

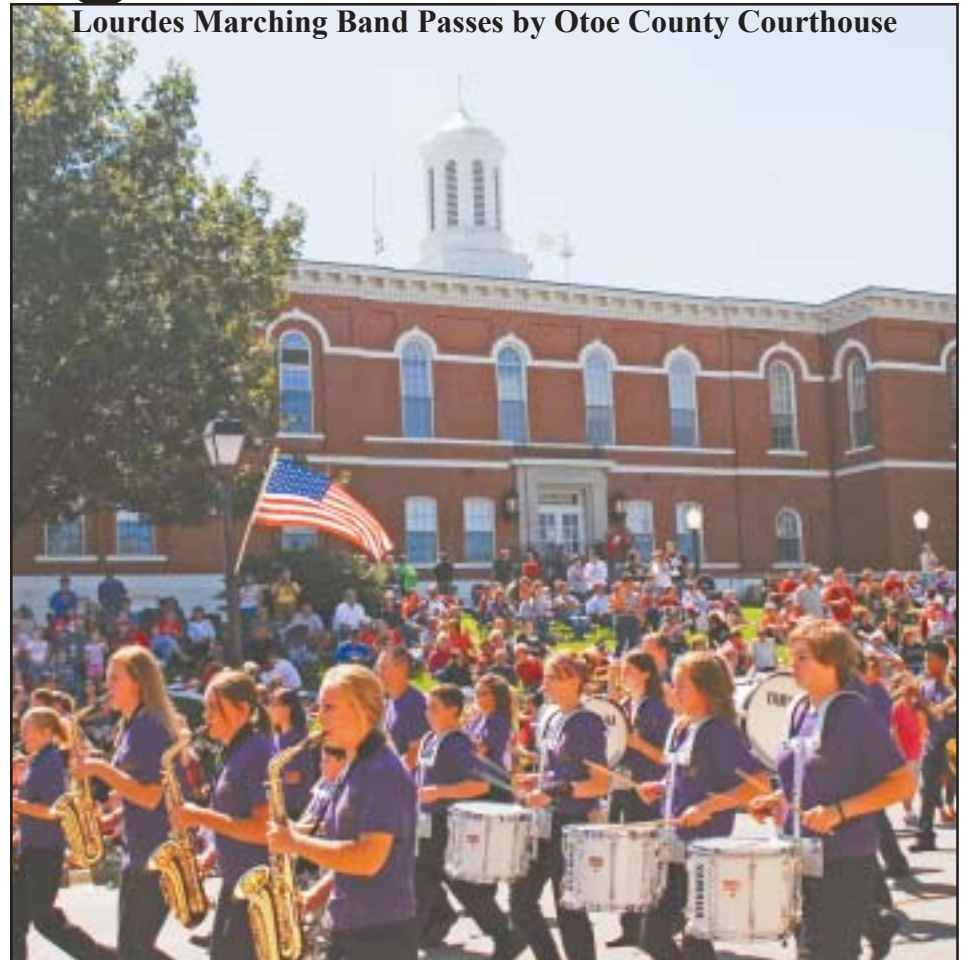
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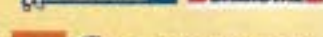
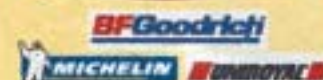
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Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

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Thank You

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Medicare Drug Plan Open Enrollment Coming Soon

By Mary Ann Holland
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator

Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D—the Prescription Drug Plan—begins October 15 and continues through December 7. Medicare beneficiaries should plan to do a comparison between their 2012 prescription drug coverage and Part D plans available for 2013.

The Medicare prescription drug benefit is designed to change every year. The number of plans available each year may be different, insurance premiums can be different from year to year, as well as plan deductibles and co-insurance costs. The list of medications, also known as a plan's 'formulary list' changes from year to year.

Things to consider when choosing a Medicare drug benefit:

- Other coverage—do you have or are you eligible for other prescription drug coverage? Coverage through a former or current [or spouse's] employer plan, Union, Veteran's, or Federal plan [TRICARE] may qualify as creditable coverage meaning you do not need a Part D plan.
- Cost—how much are monthly insurance premiums, annual deductibles, co-pays for each classification of drugs, co-insurance?
- Prescription drugs—what are your drug needs? What will your prescription drugs cost under each plan? Are your drugs covered under the plan's formulary? Does the plan require step-therapy, or is there a quantity limit? Does your plan cover specialty medications? Those are important factors to consider for all Medicare beneficiaries, but more important for people with certain health issues.
- Convenience—which pharmacies can you use? Does your local pharmacy work with your plan or will choosing a new pharmacy be necessary? Can you get prescriptions by mail if you choose to do so?
- Coverage gap—will the cost of your medications put you in the donut hole? Under provisions of the Affordable Care Act, in 2013, once you have reached the donut hole, 50% of the cost of brand named medications will be paid by drug manufacturers, you are responsible for the other 50% of the cost out of your own pocket. You will pay 79% of the cost of generic drugs and drug manufacturers will pay the remaining 21% of the cost. Generic medications are generally less expensive than brand name or preferred brand name medications.
- Travel—will the plan cover you in another state?

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and the Nebraska Department of Insurance, Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP] are partners in ensuring Nebraska Medicare beneficiaries and their families are informed about the Medicare Prescription drug benefit, make choices and enroll in a plan that best fits their individual medical and financial needs. Contact your local Extension office for information about Medicare Part D enrollment opportunities in your area, or call Mary Ann Holland, Extension Educator, located at the Cass County Extension office at 402-267-2205. You can reach the Nebraska SHIIP office at 1-800-234-7119.

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Past issues are online at
yourcountryneighbor.com

Poetry by Devon Adams

A SENSE OF TIME

The clear of the day
is infused with a milky
luminescence as a band
of curdled clouds slides
across the blue sky pan.
Warmth from the intense
noon sun wanes to a hint
of summer, as October
moves over September,
and morning dawns move
closer to evening dusk.
The electric chill invigorates
our bodies and our minds,
charging our depleted batteries
and awakening our senses.

CAMO SPOTS

Bright white spots define the age
of fawns who hide in plain sight.
Instinct and instructions from Mom
are the guiding guardian rules that
keep the little ones alive and immobile
until they can absorb survival skills
from older members of their tribe.
Then legs lengthen, as muscles
strengthen for jumping fences, logs
and streams. Soon the summer growth
of hair fades the spots forever, leaving
behind the innocence of youth and the
wide-eyed wonder that makes everything
wonderful and impossible to resist. Life
becomes a constant reconnaissance of
things that move and things that don't,
and that evaluation of environmental items
marks the difference between life and death.

FRAME THE SCENE

On a large blue canvas that stretches
from horizon to horizon, a brush moves
quickly to apply the feathers in the clouds,
and the strokes of paint that define the floating
geese that fill the air with conversations.
A pale moon full of autumn shivers in the chill of
evening, as river fog wraps the valley in a twisted scarf.
Quilted velvet fields are stitched with golden threads
woven through the russets, wines and scarlet hues
of summer dying in the fires of autumn.

TAKING AIM

With unerring accuracy, the missile
hits the mark, and a dog yelps.
In utter confusion and dismay, the
sweet family companion turns his
gaze upward into the walnut tree
and vows to end the life of the fuzzy,
perky squirrel who is throwing nasty
nuts at him. He will lurk and wait
as long as it takes, because revenge
is the only solution to the barrage
that has made his life so hazardous.
For his part, the rodent laughs, and
notes the location of the black bullet.
When the stupid canine is asleep, he'll
sneak down and gather up his arsenal,
and store it for further use. Walnuts are
so versatile. When the aim game is over,
he can eat the ammunition and throw
down the sharp shells so Barko will
puncture his paws as he vainly chases
his high-level invincible neighbor.

THEY'RE GONE

They studied the calendar of the sun,
and knew it was time to pack up and leave.
All the summer tasks were finished, the
children born and raised and cast out
on sharp wings, equipped with boundless
energy for an epic pilgrimage to the south.
Messy renters, they left the floor of the old
barn littered with cast-off feathers, stinky
piles of goo, and tiny remains of swallow
babies who fell from nests, the miniature
bones waiting for time to erase their shapes.
The immense pull of instinct keeps them
away from introspection or grief, with only
the thought of today to guide them.

ART BY DEVON ADAMS



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Don't tell the Kids!

Shirley Neddenriep

Production from my backyard peach tree finally ran its course. But there is a vigorous growth of seedling elms making themselves at home under peach branches that will have to go. All the bad peaches are cleaned up and pitched to the pigs. Those animals love bad peaches and even crunch up the pits.

There are peaches stored in the fridge for pies. In desperation some peach halves were frozen in a 3-quart container for making peach conserve later. Finally found time for seeding and grinding oranges, peel and all. Grind the peaches. Add one and one-half times as much sugar and cook the combination. My supply of pint jars had diminished because a grandson asked for some for drinking glasses. With short-sighted happiness I gave them away for him to use.

Now here I stood with more peach conserve than jars. Although forbidden by close relatives, I went to the cellar. The steps are steep, more than they used to be, but I found jars. Interesting old pint jars - one odd-shaped jar used to hold Hormel meat in its first life.

After these jars were cleaned and boiled to sterilization temperature, they were filled with peach conserve and topped with melted paraffin, plus a Kerr lid for good measure. But don't tell the kids how the jars got from the cellar to the kitchen!

One of my house chores is to keep a lock on the door leading to the attic above the garage. I had a padlock. A sturdy ten-foot tall step ladder stood in place leading to the attic door. With no one else around, I climbed up and fitted the padlock in place at the hasp and locked it, removed the key and climbed down. Done. Safe. Secure. But don't tell the kids.

Many 'senior citizens' find the need to protect their vision from light. On a recent trip to the optometrist, I mentioned this nuisance of mine. Two choices. A new prescription including darkened lenses or dark glasses that fit over my present eye-ware. I chose the latter for economic, immediate reasons and left that office with dilated pupils and sporting new dark sun glasses. Even the side panels were dark.

At my car the key fob came in handy to unlock the door, but the action made such a feeble sound it seemed that my hearing had dimmed as well as my vision. Just then a strange woman appeared and asked, "May I help you?" I had unlocked her car. "Your car is there," she pointed two spaces away. Both were white. Both GM family. Go figure. But don't tell the kids.

There are times to stay in line and keep marching and there are times and ways to get things done. Pick one. But be prepared to change your own light bulbs if they find out.

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

I was reading in the newspaper a few weeks ago about the new writing proficiency tests being administered to Nebraska students. Apparently, the students are given an essay topic and then required to prepare an outline and compose the essay in a single sitting, right then and there. Being able to do that well is no small accomplishment, I assure you.

If TV and movie depictions of elementary classrooms are accurate, the perennial essay topic for young students is "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." How *did* I spend my childhood summers? My first impulse is to protest that my childhood summers on our farm in northwest Iowa were not particularly essay-worthy. But once I start actually delving into the gray matter, I realize I do have some memories of family vacations.

There was the summer when I was going on five or six when we visited relatives in Montana. They lived in an actual log house surrounded by a genuine split rail fence. In a photo of that trip, I'm perched on the top rail, my two older sisters standing beside me, and my younger cousin peering between the rails. We visited Yellowstone National Park on that trip, too. In those days, tourists were still practicing the bad habit of feeding the bears from their car windows. That must be the origin of my on-going bear phobia, although I'm sure my parents were not foolhardy enough to have allowed us to hand-feed the bears, either from inside our car or otherwise.

In later years, when my two younger sisters were old enough to go along, we vacationed closer to home a couple of times at Lake Okoboji. For five little farm girls, spending several days at the beach and playing ping-pong in the cabin resort rec room was pretty heady stuff. I have a photo of the five of us lined up on a bench with the lake in the background. You never saw goofier kids, except for my oldest sister. She was too old for making faces by that time. Actually, I don't think any of us were intentionally mugging for my dad's camera; we were just naturally silly-looking. Those are the best kind of photos.

The summers I actually don't recall in much detail, strangely enough, are the ones that George Abwunza spent with our family. George was from Kenya and was attending college at LeMars, Iowa. He came to us through a program of the Farm Bureau, in which my dad was active. Dad was so thrilled and proud to finally have some male company in the house! (My little brother had not yet arrived on the scene.) I suppose it's a testament to my family's openness toward George that I just took his presence for granted. *OK, so there's a young, black man, who speaks with a definite accent, living with us now.* Apparently life went on pretty much as usual, because I don't recall much in the way of specifics about those summers George spent with us.

On the other hand, the memories of this year's summer vacation in Branson with our son, daughter-in-law and four-year-old granddaughter are pretty fresh. At my suggestion, we stopped along the way for a picnic lunch. We pulled off the road into a little town's city park. There was a picnic shelter with what looked like a public restroom building, but alas, the doors were locked! At the far end of the park was another building identified as the Community Center. Judging by the cars in the lot, I assumed it was open and hoped I'd find public restrooms there. I scooted across the park as quickly as my bladder would allow and stepped inside, right into a family reunion in progress. My distress must have been obvious; my request to crash their reunion to use the restrooms was graciously granted. I didn't even have to point out that our group included a pregnant woman and a four-year-old, also all in need of immediate relief.

The closed park restrooms turned out to be a portent of additional closings. Have you ever seen the Chevy Chase movie "Vacation"? You guessed it: we just happened to schedule our trip to Branson during Silver Dollar City's annual two-week Monday - Thursday shut-down. The highlight of our trip - our Wally World, as it were - was closed, as were several other family fun centers. Had we been there on the weekend, everything would have been open. But once schools start up, the amusement parks close during the week. Our plan to avoid big weekend crowds, and take advantage of less expensive weekday lodging rates, had backfired. Well, at least we didn't go ballistic and kidnap any security personnel and compel them to open up the park at toy-gun-point like Chevy Chase's character did. Still, it was a little disappointing.

To make up for it, we went to the Dixie Stampede dinner theatre. Our granddaughter was in thrall to the horses and all the other pageantry. But I'm still trying to figure out if I should be amused or insulted at having been served a three-course meal without silverware. The total finger-food meal is a trademark of the Dixie Stampede. Call me snooty if you will, but eating a whole, broasted chicken (a smallish pullet, actually) with my bare hands is not all that appealing to me. But in terms of vacation memories, it will be as "sticky" in my mind as the chicken was on my fingers.

So, dear readers, how did you spend your summer vacation?

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

A few weeks ago, I felt a change in the weather and myself. Even though the thermometer was still soaring into the 90's, I knew change was in the air. With the long hot summer of 2012 going down in the record books, I was more than ready for a change. (Only good change need apply.)

I had been in a semi-depressed mood all summer, especially, after looking over my water bill. I would water my gardens, but didn't have much interest in weeding, dead heading, and just playing in the dirt. But when I felt the change, I was gung whole, let's get'er done. One of my disappointments of the summer, was hardly anyone came to see the garden, and I really didn't want them to, what a mess.

My new found energy meant that we could have guests over again, my husband had informed me his new boss will be the first one. So with lots of enthusiasm I tackled first the moon garden, the pink garden, cleaned out the compost pile, replaced the soaker hose in the strawberry patch and started working on the island, which is in the middle of the garden pond.

I was weeding on the north side of the island when I heard a strange noise. Thinking that the neighbors to the east must have acquired a mule from the sound, I kept weeding. After a while I got that strange prickly feeling of being watched. I raised my eyes and looked straight into the eyes of the biggest, blackest bull I had ever seen. Luckily, I had the rest of the island and the pond in between us, for his eyes were saying, "Don't mess with me woman," as he took a long drink of water from the pond.

Okay, got you, as I slowly stood up and walked over the bridge and towards the house. After getting inside the house I quickly called my husband at work. His response was "Well, tell him to leave." ??? Okay, I am five feet one inches tall and HE was at least that tall and probably outweighed me by two, three, four TONS, at least. Next I called the farmer who I thought he belonged to, no answer, not even a machine. Okay, go tell him to go home Marilyn, you can do it.

Fearful of the state of my gardens once a huge bull tramped around in them, I grabbed my cell phone and a broom, for extra protection. When I approached the pond, there was no bull. Was I imagining it? I walked around the pond to the east which is bordered with the neighbor's driveway up the hill, and took the driveway back to our country road. As I rounded the corner of the intersection I saw the bull looking at me, chewing on something, from the edge of our driveway. Oh there he was, not my imagination.

As he came down the country road towards me, I tried very hard to blend into the sumac and cedars on the side of the road. As he went past me he didn't seem as menacing, he even had a playful swish to his tail, and when he looked at me, he seemed to say thanks for the drink, enjoyed your yard. I took a picture of his backside with my cell phone for proof. So I guess even a pretty yard with lots of shade trees and a pond can change the bull in all of us into a soulful-eyed cow. Anyway, as you chew on that I will enjoy playing in the dirt where life is good and always entertaining.

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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

(Sung to Handel's Messiah)

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah, Hallelujah.

H...a...l...l...e...l...u...j...a...h !!

Sweet, heaven-sent rain...3/4 of an inch.....fell this week on our thirsty valley, an event so rare I felt like scooping up all my empty canning jars and preserving the precious liquid as a hedge against a waterless 2013.

After the celebration farmers and equipment swarmed into area fields to bring in the harvest; Dale is 'putting-up' corn silage while simultaneously readying the cutter and combine for dry edible beans.

Sugar beets, a crop which looks to be the largest...and sweetest..... in the valley's history, is swinging into gear amid a cloud of uncertainty. Farmers under contract to Western Sugar were recently notified there was a very real possibility that only 80% of their crop could be harvested for sugar, while the remaining 20% would be purchased at feed value...perhaps \$35.00 per ton.

A local feedlot owner, recently immigrated from Montana, described the problems he had once encountered while trying mix a few tons of cheap potatoes into his

Continued on next page >>>>



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<<<< Karen, Continued from page 10

cattle's feed ration. A macer didn't work, nor did a trash compactor...and a hay grinder turned them into a sloppy mush which froze solid as soon as the temperature fell below 32 degrees. In the end he and his employees spread the potatoes on the ground and drove over them with tractors, breaking the spuds into bite sized pieces small enough to ensure the cattle didn't choke. That method resulted in a 50% loss of what he had hoped would be a cheap substitute for pricier feed.

"I'm not buying feed beets unless they're processed, in some way, at the sugar factory," he said, shaking his head, "I learned my lesson the hard way."

I'm as busy as a person can be; Early Monday morning, still decked out in my running duds, I climbed a homemade scaffolding to paint the tip-top, east-facing peak of our house, I had brought along my phone in case the tire shop needed to contact me, and a timer set to ring when the just-canned tomatoes in my water-bath canner were thoroughly processed. Dinner, (for the silage crew), was already simmering away in my crock pot, and supper was in the fridge. I'd sliced a cantaloupe for dessert...washed and dried two loads of clothes...and cleaned the refrigerator.


It was 8:30 AM.

I have no doubt that someday I'll look back on these days with a fierce longing for what was, but right now....Whew!!

Keep praying for rain...the pump has been primed, but we could certainly use a few more soft showers.

As Always, Karen

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Migrating Monarch stops for Nectar.

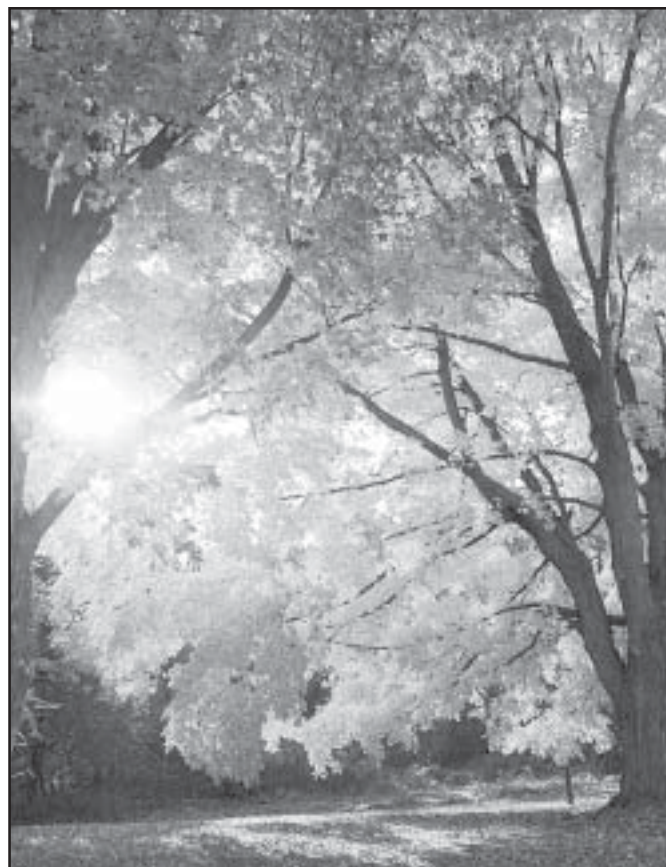
Poetry and Photography by Carol Carpenter

Hills of Southeast Nebraska

West of York Nebraska, where the earth loses its gentle rise and fall, becoming the belly of a young soldier, muscular and lean, all sinewy and strong hard and flat, with a few severe edges. But turn to the east, along the tumbling green hills of southeastern Nebraska, the topography transforms into a full bodied woman who turns slowly from side to side, flopping in her sleep, her splendid curves and deep creases undulating across the pastures peppered with cattle, grasslands crocheted with creeks, sprinkled with the old bones of ancient barns, and crazy quilted with alfalfa, corn, milo, and soybeans. In the silver moonlight, her rounded ridges resemble silky, upturned breasts bathing in warm milk, while her long tawny hair bristles like bluestem buzzing in the summer breeze. Her languid, limestone shoulders hold the Missouri River at bay, its tongue slurping spiteful at the land in times of too much rain, and in drought, lying parched on the bank, panting like an August dog. The river spills along her sandy sloping back from Gavin's Point to Rulo, down to that gentle slope of leg to tightly curled ankle, foot and toe. As the sun rises, the seamed ridges, blackened ditches, and sculpted terraces emerge gracefully pilfering dawn's pink and amber, holding our breath, as the hills, with their dark, fertile soil sing with cascading splendor.

carol_emt87@yahoo.com

Turn this poem on its side. Can you see the hills?



Peru Maple

October


Golden moondrops skitter
over dark rippled river
silver frost shimmers
quiet pumpkins wait
near trees decked out
in colors of fire
yellow, orange, crimson
migrating flocks
point the way south
wind shifts cold
twisting red cedars
back north
the tired earth
stripped of crops
lets out
one last sigh
before winter's
grey and
desperate
slumber




The Monarch butterfly lays its eggs on the Milkweed leaves, and the larvae spin a chrysalis called “the green house with golden nails”. Google “monarch chrysalis” to see why.

The Milkweed plant is not everywhere a weed. In some places the seeds are harvested for \$55.00 per pound, and \$10.00 per pound for its ‘floss’, the angel-hair-like ‘silk’ that carries the seed with the wind. The floss was used by native Americans to line their children’s cradles, and more recently, during World War II it was used as lining in Navy life jackets.

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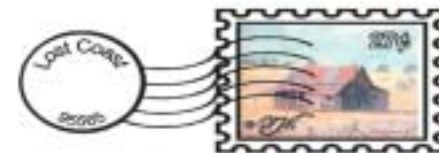


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Legend of the Fall

By Vicki O'Neal



"I felt an earthquake," my sister said on the phone a few weeks ago. "A big, long quake!"

I knew what she meant. My Sis lives in the Midwest, and she hadn't felt a real earthquake. It was one of her "premonition quakes." The tremors she feels before a large quake hits somewhere in the world. These things always concern me, especially now that I'm living on the California coast—in a tsunami zone.

I tried not to think about it, but later in the week I began seeing a escalation of quakes in SoCal. Not large quakes, just baby ones. 4.4 mags and 4.5's. Nothing to be too concerned about. But they kept coming.

There were dozens of aftershocks, as well. Or are they Fore-shocks?... I wondered. Precursory warnings of what is to come? Is the Big One on its way?

I sat down at my computer and began writing about this very subject on Facebook. I was discussing the coming 9+ magnitude megaquake/ tsunami that scientists say will wipe out the U.S. West Coast....

It was at that moment, the room gave a jolt. One single hard jolt.

I paused and looked out the window. I was sitting smack-dab in the middle of a Tsunami Zone...And now the earth was jolting around me. It wasn't a comfortable feeling.

I hadn't felt a quake for a long time. It seems that the tectonic

plates have locked-up during the last few years, and we seldom feel them any more. But today was different.

Apparently, something was breaking loose. The swarm of quakes from SoCal was moving up to NorCal.

I clicked on the USGS website. Sure enough! A new red square had just appeared on the Coastal Map. The quake was a 4.3 and had occurred in the Pacific Ocean, just a few miles to the west of me.

There had been several other recent quakes in the same area—a classic spot to produce tsunamis. At 500 miles per hour, the wave would hit me before I had time to sneeze.

Not a pleasant thought, to say the least.

It wasn't long before, we had another quake and then another. They were still small ones, by California standards...4.5 and lower. But they were disconcerting, nonetheless.

I called my big Sis and told her news. She immediately began giving me the what-for. "What are you doing there on the West Coast!?" she said. "Do you want to die?"

"You're going to get your own megaquake soon in the Midwest," I said. "Scientists say you're overdue for the Big One on the New Madrid fault-line, there in Missouri."

"But at least we won't get a tsunami....!"

True. I hung up the phone and sighed. It was the Tsunami that would make the West Coast quake so deadly. Just like the megaquake/ tsunami in Japan, it will wash over entire cities—before we even knew what was happening.

As much as I love the Pacific, it was these kinds of things that made me wish for the stability of the Midwest. The serene windmills and gentle hills. The cornstalks marching across the fields in a nonsense manner.

Why couldn't California be as sensible?

I shut off my computer and took the dog for a walk on the beach. Staring out at the surf, I tried to picture the coming tsunami...To imagine a mounting wall of water that would come like a behemoth rising from the Sea. I'd seen it many times before on the video clips from Japan, but it somehow seemed more real to me now as I stood gazing at the Pacific...Trying to judge its moods...its temperament.

When will it come? At what point will the lovely Pacific turn into a raging maniac that exacts its vengeance upon us?

There is an old prophecy that was given to our church years ago. It has become a fascinating Legend to one and all. No one doubts that it will come to pass.

When the weather turns cool and our breath can be seen in the air, a megaquake and tsunami will visit the West Coast. But before it comes, our people will be fore-

warned. The warning will be as benign as the megaquake is monstrous. A 5.5 quake will come during a time of Festivity — probably during the Fall Harvest Season—and it will alert us to the coming disaster that is just ahead.

It is then that we will make our exodus eastward—away from the Coast. We will only have 1-3 days to escape...And then the monster will come.

It will descend upon the cities of the West Coast like a mighty creature from the Sea...overwhelming everything in its path. Shaking and tearing and rending and grinding everything in its teeth.

And when at last it has spent itself, the earth will grow still. And the people will wail. And America will no longer be the same. It is the "Legend of the Fall"...The fall of America.

Is it a fact? Is it folklore? We shall see...Someday, we shall see.

The Good Book foretells of a great Megaquake that will shake the entire earth. (Revelations 6:12-17) So, it doesn't hurt to prepare, folks—wherever you are. In these days of chaos and uncertainty, we might do well to heed these words of the Bible....

"When you see these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads—your redemption is drawing near...!"

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