

Your **Country** Neighbor

FREE!
August 2011



Lake on the Continental Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park (or how I spent my summer vacation...if you care).

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

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Merri Johnson
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Thank You

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Your Country Neighbor

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Editor's note:

*More than five years of
this publication are online at:*

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Hey Mr. Hassler how do you expect us to write anything, when it's this hot? Well let's see if I can pull a rabbit out of a hat.

Oh hello, well you're not exactly a rabbit, you look more like well— a cute, cuddly, bear. Who, what did you say? Oh “Pooh”, you're my Pooh bear, I love you.

It's about time they brought you back. (I just pitched my twenty year old Pooh sweatshirt.) I've missed you. In case you all have missed it, a new Winnie the Pooh movie is out this summer (and I'm in seventh heaven), and yes, I will see it, with or without a child in tow.

If Pooh lived in my woods, what adventures we would have (move over Tigger, a Hollywood add on). Pooh would mumble over his honey, and optimistic me would remind him we'd find it together. Then off we'd go hunting for another bee hive.

It would never be hot in our woods, and ticks and mosquitoes would never dream of bothering us. We'd run and jump and sing (I can't carry a tune), and laugh, and laugh some more till our sides hurt, and then Pooh would say, “Oh bother”.

We'd stop and drink some sweet, clean water from a stream that obediently stays within its banks. Then we'd hear some buzzing and follow it to a tree dripping with rich honey comb. Rabbit would come by with a smoking stick and the bees would stay away while we plundered the hive.

After indulging ourselves until we were sticky all over, a soft rain would wash us squeaky clean. After the rain, a warm summer breeze would dry us fluffy and fresh smelling. Next, we would roll in a field of purple clover, and lay very still watching the clouds go by and drift into a restful sleep.

Ah yes, for right now this is where life is good, for me! My VBFF (very best friend forever), and I wish you a good one, and keep it cool with a special memory of your own.

Where to find *Your Country Neighbor*

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You can also see current and past issues of *Your Country Neighbor* online at:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Hubby reached another decade milestone on the journey of life last month: he turned 60. "No way." That's what he's always telling me people say when they realize his age. "You don't look a day over 55!" they supposedly exclaim. What's five years one way or the other? It's your outlook on life that matters, right? In other words, as long as you refuse to acknowledge your actual age, you will feel young, and maybe fool a few people.

But, you ask, did he do something special to celebrate his 60th? *Celebrate* doesn't quite capture the moment. *Risk taking* comes to mind. Or, maybe *tempting fate*. Possibly even *death wish*. Our neighbor observed hubby in the act and commented later, "That was an interesting feat you performed yesterday." Now you're curious, aren't you?

Since you already know that our neighbor saw the whole thing, you can surmise that he didn't go sky-diving or bungee jumping or get shot out of a cannon; all of which would be difficult to undertake in our backyard. No, it wasn't quite that dramatic, but still not your typical 60th-birthday activity. Inspired by nostalgia for summertime boyhood pursuits and the psychological need to prove that he could still do it at age 60, hubby climbed a tree.

Technically speaking, he didn't climb *up* the tree trunk – he used a ladder for that. But, the ladder wasn't quite tall enough to actually reach the limb he was going for, so he settled for wedging the top of the ladder in a lower fork of the tree, and *very carefully* climbed onto the limb and edged out about eight feet from the trunk to install a "real" swing for our granddaughter.

To accomplish that, he had to steady himself by holding an overhead branch with one hand while simultaneously wielding a chain saw in the other to remove several branches that were interfering with the positioning of the ropes. He then sat on the limb – again steadying himself with one hand on the overhead branch – and drilled two holes through the limb and then inserted foot-long eye-bolts, from which to hang the ropes. Mind you, the bolts had to be inserted *from the bottom up* in order to have the eyes on the bottom side of the limb. My husband has long arms, but they were barely long enough to allow him to retain his grip on the overhead branch and still reach around under the support limb to insert those bolts without dropping them. Have I mentioned that he was 20 feet off the ground during this caper?

It was a pretty warm day, so it wasn't long before hubby was feeling the effects of all that exertion, particularly pulling himself up to a standing position after prolonged perching with his legs dangling over the edge of the limb. Bruises on his backside bear testimony to the unforgiving surface of mulberry tree bark. No doubt, hubby's blood thinner medicine contributed to the bruises. (Hmmm? I wonder if shimmying around on 20-foot high tree limbs is included on the list of things one shouldn't do while taking blood thinners.) No matter. He installed the swing and lived to tell about it.

And just where was I as my husband was behaving so foolishly? I must admit I was fully complicit in the madness. When I wasn't performing my role as ground-level assistant, I was taking photos. Don't get excited. I had my cell phone handy to call 911. Of course, it probably wouldn't have done much good if he had actually fallen out of the tree. But he didn't. Channeling his inner 10-year old self, he proved he's still a can-do kind of guy. I wouldn't want him any other way.

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Poetry by Devon Adams

THE LONG VIEW

The blue of the mountain range rises out of the haze around the farms. Distance is deceptive though, and it takes hours before the blues become peaked piles of rocks that reach above the busy clouds. Driving through the pass leads deeper into the wrinkled landscape, and the horizon becomes hidden behind walls of stone and snow. Only on the prairie is there a dome that arches from flat to flat, where storms grow towers in Dakota that can be seen from Kansas wheat fields. The bloody sun of a summer heat wave explodes the gray of the morning, and then it subsides once again into fire, as it falls over the black edge of night. All that drama is lost in the shadows of the jagged land that rises in the west.

BUTTERFLY BUSH

Purple torches are burning, as long fingers of light ignite the tips of fragrant flowers. The bush that is a magnet for all shapes and sizes of the magic butterfly bugs is glowing in a summer sunset. It has spent the day hosting the flutters of fancy wings, matched to busy bodies with tongues that reach deep into the heart of each separate blossom. Resembling embroidered patches sewn with brilliant thread, they are meticulous in their harvest, with not a single drop of nectar left behind.

PART OF THE PLAN

On an ordinary day, a change comes, like a small white cloud that appears suddenly at the edge of the sky. It wasn't expected, and it leaves a hole in your life. Later, you realize that it wasn't a dropped stitch, because it made room for the next chapter of your life.

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It was gray metallic and gleamed like steel. Brand new, with the sticker still stuck on the window. Powerful cylinders that could spin the tires into smoke, a satellite radio, a sophisticated system of temperature control and location locators. It was a sedan, with four doors. But he wanted a silver bullet, that was flat and mean and cut the wind like the edge of a knife.

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ABOUT BUSINESS Shirley Neddenriep

One day I stood in the farm shop, waiting. The guys would return soon; I'd brought a jug of kool-aid and sandwiches. So I'd trapped myself. There is no logic leaving bread and meat for carnivorous squirrels which frequent the place and have a nose for edibles.

While I waited, the building talked to me. Ever hear a building talk? No wind, the air stood still, as weathermen tell the inside of a hurricane is. Calm.

But there were squeaks. Or squawks. Metal on wood? A loose nail somewhere? Settling back to earth. Buildings do that. They settle slowly, so you don't even notice until one day a door won't close, or a window refuses to slide.

I looked at the shop window. It hadn't slid in years. Maybe it never had slid, but served its sole purpose of providing light in an area above a work table that would ordinarily be dark. That is, without the florescent tubes suspended nearby.

Maybe the chains holding the light fixture spoke out, they are on 24/7 it seems to me, besides the radio incessantly blaring a ball game. The radio was silent this day, so all I heard was the creaking building. Tree limbs brushed the roof; they ought to be trimmed.

It isn't even an old building. Well, maybe by today's standards it is old. By my standards, it is practically brand new, just constructed, the cement floor barely dry.

A floor drain with heavy duty rollers served as a collection sump for rain water or floor/machinery cleanup. Its conduit ran 90 feet to an outlet on the far north end of the north/south building.

I stood there and looked around to see that changes had been made. Rearrangement of tool benches, new allocation of space. Odd. But that may be due to new blood introduced, new management of the shop.

I remembered that during my tenure at an 'official' office environment, with each new manager came a rearrangement, of furniture, of staff, of policy, of routine, to make his/her mark on the place. Maybe its happening here, in this lilliputian farm shop.

The re-located, huge vice, I noticed; and then took a closer look. There, wedged tightly between the jaws of that vice which were made to solidly grip heavy metal objects to be mended, welded, repaired, or damaged; there tightly grasped in its claws, was an invoice. Paper.

At that moment I released the statement from the firm grip of the vice and returned it to the farm office in my house where it belonged. Lunch, too!



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
Photos Submitted by Author

Fishing

The River flooding this year has been unreal. The discharge at Gavins Point Dam is at an all time high of 160,000 cubic feet per second for over a month. The levees have been tested and some didn't fair so well. There is give and take when the River is run over its capacity. Water overflows a levy in its low spots and the force of the water erosion takes over from there. The levees are something that we really take for granted, something that was built over 50 years ago that keeps the sleeping giant out of our lives for the most part. But like the weakest link in a chain, so is the levy system. The levy near Watson, Missouri was the weak link this time letting millions of gallon of water flow over making the gaping hole 300 feet long in the levy itself. This break flooded all the farm land, homes, and highways in its path. While it is a give and take situation, water that devastated the Missouri side of the River relieved the pressure on the Nebraska side. The river dropped. Although not below flood limit, the relief was enough to ease the pressure on other levees in the system. With an announcement from the Corp of Engineers that the mountain snow melt is over for this year the river remains high and it's just a matter of time before flow start to slow down. The fishing for this year on the Missouri river is out. The River and it's flood waters have been off limit since June. Not often does the State and Federal Government close the River to traffic – that is how severe the flooding really is. This is something that we have never seen before and probably will never see again. For public safety all roads leading to the river are also closed to traffic. So if you can't get there – you can't fish. FISHING IS CANCELLED THIS YEAR. Ever hear that before?



This month's fishing pictures are of road closed signs leading to the Peru Bottom Land – forbidding access to the flooded river.

Hunting

The seasons are coming back around. Nebraska Squirrel Season opens August 1st. Next will be Dove and Early Duck Seasons. So get your rifle and shotgun out and sharpen up – the hunting seasons are coming.

DEER HUNTING

Fall & Winter deer hunting application/permit time is here:


Second application is first come, first served for what is left July 11 through the close of season.

You need to go to The Nebraska Game & Parks web page and check the 2011 Deer Seasons out now!


At: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/hunting/guides/biggame/deer/BGdeer.asp>

Fishing is out for the river this Summer so a lake or pond may be the best right now. Again, Fall Deer Permits can be purchased right now. So get your permits and start planning your Fall deer hunt. Remember, I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time "Happy Hunting & Fishing."

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Lost Coast

Bully For You...!

By Vicki O'Neal



How do you deal with a bully who's a fraction of your size, weight and strength—yet who wields great power over you? ...Especially when it's a bully you don't even recognize?

They comes in small packages, nowadays. They're often disguised as fragile little creatures who need protecting.

The other day, I saw a little person picking on a big guy. Poking, jabbing, pinching, and hitting. It obviously hurt, but the big guy was tolerant. He was ruled by our laws of humanity—a genteel respect for the smaller person.

At last, the torment became too much. "Stop!" the guy said. "Why are you doing this?"

"Because I can!" came the swift answer. "It's what I do best!"

The smaller the bully is, the more pleasure they seem to gain from tormenting their victims—perhaps because they, themselves, have been bullied. They are the ones who need defending....right?

Pint-sized bullies are common in the Human species...They're everywhere! But in the Animal Kingdom, they don't even exist! The Law of the Jungle would never tolerate such a thing. Critters deal with tiny tyrants swiftly. The torment ends before it begins.

Sadly, we lack the common sense of God's furry critters who rule their offspring with a necessary firmness. Their very existence depends on it. They don't tolerate tiny tyrants like we do—not for a moment.

We, humans, struggle with such matters. We're not as wise as God's lesser creation. We seldom suspect what's really going on. We're programmed to think that bullies are always BIG. But such is not the case.

Little bullies have infiltrated and even taken over our culture. They're running rampant through our homes, schools, churches, and businesses—yet we remain unaware. We're in total denial.

We go through life feeling harried and hassled. Tensions build up and up. Families implode. Marriages are destroyed. Our whole world seems to be teetering on the brink of insanity. We have set ourselves up to be destroyed from within, because we don't recognize the threat we are facing....the self-destructive patterns that we, ourselves, have created.

It's the scourge of permissive parenting...The yielding of our society to pint-sized bullies.

"What rubbish!" you say. "Our kids are not bullies! They don't rule over us! And they certainly don't rule the world!"

Indeed...

You've heard that old adage about Mommas: "The-hand-that-rocks-the-cradle-rules-the-world"...?

Well, it's true, so true—except when Mother surrenders that power—yielding it to the one who is in the cradle. Who rules our world then?

Pleeease Mommy! Oh Puleeeeeease! "I said NO!" Oh, but Puleeeeeease! "OK. OK! I'll buy you that toy, but nothing more!"

Admit it. We, ourselves, have put these toddler-tyrants in power. They begin manipulating us from the cradle—learning bad habits that will destroy their character and cripple them for life. And we allow it. We call it love. When our babies were born, they looked up at us with wide-eyed innocence and we were lost. Doomed. Blinded to reality!

We cater to their every whim—enabling them day after day. We hug our tormentors and encourage their terrible behavior. We reward it whenever possible.

Then, when we see the same behavior in other peoples' kids, we are horrified. Aghast. "Look at that! Chaos in the church-house!...in the marketplace!...in the neighborhood! What is the world coming to!"

Tiny tyrants are wreaking havoc on all sides. How often we see it...A child tormenting an older sibling while the parents look the other way. Step-kids sabotaging relationships. A huge Tug-of-War between parents. Children demanding that the "terrible step-parent" be tossed out the door. Marriages end up in divorce courts. Misery abounds.

"Unbelievable!" we say. "The little monsters! How embarrassing for the family! I'd never stand for that!"

Problem is: we do stand for it. We let our kids cause us chaos because these are our precious little bullies—and we'll defend 'em to the death. No one—but no one—recognizes the pint-sized bully in their own backyard...or in their own house. It's always somebody else's kid who is the brat. The little monster manipulator.

The ultimate truth is this: it's a scary world for little bullies live in. To wield that kind of power is terrifying when you're so small. Kids need and want secure boundaries, and they keep pushing until they find one. It's a frightening thing when they can make more and more demands—and nobody stops them.

It's a scary world for the rest of us, as well, and it's getting scarier by the day...because we all know that it can't continue. America is going to pay for permissive parenting—and pay big!

You know, folks—this is a rather recent phenomena, really. A curse of the modern era. Permissive parenting didn't happen much in the old days!

Can you imagine it?... A century ago, kids throwing themselves on the floor at Ma and Pa's Grocery Market—shouting at parents and grandparents, while the adults stood by red-faced and helpless? (Or worse yet, those same kids killing their parents,

then throwing a grandiose party right afterwards.)

No. Never. It simply didn't happen in the old days. Our forefathers would not put up with such anarchy...such foolishness. Every adult had the liberty—in fact, the obligation—to correct everybody else's child in public. No one was insulted. It was expected...for the good of society! And they had a much better culture than we do, today.

Try correcting someone else's child, nowadays. You'll end up in serious trouble. In fact, if you try to correct your own child in public, you'll be in trouble. It's no wonder we're living in chaos.

What's going to happen in a world where kids rule the roost? Where parents are afraid to say "No." Where pint-sized bullies make demands and everybody else is expected to fall in line?

I'll tell you what will happen. There's going to a breakdown in our society—a collapse of our culture. A return to Uncivilization that's far worse than the Law of the Jungle. The growling, prowling critters of the Animal Kingdom will be better off than our own species—for they are equipped to handle the ensuing backlash of violence.

They have their own laws and jaws and claws—and they mete out justice swiftly. They have no anarchy amongst their ranks....!

Well, folks. I reckon I've said enough on this subject, and I'd better be winding down. You don't want me talking about the juvenile crime and the violence in the streets of America... So, I'd better hush. I rest my case, folks... 'Cuz the case is getting mighty heavy.

By the way...If you need a little more backbone—some willpower to help you handle those kids and grandkids—just cut out this column and hang it on your fridge. Then read it once a day. Or twice, if needs be.

Remember..."They can't bully you—if you don't let 'em....!"

Bye for now, everybody. See you again next month!

Vicki O'Neal

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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



Paleolithic era cavemen ground starch from its roots, ancient Rome turned it into 'the people's whiskey', and early religious painters portrayed the crucified Christ holding one of its stalks. It provided hunter/gatherer Native Americans with food, medicine, material for mat and basket weaving and even soft down filling for bedding and diapers; one Native American word for the plant meant 'fruit for Papoose's bed.'

The late Euell Gibbons, consummate outdoorsman and proponent of natural diets, called it "the supermarket of the swamp": in late spring the base of the leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, and the underground ribosome pickled like cucumbers; in early summer the developing flower spike can be boiled and eaten like corn on the cob; in midsummer, once the male flowers are mature, the pollen can be collected and used as a flour supplement or thickener, and...If you forget to pay the electric bill...the flower itself can be dipped in fat or wax and lit as a candle.

And that's not all. Boil the rootstocks and you've got yourself a diuretic, mash them into a jelly-like paste and you have a down-home treatment for sores, boils, wounds, and scabs.

It thrives from the sub-Artic to the Tropics, and is able tolerate both freshwater and brackish-saline swamplands. Its water-filtering capabilities make it an excellent candidate for municipal sewage pond remediation, established stands along ditch banks and shorelines stops soil erosion dead in its tracks, and in 2009 an outfit called Sustainable Technology Systems signed an agreement with Otero County New Mexico to conduct a feasibility study on its use for the production of ethanol.

Perhaps the 'Supermarket of the Swamp' will one day become the 'Gas Station of America'

It's known by many names: Russian (Cossack) asparagus, flagtail, marshbeetle, blackcap, watertorch, rushes, flags, candlewick, cat o' nine tails, prairie-chicken feathers, eye-itch and roof grass...but around here it goes by 'Cattail'.

We've always lived among stands of cattails; even during those dry years when our annual rainfall dropped to single digits there were pockets of lush green foliage and fat brown 'tails', but this year, with water standing in every bar-pit, roadside ditch, lake, and mud-hole the cattail population has exploded. They're growing in soggy fields where I've never seen anything but corn, beans, and

alfalfa, and they've taken over the buffalo grass in river bottom pastures. In some places they're actually growing in the county roads.

A few days ago I 'booted-up' the four grandkids, seated them in the box of the pickup, and idled down the road at 3 miles-per-hour to the nearest cattail stand. The seven year old was relieved to find out we were only harvesting plants, not cutting tails off of live cats; the six year old was more interested in the snails he found in the stinky water, the eight year old turned the stiff stalks into swords and spears, ("Stop poking your brother, you could put his eye out"), and the three year old kept losing her boots in the mud.

It was a memorable afternoon.

Come fall I'll teach them to 'explode' a cattail by pinching the disintegrating head; its great fun and makes a wonderful mess; cattail heads contain about 300,000 seeds, and each seed has an 'umbrella' of 40 to 60 hairs to help it fly.

I hate to admit it but I once moved a vase of summer-harvested cattails to a seldom-used upstairs

room for a future crafting project. A month or so later they concluded their life cycle by bursting wide-open. It was mess....but not a wonderful one. I should have known better.

"Experts' say that "Cattails offer a natural solution to multiple environmental concerns.", but I like it for it is.....a survivor; drown it, or drought-it-out, and it'll come back better than ever.

And if you burn the green heads (without the wax dipping) it's said the smoldering smoke acts as an insect repellent. .

I'm going to give that a try.

As Always,

Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

Tammy Westhart, Accountant

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