

Views Around The Lake

by Cindy Klopsteck

Lavender: A Whiter Shade of the Color Purple

It was most revealing to me, while digging through my clothes closet yesterday afternoon that I found nothing with the shade of purple.

That's not to say that I'm a clotheshorse so my closet should just be full of garments of every assorted color...it's not.

But somewhere amid the tightly-packed hangars and even way to the back where ladies tend to hang those clothes that should long ago have been shipped off to a worthy charity or a profitable garage sale, it seemed odd there was no shade of the color purple.

I remember having (and loving) a pair of deep purple heels some years ago, with matching purple accessories of clutch bag and jewelry, but they had all been worn to oblivion.

Interestingly enough, I have never replaced these items with anything purple.

Within a few hours of my search, my friends and I would be attending the closing performance of "The Color Purple" in Houston.

Certainly I didn't HAVE to wear purple, and I obviously don't even fancy the color if I couldn't find it anywhere in my closet, but for some reason I felt strongly compelled to wear that passionate color—maybe because I had heard so much about the emotions and passions revealed in the play.

I wound up wearing mostly

white with a colorful blouse boasting a few purple-accented butterflies, topped off by a shimmering silver/lavender wrap.

Two friends had also opted to include purple in their attire, but I was surprised to see just a random sprinkling of the bold color once we arrived at the theatre.

I have to admit I've never read the book or even saw the well-acclaimed movie, so for a few hours I thought perhaps I was overemphasizing the importance of the color to the story.

As the play progressed, I learned I was both right and wrong about that theory.

The first time the word "purple" was spoken came very near the end of Act I, more than midway through the entire play:

"I think it... (displeases) God... if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."

--Shug Avery to (at the moment) a sad and depressed Celie

Wikipedia says: "The title of the book is a very important symbol." In the book, the color is "continually equated with suffering and pain", but not so obviously in the play.

However, the field of purple flowers in both venues provides a means for Celie to finally embrace beauty.

Purple, or any shade thereof, is obviously not a top-rated color with me.

However, all this rumination of the color brought back the realization that lavender had been my

mother's very favorite color.

She had touches of the color in our house, favored blossoms of that color and sewed herself many garments with shades of that color.

My last distinct memory of purple and lavender for her may well be the variegated, orchid-colored blossoms we placed upon her grave some 35 years ago.

After her death, my sister and I donated most of her clothing to underprivileged residents at the Richmond State School, where I was employed.

A vivid memory of mine is that of sitting at my desk at the school one sunny afternoon, typing away at an assignment, when I looked up to peer for a moment across the green field adjacent to my office building.

The grassy area was strewn with walkways and sidewalks in all directions, a virtual crossroads on the state school campus.

Residents were walking and running to and fro, busy at their everyday lives.

It was then that I saw the color purple, actually more a heavy lavender shade, passing slowly before the large window of my office building.

A middle-aged resident was hesitantly working her way across the walkway wearing one of my mother's favorite handmade dresses.

I stopped everything for a moment. I think I may even have stopped breathing.

The sight of the lovely deep

lavender dress brought a flood of emotions through me.

I was angry at the mentally-challenged lady casually walking around in my mother's dress, even as I was glad to see that the beloved clothing we had donated was being appropriately shared.

It must have taken me several minutes to compose my thoughts and return to work.

Of the hundreds of residents then residing at the state facility, I never again saw that particular dress or any other of my mother's dresses.

But that day I was deeply affected by the color purple.

Yesterday the theatrical portrayal of Alice Walker's well-known saga also affected me.

The word purple was used only a few times in the play, with just two songs bearing the book's title being presented during the entire performance.

So I ultimately think this title is an effective achievement in understatement, and yet quite revealing.

I'm going shopping this weekend, and I think I'll buy a new dress in a lovely lavender shade, or some other form of the color purple - even though I quite realize that the external display of color means less than the internal and very personal feeling of what this or any color represents in one's life.

"The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts."

--Marcus Aurelius

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How To Make Back-To-School Gear Last Longer

More parents are making moves to protect the more expensive and most heavily used school purchases from failures -- such as computers, musical instruments, sporting equipment and even the most abused item of all, backpacks.

Manufacturers' warranties usually offer 90 days to one year of limited parts and labor. Take note of the word "limited." Those warranties only cover manufacturer's defects.

So if a key stops working on your kid's laptop, manufacturers could consider this wear and tear,

which many don't cover.

Most extended service plans cover such failures. Additionally, some cover accidental damage from handling.

If you want peace of mind for those "oops" moments, opt for the extended service plan with accidental damage from handling.

No matter what, kids should be taught to take care of their things:

Always transport or store laptops in protective pouches or bags. Keep cell phones in holsters or cases. If kids keep phones in pockets, make sure they can't

easily slip out.

Keep liquids away from computers, MP3 players, calculators and phones.

Don't throw backpacks on the floor. Hang them up or place them out of the way.

Keep pens and pencils in a case so they don't leak in backpacks or puncture items.

Clean musical instruments after use and put them back in cases.

Even the most well intentioned kids can be careless.

So savvy parents have learned there are many service and replacement plans for school items:

Computers and electronics are perfect candidates for extended service plans, protecting against costly repairs or replacement.

The better plans protect against failures due to normal wear and tear, environmental factors (heat, dust and humidity), power surges or electrical failure, and even failure to perform at manufacturer specifications.

Plus, reputable service plans will offer troubleshooting via phone or online portals where support is given around the clock. For college kids, access to free troubleshooting provides parents peace of mind knowing their kid's laptop is up and running.

Musical instruments frequently suffer unintentional damage. Extended plans can be critical for the most popular band and orchestra instruments, like trombones, clarinets, flutes and more. Choose extended service or replacement plans that will either repair instruments or replace them.

Even basic supplies can be covered, such as backpacks, pencil sharpeners and calculators.

General coverage includes:

100 percent parts and labor, and protection against defects in material and workmanship, including those due to normal wear and tear.

Backpack coverage also includes seam separation and zippers.

No matter if students are working on reports on their computers, playing in football games or performing with the orchestra, parents are looking to sleep easier knowing their equipment is protected.

Cattle On Feed Down Three Percent

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in Texas feedlots with capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 2.51 million head on August 1, down three percent from a year ago.

According to the monthly report released by the Texas Field Office, the estimate was up one percent from the July 1 level.

Producers placed 495,000 head in commercial feedlots during July, up eight percent from a year ago, and up 30 percent from the June 2009 total.

Texas commercial feeders marketed 470,000 head during July, down ten percent from last year and down four percent from last month.

On August 1, there were 2.13 million head of cattle and calves on feed in the Northern High Plains, 85 percent of the state's total.

The number on feed across the area was down three percent from last year but up one percent from

the July total.

July placements in the Northern High Plains totaled 433,000 head, up 30 percent from the June total.

Marketings were down two percent from last month to 408,000 head.

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in the United States in feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or more totaled 9.6 million head on August 1.

This inventory was two percent below August 1, 2008.

Placements in feedlots during July totaled 1.86 million head, 13 percent above July 2008. July placements of cattle and calves weighing less than 600 pounds totaled 455,000 head; 600-699 pounds totaled 365,000 head; 700-799 pounds totaled 458,000 head; 800 pounds and greater totaled 585,000 head.

Marketings of fed cattle during July totaled 1.93 million head, five percent below 2008.



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