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Peru's 'north beach'. No Swimming Allowed.

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126

Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net

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Cover Photo

It was a beautiful, warm Spring day near the end of March. I planned to get some photos of a Bald Eagle and her nest. It was good timing or the weather or luck, but it was an exciting display of flight and Bald Eagle home-making. I hope you enjoy the Nature Photo Essay throughout the pages of this little magazine.

April Writers

Devon Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Janet Sobczyk

Thank You!

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Peru Community Comes Together to prepare for flooding

Community members, Peru State students, faculty and staff filled sandbags during the day on a Monday as the Missouri River continued to rise. More than 120 students and a total of 160 volunteers contributed to the effort.

The City of Peru declared an emergency as flooding along the Missouri river was forecasted to reach record levels. The City also advised the community that sandbags would be necessary to protect key components of the City's water supply.

Sandbags were used to protect the water treatment plant, a lift station and a well in Peru. Nemaha County Emergency Management was on hand to help direct the project in partnership with the City of Peru.

Darrin Reeves, mayor of Peru, said that more than 8000 sandbags were filled. He also expressed his appreciation for everyone that came out to help with sandbag efforts.



Community members, including Peru State students, faculty and staff, work to fill and load sandbags.



Members of the Women's Basketball Team, Maddy McPhillips (Omaha) and Keandra Washington (Omaha), fill sandbags.



Members of the Peru State football team work with faculty and staff to load sandbags. From left to right: Deshawn Phelps (Austin, TX); Ben Sode (Clermont, FL); Victor Hubbard (Corinth, TX); Dr. Frank Lynott (Nebraska City); Brent Melvin (Peru); and Dr. Jesse Dorman (Nebraska City).

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The American Bald Eagle in Southeast Nebraska
 A photo essay continues on the following pages.
 On the first really warm day of 2019 I drove to the only eagle nest I know in S.E. Nebraska. The pair built a new nest this year. The tree that held last year's nest fell this Winter.



The new nest is shown here above the fallen Cottonwood that held last year's nest.



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Upper Left Photo; Close-up reveals eagle nesting.

Lower Left Photo; Fallen tree that held last year's nest.

Below; View from another angle; it's head is slightly more visible.

Photo essay continues on next page. >>>>>>>>





Close-up of "another view."



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While photographing the nesting eagle, its mate appeared, circling.



Both eagles can be seen through the Cottonwood's branches.



In its talons it has more nesting material, or perhaps food for its mate.



After circling, it approaches the nest. I assume this is the male.

Photo essay continued on page 8 >>>>>>>>>

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Poetry

by Devon Adams, Peru

FOOL PROOF

Soon spring will actually spring into being, unless the Ice Angel is still sleeping in her velvet chair. In that case, don't read the rest of this message, because it won't apply to you. You will have been fooled into the belief that Mother Nature cares what you want. She is the master planner and surprises are her favorite kind of gift. She can lie in your face so well that you think you know exactly what comes next. Just as the calendar tells you that we have counted so many days since the New Year that it must be time for a change, and it will be warm and sunny and grass and fresh flowers will grow in your yard, you will awake and look out your window at snow, deep snow, once again. It is proof that you are a fool.

TWO LIPS

After a long, long winter and a soggy spring, green stalks push up from the soil. The garden is close to exploding with new life, and the gardener is crazy with cabin fever. Together, they will create a small eden soaked in sweet scents from lovely flowers that come in many splended shapes. Buds on the slender stalks blush with color as their first two lips open into a cup of radiance centered with a bullseye of dusty, golden pollen.

EASTER BUNNIES

The holiday has evolved to include cute little bunnies who can't tell a church cross from a school crossing. Their job is to hard boil eggs and dye them in delicate colors that match the rainbow and spring flowers. Then they get their cheap friends to help them hide the eggs in the grass or in peoples' houses, where some of them will be forgotten and turn into stink bombs. The trick is to fool children into thinking that the Easter Bunny has hidden these treasures and it is their job to find them and eat them. Parents are the liars who have set up this whole procedure, and they have added extra perks that include chocolate candy and plush toys that fit nicely in pretty woven baskets that sit on dining room tables waiting for Mom and Dad to steal from them. But, in the end, everyone is happy, except the adult who at some point steps on an ancient egg with his bare feet and implants decorative shell fragments deep into his tender toes.

BONDED

High in the blue of spring are two dancers who see only each other. Their graceful spirals reach toward the sun as they perform mating rituals older than the birth of man. At first glance, their actions appear aggressive and dangerous, but it isn't so. They are in full control as wings flare and talons form menacing claws. No harm intended, as bodies touch and their screams echo into the infinite space of the sky. They are acrobats, dropping upside down and catching their own falls with precision and daring, losing altitude and then climbing again, until they are exhausted. Last year's nest waits for them to repair and replace branches before they make a soft spot for the eggs to come. Waiting time will pass before cracks appear, and then eaglets will roll out and into the world of the majestic clan of the Bald Eagle.

THE ICE ANGEL

Cold, long winters sometimes become long, cold springs if the Ice Angel forgets to do her job. Her duty is to tidy up the earth by collecting all the leftover icicles and skating rink ice that has coated streets and parking lots all winter. When the sun is nearing it's tipping point toward summer, she is in deep trouble if the ground is still white and temperatures are bone-chilling. If she has been napping in her cozy velvet chair behind the north star, people will vote to take away her halo. But if she has a double lapse and permits a blizzard in April, her job evaluation will come with a negative rating and she will be fired.

ROLLING RIVERS

They start as little dribbles, dripping off the dragon fangs hanging from your eaves. Then they join with the runoff from the ice shelves that have been lying over the ground for months, going downhill to find local drainage ditches, or your basement. Snow has fallen in great amounts in the mountains and is melting into tiny rivulets that grow into raging ribbons cutting deeper as they run, charging down the valleys. From the spine of the Rockies and out onto the plains, they fill the spider veins of creeks that join bigger arteries. The flat of the Platte and the rush of the Missouri gather them all into one big flood waiting to happen. Dams and ice jams can hold back disaster only so long, but the water always wins. Then it keeps flowing down to the sea at the mouth of the Mississippi.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

It is officially spring! I have balanced an egg on my kitchen counter as of 10:15 a.m. today, March 20.

I hope to be able to observe the full super moon this evening. I like all the various names given to this moon: Sap Moon, Sugar Moon, Lenten Moon, even the Full Worm Moon, though the “worm” image is not so appealing. I’m really not squeamish about worms, but they just don’t evoke romance or stir the poetic imagination like the other names. It’s the last super moon of the year, so I’m keeping my fingers crossed for clear eastern skies at 8:43 p.m.

Whether I can see the moon tonight or not, I can see the daffodils, day lilies and iris coming up in my yard. I’m also seeing last fall’s standing dead perennials still standing. Being gone for almost three weeks last November – and then coming home to early snowfall – meant that some fall garden clean-up never got done.

A couple of other surprises were waiting under the snow: our garbage can lid has finally been revealed, lodged up against a garden obelisk, and vole runs have appeared in our front lawn. I had to do a bit of research to figure out what caused those crisscrossing figure eights of dead turf. The grass should recover, so it’s no big deal.

My spring is full of promise.

For many people, this spring is full of tragedy and uncertainty. For them, this spring’s flooding is more than a big deal; it’s total devastation. I can’t begin to imagine how it feels to be a resident or business owner in Hamburg, Iowa. The photographs of that town are surreal, as are all the videos and photographs from every place that has been inundated. Many factors contribute to economic and environmental flood damage. I had thought that after 2011 certain agencies had taken steps to minimize their own potential for adding to the damage through governmental policies and activities. It appears I was wrong about that.

For now, the focus is on clean-up, repairs, and caring for the people who have lost so much. But some hard decisions may need to be made about rebuilding homes and even whole towns.

Hubby and I are natives of Cherokee County, Iowa. The county seat of Cherokee sits in a valley bounded on the east by the Little Sioux River. As a child, Hubby lived in the flood plain of that river. More than once, the east end of town was flooded, requiring extensive repair and rebuilding. But finally, decades ago now, the decision was made to relocate all homes and businesses from that area. No more assistance would be given to those who chose to stay in the flood plain. It was a good decision.

Mother Nature generally wins all her battles eventually.

But she also offers hope: the hope of springtime now and the future healing of the land. I have great sympathy for the people of Hamburg and I sincerely hope that decisions made now will ensure a better future.



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Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru



He lands nearby as if to be a “lookout.”



He selects a steadier branch and then...

Photo essay ends on page 12. >>>>>>>>>

When I was in the first grade, if I got a perfect paper I would get a “gold star” sticker. If it was almost perfect, but not quite, I got a silver star. I also recall red and blue star stickers, but they were not all that important, which is probably why I don’t remember what they were for.

Years later, as a father with kids in school, a new practice came about. Everyone got a ribbon at the track meet, or the fair or whatever. Often, I didn’t know what my kid’s ribbon meant. Was it first place, tenth place, honorable mention? Or, “Look dad, I finished!” The philosophy seemed to be, failure feels bad, so it must be bad, so let’s arrange for everyone to feel good by avoiding failure. Personally, these days I’m glad I know what I’m not good at. I don’t want to waste time where I don’t have skills, like quantum theory or electronic ignitions.

Winning feels good. Losing feels bad. If we fix it so that losing always feels good, I don’t believe as many will try to win a race, to graduate summa cum laude, or become a Navy Seal.

Occasionally I have watched the last game of “March Madness,” the NCAA basketball tournament final. Often, these basketball teams are so good, it’s a flip of the coin as to which one will win the game. And sometimes a “win” is only by a point or two. The exceptional second place performers, can be seen covering their heads with towels, lying “crushed” on the floor, or even weeping openly. Losing hurts, yet some of these same young (second place) men will be recruited into the NBA and make millions of dollars in their lifetime, if not every year. (Ja Morant of Murray State comes to mind.)

Besides 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place medals, runners who complete races of 5K (5000 meters), 10K, etc., often get a “finisher medal,” assuming the cost of so many medals doesn’t take too much away from the fund-raising. But it’s not just a “token” because a lot can happen over 3+ miles, and finishing is an accomplishment, even for walkers. It’s not a “false confidence” builder.

So an award’s connection to an activity or event should be taken in context. What does the award (sticker, ribbon, medal), signify to the “holder?” “I didn’t get there first but I’m not alone,” or “Everyone got one of these; so what?” or “I’m better than everyone else this time.”

An individual’s attitude is important, in particular, his/her personal self esteem. Encouragement can build that, training can build that, cheers, recognition, love builds that. When an award is presented with love and good intentions, that’s a gold star that goes both ways. Enjoy Spring.

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A bit later he leaves; back to the hunt.
>>>>> End of photo essay. <<<<<<

Come Walk With Me

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha

After months of trying unsuccessfully to hibernate, I was lured outside by spring. Two days of cold, driving rain had conquered huge drifts of snow. Now uncovered, the earth could breathe again. Warm sunshine and intermittent breezes soothed the winter strain from the landscape and my face.

Birdsong drew my eyes to bare branches, but I couldn't locate the source of their cheerful twittering. Just as well. A stumble on cracked sidewalk reminded me to watch my feet. They instinctively tiptoed through clear, shallow pools beside leftover shimmering ice. They avoided muddy puddles entirely. Most of the pavement was dry, though, strewn with sand and stray brittle leaves along the curbs.

The sunshine beckoned to others, too. A long stream of helmet-capped cousins cycled by. A few smiled at me. One dared to wave and then quickly re-grasped the handlebar.

A young lady, pony-tailed and trim in black yoga pants walked her color-coordinated lab briskly. On the opposite side of the street an older lady in rainboots shuffled slowly down the walk. Her two dogs of greatly different sizes kept a practiced pace with her, stopping to wait when she needed to rest.

An elderly neighbor patrolled his yard for fallen sticks. He veered off course to check the mailbox. He examined each envelope and headed back inside, leaving the twigs forgotten in a pile on the brown lawn.

A young boy with three Huskies ran past, panting as hard as the dogs. The echo of a bouncing basketball wafted from a school playground. A couple in matching running pants with a white stripe down all four legs ambled past, hands in pockets, strides in sync, in deep conversation.

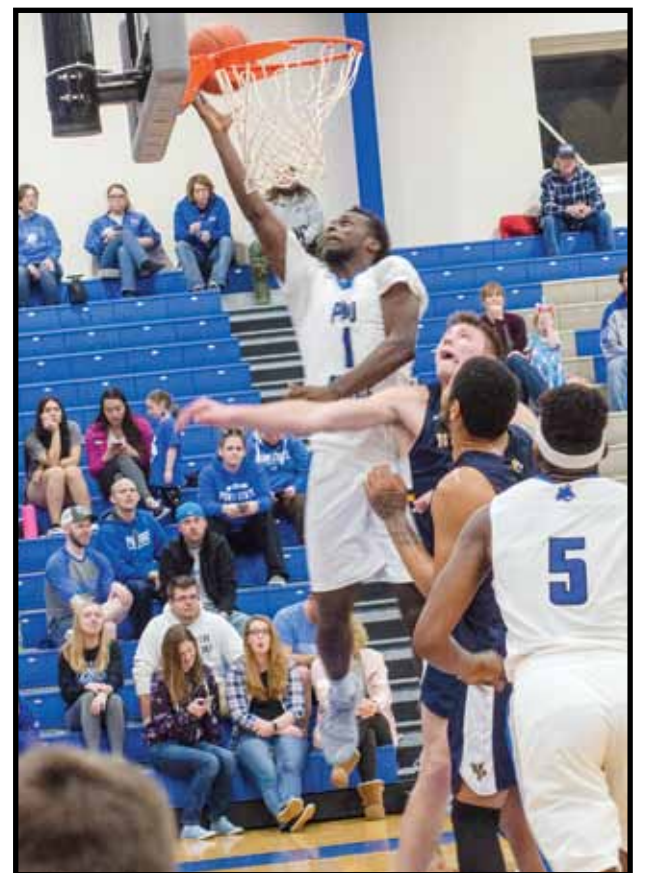
A brown squirrel ran across a pine branch, leaped for a maple branch just a tad too far away. It was saved from a 15-foot drop by one claw. It dangled for a moment, then pulled itself onto the branch and scrambled headfirst down the trunk.

Very few cars drove past. It seemed everyone preferred to be out enjoying this first glimpse of spring. Low-hanging cotton clouds in the distance served as a reminder that more spring rain will come. But for today, at least, the perfect blue soothed away the stress.

Heart of America Conference Champions!!



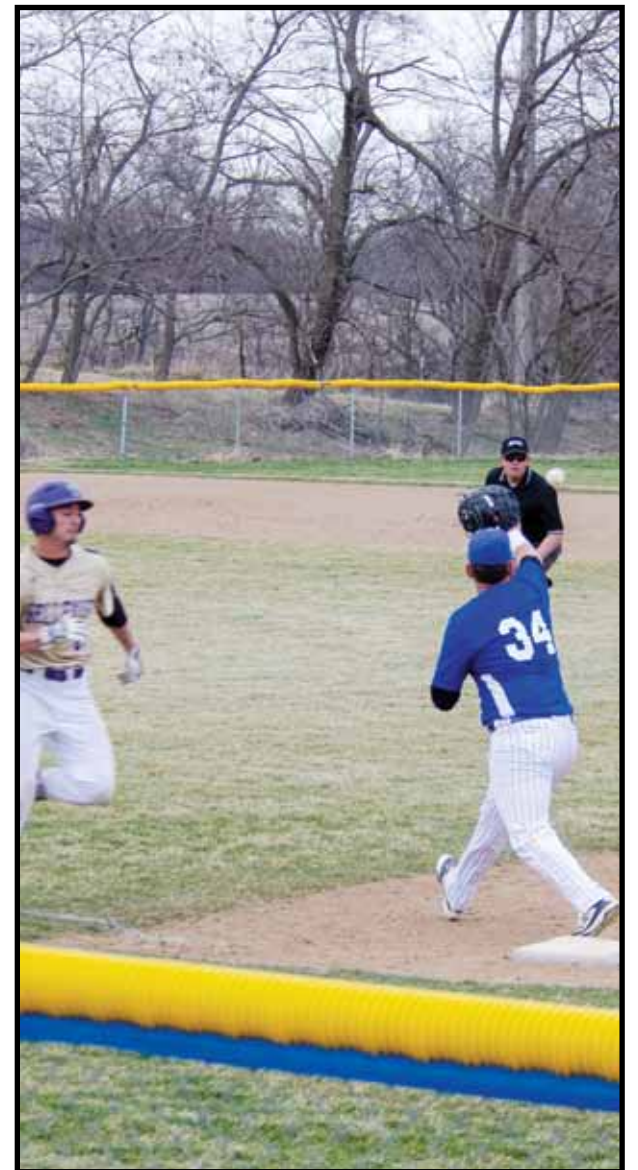
Thank you Coach Ludwig and the Bobcat Basketball Team
for another Great Season!





PSC Baseball & Softball

Schedule of Games on Back Page



The Peru State men's basketball team won their last five in a row.

Included was the victory in the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) tournament. The Bobcats topped the then top-ranked Benedictine (Kan.) Ravens 74-65 in Atchison, Kansas.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) announced the 32-team field for the 2019 NAIA Division I Men's Basketball National Championship. The 82nd Annual event took place March 20-26 at Municipal Arena in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

The Peru State men's basketball team was awarded a fifth seed after being ranked 19th in the final NAIA DI MBB Coaches' Top 25 Poll. The Bobcats faced William Carey (Miss.) on Thursday, March 21. The Crusaders topped the Bobcats 95-89 in the first round of the NAIA Division I Men's Basketball Championships held in the historic Municipal Auditorium in downtown KC.

With the loss, Peru State finished its season 23-11 after participating in its second-straight national tournament.

Former member of Westboro Baptist Church to present at PSC

Megan Phelps-Roper will present on the Peru State College campus as part of the Distinguished Speaker Series. She became famous after her TED Talk, "I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here's why I left." Phelps-Roper's presentation will be Tuesday, April 2 at 7 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center. The presentation will be free and open to the public.

In 2012, Phelps-Roper and her sister fled the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. In her inspiring talk, Phelps-Roper advocates for a better, more empathetic way to overcome disagreements—for engaged communication that not only heals wounds and forges bonds but helps us expand our narrow perspectives.

Recently, Phelps-Roper has appeared on Sarah Silverman's Hulu series, *I Love You, America*, and on the National Geographic series *The Story of Us*, with Academy Award-winner Morgan Freeman. Her inspiring, moving, and deeply human story of change is also the subject of an upcoming memoir, called *Unfollow: A Journey from Hatred to Hope*, to be released by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Peru State established the Distinguished Speaker Series in 2010 as part of a commitment to student engagement and success. The intent of the Series is to bring diverse, nationally and internationally recognized speakers to southeast Nebraska to enrich the educational experience of students while also providing regional communities more opportunities to engage in interesting and relevant topics.

Bailey Bindle named 2019 Lifesavers Traffic Safety Scholar

Peru State College student Bailey Bindle has been named a 2019 Traffic Safety Scholar (Scholars) and awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to attend the 37th annual Lifesavers National Conference on Highway Safety Priorities, March 31-April 2 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Bindle is pursuing a degree in Criminal Justice and is one of 50 U.S. and international students selected through a competitive application process. The Lifesavers Conference showcases the latest research, evidence-based strategies, proven countermeasures, and promising new approaches for addressing the nation's most pressing traffic safety problems.

ESU4 and Peru State College partner to address Southeast Nebraska's shortage of Substitute Teachers

Peru State College and Educational Service Unit 4 (ESU4) are partnering together to train more substitute teachers through the Southeast Nebraska Teaching Academy (SENTA). SENTA has already produced twenty-two substitute teachers to ease the strain on area schools, with a new academy about to start.

Dr. Ellie Kunkel, dean of the school of education at Peru State, writes, "The importance of SENTA is to provide substitute teachers for schools who are seeing, increasingly, a shortage. Through SENTA, individuals will be able to teach in every school in ESU #4, thus expanding the pool of individuals who are eligible to substitute teach."

Dr. Robert Ingram, assistant professor of Education at Peru State, adds that the program benefits Peru State students immediately. "After students complete the class, they can substitute and earn money on the days they are not attending courses at Peru State."

Madison Panko, a student that has completed SENTA, writes "The SENTA class is a great way to prepare teacher candidates for when they become teachers in their own classroom. This class teaches you classroom management skills as well as best practices as a teacher."

Ingram adds, "We ask our former students to return to the class the semester after they have completed the SENTA Course. They share their experiences and suggestions with current students and calm the fears of teacher candidates scheduling their first substitute teaching job."

"One of our former students, Sara, recently visited with SENTA students in class and assured them saying, 'You can do it! Rely on the best practices you have learned; stop and think as you encounter an uncertain situation, and be sure to reach out to a neighbor teacher for help.'"

More information about SENTA and earning a local substitute teaching certificate can be found at www.peru.edu/senta. SENTA assists potential substitute teachers to complete the credentials necessary to earn a Nebraska Department of Education substitute certificate.

The ESU 4 mission is "impacting student learning through communication, accountability, and leadership." ESU4 proudly serves Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson Counties.



BOBCAT SOFTBALL

MARCH

SUN 17	Hastings College	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
THU 21	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
TUE 26	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	3 p.m. 5 p.m.
WED 27	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	3 p.m. 5 p.m.
FRI 29	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.

APRIL

TUE 2	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m. 4 p.m.
FRI 5	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	3 p.m. 5 p.m.
SAT 13	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
<i>SENIOR DAY</i>			
SUN 14	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m. 4 p.m.
FRI 26	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.



2019 SEASON



BOBCAT BASEBALL

MARCH

SAT 2	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
SUN 3	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
SAT 9	Missouri Valley College	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
SUN 10	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
WED 13	York College	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
TUE 19	Sterling College	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
SAT 30	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
SUN 31	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.

APRIL

TUE 9	Kansas Wesleyan Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
SAT 20	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
FRI 26	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m. 3 p.m.
SAT 27	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
<i>SENIOR DAY/ALUMNI REUNION DAY</i>			
3 p.m.			

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