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Nemaha County Courthouse, November, 2016

SPECIAL 16-PAGE ISSUE

*Merry Christmas*

A Magazine for Small Towns and Rural America

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## December Writers

Devon Adams  
Merri Johnson  
Lee Nyberg  
Vicki O'Neal  
Marilyn Woerth

**Thank You!**

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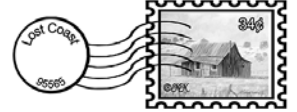
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“Christmas...A Time Of Miracles!”

by Vicki O'Neal



Nobody will believe it, folks. I can hardly believe it, myself...yet I have to! Because it happened to ME.

Just days ago, I was heading home for the Holidays. I'd been in California and was heading for the family farm—the Old Home Place in the Barada Hills.

I was on I-80, driving hard and fast across Nevada. The landscape was desolate...no sign of civilization. It might as well be the Mojave! Not a tree anywhere. Just crusty dirt and distant hills heaving up on the skyline.

It was a horrendous drive. Almost 1800 miles. My Honda was heavily loaded and it was guzzling gas like an inebriate at a Christmas Party. Glancing down at the fuel gauge, I saw the warning light flick on. It glowed bright red.

Lord have mercy! I knew I was in serious trouble. Soon my tank would run dry!...Dry as the desert sand around me! How could I be so stupid?

I'd be stranded amid the tumbleweeds—at the mercy of wolves and random Maniacs passing by! “Oh Lord...You've gotta help me!” I cried. “What can I do?”

I grabbed my smartphone and tried to Google the nearest gas station, but I was so far from civilization my celly hardly worked.

I searched the skyline as I drove, and at last I saw a signpost hove into sight. But it wasn't a town at all. Just a couple of shacks leaning in the wind. No service stations. Nothing.

My spirits sagged. I pushed onward...mile after desolate mile. How long can a Honda run with its fuel light on?

Reaching for my cellphone, I dialed an old friend—praying that the call would go through. It did. Kay's voice was the most welcome sound I've heard in a long time. I told her of my plight. The desperation in my tone sent her into action immediately.

“I'll Google the nearest gas station on my laptop,” Kay said. “What's your exact location?”

I told her the mile-marker and she scoured the 'Net for several minutes. Agonizing minutes. I drove more slowly—watching the needle on my fuel gauge sink toward oblivion.

“Dear God...HELP ME!” I cried.

“Just hold on...” Kay said. She's known me for 40 years and she knows the signs of impending meltdown. “Hold on!” she said. “I'm still looking!”

“I know...I know!” I said. “The Good Lord will help me somehow! I've just got to Believe!”

I tried to remember all the other crises that I've overcome in my lifetime...all the times that Providence had intervened at the last moment! I needed one of those miracles now...Desperately!

I felt light-headed. Almost dizzy. I started to chatter mindlessly. “One time, my sister ran out of gas on the side of the road,” I said. “Her tank was dry! The car wouldn't even start. But my sister's got Crazy Faith!”

*Continued on page 11 >>>>>>>>>*

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The Chic-a-dee is a partner in crime, as is the Titmouse, page 14.

## Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

An old Cherokee told his grandson, "My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies, and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy, and truth." The boy thought about it, and asked, "Grandfather, which wolf wins?" The old man quietly replied, "The one you feed."

The month of December is a holy month filled with several religious holidays of different faiths and one secular one. All of these holidays have several things in common. They are all celebrated with lights and the giving of gifts. If I were to give each and every one of you one perfect present for your special holiday, could you guess what might be?

I have thought long and hard on what I might hope to give each one of you, if I only had one gift to give. What would it be? Love came to mind. I could give you the gift of love. It is often called the greatest gift of all. Perhaps it is, but as great a gift as love is, it can only go so far in your life. Don't most of us love and have been loved, and yet aren't we all filled with doubt, worries, fears, and temptations?

I could give you wealth of mind; knowledge or material wealth, but we know that still does not vanquish those prickly little nags of doubt, worries, and fear. What then could I give you that would be the perfect gift for you? How about faith? I could give you faith. But faith is many and different things to everyone alive. I have faith that you will understand me. I have faith that there is meaning to my life. Yes, faith is a good thing. I have faith in my fellow man. Or do I? Again, those nagging worrisome little bugs come marching into our lives.

Is it a worthless cause searching for the perfect gift? How can I give you that one perfect gift that will give you all these things and so much more, that will give you peace of mind.....? Whoa wait a minute...peace of mind, hmmm. Close your eyes, and open your hands. Can you feel it? No don't



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open your eyes, not yet, take several deep breaths, yoga breaths; breath in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, now let it out 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and do it again. Do you feel the stillness around you; the lack of light and sound? I want you to be just in the moment. Now pretend that stillness is part of you, drink it in as if you have been in the desert for a very long time and only it can disperse your thirst.

Look around you and start picking up those little nags, worry, doubts, fears, greed, envy, anger, and all those hindrances in your life. See that box, put them all in that box, then use that key to lock them in, now toss that key far, far away.

There is a shimmering in your very being, deep within you. Grab hold of it and let it grow. That shimmering is called peace of mind and it is my gift to you. Take care of it, nurture it, and share it, and do everything that it asks of you. Now open your eyes, for you do truly live where life is good. May this light shine within you. Peace!

## A GIFT OF TIME AND PLACE

Devon Adams

Walking through the halls of autumn is always a transition. Caught speechless by the changing hues on the hills that are such a contrast to the lush and varied greens of the steaming summers, I try to burn the images in the pages of my memory. Photos are good substitutes, but they don't tell the total three dimensional story that comes from actually being in a place, and feeling the atmosphere and the ambient lighting that changes in small degrees as minutes pass.

I think of lives lived before mine, of native people who also loved these bluffs of the river land. They have left used tools and weapons of their cultures, like the words of a story whose pages have been scattered and hidden under the progressive layers of plant growth and decay, and it is such a thrill to stumble upon such objects, to hold in my hand that which was held by other hands, and used for living day to day. I stand and survey the same view that existed hundreds of years ago, and imagine that those folks also watched the colors of the seasons paint the years as they rolled inexorably along. I wonder if the ghosts of all those who came before me are still existing in the atoms that surround us. I'd like to think they are still here, and that some part of me will always remain to be a part of the sense of place that is so overwhelming.

Out of the long blue distance, the poignant voices of the children of the sky drift with the wind that carries them. They are weary, and want to find a place to settle before the evening dusk is done. In wavy V's they hover overhead and then spiral down to the water of the lake. Tired conversations turn to bedtime lullabies as the geese sing each other to sleep. Creatures in the woods go on about their business of staying alive and preparing for hard days ahead. Tomorrow the feather people will continue their long journey away from the demons of the north.

The night wind cools and snow dreams come to haunt the river on the prairie. The moon shines with the cold eye of a frozen fish. Leaves and grass turn pale, and ice turns moving water into stone. Blizzards spread white blankets that cover all the details. Trees are stark dark lines etched against the glare. The arc of the sun dips low and lower, until it kisses the point of the horizon that is the solstice, and then time turns around and reverses the sleeping death of winter. It is a new beginning on an old planet, and it gives us the promise of bright tomorrows.

We are surrounded by treasures that are too easy to ignore. They are precious beyond any purchases made inside of buildings full of manufactured toys. And they are free. The magic hush of an owl sailing across a meadow, the flash of an elusive deer, or the chatter of chickadees scolding a squirrel are waiting to be noticed. Cloud paintings hang in a high gallery above us, and river currents carry clues to stories that are floating swiftly past. Sounds and scents surround us that are clues to mysteries waiting to be solved. Every second is a fleeting gift of time to be savored with thankful prayers for the chance to be alive!

# Merry Christmas

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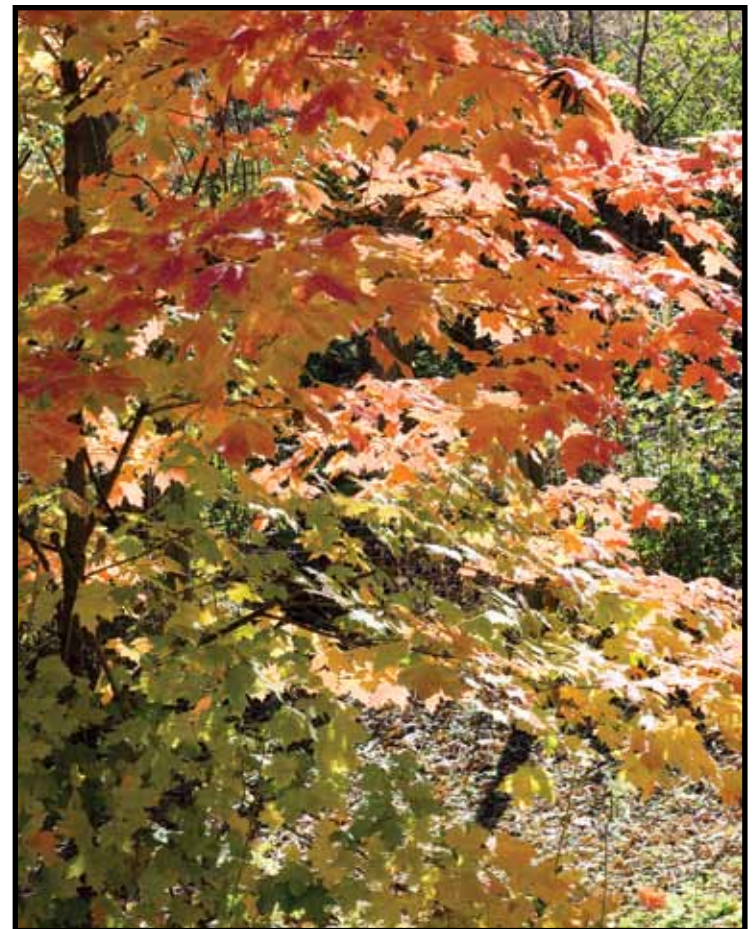
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*Publisher's note:* Autumn view from my back porch.  
Little red maple before the late November winds.

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PSC 'Senior Day', November 5, 2016



# Poetry by Devon Adams

## HORSE FROST

They've lost the color of their coats, in the foggy frost. As morning dawns and light illuminates a brand new world, these hoary beings appear to be wild creatures from a futuristic movie. Long winter hair sprouts ice in crystal constructions, and nostrils snort steam in blasts of heat that sticks to whiskers and lashes in fuzzy worms that blink and wiggle. They must think they're dreaming, as they stare at each other and wonder if they know these "others."

## WHAT LIES BENEATH

When long nights and short days come, the top of the ground is frozen, like brown cement. Grasses are stiff with frost and reluctant to dance in the frigid winds. Snow falls in soft flakes shot with the fire of the sun, followed by harsh pellets that cut like cold knives. Ice becomes an old man, thawing and then freezing again before he can escape as water. In the distant hope of spring, he will be the last to go, waiting in the shadow under the hill, until green reaches up to touch his long gray beard. Then he will melt deep into the soil, becoming part of all the life waiting to grow.

## MAKING THINGS FIT

As the winter tightens, so does the time we have to get things done. Work can't wait for all the planning that has to happen before our holidays will be so special that we'll remember them forever. So we stay up late and clean, and shop for all the right ingredients after the end of our shift, and buy gifts for those we love for more than we can afford. But when that day dawns bright and shiny, and we are there together, in a family photo, we'll know that making memories is the bottom line in the story of our lives.

## SKY LIGHTS

After the branches were bare and the leaves were brown on the ground, the horizon was wider, with trees of black lace standing on the edge. The sun was in a hurry to leave the day, but as it fell behind the hills, it left a rosy glow in the clear air. Wild grass hugged the hill and bled blood red in the last sun arrows shooting low and long from the sun.

## "ARE WE THERE YET?"

Says the little voice from the back seat. "How far is a mile, and can't we go faster, and why not? And can we go to that gas stop, cause I'm thirsty and also I have to go, again. Then when we get home will the calendar be closer to Christmas? Are we going to go to Grandma's house this year, and will she have a great big tree with blue lights and silver bells and the little angel on top? And when we get to her house will she bake my favorite cookies? Can we go there for Christmas Eve, so I can wait for Santa in Grandpa's big soft chair by the fireplace? I can't wait for snow and Santa, and how far have we gone now?"

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## Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Each Christmas, the women in my family participate in a gift exchange. We used to draw names and try to buy something tailored to the personality and preferences of the recipient. That's great if you're on the receiving end of a gift purchased by someone who actually likes to shop and doesn't settle for an oh-well-this-will-have-to-do kind of present. But if I drew your name, you weren't likely to be blown away by my ability to find the perfect gift.

Later on, we started just bringing a "female" gift and drawing names at the gathering. That took some pressure off trying to buy something too specific. But still, I was observant enough to notice that my gifts did not elicit the oohs and aahs that some others generated.

Still later, we added the "Let's Make a Deal" enhancement of placing all the gifts in a pile and drawing numbers to determine who would be first to take the gift of their choice. The only rule was that you couldn't choose your own gift. So, the first person chose and opened her gift, and the giver was revealed. Then the No. 2 person could either take an unopened gift or steal the first person's gift. This process continued until the last person had her pick of every opened gift plus the final unknown. There was usually one item that was popular with everyone and changed hands several times. But ultimately, someone had to take a chance on the last unopened gift and hope it wasn't a dud. If your gift had already been opened, but never stolen, well, you knew it wasn't so hot. But people forgot about it as the game went on. But if the last gift in the pile was the one you brought, you really felt the pressure. With all eyes on the recipient as she removed the wrapping paper and revealed the giver, your reputation as a gift-giver was on the line.

The gifting scheme changed again several years ago when we began adopting a theme each year. A couple of years ago, the theme was "Your Favorite Thing." I gave warm woolen mittens in a brown paper package tied up with string. That generated an impromptu chorus of "My Favorite Things." (For those of you who avoid musicals, that's from "The Sound of Music.") I scored some gift-giving credentials that year.

This year, the theme is "green," however one chooses to define it: the color green, the environmental byword, the color of money, a plant, something recycled, whatever. I haven't given it too much thought yet. Shopping is not one of my favorite things. Although green is my favorite color. I sense a dichotomy here that could complicate things. It would probably require psychoanalysis to determine the reasons for my shopping issues.

I keep suggesting that we switch to a White Elephant Exchange. I have lots of stuff that would be perfect for that theme. Plus, no shopping required! For some reason, my female relatives are not interested in exchanging each other's cast-offs. Even if they were, I'm pretty sure someone else would have more interesting "elephants" and I'd still experience all the high anxiety of the gift exchange. I suppose I could just opt out, but where's the fun in that? Wish me luck.

While we're wishing, I wish you all a Merry Christmas. May all your gift-giving and getting bring you a smile.

<<<<<<<<< Vicki's 'Miracle' continued from page 2.

I knew I was babbling, but I didn't care. "She prayed and got a bottle of water and poured it into her gas tank! Then she started the car and drove it to the nearest gas station. My sis is crazier than ME...and she sees a lot of things that can't be explained!" I started to laugh. "Truth is stranger than fiction, you know—"

But Kay wasn't listening. "Aha!" she said. "I've found a gas station for you! But it's ten miles down the road."

"Ten miles!" I looked down at my dashboard for the hundredth time, and my eyes froze on the fuel gauge. For some reason, the warning light had gone out—even though it had been glowing brightly for dozens of miles.

I felt a chill. Maybe that's what happens just before the engine dies!

I peered at the gauge more closely. Strange. Not only had the warning light gone out, but it seemed that the fuel level had risen ever so slightly on my gas gauge.

I blinked and looked again. Yes—it was true. It wasn't my imagination. I'd been driving on 'fumes' for almost a half hour, but something odd had just happened. And it happened while I was telling of my sister's miracle story! It was ironic. Too bizarre.

I didn't dare tell my friend Kay. She would think I was delusional. But I needn't have worried. Kay was paying me no mind—she was too busy talking. "The town is called 'Delle'," she was saying. "And the gas station should be open! Do you think you can make it ten more miles?"

"Yes," I said. I felt a warmth creeping into my soul. "Yes! I'm sure I can make it..."

And I did!

The Honda kept on running mile after mile...and the red fuel light stayed OFF the whole time. It didn't come on again. Not once!

Within minutes, I pulled into the town of Delle and heaved a great sigh of relief. "Thank God!" I said. "Thank God!" I felt weak and light headed...But so very grateful!

The service station was old and run down, yet it seemed a lovely oasis in the middle of the desert. I gazed at it in awe. Gas pumps....wonderful gas pumps!

The fuel was expensive. I paid \$3.00 a gallon for that fuel. But I didn't care if it cost \$30.00 per gallon! I didn't care at all.

And there's another thing I don't care about, folks....

I don't care if anyone believes this story or not. I've just experienced a true "Christmas Miracle"! This is my Story and I'm stickin' to it. I ain't backin' down! After all....This is the Season of Miracles. That's what it's all about!

Have a wonderful holiday, my Country Neighbor.  
May you and your families experience many "Christmas Miracles" as well...!

*Vicki O'Neal*

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Laundry Facility On Site

Tenant pays for electricity, gas, TV cable and phone

Apartments have central air and heat

Located close to shopping center

Rent based on gross income and family size

Rental assistance available for qualified applicants

For Applications

Call Lydia at 402-274-5460



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7th & Oregon Streets in Peru, Nebraska

1 Bedroom Apartment Utilities Included

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- Handicap accessible

This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

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## Golden Acres Apartments -- Cook, NE

ONE BEDROOM APARTMENTS AVAILABLE

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Laundry Facility On Site

Tenant pays for electricity, gas, TV cable and phone

Apartments have window air units

Rent based on gross income and family size

Rental assistance available for qualified applicants

This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

For Applications

Call Lydia at 402-274-5460





# Peru State College Sports

Images from 'Senior Day' Game and Volleyball Tournament Play  
November 5, 2016



# Peru State College Sports



Images from Men's & Women's Basketball  
November, 2016





The Titmouse 'hangs out' with the Nuthatch and the Chic-a-dee



The Nuthatch in a rare 'upright' position; the Goldfinch is not so gold this time of year.



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# Alzheimer's Affects Us All



## Alzheimer's and Bath Time

By Lee Nyberg

Holiday stress makes a nice long soak in a steaming tub sound like pure luxury. But not for a person with Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia. Because dementia changes how a person views bathing, caregivers need to employ stealth and craft to keep a loved one clean.

Get the right equipment. You'll be more confident as you're assisting in the bath, and your loved one will feel more secure, when slippery surfaces are covered.

- Use large, non-slip mats in and outside of the shower or tub
- Have grab bars installed—you might need one to steady yourself in the process
- Put a bath chair in the tub or shower, so your loved one can stay seated and more stable
- Use a hand-held shower head, to direct water where you want it and away from the bather's face

Prepare for the event. Make the bathroom ready so bathing goes smoothly without waiting or you leaving your loved one alone in the bathroom.

- Make it very warm to prevent chilling when clothing comes off or skin is wet
- Have supplies (lots of towels, non-drying cleansers, and lotion) in place before arriving in the bathroom
- Play soft music, if this helps your loved one stay calm
- Experiment with the best lighting levels for lowered agitation

Sell it. Connect bathing with a happy time. Does the idea of a bath need to be part of a favorite event, like "getting ready for a dinner dance" or "heading into the office"? Recreate the atmosphere with music and/or conversation—talk up the coming dinner out or special treat; ("After your bath, we'll have a tea party with Christmas cookies.").

Bathe with confidence and calm. Allow your loved one to do the washing, if possible. To assist, put a warm soapy washcloth in her hand and then move her hand to do the cleaning, especially for the briefs area. Wash the back and feet in a gentle massage-like fashion, encouraging your loved one to relax. Be sure to explain what you will do next and say what you're doing, such as "Next, let's wash under your arms. Lift your arm. Now, we'll wash under your arms." During the bath, distract your loved one with a favorite subject; ("How about those Huskers?").

Finish strong—with praise. Compliment a fresh and dapper appearance and mention the reward that has been earned. People with dementia, like everyone, appreciate praise and overcoming difficult tasks.

Adapt and have options. Your loved one will be safer if bathing is a calm experience. If you see agitation, consider alternatives to a traditional bath or shower, such as skipping the bath and sometime later, having a sponge bath in a warm room with soft music playing. Try shampooing and bathing on separate days, to make the tasks easier. Many caregivers prefer rinse-free shampoo caps for most hair cleansing. You'll need a variety of tools to help you get the bathing job done.

Adjust your expectations, too. A bath 2-3 times a week is fine, as long as the briefs area is kept clean and dry. Most caregivers find bathing ceases to be an issue, as Alzheimer's progresses.

*Lee Nyberg serves older adults and their families through education on aging issues and her company, Home Care Assistance. [HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com](http://HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com)*

# BOBCAT BASKETBALL

## Womens

10/28	Grace Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/4	College of St. Mary	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/8	Mount Marty College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/12	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
11/13	Wayne State College (Exhibition)	Wayne, NE	1:00 p.m.
11/16	Missouri Valley College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/19	MidAmerica-Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	2:00 p.m.
11/22	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	5:30 p.m.
11/25	Augustana College (Exhibition)	Sioux Falls, SD	2:00 p.m.
11/28	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
12/1	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
12/3	Benedictine College	Atchison, KS	2:00 p.m.
12/10	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
1/2	Washburn Univ.	Topeka, KS	5:30 p.m.
1/4	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/7	Baker University	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/9	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	5:30 p.m.
1/12	Avila Univ.	Kansas City, MO	5:30 p.m.
1/14	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/18	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	5:30 p.m.
1/21	Evangel Univ.	Springfield, MO	2:00 p.m.
1/25	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/28	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/30	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/2	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	5:30 p.m.
2/4	Benedictine College (Senior Day)	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
2/8	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/11	Clarke University	Dubuque, IA	12:00 p.m.
2/15	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/18	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City, KS	2:00 p.m.
2/22	Avila Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/25	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	2:00 p.m.

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# 2016-2017 SEASON

## Mens

11/1	Northwestern College	Peru, NE	7:00 p.m.
11/4	Briar Cliff Univ.	Sioux City, IA	7:30 p.m.
11/8	Park Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
11/12	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
11/16	Missouri Valley College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
11/19	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	4:00 p.m.
11/22	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	7:30 p.m.
11/25	Augustana Univ.	Sioux Falls, SD	4:00 p.m.
11/28	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
12/1	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
12/3	Benedictine College	Atchison, KS	4:00 p.m.
12/6	University of Mary	Bismarck, ND	7:00 p.m.
12/10	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/2	Washburn Univ.	Topeka, KS	7:30 p.m.
1/4	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/7	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
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