*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**Oh deer! Driving in the Northwoods**

My wife and I love living in the Northwoods. I wish we had moved up here sooner. But, there is a price to pay to become a “local.”

I was told that you have to “blend in.” Not knowing what that really meant, I thought that you just had to look cool and act cool, wear dark glasses all the time (even at midnight), and hum “Your Cheatin’ Heart” by Hank Williams every place you go.

No problem singing “Your Cheatin’ Heart,” I know that song by heart; but I do have problems wearing sunglasses after midnight. Running into obstacles is just not my cup of tea. To me, having a bloody nose before you go to bed is not “cool.” Well, to each his own.

Anyway, living up here for only 3 1/2 years, my wife and I have had our share of paying the price in becoming a local. Colleen hit a deer last year and totaled her car. It was a red Honda Fit with all the bells and whistles, a little car that could fit all her display materials when she went to different exhibitions around the country. She could pack all her artworks, exhibition stands and overnight bags in that little car, and with a passenger, if necessary.

She had driven that car to Indiana, Texas, Washington, D. C., and Minneapolis, and she had the grandest time. Then one night I got a call from her, “Can you please pick me up? I just hit a deer and I can’t drive it anymore.”

Without even asking, “How are you doing? What’s the damage? Are you OK?” I flew to the location she mentioned, just to find her shivering and sobbing. The front end of the car was like a caved-in accordion. Thank goodness, she was OK. Shocked and scared, but she was OK.

Thank you, Lord, thank you.

Before we moved to the Northwoods, we were warned about the crazy deer and other wild animals running around and kept thinking, that it won’t happen to us. What’s the chance of hitting a deer, or any other wild animals? I read a story before the move where a driver hit a deer. It flew up and crashed the windshield and trampled the driver to death. My, what a way to go indeed!

Before my wife’s accident with a deer, I had mine while driving to my niece’s graduation in Iowa. A 50-pound turkey hit and shattered my windshield while on my way. The impact was so strong that the windshield was totally shattered and my rearview mirror was dangling. I thought nothing of it at first, but decided to stop the car and called 911. The sheriff came within minutes and congratulated me for making the decision not to keep driving, because if the shattered windshield hit my face, it wouldn’t be a pretty sight.

A year later, the same pretty car all fixed up hit a deer! I couldn’t have timed it better. Didn’t see it coming, with no signs or warnings.

“Foom,” that was it, in a split second. Airbags didn’t even go off, nothing happened and the car was moving still. I got home and looked at the damage, just to find out there was a big dent to the front hood. Maybe a few thousand dollars’ worth of damage? Oh well, what the heck, that’s life.

After the auto shop repairman took a look, he agreed that it was a couple thousand dollars’ damage. Bite my tongue, oh well. Then he called me the next day and told me that the damage was over $7,000! Yes, the hood was dented, but so was everything inside, the engine, the A/C, the oil compressor … in other words, EVERYTHING! Thank goodness for insurance.

That was a leased car, so after all was fixed and when the time came, I had to get out of the lease and get another new vehicle. Would you believe that after I picked up a brand-new car, I hit another deer, just three months later?! Oh dear is right, how many times can you say that?

Coming home from a cooking class in Cumberland not too long ago, I just passed Turtle Lake and was on my way home. Out from nowhere, a deer popped out and hit my front end. Again, the airbag didn’t go off and the car kept going till I got home.

It was then that I got out of the car and investigated the damage. I couldn’t believe my eyes! The front end of the passenger side was totally caved in. The headlight was pushed back 2-3 feet, with all other parts. Surprisingly, the airbags didn’t go off and all indicators were stating that everything was fine.

Looking at the damages, I felt sorry for the poor animal. Goodness, no way it could’ve survived the impact. But what was I supposed to do? I couldn’t even step on the brake.

The funny part is that after my first accident, I bought a pair of “deer whistles” as precautions. They didn’t cost much, maybe $4 to $5 a pair. But I thought, what if that doesn’t work? There are hundreds and thousands of residents who have purchased the whistles to prevent accidents. What if it is just a gimmick?

The creator is probably laughing his head off as those whistles do not work.

But, money is in his bank already.

So, after another new car, hopefully, my wife and I will fit into becoming “a local.” Goodness, a turkey, three deer, maybe a coyote …

My only regret is I didn’t stop and pick up the prizes. I would have made up a feast to feed the neighbors.