



# Home Sweet Home

By Michael G. Steelman

Over the holidays, I took a few days off to stay home and spend some quality time with my wife and my dog. I should put this in perspective: My wife has been retired for a couple of years, and my dog has never worked that I know of. So they are both used to just hanging around the house, puttering, and doing whatever they do all day. I am blessed to still be working; I enjoy my work and the people that I work with immensely.

So my day at home started with a cup of coffee, and since I get up very early, some quiet time. Shortly thereafter, my wife and my dog joined me. In the cold weather, my wife has an interesting way of dressing warmly, with flannel pajamas, fur boots, mismatching robe, and hair that, well, needed tending to, like Albert Einstein having a bad hair day. When she first came out, I thought a Siberian reindeer herder had stumbled into our home, but no, it was simply my wife in her retirement uniform of the day.

My dog on the other hand, looked exactly like he looked when he went to bed; fur neat and combed, bright-eyed and very

bushy-tailed.

The first words out of my wife's mouth after a grumbled good morning was "What project are we going to do today?" - said surprisingly sweetly.

Project? What project, I'm off for the day and not intending to do much of anything. But since we just purchased our "downsize" home, there is still a lot to do. I have discovered that "downsizing" means throwing a lot of stuff out, sorting through boxes of photographs and memorabilia that we have hauled from home to home for no apparent reason, and then buying more stuff for the downsize home. It's an endless cycle. So, the project ordered for the day was hanging pictures. Sounds simple enough, but I soon discovered that there is nothing simple in hanging art.

So we inventoried our pictures, and took a walk through the house to determine placement. Easy really, since I was determined to do exactly what my wife told me to do.

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So I gathered my equipment: pencils for marking spots, level, hammer, picture hanging accoutrements, drill, screws, tape measure, etc. You can't be over-prepared for the nightmare of picture hanging.

We approached the first spot, I hold the rather large and heavy picture in place for my wife to look at from several feet back and different angles. I had to move it up, down, left, right innumerable times. Thankfully, I won't need a workout for weeks because I held paintings in place all day, and now have a new and miraculous upper body workout routine.

Apparently the key to hanging pictures, according to my wife, is that it must not be too high or too low. This amazes me, because not once during our 48 years of marriage, has a guest in our home ever commented that a picture was too high or too low. Apparently that was not the point.

Recall, throughout this day of picture hanging, my wife has remained in her flannel, fur boots and robe outfit, and I began to wonder if she spends her entire retirement days a bit underdressed.

Remember that my dog, "Shakespeare" is so happy that I am spending the day at home, that he never leaves my side. Whatever I am doing, he is right next to me looking up at me, and I know the look in his eyes. He is asking

me "What are we doing? Where are we going next? When do we eat? When can I take a nap?" My dog's questions and demands are quite simple and straightforward.

My wife on the other hand can appear to be straightforward and direct, but you have to know the secret language to truly understand what she is saying. If she says, for example, "Oh honey, you don't have to do that right now." What she really means is, I want that done right now. Or, if she says "Whatever you think is fine with me," What she really means is, do it my way or suffer the consequences. It's really a quite simple language to understand, once you have erroneously taken her statements literally.

During the course of our "quality time" day together, my wife said she needed to run to Ludlums, which meant a shower, hair drying, make-up, and whatever else happens in that dressing room, which took well over an hour. She drove to Ludlums, and was back in ten minutes. I was thinking about the math of time spent in preparation for the grocery store trip, versus the time actually spent in the grocery store. I also wondered why she needed to look so good for the Ludlum patrons versus how she looked for

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me and my dog at home. I was wondering how she would be received at Ludlums, if she was still in her mismatched flannel pajamas, robe and fur boots. I, of course never shared that thought with her, as I would then be spending my holidays at the Martin-Hollis Funeral Home.

So after a day of sidelong and furtive glances between me and my dog regarding our better half, and thinking that I could finally curl up with a good book, my wife “suggested” that I drive to Macomb and pick up Chinese food. Wondering why we don’t have a Chinese take out restaurant in Bushnell, Shakespeare and I gladly drove to Macomb to expand our cultural food options.

During the ride down, Shakespeare and I looked at each other and reflected on our day at home. We both wondered what the next day would bring. We both knew the answer; more projects. I began to dream about being back at work, behind my desk and doing all the things, that in my little universe, I have some control over. I needed a vacation from my vacation, and hoped when I opened my Chinese fortune cookie that night, it would say, “You need to spend more time out of the house.”

## Friends in Motion

Some anniversaries being celebrated include: **Gordon** and **Dorothy Melvin** (41 years) of Macomb, **Bud** and **Deb Hobbs** (54 years) of Good Hope, and **Larry** and **Judy McClouth** (54 years) of Bushnell. Happy anniversary to all!



Birthday celebrations include: **Jane Brown** of Bushnell, **Ordelta Baker** (102), **Harold Camp** (88), **Anne Haynes** (83), **Kathy Hollis** (75), **Murrell Hollis** (76), **Larry Kugler** (77), **George Pensinger** (81), and **Nelda VanDiver**, all of Bushnell, **John Butler** (77) of Greenbush, **Budd Hobbs** (73) of Good Hope, and **Gordon Melvin** (92) of Macomb. Happy birthday to all!



## UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Feb 4 & Mar 4** VFW breakfast, 7 to 10 am

**Mar. 3** - Free blood pressure, pulse/oxygen, cholesterol and blood sugar checks at F&M Main Bank Lobby, 9 to 10

# It Doesn't Get Much Better Than Bacon!

## HARVEST SPINACH SALAD

**Kathy Danner**

- 1 bunch fresh spinach, stems removed
- 5 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled
- 5 green onions
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 1 Red Delicious apple, cored and thinly sliced
- 1/4 lb. Monterey Jack cheese, cubed
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. dry mustard



Toss together spinach, bacon, green onions, almonds, apple and cheese in a large salad

bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, sugar and mustard. Toss dressing with salad; serve immediately. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## ZUPPA TOSCANA (OLIVE GARDEN)

**Don Swartzbaugh**

- 1 lb. Italian or regular sausage
- 4 slices of bacon
- 1 small white onion
- 3 cups diced potatoes
- 4 cups beef, chicken or veggie stock
- 1/2 bag of fresh Kale
- 1 cup of heavy cream.

Brown sausage and bacon, and



drain excess drippings. Sauté chopped onion in drippings. Combine sausage, bacon, onion, potatoes and stock, and cook until potatoes are soft. Add Kale. Add cream when almost done

## BACON AND JALAPENO STUFFING

**Monica Lafary**

- 1/2 lb. bacon; cooked and diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 celery stalks, diced
- 1-3 jalapenos, seeded and diced
- 1 Tbsp. thyme
- 3/4 Tbsp. chili powder
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
- 8 cups toasted breadcrumbs
- 6 cups crumbled cornbread
- 1/4 cup butter, divided

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook bacon, remove from pan, reserve drippings. Add drippings to dutch oven. Add onions, celery, jalapenos, thyme

and chili powder. Saute for 5 minutes. Add broth and bring to a simmer. In a large bowl, mix eggs, cheese and bacon. Add breadcrumbs, cornbread and broth to bowl slowly then gently toss.



Grease a 9 x 13 inch dish, add mixture. Dot top with butter, cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake another 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.