

American Life In Poetry

A Simple Exercise In Pure Poetic Beauty

BY TED KOOSER
U.S. Poet Laureate

E.B. White, one of my favorite writers, used to say, "Simplify, simplify, simplify," but that doesn't mean that writing has to be simple, which is a different matter. Here's a fine poem by Laurel Blossom of South Carolina that's been simplified into a pure, clean beauty.

RED BALLOON RISING

I tied it to your wrist
With a pretty pink bow, torn off
By the first little tug of wind.
I'm sorry.

I jumped to catch it, but not soon enough.
It darted away.

It still looked large and almost within reach.
Like a heart.

Watch, I said.
You squinted your little eyes.

The balloon looked happy, waving
Good-bye.

The sky is very high today, I said.
Red went black, a polka dot,

Then not. We watched it,
Even though we couldn't

Spot it anymore at all.
Even after that.

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IRS Seeks Volunteers For Taxpayer Advocacy Panel

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The Internal Revenue Service seeks civic-minded volunteers to serve on the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP), a federal advisory committee that listens to taxpayers, identifies key issues, and makes recommendations for improving IRS service.

"TAP members give the IRS insights from every corner of our nation, helping the agency in its continuous effort to improve tax administration," said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman.

The TAP is seeking members or alternates in more than two dozen locations, including the Midwest states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Applications for the TAP will be accepted through April 27, 2012.

The TAP provides a forum for taxpayers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to raise concerns about IRS service and offer suggestions for improvement. The TAP reports annually to the Secretary of the Treasury, the IRS Commissioner and the National Taxpayer Advocate. The Office of the Taxpayer Advocate, an independent organization within the IRS, provides oversight of the TAP.

"In trying to comply with an increasingly complex tax system, taxpayers may find they need different services than the IRS is currently providing," said Nina E. Olson, National Taxpayer Advocate. "The TAP is vital because it provides the IRS with the taxpayers' perspective as well as recommendations for improvement. This will help the IRS deliver the best possible service to assist taxpayers in meeting their tax obligations."

To be a member of the TAP you must be a U.S. citizen, current with your federal tax obligations, able to commit 300 to 500 hours during the year and able to pass an FBI criminal background check. New TAP members will serve a three-year term starting in December 2012. If you're chosen as an alternate member, you'll be considered to fill any vacancies that open in your area during the next three years.

Applications are available online at www.improveirs.org. For additional information about the TAP or the application process, please call toll-free 888-912-1227.

Easy Fix For Time-Traveling Car

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:

My car time-travels into the future. I have a 2004 Volvo XC70 station wagon (I know it's dowdy, but it's better than a minivan, right?) that for some reason does not keep proper time. I can set the clock to the correct time, and within days it will be running fast. Within two months, the clock is fast by 20 minutes. I can understand losing time because of a weak battery or something, but advancing in time? Any thoughts? OK, let me clarify that: Any thoughts pertaining to my question? — Lisa

TOM: We actually do have a few of those, Lisa.

RAY: If you're the kind of person who is chronically late, you may have a spouse who is surreptitiously nudging your clock ahead in an attempt to get you to be on time.

TOM: Several of my ex-wives used to try that on me.

RAY: Oh, I don't think they wanted you to be on time. They were just trying to make the day of the divorce settlement come sooner!

TOM: Most likely, Lisa, the clock itself is faulty. And, unfortunately, the clock in this car is part of the instrument cluster.

RAY: And when you find out that in order



CAR TALK

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

to replace this clock, you have to replace the whole instrument cluster for \$1,000, you'll embrace the time-honored solution for malfunctioning automotive clocks.

TOM: You'll go to the hardware store, and for four bucks, you'll buy yourself one of those stick-on digital clocks. You'll peel off the backing and slap it right onto the instrument panel, over where your current clock sits.

RAY: Now, it's possible that your entire instrument cluster is beginning to fail. If some-

thing crucial in the cluster stops functioning — like the speedometer — you may be forced to replace the whole thing at that point.

TOM: Or, if you're lucky, your regular mechanic will know one of the places that fixes these panels for a few hundred bucks, and he'll be able to send it out for you.

RAY: But I wouldn't bother just for the clock. Even if you're a Volvo owner and you're used to leaving the dealership with angina after seeing the estimate, that's a lot for a clock. Especially given the age of the car and the price of the alternative. Good luck, Lisa.

In their pamphlet "Should I Buy, Lease, or Steal My Next Car?" Tom and Ray break down the strategies for buying a car, so you can make the most of your money. Send \$4.75 (check or money order) to Next Car, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475.

Get more Click and Clack in their new book, "Ask Click and Clack: Answers from Car Talk." Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or email them by visiting the Car Talk website at www.cartalk.com.

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Clean-Up Event Brings In A Big Haul

The Great American Cleanup in Yankton was a great success, according to Keep Yankton Beautiful (KYB) officials.

The cleanup took place in Yankton last Saturday, and more than 130 volunteers came out to help clean city streets and public green spaces.

There were teams from HyVee, First Dakota National Bank, Home Federal Bank, Sacred Heart Church, TruXedo, Sapa, Boys & Girls Club, Boy Scout Pack 258, Mt. Marty College, Knology, Gehl, Keep Yankton Beautiful, RSVP Group, Yankton Area Ice Association, Yankton Children's Theatre and Roger's Family Pharmacy. Also, many individuals and families who came out to help with the cleanup this year.

In all, 1,530 pounds of trash was collected and taken to the transfer station by volunteer City of Yankton driver, Jim Flynn. An additional six bags, bringing the total weight to more than 1,600 pounds, was brought to the transfer station later.

KYB members Pam and Jack Frick and volunteers Steve Ellis and Jake Hoffner drove pick-up trucks and trailer beds around town to gather the trash and bring it back to Memorial Park and the City of Yankton hauler.

Because of the record volunteer turnout this year, KYB was able to get to more routes, adding old 50 East (Whiting Drive) and parts of Fourth Street/Highway 50 East. In all, the cleanup covered 30 miles around the community, with a large group from Mount Marty College taking Chalkstone Road and 52 West towards the Lewis & Clark Lake area.

This year's collection total, while impressive, was 500 fewer pounds than was collected last year — even with the addition of routes. KYB officials said it means things are trending in the right direction and it is a great measurement of success for these cleanups and waste reduction education efforts.

KYB officials thank all of their volunteers and members who were willing to devote a sunny Saturday morning along with their friends, neighbors and co-workers to the betterment of our proud community. The cleanup was also supported by Starbucks, WalMart, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Culligan, Outdoor Channel, Knology, Riverside Broadcasting, Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, Classic Hits 106.3, MidAmerican Energy, South Dakota Dept. of Transportation, City of Yankton, Glad, Nestle and Keep America



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Sapa Cleanup Team — from left, Rich Kuchter, Lisa & Dan Groetken, Deb Sage, Trevor Slate, Cindy Smith, Kevin Perakslis (with kids Connor, Chloe, Cate and Cody). They cleaned-up along 31st Street and in the green space at Locust & 15th, collecting two pick-up truck loads of trash.

Beautiful sponsors Gatorade, Pepsi, Dow, TroyBilt, Solo, Wrigley, LG and WasteConnections, who all donated products and/or services to this cleanup.

On May 5 at 8 a.m. at the Riverside Park Boat Ramp, KYB will hold the Missouri River Cleanup. There will be lots of trash and debris following last summer's flooding — and probably some very interesting items to be discovered. Volunteers of all ages are welcome. You will get a free Missouri River Cleanup T-shirt. You will get safety vests and go out on boats to your cleanup location along the banks of the Missouri River on either the Nebraska or South Dakota side.

According to KYB Executive Director Julie Perakslis, "This cleanup is a lot of fun. I went out last year with a group of Vermillion students, KYB members and members of Boy Scout Pack 258. We found one half of a scooter, a pile of wooden pallets and lots and lots of trash. It was a great morning, a fun boat ride and an adventurous cleanup."

This year's lunch will be donated by Cimpl/American Foods, HyVee, Chesterman's, Culligan, WalMart and Nestle, with donors still coming in. For more information and/or youth volunteer waiver forms, contact Dugan Smith at the National Park Service at 665-0209.

For a complete list of Keep Yankton Beautiful members, sponsors and volunteers and to get more information on its programs and projects, visit www.KeepYanktonBeautiful.org or call 689-1700. KYB is located at 322 Walnut next to the Dakota Theatre thanks to a gift from the law offices of Kennedy, Pier & Knoff.

Perakslis added, "Thank you again for the incredible volunteerism and spirit of this community — we hope to see you on May 5! And please remember that most litter makes its way into the environment through unsecured trash and recycle containers left out for pick-up. Please be sure to secure your trash and recycle and please secure all items left out this week for Citywide Cleanup."

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Avera and Hy-Vee Dietitian

Saturday, April 21
11am - Noon

HyVee Club Room 2nd floor
Ages 5 - 11, Parents Welcome
Cost \$10

Sign up at HyVee Customer Service
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Hurry! Class limited to 10



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Doors open at 7pm • Show starts at 8pm • Reserved Seating

Tickets available in the Fine Arts Building at the University of South Dakota (Open M-F, 10am to 2pm - Cash Only), charge by phone (866) 300-8300 & online at JadePresents.com

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Participants receive FREE membership to Avera Sacred Heart Wellness Center & Yankton Summit Activities Center during program!

Register at Avera Sacred Heart Wellness Center or call (605) 668-8357.