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Canada Geese Photographed at Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge, Nov 29, 2011

Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

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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:*

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Hubby and I were settling down for some TV viewing on a Saturday night a few weeks ago. Typically, I ask him if there's anything interesting on the boob tube, and he responds that there's a movie on that he thinks I might like, but of course he doesn't recall the title, who's in it, or what it's about.

But this particular week I had scanned the TV schedule in the World-Herald in advance and noted that PBS was running a couple of music specials. Celtic Thunder Christmas was on first, followed by a 60's revival of pop, rock and soul. "Hey, we might actually enjoy these," I said.

I had seen Celtic Thunder on PBS before and was immediately drawn to their folk songs, not to mention their brogue, and, O.K., I admit it, they're pretty easy to look at, too. As their on-line biography so aptly puts it, their performances are a "celebration of Celtic heritage and men—their loves, attitudes, individuality, power and strength, throughout life's journey." Exactly. Although I hadn't actually articulated their appeal in quite that way, it's right on the money. These guys make men look good.

It is a little bit disappointing to know that the members were selected for the group from auditions all across Ireland and Scotland, instead of coming together to form a band organically, like the Beatles, for example. But I think I can manage to overlook it.

In fact, these five men are so distractingly distracting, that it wasn't until the program was nearly over that it dawned on me that the staging and style of their Christmas special was eerily Lawrence Welkish. I mentioned my observation to hubby. An uncomfortable silence and shifting in our seats ensued. Being children of the '60s, it was our duty growing up to ridicule Lawrence Welk (no offense intended to Welk fans). Could we actually be enjoying this generation of wholesome, yet undeniably virile, men extolling virtue through song? Apparently so. Who knows, if Myron Floren hadn't been quite so constrained by the TV censors and by Lawrence Welk himself in those days, perhaps the accordion, rather than the guitar, would have become the instrument of choice of budding rock musicians.

One wonders how the accordion would have affected the stage shows of bands like Paul Revere and the Raiders. Remember, I mentioned that Celtic Thunder was followed by a '60's review. Paul Revere – the *original* Paul Revere – made an appearance, although "appearance" is not quite adequate to describe it. "Spectacle" comes closer. I had forgotten about the band's colonial-era military costumes. These days, those form-fitting pants are really form-fitting. But despite the extra pounds, the mad-man of rock-n-roll bands is still doing his trade-mark bounce, while simultaneously playing guitar and singing. Gotta give him credit for energy. It's hard to imagine him springing up and down like that with an accordion strapped to his chest, though.

If I felt somewhat ill-at-ease enjoying the Welk-esque Celtic Thunder, I was downright embarrassed to be watching a band composed of plump, 60-year-old men in tights jumping around like six-year-olds on sugar highs. But the show got better. Chad and Jeremy came on, sedately seated on barstools, guitars balanced on their knees, and sang one of my favorites, "A Summer Song." Now there's a song you can sing no matter how old you get, with no risk of looking foolish. Maybe Celtic Thunder will sing it in their next performance.



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Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Ah, it's the New Year! What is my New Year Resolution you might ask? Well don't, I do not believe in making them. What I do believe in is making plans and dreaming. The major plan I am going to be working on this year is the revamping of my moon garden (an all white-flowered garden). So for the month of January I will be buried in graph paper, garden books, plant catalogs and pictures of the garden as it is now.

You see I plan to overhaul the moon garden in a major way. Several questions I am asking myself; "Do I want to keep it as a moon garden, or do I want to move the garden and not have a garden in that spot, or do I want to enlarge it?" As you can see I have a lot of homework ahead of me. (I hate homework.)

One of the reasons I plan on revamping my moon garden is that the environment around it has changed, making it impossible to enjoy it as I once did. (Too, many large animals next door, right along our property line.) The need to rethink this area comes with a heavy heart. It was my first garden, my contemplation garden, my pride and joy, my dream come true. Now I can't even stand to sit in the area. (Is that an oxymoron? Not quite.) So, since the environment next door isn't going to change, it is time for some major changes on this side of the garden fence.

But I will prevail and like the phoenix I plan on raising from the flames with a better, more special garden space. (Too much drama?)

With that said, I pose the question, "What do you need to revamp in your life?" Ah, come on, we all have something that needs revamping. No one's environment stays the same. For one thing we all keep getting older, our realities change, boundaries move, time progresses forward. (Need a push?)

The key is to become proactive in the process. I've let too many years go by before I decided to become proactive in changing my garden area and I lament the time I have lost. One of the reasons I did not become proactive is because I had no hope in making the situation any better. I had become very good at ignoring the moon garden, pretending it wasn't there, looking at it as the ugly stepsister. Now that I have decided to address the elephant in the yard, I am excited and full of energy, and hopefully, soon, full of dreams and plans.

Is it your turn to become proactive with the elephant in your life? Only you can answer that question. Meditate on it, but don't wait too long. Find your hope, form your dream and start making your plan.

With a dream in mind, a plan forming, and plenty of hope to keep me going, I welcome the New Year where life is good, and past dreams can be improved upon. Good luck all you dreamers!



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Poetry by Devon Adams

CUTTING COLD

The sun sent daggers of light that cut through the icy air like a wolf's fangs bite into a frozen moose. Earth was locked and rigid in the grip of the worst kind of a prairie winter. The frozen lake boomed and cracked like rifle shots, as the ice expanded. A lone goose, too weak to follow his companions, staggered without sight. If he was lucky, an eagle would find him. There was no grass, only frozen snow harder than smooth rocks. Deep in the mud cave under the ice, the turtle and the frog dreamed that they were alive again.

SHADOWS IN THE SHADOWS

Sun shadows reach across the grass. They are the long fingers of the dying day, and things hide inside their blue gloves. Over there, beside the pasture gate, is something soft and dark. It looks like a coat on a stump, until the feet move and the rest of the body follows. In the safety of the dusk, the ring-tailed critter waddles toward the porch. He stops to sniff the air before stepping up the back porch steps. With nimble fingers, he opens the door and joins the cats at their cat chow bowl. He is greedy and eats a lot, and then he becomes shadow once again and fades, like the dreams we can't remember.

COUNTRY DARK

The dark of the land at night is gone for good inside the cities. But country dark is disappearing too. Artificial lights keep getting brighter than they need to be to see, and they burn bright holes through the black velvet of the cloak of darkness that we used to know. There is no peace across the fields and hills, because the flare of yard lights, guard lights and headlights cuts across the miles that used to be serene and black. Night is not meant to be light.

COLLECTIONS

People collect things, and when they have a number of whatever, it is a collection. They put it on shelves, and in cases and cabinets, and in the basement or the garage, or garages. Dollars may be involved, or maybe not. Rocks are cheap, if you find them lying on the ground, but if they're diamonds, they aren't free and you won't find them under your shoes. But what is really important? Is it the object, or is it the time you spend finding the object? Can you put yesterday on a shelf and look at it tomorrow? How much is a minute worth when it is over, and when is tomorrow worth waiting for?

TRANSITIONS

The morning was like those before, and the coffee was hot and black. The paper had been read, and breakfast eggs and toast with jam were good, as always, although the neighbor's jam was a special summer garden treat, with luscious raspberries dripping purple flavor. The day moved on, with sunshine falling through the windows tick for tock along with the clock. Soon, the evening and supper were done and gone, and it was on to bed, as usual, in the routine shape of hours. And then the life was finished, in a gasp, and all the days went backwards, fading into wisps of memories floating like dust motes on the slanted bars of sun.

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



To Dad:

He was born on the eve of the Great Depression to an immigrant mother and father who had fled an ever-escalating civil war the world would come to know as the Russian Revolution. Like many women of that era his mother gave birth at home, in her own bed, with only neighbor women in attendance. Cash money was scarce and no one would have considered wasting it on a doctor bill, especially for something as ordinary as childbirth.

She was near fifty when her last child made his surprise appearance, his siblings all but grown, or resting eternally in untended graves back in Mother Russia. She thought of them

sometimes, those babies who never lived to see America, and wondered what they might have become had they been given the same opportunities her last child would surely enjoy.

As he grew she called him her 'Golden boy', and like the biblical Joseph he became his father's favorite; the last arrow in his quiver, a son to care for him when time, that great master-thief, spirited away his strength.

They called him Sam, even though his baptismal certificate read differently, a mix-up which had resulted from a hung-over God-Father who, when asked by the minister what the child was to be named, blurted out the

first one that popped into his aching head....Benjamin. The parents, loathe to challenge a statement made before God and the church, remained silent about the mistake and no one thought of it again....until Sam reached age 18 and answered his nation's call to help save the world.

His family and friends called him Sam, but the U.S. Navy thought differently. From his draft notice to his discharge papers he would be known to the U.S. government as Benjamin Sam Kraus.

Long after his Pocatello Idaho Navel base
Continued on page 9 >>>>>>>>



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Trumpet Swans at Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge, December 16, 2011. Snow Geese in background.

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A BIT OF GENEALOGY

Shirley Neddenriep

If you are into genealogy, or even if you are not, you may find this scrap of information interesting. It is a part of several stacks of history dating back to the 1780s and refers to Mary Harvey, wife of Charles Cushman.

“His wife was an English woman by the name of Mary Harvey, whose history is a romance. Her father was an English clergyman of London, with a large fortune and title blood, but a younger son. Her mother died when she was young and her step mother treated her ill. Her father resolved upon separating them, and entrusted her, with all her mother’s valuables and a sum of money to be invested for her education, to the care of a gentleman, who engaged to place her with some friends in Scotland.

“The gentleman proved a scoundrel, took possession of all her effects and landed her and left her at service in America, utterly destitute. A young girl, alone and unfriended, her story found sympathizers, but none to undertake to right her wrongs. Her father, getting no tidings of her, died, as she learned of grief; while she married Charles Cushman, the “Forgeman,” as the title runs in some of the old papers of the day.

“Her husband and herself formed many plans, wrote many letters, and made many resolves, all having in view the recovery of her property. Several years later, her grandson, John Cushman, was fitted out for England, with that aim; but waiting in New York City for a ship, he took a fever, and after long suffering, returned home. Nothing was ever obtained of her property from England.”

—From “The Genealogy of the Cushmans,” by Henry Wyles Cushman, 1855. Pg 140.

So who said life is fair? And what do readers need with romance novels? Here is another story, more adventure than romance: (These are my people, folks)

“Sylvanus Brown was born March 31, 1749 in Rutland, VT and died in Augusta, New York 1822 and buried there. He, along with Ethan Allen and three others, were declared by Governor Tryon, of New York, to be guilty of Treason, because he declared that the assemblage of three or more Vermonters together outlawed and ordered to come in for their punishment. The price on Ethan Allen’s head was 100 pounds and on the other four 50 pounds and to come in within six months for punishment. Ethan Allen sent the governor a long letter about Vermont’s rights and that New York nor New Hampshire had any claim on them.”

The above quotes are as found, grammar and spelling unchanged from the original. I found them interesting, I hope you enjoyed reading them too.



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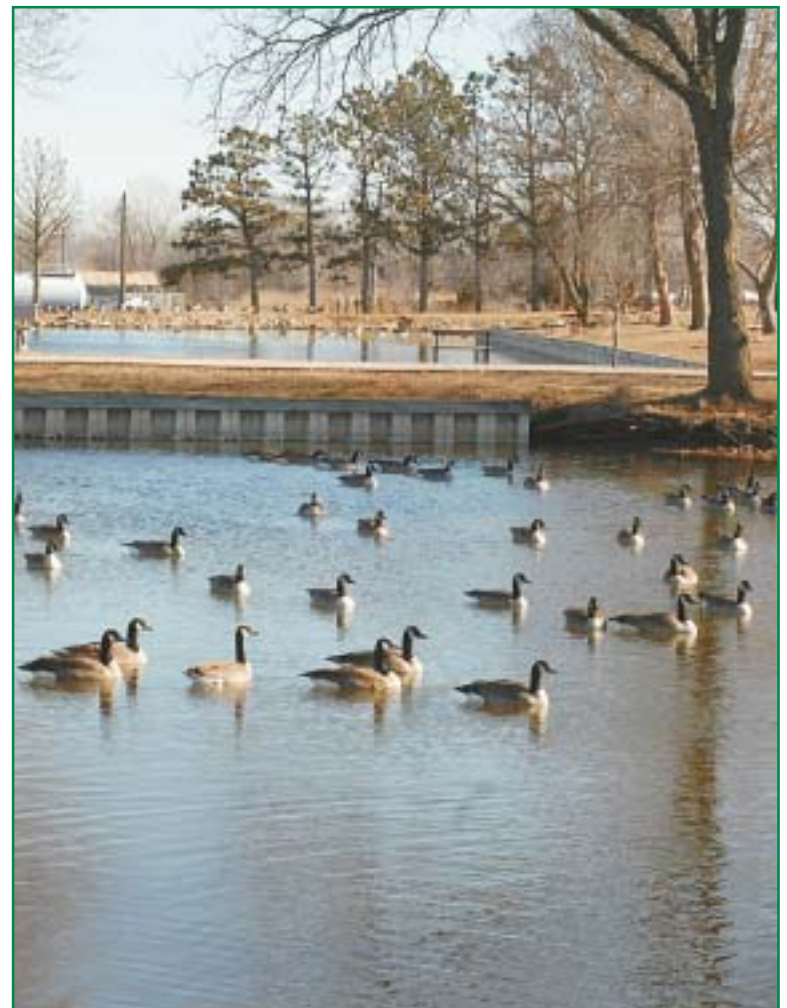
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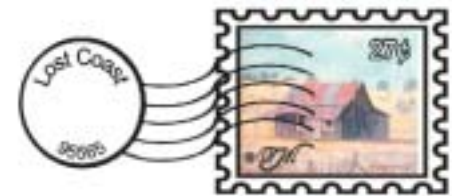
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Canada Geese on Auburn's lake.

2012 and Beyond...

By Vicki O'Neal



I hate to mention it, folks, but this world is a mess. And the year has only begun.

I wish the Old-timers were here right now to chat with us about it. Maybe Frieda Burston, or Joe Smith...? We need to sit down with these old-time “survivors.” We need to figure out what we’re doing wrong to cause such havoc on Planet Earth! Seems like crises are building all around us. Strange things are happening everywhere.

Now, folks. We know all this hype about 2012 is just that. Hype. We know that the movie “2012” is ridiculous. It’s simply not possible for ancient Mayans to predict what is coming, today. Besides, when we study it out, we realize that the Mayans weren’t predicting the “End of the World” at all. They were actually predicting a New Beginning. A rotation on the world’s calendar-of-events! New leadership. New outlook. New everything. Isn’t that wonderful?

According to the Mayans, a “god” is about to rise on the world scene—a Messiah of sorts—bringing great change to the planet. Supposedly, folks. Supposedly. Well. I have to tell you. After all the catastrophes of 2011, we need some change! But I’m not sure we need the kind that the Mayans are predicting.

In 2011, we had record-breaking floods. Power outages. Droughts. Heatwaves. Wildfires. Crop-failures. “Mass-animal-deaths”...magnetic shifts and anomalies. Swarms of earthquakes rattled the country from coast to coast. Swarms of tornadoes, like killer-bees, attacked our heartland. They cost America thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

Seems that the U.S. is under full-scale attack by Mother Nature. Like the plagues are being released. Like the four horsemen

of the Apocalypse have begun to ride. Like a great One-World leader needs to arise and take charge—so as to bring peace and stability to our raging planet!

The Good Book calls this a “Time of trouble like the world has never known...” Both the Bible, and the Scientists claim these are all warning signs. That it could get a lot worse. Worse...? you say. How could it get worse than it’s already been?

Well. Just hang on. You see, one of the weirdest signs, is not the increasing number of earthquakes, but rather the lack of moderate quakes in certain places. The West Coast’s tectonic plates are locked and the pressure is building day by day. Mm-hmm. The “Big Ones” are coming, experts say. Coming to both the West Coast and to Mid-America. They say that mega-quakes will disrupt commerce. Divide the nation. Cause massive death and social unrest...And destroy what is left of America’s fragile infrastructure and economy—Yada...Yada...Yada.

Yes, we know all this. It’s horrible. We’ve been hearing this for years... And we’re getting tired of hearing it!

But what if it’s about to happen?
Well, folks...That’s why we need to chat with our Old-timer friends like Frieda Burston and Joe Smith. We need to ask them: How do we prepare for such a mess? Especially when it’s already happening?

Economic guru’s are screaming at us. They say we’re in the midst of a “melt-down” around the world. Greece. Spain. Italy. Countries overseas have already begun to domino. The Euro is tanking. Warnings abound...warnings of stock-market crashes. Bank runs. Collapsing corporations. Both hyper-inflation and deflation. Maybe even a depression.

A lot of ugly stuff is going on. It’s like Brian Williams says on NBC: “The world has no money...And the Emperor has no clothes!”

To make matters worse, experts warn us to prepare for bio-terrorism and epidemics. Racial conflicts. War on our southern border. Food and fuel shortages. Nationwide rioting. The Government, itself, has been doing major drills in preparation for these events. Do these people know what they’re talking about? I sure hope not! It wouldn’t be cool.

Ah. But there is a silver-lining to these things. We could always look at the positive side, my country neighbors. Just think of it this way. In 2012, we won’t have to worry about the 15 extra pounds we put on during the holidays. They would melt away like magic when the store shelves are empty. We won’t worry about paying off our massive credit card bills that we ran up at Christmas, because the banks will be out of business. The doors locked. Windows barred. We won’t worry about the skyrocketing gas prices, because there won’t be any gas to be pumped. We won’t have to worry about stress on our jobs—because there won’t be any jobs to be had. We’ll have one long vacation. Retirement, even. Just what we’ve all been longing for! See? There’s always a cheery side to the year of 2012.

And now, if you’ll excuse me, folks—I’ve got to get me some of that leftover eggnog. Maybe get myself a handful of Snickerdoodles...I’ve worked up an appetite, and you know what? I’m not worrying about that extra 15 pounds. Not now. Looks like I’m gonna need it...!

Whisler's Hunting



by Josh Whisler
Photos Submitted by Author

& Fishing Report

Fishing: The Missouri River has stabilized at near normal levels right now with rock formation showing, much like we are used to seeing for this time of year. Levels have fluctuated a couple of times due to rain runoff and it has, on occasion, wall to wall ice patties afloat. But for the most part it has been low and cold.

As for the fishing, the cold weather hasn't stopped the fishing action a whole lot. If you can get to the river you can catch fish right now. I don't know if it's from the flood or the persistence of the fishermen this fall and early winter, but the fishing has been exceptional. The big ones and little ones are both hitting right now. The big ones are hitting chubs, gold fish, and cut bait. The little ones are hitting crawlers, chicken livers, and dough baits. It's a good time to get out and get a nice mess before the weather really changes.

And if you're not in to fishing, you can watch the Eagles fish. There seems to be a large amount of Eagles coming through our area right now and it is nothing to see well over a dozen on a quick 15 minute trip to the river to check it out. If you're not used to seeing Eagles or have never seen one, you really need to take a ride on the Peru Bottom. Time of day doesn't seem to matter but I have seen more in the mid-morning than any other time. And don't forget your camera.



Audra Whisler from Peru sporting a 45+ pound Blue Cat

Hunting: There are a lot of small game seasons open now and harvest seems to be good in all species this year. There doesn't seem to be a shortage of any wildlife this year. Big Game Seasons are still open too. The Muzzle Loader Deer Season, Fall Archery Deer Season, and Fall Turkey Season go to the end of December. And the Late Antlerless Deer Season opens December 26th and lasts into the second week of January. I have seen the deer herding up - with groups as big as 30 and 40. This

means that it isn't going to be as easy to get near them to get a shot off as it was a month or so ago. All those eyes, ears, and noses keep them pretty safe and out of range. Patience seems to be the remedy and a cold snap wouldn't hurt to get one coming your way on the way to a feeding or bedding area. Time will tell.

Fishing is still good on the river right now. And there are a lot of good hunting opportunities also. But the weather is going to have a lot to say about outdoor activities soon. So get out and get some fishing or hunting in while the weather holds. 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."



Pat Cave from Falls City holding up a 62 pound Blue Cat caught on the Missouri River near Brownville.

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