

# Your *Country* Neighbor

**Free**

March 2018

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**A Magazine for Small Towns  
and Rural America**



Auburn Cheerleaders performed at the halftime of Peru State College Basketball... See Page 6



Red-tailed Hawk



More 'Birds in Winter' on page 4



Arbor Lodge, Majestic Even Between Seasons

## *Your Country Neighbor*

*Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha*

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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## Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



She's red  
I'm green  
And that means blue  
That's what you get  
When you mix the two

She's up town  
And I'm down home  
She's out at night  
And I'm alone  
She likes silk  
And I'm blue jean  
She's all red  
And I'm all green

Yeah, she's all red  
And I'm all green  
Let me tell ya brother  
It's a serious thing  
You don't know what she does to me  
She's all red  
And I'm all green

**Your Country Neighbor**

P.O. Box 126  
Peru, Nebraska 68421

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View Online at  
[www.yourcountryneighbor.com](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

## February Writers

Devon Adams  
Steve Adams  
Janet Sobczyk  
Merri Johnson  
Vicki O'Neal  
Merlin Wright

**Thank You!**

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## A Silent Retreat in Winter

Janet Sobczyk

“An oasis of silence”  
pamphlets proclaim  
nestled into a Nebraska plain  
quiet beckons  
I answer the call  
to a weekend of introspection.

Brick walls secure amid  
brown native grasses  
whispering secrets into the wind  
tell of burdens unloaded  
by troubled humans seeking  
rest, and answers.

Martin houses stand empty  
trees shiver naked  
evergreens form an honor guard  
flagpole ropes clap a rhythm  
an azure sky longing for  
the return of birds.

Inside, silence reigns  
voices turn to lowest volume  
carpeting hushes footsteps  
windows encourage day dreaming  
artwork begs a long look  
chapel awaits with magnetic pull.

At meals, utensils clink  
self-consciously against plates  
conversation in the kitchen  
intrudes through opening door  
ears perk at the sudden sound  
napkins dab satisfied mouths.

People arise  
smiling their goodbyes  
walk wordlessly to solitary nooks  
or meander pathways  
around a half-frozen pond  
created for reflection.

Time tells me to leave  
but heart wants to stay  
reading, writing, praying, listening  
heals the stress  
clears the head  
sends me on my way.

*This poem describes attendance at the January 2018 women's silent guided retreat at St. Benedictine Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska.*

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**Caffeine Musings**

Merlin Wright

Found a penny on the ground by our car at the grocery store..... Darlene asked if I was going to pick it up and I quoted someone on the internet, "yes because it says: In God we Trust". I trusted myself to be able to bend over and then straighten back up. I understand it costs over one and a half cents to make a one cent coin. During my childhood one penny could be used to buy something such as a gum-ball or a prestamped postcard. Picture postcards however; always needed a two cent stamp.

Google tells me that the price of a prestamped postcard was doubled to two cents in 1917 and lowered back to one cent in 1919 after financing World War One. That method of financing federal spending was used again for a few years starting in 1925. Then in 1951 the price jumped up from a penny several times and did not drop back down. There was another penny increase from 34 cents in 2017 to 35 cents in 2018.

One day recently I was given an orange and that caused me to think of the good old days. Our church gave each

*Continued on page 9 >>>>>>*

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The Bluejay is too big for the feeder; he finds spilled seeds underneath.

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The Red-bellied Woodpecker is entertaining to watch.

# Poetry by Devon Adams

## PAINT THE MORNING

With the brush of a wing tip, the morning sky becomes a pale pink canvas covered with geese and ducks. From far above, wailing echoes fall from the high, lonesome paths of sandhill cranes, their graceful bodies hauling long legs behind them, like extra luggage. Below them is the old river that flows through their genes, and calls for them to pause on a journey that never ends. But, in the mayhem of landings in a big wind, the delicate bodies twist and stumble into a cornfield, fighting for balance with their open wings, finally settling safely, grateful for rest.

## THE EDGE OF WINTER

Now that the sun disk is on a dead run for the center of the sky between the longest and shortest days, male birds have found their voices and are calling for mates to recognize them for the handsome devils that they are. Traces of old snow linger on the north slopes and in shadows. There is always a chance for wind, rain, hail, snow, ice or sunshine, sometimes all on the same day. Like rotten ice on a farm pond, the days hang on the edge of winter, waiting for the last of the freeze to melt and make life green again.

## SUITE FOR SUMMER DREAMS

Softly spaced single notes hang in chilly air, like whispered prayers in a cold cathedral. Songs sung slowly come from all directions, as birds find voices that were silent in the snow. A Suite for Summer Dreams comes together from the tiny hearts of those with feathers, and they will play it loud and long, until the flirting and the courting create little lives deep inside their fragile eggs.

## IN TANDEM

Like horses pulling a wagon, hitched side by side, cedar waxwings and robins work as a team to haul spring away from winter. They arrive together, descending from the sky to fill bare trees with activity and busy minds. Lawns are sprinkled with robins searching for lunch in soil no longer frozen, while waxwings flutter in cedars and other trees that still have leftover berries from last fall. The last traces of winter will be leaving soon, they seem to say, in spite of late blizzards that may try to argue with the calendar.

## DEGREES OF SEPARATION

Each year her body shrinks a fraction of an inch, and energy for moving, not to mention getting past the aches and pains, is slowly ebbing. But the action inside her brain was always in the highest gear, with precision thinking and judgement operating at an optimum level, like a well-tuned racing car. Then a turn of health led down a complicated path, with detours into disease, and fear and panic, and being trapped inside a room of her own thoughts. It is a room with a very small door of opportunity for escape, but not impossible to do, with the right amount of courage and determination.

## RANDOM HEARTS

The search goes on for the one she wants, even though the body count is growing larger every year. Always there are flaws that surface over time, leading to dismissal of a suitor, or a husband. Impulses can cause bad choices, and instant attractions are like chocolates, because one is never enough and maybe the next one will be better than the last. So the days go on and the years add up, until the time that she may wonder if the problem is her own, and not the fault of the men who've loved and lost her.

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## Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson



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Hubby and I frequently watch Wheel of Fortune, usually from the vantage point of the supper table. I know, people are supposed to talk to each other at meals, not watch television. But, hey, we're retired: we talk to each other all day. By evening, we're ready to turn the conversational duties over to Pat and Vanna.

That doesn't mean we watch in silence, however. Hubby has plenty to say to the contestants.

"Always take an 'R'," is one of his most commonly offered announcements.

"Don't spend all of your money buying vowels," he warns. "You're only helping the other contestants at your own expense."

"Watch the wheel when you spin!" He may add, "you moron," when a contestant repeatedly spins with no apparent regard for the position of the flipper. He doesn't have much sympathy for players who hit bankrupt or lose a turn in that scenario.

He has even more scorn for those who fail to call the obvious multiple letters. And people who play too conservatively and solve when there are still multiple letters to be had get the worst treatment. "You can't win big if you aren't willing to take a risk!" And for good measure, "You moron!"

The game's new feature of allowing the big winner to choose the category for the bonus round has afforded hubby another opportunity to opine. "Never choose 'thing.' It's much too broad." I have to agree with him on all his pointers.

Of course we call out our own guesses as the game progresses. "We gotta get on the show," he likes to say. "I'll spin, you solve. We could do it."

Well, "we" haven't gotten onto the show. But, hubby did get his chance to audition as an individual recently in Omaha. Perhaps you saw him on the Omaha evening news on February 1st. The local TV station that airs the program was on hand for the 45-person audition. Hubby was in the front row of seats. Everyone was clapping and cheering enthusiastically. Well, not everyone. It's an understatement to say that hubby is low-key when it comes to cheering. I show more excitement watching sports than he does.

So, how did he do at the audition? Let's just say his performance was nothing to get excited about. Contestants don't actually spin the wheel at the audition. That is done by a show staffer. So, hubby didn't get a chance to impress the judges with his spinning technique. He had to perform strictly on his brain power. He felt that he did okay picking letters that fit, but he isn't the best speller you'll ever come across, and he didn't actually solve a puzzle. Then, of course, there was the "enthusiasm" factor. You can be dull on Jeopardy, but not on Wheel.

Perhaps we'll get on the show as a couple someday. Then we'll get to test hubby's confidence in his spinning prowess and in my vocabulary skills. Until then, we'll just keep enjoying the show from the sidelines. Perhaps hubby will pick up some pointers on playing with enthusiasm while he's watching.

**PEGGY KUSER**

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The Brownville Village Theatre, February 2018



The Brownville Fine Arts Gallery, February 2018



Brownville's Carson House, February 2018

<<<<< *Caffeine Musings, Continued from page 3*

kid a paper sack of candy after the Christmas program and there was also an orange in the sack. During the depression, kids were delighted to find an orange in their stocking. Now we buy oranges at most grocery stores any month and don't think about the good old days. Ordinary oranges are considered not good enough for special occasions.

The small sweet Mandarins are easier to peel and are marketed under several names such as Clementines or Halos or Cuties. In an effort to be correct I used google and learned that Clementines, Halos, Cuties, Tangerines, Satsumas and five others are all Mandarins. One source claims that the name used depends on which month they ripen and are sold.

Darlene and I are again reading the book, One Man's Wilderness. We had both read the book six years ago, so the little details were missing from our collective memory. The book tells of the daily happenings of Richard Proenneke starting in 1968 while building a cabin at Twin Lakes in Alaska. The cabin interior was 11 feet by 15 feet which is about the size of our kitchen. The most enjoyable way to read of his snowy existence is to read on a day when snow is falling here in our area. Richard Proenneke lived in Primrose, Iowa and recently the nearby town of Donnellson, Iowa developed a museum containing a replica of his cabin. His cabin was smaller than the recently built log cabin along main street in Brownville.

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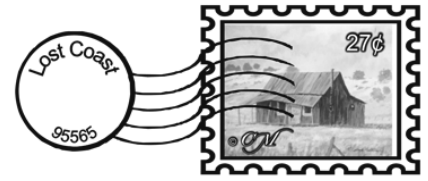




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## “Of Peace and Peril....”

By Vicki O'Neal



I had no premonition. No warning at all. The day seemed hopeful, even promising. There was a lovely rainbow arching across the sky as I drove along—a symbol of joy and peace. It was a fine day, really....

A fine day to DIE...But I didn't know that!

There was a smattering of raindrops on the windshield—nothing ominous. The canyon sparkled from brief bursts of sunshine and rain. For some reason, I decided to pull off the road along the river. I soon regretted it, and found my little car high-centering on river rocks. It took me a minute to back out of the situation.

A one minute delay. Just one minute! I had no idea how vital a minute can be. A minute can determine whether you will live or die...whether you will be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Driving on down the canyon, I rounded a curve and was suddenly confronted by a scene that made my blood run cold. I hit the brakes and my car slid to a halt.

Across the highway was a torrent of rocks that had tumbled off the mountain. They littered the entire roadway, a fresh slide that had occurred moments before.

I recoiled at the sight, then instinctively hurried my little Honda across the scattered debris-field. I steered between the big rocks—crunching over the small—hurrying lest a fresh supply of rocks come tumbling down on my head.

I made it safely across, and it was then that I saw a white truck parked on the side of the road. The young man standing beside the King Cab looked stunned as he stared at his late model vehicle.

It was a nice extended Cab with 4 doors, and it was in bad shape. The windshield had been shattered by large rocks. A young woman was still sitting in the passenger's seat. She was picking shards of glass out of her skin.

Turning on my emergency flashers, I stopped my car on the shoulder of the road, and hurried over to the young couple. “Are you all right?”

They nodded, looking stunned. They were still in a state of shock, but as I questioned them, they slowly began to thaw. Words tumbled out of the young man. Disbelief. Anger. Frustration.

He paced about, bemoaning his fate. “Look at my new truck!” he said. “I haven't even made the first payment on it! Worse yet, I don't have full coverage insurance! I'm going to have to sue the State to get reimbursed!”

He showed me a big rock that had smashed through the windshield and landed in the back seat. It was as big as a bowling ball and it had passed right between the two of them.

They were fortunate to be alive. I told them so—realizing at the same time that it could have just as easily been me beneath that onslaught of rocks. Me and my little Honda.

“Thank God no one was killed!” I said.

“Actually,” he said, “We're lucky we didn't have our kids in the back seat of the King Cab! That big rock could've killed them.”

“Wow!” I said, aghast. “We need to document this damage in case you have to sue the state. I'll take pictures if you'd like.”

The young man nodded glumly and returned to his pacing, cursing beneath his breath.

I went to work with my camera, documenting the damage to the truck—capturing the whole thing via cellphone video.

It was then that we heard a siren in the distance, the sound of an approaching squad car. A moment later, the officer arrived in a flurry of flashing lights and blaring sirens. He got out of the vehicle and stood surveying the scene. Then he started barking out questions.

I went on filming my “documentary” until the officer's voice cut through my reverie. “Were you involved in the accident, ma'am?”

“No,” I said, “But thank God I wasn't a minute sooner!”

“Good...Great...Perfect!” he intoned, all business-like. “Now if you'll move your vehicle out of the way before it gets hit by oncoming traffic....”

Obviously, I was in the way. I was impeding the business of the State. I needed to move along!

I exchanged information with the young couple, promising to email them the photos and video, then got in my car.

Other drivers were still gawking at the poor young couple, but no one else had stopped to help. Everyone was content to rubberneck...to speculate...to shrug aside a near tragedy. Lives could've been lost....but the Good Lord had been merciful.

I took a deep breath and started the car. “Thank you, Lord, for sparing us. We're so grateful!”

Just then, sunlight pierced the clouds and I looked up to see a lovely rainbow arching across the sky as I drove off. It was a symbol of joy and peace! Hope and promise!

It was a fine day, indeed....A fine day to be alive!



## BOBCAT SOFTBALL

3-15	Ottawa Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
3-17	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-18	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-20	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
3-22	Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
3-30	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
3-31	Missouri Valley College	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
4-3	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
4-14	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
4-15	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
4-21	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
<i>SENIOR DAY</i>			
4-24	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	2 p.m.



## 2018 SEASON



## BOBCAT BASEBALL

3-13	York College	Peru, NE	2 p.m.
3-17	Mount Mercy	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-18	Mount Mercy	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-24	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-25	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
3-28	Bethany College	Peru, NE	3 p.m.
4-3	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	1 p.m.
4-14	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, Ne	1p.m.
4-21	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, Ne	1 p.m.
<i>SENIOR DAY</i>			
4-22	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, Ne	1 p.m.

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