

WISE AND OTHERWISE

By Kent A. Stock



The call of the wild (avian version)

Right now we have a pair of owls in our neighborhood who are quite the conversationalists. From other reports several pairs of our nighttime callers are hanging out about town. I like to hear them but don't so much like the coyotes howling of an early morning when I walk the dog. That sound gives me the creeps. But the owls I enjoy hearing and sometimes I try to join in but I'm sure that does not surprise you if you have ever read this column more than once.

I like birds, in general, but not up close and personal. That is the way I feel about some people too but then that is a topic for another column. I feed my backyard birds through the winter because I figure if they are willing to stay here with us in the cold and snow I might as well feed them to say thanks.

My favorite birds are owls and penguins. I think it would be a neat idea if someone were able to merge the two into an owlguin or a penguin. They would be very cute, would they not? This is why I am not allowed to actually practice any science type stuff.

All this bird calling calls to mind a trip my family made to St. Louis Zoo a few years (decades) back. It does involve the bird house there and an adventure we won't forget.

First of all, our mom disliked birds in the extreme but agreed to go in the bird house. She had childhood

trauma with chickens is all I can remember but she decided to be brave this trip. The very first room we went in had these large birds roosting on limbs or posts. That was it, they were just there staring at us and we were staring at them with nothing to stop them from swooping down and pecking our eyes out.

That was when mom made an early exit from the bird house charging back out the entrance knocking people out of the way like Walter Payton breaking tackles. She may have been only 5'3" but she had quite the forearm. She joined my dad outside to wait for us to come out.

We walked around talking to the birds, of course, and trying to get them to move because for all we knew they were stuffed and mounted in their enclosures. We even sang the kookaburra song to the, duh, kookaburra. He did not laugh; perhaps we weren't Australian enough.

We were about at the end when we were all standing looking at what was a fairly ugly bird from Upper Zimbabwe or some such exotic locale. All of a sudden there was this horrible honking, screeching noise.

I was at the end of the line so I turned to my family and said loudly, "What the heck was that?" My family all took a step back and at the other end of the line was a gray crested, bespectacled, nose blower wiping his schnoz with a handkerchief and looking none too happy.

What did we do, burst out in laughter which re-

ally set the bird house alive including the ugly bird from Upper Zimbabwe. I think even the kookaburra was laughing. So we decide to make a speedy exit, laughing hysterically and literally running out of the bird house.

Our parents were waiting there as the obviously hysterical crowd of kids, grandkids, strollers and whatever else came speeding toward them. I remember my dad's face and knew he was thinking, "Oh good grief, what have they done now."

"We have to move he is after us." At this point my parents just went along following at a safe distance behind their crazy brood. They were probably concocting a story for the St. Louis Zoo security team when they arrived to check on the disturbance and the disturbed. "We'll tell them it was the heat" which is always a good excuse for a July day in St. Lou.

The story still makes us giggle to this day. A nice memory while I sit here writing up my plans on how to combine an owl and a penguin. Do I hear a kookaburra laughing?

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



New And Improved
Admit it, you have made new year resolutions in the sincere hope of making a positive change in your life. Unfortunately, by March, many of those resolutions have gone down the drain, abandoned, or forgotten. I'm about to tell you why that happens. It's not ALL your fault.

First of all, humans are creatures of habit. We all have hundreds of habits that we probably are not even aware of having. Some of us can go through our entire week on auto-pilot, our bodies doing the same thing day after day; we get up, shut off the alarm, shower, pour a cup of coffee, microwave a Hot Pocket, drive the same road to work, do the same job, go home at the same time, etc, repeat. Some of us love the continuity of habits and some of us hate it and long for change and excitement.

Some of our habits are good and needful, like brushing our teeth, and showering daily; but other habits are not so healthy for us, such as that bowl of ice cream we indulge in when we watch Wheel Of Fortune. The problem with habits is that they are really hard to break. Not impossible, just hard. It is also hard to add a new one to our day, because we are already in the habit of doing what we do.

Here is something that can help you. According to various articles on the Psychol-

ogy Today website, breaking habits is easier if you replace the bad habit with a better habit. Your brain is programmed to do that one habit at a particular time or at a particular cue, so plan a healthier option and be ready to replace the bad habit with an acceptable good one.

If you are wanting to add a new habit into your life, the best way to do that is to attach it to an already established habit. If it is exercise, then pick an event either before or after the appointed time that you want to add exercising into your schedule, as a cue. When you link the 2 habits, soon your brain will connect the two, and within a month that new activity will be embedded in your brains auto-pilot schedule.

Making resolutions can be difficult. A lot of people fail at keeping their resolutions because their resolution was too vague and didn't offer a measurable goal. Resolving to lose weight, get more exercise, eat healthier, be nicer; those goals are not specific enough and are pretty much pointless. A specific and measurable goal would be like: I resolve to eat 3 servings of vegetables every day. I resolve to exercise 15 minutes every day. I resolve to lose 10 pounds by Christmas. Those are measurable and reachable goals.

Some people make resolutions because they feel they are supposed to, but their heart is not in it. If you are just making claims to change because everybody

else around you is, but you don't have it deep down in your gut to change, then you are wasting your time. To achieve anything, you have to want it bad enough to keep going after it, even when the going gets really hard; cause it will get hard.

A lot of people set goals for themselves that are too lofty or that won't fit into their lifestyle. There is always a price to pay for anything you gain. Most people don't think about the cost, they just see the end result and ignore the price tag. People fail when working towards their goals when the reality of how hard they will have to work for that goal hits them in the face. Anything worth having, is worth working hard for.

Keep a journal. Record your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and don't forget to cheer yourself on. Journaling has been shown to have a positive effect on your mental health, as well as serve as a wonderful healing tool for the depressed, grieving, and lonely. Writing in a journal everyday, even just a couple sentences, can help clear your mind, release stress and tension, and help bring back memories of your past.

I hope this helps everyone with their resolutions. Remember, just because the year is new, doesn't mean you are. You have the same creaky knees as you had last week. So don't push yourself too hard. Change is good, though. Good luck.

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We will remain closed for the week of January 14-19 as we complete renovations to improve our services for our customers and staff.

We apologize for any inconvenience and look forward to serving you when we reopen on Monday, January 21!

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