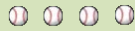


# NEBRASKA HOT STOVE LEAGUE



SEASON XXXVII



2020 HSL Champion  
West Des Moines Cubs  
Manager: Shamu

400

## FROM THE BULLPEN

2021 Campaign

Edition No. 24

October 15, 2021

### THE MARVELOUS MR. MAGPIE

Gentlemen:

So let's get right to it, shall we? The reason that Mitch/Curby/Magpie won the whole enchilada this year is that he picked one whale of a good team, and then managed it superbly.

Let's take a look at the team that he drafted, how many of them ended up on his team at season's end (or close to it, see footnotes), and how many points they scored:

#### **BUMS' DRAFT TEAM AND FINAL POINT TOTALS**

1.	(5)	Gerrit Cole (NYY - SP) <sup>1</sup>	675.0
2.	(22)	Manny Machado (SD - 3B,SS)	573.5
3.	(31)	Trea Turner (LAD - 2B,SS)	645.5
4.	(48)	Lance Lynn (CWS - SP) <sup>2</sup>	543.0
5.	(57)	Yoán Moncada (CWS - 3B)	459.6
6.	(74)	Jose Altuve (Hou - 2B)	609.4
7.	(83)	Joe Musgrove (SD - SP)	587.0
8.	(100)	Jesse Winker (Cin - LF,CF,RF) <sup>3</sup>	481.9
9.	(109)	Clint Frazier (NYY - LF,RF)	111.0
10.	(126)	Alex Verdugo (Bos - LF,CF,RF)	442.9
11.	(135)	Eric Hosmer (SD - 1B)	365.7

<sup>1</sup> Dropped October 1.

<sup>2</sup> Dropped October 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sent to waivers on September 29.

12.	(152)	Andrew Heaney (NYY - SP,RP) <sup>4</sup>	304.0
13.	(161)	Trevor Rogers (Mia - SP)	423.0
14.	(178)	Mark Canha (Oak - 1B,LF,CF,RF)	460.8
15.	(187)	Joc Pederson (Atl - 1B,LF,CF,RF)	326.7
16.	(204)	Rafael Montero (Hou - RP)	142.0
17.	(213)	Drew Smyly (Atl - SP,RP)	323.0
18.	(230)	Carlos Rodón (CWS - SP) <sup>5</sup>	533.0
19.	(239)	Jake McGee (SF - RP) <sup>6</sup>	387.0
20.	(256)	David Peralta (Ari - LF)	348.2
21.	(265)	Logan Webb (SF - SP)	515.5
22.	(282)	Mitch Garver (Min - C)	209.8
23.	(291)	Anthony Bass (Mia - RP)	204.5
24.	(308)	Pete Fairbanks (TB - RP)	185.0
25.	(317)	Johnny Cueto (SF - SP)	253.0
26.	(334)	Joey Wendle (TB - 2B,3B,SS)	364.4
27.	(343)	David Dahl (Mil - LF,CF,RF)	87.2
28.	(360)	Jonathan India (Cin - 2B,3B)	552.1
29.	(369)	David Bote (ChC - 2B,3B)	173.8
30.	(386)	Tanner Houck (Bos - SP,RP)	181.5
		TOTAL POINTS	11,469

Now let's look at the **Bums'** roster the final day of the season and the final point totals scored by each of these players:

**BUMS ROSTER ON CLOSING DAY AND SEASON'S POINT TOTALS**

1.	Trea Turner LAD - 2B,SS	645.5
2.	Jose Altuve Hou - 2B	609.4
3.	Cedric Mullins Bal - CF	578.2
4.	Manny Machado SD - 3B,SS	573.5
5.	Mark Canha Oak - 1B,LF,CF,RF	460.8
6.	Yoán Moncada CWS - 3B	459.6
7.	Alex Verdugo Bos - LF,CF,RF	442.9
8.	Lourdes Gurriel Jr. Tor - 1B,2B,LF	406.7
9.	Kyle Farmer Cin - C,1B,2B,3B,SS	374.3
10.	Eric Hosmer SD - 1B	365.7

<sup>4</sup> Dropped September 11.

<sup>5</sup> Dropped September 29.

<sup>6</sup> Dropped October 2.

11.	Mike Zunino TB - C	348.8
12.	David Peralta Ari - LF	348.2
13.	Brett Gardner NYY - LF,CF	273.3
14.	Rafael Ortega ChC - LF,CF,RF	262.5
15.	Alcides Escobar Was - 2B,SS	245.5
16.	Matt Duffy ChC - 2B,3B	236.8
17.	Daulton Varsho Ari - C,LF,CF,RF	226.0
18.	Jarred Kelenic Sea - LF,CF	198.7

1.	Joe Musgrove SD - SP	587.0
2.	Logan Webb SF - SP	515.5
3.	Trevor Rogers Mia - SP	423.0
4.	Will Smith Atl - RP	407.0
5.	Josh Staumont KC - RP	295.0
6.	David Bednar Pit - RP	292.5
7.	Vladimir Gutierrez Cin - SP	277.0
8.	Aaron Bummer CWS - RP	257.5
9.	Alec Mills ChC - SP,RP	216.0
10.	Jesse Chávez Atl - SP,RP	136.0
11.	Reiss Knehr SD - SP,RP	47.0
12.	Reid Detmers LAA - SP	19.0

### SKIP SEZ



Drafting out of the No. 5 hole, Magpie got off to a great start by taking Gerrit Cole (675.0), Manny Machado (573.5) and Trea Turner (645.5) as his top three picks. He continued to cruise in Rounds 4 through 8: Lance Lynn (543.0); Yoán Moncada (459.6); Jose Altuve (609.4); Joe Musgrove (587.0); and Jesse Winker (481.9) before hitting his first clinker in the 9th round with Clinton Frazier (111.0). His excellent draft continued in Round 10 with Alex Verdugo (442.9), 13th round pick Trevor Rogers (423.0), 14th round pick Mark Canha (460.8), 18th round pick Carlos Rodón (533.0), and his 21st round pick of Logan Webb (515.5), with Webb perhaps being the steal of the draft.



Magpie then managed his team with great free agent diligence and good judgment, shrewdly picking up Lourdes Gurriel Jr. (406.7) as a free agent on April 23, and then just three days later, picking up the plum of the free agent draft, Cedric Mullins (578.2) on April 26. He then added relief pitcher Will Smith (407.0) on May 7, utility man Kyle Farmer (374.3) on July 28, and catcher Mike Zunino (348.8) on August 18.



Magpie completed a total of 109 transactions over the course of the season, only stubbing his toe once, dropping Jonathan India (552.1), his 28th round pick, on May 2; but avoiding a second mistake of dropping Logan Webb on April 14 by picking him up again on April 18, a nifty recovery from this near gaffe.

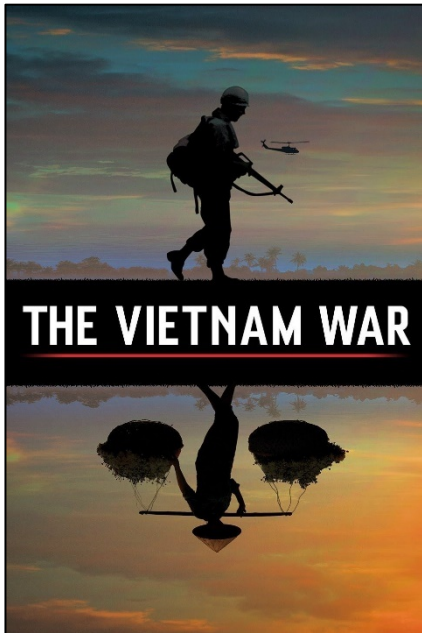
### RECORD OF FINAL FINISHES

Magpie's first place finish in 2021 is his first championship since 2012 when his **Bums** blew away the **Wahoos** and the rest of the field with a 400+ point margin. It is also his team's first money finish since that same year of 2012, the longest stretch that a Magpie-managed team (**Reds/Highlanders/Bums**) has not finished in the money.

Magpie's crown in 2021 is the fifth championship for this game warrior, along with his first place finishes in 1991, 1993, 2003 and 2012. It is also the 16th time in 34 years of competition that Magpie's teams have finished in the money, and the 30th time in 34 years of competition that he finished in the top half of the league. With these vital statistics, it is at least arguable, if not a lead pipe cinch certainty, that Magpie has been the savviest and the most successful Hot Stove League manager since his entry into the Bonds of Brotherhood in that fateful 1988 season when he and Itchie first entered the Hot Stove League.

So in summary, hats off to Magpie for another great season of competition, and another etching of his name on The Cup.

### KEN BURNS' VIET NAM



I don't know how many of you have watched the Ken Burns series on Viet Nam, but as with all of Burns' many documentary works, it is outstanding and fascinating. And even though I have read several books about America's disastrous experience in Viet Nam--including one of the quintessential tellings entitled *The Best and the Brightest*--I can't believe how much more I learned from watching the Ken Burns series. It would be fascinating now to go back and look and see what the history textbooks used by Mr. Mueller in my junior year of high school in 1974 had to say about the reasoning behind our commitment of massive amounts of money and manpower to South Viet Nam. Not that I would remember, but I would be surprised if *Ho Chi Minh's* name even came up during our history class discussion of the war, and yet he was the central figure in the first two episodes of Burns' bio epic.

I didn't even realize that Ho Chi Minh was a native of Viet Nam, or that he had tried to get the attention of President Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I to advocate for an independent and sovereign Viet Nam, to no avail. I did not know that Ho Chi Minh went by somewhere between 50 and 200 aliases during his life, primarily as a matter of self-preservation. And I certainly did not

know that prior to becoming a political force to be reckoned with in the early 1940s, Minh reportedly lived in New York City and in Boston, at the latter working as a pastry chef at the venerated Parker House Hotel.<sup>7</sup>

I also learned, or relearned, as the case may be, that our involvement in Southeast Asia didn't just begin with JFK sending over advisors first and troops second in support of the South Vietnamese; rather, our involvement began with the Truman administration quietly providing millions upon millions of dollars of aid to France in support of their ongoing efforts to colonize Indochina and to keep it out of the hands of the Communists. This support continued throughout the Eisenhower years as Commander in Chief, 1952 to 1960, until the United States' tentacles were already deeply entrenched in the Viet Nam peninsula as the Kennedy regime assumed power.

If you aren't watching the Viet Nam documentary by Burns, you will want to.

### **BEAUTIFUL NEBRASKA: IN PRAISE OF NORTHEAST NE**

After a frenzied couple of weeks in a row doing actual legal business, I decided to take yesterday off for another driving tour of our wonderful state, taking in a few more county courthouses along the way. It seems like I usually have at least one deposition trip each October to the northeast part of our state--whether it be to Norfolk or Neligh or South Sioux City or some other venue--which offers a great opportunity to take in the beautiful scenery and sights of autumn, including all of the harvesting activity. Yesterday's drive was particularly beautiful, as I seem to have hit it at a time when the fall colors were at or near their seasonal peak: stand after stand of fiery red sumac;<sup>8</sup> field after field of yellow and brown cornstalks, just waiting to be turned into silage; and hill after dale of trees and bushes and native grasses with resplendent changing colors of the season.

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<sup>7</sup> And what makes this particularly fascinating to me is that Underbelly, Big Guy and I stayed at the Parker House Hotel during a non-HSL trip that the three of us took to Boston in 1987, when the three of us experienced Fenway Park for the first time. At least I think it was on this trip that I stayed at the Parker House, but if I am wrong, I am quite sure that Big Guy will correct me.

<sup>8</sup> As with Bill Kloefkorn, a favorite of mine.



Seeing all this beautiful landscape of our beloved state had me literally singing out loud to myself the song *Beautiful Nebraska (peaceful prairieland, laced with many rivers, and the hills of sand)*, written in 1960 by a fellow named Jim Fras. As I sang and hummed the song, my memory bank produced a recollection from about 1963 or 1964, when the author came to Pershing Elementary School in Northeast Lincoln and played the song for us on the school piano and sang the song for us at the Pershing School Auditorium, before or after describing the process of writing the song and his inspiration for it. My third grade teacher, Mabel Stansbury--who apparently was convinced that the sun rose and set on this gentleman songwriter--had us all write letters to Mr. Fras in praise of his song and to thank him for coming to our school and sharing it with us. Perhaps not quite as smitten with our visiting singer-songwriter as she was, I turned in what was apparently felt by her to be a less-than-inspirational offering, and to this day I remember her shaming me in front of a few of my third grade running mates.<sup>9</sup> Even though I liked Mrs. Stansbury--she was a neighbor, catty-cornered across the street, for gosh sakes--and rewrote the entire letter using every superlative and adoring adjective I could think of to impress her, I liked her a little bit less after that particular tongue-lashing.

The first stop of my driving sojourn yesterday was Hartington in Cedar County for a visit to the beautiful old Cedar County Courthouse. The last time I was in the area, after driving back to Omaha from Niobrara last year to see the home of Standing Bear, the courthouse was locked tight because of COVID-19 and unavailable for a viewing. Below is a picture of this courthouse, built in 1891 with an addition completed in 2009, and beautifully preserved by the fine people of Hartington.

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<sup>9</sup> Being the son of a Lincoln grade school principal had its benefits, but a few downsides as well--heightened expectations from teachers.



As originally built



Cedar County District Courthouse

Today

Even though it is allegedly the former home of some of Itchie's shirttail kin, and it therefore pains me to say this, Hartington looks like a really nice, clean, welcoming Nebraska town, with a thriving downtown area and few if any vacant and boarded up downtown buildings. I could see retiring there someday, but Itchie would probably follow me and move into the house next door, so scratch that idea.

My next stop was in Center, Nebraska, and a repeat visit to the Knox County Courthouse. Legal business brought me to this courthouse probably 25 or 30 years ago for a hearing and/or depositions, but since it was on the way I decided to revisit it just for old times' sake. Not a beautiful building from the outside, as you can see from one of the following pictures, but the district courtroom is actually quite nice and well-appointed. I don't know who the traveling judge is who currently reigns over Center's legal business, but I sat in his or her judge's chair for a minute or two and banged the gavel a couple of times just for good measure. Judging from the docket sheet on the judge's bench, it would appear that this is a fairly busy courtroom.



Judge Skipper?



Knox County District Courtroom



Knox County Courthouse



## BEAUTIFUL BUTTE

From Center, I traveled through a multiplicity of small Nebraska towns to get to Butte in Boyd County, including Winnetoon, Verdigre, Verdel (population 27), Monowi (population 1<sup>10</sup>), Lynch, Bristow, and Spencer. Back in January 1997 I tried a three-day wrongful death jury trial in Butte (population 326) to a six-person jury of some of the toughest, grimmest, most humorless folks you will ever meet. After hearing three days of evidence, the jury found my client 50.1% negligent and the decedent 49.9% negligent in connection with a vehicular accident at an unprotected (no stop or yield signs) gravel intersection and awarded the decedent's estate \$17,000 and change. Apparently this is how the stoic veni-remen of Boyd County, Nebraska, value a young man's life.<sup>11</sup>



A return to Boyd County

My return visit to the Boyd County courthouse rekindled all kinds of memories of that trial twenty-four-plus years ago, including the fact that our trial judge was the Honorable William Cassel, who now sits on the Nebraska Supreme Court, but whose portrait from those days still adorns the wall adjacent to the jury box.

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<sup>10</sup> That is correct, the green population sign for Monowi indeed says 1. And she apparently wasn't home, because I didn't see her.

<sup>11</sup> The counsel for the decedent did appeal this verdict, and the Nebraska Supreme Court decided that this amount was so shockingly low for a wrongful death case that it needed to get reversed.



I also remember that the judge's bailiff was a crusty old boy with a terrifically dry sense of humor, and that at lunch each day of trial we all ate at the same diner in Butte because it was the only place in town that served food. As such, the café that week was thrice patronized by our six jurors, plaintiff's counsel and his client, me and my client, the judge, the bailiff, the clerk and the court reporter. Just one big happy family.

After departing Butte I resumed my drive west on Highway 12 through the western portion of Boyd County, passing through the small village of Naper (population 76) until I reached--drum roll, please--the holy grail: **KEYA PAHA COUNTY**.

#### A KEY MOMENT

Finally, after living in the Cornhusker state since the age of 1, and after a frenzy of recent courthouse visitation activity, I made it to my 93rd and last Nebraska county, Keya Paha.



I've now touched soil in every Nebraska county.

And I found that a river runs through it--the Keya Paha River, as is apt.

Until last week, I had always assumed that the name of this county was pronounced *key-a PAW-ha*. But just last week a legal aid lawyer that I was volunteering with and who was chatting me up about her granddaughter, told me that she had just recently been to Keya Paha County to visit her grandchild, and she pronounced it *KIP-ə-haw*. So there you go. Don't ever say that you've never learned anything new from a *From the Bullpen*.

All good Nebraskans know that the county seat of Keya Paha County is *Springview*, and eventually Highway 12 took me to this rugged village of 242 people, but not before taking me through the tiny hamlet of Burton, population allegedly 10.

### THE COURTHOUSE

Smartly situated at the intersection of Turbine and Ashe Streets, the Keya Paha County courthouse was erected in 1915 and is constructed in a style that seems exactly right for this place: square, durable, unpretentious, utilitarian. Not a bit of gingerbread or a single frill to be seen. Not necessary.



Keya Paha County Courthouse

The district courtroom on the top level was open but dark, but once I flipped on the lights and took the bench, I was mildly disgusted to see that there were hundreds upon hundreds, maybe thousands, of dead flies on the floor of the courtroom, and even on the judge's bench. See picture below.



Because Keya Paha County is clearly cattle country, perhaps the dead flies shouldn't be a surprise, but you would think that they must use the district courtroom often enough that somebody would take a shop vac to the area, out of respect for the judge if nothing else. Also noteworthy in the district courtroom were the photographs of all of the same judges whose portraits hang in the Boyd County district courtroom, giving real meaning to the term *traveling judge*.



After leaving Springview, I headed south on Highway 3 toward Long Pine, and just a mile or so south of Springview, the landscape changes dramatically from sandhills ranchland to much steeper terrain populated with copious groves of pine trees, and then after another mile or two, the Niobrara River and Waterway. So, so beautiful, the land reminds me of the area just south of Chadron where the Nebraska-National Forest and the Pine Ridge National recreational area are located. If not for being located out in the middle of nowhere, this area south of Springview would be overrun with fishermen, hikers and tourists galore.

The next stop on my courthouse review was Ainsworth, Nebraska, 19 miles south and 6 miles west of Springview, and the county seat of Brown County. Once inside the city limits, I had a near accident with an old farmer who had to be at least 117 years old and who pulled his similarly-aged truck right out in front of me at a clip of about 6 miles per hour, so that did leave me time to react. After my brief tour of the small, spartan, unimaginative and unimpressive Brown County Courthouse (same judges, no flies),



and as I was beating my way out of town to head for Bassett in Rock County to the east, the old farmer's doppelganger pulled out in front of me in a tragic-looking Mercury Sable, again narrowly avoiding contact while minding his personal 10-mph speed limit.



Brown County Courthouse

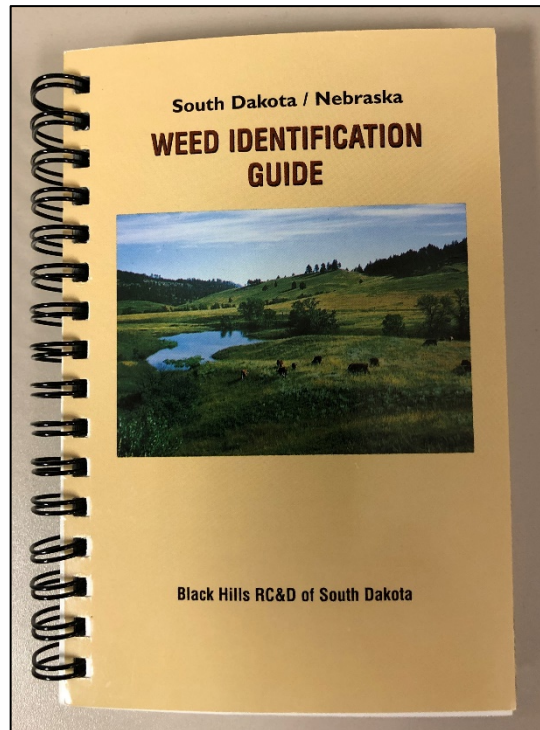
The drive east on Highway 20 toward 81 County (Rock) is well known to me from numerous trips to and from Valentine, past the beautiful Long Pine area and through and past one center-pivot irrigated hay or corn field after another, land flatter than Maggie's head after a fresh, high and tight crewcut.

Once in the sprawling metropolis of Bassett, population 728, it surprisingly took me a while to find the courthouse which is situated at 4th and State Streets, a couple of blocks off the beaten path and surprisingly distanced quite a bit from the downtown business district. Once located, I noted that it looks a whole lot like the courthouse in Springview, and so perhaps they hired the same architect and split the fee for the drawing and plans down the middle.



Rock County Courthouse

The district courtroom on the top floor was fairly spartan but clean and kempt, with no judicial portraits on the wall nor flies on the bench or carpet. One noteworthy feature of this courthouse is a fairly large rack of publications just outside the courtroom entrance, with more pamphlets of various species of weeds than a fella can shake a stick at, including one that I found called the Weed Identification Guide for South Dakota and Nebraska, which I grabbed for my own purposes, it being complimentary and all.



After my tour around the Rock County courthouse in Bassett, it was back onto Highway 20 for the drive home through O'Neill and then Norfolk. Since I had paid several previous visits to the Holt County district courthouse in O'Neill for hearings and depositions, and me wanting to get home before dark, I passed through O'Neill without making the stop. But just seeing the courthouse did remind me of a hearing that I had there one day long ago, again with Judge Cassel at the helm, in which the other attorney, a crazy coot by the name of George who drove a Mustang automobile and wore a ten-gallon cowboy hat, got so worked up in his argument for justice from my client, that his voice just kept getting louder and louder and louder until **WHAM!** --he slammed his palm against the counsel table and uttered some profanities in my general direction, such that I was fairly certain that he would receive a chewing-out by the judge. However, as I have since learned, crazy George is well-known in those parts for going from 0 degrees Celsius to boiling in a span of seconds, his vesuvian temper reportedly being regularly on display. So instead of holding George in contempt or at least demanding an apology, instead the judge nodded his head knowingly, and after George was finished, he turned to me and asked me if I had anything further to say. While tempted to fight fire with fire, I instead quietly if not meekly uttered that I had nothing further to say. That's probably one hearing that I wouldn't mind having a redo on, now that I'm all grown up.

## STUFF I LEARNED ON THURSDAY



On my drive to Hartington and the Cedar County Courthouse, I passed through Wayne, Nebraska, and learned that this lovely town was named for “Mad Anthony” Wayne, a revolutionary war general, and that Wayne State College was previously known as the *Nebraska Normal College*, and John G. Neihardt, later named as the state poet laureate, was one of the early students there.



I revisited the tiny community of Laurel, Nebraska, on this same courthouse drive, but I may never pass through it again after seeing a 2024 **Trump/DeSantis** sign prominently posted by one of its denizens. More than three years before our next presidential election, the thought of this is far too gruesome to bear.



According to Scott Voorhies of KFAB,<sup>12</sup> actress Demi Lovato believes vehemently that extraterrestrials should not be referred to as “aliens,” because this is a derogatory term.



Also according to Voorhies, Dave Chappelle has reportedly been roasted if not boycotted for saying something like, “*Gender is a thing.*” Seems harsh. And also, according to Voorhies, the Rolling Stones are no longer singing one of their classic songs, *Brown Sugar*, because it has been criticized recently as having racially offensive and sexually exploitive lyrics, even though Keith Richard reportedly came out and said that they were trying to make a point about the evils of such practices. Cancel culture strikes again!<sup>13</sup>



Just outside of Center, Nebraska, population 94, proud county seat of Knox County, is Brazil Creek. Just past Brazil Creek is a beautiful, very large brick barn with a huge sign on it which says, simply, *God’s Country*. Proud people, these inhabitants of Center.



It would have been nice to know that the only direct road from Center to Verdigre, Highway 84, was closed. No detour signs, no nothing, just closed. For repairs. Having now driven across miles and miles of Knox County gravel roads, take my word for it: This county is Rural, with a capital R.

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<sup>12</sup> Because my Tesla does not have access to AM radio--or if it does, I haven't figured out how to activate it--I haven't listened to KFAB for a while, but having borrowed Michele's car for my Northeast Nebraska trip, I was able to listen to two hours of the Scott Voorhies show which, although branded as deeply conservative, is pretty darned funny. He has a very dry wit.

<sup>13</sup> And I don't even really know how I feel about it. But they better not culture-cancel any of my favorite Jimmy Buffett ballads, and that's all I got to say about that!





The town of Verdigre, which is surrounded by natural beauty, calls itself the “Kolachi” capital of Nebraska, although I didn’t try one there. They do have a filling station downtown, if you want to call it downtown, which provides “full service only,” and they mean what they say. The Verdigrean who fueled my vehicle not only gassed it up, but he also cleaned the front windshield, which very much needed it. The last time I had full service at a gas station was either in Oregon or New Jersey, where their state laws forbid anyone other than a gas station attendant from filling up your vehicle.



It’s good that Linda doesn’t drive that much anymore, because if she had decided on a whim to visit her birth town of Bloomfield in recent times, she would have seen this house and this flag flapping in the wind:



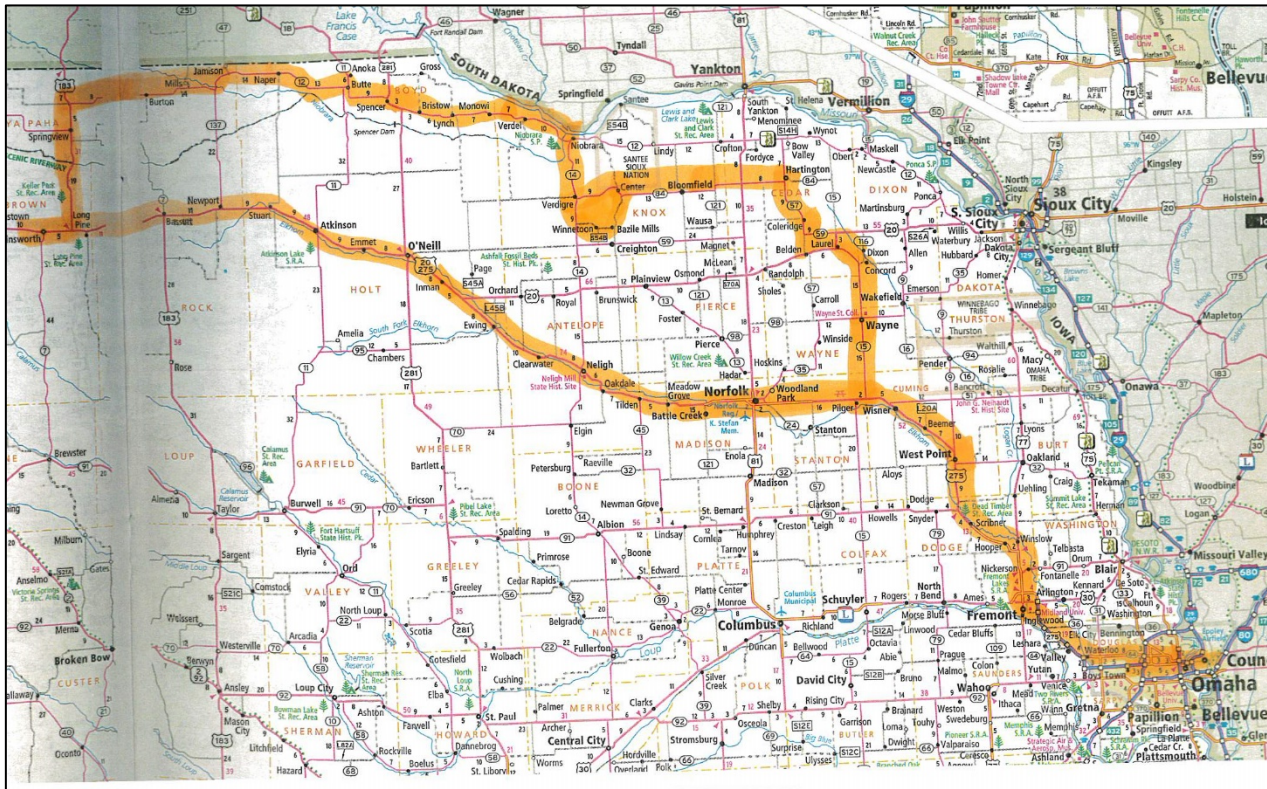
I’m pretty sure that she would either have disavowed her familial connection with the town, and/or driven her Expedition over the banner and through this red-necked nitwit’s front door.

### **IN THE END**

At the end of my eleven-hour day of driving and visiting courthouses, I ended up setting foot in one new county (Keya Paha), visiting and setting foot inside four new--to me--district courthouses (Cedar County in Hartington; Keya Paha County in Springview; Brown County in Ainsworth; and Rock County in Bassett) and revisiting two old acquaintances (Knox County Courthouse in Center and Boyd County District Courthouse in Butte), and in addition, saw many miles of breathtaking autumnal beauty along the way.<sup>14</sup> A truly terrific Thursday.

<sup>14</sup> And I didn’t have to respond to a single email the entire journey, which was some very sweet icing on the cake.

# DAVE'S DRIVE



\* \* \* \* \*



A Reno Tale<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> After learning that the game in Reno was COVID-kiboshed. (Omitted from our last edition.)

\* \* \* \* \*

That's it for this edition, fellas. Have a terrific weekend and **GO BIG RED!!**

Skipper