

Your *Country* Neighbor

Free

February 2018

Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Hiawatha • Johnson • Nebraska City • Peru • Rock Port • Sabetha • Syracuse • Tecumseh
A Magazine for Small Towns and Rural America



Foggy misty morning on the Missouri. The *Captain Meriwether Lewis* is to the right.



Peru State Basketball Photos
Women's on page 4, Men's on page 9



I think of the Cardinal as Nature's Valentine

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

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Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



I say good
You say bad
You say good
I say, well
I guess I could
We never agree
And that's the way
It'll always be

We've been together
For way too long
I've been weak
But I try to be strong
Guess that's the way
it's going to be

Sometimes
just wanna be alone
Out on the road
Trying to get home
Where I can be
Just what I
wanna be

And do what I want
And see what I can
And try to get back
To Just being a man

It's not as easy
As you would think it would be...

Your Country Neighbor
P.O. Box 126
Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net

View Online at
www.yourcountryneighbor.com

February Writers

Devon Adams
Steve Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Merlin Wright

Thank You!

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P036333 10/03

Caffeine Musings

Merlin Wright

It does not take much to amuse me and keep me inside if the outdoor temperature is near zero.

The price per pound of birdfeed is less in the forty pound sack, and so I buy that size instead of the 20 pound sack. One winter I kept a record of how much I spent on birdfeed but decided to never do that again. I rationalize many decisions I make and am convinced that feeding birds is cheap entertainment compared to driving to town to watch a movie.

We often sit by the south windows and watch birds eat sunflower chips. Before the snow in December we could expect to see five male cardinals each evening as two would eat and three would wait in the nearby pine tree. The birds don't sit still long and are difficult to count. When we have snow and bitter cold we sometimes count 15 male cardinals. When it is near zero the cardinals appear to be more tolerant of each other and five males share the platform feeder.

Our other wildlife thrill is the sundown visit of whitetail deer. Each afternoon I go get the mail at 3:00 or 4:00 P.M. and put a gallon of corn in a pan at the edge of the pasture. Usually three does come before 5:00 P.M. and sometimes three more stand at a distance and wait their turn. The first three leave before all the corn is consumed. We suppose the grouping of deer might be one older doe and two of her grown fawns. One other group is four does. Sometimes we also see a 6-point buck.

Our woodshed is still over half full and it looks as though there will be plenty of wood to carry in for the stove in the basement this winter. We both like to read by the stove and listen to the sound of the fire. Each morning I scoop the ashes into a covered bucket and Darlene proceeds to start a new fire. Sometimes the paper needs a match and sometimes the coals left in the stove restarts the fire. We both like to open the stove door during the day and toss in some wood. On real cold nights the heat pump starts shortly after midnight. I am reading a book [A Year in the Maine Woods] by [Bernd Heinrich]. He also uses yesterday's newspaper to start the morning fire. He said that in order to not waste it, sometimes he read it before burning it.

Photos on the internet have shown that people can toss a cup of boiling water into the zero degree air to make snow. I have finally done that and plan to again a few times. My question is, how hot does the water really need to be and how cold does the air need to be for the process to work? What I expect is that none of the water will hit the ground but all will freeze in the air into a cloud that looks like snow.



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Window On 5th Street

Stephen Hassler

The view of my town though my window on 5th street has changed (not surprisingly), from when I began this publication almost 20 years ago. Peru State is a more vibrant 4-year college, but the elementary school is gone. A new 'boulevard' now graces the entryway to Peru State College, and it also leads visitors to downtown Peru. Recently the VFW closed but the 5th Street Post opened in its place. Mainstreet Bank is a new name for Peru's bank, and they still count customers' change for free. Speaking of free, there's free air at Casey's, and Decker's grocery store will carry your purchase out to your car. There are two churches and two bars, and the cafe has changed names a few times.

There are fewer residents in Peru; much of rural America has been yielding to metropolitan ad-

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



Bobcat Basketball

Peru State at Home, January 2018



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Poetry by Devon Adams

HEART SIGNS

In a random dance on brand new snow, crimson cardinals formed a perfect heart. They didn't know, and didn't care, that it was Valentine's Day, but the lady at the window saw it all and knew it was a sign. Her one true love was sending her a message that would touch her heart, even though he couldn't touch her hand from his place in the starry skies of heaven. His heart still belonged to her, and he sent the lovely birds to let her know.

THE INNOCENT KILLERS

They don't need a license to kill, and their weapons come attached to their bodies when they are born. Some are destined to soar on the wind, and they sight their prey with magic eyes like telescopes, before they dive toward the ground and use sharp talons to trap their victim in a death grip. Some are born with fangs like knives, and steel muscles that propel their legs into mad rushes that bring down their quarries in explosions of dust and blood. Some are solitary assassins and some work in death squads. Others work in slow motion, like pythons who swallow bodies slowly, one ripple at a time. Each of them is caught in the web of their destiny.

FEASTING ON IDEAS

What is a library if it isn't a giant supermarket filled with unlimited ideas? Not only that, but they are all free. The internet simply expands the inventory into a digital universe. Imagine being able to walk out of a store with your shopping cart filled with all the favorite foods you've ever wanted, and knowing that you would be able to eat as much as you wanted and then go back for more. So it is with ideas that your brain devours. You can never eat too many, and there are always more to find.

FIRE IN THE STONE

Deep inside the purple depths of an amethyst gem, the light is bouncing into broken prisms, making rainbow colors from a cold stone formed inside the earth. As values go, it won't sell like perfect diamonds with clarity and cutting edges, but when it is the birthstone of your own month, its value comes from love and memories.

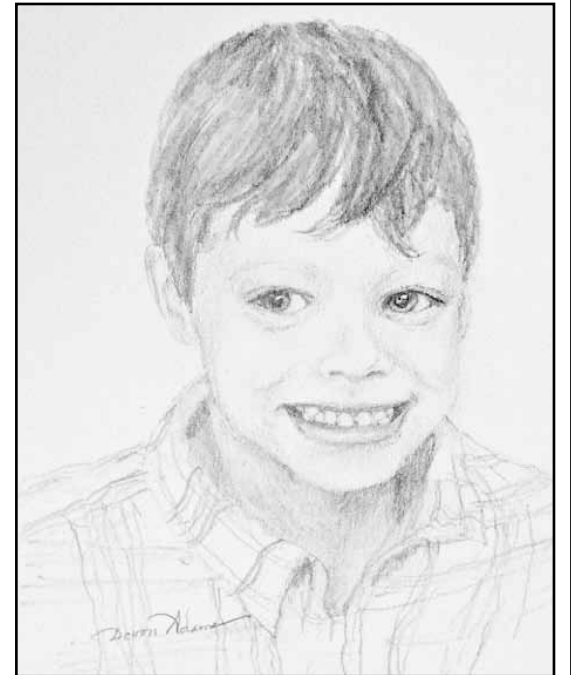
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WELCOME TO THE CAFETERIA

Food is on the table all day, every day. Granted, it isn't dead yet, but that is part of the attraction. Lovely, flashing colors adorn the dining room, and there are chirping sound effects to accompany dinner. Some of the guests are a bit brash and pushy in their quest to swallow sunflower seeds, but eventually the bluejays back off and allow the cardinals and other birds to gobble seeds and suet. That is when the other guest arrives. An invisible shadow, the cat creeps closer and closer, waiting until a victim lowers his head to pick out a kernel. With an instant leap, el tigre, with his claws and jaws, makes a meal out of the formerly feathered fowl.

WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

Conversations can be tricky when the person to whom you are speaking listens to only part of your words and then starts to argue with you before you've even finished a sentence. Or, he lets you finish speaking and proceeds to stomp out of the room in red anger, leaving you baffled at his reaction. What I mean compared to what you think I mean are often like sparks to tinder, and in an instant a misunderstanding grows from a tiny flame to a brush fire. Sometimes it pays to act like a school teacher, and use a pop quiz to keep the lid on a situation. By being humble and asking your listener to explain what he understood you to say, you can head off a shoot-out at the O.K. corral.

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- (S) '15 JD 4044M, 48 hrs, loader, hydro.....\$24,900
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- (S) '15 JD X530, 431 hrs, pwr steering, 48" deck, pwr deck lift.....\$4900
- (S) '16 JD X390, 77 hrs, pwr steering, 54" deck, pwr lift.....\$4700
- (S) '10 JD X360, 48" deck, 200 hrs, pwr steering & lift.....\$3200
- (S) '10 JD 825 Gator, 720 hrs, alloy wheels, pwr dump, brush guard.....\$11,500
- (S) '07 JD X720, 436 hrs, 54" deck, 25 hp Kawasaki, no rips in seat.\$5600
- (S) '09 Dixon Speed ZTR 44, 22 hp Briggs, 44" deck.....\$1950
- (A) '83 JD 4450, 7326 hrs, QR Trans, 3 SCV'S, 2WD, TA26 Westendorf loader...\$28,500
- (S) '13 JD 825i Gator, 140 hrs, camo, alloy wheels, roof, bucket seats.....\$13,200
- (S) '12 JD 568 Round Baler, twine, wrap, hyd, Megawide pick up.....\$26,900
- (S) '14 JD 5115M, 3 function, 16F/16R PR, 3 SCV, 154 hrs.....\$62,000



6 February 2018 Your Country Neighbor Left to right; Red-bellied Woodpecker, Titmouse, Lady Cardinal, Chickadee.

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Under Contract

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson



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We recently made our third annual January visit to hubby's family in Texas. His sister, and brother and sister-in-law, spend winters in the Rio Grande Valley in one of the 400 Winter Texan RV parks. If you've never been to one, it's kind of like camp for adults, but without those annoying camp counselors making sure you're not sneaking out of your cabin in the middle of the night. There's a community hall, pool tables and swimming pool, pickle ball and shuffle board, a par-three golf course, card clubs, hobby groups, even a woodworking shop. Some parks are known for dancing, while others attract people who are into cards and board games.

PEGGY KUSER

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Winter Ranch, where hubby's siblings live, is populated mostly by Upper Mid-Westerners. These retirees have earned the luxury of escaping the long, cold winters of their working years. But they haven't left behind their winter evening pastimes of table games. Some of these are games you won't find in stores. The rules are hand-written and photo-copied. They might involve a hand-made board created by an enterprising Winter Texan and available for sale at the local flea market. They have names like "65" and "Social Security." I don't know if the games originated in Texas, or if they're an amalgam of games brought in from Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois, to name a few of the places represented on the Roll Call of States posted in the hall. Either way, Winter Ranch is the place to play games you've never heard of before.

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This year we played the "made-up" games and a game that came from a store: Rummikub. It's sort of a cross between Dominoes, Mahjong and the card game Rummy, using color-coded, numbered tiles. The object is to lay out all of your tiles in groups of three-of-a-kind or more, or runs-of- three or more. Everybody can play on everybody else's groups of tiles, resulting in constant reconfiguring of the groupings. As the game progresses, more and more groups of tiles fill the table top, requiring strict attention to where you might be able to play your own tiles.



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Just when you think you've worked out a strategy for playing multiple tiles on your next turn, the player right before you makes a move that destroys your plan. This is especially frustrating when said player takes forever to scrutinize and take advantage of all the possibilities. Meanwhile, you're keeping an eye on the one option still left open to you, hoping against hope. At last, your nemesis seems to be done. You breathe a sigh of relief, select a tile from your tray, and reach out to place it. The instant before your tile makes contact with the table, that greedy so-and-so jumps back in and announces he's not finished yet and makes another play that wipes out your chance to play one crummy tile!!!! This is truly infuriating!! There ought to be a time limit!

Did I mention that "said player" is none other than hubby? That's right, my own husband! Where's the love? Spousal rivalry is alive and well, and every bit as potent as sibling rivalry, in our house. I should know by now to NEVER sit to the left of hubby in any game. I'm going to remember that next year. And I'm going to take along a timer.



Bobcat Basketball

Peru State at Home, January 2018



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Soon Spring in Neal Park will display a Dogwood tree and "red buds".

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Memories, Milestones, and A Mother's Smile

Stephen Hassler

I expect all of us who have lived through “interesting times” have special memories that will never leave us. On my list is the assassination of President John Kennedy, the Challenger disaster, seeing Darla for the first time, and seeing her for the last time.

My grandfather wrote in his diary about spotting the first Robin of the year, a welcome signal for him that warmer weather was coming and the bitter cold nights working in the Omaha stockyards would give way to Springtime temperatures. No doubt his memory of the first Robin helped him keep faith on those cold nights herding hogs through the maze of pens and alleys that were the Omaha Stockyards.

I was watching an episode of *Downton Abbey* recently in which ‘his lordship’ announced to his family and staff that the war (World War I) was over. It reminded me of my mother relating her memory of the news that World War II had ended. She was a housewife on a farm in Iowa and rushed out of the house and into the field to tell my father “The war is over!”

I wonder what other moments were important memories to my parents. One died too young and the other didn't talk much about the past. What were their lives like as newlyweds? What happy times or sad times did they reflect back on? Which events were random and which were results of personal life decisions? I wish I could understand better what their lives were like; the lives I didn't know.

Imagine if all our parents kept a diary or a journal chronicling their daily lives, or at least the milestones on their journey through life. Later, their children could reconnect, renew experiences in their minds, and reflect in their adult years what they let pass by earlier in life. Photo albums help with this, but if a person wrote down their thoughts and feelings describing those birthdays, holidays, and vacations, what a treasured companion to the photo album!

My sister remembers our mother's favorite Christmas ornament; a vintage angel with sparkling wings and a gown of many strands of thread. She remembers that our mother would smile admiringly at it hanging on the tree. I don't remember the ornament but the memory of that angel is a go-between connecting my sister to our mother's smile. That particular

connection to a moment in the 1950's no longer exists; the angel's threaded gown unraveled long ago. Nor is its image in any photos of the family Christmas tree. But my sister has the memory of that smile and the image of the angel, and a determination to reconstruct it. She wants to hold, feel, and touch it, to create a present-day connection to a special memory.

Some memories are just milestones, signposts, but others are more intimate. Sometimes we reach back in time to connect with a smile, a kiss, or a touch. By grasping at the threads of long ago memories, we try to sew a fabric of love, connection, and hopefully, deeper understandings.

<<<<<< “*Window On Fifth Street*” continued from page 3

vantages, not that rural living doesn't have its advantages, just different strokes for different folks. I expect there are additional stones up on cemetery hill, but in contrast, I've noticed some young faces bicycling down 5th Street and others playing at the new water park on hot days. A couple of my friends have moved to town from other communities, a few others have moved away, and a few just switched addresses. Still, Peru remains the second largest community in Nemaha County.

The view through my window on 5th Street today reminds me that some things change and others do not. You and I don't need to be reminded of that, but sometimes we want to resist change; my old computer works just fine, I can still pass my drivers license exam with these glasses, my mailbox out on the curb was a lot cheaper than a P.O. box. On the other hand, three TV stations are not enough any more, and why should I have to wait for “fast food”?

One thing that won't change; you and I will experience the next 20 years with both excitement and anxiety. But for now, let's just look to Spring, make lots of plans but few decisions, and take one day at a time.

Your Country Neighbor
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BOBCAT BASKETBALL 2017-2018 SEASON

Mens

10/31	Valley City State Univ.	Valley City, ND	7:00 p.m.
11/1	Mayville State Univ.	Mayville, ND	7:00 p.m.
11/10	Dordt College	Orange City, IA	4:00 p.m.
11/11	Northwestern College	Orange City, IA	6:00 p.m.
11/13	Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.	Lincoln, NE	8:00 p.m.
11/14	Augustana Univ.	Sioux Falls SD	8:00 p.m.
11/24	Missouri Baptist Univ.	Columbia, MO	5:30 p.m.
11/25	Columbia College	Columbia, MO	3:00 p.m.
11/29	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	7:30 p.m.
12/2	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
12/6	Grace Univ.	Omaha, NE	7:00 p.m.
12/9	Benedictine College	Atchison, KS	7:30 p.m.
12/15	Friends Univ.	Peru, NE	7:00 p.m.
12/29	Dakota Wesleyan Univ.	Mitchell, SD	8:30 p.m.
12/30	Dordt College	Mitchell, SD	6:00 p.m.
1/3	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	7:30 p.m.
1/6	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
1/10	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/13	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/17	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	7:30 p.m.
1/20	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
1/24	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/27	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/31	Avila Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/3	Culver-Stockton Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/7	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	7:30 p.m.
2/10	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	4:00 p.m.
2/11	University of South Dakota	Vermillion, SD	TBD
2/14	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/17	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/21	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/24	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	4:00 p.m.



Womens

10/31	Bethany College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/3	College of St. Mary	Omaha, NE	6:00 p.m.
11/7	Mount Marty College	Yankton, SD	6:00 p.m.
11/10	York College	York, NE	8:00 p.m.
11/11	Bethany College	York, NE	1:00 p.m.
11/15	Northwestern Missouri State Univ.	Maryville, MO	7:00 p.m.
11/17	Bellevue Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/18	Lincoln Univ.	Jefferson City, MO	4:00 p.m.
11/24	Wayne State College	Wayne, NE	5:00 p.m.
11/29	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	5:30 p.m.
12/2	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
12/9	Benedictine College	Atchison, KS	2:00 p.m.
12/10	Missouri Western State Univ.	St. Joseph, MO	6:00 p.m.
1/3	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	5:30 p.m.
1/6	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/8	Haskell Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/10	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/13	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
1/17	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	5:30 p.m.
1/20	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/24	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/27	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	2:00 p.m.
1/29	University of Nebraska Omaha	Omaha, NE	7:00 p.m.
1/31	Avila Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/3	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
2/7	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	5:30 p.m.
2/10	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	2:00 p.m.
2/14	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
2/17	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/21	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
2/24	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	2:00 p.m.

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