

Dear Family and friends,

June was a busy month. We were visited by my niece Spring Kraft and her family and my brother and his wife for a few days. I had forgotten what it is like to have little ones around the house. However, it was a very enjoyable visit.

Brian, Spring's husband, puts websites together and he agreed to do one for me. It is currently up and running with more pieces being added almost daily. Eventually it will have links to interesting websites, pictures, and information about my current book Under God's Sky and other projects that are under way. I hope you will take the time to share this website with as many other people as possible. Remember though, it is a work in progress, so keep checking back for new developments.

My website address is: www.johnrhardison.com.

July has not been much better so far. I am trying to finish reading the manuscript for another book as yet unnamed. It seems like it takes forever and then a few more days. I have some other projects in mind, but I have to get this one done first.

We are trying our best to survive the triple digit weather. It is hot out there. In fact, it is so hot that I don't even mind it when the sprinklers swing around and get me wet as I am trying to hook the lines together. Of course, having the sprinklers do that when it is at the end of September and much colder and windier is not near as much fun.

As promised I have included another article by permission from Dan Madson in this newsletter. Please check out Dan Madson's website for several interesting books and more at www.danmadsonbooks.com. His books are funny and enjoyable.

I pray you are having a great July and, depending on where you are in this great country of ours, you are able to keep cool and/or dry.

May God bless you and yours,

Fear God

***And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?
(Deuteronomy 10:12,13)***

If you are going into wilderness country where grizzly and black bears are known to be, it would be wise to read a few books to learn something about bears and be cautious. Bears are bigger and stronger than humans and sometimes, if caught in the right situation, can be downright dangerous. I remember hunting years ago on horseback with a guide in British Columbia. One of the first instructions we were given by our guide was if we got off of our horse, our rifle was to come off at the same time. He pointed out that grizzlies in the forest and brush would sometimes rise up on their hind legs to see what was making noise near them and in the process scare the horses. If our horses took off with our rifles, we would not only be afoot, but would have no defense if the bear decided to make an issue of our presence.

One could assume a person should *fear* bears and I have known some people who truly *feared* them. They were afraid of them and could hardly function in their presence. However, the truth is most people living in bear country learn to *fear* bears only in the sense that they have great respect for them. These people learn the rules for avoiding problems with bears. For example, they make sure to be noisy when traveling in bear country so the bears will know humans are in the area and have time to move away from a possible close encounter.

An Indian guide named Harvey, who accompanied my grandfather and I on a moose hunt in 1967, was killed two years later by a grizzly that had circled around and waited behind some brush using several inches of freshly fallen snow to hide any noise he made. As Harvey quietly followed the

bear's tracks, the grizzly attacked him from behind and apparently killed him with one swat of his paw. Harvey had broken the rule about letting the bear know you were there and it cost him his life. Other rules say people should keep all food locked up in a car or hanging high in a tree away from where people are sleeping. One time I left a gallon water jug outside my tent door in Lake Louise campground. In the morning the top was popped loose. A bear had bitten through it. Another rule is a people should never get between a mother bear and her cubs. The cubs are cute, but it is best to stay away from them because the mother bears are very protective. Actions humans may think are innocent may not look that way to a mother bear. As I was filming a mother black bear and her two cubs, I watched some people run shouting after the threesome because the mother bear had grabbed a cardboard box of their camping gear in her mouth and was proceeding to drag it from their tent. Camping gear was going everywhere. The people had returned as this began happening and ran shouting after the mother getting themselves between the mother and her two cubs. Luckily for the people that mother bear was on good behavior and she and the two cubs left, but the human actions could easily have caused another bear attack such as those we read about in the newspapers. These are certainly not all the rules about being around bears, but they demonstrate how important it is to know those rules and *fear* (respect) the bears.

The Bible spends a lot of time telling us to "*fear* the Lord" in a number of passages in the Old and New Testaments. God hates sin and we are all sinners, so we have good reason to *fear* God's wrath. We are told the wages of sin is death. However, as Christians, we know Jesus has washed away our sins by his blood shed on the cross for us so we can have eternal life. We have been made perfect in God's eyes through Christ. As Christians we *fear* (respect) God like a person going into the wilderness *fears* (respects) bears. After all, God made this world. He is the master of all. He is more powerful than anything we can imagine. Doesn't it make sense, that, as we inhabit God's world, we work to learn more about God and his "rules." When we become Christians we want to learn about his "rules" as they are written down in the words of the Bible. We *fear* God in the sense that we hold him in the highest respect and want to do his wishes. It is true we will never be able to live up to what our lives ought to be because we have a sinful nature. However, as Christians we love God and will spend time studying his Word. We want to learn more about how Jesus stepped in for us and made us perfect by dying for our mistakes.

It is hard to get our minds around God. He is powerful, yet caring. He is a God of wrath, but also a God of love. He has destroyed armies, yet he cares about each sparrow. He is to be *feared*; yet he loves us.

We know bears are powerful and are more or less the king of their wild domain. We can see them and to some extent figure out how they will act in a given set of circumstances. How much more powerful and mysterious is God who is ever present in the world. How much more respect we Christians will show him than we show the bears in the wilderness. The Bible holds the answers we want to find. Let us continue to show our respect (*fear*) for God by making good use of his Holy Word, so we can continue to grow in our understanding of what God wants from each of us. As Paul tells us, "*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed --- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence --- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life...*" (Philippians 12-16).

"Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. ... Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:11,12).

John R. Hardison

‘B is for Beauty’

I Corinthians 1:18 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I know it’s cliché, but it’s true. Our basement flooded a few years ago. Diluted sewage came bubbling up through the drain in the floor and covered the entire basement to a depth of three inches. Carpet was ruined; furniture had to be moved. The smell was less than pleasant. I stood on the stairs with the Roto-Rooter man and looked at the disaster. To me, it was a horrible sight. To him, it was beautiful! He made his living fixing messes like mine and seemed happy as a clam to lug his equipment through the murky water and clear the drain.

Ever looked down an old chimney? It’s a black, ugly mess to the casual observer. To the chimney sweep, it’s a beautiful sight. Ever driven around town after a light snow? Cars are covered with salt and grime. It’s depressing for drivers but a beautiful sight to the carwash owners.

Many images in the Bible that Christians hold dear are beautiful to look at—the rainbow God sent after the flood; the angels singing to the shepherds the night Jesus was born; the empty tomb on Easter morning.

Of all the images that remind us of God’s love, none stands out more than the Christian cross. It’s not that the cross is special in and of itself. It’s special because it’s the place where God sacrificed his Son to save us from our sins.

I remember seeing *The Passion of the Christ* for the first time. The scene where Jesus was whipped by the Roman soldiers was so brutal it was difficult to watch. When the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, he was nothing but a beaten, bloodied man waiting to die. For those who don’t know Jesus as their Savior, it’s a horrible sight. To believers, it’s the most beautiful image in the world.

When we’re troubled by our sins, the cross reminds us that somebody else has already been punished for them. When we’re scared about tomorrow, the cross reminds us that our days on earth have already been planned and our future in heaven is a done deal. When we’re thankful for the gifts we’ve been given, it’s the image that directs our gratitude to our heavenly Father.

Ever driven past a car dealership after a hailstorm? It’s a disaster for the owner, but it will put a smile on the faces of dent repair people all over the city. Remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, especially when it comes the Christian cross.