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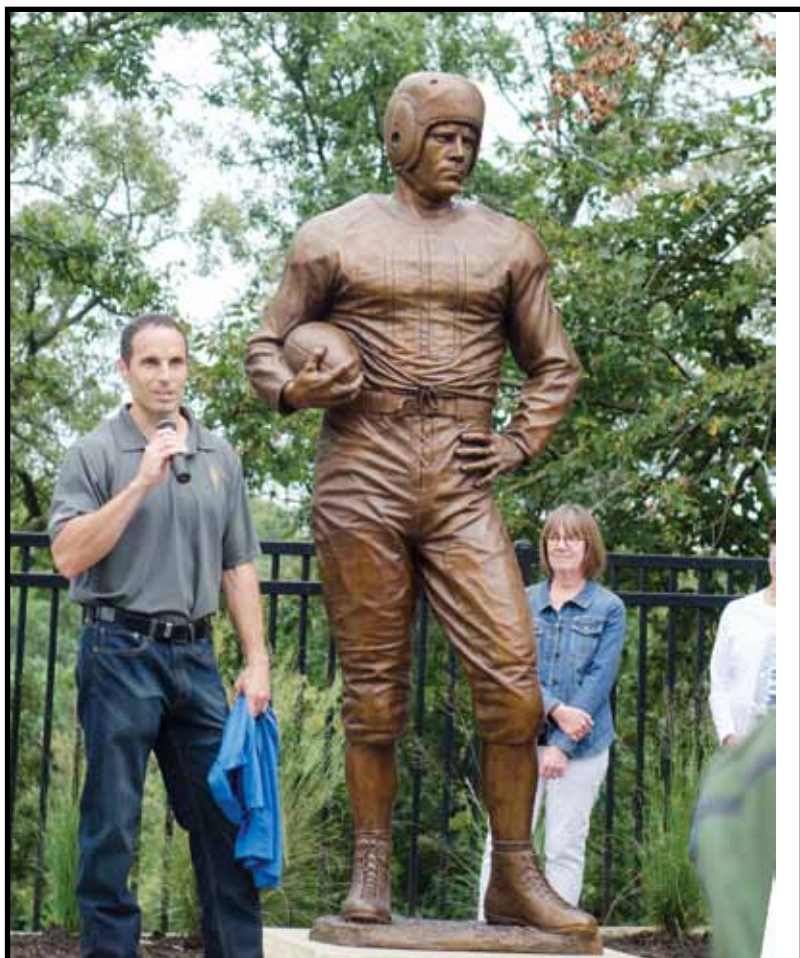
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September, 2015

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Voices

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

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 Vicki O’Neal
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 Thank You

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The Full Moon

Stephen Hassler

The full moon often surprises me. I don't notice it every month. I might be busy inside or it may be cloudy outside. So if I happen to be relaxing on the porch in the evening and suddenly notice a full moon rising, I'm pleasantly surprised.

I used to keep better track. I used to know where in the night sky to find Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Venus, and when there would be a full moon. Those were simpler times long ago (summer nights as a teenager interested in astronomy). This evening, aware of the full moon, I'm writing more than looking. But the man-in-the-moon's face is familiar to me now, so I don't bother to examine it too closely anymore.

I remember years ago calling my wife out to sit with me on the doorstep to watch the rising of a full moon. She was surprised how quickly the glimmer on the horizon developed into a big orange ball. I'm always impressed by it myself. By some atmospheric 'trick' (with a scientific explanation), the full moon can be clearly observed to steadily move (rise), until it 'clears' the horizon. Its movement is hypnotizing. After a few minutes the movement is too slow for the eye to detect. Higher in the sky, it becomes 'smaller' and more white than orange; the lens of the atmosphere having less of a magnifying effect, the air being thinner looking straight up than toward the horizon.

One seldom can ponder a full moon without thoughts of romance, especially when in romantic company. Gazing at a rising full moon causes me to pause quietly and want to hold hands, reflect on the future, or think about how many moons I have shared or have left to share; too few on both counts.

Recently I reflected on why I gaze at the moon; it seems to be a kind of reflection of this world, my world, and I am trying to see myself in the larger 'scheme' of existence. I am looking for meaning, belonging. Maybe that is why humans long to go to the stars. Perhaps that is why humans think of Heaven up in the stars.

Well, we've been to the moon, and Heaven seems to be farther away, so until we have star travel, I'll focus a little closer when looking for meaning or romance, There is after all, something heavenly about a full moon.



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Poetry by Devon Adams

B-1 BOMBERS

Dark shapes flying in formation appear in the blue distance of the summer sky. Gliding at the edge of your consciousness, they seek no attention in their stealthy approach. It is an uneventful afternoon, one day closer to autumn, when light leaves a little sooner each evening, and the hot edge of the heat is getting dull. A brief puff of a breeze lifts the drying leaves, as a fast shadow glides across your path. As you glance upward, you gasp at the sight of a plane banking into a dive and coming toward you on a bombing run. Your heart stops before your brain can decipher the black wing feathers and the bald head of the turkey vulture who just wants to get a closer look. Your mind supplies the sound of the whine and roar of a powerful aircraft engine.

DOWN IN THE ORCHARD

Tree muscles groan and strain as they try to hold up all the apples growing on their branches. It has been a fertile season and the fruit is huge and juicy. Shades of shiny reds and wines contrast with fancy hues of greens and golds. The last of the summer heat is retreating, as dew and swirling fog envelop the trees in the chilling early mornings. By noon, the sun has burned away the damp, and the orbs are warm, with luscious aromas like perfumed blankets lying along the rows of fruit. The hazy blaze of a gold-rose sun, filtered through fields of dust, will dip behind the hill and wait for the rise of the harvest moon.

REMEMBER WHEN

Inside gardens can be made from the ghosts of flowers. Some species have blooms that dry with all the colors of their life, if you pick them when the petals are still summer new. They will last if pressed flat, or hung by their toes, until the moisture is gone and they are only echoes of their living cells. But they will last as long as memories, if you place them in bouquets or under glass in picture frames, where they will look back at you and remember when.

SNAP

After weeks of damp heat, one day your foot crunches on a fallen leaf and the snap of the sound means that fall is on and summer is dying. Chilly nights, drier air and the slant of the sun conspire to paint the trees and grass in bold and beautiful flying colors. The mold and mildew on our brains will be history after the frosty air arrives, and we will awaken with new power and vigor to tackle tomorrow.

TO BE STILL

There is a hush that comes in the claustrophobic deadness of a late summer day, when steam heat seems to boil and there is no wind. Sounds are magnified beyond their usual meaning, and time crawls. Dapples of dazzling sunlight flicker through a canopy of green leaves and dance in the grass, like sprites from another dimension, sent to help us be still enough to savor the essence of every separate moment, before it vanishes like our illusive dreams in the night.

SEA LIGHT

The windows open their eyes to the spreading sea beyond the wind spun beach grass. Curtains are thin filigrees of lace that dance in blue breezes tinged with the tang of wet salt. On the ceiling, waves flicker in echoes from the restless waves that have no end and no beginning. All the walls are white, and they pull in the reflected light from the water and the sky, distilling the essence of the coast into air that feels like the inside of a clear glass bowl. On the distant horizon there is a hazy edge that is neither sea nor sky, and the magic of that illusion glows inside the house.



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Where Life Is Good
 Marilyn Woerth

Eleven year old grandson to three year old brother: You don't always get what you want Zach. Three year old grandson responding to eleven year old brother: Well... well, I want everything I want. Grandma to Zach, grandma too would like kisses and hugs everyday from you guys. But I don't always get what I want.

This can prove especially true in my garden; my list of flowers I would love to have is never ending, and planting and maintaining said list would require several life times so... I guess I will have to narrow the list. Sigh! But I want everything I want. I wish. Take hydrangeas for instance. I love them. I have several of the mop heads and lace heads, one oak leaf and one climbing hydrangea planted, and I want more. I'm not greedy, or am I? What is greedy about wanting to plant beautiful things, especially since I like to share them? I mean, everyone loves hydrangeas don't they? Okay so maybe I do get excessive about plant material, but who could blame me. The quality and the varieties of plant specimens has expanded hugely recently and no more so than in the hydrangea category.

At a recent flower and garden show that my garden club sponsored I was disappointed that I wasn't able to show my hydrangeas; a July-September blooming shrub, mine hadn't bloomed yet in mid-August. One of my gardening friends said that it was because of the hard winter. Hydrangeas bloom on old wood, and if the winters are hard they die back to the ground, so therefore there may not even be any blooms or they may be late this year. But there are some wonderful hydrangeas that bloom on new wood, and they are doing wonderful this season. The new ones I have seen the most in yards and at the garden shows are the Limelight series, which are a paniculata hydrangea.

So let's do some research. There are basically six different types of hydrangeas: anomala petiolaris (Climbing Hydrangea), arborescens (Smooth Hydrangea), macrophyllia (Mop Head, Lace Cap, or Big Leaf Hydrangea), paniculata (panicled hydrangea), quercifolia (Oak Leaf Hydrangea), serrata (Mountain Hydrangea). The two varieties that do especially well in our cool zone 5 are Hydrangea arborescens and the paniculata's. Of course, guess which kind I am most drawn to, yup, you guessed it, the macrophyllia.

Now I would love to order macrophyllia's such as Pistaschio, Amethyst, Wedding Gown or even Light of Day. But let's be practical, I would like to have several varieties that bloom on new wood that I can depend on this time of the year. So let's look at some paniculata's, even though I love the size and shape of Lime-light, I'm not that thrilled with the color, but White Diamond, Zinfin Doll, Little Lamb, and Bombshell look promising. Oh, how about a hedge of paniculata Quick Fire or arborescens; Bella Anna pink flowers with lime green leaves. Lots to think about as I narrow my options if not my wish list.

Oh there is one more thing that I need to ask of you guys. Please don't tell my husband as he already thinks I have enough plants in our gardens. But I will let you in on a little secret; he's always looking for new plant material for his woodland. Daydreaming about my wish and want list where life is good and hubby's can be so understanding. (Wink!)

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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Dementia Affects More Than Memory

By Lee Nyberg

“Dementia is more than memory loss. It’s actually a group of impairments in cognitive processes, including memory, language, perception, judgment and reasoning,” according to Dr. Sam Gontkovsky, PsyD, neuropsychologist.

Most of us are familiar with short-term memory loss, such as happens when a person calls her daughter about an appointment a second time because she cannot remember she spoke with her an hour ago. Understanding the nature of losses in five key functional areas can enable us to better support a person with dementia.

Language (ability to speak and understand language): A person with dementia may experience inability to understand what another person is saying or to bring up the names of familiar people and things. When you’re with a person with dementia, try to piece together what he might be attempting to communicate by observing body language and context. If your loved one is gesturing to his head and saying “where is my dat?” So you might say something like, “George, I think you’re looking for your hat.” Be sure to help in a way that is not condescending or correcting.

Executive Function (ability to plan and organize tasks): People with dementia often have trouble with simple tasks, like creating a list of errands or choosing weather-appropriate clothing. Caregivers can organize the house and routines, so for example, only the appropriate clothing for a season is available. Increase monitoring when you notice problems in this area since the person with dementia is increasingly vulnerable to very poor judgement. For example, she could start a kitchen fire and be unable to follow logical steps to put it out, or make an extremely poor investment.

Motor Function (balance and coordination): According to a 2002, New England Journal of Medicine article (Dr. J Verghese et al.), an abnormal gait can be an early indicator of dementia.

Damage to the areas of the brain controlling balance and coordination may also be related to Parkinson’s disease in connection with dementia. Change footwear to non-skid soles with flat or low heels and remove loose throw rugs and other tripping hazards.

Attention (ability to consistently maintain focus): Attention problems are especially noticeable during activities and conversations. Variable levels of focus lead to gaps in information, increasing a person’s confusion and frustration. Communicate in short, clear phrases, especially when giving instructions. Use language specifically, carefully choosing words. Plan activities which require more focus earlier in the day, when mental energy levels tend to be higher.

Visual-Spatial Relationship (ability to perceive visual data and orient the body in space): The person with dementia may have difficulty comprehending depth perception, determining distance, color and contrast. For example, a black and white tile floor may appear to have “holes” where the black tiles are, since depth perception is impaired. Use brightly colored tape to emphasize stair treads and eliminate darkly contrasting smaller rugs. Use plates which contrast against the table and the food to help a loved one distinguish her food from its surroundings.

While we can’t undo the damage of Alzheimer’s and other dementias, neuropsychologists believe our brains can form new connections and improve function if we exercise them. Encouragingly, research shows this includes people with some cognitive decline.

Lee Nyberg seeks to help families and those living with Alzheimer’s through education and her company, Home Care Assistance.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

It's a Thursday afternoon in August, but not a typical August afternoon. The sky is utterly cloudless and the air is warm but dry, owing to a northwesterly breeze; in short, a perfect day for dozing in a patch of dappled shade. I dare say I'd be doing just that if I were home in my screened porch, reclining on the chaise lounge with a novel.

But I'm minding the School House Art Gallery in Brownville today, a venue almost as conducive to dozing and reading as my porch. Thursday visitors are rare, but it wouldn't do to have some ne'er-do-well sneak in and make off with the goods while I was asleep on the bench on the Gallery deck.

Lest you get the wrong impression of my views on art, let me say that Sheli Petersen's work, currently on display, is NOT nap-inducing. I am a total amateur in the world of the visual arts, but I know what I like. I like Ms. Petersen's wildlife art and illustrations. I hope she won't mind my unauthorized review of her work in Brownville.

To me, the most intriguing piece is the one titled "Red Fox and Earth." It has the feel of Native American creation mythology. Not that I know anything about Native American creation mythology. Did I mention I'm a total amateur in the world of Native American creation mythology? But, if I did know anything at all about Native American creation mythology, I'd say Ms. Petersen's fox piece is an interpretation of it. It has the look of a cut-away diagram, with the fox below grade, the curve of its head and back following the curve of the land. Exposed roots of wild grasses and forbs seem to be growing right out of the fox's long hair, which takes its color from the red clay soil. On second glance, you will notice the faint outline of a second set of ears and muzzle shadowing the fully formed fox's face. Do the shadows suggest some transition of the animal from the red clay into full life above ground? Or are they remnants of preliminary sketches? Perhaps merely artistic flourishes? You'll have to visit the exhibit and judge for yourself.

I was also drawn to "Raven Roosting" and "Barred Owl." As you would expect, both are done in mostly browns and grays and in a nighttime setting. But it's Petersen's magic with moonlight that drew me into her subjects. I could almost believe that if I could look at each one from the back side, I'd actually be able to see the moon casting its mysterious glow on the scene. That glow keeps the pictures from being dull, despite their lack of bright colors.

If it's color you want, Petersen's illustrations from "Reynard the Fox," "How Two Mice Started a War," and "Carmen and Angelo" won't disappoint. I'm not familiar with any of these stories, but Petersen's illustrations have piqued my interest enough to prompt a visit to the children's section of the used book stores in Brownville.

So, the visual arts complement literary art which inspires theatre and music and sculpture..... It's OK if you're a total amateur in the world of all those things. You can find them all in Brownville, and I promise they won't make you want to take a nap!



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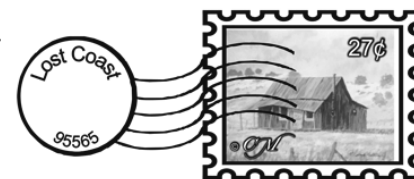
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Old Home Place
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Lost Coast

Your Western Correspondent is Headin' East...

By Vicki O'Neal



I'm getting nervous out here on the West Coast. The wildfires are simply out of control. I know it's hard for Midwesterners to fathom— seeing how you've been drowning in rain this past summer— but out west, it's a different story.

There are currently over 100 wildfires ablaze. By the time you read this article, the whole western hemisphere could be burning, at the rate it's going.

A four-year drought has brought us to a heart-breaking, record-breaking conclusion. Not only is there enough dry tinder to light the world on fire— there's also very little water with which to fight it. Smoke fills the air. The sun looks redder than usual. Blood red, at times. It's not a good omen.

A big harvest moon is normally a thing of beauty this time of year, but not lately! It's just plain bloody. I hate to be glum, folks—but I don't know how else to say it. We're facing something ugly, here, and no amount of glint and glimmer can polish it.

Oh... by the way. Things aren't much better in the economic and geopolitical arenas!

Right now, everybody is watching the unfolding of world events like a deer caught in the headlights. The Markets are spooked. The global economy is spinning out of control. The month of September looks meaner than a mad cat. And October seems.....

Well. It looks scarier than usual. And I'm not talking about Halloweenish stuff. The world seems to be a dangerous place nowadays.

Historically, this is the time of year when Markets often head south for the winter—and this year, it looks like they are REALLY heading south. I have to tell you, it ain't pretty at all—not like a gaggle of geese winging Southward across the skyline.

Indeed. Autumn is the time of year for falling leaves and falling Stocks!... But these Stocks today aren't grand and glorious like Nature's fiery foliage. They're ugly as the wildfires out west. And Folks... that's ugly!

The only beautiful part of it is the spirit of resilience of the American people. When we are smitten, we rally together. We face devastation with grit and determination. We rise up with a pioneer spirit like our great grandparents had!

This month reminds me a lot of 9-11 for some reason. September 2001. What a month that was! The nation was decimated, yet everyone pulled together. We were unified like we had never been before. Forget politics! The Republicans were hugging the Democrats and vice versa. We were all Americans and we were all in this together. This was our Homeland and we were gonna fight for it!

Speaking of "Homeland", folks— I'll be there soon! My friends and family have been urging me onward. I get texts and emails urging me to flee the West Coast.

Nancy from the Missouri River Bluff wrote: "Wildfires! Earthquakes! Get yourself HOME, girl...!" My Prayer Partner, Cheryl, from Auburn says simply, "You'll be back here, soon." And I know that I will. Cheryl is always right.

My adventures on the West Coast have apparently come to an end. I've been a "Western Correspondent" long enough. It's time for me to return to my roots.....and a little common sense, I reckon. If things are going to "crash and burn" like it appears.... I'd rather be at Home— rather than on the West Coast.

The Old Home Place is looking mighty comforting nowadays. I'm packing up now even as we speak. So, if you soon see me chugging into town, full of grit and smoke— you'll know it's just an ol' home gal returning to her senses. Just Crazy Vic who's coming back from the "trenches".

You don't have to throw down a red carpet or even the Welcome mat— but you could leave me out a few dog-eared copies of "Your Country Neighbor...."

And while you're at it— maybe set out a good stiff cup of Corn-huskin' tea. That would be fine. Just fine.

Won't be long now, folks. I'll be seeing you soon!



Kids at the Rodeo!

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