

Opinion

Stones, Sushi, and Bite-Sized Balls: First-hand account of a local buffet.

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I want to share a story. This concerns students and staff which reside in or around the Wilmington area and like cheap sushi and Chinese food. It especially concerns those who frequently visit the Grand East Buffet at the corner of Foulk and Naamans Roads in Wilmington.

My boyfriend and his mother introduced me to the buffet about a year ago, and being the sucker I am, \$12.00 for unlimited sushi and crab legs sort of caught my appetite and had me hooked; Hooked to the point of making it a weekly trip on Friday nights. My boyfriend's mother complained a few times about not feeling well off the food, however coming from someone who had been battling cancer and didn't have much of a tolerance for food in general, we dismissed it.

To begin with, the waitress staff on more than one occasion snickered while looking at our table and at times was joined by the store owner and his wife. We ignored it; when you're a gay couple dining with an (at the time) over-weight Jewish mother-in-law, you tend to get used to the snickering. More recently, the owner had the waitress re-seat us at a different booth because there was "more room," however denied the fact that it was in reference to my boyfriend's mother's weight. Mind you, this is my post-chemo Jewish mother-in-law who lost nearly 100 pounds....

The final blow, however, came earlier this month on a Saturday evening when we sat down in our "fat booth" for our dinner. My boyfriend's mother loved their sesame balls filled with a bean paste, so naturally when she came back with her first plate she had a few of her bite-sized treats on the side.

Bickering and laughing as we normally do, we started our dinner. Before long I looked over to see my boyfriend's mom, Andrea, spit out a stone which had just broken her tooth. The stone came from inside a sesame ball.

Immediately, we called over a waitress, who summoned the owner. He explained to us that they came from a distributor already assembled and were simply "warmed up" on the premises, however promised he would speak with the supplier and make them aware of the situation. He then disappeared.

After finishing our meal, we walked to the counter to pay the bill. The owner's wife was at the register chattering away on her headset and iPhone as she rung up our bill. When the register displayed a full price meal for three, we stated that we needed to discuss the incident which happened earlier. In other words, we needed insurance information to take to a dentist to have her tooth repaired.

Although the restaurant was crowded with regulars, the owner heard the dispute and walked over to the desk. He then proceeded to offer a \$5.00 discount....

By this point we were furious. My mother-in-law walked out of the store to avoid yelling at the man, however my should-be law student boyfriend stayed behind to continue the dispute. He proceeded to tell the owner that we needed insurance information. The owner pushed his wife aside at this point and asked to see the stone. We produced it, and he very obviously while "inspecting it" dropped it. His wife saw it fall and retrieved it, that's when the owner took her roughly by the arm and mumbled something nastily to her, probably to butt-out.

The conversation went on and the tone escalated as the owner accused us of planting the stone, then suggested that it was probably already in Andrea's mouth when she entered the restaurant. When we, again, demanded the restaurant's insurance information, he said if we were going to continue the argument we were to call the police. Yes; we were to call the police because we found a rock in our food.

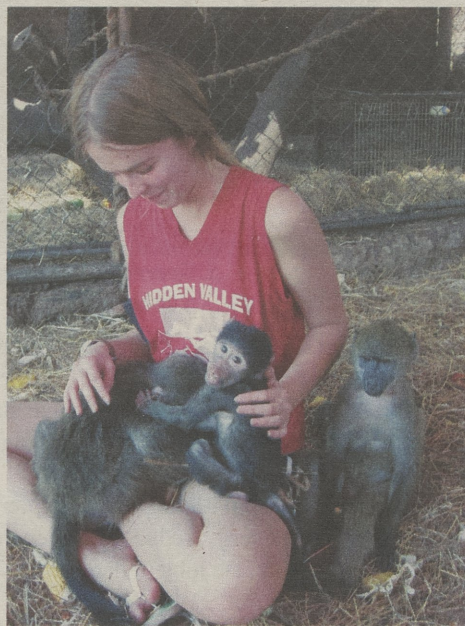
Needless to say, we found this a bit ridiculous. We left them the \$40.00 bill and walked out of the building. Looking at each other, we agreed that they were most likely uninsured so at this point it was a dead issue.

Thoughts have crossed my mind since the incident; however I have resisted posting signs on their doors, or leaving rocks on their doorstep (yes, I am spiteful and I enjoy it...). I decided that the power of the pen was probably a more effective approach.

If you decide to continue to dine at the Grand East Buffet, I ask you to please enjoy a California Roll for me, because at this point I doubt we will ever be returning. Just know, should you ever have a problem, the owners do not stand behind their establishment.

Brandywine BELIEVES

I Believe In Animals



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I believe in animals. The way I see it, a person who doesn't believe in animals, cannot truly believe in humans. Humans are just another type of ape. By extensions, if a person doesn't believe in humans, how can they believe in themselves?

For me personally, animals of the nonhuman variety have been the ones that have made my faith in animals one of my core beliefs. There have been so many animals that have impacted my life; I could not begin to list them all here. Innumerable wild animals have touched my life; I have yet to see anything more magnificent than a wild African elephant or a wild pod of killer whales. My life would feel incomplete without an animal to share it with.

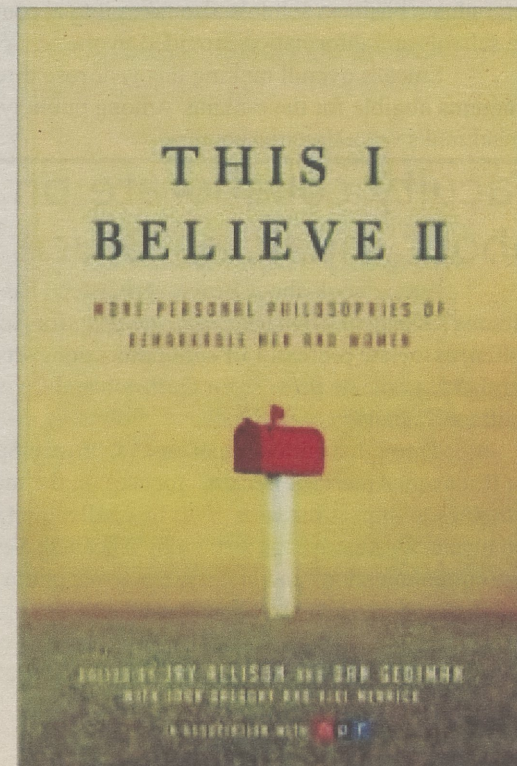
I have had equally important bonds with both wild animals and domestic animals. I think that most people, who choose to care for a pet, love their pet. However, too many people, including pet owners, do not extend that compassion to the wild animals that share their environment. I simply cannot make the distinction between my pet rabbit and his wild cousins. How could I consider wild rabbits "pests," but consider my rabbit a part of the family?

I understand the differences between wild and domestic animals. That does not, however, make wild animals any less important. I spent a month volunteering at a center that rehabilitates orphaned baby baboons. The center was located in the middle of a South African game reserve, so I had contact with wild animals on a daily basis.

I am the first to admit how challenging it can be to live in such a close vicinity to wildlife. It is not fun to avoid a wandering buffalo and it is innervating to see a crocodile that would consider me a food source. It is also worthwhile. In fact, the bush would feel so empty without crocodiles and buffalo.

The baboons were nothing short of amazing. They were so intelligent and such individuals that they reminded me more of a sibling than a pet. I formed close bonds with some of them, yet they never lost their "wildness," and I am thankful for that. They should be wild; they were born in the African bush, and that is where they will be released upon maturity. Most of the orphaned baboons at the sanctuary were there because of run-ins with a fellow primate, humans.

The ironic part is, when we hurt animals we also hurt humanity. We are not above animals, and we are not about nature. It seems that every time a similarity is discovered between humans and animals, we quickly find a way to redefine what it means to be human. I think all of us might benefit if we, as humans, took a different perspective. I believe that there is no higher compliment to ourselves than when we embrace that we too, are animals.



The Lion's Eye

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