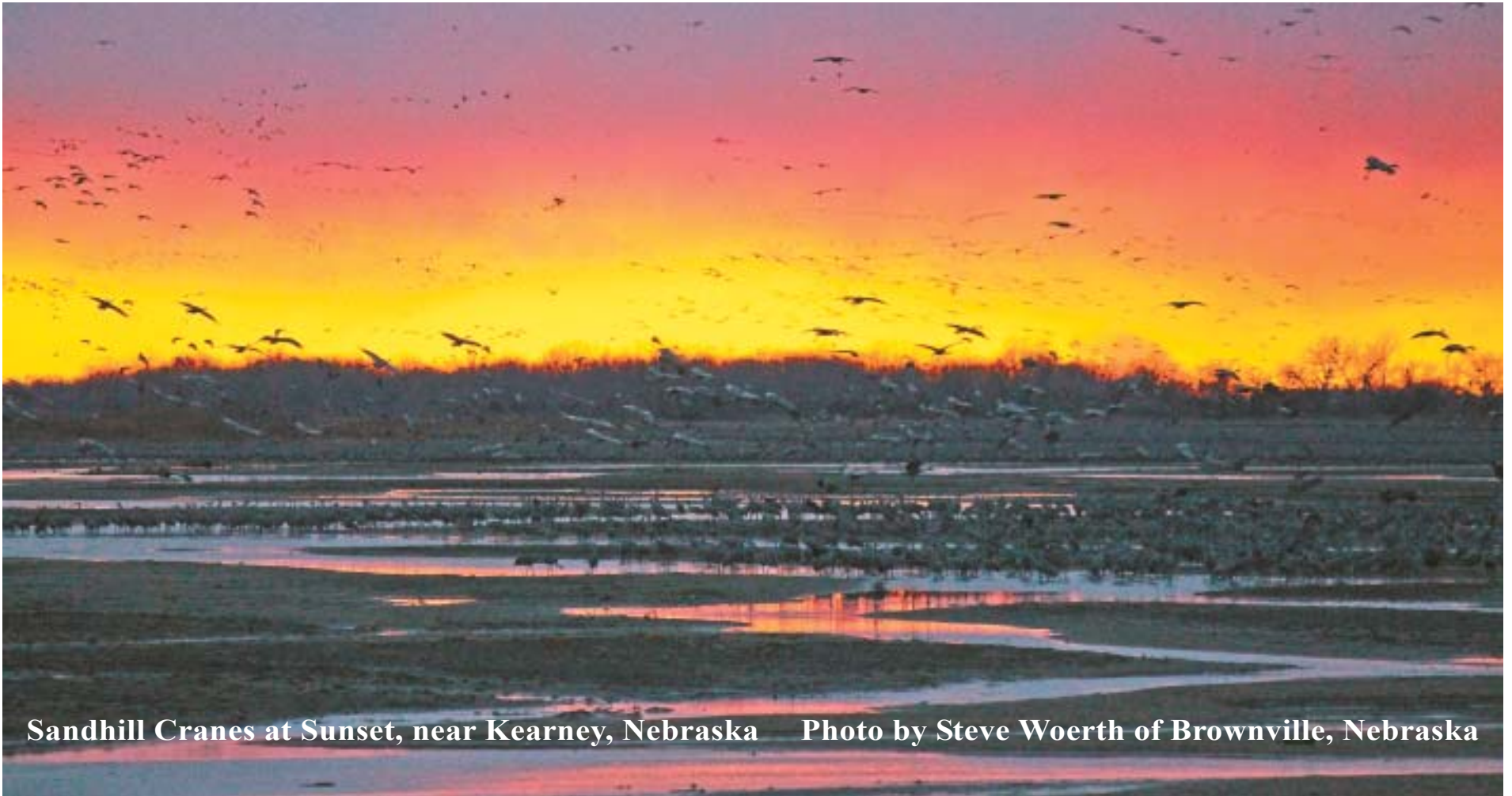


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Sandhill Cranes at Sunset, near Kearney, Nebraska Photo by Steve Woerth of Brownville, Nebraska

Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher and Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Cover Photo

This is the photo I wanted to get, but Steve Woerth of Brownville was in the right place at the right time.

Each Spring near Kearney, Nebraska, the Sandhill Cranes congregate along the Platte River, sleeping on the sandbars at night and feeding in the surrounding fields during the day. About 500,000 make their way to Summer breeding grounds in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska.

Birders, photobugs, and other interested observers bear the chilly mornings and evenings along the Platte River, to see the cranes rise up at dawn, when they leave for the fields, and welcome them back at sunset.

The birds leave for their breeding grounds as late as early April, but there may still be a small 'window' to see the Sandhill Cranes this season. Contact the Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney, NE, through their website, rowe.audubon.org.

Stephen Hassler

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See Page 14 for Examples

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Event Brings Opportunity for Important Message

Submitted by Laura Osborne

A very important message is being highlighted by the NADAA Coalition as they work with several Nemaha County, Nebraska entities to conduct another medication take back event.

"Abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications IS happening here," says NADAA Director Laura Osborne. "It is critical that adults closely monitor what happens to medications that they have at home, because there are people, including teens, who are taking advantage of opportunities to abuse them.

"Pharming" or "Skittling" parties involve individuals bringing any prescription medications they can find and combining them all together at the party site. Then, the party goers will take multiple pills of different prescriptions all together at the same time. Often, alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use is also occurring in combination with the prescription drug abuse at these gatherings.

"Using a medication that was not prescribed to you or using medications in a manner that contradicts the manufacturer's instructions for use are both dangerous behaviors," Osborne says. "The risks are increased when medications are taken in combination with each other, especially when the person taking them has no idea what they are actually ingesting. Another element that increases risk is when alcohol is added to the equation.

"People typically think about the effects that medication could have on a person's body, and those effects are altered when medication is not taken as prescribed or directed," Osborne notes. "The potential harm that can occur to a person's body when combining prescription medications, then adding other substances such as alcohol and marijuana on top of it, is frightening to think about. Additionally, there are other risks for teens at these parties including assault, sexual assault and more.

Osborne notes that one factor contributing to the problem is a perception that it's okay to take any prescription drug because they are prescribed by physicians. "People, especially young people, fall under the misperception that taking any prescription medication is a safe thing to do. However, it is important to realize that taking medication that wasn't prescribed specifically to you can be very dangerous, especially when it is combined with other medications and substances."



Bald Eagles, Adult and Juvenile
Spinning in Flight



Silhouette of Sandhill Cranes,
Dawn, March 14, 2013

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WILD BLUE

The sky has an infinite azure depth, but at it's edges appear bright stripes that mean morning and night. The sheer sheen has been dyed in ribbons of fierce, fiery crimson glory that fade to pales of purple and powder pink, as day changes from it's silk sheath to the soft black velvet of it's night robe.

MOSTLY CLOUDY

Gray days are long, when sun butter fails to spread it's warmth across the plains. Without shadows to spread their fingers from dawn to dusk, time feels frozen, and the memories of sunshine on your shoulders isn't real enough to kill the chill.

SPENDING TIME

What does it cost? How do you know what time is worth, when the night is dark and tomorrow is hiding behind the moon? Spend your minutes like they'll last forever, but hold them in your heart like each one may be your last.

Poetry by Devon Adams

WAITING

Bluebirds in the snow fluttered in with the flurries, carried on the storm wind. Their lovely hues, polished with light, set them apart from the simple sparrows, or the fierce jays, who wore their blues like military uniforms. The welcome water in a heated bucket drew the chilly visitors to it's crowded rim. Caught in a ripple of winter, when spring had lied with sunny promises, they puffed up their feather overcoats, and waited.

ECHOES IN THE CANYON

He follows his nose on busy feet that carry him across the fields of winter. The echo of his deep bass voice ricochets among the wild trees that choke the canyon. He was bred to hunt, but he can't stop until exhaustion breaks him. A sweet, short nap before a brand new scent invades his restless dreams, and then he's off again, baying under the cold moon.

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WOOD SONGS

Soft green leaves emerge like many fingers, growing into life along branches gone soft and springy with the rush of sap. The air vibrates with music sung by a thousand throats, as the bright light flashes off busy wings with feathers painted in fresh colors. Crowded trees on the hills open their lonesome arms to birds coming back from winter. All of the songs that they sing are part of one symphony, written by an unseen composer.

RUNNING LATE

Deadlines and dates are jokes enjoyed by the invisible form of mother nature. We may picture her as a benevolent and cheery type, who loves to please her children with crocus blossoms and tulips. Sometimes she decorates them with a lacy coating of the most perfect snowflakes, that wander out of the sky like lost tourists who've boarded the wrong bus. But that nurturing type who only exists in our imagination may be more of a wicked witch, whose moods can be as dark and deadly as black ice in a whiteout wind. The cackle of her laughter is drowned out by the cacophony of a multiple car crash on a bleak and blustery stretch of interstate whose lanes will soon be closed.



Morning after that last snow in March.

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

You all know we had a drought last year. Yes sir, a really good one! And you all know that there are predictions of this year being another drought year. For all the snow and lingering winter we have had, ponds are very low. Moisture-wise we are still in a deficit. Nebraska and Wyoming had their driest year on record in 2012. It takes a bit to bounce back from that.

I am worried about our trees and found a great resource with the Nebraska Forest Service. As Nebraska (and the Great Plains) continues to deal with ongoing drought, the Nebraska Forest Service will provide resources and services regarding this issue. For more information, please visit <http://nfs.unl.edu/dealing-drought>.

How did your lawn fair? Well ours that was in the shade, not so bad. The parts that were in the boiling sun were not so good. Go figure. Our front yard was hit the worst. Besides the heat, moles and voles and whatever else that runs underground seemed to have a raucous party under our lawn. So by the end of the summer season that area was nothing but dust and weeds. So we sprayed a vegetation killer all over it waited about three weeks, then started digging, hoeing, rototilling and then digging, hoeing, and rototilling for about another three weeks. We added some compost in as well.

During the time of the great scourge, I was researching new grasses that had been developed to withstand drought, since I figured global warming or not, we seem to be in a drought pattern. I found one that sounded perfect, except (groan) for the cost. You could not buy it in seed form (yet), and a research firm in Nebraska sold it in turf form, but even if you drove to the place and picked it up, saving shipping fees, well the cost was more than hubby could justify. So back to the computer for plan B and I ordered the next most interesting possibility.

Well something came up and it sure wasn't grass. It had small round leaves. Then some grass started coming up and would've looked just great except for the things with the small round leaves being so numerous. I thought it looked like henbit, but Steve said he didn't think so. I said yes, I am



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the master gardener. It is a cool weather weed, since it stayed all winter and henbit is a cool weather weed. So now it's the middle of March and we put on some pre-emergent. Well the little round leaves are turning yellow, and there are now tiny blue flowers on the plant with the little round leaves. Only one problem. Henbit has purple flowers. Hmm, not henbit (hubby was right). Haven't yet determined what it is but I am leaning towards some kind of spurge.

As a master gardener I hate to admit it but I am not very knowledgeable about weeds. Time to get that way I suspect.

I can't predict what this season will bring, not being clairvoyant, but I do know this: I plan on babying and nurturing what is special in my yard and eliminating what is not. Where life is good and the best way to head off the unpredictable is to plan ahead. Now where is that weed identification class going to be at this year?

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ELK HUNTERS POTATOES as told to me by a friend who hunted elk in the Blue Mountains of Washington state in his younger days. Recorded by V.L. and shared with YCN readers by **Shirley Neddenriep**

He tells: "The snow outside the tent is knee deep. Our tent is in the bottom of Swede Canyon. Without snow you can leave camp early and get to the top of the ridge in about two and one-half hours. With the snow as deep as it is, you are lucky to make it to the top before its time to head back down.

"Some people, who haven't hunted elk, cringe at the thought of hunting in the snow, sleeping on frozen ground. Truly, it can be a delightful experience. Insulated boots with rubber bottoms. Insulated underwear. Sorry, no gloves. Can't operate your rifle with gloves on. Warm your hands in your coat pockets.

"Now, about the coat. Shop at a war surplus store. Detachable hood. Deep slash pockets, plus regular pockets. Best of all, the tail of the coat is long enough so you can sit on a snow-covered log without getting your fanny wet. Even better, it is long enough in the tail so you can pull the tail between your legs and slide through the snow a good part of the way back to camp. Soldiers in Korea used it.

"The sleeping bag was made by the U.S. Government for workers building the Alcan Highway. Air mattresses are OK but it's miserable to wake at midnight to discover the air escaped through a leak and you are lying on frozen ground. Foam mattress is better. Or a pile of evergreen boughs. Or both.

"So you hunt all day, planning to get back to the tent just at dark. If you were careful all day to avoid working up a sweat, you've been warm all day. Going up steep ridges, especially in heavy snow, you have to go mighty slow to avoid perspiration. Best way to hunt, anyway.

"The tent is also war surplus designed to accommodate four men. One center pole. And if you were careful when you chopped it down it still has some branch stubs on it suitable for hanging spare clothes and stuff. There are only three of us in the tent, but we also have spare clothing, food for nine or ten days, two Coleman lanterns, a two-burner Coleman stove and a one-burner tent heater.

"Back at the tent, no elk sighted. A few deer. One cougar. It's pitch-black dark outside. We are tired and WE ARE HUNGRY. Warm two cast-iron skillets on the stove. Peel and grate a bunch of potatoes, dump them in the fry pans greased with Crisco until the grated potatoes are one-inch deep across the bottom of the pan. After the potatoes have cooked for a minute or two, use a pancake flipper to divide them into pie-shaped wedges. Can't do that too soon or you wind up with hash browns. Stove has to be a little hotter than medium. Finally the potato wedges are 'set' enough so that they can be turned over to cook on the other side. Cooked properly, Elk Hunters Potatoes are crisp-crunchy on the outside, and kind of dough-chewy on the inside. It takes some practice, but the goof-ups are always edible."

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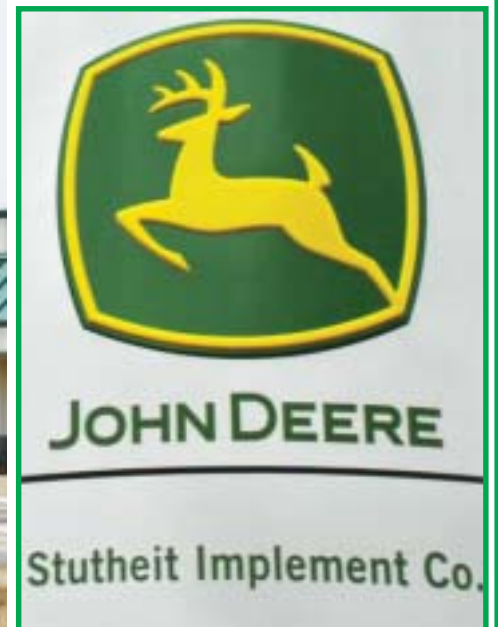
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You're Turning 65: Welcome to Medicare! Spring Workshops

If you, or your spouse, are turning 65 in 2013, you have lots of company. Ten thousand Baby Boomers age into Medicare every day and will continue to do so for the next decade. Plan to continue working, and not draw Social Security benefits? If so, you are still entitled to enroll in Medicare at age 65. If you are 65 and uninsured, enrolling in Medicare will give you access to health insurance coverage widely accepted across the country.

If you are currently employed, will your group health plan continue after you turn 65? Do you have a younger spouse needing health coverage? How do VA benefits affect Medicare? What are the costs of Medicare and how do I find the right plan? Want answers?

Plan to participate in ***You're Turning 65: Welcome to Medicare!*** workshop, presented by Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIIP Professional (Senior Health Insurance Information Program). No registration is necessary and the workshop is free. Workshop dates and locations are listed below. Select the date and location that works best for you; content is repeated at each workshop.

- Tues., April 16, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Plattsmouth Library, 400 Avenue A, Plattsmouth
- Wed., April 17, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Morton-James Public Library, 923 1st Corso, Nebraska City
- Thurs., April 18, 10:00 a.m.-Noon Cass County Extension, 8400 144th Street, Weeping Water
- Tues., April 23, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Auburn Public Library, 1810 Courthouse Avenue, Auburn
- Thurs., April 25, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Sump Memorial Library, 222 N. Jefferson, Papillion

The workshops cover the basics of Medicare, Medicare Supplement Insurance, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Preventive Services, and the prescription drug benefit, including information for applying for extra help for individuals with limited income and resources. Pre-retirees, new-to-Medicare beneficiaries, family members and caregivers are welcome to attend.

Visit the Cass County Extension website at: www.cass.unl.edu for a complete list of Medicare workshops planned for 2013. Questions can be directed to Mary Ann Holland at the Cass County Extension office at 402-267-2205, or contact by e-mail at: mholland1@unl.edu

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Snowgeese migrating north on a warm day in late March.
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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

If you're looking for a sure-fire way to open a conversation with a man Dale's age just ask this question and watch his eyes go glassy: "What did you drive as a teenager?" Women long for prepartum figures...men sigh and say, "I wish I had that car back."

Dale's pride and joy was a dark blue, white bucket-seat interior, 1969 Chevelle SS; his friends drove Firebirds, GTO's, Cobras, Barracudas, Dusters, and Roadrunners, each car with enough horsepower to earn the nickname...Muscle Car. In an era of low-cost insurance, and cheap gas, dragging main was the favorite weekend pastime; each time I hear a Beach Boys 'car song', or watch the movie 'American Graffiti', I dust off those summer Saturday-night memories with Marianne, Cindy, Anita, and Lydia. Girls didn't drive muscle cars...but we certainly enjoyed looking at boys who did.

Lately Dale's been exhibiting signs of old car-fever, spending his evenings at the kitchen table surrounded by service manuals and various parts-catalogs. Is he restoring his old SS...or another vehicle with the same romantic quality?

Nope.

Last winter he bought himself a used spray coupe from Simplot and he can't seem to think about anything else; visions of racing up and down corn fields with booms a-dangling and nozzles a-spraying has brought out the starry-eyed romantic in him.

That's a farmer for you.....

And by the way....my car was a 1968 Mustang fresh off the showroom floor. I'll never forget that September day...and not because of the car.

Eager to show Dale the prize my father had just purchased I drove straight to Dale's grandparent's farm (east of Gering) where he was irrigating that summer. His grandmother, a formidable woman, stood in the yard

watching as Dale inspected the shiny powder-blue cutie with an engine the size of our dining room table.

Later he would confide that his grandmother, a frugal, penny-pinching Volga German (a trait we share), had offered this piece of advice: "Don't ever marry that girl. She'll want too much."

When I think about that day I still laugh.

As Always, Karen (I wish I had that car back)



Snowgeese 'dropping in' at a State Park,
Just off I-80, Exit 312 at Grand Island.

Alzheimer's Affects Us All

by Lee Nyberg



What to do if you think your parent has Alzheimer's

"I think Mom has Alzheimer's." This chilling thought resonates with millions of adult children. For the best possible quality of life for a parent and an opportunity to plan for the future, a neurologist's opinion is critical.

A doctor can provide factual answers. Instead of Alzheimer's, your mom may have underactive thyroid, vitamin deficiency, brain tumor, or depression, all treatable disorders which can cause memory loss, slow thinking, behavioral changes, and irritability. Alternatively, the symptoms you may have noticed in your parent, such as difficulty with problem solving and decision-making, could be mild cognitive impairment (MCI). MCI presents as cognitive changes greater than those considered normal for a person of a particular age. People use specific coping skills, like writing reminders, to handle MCI.

Preparing for the doctor visit is an important task in itself. If your mom is resisting seeing her doctor, creativity and diplomacy are required. First, understand the reason for the resistance. It could be fear of the diagnosis, concern about going alone, or a belief that illness is shameful. Offer your support and attendance at the appointment. Geriatric psychiatrist, Gary Kennedy, suggests negotiating with your mom for compliance. For example, you might say, "I'll be able to help you, if you'll do your part. Let's go to the doctor to see what's causing the difficulty you're having in remembering to take your medicine."

A primary care physician is your first appointment. If necessary, your dad will be referred to a specialist, usually a neurologist. Before the appointments, educate yourself and the staff at the doctor's office. Research key terms, such as MCI, Alzheimer's, and dementia symptoms. The Alzheimer's Association (Alz.org) and the Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.com) are very useful. Call the doctor's receptionist and admitting nurse and enlist their help. Your dad may need soothing and extra care once you arrive. Alert the doctor to tout any specialist she recommends, using phrases important to your dad, whether it is "skill," "kindness," or "...years of experience."

If the specialist confirms Alzheimer's, you can continue to make a difference in your parent's quality of life. Diagnosis gives you access to medical treatment, therapies, and programs. Michael J. Fox said, "I don't have Parkinson's, I am living with Parkinson's," to emphasize he still has life to live. So do people with Alzheimer's. Angela Lunde, of the Mayo Clinic, said Alzheimer's patients, "can give and receive love, participate in activities, and share moments of joy and laughter."

Educating yourself about Alzheimer's and elder care, planning for changes in your parent's needs, and organizing financial and legal affairs will help you meet coming challenges with greater confidence. Remember, you are not alone. Even if you do not have help from family, other supports exist. Friends, support groups, religious leaders, professional caregivers, geriatric care managers, and community and government resources are available. Since your mom's needs will change over time, you may use a variety of resources. Take care of yourself, too. "Put your mask on first, before assisting others."

Lee Nyberg is the Marketing Director of Home Care Assistance. Home Care Assistance provides in-home senior care, helping seniors maintain their independence, dignity, and control and giving their families peace of mind. For more information, visit www.HomeCareAssistanceLincoln.com.

Techniques to Help Manage the Stress of Caring for an Alzheimer's Patient

For many families, dementia is a fact of life: 15 million Americans are caregivers for someone with Alzheimer's for an average of 4-8 years after the diagnosis, about twice as long as for other conditions. The Alzheimer's Association Report of 2012 said 61% of caregivers suffer from high emotional stress; 33% report symptoms of depression, and 75% are concerned about maintaining their own health.

Stress management is a crucial element of self-care for caregivers. Here are three millennia-old methods to manage one's own mental realm.

The Classic: Meditation

Meditation is the cornerstone used to manage your own emotions, reactions and thoughts. Here's how:

1. Sit comfortably so you can relax completely while staying awake.
2. Close your eyes and relax your body.
3. Clear your head. Focus on a repetitive phrase, like "Loving kindness," a sound like "ahhh," or count your breath, starting over if you start to attach your attention to thoughts.
4. Plan to do this everyday and start with a small amount of time, such as 5 minutes and work up to 15-20 minutes.
5. Expect meditation to take a while to make a difference; a habit takes 28 days to form.

Meditation for Beginners, by Jack Kornfield, is a great basic text if you want more guidance.

Less Known: Mindfulness

This is not mind-over-matter. Mindfulness is the intentional focus on each moment, without evaluating the moment. For example, "I am bathing my mother's feet." The lack of judgment of the act, the foot, or the fact that your mother needs this service, serves to remove the intensity of the moment and as a result, calms us. With practice, mindfulness helps us gain control of our emotions, reactions and perceptions of ourselves and our situation, allowing a mental break from habitual stressful thinking. With control of our thoughts, we take an enormous step toward stress reduction because we view ourselves "in control." Liken this to the feeling of control we have as we drive a mountain road when our brakes work, versus when they don't.

A Little Out-There: Yogic Chanting

When the International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry publishes a study from UCLA's Semel Institute of Neuroscience, specifically conducted to help caregivers of Alzheimer's sufferers, we take notice. The study was of two groups of caregivers, a yoga group, and a simple relaxation group. Everyday, for 8 weeks, the yoga group performed a 12-minute yoga practice, which included Kirtan Kriya (visualization, chanting and rhythmic finger movements). The other group merely listened to relaxing music for 12 minutes for 8 weeks. The chanters were twice as relaxed as the music listeners. The study's author believes the combination of visualization, singing and touch creates mental stimulation and reduces stress. Go to http://www.alzheimersprevention.org/kirtan_kriya.htm for more information.

Finding your own comfort level with a technique and committing to it is the key to the mental self-care necessary during stressful caregiving roles, such as for Alzheimer's patients.

Lee Nyberg is the Marketing Director of Home Care Assistance. Home Care Assistance provides in-home senior care, helping seniors maintain their independence, dignity, and control and giving their families peace of mind. For more information, visit www.HomeCareAssistanceLincoln.com.



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Sandhill Cranes near Kearney, Nebraska, March 13, 2013

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

I've been a tad distracted lately, what with planning for my retirement at the end of April. With that for an excuse, I'm re-running a column from April 2009. It's about time to pick on my husband again anyway. Hopefully you will enjoy reading this again as much as I did!

April 2009

It's time for another installment in the minor misadventures of my husband, who shall continue to remain nameless to protect the guilty.

You may recall reading of the incident last December in which my husband walked into our son's next-door neighbor's unlocked house, making it all the way through the garage and upstairs to the living room before realizing his mistake. Fortunately, no one (except a dog which looked nothing like our son's dog) was at home to confront him, and he managed to escape with his dignity intact. Until he told the rest of us what he had done. I bring this up purely because today's story also involves a visit to our son and daughter-in-law.

A few weeks ago we traveled to St. Joe to help our son and daughter-in-law move. I was really on top of things, packing my overnight bag and taking care of things that needed doing the day before, instead of waiting until the morning of departure, like usual. I even loaded a stack of newspapers into the car that my son had requested for packing breakables.

The next day, about halfway to St. Joe, my husband asked if we would be helping to pack or just moving boxes. "They still have some packing to do," I answered. "That's why I'm taking those newspapers along."

Brief silence. Oops. "You meant to take those along? I took them out of the back seat when I put our luggage in."

So much for being on top of things the day before.

He figured I was just hauling the newspapers around until I made it to the recycling trailer. He thought it would be helpful to get them out of the way. It never crossed his mind that I meant to take them along. Hmm. Eggs and bacon. Salt and pepper. Packing and newspapers. Some things just naturally go together. Besides, I haven't recycled newspapers in years.

Why is it that husbands and wives are so seldom in sync on things like this? I manage to remember to pack the newspapers, and my husband manages to unpack them.

Well, never mind the newspapers. It gets better.

When we visit family overnight, my husband takes his own eggs and sausage along (I'm not kidding) to ensure that he gets what he wants for breakfast. (Have I mentioned that he's a little obsessive about breakfast?) So, I made sure that my daughter-in-law knew not to pack and move the necessary cooking utensils until after breakfast. Wouldn't you know, my husband had decided, unbeknownst to me, that trying to cook in the middle of moving would be too much hassle. He'd just run out and get something.

O.K. Fine. Eat in, eat out. Whatever makes you happy. My husband, before breakfast, is a little like a bear coming out of hibernation. I generally just stay out of his way.

So, he headed for a restaurant and I stayed in to eat whatever I could find. About half an hour later, my cell phone rang. It was hubby. "Could someone bring my wallet?" Seems Bob Evans prefers cash to help in the kitchen.

Lest you think I'm abusing my husband by revealing his foibles, let me assure you, he gets to have the last word before the article goes to print. "That's pretty funny," he chuckled, after reading this one. "Too bad it's all true."



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April

Breathe fresh,
breathe of green
where meadowlarks
bookend dawn and dusk,
where soft raindrops patter
knocking on the door
of yawning earth.

Whirl to the south,
watch spiderlings
cast silver parachutes
trusting the breeze,
trickling brooks
flow freely
down canyon walls,
feel the cool mist
where gorged rivers roar

Rest in radiance
beside the blue pool,
where the lady watches,
whispering, singing
gently tapping the ground
she wakes sleepy eyed children
who stretch supple limbs
and clean faces
towards the sun.

by Carol Carpenter



Meadowlark



Rural Scene



Hawk

How handsome he is,
perched on the fencepost,
scanning his savannah
with stalwart intention.

That brown tweed jacket
draped across broad shoulders,
ivory cashmere sweater
flecked with rusty stitches.

Golden eyes
watch and wait patiently
for the rustle of foxtail,
bristle of witch grass,
the telltale sign
of dinner on the move.

A rabbit bolts,
zig zagging
across the corn stubble.
From his hedgepost
The hawk rises
on wingbeats strong
talons sharp, dive earthward
in a haze of blood and fluff.

Above the vast prairie,
no bald eagle's cry.
It is the place of red tail,
Cooper's, sharp shinned;
the home of broad winged,
rough legged, northern harrier;
and those who surfs the swells.



Sunset, from a Walking Bridge over the Platte
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