

Your *Country* Neighbor

October 2013

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Lourdes High School, 2013 Apple Jack Parade



The crowd was enthusiastic and supportive at the PSC Game, September 28, 2013

OLD TIME AUTUMN WEEKEND



- October 12 & 13 *Old Time Autumn Weekend*
- Civil War Era Re-Enactment; 200-300 Re-enactors
- Boat Rides, Carriage Rides, Trolley Rides
- Saturday Chicken & Biscuit Dinner 11:00 - 1:00
- Living History Presentations
- Re-Enactor Spencer Davis

Sponsored by Brownville Historical Society
Paid for by *Nemaha County Visitor's Committee*

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Voices from the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher and Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers This Month

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 Karen Ott

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Thank You

Your Country Neighbor

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Cover Photos

Bands representing much of southeast Nebraska in the Applejack Parade, put on a great show for the largest crowd ever photographed for *Your Country Neighbor*. More photos on page six.

Peru State College lost a heart-breaker to Benedictine College in Auburn, September 28th. After leading throughout the game, Benedictine scored in the last minutes to win 45 to 41; a well fought and entertaining game. More on page 14 and the back cover page.

HAY HARVESTING - Circa 1960's

Shirley Neddenriep

Here at this farm, during the growing up years of five sons, the second oldest had the assignment of mowing the hay.

Usually no later than May/June each year, the first cutting of alfalfa hay dovetailed the final planting of row crop. Ideally, several days of hot, sunny weather coincided with hay harvest.

The second criteria was timing. Alfalfa has the most nutrients when the plants are just beginning to bloom. When these major standards are met, a crop of hay for animals on the farm yields a high content of fiber and 24 to 26% protein.

Second son, at an early age, began his summer job of mowing the hay. He was lean-built and wiry. His brothers told of the summer they constructed a tree-house. A ladder accessed the site 10 feet above the ground. One day this brother of theirs dropped a hammer, thud! to the dirt below. He nimbly jumped to the ground, retrieved the hammer and scrambled back up to the work.

For mowing, he drove the Ford Selecto-Speed with a sickle mower, its cutter bar driven by the power take-off from the tractor. The narrow-front tractor had 10 speeds forward for shifting gears on-the-go. He made the most of the tractor's power steering by attaching a spinner knob for quick turns.

He mowed the perimeter of the hay field for the back swath. Then he could charge into uncut alfalfa hay at the most effective speed. At the end of the field he made a quick turn. Timing was critical. He used the narrow front, spinner-knob and power steering to aid him in his maneuver. He raised the sickle, hit the inside brake, pivoted, drove along side the still standing hay, lowered the sickle (without clogging the cutter bar with hay that had just been cut, or miss any stands still uncut) all without reducing his speed. Repeat.

His method mused today's zero-turn mowers. His speed distressed our neighbor lady, Maxine, who lived across the road. "I was afraid to watch!" she declared. Productivity that his dad encouraged was 10% of his efforts. The rest he considered pure fun.

Raking hay held less glamour than mowing or baling. Three-bar rakes gave way to 4-bar and those are hidden in windbreaks. The 10-wheel rotary New Holland rake became available. This machine lifts hay from the stubble and avoids dirt or debris in the hay bale. One day I watched in the farm shop as this strange machine

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was being tweaked and thought, "What a marvelous piece of engineering!" Mowers and rakes were displaced by windrowers (hay harvesting machines). That machine could cut and rake a 20-acre field in 3 hours compared with six hours each for mowing and raking on the same number of acres.

At first, dad operated the baler, dropping bales onto the ground. An option to pull a wagon held no appeal. He had to keep moving as in addition to his own hay, he custom baled for other farmers. His sons loaded 60 to 80-pound bales onto wagons. Each bale in the load had to be precisely placed on the wagon bed to establish a straight-sided load of bales four layers high containing 96 bales. An additional two layers were added, but shrunk in from the sides to top off the load and get as much hay as possible each trip.

Putting up hay brought families together and encompassed neighborhoods. Hungry young hay helpers slacked their thirst and hunger at the kitchen table, or on a grassy site near the barn. Laughter and tales filled the glen. This continued for generations as testified from a granddaughter. "I will always remember the day I found out I had passed my LPN boards. I was helping Grandpa pick up hay bales. We had a lot of fun that day, just he and I working in the field together."



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Poetry by Devon Adams

STOP LIGHTS

The intersection light
has changed again.
Green to red,
summer to the blazing crimson
of sumac walking in the wind on the hills,
rose hips glowing in the morning mist,
flames of bittersweet burning in cedars,
and ladies of the trees wearing outrageous
red and gold dresses that blow away and
leave them stripped naked in the cold rain.

INVITATION

His hammer head
is pounding out the worms
that hide inside the rotten,
hollow branch of the aged maple.
He doesn't notice
the fancy leaves around him
that are burning red
from the sun shooting
shafts of light like
bullets from a rifle:
if you have to die
and fall on the ground,
you may as well
have a party
and wear the hottest shades
that nature has made
with her lovely, long
freezing fingers of frost.

ENGINE NOISE

They are crazy for noise
and like to rev their motors,
all at the same time, in a
cacophony of vibration that
is shattering to ear drums.
It is a continuous, clashing
competition that removes
all quiet from the atmosphere.
It is the annual locust horde,
driving their tiny Harleys
over the speed bump from
summer into autumn.

HAWKS

Sometimes I wonder if
they rise to heaven and
then float back to the
deep of the sky. They
seem to flirt with the
circle of the sun, as
their spirals take them
higher and higher, away
from gravity and reality.
Maybe they carry the
spirits of their prey after
a kill has been made,
and deliver death.

THE SHADOW SIDE

When the moon is full,
and beautiful with silver,
we forget about the dark
behind the face.
But in the quarter phase,
or the balanced half and half,
shadows can't hide.
So it can be with a pair
of people bound together.
The early part of love is
blinded by bright light
casting doubt on warnings
that are often small and
easy to discard.
Then life becomes real.
Shadows show themselves,
until love becomes control,
and steals your freedom.
But truth was always there,
hidden by the light of lies.



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife
Merri Johnson

If we're lucky, or maybe just alert, every so often we get to experience something out of the ordinary. That happened to me in September on the Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve east of Valentine. I was a participant in the Nebraska Master Naturalist training program of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

I happened to see an article about the program in our local newspaper early in the summer. It's a small miracle that I actually read the article, as I typically gloss over news releases sent out by the University. There are so many of them!! I sometimes feel that there's more University news than local news in the paper. But I'm grateful that *this* article got in.

For seven days, I and 15 other participants, plus a dozen or so instructors and other volunteers, inhabited the Nature Conservancy's 55,000+-acre property along the Niobrara River. That in itself was a singular blessing. Atop the Sandhills prairie, we observed the Preserve's 300-head bison herd: a group of bulls, cows and late calves up-close; others trotting across the prairie in their paradoxically bouncy style; and still others grazing at a distance, looking just as natural as the grass itself. And the view is the kind Western movie-makers look far and wide to find: that place where, as far and wide as you gaze, there is no evidence of human activity, unless you're in just the right spot to see the windmill and stock tank.

You may recall last summer's lightning-strike wild fires in northwest Nebraska. Those fires burned the Preserve's prairie along with a significant amount of timber, much of it Ponderosa pine. But the prairie responded the way nature designed it to and came back gloriously. And the timber stands will recover, likely more diverse; nothing is static in nature.

If you're familiar with the Little Nemaha River here, you know that you are not likely to see the bottom of it through the silty water. So, for this Nemaha County resident, the Niobrara was especially exotic. We spent an hour or so wading mid-thigh deep in it as part of our wetlands training. Yours truly made the mistake of wearing blue jeans and hiking shoes into the river. Clambering back up the shifting sand bank in sopping wet jeans and shoes felt like having ten-pound weights attached to each foot. I'm pretty sure my staggering posture gave the same impression to everyone behind me.

I fared much better during our afternoon of kayaking the Niobrara. Needing only to *steer* my kayak as it was carried along by the 3 mph current was much less taxing than my slog up the riverbank had been. Along the way, a bald eagle watched us from its perch on a ledge in the bank, 40 feet or so above the river. Then it showed us its wingspan, gliding a ways downstream and landing in a tree on the other side. A little farther on, a belted kingfisher demonstrated its swoop-and-scoop technique for us. And all the way, we could clearly see the large rocks and sandbars under the river's surface, which did not necessarily keep some of us from getting hung up on said sandbars a time or two.

Continued on page 14 >>>>>>>>>>

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Mark Your Calendars

Plan to attend the 2013 Living History celebration at Arbor Lodge State Historical Park.

The 33rd Annual Living History season kicks off Sunday September 29. Inside Arbor Lodge, demonstrations will include seed beadwork, rigid heddle weaving, lace making, woodcarving, quilting, and more. Within the park, visitors will enjoy mineral/fossil displays, chainsaw carving, cooking, rope making, leatherwork, and other fun activities.

Living History on October 6th will bring more fun demonstrations, including lace making, knitting/crochet, wood carving, wagon train dolls, quilting, and leather craft. Visitors may enjoy a hayrack ride and carriage ride, as well as cider press demonstrations.

This year Arbor Lodge will be hosting a "Family Fun Festival" in conjunction with Living History. The park will have the Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Families Event Trailer to share many outdoor hands-on activities; such as casting, turkey calls, bird watching, fish printing, birdfeeders, and more! Other outside fun will include pottery, Dutch Oven cobblers, and sausage making.

Inside Arbor Lodge, the Friends of Fort Atkinson will demonstrate spinning, weaving, and lace making. Demonstrators will also show seed beadwork, leather sewing, rigid heddle weaving, needlework, quilting, and knitting/crochet. A full schedule of activities will wrap up Living History on October 20th. The Pioneer Children's Choir will delight guests at 2:00 on the South Portico. Mike Riege will thrill park goers with chainsaw wood carving, Mansion guests will love demonstrations of china painting, knitting/crochet, wood carving, acrylic painting, and needlework.

Arbor Lodge State Historical Park invites everyone to attend the 2013 Living History Celebration. In addition to the many activities, each Sunday visitors will enjoy Charles Bachle with his Dancing Horse Paso Finos, as well as cider pressing, and leather craft demonstrations. Concessions, Kettle Corn, and Carriage Rides will also be available. They also offer FREE scenic hayrack rides through the park. There is something for everyone this fall at Arbor Lodge State Historical Park in Nebraska City.

Submitted by Laura Steinman, Special Events Coordinator, Arbor Lodge State Historical Park
steinmanl@windstream.net 402-873-2061 (cell) 402-873-7222 (work)



Peru State College Touchdown Run, August 31, 2013

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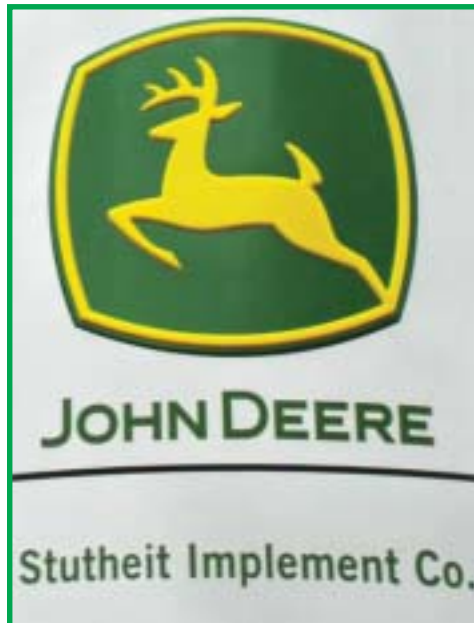
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(A) '01 Dixon XTR 5020 50" Deck	\$1800		

Medicare Drug Plan Deductible Less in 2014

Mary Ann Holland Retired University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIIP Professional

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS] have announced lower Medicare Part D deductibles for 2014. The maximum deductible set by the federal government will be \$310 as compared to \$325 for 2013. Average drug plan premiums remain largely unchanged from a year ago; the nationwide average premium is \$31.00 per month.

Nebraska Medicare beneficiaries will have the option to choose a Medicare Part D plan from 29 offered, according to Mary Ann Holland, retired University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator and Trained SHIIP Professional. "I will be hosting Medicare plan comparison/enrollment events in Southeast Nebraska, the same as I have done the last few years. Every Part D enrollee should review their options when it comes to prescription drug coverage for the coming year. Very soon your current plan will send information for the 2014 changes in coverage that will start January 1, 2014. Beneficiaries may not need to change drug plans for 2014, but the only way to know for sure is to

view details about your plan using the drug plan finder tool on Medicare.gov.

In Nebraska, 14 of the 2014 drug plans will have the maximum \$310 deductible, while 13 will have a \$0 deductible. Two plans have other deductible amounts. Monthly premiums in this state will range from \$13 to \$141. At least those are the preliminary numbers, says Holland."

Several 2013 drug plans will not be available next year; likewise, there are new plans to consider. Each year, the drug plans have the option to be part of the state landscape, or not; they have the right to determine deductibles, premiums, co-pays/co-insurance, restrictions, and medications they will or will not cover. Having a drug plan comparison is critical because there may be changes that you are unaware of which in the long run could be very costly.

Mary Ann Holland will be hosting drug plan comparison events

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Tips on How to Improve the Resale Value of Your Home

by Leslie Justus

- Don't over-improve your house. Keep with the standards of the other homes in your neighborhood.
- Tearing out a wall to create an "open layout" could improve the appeal of the home and it doesn't have to be expensive.
- Buyers have a tendency to lower their offers when they notice deficiencies and maintenance issues. Do some mild updating in all of the rooms. Choose styles and fixtures that complement the house.
- Remodeling your kitchen is a good way to add resale value to your home. Replace outdated appliances with energy-efficient ones. Replace cabinets and countertops if needed. Address only the basics. Use neutral colors.

Remember, there is no foolproof formula for adding resale value to your home. Do your research and always ask the advice of a real estate professional. This could help avoid costly projects that don't really add value to a home.

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during the annual open enrollment period from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. There is no cost for the service. Contact your local Extension office for more details. A complete schedule is available on the Cass County Extension website: <http://cass.unl.edu/>. Follow the link to the Medicare Page which lists all enrollment events.

Auburn enrollment events will be held at the Auburn Memorial Library on Oct. 23, Nov. 19, and Dec. 5; contact the Nemaha County Extension office at 402-274-4755 to schedule an appointment. Pawnee City events will be held in the Pawnee County Courthouse on Oct. 24 and Nov. 5; contact the Pawnee County Extension office at 402-852-2970 to schedule an appointment. Johnson County enrollments will be held at Ridgeview Towers Assisted Living in Tecumseh on Nov. 6 and Nov. 15; contact the Johnson County Extension office at 402-335-3669 to schedule an appointment. First National Bank in Sterling will be the enrollment site on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1; contact Doris Behrens at the Sterling Senior Center, 402-866-2050, to schedule an appointment. Syracuse enrollment events will be held Oct. 22, Nov. 7, and Dec. 3 at the Otoe County Extension office; call 402-269-2301 to schedule an appointment.

Enrollment events in Nebraska City will be held at The Ambassador Care Center and the Kimmel Education & Research Center; appointments can be made by contacting the Cass County Extension office at 402-267-2205. A list of dates and locations will be available when you call.

On the date of your appointment, you will need to bring your Medicare card and a list of prescriptions you take. You will have a one-on-one counseling session to determine your best options for 2014 enrollment in a Medicare prescription drug plan. Questions for Mary Ann Holland can be left at any local Extension office, or by e-mail at [HYPERLINK "mailto:mholland1@unl.edu"](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:mholland1@unl.edu) mholland1@unl.edu.

This article was written by Mary Ann Holland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator Emeriti and Trained SHIP Professional. Additional questions about Medicare can be directed to the Nebraska SHIP at 1-800-234-7119.

Scarier than Haunted Houses

By Vicki O'Neal



In October, my kids love going to “Haunted Houses”...But not me! Life is scary enough as it is. I get all the chills, goosebumps, and panic attacks I need in my every-day-Life!

Recently, I took a vacation to the West Coast. I was walking down the Main Street of Eureka, California, when a man started screaming at me for no reason...roaring at the top of his lungs. He was high on drugs.

I avoided eye-contact with him and walked quickly to my car, then jumped inside and drove away. Scary. Really scary!

I drove to the rocky sea-coast to calm myself and to clear my head. I'd just found a beautiful spot to relax when suddenly another man showed up...An odd character to be sure. He apparently had a lot on his mind.

We struck up a conversation and he told me about his friend, Jessie, who had just been killed a couple of miles from here. Jessie had been deliberately shot in the face with an arrow from a crossbow. A homicide investigation was underway.

“Jessie was the greatest guy in the world!” he said. “But he’s dead now! His funeral is tomorrow.”

“I’m so sorry,” I said. “That’s really scary! This world has gone nuts...!”

“And it’s about to get worse!” he said. “We’re heading for trouble in America. Criminals are getting out of prison early because of overcrowding. Our borders are overrun by illegal aliens.”

His face was morose and brooding. He was like a volcano of bad news. Spewing. Vent-

ing. “Martial Law is coming!” he said. “Terrorism. A collapse of the dollar. A Stock Market Crash. Looting. Hunger. Anarchy! The signs of trouble are everywhere!”

He was staring down the road where his friend had been shot in the face, just days ago. He obviously wasn’t a happy man. I sidled away from this gloomy character as soon as I could and headed for the rocky ridge jutting into the sea. I climbed above the pounding surf and sat there staring at the overcast sky. No matter how gray the sky, or how dark the world situation, I refused to be gloomy today. I would enjoy my vacation and all the beauty around me. I would think Happy Thoughts!

I did so for several hours...but soon the sky grew darker and raindrops began to spatter down on me. The tide was coming in with a vengeance. It battered the cliffs, nearly

Continued on page 13 >>>>>>

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Day dawns a million times removed from Middle East butcherings and Washington D.C. bickerings.

In farm country, nothing matters except this moment, the curtain is closed on the world stage and my theater seat empty; I am cocooned in rural solitude, separated from the whims of the foolish and the warlike by more than miles. Here, among the green fields and dusty dirt roads, life is, if not simple, sweet as clover honey.

The sun lies hot and heavy on the land, ripening the corn, drawing out the moisture until each golden kernel is hard as flint. In the near 100 degree temperatures bean fields 'turn', a local term used to describe the gradual yellowing of the leaves and ripening of the pods. After a summer of moderate temperatures three weeks of fry-an-egg-on-the-sidewalk heat arrived just as the last drop of the valley's irrigation water trickled down from the watersheds....the Wyoming reservoirs, Alcova, Grey Rocks, Seminoe, Pathfinder, GLendo and Guernsey had given their all...and now the valley bakes, like a loaf of homemade bread, in Mother Nature's oven.

I'd be hard-pressed to name a single farmer who was fortunate enough to escape this year's generous crop hail; summer storms were frequent and vicious....carrying spotty rain and tons of softball, baseball, ping-pong, quarter, nickel, and marble sized chunks of ice. Some folks lost their entire crop in June, others were wiped out in August. Most, like us, experienced various degrees of damage, and the approaching harvest will no doubt be a combination of the good, the bad, and the ugly. But that's to be expected.

The high winds from one such storm toppled some trees and broke dozens of branches in those still standing; fast-growing Cottonwoods are prone to such damage and a few jagged branches are hanging by a thread in the uppermost reaches of the trees surrounding our farmyard. The darn things fall when you least expect it, often crashing to the ground on a dead-calm afternoon...which scares the life out of farm-dogs Butch and Jake who spend most of their time during summer's dog-days sleeping in the shade...under the trees.

Widespread rain would have made the hail easier to bear but regrettably the storms usually dumped a gully-washer on a mile square area and pitter-pattered everything else with a light sprinkle. This week's forecast is 7 days of 'possible' showers...and temps in the 70's.

Well, we'll see about that.

The vegetable garden has been especially fruitful this summer, and my pantry overflows with canned goodies; in this part of the country nearly everyone cans, freezes, or dries summer produce for winter consumption. It's part of the rural way of life. I dug two rows of onions on Saturday afternoon, picked 6 bushels of tomatoes before church on Sunday, and harvested 10 watermelons that evening (6 left on the vine for ripening); lettuce and kohlrabi were eaten last spring.... cabbage was processed into sauerkraut, or shredded, cooked, and frozen for cabbage burgers a month ago. I'm still harvesting peppers, German blackberries, squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, beans and carrots. Like most women who raise a large garden I feel guilty if any produce goes to waste...although I do have to admit that in the past two months my hens have eaten over-grown cucumbers and zucchini by the boatload. They start cackling in glee the minute they see me coming.

And speaking of chickens.....there's new life on the farm. Yesterday afternoon a mama hen hatched out five baby chicks.... I gave them a drink, scattered a handful of chick starter on the brooder house floor, and left the new family in peace. She was setting on 12 eggs so there's a possibility we may see two or three more chicks by the end of today.

Dale cut beans again this morning, and if the rain holds off he'll combine this week. At this point the bean crop is in a vulnerable state. Rain, hail, or both, can beat the pods open and pop the beans into the mud, and wind can roll the windrows across the field and into the neighbors hay field...or the bar-pit.

He'll be a nervous wreck until the beans are safely combined and delivered to the beanery. When he's not 'doing' beans he'll be chopping silage for winter feed...and thinking about the upcoming corn harvest. From now until the final truck leaves the last field Dale will be focused on nothing else.

He's a farmer...and that's his life.

Have a good week....and pray for all those who find themselves living in countries governed by the ruthless.

As Always,

Karen

Alzheimer's Affects Us All

This Is Your Brain, Doing Its Best To Fight Alzheimer's

By Lee Nyberg



Dementia is in the news, movies, and magazine advertisements. A Lincoln High play featured a patient with Alzheimer's. It figures in several mystery novels I have read recently, all by different authors. Everywhere, I hear real-life stories of someone who is living with Alzheimer's. Despite this swirl of dementia and Alzheimer's around us, it is not inevitable. Only about 10% of the population at 65 and only about 30-50% of the population over 85, has it.

Even so, I guess most of us are thinking about how to prevent dementia and its most common form, Alzheimer's, or how to slow its progression, especially if a person already has mild cognitive impairment (MCI). Much has been written about medication, so this article covers other avenues to preventing and delaying dementia. The Alzheimer's Prevention Program, by Dr. Gary Small, presents an exercise and nutrition program specifically designed to protect the brain. "Successful Aging," by John Rowe, M.D., and Robert Kahn, Ph.D., reports older adults who stay sharp have actively worked at it, as these three examples show: Ernest converses for one to two hours a day on current events and reads 5 books a week; Allescio completes every word challenge in the newspaper every day and never watches television; and Vera reads, plays bridge three to four times a week, does daily crosswords, and plays weekly games of Scrabble and cards. Experts in brain development have long known our brains keep growing throughout our lives, but only if we keep exerting them. Think of training for a sport: to keep progressing, you must continue to add physical challenges.

Now consider a runner cross training for swimming: new muscle groups will be used and strengthened. Similarly, researchers are beginning to see the importance of mental

"cross training." Studies by Mount Sinai Medical Center, Miami, FL and University of New South Wales, Australia show cognitive training has significant benefits for people with cognitive impairment. Cognitive challenges vary from easy to quite difficult. Here are some examples:

- Mental exercises involving sequencing and relationships between objects
- Longer term efforts, such as learning something difficult (or teaching someone else): Chess, bridge, or a new language or technology
- Learning and using memory tools: i.e., The Roman Room Method ('Alzheimer's Prevention Program,' p. 64.)

We have all experienced a form of mental cross training already. Remember when summer was over and the school year began? Apart from your joy or revulsion to be sitting in a classroom again, you probably felt a bit foggy, as if your brain was not working quite right. If you were like most people, you were out of practice at doing math and paying deep attention while reading. As the early school days passed, your brain fog cleared and school began to make sense again. Summer is over and mental stimulation is forever—for all of us who want to do all we can to stay sharp.

Lee Nyberg seeks to help families care for loved ones with Alzheimer's through education and her company, Home Care Assistance. Home Care Assistance provides in-home senior care, helping seniors maintain their independence, dignity, and control and giving their families peace of mind. For more information, visit

www.HomeCareAssistanceLincoln.com or
www.HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com or
call 402-261-5158.

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obliterating the narrow pathway that led back to my car.

Here I was—stranded high on my perch—thinking “Happy Thoughts” while lightning speared the sky. What in the world was I doing?

Quickly, I skidded down the side of the rocks and hid beneath a slight overhang. I teetered there for several minutes watching the waves rush in and out at my feet. Somehow, I had to make a run for it. I couldn't stay here forever...But I was scared stiff. I might drown in the raging surf! Might die right here on this spot!

I thought of my kids. I wanted to call them on my Celly and tell them about my predicament...maybe even say Goodbye!...but then thought better of it. I must hurry. I had no time to lose!

I counted the waves, waiting for the seventh wave—the largest—to pass. When it receded, I slid down from my perch and ran like the dickens across the wet sand. The incoming surf licked at my heels hungrily—frothing and foaming with rabid fury..

I ran and ran, praying loudly, urging myself onward. Rain pelted my head, and the waves galloped toward me....But I prevailed against the watery death. The waves never flattened me against the cliff, nor sucked me out to sea.

Exhausted, I made it back to my car and slid down in the seat panting.

The rain had become a rushing madness by now...dumping from the sky. I'd barely made it in time. I sat there staring out the windshield at the

driving rain, while thanking God for my narrow escape. I assured Him that I wouldn't be so foolish again....

But who am I kidding?

My kids might like Haunted Houses, but I love the rush of adventure and dangerous living! I'd survived yet another scrape with death and it was an exhilarating feeling. An adrenalin rush!....Much better than Haunted Houses!

Scariness is kind of fun, folks....**IF** you survive it. It makes your blood pump and keeps you young and vigorous. It makes you glad to be alive and keeps you from taking Life for granted!

Happy Haunting, everyone! Have an awesome Autumn....and a fantabulous Fall....!

And don't do anything that I wouldn't do.....Y' hear?



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<<<<<< Continued from page 5

Now, don't imagine that the week was filled with nothing but fun and games in the great outdoors. We had plenty of seat time in the *un-air conditioned* Visitor Center where experts in everything from snakes to prairies to lodge pole pines and much more shared their considerable knowledge and passion with us. I cannot do justice in this small column to their contributions to my education in that one week.

In addition to first-hand observation of nature, there is something elementally instructive about doing without a few luxuries for a week. Did I mention the thermometer was pushing 100 degrees on our first day? And that the bunkhouse was not air conditioned, either? Or heated, for that matter, which became relevant as the week progressed. And that I slept in a top bunk that did not have a ladder for access? Or that we had one shower and two toilets for over a dozen women? There was no opportunity to hog the sink or the mirror or the shower or that other bathroom fixture. And the lighting in the bunkhouse was not designed for applying mascara. Some of us ran out of clean clothes before the week was over, even though some of us had brought along two suitcases full.....

That week on the Niobrara was one of the most important weeks of my life in recent memory. (Perhaps not *quite* as important as the week I spent with my newborn grandson last January. But close!)

If you love nature and have the opportunity to become a Certified Nebraska Master Naturalist, I highly encourage you to do it. You can find out more by contacting me at merrigs40@gmail.com or visiting <http://NATURALIST.unl.edu>.

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Peru State College Football Cheerleaders

Photography and Poetry by Carol Carpenter



Scapes

Suburbia

Brick ranch style houses
fake shutters of red, black or green
plain white aluminum siding
cookie cutter homes with two car garages
neat trimmed lawns
chain link fences, these boxes
all lined up on both sides of the street
wrapped in concrete sidewalks

Detroit

Bright city lights
cold blue steel and silver glass
forests of brick, chrome, plaster, asphalt
heat shakes the sky, all light, no stars
summer evenings of brats, beer and baseball
winter mornings of cold tile floor, slanted sun
frosted iron gates, sirens warble

Rural home

swaying sunflowers beneath a cerulean sky
turkey vultures swarm above the limestone bluffs
corn tassels kissed by the evening sun
pinch pleated hills of gold and evergreen
fragrance of freshly mowed alfalfa and clover
chorus of coyote, bullfrog and meadowlark
Milky Way spread thick across the night sky
black, damp earth of Missouri river bottom
and the promise of the sunrise

Yellow head

A yellow-headed ruby-throated
female hummingbird darts between
the lilac branches near the feeder,
ostracized and pursued by the other
females;
she's evidently not welcome here.

Even the little fledglings give chase,
her golden crown shining,
iridescent green wings whirr when
she comes around for another pass.

Quick as a wink she slurps the nectar
before the others discover her theft
and bully her away,
our little anomaly,
the top of her tiny head
smeared with sunshine.

Swing

Rubber seat squeaks under denim
metal chain slick and cool
jump and push back
finally free from the ground.

Arms pull, legs pump
forward and curl back
toes pointed to clouds
muscle bone breath
sinew blood rising
back and forth and
back and forth and
back and forth
higher and
higher and
higher.

Stomach flutter and
heart thumping
until that single moment
that pause at the top where
flesh defies gravity
self-propelled
freedom
without feathers
without wings
I know
I can fly.

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