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**(**2004 NHN&WR letter/story #13)

**A Communiqué: The Week of the BAT**

The Chinese have their "Years of the Whatever", the Jeffersons, McDevitts & Pecks have had their "Week of the BAT"!

The place: Cedarvale Lane, North Hero, VT.

The date: July 19-24.

The cast: Jeffersons (3); Jason, Ken, Lucile.

McDevitts (10); Christopher, Etta, Frank, Kaytlyn, K.C., Linda, Michael, Norman, Oliver, Thomas.

Pecks (4): Bill, Colin, Danny, Sara.

BATS (60): Anonymous. (They all looked alike to us.)

Setting the scene.

Living close to nature entails a constant battle to maintain the integrity of one’s own turf. The prime contestants in North Hero are; birds, chipmunks, flies, foxes, mice, mosquitoes, people, raccoons, skunks, squirrels and of course, ... the ubiquitous BAT. Bats do not; make nests in automobile engines, eat electrical wiring, pillage garbage cans or tear apart birdfeeders. In fact, they are our best allies Vs the insect population. However, when they invade our inner sanctums the battle is joined. We will get rid of some of our cast right off the ‘bat’. It was determined that 28 bats were living in the attic of the senior McDevitts. How determined? No idea. At this point Frank & Etta, with great intelligence, got in their car and went to Montreal, leaving their 6 guests to deal with the problem. Dan Peck, visiting the Jeffersons, surfaced only momentarily from the cabin catacombs and participated in only one small skirmish. Bats don’t bother Jason one iota. K.C. and the younger McDevitts were not observed on the field of BATtle. So much for the cast, ... now: Home Depot sticky strips. When traps don’t work, mice can be caught on these. They also work for bats if one knows where the bats are entering a house. The Jeffersons had used them during their last mouse infestation. Had they taken them all up after being victorious? Of course not.

Historical.

Chimneys seem to have a fatal attraction for birds. Once down the chimney and into the stove or onto the flue vent, the diameter of the pipe may not allow room to extend wings and fly back out. The resultant noise is significant, a chickadee being able to put on a performance worthy of a "*Killer Heron".* After two terrifying/hilarious encounters the Jeffersons had bird proofed their chimney cap with turkey wire. The McDevitt cabins were not similarly equipped. The Jefferson cabin also has a mud room which results in two back doors and functions effectively as a *‘Bat Lock’*.

Opening Gambit.

Arising early Ken walks into the living room and discovers a bat on the floor by the lakeside front door. It is alive and adhered to a sticky strip. Hmmmmn, ... someone must have come in the front door last night.Oh well, out on the deck with coffee, post-it notes, dull Swiss Army knife and stuckdown bat. (At first we wrote "stuckup" bat, but that didn’t seem fair, ... we hardly knew the little fellow.) Ken is ignorant of the fact that if one pours on vegetable oil, the bat will slide off the sticky strip. Prying up a piece of bat and inserting a post-it note underneath, he starts freeing the bat. One hour later, bat is stuck only by the right cheek. Sharp teeth dictated leaving the head to last. By this time Swiss Army knife is pretty well stuckup itself. Ken pries up the cheek and frees bat from the sticky strip, only to find bat is now stuck to Swiss Army knife ... with teeth very active. Ken drops Swiss Army knife. Bat starts to waddle off.

*"Come back you little ingrate, ... you’re stealing my Swiss Army knife!"*

Ken struggles to put gloves on over sticky fingers before bat disappears in the woods. Success, bat is grabbed and knife retrieved. End opening round. Later that day Michael McDevitt comes by Jeffersons. He asks to see a sticky strip and then is off to Home Depot to pick up a couple gross. By next morning Michael reports he has caught 28 bats. To Ken that sounds like 4 work days of de-sticking (de-stucking?) effort..

Musing,*"Wonder what he did with the bats?"*

Decision, *"Don’t think I’ll ask."*

Round Two.

Norman had to return temporarily to Ottawa on Monday. Lucile would go next door to keep Linda company that night. Prior to retiring most all are on the Jefferson deck, Colin looks in the living room window.

*"Hey! There’s a bat flying around the kitchen!"*

A team effort springs into action. Bill blocks the cellar stairs. Dan shuts upstairs bedroom doors. Colin shuts bathroom door. Lucile retrieves see-thru plastic container and 8’1/2 x 11 cardboard as bat flies right between her legs. Ken wields Head tennis racquet and pins bat to door casing. Sara cheers. Lucile hands Ken the plastic container. Container replaces racquet. Cardboard slides under container. Trapped bat is taken outside and released. Bat makes one feint at Lucile who’s in the front door and then disappears into the woods. Elapsed time sighting to capture & release: 4 minutes. How to go team!

Linda and Lucile leave for next door. They are in bed.. Phone rings. Owner of next door cabin. Suspect talk by 18 year old son. Wild Bash???? Wants notification made if more than one car arrives that night. Linda decides to put on outside light and goes into living room. Much noise from inside the air-tight stove, ... obviously BATS. Linda closely examines the stove. There is a circular venting knob on the left side. It is rotating. Little bat hands stick through its slotted vents.

Panic, "MOM!"

"Quick, look there ... fingers, ... bat fingers! I don’t see them. MOM ... get your glasses ... They’re trying to get out! ... Where’s the duct tape when we need it? ... Use Scotch ... Tape all the holes ... Tape all the pipe joints ... Wrap up the stove in a garbage bag ... Bat hands are making the garbage bag move! ... I’M STANDING GUARD ALL NIGHT ... with a broom!

(In the midst of all this noise and confusion, two young men sedately arrive next door, park, enter the cabin and go to bed rolling their eyes at all the commotion next door.)

Next Morning.

Norman returns. He thinks the wrapped up stove a work of art. Linda did not sleep a wink. Norman gets ladder, ascends to roof, removes the chimney cap and peers down into chimney. Official confirmation, ... many bats.

The Situation: Most of the bats seem unable to make it out the top of the chimney. They crawl up almost to the top, then fall back down inside the stove.

The Plan: Norman, working from the stove’s left side door, will poke the bats one at a time out the larger front door with a stick. Colin will guard the stove’s front door with a large fishing net and snare them as they try to fly away. A quick flip of the net and the bat will be trapped. Ken will bat-proof the chimney cap. Don’t you love it when a good plan comes together?

The Execution: Norman carefully cracks the side door.

*"Yike, ... there’s a bat on the back of the door!"*

Norman slams door. Nerve readjustment. Cautious second try. Bat is poked. Takes flight out the front door. Net flashes. Capture. Piece’a cake. Colin dashes out the front door, runs to the woods, executes a reverse flip and frees the bat. Huzzah! On-lookers cheer. Norman and Colin reposition for bat #2. A late on-looker arrives on the front porch and peers into the living room. It’s Bill Peck. Bill Peck is soon offering advice.

*"Colin, ... why don’t you do this?"*

*"Colin, ... why are you doing that?"*

Finally Colin, *"Dad, .... we’ve already caught 14 and we know what we’re doing!"*

On-lookers cheer.

Linda offers, *"The cap is still off the chimney, maybe the same bats are flying back in the chimney."*

Norman, *"Nah, they wouldn’t do that."*

Lucile donates a mirror to the operation. A final bat check is executed. Chimney/stove all clear announced. Final count:18. Bat-proofed chimney cap is reinstalled.

On-lookers cheer.

Two on-lookers are attic bat professionals, Michael & Thomas McDevitt with a bat count of 28. They look at each other. Maybe they’d better check their stove. They do, Bats? Yes, ... 12. It’s déja vu, they execute a similar operation. Neighborhood is temporarily out of turkey wire, mesh screening is used. Three cabins are temporarily bat-free.

Situation the day after.

Mesh didn’t work. The 12 bats are back in Frank & Etta’s stove. A strategy conference is held re Jefferson Carriage House which is thought to house 40 bats. Decision: abandon it to the enemy. We’ll wash up the bat poop in the fall.

End of communiqué.

Lucile & Ken

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