

In Memory of John Lederer

The porch lost longtime member John Lederer from Oregon, WI .. John was a frequent and often eloquent contributor to the list and his departure is a great loss. Our condolences to John's family ..

The published obituary follows. Thanks to Andrew Lederer for passing that and the pictures along:

Lederer, John H.
FITCHBURG/MADISON

John Hall MacArthur Lederer died Thursday, March 12, 2009, at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison. He was born on April 24, 1948, in Columbia, South Carolina, the son of Jordan and Grace (McGill) Lederer. He and Karen Larson were married on June 8, 1969, in St. Louis, Mo. Their son, James was born in 1978, and son, Andrew in 1979. John graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1965. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and received his law degree from UW in 1973. After clerking for Judge Walter E. Hoffman of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, he returned to Madison and joined the Dewitt Law Firm, where he practiced law until 1991. For many years after his retirement, John was actively involved with the technology committee of the Wisconsin State Bar Association. He was a man of great wit, intellect and kindness. John was a voracious reader and web surfer with varied interests, including classical history and literature, travel, collecting old tools, and computer technology. He enjoyed spirited, but always friendly, discussions on timely topics such as politics, climate change and the state of higher education. He is survived by his wife, Karen; his two sons, James of Monticello and Andrew (Julia) Lederer of Oregon; granddaughter, Taylor; his "surrogate" daughter, Penny Nangle (Dave Alarie) of Verona and their children, Nathan and Sara; his two brothers, Jordan (and son Ned) of California and Jim of Florida; his sister-in-law, Margaret (Larry) Weintraub of Clayton, Mo., and sons, David and Alex; his aunt, Jane Lederer Northcross of Memphis, Tenn. and her children; and his beloved dog, Beaker; and grand puppies, Moose and Peanut. He was preceded in death by his parents, Jordan and Grace. A memorial service will be held at 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 19, 2009, at GATES OF HEAVEN, located in James Madison Park, 614 East Gorham Street, Madison. A reception at Gates of Heaven will follow the service. All Faiths Funeral Home, (866) 255-3248, www.866allfaiths.com, is assisting the family. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials to the American Heart Association.

A list member (who has scurried back under the porch so shall go nameless here...) provided this from the archives... it is a classic piece from John that so many of us can relate to oh so well! (BTW, John's web site has been preserved here .) Does an "almost" count?

This is a long ago story. You see, I have not been permitted to go to auctions for 30 years, a stricture just recently relaxed as SWMBO indulges me in my old age. The reason is that auctions have provided our marriage with a topic of conversation when our tempers are heated for 30 years.

It started in Cross Plains when we were both students and poor. Our apartment was decorated with the interesting and varied furniture we bought at farm auctions, our informal rule being that nothing could cost over \$2.00.

The farm auction was in progress when we arrived. SWMBO went over to some housewares. My expert eyes noted a pile of horsecollars and harness as "possibly interesting" , a large blower as "I could do something with that", and then I saw it. Next to the barn. Mostly other colored from rust, but magnificent in its immensity.

It was, on close examination, a steam tractor. Not just any steam tractor, but a caterpillar treaded steam tractor, slightly larger than our apartment. I had seen steam tractors, but never a caterpillar treaded one. This was the sort of thing that once had busted the sod for a mile on two cords of wood. It had caused the movement West, the great flood of Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, Germans, Poles, who had come to Wisconsin seeking land and freedom. It had made our country what it was. This was history on the auction block.

I walked over entranced and proceeded to examine it. It was a bit deteriorated from old age and rust, a few tread links had given way,

some things were obviously missing though they might be in the somewhat indeterminate pile of rusty metal and cans next to it. However, it was basically there. I could already see how with a few tons of steel plate it could be put back into tip top shape. It had, I suddenly noticed, a whistle.

SWMBO noticed my absence and came over. She noticed my bemused expression and immediately pointed out a minor defect. There was a 16" diameter maple growing through the tractor. Immediately, I realized that this was a great advantage.

A chain saw could remove that maple in a flash. I knew someone who could lend me a chainsaw. It was no real obstacle, but it would serve to hold the bidding down.

I stood as the auctioneer slowly came closer. SWMBO was more and more animatedly asking things like "what would you do with it", "how would you move it", "for heavens sake it has a *tree* growing through it". She knew I was hooked, and her influence was waning.

The auctioneer clambered up on the cab step, and quickly hopped down as it started to crumble beneath him. He knew little about the tractor.

That did not keep him from a steady patter about what a treasure it was.

I was already contemplating how high I could go. We had at least \$35 in our checking account. I could sell my shotgun for \$60 to my hunting partner before the check bounced. Maybe SWMBO would sell some of our wedding silver. I glanced at SWMBO. Maybe not.

The auctioneer reached the end of his patter and swung into "what do I hear, what do hear? who'll bid \$500?"

Silence.

The sought for bid dropped down.

Silence.

It dropped again.

Silence.

"Alright", the auctioneer, said "we'll do this the hard way. Who'll bid a dollar?"

This was it. The silence stretched. No one had bid. I could have it for a dollar. One dollar and I would be a steam engineer. I lifted my arm, and started to bid.

Just then, there was a blinding pain. SWMBO, noticing that I had not been absorbing what she was saying, had just kicked me in the shin. She had on boots with narrow toes. My attention was jerked to her.

SWMBO is part Norwegian. She has a cheery complexion and twinkling blue eyes. But there is a strange thing about Norwegian eyes. They can reflect any of the seas of the world. Right now hers reflected an angry North Sea, cold, grey, and bleak. In measured tones she informed me that I ought not bid.

I believed her. I had a sudden insight on history. The world had been navigated by Vikings who had done things after their women had told them that they ought not. These were the eyes that had caused the Scandinavians to sail to the Mediterranean, to Labrador, to pull their longboats on rollers across the plains of Russia to the Black Sea, far, far away from those eyes.

The moment passed. The auctioneer moved on, The steam tractor stood, slumped in its rust, unbid upon. SWMBO sweetly told me "I am so glad that you didn't bid, honey. I am sure that it would have been difficult to move". She put her hand on my back in sympathy.

Regards,

John Lederer
Oregon, Wisconsin

Thanks for that and so many more John .. we'll miss you!