

Your

Country Neighbor

November 2006

Your Nemaha Valley

FREE!



Voice



This cover photo was taken south of Syracuse on Highway 50. It appears this harvest is somewhat “overflowing”. The picture was taken with a telephoto lens, and the “spill” was not noticed until the images were loaded into a computer, except perhaps, by the farmer shortly after this picture was taken.

The sunny days of October provided some fine foliage viewing, but the rain and wind was not as welcome. Nevertheless, November appears to be willing to offer more pleasurable days of Autumn, hopefully, right up to Thanksgiving. Enjoy and be thankful.

Civil War battle re-enactment; one of the events held in October during Brownville’s *Old Time Autumn Days*.



Autumn travelers pause on a tranquil lake to rest during their journey south.



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Your
**COUNTRY
NEIGHBOR**

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Pawnee City High School students of Deb Kubik are pictured with their 'birdhouse gourds' which they donated to the recent "Birdhouse Bash" benefit auction held at the *Little Red Schoolhouse Gallery* in Brownville. The benefit raised \$500.00 for the Furnas Arboretum.

Photo by Deb Kubik, K-12 Art Instructor

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To register or obtain more information, contact instructor Karen Fritschle at 402-209-0808.

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In Nebraska: Auburn, Avoca, Barada, Brownville, Cook, Dawson, Dubois, Elk Creek, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Nebraska City, Nehawka, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee City, Peru, Shubert, Stella, Syracuse, Table Rock, Tecumseh, Union, Verdon, and Weeping Water.

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A Letter From Frieda

by Frieda Byrston

Walking up the sidewalk today, I stopped. Ahead of me was a tangle of electric wires leading to small machines. The men who were working there saw me and recognized from the little radio dangling from my neck that I belonged to the "senior community" in the hollow below. They pulled the wires out of my way, and signaled me ahead. I told them, "When I lived in Israel, wires across the sidewalk meant the police were about to blow up a booby trap, I didn't know what *these* wires meant—"

The men laughed and said they were just detailing a new truck and thought no one walked up here. "This is America," they said in various accents. "You don't have to be afraid here. It's safe."

I walked on up to the fountain on top of the hill and sat there looking down on the world below. That was the problem with America, I thought. Too many people came from places like San Salvador, where a man could go to work in the morning and lie dead on the street by noon, killed in the little civil wars that bubble up everywhere nowadays. They came to the U.S., found stores open and business as usual, and thanked God that they had come safely to a safe place.

I won't be around when they discover that America isn't all that safe, and wonder where to run to next. And most of the people who were born here will be wondering where to run to, too....

Europe is already beginning to feel it. France knuckles under to Muslim demands for changes in laws and regulations. Italy does a contortionist act to explain away the Pope's comment about Islam and violence. Jack Straw draws Muslim fire in Britain. Germany tries to head off trouble by thinking ahead.

The German Big-Hats called a meeting with the Muslim Long-Robes to talk about absorbing Muslims into mainstream German life instead of their staying on the outside as expatriate Turks. See, after War II, Germany was short on men, so they imported young Turks on contracts to work in the factories the U.S. rebuilt for them. To everyone's surprise, German girls converted to Islam to marry Turkish imports, and had half-German babies who were native-born Germans and couldn't be shipped back to Turkey when their fathers' contracts ran out. The fathers stayed. The half-German babies grew up all-Muslim, married each other, and made more Muslim babies. Now Germany finds itself no longer big and blue eyed and blonde and Lutheran, and it upsets the basic Germans.

German Big-Hats want all Muslims to wear clothes like non-Muslim Germans and send all the kids to regulation German schools. Muslim Long-Robes don't want that. MLR say the kids will lose all respect for their elders and their traditions—they'll lose their own identity and forget who they are.

Right. That's what happened in Germany with the Jews. When the Crusades failed, and the feudal system fell apart, a new merchant class arose. They could make and sell, but they couldn't read or write, since education had mostly been limited to the monasteries. They imported Jews to do the bookkeeping and correspondence because Jews learned reading and writing as five-year-olds. But Jews were kept to themselves. They weren't allowed into German society. They were only hired hands.



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A little earlier than America's Revolution, Germany had gone into a period of prosperity and culture, and had allowed Jews to enter their universities. From there, Jews lost their Jewish identity, and many converted to German Catholicism, married into all levels of German society, and were absorbed as Germans. Many of them lost even the memory of their Jewish connections. They were totally German.

Maybe this is what the Muslim leaders are thinking about when they refuse to be integrated as Germans into German schools. Maybe they are remembering that when Hitler came along and cut the Jews out of Germany, he made a pretty complete job of it. He declared that anybody with one Jewish grandparent was Jewish, and many of the Jews whose souls rose in smoke from the death factories, didn't know they were Jewish until the police knocked at the door. (They were Jewish by Hitler's law, but not by Jewish law—by Jewish law, your mother has to be Jewish before you can be, unless you convert. But what Grampa did doesn't make the score board.)

But maybe some of those Muslim Long-Robes read history. They may deny the Holocaust, but maybe seeing the death camps has made them wary of its possibility for them some day. Or maybe it's just that they see themselves as zeroes if they integrate as Germans, while they can look forward to seeing themselves as heroes if they keep to Muslim multiplication methods....

And watching what's happening in Europe makes me wonder how it's going to happen here. I walked back down the hill. The men were working on another car. They all smiled and said, "Keep walking, little lady. You're safe here." I smiled back. But I didn't say a word. Not one. I just kept thinking....



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Off to the Land of Up-side-down

by
Vicki Harger

Autumn makes you think about things you've never thought of before. I don't know why. Maybe it's the harvest moon and the hint of adventure on the breeze. Maybe it's the last stubborn leaf clinging to the maple tree...Or maybe it's the long lines of geese flying overhead—a honking traffic jam in the sky—wending their way southward. They know where they're going. But do we?

Restlessness assailed me one autumn afternoon. I went to find my daughter. "Let's go for a drive," I said. "We need to explore—maybe do a little Nancy Drew-ing. What do you think?"

"Sure," said Mystia, putting down her Nancy Drew mystery, "Why not?"

Taking off in a cloud of dust, we headed for the back roads, humming and singing nonsense rhymes from childhood.

"We're off to the Land of Up-side-down,
Where umbrellas smile and the pumpkins frown,
Watch me, Kitty, catch a Ringo!"

We followed the dirt tracks, heading deep into farm country where you see nothing but soybean jungles and long pathways tunneling through dry corn. We wandered down the dirt trails criss-crossing the Heartland, spending the afternoon poking around in the dusty corners of rural Nebraska.

When at last the sun began to set, we moseyed on toward home—past leaning barns and weary farmers finishing up their fields in the fading light. Day was dying in the west, quickly paling to a lifeless gray.

A graveyard came into view, stark in the glare of our headlights. On impulse, I pulled into the prairie cemetery, ignoring my daughter's protests.

We stared about us at this City of the Dead—gazing at the dark, windowless towers—miniature skyscrapers silhouetted on the skyline. Silence reigned. The occupants of this city dwell side by side, elbow-to-elbow in mute companionship. A graveyard is the only place on the planet where the Hatfields and the McCoys get along. It is a Land of Up-side-down, indeed—yet there's nowhere else that's quite as peaceful.

Twilight deepened. The crescent moon lodged itself in the branches of a cedar tree near the edge of the cemetery. Dusk descended as stars pricked holes in the sky.

I thought of all the regrets and *If only's* buried in this graveyard as I gazed at the moonlight filtering downward—the same moonbeams that had shone down on a thousand generations before us. If the bones in this cemetery could speak, what would they talk about?

Relationships that will never be? Memories that were never made? Forgiving words that were never spoken. Prayers that were never prayed?

Above me, the crescent moon freed itself from the cedar branches and sailed westward, taking with it the regrets and prayers of many generations.

"Mom?" my daughter spoke out of the darkness. Her voice was small. She was probably thinking about such weighty matters, herself. "Mom!" she said, again—louder this time. "Can we go now?"

"Mm-hmm. In just a minute," I murmured, squinting through the windshield. "I see something, and I want to check it out. There's a mystery out there, Nancy Drew."

She sighed.

I got out of the mini-van and began walking through the dusk toward two lighted flames on the far side of the cemetery. Mysterious and beckoning, they glowed softly in the autumn twilight. The twin flames seemed to be hovering there, guarding a very large tombstone. Feeling mesmerized, I stared at the glowing lights as I moved toward them.

I'm not sure what I was expecting, but I was rather disappointed when I reached them. The flames were modern devices. Some new-fangled solar lights flanking a huge tombstone. I bent to examine the large monument, then caught my breath sharply. I stared at the birth date on the grave.

October, 1961.

I straightened abruptly. It was my birth month, and it was the very year of my birth, as well. And the date of death? December 11th, just a few weeks from now. A shiver ran through me, and I felt suddenly cold. Just suppose...? Now there's an eerie thought. What if I only had a few weeks left on earth? What if December 11th were the date of *my* death? What would I do with my few remaining days?

An odd foreboding swept over me as I stood there staring downward. It was like looking at my own headstone. Strange. So strange. I had walked all the way across a dark graveyard for this...? What did it mean?

I didn't linger long, but my thoughts were deep as I made my way back to the mini-van. With caution, my daughter unlocked the van door for me. She was chomping her chewing gum—looking rather unNancy-Drewish.

"Mom, you're nuts," she said, as I climbed in. "Look! There's a car coming, now. What will people think of you wandering around in a graveyard at night! They'll lock you up. Why do you do stuff like this?"

"Well," I said briskly, starting the engine. "It's good to go to cemeteries sometimes. It makes you think about things you've never thought of before."

"Yeah," Mystia said, "Like thoughts of strangling your mother. Now—lets' s get out of here before that car gets here."

I laughed. "Sure sweetie. We're out of here... Out of this Land of Up-side-down!"

I drove slowly homeward, watching the crescent moon slip in and out of the wispy clouds like a small ship on shiny waves. It sailed steadily westward—a vessel bound for some distant port on the far side of the world, slipping past planets and constellations—past Draco the Dragon and Hydra the Sea Serpent. Around the planet it sails, unaffected by our change of seasons...untouched by the conflict and tragedy taking place on Earth.

"Round and round like a big yo-yo,
Watch me, Kitty, catch a Ringo."

Feeling rather sleepy now, I pulled into the driveway, coming to a stop by the farmhouse.

Ah, the follies of mankind, and the adventures of an autumn eve. We'd made a few memories, solved a mystery or two and stirred up a little dust. Not bad for a couple of Nancy Drews in the Land of Up-side-down.

Getting out, I stretched my stiff muscles, and trudged toward the house while gazing sleepily up at the crescent moon. Why is it that autumn always make you think about things you've never thought of before? A mystery, it is. A real mystery.

Now, I said to myself, yawning—if we could just figure out what a Ringo is, we'd be doing fine. Just fine.



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Health

by Joe Smith

It is about time I begin to think about what to write about for next month's *Your Country Neighbor*. There are several of us that have written about Alternative Medicine. Most know what they are talking about. I try to find out the facts the best I can. I don't say I'm an expert, I can only tell what I know from what I have read and what I have seen first hand. Herbs are, to me the way to go for good health. I know that some don't agree with that and that is just fine. But as of this year, since 9/11 2001 FDA approved meds have been responsible for over 560,000 deaths. I doubt that herbs have caused that type of problem. Personally, several years ago, I had some serious health problems and was told I should go on a chemo type med. I decided not to. I looked on the internet and found some information using natural herbs that sounded good to me. I started taking the recommended herbs. I didn't buy them from the internet fellow, but from Akins in Lincoln. In three months my problem almost vanished. My cholesterol dropped from 250 area down to 143. My weight went from 196 down to 168. All the other tests were normal, with exception of my liver. I had a very high viral load and the herbs dropped it to almost normal. This was awhile back and my weight has stayed off and my cholesterol is still down in the 150 area. I changed nothing in my diet. I had a physical last week and every thing checked out very good except my liver again. That was a big surprise. It was some what high again. So I went back to the old herbs that I had taken in the first place to see if I can do it again. Time will tell.


I have been taking an herb called Graviola, that is supposed to help with tumors and all types of cancer they say. The companies can't claim that or they would be in big trouble with our friends at FDA. But I am 74 years old and my prostate test (PSA) came out 1.2. I used to have a dozen skin cancers taken off each year, too much time in the sun when I was young. I haven't been to a skin doctor in a year or two. Did the herb help??? Could be, at least I think it did. So as you can see, I believe they do help. Would I take medicine from a doctor? That

depends what and where. I'm not trying to run doctors down.


To lose weight I took an herb called Fiberzon+. My wife has been taking some of it and it is helping firm her up also. The nice thing about herbs is very few side effects. Not like the FDA approved drugs. I read a piece in some news letter that only 3% of the people on chemo live though it. How true that is I don't know. It surely is higher than that. If not, somebody is asleep at the wheel. There are pages of natural cures for cancer on the internet. How good they are, I don't even claim to have any idea. But personally I don't think chemo is the answer, This is only my opinion. I am not a doctor and don't claim to be. But common sense goes a long way to keep you healthy. Your diet, smoking (if you do), exercise habits, the meds you are taking. Don't take prescriptions without telling your doctor what you are currently taking. Then there is the fear factor. That is enough to make some people sick. As we age we let our imaginations run away with ourselves.

Being a doctor would be a hard thing for me to do, with all these new drugs coming out, the drug companies pushing them, the responsibility to treat people without knowing how they will react to certain drugs. That would be a load I wouldn't want to carry. So smile and laugh a lot. It is good for your health. Joe Smith

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Bea's Flower Buzz

"A Harvest of Thanks"

by Bea Patterson

Henry Alford, who in 1844 wrote the words to the beautiful old hymn "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," **must** have been a gardener. The words and phrases are a perfect summation of what Thanksgiving means to people who feel a connection to the earth, its sustaining abundance, and our awesome God-creator.

Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home:
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied:
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest-home.

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Whole-some grain and pure may be.



Happy Thanksgiving!

Bea Patterson
Pick-Me-Up Greenhouse
bp15624@alltel.net

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

By Merri Johnson

Well, here it is nearly November. I haven't even finished Fall gardening chores and the pressures of the holidays are starting to rear their ugly heads. That image of a multi-headed monster is more and more apparent in the attitudes underlying the comments one hears about the holidays.

Retailers begin exploiting the holiday that's two months away before the one that's next week is even over. Of course we consumers add fuel to the fire. I understand that Halloween is now second only to Christmas in terms of money spent and effort put into decorating, costumes, parties and candy.

You know, I actually hope Halloween *does* eclipse Christmas in material terms. Retailers could promote their annual make-or-break sales in October around a truly meaningless excuse for partying, and not have to rely on Christmas, a holiday that should be about a whole lot of things other than materialism. That might help put Christmas back into proper perspective for a lot of people who don't have the fortitude to resist the media images of what makes a perfect holiday: spending lots of cash and making yourself crazy with all the activities.

I remember one Christmas sermon from my childhood when my Pastor quoted his wife who said that, with three young children, the only thing she had time to prepare for Christmas that year was her heart. She got it right.

Last January I attended an Epiphany celebration with a friend in Kansas City. There I met a woman whose answer to the question, "What did you do for Christmas this year?" was one word: nothing. She meant

"nothing" in terms of decorating, shopping, baking, entertaining and all the rest. She kept her focus on the spiritual meaning of Christmas.

It takes a lot of will-power to resist popular culture. People think you're some kind of Scrooge or weirdo if you don't buy into all the frenzy. Now, don't misunderstand me. I don't have anything against holiday traditions. But let's be honest: most holiday decorating isn't really about Christ's birth. It's about, well, decorating. The holiday is merely justification for changing our home's décor. We all like change. Let's just admit our motivations.

I enjoy twinkling lights and glowing candles as much as the next person because they're lovely and soothing (unless you have those horrendous multi-colored racing lights capable of raising your blood pressure within 30 seconds). I string my fence with those big, old-fashioned white bulbs right after Thanksgiving and leave them up until Epiphany, because I like seeing their soft glow from my kitchen window while I'm cleaning up supper dishes. I confess that I do not think about the star over Bethlehem every time I see those lights.

And I love the scent of fresh-cut evergreen. And it wouldn't be Christmas without the special music. And I come from one of those rare families that really want to spend holidays together, so we travel every year.

I'm not suggesting that one has to become a minimalist to sincerely and sanely celebrate Christmas. But it couldn't hurt. As the season progresses, keep in mind that you are in charge of your own mental health, and don't come whining to me about how stressed out you are! You're adults. Take charge. Just say no.

Homecoming Month



Mound City High School Panther Band



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Homecoming Month



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos provided by Author



Fishing:

The Missouri River has been lowered to its Winter Level and river barge traffic season is over. This is good and bad – The good thing is: this allows you to see exactly where the deeper holes are and where the rocks are located, these holes are where the fish have to be congregating. This gives a whole new meaning to ‘Fishing Hole’. These holes are where the fish are because they don’t have any where else to go except back into the current that takes them to the next hole down stream. With the lower water temperatures slowing the fish’s metabolism down they are not as aggressive and sort of ‘Go with the Flow.’ What a life! The bad part of fishing the holes are: in these holes there are plenty of snags so you lose your tackle often and if you hook into a big one it can also tangle your rig on the snags costing you more tackle. But you never know what you’re going to catch and that’s what keeps you going back. It’s cooler now so there are no bugs to mess with. And there are still big ones to be landed. So give it a try but don’t forget your jacket – the cooler water puts off a bit of a chill.

This month’s fish picture is of Brad Johnson from Auburn shown with a 7-pound Flathead taken near Peru this Fall.

Hunting:

Hunting seasons are sneaking up on us one by one. You can pretty well pick your critter before too long. I prefer getting in a little squirrel hunting before the deer rifle season starts. Squirrel hunting also gives you an opportunity to scout areas for turkey and deer. You might say I’m a ‘multi-tasking hunter.’ The truth is the same habitat is used by a number of the different species of animals. Ever had the wrong weapon for what you run into in the timber? I have! I’ve been there with a shotgun turkey hunting and see a trophy buck that’s well inside bow range. Also I have had squirrels running all around me when sitting in a deer stand with a high power rifle. A guy can’t cover all the bases but patience usually prevails. I concentrate on hunting the specific species I set out to hunt and that works the best for me. And if I see other animals running about it’s a bonus. I’ll bring something special just for them next time.

This month’s hunting picture is of myself with a mess of squirrels harvested from the hills of Peru.

Fall Turkey Seasons are open. Bow opened October 1st and Shotgun opened October 14th. New for this year: The two seasons run parallel till the Regular Rifle Deer Season starts, November 11th, and it stays closed for the duration of that season. Then the Fall Turkey Season re-opens till the end of the year. Permits are ‘Buy’ so you can purchase one any time. There are plenty of birds around. They do not come to a call in the Fall but you are allowed to shoot a hen or tom. It’s a little challenging to get close enough to get a shot but if they decide to wander your way – you can take your pick as long as you can stay still, since they spook easily with any movement. And when they spook they are out of shooting range fast.

We’ve had a couple of frosts and the foliage is turning colors and falling. The smell of Fall is in the air. But the weather won’t hold forever so get out to the timber and get some hunting in or try the river before it gets too frigid. You won’t be sorry you did. I think you’ll find Fall was well worth the wait. Remember I’m not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time “Happy Hunting & Fishing.”



Brad Johnson from Auburn shown with a 7-pound Flathead taken near Peru this fall.



The author with a mess of squirrels harvested from the hills of Peru.

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Poetry, etc.

WALL OF WIND

by Devon Adams

Trees sighed in the soft breath of the night,
oblivious to the looming threat on the horizon.
Then the south breeze died,
leaving dead silence in its place.
A distant clatter sounded from the northwest,
like soldiers with heavy boots running on ice.
The sound approached swiftly,
exploding in a roar of branches fighting.
Like a tidal wave of air, the wall of wind
blasted across the summer prairie.
Soon there were casualties,
and the air was filled with noise
from branches breaking like rifle shots
and whole trees crashing to the ground.
The sudden destruction lasted only minutes,
followed by torrential rain, cold as winter.
The morning sun defined a battlefield
littered with ruined wooden bodies,
lying like dead soldiers on the grass.
Grandfather trees, their trunks thick with time,
had been mortally wounded,
with jagged scars remaining
where huge branches had been ripped away.
There comes a wind, after a hundred years
of growing, that twists a weakened spot
so that it is broken and defeated.
The splintered oaks and maples and
shattered elms and pines would
become smoke and ashes,
the charred remnants of yesterday's shade.

SITTING IN THE DARK

by Devon Adams

Sometimes we find ourselves sitting in the dark,
contemplating the day's journey,
wondering how we might have changed
the way we reacted or the words we said,
or the way we used precious time.
No matter the outcome, the day is done,
and history has been written
on another page of our lives.
That fact conceded, we move on
to speculate about tomorrow
and what might happen then.
Our complicated brains allow us to worry
about things that haven't happened yet,
a waste of energy and time.
We can reach a point of exhaustion
and mental anguish simply by projecting
our imagination on the wall in the dark room.
Conversely, the images that we manipulate
can be movies showing things we like to do.
Sadness comes from saying to yourself,
"I don't have time for what I love, because
I have to do the necessary things instead."
But if your life is spent plowing through
the hardened clay of lists of things
that must be done, if you keep putting off
a day to give yourself to play,
then you'll still be waiting when you die.
Conditions will be different after that,
and though you may continue in a form
of energy that lingers for eternity,
it won't be the same as being in a body
that can feel and move and think.
So, when you're sitting in that chair,
in the dark of the night,
in the dark of your mind,
turn on the light of your heart
and make your own sunshine.

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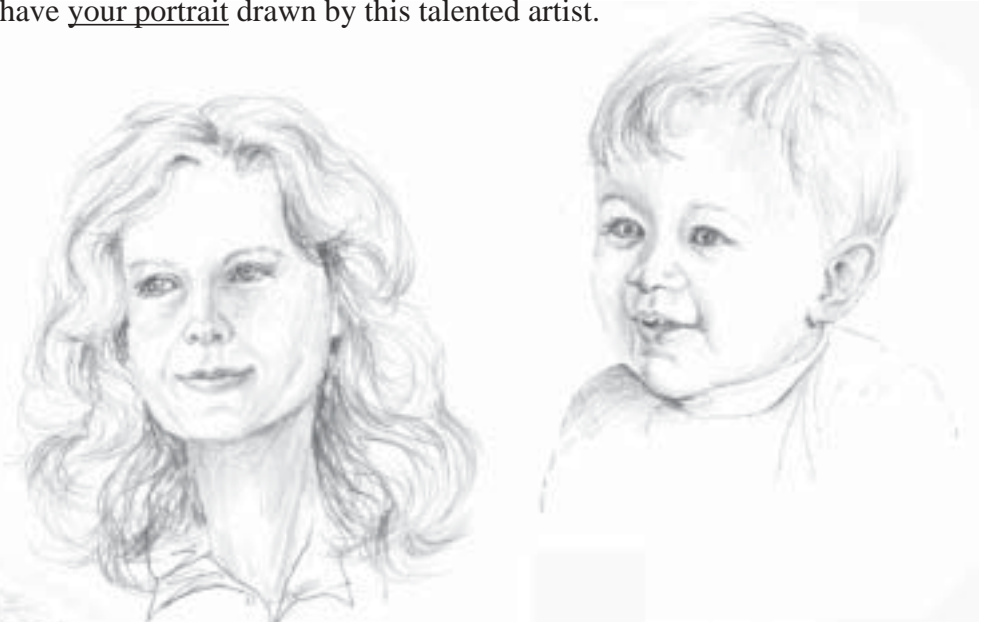
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Thanksgiving-Never Outdated

by Lila Meyerkorth

Let's be thankful for:

Education, because it enlarges the human experience of mind and spirit.
Integrity, because it builds a wall against all sorts of evil.
Humility, because we are created to worship a holy God.
Sincerity, because truth discloses the false.
Gentle, because gentleness exhibits noble worth.
Kindness, even while someone treats us unkind.
Peacemakers, because someone has soothed our wounded spirit.
Faith, because eye has not seen all the glory that is to come.
Hope, because God never fails.
Love, because love covers a multitude of transgressions.
Self-control, because it works for a good purpose.
Prayer, because a penitent heart is the safest place on earth.
Scorn talebearing. It is gossip, passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.
Praise, because it is a beautiful expression.
Generosity, because we can never outgive the Lord.
Considerate, because we are taught to "Prefer one another."
Endurance, because in refusing to give up, we win.
Longsuffering, because our heavenly Father is patient.
Courage to speak what's right when we know we'll be criticized.
Merciful, because through it we obtain mercy.
Joy, because it overflows to those longing to be free.
Convictions, because while holding steady under fire, strength is born.
Forgiveness, because Jesus forgives our many sins.
Morality, because it represents an acceptable code of ethics.
Frugality, because it increases the means of helping others.
Selflessness, remembering those unselfish acts shown us.
Submission, because it releases to others control of their own destiny.
Good humor, because everyone likes optimism and entertainment.
Even if time lingers awhile, none of these characteristics will ever be outdated. For they were introduced by the creator, and will continue in essence throughout all eternity.

A Flutter of Memories

by Debra L. Hall, 2006

At Grandma's house it's Fall right now
The leaves are on the ground.
Rust and gold and leafy green
Flying all over town.
Flitter flutter,
there they go,
whirling against the sky.
Rake them up,
mounds of color
piled way up high.
At Grandpa's house Puppy is romping
In the brown and yellow grass,
looking for the little kids
who came the summer past.
The trees are creaking.
The wind is cool.
All the children go off to school.
The only thing they leave behind
is a swooshing, bustling sound;
a scampering, twirling spiral of leaves
tumbling round and round.

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The Face of Drought

A Farm Report from Western Nebraska

by Karen Ott

“From the top of the Rocky Mountains to the lowest gully on the High Plains, the seven year drought has left a mark that will take years to wash away.” (Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 18, 2006)

October might be the end of the 2006 growing season, but it's the beginning of our 2007 water year. This fall, as is customary, Bureau of Reclamation's John Lawson issued three possible water forecasts for 2007—reasonable minimum; most probable; and reasonable maximum. As you can guess, the future is far from rosy. “We're on the ragged edge.” Lawson said. “We haven't reached the ‘most probable’ plan in seven years.”

Three tidbits from the bureau's annual autumn report:

Total storage capability for the entire North Platte reservoir system is 2,787,800 acre-feet. As of September 30, 2006 the system held 805,800 acre-feet with a ‘most probable’ forecast for September 2007 falling to 792,000 acre-feet, and the “reasonable minimum” to 417,000 acre-feet.

The system has dropped an average of 100,000 acre-feet each of the past seven years. The lower annual totals in recent years make the ‘percent of average’ higher, which makes the situation look better (on paper) than it actually is. “The percent of average goes up, but we have less water,” Lawson explained.

Glendo dam, which supplies water to the Mitchell irrigation district, (and many smaller districts), is the lowest it has been since the reservoir was completed in 1958. The dam is not expected to get enough water in 2007 to even cover evaporation losses, let alone provide for irrigation. Most of Glendo's irrigation water accounts are at zero acre-feet.

That's the situation in black and white. In our part of the world there aren't endless discussions on the evils of greenhouse gasses, or arguments concerning the pitfalls of burning fossil fuels. There are just the daily battles of real life.

We leave the questions concerning climate change up to scientists and politicians. That's their job; it's what they get paid for.

I guess you could say ours is to play the role of the canary in the mine, to be a warning signal, like the melting icecaps, for the rest of society. Like the poor little canary which collapses from toxic gases long before miners are even aware of the danger, drought stricken farm families are predicting, in some small way, what the world will someday look like.

We are living the planet's future.....and it isn't a pretty place.

Beet harvest is winding down in the valley and barring any major breakdowns we should finish our final field Friday morning. (Fingers crossed) Once the last truck has left for the factory, and the beet equipment has been cleaned and eased back into the machinery row for a well deserved rest, Dale will head for the corn fields to test moisture levels. If he can find a field at 15 percent or less the men will begin combining.

Our small herd of resident mule deer will be sorry to see the end of harvest. The tare dirt, full of sweet ‘beet-tails’, is a candy buffet to the animals, and most mornings you will find the usually nervous critters in the King farmyard munching away, regardless of humans or noisy trucks. One of the Mamas has two good sized youngsters with her...twins born this spring. Watching them is pure pleasure.

I'll be spending my Saturday at our church, along with fellow parishioners, turning out homemade noodles and butterballs. Yep, it is annual soup supper and bake sale time again. By late afternoon my back will ache and my legs will be dead tired, but I will have spent the day in good company.

Who could ask for more?

Karen



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Insomnia (Part 1)

By Ursula Waln, N.D.

Chronic insomnia can have profound effects on our daily lives as well as our long-term health. Insufficient sleep decreases our cognitive abilities – makes us less alert; slower to respond; less able to pay attention, learn, and remember. Chronic insomnia makes us irritable and more prone to depression. It also inhibits our immune function and makes us more susceptible to illness.

Most insomnia can be prevented through attention to factors that disrupt sleep. Therefore, before resorting to pharmacologic treatments (many of which can ultimately make the problem worse by creating a dependency), we are wise to do what we can by way of prevention.

The first thing to do is take an honest look at our caffeine consumption. Over-consumption of caffeine is probably the number one cause of insomnia in the U.S. Many people will say that caffeine doesn't affect them, but caffeine is a pharmacologically active substance. It affects us all whether we notice it or not. Try cutting back on caffeine, and don't have any after about five or six hours into your waking day (e.g., after about noon or 1:00 p.m. if you get up at around 7:00 a.m.). And remember, there is caffeine in chocolate, so avoid chocolate in the later part of the day too.

Avoid just-before-bed activities that are known to interfere with restful sleep, such as exercising strenuously, drinking alcohol, or eating.

Create a comfortable sleeping environment for yourself. A bedroom should be cool because body temperature drops while we sleep. And, it should be quiet.

Make sure the room is dark. Cover windows as necessary to block out light from street lamps. Turn off the lights. Turn off the TV. Move nightlights, answering machines, and other lighted electronic devices out of the bedroom. If you have a digital clock that continually shines light in your face, either replace it with a clock that only lights up when a button is pressed or cover it up with something that occludes the light.

To understand why this is important, consider the role that light plays in wakefulness. The morning sunlight reaching our eyes is nature's way of signaling our bodies that it is time to wake up. Our bodies respond by decreasing the production of hormones associated with sleep and increasing production of hormones associated with wakefulness. Whether natural or artificial, light is not entirely blocked by our closed eyelids. Some of the light passes through our eyelids into our eyes, stimulating our optic nerves. This stimulation is registered within the brain and signals the pineal gland to suppress production of melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone that promotes restful sleep. It also promotes synthesis of growth hormone, and this supports healing and physical restoration processes that take place while we sleep. Light in our eyes inhibits melatonin production and therefore prevents us from getting the restful sleep we need to stay healthy.

Interestingly, tight clothing worn for extended periods has been found to inhibit melatonin production too (e.g., bras and girdles). Therefore, avoiding tight-fitting pajamas may also be helpful in preventing insomnia. (Exercise, alcohol, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and beta-blockers inhibit melatonin production as well.)

Supplementing melatonin can be effective and may be necessary when there is a melatonin deficiency due to drug inhibition or a medical condition. However, when melatonin levels are low due to lifestyle factors, addressing the interfering factors is preferable. Supplementation is best done under the care of a qualified practitioner, especially if other pharmaceutical, medical, or hormonal factors are to be taken into consideration.

Our bodies establish circadian rhythms based on our usual habits for sleeping and waking. Therefore, maintaining a regular bedtime and a regular rising time helps: when our intent to fall asleep is synchronized with our biological clock, sleep comes more easily.

With few exceptions, adult humans really do need an average of seven to nine hours of sleep per night. Establishing a daily routine that allows for sufficient sleep honors our bodies' needs.

When environmental and physiological causes have been ruled out and insomnia persists, psychological causes of anxiety may need to be addressed. If we regularly lie awake thinking, worrying, or mulling things over, we

waste a good deal of psychological energy. Although we may occasionally gain insights or see solutions to problems during insomniac musings, most of what goes through our minds comes to nothing useful. On the other hand, the subconscious processing we do during sleep actually does deepen our insights, clarify our feelings, and reinforce our learning. Turning off the mental anguish and chatter is complex but not impossible. It involves putting things in perspective, stopping habitual thinking, and learning how to relax.

To put things in perspective, we have to realize that our losing sleep over things is not making them any better. We also may need to reassess the enormity of our concerns. Most of us make mountains out of mole-hills. We may view day-to-day concerns as if they were of the same magnitude as life-threatening events. We may set unreasonable expectations for ourselves and/or for others and then find it difficult to come to terms with human fallibility. We may have to change the way we view ourselves and the problems that plague us in order to get at the root causes of the distress underlying insomnia.

To stop the habitual thinking that keeps us awake, we can practice quieting our minds. Try this: Rather than tell yourself over and over to go to sleep, to stop thinking, etc., tell yourself once – just once – that you are going to sleep now. (This sends a clear message to your subconscious mind to prepare for sleep.) Then, listen to your breathing and try to allow your mind to be still. If it helps, think of a continual tone or envision a steady, peaceful darkness to clear out all other thoughts. If you find yourself thinking again, just notice it. Notice what the nature of the thought is (anxiety, regret, anger, etc.). Gently and without self-reproach, remind yourself that you don't need to think about that right now, that thinking about it won't change it and won't do you any good. Let the thought go, and allow your mind to be still again. With practice, the cessation of thought becomes easier and the transition to sleep less drawn out.

We can teach our bodies to relax in response to our intent to go to sleep, and this in turn will help us fall asleep more easily. Doing so involves paying attention to where we hold our tension in our bodies, learning what it feels like to let that tension go, and then remembering to let it go when it's time to sleep. Key tension areas include the muscles around the eyes, the jaws, the neck, and the upper back. When you first lie down, scan these areas for tension. Consciously relax the muscles and feel the change. Pay attention to what it feels like to have the muscles be relaxed. At first, you might alternately tense and relax the muscles to solidly establish in your awareness the contrasting sensations. Then, each night when you are ready to sleep, feel the muscles relax. Your subconscious mind will connect this relaxing sensation with sleep and will welcome the sleep you intend.

(To be continued next month)

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How Lucky We Are

by Joe Smith

Three times in the last several weeks I have had to go to Lincoln to see a specialist.

My son insisted I go to a Physical Therapist to get some treatment for my balance. I went to St Elizabeth Hospital and I first went to an ENT doctor and they ran some test on me, I wasn't too bad, bad enough but could get by. They talked about hearing aids some time in the future. I told them, just before I kick the bucket, I might consider it. They sent me downstairs to a PT for treatment for my balance. I went and was amazed at what they came up with. To correct my balance, I have certain things I have to do five times a day. Marta watches so I don't get away with anything.

Sitting in the waiting rooms and such I see a lot of people who are in much worse shape than I have ever been in. There are people in the little motorized chairs with very little hand movement and not much body movement at all, their necks held in position by different methods. Some are wearing large neck braces coming out of their shirt. It makes me wonder what the heck I am doing up there wasting these people's time teaching me some exercises to help me get my balance back.

If you just sit in the lobby of one of these big hospitals you see what pain really is. People are amazing, still going after some really bad things have happened to them. I was talking to a fellow who lives in Lincoln who was in an accident and thought he would be crippled for life, but the doctors completely rebuilt his 4th and 5th lumbar vertebrae. He was in his 70's and was getting around good. Just to sit and watch all these people coming and going I got to thinking how really lucky I am. It is good to have something that makes you humble every now and then, that brings you back to reality.



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Medicare Drug Plan Open Enrollment Period Right Around the Corner

November 15 through December 31, 2006, is the Annual Open Enrollment period for 2007 for Medicare beneficiaries who wish to make changes in their prescription drug plan or enroll in a plan if they missed the earlier deadline. Those who were eligible to enroll during 2006 but did not, may be assessed a 1% penalty at the time they do enroll.

Medicare's Drug Plan Finder tool on Medicare's national website is now updated with 2007 information so that beneficiaries can log on and compare coverage options. Go to web address: www.medicare.gov and look for the Drug Plan Finder Tool. Actual enrollment in a plan cannot be done until November 15.

For 2007 in Nebraska there are 22 insurance providers offering a total of 53 coverage options, with a variety of premium amounts, deductibles, and drug co-pays. Each of the drug plans has a formulary list which includes the most common prescription drugs used by older adults. Formulary lists, or "list of covered medications" vary by drug plan. Those enrolled during 2006 should have received information from their current drug plan with updated prices. The *2007 Medicare & You Handbook* has been mailed to all Medicare beneficiaries as well.

Part D changes for 2007 include a maximum deductible of \$265, initial coverage limit of \$2,400, and out-of-pocket threshold of \$3,850. These amounts represent a slight increase over 2006. More than half of the plans available to Nebraskans have a \$0 deductible, while fifteen plans offer drug coverage in the "gap." The average monthly premium in Nebraska is \$36.67 with twenty-two plans offering premiums below that amount. Premium prices range from a low of \$10.60 to \$110.30.

Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension Educator, working with the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP], will be holding enrollment sessions in a number of communities in southeast Nebraska for beneficiaries who would like assistance in comparing plans or enrolling in a plan.

Enrollment events in Nemaha and Richardson Counties will be held on Thursday, November 30 and Tuesday, December 19 at the Auburn Library; Tuesday, November 28, and Thursday, December 14 at the Humboldt Library; and Wednesday, November 29, and Wednesday, December 13 at the Falls City Library. For appointments in Auburn, contact the Nemaha County Extension office at 274-4755; in Falls City and Humboldt, call the Richardson County Extension office at 245-4324. Please bring along Medicare information and a current list of prescription drugs [obtain from your pharmacy]. Appointments will be approximately a half hour each.

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Harold and Darleen will Grind Corn Flour,
Organic Corn Meal, and make Corn Pancakes.
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Main Street in Brownville
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