

# Giant tarantula holds woman hostage

I have always wanted to write a headline like that. It's one of those perfect tabloid headlines that are generally followed by stories that do nothing but disappoint readers.

Making up a headline about a tarantula holding a woman hostage doesn't take much talent or even imagination. However, following it with a story that supports the headline and is absolutely true, is a bit of a journalistic coup.

You are probably asking how a tarantula could knowingly hold a woman hostage. I must agree, it does sound far-fetched. Although, I never said the tarantula actually knew it was holding the woman hostage. In this case, the woman assumed she was being held hostage by said bug.

The incident took place many years ago during my misspent youth. Kinky Boswell, one of the members of my erstwhile gang of ne'er-do-well friends went on vacation to New Mexico with his parents to visit family.

His real name was Kenneth Armstrong Boswell, but we called him Kinky because he had a penchant for getting into strange situations and doing odd things. This story is one of the many weird incidents in Kinky's bizarre life.

During the 1950s, kids growing up in the nation's breadbasket often had unrealistic impressions of the western states. They had visions of cowboys fighting savage Indians and a landscape of cactus and sagebrush as a setting for the Hollywood version of the Wild West. Those under 10 years of age often have a conception of time that is somewhat askew, which leads them to believe the days of the western frontier ended last week.

Kinky came back with tales of deserts, mountains, plateaus, horses, and really friendly American Indians. He said they had exceptional skills for making everything from feathered headdresses to pottery, as well as colorful rugs and blankets.

Kinky emphasized that none of the Indians carried tomahawks or shot at them with bows and arrows. I think that surprised him. He also got to hang out with his 12-year-old cousin, Artie. Learning to ride Artie's horse was the highlight of the entire journey.

Artie's dad drove Kinky and his parents to the airport at the end of their visit. Artie went along to spend more time with Kinky and

they rode in the back of the van. He whispered to Kinky to open his luggage as soon as he got home. He also told him to make sure he was alone when he did it because a little surprise was packed in the bag just for him.

Kinky did exactly as Artie instructed. In the privacy of his bedroom, when he was alone, he opened his luggage and found a large jar buried among his clothes with a note attached to it. The note said, "This is Margaret. I had her for two years. You liked her so much, I thought you'd like to take her home." It was signed, Artie.

Margaret was one of three tarantulas Artie had caught in the New Mexico desert. He told Kinky he could get as many tarantulas as he wanted, whenever he wanted. The Southwest was overrun with them.

Margaret was nearly as big as a saucer. Kinky immediately called the gang and we gathered in his bedroom to see the "coolest thing in the world," according to Kinky.

And cool it was. Margaret was big, hairy, and brown, just like in the horror movies. Only Margaret was real. When Kinky visited his cousin Artie, he told Kinky all about how to care for tarantulas. So Kinky knew that he had to go out and get fresh food, meaning live bugs.

"Tarantulas aren't like other spiders," Kinky said with authority. "They like to catch their food." Then he put Margaret in a big gift box with a loose fitting lid so she could get fresh air, and they could use the jar to hold the beetles and grasshoppers they found for her to chase and eat.

Kinky didn't realize how strong Margaret was. She moved the lid off the box and was free in less than half a minute after they left to catch her lunch. Margaret found her way down to the first floor through a crack in the wall and ended up in the pantry where she sat on a shelf looking for unsuspecting bugs that might just happen by.

Then Kinky's mom walked in with a bunch of canned goods from New Mexico. She climbed up on a stool to put the jars on an upper shelf when she spotted Margaret. Their eyes locked. Kinky's mom was too petrified to utter a sound — for about 10 seconds. Then she let out a scream that should have been heard in New Mexico.

Unfortunately, the only creature that heard her was Margaret.



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

The pantry door was closed as well as the rest of the house. Margaret jumped on the wall next to the door and froze. The screaming scared her into paralysis.

## Letters

Continued from previous page

ers that they have the month of April to renew their dog license(s) as required by RI General Law. Please return your license renewal form and required fee to the Town Clerk's Office, 93 Narragansett Ave. If you need to register a new dog, please stop by the Town Clerk's Office with a current and valid rabies certificate.

**Kimberly A. Turcone**  
Deputy Town Clerk

## Teachers need your support

As a teacher, I feel the need to respond to letters regarding teachers and the state of our educational system.

First, teacher contracts and unions do much more than just "protect" and "limit the restrictions" on teachers. Teachers care about students' learning conditions and want students to reach high standards. Teachers' unions fight to help students learn better. Limiting a union's ability to negotiate important items such as class size, health and safety, student discipline, specialists' case-loads, and qualifications for employment will hurt students.

Teachers are in the schools everyday and see what is best for students. We should have more say, not less say, in important issues facing our schools. Collective bargaining is the only avenue available to public schools teachers to express our ideas and take a

Kinky's mom screamed until she was hoarse. Margaret didn't move, and Kinky's mom thought she was waiting for her to attempt to open the door so she could pounce. Margaret thought Kinky's mom was going to attack and smash her like the overgrown bug that she was.

We didn't come back for almost two hours. We were walking up the steps with the jar full of live bugs when Kinky's dad joined us. "What's in the jar?" he asked.

"Just some bugs," Kinky re-

plied.

Kinky's dad didn't think anything of it, and called for his wife as he walked in the back door. Then the screaming started. I think you can imagine what happened next.

Kinky was grounded for life. The rest of us just ran out the door and scattered in every direction possible. Margaret was sent to live in the biology department of a local university and had to adjust to life in a system she can't understand.

stand on what are the best methods to educate students. Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions.

The idea that learning will improve if teachers' salaries are based on students' test scores is flawed. What about those teachers who work in our lower socioeconomic areas? Or those teachers who work with students in special education? Based on standardized test results, students who receive special education or who come from a lower socioeconomic area are usually "lower-performing" than students who are "more privileged." Should teachers be punished for taking on the "more challenging" students? Will our good teachers in these areas switch positions to work with the "higher-performing" students?

How should I be paid for being a health and physical education teacher? In physical education, my students and I work on character development, sportsmanship, teamwork, respect, physical fitness, and the development of the skills and appreciation needed to maintain a physically active lifestyle. In health, my students learn about the growth and development of their bodies, the importance of proper nutrition, how to protect and improve the environment, how to be a wise-consumer, how to recognize and handle their emotions, and how to prevent disease transmission. In adaptive physical education, I work with students with both physical and cognitive disabilities. We work on balance, core strength, relaxation techniques, and improving overall fitness levels. This just scrapes the

surface of what my students and I do during the year. There are no standardized tests that measure what my students learn and the lifelong effect that all teachers have on their students.

It is no secret that teachers are among the lowest paid professionals. There is now legislation in front of the general assembly that would further limit teacher's pensions and health care. I became a teacher to help better the lives of children, to enjoy what I do, and to know that I make a positive difference in the future. I did not become a teacher to become rich, but I did expect affordable health care and a secure retirement. Based on the public perception of teachers and the proposed bills, I am scared about the outlook of my professional and personal future.

Think teachers are overpaid? For the sake of argument, let's just pretend that teachers act as babysitters (everyone knows teachers do much more than just baby sit). If a teacher got paid \$5 an hour for each of the 25 students he or she teaches, for every hour of the school day that they teach, for every day of the school year, that teacher would earn more like \$100,000. And that's just for babysitting at the low rate of \$5 an hour. A top-step teacher in my district earns little more than \$60,000 a year. Even with benefits, that really doesn't seem like that much now does it?

The assertion that teachers are not held responsible for their performance is false. As a teacher,

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