**Every trash day offers a clean slate**

*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

It is amazing to me that my week starts on Wednesday, the day before our trash gets picked up. Our house is kind of hidden from the main road, so we have to haul our rolling trash can all the way out in order to get it picked up.

It is exactly 100 steps (I counted) from the front step to the mailbox, where the trash gets picked up. Even though there are only two of us living in the house, you wouldn’t believe the amount of trash we accumulate every week. Well, we could count the cat as a “being,” making it three of us; it is amazing just how much waste she contributes as well.

We were kind of spoiled when we lived in Milwaukee, as the trash cans were parked in the back alley. All we had to do was walk to the back of the house and dispose of the garbage, and that was it.

However, all things considered, the Northwoods is home now. I wish we would have moved here a long time ago, but maybe it wasn’t time yet.

I used to go to the gym to get my daily exercise, plus get in a game or two of racquetball. But after settling down here, I found the locals have never heard of racquetball, but tennis and pickleball are quite popular.

Then I found out that because I played too much racquetball in my younger days, I am paying the price now. The cartilage in my right shoulder and left knee were almost gone and needed total replacements. Not only was I unable to play more racquetball but all kinds of activities also came to a halt.

No such luck as far as household chores, though. Even when I couldn’t move around much, I could still do dishes, vacuum the house and take out the trash.

I always wondered, just where does the garbage man deposit the trash, as it was a different situation when I lived in Hong Kong. Here in the U.S., I heard that there is so much land, folks would just pick out a landfill in the woods and pile the trash in. Then when it reaches a saturation point, they would pile dirt to cover it up, and then pick a new location.

Years ago, I read that in Colorado (I think) they actually poured cement over the trash pile, and after a few years, when the cement was hardened, they created a ski slope and developed the area into a ski resort. Now, that is ingenious!

Hong Kong is a small island, with no land and no slope to dump the trash, so guess what they do with all the trash? Yes, you guessed it, they burn it. What a great way to get rid of piles of waste.

However, there is smoke when there is a fire. Even though the engineers built a tall chimney for safety precautions, there is no way to get rid of the odor of the contents. It just so happened that my aunt and uncle bought a home that was close by the burning station, and the price was affordable, with a beautiful view of the back side of the harbor. Little did they know that the wind changed its direction every day, and when it was an easterly wind, it would carry the unpleasant odor and distribute it to the whole area. What to do? What to do?

Over the years I’ve become a man of habits, and I follow the same routine daily so I won’t forget something. Now that I am getting older, that habit has become a necessity. I am not saying that I am forgetful, but it is something like that.

So, our dear trash man would help me out as Wednesday is the day that I should start my week. I would collect all the trash in the house, and then walk 100 steps to haul the trash can out to the street, so that come Thursday morning, he will show up first thing and collect the trash for us.

Every day is just another day, but Wednesday, trash day, is more meaningful, because if I ever miss it, the odor from the trash will somehow find its way to our house. The reek left over from the cats in the carpet is enough for me to bear, so I will do my best to maintain the standard of sanitation in our home.

Every Thursday promptly by 7:30 a.m., I can hear the Waterman’s garbage truck approaching. I understand that they have a large area to cover — south from Baldwin to north of Webster. Bless those drivers, they work all year-round, and the only day they take off is Christmas.

I have worked many different jobs in my career, from dishwasher to janitor, but being a trash collector never occurred to me. Well, I would if I could, but I also have to be realistic. If I can’t even drive a small car, just how do you expect me to drive a huge garbage truck? I’d be knocking down mailboxes and road signs all day.

I wrote about unsung heroes earlier, and they are truly a different breed, just doing their job day in and day out with no complaints. I can’t imagine if the garbage collectors just stopped doing what they’re doing, what would happen to us?

It just so happened that the last time we visited our daughter in New York, the trash collectors were on strike, and trash was piled up everywhere. To make it worse, it was a hot summer week, and with the unpleasant odor on top of the horrid pile of garbage, I wished the city that never sleeps would take some time off.

Anyway, thanks to our trash man, I look forward to every Wednesday so we’ll have a fresh clean start for the week to come. Thank you, thank you and thank you.