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9 - 4 FRIDAY & SATURDAY

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LOOK FOR GREEN SIGNS

**NEWSPAPERS
BRING LEARNING TO LIFE!****Want to be a better father? Get a bigger grill**BY NED HICKSON
News Media Corporation

Sunday morning I will awaken to sizzle of bacon and eggs, the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and the shuffle of approaching feet as I lay in bed quietly thinking to myself: My God, my wife is leaving me.

Then I'll remember: Wait — It's Father's Day! It's a day when we fathers are revered for our wisdom, patience and, in a few rare instances, our neckwear. For one whole day I'll be the perfect father since my wife will be handling everything for me. She does this to help me relax and enjoy my special day. The problem is, it's hard to relax when, by handling everything herself, my wife makes it clear I could be replaced by a dishwasher and a few extra power cords.

Okay, that's not entirely true. I can still claim "The Grilling of Food" as my main contribution to the daily operation of our family. I have managed to keep this duty the way most

men do, by making the task of grilling appear as complicated and miserable as possible, even if it means faking a heat stroke while grilling pre-cooked hot dogs.

I realize there are many new fathers who have made themselves indispensable during the diaper-changing phase. Just remember: your indispensability in this area — much like this morning's tightly-wrapped dooty — will eventually disappear into the Diaper Genie. That's when grilling even the simplest things, such as a bratwurst, should be made to look as difficult as possible.

To do this, you'll need a large grill. The bigger the better. In fact, if a hibachi is your main grilling source, go now, hop into your vehicle, and accidentally back over your hibachi several times and replace it with something more practical.

And, practically speaking, we're talking a grill roughly the size of a Humvee.

Why?

You need a large cooking sur-

face so that you can convincingly spray down flames and battle for control over a raging inferno that, if not for your grilling skill, would quickly consume everyone's bratwurst — and quite possibly the world. Unless you are highly experienced in pyrotechnics, or live near an open gas line, trying to produce this same effect on a hibachi is very difficult.

Once you have your giant grill, you'll need to keep a spray bottle handy. Your wife will assume it's to prevent charring. This is partially true. But mostly you'll be using it to spray on your face and body to appear as though you are perspiring when, in fact, you are frequently supplementing any loss of body fluid with liberal amounts of ice-cold beer hidden behind the grill.

Lastly, you should purchase a special, custom-made spatula that is so enormous and so heavy it can only be wielded with two hands. This will make the grilling process appear even more difficult by requiring a "spotter" every time you flip someone's

burger. Put all of this together — spray bottle, giant grill, two-handed spatula — and you'll have the dramatic image you want, which is that of a sweat-stained father staggering in and out of the flames of his grill, both hands gripped tightly around the handle of his 50-pound spatula as he devoutly retrieves the evening meal.

Sure, this may sound like a lot of effort; you could fold clothes instead.

But the effort is worth it when it comes to family.

Besides, it's really hard to keep beer cold when it's hidden in the laundry.

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, "Humor at the Speed of Life," is available online at Port Hole Publications, Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com

RANCH

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years ago and have been married for five. In this small Oregon community, Hibbetts said they've found a respite from the big city, its distractions and terrors.

"We wanted something smaller because of the PTSD," he said. "I knew I needed to get away from a crowded city, and we just fell in love with Cottage Grove."

Hibbetts served with the U.S. Army's 977th MP Company, and in 1993, a roadside bomb in Somalia — which he says was the first such attack on Americans — took the lives of two of his friends, friends the younger Hibbetts was named after.

At first, Hibbetts said he didn't realize he was dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following the attack. Eventually, though, the anger and depression convinced him that something was truly wrong,

and through the Veterans Administration, he eventually found help. Still, triggers that can come from unusual places, such as flies, which remind him of the war zone he left so long ago, can sometimes resurface.

Here on the Misfit Toy Ranch, one can find many such stories of trauma, pain and healing, and many of the animals here — including Willow, whose owner, Heather Hiser, donated her to the ranch for riding lessons — have their own battles to overcome.

Naomi Driscoll and her husband, Zach, have been in the Cottage Grove area for about 10 years and have operated the ranch for five of them. Naomi Driscoll has given riding lessons since age 16. She comes from a family of veterans, and her husband deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 with the Army National Guard's HHC 2-162, which was formerly headquartered in the

Cottage Grove Armory before moving to Springfield.

"I've always been patriotic and a fan of veterans," Naomi Driscoll said. "Lately I've felt like there aren't a lot of thank-yous being said, and we wanted to offer one here on the ranch."

The Driscolls also have their own experience with PTSD, stemming from an incident in which Zach Driscoll was struck by an armored vehicle in Afghanistan.

"My husband has PTSD, and when I saw how much his horse has brought him joy, I knew that was something I wanted to share," she said.

And so Misfit Toy Ranch, where many of the animals themselves have been brought forth from lives of trauma, recently began offering free riding lessons to combat veterans and their families.

"We want to offer lessons to anybody who served," Naomi

Driscoll said. "They've done so much for us, and we're trying to do something for them."

While some veterans, including Michael Hibbetts, choose not to mount up, Driscoll said the joy of watching their family members ride also brings its own kind of healing.

"The chaos and violence of war changes someone," she said. "And there's no doubt that horses seem to understand any physical or mental handicap. They help heal and bring a lot of joy. We're not calling ourselves a therapy center. We just want to help bring a smile."

The Misfit Toy Ranch offers riding lessons to everyone and free lessons for combat veterans and the families of the fallen, as long as a veteran's DD2-14 or military ID is provided. The ranch can be reached by phone at 541-623-0364.

T&T

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her attention on the other.

When Grandma first adopted Tippy the dog showed an interest in teething on our store's comfy-handmade rabbit and sheep skin moccasins. Tippy purr-furred the slipper's fluffy rabbit fur. We quickly had to train her not to chew the slippers. But sadly my grandmother's moccasins, at home, did not survive!"

"Actually it was Lynnea who wanted a dog," laughs Nancy, "but she can not have one, so she encouraged me to adopt one. I remember my mother, who turns 100 years old this year, always had a little "guard" dog mascot at the store. Customers who have been coming here since their youth, who are

now parents, are bringing in their children and they recall tales on Barney or another of the succession of Mum's dogs. So, I thought, time for another mascot. One of mother's dogs always sat on a stool and it is intriguing that Tippy likes to do it too. We are ordering Tippy a t-shirt with our whale logo that is painted on our store for his office uniform.

Tippy is the funniest little dog. When she is happy, her ears flip up and her tail twirls like a propeller. Pets adds warmth, love and humor to our homes and places of employment."

TIPS

How to pet a cat correctly:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Si-yk1KxYX0&x-yt-ts=1422327029&x-ycl=84838260>

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