

Your *Country Neighbor*

February 2013
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CONTENTS

Medicare & Veterans' Benefits	6
Cover Photo	2
Devon's Poetry	4
"Where Life is Good"	5
Early West Defenders	10
"The Face of Drought"	11
"Vicki"	12
Wildwood House	13
Another Selection from Karen Ott	13
Merri's Diary	14
Carol's Poetry & Photography	15
Coupon for <i>Valentino's!</i>	16

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!

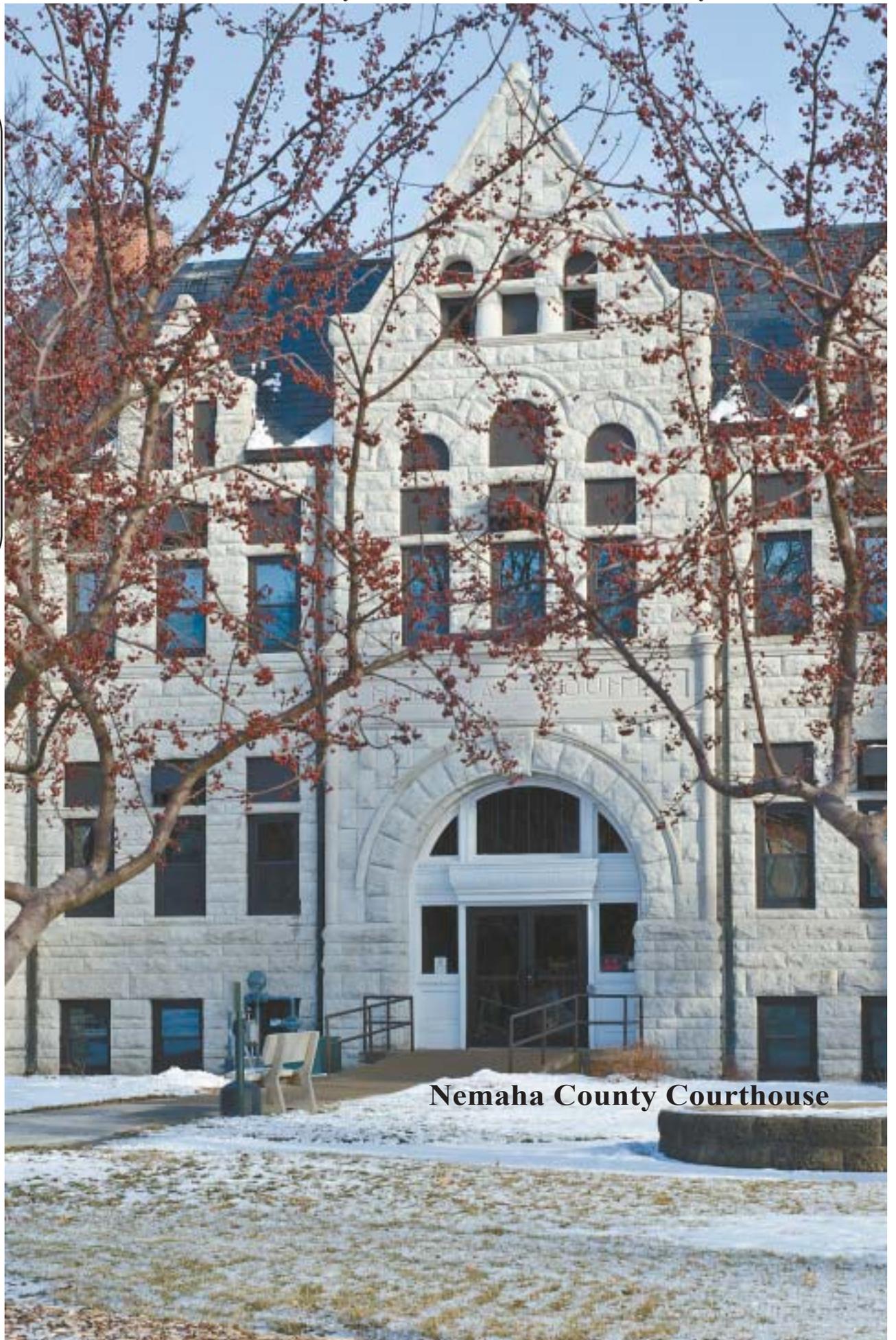
This month, February, 2013, marks the 11th anniversary of continuous monthly *YCN* publications.

In the months ahead you may notice subtle changes in *Your Country Neighbor*. Maybe you already have.

Some of those changes will be initiated by you. Submit your photos, articles, and poems for consideration. Don't be afraid that they may not be good enough. That's my decision, and I am usually right about it.

Use e-mail address on p. 2

Volume Fourteen, Number Two



Nemaha County Courthouse

February, 2013

Where to Find Your Country Neighbor

Your Country Neighbor is hand-delivered to grocery stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, restaurants, cafes, and most businesses that advertise in this paper.

Find *YCN* in the following cities and villages:

Kansas
Hiawatha
Sabetha.

Missouri
Rock Port

Nebraska Auburn,
Brownville, Cook, Falls
City, Humboldt, Johnson,
Nebraska City, Nemaha,
Peru, Syracuse, and
Tecumseh.

Current and past issues are online at: www.yourcountryneighbor.com



“My Daughter Loving JJ” submitted by Jennifer Mumm



COVER PHOTO

Stephen Hassler

The late afternoon Sun paints the western face of the Nemaha County Courthouse with a gentle brightness after a rare dusting of snow. In the foreground are the red ‘berries’ that decorate the Winter branches soon to be pink with Spring buds.

Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Writers This Month

Devon Adams
Carol Carpenter
Mary Ann Holland
Merri Johnson
Shirley Neddenriep
Vicki O’Neal
Karen Ott
Marilyn Woerth

Thank You

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FORD FOREVER

The old boy retired
some time ago, with
a little help from the
deer that put him in
the bottom of the ditch.
And it wasn't even the
rollover that ended
his infamous career.
It was the big bad
rock that broke his
front axle. Now he
sits out here at the
edge of civilization,
rusting away in the
weather, forgotten
by his buddies who
are still whooping it
up at the bars in all
the small towns out
here in the boonies.
They never give him
a thought as they
kick dust in his face,
racing by on the back
roads, breaking every
law they can imagine.
Life is not made for
sitting still in the
middle of a patch
of nettles, with critters
making nests in your
padded seats, and foxes
digging dens under your
hood. The worst thing
is being surrounded by
tall plants that the good
old boys call ditch,
especially in the fall
when they are cured
by the sun until their
smell is so strong it
peels your paint.
What a way to go!

Poetry by Devon Adams

HEARTS TOGETHER

They are an old couple,
somewhat bent, as they
shuffle around the lake.
Remembering glorious days
of youth and yesterday,
they sit beside each other
on the sandy beach, and
watch the young ones play.
Some of their children are
out there in the crowd, living
life in seconds, never counting
days, growing old too fast to
notice and not caring to be told.
If they're lucky, they will realize
that love is all they need forever.

THE BOXES

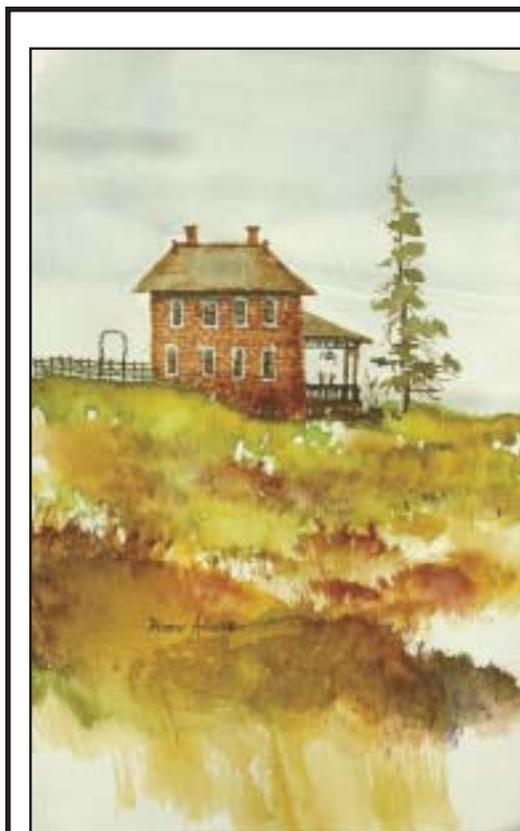
It is dark there,
under the stairs,
and in the corners
of the basement.
Boxes hide their
contents in the
shadows. Much
time has passed
since they were
packed and taped
shut and no one
remembers exactly
what is inside. Life
has moved on upstairs
in the big house,
but down in the dark
the past is waiting to
be found once more.

AT THE CAFETERIA

The crowd starts to gather
as the sun crashes into
the sky of the morning.
Etiquette doesn't happen,
and tempers explode as
bullies elbow past wimps
to commandeer choice
positions at the table.
Gobbling is the style
and greed is rampant.
Why stop with enough
when your gut has room
for more than your share?
Eventually the battle wanes
and even the little guys get
some of the cracked corn
and choice sunflower seeds.
The heated water in a bucket
is popular and essential for
these tiny lives, and on warm
winter days a romp in some
bath water is a hoot and a half.
They don't rely on the latest
gadgets in electronics, or fancy
cars and clothes to be happy.
It is a celebration just to be alive!

NO RESERVATIONS

There's no reason to reserve a
ticket for a trip. The destination
is free to all who wish to fly
away from the hours of today.
All you need is a tired body
and a mind exhausted from
the battle to survive on this
pretty blue planet.
Your bed is your transport,
and your tour is determined
by the twists and turns of
the unconscious landscape
inside your bumpy skull.
The dream liner departs and
takes you to dimensions both
peculiar and specific to your
own experience and memories.
So, sweet dreams and we'll
see you in the morning.



ART BY DEVON ADAMS

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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Augh, New Year's Day has passed and I have made no new resolutions for this year. Not like it's the first time I haven't made one. Instead of setting myself up for possible failure, I (LOL) wait until I have already started my success.

For instances, I could say that my resolution (at the moment) is to learn something new this year. Since I have already signed up for a welding class through Southeast Community College Continuing Education, I can safely make that statement. Now you may ask why Marilyn, a semi retired person over sixty, is going to take welding classes. Well there is a simple answer; to make garden art, of course. Oh, and did you notice that there are a couple of horticulture classes in the S.C.C. pamphlet? One of them, "Start Plants from Seeds," is being taught by a good friend and fellow writer who is in love with heirloom tomato plants, Paul Fish.

There are so many interesting classes I may have to sign-up for more than one, like "Breads and Soups" mmm, does that sound good. And how about "20 Tips for Better Photos", right up my alley, (love to photograph my plants and grandsons). And look at all the fitness classes, hobby classes and computer classes and oh my let's not forget the "Dining with Bookworms" second season.

So instead of being bored this winter and feeling like a failure, pick up a library book, or a how-to-do video (DVD) or enroll in a class and learn something new. Stretch those brain cells and keep yourself young at heart. I'm even looking at possibly becoming a volunteer tutor. I've worked too hard on those brain cells. I don't want to lose them to complacency.

Here in the Midwest, we are never as old as we are defined, and we are constantly redefining and evolving (without cosmetic surgery) because after all, this is where life is good; especially when we have the desire and tradition to make ourselves better. To a happy, full life. Cheers!



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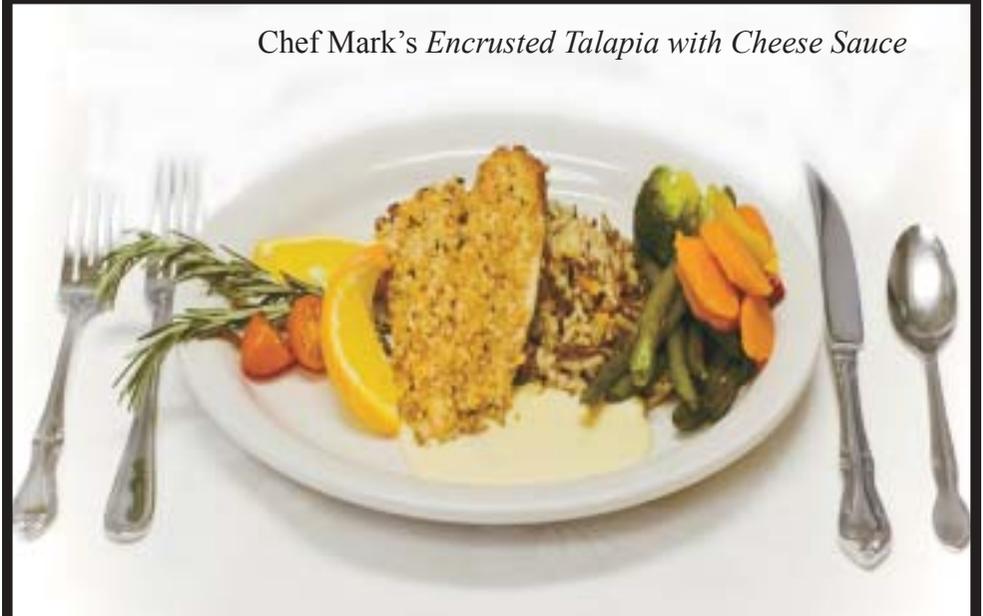
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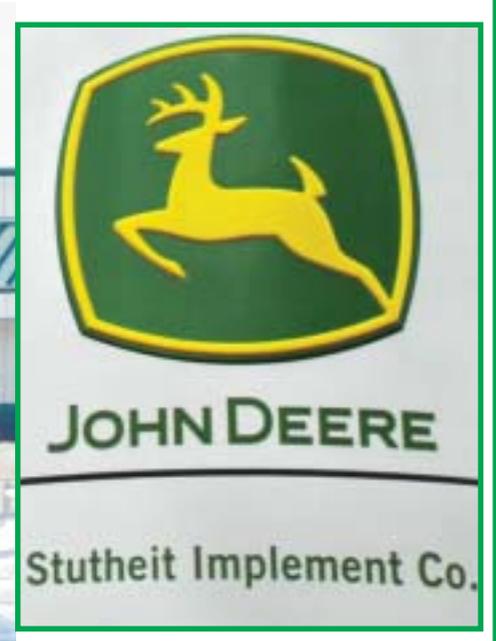
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No Snowgeese yet in 2013. The refuge is frozen over.



An Occasional Bald Eagle has been sighted near Brownville.

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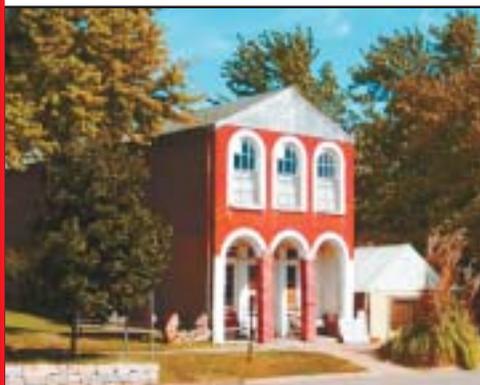
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EARLY WEST DEFENDERS

Shirley Neddenriep

Actor Gary Cooper made a big impression on those who love stories of the old west. As the hero of *High Noon*, his persona made the movie into a perennial favorite for its historical fiction and high drama.

G. Bruce Boyer, author of "*Gary Cooper: Enduring Style*" describes Cooper as the story of a man who was too proud to run. Boyer portrays Cooper as a straightforward and honest American. "In his acting career he seemed to ignore and rise above the contrived glamour of many other film heroes of early days."

But does the movie, *High Noon*, genuinely reflect the pioneer spirit of the people who lived in small prairie towns? In fact, the ordinary people were willing to back their sheriffs and defend their lives and their towns against armed robbers. An example from the book "*Rough Towns*," tells of a bank robbery in Delta, Colorado, in 1893, and reaction by citizen Ray Simpson. He was cleaning his rifle in his hardware store,

just across the street from the bank. He heard shots; just then three robbers came past on their horses. Simpson fired and one robber fell. Angry citizens were near enough to see Simpson fire a second time. The third robber got away, but with no money.

Simpson explained his accuracy by telling that he grew up in Kentucky where boys learned to shoot squirrels with exactness so that no meat was wasted.

In 1892, five young men rode into Coffeyville, KS planning to rob two banks at once, because that had never been done before. Three were brothers named Dalton. Coffeyville, a quiet town in a wheat-farming district, had a schoolteacher filling in as a lawman. He did not even carry a gun.

The five tied their horses in an alley and were recognized by a storekeeper as they strolled across the main street to the bank. He spread the word and citizens armed themselves. Inside the bank Grat Dalton collected a pile of silver so heavy it would take two men to carry. This hampered his

getaway plan and gave defenders time to find weapons and seek cover. Two house painters jumped from their scaffolding; one courageous citizen crawled out on a porch roof and fired with a pistol. The robbers could not match the firepower of the citizens and ran hard for their horses, leaving behind their heap of coins. Citizens fired from the upstairs offices of the bank. Liveryman John Kloehr, an expert shot, joined forces with Carey Seaman, the town barber who shot both barrels of his shotgun to end the fight. The citizens were particularly enraged because the Dalton Gang had mortally wounded two unarmed doctors in a previous train robbery, violating an unwritten code of the West that protected that profession. By the end of the Coffeyville fight four bandits were expired and were lined up for a photo as was the churlish practice of the day.

So next time you view *High Noon* for its intense drama, remember the brave citizens of prairie towns who were the real heroes of those unsettling days.

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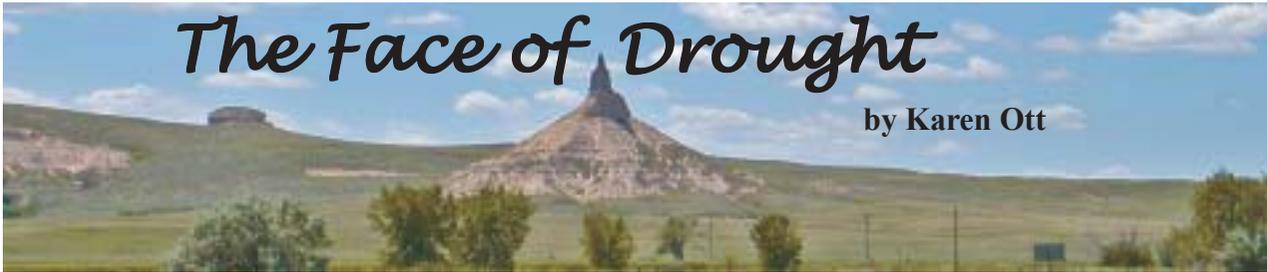
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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



Tuesday

Day dawned clear as a bell; blue sky, slight breeze, geese in V formation overhead, a whisper of wings the only indication of their passing; on such a morning the land's heart-beat is louder than my own

I spent more time than necessary on my outdoor chores; dawdling on my walk to the feed shed for cracked corn, and, once the poultry feeders were brim-full, lingering to offer a lengthy morning salutation to the feathered flock clucking around my ankles. Even then I was reluctant return to the indoors where disorganized piles of forms, figures, computations, and cash flows waited for me to forge the next link in an endless paper-chain of state and federal busy work.

The farm corporation runs on a fiscal year of October 31 to October 31; the tire shop corporation operates on a Jan 1 to Jan1 tax cycle....with a filing date of March 15; and of course our individual income taxes, state and federal, are due April 15th. State personal-property taxes must be filed by May 1st, with the first half of our farm and tire shop real estate taxes due the same day. The 2nd half is delinquent if not paid by August 31.

Once a year the tire shop is required to pay a mandatory (no form...just a demand letter) State of Nebraska annual recycling 'fee' of \$25.00, and every quarter I send a check to our state capital to cover the state's tire tax (form 93) which requires I collect a dollar for every tire sold. Once a month I calculate sales tax (Form 10) collected (6.5 percent...5.5 state and 1 cent local) which the state requires I file, and pay, electronically. Every other week I log on to the fed's tax web-site and fork over the shop's calculated employment taxes....form 941; the farm follows a form 943 schedule for reporting and filing. The state's employment taxes are reported, (Form 941N) and paid, quarterly... along with Nebraska's

unemployment tax, Forms UI11T and UI11W; federal unemployment, FUTA form 940, is due quarterly, but reported annually.

And on...and on....and on.

I could spin a tale of government red tape long enough to bore you to death...and then write another lengthy listing of all the rules, regulations, and tax due-dates generated by your passing.

But of course I won't.....because I'm part of the silent majority....I just do my job, pay my taxes, and hope neither the IRS, or the Nebraska Department of Revenue, find something they don't like.

Sahara Desert yearly precipitation (average).....5 inches.

Scottsbluff County Nebraska (2012) 6.5 inches

Here, on the home place, we finished last year with a just over 6 inches of measurable precipitationand in that we consider ourselves lucky. Some nearby areas received less than two.

2013 isn't looking much better. Using words such as 'bleak' and 'below average' to describe the condition of our Wyoming watershed snowpack irrigation-district personal warn us to prepare for a short water year...perhaps as little as 20 days. Mother Nature has once again turned her back on the high plains, and another year of drought seems inevitable.

The weather has become so worrisome a Torrington congregation, with the invitation below, is asking local churches to unite in prayer on February 3rd. There's nothing more elemental , or humbling, as getting down on your knees and begging for water.

Editor's note;

There is a second article by Karen on page 13.

An Invitation for Community Prayer:

Please consider this invitation to join together in faith and prayer on behalf of all citizens of the North Platte Valley.

As all are aware 2012 was a year with little precipitation and this winter has seen very little accumulation of snow-pack in the watershed upon which we all depend. While some families and individuals are more adversely affected than others, as members of a close community, interdependent upon, and concerned for one another, we are all affected.

You are invited to unite together with other people of faith in our area on Sunday, February 3rd in prayer regarding this matter. We invite you to participate in any way appropriate according to your personal convictions.

Adversities can bring blessings when we humble ourselves and recognize from whence all blessings come. Perhaps this challenge can be an opportunity to strengthen our faith through increased humility before God.

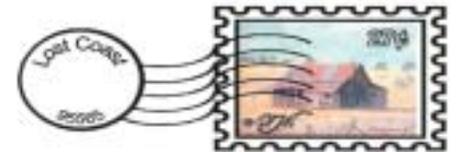
Thank you for your consideration.

"It is good to remember that the laws of the universe recognize no favorites and cherish no hostility or small vindictiveness; that before sun and rain, stormy winds, or summer's kind beneficence, we all stand upon one common level."
(Caroline Henderson, "Letters from the Dust bowl.")

Please join us.....

As always,

Karen



It was late afternoon. Almost evening. And here I was, a pen-less writer wandering the streets of Denver, searching for a stray ink-pen. I was getting desperate. My two daughters weren't at all helpful. "Mom!" my teenager said. "You don't ask a stranger for a pen! Just go and buy one!"

But there were no stores nearby that sold ink-pens... Just clothiers, boutiques and Fine Food Establishments. Places with strange names like "The Lima Bean"... and "Coyote Ugly"... "The Cheeky Monk"... and "Rocket Fizz." It was turning out to be surreal vacation. I wanted to write about it... But I had no pen to record these things. In vain, I searched the gutters for an ink-pen. Alleys. Trash bins.

"So embarrassing, Mother!" said my eldest daughter. "Please stop!"

But I couldn't stop. When words are swirling in your head, begging to be written, you have to do something!

I walked into a Candy Shop with my daughters trailing me warily, and explained my predicament to the blue-haired cashier. Unlike my offspring, she understood perfectly.

"No writer can be without a pen," she said, crunching on a blueberry lollipop. Her tongue was as blue as her hair. She was just a kid, but she understood things far beyond her years. She handed me an ink-pen and several sheets of paper. "Have fun!" said the blue-haired nymph. "And welcome to Denver...!" A sweet kid!.. Sweet as the tubs of candy surrounding her.

"Never judge a person by the color of her hair," my daughter murmured as we left the shop. "Absolutely not!" I said. I was already scribbling happily. It was potpourri of strange scents... A hodgepodge of sights and sounds, all percolating in the city streets. Bikes and Limo's. Briefcases and backpacks. Balding women and long-haired men. Tattooed grannies, and skateboarding grandpas. Business men in \$5,000 suits... and homeless people in rags. The filthy rich and the filthy poor.

I wrote and wrote... scribbling my way down the sidewalk, bumping into parking meters, lamp-posts and people—excusing myself to one and all—then scribbling on. I didn't realize my peril. It didn't occur to me that a country bumpkin in the Big City could come to ruin. I was oblivious to danger.

I could hear my kids laughing behind me. My giggling girls. They had shed their embarrassment momentarily, and were

laughing with abandon... as only my daughters can do.

I smiled to myself. Love and laughter and scribbled memories... written on scraps of paper with a borrowed pen. Such a glorious time we were having. If only we could walk on like this forever, walking into the sunset.

The skyscrapers and Capitol building gleamed in the rays of the setting sun. Wisps of steam drifted from beneath the man-hole covers. All about us was the sound of strumming guitars... Mariachi music drifting out of eateries.

It was Fairytale-ish. Alice in Wonderland. The manholes... mysterious rabbit-holes leading to God-knows-where. Quirky characters stepped from storybook-buildings and meandered through the pages of my scribbles. Blue-haired nymphs. Street musicians.

Happy voices and sad ones, too. Aimless snatches of conversation. People talking to themselves... to one another... to their cell phones. "I love you and I miss you..." a man said to his celly. "I mean it! I can't take this stuff any more. We have to do something, you hear!"

I followed the mesmerizing murmur of voices... the Pied Piper of People-Watchers was leading me onward... Leading me toward the setting sun... Leading me toward certain danger as Pied-Pipers always do. I followed willingly. Blindly. With pen in hand, I recorded every word.

Scribbled words... They were far better than souvenirs from the finest gift shop. I smiled to myself and stepped into the street.

Shreeeeeeeeeeek...! My whimsical thoughts came to an abrupt end. I heard the screech of brakes before I saw the oncoming bus. I stepped back.

The bus flashed by, just inches away. I stared after it pensively. The Pied Piper of People-Watching had nearly taken my life. The wretch!

My daughter grabbed my arm. "MOTHER!" she said. "You could've died! Please pay attention!" I nodded vaguely... mindlessly... then wandered onward.

Gripping my pen, I went on scribbling.

Editor's note; Below is another letter from Karen Ott, reflecting on the New Year.

Another year fades....Another year older

If I could relive those three hundred sixty five days, would I take the same path, speak the same words, chase the same dreams, pay the same price? Will I squander the coming year's gifts on petty self-interest, hiding behind the worn-out 'I don't have time' masquerade when I'm needed, or will I be able to leave behind my bad habits and broken promises?

I wish it were as easy to reinvent myself as those slick-paged magazines, and self-help paper-backs, suggest with their guaranteed-in-writing assurances that exercising more, eating less, and getting enough sleep, are the keys to a changed, and happier, life. They make things look so simple when in truth a bad habit is like a herd of cows walking the same meandering trail to water day after day, year after year, decade after decade. With each trip the path becomes easier to follow until, over time, it's practically impossible to change course.

Practically, nearly, almost, just about....but not set in stone.

On Friday, while driving home from another hectic day at the tire shop, I absent-mindedly lifted my eyes towards the hills just south of the house, and there, etched in brown on the sparkling white snow, were the familiar, telltale signs of cattle moving towards water..... not the usual single path, but several lesser ones also, each gently arching away from the main trail

and rejoining it as they neared the life sustaining well.

Most folks would find nothing special in such an ordinary sight; cattle are commonplace in the valley, and if all the local cow trails were measured they surely must total thousands of miles, but to me, on that particular day, I saw a symbol for the New Year: life may take many paths, but it always ends at the same place...for everyone.

The only thing in my control is how I get there... I can continue to follow the road I've come to know, or I can break free and choose

the way less traveled, sing the unfamiliar song, use every crayon in the box. Some days I'll live up to this all-encompassing resolution, on others human frailty will mock me and I'll fail..... miserably.

But through it all I'll try to remember that quenching real thirst includes the journey to the well.

That's my New Year's resolution, and I'm going to give it my best.

Pray for me.

As Always, Karen



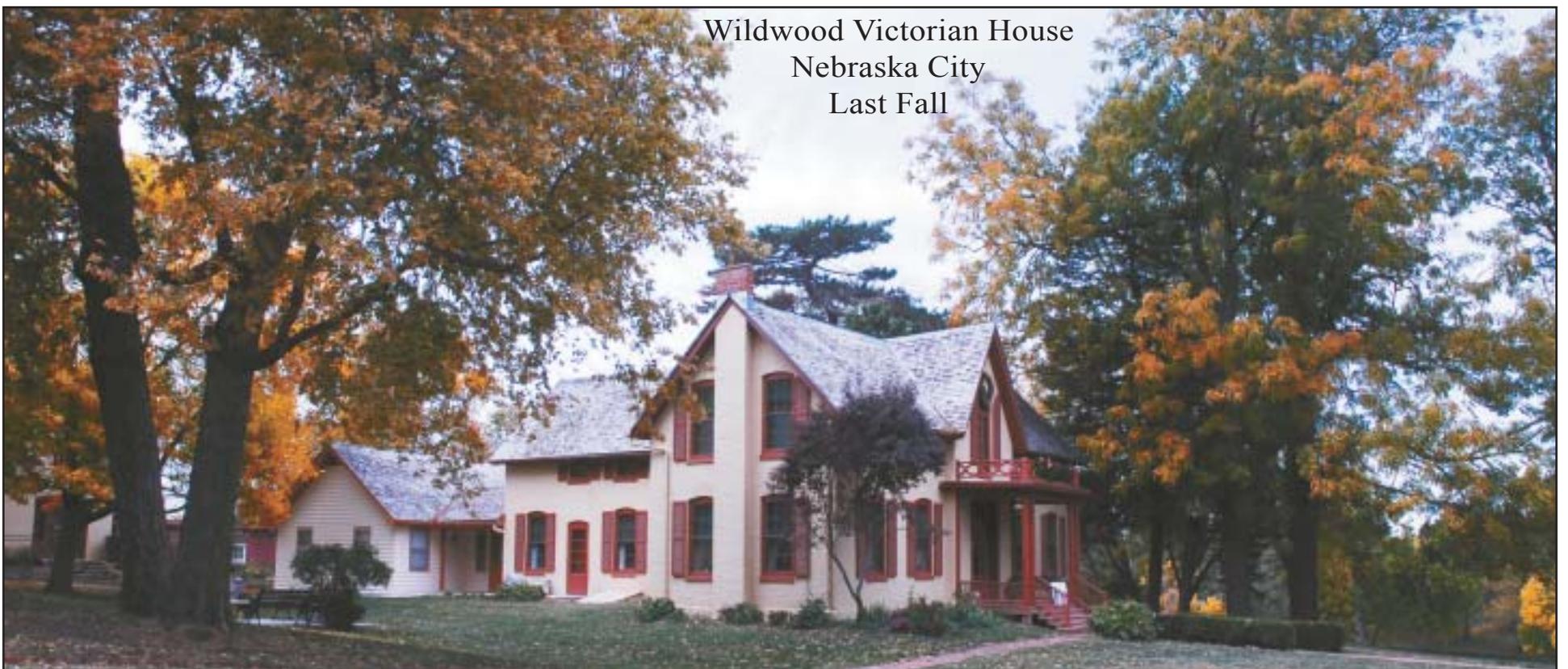
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No doubt you've experienced the phenomenon, when presented with a decision or a problem, of "sleeping on it" and waking with the solution in mind. The scientific explanation is that your brain isn't just resting in sleep, but actually continuing to process your thoughts. Or you may believe that a higher power is giving you guidance. Either way, it's out of your conscious control.

I may have inadvertently discovered a new twist on the technique of "sleeping on it"; the "it" in my case being a cheap air mattress. I've spent the last four nights camped out on the floor of my new grandson's nursery, taking the overnight feeding shift. Normally, I don't sleep all that well away from my own bed, but curiously, my chronic left arm and shoulder ache is actually less bothersome today than it was five days ago. Of course, I suppose that could also have something to do with the fact that I've spent very little time on the computer in the past five days. Or maybe cuddling a newborn for an hour or so in the middle of the night is just plain therapeutic.

When I return to my own bed tomorrow night, I'll be making a mental note of how my arm and shoulder feel before going to bed and how they feel in the morning. I may have to revert to the air mattress if the old ache comes back. It's either that or buy a firmer mattress. I suspect both options will meet with opposition from Papa Bear, who actually prefers a softer Mama Bear-type mattress. We'll have to arrive at some kind of compromise short of separate beds. There's no room for twin beds, and sleeping in separate rooms is out of the question. We're old-fashioned that way.

About the only time we split up is at my mother's. Her guest beds are all only doubles, and we've become too accustomed to the space in our king-size to play nice in something smaller. Hubby denies it, but if we are forced to share a bed at my mother's, as soon as I get up in the night, he instantaneously expands to fill the space I vacated. And trust me, he is a grumpy Papa Bear if I have to "nudge" him back onto his own side. Add a saggy mattress to the limited space and my situation becomes even less desirable. To avoid rolling to the middle, I have to cling to the edge, which only encourages hubby to spread out more. Being the smaller combatant in the "bed wars," I have little chance of winning.

Ah, well, for tonight I'll just settle into my air mattress one more time and focus on the pleasures of cuddling that little bundle at about 2:00 a.m. Snuggling Grand-Baby Bear in the middle of the night is a fleeting pleasure. I'm going to enjoy it while I can.

Poetry and Photography



Waiting for the Fog

I wait for the fog
dark clouds whirl
across the winter sky

I think about
her little white boat rowing
under the brilliant sun
of freckled arms and legs
on the dock,
of her small hands
beneath your clothes

your strong fingers
brushing honeyed hair
away from her brown eyes
and then kissing
your eyes bright as stars
on a December night.

I watched from the
bedroom window
headache sharp
claws stuck
in my throat.

I watch mist
rising from the water
your shotgun asleep
on my lap.

Forgive me.

I sit and wait
for the fog
and the gentle
sound of rain.

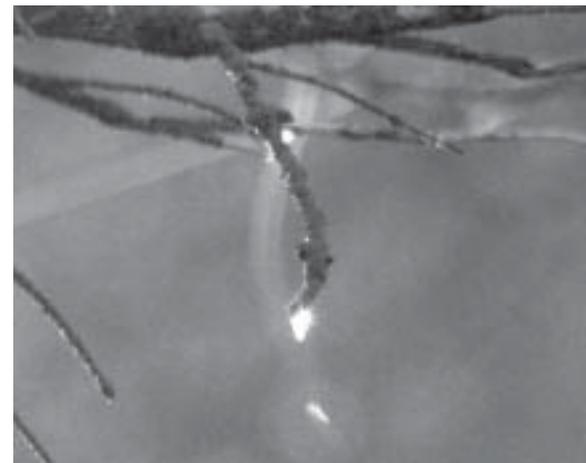
Ghost

Cold fingers tiptoe
stop just short of my throat
fog reflects shadow
one glimpse of an outline
velvet curtains fall
hard over the morning
while I hide
content beneath
a fading whisper

Love

Plato says
that we are destined,
severed and turned
by the gods,
to constantly search
for our "other half"

incomplete like
empty hands
with lines of life
head and heart
waiting
once again
to be strummed



Tears

A single tear shatters
on the ceramic tile
like a tumbled glass,
shrieking down faces
pinching edges of
every angry word.

Bones rumble in their cages;
shoulders shudder with
each wobbling heart.

When those drops cascade,
galaxies collide and
souls pour from the sky.

by Carol Carpenter



Fog on the lake

Muted ripples mirror
incessant smoky silk
sky and water woven
into murky flannel where
the bones of lonely trees
listen for the boat of
lost souls sweeping
across the muzzled lake



Sunset
by Richard Cox
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