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COVER PHOTOS

On the first day of Summer, 2015, I rode my bicycle along *The Steamboat Trace* hiking/biking trail from Peru to the Missouri River. These are my favorite photos from that ride; Mourning Cloak butterfly, Columbine wildflower, Wild Rose, Western Kingbird.

Inside are articles by your favorite writer(s) and more photography from mid to late June.

Be sure to visit the advertisers who support *Your Country Neighbor*, and enjoy your favorite writer.

Have a great month!

Stephen

JAMES H. CAIN



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Voices

From the Valleys of the Nemaha
Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers This Month

Devon Adams
Sue Farmer
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Lee Nyberg
Vicki O'Neal
Marilyn Woerth
Thank You

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Night Owls vs Morning Persons

Stephen Hassler

I wasn't always a morning person. I didn't like having to work eight hours of the day in order to have two or three restful hours in the evening, so after work I tried to squeeze out all of the day that was left, trying to make the evening longer than it was; usually staying up later than appropriate, watching the Tonight Show instead of Good Morning America. I was a "night owl".

People who are not "morning people" usually embrace the notion of being a "night owl". Maybe they just don't want to say goodbye to the day. They stay up late at night watching television or eating or drinking, not wanting to let go. I'm sure night owls value the approaching day, but they're too tired to wake up to its beginnings. Personally, I like to be up before the sun and watch it rise. Sometimes it colors the clouds, and on clear days, sends its blinding light through green leafy branches, warming my porch, always giving heavenly 'notice' to the songbirds.

Evenings are often serene, afternoons can be pleasant, but mornings are almost always magic. I look forward to having coffee outside in the morning. I say to the morning, "I'm awake, Day, I'm here and I'm ready." (Well, I don't really say that, but I 'feel' it). Mornings are beginnings; of a new day, of a new life. Mornings bring anticipation, excitement, wonder. So come bedtime I say goodbye to the day, knowing that when next my eyes are open, there will be the wonder of the morning light, a new day dawning. (Unless it's my 3:00 a.m. bathroom break.)

So I wish you a magical morning experience as often as you can fit one into your busy life. Greet the day with a morning walk or jog, maybe a yoga exercise. And remember, most things are better when shared with friends, and going for a walk with a friend in the morning can be a great way to begin a day. Why not begin tomorrow?



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Sometimes it just doesn't pay to try to be efficient. Earlier today I had an item that needed to be mailed TODAY. Hubby was going out anyway, so I asked him to take it to the post office to save a trip.

As soon as he pulled out of the garage it occurred to me that I hadn't mentioned that he needed to take the envelope inside the post office to get it weighed and stamped. A cursory glance at the somewhat grubby manilla envelope would reveal that I was re-using an old one and that the postage label on it was also old.

But I know hubby well enough to be pretty sure he would pay no attention to the layers of labels or notice that the envelope had been previously metered. No, he would just chuck that envelope into the drive-up mailbox. It would be days before it came back to me undeliverable for lack of postage. So much for getting it in the mail TODAY.

I tried to catch hubby before he drove away up the street, but I was too late. So I dashed back inside to call him on his cell phone, which I discovered sitting on the kitchen counter. So much for the convenience of cell phones. I had no choice but to follow him to his appointment and retrieve the envelope.

Not only did I not save a trip to the post office, I actually had to drive the opposite direction from the post office to get the envelope and then drive back to the post office to mail it.

I can only hope that re-using that envelope saved more resources than I wasted doing the extra driving to get it mailed TODAY.

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Farm Pond West of Peru, Nebraska

Poetry by Devon Adams

FLAGS

They are alive in the wind,
with their stripes and colors
snapping to attention.
Like a battalion of soldiers,
the banners line the street
and remind us that freedom
isn't free. The ghosts of past
wars discovered that truth,
and proved their loyalty with
their lives. As the sky explodes
with bursts of fire that fill our
eyes and ears with a patriotic
imitation of war, we celebrate
our liberty.

ALMOST FOREVER

Summer light is almost forever.
Evenings ease softly into glow,
when trees are silhouettes, ponds
are pools of precious metals, and
the sky wears golden bands along
the edge. Clocks say night, but
summer says, "Not yet, not yet,
until the stars are ready to be
born again!" But soon comes
early dawn, breathing heat,
and fading black away.

SOUND OFF

So many sounds so loud,
and long, going on and on.
Too much to hear and learn,
all at once. Coming in your
ears, crowding your brain
space, taking your attention,
and not giving it back again.
Try turning off the sounds,
and listen to the natural world.

THE HOLLYS

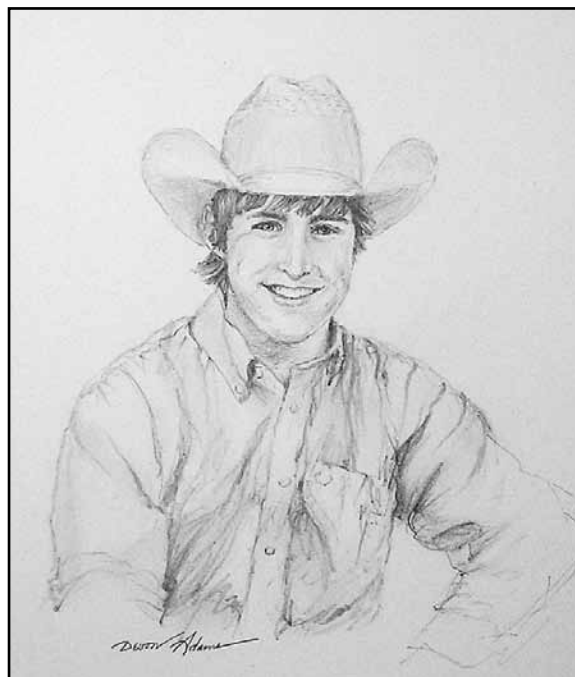
In the melting heat, they
danced with wind. With
fancy petals ruffled at
the edges, the hollyhocks
would nod and greet each
other, as they waited for
the little girls to come and
pick them off the stems,
and turn them inside out.
Then they would become
the ladies of the garden!

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and a scent inside
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safe from insects, this
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RESEARCHING YOUR COLLECTIBLES

Suggestions regarding how to know what you have and whether it has more than sentimental value.

Sue Farmer

There are LOTS of books on antiques and collectibles - and some for very specific collections, for example, exclusively depression glass, carnival glass, specific potteries (Roseville, McCoy, etc.), coins and currency, pocket knives, early American pressed glass (EAPG), cast iron, furniture -- you name it -- there's a research book on it!

I've found the easiest research tool is the internet ... you can filter your search by name and/or description. The only catch to that is knowing how to describe your item -- too much detail and you'll miss pertinent websites; too little detail and you'll get a massive amount of information to sort through. You may need to try several different descriptions to get a "hit." There are websites available that will do the research for you when you simply can't find anything like what you have. For example, I use "Just Answer" -- they have experts in every field you can think of ... and they usually respond in a reasonable amount of time. Yes, it costs to have access; but that brings me to what may be easiest for you.

Try asking antique dealers and/or auctioneers. Many times they can recognize a piece and its value with little or no research (because they've done it before, of course). And if they don't know anything about your treasure, they have resources to look it up!

Finally, if you have a family heirloom that turns out to have little monetary value, just remember ... it's still priceless to you. The memories that "old stuff" triggers is what really counts. There are stories to be told, memories to be shared, passed down from generation to generation.

So remember to take time to have a cup of coffee, sit a spell and visit the past -- your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will value that the most.

Sue Farmer
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Seven Tips for Summer Travel with an Older Adult

By Lee Nyberg

Summer is the season of road trips for many families. Maybe the reason is a trek across country for a destination wedding or a reunion of the family at the much beloved Minnesota cabin. Traveling with older adults can add another layer of adventure to a family trip. These 7 tips will help you along the journey, whether by road or air.

Proper Prior Planning: Understand the current situation on any health issues or limitations with daily activities, including special diet and mobility needs. Arrange for an accessible hotel room and airport transport help in advance. Have contingency plans for leaving early, if necessary.

Power Packing: Don't check anything you can't live without. An older adult's medication may be irreplaceable. Extra clothes can be a face saver for someone dealing with incontinence.

Don't Be Late: Stick to the normal medication schedule. This is crucial for some conditions, like Parkinson's disease.

Let's Go Now: Know when the good times are in the course of a day, plan your most taxing activity then. If ultra-busy, noisy places like airports cause agitation in your loved one, try to limit exposure.

Time to Stop for Gas: Be sure everyone is properly hydrated and has low-salt snacks available. Summer heat and humidity are a double whammy for an older adult.

Emergency! Be ready to check your loved one into the hospital if necessary with insurance information, medical history, doctors' contact information, and a list of current medications and dosages.

Avoid an Identity Crisis: If you're providing care for your older adult loved one, have a card in your wallet which identifies you as the caregiver of Person X, include emergency phone contact information, not your information or home address. List key medical conditions, especially if dementia is present. Have your loved one carry a card identifying you as his caregiver or companion with your name and phone number.

Sometimes staying at home is the best option for an older adult loved one. Check with your loved one's doctor if you have any concerns about fitness to travel. If you decide to venture without your loved one, enlist the help of familiar friends, family, or professional caregivers to care for your loved one in your absence.

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

What are the possibilities? You have the rest of the summer, fall, winter, and your life spread before you, what are your possibilities? Let's say that I am 99 years old, what are my possibilities? That will depend on how sound my mind and body is. One inevitable fact is that I will die. One possibility is that I will turn 100. Will I still have to pay taxes when I turn 100? I suppose that will depend if I still have money in the bank. One of the possibilities I hope I still have is the ability to smell the flowers. What a sad life it will be for me when I cannot wander outside to smell the whiff of a fragrant breeze.

I actually have been putting off... writing about this time in my life. Even though I know for my own sanity it is something I need to attend to, and now is the time. My father died at 59, my mother may not turn 84. She is forgetting how to live. Her heart and body is strong, and if I know her, so is her will, but her mind at last is forgetting how to live. So I had drawn myself into a slump holding my breath waiting, waiting, and thus I have forgotten how to live as well.

I have not been outside very much to smell the roses, lilac, and now the lilies, oh my desirously wonderful lilies. Ask me what my favorite flower is and I will pronounce it loud and clear, the lily. In my mind it is the symbol of eternal life, youth and happiness. It has been a hard few years and I WAS keeping myself from living it to the fullest. But no more...I am tired of waiting for life to make me happy again. Only I am capable of that, I know this; I have practiced it so why have I forgotten this important part of who I am? Sometimes life can just be overwhelming.

It hits us all in different ways and at different times. Have you been through the worse you thought you could ever survive? Then survived only to find that some lesser stress has pushed you to the edge? When I first experienced anxiety attacks decades ago I couldn't understand it. I told my physician that my life was fine now, I had minor difficulties earlier but now this should not be happening. He explained that is how it happens sometimes; we hold ourselves in and are capable of being strong but when the crisis pasts and our guard is down, we can quite literally slip over that edge.

Not one to hold with taking pills, I gathered knowledge. Now I can sense when an anxiety attack is coming on. I run through in my mind questions I need to ask myself. I then answer those questions and then I act on them. What this did was help me to take charge of the event, not the circumstances taking charge of me.

Thus through the years, very little medication has been needed. But sometimes when there is prolonged stress, it creeps up on you, and sometimes you know it and still feel unable to react; you fight it but you're not winning. It was time; I swallowed my pride and went in for help, for myself, my family and my mother. It didn't take long, I still prefer the natural way, but sometimes I do need a boost. Now I am back to being me, halleluia! Now the possibilities lay before me once again. And I am taking full advantage of them where life is good.



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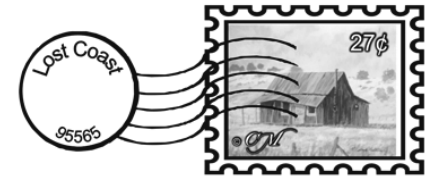
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Old Home Place
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Lost Coast

Sweet Summer Sojourn

By Vicki O'Neal



Having kids makes us sentimental and a bit loopy. As babies, they weave themselves into our very souls...and we don't know what to do when they grow up and get on with their lives. It ain't easy being a Parent.

My youngest daughter came to visit me in NorCal for the summer. She is my princess—my baby—a Senior at a College in Omaha....A spirited 22-year-old College Kid who drove across five states to see her Ol' Mom on the West Coast. 2000 miles of white-line fever...Endless Wyoming. The saltflats of Utah. The grimness of a Nevada desert highway. It's a real feat for a hardened traveler like me—let alone a College Kid.

My daughter wasn't daunted. "I made it just fine," Mystia said, upon arrival. "I have my GPS!"

She had other electronic wonders hidden in her Smartphone, as well. She put them to good use—taking candid video clips of me living my daily life. She shared them on Social Media. Her friends responded with gales of laughter that echoed across Cyberspace. I have no idea what's so funny.

Immediately upon arrival, Mystia took over my bedroom...my dressers, my cabinets, my bed, and my breathing space. Retreating to the couch, I look on bemused. I tolerate her gladly--paying dearly for the privilege of being a mom.

It ain't easy being a Parent.

My bulging closet full of clothes had to be examined, and most items were dismissed as obsolete. She helped me organize a Yard Sale and we sold a few of my things—a feat that she thought remarkable—considering what we had to work with.

Mystia joined a gym and insisted that I sign up for a membership as well. She put me through a series of rigorous exercises and tortures especially designed to strengthen my half-century old muscles. I groaned my way through it. The toning, the workouts, the warm-ups...the cool-downs. It hasn't done much for my body, but it has improved the relationship with my daughter considerably. She's quite proud of me...At least for the moment.

I wanted to share with Mystia the glories of the West Coast. But within days of her arrival, it seems that our Pacific Paradise has gone completely wacky. I took her to my favorite stretch of coastline, hoping to find sand-dollars. Instead, we found a beachful of dying jellyfish, dead birds and rotting seals.

"What's going on?" I said. "It's never been like this before!"

"It's my fault," Mystia sighed. "I've brought with me the curse of death."

She may be right. I've been on the West Coast off-and-on for the last seven years, and I've never seen anything like it. Out in the ocean—off the Oregon coast—underwater volcanoes have begun to erupt. Earthquakes are rippling the placid Pacific now, and scientists are becoming concerned. The tectonic plates and subduction zone has been locked up tight and the pressure has been building for years.

It's going to blow one of these days. But none of that bothers my College Kid. "I can't wait to feel my first earthquake!" she says.

We had a small, preliminary quake the other day—just to make her happy—but it had quite the opposite effect. The quake occurred at 4:00 in the morning and Mystia slept right through it. It made her mad.

"Don't worry," I said. "One of these days we'll have a quake that's big enough for you. Too big, in fact. A megaquake is coming that will take out the whole West Coast. That's what Scientists say."

She wasn't overly concerned. College Kids have much bigger things to worry about, actually. Monumental things...like getting textbooks in the mail so they can do their Summer Classes online.

Yesterday, Mystia was in a panic. "My first assignment in Psychology is due by midnight...and I barely got my textbook in the mail today!"

I offered to help with the assignment—but my daughter said it was beyond my scope. The assignment was about "Parenting". What could I possibly know about that subject?...or about anything else, for that matter?

Unfortunately, College has a way of enlarging the brain cells of our children to an enormous size, and it takes a good while for them to shrink back again to normal. The College-of-Hard-Knocks will someday restore their brain cells to proper size. It always does.

Until then, I'll just enjoy the Journey.

We're churning toward the end of Summer now. Soon, I will regain the rights to my bed, my closet, and my dresser. Mystia will vanish into the Halls-of-Higher-Learning, once more, and I will be alone—with only the echo of her laughter and the lingering scent of her perfume on my pillow. My heart aches for her already.

She is my Princess. I taught her to read...to do math...to write stories. She taught me to use the Computer properly...to smile when I'm sad...To laugh the night away until our hysterical giggles become wet with tears—or something definitely worse.

I must make the most of each passing day, and store every memory in my heart for the days ahead. Every smile. Every glance and grimace. Every moment of intense fellowship...All packed away in the time-capsule of my Heart...to be opened again sometime in the future.

When the front door shuts for the last time and her footsteps fade from my daily life, I will wander the pathways of Memory—hearing again the echo of our sweet Summer Sojourn. I will hear it as the twilight deepens...as the crickets chirp and a lonely moon rises above the bay.

I will remember...oh yes, I will remember....And the tears will fall like rain.

It ain't easy, folks.

It ain't easy being a Parent.

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