

Dick Bernard

From: Dick Bernard [dick@chez-nous.net]
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To: dick bernard
Subject: two weeks

Sunday morning I was tooling down the freeway between Minneapolis and St. Paul, and a motorcycle passed me...towing a rowboat at freeway speeds! I did a doubletake. Then, that afternoon, on my walking route, two kids came down the sidewalk rolling a canoe, inside of which was a small kayak (the canoe was on a platform of sorts, on wheels. Memo to you wilderness types : civilized idea for portaging. Actually, the use of the wheels was probably logical - the kids had probably been in the lake, whose dock was a few blocks away on the other side, and lived some blocks away and were going home.

Fall is coming here - I can tell this by the first timid geese which are heading south. By next month they'll be going through here in droves. The ducks that occupied a small neighborhood pond all last winter will probably return to take up that same insane winter home in a short while - they have been gone all summer. Even in the animal kingdom there are personal quirks and foibles among the animals - they aren't all alike! Speaking of animals: I was listening to a Canadian broadcast piece on Thursday night, about an 800 pound black bear who ran into a car someplace in Manitoba recently. Normal very large black bears are about half that size I guess.

Cathy and I were both out of town this past weekend - she to visit her sister at Cross Lake, and me to Park Rapids to help Flo and Carter on their cabin (which is coming along well, and worth a few words, Flo, in your next update. They're doing a very nice job.)

Was planning to work with them in Park Rapids on Friday and Saturday, but Friday, we were rained out. But there was work anyway. The Headwaters Intervention Center honored Flo by planting a tree in her honor at the new school just a few short blocks from their house. Carter and I picked up the tree, dug the hole, and got it set - which was a task, since this was about a 3" diameter sugar maple, perhaps 12 feet tall. The presentation was made in a pretty steady rain, so there were only a few people there. But it was very impressive nonetheless, and a well deserved public recognition of Flo, for all her outspoken advocacy for those who need assistance. Advocacy for the less advantaged is in Flo's blood, and it is good that there are people like her in society. Headwaters works primarily with spousal or partner abuse victims. In previous years, and even continuing now, Flo has been an outspoken advocate for not only these victims, but for the mentally handicapped; for the elderly; for children, for peace - she "walks the talk" more than most anyone I know. We need many more people like her.

Saturday was cool and generally fairly dry. John Hagebock and Eric joined the three of us at the cabin site, and John and Eric provided real expertise and assistance in working with Carter raising the roof trusses, so that all the trusses were up at the end of the day. I filled the role of common labor - moving dirt from one side of the cabin to the other. A necessary, hard and distinctly unglamorous task! But a task that needed to be done. I could boast, legitimately, that the pile of dirt on the west side of the cabin had almost been moved to the east side by the end of the day - one wheelbarrow full at a time! We spent a long day at the cabin, not getting home till almost nine p.m. Flo made a great meal, which we ate at the cabin. One of her former colleagues brought out a delicious stew for lunch. We didn't go hungry.

I am sure of one thing with this cabin: it will not fall over due to hapless construction. Carter especially is extraordinarily attentive to the smallest of details. I can think of no one more "wedded" to precision than Carter - 1/16" can be a big deal for him! It's a good trait, and one I don't share. I suspect two or three inches here or there wouldn't be a big deal for me. JUST KIDDING, for those of you who believe that!

The old cabin was and is a mouse haven; in the new cabin, those mice wishing to "break and enter" will have their work cut out for them.

Cathy had a nice weekend with her sister, who is about to head back to Arizona - so it will be last time for awhile. Next weekend is a big event for Cathy. She'll be among the group of 3M employees honored for long service. For her, it is 35 years with the company (she actually started there almost 39 years ago, but left for awhile as a young mother.) There will be a big fete for the senior employees next Saturday. I'll tag along, of course. Olivia Newton-John will be the entertainer. Should be a nice evening. (Cathy is waiting "with bated breath" for that magical birthday, 2/26/03, when she will be about ready to retire.)

Labor Day weekend we basically hung around home. I went to work on organizing 20 years of photographs. For me, that is a big order - I started out with about 20 business size envelope boxes full. There are thousands of photos. I have done a reasonable job of keeping most of them in order over the years, but felt a need to relabel, and in some cases discard photos. I do not go timidly into such projects - once I start I cannot quit. A few months ago, I did the slides for the last many years. Anyway, by the end of last weekend, the 20 boxes were down to 13, and the number of unidentified photos had shrunk to a fairly small number. It felt very good to do the project, exhausting as it was. As the fall goes on, some of you will be receiving some photos of your own families from these boxes. Something you may wish

to keep for your own collections.

Today began a two week Habitat for Humanity project in Minneapolis. I'm scheduled for nine of the ten days, but will probably only have to work about six of those. We will be working on a house in south Minneapolis, to be occupied by a Somali family. John Hagebock joined our Basilica work group today and will be there again in the morning - we and two others worked together on a porch today. He does very good work. Cathy will join the group next week Tuesday.

Affordable housing, which Habitat is about, continues to be a crisis here, as are the other elements that go into homelessness, especially for children and their families, most of whom are working, I believe, but for too low wages. I would really recommend that everyone on this network read an editorial on homelessness in Sunday Sept 9 Minneapolis StarTribune. go to www.startribune.com, click on Opinions, then editorials and the editorial "Homelessness/No meals, no meds, no mattresses" should come up. Homelessness is a very major social justice issue, not at all abstract to tens of thousands of people in this state, including the working poor who simply cannot afford housing. We are no better or worse than anywhere else. All the stories of those who are homeless, are not at all as simple and clearcut to judge as it might first appear. Sure, some make unwise decisions, and some's pathway to the street is full of foolishness - but who are we to judge? They could be any one of us - which is hard to imagine in these prosperous days. The only difference is that we haven't (yet, and hopefully won't) gone over the cliff; they have.

For those readers who are Christian, Jesus' entire message - it seems to me - spoke constantly to the needs and the very real value of those in his society who were on the lower rung, and even made stupid personal decisions, and he did so without judgement. His judgement was more to be seen cast on the ones who judged ("let the person who is without sin cast the first stone", and many similar.) It was the prosperous and the powerful who were his foils. I think Hebrew scriptures have a similar thread as well - God never gave up on the "ninnies" who couldn't figure it out!.

Which reminds me of a letter from a friend who works in a large Parish in another state: a recent issue, there, was what to do about a homeless guy who was living in his car, and using the bathroom facilities in the church. I don't know what the final resolution was - the guy probably went somewhere else before the issue became a crisis - but it is one of those dilemmas of putting the gospels into practice.

More than enough for now. Do hope you all have a great week.