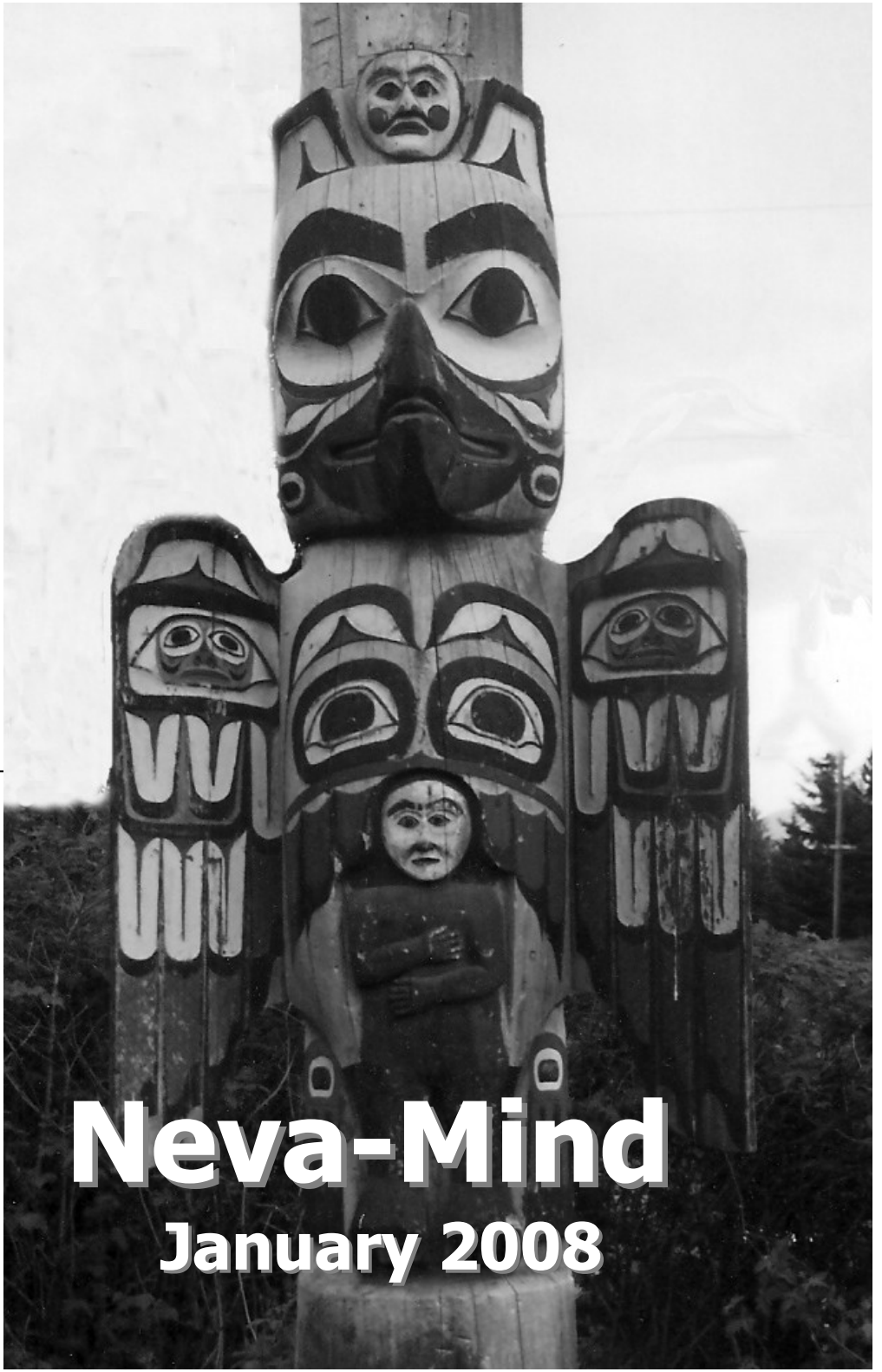


Neva-Mind

January 2008

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Neva-Mind

A publication of Northern Nevada Mensa
Volume 32, Issue 1

February question

What book have you read lately that you would recommend to others? Is there any book that particularly influenced your life?

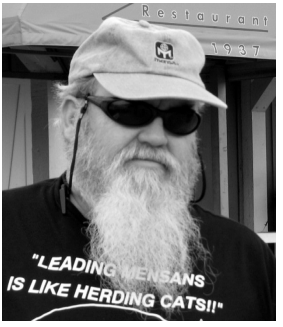
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Or call her: (775) 746-2938
Or write it down and mail it to her:
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6240 Stone Valley Drive
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Deadline: January 10



Cover photo by Loren MacArthur

See explanation on page 6.



Neva-Mind is lucky to have a writer as talented as Ken Wright in its pages. This month Ken tells a very funny tale of...well, turn to page 8 and find out.

Correction

The date for this month's general meeting was incorrectly listed in the December *Neva-Mind* as Saturday, January 13. The correct date is Saturday, January 12.

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Mensa photographers receive credit….and, we want to know what you think.

From the loc-sec

by Bob McAllister



Vertically Challenged Red Riding Hood

There was once a young person named Red Riding Hood who lived on the edge of a large forest with her mother — and though it was a single parent household, it provided a loving, supportive and nurturing environment in no way inferior to any other domestic arrangement, nor did Red Riding Hood suffer any developmental instabilities from lack of a regular father figure, nor was she in any way confused or handicapped by the male friends which her mother occasionally (and solely by her own choice, not because of any social preconceptions or lack of self esteem) would ask to stay overnight.

One day, her mother asked her to take a basket of reduced-calorie, fat-free, sodium-free, preservative-free, fiber-rich biscuits and a bottle of mineral water to her grandmother's house — not because this was woman's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community. Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and completely capable of taking care of her self as a mature adult and had hired a housekeeper (or, rather, a domestic sanitation engineer) not because she was unable to do such work if she chose, but only because it provided a means of assisting and liberating the local diligent, but under-employed immigrant community.)

So, Red Riding Hood set off with her basket of reduced-calorie, fat-free, sodium-free, preservative-free, fiber-rich biscuits and bottle of mineral water through the woods to Grandmother's house. She knew that many people believed that the forest was a foreboding place, filled with wild animals, and never set foot in it. But Red Riding Hood was confident in her budding sexuality and, furthermore, had been assured by her therapist (whom she visited only that she might be a more fulfilled person, not

(See **Red Riding Hood** on page 14)

Joseph Giampapa to give talk

by Richard Arbib

Editor's note: See page 11 for details.

I first met motivational speaker Joseph Giampapa in 1971 when I was a student at the University of Nevada, Reno. While I was taking an acting class, he directed an Oscar Wilde play, ***The Birthday of the Infanta***. I had a small part as the herald. Five years later he directed me in the play again, this time in the lead role as a hunchback dwarf, and we toured all over Northern California. Even back then, I knew that Joe was a man of many talents. He had been a stand-up comedian, an actor, and a director.

Many years later, when I met him again, I discovered he was also a fantastic motivational speaker when I heard him speak before about 100 people at a meeting for Pro-Net in Reno. He was probably the most popular speaker at any of their events. To understand what his presentations are like, imagine motivational speaker Tony Robbins, but much funnier and more entertaining. Joe inspires and entertains at the same time.

This is one Mensa presentation no one should miss. Mr. Giampapa normally charges $3,500 for a 90-minute presentation. He is waiving his fee to speak before the Mensa group for free! Whether you are a regular attendee or if you are a member who has never attended a meeting — if you are waiting for a special meeting to attend, this is it. The following information is taken directly from his web site, www.josephgiampapa.com:

A nationally known lecturer and educator, Mr. Giampapa holds a masters degree in communication and affiliations in three countries. He has been named to the Entertainment Industry Council Speakers Bureau's "Roster of Celebrities" with such board member notables who include (past and present) Frank Sinatra, Tim Conway, Lucille Ball, and Jack Anderson. He specializes in the areas of self-empowerment, effective communication, self-image and making positive impacts in peoples' lives.

Joseph Giampapa was raised in the suburbs of Chicago. By the time he was eighteen, he was working for the Red Cross entertainment service as a "stand-up comedian. Using "family humor" and coming from a family of eleven, he was never at a loss for material.

When he was in Europe, he wrote, directed and produced various road shows for our servicemen overseas. Later in the states, as a teacher with a background in communication and sociology, he always made sure his students were getting their money's worth. He created high energy projects such as burying a time capsule in front of city hall.

As an educator, he is known for his innovative programs stressing positive

(See **Giampapa** on page 10)

The editor says

by Loren MacArthur



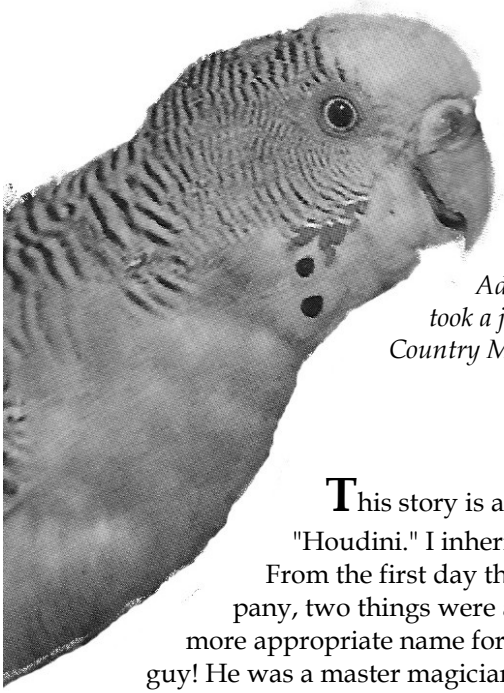
Some people plan ahead. Others, like me, wing it. The photo on the cover is of a Tlingit totem pole in a Tlingit village in Ketchikan, Alaska. My idea (and it seemed a pretty good one) was to write about my time in Alaska and what I observed about the relations there between Tlingits and whites. However, copy arrived at the last minute, stacks of it (metaphorically speaking since it came over the net) that I wanted in the *Neva-Mind*, and it was just too bloody late to change the cover. I guess you can say the cover stands alone, with no particular reason for being there. Next month you'll get the story that goes with it.

I think a lot about place. Until recently, I was an unrepentant Californian. Although I've lived in Paris twice (one year, five months) and Spain twice (five months, three months), those places were never more than an enchanting interlude during which time I never totally stopped thinking about California's dry, golden summer foothills, its oaks, its history—the essence of the place where I belonged.

It took six years living in Juneau for half of each year to knock me out of my provincialism, to let me feel in the very center of my being that I could belong somewhere besides California. My thoughts about place are particularly insistent now because in nine days I fly to New York to spent the holidays with my son, daughter-in-law and grandson. My mother was right. She didn't want me to attend school on the East Coast because she was afraid I'd marry someone there and stay. Now my son has done just that, and I see them only three times a year. Duncan grew up in Southern California, and I think the culture there lacks the ties to history that are strong in the north, both in California and Nevada.

I may not be an unrepentant Californian any more, but I am definitely a Westerner. Traveling in New England, all I could see were trees, lining the highways, blocking all sense of space. It is a small, tight place. The West is defined by space, and it's where I want to be. That may be my new provincialism, but Nevada is infused with space, and that's why I'm glad to call it home. ■

Houdini ... and the big breakout



Out of the army in 1979 and waiting for a place in the Federal Aviation Administration Academy, Ken Wright took a job managing a pet store in the Cross Country Mall in Columbus, Georgia.

by Ken Wright

This story is actually about a little critter named "Houdini." I inherited him when I took over the store. From the first day that I saw him, until we parted company, two things were apparent to me: there was never a more appropriate name for a creature, and I really liked this guy! He was a master magician and a comedian rolled into one.

The former manager hated and feared Houdini. She even said the little guy was possessed by the Devil himself. She wanted Houdini destroyed because he was "dangerous" and she worried about what he might do someday.

When I came in to the pet store to officially take charge, one of the things that I insisted upon was a joint inventory inspection, I wasn't about to sign for something that I couldn't see. That inspection is when I first got bitten by Houdini.

We had reached the large aquarium tanks on the list, and I couldn't see where one of the 55-gallon tanks was. This was what I was worried about, supplies missing or worse. This store was in a terrible financial mess due to sloppiness and graft and plain old stealing. The outgoing manager was with me all through this "where is the tank" business and didn't mention a word about knowing the whereabouts of the missing tank the entire time. She was trying to get away without having to deal with the "issue" of Houdini.

"The inspection will stop until the missing 55-gallon tank can be explained," I said. This meant her departure would be delayed, because I had her pay-

check under the papers on my clipboard and she didn't get that until I signed for the store, releasing her from responsibility. She finally gave in and told me that it was in the kennel room.

The kennel room is where all the dogs are displayed in cages for people to see behind a glass wall. How in the world did she get that tank into that little area? I thought, and then, Why in the world would you do such a thing? When I asked her why, she had just one word to say, "Houdini."

I went through the glass door, looked around, and spotted it at the end of the long, narrow room, right next to the sink and across from the racks where the supplies were kept. There, on a black iron stand, stood the missing tank, apparently undamaged but with a piece of plywood covering the top and two concrete blocks on top of that.

Upon closer inspection, I saw that inside this rather large glass tank, there was a cage, and it had every opening secured with heavy wire. Inside this cage was the resident demon—*Houdini*.

Houdini had been locked inside this double-secured solitary confinement after his last escapade in which he had released a couple of the birds from their cages; freed the mice, rats, gerbils and hamsters from their enclosures; moved the aquarium filter return tube on a 100 gallon tank to outside the tank, causing water and small fish to be pumped out onto the floor and was chasing a kitten around yanking on its tail when he was finally nabbed by the staff and put into the lock-down situation where I found him.

I thought that the confinement conditions were too extreme, even for such a "hardened criminal." I moved the blocks off the top of the tank and removed the cage from the tank. At this point I looked out through the glass wall, to see my staff closing the sliding glass doors which led to the mall and the former manager tossing a note on the counter with her forwarding address and the words "Mail it to me" printed on it, as she ran out of the doors just as they closed together. What is the problem with these people anyway?

Houdini had been locked inside this double-secured solitary confinement after his last escapade...

Then I got my first example of Houdini in action. The openings to his cage were all wired shut, except for one, where his food dish was inserted. I didn't notice it. But Houdini knew. He had undone the wire and waited patiently for his chance—and then I gave him one.

(See **Houdini** on page 17)

January birthdays

Dan Anderson	Carson City	1
Andrew Simbeck	Reno	2
Pauline Bradley	Reno	6
Albert Morch	South Lake Tahoe	8
Joseph Kisenwether	Sparks	10
David Osborne	Carson City	16
Eucke Warren	Sparks	16
Darlene Underdahl	Virginia City Highlands	17
Timothy Sullivan	Reno	18
James North	Reno	19
Joseph Stuart	Reno	25
Joel Croteau	Reno	31
Wilson Key	Reno	31

Come, rich and lovely Winter's Eve,
That seldom handles gold;
And spread your silver sunsets out,
In glittering fold on fold.

— W. H. Davies, from "Silver Hours" 1932

Giampapa (from page 6)

self-worth and various programs directed towards "kids at risk." His master's thesis was based on the aesthetic needs of children which he researched while touring the school systems from Oregon clear down to Mexico.

Joe has been labeled a leader in the field of interpersonal communication and maintained a private practice for years, helping individuals reprogram their lives for success. He has developed programs for both the corporate and private sectors and has served on and chaired many community boards. He has developed television programs for preschoolers to bolster self-worth and has had White House staff recommend one of his programs. Mr. Giampapa holds with the philosophy that everyone was meant to be someone. He is dedicated to helping each of us communicate more effectively. He introduces us to our own personal "tools for life" enabling each of us to empower ourselves to achieve greatness. ■

Mensa's January activities

January monthly meeting

Giampapa talk to be featured at meeting

Be entertained and inspired at the same time by comedian and motivational speaker Joseph Giampapa. Do not miss this. For more information, check out his web site: josephgiampapa.com

Arrive around 6 p.m. on Saturday, January 12. Bring a dish to share at the potluck dinner. The meeting will be held in the home of Loren MacArthur, 6240 Stone Valley Drive in Reno.

Directions: Go west on Interstate 80 past West McCarran. Take the Robb Drive exit from I-80 and drive north to Mae Anne Ave. Go left (west) on Mae Anne for two blocks. Take a right on Stone Valley Drive. 6240 is the fifth house on the right. Phone: (775)746-2938.

Every Monday

High desert attitude reconsideration

Join Mensans for an evening of conversation, drinks and popcorn starting around 5 p.m. at Crosswinds in the Airport Plaza hotel, 1981 Terminal Way at the corner of Plumb Lane and Terminal in Reno.

Fourth Wednesday

Lunch at Soochow Chinese Restaurant

Meet at 11:45 a.m. Wednesday, January 23, at the restaurant, 656 E. Prater Way in Sparks. The restaurant is in a strip mall at the corner of McCarran and Prater. The entrance is on Prater. For information, call Loren at 746-2938.

February general meeting

All that glitters is not gold

Diamonds and jewelry are the topic of a talk to be given by Mensa member Joyce Immers at the February meeting.

Arrive around 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 15, for the potluck that precedes the talk. Please bring a dish to share.

The meeting will be hosted by Donald and Laura MacGregor at the clubhouse in Skyline Villas Condominiums, 3457 Skyline Blvd. in Reno. Phone: 826-5904.

Regional gathering

Seattle's RG set for February 15-17

Romp, stomp, circumnavigate, and circumlocute, but never circumspect or circumvent Seattle's Regional Gathering (RG). Join us President's Day Weekend, February 15-17, 2008. For information and to print registration forms, go to http://www.mensaww.org/gather.htm. ■

Do you plan to attend your party's caucus, and is a caucus a good way to select a presidential candidate?



Cynthia Murphy Dayton
No, I do not plan to attend. Nobody I've ever voted for has ever won. Living in Nevada, our electoral votes don't count very much. I'd be surprised if our early caucus would be a very large influence. Unfortunately, I don't think there's any great way to chose a candidate. Nevada is just not that powerful in electing a president. Until we can come up with a better idea [for nominating a candidate], the caucus is okay. I'm not impressed with any method.

Viriginia Moore Reno
Yes, absolutely I'll attend. I think it's important to have a voice in the decision. It's our only opportunity. I've never attend a caucus. I'm not certain if it's a good idea. We'll have to see how it goes. We've always had primary elections, but typically by the time our primary was held, the candidates had already been chosen.



Bryan Lang Reno
I don't plan to attend. I work overseas in the Mideast. It makes it real tough scheduling anything on this side of the planet. I would prefer that choosing the candidate would be done through primaries. It's by the people, for the people.

Timothy Sullivan Reno
No I am not going to attend. I will be out of town. A caucus is probably a good way, better than anything else you've got going.



Joseph Kisenwether Sparks
No, I do not attend because I don't feel I have any political power. There's no way the election is going to come down to one vote, and if it did, the Supreme Court would decide it. I suppose if you were going to choose a candidate, the more information the better.

Northwest Passages



by John Recht
RVC Region 8

Planning may not be very sexy, but it is one of the most important functions for any board of directors. The American Mensa Committee (AMC) in this term has made great strides to improve its planning process, and I am very gratified that the AMC has shown their confidence in me by appointing me chair of the Planning Committee. Either that, or else they just don't think I am very sexy. Nevertheless, I am happy to report that at the December AMC meeting, we adopted a set of short-term and long-term goals that will give us a framework for the planning process that is currently under development. Please stay tuned for more about this effort in the coming months, and as it goes along, you will be able to follow just how well we are doing toward accomplishing the goals we have set.

Speaking of sexy, as I write this, Linda and I are actually on our honeymoon. For that reason, and also to please all the newsletter editors in the region, I will keep this column short. In closing, then, I would like to remind you one more time about Mensa of Western Washington's Regional Gathering, EveRGreen 2008: Romp & Circumstances, on Feb. 15-17. Information and registration forms are available at www.mensaww.org/gather.htm.

If you are fond of Texas Hold 'Em poker, don't miss the official Region 8 tournament on Friday night at the RG! In addition, I suggest that you register asap for Oregon Mensa's RG, which will be May 4-6; look on the home page at www.oregon.us.mensa.org for information and registration forms. And finally, it's definitely time to think about registering for the 2008 Annual Gathering In Denver from Jul. 2-6; you will find all the information you need at www.ag2008.us.mensa.org. To all of you, I send my best wishes for health and happiness in the new year, and I hope to see you at an event sometime soon! ■

because she felt in any way inadequate or troubled) that she had no repressed childhood traumas, and so she was not hindered by any such obvious, destructive Freudian imagery.

On her way to Grandmother's house Red Riding Hood was accosted by a Wolf, who asked her what was in her basket. Although it was clearly improper for the Wolf to take such liberties as asking personal questions without prior permission by Red Riding Hood, she was sufficiently self-possessed that she did not feel overly threatened by his query and, rather than pursue litigation, kindly answered, "I, in order to express affection and strengthen family and community ties, am taking some reduced-calorie, fat-free, sodium-free, preservative-free, fiber-rich biscuits (which, I might add, were manufactured without any testing or exploitation of animals and by a factory which produces no harmful byproducts or greenhouse gasses) and a bottle of mineral water to my grandmother, who is certainly fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult and hires a domestic sanitation engineer only in order to liberate the diligent but under-employed immigrant community.

The wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk these woods alone."

Red Riding Hood replied, "I am a woman, not a girl, and I find your sexist and masculine-centered remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because I am confident in my own worth as an independent and responsible human being and I recognize that your status as an outcast from society, brought about by narrow-minded traditionalism and inadequate social engineering, has caused you to develop your own offensive, yet nevertheless entirely valid world-view. Now, if you will excuse me, I must be on my way, not because I wish to belittle your conversation or express a lack of interest in your intrinsic worth as an individual, but because I need to fulfill my social obligations and return home to meet my therapist, whom I visit only to further enhance my already more-than-adequate sense of self-worth and fulfillment."

Red Riding Hood walked along the main path. However, because his status outside traditional society had freed the Wolf from slavish adherence to linear, Western-style thought which had characterized the builders of the road, he knew of a quicker, more intuitive route to Grandmother's house. He hurried along this route, burst into Grandmother's house and ate her — which, though an entirely valid course of action for someone who had adopted a carnivorous lifestyle, and certainly not to be faulted as wrong or as immoral by close-minded, non-carnivorous observers, never-



theless represented an improper and offensive imposition of that lifestyle and perspective on Grandmother. Then, hampered by neither rigid, traditionalist notions of masculinity and femininity nor by possible Oedipean interpretations of his actions, he put on Grandmother's nightclothes and crawled into her bed.

Soon, Red Riding Hood entered the cottage and said, "Grandmother, I have brought you some calorie-reduced, fat-free, sodium-free, preservative-free, fiber-rich snacks (which were manufactured without animal testing or environmentally threatening procedures) to salute you in your role of wise and nurturing matriarch."

From the bed, the Wolf said softly, "Come closer, child, that I might see you."

Red Riding Hood replied, "Oh, I forgot that you're as optically-challenged as a bat, a perfectly acceptable and tax-deductible condition. My, Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"They have seen much and forgiven much, my dear."

"My, Grandmother, what a big nose you have — only relative to traditional aesthetics, of course, to which you have no obligations to conform and a nose, which in your aesthetic framework, may certainly be attractive and fulfilling." →

"It has smelled much and forgiven much, my dear."

My, Grandmother, what big teeth you have…"

"Your observations do not change the fact that I am happy with my appearance, and furthermore, am confident with my lifestyle choice as a carnivore, which is why I am now going to eat you, though I hope you will understand my actions arise out of no malice or dislike toward you and that any injury my behaviour may cause you should in no way be taken personally, particularly as I cannot be held responsible for any action which is in any way, howsoever remotely, a result of my underprivileged childhood.

" Furthermore, I would be equally happy to eat you if you were a boy and only unfortunate coincidence, not any personal bias, has resulted in the fact that I happen to be eating only females today."

The Wolf sprang out of bed and grabbed Red Riding Hood, who screamed, not because of alarm at the Wolf's apparent tendency toward cross-dressing, a perfectly valid and acceptable clothing option, but because of his willful invasion of her personal space and apparent intent to force his world-view upon her. Her screams were heard by a passing wood-chopper person (or, as he preferred to be called, a Natural-Fuel Technician.) When he burst into the cottage, he saw the melee and tried to intervene. But, as he raised his axe, Red Riding Hood and the Wolf both stopped.

"What do you think you're doing?" the Wolf asked.

The Natural-Fuel Technician blinked and tried to answer, but could not think of a reply — only because his underprivileged upbringing had not provided him with an adequate education, a fact which in no way undermined his intrinsic value as a human being or compromised, in any way, his eligibility for any career, particularly in academia and politics.

"What," asked Red Riding Hood, "gives you the right to burst in here like a Neanderthal, trusting your weapon to do your thinking for you? Sexist! Speciesist! How dare you assume that women and wolves can't solve their own problems without a man's help?!"

When she heard Red Riding Hood's speech, Grandmother jumped out of the Wolf's mouth, grabbed the Natural-Fuel Technician's axe, and cut off his head, a perfectly justifiable action, particularly since the Technician had clearly been irretrievably indoctrinated into an intolerant Euro-centric outlook.

After this ordeal, Red Riding Hood, Grandmother and the Wolf felt a certain commonality of purpose and mutual recognition of each other's worth. The Wolf, moved by this recent example of deleterious effects of the Technician's attempt to impose his devaluing world-view on others, vowed (or, rather, promised, since he was in no way limited by any primitive and unsubstantiated belief in some Absolute or Divinity) not to eat any other individual.

And they all lived happily (not imposing on, nor to the detriment of others) ever after. ■

Houdini (from page 9)

As I turned to look out through that glass wall and stared in wonder at the actions of the employees, Houdini was making his move. He unhooked his food dish and squeezed out and around and just as I turned back at the sound of the food dish hitting the floor, he nailed me in the hand and bit and twisted until the blood was flowing and then took off around the room opening cage latches on the dog cages faster than I could. I could only stand there dripping blood in awe of this little monster.

Oh, by the way, did I forget to mention that Houdini is a cute little blue... PARAKEET !

Which brings me to the second part of my story.

I had rebuilt Houdini's cage and improved his living conditions, as well our own, because now it took four hands to unlock the four dog snaps which secured each and every opening, and his terrorist activities were kept to a minimum.

All this time we had ignored and pretty much forgotten Houdini, but he hadn't forgotten us!

as

Bird sales were booming as a result of my clipping the wings on some cockatiels and handling them constantly, to where any one who was interested could hold the birds and they behaved themselves. The birds actually sold themselves. We purchased some "bird playgrounds," which consisted of a wooden tray base and some perches and ladders. To this we added a bell and a mirror from existing stock on hand and the birds did the rest. They would climb up and down and ring the bell and fuss and chatter at the Bird in the Mirror.

Things were going so well that we ordered more birds. We now had cockatiels, parakeets, love birds, canaries and finches on hand in the store. Birds everywhere. We had all the cockatiels trimmed up and on their best behavior. We were selling !

All this time we had ignored and pretty much forgotten Houdini, but he hadn't forgotten us! As always, like a great white shark, this great blue budgie was lurking, waiting for his opportunity. And then two events transpired which set his plan into action.

We brought a Blue & Gold Macaw into the store that screamed at Houdini and we had to tether the Macaw to his cage by his leg in order to keep him in one place. Once, he flapped down to the floor and walked out the

→

door into the mall with one of our sales people in pursuit and was quickly apprehended, but not before being spotted by Mall Security and causing a nasty-gram to be sent by the Mall Operations Chief , Re: Livestock running loose and the Consequences you face. More importantly though, the Macaw upset Houdini and you could see by his actions that he was really angry.

And the second event was human error. One of the young people who made up our sales staff evidently thought that Houdini had "learned his lesson." When he put fresh food and water in Houdini's cage, he only used one dog snap to secure a door on his cage—and then closed the store up for the night.

The next day was Sunday, and it was always busy on Sundays in the mall. People were all dressed up from church and wanted to go somewhere and show off their nice clothes and get something to eat in one of the mall's restaurants. We didn't open until eleven on Sunday because most people were in church before that, and if they weren't, they didn't want anyone to know it. Most folks went to church in 1979 Columbus, Georgia. It's just what you were supposed to do.

My mistake was giving my keys to a young person who sleep-walked until after two o'clock. He was supposed to go on ahead. open the doors, turn on all the lights and start getting ready for the day's business, while I checked our box at the mall office. In retrospect I should have sent the kid to the office. When this youngster got to the store, he didn't so much as look inside, or he wouldn't have opened those doors.

An atomic bomb named Houdini had gone off during our fourteen hours away from the store.

Houdini had opened not only his own cage, but every bird cage in the store. The mice, rats, gerbils, and hamsters were freed too, and the covers were off of the reptile tanks. The fish tanks had stuff floating in them that used to be on shelves. The telephone was unplugged, and the bird seed bags were all opened and seed was everywhere. An atomic bomb named Houdini had gone off during our fourteen hours away from the store. I don't know if it was a social comment or what, but the birds had been sitting on top of the cash register and crapping on the keys all night and morning—what a mess!

If the kid had just looked in the glass doors, he would have seen something straight out of the "Birds" (Alfred Hitchcock) and certainly would not have opened the "Portal" and let them escape. But he didn't look. He unlocked the doors and pushed them into the walls. Wide Open!

As I was walking through the mall, noting to myself how busy it was already and how it could be a very good day for us, I heard the first scream and ran around the corner just in time to see Houdini leading an aerial assault on

an elderly blue-haired lady. As she screamed again her false teeth shot out of her mouth and into the wishing pool. Her screams sounded a lot different after that, kind of muffled. By now I was running for the store, and people were running the other way. "This can't be a good sign," I thought, and it wasn't. There were mice and various other assorted rodents wandering out of the store. I heard a big *sreech* and crashing sound and though, Now what? Maybe I should just go on home and start over.

Houdini was making another pass through the pet store after his successful run down the center aisle of J.C. Penney's and came back to get at the macaw who had tormented him. He made a couple of low passes around the parrot's head, got him good and riled up, and then made a high speed dive right across his beak. The macaw launched into the air after him, but he was still tethered to the cage. When he hit the end of his "leash," it jerked the cage into the air and right into a big fish tank full of Oscars. Fortunately the bird did not go into the tank or those fish would have drowned him and eaten him. But he was effectively anchored by the cage in the tank and was hanging upside down by his leash. Houdini made a couple of victory laps around the tank and out the door before I could kick the rodents back inside and shut the doors.

Some little twit was yelling "Bats!" out in the mall and scaring people half out of their already befuddled wits. Now, if he had said "Rats!" he would have been correct. There were snakes in the trash can wells, and birds in the trees in the center courtyard, and mall security running around like the keystone cops, some with their guns drawn, others with their Mace in hand in case of attack by Fiendish Finches, or Killer Canaries. At that particular moment I was contemplating "Keeticide," with extreme prejudice!

It took all day to round up the low movers and most of the birds. Some of the birds went into a Casual Corners store, sat on the edge of the light fixtures and "bombed" the clothes, which we had to buy.

We ran around netting birds and grabbing rodents and actually recovered all the reptiles right away. We only lost one rodent, a hamster, and it wasn't really lost. I had kicked it back inside, and it had landed right next to a reticulated python who was hiding under a shelf. The hamster became a snack, but at least it kept the snake from wanting to move and hunt. We lost one kitten, which one of the little kids said he saw a woman pick up and put it in her pocket and leave the building. We lost several birds, finches and canaries mostly, a few had crashed into the glass and broke their little necks, some got out through a door being held open by a guy wanting them to go free. There are probably some living inside that mall today, up high around the skylights, and in the tops of the live trees growing in the courtyard.

And after all that when I went back to the store to call in the results to our district manager, I looked up from where I was holding my head after the call was done, and Houdini was sitting in his cage, whistling and admiring himself in his mirror. What a guy! ■