

Your

Country Neighbor

FREE!
September
2011



During August 2011 there were some hot days, but this sight was rare.

Voices from the Valley of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

Writers this month

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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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Tiger Swallowtail on thistle

What If

by Lila Meyerkorth

What if this were the last opportunity to give someone a word of encouragement,
---or thank a friend for a word of chastening that woke us up?

What if this were the last opportunity to help a little child, or the elderly,
---and all in-between?

What if this were the last opportunity to tell our family we love them,
---or a friend how they have helped us through the journey of life?

What if this were the last opportunity to pray for our military,
---or give those who are back a heartfelt thanks?

What if this were the last opportunity to thank our parents, teachers, and pastors for their patience,
---and for the extra time they give us?

What if we had been a fake, but eventually found our way,
---or are too proud to admit that we do need the Savior and stumble on without him?

What if this were the last opportunity to count our blessings?
---Oh, the list should go on and on and on.....

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Pipevine Swallowtail on phlox

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

By Merri Johnson

I've had several reminders recently of how cushy my life is. Of course, we all know intellectually that life in the U.S is generally pretty cushy, but I'm convinced that very few of us grasp that reality in any meaningful way. Unless you're one of those whose homes had to be evacuated this summer due to the Missouri River flooding. And not merely evacuated, but in all likelihood, permanently abandoned due to damage too extensive to ever repair.

And then there's the heat wave of July. Didn't we all think a million times, "Boy, air conditioning was sure a great invention." Have any of us intentionally gone without it for more than a nasty day or two? Air-conditioner breakdown or a power outage might force discomfort on us briefly, but it's a pretty low-income person that can't find a way to keep the old A.C. running. You know what? I met one of those people this summer. Electricity turned off for non-payment. That meant no A.C., also no lights and no refrigeration for food. Think about it.

Yesterday I was made aware of another local family struggling to keep a roof over their heads – literally. An eviction date has been set. We can speculate on how the family came to this, whether or not they are deserving of help...again. It seems that government assistance has been exhausted. But there's a dependent child involved. Those of us who profess that Matthew 25:34-40 applies to us must act when confronted with such a situation.

What must it be like to endure continual discomfort, or uncertainty, and even danger every day just to acquire food and shelter? To be sure, many people do perform physically demanding labor. Construction and slaughter house workers come to mind, as do miners and migrant farm workers.

Five years ago, I had the opportunity to spend *one* afternoon harvesting grapes. The temperature was bearable enough, but it didn't take long for my hands, arms and bare legs to turn sticky. And then to turn gritty with small insects, bits of leaves and dirt stuck to my skin. And the bees! They generally didn't sting, but they did land on me and do a lot of buzzing. Grape picking is not for bee-phobes.

At the end of my five-hour stint in the vineyard, I returned to my air-conditioned home and took a shower. And I knew I didn't have to go back to the vineyard, or a lettuce field, or an apple orchard the next day.

I don't know much about the lives of migrant farm workers. But several years ago, while traveling to Alabama, we pulled up behind a pickup with a topper. The hatch was open and inside I could see two women and a couple of kids riding on top of what looked like all their worldly possessions. A middle-aged man and a younger one rode in the cab.

I made brief eye contact with one of the women, and in that instant, "migrants" became real people to me; not just cohorts of a particular ethnic group tallied in Census data. This was a three-generation family living out of the back of a pickup. Perhaps they were on their way to a permanent home. Even if that was so, it's probably reasonable to assume that their lives would still be a lot less cushy than mine.

I don't feel guilty for having an easy life. That could change in the blink of an eye. But the next time I'm tempted to whine about a little hardship, I will remember the family in that pickup, and bite my tongue.

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Poetry by Devon Adams

WATER AND HEAT

She sneaked up behind the hill
and peeked through the trees.
Water was running in the valley,
which wasn't at all unusual.
The strange thing was that the
water wasn't the river anymore.
It was everywhere that was flat.
Roads and trees and buildings had
been drowned in acres of flood.
Her face frowned as she felt the
searing blast from the heat wave
that was cooking the valley.
It was confusing to have water and
fire existing in the same place, as though
they were at war. Rising to her full height,
the moon sighed, as her silver light bathed
the scene of destruction in a pewter patina.

FOR NOW

While working through your list
of things that should be done,
stop and read between the lines.
Look for the smallest print,
written in invisible ink, that is
hiding behind your obligations.
Let the day drift away, just for now,
and listen for the silent song
that plays inside your heart.
Then sing along with that tune,
and save the list for later.

APPLE TIME

The orchard is full of pregnant trees,
bent from the weight of the fruit that
hangs from their branches.
They are waiting for the force of gravity,
or the grasp of human hands, to relieve
the burden of their summer's growth.
Wrapped inside their tight skins, the bodies
of flesh and juice are waiting to be savored
by the hunger of the humans who have
nurtured their lives from blossom to bounty.
But other critters also covet the sweets,
and they come to gather the fallen orbs
lost in the grasses, or passed by for more
perfect specimens. They will carry seeds
to wilder fields, depositing them in a random
pattern, and some of those errant travelers
will take root and become secret caches,
known only to the deer and raccoons and
all the rest of the community that walk on
four feet, or sail in the sky with wings.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

They didn't go to contractors' school,
where houses fill the pages of books
about construction. Right angles and
perfect plumbs aren't an issue for the
wild things that run through the grass
and fly through the blue of the sky. Their
homes meet the basic rules of camouflage,
coming without corners or straight lines.
Some are woven with perfection from
grass and hair and bits of fluff and twigs,
and now and then a human touch,
stolen from yards or porches.
Others are improvised from piles of brush
and trees that storms or man has stacked.
Rabbits move right in and use the cover
as a house and hiding place, while wrens
and other twitters love the maze of twigs
available for nests, or sleeping roosts or
singing platforms set far below the highest
tops of trees, where their showy cousins
like to flash bright colors and read the
sheets of music written just for orioles
or thrushes, or mockingbirds.
Being wild is harder than it looks, and
innovation matched with materials is
the way to spell survival for critters that
have intelligence that rivals human brains.

This Labor Day Honor Hard Work



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Where Life Is Good

by Marilyn Woerth

A summer of malcontent. Hmm, I wonder if that is how this summer will go down in the history books. Uprising all over the world. Riots in England. Financial global skids. Erratic weather patterns. Political hatred. And the kicker in the heartland, the flooding and all it entails. No wonder we are all so depressed, it's enough to make any sane person run for a therapist (hopefully, they are all still sane).

When my mood and thoughts start spiraling down there are two things that can pick my spirits up, children and flowers. And boy have I been enjoying both lately. Grandson A came to visit for a week and Grandson B joined him for a couple of days. Grandma ended up tired, wet (water gun fight), sun burnt (lathered them up but forgot myself), loved, and extremely happy. (Also, bowled a 210 on Kinect.) Hmm speaking of the Kinect and Xbox, I now have duct tape lines on my carpet in front of the television, the boys are very competitive. "He made me lose, he got in front of me, I couldn't see", so on and so forth. Grandma pulled the plug.

As for my flowers, they have been blooming wonderfully, especially the natives, purple coneflower, black-eyed Susans and yarrow. Looks like there will be a good crop of goldenrod (Nebraska's state flower), we also have a huge crop of peppers (all types and colors). Salsa making will be very colorful this year. My roses made it through the hot spell fairly well, I may have lost a few perennials, but I don't think it was from the heat. Hard telling.

While watering all my container plants, grandson A accompanied me one day and as I watered he went behind me and with a small vial and poured (imagination, please) a special formula he had mixed-up for my plants to protect them from thunder and lightning. My super hero. I love it when my grandsons and my flowers play well together.

Right now I am looking forward to September and October, my favorite months. When my energy level picks up, my mood swings are less, and I seem more focused on the garden. The grandsons are back in school so when I need a kid fix, I run up to Council Bluffs to scoop up my two and four year old nieces. We have wonderful tea parties together, (no duct tape needed).

When I think of the rich fabric of my life, I often find some worn spots, some torn spots, and some seams where the threads are stretched as far as they can go without breaking. But I have found a little bit of mending, whether it is faith based or therapy based, can go a long way to strengthen those spots and seams. We are born of strong pioneer blood here in the heartland. We don't let a little aging on our fabric get us down for too long. Besides, where life is good you can still find children and flowers, friends and family, and once in a while a very proper tea party. Oh yeah, and a snake box (don't ask).

A DAY OUT

by Shirley Neddenriep

“Come see the Pink Wave Petunias!” My visitor followed me to the clear front storm door. We would not need to go out into the heat to see the flowers. She stood beside me and I heard her gasp! “Oh-h-h-!”

“Granddaughter helped me with them,” I bragged, “so they cascade from their 3-foot raised bed to the ground.” Then I heard her get her breath and say, “Will you look at the size of that spider?!”

And there he was, the scene stealer! Two inches across and clutched to the stone wall of the porch. “Oh, he is just a garden spider,” she rationalized, turning back toward the kitchen, completely ignoring the showy cascade of pink blossoms beyond. Sometimes its true that pride goes before a fall.

She drove and the three of us toured sites my sister selected. Coryell Park; sis and I remembered walking the three miles from our home in Brock to play all day on its swings and slides, then do the 3 miles home again. Barefoot.

Onward to sister’s place in the country where she raised her family before moving away. We drove in from the west on a dirt road where you wouldn’t go in rainy weather. Driving along that narrow track she recalled memories of cows chased, calves rescued from the flooded creek, a huge boulder, also salvaged from the creek and set at the driveway.

We visited the Veteran’s Memorial and learned that a name must be paid for to be inscribed onto the stone. It does seem unjust when they have already given the full measure. Nothing is free.

A friend joined us for lunch, what fun! Back home sis helped me with a baby quilt, ripping the seam apart. I’d inserted a prairie point with its raw edge out and stitched it down firmly! After the two of them left for home in Beatrice, I inserted a fresh point and stitched it in place. Now it is ready for little Ellie, three weeks old as I write this.

Next I made my bi-weekly volunteer time at the library for a couple hours and after that a neighbor came by. She swept those nosy spiders off the front porch. We sat while her son mowed, a job I enjoy when there is energy. Tonight there wasn’t. We did stroll to the garden to harvest the first watermelon, Crimson Sweet, a beauty. Soon after that the storm rolled in putting a hold on outdoor activity. It had been a good day.



Rocky Mountain National Park, July, 2011



Black Swallowtail on thistle



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Whisler's Hunting & Fishing Report



by Josh Whisler
Photos Submitted by Author

Fishing:

The Missouri River has fallen a little this last month. It's been clear and cool with quite a bit of water fowl flying right now. The many rock formations not seen all summer due to the higher water levels are starting to appear. And you now you know why that water in those areas was churning and swirling all summer as you passed well above the formation in your boat. A little scary at times to think there is such a massive formation under the water's surface that is disrupting the current so violently. But those things draw great respect for the river from boaters and fishermen alike. While it is a good place for recreation, it is also a dangerous place that requires respect. Are they catching any fish? At the first part of the month success was pretty good – with small and big fish, then came along the change in the weather. Two or three days in a row with frost west and north of us, which was followed up with snow. And just like that the fishing success died off - what seems like over night. No one could have seen this coming but Fall came in like a lion and looks like river fishing may be over for the year.

Hunting:

Fall is here and the hunting seasons are wide open. The summer is over and it's time to get out and get your self some hunting enjoyment.

TURKEY – Turkey hunting permits are still available to buy through the end of season.

Turkey season runs from Sept. 15 through Dec. 31, and hunters may use either a shotgun or bow and arrow. A permit allows a hunter to kill two turkeys. A hunter may buy no more than two permits for the season.

NEW: This year will be the first time turkey hunting is allowed during the November firearm deer-hunting season. Turkey hunters hunting during deer season must wear at least 400 square inches of hunter orange on their head, chest, and back.

DEER - Again, deer permits are still available too. It's as easy as checking your unit or the unit you want to hunt, and buy a permit. (Keep in mind some areas are bought out, but still permits are available.) Just buy your permit at the Game & Parks Web page:

<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/hunting.asp>.

As promised in my last article, I am still checking into local processing plants for fees and I will have list of prices in my October article.

The cooler temperatures have pretty much wrapped up the fishing for this year so it's time to move to the hills for upland game and deer action.

Bundle up and head on out there – you won't be sorry you did. 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."





Jerry Whisler from Auburn shown with some nice Flatheads



Alan Meints from Steinauer, NE shown with a 30+ pound Blue Cat caught near Peru.

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Country Gals in Cyber-Space

By Vicki O'Neal



A few years ago, we were care-free. Just rural folks with sunflowers and veggie gardens. We lived on dusty country lanes—not in the fast lane of the Internet Super-Highway.

We had no World Wide Web. Only cobwebs. No Tweets. No Facebook. No daily emails. And we couldn't care less!

The only "Viruses" we had to worry about were chickenpox and measles. "Online?" That's how we dried our laundry. Copy-and-paste? Kiddies did it in kindergarten. We had no dot.com's. Just dot-to-dots. And a "Motherboard" had just one purpose—to paddle little rear ends.

We had the breeze on our faces. The creak of a porch swing. The lowing of cattle in the pasture. Ah yes. Life was good.

But not any more.

All that changed with the arrival of the Information Super-Highway. It cut a swath through our Back-Forty—invading every corner of rural America. Gone were the meandering country lanes!

Nowadays, everyone's Tweeting and Twittering—even Grannies who don't half know what they're doing.

Nobody gets anything done. No baking, gardening, canning, or praying. We're just Googling, Yahooing, and Facebooking our lives away. Ridiculous!

My own Mother, agrees. One day, she was squinting at my "Blog" on the computer screen. Mama shook her head with gentle woe. "You know..." she said, "Today on your Blob, I'm not even sure what you're blobbing about!"

Blob and blobbing? Good way of putting it, Mother! Similar to blabbing, I think.

Oh. But we can't live without it. Surfing the net. Checking out Ebay. When our computer

systems go down, we panic. God forbid! Our world melts into a big blob of high-tech Gizmologeoliticalpsychofanaticism.

That's exactly what happened to us, the other day. A fiber-optics cable caught fire somewhere in our neck-of-the-woods and everything went down—even our cell phones. Devastating! It was TEOTWAWKI, for sure. Even "2012-ish!"

Couldn't check emails or see what the Stock Exchange was doing. Stock Markets...? Don't mention 'em! Last I heard, the Markets had dropped 100's of points. No. Wait! Somebody said they're spiking higher. Ooops. Lower. Higher. Up...! Down...! I'm dizzy from it all.

Gold prices are at record levels—which means only one thing. Investors are frantic. I warned you about that many years ago...remember? Told everyone to buy gold when it was just \$300 an oz. Now it's about \$2000! Investors always flee to Gold—seeking refuge when fear is rampant in the Markets.

Panic on Wall Street. Uncertainty on Main Street. Weariness at the Old Home Place.

A crazy world to live in, and it's getting crazier by the moment. In just nanoseconds, panic spreads via high-speed Internet. It goes viral—spreading around the globe. It used to take days for bad news to travel throughout the world. Not any more!

Economies are tanking. Entire countries going bankrupt. The Middle-East is erupting. Terrorism? Nuclear War? There's a quaking in the land. Tsunamis of bad news are overtaking us via the Internet.

Oh. And if that's not bad enough, our Planet itself is turning psychotic! Record droughts. Heat-waves. Crop failure. Climate changes. Solar storms. Quakes in unlikely places. Swarms of tornadoes descending like locusts—chewing up everything in their path. Historic flooding. Animals dying en masse. Sounds "biblical," huh?

Seems like it's 2012 already. Is this The-End-Of-The-World-As-We-Know-It? "TEOTWAWKI...?"

Naw. Not really. 'Cuz we feel fine. Just fine. We know what awaits us. There's good news in the midst of it all.

You see...When our Internet Super Highway finally crumbles away—full of potholes and decay. When our modern culture buckles beneath the weight of materialism, political corruption, permissive parenting, and immorality. Then we know that our old-fashioned values will have to kick in, again.

America will turn back to her "countrified" roots, once more—or she will cease to exist as a nation. One of these days, we'll get on our knees and appeal to our Creator for peace in this land.

Yep. One day it will happen. But until it does, we're stuck with what we've got: "Gizmologeoliticalpsychofanaticism."

Well, there you have it, my country neighbor. There it is in a nutshell...or in a "flashdrive," as the case may be.

If we've learned one thing today, it's this: It's better to garden than to Google. Better to twiddle and whittle, than to Twitter and Tweet. Let the tweeting and twittering be done in the treetops—not CyberSpace!

Ah yes. Sunflowers. Windmills. Gardens. Dusty country lanes and creaky porch swings. The sighing of the wind, and the lowing of cows in the pasture.

Forget Wall Street, and even Main Street. All that really matters is what's going on in our homes and our hearts. If we take care of that, everything else will fall into place.

Together, folks, we'll make it through the rough times ahead... (And they're going to get rough, I assure you. Rough as a corncob in the old hen house.)

So long for now. See you next month!

...If the Good Lord's willing and the crick don't rise!

Vicki O'Neal
www.VickiO'Neal.com

The Face of Drought

by Karen Ott



(Editor's note; I didn't want Summer to end without printing this July message from Karen for her readers.)

The heat shimmers in the distance, rising off the land in waves, rippling like silver over the thirsty fields. Farmers, sweaty and sunburned, work from dawn to dusk, collapsing into bed after a quick shower...too tired to eat...or talk.

It's first irrigation and the race is on.

Not long ago the water they channel down the rows was mountain snow, now it's the life blood of the panhandle, more precious than all the gold in California or all the tea in China; without it the summer sun would brown-out the crops and pastures, and this valley would turn prairie-fire dry.

The crops savor the water like fine wine, unfurling their leaves and saluting the summer sky in appreciation. But..... the fields are weeks late in development, and every day the men search in vain for the sight of tassel and silk. It's nearing August and the corn is woefully immature.

If they were able they'd mortgage the farm and buy time...three weeks....or perhaps a month more of growing weather at the end of the season; there's gold in those fields....money to pay debts, replace old machinery, or maybe shingle the house.

Time...it's all they need.

Most women tend their yards and gardens in the coolness of the early mornings or late afternoons, spending the hottest daytime

hours inside, at town jobs or at home. Some work side by side with their husbands, skin bronzed not by tanning beds or sprayed-on concoctions cooked up in a factory, but by the sun. Together they nurture this year's crop like a beloved child....for better or for worse....come hail-storm or early frost.

Sometimes the kids tag along, splashing in the water and sinking their toes into warm mud; municipal swimming pools pale in comparison to miles of irrigation ditches. By age five most of the boys and girls will have learned to 'set' a siphon tube, and by thirteen some will have taken on the responsibility of irrigating entire fields, learning early the importance of hard work.

It's 'family-time' farm style.

That's a glimpse of our summer....always different...eternally the same.

Hope you're enjoying yours...wherever you are.

As Always,

Karen

Melinda D. Clarke, CPA

Tammy Westhart, Accountant

Combined: 18+ years experience

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