

Family Tempts Fate

Schedules Home Refinance, Van Repair, Vacation Departure on Same Weekend

Pete and Dianne Calgaro displayed great courage and faith this summer when they arranged to refinance their home and have their vehicle's air conditioning fixed while preparing for a road trip to the Atlantic coast.

"We can't exactly go to North Carolina without air conditioning," Dianne pointed out as she drove their 1996 Plymouth Voyager¹ to the repair shop a week before their planned departure. ("Planning ahead" Calgaro-style.)

Pete also found out that interest rates had dipped to a level that justified refinancing the family home. The mortgage company representative assured Pete that the closing would take place quickly – at the latest, a comfortable three days before vacation.

Unfortunately, the auto shop discovered that a vital repair part was unavailable. Mechanics searched databases throughout southern Wisconsin to little reward. A dozen other minivan owners in Madison needed the



The van takes a rest in North Carolina.

same part. Finally, one was located in greater Milwaukee, and a driver was sent to pick it up.

Closing day...

On Friday, July 5, Pete anxiously awaited a call from the mortgage lender, who was to tell him what time to arrive for closing. Meanwhile, Dianne anticipated a call announcing the restoration of their minivan's air conditioning.

As 5 p.m. approached, both calls came through – with unexpected news. No closing. No minivan. Dianne rushed to rent a vehicle for the weekend. Rachel's birthday party was set for Sunday, and they would need wheels.

The optimistic Calgaros figured that, on Monday, they would pick up their minivan, return the rental car, attend the closing, then pack up and take off for their fun-filled vacation.

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Even better!

Monday morning, family members packed their bags (and the dog's crate), lining them up at the door in eager anticipation. Rachel stayed home while Peter accompanied his parents to the newly-rescheduled closing on the other side of town. Upon their arrival, the Calgaros were told a revised form was being finalized at the home office and would soon be faxed over.

Three hours later, the Calgaros departed with newly-signed mortgage papers. They drove over to the auto shop to claim their minivan. However, a test drive revealed a loud noise emitting from the engine. Yet another hard-to-get part was needed before the van would be highway-worthy.

The shop owner² followed the Calgaros as they returned the rental car, then drove them home - promising that the van would be ready Tuesday no matter what.

Rachel, who had been waiting at home alone for most of the day, was not amused. It was bad enough that the family had planned to be on the road on her 11th birthday. It was worse being stranded at home. Her mood improved slightly upon being reminded that Peter had endured three hours sitting at the mortgage office, with nothing to do except squirm in his seat, get drinks of water, and repeatedly remove his shoes and socks.

On Tuesday, the shop owner retrieved the needed part at 6:30 a.m. He drove the minivan to the Calgaros' home and helped them load their luggage. In gratitude, Pete and Dianne decided to drop him off at the shop instead of making him go on vacation with them.

\$1,800 later...

Finally, they hit the road, anticipating a thrilling overnight stay in eastern Ohio. Which was about the time they discovered that the air conditioning had frozen up and was working intermittently at best.

Pete's migraine only lasted one night. The family continued on through Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.; with stops in Virginia Beach, the Outer Banks and Asheville, N.C. They met their goal of frolicking in the ocean, and enjoyed visiting friends in Chattanooga, Tenn.³ and family in Springfield, Ill.⁴

Foxxi learned that the view out the window is much better from the front passenger's lap. Car rides have subsequently involved more shedding.

Dianne suggests that the Calgaros consider air travel when they plan their next vacation.

¹ Listed in *Consumer Reports' Buyers Guide "Used Cars to Avoid"*: Plymouth Voyager, 1995-98

² An awesome guy - and very patient.

³ Thanks Ty and Rachel! Cute baby!

⁴ Chris, Eric, Eastin & Ambria. And Buddy the guinea pig.

Family Pets Dwindle to Two

Gerbils Go to That Big Habitrail in the Sky

The Calgaro pets now consist of Foxxi, a 5-year-old Pembroke Welsh Corgi; and Hermoine, a sort-of-Abyssinian guinea pig.

The final two members of the family's gerbil contingency finished their time on Earth during the summer and fall of 2002.

Speedy the gerbil passed away as she neared her 4th birthday; Dorito celebrated the event on Aug. 2 and died peacefully nearly two months later. They were predeceased by three others.

When asked whether the Calgaros would acquire more gerbils to replace the formerly seven-member brood, Dianne commented, "Um....those particular gerbils are simply irreplaceable. We could buy other gerbils, but it would never be the same."

"Yeah, that's the ticket...those gerbils were one-of-a-kind."

She then turned towards Hermoine's cage to complete its weekly cleaning.

Girl Becomes Elf

A Madison 11-year-old has astonished local health officials with a sudden, unexplained transformation into a member of the elf species.



The wise one, in a pensive moment.

"This is not your ordinary 'ho-ho-ho, Santa Claus and reindeer' elf," said one puzzled authority. "This child has completely left behind her human status and is now elvish, as described by the late J.R.R. Tolkien."

Tolkien is the British writer best known for his fantasy trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*.

The girl in question, formerly known as Rachel LeeAnn Calgaro, developed a stately demeanor and wisdom beyond her years before sprouting the distinctive pointed ears of the elf species. She now responds only if addressed as "Firithfâniel."

"Finding clothing for her can be kind of difficult," said the girl's mother, Dianne Calgaro. "For one thing, flowing garments made of gilded elven-cloth are not exactly a dime a dozen. And of course, she doesn't want to wear the same one two days in row."

Firithfâniel is gracious regarding her new status in the family. "Yes, elves are smarter, stronger and all-around superior to humans. However, I possess compassion for these odd creatures."

"Okay, my parents do drive me nuts sometimes," Firithfâniel added.

The elf-girl expresses her natural affinity for music by playing viola in the 6th grade orchestra at Toki Middle School and studying piano privately. She hopes to add woodwinds to her repertoire by next year.

Firithfâniel's next adventures include orthodontic work. She will begin with a retainer which must be worn day and night – braces will come sometime after.

"I'm having a heck of a time finding the right material for this kid's orthodontia," said the family's dentist, Dr. Fred Zietz. "What in the heck is 'mithril,' anyway? She keeps yakking away about 'dwarves' and 'metal of greatest strength.' All I can say is: it's not going to be cheap, that's for sure."

Pete Marches On

Pete Calgaro, appropriately, marches to his own drummer. Not to stop with just a drum set and keyboards, he set up a basement recording "studio" this year. After years of playing air guitar, he now jams on a three-dimensional electric guitar with a real whammy bar. He plays said guitar wearing headphones so as not to disturb the neighbors. "Rock on!" says son Peter, who enjoys whacking the drums while dad is trying to concentrate on playing. Rachel often joins in on piano, playing *The Lord of the Rings* theme over... and over... ad nauseum.

This fall, Pete joined St. Maria Goretti Parish as an assistant to the director of worship. He co-directs the contemporary choir and has started a new choir called SpiritSong.

In other news, Pete reached his 10-year anniversary at NBC15 and works diligently to help out other stations in his company's broadcast group by creating graphics for their newscasts. Sometimes in his sleep.

Despite this vigorous schedule, Pete jogs four miles a day (his work commute) and reads a variety of books on simplicity, spirituality, prayer and feng shui.

Dianne Feels Like Normal Human

Dianne Calgaro is discovering the joys of normalcy. "For about two years, I kept gaining weight and was constantly tired. I blamed it on my anxiety medication, so I stopped taking it," she explained.

Despite regular exercise and fairly sensible eating habits, she continued to grow. Eventually, Dianne was diagnosed with hypothyroidism and began treatment for the condition.

Months later, she started taking her anxiety meds again, crossing her fingers that the fatigue wouldn't return.

Happily, she now enjoys a sense of physical and mental well-being. "I was starting to think I'd always have to choose one or the other," she said.

Dianne continues to exercise as much as possible, riding her bike to work in the summer, and using her home treadmill or the local YMCA facilities year-round.

Some people acquainted with Dianne protest that "normal" is a relative term. "Several facts about Dianne dispute her claims of normalcy," said one anonymous source.

- *She skips in public.*
- *She's 40 years old, yet still plays with toys.*
- *She often hears songs in her head and feels compelled to share them with others.*
- *She once owned rainbow suspenders like Mork's, and actually wore them.*

In rebuttal, Dianne points out that she holds down a regular job as communications services director for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. She enjoys playing with her family, keeping on-line journals, volunteering as website coordinator for St. Dunstan's Church, and singing alto in the church choir.

She hopes to report continued normalcy in years to come.

Boy Wonder Cultivates Amazing Skills

Third-grader Peter Calgaro IV has amassed an impressive array of skills, which cleverly combine to accomplish one important goal.

"The girls will stay away from me," explains the multi-talented boy wonder.

Not only can Peter burp at will – an ability he had mastered by age three – but he can make a wide variety of socially unacceptable noises by carefully maneuvering his hand in his armpit.

At special times, he prepares onlookers for naturally occurring noises by shushing everyone as if an important announcement is about to be made. He then makes a non-verbal proclamation of intestinal gas, followed by a dramatic "ahhhhhh" and a wicked smile.

Even these stirring displays of school-aged masculinity cannot keep small females from giggling in Peter's direction at times.

Peter enjoys playing *Magic: The Gathering* with his (male) friends, and he continues to challenge his parents to chess matches and strategic games. Of course, he challenges his

parents in numerous other ways as well.

At Falk School, he enjoys his classmates, spelling, Star Math, and gym. Although his teachers, Mrs. K. and Mrs. A., do not yet have Peter's parents



Peter shows his talent.

on speed dial, they have conversed with Dianne several times this fall. Amazingly, the school nurse has not yet called to report any accidental injuries during the school day.

Peter's future plans include inventing jet pack propulsion and weaponry to be used in the manner of Jango Fett in *Star Wars Episode II*. He assures his parents these inventions will assist him as he pursues a future career in law enforcement. He also wants to be a scientist.