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JUST SAYING!

Since I have now sold the company and do not write their newsletter any longer, I have decided to do a personal newsletter, once in a while, just for the fun of writing and as means of getting out general information Linda and I and our friends have found helpful and maybe even humorous. After discussions with friends at a recent gathering, the name “The Crapper Chronicles” seemed to be a favorite. Wine was, however, involved; but for now that will be the name.

This is the ninth newsletter of my retirement years. I am archiving all newsletters on my website at www.TompkinsPublishing.com.

Back in the Misty Mists of Time: Demolition Men

Back in the misty mists of time, on a cool, cloudy, spring afternoon, in North Dakota, some friends and I had a most interesting adventure. The back ground to this story: A good farmer friend of mine, Kermit Martin, had an old cement block silo located in his farmyard and he wanted to remove it. Now days you rarely see one of these old round cement block structures, but years ago there were many of these tall old silos dotting the landscape on farmsteads in North Dakota. They were round, about 20 feet in diameter and 40 feet tall. Being constructed of curved cement blocks they were very sturdy and very heavy. However, in the modern farming world these silos had become obsolete and the old one in Kermit’s yard had long been abandoned and unused. Since he was going to build new corrals in that location, he wanted to get rid of it, but the cost of demolition was quite expensive. I was working construction at the time and being young and dumb and wanting to impress my older friend, I confidently proclaimed, “Kermit, I can take that silo down for nothing.” What makes the story worth telling is no one got killed that afternoon.

Plan A: My friends and I had come into some war surplus steel jacketed armor piercing 30-06 rifle ammunition. At the time due to war surplus left over from both World War II and the Korean War this type of ammo was readily available and cheap. We were looking for an excuse to burn up the ammo anyway and Kermit’s project seemed a good place to start. My reasoning was if we aimed our shots at the base of the old silo the bullet would easily penetrate and blow up the block it hit. My thought process was if we blew out a 6” block with each shot in no time at all we would have “cut” a slice out of the silo similar to a chainsaw cutting down a tree. The logic was after a long enough cut was opened up gravity would simply take over and the silo would topple. There were no buildings in the immediate area so we felt the plan would work fine. Kermit’s house was located about 200 feet away so of course we felt no worries about damaging anything. I floated the idea past Kermit and we decided to give it a try.

Recruiting a couple buddies, on the appointed day we went out to Kermit’s farmstead with two high powered rifles, and 500 rounds of the armor piercing ammo. Like all projects that seem simple when you are talking about them, I expected the job to be over by noon. After Kermit made certain his wife Pat had the kids safely inside, we set up our firing position about 100 feet from the silo between it and the house.

After firing the first few shots we walked over to inspect how much damage each shot was inflicting. Immediately the first problem that showed up was instead of each shot “blowing” a brick out of the wall, all the steel jacketed ammo did was



punch a hole about the size of a pencil through each brick. You could plainly see where after the bullet punctured the individual brick it would continue on. There were many scratches and gauges in the bricks where the bullets had ricocheted around inside the round structure. We did not think much of it and after agreeing we would probably shoot up quite a bit more ammunition than originally thought, we still figured Plan A had merit. We sat back down and kept firing away. Sure enough we eventually had a sizable "cut" started around the base of the silo. Though we were making slower progress than Plan A had anticipated, we probably could have eventually succeeded except for a glaring flaw in the idea. Remember how the bullets were running around the inside of the silo like cars on a racetrack? I was running the gun at the time when immediately after a shot an angry bee buzzed by, inches from my right ear. Folks, this was no ordinary bee. It was a spent 180 grain bullet that after ricocheting around the inside of the silo had escaped through the hole we were making, passing directly between my friend Ronny and I. By the grace of God it had missed us. Needless to say, happy not to be hit, we put the guns and ammo away and instantly abandoned Plan A. None the less, twenty one year old boys on a mission have lots of plans. After going back to the drawing board, I came up Plan B and it was a brand new genius idea.

Plan B: The cement bricks the silo was constructed of were old and only about two inches thick. I was working that summer on a crew operating a large crane and the owner of the construction company had many hundreds of feet of used 5/8 inch steel dragline cable. After getting a laugh when we told him about trying to shoot the silo down he agreed to let us use a quantity of the cable for the project. Certain we now had a plan that would work, we went out to the equipment yard, loaded up a quantity of cable and headed back to the farm.

The implementation of Plan B, involved first running the cable through the hole we had previously shot in the side of the silo; then breaking out another brick about 12 feet further down the wall with a sledge hammer. The cable was strung through the two holes and out to the waiting field tractor in the yard. After hooking everything up we put the tractor in gear and pulled the cable taught to see if the rigging would hold. As expected, when the tractor pulled away, the cable cut through the old bricks like a hot knife in butter. Slicing neatly through the bricks in mere seconds the cable had removed the twelve foot slice at the bottom of the tough old structure. Shutting down the tractor we waited breathlessly for the old giant to tumble: No dice!

What we were beginning to learn, was that old silo had stood through generations of North Dakota thunderstorms, wind, and blizzards. It had been there long before we had been born. Three young guns with bullets and dragline cable didn't cause it to budge in the least. Like a giant Sequoia it stood straight and tall in defiance of youthful arrogance. Bummer! Walking gingerly up to the building I took the sledge and broke another hole in the side leaving only one brick between where the prior cut had stopped. Remember this one brick being left in place: We will have more on that later. I went at least another ten feet around the silo and punched yet another hole with the sledge. Not giving a thought to the fact the old structure might be ready to topple, I went back inside, once again threaded the cable through the two holes, hooked things back up, and once again took off with the tractor.

One more time the cable worked its magic. Now we had way more than half of the total base of the silo removed. Did we get action? Did the old tower fall? No, not even a 'Leaning Tower of Pisa' slight tip! The obstinate old structure still stood tall. That one brick, that one dumb, stupid, obstinate piece of cement; was preventing gravity from winning out. Huston, we have a problem. Our tree would not fall. Now we were in a dilemma, after nearly getting our heads blown off, we did not dare use the gun, and testosterone be damned; no one volunteered to go up and put the cable around the offending brick. Plan B and project 'Silo Down' once again had ground to a halt. Now what?

You know, so many times in life delaying a given enterprise or project will doom it to failure. In the overall scheme of things usually no decision is a bad idea and no action as well usually has a poor result. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes no action can be a good thing. I am living proof of it. For as we stood there, seeing nobody else was going to volunteer to walk up and re-hook the cable, I turned my back to the still standing silo, and turning to my friends I said "Hell, I suppose since this was my idea, and I was the idiot who left that single damn brick there, I have to be the one to go up and put the cable around it." The reason what I said that day is so burned in my mind; why it is so clearly engraved into my memories; is while I was talking I felt the ground jump. As I spun around expecting to see the silo, all that was left were the cement blocks rolling, tumbling and spinning across the ground. The offending brick had finally given up. Gravity, although arriving late to the party, had done her work. The silo: In those mere seconds, had toppled.

Had I walked up to that offending brick to try and get a cable around it, tons of falling cement blocks would have crushed me like a bug and I would not be telling you the story. If the stray bullet that went buzzing by my ear hadn't missed, or if the weakened structure would have crumbled when we went inside to restring the cable that second time: There were so many lucky things in our favor that crazy spring afternoon that did not happen. But you know, maybe it was not luck. I have always believed in Guardian Angels and that day out at Kermit and Pat's farm is one of the reasons why. Kermit's father Earl Martin had passed away a short time before and he was a wonderful person with a tremendous sense of humor. Maybe he was the one protecting us that day and getting a good laugh out of our antics at the same time. If he was I hope someday I get to thank him.

"So, I Was Talking to My Buddy Jack"



Maybe you haven't read it but a few months ago some ridiculous survey was put out that reported that these days more than 30% of college students are "hungry." The article implied that over 30% of our poor higher education kids are not getting enough to eat. As Jack and I were out walking today we were talking about this dumb survey and Jack said it just so happened that the neighbor dog was running a similar survey for "Dogs in Training." Since I do not speak "dog" very well, I asked Jack which dog was running the survey? He said it was "Fido" who lives up on the hill a quarter mile away from our place. Gee, what a surprise. Here I thought that dog is continually barking because of being lonely or because he was mad at being cooped up in his kennel. Stupid me, now I find out he too is running a "hunger survey." Jack was not aware of

what "non-profit" Fido was working for, but giving me a sly grin, he mentioned that he too is certainly "hungry" more than 36% of the time. I told him to get a life and go steal some of the neighbor cat's food.

Shorts

World Travelers Beware: A Swedish dentist, living in England with her daughter and husband recently took her daughter on a holiday flight for a short visit to Dubai. The flight was on Emirates Air. On the flight she was offered, and accepted a glass of wine. It is reported but not verified that she only had one glass of wine. Even though she had visited Dubai before, on landing and clearing customs she was informed "she had an invalid visa." Furthermore, since having, or consuming, or being under the influence of alcohol is against the law in Dubai, when the customs officer smelled alcohol on her breath both she and her daughter were thrown in jail. After three days in a filthy prison they were released and the daughter was allowed to return to England. The mother was detained in Dubai awaiting trial. Her major offence seems to be that she is a female in a country where females have little power. Oh wait, I also read that recently women have now actually been allowed to drive a car in that country. Gee, what progress! Needless to say, Dubai is not on our "must see" list of countries.



Zucchini Season has Arrived: Like many rural families, my mother grew Zucchini in our garden out on the farm. We kids were served a steady diet of Zucchini bread, Zucchini bars, fried Zucchini, Zucchini in salad, and many other dishes. Most likely from being fed so much of this over productive vegetable, I have to tell you even though many of these dishes are delicious, I am not a big fan. However, this prolific vegetable is the very reason I must once again caution my North Dakota readers to keep car doors locked at all times during "Zucchini Season." This is the time of year that Zucchini squash matures and once again growers are seeing



another bumper crop. Due to not being able to get rid of this prolific vegetable, many distraught growers are frantically resorting to dumping extra Zucchini in unlocked parked cars. There was even one desperate grower who was walking up to cars parked at a stoplight, opening unlocked doors and throwing Zucchini into these vehicles. Protect yourself and your kids from being inundated with Zucchini. Keep car doors locked!

How Much Sugar is recommended: The American Heart Association says women should try to hold their daily sugar consumption to 30 grams. Men are allowed 40 grams. But how much sugar is a gram? The Betty Crocker Cookbook says there are 30 grams in an ounce. How much sugar is in a 12 oz bottle of regular Coke? 39 grams! I suppose one of the side effects of being retired and having more time on your hands is a person starts reading food labels more closely. The other day as I was dutifully consuming my morning yogurt, I started to read the label on the back and low and behold this particular yogurt had 24 grams of sugar! Wow! Almost the same as having a bottle of pop! At least the Vicki's Granola I was mixing it with only had 2 grams of sugar for my size of serving. Bummer. Tomorrow's breakfast is going to be two eggs and a couple slices of toast made with Dave Shomento's good old European style bread. It has virtually no sugar added!



Food Prices Higher? In the process of emptying my parent's house in the aftermath of the Minot Flood of 2011, along with old check registers from the late 1950's I came across a receipt for items purchased at Eatmore Sausage and Packing Company. The receipt was very unusual in several ways. First of all it was handwritten, secondly it was on carbon paper, but what really caught my eye were the posted prices of the items purchased. Price per pound were: T-Bone steak - \$1.05, ham - 56 cents, hamburger - 48 cents, and bacon - 56 cents. At first blink the prices seemed insanely low; however, the date on the handwritten sales slip was 9/8/1962. Converting the prices into today's dollars, you will find today's cost per pound for the same goods are most definitely cheaper.



The issue of NFL players kneeling, or failing to come on the field for the National Anthem is of course old news. Most of us have made a decision one way or the other how to handle it. Linda and I simply cancelled our Cardinals season's tickets and quit watching football altogether. Now I see that Nike has endorsed the 2nd string quarterback who started the entire mess. No biggie, Linda and I can do without Nike as well. However, on a positive note I hear the word with NASCAR drivers is simple: "If you don't show respect for the National Anthem you don't race." Gee that makes it easy; I guess Linda and I will be watching more car racing. My final thought was the other day we were watching the Canadian Women's Open on the Golf Channel. The event was won by Canadian golfer Brooke Henderson marking the first time in many years that a Canadian golfer had won the event. However, what made her victory more poignant and meaningful was the fact that instead of protesting some injustice in Canada, the crowd spontaneously started singing the Canadian national anthem "Oh Canada." The sense of national pride and unity was extraordinary and literally brought tears to your eyes. It bloody well made our day, **eh!**



The More We Change the More We Stay The Same



Slanted, editorialized, weaponized, misquoted, and politicized, news reporting is nothing new. In our country's past history one of the key elements in Theodore Roosevelt's presidential campaign were his battles with the aforementioned type of news reporting. Of course in those days there were only newspapers to report events and no internet or TV. However, then as now actual UNBIASED reporting on any given day's events was rare. Then as now many of the giants in the newspaper industry were constantly putting their slant on what was being reported, suppressing stories they did not want publicized and pushing news that they did. This practice was so widespread the phrase "Yellow Journalism" was used to describe it.

Free speech and the first amendment that guarantees it, is indeed one of the cornerstones of our country. Yet, with this great freedom comes the even greater responsibility to report the events and only the events without slanting, twisting, editorializing and distorting facts. Will this happen any time soon? Will the "talking heads" on our TV and computer screens ever simply report the news without the smoke and mirrors? I don't think so. All we can do as citizens is think for ourselves and take the time to look around us and see what is REALLY happening and then VOTE accordingly. America is a great nation. We have given and continue to give more to the world than any nation in history. The media people and many of their movie actor friends who seem to think this country should become less capitalistic and more socialistic should look around the world at the dozens of failed experiments and impoverished citizens in countries with this type government. Years ago England's great prime-minister Margaret Thatcher defined the failure of socialism in one sentence when she said, "The problem with Socialism is eventually you run out of other people's money."

Thanks for reading The Crapper Chronicles, and remember, we have our families, our friends, our health, and time.....the rest is smoke and mirrors!

Chuck

THE CRAPPER MUSE

North Dakota Afternoon

You can't discuss North Dakota in the summer, and not mention the shades of color.

You see, our state has all of them, from somber black-blue to every other.

Whether dark green upon a hillside, or reflected brightly in a creek;

You must see North Dakota in the summer if Nature's paint is what you seek.

The ash trees stand tall with heavy fruit, the sage is lush green-gray;

A squadron of clouds sail a clear blue sky, a light breeze completes the day.

The buffalo grass waves in the sun, the finches are happy in their work.

The kingbirds dive and swoop for lunch, the turtles sunbathe and smirk.

The wheat fields stretch to far horizons, rolling waves ripening gold in the breeze.

Heavy sunflower heads, nod off in the late afternoon sun, napping as they please.

A distant plane drones by on endless skies, to remind me of the year.

Without such small reminders, I'd swear no other folks were here.

These days are so very magical, in this heaven we call home.

If you take some time to let your imagination run, you can see the buffalo roam.

A few miles away, a city hums: Progress must have its way.

But here in the Shaw; these are ancient times: Its peaceful here today.

Chuck - 2016, Shaw Coulee in Summer

