

# FORUM

Fanfare for the Common Man

## Man vs. Wild

BY DAN BROWN

I'm sure you saw the recent story about the woman trainer, a USC alumni who was killed by a Killer Whale at Orlando's Sea World.

We have all made the comments about the obvious danger everybody seems to ignore when it comes to frolicking around a big, deep pool with a two-ton mammal that comes with a mammoth mouth and very big teeth who coincidentally has the word "Killer" as its first name.

I know the woman was merely sitting poolside petting the Orca on the nose when it reached up and grabbed her and drug her into the pool. And if the whales could speak, I'm sure it wasn't doing anything more rambunctious than playing, roughhousing around so to speak.

But when you weigh a couple tons and have a mouth the size of a small trash dumpster, with teeth no less, roughhousing around can be dangerous, and sadly, in this case, fatal.

The trainer drowned, which is to say, the killer whale didn't eat her. Whales don't know we can't breathe underwater or even hold our breath for as long as they can.

The whale was just doing what whales do in this case.

I think they made one too many Free Willy movies, though I understand Steve Irwin's daughter is making her film debut in the latest Free Willy incarnation.

It's hard to believe it's been almost four years since Irwin died after being fatally stung while swimming with stingrays. Irwin spent his entire life around crocodiles that wanted to eat him. He understood and respected the threat of wild animals.

But we all get lazy sometimes. We relax. We let down our guards. And we shouldn't.

It used to be we were afraid of wild animals like bears, tigers, dolphins, killer whales and the likes. Not

anymore.

Nowadays, and maybe it stems from this whole communing with nature movement or the whole Golden Rule Love Thy Neighbor state of mind, but we suddenly feel that wild animals are our friends, that they aren't a danger to us, and hey, if you walk up to one with a smile and an outstretched hand, that animal will let you pet it.

Wrong.

And we wonder when we read about tigers mauling Las Vegas magicians or 200-pound monkeys beating someone to a pulp, or pet wolves suddenly turning on their masters and devouring an entire family.

Just because Tarzan had Cheetah doesn't mean your next-door neighbor should have a monkey, too.

I tell you who's to blame in all this. Those petting zoos are to blame.

Animals don't have the known cerebral function for loving thy neighbor. They embrace Darwinism. Animals love their neighbors ... for dinner maybe. Survival of the fittest is their only religion. Eat or be eaten. You can't domesticate that.

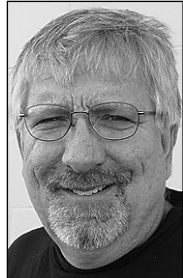
You do know that if they could, your dogs and cats would eat you.

The next time you are sitting there on your couch, scratching kitty behind the ears, take a moment and regard the calculating look in their eyes. Fluffy is watching you with that practiced look that is trying to figure out what would be the best way to attack you so as to eat you.

Do you want to know what that look is really saying?

It's saying, "Give me time. Not today. Not tomorrow. But one of these days I'm going to figure out how to do this and then my friend, you're dinner."

There is a wild in wild animals for a reason.



Smith Says

## What makes women happy?

BY JULIE R. SMITH

Virginia Woolf said it was money and a room of one's own (i.e., a sanctuary in which to work or dream.)

Gloria Steinem—"membra her?"—said the key to happiness is a sense of purpose. Marabel Morgan—I KNOW you "membra her"—said making our husbands happy would make us happy. (Total Woman workshops were as ubiquitous as Jello in the 70s, and to this day I agree with many of her principles.)

The latest look at happiness can be found in a book by Ariel Gore, "Bluebird: Women and the New Psychology of Happiness." Gore defines happiness as "the ability to rejoice in the midst of suffering."

Happiness, she says, is a decision, an act of will: We must actively choose to be happy. (That sounds too much like gritting one's teeth and wearing a hair shirt to me.)

Then again, she says, some women have a talent for happiness. They're born cheerful, like my sister was born knowing how to swirl flaming batons. Other gals are grim as the grave. (We've all known a few of those, haven't we? Their lives are blessed, but joy eludes them. I avoid these people like the plague.)

Here's a brief list of what makes me

happy. Feel free to add your own.

- A bubble bath.
- Hanging out with my husband.
- Learning a new skill (not baton twirling; I have fingers like sausages.)
- Makeupalley.com. It's addictive.
- Getting a certain magazine each month, because it reminds me of the friend who's quietly renewed the subscription for years.
- Listening to my little dog snore.
- Feeling in control. (It's always an illusion, but so what?)
- Retin-A.
- Knowing my brother counts me as one of his best friends.
- Widdle reaching for my hand in church.
- Ice-cold Chardonnay.
- Facebook friends.
- Waking up with a face that doesn't have swollen eyes or sheet creases.
- A new tube of mascara. I'm such a girl.
- Chocolate so bitter it makes my tongue curl.
- Being corrected by someone I love. (Who else will point out your mistakes?)
- A flat-bellied day. (Which never lasts past 11 a.m., but still.)
- Having enough of anything, whether



it's linguini or love.

- Friends who smell good.
- Watching "The Office."
- Letters to the editor. The topic doesn't matter; I just like to read them.
- Washing dishes. (I know, it's weird.)
- A new shaver for my Sasquatch legs.
- Watching anything with Ricky Gervais in it.
- Friends who loan me books and say, "This made me think of you."
- Looking at photos of Widdle before we met.
- Being alone by choice, which is so different from being alone by circumstance.
- Reading three days' worth of newspapers by lamplight on the squishy sofa in the living room.
- Andy Griffith re-runs.
- The 17 mismatched wine glasses in the china cabinet.
- Marinara sauce.
- Throwing out ugly silk flowers.
- Baby goats.
- When someone indicates, with a nod or a smile or an arched eyebrow, that he/she gets me. It's a rare thing to be truly got.
- Irish oatmeal. With cream and sugar.

Julie R. Smith, a happy little fool, can be reached at widdlewife@aol.com.

## Letters to the Editor

### 'Shameful and inexcusable'

Dear Editor:

It is shameful and inexcusable what our children are exposed to in the checkout lines of our supermarkets!

The pornographic "titles" and headlines of the articles in some of the magazines that are placed in the checkout aisles are forced upon our children's minds and hearts as they simply wait in the checkout line with us—they are a captive audience!

Now, being a good American, am I for censorship? No!

However, neither am I for exposing young people to ideas, words, and acts that they are either not emotionally prepared for or that are simply indecent. What adults read and do are their own business; but just as it would be ludicrous to force a "sample" of a cigarette that sits behind the counter on young people as they wait in the checkout lines, it is just as ridiculous and harmful that we force our children to "sample" these magazines that are not healthy for their minds and hearts.

I have talked to most of the local store managers on numerous occasions about this. My suggestion is that the magazines either be moved to an aisle that a parent can choose to pass by or not (but let it be our choice), or there are two different "display" options for the free-standing racks. Plastic "U" shaped holders that show the name of the magazine and any central picture, but "hide" the names of the included articles are available from most vendors.

Or, the simple brown-bag wrap that displays the title and can easily be slipped down if a potential buyer chooses to read more. That is a win-win: the seller still gets to have his mag-

azine, the buyer and family are not forced to be exposed to things they would rather not see.

We wonder what is wrong with our society ... The apathy that our average middle class family (the silent majority) has allowed—our "sleepy state"—is not "working" for us!

Please, take a few extra minutes in your local store to speak with the manager about taking steps to change this. Some managers, I have learned, out of laziness or indifference, say they "have no control" over what is put out there ... this is not so! I am willing to bet that when we start talking (with our mouths or our money) that we will be heard.

Beezie Fleming  
Pinopolis

### David and Cindy

Dear Editor:

My first cousin David Woods is a loving and giving person. He is a hard working person and he has a big heart; he's always doing things to help. When I was a Head Start teacher, I had boys in my classroom who needed haircuts. With the parents' approval, David, who is a barber, came every two weeks to cut their hair. Without pay, he did it with joy.

On Mother's Day, David and his wife Cindy cooked and prepared dinner for all of the mothers on his parents' and Cindy's side of the family. It was a great celebration. David gave every mother a rose.

David is very generous, even with the current economic state. On Jan. 8, he and Cindy took his mother, his aunt, two first cousins and his daughter on a three-day cruise with all expenses paid. It was the first cruise for many and David and Cindy

made sure that no one was left out. They treated everyone like royalty.

I just wanted David and Cindy to know I am so grateful that they have given us something that money could not buy: memories that are priceless. David, I know you hear the cry of many. I know that God will give back to you as He sees the need. My prayer is that God blesses you and Cindy.

From all of us — Anna Dell Bryant, Dorothy Beaufort, Catherine Gerald, Deborah Moor and Jonnie Ruth Jenkins — we love you, David and Cindy!

Catherine Gerald  
St. Stephen

### Unhappy with road

Dear Editor:

I used to drive to North Charleston on a road in our county that I thought was in fairly bad condition. Now I drive to Moncks Corner on Highway 6. I don't think that other road was so bad. The recently installed "Rough Road" signs seem to agree with my thoughts.

Madeline Drake  
Cross

### Pastor Celebration

Dear Editor:

For the Sake of Souls Deliverance Ministries in Moncks Corner celebrated Pastor Arnold's birthday Feb. 13 at Somerset Point in Pinopolis, and with a birthday service Feb. 15 at the church.

The church wants to thank everyone that made the celebration a joyous and memo-

See **LETTERS** Page 6A

## Lowcountry Riffs

## Busting another myth

BY JIM TATUM

Whoever said money couldn't buy happiness either never had it or just took it too seriously. With enough money, you can, in fact, buy a lot of happiness, or rather, peace of mind, which is a very clearly marked and well-paved route to happiness.

You just have to do it right.

I have always said I want to be rich, not famous. In fact, I want to be rich and anonymous — very rich and very anonymous. I've always admired understatement and enjoy being underestimated. It's so much more fun when you finally get around to cutting the legs out of the one who took you for granted — and you get to do it on your terms.

Which leads me to another myth to bust: You can have your cake and eat it, too. The trick is to pick a flavor no one else likes.

Everybody thinks fame is a wonderful thing. Yet in this age of Facebook, YouTube, and other such real time outlets for worldwide spontaneous idiocy, fame is not only easy to achieve, it's even more

fleeting than it ever was. And you really can't spend it, so what's the point of it?

Fame is far more trouble than it's worth, but rich and famous is a miserable combination. If you're rich and famous, then you are never going to be able to properly enjoy your money, or even your time, because people will always be bothering you. People will think that because they know of you, they are entitled to take shameless liberties with your solitude.

No, thanks.

But if you're rich and anonymous, you can have the best of all worlds. If you are a do-gooder, you can support causes you find worthy without having to fend off unwanted solicitation — but you do it on your terms since no one would know to call you up and shamelessly beg. You don't have to put up with incessant interruptions from stockbrokers, real estate agents, charities, widows, orphans, long-lost relatives, anti-cat juggling activists, or



any other such Society for the Prevention of Social Ill Du Jour.

More important, if you have the jing and no one else knows it, then you can do whatever you want completely under the radar. You can enjoy the beauty of this world in peace. You can know your friends and family like you for you, not for your money. Or if you happen to be an insufferable jerk, then you can know for sure they only put up with you because you are family, not family with money.

I don't need all the money in the world, either, just enough to keep me sitting in warm sunshine and sand on the beach pretty much all day every day for the next 30-40 years. One way or another, I'm going to get it.

That's my cunning plan. I am going to get rich, but you're not going to know about it. No one is. And in a few years, people may idly wonder whatever happened to that awful, curmudgeonous, chitlin' circuit writer that used to glower out at the world from here now and again.

He'll be happily retired at the beach — and no one will ever be the wiser.

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