

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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Tom Monaghan

Pizza Tiger

Nice guy who is buried in endless dough

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

Tom Monaghan's life certainly has had a story-book quality. A one-time orphan boy whose business has survived fires, bankruptcies, takeovers, con men, federal lawsuits, over-expansion and rotten partners, Monaghan has persevered. And persevered.

Through it all — through the week he lived off stale popcorn and a bottle of wine, through life in a trailer with his wife and baby, through his term as the self-described "village idiot" in the Ypsilanti business community — Monaghan never doubted he would be rich one day. He never doubted that his honesty, work habits, religion and single-mindedness would turn his local pizza shop into a national institution.

He was right. Today, of course, Monaghan is fabulously wealthy. People Magazine profiles him. Forbes lists him in its annual rankings of America's barons. Private jets whoosh him from board meetings in Ann Arbor to Detroit Tigers exhibition games in Florida.

He finances \$8 million cars without putting up a penny of his own money. His Domino's Pizza stores in Japan set company records for sales. He owns an island in Lake Huron. He catches the power-boat races in Key West, near another of his getaway places. He can do 150 push-ups at a time and has run the New York Marathon.

IT'S A STORYBOOK life. So why is the story book so, so... what? Like a pizza in need of sauce, maybe? Or garlic bread without the garlic? The events of his life are dynamic, but the telling of them is not. Not in "Pizza Tiger" (Random House, \$17.95), anyway. It's OK, but it's badly in need of spice. At heart, the book is the story of a nice guy who keeps on plodding ahead, but the bits and pieces of interest are buried in the endless dough of the pizza business.

At 346 pages it is far too much a tale of corrugated boxes, cheese-cutting innovations and oven improvements, and far too little about the boy whose mother gave him up, of the feisty Marine who wasn't afraid of a fight, of the pizza maker who was charged with assault and battery after he beat the bejabbers out of a former employee.

Domino's delivers, on time, tangy and hot. "Pizza Tiger" delivers occasionally, but you have to suffer through too much business history and strategy. We could do without, say, the details of his early accounting practices.

Better Monaghan had written or, rather, co-written, two books, one a biography, the other a business how-to manual. (The book is written by Robert Anderson, who co-wrote Ray Kroc's Meckob on McDonald's, "Grinding It Out.")

Another problem in "Pizza Tiger" is that Monaghan, despite the dramatic nature of many of the events in his life, isn't very dramatic. He has a straightforward, gee-whiz, good-boy way of looking at things that makes him a darn good citizen, but not necessarily an exciting one.

It's the good-news syndrome. We all like to hear good news, but nobody likes to read it. Has there ever been a duller headline than No One Killed in Train Wreck?

The tale might have been wonderfully told at half that length.

For example, early in chapter five we get a tantalizing lead in. "While Sperling went to work straightening out my legal situation, I was busy screwing up my home life." Aha! Eighty-one pages into the thing and it's starting to cook.

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Born on Christmas Day, Polo and his master Bob Benker give a Christmas party each year to thank his friends, the children of the community. Polo could use some new kerchiefs, according to his master.



His: If he has everything, what about his pet?

By Ruette Shand
special writer

WHAT DOES one give to the man who has everything? The quandary is one of the major questions of this giving season.

Something that comes to mind is a gift for his pet. Even the toughest man to please becomes a veritable pussy cat when conversation turns to his best four-footed or feathered friends.

Take, for instance, Larry Ebel, director of store design for Taubman Co. Ebel obviously has most everything he wants, including a smashing beaver fur coat and an extensive Ralph Lauren wardrobe.

Now, the dashing man about town has a new acquisition, a growing, Lhasa Apso puppy. The golden-haired species, known for centuries as ferociously dedicated protectors of Tibetan temples, has been available in this country for only 20 years, his master explained.

"His name is Butch," says Ebel, who adds, "I hate lap dogs, per se. My friend Brenda has a Yorkie named 'Precious,' which I refuse to say in public."

EBEL SAYS he doesn't consider Butch a typical lap dog.

"He doesn't have a squished-in face because he is buck-toothed. And he seems to be growing like a weed. He's already outgrown his Ralph Lauren-like Scottie sweater. I knew the instant I saw this dog that I was a dead duck. No one else would buy him because of his overbite."

Ebel says Butch needs some new toys. "He goes through a gaggle a week now. When he gets a new cowhide shoe to chew on, he first walks around with it and shows it off. It's fun to give him toys."

Catching himself really getting involved in the Christmas pet spirit, Ebel jumped up and declared, "I don't believe I am sitting here talking about the dog as if it is a person! I can't stand people who do that."

Nevertheless, Ebel did manage to add that Butch already has received one Christmas gift.

"He has a new French doggie bed, quilted in bright print. Roz Becker carried it all the way from France for her dog, but it was too small; so she presented it to Butch."

HAIRDRESSER to the stars, Yiannis Karimalis would welcome promissory notes that read, "I hereby donate four hours a month to clean your bird sanctuary." Or, says Yiannis, "A fifty pound bag of corn would be nice."

Yiannis, who keeps exotic birds in the rear of his wooded Novi property, says he kept birds as a boy in his native Greece but then they were nearly always pigeons.

Now he has majestic peacocks in both albino and splendid color. Brilliantly hued Chinese pheasants mingle with Michigan natives that wander in from the wild. Exotic chickens that lay green eggs host a couple of wild ducks that took refuge with the well-fed brood. Pigeons clatter when strangers come too close and small white doves flutter in their enclosure.

"Birds are very beautiful," says Yiannis of his pets. "They are so innocent. They have such freedom and they are so gentle."

While birds do not offer companionship on a cold winter night, they do supply other amenities. "The chickens are nice because you have fresh eggs and the pheasant eggs are a delicacy. The rooster not only wakes us in the morning, he keeps the hens happy. And they say if you have a rooster, the eggs don't contain so much cholesterol."

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Butch and his master Larry Ebel are preparing a list of suggested items that will help would-be gift givers select items sure to make them happy. Butch is looking for new toys, says Ebel.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

As a boy in his native Greece, Yiannis Karimalis kept pet birds, mostly pigeons. Now the Karimalis aviary is host to exotic peacocks and Chinese pheasants. A little help with their care would be an ideal gift, says Yiannis.

Hers: She still treasures childhood friends

By Ruette Shand
special writer

WHAT WOULD Christmas morning be like without a pet or two, in one form or another?

Everybody remembers at least one special Christmas morning that incorporated a pet. There was the beloved stuffed animal at age 3. It's probably still tucked away somewhere. It's surely all ragged and torn, but not totally forgotten.

There might also have been a real, live purring kitten that you received at age 8. The fuzzy, cuddly creature slept with you on that first Christmas and ever thereafter when Dad wasn't looking.

Or, the lively, wiggly puppy with its inexhaustible stumpy tail, that appeared when you were age 12, an age considered old enough to assume full responsibility for the care of a dependent creature.

Most people treasure memories of an endearing pet they coveted and received when they were children. The memories never fade away entirely. Sometimes we recall them in adult years through collections of inanimate pets.

Eileen Wibel of Troy remembers receiving a miniature alligator or crocodile (she's not sure which) one Christmas morning back when she was only 7.

"I never really played with it, or even wanted to touch it. I called it 'Gator' and it lived in a cage until the next summer when it died."

But, says Wibel, the memory of that exotic pet lives on through her preference for things made of reptile skins.

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Sure to please anyone's favorite memories of a treasured pet are these four pictures, arranged clockwise from top. First is a glittering peacock with a rainbow of rhinestones from Bess Orman. Then Silvestro and Tweety Bird sweater trimmed with beads and sequins from Claire Pearone. Next a baby of silver, Owl evening bag by Judith Leiber, Quincentessie at La Mirege, Southfield, crocodile pin from Roz & Sherm, rabbit and swan to wear on a chain from Bess Orman, bulldog atkpin from Wang Wang, Somerset Mall. Finally Dalmations romp on youthful sweater, Jacobson's, Birmingham.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Sumptuous sable is the ultimate gift she's sure to treasure as much as the soft, furry kittens and puppies she once received as a child.