

# This and That

By Janine L. Kock, Times Editor and Publisher

• **BABY UPDATE!** Kelsey and the three kids took off for home last Tuesday, the 30th. While I have to admit I was quite tired, sharing my house with two to four people for a week, coping with a Monday holiday, and trying to spend some quality time with the visitors while working on the paper, it was pretty darn quiet without the action I'd gotten accustomed to over the past two weeks.

Isabella cried, wanting to stay with Grandma longer, but the entire family was glad to be reunited, especially as the week went on and the washing machine and the air conditioning were both repaired and everything was as normal as it was going to be with a newborn, a 19-month-old and a five-year-old in the house.

I was busy with a variety of activities all weekend, and I didn't want to bother them with a phone call in case they were resting, but Monday evening I couldn't stand it any longer. I sent a message asking, "Does anyone there want to talk to me?" And, within a couple minutes the phone was ringing and Isabella's voice was saying, "Hi, Grandma!" followed by a giggle that I sure had been missing.

We chatted for a few minutes until it was time for her to crawl into bed, with kisses and promises that she'd call again soon.

What was life like before grandkids, anyway??

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• **A TRIP TO OMAHA.** Long before Lilly decided to make her appearance on May 20, I had scheduled in two days with my oldest grandchild, almost eight-year-old Samuel in Bennington, Neb. His summer is pretty booked up, with Vacation Bible School in Westside, with his "Nana" in Ankeny, and their own church in Omaha and a variety of other activities, so when he has a few days unscheduled, I volunteered to spend some time with him rather than committing to pay for what they call "Train School" -- the Union Pacific Day Care Center.

So, after the Morrisons left for home Tuesday afternoon and after we uploaded the paper (two hours after press deadline, but who's counting), I packed my bag and took off for Omaha, arriving at almost 10 p.m.

Wednesday was a relaxing day of walking on the trail near Lake Flanagan, swimming at the neighborhood pool, playing games, reading books and just enjoying some time together.

Thursday, however, we took the 1/2-hour drive to Lauritzen Gardens, simply because we like to spend time there, and once again there was a new exhibit -- this one entitled "Glass in Flight 2" by Alex Heveri. With 16 life-like pieces of artwork spread throughout the gardens, it was fun to find them (they were all things that fly, like hummingbirds, dragonflies, praying mantis, honeybees, etc.) and then check them off on the flyer, while periodically comparing how many steps we had on our step-counters and enjoying the beautiful weather.

It was beautiful until we had worked our way to the back of the 160-acre grounds and the rain began. We turned around and started back toward the visitors' center, dripping wet and a bit chilly before we made it. One of the employees assured me that a few years from now, Samuel will look back on our walk in the rain as an "adventure with Grandma," so I hope that is true! As of Thursday afternoon, it took lunch at Freddy's to make him smile again!

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• **BUY LOCAL!** Michele Ertz, who operates "O'Meshka Mind Body Soul & So Much More" on Main Street in Manilla, took to her business's Facebook page last week to thank everyone who has supported her in her first year of business in a storefront which has the goal to "be a part of the change" in her town!

She also shared a piece entitled, "This is Why the Economy Is the Way It Is!" and I couldn't agree more with the thoughts.

- Kylie Jenner pulls out a lipstick and people buy it.
- Michael Jordan launches some new sneakers and people are buying them.
- Apple launches a new phone and people line up to buy them.
- Michael Kors pulls out a bag and goes viral.
- Starbucks opens a new branch in a nearby city and has a full house on the same day.

But when a friend or family member starts a new business... people will often think twice about supporting him or her.

What happened to being so quick to support a stranger no matter what it costs us, but then we find a thousand excuses not to support someone we know and love.

Celebrities have huge bank accounts, when you know someone close started from their home, with a lot of desire, illusion and sacrifice...

The next time you see a friend posting about their business, give them a like, a comment, or a share. If you see in the paper that a new business is opening, help spread the word and encourage others to have a look. Even if the product is not one you have a need for, you can help them grow.

The Observer is celebrating 20 years in business under Kock Publishing's ownership. Perhaps this is the year that you will pick up a copy to read and purchase a subscription. How about buying subscriptions as gifts for friends and family members? Perhaps you can run a newspaper ad for your event or to wish someone you know well on their birthday. Sure, you can "advertise" on social media, but when is the last time that Facebook took photos at your kids' ballgames or donated to your group's fundraiser?

This economy is not an easy one in which to do business, but we are proud to support our local area's businesses, non-profits and community projects, and we encourage others to support us in return!

## Tour D'Afrique 2023: The Masai Steppe or The Evil Eye and How I Lost My Sense of Humor – Part II – The Rest of the Story.

Those readers who are old enough will remember Paul Harvey, the nationally syndicated newscaster out of Chicago, who for 50 years reported the daily news also had a segment he called, The Rest of the Story. When radio listeners heard "Stay Tuned for The Rest of the Story," 20 million people would listen to a well-known story and wait for the backstory that made it possible. Or he would tell a little-known story concerning some famous incident or celebrity and always end with the line, "And now you know... The Rest of the Story."

We take up our story in the famous Rift Valley of Tanzania. In this part of Africa, you are either riding into, in, or out of the Rift Valley. On this day, the road was good; the sky was overcast, and there was even an occasional -- and welcome -- cool mist coming from the grey sky. So, the temperature was relatively cool, and we only had 68 miles to go till we reached Mbeya, an old gold mining town in SW Tanzania, and a scheduled rest day.

However, we were riding out, and by out, I mean up. We were some 2,200 miles from our starting point in Egypt, so our legs were strong, but this would be their most formidable challenge to date. About a mile and a third up, 6,948.8 feet to be exact.

They say the best way to keep going is don't stop. But there are better philosophies than that when you're doing endurance cycling. I've found in my reading and then proved to myself in training that stopping every hour for short periods of hydration and nutrition keeps me going further and faster. So, about an hour into the climb out of the valley, I began to look for a spot for my second breakfast.

Our camp breakfast is usually at 6:30 am, and, except on rare occasions -- very-very rare occasions -- breakfast is oatmeal. People add things to it like granola, yogurt, fruit, honey, and even peanut butter, but it's still oatmeal. Americans call it oatmeal, and the British call it porridge. They have a way of making bad things sound better with their accent and all. Not that oatmeal is inherently bad. It's just that day after day... I have actually begun changing the titles in my journal entries. Instead of starting Tour Day 48, I begin Oatmeal Day 48.

Even that may need to be more accurate. "Bloody hell," Peter, my Australian friend, would add. Because, many days, the concoction is thin and runny, thus appropriately qualifying for the designation gruel.

Why, you ask? Because gruel is the root word for the adjective grueling, describing an exhausting and punishing experience. To help prepare for that grueling experience, while at the breakfast table, we would also stuff our pockets with sandwiches and fruit.

A cycling jersey has three pockets across the lower back that are supposed to be accessible while riding. (Provided you have normal functioning shoulders and hands) I carry my ID, money, passport, and other necessary documents in my left pocket. They are kept in a zip-lock plastic baggy to keep them dry from rain and sweat. The same is true for the all-important toilet paper in the center pocket. In the right-sided pocket, I keep a day's supply of energy gels and electrolyte additives for water. Then, at the breakfast table, I cram two bananas in the right pocket and make a PB&J sandwich to place alongside the TP in its own plastic bag. Sometimes I make PB & Nutella.

The bananas are the most fragile, so that's always my first choice for my second breakfast. As I climbed, I looked for a good place to stop. One with some shade, a place to sit, and relatively flat and quiet. When I found it, I dismounted, sat on a rock, and reached for a banana. For a second, I wished I had grabbed the TP instead because when I looked up, I was face to face with a large male baboon. I almost... well... I expected him to be aggressive, but he seemed nearly as startled as I was and backed off a few feet. But only a few feet, he had a reputation to uphold. As I nervously looked around, a troop of at least 20 females, babies, and young juveniles intently watched us.



Silently we came to a compromise. If he would be happy with the peel, I would be happy with the banana. Crisis averted, we enjoyed each other's company for a few minutes before separately going off on the day's business. I had no way of realizing I was the one fate would make a monkey of that day.

We were on the final day of a 7-day, 580-mile ride, completing it with a

6,000 ft. climb. I'm not ashamed to admit I was tired. As I summited the climb, I noticed Patrick, one of my co-riders, stopped alongside the road, snapping pictures. This was good. I'd ask him to airdrop the pics later, but right now, I needed him to navigate.

Last night we had camped in a schoolyard and pitched our tents in a thunderstorm. This morning another thunderstorm before breakfast. Not only was all our gear wet, but there was also no electricity or charging facilities. Plus, there was no sunshine for my solar charger. My phone and trip computer were dead. This wasn't a big problem on the road, but navigating the city to find our hotel campground was an issue. For that, I needed to follow Patrick.

Patrick is at least 20 years younger and a stronger rider than me, but the descent into Mbeya was steep, and there was not much road traffic, so it was easy to follow him. The same could not be said in the city, the road leveled out, and the traffic increased, as did my fatigue and frustration.

Then, a truck cut me off at a T-intersection, probably less than a couple hundred yards from the Hotel, and I fell to the pavement. I had been barely moving at the time, and the fall was likely due more to fatigue than anything else. It wasn't a bad fall; it was almost like it was in slow-motion. It was, without a doubt, more embarrassing than painful though I did have some new abrasions on my right calf -- cyclists call it road rash.

I tried to ride the rest of the way, but the derailleur on my bike was broken, so I limped into camp humiliated, fatigued and frustrated.

Stay Tuned For The Rest Of the Story.

Note to Readers: Additional details and pictures can be accessed on line at [craigsandersmd.com](http://craigsandersmd.com)

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