

# Open Season

By  
Cynthia  
Haynes



TUNISIA, NORTH AFRICA — The mullah woke me with his early morning call to prayer. It must be about 5 a.m. I'm glad I'm not a Muslim.

We're in Kairouan, the religious heart of the country. In 670 A.D., the city was the capital of the area because it was on an important caravan route.

Today, it is a city of mosques, shrines and history.

We visited the Great Mosque, first built in 703 and rebuilt or renovated in 774, 1025, 1294, 1618 and, finally, 1970 for the city's 1,300 birthday.

Like mosques throughout the world, it is built around an open courtyard with a minaret or tower at one end. Tunisian pilgrims heading for Mecca leave on their journey from this courtyard. Girls present their first hand-made carpets as gifts to the mosque and hundreds of these small rugs cover the courtyard for marriage-contract ceremonies.

This also is where boys come to be circumcised when they are 5 or 6. A photo of youngsters at this ceremony shows what looks like a kindergarten class of scrubbed young faces in little suits, excited and anxiously awaiting their rite of passage.

The mosque, while one of the holiest places for Tunisia's Moslem community, is built on an early Christian site and both crosses and stars of David can be found on the columns and walls, whose stone was taken from Roman and Byzantine ruins.

The six women of our party — two Moslem, three Christian and one Jewish — borrow scarves to cover our heads to go into the prayer room. Inside, men and women, facing east, stood or knelt in prayer while others like us gawked at the huge columns, rugs, chandeliers and fancy wood and plaster work and took each other's pictures.

After the mosque, we visited the shrine of Abu Jama el-Balawi, known as the Prophet's barber. The faithful believe that three hairs from Muhammad's beard are interred in the green-draped tomb with his friend and barber.

The shrine is set up like a small

mosque, with a central open court surrounded by rooms for prayer, teaching and storage.

On entering the shrine, an attendant sprinkled us with orange water to purify us.

I felt, as I had in the great mosque, that we were in a holy place and I said a prayer to the Father, Yahweh, Allah — the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rebecca, Tunisia and America — to bring understanding and brotherhood to our related but different beliefs.

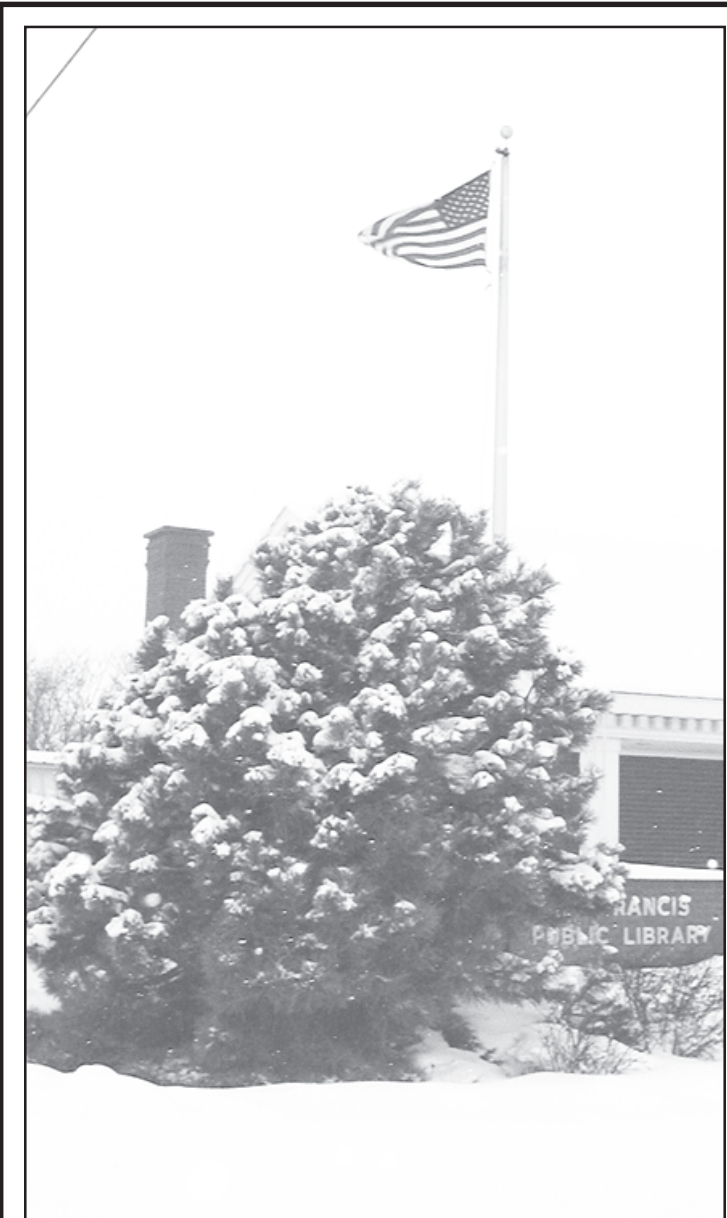
Was this experience so much different than my mother putting a napkin on my head when it was time for Mass and I had forgotten my hat?

What about all those visitors to St. Peter's in Rome? Most of them are there to gawk and take pictures.

And, sometimes, some say a little prayer.

I believe in angels and saints, in heaven and hell and in God and the devil. I made my first communion when I was in the second grade and my class looked a lot like that picture of young boys, waiting to become part of their religious community.

I seem to find more similarities than differences in my experience at mosque and shrine. Still, when that mullah calls the faithful at 5 a.m., I burrow deeper under the covers and my prayer is to thank God that he isn't calling me.



NEW SNOW fallen the past week has left many beautiful scenes throughout the county.

Herald staff photo by Karen Krien



# First Baby Contest

We're celebrating the first special delivery of the Year 2007! The winning baby and parents will receive these bundles of gifts, courtesy of these businesses.



**Parents Rules:**

1. The parents must have lived in Cheyenne County for at least one month.
2. The Saint Francis Herald office must be notified as quickly as possible after the birth. The Herald's number is 785-332-3162.
3. A 60-day limit following the baby's birth is required for taking advantage of these outstanding gifts & services.

## \$25 Gift Certificate



785-332-2064  
120 E. Washington  
St. Francis

The first baby of the year will also received this special quilt!



Prairie Piecemaker Quilt Guild  
Goodland

## Baby Photo Album or Picture Frame



### SCHULTZ'S LTD.

785-332-2833  
114 W. Washington ~ St. Francis



## Spinal Adjustment for Mommy & Baby plus ... a tube of Biofreeze

### POLING Chiropractic & Family Health Center

785-332-3105  
709 S. Benton ~ St. Francis

## \$50 Savings Bond



"Where The Employees Are The Owners"  
Bird City, Colby, Goodland, Kirk, Oberlin, Quinter, Sharon Springs & ST. FRANCIS

## \$50 SAVINGS BOND



### BANKWEST OF KANSAS

785-332-3333  
121 Washington St. Francis  
Other Locations Colby • Goodland • Idalia, CO

## FREE FULL Car Wash!



### ST. FRANCIS EQUITY

785-332-2421  
105 S. River ~ St. Francis

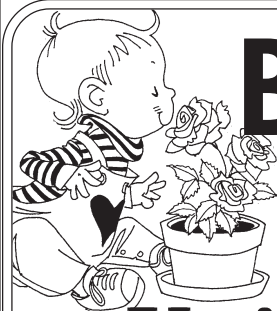


## Baby Gift

### OWENS True Value

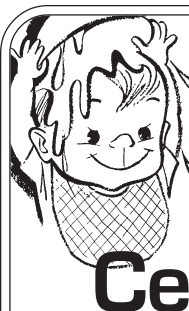
Help Is Just Around The Corner.  
785-332-2411  
113 E. Washington ~ St. Francis

## Baby Gift Krien Pharmacy



785-332-2177  
105 W. Washington ~ St. Francis

## \$25 Gift Certificate Hilltop General Store



Open 7 Days a Week  
7 a.m.-7 p.m.  
785-332-2277  
Hwy. 36 & Benton Street ~ St. Francis

## Two Bottles of Champagne Burr Retail Liquor



785-332-2172  
Hwy. 36 ~ St. Francis

## FREE Subscription to the: The Saint Francis Herald or Bird City Times



785-332-3162  
310 W. Washington ~ St. Francis

# Don't Miss this Unbelievable SPECIAL OFFER!

FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY!

Jan. 8 until Feb. 8, place a **FULL PAGE** advertisement in the *Country Advocate* and *The Saint Francis Herald* or *Bird City Times* **pay less than one-half the full price ....**

plus we'll throw in **COLOR** for 1/2 price too!

Call us a call today! 785-332-3162!

**The Country Advocate**

**The Saint Francis Herald**  
*Bird City Times*

310 W. Washington ~ St. Francis, KS

