

Columns

Genealogy turns up a sister I didn’t know I had

Just when you think you have life figured out and everything is back on an even keel something monumental happens and your whole perspective changes.

I will tell you the ending first; I have a biological half sister! Yep, after being an only child for 75 years I suddenly have a sibling, a baby sister; she is five years younger. I had wished for a sister or brother all my young life but that never happened until last week.

A couple weeks ago I wrote about researching my family tree for health reasons but I certainly never expected to be given such a gift and would still not know about this event if a secretary at a cemetery had not taken an interest in my inquiry and decided to use her recently acquired genealogy talents to help me.

We have the same father; his name is listed on both of our birth certificates and her name was listed in his obituary in 2001 but mine was not listed. The secretary thought it was odd that I was inquiring about a grave and I was not listed in the obituary, so she began to research the listed daughter and found her name, address and phone and gave the information to me. She was concerned because I did not have this information and was laboring under false information as I had told her I was the only biological child.

Since I leave no stone unturned, I immediately placed a call to the woman and lo and behold, she knew about me but did not know my name or any other information and has never had any interest in genealogy nor did she believe it was true. We talked for over two hours, we have that in

common, and she said that she did not meet her biological father until he was 70 years old but they became friends the last seven years of his life.

The first few years of our respective lives were similar; our parents were together for about five years, we were planned but not long after we arrived our father left and never returned. Both of our mothers moved in with grandparents and life continued. I ended up meeting our biological father when I was 13 and spent two summers with him and a later vacation when my son was born but we then lost contact again.

Over the three weeks I have been doing research I have met, via telephone, another first cousin and she and I have compared information and have been able to formulate a timeline of our family. The cousin actually had a scrap of paper with my sister’s name on it but no one in her family was able to uncover further facts. She, too, is as surprised as I am and never expected to find another family member. Suffice it to say that we all three have lots of questions and will most likely be burning up the phone lines and texting frequently. I am in hopes of meeting both of these ladies as they both sound nice on the phone and we seem to have a lot in common.

Aside from my new family drama I have been enjoying reading all the stories about the upcoming coronation of King Charles. I have always had an interest in Great Britain’s Royal family after writing about them my sophomore year in High School. I spent hours at the library researching Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria and I never lost interest like I did with

most of my other writing assignments. I guess I can blame my English teacher; she had lived in England for a couple years and had firsthand knowledge about the country and customs. One of this teacher’s novel ideas was to have us study English foods and we read cookbooks from the Victorian age. I was so entranced during this six week period of English class that I actually made an “A” in my writing course.

I have discovered a most intriguing English Heritage web site “The Victorian Way” a cooking site with video podcasts and recipes of the Victorian era. (<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/victorian-recipes/>). Ms. Hipperson looks just like my old English teacher and I have been enthralled watching the videos. Reading about the royal family and watching these video reenactments is better than watching a day time soap.

From the web site: “WATCH VICTORIAN RECIPES BROUGHT TO LIFE ON YOUTUBE. Meet Mrs Avis Crombe, head cook at Audley End House and Gardens in the 1880s and now - as played by historical interpreter Kathy Hipperson - an international YouTube star”.

I have mentioned that I have been making many different soup recipes for my mom and I have exhausted all the “Betty Crocker” recipes so I found a British soup web site,” Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s traditional British soup recipes” with variations on some of the soups with which I am familiar. I just told mom that I am making her prune soup and believe it or not she thinks it sounds good so this

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



week I am making “Cock-a-leekie” a soup made with leeks and prunes. Wish me luck.

Cock-a-leekie

Beef is sometimes added to this famous Scottish soup, along with the chicken – add about 700g stewing beef, if you like – though I prefer the clearer, more refreshing broth that comes from using chicken on its own. Serves eight, with plenty of moist chicken

left over for salads and sandwiches for another day.

About 20 prunes
1 chicken, about 1.25kg
1.5kg leeks, trimmed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Soak the prunes in hot water or tea for a few hours, then drain and remove the stones.
Put the chicken breast-side down in a large casserole and pour in enough water to cover. Bring to a gentle simmer and carefully skim off the scum that rises to the top. Simmer

Mars is on the move

Friday evening, Mars appears very near a bright star in Gemini called Mebsuta. Note how close they are Friday night then check back over the weekend. You’ll see Mars has moved to the east.

This weekend and all next week is “Dark Sky Week,” a time to not only enjoy our beautiful prairie skies but to also evaluate your own exterior lighting. No one is asking you to shut your lights off, but is your lighting doing what it is supposed to be doing?

Is your lighting creating shadows where criminals could hide? You may be compromising your security by adding light! Do you create glare by shining light into people’s eyes? That’s a safety issue.

In the night sky

By David Leake



Any light shining upwards is wasted energy. Do you shine light into your neighbor’s windows? I could read a book in my living room at night due a neighbor across the street.

By directing light downward, you can get the same illumination on the ground using a lower wattage bulb, and now you’re saving money! A simple rule is that you should

see what you are trying to light but not see the light source itself. Have a look at your own lighting situation, but do it for your safety, security, and your wallet. Better views of the sky are a secondary benefit!

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

Try this recipe, perfect for spring weather

This week I have several recipes that come from Marian Burris of Reno, Nev. This first one sounds like a perfect recipe for spring!

Shrimp and Melon Salad

Submitted by Marian Burris
3/4 pound shrimp, cooked, peeled and deveined (medium size)
one honeydew melon, cut into medium chunks
one cantaloupe, cut into medium chunks
1/2 small red onion, sliced thin
5 or 6 rounds jalapeno peppers from a jar, chopped
For the vinaigrette:
2 Tbsp lime juice
1 1/2 tsp honey

4 Tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper, scant
In a large bowl, combine the shrimp, honeydew, cantaloupe, onion, jalapeno and dash of salt and pepper. Mix vinaigrette ingredients. Drizzle over melon salad and toss to combine.

Note: You may not need all of the melons you cut.
Marian says she uses fancy glasses to serve the melon salad. She also recommends putting the salad in the refrigerator to get cold, perhaps an hour or so. I do recommend using a high quality olive oil with this recipe.

This next recipe reminds me of something my grandma used to make, brings back great memories. Marian says to serve this with rice, but I bet it’s also good with mashed potatoes.

Chops with Mushroom Gravy

Submitted by Marian Burris
1/2 cup flour
2 tsp paprika
1 tsp salt
4 boneless pork loin chops (1” thick)
1/4 cup butter (or maybe a little more)
1 medium onion, chopped
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
2 4 oz cans mushrooms

Let’s Cook

By Linda Hoskins



2 cups milk
2 Tbsp lemon juice
In a large plastic bag (or a bowl), combine flour, paprika and salt. Add pork chops, toss to coat. Set the remaining flour mixture aside. In a large skillet,

saute chops in butter until golden brown on both sides. Transfer to a greased 13x9x2 baking dish.
In the same skillet, saute onion, green pepper and mushrooms until tender.

Stir in reserved flour mixture, gradually add milk until blended. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat, stir in lemon juice. Pour over the chops.

Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 60 minutes.

If you have a recipe to share, or a question about cooking or a funny story about a recipe that did not turn the way you hoped, please share by sending to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258.

Efficiency and procrastination are partners

I started a club for procrastinators. Well, I’m going to. You can look for last month’s newsletter in next week’s mail.
I know it sounds contradictory but I’m both a master of efficiency and a professional time waster. You have to be efficient in order to squander the amount of time that I waste.

I like to think that I find ways to do things faster in order to have more time to do nothing. But that’s actually the opposite of what really happens. In my world, “me time” comes first, so when I finally sit down to do what I need to do, there’s only so much time left. Better use it wisely.
So, here are some tips on how to be more efficient, but keep in mind that I only have about 15 minutes to compile them.

And that is the first tip. Work the way that works for you, but you’ll spend less time on a laborious task if you leave less time for it.

Mark Twain said, why put off till tomorrow what you can put off till the next day just as easily? I say, why do it at all? That’s the second tip. Stop doing things that aren’t necessary.

You might be surprised by the long list of things that I’ve found aren’t necessary at all. You might also disagree with my list. Get your own list.

Some things have to be done eventually. And eventually, I will do them. Sure, I could empty the trash can daily or weekly. But until it’s full to overflowing, that’s a task that can wait. Those 15-second increments that regularity would demand accumulate on

Ramblin’ Man

By David Porter



the “me” side of the ledger.

Combine tasks when possible. I’ve taken to writing on my phone instead of my computer because I can do it one-handed. That leaves my other hand free to hold my cigar. This is a double benefit. I’m doing my job and wasting time at the same time. I’m not sure which category to put it in.

I don’t know what number this next tip is because I quit counting them. See tip 2.

Delegate to others. Some people have trouble with this one. If you want a job done right, you have to do it yourself, right? That may be, but sometimes, it’s not important that the job be done right. It’s only important that the job be done.

Some jobs can be done any number of ways. Is it really important that it be done YOUR way? When I run into people who take issue with the way

that I do a job, I have a simple solution. It becomes their job.

Some people take a lot of pride in how things look and how things are done. I say, let them. Maybe I would feel differently if I was looking for the next big promotion, but I’m more interested in reclining than climbing.

Next tip. Plan ahead in your head. It may look like I’m wasting time, but I’m thinking about things. Thinking counts as work, I think. I mean, come on. Somebody has to be the brains behind the operation. Might as well be me. If the government has taught us anything, it’s that it doesn’t take the best brain to be in charge.

Sometimes, you don’t want somebody too awfully smart in charge. They might actually come up with things for the rest of us to do.

The point is, efficiency starts with a plan. And a plan starts with a thought. Even something as simple as packing a bag for a trip; you don’t just start throwing things in a suitcase. You think about what you need to bring, where it is in the house, how it should be packed to make efficient use of the space, etc. I think about all those things, and by the time I’m done thinking about it, my wife has already packed the bag and we’re ready to go.

I have more tips, but I’m already over 650 words. That’s the last tip. When you have done enough, stop. That’s my favorite part.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. I’ll have more procrastination tips later. Much later.