

Home

With

The

Armadillo



**Home with the Armadillo #57** is brought to you by Liz Copeland of 3243 165th Ave. SE, Bellevue WA 98008. Phone number is 425-641-0209. Email is received at lizc@nwlinc.com. Started in late March 2003, for SFPA 232.

I'm sorry I missed last mailing but between the pain and irritation of the stents left in after the November surgery, and the next surgery in mid-January, I didn't feel like doing much of anything. I had another surgery in February and that was the last of the kidney stones. So, I now have 2 scars on my back and only a very small fragment from one of the huge kidney stones still in the left kidney. My doctor plans to take an x-ray next week and if the fragment is still there, he'll try and piggyback on my hysterectomy (scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup>). And then I'll be done with all this surgery.

I'm recovering quite well, given that I've had 4 doses of general anesthetic and 2 invasive surgeries with tubes and other ickiness in 4 months. I'm waking easily in the morning, have energy all day and am only having some slight problems sleeping. The latter is actually pretty normal for this time of year given the huge surge in pollens. I sometimes have to take a brief rest during the day but I'm no longer feeling like napping; I just sit in a comfortable chair and do some reading or paperwork until I feel up to getting moving again. Next week I plan to start the daily walks in the afternoon again. I should be in pretty good shape by April 24, when I go under the knife again. The current advice is that the recovery from the hysterectomy will take at least 6 weeks, and I'll still have some weakness then. But I'll be back on my feet, able to drive and walk, and probably better than I was before the kidney stones were discovered.

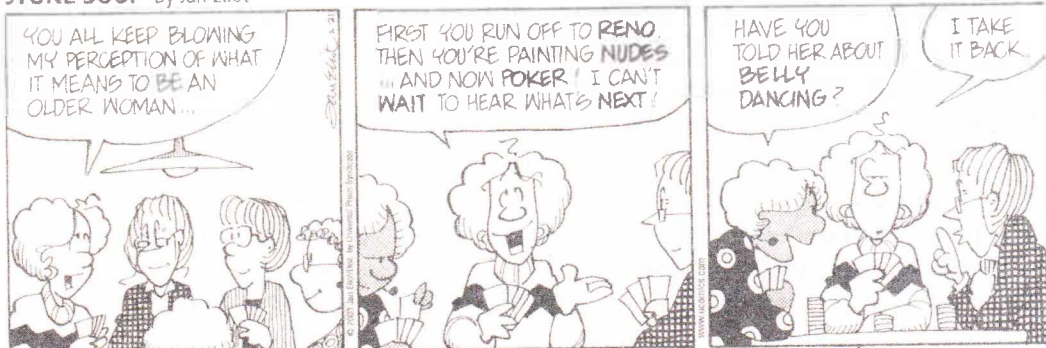
Just in time for Allie's graduation on June 18. Yowza. How time has flown. Her high school has several activities scheduled for that last week of school, and all kinds of relatives are coming in for the graduation ceremony. Fortunately, we're no longer suffering from college anxiety as she's been accepted to her second choice school and should hear from the other two schools by the end of the month and in April, respectively. All 3 schools are good schools so as Allie puts it, it's like choosing which chocolate you want to get at Godiva's. There are no bad choices here.

I'm spending most of my time between now and my next surgery trying to finish my garden in the front yard. This year, I'm trying the technique of over planting so as to crowd out the weeds. Since I won't be able to work in the garden for about 6 weeks after the surgery, it would be nice for the weeds to have some obstacle to their taking over the whole place. I will undoubtedly dragoon my children into doing some weeding but they don't like doing it so it would be nice to have only a few to deal with. This means I'm buying almost twice as many plants as are supposed to go in a given area and I'll plan on transplanting some of them next year when I do the back yard.

The other fun thing is I get to use acid loving plants. I haven't lived in an appropriate place before so I'm unfamiliar with rhododendrons and heathers. We have one large blue rhodie in the front and I'm adding another with electric pink blooms. I've also discovered a web-based business ([www.heathsandheathers.com](http://www.heathsandheathers.com)) that specializes in heaths and heathers and I'm ordering stuff from them. The heathers are nice because they're evergreen and different types bloom at different times of the year. The small ones that bloom in the winter are very popular here. I'm going to be putting some of those in, along with some other varieties that change foliage colors in the winter, and some large dramatic ones for along the street.

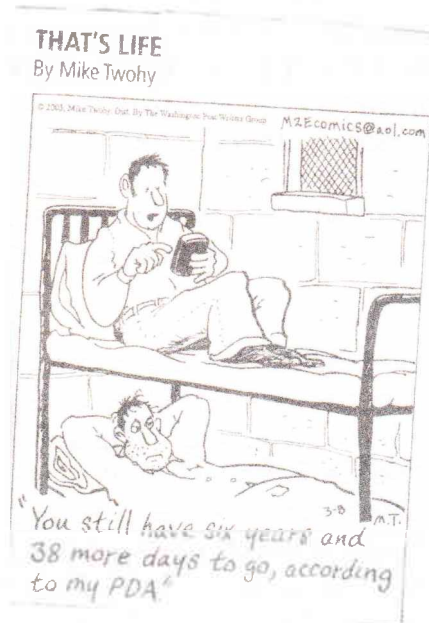
And, of course, I'm adding more roses to my roses and herb hill. James cut out six junipers for me so I have another 3-4 foot strip that runs 25 feet along the street that I'm going to fill with roses, rosemary, and maybe some dusty

**STONE SOUP** By Jan Eliot



millar or lavender. On the other side of the hill, there's room for 3 or 4 roses, even before I remove some of the bushes that I don't want. That part of the front yard will probably wait until next year as I plan to transplant the bushes to the backyard when I plan to redo it and then fill in under the dogwood at the top of the hill with yet more roses and heathers.

I'm also getting to add some shady plants that I couldn't use in Boulder because of the cold. Caladiums and calla lilies are outdoor plants here just as they were in Austin and I'm filling my partially shady bed in the front of the house. The local Lowe's has 5 different colors of callas and I'm putting all but the yellow in one bed. So I'll have an almost fuchsia bright pink rhodie with pink tulips underneath it at the north end of the bed. Just south of that will be a small bush that's already there with callas behind it. And just south of that, the caladiums will be in the front of the bed with callas behind them. It's actually a difficult bed to plant because it gets full direct sun at the north end in the morning, but gets shaded by noon as the bed is next to the house and the eaves start shading it early. This is made worse by the large rhodie at the southern end of the bed shading the rest of the bed during the summer after about 10 am. It's not enough sun for the bushes that are planted there, other than the rhododendron, but it's too much sun in the morning for the usual shade plants I tried planting there last year.





We'll see if any of the plants I put in this year thrive there. If not, I'll end up tearing my hair out in frustration and looking through endless plant catalogs trying to find something that can cope with the conditions. But I'm not about to complain about the amount of sun I get in the front because that makes it possible to grow roses in my front yard.

I spent a lot of time this last couple of months doing nothing but reading books. Because I felt so bad, I didn't want to read many new ones so I mostly ended up rereading old favorites such as Robert Parker, Bujold, even the Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover books. A few of the new ones I read are described below.

## **Books, books, books**

### ***Calculating God/Robert J Sawyer***

This is one of the Canadian authors who is new to me. This book isn't his first and I'll probably seek out his other works. This was an excellent SF book with an interesting presentation of ideas, new aliens, and a challenging story, but I wasn't quite happy with the ending. I'm not sure I would have had the protagonist make a different final decision, but I was still unsatisfied in a way I haven't figured out yet.

### ***Welcome to Temptation/Jennifer Crusie***

Crusie started out writing romance novels and there are still discernable remnants of that in her latest works, but she's moved on to doing quirky novels and this one is a caper story. I laughed frequently and enjoyed it enough to insist that Jeff read it as I was sure he would love it too. I also read 2 others of hers: *Manhunting* gets 2 stars out of 4. Workmanlike book, obvious plot. It's one of her older books and more in the romance genre. *Fast Women* shows a film noir influence and is also a fun read. For romance readers, I'd recommend her as an author. For non-romance readers, try *Temptation* first.

### ***Les Roberts***

Les Roberts is a B-grade mystery writer, sort of a Robert Parker wannabe. He has 2 series heroes: Milan Jacovich (a PI in Cleveland) and Saxon, a mostly out of work actor in LA who spends his time trying to be a hard boiled film noir detective ala Ross McDonald. This is a pretty hard act to put over in 90's Hollywood. I didn't really like the Saxon books. The Jacovich ones are better as they have a better sense of place. Jacovich is a descendant of Slovenians who immigrated to Cleveland just before WWII, and he is still immersed in and a part of ethnic Cleveland. Frankly, I wasn't even aware there was an ethnic Cleveland so I found that part of these books interesting. Enough

so as to cause me to overlook the iffy plotting and the serial romances. I don't know if I would have read these if I hadn't been in bed recovering from surgery.

**C.J. Cherryh/Foreigner series** I read the first one of these, enjoyed the new aliens and their interactions with humans. Interesting enough to get the rest of the series. I read the second book, and got annoyed by the dithering of the main character, started the third only to find him still dithering about, so I never finished it. I may try it again when I cope with something more challenging than I was up to while recovering. I had the same problem with the **Chanur** series. I read the first two and then just put the third down partway through and never picked it up again. I don't know if it was the books or me.

I'm doing the deadline mambo so that's it for this time. I hope to do better in the next mailing but I won't make any promises. If I'm able to sit at the computer after the next surgery, I may even be able to do comments. Only time will tell...

### A forwarded e-mail

"Here's the final word on nutrition and health (it's a relief to know the truth after all those conflicting medical studies):

The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or North Americans.

The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or North Americans.

The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or North Americans.

The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or North Americans.

Conclusion: Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you."

