



Thayer's

# Wild Bunch VI

By J E Ted Thayer

## **Thayer's Wild Bunch VI**

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1271 N Wheatfields Rd Lot 22  
Globe AZ 85501-2803

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### PREFACE

January 3, 2019

<http://www.tedthayer.com/default.html>

**TedThayer.com**



**J E Ted Thayer | 01-03-2019**

## THIS One ...

is a compilation of The Wild Bunch commentaries published via email broadcast and on Facebook pretty much every Monday and Thursday as well as occasionally on the TedThayer.com website in 2019.

As I stated in the original *Wild Bunch*, I love to write, so I save most of my stuff. This exercise became an easy way to write some history and keep it safe. It's interesting to see how facts and opinions change over time.

Each pair of chapters represents a week's offering without the website banner shown above. On June 16<sup>th</sup> of 2016 we switched to two weekly columns because it was nearing the close of another election cycle. We'll keep it at two per week and see how it goes. So, how do you think 2019 will turn out? Stay tuned, boys and girls.

It's gonna be a great ride!

Thursday, January 3, 2019

## **Crickets?**

**I ordered a box of crickets from the Internet and it went about as well as you'd expect**

By [Christopher Ingraham](#)

Reporter

December 29 at 3:37 PM

For Christmas this year, my family adopted a young bearded dragon lizard as a pet.

Our dragon, whom we named Holly, eats a lot, and the thing she loves to eat most is crickets (typically about 10 a day, in addition to other things like mealworms and vegetables). From the get-go, I knew that keeping an ample supply of crickets on hand would require some planning. We live in [a rural area of northwestern Minnesota](#). The closest pet shop is an hour away, in North Dakota. Restocking our cricket supply would require a time commitment of at least two hours out and back.

By Christmas Day this year, Holly's cricket supply was running low. I decided to order crickets online, which I had never done before, to save a trip to North Dakota. I bought the crickets from [Fluker Farms](#), one of the more well-established online insect vendors (yes, these exist and there are a lot of them). I decided on a shipment of 250 crickets, which seemed like a reasonable amount for a lizard who is theoretically capable of gobbling up to 50 of them every day.



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I opted for next-day-shipping to ensure there was no gap in Holly's cricket supply. But the package ended up getting delayed by a fierce blizzard that roared through the Northern Plains this week, dumping up to a foot of snow and sending temperatures plunging below zero. The cricket box ended up spending an unplanned overnight at a FedEx sorting facility in Grand Forks, N.D. I feared they would all be dead on arrival.

The package arrived Friday. I anxiously met the FedEx delivery man at the door. He appeared to be relieved to unburden himself of the six-inch-square box emblazoned with the words "Live Insects" and decorated with life-size cricket silhouettes. We exchanged no words. If you're a FedEx driver, you probably try to avoid conversations with the types of people who order boxes full of insects from the Internet. Having never ordered Internet crickets before, I naively assumed that I'd open up the box and find the crickets in some sort of sealed bag or other contraption to facilitate easy transfer to their final storage place. I also assumed that given the near-zero temperatures we were experiencing that morning, any crickets in the box would be groggy and disoriented and easy to manage.

I was wrong on both counts.

I cut open the tape and opened the cardboard flaps and was greeted by dozens of beady little cricket eyes staring eagerly up at me. I had a brief vision of the aliens-in-the-claw machine from "Toy Story" before the crickets started doing what they usually do when they are suddenly exposed to light — hopping all over the place. I quickly closed the flaps.

This was a conundrum. There was no immediate way for me to transfer 250 clearly active and ravenously hungry crickets from the box to the shallow plastic container we store them in at home. The only solution would be to grab a spare fish tank

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we had out in the shed, which would take a bit of time, requiring a trip outside in the deep snow and chilling cold. Back at my desk, after all, I had a nearly finished story that was due to my editor. Rather than upend my workday for the sake of \$11.50 worth of Internet crickets, I decided to retape the box and store it in a secure location until I had time to deal with it.

Besides my wife, Briana, and I, our house is home to 5-year-old twins, a 1-year-old, three large cats, one beagle-basset mix and one lizard.

There was only one place where I thought I could put the cricket box without it getting overturned or split open by a child or an animal: the bathroom adjacent to our kitchen. I put the crickets in the cabinet above the toilet and went back to work. For about 20 minutes, everything was quiet.

Just as I was about to file my story, I heard Briana, in the kitchen, utter the following words: "Where do these crickets keep coming from?" I should point out here that I told her offhandedly that I had bought crickets online, but I hadn't told her when they'd arrive and she hadn't been around when FedEx came.

At this point, I reasoned that there was no crisis, that she had probably encountered one or two stray crickets that had hopped out when I initially opened the box. So I decided to keep working.

In retrospect, once again, this was a mistake.

As I was making final edits to the story, I continued to hear increasingly frantic cricket-related outbursts from the kitchen. Briana later told me that she first realized something was terribly wrong when one of the cats suddenly leaped on to a

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pumpkin pie that had been warming on the countertop. It was going after an unusually large cricket that was munching the filling.

Eventually the commotion was too much to ignore. I went to the kitchen. Briana whipped around to face me, wild-eyed.

“So uh, remember when I said I ordered some crickets?” I said. “They got here toda--”

“YES, I SEE THE CRICKETS ARE HERE,” she said. “WHY ARE THEY ALL OVER THE KITCHEN?”

“Huh,” I said. “That is weird. Let me check something.” I walked over to the bathroom. I opened the door. There were crickets. Everywhere.

Crickets on the floor. Crickets on the walls. Crickets in the sink. Crickets in the toilet. A clump of at least 12 crickets were attempting to cram themselves underneath the baseboard. A cricket jumped at me from the stack of folded washcloths on the shelf. Two crickets appeared to be chasing each other around the plunger. The crickets in the toilet were propelling themselves around the bowl at an astonishing speed.

The only thing I could think to do is flush the toilet and close the door. “Don't come in here!” I yelled. My voice was unnaturally high from trying to force myself to sound nonchalant.

Evidently, I had not resealed the box as well as I should have. Later inspection also revealed that in my haste to ascertain the crickets' condition, I had opened the box from the wrong side, despite the presence of large arrows indicating the proper side

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with an all-caps warning that read, "SEE INSIDE FLAP FOR CARE INSTRUCTIONS!"

There was nothing to do now but execute the Spare Fish Tank Protocol on an emergency basis. I threw on my boots, ran out to the shed and grabbed the spare tank. I brought it back to the bathroom, threw the box inside it, and began scooping up the strays wherever I could find them.

Roughly 45 minutes later, the bathroom was clear. But in the interim, the earlier escapees had begun migrating elsewhere. There were crickets in the kitchen closet. Crickets in a pile of shoes. Crickets making their way downstairs to the kids' playroom. The cats were in a state of high alert, having what I can only imagine was the greatest day of their lives.

I tried to collect all of them. It was like the world's worst game of Pokémon. Well after the initial cleanup concluded, crickets kept turning up in inconvenient locations throughout the day. They were in the playroom and under the couch. There's presumably a contingent somewhere in the walls. At one point I heard a 5-year-old shout gleefully from the bathroom, "There's another cricket in the toilet!"

I shared this story on Twitter last night as a form of life insurance: I told my followers that if they did not see any tweets from me this weekend, they should assume it was because my wife murdered me after finding a cricket in our bed in the middle of the night. It resonated well beyond what I expected; perhaps this is because, as writer Nicole Cliffe observed, "in every relationship there is the accidental cricket-releaser person and the where-are-all-these-damn-crickets-coming from person, look in your soul and ask: which am I?"

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I'm happy to report that as of Saturday afternoon, I am alive. The lizard is well-fed. The cats are sleeping deeply. The Ingraham household is finally still.

But something's chirping in the bathroom.

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

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Monday, January 7, 2019

### Trebuchet

For days now, I've heard good people arguing about "**The Wall**", "**Trump's Wall**" and "**The President's Wall**" ... along with the good and bad points of a barrier across the southwestern border with Mexico.

Something missing in the discussion is the fact that walls keep intruders out. After all, isn't that why people put walls or fences around their homes in the first place?

The liberal argument against walls is that they are a sixth-century solution to a twenty-first-century problem. We have more modern ways to deter prospective evil-doers.

On the other hand, the conservative argument on behalf of walls/barriers/fences is that they keep unauthorized people out with very little need for other methodology.

Law enforcement people have consistently complained that "the bad guys" can always find a way through an area without a wall or physical barrier. These are the smugglers, the human traffickers, the drug-runners, the gang members. These are the people coming into Arizona through un-guarded areas of the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation as well as farm and ranch lands adjacent to the southern border. Stretches of the border near Yuma are also plagued with groups of people streaming in from the south, many of whom have detoured from stronger stretches of barriers in southern California.

I came up with a simple solution to this problem: **The Trebuchet**.

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According to **Wikipedia**, "*trebuchet* (French *trébuchet*) is a type of catapult, a common type of siege engine which uses a swinging arm to throw a projectile. The *counterweight trebuchet*, also known as the *counterpoise trebuchet*, uses a counterweight to swing the arm. It appeared in both Christian and Muslim lands around the Mediterranean in the 12th century.

Just think of it! Use a giant trebuchet equipped with a sort of seat that could fire a human down range ... like over a border wall or barrier or fence!

Catch aliens entering the country illegally and throw them back over the barrier into Mexico. Put up bleachers and sell tickets! It wouldn't take long before illegal entries would be reduced to zero! Spectacular!

What a show! Just sayin'!

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

Thursday, January 10, 2019

## Screwed Again!

Well, I fell for it again! Your **Windows 10 Update** won't make a dent in your metered service. This from a **Microsoft Service Tech** (or a very clever Artificial Intelligence program.) Fact is - it was a bold-faced lie! And it cost me dearly!

When we started I had used 16.9 of my allocated 25 GB of internet bandwidth (data). When we finished I had done nothing but use up more data to 20.3GB, leaving me just 4.7GB to last until it renews on January 24th.

I'm screwed because if I contact Microsoft again the same thing will happen and I'll be out of bandwidth before renewal time. That means cough up more \$\$\$ because Windows 10 has so many built-in problems that Microsoft doesn't care anymore if you're getting screwed!

Well, I figured it out, folks. I quit **CableOne** a few years back because they were screwing everybody, too! In order to have high-speed internet service a customer had to have a high-speed modem that was leased from CableOne. The cost was unreasonable after figuring in taxes, fees and tariffs. No exceptions - even if you already owned an identical modem!

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, CableOne has lost enough business that customers now have a number of modem options: First, lease one. Second, buy one that meets the current specs from a CableOne-approved manufacturer/vendor (must be DOCSIS 3.0 compliant.)

Sounds like a winner because the modem I have is mine and it's compliant so I won't have to pay a lease charge. I'll get



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very reliable high speed internet on the order of 100Mb/Sec and a healthy 100GB of monthly bandwidth for a mere \$55/mo plus taxes, fees and tariffs. What's more, the first three months are just \$40/mo plus taxes, etc. Beats the heck outa the \$75 per month I'm paying my current satellite dish carrier!

Sounds like I need to drop in and have a chat sometime in the next few days with Joni, the local CableOne manager. I might even take along the numbers off my modem ...

Improvise - Adapt - Overcome. Semper Fi.

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