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Observer Life

Chat Room

Kathie O'Donohue

The more life goes on, the more she wonders

I wonder why it is that every time I choose a shopping cart, it is always a sick one.

A wheel is twisted, or it has an overpowering urge to move in the opposite direction I am moving. Other wayward cart tendencies abound; and lately I have noticed that members of my family are afflicted with this problem when they accompany me to the store.

Also, some carts are downright sneaky. I test them initially and they seem OK. But several aisles and a lots of bulky items later, they start to act up. Strange noises present themselves, or one wheel becomes lame. Then after all the trouble with the cart, I am told there's nothing good to eat around the house once everything's unpacked and put away.

Food is an interesting phenomenon in our home. With seven people, there is never a night when everyone likes the food I make. I have accepted this. What I haven't come to terms with is chili.

Excepting of both parents and one son, the rest of the kids separate out all the ingredients into horrid little piles on their plates. Beans here, onions there. Tomatoes in the middle. Ground beef off to the left and green peppers at 2 o'clock.

Once, I blended all the chili ingredients together. Chili's greatest nemesis in the house proclaimed it the best chili I had ever made. Little did he know. But the thing that bothers me most is that they would eat the very same meal at a friend's house without complaint.

NEW DRIVERS

Here is my perspective on stressful events: I have birthed five children; nothing can faze me. Recently, though, I have found an event so adrenaline-provoking my life truly passed before my eyes: driving with a student driver.

An instructor at the driving school told parents that it's often a good idea to let the new driver practice driving around in neighborhoods. One day after we dropped our car pool buddy off, I decided to let my son drive home. It was then I discovered my son's propensity to hug the right side of the road.

Suddenly, from every direction lawn service trailers appeared on my side in front of nearly every home! Mailboxes threatened to behead me! My life quickly passed before me: I saw myself 3 years old, 12, then 16. I saw myself dead!

Another time, we were turning off a main road to get into our subdivision. As he turned left without braking, I screamed, "BRAKE! BRAKE! BRAKE!" to which he responded, "What? I know how to drive!" He was totally oblivious to impending doom in the form of a gigantic rock and got angry at me for telling him what to do. After all, he argued, he had a permit.

I personally think they shouldn't hand those things out until a kid is working, married and has a first child. The driving training job was relegated to his father after that.

While on the subject of driving, I really wonder why it is when I achieve a

PLEASE SEE O'DONOHUE, C10

Yes, I'll marry you!

JIM JAGOFELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A candlelit stairway was a path to love for Andrea Paparelli-Simpson and her husband, Michael.

Couple wins contest for most romantic wedding proposal

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
STAFF WRITER

When Andrea Paparelli-Simpson returned from an errand to the home she shared with Michael on a hot August afternoon in 2001, she found a note pinned to the front door. "Find me," it said.

Andrea walked into a house aglow with candles that lit a path lined with Hershey Kisses. The path led her upstairs where she found "enticing" clues to unexpected destinations. Her final destination was the bathroom. There, her soon-to-be fiancé awaited her on bended knee in a pool of rose petals. In his arms were two dozen red roses and a diamond engagement ring.

"Now that I have kissed the ground you walk on and showered you with roses, will you be my wife?" he said.

And that's how Andrea Paparelli-Simpson and Michael Simpson, both 24, won the *Observer Newspapers'* "Lessons in Love" contest for the most romantic wedding proposal. On Thursday, Feb. 13, they'll head out for a night on the town that includes a Red Wings game, dinner at Little Italy's in Northville, transportation by J.R. Tours of Novi, and a night at the Fraser Inn in Northville. They'll also receive candy, roses and a $250 gift coin from Orin Jewelers in Garden City.

The couple, married since Nov. 2, were surprised they won.

"I was like oh, my gosh, are you serious?" said Andrea, after receiving a call from the *Observer's* promotions manager.

"I was surprised. I thought there was some better marriage proposal out there. I was actually thrilled," said Michael.

It all started two years ago in a club called Faces when Michael spotted Andrea sitting with her friends and was instantly smitten. He sent over a drink.

"Her looks struck me while I was sitting at the bar," said Michael. "She looked unlike any other girl. I sent over a drink to say I'm here. She didn't know where it came from. She may have thought I was just a nasty guy hitting on her."

"He caught my attention," said Andrea. "He sent a drink over to my table, sort of one of those across-the-room things."

Angela then asked Michael to dance, and the rest, as they say, is history.

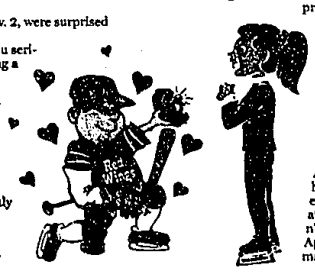
Now pan this picture to a day eight months later. Andrea and Michael are sharing a home. Michael is fidgety. He asks Andrea if she has errands to do, maybe at the supermarket or the mall. No, she says. She's cranky and wants to stay home and watch television. Michael goes to the basement and calls Andrea's father. Your daughter is not leaving the house, he says. Do something.

Andrea's father, Paul Paparelli, who owns a Canton catering business, asks her to come over and pick up a bank deposit. She's gone over an hour, enough time for Michael to strew the house with Hershey's Kisses and poise himself in the bathroom.

Ah, romance.

Michael, who describes himself as "quiet and shy," doesn't know exactly where he got the idea of chocolate kisses and rose petals.

"I was looking around, asking other couples how to propose. I wanted to do something totally off the wall ... I'm not really the one (who's) always romantic. I just come up with things in spurts to keep things alive," he said.



Even the engagement ring's design was Michael's idea, said Andrea. They previously had talked about getting engaged and had looked at a few rings, but it hadn't been a serious search. Apparently, Michael was making notes.

"He smooched a couple of ideas together about the ring. We were just talking. I didn't think it would happen that year."

Married just three months, the couple is refinishing their kitchen. It's been a few weeks since they found out they won, but Andrea is still amazed at her husband's creativity ... and romantic nature.

"He keeps quiet and then every once in awhile he comes up with something like this," she said.

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A romantic gesture led to this happy wedding day for Michael Simpson and Andrea Paparelli.

How do I love thee?

Choosing a winner for the *Observer Newspapers'* second annual "Lessons in Love" contest once again proved difficult. We received samples of so many unique, funny and heartwarming ways to propose marriage. Here are a few:

■ Garden City resident Nancy Murray's husband proposed to her on Valentine's Day. He took her to a special restaurant. In the parking lot, he started unbuttoning his shirt, saying his doctor was concerned about a particular area on his chest. Finally, he flung open his shirt, displaying a chest that read: "Nancy, will you marry me?" He had gone to a barbershop and had a heart shaved on his chest with those memorable words.

■ Joyce Anspach of Livonia wrote: "I don't recall the words that my husband used to propose to me, but I do recall the yellow moose tag that he placed around my ankle for me to wear until he purchased my ring."

■ When Jessica Oliverio's boyfriend, Ben, asked her to go for a car ride, the Livonia resident didn't realize he had arranged for her to go sky diving. When they got to the airport, Ben told her he was not jumping with her.

She went up in the plane, jumped, and after she pulled her parachute she looked down at the airport. She could read a huge sign that said, "Jessie Q, will you ...?" She landed and Ben was waiting on bended knee.

■ During his travels as a young adult, Gregory Yanik of Plymouth came across an ocean cliff overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. He thought it the perfect place to get engaged someday. When he found his special woman, they flew to San Francisco and climbed along the cliffs.

He brought nine silver and one pink balloon, the pink carrying the marriage proposal inside. Soon the sun sank, the fog rolled it, and it began to rain. His future wife, dripping wet, let go of the balloons. He proposed in the car and has been happily married ever since.

■ When Rob Feldman of Farmington Hills invited his girlfriend, Alisha, to the movies, she had no idea she would be the featured event, wrote his mother, Joan Feldman. Alisha was confused. The movie appeared to star family and friends talking about her and Rob.

There were old college friends singing "Do wop, marry him." Next, Rob appeared on the screen and asked Alisha to marry him. When the lights when on, co-conspirators held up signs reading "Say yes!" She did.

■ Scott Tarach of Westland wrote Darius Rucker of Hootie & the Blowfish several times before one of the band's concerts asking him to propose to Scott's girlfriend, Jaime. Darius complied. During the concert, he spoke of Scott's love for Jaime and told her Scott wanted to marry her.

A spotlight was put on Scott and he bent down, pulled out the ring and proposed. Jaime said yes, and "the crowd went nuts," wrote Scott.

■ Canton resident Julie Baechler, whose husband is the head football coach at Canton High School, had her wedding proposal announced over the PA. The principal came on and said he had an announcement. She soon heard her future husband's voice saying, "Julie Tortora, will you marry me? If so, I'll meet you in the hallway. If not, I'll see you in your room." Soon Julie heard screaming from all the surrounding classrooms and music blaring from the band room. She accepted.