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Cruising Main

We were just minding our own business, Don and I, cruising down Main Street on a beautiful summer Sunday morning. Suddenly, I caught a slight movement out of the corner of my eye. I looked again and there it was, something I have never seen on Main Street before and, most likely, never will again: a potbellied pig.

Said pig was on a leash which was being held by a sleepy-looking guy casually smoking a cigarette. The pig might have been in the process of urinating on the pavement. The imagery was unique and fairly thought-provoking.

While potbellies are thought by some to make great pets, I have never known anyone who actually has one as a house pet. It begs several questions: How do these animals fare, living in someone's home? How do you pig-proof your house – or don't you? What do they chew on when they get bored? Considering the size of the puddle created by our four-legged visitor, what kind of potty-training system would work?

I can only imagine some of the amenities a pig-lover might provide for their little Porky. So many thoughts, so little space.

Anyway, what you see on Main Street can be a little on the wild side sometimes.

Not many days after seeing the pig and on another sunny morning, traffic on Main Street was slowed and being directed by local police and fire department personnel. This time, there was an incident where a semi driver was forced to brake unexpectedly, propelling a portion of his load of cowskins into a wet, messy, undignified and spread-out pile on the road. There they were, in their natural form – future jackets, purses, shoes, belts and rugs.

Looking through the photos Ben Sonnek took (there is one on page 2 of last week's paper), it really makes me wonder if some of our first responders would consider being interviewed for a book someday. We could call it, "A Day in the Life: Serving on Main Street." My guess is, this is the first cowskin cleanup they have done, although we all know there have been other animal by-products spilled in the past. It happens. Luckily, there were no injuries or vehicle damages reported in this incident.

I would also guess, even though this was kind of gross and rubber gloves were in order for the cleanup crew, this is far, far from the worst thing our first responders have been called to handle. These people are dedicated and prepared for every situation life throws at them.

On a more ordinary side of things, I cruised Main Street on



Random Reflections
by Diane Leukam

Tuesday just to see what I would see, and it was quite interesting, actually. Signs everywhere gave clues as to the times we live in, like the current gas price of \$4.099 a gallon, along with business signs for a cell phone store and internet services, orthodontics, dentists and chiropractors. Another sign said, "Buckle up, Buttercup."

The young driver of an old, rusted pickup truck with loud mufflers revved the engine, a large American flag mounted to the back being waved with pride. Some might look down their noses at "people like him," but I doubt he cares about their opinion.

A newer pickup was being used to haul a brand-new golf cart.

I saw a priest on a motorcycle – with no helmet, by the way. I suppose it was too darned hot because at the time it was 90 degrees with a heat index of 101.

There were lots of beautiful hanging flower baskets. Driving by my sister and her husband's home on Main Street South, their flowers are in bloom and, alongside various homes, the hydrangeas are coming into their own, which tells me fall will be here too soon.

Campfire wood is stacked up at a gas station, hinting at the many people who travel to or through our area on their way to the campgrounds or cabins.

Finally, and I didn't see this on Tuesday, but one of my very favorite things to see on Main Street is people, young or old, heading to the lake or river with their fishing poles. It seems there have been many this summer.

Cruising Main was considered entertainment for teenagers for many years. Driving from the Hi-Ho Café that used to be on the south end of town (where Holiday is now), to the Dairy Queen, which at the time was on the north end (where the Brothers station is now), was practically a daily ritual. I really don't see that happening anymore, although I maybe just don't know the kids as well. What are they all doing now? I'm not sure. I hope they can see the good in the community they call home.

There is something to be said about observing life on Main Street in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. Sinclair Lewis did that once, and it worked out well for him. He didn't have too positive an impression of "us," but like the kid in the old pickup would maybe say, that's OK. We never claimed to be perfect.

I just don't think I'm ever going to see that pig again.

Grumpy old men?



Ultra Sonnek
by Ben Sonnek

For a while, but especially in the wake of the overturn of Roe v. Wade, I've been hearing claims that old male politicians should not dictate what young girls do with their bodies. I've always found that argument a little interesting.

Is the problem the politician's age? Centuries ago, those fortunate enough to reach old age were broadly regarded as wise elders with the benefit of life experience. Granted, 50 was generally considered elderly, but with today's life expectancies, even 65 is hardly considered over the hill, especially when these people display adequate levels of cognitive fitness to back up their decades of knowledge. Feel free to drop your obvious Biden joke here and keep reading.

Is the problem that the politician is a man? If this means men cannot make laws that affect women, that sets a rather intriguing legal precedent. Our country would need a split government, one by males for males and the other by females for females – never mind what kinds of splinter factions would arise from the promulgation of the gender spectrum. Then, why stop at that distinction? Why can't bakers only write laws for bakers, bankers for bankers, schools for schools, thieves for thieves, murderers for murderers? One reason why that cannot happen is because it often takes an outside eye to look into a corruption and say, "That's messed up." It's a main principle behind the jury system.

Is it because the politician is a politician? That'd be an odd objection; their whole job is making laws which thusly affect the people's bodies and what they do with them.

One could accuse me of muddying the issue by taking it apart. That's fair enough; living creatures tend to stop working when they're dismantled, and the same can sometimes be true for ideas. In that case, let's take the whole idea at one blow: "An old male politician should not dictate what a young girl does with her body."

It seems like the mental image we're supposed to carry away from this statement is a lecherous old fat-cat in a suit, rubbing his wrinkly old hands together in pleasure at the fulfillment of his carnal will over an innocent young woman. If that's the case, should we not treat pro-abortion politicians with more suspicion – especially men? The male politician who undercuts abortion seems to be operating against his potential self-interest for self-gratification; abortion is a prime concealer of abuse, allowing men in power to use women like toys to satisfy their hunger, all while sucking away the life that would reveal their philandering ways and demand the abuser take responsibility.

Of course, that lends itself to another common abortion argument: What about the children born in less-than-ideal situations, including financial difficulty, single parentage or – to put it lightly – unspeakable abuses? How can we ask a child to bear the burden of an ugly parentage? It is a terrifying reality. Children deserve a home with stability, love and commitment, and anything less is a tragedy.

To say it would be better to do away with these developing humans, though, is an insulting – even terrifying – proposal. It equates a child's worth with their lineage, a factor over which they have no control. However, one's worth is not determined by one's parentage; you're not less of a person because of where or how you were conceived, whether your home was abusive, broken or nonexistent. The fact that you're alive gives you an equal footing with the children of princes, and if you bear yourself in life with dignity and perseverance, that gives you cause to hold your head higher than most princely offspring.

Nature, especially human nature, tends to remove the evil and keep the good in any given situation. When a boat is sinking, we remove the water and save the boat. When a person is ill, we remove the illness and save the person. Why then, in a crisis pregnancy, would we not remove the crisis and keep the child – who is not an illness but rather a natural, beautiful result of the procreative act? In the sinking-boat example, of course, there is a scenario when the boat is "removed," but that is when the crew abandons ship, and the "good" that is the boat is lost. Women have dignity as people too, but the message sent to them through abortion is, "You and your child are truly lost, and nobody is coming to help you." That's a funny claim to level in a country with resources such as ours where, even in deep blue states, there is often a pregnancy resource center just down the road. Nobody is truly alone.

After all, this is not an issue of an old politician controlling a young woman. This is an issue of said politician forbidding the destruction of the most innocent human life imaginable, one that cannot be blamed and should not be punished – whether inside or outside the womb – for its genesis.

Back-to-school tips

Hello, Herald readers! It is already August, and we just finished up with the Stearns County Fair. I hope you had the opportunity to stop by our fair booth and say hi, watch a demo or grab some useful info related to many public safety topics.

As we prepare for school to start at the end of the month, I want to provide some back-to-school safety tips. Getting to school can be one of the most dangerous times, whether kids are walking, riding a bike or taking the bus. It is important for kids to take the proper safety precautions and equally important for adults to keep these in mind as well.

If you walk to school, use a sidewalk, look both ways before you cross the street and stay alert. It is good for parents to practice walking the route their kids will take to school so the kids are comfortable and familiar with it.

If riding a bike to school, kids should have a good knowledge of the rules of the road. They should ride single file and on the right side of the road with traffic. Kids should stay alert for distracted drivers and should always come to a complete stop at stop signs and before crossing any street. Kids should



County Sheriff
by Steve Soyka

also wear a properly fitting helmet when riding.

If your child rides the bus to school, there are some important things for them to remember. First, you should go over school bus safety rules and practice these if you can. Parents should accompany their kids to the bus stop to teach them the proper way to get on and off the bus, and make sure, kids, that you stay 6 feet away from the curb so the bus driver can see you!

As school starts, it is important for parents and all other adults who may be driving to be aware of more activity in and around schools. When driving, obey the school speed zone limits and follow all school drop-off procedures. Make eye contact with kids who are crossing the road so they see you and you see them. Lastly, stop for school bus red lights and the extended stop arm. Do not pass a bus with the lights activated.

More safety tips can be found at the National Safety Council website, NSC.org. Have a safe and productive school year!



LIFE HACKS

By Missy Traeger

How to use common, everyday items to help with household problems!
Do you have a zipper that is hard to run up and down? Grab a Crayon or a chunk of wax and coat the teeth of the zipper. Run it up and down a few times and watch how nice it works!

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Letters: Letters to the editor and other opinion articles are welcomed. Letters must be signed with first and last name and include address and phone number. Letters should be short and to the point. We reserve the right to edit lengthy letters.

Corrections/Clarifications: The Herald strives for accuracy. If you would like to report a factual error, please call 352-6577.

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