

Your *Country* Neighbor

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May 2020

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The American Bald Eagle



Pelican food fight, on field pond East of Brownville off Hwy-136, April 21.

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha **A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America**



Goldfinch and House Finch, frequently seen in May

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Online at yourcountryneighbor.com

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“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

May Writers & Contributors

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Thank You!

**Your Country Neighbor
can be found online at;
yourcountryneighbor.com**

**Inform your relatives
and friends residing outside
our ‘country neighborhood’
and those “stay at home” folks.**

ATTENTION!

A Message of Gratitude from your Publisher, Stephen Hassler

I am pleased as I am every month for more than 18 years, to offer you this new issue of *Your Country Neighbor*.

And in this uncertain time I am asking that you assist a “stay-at-home” individual you know by reminding him or her of

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

so they can continue to enjoy this publication even if they do not get out as much. And if you are able, remember to include *Your Country Neighbor* with your grocery order. Plus, you should be able to find it at your pharmacy and hardware store. By the way, you have my permission to take an extra copy for a friend, neighbor or loved one.

I want to remind each of you, my readers, to please appreciate the support of advertisers, writers, and other contributors, who together continue to make it possible to offer you, such unique and desirable content, namely voices and photos from the Nemaha Valley, messages of retail interest, and items for the public good, such as Medicare notices and PSC news.

I am grateful to the following businesses who have been supporting *Your Country Neighbor* each month and have been doing so for most of this publication’s history of 18+ years.

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Pelicans Swimming and Fishing



Pelicans among Cormorants



American Pelican migrating toward Canada

Honor Your Mother

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

During May, we pay homage to our mothers. Gifts will be wrapped, flowers sent, and visits made. This is because we feel a great love and hold much respect for our mothers who nurtured us and cared for us. We also, at this time, must acknowledge the sacrifices our mothers made for us.

Meeting a child's needs is a great responsibility and a continuing challenge. Yet, most mothers do exceedingly well in this role.

If we tried to value a mother's contribution to our lives, we would soon realize that what a mother does is priceless. Mothers provide for their children's physical and emotional needs. They protect children from harm giving them safety, security, and stability. They are always there for them guiding and advising.

Be thankful if your mother is still in your life. Let her know that she is the one who has undertaken the most important task of life with its pleasures and its perils, and that she is making, through her children, a valuable contribution to society and its future.

Honor your mother today and every day. Don't let adult pride hide what you need to express in words and actions. Yes, honor your mothers on Mother's Day and always.



Migrating Pelicans and Cormorants



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Spring Plays Peek-A-Boo

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020

The weather is a popular topic for people all over the country, but I suspect Midwesterners can one-up most weather conversations. In the Midwest we have four distinct seasons which change not only every few months but often several times a day. I'm not sure other parts of the country have those bragging rights.

I was born in Arizona and my weather memories there range from sunny and warm to sunny and beastly hot. I remember one December there was a trace of snow that melted immediately. Everybody in the neighborhood was outside snapping black and white photos.

Here in the Midwest we know what to expect from three out of four of the seasons. In summer it's hot or stormy. In fall it's crisp and beautiful or rainy and gray. In winter it's long, cold, and can be measured in inches.

During winter there can be a day or two of spring-like weather, usually in February. Then the next day a blizzard strikes and people grumble because they had false hope that it would be spring soon. But spring plays games with us. All through March and April it peeks in to make an appearance... and then winter hip-bumps it off the stage. Spring doesn't give up. It sneaks around the curtain and tries to steal the spotlight, until jealous winter notices again. The game is on!

In spring people are excited to plant flowers and gardens, but don't be fooled! There's a rule that I've ignored too often: wait until after Mother's Day to do the planting. I've thought that a few warm days in a row were the start of spring. Time to plant my geraniums and put away the parkas! Two days later, "Wrong again," I think, making a mad dash to bring in the flowers and dig out the coats.

I've seen people leave the house in shorts and flip flops in March and April after a couple nice days, thinking it would be hot by noon. Nope! At the end of the day they come home to make soup and wear fuzzy socks with flannel pj's for a few more nights.

Even nature gets fooled. The daffodils and crocuses rise up demanding to be the first to show off



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their finery, only to get hit by frost and slump miserably to the ground. Robins return, grow round-bellied, and start to build nests. Then bam! They get slammed by a snow shower and huddle together glaring, as if to say, "Whose idea was it to come back this early?!"

I truly feel sorry for them. Mother Nature leads them astray year after year. Birds are so gullible.

MEMORIAL DAY



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P o e t r y

Devon Adams, Peru

OLD LADY

She was young and beautiful, wearing her new yellow dress, with color as deep and clear as a sweet lemon drop. Her garden party was a late night affair. When it was over, cold air hit her like a breath from death. She stood there shivering. Later, a cold dawn revealed Forsythia standing by her friends, Iris and Rose. They looked at each other and saw frost on their leaves and stems, and especially on a ruined yellow dress. Forsythia cried when she saw that her bright petals had dimmed to old gold fabric, wrinkled and droopy, like the skin of an old woman. She vowed that never again would she throw a SPRING party until she was certain that WINTER was truly gone.

THE WAYS OF WATER

Long years ago, when this prairie was pristine, the river ran through it with the mighty muscles of a giant. Cycles of the sun and the moon came and went, and the river ran. Early native people lived on the land, but didn't change it. They knew how to live off of it's bounty, and when to get out of the way, as they did during floods and prairie fires. It took the progress of what is called 'civilization' to throw a wrench at Mother Nature. Being both autocratic and stupidly confident, modern men believed they had a better plan. So they changed the shape and the course of the "Mighty Mo," and the results have proven to be amazingly destructive to the course of our human destiny. The final verdict will be enacted upon those who had no seat in the jury box.



Bald Eagle nesting near Rock Port

LOST DIARIES

Old pages, cracked, crinkled and crumbling, are brown with age. Last Autumn, they were dropped from trees in a last ditch attempt to leave notes about the days and nights of Summer, when life was new and green and exciting. Now the words have faded in the violence of Winter, and no one can read them, even if they tried. But now the sadness of bare, dark branches is forgotten, because the sun clock says Spring, and the light is longer, the air is warmer and new leaves are growing that will be pages in a new volume of gossip and opinions about the creatures of the kingdom of nature.

BOXED IN

In the national condition of isolation from close contact with other beings from our particular species, some of us find that we are bored at home. Never mind that we are going mad with stress about finances and our futures, it is the minute to minute ticks of the clock that are driving us into a catatonic state. But wait, there is an answer to that worry. It is found in our brains. They were designed to solve problems and to enjoy the stimulus of being alive. Someone said that, "if you think you have a problem, you're not looking at it from the right angle." Being creative is it's own entertainment. You can think your way out of the box in which you think you're trapped.

P o e t r y

Devon Adams, Peru

KITES WITHOUT STRINGS

Here in the land of big sky and open spaces, the wind blasts us into spring like we're being shot out of a cannon. Allergies in our noses and dirt in our eyes tend to make some of us hide in our houses. But, this year, we're staying inside for other reasons. Life has taken a wild turn and we have flown off the curve in the road and are hurtling through the air, wondering if survival is possible. We need only to look up at the blue enamel of the sky, that covers us like a giant lid, to find an answer to our fears. A pair of mature bald eagles is cutting huge patterns in the space above us. They don't think about falling, because they use wind like a tool of existence. Like kites without strings, their bodies hang suspended over those of us below. Not a flap of a wing is needed as they head into the fierce wind, their powerful wings holding them like the hands of God.

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STEP FOR STEP

She's always there beside you, whether you like it or not. When you were a very short person, you needed her to change your diapers, feed you, and keep you safe. As time went on, she was teaching lessons you needed to learn, and now and then they were harder for her than for you. When you grew up, she still didn't sign your final report card, even if you were certain you knew more than she did. Becoming a parent gave you some insight into Mom's behavior, but she still treated you like a little kid. As you grew older, your reflection in the mirror was eerily similar to hers. Now that your years have stacked up to a considerable age, you realize that sometimes you still need to be a child, and your mother knows it.



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Several weeks into the current era (which shall not be named), one of my sisters jokingly reported that she was starting to get on her own nerves. At the time, her husband was still going to work every day, so she was spending a lot of time alone. Being a very sociable person, the change to her routine has been more stressful for her than it has been for people like me.

My brother-in-law has since been offered a buy-out by his employer and is now home every day with my sister. Some people might find that to be another stressor. My brother-in-law is also very sociable, so now both of them are having to find ways to stay busy under the same roof. Thankfully, spring weather has finally arrived so they are able to be busy with their yard.

The ability to be outdoors is my salvation. If we were still in the dead of winter, there's no telling what might be happening around here. Lest you think I am being flip about the situation, be assured I am very aware of the challenges that many people are facing. For Hubby and myself, maintaining a sense of humor is critical to getting along, no matter what is going on in the wider world.

Recently Hubby was finalizing the grocery list. He generally does our grocery shopping, for which I am very grateful. Shopping for most anything is one of my least favorite things to do. Anyway, Hubby was perusing the list, pen poised over the paper, pondering what more to add to it.

He said to me, "You know that stuff you eat that's in a container?"

I gave him a blank look.

".... it's in the fridge," he prompted.

More blank look from me.

"....it's white," he offered as another clue.

"Yogurt?" I guessed.

"That's it!!" He scribbled it onto the list.

These kinds of verbal exchanges happen a lot in our house. When you think about it, our conversations are longer and more entertaining than they would be if neither of us ever drew a mental blank. I guess what I'm saying is this: there are upsides to this situation. Try to find your own silver lining. You'll be happier.

Images of Corona:

A Haibun, which blends haiku images with prose

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

Photos on Facebook
creative ways to pass time
connect with others.

Since we have to self-isolate and quarantine, people are trying to connect any way they can. We need to pass the time in constructive ways to avoid cabin fever. Parents are trying to work and school at home, and keep kids entertained. Social media has become more important than ever. Daily posts spread hope, provide news, and share photos of creative project ideas.

Restaurants are closed
store shelves are bare, items rare,
uncertainty reigns.

Going to the store feels like going into a war zone one minute and perfectly normal the next. Certain items are absent from shelves or in limited supply: toilet paper, Clorox wipes, tissues, rubber gloves, face masks. But other shelves look totally normal. In some aisles people may be casually shopping, keeping distance. In others there might be a dash and struggle for the last of something. Questions hover... so far the food supply is holding up, but for how long?

People at home cook
have more time and less fast food
eat meals together.

For modern American families who were constantly on the go, this time of isolation is a rare opportunity to slow down and enjoy cooking again. Or simply enjoy eating dinner together again... at a table instead of in the car dashing somewhere. It's the silver lining of this pandemic.

Images on news
rows of caskets, no mourners,
waiting to be moved.

The photos from Italy and China, and even around the US, are chilling. Patients lie in rows on gurneys in crowded hospitals. Freezer trucks are parked at the back doors to hold those who pass because mortuaries are overflowing. Rows of plain wooden caskets, mass produced in a hurry, are full and waiting for cremation. Services can't be attended by groups of mourning families and friends. Funerals have become small private affairs with little closure and no comfort. Shock chokes onlookers into silence.

Turn off the TV
gather on couches to pray
hope death passes by.

It feels like we're Israelites during the first Passover, trying to escape the plague. They huddled in homes with lambs blood on their doorposts, hearing the wails of Egyptian mourners, praying to be spared.

Springtime... grass greens up
bushes bud, flowers bloom and
sunshine gives us hope.

We can't dwell on the fear for long without going crazy. Thank goodness corona came as winter is ending. People and pets are taking walks to enjoy spring weather and to clear dark thoughts. Evidence of new life keeps us going. Look around. People are still getting married, babies are still being born. Nature gives us hope.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

There was a time when I shared the space behind my Window on Fifth Street with another. But life changes. Sometimes joyously, and sometimes sadly.

If you have lost a loved one, or if you will someday, you most likely will be faced with grieving. Grief is sadness, loss, and other not-so-pleasant feelings. And at first, it seems as if the feelings will never go away.

They say, "It's gets better with time, and "You don't get over it, you get through it." And after some time, usually months, sometimes years, the sad thoughts do give way to fond memories. That is how I would describe my experience of grieving. But keep in mind what they also say, "Everyone experiences grief differently."

I won't say that the experience of grieving is bad, but it feels unpleasant, and it's harder when laced with regret, especially early in the process of grieving. Regret for something not said, or regret for something not done. But I am convinced that even if the survivor had said that thing or done that thing, there would remain something else not said or not done for which to be regretful. I believe there's a lineup of mistakes/regrets in one's past. Remove the dominant one, and another moves to the top of the list. I believe this is part of human nature. No one is perfect. Regrets are natural.

Focus on those things that were good in the relationship, especially those things that were good for the two of you together. Isn't that why you were together in the first place? Recall special events, rewarding times together that enriched your lives and perhaps, others' lives as well.

Another approach might be better for you than what was helpful to me. There is a difference between preparing for the death of an elderly person, verses the loss of a child due to an accident or other unexpected event. I can't imagine how I would feel if I had lost a child suddenly. So clearly, I don't have all the answers, perhaps just one that is only applicable to me. Fortunately, I don't have many "grieving" experiences from which I can draw more "answers."

They say, "Life goes on." I want to say, "So what?" It doesn't go on in the manner it once did. It makes more sense to me to say, "Life changes." Sometimes for the better and sometimes, it seems, for the worse. And for those not so good times, we have grieving -- to help us through it. And fortunately for me, I also have my window on Fifth Street.

Window From The Past

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Dear Mom,

Happy Mother's Day! A lot has happened since we last talked. I raised some children, like you did, and I married above myself, like Dad did. Not too long ago I returned home to Nebraska. You lived here most of your life, but I wanted to try different things. I lived in Colorado, Arizona, Texas, New Jersey, and of course, Iowa and Nebraska. But now I'm back. Can you believe that I missed Nebraska blizzards? It took living in Arizona and Texas to realize that I love them.

One harsh Winter here in Peru I watched the snow blowing by my window on Fifth Street. I watched with a coffee mug in my hand and a warm blaze in the fireplace. No cows to milk anymore nor calves to feed. I was living in town, and I could walk to the grocery store. Not that I don't miss the farm! I really miss the fragrance of alfalfa blooming in June. I miss our walks through the fields of oats and corn on Summer days, and your fresh lettuce salads at suppertime.

And guess what? I'm publishing a magazine! I love doing it and I know you would be proud. I am fortunate that I know so many people who help and support me. They make my publication possible, but they also make it special.

I wish we could talk again. I'm thinking of you... Happy Mother's Day, and thank you for being my Mom!

Love, your son.

p.s. to my country neighbors:

When we were children, we followed our parents everywhere. When we were teenagers we tried to get away from them. As young adults we were too busy for them. As we become older we want to know them better and be closer to them. Don't be concerned as to how to go about it. Just take your parent to lunch or coffee or go fishing or shopping. Let the magic happen. And give your Mom a rose; don't wait for Mother's Day.



Taking A Break



Peru State College Sports Photos

Fall 2019 - Spring 2020





Peru State College Sports Photos

Fall 2019 - Spring 2020



PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

Peru State College Postpones Commencement

Peru State College has postponed its May commencement until December 18, 2020. The College made the decision following new recommendations to extend social distancing guidelines and to best give our graduates the opportunity to celebrate together.

Jason Hogue, director of marketing and communications at Peru State, said, “With the uncertainty about the trajectory and duration of the Coronavirus outbreak, it has become clear that it would be best to postpone the May commencement. The College looks forward to celebrating the accomplishments of its graduates, with their family and friends, in December.”

The December 2020 commencement ceremony will be open to graduate and undergraduate students that would have been eligible to walk in May 2020, including December 2019, May 2020 and August 2020. Students graduating in December 2020 will also be invited to participate.

Additional details regarding the December 2020 event will be released in the future.

Recently, 73 Peru State Athletes were named to Fall 2019 Dean’s List.

All nine of the athletic department’s programs were represented with at least three or more individuals. In order to make Peru State’s Dean’s List, a student must have a grade point average between 3.50 and 3.99, have completed at least 12 graded credit hours during the past semester, have no incomplete grades for the semester, and be degree seeking.

Last fall, the College introduced the President’s List which recognized those with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. Those student-athletes earning that honor were noted in a separate release.

The golf and volleyball teams had the highest percentage of their teams earning dean’s list and/or president’s list recognition. All of the members of the golf team were on one of the two lists.

Local, southeast Nebraska communities are represented by the following athletes;

Michael Lombardi (Peru) – Criminal Justice-Administration
Nicholas Novak (Dawson) – Criminal Justice-Administration
Ki’Jana Owens (Peru) – Kinesiology
Tristan Unruh (Auburn) – Kinesiology
Arianna Waschkowski (Bellevue) – Elementary Education
Makalah Scheele (Beatrice) – Psychology
Allison Baker (Nebraska City) – Pre-Dental Hygiene
Addison Gyhra (Auburn) – Elementary Education
Alyssa Marsh-Contreras (Bellevue) – Kinesiology
Madison McPhillips (Omaha) – Psychology
Allison Tichy (Bellevue) – Kinesiology
Drew Bippes (Falls City) – Undecided
Logan Jasa (Sterling) – Management
Wil McCoy (Lincoln) – Management
Jaxson Balm (Auburn) – Elementary Education
Jackson Tingwald (Ralston) – Health and Physical Education K-12
Amiya Coleman (Lincoln) – Art-Fine Arts
Sydney Neal (Peru) – Management
Azlyn Fendrick (Lincoln) – Marketing
Shea Kinnison (Nebraska City) – Elementary Education

In addition, many other student-athletes who had completed their eligibility and were finishing their degrees, along with student assistants and student managers, were on the Dean’s List.

Athletic director Wayne Albury was pleased with the number of student-athletes gaining recognition. He stated, “Having 99 student-athletes on either the President’s or Dean’s is a significant accomplishment for our department.”



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