

The purrrrrfect Valentine's gift

Open Season
Cynthia Haynes



My Valentine tried to eat my breakfast the day after I got it. On Friday, we drove to Salina to get a Valentine's Day delivery from Steve's sister and her son – a flame-point Siamese cat rescued from the Emporia Animal Shelter.

The cat, we are told, got so high in a tree that he had to be removed by using a bucket truck. He had apparently been up there several days in the freezing weather a couple of weeks ago.

His tail and one ear were frostbitten; he lost about three-fourths of the tail, but the ear just looks a little shriveled and gimpy.

He's a beautiful, soft boy, who loves to have his tummy rubbed and enjoys sitting in your lap. We're guessing his age at 1 to 2.

Sister Barb and I saw him on the shelter's website when we were browsing last week during a quick visit to Emporia. It was Sunday, and we had to go home, but she promised to go down to the shelter Monday and check out the cat. In fact, she checked on him on Monday and checked him out of the shelter on Tuesday.

He took up temporary residence in her spare bedroom, since she thought the four large dogs in her house might upset him.

I knew we had to move fast, however, when I got a Facebook post from her son with the cat around his neck and a note saying, "What do you mean YOUR cat?"

So we spent most of Valentine's Day driving to Salina for the exchange.

On the way home, with the cat sitting in my lap, we discussed names. The shelter had called him Channing, but we didn't go for that.

I suggested Val for Valentine's day or Bob for bobcat, since he has such a short tail. Lynx was another suggestion.

My nephew had suggested Fang since he has large teeth and paws. Steve threw out Larry, for the famous spokelynx of Frontier Airlines.

As he said it, I swear, the cat raised his head and looked up. So Larry it is.

Molly Monster, the queen of the house and all she surveys, hates him. Of course, Molly hates all cats, even though she is a cat. (However, my son-in-law, who rescued her from a housing development where he was taking pictures and she, apparently, was lost, claims she thinks she's a dog. She like dogs a lot better than cats; that's for sure.)

So there has been a lot of growling and hissing around our house the last couple of days.

And of course, we're now remembering what it's like to have a young, inquisitive cat around. He jumps up on everything and tried to steal my toast on Saturday. On Sunday, Steve left a bag of hamburger buns on the counter, and it ended up with lots of little teeth marks.

We'll have to learn to put food up right away and close closets and drawers.

And Larry'll have to learn to stay off the table and counters and walk carefully around Molly.

Oh, but he's soft, and pretty, and lovey. He's a great present.



Hooked on phones and wrestling

It's not that I'm cheap, but I finally convinced Jim to give up our telephone land line.

My argument for it: the only people who called us on it were telemarketers. His argument against it: we wouldn't have a listing in the phone book. My answer: precisely.

He finally agreed when I found out you can have your cell phone number listed in the phone book upon request and reminded him that I had registered both our phones on the national "do not call" list.

This decision isn't for everyone. It's major drawback, other than the expense, is your home is no longer on the 9-11 emergency locator. My rationale is that if I am coherent enough to call for help, I'm probably coherent enough to tell you where I am. Besides I always have my cell phone with me. Even if I've fallen and can't get up.

-ob-

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



Now, I appreciate basketball, but we all know that wrestling is "king" in western Kansas. I have a young friend who is relatively new to the area and one year ago was definitely new to the sport of wrestling. Those of us who grew up with big brothers practicing take-downs and reversals in the middle of the not-nearly-big-enough kitchen floor can't understand anyone who doesn't automatically love the sport.

Her son was 8 years old and wanted to wrestle just like his friends. I encouraged her to let him try, and that he

wouldn't be killed. At his first tournament I went along with her for moral support. She was so nervous as her son went out onto the mat I feared she might collapse. But then she really got into the action, screaming support to him.

Her son had control and was doing great while she was yelling, "Take 'im down. Take 'im down."

I had to point out, "He's got him down. Tell him to pin 'im."

Now, they are in their second season of wrestling and she has morphed into "Extreme Wrestling Mom." She never misses a practice or tournament, proudly wears her son's name on her team t-shirt and her 3-year old daughter has her own cheer leading outfit. Now, when she talks about her son and wrestling it's, "We won," or "We're going to regionals."

Yup, she's hooked.

Finding the true happiness in our lives

During the last couple months winter had a tight grip on Kansas countryside. Seemed like whenever I'd look outside my office window I saw gray clouds, large flakes of snow and trees blowing in a bitterly cold wind. This made it easy to dream about the spring thaw or the warm summer sun.

Still there was work to be done – Insight columns to write, photos to take, radio programs to record and meetings to attend. Stacks of files waded to me from the corner.

Deadlines and commitments. What to leave in. What to leave out.

When experiences like this occur, I clear my mind and remember what makes this profession I've chosen rewarding.

For me, happiness comes in many forms:

*Seeing any story you've written adorned with your byline. You probably won't rush home and show your spouse, mother or a good friend, but you consider it a job well done, a challenge met or another human interest story that comes to life on the printed page, Facebook or the web.

*Knowing you are creative. You think about things that cause others to say, "I wish I had thought of that" and for thinking of good stories, coming up with catchy headlines and "well-writ" and telling sentences. On top of that you're being paid for that talent, even

Insight
John Schlageck



if you need less than a wheelbarrow to take into the bank.

*Wordsmithing, or working well with words. Whether it's coaxing, educating, enlightening, urging or uncovering a wonderful story you have the ability. Still, you must look for the reality beyond the deadlines. You help people adjust to change. You show them dreams can become reality. You attempt to guide them away from trouble. And, you hold them up as examples of success in this business of farming and ranching.

*Sharing the excitement when the organization you work with is recognized for excellence. You enjoy the company you keep – the farmers and ranchers across Kansas. You admire the people you work for and write about, the folks who remain a part of this key industry called agriculture. Maybe you were once part of this vocation. Maybe you weren't. In the end it makes no difference. By association, you are part of it.

*Understanding and valuing the weather and the four seasons. You've

experienced the promising winds of spring, the blistering heat of summer, the brilliant colors of fall and the bleakness winter can bring. You know what it can do to crops and livestock. You know about the white combine. You've seen blizzards destroy a cow herd. Weather is like a wheel moving slowly while being prodded along by Mother Nature. Sure would be fun to spend more time watching her do so.

*Being recognized for your abilities. This usually includes certificates, a plaque, pin or that all too fleeting trip on stage and the applause that follows. The point is someone singled you out as a writer, photographer or editor. You've received an 'atta boy or 'atta girl. Accept it graciously and with gratitude.

*Finally, you are alive. You're walking upright and enjoying this big adventure called life.

By the way, just yesterday I saw some green shoots in our yard poking their little heads out of the melting snow. That's another reason for happiness.

A French writer from the early 1600s once said, "We are never so happy, nor so unhappy, as we suppose ourselves to be."

This guy's name was La Rochefoucauld.

Now that's real happiness – remembering a name like that.

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Thumbs up to Dana Paxton for the great picture of the snow covered statue on the front page of Friday, February 21 Telegram. It was great. Called in.

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:
e-mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.