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August, 2016

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**A Magazine for
Small Towns and
Rural America**



Sunflower in a Peru Garden



Photographed along the Steamboat Trace on July 30, 2016



Spider Web along a morning trail



July 4th, Brownville, Nebraska

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Thank you!

Cover Photo(s)

The sunflower is a volunteer in a Peru garden. The butterfly, wildflower, and frog were photographed July 30th along the Steamboat Trace near Peru, Nebraska, as was the spider web. The fireworks event was a great way to end a very pleasant 4th of July in Brownville. I enjoyed the outdoors during July. Enjoy your August!

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the
Valleys of the Nemaha
Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers This Month

Devon Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Lee Nyberg
Marilyn Woerth

Thank You!

Your Country Neighbor

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Back To School!

Stephen Hassler

I was too young to remember much about the 50's. A pre-teen, isolated on the farm, I didn't have much opportunity to absorb the 50's culture, but I remember a few things that people told me. There were "sock hops" in small towns on some Saturday nights; street dances for teens. In my town it was at one of the intersections on Main Street. I had the impression teens would dance in their stocking feet, but I'm not sure because I was too young to attend the event. It might have just been a reference to the "bobby sox" that girls wore to the dance with their "poodle skirts".

I do remember teens driving up and down Main Street some evenings, or after school, much to the chagrin of the 'stuffy' adults. Cars would honk occasionally to each other as a greeting. Many adults found this annoying. Some small towns even had ordinances against such "rebellious behavior".

The following is an article I wrote several years ago and have reprinted here a few times. I think it's always appropriate this time of year. For me the article is both nostalgic and timeless.

As I look out my window on Fifth Street, I am anticipating back-to-school season; school buses, football practice, and cruisin'. The freedom to get in a car and go anywhere I wanted was once just an anxious teenager's dream. Now, whenever I want, I can take my comfortable car with air conditioning, CD player with Bose speakers, and tour the rural countryside or drive to the Rocky Mountains. This is one freedom I cherish but often take for granted. Before I received my driver's license, I didn't have that freedom of movement. Before I had a driver's license, travel was viewed from the back-seat of a '57 Ford Fairlane. Often, a parent's head would obstruct my view, so I just looked out the side window and watched my world go by about 45 miles per hour. There were the ever-changing fields of grains and grasses; the lavender of blooming alfalfa or the gold of ripening oats. Now and then a train passed by on the tracks that ran parallel to the unpaved country road.

As my father steered into town, we connected with the highway and coasted down the hill to the traffic light and the drive-in on the corner. High school kids stood around in small groups with their red and black letter-jackets sipping Cokes and Pepsi's and Dr. Peppers and munching on hamburgers. Some sat in cars and leaned out of windows in conversation, listening to the latest Bobby Vinton song or the Beach Boys on the radio. I wanted my red and black letter-jacket. This was a new town, a bigger school, and new friends. I was fifteen and dreamt of going to college, of breaking out of my rural world and into the real world of NASA missions, the nuclear age, and muscle cars.

It was 1962. The 60's! But my 60's were not the images I saw on the new color TV in the old Iowa farmhouse where I was painfully trying to grow up. My world was the school bus before dawn ten miles from my homeroom. My world was trying to learn chemistry and geometry, while having to learn English Composition. My world was one of solitude and three wishes; I wished that I were a star on the basketball team, that I were popular enough to go out on Saturday nights with the prettiest girl in school, and that I would get my name in the paper as one of those on the semester honor roll. Those three wishes were never heard by any Genie in my world. And so for me, my world in the early 60's amounted to getting my homework done and not getting beat up.

It helped a lot that I got a car my Senior year. That old '53 Chevy was freedom from school buses, and freedom to go see friends if the urge came up. It was independence and image; it added a new dimension to my life. Occasionally, during school lunch break, I would drive a few friends around town. Me, showing off my 'wheels', and they, going for a 'joy ride'. And if we saw another group doing the same, an exchange of horn honks was not only a greeting, it was like saying, "How about this? This is living!" So when you look out your window on your street, try not to shake your head in disgust at those teenagers who might seem a bit noisy. Not all of them are popular or athletic, and few are geniuses. But they are all struggling to fit into a world so much bigger than they are. They are trying their wings. They are exploring freedoms withheld from them while they were children. They are beginning to experience what we adults take for granted; freedom is fun!



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Poetry by Devon Adams

IN A NUTSHELL

Sometimes you can see the future whether you want to see it or not. An incident happens in flash, but the implications and the meaning can explode in your brain like a bomb. It is like skipping to the end of a book. The story comes to your conscious mind already written, and you know it is true. Your life will be changed, for better or for worse, and there is no other choice than to live out the course of the complications, and to cope with them with all the courage and common sense that you can muster.

FRAMED

Windows are magic portals into fragments of the outside world. Passing from room to room can be a museum tour of the greatest pictures never painted. A single sideways glance through those frames reveals a view caught in the web of time, by a momentary breath held for a second, as your eyes quickly scan what seems familiar. It is painted by the atmosphere and the light of that second, and it will never be exactly that way again. So it is with our lives, which are lived in tiny increments that accumulate into years.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

In the midst of a steamy summer afternoon, when kids are riding their bikes through the shade to the pool, random images of school invade their thoughts. Early dismissal won't work to banish such ideas, and they persist even into the cool blue waters that swirl around tanned and sun-burned bodies. As days fly by, teachers seem to start floating through dreams, giving out assignments and handing out papers. Shelves piled with new pencils, erasers, and notebooks are waiting on the other side of sleep.

RAIN AND DRAIN

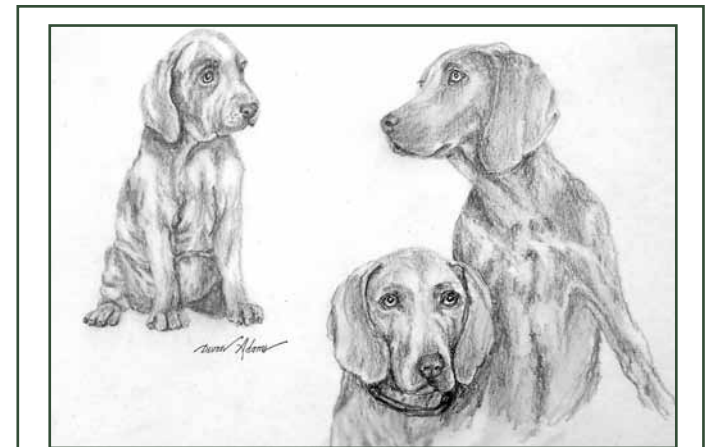
Roads and rivers ran with heavy rain mixed with hail. The weight and the speed of the water stole soil and plants and dragged them down the slopes in a gravity pull that stripped hills and fields of crops and dreams. Like an insidious machine, the storm was an erosion factory, drowning what it didn't dislodge.

ONE AT A TIME

Compassion comes in many forms, and degrees. The world would be a nicer place if every person had a generous gene that compelled them to treat others with kindness. However, that is not the case, and the burden of saving others falls on the backs of the sweet souls who care. But more often than not, they try so hard to help that discouragement follows them home like a lost puppy, and they feel guilt that they haven't been able to save all those who need to be rescued. But the only way to stay sane and keep going is to realize that saving even one has changed that one life, and sometimes that is enough.

THE LONG SKY

At the end of a summer day, when the air remained clear and the distance was not distorted by heat waves, the sun sank lower and lower until it stopped to rest on the edge of the prairie. The north course of the Missouri followed its valley into the dying glow of a rose tinted evening that was suffused with a bronze band that lay on the horizon like a bright ribbon. Over the tops of the trees, star sparks began to poke holes in the thin fabric of the last of the day sky. And on the ground, the flash points of fireflies blinked and winked at the night.



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Continued from page 4

table in a small town along the Ligurian Coast and did not realize it until we were many miles and hours away and needed to be aboard our ship. Live and learn, check the table before you leave.

When we were at the Turkish carpet store the man who helped us was from Australia and in the 55-60 age range. I told him my oldest son had been in Turkey in the Air Force and he was supposed to get me a Turkish rug, but then the bombing of the Navy vessel, Cole, happened and they were restricted to base. So now I was here to finally get my Turkish carpet. The gentleman said he had made Turkey his home but had to leave for many years because of the political climate. I wonder if he is still there now. Would we go again? Depends, I mean I could fall down my stairs.

Holidays and vacations are fun but it is always good to come home to where life is especially good and relatively safe. God bless America.



One of my favorite windmills to photograph... This time it's almost obscured by tall July Corn.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

My daughter called the other day to tell her dad that his birthday card was going to be late. She had just found it under a stack of papers on the dining room table, where she had placed it several days earlier, with the expectation that her husband was to take it out to the mailbox. How the stack of papers got on top of the card is up for debate. Who is responsible for actually putting the card in the mailbox is also debatable, I suppose.

At any rate, upon finding the card, she immediately went to the Post Office and inquired about over-nighting it. The postal worker gave her a form to fill out and then told her it would cost something like \$23.00.

Twenty-three dollars??! She considered the cost and then clarified, And it will definitely arrive tomorrow?

Not definitely, ma'am. We can't guarantee one-day delivery.

But I said I wanted to "over-night" it.

I know, ma'am, but our best guarantee on over-nighting is two days.

But then it will still be late.

I'm sorry, ma'am.

She gave up on the over-night delivery and made the phone call instead.

Poor hubby. His special days are getting short shrift here lately.

The day after Father's Day he asked me if I had "intended" to not give him a Father's Day card this year. He was OK with that, if that's what I intended. He didn't have to get a Father's Day card from me. He got lovely cards from his kids and grandkids. If his wife didn't feel compelled to recognize his continuing fathering sacrifices, so be it.

Oops. Of course I had intended to give him a card. It was in my dresser drawer. But I had received news that morning of the death of a friend and was distracted by the shock of it, and forgot all about the card.

With hubby's birthday coming just one month after Father's Day, I wasn't going to make the "card mistake" again. But what about a gift? Men are so hard to buy for. Hubby is a practical sort when it comes to gifts. His list is essentially a gift registry generated from Amazon.com, complete with model numbers. Being a reluctant shopper, at best, I actually appreciate not trying to guess what he'd like. But sometimes it doesn't feel very genuine to just order from a "menu." So this year, I suggested that since it's his Medicare-eligible year we do something special for his birthday.

How about a trip to Colorado to visit our friends at Bolder and Loveland?

Since I am usually the frugal one around here, he was pleasantly surprised that I would suggest a trip that wasn't in the budget for this year. He immediately accepted.

Hubby loves summer weather, but even he is not totally thrilled with the heat wave we've had here since early June. The air last night was so stifling, I felt like I was actually inhaling corn pollen. Hubby has been monitoring the forecast for the Bolder area for about two weeks now. The temps are predicted to be warm, but the humidity at 5,400 feet will be only about one-third the level we are enduring here. I think a Rocky Mountain high is just the right gift for hubby's 65th.



I've not seen many butterflies so far this year; maybe August?
To learn more about this one, 'google' "Red Spotted Purple".



This delicate wildflower was photographed on the bank of the creek at the
Whiskey Run Creek Vineyard and Winery in Brownville, Nebraska.



I finally got a photo of a Swallowtail this year.
Here, in the flower garden of the "Little Red School House" in Brownville.

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A 'Road Trip' Journal

Stephen Hassler

July was a busy month for my photography. There was the annual 4th of July parade in Brownville, Nebraska, and that evening, fireworks. For me, this year's fireworks display was better than years past for the reason that it lasted almost twice as long. Fine entertainment for wrapping up the 4th, and for fireworks photography. (Photo on cover.)

On the 6th I delivered a newly framed photo to the fine arts gallery in Corning, Iowa. I have several pieces hanging there. I think it's cool to have my work displayed in the town where I graduated high school. I left a few copies of this publication at the *Sweet Desires Bakery* where I stop for a 'cake donut' when I'm in Corning.

I photographed the remodeled theater and the restored opera house, had a broasted chicken lunch at the popular *Three C's Diner*, and drove by the high school where I graduated long ago. It just doesn't feel like long ago. I visited briefly with a classmate and alumni leader who works at a kind of car 'museum' in Corning. The business has a great display of restored classic cars from the 40's, 50's and 60's, and they're for sale! There are a few later models too. Call 641-322-4777 for days and times open.

Corning's pharmacy has a wonderful 50's 'soda fountain'; an experience worth a trip for a nostalgic ice cream soda or sundae. A Nemaha County Nebraska, local soda fountain, which used to be in the Peru pharmacy, is displayed at the *Dogrose Studios* art gallery in Brownville.

July 16 weekend in Brownville brought visitors for the Theatre's 50th Anniversary. The town was crowded with people who came by buses and cars, and the *Lyceum Cafe* was very busy. I saw two people walking around with Brownville's famous handmade brooms purchased from the broom store. I heard that the new ice cream shop has unique and wonderful flavors, the gardens at the *Whiskey Run Creek Winery* are showing their Summer blooms, and *Dogrose Studios* is a must stop for fine art or iced coffee. Many like the flavored soda drinks. You can pretend they came from the actual soda fountain.

I discovered the 'new' *Lorton Lounge* and learned about their Friday night fish dinners. It's been a long time since I delivered *Your Country Neighbor* to Lorton, and the new building appears to be a popular location for dining.

July events I missed; The *Nemaha County Fair* in Auburn, The Summer festival in Corning, Iowa at the end of July, and the *Freedom Run* in Brownville, Next year!

But I'll make it to the *Nemaha County Rodeo* on either August 12th or the 13th. Maybe I'll see you there.

It's Back To School!



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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Alzheimer's Care: Cool Activities for Hot Summer Days

By Lee Nyberg

At 9:00 am, it's already 87 degrees. The day stretches before you, as long as Hwy 6 to Imperial. Since his Alzheimer's has progressed, your husband relies on you to structure his day...

Researchers studying the brain's ability to repair itself have found people with mild cognitive impairment or early stage dementias can slow functional decline by continuing to stimulate their brains and following healthy diet and exercise routines. When possible, help a loved one occupy themselves in ways which make the most of cognitive ability, respect their past life, and incorporate exercise.

Offer activities appropriate to their stage of dementia. A person in mild cognitive impairment still functions well in many tasks, but is forgetful and has trouble with organization and problem solving. With moderate dementia, a person has significantly reduced cognitive function and more changeable moods and emotions. At any stage, activities which stimulate the senses can be enjoyable and beneficial.

Begin with dignity in mind. For as long as possible, offer choices for constructive occupation, such as chores or tasks. These are the most likely to fulfill your loved one's need to be helpful and useful. People are often helped when a task is tied to a reason for it, such as "sorting cards for tonight's poker game," versus "sorting cards into suits."

Vary activities throughout the day. Shifting from physical (a walk in the park) to social (emotionally stimulating) to task-oriented (needs more concentration), so both body and mind get a workout. Choose things you like to do, too. Some suggestions:

Socializing

- Read the morning paper
- Share a meal, snack, or iced tea
- Pet dog or cat
- Watch a nature or travel video
- Sing songs around the piano
- Look at photographs
- Invite a friend over, visit a friend
- Examine a collection (figurines, jewelry)

Chores/Tasks

- Clean windows
- Sweep kitchen
- Sort or fold laundry
- Hang awards and plaques
- Rearrange drawers
- Run errands
- Make cookies or crockpot meal
- Make lemonade from lemons

Calming

- Pet dog or cat
- Watch a nature or travel video
- Listen to favorite music
- Manicure or foot rub
- Go for a drive

Outdoor

- Plant flowers or bulbs
- Sweep the patio
- Have a picnic
- Watch birds or squirrels
- Pull weeds
- Fly a kite
- Hit golf or tennis balls
- Go to the zoo or public gardens

Wear your cruise director hat. Successful caregivers have learned to make a game of things and always have a plan "B". They've also accepted they may need to alter housekeeping standards to focus on caring for their loved one and for themselves, in a way that enhances both their lives. This is not to say caregiving is easy, or can be done without help. Getting help when needed is part of "enhancing life." Family, friends, adult day services and professional home care can be called in to help engage loved ones.

Because we have at least 37 more sidewalk-melting days this year, you'll have many chances to try some of the activities listed above. Making lemonade might be a good start.

Lee Nyberg, a partner at Home Care Assistance of Nebraska, focuses on education on aging issues, co-leads a Parkinson's support group, and is a Legislative Advocate for the Alzheimer's Association. HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com

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