

Potpourri

January, 2016

Gabby and F.S.A.D.

Most of us struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.), at least occasionally. A long stretch of gloomy, rainy days can make even the most optimistic person feel a little glum. But a cat? Still, it's the conclusion I came to. See what you think:

It's early January, warmer than usual (mid-60s). We're in for a solid week of rain.

Day 1: Gabby goes to the door, cries for me to open it. I do. Gabby pokes her nose out, then backs into the room, stalks to the recliner, hops up, and curls into a ball.

Day 2: Repeat of day 1, except when she backs into the room, she shakes all over—head to tail exactly like a wet dog. (Really.) Heads for the recliner.

Day 3: Repeat of day 2. This time, however, after she shakes, she nips my bare ankle. I explain I don't like the rain anymore than she does. She ignores me.

Day 4: She tries to repeat day 3, but I'm prepared. I'm wearing thick socks. Instead of heading for the recliner, she stalks to her food dish and cries pitifully (dinner is 4 hours away). At first I say no. Then I give in. The cat food actually looks kind of good, so I make popcorn.



Day 5: Gabby goes to the window and looks out. Silently she comes to my desk and curls up in an empty basket. She follows me all day she jumping in my lap whenever I'm sitting.

Day 6: Gabby stays in bed until 3 p.m. (missing breakfast). She doesn't go near the door. As soon as I've fed her, she crawls under the sofa and goes back to sleep.

Feline Seasonal Affective Disorder—or something else? What do you think?

WHAT I'M READING

I'm one of those people who read several books at the same time. I'm not a fast reader, though I can skim at lightning speed if pushed (a skill I learned in grad school and used in teaching). At the moment I have 3 books going.

Nonfiction

- *Bringing Up Ziggy: What raising a Helping Hands monkey taught me about love, commitment, and sacrifice* by Andrea Campbell (Renaissance Books, 1999). I water-walk with Andrea once a week. When she realized her stories about Ziggy intrigued me, she gave me a copy of her book. Helping Hands is a nonprofit organization that trains capuchin monkeys to assist quadriplegic individuals. Andrea got Ziggy when he was five weeks old and was foster

mother to him for over ten years as they became an ambassadorial team for Helping Hands. Ziggy now has his own quadriplegic partner. Andrea's voice comes through loud and clear in the stories and observations about life that make up this patchwork of monkey facts, memoir, and life lessons. If you think you'd like to read it, *Bringing Up Ziggy* is available on Amazon.

- *Jesus as They Saw Him* by William Barclay (Eerdmans Publishing, 1962). I checked this book out of our church library. Barclay (1907-1978) was a minister, theologian, and professor at the University of Glasgow. His life work was to make biblical scholarship available to lay readers. He is best known for a 17-book series of commentaries on the New Testament, called *Daily Bible Study*. I knew Barclay's name from his commentaries, which I use in my own Bible study. In *Jesus as They Saw Him*, Barclay explores 42 titles Jesus was known by in the New Testament. It's a slow book, a bit like an encyclopedia. I'm sure I'll be reading it for a few months (luckily our library doesn't enforce due dates). It's doing for me exactly what Barclay hoped. "I can only hope and pray that as the writing of it has opened to me something of the inexhaustible wonder of Jesus Christ, so the reading of it will do something of that for others" (p.8). It too is available on Amazon.

Fiction

- *Book, Line, & Sinker* by Jenn McKinlay. Though she's been a New York Times best-selling author of cozies for almost ten years, I've just discovered McKinlay. This is the third book in her Library Lover's Mysteries series I've read. The books are a quick read, fun and intriguing. In this series the two main characters are library director Lindsey Norris and children's librarian Beth Stanley, Lindsey's friend. The series is set in Briar Creek, Connecticut. McKinlay has also written series of Cupcake Mysteries, London Hat Shop Mysteries, Good Buy Girls Mysteries, and Decoupage Mysteries. Check out her website at www.jennmckinlay.com. (Pun intended.) If you like cozies, I'm pretty sure you'll like McKinlay's books.

FROM THE BIRD DECK



Papa Chickadee (4¾"):

"All airborne personnel, clear the air space. I repeat, cl...ea...r... the air space. Pileated woodpecker (16½") spotted coming in from southeast sweet gum. Target right suet

feeder. Remember your pecking orders! Cl...ea...r... the area. I repeat, cl...ea...r... the area!



WORD PLAY

My friend Becky recently gave me a fun book—*From the Word Museum: The Most Remarkable English Words Ever Forgotten*, by Jeffrey Kacirk (Touchstone Books, 2000.) From time to time I'll share an entry with you. This month's word comes to from Leeds, England in the mid-1800s.

- Word: *hurple* [verb]
- Definition: To shrug or stick up the back as an animal does in inclement weather when standing under a hedge.
- In a Sentence: Seeing the rain, Gabby hurpled and backed in the door.
- Your Sentence: _____

Please email me your sentences [suzannebratcher@gmail.com], so I can share a few in next month's newsletter.



A KEEPER of a Recipe: *Cookies of Joy*

This recipe has been handed down for 900 years! Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) recommended it for slowing the aging process, creating a cheerful countenance, lightening a heavy heart, and releasing intelligence. "Eat often," she advised. My friend Vaughn shared these cookies with me at Christmas. I'm not sure about the aging process or the intelligence, but these cookies definitely made me cheerful.

Ingredients

½ c butter
1 c brown sugar
½ c applesauce
1 egg
½ c raisins
½ c chopped walnuts

¾ c all purpose flour
¾ c whole wheat flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground cardamom
1 Tbsp cinnamon
1 tsp ground cloves
2 tsp nutmeg

Tools

2 medium bowls
cookie sheets
parchment paper
oven @ 350

Directions

Cream softened butter with brown sugar and applesauce. Beat in egg. Add nuts and raisins. Combine remaining ingredients in another bowl. Mix ½ with butter-egg-sugar mixture. Add the rest. Mix well. Chill an hour or more. Form the chilled dough into about 24 walnut-sized balls (roll or drop from a spoon). Place balls on a parchment-covered cookie sheet (or greased). Bake 12-15 minutes. Allow to cool on the cookie sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire rack to finish cooling.

MY WRITING LIFE: *Guardians of the Canyon*

I received an encouraging response from the editor at Love-Inspired-Suspense. As it now stands the storyline doesn't quite fit the reader expectations, but the editor liked my voice, the characters, and the basic plot. She made specific suggestions for improvement. With some brainstorming help from my daughter, I've re-imagined the middle of the story. Guess what? It's becoming a stronger story. Stay tuned to see if it my revised synopsis makes it through the door!