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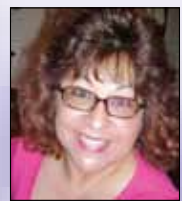
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CONTENTS

Credits & Cover	2
Summer Evenings	3
Devon's Poetry	4
Merri's Diary	5
"Alzheimer's Affects Us All"	8
Photography	3, 6, 7, 10
"Where Life Is Good"	9
"Of Muck, Manure, and May's Merry Madness"	11
Coupon for Valentino's!	12

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COVER PHOTO

The Arbor Day Parade came with a rainy mist and an appreciating crowd of parade-watchers. Thanks, Pioneers, for a great performance under not so great weather conditions. And a special "Hats Off" to the students of the Nebraska City Middle School Band who marched in the cool misty rain without head coverings; brave, dedicated. See band photo page 6.

Inside are articles by your favorite writers and photography of a photogenic Spring. Note the Eagle on page 3, Arbor Lodge and other Spring scenes on page 6, the Cardinal on page 7, plus Peru Dogwood blossoms and football on page 10. Be sure to visit the advertisers who support *Your Country Neighbor*, and enjoy your favorite writers.

Have a great month!

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Voices

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

Writers This Month

Devon Adams - page 4
Stephen Hassler - page 3
Vicki Harger - page 11
Merri Johnson - page 5
Lee Nyberg - page 8
Marilyn Woerth - page 9

Thank You

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Summer Evenings and Special Moments

Stephen Hassler

One evening on my porch in early April it felt like a quiet Summer evening; seventy degrees and very still. It was between dusk and darkness, and the birds had ceased their evening chatter. My laptop computer and I were in a comfortable chair not quite of living room quality. As the darkness approached, the street lights awakened with a gentle glow, then brightened to half-way. The gray-blue sky darkened to a satin black, and the silhouettes of the trees blended into the dark, distant hills.

The sudden change in light made me feel as if there were some other place I should be, as if I were staying up late on a school night and my mother would catch me at any moment. I paused to deepen my awareness of the magic feeling, but moment by moment my eyes registered fewer and fewer shapes and the stillness said nothing to my ears. Various memories teased my senses. One was of my father carrying milk pails to the milk-house, the country yard-light illuminating the side of the barn, the warm white stuff, sloshing over the rims, and kittens scampering at his heels. Another was of me with my first steady girlfriend watching a full moon rise over the Missouri River, and below the overlook, a barge's pusher-tug swept it's spotlight from one bank to the other while chugging up the river.

There seem to be moments in my memory that would leave holes in my life if they were absent; special Summer evenings, perfect Friday afternoons, or a Winter's snowfall watched through the dining room window. When life is tedious such moments are like beacons that flash, and then they are gone, but they are reminders that there is more in life than tedium.

I went to visit a friend the other day. It was late morning, but he had fallen asleep with the television on. These days he was a more of a tired soul than the friend I used to joke with, have lunch with, visit with... and now he was becoming one of those special moments... a late evening silhouette soon to be one with the darkness, a hole in my life.

I closed my computer and went inside, knowing that the magic was gone until next week or next month when a pointed awareness would make me wish I could stop time and make the feeling last. Time doesn't stop, but that in turn guarantees that tomorrow's dawn will bring more possibilities of special moments, as well as all the rest of life that happens before dusk, before we fade away into the dark.

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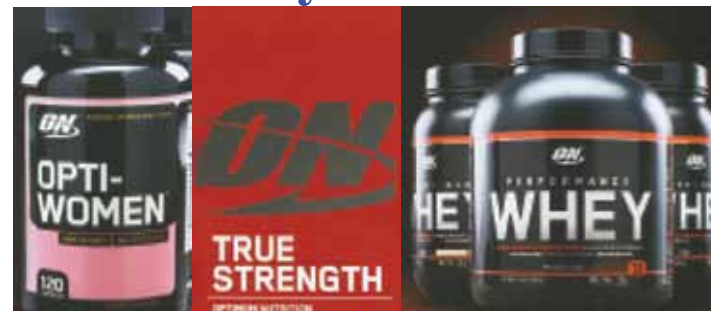


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American Bald Eagle, April, 2015

ENDLESS CREEK

It winds along the bottom of a valley, draining water from the rolling hills. The soft scent of wild plum lays beside the water like a blanket, and finches flit through sun and shadow. When rain is bursting from the sky, it overflows and cuts deep scars across the county road. It is a vital artery for the wild things who live in the valley. They write notes to each other with their tracks on the muddy banks. Time doesn't mean much here, and things won't change for generations yet to come. Buried under layers of years are tools and weapons made by people we never knew. Only the creek can see their ghosts still wading in the gentle, swirling currents.

FEELS LIKE FRIDAY

Calendars are correct, always. Not so much humans, as we tend to think ahead, or behind, in any given week. It's only when the certainty inside our brain causes us to misfire and miss important appointments, meetings, birthdays, anniversaries, or even daily work, that a little glitch of mind becomes a big problem in the reality of life.

Poetry by Devon Adams

THE LAST LADY

On a dirt lane far back from the drone and hiss of highway traffic, away from even the dusty gravel roads, is a small farmstead that was someone's home so many years ago. Set on a bluff, and surrounded by timber, it hasn't been plowed into a field for corn or beans. It is as it was when the last lady who lived there died and went to live in the peaceful country cemetery just around the bend. The buildings are seeping slowly into the ground, but the lonesome flowers still rise to meet the light, waiting for someone to come and love them one more time.

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FOOTNOTES

Every day we write another page of our life, whether in a real journal, or in the files inside our minds. As years accumulate, sometimes we look back, make notes beside the pages from the past, and compare and contrast what we knew then and what we know now. And we tend to say to ourselves, "If only"-----

RIVER ROAD

The rough ribbon of gravel runs away, like a kid running from chores, leaving shoulds and should nots behind. It leads to the mighty muscles of water that drain the prairie of it's tears, and carry the soil that is forever washing down the slant of the continent to the sea. Dust flies behind vehicles on their way to the boat dock, the magnet that pulls on the hearts and minds of fishermen, hunters, and nature's own people, with it's promise of adventure on the wild and often dangerous currents. They are leaving the edge of civilization to explore the limits of their skills and imagination, to absorb the beauty and grace of the artery that keeps the life of the land pumping. A flurry of snow geese descends out of a blue ceiling, their wings catching and throwing back the brilliant rays of afternoon sun. As they settle onto the water, an eagle watches from high in the old cottonwood tree. He'll be eating well before the fall of night. The guy with the camera catches it all, recording time forever on the images that are saved inside his magic box.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

You just never know what you're going to find when you start looking for something.

A few days ago, hubby and I wanted to connect the laptop with the television so we could stream a TV show from the Internet. We needed the proper cable to connect the computer and TV. We had streamed a program before, so we knew that we owned the proper cable, but do you think we could find it? We looked in every reasonable place at least three times. We found numerous non-functional or outdated or simply superfluous electronic devices and miles of cable and cords of one sort or another, but not what we were actually looking for.

While we were rummaging around on the office closet shelf, hubby pulled out a box of supervisory personnel training materials he had accumulated from a previous job: Personal Coaching for Results; Investment in Excellence; and the Manager's Guide to Successful Day-to-Day Employee Relations. All together, the materials weigh ten pounds.

For someone who doesn't particularly enjoy reading, especially psycho-babble and fiction, this pile of "how-to" manuals represents the worst aspect of being a supervisor, namely, dealing with all the bureaucracy of personnel matters. He much prefers to focus on doing the actual, concrete, day-to-day planning and work that makes the business function.

Upon discovering the box, hubby's reaction was to throw it immediately into the trash. I, on the other hand, thought it might be interesting to take a little peak at a handful of note cards bearing hubby's handwriting that slid out of one of the manuals. The cards were apparently part of an exercise in assessing one's satisfaction with personal life in the present, as well as one's desired state of affairs in the future.

I won't go into specifics, just suffice it to say that hubby may or may not be "listening to his wife" now or in the future. This, of course, is not news to me. (You can't be married to the same man for nearly 44 years and learn nothing, for crying out loud.) Health and fitness, along with accumulating an adequate retirement nest egg, pretty much covered the rest of the personal life satisfaction notations. Like I said, his thinking runs along practical lines. Hubby knows that if he does something dumb, injuring himself and ending up an invalid, I'll just have to find someone else to do all that retirement traveling with me.

Looking further into the various manuals, I can understand why hubby wanted to trash them without delay. The Key Concepts Glossary of the Investment in Excellence curriculum contains approximately 250 entries. That's a lot of jargon to add to the lexicon of the already huge industrial terminology he needs to know. And the Manager's Guide to Successful Day-to-Day Employee Relations includes 30+ topics, none of which pertain to the real work of the employees.

Fortunately, hubby no longer has to deal with how-to manuals for dealing with troublesome subordinates. But perhaps he could benefit from a home storage manual tip on where to put your computer cables so you can find them when you want to stream a program from the Internet to your flat-screen TV.

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Arbor Lodge, a Spring View, April, 2015

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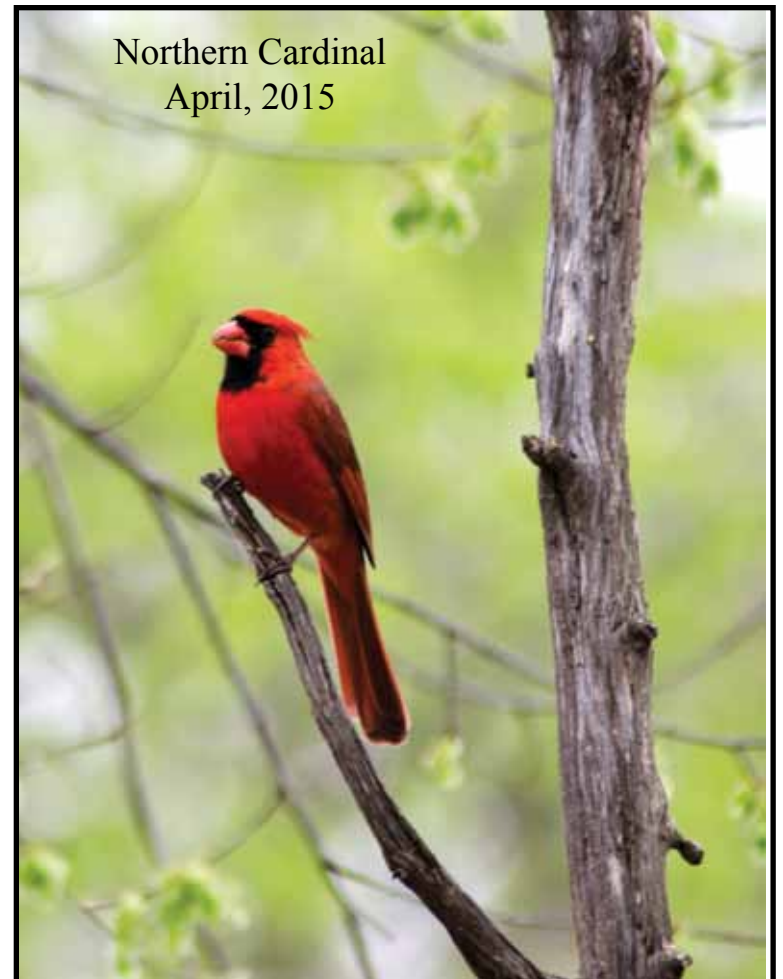
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Northern Cardinal
April, 2015

Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Your Brain and OTC Medications

By Lee Nyberg

With a family history of Alzheimer's disease, I am always seeking information about preventing dementia. Sometimes this quest leads to unpleasant surprises.

One of the key things we can do to preserve cognitive health is to sleep enough for our brains to rest and regenerate. For many people in mid-life, and older, this is easier said than done. Busy schedules, many roles and responsibilities, and changes in digestion and hormones contribute to sleeplessness. Many of my friends and I have turned to a little pink pill, Benadryl®, (diphenhydramine), to help us sleep. Since this antihistamine is known to cause drowsiness and can be purchased legally in every grocery store and drug store, I thought it a safe solution.

A recently published study on the long-term use of the type of medication in my little pink pill snapped me out of my day-dream of easy sleep. The University of Washington's School of Pharmacy examined 7 years of usage history of a group of drugs called anticholinergics. Anticholinergics are a class of medications which block a neurotransmitter (Acetylcholine) in the brain. The drugs help stop involuntary muscle action, such as spasms, and are used for sleep disorders, depression, asthma, incontinence, and gastro intestinal cramps. Over-the-counter medications with anticholinergics include: TylenolPM®, Dramamine®, Nyquil®, and Sominex®.

The study, which analyzed the medication use of 3,500 men and women, 65 years and older, found that people taking anticholinergic drugs for 3 years or more had a 54% higher risk of dementia, relative to those who had taken these medications for 3 months or less. Anticholinergics have a cumulative effect, meaning they build up in our systems. Another study, published in 2010, conducted by the University of Indiana's Dr. Malaz Boustani, concluded anticholinergics are toxic to the brain and especially so for older adults.

Anticholinergics have a greater effect on older brains because the 65 year-old-plus body's liver and kidney functions are slower, allowing the medication to remain in the system longer and its cumulative effect to happen more quickly. Additionally

an older brain produces less of the neurotransmitter Acetylcholine, so there is less of it in the brain for the drugs to block, again leading to more of the drug in the body. Dr. Boustani recommends anyone concerned about developing dementia, or who already has a diagnosis of dementia, to avoid these medications.

Dr. Sarah Barry, a geriatrician at Harvard Medical School says, "This [University of Washington] study is another reminder to periodically evaluate all the drugs you're taking. I have seen people who have been on anticholinergic medications for bladder control for years and they are completely incontinent. These drugs obviously aren't helping." She also said there are many alternatives to anticholinergics, including newer antihistamines such as loratadine (Claritin®) to replace diphenhydramine (Benadryl®) or chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton®).

A pharmacist can help you identify the anticholinergics you might be taking. Your primary care physician can prescribe safer alternatives. For your brain's sake, have your medications evaluated. If you're caring for an older adult, have the same done for him.

Sources: University of Washington, School of Pharmacy, University of Indiana, School of Pharmacy, and Harvard Medical School, and the Mayo Clinic.

Lee Nyberg seeks to help families and those living with Alzheimer's through education and her company, Home Care Assistance. For more information visit our website:

HomeCareAssistance.com

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

For a gardener at this time of the year, the pitter patter of rain drops can be a welcome release... a break from the chaos of the lengthy to-do list. Now most people granted do not have a yard as large as ours and they often don't have a clue of what I am complaining about until they have their first tour of our gardens. One of the first questions we hear is "How do you do this all by yourselves, I'm just exhausted thinking about it?" The second most common statement we hear as we traverse through our three acres is "There's more, when does it end?"

Yes, my dear husband of mine, when does it end? I am perfectly happy with what we have now. Well maybe a wooden arbor swing covered in wisteria vine (Aunt Rita said I could have some of hers), would look nice by the pond. Oh and over by the moon garden the old Nanking cherry bushes could be ripped out and a wooden raised deck would be nice there surrounded by shrubs. We will need to take out the old box elder tree before it topples anyway and the young elm tree will give the deck a nice shaded roof.

You have been dreaming for years of putting in a stream cavorting over boulders in the ravine out back. I see it as a dry stream bed with a wooden deck hanging out over the rocks going down the ravine with a place for deck chairs, and a rock bridge at the foot of the stream where you have already placed a path through that section of the wild area.

The grandpa part of you wants to add on to the pirate tree house that already has a rock wall, tube slide, fireman pole dropping down into a rope spider web that drops into a two ton sandbox. Of course, you say the boys are getting older so we need a zip line to parallel the unbuilt stream going down the ravine. By golly we need one of those. Umm, remember back when we were younger and we made this plan; build until we are sixty, then just maintain. Hmm, and how far into sixty are we? Yes I know that age is relative, all in a person's perception. I keep telling my body that but it's not listening. What's that? Oh you get these dreams and plans in your head and you just have to make them real. Yes the pond and Japanese tea house are wonderful and all the other small gardens but I'm getting old. I know, it does help us stay young, and the grandsons or anyone else's children don't ever want to leave but... oh please don't look at me that way. I hate it when I get that sad, little boy face, you're not playing fair.

Maybe we are going to have to come to a compromise on which one of our dreams becomes a reality. But then I guess I really don't want us to stop dreaming for that is the best part about living where life is good. And yes it does help to keep us young. Now where is that heating pad?

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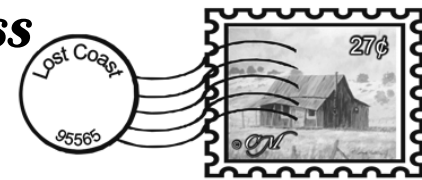
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Old Home Place
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Of Muck, Manure, and May's Merry Madness

By Vicki O'Neal



I didn't realize what a tenderfoot I'd become until today. You see—I've been living in town for the last few months and the grind of city-life has been gradually wearing away at my countrified veneer, but I didn't know it.

I still had a Country-Girl heart—yearning to plant a garden—even if it were within city limits! With that in mind, I left early on my way to work, today, and drove out of town toward a new client's home—while looking for some good garden soil along the way.

I decided to swing into a friend's farm to see if she had a few shovelfuls of cow manure to bolster the dirt in my new garden. It would only take a couple of minutes, or so I thought—and I would soon be on my way to work again.

My friend, Jen, was just leaving on an errand as I pulled up to her farmhouse, but she was happy to share her cow poop with me. "Just be careful of the Bull!" she said. "He's fairly docile, but you never know about a bull!"

I waved her words aside and said. "Say no more! I'm a country girl, you know!"

I soon found the shovel and some feed-bags and went into the cow pen with a frisky pup trailing at my heels. The day was gloriously warm and I felt like a million dollars. This is how life should be! Sunshine and country breezes and cow manure everywhere! Life simply doesn't get any better than this----!

Good Lord!

The grass beneath my feet had suddenly given way. My white, leather work-shoes disappeared into a sodden marsh of manure. Faster than you can say: JackBeNimble, I was stuck in poop up to my ankles.

I yelled and leaped aside, leaving one of my shoes behind in the muck. Unfortunately, I now had the attention of the entire herd of cows and they headed toward me at a trot—including the bull. They'd seen me floundering about, waving the feed-bags in my hand, and it had sent them into a frenzy. A moment later, I was surrounded by milling heifers with the bull not far behind.

How in heck do I get into such predicaments?

Reaching for my shoes, I pulled them out of the manure and tossed them aside. The pup, tagging at my heels, immediately seized hold of one shoe and trotted off with it. I ran after him screaming which only increased his pleasure. He thought we were playing a game and he ran faster.

It was then that a truck full of hay pulled up outside the fence. Jen's father-in-law was delivering dinner to the hungry herd. Fortunately for me, the dog dropped my shoe and the cattle turned their attention from me to the farmer. I felt a surge of relief, but my relief was short-lived. I realized, belatedly, that my car was parked directly in front of the gate, blocking the farmer's access.

Embarrassed, I hurried to rectify the problem, but by now the once "docile" bull had become indignant that his dinner was being delayed. He bellowed and pounded the ground with a huge hoof, tossing his head menacingly. Lowering his head, he rammed his horns against the gate, his bellows echoing across the hills.

Cautiously, I worked my way to the other side of the fence. Using the gate as a barrier, I somehow—through sheer determination and madness—began driving the herd back from the fence. I hollered and waved my arms, creating mayhem for a several minutes, but at last the entire herd yielded—even the bull.

Panting and sweating, I moved my car out of the way and the farmer's truck was able to pull inside the gate. He delivered his load of hay, and then drove away waving.

Exhausted, I sank back into my seat. It was too ridiculous what had just happened to me. My work clothes were spattered by muck. My white shoes were smeared with poop. I was stinky and sweaty.... Speckled and freckled in the worst kind of way. It had all happened so fast.

This was one of those Adventures-in-the-Making. I knew I simply couldn't waste all of this misery.

Grabbing my laptop, I began typing feverishly. I was half-way into my Adventure, sitting there on the side of the country road, when a big white pick-up truck pulled up beside me. The driver was a refined gentleman who looked at me with more than a hint of suspicion.

And no wonder! Here sat a bare-footed, red-faced, muck-spattered stranger parked by a lonely farmhouse with suspicious white bags of "loot"! It did look awful, especially since the occupants of the farm were obviously not at home.

I groaned inwardly, but tried to look cheerful and sane. I didn't give him a chance to say a word.

"I know this looks crazy," I said. "But I was on my way to work, you know, and I came to my friend's house to get poop for my garden and the cows started chasing me and I lost my work-shoes in the poop... and then the dog took off with my shoe, and the bull was after me, too... and if you don't believe that these kind of things happen to me, you can look it up on VickiOneal.com and see for yourself. I'm a writer you see, and things like this...."

"Whoa.... whoa.... whoa!" he said. "That's too wild of a story to make up at the spur of the moment!" He shook his head and eased his truck into gear. "You must be telling me the truth. I believe you!... I believe you!"

Still shaking his head, he drove off in a cloud of dust, leaving me to my writing.

And that's how it happened, folks. At least you know me well enough to believe that it's true! See what happens when you become too sophisticated and citified for your own good?

And now....I somehow have to get my filthy shoes scrubbed and my clothes cleaned off, and wash the specks of manure off my face. In about a half hour, I'm due to arrive at my new client's home looking respectable and refined and I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I've got to try!

Time's a wasting.... !

Have a great day, folks, and stay out of the cow poop!

With love,

Crazy Vic



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