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Neighbors

<http://www.cassneighbors.com>

A regional newspaper freely distributed in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, Three Rivers, Elkhart and Mishawaka, with home delivery at Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes



Thanks to my friend and next door neighbor "Bad Patty" Luecht for the photo

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A yellow and black Cub Cadet XT2 LX46 EFI lawn tractor shown from a front-three-quarter view.

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REGIONAL NEWS

VBCDHD will keep its website (www.vbcassdhd.org/covid-19) and Facebook (@VBCDHD) as up-to-date as possible with the latest information, including access to Michigan.gov/coronavirus data.

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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

August 12 - Marshmallows and Meteors, 9:30 pm, Bendix Woods County Park, South Bend, 574-654-3155

August 15 - Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show, 7 am - 4 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212 **CANCELED**

August 18 - The Cass County Historical Society meeting, Newton House, 20689 Marcellus Highway, 6 pm open house 7 pm meeting outside

(bring chairs)

August 29 - Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa Pow Wow, 9 am, Dowagiac, 782-8212

September 12 - "Can't stop us COVID-19" Drive-Thru Antique Engine & Tractor Show, 10 am - 4 pm, <http://www.michiganflywheelers.org>

September 15 - The Cass County

Historical Society meeting, TBA

October 10 - Under the Harvest Moon Festival, 10 am - 4 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

October 13 - The Cass County Historical Society meeting, TBA

November 13, 14 - Christmas Open House Weekend, 10 am - 5 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

November 28 - Small Business Saturday, 10 am - 11pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

December 4 - Candle-light Christmas Parade, 7 - 9 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the pandemic all events are subject to change or cancellation. Please check with event organizers prior to attending any events.

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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

And then it was August!

by **Jane Boudreau**

Hello Neighbors! And now, right before our eyes -- it's August! How the heck did that happen? Word around town is that people are counting down the days to January 1, 2021. It'll be a new year, a new day. Hopefully change is on the way; people hopefully getting better and staying healthy ... all that good stuff. Finally, I hope all of you are doing well.

Now I have to go into that gardening thing. Please skip down if you don't care a whit about dirt, bugs, and sweating it out on a perfectly fine day. Not much new going on in my garden unfortunately. In fact this summer hasn't been the best for me. Rather than staying put, I was going back and forth between homes and I lost a few plants. With the lack of rain in June it was a give. I didn't have a lot of flower pots or hanging plants, but it always makes me sad to see a withered up plant that was glorious when I left -- either house. Does anyone have any tips on how you keep your garden going while you are away? It's probably an age old question but I'm at a loss. Email me if you'd like and I'll share next month.

This is a shot of my climbing rose (the other blooms had died off), and I can't tell you how proud I am! I planted this by my arbor about ten years ago and absolutely nothing would happen with it. It never grew much, and certainly wasn't getting the hang of climbing. I probably should have ripped it out and planted clematis, which is a trooper. One day last summer I saw some tendrils hanging and started looping them on the arbor and securing with twine. This summer it is halfway up and I'm getting buds and flowers here and there. And then lo and behold, I found out it was a bush, not a climber. Well, it's now an expat.



If you're still with me here, I wanted to tell you about a lifesaving app I found and have on my phone. And this is how I found out my climber was a bush. It's called "Picture This," and it's free by the way. Very simply, you take a picture with your phone on this app, of your plant, flower, weed, or what have you, and voila! It identifies the species, features pics, history, and tips on growing. I can't tell you how much I love it. I walk around my garden like Inspector Clouseau snapping pics of my flowers in case I've forgotten the name. It's helped me immensely identifying weeds along with tips on how to get rid of them. And it was a really big help when I visited the nursery to pick out some bedding plants and flowers. I usually look at the stick for the info, but I had my trusty little phone app and identifying and picking out what I wanted was a breeze.

Another wonderful aspect of this app is that it keeps your photos in a library so



you can refer back to them. I bought this beautiful flowing plant with pink flowers at Dussell's Farm Market. I brought it back to Chicago to plant. Along the way I forgot what it was. I just jumped on the app, found the photo I took at Dussell's and boom! By the way, it's a Blue Mustard (underneath that pink) and it's edible but I'll pass.



Since I have nothing nice to say about my overall gardening, I thought I'd try to keep your attention by talking about houseplants. They aren't exactly my forte, more so victims. Just as I have problems with being in one place long enough to keep my gardens and pots healthy and watered, houseplants can suffer quite a bit as well. I tend to stick with the tried and true, easy to grow varieties. I've had this Jade plant for over twenty years. It's a succulent so it can manage for a long while without water. Just how resilient is my guy? We had water damage inside our cottage years ago. It was major and took well over a year to basically gut the place and start over. A company initially came and packed up all of our furniture and belongings. I never thought about the monster Jade plant. When we "moved" back in eighteen months later, I noticed something in the corner of the garage. And there was my beloved monster plant, all shriveled up. I took a leap of faith, cut off as much of the dead stuff as I could, submerged it in water, and gave it a lot of sun. Ta Da! She made it! Those miraculous leaves store water and if in a drought, rely on that for hydration. So moral of the story, you can't go wrong with succulents or cacti. I cut off sections here and there to spawn for family and friends. You can see a healthy plant on the cabinet, it's just six months old.

I do pretty well with ferns, pathos, and spider plants. But for your interest, I gleaned some tips from Better Homes &

Gardens, a magazine I surely will never be in. I don't mind however, stealing their ideas for my own use. So here is a quick rundown:

1) Indoor container plants need much lighter soil than the soil you have in your garden or in a bag marked topsoil. Always get a potting mix. This will provide good drainage, hold moisture, and give roots room to grow. Who would have thought?

2) News to me: Overwatering kills more plants than under-watering. Use room temp water and it's best to actually get it from an outdoor tap if you have softened water. It can accumulate in the soil and burn the roots of the plant. If this isn't enough fussing for you, it's best to let the plant water sit for a few hours to evaporate any dissolved chemicals. Hmmmm ... maybe I need a rain bar-

rel.

3) Be sure your pot or planter has drainage holes in the bottom. You need to completely soak the plant until you see the water coming out the bottom. This is best done outdoors or over your kitchen sink or there will be a lot of mopping to do. For my monster Jade, I have an old utility tray, 4 inches deep, in which I set the whole plant. I water and just leave it to soak for several hours. I then set it on a few old towels to be sure nothings coming out and then pop it back into the woven basket it calls home. It's totally worth it for this guy, I don't have to water for another 4-6 weeks. No matter what sort of plant you have, you have to let that water go right through and out the drainage holes. Forget prancing around with a pretty watering can adding a splash here or a glug there, they need a good soak.

4) I'm not a chemist so I fertilize my plants with whatever I find at the big box store. I mix the powder with water according to the direction and give them a good drink. I never fertilize in the winter as plants aren't actively growing then. And you should never water baby plants if the potting soil has nutrients in it--and it should if you are buying what I told you to buy. :)

Getting away from plants and going in the direction of even more drivel, I wanted to share just a little decorating tip that I love, but maybe you won't. I have found that when you have things you love or need scattered on a surface,



such as a countertop or your coffee table, it will look a lot less cluttered and even more eye-catching if you corral objects into a container, basket, or decorative tray. My decorating style is a mixed bag, I like a casual cottage look with some rustic modern and farmhouse touches. But the wind can blow me in another direction next week. The point I'm making is that you can gather up anything you like in your home that you want to display, plop it on a tray and you have instant style. I also use trays and baskets in the bathroom and on my dresser to hold all those little essentials that would otherwise be clutter. My nightstand has a basket holding my latest book. It looks so scholarly. What you can't see are my reading glasses and iPad. Okay-I'll come clean. Also in the basket are eye drops, cough drops, tweezers, nail files, dental floss, bobby pins, my address book, gum, a few pairs of earrings, tissues (some used), nail polish remover, last weeks Sun Times, recipe clipped from magazines, dog bones ... well, you get the picture. But at least it's all tidy and in one place.

Now ... recipes.



Pasta with Sun-dried Tomatoes & Pesto

My daughter made this over the 4th of July holiday and we all loved it so much; we were sneaking into the fridge later to grab another small plate. It's super easy to throw together and it feeds a small crowd. Make it your new summer side dish.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. rigatoni pasta
- 1/4 c olive oil
- 1/4 c basil pesto (available in most grocery stores)
- 1 T dried Italian herbs
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 c red cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1 c yellow cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1/4 c. sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 1 1/2 c fresh or buffalo mozzarella cheese, roughly chopped
- 1/2 c grated parmesan cheese

Continued on next page. See:

JANE

BUSINESS & FINANCE

To schedule or not to schedule

By **Charlie Retherford**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

There are many items that can be scheduled on your homeowners' insurance policy. To schedule an item means to specifically list it on your policy. Scheduling personal property comes at an additional cost, but it is good for a variety of reasons.

Common items that you should consider scheduling include jewelry, cameras, furs, silverware, firearms, fine arts, musical instruments, and collectibles. Scheduling an item provides additional protection for your valuables.

Although most homeowners' policies provide coverage for personal property, some items are limited in their coverage amount. Some items with a theft limit are firearms, jewelry, watches, furs, silverware, pewterware, and goldware. Personal property should be scheduled when the amount of insurance needed to cover an item exceeds the amount of insurance provided by the insurance policy.

Scheduling an item also provides

additional protection for your valuables. Coverage is no longer limited to the policy limit, and in most cases includes coverage for breakage and mysterious disappearance. When scheduling an item on your homeowners' policy, no deductible applies unless specified on your policy.

You may have high-value items that are not limited by dollar amount in the basic policy; however, there may not be enough insurance to cover these items plus the other unscheduled personal property in the home in case of a large or total loss. Think about the individual who has a homeowners' policy with \$100,000 on his unscheduled personal property and has a total loss. A \$50,000 grand piano is among the personal property that is lost. If this individual decides to replace the piano, he will only have \$50,000 left to replace an entire household's contents.

If you decide to schedule items on your policy, you will need a complete description and value of the item. Often an appraisal or a receipt is required. An appraisal will help you to settle any future claims on the scheduled item. Some lower-valued items may only

require a receipt. It is important that you review, photograph and update your valuable items on a regular basis. Remember that if the value of your item has increased and your policy has not been updated, you will only receive the amount specified on your policy at the time of loss.

What about your recreational vehicles such as boats, jet skis, and ATVs (also know as all terrain or off-road vehicles)? Did you know the coverage on your basic homeowners' policy is very limited if there is any coverage at all? These items can often be scheduled on your homeowners' policy.

Boats, jet skis, and ATVs need "liability" insurance coverage. Liability protects you if your vehicle injures someone or damages someone else's property. Other coverages available are "comprehensive" and "collision" insurance. Comprehensive insurance protects your property for damage if it is caused by an event other than a collision. For instance, if your boat or ATV is damaged by vandalism, theft, fire, flooding or an animal, comprehensive coverage will likely apply. Collision insurance provides

coverage for damage if you collide with another boat, ATV, or other obstacle.

Some of the factors that determine the cost to insure your boat are the value of your boat, the horsepower, whether it is an inboard, outboard or a jet ski, and the length of the boat. You may purchase additional coverages for such things as your boat trailer, medical payments, personal effects, and liability to protect you from an uninsured boater.

Some of the factors that determine the cost to insure your ATV, whether it is a 4-wheeler, snowmobile, or other off-road vehicle are the value of the ATV and the size of the engine. Additional coverage can be purchased for your ATV trailer, medical payments, personal effects, and liability to protect you from an uninsured or underinsured ATV operator.

If you are unsure whether you should schedule items on your homeowners' insurance policy, contact your independent insurance agent. Don't find out after you have a loss that you have inadequate coverage, or worse yet no coverage, on your homeowners' insurance policy!

JANE

Continued from previous page

S & P to taste

Directions:

Boil pasta according to box directions. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, mix the olive oil with the pesto, herbs, and garlic. Drain the pasta and toss with the olive oil mixture. Gently mix in the sun-dried tomatoes, tomatoes, and mozzarella cheese. Stir in the parmesan cheese and season with S & P to taste. Serves 8-12 as a side dish.



Mediterranean Baked Cod

I wish I could say we ate more fish. My husband loves salmon but I'm a little so-so about it. I prefer sweet whitefish like cod and tilapia. When you factor in that I've never found a creative bone in my body when it comes to preparing and cooking fish, it just doesn't happen much around here. I did however, come upon a sale at my grocer on cod and tuna. So I really had to put my thinking cap on and do this fish right.

I cook every evening. More times than not, it's play time. I'm in my element when I can create something delicious by gathering up what I have in the fridge and pantry and then let the dance begin. A lot of times I'll refer to a recipe to brush up on my game, and then edit it according to what I have on hand or my preference in place of or in addition to the recipe ingredients.

So you have a little over a pound of

cod. Let's bring out the flavor (butter), and add to the flavor (a veggie, in this case spinach). To give it that extra kick, some herbs and spices, and the final touch to make it all come together, it can be anything from a sprinkle of cheese to toasted breadcrumbs to a splash of cream. I used the juice of a lemon.

These flavors are those we find in Mediterranean cooking and it's one of my passions. Very fresh, vibrant, and heart healthy. I hope you enjoy making this dish as much as I did putting it together.

Mediterranean Baked Cod

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lbs fresh cod fillets, cut into 4-6 pieces
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 10 oz. package frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 5 T fresh lemon juice
- 5 T olive oil
- 2 T melted butter
- 1/3 c flour
- 1 t ground coriander
- 3/4 t sweet paprika
- 3/4 t ground cumin
- 1+ T salt and pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix the lemon juice, olive oil, and melted butter in a shallow bowl. In another shallow bowl mix together the flour, spices, salt and pepper.

Pat all sides of the cod pieces dry (very important). Dip the pieces (both sides) in the olive oil/butter mixture first followed by the flour mix. Set aside on a plate.

Heat 2 T olive oil in a cast iron or heavy oven proof skillet over medium high heat. Add the fish and sear on both sides until you have a golden color but not cooked through. Off the heat and spoon the spinach over and between the cod pieces. To the remaining lemon mixture, add the chopped garlic and swirl to mix. Pour this over the entire dish.

Bake the fish in the same skillet for about 10 minutes or until it flakes easily. Finish with a good squeeze of lemon and garnish with fresh parsley if desired. Serves 4

Blueberry Cheesecake Parfait

Can my heart beat any faster? I can pop fresh blueberries in my mouth and be in heaven. Give me a bowl of them with fresh cream or whipped cream and my eyes are rolling back in my head.

And this ... I won't go any further. It's delicious, somewhat healthy (okay, there's a lot of sugar but the cream cheese is good enough), and it looks absolutely fabulous. Come on ... impress your guests! Finally, it's easy. You can thank me later.



Blueberry Cheesecake Parfait

For the blueberry sauce:

- 1/4 c sugar
- 1 T cornstarch
- 1/2 c water
- 1 T lemon juice
- 3 c blueberries (fresh or frozen and thawed)
- 1 t vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

For the filling:

- 1 1/4 c heavy cream
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 t vanilla extract
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1 store, bakery, or your own pound cake, cubed (smallish)

Directions:

In a medium saucepan over low heat, combine the sugar and cornstarch. Stir in the water and lemon juice. Add the blueberries and stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium high heat, stirring frequently. Reduce to a simmer and cook an additional 3-5 minutes until the mixture is thickened. Remove from heat and let cool.

In a medium bowl or your standing

mixer, beat the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. In a separate bowl, beat the cream cheese, vanilla and sugar until smooth and fluffy. Fold in the whipped cream.

Divide half the pound cake cubes among 6-8 small glasses or parfait/pudding cups. Spoon half the of the cheesecake filling over each cup and top with the blueberry mixture. Add another layer ending with the blueberry sauce. Garnish with fresh mint if you happen to have it. It's just for show so don't stress if you're fresh out. I like to use any old glass, or a jelly jar which I'm embarrassed to say I have a nice collection of, as long as they are approximately the same size ... you really wouldn't want to see grown people arguing, or even crying if they have a smaller cup or jar. And make sure its glass so it looks purdy.

My, what a long column this month. I have to say I have just my immediate family and a handful of friends that I'm comfortable to be around during this pandemic. I'm even more vigilant about healthy hygiene and a sanitary home than before. With the cautious reentry into a changed world, I feel more than ever that I need to keep a distance from people even in my home. Over the 4th of July, even though it was just close family, I pretty much took a step away and made a lot of rounds of sanitizing door knobs, light switches, countertops and even the handles of the refrigerator and cabinets. I simply don't think we can be careful enough. Keep that hand sanitizer in your car, pocket, or purse for when you can't wash your hands. After wearing your mask, and you should be, put it in a safe place (or dispose of it if you have a supply) where it can't subject you or anyone from any contamination. It's supposed to be good to go after 24 hours. I keep a few in a small plastic bag in my glove compartment. Sometimes we think we are just going out for gas or a drive-thru and then find we need to actually go into a store or what have you. Just a few tips from this bossy writer.

Be safe. Enjoy August. Try my recipes. Wash your hands.

Jane is a writer, columnist, and blogger who lives in Chicago, on Diamond Lake, and a little place in the mountains of North Carolina. You can reach her at Blindy9@yahoo.com.

LOCAL REAL ESTATE

The local housing market in June

The Cass County housing market surged in June from restrained demand for waterfront housing. The overall number of houses sold dropped 6 percent when compared to June 2019 (67 vs. 71). Sales of waterfront houses increased 56 percent (25 vs. 16). Non-waterfront home sales fell 24 percent (42 vs. 55).

Looking at sales in June when compared to May when the shelter-in-place restrictions were in effect, there was a 60 percent increase in the overall number of house sales (67 vs. 42). Waterfront houses sky-rocketed from 5 sales in May to 25 in June for a 400 percent increase. Non-waterfront home sales rose 14 percent (42 vs. 37).

Year-to-date, the overall number of houses sold was down 11 percent (254 vs. 285). Waterfront home sales grew by 5 percent (65 vs. 62). Non-waterfront home sales declined by 15 percent (189 vs. 223).

The overall average selling price in June 2020 soared 31 percent over June 2019 (\$291,204 vs. \$222,374). The overall median selling price in June at \$209,000 rose 36 percent from the \$154,000 median price in June 2019.

The average selling price for waterfront homes increased 22 percent to \$495,560 from \$404,906 in June 2019. The median selling price for waterfront homes soared 29 percent (\$416,000 vs. \$322,500).

The average selling price for non-waterfront homes in June increased by only \$289 to \$169,563 from \$169,274 in June 2019. The median selling price was up 13 percent to \$155,950 from \$138,038 in June 2019.

The median price is the price at which 50 percent of the homes sold were above that price, and 50 percent were below.

In Cass County, five houses were bank-owned or foreclosed as a part of all closed transactions in June or 7 percent of the total houses sold. The highest percentage in June previously was 16 percent in 2014.

For comparison, the surge in June's activity across SWMI caused the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions to drop to 1 percent in June. This was the lowest percentage reached since 2009. In May and April, the level was at 6 percent. The highest percentage in previously in June was 36 percent in 2009.

The overall SWMI housing market after months of shut down, the pent-up demand lifted the SWMI housing market back up by 124 percent in June compared



to May. In May, only 142 houses were sold, setting the lowest number of sales in the year-over-year comparison that dates back to 2006. In June, 318 houses were sold.

The number of houses sold in June was down 13 percent from June 2019 (318 vs. 367).

Year-to-date, the number of houses sold fell 24 percent to 1269 from 1669 sold in June 2019.

The most startling result was the sky-rocketing average and median sales prices that shattered all selling prices in any month in any year going back to 2006.

The average selling price at \$300,418 was 14 percent higher than the \$263,214 average selling price in June 2019 and 25 percent higher than the \$240,374 price in May 2020. The spike in the June average selling price raised the year-to-date, average selling price by 4 percent (\$242,978 vs. \$233,307).

The median selling price rose to \$234,950 from \$186,001 in June 2019 for a 26 percent increase. From May 2020 to June, the median selling price increased 36 percent. In May, the median selling price was \$173,250. Year-to-date, the median selling price rose 11 percent (\$187,900 vs. \$169,000).

The median price is the price at which 50 percent of the homes sold were above that price, and 50 percent were below.

With fewer houses sold, the total dollar volume dropped only 1 percent in June (\$95,532,984 vs. \$96,566,516). The year-to-date total dollar volume fell 21 percent (\$308,340,086 vs. \$389,389,518).

The inventory of houses for sale

declined 13 percent from June 2019 (1500 vs. 1721). This level gave the market a 6.7-months supply of houses for buyers. In May 2020, the level was 6.2-months supply. For comparison, in June 2010, there were 3679 houses for sale.

The surge in June's activity caused the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions to drop to 1 percent in June. This was the lowest percentage reached since 2009. In May and April, the level was at 6 percent. The highest percentage in previously in June was 36 percent in 2009.

Locally, the mortgage rate was 3.253 up slightly from 3.244 in May. Last year in June, the rate was 4.026. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in June was 3.13 down slightly from 3.15 in May for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

This data reflects home sales across Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren counties and should not be used to determine the market value of any individual property. If you want to know the market value of your property, please contact your local REALTOR®.

When Selling a Home...

Want to fetch top dollar for your home and walk away with as much money in your pocket as possible? Of course, you do. But the offer price isn't the only thing worth considering.

One important consideration when weighing an offer is the size of the earnest money deposit. The higher the amount, the more serious the buyer may be. The standard amount is 1 percent to 3 percent of the cost of the home.

Most offers have contingencies - provisions that must be met for the transac-

tion to go through, or the buyer is entitled to walk away from the deal with their earnest money. Contracts with fewer contingencies are more likely to reach closing and in a timely fashion. Your REALTOR® can advise you on the many contingencies and how each can affect you.

You should also consider the down payment the buyer is planning to make. The size of the down payment signals the strength of the offer.

The closing date may also have a big influence. Whether you want a slow or quick settlement will depend on your circumstances. If you've already purchased your next home, for instance, you probably want to close as soon as possible. Or you may need more time if you still have not purchased a home.

When Buying a Home...

When you embark on the home-buying process, your heart is filled with all the dreams in the world. It's really easy to get caught up in the "I have to have _____, so I'll cut back somewhere else" game.

Start by making a list of everything you want in your house. If you love it, jot it down. Have your spouse or partner do the same thing in a separate document.

Next, start sorting your wants by order of importance. What's your No. 1? What are the top 10? Think about things that are important and can not be changed, such as the number of bedrooms should have a higher priority.

Wants that are lower on your list should be cosmetic that can be changed. For example, wood flooring can be added later. You don't want to pass up a fantastic house because you can't see past the orange carpeting.

Take your list with you when looking at a house to keep you focused. Make notes on the home's features and compare them with your priorities. If one of your top items is not available, ask yourself, Would you feel like your house would be incomplete without it?

To view properties that are for sale in your local area, go to www.swmar.com and click on "Search". The Southwestern Michigan Association of REALTORS®, Inc. is a professional trade association for real estate professionals who are members of the National Association of REALTORS®, and ancillary service providers for the real estate industry in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. The Association can be contacted at 269-983-6375 or through their website at www.swmar.com.



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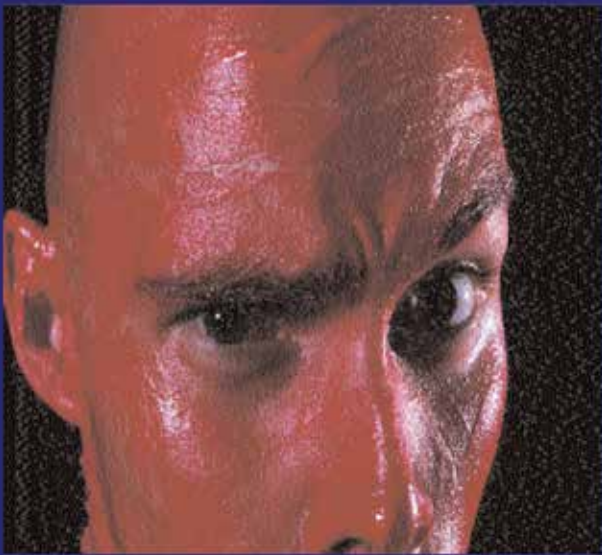


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OUR CHILDREN

Supporting our kids

by **SANDY FLEMING**

As of this moment in mid-July when I'm writing this, most of the local schools are still up in the air about their plans for fall, or have decided that a full, normal return to start the school year is not a good idea. Around the country, record numbers of families are planning to keep kids home instead of sending them back to in-person programs. It's a scary and uncertain time, no matter which way your district or family decides to respond.

But there is one big thing that has not changed. Kids still need to learn, and they still need family support to become the most fully educated citizens that they can be. No matter what the school or your family decides about in-person attendance or virtual lessons, there are a number of things you can do starting right now to make sure the kids have their most successful and productive year ever.

Examine Your Attitude

Kids take most of their cues from the adults in the house, so be sure you are expressing and modeling behaviors that will help them be successful no matter where school happens this year. Do your research from reliable sources to form your own opinions. Want to see if a source online is reliable? Do a search for the name of the source with the word "bias" hooked onto the end of the phrase. You'll get information about the accuracy and reliability of the information from that source. You can also check <https://www.adfontes-media.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/> for an interactive chart about bias and reliability. Be sure to read the directions- if you just look at the chart, it's a mess because it rates something like fifty news outlets and they overlay one another. A better way is to click the name of the outlet in the list at the bottom and isolate that source. Look for sources near the top center of the chart for accurate, reliable information that's not pushing too far to the left or the right. When your kids see that you check things out, they will become more discerning consumers of media as well, and will be less likely to fall for so-called "fake news."

Make sure you keep your criticisms or fears about school to yourself, as well. If you choose to send kids back to in person classes, express that it's what's best for them. If you choose to keep them home, support that with comments about that being best for them right now. The last thing you want is for them to become fearful so that when the time is right to return to in-person school and events, they will be too anxious.

And no matter where you stand on the great mask debate, remember that if or when kids do return to in-person classes, they will likely need to wear masks at least part of the time. Help them get used to that now and keep practicing. Remember that you've already taught them to brush their teeth, wear their seatbelts, and take baths or showers every now and again, so you can teach them this bit of neces-

sary inconvenience, as well. If you approach it like another hygiene or safety task that is necessary and not optional, they will be far less likely to have trouble with the behavior when they do get to go back to school.

Set Up a Routine

We've spoken before about the importance of having a solid daily routine for kids of all ages. There are countless benefits, including emotional security that kids need especially now. Routines help them build resilience and healthy habits, as well as helping them learn to make productive use of the time. The only difference now is that your home routine may need to include regular school activities.

If they are home for more hours or days than usual, make sure that part of that new-found free time is used for learning. Help them keep on top of their virtual classwork by checking on their progress daily. Don't wait for the teacher to email you that they are behind. Be proactive, and make sure they stay caught up. Even middle and high schoolers (or possibly especially middle and high schoolers) need some help with prioritizing their online work. Online learning is hard for many people, and it's easy to put it off until assignments are in crisis mode. Not only is it tough to learn that way, but kids risk getting much lower grades than they would otherwise be capable of.

If the given school work does not fill a significant portion of the time at home, remember that you can easily supplement with your own activities. The internet is full of games, lessons, and more that you can choose from, or you can acquire one of the many at-home lesson books for your child's age and stage. You can also just require kids to practice perpetually weak skills, like math fact speed and fluency or writing paragraphs or longer pieces. Spend at least part of the day on reading and another part of the day on household chores. Don't let them fall into the trap of playing video games for hours on end every day when there are so many more productive ways to use the time.

Keep the bedtime and wake-up routines close to what they need to be for the normal school day. That way you'll be prepared when school is an option. This is also closer to reality for most adult schedules, as well, so building the habit of regular morning and evening routines will help them long after they graduate.

Encourage Cooperation

Of course, kids naturally want to do far more playing and fiddling than working – don't we all? So you'll need a solid plan for ensuring their cooperation, whether it's in mask wearing, virtual learning, household chores, or any other things they would not choose to do if left on their own.

The most effective ways to ensure that kids do what they need to do most of the time involve using positive reinforcement. Reward them for doing what they need to do, and chances are very good that they will continue to do what they need to do. The most effec-

tive rewards usually involve your attention and praise. Spend time with them, take them on an outing, play a game, or fix a favorite treat or meal together.

If you find that elearning or homework is a fight, you may want to take a close look at exactly what goes on. Many parents quickly resort to punishment for these problems, like grounding, taking away phone or computer or television privileges, and the like. These methods usually produce short term compliance, but after a few days or weeks, many kids are right back to the behavior that you wanted to change. Examine your family history. Have your punishments actually changed the child's behavior over the long haul?

If you find that you are constantly either threatening or punishing for the same problems over and over again, consider a change in strategy. The whole purpose is to change the kid's behavior, right? To teach them behaviors that will get them ahead in life? If they keep repeating the same bad behavior, is your method really working? Just food for thought. You might want to give positive management a try.

Get Help When Needed

School is hard for some kids, no matter whether it is in-person or over the internet or some combination. Pay

close attention to how your child is doing with learning these important skills. Be sure to help as much as you can with explaining a concept in different ways, helping to set up a schedule or set goals, or encouraging kids to reach out to their teachers for help when needed.

If the learning just seems to be stalled in any area, make sure you get in touch with the teacher and stay in touch. Working as a team can really help kids progress. The teacher will likely have some ideas about how you can help most effectively. And of course, if that still doesn't do the trick, reach out for outside help. There are countless websites that give sound advice on helping struggling students. There are also vast numbers of tutors available for short-term or longer-term assistance if it's needed. Just don't expect the problems to fix themselves! Give your kids every educational advantage that you can, no matter what the school situation is in the coming months.

Sandy Fleming is an educational consultant and private tutor living in Edwardsburg. Check out her Facebook group, Active Minds (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1048952175489109>) for a steady stream of educational tips, activity ideas, and other ways to support learners at home.

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FIELD TRIP



Field Trip: the flowers I can see from here

Ok, I admit it's a bit lame (but not nearly as lame as the COVID haircut field trip), but because the pandemic still has most places shut down (or severely restricted) I really can't go ANYWHERE yet and I'm bored to tears sitting around the house, so I went out into the yard with my camera and started shooting photos of the beautiful flowers my wife Sandy (and daughters Erica and Sanya) planted

this spring ... and I got a bit carried away and walked next door and down the street a couple of houses until I had a camera full of pictures of flowers ...

Hey, I thought, I need a field trip for Neighbors this month. Might as well use the photos of the pretty flowers as my field trip ... everyone loves pretty flowers.

Besides, I just got another haircut and it wasn't nearly as dramatic as the last.







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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area.

Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20

years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

Jerdon has recently used many of

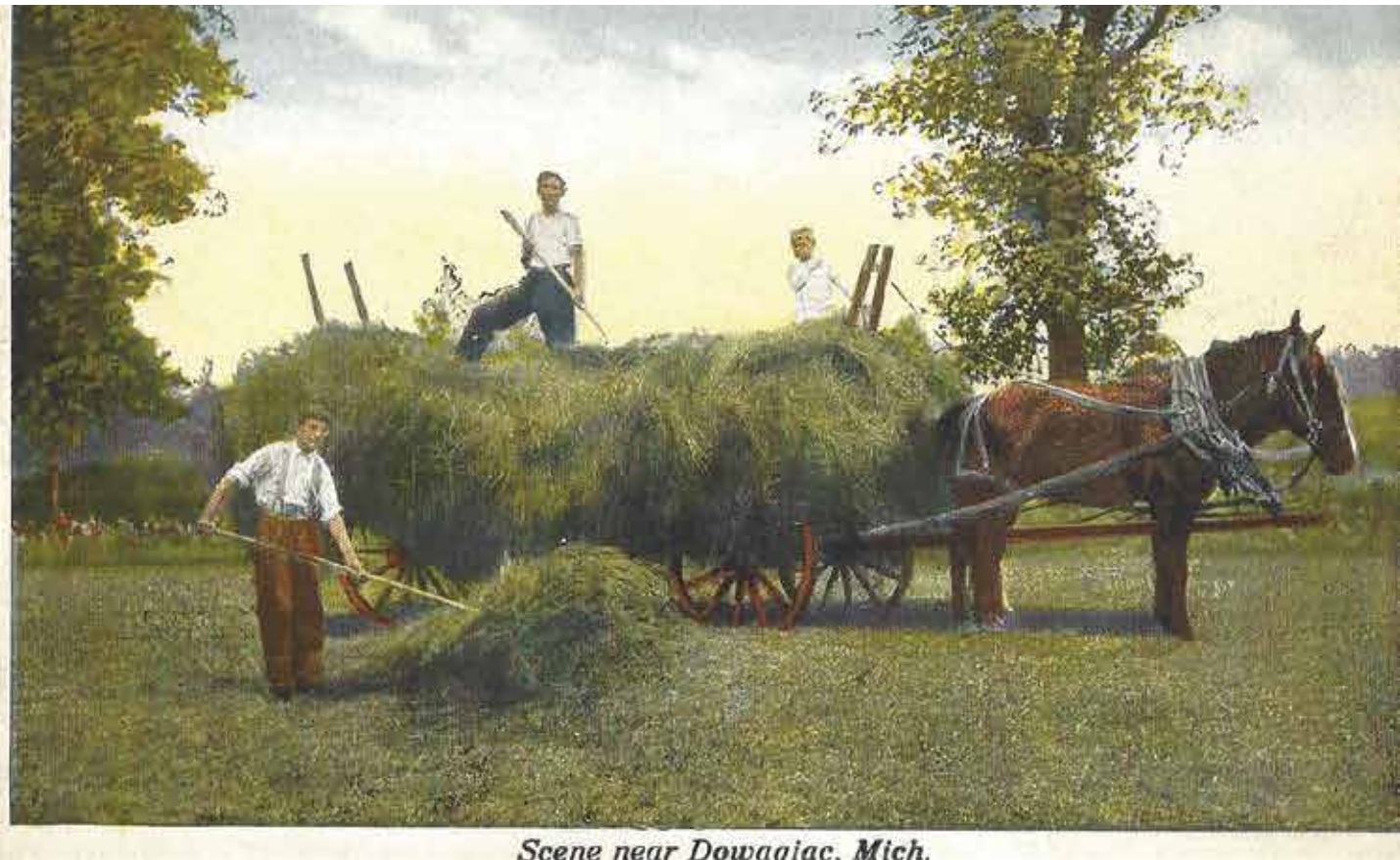
his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real Estate

office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the web-site: www.arcadiapublishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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NATURE NOTES

Summer birds and wildlife

Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch

Mike Mahler sent in a nice photo of a male Bell's vireo, taken on June 4, 2020 near the Renaissance Athletic Club located off Graham Avenue in Benton Harbor. In 2019 a Bell's vireo was present from early May through August at the same general location, likely being the same individual.

The Bell's vireo is a rather plain looking songbird common on the Great Plains and in the Southwest US and Mexico. In Michigan, the Bell's vireo is an uncommon and irregular breeding species mainly confined to the state's southwestern counties.

Of the roughly 50 records of the Bell's vireo recorded in Michigan from 1885-2020, about half come from Berrien County.

Most Bell's vireos observed in Southwest Michigan in the spring do not stay to nest, as they can't find mates. However breeding was confirmed in Berrien County during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the population on the eastern edge of their range was greater. The Bell's vireo that is currently in Benton Harbor may have found a mate but as of this writing, a second individual has not been confirmed.

The preferred habitat of nesting Bell's vireos found in Berrien County is thick vegetation including: quaking aspen, hawthorn, multiflora rose, stag-horn sumac, wild grapes, and brambles. In the west they use mesquite and willow groves for nesting, often along stream sides.

Robby Hoffman, Jr. of Coloma Township has seen a Blanding's turtle dig a nest among some landscape rocks next to his house! Blanding's turtles are easily identified by their showy, distinctive yellow throat, which can be seen in a photo provided by Hoffman.

The Blanding's turtle range covers most of the Great Lakes States and southern Ontario, east to New England. However the species is on the decline, mainly due to the draining and degradation of wetlands, but also due to the fact that Blanding's turtles don't reach sexual maturity until they reach 20-25 years in age.

A gray tree frog was photographed in June by Beth Wolf of St. Joseph Township. The images Wolf sent are of great quality, showing the frogs suction cup feet and scales of its underside as it clung to a window.

Gray tree frogs are found throughout Southwest Michigan and most of the Great Lakes region, where they are common. Gray tree frogs have the ability to change color from gray to brown to pale green, or any intermediate color, usually over the course of an hour. Color change in the species is thought to be highly influenced by humidity levels and temperature change.

One of the local bird highlights of 2020 was the discovery of six black-bellied whistling-ducks on July 10 at the home of Lizabeth Ter Meer of Hagar Township. The ducks were discovered July 10 by Ter Meer, and photographed by neighbor Debra Jesuthasan. The small flock was observed on the Ter Meer property for a good portion of that day but were gone the following day. To date the ducks have not been relocated.

Black-bellied whistling-ducks have been expanding their range northward from South America and the Caribbean, and by the mid-20th Century were found



Clockwise from top left: Bell's vireo on June 4, 2020 along Graham Avenue, Benton Harbor by Mike Mahler of St. Joseph. This nondescript bird is usually identified more often by sound than sight. It is a species common to our west, but occurs sparingly in Michigan, mainly the southwest part of the state, mainly in Berrien County; Blanding's turtle on June 11, 2020 in Coloma Township at the home of Robby Hoffman, Jr; Black-bellied Whistling-ducks on July 10, 2020 at the home of Lizbeth Ter Meer, photographed by Debra Jesuthasan in Hagar Township, Berrien County; Yellow-throated warbler carrying nesting material, June 18, 2020 on Lakeside Road near Three Oaks, Brad Anderson; Pair of eastern phoebes, July 2, 2020 at Warren Dunes State Park, Brad Anderson.

in the United States, and not recorded in Michigan until 2006. Records in the Great Lakes region have increased since the 1990s-2000s, with a total of 11 records in Michigan between 2006-2020. Berrien County's first black-bellied whistling-duck, a single bird, occurred from April 18-27, 2014 at the Andrews University Dairy Farm.

So far during 2020, black-bellied whistling-ducks have been reported from Oakland, Ottawa, and St. Clair Counties in Michigan, and several from the Chicago area.

The black-bellied whistling-duck was formerly called the black-bellied tree-duck for its preference of nesting in tree cavities. The species now breeds in the southern US, and I am unaware of any breeding records anywhere within the vicinity of the Great Lakes or Ohio River.

The black-bellied whistling-duck looks like a cross between a duck and a goose, with long legs, straight posture of

the neck and head. The bird stands at about 1 and a half feet in height and a wingspan of two and a half feet.

Brad Anderson photographed a yellow-throated warbler on June 18, as it picked up a piece of vegetation presumably to be used as nest making material, off the Lakeside Road bridge over the Galien River. The Kesling Preserve owned by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy located along Forest Lawn and Lakeside Roads, harbors this species.

The yellow-throated warbler is a common summer resident along river bottom swamps across the Southeastern US, north to Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, southern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The species nests regularly in Berrien County along the Galien River basin which is the species' main nesting stronghold within the Wolverine State. The local yellow-throated warbler population attracts many birdwatchers to the region every year who want to see this southern

wood warbler in Michigan.

The wooded forests along the Galien River contain the American sycamore at heights of 20 to 70 feet, being a nesting requirement of the yellow-throated warbler. Associate tree species include American basswood, American elm, silver maple, and formerly white ash. In American sycamores tree the yellow-throated warbler constructs a nest out of thin plant fibers, caterpillar silk, lined with down. In southern states, the yellow-throated warbler will construct its nest inside clumps of Spanish moss growing among the sycamore tree.

The yellow-throated warbler arrives back on its Galien River nesting territory by April 13, often identified by its song rather than by sight because the small songbird rarely ventures away from the

Continued on next page. See:

NATURE

LOCAL HISTORY

Zinny Truitt Andrus of Edwardsburg

Provided by **Jon Wuepper**,
Local History Branch Manager
Cass District Library

Here we have a photo from the George Andrus collection, showing Zendella Andrus sitting at a Schiller piano holding the sheet music for "Just Some One" composed by William R. Anderson.

She was married to George Andrus (1883-1958), co-owner and publisher of the Edwardsburg Argus newspaper. George's brother Charles was the other co-owner of the paper.

I have found a scan of the sheet music she is holding in the photo, as well as "Rainbow Song", being one of two sheet music covers seen on the piano. I could not find a color image of the other sheet music seen on the piano, titled "Blue Jean".

Zennie was born Zendella Truitt on October 22, 1884 in Milton Township to James H. and Mary Matsen Truitt. She graduated from Edwardsburg High School in 1904, then taught school in rural districts in Cass County. On October 4, 1908 she married George Andrus of Edwardsburg and for the next 49 years worked at the news desk of the Argus.

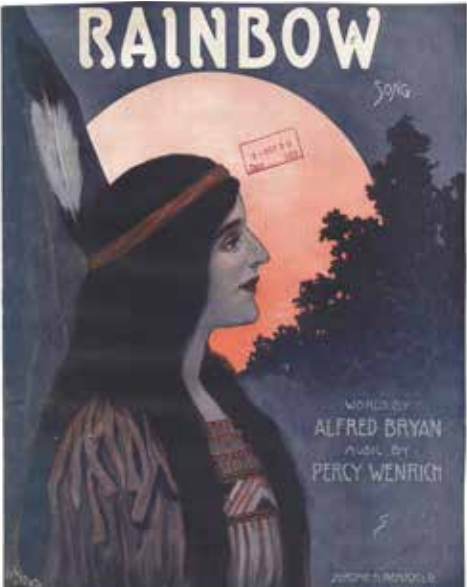
She was a member of the Edwardsburg Methodist Church and the Monday Evening Club.

Zennie Andrus passed away on March 10, 1957 and is buried in the Pleasant Lake Cemetery.

RIGHT: *Zendella Andrus (1884-1957), or "Zennie" to her friends, at piano in her Edwardsburg home, circa 1910. Zendella was married to George Andrus, owner and publisher of Edwardsburg Argus.*



LEFT: *Cover of sheet music to "Just Some One", courtesy Library of Congress*
RIGHT: *(c) Cover of sheet music to "Rainbow Song", courtesy Library of Congress.*
BELOW: *Zennie Andrus, circa 1915, Edwardsburg, Michigan.*



WHACHA- MA-CALL-IT?

ANSWER FROM PAGE 8

BUTTER STOMPER

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NATURE

Continued from previous page

tops of the trees. In Michigan an average of four eggs in one clutch is produced each year, but in the south two broods may be raised.

Yellow-throated warblers along the Galien River are most active from April to June or early July, after which they are still present but sing less often after young have fledged the nests. The species can be observed with greater effort than spring into late September.

Yellow-throated warblers spend the winter months in south Florida, Caribbean islands and Central America.

Brad Anderson also sent in a nice photo of a pair of eastern phoebes, taken on July 2 at the Kesling Preserve.

The eastern phoebe is the most abundant member of the flycatcher family in Southwest Michigan, common from March through October with occasional winter reports.

This flycatcher, although rather plain in appearance, is easily identified by its song, a repeated "phee-be, phee-be". Another diagnostic behavior of the eastern phoebe is its tail bobbing.

Its nickname is bridge bird because of its habit of frequently constructing its nest under bridges. The nests are constructed out of hair, feathers, grass and held together with dried mud pellets. The two adult eastern phoebes in Anderson's photo are likely a local nesting pair.



Larry Blyly snapped a photo of a mother wood duck walking her 19 babies on Blylys backyard deck, June 21, 2020, Hartford Township.

Larry Blyly of Harford Township submitted a photo of a hen wood duck along with 19 babies in tow crossing his backyard deck!

Wood ducks nest in hollow tree cavities or nesting boxes constructed specifically for the species. Nest sites must be over or near water. The wood ducks in Blyly's photo probably were hatched over the nearby Paw Paw River.

In our region the wood duck produces one clutch of 10-15 eggs per season. Occasionally we see an above average number of young wood ducks, such as in Blyly's photo, showing 19 babies. This may be attributed to nest dumping which occurs when other female wood ducks lay eggs in another female wood ducks nest.

The majority of the wood duck population leaves Michigan by the middle of November for the Southeastern US, but a few do remain around open water throughout the winter.

Please report your sightings to Jonathan Wuepper at wuepperj@gmail.com.

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THE LAST WORD

Fifty years ago, whodda ever thunk we'd be here?



ifty years ago, everyone alive would have been lying through their teeth if they had said that this is what they would guess that they'd be doing in the year 2020.

A lot of things happened in my personal life fifty years ago; 1970 was a big year, and a number of once-in-a-lifetime things happen.

And I sincerely hope most of them were only once in a lifetime events.

I (vaguely) remember finishing high school 50 years ago (Riley High School, South Bend, class of 1970). I (barely) remember walking across the stage and getting my high school diploma. I have no memory at all of graduation cards or gifts, of parties or celebrations.

Riley High School was a pretty wild school in that era. We'd had the school closed for a portion of the year because of riots and fights; there'd been protests against racial inequality and the war in Viet Nam that and the whole school was divided in sororities and fraternities, jacket clubs and street gangs. There were more people there with stitches than pocket protectors.

I remember wondering more than once if I'd live through my senior year, let alone graduate. And I remember wondering what life would bring, whether I'd make it through college, what kind of career I'd have, and I distinctly remember wondering if I'd still be alive to attend my 50th high school reunion. My teenage years had been fairly tumultuous and most people wouldn't have bet even money on me making it.

You wonder about those kind of things when your 18 years old.

Well, I made it through school, although I've lost track of most my classmates. Ran into a few over the years at functions or in restaurants or at show. Attended a couple of the earlier reunions out of curiosity ... didn't recognize many people, most of whom, like I were just surprised to be among the survivors.

As it turned out, that was just the first lifetime event of 1970.

I started college classes at IUSB, the first of seven years of full-time study as it turned out. College was another one of those lifetime events that turned out a lot harder to get through than you expected them to be. It certainly wasn't the last.

The next was Hurricane Sandy. That one almost did kill me. Several times.

I first encountered Sandy in the spring of that year at a teen dance at the local YMCA. She was a bright lass with frosted hair and big smile, and after cutting in on she and her dancing partner (I was a bold lad), we danced together until the hall closed down and her friends took her home.

After that I got into a fist fight with my neighbor, Otis, who had also danced with Sandy and took offense that I had moved into his territory. I ended up getting a ride home in the back of my neighbor Hank's squad car and was treated to one of the many lectures he would give me that year about staying out of trouble.

The lectures didn't work very well. I still got into a lot of trouble, despite the angelic influence Sandy brought to my life. She'd been a Sunday School teacher before she met me. I kinda ruined that for her.

Anyway, on August 27, 1970, Sandy and I got married.

Talk about a lifetime event.

A few days later, in a fit of youthful rage, my older brother gave me the beating of a lifetime (supposedly because I'd defied my parents and gotten married at such a young age). I remember walking out of my folks house with a double armload of clothes and records and assorted personal items. Big brother was sitting on the hood of my hot red 1968 Camaro convertible (admittely not the most practical car for a newly married 18 year old, but that's how we rolled in 1970).

"I hear you're married," he said.

I vaguely remember a fist coming at my nose ... then I woke up in the street in the street in a pool of blood. My brother had walked back onto the porch.

"It'll never last, you fool," he shouted angrily. My mom, beside him, continued crying (it's what mom's did in 1970).

I remember wondering how many times he hit me. Besides a broken nose and purple, fat lips, I had two chipped front teeth that had to be ground down by my dentist, and two cracked ribs that hurt for a month every time I inhaled.

I don't know, maybe that beating made our marriage stronger ... I do know it made me more obstinent. Like Nietzsche said, what doesn't kill me makes me stronger. I remember it took me a long time to forgive him.

That's the way teenage brothers were in 1970.

There were a few other lifetime events that year ... we found out Erica would soon join our household, we adopted our first house cat, and I learned how to do laundry (although I sometimes

cheated while Sandy was in nurses training and paid a very nice lady at the laundromat around the corner to do it for me).

That's the way we did laundry 50 years ago.

Having made it to this significant milestone of 50 years has me quite nostalgic. Looking back, I've had a good life. I've made a lot of great friends over the years, got some great memories, some not so great; and it's the understatement of my life to say things have turned out in ways I could never have imagined.

And then, after all that, the world wobbled again and the pandemic struck.

And wouldn't you know it, it happen this year and spoiled everything.

I just found out that my 50th high school reunion was canceled a couple weeks ago by the epic pandemic precautions the world is imposing ... probably for the best, all things considered, but I would have liked to see how everyone who is still alive had aged (and how much younger I look than all those old people surely do by now).

And now our plan for a 50th wedding anniversary trip ... a trip to New Zealand to watch the America's Cup sailboat race and visit Rivendell ... is in limbo.

I've aged, but lest you think 50 years have mellowed me, I still get in trouble ... just the other day I suggested to Sandy that since everything else was canceled, we could cancel our anniversary, too.

And I'll be darned if Hurricane Sandy didn't strike again, almost 50 years to the day that it struck the first time.

At least it didn't hit me as hard as big brother Paul did 50 years ago.

Happy 50th Sandy. We made it. Whoda ever thunk?



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