

Dropping in unannounced has its risks

A friend recently revealed that he and his wife do not want people stopping by their house unannounced. Fortunately, I have never dropped in on them but I have been known to be a dropper-in-ner. And, I have to admit, I'm not crazy about other people doing it to me. Hypocritical? Perhaps, but it has more to do with whether I'm wearing pants when the doorbell rings.

Actually, we don't have a doorbell, so maybe people drop by more often than I realize. We spend most of our time in our "back room," so we can't hear a knock on the door. People who know us well know to come around to the back patio door, but they do so at their own risk. Again, pants.

As I examined my own habits and beliefs, there are

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



certain criteria that emerged for dropping by. While I have done it, I haven't done it lately. And when I do, it's only with people who I know don't mind (or at least I think they don't mind).

Most of the people I would drop in on are family. My parents, for instance, are people I would drop in on unannounced. My oldest sister is another one, which kills two birds with one stone since

my parents live with her now. Another one is Mrs. A, mother of my best friend growing up. That's family. Now she lives two doors down from my sister, so three birds, one stone. All I have to do is trespass across my third-grade teacher's backyard to get from my sister's to Mrs. A's. It's a small town.

In my younger days, I would have been more likely to drop in unannounced. Compara-

tively, I don't think I'd mind if one of my younger relatives dropped by. For instance, if a nephew or niece stopped by, I'd be so thrilled that they wanted to visit that I wouldn't think about social protocol. The older ones? Well, I suppose.

I would not drop in on most of my siblings but that's because most of them don't live near me. I wouldn't make a trip over if I didn't know that they'd be home and available to visit.

Interestingly, my own children do not drop in on me. They could but I think they're afraid of what they might walk in on; they're well aware of the pants issue.

I think most of us have a public persona and a private persona and we don't mix the

two. As an example, if I'm just bumming around the house, I may not be fully dressed, as we've established, and my hair may not be combed. I don't want most people to see me like that. Plus, it would be helpful to have a few minutes to straighten up the house before company comes over.

I've had a few people drop in to see me at the office. That's fine, but I'm hardly ever in the office. If I knew they were coming, I could try to be there.

In this day and age, it's a lot easier to call someone before dropping in. Everyone has a cell phone. If you're not close enough to someone to have his phone number already, you're probably not close enough to stop by unannounced.

We probably all know people who wouldn't mind a visit

without calling first. But as a general rule, it's just common courtesy to let them know you're coming. You certainly won't offend someone by calling ahead.

If someone did stop by who is not within my circle of friends and family, I wouldn't be offended. They'd just have to take me as I am and be understanding if I don't have much time to spend with them. So, I guess my call-ahead preference is irrelevant. Stop by anytime, but if you want me in pants, call ahead.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblin-man.us. I'm wearing pants now if you want to stop by, but it's 3 in the morning, so there's that.

Remembering a mentor and the lessons he taught

People come into your life for a reason, a season or a lifetime. — Brian A. "Drew" Chalker

Today, I am saddened by the news of the passing of one such person, who came into my life for a season when I was in high school.

As I've chronicled in the past, times were tough for my family during my early high school years, as my mom and stepdad had separated.

Mom, who had been a stay-at-home mom for much of my childhood, took a job at Liltelfuse, making around \$4 an hour, and she raised me and my two younger sisters on that meager wage. The Reebster was and always will be my

hero, battling like an Amazon warrior princess to give us everything she could to live, and we rarely wanted for anything.

As you can imagine, spending money wasn't always readily available and so I did what I could to help out and minimize expenses. I would keep stats for team sports in order to get in free and to ride the bus to away games, a habit I had developed in grade school when I rode with my Uncle Bill "Gopher" Jones, the bus driver.

Sometimes I would catch a lift home with a friend, Brent, rather than ride the bus, and sometimes they would stop for a postgame meal, and this is where Dale came in.

As mentioned before, I sel-

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



dom had pocket money, but my friend's dad, Dale, would always assure me that it was ok and make things right.

The coolest thing was that he never made me feel inferior. In fact, it was just the opposite. Every time I saw him, he greeted me with a huge smile and "Hello, Hook!" and at a time in my life when self-esteem was

an issue, this greeting made me feel like I was worth something. I doubt that he looked at it those terms. He was just a great man, doing what great men do, being a friend and taking care of someone who needed it.

Brent and I eventually drifted in different directions, probably because of bad choic-

es I was making, still friends, but not hanging out as often. My contact with his dad naturally faded, although when I would see him, it was always the same greeting, one which has me smiling right now, thinking about it.

I left town for a decade, and after I returned and bought my house, Dale and Nancy bought the house at the end of our road, and we became neighbors. I didn't go to see him often, as a young dad with active kiddos, but he would never fail to stop the car and chat for a minute if I was working in the yard. Though informal, I learned a lot about life from those little interactions.

Finally, several years ago, I

had the pleasure of interviewing him, his son Todd and his grandson Jeremy for our annual farm and garden edition, and I heard stories of his childhood that kind of brought it all full circle. He was born on a farm in the middle of the Great Depression, so I am sure that it wasn't always easy for him and his family, and I'm sure he could see when someone else was struggling.

All I know is he was a friend to me when he didn't have to be, and I'll miss him. Goodbye, Mr. Shunk. I am sure that your rows are straight, and your crop is bountiful. Dale Shunk passed on July 10, eight days before his 90th birthday. (*Obituary is on page 2.*)

'Seasoned salt' not a good substitute for salt

Over the past few years I have shared some stories of cooking mishaps, some of them funny. Now I have a story that comes from Kathleen Christopher. She lives in Hannibal, Mo., now, but grew up in St. Charles. She says she saw my column in the Carrollton newspaper and decided to share her own funny story:

"Back when I was a few months out of high school, I got my office job and my own apartment. My co-workers were having a snack potluck for Christmas that year. What better time to show off my cooking skills than to bring in a plate of homemade cookies?"

"Perhaps non-cooking skills would have been a better term. The recipe called for salt, and I

didn't have any salt, but I did have seasoning salt. What's the difference? It's salt, so in it went. That really wasn't one of my better ideas. My 18-year-old brain didn't comprehend just to leave the salt out.

"The cookies really were beautiful, sort of a dusty orange color. Fortunately, I tasted one. They sure weren't as good as they looked!"

"There was a grocery store across the street from where I worked, and I scraped up enough money to buy some bakery-made cookies. I did not try to pass them off as my own. I told my coworkers the ones I made had burnt! I bet the seasoned cookies would have caused some flaming tongues."

Thanks Kathleen for shar-

ing your story! She added a note saying the cookie story happened almost 50 years ago, and maybe this story will run off any future dinner guests. She once set a dish towel on fire at her brother's house, (wonder if she ever got invited back there...) and timed a microwave at 30 minutes instead of three, but said

that was a whole other saga. I would love to hear the rest of those stories!

If you have any stories like this, please share with us!

Recently I came across a recipe that sounded delicious to me, and to be honest, I loved the name. Just had to try this "Jezebel Sauce," and oh my, it was so good. This makes a

fancy addition to an array of appetizers. Be sure to read my notes at the end of the recipe.

Jezebel Sauce

8 oz block fat-free cream cheese
1/3 cup apple jelly, warmed
1 Tbsp prepared horseradish
1 1/2 tsp ground mustard
1/3 cup apricot spreadable fruit
assorted crackers

Place a block of cheese on a small plate. In a small bowl, heat the jelly until warmed in the microwave (or use a small pan on the stovetop). Stir in horseradish and mustard until well mixed. Stir in apricot fruit. Spoon over the cream cheese.

Serve with crackers.

Use real horseradish in this dish, not horseradish sauce. Also, be careful to just slightly

warm the jelly. If you melt it, it gets quite runny and doesn't sit on the cream cheese block nicely.

If you want to make a fancy presentation, you could place the block of cheese on a big plate, then add grapes and or dried apricots around the edges of the plate.

I found this recipe online, and it says the sauce could be used as a glaze on ham or pork. I have not tried this yet, but I think the next time I fix a ham steak, I will brush on this glaze. I think it would be great.

If you have a recipe or cooking hint to share, please send to letscook!@herald-pubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258.

What my dog has taught me

My dog is getting old. Even though she is an American Hairless Terrier, and has virtually NO fur anywhere on her body, she does have tiny little eyebrows and soft downy hairs on her muzzle, both of which have turned white with age. Her name is Paisley, and everyone who has ever met her just absolutely LOVES that little dog.

Paisley has been with our family for 12 years now. I remember the day I went to pick her up when she was just a few months old. I drove clear to Morris using a real map, because that was before I was brave enough to try out a smartphone. She was so small, and lively, with big brown eyes, and wrinkled extra skin on her forehead. I was smitten at first glance.

She has been a really good dog; she loves kids and playing fetch and was quick to pot-

Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom



ty-train. She wasn't a chewer so our shoes and furniture were safe, and she has a healthy fear of our cats. She is always by my side and misses me fiercely even during my short trips to the grocery store. I honestly couldn't ask for a better dog.

She loves me, and I love her. But one day she will be gone and I know this, and have tried to prepare myself for that day. I have even tried to tell myself that life will be easier without a dog around. Yes, I admit that it does get bothersome at times

to drop what I'm doing and let her out to go potty. Sometimes I wish I didn't have her hot little body curled up next to mine in the bed. Her vet bills and food cost could be better used for house maintenance or other necessities. And if we were travelers, which we are not, it would be nice not to have to worry about her care while we are gone.

But even with all she costs us in time, money, and everything else, she more than makes up for with her devoted

love. I know that when she is gone, there will be a huge hole of emptiness in my heart that will ache for a long time. That is why I hold her, I talk to her, I allow her a spot on the sofa next to me, and even let her rest at night next to me in the bed. (She has her own blanket, mind you.) I know what to value, what to enjoy, while I have it. I have a relationship with that dog, and I nurture it, to keep it healthy and worthwhile. There is a love between us that is worth the work.

So let me ask: What other relationships do we have that we need to recognize and that maybe we aren't valuing like we should. Just like the little white hairs on my dog's face, time changes things and before we know it, years have gone by. Did we do enough, love enough, enjoy enough, recover enough, forgive enough?

Good relationships, and

good dogs, are a treasure to find. But they don't stay good on their own. I think we forget that sometimes. But to be honest, have we put in the time, the work, the nurturing, the love to keep our relationships alive and well? I know that the road goes both ways, but you would be amazed how humbleness, honesty, and love can heal and nurture a relationship.

Look at your relationships and SEE the beauty and value in them. Rebuild any crumbling foundations, and preserve what has been built. It's worth it. If you look for good,



Paisley

you will find good. If you look for the negative, that you will find as well. Dogs are man's best friend, a perfect example of how to love unconditionally and forgive repeatedly. We can learn a lot from our dogs, especially great dogs, like my Paisley.