



Cheering on the PSC Basketball Team



American Bald Eagle, Highway 136.

More Eagle Photos Inside.

Hoyt Street Jazz Ensemble performs on December 5 at PSC



Hoyt Street Jazz Ensemble performing in the Student Center.





The Hoyt Street Jazz Ensemble will perform on December 5 at 6:00 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center. Admission is free and open to the public.

The concert will include holiday music and pieces by Tito Puente, Horace Silver, Mongo Santamaria and Stevie Wonder. Mark Benson, director of the jazz ensemble, said “The students have been working hard to prepare for this concert. We hope you will join us on December 5.”

To learn more about Peru State’s Jazz Band, contact Mark Benson at mbenson@peru.edu or visit www.peru.edu/music

A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126
Peru, Nebraska 68421
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*“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where
there is no path and leave a trail.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

December Contributors

Devon Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Dorothy Rieke
Janet Sobczyk

Thank You!

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The Doll That Made Christmas Special

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

I suppose some people would say Christmas was a dreary holiday during the Great Depression. It was not. We appreciated everything we received and valued the season with its special music and kind acts.

As a child, I always looked forward to the arrival of the Sears Roebuck and the Montgomery Ward catalogs. I spent hours looking through those catalogs dreaming of what it would be like to have everything I wanted to celebrate Christmas.

One year just before Christmas, as I was looking at the dolls in one of the catalogs, I saw the prettiest doll I had ever seen. She had raven black hair and blue eyes. She wore a beautiful white gown trimmed with lace. Of course, I coveted that doll the minute I saw her. Oh, if I could just have that doll for Christmas!

I looked around and saw Mother too busy to talk about dolls. Later, when Dad came in for dinner, I showed him the doll's picture. I timidly asked, "Do you think Santa Claus could bring me this doll?" He paused and then said, "Dorothy, you have several dolls. I think he would give that doll to another little girl who had no dolls."

"But, Daddy, she is so beautiful! I really want her for my own." "I am sorry, dear, but I think some other little girl will have that doll." I did not like to hear that.

Later in the week, we visited my Dad's Aunt Em. I was sitting at her kitchen table eating cookies when I spied the same catalog on the table. Of course, I told her about the doll which I had named Nancy.

She looked at the picture of the doll and admired it. I knew she was poor also, so I did not expect her to buy the doll for me.

Christmas came with all its beauty and excitement. We attended the Christmas eve service and returned home to open our gifts. I really did not expect to get the doll, and I did not. Dad had constructed a doll bed for my dolls, and Mother made new clothes for them.

The next day, Mother prepared Christmas Day dinner. Nearly everyone was there but Aunt Em. Mother told me to look outside to see if her car was parked out there. I ran to the door and saw her car coming up the hill. She parked the car and got out. I ran toward her exclaiming "Merry Christmas!"

She opened the back door of her car and lifted out a doll. She handed the doll to me. I stuttered, "The NNNNancy doll!" Tears came to my eyes. "The Nancy doll!" Aunt Em said, "Not really, dear, but it is as close as I could make it." She had made a doll. She dressed it in materials cut from some of her dresses. That doll was so special! I still treasure her.

Christmas is a time of giving and a time of receiving. Somehow, the giving often becomes more meaningful than what we receive. Aunt Em certainly knew that.

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Here Comes 2020!!

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Christmas is almost here, and then New Year's Day follows shortly after. In regard to New Year's resolutions, I would like to encourage you to make plans for 2020 rather than resolutions. Plans can be revised, but to cause a resolution to change means failure. And on the average, resolutions are broken by January 17th. So why set yourself up for failure? Good intentions can result in over-enthusiastic promises to ourselves that are doomed to fail.

For example, want to begin exercising? 'Plan' to exercise five minutes every other day or three times a week. After two weeks increase to seven or ten minutes, or alternately, increase exercise frequency to daily. Create your own plan, but begin with baby steps to avoid stumbling, or falling off your plan entirely. But if you do, revise your plan and begin again. The key points are patience and consistency.

Here's some motivation; You can cut your risk of early death by exercising. A little exercise may not do much for weight loss, but it could do a lot to make you healthier, feel better, and live longer. For example, a study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine suggests that even running just once a week can lower your risk of early death by 27%.

The confusing conclusion is; "Nearly any amount of running for less than 50 minutes a week." At the maximum, that's about ten minutes per mile, one mile per day, five days a week. They didn't find any evidence that running more than this is any more beneficial. And running less can be just as good!

But don't think that a 10-minute mile is easy. I began exercising by walking four blocks daily to the Post Office. At first I kept track with my wrist watch, but now I have a "smart" phone and I downloaded the "Runkeeper" app. It's free in the App Store for iPhones. I forget how to get apps for Android phones. Visit your phone supplier or high school relative.

Find the activity you enjoy the most. Stick with it. And walk as much as you can, if you can't run. A 15 or 16 minute mile is a fast walk.



Street in Sabetha, November 2019



Mansion in Nebraska City, November 2019



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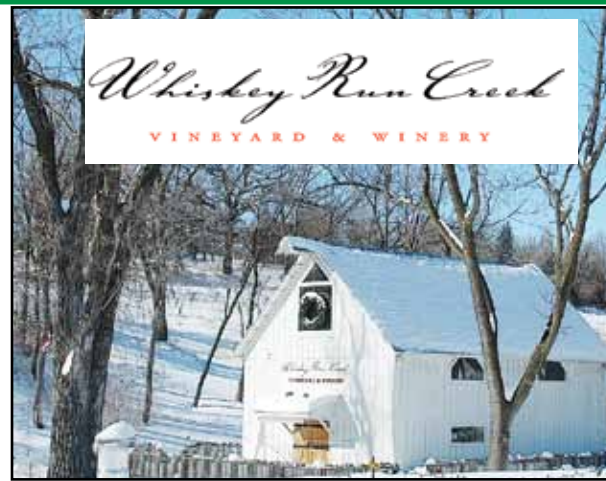
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American Bald Eagle

Photos taken near Brownville, November 2019.

This might be the eagle that has a nest near Rock Port, not far away. I've seen it in this tree often. I'm guessing it's a "hunting perch."



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The *American Pelican*, one of only two Pelican species in North America. Lower right corner is the black neck and head of a *Cormorant*, sometimes called "the snake bird." You can see why. The *Cormorant* does not have oily feathers, so it cannot 'float' on the water's surface.

See larger view of both species on page 8.

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SNOW ANGELS

“We’re at grandma’s house today because it’s Christmas, and our family’s heart is here. We always come, because that’s what we do, our parents said,” the kids declared. As luscious plumes of scent float through the rooms and out the doors that open often for more company, the kids are playing in the big white yard, making snowmen with crooked hats and walnut eyes and carrot noses. The big ones help the little ones, as their busy bodies build up appetites big enough to hold at least one helping, maybe more. And then a mom calls from the open kitchen door, “It’s time for snow angels!” Like puppets dancing on a stage, the children line up, then fall flat on their backs before the arms and legs begin to flail. With glee and giggles, the bodies wiggle until the tummies are so empty they can’t wait one moment more. Then Grandma says to her real life living angels, “Dinner’s ready. Come on in!”

SNOW DANCER

The tiny lady in the tutu dances to a tune that jingles through the falling snow. She wears a crown of sparkling diamonds that twinkles as she twirls on toes that tap in satin shoes. Her hair is twisted in a bun, and she’s wearing fairy wings that shimmer in the sun. But she isn’t chilly, because she isn’t really real. She lives inside a crystal globe. Her music plays when twisted with a key, and the falling flakes are fake, floating in a pool of water trapped inside the bubble of a glass.

P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

HEATED POOLS

They don’t know why there is open water for them to drink, but critters don’t really care how it got there. It is enough to know that there is a place they can drink when the land has been sealed under a layer of ice. Humans may seem to be an alien species to birds and the four-footed creatures among us, but we score some points for compassion, with inventions like electricity and heated water. Then there is a magical day when an apparition appears in the midst of a soft storm of snow flakes falling like lace out of gray sky blankets. In the flash of a second, a group of bluebirds is perching around the rim of your bird bath, having a party. Where they came from is a mystery, and you may not see them again, but hold the sight in your heart forever!

REMEMBER THAT?

Now that the leaves have fallen and we’ve had a taste of cold and snow, our memories have been shaken out of an autumn trance. Instead of hoping for Indian Summer, and dreaming of a “warm” winter, folks must admit that things may not go well. No matter how many letters they write to Santa asking him to carry out his deliveries in an SUV on dry roads, with the windows rolled down, the chances are really good that Rudolph will have to help out. A giant storm is likely to paralyze holiday travel on roads and in planes. We will sit in the dark, wrapped in blankets, unable to access our electronic heartbeats, eating out of cans, and counting the number of batteries that are left. But don’t worry, by next summer we’ll be wishing once more for a winter fantasy made of dreams.

BLOOMING WINDOWS

Inside and outside are not the same. Icicles drip from the eaves, and there are white drifts over the winter roses and the shriveled zinnia stalks. But things are bright in the sunny corner of the kitchen. The antique table covered by Grandma’s lace holds pots of Christmas cactus and geraniums that fight each other for the hottest blooms of color. Violets are velvet leaves from Africa, and exotic orchids nod their haughty heads at the frigid landscape in the yard, taking the warmth for granted, like royalty.

TRACKING

The wind was hiding last night, as an inch of powder fell evenly on every surface. As the early sun glows through strips of fog along the river, words can be seen, written by feet walking in the snow. Sentences wander by trees and crawl under bushes and out again, with exact outlines of toes and claws and hooves. Whispers of feathers leave fan marks where tracks stopped and wings lifted into the frigid air. A few drips of blood are left where a silent owl stabbed and grabbed a mouse with his sharp talons. Not far away is more blood and a bunny tail where rabbit toes and coyote feet did a meet and greet and die collision. At the edge of the timber, hoof beats stop, as deer wearing gray ghost costumes stare back at the human making his own tracks.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Dateline: Savannah, Georgia

It sure doesn't take long to forget about your "real" life when you're on vacation. That is pretty much the point of getting away from it all, right? Except when you didn't actually mean to forget about your real life entirely.

I knew in advance that I would need to compose this month's column from Georgia, but did I remember to do it yesterday as I had planned? Of course not. It took an email reminder from my publisher to get me on track. It's such a gorgeous day here in Savannah that I hate to be spending it sitting inside tapping away on the laptop. But duty calls!

Our home-away-from-home this year is an apartment directly across the street from the Colonial Park Cemetery. There are many historically significant people buried in this cemetery whose accomplishments are memorialized by official State historical markers. Such is the case with one particular young man who died in 1815.

His name was James Wilde. His historical marker reads in part, "The epitaph to James Wilde on the nearby tomb is a melancholy reminder of the days of duelling and, particularly, of a tragic affair of honor fought January 16, 1815, on the Carolina side of the river near Savannah. Lieutenant Wilde was shot through the heart in a fourth exchange of fire...." Can you imagine? These two men had three opportunities to come to their senses. Instead they shot at each other a FOURTH time and finally ended the duel.

This matter of dueling to the death over honor is incomprehensible to most of us. It is to me, anyway. But is it so different from the gang shootings that happen all too frequently in Omaha? James Wilde's marker goes on to report that "The nature of their quarrel is unknown."

I can't help but think of the news articles about those Omaha gang shootings. How often has a grieving relative or friend been quoted lamenting that the victim had "just started to turn his life around" when the bullet cut his life short.

James' brother, Richard Henry Wilde, was a poet and statesman. He had apparently intended to write an epic poem based on James' descriptions of Florida made while serving in the Army. The poem was never finished, but is remembered for the beauty of its opening stanza:

"My life is like the Summer Rose
That opens to the morning sky;
But ere the shades of evening close
Is scattered on the ground ~ to die."

You may wonder about my motivation for writing about such a sad topic during the Christmas season. I didn't set out to throw a wet blanket on the festivities that I hope you are all enjoying. But perhaps amid the joy and celebration, a bit of reflection is in order.

"Peace on earth" was proclaimed by angels over 2,000 years ago. My Christmas prayer for all of you is that peace will reign in your family and community this Christmas season and in the new year.

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The Year Christmas Came Before Advent

Janet Sobczyk, © 2019, Omaha



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Mansion in Auburn

Recently I was perusing the holiday section of a children's library and noticed there are so many picture books about some character or another saving Christmas. The message seems to be that humans (and animated characters, too) will go to great lengths to make sure Santa comes. The last illustration usually shows the character who did the saving, surrounded by smiling loved ones. That is the real message. Christmas is saved when people can be with their loved ones.

Preserving traditions around important holidays keeps families bonded together. But what happens when family members can't make it home for the holiday? Often times the answer is to move the date. With tight work schedules and travel from long distances many families opt to celebrate a holiday on the weekend before or after the actual date. And that's perfectly fine.

When my siblings and I grew up we all settled in different states: Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado. My brother who is now in Colorado was in the Air Force, so his state changed several times through the years.

In the early years we still managed (or attempted) to get together for Christmas with my parents. I remember one of the last years we all gathered at their house, bad weather was an issue. Everyone from close states made it, but my sister from MN had to find a motel for refuge from the storm.

Mom was so upset with the worry of everyone arriving safely that she couldn't enjoy Christmas Eve at all. "We can't start anything until she gets here" was her refrain as we tried to come up with things to do that evening. So, at the risk of one daughter missing out on a fun moment, the rest of us had a boring time. We did thoroughly enjoy Christmas Day together when she arrived the next morning. But the lesson I learned was to expect that these things can happen and just enjoy being with the ones who can be there.

So now my own children are grown and some of them have to travel to get home for Christmas. I understand the worry of my mother better now. When the weather is bad, I'm inclined to say, "Stay put and enjoy whatever you can make of it, wherever you are. We can be together another day. It's not worth risking lives."

Although weather can always be a factor, another issue that faces young married couples is finding ways to be with both sides of the family. That's especially hard when the parents and the in-laws live in different states. It's only fair to alternate, so that's why three of our five children will not be home for Christmas this year. That's okay. We just moved our celebration to another date. What's important is that we can be together, right? Well, the only time that works for all of us this year is.... Thanksgiving weekend.

We'll have the big turkey dinner Thursday, shop and put up the tree on Black Friday, then have a ham dinner and presents on Saturday. It's a perfectly logical plan, and I'm sure we'll have a great time. But it strikes me as odd that we'll be done with Christmas before the first day of Advent.

By the time this December issue of *Your Country Neighbor* comes out, we'll be done. As everybody else endures the crazy Christmas rush, we'll be done. As people are busy wrapping gifts, ours have already been opened.

Hearing Christmas carols throughout December might feel like hearing them in January. Enough already! Or maybe I'll feel the way a friend predicted, "Just think. You'll have time to sit back and enjoy the music and lights." And the nativity set, with everything it symbolizes: family, faith, hope of salvation. Add some eggnog and Christmas movies and we're good!

The last PSC home football game of the season was a good one for the Seniors and Bobcat fans, with a win over the Wildcats of Graceland University.



I don't remember a season with so many blocked punts!



One of four touchdowns. PSC 34-3 over Graceland.



I don't remember if this was a completed pass, but I like the photo.

A "Window" From The Past

Stephen Hassler, Peru

One evening on my porch in early April it felt like a quiet Summer evening. It was between dusk and darkness, seventy degrees, and very still. The birds had ceased their evening chatter. My laptop computer and I were in a comfortable chair not quite of living room quality. As the darkness approached, the street lights awakened with a gentle glow, then brightened to half-way. The gray-blue sky darkened to a satin black, and the silhouettes of the trees blended into the dark, distant hills.

The sudden change in light made me feel as if there were some other place I should be, as if I were staying up late on a school night and my mother would catch me at any moment. I paused to deepen my awareness of the magic feeling, but moment by moment my eyes registered fewer and fewer shapes and the stillness said nothing to my ears. Various memories teased my senses. One was of my father carrying milk pails to the milk-house, the country yardlight illuminating the side of the barn, the warm white stuff sloshing over the rims, and kittens scampering at his heels. Another was of me with my first steady girlfriend watching a full moon rise over the Missouri River, and below the overlook, a barge's pusher-tug swept its spotlight from one bank to the other while chugging up the river.

There seem to be moments in my memory that would leave holes in my life if they were absent; special Summer evenings, perfect Friday afternoons, or a Winter's snowfall watched through the dining room window. Often in our tedious lives such moments are like beacons that flash, and then they are gone, but they are reminders that there is more in life than tedium.

I went to visit a friend the other day. It was late morning, but he had fallen asleep with the television on. These days he was more of a tired soul than the friend I used to joke with, have lunch with, visit with... and now he was becoming one of those special moments... a late evening silhouette soon to be one with the darkness, a hole in my life.

I closed my computer and went inside, knowing that the magic was gone until next week or next month when a pointed awareness would make me wish I could stop time and make the feeling last. Time doesn't stop, but that in turn guarantees that tomorrow's dawn will bring new possibilities of special moments, as well as all the rest of life that happens before dusk, before we fade away into the dark.

My Christmas wish for you is that you experience one of those special moments. Embrace it in the fleeting interval that it happens, and look forward to more of them to come, rare though they may be.



Peru State College Women's Basketball

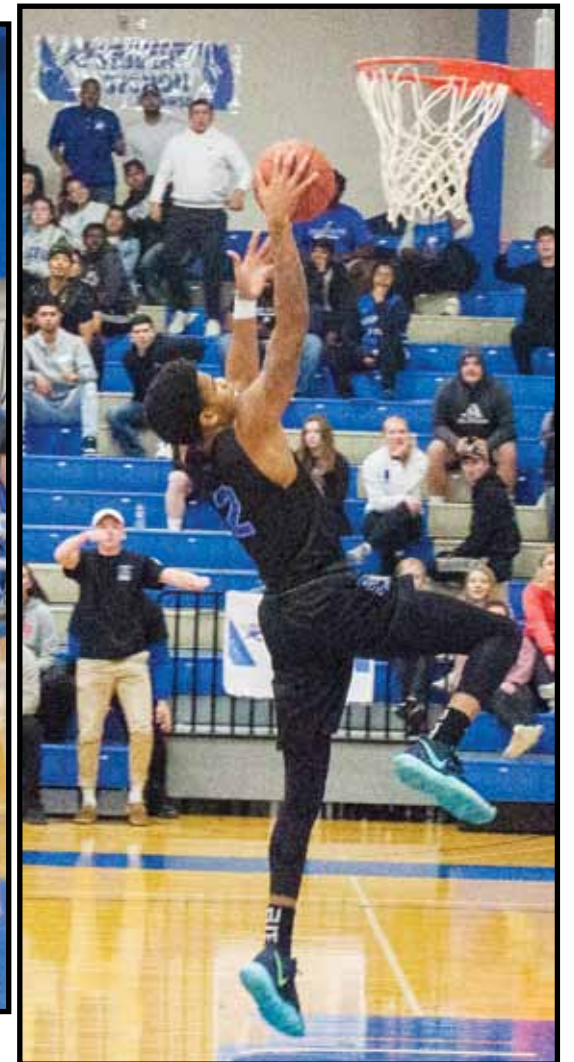
Peru State v. Culver-Stockton & Missouri Valley





Peru State College Men's Basketball

Peru State v. Culver-Stockton & Missouri Valley



PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

Peru State Hosts Student Leadership Conference

Peru State hosted the 2019 Nebraska State College System Leadership Conference. Students representing the Student Senate organizations of Peru State, Wayne State and Chadron State all attended the event.

The theme for the conference this year was “Leading Through Adversity” with a goal to provide a great opportunity for all students to collaborate and grow as student leaders. All leaders are faced with good times and bad times. It is easy to lead in the good times, but it is in the bad times that a leader shows who they are and how they handle adversity.

Thomas Veleba (Pawnee City, NE), Vice President of Peru State’s Student Senate, said, “We were fortunate to have such a great line-up of speakers for students, faculty, and community members to collaborate with throughout the day. It was a great day for everybody to learn and experience some of the many values it takes to be a leader in all areas of life.”

A wide-variety of speakers presented at the conference:

- Shawna Bindle, Mayor of Falls City, “Leadership and Influence.”
- Dr. Greg Galardi, Professor of Business, Peru State College, “Lumps and Bumps on the Road to Leadership.”
- Crystal Hutson, Director of Student Activities and Programs, Peru State College, “How to Fuel Motivation.”
- Kayla Meyers (Sidney, IA) and Kristin Sanford (Lincoln, NE), Student Leaders, Peru State College, “Leadership Styles.”
- Dr. Kristi Nies, Professor of English, Peru State College, “Well, That Was a Train Wreck.”
- Dr. Kyle Ryan, Professor of Kinesiology, Peru State College, “Developing Resilience through Self-Assessment.”
- Julie Slama, Senator, Nebraska’s First District, “Stepping up to the Plate.”
- Aaron Thomas, Motivational Speaker and Author, Keynote Speaker: “Opportunities and Platform: Overcoming Adversity.”
- Dr. Paul Turman, Chancellor, Nebraska State College System, Introduction
- Ivan Wineglass, National Alumni Association Board of Directors, Peru State College, “Being Intentional for Life.”

The event was open to all students, faculty and community members who wished to attend.

Peru State Hosts Fourth Annual Art Day

The Peru State College Art Department hosted more than 130 aspiring high school artists on campus as part of the fourth annual Art Day. Art Day seeks to connect the region’s young artists with the faculty, current majors, alumni and friends of the Art Department in ways that encourages continued exploration of the arts.

Visiting students and teachers were welcomed to campus by special guest artist Susan Knight. Knight is an Omaha-based painter, paper and installation artist. She has been commissioned to create a special piece for Peru State as part of Nebraska’s 1% for art commitment and renovations of the College’s Performing Arts Center.

Susan Moore, assistant professor of Art at Peru State, writes, “I was amazed with the turnout this year! And I was over the moon with the new workshops and our guest artist this year – it is always exciting seeing new and diverse artwork and art processes.”

Students and teachers were then able to choose from four workshops.

- Fine Art Workshop: Dynamic Paper Cutting – with guest artist Susan Knight
- 3D Design Workshop: Sculpture Construction with Peru State Students
- Graphic Design Workshop: Logo Art Designing with Peru State alumni, business owner and entrepreneur, Logan Merz
- Teacher Workshop: Target, Method, Match with Peru State alumni, former Peru State faculty member and nationally recognized cartoonist, Paul Fell

In addition to the artistic workshops, attending students were able to tour campus and the art department, meet and greet current art majors, and have lunch in the newly renovated cafeteria. Attending teachers were also able to participate in a teacher-led round table for addressing standards, curriculum innovations, and assessment approaches.

Students were also allowed up to three submissions to the juried exhibition that will be displayed and judged in the spring. Students could submit any drawing, painting, printmaking, graphic design, photograph, 3D (including sculpture and ceramics) or digital artwork completed during their high school career. All submissions were free.

In addition to winning the exhibition, outstanding entries may be eligible for scholarships worth thousands of dollars off a student-artist’s tuition at Peru State College. The exhibition will be displayed on a date still yet to be determined.



'19-'20 BOBCAT BASKETBALL

MEN'S

11/29	Northwestern College	Sioux Center, IA	5:00 p.m.
11/30	Dordt College	Sioux Center, IA	4:00 p.m.
12/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
12/5	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City,	7:30 p.m.
12/7	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
12/14	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	4:00 p.m.
12/28	Concordia Univ.	Seward, NE	3:00 p.m.
1/4	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/8	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/11	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/15	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/18	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/22	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	7:30 p.m.
1/25	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	4:00 p.m.
1/27	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/30	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/1	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	2:00 p.m.
2/4	Univ. of South Dakota	Vermillion, SD	7:00 p.m.
2/8	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/12	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/15	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/19	Benedictine Univ.	Atchison, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/22	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	4:00 p.m.
2/26	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/29	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
	Senior Day		



WOMEN'S

12/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
12/5	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City, KS	5:30 p.m.
12/7	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
12/14	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	2:00 p.m.
12/16	Missouri Western Univ. (EXH)	St. Joseph, MO	11:00 p.m.
12/18	College of St. Mary	Omaha, NE	6:00 p.m.
1/4	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
1/8	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/11	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	2:00 p.m.
1/15	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/18	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	2:00 p.m.
1/22	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	5:30 p.m.
1/25	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	2:00 p.m.
1/27	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/30	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	5:30 p.m.
2/1	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	12:00 p.m.
2/8	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
2/12	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
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2/29	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
	Senior Day		



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