

Mike, Paul, and Steve;

Recently I was reminded that my current wife keeps a list of reasons why she is going to divorce me. My first wife also kept such a list... something about an alligator in the bath tub, a poisonous snake getting loose in the house and never found. You know, things like that.

I thought I would write briefly about one of my current wife's complaints. Its still in draft form and needs some work but I thought you would enjoy the story.

Cousin Dave



The Rat-A-Pult

Patrick, my youngest son, could be heard coming and going through the basement door. After a few minutes of silence I decided to look out the back windows to see if he was okay. There he was throwing a tennis ball and measuring the distance of its flight with my large tape measure found in the basement. I had to go out and ask.

He told me he was working on a school project. The project required that an object be thrown repeatedly and released at different angles. He was to measure the flight distance to see what effect the angle had over the distance thrown. I pointed out that it was difficult for him to maintain the same amount of force for each throw at various angles and suggested that he use a machine for the throwing part. He asked what kind of machine we had. I told him we should build a Cat-A-Pult.

It only took a few hours to produce a really cool machine. Patrick cut up a handle from a broom for dowel type uprights (about 1 ½ feet tall) inserted into a plywood base. A throwing arm was constructed with a large Tuna fish can attached to one end to hold whatever object was to be thrown. For power we used surgical tubing, just one strand on each side going from the uprights to each side of the throwing arm.

A very simple device. All the operator had to do was place a tennis ball or golf ball into the can and pull the throwing arm all the way back until it hit the base. Release when ready! The stretched tubing provided the power and consistency needed. All Patrick had to do was place bricks under the front of the base to change the angle of throw and then measure the distance. The tennis ball did okay but the smaller harder golf ball was best.

He could send a golf ball from the middle of our back yard and over our neighbor's yard and into the middle of the next yard. Not bad for a machine only a foot and a half tall. Once his project was completed the catapult became a toy, or actually a weapon.

I really did not like the neighbors directly behind me and I thought the cat-a-pult might be a way to aggravate the crap out of my neighbors. I tried to hit their windows with a golf ball but the house was out of range.

I suggested to Patrick that we build a larger cat-a-pult. I may have gotten a little carried away. The uprights were 2X4's about four feet tall and well braced. The throwing arm had spring shock absorbers on each side to stop its forward motion at the right point. I devised a trigger mechanism based on that of a bear trap- just happened to have a trap hanging in the basement. The trigger mechanism was awesome. The two moveable parts were balanced such that they stood upright ready to receive the throwing arm.

The surgical tubing used for propulsion was the heaviest made and six strands were all I dared use on each side. It took all my weight to push the throwing arm into the trigger mechanism, the trigger would drop and lock as the arm was pressed down.

The first test was wonderful; the golf ball went over the target house proving we had plenty of range. A few minor adjustments and the target could easily be hit. Thankfully, Patrick had a good supply of old golf balls from a nearby golf course.

Smacking the back of the house was great, lots of noise. Hitting the roof was also fun; after a few bounces the golf ball would often roll into the rain gutter. I only managed to break one window. So there I sat in my backyard in a lawn chair drinking a beer and wondering what would be even more fun to launch at the target. Hmm... How about a dead rat?

After buying four rat traps I set them in a nearby field. The next afternoon I had three dead rats. I quickly learned that dead rats, rigor mortis or not, do not fly well. They tend to flop around while in flight and change course. And unfortunately the rats were covered in flies and ants. So there I sat in my backyard in a lawn chair drinking a beer wondering how to get freshly killed rats- you know, the kind with no flies or ants. After another beer the idea came to me. I went to my garage and got two Havaheart traps, the catch them alive traps.

I set the Havaheart traps and the next day I had two large live rats. After bringing them home I shot the rats while still in the traps. No flies and no ants but they still did not fly well, just too floppy in flight.

So there I sat in my backyard in a lawn chair drinking a beer and wondering what would make a dead rat fly better. Hmm... I know! I can ball up a dead rat, place it in a zip lock bag and freeze it. It would then be like launching a softball or a small tire. Just shoot the rat to kill it while in the "catch them alive trap" and then coil it up with its nose in its belly and wrap the tail around. Stuff into freezer with frozen food on each side to keep the rat from "unwrapping".

So there I sat in my backyard in a lawn chair drinking a beer having a father and son experience.... I was so proud of him. He could hit our neighbor's house nearly every time!

Over a period of a few weeks we would build up our supply of frozen rats and then spend an afternoon of target practice, just plain old good father and son bonding time. When a rat landed on the roof it would often roll into the rain gutter. Sometimes it would bounce and stay on the roof or on occasion it would bounce into the yard. But no matter where they landed they would

soon rot and stink like hell. Our neighbors did not have air conditioning; they kept the upstairs windows open. I could always tell when the stench got bad- they would close the windows.

This was so much fun but one day all hell broke loose.

My wife found some of the rats which I had neatly tucked away in the freezer. Whoever said "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" obviously this guy's wife didn't find frozen rats in her freezer. This is when I learned that my wife was multi-talented. She was in a full rage, foaming at the mouth and spitting foam while yelling my full name. Yelling not just Dave Daly but the full name... "God Damn You Dave Daly". (I've heard it many times over the years and not just from her). Yep, spitting, foaming and yelling all at the same time; I can't do that! Now that's real talent!

Then she started tossing all the contents of the freezer on the kitchen floor. I asked what she was doing and she said she was throwing everything away. I assured her the rats were very dead and bagged before being placed in the freezer and they had not wandered around sniffing and pissing on the food. Nope, everything was thrown out all the while she cursed me.

So there I sat in my backyard in a lawn chair drinking a beer and wondering what lessons I had learned. First: A cat-a-pult that throws rats should be called a rat-a-pult.
Second: A rat-a-pult can cause one to drink too much beer!
Well, that's about all I learned.

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Other stories to come.....

The night Jesus visited my neighbors.
When SWAT had my neighbors in their sights.
What happened to the storm drain???
What happened to the Little 'Gator??
Hey, someone stole my side yard!
Practical jokes I'll NEVER do again!