

Your *Country* Neighbor

Free

June, 2017

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A Magazine for Small Towns
and Rural America



Great Egret



Canada Goose 'mom' and goslings, Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge -- Mid May



Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City, May 2017

Volume Eighteen, Number Six

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the
Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



There's a man
that lives right over there
He doesn't think
life's treated him very fair
Now, I'm not saying what he says isn't true
Keep your eye on him son
Ya never know what he might do

He ain't happy with his city
He ain't happy with his state
He ain't donating to the united way
He's got troubles
And bills are due
Keep your eye on him son
Ya never know what he might do

His back's against the wall
And people just keep pushing on through
Something's gotta give
It might be you
He ain't happy with his city
He ain't happy with his state
He ain't donating to the united way
He's got troubles
And Bills are due
Keep your eye on him son
Ya never know what he might do.....

June Writers

Devon Adams
Steve Adams
Merri Johnson
Lee Nyberg
Marilyn Woerth

Thank You!

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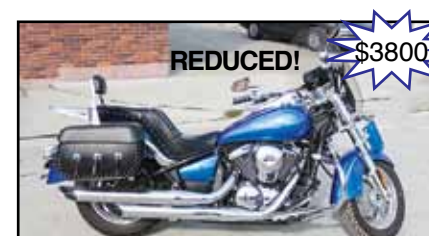
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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Are you up for a little genealogy road trip? That's what my husband and I found ourselves doing a couple of weekends ago. The weekend actually started out on a more familiar routine. Friday night we drove to Ames, Iowa to see our youngest son and his family.

Saturday morning found us cheering on our youngest grandson in a rousing game of soccer. Those five year olds sure are a hoot to watch. Our grandson is certainly not afraid of making a goal but it doesn't bother him if he doesn't either. He's just happy to be outside and running. Sunday afternoon was spent at the zoo in Des Moines. After the zoo there was an early birthday celebration for our oldest grandson now a teenager. Monday, as everyone went back to their normal routines, hubby and I went to Des Moines, to submit paperwork for some ancestor's death certificates and then a trip to the botanical gardens. Tuesday afternoon we absconded with the soccer player for a long hike at Ledges State Park, a favorite hiking spot for us to take the grandkids. Tuesday evening was spent at the school auditorium watching the teenager's band performance (he is in choir, band and orchestra). By then we were very tired and ready to head home in the morning.

My husband's mother is 100% Danish. We always had meant to stop at Elk Horn, Iowa just off I 80, the place with the windmill. We decided being retired people there was no better time than at the present. There had always been holes in his mother's ancestry due to her mother not sharing her heritage. Now we know why. At Elk Horn we passed up the windmill and headed to the Danish Museum on the north edge of town, a beautiful building. There we found a Danish Immigrant Wall of Fame, and there on the wall was his great grandfather's name along with his first wife. We had come to the right place.

An employee of the museum sent us back into town to an extensive genealogy center. We were in seventh heaven. They had a whole file on his great grandfather. We found out that his grandfather and his first wife, after leaving Denmark, farmed in an area not far from Elk Horn. After they had six children, two passed early, the first wife passed away, and is buried on their farm. Now the story gets interesting. With the information that was given us there and then finding more from Ancestry on line, a story was pieced together.

His grandfather, at the age of 49, then marries his great grandmother who was, wait for it, eighteen! She already had an eighteen month old child who had been adopted by her brother. They lived together long enough to have four children of their own, the youngest being hubby's grandmother. Then his great grandmother decided she was tired of raising all the children and the hard life on a large, prosperous farm. She divorced her husband but left the children with him. Her new life found her with another child that was put up for adoption before she remarried and had eight more children (Phew).

Now back to his grandfather, it does not look like he remarried, we did find his gravestone in a small rural church graveyard but he was buried by himself. We also acquired his obituary, it appears he left everything to his children by his first wife; the four from his second wife being left out. Guess that's probably why he was not discussed much by the family. Steve's mother remembers visiting an elderly woman in Iowa who had beautiful hollyhocks, we think that was her grandmother, but she couldn't verify that for sure.

We still have some questions, so another road trip is in the works, this time we will take Steve's mother. Then there's the trip to Ohio where we will search for both of our ancestors. I ask you now, why do we need television when we have ancestors? Ready for more genealogy road trips, where life is good. After all, isn't this why they immigrated here to begin with? Right!



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Poetry by Devon Adams

INDIGO MELODY

Streaks of song flash
through leaves, leaving
hot trails of music that
soon vanish into echoes,
as the singer continues
to throw out his notes.
He is like a small blue
ghost, glowing with sound,
but the bunting is real,
and his true colors are
an indigo explosion.

QUICKSAND

The jacket was always kept
in the spare room, hanging
over the back of a chair.
It was brown leather, with
creases and cracks from
age and wear, and it still
had sand in the seams and
in the pockets. As a child, I
would often play in that room,
with it's familiar assortment
of things too good to discard,
but not presently in use. I
knew the story behind the
worn old coat and each time
I looked at it, I would imagine
my father wearing it, as he
struggled to escape from the
bog of quicksand that had
tried to pull him under. Then
I would walk back into the
kitchen and he would scoop
me up in his arms, warm and
alive and mine to keep forever

WHAT MAY COME

When worries wake you
in the morning dark, and
sleep is gone, it's good to
separate what is from
what may come to be.
Movies in your mind of
things that may go wrong
make you want to run.
But the monsters that
chase us in our thoughts
aren't real, because they
haven't happened yet.

FLOWER SPIRITS

In the evening pause
between bright and dim,
when the sky glows like
embers in a fire, as night
comes with it's dark cloak,
there is a blanket of scent
lying over the garden.
It is a transparent presence
that you can almost touch,
so heavy is it's mix of flower
spirits hovering in the still air.

SPLASH PARTY

He is wet to the end
of every red feather,
with even his crest
slicked down, but he
isn't wet enough, yet.
So in for another dip,
and then the goldfinch
hops to the lip, but won't
do a dive. The yellow
fellow takes a seat,
while a robin slaps out
half the water before the
woodpecker backs down
the trunk of the tree and
reaches to drink with his
feet holding on to the bark.
The sparrows have to
wait their turn, but then
they all fit into a party
splash, in just one dish.

SWEET HAY

In the rolling fields there are
rows of hay drying in the sun.
A south breeze carries the cut
perfume of alfalfa through the
shimmering heat waves that
make pools of shiny water on
the highway. Farmers sweat
out long days under the brassy
lid of sky, praying for weather
without fits of temper full of
destruction. But even with the
stress of the gamble, life is good
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sight, and tomorrow will come
over the hill with blazing energy.

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Great Egrets on Migration -- Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge

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Diary of a Part-time Naturalist

Merri Johnson

We don't always get what we expect.

That happened to me earlier this week while attending a nature workshop. This outdoor workshop encompassed "nature writing, visual art, and the contemplation of nature in the context of the rugged terrain of the Loess Hills."

As soon as I learned of the workshop, I eagerly signed up for it, anticipating gaining some skills in sketching and writing. That seemed like a logical enough expectation, given the description of the workshop. And I did gain useful insights into both of those disciplines, partly through my own work, but more importantly, through hearing others' perspectives.

That bit about others' perspectives is what I'm referring to in my opening sentence.

At the start of the workshop, each of us was asked to briefly explain why we had chosen to attend. My reasons included improving my skills, as well as experiencing the pleasure of being with like-minded people. By "like-minded" I meant people who shared my enjoyment of the contemplation of and interaction with the natural world.

In retrospect, I'm re-thinking my definition of like-mindedness. My perspective on what the workshop was about was apparently different from what some other participants had in mind. For example, I didn't expect human sexuality to feature in our contemplation of "nature." It wasn't a major component of any discussion, but I would never have imagined it would come up at all. Does that make me a prude? Naïve? Narrow-minded? Behind the times?

Nor did I expect politics and religion to come up. Though they were not discussed at length, they did come up. My views on both – which I kept to myself – were different from what was expressed by several others. Again, perhaps I am naïve to think that any discussion can be free of politics these days.

There were other aspects of the workshop that I am still struggling to reconcile with what I expected. But I think you get the point: we don't always get what we expect.

I guess it's what we do with what we get that matters, whether or not it's what we expected.

Although I will be a bit more selective in choosing workshops in the future, I don't regret the experience I had this week. Though I felt like I was operating on a very different wavelength from some of my fellow participants, I made a point of respecting their right to their views while expressing a different view. I also did a fair amount of just keeping my thoughts to myself. That isn't always easy for me. But in doing more listening and less talking, I found that each person there contributed something to my personal growth in understanding "human nature." That was an unintended outcome, but valuable, just the same.

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Great Blue Heron at Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge -- Late May



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Canada Geese family on a pond near Peru, Nebraska -- Late May



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Canada Geese family at Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge -- Mid May



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Migrating Ducks at Loess Bluffs Wildlife Refuge -- Mid May

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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Alzheimer's Caregiving is Easier with a Dose of Humor

By Lee Nyberg

Laugh at yourself lately? I did yesterday. I'm a veteran picture-hanger, and yet, I needed 12 nail holes, instead of six, to hang three pictures. In the process, I travelled from the garage workbench to the upstairs guestroom five times.

Laughter makes the difficult easier. Drs. Rowe and Kahn, in "Successful Aging," said the ability to laugh at yourself and the difficult times life delivers makes a tremendous difference in how you age, and how well connected you stay to your spouse and other important people. Laughing reinforces relationships, which in turn, helps us be resilient and handle life's big problems more successfully.

Caregiving for a loved one with dementia calls for resilience. A sense of humor won't cure Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia, but it can ease the strain of caregiving. The University of Maryland's Dr. Robert Provine showed laughter reduces the physical symptoms and damage from stress because it boosts immune system response and fights infection; soothes tension by increasing circulation and relaxing muscles; and increases feelings of happiness, lessening depression and anxiety.

Using humor and letting yourself laugh is a powerful way to relieve pain and heal, according to Norman Cousins, author of "Anatomy of an Illness." Dr. Gary Small, in his book, "The Alzheimer's Prevention Program," said laughter changes the way a body functions. In addition to stretching the face and body muscles and increasing blood pressure and breathing, it also increases activity in the brain. In fact, laughter mimics the effect of a mild workout on the body's physiology.

Keeping perspective is worth the effort. Several years ago, I had the great good fortune to interview a man with young onset Parkinson's disease. He taught me about perspective. Instead of crying over his difficulty with showering and drying off, he chuckled as he described a "human carwash" system he had seen on the Internet; he especially liked the giant "duster" for drying backs.

Seek out reasons to smile and ways to laugh when you need to "encourage" your own lighter mood.

Watch your favorite brand of comedy, whether dry or slapstick.

Smile; post a sign to remind yourself.

Be grateful for the smallest things. Everyday blessings, like a birdsong or hot buttered toast, are more important to well-being than a once-in-a-lifetime trip, according to Rutgers University researcher, Dr. N.S. Fagley.

Be with people who laugh; kids are masters of fun and laughter.

Laugh at your life; focus on the ironic, silly and absurd, rather than the negative.

Did you ever suddenly see, everywhere you looked, identical versions of the "unique" car you had just purchased? We find what we seek, whether the funny or the grim. We live moment by moment, with each instant adding to a lifetime. Choose to find flashes of humor in caregiving; these are the little joys you might otherwise miss. I'll always remember my mom's love of hats and the joy she took in wearing them all through her Alzheimer's journey. That she chose to wear them sideways showed me the humor in the situation..

Lee Nyberg serves older adults and their families through education on aging issues and her company, Home Care Assistance. Learn more at www.HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com



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