

Matfield Matters

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MATFIELD GREEN, KS

SUMMER-FALL 2010

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Slowing down?

Clara Jo Talkington says she's slowing down, but it's hard to tell

Clara Jo Talkington has kept so busy over her 76 years, that no one would begrudge her some time to slow down and smell the roses. And she says she's trying!

Clara Jo Baker was born June 10, 1934 to Edward "Tinkum" Baker and Bertha Russell Baker in her parents' home on the Seward Baker place on what was Highway 13, near the Knute Rockne crash site. She didn't live there long before her parents moved to a dairy farm near Marion where they milked 35 cows twice a day. Moving often, as was the practice back in the day, her family was soon back in Chase



Clara Jo Talkington (right) helps hostess a reception for Kansas Notable Book Award winner Addie Sorace (left) and her daughter, Deborah Prutzmann at Pioneer Bluffs

County on the Bray place, south of the Booster Plant.

She started school at the old Booster Plant Schoolhouse, often riding to school three-on-the-back-of-a-horse with her older brothers Bob and Carl. Crossing

the creek a couple of times each way, the person on the back of the horse invariably slid off into the creek. All part of the trip!

Before long the Baker family was mov-

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HISTORY TIDBIT

The largest event ever to take place in our area occurred July 31, 1923, the day the railroad track reached Matfield Green. A large dance platform was built near where the depot would later stand, a brass band performed, and over 3,000 people are reported to have attended. Nearly a year passed before the first cattle train arrived on April 24, 1924.



On August 29, the New Century Club hosted a fun and delicious Matfield Green Community Picnic at Pioneer Bluffs. Thanks to Barbara, Betty, Clara Jo, both Marys, Nancy and Phyllis for a wonderful gathering. The group staged this picture as a greeting to the Millers. [Jump to article](#) on the back page for details on why Phil & Kathy are in Houston.

**HEAVEN ON EARTH
NEXT 5 EXITS**

You can still “fill ’er up” in Matfield Green...sort of

The property we all know today as the Hitchin’ Post began its life back when Model T Fords ruled the gravel road known as Route 13. It was a place to buy gas and get a flat fixed...a filling station!

Back in the 1970s the station didn’t even have a brand you’d recognize, just gas purchased from the refinery at El Dorado. It was owned by Charley Talkington.

But then, in 1977, Duane Van Buskirk got a hold of the operation of the station and its quiet days as just a “filling station” were soon to be behind it. In 1979 ‘Van’ turned the operation into a tavern/filling station and named the place the Single Tree, in honor of the one, lone tree on the property. Soon, Van took a job on the Turnpike and left his wife Mary in charge. If you know Mary, you know she didn’t take much guff...as in none at all! She ran the place until 1984. They then sold it to John Adkins. Then, a series of owners came to own the place: Terry and Geraldine Wagoner (who named it the Hitchin’ Post), Eddie Engles and Marcia Trayer. Through these five owners of the tavern/filling station, the place had no running water, thus no indoor toilet. Nada modern conveniences.

Then came Ron Guvion. If you prefer indoor toilets, thank Ron. If you like to shoot pool, thank Ron. Where the pool table now sits used to be outdoors, where Van parked his car. Ron sold the place to Mike and Jayne Mayes, who then passed it along



LaVern "Vernie" Schokowsky in front of Wagoner's Garage, now the Hitchin Post grill and bar.

to Nancy Ewing who in turn sold it to Mary and Gary Ludwick, an interesting couple from El Dorado who had stopped there “a million times” on their motorcycle. To the Ludwicks the Hitchin’ Post seemed like a perfect semi-retirement job. They painted everything up with a new coat of white paint, only to discover that *stopping* for a burger and *running* a burger stand didn’t have a lot in common.

So, a CLOSED sign hung on the front door for a while...and all of us held our breath hoping someone would come rescue this wonderful hamburger joint. And SOMEONE did, a native Chase Countian who loved to cook.

Susan Hardesty was born here, moved around with her parents as a child, returned as a teenager and never left again. After her first husband died,

Susan began cooking to help raise her two daughters. She made pizzas in four different gigs at Casey’s, throwing in making pizza at Pizza Hut just to keep her hand in the dough. Finally, she started cookin’ burgers at Buck’s on the highway in Strong City...and she never looked at pizzas again!

When the Hitchin’ Post came up for auction in September 2004, Susan was there with a bidder’s card. And her bid took the day. She’s been turning out GREAT burgers ever since.

Susan loves her customers, even though when the place is crowded, it leaves little time for her to step away from the grill and socialize. Sometimes the place can be pretty empty, but then here come 70 customers stopping for lunch on their way to last June’s Symphony. *Jump*

Hitchin Post *continued from previous page*

All heck breaks loose on the first Sunday of the month when hundreds of bikers stream through Matfield Green. On a good Sunday weather-wise, Susan will serve 250-300 bikers. Even though she's the Chief Cook, on the busy days she gets good help from her daughters, Clara Jo Talkington and others.

Susan is a strong believer in planning events that promote Matfield Green and the Hitchin' Post. The St. Patrick's Day Parade is a tradition anticipated by many each year. On July 24th she had the Shriners Blues Band up to play at the Post.

On August 28th Susan threw a celebration of her 6th Anniversary of ownership. One way or another, all of us who've ever



had one of the Hitchin' Post's famous burgers joined in the celebration and "Tipped One" to Susan and her spot at Exit Four, Matfield Green, Kansas!

This year's St. Patrick's Day Parade and festivities at the Hitchin Post were covered in The Wichita Eagle by outdoor columnist Michael Pearce.

Chase County leads the way with recycling program

When my wife Kathy and I moved to Matfield Green more than seven years ago, we came from Kansas' largest city, Wichita, where we lived for more than 35 years. Naturally, we knew there would be some things about Wichita we would miss. But, one of the things we haven't missed is the lack of political will at City Hall to establish a comprehensive recycling program. Over the years, both of us were part of groups that advocated for some form of

City/County sponsored programs, but it never happened.

So, it may sound a little weird, but for the past seven years we have been enjoying this simple, easy-to-use recycling program here in Chase County. Once a month, on the Tuesday before the fourth Thursday (that's the most complicated part of the program!) the Recycling Trailer comes to Matfield Green. It's parked across from the Schoolhouse in a real handy spot. And that little trailer takes

just about everything recyclable ... all kinds of paper and cardboard, glass and cans, and several kinds of plastic. Why, it even has a bin marked for Junk Mail. Now, is that therapeutic or what? I can hardly wait for Junk Mail to appear in our mail box so I can have the satisfaction of throwing it right back to a good cause.

Yes! Our little community is light years ahead of our state's biggest town in at least one way, and that's recycling!



The Chase County recycling trailer will be in the parking lot of the Matfield schoolhouse on 9/21, 10/26, 11/23 & 12/21

Slowing Down? *from Page 1*

ing again. This time it was to Butler County, southeast of Cassoday on the Henley place. During this time Clara Jo's father was working for Mason Crocker on the Crocker Ranch. Mr. Crocker devised a plan for the Bakers to move to Texas to watch over cattle during the winter, then moving back to Chase County when the cattle came up for the summer. This arrangement, predictably, was very stressful on the family and in 1952, Clara Jo's parents decided to re-settle in Matfield Green, opening a restaurant in a little three-room house that sat where the Jerry Collins home is today.

Clara Jo was set to graduate from High School in 1953, but was deterred from that plan when she met Wilbur Talkington at a dance in Cassoday. They fell in love and were married in 1953. They moved into the old Crofoot place with other family members. Clara Jo rode to Chase County High School each day with Wayne Rogler's daughter Mary Ann and graduated in 1954.

By 1957 Wilbur was back from a stint in the service and landed the job as Matfield Green Postmaster, when the Post Office was located in Jess Snedegar's General Store which stood just south of our old Bank building. Clara Jo joined him at the P.O. on April 1, 1957, serving as a part-time Clerk.

Along with new jobs and everything, Clara Jo and Wilbur began their family. Jay was born in June 1957, Debbie came along in April 1959 and then Kathy in July 1961. Clara Jo

takes a lot of pride in the many years that she and Wilbur followed the kids' activities at school. Her kids attended Matfield Green Grade School, although in Jay's case he went into Cottonwood Falls beginning in the 8th grade to be more active in sports.

After the kids got into the upper grades at school, Clara Jo took full-time employment with the Post Office in Cottonwood Falls. In 1983 she had an opportunity to return to the Matfield Post Office and in 1984 was named Postmaster where she served until joining Wilbur in retirement in 1992.

That may sound like a pretty full life, but wait...there's more. Clara Jo served on the Matfield School Board for four years. In 1970 she joined the Eastern Star in Cottonwood Falls. Over the past 40 years in Eastern Star she as served as Worthy Matron 16 times, including holding the post again this year. For many years she has helped son Jay by taking tickets at Chase County High School Athletic events, where Jay is Athletic Director.

After losing her dear husband Wilbur, Clara Jo took on the job directing Matfield Green's water system on November 1, 1997. She held this position until retiring from it in August 2008.

Last year Clara Jo began making specific plans for the year 2010. No more raising and dressing 100 chickens. No more huge garden. She was getting ready for a very special family event, the graduation from West Point of her oldest grandson,



Brett & Grandma at graduation.

Brett, last May. Nothing was to stand in her way of being part of the group of 13 family members who made the trip to New York to see Brett receive his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army. Clara Jo, as evidenced by the accompanying photo, was one proud grandmother.

Clara Jo loves all her eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren...and makes plenty of time to be with them. She's still the secretary-treasurer for Matfield Community Church. And, she's trying to find more time for her puzzles, big ones, hard ones. She loves puzzles.

But in visiting with her, one does get a sense she is trying to slow down...a bit! Her friends and neighbors can only wish her the best...and don't slow down too much!

P. S. Here's something I bet you didn't know about Ms. Talkington: Back in the day, she broke and trained horses...how about that! [Jump back to front page](#)

Matfield area residents pitch in to support Symphony

Symphony in the Flint Hills, held this year about 8 miles west of Bazaar, has become a signature Kansas event. As Governor Mark Parkinson described it in his effusive speech at the concert on June 12, “It’s about what happens when you combine the best of what men and women have to offer—talented musicians, and you pair them with the best that God has given us—the Flint Hills. It’s a synergy that I can only describe as a ‘pure Kansas night.’”

As you might imagine, it takes lots of people to put on a production as large as the Symphony in the Flint Hills. And almost everyone working to help make it a success every year is a volunteer. This year over 600 volunteers came from 106 Kansas cities, and from 7 other states to do everything from taking tickets, to serving BBQ, to educating people about prairie wildflowers, to selling programs and T-shirts, to collecting all the trash and recyclables that are generated by 7,000 people in one afternoon and evening.

Since the Inaugural Symphony in June 2006, a dedicated group of Matfielders have been involved in many behind-the-scenes jobs to ensure the Symphony runs smoothly. Over the years, that group has included **Barbara and Tom Armstrong, Floyd and Laura Beck, Elaine Jones, Nancy Wight, Emily Hunter and Kathy and Phil Miller**, among others.

The 5th Annual Symphony had quite a contingent of volunteers from our little burg. **Elaine**

Jones took on the huge task of coordinating the renovation of the old Prairie Coffee Co. in Cottonwood Falls into a fabulous gallery of photos of cowboys and Flint Hills scenes to celebrate this year’s Symphony theme: **Ranching in the Flint Hills**. She was ably assisted in this makeover by **Jim Worster, Ton Haak and Marva Weigelt**. The Gallery was a smashing success.

Appearing in the two of the many presentations in the Educational Tents on Symphony day were **Marva Weigelt**, who entertained a large audience on the realities of what many of us refer to as the “good old days” of ranching, and **Tom Burton and Phil Miller**, who told stories about the days when cattle were shipped in and out of the Flint Hills by train.

Kathy and Phil Miller, Jane Koger and Marva Weigelt each contributed articles for the Symphony’s Field Journal pro-

gram. Kathy’s article told the history of starting Symphony in the Flint Hills and Phil wrote on one of his favorite subjects—trains in the Flint Hills and their impact on early day ranching. Jane’s contribution was on her experiences with greater prairie-chickens on her ranch, and Marva chipped in with a story about the Roglers and Pioneer Bluffs.

And, last, but certainly NOT least, is the Symphony’s Executive Director, **Emily Hunter**. A Matfield resident and Chase County mover and shaker for many years, Emily has been working tirelessly since 2004 to make Symphony in the Flint Hills an outstanding event that all Kansans, and especially all Flint Hills residents, can appreciate and take pride in.

And what do ALL the people mentioned above have in common? **Their Zip Code!! 66862! Matfield Green, Kansas USA!**



Marva Weigelt sets up The Heart of the Flint Hills Snapshot project at the Symphony Gallery in Cottonwood Falls. This exhibit is now at Pioneer Bluffs.

New exhibits at The Gallery at Pioneer Bluffs

Have you dropped by the new Gallery at Pioneer Bluffs in the Maud & Henry Rogler home yet? If not, it's definitely worth a visit anytime Friday to Monday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Julie Wagner: Earth Song

On Saturday September 18, the first solo exhibition of contemporary art opened in the art space recently created on the second floor of the main house at Pioneer Bluffs. The first artist, showing through December 6, is Julie Wagner from El Rito, New Mexico. In the spring of 2011, the second artist presenting work will be Bill McBride of Matfield Green. Some of his sculptures will be installed outdoors, on the grounds.

Julie's work is informed by the cycles of nature. "I work with flux in nature. Growth cycles. Erosion cycles. I'm interested in the earth and air and what is under the earth. It is all part of the same, there is a kind of unity." Julie is sensitive to the energies of the landscape, to the above and the below, as can be seen in her new series of paintings inspired by the tallgrass prairie, Square Foot and Earth Forms (see *Square Foot V* pictured below).



Julie's work "is based on observations and images of natural forms, and on maps, diagrams, and scientific drawings. I am interested in the dynamics and processes of nature in both the short and long term."

She looks at maps and takes walks around the land with or without her camera. She considers the long view, the changes that occur over millennia, the view from the air and the view from right at her feet. Eventually, all of this gets condensed into a painting, or book, or sculpture—which one depends on which seems the most suitable vehicle for the idea.

Her aim is "to create a dense surface which functions as both a micro and a macro view of the earth. I am creating something that takes on a life and form of its own. I am very interested in helping widen the view of how we look at the world we live in."

Flint Hills Soil In Progress

On the front porch of the main house at Pioneer Bluffs, Anne Ausloos, a visiting artist from Antwerp (Belgium) has installed four glass vessels. In each of these vessels, soil (earth, clay, dirt) including the official Kansas State soil "Harney silt loam" is suspended in water. The name Harney, meaning *people*, is adopted from *harahey*, an ancient Wichita Indian term for Pawnee Indians.

The soil was collected from an area in the Flint Hills just west of Elmdale.

In a relatively short period when compared to geological

time, Flint Hills Soil In Progress will make a different stratification visible in each vessel. By exposing the soil's grains to water, heat, air, light and/or gravitation, the process will become visible. The organization of the soil as a result of the stratification as well as the dissection of the soil into different colors will be recorded on camera (still and video). The process will continue over many years. As a result, the Flint Hills landscape will be portrayed in a poetic manner in all its intriguing beauty, in its bare essence.

"Life enters the vessels gradually. Mine is a visual research only, I am an artist, not a scientist," says Anne, who donated the project to Pioneer Bluffs.

Anne's recent projects were all born from processes. They are not "made." She sees it as her task to create, or provoke, those circumstances in which visualizations occur spontaneously, in this case, a miniature of the Flint Hills soil in the process of visually becoming alive.



Soil in Progress, Anne Ausloos



Matfield Community Church News

On July 2, Matfield Community Church and Tallgrass Spiritual Retreat Center sponsored Matfield Movie Night with the help of an outdoor theater system loaned by Rev. Billie Blair's sister, Gayle Coover from AZ.

The "walk-in theater" experience was enjoyed by the seven who came out to see the musical, *Mama Mia*.



Women's Retreat. Matfield Community Church invites women from around the area to gather with them on Saturday, October 23 for a morning retreat titled "Holy Happiness:

Reaping the Benefits of Joy in Mind, Body, and Spirit." We hope you'll consider this opportunity to come together with other

women. We would love to see a great turn out for this four-hour retreat.

The retreat is from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on October 23rd. Breakfast is included in the \$25 registration fee. For more information, please contact Barbara Armstrong (753-3453) or Rev. Billie Blair (753-3465 or tallgrassretreats@wheatstate.com)

Please join us for Sunday morning worship at 10:30 a.m. Our monthly carry-in dinner is the last Sunday of every month after worship. Even if you don't remember to bring a covered dish to share, you are welcome to join us. So far we've always had enough, kind of like the miracle of the loaves and fishes.



What's happening at Pioneer Bluffs

There is much happening at Pioneer Bluffs these days!

About 1,000 people braved the heat to see William Least Heat-Moon's Chase County homecoming July 24 at Pioneer Bluffs—despite temperatures that exceeded 100 degrees. The day included the debut of the documentary film **Return to PrairyErth** by director John O'Hara, and a Prairie Talk by Heat-Moon.

A record number of Pioneer Bluffs visitors may have been set with this memorable event. According to the Chase County Leader, in December 1915, "nearly 300 people attended the barn dance at Henry Rogler's."

Those interested in a "Return to PrairyErth" DVD should contact director John O'Hara at johara@cox.net.

The story of Pioneer Bluffs will be shared this fall in a segment of **Sunflower Journeys**, a Topeka PBS television show about Kansas and Kansans. Earlier this summer, producer John Njagi spent a day filming and interviewing hardworking volunteers at a First Saturday workday. He heard why volunteers love supporting Pioneer Bluffs and what makes it a special place. The Sunflower Journeys program, "Ranching, Conservation & A New State Park," will air at **7 pm on October 14**.

A Celebration of Community and Local Food will be held Saturday, October 9 at Pioneer Bluffs. The day begins at 3 pm with a variety of demonstrations and youth activities. Four bands are scheduled to play throughout the afternoon and

evening, including The Deedles and The Skirts. The local food feast will be served from 5 to 6:30 pm. Cost for all the activities and the meal is only \$10.

If you haven't yet seen the local photographs in the **Heart of the Flint Hills Snapshot Project: Honoring the Culture of Agriculture**, come by and see it on the second floor of the Gallery at Pioneer Bluffs Friday to Monday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. through December 6. It's worth it just to look for pictures of people you may know!

Pioneer Bluffs is giving away free firewood! Call Lynn.

For information on all of the happenings at Pioneer Bluffs, contact executive director Lynn Smith at (620) 753-3484 or lynn@pioneerbluffs.org. On the web at www.pioneerbluffs.org and on Facebook.

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100% HOMETOWN!

Brought to you by Phil Miller, Chief Correspondent; Kathy Miller, Editor; and Marva Weigelt, Production. Printed by our friends at Kansas Graphics in Cottonwood Falls.

**KEEP IT
COMING!**

**THIS COULD BE YOUR
LAST ISSUE!**

If you live outside the Matfield Green area and would like to continue receiving *Matfield Matters*, please send \$10 for a year's subscription (4 issues) **OR** you can receive it **free** by sending your email address to:

prairiehawk@wheatstate.com

THANKS!

Smilin' Phil Miller, the editor

As many of you already know, the fearless volunteer editor, writer and all-around handyman behind *Matfield Matters* is currently in Houston, Texas at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Phil Miller started his first round of intensive chemotherapy at the end of August, with the goal of beating a diagnosis of mantle cell lymphoma.

The Millers are thinking positively and referring to this as their "health project." If you'd like to be on the email list to receive regular updates on Phil's progress, please contact Marva Weigelt at 753-3468 or prairiehawk@wheatstate.com

Despite all the sudden flurry of unexpected activity as a result of his recent diagnosis, Phil insisted that "the show must go on" with *Matfield Matters*, so just as Phil and Kathy were racing around to put their affairs in order, he was also making it a priority to get drafts of his articles and instructions to Marva so that the next edition could go to press as soon as possible.

So even though Phil is out of town right now, you can still "hear his voice" in most of these articles.

Please keep the Millers in your thoughts and prayers!



Computer Flu

A note from Phil:

Even out here in the country, BAD computer viruses can find you, as we learned the hard way back in May. What infected us was so ugly that I lost all my email history and addresses, my Excel files with all the data on mailing lists and many of my Word files with my stories from earlier *Matfield Matter* issues. We had to have Windows reinstalled at a repair shop.

We're working our way back... Kathy has rebuilt most of the mailing lists (both hard copy and email). But if you know of anyone who may not be receiving current issues of *Matfield Matters*, please have them email Marva Weigelt at: prairiehawk@wheatstate.com

We don't want anyone missing out on all this good stuff!