

Your Country Neighbor



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November
2011

More Football Photos of the October 15 PSC Game Inside

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

Devon Adams
Merri Johnson
Shirley Neddenriep
Vicki O'Neal
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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:

www.yourcountryneighbor.com

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Finally, ten years after 9/11, I got my chance in September to visit New York City, a place I've wanted to see for a long time. It wasn't high on my husband's list of places to go (there are no golf courses in downtown Manhattan), but as a 40th wedding anniversary gift to me, he agreed to make it a side-trip of our visit to his sister in Boston.

We took the train from Boston's South Station at 6:15 a.m. and arrived at Pennsylvania Station about 10:00. The train was comfortable, but there was no fancy dining car where you could order a meal from a waiter; just a snack bar with a few booths. But the views of the Atlantic coast harbors and inland waters were lovely.

My sister-in-law had cautioned me to keep tight hold of my purse in New York, and our niece had told us how chaotic Penn Station had been when she went into the City on St. Patrick's Day. (What was she thinking?!) Fortunately, the Station wasn't filled with Irish or faux Irish revelers on September 21 and we had no trouble finding our way up to street level.

Emerging onto the corner of 7th Avenue and 33rd Street, I had no fear of being mugged, pick-pocketed or getting lost, let alone becoming the victim of a terrorist attack. It was like being part of the morning television news programs, walking the neighborhoods I'd seen hundreds of times on TV. Hubby, always in a hurry to get from Point A to Point B, was focused on which way to go to find our hotel, while I was absorbing the atmosphere. "Look, we're on Avenue of the Americas." "There's 5th Avenue!" "It's Macy's! The Thanksgiving Day Parade comes right by here." "So this is Times Square. Incredible."

Looking out over the City from the 86th floor of The Empire State Building the next morning, I tried to spot just one single family dwelling. As far as I could see, there was only street after street of brick buildings rising up like haphazard stair-steps and built in all manner of architectural styles. Every so often, a church spire pierced the space between mammoth rectangular structures, reminding me that even New York City is not entirely a monument to capitalism. It boggled my mind to imagine how many people were inside all the rooms on all the floors of all those buildings. And there, like an oasis, sat Central Park, the true source of my desire to visit New York City.

Hubby and I had toured the Park the afternoon we arrived. We eschewed the horse drawn carriages and bicycle taxis, preferring to see everything up close at a walking pace. I should have known better. Hubby had determined to keep up his cardiovascular exercise regimen on our trip, and Central Park presented the perfect opportunity. We walked almost the entire park – 51 blocks running north-south and the three loong blocks east-west. Eight hundred acres of lovely things to see and experience, condensed into five hours, the last hour of which consisted mostly of willing myself to keep putting one foot in front of the other. My walking shoes were not quite as cushy as I could have hoped for.

Everyone asks me if we saw any shows while we were there. The answer is no, unless you consider The Naked Cowboy of Times Square to be a show. We didn't actually watch his performance, lingering only long enough in our quest to pound as much pavement as possible in our 32-hour visit to note that he was tall and slender and his outfit included only a Western hat, boots and tightie-whities, mercifully blocked by his guitar for the most part.

By the time we headed back to Boston we had accumulated 25 miles on hubby's pedometer. Hurray for us. But really, I'm not complaining (much). I thoroughly enjoyed the City and have plenty of reasons to visit again. I think I'd better do it fairly soon, though, if I'm going to be able to keep pace with hubby.

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Poetry by Devon Adams

SHADOWS ON THE MOON

Drifting on the wind are wisps
of wet clouds in filmy scarves
that throw shadows on the moon.
Like memories from a dream, they
seem to change the present reality.
We search for meaning in fragments
floating in our inner vision, and implore
our reason to lead us to the truth.
But we exist on a level somewhere
between invisible dimensions
that hover just beyond our reach.
Now and then we touch the edge
of the past and it becomes the present.

NORTH OF NOVEMBER

October skies are true blue, as
crisp dry air invigorates sluggish
bodies gone soft from summer's
sweat bath, and colors explode
like rockets tethered to the ground.
But a cold Canadian draft chills the
flat prairies, bringing a warning of
harsh conditions to come.
The world will be a different place
as the calendar pages fall into winter,
and we find ourselves north of November.

FIRE IN THE WOOD

The wood is dry and full of fire.
It is stacked inside the shed
behind the house. Each log
will have its turn to burn inside
the old wood stove. The flames
will be the memories of trees
that used to be, and only ashes
will remain of lives once lived.

MASQUERADE

The barren trees stand like ghosts
across the pond. Their shapes
are shifting with the light, moving
in one place, hiding behind fog.
Then the buck appears, in costume,
wearing insubstantial smoke for
camouflage. He is no color, only
smudges in the air, and he'll disappear
before you know he's there.

HOW LONG?

How long is too long?
It depends on the color
of your temper.

SWEETER

In the evening
of the day,
songs are sweeter
by the tweeters.

FEATHERS

I have a jar of cardinal feathers
on my painting table.
My cat
has the rest.

BREAKING TRAIL

The meadow grass is deep and dense,
as it wavers in the winter wind.
Last year's thatch is woven tightly
with this summer's blades, and
stepping high is the method
for propulsion. Then the timber's
edge begins, and breaking trail
is harder than before. There are
sharp dagger thorns reaching out
to rip both clothes and skin, and
branches whipping into faces.
But suddenly the path is clear.
It appears where critters tread, the
snaking, sinewy twists and turns
that paws and hooves have carved
through brush and trees and grass.
Like a key in a lock, the secret passage
opens the door to the wild.

REFLECTIONS

I can see
the world
looking back at me
in the reflections
of my horse's
deep brown eyes.

DRIPS

There are drips and drops
of paint on the floor
under my drawing table.
I don't care.

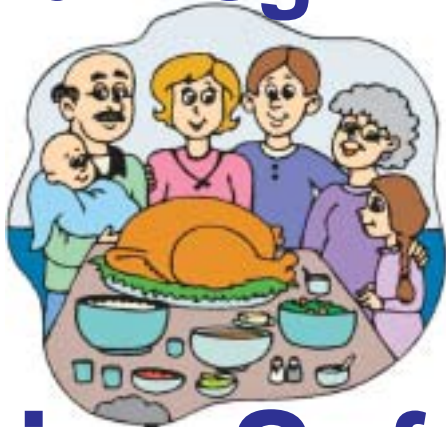
FLAKES

It snowed all day,
and not a flake left
to show for it.

BOUQUET

My palette looks like
a bouquet of flowers
that cried,
and all the tears
ran together.

Going Home For Thanksgiving?



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Peru State College, October 15, 2011

Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

Sometimes life doesn't always go as planned. Call it karma, destiny, or just life, things often go astray. What we do for ourselves during difficult times helps to shape what we think of ourselves. Yes, I said what we do for ourselves.

I am a woman of faith. I do have my public faith, but sometimes I need another layer of my faith. Now don't get me wrong, both of my layers of faith come from the same source, one is just more private than the other.

Whenever I ache so bad, I turn to my private faith and the best place for me to find it is outside among nature, solitarily looking deep within at what is now and what potentially could be. Yes, I look into the soul of the universe and that is where I can lose myself, in a good way.

It is during these times I have learned to give all my worries, doubts, dissatisfactions, my flaws and uncertainties over, over to eternity.

Sometime I find the soul of the universe in a dark starry night, sometimes in a perfectly deformed flower, or the deep throated croak of a bull frog, or in the sparkling icicles that hang down, all these are gifts from beyond the universe.

One gift given to all of us, if we just allow ourselves to indulge, is to give our weighted concerns over. It is so much lighter a burden when shared. Our faces will frown less, wrinkles will become smooth, our hearts will be chipper and our steps will be as light as goose down. The soul of the universe smiles, accepts our concerns and asks for only one thing in return "to do the next right thing in OUR universe" always.

Living, meditating and lightly moving on, where doing the next right thing comes easy, where life is good. Happy Thanksgiving to each and every special one of you.



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KATE - A NURSE

Shirley Neddenriep

A starched white cap sits perkily atop a smoothly styled hairdo to identify a Registered Nurse (RN); when did that system disappear?

No starched white cap to identify a Registered Nurse today. Nurses wear 'scrub tops' of various colors and designs. An RN is incognito, except for a badge pinned in place, unreadable from a patient's in-bed perspective.

Kate is one such. She is young, fresh, spirited. She cannot be of an age to have earned the title "RN." When will you graduate? I graduated four years ago. She is a smooth one, that Kate! Deft movements, friendly ways and always at the ready to answer her pager. Nurses do that now - wear a digital device and are able to respond, hands free, to another nurse in a nearby room calling for help - to lift or turn someone. Patients folded into a "W" by their beds welcome the sight of Kate, or one of 599 classmates come to help. They do 12-hour shifts there at Bryan LGH-E. Some are LPN, some are aides, all are angels with a common mission. Florence Nightingales they are, all over again.

Kate wears her hair straight, styled in a short, chic cut that falls forward away from her face as she leans to spread a sheet or fluff a pillow, and, as she raises from her work, falls perfectly back into place. No Rita Hayworth fling, no tucking behind the ears. And her attractive "do" frames a beautiful smile.

On Saturday, September 3, she stood near Tennessee/Chattanooga played Nebraska that night. She wore a black, red, and white scrub top patterned in Husker/UNL logos in recognition of the event. About the game, and its Pep Rally, she commented, "I think I will go home and watch whatever is left. Her shift ended at 7 pm, but she still worked the floor an hour after that. 'Dedication' is her middle name.

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Peru State College, October 15, 2011

Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
Photo Submitted by Author

Fishing:

It's Official that the 2011 flood is over – according to the Army Corp of Engineers that reported this week that the Missouri River from Montana to St Louis is below flood stage in all areas. Now the clean up for the man made flood begins. There is plenty of controversy over how its going to be done in the future and plenty of finger pointing also, and I feel there's going to be plenty of restructuring of jobs real soon within the Corp of Engineers who control the flows of the river though the series of dams and locks on it's way to the Mississippi River. Time will tell on that matter – so let's get to what we have control of – fishing. The fishing has been tremendously good in the past month. The timeliness of the river receding into its banks and the feeding frenzy that takes place when the water starts cooling down (which is an indicator of the change in seasons), has really kicked the fishing action into high gear. Can you get to the river? Sure can around here. The boat ramps are cleaned off and the main river accesses have been made passable. Now it's up to you if you want some of this action. Big ones and little ones are 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. All I can tell you is that they are feeding now so get out and get some.

Frog Hunting or Frog Fishing – never figured that one out. Call it Frog Hunting but you need a fishing license and catch them with a hook and line. With the high waters this year there was a positive thing that came out of those conditions. More frogs! You know there are plenty of them around when they are getting hit on the highway. Instead of coons you see splattered bull frogs. Now that's crazy like we haven't seen in years around here. As strange as it seems (back to the hunting thing again), there is a season on bull frogs! The season is from August 15th to October 31st with a bag & possession limit of eight frogs with a length requirement of 4 1/2 inches from snout to vent. If you like them or would like to try them they're not hard to find right now. You tell me, is it hunting or fishing???

Hunting:

All kinds of small game seasons are open right now, and the Big Game seasons are open one by one also. So there is plenty of hunting opportunities right now.

Other upland game and seasons are as follows:

Species	Bag	Possession	2011 Opening Date
Cock Pheasant	3	12	Oct. 29
Youth Cock Pheasant, Quail and Partridge Seasons	2	4	Oct. 22
Quail	6	24	Oct. 29
Partridge	3	12	Oct. 29
Rail	10	20	Sept 1
Snipe	8	16	Sept 1
Woodcock	3	6	Sept 24
Dove	15	30	Sept 1
Squirrel	7	28	Aug 1
Cottontail	7	28	Sept 1

BIG GAME HUNTING

Fall Big Game Seasons are open or opening too.

Fall Turkey Seasons (Archery & Shotgun), opened September 15th and will remain open until December 31st this year and will allow hunters to bag two (2) turkeys of either sex on the fall permit with a limit of two (2) permits per person. Again this year – while hunting during the Firearms Deer Season, Turkey Hunters must wear 400 square inches of hunter orange for visibility by other hunters.

Deer and turkey hunting tags can still be obtained now.


For big game information you need to go to “The Nebraska Game and Parks” web page at: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/hunting/guides/biggame>


Fishing is excellent on the river right now, and the hunting seasons are coming on too. It's time to get out there 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.”



This month's picture is of Darin Reeves from Peru shown with a whopper Bull Frog taken near Peru.

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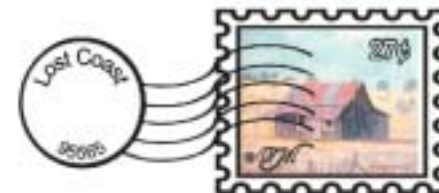
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Of Blunders and Blessings

By Vicki O'Neal



It was one of them days.

I stood in a long line at the Dollar Store. Ahead of me was a flustered old Granny—juggling enemas and a handful of loose change. She dropped her coins and enemas all over the place. Everybody sighed and shuffled their feet.

I should have spoken up, then. Should've cheered up the old lady.

"Yep. It's one of them days, Granny—but we'll make the best of it. I'll write about you in my newspaper column. You'll be famous in four States—enemas and all."

But no. I didn't say it. Didn't try to cheer up the old gal. I was feeling grumpy, today—not benevolent. Leaving the store, I drove out of town toward the coast. I was thirsty. I'd bought a can of Dr. Pepper. But I'd forgotten to buy some ice.

Ice addicts have intense cravings, especially on these kinda days. I had to find some ice, somewhere. I drove along slowly—hopeful, watchful...Feeling desperate.

Then, I saw it. A bunch of ice-chests sitting on a lawn. There was a crowd of people standing around, eating. They all had on cowboy hats and fancy boots. Cowboy convention? Family reunion? Funeral?

Didn't matter. I needed ice. I braked to a stop. Putting on my sunhat, I went to join the cow-folk. Mixing. Mingling. It didn't take me long to get to the point.

"May I have a cup of ice?" I said. Politely, of course—as is the custom in these situations.

"Ice? Sure!" They gave me some in a cup. "Have some cheesecake, too." They insisted on it—handing me a paper plate and a fork.

What could I do...? I ate the cheesecake. Two pieces, in fact.

I thanked the cow-folk, and drove on—crunching my ice and licking my plastic fork. I felt more cheery. Things were starting to look up! But I should've known better. These kinda days don't get better. They only get worse.

At the beach, the wind was blowing, kicking up sand. The sunshine was bleak. As soon as I opened the car door, my hat sailed away. I ran to catch it. The wind slammed the door shut behind me. I knew what had happened even before I tried

the door handle. The car-lock button had been activated. I was locked out.

No keys. No cell-phone. No entry. No luck. I tugged at several door handles, fuming. They were all locked.

No doubt about it. It was one of them days. Much worse than an old Granny at the Dollar-Store...juggling enemas and dropping coins everywhere. I'd trade places with a constipated Granny in a heartbeat.

I looked around. No pay phones. Nothing but miles of surf and blowing sand.

What to do?

I went to sit behind a sand dune where the wind couldn't find me. Sat there thinking about my predicament. Self-pity swept over me.

It was then that I saw him...a one-legged seagull. He should've looked sad and pitiful, but he didn't. In fact, he looked quite perky. Even cheerful. He stood a few yards away, gazing at me with interest. No self-pity in this one-legged fellow.

Soon, he took off with awkward grace and circled overhead, only to land again, nearby. He did this repeatedly, watching me with that same disconcerting gaze. I was perplexed...intrigued. Why would a seagull do that? He could see I had no food for him. Why was he here?

I felt my self-pity melt away as I watched him. "OK...OK, Lord" I said at last. "What's with the lame seagull?" There was no answer. Just the sound of pounding surf and blowing sand.

I stared past the gull to the waters beyond, where the sea met the sky.

Over there in distant lands were millions of starving people. Lame. Sick. Hurting. Dying. They struggle for every crumb of bread and every drink of water. Desperate people with little hope for tomorrow.

They have no ice. No cheesecake. No cell phones. No cars to drive. Nothing. They don't even have Dollar Stores or enemas. Every day of their lives is One-Of-Them-Days. Yet they persevere against all odds.

I sighed. Lord, forgive my foolishness. OK? I will try harder.

I leaned over and picked up a big seagull feather that was lying on the ground. It looked just like an

old-fashioned quill pen. I began writing words in the sand—a list of all my blessings.

The list was long, scribbled across the sands. When at last I looked up, the one-legged seagull was still there watching me—approvingly, I was sure.

He got up and stretched, then took off—doing his awkward little dash across the sand. He disappeared into the sky, never to be seen again. Ol' Mr. One-Leg.

The sun was sinking in the west. I gathered up my hat and jacket and feather pen. Slowly, I walked back to the car.

I'd learned an important lesson, today...But I still had a serious problem. I peered through the window of my car. There were my keys and cell phone just beyond my grasp. If only I could....

Impulsively, my hand reached out once more and tugged at a door handle.

The door opened abruptly.

What...!? Oh thank God! But...how? Why? I stood staring at the door handle, mystified.

A car-lock button locks all the doors at once...not just a couple. So why was the passenger-door unlocked, now? It was a mystery to me. I knew only one thing for sure. I was thankful to be back inside my car!

Starting the engine, I sat staring at the surf crashing upon the rocks. It was beautiful!

"Thank You, Lord, for so many blessings. For oceans and sunsets. For family and friends. For kind cowpokes and cheesecake. But most of all, thanks for my little friend...ol' Mr. One-Leg. He taught me to count my blessings...even the smallest ones. For this I am thankful."

Rays from the setting sun broke through the clouds and splayed across the waters. A trillion dancing diamonds. I couldn't help but smile.

It had turned out to be a gorgeous day after all.

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



A gathering chain snaps and a man cries out in surprise as flesh is torn and leg bones shatter. Entangled in the mangled iron he crumples against the inside wall of the beet cart, as still as death, oblivious to the pain he should be feeling; "Get my billfold out of the pickup." he mumbles to his horrified son, "It's got my insurance card in it."

Then comes the frantic flurry of phone calls, the first to 911, the next to the farm wife whose life has been irrevocably changed while she finished up the fall canning, the third to a Colorado-bound daughter-in-law on her way to an uncle's funeral.....a cell phone held in shaking hands, the bad news relayed in a voice choked with fear and disbelief, "Dad's hurt...his legs are broken...I can see the bones...we're in a field south of the Henry river bridge."

They'd been trying to free up a frozen chain inside the cart of the beet lifter, but the usual iron bars and brute strength weren't enough, and they'd made the ultimately fateful decision to torch the links apart, unsuspecting of the energy they were about to release; after all, there was no reason to think this time would be any different from all the others.

Beet lifter digger-chains are a perpetual problem...they bend and warp, or catch a rock, or pack with mud in a wet field...I've seen the problem a hundred times....and so had they.

In one sense Steve's lucky: he wasn't alone when the accident happened. Instead of bleeding to death inside the piece of machinery he was trying to repair he's under heavy sedation at the local hospital where doctors assess the injuries, and plan a course of treatment.

He may never crawl up into a tractor, operate a combine, or chase cattle again, but he's alive.

Thursday afternoon, under a crystal-clear October

sky Dale drove to the beet field where Steve's son (and crew) pulled beets. Following his heart, and an unwritten Code of the West, he offered his help whenever, and wherever it's needed...even though his own workload is exceptionally heavy this time of year. Other neighbors did the same; secure in the knowledge, if the roles were reversed, they could count on the same support system.

To most of you this will be just another farm accident that happened 'somewhere else.' But consider this: the sugar in that package of cookies you buy next year, or in the cake you bake for your toddler's next birthday, may have come from beets grown in the field where Steve was hurt.

It's a small world, and if, as is postulated, everyone is just six steps away from any other person on earth, your connection might be closer than you think.

Say a prayer for Steve...and his young son who now shoulders the responsibility of bringing in the harvest...and, if you're a farmer, for pete's sake be careful out there. Regardless of what you might believe, you're not invincible...or indestructible.

Put safety first....and everything else will follow.

As Always, Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

Tammy Westhart, Accountant

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