

## With A New Home, The Journey Goes Full Circle



New residents of Barnesville, the Veralrud family pictured above are, Layne, Luke, Megan, Austin and daughter Lydia. The couple relocated in December after living in Osgood.

By: LaVonne Redding

For one young family, Barnesville seems to be the place to set down roots. Coming from the Osgood area, Austin and Megan Veralrud have found the ideal location for their family.

For Megan, Barnesville is a new home. She grew up and graduated from Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton schools. Austin already had ties to the area and Barnesville Schools. Growing up in the Comstock region, he and his older brothers attended Barnesville schools, moving away after his fifth grade year.

Megan is currently attending

MState in Moorhead, majoring in accounting, while also staying home with the couple's three children. Austin was working in Fergus Falls when they first purchased their home. Since the family moved in at the beginning of December, he has started a new position as a finance manager at Outlet Recreation of Fargo.

With three small children, the Veralrud family is extremely busy. Their sons Layne, four, and Luke, who is two, are older brothers to two-month-old sister Lydia. She was born less than a month after they moved into their new home in December.

Making their family complete, they have added a furry friend named Lola who is three years old.

When asked why they chose Barnesville, Austin and Megan said they were looking for a community with small schools and a neighborhood where the kids can play.

If this family isn't busy enough, Austin shares an exciting pastime with his dad and one brother. All three enjoy the fast-paced sport of racing. For the first time, in this racing season all three will be competing in the same class in the IMCA Sport Mod car series.

## Party Lines Changed The Way Gossip Got Around

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and I went over to the folks' house to get the Heet.

The next day Bill Meissner, a neighbor, was having his auction sale. Bill had decided it was time for him to sell his farmland, his farming equipment, and retire. Of course, all the neighbors, including me, went to the sale.

This was the first auction sale I had ever been to and I found it mesmerizing listening to the auctioneer's chant and feeling the electricity that was running through the crowd of bidders. So, I almost jumped straight up when I felt a hand tap me from behind and on the side of my neck.

I turned to see Alva Brown standing right behind me. He smiled and said, "How's that shoulder? Did the Heet work?" So much for our secret code, but it was rather comforting to know that someone was concerned.

A similar incident occurred because of an injured dog we owned. Her name was Penny and she came home one evening with bloody ears. It was obvious she had stuck her nose into someone's business and they had come out fighting. The result was severely scratched ears for Penny.

Jackie and I cleaned her up and put what medicine we had on Penny's wounds. But a problem arose. It wasn't so much with the ears as it was with Penny. Her ears must have itched, because she could only leave them alone for a short while before she would start scratching them. Soon her ears would be bleeding again and we would be back to square one.

This went on into the middle of the night. Once again I went to the phone to use my code. Dad answered and I told him of Penny's problem. We discussed the situation without coming up with any reasonable solution.

All of a sudden a voice broke into our conversation. It was Lela Dibley. Lela said, "Howie, just put some flour on those ears. That will dry up the blood and stop both the



Mr. Howard Peet is a very busy college professor who writes, researches and plays music.

bleeding and the itching."

I said, "Thank you," hung the phone up and got out the flour. Just as Lela had predicted, the bleeding from the ears coagulated, the itching stopped, and both Penny and I went to sleep for the rest of the night thanks to veterinarian advice via the party line.

Although technology was ready to put us on the moon it was not ready to do much with the party line. On July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong was saying, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," rural telephone company owners were saying, "one-phone ring for privacy, one giant line for all."

In the 1960's we moved to Lake Lizzie. I was now a professor at North Dakota State University and we had built a home on the lake only to find that our telephone hookup was yet another party line. However, telephone technology had made some inroads into privacy. The line we were attached to at

the lake provided us with a private ring that alerted nobody else on the line. This worked fine when all the windows and doors were closed, but during the summer with cabins open wide to let breezes in it also allowed the ringing of phones out. However, after our time in the farm home we were used to hearing neighborly clicks as we answered our telephone.

It was late in the evening one summer day when our telephone rang. The caller was Dan Sandel, an attorney from Breckenridge. I was involved in a lawsuit over a land issue and Dan and I were talking over possible strategies. Because it was a rather complicated issue we tied up the line a good length of time.

The next morning I started out on my usual walk. Soon I heard Marjorie Kubitz, our neighbor, calling out to me. She was puffing as she came up the hill to where I stood waiting for her and wondering what she had to tell me. Upon catching her breath she said,

"You know, Howie. I was listening to you and that attorney talking last night and I think you are right!"

Although I was somewhat irritated that Marjorie had listened in on my conversation, I was comforted to know that I had a supporter right there on my party line.

As I recall those days of the party line a bit of nostalgia begins to creep into my mind. That party line provided a wonderful foundation for the neighborhood it served. The lack of privacy made the neighborhood an open-ended community for all who lived there. This, of course, brought out that small-town camaraderie so dearly entrenched in the memories of most of us who came out of that era.

The party line was the glue of the neighborhood making a family neighborhood, one where a sense of community responsibility was developed along with concern and respect for each individual member. We knew each other - warts and all.

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