



Compostings

by Al Batt

Grandpa Al crows loudly for Joey Batt

ECHOES FROM THE LOAFERS' CLUB MEETING
Do you always stir coffee with your right hand?

Yes, I'm right-handed.

Try using a spoon next time.

DRIVING BY BRUCE'S DRIVE

I have a wonderful neighbor named Bruce. Deep thoughts occur as I drive past his drive. When the sun rises and sets, it makes my day. Bright sunlight makes me sneeze three times. I have photic sneeze reflex. It's pepper on the sun. Achoo represents the sound of a sneeze and is an acronym for Autosomal Dominant Compelling Heliophthalmic Outburst (ACHOO) Syndrome, characterized by uncontrollable sneezing in response to sudden exposure to bright light, typically intense sunlight.

I exchanged pleasantries with a fellow traveler in Bethany, Missouri. She was from Goshen, Indiana. She asked where I was from. I told her. She said the winter weather here might be too much for her. I told her our weather wasn't as bad as she'd heard, and it was worse than she'd heard. She mulled that over for a minute and left. She was a hurrying Hoosier.

When I was in school, I formed the Al Club. I was in it because I started it. Others shared the lovely name: Routh, Waldhauser, Morstad, Loe, Tappe, Hanson and Berkvam, to name a few. Al Berkvam was a teacher and a coach. I told him he was a member. I was afraid he'd get all weepy on me, but he didn't. Those who had Allen, Allan, Alan or Allyn as middle names were awarded trial memberships. El Kabong was an honorary member. In the "Quick Draw McGraw Show," Quick Draw spent cartoon time as his alter ego, the masked El Kabong, who used a guitar (a Kabonger) to bash bad guys into submission. In the Al Club, there were no dues, no secret handshakes, no mission statement and no meetings. The first rule of Al Club was: there are no rules.

I was in a large store in Missouri because it was handy to buy some drinking water to put in the cooler in my car. I stumbled around a bit before locating my prey. As I grabbed a 12-pack of water, a man thanked me. I replied, "You're welcome," out of habit. His young son told me I was a hero and then they left. I was confused. When I got to my car, I grabbed my hat from my head. It said "Kiester Fire Department" on it. The city was named for state senator and judge Jacob Kiester. The Kiester Fire Department, which is made of heroes, had given me the hat. If I could have found that man and his son, I'd have told them so.

I'VE LEARNED

I use a level only in the evening.

The lady who lived next door to me in the Twin Cities was 80% Irish. Her name was Iris.

Most conspiracy theories are my-thunderstandings.

I like a banana that's a little green and firm. "No brown bananas" could be my shopping motto, although banana bread is great. Why are most banana-flavored things yellow? We don't eat the yellow part.

BAD JOKES DEPARTMENT

What is yellow, delicious and dangerous? Shark-infested lemon meringue pie.

If you've never tried blindfolded archery, you don't know what you're missing.

If he left a voicemail, would you call Johann Sebastian Bach?

I got a job at the chess factory. I work knights.

Welcome to IKEA. Come in and make yourself a seat.

I cut a log in half with my vision. I saw it with my own eyes.

A GRANDPA CROWS

Joey Batt, daughter of Brian and Laura Batt of New Ulm, and a first team All American, was named to the all-tournament team after her Minnesota State Mavericks Women's Basketball Team won the 2024 NCAA DII National Championship with an 89-73 win over Texas Woman's University.

NATURE NOTES

Terri Guillemets wrote, "My favorite weather is bird chirping weather."

Anonymous wrote, "Spring has sprung. The grass is riz; I wonder where the birdies is." The birdies are here or on the way. I believe in the miracle of birds each time one swings into my field of view. If I'm fortunate, I might get to enjoy the terpsichorean talents of sandhill cranes. Reason number 397 why I like birds: just because.

House finches are permanent residents of Minnesota, but some undergo a short-distance migration south. It might be to avoid paying taxes.

If the inside of a house window hosts flies that resemble house flies, they are cluster flies. They don't harm people or property and don't reproduce indoors. They are parasites of earthworms.

Birds need to transfer and preserve heat to eggs and nestlings via brood patches, bare areas of skin on the belly that lose their feathers toward the end of the egg-laying period. Most birds shed automatically, but some pluck their brood patch and use the plucked feathers to make an insulating lining for their nests.

MEETING ADJOURNED

"Kindness is always fashionable, and always welcome."—Amelia Barr.

The anatomical position of their feet...

I am pleased to report I saw a Loon on Waseca's Loon Lake this past week. I know this happens only in spring and fall, during migration, so I was happy to be in the right place at the right time.

I went online to see how far our state bird travels and came across a whole bunch of "I had no idea..." information I now feel compelled to share.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website, loons are physically heavier than other birds their size because they have solid bones—unlike most flighted birds, whose bones are hollow. This extra weight is a benefit in a number of ways. For one thing, it causes the loon to sit lower in the water than other birds. This probably helps facilitate that famous element of their life cycle—having their chicks climb on their backs. It also streamlines their dives, allowing them to slip underwater without a splash. One website also mentions it allows them to dive as deeply as 250 feet (another site claims 320 feet) and stay underwater for as long as 20 minutes.

That weight is a disadvantage, though, when it comes to flight: Given the ratio between their body weight and their wing size, they need a "runway" at least 100 feet long,



In My Humble Opinion

by Deb Bently

and up to 600 feet, to take off. Because of this, any loon found on land more than a few feet away from water is likely in distress. It sometimes happens that loons in flight will see the reflective surface of a road or parking lot, mistake it for a lake, and come to a landing. Once this has happened, they will not be able to take off. An organization calling itself the "Loon Preservation Committee" out of New Hampshire urges people who come across one or more stranded loons to contact a qualified rescue person or organization.

The anatomical position of their feet is the same type of double-edged sword: Loons are very awkward on land, but impressively efficient and versatile swimmers.

Thanks to their "torpedo-shaped" bodies, once in the air, they can fly as fast as 75 miles per hour.

Scientists believe loons can live to be up to 30 years old.

Something to brag about: the DNR claims Minnesota has roughly 12,000 loons—more than any other state besides Alaska. There are five types of loons—all of which an Alaska DNR website describes—we Minnesotans see only the "common" breed, which has a black bill.

Speaking of seeing—scientists believe the red eye color is related to giving the loon improved eyesight while underwater. Only mature birds have red eyes, so it may also be useful as the birds select their mates.

On to another iconic topic: vocalizations.

Various sites mention that loon calls fall into four different categories, named "wails," "yodels," "tremolos" and a "hoot." The one most people think of first is the "wail." Ornithologists say that one is simply one loon "looking for" another—"I'm here, where are you?"

"Yodels" are made only by males and are defensive warnings, meant to

drive away an intruder. They are also sometimes simply a message: "This is me. You are in my space. Go elsewhere."

The "tremolo," which some people say sounds like a laugh, is a more energetic defensive call. Websites list a variety of uses, but people I know who are "crazy about loons" tell me it is used in recognition of threats such as an approaching boat or a circling eagle. The "hoot," websites say, is a soft, more intimate sound used to communicate with hatchlings.

Loon vocalizations are a particularly deep "rabbit hole," so if you want to know more, feel free to spend some time on the web.

Websites suggest the main reasons young chicks ride on a parent's back is to help regulate their body temperature, and to protect them from predators, including turtles and large fish, which might come up from underneath. The more recently they have hatched, apparently, the more time they are likely to spend riding. One parent serves as a floating island while the other dives to find food and feed the young.

I hope, like me, you were fascinated by some of this information. I have always been fascinated by loons. Now I have come to appreciate them even more.

I didn't get *the* job, but I did get a job

What's up gang? It has been quite a time in Amelia's life - ooh, it's a doozy. Keep reading for all the juicy gossip and details of how things go for a 20-year-old college student.

Well, first off, I applied for a promotion at work (the college newspaper, the Minnesota Daily) and through a two-month-long process, I learned a lot about the workings of the Daily. But all that came to a crashing halt last Thursday.

As usual, I am exaggerating, but the core fact is undeniable: I was turned down for the job I wanted. I've come to realize that's okay, though, because I got a job I believe will actually be better. Instead of being editor-in-chief, the leader and big decision maker of the Daily, I will be the second-in-command, the managing editor. I just found out today and I don't think I'm supposed to spread the word, so shhhh.

Anyway, three other editor-in-chief candidates and I turned in our 20-page applications, then met weekly for two months with the manager of the Daily to discuss how the Daily runs and what exactly the position requires. At the end of those two months, we presented our strate-



To Be Determined

by Amelia Roessler

gic plans and ideas to the entire MNDaily staff; the staff responded to a survey evaluating how well we each did, and those results were sent to the Minnesota Daily board.

Two weeks later, the other candidates and I spent six hours in the office, taking our turns giving presentations and being interviewed by the MNDaily Board. Definitely not nerve-wracking at all. The worst part was, we had to wait in the office for over an hour before we were brought down to hear the final decision at 11:30 p.m.

While I did not get "the" position, I am actually really excited with this new position. I get the leadership aspects I was hoping for without all the pressure of making the final decisions. I sat down with the new edi-

tor-in-chief today; immediately after he offered me the position and I accepted, he went on to say, "Great, now here's the list of things we already have to do." So I whipped out my notebook and got to note taking.

I would like to pause and say thank you to everyone who supported me through this. My parents, family, friends, and most of all, Eli, who gave me a wonderful letter of recommendation and ended up talking on the phone with my professor for 45 minutes (which is a crazy thought to me: my two worlds collided).

So I got that going for me. In other news - remember that guy I told you guys I had a crush on? Well, we are officially dating now. Also, I don't know if it is appropriate for me to be

telling the entirety of Waseca County my dating life, but it's news in my life, so you're reading about it. I mean, if you made it this far in my column you obviously don't hate hearing about my life and can handle the randomness of my column writing, so kudos to you. I won't tell you his name or anything like that, but he is super sweet and lets me pick on him, so it's a good time (sorry Grandma, he's not a cowboy like we talked about).

Other gossip includes my roommate/best friend has been having a stressful time in her life which has included demanding classes, fake friends, and stupid men, so I've been trying to help her out.

And not to mention all of my classes are starting to assign final projects now, too, so that's great.

Well folks, that's it. Thank you for reading this week's episode of random thoughts that were in Amelia's head and somehow made it into the newspaper.

My Determination: "Don't be a strong woman. Strong women weather storms. You want to be the storm." - Svetlana, Shameless

What do you ask a congressman?

I had the opportunity to attend a recent fundraiser in Waseca for Congressman Brad Finstad, our local representative in the United States House of Representatives.

The most surprising part, for me, were the people I spoke with while in attendance. One attendee, a Pioneer reader, gave me a hug and started crying. She said some kind words about my work with my two newspapers.

The moment was deeply moving for me.

Numerous other people shared kind words. I never tire of hearing compliments about the newspaper. They reinforce the value of my hard work and dedication.

I love what I do. It's important and gives my life meaning.

Politics, outside of local elections, are something my dad always cautioned the newspaper to stay away from. I generally follow his advice.

This week was a slight exception. I do feel our congressman and senator visiting Waseca are important news stories. These types of visits don't happen every day.

I'm at a point in my life where, politically speaking, I am unsure where I stand. On the one hand, there are elements of both parties' platforms I can agree with. On the other, both have taken some positions I cannot support.

I'm brought back to the history book I read in college. It claimed anyone who uses terms like "left" and "right" does not understand



STAR GAZING

by Eli Lutgens

people. I'm grateful to be my own person, not obligated to agree or disagree with a certain set of people simply because I'm "on that team."

During the fundraising event last week, I had the pleasure to talk with a great number of folks prior to the congressman's speech and my time speaking personally with him.

I spoke with two of the four candidates running for the republican nomination to replace soon-to-be retired John Petersburg.

I also spoke with John, who invited me for a tour of the Capitol. I appreciate everything John does for Waseca and told him as much.

What little I've learned about politics so far is that I don't much enjoy candidates belittling their opponents. Naturally people will disagree, but complaining and name calling, in my opinion, reflect badly on the person throwing the mud.

There were many, many other people at this fundraiser, too numerous to mention.

A few conversations, however, stand out to me.

Waseca County commissioner

Doug Christopherson was there; I asked him about the congressman's speech. His response was likely based on his experiences as an elected official. "It's difficult to approach all of these issues and ever expect one person to change them when they require much more."

One of my favorite sayings proclaims "A problem well stated is the first action required for solving it."

The congressman's speech was good. After listening to him, I can easily understand why he is our representative. He has strong values and convictions, is a farmer, and has strong faith in God. Numerous statements he made about how "politicians in Washington need to be adults" resonated. He talked about the "instant gratification" people have access to today. And much, much more.

Regarding my opportunity to speak with him personally, I wish we would have had longer together.

Prior to our interview, I had sent out a request to about 150 different local leaders and businesses requesting their sugges-

tions regarding questions for the congressman. I felt compelled, after reading through nearly 100 replies, to simply ask about the most-suggested topics: farming, health care, immigration, emergency services and taxes.

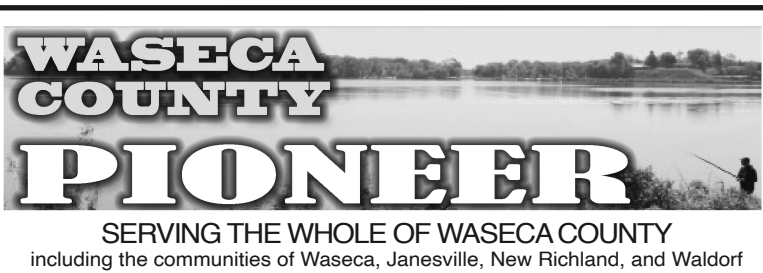
I had been sent some very specific suggestions about an amazingly wide array of issues. Some addressed internet access, home schooling regulations, and very specific elements of health care including the worker shortage and the ability of Medicare to cover certain hearing aid brands. The list goes on and on.

Whenever I speak to local representatives—and I've spoken with most of our local state senators and house members—I tell them my biggest concern is caring for our aging population. The shortage of healthcare workers will only be exacerbated in the coming years as demand grows.

The congressman agreed this is a problem, although neither he, nor really any federal bill I am aware of, offer any solutions.

Representative Peggy Bennett had a good response when I asked her about it last summer. I'm hopefully optimistic and I do believe Minnesota will fare better than other states as the need continues to grow.

"If all printers were determined not to print anything till they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed." Benjamin Franklin



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