

Feeling a bit of writer's remorse

Writing can be a lot like chewing with your mouth open. Downright disgusting, especially if there is too much falling out of your mouth.

Lately, I've been reviewing some of my columns, paring them down, preparing to launch them into the mysterious stratosphere via a blog.

To read more, the address is <http://checklistcharlie.blogspot.com>.

My technical advisor, a young man of a mere 19 years, tells me that you can easily find my blog.

Personally, I think it is worth the money to have him come over and guide you through the startling and unnerving universe referred to as the internet.

This same young man has no trouble finding my blogspot or posting my columns on it.

He tells me it is easy, so easy his conscience is having trouble sending me a bill for his time.

I'm not guaranteeing that you will ever be able to find it out there wherever it is.

Anyway, as a result of editing my own work, I am suffering from Writer's Remorse.

This is something like Buyer's Remorse, only a lot more public.

At least with Buyer's Remorse, once you recover your senses, you can return to the store and return the item, thereby redeeming your money and your dignity.

Unfortunately once you publish, your misshapen sentences, poor grammar, misspelled words, and - worse yet - your silliest ideas are out there for the whole world to see.

Your words can then repetitively embarrass you whenever you are least expecting it into perpetuity.

I have got to learn some self-control.

Or maybe just better man-

CATHY KRAFVE



Checklist Charlie

ners.

"Oh, it must be like Speaker's Remorse. I get it all the time!" responded my friend recently when I mentioned my problem to her.

I was astonished.

I never knew her to give a public speech.

Then it dawned on me that she meant regrets about her conversations.

Really? I never would have guessed it in a million years. She personifies graciousness.

She confessed that she often regrets saying too much.

Wasn't that gracious of her to go so far out of her way to identify with me?

But there it is. The problem in a nut shell. Too many words.

Sometimes it would just be better to close my mouth, like when chewing food for instance. Or when talking. Or when writing.

Of course, the lovely thing about writing is that there are always editors around with red pens to trim it down.

And publishers reminding me to keep it succinct.

Now if only someone would trim down my spoken words.

No more Speaker's Remorse.

Maybe, with a little mercy, it will carry over into my conversations.

■
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It's been in our family album for years: Probably since the summer of 1941 when Daddy pasted the black and white photo on the porous black pages of the brown leather-covered book.

Three young children are sitting on a log at the shoreline of a river.

The two boys, about 4 years old, are dutifully looking at the camera waiting for the shutter to be snapped.

At the very back of the log, with the black curly hair, is my first cousin Gene.

It should come as no surprise that the kid looking straight into the lens grew up to be an actor.

Even then, he looked good on film.

The sandy haired boy in the middle, holding a spouted water pail, is my other first cousin John.

He seems a little bored with the whole process and eager to get it over with.

The squinting little girl, obviously refusing to cooperate with the photographer, is looking down at her pail and probably saying, "Hurry up Daddy, my eyes hurt me."

That spoiled two-year-old is me.

The photograph was taken in St. Charles, Ill., along the Fox River, about an hour from Chicago.

Our parents, all brothers and sisters, frequently left the city to go there on Sunday picnics.

At the time, we three were all "only children" and probably pretty spoiled by our grandmother, Nonna Providenza.

Though I don't remember when it was taken, it's one of my favorite photographs.

And truthfully, I don't remember the boy in the center of the shot.

As a small child, I would often leaf through the family album, stopping to ask, "Who's that, Mommy?"

"It's your cousin Johnny," she would always answer, pointing to another photo of her brother and his wife. "Your Uncle Laurence's and Aunt Josephine's son."

I didn't remember them either.

What I did remember is being in our dining room when the phone rang one afternoon.

My father answered it and turned to my mother saying, "e morto. Laurence is gone." and then Mom starting sobbing.

I was seven at the time. Uncle Laurence was just 32. Cousin Johnny was nine years old.

Laurence was the second sibling my mother lost and the second child my grandmother buried.

Laura, the first, died at age 12 of a childhood disease.

Both were laid to rest in the



Long-lost family

same plot alongside Grandpa Giovanni Falcetta at Mount Carmel Cemetery.

On Sundays when the family drove to the cemetery to visit their graves, my mother and Nonna Providenza would talk about how Uncle died.

They said he got cancer from a punch in the stomach.

The story went Laurence and his best buddy were showing off how strong they were.

"Go ahead and punch me. Punch me as hard as you can," Uncle was said to have told his friend.

The pain was terrible and later, Uncle Laurence developed stomach cancer. I

'm not sure I believed the punch caused the cancer, but the origin was true so to them that I never questioned it aloud.

Not long after his passing, Aunt Josephine and my cousin moved back to St. Louis, Missouri, where her parents still lived.

For some reason, the families did not keep in touch and we lost track of each other.

In 2006, my husband and I drove to Vienna, Vir., to spend Thanksgiving with my cousin Prudy.

"While you're here, Antoinette, I want us to make a phone call.

"My cousin Frances (on her mother's side) knows someone who knew our Aunt Josephine.

"She's located our cousin John and I have his number. We'll do it before you leave," Prudy said.

On Sunday night, I said to her, "If we're going to make that phone call, we'd better do it or we'll be leaving and forget about it."

With Prudy on the bedroom phone and me on the guest room phone, we dialed the number.

Because I was the older and braver one, she decided I should do the talking.

"Is this the Falcetta residence?" I asked.

"Yes," a man's voice answered.

"May I speak to John

Falcetta?"

"This is he," answered the gentlemen.

"I'm your cousin Antoinette and your cousin Prudy is on the extension." And then, babbling like an idiot, I tried to explain who we were and why we were calling.

John appeared to be cautious about responding.

Until finally, I babbled long enough to where he felt our call was legitimate.

"You know, my wife's been after me for years to try to find my cousins. I'm so glad you called," he said, making us feel more at ease.

With the ice broken, we three talked almost an hour, attempting to fill in some of the blanks from the last several years.

Before exchanging telephone numbers and e-mail addresses and hanging up, we promised we would keep in touch and try to get together someday soon.

We exchanged Christmas cards but our plans to meet each other did not gel for two years.

Last month, Bob and I came in from a morning of shopping in Tyler.

He listened to the answering machine and said to me, "Oh, you're going to like this message."

It was John. "Hello, cousin. I'm going to be in Dallas on business in May and wondered if you're going to be around so we can get together."

"You bet!" I answered as I returned his call. "Just say where and my husband and I will be there."

Next week I'll see my cousin John for the first time in more than 50 years.

And next week I'll tell you all about it in this column.

Prudy's Neapolitan Pizzaiola

In November 2006 when my husband Bob and I visited Prudy and Jim, she prepared this authentic recipe she got from her sister-in-law, Anna Marie.

Pizzaiola is a specialty of

Naples, where Prudy's mother's family was originally from. It's so named because the sauce ingredients are similar to that used in pizza topping.

Prudy said, "Pizzaiole (in her best Neapolitan accent) is like a great big casserole. You throw everything together in a big pot and let the oven do all the work."

The result was a hearty and delicious dish.

Serve with rigatoni or rotini cooked to al dente, a tossed green salad and plenty of hot Italian bread, and you have the perfect company meal.

6 to 8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided

6 cloves garlic, sliced

1 large can, about 32 ounces, crushed Italian tomatoes with juice

1 8 ounce can, tomato sauce

1 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

1 / 4 teaspoon black pepper

1 / 4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

4 pork chops

1 pound Italian sausage, cut into one inch pieces

4 chicken thighs, skinned

2 medium onions, sliced

2 potatoes, sliced about 1 / 4 inch thick

1 cup frozen peas

3 / 4 cup medium pitted ripe olives

8 ounces fresh mushrooms, sliced

1 red or green pepper, sliced

1 tablespoon parsley, chopped

6 springs fresh basil, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Add about three tablespoons of oil in a skillet heated over medium heat and sauté garlic until just barely browned.

Stir in the tomatoes, tomato sauce, oregano, salt, sugar, black and red pepper.

Simmer over low heat for about 15 minutes.

Drizzle about three tablespoons into a large and deep ovenproof pot or Dutch oven.

Layer pork chops, sliced sausage, chicken thighs, sliced onions and potatoes, peas, olives, mushrooms and bell pepper.

Season generously with salt and pepper to taste.

Pour simmered tomato sauce over the mixture.

Add parsley and basil and drizzle a little more olive oil over the top.

Cover and bake for 60 minutes. Uncover, stir mixture and bake for another 20 to 30 or minutes until done.

Serves about eight.

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A clear advantage in mammography.

Digital mammograms are clearer, show more detail than those traditionally captured on film and can be enhanced with computers. It all adds up to more accurate diagnosis of breast cancer.

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"Digital mammography is substantially better in enabling us to detect

abnormalities. The clarity really allows us to feel more confident that indeed there's nothing we're missing."

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