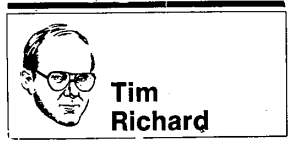


The Boomer returns

Poodle proves again that he's the boss

"Well, what did The Boomer do this trip?"
The question hit me almost as soon as I dragged myself into the office after our vacation Out West. You'll recall a couple of weeks ago I related that our 21-pound poodle is a perfect angel all year but pulls his strangest stunts on vacation.
The Boomer didn't let us down in 1981.
Poodles, as their mommies and daddies will verify, are people dogs. They must be with someone at all times.

I READ once that the reason poodle grooming is such a multi-million dollar business is that two out of three sleep in bed with their people, and it's highly desirable that they be clean.
I have run my own survey. Actually, three out of three poodles sleep in people beds. This form of socializing is a definite advantage when you're camping at 10,200 feet in the Rocky Mountains, where the temperature generally dips to the 40s at night. A poodle in your sleeping bag is worth 1 1/2 extra blankets.
Poodles have a reputation of being spoiled. There is something to it. The only thing more spoiled than a poodle is the person the poodle owns.



Tim Richard

SO THE BOOMER likes to be with people. On the second day of our camping trip, I explained patiently to him that we couldn't take him swimming with us because parks people have rules against dogs on the beach. Parks people take the narrow position that poodles are dogs rather than humanoids.

The Boomer therefore had to be left in the tent. The window flaps would be left unzipped, and gentle breezes would waft through and keep him cool, we figured.

We didn't figure that as soon as we were on our way, The Boomer would make his own exit from the tent, just like Daisy's little door to the house in the old "Blonde" movies.

He clawed a hole in the tent window and was quickly out. The tent was only one day old.

Unable to catch our car as we drove to the swimming hole, The Boomer cooled off by dipping his belly in a mud puddle. He was practicing the ABCs of Boomerism: Always Be Comfortable.

THE LITTLE darling got extra attention in Yellowstone National Park. They have bears in Yellowstone.

A miniature poodle may be only the size of a cocker spaniel, but he has the heart of a wolf. I learned this one Monday morning some years ago while driving to a trout stream in upper Michigan's Ottawa National Forest.

Two young bears were raiding garbage cans in the campground's picnic area. The Boomer darn near went through the windshield when he saw those bears. They could have sent him to Doggy Heaven with one swipe of a paw, but try to tell that to a poodle.

A SAD EVENT did occur in Yellowstone a day after we departed.
The signs tell you to keep dogs off the boardwalks around the geysers and hot springs.

There is good reason. Some guy's dog leaped out a car window and ran into a hot spring, and his owner followed trying to rescue the dog. Both perished.

As I said, The Boomer got extra special leash attention in Yellowstone. Nothing bad happened to him, either with bears or geysers or elk or bison or deer or eagles.

Once he became tangled in 50 feet of monofilament fishing line which some sportsman had discarded, but otherwise his trip was safe.

And last Friday, he celebrated his 13th birthday curling up in my easy chair with a disgustingly filthy bone, practicing the ABCs of Boomerism.

Seat belts — I'd rather do it my way

"Every 24 hours I deliver about \$1.50 into the hands of Mr. Philip Morris, who lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

I know I do this because about twice a day I buy a pack of Marlboros. Mr. Morris' name is printed on the side of every pack. Mr. Morris' picture is not printed on the pack, but I think he's a dwarf who likes uniforms.

Anyway, on the other side of every pack of Marlboros is printed: "Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health."

The Surgeon General didn't have to tell me that. I know that. After all, the Marlboro man — that guy with the cowboy hat who always seemed to be riding a horse in the middle of a snowstorm somewhere out west — died of cancer. I don't think horseback riding is what caused it.

Still, I don't mind hearing from the Surgeon General twice a day. I happen to like the Surgeon General. He's a Real American. He has his opinion, but he knows I'm entitled to mine.

I am less fond of the Automobile Club of Michigan and of Mr. Richard Austin, Michigan's Secretary of State-For-Life.

THANK GOD the AAA and Mr. Austin are not the Surgeon General.

Mr. Austin and AAA want the state to adopt a law making it obligatory for motorists to wear seat belts. They also want to require motorcyclists to ride with their lights on, but this doesn't bother me. I don't ride motorcycles, of which I am, in fact, terrified.



Mike Scanlon

I do drive cars, however. In fact, I love automobiles the way some suburban housewives love Valium.

I own five cars. Four of those have seat belts in them, and I am pleased to say that I have never worn any of them.

Not wearing seat belts saved my life last October, when my 1964 Dodge Dart — God rest its little soles — flipped end-over-end six times on the Southfield Freeway after being forced into the median by a degenerate Canadian. I lay down on the floor and didn't look up until a cop stuck his head through where the windshield used to be and said, "Are you alive?"

I was. At least, I think was. But the roof of the car was about 30 inches lower than it used to be, and if I had been wearing seat belts I would either be dead or about the same height as Mr. Morris.

THE AAA points out that 21 foreign countries, including parts of Canada, require motorists to wear seat belts. That means there are about 130 foreign countries, including parts of Canada, that do

not require seat belts. Does the AAA mention that? No.

One of the foreign areas that requires seat belts to be worn is Ontario. Now, it seems to me that if Ontario has seen fit to make motorists wear seat belts, that makes one good argument against the practice.

Precious little is done correctly in Ontario. There are parts of the province where it's a violation of the law to drink beer in your backyard, and the guy who forced me into that median strip was from there. If they'd let him drink beer at home, he probably wouldn't have come over here to do it.

Despite my experience with my Dodge Dart, may it rust in peace, seat belts do save lives. I know that. I don't need Mr. Austin and the AAA telling me that.

I also know that if I bang my head against the wall, it will give me pain. If I do it long enough, it will likely draw blood. If I do it longer, I may do my brain permanent damage. And if I do it even longer than that, I may kill myself.

That doesn't mean Mr. Austin and the AAA have to make it illegal for me to bang my head against the wall.

I invite Mr. Austin and the AAA, all 1.3 million members of the AAA, if they so choose, to buckle up. They can even put stupid bumper stickers in foreign languages on their cars if they want.

Myself, I'll take my chances with my friends the dwarf and the cowboy.

Exchanging nonsense

Cliches fall like raindrops

Commentator-author Edwin Newman says an enormous amount of activity in the United States is devoted to exchanging nonsense.

Newman's out to de-jargonize American English and attack modern gobbledygook. I had a similar idea about kicking the cliché habit. But the major difference is that the acid-penned Newman wrote books on unconvincing and atrocious English and made a mint.

My humble contribution to the war on witless patter was written for a creative writing class.

I was on my way to an M.B. degree — Master of Banalities. So I wrote my epic to purge my system of stereotypes. For the sake of triteness, I dubbed my protagonists Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith from Anywhere, U.S.A.

IN MY STORY, Smith and Jones, are two suburbanites reunited on a commuter train. Here's how their dreary dialogue went:

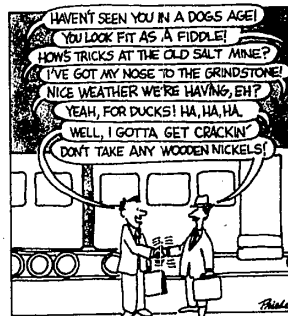
Jones: (delivering Smith a resounding whack on his shoulder) "Haven't seen you in a dog's age, old buddy. How's the world treating you?"

Smith: (after recovering his wind) "Can't complain for an old man. Can't keep a good man down, you know."

Jones: "You're looking fit as a fiddle. Same old Smitty, haven't changed a bit."

Smith: (blushing) "You just say that 'cause it's true. You don't look so bad yourself."

Jones: "How's the little woman and those three kiddies?"



Smith: "In the pink. Those kids sure are chips off the old block."

Jones: "Bet they're growing like weeds."

Smith: "Yep, they have a way of growing up right under your nose. Time sure flies."

Jones: "You can say that again."

Smith: (obligingly) "Yep, they have a way of growing up right under your nose. Time sure flies."

JONES: "Think spring will ever get here?"



Jackie Klein

Smith: "Nah, just two seasons. Winter and July. Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it."

Jones: "How's tricks down at the salt mine?"

Smith: "Keeping my nose to the grindstone. Tough to make buck these days. We're just making ends meet what with double-digit inflation and all."

Jones: (consoling) "Oh well, you can't take it with you. What's the difference as long as you're healthy? Health is one thing money can't buy."

Smith: "Rich or poor, it's good to have money. It's a great life if you don't weaken."

Jones: "Let's change the subject and talk about something pleasant. Hey, that's a nice head of skin you've got there."

Smith: (offended) "I've got news for you. My forehead's just getting higher. That's a sign of brains."

Jones: (seeking safer ground) "What do you think of the our chances for winning the pennant this year?"

Smith: Two chances — slim and none. Those bums can't hit the side of a barn."

Jones: "Yeah, I could bow my top everytime I think of those turkeys. Those fat heads act deader than donkeys on the diamond."

Smith: "Hornal to break this up, but I've gotta get cracking. Dodge put the old shoulder to the wheel. See you around, buddy."

Jones: "Yeah, don't be such a stranger. Drop in and we'll shoot the breeze. Bring your better half. So long, don't do anything I wouldn't do."

Whew, was I glad to get that off my chest. That sure was a load off my mind. It'll be a cold day in July before I'll use another cliché — or take any wooden nickels.



Shirlee Holden

Libertarian still burns for principle

Wednesday's child is full of woe, an old verse says. And with or without rose-colored glasses, it's easy to get that way.

Just think about the economy, unemployment, your last electric bill or how rotten you feel having gotten up at 4:30 a.m. to watch Prince Charles take a bride.

Being in just that kind of blue funk one recent morning, I was jolted out of my mood by a letter in the mail from Farmington.

The letter was in response to a recent column bemoaning the latest assaults on the First Amendment.

Sheila R. Holden's husband, Professor W. Sprague Holden, once graded my journalism papers at Wayne State University. Now she was giving me high marks for my column against prayer in public schools.

"The righteous right terrifies me," Mrs. Holden wrote. She then went on to relate her own involvement as a civil libertarian dating back nearly six decades.

Unaccustomed as I am to using long excerpts, I'm going to deviate from my custom. That's because Sheila R. Holden tells her story far better than I could. She wrote:

"I JOINED the ACLU in 1924. I first met Roger Baldwin in 1923. He was a friend of my mother's best friend, and I was allowed to attend meetings in various homes, where the sad state of the nation was discussed, and remedies sought. ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) was the result, and Baldwin bought a storefront office and moved in, in 1924.

'Then I would lead them in singing the Star Spangled Banner. The police, of course, could do nothing except stand glowering at us with hands on hips.'

"This was in the depths of the Depression, and of Oppression (sic). Everything seemed to us to be illegal — no liquor, no abortions. (I lost three dear friends trying to do it themselves — septi-cemia killed them.) There were book burnings — you could be jailed if you were caught with an illegal book.

I used to follow Roger Baldwin around like a puppy dog, wherever he spoke. A group of us students at the University of California decided to demonstrate on the campus. We put together a soapbox podium, and took turns orating to great applause and cheers.

"Occasionally a brave professor would sneak out and take a few minutes to congratulate us and urge us on. Then we would hear police sirens in the distance. Whoever was on the podium would be reading the Constitution: 'When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary, etc. while we listened reverently.

"THEN I WOULD lead them in singing the Star Spangled Banner. (I'd been taking singing lessons for two years, the start of a 30-year career as a dramatic soprano.) The police, of course, could do nothing except stand glowering at us with hands on hips. Things got more and more sticky, until the university was forced to ban the campus demonstrations.

"Losing only a few of our mob, we moved to Baldwin's headquarters for our meetings. I remember his telling us that this was dangerous, and that we must be very careful. So we posted a lookout to give warning of a raid.

"Evidently the police finally realized that sirens were stupid if you wanted to catch anyone. So, one day, two police cars came silently from both directions. Our lookout had just enough time to yell 'Cheese it, the cops!' before he was caught. 'Baldwin said 'Get out fast,' and we ran out the back door, but some, not as fleet of foot, were caught and jailed.

"The police, we later learned, had axes and smashed the building — all the glass, every bit of furniture destroyed. Roger Baldwin moved to another state to continue his work."

MRS. HOLDEN, never faltering in her libertarian beliefs, is still a contributing member of the ACLU and a generous supporter.

She writes that to this day she "still admires Roger Baldwin as much as anyone I have ever known."

A number of times through the years I met Sheila Holden in the company of her husband, the head honcho at Wayne State University's journalism department until his death eight years ago.

It isn't unnatural that I should have looked upon her simply as the wife of Bill Holden, an exceptionally warm and encouraging teacher. We all stereotype that way. Now I know how much I lost by getting to know her as a person in her own right. I'm hoping it isn't too late.