



Compostings

by Al Batt

Hartland resident cannot be reached

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING

Here's your gift. Forgive the brown paper bag. I don't like to spend money on wrapping paper.

It's the gift I gave you last year. I don't like to spend money on gifts either.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Whenever I pass his drive, thoughts occur to me. Not everyone is meant to be a Minnesotan. Friends and neighbors flee to the welcoming arms of warmer temperatures found in the south. My wife and I stay here and eat lefse. She presented delicious lefse to five grandchildren. She didn't force them to eat it and they didn't eat it. Only one had tried lefse before and the other four proved to be cautious eaters. I told them it was potatoes, butter and sugar. They like those things, but purposefully forgot to sample the lefse. I didn't add, "Try it, you might like it." I'm OK with them not eating the lefse. That means there is more for me.

The liftgate on my car isn't as tall as I am. I bumped my head on it while putting holiday things into the car. I'd just flunked Situational Awareness 101. It was a glancing blow, but it stung like the dickens. I'm going to wear a safety helmet when I go shopping.

Christmas can be stressful and exhausting. Every day with a loved one is a gift. The year 2023 showed me how lucky I am to have family and friends. Sadly, people important to us die around Christmas. Winston Evenson died at 96. People said he had a "good run." I wish he'd been able to put on a few more miles. I taught a writing class in which I assigned my students the exercise of concocting mottos for themselves. One, being as knuckleheaded as his instructor, always came up with, "I don't believe in having a motto." I shared one of mine, "I try to make the best use of every moment." I don't know if Winston had that as a motto, but that's how he lived his life. Anne Lamott wrote that something was "like trying to put an octopus to bed." That's how difficult it is to say goodbye, but platitudes and gratitude help. So does repeating their stories.

A Hartland resident became weary of his cellphone bills this summer. He tossed his phone onto the lawn and ran the mower over it

a few times. He can't be reached for comment.

BLATHERSKITE

There are alleged lucky ways to usher in a New Year. Put my right foot down first when I get out of bed on New Year's Day. Saying "Rabbit, rabbit" before saying anything else on the first day of a month brings good luck for a month. Eating grains, ring-shaped foods like bagels or donuts, tangerines, greens, pork or cornbread on New Year's Day. I went with my right foot first, said "Rabbit, rabbit" and ate oatmeal. I should be golden.

I'VE LEARNED

When I was telling stories in Oklahoma, a fellow told me the lone star on the flag of Texas is a rating.

In Ohio, an audience member asked me, "What has five toes and isn't your foot?" It was his foot.

Social media has shown us why products need warning labels.

It's difficult to lose both socks of a pair, but it's easy to lose one.

Something I'm hoping to learn. The population of Waldorf, Minnesota, is 201. Who is the one?

NATURE NOTES

I'd finished my radio show about nature and at its completion, the station played The Mamas and Papas singing, "I've been for a walk on a winter's day. I'd be safe and warm if I was in L.A. California dreamin' on such a winter's day."

I went for a walk on a winter's day without the California dreaming. The feeders were semi-busy. Mild winter weather leads to lessened feeder activity. Severe weather brings birds to the feeders just as it brings people to the grocery stores.

If I taught a bird appreciation class, and I have, Joan E. Strassman's "Slow Birding: The Art and Science of Enjoying the Birds in Your Own Backyard" would be a good textbook. Joan presents new and old information in pleasing ways. A dark-eyed junco loses 7% of its body weight when at rest overnight. Robins have found that regurgitated insects and earthworms make a great baby formula. Thanks to jays burying acorns to cache, "mighty oaks from little blue jays grow." Cooper's hawks, once known as chicken hawks, have created another definition of the term "feeder bird."

MEETING ADJOURNED

Being kind is the work of a lifetime.

A privilege to report the news

As many of you know, I was an English teacher at NRHEG Secondary for more than 25 years. Any of you who are former students, you may be interested to learn "the shoe is on the other foot" now, since producing a weekly column is a little like being told "Write an essay on any topic."

Just like my students, I am now forced to consider what subject will be interesting to my readers, as well as what impressions I am willing to share. Given the (mostly) weekly nature of the assignment, I also have to remember what I've talked about before, and consider whether it's worthy of further discussion.

People frequently ask, "What's new?"

I seldom have a quick answer for that one, since, frankly, everything is new. Given the nature of my work for the newspaper, only my calendar knows for sure where I will be and who I will be talking with on any



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

given day. Sometimes, depending on what I've been able to arrange, I have whole days open. Other times I am racing from place to place, barely managing to keep the schedule circumstances have created for me.

One thing for sure, I enjoy the community connections the newspaper is able to facilitate, and I feel privileged to meet and speak with the many people in our coverage area whose desire is to make a positive impact—or even simply to be positive people.

This week has given me many ex-

amples to share. In this edition is a story about the "BackPack" program operated by the Waseca Area Neighborhood Service Center (WANSC). We all know there are people in our community who experience difficult times; It's a delight to have learned more about the WANSC's determination to help—and about the many volunteers and donors who make that help possible.

Also delightful is the news that our community supported two successful blood drives over the past few days. Out at Farmamerica on Friday, and at

Grace Lutheran Church from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. that same day, donors lined up to bare their sleeves. I found Kloe Wadd's statement profound: "To give blood is to give life." From the perspective of those holding the events, it makes sense that folks among us who are healthy and vibrant have every reason to contribute to a system which supports others whose bodies are in need of a little help.

A Red Cross worker informed me that about 25% of the eligible American population donates blood. Another 10% or so try to, but do not meet the donation criteria.

For anyone who stays away because of a fear of needles, just imagine how many needles the patients have had to endure: surely you can handle one.

For anything you do that helps others, thank you. Keep up the good work.

What are your 2024 resolutions?

Happy New Year! It is now 2024, although the only genuine change I've encountered so far is remembering to use a "four" instead of a "three" when I write the date. My New Year's Eve was spent working at the bar, instead of celebrating and watching the countdown, and if I'm honest, it wasn't that bad. In normal years, I never really made a big deal of the new year's arrival anyway. Sure, I watched the countdown, stayed up until midnight, but then I would just go to bed. This time at least I got to make some money.

I had known beforehand what to expect at work, with the Vikings game (what a sad time) and then the fact that it was New Year's Eve. Turns out, not a lot of people go to the bar for the countdown and change of the year. There were about ten people there when the clock switched; they all took their shots and kissed their loved ones and that



To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

was it - fairly relaxed in terms of the bar.

Everyone always asks what everyone's new year resolutions are. If someone asked me, I'd answer honestly with "I don't know." I've tried resolutions in the past, but like everyone else, they usually fell apart for me in about a month or two. In high school, it was always something like starting to work out, going to bed at a decent time or eating healthier foods. You know, the classics. But after a while, I would fall back into the same routine as before, too dis-

tracted by the things in my life to bother expending more energy on keeping resolutions I had perhaps already known would not be kept.

So the past couple of years, I've given up on New Year's resolutions because there are always things I want to work on. At least now and then, if there was something, sometimes, I thought I should take care of, I'd make the excuse to wait until New Years to start. I don't want to do that anymore: I should be starting the goals right then and there, rather than waiting. I guess that means my "res-

olution" is not to bother with New Year's resolutions. Out with the resolutions and in with the new goals I want, whenever I want to start them. As I've been working out more, the goals I have been working on are more personal and invisible to the outside world. Working on my fear of missing out and improving my self-confidence and self-image. You know, things like that.

Not that I have a feeling this year will be any different. Each year I sit and watch in silent awe at what happens in the world around me. Hopefully next year can be more peaceful, but that is unlikely. After all, who knows what the future brings? I sure don't.

My Determination: "Hope is a fickle, dangerous thing. It steals your focus and aims it toward the possibilities instead of keeping it where it belongs - on the probabilities." - Rebecca Yarros, Fourth Wing

She breathed life and love into the world

You know the feeling like someone's standing right behind you?

That feeling came over me Sunday evening as I worked on the newspaper. Slowly at first, then more strongly.

I spent the day working on the Jane Wagner story, reading stories, talking to people, and finally, putting ink to paper.

The feeling started as I laid out the front page. And then it got stronger and stronger. As I finished writing the last outline and the page was complete, I paused for a moment to admire my work.

And then I turned around. I had assumed one of my friends was behind me, since it's not uncommon, when I am working, for someone to pop into the office and look at the screen while I put everything in place. In



STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens

this case, while visiting friends in Florida, working remotely, I thought it was one of them.

But when I turned around no one was there.

I immediately thought of Jane.

I'd like to think maybe she took just a minute of her afterlife, in Heaven, and popped in to take a look at the newspaper.

While I was growing up, Jane's mom, Joie, was my babysitter. I have

many fond memories of Grandma Joie and also fond feelings of admiration for the entire Wagner family. The twins, Maddie and Marnie, were only a year younger than I. I was a freshman, and Carlie a senior, when NRHEG won its second straight girls' state title in basketball in 2014.

Everyone knew Jane; it seemed like she brought joy wherever she went. When she would see me in public, she would stop me, or holler

down the street for me to come talk to her.

She breathed life and love into those around her.

The memories and impact Jane and the Wagner family have created in the minds and lives of those around them are mountainous. May we all strive to be a little more like Jane and bring kindness into the world.

"If tears could build a stairway and memories a lane, I'd walk right up to Heaven and bring you home again."

Author unknown.
"Although it's difficult today to see beyond the sorrow, may looking back in memory help comfort you tomorrow."

Author unknown.



SERVING THE WHOLE OF WASECA COUNTY including the communities of Waseca, Janesville, New Richland, and Waldorf

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Grace Lutheran holds successful blood drive

Grace Lutheran Church of Waseca set and exceeded a goal of receiving 36 units of blood for its Red Cross Blood Drive held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, December 29. The drive actually brought in a total of 40 units.

High School senior Addie Wiesler oversaw the organization for the blood drive. Her work helped her qualify to receive a Red Cross scholarship. Mary Jenatscheck provided supervision for the event.

"Leading up to the blood drive we learned from the Red Cross about the critical need for blood. The blood donors provided such a needed and generous gift," said Jenatscheck. The American Red Cross continues to experience a national blood and

platelet shortage. The organization declared a national blood shortage on Sept. 11, 2023 citing a critically low blood supply level.

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