

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY:

## Honoring A Humble Nebraska Hometown

BY TED KOOSER  
U.S. Poet Laureate

I live in Nebraska, where we have a town named Homer. Such a humble, homely name and, as it happens, the poet Donal Heffernan is from Homer, and here's his hymn to the town and its history. Long live Homer. And while we're celebrating Nebraska towns, let's throw in Edgar, too.

### MY HOMETOWN

Oh, Homer!  
Your village sleeps near the Missouri River  
With your cousin Winnebago,  
both children of Lakotaland.  
You kept your town at two stories,  
as flat as the surrounding prairie.  
You taught the Iliad and Odyssey  
in honor of your namesake poet.  
Your spirit outlasted the bleached fields of the Depression, and  
Bravely swam against the raging Omaha Creek floods.  
On warm, wet spring Saturday nights,  
You provided dark places for your young  
To launch your next generation  
In pickups, unlighted.

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## BP

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The cap will be tested and monitored to see if it can withstand pressure from oil and gas starting Tuesday morning for six to 48 hours, according to National Incident Commander Thad Allen. On his Facebook page, Allen also shared news of the development. "Getting there," Allen wrote in a status update shortly after the cap landed on the well.

The cap will be tested by closing off three separate valves that fit together snugly like pairs of fists, choking off the oil and blocking it from entering the Gulf. BP doesn't want the flow of oil to stop instantaneously, said Don Van Nieuwenhuis, director of Professional Geosciences Programs at the University of Houston. Shutting the oil off too quickly could cause another explosion, he said.

"Rather than like a train running into a brick wall, it'll be more like putting the brakes on slowly," he said. "That's what they're aiming for. You can keep the brakes on and everyone arrives alive, or you hit the wall and have big problems."

Engineers will be watching pressure readings. High pressure is good, because it would mean the leak has been contained inside the wellhead machinery. But if readings are lower than expected, that could mean there is another leak elsewhere in the well.

"Another concern right now would be how much pressure the well can take," and whether intense pressure would further damage the well, said Eric Smith, associate director of the Tulane Energy Institute.

Even if the cap works, the blown-out well will still be leaking. But the newer, tighter cap will enable BP to capture all the oil, or help funnel it up to ships on the surface if necessary.

One of those ships, the Helix Producer, began operating Monday and should be up to its capacity of collecting roughly 1 million gallons of oil a day within

### Vacation Bible School at Kingsway Christian Church

Beginning Sunday, July 18 take a journey back to ancient Egypt...without leaving the neighborhood!

Experience Joseph's incredible faith journey from prison to palace—with Joseph himself! Every day kids will talk with Joseph, sing, craft hand-made projects, play Egyptian games and eat Egyptian snacks.

This adventure at Kingsway Christian Church is open to children 4 years old through 5th grade and runs from Sunday, July 18 through Thursday, July 22, 6:30-8:30 p.m. each evening. Come between 6-6:30 p.m. on Sunday to register. There is no charge to attend.

Pre-registration is appreciated. Visit [www.groupvbsspro.com/vbs/hl/yanktonkingsway](http://www.groupvbsspro.com/vbs/hl/yanktonkingsway) to pre-register or call 660-7537 or 665-6317.

Kingsway Christian Church is located at the corner of 19th St. and Burleigh St. in Yankton. So come and spend a while on the Nile at this year's Vacation Bible School.

a few days, Suttles said.

A permanent fix will have to wait until one of two relief wells being drilled reaches the broken well, which will then be plugged up with drilling mud and cement. That may not happen until mid-August.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration issued a revised moratorium on deep-water offshore drilling Monday to replace the one that was struck down by the courts as heavy-handed. The new ban, in effect until Nov. 30, does not appear to deviate much from the original moratorium, as it still targets deep-water drilling operators while defining them in a different way.

Work on the new capping operation began Saturday with the removal of a leaky cap that captured about 1 million of the 1.5 million to 2.5 million gallons of oil the government estimates is spilling from the well every day.

Gulf residents closely watched the operation, knowing the damage already done to the biologically rich Gulf and the coast's two leading industries, fishing and tourism.

"I think we're going to see oil out in the Gulf of Mexico, roaming around, taking shots at us, for the next year, maybe two," said Billy Nungesser, president of Louisiana's oil-stained Plaquemines Parish. "If you told me today no more oil was coming ashore, we've still got a massive cleanup ahead."

BP "can't do much, but they know how to drill wells," dock master Jimmy Beason said at a marina in Orange Beach, Ala. "I think that by the end of the month it will be stopped, and this work with the cap is part of it. I see the light at the end of the tunnel."

As of Monday, the 83rd day of the disaster, between 89 million and 176 million gallons of oil had poured into the Gulf, according to government estimates. The spill started April 20 when the Deepwater Horizon rig, leased by BP from Transocean Ltd, exploded and burned, killing 11 workers. It sank two days later.

## How To Deal With An 'Air Bag Surprise'

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

**Dear Tom and Ray:**  
I hope you can help me. My rear passenger side air bag deployed, along with the passenger side mid bag and the window shield. There was no impact. I was moving at 35-40 mph on a smooth road with no potholes. I took the car to the dealer to get the problem fixed. They said it was not their problem and that I must have hit something. They saw a mark on the wheel and said I set off the bag when I hit a curb. OK ... so I hit a curb, but it was two weeks before the bag exploded. I don't think air bags have that kind of delayed reaction. So the question is, Where do I go to get the dealer to do the right thing? What federal or state agency should I report this to? My insurance company knows about it, and is trying to help. However, I want to be sure the dealer fixes what it should fix. What do I do to hold their feet to the fire? Please help me. —Eileen

**P.S.:** It is a Mercedes E350, and I have found another case just like this online.

**RAY:** Ah, yes. The old "Air Bag Surprise." Very exciting!

**TOM:** We've found that dealers and manufacturers get very squirrely when air bags go off when they're not supposed to.

**RAY:** It's not just Mercedes, Eileen. They're all deathly afraid of admitting liability in cases like this. You can imagine that if an air bag goes off without reason, it can



CLICK &amp; CLACK

CAUSE an accident rather than prevent one.

**TOM:** And you can imagine what a horrible public-relations disaster it would be if word got out that some manufacturer's air bags were popping off on their own. People would flee from the showrooms.

**RAY:** But once in a blue moon, air bags do deploy on their own. During the past 20 years or so, 43 vehicles have been recalled for "surprise" air-bag deployment.

**TOM:** But in our experience, until a recall is actually issued, manufacturers tend to play dumb or blame the customer when this happens. So I have a sad feeling that you're

not going to get real satisfaction. I hope I'm wrong, but that's been the pattern we've seen.

**RAY:** So if they continue to insist that you had an accident when you clearly didn't, and no one higher up in the Mercedes hierarchy will help you, then you have to wait for the feds to force them to act. You can assist in that process by filing a complaint with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, or NHTSA.

**TOM:** That's the federal agency that monitors safety complaints about cars. If it sees a pattern of complaints about a certain vehicle, it'll open up an investigation. And if the investigation turns up evidence of a defect, it can issue a recall.

**RAY:** Meanwhile, I'd insist (or get your insurance company to insist) that your dealer replace not only the deployed air bags, but also the car's air-bag control unit, which would be my first guess as to the source of the problem. But it's just a guess.

**TOM:** And file your report with NHTSA at [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov), or by calling NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236. Good luck.

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## Yankton School District Earns Award For Energy Efficiency

## STORM

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Yankton Middle School, Beadle Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Stewart Elementary, and Webster Elementary have earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Energy Star, the national symbol for superior energy efficiency and environmental protection. Commercial buildings and industrial plants that rate in the top 25 percent of facilities in the nation for energy efficiency may qualify for the Energy Star.

Commercial buildings that earn the Energy Star use an average of 40 percent less energy than typical buildings and also release 35 percent less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Yankton School District improved our energy performance by managing energy strategically across our entire organization and by making cost-effective improvements to our buildings. Yankton School District has saved \$853,110 in annual energy bills in the ten-year period beginning December 1999 through November 2009; and prevented greenhouse emissions equal to the electrical use from 395 households or equal to the greenhouse emissions from 622 vehicles.

To earn the Energy Star, Yankton School District 63-3 took the following actions:

- District-wide lighting retrofits using reflective technologies and T-8 lamps.
- Replaced incandescent lighting with more energy-efficient metal halide lamps in large open areas.
- Replaced steam boilers with hot water systems at four locations.
- Installed base-load boilers at all five sites.
- Converted the HVAC systems

to direct digital controls and installed building automation software for better operating and scheduling control.

- Replaced older unit ventilators.
- Added air conditioning to the buildings.
- At the same time, we upgraded the fire alarm systems in the buildings and added a building (fire) sprinkler system to Middle School.

EPA's national energy performance rating system provides a 1-100 scale that helps organizations assess how efficiently their buildings use energy relative to similar buildings nationwide. A building that scores a rating of 75 or higher is eligible for the ENERGY STAR. Commercial Buildings that can earn the ENERGY STAR include offices, bank branches, financial centers, retailers, courthouses, hospitals, hotels, K-12 schools, medical offices, supermarkets, dormitories, and warehouses.

Energy Star was introduced by the EPA in 1992 as a voluntary, market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency. Today, the Energy Star label can be found on more than 50 different kinds of products, new homes and commercial and industrial buildings. Products and buildings that have earned the Energy Star designation prevent greenhouse gas emissions by meeting strict energy-efficiency specifications set by the government. In 2006, Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved about \$16 billion on their energy bills while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those of 27 million vehicles.

said. "You would not believe it until you saw it."

Police called Monta Storm, owner of Monta's Framing and Florals, at home because they needed a key to get inside her store. She arrived, key in hand, at 11:45 p.m.

"I was very concerned. When I came in and said, 'Please, I'm really concerned about my \$25,000 mat cutter. Can you do something to protect it?' They covered it and protected it," Storm said.

Fortunately, the mat cutter was saved and the exterior of her building suffered only minor damage. Monta's and LilyCrest Cottage had minimal smoke damage, too. Storm said that new electrical outlets and power lines have already been replaced.

While Monta's did not regain electricity until about 3 p.m. on Monday, it hasn't been affecting business at the store.

"It's so funny. We've done two framing orders and sold a clock.

We've been meeting people at the front door with our flashlights," Storm said with a laugh.

The storm, which had no potential tornado or hail warnings, accumulated up to an inch and a half of rain in some parts of Yankton County.

The official rain total for Yankton was .73 inches, while the Chan Gurney Municipal Airport reported .07 inches. However, there were unofficial reports of 1.5 inches of rain in downtown Yankton. Also, Vermillion reported .63 inches.

"The storm was kind of an old-fashioned one with some intense thunder and lightning to go along with it," said Yankton County Emergency Management director Jeremy Dangel. "It wasn't the kind of the weather pattern we normally get concerned about."

"I think the amounts of thunder and lightning probably took some people by surprise," he added.

Sunday night's storm was preceded by a large thunderstorm Saturday night in northern Yankton County that swamped some crops with heavy rains. Approximately 1.5 inches was reported in some places.

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