

LIFESTYLE

Dairyman realizes life-long dream of performing



Dave McComb entertains an appreciative Legion crowd in Colborne.

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by JOHN CAMPBELL
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Dave McComb loved to play the guitar when he was young but he stuck his instrument away in the closet 40 years ago to concentrate on farming. He became good at what he did, recently being recognized by Holstein Canada as a master breeder for the second time, one of only four dairy farmers in Northumberland County who can claim such an honour.

But four years ago he got the itch to take the guitar out of storage and start playing once again. He had "more time" for it, having entered into a partnership with his son Wayne to operate the family farm near Castleton. Now the 65-year-old dairyman appears regularly at the many jamborees that have sprung up across the county, in Campbellford, Brighton, Hastings, Colborne, Grafton, Cold Springs, and elsewhere.

It's a popular circuit for music-lovers like himself,

who "chord on the guitar (and) have a decent singing voice". You enter your name on a list when you show up at the hall and then wait your turn to sing three songs onstage, accompanied by a group of musicians who are there to provide back-up.

"You can go every Saturday night and Sunday all winter," he says.

The jamborees shut down for the summer months when it gets too hot to hold them inside, and there are larger outdoor shows for people to attend as spectators, as Mr. McComb and his wife Erma faithfully do, taking their trailer to events such as the Havelock Jamboree.

Mr. McComb, whose idols are Hank Williams and Hank Snow, has written several of his own compositions, penning new words to classic country music tunes. One that is received well wherever he goes is The Wabash Cannonball in which the names of local communities have been substituted

Mr. McComb is a good friend of George and Alice Potter. Their Sandy Flat sugar bush is the venue for the annual Warkworth Maple Syrup Festival where he's performed for a number of years. On the occasion of Mrs. Potter's birthday last year, he wrote a song about the sugar bush that he plans to sing at this year's festival.

Mr. McComb also enjoys old-time square dancing. He's the chair of the Percy Swingers, a group of people who get together for dancing at the Warkworth Centre for the Arts the first Tuesday of every month, except for July and August. Mr. McComb and his brother Marvin share calling out the instructions and the Potters, on fiddle and bass, provide the music.

"Everybody is welcome," he says. "Anybody who doesn't know how to dance we'd love to teach them. We do waltzes and a lot of special dances."

Admission to the dances, which run from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., is \$5.

Librarians not expected to censor porn perusers

On Ethics
RANDY COHEN

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I was disturbed to see a man looking at pornography on a New York Public Library computer. When two children sat down near him, I decided to take action, but he instantly switched to an inoffensive video game. A security guard told me they were keeping an eye on a couple of people acting similarly and would catch them in the act eventually.

Should I have alerted someone as soon as I became aware of this man's activities?

Anonymous, New York

A guard monitoring someone's A reading? That's not my idea of how a library operates.

Libraries should provide for the free exchange of ideas — not just ideas you or I find palatable, not just ideas suitable for 5-year-olds. And librarians should not be forced to censor patrons' reading, let alone eject them for looking at disturbing images.

Happily, even if you and the overzealous guard had reported this incident, nobody would have been roused. Caroline Oyama, manager of public relations for the New York Public Library, explains that it "does not ask adult patrons to leave, stop what they are doing or move to another computer if another patron doesn't like the website he or she is viewing. Instead, we make every attempt to move the user who is offended to another computer where he or she doesn't have to see what the other person is viewing."

This is a prudent policy, consistent with the library's ethos and responsive to the sensitivities of patrons of all ages. This isn't to say that libraries should be heedless of young patrons — nor is the NYPL. It complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act, which requires it to install filtering software on its computers or lose some federal financing. Patrons older than 17 may have the filters turned off, but they cannot be disabled in the children's rooms. What's more, Oyama reports, "the branch libraries have polarized privacy screens on many public computers, which allow patrons to see only the screen directly in front of them." So you needn't have feared for the children sitting near your porn peruser.

Incidentally, while you depict that fellow's quick shift to a video game as a cunning tactic to elude capture, a digital Moriarty foiling his e-Holmes, it

might have been an act of consideration for those children who had just arrived.

Q I own a franchise that has not lived up to earnings expectations. (More than 400 of these franchises have gone under.)

The franchiser has offered to help me resell the franchise, but I am almost certain that the new owner will fail. (The franchiser's reaction: Make sure you get cash.) Caveat emptor is one thing, but could I look the new buyer in the eye when I bump into him in Costco next year?

Anonymous, Arizona

Caveat emptor is indeed a meagre ethical standard. I admire your embrace of the more stringent look-'em-in-the-eye-next-year principle. One way to do that is to present any

prospective buyer with the pertinent facts about this franchise. When so informed, if he still thinks he can make a go of it where you could not, then sell with a clear conscience.

Ethics forbids you to withhold information the buyer needs to make a decision; it does not require him to make a prudent decision or you to protect him from his folly. His being unwise doesn't make you unethical.

But if, as you imply, the franchiser itself is less than candid, then it is behaving dishonorably and perhaps illegally, something you (and the failed 400) might want to discuss with your state attorney general's office.

Readers can direct their questions and comments to ethicist@nytimes.com. This column originates in The New York Times Magazine.