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Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha to Sweeten your Coffee Break

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126
Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net

Online at yourcountryneighbor.com

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

Ralph Waldo Emerson

June Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Frieda Burston - 11

Stephen Hassler - 5

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 2

Janet Sobczyk - 12

Thank You!

Total Accumulated Covid-19 Deaths in Nebraska

May 1 2366

May 8 2378

May 15 2378

May 22 2377*

May 29 2376*

*A change in numbers concerning the cumulative total of deaths is due to a number of unconfirmed cases being inadvertently assigned a confirmed status. Upon review the improperly coded cases were immediately corrected.

Promote Healthy Living For Your Children

Dorothy Rieke

Children today are often “glued to the television, playing video games on computers, calling on cell phones, or working with iPods.” These may or may not stimulate the mind depending on content. However, other options exist that may be more beneficial to children’s physical and mental development. In fact, each individual’s life-long health may be greatly influenced by his or her actions and activities during youth.

In many cases, the household chores and the make-believe games of past years have vanished along with the benefits of use of imaginations, helping with chores, and cheap entertainment.

Granted, children do learn watching some television programs or scanning the internet. These should not be omitted. However, those pastimes should be limited in order to give children opportunities to become aware of their surroundings, gain exercise, and learn to express their ideas.

At times, with inactivity, certain health problems surface. Obesity causes are often due to a lack of physical activity and poor food choices which result in too much fat in diets from junk food. Generally, today’s “high- tech activity” children do not get enough physical exercise, which represents a key to a healthy body.

Children sitting for long periods of time often have higher BMI than active children. BMI is calculated by dividing a person’s weight by the square of his or her height. In children, obesity is defined as a BMI for ages and gender at or above the 95th percentile.

Spending time inside away from fresh air and physical activities contributes to obesity. In order to reverse this trend, children need to take brisk walks, use their imaginations, participate in extracurricular activities that require effort, and eat healthful foods.

Parents, at times, compound this problem when they take elevators, park near entrances, and drive students a few blocks to school when they could walk or ride their bikes.

However, when parents explain the benefits of vitamins and nutrients, encourage physical activity as a family affair, and set good examples with exercise and eating the right foods, they are playing a vital role in creating healthful eating patterns for good health during future days.

Physical activities must be selected according to each child’s interests and capabilities. If possible, make exercise a family activity when all members participate, support, and encourage. Activities such as playing ball, taking a pet for a walk, running errands, dancing, or participating in competitive sports, increase the chances of avoiding obesity.

Obesity influences children’s lives in the wrong ways. Because of the increase in body fat, it can cause sleep apnea and low self-esteem. Obesity increases risk in later life for coronary heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

Research suggests ways to fight obesity. These include increasing physically nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains and cutting down on sedentary actions. Early years with the right choices and a good balance of activities make a great difference in a well-adjusted happy child.

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New "Positive" Cases of Covid-19 in our "Country Neighborhood"

Source: Google Search; 'Name' County, Nebraska Covid

Date Nemaha Otoe Johnson Richardson





05/01-05/14 8 21 2 5

05/14-05/27 8 9 1 11

Isn't it your patriotic duty to protect
your relatives, friends, neighbors?

Follow CDC Guidelines as to when/where to wear a mask.

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The Red-bellied Woodpecker visits my feeder frequently.
I'm sure it has little ones in a tree hollow somewhere.



The Blue Jay only visits my yard for sunflower seed.
I've seen the Robins and Cardinals team up to chase one away.



There are several Red Winged Blackbirds in the marshy
Roadside east of Brownville.



The House Finch is a common resident with
an uncommonly melodius song.

Your Country Neighbor
Your “2-cups-of-coffee” companion
including local photos and articles
with the flavor of rural America.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I enjoy piecing together all these articles, ads and photos the week before publishing. It's like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box, but not as difficult, because there are so many ways that the end product can come out. In fact, if it were not for deadlines, I would still be 'tweaking' this issue, trying to make it perfect.

Window on Fifth Street is my preferred task when it comes to writing. I try to express my view of Small Town, America for those who may not have noticed or appreciated the beauty in their community, particularly rural living. I guess it's kind of a "count your blessings" approach to viewing your surroundings. Or maybe an increased nostalgic awareness. A lot of my appreciation for the country is due to memories of growing up on a Nebraska farm, memories renewed after living in the big city after college, and then returning to alfalfa fields, windmills, and Meadowlarks along a quiet, dirt-surface road.

Cornfields, however, are not what they used to be. I am awed each time I drive by perfect emerald green fields in July. A country bonus in recent years has been the amazingly beautiful Autumn foliage around this area, and I am looking forward to photographing October again, but until then, it's summertime!

Often around this time of year, I recall a memory from an earlier time; I must have been in the fifth or sixth grade. I had a dream that I had just woken up and it was the first day of school. That was almost a nightmare!

I didn't dislike school. School was where and when I got to be with my friends, to socialize, play games, laugh and have fun. I even liked the new ink smell of my textbooks. But I didn't care for English, I only tolerated History, but I liked Arithmetic, mainly because I could finish it quickly and then I could do something leisurely, like page through the encyclopedia with colorful pictures from all over the world.

When I woke up for real, it wasn't the first day of school after all, it was the Saturday after the last day of school, and I had the whole summer ahead of me! Best of all, Sunday was the annual school picnic with softball games and free ice cream. For a fifth grader who was tired of school and eager for summer vacation, that Saturday felt like the happiest day of my life, and at least up to that point, it might have been. And all things considered, it still ranks in the top ten.

There's something special about the Christmas season, there's something special about football season, and there's something special about Summer. So have fun with parades and festivals, picnics and ball games, fireworks and 5Ks. It's summertime and the feelin' is amazing!

School's Out!



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HEART KNOTS

When they met, it was in a hurry, at a party, by the river that runs through the park in the city. He was young and she was younger, but their eyes met and a spark was lit. It flickered, and then it flamed into complications so tight that it tied up their hearts into a big knot that was not what their parents had planned for them. “Just wait awhile, until you’re older and meet other people. Don’t decide today about tomorrow until next week, or next month or next year.” Of course they didn’t listen, and now they have grandchildren, with a great grand on the way. And the bond between their hearts is wound together tighter now, and for forever.

PAINT GUNS

A crew came through with paint guns loaded with every color of the spectrum, and they shot the colors at the trees in all directions. Now the shimmers are alive, with feathers flitting branch to branch, catching sunshine on their wings, like glitter thrown down from the sky. An orange rocket skims the orchard edge, while his yellow mate follows at a distance. Cardinals, like stop lights, are everywhere, and woodpeckers wear black and white with red caps on their heads. A blue bird echoes the sheen of an indigo bunting as a goldfinch lights up a stalk of seeds. A grosbeak wearing rose flies past the meadowlark and the red-winged blackbird. And look, new drips in nests, growing into colors!

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SUMMER DREAMS

Remember last winter, when the house was cold and the cost of heat kept rising, and the wind was constant, and the power went out? And then it snowed, and then it snowed some more? Think of a year in the form of a Merry-Go-Round that never stops revolving: you will ride out of January into February eventually. Then Spring will pause briefly to remind you that Nebraska weather can be perfect, now and then, here and there, but not for long, ever. This is why we have fantasy notions about summer: without the bugs and bites, or the heat and humidity that melts your skin into your socks, or the vicious weeds that make you itch and cut your skin, and gum up the mower. We remember only the lovely picnics in the grass (without ants and bees), swimming in the lake (without mud and peeling sunburn), relaxing in the shade of big old trees (without chiggers in the grass or snakes). Our dream lives keep us sane, on good days, anyway!

HAIL TO THE KING

The most feared of his weapons is the wind, hurled like thousands of spears from the sky to the ground, ripping, cutting, twisting into living beings, like trees and humans, the dead maker tornado. It is greedy in it's attacks, random in it's targets, final in it's destruction. But next most feared must be the heavy pellets of hail that are thrown from the same savage hearts that belong to the soldiers inside the thunderheads. From toy size peas of ice to massive baseballs from hell, hailstones can kill with precision in the same way that medieval warriors swung spiked iron balls on chains to crush the heads of their enemies. His armies are many, and his power is unlimited, this Storm King who rules the skies.

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BLACK SATIN PURPLE

Before the warmth of the spring sun and the gentle rains, the magic was sleeping inside the bulbs under the ground. Finally, a flat green leaf began to rise up into the air. It grew taller each day, surrounded by it's fellow blades. Sudden stalks shot up. Buds swelled on them. Finally, the delicate petals of the iris bloom uncurled into a satin that was softer than velvet and thinner than paper. It was deeper than night, darker than bright, like diving into a bottomless pool of black purple paint.

SUPER DADS

They seem to be ordinary, but they're not. It is an illusion. These men wear invisible costumes under their clothes, with shiny capes that float behind them, and mirrored glasses that give them the power to see through walls. On their heads are bullet shaped helmets, while steel gloves make powerful claws out of their hands. Parked on the street is a vehicle that can fly, or turn into a boat at the push of a button. A SUPERDAD opens the door and climbs into the slick projectile, not a simple sedan. The image is complete. He flies home and lands in his driveway, as his young child runs out to meet his hero.



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| (S) '96 JD 345, 54" deck, 1374 hrs, stk 372290..... | \$2,400 |
| (A) '06 JD 44 snowblower, stk 322142..... | \$750 |
| (S) '05 JD 1445, 72" deck, 1916 hrs, diesel, stk 371132..... | \$7,555 |
| (S) '13 JD 997, 72" deck, 2530 hrs, diesel, stk 322280..... | \$7,800 |



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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn



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A few weeks ago, I entered our garage to get bird seed to refill our multiple feeders. It was a completely routine thing to do, and I had no reason to suspect that the subject of my worst phobia was lurking just inside the seed cabinet. I was utterly unprepared to open that cabinet door and see a good-sized gray mouse tiptoeing among the seed containers. You can bet that I slammed that door shut with as much force as possible. It's one of those plastic cabinets with loose-fitting doors that are literally impossible to slam, so there was no satisfying crack of wood door on wood frame. Nor did I scream hysterically like an actress in a melodrama. My utterance was more of a loud gasp of revulsion.

I did march back into the house double-time, however, and instruct Hubby to immediately set traps in that cabinet. Of course, we had no traps, having never before needed one in this house. (And by the way, where are all the stray neighborhood cats when you need them???) Hubby dutifully headed for Orscheln's to acquire all means of exterminating this vermin. I know sticky traps are less humane than spring traps, but when dealing with rodents, "no mercy" is my motto. You cannot deploy too many traps when you have a mouse in your attached garage.

Anyway, Hubby emptied the cabinet and set the traps. He left the garage door open to give the vile creature an escape route. (It had probably come in through the same door, since we had unintentionally left it open the previous night.) I had Hubby empty the garage rag box to make sure there was no nest of horrid baby mice just waiting to make my life a waking nightmare.

For the rest of that day, I knocked loudly on the house-to-garage entry door before opening it, just in case that mouse was anywhere nearby. I saw no sign of the mouse on any of my visits to the garage, but I kept my guard up into the next day. Hubby checked the traps, but they remained empty.

Three days later, he announced, "Well, I caught your mouse."

"What?!" I screeched. "You mean I have been rummaging around out there for three days with that thing still hanging around?" A shiver of creepiness and disgust ran through my body.

"Yeah, I got it with the spring trap. I threw it out, so you don't need to worry about it anymore," he assured me.

"Wait, where exactly did you throw it?" I wanted to be sure that I would not accidentally come across its rotting carcass. Coming across a dead mouse unexpectedly is almost as bad as seeing a live one.

"You'll never see it," Hubby pronounced, and stubbornly refused to tell me the location of its final resting place. I would have preferred to impale its body on a pike as a warning to other mice, but I doubt they would have taken the hint.

As a member of the Nebraska Master Naturalists organization, I know I should have respect for all critters. They all play a role in maintaining the balance of nature. As far as I know, the only good purpose for mice is to be food for larger predators. And since there are no predators in my garage – except me – it is my absolute duty to control the rodent population in my domain. Or rather, it is Hubby's duty to control them, since I cannot stomach even setting a trap. And I, for sure, cannot empty a trap with a mouse in it. Thank goodness Hubby is a manly man!



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A Time to Save, and a Time to...

(The Late) Frieda Burston

(From *Your Country Neighbor*, June 2006)

Went around all week feeling like there was a 10-ton stone in the bottom of my stomach. Didn't know why.

Then, cleaning up for the Sabbath, I picked up the brochure of the Residential Facility I'm headed for, and there was a twinge in the gut. Ah, YES! my problem started when I showed that brochure to My-Student-the-Doctor, who has just retired. He read it, every word of it, then whipped out his little electronic gismo and started in-putting, in deep silence, with a little head-shaking.

Then he said, "You can't afford to take a one-bedroom apartment. They just raised the rent by a bigger percent than your pensions rose. And extra services like washing your back, cost. At your age, it won't be long before you'll need those extra services. The money will have to come from your savings. So take a studio apartment, and have money for a back-washer. And buying furniture for one room will cost less than for two. Save your money for when you'll need it." Suddenly, from rich I was poor—I went into shock. Lulu and D-D had told me that this was what I had saved for so carefully, so that I wouldn't have to be a burden on my children, that the time had come to spend it now, to enjoy it. But if I lifted the lid and really looked at it, I knew I hadn't saved for enjoyment. Not for a back wash, either.

I saved because I was a child of the Great Depression. Saving was a way of life. One saved. To this day I never eat the last piece of anything, I save it because I might be hungry later and find nothing to eat. When I put a new bag of food into the refrigerator, I feel free to eat or throw the last shriveled piece in the old bag. Not until then. I might need it, and then I wouldn't have it. So I save it. The memory of hunger curling up our skinny little tummies at night, curls up my fat little tummy even now.

We lived with fear for most of my young life—not fear of invading armies, of political conspiracies, or of epidemic disease. No. We lived in fear of hunger, of homelessness, of all the terrors of times so poor that a man digging ditches by hand with a broken shovel, prayed every day for a ditch to dig. Factories closed, businesses went bankrupt, stores sold out. People found themselves on the street among their cherished beds and chairs, in winter. People who had cars had no money for gasoline. People who had horses couldn't buy hay. People who had stoves had no wood to burn. (Banks let us live in foreclosed houses without rent, as insurance against people tearing down houses to burn, board by board, at home.)

Anyone who had a yard tried to grow food— then every green leaf vanished in a cloud of locusts. Not just one year. Two. Then there were six years of drought. My brother dug a deep hole in the yard — we dropped a bucket on a rope, and pulled up enough mud to keep the tomatoes alive. The ground turned to dust, the winds blew the dust away, hunger spread. There were days in winter when we gathered around our only coin, a dime, debating whether to spend it on a loaf of bread or a quart bottle of milk. Either, or. There were stores where stale bread and "turned" milk were half-price, but how much shoe leather was worn off, walking to them? A pair of paste-on rubber soles were 19 cents at the Dime Store, but if there wasn't money for food, where would the money for paste-on soles come from? Nobody worried about washing Grampa's back. (People naturally smelled. No deodorants in those days.) We worried instead whether we should take less ourselves, and share our milk or bread with Grampa.

Thirty years later I had silver spoons on my table. Forty years later, a three-level house overlooking a lake. The country outgrew the Great Depression, and so did my generation. Or we thought we did. But I wonder how many of my childhood friends can look at what we so carefully saved for our old age, and now that that old age is here, feel comfortable about breaking into it and spending it off so quickly? Or do they have, like me, not butterflies in their stomachs— but ten-ton stones, when thinking on it now?

School Year Flashbacks

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha, © 2021

It's done
the relief is real
summer beckons... but
before leaving the school year behind
flashbacks scroll across my mind, a photo gallery:

*Glowing smiles of grads as they remove masks to pose
Proud families gathered and hugs all around
Prom held outside, beneath a cloudy sky, twinkle lights and magic holding back rain
Green shirts on St. Pat's with snacks and Zoom bingo
Pink and red valentines, the giggles and blushes of young crushes
A snowball throwing contest, lined up, arms ready, powdery ammo flies far
Trimming classroom trees with handmade décor, wearing gaudy sweaters
A turkey feast done differently, classrooms apart, but still delicious
Halloween costumes with Covid masks
Walking in autumn air, circling the parking lot for much-needed mask breaks
Labor Day weekend, the first respite for exhausted (already!) teachers and students
Practicing new rules, cleaning, taking temps, learning how far apart 6 feet should be
First day jitters amplified by pandemic fears*

It's done
this challenging school year is over at last
looking back, so proud of everyone
reaching across miles to remote learners, sharing smiles
facing fears, changing plans, tackling new technology
being there for each other through sadness and joy
doing more than we knew we could
and looking back...
it was all for the good!

*This poem is dedicated to the students, teachers, and staff of
Madonna School in Omaha, who made it through the whole
2020-21 school year in-person with a remote learning option.*

Janet's daughter attends Madonna and is
shown here at prom with her date, who
is also a Madonna student.

Photo by Janet Sobczyk





Peru State College Graduation

May 8, 2021





Peru State College Graduation

May 8, 2021



Peru State College News

There's still Time to Register for PSC Girls Basketball Camps

It is not too late to register for the upcoming Peru State women's basketball 2021 summer skills camps. The camps will be held June 7-10 in the Al Wheeler Activity Center on the College's campus.

There is a special session for Grades K-4 from 8 to 11:30 a.m. for \$80 or if the participant wants to stay through lunch, the fee is \$100.

For girls' grades 5-12, instruction will take place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily for \$140. Lunch will be provided for all participants.

Campers will receive daily instruction to address all areas of skill development. All campers will receive a camp t-shirt. There will be a \$10 discount for two or more from the same school.

To register, go to: <https://www.perustatewomenshoops.com/>

For more information, campers should contact Bobcat women's basketball head coach Ian Holleran at iholleran@peru.edu or by phone at 703-344-4601.

2021 Bobcat Volleyball Clinics Announced

Several clinics for different ages will be conducted by the Bobcat volleyball coaching staff and players as Peru State announced its summer volleyball plans. The camps will be held in the Al Wheeler Activity Center (AWAC) and are open for both girls and boys.

Peru State will host a Passing and Serving Skills Clinic on July 26, a Setting and Attacking Skills Clinic on July 27, and an All Skills Clinic on July 28. On the 26th and 27th, the clinics will be divided between grades 1-4 which will take place from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and grades 5-8 which will take place from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

The cost of the July 26 and 27 clinics is only \$20 which includes a t-shirt. There is a \$5 discount per sibling registered.

The All Skills Clinic will take place from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for grades 9 through 12. Its cost is \$50. Lunch and a t-shirt will be included for this camp. The \$5 discount per sibling registered applies for this camp as well.

For more information, campers should contact Bobcat head volleyball coach Laurie Felderman at lfelderman@peru.edu or by phone at 920-639-5844.

Hansons Recognized As Spring Semester Ends

As the spring semester closed, Dr. Dan Hanson and Elaine Hanson were recognized for their years of service to Peru State College. Dan Hanson, President of Peru State College, announced their intention to retire in the fall of 2020 with their last day on June 30.



Dan and Elaine Hanson were also recognized at the Spring 2021 Commencement. The Vice Presidents, Debbie White, Dr. Jesse Dorman and Dr. Tim Borchers, on behalf of the College's faculty and staff, presented the Hansons with a print of the sesquicentennial painting by Todd Williams and a Peru State flag.

President Hanson was previously recognized this spring by the Nebraska Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) with the Distinguished Citizen Medal. The DAR Distinguished Citizen Medal recognizes individuals who fulfill the qualities of honor, service, courage, leadership, and patriotism.

A farewell reception is scheduled for Saturday, June 5 outdoors on the Peru State campus, beginning at 1:30 p.m. A program will begin around 2 p.m. In case of inclement weather the event will be held in the Al Wheeler Activity Center.





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PRESIDENTS

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GPA of 3.50 out of 4.0

DEANS

\$5,750

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T.J. MAJORS

\$5,250

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