



Erik Unger/DN

Lincoln wine makers Bob Webb and his wife, Joan (not pictured), have won many ribbons for their homemade wines.

Retirees keep busy making wine

PEOPLE Profile Couple fills days preparing latest county fair entry

By Mark Baldridge
Senior Editor

Bob and Joan Webb are retired but they try to keep busy. They spend their time making 80 to 90 gallons of wine a year.

"You can't sell any, of course," Joan said, "but the government allows you to make 100 gallons per person per household, so we could make as much as 200 gallons if we wanted."

Attending meetings of the Lincoln Wine Guild, an organization of some 22 members, the last Saturday of every month for the past 12 years has filled up some of their free time, too. And every year they carry home a ribbon or two from the Nebraska or Iowa state fairs.

"Our best wine is our sparkling cranberry, if I say so myself," Joan said.

"You take 25 pounds of raw cranberries, grind them up and put them in your 10-gallon crock," she said. "You get a gallon of wine for every 4 pounds of fruit, depending. You add sugar till you get the right balance, about 20 pounds.

"When the wine is finally done you can sparkle it by adding liquid sugar — about a tablespoon per bottle — and champagne yeast and capping it right away. It'll be done in another six weeks or so."

Patience is a definite advantage in wine making, said Joan, as a batch of wine may take a year or even longer to be ready.

But there is no limit to the possibilities of wine making once one gets started. The possible kinds of wine are astounding.

"We've had people make tomato or onion or potato wine," she said, "though I can't say they were very good."

This year, the Webbs took a boysenberry and a country wine blend to the fair, and in their basement sits a batch of pineapple wine, patiently fermenting.

They make grape wine, too, and refer to one possible source for locally grown grapes, the Rock Bluff Vineyard owned by Jim Danielson.

Danielson, an acquisition specialist for the Great Plains Network and an assistant professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said he would like to make his vineyard a paying proposition, although that's a few years away yet.

In the meantime, he sells to wine makers from all over.

"There are two kinds of farmers in

this business," he said, "grape growers and wine growers. I'm a wine grower."

This means that his grapes are grown specifically for wine production.

Danielson said he made his own wine and said, "It's very easy to make wine. It's hard to make good wine."

"Wine occurs in nature," he said. "The art of wine making occurs when a person gets control over nature."

The most important thing in making a good wine, Danielson said, is cleanliness.

"Beer making and wine making are not that far apart," he said. "They both take cleanliness and care."

When a beer goes bad, it always has the same cause, he said.

"The only reason a home beer might not taste good is that, somewhere along the line, it got a bacterial contamination," he said. "Otherwise it's almost impossible to make a bad beer. It's the same with wine."

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Bredenberg's 'Dream Vessel' satisfies with familiar theme



"The Dream Vessel"
Jeff Bredenberg
Avon/Nova Science Fiction

By Sam Kepfield
Staff Reporter

More post-holocaust prose is to be found in Jeff Bredenberg's "The Dream Vessel."

This time it is of a more conventional sort: The world is destroyed by nuclear bombs, and the remnants of America are thrown back to the 1750s.

The story reads much like a historical novel with plenty of familiar themes. It is almost like a cross between Robert Heinlein and Herman Melville. Much of the action takes place on old-fashioned sailing ships and concerns unsavory characters thereon.

The era to be copied is somewhat deliberate, though, because "The Dream Vessel" is the second book in a series that deals with a future America just out from under the shackles of a ruthless dictator, the Monitor.

"The Dream Vessel" tells of efforts to build a ship big and fast enough to reach Europe where, it is hoped, help for a struggling civilization will be found.

Throw in a few Caribbean pirates, a voodoo leader and slave traders, and you've got a heady mixture.

The only grievance is that the action gets a little choppy toward the end. It is almost as if Bredenberg were writing with a word limitation, and during the last 50 pages he discovered he was running quickly out of room, having splurged verbally for the first 175 pages.

Still, it is a satisfying story of a familiar theme, and the next installments hopefully will improve with experience.

Kansas wraps up tour with non-stop show

concert REVIEW Group still rocks after 18 years

By Jill O'Brien
Senior Reporter

Wrapping up its "Seat of the Pants Tour," the 18-year-old band Kansas, far from over-the-hill, rocked the Beatrice Get-Away club Thursday night.

The cast of Kansas still boasts three original members: Rich Williams, the guitarist of mystical leads; smooth-cooking drummer Phil Ehart; and prancing vocalist Steve Walsh.

Walsh, 41, easily could have been mistaken for a Midwestern high school student on stage. He's living proof that rock 'n' roll is the elixir of youth.

Walsh treated the audience to a non-stop, no-slow show with energetic rock aerobics as he bounced about as if the stage floor was a trampoline.

Dividing his time dashing back and forth between keyboards and mi-

crophone, Walsh collided at one point with electric violinist, David Ragsdale, nearly knocking Ragsdale down.

By the end of the 90-minute set, the dampened strands of Walsh's long hair hung out under his baseball cap like the fringe on his vest, and his voice had grown hoarse from hitting so many high notes.

Besides the original members, the music of Kansas is characterized by the intense instrumentals of keyboardist Greg Robert, bassist/backup singer Billy Greer and violinist/guitarist Ragsdale.

Ragsdale dazzled the audience when he appeared in white tuxedo coat tails, white bicycle shorts and high-top tennis shoes — his outfit accessorized by huge grins and an electric violin tucked under his chin.

Backstage, Ragsdale said he had been with Kansas only a little more than 1 1/2 years.

His violin — black with a streamlined body unlike the traditional hour-glass shape — is a five-string Steinberger and powered by a nine-volt battery, he said.

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Courtesy of Kansas

Legendary rock group Kansas is Richard Williams, David Ragsdale, Billy Greer, Steve Walsh, Phil Ehart and Greg Robert.