

Columns

Film, music award nominees a mystery to me

This week I will be clearing out the cobwebs in my mind with a few unrelated thoughts. I just came back in the house from a lovely 53-degree afternoon romp in the yard with the cats and playing with the neighbor's dog. Even one nice day will make it hard to go back to cold weather but spring is just around the corner.

The word from my friend in Norway is that it is cold and raining and the first day there was not as pleasant as she had hoped. She posted on "Facebook" that her reindeer sledding was great fun and she was able to meet the family who owns the ranch and spend an exciting day with them. Searching for the Northern Lights is next on her agenda.

With continued shortages of my favorite soft drink, caffeine free diet "Coke," I am experimenting with other soft drinks and reaffirming my choice of drink. The only thing I seem to like is caffeine free "A & W" root beer and I have never really been fond of root beer.

For some reason the lemon-lime drinks don't seem to taste like they did when I was a kid and are not as satisfying. I have never liked drinking plain water; it seems so bland next to pop.

Instead of whining I should be glad we have toilet paper and soap. I am not sure we Americans would know how to handle shortages in this day and age, but I bet we would learn. Pandemic shortages gave us a taste of what could

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



happen and I, for one, discovered I am spoiled. I shall endeavor to rectify that shortcoming.

Did you watch the Golden Globe Awards or the Grammy's? I think I have entered the "twilight zone" of my life because I barely recognized any of the actors, had not seen or heard of any of the movies and have not heard any of the music nominated.

The Grammy Awards originally named the "Gramophone Awards" was established in 1958, but were not televised until 1971. I can clearly remember watching the awards show and listening to Hubby (who was in a Rock band at the time) gripe that there were no Rock bands or musicians nominated. He would have to wait a few more years, until 1995, when his favorite band, "The Rolling Stones," won for best Rock band.

We really enjoyed the Grammys back then but I found that I don't much care for current music. I guess that is why I listen to all the "oldies" rock radio stations. Much was the same watching the Golden Globes." I recognized a couple of the actors but none of the movies. The 2023 Oscar's will be held on March 12; I won-

der if I will recognize anyone there?

I have been cooking salt-free recipes for my 97-year-old mom; she has lost 20 pounds water weight and is feeling much better. Congestive heart failure is not to be played with and I am doing everything I can to see that she eats healthy.

It is sad too because at her age she can not understand why she has to deprive herself of good food at this stage in her life. I agree but I have to be the "baddy" and try to encourage her.

I have been cooking sugar-free for 30 years and I thought that was hard to accomplish but I have changed my mind; I think it is harder to cook without salt. As I mentioned before, the amount of salt in store-bought food is ridiculously high and I really don't understand why it is necessary to have that much salt in our food. We have all become accustomed to it, though, and it is a hard habit to break.

Have you ever made baked sweet potato soup? I found the recipe on the "Taste of Home" website (<https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/most-delicious-recipes/>); it sounds delicious and I have

never heard of it so I turned the recipe into a salt-free recipe for Mom. I basically made our potato soup recipe and substituted four pre-baked sweet potatoes for regular potatoes. It is delicious, sweeter than regular potato soup, which compensated for the lack of salt. I will be adding this soup to our monthly menus.

The outside cats are doing well in their cat condo in the shed. Simey (the blind cat) and Chessy are getting fat; I think I am feeding them too much. Simey was so skinny when he arrived last fall that I was afraid for his ability to

survive the winter. He has also grown into quite an affectionate cat but still does not like to be held but at least he likes to be petted and actually tried to climb into my lap last night.

Both boys need to go to the vet but catching them and getting them into pet carriers is still too hard. For now I will continue to spend time with them each day the weather allows.

Think Spring!

I am sharing a recipe my silly girl friend just sent. It is "Fried Kool-Aid" and she loves finding unique recipes to make for her kids.

Fried Kool-Aid

vegetable oil (for frying)
1/4 cup sweetened Kool-Aid drink mix
3 eggs
1/4 sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 cups milk
3/4 cups flour

Make the batter by beating the eggs and sugar together.

Gradually add the milk and dry ingredients.

Preheat oil to 350°F.

Cook in hot vegetable oil until golden brown (a few minutes, depending on heat).

Cool on paper-towel covered tray for a few minutes, then dig in!

Pluto discovery turns 93 years old

This Saturday is the 93rd anniversary of the discovery of Pluto. Some textbooks say it was found by a "Kansas farm boy" named Clyde Tombaugh. The name is correct but Clyde was born in Streator, Illinois!

There is still some "bad feelings" about whether Pluto is a planet or not, mostly by adults. When Pluto was found having moved from one photographic plate to another, we didn't know what bin to put it in.

Scientists love to classify things, like dogs, trees and, yes, solar system objects. But it was big for an asteroid, wasn't a comet, and obviously not a star, so they lumped it in with the planets.

But starting in 1992, astronomers began finding more of these "Kuiper Belt Objects." It is like an asteroid

In the night sky

By David Leake



belt but icy in nature and in the outer part of the solar system. And, after further investigation, it was determined that Pluto best fit in with the other KBOs rather than a planet. Our Moon is larger than Pluto!

Some still feel Pluto should be grandfathered in and that's a valid argument, but I like the idea that science is self-correcting. When more information becomes available, we change our

views. Otherwise, we'd still be thinking all the planets orbit the Earth!

I got to meet Clyde Tombaugh before he died. He signed a poster for me. And he could still clearly remember the day he saw that little dot on the photographic plate move!

David Leake is retired Planetary Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

Going back in time to berate my former self

A friend of mine said the other day that he wished he could go back in time so he could beat up the jerk that he used to be.

I'm pretty sure his old self never wanted to go into the future to beat up his current self, so who's the jerk, really? But I digress.

It got me to thinking, what would I tell my high school self if I could go back 40 years and meet that clueless lump of clay.

Gosh, I can think of so many things I'd tell that kid. Eat less junk food. Smile more. Brush your teeth three times a day or they'll abandon you later in life. Stay in school. Listen to your mother. Slow down when driving. Quit wasting so much time.

But kids don't want to hear that stuff. I would not have listened. For all I know, my future self was there telling me those things and I just wasn't paying

attention. Maybe I would have listened more if someone was telling me the kinds of things I really wanted to know. Like how to get girls.

I don't know about all guys, but I think most teenage guys are pretty well centered on one thing, and that's how to get girls. Some guys just seemed to know how to do it. Maybe others read up on it or watched and learned. I was too frightened to even open my eyes.

I didn't feel attractive enough. I had no confidence. I had no courage. I was afraid to fail. I was afraid to look foolish, and I was afraid to disappoint my parents. I was stuck so far in Oz that mental roadblocks coalesced into the inability to take action. Doing nothing was the safest thing I could do.

I knew what confidence was. I was extremely — nay; overly — confident in some ar-

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



eas. Still am. If you don't think you're good at what you do, nobody else is going to think so, either. What I needed was for my future self to take that confidence dial and tune me up a little bit.

In my youth, I was a bit of a fast burner. I had a career trajectory in place by the time I was 17. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew the direction to get there. Well, "a" direction, anyway. I was way too busy going places; I didn't have time for girls, I often told

myself convincingly.

In this sense, "girls" is a metaphor. I'm really talking about living. Not breathing in and out living. Not going through the motions living. Real, exhilarating, breathtaking, jump-out-of-an-airplane living.

Oh, I did some neat things as a teen. I achieved some lofty goals. I'm sure the grown-ups in my life were pleased, maybe even impressed. They were complimentary and supportive. But in all that hurry to get

where I was going, I forgot to be a kid.

That's what I would tell my old self if I could. You can venture off the path you're on and still find your way home.

Take yourself a little less seriously over here and be a bit more aggressive over there. Quit wasting time thinking you aren't handsome enough or tall enough or likable enough. Here's a little secret: Across town, right now, there's a girl your age who thinks she isn't pretty enough or good enough for you. The two of you ought to get together. Maybe you won't make eye contact, but you can stare at the floor together.

If you get knocked down, pick yourself back up, buddy; brush off the dust and try again. The worst thing that can happen trying is about the same as the best thing that can happen not trying.

Courage. Confidence. A touch of humility. Persistence.

Determination. Self discipline. A sense of humor. And the understanding that there is no man better than you and no woman who is out of your league. These are the characteristics that will help you get the girl. And if it doesn't work out and you end up spending your evening alone at home? Well, that's what you were doing anyway.

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Note: A reader pointed out that I left out the amount of sugar in my pizza crust recipe. It's one teaspoon.

Pay closer attention to the angels in our lives

Throughout our lives, we are touched by angels, right here on earth.

The sad thing is, we seldom realize it until the moment has passed. Often, we don't recognize it until it's too late to tell them how they helped us.

This weekend, one such person who touched my life right when I needed it, was laid to rest. Although she protested and told me I could call her by her first name, I never did. She was always Mrs. Eckerty to me. A sign of the deep respect and admiration I had for her.

You see, my high school years were rather tumultuous,

for reasons that need no airing out in a public space. I was a rebel without a clue, and for some reason, Mrs. Eckerty saw something in me that I never saw in myself, and, thanks to a close friendship with her oldest son Bobby, welcomed me into her home without condition.

For a brief, yet important time in my life, the Eckerty house became a sanctuary of normal where I could escape and hang out, listening to Rush and Triumph with Bob and being treated as one of her sons. It's only now, with her passing, that I can see what she and Mr. Eckerty brought to me.

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



Stability. She never judged me, although she probably should have, as I introduced a whole bunch of bad behaviors to her two oldest sons.

Of course, it shouldn't come as a big surprise. She wrote the book, literally, on methods of teaching. Of course,

her target audience was on teaching pre-k and kindergartners, but anyone who had such a passion for teaching the youngest learners amongst us surely saw that there were teenaged knuckleheads like me who could use a boost.

Luckily for me, she wasn't

the only parent of a friend who somehow saw that I was worth something.

There were so many others who somehow took a shining to me, regardless of my misbehavior. I don't know, maybe they were just ready to take in strays. All I know is that they were there when I needed them, even though I didn't know I needed them at the time.

It's kind of sad that it took her passing for me to realize how blessed I've been with angels throughout my life. There have been the parents who took me into their homes when my own home wasn't the

best place to be. There have been my "sea daddies," who showed me the ropes when my navy career was first beginning. And, there have been those within academe who have guided me throughout my career in higher education. To all, I am so grateful.

It is my foremost wish to pass it forward to any who ask for guidance, and I hope that all who are in a position to help others step up and takes a chance. Who knows? You might have more of an impact on that lost soul that you take in than you can ever imagine. Just like the angels in my life have impacted me.