

From the Heartland

By Allan Burke, Emmons County Record

Is it fall or winter? This week's forecast adds to the confusion. Daytime highs will be between a chilly 32 and 46 degrees while nighttime lows will vary from a frigid 15 to 32 degrees. Adding to the argument that winter has started, snow showers are predicted for Friday. There were also flakes in the air on Monday. Get out the woollies.

The annual shuffle

My bride and I spent most of the weekend preparing for the onslaught of winter, and it appears we did the right thing since it felt like winter on Monday.

Leah harvested her carrots, cleaned up the garden and used electric hedge trimmers to cut down the plants around the house, including a big row of Autumn Splendor which was still looking good until the hard frost episodes last week. She also moved planters to the back of the house, and some pots went into the back shed.

My task was mucking out the shed, which I did not clean last year. I dragged all of the big stuff out of the shed and moved the snow blower to the garage. Once I could get into the shed, I wired up an old vacuum and cleaned the place. Remarkably, I suspended my hoarding tendencies long enough to throw away several things: a bag of insulation, the box our edger came in and a bunch of smaller and equally worthless items too numerous to mention.

The shed was such a mess that I had to sweep it before firing up the vacuum. The overhead door had to be open since the building has no electricity. The wind was from exactly the right direction to blow leaves into the shed. I swept up invading leaves at

least 367 times.

There was some major rearranging done before it was time to move the patio table, six chairs and the gas grill to the shed. Miraculously, everything fit, and there was even about one cubic foot of space left over. Of course, there may be an avalanche next spring when the overhead door is rolled up.

Grandbaby sitting

While Alex is away at National Guard sergeant training in Utah, Leah and I will be helping Margaret with baby-sitting for Baby Jade in Grand Forks.

Leah will be there this week (after finishing the paper, billing and payroll) through Friday, and I am tentatively scheduled to do the honors next week. Thanks to technology, I will be able to connect to the server at the office and do some work when Jade is napping, although our granddaughter is not a big fan of naps.

When Margaret called and mentioned the need for baby-sitters, we tried not to blurt out, "Yes! We'll pack the car and leave today."

There was some concern about my ability to change diapers, and I explained that, not only can I change a diaper, we used cloth diapers and rinsed them in the toilet. Using store-bought diapers is like going from a threshing machine to a John Deere tractor with GPS.

Fifty years of excellence

Strasburg native Michael Miller was honored Friday for his 50 years of service at North Dakota State University where he developed and directs the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Zachary Vietz, our intern from last summer who did

our World War I special section, will be doing a story on Michael, along with photos from the Friday reception.

I first learned about the Germans from Russia from the late president of the National Farmers Union, Tony Dechant. Tony grew up in a part of Kansas where some of the Germans from Russia immigrated. Having visited the Dakotas many times, he told me about south central North Dakota and north central South Dakota when we were visiting about the move to Selby, S.D., that Leah and I were about to make 30 years ago.

No sooner had we started publishing three weekly papers in South Dakota than Java, S.D., native Clarence Bauman of Bismarck, then president of the International Germans from Russia Heritage Society, introduced me to Michael.

Speakers at the reception, which included a visit by North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, praised Michael's accomplishments and his dedication, persistence, passion and vision.

Not only has Michael gained national recognition for his fine work, he is regarded as an international authority on the Germans from Russia. He played a key role in the effort led by District 28 legislators Sen. Robert Erbele, Rep. Michael Brandenburg and the late Rep. William Kretschmar in the state's purchase of the Welk Homestead.

Michael has given back much to his home town and county, to the state and to the Germans from Russia community around the world. It is an honor to count his as a friend. Congratulations Michael!