

Summers and starlight

This summer feels like those I remember as a kid growing up in endless days of sun at the cottage, swimming out to the raft with my cousins where we would try to perfect our diving skills and outdo each other displaying robust aquatic talents.

The water in the stream that fed the lake was always cold but a cousin and I would find it refreshing and wade right in. We carried along a picnic lunch of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and a cookie or two that mother had kindly made for us and snack on wild strawberries or pick cherries from one of our uncles' farm trees nearby on our way back.

That stream was where our grandfathers logged during the settling of the land along the lake. They were elder brothers of a family of eight boys and one girl, the baby. The family homesteaded the



JANICE KIMES
Columnist

lake which became our summer playground for years until we all drifted off to various corners of the map.

When we were young and spending days preparing water ballet shows for our families to attend as audience, we would also navigate the shore waters in enormous wooden row boats hand-hewed by our grandfathers years before. That, I hasten to add, does build muscle!

There were days when we would tramp through our uncles' homes and barns up and down the road, intentionally ending up in the kitchens where the aunts would be preparing irresistible baked goods. We knew they would always be willing to let us watch

and sample the tasty results of prune filled kolachkis, breads and cookies, a steady stream that always kept us going back for more and never being refused.

Years later, a cousin and I decided to bake the braided Bohemian Christmas bread from one of their recipes. Several hours into the project, my kitchen was layered with a fine white flour dusting, the bread was rising and we breathed a sigh of relief. It was a somewhat complicated process for amateur cooks like us but it will remain a delicious and fond accomplishment and memory though we decided once was enough.

So many childhood memories of being at the lake have drifted over into the joys of my own family's cabin experiences here - taking our grandkids down to sit by the fire pit warmth near the shoreline in the evening and if it was cool, wrapping them in blankets

when they were small.

We would point out the comets and starry shapes of constellations, identifying the Milky Way, the dippers and the North Star. (In the early days, our first grandson asked if that star was named after the hockey team.)

At that age, there was always so much to be busy doing like catching frogs and skipping rocks or digging sand to throw back into the lake, which could take a toddler all day.

With my heart full of expectation, the pails and shovels, blankets and fire pit await the next generation to begin searching the heavens with me on starlit nights.

Janice Kimes sketches the domestic cartoon of life with its inevitable calamities, delights and vigor. She and her family enjoy their seasonal Aitkin County cabin.

MY VIEW

Raised on radio

Do you ever listen to a song and remember exactly what life was like when you first heard it?

My stepdad and I were going down Hwy. 14 from Rochester to our home in Kasson. The sunset was one of the most amazing that I had ever seen in my 13 years of life. I was in the passenger seat of an old station wagon reminiscent of "That 70s Show" Vista Cruiser, it was not so much to look at but a comfortable, smooth ride nonetheless.

We were listening to the local pop radio station and I heard a song begin that I knew I had never heard before. I started feeling the excitement in the hopes that it was Journey. My favorite band in the whole wide world (at that time and still to this day) was Journey.

Then, I heard it. The voice. The voice that always seems to make my life better no matter what situation I am in. It was Journey. It was Steve Perry's voice.

Ahhh, Steve Perry. I remember one Christmas my parents gave me a post-it note. One tiny, little, piece of yellow paper with sticky stuff on it. Written neatly on it in my mother's handwriting was this... "This piece of gold entitles you to one Journey concert free of charge. Transportation included." I don't think I had ever been so happy in my life! I started searching my magazines for tour information and even wrote to the Journey Force (fan club) for any news of a concert in Minnesota. No luck.

I put my "piece of gold" in a safe place. Then, it happened. I was listening to the radio and heard the announcement. Journey had a new album and they were touring to promote it. They were coming. I had goosebumps everywhere. After I returned home that day, I tore my bedroom apart looking for my "piece of gold." I had just about given up hope when I remembered I had put it in a box in the top of my closet. I took down the box that I probably hadn't taken down since I hid my post-it inside. When I removed the lid of the box, there it was. My piece of gold. I quickly grabbed it and ran through the house to my mother. It was going to finally happen, I was going to be in the same room, breathing the same air as Steve Perry!

I can't remember if we took the "Vista Cruiser" to the concert or if we had the conversion van by then but my stepdad drove and accompanied me. There was a new musical group called Glass Tiger who opened the show. When they were finished playing, it was time for Journey. My favorite group ever was making their way onto the stage and there he was ... jet black hair and a red tailcoat. I was mesmerized to say the least. I felt I knew everyone in the band on a personal level. Neal Schon, Steve Smith, Jonathan Cain, Ross Vallory, and Steve Perry were my family that I never met.

All through my life I have looked to music for comfort and motivation. I feel connected to the sound and sometimes it feels like the song was written just for me. Music, Journey in particular, has helped me find the calm in my chaos.

The other day I was listening to a local pop radio station and Journey's "Send Her My Love" started to play on the radio. Once again I was sitting in the passenger seat of the "Vista Cruiser" on a beautiful summer evening, heading home.



KATHY ROBB
Columnist

Motorcycle training courses

Question: It seems like I am seeing more motorcycles than ever. Can you talk about their safety?

Answer: Here is some information that was shared on the Department of Public Safety's blog: <https://dps.mn.gov/blog/Pages/20200824-make-every-motorcycle-ride-safe.aspx>

With everything going on in the world today, a motorcycle ride can be the perfect escape. Wearing proper protective gear can help keep you safe in case of a crash, but having good riding skills and a strategy can prevent a crash from happening in the first place.

The number of motorcycle fatalities is high this year compared to past years with 42 rider deaths, according to preliminary reports. At



NEIL DICKENSON
Ask a Trooper

this time last year, there were 31 rider deaths. August through fall is prime riding time for many Minnesota motorcyclists.

Here are steps you can take to reduce your risk of crashing:

- Ride sober.
- Wear highly visible protective gear, including a brightly colored helmet.
- Have a good riding strategy for every ride.

Motorcycle training is a great way to develop and improve safe riding skills, but time is running out to register for the Basic Rider Course (BRC) to earn your

endorsement. So register now for one of the 22 locations throughout Minnesota. More than 1,300 riders took the BRC in the first two months of the training season, which started the first week of June, and nearly 300 more riders took other MMSC training courses.

There are a limited number of intermediate courses still available too. This course is a great way to practice riding a new motorcycle or riding with a passenger. Take the intermediate course with a passenger for no additional charge.

MMSC offers advanced and expert training courses too, but those have wrapped up for the season. Challenge yourself to take a training course every year or two to keep your riding skills sharp — after

all, training can make a huge difference in avoiding crashes.

You can find details about all the training courses on the MMSC's website, including eligibility requirements for each level.

You can register online for the motorcycle training courses that are available through September, but don't wait. Courses are filling up.

Happy summer and happy riding!"

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws in Minnesota, please send your questions to: Sgt. Neil Dickenson, Minnesota State Patrol, 1131 Mesaba Ave. Duluth, MN 55811, or Neil.dickenson@state.mn.us.

Eisenbart/ Bradbury's work is relevant

Continued from page 4

Of course, when you're as prolific as Bradbury was with the short stories - he penned more than 600 of them - narrowing it down to 100 would be hard. I've found quite a few new favorites in the last few days - most of them surprisingly not his science fiction pieces.

"The Dwarf," for one, tells the story of a man with dwarfism - and his preoccupation with the mirror house at a carnival. "The Laurel and Hardy Love Affair" tells the story of two lovers drifting together, and then drifting apart. And "Lafayette, Farewell" tells the simple story of a man gradually losing his memories to what then

was called dementia.

These stories, and all of Bradbury's, really, have one thing in common: a deep understanding of what it means to be human, and to be affected by the world around you. In times such as this, when we are almost all hurting in one way or another, works like Bradbury's could not be more relevant.

Try any of the stories mentioned above. Try none of them and simply Google "Bradbury's best short stories." But pick up something of his and just read.

Because right now, we all need to be reminded it's OK to be human.

MORE LETTERS

Continued from 4

America became a nation with chronic ills—a corrupt political class, a heartless economy, a divided and a disenfranchised public. It forced a question that most Americans have never had to ask: Are we still capable of self-government?

All of the lasting pain of the last few years was felt in the middle and at the bottom, by Americans who had taken on debt and lost their jobs, homes, and retirement savings. Like a pyramid scheme, over the past few years, it has enriched corporations and investors, lulled professionals, and left the working class further behind. The lasting effect of the Trump slump has increased polarization among the American public.

Trump has never pretended to be president of the whole country, but pitted us against one another along lines of race, sex, religion, citizenship, education, and have's and

have-not's. The sad part for America is, a third of the country locked itself in a hall of mirrors, that it believed to be reality; a third drove itself mad with the effort to hold on to the idea of knowable truth; and a third gave up even trying.

Wayne Halverson
Aitkin

Dying vs. living

Have the news media and the politicians made us so afraid of dying that we are afraid to live?

As I was in church this morning, I considered how things have changed. The masked people in church may have been greeting each other, but you could not see any smiles, there were no handshakes, clasps or hugs and of course you couldn't sing any hymns because that may spread the virus. Church is only one of the places that we should be afraid of living. Going to the grocery store has always been a social event where you would see people you normally may

not see, and you would smile at those you didn't know and socialize with those you knew. Now, you may or may not recognize people unless they speak, and you don't know if they are smiling or frowning.

We have been convinced by the virologists, politicians and media, that we cannot visit the sick or those who are in nursing homes because you may spread the virus to the most vulnerable. Those are the people that need visitors the most and we cannot visit them. Can you imagine what it must be like for a nursing home resident that has not seen their spouse or other family members for their last days, or the spouse who knows he cannot visit a wife knowing that she may be gone soon? This makes the last days of life for these people unbearable. Those who are awaiting death, must hope it gets there quicker since they have to die alone.

We are being convinced that if we don't wear masks in public, we are being irre-

sponsible because we may be spreading the virus to others. Our chances of getting the virus are very slim, and our chance of spreading it since we have no symptoms are also negligible. Our chances of dying are much greater when we get into the car and drive than they are in not wearing a mask. If masks are so good at protecting us, shouldn't those people who are terrified of dying wear their masks and let the rest of us who know death is coming to us all and take the chance? I think we had that freedom to take care of our own health before this explosion of fear mongering.

Those who are so afraid of dying should lock themselves in their houses, don't let in any visitors, get your groceries delivered outside, disinfect everything coming into your house, and then you may be safe from the virus. (MAY be safe!)

John Bajda
McGregor

online opinion poll

views from www.aitkinage.com readers

ONLINE POLL

With so many things that were considered science fiction now becoming fact, do you feel science fiction authors, such as Ray Bradbury, are still relevant?

64.3%

yes

7.1%

no

28.6%

I don't care

NEW OPINION POLL — VOTE NOW

Do you feel that your local law enforcement is doing a good job?

Online polls are found at aitkinage.com. Scroll down the page and look for it in the right-hand column.

SUGGEST A POLL QUESTION

Do you have a good poll question? Send it to katrobbi@outlook.com.