

Put-downs don't improve anyone

WHEN teachers are willing to become students, they often find their students become their teachers.

But teaching is more than imparting new knowledge; it also is about reminding another of truths forgotten.

One of my former students reminded me of this, when he stopped in over the holidays to bring me up to date on his life.

Bill was talking about a difficult person he had encountered and wondered what I thought about the way he had handled the challenge. Without realizing it, he told me that he had done just fine.

THE CLUE was in his statement that when he hears someone putting down another person or group of persons, a warning bell goes off in his head.

He told me that this causes him to take the rest of what is said with a grain of salt.

His words of wisdom from a student who will probably be teaching the rest of his life took me back to a funeral some 15 years ago. I had the honor of giving the eulogy for a man who had been my pastor when I was first ordained.

As I stood in front of his coffin, I found myself saying that I had never heard him put down another human being. It was one of those things we hear ourselves saying as if the words were coming from another.

I remember thinking that I would like to emulate that. Could anyone say that of me some day? Perhaps that explains the touch of envy I detected in myself as I heard this description from my own mouth of a pastor and friend who had gone to meet the one who never said anything negative about him.

IT DOES MAKE me wonder: What do we gain from putting down people or groups about whom we usually do not know much?

Not too many people, and hardly any groups, have improved over the years as a result of put-downs.

Whether the object is a race, a religion or the guy next door, put-downs are far more often a clue to the ignorance of the speaker than they are a help to the audience.

ONE SAD thing about the process is that the speakers often are overly impressed with the importance of their pronouncements.

The more they hear themselves repeat their pronouncements, the more they are convinced that they

perspectives



Rev. Robert Schaden

have just made a contribution to the knowledge of those within range of their wisdom.

It is amazing how some of us seek our sense of self-importance. But beyond the amazement is the sadness at our handicapped status.

Bill's comment does give me pause to reflect. He makes me want to work a little harder at making sure that I do not ring those warning bells he mentioned.

The Rev. Robert Schaden is with Newman House at Schoolcraft Community College in Livonia.

Volunteers are needed

Some 75 to 100 volunteers are being sought by Oakland Family Services to help families with neglected children.

Volunteers will be trained and supervised as they develop one-to-one relationships with a parent. Goals are support, education and role modeling for parents in the program, according to Nancy McHugh, volunteer coordinator at Oakland Family Services. She can be reached at 858-7766 in Pontiac.

Attract butterflies to your garden this summer

ALTHOUGH winter is only slightly more than half over, we already face signs of spring.

Clothing stores are selling bathing suits and summer shirts. And seed catalogs have been sent, so that people can begin planning their favorite outdoor summer activity.

To many, the arrival of their new seed catalog brings back memories of last summer's vegetable garden and prize-winning flower beds. Some people choose flowers that complement their homes. Others plan to have flowers that will bloom all summer, while some just have their favorite flowers.



Timothy Nowicki

nature

new species in your yard provide a new dimension to your gardening.

THE FIRST step is to determine what species of butterflies are found in southeastern Michigan.

Some species you can attract are tiger swallowtails, red-spotted purples, monarchs, viceroy, painted ladies, spicebush swallowtails, and black swallowtails. A careful look at a field guide will reveal even more.

Once you have determined what species frequent the area, you must give them what they like to eat. Keep in mind that the caterpillars and adults eat different foods. Both life cycle stages are flexible in their eating habits, but the caterpillar stage tends to be more specific.

Black swallowtails prefer eating plants of the carrot family. Many gardeners plant parsley for their own use, but why not plant some ex-

tra so that the butterflies can feed, too?

Adults, on the other hand, prefer the nectar of milkweed, phlox or clover.

PAINTED LADY caterpillars feed on members of the daisy family (compositae). Sunflower, peary everlasting or burdock would be eaten by the caterpillars. Sweet William, zinnia and dahlias would serve as nectar sources for the adults.

In addition to food, water is an important resource. Standing water is not necessary. Shallow depressions that provide moist soil are all they require.

Sheltering your garden from strong winds will help butterflies flying to your yard. Growing bushes or trees that also serve as food for the caterpillars can serve a dual purpose.

A couple of books on the market outline in more detail some of the favored food and nectar plants for various species of butterflies. Mathew Tekulsky's "The Butterfly Garden" is a good one.

The writer is staff naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park.



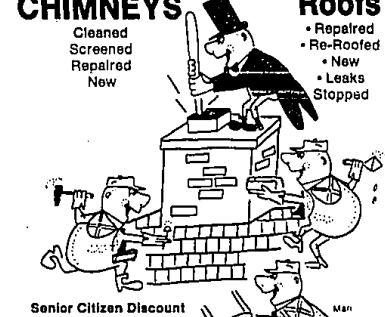
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