

Columns

Another weird dream; follow along if you can

I was dreaming that I was still in high school, which is odd enough since that was 40 years ago. I could have gotten out a little sooner for good behavior, but I didn't have any good behavior.

In my dream, I was talking to the band director, who, in real life, I've never had a conversation with. Except the band director in my dream wasn't the actual band director because that's not how dreams work. In my dream, it was one of my classmates who did not have a career as a band director and, as far as I know, was never in band.

The classmate in my dream is someone I haven't seen or talked to in probably 30 years. Not because I wouldn't want

to. He just lives over 1,000 miles away and I don't have his number.

Anyway, we conversed in my dream, and you know what? He looks just like he did the last time I saw him. Hasn't aged a day.

I wasn't sure if we were still in our first semester of our senior year or the second, which is also odd for my dream because I didn't go to school the second semester of our senior year. Well, I was in school, just not that school or a school. Let's just call it a work program. And no, it did not involve a pickaxe or an ankle monitor. Come to think of it, though, I didn't get paid, so maybe it was a humanitarian atrocity.

Anyway, I was asking the band director if I took band for the final semester, never having been in band, could he teach me everything I need to know to be able to play an instrument well enough to entertain people and pay my bills.

He said, yes he could, if my audience was deaf and I had no bills. Although, he added, many deaf people would be able to feel the vibrations and would know whether I had any rhythm, which I don't. When I clap along in an audience, I have to watch the other people to know when to smack my hands.

I've also been told that I'm tone deaf, which isn't really true. No, it's true that I've been

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



told that, but I'm not entirely tone deaf. I can hear different notes. I just can't emulate them. I'm more tone mute. Well, not mute. I just mispronounce music.

I also just misused a word, but that's OK. I have a permit for that.

The word should be "mispronounce." Mispronunciation

means mispronouncing, but it feels like it includes poor enunciation, which it doesn't, technically. There's a difference between mispronouncing a word and not enunciating it. When it comes to music, I do both. I think it's called "butchering."

Maybe I'm just a musical maverick. When other people

go low, I go high. When they skip a beat, I skip three. When they're euphonious, I'm erroneous.

I put the harm in harmony. I put the nor in tenor. I put the can't in cantata.

Anyway, where was I? I was telling you about my weird dream. Oh, yeah; and then I woke up. I'll try to get back to sleep to see if I can "drum" up an ending. Doubtful. Considering my musical skills, the only drumstick I'll be handling comes from a chicken.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. And now I'm hungry for chicken.

Highlights from Villa Grove's Ag Days

*This ain't my first rodeo
This ain't the first time this ol' cowboy's been thrown
This ain't the first I've seen this dog and pony show*

— Vern Gosdin

Technically, I suppose this is true. I have vague memories of going with my Grandma and Grandpa Hooker to a rodeo on the southeast side of Bement, 40 plus years ago. My most vivid memories are that the bulls were scary, the horses were huge, and the cowboys and cowgirls were larger than life heroes, taking a beating and risking life and limb battling those brutes.

Fast forward to 2023, and I

went to my second rodeo. The bulls were scary, the horses were huge, and the cowboys and cowgirls were larger than life heroes, taking a beating and risking life and limb battling those brutes, as a couple of local gentlemen found out. The hard way. I'm not sure where those two dudes fall on the spectrum between brave and bat-crazy, but my hat's off to them for giving it a whirl.

Although it wasn't officially part of the Ag Days celebration, the rodeo, combined with the new carnival company and food vendors seemed to give the whole weekend a fresh new vibe. Attendance at Friday's IPRA event easily

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



reached four figures and the lines at the rides and food trucks were pretty steady as well. The stalwarts like the Chamber's pork burger stand and FFA produce sale were welcomed, familiar sights as well.

Every time I think that

I've seen the peak of my little town on the river's generosity, the folks around here do something that amazes me. This year, Jackie Wells and the Camargo Township Library teamed up with Karla and Bub Westray from JR's lounge to provide over 100 bracelets for

kids to use to ride the carnival rides. Many of these children come from families whose financial situation is tight, and they may not have been able to fully enjoy the celebration without this support.

Karla, in her usual self-deprecating manner, quickly deflected credit. "All I did was ask, and who doesn't want to help kids?" she said when asked about her and Bub's involvement. The bottom line is that by her making the ask, and by Villa Grovians answering the call, there were over 100 smiling kids screaming and hollering as they were spun, flung and "gated" throughout the weekend.

Finally, one thing that struck me is how the event has changed, as the festival has lost most of its agricultural connections, over time, other than the antique tractors in the parade. Perhaps, with it's new beginnings, it's time to consider a new name and even a new, single location at Richman Park for the entire festival to be held beside the rodeo event.

Kudos to all involved in this year's event, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for the first weekend in August in 2024 and beyond.

Real Life Wellness — Strength in numbers!

I have been discussing the second part of my new Wild Root Health program which is physical activity. Last week, I described the first type of physical activity, aerobic exercise without going anywhere or spending any money. This week, I want to share the second type of physical activity, strength training.

As we age, strength training has different motivations behind it for each of us. When you are young, strength is a sign of beauty. As you mature, strength is a sign of vitality. We you are getting older; strength allows you to live longer. All three of these reasons are important, but once you pick your strongest reason why you want to stay strong, it doesn't

have to be difficult to perform.

I think of strength training in three ways. First is consistency/regularity. Second is progressive overload and finally you need to use proper form/technique. Unless you build your personal program to incorporate all three ways of strength training, you won't get the long-term results you are after.

To become consistent/regular with strength training, first you must have a strong enough motivation or what I call your Why. Your Why will usually be driven by one of three factors. The first factor is age. The second factor is your environment, and the final factor is your economics. Once your Why is strong enough, it

won't be a matter of if you are going to be consistent, it will be a matter of when are you going to fit it to your day.

When people see your level of motivation, they will unconsciously become drawn to your new energy. This is the perfect time to find your strength training tribe to make you even more accountable to your new strength routine.

The second way to strength train is by using a progressive overload. Simply put, over time you should slowly increase the number of weights or resistance you use to increase your lean muscle mass. When you lift against resistance, you are actually tearing that muscle down microscopically. When you tear one piece of the mus-

cle, it will respond by generating two new pieces to replace the lost one.

This is how you build big muscles. This is great for people who want to look better. But resistance or overload training also increases the resting tone of muscles. Your muscles resting tone is the low-grade contraction that is

always in the muscle, even at "rest".

For people who want to feel better or live longer, resting tone becomes more important than building big muscles. When you have strength from creating good resting tone, your bone density, cartilage, and ligament health also increase. This leads to better

health in all areas of your lifestyle.

The last part of strength training is proper form/technique. This is my biggest pet peeve with most strength programs. Not near enough focus is placed on this way of building muscles. I have treated more injuries from poor form/technique than the other two ways of strength training combined.

No matter how old you are, weak you are, stiff you are and scared you are to begin strength training, there is a simple, safe, and inexpensive way to start the process. All you must do is ask for help.

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



I scream, you scream; we all scream for ice cream

Nothing is better on a hot summer day than a freshly made ice cream cone. Young and old alike have enjoyed this wonderful treat since it first became a common celebratory dessert in the 1700s. Before that, flavored ice was a delicacy savored as far back as 2 B.C.

You scream, I scream, we ALL scream for ice cream. I cannot imagine a world without ice cream. I do not think I have ever turned down ice cream. The cone it comes in; well, that's another story.

I would rather eat my ice cream out of a bowl, cup, mug, shoe, or off the backs of my enemies rather than eat it smashed into a cardboard-tasting dry, crumbly, stale cone. They can call it a sugar cone all day long, but to me, it's still disgusting (especially when it

gets soggy.)

Waffle cones are another story. They are delicious, crispy, and flavored like something wonderful. They are also messy and require the use of multiple napkins. A double scoop of ice cream inside a fresh warm waffle cone is the ultimate dessert in my book. It's my kryptonite. My knees go weak just thinking about it.

Even though I'm very good at making ice cream cones at home (using the dreaded sugar cones,) I really don't like doing it. That is because when I was a kid, my mom ran a daycare in our home, and would call on me to make ice cream cones for numerous children she was watching. I cannot even tell you how many hundreds of cones I made over the years, but when I made one, I had to

make at least a dozen at a time.

The part I hated about making all of those ice cream cones was that ice cream came in paper boxes and I had to reach my hand down to the bottom to get each scoop out, getting sticky clear up to my elbows. I don't like being sticky. And it never failed, at least one kid would take a bite out of the bottom of their cone, making a big mess, which I had to clean up as well.

My dad always got the same ice cream: Neapolitan. It was his solution to suit everybody. Chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry, all in the same box. But I liked vanilla, and I didn't want my ice cream mixed. I'm a purist, or a picky person, however you want to look at it.

So what is your favorite flavor of ice cream? Mine is vanil-

la, and here is why... Vanilla is predictable. From my hometown, to Timbuktu, vanilla is vanilla. But chocolate fluctuates, and strawberry does too. I don't want to have to crunch or chew my ice cream, so I don't want nuts and candy and other things littering the pure vanilla goodness that I like to savor on my tongue. Vanilla is like home, it's familiar, and it's simple. Vanilla is the basis of

all other flavors. It's the cornerstone of ice cream. And it's good enough for me.

I don't need Baskin Robbins and their 31 flavors, or any other fancy named company's clever or punchy named flavors. I also don't need frozen custard, frozen yogurt, or whatever else icy mixture that has been concocted. Ice cream isn't hard to make; it requires simple ingredients of cream,

sugar, and vanilla, mixed in an ice bath til it freezes. You can even make your own in a baggie at home. There are recipes online on how to do that.

So I said all of that to say this: I love ice cream, especially vanilla ice cream. You can tell a lot about a person based on the flavor of ice cream they prefer. Ice cream is better in a waffle cone or by itself, but don't bite the end off your cone prematurely.

Ice cream is a summertime favorite, but also great any time of the year. My personal favorite is Blue Bunny vanilla ice cream. So if you haven't had any ice cream lately, what are you waiting for? Ice cream is a little taste of Heaven here on earth. Enjoy your summer, and don't forget the ice cream!

Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom

