

## THE NEWSPAPER NOBODY DEPENDS ON



MELBOURNE, IOWA

# A Rural Route Reader



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PRICE: IS RIGHT

## OVERZEALOUS PARENTS BLAME MISTREATMENT OF CHILDREN ON “SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS”

If you are looking for a seasonal letter filled with pastoral images and cute stories of baby farm animals, you have picked the wrong family.

As you will see (if you are brave enough to read further) this family does not offer such rural platitudes. (I do recommend you pick up the next letter in your holiday mail and gaze upon the well-dressed, happy people and words therein and abandon this one without ado.)

This page chronicles the three unfortunate children coming out of the

Barnes and Runquist union.

If a small sadistic part of you is tempted by reading and viewing children denied the basic building blocks of life—read on. These children do not have a single game boy or X-box, and the parents even limit the TV (no cable, only 3.5 channels at that) and computer to a paltry 30 minutes a day.

The children manage a treacherous schedule of dishwashing, egg gathering, sheep feeding, and other unmentionable jobs.



A 96 degree day is not too hot to go out into the garden to pick green beans—especially if you’ve just spent the last week on vacation.

I tell them, the picking is the easy part—now it’s time to snap the ends and get the canner ready!



There’s no use for a 44 year old man to scramble 25 feet up a scaffolding when there are able-bodied children ready to work for their supper and winter clothing.



It doesn’t matter if it is early March and cold enough to wear your winter jacket and hood to protect you from the March gales.

The chicken waterers need to be washed, as washed now! The children felt fortunate to have leftover hot water for a warm bath after the washing was over.



Claire, equipped with miner’s flashlight around her head, draped in cobwebs and covered in dust, safely returns from the crawl space where she successfully pulled the ethernet cable to network home PCs.



Martin pleads to come in before splitting the walnut logs. After he cut them all up, he hoped it might be time for a snack before splitting and stacking the rest of the wood.

## POSTLUDE

Gentle reader, the next time you gaze upon the rolling countryside and see the old barn and cozy old farmhouse and yearn for a simpler life that it promises, think of the trials these children endure. The unspeakable tasks that they perform to survive.

To make it worse, the parents commonly leave the children at the end of the long, cold, winter and leave for the south, leaving them in the hands of wicked G’ma Jo, until their return starts the work all over again.