Your Country Neighbor

Free

November 2017

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A Magazine for Small Towns and Rural America



Juvenile Bald Eagle; near Brownville.



Peru State College v Graceland University -- Homecoming 55-34 Win -- October 28, 2017



Peru State College Marching Band --Homecoming Parade, October 28, 2017

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



A coyote howls From over the hill Wild things - they Live here still They ain't leaving There here to stay After were gone They'll still be here anyway We ask too much From this ole land It's taken all that A planet can stand In the end it won't matter anyway I'm just glad the ole coyote is gonna stay That ole coyote He don't need me And that's the way it's suppose to be In the end it won't matter anyway I'm just glad - The ole coyote is gonna stav

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Caffeine Musings

Merlin Wright

Coffee at home after my delightful 3 egg western omelet that I made with homegrown peppers and onions. Even had a cup of cowboy coffee. Cowboy coffee is made by boiling ½ cup of grounds in two cups of water and then adding a bit of cold water or milk which makes the grounds settle. You still get a few grounds to chew on.

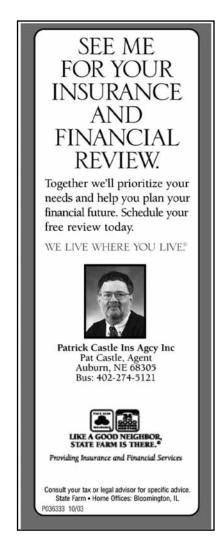
Grey sky and 32 degrees with a slight breeze. Enchanting to listen to the wind outdoors and to the wood stove here in the basement. The stove talks to us on windy days as the draft enters the firebox through small dampers in the door.

November Writers

Devon Adams
Steve Adams
Mary Ann Holland
Merri Johnson
Shirley Neddenriep
Lee Nyberg
Vicki O'Neal
Merlin Wright

Thank You!

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Don't Fall For It!

Mary Ann Holland

You have probably heard that Medicare will begin issuing new Medicare cards in 2018. This is a measure the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS] is using to curb the scourge of Medicare fraud. Medicare claim numbers will be changing so numbers can in no way be identified with you. The new numbers will be randomly computer generated with both digits and alpha characters. Starting in April 2018, the new cards will be automatically mailed on a monthly basis to Medicare beneficiaries. By April 2019, everyone who is enrolled in Medicare will have a new non-identifying number.

Why is this important information for you to know now? "You need to know so you don't fall prey to any Scammer who calls you saying they can expedite the process and get your new card to you right away. They will claim the call is coming from Medicare, or an official-looking postcard or letter will arrive in your mailbox which appears to be sent from Medicare" according to Mary Ann Holland, Certified Medicare Counselor with SHIIP. Don't fall for it!

Medicare is in the news right now because it is Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D plans and Medicare Advantage plans. We, as consumers, are used to hearing news about Medicare. It would be very easy to mistake a phone call or written communication as coming from the 'real' Medicare. Should you get a phone call—hang up!!! It is a Scam. Letter or postcard? Throw it away! Medicare will not call you.

Medicare has been working diligently over the past few years toward the goal of reducing the possibility of others using your Medicare information to commit fraud. Medicare knows who is enrolled in their insurance program; they have your address on file, so you can be certain your new card will arrive in the mail when it is your turn.

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.

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Roses and Milkweeds... October 2017

Brownville Fall Flea Market

Tree Stories

Shirley Neddenriep

A branch fell from the white ash that must have been dead a long time and just propped up until the wind loosened it so it came to rest on the grass. A robin has perched there off and on all day it must have been the bird's favorite place to sit and now with no cats around it can feel safe at ground level on his choice place. That is the ash story.

The Austrian Pine is another. Austrian Pines were introduced to the United States in 1759 it says from Europe where they grew in Austria or Italy and adapted well to various climates thriving in nearly any soil type in their new continent. During the dust bowl years, I read, 217 million Austrian Pines were planted as part of the Shelter-Belt Project. The tree likes full sun and has some drought tolerance. They top out at age 100 but some live longer, reaching 60 to 70 feet tall here in Zone 5, but are grown in Zones 4-7 that is from North Dakota south to Oklahoma and several states either side of Nebraska.

That they were selected for Shelter-Belt protection is interesting because of their height but they compensate with width, growing 20 to 30 feet wide if growing conditions are good. So here they came with a dozen Austrian Pines for farmers to plant and nourish in a Shelter-Belt and the people who lived here and they had been Neddenriep for 150 years about, what did they do but plant their allotted pines in the front yard? Thinking that it couldn't be farmed anyway and why take up good corn-growing land with a dozen trees? I don't know, but it must have been a common thought because many clumps of Austrian Pine are seen about the country-side not in wind breaks but near a farm house.

The sapling trees grew and some of them flourished as time passed and held one end of a clothesline or served as a hitching post for a goat tied there, or shelter for a pet fox and then one broke in a strong high wind when the tree was maybe only 80 but it fell along with the head of the windmill leaving eleven pines. One of them caught fire along with the brush pile being burned too close. A pine bore caused one of those trees to wither and die. By then the bark was deemed attractive so a 20-foot stump stayed though the dead top half was hauled away and then the stump, being without nourishment rocked loose and fell over anyway making a cleanup chore. Now down to two trees and one of those died two years ago and made a threat of itself as it might fall across the road so it had to be taken down by a man with a machine but first a saw. It fell as he directed, missing other trees and the road and making a smashing scatter of broken limbs and rotted branches. Half of that tree trunk weighed a ton. The two halves are ready to be sawed into fine pine lumber and that might be a better use than firewood according to pretty good sources.



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TEXTING AND TALKING

There was, once upon a time, a habit called a family dinner. In the far distant past of the last century, and even before that, people stayed where they started. There were big families who ate at home, and they all sat down at the same time and they had conversations while they ate. Today, talking itself is losing definition. Texting on tiny screens that respond to fingers tapping on tiny keys, is the accepted form of communication. With heads solemnly bowed, a group of people may eat at the same table, but even if they're all related to each other, they don't talk. They don't even look at one another. It is a very strange phenomenon to see even a restaurant full of diners silent as a tomb, texting for all they're worth, sometimes to the person who is directly across from them. They are aliens from some distant galaxy, using the bodies of humans who used to know how to speak to one another.

HUNTERS' DAWN

Thick fog has changed into magic crystals of frost where it kisses the grasses and trees of the river valley. In the channel, the water is thinking about being ice. Muffled chatter floats through the mist, as a contingent of geese confers about a landing site and then falls from the sky into the nearby lake, settling into the ripples like feathered phantoms. A pale disk of sun is a cold circle cut out of the fog, as it's faint promise of warmth disappears again behind the filmy curtains. The hunters will have to wait, as their bodies slowly absorb the chill, and they become frozen statues.

STRETCHING THE CORD

There are those of us who like to soar into the heights of new adventures, without the limits of fear or doubt. One new exploration leads into other paths that have no end. Life becomes a journey into the unknown. Back at the beginning are gentle souls who enjoy the comfort of familiar places and feel out of place and uneasy traveling past the boundaries they perceive to be the lines they won't cross. But inside those lines is the infinite life of the mind. Without moving a physical inch, thoughts can expand into worlds of imagination and invention that far exceed the miles that can be counted.

READ YOUR LIFE

Try to imagine the length of your life condensed in a book. How many pages will there be? You can only live one day at a time, but looking back, there will be a manuscript. And each page may not be a whole day. You could write many paragraphs about your thoughts and feelings at any given moment. Filling pages and pages with detailed descriptions of people and places and things would be easy. Every memory you have is full of thousands of visual and sound images. Come to think of it, your book may need a truck, or two trucks, to carry it's weight. Or, you could put all those words in a cloud and take it with you to heaven.

HER HOUSE

She doesn't live there now, but her spirit flits through the broken windows and touches the soft fur of the raccoons and mice who have moved in. She flies out over the pasture with the barn swallows who have built their mud nest on the ceiling light in the living room. At dawn and dusk, she still loves to see the pale pink light glow into morning or fade into night. She sleeps with the deer who bed down beside her back porch, and watches as their fawns take their first wobbly steps. But her favorite is the mother cat who has settled in to raise her three rambunctious kittens in the corner of the kitchen. under her favorite soft chair.

BARE ESSENTIALS

The green is gone, and life is down to the dirt and dead weeds. Trees are dormant and bare. Wild critters don't think about comfort, when life gets hard. Eating is survival, and also death for those who are lunch. But fun happens, even in blizzards. When the young ones take time to play, even the elders get crazy and cut loose. It doesn't hurt to have a few fermented apples to juice up the party, either. From the wolves to the mice to the birds. the wild ones know that humor tastes good.

Old Home Place 390 Memory Lane Lost Coast

Strangest Thanksgiving Story Ever...!

By Vicki O'Ngal

Everybody likes "Miracle Stories" around Thanksgiving and the Holidays....And today I have a good one for you! It's a Miracle Story that I recently 'participated' in—so it's one of my favorites!

In case you hadn't noticed, I disappeared for the last few months and it was for a very good reason! I took off work and went on a long Sojourn to the countryside. After several weeks of solitude, I felt inexplicably drawn to "Yreka", an old town that I'd lived near several years ago.

There, I ran into a rather interesting biker-gal, Joanne, who happens to be the Ex-wife of my Ex-husband! She wasn't too pleased to see me in town—but I refused to be intimidated and soon I became her friend.

Joanne needed a lot of help! Her life had deteriorated badly, and she had a lot of health problems...broken ribs...epileptic seizures...and a terrible drinking and smoking addiction! But she was a sweet gal deep inside, and she really wanted to change, so I vowed to help her.

One evening, I was alone with Joanne when she suffered a gran mal seizure...She fell to the floor convulsing and foaming at the mouth. Soon, she stopped breathing altogether.

I hollered for her fiance who tried to resuscitate her, but it seemed a lost

cause. Minutes ticked by while we worked on her lifeless body. We'd nearly despaired when Joanne finally coughed and began to breathe on her own.

That was a major turning point in Joanne's life.

The next day, she told me the most startling news. "Vicki..." she said. "You won't believe this, but I literally died last night! I floated up and saw myself on the floor with the two of you working on my body. You were on the right side and my fiance was on the left."

I felt a chill run through me. "Wow!" I said. "That's true! We were positioned exactly like that! But what happened next?"

Joanne's voice was somber. "I floated away and went somewhere I've never been!" She described a brilliant figure in white standing before her, and she felt such joy and peace. But then almost immediately, the scene changed.

Joanne started to cry. "Then I was sent somewhere else, and it was horrible!"

Between sobs, she told of a place that could only be described as Hell itself. Joanne said: "Vicki—I've made up my mind! I'm going to Church with you on Sunday!"

Now folks...what I'm about to tell you

is so startling, you might not believe it! But the Good Lord knows it's true—every word of it!

I took Joanne to church—in spite of her painful broken ribs—and she ended up being 'delivered' of a lot of things! Her desire for both alcohol and nicotine vanished and she has never touched the stuff since! Joanne is a different person today than she was just a few weeks ago.

Amazing things occurred on that momentous Sunday afternoon. And best of all, Joanne says that the pain in her broken ribs mysteriously disappeared that same day!

How can it be, folks?

Well—all I can say is that Miracles still happen!

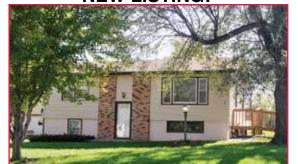
And now, Joanne is going to have her best Thanksgiving ever! And so am I... because the greatest joy in life comes from helping others!

So folks—I've got some great advice for you. Go find someone to help this Holiday Season, (even if it's the Exwife of your Ex-husband!)

Get busy, my dear friends....Finish up the year on a high note! Become part of someone else's "Miracle". Make this Holiday Season the most memorable of them all!

You'll be so very glad you did!

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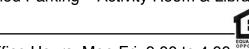
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Diary of a Part-time Housewife Merri Johnson

Raise your hand if you are familiar with the term "fleek" or "on fleek." Apparently it's been in urban usage for over ten years, but has recently come into wider parlance. I only learned of it last weekend when I used the term "stylin" and immediately realized how outdated that expression is. So, I asked what term the younger generation is using today in place of stylin'. "Fleek" was the answer. Or maybe "on fleek". Or, as the French apparently say, "on Flique."

I Googled the term in an attempt to get a better understanding of it. I've never been especially comfortable using hip slang. I guess I have just never felt hip enough to use such terms convincingly. I found numerous online explanations of its meaning and origin, as well as opinions of it (all non-flattering). There were too many, in fact, to quote in this small column. However, my favorite is that it is a combination of the words fly (slang for awesome or cool) and sleek. Apparently a teenage girl used it to describe her eyebrows. I wish I had that girl's eyebrows. Mine could never be considered fleek. But that's another topic.

The conversation about this word took place among my four sisters and I as we were celebrating my birthday at the home of my eldest sister in eastern Iowa. One of my sisters – definitely the most fleek among us – put her own twist on it: on fleekenschtyle (pronounced with a German accent in honor of our German-Dutch heritage). We used her term all weekend in every conceivable context, much to our own amusement.

We continued amusing ourselves at the Ladora Bank Bistro where we dined on Friday, the 13th. As you might guess, the Bistro is housed in an old bank building. It still has the original wrought iron cashier's windows and other cool architectural touches. One might say it is on fleek. The chairbacks at our table were upholstered with men's suit coats, shirts and ties, giving the impression of a small, headless man sitting in the chair. In our jolly mood, we recruited the waitress to take a group photo as we all squatted behind our chairs, our heads popping up above the suit coats. We were in a private dining room, so no one else witnessed our silliness. Not that being out in the main dining room would have stopped us. Heck, by now, one of my sisters has probably posted that photo on Facebook.

The Bistro is a tapas bar. When I gave Hubby our itinerary for the weekend, he got the strangest look on his face. "You're going to a topless bar?" Bless his heart. No, dear. "Tapas" is small Spanish savory dishes, typically served with drinks at a bar. Very fleek.

On Saturday, we tooled over to the Amana Colonies theatre for the production of "Church Basement Ladies: Rise Up, O Men." Being a church basement lady-type myself, I found it hilarious. It's great to be able to see your own foibles in the characters and laugh your head off in public. No need to be concerned about being sophisticated. Or fleek.



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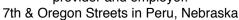
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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



First Steps After an Alzheimer's Diagnosis

By Lee Nyberg

Super-tiny wins. Super-tiny beats "bigger is better" when it's a hug or a laugh—known as a "micro-moment of positivity," according to Barbara Fredrickson, University of North Carolina psychologist. Positive emotions help you flourish, especially in times of worry, stress and anger—emotions which often occur when a loved one receives a diagnosis of Alzheimer's. As a first step: notice every positive interaction, especially the smallest things, like a funny joke, a bright sunny day, or a happy, skipping child. Make it your mission to see the positive side.

Believe There is More

Believe there is still life to be lived with an Alzheimer's diagnosis. Travel, participation in physical activities like golf, social events with friends and family, church attendance, and volunteering remain options, especially in the early stages of Alzheimer's. The Mayo Clinic's Angela Lunde stated Alzheimer's patients, "can give and receive love, participate in activities, and share moments of joy and laughter."

Move Forward with Coping

Accept the reality a dementia diagnosis. It can help you come to terms with issues that may have been worrying both you and your spouse, such as odd behavior or failure to do routine financial tasks. Your loved one will also have access to medical treatment, therapies, and programs. Educate yourself about the behavioral and cognitive changes Alzheimer's brings so you can equip yourself to handle your loved one's current situation.

The Most Important Decisions

As with any long-term illness, financial, physical and emotional needs will arise; addressing these from preparedness and strength gives you power and confidence. If your loved one is cognitively able, work together with professional financial and legal advisors to plan for future care needs and make the most of resources. A good living will, which everyone over 18 should have, addresses personal, emotional and spiritual needs as well as medical choices. Many find the Five Wishes® worksheet (AgingWithDignity.org), a helpful guide to address these points:

- Who will make care decisions for me when I can't
- Medical treatment I do or don't want
- How comfortable I want to be
- How I wish to be treated by loved ones
- What I want loved ones to know

Answers to these topics will define the coming years for all concerned.

Family Circle

Caregiving needs are light in the beginning, making it a good time for the whole family to participate and become comfortable with it. Sharing care also means no one, including yourself or your loved one, believes only you are able to provide care. Host regular family meetings so all members stay abreast of evolving care issues.

Early on, discuss how the family will manage the time when caregiving is beyond a spouse's ability. Deciding roles and responsibilities, including how and when the family will bring in or access help, makes good "Boy Scout Preparedness" sense. Consider using some of the many community resources, such as support groups, religious leaders, professional caregivers, geriatric care managers, and government services.

Resilience

Staying positive, taking this new journey one step at a time, and avoiding becoming mired in fearful thoughts will help you focus on the living you and your loved one can do. Find small ways to celebrate what is possible now and discover joy in every day.

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

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