

VIEWPOINTS

The Best Way ... to save a kitten's life

By Alan Dale

alan.dale@plaintalk.net

I would never wish what happened upon my cat to ever occur to another feline, or heck, a human being.

Her previous owner, the one who 'cared' for her during her first four months of life, decided the best way to get rid of her when he moved was to bury her alive under our duplex building.

Yes, my cat, now almost seven-years-old was buried alive and left to suffer...

For five days.

It's almost unreal to think how tough a kitten has to be to survive that ordeal. She came out of it a little irritated, quite upset, but ultimately OK.

Since we had been neighbors before the brutal attempt on her life, we ultimately bonded and she is now mine.

How tough she is can be told in another column.

But not this one.

That's because on Sunday I had to deal with another trauma placed upon a kitten, but this one wasn't an act of malice, it was just a crazy chain of events.

Those events led to the brief and horrendous ordeal for an absolutely beautiful little female (we think) kitten...

And I really didn't mean it.

I was having a late lunch at Café Brule when a lady ran in asking who drove the type of car that I own.

"It sounds like a cat is trapped inside the engine." My God.

Well I ran out and once I got out of the restaurant you could hear the incessant (and loud) screams of the kitten.

A small group of concerned persons milled about my vehicle. I popped the hood and we looked inside.

First a nice lady saw the feline and how it had wedged itself about one of the wheels and in between it and part of the engine.

The lady tried to get this little (but tough as nails) kitten out, but the tiny, fuzzy one, wanted nothing to do with it. She may have been frightened, but that didn't mean this human was any better an option in her cat eyes.

After a bit of struggle, we finally managed to corral the little thing and that's when things got interesting.

Or can I be corny and just say, when things got beautiful?

First a wonderful young lady working at PetsPaw came out and took her from another awesome woman who was trying to feed the crying cat some water, despite getting a nice bit of scratching.

The PetsPaw lady wrapped the kitten inside a towel and offered to give it a flea bath and just comfort it.

What grabbed me was all the people standing there and the concern for this little, barely two-pound creature.



Alan Dale/The Plain Talk

What's going to happen next? Now, what do we do?

No one could take her home. I would have, but my cat has this crazy, alpha, territorial, beat the crap out of a pitbull with two punches thing going for her, so I was out.

I was devastated.

I won't lie and say how bad I felt for this kitten, which probably jumped aboard when I left The Valiant Winery's Great Dakota Wine Fest. The same lady who pulled the kitten out of my engine said her and her husband had heard that same yowling from the parking lot there - why she never cried when I was near the car is beyond me.

On more than one occasion I held back tears because I felt so guilty for possibly almost killing this innocent little goof of fuzzy. I didn't hear her. If I had, I would have never driven my car.

But she was OK.

So as I went back to Café Brule to try and eat lunch - I did, but I was struggling - I randomly asked two clean cut college girls sitting next to me:

"Do any of you want a kitten?"

Some young ladies said they were interested in looking into taking her home for a friend, but alas to no avail.

Then, our fuzzy friend's flea bath savior decided to take her home... flea-free of course.

Before I went home I gave my little acquaintance a couple rubs of the chin. She had calmed so much and she was going to a home.

One she may never have gotten if she hadn't almost died in my engine or after falling out of and onto the gravel at 30 mph.

Unreal.

What will stick with me is those first few people and their concern. What more sticks with me is the absolutely wonderful gesture of the PetsPaw lady who took the kitty in and was willing to take her home herself.

In less than a half hour, a traumatized kitten had a new life.

Thanks so much, Vermillion. I am still choked up as I write this. No, Alan, that's not sweat... that is called a tear.

I thank you for the kitten because despite her toughness she probably can't write a column.

Eh, you'll get over it. You are loved.



Spousal bonding: The day we shared a bottle

It was a once-in-a-lifetime bonding moment the day my husband, Brian, and I shared a bottle of Revlon Frost & Glow by Colorsilk - a blond highlighting kit for my 50 shades of gray.

I wasn't coloring my hair at home to save a buck. I was doing it to save a hundred of them.

To be more accurate, our experience was much more than a moment since the application itself took nearly three long and tedious hours.

Let me explain. I was bored out of my gourd and asked Brian if he wouldn't mind applying some highlights. I just needed a little blond kick to liven it up a bit.

"I want it to look natural," I said. "Just like a movie star."

He readily agreed to stand there wearing latex gloves, holding a tiny plastic hook and pull my thin scraggly strands through dozens of teeny holes in a plastic bonnet tightly tied under my chin.

Seriously doubting he knew what he was doing, I worried he'd get fed up with the ordeal and walk out on me in the middle of it. All I needed was a hairdresser with an attitude. Then what would I do?

Tentatively considering the alternative, I wondered if I could do it myself. Probably not.

None the less, it was together time, I reasoned, right there smack dab under the single overhead light; my head entombed in thick purple Color Silk compound.

Time passed ever so slo-o-o-wly as Brian tediously poured over me, like a brain surgeon whose sole responsibility was not to break my

MY STORY YOUR STORY



PAULA DAMON paula.damon@iw.net

hair or mess up so badly on the dye job that I'd have to wear a hat for the rest of my life.

I have to say, even though he's not the most patient person in the world, he really did hold it together. No primal screams here.

After an hour of fishing hair through that darn cap, he was less than a quarter of the way finished. I began doubting I'd make it out of that chair alive.

Methodically I'd remind him every so often to hold the hook sideways at a 40-degree angle to my head, like the directions said to which he'd respond,

"I am," even though I knew he wasn't.

Oh, I did my share of self-talk, as I evaluated and re-evaluated my level of risk in letting him mess with my crown.

If it turned out to be a disaster, my backup plan was to run across the street to my neighbor, a hairdresser, and beg her to fix my failed new do.

After what seemed like an eternity in our makeshift salon, Brian threw me a curve.

"If there's any of this stuff left when we're done with your hair, we're dumping it on mine."

"We are?" I screeched, convinced he had totally lost his mind.

"Yes, we are," came his resolute reply.

"We're not streaking it with highlights - just going solid blond?"

"Yep."

"There won't be any left," I said, trying to dismiss his wild hair idea with my power of suggestion. [You know what I'm talking about, Ladies.]

"Oh, yes, there will be," he said convincingly.

Sighing deeply, I wondered if the tedious had gotten to him.

After he applied that final layer of paste and covered my head with a second plastic cap, we traded places. Now, it was his turn.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" I said, testing his resolve.

"Yes!" he quipped, leaving no doubt.

I proceeded to apply every last drop of the remaining half-cup of mixture on his thick dark hair.

Then, after wrapping his head in a makeshift plastic hood from a Fareway grocery bag, I clamped it down with plastic hair clips and set the oven timer for 50 minutes.

That was a rare moment in our 42 years together. Sitting there with our heads wrapped in plastic and old bath towels tucked around our necks, we were two old people who had gotten sick and tired of looking old. Sick and tired.

And then I panicked. What if someone knocked at the door? What would they think?

Quickly placing my hands on his shoulders and staring him square in the eyes, I said emphatically, "Remember, if anyone comes to the door, we are not answering it looking like this."

Capitol Notebook: A dead man doesn't give an interview

By Bob Mercer

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The Pew research center distributed results this summer showing South Dakota has the smallest corps of news reporters assigned to covering the statehouse.

There are two of us. The other reporter works for the Associated Press and is temporarily assigned to Pierre, while AP looks to make a permanent hire. Chet Brokaw retired earlier this year.

Officially I work for the *Aberdeen American News*. But my stories and columns are shared simultaneously among seven daily papers at Aberdeen, Watertown, Mitchell, Yankton, Pierre, Rapid City and Spearfish.

Six papers pay Aberdeen. It is an efficient system. A news item that would be of interest to one or more of the seven often comes up while looking into another. Travel expenses are spread.

But there are many days I can't get to every

state meeting in Pierre or elsewhere across South Dakota.

During legislative session, there frequently are four or more committee meetings in the same two-hour block each morning, followed by another two-hour block of the same.

Consequently I juggle.

If AP is at a meeting, I decide whether I need to be there too, because of some topic of direct interest to one of the seven papers I serve. If there is another meeting of direct interest, I frequently go to that other meeting.

The other morning there were three meetings at the same time.

I chose the Transportation Commission meeting and picked up two stories immediately, with another one in my notes and background for a fourth one later.

From there, I headed

to the South Dakota High School Activities Association offices where the board of directors including four new members gathered.

The SDHSA directors worked through lunch, taking a short break to get sub sandwiches from the back counter of the meeting room.

The meeting I didn't attend was of directors for the South Dakota Development Corporation.

SDDC was one link then-Gov. Mike Rounds used to get state Future Fund grants to Northern Beef at Aberdeen.

State Attorney General Marty Jackley determined several Future Fund grants were increased to SDDC in December 2010. Northern Beef received an extra \$550,000 from SDDC.

Northern Beef meanwhile diverted \$550,000 from a different \$1 million grant

approved by Rounds in December 2010.

The \$550,000 went to an escrow account for SDRC Inc.

Joop Bollen of Aberdeen operated SDRC and under a 2009 contract ran the EB-5 immigrant-investor visa program for state government.

SDRC raised tens of millions of dollars for projects such as Northern Beef and profited by charging fees to EB-5 investors and borrowers.

In the center was Richard Benda, secretary of tourism and state development for Rounds. Benda and Bollen signed the 2009 contract.

Benda went to work at SDRC in 2011 as loan monitor for Northern Beef. The \$550,000 paid Benda for two years and covered other costs.

Jackley prepared last October to arrest Benda. But Benda died Oct. 20 from a shotgun wound to his abdomen described as suicide.

I wish someone tipped off a reporter in 2010. A dead man is hard to interview.

CAPITOL NOTEBOOK



BOB MERCER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader enjoys 'Between the Lines' column

I generally bring my lunch to work. It gives me a few more minutes to relax, read the newspaper (yes, a few of us still do that!), and skip the Noon rush all together.

Yesterday at lunch, I read (Paula Damon's) your column entitled, "People will forget what you say," which was published on July 25, 2014. I read most of your columns because I enjoy your writing style. It's comfortable, easy reading and well written, too. As a writer myself, I don't like reading boring material any more than the next person.

What really got my attention in this last column was that you explained your emotions so right on. You hit the target about how you feel and were able to put it into words that so simply explain what you felt. As I read on, I sat there thinking, "That's exactly the way that makes me feel."

I'm sure there are weeks when you work your tail off, yet hear nothing from any of your fan base. Keep writing. I enjoy your work. And by the way, it makes my lunch break so much more enjoyable!

— Laurie Fritsch

Vermillion



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