

May 31 1973

The same bunch of troublemakers that pop up every spring are back destroying the peace in Mertzon. Lawn cutting busybodies and soil depredating gardeners are once again at work.

Every evening, the tranquility of this small ranch town is polluted by gasoline mowers slashing down good grass. All during the weekends, hoes and rakes deface the natural beauty of the weed beds.

Powders and sprays are spread as if the balance of nature was controlled by a toll free telephone call. Mulchers and fertilizer are used as though the Maker didn't know what he was doing when he made the ground.

Squash and bermuda grass farming don't rule my spare time. When I go for a sideline, I go for the quick money crops. Without buying one inch of plastic hose, my boys and myself already have five spotted puppies, four F-1 cross kittens, and two solid black crows. (Actually, I think the crows are ravens, but if you won't be picky, I sure won't.)

We are counting on selling the crows alone for enough money to buy out a vegetable stand. With any luck at all, the profit from the kitties and the puppies should make a pantry full of pumpkin preserves look like a cache of wasted effort.

Business hasn't been as good as we anticipated. The only two customers we've had on the crows were too low caste to make a trade. No offense meant, but maybe I'd better explain the finer points of crow husbandry. To own and appreciate one, a person has to be of the caliber of those fine gentlemen you see pictures of running the holy hell out of a fox, following a pack of potlicker dogs and riding long-legged horses.

Crows are intended to be owned by men of artistic nature. Edgar Allen Poe couldn't have written "The Raven" if a sapfinch or a parakeet had perched on his window sill.

In fact, using a songbird for a prop, he'd have been lucky to have written the footnotes for Mother Goose's book. He might have got off a stanza of "Bye Bye Blackbird" under other circumstances, but he sure wouldn't have been famous on a songbird kick.

Every singing bird we ever had around the house was suffering from wanting to play on a washboard. All the music they could make was the melody they played by kicking gravel from their cages.

I never did like those fake singers. When my wife would get mad, she'd use my column to line the bottom of their cages, but that's a story I'd like the chance to tell you some other time.

Anyhow, only the couth can take a young crawling and nurture him into the fine specimen that he'll make. Common clods, like those two old boys who came by, can't pass the test.

Anybody who can't get by the point of wondering whether a crow can be housebroken is disqualified.

If my mind followed that channel, I'd be ashamed. to shave in front of anything except a peephole mirror. Barnum and Bailey would have put together a fine circus worrying about matters like that! Show me a circus owner that's sensitive to cage conditions and I'll show you a man who should have been a taxidermist.

What difference could it make whether a crow was house trained or not? They aren't made to live in shanties. People who live in a place so cramped that a crow can't find a roost ought to own white mice. Polo ponies can't be stabled in chicken coops. Folks should examine themselves before they start making objections to pets.

Trading on the kittens and puppies has been too slow for a market test. In that line, too many complimentary copies are passed out for a small operator to exist. Repeat customers are hard to find, and discrimination against females should be investigated by the woman's liberation movement.

I showed one lady a \$65 tigerstriped pussycat that had more class than Amy Vanderbilt's memoirs. By the time she got through denouncing mother cats, it sounded like she was preparing to launch a nationwide crusade to stop the bees from pollinating the flowers.

Mothers of four or five kids have a lot of license to run down an animal that produces an offspring that can't even slam a screen door. First grade teachers have to be constantly watched or they'll run off to sea. Kindergarten herders are harder to keep than a boatful of eels. Don't hand me any of that stuff about pet population explosion. It doesn't take many humans to make up a mob

Late evenings are pleasant in my back yard. The pups have dragged in a couple of goat hides for the crows to peck on. The kittens roll and tumble in the long untarnished grass.

It's a great feeling to have your spring crop completed. Fleas and lice may become a problem later on, but as it is now, I'm not raising anything for the snails and sowbugs to eat.