

Timpkos Cancel 2009 Holiday Party

Endies Miktop, Senior Staff Reporter

CHEZ TIMPKO, VA—"I think we need to cancel the party," Chuck Timpko announced to his wife as she finished her shower the morning of Friday, December 17, 2009.

Denise Timpko, who is never truly awake in the morning, turned pale in confusion. Given her normal pallor, this state is difficult to detect except when warm water has already reddened her skin.

"What do you mean?" she asked, obviously not getting the point.

"They say we're going to have a major snowstorm—12 inches or more."

"Oh."

"We might get as many as 18 inches."

"That would be a problem," she wrapped a towel around her sopping hair.

"I was going to buy the perishable groceries for the party today, but we can't eat all that food," her husband said. "Maybe our neighbors and friends who live nearby

will be able to come, but we can't count on that."

Denise Timpko thought about the over 50 positive RSVPs they'd received, all the groceries already purchased, and the dishes her husband made the evening before.

She briefly

regretted taking annual leave the previous day and today. She thought about the newsletter she'd finished, which she normally handed out at the party. At least

before.



The Goddess takes a hand in shoveling snow during Snowpocalypse, the snowstorm that caused the cancellation of the holiday party.

Exploring Fantasy in the Flat Land: Ohio

COLUMBUS, OH—Believe it or not, not all of Ohio is flat. For example, those sections in or bordering the Appalachians positively roll. And Cincinnati isn't flat. Yet the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland occupies a portion of flatland by a big flat lake, Lake Erie.

"Flat isn't bad," Denise Timpko says. "But I'm not really used to it. So when Chuck and I visited Ohio on vacation this year, it surprised me. Of course, the flat lands of Ohio must have attracted farmers back in the day."

"Probably now, too," her husband comments.

"No doubt."

The Timpkos' usual trip to the World Science Fiction convention around Labor Day weekend didn't occur this year since Australia hosted the 2010 convention, and the Timpkos chose not to attend. Instead, they bought memberships in the World Fantasy Convention, which was held this year in Columbus, Ohio, on Halloween weekend.

"The convention is mostly a writers' convention," Denise explains, "Although not all attendees are writers. Many editors and artists attend as well as fans."

"The art show," Chuck Timpko says, "Is a big draw for us. It consists of works by professional artists only."

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The Goddess Speaks

An annual column written by your own hostess, the goddess Denise

The goddess joins her human host in mourning the loss of Cinnamon, the 19-year-old cat the Timpkos raised since she was a 6-month-old kitten. The Timpkos adopted Cinnamon, an orange and white short-hair cat, from the animal shelter along with Panther, a year-old black short-hair cat.

Cinnamon and Panther became great buds. When Denise left for work, they would be curled up together. They played well together. Panther proved friendly to everyone. He wanted to sit in a visitor's lap before the visitor could sit down to make a lap. Cinnamon, not so much. She disdained other women and especially all children. She loved Denise, Chuck, and Chuck's mother. Denise always wondered whether children had chased or hurt Cinnamon in her earlier life as a stray.

Cinnamon and Panther became Denise's children. Cinnamon and Panther would follow Denise around the house. If Denise went upstairs, they followed. They slept with her at night. She never had a private moment in the bathroom. They were attentive during one of Denise's foot surgeries, smelling the strange odor of the soft cast on her foot.

Then it all ended. Panther became sick with feline infectious peritonitis, a fatal illness, and he had to be put to sleep. People who don't have pets may not realize that animals mourn.

At 9 months Cinnamon lost her companion; she became very depressed. For some weeks she carried a 3-foot-long duster everywhere, jumping up on the bed

with it, sleeping near it, having mock fights with it. One morning Denise found a stuffed bunny that normally resided on the bed in the guest bedroom face down at the foot of the steps in the living room. Cinnamon preferred the bunny to the duster and carried it around with her, sometimes dropping it when yearnings for food or the litter box struck.



Cinnamon Timpko when she was about 1 year old

Denise, who also mourned Panther, decided Cinnamon needed a companion. The Timpkos adopted the 4-year-old tortoiseshell Camouflage, or "Cammie."

"We should have adopted a cat younger than Cinnamon," Denise says. "Unfortunately, Cammie, although a very sweet cat, was incredibly feisty in the first 6 months she lived with us. She took over as the dominant cat, making Cinnamon more depressed. Eventually, they became sociable and both would sit on my lap at the same time, but the first 6 months were difficult."

"We lost Cammie in June 2007. She lived to be 19 and, until the last few days of her life, was energetic. Despite her rocky beginning with us, she became quite lovable and I miss her. We

lost our Obsidian, "Siddy," who we adopted in the mid-90s, in 2003. Siddy's fur, which was nearly all black except for a few white hairs on his neck and stomach, felt like satin. He was especially enamored of Chuck."

Cinnamon, Cammie, and Siddy and Denise were constant companions, because the three of them accompanied her everywhere, just as Cinnamon and Panther had done.

A few months after losing Siddy, the Timpkos adopted Maxine, a totally white cat. Maxine, like Siddy, adored Chuck.

"She's a very laid-back cat who put up with Cammie's occasionally slapping her just from whim," Denise says. "Cammie objected to Maxine because Cammie wanted to show who was top cat."

"When Cinnamon died 2 days after my birthday, I was very distraught. I knew she would die sometime this year. She had thyroid disease and had lost weight significantly over the last 2 years. She slept more than usual. She seemed very old, and I had been hardening my heart against her passing. The Saturday she died I made myself go out for a previously arranged appointment with friends because I could not stand to be home where she died. I knew it would be very bad for me psychologically. But I cry for Cinnamon, Cammie, Siddy, and Panther privately. Pets' personalities differ as much as human personalities do, and who doesn't cry for lost family?"

The Timpkos adopted two cats in November. One came from the same animal shelter as Cinnamon and Panther and one from a cat rescue organization.

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"It was not Plan A to adopt two cats," Denise says. "I had filled out applications at three cat rescue organizations. After 10 days none of them contacted me. I became frustrated, went to the animal shelter, and arranged to adopt a cat. Returning home, I found a message from one of the organizations saying the cat about which I inquired was still available.



Kalliope ("beautiful voice"), named after the Greek muse of epic poetry and eloquence

Chuck and I made the mistake of going to see her. At that point we became enamored.

"The animal shelter named the tabby cat we adopted, who was a stray, Mallory. I changed her name to Kalliope after the Greek muse, because she's a very talkative cat."

Chuck Timpko comments, "We couldn't stick with the name *Bubbles*, which was the name the cat rescue organization gave our other new cat."

"They called her *Bubbles* because she has the loudest purr I've ever heard," Denise says.

"So I wanted to call her *Ermengarde* or *Hildegard*."

"I nixed that," Denise makes a face. "Horrible names in my opinion."

"I suggested the name *Zenobia*

after the Queen of Palmyra, a third century Syrian queen who led a revolt against Rome."

"Zenobia is a pretty name," Denise says, "But we didn't know how appropriate the name was until we realized how much of a royal attitude our black and white cat has.

She's got the same cranky attitude *Cammie* had when she joined the family."

"She'll get better with time."

"Eventually," Denise agrees. "Her mean attitude is toward other cats, particularly *Maxine*, not people,

although she is often friendly to *Kalliope*."

"Before becoming a stray, she was obviously in a one-cat household."

"That's for sure."

Both the new Timpko cats like to play, especially *Kalliope*.

"We'd forgotten how very active kittens are,"

Chuck mentions.

"We haven't had a kitten since *Cinnamon*," Denise laughs, "Remember when *Cinnamon*, *Cammie*, and *Siddy* explored the Christmas tree, all the way to the top?"

"Amazingly, neither *Zenobia* nor

Kalliope show any interest in the tree or the manger scene."

"At least we won't have to worry about the burlap bags over the camels going missing for half a year like we did when *Cinnamon* routinely stole and hid them."

Why did the Timpkos adopt new cats so quickly after *Cinnamon*'s death?

"Because I feel it honors *Cinnamon*," Denise explains. "I will never forget her. But there are so many cats without homes, and this is a good home. We gave *Cinnamon*—and *Cammie*—long, secure lives. We can do that for these cats in *Cinnamon*'s name. It keeps *Cinnamon* alive for me." ♦

Allison Harlow Becomes 76th Great-Grandchild of the God Njord

On May 11, 2010, Allison Belle Harlow, the Timpko's third great-niece, was born. Although she is far too young to realize it, she is the 76th great-grandchild of the Norse god Njord (see *Chez Timpko News 2006*). Allison's mother, Christine, is the daughter of Denise's brother Bruce. ♦



Zenobia named after the third century Queen of Palmyra who led a revolt against Rome



Denise's niece Christine Harlow and her daughter Allison

The artist guest of honor was Darrell K. Sweet, who exhibited about 30 paintings.

"I half seriously suggested to Chuck that we remortgage the house in order to purchase the stand-out painting by Darrell Sweet of Richard Harris as Albus Dumbledore in Harry Potter," Denise sighs. "I did express my appreciation to Sweet of not only that painting but all of them, and I thanked him for bringing so many pieces to the art show. It was like going to a special exhibit in a museum. Since he's an older artist, it may be the last time I'll see such a collection of his paintings."

"Even though we didn't buy the Dumbledore," Chuck points out. "We did buy a small, much less expensive painting by Sweet."

"It is a wonderful painting," Denise agrees. "I was so happy no one bid against us."

The Timpkos also purchased a painting by Chris Seaman, *Tutmouse* by Alan Beck, and two dragon sculptures, *Fat Bat* and *Sleeping Mother Dragon with Eggs* by William Saloka.

Although the trip ended in Columbus at the convention, the Timpkos

first traveled to Cleveland, where they dined with Mel Rohan, a friend with whom Denise worked at IBM before they both left the company. Mel, also a cat lover, claims she owns a wonderful cat named Johnnie. However, Denise wonders whether Johnnie is a figment of Mel's imagination

because the feline didn't appear at any time during their visit to Mel's apartment.

"She just came out," Mel called from her window to the Timpkos as they

walked on the sidewalk outside her building

after they left.

Is Johnnie akin to the so-called ghosts for whom they have no scientific proof on the SyFy channel? Denise debates this point. Mel claims she has no pictures of Johnnie because the cat successfully eludes the camera. Shades of paranormal mystery abound.

Libbey glass outlet where they purchased more than they anticipated. In other words, it was a successful shopping trip that entailed carrying the packages of glass products for the rest of their trip, perhaps not Plan A. After their purchase-heavy trip to the convention, the car was stuffed on the way home.

"We really need to plan better," Chuck said to Denise.

"We knew we'd have this problem," his wife said. "That's why we were so happy to be able to drive, rather than fly."

"True, but we didn't count on the Libbey glass outlet."

"Who could resist those cobalt blue glasses? Especially at that price."

"Thank goodness we didn't buy anything big at the Toledo Museum of Art."

Denise agrees. "Yeah, postcards are pretty portable. I was tempted to buy a vase at the gift shop in the Glass Pavilion."

"That glass demonstration was really interesting."

"I was glad we went. It was very informative. I met the two glass-makers afterward and talked to them about how I'd use one of the glass-making hazards to kill my character in the book my writers group and I are working on.

"It was a successful trip, despite the amount we bought," Denise concludes.

"Of course, we save for it every year," Chuck says.

"What I really liked," he says, "Was visiting the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential house in Fremont and then the Mazza Museum in Findlay."

"We wouldn't have known about the Mazza Museum if you hadn't found that flyer at the rest stop. That was quite a find. A museum with picture book art. And to think it owns 5,000 pieces of art. There were only about 200 pieces displayed."



Paintings hanging at Chez Timko: (above) paintings by Darrell Sweet and (below) painting by Chris Seaman



Sleeping Mother Dragon with Eggs, by William Saloka

After leaving Cleveland, the Timpkos drove to Toledo, a city whose downtown looks more prosperous than Cleveland's downtown. The view from their hotel room showed the Maumee River, a pretty sight. The first day in Toledo they discovered the

Denise Timpko Declares War

Endies Miktop, Senior Staff Reporter

CHEZ TIMPKO, VA —“I loathe them,” Denise Timpko declares, “They just hang there with their odious green color, tempting me to grab a knife and slaughter them. Rip them into rags. Load them with rocks and sink them into the pond.”

“Of course,” she adds reflectively, “The pond out back is in wetlands. It would probably be illegal, not to mention immoral, to pollute the poor pond with them. It might cause protesters to gather and shout “Pity Poor Pond!” as their battle cry. Not a good idea.

“Maybe I could burn them instead. But that raises the problem of more environmental issues. There must be some way I could pulverize them.”

Earlier, in more lucid moments, Timpko recited the history of the green drapes.

“Admittedly, they were here when we first looked at the house,” she explains. “And we left them hanging after we bought the house and moved in because

we needed something on the windows. You know, when one has lots of art-work, one needs to protect the art from the sun, which can damage it severely. So it was just a practical—and a cheap—decision to leave the drapes hanging.

“We’ve lived in this house now for 11 years. I’ve been practical long enough. I want different curtains, curtains that I actually like.”

Timpko rants on for several minutes, giving this reporter the opportunity to survey the green drapes in the living and dining rooms.

The drapes in question are



Not fancy or expensive but a better color than the old light green country-looking curtains (a picture of the previous curtains disappeared when the reporter's camera died)

pale green with white flowers and composed of panels and a valance. Some people would say the drapes aren’t that bad. Some, if not many, people would actually like them.

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“We bought a lot of stuff there.” Denise sighs. “Books. That soft doll for Allison.”

“We’re back in the hills,” Chuck announced.

“This is a particularly pretty section of Ohio. How long before we get home?”

Five hours later Denise sat waiting in the car while Chuck ran into Safeway to buy candy. The sun had already set.

When he returned and began carefully driving the two blocks to their house, Denise said, “We’ll arrive in the middle of trick or treat.”

Chuck pulled the car into their driveway, “We’re home at the end



Fat Bat by William Saloka (notice the human skull of his Fat Bat’s meal)

of a great vacation.”

Denise nodded.

“I’ll unload the car while you give out candy,” Chuck said.

“Okay,” Denise replied, amazed at his seemingly never ending energy. She entered the house through the garage and petted Maxine, their white cat, and dumped the candy in a bowl.

Excited voices outside announced the trick or treaters before the door bell rang.

Denise opened the front door, and kids in fanciful costumes shouted, “Trick or treat!”

It’s actually quite fitting to return home from a fantasy convention on Halloween night, Denise thought. ♦

"Then let those people have the Zeus-darned things as long as I get replacement curtains I like," Timpko says. "In point of fact, several people have mentioned that they like them, including our neighbor's daughter."

The question lies in what Timpko finds so objectionable about the drapes.

"I don't like green," Timpko says.

"What about the green in the sofa?" this reporter asks.

"I don't like most greens. The green in the sofa, which is a Kelly green, is all right. Using green as an accent color is generally fine. Unless, of course, it's any shade of olive green."

"What about the greens in artwork?"

"All colors are permissible in artwork. That is an entirely different matter."

"You have very specific views about the color green."

"Of course," Timpko proclaims. "I am, after all, the goddess. According to the records in the One World Tree, I am the descendent of both King Malcolm II of Scotland (murderer though he may have been) and Njord, the Norse god of wind and prosperity."

"The One World Tree contains some very suspicious information," the reporter mentions.

"So you don't believe the genealogist on call at ancestry.com could trace her family tree back to ancient Egypt?"

"Did she really say that?"

"Yep," Timpko replies.

"Then that raises questions about your supposed godhood."

"Perhaps," she agrees. "However, I rather like being a goddess, even a supposed one whose inheritance is based on patently false information recorded in the One World Tree."

"By the way," I say. "What's this got to do with your disliking the color

green or those wretched green curtains?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, except that goddesses get to have quirks."

Since there is nothing profitable to say to that, this reporter asks, "What about Chuck Timpko?"

"What about him?"

"Does he like the curtains?"

"No. Neither he nor I like little white flowers, although he doesn't object to the color green."

A few weeks later after our chat, Timpko contacts me.

"The goddess won the war."

"What war?"

"The drapery war," The sarcasm in Timpko's voice makes me hear her grave dissatisfaction with my memory. "The green drapes are gone."

"You dumped them in the pond?"

"No, you idiot," Timpko doesn't mince words this time. "Goddesses do the responsible thing. I gave them away."

"Someone wanted them?"

"Indeed," Timpko, an aficionado of *Stargate SG-1*, quotes Teal'c.

"What's there now?"

"Red and gold drapes. Not the most expensive kind, but they'll do."

"I should take a picture of them for *Chez Timpko News 2010*."

"A good idea," Timpko says.

"However, make sure you say the goddess doesn't want to hear people say they preferred the green ones or anything disparaging about the red and gold drapes. It's not a good thing to criticize the goddess' taste."

"From your mouth to their ears."

"More like eyes since they'll be reading your article."

"You're very literal, aren't you?"

"It's one of those quirks I mentioned. Of course, I'm no way as literal as Bones."

"Temperance Brennan, you mean. The *Bones* character."

"Who else?"

"Dr. McCoy in the original *Star Trek*."

"He wasn't very literal."

"This conversation is going downhill, isn't it?"

"You noticed." ♦

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she could make the newsletter available via e-mail.

She sighed. "You're right. We'd better cancel the party. Oh, and I'd better cancel the ham."

"I'll start calling and sending out e-mails."

"Okay, I'll do the same after I'm dressed."

Chuck hesitated at the bathroom door. "You know this is the first time in 18 years we've cancelled the party. I guess we've been pretty lucky."

Denise nodded. "We have at that."

Snowpocalypse, the snowstorm of December 19–20, 2009, brought a cumulative snowfall of 16.4 inches at Dulles Airport, becoming the seventh heaviest snowstorm in the Washington metropolitan area in recorded history.

The biggest unofficial snow (before official records began) was in January 1772 when 36 inches (3 feet) fell in the Washington-Baltimore area. It has been called the Washington-Jefferson snowstorm because it was recorded in both of their diaries.
—National Weather Service Forecast Office, Baltimore/Washington

Politiciatis, The Genesis of Washington Panic

"People who've lived in areas where blizzards are common, such as Senator Dick Durbin and President Obama," Denise explains, "Don't understand the psyche of the Washington culture when it comes to the 's' word. Snowstorms represent one of the worst acts of terrorism—the other is ice—Mother Nature can afflict on Washington. Psychologically, we're not prepared for them. Collectively, our only way to deal with them is to panic. We do that rather well."

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“The goddess,” she says, “Of course, doesn’t panic. That is not the done thing for goddesses, after all. She does, however, acknowledge the panic precipitating the population’s plundering of milk, egg, and toilet paper from the local grocery stores.

I’m convinced that infants born in Washington, D.C., are taken from the arms of their loving mothers right when they are born, into a room where someone shows a film of a snowstorm with shrieking and screaming so that those children come to believe that snow is a mortal enemy, like a nuclear attack, because I’ve seen over 40 years here, people in this town go into a full-scale panic at the thought of a snowfall.
—Senator Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, February 11, 2010

“In the goddess’s opinion, Washington’s panic stems from hosting politicians all the time—Congress, embassies, and, on occasion, heads of state from other countries—and then getting flak from the rest of the country for doing so.

“Think about it this way: For the most part, the politicians weren’t born here. They come from other states and nations. The rest of the states then accuse Washington of being weird or worse, but it’s really all due to their sending their own politicians here, politicians who often lose—or should lose—the trust of their own supporters because, after all, politicians are politicians. The goddess thinks that some politicians suffer from an inborn mental disease she calls *politiciatis*, in which they lie, cheat, and do whatever is expedient to achieve power.

“The bottom line is when politicians mix with other politicians, all their worse—and occasionally their best—qualities emerge. When it’s their worst qualities, other states blame Washington. But Washington is only a place providing the hosting facilities. It isn’t a person who forces these politicians into rank behavior.

“As a result the people who live here—even if they’re not from here originally—gradually



Chuck Timpko and the young ladies of USDEC at the beach in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in 80 degree weather (from left to right): Kristen Parody, Kari Kwiatkowski, Chuck, Amy Foor, Annie Bienvenue

and unconsciously develop a sense of guilt for something for which they’re not responsible. Years of hearing TV reports of yokels from other states complain about Washington wrecks a toll: Washingtonians panic over a stupid thing like snow, something else we can’t control. Since snow doesn’t occur often in DC, the panic produces occasional psychological relief from the effects of *politiciatis*, after which we laugh at ourselves. Everyone’s experienced enough excitement for a while. Of course, that was until this year when we celebrated what was equivalent to a bicentennial of relief from psychological trauma,” Denise concludes.

Two Small Parties

The Timpkos successfully notified all would-be party attendees, and all agreed that, yes, the snow thing would happen and “we all

know what that means.” What that meant was that not all—in fact, most—roads were not plowed immediately. Although the *planned* Chez Timpko party did not occur, the Timpkos had instead two parties. On Saturday, December 18, 5 neighbors joined the Timpkos for a very pleasant cozy evening. On Sunday, December 19, when some roads were plowed, about 12 friends and their children arrived and most of the food Chef Charles Michael had

prepared disappeared.

“Our holiday party turned into two small parties,” Denise sums up the Chez Timpko 2009 party, “It was lots of fun. An exciting weekend.”

“But we were naïve,” her husband says, “We thought that was the big one of the winter.”

Snowmageddon, February 5-6, 2010

“Ah, yes, the snowstorm you missed,” Although she laughs, Denise sounds slightly irked. “The one where you left me when the first flakes were falling to go to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.”

“But I had no choice. We were putting on the annual spring conference . . .”

“It was February,” his wife points out.

An epic snowstorm has the mid-Atlantic region in its cross hairs. At this time, personal safety must be first and foremost. National Weather Service forecasters have been tracking this storm for the past week and now that the storm is here it must be taken very seriously.

—National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco

“Whatever. It was USDEC’s conference with our international marketing reps. If we didn’t leave on Friday morning, if we left on Saturday as originally planned, the staff wouldn’t get there and the whole conference would be a bust. We’d lose lots of money.”

“I appreciate the logic,” Denise says, “Even so, you didn’t open the front door and find three feet of snow hemming you in! I couldn’t even open the door to the deck or the back door. You were relaxing in 80 degree weather by the pool!”

Chuck shrugs. “At least you had enough food and other supplies.”

“We always have enough food in the house. We don’t panic like other people do in snowstorms.”

“I thought you went to the store.”

The storm, which President Obama referred to the storm as “Snowmageddon” in a speech before the Democratic National Committee winter meeting, brought 32.4 inches to Dulles airport. Some places in Loudoun County had up to and past 36 inches.

“Oh, I bought a couple of cans of soup and apples ‘cause we were low. I went early and got out of there quickly. The really smart thing I did was go to the bank and get \$150 so I’d had enough to pay someone to shovel snow.”

“Who’d have guessed that teenagers would actually show up to shovel the snow?”

“When you have a disease like MS, you plan for possibilities,” Denise responds. “I knew I could shovel some snow, but not lots. I shoveled the

porch and sidewalk and a single path to the mailbox, but that was it. When the teenage boys rang our doorbell on Sunday and offered to shovel the driveway for \$40, I told them I’d pay them \$80 if they shoveled the entire driveway and cleared off all the snow from the car. They were extremely happy. So was I. I could go to my doctor’s appointment on Monday. It was a win-win situation.”

“From hearing all the news reports,” Chuck says, “You were very lucky the road was clear enough to get to the doctor.”

Denise remembers, “Yeah, they plowed a single lane down our street Sunday night and they’d plowed the main road, but the five-mile trip to the doctor was a bit tricky, although doable.”

Orkin to the Rescue

While Chuck wine and dined with fellow USDEC employees in Puerto Vallarta, Denise rejoiced in being able to work at home. Yet she worried about the news of collapsed roofs around the area and found that the local Safeway was closed because of the threatening weight of snow on its flat roof. She didn’t worry about the Chez Timpko roof, which is sharply pitched, but about the deck. Three feet of snow lay on the deck.

Thousands of people in the metropolitan DC area were left without power, some for days, and with unplowed streets. After Snowmageddon, the federal government and most public schools closed for five days in a row. Above ground Metro stations froze to a halt and Metro took days to restore full service.

On Tuesday morning someone rang the doorbell, and she opened the door to find an Orkin technician.

“I don’t think you can refill the ant traps with snow on the ground,” she stuttered, very surprised.

“But it’s a good time to spray inside,” the technician replied.

“Well, there is that,” she agreed.

They talked about—what else—Snowmageddon.

“You’re lucky you have power,” the technician commented. “Some people haven’t had power since Friday.”

“The electrical lines are underground here,” Denise said. “It’s the benefit of living 30 miles outside the city in a relatively new area even though the commute is wretched.”

“I see you shoveled your entire driveway.”

“Not me. I only shoveled the porch and sidewalk.”

He looked out at the deck. “You know you probably need to get the snow off your deck. It’s a lot of weight.”

“I know, I know,” she said. “I just can’t figure out how. I can’t open the screen door.”

“What about the basement door?”

“Same thing. It’s snowed in.”

“Do you have a shovel? I should be able to open the door.”

Snow storms in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia are consistent with climate change principles. Extreme winter weather does not mean climate change is a hoax.

—Justin Novak, “Global Warming Predicts Increased Precipitation: Snowmageddon and Snowpocalypse Evidence of Climate Change,” *www.suite101.com*, February 14, 2010

“You’re kidding.”

“No, I’m serious. It won’t take much time.”

“It’s three feet of snow! You probably need to get to your next appointment.”

“No, it won’t take long.”

They got the shovel and went to the basement, where he managed to get the screen door off and began shoveling snow at a mad pace up the walkout, creating a path to the deck and up the stairs. In less than 20 minutes, he unearthed the floor of the 12 x 20 foot deck.

Denise thanked him and offered him money.

Geography, Dairy, and Strawberries: A Dieter's Experience

Tesimdo Pinek, Foreign Reporter
Extraordinaire

CHEZ TIMPKO, VA—The link between geography and the U.S. dairy industry involves more than just the location of dairy farms.

"It's all about strawberries," Denise Timpko says. "And smoothies."

A strange association, you say?

"Not really. It's true that Loudoun County, where we live, used to be the site of many dairy farms, according to my husband, He Who Knows All Things Dairy—he hasn't worked for the National Dairy Board and the U.S. Dairy Council for 20-some years for nothing. I believe our house was erected on what was once a large dairy farm, but that's not the link. For me the link is indelibly associated with my love of strawberries."

Three years ago Denise became disgusted with her weight and foresaw that she was heading for, although not there, type 2 diabetes.

"Diabetes is rampant in my family, both juvenile and adult onset. I take it seriously—it scares me and with good reason. My younger cousin Mark, who had diabetes from early childhood, died from diabetes 3 years ago. Fortunately, I do not have diabetes. To make sure, I now get an A1C blood test annually.

"My weight, of course, is partly genetic. Many, if not most, people in my family my age are overweight. However, one must deal with the cards one gets. One can lose weight through correct nutrition and exercise, but it's difficult. It's hard to stay motivated. Losing weight doesn't happen quickly. Actually, if it does, one tends to gain it back. I know. I've done that.

"From being a member of Weight Watchers previously, I knew it was the correct diet for me. One can eat whatever one wants within reason, even if it's dessert. This is particularly important. I know from experience that, if others tyrannically monitor what you're eating and frown when

you eat something they think you shouldn't, you rebel. It's human nature.

"Since I really wanted to lose weight, I decided to focus on building good eating habits by incorporating one thing at a time until it became second nature. One should have five fruits or vegetables daily. So I decided to start eating something that was as good as a dessert, but healthy."

Denise's craze for strawberries is unending. She can eat them morning, afternoon, and night. She likes strawberry parfaits, virgin strawberry daiquiris (she doesn't drink), and strawberry smoothies.

"I adore ice cream," she says. "But I find it hard to control my craze for it. These days I generally only eat ice cream at restaurants when it's a special occasion or I'm on vacation."

Working at the Ronald Reagan Building in DC on a contract with a federal agency introduced her to Smoothie King.

"I found that smoothies were for me as good as ice cream, and I discovered the Strawberry Xtreme smoothie. I'd have one for breakfast every day. At first I had them with all the ingredients included. One day I read the nutritional pamphlet Smoothie King publishes about its smoothies and discovered I needed to limit the calories. So I began to experiment. I started visiting the Smoothie King near home and finalized my version of the recipe."

But what links geography, the U.S. dairy industry, and strawberries?

"Chuck began educating me

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"No, no," he refused. "I just want you to keep your contract with Orkin."

"Well, that I certainly will do," she said as he left.

Denise went back to the kitchen to stare at the denuded deck.

"Chuck will never believe this. I'm almost sorry I sent him that note."

The note she sent her husband Saturday night said simply "Bring gifts."

"I never ask him to bring gifts," she explains. "That's far too demanding, but he shouldn't have sent me a note about it's being 80 degrees."

Miraculous Homecoming

On February 11 a ferocious blizzard—*Snow My God* or *Snowzilla*—dumped another 10 inches of snow. When Denise woke up on February 12, she looked out the window to see her driveway miraculously clear of frozen pre-

cipitation. Ron Etter, the Timpko's neighbor from across the street, had shoveled it earlier that morning.

Denise took a freshly made loaf of bread to the Etters' house later that day to thank him and his wife Marisol.

"Chuck is returning from Mexico today," she said. "It's wonderful I don't have to shovel a path for him. Thank you ever so much."

Secretly, however, the thought of Chuck stumbling through unshoveled snow dragging his suitcase between the five-foot-high mounds left behind by the snowplow in penance for his Mexican jaunt amused her.

Yet she was quite glad to see him safe and sound when a taxi arrived later that night from Dulles airport. It had, after all, been a very long week, and, of course, he did bring gifts. ♦

Timpkos Forced to Build Patio

Nesdie Miktop, Cub Reporter

CHEZ TIMPKO, VA—Actually, no one forced the Timpkos to build their new patio and add landscaping around it.

It was the threat of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, a proposal by the county board of supervisors now under consideration.

Specifically, the act

would require homeowners whose property lies within 100 feet of water and who plan to build on their own property to pay the fees for a study to assess the potential damage that such building on their own property might cause to the Chesapeake Bay. So if the act is passed, the cost of building a patio on Chez Timpko might cost as much as \$9,000 for the study.

Chuck Timpko attended a hearing on this act for the public at the county building. He was not the only homeowner who was against this proposal. The Timpkos decided that building a patio and adding the necessary landscaping before the act passes seemed imperative.

"The pond behind our house," Chuck says, "Doesn't drain anywhere. It's a natural spring that was enlarged by the builders."

"This year," Denise adds, "We paid

for contractors to paint the interior and the exterior trim of our house, repair and paint the deck, and replace our furnace. These were



Above and below: Views of the patio and landscaping

the planned home maintenance expenses for this year, not the deck and landscaping."

"But now we don't need to worry about whether the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act is passed," Chuck comments. "And we can enjoy the patio earlier than we planned." ♦

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about the dairy industry years ago just from idle comments here and there. I was fascinated to learn that Asia buys milk by-products, such as whey. Why? I asked him, and he explained the muscle-building qualities of whey. So I decided to substitute whey for soy in my smoothies. I am very happy that I did. It tastes much better. In essence, it's a strawberry milkshake without the lactose, which is why I've always hated milk.

"When I began exercising at the gym 18 months ago, I knew that drinking a smoothie before or after exercising would help convert my copious fat to muscle. In the past year I've lost 3 inches around my body, proof that it works.

"Since I changed my diet 3 years ago, I've lost 43 pounds and I've kept it off. I need to lose 50 more, but it will come off, gradually, slowly, but steadily."

Okay, that covers the U.S. dairy industry and strawberries. What about geography?

"I go to Smoothie King, sometimes every day. The owner and all the clerks know who I am and what I want. The only question they ask is whether I want a small or medium smoothie. That answer depends on whether I'm focusing on losing or maintaining (some days I only want to maintain)."

And? What about geography?

One of the clerks, who are all high school students, was talking about an acquaintance, who she didn't like much. The woman bragged about returning from an island in South America.

"Really?" Denise said.

"Yeah, some island called Paraguay."

"I see," Denise said. "Did you take geography in school?"

"No."

"They don't teach geography anymore?"

"No, but I know the names of all the states," the girl protested.

"That's good," Denise said. "But you might want to know the names of other countries, where they are, and whether they're an island."

"Paraguay isn't an island?"

"No."

In that moment Denise no longer felt like she was 31, which she regards as her best age and the mental image she has of herself. She felt every day of her 58 years.

"Thank you very much for making my smoothie," she said to the girl.

"Bye! See you tomorrow!" ♦

Chuckling Chez Timpko News

Apparently, some readers don't understand references in *Chez Timpko News* to gods and goddesses, and some readers may not appreciate greatly exaggerated stories. Because of these misunderstandings, Denise Timpko feels compelled to explain a fundamental fact about this newsletter: The first and foremost mission of *Chez Timpko News* is to be funny.

Of course, the definition of *funny* depends on whether one finds her sense of humor amusing.

Some of the articles are not factual (shock!). Some are. Some are based on the truth. In other words, Timpko bends, ties, stretches, sits on—there's an image for you—and sometimes ignores the truth.

It's up to you, Gentle Reader (Timpko finds Victorian books droll), to get with it. Of course, if you choose not to do so or don't appreciate the humor, the solution is simple. Either don't read the newsletter, or just chuck it, so to speak (apologies to Mr. Timpko). Or do both. ♦

People You May Meet

Harold and Cathy Aderholt
KimSu Beauregard
Marc Beck
Annie Bienvenue and Chris Robinson
David and Marie Clem
Eileen Collins
Catherine Cooling
Katie Dokken
Bruce Eells
Amy and Eric Foor
Jon Gelber
Vicki and Chris Glasow
Colin and Fran Helmer
Al and Linda Himler
Angelique and Jon Hollister
Tom Hrды and Judy Schramm
Danny and Sally Ingram
Walter and Kitty Klaus
Kari and Matt Kwiatkowski

Welcome to Chez Timpko

- Place coats in the Dinotopia room upstairs, up two steps, and straight back.
- Bathrooms are on every floor.
- Drinks (sodas, wine, beer, water) are in the garage.
- Smoking allowed OUTSIDE the house or in the garage only. Note that smoking causes migraines for the goddess so don't rile her.
- **Touch NOT the books!**
- Errors in this newsletter are due *solely* to your imagination!

Veronique Lagrange
Kent and Theresa Larson
Mike and Debbie LaViolette
Matt and Terri McKnight
Brenda and Joe Nardone
Marianne and Vijay Reddy
Kristi Saitama and Guest

Carl and Suzy Serger
Karen Smith
Tom Suber and Cary Griffin
Keith Thornburg
Benes and Susan Trus
Rebecca Vidal
Bobby Yi

Chez Timpko Menu 2010

Appetizers

Fiesta Baskets
Cheddar Veggie Torte
California Beef Crostini
Sweet-and-Sour Sausages
Corn and Bacon Dip
Cardonnay Shrimp Spread*
Salmon-Pimento Appetizers*
Black Bean Tortilla Pinwheels
Kitty's Deviled Eggs

Entrees

Chicken Chorizo Lasagna
Sweet Pea and Artichoke Lasagna
Smoked Sausage and Couscous
Baked Ham and Turkey
Rolls a la Denise

Side Dishes

Persian Rice Salad#
Quinoa, Garbanzo, and Spinach Salad with Smoked Paprika Dressing

Desserts

Earl Grey Chocolate Truffles
Raspberry Sour Cream Tart
Musician's Tart#
Poppy Seed Chocolate Torte
Baileys Irish Cream Cheesecake#
Spiced Pumpkin Cheesecake#
Chocolate Chip Cookie Cheesecake#
Chocolate Whiskey Bundt Cake
Belgian Dark Chocolate Cake

*Seafood! The goddess Denise protests. "It is an abomination! An absolute horror!"
#Nuts! The goddess Denise approves, but some may not.