



Seen from Kansas Highway 36, West of Hiawatha.

Voices from your Valley

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Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

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Thank You

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Where Life is Good

by Marilyn Woerth

My husband is a do-it-yourselfer (is that spelled right)! And I love the fact that he is. It does save money (not time) and it can (pause, reconsider what I am about to say, no, say it) at moments make life seem like an episode from the TV show about Tim the Tool Man. Unfortunately, we have no neighbor that gives out comprehensive fatherly advice. The main drawback of living with a do-it-yourselfer is that at times life does become, well, unnerving.

Like the time he was putting the roof on the tea house, and reached a little too far at the top of the ladder and fell into the pond. I watched it happen. I was weeding next to the pond. It was one of those s-l-o-w motion moments. Scraped up his elbow and back pretty good. And a trip to the doctor a few weeks later to remove a pebble embedded in the elbow. But he did finish the tea house, and family and friends love it.

Last month he put in a new entryway, hallway, and kitchen floor (pew). Why is it (and every woman knows this) men think that if you put enough force behind or into something they can make it, well, work. The slate laminate flooring is one of those tongue and groove type things, which by the way, the manufacturer makes it sound like it should be really easy to install. He he he!

So the idea is to snap those long fabricated boards together, just like that. Hmm, so not just like that. Okay, so rubber mallet and long piece of wood should work just great. Just slam those pieces together and click, that worked. Puffed out chest, little brute force works wonders. Then he gets into the hallway where there is not so much space to wield that mallet. Then out comes the handy dandy tool the employee at the store sold him. A slim metal looking tool with both ends turned up in opposite directions. The idea is to put one end alongside the board and hit the other end with the mallet. Wham, hmmm, then a louder wham, (by now my ears are ringing) several louder and harder whams follow. Oh, the board chipped (imagine that). Replace with new board. Same process, same results (imagine that). Good thing we have two extra boxes of laminate boards.

Wifely sage advice, "Its late maybe you should start again tomorrow." Wham, grimace, pain, holding thumb, "No, I am going to get this part done tonight", (okay, I will just retreat to another room). Two more chipped boards and two days later I have a beautiful entry, hallway and kitchen floor. And my new floor looks great. Thanks sweetie. Life is often an unnerving process that ends with very good results, and life is good. Happy Father's Day to all our do-it-yourselfers.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

May has been such a hectic month that I find my thoughts won't settle around a theme for this column. So I'm just going to go with the flow and throw out a few odds and ends.

My husband and I recently spent a lovely six days with our daughter and son-in-law in Georgia. You may recall reading in a previous column that when we visited them last year I took rhubarb custard pie along for my daughter. My husband and I actually ate some of it while airborne. This year, I took another pie along, but I saved it for our day on the lake at Richard B. Russell State Park. Now I can honestly say that I have eaten rhubarb pie on air, land and sea. (I'm considering having that accomplishment engraved on my tombstone someday.) So what if I wasn't exactly on the *sea*; I was still on a boat on the water. Technically it was a pontoon, and it was tied up to the dock at the time. But if the so-called riverboat casinos can claim to be on the water while the gambling is going on, I guess I can claim the same while eating rhubarb pie.

Muffled, middle-aged hearing continues to be a source of entertainment. While packing for our trip to the aforementioned state park at my daughter's house, I could have sworn she asked her husband to help her get the toothpaste out of the attic for the trip. An odd place to store toothpaste, I commented. But perfectly normal for a *suitcase*.

My oldest sister turns 60 in June. The female members of the family will be celebrating with her at Ponca State Park right after the 4th of July. When considering party themes related to woodland settings, I thought of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." A cursory review of the play, however, was all it took to convince me that I would need at least a month to translate it into modern English that we could understand. So, no Shakespeare for us. Perhaps we can all just dress up as wood nymphs and frolic about the campfire for a bit before gorging on birthday cake.

Speaking of gorging, our spinach crop is requiring that we eat salad every night to prevent its going to waste. Ditto, the rhubarb patch. Unfortunately, the rhubarb has gone to *my* waist in all those cobblers, pies and muffins. The strawberry bed is promising a bumper crop, too, unless the birds get in there ahead of us. I suspect that the oriole family that has a nest in the hackberry tree just south of the garden didn't choose that spot by accident. I don't begrudge them a few berries, though, if the trade-off is the opportunity to hear their flute-like calls, and see their brilliant flashes of orange in the tree-tops. If we're really lucky, we may get to see the fledglings leave the nest.

I read an article today on the theme of watching for the "new thing" God is going to do (based on Isaiah 43:18-19). So I'll leave you with this thought: If you are feeling in a rut, or discouraged about how things are going – personally, politically, or otherwise – take heart. Be alert and watch for the new things that God is doing. Then get ready to play your part.

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The River (Continued from Last Month)

by Marvin Thomas

The Great Depression of the 1930's became an anomaly for Brownville. There was some employment available from the riverwork, but not sufficient to offset the job losses from agriculture and small industries. During those years, migrant families came and others left, with the town's population remaining at a fairly constant 500 persons. Although the construction of the Brownville Bridge, in 1939, brought in specialized short-term workforces and provided some meager financial benefits, it added little employment for the local residents.

A hardy group of local fishermen continued to catch and market the river fish, but there was little available purchasing power. Among these stalwarts were Sam Roberts, Barney Quillen, Otis Cogdill, and "Skipper" Oldfield, the master craftsman. And for briefer periods of time, Claude and Cletis Moore, George Majors, and a few others of the village, joined in the tempting work and sport of the fishing.

Such commercial fishing required equipment, including boats, lines, nets, baits and techniques that were both handed-down and learned by experience. Both equipment and fishing methods were controlled by state laws.

Banklines were made of cotton fish cord, with a maximum of 5 hooks on short extension cords, spaced on a long cord weighted on the free end; the upper end was tied to a driven stake or to a low willow branch at the river bank. Hooks were baited with minnows, or small cuts of fish, or dough bait.

Trammel nets were occasionally used. They were made of cotton cord in a 2" x 2" mesh, assembled as a seine as deep as 12 ft. and as long as 200 ft.

Hoopnets were fashioned of two or three wooden or steel hoops, encircled and interconnected with a network of fish line (dipped in tar after assembly), hand-woven by shuttle and formed to include internal funnel-like throats, welcoming the fish to enter and seek the bait, which was located in the last (tail) section, where the fish were trapped, awaiting the daily visits of the fishermen. Typically, the fish would rest in the bankside eddies before progressing upstream through the faster currents of the waters. In these eddies the hoopnet was set with its large mouth downstream, inviting the fish to enter and become entrapped while seeking the bait. Although each fisherman believed his own bait to be the most productive, a typical formula involved cooking a corn chop until glue-like, then mixing in bran and waste cheese; and some would add a flavoring of anise oil for carp, or asafetida for catfish. On cooling, this smelly assemblage would be cut into large chunks and wrapped in cheese cloth to ensure a slow dissipation in the net.

Many of the boats were 16 ft. long (optimal length of select pine lumber). For rapid transit they were equipped with an outboard motor, such a Johnson Sea Horse, or Evinrude; but oars were necessary for maneuvering while attending the lines and the nets.

In the late 1930s, Frank Thomas and his sons Marvin and Frank caught the spirit and joined the other river fisherman. Frank soon added fresh fish to the Sunday morning offerings from the meat market at his Thomas Bros. Store. This proved popular and soon increased the number of visitors from the countywide towns who sought fresh fish from all the Brownville fishermen.

But, World War II would usher in major changes. The younger men were soon called elsewhere for defense work or for the armed services, and river work became secondary to the "call-to-arms". By the mid-1940s the river control and maintenance work was resumed by the Corps of Engineers and their independent contractors, making long-term employment available for several of the Brownville residents and the returning service men, including Bob Sage, Cletis Moore, George Majors, Wallace Bridgewater, Gene Myers, Jay Tunks and "Dutch" Henry. From these efforts of the 30's through the 60's, their work had helped make a difference: the river was becoming a more rapid and controlled channel and the river plain more adaptable for croplands. In these four decades many changes had evolved for the "Mighty Mo", and for the fishermen and the many river workers whose lives had been fashioned by it.

Poetry by Devon Adams

VAGUELY CONSCIOUS

There is a line that forms
between dreams and waking.
Sometimes it is hard to cross, as if
the other world keeps pulling us back
to the far reaches of our consciousness.
We can see the warp of deep space, and
hear the silent music of cosmic waves that
envelope us in our journey of living.
Buried inside the particles of our being
is the suspicion that time is not stable,
and that now may not be what we think.
We grasp the edge of the concept of forever,
and can believe, just before we wake,
that life continues as a fixed amount of energy,
allowing us to cross other lines that reveal
our continuing existence in a kaleidoscope
of different forms and colors and sizes.

MY CIRCLE

I am a pebble dropped in a pond.
Circles ripple in response
to the impact of stone on water,
but in the center I am falling
through wet curtains until
I reach the soggy bottom
and settle into sediment.
On the mirror surface,
rings spread away and flatten,
until there is nothing left to indicate
that my life was changed.
We are the centers of our own lives,
separate from other lives.
We exist alone, and our problems
can be invisible to those around us.

MANY ROOMS

The house is large.
Most rooms are empty now,
except for the memories that dwell
like shadows on the walls.
Now and then the kids come home,
bringing grandchildren and noise,
but then they leave again,
as echoes follow them down the hall.
Generations blend through the years
into faces that repeat themselves,
and fill the pages of photo albums.
The young ones become old ones
faster than the speed of light,
as families rush through the days,
and over the hills into tomorrow.

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VISIBILITY

The fog was a wall, isolating
vehicles like singular islands.
But danger crouched like
a predator with glowing eyes,
leaping into view with no warning,
as headlights suddenly appeared
in the opposite lane, or emerged
behind my bumper, ready to pounce
and devour, as invisible masses
of moving metal stalked each other
in the dense and ominous fog.

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Anita Robertson

Your Country Neighbor grieves the passing last month of Frieda Burston. She had been a frequent columnist in this publication. Her 91st birthday would have been in early June. The sharpness of her mind, despite her years, was evident in her writing. May she rest in peace.



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ONE DAY IN MAY

Shirley Neddenriep

The kids came home. They brought their kids. Those kids brought their kids. Suddenly the dandelion puffs in the yard didn't matter. The 'lawn' was filled with people! Cameras clicked. Engaging conversations beginning with 'Remember when . . .' prevailed.

Puppies frolicked in the green grass with children who snuggled them and shared their ham sandwiches. Picnic-weather drew nattily attired men to the farm shop. They knew to stand back from grease. From dust. Not the day for grease and dust, a day for Peace.

"Do you have baby cows?" came a query. "Not now," his mother consoled, 'not now.' "Grandma, Can I go upstairs? I have never been there."

"You must take off your shoes." What is it about shoes these days? Grooves, cleats, grab mud and hold it. Then release it on floors. Weren't we sure-footed as mountain goats, this older generation, when we grew up? The soles of our shoes were polished with wear. We could not track in mud, or sand, or pebbles, and we could run fast with our smooth-soled shoes, a pre-Nikki generation.

He carefully removed his shoes and dashed for the stairs. Now what is so tempting about an upstairs? Is there a mystery to be discovered? What does a child hope to find? But let him go. Don't wait too long.

"The peonies are blooming!" came a glad shout! They are early peonies. Dug up in Nevada and transported here. Before that, dug up in Germany and planted in Nevada. Huge, rosy, full, lovely in the sun; heat reflects from a stone wall, pushes them full.

"Europe!" Going to Europe for a honeymoon? Wait until the volcano quits spewing ash! Young people's confidence. "It'll be alright." But I'm not sure. I wish they would go to Africa first and testily approach Europe from the south. "Well," observes the young, "It's round, we could go around it." The earth. Go around the Earth!

I would just quit with Hawaii and stay there; see Greece and Italy later. "Everything is close together," they argue, like D.C. You can see a lot in a little while. Don't wait too long.

I stood at the kitchen window. Past the vase with a single red rose, past the stack of coffee cake and basket of fruit. Out in the yard, a resurrection happened.

"Come and see this," but my words fell on deaf ears. They were in groups, discussing times past. I looked back at the yard. Four boys of the same size and age, from seven to eight ranged the tangle of junipers. I wished their dads or grandpas to come see them approach each branch, investigate each fiord between the branches. "Come and see the boys!" in vain. They were laughing and exploring notions of their own.

They are out of play; they are into life. As I watched, the last of their little sons and grandsons disappeared at the end of their miniature forest, still eagerly exploring. With each turn a new vista, a new place to scout, a different rabbit to rout, a turtle dove to come fumbling, tumbling from its meager nest.

I watched. I listened. There is life all around. Watch it. Hear it. Be part of it. Don't wait too long. Don't wait until the music stops, until the mud quits coming in the door. Beauty Bush just outside promised pink, fragrant blossoms, and soon! Go see the beauty of the earth, of Life. Don't wait too long.

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Medicare beneficiaries need to be wary of anyone who promises to 'help' you get your check. Scammers may say you can get your check more quickly if you pay them a fee. Remember, Medicare is not going to call you; Social Security will not call you. Phone calls from persons saying they represent those agencies are scams. Immediately report this scam or any similar fraud to the police in your area, the Nebraska State Patrol, or the State of Nebraska Attorney General's office. Medicare fraud is a crime; protect yourself from being victimized.

2011 Coverage Gap

Starting in 2011, if you reach the coverage gap you will get a 50% discount on brand-name drugs, and a 7% on generic prescription drugs. This is the initial step toward closing the coverage gap. By 2020, the gap will be eliminated entirely. More information on this benefit will be available at a later date. Information for this article was provided by the Nebraska SHIIP [Senior Health Insurance Information Program] of the Department of Insurance, and AARP.

For more information about the \$250 rebate, or other questions related to Medicare and Social Security, contact Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator located in Cass County at 402-267-2205. You may want to visit the website: cass.unl.edu Link to Family, then click on "Medicare". Contact SHIIP at 1-800-234-7119, or visit the website: www.doi.ne.gov/shiip



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
(Photo provided by Author)

Fishing:

The River has had its ups and downs this last month but fishing has been fair. Even some Big Blues landed in excess of 30 pounds have surprised some local fishermen. For the most part the temperature has been cold and the water staying right above 50 degrees, which is still not the best for fishing but has brought the fish into the shallows to feed. A lot of Sturgeon are being caught this spring for some reason, probably due to the colder water. Some folks eat them while others throw them back. They are not the easiest to clean but when cleaned properly they reveal pearly white meat with no bones. A Sturgeon has an exoskeleton rather than an internal bone skeleton. Their outer body is more like sections of armor plating that fit together and interlock and swivel. They are quite a sight – looking like something right out of the ice age. They have a sucker on the bottom side of their head with tentacles for feelers, and seem to hit mostly on night crawlers but do seem to scavenge on other food/bait also, including dough baits and minnows.

Hunting:

Spring Turkey Seasons are drawing to a close and you'll see more and more of the toms by themselves. Which means the hens are laying on the nests more and more. So the time to get a tom to come in is a lot easier

now than in the past weeks when you would see as many as 12 hens around one tom. Calling a Tom or a Jake away from the hens will not be as big a problem until the end of the season, the way I see it.

Again, Spring Turkey Permits are still available and each hunter may not have more than three (3) spring turkeys. Permits are for one (1) male bird or bearded hen.

Spring Turkey Seasons:

Youth Archery———March 25th – May 31st


Youth Shotgun———April 10th – May 31st

Archery ———March 25th – May 31st


Shotgun———April 17th – May 31st

Spring Fishing is getting better and Turkey hunting is drawing to a close. But with the warmer weather comes the flathead run on the river. And folks around here can hardly wait. Spring seems to hang on for now - but soon enough the weather is going to warm up and then things on the river will really liven up. 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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Sam Carman from Peru with a fair size Channel Cat taken while bank fishing on the river near Peru.



Dawson Mertens of Rockport, MO, shown with his first turkey, and guide Kurt Tanner of Nemaha, NE. This 25 pound Tom was taken on a Nebraska Youth Turkey Season tag for non-resident hunters offered this year in Nebraska. Good Job Dawson!

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



“Are you buying eggs from someone?”
“No...I’m selling them.” “Do you have
extras?” “Sometimes.” “Can I buy a
dozen?”

The 1977A-Series dollar came in payment
for a dozen eggs, a sideline business which
accidentally sprang up at the tire shop
when I unintentionally left a lopsided stack
of empty egg cartons out in plain sight of
customers hungry for fresh, brown-shelled
farm eggs.

Stamped in bright blue on the lower right
hand corner of the bill was
www.wheresgeorge.com, the address to a
website which “tracks the travels of dollar
bills through circulation.” In a high-tech
version of “Follow the Money”, you enter
the serial number of your stamped bill and
your zip code. If the dollar has been en-
tered at the website before, you get a list of
the cities and states where the bill has
been, along with travel time, distance and
how quickly the dollar moved.

I stared at the rumpled bill lying on my tire
shop desk, “And where have you been?” I
wondered, envisioning a whirlwind tour of
America’s great cities; New York; Boston;
Charleston; Baton Rouge; Dallas; Honolulu;
San Francisco. What exciting adventures
had it experienced? What marvels had it
seen?

I entered the required information at
wheresgeorge.com and waited for the results
with bated breath, smiling a little at the

grand-tour-like schedule I was certain
would appear.

Wrong.

In the two years since my dollar was first
registered in (of all places) Omaha, it never
left Nebraska. In stark contrast to the care-
free, footloose traveler I had envisioned the
pitiful little thing had taken 630 days to
painstakingly crawl from one end of the
state to the other.

Compare that desultory showing to a 2005
series bill which traveled 7,293 exhilarating
miles during the same time frame and a
person can conclude only one thing: we
Nebraskans are a bunch of tightfisted
penny-pinchers who believe the safest way

to double our money is to fold it and keep in
it our pockets.

So where’s the bill now?

For a brief empathetic moment I contem-
plated transporting the beleaguered little
hitchhiker across the state line into Wyo-
ming, but in the end my Nebraska heritage
got the better of me. Tonight the faded
greenback rests comfortably in a 1940’s
aluminum ice bucket labeled ‘Egg Money’,
bedded down alongside a fistful of equally
crumpled relatives.

A bit of just-in-case, farm-wife traveling
money.....

Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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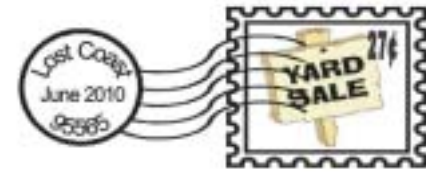
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Here's Your Sign!

By Vicki O'Neal



Economic indicators. Signs of the times. Don't you just hate 'em?

Things are getting rough, folks. Lately, we've had to learn to think in creative, penny-pinchin' ways....

The other day, I really had to put my penny-pinchin' talents to work. I'd forgotten all about my husband's birthday, and I had no gifts for Michael. No cake. No balloons or banners or candles. No birthday card. Not even a trinket from the Thrift Store.

I didn't have a lot of money at the moment, either. But I didn't panic. Crazy Vic is at her best when it comes to penny-pinchin'.

Soon, my hubby asked me if I wanted to go "treasure hunting..." Happily, I jumped in the car with him and away we went—watching for signs. Signs on posts. Signs with arrows.

At each Yard Sale, I'd hurry out of the car, determined to get to the treasures before my husband did. There had to be something for his birthday. An antique knife...? Or some fancy camping gear? Maybe I'd find one of those carved black bears that Michael likes....

(He has a fascination for big black bears. It's a man thing. Whenever he's camping in his tent and hungry bears start prowling the campsite, Mike leaps out and runs toward the bears—roaring his way across the campground in his underwear. The bears always run for their lives—as do other campers—fleeing from the Fruit-of-the-Looney.)

No one messes with Mountain Mike. Not big black bears. Nobody.

But never mind the live bears. Right now, I was looking for fake ones....

I went on scanning every Yard Sale with growing desperation. Lots of baskets and gaskets. Glassware and Tupperware. Little figurines that nobody wants. Run-of-the-mill stuff...That's what Michael calls it. But no camping gear. No antique knives. No bear stuff—

Ah, but wait!

I caught my breath. Apparently, we'd just stumbled upon a bear-collector's Yard Sale. I couldn't believe my eyes. There was bear stuff everywhere.

Feeling grateful, I gathered up an armful of bear trinkets. It was more than luck. It was the Lord's mercy upon a silly gal who'd forgotten about her husband's birthday.

There was a nice "Welcome" bear-sign for the front of the house...A little scratched, but I could paint it. And brand new rolls of bear wallpaper-borders—still in their package with \$19.49 price-tags. What a bonanza! \$40 worth of merchandise. It would only cost me a couple of bucks.

And then that I saw it...the prize of all prizes! A gorgeous black bear sitting amongst the knick-knacks. The bear surely had a \$20 retail value...but here it was only 50 cents.

I started to smile. I could envision it already. I'd make a big sign that said: "Happy Bearthday, Mountain Mike!...With Love from Crazy Vic." It would be perfect.

Well...almost!

There was a small hole on the bear's backside, but I could patch it, somehow.

I hid all the bear paraphernalia from Michael and went to pay the lady—only to realize I didn't have any money in my purse. Not even pocket change.

Now what?

I sidled over to my husband. "Honey...?" I said. "Do you have a few extra bucks?"

Michael was suspicious. Immediately. "What are you buying?" said the Master-of-all-Bargain-Hunters. "Is it in good shape? Are you getting a good price? Let me see it, sweetie."

I demurred and sidestepped for a while. Then exasperation set in. "Oh all right!" I said. "If you must know!... I'm buying your birthday presents here."

Michael didn't look a bit surprised, but the other

shoppers did. Eyebrows went up all over the place.

I was undeterred. "I'm no cheapskate!" I assured the world at large. "And I'm not going to haggle with the seller. I intend to pay the full price!"

Michael sighed. "I know! If I was buying them, I'd be able to get my own gifts for half price." He handed me the money, shaking his head. "Honey, you're something else! You're paying for my birthday presents with my money...At a yard sale?!"

"Oh Michael—you make me sound so very.....so very cheap!" I turned away.

"It's okay, darling..." he said comfortingly, then he laughed. "Don't despair. You're worth at least 10 cents...!"

"What....?"

"A little green sign is stuck to your backside," Michael said. "The sticker says '10 cents,' but I bet I could get you for a better price if I tried!"

I looked at my backside. Sure enough. "10 cents," said the little sign. Cheap, indeed! Can't get much cheaper than that.

It's a sign, folks.... One of them dreadful signs-of-the-times.

Don't you just hate 'em....!

Vicki O'Neal
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