



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## VALENTINE ROYALTY

King Roy Forehand and Queen Ardith Christenson were selected as The Lutheran Home's Valentine royalty on Feb. 12. The two residents will represent the skilled nursing facility in this summer's River Falls Days parade.

## Swenson: Liked to provoke debate

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turmoil...Isn't it anticlimactic that we must sell lives and injuries to survive?

■ This I know: If Mary, mother of Jesus, had been stoned for an out-of-wedlock pregnancy (it was a common practice then), we would not have had the Savior to emulate right from wrong. We would not have forgiveness for our sins.

■ The answer to parking problems in town is not in limiting a customer's parking time. When they return to the car with arm loads of packages, why slap them in the face again with a ridiculous parking fine?

■ Maybe this should go to the City Council, Mayor Duane Pederson, and the city's advisors pushing for outright war with the townships four...This ain't Chicago or New York. You cannot dictate to us. We are separate municipalities chartered under the laws of the state of Wisconsin and are extended certain protections. Trying to extend taxation into our town governments will most likely be a futile attempt.

■ In Europe people are proud to extol the history of the buildings they occupy. We, on the other hand, don't let them get old enough to put on the historical register, but tear them down demanding new walls and roof no matter how solid they may be!

■ Let me ask how many jobs in River Falls are held direct or indirect because of the agribusiness industry? Whole departments at UW-RE, the grocery stores and help all rely on the products we farmers raise.

■ Compact fluorescent lamps...I have a new report in front of me by a doctor who identified another danger: Electromagnetic frequency exposure that could do harm to the body. Incidentally, his wife broke one, so they lived the trauma.

■ Surcharges? We understood when gas was high, but few businesses dropped them when the emergency ended. They kept it as a new profit center.

■ We were concerned about rising transportation costs, then went to the drugstore to check out if we bought all our drugs at one store, might we save a bit? The answer solved both problems. I sat with my wife and extrapolated our savings on drugs for the year: \$1,204!

Swenson's son Bob, a town of Pleasant Valley dairy farmer, was another who didn't always agree with his father. But he admitted his dad soaked up so much information that he was impossible to out-debate.

"He'd often stop by, sit at the kitchen table and expound on some topic," Bob said. "Then a week later he'd call and ask if I'd read his letter in the paper. I'd tell him I didn't have to because I already knew what it was about from his talk."

John Swenson told the Journal in September 1993 that letter writing was healthier and wiser for a man of his advanced age.

"Long ago I used to be able to sit and argue," he said. "I was never violently argumentative, but now I can't think as fast. So I do it with written words — and they came slow."

Slow or not, the words and ideas accumulated. In his book "Stuff," with chapters like "Highway Beauty," "Fat Cats," "Easter Chicken," "Growth, Is it a Sin?" and "Functionally Illiterate," Swenson explains the writing urge:

"Things come out of my head, and I cannot help myself so I write them down...The recommended reading place is in the bathroom. The pages in this book were specially designed for dual purpose — use and recycling. If at some point you don't agree with me, you can use a page to make a statement of your own."

"Stuff" was dedicated "to my lovely wife, Ardis E. Nestrud Swenson." At the time of John Swenson's death last week, the couple was married for 62 years and five months.

Ardis — or "Ardie" as she's called — said John was the "love of my life who would do anything for me."

While in theory she edited her husband's letters and books, Ardis said John didn't like her to change much.

"I was more a period-and-comma person," she said. "But I was really astounded by some of the things he wrote. He was smart."

In "My Navy Experience," John Swenson chronicled being the new recruit after enlisting at age 17 and later getting a "dear john" letter. He was to be on major invasions in the Pacific, including at Iwo Jima.

■ When I got my ship...our first duties and for three months was called 'mess cooking' where we peeled spuds and onions and served the food on fold-out tables in the bunking quarters. We were the newest ones on board, so we had to do the least liked tasks...

■ (From Hawaii) I was writing to a sort of favorite girl back in River Falls. I went to a Sears Roebuck store and bought her a grass skirt and top. About the time she got it she wrote to me and said she got married to some guy from Utah. So I never saw her model it which was I was looking forward to."

From "Just Looking out the Back Door":

■ Once in a while you should take the time to object to accepted clichés of wisdom...It is often stated in the area of salary justification for public servants, etc., you must keep raising the pay scale to keep and attract the best qualified people. That is simply not true! You merely attract the most greedy...

■ How valuable is a surgeon without the support of nurses, aides, and sanitary engineers to follow and complete what he started...I am not against anyone who achieves an enviable lifestyle, but this class distinction when we place more dollar value on the work of an economist than a janitor is ludicrous.

Swenson's most unusual book is "The Crew," marketed as science fiction though Swenson suggests the story is factual:

■ Because of the extraordinary contents of this report, the publishers have agreed to print it only under the heading of science fiction...Since this manuscript was first sent to a publisher, strangers have been at my place much oftener than usual. The home has been burgled twice, nothing was taken, only thoroughly searched...The log books are not here, but under lock and key many miles away. Perhaps this message will dissuade them from further searches.

The narrative begins when Swenson and his wife bump into an airport stranger while returning from a vacation in Las Vegas.

The man excuses himself to make an urgent phone call, never returns but hands them an envelope with a baggage claim that leads to a brown leather suitcase. Inside is a cryptic set of notes about a human crew's experiences with an alien, telepathic species and a corridor used for rapid spacetime travel.

While the extraterrestrials, called Runwaonians, differ from humanity, there are passages that imply intriguing links: "They are members of the intergalactic intelligence of the universe...The Earth and all inhabitable planets have been visited in ancient times by beings from the skies. They've stayed a while, intermarried, gave birth and went away leaving a genetic trace that all tribes of the galaxies possess.

"(Runwaonians) live, learn, work, propagate, practice a religion, grow old and die, embracing the belief that mortal life is just a stopping place till they return to their God and giver of all life in the universe."

Please see John Swenson's obituary in this week's Journal on A6.

## Breathalyzer: Uses straws to measure

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It includes a slot to insert a dollar bill, instructions and a straw dispenser. A user places their straw into the machine and blows for a count of three to get the digital reading of their blood-alcohol content a few seconds later.

Machine upkeep includes stocking the straws and after 500 uses, changing the sensor, which tests itself. And the breathalyzer has a built-in usage counter.

The students think the machine gives people a realistic option for gauging their sobriety. They say most people make the judgment about driving based on how they feel, which can be affected by a number of factors.

Petersen said for example, he was at Bo's for the Superbowl game. He pondered how he felt but wondered how much of his feeling was affected by the excitement.

"That's how most people make their judgment, they ask: 'How do I feel?'" he said.

The three tavern professionals say that question is flawed since people might eat a lot or a little, perspire profusely or not at all, have a large body or a small one. Some patrons might drink at a bar where the alcohol going into drinks is strictly measured with a controlling device, whereas some establishments use a free- or timed-pour system.

Ellingson confirms, "There are a lot of variables."

The partners point out the disclaimer on the instructions that clarify "the only legally valid measure of BAC is blood testing..."

The three think the machine could be a tool for bartenders to use when it's time to stop serving someone who still wants to be served. It can also be a way for people to gauge their own BAC, a statistic most people never see until

it's too late.

Sampair and Petersen say the drunk-driving statistics testify to how easily humans err in their judgment.

One out of every 139 drivers in the nation gets arrested for driving under the influence. A first-time drunk-driving offender has typically driven drunk an average of 87 times before getting arrested.

The students say the breathalyzer project gave them an opportunity with a three-pronged purpose: They helped the community; applied what they're learning about business; and formed an operating partnership.

They'll see where Sampair & Petersen leads and say the breathalyzer portion is one aspect of the business. Meanwhile, the whole experience enables them to add some interesting real-world experience to their resume.

Reach Petersen at 507-430-4042 and Sampair at 651-491-7782.

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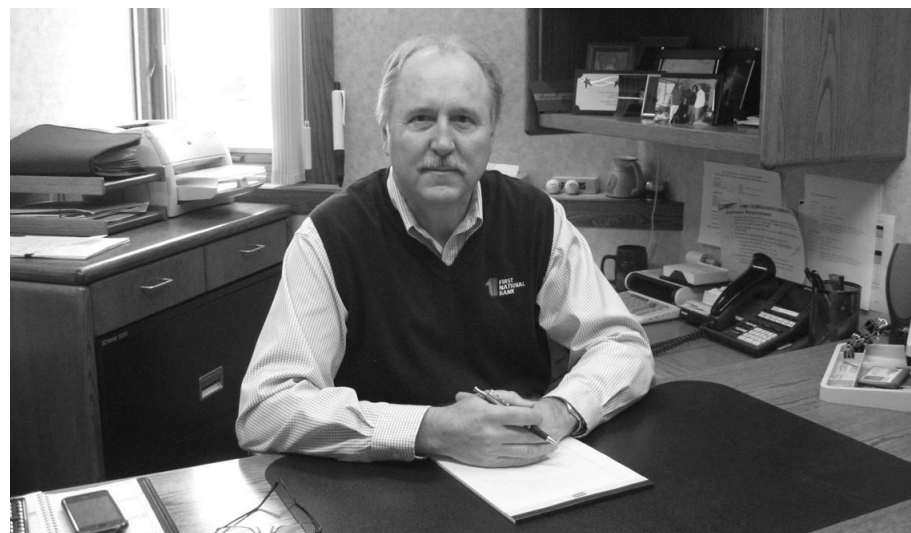
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