

MEDIATE THIS !

DEBATING IN-HOME WATER CONSERVATION AMID WET WINTER

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

The National Conflict Resolution Center handles many disputes involving minor family tensions that escalate into major sources of friction. We explore this category today with an example of a couple locked in disagreement over water conservation practices. Partner A, who grudgingly agreed to curtail water usage during the drought, believes the current onslaught of rain is a license to take long showers and run the tap while brushing teeth. Partner B, who is deeply committed to environmental sustainability, sees no reason to backslide into wasteful habits.

Like most domestic standoffs, this was prompted by a “presenting issue” (an argument over water conservation), but it involves more complex challenges of handling 24/7 diverging views and clashing priorities.

Before we apply conflict resolution principles to sort out those challenges, let’s consult earth science experts for a reality check about rainfall and drought.

Recent downpours have delivered short-term relief to this parched region.

The National Weather Service measured 10 inches of rain in San Diego through the month of Febru-

ary, far above our average for the entire winter season.

But drought is a long-term problem. A United States Geological Survey webpage titled “Why doesn’t a drought end when it rains?” warns that most of the water from torrential rains “will run off into drainage channels and streams rather than soak into the ground.” A steady series of rains over many months “might be required to break a drought,” the report concludes.

From a meteorological standpoint, it’s too early to put small loads into full-sized washers. But from a family relations standpoint, this is a good time to assess if your efforts to conserve natural resources are draining your finite supplies of psychic energy and interpersonal harmony.

This recalibration could begin on a quasi-festive note over dinner at a favorite restaurant (presumably, one that only serves water if you specifically ask for it).

Start by congratulating yourselves for your success to date in establishing a green household. Most people agree in principle that environmentalism is a praiseworthy venture. But not everyone goes to the trouble of walking that talk through careful daily stewardship of resources.

In conflict resolution, we can



GETTY IMAGES

This week’s dilemma details a couple’s disagreement with one another about water conservation.

reboot a tense situation with a new plan of action that offers novel ideas and shelves efforts that aren’t worth the trouble. This exercise begins with a “consensus” dialogue that is conciliatory in tone and constructive in nature.

Over dinner, explore the possibility that an informal audit of water usage could identify which conservation steps make sense for you both and which might need to be revisited.

Running water for long

stretches out of any indoor faucet is pretty indefensible. But using a bucket to catch the early cold water from your shower pipes then lugging the sloshing bucket outdoors to irrigate your (currently water-logged) landscaping is harder to justify right now.

If the two of you can draw up a list of priority conservation steps, you can reach a consensus about sensible household water administration.

Help is available from the city of

San Diego’s Public Utilities webpage of “Water Conservation Tips.” Many are inexpensive one-time-only fixes that conserve household water with minimal or no daily exertion.

And, as with any negotiation, there is always the option of bartering.

Partner A doesn’t share Partner B’s passion for environmentalism. Does Partner A have any preferences that Partner B could support in exchange for sustainable practices? Like bingeing on reality TV shows with low production values? Or buying new fun gadgets to round out the garage inventory of old fun gadgets?

Conflict resolution is a process that often yields unintended benefits. Whenever you take a fresh look at an existing problem, you might be surprised to discover solutions like bartering you hadn’t thought about.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediatethis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous. If you have questions, email me at lora.cicalo@suniontribune.com

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

ERNIE COWAN OUTDOORS

Keep eye out for Swainson’s hawks

The relative gentle and generous rains in San Diego County this winter will certainly provide a period of abundance as seasons transition from winter to spring.

Creeks that have not been alive in several years will flow long enough for tadpoles and frogs to complete another life cycle. Crawfish will multiply, providing food for wetland birds and other wildlife.

Soils will be renewed by the leaching effect of freshwater, and some wildlife species, sensing the bounty may produce larger broods, or even experience double mating cycles.

One of the most noticeable examples of this cycle of abundance is happening now in the normally barren sands of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Several years ago, careful observers noticed that Borrego Springs was on the migratory route of the Swainson’s hawk.

Each spring, starting in late February, these beautiful raptors pass through and temporarily roost in the desert on their long journey from South America to the northern extremes of North America.

San Diego’s deserts have also experienced nearly record winter rainfall this year, and there is green just about everywhere.

It might be too early to predict another wildflower “Super Bloom,” but there is no doubt that there is plenty of new vegetation, along with beautiful fields of flowers already painting desert sands with yellows purples, whites and reds.

For some visitors, that’s all that they will come to see. But the careful observer will discover so much more, and that discovery revolves around the migration of the Swainson’s hawk.

Along with abundant vegetation comes the hatching of colorful caterpillars. These are the larva of the large sphinx moth, sometimes called hummingbird moths because of their size and feeding characteristics of hovering from flower to flower. They are large, colorful caterpillars reaching 3 inches or more in length and a half-inch in diameter.

Nature has some kind of messaging system, and where there is more vegetation there will be more caterpillars.

How does this connect to the Swainson’s hawk?

The caterpillars provide an important source of high protein nourishment for the migrating birds, and Nature’s messaging system lets the hawks know there is more available food. That will mean more hawks.



ERNIE COWAN

Swainson’s hawks migrate through Borrego Springs each year.

Each year, volunteers participate in a spring Swainson’s hawk watch in Borrego Springs to record the numbers of birds observed. Two years ago, when there was a super wildflower bloom, hawk numbers were at a record, along with caterpillar numbers.

Borrego resident and biologist Hal Cohen organizes the annual hawk census that began two weeks ago.

On a single day in March 2017 during the last wildflower Super Bloom, Cohen and his volunteers counted 3,713 migrating hawks. The total number of birds counted in 2017 was an incredible 11,690. The previous high before that was 8,917 in 2016.

The average number of Swainson’s hawks observed during the past 16 years is 4,737. In 2018 there were 4,172 observed.

The migration can be a spectacular sight. Birds often arrive just at dark, flying down to roost in date palms or large trees. In the morning they wait for warm currents to begin rising, then lift off and rise gently into the sky. This is designed to preserve energy for their journey.

As the birds rise, they begin to circle, gathering in formations called kettles, which resemble slow moving tornadoes.

These kettles may include hundreds or even a thousand or more birds that continue to circle and rise until catching a wind current that carries them north.

If you are planning a trip to Borrego Springs for the wildflowers, you might also want to save time for a morning visit to the hawk watch site, 2.8 miles north of Palm Canyon Drive on DiGiorgio Road. Volunteer hawk counters are there daily from 8 to 11 a.m.

Email ernie@packtrain.com or visit erniesoutdoors.blogspot.com.

THE READERS’ REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Reactions include comic’s creator

There’s been plenty of reaction to the Union-Tribune, and more than 100 other papers, dropping the comic Non Sequitur over a hidden profanity that appeared Feb. 10.

Reactions include those from U-T readers, an apology from the managing editor of Andrews McMeel Universal, the syndicate that distributes the strip, and a letter from Wiley Miller, the comic’s creator. His letter appears below verbatim.

As of Feb. 15, Andrews McMeel had received 110 cancellations, a spokesman for the syndicate said. Non Sequitur had been published in more than 700 newspapers in the U.S.

U-T Editor and Publisher Jeff Light has not decided on what will replace Non Sequitur permanently.

In the meantime, Monday through Saturday readers have been seeing “The Knight Life.” Because the full-color Sunday comics section is printed weeks in advance, Non Sequitur will run today. On March 10, Pardon My Planet will appear temporarily on Sundays.

The U-T canceled the strip not only because of the profanity but for the deception used to get it in the paper and for the artist’s lack of honesty. At first, he said he wrote the insult, directed at President Donald Trump, but meant to remove it. However, he also had tweeted before that explanation that readers might find an Easter egg in the comic, which played off famous works by Leonardo Da Vinci.

A few readers wrote in supporting the move to drop the strip; most wanted it to return.

This reader captured one of the common sentiments: “It was the most astute, wittiest, and intelligent of UT’s comic strips.”

Several suggested a suspension, rather than a permanent drop.

Readers also said they couldn’t make out the vulgarity, anyway. Others said it wasn’t a big deal.

A few others used this logic: The president is deceptive and uses profanity, so it’s appropriate for Miller to do the same in insulting the president.

Sue Roush, managing editor of Andrews McMeel Universal, sent an apology to newspaper editors.

“We deeply regret not catching Wiley Miller’s hidden inappropriate message. ... It has dealt a serious blow to the long history of excellent service and trust Andrews McMeel Universal has built with our news-

paper partners over 50 years in the syndication business. We fully understand the outrage the language caused among your readers, as well as your frustration with us. We wholeheartedly apologize.”

Miller wrote a hard-copy letter of apology, which arrived last week. Here it is in total:

“Dear Editors,

“I greatly appreciate your allowing me the opportunity to explain and apologize for the ‘Da Vinci’ strip that ran in *Non Sequitur* on Sunday, February 10th.

“I drew the strip Christmas week. Because the strips are intricately drawn, I work seven days a week. That day, I took time to visit with our kids and grandson; it got late. I wanted to ink the Da Vinci Sunday so I could upload it the next morning. I was watching a late-night cable news station as I sat inking; a featured story got my ire up. I scribbled the epithet without thinking, *intending*, however, to write it out the next morning. I finished inking another strip, shut off the lights, and went to bed.

“The next morning, in the hubbub of children’s visit, the correction was forgotten — a mistake, I’m devastated to say, I compounded six weeks later when the strip ran, and the oversight was pointed out by readers. My first thought was horror, and not apologizing immediately became my second mistake. Support for the epithet began rolling in; a way out suddenly appeared. In a tweet, I hinted that my oversight was intentional, an ‘Easter egg,’ a new misjudgment of shameful proportions — the dumbest and most dumbfounding thing I’ve done in my sixty-seven years on this planet.

“Remorse is an understatement. I’m gutted by my own poor judgment.

“*Non Sequitur* has been my pride and joy, as well as livelihood, in a cartooning career that has spanned forty-two years. The strip has been in print twenty-seven years, and garnered many awards. During that time, I’ve drawn just shy of 10,000 strips, and not a single one contained such a vulgar, foolish, unprofessional ‘venting.’

“I apologize to you, my editors, for breaking trust with you, whom I owe a great debt for the many years you’ve run the strip. I’d also like to assure you that no such breach will ever happen again. I intend to work hard at regaining your trust.

“Sincerely, Wiley Miller”

adrian.vore@suniontribune.com

FROM THE ARCHIVES

1946: AIR CRASH IN COUNTY WORLD’S WORST

On this day in 1946, a San Diego-bound American Airlines DC-3 crashed in the Laguna mountains 46 miles east of San Diego, killing all 27 people on board in what was then the nation’s worst commercial airline disaster.

It was San Diego’s worst airline accident until 144 people died in the crash of PSA Flight 182 over North Park in 1978.

From *The San Diego Union*, Monday March 4, 1946:

WORLD’S WORST AIRLINE CRASH KILLS 27 IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY MOUNTAINS

Transport Falls Near Lagunas

Storm, Downdrafts Possible Cause; National City Man Among Victims

Twenty-seven persons were killed in the nation’s worst commercial airline disaster when a San Diego-bound American Airlines plane crashed into the side of Thing mountain in the Tierra Blanca range 46 miles east of here and four miles east of Mt. Laguna at about 8 a.m. yesterday.

Last night deputy coroners had counted 21 bodies, and it was assumed the other bodies still were pinned in the wreckage.

Aboard the plane were 15 men, 10 women and two children in arms, airlines officials said. Among them was Chief Machinist’s Mate V.C. Berdine, of National City, whose wife Viola, had gone to Lindbergh field to meet the plane’s scheduled 8:30 a.m. arrival. She was prostrated after hearing news of the accident.

ON RADIO BEAM, BUT BELOW CEILING

The highest previous commercial air-

lines accident toll occurred Jan. 10, 1945, when 24 were killed in a crash near Los Angeles, The Associated Press reported. That plane also was flown by American Airlines.

The plane, bound from New York to Los Angeles, was a special section of the airline’s Flight 103. It left Tucson at 5:55 a.m., was last reported over El Centro at 7:54. State highway patrolmen said it was exactly on its radio beam when it hit the mountain at an elevation of about 5000 feet, a few hundred feet below the summit, and 3000 feet below its scheduled ceiling.

Belief that the big plane, a Douglas DC-3, might have been caught in colossal downdrafts as it approached the fog-obscured heights grew from reports made by Deputy Sheriff L.A. Mathiot, of Jacumba, and Lt. (jg) John Vukie, coast guard flier, whose plane first sighted the wreckage.

AIR CALLED

‘EXTREMELY TURBULENT’

“At 8 o’clock,” Mathiot said, “the slope was covered by fog and it was raining in gusts. Visibility was zero.”

Vukie, whose co-pilot, Coast Guard Aviation Pilot 1c R.M. Blissey, spotted the crash through a hole in the overcast at 12:52 p.m., described the air at that time as “extremely turbulent,” due to the passing of a weather front. He said at one point his big Mariner seaplane was thrust downward 5000 feet by a sharp downdraft.

After Vukie identified the wreckage as that of the missing airliner, he kept circling the site, dropping red flares and directing sheriff’s cars by radio until deputies had seen the wreckage.

Immediately after word that the wreckage had been found reached San Diego, a rescue caravan was organized to go to the scene. Besides 10 cars of sheriff’s men, it included the mobile disaster unit of the San Diego Red Cross chapter, commanded by Comdr. R.S. Bulger, eight navy ambulances and jeeps.

CARAVAN TURNS OFF

The caravan proceeded along Highway 80 to Live Oak Springs, where it turned off on a forest service road which ended about two miles north of the Manzanita Indian reservation.

There passengers crowded into the ambulances and were taken from the



road across the mesa toward the disaster. They were stopped momentarily at a creek bed with high banks. One of the trucks with four-wheel drive, careened down one slope and up the other. It was proceeded to follow by another and the two pooned to a point about a half-mile from the bottom of the slope where the plane crashed.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO @SDUNIONTRIBUNE.COM. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB.