



FROM THE Editor's Desk

BY SARAH NIGBOR



WOODWORKING Again

BY DAVE WOOD

Learning the hard way

Maybe learning lessons the hard way is sometimes a good thing. I'm guessing the lesson learned is more likely to stick. I know that is true for my kids this weekend.

The three youngest, especially Dawson (he's 13) is always begging to give the cat a bath. I am not sure why he thought this would be so fun. Hasn't he ever heard that cats don't like water? He knows that now.

Snuggles is the sweetest, most cuddly cat we've ever owned. He is a small, long-haired tom cat with white and black markings. He's mostly puffy fur, which makes him look like he has a little pair of furry pants on. He chirps with happiness continuously throughout the day and loves to be held and scratched under his chin. He scarcely weighs 10 pounds.

However, put him near a tub and he turns into a whirlwind of teeth, claws and howling. The docile, loving eyes become daggers of hatred and terror. His sweet little mouth turns into a gaping maw of jagged teeth. Hanging onto him during a bath is like trying to grasp a greased pig (Dawson should know, as he loves that event at El Paso Days).

As parents sometimes do, I gave in. I was tired of the begging and I figured they wouldn't die from the experience, so I said yes. Why, oh why did I say yes? Especially after my husband had just cleaned the bathroom. Hindsight is 20/20.

Snuggles snuggled into Dawson's arms, but his eyes grew wide as he neared the bathroom and heard the water going. I know it may seem cruel, but he truly needed a bath. We brush him often, but sometimes he gets little mats in his fur that he and we cannot get out. He's good at grooming, but it had been a long while since he had a bath. His vet rec-

ommends twice a year or so.

The three kids quickly shepherded him into the bathroom, slammed the door and the fun commenced. For almost 20 minutes I heard nothing but shrieks, splashes and the most deep, gut-wrenching howls from my darling Snuggles. I listened carefully, giggling to myself the entire time, because I knew what they were in for – and they didn't believe me. I have a 4-inch scar on my chest to prove how fun cat bath time is.

No one was maimed or scratched, but when the three emerged from the bathroom holding Snuggles, who looked like a skinny, deranged rat, they had sheepish looks on their faces. Their clothes were soaked, their hair disheveled and they were covered in wet cat hair stuck all over their bodies. As I comforted poor Snuggie, gently toweling off his luxurious fur, the kids all changed clothes and removed the 50 towels (I'm exaggerating slightly) from the bathroom. Snuggles soon regained his sweet personality and sat on my lap purring as he dried into his fluffball self. He was rewarded with a special supper.

But when I walked in the bathroom, I almost had a stroke. The once pristine bathroom was a sea of matted cat hair, water and more towels. I couldn't decide if it looked like a crime scene or a battlefield. As Snuggles studied me through his slitted eyes, I could almost hear him saying "See what happens when you dare to give me a bath?"

The kids all admitted I was right and vowed to never go through a cat bath experience again. As I helped them clean up the nightmare scene, I wondered if maybe it wasn't me who learned the hard way. Don't give in to kids' bad ideas!

Anniversary disappointment gains new life

The BW and I recently celebrated our 53rd wedding anniversary, which is amazing for me to ponder, especially since I made a dreadful mistake on our 12th, which threatened to undo the marriage then and there. Thereby hangs the following tale.

At that time I was a callow young whippersnapper, fortunate enough to have gotten a job as a book reviewer, and by happenstance, I reviewed a new book about the making of the Oxford English Dictionary (known in the crossword puzzle world as the "OED," the monumental ten-volume book about appropriate usage of the English language).

In my column I mentioned that I sure would like to give a set to my Beautiful Wife, who happened to be studying for her Ph.D. At the University of Minnesota. We were soon to celebrate a wedding anniversary, and I thought, academic that she aspired to be, she would love to own this treasured set. Soon after, I received a call from a wealthy dowager in Wayzata to tell me she enjoyed reading my O.E.D review and said she possessed TWO sets of the famous project, and she had room on her shelves for only one copy. "My husband didn't know I owned the original edition, so he gave me another published in 1937. I've never even opened a volume of this newer edition, and it's yours if you'll come out and pick it up."

TWO sets, talk about conspicuous consumption, thought I, an ink-stained wretch from the local newspaper, who couldn't even afford a condensed one volume edition. Ah, but it would be great to rub elbows and erasers with the Rich and Famous.

I told the dowager that I'd be right out in my ancient 1970 Olds 88, if it would start. I made it through her gates, and she graciously had the beautifully bound volumes boxed up for me. I took them home to my humble abode in south Minneapolis, for I had plans. Big plans.

For on the following weekend I planned to take my B.W. to celebrate our anniversary in St. Cloud, where restaurants and motels are cheaper than in the Mill City, and present her with a very big, very expensive present. After a lovely candle-lit dinner at one of Stearns County's finest night clubs, we motored to a motel, where I presented B.W. with her ten-volume present all boxed and ready to peruse.

B. W., I'm sad to report, was underwhelmed. Close to tears, she explained that she had expected something more appropriate to her present situation, "something I can use for my current pursuits," I believe she said. "Haven't you noticed how frustrated I am, always looking for meanings of contemporary jargon that I can never find in our pathetic little old Webster's?"

So much for a great celebration, ah those many years ago.

Disappointed, but not daunted, I threw the boxes into the trunk of the 70 Oldsmobile, hauled them home and not knowing what to do with them, but put them in our modest library. They've now resided in our library in

River Falls, untouched and unloved these many decades.

Until last Sunday. B.W. returned home after attending a new play at the Guthrie Theatre set in the 17th century (z-z-z-z) in which two famous rival playwrights, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare debate about writing a play together for 90 minutes (z-z-z-z).

"How was the play, my love?" asked I. "Sort of boring," replied the L.O.L. (no, not Land O' Lakes! I mean "Love Of My Life!") "I just can't understand why you and your pals keep going to the Guthrie...."

"Hold on," she interrupted. "The Guthrie gave us these neat programs about the play and its language and even included a game, which we can play. During the play, Shakespeare and Marlowe spent most of their time hurling insults at each other, and the game is a catalog of 17th century epithets in use during that time, but with no 20th century translations."

"Good grief! That's a game? What do we know about 17th century English?"

"Don't you see my pet," she replied. "We have the O.E.D.," and she grabbed one of the dust-covered volumes and began to translate 17th century words into their modern equivalents.

"For instance, if you should call me, 'Thou Bootless Beetle-Headed Bladder,' I could look up those words in the in this old dictionary under Volume B and find out what you meant to say in 21st century English...."

"And that would be....?"

"You Useless, Scurrying Pimple"!!!!

"Let's try one more," said M.B. (My Beloved). "If you called me 'Thou Craven-Clawed Bug-Bear,' I would be able to find out you really meant 'You Contemptibly Timid Soured-milk Goblin.' These books are really going to come in handy, for I'll be able to brush up my Shakespeare, and brush you off the face of the earth, you reechy, horn-mad March-child," concluded the Love of my Life.

I held out some hope that the last two referred to my passion for playing Sousa on the tuba, but she confessed the last one only meant that I was a terrible conformist. And the first two, better left unsaid.

"Brush up your Shakespeare! Start quoting him now! Brush up your Shakespeare— And the women you will wow!"

- from Kiss me, Kate by Cole Porter

I guess not every woman!

P.S. Ruth wanted me to mention an entertaining new novel, "The Dictionary of Lost Words," which tells the lively story of the workshop and its employees who spent decades compiling and editing the original O.E.D., published in 1928.

Dave would like to hear from you. Phone him at 715-426-9554.

LETTERS to the Editor

2023 Relay For Life River Falls-Pierce County

To the editor,

Consider joining us in the fight against cancer at this community in-door event.

The Relay For Life of River Falls -Pierce County event is 5-11 p.m. Friday, April 14, 2023 at

the River Falls High School. Come join us and bring your family and friends for Rotary spaghetti dinner,

Relay ceremonies and more! 5 p.m. - Teams to setup their camp sites

5-8 p.m. - Rotary Spaghetti Dinner

6 p.m. - Opening Ceremony (speaker Ken Sabby)

6-10 p.m. - Silent Auction (buy it now option available)

9 p.m. - Luminaria Ceremony (speaker Boyd Huppert)

11 p.m.- Closing Ceremony

Send questions to Relay-ForLifeRF@yahoo.com

See website: www.Relay-ForLife.org/RiverFallsWI for more information.

Tammy Sharon River Falls

An honor to represent Wards 3&4

To the editor,

It has been an honor to represent residents of Ward 3&4 of the City of Prescott for the last three years.

Access to the under the hood mechanics of the city

has been both a learning and humbling experience.

Thanks to all the city staff, fellow elected representatives and others I have encountered on this journey.

I look forward to continu-

ing a life of obscure eccentricity.

Thomas Oss Ward 3&4 Alderperson Prescott City Council

Book banning

To the editor,

The recent surge in actions to ban books in school and public libraries reminds me of my seventh-grade social studies teacher. We were doing a unit on Russia, at the height of the cold war. He told us that one of the weaknesses of autocracy was the banning of books, and the ideas they contain. Autocrats were fearful of citizens encountering ideas that challenge their rule. In the USA, he told us, we did not ban books. We trusted our citizens to be able

to evaluate critically a range of ideas. To emphasize this, he brought to class a book of Marxist writings, including the Manifesto of the Communist Party. He let us borrow it to read if we wished. I did. The Manifesto wasn't very long, nor that hard to read, although I'm sure my teen-aged self missed a lot. I did not become a Communist. Nor were there groups of Bolsheviks organizing the Proletariat in the school cafeteria.

What did happen was that

I was energized by the trust placed in me by adults that I was free to go anywhere in the world of ideas, free to evaluate complex and controversial concepts on my own. It brought home forcefully the value of living in a free society. Why do we want to rob our youths of this today? Fearfulness of ideas is anathema to growth and shows our lack of trust in our own children.

Bill Cordua River Falls



BACK Home

BY CHRIS HARDIE

The season of hope

In the course of my writing over the years, the topic of spring is among my most frequent musings.

It's logical when much of my inspiration comes from the land and the seasons. Winters seem to be getting harder as I grow older. The prospect of something green and new is something to look forward to.

Officially the vernal equinox – translated from Latin words meaning new or fresh and equal – occurred at 4:24 p.m. CDT Monday, March 20 when the sun shone directly over the earth's equator near Meru, Kenya. Tucked away in the hills of our west central Wisconsin farm, my wife Sherry and I celebrated with our first campfire of the season.

Like most springs, it was the juxtaposition of the seasons. Our chairs sat in the snow. While we have yet to spot our first robin, we listened to sweet avian music greeting the new season.

I recalled former observations about spring. Sometimes it comes softly, with the gradual snowmelt and the gentle warming of the soil that is the green light for the first shoots of the year to awaken from their winter sleep.

Sometimes spring comes hard, with a big warm-up or a hard rain that sends rivers of melting snow sweeping across the landscape. You can hear spring from the roaring sound of the creek that runs through our valley struggling to carry the water downstream.

This year spring comes reluctantly. We've had a few of those days where the faint touch of warmth teases but is carried away by cold north winds and replaced by the cruel laughter of Old

Man Winter and his snow.

And yet, spring is upon us. The turkeys are gobbling, the geese are flying and spring bulbs are slowly emerging. Even with below normal temperatures, you can feel the warmth of the sun.

Perhaps this year's lesson from spring is to remind us that we need to practice patience. In a frenzied world fed by mind-numbing social media and intrusive consumer tracking, we want and expect more and more to happen instantly.

We've become a world where searching, scrolling and buying is as much of our routine as eating, drinking and sleeping. We fill our senses with the nonsensical and believe what we want to believe.

Why? Because it's easier. We form opinions, send electronic messages and withdraw into our tribal clans populated at times by people we've never actually spoken with. We conveniently bury the truth instead of seeking it, look the other way and find blame with someone else instead of looking at our own accountability and actions.

The vernal equinox gave us a day of 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. Light and darkness. Darkness and light. A new and equal start. Yin and yang. True equality from mother earth while we squabble and kill over differences of religion, color or belief.

Our first taste of spring was brief, as unfinished tasks awaited. We promised that we needed to sit around the fire more often this year to unwind and simply enjoy each other's company and presence. No one knows how many more we – or any of us – will have together.

Life, indeed, is too short and too precious to be fretting about the perceptions of others. Another season of hope awaits.

Chris Hardie spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and publisher. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and won dozens of state and national journalism awards. He is a former president of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. Contact him at chardie1963@gmail.com.

100 MILES

- of -

LITTLE TOWN THRIFT SALES

Thursday
April 20
Friday
April 21
Saturday
April 22

10 towns of city-wide thrift sales along HWY. 10 include: Ellsworth, Plum-City, Arkansaw, Durand, Mondovi, Eleva, Strum, Osseo, Fairchild & Neillsville, Wisconsin

**To register your thrift sale, Scan QR Code on the right!

**To order a map of the thrift sales, Scan QR Code on the left!

Info? email: sproutpoppupmarkets@gmail.com
Facebook: 100 Miles Of Little Town Thrift Sales