

COMMUTER'S WIFE

Chain Letters More Than a Nuisance; They Are Illegal

By HELEN BRUNSON
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

The "chain-mails" are at it again. I don't mean prisoners working on the roads like they used to do in the south. I mean the hordes of women across the nation who think it's fun to send chain-letters.

Each letter contains a list of names and addresses and is worded something like this: "Please send a copy of this to six of your friends. Omit the first name and add yours to the bottom of six letters, putting the last name first. Send the first named person a handkerchief. (Send to name you omit)."

Then this epistle goes on to explain that you will receive a shower of handkerchiefs for the one I send, and that it's fun to see where they all come from. It beseeches me not to break the chain. Some letters want me to send dimes, scarfs, tea towels. A few of them whisper that some evil will befall me if I break the chain.

WELL, SOME EVIL will befall me if I don't break the chain—that is if the postal authorities find out what I'm up to.

For the penalty for carrying on such chains can be a stiff fine, or a term in prison. Of course the

local post office officials cannot open such letters, but they can easily discover the names of those who use postal cards. They also can refer suspected letters to the district inspector.

Most women who send chain letters don't know it's illegal. They just have an over-dose of that feminine falling, wanting something for nothing. But postal authorities tell us that it constitutes the lottery act, and is a variation of using the mails to defraud. Moreover, it overloads the post office with superfluous mail.

THE LATEST chain letter received here urges me to send out six letters to six friends and send my favorite recipe to the first name

Mrs. Brunson



NATURE NOW

Passing Thoughts on Mother Nature

By LYDIA KING BREHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Herewith your scribe reaches into her "nature pocket" to bring forth some "pebbles" not previously reported.

A few days ago a squirrel climbed over a neighbor's fence carrying in its mouth a large crumpled mass of paper. We followed its progress across the yard and fence where it disappeared under the wide overhanging roof of a second neighbor's house.

Remembering past reports of small flags vanishing from cemeteries in like fashion we calculated that it is time for the squirrel family to prepare for a nest full of "blessed events". They are among the earliest of the four-footed to bring forth their young. In the dark recesses of a hollow tree or in a nest well-placed out of reach of marauders.

Whatever the nesting material selected you can be sure that as you read this the little blind babies will be safely nuzzled within its cozy enclosure.

IF ANY GENTLE reader should aspire toward owning a fur coat present this evidence to friend husband. In Montreal at a recent wholesale auction of furs, pelts were sold at a figure 25 per cent

on the list. I'll get 36 recipes in return. Well, I have a number of recipe books and don't need any more "receipts"—I guess I'll have to spoil the sender's fun, even though this one is legal, since there's no money involved.

Furthermore the job would take about two hours, and who has that much time to waste?

Obviously a lot of women do. But it is a pity that their time must be occupied in this way. The world, and the post office department would be much better off if these women would look around their own communities and find some volunteer work to do. They might sew cancer caps, visit hospitalized veterans or work on charity drives.

The best way for all of us to turn their minds to more worthwhile things is to be "chain-breakers."

Paxton Speaking About Television

George B. Paxton, Jr., a Birmingham student at University of Missouri, is on that university's speakers bureau schedule, making talks in and around Columbia, Mo., on television.

Paxton's talk is "This Thing Called Television," and according to the bureau "gives some insight into the intricacies and problems of television production. The bureau offers Missouri citizens talks of wide subject range, gives students experience in communication.



Mrs. Frehe

higher than in 1954. According to the department of lands and forests this means an increase of up to 40 per cent in the retail price next Christmas.

About 75 per cent of the cost of a mink coat is in the labor. Hundreds of small strips of fur are painstakingly sewed together to make a single coat.

A recent newspaper article reports the Audubon society's statement that two million free lunch counters are upsetting the natural economy of the North American bird world. Why not be a beggar if lunch is free? Man's place in nature's economy is ever in dispute.

Sometimes even a mouse can be tough. Recently at Horsham, Pa., one such was placed in a rattlesnake cage for provender. But instead, he bit the snake in the tail and the rattler died several days later from an infection.

NOT EVEN A snake can sleep

in peace. It is reported that a recent skating party on Maison Island built a fire to warm themselves. They tossed on a rotten log from which a rattlesnake slowly crawled forth, reactivated from its hibernating period by the sudden warmth.

I have just made a little tour in the snow to gather samples of twigs; mulberry, red maple, white birch, spruce and hick, all with their winter buds tightly folded.

Trees and shrubs form their buds in the autumn, enclose them in scales and varnish them against the wet of winter. Thus prepared they are ready to burst forth, with spring's first warmth.

With my 20X lens I can make out the interesting and individual shape of last year's leaf scars and the patterns made thereon by the bundle scars—those little tubes which carry liquid nourishment to all parts of the tree.

Those highly characteristic leaf scars furnish botanists with a sure clue to the identity of any tree when it is stripped of its telltale leaves.

ANYONE INTERESTED in the out-of-doors should own a small hand lens. During the many years your scribe spent interesting children in nature, no other single aid could ever match its magical power. The compound eye of a fly, the central organs of a flower, a grain of sand, a butterfly's wing—these magnified 20 times are as dramatic as any fairy tale.

As I write, the sap is running in the "sugar bush" of the hard maple belt which reaches from New England west to Wisconsin. Like many another enterprise,

on its opposite shore. Now all nature waits expectant in a pause "before spring." The tree has not yet leafed, the flower is not yet formed, the mate is not yet chosen.

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