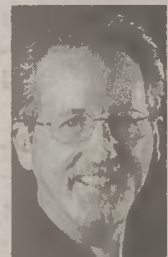


Opinion

Icing can cure aging...

I have more good things in my life than one man probably deserves. Somewhere near the top of the list is my mother's chocolate pound cake with chocolate icing. To receive one of those is to live a blessed life.

She bakes a chocolate cake for most birthdays around our family compound. Mine was the most recent. Finally.



MARK
RUTLEDGE
*The Daily
Reflector*

At some point during the earliest years of her marriage — which means around the time of my birth or shortly before — Mom clipped two pound cake recipes from the Charlotte Observer. One is lemon. The other is chocolate.

Her lemon pound cakes alone are legendary. They arrived with less frequency during her long teaching career. For about the last two decades, however, she has kept a lemon pound cake on her table roughly 90 percent of the time.

This has been a mild problem for my waistline, especially since last year when the pandemic began. For the days when I must work from home, I set up shop in my dad's old study at her house. There has developed a routine that involves my starting the workday with coffee and a piece of lemon cake.

"Don't you want a piece of cake?" Mom will ask if I sit down without one.

"Well, I've already eaten a bowl of cereal," I might say.

I eventually have the cake, always. I might even do a second slice as a pre-lunch appetizer.

Mom's lemon pound cake is as dependable as spring rain. She never bakes a bad one. But when they are fresh and still warm, everything else in the world seems good as well.

Once in a while, I will walk through the door to the distinct aroma of a freshly baked chocolate pound cake. "That's for (insert name of sibling or grandchild)," she will quickly announce. The birthday might be days away. She'll put the cake in the freezer and thaw it on the day she makes the icing.

The icing.

I'm not sure where she got the recipe for her chocolate icing, but when it comes out right — which is most of the time — it is of a magical and marvelous candymaker quality that I have never experienced anywhere else in my life.

Making the icing can be a punishing experience — both for the maker and the icing.

"You have to beat it and beat it and beat it," Mom says, "in order to get the right consistency."

If the icing comes out hard instead of creamy, it's a sure sign that atmospheric conditions are askew. "I can't get this icing to thicken right," Mom will say. "It must be the humidity."

The icing will taste as good, but one cannot roll it into little balls of fudge like my older sister and I did when we were kids.

Something else we did as kids was lick the mixer blades and the spoon and pan after the icing had been applied to the cake.

"Which kind of cake do you want for your birthday?" Mom asked about a week ahead. She has asked me that for most of my 60 years, and the answer is always the same. Maybe she's secretly hoping I'll finally go for lemon and she won't have to spend an hour beating the icing.

Fat chance.

The day before my big day, she had just spread the icing when I walked in. She handed me the pan and the spoon — and I was 10 again.

Magic.

Contact Mark Rutledge at mrutledge@reflector.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The *Bertie Ledger-Advance* encourages Letters to the Editor. Letters should be on topics of public interest to Bertie County, and writers must have a connection to our circulation region.

Email: lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832



A little bit about me...

There have been many columns I have written about my house, my family or topics dear to my heart. But seldom do I write a column about me.

So this week I decided to share a little about myself.

First, my family takes top priority in my life. I always strive to make sure they are taken care of and provided for.

To see my children, do their best and succeed in life is my greatest goal.

I have several hobbies, some of which I have had since my childhood, and others I have gained as an adult but my favorite is playing the piano.

I love to play that piano. I began taking lessons under Mary Mardre at the age of eight. This has been a hobby I have continued as an adult.

I can read sheet music, which makes it easy for me to sit down at any time and play. Sometimes I think I may sound a little rusty but, it's like riding a bike; you never forget.

I love to listen to music, watch movies and read books. It is hard to believe I love all three when I find it hard to make time for any of them, which makes it part of a multitasking venture.

Listening to music is probably what I do most frequently because I travel a lot. I love all genres of music, and I like to switch it up. Today I may be listening to 80's rock and tomorrow it may be beach music or old-school rap. Whether around the block or on a long-distance trip, I have the radio turned up.

I love to visit unique places, and try to blend with the locals.

Which leads to another fact, I love eating at different restaurants. I like to find the popular local places and tend to avoid the chain restaurants that may be found in every city.

I have never been one to like to shop.

A weekly trip to the grocery store is a chore because I just hate having to shop.

If you have ever heard the expression "house divided" in regards to sport teams, well I am "heart divided."

I am an East Carolina University Pirate and University of Virginia

Cavalier at heart, and anyone who rides by my house will find my "purple and gold" or "blue and orange" flag flying high during football and basketball season.

I have a passion for American muscle cars. The louder the rumble coming from the engine the more I like it.

I love putting a monogram on everything, especially my shoes. I am a "night owl." I get most of my tasks done at night, but the problem is I hate to get up in the mornings.

More importantly, I cannot, repeat cannot, live without coffee.

I can drink coffee, morning, noon and night.

When I interviewed for this job I was asked, what was the one downfall I had?

My reply was, "don't talk to me until I have had coffee."

I guess that is why we soon started using the coffee maker in the office.

Leslie Beachboard is a Managing Editor for the *Bertie Ledger Advance*, *Chowan Herald*, the *Perquimans Weekly* and *The Enterprise* who likes college sports and cannot function without coffee. She can be reached via email at lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com.



LESLIE
BEACHBOARD
*Small Town
Girl*

If the name of a person, object or service is not preceded by the term "award winning," they are nothing.

I am not opposed to awards, but think they are overdone. This is not envy, as I have even been honored with some too. For instance, I was the Croquet Champion at 4-H Summer Camp in 1957, and the Golfer of the Year in our league. Great, but I don't look for their mention in the obituary my children will eventually have to write.

An award should not be restricted to a timeframe, but given only when merited. For example, the Academy Award for the best motion picture in 1939 went to *Gone with the Wind*. It won over equally deserving classics like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Of Mice and Men* and *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. It was a great year for movies.

Compare this with 2011's winner, *The Artist*, which wouldn't have made the top ten in 1939. Yet, they both have an Oscar on

display as best picture of their year. I propose a trophy awarded when justified.

If you are going to have an award, it first must have a name and purpose. Mine will be the Billy Carter Memorial Trophy, and limited to close relatives of a chief executive that garnered headlines challenging their famous kin.

In case you've forgotten, Billy was President Jimmy Carter's brother. He was popular with the press, but a family embarrassment. He was a Georgia farmer and gas station operator, and became a legend riding on his brother's coattails.

His antics were too many to mention here; but, enough to have Falls City Brewery market a Billy Beer in his honor in 1977. Billy passed away in 1988 from cancer, but his legacy should not be lost. There have been some since who challenged Billy's antics. First, there were the Reagan kids and then George W. Bush's twin daughters; but, they all fell short and none since have come close, until now.

It took 33 years to find a recipient, but Hunter Biden has been selected as worthy. He is the sec-

ond son of our current POTUS. He considered himself a lawyer and an investor. His personal life is material for the cover of a check-out counter tabloid however.

He separated from his first wife and quickly began an affair with his late brother's widow, all this while getting a former stripper pregnant. He has also struggled with alcohol and drugs, to say nothing of possible influence peddling abroad. Being a column instead of a book, I can't cover everything, but you get the picture.

Speaking of picture, Hunter now claims to be an artist. He recently sold one of his works for the handsome sum of \$500,000. I have been thinking hard about that. I have seen his work and believe, at worst, I am at least 1 percent as good as he is.

With that logic, mine should go for around \$5,000 each. If I paint and sell one a week, I'm in fat city. Which reminds me, I need to wrap this up and get in some brush strokes while the afternoon lighting is at its peak. God bless and have a great day.

William Rowell is a resident of *Perquimans County* and can be reached at blrowell@embarqmail.com.



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*The Perquimans
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