

Columns

A dreaded venture in dress shopping

According to some of the weather reports I have been reading we could be in for a wet July. As of this writing we sure need rain. Our water bills here in Charleston are high enough but my June, July and August bills can skyrocket \$50-\$80 more because I garden so much. This year I am doing more container gardening and I actually think they take more water than plants in the ground. The good thing is that my gas and electric bills go down just about as much as the water bills go up.

I am quite enjoying the container gardening this year and I have noticed that many of the garden centers have more ready made large container pots than usual. This is a good thing for those who don't want to make up their own pots but I really enjoy putting a planting together just to see how it matures. I did buy one ready-made pot and was gifted one and I am really enjoying them; I also copied one I saw and so far it is doing well. With all the readymade planters I noted that there are less single plant stock, except for Prairie Gardens in Champaign. Once again they came through for me and were able to order a flat of Santolina (lavender cotton) so I could make our traditional "S" shaped planting. Santolina has a beautiful bloom if allowed to grow but I trim mine like they do in the Canadian gardens we have visited so I have never seen the bloom. I had three extra plants after creating the "S" so I put them in the herb gar-

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



den and will not trim them this year just so I can see the bloom.

Speaking of herbs, this is my favorite time of the year for lunch sandwiches with all the fresh herbs in the garden and in containers. I have mentioned that I hope you will try fresh herb and cream cheese sandwiches but this year I tried a new sandwich. I have always wondered what herbs would pair well with bananas and I did a taste testing experiment. I mashed a banana and divided it into six portions. Then I sprinkled a different herb on each portion and mixed them well. I tried sage, basil, purple basil, thyme, tarragon and dill and boy was I surprised. The two basil herb and banana mixtures were horrible; the sage was not bad, the thyme and the dill mixtures were good but, surprising, to me, the tarragon and banana mixture was absolutely delicious. Today I toasted a kaiser roll, spread it with the mashed banana and tarragon mixture and had a delicious and unique lunch. Try it, you just might like it.

A major catastrophic event has occurred in my life (tongue in cheek). I have been invited to a close family friend's wed-

ding weekend and I am going to have to wear a dress! Yes, that is what I said; a dress. I have to buy and wear a dress. It has been about 20 years since the last time I wore a dress and I vowed to never do it again. Back then it was a major challenge to find something suitable for that formal occasion and I thought I had found a nice fashionable dress but after the event, when I looked at myself in the pictures, I was horrified.

I tend to be more sporty in my fashion choices, even for dressier occasions and luckily times have changed and dresses not usually required now but this time is different and I have no idea where to look for a dress let alone trying to find one which does not make me look like a potato sack tied in the middle.

My go-to choice for semi dressy occasions is usually a very long top worn over tight leggings with dressy flats. I can carry this off fairly well and I have a couple different tops and pants that are interchangeable. I can also pair the tops with longer yoga shorts and this makes for a nice summer evening outfit but discussions with the "Mom" in question has

led me to believe that I might not be able to make this type of outfit as dressy as necessary.

I have looked online at dresses for my age and body type and am quite dismayed at what I have seen. Trips to Champaign and Terre Haute have proved useless so I am off to Decatur this week to see what I can find there. Dresses are simply not made for women who still see themselves as they looked at 30 but are actually in a 75-year-old body.

Actually I have never liked dresses, even as a teen when the popular dress was the "sack" dress. Back then I thought they made me look fat but the point was to cover up the imperfect body.

I really do not like the idea

of buying dresses online; it was bad enough when we had plenty of stores in which to shop and one could try on as many dresses as we needed to find the right one. The thought of trying to imagine myself in a dress, just looking at a picture on the computer, scares me to death. Then, of course, there is the problem of the returns when the dresses I buy are not suitable. The easy thing to do would be to beg off the engagement but I am not one to take the easy way out.

What will be just as difficult will be finding a hat to go with the dress for this formal occasion. I might just have to end up going to a bridal shop to find something suitable. Wish me luck!

Dill and Potato Pancakes

(From the old Farmer's Almanac)

1 cup self-rising flour
2 tablespoons butter, softened
Salt, to taste
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill
2 cups freshly mashed or leftover potatoes

1/8 to 1/4 cup milk, as required

Preheat oven to 400°. Sift flour into a bowl, and add butter, salt, and dill. Mix in mashed potatoes and just enough milk to blend ingredients into a soft dough. Form round cakes with your hands, about 3 inches in diameter and 1/2 inch thick. Place the cakes onto a greased baking tray and bake 20 to 25 minutes, without turning, or until golden. Serve warm. <https://www.almanac.com/>.

Sun at its farthest from Earth this week

Tomorrow, the Earth is at its farthest from the Sun, a point known as "aphelion." If you're keeping score, we'll be 94,506,364 miles from the Sun at about 3 p.m. The Earth's orbit is almost a perfect circle but not quite perfect. We are farthest from the Sun in July and closest to the Sun in January, though the difference is only about three million miles or roughly 3%. So how will you celebrate aphelion?

Venus, now low in the west after sunset, is at its brightest when it is situated about 39 degrees separation from the Sun. That happens this Friday. Through a telescope, Venus will appear as a thick cres-

In the night sky

By David Leake



cent. This is the brightest you'll ever see a planet in our sky.

Monday evening, Mars will appear near the star Regulus in the western evening sky, not long after sunset. Mars is reddish while the star is bluish. Check 'em out in binoculars. Next Tuesday morning,

the waning crescent Moon rises in the east around 1:30 a.m. just ahead of Jupiter.

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

A note worth sharing from Colleen's pediatrician

One of my daughters (Colleen) has two children, ages 5 and 9. They have been seen by the same pediatrician since the day they were born. Last week, Colleen received the following letter from her pediatrician and I thought it was special enough to share:

To all of our patients,

I am writing this letter with a real mixture of emotions. For 38 years it has been my very good fortune to be able to participate in caring for the health of so many wonderful children and their families. Our families have grown up together, and we have shared much laughter and a few tears along the way. I count myself so lucky that you have

So there I was

By Pete Buckley



shared your precious children with me. The fact that a second generation of children are now my "grandpatients" is a particular delight, and has added a new and amazing dimension to my career. To be entrusted with the care of those you all love so much has been a great responsibility and a great honor.

There have certainly been some bumps on the road, with COVID being the biggest! It is also obvious to most of you that the EMR and increasing evolution of health care into a business have not been things that I welcomed. I have also had a few health challenges as many of you are aware, and as someone

clever posted on the internet, I think I'm approaching my "Best if used by date!" I am planning to retire from the practice September 1, 2023, and spend some time reading, cooking, traveling, and yes, maybe playing some pickleball! I am also hoping to be able to continue to attend and support some of your children's activities. I have watched with pride over the years as they have played sports, acted, sung, and danced, and I hope to continue to do this.

This has not been an easy decision for me, but know that Drs. XXXXXX and XXXXXX will continue their excellent care of your families. The search is on for a third person to participate

in that care, so stay tuned for news on that front!

Children, I will miss checking your ears for monkeys and asking you to roar like a dinosaur so I can look in your mouths. I will miss laughing with you and hearing your stories as well as talking over the difficult things about growing up. Parents, I will miss reminding you about sunscreen and tick checks, and assuring you that being a parent is not an easy task. Hug your children often and tightly, even when they try to push you away!

In closing, please accept my deepest appreciation for all the cards, gifts, kind words, and love over the years. I will miss

you all more than words can express. I will say goodbye with a quote from Charles Dickens that I've kept by my desk since I started my career. "I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us."

I read this note and thought, "Wow! What a compassionate, loving healthcare professional." I only wish that every child had a physician who was as passionate and kid-friendly as this doctor. I especially like the quote from Dickens and realize that children really are "so fresh from God" and that Colleen's doctor was a special kind of pediatrician to have recognized this.

Better politics, smarter government —

Life lessons for recent graduates, and everyone else

Editor's Note: This op-ed was distributed by Capitol News Illinois on behalf of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own.

Many of us learned long ago of the limited persuasive power of unsolicited advice. Offering unprompted words of wisdom is the clear triumph of hope over experience! Nonetheless, this spring I bravely offered my students at Southern Illinois University some of the lessons that I have learned over my career. I humbly offer them here as well.

1. Work hard at every job — even the ones you don't like. You can learn a lot from work that isn't fun, rewarding, or stimulating. In addition to gaining skills, you can also study the qualities of success-

ful colleagues. Learn from stars.

2. Try out as many things professionally as possible early in your career. Take chances, don't be afraid to fail, and then focus by mid-career.

3. Travel as much as you can within your own country and abroad. Traveling expands your horizons and makes you a larger person. And it's fun.

4. READ, especially BOOKS, and especially biographies and memoirs. They are life's instruction manuals.

5. Commit to excellence. My favorite historian, Barbara Tuchman, wrote that you either do things right or half-right, your approach is either careful or sloppy. Always try to do things right and make sure your approach is careful.

6. Keep improving your skills, in particular writing and

negotiating. Effective writing requires clear thinking which is both valuable and rare. And much of life is negotiating, even when we are not aware of it.

7. Play the long game. Stay in touch with people. Send notes, make calls, and ask questions of your bosses, colleagues, friends and especially your parents and grandparents. Mark Twain was right: "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

8. Persistence is an underrated, even essential, quality. Press ahead on projects and refuse to give up. Stay humble, exceed expectations, and control the controllables.

Op-Ed

By John T. Shaw



9. Make time to think and plan. George Shultz, as secretary of state, set aside one hour a week to sit quietly in his office to consider what he was trying to accomplish. He brought only a notepad, a pen, and his thoughts. Thinking and planning allows us to avoid one of life's greatest traps: letting the urgent take precedence over the important.

10. Take every opportunity, even small ones, to be courageous. John F. Kennedy

wrote that courage "requires no exceptional qualifications, no magic formula, no special combination of time, place and circumstance. It is an opportunity that sooner or later is presented to us all."

11. Be on the lookout for mentors. Life has a way of providing them at times and in places that are surprising. Watch for them and pay as much attention to what they do as to what they say.

12. Be a good citizen. Learn

how your government works, vote, support honorable candidates even if you don't agree with all their views. Make life better in your community and support problem-solvers.

13. Enjoy life; the years pass quickly. Al McGuire, the legendary coach of Marquette University, sent a note to one of his successors, Tom Crean, wishing him luck. McGuire's handwriting was not completely legible, so the note ended with either "Enjoy the sun" or "Enjoy the run." Whichever word McGuire intended, the meaning is the same.

John T. Shaw is the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois Institute Carbondale. His monthly column explores how Illinois can work toward better politics and smarter government.