



Nebraska City High School Marching Band in the Arbor Day Parade, April 27, 2013

Auburn•Brownville•Cook•Falls City•Hiawatha•Humboldt•Johnson•Nebraska City•Peru•Rock Port•Sabetha•Syracuse•Tecumseh



One of the Arbor Day Parade Entries; Carrying the Flag

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Cover Photo

The "Pride of the Pioneers" high school marching band in the Arbor Day Parade. It was cloudy and cool at 1:00 parade time, but there was a good crowd of onlookers and the day was festive.

The sun came out for part two of a double-header at Peru State College. See their pitcher in game two wind up and deliver his pitch in the set of photos on the back page of this publication. Another series of photographs are on page 9.

Spring is here today; what will May bring? Have a great month!

Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

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CREASED WITH AGE

The once smooth folds and curves
are lined with deep furrows from
years of worry and weather.

Life has never been easy, and
time goes on and on without a
break from the constant barrage
of sun and rain and ice and wind.
Under the soft soil that faces the
elements are the layers of ancient
stone that hold the hills in place.
Long ago, glaciers carved a deep
valley that became a river bed,
and now the muddy Missouri flows
in violent currents that own the
flood plain between the bluffs.
But the skin of the hills endures,
albeit covered with creases and
scars from years of abuse. As
the shadow fingers of the evening
sun reach out, they feel the rain
cut ruts and gullies that mar the
rounded brow line of the soft hills.

OLD TIME

A clock is a shaky attempt
to catch time, but it fits inside
the frame we call reality.
Perhaps we are sailors
on a sea of star dust,
and today is forever.

Poetry by Devon Adams

WONDER THUNDER

Someone is throwing thunder sticks
that explode with angry rumbles
across the murky wet skies.
Curtains of heavy rain pour into
the dry throat of the prairies.
Stranded on a planet without
control switches, we watch and
wonder what will happen next.
Hope is only a weak force when
applied to the massive weight of
unseen elements that mix and
match like cards in a celestial
game of five card stud.

ON THE SHELF

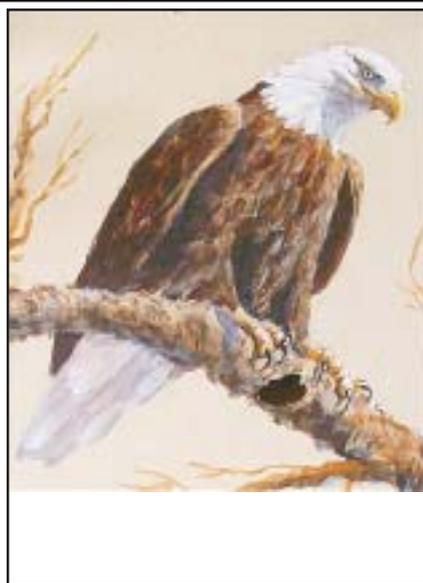
Soft scents come floating,
holding memories.
Years fall away, to
voices that had faded.
Just behind our conscious
thoughts are closets full of
yesterdays.

FIXING LUNCH

Not everyone cares
about clean dishes,
or soap.
Some of us don't
cook our meals
at all.
We must catch
others among us
as prey.
We eat when the
killing is done,
or before.
Like the pretty robin,
who swallows squirms
of worms.

SOME STORMS

We need the moisture,
but must pay a price,
because wishes don't
come in pretty boxes.
No rainbows bend
the chilly sky, as
flooded creeks run
through fallow fields.
Blizzards kill the calves,
and smother pheasants
hiding in the grass.
Storms just come,
and leave us gifts
we didn't want.



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LEMON DROPS

The spring tree was full of lemon drops. They sparkled like strings of yellow lights in the dusky dawn. But they weren't candy. Instead of sugar coats, they wore tiny feathers, tipped with black. Finch songs warbled from tiny throats, and the notes left laughter in the air.

GROWING SECRETS

Today I planted colors in the warm spring soil. They are hiding deep inside the tiny seeds, like secrets to be found. I can't wait for the sun to pull them up into the air, so I can watch stems sprout, then leaves, and then the crowns of flowers. This transformation must be magic, or so it seems.



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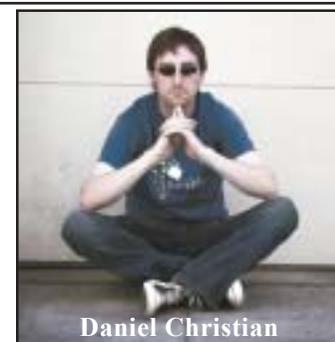
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May, 2013

Your Country Neighbor

Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Babysitting grandchildren can be a loving, joyful, daunting task, no matter what age they are. As grandparents we want to be loved and adored by our grandchildren. We also want to be loved and adored by their parents. So, ending up with the same results on these two different wave-lengths can be a little like walking a tightrope while balancing a pole. Usually, one end dips, and then we all are in trouble.

And it doesn't seem to matter if your adult child is the mother or father. Sooner or later we grandparents find ourselves in hot water. Grandparents like my husband spoil the child and end up in the doghouse with the parents. Or like myself, try to please the parents and end up scorned by those you hold close to your heart. What does one do?

Steve and I have found that using the outdoors can keep us both out of trouble (mostly) and happy. We love to take our grandsons outside, not only on our own three acres but anywhere else that is available.

When grandson B lived twenty minutes from Powell Gardens in Missouri we would take him there for hours several times a year. Where else can you turn a kid loose to run along miles of path, in beauty, peace and safety? Public gardens, arboretums, and wildlife refuges are excellent places to bring children not only from an exercise aspect but also as an educational experience. Most of these places have educational themes that change every year.

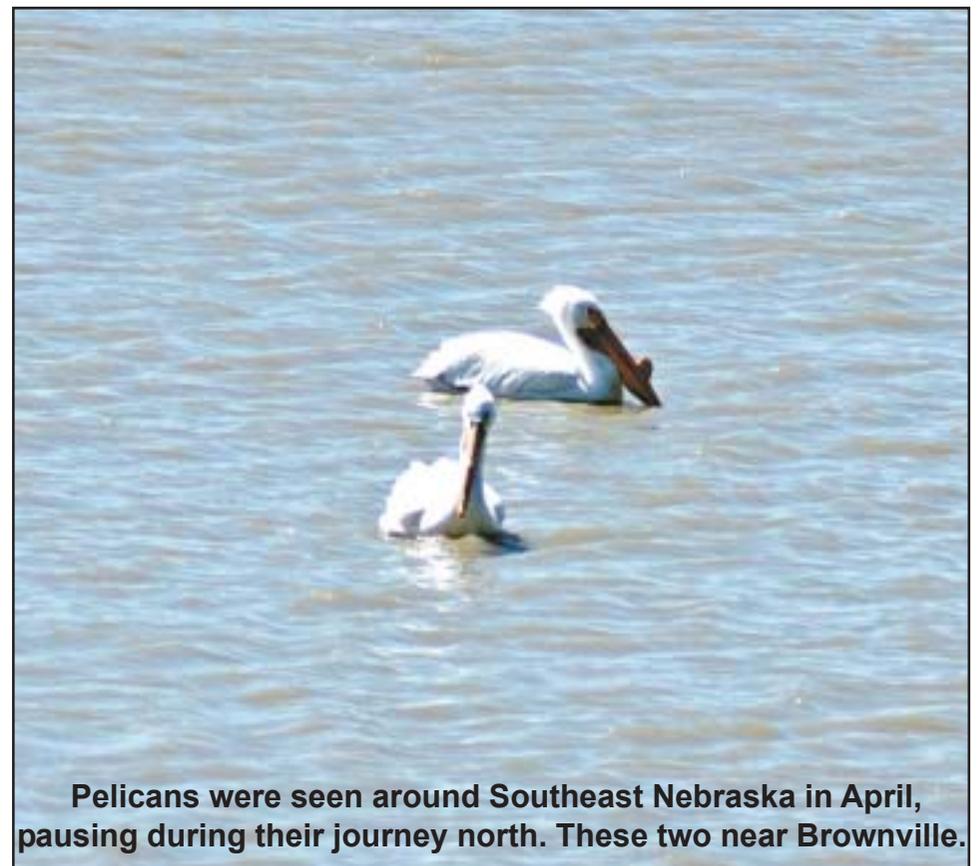
This April, we took all three grandsons to Reiman Gardens at Iowa State in Ames. They have a collection of Lego sculptures throughout the gardens. The boys kept asking, "How many legos did it take to make this one grandpa?" After grandparents, parents and baby Z were all tuckered out, the boys still wanted to keep going. Of course, Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha has that fabulous model train set-up. We could leave grandson A there, return in 50 years, and he would still be there.

The thing I like the most about taking the grandkids to the gardens or places like Fontenelle Forest (Omaha), the Arbor Day Farm (Nebraska City), Squaw Creek (Mound City), or Indian Cave State Park is not only that they are learning to love and respect nature but they behave so much better when they are outside. (They also sleep better at night.) We have found, if you buy grandparent memberships you tend to go more often, and it costs less. May 11 is National Public Gardens Day, and many public gardens like Lauritzen Gardens are having free admissions on that day.

The really cute thing about the grandsons, is watching them act like they own the place because they have been there so often, they become little tour guides to others on the trails. Where else could you hear, "This is a tree peony. Grandma has one in her yard," or, "That is a wood duck and it sounds like this..." or, "Leaves of three, let it be." Enjoying this vast corner of our lives, where life is good, especially when babysitting grandchildren.



Dracunculus Vulgaris
Submitted by Marilyn Woerth



Pelicans were seen around Southeast Nebraska in April, pausing during their journey north. These two near Brownville.

MAY FETE

Shirley Neddenriep

Seldom heard these days is a delightful melody titled *Country Gardens*. The tune and lyrics originated as an English folk song. Visualize the paintings of Thomas Kinkaid and you have the garden-like setting of this lilting strain.

In Brock, in May, of any given year during the 30s, 40s and until merger occurred, the annual May Fete held sway each Spring, capturing the fixed attention and energy of the entire community. Hearing *Country Gardens* brings back memories of the May Fete held on the last day of school, for the tune stood as its theme song.

Let me tell you, and it can't be all, for many years have passed. There were ball games, for on that clear and sunny day a formidable cloud of dust rose from the area in back of the solid 3-story brick school.

A manicured lawn surrounded the building. The school's large east-facing double doors opened out to a wide sidewalk leading east. At the end were two matching brick pillars reflective of the brick building in design and material. The sidewalk marked a dividing line between the North and South lawns.

On the North lawn stood a raised Dias decorated with colorful strands of crepe paper to serve as a throne for the royal court. Huge wicker baskets of lilac, spirea, tulips, lilies gathered from village gardens adorned the steps leading up to the Dias.

Also on the North lawn stood the 12 foot tall May Pole. Attached to its top were streamers of pink and white fabric reaching the ground. Fifth and sixth graders soon would wind the May Pole for the entertainment of the King and Queen of May, their court and the waiting crowd. There was also space for the school band and for a piano there on the North lawn.

South of the wide sidewalk wooden folding chairs were evenly spaced in rows to accommodate people of the village, parents, grandparents, come to watch or take part in events of the day. Further south, a long row of tables stood invitingly in the deep shade of trees separating the lawn from the ball park. Covered with white cloths, those tables soon sagged with every kind of good food to be shared by all. The entire town ached with Spring each May! Each year blue skies and sunshine held for the May Fete!

A King and Queen were selected by secret ballot from among the student body with eager anticipation during the week preceding the big day. A royal court made up of a young man and a young woman of each high school class escorted the King and Queen. Young girls in frilly dresses carried baskets of petals to scatter in the path of the May Queen.

As the music teacher began *Country Gardens* at the piano, everyone's attention turned to watch a dozen nervous elementary students. They formed a wide circle around the May Pole; each picked up a streamer and the winding began. As the final strains of *Country Gardens* ended, a woven pink and white May pole revealed itself, the epitome of the May Fete once celebrated at Brock Consolidated Schools, in Brock, Nebraska.

Internet addresses of two interpretations of "Country Gardens"

Piano: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyBJYTBwsfA

Orchestra: www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5-wqq1ZNKo

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Medicare and Retiree Health Plans

Mary Ann Holland

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIIP Professional

Let's say you are turning 65 and are currently covered under your company's group health plan. As you plan for retirement, you are considering a variety of health insurance options. Does your employer offer a retiree health plan? Should you sign up for Medicare? Do you need Medicare Supplement insurance?

Many companies continue to offer health insurance after an employee retires. Retiree plans are contracts between the employer and an insurance company, likely the same insurer that covers employees of all ages. Retiree plans typically include some sort of medical benefit and drug coverage; usually the coverage is a package, meaning you cannot have a medical benefit without a drug benefit, or vice versa. Each retiree plan is different and offers different benefits. Find out what is available to you, what benefits are offered, and obviously, what the plan costs.

Retiree plans vary greatly with a wide range of options including Medicare Advantage plans, Medicare Supplements and full health coverage. Since a retiree plan is not tied to active work, Medicare *does not* consider retiree plans to be "creditable coverage" for Parts A and B. Retiree plan members don't have to enroll in Medicare, but if a retiree opts to enroll in Medicare at a later date, he/she will have to wait until the next general enrollment period which is January 1 through March 31, for coverage beginning July 1 of that particular year.

Retiree plans are not **guaranteed** renewable, meaning the coverage or contribution rate can be changed or dropped at any time by an employer. If a beneficiary is enrolled in both Medicare and a retiree plan, Medicare will always be primary. Even if retiree coverage is so good that it pays for everything [Medicare] Part B covers, it is still necessary to enroll in Part B to avoid a penalty later, should the retiree plan be changed or eliminated.

When you turn 65 and "age into" Medicare, you have an initial enrollment period to sign-up for Medicare. The initial enrollment period is seven months—three months before the month of your 65th birthday, the month of your 65th birthday, and three months following the month of your 65th birthday. Most people sign up for Medicare Part A—hospitalization coverage—as they turn 65 because the Part A premium is \$0 per month [providing they had 40 quarters of covered Social Security employment during their working years]. Everyone pays a premium for Medicare Part B; in 2013 that premium is \$104.90 per month, or higher if the individual's income exceeds \$85,000.

Some Medicare beneficiaries delay enrollment into Part B if they continue to work and are covered by a group employer plan, either their own or their spouse's. When they

retire and leave the group coverage, most people elect to begin Medicare Part B and purchase a Medicare Supplement or Medicare Advantage plan. Once Medicare Part B becomes effective, you have a six month's period of time known as a 'guaranteed right of issue' where you can't be turned down for coverage.

Should you decide to take advantage of a retiree plan offer, the retiree plan may work very effectively as a secondary payer to Medicare's coverage, but the plan is NOT a Medicare Supplement. Retiree plans do not have to comply with Medicare Supplement regulations. Benefits the retiree plan offers may be better, worse, or somewhere in-between when compared to regular Medicare Supplement insurance. Since retiree plans are not guaranteed renewable, they can be cancelled at any time. An open enrollment will **not** be available at a later date should the retiree need to buy a Medicare Supplement. Additionally, there is no guarantee you will be healthy and able to buy insurance.

Many retiree plans, however, **are** considered to be creditable for Medicare Part D; if that is the case, there is no need to enroll in a separate Part D policy. Retiree plans generally offer better coverage, with no donut hole, compared to a Part D plan. Should a retiree plan come to an end [an involuntary loss of creditable coverage], the Medicare beneficiary would be eligible for a special enrollment period [for a limited amount of time] to enroll in a Medicare Part D drug plan.

Making a decision about retiree coverage and Medicare needs to be carefully planned and well thought-out. Always weigh the pros and cons of each option, including long-range consequences, before making the final decision.

This article was written by Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIIP Professional located at the Cass County Extension office. She can be reached at 402-267-2205 or by e-mail at: mholland1@unl.edu.

Resources used in preparation of this article include: *Volunteer Counselor Training and Resource Manual*, Nebraska Department of Insurance SHIIP, 2013. *Volunteer Counselor Training and Resource Manual*, Nebraska Department of Insurance SHIIP, March 2010.

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by Leslie Justus

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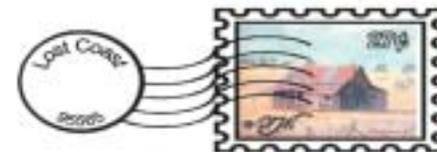


OUT AT FIRST!

PSC Baseball, April 27, 2013; Pitcher Throws Missouri Valley Runner Out At First Base

Mamas, Mysteries, & Miracles...

By Vicki O'Neal



As a Mom, I can count so many blessings on this Mother's Day. I am grateful that my daughters are alive and well! Not long ago, their lives were in jeopardy and I may have lost them both— except for divine intervention.

You may doubt that such inexplicable miracles could happen today, but I assure you that the following events really occurred. As the old saying goes: "Truth is stranger than fiction!"

A few months ago, I received an unusual phone call. It was from my prayer-partner, Cheryl. She is a spiritually gifted woman who lives in Auburn, Nebraska. She has told me many things which have all come to pass.

Cheryl called me while I was in California and said: "Prepare yourself! You're coming back to the Midwest. I saw you in a vision, packing up your things. Something is going to happen and you'll know when it's time to come back here. But don't worry. Everything is in God's hands."

I could hardly believe what she was saying—but I knew that Cheryl has divine guidance, so I

didn't argue. I waited expectantly, prayerfully.

Just a few days later, a strange chain of events began. A feeling of uneasiness and urgency swept over me at 10:30 in the evening. I felt concern for my oldest daughter's safety, and I tried to call her cell phone—to no avail. The call went unanswered... but I prayed that she would be safe wherever she was.

Soon, I received the phone call that every mother dreads: "Your oldest daughter was in an accident. She's at the hospital and could be facing surgery! Come as soon as you can!"

I immediately began packing up to return to the Midwest, just as Cheryl had seen in the vision.

Ironically, the time of my daughter's accident had been at 10:30 pm—the very same moment that I'd felt the urgency to call her cell phone, and to pray for her safety. My daughter later said that she could hear her cell phone ringing just moments after the accident, but she couldn't answer it. Her arm was badly broken and she was in a state of shock.

Although she couldn't call 9-11, her Mama's prayers were already on the way. It was a remarkable occurrence, to be sure.... But the mysterious circumstances didn't end there. Even stranger things were yet to come.

Continued on page 13 >>>>>>>

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

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The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott

Two years ago, as if by magic, a castle sprang up in our back yard, its lofty towers, hidden entrances, and secret passages acting as powerful temptations to bright-eyed boys more accustomed to playing make believe in, and around, the farmstead's ordinary outbuildings.

When working outdoors I'd often see them dashing along the uppermost battlements, their forms outlined against the Nebraska-blue sky, their childish voices drifting like windblown cotton. To me the castle was unchanging, to them it was a time-traveling shape shifter with the power to be anything, and go anywhere: on a single summer afternoon they might visit a newly discovered alien planet, the Scottish highlands, and the early 1800's... each experience fueled by boyish enthusiasm, and unbridled imagination.

Some days they're feudal Kings, shouting out orders to unseen subjects, threatening beheadings and dungeon chains if disobeyed, on others they don the noble code of medieval knighthood and fight back to back, kindred spirits protecting a flag fashioned of irrigation canvas, discarded shovel handle, and baling twine... the realm against hoards of foreign invaders.

I've lost count of how many times I've declined an invitation to "climb up and play", telling my two fearless explorers I'm busy when, if truth be told, the real reason is that I'm firmly grounded in the grown-up possibilities of broken arms and painful concussions. Without me they've seen the Emerald City, sailed the Pacific in search of pirate treasure, blasted off to the moon, and ridden a run-away train. These youthful Huckleberry Finns are growing up like children did a century ago... steeped in adventure of their own making, forging memories fashioned of their own resourcefulness, inventiveness, and ingenuity.

During the past two weeks the straw-bale castle has shrunk in size as its walls are torn down and distributed among the various corrals. Days and nights of snow and slush, and temperatures ranging from the low teens to the mid-thirties, have Dale bedding the herds nearly ev-

ery other day. Calving is seldom a picnic in the park, but mamas birthing babies in crowded, muddy conditions is something else altogether.

Despite calving difficulties Dale is quick to remind those grumbling few... "For a year I've been praying for moisture... I'm not about to start complaining when it finally arrives."

Our fields, including those planted to winter wheat, are soggy wet. Another castle in the making, another year of time travel, lies beneath the miracle of this prayed-for spring snow.

Hallelujah and Amen.

As Always

Karen



Syracuse, Nebraska Float with Burger Meister and 'Royalty' Arbor Day Parade, April 27, 2013

Sundowning

Lee Nyberg

It's 5:15 p.m. Dinner is being prepared, my husband and teenaged children are coming home from work and school. In the midst of all this, my Dad, who has Alzheimer's Disease, shouts, "Call the police; we have burglars!"

According to the Mayo Clinic's D.G. Smith, around 20% of people with dementia experience sundowning [elevated agitation beginning in the late afternoon or early evening]. Some people show this agitation by rocking, crying, pacing, or following their caregiver. Others experience severe agitation with hallucinations or violence.

Doctors do not agree on sundowning's cause. Some research attributes it to disrupted circadian rhythms, (Volicer et al, Am. Jour. of Psychiatry, 2001). Other researchers dispute this connection and conclude the confusion, anger, paranoia, disorientation, restlessness, and rapid mood changes are dementia behaviors exacerbated in the evening, (Sundown Syndrome in Persons with Dementia, Khachiyants et al, 2011, Nat. Inst. of Health).

Each person's experience with dementia is unique; the cause of sundowning may be, too. Mace and Rabins, authors of *The 36-Hour Day*, recommend determining and avoiding an individual's triggers for sundowning. With these common triggers, consider the daytime events prior to a sundowning episode to help focus your approach.

- Over-stimulation during the day; person with dementia may be exhausted
- Increased early evening activity level, such as cooking, people coming and going; may cause confusion and frustration
- Dusk; growing shadows can increase confusion and disorientation, especially for those with vision problems
- Recent dramatic changes in routine, such as a return home after a hospital stay; may lead to confusion and disorientation

People with dementia can be very tired at the end of the day from struggling with their condition. The Alzheimer's Association suggests looking for possible sleep disturbances due to urinary tract infections, restless leg syndrome or sleep apnea. In addition, reducing caffeine intake, avoiding heavy evening meals, and using a bedside commode can help minimize sleep disruption and perhaps lessen sundowning.

To reduce sundowning, Dr. Rabin and others suggest:

- Establish a daily routine: put difficult activities in the morning, i.e., bathing
- Try low-level soothing sounds, like ocean waves, in late afternoon and early evening
- Occupy your loved one in the early evening with a calming activity, such as listening to music, setting the table, winding yarn
- Soak up morning sunlight and turn on interior lights well before dusk
- See the doctor for medication (anti-anxiety or anti-depressant) and supplements (vitamin E, melatonin, or St. John's Wort)

Try distraction to stop an episode of sundowning. If your loved one is asking about a child or a spouse, make eye contact and in a low, neutral tone, acknowledge her words. "I hear you asking about your husband, Joe. You seem to be thinking about him now. How did you meet?" Frequently tell her where she is and what is happening. If she is not very agitated or angry, try gently stroking her hand. An angry person may become violent when touched.

Sundowning can be an extremely frustrating time for a caregiver. Remind yourself the disease is causing the behavior. To ease your own stress, breathe deeply and massage your neck. Learn other in-the-moment stress reduction techniques. Seek respite care as often as possible.

Additional source: SundownersFacts.com.

Lee Nyberg is a Partner in Home Care Assistance of Nebraska. Home Care Assistance is North America's premier provider of 24/7 in-home assisted living. Our mission is to change the way the world ages. We provide older adults with whole-person, individualized care that enables them to live happier, healthier lives wherever they call home. Our services are distinguished by the caliber of our caregivers, the responsiveness of our staff and our expertise in live-in care. We embrace a positive, balanced approach to aging centered on the evolving needs of older adults. As a Champion Partner of the Alzheimer's Early Detection Alliance (AEDA) with the Alzheimer's Association, we take our responsibility to educate others for early disease detection seriously. In addition, we are proud to certify our staff through the Alzheimer's Association's essentiALZ Advanced Dementia Care training. For more information about Home Care Assistance in Omaha, visit HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com; in Lincoln, see HomeCareAssistanceLincoln.com.

<<<<<<< *Continued from page 10*

After I arrived back in the Midwest, I helped my oldest daughter for several weeks until she recovered from the accident. Then I asked my prayer-partner, Cheryl: "What should I do now?"

"Stay here in the Midwest," she said without hesitation. "The Lord wants you to stay here and get a job. You will understand it all later."

I did as Cheryl advised me. It was only a few weeks later that an urgent feeling assailed me, once more. I began to pray, not knowing what was about to happen—but knowing that I must pray...and pray hard! The urgency I felt then was much stronger than what I'd felt before my first daughter's accident.

Soon, my phone rang. "There's been another accident. Your youngest daughter's car was totaled. It could have been fatal...but she walked away without a scratch."

I was dumbstruck. Two daughters. Two accidents. Two miracles in two months. Exactly two months to the day, in fact!

I called my youngest daughter to get the details about the latest wreck.

"It was raining and I was driving with my boyfriend, Ory," said my daughter. "The car hydroplaned and crossed the median, coming to a stop in the opposite lanes of traffic. We knew we were about to be hit by the oncoming cars, but then Ory saw this great light radiating all around me and he felt no fear. So, he took off his seatbelt and held me in his arms while we waited for the cars to hit us. We felt such a deep sense of peace. It was amazing, Mom! A car hit us and totaled my vehicle, but we walked away without a scratch."

I could only marvel at the miracle, and breathe a prayer of thanksgiving! I am a very thankful Mama, indeed. I have much more to be thankful for this year than most!

And now, my Country Neighbors... I wish all of you Moms out there a wonderful Mother's Day...especially my own Mama! She has prayed many urgent prayers on my own behalf over the years. I'm sure your own mother has done the same for you! Without our Mothers' prayers, we may not be alive, today.

We should remember our Moms in a special way this year. They deserve to be pampered after all the anxiety and worry we've brought them during our lifetime... After all the tears they've shed and the prayers they've prayed.

Treat your Mom to an extra special Mother's Day like she's never known!

I must say goodbye, now, my friends. May God bless you all... And may you have the best Mother's Day ever!



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

The world just keeps getting curiouser and curiouser. I refer to a story in the *Omaha World-Herald* from a few weeks ago about adult men who belong to the *My Little Pony* fan club. For those of you who don't know, *My Little Pony* is a cartoon aimed at little girls. It features pastel-hued flying ponies, and a typical episode will deal with some facet of friendship. The franchise has been around for quite a few years. I still have my daughter's *My Little Pony* Baby Bonnet School of Dance toy, circa 1990. My nieces, now in their late teens and early twenties, used to watch Pony videos from the library non-stop when they stayed with us. And our not-yet-five-year-old granddaughter loves it.

But grown men? How can this be? If you ever listen to Rush Limbaugh (please don't hate me because I sometimes listen to his program!), you've probably heard him lament "the wussification of America." I suspect even Rush would not believe in the existence of grown men who admit to belonging to a *My Little Pony* fan club. It goes beyond wussification to infantilization.

I appreciate a man who isn't afraid to let his feminine side out on occasion. If I didn't, I wouldn't be married to you know who. But the day my husband joins the *My Little Pony* fan club, he'll be looking for a new roommate.

I recently heard of a survey that asked women to identify male activities that they deemed sexy. One of the top picks, if not *the* top, was watching their man doing some kind of repair task or at least having the ability to do so. Right on, sisters! I have to say, I find observing my husband, attired in jeans and a t-shirt, flat on his back, wielding a wrench on some kind of plumbing fixture to be quite appealing. Please note the requirement that he be flat on his back. Sagging plumber's jeans are definitely NOT part of this picture.

The aforementioned survey brings to mind an episode of *Frasier* that we recently watched. Frasier and his equally snooty and wimpy brother Niles had discovered that women were attracted to men who understood the mechanics of automobiles. They immediately enrolled in an introductory mechanics class. They naturally flunked out, but managed to safe face with the excuse that it was more worthwhile to support the economy and hire actual mechanics than to learn how to repair their cars themselves.

I'm not sure just how that plays into the phenomenon of male Pony fans. According to the *World-Herald* article, they call themselves Bronies, a combination of Bro – short for brother – and ponies. Somehow that doesn't make it OK. No matter what you call it, being an adult male (or female) AND a member of a *My Little Pony* fan club sounds wacky to me. I'm sure they're really nice, because that's what *My Little Pony* is all about. (Does my failure to embrace this make me *not* nice?) And I probably wouldn't be able to tell they were Bronies if I met them on the street. Unless they were wearing fan club t-shirts, which apparently some of them do since collecting Pony paraphernalia is part of the joy of the conventions they attend. That's right. There are *My Little Pony* fan club conventions. For adults.

Does anyone else find this as mystifying as I do? If you have an explanation for it, I'd like to hear it.



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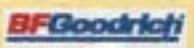
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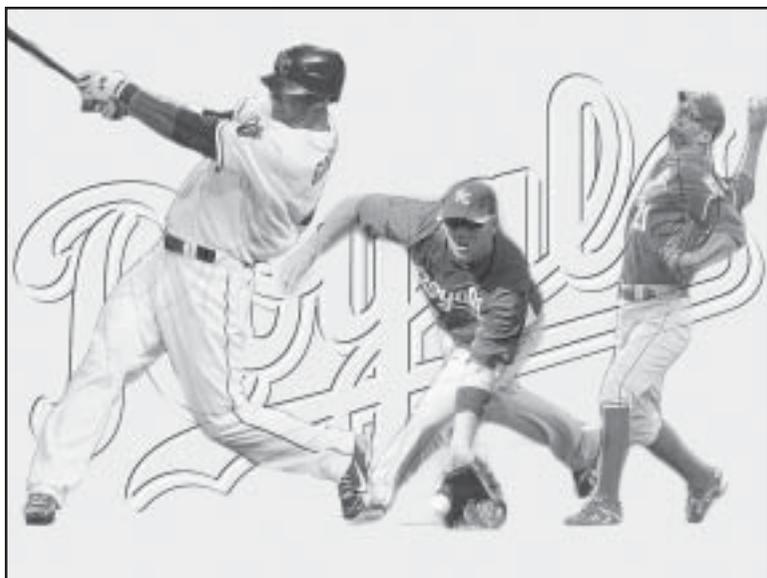
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Poetry and Photography



The Boys of Summer

The other night I had a dream
about three young baseball players
golden boys of summer
fresh—muscular—handsome
They play for the Kansas City Royals
Alex Gordon
Jeff Francouer
Mike Moustakas

My goodness, they are beautiful.

Dark blonde left fielder Alex Jonathan Gordon
Lincoln Nebraska Native
Graduate of Lincoln Southeast High School
and a former Nebraska Cornhusker
Lead off lefty
His smile lights up his face
strong and tall
just about every girl's fantasy

Whiskered brunette right fielder
Lilburn Georgia native
Jeffrey Braden "Frenchy" Francouer
swings fifth, bares his dazzling teeth
at the plate, long and lean

Los Angeles born full-tilt male third baseman
Michael Christopher "Moose" Moustakas
Bats third, cheeks bulge with bubble gum
dark wavy hair perched above muscular shoulders

Did I mention that these fellas are attractive?

In the dream, all three of them came to my house one evening
I greeted them at the door
these lovely young men, in the dream,
followed me into the house
I sat them down and
fed them pot roast, roasted vegetables and
thick slices of lemon meringue pie.

And I woke up feeling my age
and incredibly disappointed.

by Carol Carpenter

Field of Stones

We plant
our field of stones,
bright white tablets
in plush green grass;
each individual
meticulously soldiered,
black relief,
name and unit
age and rank,
built from the blood and bones
of boys and girls,
draped with families,
flags and flowers,
punctuated by the tears
of those who remember
the reasons why
and those who still believe
in freedom.



Blame it on the biscotti

I give in to temptation
trapped under glass
peppered with pistachios
or patina pine nuts
dipped in chocolate

Irresistible delights
jailed twice baked
enticing crunch
flecked with almonds or apricots
anticipating drench.

Prato biscuits
fed the roman Legions
that crusty cookie bread
said to last centuries
carried along into battle.

Chocolate mocha almond
my knees wobble at the sight
those sparkling jars
give me a hot cup of coffee
and blame it all on the biscotti.



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