

Saying goodbye to 2018



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

At year's end, I try to take a look back at the rescues and assists that we have taken part in. It is a good idea to review the things that went wrong, those that went right, and what can be learned along the way.

Learning things the "hard way" has always been my modus operandi. Whenever something along the way leaves a mark, seems I am better at remembering the lesson and less likely to repeat the misdeed. Maybe we can learn something from the mistakes of others, in the hopes of keeping us around a while longer. Personally, I don't need any new additions to my scar collection.

One of the "toys" I bought this year was a Bug-A-Salt gun. I picked up this little gem at Murdoch's over the summer. It uses ordinary table salt for ammunition and operates on forced air created when you give it a pump. It was designed as an outside toy to shoot flies with a 3- or 4-inch pattern of salt.

The gun is relatively safe, with an effective range of less than 4 feet. It will, however, send a fly to the next life with quite a force. Fly hunting is the intended purpose of this toy, and my patio around the barbecue grill is the hunting grounds.

Before you suggest that I am too old for such a toy (as my wife said when I brought it home), I really intended it for the grandson. Turns out it is so much fun that I never gave it to him.

The lesson I learned the hard way was to never shoot at a wasp nest with it. I noticed a wasp nest up under the eave of the house. The nest was loaded with a dozen or so of those black and yellow striped demons from Hades. I figured it would make short order of the whole nest full with one close shot from the salt gun.

The wasps stung me six times before I made a complete getaway. As I tended to the stings, all six of them, I decided it was probably best to leave the wasp nests alone.

Early in the spring we were notified of three people stranded in an SUV up on the Divide road. The roads were not open yet because of huge snowdrifts in certain areas. The night before we had a windstorm that fell many trees, blocking the road in several areas. There were so many downed trees that the chainsaws got a real workout on the way up.

We found the three people safe and sound, but a little cold and hungry after they spent the night. These folks were trying to get to the West End but ignored the road-closed signs on the way. The people even drove around downed trees from the windstorm. They also had no winter supplies, extra clothes or food. Luckily, they found cell service and got out a call for help. The lesson here is to heed those warning signs and prepare your four-wheeled sleigh for winter by loading up some safety supplies. Perhaps a bit of common sense would be in order. I don't mind giving

Mother Nature a run for her money, but to blatantly challenge her power is foolish.

We responded to a call for an injured motorcyclist in the Peach Valley riding area. We went to assist Olathe Fire and EMS, who did a great job with the call. Olathe Fire is one of the best agencies around and we are fortunate to have them.

Seems a young man took a spill on the dirt bike trail behind the Sunset Rocks. He busted up some ribs and had some internal injuries. Fortunately, he was not alone, as so many off-road riders are. His riding buddies made him secure, treated him for shock, and headed off to get help.

One of the riders met us at the parking area and escorted the rescuers directly to the injured man. The fact that he had the buddy system in effect, and that his buddies knew how to handle an emergency, saved precious time for the responders. The moral is to never venture out alone. Besides the safety aspect, it is more fun to enjoy the day with someone else along.

We have had a number of calls, both on the East and West end, for people with dementia wandering off or getting lost. This happens every year, and the problem is nationwide. Many of these searches end up as a recovery because it is difficult to find someone who either does not want to be found or does not know they are lost.

I really don't have an answer to this problem. I might add that families need to take a hard look at family members who drive and have access to automobiles when it is known that dementia is in play. I know that is a hard decision, to remove a freedom from a loved one, but the tragic results from not stepping up are too high a price to pay. Each family needs to think this one through when faced with a similar situation.

Telluride lost a favorite citizen when he fell on a hike in a remote area. Many search-and-rescue people, deputies and volunteers spent many hours searching before he was found deceased.

The man was hiking alone, had no contact back in town with information as to his whereabouts and hike plan, and he had no way of summoning help. I am not sure if he would have survived the fall, but he made some mistakes by going it alone. At the very least, a Garmin InReach SE or a SPOT Gen3 to get some help would have been a wise addition to his pack. Being able to summon help when needed should be a top concern for anyone who ventures outdoors. As it was, the poor man paid the full price, plus tax.

I am a regular guest on "The Dan Show," with Dan Lynch of KUBC radio. On his show, we discuss all things outdoors, including first aid, survival, rescues, hunting, wildlife and wild fires (and of course the Cubs).

On one session, we discussed CPR and using the Heimlich maneuver. Dan had asked about how to perform the Heimlich on yourself, if you are alone and choking. I proceeded to explain about using the corner of a sofa or chair, to push on your diaphragm, below the rib cage but above the belly button. The idea being a "self thrust" to force the air out and dislodge whatever you were choking on.

The following day, an elderly gentleman called into the show. He explained that the day before, he began choking on a piece of his sandwich.



(Top) Dan Hiebert showing a Spot locator device. This unit can help save lives and is something everyone should consider. (Center) Mark Rackay's grandson, Chance Watkins, using his Bug-A-Salt gun. Hopefully, he will use it wisely and not have to learn the hard way, like his Pa did. (Bottom) An injured offload motorcycle gets help from the Posse, Olathe Fire and the Sheriff's Office, near Sunset Rocks in the Peach Valley Riding Area. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)



The man remembered what we discussed on the show about doing the Heimlich to yourself, and he administered the maneuver to his diaphragm.

The man is alive today because he was able to save himself. It was a real happy moment for Dan and me to learn of this, and that it saved someone. Learning these skills, and practicing them, is something we should all be doing.

I openly admit that I am hard-headed, and tend to learn most of my lessons the hard way. I gave that Bug-A-Salt to my grandson for Christmas, along with some advice about not shooting any wasp's nest with it. I know he won't heed that advice and will probably learn the same way his old Pa did. Guess he is a chip off the

old block.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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