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## The Oak's on Me

Jerry Zezima

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# The Oak's on Me : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Sunday February 18, 2024

## The Oak's on Me

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By Jerry Zezima

I know I am going out on a limb by saying this, but in our yard, everything happens in trees.

The stately sentinels — mostly oaks, although a modest maple stands out front — serve as headquarters for birds that poop on our cars and squirrels that ravage the garden. The trees also have a nasty habit of being hit by lightning, dropping on power lines and falling on neighbors' houses.

So my wife, Sue, and I called an arbor care specialist who got to the root of the problem by taking down a couple of sickly specimens and pruning others so much that our property looked like a branch office.

I love trees, especially maples, which I get all sappy about because they produce sweet, delicious syrup.

But I am not so enamored of oaks, which supposedly are the strongest trees but which litter the yard with twigs if even the mildest breeze blows through.

They also drop disgusting brown gunk that stains our vehicles, clogs the gutters and leaves the yard looking like a herd of cattle fertilized it.

And don't get me started with acorns, which the squirrels love but which drive me — you guessed it — nuts.

Still, the deciduous darlings wouldn't be so bad if they didn't topple over like drunken revelers.

The first time it happened, on a dry, windless morning, I was upstairs in my office, working hard to avoid working, when I heard a tremendous crash. I looked out the window to see that a not-so-mighty oak on our side of the fence had fallen on the attached garage of the house next door.

Fortunately, our neighbors are very nice people who said they wanted to get a new roof but couldn't afford one.

"Now our insurance company can pay for it," the guy said.

"Thanks," his wife added.

"You're very welcome," I replied. "It was nothing."

The next mishap occurred when one of two towering oaks in the backyard was hit by lightning. I was shocked — shocked! — to see zapping going on there.

Sure enough, the top of the tree had been sheared off.

We called the aforementioned arbor care specialist, who came over with a crew that used a chainsaw on the fallen wood and gave a crewcut to the rest of the treetop, leaving it looking like Curly of the Three Stooges.

Logs littered the yard, so I loaded them into the car and drove, with Sue, to the dump. It was our 42nd wedding anniversary.

“Isn’t it romantic?” I cooed.

My bride’s gaze told me in no uncertain terms that I was a lumber-jerk.

A couple of years ago, the top of a neighbor’s tree — an oak, naturally — collapsed onto power lines above our property. The electrical box on the back of our house was ripped off, the power went out and the torn and tumbled treetop, which fell for no discernible reason aside from maybe ants or termites but certainly not wind, lay in a heap next to the fence in our backyard.

The neighbors (not the same ones whose roof was smashed by one of our trees) paid for half the cost charged by the arbor care guy to cut up and cart away the rotten wood. Insurance covered damage to the house.

Most recently, a storm toppled the top of yet another oak in our backyard. Back came the tree crew to cut it up, take down the rest of the tree, fell the one that was hit by lightning, and prune dead branches from other trees, including the big oak in front of the house that provides plenty of shade in the summer but makes our lawn look like it was manicured with a flamethrower.

The work was good not only for our house and property, but for the trees themselves.

“Now the birds can’t poop on our cars,” said Sue. “And it looks like the squirrels have been dispossessed.”

“If they think they’re coming back to drive me nuts with their acorns,” I said, “they’re barking up the wrong tree.”

—Jerry Zezima

Jerry Zezima writes a humor column for Tribune News Service, which distributes it to newspapers nationwide and abroad. He is also the author of seven books, *Leave It to Boomer*, *The Empty Nest Chronicles*, *Grandfather Knows Best*, *Nini and Poppie’s Excellent Adventures*, *Every Day Is Saturday*, *One for the Ageless* and his latest, *The Good Humor Man: Tales of Life, Laughter and, for Dessert, Ice Cream*, all of which are “crimes against literature.” He has won eight awards from the National Society of Newspaper Columnists for his humorous writing.