

Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

Thursday, October 6, 1966
Illinois Valley News
Yellow jackets

One of the most enterprising, energetic and capable animals on earth is the unloved but much respected wasp known as the yellow jacket. Noah Webster says this insect is noted for its irritability, and, in the understatement of the century, adds, “– and also for its painful stings.” If the great man had lived on the periphery of civilization as I do and spent as many summer days tramping the forest trails –where the yellow jackets seem to delight in concealing their well-manned fortifications – I’m sure he would have elaborated more extensively on the subject.

I remember a number of years ago when we seemed to have a yellow jacket explosion, when the fearless, aggressive little marauders would even try to remove the shreds

of meat from between your teeth if you didn’t keep your mouth shut. Highlight of my memories of that year was the hot summer day I decided to clear away some brush near the cabin. Wearing nothing but the bikini-like remains of a one-time pair of jeans, I stepped slap into a big yellow-jackets nest.

Outrunning a swarm of lightning-swift murder-bent yellow-jackets isn’t as improbable as it sounds, especially after a few of them have pepped you up with their special electrochemical injections. After the indignant wasps had routed the enemy they finally settled down to repairing the damage to their nest, and making plans for a more effective and impressive campaign next time that wingless, two-legged monster came clomping around in their territory. About that time I came sneaking back from the other end of the county, smarting psychologically from my defeat and physically from my wounds. And now murderous plans

superseded the fear and humiliation I had suffered. With a pint can of gasoline and a kitchen match I bravely, though stealthily, again approached the enemies’ stronghold. Dousing the location of the hidden nest and tossing the lighted match, I withdrew in an orderly fashion—about 90 mph—to the cyclone cellar.

That was a bad year, YJ-wise. But the present season of 1966 will, I’ve no doubt, go down in history as the year of the yellow-jacket. The little stinkers seem to be everywhere. It wouldn’t be so bad if they built exposed, conspicuous nests, as do those more formidable but less underhanded fellow wasps, the bald-faced hornets. But the sneaky little yellow demons always conceal their nests, usually on the ground, often under dead leaves or other forest litter on or beside the trail. You don’t have to step on the nest. Just walk by near enough to jar it and out they come, as mad as if you’d jumped on their nest with both feet. The battle is joined and

the flight is on.

The other day, hiking up the steep trail to Hell’s Hole on an exercise jaunt, I suddenly was shocked by a lightning bolt penetrating my starboard thigh. Then I noticed in the dim light of the wooded trail a million yellow-jackets hurtling around me, grinningly looking for the most vulnerable and tender spots to etch their autographs. Stupidly, I hesitated a tenth of a second before taking off. Then, as if I wasn’t already making a superhuman effort to vacate the forbidden territory, another one stabbed me a painful farewell right where the flimsy shorts I was wearing were stretched tight across my frantically retreating fanny.

That was my third encounter with the touchy little rascals this summer. I’ve watched others get the treatment too, and heard the pitiful complaints of still others. I always sympathize with them; but always, even though I realize what a painful

subject it is, find it hard to control my facial muscles. There’s nothing quite so funny as watching (at a safe distance) someone else being attacked by bees or wasps – madly flailing their arms, like present-day Don Quixotes, and dashing desperately for parts unknown.

Still, there’s something to be said in favor of the crotchety little bundles of dynamite. Their tireless industry in carrying out their predestined communal chores can’t help but attract our grudging admiration. And despite the fact that they sometimes raise hob with our overripe fruit, still they’re mostly carnivorous, and are voracious scavengers.

After those kind words are said though, I’d like to state most emphatically that it would be right nice if all yellow-jackets, and a host of other pests I could name, could be banished to a nice cozy world of their own, a long, long way out in interstellar space.

ROGUE VALLEY



COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Food & Friends Menu

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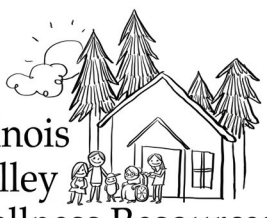
Senior Companion Program

We know how much you value independence in your life. There is a program that can help you stay independent and maintain your dignity in your own home. The United Community Action Network Senior Companion Program provides a cost effective option in the continuum of care available to the nation’s aging population. Each year, Senior Companions serve thousands of older and frail adults by providing companion-ship, transportation, light chores and respite to facilitate seniors remaining in their own home. Senior companions serve isolated and elderly adults that are physically or socially isolated because of factors such a language, disability or location. To receive a service request or referral form please call 541-492-3520. To find out about more local resources or services you can contact your local ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Connection) at 1-855-673-2372 or visit www.ADRCoforegon.org.

Sponsored by I.V. Wellness Resources

Loneliness is a major factor in our well being.

Not only does it make us feel empty, desolate, isolated, uneasy or a host of other descriptions, it is an important factor in our rate of age related declines and our death rates. One doesn’t have to be alone to be lonely. A study found that 43 percent of older adults considered themselves lonely but only 18 percent of those lived alone. Those who were lonely had a 59 percent greater chance of significantly declining in health and/or functioning and a 45 percent greater chance of dying in the 6 years the study lasted. In those of us who are actually physically isolated the actuality of being alone is fraught with increased risks. Being unable to reach out for help and get timely aid in emergencies happens all too often. An idea worth considering and one I.V. Wellness Resources could help with would be the development of a system whereby we each stay in contact, at least by phone or email, frequently. A system or association where we each contact two members of our association to check-up on each other. This is sometimes called a “phone tree.” Phone trees are often used by groups to get information out quickly. One person contacts two people. Those two people contact another four. Those four contact another eight, and so on. Hopefully our association will not only diminish the possibility of isolation preventing us from getting help we need but will initiate friendships and other friendly communications. This shouldn’t take much time to develop. We will need some legal advice before actually instituting this. Once the OK is given to go ahead we should be able to quick start it through the use of email. At that time any of you who would like to be a part of this could contact us at the email address below. We would like at least your first name and what area you live in (eg. Holland Loop or Arrowhead Dr.). Your area is important so we can try to arrange for contacts close to you in case you want to visit. We should be able to get your email address from your email to us. If you would like to be contacted by phone we will need your phone number. We will not give out this information to anybody outside our association and only to the person in our association who will be responsible for contacting you. We will only give you the information of who will be contacting you and the contact info for the two you should contact. Safety procedures will be developed to insure no one outside our association gets any of this information. Please fell free to comment on this idea and give sugges-tions- www.ivwellnessresources@gmail.com.



Illinois Valley Wellness Resources

Senior Bulletin

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Call Pat Jenkins, RN, MSN with I.V. Wellness Resources for a low cost evaluation at 541-415-0465.

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