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# Reader's digest

APRIL 2016

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# Editor's Note



## He Loved His Lawn

**WHEN MY FATHER** was diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer, our family was desperate to track down why. The Ludlows didn't get cancer. We had zero family history. And besides, we'd all expected an affliction of the lung to do him in. He smoked two packs of unfiltered Lucky Strikes a day for 40-plus years.

His oncologist said Dad perfectly matched the profile of the typical stomach cancer patient:

71 years old, male, A positive blood type. The Mayo Clinic website fingered his diet, which was high in salty, smoked, and pickled foods and relatively low in fresh produce. But something else gnawed at me.

It was our lawn. As a longtime health journalist, I questioned the 50 years of pesticides Dad had sprayed on our suburban grass. I can picture it still, the rolling fertilizer dispenser tossing white pellets to and fro, pellets my dad marched through, then tracked all over our house. In the '70s, Dad would become an early ChemLawn enthusiast. He was the first on our block to install timed sprinklers. A carpet-like lawn gave my father great satisfaction.

To make matters worse, he spent his Sundays clomping around a perfectly manicured golf course, often licking the grass stains off his Titleists.

The evidence on pesticide dangers has mounted, and many cities and towns have restricted its use for cosmetic purposes. But suburban America still wants lawns that look like putting greens. I shuddered to read McKay Jenkins's moving story about the price we pay (page 104).

Steve and I keep our New Jersey lawn neatly trimmed but let it grow "wild." I walk Milo far from any little white lawn flags signifying a recent spray, and I've taught my daughters to leave their outside shoes at the front door.

A combination of factors—especially his smoking—caused Dad's cancer. But personally, I'll always hold the poisons on grass partially responsible. **R**



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# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

## 50 Secrets Hospitals Won't Tell You

Item 42 suggests it's not necessary to abstain from eating or drinking as of midnight the day before your surgery. While this is correct, I implore readers to follow the guidelines set by the surgeon. If one fails to follow guidelines, regardless of what current studies show, the anesthesia group may elect to cancel or postpone your surgery. Surgeries may also start earlier than planned due to cancellations or procedures going more quickly than anticipated.

DAVID SCHWABACHER, RN, CNOR,  
*Springfield, Illinois*

## Everyday Heroes

Bravo to Lancaster High School! A far better lesson than a textbook could offer. I am proud of you all.

RHONDA LEET, *DePere, Wisconsin*

## Photo of Lasting Interest

I loved your photo of the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Seventy-three



million fans tuned in; the curious, the adoring, and of course, the screaming. I laughed when I read that Ed Sullivan's musical director said, "The only thing that's different is the hair. I give them a year." Thanks

for the historic photo and priceless words.

ANTHONY CARDAZONE,  
*Toms River, New Jersey*

## Editor's Note

Nancy and I have been married for 42 years. I am the organizer—for years, I organized drawers, closets, and more. After decades of thinking I was saving everyone's time, I finally realized how much time I was wasting!

DWIGHT MCCURDY, *Ellicott City, Maryland*

## The Children Who Vanished

I was surprised to find the article on the Sodder family. I grew up a few miles from their home. Occasionally, as we drove through Fayetteville, my siblings and I could persuade our daddy to stop and let us look at the billboard while our parents

would tell us the story. Besides the mystery connected to the Sodder family, there was so much sadness to it too. I was glad to read that the youngest survivor of the children is still searching. Although the mystery has not been solved, the story did separate facts from urban legend. In a way, it brought closure to this West Virginia girl.

LINDA HANSHEW, *Radford, Virginia*

## Escape from North Korea

It is a shame that it took smuggling, bribery, and human slavery for Yeonmi to gain true freedom. People need to hear stories like this to help them realize that the world reaches beyond their sheltered bubble and that marginalized people need help.

CLARA IGOU, *Campbell, California*

## The Case of the Barking Dogs

As an animal rescuer, I know barking dogs are an issue everywhere. There are companies that make bark stoppers. The one that worked best for my dogs was a birdhouse that made a sound when they barked. It didn't hurt them, they stopped barking, and the neighborhood thanks me.

LYNNE SAWYER, *Decatur, Georgia*

## What It's Like ... to Be a Person with Schizophrenia

This article was so informative. I'm glad the author was brave enough to write this, and I would like to see more stories about people living with mental illnesses. If people know more about mental illness, maybe we can finally stop the stigma surrounding it.

A. C., *via e-mail*

Mental health issues receive little attention from politicians and fund-raisers. Until all mental illnesses can be acknowledged publicly without prejudice, we will continue to fail those suffering from what can be debilitating conditions. Nothing will change until such an article can appear with an actual name attached.

THERESE WRIGHT,  
*Merrimack, New Hampshire*

## What a Great Issue!

Wow—your February issue filled me with a range of emotions. I shared “Escape from North Korea” with my 11-year-old twins. Your schizophrenia story brought tears to my eyes. Other stories were just as finely written, and there were many giggles too.

DANA SEWELL, *Otterville, Missouri*

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# EVERYDAY HEROES



A retired soldier subdues  
a knife-wielding teenager

## The Fearless Veteran

BY ALYSSA JUNG

ON AN OCTOBER afternoon last year, James Vernon, 76, was supervising a youth chess club meeting in a conference room in the Morton Public Library in Morton, Illinois. About 16 kids, ages seven to 12, quietly faced off at two horizontal rows of tables, and James walked from pair to pair, overseeing the matches and offering tips. Four mothers sat off to the side, waiting for their kids to finish the weekly hour-long session.

Suddenly, a stocky teenager wearing glasses burst through the door at the front of the room. “I’m

gonna kill some people!” he yelled.

At first, James, who was standing in the aisle between the tables, thought the bizarre sight was a Halloween prank, but then he saw the five-inch hunting knives that the teenager was holding in each hand. The teen, whom police later identified as Dustin Brown, 19, shouted incoherently and began cutting his left forearm with one of the knives. Blood dripped from his arm and onto the floor, inches from where two stunned chess players sat. “As soon as I saw those knives and he started cutting, ➡

*"The attacker  
was mad at the  
world," says  
James Vernon.*



I knew this wasn't a prank," says James. "I thought, I can't let [something terrible] happen."

James, a former computer-systems architect, spent 44 months in the U.S. Army from 1962 to 1966. He had been trained in hand-to-hand combat, but he decided to forgo that and attempt to calm the boy instead by talking to him. "Hey, who are you? Where do you go to school? What's the problem?" James asked the boy. "Let's talk about this. I'll listen."

"My life sucks," Dustin replied as he peered down at the floor and continued to cut his arm.

While James talked to Dustin on one side of the room, Sandy Rassi, 40, the mother of three of the chess students, stood up on the other side. When she heard James say, "It's about time for these kids to head home," she motioned silently for the children to quietly leave the room one by one.

When Dustin finally looked up, he saw that the chairs were empty, and he lunged at James.

"I think he attacked me because I was the only one left," says James.

Dustin swung the knife toward the man's neck and face, but James caught the blade with his left hand. The knife sank into his palm, leaving a deep gash between his thumb and

forefinger and slicing the tendon at the back of his ring finger. With blood gushing from his hand, James continued to fight. He grabbed the necklace Dustin was wearing with his right hand and jerked him forward while he swung his right knee toward his groin.

Then James pinned the boy onto a table on his left side, hitting the right side of his collarbone with his uninjured fist. "I was trying to get him to drop the knives," says James.

It worked. Dustin let go of both weapons, and James subdued the attacker until

Morton police officers arrived a few minutes later. Paramedics rushed James to the hospital, where doctors spent two hours surgically repairing the tendon and two arteries in James's hand.

Almost six months after the attack, James still hasn't recovered full range of motion in his hand, but he's back at the helm of the chess club.

Dustin was charged with attempted murder, armed violence, burglary, and aggravated battery, all felonies, as well as aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, a misdemeanor.

"I told my kids that Mr. Vernon stopped evil," Sandy says. "He was willing to put himself at risk for them."

“*I think he attacked me because I was the only one left,*” says James.

# His Portraits Bring Peace

BY JULIANA LABIANCA

IN JANUARY 2014, when Luigi Quintos, 54, held his newborn grandson, Ayden, for the first time, the baby weighed just over a pound. Ayden had been born two months premature, and doctors thought he might not make it. Devastated, Luigi turned to art to calm himself. He had been drawing portraits of people off and on since grade school.

This time, Luigi drew a graphite portrait of Ayden with his parents—Luigi's son and daughter-in-law—gazing down at him. "It was my way of making sure they'd always be together," he says.

After five months in intensive care, Ayden pulled through. Buoyed by the good news, Luigi set up a Facebook page, Priceless Images, where he offered to draw portraits of other kids who were sick or had died. "I thought my work might offer comfort," he says.

Within days, requests filled his inbox. Often, parents e-mail Luigi a photo of their child along with a description of his or her illness or how the child died. Sometimes they request that the artist exclude oxygen tubes and wires that appear in the photo, and one family asked



*Luigi and Ayden, who relies on supplemental oxygen, hold a recent drawing.*

for their child's eyes to be drawn open, an image they never got to see in real life.

Each drawing takes Luigi, who works as a courier driver in Salem, Oregon, a few hours. When he's done, he mails an 11-by-14-inch portrait to the parents and posts a version of the drawing on his Facebook page.

To date, Luigi has completed 450 portraits, with another 350 on the waiting list. But Luigi doesn't mind the backlog. "[The drawings] give families something they can hold on to," he says.

**R**

1. To the right of the chair.



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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## Ernest Hemingway's Performance Review at BuzzFeed



**RALPH JONES**  
*is a comedy writer and a journalist who lives in London.*

**BY RALPH JONES** FROM THE TOAST

**NAME:** Ernest Hemingway

**POSITION:** Staff writer

### WHAT HAS BEEN GOING WELL?

**EMPLOYEE:** The days are long, the work is shallow, and the only piece of mine that went “viral” this year was “27 Kick-Butt Things You Learn When You Catch a Marlin.”

**MANAGER'S COMMENTS:** Though “27 Kick-Butt Things You Learn When You Catch a Marlin” was an unexpected triumph, Ernest isn't working to the standard achieved by other BuzzFeed writers. His “18 Things You Know ➔



Only If You're Ernest Hemingway" is our lowest-performing piece of content since we launched nine years ago; 202 people have read it, and I know that three of these were Ernest on different devices. Only 612 have read "Buy My Novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*," and most

of this traffic came from Japan as the result of a technical glitch.

And "14 Hats

I Wore While Writing *A Farewell to Arms*" significantly underperformed, as did "31 Lions I Still Really Need to Catch" and the interactive quiz "Can You Guess Where Ernest Hemingway's Pen Is?"

In retrospect, I'm not sure why I commissioned these.

### WHAT HAS BEEN GOING LESS WELL?

**EMPLOYEE:** This job blights me like a sore tooth, and our audience is vapid, and the majority of our content is vapid. (I do not include my contributions in this assessment.) Most of my pieces running to more than 16,000 words are decimated, and they are stripped of their integrity and filled with infernal "memes."

I am told I ought to be more active on social media. I see no reason why these cretins ought to be allowed to read my writing for free.

### MANAGER'S COMMENTS:

Ernest still struggles to understand that our audience does not pay to read our website. He is confused whenever I remind him that we are not a print publication. He is frequently surly, hungover, and verbally abusive, especially in morning meetings. It has not escaped my attention that he has reported to work drunk on dozens of occasions and that sometimes he simply lies under his desk for hours.

Ernest refuses to publish picture round-ups, claiming that they are beneath him and that they "dull the intel-

lect." When shown statistics on how well these pieces perform, he tends to make offensive comments about the "fools" who write them.

### HOW IS THE MORALE AROUND YOU?

**EMPLOYEE:** My fellow workers seem to be having no shortage of LOLs, but I find this flippant atmosphere uncondusive to fine writing. I prefer to wear headphones and listen to a recording of men cutting wood in a forest. The forest is wet, and the men are fine workers.

The free BuzzFeed coffee is a bonus, of course. Fortifies the spirit. Keeps the voices at bay.

“  
**“14 Hats I Wore  
 While Writing  
 A Farewell  
 to Arms”  
 significantly  
 underperformed.**

**MANAGER'S COMMENTS:**

Ernest regularly threatens to damage team morale, ignoring his colleagues in order to listen to his headphones. He does not realize that often the rest of the office is able to hear what he is listening to because he has not plugged in his headphones correctly.

**HOW DO YOU FEEL YOU COULD IMPROVE YOUR WORK?**

**EMPLOYEE:** The responsibility lies not with me but with BuzzFeed. My work is strong, and my hands write good words. When I pitch about my experiences hunting lions in Africa, I am told that a compendium of "cute baby lion pics" would be "more likely to get 500K clicks."

**MANAGER'S COMMENTS:**

Ernest is pitching increasingly bleak pieces, most of which pertain to alcoholism, lions, or writing alone in a shed.

**IS THERE ANYTHING THE COMPANY CAN DO TO HELP YOU?**

**EMPLOYEE:** I should like a pay raise and a bigger chair, and I should like my bouts of inebriation to pass unremarked upon.

**MANAGER'S COMMENTS:**

For the benefit of both Ernest and the company, my advice is that his contract be terminated forthwith.

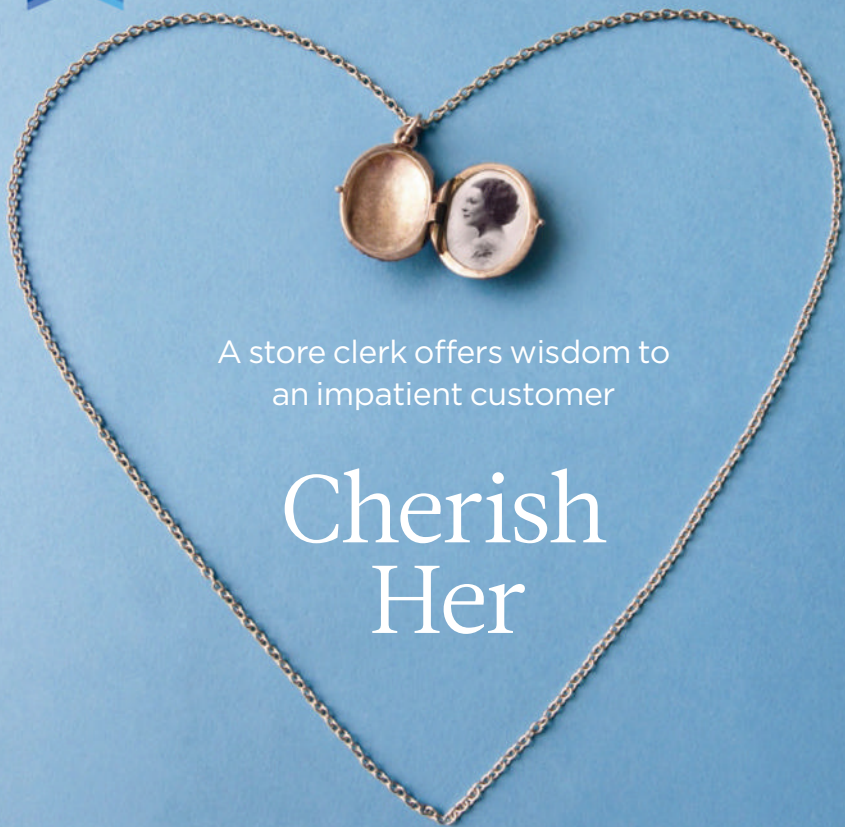


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**HARD TO BELIEVE ...**

- Movie theater popcorn in America costs more per ounce than filet mignon.
- In a typical three-hour NFL broadcast, the ball is in play for roughly 11 minutes.
- America's most popular sporting good is the Frisbee. It outsells baseballs, basketballs, and footballs combined.
- Salsa has surpassed ketchup as the top-selling condiment in America.
- \$77,000 in assets puts you in the world's wealthiest 10 percent.


Sources: NPR, *Wall Street Journal*, businessinsider.com, inquisitr.com, and BBC.com



A store clerk offers wisdom to  
an impatient customer

# Cherish Her

BY CARL SCHULTZ FROM OUR TOWN

 THERE WAS SOMETHING in the elderly woman's demeanor that caught my eye. Although slow and unsure of step, the woman moved with deliberation, and there was no

hesitation in her gestures. She was as good as anyone else, her movements suggested. And she had a job to do.

It was a few years ago, and I had taken a part-time holiday-season

job in a video store at the local shopping mall. From inside the store, I'd begun to see the people rushing by outside in the mall's concourse as a river of humanity, occasionally ebbing during odd hours but mostly overflowing in the deluge.

The elderly woman had washed up on my retail beachhead, along with a younger woman who I guessed was her daughter. The daughter was displaying a serious case of impatience, rolling her eyes, huffing and sighing, checking her watch every few seconds. If she had possessed a leash, her mother would've been fastened to it as a means of tugging her along to keep step with the rush of other shoppers.

The older woman detached from the younger one and began to tick through the DVDs on the nearest shelf. After the slightest hesitation, I walked over and asked if I could help her find something. The woman smiled up at me and showed me a title scrawled on a crumpled piece of paper. The title was unusual and a bit obscure. Clearly a person looking for it knew a little about movies, about quality.

Rather than rushing off to locate the DVD for the woman, I asked her to walk with me so I could show her where she could find it.

Looking back, I think I wanted to enjoy her company for a moment. Something about her deliberate movements reminded me of my own mother, who'd passed away the previous Christmas.

As we walked along the back of the store, I narrated its floor plan: old television shows, action movies, cartoons, science fiction. The woman seemed glad of the unrushed company and casual conversation.

We found the movie, and I complimented her on her choice. She smiled and told me it was one she'd enjoyed when she was her son's age and that she hoped he would enjoy it as much as she had. Maybe, she said with a hint of wistfulness, he could enjoy it with his own young children. Then,

reluctantly, I had to return the elderly woman to her keeper, who was still tapping her foot at the front of the store.

I escorted the old woman to the queue at the cash register and then stepped back and lingered near the younger woman. When the older woman's turn in line came, she paid in cash, counting out the dollars and coins with the same sureness she'd displayed earlier.

As the cashier tucked the DVD into a plastic bag, I sidled over to the younger woman.



**CARL SCHULTZ**  
is a writer and  
a resident of  
Johnstown,  
Pennsylvania.

*This piece  
originally ran  
as a letter to  
the editor in  
the town's  
local paper.*

“Is that your mom?” I asked.

I halfway expected her to tell me it was none of my business. But possibly believing me to be simpatico with her impatience, she rolled her eyes and said, “Yeah.” There was exasperation in her reply, half sigh and half groan.

Still watching the mother, I said, “Mind some advice?”

“Sure,” said the daughter.

I smiled to show her I wasn’t criticizing.

“Cherish her,” I said.

And then I answered her curious expression by saying, “When she’s gone, it’s the little moments that’ll come back to you. Moments like this. I know.”

It was true. I missed my mom still

and remembered with melancholy clarity the moments when I’d used my impatience to make her life miserable.

The elderly woman moved with her deliberate slowness back to her daughter’s custody. Together they made their way toward the store’s exit. They stood there for a moment, side by side, watching the rush of the holiday current and for their place in it. Then the daughter glanced over and momentarily regarded her mother.

And slowly, almost reluctantly, she placed her arm with apparently unaccustomed affection around her mother’s shoulders and gently guided her back into the deluge. **R**

“  
*It’s the little moments that’ll come back to you. Moments like this. I know.*”

OUR TOWN (FEBRUARY 4, 2015), COPYRIGHT © 2015 BY CARL SCHULTZ, OURTOWNJOHNSTOWN.COM.



## FE-LINES

“You only live once.” —a pessimistic cat

**@MRNICKHARVEY**

My cat sure drinks a lot of water for someone  
WHO CLAIMS TO BE TERRIFIED OF IT.

**@JAZMASTA**

For my cat’s birthday, I’m covering my coffee table with change, bottle caps, pens, and gum wrappers so he can just knock it all onto the floor.

**@NICCAGEMATCH (JESSIE ALTMAN)**

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# Points to Ponder

There are things as satisfying as fun besides fun. Exhilarating and life-changing ... experiences that are wildly fortifying despite not being “fun.”

**SARAH SILVERMAN,**  
*comedian and actress,*  
in *Vogue*



**THE OPPOSITE** of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.

**ELIE WIESEL,**  
*humanitarian,* in *U.S. News & World Report*

**PEOPLE ARE** less quick to applaud you as you grow older. Life starts out with everyone clapping when you take a poo and goes downhill from there.

**SLOANE CROSLY,**  
*writer,* from her book  
*I Was Told There'd Be Cake*

**IN THE END,** it cannot be doubted that each of us can see only a part of the picture. The doctor sees one, the patient another, the engineer a third, the economist a fourth, the pearl diver a fifth, the alcoholic a sixth, the cable guy a seventh, the sheep farmer an eighth, the Indian beggar a ninth, the pastor a tenth. Human knowledge is never contained in one person. It grows from the relationships we create between each other and the world, and still, it is never complete.

**PAUL KALANITHI, MD,**  
*neurosurgeon,* in his book  
*When Breath Becomes Air*

SOURCE PHOTO: VALERIE MACON/GETTY IMAGES

**YOU KNOW WHEN** you actually get good at sports? When you're having fun and being creative. When you're being a kid. When you don't even realize you're getting better, that's when you're getting better. If you're not engaged in what you're doing, it's as helpful as taking the trash out. It's just another chore.

**PATRICK O'SULLIVAN,**  
*retired NHL player, in the Players' Tribune*

**[MY MOTHER]** would say to me, "It's so easy to say yes, but never be afraid to say no." If you work hard enough and you're good at what you do, an opportunity is never the last chance. It's just a sign you're on the right path. Don't rush into anything.

**LITTLE SIMZ,**  
*rapper, in the Red Bulletin*

**REREADING** the same book produces new insights because the reader is a different person. Indeed, a good book is very much like a mirror: The glass is the same year after year, but the reflection in it changes over time.

**CHRISTOPHER B. NELSON,**  
*president of St. John's College,*  
*in the Wall Street Journal*

**TO BE HOPEFUL** in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of competition and cruelty but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.

**HOWARD ZINN, PHD,**  
*historian, in his book*  
*A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*



## WITTY WISDOM

The best time to reevaluate your life is when the online video you're watching is buffering. **@APARNAPKIN (APARNA NANCHERLA), comedian,** on Twitter

Never trust a man wearing more than 0 necklaces.  
**@AUDIPENNY (AUDREY FARNSWORTH), comedian,** on Twitter

I read the Internet so much, I feel like I'm like on page a million of the worst book ever.  
**AZIZ ANSARI, comedian,** in a stand-up routine



PHOTO  
OF LASTING  
INTEREST

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## Miracle in the Desert

Two figures in burkas of cerulean blue stand out against a desolate landscape in Afghanistan. Framed against dusty peaks, one woman faces the camera as the other unrolls a blanket on the ground. Photographer Lynsey Addario, on assignment for *National Geographic*, stopped short as she and her translator came upon the scene: In Badakhshan Province, women are rarely seen without a man. But there they were, a mother preparing to deliver the child of her daughter, whose husband had gone to get help when their car broke down on the way to the hospital. Happily, Addario was able to ferry the family to a medical facility a few hours away, where the young woman had a healthy baby girl.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNSEY ADDARIO** FROM GETTY IMAGES REPORTAGE



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# Notice: Medical Alert

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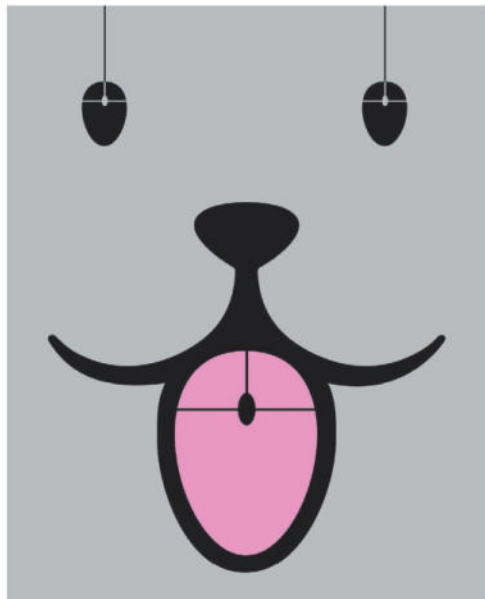
Sincerely,



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President



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Does a veterinarian have a constitutional right to offer animal advice online?

## The Case Of the Virtual Vet

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

IN 2002, A DISABILITY forced veterinarian Ronald Hines, who lives in Texas, to give up his practice after more than 30 years. In his retirement, he started a website, 2ndchance.info, to post general articles about pet health and care. Soon he was inundated with e-mails from pet owners all over the world—many without access to a veterinarian or the means to pay one—asking for his guidance. In 2003, he began charging for his service, which he offered by e-mail or phone. By 2011, he was charging a flat fee of \$58 and, that year, grossed nearly \$2,800.

However, on March 19, 2012, Hines received notification from the Texas

State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners that he was breaking the law. It turned out he was in violation of a statute of the Texas Veterinary Licensing Act that prohibits practicing veterinary medicine without physically examining the animal, which is considered “outside the context of a formal veterinary-client-patient relationship.” The statute explicitly states that the relationship “may not be established solely by telephone or electronic means.” Hines immediately stopped his service.

His formal punishment included a yearlong suspension of his license starting in March 2013, a \$500 fine, and retaking the legal portion ➔

of the veterinary licensing exam.

In April 2013, Hines filed a lawsuit in federal court against the nine members of the state board, claiming that they had violated his constitutional rights, including his First Amendment right to free speech.

“If a vet gives a speech to the general public or writes a book, everyone agrees it’s protected,” notes Jeff Rowes, a senior attorney at the Institute for Justice in Virginia who represented Hines. “But when he’s speaking to one person, giving individually tailored advice, it’s not?” Though the state has long-established authority to regulate professional

conduct (such as requiring a vet to physically examine animals), Hines argued that the advice he’d given was not conduct subject to regulation but instead protected speech.

The state board, in turn, filed a motion to dismiss, claiming that the advice Hines had given was indeed professional conduct and pointing out that “courts have repeatedly held up state restrictions on professional practice against First Amendment challenges.”

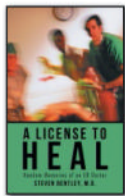
*Does prohibiting a vet from giving advice online violate his right to free speech? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

In February 2014, U.S. district court judge Hilda Tagle agreed with Hines that he might very well have a First Amendment claim: “[H]e provided advice to pet owners over the Internet and ... the professional regulations at issue in this case have prevented him from engaging in that speech.” Two months later, the state board appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans. The judges ruled that the Texas law imposes a standard of care but has nothing to do with free speech: “It does not ... require veterinarians to deliver any particular message.” The trouble, according to Rowes, is that circuit courts across the country have ruled differently on similar questions about the lines between speech and conduct, which is why, in June 2015, he took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. However, in November, the court refused to hear the case, which leaves Hines where he started—with a license but unable to legally offer advice online. Rowes believes that given the explosion in telemedicine, the high court will eventually have to weigh in. **R**

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



## A License to Heal

Steven Bentley, M.D.

[www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)

\$11.95 sc | \$3.99 eb

In the world of emergency medicine, there is pain, blood and tragedy, but there is also hope and compassion. *A License to Heal* shows readers the stories from an ER doctor that brings this dynamic world to life. In this highly personal narrative, an emergency room physician describes the world of the ER— as one filled with pain, fear, and grief, but also compassion, hope, and a surprising amount of humor.



## Walking the Stones of Time

Oswald Brown

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*Walking the Stones of Time* is a compelling love story of an awkward young man and an equally awkward young woman who, despite their lack of social skills, forged a love that was stronger than all of their inadequacies.



## Batting Rocks Over The Barn

Lawn Griffiths

[www.xlibris.com](http://www.xlibris.com)

\$29.99 hc | \$19.99 sc | \$3.99 eb

The rhythm of rural life during the 1950s and 1960s comes alive through the eyes of an Iowa boy who grew up to become a newspaper journalist and farm editor. Follow his odyssey in *Batting Rocks Over the Barn*.



## Imperfect Family: Setting Free Skeletons of Kinship Neglect

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*Imperfect Family: Setting Free Skeletons of Kinship Neglect's* a family saga showcasing an ordinary family's cohesiveness, strength, ambition and determination that made it possible for one generation to climb the ramshackle ladder from deprivation to the security of American middle-class.



## Honeyball

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A group of women pull together in a dedicated campaign to find success at the box office while their leader finds the love of her life and the persons responsible for the death of her father in a plane crash.



## The Armageddon Virus

Robert Gallant

[www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)

\$16.95 sc

Travis Weld, leader of a clandestine government team pursuing terrorists, decodes a phone message from someone offering to sell a deadly new virus to an illicit weapons dealer. Can he track the seller and secure this mysterious Armageddon virus?

# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

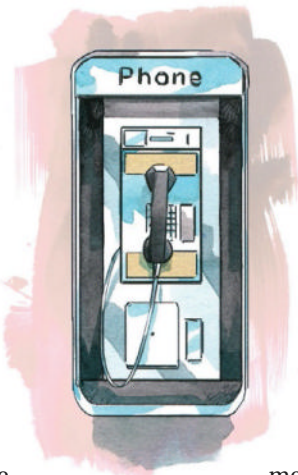
## WRONG NUMBER

I answered a ringing pay phone—a call meant for another. I was enamored by the angelic voice of the girl on the other end of the line, and we spoke for what seemed like hours. She was from Iowa, I from Florida, and I was spending the summer in New Mexico's mountains. I immediately knew that I wanted to know more about her. We exchanged letters and became pen pals. Six months later, I traveled to the Midwest to meet my mystery girl. It was love at first sight. In September, we will celebrate our 30th anniversary.

**RANDY ARONSON**, *Cooper City, Florida*

## A MOTHER'S SERVICE

When I returned from a tour in Iraq, getting back into a routine was a challenge. I tried to jump into things as if I had never left. My daughters seemed to be adjusting well to having me home, and it didn't seem as if the deployment had affected them in a negative way. One Saturday, I was watching



television in the family room when my youngest ran into the room, hugged me, and said, "I forgot what you looked like." I knew right then that I was leaving the military.

**TIWANA CAMPBELL**,  
*Brunswick, Georgia*

## THE SAME ROAD

I drove into the cancer center's parking deck for my next chemo treatment. As I rounded the corner, I inadvertently veered into the middle of the lane. The woman in the oncoming car did not appreciate that, and her finger and mouth signaled her disapproval. I started to cry. There is only one reason people are in that building, and she didn't care. For years, I bragged that I had no road rage because that woman had taught me to consider what others might be going through. Later, it hit me—she had been in that building too.

**JUDITH JAGGER**, *Stow, Ohio*

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

# WHAT BAD KNEE?

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how to  
swim**

after nearly  
drowning as a  
young girl.

RETA GRIFFITH

Enterprise, OR

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**quit smoking.**

SANDY BISS

**Anything.**

My choices have made me  
the person I am today.

LLOYD OLSON

Practicing yoga ...  
**Namaste!**

VALLETTE FOSTER

Morrison, CO

Mesquite, NV

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you're not guaranteed  
good health or  
a long life.

DEBBIE SLAWIAK KINAHAN

A dollar spent on  
**traveling  
the U.S.**

and seeing our  
country. I have  
only two more  
states to go!

NANCY FOSTER

Kerrville, TX

My decision  
to be a  
**teacher.**

Students  
experiencing  
that aha moment  
will always warm  
my heart.

MARY BETH DODGE

**Forgiving**

the person who  
caused me pain,  
which gave me relief  
I never thought  
I could have.

ERIKA JONES

Elbow Lake, MN

Hopkins, MN

Northbrook, IL

Hollidaysburg, PA

New York, NY

Hershey, PA

Adopting my  
**beautiful daughter**

from Russia 18 years ago.

ELENA CARLSON

**Taking  
naps**

and leaving  
large tips.

RHIANNON RAE

Oak Hill, OH

Clarksville, TN

Eating the last  
**cookie.**

CHRISTINA HICKS

**Serving**

my country.

SHARON PARSONS

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for the chance to  
finish the next  
sentence.

# Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



*“Isn’t it enough we tip well? Must we also like him on Facebook and follow him on Twitter?”*

**I ONCE GAVE MY HUSBAND** the silent treatment for an entire week, at the end of which he declared, “Hey, we’re getting along pretty great lately!”

**BONNIE MCFARLANE,**  
from *You’re Better Than Me* (Ecco)

**AS THE HOSTESS** at the casino buffet showed me to my table, I asked

her to keep an eye out for my husband, who would be joining me momentarily. I started to describe him: “He has gray hair, wears glasses, has a potbelly ...”

She stopped me there. “Honey,” she said, “today is senior day. They all look like that.”

**ROSALIE DARIA,** Cincinnati, Ohio

### WHILE HOSTING A GARAGE SALE,

I asked a man if he was looking for anything in particular. “Yes,” he said. “Place mats the color of grape jelly.”

H. T. GIBBONS, *Santa Fe, New Mexico*

**HERE ARE REAL**—and very literate—names of Roller Derby players:

- Grimm Scarytales
- Pain Eyre
- Pippi Longstompings

Source: bookriot.com

### THE BLACK LACQUER STAND

holding his prized samurai swords dusty, so my husband left our cleaning lady a note, reading, “Check out my swords.” That evening, he found the stand just as dirty as before but with this appended to his note: “Nice swords.”

ELEONORE BODE-LEMMING, *Salem, Oregon*

**AT THE MALL**, my five-year-old grandson joined the other children in line waiting to sit on the Easter Bunny’s lap. When it was his turn, Jake didn’t move; he just stared.

“Don’t you want to sit on the bunny’s lap?” I asked.

“No!” he shouted. “There’s a man in his mouth!” C. S., *via mail*

**WHEN ASKED** for his name by the coffee shop clerk, my brother-in-law answered, “Marc, with a C.” Minutes later, he was handed his coffee with his name written on the side: *Cark*.

PAUL NEELON, *Pembroke, Massachusetts*



### ANYONE KNOW A TUTOR?

Are you of the opinion your children are acing school? Well, check out some of their test answers.

**Q: Use the word *congenial* in a sentence.**

**A:** When you leave the gravy out too long, it congenials.

**Q: The first thing Queen Elizabeth II did upon ascending the throne was to ...**

**A:** Sit down.

**Q: Write a sentence containing a double negative.**

**A:** Mike is ugly and he smells.

**Q: Name two plays by Shakespeare.**

**A:** Romeo and Juliet

**Q: On what grounds was Aaron Burr tried for treason?**

**A:** New York

**Q: Write about the importance of animals in *Of Mice and Men*.**

**A:** The mice are very important—without them, you’d have only the men.

**Q: Use the word *doldrums* in a sentence.**

**A:** I cannot play the doldrums.

From *F in Exams: Complete Failure Edition* by Richard Benson (Chronicle Books)

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*Stop, I'm blushing.*



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# ART *of* LIVING



## The Big Fat Truth

Reality-TV producer **J.D. Roth** has seen the most unlikely folks achieve the most incredible goals. Here's what sets them apart. FROM THE BOOK *THE BIG FAT TRUTH*

**THE NIGHT BEFORE** the first winner of *The Biggest Loser* was announced, the guy in the lead—his name was Gary—went out for a healthy dinner with his family, shared some laughs, talked about what he'd accomplished, and went to sleep. Gary's closest competitor worked out, pushing hard to the bitter end. He beat Gary by one pound. That one pound cost Gary \$250,000.

When I saw Gary many years later, he was still thin and healthy—but the winner had put all his weight back on. Competition is the premise behind *The Biggest Loser*, so people motivated by beating others often get the cash. But the real winners are those whose reasons for losing weight evolve into something deeper. Gary was very upset about losing, but then he realized that he wanted to get his life back, and he did. The other guy was in it mostly just to win it. That got him only so far.

## Win the Health Head Game

As the man who created the weight-loss TV shows *The Biggest Loser*, *Extreme Weight Loss*, *Fat Chance*, and *The Revolution*, I've seen our participants shed weight, get off serious medications, and do things they had never done or had been avoiding for years.

They get their lives back by resolving the issues that made them fat. Addressing your mental and emotional blocks is the secret to

sustained weight loss or any other significant life change. By tweaking your mind-set, you have the potential to change your inner dialogue—and your life. Here's how.

## Say "I Can"

The power of an "I can" mentality is amazing. A guy named Danny who tried out for *The Biggest Loser* weighed more than anyone I'd ever seen at his age—19 years old and 450 pounds. He couldn't even close his hands to make a fist. I usually think anyone can do anything, but I had my doubts about him. "You scare me," I said to him. "I don't think we can have you on the show. Honestly, I don't think you can do it. And by the way, where are your shoes?"

"It's too hard to get them on," he replied. "Name it. I'll do anything to be on this show. How do you want me to prove that I can do it?"

I couldn't tell if the desperation in his voice was genuine. "OK," I said, figuring I'd scare him off. "Go out of this room, and take the first door on your right. It's the stairs. Take them down to the bottom"—we were on the 20th floor—"then climb back up." Without hesitation, he walked out of the room, still shoeless.

After about 15 minutes, I got worried and went to locate him.

I finally found him on the ninth floor on his way up, huffing and puffing, spitting and coughing, soaked in sweat. When he finally made it back



*Gary, second from left, lost 71 pounds and says he “won a new life.”*

to the room, he burst through the door, barely able to speak. The place erupted with applause. Standing ovation. He did it. Barefoot. The kid went on to appear on the show and lost almost 250 pounds over two seasons.

When you say “I can” to resisting a cookie and “I can” to running a 5K race, it’s a small leap to saying “I can” quit this lousy job and “I can” tell my spouse that I want to be treated better. When you become an “I can” person, a world of possibility opens.

Take Moses, a *Biggest Loser* contestant who blew out his knee within the first week. He couldn’t run, walk, or do anything else that required being on his feet. That was a big problem because, to stay on the show, you have to drop pounds each week.

So what does this guy do? Fold? A few weeks earlier, he might have played the victim card. But he came up with the idea of shadowboxing from the edge of his bed for 12 hours

a day. Sweat poured off him in rivers. The bed was soaking wet. Desperation is the greatest motivator.

These are ordinary people with ordinary families and ordinary jobs. What sets them apart is: They believed that they could do something extraordinary. (By the way, have you ever tried to shadowbox in bed for even 12 minutes? It’s exhausting—and he did it for 12 hours!) The power of the mind still amazes me each day.

## **Pretend No One Is Looking**

We ask cast members to write down their small victories. One of the best I ever heard was this: “I tried today even when my trainer wasn’t looking.” Most people would gloss over that, but I read it to the whole group.

“Here’s what this guy is really saying,” I said. “When no one was looking before, he wasn’t his best as a father, his best as a worker, his best as a husband, his best as a human



being. That's what he meant. But today, he said that even when no one was looking, he gave his best. Is he now going to try harder as a father, a worker, a husband, a human being? That will be a much greater victory than whatever his numbers on the scale end up being."

Little achievements snowball into bigger accomplishments. Suddenly, you're not just turning down candy from colleagues; you're turning down their efforts to foist their work on you. Small acts of willpower generate confidence.

## Do Something Impossible

Nothing is as demanding for our cast members as the 7,000-Calorie-Burn Challenge—when we ask them to burn 7,000 calories in one day. (Running a marathon, by comparison, burns approximately 3,500 calories.)

I don't recommend burning 7,000 calories in one day for physiological reasons. But it delivers an incredible psychological payoff. Many people on our shows think everything is impossible. "I'm not a runner; I can't run." "I can't get a job." To achieve something so ridiculous becomes a badge of honor.

Jen, a cast member on *The Revolution*, was a single mom who'd recently recovered from a rare form of cancer. When I announced that the first person to burn 7,000 calories in one day would win an iPad, Jen chimed in right away. "I wanted to win for my

son," she says. "I couldn't afford one."

Jen—and her ten-year-old Ryan, who stayed with her the whole day—hit the gym first thing in the morning. I mean at dawn. She took spin classes and worked out on the treadmill, the rowing machine, and the stair-climber, moving from machine to machine, hour after hour. When Jen had about 500 calories to go, after nearly 20 straight hours of exercise, the gym was closing. It was 10 p.m. So Jen went outside and ran around the building by the light of the moon. "Every time we'd pass this one corner, we could see bats," says Jen. "I don't know what came over me. I didn't want to let my son down. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it too."

Needless to say, Jen won the iPad. But that was the least of what she gave her son. She showed him that she was a superhero. That kid (who's now a high school football player with offers for a full college scholarship) will never forget the night his mom did the impossible. "Every day on my way to work, I drive by that corner where we saw the bats and smile," she says. "That day, I realized that your mind is in control of your body. You can convince yourself to do anything." **R**



Get more inspirational tips in J.D. Roth's new book, *The Big Fat Truth* (Reader's Digest, \$24.99), available wherever books are sold and at [bigfattruthjdroth.com](http://bigfattruthjdroth.com).

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# The Morning Report

BY DONALD E. HUNTON FROM THE *BOSTON GLOBE*



WHEN MY mother passed away a few years ago, my octogenarian father was left alone in the large house they had shared out West for 50 years. Without her to watch out for him, he worried about who would find him and help if “something happened.”

My sister and I live in other states, so we hit on the idea that Dad could send us an e-mail every morning when he awoke. Thus was born the Morning Report.

He’s usually up by the crack of dawn, and his half a dozen or so sentences are waiting in my inbox

when I wake up, despite the two-hour time difference. If there’s no e-mail, I call him, or my sister does, to make sure everything is fine. (Sometimes he’s having computer problems or decided to sleep in.) The reports have become more than a daily check, though: They’re a diary of sorts, a planning tool, a catalyst for more extended conversations, and a source of insight into his life.

Through them, Dad tells us about his daily routines. He might be heading to the grocery store for bananas, going to his cardiac-rehab exercise

class, or having lunch with friends. I find the repetitive cycle of his activities—current-events discussion group on Tuesday nights, Rotary Club on Wednesday afternoons, and coffee with friends after church on Sunday morning—reassuring.

Sometimes he slips in cryptic teasers. For example, recently he told us, “I’ve climbed halfway up Mount Washington!” Given his age and distance from New Hampshire, such a hike was unlikely. I was befuddled for a day or two until he reminded me he was working on a hooked rug with a scene of the mountain.

Each e-mail closes with “All my love, Dad.” When my mother was alive, that sentiment was normally reserved for her. Now that she is gone, he shares those feelings and his experiences with us. For me, what started as a simple security measure has spawned a deeper closeness.

I’m grateful my father is still able to manage his computer and the Internet. I know the day will come when he’ll no longer be able to write the reports, and we’ll have to find other ways to keep tabs on one another. But until then, they are our way of knowing that another normal day has begun. **R**

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR, FROM THE *BOSTON GLOBE* (MAY 24, 2015). COPYRIGHT © 2015 BY DONALD E. HUNTON.



## IDK, FBI

The FBI released an 83-page glossary of Twitter shorthand that agents might encounter. If these entries are any indication, someone at the Bureau had way too much time on his hands.

- PHAT (“pretty hot and tempting”)
- BOGSAT (“bunch of guys sitting around talking”)
- IITYWTMWBAD (“if I tell you what this means, will you buy me a drink?”)
- SHCOON (“shoot hot coffee out of nose”)
- WYLABOCTGWTR (“would you like a bowl of cream to go with that remark?”)
- BTDGTTSAWIO (“been there, done that, got the T-shirt, and wore it out”)

Source: muckrock.com

# The Tantrum That Broke The Internet

BY LAURA MOSER FROM SLATE

MY TWO-YEAR-OLD daughter, Claudia, is usually easygoing by toddler standards—except in the mornings when she demands to strip off all her clothes and don nothing but a fitted dinosaur sheet.

Last spring, it was precisely her determination to transform household items (dishrags, washcloths, even Chinese-takeout napkins) into eveningwear that rocketed Claudia to Internet fame. It was early April, and we had for once negotiated her into a dress-dress and escorted her to the White House to have her picture taken with the president before the annual Passover seder.

Claudia, however, didn't want to be in the White House, whatever that was. She wanted to be in her bedroom, emptying out the drawers of her changing table in search of more sheets.

"I take off my shoes," she told me.



## *Antics with an exclusive audience: Claudia in the Red Room*

"No, sweetie, not right now."

"I take off my dress," she suggested next.

"Claudia, if you could just wait one second—"

"I wear a sheet-dress."

"I'm so sorry, sweet girl, but we didn't bring any sheets tonight!"

That same instant, the hush associated with the entrance of the chief executive fell over the Red Room. But Claudia didn't care. Claudia wanted a sheet, and she wanted one now. In her fury, she threw herself at the feet of the most famous man in the world.

PETE SOUZA/COURTESY THE WHITE HOUSE

That same instant, Pete Souza, the chief official White House photographer, walked into the room and snapped a photo.

Two months later, when the White House photo office e-mailed me a photograph of the incident, it didn't occur to me that it would interest anyone beyond my circle of family and friends when I posted it on my Facebook page. I then went off to the grocery store. While I was there, my brother tweeted the photo, saying, "This really might be the best picture ever: my niece Claudia throwing a fit at Passover."

By the time I returned with dinner, Claudia's tantrum was all over the Internet. Over the course of the weekend, it was featured in the *Daily Mail*, *salon.com*, *huffingtonpost.com*, CNN, the *Washington Post*, and many more. *Good Morning America* ran multiple segments about her (after I turned them down for an interview). And everywhere, everyone had a lot to say about Claudia.

Most people were amused and sympathetic. This contingent offered good-natured ripostes: "Guess she voted Republican?" and "So this is what it's like dealing with John Boehner!"

I was shocked by what other com-

menters read into the picture. They saw my political beliefs and the pride I took in my inability to raise a child. ("The 'she's just a kid' excuses are the excuses liberal parents make for their lack of parenting skills.") They saw my income and my ethnic background: I was a "wealthy Jewish donor"—

don't I wish!—and my daughter, a spoiled brat. One commenter recommended I put Claudia on medication.

As I pored over the comments, I was reminded that Internet stars are less humans than tropes: of heroism (black cop helping white racist), villainy (Minnesota dentist posing next

to Cecil the lion), and everything in between. Actual living humans—in this case, my baby girl—are reduced to memes as every day the Internet offers up new canvases where other people can project their fears and loathings. For almost an entire week, my daughter provided this grist.

For the meme herself, the most significant outcome of her brush with the big time may have been that three days after my brother's tweet, she woke up and announced that she was done with diapers. It was as if, as an international Internet celebrity, she suddenly felt compelled to up her game. And that was news I could use. **R**

“

***The comments reminded me that Internet stars are less humans than tropes.***

”

# Neat Ways to Enjoy Messy Snacks

BY KELSEY KLOSS

## **Popsicles:** CATCH DRIPS

Thread the bottom of an ice-pop stick through a cupcake liner. As it rests below the ice pop, the liner will catch any drips before they reach fingers (especially helpful for kids).

## **Watermelon:**

### **RETHINK SLICES**

A triangular piece of watermelon is a recipe for sticky cheeks. Instead, lay a slice flat with the point facing away from you, then cut off the bottom two corners of the rind. Hold the remaining piece of rind on the bottom as you eat your fruit mess-free.

## **PB&J:** MOAT THE JELLY

To keep jelly from drizzling out, spread a layer of peanut butter on the bread first. Add an extra layer around the bread's edges (to act as a square barrier), and place jelly neatly inside.



## Cupcake:

### MAKE A SANDWICH

Victim of a frosting-covered nose? Twist off the bottom half of the cupcake. Place it on top of the frosting for a cupcake “sandwich” with the frosting snugly in the center.



## Burger: FLIP IT OVER

The top half of a bun is usually twice as thick as the bottom, so ingredients will rest on a sturdier base if you eat the burger upside down. Bonus: Now at the bottom, the lettuce will act as a barrier for dripping juices.

## Oreo cookies: FORK AND DUNK IN MILK

Love to splash cookies in cold milk? Try this trick: Push the prongs of a fork into the cream filling of a sandwich cookie, such as an Oreo. Holding the fork, dip the cookie into a glass of milk. Eat the milky cookie from the fork without a mess.

## Buffalo wings: DE-BONE PIECES

Remove the cartilage on the wide end of the wing, twist the small bone, and pull it out with ease. Repeat with the large bone, then eat the wing in one bite.

## Tacos: WRAP WITH LETTUCE

Keep the fillings and shell together—and add a nutritional boost—by wrapping a large leaf of lettuce

around the shell. It will hold together any bits and pieces that might otherwise end up on your shirt.

## Corn: EAT LEFT TO RIGHT

Butter and eat only a few rows of corn on the cob at once, munching through it horizontally. If you eat the corn in rings, kernels and butter will end up on your cheek as you turn the cob.

## Powdery chips:

### USE CHOPSTICKS

To avoid leaving fingerprints on your books or keyboard, use chopsticks to dig in to cheesy chips or popcorn if you snack while you work. (It may seem bizarre, but there’s even a Facebook fan page called Eating Cheetos with Chopsticks.) **R**

Sources: foodbeast.com, popsugar.com, mashable.com, huffingtonpost.com, buzzfeed.com, thekitchn.com, lifehacker.com, womansday.com





What a food's hue can—and can't—reveal about its nutrition

# Crack the Color Code BY KELSEY KLOSS

## ■ PURPLE VS. ORANGE CARROTS

Rainbow carrots are a trendy feast for the eyes, but one color isn't necessarily healthier than the others. All are rich in different antioxidants. Orange carrots have high levels of beta-carotene, important for healthy vision. Purple carrots are packed with anthocyanins, which may prevent heart disease. Red carrots contain lycopene, linked to lower risk of certain cancers. Yellow carrots have high amounts of lutein, linked to cancer prevention and healthy eyes. For maximum benefits, eat a variety.

## ■ BROWN VS. WHITE EGGS

An egg's color says less about nutrition and more about ... the chicken's earlobe. Chickens with white earlobes lay white eggs; those with red earlobes lay brown ones. The only reason

brown is pricier? Chickens that lay the eggs are larger and require more feed.

## ■ BLUE VS. YELLOW CORN CHIPS

Swapping yellow chips for blue won't make your snack guilt-free. Blue corn contains more of the amino acid lysine and the antioxidant anthocyanin, but corn loses many of these nutrients when processed into a chip.

## ■ GREEN VS. RED BELL PEPPERS

Red peppers are usually aged green peppers. Chlorophyll masks red pigment in green peppers until the vegetable matures. Green peppers are typically cheaper and have fewer nutrients because of their shorter growing time. R

Sources: Eric Decker, professor and head of the Department of Food Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; *Annals of Agricultural Sciences*; time.com; thekitchn.com; medicalnewstoday.com; rodalesorganiclife.com; goaskalice.columbia.edu

FOOD STYLIST: CLAUDIA FICCA FOR APOSTROPHE



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# 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.

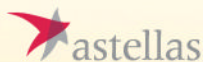
## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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 (Tamboco®), propafenone (Rythmol®), digoxin (Lanoxin®). Myrbetriq may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how Myrbetriq works.

Before taking Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems.

In clinical studies, the most common side effects seen with Myrbetriq included increased blood pressure, common cold symptoms (nasopharyngitis), urinary tract infection and headache.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Who should not use Myrbetriq?**

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

**What is overactive bladder?**

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

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

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

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

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

Tell your doctor if you take:

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

**How should I take Myrbetriq?**

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

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

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

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

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

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

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

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

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

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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

**How should I store Myrbetriq?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?**

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

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

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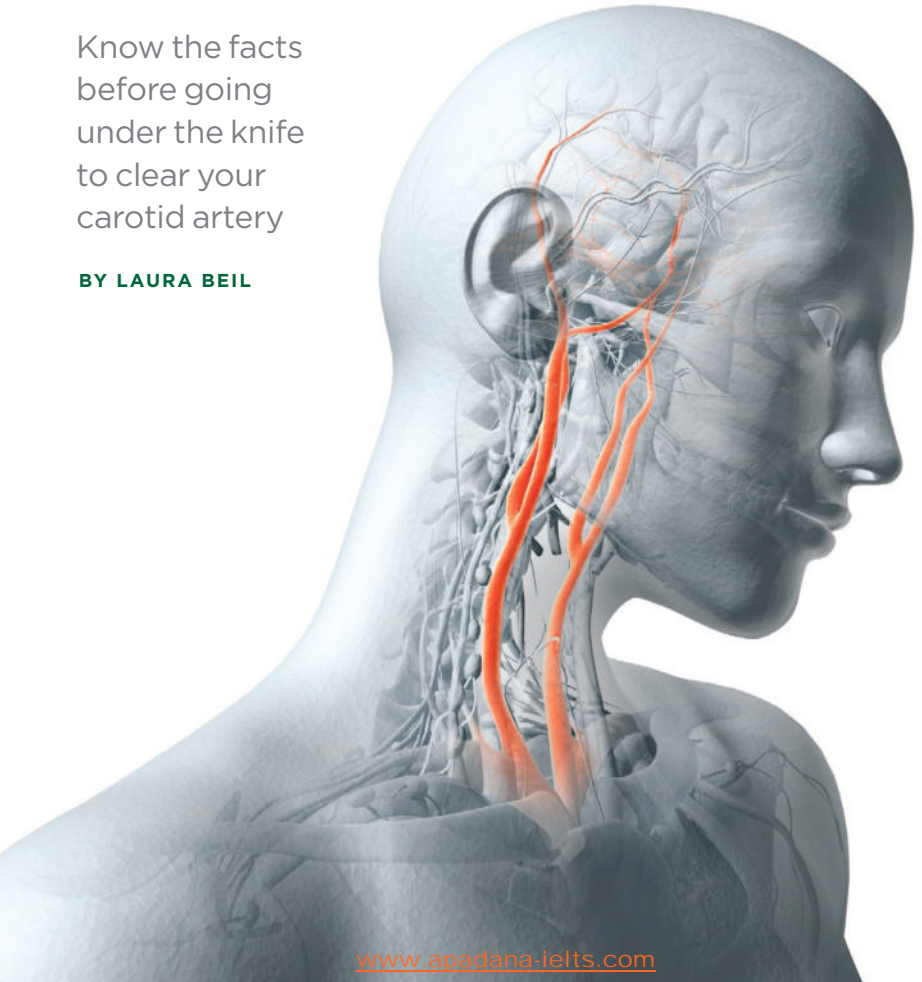
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# Surgery That Can Give You a Stroke

Know the facts before going under the knife to clear your carotid artery

BY LAURA BEIL



**DURING A ROUTINE** exam after Martha Bowes turned 60, her doctor found that her carotid arteries, large vessels in the neck that supply blood to the brain, were obstructed with plaque. Because she felt fine, Bowes didn't obsess over it—until she found herself in the office of a surgeon.

The doctor had completed a procedure on her husband, and the couple were returning for a follow-up. As the visit wrapped up, the doctor asked Bowes about her carotid arteries (worried, her husband had mentioned the obstruction).

No doubt, Bowes needed an operation, the surgeon said. From his description, Martha got the impression that it would be as quick and simple as a tonsillectomy. “We go in, make an incision on your neck, and we just clean that [plaque] out,” she remembers him saying. She hesitated; he insisted. “We have to do this immediately, or you're going to have a stroke,” he said. She booked the soonest appointment she could.

As Bowes awoke from surgery later that week, her mouth wouldn't properly form words. She looked at the clock on the wall and struggled to tell what time it was. She discovered she couldn't move her left side. “When I realized that, I was scared,” she says.

Before surgery, Bowes had walked three miles a day around her Lubbock, Texas, neighborhood and traveled throughout Europe and East Africa. Now she lay paralyzed, damaged by

a stroke—the very condition she'd had the operation to prevent.

## The Rise of a Risky Procedure

Bowes says today that had she known her options, she would have reconsidered going under the knife. An estimated 4 to 5 percent of middle-aged adults have some carotid blockage, called stenosis. Every year, about 100,000 to 140,000 people undergo surgery, just as Bowes did, to clear their carotid arteries. Others have a small mesh tube called a stent threaded into one of the arteries to prop it open. Yet despite what the surgeon told Bowes, other experts believe her stroke risk was probably so small that she would have been fine had she taken drugs to lower cholesterol and followed a healthy diet.

Stroke is one of the most common causes of death and disability in the United States, affecting almost 800,000 people a year. But only about 20 percent of strokes arise from a blockage in a large artery like the carotid. The vast majority of people with a blocked carotid artery will die with it, not because of it. One *JAMA Neurology* study followed 3,681 heart patients from 1990 to 2014; of the 316 people who developed carotid disease, only one had a stroke during that period.

Clearing a clogged carotid artery could be a solution in search of a problem. During or after a procedure,



bits of plaque may break free and lodge in the small vessels of the brain, triggering the stroke you're trying to stop. The likelihood depends on many variables, including the surgeon's skill. One 2015 study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* compared surgery outcomes of carotid artery stenting across 188 hospitals. Stroke risk after carotid stenting was anywhere from zero percent to nearly 19 percent.

In the view of some experts, drugs that lower cholesterol, along with weight and blood pressure control, are so powerful that if patients have no symptoms (such as a ministroke), they're better off leaving the carotid in peace. If a patient has symptoms, however, most doctors advise intervention. (By some calculations, close to 90 percent of U.S. patients who undergo procedures on their carotid arteries never had symptoms.)

"This is the most contentious debate in cardiovascular disease," says Christopher White, MD, director of the Ochsner Heart and Vascular Institute in New Orleans, Louisiana. One professional medical meeting had a session titled "Ill-Advised, Malpractice, or Criminal?" to describe the popularity of carotid artery stents.

## Does Surgery Help or Hurt?

Martha Bowes wishes she'd known that plaque in the carotid artery was unlikely to be a medical emergency. In fact, in 2014, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advised against routine carotid screening. Nonetheless, such tests are still done often.

One study noted a 27 percent increase among Medicare beneficiaries from 2001 to 2006. This past November, a *JAMA Internal Medicine* report named carotid screening as one of the most over-used procedures in 2014. Doctors check for blockages without reason. Health fairs offer free tests. One company sends mailers that urge

people to find plaque buildup "so you and your doctor can do something about it before it's too late."

While removing plaque seems to make intuitive sense, some studies don't always support that thinking.

Two major ones that compared surgery like Bowes's with medical treatment were published in 1995 and 2010. Stroke risk was about 30 percent lower after surgery, which would be a decisive victory for Team Surgery except for this: Powerful cholesterol-lowering statin drugs came into widespread use only after the research was under way, says

“  
***Close to 90 percent of U.S. patients who undergo procedures on their carotid arteries never had symptoms.***”

David Spence, MD, a neurologist at the University of Western Ontario. Patients in the landmark studies mostly took blood thinners. This instantly outdated the results. There is also debate over which procedure—stents or surgery—is best; still more studies have yielded conflicting interpretations.

In a 2009 paper in *Stroke*, Australian neurologist Anne Abbott, MD, reported that when people make lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, controlling weight, and lowering cholesterol and blood pressure, the benefit for stroke protection exceeds that of the track record of surgery or stents. But her results were not universally heralded. Richard Cambria, MD, chief of vascular surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital, points to limitations with Dr. Abbott's conclusions. He says his data show that about 40 percent of patients on medical therapy, including statins, saw blockages worsen.

The Mayo Clinic launched a study in December 2014 that may settle the issue. It will eventually enroll almost 2,500 people who will be randomly assigned for surgery, stenting, or medical treatment alone. Results won't be available until around 2020. In the meantime, researchers are working to determine what makes some blockages more likely to cause strokes than others. There's evidence that plaques encased in thick, fibrous caps are less likely to cause a stroke,

says David Thaler, MD, chairman of the department of neurology at Tufts University School of Medicine.

## What Patients Should Know

Don't have your carotid arteries screened without reason. If your doctor finds plaque, embrace medical management—statins, exercise, weight loss, and blood pressure control—regardless of whether you have a procedure, says James Meschia, MD, a Mayo Clinic neurologist and a principal investigator of the new study under way. If you're considering a procedure, seek a second or third opinion—from different specialists. One study found that neurologists and stroke specialists were less enthusiastic about intervention than cardiologists and surgeons were.

Consider your own worry habits. "Once you tell [some patients] they have a blockage, you ruin their lives," says Dr. White of Ochsner. "They worry every day about having a stroke. But other people say, 'You know, doc, it's not bothering me. I'll call when I have a problem,'" Dr. White continues. "They're better off with medical therapy."

Which is what Martha Bowes wishes she had chosen. Fifteen years after her stroke, she can walk with a brace and a cane, but her left arm and hand are limp. She doesn't fault anyone considering surgery but advises, "Understand the alternatives. I was given none." **R**

# What Your Exercise Style Predicts About Your Health

BY LAUREN GELMAN



## IF YOU: Love Interval Training

You may be less resistant to insulin. Type 2 diabetics who did three short bursts of high-intensity exercise daily had bigger drops in blood sugar than those who did one low-intensity cardio session.



## IF YOU: Stroll During Lunch

You'll be more resistant to stress. In a U.K. study, participants who walked for 30 minutes three days a week for ten weeks felt more relaxed and less tense at work on days they walked.



## IF YOU: Frequently Strength Train

You may boast a flatter belly. Researchers at Harvard found that people who lifted weights for 20 or more minutes daily had less belly fat than those who did the same amount of cardio.



## IF YOU: Do Cardio in the Morning

You may get better z's. An Appalachian State University study found that a.m. workouts led to improvements in sleep quality compared with exercise in the afternoon or evening.



## IF YOU: Walk 10,000 Steps a Day

You dramatically lower your risk of early death. Inactive people who raised their daily step count to 10,000 from 1,000 had a 46 percent lower risk of death over 15 years, found an Australian study.



## IF YOU: Swear by Yoga

You may reduce arthritis pain. Patients with osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis who did yoga three times a week reported a 20 percent improvement in pain and energy, found Johns Hopkins research. **R**



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# Hurt That? Try This

BY SUNNY SEA GOLD

## A Paper Cut Between Your Fingers

**TRY: "BUDDY TAPING" YOUR DIGITS**

Paper cuts heal more quickly and with less infection risk (germy hands!) if you keep them covered. "But webbing between fingers is a tough spot because of all the stretching and movement," says Matthew Fink, MD, a professor of clinical neurology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. Solution: Buddy tape fingers together using paper or cloth first aid tape—snug but not too tightly—for a couple of days or until the cut heals.

## Scorched Mouth

**TRY: GUZZLING COLD LOW-FAT OR WHOLE MILK**

Melted cheese from piping-hot pizza or nachos can stick to your tongue and the roof of your mouth, causing burns and blisters. Drink cold milk to soothe the pain, suggests

Kim Harms, DDS, a spokesperson for the American Dental Association. The fats in milk coat the burned area and create a soothing barrier that provides relief that cold water cannot.

## Throbbing Stubbed Toe

**TRY: CURSING AS IF NO ONE'S LISTENING**

Stubbed toes truly do hurt worse than other little injuries. The brain prioritizes pain signals from our feet for our safety, says Joshua T. Goldman, MD, a professor of sports medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. Letting loose a loud four-letter word can lessen the pain, U.K. research has found. Researchers suspect that swearing may release natural pain relievers in the brain. (Got a really bad stub? Buddy tape it à la the paper cut for faster healing, says Dr. Goldman.)

## Brain Freeze

**TRY: FAVORING THE FRONT OF YOUR MOUTH**

That sudden flash of agony after a slurp of a milk shake is actually a type of migraine triggered when extremely hot or cold things stimulate the vagus nerve at the back of the mouth, says Dr. Fink. Take small sips, and let frozen treats melt in the front of your mouth before you swallow, he says.



# ~~Un~~Certainty



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NEWS FROM THE

# World of Medicine

BY KELSEY KLOSS

## Early Signs of Heart Trouble

There may be telltale symptoms the month before a sudden cardiac arrest. In a new *Annals of Internal Medicine* study, researchers tracked 840 patients who experienced cardiac arrest (an electrical malfunction of the heart). Fifty percent of men and 53 percent of women experienced warning signs, such as chest pain and shortness of breath, in the weeks before. More than nine in ten patients reported symptoms resurfacing 24 hours before the cardiac arrest—but only 19 percent called 911 with the onset of symptoms.

## Green Light to Shower After Surgery

Doctors typically advise against getting surgical wounds wet to prevent infection until stitches are removed, which can take days or weeks. In a new study, researchers recruited 444 patients with low-risk surgical wounds. Half showered 48 hours after surgery, and the other half waited two weeks. There was no difference in infection risk, but patients who were able to shower were happier with their care. Early water exposure may be safe for most patients, but always check with your doctor.

## Sugar-Free Drinks Hurt Teeth

Swapping sweet drinks for the sugar-free kind can still damage your pearly whites. Australian researchers tested 23 soft drinks and sports drinks on healthy, extracted human molars. All beverages caused erosion of dental enamel (most beverages eroded it 30 to 50 percent). Any drink with a low pH (meaning it is acidic) can cause harm, even if it has no sugar. Check



for acidic additives, especially citric acid and phosphoric acid.

## When Pneumonia Is A Cancer Clue

An *American Journal of Medicine* study tracked 381 heavy smokers hospitalized with pneumonia. Nearly 10 percent were diagnosed with lung cancer within a year. Less than 1 percent of smokers without pneumonia have a chance of receiving a lung cancer diagnosis in a given year. Researchers say smokers hospitalized with pneumonia should be considered for lung cancer screening.

## What Happy People Value Most

Cherishing time is the secret to contentment, according to a new *Social Psychological and Personality Science* report. Researchers analyzed nearly 4,700 participants who were given real-life examples, such as whether they'd prefer an expensive apartment with a short commute or a less pricey apartment with a long commute. More than half prioritized time, linked to greater happiness, over money.

## Two-Minute Cure for Arachnophobia

Spiders give you the creeps? Consider this: Researchers exposed 45 arachnophobes to a tarantula for two minutes, then administered a dose of either the beta-blocker propranolol (used to treat high blood pressure

and heart conditions) or a placebo. Related research shows that a fearful memory may be eased if propranolol is given during that memory's activation. Those given the drug were far less likely to avoid spiders over the next year. Study authors suggest the technique could be used on those suffering from anxiety disorders.

## Antibiotic Resistance: A Growing Threat

The effects of medicine-resistant infections may soon pose a larger risk than cancer. Annual deaths caused by drug resistance are estimated to increase from 700,000 in 2015 to about ten million in 2050, according to *Review on Antimicrobial Resistance*. The world's population is taking more antibiotics, rendering the drugs less effective, and companies are producing fewer new antibiotics.

## Mental Trick to Stop Craving Junk Food

Negative messages about unhealthy food may make you crave it more. In an Arizona State University study, researchers gave dieters either positive or negative messages about sugary snacks. Participants then watched a video while eating cookies. Those who received the negative message ate 39 percent more cookies than the positive-message group. If you're trying to diet, think about the pros of healthy food rather than the cons of junk food. **R**



ALL IN

# A Day's Work

**BEFORE GOOGLE**, there were librarians. Here are some queries posed to the poor, suffering staff of public libraries:

- A woman wanted “inspirational material on grass and lawns.”
- “Who built the English Channel?”
- “Is there a full moon every night in Acapulco?”
- “Music suitable for a doll wedding to take place between a Shirley Temple doll and a teddy bear.”
- “Can the New York Public Library recommend a good forger?”

**I GUESS THIS IS WHAT** happens after you’ve worked at the same place for a while. I was eating at a fast-food restaurant when an employee began his shift by walking into the kitchen area and calling out, “Honey, I’m home!”

*G. M., via e-mail*

**I SUPERVISED AN EMPLOYEE** who had a negative view of everything I did. If I took a vacation day, I was “never there.” If I praised someone’s work, it was “too little, too late.”

He eventually took another job but was fired six months later. Shortly thereafter, he contacted

me, hoping to return to his old job.

“Have you learned anything from this experience?” I asked.

“Yes, I should have stayed here,” he admitted. “You’re too indecisive to have ever fired me.”

*TERRY O’CONNOR, Chantilly, Virginia*

**AN INSURANCE AGENT** called our medical office. One of our doctors had filled out a medically necessary leave-of-absence form for a patient, but, the agent said, the patient had altered it. The giveaway? The return-to-work date had been changed to February 30.

*J. L., via e-mail*

**I’VE BEEN WORKING** on my PhD in engineering for the past five years, but my kids don’t necessarily see that as work.

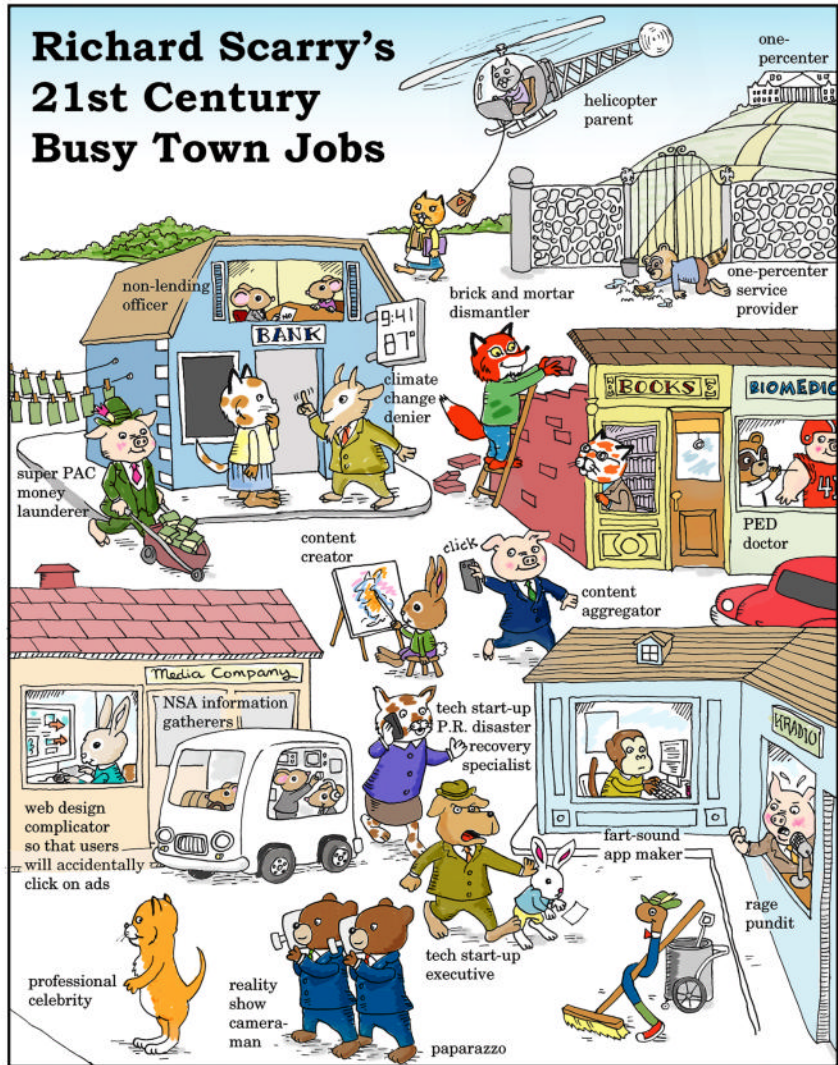
As we were driving past Walmart one day, my son spotted a Now Hiring sign and suggested that I could get a job there.

Hoping to make a point, I asked, “Do you think they’re looking for an engineer?”

“Oh, sure,” he said. “They’ll hire anybody.”

*CHRISTOPHER FIELDS, Fort Collins, Colorado*

# Richard Scarry's 21st Century Busy Town Jobs



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TOM THE DANCING BUG © 2014 RUBEN BOLLING/UNIVERSAL UCLICK

One of your 21st-century jobs should be to send us funny work stories. Yours could be worth \$100. For details, see page 7 or go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit).

**NOTE:** Ads were removed from this edition. Please continue to page 68.

# 35 EXTRAORDINARY USES FOR ORDINARY THINGS

PRODUCED BY KELSEY KLOSS

*Reader's Digest* thoroughly vetted these genius tricks so you can finish chores, make repairs, and clean messes in a breeze—using common items you already own.

## EVERYDAY CLEANING HACKS

**1 Aluminum foil scrubs pots clean.** No scrub pad? Use aluminum foil as a temporary replacement. Crumple a handful and scour to polish stainless steel pots (foil may damage nonstick pots).

**2 Kool-Aid unclogs a dishwasher.** Soap scum can block pipes in dishwashers, causing the machines to not drain properly or even break down. Before you pay a plumber, pour Kool-Aid mix into the detergent dish and run a regular cycle with the





machine empty. (Any color is generally fine, but if the thought of adding red powder to a white machine makes you shudder, stick to lighter shades.) The Kool-Aid's citric acid removes soap scum.

**3 Alka-Seltzer cleans coffeemakers.** Fill the chamber of a drip coffeemaker with water. Drop in four Alka-Seltzer tablets. Once they dissolve, run a brew cycle to wash the machine's tubes. Rinse the chamber two to three times, then run another brew cycle with plain water. The sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and citric acid in the effervescent heartburn aid make it a powerhouse cleaner.

**4 Cooking spray removes shower soap scum.** Conventional cleaners don't dissolve stubborn soap buildup on shower doors. Spray the glass with cooking spray and leave for 30 minutes. The oil slides between the glass and the soap scum, making it easy to wash. Wipe off with soapy water (use a wet sponge with a drop of dishwashing liquid).

**5 Sponges remove pet hair.** Fido leaving your furniture furry? Lightly dampen a sponge, and rub it across upholstery. It will easily lift pet hair from the surface.

**6 Ammonia cleans the oven.** For almost effortless oven cleaning, fill a bowl with ammonia and set it in

an unheated oven overnight; remove the bowl the next day. The ammonia's fumes will have loosened the gunk so you can wipe it off with a wet sponge or paper towel.

## UPGRADE YOUR LAUNDRY

**7 Lemon juice lifts ink stains.** Soak an ink stain in lemon juice for five to ten minutes before laundering in a normal cycle. The juice's citric acid is a natural stain fighter that breaks up the ink on clothing.

**8 Pillowcases protect delicates.** The washer can pull fragile sweaters and pantyhose out of shape. Toss them in a pillowcase. Close the case with a rubber band, place in the washer, and run the machine on a gentle setting.

**9 Sugar removes grass stains.** Enzymes in sugar help break down the chlorophyll that causes green stains. Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar with just enough warm water to create a paste. Apply to the stain. Let sit for 30 minutes before washing.

**10 Milk polishes leather.** To clean patent leather (the glossy type used for belts, shoes, and purses), dip a soft cotton cloth into milk. Gently buff the leather in circular motions to moisturize. The milk's enzymes and fat soften and polish the leather. Buff again with a clean, dry cloth to remove remaining milk residue.

**11 Vegetable shortening removes lipstick stains.** Rub a dab of it into the lipstick mark, and launder as usual. The oil acts as a solvent to loosen the stain.

### EXTEND THE LIFE OF YOUR STUFF

**12 Sponges preserve soap.** To help a bar of soap last longer, leave it on a sponge next to the sink or in the shower. The sponge will prevent slime and drips by helping soap dry faster.

**13 Oven cleaner refreshes a curling iron.** Styling gel or conditioner can cake onto curling irons, making them less efficient. Spray the iron (not plugged in) with a light coating of oven cleaner. Allow to sit for an hour. Wipe off with a damp rag and dry with a cloth for a curling iron that works like new.

**14 Hair spray protects artwork.** When your mini Picasso brings home a masterpiece, preserve it with a few spritzes of hair spray. This is especially handy for chalk and other materials that smudge easily.

**15 Petroleum jelly prevents rust.** Apply a thin layer to the surface in question (e.g., outdoor machinery, nuts and bolts, and chrome on bikes). The petroleum jelly will protect the metal from moisture and air, both of which encourage rust.

### SHOOT! I JUST RAN OUT OF ...

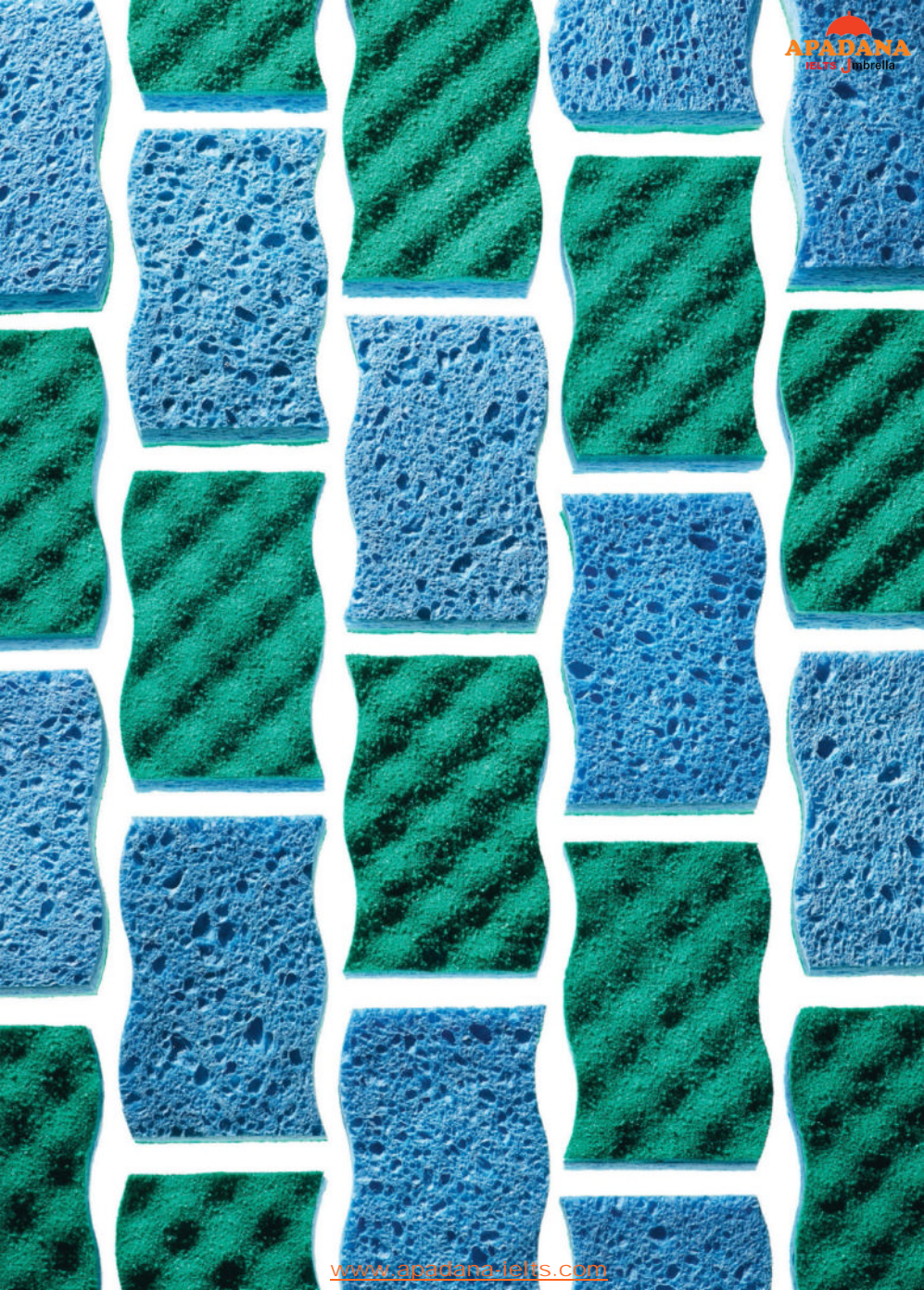
**16 Deodorant.** Milk of magnesia is commonly used as deodorant in humid, tropical environments. Normally taken as a laxative, it has antibacterial properties that make it difficult for odor-causing bacteria to flourish. (Lemon juice also deodorizes, by making your underarm too acidic for bacteria.) Apply with a cotton ball.

**17 Dishwashing liquid.** Shampoo (the plainer the better) will get the job done. Stick to using it in the sink—filling your dishwasher with shampoo may drown it in suds.

**18 All-purpose cleaning spray.** To clean up marks, glue, or paint from a table, try this teacher's trick: Spray a dollop of shaving cream on the surface and spread with a dry sponge. Leave for five to 15 minutes. Wipe off with a damp sponge. Essentially condensed soap, shaving cream will leave the table squeaky clean.

**19 Shampoo.** Sprinkle flour into your hair and shake throughout. The flour absorbs excess oils, leaving you with a fresh-looking mane.

**20 Hand sanitizer.** If you need to wash your hands while traveling but no bathroom is in sight, use antiseptic mouthwash. Put a few







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drops on your hands and rub like hand sanitizer. The mouthwash's high alcohol content attacks bacteria and gives skin a minty fresh scent.

## BEFORE YOU THROW IT OUT

**21 Butter tubs double as water dishes.** When you travel with your pet, pack an empty, washed butter tub instead of a bulkier everyday bowl. The lightweight container makes a conveniently resealable food and water dish. It can also protect fragile dog biscuits.

**22 Coffee lids protect shelves.** Use a sturdy plastic lid from a coffee can as a pantry coaster. Slip it under containers that might drip—say, honey or salad dressing—to shield your shelves from a sticky mess.

**23 Dryer sheets dust.** Television and PC screens are electrically charged, which causes them to attract dust. Since the sheets are designed to reduce static cling, they'll remove dust and prevent it from resettling for several days. Polish glass screens with the sheets after they've been in the dryer, for a softer texture.

**24 Cardboard tubes wrap extension cords.** The simplest way to keep cords tangle-free in storage: Slip wrapped cords into toilet paper tubes and stack in a box. This also keeps a single cord tidy behind your desk.

## POWER PLAYERS

### BAKING SODA

*"Baking soda is a mild base (alkali) that causes dirt and grease to dissolve easily in water, and it also deodorizes," says Steve Spangler, a bestselling author and the founder of Steve Spangler Science, a science education teaching-tools company.*

**25 Kill insects.** If you spot cockroaches or other crawly creatures in your kitchen, mix equal parts baking soda and sugar, then sprinkle in the corners of the room. Insects are attracted to the sweet mixture but die when they can't properly digest the baking soda.

**26 Lift stains from china.** If your good china is tinted with discolorations from coffee and tea, dip a moist cloth in baking soda. This creates a stiff paste you can gently rub against stains to remove. Rinse clean and dry.

**27 Strengthen dishwashing detergent.** Add two tablespoons of baking soda to the usual amount of dishwashing liquid you use. It will give your detergent a powerful boost and easily clean greasy dishes.

**28 Spruce wallpaper.** To brighten a dingy section, wipe it with a sponge moistened in a solution of one quart water and one tablespoon

baking soda. For grease stains on wallpaper, rub a paste of one tablespoon baking soda and one teaspoon water on the stain. After five to ten minutes, wipe off with a damp sponge. Always test on an inconspicuous part of the paper first.

### WD-40

*WD-40's ingredients are top secret, but the company's research and development team says the product contains mineral spirits (solvents), which is why it can remove paint and glue. It also forms a lubricating surface, making it handy for unsticking items that just won't budge.*

**29 Remove glue.** To loosen stubborn glue dried on scissors or a counter, cover it with WD-40. It can dissolve the adhesive components of even strong glue to make it easier to remove.

**30 Prevent splintering.** Wood handles on tools splinter over time. To protect your tools, spray a generous amount of WD-40 on the wood. This displaces moisture from the surface and creates a barrier against corrosive elements in the environment that can cause splintering.

**31 Wipe off crayon marks.** Kids turned your wall into a canvas? Spray crayon marks with WD-40 and wipe with a clean rag. It will not

damage paint and most wallpaper (remember to test on a small, hidden area first).

### VINEGAR

*"Vinegar is the common name for acetic acid, which is strong enough to kill bacteria but safe enough to consume and touch," notes Spangler.*

**32 Remove sweat stains from clothes.** Mix one part vinegar with four parts water. Pour on the sweat stain and soak for one minute. Wash in a regular cycle.

**33 Loosen bumper stickers.** For pesky stickers that won't budge, soak a paper towel in vinegar. Place it over the sticker for five to ten minutes. The vinegar will weaken the adhesive.

**34 Treat athlete's foot.** Because vinegar is a potent disinfectant, soaking your feet twice daily for ten minutes in one part vinegar and four parts water may help treat this fungal infection.

**35 Neutralize odors.** Just cooked fish? Painted a room? Pour vinegar into a glass or bowl, and set it in the affected room for 30 minutes. **R**

Sources: Joey Green, author of *Joey Green's Cleaning Magic: Extraordinary Uses for Ordinary Things*, a *Reader's Digest* book; Rick Muscoplat, contributing editor and automotive expert at *Family Handyman*; WD-40 company's research and development department; Joe and Terry Graedon, authors of *Quick & Handy Home Remedies from the People's Pharmacy* and founders of *peoplespharmacy.com*; [wd40.com](http://wd40.com); [thekrazycouponlady.com](http://thekrazycouponlady.com); [wisegeek.com](http://wisegeek.com); [chemistry.about.com](http://chemistry.about.com); [lifehacker.com](http://lifehacker.com); [apartmenttherapy.com](http://apartmenttherapy.com); [ollie.com](http://ollie.com); [goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://goaskalice.columbia.edu)

# That's Outrageous!

HOBBYISTS

## TRAFFIC CONES

David Morgan's collection is the envy of all Department of Transportation groupies. Since 1986, the 72-year-old Brit has gathered 500 traffic cones, including one he says is from Malaysia. "Some people probably think it's dull," he told Britain's *Daily Mirror*. "If I go to dinner parties and tell people I'm a cone collector, they quickly move on."

Source: [mirror.co.uk](http://mirror.co.uk)



## CHEETO COLLECTION

Specifically, Cheetos shaped like humans or animals. Andy Huot will pop open a bag and remove each cheesy nugget, examining it "from all angles." If it meets his criteria, he'll photograph it, often as part of a scene starring other Cheetos. As for those

Cheetos that more closely resemble a snack ... What do you think he does with them?

Source: [priceonomics.com](http://priceonomics.com)

## AUTOGRAPHS

Big deal—a lot of people collect autographs. What sets Paul Schmelzer's collection apart is that Schmelzer asks celebrities to sign *his* name, not theirs. That's right: He goes up to the rich and famous and says, "May I have my autograph?" Seventy celebrities have signed *Paul Schmelzer*, including Yoko Ono, film director Peter Bogdanovich, and the voice of Homer Simpson, actor Dan Castellaneta. Robert Redford and James Brown were confused and signed their own names.

Source: [signifier-signed.blogspot.com](http://signifier-signed.blogspot.com)

## QUOTES

Greg Packer's goal in life is to be the most quoted person on earth. So far, the 51-year-old retired highway maintenance worker is on track: He has been quoted by media outlets nearly a thousand times. Somehow he has finagled his way in front of a camera to speak on such disparate topics as the Iraq War and the first iPhone, neither of which he knew much about. He has been quoted so often that the Associated Press warned its reporters about using him in any more articles.

Source: *the New Yorker*

Four best friends.  
Two mountain paths. One wrong turn.

# AVALANCHE!

BY ADAM HERMAN AS TOLD TO PETER RUGG FROM *BACKPACKER*

**T**HE PLAN WENT BAD AT THE FORK in the trail. It had been one hour since Conor and I had seen either Tristan or Rich through the blur of white that had whipped up as we started hiking down Mount Washington. We had split into groups so each pair could go at its own pace. Conor and I were ahead and intended to wait for Tristan and Rich at the junction. They planned to stay and hike a few days, so they were loaded down with overnight gear. We were all experienced climbers, but either we were moving faster than we'd guessed or they were moving slower. Maybe both.

In a few minutes, the sweat on our skin started to ice. If we stayed still, it wouldn't be long before frostbite set in. We waited as long as we could, maybe 15 minutes, but no figures appeared through the snow. So we turned to the

JOSE AZEL/AURORA PHOTOS/CORBIS



trail and, being more sure of our shivering than of our direction, went right at the fork and hurried along to warm up.

Then I felt one of those seismic shifts that drive your stomach into your throat and trigger something primal in your brain. And I knew, very suddenly and very clearly, that I had walked onto the lip of a dangerously loaded snowfield, and now we were in an avalanche.

I tried to spike an ice pick into the ravine to anchor myself, but it was much too late for that. Then I was in the air. All I could see was empty, cool whiteness no matter how long I turned in the air or which way the snow and the ice ground me up. Then the white went dark, along with the rest of the world.

**T**HE FOUR OF US grew up together in Oak Bluffs, on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, but now we'd been scattered by college and work. Back home for the holidays, we had planned a trip to New Hampshire's White Mountains. Tristan and I were new to Mount Washington, but Conor and Rich had both summited it a few times in winter. In their experience, they'd said, the path up the Tuckerman Ravine Trail from Hermit Lake was simple. It was. Even for a first-timer, the hike was straightforward. I snapped a picture of the Forest Service's warning sign about avalanches. One more

shot to remember the trip by but not relevant to us: Our ascent was by a different route, and the posted avalanche danger was low for the day.

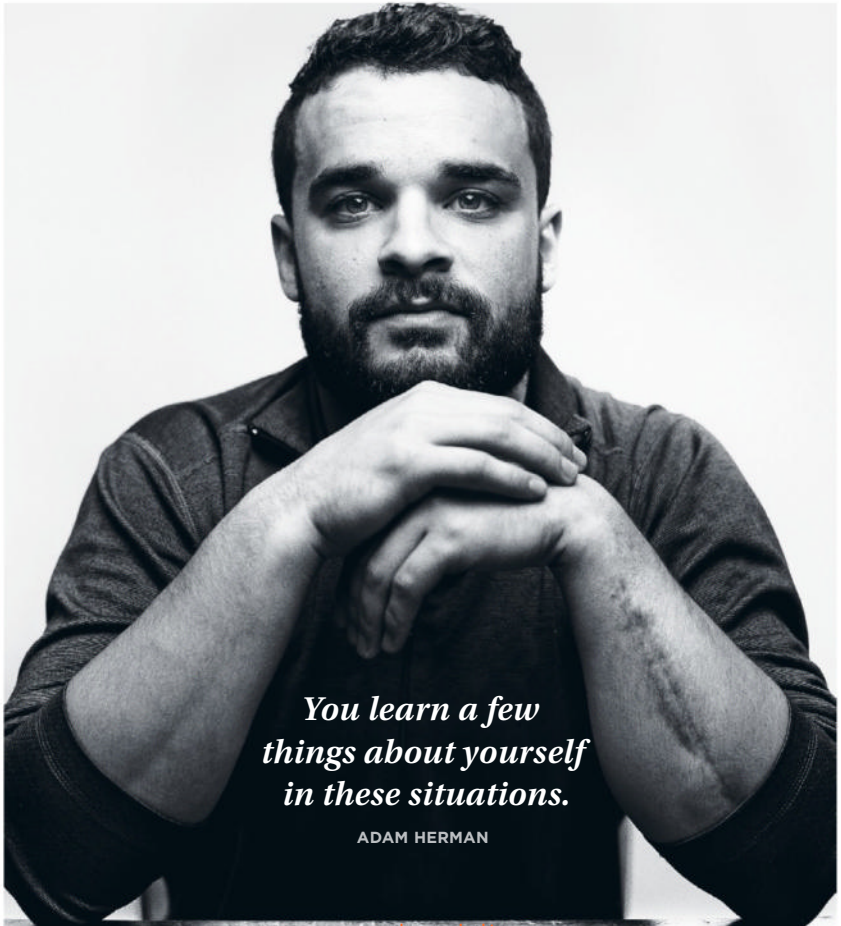
Conor and I traveled quickly over the well-trod snow. Our packs were light, with just extra clothes, water, and some food. But Tristan and Rich were carrying heavier loads, so their progress was slower. Early in the hike, we decided to split up so that Conor and I could tag the summit and make it back before dark. By 2:30 p.m., Conor and I had reached the summit, and we stayed awhile to snap pictures. Before we even started back down, the snowfall had set in, and we knew it would be better if we were off the mountaintop before the sun set. On the way back down, we crossed paths with Rich and Tristan. They turned around, and we made plans to meet at the fork in the trail, staying in our separate groups.

**I**WOKE UP ON TOP of the snow. Initially, I'd thought I was going to die or be buried, but I had only a broken arm. The rest of my body hurt, but I still couldn't tell how badly—the adrenaline was pumping hard. I tried to sit up, and blood started oozing down across my face. I decided it was better to lie back down. It was like lying in a room with white walls and a white ceiling, and there was no sign of Conor. I could see my boot sticking out of the snow, knocked clean off by the force of the impact. I lay there for maybe

15 minutes, weighing my options and trying to stay calm. Then the crunch of snow under boots brought me back. There was Conor, well enough to walk, climbing down to me. He must've landed on a higher ledge. As he came closer, I could see his face, a cluster of purple bruises. He considered me for a moment, blood dripping from his forehead down to

his jacket. "Who are you?" he asked.

I told him that we were good friends who'd been climbing this mountain all day and that we'd been in an avalanche. I'd spent six summers working as a lifeguard, and I knew a concussion when I saw one. I also knew that as long as we didn't fall asleep out here in the snow anytime soon, he was likely to be fine. As for my own condition,



*You learn a few  
 things about yourself  
 in these situations.*

ADAM HERMAN

BEN ROSSER



between the arm that I was sure was broken and the stab I felt in my back, I knew I was hurt badly but not beyond repair. There was a voice, very soft, in the back of my brain, telling me that maybe no one would find us, that if I was so right about the “low avalanche danger,” I wouldn’t be down here to begin with. Conor and I did what we could: We consolidated our water and food and waited. It wasn’t long before I could hear Tristan’s voice cutting through the wind. It was the best sound I’d heard in my life. “We’re getting help!” Tristan promised from somewhere up in the white. “Hang in there!” Not that we had a choice.

You learn a few things about yourself in these situations. For one, you find out whether you’re a pessimist. Conor, from either head wound or natural disposition, gave up. He talked about how he couldn’t believe this was the end and what he thought might come next. He thought death might be an improvement, spiritually speaking. “I’m at peace with dying,” he told me. I love Conor, and I knew that it was the knock on his head talking, but this wasn’t any good. “I’m saying this

for you as much as me,” I answered. “Please shut up.”

Once I knew help was on the way, it was very boring being down there in the snow and ice. I thought about the next hike I’d take, how long it would be before this broken arm healed, how I was going to tell this story the first time a girl asked about the cast. But I knew I wasn’t going to end like this, spooning with Conor. Five hours after our fall, I saw the lights of the approaching snowcat. I can’t remember now if I was laughing as the emergency workers slid me onto the backboard, but if I wasn’t, it seems I should have been. When we got to the hospital, the doctors confirmed I had broken not just my arm but my back. Conor had sustained a massive concussion. The rescuers estimated we’d fallen more than 800 feet, skidding off patches of rocks and snow and ice. It was pure luck that Tristan and Rich had found us. When they had reached the split in the trail and found it empty, they’d had no way to know we’d taken a wrong turn. Tristan just had a hunch, and lucky for us, he listened to it. **R**

BACKPACKER (MARCH 2015), COPYRIGHT © 2015 BY PETER RUGG, BACKPACKER.COM.



## EXTRA CHEESE

Standing in the park, I was wondering why a Frisbee looks larger the closer it gets ... then it hit me.

STEWART FRANCIS

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# The Moth

A TRUE TALE FROM THE PREMIER LIVE STORYTELLING GROUP

## A PUZZLING PACKAGE FROM A MYSTERY MAN

BY CYNTHIA RIGGS FROM THE BOOK *THE MOTH*

**A**BOUT SIX MONTHS ago, a mystery came into my life that was totally unexpected. I had thought about a guy that I'd met many years before. His name just popped into my mind. Well, two weeks later, I got a package from him.

The return address was a latitude and a longitude. Inside was an archi-

val envelope that had a whole bunch of old, dried-up, yellowed paper towels in it. The paper towels were covered with scrawled-out cryptograms. Also in this package there was a note, with a more modern cryptogram.

Well, I had no idea what this was all about, so I looked at some of the

**WIN  
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RD readers can score free tickets to a Moth event near them. Go to [rd.com/moth-tickets](http://rd.com/moth-tickets).

messages on these paper towels, and then it all came back to me.

When I was 18 years old, I was a marine geology major at a college in Ohio—of course. My college managed to find me a job lasting for four months in San Diego, working for Scripps Institution of Oceanography sorting plankton at a research project.

Now, I was just thrilled. I'd never been out West before. I was working in a real laboratory. I was 18. Most 18-year-olds are clueless; I was particularly clueless.

My coworkers were a bunch of guys who had been sorting plankton for too long. They were bored, and they were rather bright, so they came up with some wonderful practical jokes, like nailing my lab drawers shut. I had no idea how to handle this, all these little jokes they played. But there was one guy in the lab. He was an elderly man—he was 28. He started defending me against my tormentors. My dad had been in the Army, and he'd introduced me to cryptograms. I loved the idea of these secret messages, so I wrote secret messages, as cryptograms, to Howie, on these paper towels.

Now, he'd kept them for 62 years.

Well, I have several young women in my Wednesday writers' group in Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and I said to them, "What do you think of all this?" They all said, "You've got to get in touch with this guy. You just have to. This is wonderful."

And so I thought about it, and I thought, Well, how am I gonna get in touch with him? This was latitude and longitude. So I Googled it. I found ... there was sort of a circle right around Baja California. Now, I knew that Howie had a dental degree, so that was kind of a clue. I figured, OK, there was a golf resort somewhere within that

latitude and longitude, so I called this golf resort on its toll-free number, and I said, "Is there a Dr. A. registered there?" No, there wasn't.

Then I figured, OK, that circle could include the coast of Baja California. So I thought, Aha! He's on a cruise ship. So I found a cruise-ship tracking site on Google. This is all true. But there were no cruise ships in the area at that time.

The next thing I figured, OK, I'll go to the California Dental Association.

“

***The worst thing that can happen to a parent is to have a child die. And we shared that pain.***

”

**THE MOTH**

*Reader's Digest* is proud to partner with the Moth on storytelling "Grand Slam" events in cities across the country, with the best stories appearing in the July/August issue of *RD*. To learn more and purchase tickets to a show near you, visit [themoth.org](http://themoth.org).

And I found him! I found him, and I found an address.

So I went back to my Wednesday writers, and I said, “Now what?”

And they said, “You’ve got to get in touch with this guy. You just have to.” Well, I figured I could write him maybe sort of a noncommittal note. So I did that. I said, “Well, I just got that packet that you sent, and I’ve decoded the message.” And that was it.

In the meantime, the Wednesday writers had formed sort of a cheering section, and it was going something like this: “This is every woman’s fantasy. This man has spent a lifetime loving you and searching for you.”

**N**OW, YOU NEED to know a little something about my background. I wasn’t totally off on men, but I was a little uncomfortable because I’d been married for 25 years to a very brilliant but a very abusive husband. We’d been divorced for 35 years, and he’d stalked me for 20 of them. So I was not comfortable opening any doors to any kind of intimacy. And these paper towels were things that could lead to intimacy.

Well, I sent this letter off to what might or might not have been his current address, and, by golly, I got a postcard back, and it said, “Nicer than nice to hear from you.” So I knew I had the address right.

The next thing I did was to send him a book of poetry. I had a daughter who had died about five years before,

and this was a book of her poetry. And he wrote back, and he said, “I had a son who died at the same time your daughter died, about the same age.”

As you can imagine, this broke down a lot of barriers in a hurry. If you think of the worst thing that can happen to parents, it is to have a child die. And to have two of us sharing this painful experience ...

So we started corresponding. And we started finding out about more coincidences. Like the manganese nodules.

Manganese nodules are knobby little lumps of black/gray-looking mineral deposits that are found only in the deep sea. Few museums have these nodules, and very, very few individuals have them. Howie happened to have one that came from the Marianas Trench, which is the deepest part of the Pacific Ocean, and he sent it to me.

Well, I just happened to have been on an Antarctic research cruise. I had a small sack full of manganese nodules. I sent him four. I made sure they were smaller than his.

The next thing he sent me was a CD, a piece of music that his son had composed called “Cactus on Mars.” Well, my son-in-law, who’s a geophysicist, was evaluating research proposals for Mars.

These coincidences went on and on and on.

Howie found out that I’m an avid gardener, so he sent me seven seed packages. One was hollyhocks—*H* for

*Howie*. And one was catnip—*C* for *Cynthia*. And in between he had Leeks, Okra, Vinca, Eggplant, and Spinach.

This was a real romance.

By the way, at this time, the young woman in the West Tisbury post office got involved. She would say, as she gave me a package, “Another letter from your boyfriend!”

And at this point, the Wednesday writers stepped in again and said, “You have to go see this guy.”

I had no intention of going to see him, but you have no idea what these women are like.

So I have a ticket to California on my desk.

I’m going out to see him. But now, here comes a question: When I appear, is he going to have in his mind this 18-year-old that he fell in love with? I mean, I’m 81 now, and he’s 90.

I asked the Wednesday writers, “Well, what can you do?”

And they said, “Oh, plenty.”

Howie has actually changed my life. I had been pretty much closed up. But what he did was he gave me some very gentle warmth. He also introduced me to a calm love that I’d never thought of before. And he introduced me to a sweet passion. You’d be surprised at what you can do in letters and codes.

But most of all, the thing that’s really affected me is he gave me back a sense of great self-worth. And with that, I hope you all can find a *Howie* or his equivalent. **R**

Cynthia Riggs is the author of 11 books in the *Martha’s Vineyard* mystery series. She was born on the island and is the eighth generation to live in her family homestead, which she runs as a bed-and-breakfast catering to poets, writers, and other creative people. For 20 years, she held a U.S. Coast Guard Masters License for 100-ton vessels. She has five children and 13 grandchildren. A few months after she told this story, *Cynthia* flew to California to meet *Howie*. He proposed within two hours of seeing her. They were married in the spring of 2013.

READ MORE ORIGINALS LIKE THIS IN *THE MOTH*. EDITED BY CATHERINE BURNS AND AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK AND E-BOOK FROM HACHETTE BOOKS. LISTEN TO OTHER ORIGINALS ON THE *MOTH* PODCAST, AVAILABLE AT ITUNES AND THEMOTH.ORG.



## TECH SUPPORT?

Great, iTunes terms and conditions have changed, and my attorney is on vacation. Just perfect.

 @TYLERSCHMALL

When the inventor of the USB stick dies, they’ll gently lower the coffin, then pull it back up, turn it the other way, then lower it again.

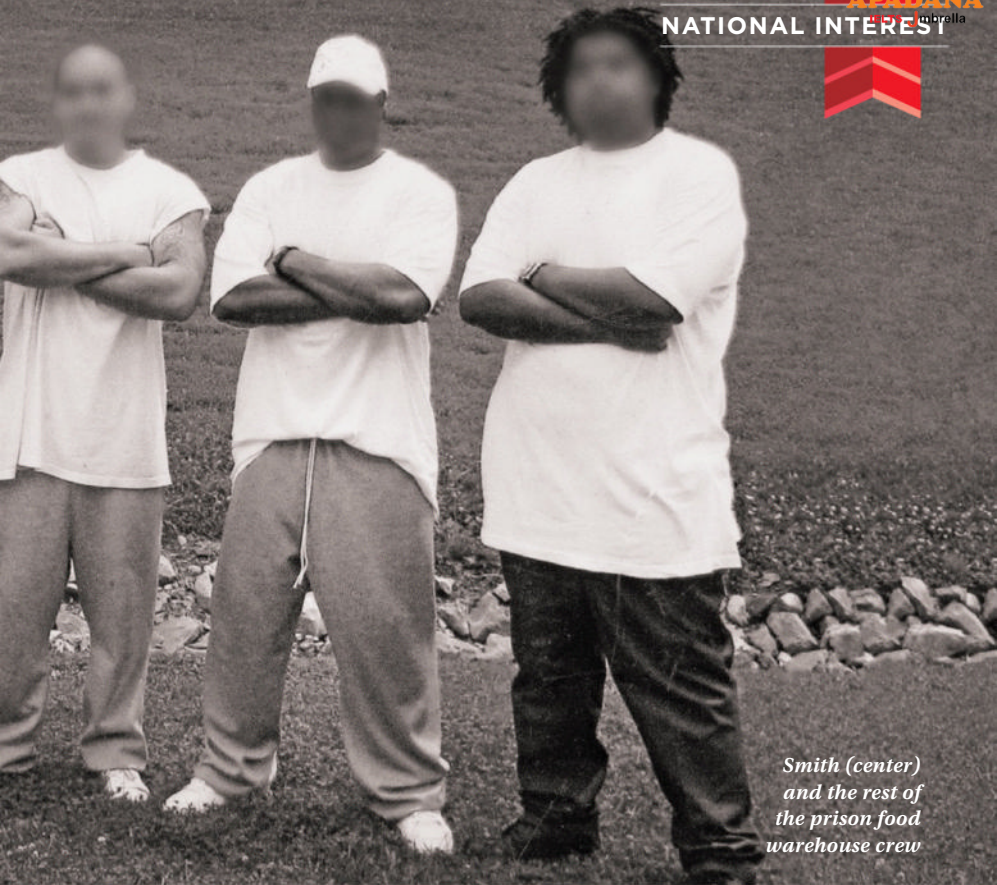
 @CLUEDONT



The worst part wasn't the racial tension or rotten meat

# Mr. Smith Goes to Prison

BY JEFF SMITH FROM THE BOOK *MR. SMITH GOES TO PRISON*



*Smith (center)  
and the rest of  
the prison food  
warehouse crew*

but seeing all the untapped potential of the inmates I met

**T**HE FIRST CORRECTIONAL OFFICER I met at Federal Correctional Institution, Manchester, which is tucked into a desolate Kentucky mountain hollow, had two visible teeth. He was nearly impossible to understand. I came in with a young black guy who mumbled and a Chinese man who spoke broken English, but at least I could decipher their words. After calling the Chinese man “sesame chicken”—and laughing uproariously at his own wit—the correctional officer, or CO, sent me to a nurse. She had a battery of questions for me.



“Height ’n’ weight?”

“Five six, 120 pounds.”

She frowned at my slight frame.

“Education level?”

“PhD.”

She shot me a skeptical look. “Last profession?”

“State senator.”

She rolled her eyes. “If ya wanna play games, play games. You’ll fit right in here. We got ones who think they’re Jesus Christ too.”

Then a CO escorted me to a doorless bathroom.

“Stree-ee-ee,” he commanded. I did.

“Turn round,” he barked. I did.

“Open up yer prison wallet,” he ordered.

I looked at him quizzically.

“Open yer butt cheeks!”

I did.

The final stop was the counselor’s office. He flipped through my presentencing report and shook his head. “This is crazy,” he said. “You shouldn’t be here. Complete waste of time, money, space.”

Exactly, I thought.

## My Road to the Big House

**S**IX MONTHS EARLIER, in July 2009, I’d gotten onto the elevator up to my lawyer’s office. A man inside smiled and asked, “Gonna run for Congress again, Mr. Smith? Or city hall?” My heart pounded—it hadn’t stopped since federal authorities had thumped on my door at 7 a.m. I numbly replied, “Right now,

sir, I’m happy in the state senate.”

I realized the walls were closing in. Back in 2004, I’d challenged the scion of Missouri’s most beloved political dynasty for a congressional seat, coming up just short of my party’s nomination. The media named my campaign one of the nation’s most surprising, featuring a young volunteer army that powered my team to a near win.

A few weeks before Election Day, two aides were approached by a man who wanted to produce a postcard highlighting an opponent’s dismal legislative attendance record. I was pretty sure that campaigns couldn’t legally coordinate with an outside party—and I was also pretty sure it happened every day, without consequence. After a discussion, my aides asked if they should move forward.

Whatever you guys do, I said, I don’t wanna know the details. Understand?

They nodded.

The postcard dropped in the campaign’s last week. My opponent filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, alleging that my campaign had illegally coordinated with the mailing’s producer. Five years later, I pleaded guilty to two counts of obstruction of justice for impeding the federal investigation into my involvement. As punishment, I requested two years of home confinement and full-time community service, during which I’d leave my house only to teach and coach at a charter school I’d cofounded a decade before. More

than 300 people, including a bipartisan group of state elected officials, wrote letters requesting clemency. But the Feds portrayed me as the mastermind of a “textbook case of political corruption,” and the judge gave me a year and a day in federal prison.

Six months later, I was adrift in a sea of sharks—a professor turned politician turned felon. As a state senator, I’d authored and passed legislation to reform Missouri criminal statutes.

“What you done did?”

“Lied to the Feds.”

“Damn, how’d they get you?” asked a guy next door with dreadlocks.

“My best friend was wired.”

Somebody said, “Dude need to get chalked,” referring to the outline around bodies at crime scenes. Other inmates agreed. Under 30 seconds, it was unanimous: Someone should kill my ex-best friend. I made a note to stay on these guys’ good side.



## *I was called a “textbook case of political corruption” and sent to prison for a year and a day.*

But once the gates slammed shut, the tables were turned: The COs had the power and exercised it ruthlessly. They, along with the prisoners, were the ones who knew the score, and my education would be up to them.

### **“See, This Ain’t No Senate”**

**A**FTER INTAKE, we received our uniforms. A CO took me to the second floor and nodded at a cell containing a guy in a black do-rag. I was the only white guy on the block. My cellie, whose freckles gave him a striking resemblance to Morgan Freeman—guys called him Red, after Freeman’s *Shawshank Redemption* character—sized me up.

“White colla?” he asked with a mix of disdain and bemusement.

“Yep.”

Red had spent 25 years in and out of federal, state, and county jails. One of the first prison codes he taught me involved dining etiquette. The next day, I sat down to eat with the guys from my cell block. People stared.

Red said, “Listen, cellie. Is you tryin’ to start a \*&(! riot on your first day?”

“Huh?”

“Look around, cellie. What you see?” he asked.

I shrugged, confused.

He said, “How many white folks you see eatin’ with the kinfolk?”

I looked around. “None.” I ate quickly and left the chow hall.

As I walked back to the unit, a beefy white guy with a sleeve of swastika tattoos approached. “Boy, is yew some kinda n—r lover?” he demanded.

“No,” I said, figuring it wasn’t the

time to reveal that I had majored in African American studies in college.

“Then sit with y’own kind at chow.”

“OK. My bad. See, that was my cellie ... I just got here.”

“They put you with a n—r?”

“Uh, yeah.” That was not the kind of language I tolerated on the outside, but since there was no gang of lawyers who had my back, I let it go.

“Don’t worry, I’ll fix it. I’m Cornbread. Holla if ya need somethin’, ya

meant either that my request to teach GED courses had been granted or that I’d received mail requiring my signature. The only recent glimmer of good news had been a literary agent’s interest in my story. I’d asked her to send a contract if she wanted to represent me.

I was led into a large, barren room. A stocky man with a shaved head and a goatee identified himself as the prison captain—if prison were school, the captain was its dean of discipline.



## *Most of the meat we were given to eat had expiration dates of 2006 or 2007. It was 2010.*

hear? But lemme find out you’ seatin’ wit the n—rs again, you just lemme find out,” he warned with a grin.

I’d gotten off easy. Violating this rule could have harsh consequences, I’d learn. Eating with members of another race could get you hurt; sharing food items could even get you killed.

This was the reality of prison. The biggest threats weren’t from the obvious places—the sex-crazed guy or the muscle collecting debts. The biggest threats came from the myriad daily interactions that could go horribly wrong, like the time an argument in the TV room escalated into a full-blown fight over whether the TV should be tuned to basketball or to women’s track.

A week later, I was summoned to the administrative building. I hoped it

“Inmate Smeeth,” he sneered. “How long was yew in politics?”

“About a decade.”

“Well, then, yew proly know more about politics than I do, dontcha think? How long yew been in prison?”

“About a week.”

“Well, I been workin’ in prisons 18 years now. So who yew think knows more ’bout prison?”

“Probably you,” I said.

“Yeah, proly so. And so I got a lil advice. Yew know what blendin’ is? Cuz yew ain’t blendin’ so good. And this book yew’s writin’ ain’t helpin’.”

“Well, I hope to make the most of my time and write it while I’m here.”

“Hm. Yew knew its rules against conductin’ a business outta here. We been re-viewin’ some things, and we think yer ‘negotiations’ with

this agent might be against the rules.”

So they were monitoring my e-mails. “I read the rules. They said inmates can’t operate a business. The way I interpreted that, I’m not conducting a business, like selling cigarettes or tattoos. I wouldn’t receive a penny while I’m here.”

“That how yew interpret it? See, Inmate Smeeth, thing is, this ain’t no Senate. Ain’t no Supreme Court. This the BOP [Bureau of Prisons] ... If I think yew’s conductin’ business, then yew’s proolly conductin’ business. And if yew ain’t, ya might find yerself in the SHU [solitary confinement] while we figger it out.”

## “The Senator Be Embezzling!”

**T**HE NEXT AFTERNOON, I received my work detail: unloading trucks in the food warehouse, one of the most grueling jobs in prison. Four of my colleagues there were twice my size, while the other two were three times my weight. We moved the food deliveries in and out of freezers—35,000 to 40,000 pounds a day in packages of up to 80 pounds each. Much of the meat had expiration dates of 2006 or 2007. It was 2010. That we were fed such stale food reminded us what the system thought of us: We were not quite animals but not quite human.

Miss Horton, a chain-smoking CO with a sailor’s mouth, was our supervisor. She told the three of us starting

together that if we didn’t steal, she’d feed us well. Despite her words, all the warehouse vets and both new guys left that day with chicken patties Saran-wrapped around their chests and produce stuffed into every nook and cranny, to be sold in the yard. Bodybuilding, which is so central to prison culture, requires extra nutrition.

I’d promised my family that I wouldn’t break any rules, but soon, another prisoner said I’d better start stealing because if I didn’t, one of my colleagues was going to plant raw hamburger meat in my coat, since they feared I’d rat them out.

There were four levels of formal violations, or shots. Series 4 shots were the prison equivalent of jaywalking—for example, possessing more than four books in a cell might result in denial of phone privileges for 90 days. Series 2 and 3 infractions—fighting, bribing a CO—were more serious and could earn you several months in the SHU and transfer to a medium-security facility. Most serious were Series 1 breaches, which included inciting a riot and murder. Because of fears about *E. coli*, theft of raw meat was a Series 1 shot, resulting in new felony charges and transfer to a high-security prison.

Prisoners who survived solitary described claustrophobia, rage, depression, hallucinations—slow-motion torture. Now the possibility of my being put in SHU was real. Should I trust the guy who warned me about my colleagues? Or was he trying to lead

me to steal so that he could rat me out?

One day, I waited for Miss Horton to take a smoke break, dug into a box of peppers, and stuffed one in each sock and another in each pants pocket. My colleague 'Ville guffawed. "Y'all check out the senator. He think he slick!"

Our inmate supervisor, K.Y., shook his head. "Senator, take them peppers out yo' pocket," he said. But he didn't notice the peppers in my socks—which I showed the crew after work.

few days before Santa Claus come").

Ingenuity was necessary for prisoners to survive on sub-poverty wages—I made \$5.25 a month, or around 3 cents an hour, for working 40 hours a week—and buy hygiene products, pens, paper, and stamps. And ingenuity took many forms. Whether it was concocting ice cream out of vanilla pudding, creamer, ice, sugar, milk, and bananas smuggled from the chow hall, cutting hair with nail clippers, or



## *I was a white guy with a PhD, yet getting a decent job upon reentry was still a struggle.*

"Damn!" exclaimed 'Ville. "The senator be em-BEZZ-ling! He a regular convict now!"

There was no higher praise. Calling someone a convict was the equivalent of endowing a professor. And not only did my foray into hustling keep me safe, it introduced me to a defining feature of prison culture: ingenuity.

### **Unlocking Prisoners' Potential**

**P**RISON WAS FULL of ambitious, street-smart men who had instincts not unlike those of the CEOs who had wined and dined me. Using jargon you'd never hear at business school, they discussed incentives ("I don't never charge no first-time user") and supply-chain management ("You always got to stock up a

making weights out of boulders in laundry bags to be used when the room was closed, inmates figured out how to do more with less. Many hoped to start barbershops, restaurants, or personal-training businesses after they were released, but they received no preparation to make their ideas a reality. And there was zero staff interest in rehabilitation. "You'll be back, dips—t," one CO liked to tell men as they left, embodying the system's attitude about the potential for redemption.

Upon release, 650,000 men show up each year to try to succeed in communities where they failed—with the burden of prison records. Two thirds reoffend within three years, and the main reason is financial struggle. Most are unemployed, making them far more likely to commit a crime than

those with jobs. Seeking legal employment is challenging when most businesses won't hire ex-offenders.

Prison education programs could help overcome this. But society must first stop seeing prison as a warehouse for the nation's throwaways and start seeing it as a costly waste of human potential. In so many of the men I met, I saw an entrepreneurial passion that embodied the best of America—but was likely never to see daylight.

At Manchester, I saw firsthand how the human spirit can triumph in the most adverse environments, whether it was an inmate running a website from his cell or K.Y. spending evenings with me learning to read as we worked on his plan for a trucking business. Many of the guys had only the GEDs they'd earned in prison, some hadn't had a visit from a friend or family member in years, and few had any savings. They'd be coming back into a world in which four of five landlords and nine of ten employers run criminal checks on candidates to screen out felons, a world in which many can't vote or even

use food stamps, and a world in which they have to find the funds to pay for housing and urinalysis tests when they can't afford clothes for a job interview.

I spent less than a year in prison, and I had every advantage upon reentry: I was a white guy with a PhD, family and community support, and savings. Yet getting a decent job was still a struggle. The criminal-justice system is not, as many people claim, broken. It's more like a well-oiled machine that keeps millions of individuals out of the economic mainstream.

I hope that everyone reading this strives to reconnect with anyone he or she knows who is behind bars or recently did time. And if you don't know anyone, please consider volunteering to help people in those situations. Even my mother, who was so impatient with my mistakes, is doing that, and in four years, she has helped turn around one ex-offender's life, and she recently signed up for a second mentee. Until we achieve broad reform, my mom offers an example of a grassroots strategy to solve our incarceration crisis: one person at a time. **R**

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## A RECIPE FOR LAUGHTER

If you read the instructions carefully, the first step to making any microwavable lunch is to throw away the box and dig it out of the trash.

 @STOTLE

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



**PLEASE STOP CALLING US** your “squad,” Linda; this is book club.

🐦 @RANDILAWSON

**A WOMAN NOTICED** her husband standing on the bathroom scale, sucking in his stomach. “Ha! That’s not going to help,” she said.

“Sure, it does,” he said. “It’s the only way I can see the numbers.”

**A FEW MONTHS AGO**, Hamas “arrested” a dolphin for being an Israeli spy. Readers of *Reason* magazine came up with titles for the film this action might inspire:

- *Orcapussy*
- *Free Schmuelly*
- *Goldflipper*
- *The Porpoise-Driven Life*
- *Dolphinfidel*

FROM TOP: HENRIK SORENSEN/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE CHICK/GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES. COLIN HAWKINS/GETTY IMAGES; CLAUDIA BURLOTTI/GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

**THE ATTORNEY TELLS** the accused, "I have some good news and some bad news."

"What's the bad news?" asks the accused.

"The bad news is, your blood is all over the crime scene, and the DNA tests prove you did it."

"What's the good news?"

"Your cholesterol is 130."

## YELP REVIEWS OF NEWBORN BABIES



**HavntSlept**  
New York, NY



I was super looking forward to having a newborn baby because some friends had said they had a really great experience. Calling this a disappointment is an understatement. Long, grueling hours and tons of hidden costs and fees.



**NewMom417**  
Guttenberg, NJ



Planned ahead but still had an extremely long wait (over nine months). Unacceptable. Then came the birthing process. First off, gross. There's a good reason the brochures don't show you how the baby gets out of your body. Also painful! I feel like there was zero attention to detail when this whole process was designed.



**NotLovingIt**  
Clear Lake, MN



THIS WAS A TOTAL OUTRAGE. If I wanted to live with something whiny that did nothing but eat, sleep, and poop, I wouldn't have kicked out my last Craigslist roommate.



**SaveMePls**  
South Pasadena, CA



Already had one of these but decided to give it another chance. The second time around, we wound up with two of them. Not what we ordered.



**SoCuteSoSweet**  
Cambridge, MA



Most amazing experience. So in love! Only drawback is that newborn is not yet old enough for me to give it candy and ice cream whenever it wants them.



**NoKidsNoCry**  
Cedar Rapids, IA



Just read the above comment. Is there a way to contact Yelp and have it prevent grandparents from leaving reviews?

RAQUEL DAPICE, on theuglyvolvo.com



The classiest ways to  
split a bill, send your sympathies,  
say no, and more

# Oh, Behave!

BY LENORE SKENAZY

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME** you sent a thank-you note to a friend after being invited over for dinner? Forget? You know why? Because you probably never did. No one does that anymore. Somewhere between unfriending and Instagramming every aspect of our lives, the rules of decorum that we'd all lived by changed. Well, we're going to correct that. We polled our friends for the etiquette conundrums that vex them most. Then we asked experts to assess the correct way to proceed. Oh, and if you like what you read, feel free to send a thank-you note. That would be nice.

## Sending Condolences

*Your friend's husband dies. You didn't know him that well. But still.*

The thing is, we all know the right thing to do when we hear of a friend's or relative's loss: Write that sympathy card and mail it already!

But what if you don't have a sympathy card around? Or you do, but the corner's kind of bent? Or what if you don't know your friend's snail mail address offhand and keep

forgetting to look it up until it's 11:30 at night and you're drifting gently off to sleep when suddenly you remember, I STILL HAVEN'T MAILED THAT CARD!!!!? And now your heart is pounding, and you are electrified with self-loathing ... but still too toasty under the covers to actually get out of bed and do anything? If you're tempted to text a sad-faced emoji just to get something out, don't. That's right up there with "liking" the



news on Facebook. But here's the good news, sluggards! When it comes to expressing sympathy, "there's no time limit," says Anne Klaeyens of the New York Society of Ethical Culture. In fact, sometimes it's even nicer for a mourner to get a note a little after the initial flurry of attention, when life for everyone else has returned to "normal."

That's when dropping your friend a note—yes, even by e-mail—will be really appreciated. And the best kind of note, adds Klaeyens, includes a little story about the deceased. (So long as it doesn't end, "And he still hasn't paid me back.")

### For Whom the Bill Tolls

*You're out to dinner with friends and order a measly hot dog—"hold the bun." Everyone else orders foie gras, lobsters, and Ketel One martinis. The check arrives. Now what?*

Oh, to live in Germany, at least when it's time to pay the tab. There, says Siobhan Callahan, an American who teaches English in the town of Bremen, "the assumption is that everyone will pay separately."

In fact, Callahan says, generally the waitress comes to the table at the end of the meal and announces to each person, "Let's see; a coffee is 1.50, and a burger is 15—you owe

me 16.50.' She does it all in her head."

This would relieve a party platter of anxiety on the part of people like ... me. Those of us who have to steel ourselves before going out to dinner, knowing that the check will probably be split equally, even though we will have eaten waaaaaay less expensively (for all sorts of psycho/social/cheapo reasons) than everyone else. I try to think of it as an entertainment tax, the price paid for socializing.

I try and try and try.

Minneapolis doctor and businesswoman Archelle Georgiou has come up with the classiest way to avoid this turmoil, short of ordering three lobsters for yourself. If her friends are boozers, she says, "I'll tell the waitress at the beginning, 'We'll have separate checks for this bill.' It's between me and the waitress, but they all hear it, and that's worked out quite well."

Until America goes German, this could be your best bet. Especially for those of us who order just the soup and fill up on the crackers.

## Car-Wreck Cousin

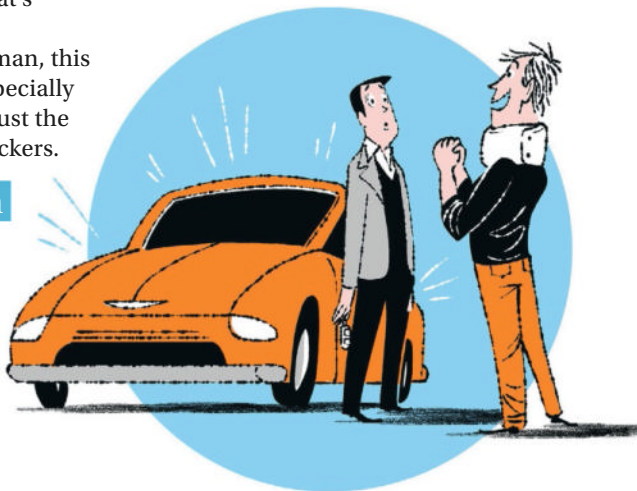
*Your cousin—a notoriously lousy driver—asks to borrow your car for a few hours.*

This is not a question of generosity; it's a question of what kind of damage your cousin

and/or car can sustain. So don't feel compelled to fork over the keys. If you have the time or inclination, offer to chauffeur him around. If you have the money, offer Uber fare. And if you've got none of the above, fib. "Say, 'Thursday afternoon? Oh, I'm busy!'" suggests Jodi R. R. Smith, president of Mannersmith Etiquette Consulting. Whatever you do, "don't feel obligated to lend somebody something that is incredibly valuable and important to you." Feeling obligated to do something you're opposed to is not the definition of *kind*. It's the definition of *doormat*.

"Say, 'I'm sorry; it's just not possible,' with no further explanation," says psychotherapist Tina Tessina.

But if you feel the crying need to utter some plausible excuse, refrain from shouting the painful truth: "There's not enough insurance in



the world!" Instead, let him down easy, something kind but firm, like "I don't have the insurance to cover you," says Maggie Oldham, who blogs about modern etiquette issues at [maggieoldham.com](http://maggieoldham.com).

## Missing Invite

*You didn't receive an invitation to an event to which you expected to be invited.*

It can feel like a kick in the kidneys when you hear about an event that everyone else seems to be going to—a wedding, a baby shower, even a group photo—and no one invited you. What's up with that?

If the host is not someone you know very well, don't take it personally, says Howard Forman, MD, of Montefiore Medical Center in New York City. There could be space limitations, a strained budget, whatever. Let it slide.

But if your niece is getting married and the rest of the family is already buying rice? Take it personally, then call your brother.

As calmly as you can, ask if there's some reason you weren't invited. Maybe the invite went to an old address and no one bothered to forward it. Imagine how relieved your brother will be to know your silence—to him, rudeness—was simply the result of an envelope error and not a freeze-out!



On the other hand, if there's a real reason he didn't invite you, your relationship is frayed enough that you may want to try to fix it. Explain the concept of regret insurance: If someday the two of you do reconcile, you'll both regret the fact you missed this life event. Then promise good behavior. Promise a nice gift. Promise you won't make a toast—or you will—or whatever your brother wants. This could be the beginning of a beautiful, mended relationship.

## Perplexing Playdate

*Your close friend's ten-year-old kid is a monster. Every time you get together, your own ten-year-old is stuck with her. You don't want her around this kid anymore.*

You can try telling your friend that

your kid can't see the miscreant because she's busy washing her hair from today till the day she goes off to college, but there's a good chance the friend won't buy that.

"When I was a kid, there was a child of my parents' friends who used to break my toys all the time," recalls psychotherapist Tessina, author of *It Ends with You: Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction*. "And what my mom helped me do was hide my good toys before that person came over."

That's an unflappable mom—and kid—who totally understood the score. (Maybe that's why Tessina became a therapist.) But there are bad seeds who can bring out the worst in everyone. Faced with spending time with them, don't.

Plan events during which the kids can't interact, like going to the movies. Another technique is to sit the tiny delinquent down when she first gets to your home and have a very grown-up chat with her—in front of her parents. "I just want to make sure you know the house rules so nobody gets hurt" is how Dr. Georgiou begins. "We have a lot of glass here. If you ran into this table and the glass broke, you would have to go to the emergency room and have all these ugly stitches!"

In other words, she outlines the behavior that she wants, and by painting a vivid picture of the consequences of disobeying, she makes

the kid and parents want it too. (And for what it's worth, now *everyone* is afraid of the table.)

## Dinner with a Dieter

*You're dining out with someone who's trying to lose weight.*

"The second day of a diet is always easier than the first. By the second day, you're off it," goes the old dieter's lament.

But the fact is, no one has ever failed a diet because his or her friend ordered a cheesesteak with extra grease when they got together for dinner, says psychiatrist Forman. Food is everywhere, so whether you're scarfing down that cheesesteak in front of your friend or not, he or she could always get one someplace else.

But there is one very kind thing you can do when dining with a dieting friend, says Mannersmith's Jodi R. R. Smith: Do not order dessert.

Dessert is the thing with two forks. No one expects you to offer a bite of your cheesesteak, but it is rare to order the molten chocolate cake with raspberry coulis without 1) reminding yourself to look up *coulis* sometime and 2) offering a taste (however grudgingly) to everyone at the table.

The other kind thing is to refrain from offering diet tips. Duct-tape your mouth before saying, "Oh? You're not going to get the dressing on the side?" Or, "Are you sure you want that?" says Karen Yankosky,



On the other hand, if you're allergic or your home is filled with fragile antiques, Persian rugs, and cacti, you can politely mention this to your friends and hope they get the hint.

"You're not running a kennel," says Crystal L. Bailey, director of the Etiquette Institute of Washington, who is not—as you might guess—a dog person.

But perhaps the most

a lawyer who hosts a podcast on dating and relationships. "I don't care if you're on the cover of *Muscle* magazine; just shut up."

### Entertaining Fido

*Your friends from out of town are coming to visit. At the last minute, they call and ask if they can bring along their dog.*

While you might be tempted to tell your friends, "Of course you can bring your dog to my house if I can bring my elephant to yours," don't.

"If there's one thing I've learned in life, it's that you never want to be on the side of someone who's against a dog," says Dr. Forman. "If our friends decided to bring their dog, we'd be, 'Where would you like the dog to sleep, and what can we get him to eat?' Dogs are really important friends to people."

effective tactic is to make it sound as if all you really, truly care about is the dog's comfort.

When guests suddenly asked Dr. Georgiou if they could bring along their three—yes, three—dogs, she told them, "Of course!" But she added that she wasn't sure the dogs would have a great time, since she has her own temperamental dog, so the guest dogs would have to stay in the laundry room. What's more, they wouldn't get out much: "Since we have so much planned for the weekend, it would be difficult to accommodate the dogs."

In other words, the poor, put-upon pooches!

Dr. Georgiou came off as a dog-doting hostess who tried but just couldn't make the weekend work for the precious pets. She got her way without hurting anyone's feelings. **R**

# THE DARK SIDE OF THE American

Your grass may be greener  
than your neighbor's,  
but at what price?

BY MCKAY JENKINS  
FROM THE BOOK *CONTAMINATION*

# Lawn





**O**N A BEAUTIFUL APRIL DAY, I decided to meet outside with my students at the University of Delaware, where I teach journalism. We sat on the central lawn between two buildings that just happened to bear the names of two gargantuan chemical companies: DuPont and Gore. In the middle of a conversation about agricultural pesticides, a groundskeeper, dressed from feet to neck in a white chemical suit, drove by us on a mower. He wasn't cutting the grass, though; he was spraying it. And not from one nozzle, but from half a dozen. Up and back he went, describing parallel lines as neat as those in any Iowa farmer's cornfield. Not a blade escaped the spray. This became a perfect teaching moment.

"Who's going to ask him what he's spraying?" I asked my students. One young woman marched over to the groundskeeper. He turned off his engine, they spoke, and she returned.

"He said he's spraying 2,4-D," she said. "He said we didn't need to worry, because he sprayed where we're sitting at five this morning."

Which would mean about seven hours earlier. My students chuckled uneasily. He was wearing a full-body chem suit, and they were sitting on the grass in shorts and bare feet?

They'd never heard of 2,4-D, or 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid. But they had heard of Agent Orange, the notorious defoliant used in Vietnam, and 2,4-D, one of the most extensively used herbicides in the world, is a constituent of Agent Orange (it did not cause the bulk of the devastating effects associated with Agent

Orange). It was developed during World War II, mostly as a weapon to destroy an enemy's rice crops. Despite its history, 2,4-D has long been seen as safe for consumer use.

In the 1940s, botanist E. J. Kraus of the University of Chicago fed five and a half grams of pure 2,4-D to a cow every day for three months. The cow was fine, according to Kraus, as was her calf. Kraus said he himself had eaten half a gram of the stuff every day for three weeks and felt great. This was apparently good enough for the rest of the country; within five years, American companies were annually producing 14 million pounds of the stuff. By 1964, the number had jumped to 53 million pounds.

Today, annual sales of 2,4-D have surpassed \$300 million worldwide, and it's found in "weed and feed" products, like Scotts Green Sweep,

Ortho Weed B Gon, Salvo, Weedone, and Spectracide. At first, its impact on humans seems mild—skin and eye irritation, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, stiffness in the arms and legs—and many lawn-care companies have dismissed health concerns. Plus, the

businesses add that the amount of chemicals in sprays is very diluted.

But the effects are more worrisome when considered over time. Because 2,4-D is designed to mimic a plant's natural growth hormone, it causes such rapid cell growth that the stems of treated plants tend to become grotesquely twisted and their roots swollen; the leaves turn yellow and die; and the plants starve to death (2,4-D does not have this effect on grass).

Unsurprisingly, 2,4-D also appears to affect human hormones. The National Institute of Health Sciences lists it as a suspected endocrine disrupter, and several studies point to its possible contribution to reproductive-health problems and genetic mutations. Although the EPA says there isn't enough evidence to classify 2,4-D as a carcinogen, a growing body of research has begun to link it to a variety of cancers.

A 1986 National Cancer Institute (NCI) study found that farmers exposed

to 2,4-D for 20 or more days a year had a sixfold higher risk of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Another NCI study showed that dogs were twice as likely to contract lymphoma if their owners used 2,4-D on their lawns.

Like flame retardants, this compound also tends to accumulate inside people's homes even days after the lawn has been sprayed. One study found 2,4-D in the indoor dust of 63 percent of sampled homes; another showed that levels of the chemical in indoor air and on indoor surfaces increased after lawn applications. After 2,4-D was sprayed, exposure levels for children were ten times higher than

before the lawns were treated—an indication of how easily the chemical is tracked inside on the little feet of dogs, cats, and kids.

Thanks to pressure from campus activists, my university replaced 2,4-D with "softer" herbicides and began putting signs on lawns that had just been sprayed. Of course, 2,4-D is one of scores of pesticides in use. According to David Pimentel, professor emeritus of entomology at Cornell University, 110,000 people suffer adverse health effects from

“  
**With 80 million  
 home lawns  
 and over  
 16,000 golf  
 courses, you  
 get close to 50  
 million acres of  
 cultivated turf  
 in America.**



pesticides every year, and 10,000 cases of cancer in humans may be attributable to pesticide exposure.

## The Greening of America

In 1900, 60 percent of Americans lived in rural areas. Today, 83 percent live in cities or suburbs. With that change has come an astonishing shift in the landscape. Over the past half century, Americans have become obsessed with grass. When you add up the country's 80 million home lawns and over 16,000 golf courses, you get close to 50 million acres of cultivated turf in the United States, an expanse roughly the size of Nebraska. This space is growing by 600 square miles a year.

By 1999, more than two thirds of America's home lawns had been treated with chemical fertilizers or pesticides—14 million by professional lawn-care companies. A year later, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that Americans were spraying 67 million pounds of synthetic chemicals on their grass every year, and annual sales of lawn-care pesticides had grown to \$700 million.

The landscaping trucks rolling through our suburban neighborhoods seem to represent something

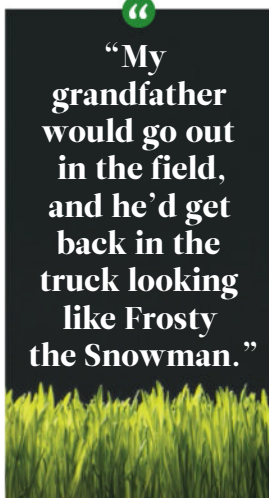
more than a communal desire for lush grass. Could it be relief from anxiety? (Why else call a company Lawn Doctor?) For one thing, hiring lawn-care specialists is a public declaration that you have the money not to take care of your yard yourself.

Diligent lawn maintenance and chemical use are also associated with approval and social status, Ohio State researchers reported in 2012: "The main factor influencing a homeowner's decision to use lawn chemicals is whether neighbors or other people in the neighborhood use them. Homeowners crave acceptance from their neighbors and generally want their lawns to fit in with

their surrounding community, so they adopt their neighbors' practices."

We also create manicured lawns to play the most chemically dependent of pastimes: golf. By 2004, there were just under 15,000 golf courses in the United States—a patchwork of chemically treated turf the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined.

Even grass seed comes coated with chemicals. A close look at a bag of Scotts grass seed reveals it has been treated with Apron XL fungicide, whose active ingredient is Metalaxyl-M,



or methyl N-(methoxyacetyl)-N-(2,6-xylyl)-D-alaninate. The bag requests that the product be stored away from foodstuffs, kept out of the reach of children, and not be applied near water, storm drains, or drainage ditches. (A Scotts spokesperson says that its products are designed to be safe when used as directed.)

As the use of chemicals has become widespread, lawn companies have found an unexpected source of profits. Herbicides like 2,4-D preserve grass but kill weeds like clover. Clover, however, pulls nitrogen out of the air and fixes it in the soil. Without clover, soil becomes nitrogen poor and fails to support plant life. So chemical companies now replace the depleted nitrogen, which homeowners used to get for free from clover, with synthetic nitrogen, for which they have to pay.

In America's watersheds, nitrogen runoff is considered among the worst problems for water quality. Since synthetic fertilizers are water soluble, a good amount runs off your lawn after a rain, where it mixes with runoff from other homes and ends up feeding the plants in bodies of water. Doused with chemicals, algae grow and grow, creating "algae blooms" that—as they decay and die—suck most of the oxygen out of rivers, lakes, and bays and lead to massive "dead zones," in which neither fish nor plants can live.

In 2007, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation published a report card on the bay's health that showed just how

much trouble chemicals can pose. The bay received an F for nitrogen pollution, a D-minus for phosphorous, an F for water quality, an F for dissolved oxygen, and a D for toxics. On a scale of 100 (with 100 being the best), the bay's health was rated at 28.

In California, scientists are discovering that algae blooms off the coast not only remove oxygen; they also release a toxin, domoic acid. It enters the food chain when fish eat algae, then moves into the sea lions that consume the fish. If a sea lion is pregnant, her fetus can be contaminated, and years later, that mammal may develop epilepsy.

## One Man's Chemical Conversion

Paul Tukey knows about pesticides; the man who invented 2,4-D was a distant cousin. When Tukey was a kid in the late 1960s, his grandfather hired a biplane to spray his 300 acres of fields in Maine a couple of times a year. The fields were mostly planted with cattle feed, not with crops intended for human consumption. For Tukey, spraying day was a thrill.

"My grandfather would go out in the field, dressed in his wool underwear and thick heavy pants, and wave the biplane over his field," Tukey recalled. "They'd drop this white powder, and he'd get back in the truck looking like Frosty the Snowman. Then we'd drive to the next field, and he'd do it again. My grandfather

was getting doused 20 times a day, but he would never let me get out of the truck. I always wondered why I couldn't go out and get dusted."

Tukey's grandfather died of a brain tumor at 60.

Tukey also followed his family's agricultural tradition but charted his own course. For years, he operated one of southern Maine's largest landscaping services and considered his job ideal. He worked outside in shorts and sandals. He never bothered with putting on protective gear.

In 1993, he started getting nosebleeds. His vision became blurry. But with business booming, Tukey was too busy to worry. One of his jobs was tending the grounds of a hospital where he hired university students for the work. One day, their professor, an eminent horticulturist named Rick Churchill, came by to say hello to his students. Tukey went out to greet him.

Churchill's eyes were focused on the weeds, which Tukey's crew had doused with herbicides and which were curling up and turning brown.

Churchill said, "I asked him how anyone in good conscience could be applying pesticides on the grounds of

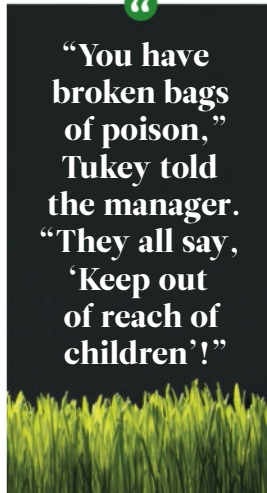
a hospital where there were patients being treated for cancers that could be linked to their exposure to pesticides. I asked whether he knew anything about the toxicity ratings of what he was applying and how dangerous many of these compounds were to an individual compromised by illness."

The words cut deeply. "It was devastating," Tukey told me. "In Maine, Rick Churchill is an icon."

Tukey did some reading, and what he found was troubling. Pediatric cancers in Los Angeles had been linked to parental exposure to pesticides during pregnancy. In Denver, kids whose yards were treated with pesticides were found to be four times more

likely to have soft-tissue cancers than kids whose yards were not. Elsewhere, links had been found between brain tumors in children and the use of weed killers, pest strips, and flea collars.

Tukey also learned that exposure to lawn chemicals was particularly alarming for people who spread them for a living. One study showed a three-fold increase in lung cancer among lawn-care workers who used 2,4-D; another found a higher rate of birth defects among the children of chemical applicators. When he finally went to the



doctor for his rashes and deteriorating eyesight, he learned that he had developed multiple chemical sensitivity. And his son—conceived in 1992, during the height of Tukey's use of synthetic chemicals—was diagnosed with one of the worst cases of ADHD his physician had ever seen. (Several recent scientific reports suggest that toxic chemicals may play a role in ADHD.)

"All the evidence indicates that you don't want pregnant women around these products, but I was walking into the house every single night with my legs coated with pesticides from the knees down," he said. "Even when my son was a year or two old, ... [he] would greet me at the door at night by grabbing me around the legs. He was getting pesticides on his hands and probably his face too."

## Tukey's Breaking Point

In the midst of his research, Tukey was driving one day when he saw a sign: A store was having a big sale on Scotts Turf Builder. Tukey made a bee-line. He was going to buy the store's entire stock. Once inside, he walked to the lawn-care section.

Tukey noticed a woman standing by the lawn chemicals. At her feet, a girl was making sand castles from a broken bag of pesticides. Suddenly, something in him burst—the DDT squirting over his grandfather's fields, the chemicals that he'd sprayed outside the hospital, and now a child in a pile of pesticides.

Tukey told me, "I said, 'Ma'am, you

really shouldn't let your child play with that. It's not safe.' I'm fundamentally shy, but this just came out of me."

The store wouldn't sell the stuff if it wasn't safe, she told Tukey. She took her child and walked away. A manager came up and asked him if there was a problem. Tukey said there was.

"You have broken bags of poison on the floor," Tukey said to the manager. "All those bags say, 'Keep out of reach of children!'"

Those labels are there because of government formality, the manager said. The stuff isn't dangerous. The store wouldn't carry it if it was.

"That really was the stake in the heart of my chemical career," Tukey said. "By then, I'd already made myself sick. I'd already been questioned by Rick Churchill. When I saw that girl making sand castles out of the pesticides, [there] was just a sudden gut-level reaction I couldn't have anticipated. I was shaking when I left the store."

Tukey issued a decree to his employees: His business was going organic. It was time to start weaning his company—and customers—off synthetic chemicals. Most clients were fine with his decision, just as long as it didn't cost any more and as long as their lawns continued to look the same.

More than 170 municipalities in Canada have banned lawn pesticides, especially on public spaces like school yards and sports fields. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have banned 2,4-D.

In 2009, the European Parliament passed laws banning 22 pesticides that can cause cancer or disrupt human hormones or reproduction.

## How to Bring Back Butterflies

Certainly, switching to a less toxic lawn company can reduce your family's—and neighbors'—exposure to synthetic chemicals. It would also reduce the pollutants you contribute to the watershed. But there is another option, one that gets into the more inspiring realm of restoration. There is a way to think of your yard as more than a burden that needs to be mowed and weeded. There is a way to think of your yard as transformational, even magical. Doug Tallamy can show you how.

When Tallamy, former chair of the entomology department at the University of Delaware, walks around his yard, he sees things most of us would not. He can look at a black cherry tree and spot the larvae of 13 tiger swallowtail butterflies. He has planted scores of trees: sweet gums, tulips, white oaks, river birches, and sugar maples. But he's really interested in bugs and birds—and boosting their numbers.

Suburban development has been devastating to avian populations. Most of the birds we see in our yards are probably house sparrows and starlings, invasive species from Europe. If you study the population numbers for native birds, you'll find the wood thrush is down

48 percent; the bobwhite, 80 percent; bobolinks, 90 percent. An estimated 72 million birds are killed each year in America by direct exposure to pesticides, a number that does not include baby birds that perish because a parent died from pesticides or birds poisoned by eating contaminated insects or worms. The actual number of birds killed might be closer to 150 million.

In mid-Atlantic gardening circles, Tallamy is a bit of a prophet, his message freighted with both gloom and promise. It is the promise of ecological renewal that he most wants people to understand. His vision is based on three ideas: If you want more birds, you need more native insects; if you want more native insects, you need more native plants; and if you want more native plants, you need to get rid of—or shrink—your lawn.

Tallamy says that when we wake up in the morning to birdsong, it's often being made by hungry migratory birds that may have just flown 300 miles. What is there to eat? Too frequently, ornamental trees that bear none of the insects the birds need—and chemically treated grass. Tallamy's prescription: Put in native plants that will make your yard a haven for caterpillars, butterflies, and birds. In the mid-Atlantic region, this can mean swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, buttonbush, joe-pye weed, and a rudbeckia species like black-eyed Susans. At the University of Delaware, Tallamy and a team are

restoring native species to the campus.

And me? I ripped up 20 percent of my lawn and planted two flower gardens, two sets of flowering shrubs, and seven vegetable beds. Now my daughter helps me pick eggplants, tomatillos, okra, and Swiss chard. My son can identify not only monarchs and tiger swallowtails but also which plants they

like to eat. How? Because last year the butterflies were not here, and this year they are. We replaced the grass, which monarch caterpillars can't eat, with native flora they can consume. It's as simple as that. Milkweed and joe-pye weed were born to grow here. All you have to do is plant them and wait for the butterflies. **R**

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## WISE MOVES FOR A LUSH LAWN

**1. Get tested.** "Spending money on fertilizer without a soil test is just guessing," says Paul Tukey. Good soil is key to a great lawn, and a soil test can tell you what's in the dirt and what's missing. For a test, call your county extension office (a national network of agriculture experts).

**2. Plant clover with your grass.** Clover competes with weeds and fixes nitrogen in the soil. John Bochart, a lawn and garden specialist in York, Maine, recommends a seed mix of white clover, perennial rye (it germinates quickly), fescue, and bluegrass.

**3. Mow high, and leave the clippings.** Taller grass provides more leaf for photosynthesis, develops deeper roots, and resists weeds. The clippings act as fertilizer. "Lawns mowed at four inches are the most weed-free," Tukey says. "If you did only one thing, adjusting your mower height would be it."

**4. Cut back on watering.** Frequent watering leads to shallow roots, so "water once a week if at all," says Tukey.

**5. Apply compost.** "Weeds need light to grow," Tukey says. "Spreading compost on a lawn in the spring prevents weed seeds from germinating."

**6. Listen to weeds ...** "Weeds are nothing if not messengers," says Tukey. "Dandelions are telling you the ground needs more calcium. Plantains are telling you the ground is too compact and needs aerating."

**7. ... and to insects.** Beneficial nematodes, which are microscopic worms, eat some 200 species of insects, including grubs that become Japanese beetles; you can buy them from farm and garden stores. Mix them in water, and spray them on your lawn.

**EDGAR ALLEN BEEM,**  
*from Down East*





Sketch comics  
Key and Peele  
create a world in  
which educators  
get the fame  
and fortune  
they deserve

# IF TEACHERS Were Treated Like PRO ATHLETES

FROM COMEDY CENTRAL

**(KEY):** Hello, and welcome to *Teaching Center*. I'm Boyd Maxwell, with the top stories from the exciting world of teaching.

**(PEELE):** And I'm Perry Schmidt.

**SCHMIDT:** Well, now we know. The long-awaited announcement by star English teacher Ruby Ruhf has sent

teaching fans across the country into a frenzy.

**RUHF:** *I've enjoyed my time in Ohio very much, but I'm pleased to announce that I'm taking my talents back to New York City. Thank you very much.*

**SCHMIDT:** Apparently PS 431 has

GETTY IMAGES (INSET PHOTO)

made Ruby an offer she couldn't refuse: \$80 million guaranteed over six years, with another \$40 million in incentives based on test scores. This salary puts her right up there with Rockridge Elementary's Kati Hope and William Wu out of ...

**MAXWELL:** Colgate Magnet! Now let's take a look at yesterday's Teacher Draft from Radio City Music Hall, where Central Rapids High, recipient of the worst test scores last semester, made the first pick, which was no surprise to anyone.

**ANNOUNCER:** *With the first pick, Central Rapids High takes calculus teacher Mike Yoast from Tulsa Teachers' College!*

**SCHMIDT:** And just like that, you're a millionaire. Mike Yoast is an unbelievable story, his father living from paycheck to paycheck as a humble professional football player; the kid was a natural math-lete.

**MAXWELL:** You know he's going to buy his mom a house. There's no way around that. You owe your mom.

**SCHMIDT:** Now it's time for the Highlight of the Day.

**MAXWELL:** Star history teacher Ashley Ferguson has been running up those test scores over at Vince Corvo High. Woo!

**FERGUSON:** *Confederate forces fired first. Can anyone tell me where this battle took place?*

**SCHMIDT:** Now, look at this: She looks left, then right. She looks past the students with their arms up in the air and spots Max near the back. She sees that even though his hand isn't up, he's engaged.

**FERGUSON:** *Max?*

**MAX:** *It was Fort Sumter?*

**FERGUSON:** *That's right.*

**MAXWELL:** Oh, come on; see what she did there? She's bringing an introvert into the discussion, y'all. That's a teacher-of-the-year play, right there.

**SCHMIDT:** That's right, boy. You know the confidence gained by Max by answering that question correctly will enhance his performance the rest of the year.

**MAXWELL:** No doubt.

Coming up after the break: Mayfield Prep trades French teacher Janeane Lowe to Skyline High for a head librarian and two lunch ladies to be named later. **R**



KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY, *far left*, and JORDAN PEELE *created the sketch comedy show Key & Peele, which ran on Comedy Central from*

*2012 to 2015. The show, which spoofed American popular culture, won a 2013 Peabody Award. Key and Peele were both cast members on MADtv.*

I found my first and best mentor  
at a job in fast food

# Washing Dishes *For Jeff*

BY DANIAL ADKISON  
FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES*



DANIAL  
ADKISON  
*is a staff  
editor at the  
New York  
Times.*

THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE in your life come in all types. Some write on a chalkboard. Some wear a sports uniform. Some wear a suit and tie. For me, that person wore a tie with a Pizza Hut logo on it.

I started working at Pizza Hut in December 1989, when I was a freshman in high school. Parents in my small western Colorado town encouraged teenagers to work in the service industry after school and on weekends. It kept us out of trouble. Having a job also kept me out of the house. I grew up mostly with my mother, and I never knew my father. My younger sister, my younger brother, and I went through a series of stepfathers. My relationships with those men were almost always fraught, and I was always looking for reasons to be away from home.

The Pizza Hut was old, and in the back it had three giant sinks instead of a dishwasher. One basin was for soapy water, one for rinsing, and the other for sanitizing, using a tablet that made me cough whenever I dropped it into the hot water. All new employees started by washing dishes and busing tables. If they proved their mettle, they learned to make pizzas, to cut and serve them on wooden paddles, and to take orders.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (ADKISON)



On my first night, the dishes piled up after dinner: plates; silverware; cups; and oily, black, deep-dish pans, which came clean only with a lot of soap and scrubbing in steaming-hot water. I couldn't keep up, and stacks of dishes formed on all sides of me. Every time I made a dent, the call came back for help clearing tables out front, and I returned with tubs full of more dirty dishes.

At home, the chore that I hated most was dishes. A few years earlier, my mother's then-boyfriend had instilled a loathing of that task by making me scrub the Teflon off a cookie sheet because he believed that it was grease, while he sat on the couch and smoked cigarettes. That boyfriend was gone, but another with a different set of problems had taken his place.

My shift was supposed to end at 9 p.m., but when I asked to leave, the manager, Jeff, shook his head. "Not until the work is done," he said. "You leave a clean station." I was angry and thought about quitting, but I scrubbed, rinsed, and sanitized until after 10 that night.

I stayed on dish duty for weeks. My heart sank every time I arrived at work and saw my name written next to *dishes* on the chart. I spent my shifts behind the sinks, being splashed with greasy water. After work, my red-and-white-checked button-up shirt and gray polyester pants smelled like onions, olives, and oil. I sometimes

found green peppers in my socks. I hated every minute I spent on dish duty, and I wasn't afraid to let everyone around me know it.

One slow night, when I managed to catch up on dishes and clean out the sinks early, I asked Jeff when I could do something different. "Do you know why you're still doing dishes?" he asked. "Because you keep complaining about it." Nobody likes to work with a complainer, he said. But, he promised, if I continued to leave a clean station and not complain, next week he would put me on the "make table," where pizzas were assembled.

A few days later, when I reported for my shift, I saw my name penciled not next to *dishes* but next to *make table*. I was ecstatic.

**J**EFF HAD a special way of running his restaurant. From a crop of teenagers, he'd assembled a team of employees who cared about their work—and one another. Most of my closest friends from high school also worked at Pizza Hut, and some of my best memories were made under that red roof.

Pizza Hut became not only my escape from home but also, in many ways, an alternate home. In my real home, I felt unstable and out of control. At work, the path seemed clear: Work hard and do things right, and you will succeed. This model had not seemed possible before.

For one of the first times in my life,

I felt empowered. When I was in 11th grade, Jeff had promoted me to shift manager. By my senior year, I was an assistant manager, responsible for much of the bookkeeping, inventory, and scheduling. I was in charge when Jeff was away.

Our staff was like a second family to me. We had all-day parties that started with rafting trips and ended with dinner and movies. Most of us played together on a softball team. We went camping. We had water fights in the parking lot and played music on the jukebox, full blast, after the customers had left.

Jeff was the leader of this unlikely family. He was about 15 years older than me and had recently gone through a divorce. I never considered it at the time, because he seemed to be having as much fun as everyone else, but if I was using my job to create the family I wished I'd had, it was possible that he was too.



“

*At work, the path  
seemed clear: Work hard  
and do things right,  
and you will succeed.*

”

Senior year arrived, and though I loved that job, I knew I would go to college the next fall. I was an A student in class but probably about a C-minus in applying to schools. My mom hadn't gone to college, and I didn't have a lot of logistical or financial support at home. I had a pile of college brochures, but I didn't know where to start—and, at \$40, every application fee would cost me half a day's pay.

A guidance counselor persuaded me to ap-

ply to Boston University, which seemed great, primarily because of its distance from Colorado. The scholarship application had to be in by the end of November—and I could not go there without a big scholarship. But maybe because of the fee or because of my cluelessness, I kept putting off sending in the form.

I still had not mailed it the day before it was due. At work, I offhandedly mentioned this to Jeff. He opened

a drawer and took out an overnight envelope. He told me to stop what I was doing, leave work, and send the application immediately. I protested about the cost of overnight postage, but he said he would cover it.

I ended up getting into Boston University with a scholarship, but I had never visited Boston. Though my mom worked hard to take care of my siblings and me, there was no room in our budget to send me on a college visit. I figured I'd see the school when I got there in August.

Jeff surprised me with a graduation present: a trip to Boston. We toured campus, visited Fenway Park, and did some sightseeing around New England. We ate at a lot of Pizza Huts, and we judged all of them against ours. The verdict: None of them seemed to be very much fun.

Before I headed to college, I told Jeff that I would come back to work over winter break. While I was away, he was promoted to regional manager, and a different person was put in charge of our store. I went back anyway, but the magic was gone. The family had dispersed, and I felt free to shift my mind-set to college and the future.

Over the years, I've kept in touch with Jeff. We usually meet for lunch when I'm in town. Sometimes, we even have pizza.

Washing dishes for Jeff was grueling, greasy work. But then again, making a pizza, driving a truck, baking a cake, and any of countless other jobs are not always enjoyable in themselves either. Out of all the lessons I learned from that guy in the Pizza Hut tie, maybe the biggest is that any job can be the best if you have the right boss. **R**

“  
***When Jeff was promoted and transferred, the magic was gone. The family had dispersed.***  
 ”

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## WEDDING SEASON

Since I've been out of high school, I've been to 32 weddings.  
 That's like 17 and a half miles of the Electric Slide.

MATT ISEMAN

My sister just got married. I was the maid of debt.

KATHLEEN MADIGAN

# Laugh Lines

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What idiot called it dad bod and not father figure?

🐦@TPOPE (TIM POPE)

What idiot called it a flyswatter and not a splatula?

🐦@MIKECANRANT

What idiot called it the sun instead of a space heater?

🐦@SAMGRITNER

If you were Minnie Driver and you didn't drive a Mini Cooper and call yourself Mini Driver, then what is even the point of you?

🐦@PEACHCOFFIN (PAIGE)

An armadillo? Wait, you mean highway lobster?

🐦@BEERBATTERBEARD (TYLER)

The Allman Brothers couldn't have had a woman in the band for two reasons.

🐦@EWFEEZ (ROBO-SAURUS)

We have Fox News in Canada. It's not a network; it's a hunting magazine.

PHIL HANLEY

BRAND NEW IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES





*"My experience shows that there's reason for hope, even in difficult circumstances," says Alex.*



Alex Cooper  
*was sent away*  
by her parents  
*for being gay.*

After eight  
brutal months,  
*she escaped.*

WITH JOANNA BROOKS  
FROM THE BOOK *SAVING ALEX*

When I saw my parents' white car, packed with my belongings, pull up in front of my friend Brianna's house in September 2010, when I was 15, I thought they were taking me to visit my grandparents. They had kicked me out of the house about a month ago, when I had told them I was gay. I'd been staying with Brianna\* ever since.

My family is Mormon, and there's no place in Mormonism for girls who like girls. Gay people can't get married in the temple, and they don't go to heaven.

"You'll be staying with your grandparents for a couple of weeks," my father said when I met them in the driveway. "So we can figure out what to do."

I got into the backseat of the car. My dad drove, and my mom sat up front, crying. Silently, we made our way north, from Southern California toward Las Vegas. After about five hours, my dad exited the highway in St. George, Utah, the place where the rest of the world ends and the Mormon world begins. And a few minutes later, we pulled in to my grandparents' driveway. We got out, and they met us at the front door. My

grandma opened her arms to hug me. "Are you ready?" my father asked my grandparents before we had even had the chance to sit down.

"We're going to meet a woman who can help you with school while you're here," my mother explained.

The five of us piled into my parents' car, and my dad drove a few minutes to a brown stucco house with a tile roof. I could see a faded red-and-yellow plastic playhouse on a bed of rocks in the backyard. In the distance was a tall ridge of mountains.

Silently, my parents and grandparents got out of the car and started unloading my stuff from the trunk. I

sat frozen in the backseat.

"What are you doing?" My voice started to shake. "What is this place?"

A woman came out the front door and greeted my parents. She looked to be in her 30s. She had olive skin and long, wet, curly black hair.

"Hi, Tiana,\*" I heard my grandmother say, her voice low.

"Alex, you need to stay here with the Siale\* family for a little bit," my mother told me as we went inside. "You need help. They're going to help you."

I scanned the house: a kitchen, a second-story loft, doors to bedrooms, a side door to the backyard. And no telephone in sight.

“**I heard the door close and the car engine start. My parents didn't even say goodbye.**”

\*Name has been changed.

That's when it hit me: My parents are sending me here because I am gay.

"Mom, please, don't leave me here!" I pleaded.

Tiana gently interrupted, saying to my parents, "Do you have the papers I asked you to bring?"

My mom reached into her purse, pulled out some school and health insurance papers, and handed them over to Tiana. I didn't know it at the time, but these documents granted the Siales temporary custody of me, allowing them to enroll me in school.

That's when I got angry. "I hate you!" I yelled. My mom, dad, and grandparents gave me a sad look, then turned and left the living room. I heard the front door open and then click closed. Outside, the car engine started. They didn't even say goodbye.

Tiana led me to the bedroom off the kitchen, and her husband, Johnny,\* followed us down the hall.

"This is where you will sleep," Tiana said, motioning to a pile of blankets on a thin pink mattress on the floor. I heard the door from the garage open and the sound of kids coming into the house. Tiana went out to meet them, and Johnny shut the door behind her. He motioned to a garbage bag filled with oversize T-shirts and long skirts.

"Change clothes," he said.

When I finished, I joined the rest of the family in the kitchen. I counted seven kids seated at the kitchen table:

Tiana's nephew Sifa,\* 19; her brother Calvin,\* 18; Johnny and Tiana's sons Victor,\* 12, Joseph,\* 11, and Sione,\* nine; and their daughters Olivia,\* eight, and Grace,\* four.

"Alex," Johnny said, squaring his shoulders and addressing me directly. "Remember that we know everyone in this town. We know the police, the schools, and the courts. They all know us and trust us. They know we take in troubled kids."

After his speech, I went to my room and sat down on the mattress. I've got to find a way out of here, I thought.

About a month into my stay, Johnny asked the family to join him in the living room one night after dinner. All the older kids sat down on the floor. I sat down with them. Johnny and Tiana took their seats on the couch, and four-year-old Grace curled up in her mother's lap.

Johnny leaned forward and put his hands on his knees. "Do you know why Alex is here?" he asked the kids.

Joseph shot his hand in the air. "Because she likes girls when she is supposed to like guys."

My heartbeat quickened, and my face flushed. I felt like I couldn't move. It was the first time it had been stated so boldly.

"Yeah." Johnny nodded. "That's right, and that's why we're going to help her."

Johnny fixed his eyes on me. "Alex,"

he asked, “do you understand the plan of salvation?”

“Yes,” I said.

“You know it doesn’t apply to gay people,” he said. “You’ll be in the telestial kingdom.” The telestial kingdom is the Mormon version of hell.

“You’ve made some bad choices, and you think you’re gay,” Johnny pressed ahead, “but that is not how God made you. You are confused. We are going to help you change. That’s why your parents sent you here.”

Two months later, in November, Tiana came home from work and went straight to her bedroom. She got a black nylon backpack out of the closet and set it on the kitchen counter. Then she gathered five or six large gray rocks from the backyard. One by one, she put the rocks into the backpack while we all watched, and then she zipped up the backpack and called me over.

“Alex,” she said. “This backpack represents the physical burden of being gay. This is what your mind and emotions are putting you through because of the choices you have made. You are going to wear this from the time you wake up until you go to bed every day.”

She handed me the backpack. I slipped it on and felt the weight of the rocks settle onto my shoulders.

“You can choose to be gay, but you know it’s not in the plan of salvation. That’s a heavy burden, Alex. You

need to feel it to help you make the right choices.”

During the first few days, the pain in my shoulders and lower back went away after I took off the backpack at night. But soon, the pink marks on my shoulders grew red, and the tightness in my lower back deepened into a constant cramping.

Johnny kept pressing me to give him the last name, phone number, and address of Yvette, my girlfriend in California. When I refused, he ordered Calvin or Sifa to get another rock. “Make sure it’s a good-size rock,” he said, “or you’ll wear a backpack too.”

Soon Tiana increased the stakes. “Until you reveal information about Yvette,” she said, “you will wear that backpack of rocks from breakfast through bedtime, while facing the wall right here in the hallway.”

Johnny got up from the couch and joined Tiana in the kitchen. “You can start now,” he said.

I slowly stood up from the table and walked across the kitchen to take my post.

By mid-January, I was in near-constant pain. My lower back ached. My shoulders were bruised and red. I had had enough of the backpack and wall.

“Tiana,” I called out. “I’m ready to quit.”

“OK, honey,” Tiana said in a soothing tone.

I stepped away from the wall. I took

the black backpack off and set it on the floor. My shoulders continued to cramp, and my feet still ached. I felt numb and hopeless. But I was finally off the wall.

I told them the only information I knew about Yvette—her birth date and phone number. Tiana wrote the details on a pad of paper, then called my parents. They filed a complaint against Yvette with the police.

After that, Tiana and Johnny rewarded me by allowing me to go to Snow Canyon High School. Soon, I had become friends with Jason Osmanski, a lanky redhead, and I told him about my move to St. George, the Siales, and my backpack.

“We’re going to get you out of there,” he assured me.

Jason introduced me to Delsy Neilson, an English teacher and the adviser of the Gay-Straight Alliance at the school.

Delsy and Jason connected me to Paul Burke, a lawyer they knew who worked for a powerful Salt Lake City law firm. I told Paul everything. He said little, but I could tell he was listening intently. “Alex,” he finally said, “I would like to offer to be your lawyer, pro bono.”

I accepted immediately. Unfortu-

nately, the conversation with Paul made me late for my next class, and without my knowledge, an automatic call went out to the Siales, letting them know about my tardiness. That night, Johnny called all the kids together at the kitchen table.

“Alex, we got a call from school about you,” Johnny said.

“It’s clear we can’t trust you to attend classes properly,” Tiana said. “As of Monday, we are pulling you out of school.”

“And as of tonight, you will go back on the wall,” Johnny said. “With the backpack.”

This was the final straw. I had to get away.

After dinner, the kids filed off to bed, and Johnny sat down on the couch to play video games. When he finally fell asleep, around 4:30 a.m., I took off the backpack and crossed the kitchen to the sliding door. I grabbed my flip-flops, gripped the door’s handle tightly, held my breath, and pulled the door open six inches. I slipped out into the night air.

Outside, I focused all my energy on getting as far as I could from the house. My bare feet slapped on the black asphalt as I ran past the houses of the Siales’ neighbors and all the people we went to church with on Sunday. Every time a car came

“I’m not going back,” I blurted out, tears coming to my eyes. “Not one more day.”



*Alex Cooper with Jason Osmanski, left, and Paul Burke*

down the road, I slowed to a walk or hid in the bushes.

Finally, I made it to the public bus stop, slipped my flip-flops onto my feet, and squatted down in the sagebrush, trying to make myself as small as possible. It was still early; the bus wasn't scheduled to come for a while. My stomach hurt with anxiety, and my mind raced, trying to come up with a plan: What would I do if the Siales found me?

I watched the color of the sky begin to change over the eastern edge of the desert, then heard the sound of a large engine rumbling toward me.

The lights of the morning's first city bus crested the hill. I stepped out of the shadows and to the edge of the curb.

When the door opened in front of me, I stood in the circle of light at

the foot of the steps but didn't climb in. "I don't have any money, but I really need to get to the high school," I told the bus driver.

"OK," she said. "Come on in."

**A**s we drove, I watched the red-rock desert and lava fields go by outside the windows. We were getting closer to Snow Canyon,

and the closer I got, the more I felt my courage grow.

"We're here now," the bus driver said, her voice soft. "You going to be OK, honey?"

"Yes," I said, though my voice shook and my body shivered. "Thank you."

I stepped off the bus. The doors closed behind me, and the bus drove away. I crossed the front lawn and hid in a gap between a wall and the school building. Around 7 a.m., when the janitors began unlocking the doors, I slipped through the back doors of the school building and ran straight to Delsy's classroom.

"Alex!" Delsy said when she saw me waiting.

"I'm not going back," I blurted out. "Not one more day."

Delsy called the police, and later

that morning, Child Protective Services and a police officer showed up. I gave them my account, and they decided that I should be taken to the Youth Crisis Center, a beige building nestled up against a wall of red-rock hills on the north side of town.

A police detective walked me through the front door of the center. We were greeted at the front desk by a blond older woman with a warm smile who introduced herself as Sandra. She stood up to shake my hand. Hers was warm and plump. I found everything about her comforting.

"This is Alex Cooper," the detective said.

"What are the chances they can take me back?" I asked.

"No chance as long as you're here," Sandra told me.

"Please don't let them take me back," I pleaded.

She smiled. "It's OK, Alex. You're safe here."



*Alex lived at the crisis center for a month, then with her father and grandparents in her grandparents' house. After the Utah Court of Appeals issued an emergency order in the summer of 2011, a lower court ruled that Alex could date other girls. Alex graduated from Snow Canyon High School in 2012 and earned her cosmetology license. Now 21, she lives in Portland, Oregon, and works as a fund-raiser for a nonprofit organization that helps needy kids get an education. She's still in touch with Jason, Delsy, and Paul.* **R**

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- All the loose change Americans left at airport security in 2014: \$674,841.06 (and the TSA got to keep it all)

Sources: *Telegraph*, *New York Times*, and Gawker



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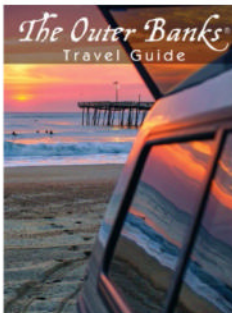
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# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things Your House Reveals About You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH



**1 YOUR POLITICAL AFFILIATION.** Conservatives tend to be neatniks with brightly lit, organized rooms, according to a study in the journal *Political Psychology*. They have more sports paraphernalia, cleaning supplies, and American flags than liberals do. Liberals' homes, on the other hand, are more likely to be cluttered and have a variety of books, music, maps, and colors. Psychologists say conservatives tend to be traditional, reflected in conventional decor, while liberals may be less conscientious and more open-minded.

**2 WHAT YOU WATCH ON TV.** Internet-connected televisions can collect data on everything you're watching and sell it to advertisers—and many are set up to do it by default. (To keep your information private, turn off data sharing in your TV settings.)

**3 WHOM YOU LIVE WITH.** Your dirt reveals whether there are more men or women in the household (the sexes shed different types of bacteria). By examining the fungi in your dust, scientists can also ➔

predict where in the country you live, down to about a 150-mile range.

**4 WHETHER YOU ARE OUTGOING.** It's written on your front door. According to color experts, a red front door means you're not afraid to say what you think. A blue door says you're naturally at ease in most situations. Green broadcasts your traditional values, and black means you're probably consistent and reserved. Inside the home, extroverts tend to choose open, spacious furniture layouts. If you're introverted, you probably decorate with soft, solid colors and muted patterns.

**5 WHAT YOU WEIGH.** A Cornell University study found that women who had just one box of breakfast cereal on the kitchen counter weighed an average of 20 pounds more than those who didn't have any cereal in plain view. Women with soda sitting out (even diet kinds) weighed an average of 24 to 26 pounds more. People who had a bowl of fruit in the kitchen weighed an average of 13 pounds less than those who didn't have fruit out.

**6 HOW OFTEN YOU'RE INTIMATE.** If you have purple decor, you have nearly double the intimacy of people with gray bedding, walls, or furniture, says a British survey. Reds and pinks also seem to spice things up, while beige and white may inhibit intimacy.

**7 HOW TYPE A YOU ARE.** The answer is in your socks. One survey found that orderly and detailed people tend to have the messiest sock drawers. Experts hypothesize that people who are meticulous are more likely to spend time prioritizing and organizing more important parts of their lives.

**8 WHETHER YOU'RE A MILLENNIAL.** If you have many photos of yourself visible, you're most likely under 35. Previous generations considered it gauche to display photos of themselves, but interior designers report that millennials—accustomed to posting selfies on social media—are much more inclined to show self-portraits.

**9 HOW LONELY YOU ARE.** A Yale University study found that people who take longer showers and baths are more likely to feel lonely and isolated. Researchers believe they subconsciously use hot baths and showers as a substitute for emotional warmth.

**10 YOU HATE YOUR JOB AND AVOID THE GYM.** Both things are probable if you think making your bed is a waste of time. One survey of 68,000 people found that those who make their beds in the morning are more likely to enjoy their jobs and to exercise regularly than people who do not. Psychologists

say it could be because happy people aim for an orderly life (rather than a chaotic, unorganized one).

**11 YOUR CHANCES OF BEING BURGLARIZED.** According to an analysis of more than 1,000 burglaries, your home is likely to be a target if it has a sliding glass door or single-pane windows. These are easy for burglars to pry open or break.

**12 IF YOU'RE ANXIOUS.** Most people—even those with clean, organized houses—have hidden messes under their beds or in their closets. If you're one of the few who don't, you may be an anxious person. Social scientists say the more

anxious people are, the more they try to control their environment.

**13 HOW WELL YOUR KIDS READ.** A 2014 study found that the number of books in your home is by far the most important predictor of your child's grade-level reading performance—more than your income or education level. Students whose homes had at least 100 books read one and a half grade levels above those with fewer books in the house. **R**

Sources: Sam Gosling, PhD, psychologist and author of *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You*; Charles Givrie, data scientist at Booz Allen Hamilton; Noah Fierer, PhD, a microbial ecologist at the University of Colorado, Boulder; Kate Smith, author of *Color Confidence: Color for Your Home Interior*; Kit Yarrow, PhD, a consumer psychologist; Helen Fisher, PhD, a biological anthropologist; Sally Augustin, PhD, an environmental psychologist at Design with Science; psychologytoday.com; popcenter.org; medicaldaily.com

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Inside the wacky world of micronations

# Where Anyone Can Be King

BY JENNIFER PARKER  
FROM BLOOMBERG.COM

*Grand Duke Travis McHenry (right) designed the coins and flag for the fake nation of Westarctica, over which he reigns supreme.*



**THE E-MAIL** was signed “Regards, His Excellency. President Kevin Baugh, Republic of Molossia.”

Come again?

No, you’re not forgetting your ex-Soviet bloc geography. Molossia is not on any world map. But what does exist—“everything a country has,”

Baugh asserted earlier in his missive, “a bank, a post office, a railroad, and an active navy”—you’ll find on a dusty, sagebrush-pocked sliver of Nevada desert. It’s a “sovereign, independent nation” as far as His Excellency is concerned and a bizarre lark to most anyone else.

Welcome to the world of micronations, where anyone can be a benevolent dictator.

## Micro-What?

By definition, a micronation is any entity—physical or virtual—that purports to be a sovereign state but, you know, actually isn't.

The very first micronation, the Upware Republic Society, was a literary group of Cambridge students who appointed themselves clerics and consuls way back in 1851. Today, about 98 active micronations dot the globe from Australia to Antarctica. Forty of them recently sent dignitaries to Anaheim, California, for MicroCon 2015, the first micronation convention held in the actual U.S. of A. These empires do not enjoy governmental recognition, but that doesn't stop them from trying. Almost all of MicroCon's leaders have written letters to their home governments requesting diplomatic recognition.

"What better way of tweaking the nose of the established order than to form one's own mock nation-state?" said researcher Steven F. Scharff, who broke down the origins of micronations in an inspirational keynote address (delivered to the conference via YouTube). The Nevada-based shipping clerk has been a student of the micronations movement since the 1990s, when learning about the Vatican ignited his interest in the whole countries-within-countries concept.

Sometimes, as with the Republic of Rose Island, things don't turn out so well. In 1968, Italian Giorgio Rosa issued stamps and declared himself president of a floating platform in the Adriatic, all in a bid to draw visitors. But almost as soon as it was built, the Italian navy took dynamite to his dreams for failure to pay taxes.

On the other hand, Scharff says, MicroCon's attendees are mostly peaceful, independent dreamers who get a kick out of printing their own stamps, minting their own money, and "ruling" over their own slivers of private property. He calls the current phenomenon "a big fantasy role-playing game that involves a lot of self-aggrandizement." It's Renaissance Faire meets model UN, with a hefty dose of political theory—and if you ask the leaders themselves, it's also plain fun. Here's a sampling of three modern micronations that you can actually visit.

## Westarctica

**Raison d'être: NONPROFIT AWARENESS**

To meet the enterprising leader of Westarctica, you'll have to travel to West Hollywood, California, where he works as a recruiter for a media company and advocates for climate-change awareness. To reach the actual country—620,000 frozen, uninhabitable square miles of western Antarctica—you'd need a boat and a really good reason.



“I have never been there myself, but we want to occupy that region,” says Grand Duke Travis McHenry, who founded the country (pop. 300) in 2001 when he noticed that the land hadn’t been claimed by legitimized nations. McHenry registered Westarctica as a nonprofit in 2014 and nationalizes “citizens” who electronically pledge allegiance—and sign up for his newsletter.

Custom-made metal and wooden Westarctican coins have no real value, so the grand duke has turned to corporate fund-raising, hoping donations will eventually allow him to colonize, building “a better platform to advocate for that melting ice.”

## The Republic of Molossia

**Raison d’être: HOBBYIST TOURISM**

The Republic of Molossia sits on a 1.3-acre lot east of Reno, Nevada, that President Baugh purchased in 1998. Its bank is a wooden hut that safeguards a stash of Valora, a so-called currency made of poker chips. Its post office doesn’t circulate real mail, but its male mannequin, Postmaster Ralph, sits ready, just in case. Its railroad is a toy railroad, and the “active navy” consists of Molossia citizenry (Baugh’s 27 family members) taking kayak “expeditions” on Lake Tahoe with squirt guns.

You, too, can tour Molossia, or even join its navy, if you call ahead and give Baugh two weeks’ notice. “We’re inspired to a certain extent by

theme parks. But there’s no real profit in having your own country,” said Baugh, who works full-time in human resources and doesn’t charge visitors any immigration fees.

## The Ambulatory Free States of Obsidia

**Raison d’être: POLITICAL ART**

You won’t need a passport to visit Obsidia. You’ll just need to track down Carolyn Yagjian, the grand marshal of this mobile nation.

A 29-year-old visual artist from Oakland, California, she “resents” the fact that most micronations are male-dominated monarchies. So when she found a volcanic obsidian rock on a hiking trail, she declared it a matriarchal micronation and made the rock its “mobile embassy.”

“I’ve always been attracted to the idea of statehood,” said Yagjian. “And this is an opportunity to question a lot of things people accept as normal about national identity.” Her nation-rock, unveiled in a bright-blue-and-hot-pink suitcase, wasn’t considered typical even by MicroCon standards. But she won a lot of points for her chutzpah and general creativity.

“I’ll allow men to become citizens, but I don’t want them to have places in government,” added the grand marshal. So far, Obsidia is a fake matriarchy of one. But it’s got 162 likes (and counting) on its official Facebook page. **R**

# Ask the Expert

## THE TRUTH ABOUT COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

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

Feeling frustrated and sometimes even exhausted from listening? Whether it happens suddenly or gradually over time, hearing loss can affect you physically and emotionally. Being unable to hear impacts your ability to communicate with your loved ones, hear in noisy environments, talk on the phone, and may force you to become more reliant on your family members to interpret for you.

Cochlear implants work differently than hearing aids. Rather than amplifying sound, they use sophisticated software and state-of-the-art electronic components to provide access to the sounds you've been missing. They are designed to help you hear better and understand speech in all situations, including noisy environments.



David C. Kelsall, M.D.,  
Cochlear Medical Advisor

Dr. David C. Kelsall, a cochlear implant surgeon and medical advisor to Cochlear, the world leader in cochlear implants, answers questions about cochlear implants and how they are different from hearing aids.

**Q: How are cochlear implants different than hearing aids?**

A: Hearing aids help many people by making the sounds they hear louder. Unfortunately, as hearing loss progresses, sounds need to not only be made louder, they need to be made clearer. Cochlear implants can help give you that clarity, especially in noisy environments. If you suffer from high frequency hearing loss but maintain your hearing in the low frequencies, there is a solution called Hybrid™ Hearing that may be able to help as well. Be sure to discuss your options with a Hearing Implant Specialist in your area.

**Q: Are cochlear implants covered by Medicare?**

A: Yes, by Medicare and most private insurance plans.

**Q: How do I know a cochlear implant will work for me?**

A: The technology is very reliable. In fact, it has been around for over 30 years and has helped change the lives of over 400,000 people worldwide.

**Q: Is it major surgery?**

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

**Q: Am I too old to get a cochlear implant?**

A: No, it's never too late to regain access to the sounds you're missing.

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

Visit **[Cochlear.com/US/RDigest](http://Cochlear.com/US/RDigest)** for a free guide about cochlear implants.



If you were called on a cellular telephone about a debt by or on behalf of Midland Credit Management, Inc., you may be entitled to receive a payment or debt forgiveness.

#### WHAT IS THIS CASE ABOUT?

A Settlement has been reached in a class action lawsuit *In re: Midland Credit Management, Inc. Telephone Consumer Protection Act Litigation*, United States District Court for the Southern District of California Case No. 11-MD-2286 MMA (MDD) (the "Lawsuit"). Plaintiffs allege that Midland Funding, LLC, Midland Credit Management, Inc. ("MCM"), and Encore Capital Group, Inc. (collectively, "Defendants") violated the Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA"), by calling cell phone numbers using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice between November 2, 2006 and August 31, 2014, inclusive (the "Class Period"), without prior express consent. The Court did not decide in favor of Plaintiffs or Defendants and Defendants deny any violation or liability. To settle the case, Defendants will provide a Settlement Fund totaling \$15,000,000 composed of a \$13,000,000 Debt Forgiveness Component and a \$2,000,000 Cash Component. If you have an existing account with Defendants with a balance owed, and you have an approved claim, you will receive a credit against any amounts you owe in an amount based on a pro rata division of the Debt Forgiveness Component, which will depend on the number of those claims submitted. If you do not have an existing account with Defendants, and you have an approved claim, you will receive a cash payment based upon a pro rata division of the Cash Component, which will depend on the number of those claims submitted. Defendants will also pay separate from that Settlement Fund the costs of notice and claims administration, estimated to be about \$3,350,000 and pay attorneys' fees and costs up to \$2,400,000, subject to Court approval.

#### HOW DO I KNOW IF I WAS CALLED ON MY CELLPHONE DURING THE CLASS PERIOD?

If you have not received a postcard notice advising you of this settlement, you still may have been called by Defendants during the Class Period. The Claims Administrator has a list of cellphone numbers called. If you believe you were called by Defendants on any cellphone you had during the Class Period, you may determine that during the Claims Process described below. You must provide to the Claims Administrator your cellphone number(s) on which you may have been called and the Claims Administrator can compare your number(s) to those on the list of cellphone numbers called by Defendants during the Class Period. If your number was called, you are a Class Member and entitled to file a claim, but no more than one claim, regardless of how many numbers were called.

#### WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

You can submit a claim as described below. Or if you do nothing, you remain a Class Member, and if the Court approves the settlement, you will be legally bound by its terms and will release your claims relating to calls placed by, or on behalf of, Defendants.

If you want to exclude yourself from this settlement, you must send a written request specifically stating that you request exclusion from the settlement to In re: Midland TCPA Claims Administrator, PO Box 30198, College Station, TX 77842-3198 postmarked no later than **April 22, 2016**.

If you remain a Class Member, you may object to the settlement by writing to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel, and file such objections with the Court, all no later than **April 22, 2016**.

Full details on how to object or exclude yourself can be found at [www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com](http://www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com).

#### SETTLEMENT HEARING

The Court will hold a hearing on August 26, 2016 at 9:00 a.m., to consider whether to approve the settlement as fair and reasonable, award a \$2,500 incentive payment to each of the three class representatives, award attorneys' fees and litigation costs in an amount not to exceed \$2,400,000.

You or your lawyer may ask to appear and speak at your own expense. A more detailed Notice and an explanation of the claims process are available at [www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com](http://www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com). The website also explains the Settlement terms in more detail. You may write to In re: Midland TCPA Claims Administrator, PO Box 30198, College Station, TX 77842-3198 to request the more detailed Notice and a paper Claim Form for mailing in a claim.

**TO RECEIVE A PAYMENT YOU MUST SUBMIT A CLAIM. YOU MAY COMPLETE AND SUBMIT A CLAIM BY CALLING 1-888-557-3460, OR YOU MAY SUBMIT A CLAIM ONLINE BY VISITING [WWW.MIDLANDTCPASETLEMENT.COM](http://WWW.MIDLANDTCPASETLEMENT.COM). YOU MAY ALSO PRINT A COPY OF THE CLAIM FORM AVAILABLE AT [WWW.MIDLANDTCPASETLEMENT.COM](http://WWW.MIDLANDTCPASETLEMENT.COM), COMPLETE IT, AND MAIL IT TO: IN RE: MIDLAND TCPA CLAIMS ADMINISTRATOR, PO BOX 30198, COLLEGE STATION, TX 77842-3198.**

**ALL CLAIMS MUST BE SUBMITTED OR POSTMARKED BY APRIL 12, 2016.**

[www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com](http://www.MidlandTCPAsettlement.com)

[www.apadana-ielts.com](http://www.apadana-ielts.com)

IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*We've polled a long list of writers and editors to gather words often misused, misspelled, or misunderstood. Here are some common offenders. How will you fare (not to be confused with fair)? See the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

1. **pallet** ('pa-luht) *n.*—A: roof of the mouth. B: painter's board. C: make-shift bed or portable platform.
2. **sophomoric** (sahf-'mor-ik) *adj.*—A: philosophical. B: immature. C: inducing sleep.
3. **secede** (sih-'seed) *v.*—A: achieve one's goals. B: withdraw. C: come next after.
4. **accede** (ak-'seed) *v.*—A: surpass or overcome. B: agree. C: manage to reach.
5. **jealousie** ('ja-luh-see) *n.*—A: window blind. B: envy. C: dilapidated car.
6. **prevalent** ('pre-vuh-luhnt) *adj.*—A: widespread. B: first in line. C: seeing the future.
7. **imminent** ('ih-muh-nuhnt) *adj.*—A: outstanding. B: about to happen. C: inborn.
8. **collegial** (kuh-'lee-jee-uhl) *adj.*—A: very courteous. B: relating to a college. C: marked by camaraderie among colleagues.
9. **bellwether** ('bel-'we-thur) *n.*—A: trend leader. B: church spire. C: balmy conditions.
10. **aural** ('or-uhl) *adj.*—A: of the ears. B: of the mouth. C: faintly glowing.
11. **climactic** (kliy-'mak-tik) *adj.*—A: of prevailing weather. B: reaching a pause. C: at a decisive moment.
12. **impetus** ('im-puh-tuhs) *n.*—A: sterility. B: force, impulse, or stimulus. C: logical conclusion.
13. **emigrate** ('eh-muh-grayt) *v.*—A: leave one's residence or country. B: enter a country for permanent residence. C: illegally cross a border.
14. **incredulous** (in-'kre-juh-luhs) *adj.*—A: amazing, extraordinary. B: skeptical. C: ungrateful.
15. **venial** ('vee-nee-uhl) *adj.*—A: dishonest. B: unimportant. C: of the blood.

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

## Answers

- pallet**—[C] makeshift bed or portable platform. The roof of the mouth is *palate*; a painter's board is *palette*.
- sophomoric**—[B] immature. People often forget the *o* in the middle, which can go unpronounced.
- secede**—[B] withdraw. To achieve a goal, and to follow after, is *succeed*.
- accede**—[B] agree. One accedes to a demand but exceeds one's goals.
- jalousie**—[A] window blind. It's related to *jealousy* ("envy") because of people peeking into others' affairs.
- prevalent**—[A] widespread. The tendency to misspell it as *prevelant* is indeed widespread.

### CONFUSED PAIRS

A quick list of other common mishaps:

<b>karat</b>	<b>carat</b>
unit of measure for gold	unit of measure for precious stones; e.g., diamonds
<b>homey</b>	<b>homely</b>
of or relating to the home	simple, unpretentious, or unattractive; though at one time synonymous with <i>homey</i>
<b>sensuous</b>	<b>sensual</b>
of or relating to the five senses; properly not risqué	relating to the gratification of the senses; sexual
<b>illusion</b>	<b>delusion</b>
exists in one's imagination	deceives or misleads a person

- imminent**—[B] about to happen. It's often confused with *eminent* ("outstanding or prominent").
- collegial**—[C] marked by camaraderie among colleagues. Its spelling is close to *collegiate* ("relating to a college"), but the meanings are distinct.
- bellwether**—[A] trend leader. This has nothing to do with weather. A *wether* is a sheep, which may wear a bell when leading the flock.
- aural**—[A] of the ears. For mouths, it would be *oral*; for lights, it would be *auroral*.
- climactic**—[C] at a decisive moment. It pertains to *climax*, not *climate*, whose adjective is *climatic*.
- impetus**—[B] force, impulse, or stimulus. Don't confuse it with *impotence*, a male sexual dysfunction.
- emigrate**—[A] leave one's residence or country. You emigrate from a country but immigrate to one.
- incredulous**—[B] skeptical. People sometimes mistake this for *incredible*.
- venial**—[B] unimportant. It's no trivial sin to be corrupt and bribable, which is *venal*.

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

- 9 & below:** grammar student  
**10–12:** junior editor  
**13–15:** copy chief

# Humor in Uniform

APRIL FOOLS' EDITION



## GREAT MOMENTS IN ARMY LAUGHS ...

The attack on the enemy stronghold took a little longer for this cavalryman after his troops replaced his trusted steed with a merry-go-round.

**THE MILITARY** has a long, proud tradition of pranking recruits. Here are some favorites from rallypoint.com:

- Instructed a private in the mess hall to look for left-handed spatulas
- Sent a recruit to medical-supplies office in search of fallopian tubes
- Had a new guy conduct a “boom test” on a howitzer by yelling “Boom!” down the tube in order to “calibrate” it
- Ordered a private to bring back a five-gallon can of dehydrated water

(in fact, the sergeant just wanted an empty water can)

**WE WERE INSPECTING** several lots of grenades. While everyone was concentrating on the task at hand, I held up a spare pin and asked, “Has anyone seen my grenade?”

SMSGT. DAN POWELL, from rallypoint.com

**This is no hoax! Send us your funniest military anecdote—it might be worth \$100! See page 7 for details.**

# Quotable Quotes



**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HERO AND A COWARD IS ONE STEP SIDWAYS.**

**GENE HACKMAN, actor**

Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming.

**DAVID BOWIE, musician**



Not sure which is harder on a relationship: sharing a dresser for three years or sharing an iPhone charger for one day.

**RHEA BUTCHER, comedian**

**AT EVERY MOMENT, WE ARE VOLUNTEERS.**

**STEPHEN COLBERT, TV personality**



**Instant gratification takes too long.**

**CARRIE FISHER, actress and writer**

Tupac was one of the biggest thugs I know, and he always wore his seat belt.

**ICE CUBE, rapper and producer**



**LIFE IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE STRANGER THAN FICTION, BECAUSE FICTION HAS TO BE CONVINCING, AND LIFE DOESN'T.**

**NEIL GAIMAN, author**

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healthy hearts for adventures ahead

.....

Keep up with the life you love.  
100% whole grain Quaker Oats can help reduce  
cholesterol as part of a heart healthy diet.\*

.....



*off you go*

\*3 grams of oat soluble fiber daily as part of a low saturated fat and cholesterol diet may help reduce the risk of heart disease. Old Fashioned Oatmeal provides 2 grams. Instant Quaker Oatmeal provides 1 gram.



PLAYTIME IS WHERE QUALITY TIME BEGINS.

*Find your island*

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE THINGS  
THAT MATTER MOST.



*F*ind your island where smiles happen naturally. Find a playground covered in soft white sand, blanketed with endless stretches of seashells. Find the perfect place to slow down growing up. Find your island at [FortMyers-Sanibel.com](http://FortMyers-Sanibel.com) and order our free Lonely Planet guidebook.



**THE BEACHES OF  
FORT MYERS  
AND SANIBEL**  
[FORTMYERS-SANIBEL.COM](http://FORTMYERS-SANIBEL.COM)