Bats in my belfry

By MARY BETH WEISENBERGER

As a country dweller, I am intimately familiar with the multitude of critters that take up residence on my property. I'm accustomed to (though not on especially friendly terms with) field mice, chipmunks, rabbits, deer, raccoons and even the occasional 'possum. Thanks to my tom-boyish upbringing, I tolerate spiders (if you don't count the big hairy kind) and have been known to call a mouse "cute" (as long as it isn't darting out from under my feet. Then I use other words to describe it.) All in all, I am comfortable, if not resigned to, sharing my space on the planet with all God's creatures, big and small.

Except for one: Bats.

In my opinion, a mouse with wings no longer falls under the "cute" category but instead reigns supreme in the creepy, Wizard-of-Oz-flying-monkey category. Their faces are distorted, their ears are freakishly large and their skin is a clammy gray. They come out to party at night, like vampires. And their sole mission in life is to fly into a human's head of hair, where they get irreversibly tangled so the victim is doomed to harbor a blood-sucking winged rodent on her head for the rest of her natural life. At least, that's what my big brothers always told me when we were young and compelled to throw corn cobs at the bats circling the steeple of the abandoned church nearby.

"Don't get too close, Mary Beth," they'd whisper. "The bats will dive right into your hair and never leave. You'll have to get your school picture taken with bat wings flopping around in your bangs."

I was relating this disturbing theory to my husband as we watched bats swoop like drunken pilots over our pond one evening. Unbeknownst to me, while I was sharing this traumatic childhood memory, my loving hubby was slipping off his sock. Just when I got to the most dramatic part, where the evil bats were ready to make a beeline for my tresses, he flipped the sock over his head and it landed, you guessed it, right in my hair. The ensuing ruckus has gone

down in history as one of my best impersonations of the Tasmanian Devil, complete with spastic twirling, high-speed tap dancing, and unrecognizable gibberish spewing from my mouth. The physical reaction to the possibility of a bat roosting in my hair was an unforgettable sight, and my husband often reminds everyone of that fact at parties.

Now rumor has it that a bat is living in our garage attic. I spotted the “evidence” one day, and it was confirmed by my son, who has apparently inherited my aversion to the creatures. He stuck his head in the attic opening and was rewarded with a flagrant flapping in his right ear. A familiar-sounding scream followed.

It appears my husband will have to be the brave one to fight the bats around my house. And when he goes up the ladder to the attic, I’ll be sure to have a sock ready.

Mary Beth Weisenburger writes from an area of northwest Ohio that has entirely too many bats. Contact her for a fun presentation at Marybeth@marybethw.com or check out her blog at www.inthesameboatwithmarybeth.com.

The opinions stated are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect that of the newspaper.