

## UP TO MY SHOULDER

The pandemic of Covid-19 resulted in more television watching in our home than ever before. Mornings my husband and I wake to the news. After he goes into his home office, I often set up my laptop on the kitchen island to also work from home. I can set up a workspace, answering emails, working on accounting, or making telephone calls while keeping an eye on the TV and what is going on in the world. When I tire of the news, I switch over to a more light-hearted program. Movies and series are too involved to be able to go through paperwork at the same time, so I most often choose the type of program where there isn't a particular storyline. This requires a show where everything is resolved within the last five-minute framework of each episode. HGTV programs of home renovations, design makeovers, or repurposing are perfect. Everything is simply revealed at the end of the show with before-and-after photos. The viewer neither has to think nor pay attention to understand the final, upbeat closure.

Another great genre of entertainment along the same lines, and of which I have become very fond, is found on Animal Planet or Nat Geo Wild. There are over twenty various programs of zoos or veterinarian clinics showing animals with a plethora of problems and successes. Again, everything is resolved in the last five minutes and they usually have make-you-feel-good outcomes, a distinctive contrast to the daily news stories of political unrest and Covid-19.

From veterinarians working at major zoos to Dr. K's exotic animals in Florida or Dr. Oakley in the Yukon, programs cover a diverse group of animals and situations. One of my all-time favorites is *The Incredible Doctor Pol*. The main character is an older vet with many years of experience. With a heavy Dutch accent, he has a quick let's-get-this-done attitude. Episodes are filled with dogs, cats, pigs and goats coming and going from his clinic in rural Michigan. Segments also include numerous trips out to the neighboring farms to tend to larger animals, most often cows or horses with the occasional llama thrown into the mix.

So, while working on emails or talking on the phone, I will often glance up to see Dr. Pol's arm stuck up the backside of some horse with intestinal problems or a cow having difficulty with calving. Though a considerably messy procedure and one that I have never witnessed personally, I reached the point, having seen it often enough, to become somewhat immune to the spectacle.

Since the pandemic started, my husband and I also spend many evenings catching up on old movies. One particular evening, we started out watching a movie and sharing a bowl of popcorn. I heard the rain start shortly after we started the film. When the movie was over and it was time to go to sleep, I went to the window to look out. What I saw was not just a normal Wisconsin cloudburst. This was more in the proportion of monsoon dynamics. Reflected in the streetlights that lined the sidewalk, were sheets of rain rocketing to the road.

I told my husband that I would meet him upstairs after checking the basement for leaks. I found everything dry but as I switched off the light, I heard a faint, “drip, drip, drip” coming from a corner where I had never seen water. Turning on another light, I saw a leak in the ceiling dripping at an uncomfortable rate unto the storage shelves below. I immediately started to remove items from the shelves and found some empty plastic storage bins to put under the drips. I was finishing up when my husband came looking for me.

I showed him the problem and the fix but added that I was going to go outside to see what was causing the predicament. I put on my raincoat and went out into the deluge. My husband, who wakes early and likes to get to sleep at what he calls a decent hour, followed me out into the rain and dark. Lo and behold, using our iPhone flashlights, we saw that a huge pond had developed alongside the house. The nearby downspout was gushing from the seams, the rain obviously not flowing out to the underground pipe leading away. With a bit of force, my husband was able to pull the lower part of the downspout off the house. It was obviously plugged.

The rain was intense. Despite the hooded raincoat, I was getting soaked, water dripping from my face and down my neck. The downspout was so packed that it was not possible to just shake out whatever was causing the problem. I decided that while my husband was holding it, I would just reach inside and grab. My hand penetrated a glob of messy goo, leaves and mud. Yuck. I pulled out my hand and threw the mush onto the ground in the huge puddle that we were standing in. I reached in several more times. After rolling up my sleeve, I was eventually up to my shoulder stretching into the round copper tubing. Suddenly the image flickered through my mind of Doctor Pol, his arm up the rear of a cow. I could think of nothing else more comparable.

By this time I was soaked to the skin. Working in the dark, with a shovel and a hoe, we dug a ditch to drain the pond. We were relieved to see, by way of flashlight, that the water started running away from the house. My husband reattached the spout and it was apparent that the rainwater was now running the proper path and down into the underground pipe. Mission accomplished! I wonder, if without the inspiration of Dr. Pol, I would have been so ready to commit an up-to-my-shoulder procedure in such circumstances. Perhaps, during the Covid-19 pandemic, those TV shows without the complicated storylines have a special value all their own.

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