

# Almena man gets New Year surprise

(Continued from Page 1) received an unexpected phone call.

"At about 3:30 p.m. on Jan. 1, a lady called who wanted to talk to Linda," Mike said. "I told her Linda didn't live here and she hung up. Then about two hours later, that same woman called again and said she knew he told her Linda didn't live there, but she had been looking for a Linda and Mike Barrett for the last 18 years."

Mike told the woman that Linda was his ex-wife and he hadn't seen her for eight years. But I'm Mike, he said.

"She let out a big sigh and said 'thank God that I found you'," he said.

The woman said her name was Cindy Baker and asked if Mike remembered her. They had dated in junior high and high school. After exchanging pleasantries and catching up on old times, she told Mike that the reason she called was to not only find him, but to tell him that two days before, she was Googling him and came across the name of a lady who was also Googling a Michael R. Barrett. Cindy emailed the woman, who's name is Bonnie, to exchange information to see if they were looking for the same Michael R. Barrett. It turns out they were.

After telling Mike this, she asked if she could give Bonnie his phone number and said that Bonnie would explain why she was looking for him. Mike said yes.

A few minutes after hanging up with Cindy, the phone rang again, he said. It was Bonnie.

"When I answered the phone and said, yes, I was Michael R. Barrett, she said, 'You don't know me, but you're fixin' to know me real well,'" said Mike. "And then she said, 'I am your sister.'"

Mike said he told her no, she wasn't. His sister is named Suzie and she lives in Washington State, he said.

"She said, 'no, you don't understand, I'm your blood sister,' and that's when the tears started," Mike said.

She knew all about him, he said. She knew who his adoptive parents were, that he went to Columbine High School and where he



Mike Barrett's birth mother has this clock hanging in her room at the nursing home where she lives in Canada. It shows each of the 12 kids who were born in Canada in the order they were born with a picture of a heart where Mike should be. Now that his family has found him, his picture will be added when he visits them in February.

— Photo courtesy of Mike and Tina Barrett

had lived. Most of this information came from Cindy and when Bonnie heard it, she said that was the closest she had been to Mike in the last 20 years. Bonnie had been looking for over 25 years, Mike said.

"When she was telling me all this stuff about myself, that's what made me start to think that I had family out there," he said. "Then she proceeded to tell me that she is the youngest of four sisters. I told her I hope there's a brother in there somewhere, because I can't handle four women at one time. She asked if I was sitting down and when I said yes, she said, 'actually, you have nine brothers.' I just about fainted."

As it turns out, Mike's father had 14 children with Mike being fifth from the bottom. He is the oldest of the three children his father had with his mother. Mike's father moved from Italy to Canada, where he met Mike's mother. She cleaned house for him. They were never married, but became intimate and the result of that was Mike. Because Mike's father was already married in Italy, Mike's mother's family, who were strict Catholics, told her she either had to abort the child or give it up for adoption.

Mike said while he was in the orphanage, his father went back to Italy, then later went back to Canada and reconciled with his mother. They had two more children, Bonnie and John. Then, his father moved back to Italy, which is where he died.

Tuck, he said, is his mother's maiden name. If he wouldn't have been put in the orphanage, he said his last name would have been Volterra, which is the last name that Bonnie and John have.

"That's why I couldn't find anything on the Internet," said Tina. "I was looking for Michael Barrett and he was born John Tuck. We didn't know; all of his papers — birth certificate, citizenship papers — said Michael Barrett."

The Barretts were completely overwhelmed. Five minutes after Bonnie hung up, another sibling called and five minutes after they hung up, another one called.

"I was on the phone for probably seven hours," he said.

Mike said he found out that his mother's name was Merial Clark and that she was 90 years old and still alive. His siblings are Albert, 67, who died a year and a half ago; Lil, 66; Sandra, 65; Doug, 61; Carol, 60, who

was also adopted and was found by the family about a year and a half ago; Rick, 58; Ron, 56; Bob, 55; Brian, 53; Mike, 50; Bonnie, 49; John, 49, who is eight months younger than Bonnie; and two brothers, Natale and Nicola, who were born in Italy.

He said he has talked to every one of his Canadian siblings except Lil, Sandra, Doug and Rick, but hopes to meet them when he and Tina go to Canada in February.

At first, Tina said Mike was nervous about telling his sister and other family about finding his birth family. But, Suzie and all of the cousins were ecstatic, she said.

"That's the family he grew up with," she said. "And they are all really happy for him."

Mike couldn't tell his parents, because both had since died. His father, Harold, died in 1989 and his mother, Dolores, died in 2006.

Since New Year's Day, Mike said he has talked to Bonnie just about every day and they have e-mailed each other pictures.

"It was seeing the pictures that really brought it home for me," he said. "It made it real, seeing how much I look like my dad."

# New Year's 'Safe ride' program goes well

(Continued from Page 1) 10-week time extension. Both of the change orders would be cosmetic only and were not required. The council did not take any action on the change orders.

• Discussed ATV inspection stickers. Councilman Ron Briery asked if someone bought an ATV tag and then traded the ATV in for a new one, would the tag transfer to the new ATV or would they have to have a new inspection done and pay another \$25 fee. Mrs. Griffiths said the new ATV would have to be inspected and the \$25 fee paid.

• Adopted Resolution 1-2008, waiving the annual requirement of generally accepted accounting

principals and fixed asset accounting for the calendar year ending Dec. 31, 2008.

• Congratulated Officers Adam Wahlmeier, Curtis Black and Larry Land on completing the 14-week training course at the police academy. Officer Hartwell gave the three officers plaques to commend them for completing the



Wahlmeier



Land



Black

necessary training. Officer Wahlmeier graduated June 1; Officer Black graduated Oct. 12; and Officer Land graduated Dec. 21.

• Discussed televising the council meetings. Mr. Briery said a Norton resident asked him to pass on a request to televise the meetings. No action was taken.

# Winter can be used to find poor drainage areas

MANHATTAN, Kan. - A sizeable ice or snow melt can provide clear evidence of landscape and garden areas that don't drain well.

"Of course, you won't be able to do anything about those areas until the ground thaws. But, identifying the places that drain poorly or slowly can be a lot easier now than in a spring downpour," said Ward Upham, Master Gardener coordinator for Kansas State University Research and Extension.

Poor drainage can result from an array of factors - clay content, hardpan, slope and the like. Despite the cause, however, it always leads to the same thing: poor oxygen levels in the soil.

"Plants suffer when moisture fills the tiny cavities where well-drained soil would have air. Roots may just drown, but often they develop diseases that bring a more lingering kind of death," Upham said.

Drainage is the biggest problem in yards that don't provide suitable outlets for unabsorbed rain or irrigation. Lack of outlets can damage more than plants if

excess water only drains toward the house.

"Solving that kind of situation can be a massive undertaking. Generally, it requires hiring a professional and plunking down hard cash or doing lots of homework and investing hard labor," he said.

If improving the soil is all that's needed, however, several approaches are possible:

• Add good topsoil so water can't just sit. Till or spade, mixing it with the underlying soil.

• Add a 2-inch layer of organic matter (e.g., peat moss, compost) and till or spade it in deeply.

• For beds that grow annuals each year, mow fall's dead leaves and garden refuse. Layer about 4 inches of the "chipped" output on the soil and incorporate deeply, so the debris can compost over winter.

"Any additives will improve drainage, but don't skip mixing them into the existing soil. Roots don't like to cross the kinds of barriers created by one type of soil sitting on top of another," Upham said.

# Leftover garden seeds can be used

La CROSSE, Kan. - Seed catalogs and January usually arrive together.

That fact can provide real mental relief for gardeners trapped indoors by winter weather. Catalogs offer a bounty of colorful options to visualize, weigh and perhaps order for 2008's growing season.

"Obvious drooling is rarely a related result - at least, for most of us. But, we can get so involved in planning that we forget to check the viability of last year's leftover seeds before we start ordering new ones," said David Coltrain, agriculture and natural resources agent with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

Average U.S. garden size is shrinking even more rapidly than average yard size, he said. So, seed packets may contain a more generous supply than some plots

or beds can handle in a single year.

"Plus, sometimes you just buy more seed than you can get around to planting," Coltrain said.

Fortunately, except for members of the carrot family, many vegetable and flower seeds can remain viable for up to three or more years. In general, their ideal storage is somewhere cool, dark and dry. As a result, leftovers stored in a garage or basement may last quite a while.

"New seeds you buy this spring should have at least an 85 percent germination rate," Coltrain said. "But, if you liked the results you got from last year's seeds and about 50 percent of their leftovers will still sprout now, you can get about the same results, planting the old seeds twice as thick as usual."

He listed these steps for testing

seed viability:

1. Wet a paper towel, fold it and place about 10 seeds between the layers.

2. Put the towel-covered seeds in a dish. Place the dish in a warm location - about 80 degrees.

3. Keep the towel moist, and regularly check the seeds for germination. Large seeds should sprout in about a week and small seeds in two weeks.

"If this test results in less than a 50 percent germination rate, don't expect satisfactory results from planting leftovers this year," Coltrain advised. "Instead, get out your catalogs again."

The Norton Telegram...  
News you need!

## LAND AUCTION

**Tuesday, January 29 at 10 AM**  
National Guard Armory, Norton, Kansas

**Large Pasture-Cropland-Hunting!**

1,200+ Acres

**Norton County, Kansas**

- Land is located in southeast Norton County near Densmore.
- Will be offered in four tracts and the total for bidding.
- Sections 7, 8, and 17 of T5 and R21.
- Combination of cropland, pasture and hunting habitat.
- Owner will reserve minerals for 20 years.
- 10% down day of auction.
- Closing 30+/- days from auction.

**Sellers:**  
Archer Family Trust

**For Property Details Contact:**  
**Monty Smith, Agent**  
Hays, Kansas  
Phone: (785) 650-0599  
msmith@farmersnational.com

**www.farmersnational.com**  
Farm Management • Real Estate Sales • Appraisal • Insurance  
Consultation • Oil & Gas Management • Conservation & Recreation

NewsLine: 877-3361

## Make Your Reservations today for the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual Meeting & Free Supper of the Norton County Conservation District

Saturday, January 19

Beginning at 6:30 p.m.  
American Legion Hall, Norton

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER COURTESY OF NORTON COUNTY BANKERS ASSOCIATION

AGENDA: Annual Business Meeting and Election of 2 Supervisors

So we may accommodate everyone, we must have reservations by **Wednesday, January 16, 2008**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL RESERVATION TO:  
**Norton Soil Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 365, Norton, KS 67654, or Call 877-2623

Please — Reservation Necessary for Supper

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

## Solomon Valley Rural Fire District No. 3

Monday, Jan. 14, 2008

7:00 P.M. at the Fire Station in Lenora, Kansas