

## Year in quotes: 'Brownies are not for the living'



**TOM ARNEBERG**  
Community columnist

We sent out another "Arneberg Argus" a couple of weeks ago. That's the name of our family Christmas newsletter, in which we try to capture the essence of ordinary life in a hectic household.

Any time we hear one of our kids say something funny or insightful, I write it down before I forget. Here are some of the entries from the latest issue, out of the mouths of Simon (now 13), David (17), Jasper (20), Alison (22), and Benjamin (24) ... and a few others:

"Do they ever make movies about the GOOD things that Romans have done?" — Simon, while watching "Ben Hur"

"It was giving ME a headache smelling me!" — David, after a hot shower following a Boy

Scout campout.

"They're like a straight jacket for your legs." — Simon, on a rare occasion of wearing blue jeans instead of nylon athletic pants.

"It's kind of weird not having seven people crawl all over you to get a spoonful." — Simon, on getting the free birthday fried ice cream at Cancun while at lunch with only his dad instead of the whole family.

"This is NOT a backpacking trip!" — Beth, frustrated with the clothing choices Tom was packing for their trip to Boston to see Ben.

"It should be called 'China-block.'" — Ben, a little disappointed at the size of Boston's Chinatown (compared to New York's).

"Brownies are not for the living." — Simon, explaining to Dad why Mom won't let anyone TOUCH the fresh, warm brownies she made for the funeral the next day.

"That's why I used to like football practice." — Simon, explaining that from the field at Parkview he could smell the pungent aroma of Leimenkugel's

brewery.

"Well, since I didn't have any notes, I got points for good eye contact." — David at the supper table, talking about the speech he gave in class that day ... not remembering he even HAD a speech until 8:30 a.m., after missing three days of school for the "Skills USA" competition in Wisconsin Dells.

"So, Tom, are you getting your driver's license picture taken today?" — Eric Fischer (Tom's boss), after Tom had changed into his tux at work to go sing with his quartet at the Avalon right after a meeting.

"That probably means she needs a bath." — Beth, replying to Simon's comment (a tricky trap) that "it smells like 'updog' in here."

"There are 14 days of school left, and I don't have to go to 8 of them." — David, looking at the calendar with his trips to the state tennis tournament and Badger Boys' State.

"I'm basically out of bug spray, and it's only Monday." — Simon's letter home from Boy Scout summer camp.

"Oh, it really IS called Mickey's Diner!" — Simon, while stopping for breakfast in downtown St. Paul on Arnetour 2013 (the annual family bike trip). He had been assuming it was just another colorful nickname for McDonald's.

"So, how are the first couple of bites?" — a waitress's innocent question a couple of minutes after serving the meal at the Baldwin A&W, before being shocked that David had already inhaled his entire meal and was sitting in front of an empty plate. (David gets *hungry* on bike trips.)

"I think I've finally found my audience." — Jasper, recalling how his telling of the eating-a-raw-rabbit-eyeball story during combat survival training was met with rapt attention at the Boy Scout meeting the previous night.

"I have things to do, places to go, and people to annoy." — Simon, trying to hurry along Mom's meal preparation, in true middle school style.

"Your dream is my nightmare." — Beth, in response to

Tom talking to the kids about camping out some year at the Minnesota State Fair.

"Wow, Dad, you're getting to the point where you might actually beat the last-place runner on the girls' JV team!" — Jasper, honestly trying to encourage Tom in his improved 5K running time.

"He's not just the Defender of the weak; he should be the Defender of the YEAR!" — Simon whispered during a worship song in church.

"If I post something sarcastic, they'll think I'm crabby, but if I say something nice, it'll only encourage you." — Beth, scolding Tom for posting a 1981 photo on the 32nd anniversary of their first kiss.

"So, did I not get the memo?" — Simon whispered to his mother in the pews, assuming it must be Ugly Sweater Day since she was wearing a vintage Norwegian sweater to church.

Tom Arneberg of Chippewa Falls is an engineer, Scoutmaster and father of five. He can be reached at Tom@Arneberg.com.