

## **Buck Up: Tomorrow Is Another Day**

Have you ever had a day when everything that happens to you reaffirms your self-worth? Me neither, especially Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The first thing I did that morning was wrestle my recycling to the curb because it was trash day. If you had told me 25 years ago that I'd be pawing through my own garbage every week - sorting and rinsing - I'd have told you it's time for you to consider changing your recreational drugs.

Cleaning the cat's litter box also occurs on trash day. If aliens from outer space are monitoring us, they can only conclude that the cats and dogs are running this planet - not the slow-moving, dull-witted beings on poop patrol.

Next, I opened the Press-Citizen and three "Heart & Soul" special sections fell out, which profiled about 50 notable individuals in our community. Despite being a legend in my own mind, I wasn't among them.

Most everyone knows who the heavy-hitting do-gooders are around here, but this was a list of what you might call "second-tier" overachievers. Even my niece, Emily Klinefelter was featured – a national champion amateur boxer with a 4.13 GPA at the U of I. I can only conclude that I somehow just missed the cut, and the best I can hope for is to be in contention for "third tier" citizen status.

My next activity was to phone in my gas meter reading to MidAmerican Energy, because LuAnn and I weren't at home when the meter reader came the day before. This is something I recommend you do if you ever start to feel overconfident about your intelligence. I can program a VCR, and I can assemble an illuminated reindeer yard ornament from instructions written in Pidgin English, but I'll be damned if I can read a gas meter.

That door hanger that MidAmerican leaves for you to call in your readings is indecipherable. It helpfully explains that even if a dial reads precisely 7 it may actually be a 6 if the hand on the dial to its right has not yet passed

zero. The illustration they use has five dials but my gas meter has only four, so I can't tell which direction the various hands are supposed to be turning.

I honestly believe that our gas meters were designed in five minutes by a contractor in a hurry to get started on the post-Civil War reconstruction.

The MidAmerican lady that I phoned the reading in to did an excellent job of disguising the fact that she thought I must be an idiot. She asked helpful questions like "Was the hand exactly on the four, or could it have been just slightly on the five side of four?"

I told her, "When I read the dials this morning I was in my basement in almost total darkness with my nose pressed against the meter, standing with one foot on a suitcase and brushing cobwebs from my eyes – I am not prepared to debate semantics." After some additional verbal interplay I finally said, "Give me the home address of your C.E.O. – I'm sending my niece over to beat him up."

At least my day at work was more rewarding – being the boss entitles you to a certain amount of respect (at least to your face).

After work I went to the health club and ended up having a rather disturbing conversation in the men's locker room. I don't normally have too many thought-provoking dialogues with other naked men, but occasionally it does happen.

I don't recall what started it, but one of the naked guys claimed he was able to name all of his teachers since kindergarten. I had to confess that I couldn't remember where I went skiing last winter or what I had for lunch yesterday. Since I have so little memory of the past, I arguably live entirely in the present moment – my life is just a series of out-of-context events.

In theory, death should have no meaning for me. I mean, if all of a sudden random things just stopped happening to me, I might not even notice. This is not a comforting thought.

I went home and flipped on the TV to find...the Olympics. This is probably the only venue in which apparent juvenile delinquents can be skateboarding over your foot on the Ped Mall one day and winning snowboarding medals the next. It doesn't seem fair.

I guess I'll have to get used to these constant assaults on my fragile self-image. Either that or I'm going to spend more time at work.