

Columns

Patting yourself on the back is bad form, but I'll do it

I don't know how to write this without sounding like a total gasbag. Then again, when am I not a total gasbag?

In the newspaper business, we're frequently called upon to celebrate the achievements of others. But when it comes to sharing our own successes, it just seems gluttonous. Self-aggrandizing doesn't look good on anyone. But who's to sing our praises if the singers of praise are sidelined? Like my mother has been known to say, if you don't toot your own horn, nobody is going to toot it for you.

That's not true for everyone. We newspaper people toot horns for other people all the time. And the bar isn't that high. If you grow a big tomato in your garden, you can get your picture in the newspaper.

I don't do anything earth shattering. I don't save lives or cure diseases or end wars. I just write these little, non-sensical stories each week and hope people like them.

Sometimes, I help people by drawing attention to a problem or calling out a public body. Newspaper people inform, educate, illustrate, pontificate and celebrate. We record history as it happens. We entertain, maintain and complain. We can be nosy and noisy. We can be thoughtful and thoughtless at the same time depending on your point of view. I can be on your side or a thorn in it.

But that's the job I get paid to do. This job, writing these little stories that have little to no redeeming value, is just something I do. I don't get paid

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



for it. It's mostly just publicly shared therapy. It's a window into my world, sometimes real and sometimes imagined.

I think I can say without ignominy that I'm a creative person. One thing I've found to be common among creative people is that they need constant validation. They second guess themselves all the time. I've known great artists who constantly wonder if they're any good at all.

Those who know me well know that I don't fit into that category most of the time. I'm overly confident to the point of egotistical, impervious to criticism, and generally just way too full of myself. A gasbag. I know that about me. I'm not offended if you say it.

Yet, I seek approval from my peers and readers and feel a bit sheepish about expressing their validation. I try to be a humble gasbag. A little, anyway. There seems to be some contradiction here; it's hard to be selfless and selfish at the same time, but I manage it.

So, humility aside, I'm proud to report that Ramblin' Man has again won first place for best humor column from the National Newspaper Association. They like me, Mom. They really like me.

I've entered the NNA contest for the past five years. The column won second place in 2019, first place in 2020, and

second place in 2021. I got shut out last year but placed first and fourth this year.

The winning entry was a column titled Spinning the nightly wheel of misfortune about injuring myself in my sleep. The fourth place column was about how not to cut down a tree.

Contests are pretty subjective, though. I entered three columns, and I thought the one that didn't place was the best of the three. It was about get-

ting trapped inside a sleeping bag.

I was telling my wife last week that I was ready to stop writing the column next year, which will be my 30th year. It's symbolic because old-school journo's like me signify the end of an article by typing the code -30-. Plus, that totals more than 1,500 columns, and that sounds like enough.

But I'll probably keep it in light of my recent accolades. Why go out on top when you

can drive yourself into the ground until you become a caricature of your former self?

So, anyway, yea me, and thank you for sticking with me all these years. With your help, I'll keep going until I become even less relevant than I already am.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblin-man.us. I can keep doing this or grow big tomatoes. I don't like tomatoes.

Zucchini bread can be canned

Here is a recipe that I printed several years ago, and think it is worthy of being printed again. This is for all you gardeners who once again got way too much zucchini! This recipe came from Lynda Nollau and she said, "I use it every summer when the word 'zucchini' becomes a four-letter word!"

Zucchini Bread to Can

Submitted by Lynda Nollau

- 3 cups flour
- 2 cups grated zucchini.
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp salt
- 3 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Place a baking stone in the oven. Preheat the oven and stone to 325 degrees. Sift together the dry ingredients. In

a small bowl, which together the eggs and vanilla. In a very large bowl, stir the oil into the zucchini along with the raisins. Stir the egg mixture into the zucchini mixture. Add the flour mixture along with the nuts. Stir until well combined.

Divide the batter as follows: use 6 wide-mouth pint canning jars. Measure 1 cup of batter into each jar. Place each jar onto the baking stone, making sure the jars do not touch each other. Bake for one hour. Check with a cake tester or toothpick, if the tester comes

out clean, immediately remove jars from the oven and place on a dry kitchen towel on the counter. Place a flat canning lid on each jar and screw tight to fingertip tight. Very soon you will hear that "pop" as the jars create a vacuum and seal tight. Cool completely.

Stir in a cool dry place. Did you know zucchini is technically a fruit? Zucchini contains seeds and grows on the part of the plant that flowers; that makes it a fruit. And not only is it a fruit, it is truly a "berry" because it grows



from a single flower. Actually, all types of squash are really fruits. But still, I won't be adding zucchini to my fruit salad any time soon!

Zucchini is 95% water and has more potassium than a banana. And for all you trivia buffs: the zucchini originated in Central and South America. About 500 years ago, Christopher Columbus brought the plant to the Mediterranean. Then Italian immigrants brought the zucchini to the United States in the 1920s. If you can't get enough of zucchini, consider traveling to the annual Zucchini Festival in Obetz, Ohio, held every August!

If you have a recipe to share, or a funny story about a kitchen mishap, or even a question about cooking, please send it to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!

PUZZLES

CROSSWORD CLUES

CLUES ACROSS

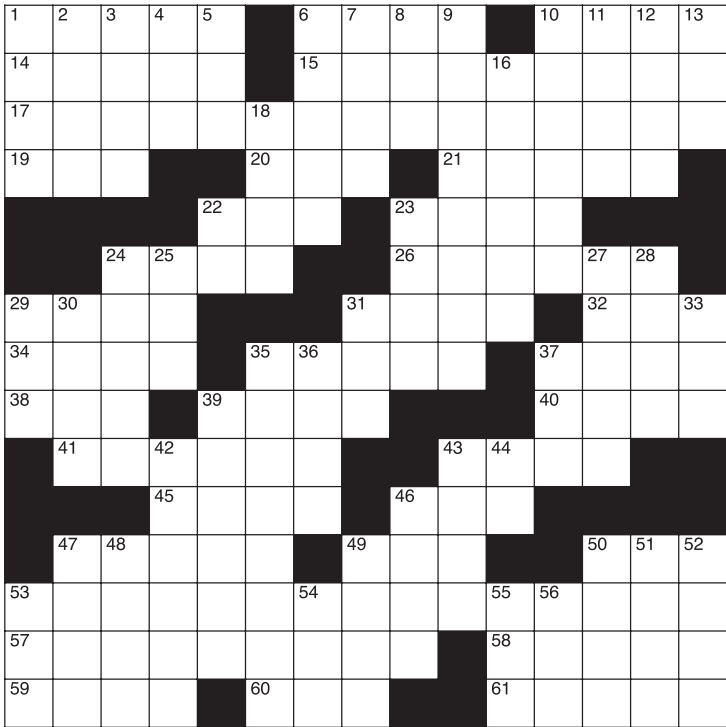
- Type of cat
- Weaponry
- Western Christian Church service
- Significant eruption of pustules
- Baltic nation
- Start of American holiday season
- Unhappy
- Maintains possession of
- Metrical foot of one long and three short syllables
- Mountain pass
- Vestments
- Type of dish
- Escaped quickly
- Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
- Wings
- Political action committee
- Touches lightly
- Stood back from
- Philippine Island
- Popular winter activity
- Type of amine
- Small freshwater duck
- Filled with love
- Without (French)
- Vetch
- Swiss river
- Describes a sound
- Sign language

- Hair product
- Have surgery
- Quality of being imaginary
- Far-right German party
- Drove
- Former French coin of low value
- Hard, durable timbers

CLUES DOWN

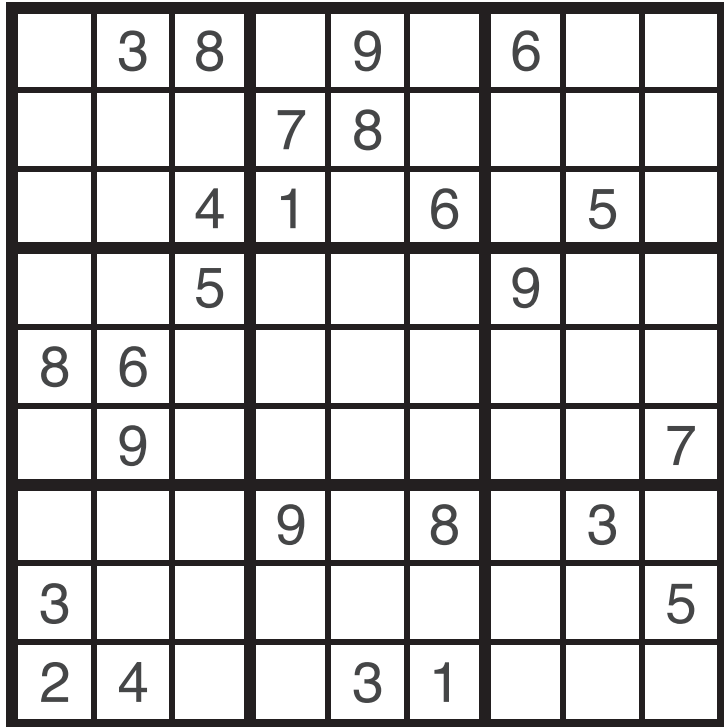
- Body art
- Middle East military title
- Actor Pitt
- Container
- Speak incessantly
- Relating to algae
- Jacob __, journalist
- Rock TV channel
- Boat's cargo
- Most wise
- Within
- Chinese industrial city
- Scotland's longest river
- Not capable
- Footwear
- Savings account
- Capable
- Vaccine developer
- Tax collector
- Fencing swords
- Native religion in China
- Promotional materials
- A shot in a film production
- Afflict in mind or body

CROSSWORD

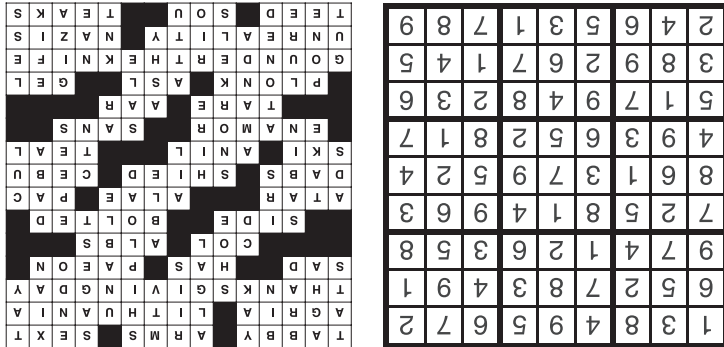


- A passage with access only at one end
- Breathing devices
- Employ for wages
- Kids' TV channel (abbr.)
- Popular Boston song
- Made amends
- Selling at specially reduced prices
- Atomic #18
- With fireplace residue
- Unleavened cornbread
- Draw out
- Southwestern Alaska island
- Where the Pyramids are
- People of Nigeria
- Smaller quantity
- Destroy the inside of
- City
- Chivalrous figure (abbr.)
- No (Scottish)

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS



HOROSCOPES

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Your compassion takes you many places, Aries. This week you may be compelled to reach out and do more volunteer work for a nonprofit that you hold dear.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, your friends need you to be steady this week, and that's just what you will give them. You like being in a leadership role and someone others can depend on.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

Right now your to-do list is very small, which means you have loads of free time for recreational activities if you choose. Otherwise, you can simply bask in having nothing to do.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer, you are in a frame of mind to learn some new skills, and this is just the week to get started. Begin slowly with a hobby or something that interests you.

LEO - July 23/Aug 23

Leo, it can be challenging to remain low-key when others are excited all around you, but you must be serious with this new venture you are considering. There will be time to celebrate later.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, while others may want the spotlight, you are content to work behind the scenes for the time being. There is nothing wrong with being a supporting character.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Take a few moments this week to go over spending, as you may determine that you have to reel in your budget a little more than you had expected, Libra.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, family responsibilities may continue to weigh you down a bit more than usual, leaving little time for romance. Try to make time when you can.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

You are interested in changing your living space in the days to come, and redecorating is at the top of the list, Sagittarius. Find out ways you can do it without breaking the bank.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, you may be holding back on conversations for fear of not getting the answers you desire. Everything won't go your way, but failing to act is not the way to go.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

You are ready to make some solid choices for your family and future, Aquarius. They may not align with what others feel is necessary, but stay true to your beliefs and needs.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

While you are prone to giving all of your energy away to others most of the time, this week you focus mostly on you, Pisces. It's a welcomed change that you deserve.



FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER 17

Patrick Mahomes, Athlete (28)

SEPTEMBER 18

James Marsden, Actor (50)

SEPTEMBER 19

Pia Mia, Singer (27)

SEPTEMBER 20

Jon Bernthal, Actor (47)

SEPTEMBER 21

Jason Derulo, Singer (34)

SEPTEMBER 22

Tom Felton, Actor (36)

SEPTEMBER 23

Anthony Mackie, Actor (45)