

EMPTY NEST

# What Defines Me

By Curt Swarm, Empty Nest

When I was in the throes of cancer treatment and so miserable with nausea and the lower GI's, I ran across this aphorism: "What Cancer Cannot Do! Cancer is so limited ... It cannot cripple Love; It cannot shatter Hope; It cannot corrode Faith; It cannot destroy Peace; It cannot

kill Friendship; It cannot suppress Memories; It cannot silence Courage; It cannot invade the Soul; It cannot steal Eternal Life; It cannot conquer the Spirit. Author Unknown"

I printed this maxim and posted it within easy sight of my recliner where I spend a goodly amount of time on the pity pot. Then I added

one more line to the ditty: "Cancer does not define me!"

"There," I said to myself. "With God's help, prayers from my family and friends, and some fine doctors, I'm going to whip this disease. It does not define me!"

Then the cancer treatment gave me colitis, and I was really miserable. There would

be times when Ginnie cooked a nice meal and, in the middle of it, I would have to run for the loo. Still, "Cancer does not define me," I told myself.

Then, I was cancer free, but I had to have new infusions to clear up the colitis. They made me sick also. Whoopee! Will this ever end?

Shortness of breath was soon to follow, which led to hospitalizations a couple of times. "Bilateral Pulmonary Embolisms" (blood clots in both lungs) was the diagnosis. Ginnie and I sat in stunned silence at what just about happened. (Blood clots can kill.) Where did they come from? It was never determined. I was sent home with a major blood thinner.

But the shortness of breath didn't subside and now included some chest pounding. I was back in the emergency room and back in the hospital. I'd had a minor heart attack. A 70% blockage of the Widow Maker artery was discovered. I had two heart catheterizations with stents and bal-

loons installed.

Once again, Ginnie and I sat in stunned silence. I'd had a heart attack. Maybe the culmination of all these illnesses — cancer, colitis, pulmonary embolisms, heart attack — was defining me. Throw in dizziness from neuropathy, the fact that I'm walking with a cane, have a temporary handicap parking sticker, and occasionally use the electric cart at the supermarket — what kind of picture does this paint? When the handwriting is on the wall, read it. These illnesses, I hated to admit, which had been going on for close to two years, were defining me.

However, following a heart event, Cardiac Rehabilitation was recommended. I plugged into the system. Lo-and-behold there's a little set of warm-up exercises they have you do before you jump on the exercise machines. They involve 12 different body movements — head, neck, shoulders, hips, legs, etc.—that seem rather inconsequential. However, I noticed immedi-

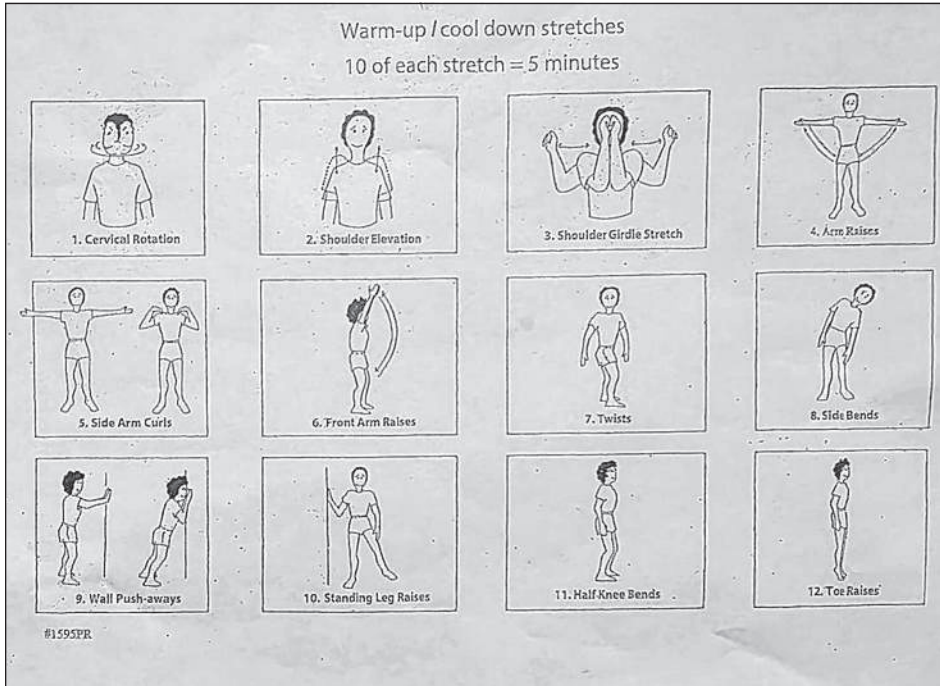
ately that the dizziness from neuropathy was diminished. Hallelujah! I brought the exercise instructions home and am doing them before I walk on my treadmill.

I no longer walk with a cane. I'm wondering if my temporary handicap parking sticker will be renewed. Do I need it? The walking would probably do me good.

But I obviously needed a lifestyle change. Exposure to ultraviolet rays had caused the Merkel Cell Carcinoma. So no more direct sun exposure for fair-skinned me. A lifetime of eating like a pig had caused an artery blockage. My diet had to change. A benefit of my health insurance is 28 home delivered meals following hospitalization. I opted for the low calorie, heart healthy meals. They're not bad.

Illness does not define me.

*Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526 or email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com. Curt is available for public speaking.*



12 warm-up exercises that helped Curt's Neuropathy.

## Judging

► FROM PAGE 5N

"These pop-up clinics will provide hands-on learning for youth to refine their evaluation skills, while also offering coaches professional development, resources and consistent approaches they can carry back to their local programs," said Celine Beggs-Shoemaker, 4-H animal science program specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach.

### CLINIC DATES, LOCATIONS, REGISTRATION

Register for Monday, April 13 clinic – Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm (Nashua)  
Register for Thursday, April 16 clinic – Washington County Fairgrounds (Washington)  
Register for Monday, April 20

clinic – Northwest Research and Demonstration Farm (Sutherland)  
Register for Thursday, April 23 clinic – Clarke County Fairgrounds (Osceola)

"Judging teaches far more than animal evaluation. It builds confidence, communication skills and the ability to make informed decisions — skills that benefit youth long after the contest ends," Beggs-Shoemaker said.

Registration for all four Livestock and Meat Judging Pop-up Clinics is now open. Participants may register for the location that is most convenient for them using the links above. For more information on the Iowa 4-H Youth Development program, please contact your ISU Extension and Outreach county office or visit the Iowa 4-H website.

## Me & My VIP Sweetheart Dance registration open

Washington 4-H County Council will host their annual "Me & My VIP" Sweetheart Dance which invites any student kindergarten — 4th grade and a special adult "Very Important Person" (VIP) as their guest. The adult VIP guests may be parents, grandparents, neighbors, aunts, uncles or other caring adults in their lives. This evening of dancing and games will be held Feb. 21 from 6 — 8 p.m. at the KC Hall in Washington.

This night of memories will include dancing,

games, light refreshments, flower corsage, and a printed keepsake photo from the sweetheart photo booth.

Registration forms available at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/washington/>. Pre-registration is required. Cost \$30 per couple and \$10 for any additional child. Registrations and payment are due Feb. 16 to the Washington County Extension Office.

To add that special touch to the evening, 4-H County Council will also be offering hair styling

and nail appointments from 3 — 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 21 for an additional \$10. These appointments must have pre-registrations by Feb 16. Appointments will be set on first come, first serve by pre-registrations. Refunds cannot be given.

For weather cancellations the day of the event, listen to KCII 106.1 fm and watch the Washington County 4-H — Iowa Facebook page.

For more information, contact the Washington County Extension Office at 319-653-4811.

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**ANNUAL MEETING**  
Lockridge Cemetery Association meets Sat. Jan. 31 at 1:30 pm, Lockridge Senior Center.

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**The Journal**

**PUBLIC NOTICES**  
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AYES: Susie Drish, Lee Dimmitt, Joe Ledger  
NAYS: None

Supervisors met with the County Engineer.

Dimmitt motioned, Ledger seconded the approval of contract for annual bridge inspection and rating from Calhoun-Burns & Associates. All "Aye". Motion carried.

It was motioned by Dimmitt, seconded by Drish to approve the purchase of three fuel tanks for grader sheds from Agriland FS for \$5160 per tank. All "Aye". Motion carried.

The Board met with the Ambulance Director.

It was moved by Dimmitt, seconded by Drish to approve the ambulance repair for \$12,000. All "Aye". Motion carried.

It was moved by Ledger and seconded by Drish that the Board of Supervisors of Jefferson County approve the salary increase of Charli Giberson Mitchell, County Treasurer's Universal Clerk from \$1,600.00 to \$1,666.67 per pay period effective January 1st, 2026. Motion carried.

AYES: Susie Drish, Joe Ledger, Lee Dimmitt  
NAYS: None

Supervisors discussed tax abatement for the property at 2151 185th Street, Fairfield. Request for abatement was not approved.

It was motioned by Drish, seconded by Dimmitt to fulfill the Broadband Grant Agreement obligation to Liberty Communications with the agreement that they will continue to help reach everyone. Dimmitt - "Aye", Drish - "Aye", Ledger - Abstain. Motion carried.

Committee Reports: Dimmitt met with Phil Miller from Board of Health, Ledger attended Board of Health meeting and Emergency Preparedness meeting. Drish attended Workforce Development meeting via zoom.

Public Comment: None.

It was moved by Dimmitt, seconded by Ledger to allow the claims against the county in the amount of \$151,527.18 and to direct the county auditor to issue checks against the various funds of the county in payment of the claims allowed. All "Aye". Motion carried.

It was moved by Dimmitt, seconded by Drish to adjourn. All "Aye". Motion carried.

ATTEST: Christy L. Conner  
County Auditor

Susie Drish, Chairman  
Board of Supervisors

**NOTICE OF ORDINANCE ADOPTION THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HEDRICK, IOWA ADOPTED TWO ORDINANCES #1-2026 THRU #2-2026 ON THE JANUARY 5, 2026 REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE ORDINANCES. THE FULL ORDINANCES CAN BE VIEWED OR A COPY REQUESTED FROM CITY HALL AT 109 N. MAIN ST. HEDRICK, IOWA. HOURS OF OPERATION ARE M-F 8AM-4PM.**

**ORDINANCE #1 – THIS ORDINANCE REPEALS ORDINANCE #2-2001 AND GRANTS TO INTERSTATE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FRANCHISE TO ACQUIRE,**

**The Clarion-Plainsman**

**Beacon News**

**Southeast Iowa Union**

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