

opinion

Family captive of spreading houseplants

by Art Buchwald

What happened was that a few years ago people started giving us houseplants instead of cut flowers. The children gave their mother a palm tree for Mother's Day; they gave me a philodendron for Father's Day and three dieffenbachias for Christmas.

My wife put them in the living room. The relatives brought a snake plant a few months later, and a friend presented us with a fatsia plant which my wife put in the library to help "cheer" it up.

She dutifully watered them and talked to them and they started to grow... and grow... and grow. Then she decided the living room looked bare and bought some grape ivy which she wrapped around the fake balcony and some aspidistras which she placed in the corner near the television set.

Someone sent us a schefflera for an anniversary, and friends who have a farm in the Shenandoah trucked in two spider plants which were rubber plants, and on my birthday I was given a potted elephant's-ears all of my own. My daughter, who was going away to college, asked us if we would keep her weeping fig plants while she was away, and someone, I can't remember who, sent us a box of screw pines.

The house looked green and lovely for a short while. But then a strange thing happened. The plants kept getting larger and larger. First they took over the living room. We realized this when the man who came to fix the TV set got lost and was never heard from again. My wife wanted me to search for him, but I said to her, "Are you kidding? That living room's a jungle."

One Saturday I bought a machete and tried to chop a trail through the living room to my library. But after four hours I realized it was hopeless. The more I hacked away, the faster the houseplants grew. We closed off the living room.

We were sitting in the dining room one evening when I noticed I couldn't see anyone at the table. It was an eerie feeling as I shouted through the palm leaves: "Is

anybody there?" I thought I heard a voice coming from the end of the table saying, "You Tarzan, me Jane," but it could have been the wind. I looked up and saw one of my children sitting in a branch of the palm tree. "What are you doing up there? Sit down and eat your dinner."

"Where can I sit?" she wanted to know. "In your chair," I said. "I can't find my chair," she said. "Do you think they'll ever send a rescue ship to find us?"

That night I said to my wife, "We've got move out of the dining room. It's not safe to eat there any more."

"They're only plants," she said. "What about scorpions and snakes? You can't have that much foliage without scorpions."

We put some defoliant down between the dining room and kitchen and started to eat all our meals in the kitchen. Occasionally, a kangaroo vine or the grape ivy tried to sneak in, but I kept an ax by my side and every once in a while I chopped off a length of it before it crawled to our food.

My doctor warned me to stay out of the library unless I wanted to take a gamble on catching malaria or yellow fever.

Despite our efforts to keep the plants from getting into the kitchen, a yucca tree crushed the door down and in a week the kitchen was a forest.

One evening I lost my wife for four hours, and only by luck stumbled over her next to the Waring blender. Worse, both the dog and the cat had become wild and we decided to free them to live the life of their ancestors, before they had been domesticated by man.

Two weeks later we moved everyone up to the second floor of the house but the plants followed us. At first we kept them at bay by starting small forest fires and removing the staircase, but the vines began climbing the walls.

I am now writing this from our attic on the third floor. If anyone reads this please send help! We have enough food to last us one more week. Tell the helicopter pilot we have a gray mansard roof. That's the only thing he can see from the air.



Glenn could have avoided angering feminists

by Arnold Sawislak

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Sen. John Glenn got the raspberry when he told the National Organization for Women that the Equal Rights Amendment failed in part because its supporters were loafing while its enemies were hustling to kill it.

The Ohio Democrat was right, but by failing to put his comment into historical context, he blew what to that point had been a letter-perfect performance before the militant feminist organization.

Congress approved the constitutional amendment and sent it on to the state legislatures for ratification in 1972. Within a few years, more than 30 of the needed 38 states had ratified the ERA and its adoption as the 27th amendment to the Constitution before the bicentennial appeared assured. The ERA seemed to have the momentum to win well before the seven-year ratification period expired in 1979.

It was about 1976 that Phyllis Schlafly and other opponents really got organized to fight the amendment. Their argu-

ments — such claims that adoption of the ERA would outlaw separate public toilets for men and women — seemed so extreme and absurd to the amendment's supporters that for the most part they declined to dignify them with rebuttals.

It is during this period — the mid-to-late 1970s — that the ERA's supporters, in effect, leaned on their shovels. They underestimated both the organizing and propaganda-making ability of their opponents. They overestimated the intelligence and political courage of the legislators in the few remaining states needed

for ERA ratification. That is the time when it could truly be said that ERA supporters were loafing.

The nasty truth dawned about 1978 and it took a herculean effort to get an additional three years to seek ratification. NOW, which was new and weak when the amendment was originally approved by Congress, had become a much more potent force by the end of the decade and was at the forefront of the effort to get the last few ratifications.

But it was too late. Opposition to the ERA became one of the rallying points of

the resurgent conservatism that led to limitation measures and the election of a Republican president and Senate.

If Glenn had traced the history of the ERA ratification battle and said its supporters had loafed after the first few successes in the states, the NOW charges — many of whom were teenagers in 1972 — would have nothing to complain about. But without that perspective, comment could have been taken to mean the supporters had goofed off in the last few years and to the women at whom they were fighting words.

Advice for wine servers: Make sure your choice breathes well

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — I used to attend dinner parties at the home of a woman who quite vocally insisted that table wine be opened in time for it to "breathe" before it was served.

It will provide an indication of my slob index when I confess that I then believed my hostess was engaging in a bit of suburban snobbery.

Now I know better. According to a wine column I was reading recently, the only argument among true connoisseurs is whether the breathing should be natural, or electrically stimulated.

Imbibers with sensitive palates who like their wine well aspirated can, for a mere \$59.95, pick up a Wine Breather that shoots a low voltage current into the bottle.

A slight galvanization apparently does for fermented grape juice approximately what an oxygen mask does for football players.

This device, according to the hype I read, provides in just one minute the respiratorial equivalent of an hour of unassisted wine breathing. That's assuming, of course, that the wine you serve breathes normally.

I've bought wine that was so short of

breath not even an Iron Lung would help.

The wine I normally buy tends to gasp rather than inhale and exhale in a rhythmic pattern.

It can be truly embarrassing to open a bottle of wine for dinner and have it arouse suspicions among the guests that it is being asphyxiated.

In addition, wine that has been in the bottle too long, or is of ancient vintage, is likely to wheeze instead of breathe.

But that is nothing compared to the chagrin you feel if the wine turns blue for lack of oxygen. Particularly if it is supposed to be a white wine.

Worst of all is when the wine continues to breathe after it has been swallowed. Here's a little tip that might stand you in good stead at your next dinner party: Before calling your guests to the table, give the wine a little nudge to make certain it is fully awake.

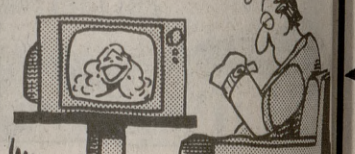
I also have found that it's not always a good idea to decant wine before serving. Pouring wine from one container to another causes it to undergo enough exertion to start it huffing and puffing.

When you buy a wine like that, don't apologize for its breathlessness or try to cover up for it by singing "O Sole Mio" or some other aria. Instead, simply explain to your guests that the wine is auditioning

for a role on the sound track of a picture movie.

Berry's World

LET'S SEE! IN ORDER TO BE BETTER THAN AVERAGE, MY DAILY VIEWING HAS TO BE MORE THAN 6.7 HOURS.



The Battalion

USPS 045 360

Member of Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

Editor Hope E. Paasch
Managing Editor Beverly Hamilton
City Editor Kelley Smith
Assistant City Editor Karen Schrimsher
Sports Editor Melissa Adair
Entertainment Editor Rebeca Zimmermann
Assistant Entertainment Editor Shelley Hoekstra

News Editors Brian Boyer, Kathy Breard, Kevin Inda, Tracey Taylor, Chris Thayer, Kathy Wiesepape

Photo Editor Eric Evan Lee
Staff Writers Robin Black, Brigid Brockman, Bob Caster, Ronnie Crocker, Kari Fluegel, Tracie Holub, Bonnie Langford, John Lopez, Kay Denise Mallett, Christine Mallon, Michelle Powe, Ann Ramsbottom, Stephanie Ross, Angel Stokes, Steve Thomas, John Wagner, Karen Wallace, Wanda Winkler

Copy Editors Kathleen Hart, Kristal Mills, Susan Talbot

Cartoonists Paul Dirmeyer, Scott McCullar

Photographers Michael Davis, Guy Hood, John Makely, Dean Saito

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting news-

paper operated as a community service to Texas A&M University and Bryan-College Station. Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editor or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M University administrators or faculty members, or of the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and telephone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials also are welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (409) 845-2611.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it. Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

CO-OP
Dill will
Ruddle

HILLEL
begin to
call 696

SNOW S
Memor

MSC CE
7:30 to
nonmer

UNIVER
to the S

THE BIG
Ruddle

SOCIETY
bers are
Ruddle

IEEE-IA
to Hous

MICROB
dustrial
Sciences

AMERIC
Karen
College
take year

COLLEG
tonight

HORSEM
Kleberg

Haiti

by E

A Haitian
lege this fall
Texas A&M
Jude Nel
will attend P
in Kap Ha
horticulturis
Nelson last
was on a coo
group of m
Nelson wor
sionaries eve
to grow veg
Nelson's
agronome,
U.S county
an agronom
able to advis
on farming
they become
The club
son's first tw
including b
plies and foo
\$300, which
the expenses
ters. Howev
have to work
income.
Nelson wi
five years to
nome. The fi
equivalent o
classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i

classes — i