

Will Work For Free...Get Your Free Services Here...



Written by Gracie Dane

Tuesday, 17 July 2007

What is it about the service professions that their customers think that they don't deserve to be paid for the services they have performed? So many individuals and businesses hire service entrepreneurs because they are more economical than a large corporation, or professional partnership providing the same. Then, when the invoice comes, it gets shoved to the bottom of the stack where it may, but not necessarily, get paid.

It's so disappointing to see this. Often times someone starting a business will do work at a lower price to market themselves and their work and show others what they can do. It's disturbing to see how often customers take advantage of this situation. It's as if they know the small business will not have the resources similar to a large company to force payment, so some will blow off the invoice entirely, leaving that entrepreneur to either call constantly for their money, or forfeit the invoice and claim it as a business loss.

What's even more disappointing is when the customer that hired that entrepreneur spares no expense on everything else they do for their business, but then scrimp and haggle over a fantastic service they received at a lower price. You'd think they would be grateful, but instead, they chose to swim with the bottom feeders, forgetting that they could have built a lasting relationship that would have benefited them in years to come.

Technical professions tend to get this a lot, especially web designers. It's as if the customer believes that they are totally fine with working 10-15 hours a day at their regular job, then coming home and working another 3 or 4 on website design for free so they can build their business off of numerous freeloading customers, instead of paying ones. I'm sure they are also all too eager to spend their entire weekend working for clients at no charge so they can be sure to have no free time to do chores, or here's a thought -relax.

Attorneys bear the brunt of this attitude as well. As a paralegal, I can't count the number of times I've had people I barely know, or even complete strangers ask me for legal advice, which I clearly tell them I cannot give them. I tell them they need to contact an attorney, and so often I hear, "I can't afford an attorney. Do you know one who will do it for free?" Yeah, I know lots of those. They never want to get paid, so they can default on their student loans which paid for those 7 years of college to learn how to interpret the law and how to represent their clients effectively. They also don't need to eat, and they are totally okay with losing their home, car, and family, just so they can represent everyone for free. While there are attorneys who do pro bono work, I have a problem with someone asking me about free services when I'm looking at that person sporting the latest hair style, complete with \$150 highlights, \$65 nails, \$100 a month spray-on tan, dressed to the nines Prada shoes and a Coach purse and driving a BMW convertible. Okay, maybe her shoes were Prada knock-offs -I'll give you that one.

Realtors are another group of service professionals who get this a lot. They often are asked to discount their commission, or even waive it completely, no matter how much work went into serving their client. I'm sure they are delighted when they can drive around cranky clients 40-50 hours a week, including weekends looking at houses instead of spending that time with family and friends, only to hear, "Can you come down on your commission a little bit. It seems like so much money all at once." Realtors get really excited when a client asks this. After all, it's the least they can do for the clients after marketing their house for them, advertising it in newspapers, putting signs up, and all those other miscellaneous expenses involved such as promotional materials and key guards at \$100 apiece. And who cares if that Realtor spent just about every day for two months driving that client around looking for their new house -gas is free, right? And never mind that the Realtor has to pay a thousand dollar subscription each year to be able to access all the homes on the market for their client to look at. They should be glad to do that -after all, you can't put a price on quality time with clients, right?

All joking aside, if you know of anyone who hesitates, or even avoids paying a small business owner for work completed, please remind them of the importance of supporting such businesses for the growth of the local economy. These are the same businesses who, as they grow, give back in numerous ways to their community, including contributions to non-profit organizations.

If you're an entrepreneur and have experienced this, or even just know one who has, we'd like to hear from you. Send your biggest client horror story to editor@sensiblelife.com. We will keep your identity concealed, as well as your clients'.

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Rexinto's Beachcomber Days



Written by Sandy Cable with Rexinto



Hello everyone! I've been traveling this past month up and down the coast line, meeting new people, swimming in the ocean, and making sandcastles on the beach. It's the perfect weather to get out and enjoy the fresh air. I took a few books to read and went swimming almost every day. I also took the time to meet some really interesting people, such as the lifeguards on duty, who are there to remind everyone to be safe. They are trained to help people in danger, and many of them have some great advice for summer beach safety. They helped me to look for safety signs, and gave me some advice, which I promised to pass on to you. Some basics are to...

- Always make sure to put on sunscreen to protect your skin from harmful heat rays and sunburn that can make your skin hurt, and can cause problems later on. Plus, sunscreen smells great!
- Taking sunglasses with you is a great way to protect your eyes from the same bad rays, and can help you see what's around you better.
- Keep cool by finding shady spots, or bringing an umbrella. Also keep plenty of water on hand to keep yourself cool and feeling great. When we are out in the heat, our body needs plenty of fresh water to stay healthy.
- Because temperatures can get really hot, you should also bring flip-flops or other beach shoes to protect your feet from the hot sand. This can also come in handy when trying to make designs on your sand castle!
- Always obey the lifeguards, as they are very knowledgeable about the ocean and when it's a good time to play. You should look for warning signs around as well, to make sure you know all the rules.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after eating before trying to swim in the water. Swimming right after eating can cause you too feel sick, and your body to hurt while you are in the water, which can make it hard to get back to shore. But waiting can be just as fun as swimming, because you can take the time to hunt for seashells and other beach treasures, play in the sand, or read a book and rest for a bit.
- Always stay away from any sea animals you see on the beach. Some of them can sting or pinch. So it's best if you see one, to get a parent to come check it out with you. They can tell you just how close a look you can get.
- If you go out for some water fun, like riding on a boat, and wave runners, always wear your life jacket. This way, if you fall, you'll stay floating above water, and will act as a beacon for the water craft to come back and pick you up.

Remember, if you watch and obey the safety guidelines, the beach can be a very fun place to play and have fun with your friends and family. On the beach you can run around, get fresh air, find some beach treasures to take home, possibly see an animal or two, get some pretty pictures, and build whatever you'd like out of the sand.

I personally had a blast just being outside and meeting new people. I even took my lunch down to the beach one day and saw a couple of dolphins swimming just above the water. I waved, but they were too busy swimming. Well, as always, have fun and be safe! My next article will be on the joy of camping. If you have any good outdoor recipes, please e-mail me. I'll be looking for some tasty ones to post on the next issue. 😊

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KENTUCKY SUMMER



Written by Kara Hancock

Friday, 03 August 2007

Sensible Life would like to welcome back Kara Hancock, our teen photographer from Kentucky. Kara has been busy the last few months pursuing other opportunities, and this issue she has provided us with some beautiful photos of the moon and sun that she has taken over the summer. Normally, we have this section reserved for poetry, but photos can be just as poetic as words. I hope you'll enjoy these as much as we have.





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HARVEST TIME



Written by Lisa Greer

Sunday, 05 August 2007

Summer is winding down, and gardeners are beginning to harvest the final fruits and vegetables from their spring crop. Canning and freezing will help some preserve those fresh flavors to get them through the winter months, but for those who aren't into food preservation, you may need something to do with your harvest. The recipes below are made using vegetables fresh from the garden. Try making some Pico de Gallo using a recipe submitted by Jose Santiago-Gachuzo, Slice (or chop) 3 or 4 tomatoes, 1 onion, and 2 or 3 jalapeno peppers, with a bit of cilantro. Mix in a bowl with some salt and lime juice (one Limon) and serve with chips.

For a full meal, try Meat Stuffed Peppers, contributed by Virginia Miller.

- 5 or 6 green peppers
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 lb ground beef
- 4 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 ½ cups fresh corn (3-4 ears)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 ½ cups cooked rice (not quick cooking rice)

Remove the tops and seeds from peppers. Parboil 2 ½ minutes and drain. Brown onion and meat together. Add tomatoes, corn, rice and seasonings. Stuff peppers and top with buttered bread crumbs. Stand upright in a greased pan or baking dish. Bake in 350 degrees oven for 1 hour. If you end up with more filling than peppers, add the filling around the outside of the peppers and on the top.

Preparing food isn't the only thing you can do with what you harvest out of your garden. Some gardeners enjoy growing gourds, which serve many purposes. Gourds can be used for decoration, or can be fashioned into useful items such as birdhouses, ladles, bowls, and even rattles. Once a gourd has dried out, the seeds inside also dry and become the rattlers. For information on growing gourds, and what to do once you've harvested them, click on the links below.

<http://www.amishgourds.com/>

<http://www.gardenersnet.com/vegetable/gourds.htm>

<http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/season/feature/famf59gardening/famf59gardening7.html>

<http://www.hometown.aol.com/miranjo/index.htm>

Sensible Life hopes you had a great summer, but don't forget -your planting doesn't stop here. If you want beautiful flowers as soon as spring 2008 arrives, don't forget to plant your bulbs in the fall. For a full range of what to plant, when to plant it and how, visit <http://www.gardenersnet.com/>.

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MATERIAL GAINS



Written by Marlene Alexander

Saturday, 28 July 2007

DOLLAR STORE STYLE

When I went to high school, there was a class called home economics that covered both sewing and cooking. I always passed but was not amongst the best and the brightest. It's my theory that my teachers gave me a passing grade out of pity for my lack of natural talent or simply because they wanted to see the back of me. No matter. I learned how to thread a sewing machine and fill a bobbin. When I was newly married, my mother, who thought every girl should aspire to domestic greatness, bought me a sewing machine. I learned how to sew a simple pair of curtains but mostly, the machine sat idle except for mending the occasional seam on a pair of hubby's work pants.

Over the years, when I did get the itch to stitch, it had to be something simple. Lately, decorating magazines have shown examples of cushion covers made from cloth napkins. No measuring, no cutting – just face the right sides in, sew along three sides, pop the cushion in and stitch up the remaining opening. Even someone with stunted sewing skills could do that, so I took this idea to the dollar store and discovered that you could get a package of two 17" square napkins for a dollar.



Then, reasoning that I could probably use the same idea with other materials from the dollar store, I created an oblong cushion cover by joining two tapestry placemats (a dollar each). This time, the stitching was done with the patterns showing out to form a ¼" border. You can do this with hemmed napkins as well. The beauty of being able to recover cushions so easily and cheaply is that you can change them with the seasons or just on a whim.



When I saw these striped tea towels, I wondered if they couldn't be fashioned into a new window treatment for the kitchen. After all, what's more at home in the kitchen than a tea towel?

Three tea towels were used for this 43"-wide window. I chose the striped pattern because it's perfect for a casual kitchen. Also, I can't be bothered with pins. Create a rod pocket by laying out the tea towel length-wise, turning over the top edge (side of tea towel) about 3" and sewing along the original hem. About 1 ½" from the top, complete another line of stitching to create the rod pocket and top ruffle.

My three-dollar valance may not be up to home economics standards, but it does the job just as well.

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COMPLETE SUMMER MEAL



Written by Connie Hickey

Wednesday, 25 July 2007

My sons, Daniel and Derek are excellent with the grill. All those years working at Ryan's Steak House to put themselves through college really paid off. My brother-in-law Mike is also an excellent cook. I cannot take any credit for cooking on the grill myself. I always get busy trying to get everything else done on time also and forget that the meat is out there burning. But, I have figured out their secret. When they grill that is **all** they have to do. Someone else, usually me, is making the salad and other accompaniments to their wonderful steak, ribs, or chicken. I never seem to have that luxury. These guys do everything from deep-frying turkey to fall-off-the-bone baby back ribs.

This issue I am going to pass on a delicious recipe for ribs, plus some of my favorite dishes to go with them. Of course, no meal is finished without a yummy dessert or two.

Mike's Baby Back Ribs

Baby Back Ribs or Spare Ribs, quantity desired

Durkee Grill Creations, Smoky Mesquite flavor

Dale's Steak Seasoning

Rub ribs liberally with above seasonings. Place in roasting pan and seal tightly with foil. Cook at 200 degrees for 6 hours. Remove ribs and refrigerate until ready to use. Place ribs on heated grill and baste with your favorite barbecue sauce. Leave on grill approximately 10 minutes on each side until heated throughout.

These seasonings are delicious, but it is really the cooking method that makes them so good, so don't be afraid to try your own flavor combinations.

This recipe can be found in "A Taste of the Past" cookbook by Ancestral Trail Historical Society. For information on ordering contact Sensible Life.

Ranch Style Baked Bean Casserole

2 Tbsp butter

1 lb ground beef chuck

1 envelope Lipton Onion soup mix

1 cup ketchup

2 Tbsp prepared mustard

2 tsp cider vinegar

2 (1 lb.) cans pork n' beans in tomato sauce

1 (1lb.) can kidney beans, drained

In skillet, heat butter and brown ground chuck. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour into a bean pot or 2 quart casserole. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 minutes. 12 servings.

I got this recipe from a military friend at one of the cookouts we attended at Fort Knox, KY.

Daniel's Pasta Salad

1 pkg. rainbow rotini

8 oz pkg. pizza blend shredded cheese (mozzarella and mild cheddar)

1 can real bacon bits

1 or 2 tomatoes

Zesty Italian dressing

Cook package of rotini until tender, but not to soft. Do not let noodles swell. Drain and let cool. Pour a little of the Italian dressing over it and stir gently to keep it from sticking together. Cut the tomatoes in small pieces. Add to the rotini. Pour about half the package of cheese over it. If you like more, use the rest. But, use at least half the bag. Add at least half the container of bacon bits (real ones only). If you like more, add more. Then pour some more Italian dressing over it and stir taking care not to chop up the rotini. Add a little at a time until it is well-coated, but not floating in the dressing. Chill or eat right away. Usually best the next day. You may need to add a little more dressing the next day as it may absorb the dressing and be a little dry.

I could never make Pasta Salad, and one day Daniel whipped up a bowl. I was really impressed. He learned to make it working at Ryan's Steak House.

Marinated Vegetable Salad

1 can early June peas

1 can shoe peg corn (white)

1 can French style green beans

1 jar pimientos, chopped

1 cup chopped onions

½ cup chopped celery

1 cup sugar

½ cup salad oil

¾ cup white vinegar

1 Tbsp. water

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. black pepper or less

Drain and combine all vegetables that come in a can. Add the chopped vegetables. Bring to a boil and cool the following: 1 cup sugar, ½ cup salad oil, ¾ cup white vinegar, 1 Tbsp. water, 1 tsp. salt, 1 tsp black pepper.

After cooking, pour over vegetables. Mix thoroughly and refrigerate 12 hours or overnight. Drain before serving.

This recipe was also given to me by a military friend. She is the same one who made the Ranch Style Baked Beans. That was over 20 years ago. I still am asked for the recipe whenever I make it.

Grilled Asparagus

Fresh asparagus (only)

Virgin olive oil

Salt

Prepare asparagus by washing and breaking off bottom end. Pour just a little olive oil on a plate. Roll the asparagus in the oil and salt lightly. Remove from plate to grill and cook until just fork tender. Don't overcook. Delicious!

I found these directions on a package of fresh asparagus I bought. They are very good this way. We put the asparagus on the less hot side of the grill.

Broccoli Corn Bread

1 (8 oz) pkg. frozen chopped broccoli, thawed

4 eggs, beaten

1 (12 oz.) cottage cheese

1 cup onion, chopped

2 sticks margarine, melted

2 boxes corn muffin mix

Stir all ingredients together. Use a 9x13 greased and floured pan and bake for 1 hour at 350 degrees.

This recipe was given to me by my Aunt Alma, who got it from her daughter-in-law.

Emma Lee's Fruit Salad

1 cup seedless purple grape halves

1 orange

1 banana

1 apple

English walnuts

½ cup Miracle Whip or Salad Dressing

1 Tbsp. milk

1 tsp sugar

coconut (optional)

Cut fruit into bite-size pieces. Chill grapes and orange in a bowl. Mix together Miracle Whip, milk, and sugar. Add banana, apple, walnuts, coconut, and dressing before serving.

This recipe is from Emily Gnadinger's mother, Emma Lee Hudson Gnadinger. It was a staple at their Thanksgiving dinner. It must be served in a glass bowl. Prettier, you know.

Emily was a dear friend and contributing author of Sensible Life. She left us July 16, 2006. We miss her very much.

Mock Apple Crisp

(A great use for all that zucchini)

Crunch mix for topping

2 ½ cups flour

¼ tsp salt

¾ cup oatmeal

1 ½ cup sugar

2 sticks margarine (1 cup)

Combine and mix like pie crust. For crust measure 2 ½ cups of mixture and press into 9x13 pan. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Reserve rest of mix.

Filling

8 cups zucchini, peeled and sliced like apples

2/3 cup lemon juice

1 cup sugar

¼ tsp nutmeg

1 tsp. cinnamon

Combine and cook in saucepan until tender (about 10 minutes). Remove from heat. When cool, add ½ cup crunch mix. Spread over baked crust.

Add 1 teaspoon cinnamon and ½ teaspoon cloves to remaining crunch mix. Combine and sprinkle over filling. Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes. Cool and serve. Good with vanilla ice cream.

Even if your family hates (or thinks they hate) zucchini, this recipe will fool them into thinking it is apples.

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Save Money and Time Shopping for Groceries



Written by Suzanne Jackson

Monday, 16 July 2007

There are dozens of ways to save money on groceries. But is the time spent clipping coupons and running all over town to get the best price really worth it? With some moderation and a bit of a system you can save both time and money.

Make a Master Grocery List

- Make a list of all the groceries you use. Walk through your house with pen and paper, room to room, cupboard by cupboard.
- Make columns on your list for each place you store groceries: laundry room, pantry, under the sink, etc.
- Under each column heading, list the groceries you store in that location. Under "Laundry Room" list: detergent, bleach, fabric softener. Under bathroom: shampoo, soap, shaving crème.
- Make copies of your list and tack one to the fridge or a message board. As you notice you're running low on something, circle it on your list.
- When it's time to go grocery shopping, use your list to take a quick inventory of your cupboards. Circle the items you need to buy, and head for the store.

Clip Coupons Discriminately

- If you don't already subscribe to a local newspaper, sign up for at least the Sunday edition. The money you save using the coupons and advertisements will pay for the subscription.
- Only clip coupons for items you use on a regular basis. Coupons need to be organized – filing new ones, discarding those that have expired. Don't add to this task by clipping coupons for something you'll probably never buy.
- Keep your coupons in an expandable folder small enough to fit in your purse. Label the sections in the folder similar to the sections on your list: Laundry Room, Pantry, Bathroom.
- Before leaving for the store, check to see if you have coupons for any of the items circled on your list. Make a note of the coupon details on your list. For example: If you have a coupon for \$1.00 off four 10 oz cans of tomato soup, write "\$1/4/10 oz" next to "tomato soup". This will ensure you buy the right quantity and size to qualify for the savings.
- Place the coupons you plan to use in your wallet. If you pay by cash, put them next to your bills. By check, place them in your checkbook. Or if you use a debit card, put them in the credit card section of your wallet. This will help you remember to actually use the coupons when you get to the check stand.

Comparison Shop without Leaving Home

- Besides the advertisements in your Sunday paper, you probably receive flyers in your daily mail. These are valuable sources for pricing information.
- Make another copy of your master list. This one will be used just for price comparisons. Each time you see an item on your list advertised, calculate the unit price and write it in the space you left to the right of the item. Do this in pencil. When you find a better price than the one you have listed, erase it and list the new price.
- Use as many ads as you can for this process - even if you have no intention of shopping at that store. You're just trying to identify the best price.
- Don't run all over town trying to get the best price on everything. Pick two or three stores that are convenient for you. When you see an item at a great price at one of those stores, you can easily stop and take advantage without going out of your way.
- When you find an exceptional deal buy extra but don't overstock. Be sure you'll be able to use the items before they expire and don't buy large sizes if they won't fit in your spaces.

More ways to save money

Before you go to the store, make up a menu. See how many meals you can make out of the ingredients you have on hand. With a little creativity you may be able to put together a week's worth of meals by purchasing only a few items. This will leave you more money to spend on sale items.

More ways to save time

Do your major shopping every other week instead of weekly. It takes just as long to shop for two weeks of groceries as it does one. Consider buying organic dairy products which have a much longer shelf life. And investing in a bread machine can keep you in fresh bread at all times.

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Freddie J's Conversation With God



Written by Frank Hayden

Wednesday, 25 July 2007

This issue of Sensible Life introduces an excerpt from the book, "A Friend in High Places", by writer, Frank Hayden. We chose to feature this in our People section due to the true story this chapter, Road Angels, has been based upon. Read on and enjoy the endearing Freddie J's heartfelt dialogue with God. For those interested in finding out the publication date of Frank Hayden's book, please send an inquiry to editor@sensiblelife.com.

During Freddie J's Conversation with God.

"Just what, exactly, was this business of scaring the bejeebers out of me on Hwy 150 in Illinois back in '57?"

"Well, if you must know, Bernard and William needed a good wake-up call."

"And I was your fall guy to give them that wake-up call?"

"Yep, you got it. You did a good job, by the way."

"Gee, thanks. You know, I came close to having a small accident myself that night."

"Yes, I know. But you didn't, did you?"

"So?"

"Oh, yeah. Benny and Willie were pretty foot loose and fancy free, even though they were both married and family men. When they were together they were like kids, always playing games."

"Some games they played. We could have all been killed that night. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, I did. But I had everything under control."

"I gotta tell you, you cut everything mighty close, that's for sure. Another coat of paint on any of our transports and we would have been smeared all over that highway."

"I know it was close, but I had it all figured out and I am pretty good at planning things. Now aren't you glad you didn't have your car painted and five coats of lacquer applied before you left?"

"When you put it that way, yes, I am. Did Benny and Willie learn anything from my almost getting scared to death that night?"

"Yes, sir, they sure did. As a matter of fact, Willie learned real quick. Six months later, Willie was hauling a load of empty pallets out across the plains when he topped the rise and caught a glimpse of an accident on the next rise about two or two and a half miles off. Now, Willie is a pretty smart boy, and he knew no one but he had seen the wreck. He was just barely able to see it from his higher point of view. There was an SUV and a pick-up truck just ahead of him and nothing else ahead of them. These two were hauling ass, but when Willie hammered down on the giant diesel, it screamed to life and quickly overtook the two. Willie flipped on anything that flashed, raised and lowered the head lights, and sat on the air horn, letting up only long enough for the air to recharge and then was right back on it with a vengeance. As he came up on them like a mad man, he straddled the middle line and headed for their rear bumpers. With the noise and all the flashing lights, the SUV and the pick-up drivers figured they would be better off letting this loonytoons through and on his way. Just as Willie broke through into the lead, he started swerving back and forth between the two west-bound lanes and braking his big rig slowly. By the time he got her down to 35 MPH, he topped the second rise and had to set down on her pretty hard to get stopped. All the traffic behind him backed up and stopped dead still. Anyone coming over the first rise saw the parking lot in front of them and, of course, they stopped also. There was a lynch mob running over the rise ready to string him up, but once they took in the scene before them they were stunned into silence."

"Wow! He must have been quite a hero then!"

"Oh, no. There was so much confusion and excitement, no one got his name. They weren't even sure what trucking firm he was driving for. Willie was an owner-operator, so they couldn't track him down. He just left it that way."

"Good for him. He's a good man and doesn't need any praise for a good deed. Is Willie still driving?"

"No. He retired a couple of years ago and I lost a good road angel. He paid it forward many times over though."

What about Benny? Is he retired and living the good life, too?"

God was quiet for a long moment and then said: "I'm afraid not. But he went out in a blaze of glory, helping me keep the world spinning properly."

"Oh! I'm sorry. Was it bad?"

"Yes and no. His time was up, but he made the supreme sacrifice during his final moments."

"What happened? Was it awful?"

"No, not awful; it was beautiful and very memorable. I think Benny always wanted to go out in a blaze of glory."

"Yup!" long pause.

"And?"

"Oh, yeah. Well, he was hauling heavy out of St. Louis, headed for L. A. Everything was right with the world. Benny's time had come, but he had a few decisions to make before he left."

"Benny had decisions to make? I thought you said his time had come."

"I did and it had, but everybody has decisions to make before they leave."

"Man, that's kind of cold. You have to pass a test before you can cash in your chips?"

"It's not a written test, Freddy J.; but there are always decisions to make, all the way up to the time you expire."

"So I guess some go kicking and screaming and some go out like lambs?"

"Oh, you would be surprised at how those lambs fight for every last second before they die."

"So a fellow has a shot at getting into heaven, even though he hasn't lived an exemplary life?"

"Something like that. I've had a few surprises on how they use their free will for their last moments here on earth."

"What did Benny do?"

"He did real good, I must say...real good indeed. Like I said, he was hauling heavy out of St. Louis and was just about home when he topped a hill and had three or four miles of killer downhill grade. Everything went well for the first five seconds or so, and then it hit the fan. Benny tried to slow his rig, but found he had nothing in the way of brakes, and things started happening faster than heart beats. His heavy load was pushing him down hill and there wasn't a sand trap in sight. What was in sight was a van with a family of five being overtaken like a snail being chased by a rabbit. Benny didn't have too much time to think, so he was making decisions in split seconds as facts raced through his mind. Benny knew if he hit the van, it would be a pancake and he probably wouldn't be hurt. That's when saw three little heads in the back window, wide-eyed, watching his decent on their tiny van. Though Benny didn't know it, mom and dad were watching horrified in the side view mirrors. Traffic was streaming up the other lane and a few of them saw what was going to happen. Mom wanted to close her eyes and scream her lungs out, but she couldn't make it worse for her three children. It was deathly silent as five human beings watched their approaching death on wheels.

"In the last second Benny had, he decided one death is better than five for sure, and dozens more possibly, so he yanked the wheel hard right and took his runaway freight train off the shoulder into the woods. Mother watched him all the way as he cut down trees and brush too small to slow him down and he steered right of any tree that might be big enough to possibly throw him back onto the roadway. The second big tree that he steered to the right of threw Benny directly into the rock face that was left from cutting the road. That's when his rig came to a screaming, screeching, fiery halt.

"Mom watched his face the whole time. She could see he was smiling as the rock face took the full force of Benny and his freight train and never even shuddered. The fire-ball was so intense that Mom felt the heat even that far away in the air-conditioned van. Her eyes widened in great surprise, but the instant had passed and she didn't know what to think, much less what to say. She went silent and never mentioned a thing to anyone."

"Wow. What would have been the death toll if Benny had hit the van?"

"There were two 8 passenger vans, a 24 passenger school bus, and three cars with two passengers each that would have been involved."

"Would there have been any survivors?"

"No. None."

"Benny?"

"He would have rolled and not come out alive either."

"One for 46. Benny did do well, didn't he?"

"That he did, Freddy J."

In the instant that Benny hit the rock face, Martha was at home when she heard a deep authoritative voice say:

"He needs you."

Martha in a panic asked, "Benny?"

"Yes."

"Benny needs me. I must go to him. I'm coming, Benny."

Their daughter Jill was witness to this and was all but beside herself. Martha slumped limply back down into her chair,

Jill was frightened and said: "Moth..."

In that instant, Martha was walking into the fiery inferno that was Benny's rig. She went in with her hand extended and came out holding Benny's hand, leading him toward the light.

"I'll see you in a little bit, Sweetheart. Know I love you."

"I love you, Martha. I love you."

"...er, are you OK? Mother! Say something!"

As if coming out of a deep sleep, Martha answered: "I'm fine, dear, just fine."

"What happened, Momma?"

"I'm not real sure honey, but it's all fine now. Benny is ok now."

The couple in the van was Dick and Maggie Worth. Their three children were Fran, 6, Joe, 8, and Phil, 10. No one had said anything during all the hustle and confusion of the moment, but after everything was over, Maggie talked to her children saying:

"I guess you all know we witnessed the finest act of valor possible. That wonderful truck driver gave his life willingly to save ours. That man will always be in my heart and in my prayers from now on, as he should be in yours. We are alive simply because of the sacrifice he made. Don't ever forget what he did for us today."

"Yes, Ma'am." They answered in unison.

Benny Coats did stay in their hearts, minds, and prayers of thanks from that day on.

Mrs. Worth was about to get settled down and back to normal when she saw an article about Benny Coats' funeral. With it was a picture of Martha Coats, with the flag tucked in her left arm and her right hand extended to shake hands with the honor guard at his burial. The picture triggered again what she thought she saw that day on the mountain, and she knew she just had to go talk with Martha Coats. The next day, Maggie was driving up the coast to Northern California. After three hours of driving, Maggie was on Martha's front porch. She rang the bell and waited.

She was about to leave when the door opened and Martha asked: "Yes?"

"Martha Coats?"

"Yes. May I help you?"

"Well, I'm not real sure, but I think I have some information for you-if you would want it."

"Information? What kind of information?"

"My name is Maggie Worth."

"I know that name. You were in the van in front of my Benny."

"Yes, Ma'am, I was... along with my husband, Dick, and our three children Fran, Joe, and Phil."

Martha stood silent for a long moment then, started to weave a little from side to side.

"Are you ok, Ma'am? I'll leave if you want. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea my coming here."

Martha caught the door facing and steadied herself. Gathering her wits about her, she said:

"No. No, please. Forgive me. Come in, come in. I feel you have news about Benny."

"Yes, Ma'am, I do. But I can come back later, if you're not feeling well."

"NO! No please don't leave! I need to know so many things. Please, tell me everything you know. Please!"

They walked into the house and got comfortable in the living room. Martha was very nervous, as was Maggie. Martha had no idea what this lady was going to tell her, but she had to hear every word... good or bad. Maggie, at the time, was just trying to think of what she wanted to say to Martha. They sat opposite each other and the silence was very awkward between them.

"I'm sorry. I don't know exactly what I want to tell you, or how to tell you, for that matter."

"Please, tell me anything you know about my Benny."

The awkward silence fell over them again, as Maggie was trying to summon the strength to start. She looked into Martha's pleading eyes and finally began.

"Are you sure you want to hear everything I know about the accident?"

"Yes. Of course. Every word you have about him."

"I may not tell it well; but after we topped the hill and started the long downhill run, an 18-wheeler came over the hill. He was several hundred feet behind us and everything seemed normal. Dick noticed first that the truck was gaining on us. So I started watching in my side view mirror. I caught my breath when I realized he was closing on us very fast. That's when all three children were glued to the back window watching the approach of death. I didn't know what had happened. I thought the driver had passed out or something."

Martha audibly caught her breath.

"But he hadn't, ma'am. Your Benny had all his faculties. He knew what was happening. At the very last second, he yanked the wheel into a hard right and took his big rig off the shoulder into the woods. I watched his face as he fought desperately trying to control his rig. I begged God to please ride with this brave man. Benny was cutting down small trees and brush just like a hot knife through butter. He was coming up on a large tree, so he steered to the right of it and he bounced off the tree, going deeper into the woods. Someplace through there, your husband looked straight at me smiled and nodded to me. His attention was yanked back to the job at hand, but he never lost that beautiful smile on his face. The second big tree Benny steered to the right of threw him straight into the rock face."

Maggie stopped talking and everything hung in midair. A lot more needed to be said, and a lot more needed to be heard. Martha had to hear every last detail and Maggie needed to tell Martha what she thought she had seen that day.

The two distraught women were searching for questions to ask and the words to tell what had happened. The pause grew longer and longer, 'til finally their eyes met and each saw the other's sorrow. No matter the outcome, Maggie had to tell Martha what she saw that fateful day.

In a very tiny soft, low voice, Maggie said: "I saw you there, Martha." She rushed on so as not to lose her nerve and the words flowed like water.

Martha held her breath waiting for each of the words to follow.

"Just as your magnificent husband hit the rock face, you were there. You had on a beautiful long, flowing white dress. You walked right into all that twisted metal and searing flames with your right hand stretched forward- just like the picture of you holding the flag with your hand extended to the honor guard."

Maggie stumbled slightly, but recovered and went on: "You disappeared into that inferno and then came out holding Benny's hand. You walked with him toward the light, had a short conversation and you watched him walk into the light. Then you disappeared just as quickly as you had come."

Martha, with her eyes filling, asked: "What was my Benny wearing?"

"Ahh. Oh. I'm not real sure. Oh yes! I do know! He had on a white dinner jacket and a brand new pair of jeans."

Martha got up and walked into the dining room and brought a picture back with her.

"Is this what you saw?"

She turned the picture around and there they were, she in a white flowing gown and he was wearing a white dinner jacket and a new pair of jeans. Maggie almost fainted when she saw the picture, but managed to keep it together.

"Benny's mother used her wedding gown to make mine and she took in her husband's dinner jacket for Benny.

"I knew I wasn't crazy! I was there. I helped my Benny find the light. We professed our love once again before he walked into that light."

Both women hugged and cried on each other's shoulder, both relieved that they weren't crazy after all. They both felt very privileged to have seen and shared that final heart beat.

-End-

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GIFT BASKETS



Written by Lisa Greer with Connie Hickey

Sunday, 05 August 2007

Now is the time to start working on those handmade gifts for Christmas. The older I get, the more I enjoy gifts from the heart –especially those that have been hand-made. In 2005, Sensible Life published an article by freelance writer, Connie Hickey, regarding weaving materials and natural dyes. This issue, we are taking excerpts from that article to provide you with additional resources to enhance your basket weaving experience. We have compiled some websites that will provide ideas and instructions for making your basket

<http://www.basketmakers.org/topics/beginners/beginnersmenu.htm>

<http://www.basketmakerscatalog.com/misc/freeins.htm>

<http://www.allcrafts.net/baskets.htm> (scroll to the bottom of the page for pattern links)

<http://www.geocities.com/pineneedlegroup2002/instruction.html>

Once you've decided on a pattern, baskets can be filled with trial size items from Bath and Body Works, or potpourri, jams and jellies, or perhaps some homemade cookies.

Excerpts from Connie Hickey's Gathering Fall Treasures.

WEAVING MATERIALS

Cattail leaves can be gathered in early fall while they are still green. Cut them at water level. Then run a needle and thread or string through the base to string them up and let them dry straight. When ready to use them, soak them in warm water. Then lay on a flat surface and run your finger down the stalk to remove the water the pithy core absorbs. They can be used for plaiting, coiling, twining, or for ornamentation.

Catalpa seedpods can be gathered as they fall or after they have lain under snow for the winter. Store seedpods in baskets or bags. To use soak in hot water for about an hour after removing seeds and pithy center. Use them whole or cut into strips. They can be used for splintwork, coiling, or ornamentation. In our area, growing up we called them cigar trees.

Clematis vines can be gathered in spring, summer, or fall. They can be used for wickerwork, rib baskets, or as weavers. Use whole or split.

Corn husks can be gathered in the summer, but are available in grocery stores in the produce section at any time of the year. They can be dyed pretty easily. The husks are useful for coiling, as a core, twining, cordage, or ornamentation.

Grape vines can be gathered anytime of year. They can be used for wickerwork, rib baskets, hoops, ribs, weavers, for coiling or ornamentation. Use whole or split. Use the bark bunched for cores.

Iris leaves can be gathered in late summer or fall. They are used for coiling, core, stitching, or twining. They are a beautiful rust or tan color if harvested before frost. Dry and store in bundles. Soak in warm water to use. Wrap in wet towel to keep mellowed.

Kudzu vines are plentiful in the South and have moved north also. The vines are good for wickerwork.

The common houseplant, Mother-in-law's tongue can be cut anytime. It is used for cordage, tying, and twining. Split the leaves with a knife or needle. Dry. Soak to use. When making cordage, pound leaves to separate fibers.

Sassafras roots and shoots can be used. Roots can be harvested anytime. Shoots should be harvested in spring, summer, or fall. Roots can be used for wickerwork and twining. Shoots can be used for wickerwork, rib baskets, hoops, and ribs.

For more information on weaving materials and dyeing materials some recommended books are: Baskets from Nature's Bounty by Elizabeth Jensen, American Baskets to Weave by Grace Kabel, The Dye Pot by Mary Frances Davidson, and Natural Basketry by Carol and Dan Hart.

DYES AND STAINS

To make a rich natural basket dye:

Collect black walnuts that have fallen from the tree immediately while the hulls are still green and insects have not invaded them. Put the walnuts in an old panty hose leg and tie shut. Place the panty hose in a bucket of rainwater to let the stain leach from the walnuts. Then boil to kill any organisms. Some basket weavers I know add a little plain (non-sudsing) ammonia to keep the dye from getting a mold scum on it while stored. I like the color better before I add the ammonia, but it lets me store it for a year or longer. Each time I use the dye I heat it, but do not boil. Dip the basket you want to dye until you reach the desired color and then rinse. Remember it will dry a little lighter than when it is wet. Set in a breezy place out of the direct sun or heat to dry.

Walnut hulls soaked in a bucket of rainwater make a great basket stain.

OTHER DYESTUFFS

For a basket maker and those who spin wool, the fall is the perfect time to gather nature's bounty to use for dyeing your reed, wood, or wool.

There are a few very common things that almost anyone can gather easily. I have not actually tried all of them, but have read about them in various basket weaving and dyeing books.

To save time and keep from having to strain your dye, panty hose make good containers for dyestuffs. The synthetic material does not disintegrate so easily. A lot of the recipes or directions for natural dyes call for adding 2 Tbsp. to ¼ cup salt to the water in which you soak your materials. Experiment until you find the mixture that works best for you.

You can pour the dye in a plastic bag with the basket, tie it tightly and swish it around. Some of the directions call for soaking your basket or reed for an hour or more, I personally do not like to soak my baskets for that long, as the reed swells too much.

Marigold blossoms can be gathered and frozen in a Ziploc bag ahead of time to use when you are ready for them. Marigolds will give a nice yellow or gold color. Zinnias flowers will also yield an orange or yellow dye.

Blackberries can be used to get a gray (from the young shoots) or purple (from the berries) dye. When using blackberries, dye in an iron pot or add rusty nails to the liquid as a mordant.

Onion skins will make a yellow to reddish brown color. Add half a pan of water and 2 Tbsp. salt to a pan full of brown onion skins. Bring to a boil and simmer one hour. Soak the reed or the whole basket in the stain for a few hours or all day.

To use red rose petals follow the directions for onion skins.

Garden beets can be cooked in a small amount of water, strained, and peeled. Then put the peelings back in the water and add 2 Tbsp. salt. Simmer one hour. Strain liquid. Then soak your reed for a day. After three days the liquid turns the reed brown.

Cranberries are not grown in our area, but can be bought, crushed and simmered for an hour in a little water with 2 Tbsp. salt added. Strain the liquid. Then dip your basket to get a beautiful rosy color.

Oak leaves can be gathered in the fall. Process them the same way you would black walnut hulls (recipe below), adding 3 Tbsp. salt for a golden brown color.

Old withered blueberries yield a lovely lavender color.

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CANADIAN GET AWAY



Written by Jyll Heiden

Wednesday, 25 July 2007



I've been fortunate enough to vacation near Lake Massawippi in Quebec the past couple of years and it has led me to understand the meaning of Quebec's motto: "Je me souviens." The area, now known as the province of Quebec, was claimed for France in 1534. Samuel de Champlain and other Europeans first settled the area in 1608. The area known as the Eastern Townships is where I found much needed rest and relaxation.

North Hatley

The cottage we called home for a week is on the shores of Lake Massawippi. The view is nearly indescribable. At night, you can be easily lulled to sleep listening to waves lapping the shorelines. During the day, an occasional motorboat ripples the lake. Our screened-in front porch provided the perfect environment for reading, writing, or napping.

The closest town to the cottage is North Hatley. It's a sleepy little village that is built around the picturesque north shoreline of the lake. The town's history dates back to the 1700's. It's reputation as a summer resort dates to the late 19th century – initially for Americans from the Chesapeake Bay area – but later by wealthy Montreal residents. North Hatley is one of the few primarily English-speaking areas in Quebec.

One of the best ways to experience North Hatley is to just stroll around. There are art galleries, shops, cafés, and restaurants. You can have great pub lunch at Pilsen (<http://pilsen.ca>). One of my favorite lunches is the house salad, a grilled veggie fougasse sandwich, and a Blonde & Rousse Massawippi micro brew. Bring a good book and walk across the street to read in the park. It's a great way to finish off the afternoon.

If you're inclined to get in the car and go exploring, there are a couple of venues that I personally recommend – Granby Zoo and Coaticook Gorge. Both are perfect day trips that get you back in time to watch the sunset over the lake.

Granby Zoo

Since 1953, the Granby Zoological Society has provided the area with a first rate zoo. There are more than 1,000 animals in habitat-similar enclosures. Plan to arrive when they open for a special experience.

Early in the day, zookeepers bring some of the animals/reptiles out to interact with the public. It was an incredible experience to see these creatures up close and personal. One of my most favorite things to do was to feed nectar to the lorikeets.

Trails within the zoo are comfortable to walk. Be sure to get a map when you gain admittance. There are picnic facilities throughout the zoo, so pack your lunch (without glass containers or alcoholic beverages) and enjoy your meal in the shade.

Zoo admission is a bit pricey. \$26.49 CDN for adults and \$16.49 CDN for children age 3-12. A family of four (2 adults, 2 children age 3-12) can get in for \$79.49 CDN. If your hometown has a zoo, like Louisville, check to see if a membership entitles you to reciprocity. A family membership at the Louisville Zoo costs \$69 USD for 2 adults and all children under 18. For more on entry fees and opening hours, call Granby Zoo toll free (877) 472-6299.

Coaticook Gorge

In the mood for a hike? Head to Coaticook Gorge for a day trip. The area was first settled in 1750 by the Abenaki Indians. They named the area "Koatikeku" - river of land of pines. The town of Coaticook was incorporated in 1888 and its economy was mainly light industrial and mills.

Admission to the River Gorge Park (Parc de la Gorge de Coaticook) is \$7 CDN per adult. That fee allows you access to the 3.5 Km trail up to the suspension bridge. The view is breathtaking. The bridge parallels preglacial gorge cliffs rising some 50 meters off the river bed.



Along the way, we were able to peak into a hydroelectric plant that is alongside the river. There's a nice picnic area and plenty of places to stop and enjoy the view.

If you really need a get away, then North Hatley is the place I recommend. Leave your computer behind, pack a couple of books, and your camera and prepare to unwind. After a couple of days, you'll understand the Quebec motto - "I remember who I am."

About the author

[Jyll Heiden](#) is a freelance writer for [Olive Tree Enterprises, LLC](#) — the publisher of Sensible Life.

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A KILLER'S MIND

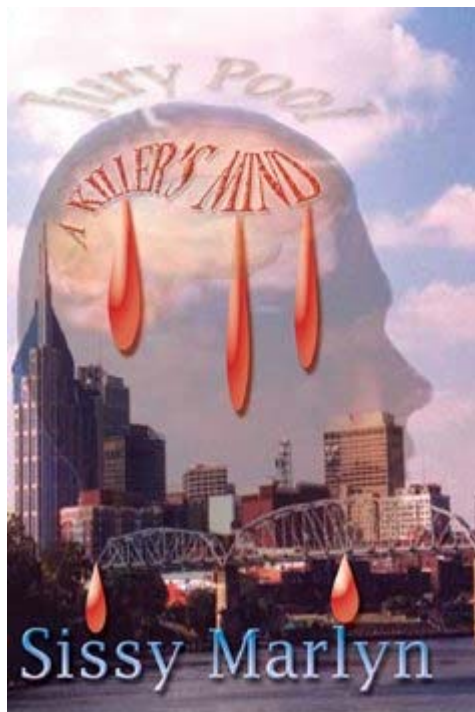


Written by Bearhead Publishing

Thursday, 26 July 2007

Book Reviews: A Killer's Mind

IT was great!! I got it in the mail last week and read it in two days. Again, good twists and turns that kept you guessing. So when is the next one? Once again I am anxious to continue the story. Deb S.



A Killer's Mind Synopsis:

Thought provoking...Suspenseful...More Twist and Turns than a Windssock in a Thunderstorm.... Sound like something you'd like to read? Of course it does! A Killer's Mind is the novel for you!

- A man's throat is carved open and his genitals mutilated.
- Enter a young, out-of-state, homicide detective turned PI. His agenda – revenge on the man who killed his beloved girlfriend two years ago.
- As the gruesome murders amass, fingers point in all directions, and lives of loved ones are once again put into eminent peril.

So what...or should I say who...do psychiatrist services, handcuffs, knives, and railroad ties have in common? That's for me, the author, to know and you, the reader, to find out. Start unraveling the mystery behind this psychological thriller today by reading A Killer's Mind.

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