

Your *Country* Neighbor

Free

May, 2017

Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Hiawatha • Johnson • Nebraska City • Peru • Rock Port • Sabetha • Syracuse • Tecumseh

A Magazine for Small Towns
and Rural America



More Zoo Photos on Page 6



Nebraska City Pioneers Marching Band, Arbor Day Parade, April 29, 2017



Nemaha County Courthouse in Auburn, Nebraska

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the
Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Window On Fifth Street (Re-Print)

Stephen Hassler

Dear Mom, This past Winter I watched the snow blowing by my window on Fifth Street. I watched with a coffee mug in my hand and a warm fire in the fireplace. No cows to milk anymore nor calves to feed. I live in town now and I can walk to the grocery store. Not that I don't miss the farm! Someday I'll have a place in the country big enough for a garden with sweet corn and cantaloupe, plus a few acres for alfalfa. I really miss the fragrance of alfalfa blooming in June. I miss our walks through the fields on summer days.

A lot has happened since we last talked. I raised some children, like you did, and I married above myself, like Dad did. Not too long ago I returned home to Nebraska. You lived here most of your life, but I wanted to try different things. I lived in Colorado, Arizona, Texas, New Jersey, and of course, Iowa and Nebraska. But now I'm back. Can you believe that I missed Nebraska blizzards? It took me a long time to realize that I love them.

And guess what? I published a magazine! I'm very excited about it and I know you would be proud. I am fortunate that I know so many people who are so talented and who help and support me. They make my publication possible, but they also make it special.

I wish we could talk again. Happy Mother's Day, Mom.

Love, your son.

p.s. To all my country neighbors: When we were children, we followed our parents everywhere. When we were teenagers we tried to get away from them. As young adults we were too busy for them. As we mature we want to know them better and be closer to them. Don't be concerned as to how to go about it. Just take your parent to lunch or coffee or go fishing. Let the magic happen. And give your Mom a rose; don't wait for Mother's Day.

2 May 2017 Your Country Neighbor

May Writers

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Steve Adams
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Mary Ann Holland
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Thank You!

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Protect Yourself from Medicare Fraud

Mary Ann Holland

"Protect Yourself from Medicare Fraud" workshops will be held on Monday, May 15, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Morton-James Public Library in Nebraska City [923 1st Corso], and Thursday, June 8, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Syracuse Public Library [480 5th Street]. Content of the workshop is the same both days; plan to attend one. The workshop will explain what constitutes fraud and abuse; identify ways to protect your Medicare coverage and steps necessary to report identity theft and scams.

Mary Ann Holland, Certified Medicare Counselor with SHIIP, will offer the workshop and respond to participant questions. This workshop is co-sponsored by the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP] and Southeast Community College.

"Demand for Medicare information is growing as health insurance changes, more baby boomers age into Medicare, and media coverage expands," said Medicare Counselor Holland. "This workshop is a great opportunity for participants to learn how to get the most from their Medicare benefits."

Tuition is being provided by the Nebraska SHIIP. There is no cost to attend the workshop, however participants must register. To register, please visit the www.doi.ne.gov/shiip, or call 402-471-2841 at the SHIIP office.

Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP] offers free, unbiased Medicare counseling and education to help seniors and people with disabilities make informed decisions about health insurance. Services are provided statewide by 350 certified volunteers. Nebraska SHIIP is federally-funded and is coordinated by the state Department of Insurance

Mary Ann Holland
Nebraska SHIIP Counselor, and
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www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



I'm a legend
in my own time
I'm a legend
in this little town of mine
It doesn't matter If you're the sinner or
the saint
Just get the job done son
It's all the same

Don't tell me no stories
Just tell me what you did
Be home by nine
And get to bed
Big day tomorrow
With a long road ahead

It's been a while
Since you been around
You don't know what's happened
in our little town
Lots of people
ain't around no more
They're all legends
That's for sure

They were all legends
In their own time
They're all legends
In this little town of mine

It didn't matter
If they were the sinners or the saints
They got the job done son
It's all the same

They were legends
In their own time
They're all legends
In this little town of mine

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“Grave Mistakes in the Twilight”

by Vicki O’Neal



My eccentric father said to me the other day: “Let’s go to the Barady Cemetery before it gets dark!” Dad was sitting in his pickup, gunning the engine. He loves visiting dead folks at the old cemetery. It’s one of his favorite pastimes.

I really didn’t feel like graveyarding with Dad that day. It’s scary business to ride around with an 82-year-old teenager. You never know where you might end up...

But then, on second thought, I reconsidered. I realized that Dad wouldn’t be with us forever—and someday I’d be visiting him at the Cemetery. So, I decided to humor my father—putting aside my fears and common sense.

Bad decision. I could’ve ended up as dead as the other folks in the graveyard!

When we arrived at the cemetery, I took out my camera and started snapping pictures of my father standing beside his parents’ and grandparents’ tombstones....Great grandparents....Great aunts and great uncles.

The sun was starting to set and I figured we had more than enough pictures of dead relatives—but Dad wanted more! He’s never satisfied. “Now,” he said, “Let’s swing by the old Burg Cemetery...and the Brick Church, too!”

I protested, but it did no good. My father was in charge.

We drove to more cemeteries and took more pictures... endless pictures as the sun sank lower. Three cemeteries!...the Burg, the Brick, and the Barady! What insanity! Who does this kind of thing?

I was all worn out, but my father was just getting started. “Now, let’s go to the Prairie Union!” he said. “It’s the best cemetery around! Folks are just dying to get into Prairie Union!”

I climbed into the pickup grumpily. By the time we’d reached the fourth graveyard, I’d formulated a plan. When Dad got out to visit with the kinsfolk, I slid into the driver’s seat. I’d had enough! I wasn’t going to another graveyard...not if I could help it!

The sun sank behind the distant hills and the cemetery turned dim and foreboding. I watched Dad meander between the tombstones, murmuring kind words to the folks who lived there...Telling them, no doubt, how fortunate they were to be in such a fine cemetery.

At last, my father finished and he returned to the truck to find me sitting in the driver’s seat with the heater turned up high.

“OK...OK!” he said. “I’ll let you drive home, but we’re going to take a shortcut on the gravel.”

I complied, but soon realized that our ‘shortcut’ was a serious mistake. The road wasn’t gravel at all. It was one of those old country lanes that meanders through the Nebraska back-land—and it was made of Mud—slick-as-snot Mud! My father could’ve handled it, if he’d been driving—but I was no match for 4-inch deep mud!

We went to fish-tailing back and forth—slipping and sliding our way from one side of the road to the other. My Father was hollering and I was sweating.

“Gun it!” Dad bellowed. “Don’t slow down now!”

I gunned it and the fish-tailing grew worse.

“You women don’t know how to drive!” Dad shouted. He was fit to be tied. “Shift into 2nd gear! No...No! The other way!”

Moments later, the truck slid into a ditch and came to an

abrupt halt. We were in serious trouble. We were many miles from home without a cell phone. It was getting dark and cold.

We sat in the deepening twilight, far out in the boonies... An 82-year-old teenager, and his weary daughter.

“You’ll have to get out and push,” Dad said. “We’ll never get out otherwise!”

Slogging through the mush, I pushed and panted and heaved while my father spun the mud into a fine dark lather. At last, the truck began to move. “Now, jump into the back of the truck!” Dad hollered. “We need the added weight on the back axle!”

I took a leap and landed in the back of the pickup. As usual, it was full of my father’s favorites—logs and pitchforks...scythes, saws, and ominous debris. I grabbed hold of the side of the truck as Dad gunned the engine.

“Hang on!” he shouted. “We need momentum to get up the hill!”

Tires spun...mud flew and we headed up the hill with a roar. Thus began the longest, most hair-raising journey of my life.

I gasped and groaned and prayed to God in Heaven as we fishtailed from side-to-side, bumping up and down... over hill and dale. Death—certain death—seemed but a breath away. At any moment, we could plunge off an embankment, and I’d end up at the bottom of a pile of logs—speared through with scythes, saws, and pitchforks.

I shut my eyes tightly. “Dear God, spare my life!” I prayed with desperation as I tossed back and forth. “Don’t let me die with a pitchfork in my gut!”

My mind grew cloudy and faint. I knew the Old Barady Cemetery was waiting for me greedily—and the Burg and the Brick and the Prairie Union, too—all vying for my corpse. They were fitting destinations for silly Gals who went on graveyard jaunts with their Fathers.

The journey was endless. It lasted two-and-a-half eternities—and I prayed every inch of the way.

When at last we reached the safety of the main highway, I was nearly comatose—lying there in the back of the pickup all splattered with mud—staring up at the darkened sky. The crescent moon smiled down at me from the heavens. Venus and Mars winked at me, and I heaved a ragged sigh of relief.

“Thank you, God...Thank you!” I murmured. It felt good to be alive!

“Get in....get in!” Father called from the cab. He was his usual cheery self again. “You’ve got to admit. Your old Dad can drive better than anyone else around!” he said modestly as I climbed on board.

Rendered speechless, I could only shake my head. But I knew one thing for sure.

I wouldn’t be taking any more trips with my Father.... Not for a very very very long time!



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Poetry by Devon Adams

SOFTLY SLIPPING

She wakes to sunlight seemingly similar to other days, but there is something missing in her perception. Dust motes dancing in the still air hold subtle messages about changes, but she cannot decipher them. In a slow process of loss, the threads of connection in her brain have begun to unravel. At first, symptoms are minor and infrequent, easily dismissed as small confusions. But as more threads come loose, she becomes a shadow of herself, with only brief moments of clarity that light her smile like sunshine between the clouds.

MOTHERS ARE FOREVER

I can sense that she is there, standing quietly behind me, like a silent shadow that is my constant companion. Our bond is much too dear to be cut forever, like a cord of flesh at birth. Across time and space we will share forever together, joined by invisible connections that are the enduring essence of being.

MAY DAZE

As blooms proliferate, and rainbows paint the sky behind the storms, living things succumb to the madness of spring. Cabin fevers evaporate in brilliant sunshine, as our brains clear and the fires of energy explode. Ambition and imagination grow garden dreams that will never be real, but they are, nevertheless, delectable, as we lie in the green grass, dozing in the sunshine.

EVEN AFTER

In a blink of time, today will be gone, and it will become part of the past. Even after sundown, though, memories will remain to follow us into our dreams.

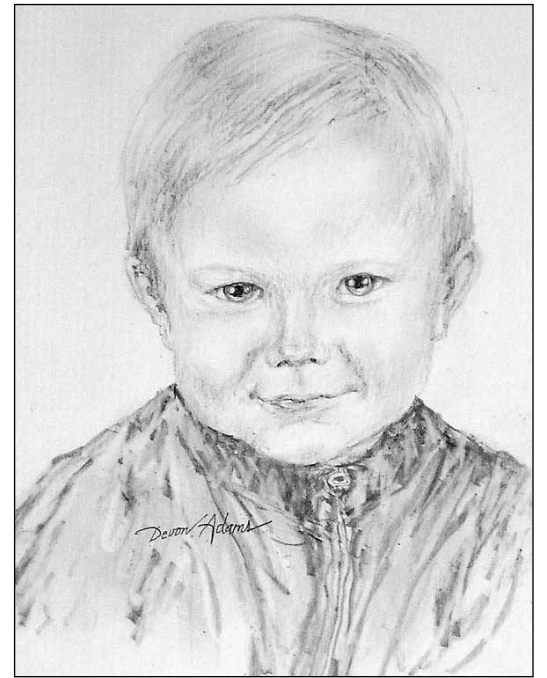
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From the inside, behind insulated windows, feeling the chill of the artificial cool, the day looks benign. Harmless white puffs of clouds are scattered across the blue expanse that is the lid of a hot pot. But outside, humidity is pushing out oxygen, until breathing is not a labor of love. The barometer is plunging past stormy toward some serious danger, and now the sky is changing from a smily face to a grim reaper type of menace. Along the horizon there is a black wall of thunder that sounds like a busy bowling alley, with the continuous clamor of pins being smashed. Dead calm hushes the pale wind, and you can smell a charge in the air that explodes into a massive lightning bolt that peels a strip of bark off the tallest cottonwood by the creek. Massive chunks of hail start to fall in a sudden silence, and they lie there, like grenades waiting to blow. Time to run!

JOY PERSISTS

The power of spring has been unleashed. A giant green wave washes over the prairies, as wild things are gripped with the urge to reproduce, the understanding implicit in their genes that the envelope of time is short each year for species to bring forth their descendants. Most of the new spirits catch life and soar, but some are extinguished, the promise of their lives broken. And yet, a joy persists, that is the essence of being. Each day is to be savored, until the last ray of sun is done, and the magic of night covers all sorrows.

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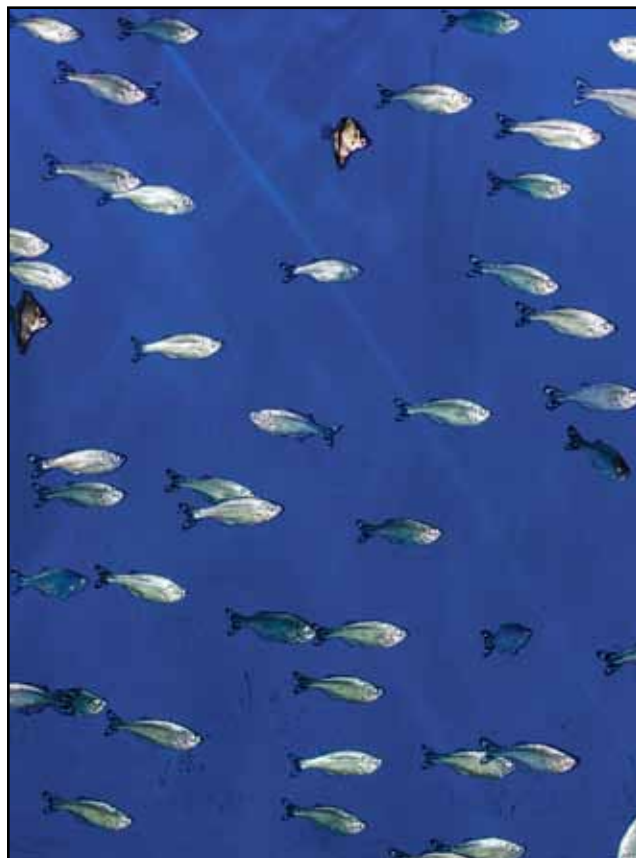
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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

It's been said that undertaking a home improvement project is a true test of a marriage. Some projects drag on and on. Others go over budget. Some just plain go bad. There's usually plenty of blame to go around in all those scenarios. Hubby and I have been through quite a few such projects over the years, so we have "passed the test" more than once.

Our most recent project was to replace the standard door for our laundry room with full-height, double, louvered, swinging doors. How hard could it be? I mean, we weren't moving walls or doing plumbing or anything. But, believe you me, that project provided plenty of opportunities for testing.

The problem wasn't lack of planning: Hubby spent hours researching. Who knew buying full-height, double, louvered, swinging doors would be so hard? Apparently, not very many people want doors like that, because there aren't a whole lot of choices out there. Hubby finally found a manufacturer that could custom-build them. The first set took six weeks to arrive and had to be sent back because of minor damage. It took another month to get the replacements.

Next step: painting. Spray painting was definitely the way to go with all those louvers. Lucky for us, we already had a paint sprayer. We spent six man-hours creating a "spraying room" in one-half of the garage, moving stuff around and hanging plastic all over the place. When all was ready, hubby filled the sprayer and aimed. Nothing happened. He tried tapping on it, afraid to be too aggressive, with no success. OK, plan two: buy new sprayer at local hardware store. Hubby gets home with the new sprayer and looks for the directions for the proper settings to apply latex paint. There are no such directions. Turns out this sprayer is only for stain and varnish. The new sprayer goes back to the store and hubby goes back to tapping on the old one. Still getting nowhere, he figures he might as well give it a good whack since it isn't working anyway. Voila! It starts spraying! Six hours prep time, and the actual painting is done in about ten minutes.

Now for a bigger challenge: figuring out how to attach the special swinging hinges. These hinges are nothing like the typical pin-type hinge. The details in the diagram and directions were just tricky enough to result in a backward attachment on the first try. Thankfully, the incorrect screw holes ended up on the back side of the doors. A little wood putty and paint would suffice to fix that. The one remaining issue was getting the doors to hang evenly. After multiple adjustments of the tension mechanism, we'll just say they hang evenly enough for who they're for.

I'm still perfecting my going-in-and-out technique. These doors will give you a good smack on your backside if you aren't careful. But the advantages and aesthetics outweigh any negatives, in my opinion. I'm not sure if hubby totally agrees with me. But he seems happy that I'm happy. And isn't keeping your wife happy what home improvement projects are all about?

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The PSC Jazz Band played on the 'Quad' on the last Thursday in April.
It was a jazzy exit for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

I am staring at this blank page... it is not calling to me... call to me please... stupid blank page. I want to write something to cheer my readers up after all the political name calling that doesn't stop, celebrity sexual harassment suits, babies being shot by stray bullets, crazy man in North Korea, Russian spies, and property taxes! Now, just where can you find life is good, you may ask?

Well sweetheart, it's probably at the bottom of your feet, especially if you are outdoors while reading this and if you're not get out there, move, do not read this indoors! There, that's better, and hopefully it is not raining when you get there, but then when is the last time you relished standing out in the rain. Rain, the blood of the earth, sustainer of life. Even though we have had our fair share this spring, let's not knock it, it could be worse. Ask the greatest generation when the entire world seemed lost during two world wars. They would tell us to stop our whining and count our blessings.

Blessing number one the lilacs are blooming and my tree peonies..ah it smells so sweet on my piece of heaven on earth. And yes, the weeds are thriving. Why is that a blessing you may ask? Hey, if the weeds aren't thriving we are all in a whole heap of trouble because then something is really wrong with the ecosystem. So yes the weeds are thriving and I have something to take my frustrations out on. Spring is a time for starting over, and if you need it, making peace with yourself.

Have you noticed how we often neglect that in our daily lives? Confession is good for the soul, so is inward reflection and self forgiveness. What a more beautiful place to cool that pot simmering inside of us than in the beautiful natural creation around us. When I start working outside in my garden I feel stripped of self doubt, self incrimination, perhaps at times self loathing. Time and space slow down even if my hands and feet are busy. Some people run, I garden. When I walk towards the garden pond and hear the waterfall my blood pressure lowers. While weeding among the roses (thorns and all) my blood pressure lowers, the sweet smell lures me into a calming state. Now the strawberry patch may irritate me because I can't seem to keep it clean for anything but the berries make a sweet strawberry shortcake well worth the trouble.

How are you feeling now? Look at what my husband and I created in our yard, our paradise, our therapy. Where is your paradise? It doesn't have to be a garden. Beauty can be created in building a Harley, teaching, working in a factory, or in kind deeds done for another, or in serving your country, all you have to do is find beauty in your own soul and the need to share this beauty.

I have a group of ladies coming to see our gardens in little over a month so if you wouldn't mind excusing me. I need to go out and pull some weeds while thinking over a transgression and deciding on how to rectify it. And when I am done for today I will look over my work, I will find its beauty and know that I have transplanted that beauty back into myself. Good thing I have a lot of weeds.

Enjoy today and all your days in this lifetime. You are your heritage to yourself and the future of this wonderful country, where life is good and so are you. Happy sunny and rainy days to you all.



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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Early Signs of Dementia

By Lee Nyberg

Wonder if you're having signs of dementia? It's common to do so, especially with jokes about "senior-itis" flying around. Or do you have secret fears when your normally on-top-of-everything spouse asks the same question twice in a day? With one in three seniors developing dementia (Alz.org), it's natural to be little jumpy about a set of lost keys. Or two.

The following are early indicators that something might be going on.

Vision is malfunctioning. Trouble reading, but not remediable with stronger reading glasses, could signal visual-spatial changes in the brain. Another indicator of the same issue is difficulty with hand-eye coordination. An example is trying to put a glass down on a counter top and missing it by inches. Driving is also affected because drivers must judge distances, so more accidents are a related concern.

Conversations come to a halt, or a loved one asks you to explain a TV program or asks a question repeatedly within a short time. This is a sign of difficulties with attention. People need to be able to pay attention to a movie to follow the plot or to a conversation to track and contribute.

Odd behavior. I knew something was not right with my own mother when she began to tell an unknown store clerk a very personal and detailed story in the same tone she would have used with a close friend. Freely giving out closely guarded information or money to strangers on the phone or in person, is a sign abilities to make good judgements are changing.

Thinking Ford is still the President or wearing a heavy coat on a sweltering day. Lapses like these, or forgetting the month or year, indicate confusion about time and place. This 'time travel' can happen for brief or not so brief periods. People often shift to a time filled with fond memories.

Losing stuff, and not being able to find it by retracing steps. If you believe you're losing your keys more often, but you can find them by retracing, you may have a case of modern life. Consider the chaos you might be in: sorting through 40 years of household items to downsize, planning a giant family reunion, or recovering from a significant surgery or illness; stress from these kinds of activities can cause you to be careless with possessions. Losing things and being unable to find them merits a check up.

With these and any other changes you might notice, evaluate whether they are disrupting daily life. See a doctor if you answer yes, on even one of the above signs. Often, people have treatable conditions, like a vitamin deficiency, thyroid irregularities, or medication interactions or side effects. Every lapse of function does not indicate dementia. Mild cognitive impairment, if it is present, does not mean more advanced dementias are a certainty. Concerns should always be taken to a doctor. Alzheimer's disease researchers are closer to solutions every day; there is reason to hope for a cure.

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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