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Sudoku

			8		7	5	6	
	3	8					4	
5		6		1			8	
6			1	7			2	4
	8		2		6		9	
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	2		7	5		3		
	9						7	
		5		9	8		4	
				1	3	4	2	
	1		2	7		8		
	6				4			9



Susan Says...

By Susan A. Szold

Before I Say Goodbye…

This week's column is different. First, I always write on Monday mornings so the pressure of a deadline motivates my work. I've always performed best under pressure and, while writing "Susan Says…" for the past twenty-one years doesn't equate with Woodward and Bernstein's efforts for the Washington Post, a deadline is a deadline. The point is that today is Sunday…I have all day to plumb the depths of my fragile psyche, air personal grievances and/or fixate on mundane issues and blow them horribly out of proportion. Also, unlike every column that has come before, this is my last one.

My mother always wanted me to write for a local newspaper and encouraged me to do so. She never got to read a single installment of Susan Says…having passed three years prior to my approaching then owner of The Citizen News, Ellen Burnett about creating a column. Ellen welcomed me and I joined the ranks of Cheryl Reedy and Paul Bruno whose excellent columns I'd already been enjoying. I wrote, exploring the travails of my life as a mom facing typical daily challenges, a transplanted New Yorker who brought a different perspective to these pages. I wrote with a Brooklyn accent--my city take on a country town and Ellen never questioned or censored my views or tone. Because of this freedom, I feel that you –my beloved readers – have truly learned who I am. This has been enormous fun.

The fun continued when my dear friend, Marylou Schirmer, took over. The name of the paper changed but the encouragement and freedom became even greater as I continued to write. Jotting down or emailing myself topic ideas, clipping articles from newspapers, conversations overheard, behavior observed and finding joy in the ridiculous continued to fuel me.

I've introduced you to my family, my pets, reflected the kindness shown me by neighbors, discovering and describing the many definitions of friendship learned from the magical women I grew to love and rely on as I struggled in the face of loss both immense when I lost my mom and poignant as my kids grew up and left our nest . I've bitched about hot flashes and technology and finding spiders in bags of grapes. I've grieved with all of you as our community lost far too many young people and have tried to find words when tragedies like the Newtown massacre brought journalists from all over the world to our corner of it. I've described my pain, your pain, our pain. We've experienced it together.

All of you have given me reason for creative joy and pleasure as twice a month I've snuck into your homes. And you have listened--mostly remaining quiet but occasionally expressing solidarity and support. Thank you for every email and card you've sent. Thanks to those who, upon meeting me and discovering I was Susan Says…reacted with such generosity.

Thanks to the staff at the top of the rickety stairs…first, Jeannie Ruggiero who never met a last minute correction or edit she couldn't squeeze in and make work. It has been a consistent pleasure working with you. Go Army! And, of course, my Marylou whose savvy stewardship and genuine wisdom have always made her the best editor anyone could ever hope for and whose kind heart and sense of humor will continue to make her the kind of friend you thank God for.

Thanks to my family for providing me with constant encouragement and subject matter…my sweet boys grew up as my good-natured subjects, their changing selves reliably fun to mock or celebrate and my amazing husband, Seth, who wanted nothing more than to appear in the paragraphs of Susan Says…often as the hapless butt of my jokes and sarcasm but whose insight and intelligence always shone through. You are my constant beacon.

And, finally, thanks you to you, my readers…the unspoken therapy you provided for over two decades has made a lonely world seem not lonely at all…instead, it's a world full of friends I may not have actually met but who understand and accept me. You gave me a level of confidence that filled me with the joy of sharing this very full heart.

This column has been a playground on a sunny day when all your friends show up and everyone gets along. Thank you, New Fairfield. I will miss talking to you. I didn't realize that it would mean so much.

Letters and Opinions

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CONFRONTATION WITH NF OFFICER

To the Editor:

I had an interesting and no doubt familiar confrontation today with a New Fairfield police officer at a speed trap he'd been manning near the Reservoir between New Fairfield and Sherman. I was late for my dentist appt and had a Subaru on my tail so I exceeded the speed limit. He waved me to the side and asked for my license.

But first he asked me if I was 'impaired'? When I asked him why, he said it was because I was wearing sunglasses. Anyone who knows route 137 heading to N.F. has the sun shining brightly on their eyes. Was he asking because he thought I was elderly?

He came back a few minutes later, at the same time flagging a young woman on the other lane who was ostensibly exceeding the limit. He said he was giving me an 'exceeding the limit ticket'. It turned out to be for $206. Now with heating oil at $5.60 a gallon, and the excessive cost of everything going up, don't you think he could have reduced that to a warning? Not this guy, so for effect I showed him I had enough to deal with in my life and I pulled off my cap and showed him my balding head, the result of ongoing chemo treatments. Just to give him an eyeful!(and don't any who know me start sending prayers or fruit baskets. It's not that serious!) But

I had a limited time to get a dental exam between appts and that was why I was in a hurry. The self-righteous cops insisted he was just insuring the safety of public citizens from the likes of me– who'd never run over as much as a squirrel in my life.

Continued on next column

Later my son saw the same officer by the post office taking down two more cars. It's enough. These are obviously speed traps designed to rake in money for which the powers that be will certainly commend him. That $206 could have been our family's Christmas but this one wouldn't care. A little kindness, a little judgement, a little empathy–at least for the temporary sparseness of my hair–should have moved me to a warning instead of a pricey ticket. I'm certain others have experienced this in New Fairfield before and they should complain about an over-zealous cop who should be tracking down real trouble instead of cars who minimally passed the speed limit.

And the elderly aren't the only ones who wear sunglasses at 9:30 in the morning!

Michele Dawson, Sherman

BEST WISHES, SUSAN SAYS…

To the Editor:

Thank you, Susan Szold, for 30 years of love and laughter. You were always a bright spot for the Citizen News/Town Tribune, and you will truly be missed. Best wishes, my friend, for a wonderful, fun-filled retirement!

With love, Marylou Schirmer

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