Forget the *Times*; weekly papers keep the finger on America's pulse

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Texas teen-ager getting ready for the Junior Livestock Show had some thoughts about petulant porkers.

"Raising a pig is good fun, but how much fun depends on the mood of the pig," Jenny Haley told the *Anvil Herald* of Hondo, Texas.

A great-grandmother in West Virginia, egged on by a granddaughter-in-law, finally got around to earning a high school diploma.

"I dreaded math the most," Dorothy Johns, 71, of Gay, W.Va., told the *Ravenswood (W.Va.) News*.

When the 91-year-old founder of an egg and poultry company in Electra, Texas, died, his obituary in the *San Saba (Texas) News* matter-of-factly noted that he was born in Indian Territory and as a child was brought across the Red River in a covered wagon.

In the *Bonners Ferry Herald*, which has served Boundary County, Idaho, since 1891, columnist Grace Bauman offered this observation: "If you think you're getting too much government, just be thankful you're not getting as much as you're paying for."

So it goes in the American countryside. While Washington concerned itself with the insolvency of the S&Ls and the sobriety of John Tower, the topic of the Tri-State Cow-Calf Symposium at Haigler, Neb. was closer to home — "Producing the Cow of the Future Today."

There are things to learn about the state of the nation from America's 7,498 weeklies that you won't find in the Congressional Record.

Sure, there's some bad news:

The taxpayers of Clinton County, Mo., may be stuck with the $20,000 medical bill resulting from the amputation of both legs of a suspect who escaped from the county jail and suffered severe frostbite while at large, says the *Lawson (Mo.) Review*.

The *Osawatomie (Kan.) Graphic* worries that Osawatomie's reputation as a railroad town may be slipping; the Union Pacific is thinking about routing even fewer trains through town.

Drugs worry the countryside, as they do the big cities. Schools get consolidated, young people leave, industries close. The big drought of 1988 still takes its toll: still not enough rain in many places, not enough snow cover for the winter wheat.

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There are things to learn about the state of the nation from America's 7,498 weeklies that you won't find in the Congressional Record. . . the weeklies report the news that tells you the heart of America is still ticking. Important news, because, after all, doesn't everyone come from a small town, or think he did, or wish he had?

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In that case, here's some of the news from back home:

Wallace Wyatt Jr. promised that if he were elected probate judge of St. Clair County, Ala., he would eat a super-hot barbecue sandwich at Smitty's Barb-B-Que in Odenville, La. He was, so he did. "He said he wouldn't do it again for $500, and it wasn't something he'd wish on anyone, even a Republican," said the *St. Clair News-Aegis*.

The Garden Club of Stamford, Texas, celebrated the 100th anniversary of Texas Arbor Day by planting two pecan trees on the west side of Post Office Square as a memorial to A.C. Denson, longtime member of the club "who, had she lived another month, would also have been 100 years old," the *Stamford American said*.

Sheriff's Deputy Ernie Booth was assigned as the law enforcement officer for Millard, Juab and Beaver Counties of Utah's West Desert. He has what Millard County Sheriff Ed Phillips called the largest beat in the United States — 3,000 square miles. Almost triple the size of Rhode Island, it has a population of 500 to 600 people. Booth told the *Millard County Chronicle Progress*: "Basically I'm pretty well qualified. I can ride a horse dang near anywhere. I rodeo a lot. I still ride bulls occasionally and I've team-roped. I know cattle."

The Area Chamber of Commerce of Yale, Mich., decided to hold a festival in July honoring Yale's most famous product, bologna. Among the activities will be a pet parade, a dog show and the selection of a King and Queen of Bologna, the *Yale Expositor reported*.

From the *Bowdon (Ga.) Bulletin*: "At Bowdon Elementary School, teacher Sylvia Caldwell asked her seventh-graders why Friday was such an important day to all Americans. Though it was also Inauguration Day, and that was the answer she was looking for, student Andy Boatright quickly responded: "It's Carl Rooks Day." He was right. Carl Rooks retired as police chief. In an interview with the *Bulletin*, Rooks said that in 24 years in law enforcement, he had never had to shoot anyone.

The *Eagle Bulletin* of Fayetteville, N.Y., characterized a recent Friday this way: "That was the kind of day you could separate the feeble defrosters from the strong."

The news in the resort town of Whitefish, Mont., was made by Police Chief Dave Dolson, who told the city council Whitefish was becoming the drug capital of northwest Montana. Out-of-town newspapers picked up the story and local business people were irked, the *Whitefish Pilot* said. Bar owners were especially angry because of Dolson's reference to "people inhaling lines of cocaine off the bars and card tables in our town."

The *Friend (Neb.) Sentinel*, reported the night visit of an opossum to the porch of Marie French of Chestnut Street. She took some photographs to prove it and the Sentinel published two of them.

In his column in the *Waupun (Wis.) Leaders News*, public librarian Tom Green noted that 6,316 borrowers checked out 108,549 items in 1988. Fines totaling $3,108.80 were turned over to the city.

The Manchester-Coffee County Beautification Association of Tennessee established a Litter Hotline for citizens to report the license numbers of people who toss trash from their vehicles. People who are turned in get a warning letter and a litter bag in the mail, the *Tullahoma (Tenn.) News* reported.

In a letter to the editor of the *Horton (Kan.) Headlight*, Donna Hoffman protested a proposal discussed by the commissioners to kill stray cats. She wrote that cats help control the mice and rat population. "Imagine what it would be like with no cats to catch and kill these rodents! What's next? A rat ordinance?"

The conditions of the restrooms at Duran Junior High came up at a meeting of the Pell City Board of Education in Alabama. The problems — overcrowding, a lack of privacy and the urinals in the boys' room were so high the boys couldn't use them.

One angry father said he understood that if a boy was tardy because he had to wait to use the restroom he might get a paddling when he finally reached class.

The *St. Clair News-Aegis* quoted the father: "I'll tell you this, if my child comes home and says he got a paddling because he was held up in the bathroom, I'm going to come here and see some folks."

Impressionist art incongruous in isolated Egyptian museum

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Less than six months ago, a picture of a dark vase holding blooms of orange, yellow and red catapulted a small museum on an island in the Nile from obscurity to fame.

It was an authentic Van Gogh called "Flowers," its legitimacy certified by two Paris-based art experts imported to disprove gossip that a fake had been substituted in the 1970s by thieves who held the canvas for months.

They also verified the authenticity of most of the 207 other paintings hanging in the Mohammed Mahmoud Khalil Museum, a collection so obscure it was considered unworthy of listing in most guidebooks.

Local journalists gleefully fixed the worth of the collection, which was willed to the Egyptian government in 1960 by the widow of the Francophile millionaire parliamentarian who had amassed it.

Based mainly on the 1 foot-by-2 foot canvas bearing the heavy touch of Dutch-born Vincent Van Gogh — the art world's hottest painter — bloated estimates ranged as high as $20 billion.

Relieved, Culture Minister Farouk Hosni predicted that Egypt would become known for its "rich collection of impressionist artworks as well as for its pharaonic past."

Not so. Fame was fleeting, and the Khalil, a forgotten and bypassed beauty spot on Zamalek, a residential island opposite downtown Cairo, remains forgotten.

"In winter months we have 40 visitors each day, sometimes more, sometimes less," said Ahmed Samy, the museum's dedicated curator.

"In the summer we get as few as two visitors a day."

Samy is caretaker to a "who's who" of the art world, interspersed with anonymous lacy carved wooden screens, Islamic tiles, hanging brass lamps, walls etched with slender calligraphy and a gurgling center fountain in the foyer.

"Flowers" hangs slightly off-center in the far right corner of an end gallery.

To its right is a spring scene in green by Auguste Renoir, to its left a soothing blue river impression by Claude Monet.

A small version of Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker," sculpted by the master himself and thought to be a model for the statue in the Louvre in Paris, sits on a pedestal in front of the Van Gogh.

In a room through a door to the Van Gogh's left, hangs an eye-catching Gaugin among 12 masterpieces sharing simple white walls.

Samy said there's been debate whether impressionist art belongs in such a setting. To the Western eye, the sedate landscapes and parasoled ladies clash with the Islamic touches that weave in and out of the museum's five main galleries and second-story catwalk.

Naval Academy's private dairy farm provides 4500 middies with milk daily

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Almost 80 years after a typhoid outbreak made officials wary of the local milk supply, the U.S. Naval Academy is still running its own dairy to put milk on the midshipmen's tables.

The cows don't graze on this picture-book campus by the Severn River, but down the road a few miles is the 865-acre U.S. Naval Academy Farm, which they share with Bill the Goat, the middies' long-horned mascot.

The fresh, rich milk they produce is much in evidence in King Hall, the cavernous wardroom, or dining hall, where the entire 4,500-member brigade takes its meals. They empty nearly 2,500 of the blue and gold half-gallon cartons daily.

But there haven't been any typhoid epidemics in trendy Annapolis lately, so why is the academy still milking its own cows?

"I guess tradition," says Todd Dander, 21, a second classman from Dallas. "That's what everything is around here — tradition."

Several others speculated that it was cheaper for the academy to get its milk from the source, bypassing the middleman.

But the civilians who run the $950,000-a-year farm, where they milk 175 to 250 Holsteins and raise 250 calves, don't claim to be underpricing the competition. They acknowledge the staff of 16 is larger than typically found on a dairy farm of similar size, but they insist that they are only milking cows, not taxpayers.

The dairy is self-sufficient, relying on sales to the Midshipmen's Mess, not federal appropriations, says R.H. "Pete" Peterson, who has run the farm since 1982, first as a Navy lieutenant commander and, since retiring in 1984, as the civilian farm manager.

He bristles at any suggestion the naval dairy is a white elephant or, as a recent newspaper headline suggested, a prime candidate "for the budget ax."

And, like many great events in naval warfare, academy officials point out that this battle has been fought before — and the middies' dairy won a decisive engagement.

The battle erupted in 1966 when the Department of Defense, faced with complaints from Maryland and Virginia milk producers, suggested shutting the dairy and selling the farm.

But the House Armed Services Committee rose to the defense of the middies' milk supply, and determined that if the farm were sold, the money would revert not to the U.S. Treasury, but to the Midshipmen's store fund, which lent $25,000 to start the dairy in Annapolis in 1911. Two years later, Congress lent $155,000 to buy the property in Gambrills, Md., 13 miles from the academy.

None of the 16 people who staff the farm is a civil servant. All except a secretary live on the farm, where the workday for the milkers and herders begins before dawn.

West Point Cadet Capt. Adam Such, 22, of El Paso, Texas, who spent a semester at the Naval Academy last year and returned recently for a leadership conference, spoke with envy of the midshipmen's copious milk supplies.

"The stuff we get doesn't taste as good," he says. "Honestly, we don't get enough dairy products."

Iraqi artists' creations reflect horrors of war seen from front lines

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Murthada Haddad, one of Iraq's emerging sculptors, spent six years fighting the Iranians in the gulf war.

The horrors he and other artists experienced at the front have had a dramatic impact on Iraqi art.

"I saw too many people die in the war and they come out in my work," Haddad said.

He lost his studio and foundry in the southern port of Basra when it took a direct hit from Iranian shellfire during fierce assaults on the city.

"It was a very, very painful experience," he said.

Six months after the August cease-fire, few signs of the conflict remain evident on the streets of Baghdad.

But the battle scars are visible in the capital's museums, galleries and studios.

Gone are the idyllic landscapes, the bedouins on horseback, the scenes from the marshes and the mountains — all traditional subjects artists favored before the war began in September 1980.

In their place are searing sculptures and paintings that reflect the carnage the artists witnessed.

Three sculptures by Haddad, displayed at a recent one-man exhibition, show small, bronze figures sitting twisted and bound, covering their faces. The group is called "Prisoner of War."

A statue commemmorating a missile attack was designed by Muhammed Ghani, whose whimsical statues inspired by the legend of "1,001 Nights" are Baghdad landmarks. A girl in the statue has two shattered stumps for legs.

A painting titled "War and Peace," which won plastic surgeon Ala Hussein Bashiir the gold medal at the Baghdad International Festival, shows a man leaving the cold, metallic bonds of his military uniform to float among the clouds.

"The war turned the work of most Iraqi artists into art that has something to say, not art for decoration," the 50-year-old Bashiir said.

"They may use the same style, but the subject has changed."

Painter Shakir Hassan, 64, remembers his first visit to the front after a fierce battle.

"When I saw Basra and the front lines I understood the dramatic results of war," he said.

"When the town itself is burned by bombardment, it means the existence of things is destroyed — not just humans, but walls, paintings as well."

Haddad used a group of people inspired by ancient Mespotamian wall reliefs to show the shock induced by the fall of Faw in 1986.

The bearded figures stare off in the distance, mouths agape, hands crossed over their stomachs.

Iraqi artists point to the generous checks the government continued handing out during the war as another important wellspring of their work.

President Saddam Hussein is known for ruthlessly eliminating his enemies, and the state-run press is heavily censored.

Still, artists stress that they have a free hand in their work.

But with a limited private market, official tastes tend to dominate and artists generally laud the government's tough standards in selecting the works they commission.