

Your

# Country

# Neighbor



**FREE!**

October 2011

The First Home Game at Peru State College was Highscoring and Exciting!

## *Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha*

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

### Writers this month

Devon Adams  
Vicki O'Neal  
Karen Ott  
Josh Whisler  
Marilyn Woerth

### Thank You

Merri and Shirley are expected back next month.

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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](http://www.yourcountryneighbor.com)

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## NEWS RELEASE

Nearly 11,000 Nebraska citizens, born in the year 1946, are among the wave of Baby Boomers becoming eligible for Medicare benefits. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIP Professional, Mary Ann Holland, will present *Medicare Mysteries No More: Explaining Medicare*, on Friday, October 7 at 10:00 a.m. at the Presbyterian Church, 1005 1<sup>st</sup> Corso, Nebraska City. No registration is necessary and there is no cost to attend the workshop.

## Where to find *Your Country Neighbor*

Look for this publication in grocery stores, pharmacies, hardware stores, restaurants, cafes, and in businesses that advertise in these pages in the following Cities and Villages in **Kansas**; Baileyville, Beattie, Home City, Hiawatha, Sabetha, Seneca, and Summerfield. In **Nebraska**; Auburn, Brownville, Cook, Falls City, Humboldt, Johnson, Nebraska City, Nemaha, Pawnee City, Peru, Syracuse, and Tecumseh.

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These photos are from Peru's first home game, September 10.



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## Poetry by Devon Adams

### BLOOD RED

The time of turning  
has come to the hills,  
and sumac leaves are  
dripping color like they  
have been murdered.  
A low sun angle  
illuminates their rows,  
as they hang like soldiers  
lined up at attention.  
One by one, they fall,  
becoming soil once more.  
Soon, the memory of  
their fire will be frozen  
under careless snow.

### FRIED APPLES

Frost is painting a riot  
across the folded hills, and  
it is time to fix fried apples.  
They are the excellent companions  
of pork chops, browned until the  
kitchen fills with irresistible aroma,  
fogging chilly window panes with  
moisture rising from the stove,  
tempting appetites to indulge  
beyond the bounds of restraint.  
Memories of childhood  
intensify the longing, but the  
taste is worth the calories.

### PARTLY CLOUDY

Sky clouds slid in slowly,  
looking like buttermilk curds  
stirred in the big blue pan.  
Warm sunshine got lost  
in gray shadows, and the  
short day pulled up damp  
drafts from early evening.  
Summer was yesterday.  
Winter was waiting to pounce.  
But the softness of the autumn air  
felt like the sweetest breath  
that heaven has to offer.

### WALK IT OFF

A dusty road leads away  
from tangled thoughts  
and jumbled solutions.  
Take a long, long walk,  
and don't think, just look.  
Fill your frame of mind  
with one thing at a time:  
The yellow feather,  
lying in long brome;  
a red-winged blackbird,  
perched along the creek;  
the scurry of a mouse;  
rumbles from a distant train;  
sunshine falling in your hair;  
red random pebbles;  
cornstalks rustling in dry wind.  
These things are real, but  
fear is only an illusion.

### ROCKY BLUES

At a street dance  
on a quiet night,  
the beat of the band  
was sad and slow.  
The country song sang  
about losing and forgetting,  
and losing and remembering,  
while dancers felt the memories.  
The blues are never out of style,  
because rocky roads are always  
just around the bend.

### UNION STAR

The great black cloth of the sky  
is full of stars, shining in a union.  
It is the universal flag  
that calls us all together.  
But the human race can't seem to  
learn that we are all the same.  
We have so many separate flags,  
with guns behind them, waging wars.  
In the end, we will all belong to  
an army of disembodied soldiers  
gone to rest beyond the  
bounds of consciousness.

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## Where Life is Good

by Marilyn Woerth

I am generally a lucky person; lucky in love, poison ivy hardly ever bothers me (stinging nettles do), my wisdom teeth have never made an appearance, but unfortunately, I am not cool. Nope, nada, not cool. How do I know this? Grandson B, told me so. "You are not cool grandma. You have got to get cool." (Sigh!)

Now when a seven year old tells you that you are not cool, it can really be a blow to your ego. So I ask, "Why isn't grandma cool?" "Because you don't buy me cool toys." Ah, an aha moment. "Grandpa does, he's cool." (A dirty look glances off my husband.) "Okay, well can't you just love me for who I am?" "Nope, you got to get cool." (Deflated.)

Now grandson B takes after his father in his artistic abilities which came from my maternal grandfather and not from me. The weekend grandson B was with us, I skipped out on a Sunday afternoon to the local restaurant that was featuring an art teacher and some of her students. Since I knew the instructor and one of the students I decided to go to support them. Much to my surprise, it was an interactive art show and we were given instructions on how to produce an abstract art form known as moon painting. My art project didn't turn out too bad and I rushed home with my "cool" art piece, sure the crown of "cool" would finally be bestowed upon me.

While grandson B was with grandpa catching frogs in the pond, I rushed about getting all the supplies gathered so grandson B and I could make a moon painting together. When he came to show me his jar full of frogs, I showed him my painting and told him we were going to make one together. Wasn't that cool?

"Grandma that's not art, that's scribbling. Why can't you draw animals?" Well kid, because grandma failed Drawing 101. Now grandpa overhearing our conversation, took pity on grandma. He took grandson B inside and showed him a painting of colorful lines an artist friend had painted, and he also told him how much we paid for it.

The next day I was doodling on a piece of paper with colored pencils and grandson B said, "Now grandma that is art." Thank you grandpa, now grandma may still not be cool, but grandson B has more of an appreciation of all kinds of art. (Just don't scribble in school, because I am pretty sure your teacher has told you not to scribble.) Maybe someday grandma will reach the cool status, but for now she'll just be happy with not being labeled a scribbler.

Hoping that you all are more "cool" than I am, but if you're not, at least we live where life is good and we can tell ourselves that we are indeed, "cool" just for living in the coolest place on Earth.



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# Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler  
Photos Submitted by Author

## **Fishing:**

The River flooding this year has been no secret. But as the river recedes into it's banks the real amount of damage is now just being revealed. The Manmade flood of 2011 has left it's mark like no other flood in history. Breaking levies and leaving flow so high for so long has taken it's toll on the Missouri River Valley that will not be repaired any time soon. From highways and interstate pavement looking like a loaf of sliced bread spewed about, to county roads with 30 foot deep holes blown in them. The damage is so severe it's almost overwhelming. How is this damage going to be fixed? The government broke it - is the government going to fix it? The questions are as numerous as the results of the flooding, and to think it's not over yet. The flood waters though, inside the river's banks, are still high enough to flow through the breaks in the levies onto the bottom farm ground of Missouri and Iowa. Many of these areas are still inaccessible. Why is it still running through the breaks? The river has cut a new channel through those breaks, that's why. So until the river is channeled back into it's banks, it will continue to flow through the levy breaks onto bottom farm ground.

On a lighter note, fishing has been good. There is a lot of bait in the water now, but the fish know it's a matter of time before winter will hit, so they are feeding up for the long winter months. If you can make it to the river's edge, they are hitting about any bait thrown at them. Large and small fish are hitting right now. The river is still CLOSED in our area to boating. But bank fishing where it's accessible, again, has been good.

## **Hunting:**

Squirrel Season opened August 1<sup>st</sup>. Dove and Early Duck (Teal) Seasons are also open now. All kinds of small game season are opening one right after another. So there is plenty of hunting opportunities right now.

## **BIG GAME HUNTING**

Fall Big Game Seasons are coming around now too.

Fall Turkey Seasons (Archery and Shotgun) opened September 15<sup>th</sup> and will remain open until December 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

You need to go to The Nebraska Game & Parks web page and check the 2011 Big Game Seasons out now!


At: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/hunting/guides/biggame>


Fishing is good the river if you can get there, but is about time to move on to hunting with the smell of fall in the air. With permits still available you need get your permits and start planning your fall big game hunt. 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 fishing picture is of Gary Garver from Auburn with a stringer of flatheads caught on the Missouri River near Peru.

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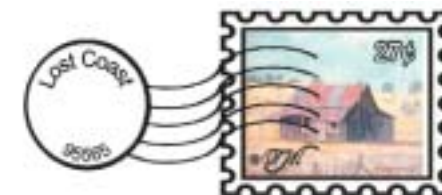
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Lost Coast

# Autumn Echoes...

By Vicki O'Neal



It came at an unlikely hour...5:20 in the a.m.  
But who am I to argue?

I slip out of bed, into my clothes, and out to my car. My husband appears in the doorway...A native Cali-man who knows nothing about the Call of Autumn.

He stands there in his skivvies. Bewildered.  
Watching me drive away.

I don't try to explain what I'm doing or where I'm going. How can a Midwesterner explain such things to a coastal Californian?

Especially when I don't understand, myself.

All I know is that it comes every Autumn. Cool. Brisk. Mysterious. A restlessness that can't be described or explained.

It should never be ignored.

I drive toward the river bluffs, wending through the misty Redwoods. Ahead of me, the Eel River is a glittering serpent in the early morning light, slithering toward the coast. Subtle. Sleek. Beautiful, yet deadly. It has claimed many lives.

I think about that now, as I park my car near the old bridge and meander toward the bluff, I'm still uncertain where I'm going. The Call of Fall is strong, here, but where is it taking me?

On the mountain above is an old train-track. Below it is the "bottomless river gorge"—where a locomotive passenger-train ended up many years ago.

Old Timers recall the wreck...The screams of terror echoing against the bluffs as the train plummeted into watery darkness. The bodies remain there to this day—buried deep within the gravelly bowels of the Serpent...A sleek serpent whose appetite is never satisfied.

The Eel River has consumed many hapless victims.

I turn to stare up the mountainside. Up there is another serpent—winding through the earth. A long black Tunnel. It's where the ill-fated train was heading just before it derailed and plunged down the mountainside.

I'm standing there thinking about it when suddenly, a clamor arises in the distance, drifting to my ears on the breeze. A ghostly, echoing barrage that seems to come from the direction of the tunnel. The sound dies away.

Strange.

Intrigued, I turn and work my way uphill, through poison oak and briars, panting, grunting, sweating. Whatever secrets this place holds—they are certainly well-guarded.

I come at last to the old railroad tracks. They gleam dully in the morning sunshine. Rusty. Overgrown with weeds and trees.

Beyond the trees is the gaping mouth of the tunnel, with fang-like briars hanging downward.

It swallows sunlight, like a black hole in space—not allowing a single sunbeam to penetrate. Deep. Foreboding. There's no light at the end of this tunnel. Just a mysterious blackness that goes on forever—a place haunted with stale misery...if not ghosts.

There is no sound from within the tunnel. Not a drip of water, or the flutter of a bat. I strain to hear a sound. Something. Anything. There is nothing but silence. Dead silence.

Spooky! I shiver and turn to go.

It is then that I hear a noise—not as loud as the echoing barrage I'd heard earlier, but definitely unnerving. A popping and snapping—like the cracking of invisible knuckles somewhere.

Big ones.

I turn to flee, tripping over briars and roots as I

go—knowing most assuredly that I've disturbed a cantankerous ghost or two. What else could produce such a horrible sound?

I hurry downhill at a good pace. No need to linger. My spirit of adventure has vanished in the morning mist. This place is too eerie for me—full of unexplainable noises and strange echoes...

And ghosts who crack their knuckles.

Just then, my cell phone rings. I jump nervously, fumbling for the noisy thing clamoring there in my pocket—drawing my attention back to the present. To the season at hand. To the relative sanity of an autumn day.

It's a friend of mine on the phone—in quest of fresh berries for her blackberry jam. She wants to know if I can join her...?

I take a deep breath. Of course I can join her! Blackberry hunting...Another autumn adventure. A saner one, perhaps—minus the strange noises and cracking knuckles.

But I don't try to explain it to this native Californian, of course. (She would be as bewildered as my husband...the dear man in skivvies who stares after me, mystified.)

I sigh and click off my cell phone, taking a deep breath of the rarefied air.

A stiff breeze stirs the trees. The breath of Autumn. Cool. Brisk. Mysterious. A restlessness that precludes the changing of the season. There are new things to discover within the Autumn mist... More mysteries to explore and escapades to embark upon.

Another Autumn Echo upon the breeze. Another Call of the Fall to heed.

And I am ready. Oh yes, I am ready...!

# The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



I'm drawn to old books, especially children's text books from the nineteen twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties. The Elson-Gray Basic Readers and MacMillan Publishing's Work-Play Books are my absolute favorites, but there are a dozen or so lesser known 'reading-series' equally appealing to folks like me who enjoy the simple, straightforwardness of the stories, and the charm of the illustrations. Tales of little boys sledding down snowy hills in old dish pans, and stories of soap-making mothers and daughters offer glimpses of American life before texting and tweeting cluttered our days with nonsensical chatter, and kids spent their youth in the real world....not a virtual one concocted by some nerdy video gamer.

Perhaps that's the reason I found the book 'Friends Near and Far' (copyright 1943) so appealing, especially chapter 4...'Prairie Farm Children' authored by George Rotter, Extension Division Staff, University of Nebraska.

Forty-two pages of 1930's-1940's farm life...as seen through the eyes of a boy named Tommy...covers a year of American agriculture in the corn belt. Nostalgic, black and white photos range from a man guiding a horse-pulled plow to the 'latest technology', a steel-wheeled tractor pulling a two row corn planter; a picture of a young boy working a corn field captioned "Hoeing weeds on a hot summer day is no easy job," is a visual reminder of how things used to be....before herbicides.

Today's farm kids continue to be enlisted in the fight against weeds, but not to the extent of yesteryear. I never made it further than a few fields of beans, but my mother often recounts how her father sent his brood of nine to the corn fields as soon as the sugar beets were thinned and hoed...which kept my aunts and uncles out of trouble while instilling the value of hard work.

Want to know how fields were tilled and crops

were planted in the 40's? Look at the photo essay on page 151. Interested in harvesting corn by hand? Flip to page 163. If canning is your passion the picture of the fruit cellar with its hundreds of packed-to-the-brim mason jars is something to see: "Most farmers grow and can a great deal of their own food." the book explains, "By the end of the summer their fruit cellars are well stocked with good things to eat. "

My canning efforts are lined up on the shelves of our large kitchen pantry, but when I was growing up the same storm/fruit cellar that now houses nothing more than a spare freezer and water-pressure system was crowded with jars of fruit, meat, vegetables, and juice....and I recall my mother often asking my dad to "Go down in the cellar and bring up a jar of....."

Nowadays we drive twenty miles to Wal-Mart

for a single loaf of bread....and complain how much we're spending on gas.

You can still find a few relics from that bygone era; on most farms there's usually a couple of antique tractors tucked away somewhere in a ramshackle building, or maybe even a few pieces of rusted, horse drawn equipment hidden behind a weathered, weed-choked windbreak.... hard-to-part-with, old-iron memories of life on the land.

It's been 68 years since the book 'Friends Near and Far' was new; I can't imagine what this farm...and agriculture....will look like in another 68 years. But I'll wager in 2079 there will still be hoes....and plenty of weeds.

As Always, Karen

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