



## **It's Just Human Nature**

*Our columnist departs from her usual topics to share a few foibles of human nature.*

*Photo: A few members of the Galetto sock family whose mates went to Hosiery Heaven join the author's stockings fireside. Happy holidays! Photo: author.*

By J. Morton Galetto

I don't profess to be the sharpest tool in the shed but I'm not too shabby. My Christmas gift to my readers is my admitting to just a few foibles, which is not to say there are not many others. These snippets should make you feel better about yourself. And to make you feel better yet, a number of my very bright friends admit to similar flaws or episodes. At the very least the look on

their faces when I relate the errors of my ways conveys guilty recognition.

Think of my tales as self-sacrificial and benevolent. So this article won't be about nature, but rather about human nature. Besides, my writings have been forcing my humor too much under a barrel, and Christmas is about joy and light. So let's have some, at my expense, and if you are honest, maybe at yours too.

Many of the mentally challenged things I do are related to technology and loss. And since nature didn't intend us to have these techy items, I'm not going to assume total responsibility for my inadequacies. Nonetheless I've decided if I got back every minute I spent trying to find things, keys and cellphone being on the top of the list, I would add years to my life.

I don't even search for umbrellas anymore. Why do the powers that be allow it to rain when you enter a place and miraculously stop the shower before you depart? Why not invent an umbrella that pages your phone when you leave a building other than your home without it? Step aside, Elon Musk.

Oh, that's right - I misplace the phone too. Don't play innocent on this count.

You may have been one of the many people who has asked me to ring yours in order to find it. Hint: if you own an Apple watch it has a “ring your phone” feature. Now if I can just remember to wear it...

One evening while out on the town with some friends, after a few glasses of wine and perhaps a martini, I admitted that I have reached for my cell phone to adjust the TV volume. Come on, I’m just waiting for technology to catch up to me. Next year it will be possible, if it’s not already. Now when I confessed to this lame maneuver at least two people at the table laughed very hard, in such a knowing way that I knew I wasn’t alone. And before leaving the restaurant we had to ring at least one person’s phone in order for him to find it.

Oh, and where do all the socks go? Yes, Virginia, there is a hosiery heaven and the Galettos are heavy contributors to their pearly gates. In fact this morning I lost a sock that was on my foot. Sock, then, shoe in that order. But I had to challenge the mandate and put on sock, sock. So when it came time for the other shoe – well, you know, “Where did that sock go?”

Now I realize that I’m not the only one who loses socks because someone once

left a pair in my car. One day the interior had a distinctive odor. I have no idea why these socks were off their owner's feet ... but I do love it when someone else validates my own quirks.

Sometimes things are left before they're lost. Did you ever notice all the shoes on Route 49 in the summer? Well, people take off their shoes and place them on the car's roof while they brush sand off their feet. Then the shoes are left topside to ride only so long before becoming part of the collection that lines Route 49 each summer. How do I know this? Well, I'm not telling.

How else do I know other people lose things? Because we hold large parties at the house and at one point in time we filled a closet with the plethora of things left behind. For further evidence of my orphaned items point, my brother-in-law who was headmaster at St. Augustine Prep used to post a regular email with all the lovely things that teenaged boys left at the school.

You know what happens when you are in a rush and about to head out the door? The phone rings of course, and in my case the cell phone. It rings while you are gathering up the world of things needed to outfit your exodus. Before leaving, the last thing I check

for is the cell phone. It's funny when you're talking on it: you simply don't see it up by your ear! My final quandary is: do I admit to the person I'm talking to that I'm looking for the very phone on which I'm speaking? In my case I find my quirks very funny, so I'm forced to confess, because I'm laughing hysterically as the person on the other end of the line, inopportunately, delivers such terrible news as... they just had to put their dog down.

Oh, did I forget to say, "Some of my humor is both dark and dry?"

The other night my husband and I returned home only to hear a very faint electronic beep every two minutes or so. It took us about five minutes to triangulate the sound to a very high-tech dishwasher that has no visible buttons or dials, just a wooden front panel. We pretend we know how it works, and because it's pricey we also pretend, "It's the best." I know no one reading this has ever said how great something is simply because they bought the "best" the store had to offer. Translation: the most exciting, new, innovative, etc. further translated: "outrageously expensive." It's human nature - in fact sociologists have proved this, but I'll spare you the details. Sometimes you don't always get what you pay for, as some of your

Christmas gift recipients will soon find out. And half the time it's a gift they selected themselves, so shame on them.

I have a nephew that outdoes himself when it comes to contraptions, especially "the best." Basically, meaning the most technologically superior items available, like programable vacuums that do everything but empty the collection bin. They are not programmed to know where the cat and dog are lying down, but I'm sure he has fancy explanations as to how it navigates that parameter.

So recently he even exceeded his wife's expectations when buying a robotic toaster oven. Do those three words even belong together: "robotic toaster oven?" Indeed not. One of their daughters put her toy green dragon in the oven and the oven declared it to be broccoli. I'm not sure what it did with it after that but I suppose it wasn't pretty; on the other hand dragons do like heat. I offered up my dog Mambo Italiano's toy "lamb chop" (of Shari Lewis fame) for sacrifice, knowing it had been treated way beyond recognition by my pooch. I wondered if it would recognize it as mutton, or anything for that matter - possibly cauliflower.

By the way I just noticed that the Total Smart Oven (name changed to avoid adding insult to injury) has been marked down for a Black Friday Sale from \$299 to \$49 (true). Maybe my niece-in-law wrote a review. In fact, I just exchanged a text with her including the advertisement, and she declared the price to be \$40 too much.



*This stuffed dragon was identified as broccoli by the robot oven. The author's nephew actually gets a notification on his phone when its in use and a picture of the item to be cooked. Photographer's ID is undisclosed in order to protect the innocent.*



Okay, so this was supposed to be only about my foibles. So one holiday season about 30 years ago, being a gadgeteer myself, I fell for a Ron Popeil sales pitch - an egg beater to be exact. Not just any beater but one with a pin that went inside the egg and whipped the yolk without breaking the egg, such that when you hard-boiled the egg the interior was all a creamy white. I thought it was incredibly funny, even without any wine, and sort of a double gag. I also discovered that the person



that receives one such egg beater can hardly find words to express how grateful they are at being gifted with such a prize. And I gave out about ten of them.

Know this too: a person who searches futilely for the yolk is mystified. Most of the beaters broke shortly after a few uses. But that didn't keep me from being entertained, and being entertained is good. The price, possibly indicative of their value, was worth every laugh.

Now for a very low tech failing. Whenever I turn on lights at the switch panels in our house I invariably hit the wrong one/s first. We have lived in our house for nearly 40 years and my husband is not impressed by my memory skills. I blame it on doing many things at once – and too many switches. My position is that he gets a free light show. Enter my niece's friend's son. This kid has energy; in fact he did forward rolls on our cellar steps, all 12 of them, and also the landing for good measure. This was when my eyebrows had a party with my hairline and I announced, "That is against the rules in this house."

At the time we were hosting the CU Maurice River Ah Why Knot Awards banquet in which we have some 150

attendees, so keeping an eye on his acrobatic skills was not going to be possible. On his way to the stairs he passed some sixteen switches and queried, "Hey, Lady (that would be me), how many switches do you have anyway?"

Then my personal light bulb came on, and I devised an evil plan to occupy his OCD and put to rest my marital plight at the same time. "Could you count them for me? My husband and I have a little thing going with the light switches." He was game to help fuel a marital spat; I might have slipped him a \$5 for good measure.

Later, when I took the microphone for the awards, I called on Alex to find out how he made out on his 30-minute search of the premises. He proudly announced he found over 60. I asked, "Did you check the garage?" "No," he acknowledged. "Well, then it doesn't entirely count. But thank you and off to the garage with you!" And off he ran. The stairs to the best of my knowledge remained limited to normal use throughout the rest of the party.

The audience was amused but puzzled. So I explained that my husband and I had an ongoing feud about my inability to hit the proper switches and that Alex thankfully shed proper light on the

problem: we simply had too many switches!

And that is how I will leave it. In today's world things come at us from all directions continually and with all that juggling we are bound to make errors – it's just human nature. We simply own too much stuff. So this Christmas give to those in need. And to others give the greatest gift of all – your love and respect.