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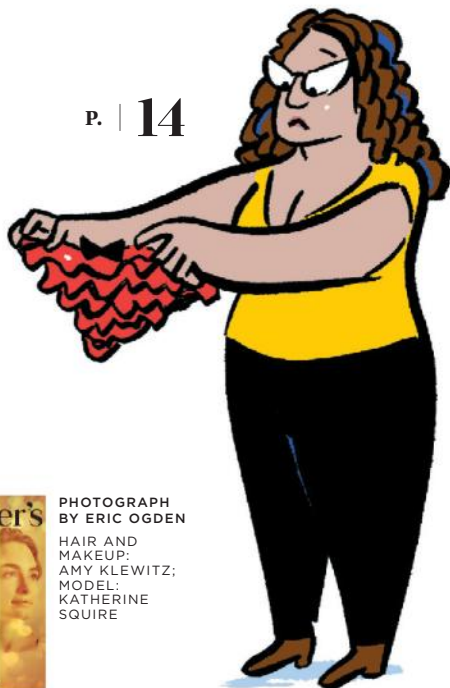
JULIANA LABIANCA



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC OGDEN

HAIR AND MAKEUP: AMY KLEWITZ;
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FROM TOP: PHOTOGRAPH BY LISA SHIN; ILLUSTRATION BY NISHANT CHOKSI



Dear Readers

I NOW BELIEVE THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF MIRACLES. First are the big *M* Miracles, those so implausible that even people who obsess on logical causes start to wonder if a higher power is at work. For instance, “Miracles in Real Life,” on page 67, tells of two half sisters separated as very young children in Korea. Four decades later, they learn of each other’s existence while working the same shift on the same floor of a hospital more than 7,500 miles away. Whoa.

The second type I discovered thanks to Daryl Chen, the editor of that story. Daryl calls them small *m* miracles, and she learned how to recognize them from her mother. “My mom was the kind of person who could find any lost object. She spotted \$20 bills in the street,” Daryl says. “At first, I thought she was just lucky. But I came to realize her gift had much to do with how she saw the world, as a place where amazing things happened—and so they did.


“Take the Great Sandwich incident. It was the spring of my senior year in high school—the week that college acceptance letters were due. I still remember going home at lunchtime, ripping open the envelope, and reading those glorious words: ‘We are delighted to inform you ...’ I was so thrilled that I dropped my brown-bag lunch in our mailbox and promptly forgot about it. Several days later, my mother came to my room. Looking excited, she said, ‘Someone left us the most wonderful thing in the mailbox last week ... a sandwich!’ When I saw her eyes shining with the joy of living a life in which sandwiches magically appeared, I didn’t have the heart to explain. She passed away 17 years ago. I’m glad I never told her.”

On that note, we wish for your eyes and hearts to remain open to the miracles—big *M* and small *m*—in your lives. As the holidays turn into a new year, let’s vow to find amusement, mystery, and wonder wherever we can, whether on the other side of the world or in the mailbox at the end of the driveway. **R**



Bruce Kelley,
editor-in-chief
Write to me at
letters@rd.com.





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Letters

COMMENTS ON THE OCTOBER ISSUE

Everyday Heroes

I had tears in my eyes thinking of the joy that Alex Yawor must bring to families by painting portraits of their loved ones lost in wartime.

It reminds me of the joy I see as a volunteer at the Eisenhower Desert Orthopedic Building in Rancho Mirage, California. The men who have been helped beam as they say, "Look, I don't need my crutches anymore." It's a smile one never forgets.

J. H., via e-mail

Down Off the Cross

I agree, cancer should not define one. I was diagnosed with breast cancer 15 years ago and again this year. My attitude is that cancer is a disease and the goal is to recover and move on. Cancer is what I had, not who I am.

ANNE SACCO, Port St. Lucie, Florida

Ms. Jarvis is the one who needs to get off her cross. I am a survivor for two years so far. My doctors in Lubbock, Texas, saved my life. I tell anyone and everyone about being cancer-free



for two years. My goal is to spread the word about the excellent doctors in Lubbock.

DERRELL GOUGH,
Carlsbad, New Mexico

I Found a Story: Fatima's Freedom

I have Muslim friends who, like Fatima, do not wish to wear a hijab or follow other religious dictates. But I also have Muslim friends who enjoy wearing their hijabs, agree with the beliefs, and are not subjugated by their families or husbands. That is the kind of story that Americans never hear.

P. S., via e-mail

My Dog Reviews the Furniture He Has Eaten

Boy, did this article strike a chord. My daughter came over and brought her two Labs, one of them still a puppy. We were gone only an hour, but the puppy managed to chew up my carpet. While the article was funny, having to replace my carpet wasn't.

PATRICIA A. PEIRCE, Hagerstown, Indiana

13 Things Your Dreams Reveal About You

If dreaming about the dead means “death may be near,” then I should have died over 40 years ago. I’ve often dreamed about loved ones. It’s a very calm and loving experience.

SUSAN DEMERIT, *Tualatin, Oregon*

Points to Ponder

Chuck Palahniuk indicates that memories of pain are long-lived but that memories of sweetness might soon be forgotten. I don’t agree. I have forgotten pain quickly, but sweetness is often indelible. Tell me, who can forget their mother’s sweet blue eyes, her correcting smile?

FRANK BERRY, *Kansas City, Missouri*

Outrageous Companies! Greed, Guile, and Lies

I was a long-time employee of Exxon. Nothing in the culture of the company I worked for is compatible with what I read in this article. Your words were carefully chosen to fit a pre-determined conclusion that Exxon deliberately attempted to sway the public regarding climate change and has been doing so for 35 years.

RONALD L. WOLF, *Plano, Texas*

Raising Alexander

My daughter was a “floppy baby” too. She had a 50/50 chance of never walking or speaking and being confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. But my husband and I always expected more of her than her physical therapist said was possible. Thirty years later, she’s married with two children, holds a black belt in martial arts, and is in law enforcement.

NAME WITHHELD UPON REQUEST

Undo a Sugar Binge

You people are darlings! I tried the tip of taking a spoonful of peanut butter to ward off sugar cravings. It works!

MARY H. SANDS, *Minneapolis, Minnesota*

THE LOST ART OF GRATITUDE

In our hectic lives, it’s all too easy to forget to express appreciation: for a gift, a kind gesture, an invitation. Have you received or sent a touching thank-you note? Tell us about it at rd.com/thankyounotes. We just might publish your letter. (And by the way, thanks!)



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EVERYDAY HEROES



Courtney Holmes offers his young customers a little something extra with their trim

The Storybook Barber

BY ANDY SIMMONS

“HEY, HOW YOU DOIN’? I’m Courtney. What grade are you in? Third? What’s your favorite book? *Elephant and Piggy*? Yeah, I got it.”

If you thought you’d walked into a library with a greeting like that, you wouldn’t be too far off. In fact, you’ve entered the workplace of Courtney Holmes, aka the Storybook Barber.

Two years ago, Dubuque, Iowa, held its first annual Back to School Bash, offering needy families an opportunity to learn about free resources in the community. Holmes agreed to participate. He was holding down two jobs at the time—one with the city’s public works department,

the other as a barber. Saturday was his busiest haircutting day, but he chose to donate his time and give free haircuts to underprivileged kids so they’d look sharp on that first day of classes. But then he had a lightbulb moment: “The kids should earn their free haircut by having to read a book to me,” Holmes said.

The idea was so popular that he continued it the first Tuesday of every month for the next two years. Five- to ten-year-old boys would grab a favorite book, settle into the barber chair, and read aloud while Holmes snipped away. If they stumbled over a word, Holmes was there to help. ➡



"These kids are eager to learn," says Holmes. "They want to open their minds."

After the haircut, they'd review the book, from the characters and vocabulary to the themes—just like in school, only more fun.

Holmes, who is married and has two sons, ages three and four, recognizes that not every parent has the time to read with their kids. "I get it. You have four kids, and you're working two jobs. Sitting down and listening to them read is the last thing you have time to do. You have to clean the house or cook dinner. So I say bring your kids in and let them read to me."

Holmes admits he, too, benefits from the free snip-and-reads.

"There was this seven-year-old who struggled through his book, stuttering over words even though he didn't have a stutter," said Holmes. He had the boy take the book home and practice. When the child came back a few days later, "He read it with no problems. That inspires me."

Holmes and his family have recently moved from Dubuque to a Chicago suburb. When they get settled, he plans to resume his role as the Story-book Barber. "The way the world is today with guns and violence," he says, "it's a safe haven for the kids, to come to the barbershop and read books." **R**

When a man falls onto the train tracks,
three strangers jump down after him

Without Hesitation

BY JIM DWYER FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

ON A BRIGHT Friday afternoon in spring, Sumeja Tulic had every reason to relish walking the streets of New York, a city she'd moved to nine months earlier from London to attend journalism school. "When the weather is good, it's very hard to find a reason to be melancholic or dissatisfied with the city," she said.

Yet her time in New York coincided with a season of ceaseless ugliness in politics and acts of terrorism around the world. "One day you

laugh, and then you're angry," said Tulic, a Bosnian Libyan.

As she walked toward the subway station, she thought, "Please, God, I want to see something nice," she said. "Enough of this craziness."

At the City Hall station, she settled onto a bench. It was just after 2 p.m. Only a few people were at the station. A man leaned against a pillar, the way anyone might, waiting for the train. The stillness was interrupted by an announcement that the next train ➔



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was two stations away. Then Tulic glimpsed the man at the pillar collapsing forward onto the tracks.

"This man waiting for the train," said Rachele Peterson, a researcher who was also on the platform, "ran over, peered over the edge, then jumped onto the tracks."



"One of the gentlemen was trying to wake him up, and he just couldn't," said an eyewitness.

The man who had fallen was not moving. Two more men jumped down to help.

"I don't know where these men got the wit and the quickness," Tulic said. "The man who fell was about six foot tall, a heavy man by default. He was kind of jammed in the tracks. It was nerve-racking to know that the train was coming. Will it stop? Will they succeed to pull him out?"

On the tracks, the unconscious man was propped to a sitting position by the three men, who then lifted

him from below to others who hoisted from above and rolled him onto the platform. Then the rescuers were themselves rescued, hauled back to safety by helping hands. As soon as they were all clear, the train pulled in. "People getting off the train walked around this unconscious man," Peterson said.

He was not, however, alone. Two of the men who had jumped onto the platform were holding his hands. "They were saying, 'Buddy, you're going to be fine,'" Tulic said. "This was an additional layer of goodness."

Paramedics arrived, and the man was taken to a local hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries, officials said.

One of the men who went onto the tracks, David Tirado, told gothamist.com that he had visited with the stricken man, who had no recollection of being in the subway or of a congress of strangers gathering to save him.

"That is the greatest thing," Tulic said. "The infrastructure in this city of millions is the people themselves providing, being there for others. Without even knowing the person, who he is, no matter what denomination he subscribes to. It was beautiful to see."



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.

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Department of Wit

My Mother Gives the Weirdest Gifts

BY IJEOMA OLUO
FROM THE *GUARDIAN*



IJEOMA OLUO is a writer and speaker. Her book, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, will be published by Seal Press in 2017.

I STARED AT THE text message in disbelief. The attached photo scared and confused me. The message said, “For Lindy! They’re in her size!”

I was used to getting text messages from my mom around the holidays with gift ideas for members of the family, including my sister-in-law. I would laugh or sigh or roll my eyes and answer “Neat!” or “What?” But this time, as I looked at a picture of a pair of black leather chaps hanging in the dressing room of a thrift store, I simply answered, “No.”

She had gone too far.

When you get a less than desirable gift, people like to say, “It’s the thought that counts,” but with my mother’s gifts, you’ve really got to wonder, What thought was that,

exactly? My mother is the type of person to see a pair of plus-size leather chaps and say, “They’re in her size!” without ever saying to herself, What would my future daughter-in-law do with leather chaps?

Still, my mother’s presents are never given with malice or mischief; they are always presented with wide-eyed, innocent excitement. “Do you like it?” she always asks expectantly, and we nod our heads while we try to figure out what “it” is. Over the years, her Christmas presents have become infamous for the amusement and bewilderment—and sometimes horror—that they evoke. New family members, like Lindy, find themselves smiling, confused and slightly scared.

Two years ago, my mother gave me red ruffled panties. They were large, bright red, and completely covered in obscenely fluffy ruffles, the kind that you see little girls wearing under their fancy dresses in old-timey pictures. They were the type of panties that I imagined, when worn under clothes, would make the wearer look like she was wearing a lumpy and quite full diaper. As I held them up, mystified by the bow in front, my mother remarked, “You

know, because you’re dating now.”

Last Christmas, she bought my brother and Lindy the Clapper—you know, “Clap on, clap off. THE CLAPPER.” On the surface, an “as seen on TV” gift from the early ’90s might seem like a harmless—even hipster—gift. But to my mother, it was genius.

She talked about it for weeks before the holiday. “Did you hear what I got your brother?” she’d say, and before I could answer “Yes,” she’d answer, “The Clapper? You know, ‘Clap on, clap off?’” Then she’d chuckle and say, “He’s going to love it.”

When Christmas arrived and we were exchanging gifts, my mother realized she

had left the present at home. “Aham, Lindy—I can’t believe I forgot the best part of your Christmas! I got you the Clapper.” Then she looked at them expectantly.

“Oh, cool, Mom!” my brother said, slightly strained and a little relieved. My mother, excited, clapped twice, and then twice again, to show them what they could look forward to. She never did remember to bring the Clapper to Aham and Lindy, so her hands-on demonstration ended up being their only gift.

Several years ago, my mother

“

*Few things
terrify a two-
year-old more
than a grotesque
version of his
mother’s head
staring at him
while he poops.*

”

spent days working on handmade clay sculptures for my brother, my sister, and me: lovingly crafted, grotesque interpretations of our heads. “I made the nose extra large so you can rest your glasses on her face at night,” my mother explained when she gave the head to me. “Keep it on your bathroom counter.”

I took the head home and placed it in my bathroom as instructed. I soon discovered that few things terrify a two-year-old child more than a small, garish version of his mother’s decapitated head staring at him while he poops. He’d forget it was there and then see it out of the corner of his eye and start screaming.

My son used the downstairs bathroom more and more, and he eventually refused to take a bath if the head was in the room. We both endured its presence until one day, as I was doing dishes, I heard a series of bumps, followed by a large crash. I walked over to the stairs, and there, at the bottom, was the head, broken into a dozen pieces. At the top of the stairs stood my son, triumphant.

But far and away, the most terrifying gifts my mother has ever given any of us came on Christmas 2004, when she paid a craftsperson to make life-size replica cloth dolls for my son and for my brother’s daughter. These dolls were the same height as our kids, had the same skin tones

and curly hair, and were dressed in our children’s actual clothes (which my mother had sneaked out of our homes). They also had manic, wide-eyed grins painted on their flat faces. If any doll was going to murder you in your sleep, it was going to be one of them.

My brother and I soon learned that the dolls were not going to kill us in our beds—they were, instead, planning on killing us when we were wide-awake. Nothing takes you from zero to heart attack faster than coming home from work and seeing a life-size replica of your child lying facedown on the floor.

Still, the clueless, endless, and enthusiastic love embodied in my mother’s strange presents is the same love with which she raised me and my siblings. She has always loved us for our boring, reserved personalities unconditionally, and we—with all our eye rolls and sighs around the Christmas tree—love her unconditionally as well. Maybe there’s no better gift to give children than the knowledge that they can be weird or awkward and still feel loved, just the way they are. Besides, one day—many long years from now—when our mother is gone, we can pass these objects on to our children and our grandchildren. And we’ll stare at them with goofy grins on our faces while we say, “Get it? Clap on, clap off. THE CLAPPER.” **R**

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Your homework assignment from a famous novelist:
Make art. Then destroy it.

How to Grow Your Soul

BY KURT VONNEGUT

FROM THE BOOK *LETTERS OF NOTE*

IN 2006, A NEW YORK CITY English teacher named Ms. Lockwood asked her students to write to their favorite author and persuade him or her to visit the school. Five of those pupils chose novelist Kurt Vonnegut. Though he never made the trip to Xavier High School, Vonnegut did respond to the students with the following letter. He was the only author to reply.



November 5, 2006

Dear Xavier High School, and Ms. Lockwood, and Messrs. Perin, McFeely, Batten, Maurer, and Congiusta:

I thank you for your friendly letters. You sure know how to cheer up a really old geezer (84) in his sunset years. I don't make public appearances anymore because I now resemble nothing so much as an iguana.

What I had to say to you, moreover, would not take long, to wit: Practice any art—music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, fiction, essays, reportage—no matter how well or badly, not to get money and fame, but to experience *becoming*, to find out what's inside you, *to make your soul grow*.

Seriously! I mean starting right now, do art and do it for the rest of your lives. Draw a funny or nice picture of Ms. Lockwood and give it to her. Dance home after school, and sing in the shower, and on and on. Make a face in your mashed potatoes. Pretend you're Count Dracula.

Here's an assignment for tonight, and I hope Ms. Lockwood will flunk you if you don't do it: Write a six-line poem about anything, but *rhymed*. No fair tennis without a net. Make it as good as you possibly can. But don't tell anybody what you're doing. Don't show it or recite it to anybody, not even your girlfriend or parents or whatever, or Ms. Lockwood. OK?

Tear it up into teeny-weeny pieces and discard them into widely separated trash receptacles. You will find that you have already been gloriously rewarded for your poem. You have experienced becoming, learned a lot more about what's inside you, and you have made your soul grow.

God bless you all!
Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut is the author of 14 novels, including *Slaughterhouse-Five*, consistently rated one of the 100 best English-language books of the 20th century.

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“

***Practice any art,
however well
or badly, not
to get money
and fame, but to
find out what's
inside you.***

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May take 1-4 days for full effect. [†]AlphaImpactRx ProVoice™ Survey, Jan 2005 - Mar 2015.

^{^^}Pharmacy Times Surveys, Acid Reducer/Heartburn Categories 2006 - 2015.



Should a resort pay damages to the family of a man who died while skiing?

The Case of The Deadly Avalanche

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

ON JANUARY 22, 2012, 28-year-old Christopher Norris was skiing alone at Winter Park Resort in Winter Park, Colorado. When he didn't meet up with his father-in-law at the time they had planned, the ski patrol was dispatched. Sadly, they found Norris's body buried under several feet of snow just off a black diamond run in an area of the resort that was known as Trestle Trees. Norris had died after being overcome by an inbounds avalanche—one occurring within the boundary of a ski resort.

Four months later, Norris's wife, Salynda Fleury, filed a wrongful death lawsuit in the Grand County District Court on behalf of herself and the couple's two children. In the complaint, Fleury claimed that

IntraWest Winter Park Operations Corporation, which runs the resort, had been negligent because, despite avalanche warnings released that day by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center for areas with conditions similar to those on Trestle Trees at the time, IntraWest failed to close the area or warn its skiers of the danger. She said that her husband "could rightly assume the Trestle Trees area was safe from avalanche danger when Winter Park did not close the area." Fleury asked for an unspecified amount in damages.

IntraWest claimed it was not liable for Norris's death, since its resort was protected by Colorado's Ski Safety Act, enacted in 1979 "to establish reasonable safety



standards for the operation of ski areas and for the skiers using them.” The act outlines a list of the “inherent dangers and risks of skiing” that a skier should expect as part of the sport, which include “changing weather conditions,” “snow conditions as they exist or may change,” and “variations in steepness or terrain.”

“This triad describes the building blocks of avalanches,” says IntraWest’s attorney, Peter Rietz. “Avalanches are an inherent risk of skiing.” The district court judge, Mary Hoak, agreed

with him and dismissed the case.

Fleury then appealed to the Colorado Court of Appeals. “If the legislature had intended to include avalanches in its list of inherent risks of skiing, it would have included the word *avalanche*,” says the widow’s attorney, James Heckbert. “It did not.”

Is Winter Park Resort liable for the death of skier Christopher Norris, who was killed in an avalanche that occurred at the ski resort? You be the judge.



THE VERDICT

On February 13, 2014, two out of three appeals judges agreed with the district court’s decision to dismiss, stating that an avalanche fell “neatly into the examples of dangers in the act.” Judge Jerry Jones dissented, arguing that the other justices erred in giving the act “an expansive reading rather than a narrow one.” He said, “The General Assembly identified particular events which would fit within the statutory definition—collisions with natural objects, impacts with man-made objects, and collisions with other skiers. The event at issue here—an avalanche—is not among them.”

Fleury made a final appeal to the Colorado Supreme Court, with her attorney echoing Jones’s point in an opening brief: “The Court should resist any urge to assume the General Assembly made such a glaring omission and should instead apply the statute as written.” On May 31, 2016, the supreme court ruled—and disagreed. Since the act includes “snow conditions as they exist or may change” in its risks, the court found the “phrase encompasses an inbounds avalanche, which is, at its core, the movement or changing condition of snow.” Winter Park Resort, as a result, was not liable.

“It’s wide-open now,” says Heckbert, Fleury’s attorney, warning that this interpretation of the language in the act basically releases resorts from liability. “There’s no limit to what can be considered an inherent risk of skiing.” **R**

Points to Ponder



SOURCE PHOTOGRAPH: FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

[SPAM] MAY MUTATE, but it's not going to stop. Spam is where evil meets advertising, and no one has ever gotten rid of either of them.

ELIZABETH ZWICKY,
Yahoo anti-spam architect,
in the *New York Times*

YOU HAVE TO make what you want to see in the world. That is basically your obligation if you're an artist. For that matter, even if you're a plumber.

CARRIE MAE WEEMS,
photographer, in Lenny

I've noticed a parallel between adult tantrums and child tantrums ... I desperately want to walk up to certain people ... and say, "Talk to your body. Just use your words."

KRISTEN BELL, *actress, in Redbook*

FROM ORBIT you see the repeated patterns of human settlement and civilization, and inevitably start to sense that each of us inherently wants the same things out of life—joy, grace, time and stability to think, better opportunities for our children, laughter, someone to love. The precept of Us and Them is one that is taught; it's not the fundamental reality.

CHRIS HADFIELD,
astronaut, on Reddit.com

SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME that the secret to success is being the person who other people want to see succeed. It's more important than talent, brains, or luck.

DICK PARSONS,
former Time Warner CEO, in Vanity Fair





PHOTO

OF LASTING
INTEREST

Inside Earth

Since 2000, more than 600,000 years after some of these crystal beams formed, humans have been exploring the Cueva de los Cristales, an underground crystal incubator 1,000 feet below Mexico's Naica Mountain. The protective suit tells all about the risk: Temperatures here scorch up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit, and humidity consistently hovers between 90 and 100 percent. A human without adequate gear—an ice-cooled suit and a cool-air breathing system—would succumb to the climate in minutes.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARSTEN PETER
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

CHRISTMAS GIFT TO REMEMBER

That Christmas Eve, I tried to put on my best Whoville face for my four children. I had no presents for them. No tree, lights, or stockings. I smiled, but I couldn't quite pull it off. The kids had not complained at all, but by bedtime, I was overwhelmed with discouragement. Tears poured down my cheeks. Waking up Christmas morning, I saw, taped to the wall, a stocking. Cut from a brown paper bag, stapled together, it had a candy cane and *MOM* drawn on it in red crayon.

MARGARET SUE LEEPER, *Miami, Oklahoma*

LUCKY DOG

I saw him limping along, one rear leg dangling, useless, on my way home from work. He was a small, nearly hairless gray dog. I stopped and tossed him bits of bread to entice him closer. Leery, this broken creature let me put him in the car. My husband rebelled against \$1,500 for surgery. "Take him to the pound!"



I did, but when he wrapped his paws around my arm in terror, I decided to face my husband's wrath. Now, six years later, he loves that dog more than he loves me.

LYNN ADAMS,
Santa Fe, New Mexico

FOREVER LOVE

The dreaded phone call came: My 97-year-old mother

was fading away. I rushed to her bedside, but Mama just lay there. I was heartbroken when she died three days later. We hadn't shared any meaningful last words. While gathering mementos from her home for her funeral, I snatched a bag promoting an upcoming movie. The release date was my mother's birthday. Reversing the bag, my vision blurred as I read the message: "Love like that doesn't go away. It's here with us forever." Mama had indeed spoken.

DIANE LA MARR, *Richmond, Virginia*

To read more 100-word stories and to submit your own, go to rd.com/stories. If your story is selected for publication in the magazine, we'll pay you \$100.

~~Un~~Certainty



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FINISH THIS SENTENCE

The one New Year's

To quit smoking.

New Year's Eve will make it 20 years.
I don't miss one thing about it.

SONDRA TREASURE



Salem, OR

Being a kid

again by playing with
my children.

J. DANIEL HERNANDEZ

Salt Lake City, UT



Spreading smiles

every day, especially
when I don't feel
like smiling.

THERESA CALLAHAN

To stay fat.

I'm very satisfied with the results!

ARTIS INGENIO

Mesita, NM

Oklahoma City, OK

San Clemente, CA

Clifton, AZ

To not complain

about waking up at four in the morning
for work before going to bed at night.

ROSEMARY MCMAHON

Writing a thank you note

to someone every day.

LESLIE RAY

resolution I kept was ...

Improving my
vocabulary.

CAROL OBERFOELL

Always leaving room

for improvement. That way I can have something to resolve next year.

DAVID CYR

Monticello, IA

To say something
nice to someone,

even if it's a stranger.
I've made it a permanent resolution.

CHERYL WACHS WURTELE

Lexington, KY

To share my love of books and

encourage reading

by building a Little Free Library.*
It's such a joy to see adults and children leave with books that they've chosen.

EILEEN LAFLEUR O'HARA

Myrtle Beach, SC


Visiting another
national park
with my family. We went to two.

MARGUERITE DISMUKES FISCHER

Savannah, GA

Making my
marriage work,
and I have for 37 years.

KAREN HARDY

 Go to facebook.com/readersdigest or join our Inner Circle Community at tmbinnercircle.com for the chance to finish the next sentence.

*Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing communities with free access to books and encouraging reading. To build your own, visit littlefreelibrary.org.



“Call Back Anytime”

IN FEBRUARY OF 2005, Phil Belfiore was teaching his seventh-grade students how to write a parody of the Robert Frost poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” He liked the sample that he had written for them, so he recorded it on his home answering machine: “Whose phone this is I think you know / I cannot answer it now though / So state your name, be very clear / I’ll call you back when I get home.”

That act would lead to one of the most unusual friendships of his life.

When Phil and his family returned to Maryland from Easter vacation, he listened to his voice messages. One

LIZ VACCARIELLO is the editor-at-large of *Reader’s Digest*. She believes stories are everywhere—you just have to listen. To share yours with her, e-mail liz@rd.com.

gentleman caller apologized for dialing the wrong number. But, he added, he’d heartily enjoyed the poem (“My little dog must think it queer / To hear my voice when I’m not near / It causes her poor heart to ache / And fills her with a pang of fear”). Phil laughed and thought nothing more of it—until the phone rang a few days later.

“I recognized the voice immediately,” recalls Phil, now 57. “He said that he was sorry to bother me, but he was calling to hear the poem again.”

The two men talked. John, now 73, lived in Cheyenne, Wyoming. It turned out that his brother’s phone number was different from Phil’s by one digit, thus the wrong number. Phil inquired about John’s raspy, hollow voice. Was he

feeling OK? Sure, just some heart trouble. Had a bypass.

“Before hanging up, I told him to call back anytime,” recalls Phil. Whether to hear more of the poem (“She gives her tiny tail a shake / As if she knows it’s a mistake / If I were there, she’d get a treat / But since I’m not, a nap she’ll take”) or just to talk.

That was 11 years ago. They’ve spoken on the phone a few times a month ever since.

John initiates most calls, but Phil will ring if a while has passed and he has any reason to worry. “We seem to always connect when there’s been a storm or a big sports event,” Phil says.

The men discuss football and family. John will reminisce about his life or update Phil on folks he has been in touch with. “Slowly over the years, our conversations have grown much more personal,” says Phil. “We talk primarily about John’s health, finances, and love life. Also our relatives, hobbies, and whatever else comes up. Sometimes we just talk for a minute to see how the other is doing.”

“Like old friends?” I prod. I’m trying to understand from Phil what draws these men to each other.

“We *are* old friends,” Phil says.

No need to overthink it. John, who over 11 years has shared a little

of himself at a time, has woven himself into the fabric of Phil’s life.

I call John and find him an engaging storyteller with an exceptional memory. He tells me that as a child visiting Capitol Hill, he had lunch in the Senate dining room with Wyoming’s Frank Barrett, whom he’d recognized in the hallway and charmed. (The senator was on a popular citrus diet and had grapefruit.) In the years since, John’s 25-year job working for the Veterans Administration provided enough spending

money to travel, mostly to visit family and friends. He has been to China, Israel, Turkey, and all 50 states.

Three years ago, 50 people came from far and wide for John’s surprise 70th-birthday lunch. Phil couldn’t make it. They’ve planned to meet twice since, but circumstances conspired against them.

Neither minds this latest “haven’t.” Phil and John haven’t gone to a game together, had a cup of coffee together, or sat on the other’s sofa. Their friendship is based on the simple act of picking up the phone. Two men checking in, talking about football, and maybe sharing stories.

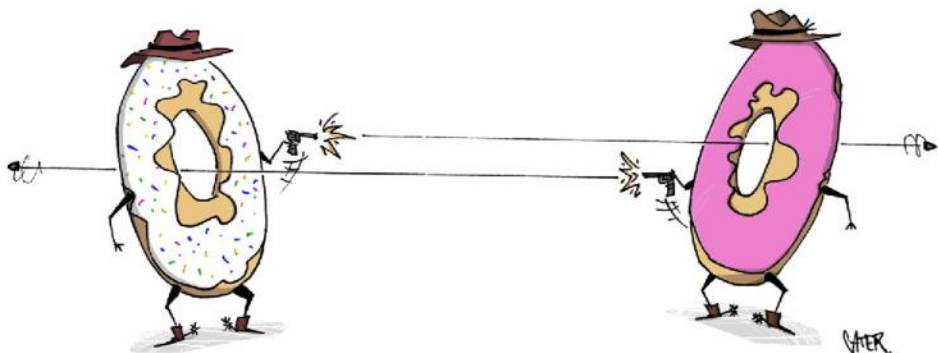
“My best friend is someone I’ve not yet met in person,” says John.

It’s as simple, and as extraordinary, as that.

“*My best friend,
John says,
“is someone
I’ve not yet met
in person.”*

Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



OUR NEW NEIGHBORS thought our Wi-Fi was our last name. So when they gave us a Christmas card, they addressed it to “The Linksys Family.”

From huffingtonpost.com

THE LINE AT OUR LOCAL post office was out the door, and, seeing that only one postal worker was on duty, the customers were getting testy. To help hurry things along, a customer called out, “How can I help you go faster?”

The postal worker yelled back, “Go home!”

SCARLETT BUZEK, *Menifee, California*

A FRIEND OF MINE had an aunt who was into health food way before

anybody else in Mississippi even considered it. She would send away for special beans and powders and nuts. And sure enough, she kept trim and lively and never got sick. But her family did not approve. It wasn't how the Lord meant folks to eat. At a ripe old age, this aunt went into a coma.

“See,” said her family, “when her natural time came, her mind passed, but her body was too healthy to go.”

ROY BLOUNT JR., in *Garden and Gun*

FILLING OUT a credit card application, my friend came upon this question: “What is your source of income?”

She wrote: “ATM.”

MICHAEL MCRAE, *Centerville, Georgia*

FROM THE START of our marriage, my wife and I had one rule: We would always respect the other's privacy in the bathroom. And over the years, we honored that commitment. That is, until recently. I was sitting on the toilet when my wife barged in, shouting, "Honey, close your eyes. I have to get a towel."

FRANK J. PETRO-ROY,
Clearwater, Florida

A FEW MONTHS BACK, my wife showed a picture of herself at the age of seven to our three-year-old daughter. "Do you know who this is?" she asked. Our daughter gasped and said, "That's me when I'm bigger!"

From reddit.com

WHEN PARENTS SAY to kids, "Go to your room and think about what you've done," it's really good practice for what you'll do every night as an adult. [@TASTEFACTORY \(PAT TOBIN\)](#)

WHEN I SERVED jury duty, we were issued pads and pens with which to take notes. On the second day, I noticed that the man next to me had filled a couple of pages. I asked him about his notes, and he showed me what he'd written: "Don't fall asleep! Please don't fall asleep!"

YEFIM M. BRODD, *Tacoma, Washington*

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

HERE'S THE FORMULA!

Four mathematical equations that explain some of life's conundrums.

$$\text{TRUTH} = \frac{\text{WHAT I THINK HAPPENED}}{\text{WHAT REALLY HAPPENED}}$$

$$\text{CREDIT CARD} = \text{I CAN'T AFFORD IT} - \text{I CAN'T AFFORD IT}$$

$$\text{BLACK EYE} = \text{EYE} + \text{STORY}$$

$$\text{CARJACKING} = \text{CAN I BORROW YOUR CAR?} - \text{NO, YOU CAN'T}$$

Source: Craig K. Damrauer on assortedbitsofwisdom.com

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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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 (Tambocor®), 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. The most common side effects of Myrbetriq include increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, and headache.

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

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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



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-ST™)
- flecainide (Tambacor®)
- propafenone (Rythmol®)
- 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
- common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis)
- urinary tract infection
- constipation
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- 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 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

PRODUCT OF JAPAN OR IRELAND – See bottle label or blister package for origin

Marketed and Distributed by:

Astellas Pharma US, Inc.

Northbrook, Illinois 60062


(mirabegron)
extended release tablets
25 mg, 50 mg

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Revised: August 2016

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WE TASTE TEST
6 TIMES
BEFORE
YOU ENJOY A SINGLE CUP



NESCAFÉ.
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ART *of* LIVING



Here's how to have an emotionally authentic holiday
even if you've got a touch of the winter blues

When It's Not Quite A Wonderful Life

BY JASON MARSH FROM YES! MAGAZINE

WHOEVER WROTE the song “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” never had to endure a night of Hanukkah listening to a cousin rail about politics. Or spend an entire Christmas alone while cheers and laughter erupted from the apartment down the hall.

Fortunately, psychological research suggests some effective ways you can beat the holiday blues—and flags some especially unhelpful ones. The upshot is that sadness and other tough emotions are not afflictions that we should try to avoid. Instead, if properly understood, they can help contribute to a healthy—and happy—life.

Here are four strategies to help you craft your own happiness recipe this holiday season (and the rest of your year).

1 DON'T FORCE CHEER At family gatherings with cousins you secretly can't stand and in-laws who dole out backhanded compliments, it can be tempting to put on a happy face while you seethe inside. Indeed, that might even seem like the most mature response—no drama, no conflict.

But a 2011 study by researchers at Michigan State University and West

Point might make you think twice. They followed dozens of bus drivers for two weeks, looking to see when they flashed fake versus genuine smiles at their passengers. The results showed that on days when the drivers tried to put on an act and fake a good mood, their actual moods got

worse. This was especially true for women.

And research by Iris Mauss of the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that people who really want to be happy actually derive less happiness from positive experiences, apparently because their expectations are

too high. Again and again, trying to force happiness seems to backfire.

2 DON'T SUPPRESS SADNESS The results of the bus-driver study can be explained by researchers Oliver John of UC Berkeley and James Gross of Stanford University, who found that negative feelings like sadness or anger only intensify when we try to suppress them. That's because we feel bad about ourselves when our outward appearance contradicts how we truly feel inside. We don't like to be inauthentic.

What's more, when we suppress emotions like sadness, we deny them the important function they serve.

“*Sadness is like eggnog and parties around the holidays: In moderation, it's nothing to fear.*”

Sadness can signal that something is distressing us; if we don't recognize it, we might not take the necessary steps to improve the situation.

Expressing our sadness can also elicit comfort and compassion from those who care about us, strengthening our bonds. By contrast, suppressing our emotions can actually undermine our relationships: A study led by Sanjay Srivastava of the University of Oregon found that college students who bottled up their emotions experienced less social support, felt less close to others, and were less satisfied with their social lives.

3 RESPOND MINDFULLY

But none of this is to endorse drowning in melancholy or lashing out at our in-laws. Some ways of processing and acting on our emotions are healthier than others. Recently, scientists have been paying special attention to the benefits of mindfulness. When you respond mindfully to an emotional trigger (e.g., overcooking the holiday turkey), you pause rather than reacting. Instead of berating yourself, you simply notice what you're feeling without judging that response as right or wrong.

Studies suggest that a mindful response to a negative event reduces the amount of sadness we experience, is associated with less depression and anxiety, and may even carry physiological benefits, such as lowering our

heart rates. It's a way to avoid suppressing your emotions without reacting hastily or getting consumed by rumination. Fortunately, research suggests that mindfulness is a skill you can cultivate over time.

4 ENJOY YOUR EMOTIONAL COCKTAIL

Inevitably, the holidays will bring a mix of highs and lows. Perhaps the most important lesson to keep in mind is that this variety of emotions might be the best thing possible for your overall well-being.

That was the key insight from a study published in 2014 by a team of researchers from Yale University, Harvard Business School, and other institutions spanning four countries. Their survey of more than 37,000 people found that experiencing more "emodiversity"—a greater variety and abundance of emotions—was consistently linked to lower depression. In fact, people with more emodiversity took less medication, visited doctors less frequently, spent fewer days in hospitals, practiced better dietary and exercise habits, and smoked less.

In other words, sadness, anger, and other difficult emotions are like so many other staples of the holidays, from eggnog to office parties: In moderation, they're nothing to fear. Just make sure you're balancing them with lighter experiences. And don't forget to give yourself a break. **R**

Silent Signs Your Body Craves a Diet Tweak


BY MARISSA LALIBERTE

Signs You're Getting Too Much ...

■ **COFFEE:** Stopping at Starbucks is often easier than getting a solid night of sleep, but jitters, a racing heart, and sleeplessness are all undeniable signs of too much caffeine. Plus, compounds in java such as caffeine and catechols can irritate the stomach, leaving you with heartburn and bellyaches.

■ **CHEESE:** Your favorite comfort food ingredient is ➔





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How is the Impella 2.5™ Device Used?

The Impella 2.5™ is the World's Smallest Heart Pump and is intended for temporary (less than six hours) use to maintain stable heart function. The Impella 2.5™ can potentially lower certain risks in patients with severe coronary artery disease and diminished (but stable) heart function who are undergoing a percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) such as an angioplasty or stenting, but are not candidates for surgery, as determined by a team of doctors that includes a heart surgeon. Please see Important Risk Information for the Impella 2.5™ on a following page.

Important Risk Information for the Impella 2.5™ Device

Protected PCI™ is not right for everyone.

You should NOT be treated with the Impella 2.5™ if your doctor determines you have certain pre-existing conditions, such as:

- Severe narrowing of your heart valves
- Clot in your heart chamber
- Replacement heart valve or
- Certain deficiencies in your heart valve.

Many of the risks related to the Impella 2.5™ device are the same as those with the procedure being completed and the placement of any pump used to help the heart. Risks related to use of the Impella 2.5 can include certain allergic reactions to medications, infections, blood clots, injury to heart tissue, valves or blood vessels, bleeding, low blood pressure, low platelet count and/or damage to red blood cells. Some of these conditions could be life threatening.

To access the Patient Information for the Impella 2.5™, which includes additional RISK INFORMATION for the Impella 2.5 and related procedure visit www.protectedpci.com

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IM2-197-16



loaded with saturated fat—the “bad” fat linked to forgetfulness. One study found that women over 65 who ate the most saturated fat had the worst memories over four years. Saturated fat also takes a long time to digest, causing excess stomach acid to splash back into your esophagus; keep track of your heartburn symptoms and cheese consumption to see if they’re connected. For the creaminess you crave, replace some cheese with pureed white beans in recipes.

■ **SUGAR:** No need to wait for a dentist to break the news—just look to your energy levels and mood. Dietary sugar spikes blood sugar, leaving you wiped out after it comes

down; frequent spikes can up the risk of depression. High blood pressure is another clue. Check nutrition labels for sneaky sugar in foods like yogurt, salad dressing, and cereal.

■ **SALT:** Who knew? Too much salt can leave you foggy-brained. A Canadian study found that sedentary adults with high-sodium diets had a higher risk of cognitive decline. Cut down on salt by choosing fresh foods over packaged ones—for example, put leftover home-cooked turkey on your sandwich instead of deli meat. And about that saltshaker—sprinkling on just half a teaspoon adds nearly 1,200 milligrams, at least half of the recommended daily maximum.

Signs You're Getting Too Little ...

■ **LEAN MEAT:** This one is for the vegetarians and vegans out there. Swelling ankles and feet can indicate an extreme deficiency in protein, which helps keep salt and water from seeping into surrounding tissue. And too little vitamin B12, which is found almost solely in animal products, can leave you exhausted and pale from anemia, a condition in which your blood doesn't have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen through your body. If you've sworn off meat, choose more fortified grains that contain vitamin B12. And bean-based entrées are a great way to pile up protein.

■ **OLIVE OIL:** If you're feeling drained or constantly hungry, you may need more "good" fats, like the monounsaturates found in olive oil, which make you feel full longer. Can't focus? Mono-unsaturated fats also boost production of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which helps you learn and remember information. Plus, fats hold in warmth and moisture, which is why constant chills and dry skin could mean your body needs more for insulation.



■ **SALMON:** This fish's omega-3 fatty acids get all the health glory, but three ounces of canned salmon deliver 100 percent of your recommended daily vitamin D, which is otherwise hard to find in food. (Your body usually makes vitamin D from the sunlight that's in short supply around now.) The signs you don't have enough vitamin D aren't pretty: A forehead that seems to sweat even without exercising or feeling overheated; achy bones, muscles, and joints; and a cold you can't kick can all reflect a shortage of vitamin D, which provides vital boosts to your bone-building and immune systems.

■ **LENTILS:** Constipated? You might not be getting enough fiber, which regulates bowel movements and helps food move more quickly through your system. Jeans getting tighter too? Fiber helps you feel full longer, which is key to staying slim. Researchers have also linked a low-fiber diet with diverticulitis, a condition that causes pain and irritation in the large intestine, leading to bloating, diarrhea, vomiting, and fever. A half cup of lentils has nearly twice as much fiber as an apple. **R**

An eye-opening look at who's really going hungry in America

The Gift of Food

BY JENNIFER BALL-TUFFORD FROM *FAMILY CIRCLE*



LAST HALLOWEEN, there was a food drive at the school where I work. Strolling by one day, I checked out the bins. There were gluten-free crackers, rice pasta, olive tapenade, artichoke hearts packed in seasoned oil, and quinoa. Another woman happened by. She smiled, then said this:

“Too bad they won’t know what to do with most of it.”

It was one of those moments in life when your ears hear something but your brain can’t quite process it. I asked, “What do you mean?”

The woman turned toward me, still smiling. “Those people won’t know what most of that stuff is. I mean, really. Quinoa?”

Yep. I’d heard correctly. Those people.

At that moment, it had been eight months since the last time I had gotten groceries at our local food pantry. Eight months since the long-overdue child support from my ex-husband kicked in. Even though it wasn’t much, it made the difference between being able to buy enough food for the five of us and having to supplement from a food pantry. For that, I’m grateful.

Those people.

I can still vividly recall my first time visiting the food pantry. I’d driven by many times, trying to work up the courage to pull into

the parking lot. I'd whisper "I can't" and keep driving, home to the barren refrigerator and the "Old Mother Hubbard" cupboards. Until desperation overshadowed my pride.

Those people.

Once you get past the hardest part, which is walking through the door, being at the food pantry isn't so bad. Sure, there's the heat on your cheeks as you fill out the paperwork, giving these strangers your life history. Explaining what you do for money, how much you get, and what you spend it on. But you get used to having hot cheeks.

I quickly learned that food pantries are hit-or-miss. Some days the shelves are full, and with really good things. Annie's Macaroni and Cheese. Organic marinara sauce. Fresh vegetables. Whole chickens in the freezer. Brie from Trader Joe's that's only two days past the expiration date. Other days, you have to scramble to get near the required weight. (You get a certain number of pounds of food depending on the size of your family.) Dented cans of creamed corn. Spoiled produce. Individual sleeves of saltine crackers. But beggars can't be choosers, right?

I visited the food pantry a total of five times over the course of 11 months. When I told my kids, I expected them to laugh or get angry or be embarrassed. Instead, they helped me put the groceries away, quietly. I can recall almost all the meals I made with food pantry goodies. Oven-roasted chicken with

quartered rosemary potatoes. Turkey chili. French toast. More mac and cheese than I care to admit. One of my favorites was an organic risotto, flavored with mushrooms and olive oil.

Those people.

I wanted to walk up to that woman in the hallway, grab her by the shoulders, and

shake her as I yelled at her, "You don't know a thing about how it feels to walk into one of 'those' places and be one of 'those' people. You've never looked at your kids and had to hide your tears because you had no idea how you were going to feed them." I wanted to say that, but I didn't. Instead, all I could muster was:

"I like quinoa."

To which she replied, "Well, yes, of course. You're not one of those people."

If only she knew.

“

I can recall almost all the meals I made with food pantry goodies. My favorite was an organic risotto.

Vacation Items You'll Almost Always Regret Packing

BY JULIANA LABIANCA

YOU KNOW THE OBVIOUS packing no-nos: superfluous pairs of pants, leaky cosmetics, oversize liquids, and items that might not make it past security. Streamline your suitcase by leaving these items at home as well.

TOO MUCH ATHLETIC WEAR

Be honest: Do you really need three pairs of running shorts so you can go on a jog each morning? While it's an admirable goal, if you've rarely worked out on a vacation before, don't go overboard. Bring along enough pieces for a hike or another adventure, and pack more only if you're a dedicated exerciser.

YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

Obviously, all of your prescriptions will be making the trip. Aside from those, stash a small amount of ibuprofen or aspirin in your carry-on and rest assured that most places you visit will have a drugstore.

GIMMICKY TRAVEL GEAR

Items made specifically for travel (think "waterproof" wallets and "theft-proof" backpacks) tend to be impractical. Don't pack anything you haven't found a use for on past trips.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LISA SHIN
PROP STYLIST: JOJO LI FOR HELLO ARTISTS

A THIRD BATHING SUIT

Bring two—one can dry while you wear the other. To clean a suit without a washing machine, fill your hotel sink with cold water and add a splash of mild hand soap. Swish the suit around (never twist or wring it, which could damage the fibers), and then allow it to air-dry.

THINGS YOUR TRAVEL PARTNER BRINGS TOO

Whether you're going on a girls' weekend or a vacation with your spouse, cross-check your packing lists for overlap. You can share items like a hair dryer, toothpaste, sunscreen, and other toiletries.

ANYTHING MISMATCHED

Pack your clothes in matched outfits and bring accessories that can go together without thought—for example, tan shoes, a tan hat, and a tan belt.

FORMAL WEAR

Consider your itinerary. If you don't have any formal events scheduled, then you won't need a suit, shiny heels, or strings of pearls. If there is a dressy event planned, pack for that one affair and leave the rest behind.

ANYTHING THAT'S NOT ON "THE LIST"

Yes, make a packing list—and then stick to it. It should take into consideration the weather, your itinerary, and any possible overlap with your travel buddies. And bring that list with you on the trip—it can act as a packing checklist on the morning of your flight home.

HARDCOVER BOOKS

While you'll definitely need a beach read, the latest hardcover bestseller will take up valuable space and weight in your luggage. Download the e-book or audiobook version, or opt for a lightweight paperback.

Three quarters of Americans think it's OK to recycle gifts, according to a recent survey

How to (Shamelessly) Regift This Holiday Season

BY JULIANA LABIANCA



KNOW YOUR LIMIT

Family heirlooms, handmade gifts, and anything else a relative or best friend might ask you to wear or show off in the future are all poor candidates for your regifting closet. And never regift presents just to get rid of them. Mark any item you consider a potential regift with a sticky note stating who gave it to you and for what occasion; then it'll be ready for the right person.

LET US JUST GO THERE: With a bit of finesse, regifts can be just as personal as newly purchased ones. Here's how to pull off the swap and have no one, including the happy second recipient, be the wiser.

FIRST, SAY THANK YOU

Be gracious to the original gift giver. If you know you'd like to exchange an item, you can simply ask where it was purchased. Many stores will accept a return without a receipt.

DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

Choose an item that is in great condition and worth owning, but just wasn't for you. It might be perfect for someone else. Think clothing that isn't your style but would look terrific on your friend, or a kitchen appliance you already own and know your aunt has hoped for.

MAKE IT UNIQUE

Repackage your gift to make it even more special. For example, if you're

regifting a coffee-table cookbook, include a piece of kitchenware to go with it.

DOUBLE-CHECK THE GIFT

Always unwrap the gift completely and rewrap it for the new occasion. That way you can make sure there aren't hidden notes, engravings, monograms, or pieces of wrapping paper attached. Also check for tags, receipts, and anything else inside the packaging that might embarrass both you and the recipient.

THROW A REGIFTING PARTY

Take the stigma away from recycling presents with this regifting party game. Here are the rules:

- Each guest brings one wrapped regift to the party.
- Guests draw numbers.
- The guest with the lowest number chooses a regift and opens it.
- The person with the next-lowest number can either take the opened gift or choose a wrapped gift to open.
- This goes on until each person has either unwrapped a new gift or taken any of the regifts already opened.
- If a gift is taken from someone, that person immediately chooses a new gift to open, or he or she can take someone else's already-opened gift.
- When all the regifts have been opened, the person with the lowest number can trade with anyone or keep the regift he or she has. **R**

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World of Medicine

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

Hidden Tooth Infections May Contribute to Heart Disease

According to research from the University of Helsinki in Finland, acute coronary syndrome is 2.7 times more common in people with an infection in the tip of one or more teeth's roots, possibly because it causes low-grade inflammation throughout the body. As many as a quarter of adults in Finland have this problem, although they may not all realize it, because it doesn't necessarily cause discomfort. It can be detected with an X-ray and, in most cases, cured with root canal treatment.

Fruits and Veggies Boost Happiness

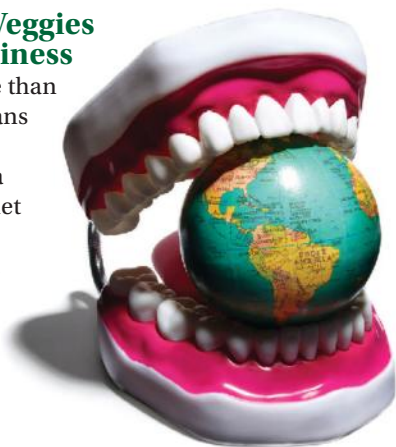
A study of more than 12,000 Australians revealed that the benefits of a produce-rich diet extend beyond physical health. With every added daily portion of fruits or vegetables (up to

eight), the subjects' happiness levels rose slightly. The researchers calculated that if someone were to switch from a diet free of fruits and vegetables to eight servings per day, he or she would theoretically gain as much life satisfaction as someone who transitioned from unemployment to a job. The exact reason is unclear, but it may be related to the effect of carotenoid levels in the blood.

With More Reps, Lighter Weights Are as Effective as Heavy Ones

Intimidated by massive weights?

For building muscle and gaining strength, lifting light objects many times works just as well as lifting heavier ones fewer times, concluded a recent Canadian study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*. With either approach, the key is to work the muscles until they're fatigued, which is a sign of activated fibers. Low-load,



high-repetition training is already the method of choice for fostering muscular endurance, and a 2015 paper suggested it's effective for increasing bone density too.

Coffee Doesn't Promote Cancer—Unless It's Too Hot

Good news for fans of coffee: It was stripped of its “possibly carcinogenic” classification during a recent meeting of the International Agency for Research on Cancer. However, the agency did warn against any beverage that is served at a temperature higher than 149 degrees Fahrenheit. Scalding-hot liquids can injure cells in the esophagus, contributing to esophageal cancer down the road. Meanwhile, coffee served at a moderate temperature appears to provide a mild protective effect against cancer in the uterus lining and the liver.

Why Antioxidant Pills Don't Work

A new review published in the *British Journal of Pharmacology* reinforced an emerging explanation for why vitamins E and C, along with other antioxidant supplements, don't prevent disease and may sometimes even cause harm. Oxygen free radicals—the molecules that antioxidants neutralize—aren't all bad. Although they can trigger disease, they're also essential to immune defense and hormone synthesis. The amount of antioxidants

found in a balanced diet appears beneficial, but getting a surplus from a supplement risks interfering with helpful free radicals.

Happily, Most Socializing Still Takes Place Offline

As family and friends gather for the holidays, reassuring research out of the University of Kansas states that up to 98 percent of what people consider “social interaction” takes place outside of social media. Americans spend a lot of time on social media, but they use it mostly for “people watching” (keeping tabs on others in their social sphere) rather than to replace in-person meetings. This is good news for mental health, since previous studies have shown there's no substitute for face-to-face interactions when it comes to staving off depression.

The Upside of a Little Butter

A meta-analysis of nine studies involving a total of more than 600,000 subjects in 15 countries found that a modest daily amount of butter—half an ounce, or one tablespoon—was associated with a 4 percent decrease in diabetes risk. Meanwhile, this same amount of butter didn't seem to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease or stroke. Moderation is a good strategy when it comes to high-fat foods such as butter, and the review implied that there's no need to avoid them altogether. **R**

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ALL IN

A Day's Work

BEFORE INSTAGRAM



I WAS SEARCHING for the phone extension of a new employee who already had the reputation of being unpleasant. Striking out, I asked my coworkers, “Does anybody know Julie’s extension?” A voice from the next cube over mumbled, “Try 666.”

MICHAEL BEST, *Alden, New York*

WHILE INTERVIEWING a candidate for a receptionist position, I asked

one of my standard questions: “What do you see in yourself that you’d like to improve?”

Her response: “My breasts.”

JIM BOEHM, *Dana Point, California*

OUR NEW HIRE did not have a great start. On his very first day, he was two and a half hours late. Luckily for him, he called in to explain.

“I know this sounds bad,” he began,

“but I didn’t realize today was Monday.” MICHELLE CHOATE, *Stayton, Oregon*

THE SKILLS SECTION of your résumé is where you can impress hiring managers with your qualifications. Or not, as these real examples show:

- “I offer mediocrity at its best.”
- “I’m try-lingual.”
- “Phone tap.”
- “I’ve got a PhD in human feelings.”
- “Grate communication skills.”

- “Familiar with all faucets of accounting.”
- “PlayStation 2.”
- “Extensive background in public accounting. I can also stand on my head!”
- “Ability to meet deadlines while maintaining composer.”

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ODE TO THE OFFICE FRIDGE

Riper than a comely wench,
Greener than a shrub.
Pulsing, so it seems, with life:
My colleague’s turkey club.

I see it every morning, yea,
When I dare open wide
The mini office Frigidaire
To stuff my lunch inside.

In goes my humble bag of brown
To wait till half past one,
Between a rusting StarKist tin
And krypton Cinnabon.

Carrots that can bend themselves
Like gymnasts from the East,
Speak of diet dreams ignored
In favor of McFeast.

And on the swinging door we find
One Grey Poupon gone blue,
A jar of ranch that bought the farm,
A Yoplait turned Yoglug.

The “stew” my boss made for his wife
(Did someone call it swill?)
“Bring it for the office, hon.”
He did. It sits here still.

And do not ask about the milks!
A cast of cartons wait,
To fleck my coffee gray with lumps
Unseen until too late.

Frigidaire, O Frigidaire,
So small and yet so potent.
Your presence is proclaimed to all
The minute you are open.

LENORE SKENAZY, from her book *Has the World Gone Skenazy?* (Creators Publishing)



Skippy's Favourite Honey

Anthony Rebusk

www.xlibris.com.au

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All the stores in Australia have run out of the world's best honey! Skippy, the honey-loving kangaroo goes off on a quest, traveling from Guatemala to England. Join the fun adventure that unfolds in the search for *Skippy's Favourite Honey!*



Covenant Betrayed: Revelations of the Sixties, the Best of Time; the Worst of Time

*Book one: The Restless
Years... The Winds of
Change*

Mark Dahl

www.authorhouse.com

\$37.45 hc | \$25.45 sc | \$3.99 eb

What was it really like in the sixties? What was it like being a soldier in Vietnam, an antiwar protester, a hippie, a Black, a man or a woman? These are the questions this book attempts to answer.



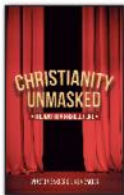
The Murderer Wore New Shoes

Ceci Brandon

www.iuniverse.com

\$9.95 sc | \$6.00 eb

Precocious teen CJ Clayton witnesses a murder while hiding under a bed. Assuming the role of investigator, she launches a covert search for the killer using just one clue: his shiny, black shoes. Will she solve the case?



Christianity Unmasked *The Way to a Fulfilled Life*

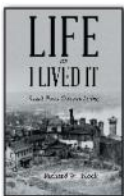
Winston Bakker;

Linda Bakker

www.authorhouse.com

\$10.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

Are you ready for a transformed life? *Christianity Unmasked* contains the formula for a permanent and victorious life and a future hope. The authors share practical life experiences to show the certainty of the promises contained in this book.



Life as I Lived It *Small Town Country Living*

Richard W. Block

www.iuniverse.com

\$22.95 sc | \$3.99 eb

Life as I Lived It is a collection of true short stories containing common sense, knowledge, adventure, and humor about life's experiences growing up in a small Indiana town along the Ohio River from the 1950s until now.



The Restaurant

Lara Lijewski

www.authorhouse.com

\$16.95 sc | \$3.99 eb

Follow Parker Flint, a broke student who lands a job at *The Restaurant*. See the shy introvert get a chance to be a confident and independent woman as she relies on humor, patience and optimism to face a tough workplace.

Miracles in Real Life

LIKE *LOVE*, THE WORD *miracle* gets overused. We trot it out to describe an amazing sports play or a particularly effective detergent. But a genuine miracle produces something precious and rare. It raises goose bumps, inspires awe, and, most of all, touches the heart. We think these four stories—about families who discovered joy when they least expected it—do that and more. And what better time to celebrate joy than during the holiday season?

Paramedic Chris Trokey (left) helped save the life of Michael Shannon, MD (right), before recognizing Shannon from his childhood.



“I Don’t Know if He Knows How Lucky He Was”

BY LISA MILLER

IT WAS 5:45 A.M. in March 2011, and as pediatrician Michael Shannon, MD, drove along California’s Pacific Coast Highway toward the beach, he could smell the sea. He was taking a route he knew well to meet a friend for their regular Tuesday walk. As he headed toward Dana Point Harbor, a blanket of white suddenly interrupted his vision. A semi-truck had pulled onto the road in front of him. The physician had no time to react.

“I probably said a few expletives in my mind,” he recalls. “I remember the wham and the sound of breaking glass, and then everything stopped. I was sitting still.”

Shannon remained conscious during the collision. In



the quiet afterward, his first thought was that he was alive. His second thought was that he had to get out—fast. He sensed something burning. His legs and feet, wedged beneath the crumpled dashboard, felt hot. But he was pinned.

Help arrived almost instantly; a unit from the Orange County Fire Department was on the scene in less than two minutes. Four men work on Engine 29—two are paramedics—and that morning, they were returning to their firehouse when they got the call. The guys were exhausted from working all night, but the timing was better than good. They were already in the truck and ready to go.

MY MIRACLE

Our daughter was \$2,500 short for tuition her freshman year, and we had no more resources to pay for it. My husband said a prayer, played the lottery, and won exactly \$2,500.

MARILYN CERNIGLIA CHEW, Charlton, NY

Arriving at the scene, paramedic Chris Trokey could immediately see how urgent it was. At 30, Trokey had been on the job for eight years, and this accident was a nine out of ten in severity. The whole front end of the SUV was tucked under the body of the semi. He could see that the engine was smoldering—now only a small red flame like a campfire, but he

knew it could explode within minutes. The man inside the vehicle appeared remarkably calm. “He wasn’t freaking out. He wasn’t yelling,” recalls Trokey. “He was saying, ‘Get me out of here.’”

Meanwhile, Shannon’s lower extremities were getting hotter. He could feel the nylon mesh of his running shoes melting onto his toes. The crew acted fast. “Someone handed me a fire extinguisher through the window, and I think I used another expletive and said, ‘I need a hose!’” Shannon says. He was given a fire hose and used it to put out the flames inside his vehicle.

The firemen doused the engine fire and called for backup: They needed stronger tools to pry open the SUV. As they waited, Trokey phoned Mission Hospital in Laguna Beach to alert the medical trauma team. After 20 minutes, with a second crew’s help, the Chevy Suburban was opened with the Jaws of Life, and Trokey put the man on a backboard and a gurney within seconds. As he sat with him in the back of the ambulance with the siren blaring, Trokey began to meditate on the crash victim’s name: Michael Shannon.

The paramedic wondered, Could this be the same man who had saved his own life 30 years ago, when he was a premie and arrived at the very same ER they were headed to with panicked parents and a perilously high temperature? The doctor who slept by Trokey’s side in the hospital until he was well enough to go home? As Trokey sat with Shannon, the feeling of recognition

grew stronger. But he didn't say anything—not then. “I wanted to focus on what was going on.”

IN JUNE 1986, Chris Trokey entered the world ten weeks early. His father, Mike, likes to joke that his son loves ambulances because he was almost born in one. Mike and his wife, Dee, went to Mission Hospital after her water broke. There, they were rushed by ambulance to the hospital at the University of California Irvine, 25 miles away. UCI had the region's only neonatal intensive care unit (NICU); their baby, the Trokeys were informed, had a 50-50 chance of survival.

Weighing three pounds, two ounces at birth, the baby could fit in the palm of Mike's hand. But Chris was tough, breathing on his own within hours. While he was in the NICU, his parents commuted between Irvine and their home in Dana Point. During those anxious first weeks, Mike and Dee searched for a local pediatrician who was skilled enough to cope with the health problems that premature babies often face. Mike worked as an educator in the Saddleback Valley school district, coordinating programs. As he looked through student files, he noticed one name again and again: Dr. Michael Shannon. When the Trokeys went for a meeting, they liked Shannon right away, from his capable manner to his shoulder-length hair, denim shirt, and turquoise belt buckle. “He was the type

of guy you could talk to as if he was your brother,” Dee remembers, “but you had confidence that he could do anything.”

After seven weeks, Chris was discharged, and his parents drove to Shannon's office so he could check

MY MIRACLE

I was walking to the gas station and heard crying behind a Dumpster. I saw a young girl in labor and helped her deliver triplets.

JAMES OPAL, *Gastonia, NC*

the baby out. Chris was fine. However, within two weeks, he spiked what Shannon coolly calls “a pretty good-sized fever”—dangerous for a newborn but exponentially more so for a preemie. The Trokeys were in touch with Shannon as the fever soared, and the doctor soon suggested the family meet him at Mission Hospital.

Dee was a wreck. Having already faced the possibility that her newborn might not survive and then living apart from him for nearly two months, a life-threatening fever felt like the last straw. At the hospital, Shannon was waiting for the Trokeys. Utterly calm, he took the entire family into his care. There was no infant ICU at Mission at the time, so “pediatricians took care of their own intensive problems,” says Shannon. He took Chris's blood and sent it to the lab and did a spinal tap

to rule out meningitis. Then he put the infant on an IV antibiotic drip and had the parents go home to sleep. Shannon would watch over their son, he told them. The pediatrician stayed with Chris for two nights, and on the third day, the boy went home.

Chris grew up with the family legend of the time that Shannon slept in the hospital with him until he was safe. His parents told the story again and again as the happiest resolution to the most desperate period of their lives. Chris continued to be Shannon's patient until he was in his teens.

AFTER THE CAR WRECK, in an echo of what had happened 30 years before, Chris Trokey stayed by Shannon's side in the trauma room for

MY MIRACLE

I landed an airplane with engine failure that had shaken all but one bolt out of its engine mount.


GENIE SMITH BERNSTEIN, Athens, GA

a few minutes. "I asked, 'Do you remember me at all? You stayed with me when I was really little,'" says Trokey. Shannon had suffered a perforated small intestine. He had second- and third-degree burns on his feet, and part of a toe had to be amputated. Shards of glass were embedded in his skin.

Shannon recognized Chris's name

at once. Although he has treated more children than he can remember, it's the ones who need him most who stick. Yet if they'd passed each other on the street, neither man would have recognized the other: At 72, Shannon had cut his hair short. And at six feet three inches tall and 195 pounds, Chris looked nothing like the fragile baby he had once been.

The day after Shannon's surgery, Trokey and the crew from Engine 29 went to visit Shannon in the ICU. This was unusual. As firefighters and paramedics, they save lives as a matter of course. But this case was different, because it was such a close call—"I don't know if he knows how lucky he was," says Trokey—and such a coincidence. Both men still marvel at the connection. Neither Shannon nor Trokey is a churchgoer, but each says this feeling—of having someone enter your life at a critical time and watch over you until you are well, of giving a gift without expectations and then getting it back when you need it most—has given him faith in a higher power.

Shannon and Trokey are busy people—Shannon sees patients four days a week, and Trokey works three 24-hour shifts a week. But every year on the anniversary of the car accident, the two men meet for a meal. And in 2015, Trokey himself became the father of a baby boy. His name is Porter, and he has had no major health problems so far. Dr. Michael Shannon is his pediatrician. 



Miracle
in
Real Life

*Reunited on the
job: sisters Meagan
Hughes (left) and
Holly O'Brien*

“I Knew She Was Out There”

BY MARC PEYSER

HOLLY O'BRIEN'S patient was just being nice. She probably didn't realize that South Korea has more than 50 million people or that there are over 1.7 million Korean Americans living in the United States. She just thought it was

interesting that O'Brien didn't know Meagan Hughes, another Korean American nurse working on the same floor—and the same shift—at Doctors Hospital of Sarasota. “You should talk to her,” the patient told O'Brien, according to the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune*. “Maybe you're from the same town.”

After O'Brien and Hughes finally met, they did begin to notice parallels in their lives. They were both certified nursing assistants. They were both orphans who had been adopted by American families. And their reasons for ending up at the orphanage were the same: abandonment. “So I said to her, ‘I know this is crazy, but what is your last name in Korean?’” recalls Hughes, now 45. “And as soon as she told me Shin, I said, ‘No way.

That's my [Korean] last name too.'"

Suddenly, the coincidences seemed more than merely interesting. In fact, for years, O'Brien, 47, sensed that she'd had a half sister back in Korea. Though her mother had disappeared when she was an infant and she was only five when her father was killed by a train, she had a memory of her and her father living, briefly, with his second wife and a baby girl. O'Brien was ultimately adopted by a loving family from Alexandria, Virginia, but her Korean childhood never left her. She remembers

MY MIRACLE

My autistic son graduated from college with a degree in Bible ministry. KEN DILLMAN, *Hutto, TX*


one night, when she was about nine years old, waking up from a dream and screaming, "My daddy died. I have a sister. We need to find her." O'Brien's adoptive family contacted the orphanage in Korea for information, but there was no record of a sibling.

Hughes wasn't haunted by lingering memories; instead, she was haunted because she didn't have any. Adopted when she was four by a family in Kingston, New York, she couldn't remember either of her biological parents. "My whole life has been a question in my mind, and an emptiness," she says.

Now the coincidence of meeting O'Brien offered the chance to fill in the

blanks. A year ago, the nurses decided to take at-home DNA tests and mailed the samples away to be analyzed. Less than two weeks later, O'Brien got an e-mail. Their DNA matched—they were half sisters. "I was like, 'Oh my God, is this really happening?'" says Hughes. O'Brien was shocked but also relieved. "In my heart, I knew," she says. "I knew she was out there somewhere." After more than 7,500 miles and four long decades, O'Brien had finally found the missing piece of her past, working just a few feet away from her.

TODAY, THE SISTERS wear special necklaces, each with a heart-shaped charm, as a symbol of their bond. "I got her the silver one, and I got the gold one for myself," says O'Brien. "She will always be my heart."

Divorced twice and remarried with no children of her own, O'Brien has found the reunion with her younger sister to be especially sweet. In an instant, she has become an aunt to Hughes's two daughters. As much as she loves the family that raised her in Virginia—O'Brien has eight adoptive brothers and sisters—making a biological connection at this stage of her life has been extraordinary. "I have this very strong belief that God must be—" For a moment, her tears overwhelm her words, as if washing away the sisters' 40-year separation. "Like, whatever I've done, I must have done something good in my life." 

Finally, mother
and child:
Jeanne Kerr (left)
and the author

Miracle
in
Real Life

“I Want to Make You My Daughter”

BY REGINA LOUISE
FROM NARRATIVE.LY

“MAY I SPEAK WITH
Jeanne Kerr?” I said,
crossing my fingers.
“Who’s asking?” the voice cracked.

“It’s Regina Louise. I think we
may’ve met a—”

“I don’t believe so,” she said. The
line went dead.

I crossed out another Jeanne on
my long list. The last time I’d seen the
Jeanne I was looking for was in 1977,
when I was 15. That day, I’d stood in a
juvenile courtroom prepared to speak
about what it would mean to me for
Jeanne Kerr, my beloved counselor
from the Edgar Children’s Shelter in
Martinez, California, to adopt me.

I’d met Jeanne when I’d arrived at
the shelter on May 1, 1975—a day
before I turned 13. I was confused by
her excitement regarding my pending
birthday. Then came balloons, cake,
and strangers singing to me as if I were
a big deal. In no time, it felt good to be

where Jeanne was. I'd grown up without a lick of kin, so I had taken my cues from Donna Reed and June Cleaver. I loved how they treated children, their soft-spoken ways. I prayed to meet someone like them who could see I was worth the trouble I was born into.

In court, my social worker presented evidence of my "escalating" behaviors: running away, telling lies, sabotaging foster care placements so I could return to the shelter, to Jeanne. "It's unnatural, Your Honor, how much she loves this woman," she said.

The judge agreed, and Jeanne's petition to adopt was denied. I believe my social worker objected because Jeanne was white and I was black. The National Association of Black Social Workers

everything changed. Now I had someone else to love and to think about.

BY 2002, I CO-OWNED and operated two hair salons, and my teenage son was a thriving scholar-athlete. I decided to write a book about my life from ages 13 to 15, a journey that included meeting Jeanne and losing her.

"Your memoir claims abuse and neglect, so you need someone to verify what you've written," my editor said. I had two weeks to locate that person.

My writing coach suggested I find Jeanne. I couldn't bear to tell her that I'd spent years ordering phone books from Nova Scotia to Hawaii, the number of times I'd been hung up on, the dead ends I'd followed. But now I could scour the Internet, and I began searching on countless sites. Marriage license? Nothing. Certificate of birth of child? Nothing. Death certificate? Hesitantly, I punched in her name. That, too, came back with nothing.

Had I made Jeanne up? But there was the blue corduroy dress she'd hand-sewn for me, with rainbows in my favorite colors. I'd lost it many years ago. There was the way she called me "sweetheart" or "punkin," the way she smelled of Cream of Wheat, warmed milk, vanilla, and brown sugar.

Then I remembered that, as a child, I had been warned that everything I said and did was put in a file so anyone who wanted to could learn what an awful

MY MIRACLE

I walked into the room, and my mother, who had dementia, raised her arm, waved, and said, "Hi, Karen," with her eyes shining bright!

KAREN RASMUSSEN, Terryville, CT

had issued a statement against trans-racial adoption, seeing it as an attack on black families. I was put in a residential treatment center for severely emotionally disturbed girls. From there, I'd go through 30 placements before landing in a group home in San Francisco. I stayed there until the age of emancipation, after which I flailed through life. Then I became a mother, and

person I was. I called the county and asked for my file. When the package arrived, I nuzzled it to my bosom like it was a newborn. Inside was a stack of papers filled with legal jargon, incident reports, and letters from one institutional director to another about my need to be “terminated.” But there was no road map to Jeanne.

With two days left to corroborate my story, I asked Jules, a friend and correspondent at a magazine that had access to research databases, for help. My deadline passed before she finished her search, so I changed the names of my characters. “Jeanne Kerr” became “Claire Kennedy.”

JULES SENT ME the search results a week later: She had an address! I wrote Jeanne a letter and sealed it with a kiss in red lipstick. The day before I left on my book tour, I received an envelope in the mail—it was my letter, stamped with the words *Addressee Unknown*.

In Los Angeles, I was interviewed by radio talk show host Tavis Smiley. He asked: “You have it all: You’re a spokesperson for foster care, have a thriving salon business, a well-adjusted child. What more would you like?”

I replied without hesitating. “Someone to say they are proud of me.”

Afterward, back in my hotel room, I checked my e-mail and saw a message with the subject line: “I am so proud of you, sweetheart!”

My heart stopped. I opened the e-mail, and it was from Jeanne. My breath caught in my throat. Was someone playing a joke on me? Only later I’d learn that a former coworker of hers had read an article about my book in which the reporter revealed the real

MY MIRACLE

We were so poor, we had not planned to have Christmas that year. Then a stranger dropped off the makings for Christmas dinner.

I still don't know who did it!

JANET WILT, Jacksonville, FL

name of Claire Kennedy, and the ex-colleague told Jeanne, “Your Regina is looking for you.”

In her e-mail, Jeanne wrote, “Please reach out to me once your tour is done. I don’t want to be a bother.” I couldn’t wait—I immediately dialed the number she had given.

“Hello?” The voice at the other end sounded hushed, just as I remembered Jeanne’s timbre; she had a particular way of saying “hello” that softened me from the inside out.

“I can’t believe it’s you,” I said through my absolute bewilderment. “I never stopped thinking of you.”

“You were my first child,” she told me. “I never stopped loving you.” Her words reverberated, and all I could do was listen. “They said I was the wrong color and that I wasn’t allowed to



*The author (center),
Jeanne Kerr (arms raised),
and family celebrate in court.*

head tilted like a curious puppy. I would not have worn those pieces together if God himself had ordered me to, and I flushed with mortification. It was then that I knew I was not only a daughter but her daughter. I earned a full adolescence

love you.” Jeanne continued. “I have something I want to give you. It is your birthright.”

I held my breath.

“I want to make you my daughter.”

From the moment I had lost Jeanne, I had known she was the mother I was meant to have in this life. I went on to live as if she’d never left, as if she were there to guide my actions. I believed that one day I’d have the chance to tell her “thank you.” On the phone with her, I knew my deepest wish was on the verge of coming true.

Three weeks later, I sat for six hours at LaGuardia Airport in New York City, waiting out a storm that had delayed Jeanne’s plane. I paced and smoothed my skirt. Finally, a woman rushed toward me, her long gray-white ponytail swinging from beneath a baseball cap. She wore an oversize sweater splattered with gigantic multicolored peonies, green polka-dot capri pants, and kitty-cat ankle socks paired with a well-worn pair of running shoes. I looked at her,

of stripes in that one moment. It had been nearly three decades since I had felt her fingertips lift my chin through the weight of my grief of having to leave her, the only person who’d ever told me “I love you.”

“Hi ... Mommy,” I said. I felt electrified saying the word for the first time. My entire life I had guarded it, my body a safe-deposit box, holding it until I could give it its rightful place.

IN NOVEMBER 2003, I stood in the same juvenile courtroom in California where Jeanne’s adoption request had been denied in 1977. I was 41, and I was with my son; Jeanne, her husband, and her son; and my partner, Stevie Anne, and her family. After the judge swore me and Jeanne to honor and love each other as mother and daughter for the rest of our lives, I turned to Jeanne, cupped my hand around her ear, and whispered, “Thank you—Mommy—for loving me when no one else could.”

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COURTESY REGINA LOUISE

Miracle
in
Real Life

“This Cat Is Meant to Be Here”

BY ASHLEY LEWIS

ON A CHILLY MARCH evening in 2014 in Lucedale, Mississippi, Ann Bosche, then 53, stood on her front steps while her mini dachshund, Gracie, took a bathroom break. Gracie sniffed an unwelcome visitor under the camellia bush and barked. Ann bent and saw a pair of green eyes.

“Hello, there,” Ann said, and heard a meow in reply. Ann, who had two resident cats, Bosco and Junior, went inside. She returned with a bowl of cat food and slid it beneath the bush.

The next night, the cat returned. Ann fed him again, moving the bowl closer to the house. After a week, the mystery cat showed himself. He was long-haired, with a plume of tail punctuated by a white tip. Ann called him Mr. Fancy, or Fancy for short.

Soon, Mr. Fancy was strutting in and out of the cat door. However, Ann’s husband, Gene, argued that Fancy should find a new home. “We don’t need another mouth to feed,



*Mr. Fancy,
home at last*

and vet bills are expensive,” he said. Reluctantly, Ann agreed.

The drive to the shelter was heart-breaking. Ann cried. Fancy cried. She consoled herself by thinking, “He’s so beautiful and lovable. Somebody will want him.”

A month later, Ann woke to the sound of Gene’s voice. She went to see which animal he was talking to—and saw a white-tipped tail. A thinner Fancy ran across the room to her.

When she asked the shelter what had happened, she learned that Fancy had escaped 20 minutes after she had left, when a worker opened the cage to feed him. Somehow, over the next month, he’d navigated the three miles—traversing railroad tracks, busy streets, and sketchy neighborhoods—back to the Bosches. “This cat is meant to be here,” Ann says. Even Gene agrees. “Whatever time I have with Fancy,” Ann says, “they’re going to be the best years of his life.” **R**

Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



“Try rolling on the ground! Roll around on the ground!”

I GOT ON BOARD with *The Lord of the Rings* once I learned it's an epic three-book saga about destroying a hideous piece of jewelry once and for all. [@JULIOTHESQUARE](#)

COMEDIAN MITCH HEDBERG was eager to hang a map of the world in his house. “I’m gonna put pins into all the locations I’ve traveled to,” he said. “But first I’m gonna have to travel to the top two corners of the map so it won’t fall down.”

WHO COMES UP WITH THESE NAMES?

- What idiot called it a flyswatter and not a splatula? [@MIKECANRANT](#)
- What idiot called it insomnia and not resisting a rest? [@DAEMONIC3](#)
- Who called it your foot falling asleep and not coma toes? [@CHUUEW](#)
- What idiot called it a stepdad and not a faux pa? [@LORDOFTHESHIBS](#)

A WEALTHY 75-year-old widower starts showing up around town with

a beautiful and much younger wife.

“How did you get her to marry you?” his friend asks.

“I lied about my age.”

“You told her you were 60?”

“No, I told her I was 90.”

FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I thought my mother, father, and cat all had the same handwriting. Then I found out Mom was just signing cards for all of them. [@MICHELLEISAWOLF](#)

ALL HER LIFE, Victoria was told that the women in her family were able to walk on water on their 21st birthdays. It didn't seem possible, but her mother assured her it was true. So on her 21st birthday, Victoria takes a boat out onto the lake, steps off, and sinks. Back on land, Victoria confronts her mother. “You told me that every woman in our family could walk on water on her 21st birthday!”

“It's true,” says her mother.

“But when I just tried it, I nearly drowned!”

“That's because your sisters and I were all born in December. You were born in July.”

Submitted by **SHARON DELANEY-CHRONIS**,
South Milwaukee, Wisconsin

JEEZ, did Santa's agent turn down a single commercial? [@JIMGAFFIGAN](#)

Your funny joke, list, or quote might be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, see page 7 or go to rd.com/submit.



IN THE RED

Twenty-five years ago, in December of 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated. Humorist P. J. O'Rourke, the author of *The Baby Boom: How It Got That Way*, told us, “Many of my favorite jokes came from behind the Iron Curtain. Maybe the humor was particularly sharp because it was the only weapon people had. I was told this one in the USSR in 1982.”

It's the Soviet Union, in the 1980s. A man has been standing in line at a butcher shop for seven hours when the butcher announces, “Comrades, I am sorry to inform you that we are out of meat.”

The man blows his top.

“I am a worker! I am a socialist! I am a veteran of the Great Patriotic War!” he yells. “And now you tell me you're out of meat! This country stinks!”

A large man in a trench coat approaches. “Comrade, comrade, calm yourself,” he says. “You know what would have happened to you in the old days if you had talked this way.” The large man makes a thumb and forefinger motion at his temple and says, “So please, comrade, go home.”

The man goes home empty-handed, and his wife asks, “Are they out of meat?”

“Worse than that,” says the man. “They're out of bullets.”



DRAMA IN REAL LIFE



All the Gallant Men

BY DONALD STRATTON
WITH KEN GIRE
FROM THE BOOK
ALL THE GALLANT MEN

**ONE SURVIVOR'S UNFORGETTABLE
STORY OF UNFATHOMABLE
COURAGE AT PEARL HARBOR,
TOLD IN FULL FOR THE FIRST TIME**

*Donald Stratton
as a fresh recruit
in 1940 (inset);
the enclosure on
the USS Arizona
where he tried
to take shelter
(circled below)*



It has been said that when an old person dies, it is like a library burning down. For the past 75 years, I have tried to share what I remember of World War II, but a day will come when I can no longer speak. Then what will become of everything I experienced on December 7, 1941? That's why I wrote this account.

A LITTLE AFTER 5:00 A.M. THE OVERHANGING DECK ON BOARD THE USS ARIZONA

I awoke on my cot. I stowed the cot away, then went to shower. Afterward I dressed in the clothes that sailors wore on Sundays—pressed white shorts, a white T-shirt, and my sailor's hat. At 5:30, reveille sounded over the intercom. Belowdecks, men headed to the showers.

5:50 A.M. OPEN WATERS, 230 MILES NORTH OF OAHU

A Japanese armada gathered. The attack force consisted of six aircraft carriers, two battleships, two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, nine destroyers, eight tankers, and three submarines that escorted the carriers. The ships turned east into the wind and increased their speed to 24 knots.

BETWEEN 6:15 AND 6:30 A.M. OPEN WATERS, 230 MILES NORTH OF OAHU

Japanese carriers launched 183 planes from their decks. The first wave of planes included 51 dive-bombers,

40 torpedo bombers, 49 horizontal bombers, and 43 fighters.

6:30 A.M. PEARL HARBOR

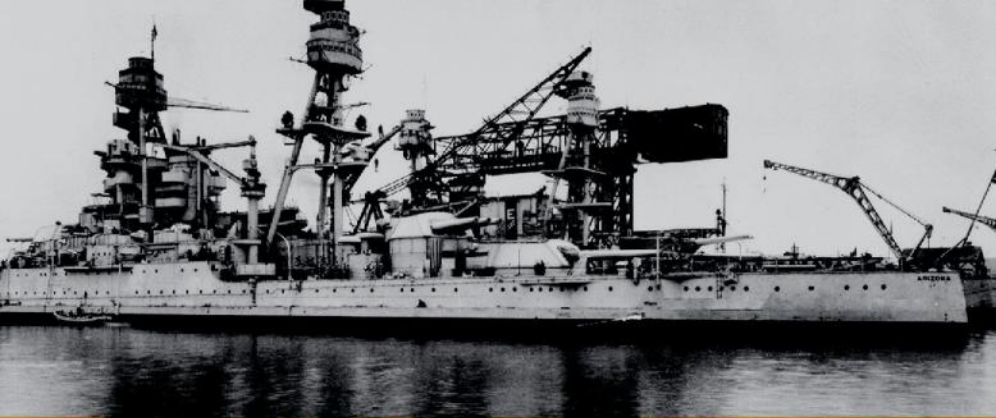
Chow call sounded, and I ate typical Sunday fare: coffee, powdered eggs with ketchup, fried Spam, pancakes. The USS *Arizona* was one of 185 ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet moored in Pearl Harbor that day. That number included 8 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, 6 light cruisers, 29 destroyers, and a number of auxiliary vessels (like tankers, repair ships, and a hospital ship). Because of poor weather, the fleet's three aircraft carriers remained at sea.

6:45 A.M. OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE TO PEARL HARBOR

The USS *Ward* fired on an unidentified sub. It sank, and the destroyer finished her with depth charges. The *Ward* reported the sub's sinking to authorities at Pearl Harbor, but the report was passed so slowly that no alert was given to other ships in the harbor.

SHORTLY AFTER 7:00 A.M. OPANA POINT RADAR STATION ON OAHU'S NORTH SHORE

Army privates Joseph Lockard and George Elliot completed a shift, but Lockard stayed to give the more inexperienced Elliot additional training on the radar equipment while they waited for breakfast. A large blip appeared on the screen. Private Lockard concluded it was a formation of planes approaching Oahu. At the same time, Japanese



The USS Arizona in Washington's Puget Sound in January 1941, a few months after Stratton came aboard as a seaman first class

COURTESY USS ARIZONA MEMORIAL PHOTO COLLECTION/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

carriers launched a second wave, which included 77 dive-bombers, 36 fighters, and 54 horizontal bombers.

Ten minutes later, Private Lockard notified Fort Shafter, but the operator told him that personnel had gone for breakfast. On Lockard's radar screen, the blip was now 100 miles north of Oahu and closing. At 7:20, the operator called back, and Lockard answered. Lockard's superior officer told him that a squadron of American planes was arriving at Pearl Harbor that morning and the blip had to be them.

7:40 A.M. SKIES ABOVE OAHU

Captain Mitsuo Fuchida led the first wave of Japanese planes along the island's north shore. Nine minutes later, his radioman signaled for the attack on Pearl Harbor to begin.

7:51 A.M. WHEELER FIELD

Japanese Zeros attacked aircraft, hangars, and buildings on the airstrip.

7:53 A.M. EWA MOORING MAST FIELD

Enemy planes struck the airstrip as Fuchida radioed on broadband "Tora, Tora, Tora," which meant a "lightning attack" and alerted his superiors that a surprise attack had been achieved.

7:55 A.M. PEARL HARBOR

I was belowdecks while prep for morning colors sounded. At the start of each day, a signalman in the Pearl Harbor tower raised a white-and-blue "prep" flag. This signaled the color guards on the ships to raise their American flags. Seven battleships were moored on Battleship Row, along the southeast shore of Ford Island. Ford was a small island in the harbor, cut in half by a runway. The *Arizona* was sandwiched between the island on one side and the repair ship *Vestal* on its seaward side.

As I stepped into the sunshine on the forecastle deck, I heard the drone

of aircraft engines and bombs exploding on Ford Island. Several of us ran to the bow to see planes on the runway bursting into flames and the water tower toppling over. The men pointed overhead. Craning my neck, I recognized the red “meatballs” on the silver wings of the planes doing the bombing: Japanese Zeros, emblazoned with the nation’s Rising Sun disk. They circled in figure eights like birds of prey. We ran to our battle stations.

I sped up steel ladders to get to my station. As I was running, I felt

toward me, a Zero fixed its sights on him. One shot hit the back of his lower leg. He limped onto the platform, a trail of blood following him. The rest of our team spilled into the metal enclosure, called the director. This was our station and where we—Harold Kuhn, Russell Lott, Earl Riner, George Hollowell, Alvin Dvorak, Fred Zimmerman, Frank Lomax—directed the antiaircraft guns. I set the dials in the director that engaged the gears to set the sights of the guns. We loaded the ammo and fired at the Zeros. But they



It seemed the whole harbor was in flames. The hellish sight of blacks, reds, and yellows, devouring everything. And the noise—it was deafening.

a wallop on the ship’s hull, followed by a muffled explosion. I raced up one ladder to the radio shack, up another ladder to the signal bridge, up a third ladder to the bridge, and finally up a fourth ladder to the sky control platform.

I looked over my shoulder at the harbor, which was in chaos. A Zero bore down, splintering our deck. It flew so low, I could see the pilot taunting me with a smirk and a wave. The air defense alarm sounded, followed by general quarters: “Attention! Attention! Attention! Man your battle stations! This is no drill! This is no drill!”

The deck was a frenzy of sailors. As Lauren Bruner raced up the ladder

were flying so low, we risked hitting the *Vestal* on one side and our men on Ford Island on the other.

We turned our sights on the high-altitude bombers and fired at a 90-degree angle. We sent volley after volley of fire, but the Japanese bombers were too high and our shells couldn’t touch them. It was like boxing an opponent whose reach was twice what yours was. No matter how many times you swung or how hard, you could never hit back. All the while, you were getting pummeled.

We took so many hits, and not just our ship. From a hatch, I watched Japanese planes circling before coming straight down Battleship Row. I

observed the *Tennessee* and the *West Virginia* take hits. I witnessed the *Oklahoma* lurch to one side, then roll over and sink. I saw a fireball in the dry dock where the *Pennsylvania* was.

The entire fleet was being destroyed before my eyes. Great billows of black smoke were eating up the blue sky. Torpedoes slammed against our hull, spewing geysers of water. Ships were taking on water, listing, capsizing. From those ruptured ships spilled oil that congealed when it hit the water and caught fire. It seemed the whole harbor was in flames. The hellish sight of blacks and reds and yellows, devouring everything. The sulfurous smell of burning fuel. The acrid smell of exploding gunpowder.

And the noise—it was deafening. One explosion followed another, and after each you could hear twisted metal writhing, letting out the most wretched sound, as if it were in agonizing pain. As soon as one dive-bomber dropped its torpedo, it pulled away while another plane swooped down to strafe us. Machine gun bullets ricocheted off metal. The screams of our men, their bodies engulfed in flames. And the fury of our own anti-aircraft guns reverberating inside our metal cubicle so loudly, I felt my eardrums would burst.

With each bomb that hit, the ship shuddered. Another bomb whistled, and we braced for impact. But it hit the *Vestal* instead. The repair ship was in flames, and its

crew was trying to extinguish them.

We were sitting ducks. Not just the *Arizona*, but every ship in the harbor. And there was nothing we could do. With few exceptions, our planes, which the Japanese hit first, never got a chance to get off the ground. We couldn't head to open waters, because it took two and a half hours for the boilers of a battleship to fire up. So we threw our shells into the sky, hoping shrapnel might shatter a cockpit, rupture a fuel line, clip a propeller. It was all we could do. Shoot and hope. And with each burst that fell short, we lost a little more hope.

Zeros strafed the ship, their bullets ripping up the deck and shredding any sailors on it. With each pass, the Japanese pilot smiled or waved. The whole lot of them were cowards and murderers. Without a declaration of war, they waged war on us. Without warning. Without mercy. Without conscience. We took another hit, which thundered through the ship. It struck the starboard side, but it didn't explode. At the same time, I saw two torpedo wakes heading directly toward us. I braced for the impact. Which never came. Another lucky break. Until seconds later ...

8:10 A.M.

A great sucking sound, like a whoosh, rocked the ship with concussive force. A 1,760-pound armor-piercing bomb, dropped from 10,000 feet above, had penetrated four steel decks to the

ammunition magazine. The blast blew a turret into the air, which then came crashing back onto the deck. Black smoke spewed out of the forward smokestack, and an expanding fireball shot 500 to 600 feet into the air, engulfing those of us in the director. The blast showered the *Tennessee* with tons of twisted metal and the twisted parts of our men.

As flames shot through the two openings of our enclosure, we tried to take shelter under some of the equipment. But the flames found us. On the deck, men stumbled around like human torches. Others jumped into the water, and when they did, you could hear them sizzle. James Cory, one of the Marines on board, recalled what he saw from the quarterdeck: "These people were zombies, in essence. They were burned completely white. Their skin was just as white as if you'd taken a bucket of white-wash and painted it white. Their hair was burned off; their eyebrows were burned off ... Their arms were held away from their bodies, and they were stumping along the decks."

While that horrific scene was unfolding below us, billows of black smoke pushed into where we were, stinging our eyes, filling our nostrils, our throats, our lungs. We coughed out smoke, unable to catch our breath because the fire had burned off our oxygen. The compartment we were in suddenly became claustrophobic, and two men bolted out the

door. I would never see them again.

As we felt our way along the metal walls, the heat scorched our palms. The metal floor was so hot, we could feel the heat through the soles of our shoes. We hopped on one foot, then the other. Once on the outer platform, we moved toward the ladder. But flames from below leaped up the steps and barred our escape. There was no way down, and the metal platform we were standing on was growing hotter.

I looked at myself. My T-shirt had caught fire, burning my arms and back. My legs were burned from ankle to thigh. My face was seared. My hair was singed off, and part of an ear was gone. I stood in a stupor until a breeze parted the smoke, revealing a sailor on the *Vestal*. It was Joe George, who was following orders to cut the lines that tethered his ship to the *Arizona* so they could head to open waters.

We called to George, motioning for him to throw us a monkey's fist, a light-weight heaving line knotted around a metal ball and attached to a thicker rope. If we could secure a rope between the two ships, then perhaps we could make it to the *Vestal*. I looked at my arms. Sheaths of skin had peeled off and were draping over each arm. I tore off one length of skin and threw it on the floor of the platform. Then the other. The remaining tissue was a web-work of pink and white and red, some black, all of it throbbing. My focus narrowed to George and the ball in his hand. He threw it, but it fell short. He



Stratton (left) visited Hawaii's USS Arizona memorial wall in December 2014 with friend and fellow survivor John Anderson. (Anderson passed away the following year.)

gathered up the line and lobbed again. Short once more. George was perhaps the strongest man in the harbor, an All-Navy boxer. He was the only man with a prayer of getting that line to us—if he couldn't do it, then no one could.

George collected the rope once more. For a third time, he tossed it with all his strength. It sailed from one wounded ship to another, across flames, smoke, and carnage. I tracked it with my eyes and caught it in the air. I tied the rope to the railing, cinching it tight, and George secured his end. The rope stretched 70 feet to span the water below us, which was 45 feet down, slicked with fuel that had caught fire. Our only hope was to make it to the *Vestal*, hand over hand across the rope. But the flesh had been burned off all of our hands, and using those raw fingers and palms would be at best excruciating, and most likely impossible.

The first in line was Harold Kuhn.

He wasn't as badly injured as the rest of us, and so he would test the rope to see if it would hold. We looked down at the flames that swept between the two ships. Then we looked at George on the *Vestal*; his captain was next to him. The officer barked an order, but George stood defiant, glaring at him. The officer left. George waved Kuhn over. As Kuhn made his way across the rope, it started to sag. We recoiled at the sight. A sagging line meant the descent would be steeper, and we'd have to go uphill at the end. George called out to Kuhn, and the rest of us echoed him: "You can make it!" "Come on, now!" "Keep going!" If Kuhn couldn't do it, how could we in our condition? But he made it. Kuhn made it!

A Japanese Zero caught sight of us on the *Arizona*. We ran into the director to take cover. None of the bullets hit us—this time. It was now or never.

I started hand over hand across the

line, feeling a surge of adrenaline. The exposed tissue on my legs and arms felt the heat from the burning oil below me. The pain was excruciating. But somehow my hands kept going. Maybe I felt I would be letting the men down if I gave up. Or perhaps I knew that if I let go of the rope, the rest of the men might not make the attempt. George extended his hand to me as he snatched me from the flames.

One by one, each of us miraculously made it to the *Vestal*. We hadn't fallen. And we hadn't been hit by machine gun fire. We had help from the good Lord, I'm sure of that. One thing is for certain: Had Joe George not stood up for us—had he not been a rebel and refused to cut the line connecting the *Vestal* to the *Arizona*—we would have been cooked to death on that platform. If anyone deserved a Medal of Honor that day, in my opinion, it was him. And I know at least five others who would second that.

We waited on the *Vestal* as George and several men cut the mooring lines. But before the ship left for open

waters, its men flagged down a motor launch. We *Arizona* escapees were helped into the launch, which brought us to shore and medical help.

As I looked back at the harbor billowing with smoke, seeing the Pacific Fleet destroyed where they were moored, staring at the remains of the *Arizona* engulfed in flames ... the devastating sweep of it was too much.

Now I want to save from that fire something of my memories of the *Arizona* 75 years ago, so that my grandkids and all of the children after them can understand why it matters.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *After suffering burns over more than 65 percent of his body, Donald Stratton spent ten months recovering in military hospitals. He was medically discharged from the Navy in 1942, but one year later, he re-enlisted in the military and served as a gunner's mate on the USS Stack in the Pacific. He spent most of his postwar career working for a diving company that helped build oil rigs. He lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado.* **R**

FROM THE FORTHCOMING BOOK *ALL THE GALLANT MEN: AN AMERICAN SAILOR'S FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF PEARL HARBOR* BY DONALD STRATTON WITH KEN GIRE, COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY DONALD STRATTON AND KEN GIRE, TO BE PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 22, 2016, BY WILLIAM MORROW, AN IMPRINT OF HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION.



FOR YOUR TASTE BUDS ONLY

Employees of the Starbucks coffee shop in the CIA's Langley, Virginia, headquarters (referred to as "Store Number 1" on receipts) are not allowed to take names for orders.

Source: *Washington Post*

Laugh Lines

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly. **ANDY ROONEY**

A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a thunderstorm, and we all go through it together. **GARRISON KEILLOR**

There's nothing sadder in this world than to awake Christmas morning and not be a child. **ERMA BOMBECK**

Got all my Christmas shopping done. Now to shop for other people. **@CONANOBRIEN**

December 25 is National Jews Go to the Movies Day. **RACHAEL HARRIS** on *The Daily Show*

I am Jewish; my girlfriend's not. She bought me eight presents for Hanukkah. I asked why, and she's like, "Eight presents, for the eight nights of Hanukkah." I was like, "You idiot, there are 32 nights of Hanukkah—and I like electronics. Back to the mall!" **GEOFF KEITH**



A TEN-MONTH-OLD'S Letter to Santa

BY RAQUEL D'APICE FROM HUFFINGTONPOST.COM

Dear Santa,

I am a ten-month-old baby, and I am writing to you because my mother has been sending out my Christmas list to people, and her list does not in any way represent the things I really want. I don't really want stacking cups.

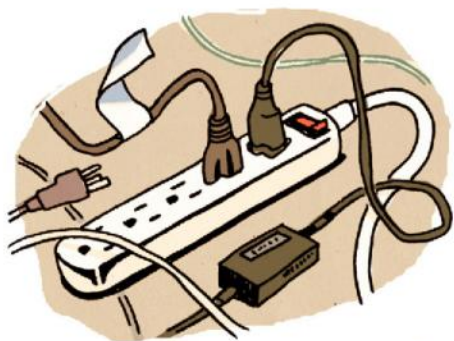
And before you say anything, I know you're ready to make the joke about ten-month-old babies and how all we want is the wrapping paper and the boxes. Touché, Santa. Touché. We do, of course, want those things. But I have a number of additional things that I want very badly.

My list is enclosed. Have a lovely holiday.

—Baby



A COMPREHENSIVE LIST of the THINGS I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

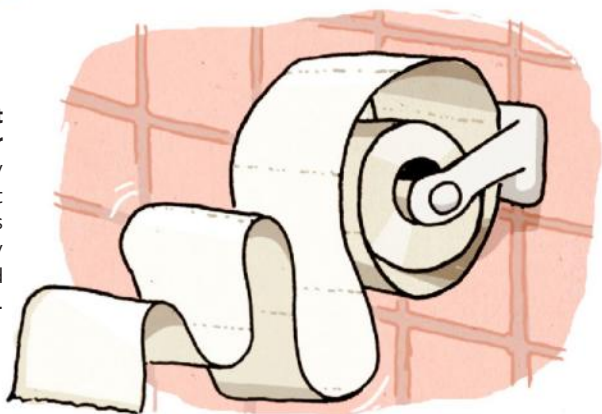


1. This Laptop Cord

I want this laptop cord more than I have ever wanted anything. Please. I also want the power strip with the orange on/off button and the white label on the other cord pictured (which is not connected to the laptop). I would love these specific cords located behind my mother's desk next to the air conditioner (whose cord I also want).

2. This Wall-Mount Entertainment Center

I have no idea why my mother does not want me to play with this thing, as it is obviously a child's toy. I would like one for my room.



3. House Keys

I would love a whole set of house keys. To eat, obviously. Only metal house keys will do. Please do not buy me plastic ones. I am not an idiot—I know that plastic house keys are not real keys.



4. Everybody's Eyeglasses

I pull these off the face of every person I meet, only to have them pried from my fingers and reclaimed by their original owner. I would love to have a pair of my own. Again, these are going to be for eating.

5. The Contents of This Thing

I would love for the contents of this thing to be emptied out onto the floor—particularly things like used wet cotton balls and discarded pieces of floss. If you would like to just take the contents of this bin and transfer them directly into my stocking, that would also be fine.



6. Handfuls of the Dog's Fur

This stuff is the best. I keep trying to pull it off her, but she moves frequently, making collection difficult. My favorite thing to do with it is put it in my mouth and then immediately realize that I didn't want it in my mouth.

7. The Hole in the Hallway Floorboard

I spend hours looking at this hole and poking at it. I know I cannot "have" a hole, as a hole cannot be had. A hole is an absence. Yet this is a list of the things I want, and I want this hole the way Gandhi wanted peace. The way the dog wants to lick my face. The way my mom wants me to stop pulling off her eyeglasses.



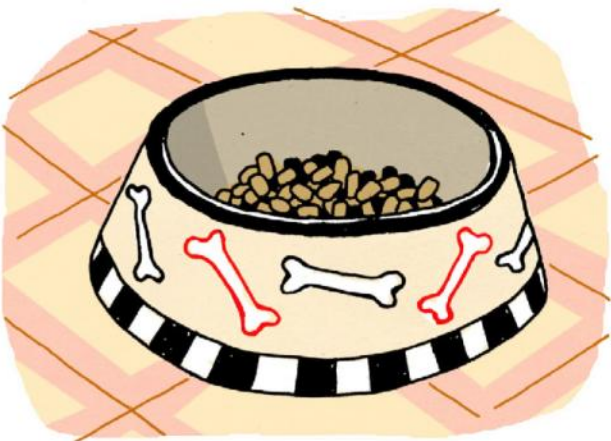


8. This Stuff, Which Is All Over the Apartment

I have no idea what this stuff is. All I know is that I want it in my hands, and no sooner have I grasped its sweet, delicate softness than my mother comes running over yelling something like, "STOP TOUCHING THAT—HOW OFTEN DO I HAVE TO VACUUM THE DANG HALLWAY?"

9. The Dog's Food

Every time I get close to this, someone pulls me away from it. If they don't want me to eat it, why is it on the floor?

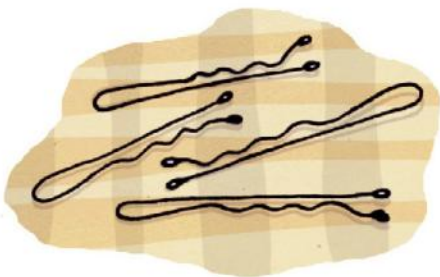


10. One of These

No idea what these do, but it's clearly a lot of fun, given that my mother never stops looking at it.

11. Bobby Pins

These are my favorite! If I had a nickel for every bobby pin I found on the floor, I'd have double the number of little metal things that I could put in my mouth because, go figure, I also totally love nickels.



The wolves of Yellowstone have some surprising lessons on being a man

The Mark of an **ALPHA MALE**

BY CARL SAFINA FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES*

IF YOU WATCH WOLVES, IT'S HARD TO escape the conclusion that perhaps no two species are more alike behaviorally than wolves and humans. Living as we do in families, we can easily recognize the social structures and status quests in wolf packs. No wonder Native Americans recognized in wolves a sibling spirit. And no wonder human males often face pressure to measure up as “alpha” males—to “wolf up,” as it were. The term *alpha male* connotes a man who at every moment demonstrates that he’s in control in the home and who away from home can become snarling and aggressive.



This alpha male stereotype comes from a misunderstanding of the real thing.

By observing wolves in free-living packs in Yellowstone National Park, I've seen that the leadership of the ranking male is not forced, not domineering, and not aggressive to those on his team.

"The main characteristic of an alpha male wolf," the veteran wolf researcher Rick McIntyre told me as we were watching gray wolves, "is a quiet confidence, quiet self-assurance. You know what you need to do; you know what's best for your pack. You lead by example. You're very comfortable with that. You have a calming effect."

The point is, alpha males are not aggressive. They don't need to be. "Think of an emotionally secure man or a great champion. Whatever he needed to prove is already proven," he said.

There is an evolutionary logic to it. "Imagine two wolf packs, or two human tribes," McIntyre said. "Which is more likely to survive and reproduce: the one whose members are more cooperative, more sharing, less

violent with one another, or the group whose members are beating each other up and competing with one another?"

Thus, an alpha male may be a major player in a successful hunt, but after the takedown of the prey, he may step away and sleep until his pack has eaten and is full.

McIntyre has spent 20 years watching and studying wolves in Yellowstone for the National Park Service. He rises early, uses radio telemetry to pinpoint the location of a pack via a radio-collared pack member, then heads out with his spotting scope to observe the animals, keeping careful notes of their activities.

In all that time, he has rarely seen an alpha male act aggressively toward the pack's other members. They are his family—his mate, off-

spring (both biological and adopted), and maybe a sibling.

This does not mean that alpha males are not tough when they need to be. One famous wolf in Yellowstone whose radio collar number, 21, became his name, was considered a "super wolf" by the people who closely observed the

“*Think of a secure man or a great champion. Whatever he needed to prove is already proven.*”



Alpha male 21 reigned over Yellowstone's dominant pack for almost seven years.

arc of his life. He was fierce in defense of family and apparently never lost a fight with a rival pack. Yet within his own pack, one of his favorite things was to wrestle with little pups.

"And what he really loved to do was to pretend to lose. He just got a huge kick out of it," McIntyre said.

One year, a pup was a bit sickly. The other pups seemed to be afraid of him and wouldn't play with him. Once, after delivering food for the small pups, 21 stood looking around for something. Soon he started wagging his tail. He'd been looking for the sickly little pup, and he went over just to hang out with him for a while.

Of all McIntyre's stories about the super wolf, that's his favorite. Strength impresses us. But kindness is what we remember best.

Biologists used to consider the alpha male the undisputed boss. But now they recognize two hierarchies at work in wolf packs—one for

the males, the other for the females.

Doug Smith, the biologist who is the project leader for the Yellowstone Gray Wolf Restoration Project, said the females "do most of the decision making" for the pack, including where to travel, when to rest, and when to hunt. The matriarch's personality can set the tone for the whole pack, Smith said.

Or, as McIntyre put it: "It's the alpha female who really runs the show."

Clearly, our alpha male stereotype could use a corrective makeover. Men can learn a thing or two from real wolves: less snarl, more quiet confidence, leading by example, faithful devotion in the care and defense of families, respect for females, and a sharing of responsibilities. That's really what wolfing up should mean. **R**

Carl Safina is the founder of the Safina Center at Stony Brook University and the author of the book *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel*.

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A NOTABLE NEW YEAR'S

On December 31, 1899, the SS *Warrimoo* crossed the exact spot where the equator meets the international date line. Straddling the line at the stroke of midnight, the forward half of the ship entered January 1, 1900, while the aft remained in December 31, 1899—simultaneously inhabiting two hemispheres on two days in two centuries.

Source: *Seattle Times*

35 Things Police Officers Want To Tell You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

COULD YOU BE A COP? Could you confront a gun-wielding thief, talk down jumpy drug addicts, console victims of crime, and make everyone around you safer—and consistently do all that well, day after unpredictable day, for years straight? Face it: Few of us are qualified for that ever-more-demanding job. We spoke with officers from around the country to hear what it's like to walk (or drive) a beat right now. Their answers offer a glimpse into the great highs and debilitating lows they experience as they try—and usually succeed—to serve our communities. At the same time, they, like the nation at large, are preoccupied with both the causes of and the fallout from the high-profile shootings of unarmed African Americans that have drawn so much attention to what they do and how they do it. Listen in.



What's missing when we discuss police-civilian interactions is "a sense of proportion," says former sheriff Sue Rahr. "Hundreds of thousands of daily exchanges go well."

1 If you get information about policing only from watching the news, the impression you are left with is that all police-civilian interactions are going badly. That's not the case.

SUE RAHR, former sheriff, now executive director of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission

2 Officers tell me people are stopping them daily, thanking them, buying them lunch or a cup of coffee. Reasonable people know that police are under extreme scrutiny

right now. They're coming up and thanking us for the job we do.

LT. BOB KROLL, president of the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis

3 The best part of the job? Waving to a kid and getting a wave in return and not a middle finger. We were much more idealistic 15, 20 years ago. We were going to change the world. Unfortunately, the world changed us. We're more cynical, more guarded, less trusting.

Chicago police officers who blog anonymously at secondcitycop.blogspot.com

4 I pulled over a female the other day, and it took her a block or two to stop. When she finally did, I asked why, and she said she didn't want to stop where there wasn't any light, because she didn't know what I was going to do to her. I thought, *Wow, we're the bad guys now.*

JAY STALIEN, a police officer in Florida who also served in Baltimore

5 We live in a society that has become more hostile toward the government and its officials. We receive many more threats than we used to. *An Iowa state trooper*

6

AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN MYSELF, I'M VIEWED AS SOME KIND OF TRAITOR.

JAY STALIEN

7 That anxiety you feel when you encounter us? We feel it too.

NAKIA JONES, a police officer in Warrensville Heights, Ohio

8 Before, when we stopped a car, we just walked up, said "You're speeding," and asked for license and registration. Now the first thing we ask is if they have a weapon in the vehicle. *An Iowa state trooper*

9 With all the scrutiny and the anti-police climate right now, it's becoming a challenge to recruit good and qualified people. There has been a big drop in interest.

LT. BOB KROLL

10 People seem to think that we should take the time to discern whether a gun is real, whether a person is willing to use it, and if they will shoot. We can't wait for a person to shoot first. That could mean not going home at the end of your shift.

An Iowa state trooper

11 The Supreme Court says whether an officer's use of force is justified or not should be judged not with the benefit of hindsight, but by whether other officers with similar amounts of training and the same facts before them find that same amount of force to be reasonable.

JIM BUEERMANN, a former police chief and president of the Washington-based Police Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to improving law enforcement

12 I don't agree with the actions the officers took in all the recent shootings, but with few exceptions, if the person just did what the officer asked, nobody would be dead.

JAY STALIEN

13 If you're pulled over, turn on the dome light if it's dark, roll down the window, and wait

with your hands in sight on the wheel. If the officer asks to see your license, insurance, and registration, tell him or her where those things are before reaching for them. That's because most wallets are where a criminal would carry a gun (pocket, purse, glove box). Then move slowly, without any sudden jerks.

*Chicago police officers who
blog anonymously*

14 If you don't comply with a police officer's orders, you're putting yourself and the officer at risk, because now the situation is getting escalated. *An Iowa state trooper*

15 There were a lot of false narratives at play in some of the police shootings. We now know that Jamar Clark¹ was not handcuffed and then shot. And people quote Michael Brown² with his hands up saying, "Don't shoot." But he never said that.

LT. BOB KROLL

16 So many incidents have turned into rioting because no one knows what happened. We need to be better at explaining police procedure and sharing the details we have so far with the public.

JAY STALIEN

17 Compare the calm in Tulsa this past September after an officer shot an unarmed black man with the rioting that took place in Charlotte. The fact that the Tulsa police released the videos right away had an impact. But what stood out to me in Tulsa was the police department's strong engagement with church and community leaders. It looked to me like a lot of work had been done in that city to build relationships with black leaders, and I think that helped quell the reaction.

SUE RAHR

18 Many officers lack experience dealing with different cultures. There was a white guy from rural Oregon in my policing class. We were policing a city that's mostly black. He was like a fish out of water. He couldn't communicate. People were like, "What's he saying?"

ERIC QUARLES, PHD, *a federal law-enforcement officer who served as a city police officer for 18 years*

19 I felt like quitting the force when I watched the Alton Sterling³ and Philando Castile⁴ shooting videos. It broke my heart. But it made me angry too. If you're that officer, and you have a God complex or you're

1. The 24-year-old from Minneapolis was killed during a struggle with police. Charges were not brought against the officers involved. 2. The 18-year-old was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Charges were not brought against the officer involved. 3. The 37-year-old was shot several times while held down on the ground by two Baton Rouge police officers. The shooting investigation is ongoing. 4. The 32-year-old was killed during a traffic stop in Minnesota. A probe into the killing continues.

afraid of people who don't look like you, you have no business wearing the uniform. Take it off. **NAKIA JONES**

20 As a police officer, it's hard not to have a superiority complex. You take a 21-year-old male, you give him a uniform, a gun, pepper spray, a Taser, a nightstick. On an individual basis, we have more power than the president. I can pull people over for no reason, arrest people, and change their lives forever. No banker can do that. No doctor can do it. We are giving young people so much power. Without the right training, it can easily go to their heads. **ERIC QUARLES, PHD**

21 This is a guy thing. Most police shootings are by male officers. When I was a police chief, we made a decision there would always be one or two women on our SWAT team. I told them, "I need a den mother. I need you to be there because you are a rational person who can help tamp down some of that testosterone." **JIM BUEERMANN**

22 People ask me, "Why don't good police officers rat out bad police officers?" Well, just like in any other organization, there are cultures and subcultures. Police officers

who tend to do things by the book hang out with other officers who do things by the book. Those who push the envelope hang out with other people like them. **ERIC QUARLES, PHD**

23 Why does anyone in any industry not report the misbehavior of friends and colleagues? **JIM BUEERMANN**

24 We need to teach proper police tactics so officers have more options when someone doesn't cooperate. In the Tamir Rice⁵ case, officers there were dispatched to a man with a gun in a park. It turned out to be a 12-year-old boy with an Airsoft-style pistol. But because the officers drove right up to him instead of staying at a distance, they didn't have an opportunity to take cover. When they saw him with gun in hand, that left them with no other option but to fire. **SUE RAHR**

25 Communications training is sorely lacking in policing. Look at Eric Garner.⁶ Here's a case that starts out as a minor infraction [selling untaxed, loose cigarettes]. The officers are trying to talk to him, and it's not going well. In a case like that, if they had better communication skills, they may not have

5. The 12-year-old from Cleveland was killed when police mistook his air gun for a real gun. Charges were not brought against the officers involved. 6. The 43-year-old New Yorker died when he was put into an outlawed choke hold. A grand jury refused to bring charges against the officer involved, but a sergeant on the scene was brought up on departmental charges.

had to use that kind of physical force.

JIM BUEERMANN

26 Departments that are doing it right look for ways to connect with residents when they're not in crisis. When I was chief of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, one of my command staff members was a fisherman, so we started a Cops 'N' Kids Fishing Tournament. We'd take 100 kids each year and have fun. Over time, those off-line interactions add up.

MIKE DAVIS, *chief of police at Northeastern University in Boston*

27 Tucson, Arizona, created a new unit to handle cases involving mental illness. These officers serve the department's involuntary commitment orders, which typically involve a lot of conflict. They go in plain clothes and start building rapport with the person before serving the order. To date, they've served over 1,500 orders and had to use force only twice in emergency situations; that's remarkable.

SUE RAHR

28 As I've matured in this job, I've learned that you become a better police officer when you



Picnics and "Shop with a Cop" programs are some of the ways the police are reaching out to their communities.

listen to people. We're trained to neutralize a threat, to make arrests. But I find that if I let off the gas a little, listen a bit more, I can resolve problems with a lot less conflict. Some of the problems we encounter, people just want to vent.

ERIC QUARLES, PHD

29 We're not automatons. We see people at their worst, and it makes us jaded.

Chicago police officers who blog anonymously

30 We are affected by things we experience on the job. I get a lot of calls where I see children who have been abused and neglected. I'll go into a house and

there's no running water, no electricity, feces all over, and kids there who haven't eaten for days. Sometimes, I'll say a prayer while I'm there. It wears on you.

An Iowa state trooper

31 When we shoot somebody, even if it's justified, you better believe it's tearing us up inside. Some officers can't even come back to work after that. Remember, most of us never have to take a shot during our careers.

NAKIA JONES

32 Every time I teach a policing class, I ask who in the classroom has ever reached into their pocket while on duty and given someone money for food, gas, or shelter. All of the hands go up.

REX CALDWELL, *of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission; retired police chief of Mukilteo, Washington*

33 There are thousands of stories of officers doing wonderful things to interact with their communities. For example, in Iowa, an

officer bought a single mother a car after hers was totaled.

SUE RAHR

34

THERE ARE OFFICERS OF ALL RACES DOING GOOD DEEDS EVERY DAY, THINGS THAT THE PUBLIC DOESN'T SEE OR HEAR ABOUT.

NAKIA JONES

35 Kids wanting to get inside the squad car to run the lights and siren. A parent thanking us for bringing their kid home. A victim thanking us for writing them a report even though they're the one getting bandaged up at a hospital. These are the things that restore our tattered faith in human nature.

Chicago police officers who blog anonymously



ANIMAL MASTERMINDS

- Raccoons pick locks.
- Octopuses escape from jars and tanks and use camouflage.
- Squirrels pretend to bury nuts in empty holes when humans are watching.

Source: rd.com

Ask the Expert

HOW HYBRID™ HEARING IS DIFFERENT

Straining to hear certain sounds each day, even when using powerful hearing aids?

Feeling frustrated and sometimes even exhausted from listening? Hearing some sounds but still not being able to understand them can impact your ability to communicate with others. If you struggle to understand speech, especially in noisy environments, hearing aids alone may not be enough.

Hybrid™ Hearing¹ is a new hearing solution that works differently than hearing aids. The system uses acoustic amplification to improve the hearing you still have, while taking advantage of cochlear implant technology to restore access to the hearing you're missing.



Bruce J. Gantz, M.D.,
Cochlear Medical Advisor

Dr. Bruce J. Gantz, a Hybrid implant surgeon and medical advisor to Cochlear answers questions about Hybrid Cochlear Implants and how they are different from hearing aids.

Q: How is Hybrid™ Hearing different than hearing aids?

A: Hearing aids help many people by making the sounds they hear louder. Unfortunately as hearing loss progresses you're not able to understand words and high pitch sounds like the voices of women and children. With Hybrid™ Hearing you use the hearing you still have using amplification technology of a hearing aid, and get back what you're missing with cochlear implant technology designed to provide you with improved clarity and speech understanding.

Q: Is it major surgery?

A: No, not at all. In fact, the procedure is often done on an outpatient basis and typically takes just a couple hours.

Q: Are cochlear implants covered by Medicare?

A: Yes, Medicare and most private insurance plans routinely cover cochlear implants.

Q: How do I know Hybrid™ Hearing will work for me?

A: When compared to hearing aids alone, Cochlear Nucleus Hybrid Cochlear Implant System recipients reported 2x better hearing in both quiet and noise and 10x increase in overall hearing satisfaction.² Hearing aids are worn first and for those who cannot hear up to 50% of words in sentences a Hybrid™ Hearing solution is considered. Be sure to discuss your options with a Hearing Implant Specialist in your area.

Call **1 800 836 2905** to find a Hearing Implant Specialist near you.

Visit **Cochlear.com/US/RDigest** for a free guide.

1. The Acoustic Component should only be used when behavioral audiometric thresholds can be obtained and the recipient can provide feedback regarding sound quality. The Hybrid L24 Implant is approved in the US for adults ages 18 and older.

2. FDA Panel Sponsor Executive Summary, Nucleus Hybrid L24 Implant System [Internet]. 2013 November 8 [cited 2014 June 5]. Available from: <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/MedicalDevices/MedicalDevicesAdvisoryCommittee/EarNoseandThroatDevicesPanel/UCM373793.pdf>.

Like half the country, I don't dream about white Christmases. I dream of tractors and more, all of them bright with bulbs.

Seeing The Lights

BY RICK BRAGG FROM THE BOOK *MY SOUTHERN JOURNEY*

SOME THINGS WE cannot duplicate where I live. We will never celebrate Christmas inside a picture postcard. We have no winter wonderland, though once, inspired by a snowfall seen on the black-and-white television, I did scrape a handful of ice

from the inside of the freezer to throw at my brother. By the time I got to him, all I had to fling was a handful of rain.

What we do have is electricity. As long as the Tennessee Valley Authority can light up the southern night with strands of color, shining from

CHIP SIMONS/
GETTY IMAGES



every mansion and mobile home, twinkling round the baby Jesus, they can have their white Christmas. I have seen lights encircling hay bales, hung on rusty tractors, and wrapped around mailbox posts. In the country, you need a whole lot of

extension cord to electrify a mailbox.

I have seen them strung across the grilles of Peterbilt trucks. My mother never takes down her lights, strung on a cedar beam in the living room, though she does unplug them eventually. The rich folks have switched

to white lights, a lot of them, to be elegant. But it will always be lights of color, shining through a night that smells of cut pine and woodsmoke, that mean Christmas to me.

I find it especially hard not to live in the past at this time of year, when I would do anything to see the world like a child again. It is why I fill the refrigerator every December with chocolate-covered cherries and watch, for the hundredth time, those oddly animated 50-year-old Christmas specials about Kris Kringle and the evil Burgermeister and the elf who wanted to be a dentist.

It is important that some things stay the same—that, at some point this season, someone will say, “We’re goin’ to look at Christmas lights. Wanna come?”

I go sometimes and sometimes just say no. It is enough to know someone is going. I have a fine memory stashed away of the lights; I do not want it to grow less than it was by heaping a

Walmart’s worth of new lights on it.

I remember it was first grade, and the big, ramshackle house we lived in, just for that winter, was haunted. I was afraid of that house at night. It creaked, and the wind hissed around the eaves. One cold evening, my aunts came by to take us for a ride in an old Chevrolet, rescuing us.

As we drove through the foothills, my face pressed against the window, I saw that the very dark had been conquered, chased away by miles of light, tracing the outlines of ragged trailers and leaning frame houses. Now and then, one of my aunts would mutter “Their

light bill’s gonna be high” over the Christmas songs on the radio, and I went to sleep that way. Later, someone carried me inside. I remember I was embarrassed by that; I was a big boy. But the women in my family are strong.

I wish you a merry Christmas and a very hefty light bill. **R**

“
**I saw that the
 dark had been
 conquered,
 chased away
 by miles of
 Christmas lights.**”

MY SOUTHERN JOURNEY BY RICK BRAGG, COPYRIGHT © TIME INC. BOOKS, PUBLISHED BY PERMISSION OF OXMOOR HOUSE, A DIVISION OF TIME INC. BOOKS.



EXTRA CHEESE

I constantly tell my nine-year-old twins how important it is to stay in school, and yet every day, they come home.

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Could you ever forgive a serial killer? What if he was your father? Here, the tale of Kerri Rawson's ten-year hunt for answers.

My Father Was the BTK Killer

BY ROY WENZL FROM THE *WICHITA EAGLE*

THE MAN KNOCKED on Kerri Rawson's door around noon on February 25, 2005. She looked out at him from inside her apartment near Detroit—he was holding an FBI badge.

She almost didn't answer. Her father, a code compliance officer in Park City, a suburb of Wichita, Kansas, had taught her to be wary of strangers, and this one had sat in his car for an hour outside her



**Kerri Rawson in
2015, ten years
after learning
the truth about
her father**

home. But she decided to let the FBI agent into her kitchen, where she had made chocolate Bundt cake. From then on, the smell of chocolate cake would make her queasy.

The man asked if she knew what BTK was. Yes, she did. BTK—Bind, Torture, Kill—was the nickname for the serial killer who had scared her mom decades ago and who was responsible for murdering ten people in Kansas between 1974 and 1991.

Paula defended Dennis. Back in Detroit, Kerri yelled at the FBI agent. The last time she had seen her dad was in Park City at Christmas. He'd looked sad. She remembered his bear hug, how he smelled, his brown uniform. This could not be true, she told the man. Dad had called last night, asking if she'd checked the oil in her car.

At that point she did something she would do many times over the next seven days: defend and then doubt her



“Should I tell you that I grew up adoring you,”
she wrote in an unsent letter to him,
 “that you were the sunshine of my life?”

The FBI guy was her dad's age, in his late 50s, wearing glasses and a necktie, nervous. Kerri was a 26-year-old substitute teacher taking a day off, still in her pajamas. The man said her dad had been arrested as a BTK suspect. He needed to swab her cheek for DNA.

At that moment, in Park City, Kerri's mother, Paula Rader, 56, sat down to lunch at home, waiting for her husband, Dennis. Cops rushed in, guns drawn. A week later, Paula's lunch still sat uneaten in the house she had shared with Dennis since the early 1970s. She'd never sleep there again.

Cops arrested Dennis as he was driving home for lunch. In Wichita, officers picked up family and friends for questioning. At the police station,

father at the same time. She told the agent about Marine Hedge. Hedge, 53, was a grandmother with a silky southern accent, five feet tall, weighing no more than 100 pounds. She'd lived six doors down from the Raders and disappeared in 1985, when Kerri was six. Hedge's body was later found in a ditch. Paula had been fearful. “Don't worry,” Dad had said. “We're safe.”

Kerri remembered that when Hedge disappeared, her dad wasn't home. “It was stormy, and I didn't want to sleep by myself. My mom let me in her bed—that's how I know he was gone.”

After the FBI agent left, she took down a picture of her father from the hallway and stuck it in a closet. She Googled “BTK” for proof that he was



Celebrating Christmas at the Rader home in 1984 in Park City, Kansas (left); a father-daughter fishing trip to Oklahoma in 2002 (right)

innocent but then told her husband she was matching her memories to BTK's murder timeline, wondering if her whole life might be a lie.

THE NEXT DAY, police and politicians gathered in Wichita's city hall. "BTK is arrested," the police chief announced. Kerri was furious when she learned that to link her dad to BTK, cops had obtained one of her Pap smears taken years before at Kansas State University's clinic. They used it to confirm that the Rader family DNA closely matched DNA in the semen that BTK left at the scene of a quadruple homicide in 1974. The FBI guy had asked Kerri for a cheek swab so he could double-check her DNA.

The first nights, Kerri and her husband, Darian, slept as if one of them needed to be on watch—she on the couch, he on the floor. TV crews

camped outside, and when Darian drove to work, they followed.

Darian watched his wife change. Athletic and nearly five foot ten, she was no girlie girl, and he loved that. She could walk for days carrying a backpack. But now, she was BTK's daughter. She even looked like her dad: same dark hair, same eyes. She shared his middle name, Lynn. She felt as if she'd done something wrong.

Kerri searched her memories. The night of Hedge's murder, Dad had taken Brian, her brother, on a Boy Scout campout. Was it an alibi so he could sneak out and murder their neighbor? In 2004, around Christmas, after BTK threatened in letters to the police and news outlets that he would kill again, Dad had driven her to the airport to pick up her brother. But Dad had wandered off. Was he mailing one of those letters? Watching the

news to see if he was mentioned? She minutely analyzed her whole life.

Kerri remembered how he spoke sharply if she sat in his chair or failed to put her shoes away. Cops said BTK made strange marks in his communications to them. She recalled weird marks Dad made on newspaper stories. "Code," he'd called it.

Three days after her dad's arrest, Kerri flew back to Kansas City. On the plane, she escaped by reading *Harry*

Everybody assumed BTK was a sadistic genius. But the real BTK is an ordinary, inarticulate doofus, Darian thought. And a good dad, Kerri said. With Paula, he'd taught the kids' godliness. Kerri had two college degrees; Brian, her older brother, had been an Eagle Scout and was training to serve on U.S. Navy nuclear submarines.

Dennis couldn't understand why no family members visited. Kerri wrote him: "You have had these secrets,



Dennis committed his first murders at age 29. At age 29, Kerri became a mother, and **suddenly she truly despised her father.**

Potter and the Goblet of Fire. But on her layover, she saw her father's face on the airport's TV screens.

Mike Clark, the family's pastor, visited Dennis Rader in jail a week after his arrest. Clark called Paula afterward, and Kerri watched her mother take the call, with a yellow legal pad in her hand. Paula wrote, "He's confessing," and underlined it as they talked.

It was true. He had murdered the Oteros: a mom, a dad, and two children, ages 11 and 9. He had tortured victims, sexually defiled several. He had taken Hedge's body inside Christ Lutheran Church, where he was congregation president. He posed her and took photos. BTK had started his crimes in 1974, before Kerri was born.

this 'double life' for 30 years; we have only had knowledge of it for three months ... We are trying to cope and survive ... You lied to us, deceived us."

The family dreaded a trial, where his crimes would be described. Dennis pleaded guilty to spare them. Kerri felt relieved until the plea hearing. Her dad told a TV audience at length how he had killed people, lingering over how he'd murdered the Otero kids. He seemed to enjoy the story. He even brought up Kerri. "Joseph Otero had a daughter; I had a daughter."

ONE NIGHT the next year, while Darian slept, Kerri lay beside him and wrote her father. "Should I tell you that I grew up

adoring you, that you were the sunshine of my life ... true, even if it is coming out jaded and bitter now ... Sometimes I just want to go out and buy the biggest, buttery tub [of popcorn] I can find and wave it in your face and say, 'Ha, you won't ever have this again' and ask was it worth it? In the next breath I want to ask if you're staying warm at night ... I'm so sorry that you're alone in that small cold concrete cell and sometimes I just wish I could give you a hug."

She never sent that letter. And when her dad wrote, his letters sometimes went into the trash, where she dumped cat litter on them. Other times she'd write, and he would not reply, later telling her he'd been busy.

DENNIS COMMITTED his first murders at age 29. At age 29, Kerri became a mother, and suddenly she truly despised her dad. In 1974, he had killed two children. In 1977, he had strangled Shirley Vian while her six-year-old son watched through a keyhole. In 1986, he killed Vicki Wegerle as her two-year-old stood in a playpen. "Man hurt Mommy," the child told police. Kerri stopped writing to her father and cut him out of her life.

Sue Parker, a therapist, treated Kerri for five months in 2007. Parker saw a woman with above-average intelligence, poise, and post-traumatic stress. (Kerri gave permission for Parker to be interviewed for this story.) Many factors determine how well

people can recover. "It's about the severity of the trauma and how long it goes on, but it also depends on the coping mechanisms the victims have ... their support system, who they have around them," Parker said.

Kerri had had good people around all her life, Parker thought. A loving husband. Church. Friends. And good parents. Not just Mom. Dad too.

The cops said Dennis Rader fancied himself a James Bond character with cover stories—Boy Scout volunteer, congregation president. But BTK had also been a good dad, Parker said. "Maybe it was all a cover story," she added. "But if it was, it was a cover story that actually worked."

While betrayed on a level only God can understand, Parker said, Kerri seemed healthy and strong when she left Parker's care. After her daughter, Emilie, was born, Kerri clung to teachings about God's love. But when a sermon on forgiveness was announced at church, she stayed away. She had a second child, Ian, in 2011, but her dad's betrayals kept poisoning her life. When Emilie was five, she asked her mother where her grandfather was.

"In a long time-out," Kerri replied.

Could Kerri see him? Emilie asked.

"It's a really long time-out," Kerri answered.

ONE DAY AT CHURCH, Darian and Kerri listened to a woman describe being raped. She said she forgave not to help the rapist, but



Dennis Rader walks Kerri down the aisle at her wedding in 2003.

to lighten her own suffering. Kerri talked about that idea for days. In August 2012, she announced at church that her father was a serial killer and told her story. “I have not forgiven him,” she said. Marijo Swanson, a friend, talked to her. “If we choose not to forgive or not work at healing from the betrayal,” she told Kerri, “we continue to give the other person power to control us and our feelings.”

That fall, Kerri suffered a fracture in her tibia. She was laid up for weeks. Shortly afterward, forgiveness poured over her one day. She sobbed so hard while driving that she had to pull the car over. The anger was gone. In December, Kerri wrote to her dad for the first time in five years. She told him she would never forget his crimes or be at peace with them, but she was at peace with the man who had raised her. Then she wrote of her life and of the grandchildren he would

never meet. “I don’t know if I will ever be able to make it for a visit but know that I love you and hope to see you in heaven someday.”

After that letter, Kerri changed. “Before she forgave him, she thought of herself as BTK’s daughter,” Darian said later. “But as soon as she forgave him, she was Kerri again.”

In February 2013, Kerri spoke at church. “[God] told me, ‘You have a dad problem; you have a trust and obedience problem. You trusted and obeyed your earthly father, and he hurt you, so now you’re holding out on me. Let’s fix that.’”

She said, “I told Him that ‘I love you.’ He said, ‘Then show me.’”

And so she had done it, she told them. She had forgiven him. She wrote again to her father, telling him once more that she forgave him. Her father was stunned. “Forgiveness is there between the lines,” he wrote in his rambling style. “She recalls all that we did as a family—many good memories, and that helps her make the day. That is true love from a daughter’s heart. What else can a father ask for.”

That was not the end to Kerri’s struggles. In September 2013, Stephen King said in a TV interview that he’d written a story inspired by the Rader family called “A Good Marriage,” about discovering a monster in the house. Furious, Kerri gave her own interview, lashing out at King. Among people giving her rave reviews: Dad.

"She reminds me of me," he wrote to the *Wichita Eagle*. "Independence, fearless, uses the media. I was touch[ed] by it ... People reading ... will see we had a 'good Family.' Nothing to hide; Only me with my 'Dark Secrets.' Like she said, I was a good Dad, (but only did bad things)."

Memories came back to Kerri. In 1996, the Raders had lost a cousin to a car wreck and were losing a grandfather to illness. To comfort the family, her mom made manicotti, but the Raders got into a fight at dinner. "We had this old rickety table and someone—I don't remember who—pounded on it, and the legs broke and all the dinner came crashing down ... My dad was so angry at my brother, he put his hands around my brother's neck and started to try to choke him. I can still picture it clearly, and I can see the intense anger in my dad's face and eyes. Close to manic."

For Kerri, life continued to be complicated. "I fight my dad sometimes in my dreams, never understanding who let him out of prison," she said. "I'm always very fearful of him and very angry in my dreams. Sometimes I'm even fighting for my life or frantically trying to convince others of the truth."

O **N A BITTER MORNING** in January 2015, Kerri is in Wichita. "Coming back here to Wichita is like stepping into enemy

territory," she says. She wonders whether people might recognize her, and she talks about forgiveness. "I feel bad for the 30 years of ... bad things because of one man, my dad ... I forgave him. But I didn't do that for him," she says. "I did it for me."

She returns to her old block and points. "There's my grandma's house, and there's where Mrs. Hedge lived ... And here is where our house was."

It is a vacant lot. The city razed the house to discourage gawkers. "To get to my grandma's house, I had to walk past Mrs. Hedge's house, and now [at age six] I was afraid. And the guy who killed her was living in our house."

She shows where a tree house stood, built by her dad. She indicates with her arms how big his garden had been. "He turned my bedroom into a nursery for plants when I was three, and I'd sleep with my brother in the bunk bed. I was so annoyed with my dad. But now you realize that kept him out of trouble. He was trying to stop. So it was plants—or murder."

She points to a depression in the grass: the grave of Patches, a pet dog long dead. The cops were so suspicious of BTK that they had dug up the dog's remains to see whether BTK had buried any secrets with them. He had not.

But nothing about her life was spared, Kerri says. Not even the graves of long-dead dogs. **R**

WHO

?

KNEW

13 Things Savvy Shoppers Look for in Online Reviews

BY CHARLOTTE HILTON
ANDERSEN



IF YOU RELY ON ONLINE REVIEWS to decide which products to buy, beware: Nearly 30 percent are phony, planted by companies to boost their sales or tank their competitors' rankings. To avoid getting scammed, watch for these warning signs.

1 A SKETCHY REVIEWER PROFILE
On most sites, you can see a reviewer's past reviews by clicking on the username. Be wary if someone has only one review, reviews only one type of product (say, diet pills), leaves

only very positive reviews, or reviews products from only one company.

2 SIGNS OF COMPENSATION
One clear clue a reviewer got paid is that the bio page shows many

similar reviews of comparable products. Some even admit getting a gift card or receiving the product for free in return for the review.

3 TOO MUCH DETAIL Fake reviews, especially for health products, often spout a long list of claims, “facts,” or marketing-speak.

4 TOO LITTLE DETAIL On the flip side, bulk fake reviews rely on generalities so they can be copied to different products.

5 FIRST-PERSON PRONOUNS It may seem counterintuitive, but Cornell University researchers found that fake reviews are often peppered with *I* or *my* to make them seem more personal. Real people use a wider variety of nouns and adjectives.

6 ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT PLACEMENT To spot fakes written by competitors, watch for negative reviews that include high praise for a specific alternative, with a link to their “preferred” product.

7 ONE-STAR AND FIVE-STAR REVIEWS Read reviews in the middle. Fake reviewers often love it or hate it, but real people will often be more measured.

8 SUPER SHORT REVIEWS Paid shills aim to get a product’s overall grade as high as possible as

quickly as possible, so they’ll hit the five-star button and type something quick like “Great service!”

9 REVIEW CLUSTERS Fake reviewers often inundate a new product with reviews to generate buzz. A huge red flag is if all the five-star reviews were written within 24 hours or if there are clusters of reviews between periods of inactivity.

10 WORD REPETITION To make it easier for people to review their products, companies often provide text to reviewers that they can cut and paste.

11 ENTIRE BRAND NAMES Real reviewers won’t bother to type out the entire name of a product. But fraudsters will include the company name, make, and model to get better search engine optimization.

12 A TURNAROUND IN ATTITUDE Reviewers swear they came in ready to hate a product but changed their minds based on its sheer awesomeness. But how likely is it that people would buy products they thought they would hate?

13 TOO! MANY! EXCLAMATION! POINTS!!! Real reviewers use a variety of punctuation, whereas fake reviews rely heavily on extreme praise peppered with exclamation points and emojis. **R**

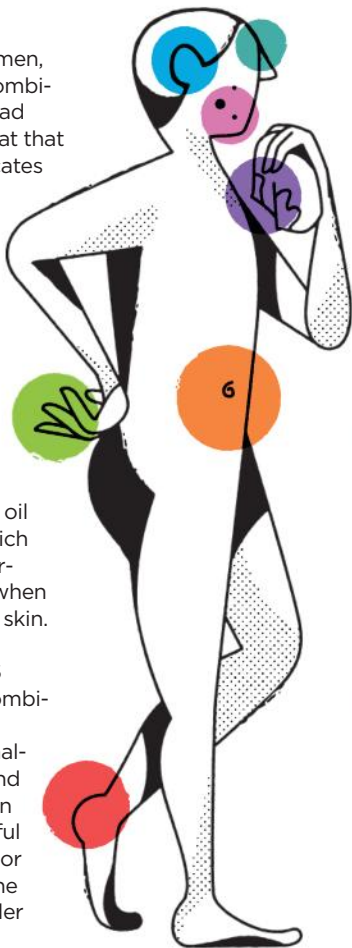
Body Gunk, Explained

BY KELSEY KLOSS

● **IN EARS** Cerumen, or earwax, is a combination of hair, dead skin, oil, and sweat that cleans and lubricates the ear canal. Skip the cotton swabs—earwax flakes and falls out as you chew and talk.

● **IN ZITS** A popped pimple is a dermatological danger zone: Zits hold puss made up of oil and bacteria, which contaminates surrounding pores when it oozes over the skin.

● **UNDER NAILS** The grime is a combination of keratin, skin cells, personal-care products, and dirt—plus you can even carry harmful bacteria from poor bathroom hygiene or raw foods under your nails.



● **IN EYES** Mucus (see below), skin cells, oil, and dust collect in the corners of your eyes. During the day, blinking flushes the crud out. When you sleep, it isn't washed out and gets crusty.

● **IN SINUSES** Made of water, dead white blood cells, salts, and proteins, mucus protects you by trapping bacteria that enter the body.

● **IN BELLY BUTTON** When Austrian researchers analyzed belly button lint (yes, really!), they discovered it consists of clothing fabric, dead skin, dust, sweat, and fat. Hair spirals around the belly button, directing debris inward.

● **UNDER BLISTERS** The clear fluid, or serum, that accumulates in a blister protects the irritated tissue as it heals. White or yellow fluid could signal infection. **R**

Sources: britannica.com, huffingtonpost.ca, goaskalice.columbia.edu, bbc.com, allaboutvision.com, webmd.com, womenshealthmag.com, news.bbc.co.uk, medicalnewstoday.com

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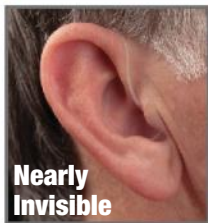
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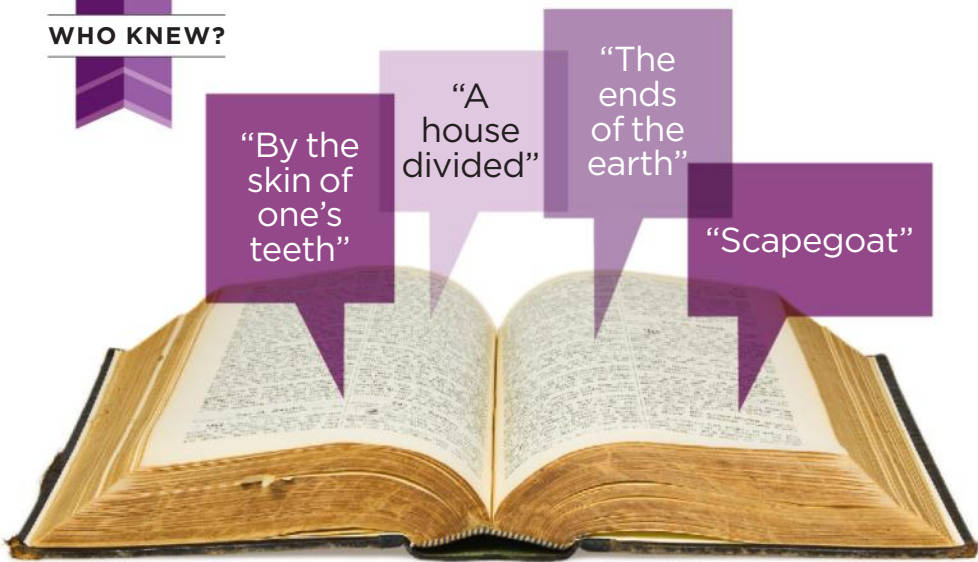
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6 Surprising Times You Are Quoting the Bible

BY **FERDIE ADDIS** FROM THE BOOK *AMEN TO THAT!: THE AMAZING WAY THE BIBLE INFLUENCES OUR EVERYDAY LANGUAGE*

1 **“A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF”** In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells an impudent crowd, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” However, the phrase didn’t enter the modern lexicon until it was quoted by Abraham Lincoln in his famous nomination acceptance speech of 1858. Addressing the contentious issue of slavery in the United States, he told an audience of Republican

politicians that “a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.”

2 **“ESCAPE BY THE SKIN OF ONE’S TEETH”** This is one of the many proverbs that owe their origin to the colorful language of the Book of Job. The tormented hero Job is complaining about his woes. He has become, he says, so emaciated that “my bone cleaveth to my skin

and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.” The proverbial meaning is that he has missed death by a tiny margin—as narrow as the (nonexistent) skin on a person’s teeth. But biblical scholars have argued endlessly about what the phrase originally signified. Some argue for a more literal interpretation: Afflicted with sores from head to toe, Job is left with only the thin porcelain “skin” of his teeth unblemished.

3 “GIRD ONE’S LOINS”

Two archaic words come together in this phrase. *Gird*, from the Old English *gyrdan*, means to put a belt (or girdle) around something. *Loins*, from the Latin *lumbus*, originally described the flanks of an animal and, from the fourteenth century, those parts of the human body that, as medieval writers primly put it, “should be covered.” In biblical times, when long robes were still in fashion, anyone embarking on strenuous physical activity or going into battle ran a serious risk of tripping on a trailing hem and falling flat on his or her face. The solution? To tuck one’s robe into one’s belt and get ready for action (i.e., to gird one’s loins).

4 A “BEHEMOTH” The behemoth is a mysterious animal mentioned in the Book of Job. With bones “like bars of iron” and a tail “like a cedar,” this mighty beast was said to be able to suck the whole

river Jordan into its mouth. Biblical scholars have long debated whether the behemoth is a mythical creature or just an exaggerated description of an ordinary animal (the most popular candidate is a hippopotamus). Whatever the original “behemoth” may have been, the name has become a metaphor for anything that reaches spectacular size.

5 A “SCAPEGOAT” The Book of Leviticus describes the proper ceremonies to be observed on the Jewish Day of Atonement, when the land of Israel would be ritually cleansed of its sins. The procedure was that one goat would be offered to God as a sacrifice, while the other—the “scapegoat”—would be symbolically loaded with all the misdeeds of the nation before being driven into the wilderness. This ceremony was said to have been carried out since the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.

6 “THE ENDS OF THE EARTH” Like most other ancient cultures, the ancient Israelites thought it obvious that since the earth was flat, it must have limits. “The ends of the earth” therefore appears repeatedly in the Old Testament as a way to describe the farthest reaches of the then-known world. When, in the Book of Job, God is said to “directeth ... his lightning unto the ends of the earth,” it’s just a poetic way of saying that God is in charge everywhere. **R**





LOOK

TWICE ...

Turn the page ➡➡

What do you see?

- A)** Popcorn kernels.
- B)** A marshmallow-caramel sundae.
- C)** Mold in a week-old pumpkin.





LOOK

TWICE ...

← Turn back

Answer: A. If you, like the average American, ate about 10.25 gallons of popcorn this year, you may have noticed that no two pieces are exactly alike—perhaps that's why lumpy puffs like these are known as snowflake popcorn. To capture the intimate inner lives of popped kernels, photographer Linden Gledhill snapped around 20 hyper-focused shots of each piece above, then blended them using computer software. The result (as seen on the previous page) is awesome and intricate ... but mostly it just makes us hungry.

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

The words in this month's quiz come from the book Favorite Words of Famous People by Lewis Burke Frumkes. Turn the page for answers—and to see which notable names picked these terms for top billing.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. plangent** ('plan-jent) *adj.*—
A: flexible. B: very loud. C: carefully detailed.
- 2. ruckus** ('ruh-kuhs) *n.*—A: back-pack. B: melee. C: dry gully.
- 3. vermilion** (ver-'mil-yun) *n.*—
A: ten-figure number. B: moth larva. C: bright red.
- 4. chthonic** ('thah-nik) *adj.*—A: of the underworld. B: frozen solid. C: having sharp claws.
- 5. gormless** ('gorm-les) *adj.*—
A: nonflowering. B: lacking firm shape. C: stupid.
- 6. interstitial** (ihn-ter-'stih-shuhl) *adj.*—A: beyond our solar system. B: in the spaces between. C: joined by stitches.
- 7. unilateral** (yoo-nih-'la-tuh-ruhl) *adj.*—A: one-sided. B: in alliance with. C: flat.
- 8. palimpsest** ('pa-lehmp-sehst) *n.*—A: spotted pony. B: leg brace. C: written-over document.
- 9. beguiling** (bih-'guy-ling) *adj.*—
A: twisted together. B: complementary. C: cleverly deceptive.
- 10. lambent** ('lam-buhnt) *adj.*—
A: easily dissolved. B: submissive. C: luminous.
- 11. incarnadine** (ihn-'kar-nuh-dine) *adj.*—A: flesh-colored. B: reborn. C: not digestible.
- 12. phosphorescent** (fos-fuh-'reh-sent) *adj.*—A: of ocean depths. B: glittering. C: soapy.
- 13. ramshackle** ('ram-sha-kuhl) *adj.*—A: barnlike. B: rickety-looking. C: falsely imprisoned.
- 14. pixilated** (pick-suh-'lay-ted) *adj.*—A: grainy or blurry. B: elfin. C: mentally unbalanced.
- 15. qua** ('kwah) *prep.*—A: in the capacity of. B: starting from. C: in the immediate neighborhood of.

 To play an interactive version of Word Power on your iPad, download the Reader's Digest app.

Answers

1. plangent—[B] very loud. My nephew blasts *plangent*, sad music in his room. (director Wes Craven)

2. ruckus—[B] melee. There was quite a *ruckus* when the fire alarm went off. (Penn Jillette of Penn & Teller)

3. vermilion—[C] bright red. The theater had eye-catching *vermilion* walls. (writer A. S. Byatt)

4. chthonic—[A] of the underworld. I love the story of Orpheus's *chthonic* journey. (Margaret Atwood)

5. gormless—[C] stupid. The writer dismissed his critics as *gormless* twits. (author Barbara Taylor Bradford)

6. interstitial—[B] in the spaces between. The film's action sequences were thrilling; I found the *interstitial* scenes rather dull. (Al Gore)

7. unilateral—[A] one-sided. The volleyball squad had a *unilateral* advantage in height. (editor Helen Gurley Brown)

8. palimpsest—[C] written-over document. My address book is a *palimpsest*—I keep erasing names and adding new ones. (Joyce Carol Oates)

9. beguiling—[C] cleverly deceptive. Those *beguiling* ads persuaded me to buy a phone I didn't really need. (playwright Wendy Wasserstein)

10. lambent—[C] luminous. Sofia loved hiking by the *lambent* moonlight. (activist Andrea Dworkin)

11. incarnadine—[A] flesh-colored. Mia chose a pretty *incarnadine* dress for the wedding. (Arthur C. Clarke)

12. phosphorescent—[B] glittering. The *phosphorescent* firefly flew right into the jar. (John Updike)

13. ramshackle—[B] rickety-looking. Jack carefully stepped onto the *ramshackle* bridge. (Ray Bradbury)

14. pixilated—[C] mentally unbalanced. Dad's *pixilated* behavior has us worried. (Mark Hamill)

15. qua—[A] in the capacity of. Forget the painter's political views—can we enjoy her art *qua* art? (Dave Barry)

OTHER FAVORITES

Crime writer Edna Buchanan liked *berserk* (“crazed”) and *amok* (“in a murderously frenzied state”) best. Actor and dancer Gene Kelly chose *plethora* (“excess”). Comedian Bob Hope went with *laughter*, while journalist Dan Rather selected *courage*. And TV host Larry King singled out *why*, saying, “It’s the best word in the universe. Think about it.”

VOCABULARY RATINGS

9 & below: almost famous
10-12: famous
13-15: infamous



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Humor in Uniform



"An impressive résumé, General, but remember—department store security is different from national security."

THE HUMOR IN UNIFORM DICTIONARY

DIPLOMACY: The art of letting someone else have your way.

UNKNOWN

FOXHOLE: Something to never share with someone braver than you.

From *Murphy's Laws of Combat*

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE: A contradiction in terms.

World War I British general **JOHN CHARTERIS**

PATRIOTISM: Your conviction that this country is superior to all

others because you were born in it.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

PEACE: In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

Journalist **AMBROSE BIERCE**

WAR: God's way of teaching us geography.

Comedian **PAUL RODRIGUEZ**

Military anecdote: a true story that will get you \$100 if we run it. For details, go to rd.com/submit or page 7.



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Jim Woods, VP, Planning, Consumer Marketing

Quotable Quotes



To be good, and to do good, is the whole duty of man comprised in a few words.

ABIGAIL ADAMS,
second first lady

Success is terrifying. Like happiness, it is often appreciated in retrospect.

JULIE ANDREWS,
actress and singer



It can hardly be a coincidence that no language on Earth has ever produced the expression “as pretty as an airport.”

DOUGLAS ADAMS,
science fiction writer

MEN BECOME WISE JUST AS THEY BECOME RICH, MORE BY WHAT THEY SAVE THAN BY WHAT THEY RECEIVE.

WILBUR WRIGHT, inventor

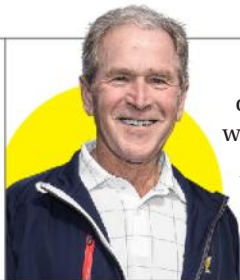


The lessons we remember are the lessons we learn the hard way.

SETH GODIN, entrepreneur, blogger, and marketer

The person, be it a gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.

JANE AUSTEN, novelist



Too often we judge other groups by their worst examples, while judging ourselves by our best intentions.

GEORGE W. BUSH,
43rd president

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1. Undereath blue chair. 2. Undereath sofa pillows. 3. On back of sofa.



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