



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

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Columnist

The dog days of spring

The neighbors have new dogs. Ordinarily, I'm in support of dogs. Love me some dogs, you might say — young, happy, floppy-eared pups bounding around with their tongues hanging out. What could be better? Only, these dogs bark. They are profound barkers, in fact. Olympic-class barkers and howlers.

They start barking each morning about the time the owners leave for work. They stop barking each evening when the owners come home. When the family is home, there are still the occasional, and hellish, outbursts of barking. So, depending on the day of the week, that's an average of almost 10 hours of barking.

The acoustics of a single dog barking in the trees are bad enough, but in this case there are two of them.

Hellhounds in the trees. Every day, all day.

My granddad couldn't tolerate barking dogs. And he always had a lot of them. Blue heelers and border collies mostly, which he used to help gather cattle out of the desert. His answer to barking dogs was to step outside and fire off a couple of rounds from his 1911 in the general direction of the barking. This didn't always work out. There were accidents. Some tragic. For years he drove around in a pickup sprent with bullet holes down the side.

I'm not advocating his method. It's just one among many.

I don't blame the dogs, naturally. It's likely they don't know any better. What's strange is that it appears the owners apparently don't, either. They are either clueless, which seems unlikely, or they are deliberately ignoring the problem. I'm not sure which, and I'm not sure how it's possible to sit in a house listening to a perfect storm of dogs outside the door, and do nothing.

All of this, naturally, fits into a general trend in

the larger culture, where we are now encouraged to believe that we are, each of us, the precise center of the universe. Dazzling snowflakes, one and all. For some people, this mindset travels down the leash into their dog.

We see it all around us. Little Squeaky on a leash, squeezing off a Cleveland Steamer on the sidewalk, or the park, or your front yard, while the owner looks around from behind her glasses to see if anyone is watching, then leads little Squeaky away from the scene of the crime. Or, a more sophisticated version of the same phenomenon, when the owner bags the poop, ties a perfect little knot in the bag — then leaves it in the exact spot where Squeaky dropped his original missive. Haven't you watched that? Happens all the time.

In France, entire boulevards are made impassable by the excretion of canines and the people walk in the street. Pshaw.

Problem is, most of us don't love your dog as much as you do. And that's fair. We don't have to. Maybe we don't like dogs at all, or maybe we just don't feel compelled to think your dogs are the greatest things gracing the planet. Maybe

your dog is ugly, or dumb. That's entirely possible. Or maybe we just don't let our dogs bark all day at nothing, and can't understand why you do.

It's probably also true that not everyone who thinks they should have a dog actually should. That's definitely true of children, so why would it be less of true of dogs?

For these people, I recommend geese. They are ferocious defenders of their territory, which I learned as a child when I was attacked each and every day coming home from school. The bus would drop me off, and I would walk across a large alfalfa field toward the house, gearing up to do battle with a ferocious set of hissing and flapping ganders. I won some, they won some, and some battles were fought to a yard-sale draw. My mother thought it made me tougher. Maybe she shouldn't have had children, either.

If you have a dog, do the world a favor and keep it quiet. Or teach it to bark at real threats, grizzly bears or home intruders, or more likely, when Sasquatch is running through the yard.

Or get a cat. The owls and the coyotes will love you for it.

19 year old charged with DUI, assault

BEND, Ore. (AP) — The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office says a 19-year-old Bend man was jailed on DUI, assault and other charges after a crash on a Forest Service road near Tumalo Falls.

KTVZ-TV reports that the crash early Saturday sent four passengers to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Lt. Tim Leak says Jordan Jeffrey Neelon was driving a Jeep Grand Cherokee down the road from the Tumalo Falls area toward Bend "at a high rate of speed" when he lost control on the gravel road and struck a tree near the roadway.

Four passengers were taken to St. Charles Bend. Leak says alcohol and speed were contributing factors in the crash.

Neelon was arrested on charges of DUI and four counts each of reckless endangering and third-degree assault.

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