

# Columns

## Foster curiosity for lifelong learning

I stepped outside tonight for some fresh air and was drawn to the bright, full moon hanging low in the sky. I wouldn't call myself a student of astronomy, but I like to gaze at the moon and the stars, always hoping to glimpse a falling meteor and thinking about what must lie beyond the universe.

I thought about a discussion I had with my dad probably more than 20 years ago. He had bought a telescope and took an interest in the night sky. He's always subscribed to National Geographic and would read about the latest discoveries and theories.

On this particular evening, he launched into a dissertation on the Big Bang Theory and black holes. He explained in detail about how the experts

think the universe was created and how the planets and stars interact. I can't remember all of the details. Scratch that. I can't remember any of the details. He went on for more than an hour explaining each theory, linking ideas, exploring tangents and then circling back.

It was the most I've ever heard my dad say in one sitting. He clearly was way more interested in the topic than I was, and he had done his homework.

After he had exhausted all the arguments, he said, in typical Dad fashion, "But they're wrong. And here's why."

He then proceeded to explain his own theories for another 40 minutes and to point out all the flaws he saw in the scientific community's logic.

I don't remember those de-

tails, either. I probably should have paid closer attention. It made sense at the time, though. He can be persuasive.

I think I may have inherited my interest in looking up at night from my dad, but more than that, he taught me to gather the facts and consider the expert opinions, but, in the end, draw my own conclusions based on actual evidence.

Perhaps that's why I became a newspaper reporter where it's up to me to sort through the data, separate opinion from fact, and to have the confidence to put forth the story as I see it. And perhaps that's why I've been such a pain in the rear to so many people for so many years.

Dad is 87 now and the complexities of the universe no longer concern him. I'm sure

### Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



he doesn't remember his own origin theory or the opinions of the experts. He doesn't remember what he did yesterday. But he still has that same curiosity about the world around him.

Yesterday, we were sitting outside, and there was a small pile of interesting rocks on the table. In amongst the rocks was a seashell that had several holes through it. From the

shape of the holes, they clearly were not drilled or punched. "What do you suppose ate away at that shell to make those holes?" he asked.

I didn't know. Maybe water dripping over a long period of time. Maybe another creature eating away at the shell to get to its prey on the other side.

I was curious enough to do a little research tonight. I won't bore you with all the

details, but probably a snail or a worm. Beetles and other predators are also known to make holes in shells. I guess you could say that learning is a curious thing. The more curious you are, the more apt you are to learn something.

I hope that when I'm 87, I'm still curious about the world and humble enough to know that I don't have all the answers. And at the very least, content to enjoy both small and large wonders like tiny holes in a seashell and the glow from the moon.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at [porter@ramblin-man.us](mailto:porter@ramblin-man.us). Stay curious. Knowing everything already is so boring.

## Recipes for backyard grilling

Some years ago I bought a cookbook Called Backyard Grilling, and I have found so many wonderful recipes in it. We love grilling out, and often our entire meal is done on the grill. This week I am reprinting a recipe that first ran several years ago. This recipe calls for red snapper or orange roughy, but as orange roughy can be hard to find and is expensive, you could try this recipe using haddock, halibut, sole, or cod. I used this seasoning blend on tilapia too!

### Grilled Spiced Fish

4 red snapper or orange roughy filets  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
2 tsp paprika  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp onion powder  
1 tsp garlic powder  
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/4 tsp white pepper  
1/4 tsp dried oregano  
1/4 tsp dried basil  
1/4 tsp dried thyme

Brush fish with oil. In a small bowl, combine the seasonings. Sprinkle over fish and gently press into both sides. Cover and refrigerate for 30 to 60 minutes. Coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray, the neat to medium. Grill filets uncovered for 3 to 4 minutes

### Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



each side or until fish flakes easily with a fork.

Grilled asparagus would be great with the above recipe. The simplest way is to drizzle the asparagus spears with

olive oil, season with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, throw on the grill for 6 to 10 minutes. Keep in mind that thick spears are better for grilling than the real skinny

ones. You don't need a pan or foil for this. Or you can try this recipe. It's so good that my son who always disliked asparagus liked these!

### Grilled Asparagus

1 lb thick asparagus spears  
2 Tbsp sesame oil  
1 Tbsp soy sauce  
1 clove garlic, minced  
salt and pepper  
2 Tbsp sesame seeds, opt.

Preheat grill to high. Trim asparagus. Skewer 4 or 5 spears crosswise in 2 places to form a "raft". In a small bowl, combine sesame oil, soy sauce and garlic. Brush onto aspar-

agus on all sides. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill 3 to 5 minutes, turn and grill on other side until crisp tender. Sprinkle with sesame seeds if desired.

You don't have to make the rafts if it sounds like too much work. I have put them in a grill basket and cooked them that way. Tastes just as good!

If you have a recipe to share, please send to [letscook!@heraldpubs.com](mailto:letscook!@heraldpubs.com) or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!

## Why is living a healthy lifestyle so hard?

We all are born with the ability to be healthy. But the longer we are on this Earth, the harder it becomes to remain healthy. A recent study done by Mayo clinic using data from the Centers for Disease Control concluded 97% of the people reading this article fail to live a healthy lifestyle. Why?

In my opinion, there are 3 main reasons. First, how the media portrays what health is and how to attain it. Second, is how fast our society and culture has changed over the last 200 years. And the final reason is how our current healthcare system focuses on sickness and not on health.

Let's explore each of these reasons.

I have just finished a book called The Healthy Deviant, A Rule-breakers guide to becoming healthy in an unhealthy world, by Pilar Gerasimo. In this book, she explains how our media has created what she calls, "learned helplessness". Learned helplessness was first described in animal experiments where a dog was placed in a box and then the floor was electrified. A lever inside the box would turn off the electricity in the beginning, so the dog learned very quickly to keep hitting the lever to stop the current.

In the next phase of the experiment, the lever was disabled, and the dog couldn't turn off the electricity any-

### Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



more. Over time, the animal quit even trying to turn off the current and finally simply laid down and accepted its fate! Terrible huh! The final part of the experiment was the lever was turned back on to stop the current, but the dog didn't even attempt to use the lever because it thought it was useless.

We have all felt like dogs many times. We try something from the media that looks and sounds so promising to help our health, only to find out it doesn't work for you. This leads to a depletion of our ego, and we become more like the dog who doesn't even want to try anymore.

Luckily, we aren't dogs, and

we can learn to rise above being inside an experiment! The experiment of changing our food supply, movement patterns, our culture and sleep patterns has failed over the last 200 years. Once you realize the media is trying to manipulate you, you can learn to recognize it and follow a different path.

The second reason we aren't as healthy as we should be is the rate of change in our culture occurring over the last 200 years. In the last 2 centuries, we have experienced 3 Revolutions. First was the Industrial revolution 200 years ago. Next is the Technological revolution 60 years ago. Finally, the Digital revolution 25

years ago. These 3 revolutions all have one thing in common. Each of them has changed our lifestyle drastically and our genetics has had no way to keep up with that level of change of biology.

Humans have been on this Earth for more than 2.5 million years. Our genetics had almost no changes during almost all that time. Then, within the last 200 years, everything about our daily lifestyle has changed because of these 3 revolutions. Do you think our genetics could change that drastically? I bet you know the answer.

Next week, I will continue and throw another part of this second reason into this discussion...Epigenetics!

## The importance of earning a 'personal best'

I didn't get to shout "Wahoo!" last night because John was sleeping, I had to contain my enthusiasm. But I did it; I finally beat my personal best at Solitaire on my Kindle device. I have been playing my little quiet game of Solitaire for quite a while now in the wee hours before I drift off to dreamland. It gets my mind off of things and bores me into a slumbry daze.

My personal best was 2:37 minutes for a game and the points were 5,679. I had achieved that score one lucky night in March and had been stuck on that number for a while now. Not that beating that score is my goal every night, but it's always in the back of my mind when my

score pops up at the end of each game. It's just really a good feeling to know you are doing well at something.

Last night I finished a game in a record-breaking 2:19 minutes, and vaulted my high points to over 6,000! My insides swelled up for a second with pride of accomplishment, as I felt a rush of adrenaline soar through me like a lightning bolt. Exhilaration I believe is what that is called. It was a feel-good moment that I wish to repeat.

I know that winning a game of Solitaire is no great feat by itself. It wasn't a Pulitzer, or a Grammy, or another great award, but it was still an achievement to me. I faced a challenge and I won.

We all face challenges, and sometimes we win and a lot of times we don't. Sometimes we just survive the challenge, and that's ok too. But the sweet taste of victory, the exhilaration that lasts a split second, is all worth the effort of trying your very best.

One of my sons ran cross-country in high school. I will leave out his name to avoid embarrassing the kid, but let's just say, he didn't exactly fit the profile of a student athlete, especially a long-distance runner. We were shocked when he told us he had signed up to be in cross-country, and at first thought he was joking. But nonetheless, he and a friend really did sign up for it.

My son's personal best

was well below average of his peers, and he was not a front-runner (pardon the pun) of his team by a long shot. Still, he stuck with it and kept trying, and for that we gave him encouragement and kudos. There must have been something about cross-country he enjoyed.

One particular meet he had

was in the country, and the trail was marked with small flags on pegs. As usual, he was bringing up the rear when he felt nature calling and wandered in the trees to "water a plant." When he was finished doing his business, he realized he had lost his way and wandered around a bit until he heard voices, and found his

way out of the treeline onto a path.

Suddenly there was his coach yelling for him to run, hurry! So he took off sprinting down the path, and ended up crossing the finish line in second place!! Everyone was amazed at how well he did, and my son was too! He kept his mouth shut, even though the coach told him he now had a NEW PERSONAL BEST to live up to!

I said all that to say this: No matter what we do, everyday we should strive to beat our personal best. Winning is wonderful, but it's not the only thing that is wonderful. And sometimes it's best to simply keep your mouth shut in life.



### Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom

Send letters to the editor to [presseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:presseditor1@gmail.com)