



Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn W. Watkins

The Back-Firing Skunk Plan Or Then There Were Three
Sometimes you just can't win for losing. No matter how good a theory looks on paper or in principle, actual practice often proves it to be unworkable.

This is especially true when dealing with those cunning little animals, the skunks. These characters are as unpredictable as the weather. Of course, skunks are not dangerous (there are no cases on record where one of them has willingly attacked a human being) but they have been known to scare people half to death for another reason.

Take for example the woman who called. She said she had a skunk under her house and he had been there for a couple of days.

The woman admitted there had been absolutely no detectable odor, but the known presence of the animal under her floor was giving her nerves a terrible wringing. Another couple of days and she figured she would be a nervous wreck. The tension, she said, was terrific. Like waiting for a bomb to go off. She didn't want the animal killed; she just wanted it to go away.

Skunk 'Different'

A skunk under a house is somewhat different from having any other animal there. It calls for some thought and requires considerable doing. You can't just shoot the animal. You can't poke him or throw a net over him. You certainly can't send a dog in after him. You can't set a trap... or you shouldn't if you wish to continue living in the neighborhood. One sure way would be to set fire to the house, which would be about as stupid as sinking a ship because there were rats in the hold.

All these possibilities were considered, however, remembering at the same time that the situation was delicate and had to be handled in a delicate manner.

There was a crawlway in the supporting wall, an opening three feet wide that offered entrance to the underside of the house. With the beam of a strong flashlight we explored the dark corners. Mr. Skunk was in one of the far corners. He was curled up in a tight little ball, obviously sound asleep. He never batted an eye while the perplexed humans began mapping a campaign; the skunk slept while the "master minds" were at work.

A plan that looked pretty good was worked out. At least it was worth a try. "Drop a series of cookie chunks about a foot apart from the edge of the crawlway back into the back yard," the plan started. The skunk will eat the cookies, walk along the cookie line and find himself in the rear lot. While he is eating the cookies, the opening in the wall can be closed.

Follow the Plan

The woman was appreciative; she said she would follow the plan as soon as darkness came over the earth and the skunk was ready to begin its nightly foraging.

The "master minds" felt pretty good; they were smugly confident. They felt they had solved another knotty problem and wanted the woman to call them later and report the success of the skunk ejection technique.

Three days went by before the woman called. "I've followed your suggestions to the letter," she said. "I put out the line of cookie chunks clear across the back yard and into the vacant lot half a block away."

"How did it work?" smugly asked one of the master minds.

"Worked wonderful," replied the woman with a peculiar tone in her voice. "In fact, I think it worked in reverse, because now I have three skunks under the house."

Military Pay Boost Would Exclude Many

Washington - (UPI) - Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara's military pay raise proposals, to be submitted to Congress this week, will exclude more than two-thirds of the nation's one million civilian reservists.

Defense officials said Saturday that about 100,000 officers and more than 165,000 enlisted men in the National Guard and other reserve outfits are scheduled to get the increased pay, because they are rated as volunteers.

NEWS CONFERENCE

Washington - (UPI) - President Kennedy probably will hold a news conference this week, but the White House said Thursday no firm decision has been made.

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