

# Reader's

## digest

JULY/AUG 2016

SPECIAL  
BEST OF  
AMERICA  
ISSUE

### BEST STORIES

— in —

# AMERICA

True tales of love, loss,  
serendipity, and adventure

From **THE MOTH AND RD** ... 61

### How to Win the Stuffed Animal

Carny tips from **MENTAL FLOSS** ... 130

### "I'm Totally Going to Die"

A **DRAMA IN REAL LIFE** ... 102

### Meet the Monkey That Picks Our Presidents

From **PSYCHOLOGY TODAY** ... 96

### Our Manners Are Better Than Yours

By **(SOUTHERNER) ROY BLOUNT JR.** ... 15

### 50 States, 50 Secret Facts

An **RD ORIGINAL** ... 112

### When Mark Twain Met Helen Keller

From the book **HELLO GOODBYE HELLO** ... 120

### Show Us Your Flags!

From **RD PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS** ... 90

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# Contents

JULY/AUGUST 2016

## THE BEST OF AMERICA ISSUE

### Cover Story

#### 61 BEST STORIES IN AMERICA

These true tales chosen by our editors from the premier live storytelling group in the country will make you laugh, sigh, and appreciate the real America.

THE MOTH AND *READER'S DIGEST*

### Photo Contest

#### 90 OUR GRAND OLD FLAG

We asked readers to submit photos they took of Old Glory. Here, the Grand Prize winner and four runners-up.

### National Interest

#### 96 WHICH WAY DO I VOTE?

Your new brain is rational. Your old brain is stark-raving chimp!

JOHN D. GARTNER  
FROM *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY*

### Drama in Real Life

#### 102 AUTUMN VEATCH IS FOUND

The plane was a smoldering wreck, and a troubled teen was alone, injured, and lost deep in the Northwestern wilderness.

ANITA BARTHOLOMEW

### Who Knew?

#### 112 50 FACTS FOR 50 STATES

Quick: Where are "idiots" not allowed to vote? (And 49 other odd, outrageous, or revealing tidbits.)

JULIANA LABIANCA

### Book Bonus

#### 120 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Charlie Chaplin and Groucho Marx, Mark Twain and Helen Keller, and other auspicious meetings of American icons.

CRAIG BROWN FROM THE BOOK  
*HELLO GOODBYE HELLO*





4 Editor's Note

6 Letters

Everyday Heroes

**8 The Mother Who Got The Lead Out**

When her family got lead poisoning from the water in Flint, Michigan, LeeAnne Walters went up against the government—and won. ALYSSA JUNG

---

**VOICES & VIEWS**

---

Department of Wit

**15 A Very Civil War**

A transplanted gentleman explains the South's tricky gentility.

ROY BLOUNT JR.

FROM THE BOOK *SAVE ROOM FOR PIE*

Finish This Sentence

**20 The Best Part About Living In My Hometown Is ...**

Words of Lasting Interest

**22 With Liberty And Justice for All**

A professor poses a question that is even more relevant today: How do you teach patriotism?

ROBERT COLES, MD

FROM *READER'S DIGEST*, AUGUST 1995

You Be the Judge

**27 The Case of The Downed Drone**

Should a person have to pay for shooting down a toy aircraft?

VICKI GLEMBOCKI

P. | **46**



---

**READER FAVORITES**

---

- 29 Points to Ponder
- 30 Photo of Lasting Interest
- 32 Life in These United States
- 54 All in a Day's Work
- 101 Laugh Lines
- 110 Laughter, the Best Medicine
- 118 That's Outrageous!
- 135 Word Power
- 138 Humor in Uniform
- 140 Quotable Quotes

PHOTOGRAPH BY CLAIRE BENOIST



ART OF LIVING

35 The Best Summer Vacation Ever!

BETH DREHER

Food

40 Barbecue Is My Truth, And a Paper Plate My Witness

JASON SHEEHAN FROM NPR

Health

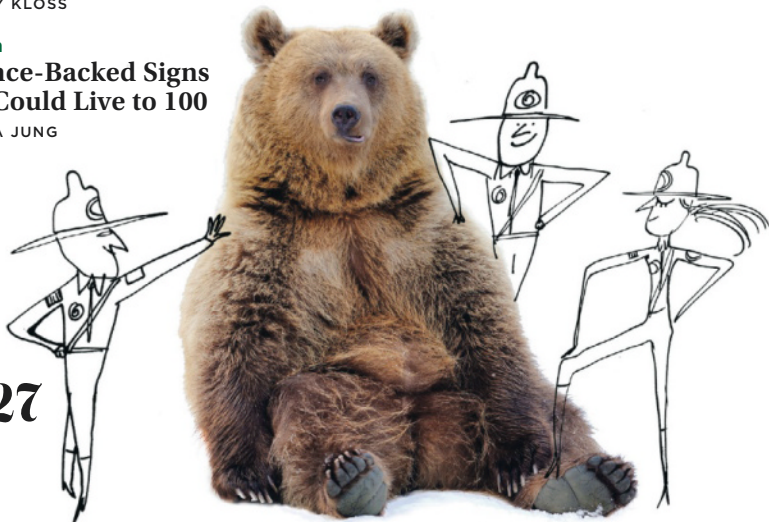
46 8 Things Dermatologists Do Every Summer

KELSEY KLOSS

Health

48 Science-Backed Signs You Could Live to 100

ALYSSA JUNG



WHO KNEW?

127 13 Things Park Rangers Wish You Knew

MICHELLE CROUCH

130 Secrets of the Carnies

LUIS PAEZ-PUMAR  
FROM MENTAL FLOSS

132 Are You an "Average American"?

BRANDON SPEKTOR



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
GLENN GLASSER


AN EVENING WITH  
THE STORYTELLERS,  
AUDIENCE, AND  
VOLUNTEERS OF THE  
MOTH GRAND SLAM  
AT THE CASTRO  
THEATRE IN SAN  
FRANCISCO ON  
APRIL 12, 2016



# Editor's Note

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## The Girl Who Got to Be Editor




ONCE UPON A TIME, a little girl worked at her desk in the purple bedroom of her childhood home in Lyndhurst, Ohio. The girl's homework assignment was to write a "true story." Simple. Yet there she was, fiddling with it long past her bedtime.

So entranced was the girl—changing words to enhance the mood, erasing passages to move the story along, reading out loud to perfect the rhythm—that she jumped when she felt her father's hand on her shoulder. Dad was a business executive. He liked to relax and watch TV at night. It was not his habit to check in on her.

"Daddy?" she said, looking up at him. "I think I just decided what kind of job I want when I grow up. I like to write about things that really happen. I like to move the words around."

"I'm glad to see you take your schoolwork so seriously," he said. "I'm proud of you." And he kissed the top of her head.

Decades later, that girl is offered a top job at *Reader's Digest*, a magazine that has for nearly a century told true stories of lasting interest. As she walks (practically skips!) out of the office that afternoon, she remembers the night in her purple bedroom and decides that for every issue, she will write her editor's note as a story. That way, she will honor the tradition of the magazine and honor her younger self. She texts her mom with the news of her job. "Oh, honey, I wish your father were alive," her mom writes. "He would be so proud."

Starting in September, look for my new column. As I step aside as your editor-in-chief, I slide happily into the role of editor-at-large, where I will still do the work I love, writing about people of interest doing things that matter, working with words. It's been a privilege to connect with the thousands of you who have reached out to me. Let's continue to do so. 



I invite you to e-mail me at [liz@rd.com](mailto:liz@rd.com) and follow me at [facebook.com/lizvaccariello](https://www.facebook.com/lizvaccariello).



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# Letters

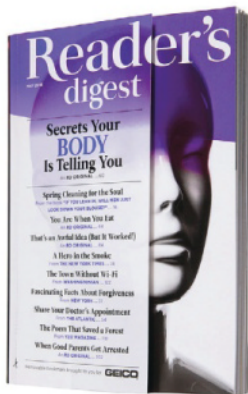
COMMENTS ON THE MAY ISSUE

## Secrets Your Body's Trying to Tell You

I started reading your cover story, and in a compulsively impulsive way, I just had to highlight one tip after another. Thanks for the wealth of healthy ideas.

SUDEEPA PATHAK,

Williamstown, North Carolina



## Love That Boy

I thoroughly enjoyed the story by Ron Fournier about his son, Tyler, who has Asperger's syndrome. It made me both laugh and cry! The compassion and understanding shown

to Tyler by Presidents George

W. Bush and Bill

Clinton was astounding.

Thank you for such heartwarming and informative articles!

BONNIE GOGOLSKI, *Blakely, Pennsylvania*

## Editor's Note

You gave your daughter Olivia a beautiful name for a beautiful child. Only someone with a compassionate heart could relate to the bison she saw at Yellowstone Park and then burst into tears when she saw bison on the menu at a restaurant. God bless her. SUZI MEGLES, *Lakewood, Ohio*

## 13 Odd Things That Happened on Friday the 13th

I can say that I personally enjoy Friday the 13th. My favorite number is 13, and I am 13 years old. To whoever is stressing out about Friday the 13th: Keep calm and move on.

A. M., *via e-mail*

## That's an Awful Idea!

It absolutely does make a difference for doctors to admit they have made a mistake. I suffered a shattered forehead and broke both bones in my right forearm and both of my legs in a car accident. After my second surgery, my orthopedic surgeon looked me in the eyes and said, "I owe you an apology. I missed the fact that you had an exact break. We'll have to take you back into surgery tomorrow. I'm sorry. I honestly made a mistake."

Not only did I not sue him, but I never considered it. **K. N., Wickes, Arkansas**

## When Good Parents Get Arrested

When I was a child living in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, we ran free from morning to night in the summer. We rode our bicycles on the battlefield roads, walked home ten blocks alone, and went trick-or-treating in the dark. No one called the police or considered our parents bad. It was the norm. It's too bad that people today think children can no longer do this safely.

**PATRICIA NEWTON,**  
*Gettysburg, Pennsylvania*

I let my two older children go out to play unsupervised. My tagalong baby, born almost two decades later, in '80, had to be watched when outside. I can see the difference in them to this day.

**L. C., via e-mail**

## Why Cats Don't Forgive

In your May issue, you show Grumpy Cat at the beginning of "Why Cats Don't Forgive." In the caption next to her, it says, "Grumpy Cat has never forgotten the time you shoed him

off the couch." As a Grumpy Cat fan, I feel the need to inform you that Grumpy Cat is a she. This incorrect pronoun may cause her to become, well, grumpy.

**CATHY WHEELDEN,** *Westbrook, Maine*

## You Be the Judge: The Case of the Monkey Selfie

Has this country gone totally off the deep end? No wonder our court system is so clogged. This case [about whether a monkey owned the rights to a photo] should never have made it past the courtroom trash can. What next? Animals' right to vote?

**JOHN T. WILEY,** *Llano, Texas*

## Laughter, the Best Medicine

Yesterday, at a nursing conference, I heard a minister share that he loved reading *Laughter, the Best Medicine* in *RD*; his message to us healers was to laugh every day and share that laughter. I decided to start a subscription to *RD* when I got home. That night, a free sample *RD* from the mail was on my kitchen table! God certainly works in mysterious ways. And yes, I love my first issue.

**JACQUELINE BROWN,** *Monticello, Indiana*

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# EVERYDAY HEROES



LeeAnne Walters made the whole nation take notice when her family's water was poisoned

## The Mother Who Got the Lead Out

BY ALYSSA JUNG

 **SOMETHING STRANGE** was happening inside LeeAnne Walters's Flint, Michigan, home. During the summer of 2014, twins Gavin and Garrett, then three, each broke out in a skin rash that wouldn't go away. By November, 14-year-old J.D. had stomach pains so severe, he couldn't climb the stairs. He was out of school for a month, but three ultrasounds, a colonoscopy, and a CT scan found nothing wrong.

Daughter Kaylie, then 18, lost clumps of her long brown hair in the shower. LeeAnne and her husband,

Dennis, both 37, lost hair and suffered rashes, dizziness, and headaches. LeeAnne even lost her eyelashes. "We had all these puzzle pieces but still couldn't figure out what was going on," says LeeAnne, a former medical assistant.

By winter, the family's health problems were getting worse, especially those of Gavin, whose immune system had been weak since birth. Every time he bathed, his skin turned scaly and red, and he screamed in pain when LeeAnne rubbed lotion on him. He also stopped growing. ➔

HAIR AND MAKEUP: NICOLE CORFIELD





*In her efforts to get to the truth, LeeAnne turned into a “full-time citizen scientist,” she says.*

One day, LeeAnne turned on the tap and brown water flowed out. Worried that the water was tainted, the family began using bottled water, 40 gallons a week, for cooking, drinking, and bathing.

In January 2015, the city of Flint sent out an advisory stating that the water supply—which had been switched, in a cost-cutting measure, from the Detroit water system to the Flint River the previous spring—contained high levels of trihalomethanes, the by-product of a chemical used to disinfect the water. The notice warned that elderly people and those with compromised immune systems might be at increased risk for liver, kidney, and nervous system problems but emphasized that the water was otherwise safe to drink.

Alarmed, the self-proclaimed “stay-at-home mom turned water warrior” researched the water supply and scoured the Internet to compile a fact sheet that she distributed to city officials, listing the side effects of exposure to trihalomethanes. Then she urged her neighbors to attend city council meetings, where they held up bottles of their discolored water and shared their health problems, including vision and memory loss. Still, officials insisted the water was safe to

drink. So LeeAnne demanded that the city test her water. The results were disturbing. The trihalomethanes were the least of her problems.

“I got a frantic call from a city official telling me not to drink the water,” she says. The tests indicated that the lead levels in her water were nearly

seven times the legal amount. And although her neighbors also complained of tainted water, LeeAnne says the city maintained her plumbing was the culprit.

LeeAnne immediately had her children tested for lead. All the kids showed lead exposure; Gavin had full-blown lead poison-

ing. “I had a nervous breakdown,” she says. “Then I got back to work.” She requested Flint’s water quality reports from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and discovered that the city wasn’t applying the proper corrosion control standards to its pipes; the standards prevent the metal in pipes from leaching into the water.

In March, a follow-up test of LeeAnne’s water showed lead levels nearly 27 times higher than the EPA’s threshold. The next month, the EPA investigated. It concluded LeeAnne’s pipes could not be responsible for the high lead levels, since they were plastic. The agency found that the ➤

“*Then it hit me. It’s not just happening to my family like they’ve been saying.*”



# WHAT NAGGING KNUCKLES?



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lead was probably in the city's pipes, which carried water to communities.

A sympathetic EPA manager connected LeeAnne with Virginia Tech professor Marc Edwards, an expert in lead corrosion. A team conducted independent water tests in more than 250 Flint homes. In September, the Virginia Tech lab released a report that concluded the Flint River water was 19 times more corrosive than was the Detroit water. The lab reported that one in six Flint homes showed elevated lead levels exceeding the EPA's threshold.

"That's when it hit me," says LeeAnne. "This isn't just happening to me like they've been saying."

Still, officials failed to grasp the magnitude of the problem. Michigan governor Rick Snyder insisted, "The water leaving Flint's drinking water system is safe to drink."

Thanks, in part, to LeeAnne's outreach, the press seized the issue, and the governor eventually conceded the water was unsafe. He ordered that Flint's water supply be switched back to Detroit's and called in National Guard troops to deliver bottled water, filters, and water-testing kits to residents. In Washington, President Barack Obama declared a state of emergency in Flint and ordered federal aid to help the city recover.

Since the story of Flint exploded, elevated lead levels have been found in Ohio, North Carolina, and Colorado. *USA Today* reported that an

analysis of EPA data showed 350 schools and day-care centers nationwide failed lead tests 470 times from 2012 to 2015. In April, criminal charges were filed against two Michigan state officials and one Flint city official related to the water crisis. As for the politician who presided over Flint, Mayor Dayne Walling, he lost his reelection bid. The new mayor, Karen Weaver, declared a "man-made disaster" and launched a \$55 million plan to replace lead-tainted pipes.

Today, LeeAnne is the cofounder of C Do (Community Development Organization of Flint), which raises money to help victims. Although her family now splits time between Flint and Norfolk, Virginia, where Dennis is stationed in the Navy, it continues to buy bottled water—even in Virginia—and follow a five-minute-shower rule. "The kids always ask if it's clean or 'yucky poison water,'" says LeeAnne. While their hair has "slowly but surely" grown back, several family members still occasionally suffer from rashes, headaches, and dizziness. Gavin weighs just 35 pounds, while his twin weighs 56.

LeeAnne doesn't call her actions heroic ("People had a right to know," she says), but Professor Edwards disagrees. "LeeAnne's a national treasure," he told *RD*. "She was the irresistible force that brought attention to this. My students nicknamed her Mama Grizzly because a mother bear always protects her cubs." **R**





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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department  
of Wit

## A Very Civil War

BY ROY BLOUNT JR.  
FROM THE BOOK  
SAVE ROOM FOR PIE



ROY BLOUNT JR. is a humorist, a sportswriter, and, most important, a gourmand.

☛ COME ON IN! Busy? Me? No! Sit right down here in my favorite chair and keep me up all night and drink all my liquor. Can I run out and kill our last chicken and fry her up for you? No? Wouldn't take a minute. Are you sure? Oh, don't let the chicken hear you. She'll be so disappointed.

What can I do to make you comfortable?

You want me to tell you about Southern hospitality?

Well.

It is true that I have long lived largely in the North but am Southern. So I have a certain perspective. I have never gotten over the sight of whatever it was that was served to me as fried chicken one night in Akron.

"This is fried chicken?" I asked the waiter. He looked at it. "I think so," he said. I rest my case. But that doesn't mean ➤➤

there is no such thing as Northern hospitality. True, it is possible to meet with a less than heartwarming reception up north.

I remember one Sunday morning in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I went to a cafeteria to get coffee and a doughnut before meeting a friend.

I took a ticket from a ticket machine, then ordered from the woman behind the steam table, who was gazing with angst down into a vat of scrambled eggs. I was tempted to tell her I agreed that scrambled eggs should never be assembled in vat-size proportions, but she seemed to be thinking about something even worse. Without speaking or even looking up, she served me and punched my ticket to show how much I owed. I then presented the ticket to the woman at the cash register.

Everything seemed to be in order. I wasn't expecting anything more than a smooth transaction, but I was expecting that, a smooth transaction.

The woman at the cash register looked at my ticket, then raised her eyes as though in supplication. "Jaysus Murray and Jeosuph," she cried, pursing her lips unevenly like Humphrey Bogart. "Why do all you people come in on weekends?"

That was 50 years ago. To this day, I don't know what was wrong.

But I wouldn't call that an example of Northern hospitality, exclusively.

In Nashville, Tennessee, I cultivated a hamburger joint for weeks, ordering the same thing every time. Finally, I came in and said, "The usual."

"You mean 'the regular,'" the counter person, named Opaline, said.

I thought I meant "the usual." I thought I was the regular. But I didn't argue. "The regular, then," I said.

"In your case," she said, "what's that?"

Still, Southern

hospitality is an institution. Before air-conditioning, climate was a factor. In the South, people were more likely to be sitting out on the porch when folks showed up. You couldn't pretend not to be home when there you were, sitting on the porch. You could pretend to be dead, but then you couldn't fan yourself.

Even today, rhetoric is a factor. The salesperson in Atlanta may give you just as glazed a look as the one in Boston. But the former is more likely to say, "These overalls are going to make your young one look cute as a doodlebug's butt." Southerners still derive energy from figures of speech, as plants do from photosynthesis.

“*This is fried chicken?*”  
*I asked the waiter.*  
*“I think so,”*  
*he said.*”





— MAKING THE MOST OF —

# YOUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

## GET PROACTIVE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Having proactive discussions with your doctor can help you better manage your health. Certain chronic conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes and chronic heart disease can increase your risk for pneumococcal disease. Being prepared to have a conversation with your doctor can help you make the most out of your next doctor's appointment.



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04/16

## DOCTOR'S APPT. TIP SHEET

- Bring a list of the medications you are on
- Write down any questions you have
- Talk to your doctor about whether you are at risk for pneumococcal disease
- Have your calendar or planner ready and be prepared to schedule your next appointment
- Remember to bring this list with you to your next doctor's visit

Northern hospitality can be summed up thusly: You walk into a dry cleaner's for the 30th time, and the proprietor, recognizing you at last, says, "You again!" If you are willing to accept that he is never going to welcome you, then you're welcome. The advantage of this form of Northern hospitality is that it works irritation right into the equation, up front. Let's face it: People irritate one another. Especially hosts and guests.

Irritation is a part of Southern hospitality too. Say you run into a Southerner where you live in the North. And you take a thorn out of his paw or something, and he declares, "I want you to come visit us! And sleep in my bed! Me and Mama will take the cot! And bring your whole family!"

"Yes, do come," says the Southern wife. "We would love it."

"And I want you to hold my little baby daughter on your lap!" her husband cries. "And Mama will cook up a whole lot of groceries, and we'll all eat ourselves half to death!"

And sure enough, you show up. And the Southerners swing wide the portal, blink a little, and then recognize you and start hollering, "You came! Hallelujah! Sit down here! How long can you stay? Oh no, you got to stay longer than a week; it'll take that long just to eat the old milk cow. Junior, run out

back and kill Louisa. Milk her first.

"Here, let us carry all your bags—oh, isn't this a nice trunk—upstairs and ..."

You are a little disappointed to note that there is no veranda.

"Oh, we lost our veranda in the Waw. Which Waw? Why, the Waw with you all. But that's all right."

And you are prevailed upon to stay a couple of weeks, and you yield to the Southerners' insistence that you eat three huge meals a day and several snacks to "tide you over"—and finally you override the Southerners' pleas that you stay around till the scuppernongs get ripe, and they say, "Well, I guess if you got your heart set on running off and leaving us," in a put-out tone of voice, and they pack up a big lunch of pecan pie and collard greens for you to eat on the way home, and after you go through about an hour and a half of waving and repeating that you really do have to go and promising to come back, soon, and to bring more relatives next time, you go back north.

And the Southerners close their door. And they slump back up against it. And they look at each other wide-eyed. And they say, shaking their heads over the simple-mindedness of Yankees, "They came!"

"And like to never left!"

"And ate us out of house and home!"



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<sup>^^</sup>Pharmacy Times Surveys, Acid Reducer/Heartburn Categories 2006 - 2015.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

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hallmarks of small-town  
Wisconsin.

**RACHEL GINTNER**

La Puente, CA

Walking around the  
Pacific Palms Resort  
**trail**

with my sister  
and dog.

**JULIE M.**

How much it has  
changed

**for the  
better**

in the past 15 years.

**MARY BARNETT**

Kotzebue, AK

Having  
**65 days**

without the sun  
setting.

**CARL JENNINGS**

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Owensboro, KY

**Bourbon,** basketball, BBQ, and burgoo.

ROB WHITTINGHILL

Little Rock, AR

Douglas, GA

**Sweet tea**

and cold AC.

CINDY MUSIC-PAPIERZ

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An eminent professor poses a question that is even more relevant today: How do you teach patriotism?

# With Liberty and Justice for All

BY ROBERT COLES, MD

FROM *READER'S DIGEST*, AUGUST 1995

MISS AVERY, my fifth-grade teacher, was a Vermont farm girl who was brought up to work hard and make something of herself. She let us know she wanted to impart to us the values her parents had given her. I remember her exhortations: Be diligent, a word she favored; be conscientious, a word she made sure we knew how to spell; be considerate of others. She also insisted we learn the meaning of a noun she liked to use, a long one, we thought: *kindheartedness*. And all year, Miss Avery kept on the blackboard this aphorism: “Have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never tries, a touch that never hurts.”

Never? I was skeptical that I could meet such standards. Miss Avery reminded us that we all slip, but that direction mattered: a goal to pursue, values to have and to uphold—in her phrase, “a larger vision.”

Those three words were tethered by her to something concrete that stood before us every day: the flag of the United States of America. She was constantly telling each of us, “This is your country.” She took pains to explain what democracy meant, what our Founding Fathers had in mind when they fought for independence. Most of us were nine years old, but she wanted us to understand what we would inherit: the sovereign

privilege and responsibility to vote, the bedrock of our participation in a larger community.

It wasn’t that she wanted us to avoid taking a candid look at America’s past and present life—quite the contrary. We spent a lot of time learning about the mistakes and injustices committed over the generations. We learned about slavery and the long struggle of Negroes (that was the word we used then) for their rights. Indeed, 20 years before the civil rights movement, Miss Avery was reminding us that “equal justice under law,” those words embedded in the marble of the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington, DC, amounted not to a description of what is but a call to what ought to be and hence a call to action.

Every day, we sang our national anthem, and every day, we proudly saluted our nation’s flag. Every day, too, we had a history lesson right

after that exercise in allegiance. It was then that a thoughtful and boldly independent-minded teacher made us turn from a glib recital of loyalty to something else.

Miss Avery asked that we put ourselves in the shoes of the presidents and other leaders whose achievements and misdeeds we were studying. We were asked to take sides and argue a point



ROBERT COLES, MD, is an author and was a professor at Harvard Medical School.

of view before our classmates—with respect, say, to the Revolutionary War (the Tories vs. the Concord and Lexington farmers who stood up to the British) or the Civil War (the South’s planters vs. the abolitionists of New England). By being asked to think about what is right and wrong and how we ought to live our lives, we were making a leap of the moral imagination.

These days, I often find myself wondering how to ask my own children or my students to think about America. In school after school, I notice classrooms without the American flag. Many teachers tell me that the salute to the flag never takes place. Some of them say they abhor what one called reflexive patriotism, an unqualified hurrah to a nation.

I respect holding a skepticism of unblinking avowals. Children do need encouragement to sift and sort, to be wary of what strikes them as phony or hypocritical. But children also need convictions—something and someone to trust, to hold up as worthy of admiration.

Moreover, we are all Americans. This is our country, and there is much in its history for us to contemplate with pride: the sanctuary, for instance, offered to millions of orphans from various storms who

have found so much that is sustaining.

Yet, as Miss Avery showed us, there is a way to pay homage to a country while at the same time reserving the right to register disapproval, even to cry out at wrongdoing. When we spoke of “liberty and justice for all,” she was quick to remind us of the

“  
***Children need convictions—something and someone to trust, to hold up as worthy.***  
 ”

difference between an idealized statement and the harsher reality for many Americans. No question, I have been in classrooms where ironies are not acknowledged, and at the other extreme, I have sat in rooms where only blemishes are dwelt upon. Our democratic principles—the things

that enable the full and free discussion taking place—are ignored, as if the Bill of Rights in all its glory is to be as overlooked as the flag.

It is important that we and our children keep in mind not only the errors made in our nation’s past but also the social, economic, and racial struggles waged with success that have led to a decent and free life for millions of us. We have good reason to want our children to appreciate this country and to hail the flag as its symbol, even as we expect them to become citizens unafraid to look squarely at what still needs to be done if a nation’s ideals are to become its everyday reality. **R**



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Stomach pain? Bloating?  
Could it be

# EPI?

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Insufficiency

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- **Gas and bloating**
- **Stomach pain**

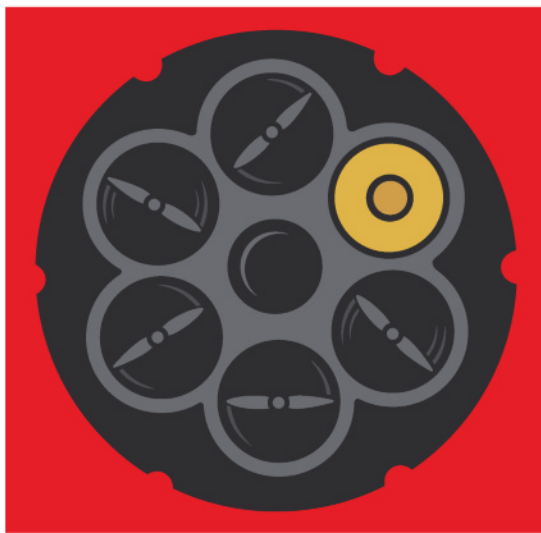
But here's a great reason to talk about your symptoms: **EPI is manageable.** To learn more, go to [coulditbeEPI.com](http://coulditbeEPI.com). While you're there, take the symptom quiz, print it out, and bring it to your doctor. It's an easy way to start the conversation about ALL your symptoms.

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A LID ON IT.**  
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Should a person have to pay for shooting down a toy aircraft?

## The Case Of the Downed Drone

BY VICKI GLEBOCKI

WHEN BRETT MCBAY'S kids heard a loud engine on November 28, 2014, they thought someone was riding a motorcycle. After investigating, they realized the noise was coming from a drone. The device, which resembled a toy helicopter, appeared to be flying low and slow over their property—a secluded farm—in Modesto, California. McBay's young son grabbed his pellet gun and shot at the drone. It crashed to the ground.

McBay says he and his kids assumed it had had a camera: "Our concern was that it was [being flown by] a pedophile or a burglar." When he and his son walked to the crash site, they came upon their neighbor's

son, Eric Joe, a 30-year-old from San Francisco who was visiting his parents for Thanksgiving.

"Did you shoot that thing?" Joe says he asked McBay.

"Yeah," McBay replied, according to Joe. "Did we get it?"

Joe had built the hexacopter from scratch and brought it to Modesto to fly over his parents' property, a ten-acre farm. It crashed 200 feet from the road that separates Joe's parents' property from the McBays', according to Joe. After Joe explained that the device was a hexacopter, McBay apologized and offered to pay for any damage.

At 2:01 p.m. that day, Joe sent an e-mail to McBay that itemized the ➤➤

repair costs: a total of \$700. A little over an hour later, McBay wrote back, calling it “excessive.” “Perhaps in [San Francisco] it’s normal for folks to have drones hovering over their property, but we live in the country for privacy,” he wrote. “I will be willing to split the cost with you, but next time let us know [you’re] testing surveillance equipment in our area.”

Joe wasn’t assuaged. Replying to McBay’s e-mail, Joe clarified two points: that there had been no camera on the hexacopter and that the drone’s GPS showed it had been shot down while flying above Joe’s property, not McBay’s. Joe wrote, “I must insist on full payment for equipment you damaged.”

Three minutes later, McBay wrote back: “Your facts are incorrect. I’m considering the matter now closed.”

Finally, on March 17, 2015, Joe filed a suit against McBay in the small claims division of the Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus. Joe asked for the full cost to replace the drone, \$1,789.57. He explained that he no longer had the time to rebuild the drone and felt “Mr. McBay should compensate me with an assembled, comparable drone.”

*Should McBay pay to replace a drone his son shot down because he thought that it was flying over his family’s property? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

In January 2015, two months before Joe filed his suit, California state senator Hannah-Beth Jackson introduced a bill that would extend a state law preventing trespassing by people to include trespassing by recreational drones flying below 350 feet over private property without permission. Gov. Jerry Brown hadn’t weighed in on the bill before McBay and Joe had their hearing on May 19, 2015. Even though the parties disagreed about whether the drone had flown over McBay’s farm, this didn’t affect the court’s decision. The judge ruled that “Mr. McBay acted unreasonably in having his son shoot the drone down regardless of whether it was over his property or not.” McBay was ordered to pay Joe \$850 in damages. In September, Governor Brown vetoed the drone bill. **R**

Agree? Disagree? Sound off at [rd.com/judge](http://rd.com/judge).

# Points to Ponder

SOURCE PHOTO: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



**SCRIPTURE SAYS YOU SHOULD** put aside childish things when you grow up. I take that to mean willfulness, self-centeredness, and things like that—not imagination, creativity, and joyful curiosity.

**DICK VAN DYKE,**  
*actor*, in his memoir *Keep Moving*

**DRAWING HELPS ME** remember the ideas I am having. I certainly think the pencil is one of the most powerful tools for invention ever ... I pick one up and I feel like inventing.

**ADAM SAVAGE,**  
*industrial designer*, in *Popular Science*

Someone asked me the other day, “Do you stare at your trophies when you walk in your house?” ... Actually, no ... If you’re always looking behind you, you’re never going to see the competition ahead.

**SERENA WILLIAMS,** *tennis player*, in *Fast Company*

**I DON’T THINK** there is any book that can’t teach you something, even if it is how not to tell a story.

**MARY HIGGINS CLARK,**  
*mystery novelist*, in the book *By the Book*

**THERE IS NO** greater threat to the critics and cynics and fearmongers than those of us who are willing to fall because we have learned how to rise.

**BRENÉ BROWN, PHD,**  
*vulnerability researcher*,  
in her book *Rising Strong*

## WITTY WISDOM

A real patriot is the fellow who gets a parking ticket and rejoices that the system works.

**BILL VAUGHAN,** *author*, in *Forbes*

Meditation always starts with deep breathing and ends with me adding new people to my enemies list.

**@ANYLAURIE16 (LAURIE KILMARTIN),**  
*comedian*



**PHOTO**  
OF LASTING  
INTEREST

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### **Astonishing America**

When winter winds pour in, the Great Lakes are easily mistaken for oceans. Living near Lake Erie, photographer Dave Sandford has been making a visual study of the liquid peaks that result when gale-force gusts sculpt surface water into towering waves up to 25 feet high. Because Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes, it is also the most temperamental; of the 8,000 shipwrecks estimated to speckle the lakes, a fourth are thought to lie below Erie.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE SANDFORD**







# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



*"This is what happens when you ignore something for a long time, Greg."*

**WHEN I WAS GROWING UP**, my mother's best dish was store-bought Entenmann's chocolate chip cookies.

**MICHAEL IAN BLACK**,  
from *Navel Gazing* (Gallery Books)

**MY THREE-YEAR-OLD** daughter stuck out her hand and said, "Look at the fly I killed, Mommy." Since she was eating a juicy pickle at the time, I thrust her contaminated hands under the faucet and washed them with

antibacterial soap. After sitting her down to finish her pickle, I asked, with a touch of awe, "How did you kill that fly all by yourself?"

Between bites, she said, "I hit it with my pickle."

**CINDY YATES**, *Mill Valley, California*

**I'D NEVER HAD SURGERY**, and I was nervous. "This is a very simple, non-invasive procedure," the anesthesiologist reassured me. I felt better, until ...

“Heck,” he continued, “you have a better chance of dying from the anesthesia than the surgery itself.”

T. F., via Internet

**MY HUSBAND** was waterskiing when he fell into the river. As the boat circled to pick him up, he noticed a hunter sitting in a duck boat in the

reeds. My husband put his hands in the air and joked, “Don’t shoot!”

The hunter responded, “Don’t quack.”

KATIE O’CONNELL, *Warrenville, Illinois*

Got a funny story about friends or family? It could be worth \$100. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).



## CANDIDATES SAY WHAT?!

As we head toward the presidential conventions, we’re very disappointed in the quality of insults being bandied about by the candidates. When it comes to name-calling, our politicians could learn a thing or two from our friends abroad, who have made slurring opponents an art form.

“The right honorable and learned gentleman has twice crossed the floor of this House, each time leaving behind a trail of slime.”

**DAVID LLOYD GEORGE**,  
former British prime minister

“He has been going around the country deliberately stirring up apathy.”

**WILLIAM WHITELAW**,  
British politician

“[He clings] to data the way a drunkard clings to lampposts.”

**PAOLO ROMANI**,  
former Italian prime minister

“She probably thinks *Sinai* is the plural of *sinus*.”

**JONATHAN AITKEN**,  
British member of Parliament

“The House has noticed the prime minister’s remarkable transformation in the last few weeks from Stalin to Mr. Bean.”

**VINCENT CABLE**,  
British politician

“The honorable member is living proof that a pig’s bladder on a stick can be elected to Parliament.”

**TONY BANKS**,  
British politician

“I don’t want to be rude, but really, you have the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk.”

**NIGEL FARAGE**,  
British politician

“He occasionally stumbled over the truth but hastily picked himself up and hurried on as if nothing had happened.”

**WINSTON CHURCHILL**,  
former British prime minister

“He’s like a shiver waiting for a spine.”

**PAUL KEATING**,  
former Australian prime minister



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# ART of LIVING



Whether you travel by land, air, or sea, make the best of your break with these brilliant tips

## The Best Summer Vacation Ever!

BY BETH DREHER

## Cruise the Last Frontier

■ **BOOK:** An Alaska voyage. For an unexpected summer vacation, hit the cool waters of the Gulf of Alaska to spot moose, observe glaciers, and visit old gold rush towns. Several large cruise companies, including Princess Cruises, Holland America, and Celebrity, offer excursions for as little as \$599 for a seven-day trip.

■ **PACK:** Duct tape. This strong and supersticky tape is a cruiser's best friend, according to Linda Coffman on [cruisediva.com](http://cruisediva.com). Use it to repair a broken suitcase, close the gaps in the curtains to keep morning light at bay, strip lint from your formal dress, and secure drawers that open when the ship is rolling along.

"There are literally thousands of uses for it," Coffman writes.

■ **AVOID:** Nausea. Reserve a room on the lower decks in the center of the ship to prevent seasickness. If you start to feel queasy, reach for the motion sickness remedy that cruise ship crew members and scuba divers swear by: a green apple.

■ **BEWARE:** The cruise line's travel insurance. The coverage is important—it will cover medical needs, lost baggage, and flight delays—but you'll usually save money by buying it from a third party such as RoamRight or Global Alert. Get quotes from multiple vendors.

■ **DOWNLOAD:** Your cruise line's app. Many companies, such as Carnival

and Royal Caribbean, have free apps that provide daily menus, a ship map, and information about your onboard account balance and your next port. For a small fee, you can enable the app's messaging function, which allows you to call or text anyone on board for the duration of the trip.

## Explore a National Park Bonanza

■ **VISIT:** Southern Utah. Fly into Las Vegas, then leave the Strip behind as you drive east toward the Beehive State, home to five national parks. Utah's southern half is a nature lover's paradise, from the vast canyons and striated red rocks of Zion National Park to the unusual rock formations called hoodoos in Bryce Canyon National Park. "These high deserts are one of the unsung natural glories of our country," says travel expert Reid Bramblett, founder of the trip-planning site [reidsguides.com](http://reidsguides.com).

■ **BUY:** A parks pass. Entrance to Zion and Bryce will run you \$30 per vehicle, and other parks carry similar fees. To save money, you may be better off buying the America the Beautiful–National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass for \$80. The pass, available at [nps.gov](http://nps.gov), gives you access to more than 2,000 recreational sites for a year.

■ **BEWARE:** Dehydration. Temperatures here can top 100 degrees in summer, meaning your body can lose cups of water from just sitting



in the shade. Pack accordingly: You'll need to drink half a quart to a quart of fluids for each hour you hike.

■ **PACK:** Panty hose. These mesh leggings can remove cactus spines from skin and serve as a fishing lure or a pot scrubber on camping trips.

## Get a Powerful Free Lesson

■ **VISIT:** Washington, DC. In the typical metropolis, the top tourist destinations can cost a fortune. But in the nation's capital, entrance to nearly every museum—including the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and the National Gallery of Art—and historic public monuments (think the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument) is free. And with access to ancient dinosaur bones at the National Museum of Natural History, fuzzy pandas at the National Zoo, and (for a small fee) a giant carousel at the National Mall, this city of nearly 700,000 people is surprisingly family friendly.

■ **DOWNLOAD:** Maps you can use without Wi-Fi. To navigate a city using your phone even when you don't have service, take advantage of Google Maps's new off-line feature. While you have Wi-Fi, use the Google Maps app to search for the city you'll be exploring (Washington, DC, for example). On both iOS and Android devices, you can download the city map to an off-line area and save it to My Places in the Google

Maps menu. (Search for instructions online for your specific phone model.)

■ **BEWARE:** Advance ticket sales and odd hours. Some of DC's most popular sites, such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and Ford's Theatre, require timed tickets. They're free, but supplies can run out quickly.



■ **BUY:** An upgraded airport experience. You may be aware that many airlines sell a one-day pass to their airport lounges for around \$50, which could give you access to free Wi-Fi, food and alcohol for purchase, and showers. But here's a bonus for families: The fee often includes entry for children or guests.

## Seek Out a Unique Beach

■ **VISIT:** Oregon. For sun and fun away from the crowded beaches of Florida, check out the Oregon coast and its 363 miles of gorgeous shoreline, stretching from the Columbia River south to the redwood forests of California. Every beach, dotted with boulders and fringed with grassy dunes, is public and free. "The coast is the perfect place to watch sea lions sun themselves or simply see the mighty Pacific waves crash in the sunset followed by a seafood feast in one of the bustling fishing communities tucked between the coves," says Bramblett.

■ **SLEEP:** Next to a lighthouse. Imagine yourself an ancient mariner when you book a room overlooking the Pacific Ocean at the Heceta Head Lighthouse Bed and Breakfast in Yachats, Oregon. The working lighthouse, which dates to 1894, casts a bright beam 21 miles out to sea, making it the brightest light on the Oregon coast. The cliff-top rooms at the Light Keeper's home nearby aren't cheap—you'll shell

out up to \$385 for a weekend night during peak season (price includes a seven-course breakfast).

■ **BEWARE:** Dangerous currents. Unless you love cold water (or wear a wet suit), you may not want to venture into the sea off the Oregon coast, even during the summer. But if you do, be prepared for rip currents. To get out of a rip current, don't panic, warns Tom Gill, a spokesman for the U.S. Lifesaving Association. Swim parallel to the beach until you're no longer being pulled out to sea, then swim diagonally toward the shore.

■ **BRING:** Baby powder. Use a generous amount of baby powder to remove sand from your hands, feet, or hair. The powder, usually made of talc or cornstarch, quickly absorbs moisture, allowing sand to fall off easily.

■ **PACK:** Binoculars. July and August aren't peak gray whale migration season, but there's still a good chance you could catch a glimpse of some of the 200 whales that spend the summers off the Oregon coast. For the best view, follow these tips from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: On a calm day, find a high viewpoint, such as Ecola State Park. Search the medium distance for a puff of white mist. Then raise your binoculars. If you see a long gray mass, you've just spotted a whale. **R**

Sources: Travel expert Reid Bramblett, founder of [reidsguides.com](http://reidsguides.com); [backpacker.com](http://backpacker.com); *Last-Minute Travel Secrets* by Joey Green; [independenttraveler.com](http://independenttraveler.com); [ncl.com](http://ncl.com); [roomright.com](http://roomright.com); [visitheoregoncoast.com](http://visitheoregoncoast.com); [cruisediva.com](http://cruisediva.com)



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# Barbecue Is My Truth, and A Paper Plate My Witness

BY JASON SHEEHAN FROM NPR

☞ I BELIEVE IN BARBECUE—as soul food and comfort food and health food, as a cuisine of both solace and celebration. When I'm feeling good, I want barbecue. When I'm feeling bad, I just want barbecue more.

I believe in barbecue in all its regional derivations and ethnic translations, in forms that range from white-tablecloth presentations of cunningly sauced *costillas* to Chinese take-out spareribs that stain your fingers red to the most authentic product of the tar-paper rib shacks of the Deep South. I believe that as with sunshine and great sex, no day is bad that has barbecue in it.

I believe in the artistic genius of generations of pit men who worked



in relative obscurity to keep alive the craft of slow smoking as it's been practiced for as long as there's been fire. A cook must have an intimate understanding of his work: the physics of fire and convection, the hard science of meat and heat and smoke—and then forget it all to achieve a gut-level, Zen instinct.

I believe that barbecue drives culture, not the other way around. Some of the first blows struck for equality and civil rights in the Deep South were made not in courtrooms or in schools or on buses but in barbecue shacks. Certain dining rooms, backyards, and roadhouse juke joints in the South were integrated long before any other public places were.

I believe that good barbecue requires no decor. Paper plates are OK. And paper napkins. And plastic utensils. And I believe that any place with a menu longer than a single page (or better yet, just a chalkboard) is coming dangerously close to putting on airs.

I believe that good barbecue needs sides the way good blues needs rhythm and that there is only one

rule: Serve whatever you like, but whatever you serve, make it fresh. Have someone's mama in the back doing the "taters" and hush puppies and sweet tea because Mama will know what she's doing—or at least know better than some assembly-line worker bagging up powdered mashed potatoes by the ton.

I believe that proper barbecue ought to come in significant portions. Skinny people can eat barbecue and do, but the kitchen should cook for a fat man who hasn't eaten since breakfast. My leftovers should last for days.

I believe that if you don't get sauce under your nails when you're eating, you're doing it wrong. I believe that if you don't ruin your shirt, you're not trying hard enough.

I believe—I *know*—there is no such thing as too much barbecue. Good, bad, or in between, old-fashioned pit smoked or high-tech and modern—it doesn't matter. Existing without gimmickry, barbecue is truth; it is history and home, and the only thing I don't believe is that I'll ever get enough. **R**

NPR (MAY 29, 2006), COPYRIGHT © 2006 BY JASON SHEEHAN, NPR.ORG.



## RIDDLE ME THIS

There are only four root words in the English language that begin with *dw*. Can you name them?

ANSWER: Dwell, dwarf, dwindle, and dweeb





# 8 Things Dermatologists Do Every Summer

BY KELSEY KLOSS

Insider advice for glowing, low-cancer-risk skin

## 1 LOSE OLD LAYERS

Twice a week, scrub skin with a brush, an exfoliating scrub, or a salicylic acid wash to brighten it and allow lotions and serums to absorb more deeply. If your skin becomes irritated, exfoliate just once a week.

## 2 CLEANSE WITHOUT CREAM

As the weather warms, switch from a cream cleanser to a gel variety, which is lightweight yet still soothing. If you have oily skin, try a foam cleanser. Be sure to wash your face every night in the summer: More

time outside means more exposure to harmful air pollutants, which can attach to moisturizer and makeup and exacerbate signs of aging.

**3 LIGHTEN THE LOTION TOO** Heavy creams contain lipids that can cause clogged pores and pimples in more humid months. Instead, opt for serums, lotions, or hydrating gels.

**4 STRATEGIZE SUNSCREEN** In the morning, before you apply your makeup, slather on a sunscreen that is at least SPF 30. Reapply sunscreen every two hours if you're outside. If you're worried about smearing makeup, look for a mineral sunscreen powder that is easy to reapply throughout the day.

**5 CONSIDER WEARABLES** Each inch on a sun hat's rim increases coverage of your face by 10 percent. Exercising outside? Wear sun-protective clothing (look for the ultraviolet protection factor, or UPF, on the label). You cut exposure further by heading out before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

**6 BE WARY OF CLOUDS** Burns can still occur on cloudy days, when cooler air persuades you to skip sunscreen. However, clouds block only about 20 percent of the sun's UV rays. Apply sunscreen as you would on sunny days.

**7 REMEMBER THE SLY SPOTS** A surprising number of skin cancer cases occur behind the ears and on other areas that you may ignore when applying sunscreen. Cover your ears, the tops of your feet, and your hands.

**8 EAT FOR SMOOTHER SKIN** Studies show that loading up on foods high in antioxidants (such as colorful fruits and vegetables, iced green tea, and nuts) and probiotics (such as Greek yogurt with live active cultures and kombucha, a fermented tea) may offer an extra layer of sun protection from within. **R**

Sources: Whitney Bowe, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital; Binh Ngo, MD, an assistant professor of dermatology at Keck Medicine of USC; Doris Day, MD, a dermatologist based in New York City and a clinical associate professor of dermatology at NYU Langone Medical Center; Patricia Farris, MD, a dermatologist and a clinical associate professor at Tulane University



## ALWAYS ...

... Do sober what you said you'd do drunk. That will teach you to keep your mouth shut.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

# Science-Backed Signs You Could Live To 100

There are more than 72,000 centenarians in the U.S. today, a 44 percent increase since 2000. Here's how to become one of them.

BY ALYSSA JUNG



## You never stop getting your age wrong

Swear you feel like 35—not 55? That's good for longevity, according to a recent British study. The subjects who felt three or more years younger than their real age—this group was 65-plus—were less likely to die over an eight-year period than were people who felt their age or older. The findings were so powerful—feeling older was linked to a 41 percent increased risk of dying—that the study authors recommended that doctors ask patients how old they feel as part of their annual physicals.

## You eat more of these two things

Women who consumed the most veggies and fruit had a 46 percent lower chance of dying over a five-year period compared with those who ate them infrequently, according to a University of Michigan study of 700 participants in their 70s. (Intake was measured by assessing blood levels of certain plant compounds.)

Residents of Okinawa, Japan, which boasts one of the world's highest centenarian ratios (about 50 per 100,000 people, compared with only ten to 20 in the United States), are living proof you should eat your veggies. Older Okinawans

have eaten a plant-based diet most of their lives, and almost all grow or once grew a garden.

## You have a way about you

Near-centenarians share a number of personality traits, including optimism and joyfulness, according to a 2012 study of 243 volunteers in the journal *Aging*. “Being adaptable and flexible helps people avoid stress and anxiety, which can increase longevity,” says Rosanne Leipzig, MD, PhD, a professor of geriatrics and palliative medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

“  
*Those who regularly take a 30-minute siesta have a reduced risk of heart disease.*

## You savor the catch of the day

Older adults with the highest blood levels of omega-3 fatty acids lived two more years on average than did those with lower levels, a Harvard study found. Participants did not take fish oil supplements; they simply ate a lot of fish, which is packed with omega-3s.

## You eat Greek-ish

We've known that eating a Mediterranean-style diet (one with an emphasis on olive oil, legumes, nuts, and whole grains, as well as fruits, veggies, and fish) has been linked with long life.

But new Harvard research of more than 4,600 women reveals the trickle-down effect of good nutrition. Researchers scored volunteers based on how closely they followed this style of eating; those with the highest scores had the least cellular aging.

## You snooze and don't lose

Residents of Ikaria, Greece, a small island in the Mediterranean with a high population of centenarians, are fond of an afternoon nap, and it turns out it's good for their tickers. Harvard researchers studied more than 23,000 people for six years and found that those who regularly took a 30-minute siesta had a 37 percent lower chance of dying from heart disease than did those who stayed awake all day.

## You can run at a good clip

A 2012 study in *Archives of Internal Medicine* confirmed that physical fitness in midlife can predict how healthy you'll be later. After following 19,000 middle-aged adults, it found that the most fit were less likely to develop Alzheimer's, certain cancers, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes in their 70s and beyond. The most in-shape men had fitness levels the equivalent of running an eight-

minute mile; the women had levels equal to logging a mile in ten minutes. "People who remain active throughout their life span, whether that's running, walking, or riding bikes, live longer," says Jeremy Walston, MD, a professor of geriatric medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.



*People who have a sense of purpose in life are less likely to die over a 14-year period.*

## You make sure it means something

A new study in *Psychological Science* found that people who feel they have a sense of purpose in life are less likely to die over a 14-year period.

"Make a new friend, pick up a new hobby,

or volunteer," says Dr. Leipzig. "My great-uncle, who is in his mid-90s, still works in his wood shop almost every day," adds Dr. Walston.

## You're trim where it counts

Women with a waist of 37 inches or more had a life expectancy that was five years lower after age 40 than did women with a waist of 27 inches or less, found one study. For men, a waist of 43 inches or more was linked to a three-year decrease in life expectancy compared with those with a waist of 35 inches or less.

Trimming even a few inches from your pants size may have a powerful health impact. "I tell my patients ➤



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\*These "Uses" have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.

that whenever possible, walk, don't drive," says Dr. Leipzig.

## You've got connections

Feeling connected to family and friends keeps people engaged and facilitates healthy aging, says Dr. Walston. "Being isolated works in the other direction and can lead to chronic illnesses." In Sardinia, Italy, another tiny Mediterranean island

with a large centenarian population, friendship is key, according to Dan Buettner, a National Geographic fellow who has traveled the world to study its longest-living people. "Life is very social. People meet on the street daily and savor each other's company. They count on each other. If someone gets sick, a neighbor is right there," he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*. **R**



## CENTENARIANS SPEAK

Five members of the triple-digit club reveal their formula.

■ **Big goals.** "Running brought me back to life by making me forget all my traumas and sorrows," Fauja Singh, 104, told CNN. The Indian-born great-grandfather ran his first marathon at 89 and has since competed in similar races around the world.

■ **Luxury.** "You can never get too old to wear fancy stuff," said Susannah Mushatt Jones, 116, when doctors were surprised to see her wearing lacy lingerie at an EKG exam. Jones, an Alabama native now living

in New York City, has long had a weakness for splurging at the lingerie department at Bloomingdale's, said her niece in *Time*.

■ **Custom.** Oatmeal and push-ups for breakfast, then fish and vegetables for dinner is how New Yorker Duranord Veillard says he made it to 109. According to *USA Today*, Veillard does five to seven push-ups every morning, while Jeanne, his wife of 82 years, looks on.

■ **Liquor (of a certain kind).** Helen Wheat

worked in the vineyards at her son's winery until she was 93, then affixed labels to wine bottles until she was 97, according to *USA Today*. Though she passed away in February at 113, Wheat attributed her longevity to her nightly glass of wine.

■ **Kindness.** Gertrude Weaver passed away last April at 116, but she shared her advice for a long life with *Time* in 2014. "Treat people right, and be nice to others the way you want them to be nice to you," she said.

# Notice: Medical Alert

Dear Reader,

Medical related emergencies are on the rise. More seniors are seeking an independent lifestyle and better quality-of-life. **Over 1 in 3 people over the age of 64 will fall this year.** Nearly half will not be able to get up without support.

Medical expenses can escalate when a person is not given timely support. You can prevent a medical catastrophe with our 24 hour emergency response system. Our solution is highly recommended by doctors, healthcare professionals, and hospitals.

We are offering a **FREE Medical Alert System** to seniors or their loved ones who call now. For a limited time, there will be no set-up fees and the medical monitoring starts at less than a dollar a day. The system is Top-Ranked and easy-to-use. The pendant is 100% waterproof and it can travel with you. Our new system can detect falls automatically.

Call Toll-Free **1-800-360-0405** and gain peace of mind. There is no long term contract. Our medical alert professionals can walk you through everything over the phone.

The first 100 callers to order will receive:

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- Free Waterproof Necklace Pendant or Wristband
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Don't wait until after a fall to give us a call. Take advantage of this special offer now to protect yourself or a loved one.

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Sincerely,



Jim Nelson  
President



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ALL IN

# A Day's Work



*"May we offer a complimentary early wake-up?"*

**MY FRIEND, AN INTERN**, was given \$50 to get the chairman of the bank some lunch. Told to get himself something, he bought a shirt.

Source: storify.com

**HAVE YOU EVER BEEN** a victim of a JIB (job interview breakdown)? These men and women have:  
■ "I was so nervous at a job interview, when he asked me what I

wanted to be in five years, I said, 'Race car driver.'"

■ "The guy asked me to tell him a little about myself, and I literally forgot who I was."

■ "I got asked about punctuality. I went on about how it was good to speak clearly and politely, and it was nice to use proper grammar in speech and writing."

Source: dailymail.co.uk

**WE WERE TEARING DOWN** an old three-seater outhouse when my neighbor asked if she could have the single-plank, three-hole outhouse seat. I said sure.

Six months later, she invited me to her home. There she showed off her newly designed family room, complete with a single-plank, three-hole picture frame featuring her three grandchildren. **D. R.**, via mail

**FROM THE POLICE BLOTTER**, or, what a beat cop deals with every day:

■ A deputy responded to a report of a vehicle stopping at mailboxes. It was the mail carrier.

■ A woman said her son was attacked by a cat, and the cat would not allow her to take her son to the hospital.

■ A resident said someone had entered his home at night and taken five pounds of bacon. Upon further investigation, police discovered his wife had gotten up for a late-night snack.

■ A man reported that a squirrel was running in circles on Davis Drive, and he wasn't sure if it was sick or had been hit by a car. An officer responded, and as he drove on the street, he ran over the squirrel.

Source: uniformstories.com

**Anything funny happen to you at work lately? It could be worth \$100. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).**

## CAN'T FIND THAT AT BEST BUY

Musician Graham Nash—as in Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young—describes how he first heard Neil Young's classic solo album *Harvest*:

"I was at Neil's ranch one day, and he has a beautiful lake. He asked me if I wanted to hear his new album, *Harvest*. And I said sure. He said, 'Get into the rowboat.' I said, 'Get into the rowboat?' He said, 'Yeah. We're going out into the middle of the lake.' Now, I think he's got a little cassette player with him, and we'll listen in relative peace in the middle of Neil's lake. Oh no. He has his entire house as the left speaker and his entire barn as the right speaker. And I heard *Harvest* coming out of these two incredibly large, loud speakers. Elliot Mazer, who produced Neil, came down to the shore and shouted, 'How's that, Neil?' And I swear, Neil shouted back, 'More barn!'" From [openculture.com](http://openculture.com)








## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (continued)

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including medications for overactive bladder or other medicines such as thioridazine (Mellaril™ and Mellaril-S™), flecainide (Tambacor®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems. In clinical studies, the most common side effects seen with Myrbetriq included increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection and headache.

**For further information, please talk to your healthcare professional and see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information for Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) on the following pages.**

**You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.**

 **Myrbetriq®**  
(mirabegron)  
extended-release tablets  
25 mg, 50 mg

# IS YOUR BLADDER ALWAYS CALLING THE SHOTS?

Ask your doctor about Myrbetriq® (mirabegron), the first and only overactive bladder (OAB) treatment in its class. It's approved by the FDA to treat OAB with symptoms of:



Urgency



Frequency



Leakage

In clinical trials, those taking Myrbetriq made fewer trips to the bathroom and had fewer leaks than those not taking Myrbetriq. Your results may vary.

## TAKING CHARGE OF OAB SYMPTOMS STARTS WITH TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR.

Visit **Myrbetriq.com** for doctor discussion tips. Ask your doctor if Myrbetriq may be right for you, and see if you can get your first prescription at no cost.\*

\*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions may apply.

## USE OF MYRBETRIQ (meer-BEH-trick)

Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) is a prescription medicine for adults used to treat overactive bladder (OAB) with symptoms of urgency, frequency, and leakage.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Myrbetriq is not for everyone. Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any ingredients in Myrbetriq.

Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq. Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream.

Myrbetriq may cause allergic reactions that may be serious. If you experience swelling of the face, lips, throat or tongue, with or without difficulty breathing, stop taking Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

**Please see additional Important Safety Information on next page.**



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**Myrbetriq® (mirabegron)  
extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg**

**Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling**

Read the Patient Information that comes with Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

**What is Myrbetriq (meer-BEH-trick)?**

Myrbetriq is a prescription medication for **adults** used to treat the following symptoms due to a condition called **overactive bladder**:

- urge urinary incontinence: a strong need to urinate with leaking or wetting accidents
- urgency: a strong need to urinate right away
- frequency: urinating often

It is not known if Myrbetriq is safe and effective in children.

**Who should not use Myrbetriq?**

Do not use Myrbetriq if you have an allergy to mirabegron or any of the ingredients in Myrbetriq. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in Myrbetriq.

**What is overactive bladder?**

Overactive bladder occurs when you cannot control your bladder contractions. When these muscle contractions happen too often or cannot be controlled, you can get symptoms of overactive bladder, which are urinary frequency, urinary urgency, and urinary incontinence (leakage).

**What should I tell my doctor before taking Myrbetriq?**

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

- have liver problems or kidney problems
- have very high uncontrolled blood pressure
- have trouble emptying your bladder or you have a weak urine stream
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Myrbetriq will harm your unborn baby. Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if Myrbetriq passes into your breast milk. You and your doctor should decide if you will take Myrbetriq or breastfeed. You should not do both.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Tell your doctor if you take:

- thioridazine (Mellaril™ or Mellaril-S™)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- flecainide (Tambocor®)
- digoxin (Lanoxin®)

**How should I take Myrbetriq?**

- Take Myrbetriq exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should take 1 Myrbetriq tablet 1 time a day.
- You should take Myrbetriq with water and swallow the tablet whole.
- Do not crush or chew the tablet.
- You can take Myrbetriq with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of Myrbetriq, begin taking Myrbetriq again the next day. Do not take 2 doses of Myrbetriq the same day.
- If you take too much Myrbetriq, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

**What are the possible side effects of Myrbetriq?**

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

- **increased blood pressure.** Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you

have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

- **inability to empty your bladder (urinary retention).** Myrbetriq may increase your chances of not being able to empty your bladder if you have bladder outlet obstruction or if you are taking other medicines to treat overactive bladder. Tell your doctor right away if you are unable to empty your bladder.
- **angioedema.** Myrbetriq may cause an allergic reaction with swelling of the lips, face, tongue, throat with or without difficulty breathing. Stop using Myrbetriq and tell your doctor right away.

The **most common side effects** of Myrbetriq include:

- increased blood pressure
- urinary tract infection
- common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)
- headache

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away or if you have swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat, hives, skin rash or itching while taking Myrbetriq.

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

**Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.**

#### **How should I store Myrbetriq?**

- Store Myrbetriq between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C). Keep the bottle closed.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.

**Keep Myrbetriq and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

#### **General information about the safe and effective use of Myrbetriq**

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in the Patient Information leaflet. Do not use Myrbetriq for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give Myrbetriq to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

#### **Where can I go for more information?**

This is a summary of the most important information about Myrbetriq. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about Myrbetriq that is written for health professionals.

For more information, visit [www.Myrbetriq.com](http://www.Myrbetriq.com) or call (800) 727-7003.

#### **What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?**

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

**Inactive ingredients:** polyethylene oxide, polyethylene glycol, hydroxypropyl cellulose, butylated hydroxytoluene, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, yellow ferric oxide and red ferric oxide (25 mg Myrbetriq tablet only).

#### **Rx Only**

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**Astellas Pharma US, Inc.**

Northbrook, Illinois 60062

 **Myrbetriq<sup>®</sup>**  
(mirabegron)  
extended-release tablets  
25 mg, 50 mg

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RD SPECIAL

# Best Stories IN America

From the Moth and *Reader's Digest*

Everyone has a story, and those stories have always been the beating heart of *Reader's Digest* and of real life. By turns wise, funny, and inspired, these 12 were told before exuberant audiences at events held by the Moth, the most celebrated live storytelling group in the country, and chosen by our editors. They show that for all our differences, together our experiences merge in the telling into the single narrative of America.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GLENN GLASSER AT A MOTH EVENT ON APRIL 12, 2016



# BEST STORIES IN AMERICA

★ Told live at a Moth show at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, CA



**FLOATING  
WITH JOHN**  
BY NESHAMA  
FRANKLIN

## I was at the bottom of the Grand Canyon,

and I was really sick. Nine months earlier, John, my husband of 35 years, had died. We had two grown children and a new granddaughter.

What was I doing down there? My sister Kathryn, who had seen me through his death, loves the Grand Canyon, and she arranged the trip.

She said, "Come on, Neshama. It's the trip of a lifetime. You weren't able to go down with John, because it was too far from medical help [for him]. So come."

I said, "Do you think I'll be ready?"

She said, "Well, it's a gestational period, nine months."

So then I was on a plane to Arizona, and my voice had dropped to a baritone. I thought it was a cold, but in the canyon, it became acute bronchitis. My sister, who's a nurse, was worried. She tried but couldn't rustle up some antibiotics. Instead, she came to

me and opened her palm. On it were some peeled garlic cloves.

She said, "Italian penicillin," and I swallowed them.

I was not the person you want next to you on the raft. I was hawking and spitting and reeking of garlic.

Everybody else went through the rapids with terrified, screaming joy. I went through just terrified, holding on for dear life. When we came to the shore, I'd wobble off and lie down, letting the activity of the camp swirl around me.

I felt weak and alone. Usually I'd be the person handing stuff from boat to shore, looking for the perfect campsite, and helping with the food. But I just lay there.

I felt especially alone when the group went off on side hikes. I was staying under the shade when I realized what was really going on with me. In this deep crack in the earth, under the pitiless blue sky, I could finally feel what had happened. I thought I

ILLUSTRATED PORTRAITS BY KAGAN MCLEOD



had done my grieving, but I had gone on with my life, and I needed to feel the weight of presence and the weight of absence.

John died of a lung disease, and there I was, struggling for breath. It was as if he were right inside me. There were no distractions. It was silent except for crows and the gurgle of the river. I couldn't even read, which is my solace, because I was so sick. So I lay there, and I felt it.

And soon I got better. Let's hear it for Italian penicillin.

Then it was time.

Nobody knew that my sister and I had brought John down on the river with us. I was planning to scatter his ashes. We decided the place he'd love most was the Little Colorado, a playful side stream. While the group was shooting down this little carnival ride, Kathryn and I sloshed upstream. We found a quiet glen, and I got ready.

I imagined the ashes would swirl and mix and go down the Colorado. But anyone who knows anything about ashes knows this doesn't

happen, especially when there's a wind.

So I dumped out the bag ... and the ashes blew back and coated me.

I was covered with John! All I could do was dunk and weep and dunk and weep. You should know I do not cry readily.



*While the group was shooting down the side stream, we found a quiet glen and got ready.*

When I had washed him off to the best of my ability, I hiked back to where they were going down the Little Colorado. I put on my life jacket upside down like a diaper (that's how you protect your rump from rocks on the bottom). I stuck my feet out, and I floated down the Little Colorado three times.

And when I crawled out of the stream the last time, a guide looked at me and said, "Neshama, what's going on? I never saw such a beatific expression on anyone going down the Little

Colorado."

"I was traveling with my husband, John," I said, "and I was learning to let him go."

---

Neshama Franklin, 77, works in a library in Fairfax, California.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Oriental Theater in Denver, CO



# I didn't know what I wanted to do after

**LOVE IS  
THE THING**

BY PAMEELA  
BURRELL

high school. But my mother did. She decided that I was going to attend a prestigious college, study premed, and become a doctor. I didn't have the courage to tell her that I lacked the self-confidence to make life-and-death decisions for other people. But I also lacked the courage to resist her plan. I did draw one nonnegotiable line in the sand: If I had to go to college, it was going to be a traditional black college in a large city.

But on my first day as a scholarship student at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, I discovered that I was the only black woman in the entering class. I also discovered that my room had been reconfigured so that my roommate and I wouldn't share a bedroom. I asked the residence manager why ours was the only room that had been changed around. She said, "Well, we thought you'd feel more comfortable with that arrangement." So from my very first day, I was made to feel like an outsider who needed to be treated differently from my peers.

I spent the next four years trying to break a code I didn't understand.

In my sophomore year, I volunteered with 11 other students at the Washington State Penitentiary, a maximum-security prison. The main goal of the program was to help soon-to-be-released prisoners adapt to life on the outside. I had found my people. I never felt more at home or more appreciated than with those men. They had lost control of their destiny. They were anxious, scared, and confused. But they were determined to succeed. They had one another's backs and supported one another through addictions, helplessness, and rage.

Our conversations were the highlight of my week for almost two years. I never missed a meeting. I was surprised by the intensity of my affection for these men. I began to realize that they were where they were because they had acted on their feelings. I was where I was because I had not.

One evening, I drove to our meeting place on campus, and no one was there. Then I remembered: The Ohio Players were performing that night.



I passed streams of concertgoers as I drove the empty van to the prison. When I got there, I asked to see all the men together in one group.

As 30 prisoners settled in, one said, "Where is everybody?" I told them who was playing, and another said, "Don't you like the Ohio Players?" I said, "They're one of my favorites." "Then whatcha doin' here, fool?" he said, and we laughed.

"I'd rather be here. I love you guys. I care about you. I want to do all I can to help you succeed." The room went deadly still. No one spoke.

Finally, I asked what was wrong. One man began to cry, saying, "In my whole

life, no one has ever told me that they loved me or cared about me." One by one, every man started to weep. Then one of them pointed to the guard in the room and said, "Look, even old Baldy is crying!" And we all laughed again.

I don't know if that program helped those men, but I know it helped me. I still lack courage, but when I am afraid or feeling challenged by the world, I think back to that special group of foster brothers of mine, and I tell myself, "Hey, guys, we can get through this together."

---

Pameela Burrell, 58, is a postal worker and a songwriter from Denver, Colorado.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Flynn Center in Burlington, VT

*When I was in fifth grade,  
you could have told me,*

**SAVED BY  
THE BELLE**  
BY COLIN  
RYAN

"Colin, it's not cool to wear the same pair of sweatpants every single day of school," but I was comfortable.

And you could have told me, "Colin, it's not cool to go to the school dance and do the Macarena for the entire duration of Guns N' Roses' 'November Rain.'" I would not have stopped. You could have even told me, "Colin,

it's not cool to be an active member of your local church's clown troupe."

Then I went to sixth grade, middle school, and all of a sudden, it was clear there were only two options. I could somehow be cool, or I could somehow be invisible. And I have to say, I was doing pretty well at option two. Until third period on the first day, when a teacher had us fill out a questionnaire with "get to know you" questions.



I assumed that she would be reading them privately, so I felt safe to share from the perspective of the sweatpants-wearing, Macarena-dancing, Christian-clowning little snowflake that I was.

The teacher collected the sheets, shuffled them, and redistributed them to the class. We went one by one. We'd read the student's name and then our three favorite answers. My sheet ended up in the hands of a kid who was one of the coolest and meanest.

His "favorite answers" of mine were the three worst ones to be read out loud. The first question was "What's your favorite movie?" The other kids wrote *Scream* and *Universal Soldier*. I remember thinking, *We're 11! How are you seeing R-rated movies?*

He read my answer, *Beauty and the Beast* (which I maintain holds up better than the others, but I couldn't make that argument effectively at the time). A laugh erupted from the room, and my cheeks burned because I knew we were just getting started.

The next question he read was "Where would you like to travel?" The others had said "Australia," "Japan." I wrote "Wherever a book takes me."

The laughter this time had an explosive quality to it. The kids were high-fiving.

The final question was "What do

you like to do on the weekends?" The other kids wrote "Hang out with friends" and "go to the mall." I wrote "perform with Clowns for Christ."

Those who weren't laughing at me were sort of staring at me in disgust. I felt about an inch tall. I remember fixating on my Trapper Keeper binder and trying to figure out if I could somehow disappear inside it.

But then, something amazing happened. A voice from the back of the room said, "Guys, cut it out." And the room went silent. The voice belonged to Michelle Siever, and Michelle Siever was popular and cool. Michelle Siever had sway. The room was quiet.

But Michelle wasn't done. She turned to the teacher and said, "Why are you letting this happen? What is the point if we're just gonna make fun of each other?"

I don't remember the teacher or the kids' names, but I remember Michelle Siever's name. I remember how it felt when she spoke up for me because she showed me that day that we actually have three options.

You can be cool, and you might be remembered for a little while. You can be invisible, and you won't be remembered at all. But if you stand up for somebody when they need you most, then you will be remembered as their hero for the rest of their life.

---

Colin Ryan, 36, is a comedic financial speaker from Burlington, Vermont.

★ Told live at a Moth show at the Bomhard Theater in Louisville, KY



**A HARD TRUTH**  
BY FRED JOHNSON

## When I walked out of the Jeffersonville City Jail,

I knew one thing for certain: My wife was gonna be pissed. The night before, I had performed a ritual

that I had done on the anniversary of 9/11 ever since I got back from Iraq in 2007: a shot of bourbon for each of my three dearest fallen comrades.

The first shot of bourbon was Maker's Mark, and it was for Bill Wood, who loved Maker's Mark. Bill died in Dora, Iraq, in 2005. The second shot of bourbon was Woodford, which is my favorite bourbon, because Joe Fenty didn't like to drink bourbon. He died on a mountaintop in Afghanistan in 2006. Joe was my dearest friend. And then my last shot of bourbon was Basil Hayden, because it's so smooth, and Freeman Gardner died so young on the streets of Amiriya, Baghdad, in 2007.

I finished my shots, and I had a couple of beers. I sat and thought and said to myself, "I'm gonna get in my

car, and I'm gonna drive it into the Ohio River so I can be with my dead friends."

Of course, a policeman stopped me and put me in jail. That's why I was in jail. The next morning, when I got out, I called home. My wife answered and didn't let me say a word.

She said, "You're going to therapy."

What she didn't say but strongly implied was, "You're going to go to therapy now, or you're never going to see me or your daughter again."

My wife had long said that I had PTSD. That when I went to Iraq, I changed, and when I got back from Afghanistan in 2011, I'd gotten worse.

Now, my wife is a PhD psychologist. She's the director of behavioral health at Fort Knox, in charge of all the behavioral health in Fort Knox.

They diagnose people with PTSD.

I said, "You know, honey, what do you know?" I said, "It's perfectly normal to freak out with your back to the door 'cause you can't see behind you.



It's normal to look at every passerby to see if they have a weapon in their hand. And it's normal to have your friends who died in combat revolve through your mind in an endless cycle. And it's normal to, every now and then, think about putting a gun to your head and pulling the trigger."

I did not have PTSD. I didn't believe in it. You don't serve your country and get sick—particularly a colonel who'd been in the Army 28 years at the time and had prepared his entire adult life to serve in combat. But I went to therapy because I felt that if I didn't, I'd lose my wife and daughter.

**T**here are three things I learned when I was in therapy. First, I needed it. I was on a downward spiral. I had to do something. The second is, it helped. My therapist gave me tools to help mitigate my anger. And third, it wasn't quite enough.

One day a fellow colonel made a derogatory comment about one of my buddies, and I went after him. I was gonna beat the crap out of him, but I got pulled back before I could do anything. I got in trouble, though, bad trouble. It was about that time that my psychiatrist said, "Hey, Fred, have you tried medication?" That was another red line for me.

I said, "I can do it myself. I'm a soldier. I'm self-disciplined." But obviously, the issue with that colonel proved otherwise.

I thought, *If I don't do something, I could leave the Army in a bad way.*

When I first took medication, ironically it was just like a firefight. There's nothing that brings greater clarity than the snap of a bullet by your head, and its impact two inches away. Then the world slows down so you can see its full spectrum. And then you apply your training to your work. That pill provided the clarity and the slowing down, and therapy gave me the tools I needed to make the right decisions.

After a while, I would remember my buddies only when I wanted to. They weren't revolving in my head. And shooting myself was a ridiculous notion that never entered my mind again.

One morning, I woke up after an awesome night's sleep, and I'm lying next to my wife, which is something we'd never do, pillows propped up, drinking coffee. I look over to her, and I touch her and say, "So this is what it's like to be really normal?"

She says, "Yes."

I thank God every day for that night in the Jeffersonville jail and the cop who pulled me over. I thank God for my wife who had the courage to give me that ultimatum. I thank God for giving me clarity to make the right decision in my now-or-never moments.

---

Fred Johnson, 54, is the cofounder of Veterans and Kentucky Shakespeare in Louisville, Kentucky.





★ Told live at a Moth show at the Fremont Abbey Arts Center in Seattle, WA



# For a long time in my family, there was

COME  
AROUND  
ANYTIME  
BY  
CATHERINE  
SMYKA

an understanding that my grandmother refused to watch *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* because the host was a lesbian.

She used to say, “The nerve of that woman, being all gay in public like that.”

There was an unspoken pact among my relatives not to tell my grandmother that I was a lesbian.

My uncle had said, “You know, she’s pretty old already, so you should just, you know, wait it out until she [passes away].”

It became a kind of family joke: “Don’t tell Grandma that Catherine’s gay!”

In college, I had this rainbow bracelet that I used to take off when I went into Grandma’s house, even though I knew she wouldn’t get what that meant. Sometimes she’d walk into the kitchen, and I’d be telling someone a story about a girl I was dating, and I would tone it down and say, “She’s such a nice friend.” It was exhausting, though. The coming-out

process didn’t feel very freeing if I was keeping secrets.

The challenge with my grandmother was nerve-racking, but she and I had that in common because she was no stranger to challenges. She’d moved all the way across the country to be with her husband, who ended up dying really early. And she raised 12 kids, mostly by herself. She never finished school. I didn’t want to be another one of those challenges, ‘cause I thought, *Having a queer granddaughter, what’re you going to do with that?*

Whenever we hung out, I was a wreck. It was late summer, about two years after coming out, and a bunch of people were at Grandma’s house, and the summer had been long and wonderful and full of this new woman I was dating whom I loved so much. I was sitting on the back porch, smiling and thinking about her. Grandma came outside, and I think we were talking about how my younger sister was about to get her driver’s license, which is already a terrifying thing.

And then I asked her about how

she and my grandfather met. It's a story I've heard a billion times, but I love hearing it again. She got this smile, and she was talking about what Grandpa was like in his early 20s and about their slightly sneaky courtship. She basically conned a priest into setting her up on a dinner date with my grandfather, which I thought was adorable and hilarious.

She has great stories, but mostly I love watching her talk about him. I can tell that she still remembers exactly how his hand used to fit in hers and the intensity of his scent. He smelled like pipe tobacco and mint. It's been over two decades since he passed away, and I know that she's thought of him every day. And she was telling me about him on the back porch that day.

She said, "He was the best man I know, so you need to find yourself someone like that, someone who will love you and respect you and tell you you're beautiful. Someone to bring home to meet the family for family dinner."

Without thinking, I said, "Well, I think I already have, Grandma." And then I was like: Oh no. I said that out loud. I thought to myself, *I don't know what to do. What is going to happen? I'm a lesbian. She's going to kill me.*

She said, "Is he a nice boy?"

And I said, "Yes. She is a very nice lady."

And the two of us looked at each other for a long time.

I have no idea what's running through her head, but mine was going something like, *Why are you still sitting here? Run! She's actually going to kill you.*

Then she reached over and patted my hand, and said, "Well, you tell her to come around anytime, all right?"

And I was like, "What?"

I looked over, and she had a smile on her face that meant she was thinking of my grandpa. She said, "You're my granddaughter, and I love you so much. You should know that there will always be a place at my dinner table for you and whomever you love."

I wanted to cry and to hug her ... and I also wanted to make sure that she knew I was telling her I was gay, like, to be clear. But she just kept looking at me and patting my hand, and so I said, "Thank you."

Since then, Grandma is the first to reprimand anyone who tells a gay joke.

My uncles are actually the worst offenders, and when someone says, like, "OK, so a queer walks into a bar ...," she is the first to slap them upside the head and tell them to cut it out.

Every once in a while, I will even see *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* playing in the living room.

---

Catherine Smyka, 28, is a writer and an LGBTQ activist in Chicago, Illinois.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Haymarket Pub & Brewery in Chicago, IL



# *I've never been on death row, but I've thought*

**HAPPY MEAL**  
BY ALVIN LAU

about my last meal. When you do the last-meal thought exercise, you go back in time to all your happiest culinary moments. You gather them together—a spectrum of your tastes—for the epic finale. It's like your life flashing before your tongue.

I'd have shrimp tempura and jerk chicken. I'd have my mom's sweet-and-sour meatballs, my favorite memory. Then I'd have my own macaroni and cheese, which is the best.

After six weeks of chemo, I dropped from 168 pounds to 152. It's not that extreme given the circumstances. But I'd always calculate how far I was from my previous health when I would walk to the corner store and not feel like I just got off a treadmill.

I was so tired; I had aches and grogginess. I was always hungry, and I thought I wanted to eat, but my body didn't. Eating was like trying to swallow sand.

All I wanted was a cheeseburger and not even to actually eat it. I just wanted to want a cheeseburger, to feel my body processing that hunger, to

thrive and not just shuffle off quietly.

I wanted to remember what it felt like to salivate over something.

When the oncologist called, the lit in his voice hinted at good news. The tumor had shrunk to an operable size. I had the surgery, and I began to be weaned off the treatments. I could start eating again. Soups, bananas, and then I could eat a real meal again.

My closest friends said they would take me anywhere I wanted to eat. I didn't have shrimp tempura or jerk chicken. I ended up getting comfort food—Thai, Americanized and sugary.

I'll never have a last meal. I'd like to think that my death will be less predictable. But as I was sitting there with all my closest friends, looking down at the menu like it was a list of wishes, I was grateful just to be hungry.

All that mattered was the chance to have a first meal, a meal I could point to and say, "That's when I came back to life."

---

Alvin Lau is a three-time international poetry slam champion. He has performed on HBO's *Def Poetry Jam*, among other shows.

★ Told live at a Moth show at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York, NY



**DANCING  
WITH  
GRANDMA**  
BY ROBERT  
WEINSTEIN

## *In 1998, I went to visit my grandma Rose in*

an old folks' home. At the time, she was 90, and I was 28, and I was about to go off for two years of grad school. This

was the last time I ever saw her.

She'd been living there for about 15 years, and I'd been to see her a lot. But it was becoming a bit sadder, partly because the place was full of people who were grasping at the last stages of their lucidity. Even worse—and I know it might sound like a horrible thing to say, and I felt bad for thinking it—it was taking her longer and longer to recognize me. I didn't know how to handle that.

When I saw her on this day, she was really excited because they had a sundae bar/Perry Como music hour in the common room.

I'm not a big fan of Perry Como, and I'm not a big fan of ice cream, but I was a really big fan of Grandma Rose, so I said, "Let's go!"

I didn't feel any less discomfort when we got there. The Perry Como was coming from a boom box at one end of the room. There was a great big chasm, and on the other end, all these people were seated and just staring at the boom box.

My grandmother and I rolled over, and she introduced me to everyone, saying, "This is my grandson, and he's going to Paris."

They responded, "How nice to meet you" and "How handsome you are" and "That's very nice." Then, when everything was said and done, we just kind of settled, and I became one of them. We just stared at that boom box.

Then a woman in a wheelchair sitting next to me asked if I'd ever heard of Perry Como. I told her I had, and she told me how much she loved him. Then she told me this story about the war—she didn't say which war—when her husband and all the other men in her town were off fighting. They missed the men, but what they really





missed was dancing. They missed it so much that they would rent out a gymnasium once a month and get a record player and play songs. Her favorite was Perry Como.

She went off into her head for a little while, and she looked like she was really enjoying herself. Finally, she said, "I really miss dancing."

I was feeling uncomfortable and didn't know what else to say, so I asked, "Do you want to dance?"

And she said, "Yes."

So I wheeled her out into the Grand Canyon that was separating the people from the boom box, and I lifted her arm up and twirled under it, and I twirled her wheelchair around, and we laughed a lot. When it was over, I thanked her and wheeled her back.

Then I noticed a lot of little old ladies smiling at me. So I asked another one to dance, and she asked someone else to dance, and we danced again, and then we split off. And pretty soon, we had snowballed into this great big geriatric cotillion.

While I was dancing, I remembered my grandmother's 75th birthday. We were at a restaurant called the Pickle Barrel, and we were eating pickles out of a small barrel on the table. I asked her what it was like to be 75 years old.

Without even thinking, she said, "It feels like it always does. My mind still feels very young, 18, but my body just won't do the things I want it to do anymore." Then she told me a theory

that she had that people get locked into a certain age and stay that way for the rest of their lives. It was kind of amazing.

Back at the dance, I saw my grandmother across the room, and of course, I danced with her, which was really great. When you're watching someone decline, it's really easy to get caught up in the deterioration and forget how much you love that person.

I realized that the reason I had felt so uncomfortable was my fear of watching her grow older and my powerlessness to do anything about it—and the thought of losing her and my powerlessness to do anything about that. And then I realized, watching everyone, that if I felt that way, I couldn't imagine what they felt like.

The ice cream arrived, and some people stayed dancing, and others made a beeline for the cart, and everybody was eating and dancing. They looked like the ages that I presumed they felt, and they lit up that room like chandeliers. And I stayed dancing with my grandmother.

I've realized over time how rare it is to see people as they see themselves. And there I was with this 18-year-old woman who was dancing with someone she loved, who loved her back.

---

Robert Weinstein, 45, is a librarian from Brooklyn, New York.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul, MN



# *I'm originally from Orange County, California,*

**HERO IN DISGUISE**  
BY MORGAN LAIDLAW

where I had the pleasure and honor of serving as a Newport Beach ocean lifeguard for five seasons. Whenever I could, I got shifts working the Point. If you wanted to save lives, that's where you worked. The Point was known for its massive, spontaneous rip currents.

So, late in a shift, I'm working Tower 15. Two blocks to my right is another guard named Mike, working Tower 17. I'd known Mike for a number of years. He calls me over the phone and says, "Hey, I got a couple kids. I gotta go give 'em a warning. Keep an eye on us."

I say, "Sure," and hang up.

Anytime you get out of your tower, you're supposed to let somebody else know, in case a situation develops. And sure enough, as soon as he hangs up the phone and grabs his buoy, a rip is snapped up under these two kids, and they're getting sucked out. Mike sees it before it's happening, and he's running full tilt toward the ocean. I scan the water. All I see is two small noses bobbing in the choppy water.

I drop my binos and I call in and say, "Double rescue 17—he's out. I'm going." Mike is already punching through the surf line. By now, the mother of the two kids realizes what's happening. She's on her feet and screaming. I start sprinting toward her, but before I'm even halfway there, Mike reaches the kids—a brother and sister around eight or nine years old. Mike told me later that he got to the boy first, and when he turned to the girl, he had to reach down into the water and catch her by the hair to pull her back up.

Mike swims sideways out of the rip current into the clear water and starts bringing them in. When I reach their mother, Mike's in waist-deep water. These kids are so exhausted, they can't walk, and so Mike's carrying them. He's got one under each arm.

I turn to their mom and say, "Hey, it's gonna be OK. They're safe." I see the terror start to drain out of her.

Then she glances back and gets her first good look at Mike. And a crazy thing happens. I see a new kind of panic wash over her as though there's some new, equally dangerous threat

on her kids' lives. She rushes up to Mike and snatches her kids and turns up the beach. Not even a thank-you.

Now, Mike had a rough upbringing. You can tell just by looking at him. He has a number of really intimidating tattoos, and his shaved head shows the scar he got from a broken beer bottle. Maybe he wasn't the friendliest guard on the beach. I admit, I didn't really get along with Mike.

But everything he lacked in PR skills, he more than made up for in lifesaving ability. If any other guard had been working 17 that night, including me, there'd be a very real chance that that mother wasn't going home with both her kids.

I have a young son and daughter, and I can't even imagine the depth of her terror, and so I sympathize with

her. Even in her assessment of Mike, 'cause he was a really intimidating guy. Maybe she didn't know anybody who looked quite like Mike. He wasn't her idea of a knight in shining armor.

That doesn't change the fact that he had just rescued her kids. It was hard to understand what had happened in her heart.

Mike just glanced at me, shrugged, and jogged back to his tower.

That was ten years ago. If you asked Mike about it today, I doubt he'd even remember. But I won't forget. As I jogged back to my tower, I promised myself I'd never let my own fear or prejudice prevent me from recognizing a hero when I see one.

---

Morgan Laidlaw, 30, is a water engineer and a father in North Minneapolis.

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★ Told live at a Moth show at the Mothlight at Mr. Fred's in Asheville, NC



## I am the last boy in the Boy Scout troop

GOING  
THE MILE  
BY RAY  
CHRISTIAN

to get his uniform and the last boy to pay his \$10 to go to the Big Camp Jamboree. When we arrive, we are the only black

troop there. One of the first things to do there is the swimming test. The test is to see how long we can tread water, and it determines whether you can take out a canoe or swim alone.

None of the boys in my troop can



swim, so I am the only black kid in the whole camp who takes the swimming test. I tread water. And I watch the lifeguard point to different boys and say, “You can get out. You can get out. You can get out.”

I make a move to get out. He says, “No, no, no. You stay.” After a long time, he says to me, “You can get out.” And I get a swimmer tag for it.

It doesn’t quite work out the way I think, though. Every time I show up to take out a boat or get in the swimming pool, I get yelled at: “Hey, stop! Let me see your swimmer tag!”

One time, I’m swimming in the deep end of the pool by myself, and I hear one of the lifeguards yell out, “You! You! Get outta that water! Get outta that water right now!” He is so frantic, I think there must be a snake or a snapping turtle. Then he jumps in the water and grabs me by the arm, and I think, *It must be something dangerous because he’s trying to pull me out. He’s trying to save me.* Then he slaps me in the face and says, “N—, who told you that you could get in the pool?”

I’m 11 years old. I get out of the pool.

One of the final activities at the camp is the mile swim. I am the only black Boy Scout eligible to try out for it. Each one of us, about ten in a group, has to swim beside a boat. If at any point you need to give up, you get inside the boat.

We start in. Three laps around this big lake equals one mile. As soon as we finish the first lap, half the boys have given up and gotten in the boat. On the second lap, the boys who had already given up yell at me from the boat, “Come on! You don’t need to do this. Give up! Come on, get in the boat!”

On the third lap, I start to get delirious. My arms feel like spaghetti, and I almost can’t move anymore. But I look way out in front of me, about two football lengths, and I see other kids getting out of the water.

I have so little energy left, and the boys are still yelling at me, but I keep swimming. I can’t even keep my eyes open. So I close them and keep on stroking, stroking, stroking. It seems like I’m not moving anywhere.

All of a sudden, I feel, like, a thousand hands on me. I’m snatched out of the water, and I see all these brown arms, and everybody’s yelling and screaming and tossing me up in the air. I’m yelling and crying, and I’m so happy.

I’m the only black Boy Scout who completed the mile swim at that camp. In the big picture, what I did, it’s not that significant. I wasn’t the last Boy Scout to do it. I wasn’t the fastest. I wasn’t the smartest or the prettiest. But on that day, in that place and time ... one little black kid was first.

---

Ray Christian, 55, is a retired paratrooper in Boone, North Carolina, where he lives with his wife, children, chickens, and dogs.



# BEST STORIES IN AMERICA

★ Told live at a Moth show at the Olympia Theater in Miami, FL



## CLOSE TO THE BONES

BY TERE FIGUERAS  
NEGRETE

## My first real job at the 'Miami Herald' was

covering the graveyard shift on the police beat. I was a chubby, overprotected Cuban girl from Kendall who

had managed to Forrest Gump her way into a really cool job, and I spent the whole first year feeling I was on shaky ground.

They sat me next to two veteran crime reporters at the newspaper. On one side was Elaine de Valle, brash and bold. She was often screaming into her phone in Spanish, as if she were being burned at the stake by Fidel Castro. She had passion!

On the other side was Arnold Markowitz, Arnie, or Witz, if he really, really liked you. He was wild, with a shock of white hair and this white beard that he would claw in frustration if someone was being especially dumb or stupid. I was frequently both.

Because Arnie was hard of hearing, he rigged up his desk phone

to a bright white light, like the kind of thing a tugboat would need to navigate foggy conditions. So every time the phone would ring, the light would flash and Arnie would pick up the phone and scream, "Markowitz! What you got?" It was terrifying, but he was a legend: unstoppable, un-scoopable. Every criminal and cop knew him, and I was determined to impress him.

That first summer, Arnie gets a call, a tip that there was a break in a cold case he had covered years ago. There was a guy who had disappeared on the way to a casino at the edge of the Everglades. Arnie gets a tip that they found his car at the bottom of a canal.

He sends me to the crime scene to see if they pulled any remains from the submerged car. I drive out to Homestead in the middle of the night, in the middle of a thunderstorm.

Somehow, I manage to talk my way onto the crime scene. I'm standing there, ankle deep in mud, and they're





winching up this old sedan, and one of the cops opens the door, and sure enough, it's a tangle of bones and muck and weeds. Did I mention the bones?

So I scribble in my notebook and get the heck out of there because by now it's ten minutes to deadline, and I have to call Arnie to file my feed.

Only my phone is dead, of course. So I'm driving in a blind panic in the rain, completely unhinged, praying for a pay phone. Then I see a Denny's, like Valhalla in the distance, a Denny's with a pay phone in front of it!

I screech like a maniac. I jump out of the car and run for the pay phone, and I notice, out of the corner of my eye, a group of potheads just kind of hanging out outside the Denny's like potheads do. But I don't even pay attention to them. I throw my coins in the phone and call Arnie.

He picks up. "Markowitz! What you got?" And I tell him everything: the car, the canal, the bones. And because Arnie's hard of hearing, I have

to yell all this at the top of my lungs.

So if you happened to be one of those potheads at that Denny's on that dark and stormy night, this is what you would have seen: a chubby Cuban girl from Kendall, her legs caked in mud, her eyes streaked with rain and tears and mascara, wailing into a pay phone, "They found his bones but not a skull! His bones! In the car. They found the bones!"

I like to think that years later, those guys in the parking lot still talk about me:

"Bro, remember that girl at Denny's?"

"Yeah, bro. She totally murdered someone. Right?"

The next day at work, I get to my desk, and there's a note on the keyboard that says, simply, "Figueras, welcome to the craft," signed, "Witz."

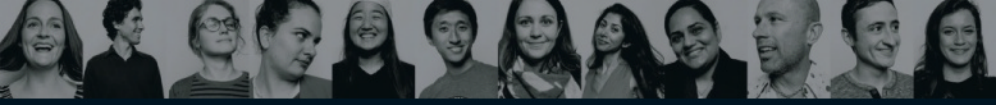
Apologies to my husband in the back, but it was the best love letter a man has ever written me.



*I tell him everything: the car, the canal, the bones. I yell it at the top of my lungs.*

---

Tere Figueras Negrete, 39, is a former newspaper editor who lives in South Miami, Florida, with her husband, two sons, and the occasional peacock.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Echoplex in Los Angeles, CA



# I got a call from my sister that my dad

## SPICE OF LIFE

BY VIKKI GARCIA KELLEHER

had taken a turn for the worse, and I needed to get home right away. I wasn't ready for that. When I got to the hospital, he had already slipped into a coma. I had missed all the dramatic goodbyes that were said because everyone knew he was not gonna make it. So that was upsetting.

He was in a coma for a while. It was that weird place where everybody is connected by this thing and it's killing us. After two weeks, I brought up the idea that maybe we should pull the plug. I don't know where that saying comes from, 'cause nobody pulls a plug. Everybody stays plugged in.

But it was time. We all knew. I thought it would happen like on *Days of Our Lives*. I thought you would pull the plug, and there'd be a lot of crying for ten to 15 minutes, and then the person would pass, and you would be sad, but it would be over.

Instead, we waited for four, then five, hours. And you wanted to scream, 'cause it's crazy. Right in the

middle of this, they wheel another woman into our room, a woman who had just had heart surgery. I remember thinking, *That's not a good idea. My dad is dying. Why are you bringing in a woman who's had heart surgery? That doesn't make any sense. It's bad management.*

The woman was on a lot of medication and saying crazy things. She's 80 and naked and kicking her covers off. I'm on this side of the room, with a curtain that is not very soundproof, sitting by my dad, saying, "I love you, Dad. I'm really going to miss you."

From the other side, we hear, "Cinnamon."

"You were such a great dad to me."

"Cinnamon."

"Dad, you were wonderful—"

"Cinnamon."

Finally, you can't help laughing, because your life is exploding in front of your eyes, and it's that moment where you're crying and laughing. Then my husband says, "Thirty ccs of cinnamon, stat!" It killed me, and we all stopped crying for a moment and laughed really hard.



Four hours later, the nurse says, "It's probably time. His heart rate is lowering." We are holding his hand, and she says, "Maybe if you tell him it's OK to go, he'll go."

So we all say, "Daddy, it's OK" and "We love you," and my mom says, "John, you were such a great dad, and I love you, and it's OK, I'll take care of the girls." And across the room from the old lady in the bed, we hear, "Don't go, John."

Yeah.

And I remember thinking, *That's what I feel. That was what was inside*

*me.* I think I gave that woman my words: "Don't go, John. Don't go."

But he did. I had my hand on his chest and his heart stopped.

Later, we found out Cinnamon Lady—that's what I call her, Cinnamon Lady—didn't have anyone in her life named John. I thought, *Wow, that's crazy.* But we also learned she was a baker. So we understood the cinnamon part.

---

Vikki Garcia Kelleher is a mother, actress, and producer living the dream in Burbank, California.



★ Told live at a Moth show at the Gem Theatre in Detroit, MI

## 'Sesame Street' nearly killed our son.

SAMMY AND  
OSCAR  
BY EDDIE  
HEJKA

I'm not kidding.

Our oldest son, Sam, has autism and Tourette's, with powerful obsessions and compulsions. Some were episodic, one-time things that he *had to do* and had to do *now*, like go over the barrier at the zoo's gorilla enclosure. Climb over the fence on the edge of a 200-foot fall into Lake Superior. Wander off at sunset in the Porcupine Mountains.

Others were more periodic, things he had to do every single day for a period of six months, a year, a year and a half. Some were harmless, like the year he wore a Band-Aid on his face every single day. And some were a little more frightening, like the stretch when he had to run out and touch the yellow line in the road with his finger to a count of four.

You couldn't stop him. He could take off while I was cooking dinner or we were all asleep. The best you could



do was to try to protect him. His obsessions and compulsions were like an itch that, if he didn't scratch it, just grew and grew. We'd survived each episode with no casualties. But when he was about eight years old, there was one that I misunderstood.

Sammy was compulsively removing the wire ties that connected our chain link fence to the upright supports and top bar. He was using his little fingers to wiggle the ties back and forth to get them loose. It was taking him forever, but he was working his way down the fence. I'd go out at night regularly with my pliers, and I'd put them all back on.

Sam is not our only child. Over the years, my wife and I have raised 17 children. At the time, we had five other children, so I'd fallen behind. One day, I looked out the back window, and I saw the fence between our house and the neighbor's house lying flat in the grass. Over by the power lines was Sammy with a wobbling 20-foot-long pole.

We've learned over the years that you can't panic, you can't yell. That only makes a bad situation worse. So I said, "Sammy, let me have the pole. Give Papa the pole, Sammy."

Before I could get ahold of it, he swings it. *Wham! Wham!* You know that gray cylindrical box attached to a utility pole where the power line goes in? He hits it hard, and as he hits it,

he yells, "Oscar! Come outta you can! Come outta you garbage can, Oscar!"

He thought the transformer was Oscar's garbage can from *Sesame Street*. I had thought his compulsion was bending those wires, but no—it had a singular purpose.

I said, "Sammy, Oscar doesn't live up there. Oscar lives on the ground."

"He live on the ground?"

"Yes, he lives on the ground." Then I said, "If you hit that, you could die."

"I could die?"

"You could die."

"I could die?"

"Yes, you could die."

So 45 minutes later, I've persuaded him to come inside and see the *Sesame Street* video and show him that Oscar does indeed live on the ground.

But I'm not foolish enough to think I've talked him out of his compulsion. So I run to the fencing store and buy three big bundles of those wire ties.

Navigating Sammy's diagnoses over the past 20-some years has taught my family to appreciate the little things.

My wife summed it up beautifully on one of our family camping trips. We were sitting around the fire having a well-deserved nightcap in our little tin cups. She looked up at me and said, "Honey, it was a good day. No fatalities." **R**

---

Eddie Hejka, 57, is from Detroit, Michigan. He is a special education teacher, a local union president, and a lucky man.



We asked readers to submit a photo they took of the American flag and to tell us what it makes them feel. Here, the Grand Prize winner and four runners-up.

# Our Grand



# Old Flag



**GRAND  
PRIZE**

## **PATRIOT PROJECT**

Shortly after his deployment to Afghanistan, my younger brother was wounded in an enemy rocket attack. I decided to create a photo essay to honor him and all those who have served. I photograph people with the Stars and Stripes and ask them what the flag means to them. Pictured here is retired Marine Robert Frazier, running across his family's cornfield in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He, and I, are very proud of this country.

**KATE MAGEE, 30,**  
*Richmond, Virginia*





**RUNNER-  
UP**





**RUNNER-UP**

### ◀◀ **FLAG IN A DROPLET**

From my desk on the 22nd floor of my office in Philadelphia, I have an incredible view of the flag on the roof of the building across the street. I snapped this photo two years ago on a rainy day in April. When I went to edit it on my phone, I noticed that each raindrop was tinted with red, white, and blue. The complete American flag is reflected—reversed and upside down—in the center drop.

**ASHLEIGH ROCKEY, 31,**  
*Kirklyn, Pennsylvania*

### ⬆️ **AT ATTENTION**

After a windstorm last July, the flag in front of our home got flipped up and stuck on the flagpole. My boyfriend, an Air Force veteran, went outside to untangle it. About 15 minutes later, I realized he was still there, admiring the flag and watching the cars go by. I grabbed my camera and took this photo from our kitchen window. My boyfriend had no idea until he came inside, but now he thinks it's just as idyllic as I do.

**MICHELE GARRANT, 33,**  
*Mooers Forks, New York*

🇺🇸 **LONG MAY IT WAVE**

When I arrived at the Washington Monument on a photography trip in September 2014, I had a certain idea: to shoot straight up the monument and toward the sky. But after seeing the circle of 50 flags that surrounds the bottom of the structure, I decided I wanted a shot from the base of a flagpole. I revisited the site about four times throughout the day to find an hour when the sun did not conflict with the photo. In the end, I took just one picture. This was it.

**PATRICK TREPP, 58, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

➡ **STONES AND STRIPES**

On a cloudy morning walk along the Wisconsin shore of Lake Superior last July, my husband, my father, and I spotted this configuration of colorful rocks in the sand. I felt moved that someone had created such a distinct display of patriotism. And because my son had just completed four years of service in the U.S. Army, it meant that much more. The beach was empty on this day, but we left the arrangement undisturbed for others to enjoy as well. **R**

**JULIE BISHOP, 53, Weatherford, Texas**





RUNNER-  
UP



To see more reader-  
submitted flag photos,  
go to [rd.com/americanflag](http://rd.com/americanflag).





# Which Way Do I **Vote?**

Your new brain is rational. Your old brain is stark-raving chimp!

**BY JOHN D. GARTNER**  
FROM *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY*



**TODAY, THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** faces increasing pressure and complexity at every turn. Domestic policy demands expertise on an expanding array of topics, and proliferating crises around the world require sudden attention and, often, a quick response. As a clinical psychologist, I'm most fascinated by this question: Exactly what psychological traits does a candidate need to win the 2016 election and to guide our country successfully? After talking to historians, biographers, and political scientists, I've realized that we are increasingly of

two minds when it comes to politics—what we want in a president and what we need may be two different things. Appealing to the limbic lobe is how a candidate wins elections, while he or she governs the country by relying almost unremittingly on the cortex.

First, there's the old brain. At the base of the brain is the limbic lobe, the source of our most basic drives and instincts as well as of our emotions. Responsive to cues that helped our ancestors survive, the old brain strongly influences what appeals to us on a gut level. But sprawling on top of the limbic system is the cortex, or new brain, which sets us apart from other mammals and makes us rational and human. It's this brain that enables analysis and judgment.

## The Balancing Act

Our old brain very much resembles a chimpanzee's. The rise of Donald Trump is not too difficult to understand if you think of the ten candidates at the first Republican debate as a troop of chimpanzees struggling for alpha-male status. The next day, newspaper columnists almost unanimously declared the Trump candidacy dead. Viewers, however, saw the proceedings through their limbic

lobe, and they thought that Trump had won. There was the candidate, beating his chest, throwing dirt at his opponents—bigger, louder, and prouder. Even the way Trump styles his hair, making him look taller than his six foot three, resembles the behavior of alpha chimps who, as pri-

matologist Frans de Waal reports, make their hair stand on end to make their bodies look large.

De Waal observes that among chimps and humans, a more submissive male regulates his voice to match a more dominant male at a pitch almost imperceptible to humans. In all but

one election since the first TV debate between JFK and Richard Nixon, the man who adjusted his vocal tone lost. The winner was almost always the one who was visibly and audibly more aggressive and confident.

One question we face today is whether our primate programming will accept a woman as the alpha male. Clearly, any woman will have to dominate her opponent, as much as a man would, maybe more so. Hillary Clinton will probably be the test case.

Along with energy and aggressiveness, many of the other traits that underlie presidential success—unsinkable optimism, charisma,



*It's our task to choose the president we need, not just the one we want, someone to harness our lower-order attributes.*

confidence, expansive vision, and, often, extroversion—are linked to what is called the hypomanic temperament. People with the hypomanic temperament are not mentally ill, but they do have mildly manic features, as all their driving forces, including the competitive push for dominance, are in overdrive.

Bill Clinton is one example of this temperament. All his drives are writ large. He spent years battling overeating and can't stop talking. His extroversion and hypomanic energy made him a great campaigner. When he first ran for Congress, he regularly stumped for 36 hours without sleeping. Though perpetually late, he'd leap out of the car every time he saw a handful of people on the street: "That's ten votes!"

Judgment, the trait most essential to success in governing, is distinctly not associated with hypomanic temperament. It's quite the opposite: Poor judgment is one of the most distinctive characteristics of hypomania. Impulsivity, arrogance, a tendency to think and act too fast—these all work against the measured, sober, and patient thinking that good judgment requires. Brain-imaging studies show that when people are in a manic state, their limbic system is on fire, while the prefrontal cortex—the part of the new brain tasked with inhibiting and modulating it—is hardly working at all.

Every person alive struggles to balance the two competing sides of human nature, but presidents must

do so in the public eye. From journalistic accounts and historical records, we can see how two recent leaders, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, exhibited—or did not exhibit—the traits needed to get into and then occupy the Oval Office. And they also provide a portrait of what a successful candidate needs in 2016.

## George W. Bush: Alpha Male in the Oval

In studies when respondents have to weigh one presidential characteristic over another, "strong leader" beats out "shares my values," "has compassion," and "cares about people like me." This is why Americans often elect victorious generals, says University of Texas historian H. W. Brands. "George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Ulysses Grant, and Dwight D. Eisenhower were the alpha males of their time. Though they had no political qualifications to speak of, they kept us safe." So there are evolutionary reasons to rally behind displays of primal strength—it might help us survive.

With the election of George W. Bush in 2000, America got another alpha-male president. Months after taking office, he stood on the rubble of the World Trade Center with a bullhorn. It was just what the nation needed, and overnight, Bush's approval rating almost doubled, to 90 percent.

Presidents also need to be visionaries. They must "see over the horizon," says Jay Winik, author of *1944: FDR*



and the Year That Changed History, “and take the American people and pull them along, to do things that they may not otherwise want to do.” FDR successfully brought America into the New Deal and World War II. To be a visionary, a person must have a touch of hypomania, the grandiosity to believe you can lead people to the promised land. You have to be irrationally confident, and Bush was.

But his Achilles’ heel was his cortex. He devalued the rational processes of decision making, and he showed disdain for contemplation and an “impatience with doubters and even friendly questions,” journalist Ron Suskind wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*. When asked why Bush showed little intellectual curiosity, veteran political journalist Bob Woodward said, “He doesn’t like homework.” Bush could lead, but he wouldn’t read, which affected his judgment.

## Barack Obama: Philosopher-in-Chief

Obama may be Bush’s opposite. He is a neocortex man to the hilt, Hamlet to Bush’s Tarzan. He never beats his chest, nor is he a hypomanic extrovert like Bill Clinton. He is a classic introvert. Introverts are highly thoughtful and work more deliberately and cautiously than do extroverts, according to Susan Cain, author of *Quiet*, a book about the power of introverts.

In small doses, introverts can be

charismatic public performers, and Obama was an inspiring campaigner. But when it came time to govern, he withdrew into his work. After Obamacare passed, he should have toured America to hug newly insured citizens and chant, “Yes, we did!” Instead, he seemed to operate under the mistaken notion that good work speaks for itself. In that regard, he operated “very much the way Jimmy Carter used to try to govern: ‘I’m going to do the right thing, and the American people and Congress will follow.’ They won’t,” says Michael Genovese, head of the World Policy Institute at Loyola Marymount University. Part of the job of being president is to perpetually pitch your vision to the public, the press, even your opponents, and then tug them over the rainbow with you.

IN 2016, with political and economic difficulties afflicting the world and America’s well-being linked to global forces, whoever has the strength to win needs, more than ever, the wisdom to govern as well. And as much as that makes demands on the candidates, it requires something from us too. We members of the electorate have the obligation to summon our own wisdom. It’s our task to choose the president we need, not just the one we want, someone who can harness the dynamism of our lower-order attributes to the acumen of higher-order skills. Will we rise to the occasion? **R**

# Laugh Lines

DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN?

I bought one of those tapes to teach you Spanish in your sleep. During the night, the tape skipped. Now I can only stutter in Spanish.

STEVEN WRIGHT

If you understand English, press 1. If you do not understand English, press 2.

Recording on an Australian tax help line

I don't want to brag, but I do speak pig Latin; I mean, I'm not fluent, but I'm sure if I ever went there, I could get by.

BONNIE MCFARLANE

The four most beautiful words in our common language:

*I told you so.*

Gore Vidal

Some people just have a way with words, and other people ... oh ... not have way.

STEVE MARTIN

All pro athletes are bilingual. They speak English and profanity.

GORDIE HOWE, hockey player



The plane was a smoldering wreck, and a troubled teen was alone, injured, and lost deep in the Northwestern wilderness



# AUTUMN WEATCH IS FOUND

BY ANITA BARTHOLOMEW



*Autumn's  
boyfriend waited  
hours for her at  
the airport. But she  
never showed up.*



# SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2015

Miles above the ragged terrain of Washington State, Autumn Veatch, 16, watched through the window of the six-seater plane as it tracked the lonely highway snaking through the mountains.

She'd been visiting her mom and stepdad in Kalispell, Montana, and had expected them to drive her home to Bellingham, in Washington. But her step-grandparents, Leland and Sharon Bowman, offered to fly her back instead, to nearby Lynden.

Over the past two weeks, she and Leland had bonded over their shared love of music, while Sharon's ability to make Autumn laugh reminded her of her mom. Flying home with them had sounded like a great idea. Then she saw the plane—a cramped white-and-red Beechcraft Bonanza A35 propeller plane built in 1949. As she boarded, she texted her boyfriend, Newt Goss, "I'm totally going to die."

They were now above the magnificent but forbidding Cascade Range, which bisects Washington State. Bellingham was just west of the mountains. A cocoon of clouds wrapped itself around the aircraft, obscuring the mountains, the sky—everything.

Through a brief break in the fog, Autumn saw a tree-covered mountainside from her window. They were going to slam into it! But no—Leland smoothly banked to the right. Autumn took a few deep breaths.

She had long suffered from severe

anxiety. That, along with her depression, other emotional issues, and rapidly shifting moods, often left her feeling fragile and alienated. More than once, she'd contemplated suicide. Her father, David Veatch, with whom she'd lived most of her life, didn't seem to understand the depth of his daughter's distress. Worse, Autumn had convinced herself he didn't care enough to understand. After a number of arguments, she'd moved in with friends and begun attending the same school as Newt, the one person she felt understood her.

**LELAND AND SHARON** had been laughing and bantering throughout the flight, but now their tone changed.

"The GPS isn't working," Sharon cried out. Without GPS, they were flying blind, surrounded by fog and mountains.

Leland shouted something about having descended too low. He pulled back hard on the flight stick and pitched the aircraft upward, out of the fog. Then both Bownmans screamed. A panorama of evergreens filled the cockpit window.

The Bonanza collided with the mountain—and kept on climbing the slope, its nose still pitched upward.

*The wreckage of the Beechcraft Bonanza was spotted three days after it crashed, more than 5,000 feet up in the Cascades.*



Debris pummeled the plane, ripping away one of its wings, until the aircraft cannonballed into a tall tree, splitting the cabin from its tail section.

Flames spat out in every direction. Autumn wriggled free from her seat belt and jumped out. But Leland and Sharon were still trapped in the front seats, moaning in agony.

Batting at the blaze that singed her face, eyelashes, and hair, Autumn struggled to get to a dazed Leland. As she reached for him, her hand sizzled in the fire. The pain barely registered.

“Unhook your seat belt,” she pleaded, as she pulled on Leland.

Beside him, Sharon went limp. Autumn had never seen anyone die before.

“Come on,” she shouted to Leland, before the life drained from him too.

An odor of burning flesh rose from the mangled fuselage. Horrified, Autumn backed away.

The terrain they’d crashed on, a

mile or more up the mountain, offered no path through the thick, dark woods, but she began to push forward and make her own. Scrambling diagonally downward, half walking, half sliding, she kept coming back to a thought: *Is it my fault they died?*

**THE SHEETING RAIN** made the rocky slope slick. Autumn, soaked, was alone in the wilderness, wearing only a T-shirt, leggings, a cardigan, socks, and sneakers. She was certain this would be her final resting place.

And then she was falling—ten, 12, 15 feet. She’d barely noticed where she was stepping when she walked off a cliff. Grasping at the empty air, she landed with a thud on her bottom.

She sat still, quietly assessing. The fall should have snapped her neck. But nothing seemed broken.

In the distance, a faint rushing noise. A highway? Hopeful now, she followed the sound.

What she'd thought might have been a highway turned out to be a stream, just two feet wide, gushing down the slope. *That's all right*, she thought. *It might be just what I need.*

She and her dad had loved watching survival shows together on TV—anything that pitted humans against a harsh environment made for great entertainment. Now those shows just might save her. She remembered their lessons: Find water. Follow it downhill. Eventually you'll find civilization.

She trod carefully along the bank through brush and rocks, until her way was blocked by a thick tangle of jungle. She crossed over to the other bank. Blocked once more, she balanced on a fallen trunk and crossed again. Within a half hour, the stream had grown deeper and wider and more difficult to negotiate. Soon it was a river.

The adrenaline that had driven Autumn since the crash began to ebb, and as it did, the burns she'd suffered

on her hand became more painful. She pulled her cardigan's wet sleeve over it to keep the blisters from further damage. She kept going.

**ANY HINT OF LIGHT** through the thick tree canopy had disappeared by 9 p.m., along with the warmth it generated. As long as she wore her wet clothes, she risked hypothermia. She spied a small overhang. It was flat and covered with pine needles. This would be her bed for the night.

Autumn wrung out her sopping-wet clothes and hung them on branches to dry. Keeping her cardigan, she pulled her knees close to her chest and settled in. But sleep eluded her. *I wonder if anyone is searching for me?* Then she realized no one would even know where to look.

Something massive rustled through the landscape nearby—bear, moose, or mountain lion. In the utter blackness, she couldn't see what.

She had never been so cold.

ILLUSTRATION BY NICK DAUPHIN

## AUTUMN'S THREE-STATE PATH



## SUNDAY, JULY 12

The early-morning light broke through the trees soon after 5 a.m. Reaching for her clothes, Autumn discovered they were still soaking wet. Struggling to get them back on, she thought, *The sooner I get moving, the sooner I'll get somewhere.*

It wasn't long before the bank was again blocked and she had to pick her way across the river, zigzagging above the rushing water from one jutting rock to the next. Cautiously, she attempted another stride but lost her balance. The current swept the terrified teen under, bumping and scraping her over jagged riverbed debris.

### THE PHONE IN DAVID VEATCH'S

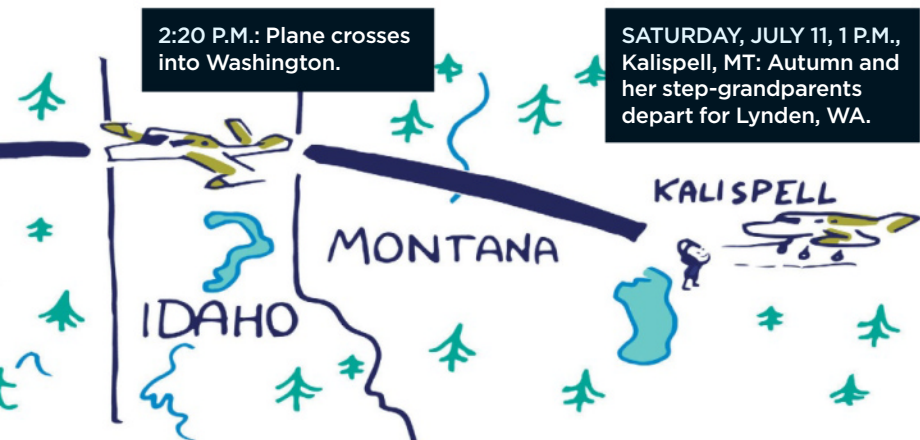
Bellingham apartment rang at 7:16 a.m. It was Autumn's mother, Misty. Newt had gone to pick up Autumn at the Lynden airport, but Leland and Sharon's plane had never arrived.

David was confused. He'd assumed

that Autumn was on a commercial airliner, not a private plane. Could this be real? He checked the local breaking-news website. There was indeed a plane missing. Feeling helpless, he contacted the local television news station, hoping that broader media coverage would galvanize the public's attention and mobilize a wider search. Then he waited.

When the Beechcraft Bonanza didn't land as expected, the Federal Aviation Administration set its search operation in motion. Steven Bass was an Alaska Airlines pilot, but this morning, he led a volunteer Civil Air Patrol crew of three in a single-engine Cessna through the northern Cascades. His crew members scanned the impenetrable forest, their eyes searching for anything out of the ordinary. They were concentrating their efforts close to the last known cell-tower position that Autumn's texts had gone through.

Had anyone survived—and that was unlikely—time was the enemy. More





than 15 hours had passed since the plane had disappeared. If the searchers couldn't locate survivors within the first 24 hours, they would probably succumb to hypothermia, injury, or any of the myriad perils thousands of feet up in the mountains. And in the thousands of square miles of wilderness, it could be months, even years, before the crash site was found.

**AS SHE SWAM** to the opposite bank of the river, a drenched, gasping Autumn gathered the strength to crawl out. The river that she believed was her best hope, her guide, was also her cruelest enemy, testing her every step of the way. Next up, a waterfall, about 15 feet in height. On either side was a near-vertical wall of rock. There was no other way down. The choice was simple: Climb down or die here.

Digging her fingers into any crevice she could find, her burned right hand screaming in protest, she descended. *Almost there, almost ...* Her fingers slipped. The frigid, roiling water snagged her, pulled her under, threw her downstream, and spit her out.

*I did it! I made it down.*

As she pulled herself out of the river, her anxiety kicked up, filling her with dread. If it bloomed into a full panic attack, she'd be paralyzed. Then her body joined in the sabotage. Asthmatic since she was little, she was finding it difficult to breathe. Settling on a fallen log, Autumn did her best to catch her breath.

## MONDAY, JULY 13

Sitting at home and waiting for news had become excruciating. So David headed to the Bellingham airfield in the morning to check on the searchers' progress. Seeing the pilots, the planes, the planners, made it real for him. These volunteers had come together to help find his baby. All the emotion that had been building came welling up, and David broke down.

**AUTUMN AWOKE AT DAWN** covered in insect bites. The bites stung. Her burns throbbed. Every muscle ached. The chill cut through her thin, damp clothes. She had barely drunk any water since the crash. The one ache she didn't yet feel was hunger. She hadn't eaten any food in over 24 hours and knew she needed sustenance. The trouble was, she couldn't find anything edible. Wild berry bushes grew in thickets on the slope, but their fruits were still green. So she stood and, once again, followed the river.

Then she heard the drone of an airplane. *Could they be looking for me?* She waved and shouted and watched it fly away. No one could see or hear her from way up there.

By midmorning, her last reserves of energy nearly depleted, she almost didn't recognize the wooden structure ahead as something man-made. It was a log bridge. A trail led from it to a parking lot, where a sign announced: *Easy Pass Trail*. Beyond the parking

lot was a highway. She had made it.

Scrambling to the shoulder of the highway, she frantically waved her arms at cars and trucks that whizzed by. A passenger waved back, but after a fruitless hour, and too tired to stand, she limped back to the parking lot.

To friends Matt Germann, 34, and Chase Euerle, 34, it looked like a great day for a hike. As they unpacked their gear in the Easy Pass Trail parking lot, Matt spied movement. A teenage girl was tentatively walking toward them.

"I need help," she said. The men then listened to her incredible story.

"You're OK now," said Matt, gently. "We're going to get you off the mountain." With no cell service in the wilderness, the men bundled her into their car and headed for the closest phone, in a store a half hour away.

**DAVID HADN'T SLEPT** in about 30 hours. His friends holding vigil with him, he finally lay down to take a quick nap. He had begun to doze when the phone rang. It was the Civil Air Patrol. Someone claiming to be Autumn Veatch had just walked out of the Cascades and into a store in the remote town of Mazama, Washington.

The first person Autumn called while waiting for the ambulance was her mother. It was a conversation Autumn dreaded. How could she tell her that Leland and Sharon were gone? But her mom calmed her fears. Yes, there would be grief, but for now, Misty reveled in the knowledge that Autumn was alive.

Autumn's second call was to her dad. A thousand pounds of tension drained away as Autumn heard him tell her that he loved her. That he would get there as fast as humanly possible. That he was coming to take her home.

For the first time since the crash, her battered, exhausted body finally recognized what it had been missing. She was ravenous.

"You know, Dad," she said, "this would be a great time for some McDonald's."

**AT THREE RIVERS HOSPITAL** in Brewster, Washington, Autumn was treated for muscle wasting, dehydration, third-degree burns, hypothermia, bruises, and insect bites. She was discharged the following day. Now 17, Autumn has moved back home with David, into her old room. **R**



## WAIT A SECOND ...

Why is a second called a second? Because it is the second division of the hour by 60. Why a minute isn't called a "first" is beyond us.

Source: quora.com

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

## FOUR REASONS YOUR CAT IS YOUR BFF

Dogs are funny, and hamsters are quiet. But cats have your back.

### HE DOESN'T LET YOU STALK YOUR EX



### HE PUTS THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE



### HE HELPS YOU MOURN

*That's his new girlfriend?  
She's even uglier than you.*



### HE HELPS YOU THROUGH LONELY NIGHTS

Hey, are you sleeping? Heyyyy!  
You asleep? Hello? Woo-hoo,  
answer me! Are you sleeping?  
Yo, answer! Are you awake  
or what?  
Come  
on, be  
cool—  
tell me if  
you're asleep  
or not!



COURTESY CATSASS.ME

**MY GIRLFRIEND AND I** often laugh about how competitive we are. But I laugh more.

**CHOOSING A MOVIE?** Don't trust these extremely abbreviated plot explanations.

***The Shining*:** A family's first Airbnb experience goes very wrong.

🐦@JANMPDX

***The Lord of the Rings*:** Group spends nine hours returning jewelry.

🐦@ESERUNSAN

***Titanic*:** Everyone tries the ice-bucket challenge.

🐦@GENERALIST

***Beauty and the Beast*:** Stockholm syndrome works.

🐦@DANSLOTT

***The Chronicles of Narnia*:** Kid comes out of the closet.

🐦@SUECHAINZZ

From the Twitter feed #ExplainAFilmPlotBadly

**A PRIEST**, a minister, and a rabbi want to see who's best at his job. So each one goes into the woods, finds a bear, and attempts to convert it. Later, they all get together. The priest begins: "When I found the bear, I read to him from the catechism and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week is his first Communion."

"I found a bear by the stream," says the minister, "and preached God's holy Word. The bear was so mesmerized that he let me baptize him."

They both look down at the rabbi, who is lying on a gurney in a body cast. "Looking back," he says, "maybe I shouldn't have started with the circumcision."



## THE UNATHLETIC CAMPER'S BASEBALL GLOSSARY

**Baseball bat:** a wooden or metal bar that can easily fly out of someone's hands.

**Foul ball:** a moment when you think, Holy @#\$%, I got a hit!

**Babe Ruth:** someone who people tell you was also overweight.

**Right field:** a quiet place where you can sit for long stretches and play with dandelions. Until suddenly you hear a clang and some shouting and immediately understand life is about to get much harder.

**Fly ball:** when the sun drops a boulder on your head.

**Shortstop:** a position that involves mostly ground balls and that you think maybe you can play.

**Line drive:** the reason you can't play shortstop.

**Innings:** the amount of time left before afternoon snack, divided by nine.

MARC PHILIPPE ESKENAZI,  
in the *New Yorker*

**You don't have to be the Babe Ruth of yuks to get paid for your funny gag or list. For details, see page 7 or [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).**



WHO KNEW?

# 50 Facts For 50 States

Quick: Where are “idiots” not allowed to vote?  
(And 49 other odd, outrageous, or revealing tidbits)

BY JULIANA LABIANCA



## » ARIZONA

The state that produces enough cotton each year to make two T-shirts for every American (that's 599 million tees).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLAIRE BENOIST

## » ALABAMA

The only state whose official drink is an alcoholic beverage (Conecuh Ridge Alabama Fine Whiskey, originally distilled by legendary moonshiner Clyde May).

## » ALASKA

The state is known for fishing, mining, and oil, but its latest industry is peonies. Peony farms blossomed from zero in 2000 to more than 200 in 2014.

## » ARKANSAS

Site of the world's most perfect diamond, the 3.03-carat Strawn-Wagner Diamond, and North America's largest diamond, the 40.23-carat Uncle Sam Diamond, both unearthed at the Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro.

## » CALIFORNIA

If it were a country, it would have the eighth-largest economy in the world, beating out Italy, Russia, and India.

## » COLORADO

Although Congress intended the state to be a perfect rectangle, its surveyors wandered a bit off course. A tiny kink

in the western border disqualified it from rectangle purity.

## » CONNECTICUT

The first phone book was published in New Haven in February 1878, containing just 50 names.

## » DELAWARE

The state with the most generous laws regarding company ownership has been the model for Cayman Islands and other offshore tax havens.

## » FLORIDA

The remains of an 8,000-year-old human civilization were found buried in a peat bog here. The bodies were so well preserved that human brain tissue was found in a woman's skull with her DNA still intact.

## » HAWAII

The only state covered entirely by its own time zone, Hawaii-Aleutian, also doesn't observe daylight saving.

## » GEORGIA

Just outside Atlanta, the picturesque community of Serenbe requires each of its 200-plus homes to include a porch.

## » IDAHO

Boise celebrates the New Year by dropping a 16-foot-tall steel-and-foam potato in the state capital. Every year, thousands of "spec-taters" gather to watch.

## » ILLINOIS

In 1887, engineers began to reverse the flow of the Chicago River to stop pollution from contaminating the city's water supply. The reversal was complete in 1900.



**» INDIANA**

At 8 p.m. on March 31, 1880, Wabash became the first city in the world to be lit by electricity—via four “Brush lights,” invented by Clevelander Charles F. Brush.

**» IOWA**

The world’s largest painted ball resides in Alexandria: The 4,000-pound baseball with a 14-foot circumference is the creation of Michael Carmichael, who began the project more than 50 years ago after dropping a ball in paint; he now adds another coat or two every year.

**» KANSAS**

It’s the state that was proved to be—quite

literally—flatter than a pancake. Scientists tested the flatness of the state against the topography of a pancake. On a zero-to-one scale of perfect flatness, Kansas was flatter, with a score of 0.9997. The pancake scored only 0.957.

**» KENTUCKY**

Underground vaults at Fort Knox hold one of the largest stockpiles of gold in the country. Not many people have seen the stash, though—and some even question whether the 27.5-pound bars, worth \$6 billion, truly exist.

**» LOUISIANA**

A last-second home-team touchdown at Louisiana State University in 1988 sent the fans into such a frenzy that the victory registered as an earthquake on a local seismograph.

**» MAINE**

Maine is the loneliest number: the single state whose name is just one syllable, the lone state that borders precisely one other state, and the only state whose official flower, the pinecone, is not a flower.

**» MARYLAND**

It’s the wealthiest state in the country, as measured by median household income.

**» NEBRASKA**

About 80 percent of the world’s sandhill crane population alights on Nebraska’s Platte River during the cranes’ annual spring migration, bringing with them thousands of bird-watchers.



## » MASSACHUSETTS

Sixteen of the top 25 windiest U.S. cities are located here.

## » MICHIGAN

The Great Lake State offers the highest recycling refund in the country—10 cents per bottle or can. Unfortunately, a *Seinfeld* episode alerted out-of-staters to Michigan's generosity, sparking a scheme that costs the state millions every year.

## » MINNESOTA

This Land of 10,000 Lakes technically has more than 11,000.

## » MISSISSIPPI

Dashing hatmaker John B. Stetson made his western creation at Dunn's Falls after the Civil War, forever changing cowboy style.

## » MISSOURI

Thanks to St. Louis and snacks popularized at the 1904 World's Fair, Americans can now throw back giant quantities of Dr Pepper, cotton candy, iced tea, waffle cones, and frankfurters.

## » NORTH DAKOTA

The state that drank the most beer per capita in 2013 and 2014 but fell to second place in 2015, according to one survey.



## » MONTANA

The temperature in Loma once climbed from -54 degrees F to 49 degrees within 24 hours—the largest one-day hike ever recorded.

## » NEVADA

From 1951 to 1992, a swath of land about 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas was used for hundreds of nuclear weapons tests.

## » NEW HAMPSHIRE

This state's license plates—bearing the slogan "Live Free or Die"—are made by prison inmates.

## » NEW JERSEY

When it comes to the

Garden State, remember two things: horses and divorces. New Jersey has more horses per square mile than any other state, including Kentucky, and the lowest divorce rate in the country.

## » NEW MEXICO

According to New Mexico state law, "idiots" are not allowed to vote. The statute doesn't give a clear definition of who fits that description.

## » NEW YORK

Twice a year, the setting sun aligns perfectly with the Manhattan street grid, illuminating the borough's east-west streets with an orange glow.

## » NORTH CAROLINA

The Biltmore Estate, in Asheville, is the largest privately owned home in the country, with more than four acres of floor space and 250 rooms (including 35 bedrooms and 43 bathrooms).

## » OHIO

Half of the presidents who died in office were from Ohio: William Harrison, James Garfield, William McKinley, and Warren G. Harding.

## » OKLAHOMA

It appears to serve up the only official state meal: a heaping plateful of fried okra, squash, corn bread, barbecue pork, biscuits, sausage and gravy,

grits, corn, strawberries, chicken-fried steak, pecan pie, and black-eyed peas.

## » OREGON

It boasts the nation's fastest talkers, according to an analysis of consumer phone calls placed to businesses across the country.

## » PENNSYLVANIA

This state's name is spelled *Pensylvania* on the Liberty Bell. The Constitution uses one *n* in one section and two *n*'s in another.

## » RHODE ISLAND

The smallest state in the country has the longest official name: State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

## » SOUTH CAROLINA

The Angel Oak Tree, located near Charleston, is estimated to be one of the oldest living things in the country. It produces a shadow that covers about 17,000 square feet.

## » SOUTH DAKOTA

Catching some z's must be easier in South Dakota, which one survey found is the least sleep-deprived state in the country.

## » TENNESSEE

On a clear day, seven states are visible from Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga.

## » TEXAS

The phrase "Don't mess

## » WISCONSIN

When the state dance is the polka, it's awfully convenient that A World of Accordions, a museum with more than 1,000 types of squeeze-boxes, is also found in the state.





with Texas" originated 30 years ago as the slogan for a campaign meant to combat littering.

## » UTAH

The Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry holds the highest concentration of Jurassic-era remains ever found. More than 12,000 dinosaur bones (and one egg!) have been excavated since the 1920s.

## » VERMONT

Don't visit the Haskell Free Library and Opera House in Derby Line

unless you're prepped for travel. The stage is in Canada, while the fans watch from Vermont; the entrance is in the U.S., while the stacks are in lumberjack country.

## » VIRGINIA

Virginia ranks number one in patriotism among the 50 states, according to one WalletHub survey, which based its list on factors like military and civic engagement.

## » WASHINGTON

The world's largest building by volume—Boeing's final assembly

factory in Everett—spans 98.3 acres and 472 million cubic feet. Seventy-five football fields could fit inside.

## » WEST VIRGINIA

In 1776, a group of residents asked the Continental Congress to create a 14th colony called Westsylvania, including parts of West Virginia and surrounding areas; the plea was ignored.

## » WYOMING

There are only two sets of escalators in the entire state. **R**

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# That's Outrageous!

KNOW YOUR NE'ER-DO-WELLS

■ **Idler** ('iyd-ler) *A lazy person.* A man allegedly stole \$4,000 from a New Jersey bank. Clearly sapped of energy from his day's work, he was caught by police soon after while taking a coffee break at a nearby Dunkin' Donuts.

Source: nj.com

■ **Mountebank**  
( 'moun-tuh-bank)

*A charlatan.* A farmer in China bought two puppies from a man who said they'd make good watchdogs. Over the next two years, the black, coarse-haired pups grew large and consumed massive amounts of food. Indeed, they were excellent watchdogs, probably because they weren't dogs. The farmer had been sold black bear cubs.

Source: thedodo.com

■ **Pilferer** ('pil-fer-er) *One who steals petty objects.* A man allegedly stole a book from the University of Louisville Health Sciences Center and then tried to resell it at a bookstore. The title of the book: *Resolving Ethical Issues.*

Source: Courier-Journal



■ **Railer** ('rey-ler) *One who is argumentative.*

A Brazilian soccer referee had a unique way of dealing with flared tempers on the field last September: He pulled a gun and threatened the players.

Source: sbnation.com

■ **Rogue** ('rohg)

*A scoundrel.* After being alerted by a concerned constituent about a terrifying new epidemic that turned women's genitals blue, a Trenton, New Jersey, councilwoman used a council meeting to address the scourge of Blue Waffle Disease. "It has already claimed 85 lives!" she insisted. Only later did she find out it was an April Fools' Day hoax.

Source: Star-Ledger

■ **Vagabond** ('vag-uh-bond)

*One who lives a drifting life.* A burglar in Wales was arrested after he was discovered fast asleep in a homeowner's bed. Turns out, the full tub of ice cream he'd swiped and then eaten had made him drowsy.

Source: Daily Mirror

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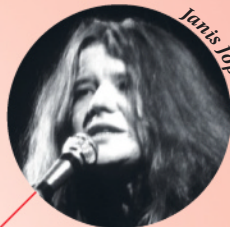
*Helen Keller*



*Charlie Chaplin*



*Janis Joplin*



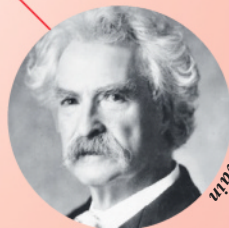
# CLOSE

*Encounters*

*Patti Smith*



*Mark Twain*



*Graciano Marx*



# Charlie Chaplin and Groucho Marx, Mark Twain and Helen Keller, and other auspicious meetings of American icons

BY CRAIG BROWN FROM THE BOOK *HELLO GOODBYE HELLO*

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## JANIS JOPLIN AND PATTI SMITH

*New York City: August 1969.* Janis Joplin is hanging out with her band at El Quijote, the restaurant attached to the Chelsea Hotel. She is the toast of hippie America. She doesn't seem to notice the girl who has just strolled in.

Patti Smith and her friend Robert Mapplethorpe have recently moved into room 1017, the smallest bedroom in the hotel. At 23, Smith is a bookstore assistant who yearns to be an artist of one kind or another. The Chelsea represents her aspirations. She enters it as a novice might enter a convent.

Dressed in a long rayon polka-dot dress and a straw hat, she puts her head round the door of the bar. The scene is almost absurdly characteristic of its era, scattered in roughly equal proportions with musicians and bottles of tequila. Jimi Hendrix is there in his big hat, slumped over a table at the far end; to his right, Grace Slick and the rest of Jefferson Airplane sit around a table; to his left, Joplin pals around with the guys in her backup band. They are all here for the Woodstock Festival.

Returning to her room, Smith feels "an inexplicable sense of kinship with

these people," and she continues to make inroads into bohemia. Recently, Bobby Neuwirth became top dog after he popped up as a friend of Bob Dylan in the documentary *Don't Look Back*. Now Neuwirth takes Smith under his wing, introducing her to Kris Kristofferson and Roger McGuinn. One day, he introduces her to Janis Joplin with the words, "This is the poet Patti Smith." From that moment, Joplin always calls her the Poet.

Over the coming year, Patti Smith joins those drifting in and out of Joplin's suite. Joplin rests on an easy chair in the center, brandishing a bottle of Southern Comfort, even in the afternoon. One day, Smith sits at the feet of Kris Kristofferson and Janis Joplin as Kristofferson sings his new song, "Me and Bobby McGee." In her rasping, wailing voice, Joplin joins in the chorus. This is later deemed a moment of rock history, but Smith is preoccupied with the poem she is trying to write.

After attending one of Joplin's concerts, the singer's vast entourage tromps off to a party downtown. Smith notes that Joplin—in magenta and pink, with a purple feather boa—spends most of the evening with a



handsome man to whom she is obviously attracted. But just before closing time, he leaves with someone else.

Joplin bursts into tears. "This always happens to me, man. Just another night alone."

Neuwirth tells Smith to take Joplin back to the Chelsea Hotel and keep an eye on her. Smith sits with Joplin and listens while she talks about how unhappy she is. Smith has written a song for her and, never backward in coming forward, seizes the opportunity to sing it. It is on the theme of the star adored by the public but lonely offstage.

"That's me, man! That's my song!" says Joplin.

Before Smith sets off for her room, Joplin adjusts her boa in the mirror. "How do I look, man?" she asks. "Like a pearl," replies Smith. "A pearl of a girl."

## CHARLIE CHAPLIN AND GROUCHO MARX

*Beverly Hills Tennis Club in Los Angeles: July 14, 1937.* To mark the opening of their trendy new tennis club, champion players Fred Perry and Ellsworth Vines stage one of the very first pro-celebrity tournaments: In a highly publicized match, Perry partners with Charlie Chaplin and Vines with Groucho Marx.

Chaplin is just a year older than Marx, but the gap seems infinitely wider: The two men are separated by sound. Chaplin is the king of silent comedy; Marx, the king of the fast-talking wisecrack. Chaplin spends a lot of time fretting that he belongs to the past; at lunch before the game, he shares these fears with his opponent.

"Charlie turned to me and said, 'Gee, I envy you,'" recalls Marx, decades later. "He said, 'I wish I could talk on the screen the way you do.' I found this such an ironical statement. Here was the greatest comedian that there's ever been, and he's sitting there envying me because I can talk ... He was just as frightened as he had been when he first came and asked my advice."

That first meeting took place 16 years before, when the Marx Brothers had three hours to kill



*Charlie Chaplin and Fred Perry (center) made duck soup of Groucho Marx and Ellsworth Vines at doubles.*

between trains in Winnipeg. Groucho Marx walked up the main street to the Empress Theatre, where Chaplin was playing. "I've never heard an audience laugh so forcefully in my life," Marx recalls. He went backstage, introduced himself to Chaplin, and invited him to come see the Marx Brothers perform.

Chaplin accepted. As a prank, he sat in the front row reading a news-

paper through the whole show. The Marx Brothers said nothing, but when Chaplin invited them to see his show, they switched places in their box with four Orthodox rabbis, all extravagantly bearded. Assuming the rabbis were the Marx Brothers in disguise, Chaplin picked on them, whereupon all four rabbis stormed out in protest.

For the rest of their lives, Marx and

## MORE MEETINGS OF AMERICAN LEGENDS

**1914:** Aboard the *SS Imperator*, Harry Houdini performs a mind-reading magic trick on former president Theodore Roosevelt. A baffled Teddy later insists Houdini tell him "man to man: Was that genuine spiritualism or legerdemain?" Houdini admits it was "hocus-pocus" but does not reveal his secret until years later.

**1944:** After surviving D-day, 25-year-old infantryman J. D. Salinger marches into Paris to find author and war correspondent Ernest Hemingway already guzzling champagne at the Ritz hotel bar. The two drink and chat for hours and remain pen pals through the war.

**1957:** Marilyn Monroe shows up at 90-year-old Frank Lloyd Wright's hotel to discuss plans for her dream home—a hillside mansion with domed ceilings, a 70-foot-long pool, and a curved driveway for limousines. Her husband, playwright Arthur Miller, rejects the extravagant plan. In 1993, a Hawaiian golf course uses Wright's "Monroe House" design for its clubhouse.

**1970:** Elvis Presley, bedecked in a purple velvet tunic and solid-gold belt, requests FBI special agent credentials from President Richard Nixon so he may better suppress "the drug culture, hippie elements, etc."

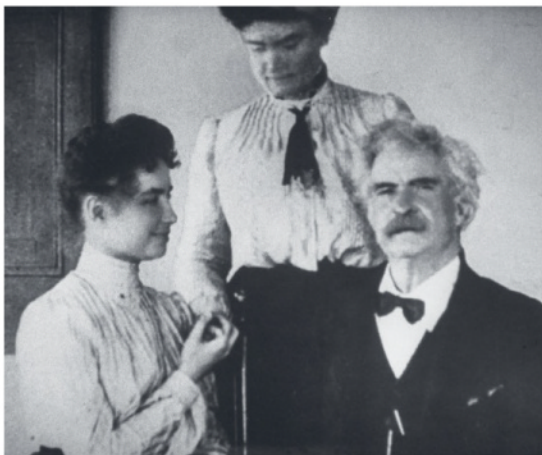
Nixon uneasily agrees. Now a badge-carrying federal agent, Presley employs a custom blue light on his car to pull over speeding motorists or offer roadside assistance. The meeting was dramatized in the recent film *Elvis and Nixon*.

**1984:** Michael Jackson visits the White House to receive an award and a private audience with Ronald and Nancy Reagan. Upon being confronted by 75 star-struck staffers, Jackson panics and locks himself in the Presidential Library bathroom until "all those adults" are removed. Nancy gossips with Jackson's entourage through the meeting.

Chaplin maintain an edgy relationship. On this summer's day in 1937, that tension between the two most famous comedians in the world comes to a head. Chaplin prides himself on his tennis: He has a court at home, where he throws tennis parties for fellow stars like Greta Garbo and Clark Gable. Marx is much less proficient with a racket. Unable to compete in tennis and incapable of being seen in public outside his buffoonish persona, he competes for laughs instead. He turns up with a huge suitcase and a dozen rackets, curls up in a sleeping bag, and then brandishes a Ping-Pong paddle.

Chaplin and Perry win the first two games with ease. At this point, Marx tells the crowd that he is going to have a lunch break. He dips into his suitcase and produces a tablecloth and a range of sandwiches, which he proceeds to spread on the ground. "Will you join me for a spot of tea?" he shouts to Chaplin.

In newsreel footage, Chaplin smiles at Marx's shenanigans, but this is only for the cameras; "I didn't come here to be your straight man," he hisses into Marx's ear. Years later, he had still not forgiven Marx for casting himself as the funny guy.



*"The instant I clasped his hand in mine, I knew that he was my friend," Helen Keller (left) said of Mark Twain.*

## MARK TWAIN AND HELEN KELLER

*Redding, Connecticut: February 1909.* As Helen Keller's carriage draws up between the huge granite pillars of Mark Twain's house, the most venerable author in America is there to greet it, though Keller can neither see nor hear him. Her companion Anne Sullivan—her eyes and ears—tells Keller that he is all in white, his white hair glistening in the afternoon sunshine "like the snow spray on gray stones."

Twain and Keller first met 15 years ago, when he was 58 and she was just 14. Struck deaf and blind by meningitis at 18 months, Keller had, through sheer will, discovered a way to communicate: She finds out what people are saying by placing her fingers on their lips, throat, and nose, or by hav-

ing Sullivan transpose it onto her palm in the letters of the alphabet.

Keller had formed a special friendship with Twain—unlike other people, “he knew that we do not think with eyes and ears,” Keller wrote. “He treated me like a competent human being. That is why I loved him.”

For his part, Twain was in awe. “She is fellow to Caesar, Alexander, Napoléon, Homer, Shakespeare, and the rest of the immortals,” he said. Shortly after their first meeting, Twain formed a circle to fund her education at Radcliffe College, which led to her publishing an autobiography at 22 and becoming almost as celebrated as Twain himself.

But the intervening years have struck Twain hard. One of his daughters has died of meningitis, another of an epileptic fit, and his wife, Livy, of heart disease. Throughout Keller's stay, he acts his familiar old self, but Keller senses the deep sadness within. “There was about him the air of one who had suffered greatly,” she writes later. “His expression was sad, even when he was telling a funny story.”

Twain welcomes them in for tea and buttered toast by the fire. Then he shows them around. He takes Keller into his beloved billiard room. He will, he says, teach her to play just like his friends Paine, Dunne, and Rogers.

“Oh, Mr. Clemens, it takes sight to play billiards.”

“Not the variety of billiards that Paine, Dunne, and Rogers play,” he

jokes. “The blind couldn't play worse.”

They go upstairs and stop by his bedroom. “Try to picture, Helen, what we are seeing out of these windows. We are high up on a snow-covered hill. Beyond are dense spruce and firwoods, other snow-clad hills, and, over all, the white wizardry of winter. It is a delight, this wild, free, fir-scented place.”

He shows the women to their suite. On the mantelpiece, there is a card telling burglars where to find everything of value. There has recently been a burglary, he explains, and this will ensure future intruders do not disturb him.

Over dinner, Twain holds court, “his talk fragrant with tobacco and flamboyant with profanity,” writes Keller. “He talked delightfully, brilliantly.” Dinner comes to an end, but his talk continues around the fire, as leisurely as the Mississippi River.

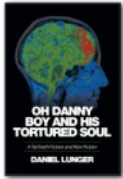
Years later, long after Twain has died, Keller returns to where the old house once stood; it has burned down, with only a charred chimney standing. She turns her unseeing eyes to the view he once described to her and at that moment feels someone coming toward her. “I reached out, and a red geranium blossom met my touch,” she wrote. “There was the bright flower smiling at me out of the ashes. I thought it said to me, ‘Please don't grieve.’”

She plants the geranium in a corner of her garden. “It always seems to say the same thing to me, ‘Please don't grieve.’ But I grieve, nevertheless.” **R**



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# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things Park Rangers Wish You Knew

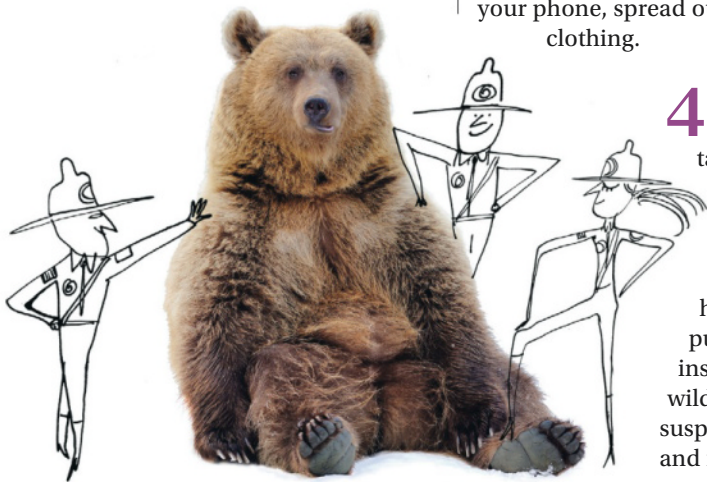
BY MICHELLE CROUCH

**1** Go beyond the overlooks. No matter which park you're visiting, walk at least a quarter mile down a trail. You'll get away from the crowds and experience a completely different perspective.

**2** People will do anything for a picture. A tragic accident that happens surprisingly often: People pose as if they're falling off a cliff for a photo but then actually fall off.

**3** Stay put if you get lost. The more you move around, the harder you are to find. If you can't reach us on your phone, spread out brightly colored clothing.

**4** I do a lot more than lead nature talks and campfire sing-alongs. Rangers make arrests, fight fires, search for missing hikers, conduct public health inspections, manage wildlife, and watch for suspicious characters and fugitives. ➔



**5** I've seen my share of visitors in the buff. That includes nude yoga, naked hikers, and couples getting intimate in secluded areas.

**6** Have a fourth grader in your family? You're in luck: At [everykidinapark.gov](http://everykidinapark.gov), fourth graders can sign up for an annual pass that grants them and a carload of passengers free access to all national parks.

**7** To avoid crowds during busy summer months, check out Death Valley instead of the Grand Canyon, Kings Canyon instead of Yosemite, or Capitol Reef instead of Zion.

**8** We work hard to keep poachers out. Some raid our parks for plant life to sell to the floral industry. Others have used antifreeze to collect moths and butterflies. Some have even killed bears for their gallbladders, which can fetch \$3,000 each as a "traditional medicine" in Asia.

**9** You're closer to a national park than you think. People associate national parks with the wilderness, but about a third of the 410 National Park Service sites are actually in urban areas.

**10** Don't be a "Code W." That's what some rangers call wimpy tourists who request a rescue when there is nothing medically wrong

with them. Lots of people call and say they're too tired to keep hiking. Sorry, but we're not going to send a helicopter for that.

**11** Many people don't read the signs—including us. I was in a national park with my son once, and we walked right to the edge of a drop-off. We were marveling at the scenery when I heard a park ranger behind us clear his throat. We had walked right by a big sign that read, "Danger: Don't go past this sign."

**12** It's a good idea to keep your distance from any animal, whether it's a squirrel or a buffalo. One time at Yellowstone, a bison was eating grass near a parking lot. People tried to take selfies, but the bison got mad and attacked someone. If you must get a close-up, invest in a telephoto lens.

**13** People have asked me if the Grand Canyon is human-made, what time we feed the animals, and when we turn on the waterfalls. Other visitors know more historical facts than I do. Yet no matter what your knowledge level is, if I teach you one thing you didn't know before, I've done my job as a park ranger. **R**

Sources: National Park Service rangers Kathy Kupper, Brandon Torres, Michael Kelly, Michael Liang, and Enimini Ekong and former rangers Andrea Lankford, author of *Ranger Confidential: Living, Working and Dying in the National Parks*, and Bruce Bytnar, author of *A Park Ranger's Life*

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He evaluated all the high priced digital hearing aids on the market and then created his own affordable

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This new digital hearing aid is packed with the features of \$3,500 competitors at a mere fraction of the cost. Now most people with hearing loss are able to enjoy crystal clear, natural sound — in a crowd, on the phone, in the wind — without “whistling” and annoying background noise.

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—Dennis L., Arizona

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*"I would definitely recommend them to my patients with hearing loss"* —Amy S., Audiologist, Indiana

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Carnival games are rigged even harder than slot machines, but not every game is equally unfair

## Secrets Of the Carnies

BY LUIS PAEZ-PUMAR  
FROM MENTAL FLOSS

### Milk-Bottle Pyramid

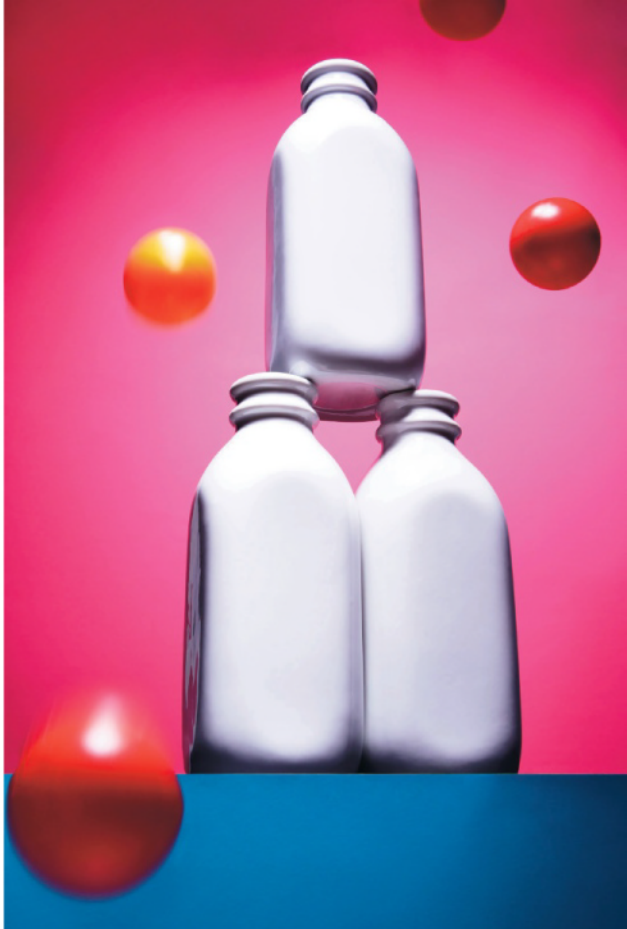
#### Can you beat it?

Yes, but it's unlikely.

**Why?** This is one of the more winnable games, if you know what you're doing. Many carnivals use leaded glass for the bottom bottles, making them heavy enough to withstand getting hit with a ball (a ball that is sometimes filled with cork to make it lighter, no less). The trick? Aim for the middle of the bottom row, and throw as hard as you can.

### Ringtoss

**Can you beat it?** Probably not.



**Why not?** The rings are barely big enough to go around the bottles. Plus, they're made of hard plastic that bounces if you don't land the ring directly on the bottle. If you want to win, put spin on your throw to slow the ring's momentum and hope it settles in smoothly; if you miss by even a couple of millimeters, say goodbye to your cash.

## Basketball Toss

**Can you beat it?** Yes, but not often.

**Why?** If your free throws swish through nothing but net, then you have a chance. If not, get ready to fall prey to some of the worst tricks at the carnival: an overinflated ball, an oval rim that's smaller than a normal hoop, and a hard backboard (often plywood) that ensures the ball flies off if it makes contact.

## Balloon Dart Throw

**Can you beat it?** Nope.

**Why not?** This game is a double whammy of cheating. First, the balloons are partly deflated so they're harder to pop (they're also all different colors to distract you). Second, the darts aren't regulation darts but cheap plastic ones that wouldn't even pop a pimple. Your only chance is to throw the dart as hard as you can and hope. (But you're better off spending your dollars on cotton candy.)

## Rope Ladder

**Can you beat it?** Actually, yes!

**Why?** It has a razor-thin margin of error, but once you figure it out, you can win every time. The trick is to avoid the rungs, as they will unbalance you. Instead, slowly work your way up the ropes, moving your right leg with your left arm and vice versa. Don't rush—if you move too quickly or your limbs aren't in sync, you'll topple over faster than you can say "Give me your money back."

## Ball Toss into Tub

**Can you beat it?** Not a chance.

**Why not?** This may be the best-rigged carnival game: Attendants use a deadened ball while they're demonstrating, which makes it more likely that the ball will remain in the tub. However, when it's your turn, they hand you a bouncy, lightweight softball.

Good luck.

**R**

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## LISTEN HERE

My life is like a song that I know only a few of the lyrics to,  
so I sing those parts loudly and mumble the rest.

**@CEHUDSPETH (CHRISTOPHER HUDSPETH)**

Casual fan: I like their best album.

Hard-core fan: Actually, their second-worst album is their best.

**@DANHOPP (DAN HOPPER)**



# Are You an “Average American”?

BY BRANDON SPEKTOR

According to Gallup, Pew, and other polling data taken from American adults ...



**71**

percent could name Alexander Hamilton as a U.S. president (he wasn't).



**70**

percent describe themselves as dog people.



**64**

percent own a smartphone; 67% of them will check it even if it didn't ring.



**55**

percent say they get enough sleep on workdays.



**52**

percent have money invested in the stock market (a 20-year low).



**39**

percent of homeowners don't know their neighbors' names.



**37**

percent have never moved from their hometowns.



**34**

percent say they are “engaged” (read: “not bored to tears”) at work.



**21**

percent say they are online “almost constantly.”



**21**

percent speak a language other than English at home.



**11**

percent buy their pets a gift on Valentine's Day.



**10**

percent have thrown out a dish just because they didn't feel like washing it.

# READERS SET TO GET FREE SURVIVAL FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES

Farmers vow to keep up with the demand to supply all readers who call toll free and beat the deadline to claim up to four free 72-hour survival food kits.

Over 85% of Americans believe that the nation is headed in the wrong direction, according to a recent survey. We've all seen the evidence to know that something bad can happen and we should look out for ourselves because no one else will.

In a crisis, your #1 need is food. But not just any food... experts recommend you keep at least a 72-hour supply of non-perishable food on hand.

Well right now – in what truly is an unprecedented move – 72-hour Food4Patriots survival food kits are being given away to readers as long as they call a special toll-free hotline and beat the program deadline.

These meals are made from scratch here in America. They taste great and provide essential nutrition. The breakthrough “Low Heat Dehydration” method and the space-age packaging material (like that used in NASA space suits) guarantee the amazing 25-year shelf life.

Your family will enjoy familiar dishes like Liberty Bell Potato Cheddar Soup, Blue Ribbon Creamy Chicken Rice, Travelers Stew, and Granny's Home-style Potato Soup.



*Readers are lining up to claim their free 72-hour survival kit before the deadline.*

Usually the 72-hour kit costs \$27.00 plus shipping. But readers who act now will pay only the \$9.95 shipping for each. “We don’t want any families left out, but we have a limited supply of free kits,” Bates warned. “Once word got out that we were giving away free survival food, our phones started ringing off the hook.”

This program will end no matter what at midnight, August 31, 2016.

## HOW TO GET YOUR FREE 72-HOUR SURVIVAL FOOD KITS:

Food4Patriots is committed to giving as many as four free 72-hour kits to readers who call the toll-free hotline with the approval code shown below. Provide your delivery instructions and agree to pay the \$9.95 shipping fee for each kit claimed.

**Approval Code: 72FREE**  
**Toll-Free Hotline: 1-800-937-7790**  
**Offer Cut-Off Date: 08/31/2016**

Food4Patriots will continue to give away 72-hour kits for as long as their supplies last. Due to media exposure, phone lines may be busy. Just keep calling and you will get through.

# CONNECTIONS:

Your link to values and insights each month

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*From the land that gave birth to baseball, Budweiser, and bebop, we bring you this homegrown mix of words, phrases, and names. Need help with your Americana? Ask your uncle Sam—or check the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. pompadour** ('pahm-puh-dohr) *n.*—A: parade uniform. B: convertible top. C: men's hairstyle.
- 2. El Capitan** (ehl 'kahp-ee-'tahn) *n.*—A: Alamo general. B: Yosemite rock formation. C: Civil War stronghold.
- 3. jackalope** ('jak-uh-lohp) *n.*—A: rabbit with antlers. B: rodeo bronco. C: crusading journalist.
- 4. barnstorm** ('barn-storm) *v.*—A: travel around performing. B: dance at a hoedown. C: give a ranting speech.
- 5. ponderosa** (pahnh-deh-'roh-suh) *n.*—A: gold mine. B: pine tree. C: mountain range.
- 6. fake book** ('fayk book) *n.*—A: recipe folder or container. B: stack of marked playing cards. C: collection of songs.
- 7. tricorn** ('try-korn) *adj.*—A: popped, as in kernels. B: deliberately campy. C: like Paul Revere's hat.
- 8. bunting** ('buhn-ting) *n.*—A: fabric for flags. B: baby boy. C: Roaring Twenties dress.
- 9. Tin Pan Alley** (tihnh pan 'a-lee) *n.*—A: hideout for hoboes. B: row of factories. C: pop music center formed in the late 19th century.
- 10. twain** ('twayn) *n.*—A: disguise. B: male suitor. C: two.
- 11. moxie** ('mahk-see) *n.*—A: chorus girl. B: courage. C: double-talk or deceptive message.
- 12. brushback** ('bruhsb-bak) *n.*—A: grooming technique for a horse. B: baseball pitch. C: method of sawing or logging.
- 13. eighty-six** ('ay-tee 'siks) *v.*—A: round up. B: get rid of. C: submerge.
- 14. copacetic** (koh-puh-'seh-tik) *adj.*—A: very satisfactory. B: satirical. C: pepped up.

 To play an interactive version of Word Power on your iPad, download the Reader's Digest app.

## Answers

**1. pompadour**—[C] men's hairstyle. The piled-up-in-front do, notably worn by Elvis, was named for France's Madame de Pompadour (1721-1764).

**2. El Capitan**—[B] Yosemite rock formation. It's Spanish for "the captain"—appropriate, since the landmark impressed early explorers as the dominant rock in the valley.

**3. jackalope**—[A] rabbit with antlers. In Wild West folklore, it's a cross between a jackrabbit and an antelope.

**4. barnstorm**—[A] travel around performing. Semipro baseball teams used to tour the country playing exhibition games in their off-season.

**5. ponderosa**—[B] pine tree. The name of this heavy western North American tree has roots (pun intended) in the word *ponderous*.

**6. fake book**—[C] collection of songs. Used by jazz and other musicians to quickly learn songs, it has bare-bones melody lines and chord names.

**7. tricorn**—[C] like Paul Revere's hat. A tricorn hat is bent at three points (*tri* for "three" plus *corn* for "corner").

**8. bunting**—[A] fabric for flags. Made of worsted wool, it is typically used for Fourth of July banners.

**9. Tin Pan Alley**—[C] pop music center formed in the late 19th century. It was named for the tinkling pianos in a neighborhood of Manhattan songwriters.

**10. twain**—[C] two. Where the Mississippi River measured two fathoms in depth, steamship workers would call out, "Mark twain!" (hence the pen name of Samuel Clemens).

**11. moxie**—[B] courage. The word dates back to a soft drink in the 1800s.

**12. brushback**—[B] baseball pitch. It forces a batter to step back and breaks his confidence.

**13. eighty-six**—[B] get rid of. Rhyming with *nix*, it was originally diner slang meaning "to cancel."

**14. copacetic**—[A] very satisfactory. Its roots are unknown, but tap dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson claimed to have invented the word.

### PICTURE THIS

Decals, a 19th-century invention, let people transfer pictures from paper to glass and other surfaces. Rumor is that by the early 1900s, fast-talking New Yorkers had jokily mashed the word *decalcomania* (the art of decal transfer) into *cockamamy*, slang for "nonsensical"—though etymologists aren't completely sure how!

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**8 & below:** proud

**9-11:** patriotic

**12-14:** all-American

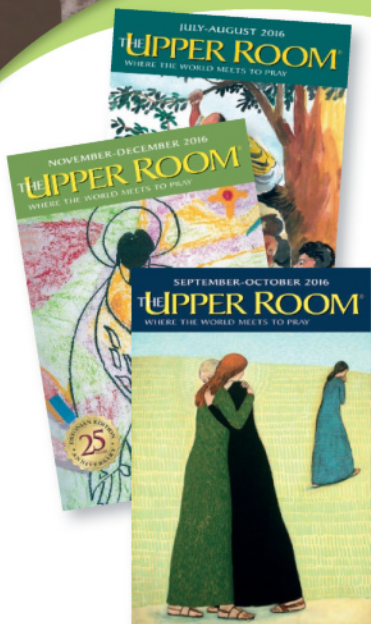




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# Humor in Uniform



*"That's an order!"*

**WHEN THE SERGEANT** told our new commander that his driver could not participate in an upcoming field maneuver because she was pregnant, the enraged commander demanded to know just how pregnant she was.

The sergeant's reply: "Completely, sir."

DAVID RASBERRY, *Castle Rock, Colorado*

**"NEXT TIME** I send a damn fool, I go myself."

SGT. LOUIS CUKELA, reportedly said at the Battle of Belleau Wood during World War I

**THE AVERAGE AGE** of people living in our military retirement community is 85. Recently, a neighbor turned 100, and a big birthday party was thrown. Even his son turned up.

"How old are you?" a tenant asked. "I'm 81 years old," he answered.

The tenant shook her head. "They sure grow up fast, don't they?"

THOMAS CLEMENTS, *Catonsville, Maryland*

**Send us your funniest military anecdote or news story—it might be worth \$100! For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).**

# Ask the Expert

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## IS A HEARING IMPLANT RIGHT FOR ME?

### **Straining to hear each day, even when using powerful hearing aids?**

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You may be asking yourself: "What are hearing implants and will they work for me?" While these answers lie in the hands of a qualified Hearing Implant Specialist, there are some telltale signs that may mean a hearing implant is right for you. Get to know the facts. It's the first step to better hearing.



**David C. Kelsall, M.D.,**  
Cochlear Medical Advisor

Dr. David C. Kelsall, a hearing implant surgeon and medical advisor to Cochlear, the world leader in hearing implants, answers common questions about hearing implants.

#### **Q: Is a hearing implant right for me?**

**A:** If you have tried hearing aid after hearing aid and nothing seems to work, it may mean a hearing implant is right for you. Other signs may include having difficulty hearing in noisy environments (*such as restaurants*) or on the phone. Be sure to discuss these signs with a Hearing Implant Specialist in your area. Hearing aids are typically worn before implantable solutions are considered.

#### **Q: How are hearing implants different than hearing aids?**

**A:** While hearing aids only amplify sounds, hearing implants help make them louder and clearer. Improving the clarity of your hearing may help you better understand speech in both quiet and noisy situations.

#### **Q: What kinds of hearing implants are there?**

**A:** There are hearing implant solutions for many types of hearing loss. They include cochlear implants, Hybrid™ Hearing and bone conduction implants. Visit your Hearing Implant Specialist to determine which one may be right for you.

#### **Q: Does Medicare cover hearing implants?**

**A:** Yes, hearing implants may be covered by Medicare and most private insurance.\*

#### **Q: Do hearing implants require surgery?**

**A:** Yes, surgery is required. However, in most cases it is a short, outpatient procedure.

#### **Q: Am I too old to get a cochlear implant?**

**A:** No, it's never too late to begin your journey to better hearing.

Call **1 800 836 2905** to find a Hearing Implant Specialist near you.

Visit **Cochlear.com/US/RDigest** to take an online hearing quiz.

\*Contact your insurance company or local Hearing Implant Specialist to determine your eligibility for coverage.

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Hear now. And always



# Quotable Quotes



**THE MORE YOU  
SWEAT IN TRAINING,  
THE LESS YOU WILL  
BLEED IN BATTLE.**

**NAVY SEALS**

**People are the only animal on  
the planet that are in denial  
that they are an animal.**

**BEN HARPER, musician**



Games are won by players who  
focus on the playing field—not by  
those whose eyes are glued to  
the scoreboard.

**WARREN BUFFETT,  
CEO and businessman**

**BEING UNDERSTOOD  
IS BETTER THAN  
BEING PRAISED.**

**IRVING FELDMAN, poet**

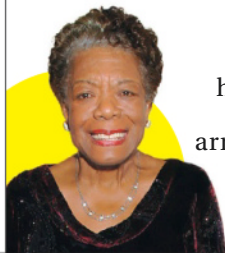


**The upside of painful knowledge is  
so much greater than the downside  
of blissful ignorance.**

**SHERYL SANDBERG, technology executive**

**PERFECTION IS  
GOD'S BUSINESS.  
I JUST TRY FOR  
EXCELLENCE.**

**MICHAEL J. FOX,  
actor and philanthropist**



Love recognizes no  
barriers. It jumps  
hurdles, leaps fences,  
penetrates walls to  
arrive at its destination  
full of hope.

**MAYA ANGELOU,  
poet and novelist**

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‡For more information, visit [LaserSpineInstitute.com/surgeons](http://LaserSpineInstitute.com/surgeons).

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