

points of view

Devil's Night

Unlocking a crammed memory bank

If you don't like love letters, turn the page because that's what this is. Sort of. It's also about Devil's Night and an anniversary.

Presumably you don't have to be reminded that it's tomorrow's date that has earned the Devil's Night designation, there having been considerable publicity warning of dundereads who brighten the pre-Halloween sky by going about burning down abandoned houses and the like.

On the same date more than three decades ago, Mother Goose and I lit a different fuse. Instead of burning down a home, we started building one. It was the day we were wed.

Some of our closest friends have chuckled over this coincidence through the years and my mate has helped the laughs along by revealing that on the day in question I knocked on her door and said, "They're going to throw the switch at 3 o'clock; is that OK?"

Please understand, the mood was light. The euphoria of romance was heightened by the fact that we were in Las Vegas, having deliberately picked that particular Saturday and site to hear wedding bells.

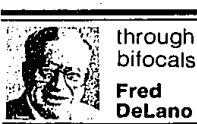
However, then as now, Oct. 30 fell in the middle of the football season. On the "first things first" theory, we were married on schedule, but I did leave a 3 a.m. wake-up call.

Lest you guffaw in error, the reason was that only by pre-dawn departure were we able to drive to Los Angeles and be in our Coliseum seats in time for the kickoff between the Los Angeles Rams and Detroit Lions — with my bride adorned in Honolulu blue and silver and a tiny stuffed lion pinned to her shoulder.

Was it worth it? Of course, the Lions winning a close battle on a fourth down touchdown by Leon Hart.

Or do you mean, was the marriage worth it?

These many years later the memory bank is crammed with recollections, some sad, some joyous. The



through bifocals
Fred DeLano

road has taken many turns, but always together. The stars that once were in her eyes have been replaced by pain, and there are many who wonder why she should suffer when I'm the one who should have been afflicted. There is no answer.

When I started using the term Mother Goose in print I don't recall. But I think it was in defiance of guys who speak of their wives as "my old lady," "the war department" or just as "the missus."

Probably the greatest pride is in the two goslings born of this lady, both of whom are now married adults, and the grandchild generation that has followed. Long after we both are gone, our mark will remain.

A wife is a Jili-of-all trades, and I'm sure that as the years have rolled by many a hope and dream have been packed away in concealed disappointment like a snapshot album that is never opened. Concern for the family has been foremost. One way or another, the fragile moments have been survived because that has been her strength as wife and mother.

To observe the recent Sweetest Day, I drove Mother Goose past a couple of jewelers' shops and a florist's because she's a mite gimpy and finds walking difficult. But at least doing something nice was in my mind. I'm not a poet and am not much good with conversational bonbons, but I did find a card that says what's in my heart.

Many other husbands may find this symbolic too:

"I may not put my love in words too often through the year, and maybe I don't say enough to make my feelings clear. But, even so, I'm sure you know that each day all year through, My greatest happiness in life depends on loving you."

If that doesn't light the Devil's Night fuse again, nothing will.

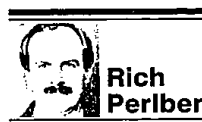
Vounteer firefighters a special breed

The leaves were raked and piled, but the best efforts failed to start even a smouldering fire.

"It's too wet," I said Sunday. "Nothing can burn in this weather." I went inside to find out how wrong I could be. My wife told me of the horrible story she had heard on the radio: something had gone wrong at a practice fire in Milford; three volunteer firefighters had died.

It was stunning news. I have never lived in Milford, but I know it well. Although chambers of commerce boast of the uniqueness of their towns, the Milfords of the world share many traits with the community where I grew up and with many where I have since worked and lived.

ONE OF THOSE common threads is the volunteer fire department. It takes a large city to support a full-time fire department. Outstate, the people who pump gas, farm crops,



Rich Perlberg

tool factories and otherwise perform hard manual labor are the backbone of volunteer fire departments. Statewide, three of every four firefighters is a volunteer.

As a youngster, we called these guys cowboys because of the way they drove their cars to fires with red lights swirling from their dashes or atop their old Fords and Pontiacs. But we said so more with admiration than ridicule. These guys were brave, some would say foolhardy, and they were dependable. When the siren sounded, you knew Del and

Frank and Larry would respond immediately and would do what the rest of us would not do — volunteer to fight fires.

Volunteers chafe at the idea that full-time firefighters are professionals. That implies, they believe, that volunteer departments are somehow non-professional. They volunteer their time, they argue, but their experience makes them as competent a firefighter as anyone.

Nonetheless, it also is true that small towns would be hard pressed to field a full department if they demanded stringent training for each volunteer.

FOR A STORY, I once went on a training session with volunteer firefighters. We were led inside a smoke-filled cinder block building. You could not see more than a foot ahead except for a lurid glow in the basement where the fire had been set. You could not breathe except for



Steve Barnaby

active group of folks who are fed up with what they feel is a bankrupt American foreign policy.

Pursell is one of several congressmen throughout the country who has been identified as a swing vote should a bill for Contra aid come to the floor. A national group calling itself Neighbor to Neighbor is responsible for rallying local opposition.

Plymouth isn't exactly a hotbed of radicalism," says former Plymouth mayor Bev McAninch, who recently became active in Neighbor to Neighbor along with her husband, Bill.

At a recent meeting the participants were what McAninch referred to as "pillars of the community."

"ALL ALONG there has been this perception that only the people in Ann Arbor care about this issue. We just want to make sure that Carl knows that others of us care, also," she said.

Although 80-year-old Helen VanDyke spends most of her time on a farm just outside of Plymouth, she too is seeking a more active role to oppose Contra aid.

"Contra aid makes it impossible for any democracy to grow in Nicaragua," she said. "Pounding the life out of them isn't doing a bit of good. We're just sending them into the arms of the Russians."

And this kind of firm talk from such moderate types does seem to be having an effect.

Pursell has met with representatives from the group and feels that they are worth dealing with, according to Pursell aide Gary Cates.

"We're interested in listening to other groups, too. But their (Neighbor to Neighbor) tactics lend more credibility to their argument," said Cates.

"They listen to Carl, too. And that's what we need is a dialogue," he said.

Interesting concept, this idea of neighbors sitting down to iron out their differences. It's about time. No sense leaving the important decisions up to the folks in Washington. After all, more often than not, they botch it up.

Oh, yeah, if you're interested in getting in on the dialogue call Caren Gardner at 453-9164.

a mask filled by a life-giving air pack.

On the top floor where the smoke lessened somewhat, we were allowed to take our masks off. I didn't put mine back on securely and started hacking and coughing as we

walked downstairs.

The instructor noticed my distress and quickly ushered me out a side door where to my surprise it was bright and sunny. I had thought the whole world was made of gloomy smoke.

keeping up with government

LOOKING FOR information about state government? The League of Women Voters has a toll-free telephone service (1-800-292-5823) that may be helpful.

The league's Citizen Information Center in Lansing offers to help people find out about such things as pending legislation, the state consti-

tution, election laws, voting regulations or tax information.

The telephone is answered from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays.

The telephone service is paid for by the league's education fund. The League of Women Voters is a non-profit organization that works to keep voters interested and informed about governmental issues.

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