

Opinion

Many an 'oops' between me and the hoops

I am an addict. That may or may not come as a surprise to my new employers, based upon my erratic behavior in the newsroom.

My addiction is not to any substance, unless Coca-Cola has made the IOC list of banned drugs. No, my addiction is to bar room basketball. You know, those machines which inhabit lonely corners of local taprooms beckoning quarters for the chance to shoot undersized balls through an undersized hoop. It's a round ball for the round eyed.

Months ago, when I first encountered the machines, I passed up the chance to play. Condescendingly I was, "Yes, a game for fools I said. Try harder, pidgeon." The hoop seemed so close you could almost drop it in.

Any challenge was put down as effeminate. "Only girls would actually compete at such a thing. I bet they have to do five 'woman's push-ups' if they miss." It was at this time I was challenged by the intrepid sports reporter of Milton's Champion, who is anything but Milton's champion.

After waving aside the challenge for a while, I was backed into a corner. I had never played the game, never considered it worthy of my considerable athletic skill, never had the necessary 50 cents. Forced to play knowing myself to be unable due to never having played before, I wandered disconsolate to the hoop. I was horrible.



Reaume With a View
with BRAD REAUME

So irritated by the experience, was I that I vowed, on my own grave no less, to defeat the forces of competition and destroy that weaselly-like sports writer so often that he would decline ever to issue a challenge to anybody over anything. Success has thus far eluded me.

In the spirit of athletic vigilante-ism I began to haunt the dark, smokey rooms where these hoop games reside. A couple of dollars here, a couple of dollars there, money was of little consequence.

My play was erratic, but being of single mind I pushed myself, developing my game, adding to my mental toughness and refusing to let the whiles of The Game interfere with my goal. Soon my ability and dedication paid off. I was steadier, able to find a rhythm, and able to change my approach to the hoop when conditions called for it.

My game has not yet progressed to the point of absolute annihilation of my target, yet I am righteous and my crusade to end athletic tyranny will triumph. Either that or I'll get real good and win some easy money.

Once upon a time . . .

This is a tale of four kitties. Once, not long ago, a woman lived with her husband and three children in a suburban backsplit. They were a comfortable family unit, free to come and go without any ties and commitments other than to one another.

One day the woman had an idea. Why not extend the family with a domestic pet?

So one Saturday afternoon, she took the children for a drive in the country and stopped at a house they had never stopped at before.

"Who lives here?" asked the children.

"You'll see," the woman replied.

Actually, it mattered not who lived there so much as what lived there — kittens.

The chosen calico kitten moved in with the family and made herself at home. However, she was a nature lover and abandoned the family every night. One morning she did not return. The woman called into the early morning light for days, but no meowing response did she hear.

The days turned into weeks. The woman missed the cat that had spent only five months in their midst. But she had another idea.

One Thursday afternoon, she, and the children went for a drive down a long, narrow road to a rich city on the shores of a large body of water.

They travelled along a shady, tree-lined lane that ended at a plain, brick building. In this building, they found a large room full of caged cats.

A cloud of depression and desperation hung over the lonely, captive animals. The woman and the children peered into the dark enclosures and considered the possibilities of adopting one of the homeless cats.

In one large cage positioned on the floor lay two black cats — a mother and an almost-grown kitten. They pulled the offspring away from her mother and placed her in their midst. She was the one.

The new pet quickly checked over her expanded horizons in the family home, selecting choice spots for naps. At night she joined the sleeping family on their beds, purring with contentment.



On the Home Front
with ESTHER CALDWELL

Five days after her arrival, the family was alarmed to find that the cat was no longer able to climb up onto chairs and beds or get down from them. As she hopped down the stairs, her lower body, compensated for her inactive rear legs.

The family returned to the building in the rich city and left the cat behind in the hopes that someone would be able to determine her problem. The family did not know whether they would ever see her again. A visit to the pet cemetery adjacent to the building saddened them even more.

An advertisement in the newspaper the next day caught the woman's attention — kittens. That evening the woman told the family she was going out for a short time. When she returned, she was carrying two black, eight-week-old kittens.

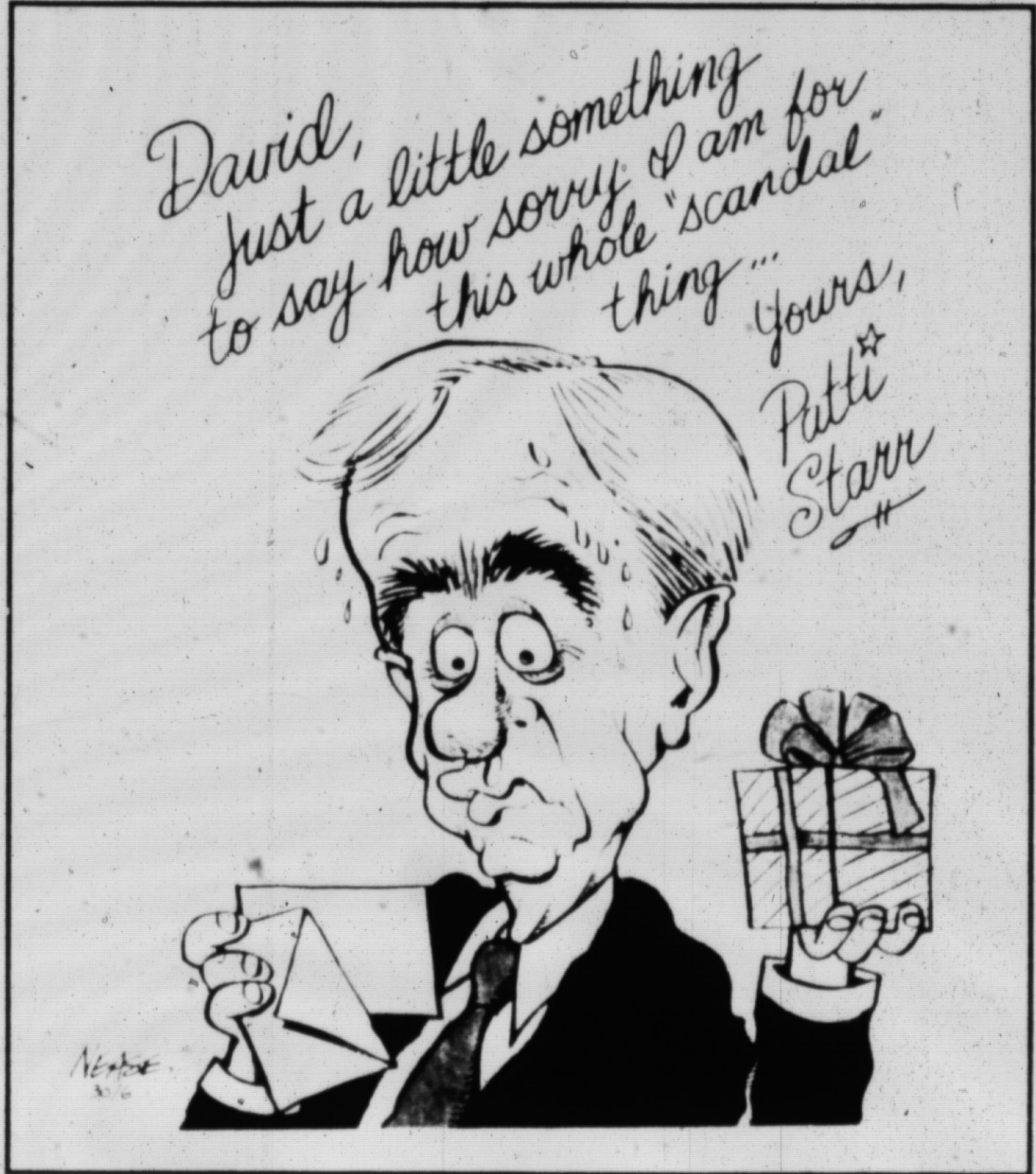
After only one night in their new home, one of the kittens limped badly and he looked so dejected that the woman reunited the pining kitten with his mother for nurturing.

Meanwhile, news of the older black cat reached the woman. The x-rays indicated the cat had extremely poor muscle tone in her back legs and if she failed to grow stronger, euthanasia was her fate. The woman knew what she had to do.

The kitten greeted the arrival of the black cat as if she were his mother and within minutes, the two animals curled up together in a wicker basket and fell asleep.

The following morning, the second kitten, now fully recovered, returned to the family. After an initial concern over the black cat, he followed his brother's example and accepted her.

And so it was that the family of five became a family of eight.



The chilling profile of Dan

The treatment of the sociopath is one of the most difficult and frustrating tasks for a therapist. Some researchers believe this is in part due to the fact that the sociopath has no anxiety about what he has done, and is not motivated to learn or change; most other disorders (depression, phobias, marital problems), do have a lot of anxiety attached to them, and the patient is highly motivated to change.

The onerous task facing a therapist and a patient's family members can be illustrated in this (abbreviated) case history, described by Dr. Elton McNeil.

Dan was a wealthy actor and disc jockey who lived in an expensive house in an exclusive suburb. He generally lived life to the hilt. One evening, out for dinner, Dan complained loudly about the meal he had been served.

When asked why he did that, he answered "I wanted to show you how gutless the world is. If you shove a little, they'll jump. Next time I come in, they'll be all over me to give me everything I want. That's the only way they can tell the difference between class and plain ordinary — I always go first class."

When asked about how he felt treating another human being that way, he replied, "Who cares? If they were on top they would do the same to me. The more you walk on them, the more they like it. It makes them nervous if everyone is equal. Watch, when we leave I'll put my arm around that waitress, ask her if she still loves me, pat her on the fanny, and she'll be ready to roll over any time I wiggle my little finger."

Another incident occurred when a friend of Dan's committed suicide. Dan showed no real concern whatsoever for the friend or family — all he could say was, "that's the way the ball bounces."

In public, however, Dan's behavior was quite different. For example, he was the one who collected money and personally gave it to the widow. In keeping with his character, however, he whispered that the widow had a sexy body



Psychology
with ARNOLD RINCOVER


that really turned him on.

Such incidents painted a grisly picture of lifelong abuse of people for Dan's amusement and profit. He was adept at office politics and described an unbelievable routine of deceptive ways to deal with opponents. Character assassination, rumor-mongering, blackmail, seduction and barefaced lying were the least of his talents. He was a jackal who feasted on the bodies of those he had slaughtered professionally.

Another early and possibly important event was described by Dan. "I can remember the first time I began to suspect that I was a little different from other people: In high school my best friend got leukemia and died. While everyone was at the funeral crying, feeling sorry for themselves and praying to get him to heaven, I suddenly realized that I wasn't feeling anything at all."

"He was a nice guy, but what the hell. That night I thought about it some more and realized that I wouldn't miss my mother and father if they died, and I wasn't nuts about my brothers and sisters, for that matter. I figured there wasn't anybody I really cared for but, then, I didn't really need any of them anyway. So I rolled over and went to sleep."

Dan's case illustrates many of the classic characteristics of the sociopath — a lack of guilt or shame, the absence of real affection for anyone, employing charm only to use and manipulate people, a lack of morals, lying and insincerity. The case is unusual, however, in that Dan was neither a criminal nor in psychiatric treatment at the time (McNeil was a friend of Dan's, not his therapist).



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