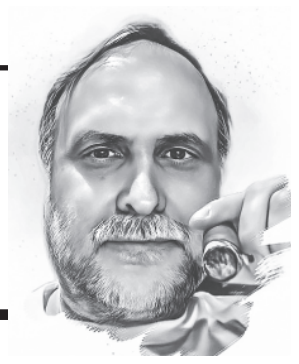
Atypical day at the carwash (that's not a typo)

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



They say no good deed goes unpunished. It's not a good reason to stop doing good deeds. Sometimes you just have to take your lumps and move on.

I had borrowed my dad's truck for a couple of weeks. I had a lot of heavy stuff to move, which is immaterial to this story. Although, I must say, I am amazingly strong and capable (and modest).

I found out that I have muscles I didn't know I had. I know it now because they bruised and ached. I also found out that I no longer have some muscles that I thought I had; or, if I do have them, they no longer work the way they're supposed to.

Anyway, when I was done with the truck, I took it to the gas station to fill it up and run it through the carwash. I think if you borrow somebody's vehicle, you should always return it cleaned and with a full tank.

I gassed it up then drove over to the carwash. As the brushes swiped at the truck, they pushed the mirrors in.

After exiting the carwash, I got out of the truck to push the mirrors back into place. It's an older truck with no power mirrors, locks or windows. It's old school.

I pushed the driver's side mirror back and then walked over to the other side to check that mirror. When I returned, the breeze had pushed the door shut. And it was locked. And the truck was running.

I don't know how the door locked. It wasn't locked when I got out. I must have hit the button when I got out. Newer cars don't allow the door to lock if it's open and the key is in the ignition. But, again, this truck is old school.

No problem, I thought. I'll call my sister. She will have a spare key. That's when I realized that my cell phone was inside the truck.

I could go inside the store and call her but I don't know the number. With cell phones, numbers are programmed in the phone. I could tell you the number for the landline she used to have, but I don't know her cell number.

I don't know anybody's cell number. I couldn't call my wife. I couldn't call my mom. I couldn't call anybody.

Meanwhile, another car was now inside the carwash and two more were in line behind it, and I had the exit blocked. Now I had to tell all these people that they would have to back out until I could get the truck moved.

Of course, when you're in that situation, you think everybody is looking at you and thinking to themselves, "Look at that idiot." Maybe they'll recognize it as my dad's truck and think he's the idiot.

Fortunately, the door didn't shut all the way; just enough to lock it. We were able to thread a wire in to unlock the door. I say "we," but "me" just watched.

In an unrelated traffic story, I had to go to St. Louis Sunday morning. I took my wife to the airport, which is immaterial to this story.

We left the house at 1:30 a.m. for a 6 a.m. flight so she'd have plenty of time to go through Homeland Insecurity.

We drove the whole way on the interstate, but until we got to Missouri, we encountered only five other cars and trucks but six possums. You know you're in downstate Illinois when you can drive two hours on the freeway and see more varmints than vehicles.

We saw other cars, of course, but they were not in our lane or were not passing us or being passed by us. We passed three semis and were passed by two cars. Takeaway: most truckers drive the speed limit and most cars drive too fast.

I had the cruise set at 72 MPH. I hope that admission is not cause for a ticket since it is technically speeding. But I have found 72 to be my magic number.

At 72, I'm faster than the big rigs but slower than most of the other cars. I have found that when I try to drive 70 or keep up with the cars at 75, I end up getting caught in a bunch of bottlenecks.

A lot of cars are going 75-80, and some of the trucks cruise at 68-69. So, I find myself having to brake for the trucks while a faster car behind me boxes me in.

Or I get caught behind a truck doing 68 while another truck doing 70 goes to pass us keeping me trapped for 10 miles. At 72, I can get around the trucks fast enough to keep the speed demon behind me from riding my bumper.

Speed limits are set primarily for safety and to keep traffic moving, so I think 72 is safer.

Then there was that period in Illinois' history when the interstate speed limit was reduced to 55 to increase fuel efficiency and thus decrease fuel consumption. That's a lofty goal, but people don't really care about that.

They'll complain about the cost of gas while driving a car twice as big as they need faster than they should. They wouldn't spend as much on gas if they used less of it.

They also don't seem to realize that it's cheaper to drive a car today than it was 60 years ago. When you consider the rate of inflation paired with the improvements in gas mileage, fuel costs today are a lesser percentage of one's gross income.

Unless you leave the vehicle running with the door locked in front of the carwash. Then it's more expensive and embarrassing.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. The optimal highway gas mileage for many cars today is 50 MPH. Don't tell the governor or that will become the speed limit.

Learn to turn on your genes!

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer

We've all been taught our family history is a very important factor for our future health potential. If your Mom, Dad, Aunts and Uncles had heart disease (or any disease), then your chances of also having those diseases is also very high…right?

Well, maybe! If you take control of your own healthy lifestyle, you don't necessarily have to go down that same path.

The term Epigenetics was coined in 1942 by C.H. Waddington. Epigenetics means you can turn off or turn on parts of your genetic expression (called your phenotype) without making changes to the gene sequence itself (called your genotype). Simply put, just because your family has heart disease in their history, doesn't mean you have to. We now know you can change the way your family's genetics are expressed.

A great deal of research has been done on Epigenetics since the 1990's. This research demonstrated there are many factors. The two factors that have been most studied are environmental and lifestyle factors. Both factors have been proven to turn on or off different Epigenetic switches depending on the situation. Only 30% of your health potential is controlled by your genes (genotype). 70% of your health potential (phenotype) is controlled by your lifestyle and environment.

This is why Epigenetics is so important? As you grew up, who was in control of your lifestyle and environment? Your family. So, it makes perfect sense that if you have the same environment and lifestyle as the rest of your family, your Epigenetic switches would be set in the same position as everybody else. This is how everybody in your family came up with the same diseases.

But here is the good news. When you change your environment and lifestyle, no matter at what age, you can flip your Epigenetic switches and change the way your body systems work. You can change almost every system in your body, your Metabolism, heart function and detoxification pathways. In other words, you can change almost everything by building a new healthy environment and lifestyle.

The bad news is you must change. Change is never easy and especially when it comes to doing things differently around your family and friends. You will be seen as different. They will look at you weird. They will wonder why you have changed. Many times, they will try to bring you back into the fold using fear, guilt or shame or a combination of all 3.

Plus, we have many outside forces pushing you away from building a healthy lifestyle. Big Pharma, Media, Insurance and our Government all use confusing information and changing guidelines to keep us all in a state of uneasiness. When we are in a state of confusion, most people will just fall back into old patterns. This leaves your Epigenetic switches in the same position as the rest of your family.

Once you realize that by changing your environment and your lifestyle could change your entire life for the better, it becomes harder to stay in a poor environment and continue to live a crappy lifestyle.

I have been working on the basics of building and creating a healthy lifestyle, I will begin talking about that next week.

'Want' versus 'must' impacts our internal clock

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker

"You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting,
So… get on your way!"
— Dr. Seuss

Isn't it amazing?

When I'm ready to go off on an adventure, I need no alarm clock. If I'm to get up at 5 a.m., I'm wide awake at 4. It's the same with deer hunting. Need to be up by 4? I'm on my second cup of coffee by 3.

Now, let's compare and contrast with workdays. I am blessed to have an alarm clock that limits the number of snoozes I can hit, because otherwise I would wear the button on that thing out.

I am sure that I'm not the only one that experiences this phenomenon. Dictionary.com defines motivation as "the general desire or willingness of someone to do something," so I guess it makes sense that my desire and willingness to get up and play golf at sunrise is exponentially stronger than my desire and willingness to make the commute to my "real" job at Parkland. Not that I don't love my job and my students and colleagues at PC, but the lure of the links is a mighty powerful one.

Now, the question becomes how to transfer a tiny bit of that golf mojo to other areas of my life where I desperately need a boost.

I could sure use that motivation that bounces my keister out of bed early on mornings when I'm scheduled to exercise before work. I can and do make excuses almost daily that keep me under the blankets instead of in the gym. Maybe I should do what I did last summer. I won't get out of bed to go for a walk, but I WILL go for a stroll down the fairway, or typically in my case, the rough, so maybe I can get a few holes in before getting ready to head to CU. Besides, my game needs all the work it can get.

I would sure like to pop tall for church like I do on the third Friday of November each year, when I'm headed for the deer blind. Again, it's easier to find reasons not to go than it is to get up and go, even though my spirit is always lifted after mass.

Finally, it would be great for me to be able to get as excited about work projects as I do about my hobbies. It's long been known that participation in leisure activities makes for more productive workers, according to an article in the 2015 Journal of the Society of Behavioral medicine. "In sum, leisure appears to have a consistent within-person benefit on a person's daily health and well-being; when individuals engaged in leisure, they also reported better mood, more interest, less stress, and exhibited lower heart rate than when they were not engaging in leisure activity." Again, there's no question that leisure activity is good for us, but what I can't figure out is how to take my excitement for fun and carry just a little bit of it over to work life. Like Walt Whitman, I need to keep trying to take the open road, afoot and lighthearted on workdays, like I do on my way to the golf course or fishing hole or my grandson's house. In the meantime, I'll keep chugging along, trying to not hit the snooze quite so often. If you're near Tri City at sunrise and you see some fool getting his swings in, feel free to stop and walk along. The sunrise on the course is beautiful. Of course you may want to avert your eyes as I hit, because unfortunately my swing is far from beautiful.

Grilled vegetables are healthy and tasty

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins

One of the things I love best about grilling is the side dishes. Vegetables taste so good right off the grill! Fire almost always makes them taste better. The dry heat of the grill caramelizes the vegetable's sugars while adding a slight smoky flavor. And best of all, grilled vegetables hold onto their vitamins better than cooking in a microwave or stove top. There are so many ways to cook the veggies, some very simple, right on the grill rack, or on skewers, or in a grill pan.

If you are looking for a really simple and fast recipe, try grilling zucchini and summer squash. Cut them in half lengthwise, brush on olive oil, add seasonings if you like. Grill on both sides, 3 to 5 minutes each side until desired doneness. For seasoning use salt and pepper. You can add garlic powder if you like. Try tossing on shredded Parmesan towards end of cooking time.

I have a couple recipes that have a bit more work involved, but are so good!

Grilled Peppers and Zucchini

Makes 3 to 4 servings

1 medium green pepper
1 medium red pepper
2 medium zucchini
1 Tbsp butter
2 tsp soy sauce

Cut the peppers and zucchini into long thin strips. Place on a double layer of heavy duty foil (about 18" x 15"). Dot with butter, drizzle on soy sauce. Fold up foil and seal tightly. Grill covered over medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes.

Note about the above recipe: I like my vegetables crisp tender and I find that 15 minutes is way too long. Just under 10 minutes is much better.

Special Grilled Veggies

Makes 4 to 6 servings

1/2 cup red wine vinegar or cider vinegar
1/4 cup olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 tsp dried basil
1/2 tsp dried thyme
1/2 tsp lemon-pepper
1 lb. fresh asparagus, trimmed
1 lg. red onion, sliced and separated into rings
1 lg. sweet red pepper, cut into 1" strips
1 lg. sweet yellow pepper, cut into 1 " strips

Mix the first six ingredients in a small bowl. Place the veggies into a large plastic bag, add vinegar mix. Toss to coat well. Refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight. Drain and reserve marinade. Place the veggies in a grill basket or a disposable foil pan with slits cut in the bottom. Grill, uncovered, over medium high heat for 5 minutes. Turn, baste with reserved marinade. Grill 5 to 8 minutes more until tender.

I would love to hear your favorite grilling recipes. Please send to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks, and Happy Cooking!