

*(Continued from page 1)*

bers observe it at our October 25 board meeting.

My reasons for selecting that site were really three-fold: 1) avoid mowing the slope, 2) grow a second type of gourd far enough away from my home that it would not cross-pollinate with the mini-Nigerian bottle plants that were my part of the IGS pure seed project for 2008, and 3) use it as a teaching medium for the community and library. As fall approached, I was debating: leave it on the vine so folks could see how a gourd dries, or remove it and bring it closer to the library to a flower bed so inquisitive minds could more easily be instructed on the drying process?

The dilemma was taken out of my hands when some misguided soul and minor criminal stole the library's one and only Marten House Gourd.

Before I called the marshal, I did poll the staff. Had any of them harvested the gourd? Had they any suspects? There was one name, but she has no phone book listing, which is why I called the marshal: she had been observed daily by the morning cleaning crew. Every morning she walked her dog past our gourd and let her dog raise its leg on the mulch and vines while she admired the gourd. I'll admit that I turned her in as my number one suspect.

The marshal said he feared that the gourd would be found smashed as stolen pumpkins often are. I had feared it might disappear on Halloween, but it had survived that significant date. I could describe it as a healthy gourd, fully 18" tall, delicate green in color, with a smooth surface perfect for retaining fingerprints of a thief.

I value the dedication and detecting skills of our local police. They are skilled in taking shortcuts across cornfields to apprehend thieves before they disappear into nearby woods. They rescue cats and beleaguered spouses. They take part in drug arrests. They stand beside me while I explain to the teen culprit that it is not acceptable to smear feces over the library's men's restroom and that if said teen ever does it again, I'll ask for police intervention. A few weeks ago at 11:00 p.m., a deputy brought a snare loop to my kitchen and removed a hissing baby opossum (6" long plus 6" pink tail plus little pink feet) from underneath my hutch ('possum had probably been brought in through the double pet door system by my 15-pound male cat and then escaped under the hutch,

there to be observed by my two dachshunds, who awoke me with their find.) I needed a third hand, as a rake and a yardstick were not sufficient to get the culprit out of his place of temporary safety. I was happy to stand by wringing my hands and holding a flashlight—have you ever tried to do both at the same time?—while the deputy lay face down on my kitchen floor to snare the critter, escort him out the door and through the fence into the adjoining cornfield. At the end I could only think, “thank goodness I waxed the kitchen floor before going to bed.” Do you know what that officer's navy blue uniform would have looked like otherwise? But, that is a story for another year. I ruefully looked at the wax scuffed by his belt buckle and assorted hardware lining his belt and decided his assistance was well worth every beautiful scuff mark.

All this is just a way of letting you know that the local police are truly great guys who respond when we need them. When we have a stalking or a gun incident, they respond. When we have a wallet stolen or a staff member with a heart incident, they respond. When we have an abandoned child, they respond. When we have a 'possum or a wayward teen or a Missing Marten House Gourd, they respond. They know that when we call, we truly need them, and they respond. Unfortunately, my gourd case is still open. Unresolved.

I have only one decision left—shall I publish in the newspaper the proper way to treat a gourd that is drying? What will happen to my lovely, light green Marten House Gourd when it starts turning tan, then black and white with mold? Will the thief put it out with the trash? I can only hope that he/she/they, thinking the gourd defective, will return the molding gourd to the library where we may spend the winter watching it dry and still use it as an educational tool.

This is the ending to the story, but there is a beginning in August, 1995. That was the year I discovered the Indiana Gourd Society—in a booth in the horticulture building at the Indiana State Fair. I stopped because there was a vest high on the wall and covered with round things—that turned out to be cross sections of luffa gourd. Then we saw the display cases with miniature gourds and jewelry—then we picked up a brochure for the Ohio Gourd Show and drove

*(Continued on page 5)*