

Neighbors

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MARCH, 2025

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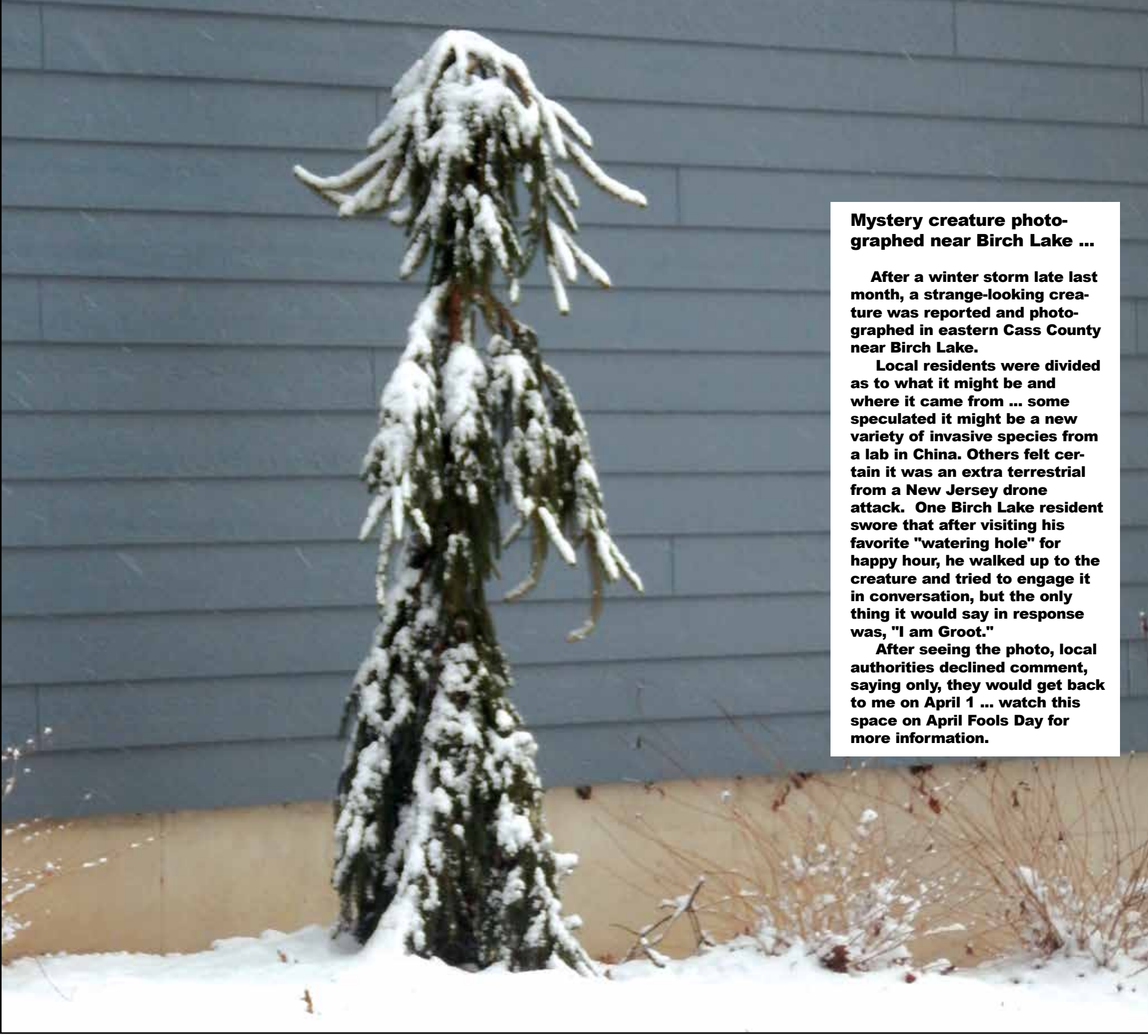
A regional newspaper serving Cass County, Michigan and the surrounding area, and distributed at homes and businesses in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, and Three Rivers, with mail delivery at homes on Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes

[HTTP://WWW.CASSNEIGHBORS.COM](http://www.cassneighbors.com)

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Mystery creature photographed near Birch Lake ...

After a winter storm late last month, a strange-looking creature was reported and photographed in eastern Cass County near Birch Lake.

Local residents were divided as to what it might be and where it came from ... some speculated it might be a new variety of invasive species from a lab in China. Others felt certain it was an extra terrestrial from a New Jersey drone attack. One Birch Lake resident swore that after visiting his favorite "watering hole" for happy hour, he walked up to the creature and tried to engage it in conversation, but the only thing it would say in response was, "I am Groot."

After seeing the photo, local authorities declined comment, saying only, they would get back to me on April 1 ... watch this space on April Fools Day for more information.

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Field Trip:

Rex Martin Plumbing Museum, Elkhart, IN

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Regional News

Dowagiac events announced

The Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce has announced the following events for 2025:

- Under the Harvest Moon Festival, October 11, 10 am - 4 pm
- Easter Eggstravaganza. April 12, 10:30 - 12:30am
- Dowagiac Memorial Day Parade, May 26, 10:30am - 1:00pm
- Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market May 31, - October 04, 9 am - 2pm
- Music in the Park, June 05, - August 21, 7:30 - 9 pm
- Summer Festival & BBQ Competition July 18, 2025 - July 19, 10 am
- Steve's Run, July 18, 6 - 9 pm
- Ed's Open Header Cruise, July 24, 5:30 - 8:30pm
- Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show, August 16, 8: am - 3 pm
- Sister Lakes Fireworks, August 30, 9 - 11 pm
- Under the Harvest Moon Festival, October 11, 10 am - 4 pm
- Christmas Open House Weekend & Theta Mu Craft Show, November 14, 15, 10 am - 5 pm
- Small Business Saturday, November 29, 10 am
- Candlelight Christmas Parade, December 05, 7 - 8 pm
- Ice Time Festival, February 07, 2026, 10 am - 4 pm

For more information on these and other upcoming events visit the Website <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Beckwith to present Odd Couple

The Beckwith Theatre Co. will present the play The Odd Couple by Neil

Simon, directed by Toni Mayberry. The classic comedy opens as a group of the guys assemble for cards in the apartment of divorced Oscar Madison. And if the mess is any indication, it's no wonder that his wife left him. Late to arrive is Felix Unger who has just been separated from his wife. Fastidious, depressed and none too tense, Felix seems suicidal, but as the action unfolds Oscar becomes the one with murder on his mind when the clean-freak and the slob ultimately decide to room together with hilarious results as The Odd Couple is born.

Performances will be on Friday, March 7 and 14 at 7:30 pm, Saturday, March 8 and 15 at 7:30 pm, and Sunday, March 9 and 16 at 2 pm.

The Beckwith Theatre is located at 100 New York Ave. in Dowagiac. Tickets are \$15 (reserve online at www.beckwiththeatre.com/box-office)

Contact info for the Beckwith Theatre: BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com, call (269) 782-7653 or visit www.beckwiththeatre.com. The Odd Couple is produced by a special arrangement with Concord Theatricals.

Midwest Energy phone change

Starting February 5, all calls from Midwest Energy and Communications began displaying their toll-free number, 800-492-5989, on caller ID. Previously, caller ID may have displayed the phone number as 269-445-1000.

If you have saved this phone number as one of your contacts, change it to 800-492-5989 to ensure you do not miss communications from the utility. If you do not have MEC saved as a contact in your phone, you may see "Public Utility" on

your caller I.D. when they contact you.

Lerner Theater events announced

The Lerner Theater, 410 S. Main St., Elkhart recently announced the "Lerner Loves You" film series, a mix of classic movies selected from the last 100 years, designed to pay homage to The Lerner's many years as a movie theatre known as "The ELCO."

Sponsored by the Elkhart County CVB, the events will take place on select Sunday afternoons at 3 pm through June of this year, with free popcorn for the first 500 guests (limit 1 box per person). Included in the series are:

- 101 Dalmatians on March 23
- Clue: The Movie on April 13
- Selena on May 25
- Black Panther on June 15

The Lerner will also host the band Air Supply – 50th Anniversary Celebration on April 26 at 7:30pm

Tickets are on sale now and ranged from \$59-\$119.00 plus fees.

For questions, please contact The Lerner Box Office at <https://thelerner.com/> or by calling 574-293-4469 or emailing info@thelerner.com.

Your Land. Your Water. Your Voice

The Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) is looking to hear from you! Whether you live, work, or play in Van Buren County; take our survey to share your thoughts!

By taking this quick survey, you help direct local conservation here in Van Buren County.

Please take the survey before May 31, 2025. Survey-takers may enter to

win prizes. If computers aren't your thing, surveys can be completed in our office their or mailed at your request.

For questions or help, contact the Van Buren Conservation District by emailing info@VanBurenCD.org, or call 269-657-4030 x5.

Sugar Camp Days, breakfast

Bendix Woods County Park in New Carlisle, Indiana, will host the annual Sugar Camp Days festival on March 8 and 9. You are invited to celebrate the maple syrup season by touring the sugar bush to see sap being harvested and visiting the sugar house to discover how sap is transformed into golden syrup.

The New Carlisle Lions Club will host a pancake and sausage breakfast both days. The proceeds from the breakfast support Leader Dogs for the Blind, cancer research, and community organizations.

At Sugar Camp Days you can watch historical crafters demonstrate their trades, enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride, and purchase delicious foods made with maple syrup, such as maple kettle corn, maple cotton candy maple syrup baked goods, maple candy, and Bendix Woods' pure maple syrup will also be available for purchase. Please note: No ATM on site. Breakfast and vendors are cash-only.

Sugar Camp Days hours are 8 am to 3 pm. There is an \$8/vehicle entrance fee. For more information, please call 574/654-3155 or visit www.sjcparks.org.

The main entrance to Bendix Woods County Park is located on Timothy Road in New Carlisle, 8 miles west of the U.S. 31 bypass from the State Road 2 Exit.





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Regional Calendar

AREA EVENTS

MAPLE FESTIVAL 2025 - March 15, 16, 22, 23, Saturdays 9 am - 4 pm, Sundays 10 am - 3 pm, Maple Row Sugarhouse, 12646 Born St, Jones, www.MichiganMapleFestival.com

CASS COUNTY 4-H FAIR - July 27 - August 2, 445-8265

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY

*REGISTRATION REQUIRED

T'AI CHI WITH ALYSE KNEPPEL, Mason/Union Branch, Mondays: 11 am. Join Alyse Kneppel at the Mason/Union Branch for T'ai Chi. Free introductory class, followed by four weekly classes which will cost \$40.

CARDIO DRUMMING*, Howard Branch, Mondays: 5 pm. Cardio drumming is a way to get your heart rate up, improve your rhythm and burn calories! Please bring a bucket, exercise ball, drumsticks and 1 to 2 lb. weights. There are four sets of materials available, these are available on a first come first serve basis. This program is free, but a gratuity of \$5 is encouraged for the instructor but not required to participate. Registration is required, please call the Howard Branch at 487-9214 to register.

DESIGN YOUR OWN BOOKMARK CHALLENGE, All locations, through March 31. All ages are welcome to participate! Pick up an entry sheet from any branch and turn in by March 31 to be qualified. A winner from each category will have their design made into a bookmark that will be available at all branches. Designs must include any of the following themes; books, reading, book characters. Use pictures and words to make your bookmark unique! Questions? Call Stephanie Kneppel at 749-1384.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DR. SEUSS! Mason/Union Branch, March 3 - 8: Daily Branch Hours. Hooray! Hooray! It's a Seuss-filled day! Come

to the Mason/Union Branch, come and play. Make a bookmark, or craft something neat, Green Eggs and Ham snacks will be a yummy treat.

TEEN MAKER MONDAY, Edwardsburg Branch, March 10: 2:30 pm. Intended for ages 12-18. Enjoy creative expression through arts and crafts! Whether it be an art project, STEAM activity or mixed media craft, materials will be available.

ADULT CRAFT CLUB: LUCKY SHAMROCK*, Main Branch, March 12: 1 pm. At the Main Branch each month for a new craft project with Adult Craft Club. This month, make a lucky shamrock to display in honor of St. Patrick's Day! All materials will be provided. Registration is required, contact Stephanie Kneppel at 749-1384 to register.

HOMESCHOOL HANGOUT, Edwardsburg Branch, March 17: 1 pm. Looking for a fun way to meet other homeschoolers? Join us for a STEAM related activity. This program is open to youth ages 5-12. All materials will be provided.

SAVAGE READERS BOOK CLUB, Savage Bean Coffee Co. March 18: 10 am. Enjoy a fresh cup of coffee and book discussion every third Tuesday of the month! Savage Readers Book Club hosted by Cass District Library and Savage Bean Co. Contact Stephanie Kneppel at 749-1384 for details.

VILLAGE BOOK CLUB, Edwardsburg Branch March 20: 5:30 pm. Join us for a lively book discussion of *The Sewing Girl's Tale: a Story of Crime and Consequences in Revolutionary America* by John Wood Sweet. Contact Molly Harwood at 574-314-6454 for more details.

MELTED SNOWMAN ROCK PAINTING: DROP-IN CRAFT. Howard Branch, March 22: 10 am - 1 pm. Use smooth rocks to create your very own melted snowman designs.

We'll provide the supplies.

TEEN FANDOM, Edwardsburg Branch, March 24: 2:30 pm. Meet up with fellow fans of your favorite books, characters, shows, and more! Each month we will discuss a different fandom and have a related activity or craft. Intended for ages 12 to 18.

CROSS STITCH FOR BEGINNERS*, Howard Branch, March 27: 5:30 pm. All materials provided, no experience is necessary. This program will run until April on the Fourth Thursday of every month. Registration is required call the Howard Branch at 487-9214 to register.

STORYTIMES:
Howard Branch- Tuesdays @ 11 am & 6 pm
Edwardsburg Branch - Tuesdays @ 11 am
Mason/Union Branch - Wednesdays @ 10 am
Main Branch - Thursdays @ 11 am

MARCELLUS Township Wood Memorial Library

To see the upcoming events for November please visit the library's website at: <https://www.marcellus.michlibrary.org/>

DOWAGIAC District Library

PRESCHOOL STORYTIME. TUESDAYS: 10:30-11:30 am. Geared toward children age 3-5.

S.T.E.A.M FOR TWEENS. (March 5 & 19); 4 pm. Ages 8-12. Please register at 782-3826 or email (att: Pam) at dowagiacibrarystaff@gmail.com.

MAKE & SHARE COOKBOOK CLUB. (March 6); 5:30-6:30 pm. March's Book: Italian Snacking by Anna Francese Gass.

LITTLE BEAKERS. (March 8); 11-noon. Ages 4-7. Please register at 782-3826 or email (att: Pam)

at dowagiacibrarystaff@gmail.com.

FANDOM FEST BOOK SALE FUNDRAISER. (March 15); 9 am - 6 pm. The sale is being held at the Berrien County Youth Fair Office Building: 9122 US-31 Berrien Springs.

CRAFT NIGHT AT THE LIBRARY: MINI CANVAS CREATIONS. (March 20); 5:30-6:45 pm. This event is for adult patrons, RSVP to 782-3826 or email erin@dowagiacd.org.

THE CLASSICS BOOK CLUB (March 25); 5-6 pm. March's Book: *The Island* or *Dr. Moreau* by H.G. Wells.

TBR BOOK CLUB FOR TEENS. (March 26); 3-4 pm. March's Book: *By The Time Your Read This I'll Be Gone* by Stephanie Kuehn. For teens 13-18 years old.

ADVENTURES IN BOOKLAND BOOK CLUB FOR KIDS. (March 26); 4-5 pm. March's Book: *I Survived the Attack of the Grizzlies, 1967* by Lauren Tarshis. For kids 6-8 years old.

THE INKWELL EXPLORERS BOOK CLUB FOR TWEENS. (March 27); 4-5 pm. March's Book: *The Austere Academy* by Lemony Snicket. For tweens 9-12 years old.

COMMUNITY SEED SWAP. (March 29); 10 am - 1 pm. Drop off your packages of seeds from March 3 - March 21 you will receive a ticket. Bring your ticket in on Saturday, March 29 from 10 am-1pm; use your ticket to get new to you seeds for your garden! Email erin@dowagiacd.org.

For a complete list and description of events visit the library's website at <https://www.dowagiacd.org/events>

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Lake Life with Jane

Restless March, spring is looming



by **Jane Boudreau**

Hey Neighbors! Last time we met up it was 2024 and quite a jolly time. Now we have spring looming and none too quickly; it's been downright frigid! It has been a winter though, and quite some time since our lakes have frozen like this. Wow! Ice fishing, snowmobiling, skating, even bonfires. I love it! I thought these days were gone forever! Sadly, there has also been some horrific weather and natural disasters all over our country, so keep in mind everyone struggling right now in your thoughts and prayers. If you want to help in some way and aren't sure how, the Red Cross is always a good place to start.

March is a restless month. We aren't being teased to head outdoors as we are in April, and we've pretty much had it with being stuck inside. Myself? I'm tired of finding things to write about this time of year! I can only give so many tips on organizing and spring cleaning in my column before you catch me repeating myself. Even I'm not as clean and organized as I write. So this month I thought I'd talk about another one of my dirty little secrets. Hey, we can make this a monthly feature, right up there with my imaginary book club! No? First, I consider myself frugal and I adhere to a strict budget, so when I shop for the sheer pleasure of getting the heck out of the house, it's worth every penny I saved to do it. All of my go-to high end stores like Walmart, Costco, Target, and so on, are coming out with their spring lines of just about everything, it's hard not to be enticed when our homes are feeling a little dark and dreary. Sometimes all it takes is a pretty wreath of flowers for the front door, a new welcome mat, or two upholstered chairs for each side of the fireplace. All kidding aside, my advice is, the best way to save is to stay out of the stores. I simply can't grocery shop at Walmart or Meijer without coming home with a bunch of stuff I had no intention of buying, and for all intents and purposes, didn't need. Target is even worse. Or shall I say better? I can't walk through a room in my home without seeing evidence of my Target love. The bath towels, the throws and pillows, the dishes, the baby clothes, the area rugs, and oh gosh; the lamps! The mix and match lamps. Pick out the base and then any shade you want. Genius! Sometimes I think about that song by Miranda Lambert, "The House that Love Built", and as I walk around cleaning and dusting I start humming and singing my own little tune, "The House that Target Built."

While we're on the subject of shopping, let's see how we can save some money during the month of March by looking at price drops you can expect to see.

-Discounted Luggage And Travel Gear
-Winter Sports Items
-Winter Apparel
-Vacuum Cleaners
-TVs
-Grills
-Garden Tools
-Cleaning Supplies

And four things NOT to buy in March:

Spring apparel, Android phones, major appliances, and mattresses.

As I've mentioned before, I really don't like to bake much. I lied. I enjoy baking as long as it's something that checks all the boxes. Something that challenges me and looks delish without a lot of fuss (I cannot decorate a cake for the life of me). It also has to be something that leaves the house with guests for whatever occasion I baked, as I have no restraint when it comes to sweet things, especially the three confections I'm going to share with you. These are my hands down favorite indulgences ever. I've tweaked the recipes to perfection (never underestimate the power of vanilla extract), yet you will be amazed how simple they are to make.



Simple White Cake

Ingredients:

2-1/2 c cake flour
2 t baking powder
1/2 t baking soda
1 t salt
3/4 c unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
1 3/4 c granulated sugar
5 large egg whites at room temperature
1/2 c full fat sour cream, at room temperature
1 T vanilla extract
1 c whole milk, at room temperature

Directions:

Assemble all ingredients. Be sure that butter, eggs, sour cream, and milk come to room temperature so that they emulsify and all of the ingredients can bind together well.

Preheat the oven to 350. Grease two nine-inch round cake pans, line with parchment paper rounds, then grease the parchment paper.

Whisk the cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together. Set aside.

Using a handheld or standing mixer, beat together the sugar and butter on high speed until light and creamy, about three full minutes, scraping down the sides with a spatula as often as needed. Add the egg whites and continue beating on high speed until well combined, about 2 minutes. Then beat in the sour cream and vanilla extract. Scrape down the sides and the bottom of the bowl as needed. Add the dry ingredients and mix on low speed until just incorporated. You may need to whisk it all by hand to make sure there are no lumps down at the bottom of the bowl. The batter will be slightly thick.

Pour the batter evenly into two

9-inch cake pans. Bake for around 24-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Allow cakes to cool for at least one hour in their pans on a cooling rack.

Vanilla Buttercream Frosting

Ingredients:

1 1/4 c unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
5 c powdered sugar
1/3 c heavy cream
2 t vanilla extract
1/8 t salt
optional: sprinkles

Directions:

In a mixer, beat the butter on medium until creamy, about 2 minutes. Add powdered sugar, cream, vanilla extract, and salt with the mixer running on slow speed. Increase to high speed and beat 3 full minutes. Add more powdered sugar if the frosting is too thin, more cream if it's too thick, and more salt if it's too sweet. Don't forget the sprinkles!

You can make this cake in a 9x13 rectangular pan, but it is too much batter for 8 inch round pans. This recipe also makes wonderful cupcakes!



Coconut Macaroons

I think macaroons are the perfect adult treat. They should be sold in fancy boxes next to the Godiva chocolates at Macy's. People who confuse them with macrons should not be allowed to have them. That's just my opinion. These are so simple to make and look so pretty on a serving platter. If you're just making them for the heck of it, be warned, they are the right size to pop in your mouth and don't get any ideas that it's okay because coconut is healthy because you canceled out all the healthiness when you started adding all the stuff the devil whispered in your ear. Do what I do: get yourself a pack of small boxes from Amazon and be ready to pack up 3-4 of these little bombs with some tissue paper and drop them off to your favorite peeps when you're out and about. Do not keep them in your house if you can't restrain yourself around something this horrifyingly delicious. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Ingredients:

14 oz. sweetened shredded coconut
14 oz. sweetened condensed milk
1 t vanilla extract
2 extra large egg whites at room temperature
1/4 t kosher salt

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Combine the coconut, condensed milk, and vanilla in a large bowl. Whip the egg whites and salt on high speed in the bowl of an electric mixer with the whisk attachment until they make medium-firm peaks. Carefully fold the egg whites into the coconut mixture. Drop the batter onto baking sheets lined with

parchment paper using a 1 3/4 in. diameter ice cream scoop or by 2 teaspoons each. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool and serve.

I would never call it a day unless chocolate was involved in some way here. If you're like me you can either:

1) Melt 8 oz. of good chocolate (your choice) in the microwave in a small dish. Carefully dip each macaroon in the melted chocolate just so the bottom is covered and let set on a rack placed over a large sheet of parchment paper to catch the drips, or

2) Follow the same steps as above but carefully transfer the chocolate to a plastic bag, twist it, snip the bottom, and pipe the chocolate over the macaroons any way you wish. You can also skip the plastic bag deal and use a spoon to form your own little Andy Warhol piece of work.



Photo Credit: Liquor.com

Jane's Signature Drink for March

And here we have the classic Old Fashioned. It piqued my curiosity as I noticed some rather young men I know ordering them now and again when we were out at restaurants or bars. I thought about my late in-laws and how on a Friday night, Papa would make himself a Manhattan or Old Fashioned. It seemed like there was very little of the amber liquid over the ice in the glass, but I now know why. And the popularity now? My research shows that it is primarily due to the surge in the craft cocktail movement, which has led to a renewed appreciation for classic, well-made drinks with quality spirits. The article I read also mentions that shows like "Mad Men" featuring characters enjoying Old Fashioneds have also contributed to its recent popularity. John Hamm would do it for me if it was poison. Without further ado, I've gone to my favorite mixologist at Liquor.com and by all costs and means, you can't get a better Old Fashioned than to make it yourself his way:

Classic Old Fashioned

Ingredients:

1 t sugar
3 dashes Angostura bitters
1 t water
2 oz. bourbon
garnish: orange twist

Directions:

1) Add the sugar and bitters into a mixing glass, then add the water, and stir until the sugar is nearly dissolved.

2) Fill the mixing glass with ice, add the bourbon, and stir until well-chilled.

3) Strain into a rocks glass over one large ice cube.

4) Express the oil of an orange twist over the glass, then drop it into the glass to garnish.

Attention! Let me remind you of the rules surrounding the Signature Drink, some of us are a bit too shy to enforce said rules but once the rules are broken, there's just no class, no sense of refinement. Your guests are offered one drink

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Our Children

Finishing strong

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Most districts are headed for the final nine-weeks marking period of the school year in late March or just after Spring Break. We're three-fourths of the way through the school year, and it's time to take stock of how the year has gone, what's been working well, and what changes will be needed to build or maintain strong grades. Very often, teachers will take improvement into account and pulling great grades out of this final marking period might make the difference between summer school or not, or between retention and passing the grade level. It's definitely worth a shot. Here are step-by-step instructions for how to maximize this final marking period.

Know Where Things Stand

Look back at your child's grades from marking periods 1, 2, and 3. Do you notice any patterns? Did they start out strong then slowly slip downward? If you see this pattern, get to the bottom of it. Sometimes the work got more challenging. Sometimes kids missed a concept mid-year that formed a foundation for later work. Sometimes their work habits slipped or they tried to cruise by without completing homework or studying. Maybe a new distraction (like a new phone or a video game system or a new group of friends) crept in somewhere along the way in the past few months. Whatever it may be, understanding some of the roots of the problem will help you encourage your student(s) to pick up the slack in the final grading period.

Here's a more in-depth look at common causes for slipping grades, and some strategies to improve for the final push of the school year.

■ **Sports season:** Do you notice that grades decreased when your student was juggling practices and games? Sometimes they need help prioritizing and managing their time. The commitment to a team or an activity is important, but so is school performance. Many students don't realize that what needs to give is personal time/

social time/video game time when the work load has increased. Be sure the student is leading a balanced life and putting proper emphasis on schoolwork. Help your student create a "time budget" that allows for the commitments and still leaves time for assignments and studying.

■ **Changes to family schedule:** Make sure the kids are getting to bed on time, waking up at a reasonable time, and have enough time at home to manage their academic responsibilities. Sometimes, just like with food and mealtime, their eyes get bigger than their proverbial stomachs. They take on so many commitments that there aren't enough hours in the day to do it all plus take care of schoolwork. Sometimes OUR eyes get too set on helping them "have it all" and WE allow too many outside activities. Take an honest look: If your student is in band, sports, a few clubs, and has lessons all at the same time, it might be too much. Decide which scheduled activities to keep and which to put on hiatus for a bit until the grades come back up. Then be careful before having them sign up for more opportunities, no matter how enticing they may be.

■ **Too much time on gaming or social media:** This one is not always easy to spot. Try keeping a log of when your student is online or gaming. Some parental security software can gather stats like that for you, or you can try to be an astute observer. Once you have a baseline of just how much time is spent with electronics and screens, you can make a joint decision about how to cut back if need be. If you can cut back even an hour or two per day of screen time, it will free up more time for academic work.

■ **Challenges getting work turned in on time:** Take a look at your student's online grade book and see if work is getting turned in and if it's on time. Many teachers "dock" points for late work, so even if the work is perfect, it might earn a C instead of an A. If you see a pattern of late work, try putting the completed work into a special spot in a binder or

folder to turn in. If a phone is permitted or a smart watch is available, students can set a reminder alarm to silently vibrate to remind themselves to turn in work. Set up a reward and consequence system for completed and turned in work. Check the online grade book daily, and provide a reward for each day there is no outstanding or late work. Have a consequence ready if there is missing work, like less or no screen time for the evening. Remember that the kinds of consequences that get results are immediate, not happening over long periods (like "no phone for the rest of the marking period" is not usually the best way to handle things). That way, each day begins a new opportunity for success.

■ **Check for patterns of low test scores:** Sometimes students do very well on homework, but bomb the tests on a regular basis. There can be many reasons, ranging from poor preparation to test anxiety. And oddly enough, proper preparation can often alleviate test anxiety!! See if you can find out WHY test scores are low. Try preparation such as rereading assignments, making paper outlines of readings, re-copying notes from class, using a study strategy like SQ3R (look over the material quickly or Survey, ask some questions that the text is likely to answer, then Read, Recite (or answer those questions), and Review or read again). Help your student make flashcards or use an online study tool like Quizlet. It can help a lot if students keep a one-to-two sentence journal entry for each day of class. What did the class cover on this date? What was the teacher emphasizing? Students can also make their own study guides as they go over each section. Try to predict what the teacher will put on the test. Finally, have him or her explain to you the concepts that on the upcoming exam. Help your student understand that assigned schoolwork is the BEGINNING, but not the ending, of how to prepare for tests.

Make a Plan to Move Forward

There's a whole new nine-weeks

marking period about to kick off. What changes does your student (or you) need to make? How will you support and guide him or her? Do you need to do more close supervision and monitoring? Move the study area to somewhere you can watch what is happening? Stay in closer touch with the teacher or school so you know what material the student is responsible for? Look at the online grade book daily or every other day?

Students can make positive changes too. Maybe they need to decrease screen time or increase study time. Perhaps an attitude adjustment is needed – "homework" is not the same thing as "studying." Studying is what you do AFTER the homework is done. It's extra preparation for tests or projects. It's important to do the assignments, but it's also important to put in some time and effort into organizing, reviewing, and making connections in the material so that students are more prepared for the tests.

Whatever you choose to do to make the situation better, remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. Chances are that your student has some unproductive habits that need to change, and these won't go away overnight. Pick one or two things that you believe will have the most impact and focus there. You can always add to the list down the road after you get these one or two things more under control. Set reasonable, attainable goals and make them observable so that everyone will know for sure when they have been met. Plan a reward or celebration when you have evidence that behavior is changing. It's very true that you only get out what you put into change. Stick to the guns, and help your student make the most of this final marking period of the year!

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor and writer in Edwardsburg helping students turn around low grades for over thirty years. Check out her website at <https://learningnook.com> for more ideas and practical learning suggestions.

Lake Life with Jane

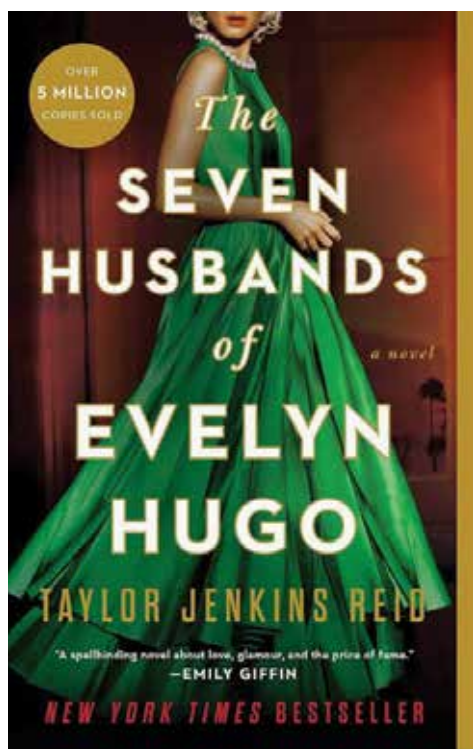
FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

your cocktail and only your cocktail. Maybe throw in some mints. Should anyone ask for another drink, politely refuse. It's really uncouth, after all. If they get unruly or insist, you have to firmly show them to the door. Unless it's John Hamm. He can have another. He can have some mints, too.



Jane's Imaginary Book Club

This month I'm excited to invite everyone over to rave about this month's selection, *The Seven Husband's of Evelyn Hugo*. I enjoyed every single page of this. I've never been one to say that I didn't want a book to end, in fact, I'm usually anxious to see how it ends. But Reid weaves a story that spans decades, and the three main characters are intertwined in such a way that I could hear their voices in my head for the remainder of the day after I finished. The book centers around an aging Hollywood star who hires a young, unknown journalist to



write her life story, which begins in Old Hollywood. Evelyn Hugo works her way up from being a young, pretty starlet, to

a beautiful, accomplished actress, who has every man in Hollywood wanting her, but she can't have the one thing she wants. Along the way she marries seven times, her heart not always in it, and sometimes her heart shattered, but in actuality, the marriages are a sort of a distraction from the true story of this book. All in all, this is such a great read. The characters are flawed, emotional, vulnerable, unstable, fragile ... I'm in awe that the author was able to give them voices and words that not only told a story, but touched the heart. This is an excellent book that I hear will be made

into a movie for Netflix. Now take your pretty gold bag of macaroons with you and thanks always for coming to the club!

That's it from me for our first month back here at Neighbors! I'm looking forward to entertaining you and/or keeping your fire pit burning bright this summer. See you next month!

~Jane

Jane Boudreau is a blogger, writer and newspaper columnist who lives on Diamond Lake, as well as in Chicago and Asheville, NC. You can contact her at Blindy9@yahoo.com

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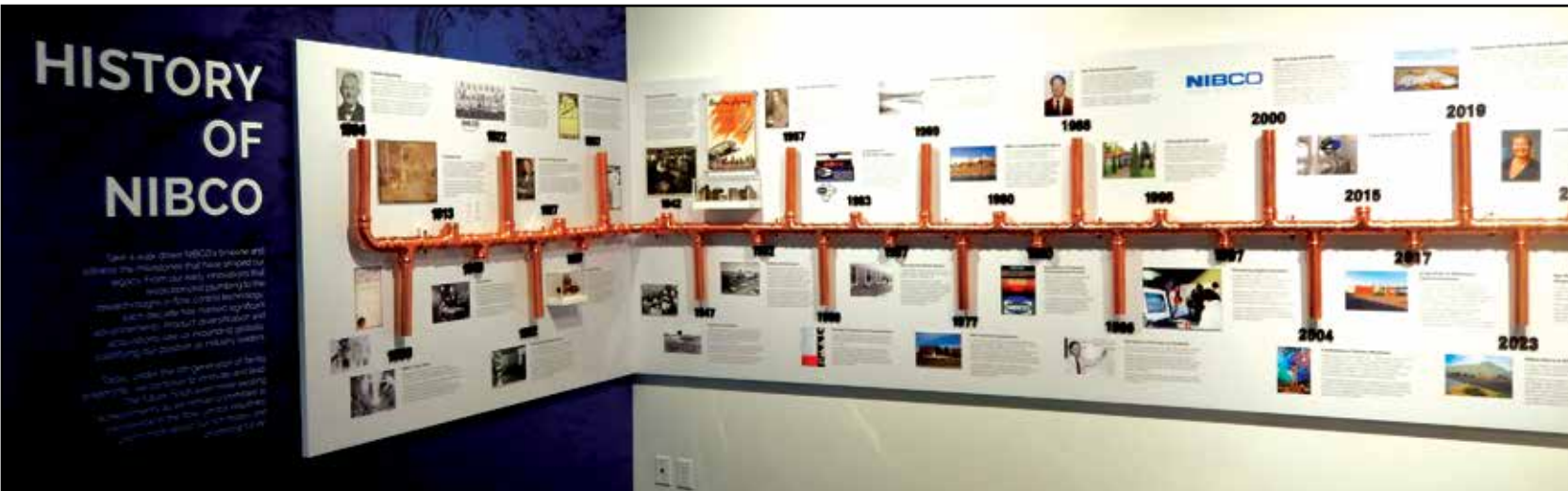
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Field Trip

Rex Martin Plumbing Museum Interactive Elkhart, Indiana



Ok, I'll admit I was skeptical when I heard that Nibco had opened a plumbing museum near its international headquarters at 1516 Middlebury St. in Elkhart ... I mean, a plumbing museum? Come on ... kinda like the old Scotch Tape store on SNL isn't it? But a recent visit with a friend and neighbor who happens to be a retire plumber changed my attitude. The Rex Martin Plumbing Museum is a lot more than an homage to pipes and valves and drains ... this museum is a historical and cultural gem detailing not only the history of plumbing but the history of the 120-plus year-old Nibco and its amazing maturation from a late 1800s metal foundry business into one of the world's largest and best-know manufacturers and suppliers of valves, fittings, and flow control products for plumbing, fire protection, HVAC, and other systems. The museum has a variety of interactive displays and exhibits that range from it's earliest day's of the business when it turned brass into materials for everything from musical instruments to fireplace tools, up to today's high-tech world-class plumbing and related supplies. The museum is open to school and special-interest groups and to the general public on special "public days" and by appointment (see the website for dates). There is no entry fee. For more information, directions and information on visiting, see the Nibco Rex Martin Interactive Plumbing Museum website at: <https://www.nibco.com/about-us/museum/>



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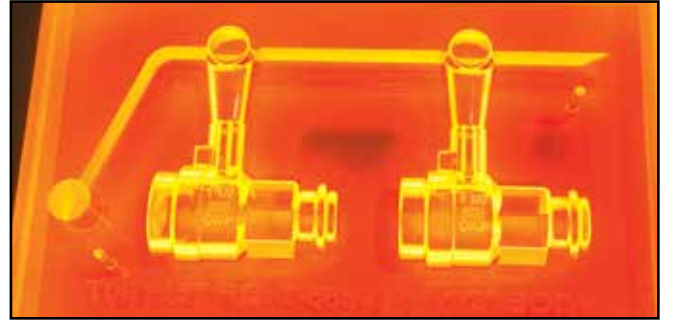
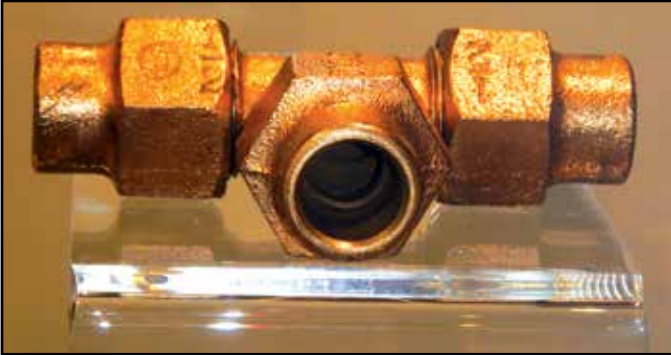
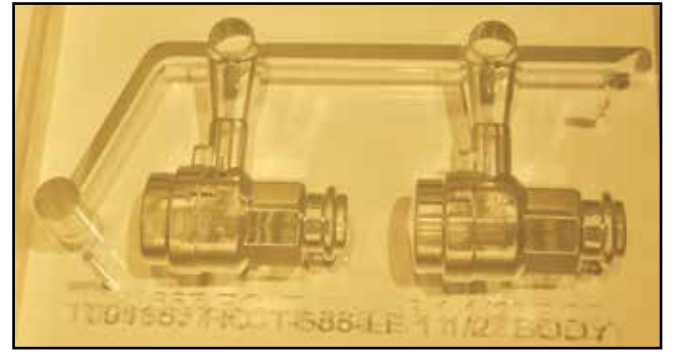
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'Bout boats and boating

Why, why, why? Reflections on boat maintenance

By **RUSTY COLLINS**
Boat Butler Marine

If you own a boat, one or more of these questions may have crossed your mind: Why does my boat need more maintenance than my car? Why do I have to use special fuel? Why shouldn't I use automotive or household cleaners in my boat? Why do I need a water pump every three years or 100 hours when my car doesn't need that? Why should I wipe my boat down every time I use it? Why should I pay extra to store my boat indoors? Why is everything so expensive.

You might also be wondering why this guy is writing an article in Neighbors? The goal of this article is to educate you on the ins and outs of boat ownership and maintenance.

I look forward to answering the questions above and many more, but first, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Rusty Collins. I've been passionate about boats since I was a toddler.

My career started at Marine Mechanics Institute, Orlando, FL. I've worked in traditional marine dealer environments and spent many years as a mobile marine technician. Currently, I'm general manager, of Boat Butler Marine in Cassopolis. In my spare time I enjoy teaching at the Impact Institute in Marine Technology and spending time on the water with my family. I am looking forward to sharing my experience with you, as well as hearing some of the questions and topics you would like addressed!

Whether you are new to the lake or

your family has spent generations on the water, your marine needs are the same, and you want to spend quality time on the water. That's the goal of this editorial, to share my experiences with boat ownership and maintenance, and to keep you on the water.

Now, back to the big question; why?

You know the saying, "Use it or lose it?" This most definitely applies to boats, especially if your boat sits idle and unused for a good part of the summer. You may say, "But Rusty, my boat is new," or "We only use it for a few hours all summer, it doesn't need service."

There's one major step towards spending more time on the water and less time in the shop, and that involves employing proactive service, not reactive/curative service.

Marine service needs to be *proactive*, not *curative*. As service providers we try to educate our customers on the correct service intervals to make the most of their summer with healthy equipment. Waiting until something breaks in the middle of the season is always a drag! Completing your service intervals at the right time will always be in your benefit.

Additionally, every boat engine is set up for high performance. The cars/trucks in our driveway are built for longevity and practicality, but by comparison, boat engines are made to perform at a very high levels. Whether you have a two-horsepower outboard or 350-horsepower inboard motor, all marine engines are working as hard as they can to produce what they are capable of.

Your goal should be to minimize cost

and to spend more uninterrupted time on the water through proactive service.

Check your owners manual on recommended service intervals. Talk with your service provider. The off season is the right time to do this!

Here's to a fun-filled, safe and enjoyable season on the water.

See you out there.



-Rusty Collins
General manager, Boat Butler Marine
rusty@boatbutlermarine.com



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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, have provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area.

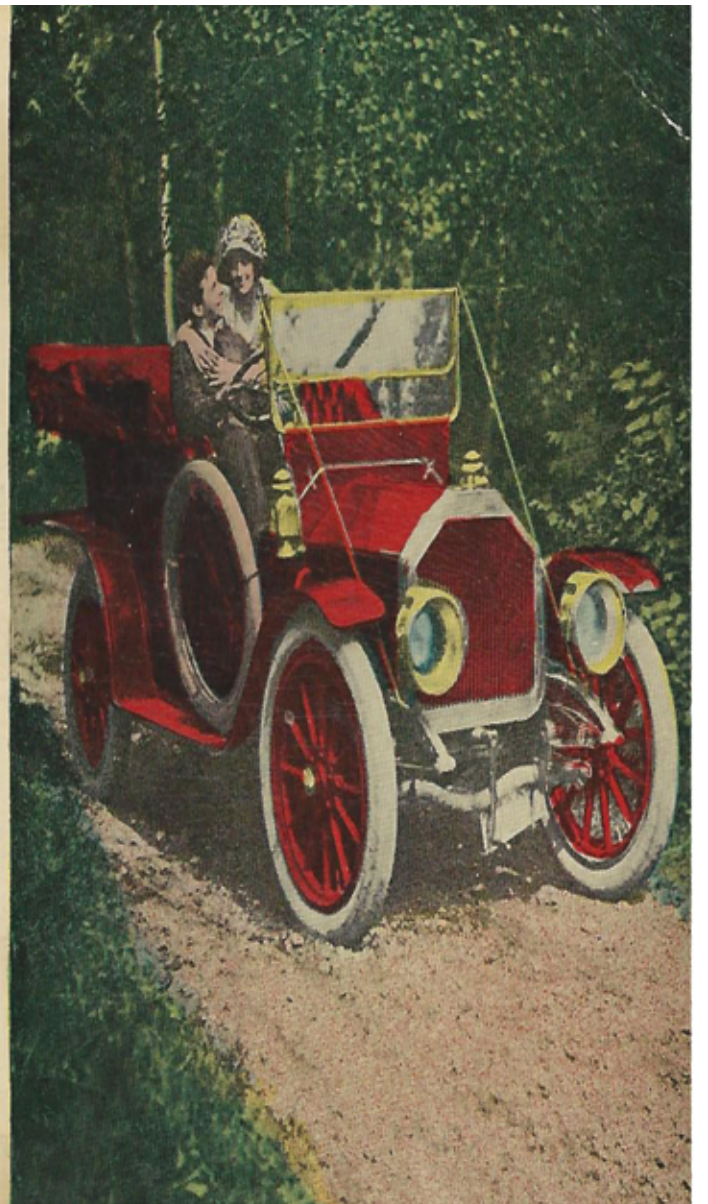
Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

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 website: www.arcadia-publishing.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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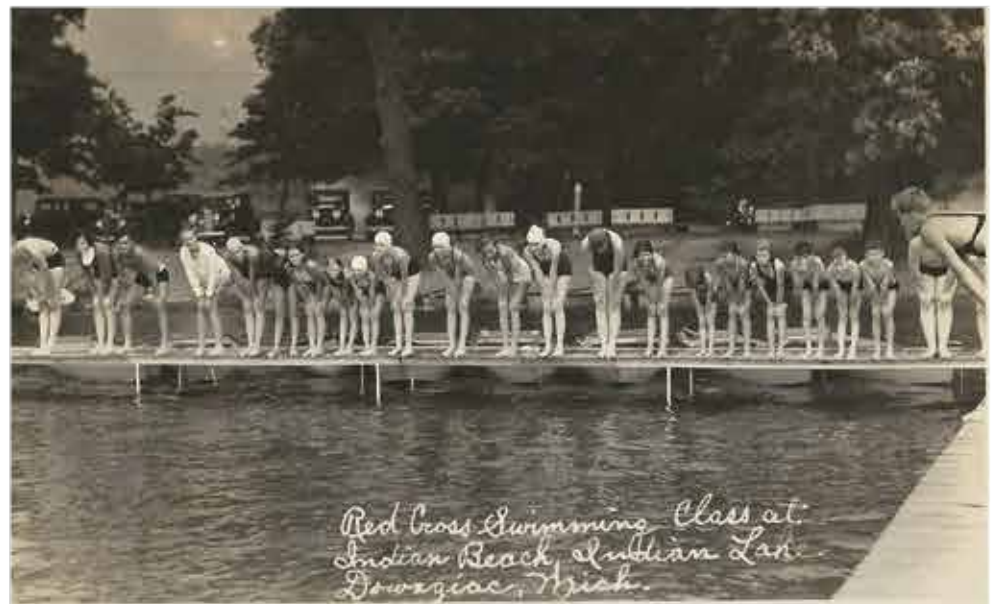
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*WAC. See store associate for details. ©The Grasshopper Company

Nature Notes

Winter nature sightings recorded

by *Jonathan Wuepper*
 Manager
 Local History Branch
 Cass District Library
 145 North Broadway St.
 Cassopolis, MI 49031
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us



On the morning of January 28, Angelene Conkin of Coloma Township captured the image of a red fox trotting across Paw Paw Lake.

Red fox are the more common of the two fox species which inhabit Southwest Michigan. Red foxes measure from nose to the end of their tails about three and a half feet. The gray fox is also the same length but the red fox is bulkier and more robust in appearance.

One distinguishing characteristic of the species is that the end of the tail is always white. On the less common gray fox, the tip of the tail is black.

Prior to European settlement the red fox was confined to the small tallgrass prairies, oak openings and Lake Michigan shoreline in Southwest Michigan.

Red foxes prefer open areas or areas or small woodlots near open areas. The gray fox is partial to large wooded areas. When our region's original forests were removed for farming it had a positive impact on the red fox population.

Farming caused the rodent population to increase which also benefited the red fox.

Red fox may fall prey to coyotes or bobcats. Young fox pups may be taken by a great horned owl or the larger hawks such as red-tailed hawk or rough-legged hawk.

In pre-settlement and early post-settlement times, the mountain lion and gray wolf also posed a threat to the red fox.

Red foxes breed in Michigan from Mid-December through early March. During this time a pair bond is formed by the two adult foxes, and they begin selecting a den.

The gestation period of the red fox is 50 to 55 days. In the Lower Peninsula, most red fox litters are born during March through May. Five pups is the average litter in Southwest Michigan.

Both parent foxes take an active role in raising the young pups. The family group stays together through the summer, with young dispersing beginning in October through January. Young males disperse from the family group first.

It is always a pleasure for me to see a red fox. I usually see them in the early morning daylight before rush hour traffic commences. On average I probably see two or three live red foxes a year (not counting roadkill).

I can count my gray fox observations on one hand. One memorable sighting of this species was when an adult, presum-



Above: Male pileated woodpecker together with a red-headed woodpecker at a suet feeder, Bridgman. Brad Anderson.

Top left: Red fox on January 28 trotting across a frozen Paw Paw Lake. Image by Angelene Conkin.

Right: Cooper's hawk on January 19, Bridgman. Photo by Brad Anderson.

ably mother, brought her pups to feed one evening to the near ground level bird feeders at Sarett Nature Center. I remember this occurred during an ecology class in 1993, and that Chuck Nelson who was director of Sarett at that time took slide photos.

On January 19, Brad Anderson photographed a Cooper's hawk in his backyard in Bridgman. The Cooper's hawk is a year-round resident in Southwest Michigan, and is adapted to flying through forests. A fox is too large a prey for this species but it will pick off small birds and rodents at bird feeders.

Anderson also captured a remarkable image on February 7 of a male pileated woodpecker together with a red-headed woodpecker at his backyard suet feeder.



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Local History

Brief history of Cushing Corners of Silver Creek Township

by Jonathan Wuepper
 Manager
 Local History Branch
 Cass District Library
 145 North Broadway St.
 Cassopolis, MI 49031
 jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

The history of Cushing's Corners is quite interesting and more complex than given in most articles and history books.

Cushing Corners is located at the intersection of Middle Crossing Street and Indian Lake Road, one half mile along the boundary of sections 19 & 20, Silver Creek Township, Cass County, Michigan. It lies one mile east of the Berrien-Cass County line.

Cushing Corners was named after Dexter Cushing (1828-1909), who emigrated with his parents and siblings from New York to Silver Creek Township, arriving here on February 29, 1854.

The name "Cushing Corners" seems to have been adopted to the location described above by the early 1900s. It was originally called Shaul's Corners, after Daniel Shaul who arrived in Silver Creek in 1839.

The corners in question were referred to as "Shaul's Corners" through at least the Civil War. Also, the Gothic revival style schoolhouse, built circa 1873, with its distinctive cupola which still stands today (as a private residence) was predated by at least one additional school building, probably a frame structure. Evidence of this can be found in the Cass County Republican newspaper, published at Dowagiac, September 19, 1861:

WAR MEETING IN SILVER CREEK.

A meeting of the patriotic citizens of Silver Creek, will be held at the Red School House, at Shaul's Corners, (in the Stark neighborhood,) on Friday evening of this week, provided the weather be favorable; otherwise on the first pleasant evening thereafter. Gentlemen from Dowagiac will be in attendance to address the meeting, on subjects connected with the present great crisis in our national history; and a collection will be taken for the benefit of the treasury of the Ladies' Soldier's Aid Society, the object of which is to provide for the wants of sick and wounded soldiers who have volunteered from this section.

Sometime after the war, probably in 1874, Shaul's Corners became "Stark's Corners", as it was referenced in the State Gazetteer of Michigan, 1875 edition. It was named for the family by that name that resided at the corners. Erastus Stark owned the land where a steam saw mill was built in the 1850s. One of his son's, Myron Stark, became a blacksmith at the corners after the Civil War. According to the book: "Place Names of Michigan", a Post Office was established here in 1880, operating until 1904. However, some accounts say that a Post Office was established there as early as the 1850s, with Daniel Shaul being the first Postmaster. It is probable that the P.O. established in the 1850s was discontinued, then reopened in 1880.

Dowagiac Republican, September 23, 1886:

Miss Sarah J. Andrus commenced a fall term of school at Stark's Corners last Monday.

In "Place Names of Cass County, Michigan", in Michigan History, Vol 27 (1943) by George Fox, it states: "Cushing Post Office, or Cushing's Corners in Sec. 20 named for D. [Dexter] Cushing. Also known as Stark's Corner's and Hardscrabble."

Finally, as stated above, the Gothic-



CUSHING CORNERS SCHOOL - SILVER CREEK TWP.

Top: Cushing Corners School, June 1980. Cass District Library.

Center: Cushing Corners, aka Cushing School, District Number 8, Silver Creek Township. Current building was built circa 1873. Date of photo circa 1940s-1950s. Courtesy Cass County Historical Commission.

Left: Sections 19-20 Silver Creek Twp, showing Cushing's, Shaul's and Starke's all as landowners around the corners. From Map of the Counties Cass, Van Buren and Berrien by Geil, Harley & Sivered, 1860. "S.H" = School House. "St S.M." = Steam Saw Mill. This map depicts a different school building than the one still standing. Courtesy Library of Congress.

revival style schoolhouse located at the corners, was apparently built in 1873. This building was predated by at least one other school house building, probably two.

Clues to what became of the frame red schoolhouse are found in the obituary of Myron Stark, published in the Herald Republican (of Dowagiac), March 31, 1910 it states: "While still a young man [he] bought a small farm in Pipestone Township [Berrien County], just west of Silver Creek, and while there he learned the trade of blacksmith from Ira Potter. He then moved to what is now known as Cushing, but which was then called

Stark's Corners, and buying the old schoolhouse, which was being discarded for the present one, he moved it to his home there and at once engaged in his new occupation."

Myron Stark is shown on the 1860 US Census as living in Silver Creek Twp, working in a sawmill. When he registered for the draft for the Civil War on July 1, 1863, Stark was listed as a resident of Silver Creek Township, occupation was "raising [or trading? stud horse[s] ."

Ten years later, in the 1870 Census he is listed as a blacksmith in Silver Creek Township. Myron Stark served as Silver Creek Township treasurer in 1872

and 1873.

My guess is that Myron Stark went to Pipestone Township during the 1860s and returned late in the decade to Silver Creek. If the obituary is correct about the Schoolhouse, this would place the date of construction of the surviving Cushing Schoolhouse slightly earlier than 1873. Perhaps late 1860s-1870. More research is needed.

The usual scenario for township one-room schools in this region was that a log building was constructed first, then eventually replaced by a frame structure. A brick building often replaced the frame schoolhouse.

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How I almost learned to fly and use a phone



he belief that human beings might fly through the air unaided has been around through a large chunk of human civilization. Although created as a cautionary tragedy designed to warn against goals that are too lofty to achieve, the Greek legend of Icarus

fashioning wings from feathers, beeswax, threads, and leather straps and disastrously flying into the sky (until he wasn't flying anymore) has survived at least partially because we are all dreamers at heart. In a museum in Florence there are over 200 DaVinci sketches of flying contraptions, machines and helicopter-like devices using bird feathers, or screw-type apparatuses, that many modern-day engineers claim to be the inspiration for the birth of the airplane in the early 20th century.

Although I personally suffer from a relative common psychological disorder un-clinically known as splatophobia (which I define as an irrational fear of hitting the ground after falling from a great height), flying has always fascinated me. Admittedly I have flown quite a bit (on airplanes ... and one helicopter) considering I am such an aeronautically challenged person, but no matter how often I fly, I never take flying for granted. When I have to though, part of my pre-flight routine always involves praying to the powers that be that my feet can (please) return to terra firma gently, softly, and most importantly, *before* the rest of my body makes a splat.

As a kid I spent a lot of time flat out loafing, supine on more than one stretch of grass, looking into the sky admiring the contrails behind barely perceptible jets, and on most Saturday mornings I watched Sky King's Cessna, Songbird, (even though the show was kind of pedestrian even for the late 1950s, Sky's niece Penny was a hottie). I read books about famous fliers, and I even got (and used) a copy of a Canadian Air Force physical training manual. I remember a weird dream (are there any other kind) where I was soaring across the sky with hawk-like wings, and just as I got to a tree I threw my wings out wide, stretched my legs forward and got ready to grab a branch with my toes/talons.

So far I figure I've been lucky with the flying thing, having never actually achieved my long-feared, face-

planting, full-me splat. None of the flights I've been on have required me to jump out of a plane before that was working properly and before it came to a stop on the ground ("two things come out of the sky," a good friend once told me, something that leaves the south end of a north-flying bird, and fools with parachutes).

So, anyway, something out of character happened to me twice this winter that has made me reexamine my passive-aggressive hate-hate relationship with flying. Both times I was penguin-stepping across the snow and ice with a neighbor dog when suddenly (to both of our surprise), I found myself quite unexpectedly ... flying.

Now this wasn't a Superman thing where I would pop out of a phone booth (what the hell is a phone booth?) wearing tights and a cape, hop once and stretch my arms out in front of me and fly. This was more the kind of event where I was vertical and earthbound one second, and in the next instant I found myself terrifyingly in the air. Yep, felt like flying to me.

On neither of these occasions did my flight last long. I'd estimate air time in the mili- to quarter-second range before my bitter end made a two-cheek landing on the same stretch of hidden, dark road ice that had provided my initial launching pad. After returning to land, and after running a self-diagnostic to determine first that I was conscious, breathing, not bleeding (learned that in a EMT class), I did a second mental walkabout inside my body to see if I could determine what was going to be my most painful anatomical feature the next morning.

Then I contorted myself into a position where I could stand again. The dog was looking at me in awe (I'm pretty sure she was relatively unaccustomed to seeing humans fly). I looked around to see if any of my friends saw me and were doubled over in hysterics, although I didn't really care ... even if someone confronted me with the pedestrian notion that I'd just quite comically ended up on my butt, I was fully prepared to counter with the alternate fact that I had not only not fallen, I had instead achieved human flight.

It seems a lifetime ago that I read the series of pretty enjoyable books by a guy named Doug Adams in which he circuitously explained how a human might actually learn to fly. The secret, he wrote, was to throw yourself at the ground ... and miss. As long as you continue to miss, he explained, you are flying.

After I took the neighbor dog home (and made her promise to keep my aeronautical achievement quiet), I limped back towards my home with both my dignity and my extreme-lower back somewhat bruised. On that walk I came to the Cartesian conclusion that even though I had not consciously thrown myself at the ground hoping to miss, nonetheless I ended up there after having spent time in the air. Cogito ergo flight. In English that may or may not mean "I think, therefore I flew." Eat your heart out Leonardo!

Over the next couple of weeks while I whined and wiggled around in the Lazy Boy waiting for the aches to relent and the bruises to fade I found myself thinking more and more about the magnificent feat I'd achieved, and even though I'm hoping to never again rest on those bruised laurels, I began wondering at what other seemingly Quixotian dream I might tilt at next.

If I can fly, I told myself, I can do anything.

So after considerable consideration I decided to take up the quest to conquer my dreaded cell phone. By coincidence, at my annual Medicare wellness visit last week, one of the questions posed on the form from the bureau-bureaucrats in government (is that redundant?) asked if I found myself in need of help with regular, daily tasks, one of which was using the phone.

I checked the box for "yes" (since there wasn't a box for "hell yes") without blinking an eye. When the doctor conducting the wellness check got to that answer, he was puzzled, and he asked me if I was serious.

"Hell yes," I told him, pulling my phone from my pocket. "Doesn't everyone?" I showed him the screen and pointed to the array of a dozen or more multi-colored (unexplained) icons with pictures of little triangles, vertical dots and lines, swirls, swishes, circles, bubbles and keys, and even what looked like an image of a telephone receiver from my youth.

"How am I supposed to figure out all this without help ... maybe the Medicare geniuses (oxymoron?) who made this questionnaire understand this, but I don't.

Doc chuckled and put down the form. "Phil," he said in his concerned-doctor voice, "when you fell on the ice, did you hit your head?" I told him I didn't fall, I flew.

Visiting day at the asylum is Tuesday.

Fly over for a visit ... but please don't call on your phone. Those things are still a pain in the butt.



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