

# THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

VOLUME XII NO 1 OCT 1993

"My task (un)accomplished and the long  
day done,  
My wages taken and... some late lark singing."  
--W.E. Henley



## KETCHUP ISSUE

Every head line here deserves its own ENNL issue, and its own front page writeup!

## MILES ANDREW HERE

Second son of Megan & Michael Ryan born June 15; in 90% percentile height, wght.

## DAMARIS TO CALIFORNIA

Leaves Mps to attend school in Sacramento; will study to be Waldorf teacher

## ELLE TO DE LAVAN-DARIEN

leaves the Shabby Shores of Tripoli to teach in the Dappy Halls of Montezuma (aka D.O.)

## CAR TOTALED: ERIC LIVES

Elle's car plunges into "tiny" stream at road washout; is carried 1000 feet downstream.

## CHEZ NOUS BARN BLOWS DOWN

Another one of Wisconsin's horrendous storms brings down our venerable & beloved building.

## ROUND BARN <sup>narrowly</sup> ESCAPES DEMISE

The phone calls poured in that it was on fire, & JJ & Elle saw the billowing smoke--but it was the <sup>horse</sup> barn!

## CRIME/MYST. TRIP FILLING

So if you're considering going, May 16-June 4, let ENNL Ed know pronto!

NOTE: See Volume XII # 2.

## 3 LEGGED CAT GETS NEW HOME

This is the first issue of the 12th season of The Empty Nest Newsletter, and the editor is woefully behind with news that should've been shouted from the treetops, like Andy's birth in June, moves, job changes; and news that would've made spectacular issues--the barns, the devastating storm that carried off Elle's car and a lot of Rock County's topsoil, etc. But there's been scant time and a lot of pressures, this past year. You may have noticed that Volume XI's issues were clumped into two mailings; I don't predict any better for this year. Some of the spring pressures besides the usual school (which is invariably unusual, but this time I threw in the Wollstonecraft production besides other extras--my own fault) we hired two people for the English program, had an incredible number of applicants, and I was kept working at SSU 3 1/2 weeks beyond my May 15 contract, without pay. This really cut into my summer, a significant cut for with Round Barn taken and the luck of the unexpected sabbatical, THIS is my work time, to get a manuscript to Northwestern U. Press. I need total immersion in, and focus on, the project at this time. So since the end of June I've been chipping at the ms., but with chunks of time out for important family things. However I don't want to cut out ENNL completely, hence this issue.

Well, it was a brave attempt, back in October.

I never got ENNL finished. However here it is, Jan 30th School's begun again and Round Barn, tho it's had a lot done on it, is not finished by a long shot. I keep plugging.

## FILLING OUT THE HEADLINES

**Miles Andrew** is surviving, even thriving, with an active brother only 16 months older. Megan and Michael are surviving, and I think thriving! Megan reports Andy is very cute and sweet, and that she can't keep up with all the astonishing things Mark does.

**Damaris** packed up her Mlps apartment with the help of many wonderful friends (and a mother); then she and Cheswick drove to California, via Gillian's, and are now settled in Sacramento where Demi is taking a two-year course to qualify as a Waldorf teacher. The Waldorf schools are based on the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner, and they emphasize the arts: music, dance, movement, drawing, painting, building, other creative expression, creative writing, story telling--yes, they do get around to the three R's eventually. But for multi-talented Damaris, this may be a place where she can get paid for putting her abilities to work. Besides, she's marvelous with kids. The Waldorfs are lucky to get her! Waldorf schools are springing up all over the country, by the way. Cheswick is having some trouble adjusting to the many cats in her current household. The number just dropped from 10 or 11 to seven. Their address is: 4432 New York Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628; phone: 916-967-8620. I think she'd be glad for mail and an occasional call in her new situation.

**Elle** resigned at Northwestern Military Academy and is now teaching English at the finest high school in the area, where she did her interning: Delavan-Darien High. Things are going well for her there. She's living at the farm, and is fixing

up the two front upstairs rooms attractively. Bonnie and Clyde have been joined by a small calico waif, Mousilie, who looks like a puff of smoke, but seems cat-in-charge. She sits in Grampa's lap and watches TV.

Elle flew to California to give Megan some help after the new baby. Eric and Mary Stelter who live near the farm drove her to the airport and kept her car, with instructions to drive it. That night (June 29) another horrendous storm hit--Eric left before dawn, in **Elle's car**, to drive to his factory job in Janesville, turned off the State Line Road onto Gustafson (a back road narrower than Colley), and there was no road--the car nosedived into ten feet of water. Somehow Eric got out, stumbled to a farmhouse, they got him to the hospital where he spent 6 days in critical care and 5 more while a torn artery in his neck healed. He didn't go back to work till September. Elle's car was swept downstream 1000 feet and sat in the mud 3 weeks before the ground was dry enough to support a tow truck. The car was ruined. The stream is usually a few feet wide and a few inches deep, and there is no bridge--only a culvert, which washed out. Other culverts washed out on nearby roads but there were no other accidents. Noone knows how Eric survived it, and he can't remember anything.

Another horrendous storm hit southern Wisconsin shortly thereafter, and the **barn on Chez Nous** went down. The top settled onto the bottom. You can still go into the under part, though some beams and posts are broken, but it's not a place you'd want to stay long. It's a sad sight. Anybody want weathered barn wood? ... I

March 10, 94: Yes, I did open all my Xmas mail. No, I didn't answer any of it, or send any Xmas mail myself. I'm sorry this issue + other are so short on wider family news.





## HEADLINES, Con't.

was just leaving the farm June 26 when I figured I'd better wait, it was coming in so pitch black from the West-- Grandpa yelled for us to come watch it sweep across the field, and when it hit it was with such fury that the trees all looked like they'd snap. Elle and I raced for our cars behind the garage. Even as I leapt into mine I figured I was nuts, I could be killed, but we both gunned our vehicles out into the cornfield, were picked up and blown back into the house, I went to look out the back door and a tree had fallen right where my car had been. The Mississippi area got it bad, but Rock county wasn't let off lightly. See the Daily News article <sup>(in a later issue)</sup>

Late August, I'd just got back from Minneapolis, and Ruth Lentell called to say the **round barn was on fire**. Elle and I raced down, seeing the black smoke billowing into the sky, and I figured (feeling ill) that this was the end. BUT--we got under the throughway where we could see the farm, and the round barn profile was serene against the sunset, with all the smoke and flames coming from behind it--it was the horse barn. Many fire trucks came screaming out, the wind was away from the barn, and they saved it, though the horse barn and surrounding buildings burnt to the ground. It was kids playing with matches who started it.

## Water unavailable at fire scene

By Robert Baxter Jr.

Daily News staff writer

Firefighters today were questioning the availability of water at a barn fire east of Beloit Thursday night that destroyed a power boat and left a trailer home and semi-tractor trailer truck damaged. As much as \$35,000 damage has been reported.

As the walls of a nearby trailer suddenly started to melt, all Beloit fire shift commander Brian Brown could do was hope and pray the home did not ignite. He didn't have any water left to battle the blaze.

Fire officials were unsure where the hydrants were at that location and had to call in water tankers from neighboring municipalities.

"We're just not used to that," said Brown, from his home this morning. "We're a municipality and used to using city water. All I could see was one trailer, then another and another going up in flames."

Later, a hydrant was found by a resident, hidden in the bushes, some 50 yards from the fire scene.

"I just don't understand why these hydrants are not on our computer," said a frustrated Brown, who noted the fire hydrant updates are handled at City Hall. "I'll be going out there Sunday with a crew to mark them ourselves."

A fire official said this morning changes made to the computer sys-

tem many times require the system to be shut down which may have caused problems in updating the information.

He could not say for sure why the hydrant locations were not in the computer.

Fire officials today were calling the barn fire "suspicious" and said kids playing with matches may have been the cause of the blaze.

### Barn fire reported

The blaze erupted shortly before 7:30 p.m. at 2601 Colley Road, just outside the Colley Road trailer park, fire officials said.

Brown said firefighters arrived minutes later and watched as the barn, which housed a boat and other personal items, was smoking heavily then suddenly burst into flames.

It reportedly belonged to Dale Faulkner, listed as owner of the trailer park. The value of the barn and its contents is estimated at \$21,000.

Fire officials immediately called for assistance from town of Turtle and South Beloit, then battled the blaze for nearly an hour before it was finally under control.

### Lack of water cited

But Brown cited delays in waiting for water that may have hampered firefighting operations. Several minutes were lost as water tankers



Staff photo by Ken Hallmann

Area firefighters helped battle a blaze Thursday night which destroyed a barn at the Earl Boutelle farm on Colley Road east of Beloit. A motor boat, farm machinery and a truck were also damaged or destroyed in the fire, which was attributed to children playing with matches.

BDN, Aug. 27 '93

were brought in from other locations.

Thirteen firefighters were on the scene and many suffered heat-related exhaustion as others were brought in to fight the blaze.

Brown said he cut his hand and was treated at Beloit Memorial Hospital.

Fire units stayed on the scene

until about 9 p.m., estimating damage and watching for hotspots.

A nearby trailer home, belonging to Timothy Louffler, suffered about \$6,000 damage to an exterior wall. A semi-tractor trailer also suffered an unspecified amount of damage.

Fire and police officials were continuing their investigation this morning.

## ACTUALLY THERE WAS PLENTY OF WATER: THE FIREMEN DIDN'T KNOW WHERE THE HYDRANT WAS!

### LIMPY WINS HOME ON LAKE BLOOMINGTON

Talk about luck. The three-legged cat at Chez Nous, who met who knows what dreadful accident in kittenhood (his brother Stumpy lost his tail), then was lost in Beloit till Elle tracked him down, and finally was happy at the farm-- but there were too many cats there (and he is a

slob albeit a loving slob)--was fancied by Elizabeth Weir, ENNL reader who sometimes stays at the farm overnight en route to northern Michigan. Now Limpy lives at her winterized cottage on Lake Bloomington, is a favorite with all the neighbors, and when Elizabeth is up north, stays with the year-round caretakers of the summer camp nearby. What a life! Vive Elizabeth!



NOTE:  
Mar. 10: Look for the 6 stories from The Round Barn in the Spring issue of the TRIQUARTERLY (WITH PICTURES!)

## MOM IN BELOIT HALL OF FAME

Dad, Jackie and Elle attended. Carey Croneis also inducted; Cathy Croneis there looking exactly like her mother, with a daughter who looks just like Cathy did in high school and college, Craig! The original letter said "W. J. Dougan" so Dad and Jackie were gathering stuff on Gramp. But they really meant Mom. Now they're interested in WJ.

## Hall of Fame

Five Beloiters have been elected to the Beloit Hall of Fame. They will be inducted in a 2 p.m. ceremony Sunday, Oct. 17 in the Beloit Historical Society Lincoln Center.

The five are the Rev. John Collins, Dr. Carey Croneis, Vera Dougan, Dr. William Fitzgerald and Col. Edgar O'Connor.

The ceremony is open to the public. The program is cooperatively sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Beloit Historical Society.

One of the five inductees will be featured each day this week. The focus today is on Vera Dougan.

## She helped start symphony, danced with Charlie Chaplin

Vera Wardner Dougan was born in Chicago, July 7, 1895, the youngest child of Dr. Morton Wardner and Evaline Anderson Wardner. A sister, Olive, and a brother, Horace, are both deceased. Mrs. Dougan died just 10 days short of her 93rd birthday.

Though she had been bed-ridden at home since the last year, her bed in the family living room was the hub of family activities and she did not enter the hospital until her last morning.

From childhood she was an eager student of piano and ballet, studying at the Haylett School of Dance and the American Conservatory of Music. After graduation from high school, she did social work at the Association House in Chicago (similar to Jane Addam's Hull House.) She also continued her musical studies. She and a small coterie of volunteers were on call at the Chicago Opera as interpretive dancers, as the opera had no official ballet at that time. She danced as a wood nymph in more than one movie with the young Charlie Chaplin.

She was offered a combination scholarship and teaching position at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Ill. and so while earning her Bachelor of Arts degree was also a faculty member teaching ballet, swimming and coaching sports.

Her alma mater in 1966 honored her with a Doctor of Music Degree. After graduation she taught French, English and

music for a time at Winchester High School. In 1923 she went to France to do reconstruction work, where she met Ronald Dougan. They were married in Chateau Thierry May 3, 1924.

The couple returned to Beloit in the autumn of 1924. Mrs. Dougan became active in teaching dance and participating in community activities as well as bearing four children by January of 1930. She presented dance recitals on the lawn of the Big House at Dougan Dairy and at Theodore Lyman Wright Art Hall of Beloit College. She also directed several city-wide pageants in the 1930s.

Mrs. Dougan wanted her children to have musical opportunities, so she imported a strings teacher from Rockford. The fruition of the string activity made possible the Beloit Janesville Symphony, founded by Lewis and Pat Dougan Dalvit in the early 1950s.

Mrs. Dougan was instrumental in beginning the symphony's supportive women's guild. The symphony's concert master's chair is endowed in her name.

Vera Dougan found a strong music club in Beloit, Treble Clef. She was its president in 1937. Through Treble Clef she became acquainted with the Federation of Music Clubs, accepting offices in the Wisconsin Federation, then the Central Region and ultimately, after being on the national board, became national president in 1956. She remained active in the National Federation of Music Clubs, holding continuing posts of responsibility, until near her death.

She was a member of Sigma Alpha Iota Musical Fraternity.



Dougan

## LATER-THAN-OCTOBER NEWS

## KARL HAS QUADRUPLE BYPASS

Back in November, Uncle Karl, feeling fatigue and shortness of breath, ended up with rather sudden surgery. He's done splendidly, though he reports the aftermath isn't exactly roses. Jo is now cooking gourmet no-cholesterol meals.

## THERE IS NO JOY IN MUDVILLE

Beavercreek, OR Craig and Barbara Dougan of this city sent the ENNL ed. a membership in the fan club of Beavercreek's most famous citizen. The first (pre-Olympic) newsletter has been read by everyone at Sangamon State and we are all breathlessly awaiting the next <sup>post Olympic!</sup> edition.

## GILLIAN AND TAMARA HOMEOWNERS

Verdi, NV Gillian Jackson and Tamara Baren, who is Cress's 6th grade teacher (and was also her 4th and 5th) have thrown in their lot together and purchased a house in a village near Reno. It has fruit trees, space inside and out, a fireplace, and is generally splendid. The household also includes Gabriel and Marika Baren. Jackie visited in December and was delighted. She's known Tamara now three years, and always visits school for a day to enjoy both Cress and Tamara in action. This year we went on a field trip to petroglyphs and Indian storage caves. Gillian has a job as troubleshooter for the UNR Biology Department, the main problem being there's no definition to the job, she has to make it herself! But better than dissecting worms!

## JACKIE FARES FURTHER WEST

Besides visiting Gillian, Cress and the Barens, Jackie spent two days with Damaris at that "odd little school," the Rudolph Steiner College in Sacramento, and decided she could be happy there, making music, doing art, choral speaking, gardening, etc. Most memorable were two walks by the river with Demi, and enjoying her talking cat, Cheswick, as well as her house- and school-mates. Then on with Damaris to Alison Walsh's, a steak dinner with Alison and Paul, much interesting talk (especially about "Shadowlands" and Joy Gresham); I read Alison's sensitive writing --she's PUBLISHED! and we learned what it's like to be employed by an "escort service." I travelled on to Annabelle Dirks' in Santa Cruz and visited Megan and Michael by day: Megan and I went to park and beach with the babies, to a pizza dinner of the Air Patrol with the whole family, did Christmas shopping, had fun. LOTS of baby holding! And with Annabelle, I cut a Christmas tree, went on a shopping trip to San Francisco where we had to elbow our way up to fancy store windows in order to see shelter cats and puppies living in Victorian parlor and kitch-

en and attic splendor (and being rapidly adopted) we also lunched with Annabelle's niece Abigail at an elegant place. Annabelle listened to my Round Barn stories every night. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and I thank all you dear ones from the cockles of my heart.