

# Your *Country* Neighbor

Free

February, 2017

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The Woodpeckers are Active.



Sunset behind a Snow-Dusted Landscape along Highway 75, January 19, 2017.



A fun group at the annual 5K Fun Run, sponsored by *Whiskey Run Creek Vineyard & Winery* to benefit the Auburn Backpack Program.

Plan to join in the fun and program benefit in December, 2017.

Volume Eighteen, Number Two

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February 2017

## It's February!

Stephen Hassler

Most of my elementary school years were spent in a proverbial one-room schoolhouse. Mine was just a half mile from our farmhouse in northeast Nebraska. Winters were cold.

One very cold Winter many years ago, when I was about 13, my big old gray cat went away. I don't think of him as dying, just finding a barn with more mice, or perhaps a farmhouse with more throw-away food scraps. He was the only cat I ever had that went sparrow hunting with me and my BB gun. That was a cold Winter in northeast Nebraska, where I grew up on my father's farm.

We had some cold in Nebraska last month, but 20 below was not uncommon back there in the 1950's. I think it was the geography, but maybe the 50's were just colder. And when Ground Hog day came around, I was confused to hear that when he saw his shadow we were to expect "Six more weeks of Winter." I always wondered, "Huh, only six? What's with that?" Winter usually lasted until mid April or later back then. Come February I would take just six more weeks of Winter any year. Never in those younger years of mine did I experience 70 degrees in March. "Warm" was 40 degrees, or when the snow would 'stick' for making snowmen or snowballs. "Warm" was when the pigs' water-troughs were not frozen in the morning, requiring the kerosene lamps under them to be relit. Try striking a match with two pairs of gloves on. When my glove caught fire one time, I couldn't feel it. I just put it out in the snow. Actually, it was my father's glove pulled over my own.

February was also the month of "calving". I guess nature's plan was for the baby cows to have all Spring and Summer to fatten up before the next Winter came along, assuring they could withstand the harshness of the Winter to come.

Momma cow would prefer privacy during delivery, so she would try to find a spot to hide on our 160 acre farm, or she went to the farthest corner so that a cold Winter's hike was necessary for me to inspect the newborn. Didn't she know the barn was warmer than open cornfield stubble? But within a day or so the little one had the strength to follow momma home to the watering tank and the barn. No further inspection required.

So come February, my heart grows fonder, not just because of Valentine's Day, but for Ground Hog Day, when the worst is over. Only six more weeks of Winter. I can handle that.

## Your Country Neighbor

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## February Writers

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Stephen Hassler

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Marilyn Woerth

**Thank You!**

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P036333 10/03



I pondered and I wandered—wondering what in the world had just happened. At last, I stopped walking. I had to know the rest-of-the-story! Why would a woman come up to an utter stranger and casually hand her a heart-shaped rock?

I turned around and began retracing my steps until I found the woman further down the shoreline. I recognized her immediately. She was standing there talking to another gal who was wearing a big sunhat just like mine.

The two women looked at me expectantly as I approached.

“Excuse me,” I said to the first woman—the one who had handed me the rock. “I just want to thank you for the heart-shaped rock. I really needed it, today! I was feeling sorry for myself and—” I trailed off.

The woman was staring at me blankly without recognition in her eyes. She shook her head. “I didn’t give you a rock...!” she said.

I was perplexed. I turned to the other woman—the one wearing a sunhat. “Did you give me the heart-rock?”

She shook her head, looking totally bewildered. The two women stood there staring at me like I had rocks in my head—instead of my hand.

Something was very wrong. I felt like I’d entered the Twilight Zone.

“Look here,” I said, clutching the heart-rock tightly. “I know I’m not crazy! One of you walked up to me and handed me this rock. You said: ‘From my Heart to Yours!’”

Slowly, a light began to dawn in the first woman’s eyes. “Oh!” she said, eyeing the rock cautiously. “That must have been me! But I thought I was giving the heart-rock to my sister, here,” she said, indicating the woman wearing the sunhat.

Then she frowned and shook her head. “How did I make a mistake like that?” She stared at me, bemused. “Well...I guess it’s because you’re wearing a sunhat like hers, and you are both about the same size! I got the two of you mixed up!” Her frown turned to a smile. “Anyway...that’s what happened,” she said, motioning to the other woman. “I thought I was giving the heart-rock to my sister, Vic—”

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“Vic...?” I said. It was my turn to stare. I stood looking at the two of them in confounded disbelief. “Did you say ‘Vic’?” My Twilight Zone had just deepened. My brain felt like it couldn’t handle any more surprises. “Your sister’s name is ‘Vic’...?” I said. “But that’s my name too!”

It was too ironic. Too unbelievable. My brain was in a whirl and so was theirs! We all started to giggle. We laughed and laughed while the sun sank lower in the sky.

“So—” I said when we were finally done laughing. “What happened is—you gave the heart-rock to the wrong Vic....!” Then I stopped and corrected myself. “No...actually—you gave it to the right Vic! You just didn’t know it!”

We all burst out laughing again. The irony was too much.

Sometimes, reality is so much stranger than fiction! It’s beyond comprehension... and you just have to laugh! There’s nothing else to do.

The good Lord has a great sense of humor, my Country Neighbor.... A wonderful sense of humor, indeed! And He knows how to comfort us when we need it most....

There is no doubt about that!

# Poetry by Devon Adams

## FLEETING FRAGMENTS

A feather falls from the flying goose, part of it's wind machine.

Trees are wrapped in a coat of clear, cold glass that breaks in brittle branches.

The wren waits for the snowflakes to change into flowers.

Cold hearts beat alone until they find each other.

The sun falls over the edge of night into tomorrow on the other side of earth.

Birds sitting in a row are music notes written on a power line.

The world is captured inside a rain drop hanging from a twig.

Warm sun melts winter on the south side of the hill, but north side shadows hide from spring.

Simple single notes change to mating songs, sung by birds celebrating spring.

Former cats and lovers still stalk the dreams of those who loved them.

Spring comes early to the Platte, dressed in costume as a Sandhill Crane.

Shell pink blushes through the evening sky, as a soft wind caresses melting snow.

With eyes wide open, the owl and the moon see everything at once.

The story of the storm is written in fresh snow by busy feet making up words as they walk.

Tiny crocus fingers push up through the snow, and kiss the sun.

Cold snow quilts are spread upon the ground, stitched with brown tree thread and embroidered with bright feathers.

An eagle watches from his perch in a cottonwood, as the flowing river swims with fish.

Soon the blue heron will return to his hunting ground, and the ice will be water.

Only half as full, but rich with gold, the moon sneaked over the hill into the sky.

The view was all but gone, forgotten in the fog.

Coyotes sing night songs about blood and the moon.

The mouse in dry grass makes a fatal sneeze, all that the locked and loaded cat needed to spring.

Rain on the metal roof sounds like a thousand marbles dropped from heaven.

Opening the front door of a book is like stepping into a separate world.

The cooking in the kitchen sends clouds of scent through all the rooms and out the cracks in the walls into the street.

Grackle birds are a shimmer of broken rainbows.

The old cat dreams that he is young, as does the withered old man who is holding him.

The calves are coming anyway, in spite of the weather, because they don't have a vote about the calendar.

Buried bottles behind the old shed share space with broken plates and cups and cans that used to live in the kitchen.

Twins are due soon, and their baby spots will be dappled in the shade, when the doe leaves to forage.



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Continued from page 6

and breast were covered by a small branch. The only true way of telling the difference. So for now they were calling it a Bewick's wren but kept an eye out hoping their newest visitor would once again stop by for a well earned snack.

The days since the sighting of the wren have gone from below zero, to freezing rain, to ice, to melting snow and ice and back to fall weather but the hyper little bird has not been seen again. The birders still keep an eye out for him as well as any new-comers that might venture their way. All are welcome to the feast.

Hoping that you are enjoying your winter hobbies as much as my husband and I are enjoying ours where life is good. Happy Valentine's Day to all of you, you're very special.



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**Diary of a Part-time Housewife**  
 Merri Johnson

I remember thinking last winter that I was going to accomplish a lot of indoor projects because there would be no gardening to take up my time. Somehow, most of the projects never got done.

The free time I thought I would have was dedicated to travel instead of gardening. When you're retired, that's supposed to be a good thing. Travel, I mean. And it is good to travel, but you can easily fritter away a whole winter's worth of project time running around to warmer climes so you can be outside. All of a sudden, it's nearly spring and you still haven't turned the mattress or cleaned the hall closet or re-organized the garage. It will be time to start gardening and the garden tools will still be awaiting their fall cleanup and maintenance.

I'm hoping that by being conscious of the "travel trap," I will do better this year. But "hope" is not a plan.

Right now, hubby and I are in Texas visiting his older siblings. From here, we go to Arizona to visit more family and friends. We've already added an extra day to our return trip, so we will be getting back to Nebraska about the time you read this. A few weeks after that, we are scheduled to stay with our grandchildren for a week while their parents go on vacation. It will be March by the time we will have had a stretch of more than three weeks between trips of one sort or another since mid-November.

March. Almost gardening time. Jeepers. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I must develop a plan NOW to be sure I get something done in February.

Number One: identify most urgent projects. OK, so none of them are exactly "urgent."

New Number One: identify projects that require hubby. That's more like it. I really want the laundry room re-do done before April. Because unless it's raining, hubby will be golfing then.

Number Two: buckle down and finish organizing paperwork in the office. That one is all on me.

Number Three: Clean garden tools, especially pruners, since February is pruning month for our corner of the world.

I know it's practically heretical to wish for a late spring, but without it, I risk a second failed winter. Please don't hate me for hoping Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow this year.

Yes, we all know that the timing of Ground Hog Day merely confirms the date of the first day of spring, whether Phil sees his shadow or not. But isn't there something in each of us that longs to maintain a link with the intuitive view of nature? Or perhaps it's just my background, growing up on a farm, where the rhythms of nature set the pattern for your life. You worked outdoors spring through fall, and in the winter, you WORKED inside. You couldn't allow yourself – or your garden tools – to get rusty. Just sitting around on your duff all winter wasn't an option.

I think I just need to channel my grandfather. If I can emulate his work ethic for even a few weeks, I can get a lot done before gardening season starts again.



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PSC Oak Bowl Stadium at dusk, January 28, 2017

# PSC Basketball, January 2017



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# Alzheimer's Affects Us All



## Alzheimer's Caregivers: Ways To Make The Best Of Your Health (And Your Loved One's, Too)

By Lee Nyberg

Caregiving could be characterized as a meandering journey through an unknown land. The beginning is the best time to establish your approach, because this is when the challenges are the lightest.

Decide how you will care for yourself and your loved one. In early stage Alzheimer's your loved one likely retains enough cognitive ability to pursue most of the following recommendations with you. You'll both be healthier and potentially happier, when you feel good physically.

Start where you are, and get moving. Check out this website: [go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercises](http://go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercises). It's free, (your tax dollars have already paid for it!), and made to help you identify your current fitness level, design a plan with goals, and stay motivated. You'll find exercises covering the big 4: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. As you and your loved one work on these areas, you'll both see benefits: improved cognitive ability, greater strength, and reduced fall risk.

Use your pharmacist and doctor to shape up your medications, but do some homework first. Even if you buy your prescriptions via mail order, your pharmacist can review your medications, and your loved one's. Before your visit or call, create a list of the following for each of you:

- All medications, by prescribing doctor, and the reasons to take (over-the-counter, too)
- Note when each medication's target (a sign or symptom) was last reviewed by a doctor, and any key changes
- How long each medication has been taken

Some medications reduce your cognitive abilities, such as benzodiazepines (e.g. Ativan or Valium), sedatives (Ambien and Lunesta), and anticholinergics (Benedryl). Mental sharpness is worth the effort to avoid these; check with your doctor for alternatives.

Avoid "White Coat Hypertension." Your doctor's office might make your blood pressure skyrocket. Check it monthly with a home blood pressure monitor. Pass these more accurate readings on to your doctor for further help with medication management. See Geriatrician Dr. Leslie Kernisan's how to: [betterhealthwhileaging.net/how-to-use-a-home-blood-pressure-monitor](http://betterhealthwhileaging.net/how-to-use-a-home-blood-pressure-monitor).

Think it through. While your loved one has the cognitive ability, help him or her work through "5 Wishes," a living will/thought process that helps one review personal, emotional and spiritual needs, and medical wishes, ([agingwithdignity.org](http://agingwithdignity.org)). Since everyone over the age of 18 can benefit, this is a good exercise for you, too. Clarifying desires for important phases in your life can help you sleep easier.

It's Bucket List Time. Now may be a great opportunity to do some wonderful things. Sometimes people stay in the early stages of Alzheimer's for several years, keeping a good portion of their cognitive abilities during that period. My parents played golf together for 2 years after my mother's dementia meant she had to leave her financial planning practice. What's on your list? How about your loved one's list?

While you're thinking about changes for 2017, plan to pace yourself. Tackle 1 or 2 each month. The overall goal is to make lasting changes for the sake of your health, not just tick off one more "to do" item.

What will your next set of goals be? Walt Disney said, "If you don't know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take."

Lee Nyberg serves older adults and their families through education on dementia and her company, Home Care Assistance.

# 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.
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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.
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1/21	Evangel Univ.	Springfield, MO	4:00 p.m.
1/25	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/28	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
1/30	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/2	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	7:30 p.m.
2/4	Benedictine College (Senior Day)	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/8	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/11	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	2:00 p.m.
2/15	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/18	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City, KS	4:00 p.m.
2/22	Avila Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/25	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	4:00 p.m.



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