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# Reader's digest

MARCH 2016



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PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ERIN PATRICE  
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WARDROBE:  
STYLIST: ELYSHA  
LENKIN; PROP  
STYLIST: SARAH  
GUIDO-LAAKSO  
FOR HALLEY  
RESOURCES;  
GROOMING:  
AMY KLEWITZ  
AND CHRISTINE  
HERBECK

# Editor's Note

## Winnie the Pooh and Laughter Too



**THE LUDLOWS WERE HILARIOUS.** I remember all the laughing we did around the dinner table back in the day. There was the running gag about the digestive impossibility of the cube steak, the giggles about a boyfriend nicknamed Crash, and the howls—tears, even—over any story that starred my dad's boss, whom he called Tigger.

My mother must have discovered and misinterpreted the cube steak, a weekly staple, in some '70s women's magazine. Our efforts to hide our pasty cube steak cud sent all four of us into fits of hysteria.

Crash was so named by my parents because the poor pimply-faced kid had once revealed that he wanted to be a stuntman when he grew up. Picture him jumping off our garage, my dad would say. Picture the helmet.

Tigger was the man at the office who cheerfully dropped loads of unanticipated work into people's inboxes, oblivious to the anxiety, anger, and distress in his wake. Work, bounce, bounce. More work, bounce. Get it?

Maybe none of this is funny to you. That's because you didn't know my dad or how eager his young daughters were to understand this larger-than-life place that he drove to every morning and emerged from so tightly wound. Inside jokes made it better for all of us.

See, that's the thing: Humor framed those family dinners. But if you ask me to tell a funny Ludlow story, I'm hard-pressed to come up with a crowd-pleaser. You had to be there. You had to be us.

Still, our humor editor, Andy Simmons (that's him smashing a pie in his daughter's face on page 64), assured me you'd send plenty of hilarious tales to fill our Life in These United States cover story. He was right.

I laughed, I really did, and I didn't have to be there. **R**



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



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE VACCARIELLO; WARDROBE STYLIST: ELYSHA LENKIN; HAIR AND MAKEUP: AMY KLEWITZ FOR PRO-STYLE-CREW

WHY SETTLE FOR A SINGLE  
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WHEN YOU CAN HAVE A GOOD CUP OF COFFEE  
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# Letters

COMMENTS ON THE DEC/JAN ISSUE

## Miraculous Christmas Stories

I can't begin to express the emotions that swept through me when I finished the last of these stories. From laughter to tears and then disappointment when the stories were over so soon! You did an outstanding job picking them. Thank you for continuing to publish such a great magazine.

STEVEN KLUNK, *La Plata, Maryland*

## The Real 12 Days of Christmas

I was laughing and smiling through each of Colin Nissan's descriptions. Loved, loved, loved the whole article. I'm definitely going to keep this for future reading. Thanks for making my morning a joyous one.

DIANA ROSA-MARTIR,  
*North Wales, Pennsylvania*

"The Real 12 Days of Christmas" had me laughing so hard, I was crying. *Reader's Digest* has been a gift subscription from my father-in-law for more than 15 years at the holi-



days. When my kids were little, they couldn't wait to read all the jokes. You brought laughter to my day.

DENISE BRUDERICK,  
*Kingston, Michigan*

## Everyday Heroes

How refreshing and inspirational it is to read about people who place

the needs and welfare of others above their own. Their sacrifice and humanitarian efforts are so fantastic, especially in the light of all the tragedy in the world these days. And where is this happening? In the good old U.S.A.

GARY B. ELLIOT, *Durham, North Carolina*

## Pretty Girl

This story tore at my heart as an animal lover. Someone finally took her in, and she became a beautiful dog. Dogs are faithful, obedient, and loving—not something to be discarded, as many owners do today. Treat them with kindness, and they will give you many years of love.

PAMELA DAVID, *Converse, Indiana*



## The Big One

We live in Olympia, Washington. The article about the Big One scared the you-know-what out of us!

**RONA MATLOW, Olympia, Washington**

"The Big One" is totally inappropriate! What scare tactics are you trying to convey? This is your holiday issue, and it should be filled with uplifting articles.

**MARGARET LERIAN, Fair Oaks, California**

## Uncharitable!

Thank you for the great articles, yet we and the public still need your help. I represent the American Cancer Fund, and both the public and our reputable charity were severely harmed by Cancer Fund of America's dishonesty. Please advise your readers not to mistake our reliable charity for one that was fraudulent.

**ACF STAFF AND ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, Hillsborough, New Jersey**

Thank you for exposing how some charities operate. I subscribe to the Better Business Bureau's *Wise Giving Guide*. It's amazing how many organizations won't give complete or

any information about their operations. The names of some of these should surprise many.

**F. A., via e-mail**

I'm glad you reported on bad charities. Now please do an article on the good charities.

**LISA JAMES, Orangevale, California**

## Inspiring the Next Generation

I'm an 11-year-old girl from Brooklyn and a fairly new subscriber, but all the issues I've gotten so far have been incredible. The jokes are funny, the articles are enlightening, and the quotes at the end are beautiful, each one ringing true to someone out there. Every time I open the latest issue, I read about someone interesting, with a life very different from mine.

Even though I'm only 11, I appreciate *RD* so much. I have a lot of aspirations for the future—graduate from Yale, become a marine biologist, write some novels. One of them is a little bit smaller but just as important to me—I want to, someday, have something published in *Reader's Digest*.

**HANNAH SMITH, New York, New York**

**Send letters** to letters@rd.com or Letters, Reader's Digest, PO Box 6100, Harlan, Iowa 51593-1600. Include your full name, address, e-mail, and daytime phone number. We may edit letters and use them in all print and electronic media. **Contribute** Send us your 100-word true stories, jokes, and funny quotes, and if we publish one in a print edition of *Reader's Digest*, we'll pay you \$100. To submit your 100-word stories, visit rd.com/stories. To submit humor items, visit rd.com/submit, or write to us at Jokes, Box 6226, Harlan, Iowa 51593-1726. Please include your full name and address in your entry. We regret that we cannot acknowledge or return unsolicited work. **Requests for permission** to reprint any material from Reader's Digest should be sent to magrights@rd.com. **Do Business** Subscriptions, renewals, gifts, address changes, payments, account information, and inquiries: Visit rd.com/help, call 877-732-4438, or write to us at Reader's Digest, PO Box 6095, Harlan, Iowa 51593-1595.

*"Keeping kids safe  
is second nature  
for me," says  
Tim Watson, who  
also coaches  
youth sports.*







# EVERYDAY HEROES



Tim Watson's quick thinking saves  
a little boy from danger

## The Bold Bus Driver

BY ALYSSA JUNG

ON A WARM MORNING last summer, California bus driver Tim Watson was about halfway through his daily 15-mile express route from Milpitas to Fremont when an alert from the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) flashed across his dashboard screen. A toddler had been kidnapped in Milpitas, the message read, and it asked that drivers be on the lookout for the boy.

The victim was described as a three-year-old child in plaid shorts and red shoes; the suspect, a man in his 20s wearing jeans and a black hooded sweatshirt and carrying a

tan backpack. Tim felt his stomach drop when he realized that a man with a toddler on his hip had boarded the bus just ten minutes earlier. Tim distinctly remembered the boy's plaid shorts.

Tim glanced in one of his mirrors and saw the pair sitting in the last seat at the back of the nearly empty bus. Before alerting authorities, he wanted to confirm their identities. Pulling into a McDonald's parking lot, he announced that he needed to look for a lost bag. He moved slowly down the aisle, peering under each seat, until he approached the last ➡➡

row. As he bent down, Tim avoided eye contact with the man. "I saw the boy's red shoes," says Tim. "But I knew I had to keep cool."

Back behind the wheel, Tim apologized for the delay and pulled the bus onto the highway. Not wanting to arouse suspicion, he waited a few minutes, then radioed the bus dispatcher. "I believe I have the kidnapping suspect on my bus," he told the operator, keeping his voice low.

The dispatcher directed Tim to continue to his final stop at the Fremont BART subway station, where police officers would be waiting. "As I'm driving, all I can think about is what I'm going to do if I get there before the police," he says. So he slowed down, rolling along at 35 mph in a 65 mph zone.

As Tim was about to make the last turn into the BART parking lot, he saw from the side mirrors police cruisers pull up behind the bus silently but with red lights flashing. "The bus doesn't have a back window, so the guy had no idea they were there," says Tim.

He stopped the bus and opened the doors. In his right side mirror, Tim could see four cops waiting for the suspect with their hands on their holsters. As the man got off the bus

with the boy, a police officer grabbed the child out of his arms, threw the suspect to the ground, and handcuffed him behind his back.

The police officers told Tim that about an hour earlier, the man, Alfonso David Edington, 23, had snatched the boy from the Milpitas

library after he wandered away from his mother.

Tim thought about his own sons, ages 17 and 21. "I went back in the bus alone and broke down," he says. Then he climbed out again to check that the boy was OK. Tim found him sitting calmly in the front seat of a squad

car, without a tear in sight. "I just smiled at him," Tim says. "I knew he was safe."

Edington was charged with felony kidnapping and faces up to 11 years in prison.

A few weeks after the incident, Tim received a certificate of recognition from the VTA Board of Directors, the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, and the city of Milpitas, as well as a congressional resolution from Congressman Eric Swalwell. Still, Tim is humble about his actions.

"I try to teach my kids to look out for people who can't defend themselves," he says. "And that's what I did."



***Tim found the boy in the front seat of a police car, smiling. "I knew he was safe," Tim says.***

# The Birthday Party Project

BY BETH DREHER

ON A FLIGHT from Dallas, Texas, to Cincinnati, Ohio, to visit a friend in 2008, event planner Paige Chenault daydreamed about the elaborate birthday parties she'd throw for her daughter one day. (Paige was five months pregnant at the time.) Then, flipping through a magazine, she saw a photo of an impoverished Haitian boy, his belly bloated. "I thought, This kid has nothing," Paige says.

The image stayed with her, and she resolved to do something to help. "I decided I would use my talents to throw birthday parties for homeless kids," Paige says.

For the next four years, Paige and her husband, Colin, took time out from parenthood to visit shelters to determine how best to pull off the parties.

Finally, in January 2012, Paige launched the Birthday Party Project, a nonprofit organization, and recruited friends and family to help decorate Dallas's 75-occupant Family Gateway Shelter with balloons and streamers, celebrating the birthdays



*Paige Chenault's organization has celebrated more than 1,800 birthdays.*

of 11 boys and girls, with 60 more homeless kids in attendance. "That first party was better than I could have ever imagined," says Paige.

Now Paige and her staff of three paid employees work with regional volunteers, aka "birthday enthusiasts," to plan monthly themed parties at 15 shelters across the country, some of which house abused or abandoned kids. Each child celebrating a birthday that month gets a \$30 gift, a decorative place mat, and an individual cake or cupcake.

One of Paige's favorite parts of each party is when the kids make a wish and blow out the candles. "They rarely get a chance to dream big," says Paige.

Her daughter, Lizzie, now seven, often helps out at the parties. Paige says, "The one thing I've always wanted is for my kid to be generous." **R**



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# VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

## Best Companies Ever!

FROM THE ONION

### Great Work-Home Ratio

*Laid-Back Company Allows Employees to Work from Home After 6 p.m.*

**GRESHAM, OR**—Underscoring the benefits of working for a laid-back company like SocialFire Marketing, founder and CEO Matt Avalon told reporters Tuesday he had instituted an officewide policy permitting employees to work from home anytime after 6 p.m. “If it helps them be efficient and get more done, I have no problem with people working remotely once they’ve left the office for the day,” said Avalon. “That’s the kind of relaxed culture we strive to create here—one where you can even be working from your living



room couch at two in the morning if you’d like.” Avalon added that employees are free to work from home on weekends and holidays as well.

### Sympathetic Coworkers

*Helpful Colleagues Advise Woman on Strategy for Speeding Ticket*

**HAGERSTOWN, MD**—Local sales manager Patricia Carson reportedly received astute counsel Tuesday from a veritable legal dream team of coworkers, who dispensed invaluable advice on how to get ➤➤

out of a recent speeding ticket.

“You should totally fight it,” said junior marketing director Gregory Castle, widely regarded as one of the legal community’s preeminent scholars. “It’s a total racket.”

“Half the time, the radar gun is busted,” said software developer Mark Schreiber, laying the groundwork for a flawless defense that would hold up under the scrutiny of even the most ruthless prosecutor.

“Even if you were over the limit, you’re totally allowed to drive at the rate of traffic, so as long as you weren’t passing a bunch of cars, you should be good,” said office manager Sarah Gilchrist, 26.

Company sources confirmed that Carson’s meeting with her office’s law experts proved even more valuable than the lifesaving medical opinions she received earlier in the year after presenting a mole on her neck to the office’s top oncological researchers.

## Child-Friendly Atmosphere

*Woman Thinks She Can Just Waltz Back into Work After Maternity Leave Without Bringing Baby to Office*

**KENWOOD, OH**—Saying she has a lot of nerve to try to pull something like this, employees of insurance agency Boland & Sons told reporters Wednesday that coworker Emily Nelson seems to believe she can just waltz back into work after her maternity leave without once bringing her baby into the office. “I don’t know

where she gets off thinking she doesn’t need to come in here with that baby strapped around her in a Björn,” said Greg Sheldrick, adding that Nelson is out of her mind if she seriously believes showing off a few measly pictures of the newborn is an adequate substitute for bringing him around to meet everyone in the department. “She needs to come in with that baby in a stroller, roll it by my desk, and say, ‘Somebody wants to say hello,’ or, frankly, she might as well never show her face here again.”

## Most Open-Minded

*Progressive Company Pays Both Men and Women 78 Percent of What They Should Be Earning*

**SEATTLE**—Stressing the importance of treating all its staff members equally, technology firm Northstar Solutions described to reporters Wednesday its strict policy of paying both male and female workers 78 percent of what they should be earning. “At Northstar, we believe that employees who contribute the same level of hard work for the same duties should earn the same fraction of a reasonable wage, regardless of whether they’re men or women,” said the company’s CEO, Jack Stargell, who noted that every staff member’s compensation package was routinely reviewed to ensure that personnel with comparable experience and job responsibilities were being equivalently underpaid. **R**





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# Points to Ponder



With a song, you can't explain exactly what happens or when it's going to happen or what it's going to do to you or somebody else. But somehow, it's this beautiful conduit that connects everybody in a way nothing else can.

**ALICIA KEYS,**  
*singer and songwriter,*  
in Marie Claire

I'VE LISTENED to someone as young as 14 and someone as old as 100 talk about their close friends, and [there are] three expectations of a close friend that I hear people describing and valuing across the entire life course: somebody to talk to, someone to depend on, and someone to enjoy. These expectations remain the same, but the circumstances under which they're accomplished change.

**WILLIAM RAWLINS, PHD,**  
*professor of communications,* in the Atlantic

**HUMANS LOVE HAIR ...** We're mammals, and a mammal's hair is its glory. The human case is particularly poignant, since we have so little of it ... Wearing clothes and sleeping under blankets are human behaviors that return us to a more immersive relationship to hair, and stroking the fur of dogs and cats is soothing to us because it recalls primordial mammalian sense memories.

**RANDY LAIST, PHD,**  
*professor of English,* in the New York Times

SOURCE PHOTO: JEFF VESPA/GETTY IMAGES

**TAKE EVERY** minute, one at a time. Don't be fooled by a perfect sea at any given moment. Accept and rise to whatever circumstance presents itself.

**DIANA NYAD,**

*who swam from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage, in her memoir Find a Way*

**RECENTLY,** a man decided to make a sandwich from scratch. He grew the vegetables, gathered salt from seawater, milked a cow ... [It] cost him six months of his life and set him back \$1,500 ... The inefficiency of making even something as humble as a sandwich by oneself, without the benefits of market exchange, is simply mind-boggling. There was a time when everyone grew their own food and made their own clothes. It was a time of unimaginable poverty and labor without rest.

**CHELSEA GERMAN,**

*researcher, in the Wall Street Journal*

**ECONOMISTS WHO** study happiness have begun to entertain the notion that perhaps what matters isn't the degree to which people get what they want but how much they like what they get. Good emotions may be more important than satiation of desires.

**NOAH SMITH, PHD,**

*economist, in Bloomberg View*

**EVERY ONCE** in a while at the end [of a movie in a movie theater], we do something really remarkable: We applaud. We don't applaud at our televisions. We don't applaud at our iPhones. We don't applaud at our iPads. But after a great movie, we applaud. That's the power of the moviegoing experience. Today, we may live in an era in which we can own any movie we wish. But in the theater, movies own us.

**JEFFREY KATZENBERG,**

*head of DreamWorks Animation movie studio, in a speech*



## WITTY WISDOM

The greatest feeling an adult can experience is seeing a back-to-school commercial and knowing it no longer affects your life.

**@DAMIENFAHEY,** *television writer*

One good thing about five-year-olds is they are always just a Krazy Straw and some chocolate milk away from the best day ever.

**@SIMONCHOLLAND,**  
*Twitter comedian*

You can use white wine to remove a red wine stain. That's why I always have two glasses of wine wherever I go. In case there's a stain.

**ELLEN DEGENERES,**  
*talk-show host, on her website*

# The movie everyone

## *Jaws.*

I don't like being scared out of my wits,  
so it was not enjoyable at all.

ELAINE STOFFERAHN ANDERSEN

## *The Wizard of Oz.*

Can't get through  
it without nodding off.

JAYNE MCKAY ROGERS

## *Fargo.*

While the accents were  
annoying, the story  
was even more so.

TONY FELLER

## *Wedding Crashers.*

They are funny, but awful  
womanizers.

ANNIE BARR LARNER

## *It's a Wonderful Life.*

Attempted suicide.  
Workplace harassment.  
Depression. Yuck!

MARIE A. SANCHEZ

## *Star Wars.*

There, I finally said it!

DIANNA HERRING

# but me loves is ...

## *The Godfather.*

Too long and too violent!

JULIE STEMARIE

## *Titanic.*

Hated every moment  
of the three hours.

MELANIE BROWN

## *Terms of Endearment.*

I hate movies that expect  
to wring tears from you.

STEPHANIE JAEGER

## *Frozen.*

I don't get the  
hype. Elsa is mean  
and runs away!

REBECCA GROSS

## *Pulp Fiction.*

Too much violence  
and just weird.

CHRISTINA HICKS

Waseca, MN

Algonquin, IL

Cleveland, OH

Philadelphia, PA

Glen Burnie, MD

Springfield, MO

Clarksville, TN

Any movie with

## Brad Pitt.

CAROLYN BOSTIC

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for the chance to  
finish the next  
sentence.

# Mother of The Bride

As she considers  
advice to give  
her daughter,  
**Ruth Pennebaker**  
realizes that  
marriage is an  
ever-changing  
adventure

FROM  
*TEXAS MONTHLY*





**RUTH PENNEBAKER**  
*is an author, a blogger, and a public radio commentator. Her latest book is Pucker Up! The Subversive Woman's Guide to Aging.*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY

MY HUSBAND AND I are sitting across the table from our daughter, Teal, and her fiancé, Bennett. Around us, the restaurant is bustling, but this will be the last calm moment the four of us will have together for a while. Bennett's family will arrive in Austin the next night, followed by 180 of the couple's friends for their wedding on Saturday.

Bennett leans forward. "Is there any advice you can give the two of us about marriage?" he asks.

He and Teal look at my husband and me expectantly. Teal is our firstborn, strong-willed and charming. She and Bennett met and fell in love four years ago. They are both 32, smart, and ambitious, and they fit so beautifully together, bantering constantly like a '30s screwball comedy, that it makes me happy just being around them.

But marital advice? My mind freezes.

We were ten years younger than they are now, just a few months out of college, when we stood before a Methodist minister at my parents' small brick house on the dusty edges of Midland, Texas. We were so young, we didn't realize how young we were. We had met in high school, where we'd ignored each other and then been thrown together on a shockingly successful date that lasted till the small hours. I loved his endless curiosity about the world and his sly wit. Halfhearted hippies, we both had big, gauzy dreams we couldn't quite articulate, and the future stretched before us, endless and blank. In the photos, he looks terrified, and I look exuberant.

The minister, who counseled us before the service, suggested we sit down every year and record what we liked and disliked about each other so we could see how much we'd grown. My husband and I thought that was the funniest thing we'd ever heard.

Now, in the restaurant, looking at my daughter and her husband-to-be, I struggle to think of some pithy wisdom to offer. The truth is, after all these years, marriage still strikes me as a crazy institution. It creaks under towering heaps of cultural and personal expectations. We celebrate it, we revere it when it works, we want it for our children.

My husband, probably recalling just how semi-formed he and I were when we exchanged vows, breaks the silence. “You’re both already better equipped to handle marriage than we were,” he says, which is true. From there, he and I talk in fits and starts. Laugh as often as you can, we counsel them. Be as mannerly toward each other as you are to strangers. Our speech isn’t what anyone would call polished.

Later, after we’ve come home, I see the scattered family photos my husband and I have been looking at as we compile a mosaic of pictures of Teal for the wedding. The photos feature houses and neighborhoods we used to live in, friends we haven’t seen in years. Teal is an infant, then a toddler dynamo, a brooding adolescent, a grown woman intent on changing the world. Trailing a few years behind is her younger brother, Nick.

In the background, my husband and I lose the fresh, plump faces of youth. We camp, we drive a battered Volkswagen Bug, we finish graduate school and law school. His hair, once red and thick, darkens and thins. My dramatic ’80s perms surround my face like a thundercloud till I lose my hair to chemotherapy. We are poor and strapped, we sell our wedding silver to pay bills, we steadily

do better. We travel to Japan and Albania and Lourdes. We look more tired than we once did.

As the wedding approaches, the tempo quickens, and the noise becomes a roar. Teal and Bennett are surrounded by friends and family, everyone giddy about the future. I’m

in a festive mood, but I also find myself remembering the past.

A long marriage, it occurs to me, isn’t a monolith any more than a life is. Instead, it is a series of relationships over the years, and you have to be lucky and stubborn and both want it to work. I see my husband and me in our

early married years, before we had children. We worked and studied, drank and hosted parties that lasted till dawn. Those were the years when we fought the loudest and laughed the hardest.

Then our children came along. In those harried years, we were always in a rush, always cleaning cereal up from the floor, never finishing a sentence or a thought. It was hard but joyous. How do two ambitious people survive parenthood together? You cope and you chafe, and it helps if you still find each other funny and attractive.

And yes, the face of love changes over the years. When you’re diagnosed

“  
*A long marriage  
isn’t a monolith  
any more than  
a life is. It is a  
series of  
relationships.*



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with cancer and cut open and infused with toxic chemicals, when your own parents begin to sicken and die, when tragedy strikes so randomly and brutally that you're left breathless—maybe that's when you finally grow up.

Today, with our children out of the house, my husband and I lead quieter, less hectic lives. We've left our family home in West Austin and moved to a smaller condo downtown. We watch TV more than we used to—but TV is more intellectual than it used to be, isn't it? Sometimes I look back and feel as if a great storm has passed and left us drifting in contentment. It's a lovely time, far more pleasurable than I would have ever guessed.

On Saturday evening, 200 people gather inside the Palm Door, a funky, offbeat event space on East Sixth Street. The four of us—Teal in a strapless gown with cowboy boots,

her father, Nick, and I—walk down the aisle to Robert Earl Keen's "Feelin' Good Again." Bennett waits at the front with Ward, my husband's brother. The rowdy crowd quiets as Teal and Bennett promise to always make time for each other, to encourage, to comfort, to dance to Willie Nelson when they're low. Their faces are open and lit with happiness.

As they speak, I sit next to the man who's hovered with me over feverish children and birthday cakes that now collapse in from the weight of the candles. He is the one who has calmed my fears for 41 years, who believed in me before I ever believed in myself, who snores as loudly as I do. And I think, That's what marriage is: falling in and out of love with the same person, again and again and again. Looking at our beautiful daughter and her new husband, I can't think of anything better to wish for them. **R**

ADAPTED FROM A JULY 2014 STORY, WITH PERMISSION FROM *TEXAS MONTHLY*, TEXASMONTHLY.COM.



## THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ...

"Some willing to work, and the rest willing to let them."

**ROBERT FROST**

"Those who finish what they start, and so on ..."

**ROBERT BYRNE**

"Those who constantly divide the people of the world into two kinds, and those who do not."

**ROBERT BENCHLEY**



Should a company pay for continuously dialing the wrong number?

## The Case Of the Relentless Robocalls

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

☛ THE CALLS to Araceli King's cell phone started on July 3, 2013. Every time, a prerecorded message from Time Warner Cable (TWC) asked to speak to "Luiz Perez." If King didn't answer the call, the company left a computerized message for Perez.

King didn't know anyone named Luiz Perez, but there were no interactive options given in the messages to opt out of the calls. So they kept coming. From July to October, King received ten calls from TWC, all using the company's interactive voice response (IVR) system.

King, a resident of El Paso, Texas, had given TWC her cell number in

connection with her account and had consented to its terms of service, which included using "automated dialing systems or artificial or recorded voices to call you." However, TWC did not, in fact, intend to call her.

Finally, on October 3, 2013, King contacted TWC. She explained to a representative that she wasn't Luiz Perez and asked that calls to her cell about his account stop. As it turned out, Perez had opened an account with TWC 20 months earlier, in February 2012, using a phone number that Sprint later assigned to King.

The calls, however, still did not stop. King made additional



requests to TWC to put an end to them, but TWC proceeded to call her 79 more times. So on March 20, 2014, she filed a complaint in the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York. She claimed that TWC was violating the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), a law that prohibits companies from dialing any phone number or leaving a voice mail without prior consent.

Yet even after TWC had been served the summons, it still called King an additional 74 times. In all, she alleged receiving 163 calls from TWC for “Luiz Perez,” according to court papers.

“She felt harassed,” says her attor-

ney, Jenny DeFrancisco at Lemberg Law, noting that each call that violated the TCPA was subject to a \$500 award in statutory damages.

Among other points, TWC argued that it did not know that Perez’s cell phone number had been reassigned to King and, therefore, the company’s liability was unclear, since that situation—intending to call one party and accidentally calling another because the number had been reassigned—wasn’t expressly addressed by the TCPA.

*Did TWC violate King’s rights by calling her number to reach another customer? You be the judge.*



## THE VERDICT

On June 18, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) clarified its position on the case at hand in a press release: “If a phone number has been reassigned, companies must stop calling the number after one call.”

In the following weeks, both King and TWC moved for summary judgment in the case. On July 7, District Judge Alvin Hellerstein ruled that TWC was not liable for the ten calls prior to King’s October 3 call to the cable company. However, he ruled that TWC was liable for the remaining 153 calls, and not just at \$500 per call, but at \$1,500 per call—a total of \$229,500. The judge explained that King “clearly experienced the very sort of inconvenience against which Congress sought to protect her.” But TWC is not giving up. The cable giant has since filed an appeal.

**R**

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

# Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

## SPLIT ON DEMAND

In July of 1969, I was wounded in Vietnam and transported to the Army hospital in Tokyo. While under the fog of sedation, I remember a lady approached me and asked if there was anything I wanted. For some reason, I responded, "I would love a banana split!" When I got out of surgery, a nurse came over to me with a banana split. I asked her what it was all about. She said, "You told Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's wife that this is what you wanted!"

WINFRED PHILLIPS, *Chattanooga, Tennessee*

## PENNY FOR A THOUGHT

The night before a new job, I drove along terrified and totally unprepared, certain I would fail my pregnant wife. As I was stopped at an off-ramp, a homeless man approached me, begging for money. Needing to change my attitude, I rolled down the window and offered him a coin. Instead of thanking me, he said he needed a favor. Uh-oh; what had I gotten myself into? "Tomorrow," he said, "go knock 'em



dead." And I did. I don't know what prompted his prescient words, but a year later, I am a proud father—and a pro at my job.

MICHAEL BEATRICE,  
*Tarzana, California*

## TIME TO TOAST

At a family wedding, the father of the bride toasted the young couple and shared anecdotes from years past. I glanced at my own son, who was cradling his baby daughter as she slept, her head resting against his chest. Our eyes met. I mouthed one word to him: "Someday." A barely perceptible nod acknowledged that he understood. First steps, first words, best friends, sleepovers, soccer practice, driver's license, prom date, college. Until one day, he, too, would be toasting her wedding, bravely smiling and sharing stories, and feeling a little shattered inside.

CYNTHIA CONLEY, *Blaine, Minnesota*

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.





# PHOTO

## OF LASTING INTEREST



### March of Joy

Some call it the happiest photo ever taken. On a fall day in 1950, photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt spotted a drum major practicing his high steps on a playing field. "I saw a little boy running after him," he recalled. "All the faculty children ran after the boy. And I ran after them." Eisenstaedt snapped the shot on impulse while covering the University of Michigan's famous marching band for *Life* magazine. *Life's* director of photography, David Friend, called *Drum Major* an "ode to joy." In 1993, President Bill Clinton agreed; when he was offered any Eisenstaedt print as a gift, this is the one he reportedly chose.

**PHOTOGRAPH BY ALFRED EISENSTAEDT** FROM *LIFE* MAGAZINE





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# ART of LIVING



## I'm a Slob, and You Should Be One Too!

BY ANDY SIMMONS

## I NEVER MAKE MY BED SO I CAN ... Thwart Dust Mites

Did you know that your bed is probably home to 1.5 million hungry dust mites feeding off your dead skin cells and swimming in the moisture left over on your sweat-soaked sheets? Or that, if inhaled, the allergens they produce (which is actually their poop ... Mm-mmm!) can cause asthma and allergies? Sleep tight! Thankfully, it's easy to stop the little buggers: Don't make your bed. Sheets and blankets tucked in with their hospital corners, just so, lock in the moisture that mites need to survive. As with Dracula, exposure to sunlight kills them. Stephen Pretlove, PhD, of Kingston University's School of Architecture, told the BBC, "Leaving a bed unmade during the day can remove moisture from the sheets and mattress, so the mites will dehydrate and eventually die."

## I SKIP SHAMPOOING SO I CAN ... Rock a Better Do

*Twilight* actor Robert Pattinson has a lot of hair, which, in my book, makes him an expert. So I took notes when he said, "I don't really see the point in washing your hair ... It's like, I don't clean my apartment, 'cause I don't care. I have my apartment for sleeping, and I have my hair for just, you know, hanging out on my head." Turns out he has a point. Washing your hair every day "strips it of its essential oils," according to huffington post.com. "Day-old hair styles better

and generally looks better than freshly washed hair." Alli Webb, hairstylist and founder of Drybar, told WebMD, "I have always said, 'It's fine to go a few days without shampooing.'" (It's true; she's always saying it. She's the dullest conversationalist.) When it comes to washing my hair, I'm Team Edward!

## I WON'T CLEAN MY DESK SO I CAN ... Spark Creativity

There's an excellent Albert Einstein quote about desks: "desks=mc"? No, that's not right. The quote's somewhere on my desk, but I can't find it amid all this clutter. I probably should dump it all into the trash, but a sloppy desk has its virtues. A University of Minnesota study split participants into two rooms (one tidy, the other messy) and asked each group to come up with different uses for Ping-Pong balls. The ideas from the messy room "were rated as more interesting and creative when evaluated by impartial judges," according to the study, published in *Psychological Science*. While orderly environments "encouraged playing it safe," concludes Kathleen Vohs, one of the study's authors, "disorderly environments seem to inspire breaking free of tradition, which can produce fresh insights. Being in a messy room led to something that firms, industries, and societies want more of: creativity." Oh, here's that Einstein quote. I was sitting on it: "If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered

mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?" I think I'll keep this quote under my butt where I can find it.

### I'M A LAZY BUM SO I CAN ...

#### Boost My Mood

We all know the value of exercise: You get big muscles so you can pop the lids off pickle jars without running them under hot water. But when it comes to mental health, doing nothing has a lot going for it. "It's long been recognized, by everyone from the Buddha to John Keats, that 'doing' can be a kind of compulsion, an addiction we only fail to acknowledge as such because society praises us for it," wrote Oliver Burkeman in the *Guardian*. "Indeed, learning how to do nothing might be the most vital skill for thriving in our frenetic, overwhelmed, always-connected culture." I'm a willing student! Especially because relaxation confers so many health benefits. The Mayo Clinic says relaxation techniques can lower blood pressure, reduce muscle tension, improve concentration and mood, and increase blood flow to major muscles, like the ones I use to lower myself onto the couch.

### MY JEANS GO

#### UNWASHED SO I CAN ...

#### Make Them Last Longer

Addressing a *Fortune* magazine conference on the environment, Levi Strauss CEO Chip Bergh

pointed to his pants and said, "These jeans are maybe a year old and have yet to see a washing machine. I know that sounds totally disgusting." Not to me! Like Bergh, I never wash my jeans. Hot water and detergent make denim fade and quicken its demise. "Raw denim is best given a good six months before washing," advises British jeans manufacturer Hiut Denim. "The longer you can leave it, the better your jeans will look." Slate.com was slightly grossed out by this practice, so it asked Rachel McQueen, a professor of human ecology at the University of Alberta in Canada, how sanitary this was. While bacteria, sweat, and skin cells get transferred to clothes via the body, "skin microorganisms are generally not hazardous to ourselves," she told the site. Of course, Eau de Unwashed Jeans is not a fragrance Chanel will be marketing anytime soon. Bergh recommends spot cleaning jeans with a sponge or a toothbrush and a bit of detergent, then air-drying. **R**





# Genius Uses for Your Microwave

BY KELSEY KLOSS

■ **OUTSMART ONIONS** To avoid crying when chopping, wash an onion, trim its ends, and microwave for 30 seconds before cutting. You tear up because the knife damages the onion's cells, releasing sulfuric gas that irritates the eyes. Heating the onion first breaks apart enzymes that trigger the gas release.

■ **COOK CRISPIER BACON** Place a bowl upside down on a plate. Drape bacon strips over the bowl, then microwave for one minute for each slice of bacon you are heating. As grease drips onto the plate, the bacon will get mouthwateringly crispy.

■ **FROTH MILK** Skip the expensive cappuccino machine. Pour milk into a Mason jar, no more than half full (to leave room for foam). Screw on the lid, and vigorously shake for 30 to 60 seconds. The milk will turn

to froth. Remove the lid, and microwave for 30 seconds so the foam rises. Pour into your favorite coffee.

■ **CONCOCT FRENCH TOAST** Care for a five-minute brunch? Rub a pat of butter on the bottom of a mug; fill it to the top with chopped bread. In a separate cup, mix one egg, three tablespoons of milk, and a sprinkle of cinnamon. Pour the mixture into the mug, and microwave for one minute.

■ **FLAVOR BUTTER** Try a twist on classic bread and butter. Microwave one stick of cubed, unsalted butter for 30-second intervals, until melted. Add a pinch of salt and fresh leaves of herbs such as thyme, sage, or rosemary. Continue heating in 30-second intervals until fragrant. Drizzle it on bread for an earthy, savory flavor. **R**

Sources: everydaylife.globalpost.com; onegoodthingbyjillee.com; thekitchn.com; prettyprudent.com; foodnetwork.com

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# Foods That Trick Your Taste Buds

BY KELSEY KLOSS

## Artichokes

### SWEETEN WATER

A chemical in the vegetable called cynarin latches on to sweet receptors on your tongue without activating them. If you drink water after eating artichokes, the cynarin molecules wash away from the receptors. This sudden release simulates a sensation of sweetness, though it's only a phantom taste.

## Yogurt

### HAMPERS CHOCOLATE

Yogurt has an acidic pH (4), and when basic chocolate compounds enter this acidic environment, they dissolve and lose their characteristic flavor. The same loss in taste occurs if you bite into chocolate after eating yogurt—though your saliva's pH slightly buffers the effect.

## Salt

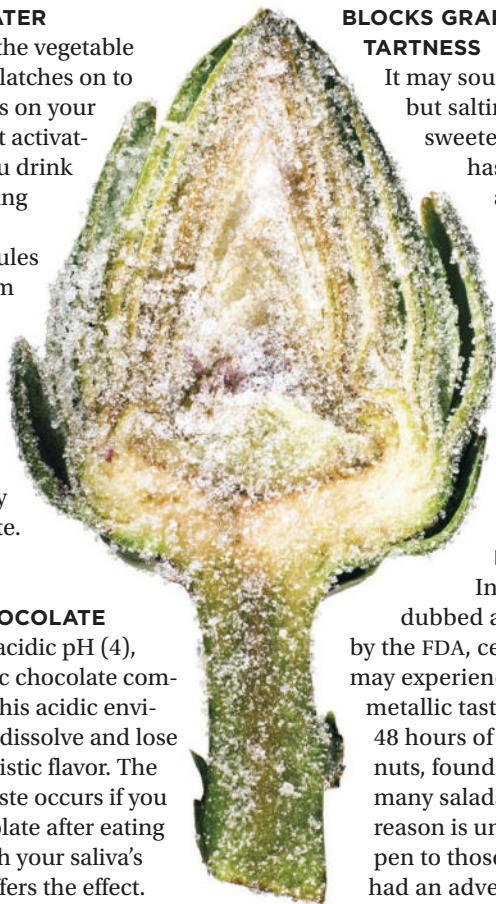
### BLOCKS GRAPEFRUIT'S TARTNESS

It may sound unpalatable, but salting grapefruit sweetens it. The fruit has both bitter and sweet compounds. Salt blocks the bitter compounds, allowing sweet flavors to be more detectable.

## Pine Nuts

### CAUSE METAL MOUTH

In what has been dubbed as pine mouth by the FDA, certain people may experience a consistent metallic taste within 12 to 48 hours of consuming pine nuts, found in pesto and many salads. Though the reason is unclear, it can happen to those who have never had an adverse reaction. It is



not an allergy and does not involve mold, and it doesn't matter how many pine nuts are consumed. Sugar may enhance the bitterness. The FDA advises people to report cases of pine mouth, but it is not considered dangerous.

## Vinaigrette

### THROWS WINE OFF-KILTER

Salad is difficult to pair with wine because your taste buds adapt to the sourness of vinaigrette. After eating it, you will be able to detect only sourness that's higher in concentration than that of the dressing. Many wines depend on a delicate balance of sweet and sour, but after your taste buds adapt to vinaigrette, you

will taste only a seemingly overbearing sweetness in the wine.

## Stevia

### TRIGGERS BITTERNESS

This zero-calorie sweetener reacts with your taste buds differently from how sugar does. While sugar triggers only sweet receptors in the mouth, stevia triggers sweet and bitter receptors. This could leave you with a bitter taste if you add too much stevia to, say, your cup of coffee. Some people's genetics may make them more prone to a long-lasting aftertaste. **R**

Sources: John Hayes, an associate professor and director of the Sensory Evaluation Center at Penn State University; Devin Peterson, director of the Flavor Research and Education Center at University of Minnesota; bbc.com; winefolly.com; jeffersondentalclinics.com; ilri.org; latimes.com; businessinsider.com; news.psu.edu

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**NOTE:** Ads were removed from this edition.  
Please continue to page 44.

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# Urine Trouble

BY SUSAN INCE

LIKE MANY WOMEN, Katherine Trent\* of Austin, Texas, had to deal with an occasional urinary tract infection (UTI) when she was younger. Symptoms were obvious (pain, burning, and a persistent need to urinate) and easy enough to clear up with antibiotics. But once Trent entered her late 60s, the sporadic UTIs of her earlier years suddenly returned—and wouldn't go away. Within a few days of one infection easing, another round of symptoms would start. This cycle continued, getting progressively worse over the course of five years. "I could tell when one was coming on. My bladder would feel irritated. I went to the bathroom frequently, and it was painful. If I couldn't get to a doctor or a walk-in clinic within 24 hours,

*\*Name has been changed.*

I would sometimes see blood in my urine," Trent recalls.

We tend to think of UTIs as a young women's problem, but many women—and men—who have never or rarely been troubled can become prone at midlife. Understanding how your age changes your risk and the best approaches to treatment can bring life-changing relief.

## Surprise Sufferers: Men

UTIs are extremely uncommon in young males. So it can come as

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a nasty surprise when men get one for the first time in their 50s, often because of an enlarged prostate.

“The prostate surrounds the urethra—the tube from the bladder through the penis—like a doughnut,” says Neil Baum, MD, an associate clinical professor of urology at Tulane University School of Medicine in Louisiana. A growing prostate compresses the urethra, causing a weak urine stream, the need to pee frequently, and a dribble after a void. If the bladder doesn’t completely empty, the reservoir of urine can become infected.

Some 5 to 10 percent of men who have an enlarged prostate experience repeat UTIs, says Dr. Baum. Medication can relax muscles in the gland or shrink it so urine can pass easily. Minimally invasive procedures to relieve blockage or pressure can also help.

## Why Women Get Worse

While blocked pipes can cause an upswing in UTIs in men, weakened pipe linings—a result of menopause—contribute to women’s increased risk. This was a factor in Katherine Trent’s repeated infections.

Prior to menopause, estrogen keeps the lining of the urinary tract thick and healthy, producing germ-killing

compounds and limiting the ability of infection-causing microbes to invade tissues. As estrogen levels decrease during menopause, the germ-fighting capability and physical barrier of the urinary tract weaken and the mix of bacteria in the vagina changes—all of which can increase the odds of developing UTIs.

Antibiotics treat acute infections, but other treatments may be necessary to prevent recurrences. In 2013, Swedish researchers reported that a few weeks of topical estrogen treatment in postmenopausal women strengthened the urinary tract wall,

making it less prone to infection. Trent’s urologist suggested that she apply a prescription estrogen cream to the vaginal area every day for a few weeks and then follow a less frequent regimen. The urologist also supported Trent’s idea to use vaginal suppositories containing probiotics (see “Cut Your Infection Risk,” page 46). Trent hasn’t had a UTI in 18 months, and last summer she spent a month in London—a vacation she would not have been able to fully enjoy while UTIs were controlling her life.

If you start experiencing UTIs out of nowhere, your doctor will want to rule out other issues. “If standard treatments fail, we check for stones

“

***Changes in the immune system make seniors likely to become delirious when they have a UTI.***

in the bladder or kidneys,” says Elizabeth Mobley, MD, of the Urology Team in Austin, Texas. If you have poorly controlled diabetes, UTIs hang around longer, since bacteria feed off sugars that spill into the urine.

## The Scariest Symptom: Delirium

Two years ago, when Meredith Channing made her daily phone call from Hawaii to her elderly mom in the Midwest, she knew something had gone dramatically wrong.

“One day, she was happy; the next, she was nasty, paranoid, and totally

off her rocker,” Channing says. “She was telling me that the neighbors were stealing from her and something had entered her apartment and moved her sewing machine.”

Others in Channing’s shoes might have panicked and suspected dementia, but Channing knew better. While she was caring for her mother-in-law several years earlier, the older woman had developed two UTIs and become confused and suspicious during both infections. “You can really mistake the symptoms for insanity or dementia and think that it’s time to ramp up the home care or consider a nursing ➡



## CUT YOUR INFECTION RISK

■ **Boost good bacteria.** Small studies have found that women with repeat UTIs are less likely to get another if they use vaginal suppositories with the probiotic *lactobacillus*, which balances good and bad bacteria.

■ **Drink cranberry juice.** In a 2012 meta-analysis, cranberry juice and supplements reduced repeat UTIs.

■ **Wipe the way Mom taught you.** The most common UTI-causing germs are *E. coli* bacteria from the gastrointestinal tract, so wipe from front to back to avoid moving the bugs closer to your urinary tract.

■ **Excuse yourself after intercourse.** Peeing after sex gives bacteria less chance to enter the urinary tract.

■ **Drink lots of water.** When you urinate, bacteria are flushed from the urinary tract, so drink enough to go regularly, especially if you have incontinence. Those prone to leakage often restrict fluids to prevent accidents, but this is a recipe for infection.

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home. The most wonderful thing about resolving a UTI is that the person can become herself again," says Channing.

Channing asked for her mom to be tested even though she had no typical symptoms. Sure enough, she had an infection. With treatment, she was back to normal in two days.

Seniors may be more likely to become delirious when they fight a condition such as a UTI or pneumonia because of changes in the immune system, explains Timothy Girard, MD, an assistant professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Many older adults don't have the usual symptoms. If you suspect a loved one might have a UTI because of changes in her behavior, get her tested, urges Dr. Girard. "Prompt treatment can help avoid delirium, sepsis, and kidney failure," he says.

## Hospitals: A Danger Zone

Up to 25 percent of all hospitalized patients receive a urinary catheter, significantly raising the risk of a UTI—

which sufferers very commonly acquire at a health-care facility. Germs can enter this slim tube, which drains fluid from the bladder, if the device is inserted incorrectly, not kept clean, or left in too long.

If you're hospitalized, ask every day whether you still need a catheter. If the medical staff says yes, ask why. Making care more convenient isn't a good enough reason if there are other options, such as using a bedside commode. Walk around as soon as possible after surgery to speed recovery and shorten your catheter time.

"Speak up if anyone starts to adjust the catheter without first washing his hands or if you see that the tubing is kinked or the bag is positioned above the patient's abdomen. Keeping it low helps prevent urine from backing up," says Lona Mody, MD, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This advice is also important if a loved one has been transferred to a nursing home, where patients with a catheter are at double the risk of developing a UTI. **R**



## THE QUIETEST SQUARE INCH IN AMERICA

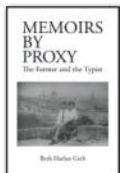
It's in Olympic National Park, in Washington, according to acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton. The inch can go 20 minutes without picking up a single human-made sound, making it quieter than most recording studios.

Source: outsideonline.com



**Uncontrolled Spin**  
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Romance, sexual attraction and witty conversation spin off into twisted revenge when Wendy, who shares a very dark past with her brother, realizes she is excited by the secret roll of serial killing, viewing herself as an Angel of Mercy.



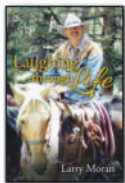
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*The Farmer and the Typist*  
Beth Harlan Greb  
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In *Memoirs by Proxy*, author Beth Harlan Greb examines the lives of her parents, who left behind documents and letters that allowed her to follow the journey of an American family, in their own words, from humble beginnings to prosperity.



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*Rectifying the Myriad of Perspectives*  
Koichi Mera  
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*Comfort Women Not Sex-Slaves* presents an alternative view about Comfort Women to the prevailing one in the United States, but is well established in Japan. This is a story of misconception that spreads widely in the world as a wildfire.



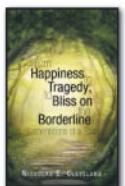
**Laughing through Life**  
Larry Moran  
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*Laughing through Life* provides a hilarious look at what it was like growing up in a large family in a small town during the 1950s and 1960s. It guides readers through childhood, teen years, early adulthood and beyond.



**Timmy Turtle and the Laughing Manatee**  
Carol Schacht  
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Bundled with vivid illustrations and a charming, insightful story, *Timmy Turtle and the Laughing Manatee* is a captivating children's book that takes young readers on an adventure with a baby sea turtle and his encounters with other ocean creatures.



**From Happiness to Tragedy; To Bliss on the Borderline**  
*(Lamentations of a Fool)*  
Nicholas E. Cleveland  
www.authorhouse.com  
\$19.95 sc | \$3.99 eb

A roller coaster ride in the fashions of Shadowlands" and "Fatal Attraction" describes the author's life with his two wives, the tumultuous romances and relations, and his time with a beautiful, sex crazed woman with borderline personality disorder.



These simple moves can reveal hidden problems to ask your MD about

# A Lifesaving At-Home Checkup

BY JESSICA CASSITY



## 1 BALANCE ON ONE LEG

Hold for up to 60 seconds. If you wobble early, you may be at higher risk for brain decline. In a Japanese study, 30 percent of older adults who could balance for only 20 seconds or fewer had micro-bleeds in the brain, an early indication of risk for stroke or dementia. These micro-bleeds can affect balance, memory, and decision making.



## 2 TOUCH YOUR TOES

Sit with your spine straight, then lean forward and try to touch your toes. Not even close? You might be at risk for cardiovascular problems. By using this test, University of North Texas researchers found that inflexible folks had less-elastic arteries than those who were more lithe. Stiff arteries mean the heart has to work harder, raising the risk of heart attack or stroke.



## 3 SITTING TO STANDING

Time how long it takes to lift and lower yourself from a chair ten times as fast as you can. Middle-aged adults who did ten reps in 21 seconds or fewer were less likely to die over the next 13 years than those who took longer. The test requires muscle strength, balance, and cardiorespiratory fitness; being slow could indicate underlying disease before symptoms arise. **R**

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Excited to see Nexium  
24HR on the shelves  
★★★★★ -John518

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★★★★★ -PATRICK34

**THANK YOU NEXIUM 24HR**  
★★★★★ -RoyBoy64  
I couldn't be happier  
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\*Based on IRI sales data 52 weeks ending 11/1/15 among OTC brands. \*\*It's possible while taking Nexium 24HR. Use as directed for 14 days to treat frequent heartburn. Do not take for more than 14 days or more often than every 4 months unless directed by a doctor. Not for immediate relief. May take 1-4 days for full effect. © 2016 Pfizer Inc.



# Seeing My Diagnosis Differently

BY MELISSA ZHU MURPHY FROM PULSE—  
VOICES FROM THE HEART OF MEDICINE



MELISSA ZHU MURPHY is currently an anesthesiology resident at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

AS I WAS finishing my freshman year at Vanderbilt University, I joined my parents in an Italian restaurant, celebrating the completion of my first year of premedical studies.

My father was blissfully breathing in the steam from his ravioli in lobster cream sauce as my mother prepared to dig in to a plate of basil penne pasta with spicy meatballs. I lifted a forkful of manicotti, about to describe how hard I'd studied for finals. Then I realized that something was very wrong.

My fork had twisted itself into a bizarre shape, like something out of a Salvador Dalí painting. The pasta on my plate, too, was distorted. I looked up at my parents, at the waiter pouring our wine. Everything was weirdly curved to one side, as though it were being sucked into an invisible vacuum cleaner somewhere off to my right.

We left in a hurry. My parents drove me to a local eye hospital, where I was assigned to see a retinal specialist. A middle-

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (MURPHY)

aged man, Dr. Essers,\* greeted us politely. Never had I felt such anxiety while hearing familiar words: “Put your chin right here, please ... Press your forehead up against the bar ... That’s right; now look at my ear.”

Five minutes later, Dr. Essers whistled under his breath. “There it is,” he said softly. “There’s a blood clot on the back of your retina. It behaves similarly to macular degeneration, but it can be caused by trauma.”

“Macular degeneration in a healthy 20-year-old girl, occurring while eating Italian food?” I said, bewildered.

“Or it may be related to your myopia,” he added, turning to order more testing. “I’m sorry,” he continued distractedly, tapping on the computer keys. “I’m afraid this means that you’ll go blind within two weeks ...”

I blinked a few times, making sure I hadn’t misunderstood. Using my minimal medical knowledge, I explained the diagnosis to my parents, still struggling to make sense of it.

The other test results were reassuring but puzzling. My retina was not actively bleeding, so what was causing this distortion? Dr. Essers offered no further explanation. “We’ll continue to monitor your condition,” he said. “Come back in one month.”

I felt my enthusiasm for medicine fading, replaced by doubt and suspicion about physicians, Dr. Essers in particular. I oscillated between worry and wild speculations.

The next day, I got a second opinion from Dr. Smith,\* a young ophthalmologist noted for his academic and surgical accomplishments. After examining my eyes, he rolled his chair back, looked at me, and said, “Tell me about yourself, Melissa. How is school? What do you study?”

“Well, I’m premed. We had finals the last two weeks. It was pretty stressful ...” Dr. Smith listened attentively. After about ten minutes, he said, “Well, from what I hear, I think you have central serous retinopathy. It’s induced by stress, and although it’s rare—it occurs in only one in 100,000 females—it’s more common in young people.” He found a hand-out. Grabbing a marker, he highlighted the prognosis: Most patients recover without intervention. “I think you’re going to be OK,” he said. “I’ll see you in a month. In the meantime, try to relax, because stress is the main cause of your condition.”

After minutes of listening, Dr. Smith had performed a medical miracle. I’d gone from imminent blindness to an almost certain recovery.

Seven years later, as a resident in anesthesiology, I’ve never forgotten my debt of gratitude to Dr. Smith. He showed me the most important instruments in every doctor’s toolkit: an open mind, listening ears, and the right words, carefully chosen. **R**

*\*Names have been changed.*

NEWS FROM THE

# World of Medicine

BY KELSEY KLOSS

## Unexpected Danger in Operating Rooms

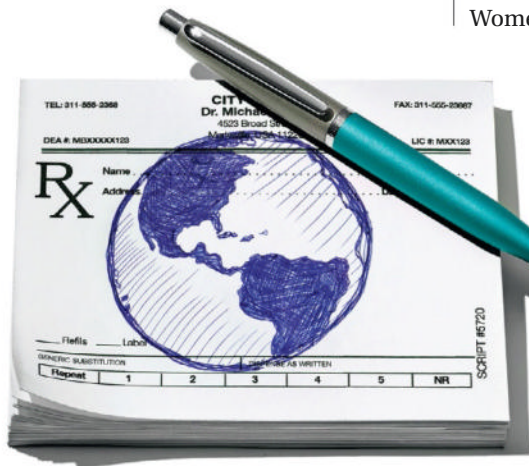
Foot traffic in a surgical space may raise a patient's risk of infection. Most U.S. operating rooms have systems that keep atmospheric pressure higher than in the surrounding corridors, which prevents germs from entering. However, in an analysis of 200 procedures, doors were opened frequently enough during more than one third of the surgeries to defeat the system's safety effects. Staff should reduce the number of times OR doors are opened (by ensuring the room is stocked first, for example).

## Why Some Smokers Don't Get Sick

Smoking clearly raises cancer risk, but some people appear to have mysteriously healthy lungs after a lifetime of lighting up. Genetic luck may be key. After analyzing more than 50,000 people, British researchers found certain DNA mutations enhanced lung function and lessened smoking's deadly impact. Not smoking is still (obviously) the healthiest option, but the findings could lead to new drugs to improve lung function.

## Lump Wasn't Cancer? Be Vigilant Anyway

Women who receive a false-positive mammogram (one that detects an abnormality that upon further testing is found not to be cancer) may need to be especially diligent about getting regular cancer screenings. After researchers analyzed two million mammograms, they found patients with false-positive results referred for additional imaging were 39 percent more likely—and those ➡



PROP STYLIST: ROBIN FINLAY

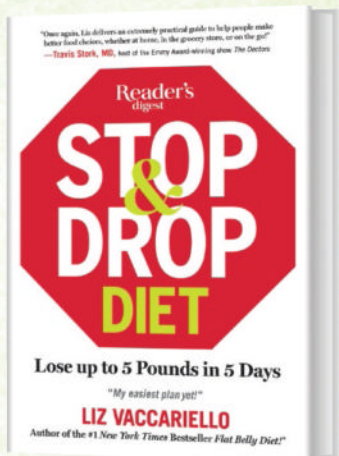


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Donna Lindskog is an  
employee of *Reader's Digest*.

**Reader's**  
digest

referred for a biopsy, 76 percent more likely—to develop breast cancer in ten years than were women with true negative results.

## Downside of Being Mom's Favorite

Were you the golden child? It may not make you happy. Purdue University and Iowa State University researchers found that depressive symptoms were most common in adult children who claimed to be closer to their mothers than their siblings were. Sibling rivalry may play a role (a mother's attention may not nullify negative attention from jealous siblings), or favorites may be likelier to care for an aging mother, which can take an emotional toll.

## Working Out May Cause Alcohol Cravings

Pennsylvania State University researchers recruited 150 adults to complete daily diaries on physical activity and alcohol consumption. Regardless of age and gender, active folks consistently drank more than their couch potato peers. People who exercise may look to further a post-workout high or reward themselves for exercising with alcohol.

## A Key Reason Men Overeat

When men dine in mixed company, they may overindulge, partly to impress the fairer sex. Cornell University researchers observed adults

at an all-you-can-eat Italian buffet for two weeks, recording how much pizza and salad each ate. Men with at least one woman ate 93 percent more pizza and 86 percent more salad than men with other men. The amount that women ate didn't differ based on their companions' gender.

## Can Viagra Prevent Diabetes?

In a recent study, 42 overweight people with prediabetes received either generic Viagra or a placebo. After three months, the drug takers were more sensitive to insulin, meaning their risk of diabetes could be lower, than were those in the control group. Viagra stops an enzyme from breaking down chemicals that increase insulin sensitivity. Researchers say the drug could potentially help treat metabolic disorders.

## Lifetime Perk of Being Fit

Exercised regularly in your 20s? It will likely pay off. A *JAMA Internal Medicine* study analyzed data of 4,800 participants, beginning in 1985. The longer someone could perform on a treadmill test as a young adult, the less likely he or she was to die of any cause, including heart disease and cancer, in 25 years. Consistency was important: When participants were tested seven years after the study started, every minute of decrease in treadmill time raised mortality risk 21 percent. **R**

**HOW'S YOUR VISION?** Did you know your eyes no longer get the necessary nutrients from food alone as you age?



# CAN YOU READ THIS?

**Age-Related Macular Degeneration affects 1 in 3 Adults over the age of 50.**

Lipotriad Visionary is the only Dye Free, AREDS 2 based formulation that contains all 6 key ingredients including the recommended 10mg of Lutein & 2.5mg of Zeaxanthin in an easy 1-per-day serving. Government research has shown that an AREDS 2 formula eye vitamin can reduce the risk of developing advanced macular degeneration up to 25%.

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# A Day's Work

## THE OPTIMIST

Thinking of asking the boss for a raise? Heed this lesson from Dilbert.



From *Optimism Sounds Exhausting* (Andrews McMeel) by Scott Adams

**A WOMAN CALLED** our airline customer-service desk asking if she could take her dog on board.

"Sure," I said, "as long as you provide your own kennel." I further explained that the kennel needed to be large enough for the dog to stand up, sit down, turn around, and roll over.

The customer was flummoxed: "I'll never be able to teach him all of that by tomorrow!"

From gcfl.net

**JUST BEFORE** the final exam in my college finance class, a less-than-stellar student approached me.

"Can you tell me what grade I would need to get on the exam

to pass the course?" he asked.

I gave him the bad news. "The exam is worth 100 points. You would need 113 points to earn a D."

"OK," he said. "And how many points would I need to get a C?"

AIMEE PRAWITZ, Sycamore, Illinois

**DON'T GET UPSET** if I ask you where something is in Target when you choose to wear a red shirt and khakis to shop.

Humorist REID KERR

**CLIENT TO DESIGNER:** "It doesn't really look purple. It looks more like a mixture of red and blue."

Source: clientsfromhell.net



**IF SLOGANS** for your favorite brands were honest, they'd look like these:

**Hallmark:** "When you care enough to give a card mass-produced by a corporation."

**Ritz crackers:** "Tiny, edible plates."

**CliffsNotes:** "They're still going to know you didn't read the book."

**Gillette:** "We're just going to keep adding blades."

**ChapStick:** "You'll misplace it before the tube's empty."

**Hot Pockets:** "Every bite is a different temperature."

Source: honestslogans.com

**MY SISTER-IN-LAW** was teaching Sunday school class. The topic for the day: Easter Sunday and the resurrection of Christ.

"What did Jesus do on this day?" she asked. There was no response, so she gave her students a hint: "It starts with the letter R."

One boy blurted, "Recycle!"

**MARI-LYNN FINLEY**, Los Angeles, California

You can buy lots of Easter Peeps with the money you'll get if we run your work story. Go to [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit) for details.

## A POLITICIAN APPLIES FOR A JOB AT MCDONALD'S



I am here to announce my application for the position of line cook at this McDonald's location. Let me take a moment to introduce myself. First and foremost, I am a fast-food outsider: I have never set foot in one of these places. What that means is, I won't accept business as usual. I will ask questions. Why do we need to empty the grease trap? How does the cash register work? What is the maximum holding time for a pan of chicken patties?

What I bring to the table is a commonsense, home cook's approach to making hamburgers. We don't need volumes of market research to tell us how to cook a Big Mac. All we need is a hot griddle and old-fashioned American know-how. Also, we will eventually need a bun and toppings.

Our grandparents didn't need fancy timers and thermometers to tell them when their food was cooked. They didn't worry about egghead concepts like maximum customer waiting time or salmonella. That was a simpler time, and I believe we can still go back to that simpler time.

I am ready to roll up my sleeves, put on a hairnet and nonskid shoes, and get to work. But I can't do it without your support. That's why I'm asking you to hire me as your new weekday line cook, except Thursdays, when I've got this other thing, and also I need next week off.

**BEN GODAR**, on [splitsider.com](http://splitsider.com)



← RESTROOMS

# Is your **BLADDER** calling the shots?



Talk to your doctor about Myrbetriq® (mirabegron), approved by the FDA to treat overactive bladder (OAB) 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 YOUR OAB SYMPTOMS STARTS WITH TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR.

Visit [Myrbetriq.com](http://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.



## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

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

Please see additional Important Safety Information on next page.

[www.apadana-ielts.com](http://www.apadana-ielts.com)

## 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 (continued)

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.

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

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



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**Myrbetriq® (mirabegron) extended-release tablets 25 mg, 50 mg****Brief Summary based on FDA-approved patient labeling**

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

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

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

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

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

**Who should not use Myrbetriq?**

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

**What is overactive bladder?**

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

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

Before you take Myrbetriq, tell your doctor if you:

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

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

Tell your doctor if you take:

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

**How should I take Myrbetriq?**

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

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

Myrbetriq may cause serious side effects including:

- **increased blood pressure.** Myrbetriq may cause your blood pressure to increase or make your blood pressure worse if you have a history of high blood pressure. It is recommended that your doctor check your blood pressure while you are taking Myrbetriq.

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

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

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

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

These are not all the possible side effects of Myrbetriq.

For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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

### How should I store Myrbetriq?

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

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

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

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

### Where can I go for more information?

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

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

### What are the ingredients in Myrbetriq?

**Active ingredient:** mirabegron

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

### Rx Only

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Manufactured by:

**Astellas Pharma Technologies, Inc.**  
Norman, Oklahoma 73072

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Northbrook, Illinois 60062



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

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LIFE IN THESE UNITED STATES

# Funny Fam

**Ha!**

*Our humor editor,  
Andy Simmons,  
takes his daughter,  
Quinn, out for  
dessert.*



# Family Stories

You can't choose your relatives—but you can choose to laugh at them



As that paragon of fatherhood Homer Simpson once told his brood, “Remember, as far as anyone knows, we’re a nice, normal family.” Then again, we’ve never met a normal family. With that in mind, we invited readers to share hilarious stories about their kith and kin with the chance to win a \$500 grand prize. After sifting through the many anecdotes, we can honestly say each family is uniquely eccentric.

## Bloody Awful

When my five-year-old daughter came down with a virus, I took her to the doctor’s office. Holding her hands, I explained the sad facts: “The doctor is now going to draw some blood.”

Calmly and stoically, she responded, “Whose?”

**FAYE HINTZ**, *Glendora, California*

## Hung Jury

After painting the bedroom walls, my husband prepared to put back the pictures. “How should I hang them?” he asked me. “Too high or too low?”

**NANCY SETTER**, *Tulsa, Oklahoma*

## Pooped Out

Upon being reminded to use the toilet after waking up, my four-year-old was thoroughly dismayed: “You mean I’m going to have to go potty every day for the rest of my life?!”

**PENELOPE INAN**, *Palmdale, California*

## Harvard, Here I Come!

“How was your first day of school?” I asked my kindergartner.

“Fine,” she said. “They want me to come back tomorrow.”

**SHIRLEY SPRAGUE**, *Concord, California*

## The Gutter Truth

Although my daughter wasn’t much of a bowler, when her friend’s bowling team was down a player, my daughter agreed to fill in. “So how’d you do?” I asked a few days later.

She rattled off her scores: “One sixty, one sixty-seven, and one fifty-five.”

“Wow! That’s great.”

“No! One game sixty, one sixty-seven, one fifty-five.”

**RUTH SAARELA**, *Garden City, Michigan*

## Little Einstein

We’re not sure how it happened, but my three-year-old nephew James got his tricycle stuck under another bicycle’s tire and gear mechanism. My four-year-old kid, Rowan, watched him patiently and painstakingly extricate the trike, then turned around to us and declared, “Him’s a genius!”

**B. O.**, *Montclair, New Jersey*

**D'oh!**

*The Hulls hold  
Jonathan back  
from joining  
the circus.*





## Let's Rat Out Grandma

During Thanksgiving dinner, my young niece Mackenzie started fiddling with my father's wedding band. Dad said, "That never comes off. You know why? Because I love your nana."

That's when Mackenzie informed him, "Nana takes hers off."

**ELIZABETH VELDBOOM,**  
*New Braunfels, Texas*

## And on the Seventh Day, He Got Paid

In church, my three-year-old insists on being the one to put the money into the collection basket. One Sunday, as the basket came toward him, he held out the envelope and asked aloud, "When is God coming to pick up his paycheck?"

**CHRIS ALLEN,** *St. Louis, Missouri*

## Hear No Evil

It was a typical noisy dinner at my parents' home, and Dad was having trouble following the conversations. He kept jumping in with off-topic comments and asking for things to be repeated. I finally told him he needed to get a hearing aid.

Looking at me as if I were crazy, he said, "What would I do with a hand grenade?"

**PAT TORNATORE,** *St. Louis, Missouri*

## Mystery Man

My ex-husband hosted a graduation party for our son that included his new family and mine. My confused

nephew wondered who was my son's father. When I pointed him out, he asked, "Do you know him?"

**LAURIE STRAND,** *Vernon Hills, Illinois*

## Blow Out the Pipes

I take after my father in the sense that we both have proud, prodigious noses. Anyway, one morning, following a night of tossing and turning, I sat on the side of the bed. "What's wrong?" my husband asked.

"I can't sleep," I said. "My nose is so stuffed up."

My loving man got out of bed and said, "Let me go get the plunger."

**LISA BOUDREAU,** *Yorkville, Illinois*

## Listen to Reason

"Can you play with me?" my preschooler asked.

"Not now," I said. "I have too much work to do around the house."

Taking my hand, and with the wisdom of one who has lived many a lifetime, he said, "Mom, I have advice for you. When people tell me to do work, I don't listen to them. Then I don't have work to do. It works for me. You should try it."

**A. CALDWELL,** *Farmington, New Mexico*

## Yeah, He's Always There

We ran into our minister at the mall, but my son couldn't place him. It was only later that it hit him. "I know that man," he said. "He goes to our church."

**CHARLES STOCKHAUSEN,** *St. Louis, Missouri*

## Book Him

A book I'd ordered arrived in the mail. I unwrapped it and flipped through its pages. My 21-year-old son, Sean, was at the other end of the table, gesturing as if he wanted to see the book. I started to hand it to him, when he stopped me.

"No, I'll take the trash," Sean said. "What would I do with a book?"

MARY KELLEY, *Gillette, Wyoming*

## Over and Out

When her six-year-old daughter and four-year-old son ran outside to play with their new toy, my sister sat back to enjoy a cup of coffee and a rare moment of quiet. The peace was shattered when my nephew ran back into the house, crying.

"What's wrong?" my sister asked.

"She won't stop calling me Roger!" he sobbed, and threw down his new walkie-talkie.

MELISSA JOHNSON, *Johnson City, Tennessee*

## That's My Girl!

Herein lies the difference in my kids' personalities: My teenage son bought me a beautiful necklace; my daughter called dibs on it when I die.

JENNI PHOMSITHI, *Belleville, Arkansas*

## Driven to Distraction

My mother and father were driving when she was pulled over by the police. Mom was in a hurry and told the officer so.

"I understand, ma'am," he said.

**Hee!**

"Did you hear the one about ...," says comedian Beck.



"But I have to ticket anyone over 55."

Mom was beside herself. "That's discrimination!" she shouted.

The officer calmly explained, "I meant the speed limit."

TAMARA ENCKE, *Holladay, Utah*

## The Anatomy Lesson

Great hoopla followed my newborn son's umbilical cord's falling off. So it was only natural that during one of his diaper changes, his eight-year-old sister would point and ask excitedly, "Will that fall off too?"

SUSAN WISE, *Campbellsville, Kentucky*





**Honk!**

says RD editor  
Courtenay Smith's  
daughter,  
Angela.

## Careful What You Wish For

My son and his wife were determined to have a boy, and two years after their fourth daughter, Bridgette, was born, Trey arrived. When he was six, Trey complained to Bridgette that he had no one to play with and wished she were a boy.

"You'd better be glad I'm not a boy," she told him. "Because if I was a boy, my name would be Trey, and you wouldn't be here."

**BETTIE CASHION**, *Picayune, Mississippi*

## Stable Relationship

We had just pulled up to the pig farm when my aunt bolted out the front door of her home to greet us. After the hugs and kisses, Dad asked about my uncle.

"He's in the barn with the pigs," she said. "Don't worry; you won't have any trouble finding him. He's the only one with a hat on."

**MONIQUE LAPERLE**, *Burlington, Vermont*

## Better Than Milk

I walked into our family room just in time to see our kitten standing on a side table, sniffing my husband's wineglass. "Get down!" I yelled.

As she jumped away, I turned to my husband and son: "I've never seen her do that."

My son shrugged. "Really? We watch her drink out of your glass all the time."

**REBECCA PERVERE**, *Fairfield, Connecticut*

## Good Question

Having absorbed the birds-and-the-bees discussion, my sister's young son asked, "Is that how we were born?"

"Yes, it is," she said.

He took it all in for a second, then, pointing to his father across the room, asked, "Where'd we get him?"

**KATHLEEN O'HARA**, *via e-mail*

## Oh, Deer

One year, the family went to the *Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular*. The Rockettes represented reindeer by wearing headband antlers. At the end of the show, I asked my husband, a biologist, what he thought.

"The antlers were wrong," he said.

"What?" I asked incredulously.

"Reindeer have palmate antlers. Those were white-tailed bucks' antlers."

I knew he wasn't kidding. I just couldn't believe he hadn't noticed anything below the antlers.

**SANDY FEINSTEIN**, *Silver Spring, Maryland*

## Awkward ...

"So I understand how a baby can look like its mother," my nine-year-old son told the school nurse. "But how can it look like its father?"

Unsure how much he knew about where babies come from, she deflected. "That's a good question," she said. "So who do you look like?"

"My uncle."

**PENNY GREGORY**, *Richmond Hill, Georgia*

## Hair Apparent

Pointing to a 30-year-old picture of me, my five-year-old granddaughter said, “Grandpa, next time you get a haircut, have them cut it like that picture.”

Problem is, I wasn’t half bald then.

ALLEN JOCHIM,  
*Spearfish, South Dakota*

## Seeing Is Believing

After my mother suffered a bout of serious headaches, we persuaded her to visit her doctor. While we were in his office, the doctor asked, “Have you been seeing any flashes of lights or auras?”

“I don’t know,” Mom said. “I didn’t have my glasses on.”

JUDY KELLEY, *Conway, Arkansas*

## Oh, Fudge

We were driving to dinner when my five-year-old shouted, “Guess what! I know the F-word!”

Saying to myself, “Now it starts,” I asked him what it was.

He proudly announced, “Phonics!”

STACY STEVENSON, *Tucson, Arizona*

## Save the Snoozing For Class

My brother was trying to awaken his son for school one day, but the boy wouldn’t budge. “Gimme a minute,” he said. “I’m watching previews for tomorrow’s dream.”

KIMBERLEE WOODWARD,  
*Waterford, Michigan*

## With a Side of Argument

We were in a restaurant, perusing the menu, when I let my husband know that he rarely paid attention to me when I spoke. Well, of course he disagreed, so we went back to reading our menus in chilly silence. After a few uncomfortable minutes, I said, “I think I’m getting a headache.”

He responded, “Go ahead, sweetheart; get whatever you want.”

ANGEL SALAMANCA, *via e-mail*

## Whatta Pistil

Our daughter-in-law was telling her three-year-old about the brain surgery he had had when he was an infant. “Why did I have to have the operation?” he asked.

“Because you had something growing in your head,” she answered.

His next question: “Was it a flower?”

MARILYN LINDBERG, *Providence, Utah*

## Gee, Thanks ...

Just as I got out of the shower, my three-year-old son walked into the bathroom. As I frantically grabbed for my robe, he quickly assured me, “It’s OK, Mom; I won’t laugh.”

ELLA ROBBINS,  
*Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*

## Checked Out

Mail from the bank was piling up for my daughter, who was away at college. So I called her. “Open one up and see what it is,” she said.

I unsealed an envelope. “It says

your account has insufficient funds.”  
“That’s got to be a mistake,” she said. “I still have plenty of checks left.”

**PATTY HAPPY**, *Granville, New York*

## No. 1 on the Naughty List

Seven-year-old Lily is very polite. So as her grandparents, we let her know just how proud of her we were. She smiled gratefully and said, “That’s OK; I’m just trying to get through Christmas.”

**NATHAN DUNAWAY**,  
*Madison, Mississippi*

## Dr. Hubby

Mom had a small decorative windmill in her yard. A storm broke one of the blades, causing the windmill to shake violently. Dad announced that he would “take care of it” and rebalanced the windmill by snapping off the opposing blade. Watching him, Mom remarked, “I hope I never break a leg.”

**GERALD LOFFREDO**,  
*Chandler, Arizona*

## Flip a Coin

“Are you going to have a boy or girl?” my four-year-old nephew asked while staring at my pregnant stomach.

“I don’t know,” I told him.  
“When will you decide?”

**CINDY FORISH**, *Red Oak, Texas*

## Why, Yes. Yes, You Do

Once, when my mother asked me if she had any annoying habits, I observed that she typically follows up statements with a question asking for validation. She thought a moment and then admitted, “I do do that. Don’t I?”

**BILL SPENCER**,  
*Cullowhee, North Carolina*



For the second week in a row, my son and I were the only ones who showed up for his soccer team’s practice. Frustrated, I told him, “Please tell your coach that we keep coming for practice but no one is ever here.”

My son rolled his eyes and said, “He’ll just tell me the same thing he did before.”

“Which was?”

“That practice is now on Wednesdays, not Tuesdays.”

**ANNETTE OLSEN**,  
*Layton, Utah*

## Deep Thoughts

It was autumn, and the leaves were at their colorful best. My four-year-old son looked out the window and said, “Look, Mom; the trees have their pajamas on.”

**BETTY CHILDRESS**,  
*Grand Rapids, Michigan*

## Wherefore Art Thou?

My granddaughter loves my Chihuahua puppy so much, she asked, “When you die, can I have Romeo?”

“Of course,” I said.

She was thrilled. “Oh, I can’t wait!” **R**

**BARBARA CORREY**,  
*Woodbury, Tennessee*



EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE



*Angel Flight has taught  
Larry Camerlin, above,  
“to be grateful for who  
we have in our lives  
as opposed to what  
we have.”*



Heroes who make a difference  
in our darkest hours

# Angels *in* America

REPORTED BY AMY PATUREL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RON HAVIV/VII

## THE GIFT OF FLIGHT

**L**arry Camerlin knows what desperation sounds like. Each week, his small Massachusetts office answers dozens of frantic phone calls from families of very sick people who hope Larry and his team can help.

What they need are flights—to a liver or kidney transplant, to receive ongoing chemotherapy and radiation, or to treat severe burns or other crippling diseases at medical centers far away from home.

As the founder of Angel Flight Northeast, a group that connects patients in need with volunteer pilots who shepherd them, Larry, 68, has never turned away a request.

“People come to us at some of the most frightening times of their lives—they’re running out of money, out of time, and out of faith,” says Larry, who pilots some trips himself while also overseeing scheduling, fund-raising, and other administrative responsibilities. “We help replace that fear with tremendous healing and hope.”



Larry, a father of four and grandfather of six, has spent his entire career providing hope during trauma. He and his wife, Ruth, built a successful ambulance company, and after they sold the business in 1994, Larry got his pilot's license. Then he read a magazine article about a pilot in California who flew a ten-year-old boy to receive cancer treatment and immediately knew what his next chapter would be. "This enormous emotional wave hit me," Larry says. "This is what God wants me to do."

The first Angel Flight NE trip took to the skies on May 31, 1996. Today, Larry relies on a network of nearly 500 volunteer pilots who donate their own time, planes, and fuel. Larry's crews on the ground, Earth Angels, drive patients to and from the airport. To date, Angel Flight NE has helped 65,000 people. Bonds between patients and pilots can last for weeks, months, or longer. One cancer patient took more than 585 trips over ten years. And every single one—for every single patient—is free of charge.

"Sometimes patients can't talk to their family about their fears, but being up in the heavens, it's therapeutic to talk to a pilot helping you get better," Larry says. "Mothers, if their children are asleep, may break down about how difficult it is to see their

kids so badly hurt." Not every journey, of course, has a storybook ending. Larry had been flying a boy with a life-threatening genetic disorder from Maine to Boston for years.

"He was witty, fun, and insightful—an 11-going-on-40-with-a-PhD-from-Harvard type," says Larry. One day, he got a call from the boy's mother: "Benjamin [name has been changed] is dying, and he would like to see you." Larry flew there the next day.

"Why does God hate me?" Benjamin asked Larry. "I'm only a little boy, and I'm dying. I shouldn't be dying as a little boy."

Larry thought for a second. "Look how smart you are, how good you are, how many people you've touched," he said. "God needs you to be one of his special angels. He loves you so much; that's why he wants you."

That flight home from Benjamin's house felt different from usual. "The closer I got to home, the sky became more flushed with yellow and orange," Larry remembers. "The sun dipped below the horizon as I touched down my wheels. Everything was so ethereal. It was like God was telling me everything was going to be OK."

“**People come to us when they are running out of money, time, and faith. We replace their fear with hope.**”

Visit [angelflightne.org](http://angelflightne.org) for more information.

*The New York City Threshold Choir sings to a patient at New York's Haven Hospice.*

## SINGING TO THE SUFFERING

**H**er friend was dying of AIDS, and Kate Munger didn't quite know how to help. She volunteered for a shift at his Petaluma, California, home. "When it was time to sit by his bedside, I was terrified," says Kate, 66. He was agitated, thrashing under the sheets. So Kate did what she always did when she felt afraid—she began to sing:

"There's a moon / There's a star in the sky / There's a cloud / There's a tear in my eye / There's a light / There's a night that is long / There's a friend / There's a pain that is gone."

Kate repeated the lyrics over and over, singing for two and a half hours. "It calmed me down, which calmed him down," she recalls. "I knew I had given him the very best gift that I could. And by the time I finished

singing, I knew this was something that would be shared." And the Threshold Choir was born—now a group of 1,300 volunteers in 120 chapters around the world who provide comfort through song to people on the threshold of life.

"We're death- and tear-phobic in our culture," says Kate, who lives outside San Francisco, where the first choirs were founded in 2000. "We tend to make ourselves busy when we should sit down or pray or hold someone's hand." Singing gives a patient's family "permission to be authentic with their tears, their laughter, their sorrow, their grief," says Kate.

When invited to a bedside, choir volunteers select from a repertoire of about 300 songs, many written by Kate and other choir members specifically to convey presence, peace,

and comfort. “We sing very softly and quite close,” says Kate. “We’re trying to re-create the distance between a mother’s mouth and a baby’s ear.”

Kate, who has sung at hundreds of bedsides, recalls singing to a newborn daughter of a Cuban musician two days before the infant died at 17 days old. The choir started with all the Spanish songs its members knew but finished with an original piece whose last line was “May you find all the love that you needed was here.”

“It inspired the mom and dad to recognize that they had given this baby everything they could,” says Kate. “They heaped love on her and received love from her. That really helped them grieve and heal.”

Choir singers join to make a difference but remain dedicated volunteers because of the group’s deep sense of community, which is especially apparent when a volunteer’s own loved one falls ill. Kristin Masters asked her Santa Cruz choir members to sing nearly every day throughout her partner Claudette’s final months (she died of brain cancer in 2013). “I didn’t have to hold everything together,” Kristin says. “Being surrounded by love and support let my heart relax.” Claudette’s last days were rich, warm, and sweet. “It was like a sanctuary in there,” Kristin says. “I got to give her that kind of death.”

Visit [thresholdchoir.org](http://thresholdchoir.org) for more information.

*“Victims won’t always remember your name,” says CRT director Joe Avalos, right. “But they’ll never forget you were there.”*



## COMFORT AMID CHAOS

**T**hey wanted a midnight snack. Marlene Alatorre and her sister, Michelle Gonzalez, drove to a taco truck in the parking lot of a nearby strip mall on a June Saturday night in Los Angeles in 2012. Michelle, 22, sat in the car, while 19-year-old Marlene waited in line. Moments later, during a high-speed chase with police, a drunken motorist careened into the food stand at 62 miles per hour, killing Marlene and a second woman on impact.

A few miles away, Joe Avalos was settled in at home when his cell phone started buzzing. He was on call for a shift with the mayor’s Crisis



Response Team (CRT), volunteers dispatched with police, firefighters, and other emergency responders to scenes of deadly accidents and crimes. He got in his car and rushed to the site.

The first thing Joe, 47, remembers is the screaming. Marlene's mother, Holivia, was on the ground wailing in the intersection, a few feet away from the yellow crime-scene tape she was not allowed to cross. Joe knelt next to her and introduced himself. "I'm going to do everything I can to help you get through this," he said, speaking softly but firmly.

In the aftermath of horrific trauma, the CRT serves an unusual civic duty: supporting victims no one thinks about—friends and family left behind.

"We wake up at all hours of the

night to be with people at the worst moment of their lives," says Joe, who spent nine years as a volunteer before becoming the group's director in 2013. "Victims feel helpless, confused, and out of control. We let them know that we're there to be their advocate."

In the incident that inspired the founding of the CRT, two couples had finished dinner at a San Pedro restaurant and were crossing the street when three of the people were hit by a speeding car. One died immediately; another, a few days later. The third was in critical condition for many days.

"[The ambulance crew members] did what they had been trained to do for the three victims who had been hit by the car," explained LAPD captain Tim King in a letter he wrote a couple of weeks later, recruiting the group's first volunteers. The police, he explained, fulfilled their responsibilities, protecting the crime scene and investigating the accident.

"Unfortunately," King went on, "there was no one to respond and assist the uninjured party who had watched the terrible incident happen before his eyes. His needs, although not physical, were as important as the three victims who had been hit by the car."

King suggested a solution: a volunteer group that could provide emotional assistance to victims' loved ones. Nearly 24 years after the CRT was founded, groups of its 320 volunteers show up at almost every tragic



death in the city of Los Angeles, from shootings to suicides to fires. Ready at a moment's notice, they each keep their car trunk stocked with a "war bag," a duffel packed with items as diverse as blankets and teddy bears. Volunteers liaise between families and investigators, crossing crime-scene tape to share information and answer questions. They might notify schools that kids will be absent or give families referrals for therapy.

Their most important job is just being present. "Standing there and handing someone a bottle of water can be pretty powerful. Victims just want to tell us their story, especially if they witnessed [the incident]," says Joe, who credits the 20 years he spent as a social worker for teaching him how to listen. "We

don't have to say much. We call it sacred silence."

Not long after Joe arrived to help Marlene Alatorre's family that June night, another car pulled up. A young woman jumped out, trying to rush the

crime scene—the daughter of the other woman killed. "She kept saying, 'I was pissed off at my mom. I ignored her calls,'" Joe says. "Now her mother was lying several feet away from her under a white sheet.

"It broke my heart," he continues. "No matter how upset you are, let it go, because

tomorrow, or even the next hour, is not promised to us." The CRT, Joe says, "constantly reminds me how precious life is." **R**

**E-mail [lacrtr@lacity.org](mailto:lacrtr@lacity.org) for more information.**

“  
***Just standing  
there can be  
pretty powerful.  
We don't have  
to say much.  
We call it sacred  
silence.***”

## PARENTAL ADVISORY

Just taught my kids about taxes by eating 38 percent of their ice cream.

CONAN O'BRIEN

I'm at my most hostage negotiator when I see my three-year-old holding a permanent marker without the lid.

**@SIMONCHOLLAND (SIMON HOLLAND)**

Asked to switch seats on the plane because I was sitting next to a crying baby. Apparently, that's not allowed if the baby is yours.

**@MOMMYSHORTS (ILANA WILES)**

Advertisement

# Notice: Medical Alert

Dear Reader,

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

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

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The first 100 callers to order will receive:

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

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Sincerely,



Jim Nelson  
President

  
Medical Alert Systems  
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DRAMA IN REAL LIFE



A two-week trek through Canada's Arctic tundra turns into a desperate attempt to stay alive

# MAULED!



**BY SABRINA SHANKMAN**  
FROM THE E-BOOK *MELTDOWN*

**THE AD IN** *Sierra* magazine promised the adventure of a lifetime: 14 days of hiking through northern Canadian wilderness, with the possibility of seeing the world's largest land carnivore, the polar bear. "If you dream of experiencing a place that is both pristine and magical, a land of spirits and polar bears rarely seen by humans," the ad said, "this is the trip you have been waiting for."

**T**WO SEASONED Sierra Club guides were the leaders. Rich Gross, then 60, worked for a housing nonprofit in San Francisco but spent a week or two a year steering trips in remote parts of the world. Marta Chase, 59, a medical diagnostics consultant from North Carolina, had led hiking trips since high school. The pair had guided 13 trips together.

Joining them were Larry Rodman, 63, a New York City corporate lawyer; Marilyn Frankel, 65, an exercise physiologist from Oregon; and Rick Isenberg, 55, a clinical researcher and former physician from Arizona.

people went to the park each year, and Gross wanted to be part of that club. Chase did, too, but she worried about hiking in polar bear country.

Polar bears sit at the top of the Arctic food chain. A large male can weigh as much as 1,700 pounds and stand ten feet tall. They spend most of their lives on the sea ice, waiting for seals. When a seal surfaces at a breathing hole, the bear pounces, grabs it by the head, and crushes its skull.

Polar bears tend to stay clear of humans, but scientists predict that may be changing. Like many areas in the Southern Arctic, the Torngats has typically had an ice-free summer



*They set up two electric fences, with supposedly enough charge to send a polar bear running.*

Chase's husband, Kicab Castañeda-Mendez, 63, a quality-improvement consultant, would be joining them as well. Rounding out the trekkers was Matt Dyer, 48, a legal aid lawyer from Maine. His shoulders and back were covered with tattoos of images from nature—a turtle, a winged bull, a giant tree of life with ravens.

It was Gross's idea to go into Torngat Mountains National Park in Canada's Arctic tundra. He'd never seen a polar bear in the wild, and he was drawn to the area's mystical terrain, where steep peaks rose from the coast of the Labrador Sea. Only a few hundred

season, when the carnivores are forced onto land and live off their body fat. Worldwide climate change is driving temperatures higher—the Arctic is warming at about twice the rate of the rest of the globe—and the period when the animals have to live off their reserves has lengthened. Since the late 1970s, the number of ice-free days in the area around the Torngats has increased from 125 to 175 days a year.

Some desperate bears turn to goose eggs, grasses, berries—and anything else they can find. As the ice-free period increases, it's predicted that more bears will come into contact with





*The group before the attack, from left: Matt Dyer, Larry Rodman, Marta Chase, Rick Isenberg, Marilyn Frankel, Rich Gross, Kicab Castañeda-Mendez*

humans, which could have deadly consequences. After all, to a starving polar bear, a human is just meat.

**O**N SUNDAY, July 21, 2013, a floatplane carrying the Sierra Club party descended toward the eastern shore of the Tornagats, weaving between the peaks. The landscape was desolate but breathtaking. Ice covered parts of glassy lakes, and rivulets of water cascaded from mountain peaks that jutted into the cloud-filled sky. The plane landed on Nachvak Fjord and deposited the passengers. The pilot said goodbye, and the seven hikers were left with just the sound of waves lapping on the shore. The fjord felt prehistoric, as if they were in a world without humans.

The first thing the group did was set up camp 150 yards from the shore. While the Parks Canada website “strongly encourages” visitors to hire

licensed Inuit bear guards who have taken a special safety course and are permitted to carry guns, Chase and Gross talked to an outfitter familiar with the area who told them that flare guns, bear spray, and electric fences offered the necessary protection. They set up two electric fences: one around the campsite, the other around the area where they would cook and store their food. Each fence stood about three feet high and consisted of three parallel wires suspended from posts. The wires had five to seven kilovolts of charge—not enough to injure a polar bear but supposedly enough to send it running.

As the hikers prepared cream of potato soup and pesto pasta for dinner, they watched terns and gulls swoop by. Wolves occasionally wandered into view. After they ate, some of the hikers stayed to clean up. By the time the sky darkened, at about 10:30 p.m., they’d all retired to their tents.



*This polar bear sat watching the group for hours, and some of the hikers believe that it later attacked Dyer.*

At 4 a.m., Castañeda-Mendez stepped out of his tent—and saw that they weren't alone. "Polar bear on the beach!" he yelled. A mother and her cub were walking along the shore in the early-morning light. The other hikers came out. They were shouting distance from two of the world's most violent predators, yet the scene was overwhelmingly peaceful. Dyer was on the verge of tears.

On Monday, July 22, after a breakfast of oatmeal and coffee, the hikers assembled their daypacks, bundled up, and headed east to explore the fjord. Gross had one flare gun in his waistband; Chase carried the other. The group members hiked through scrub willows and grassy hills and along the ledges above their camp. They came across everyday detritus from the park's residents—black-bear scat, caribou antlers, and the skull of what looked like a wolf or a seal. Dyer tucked a tooth from the skull into his pocket.

At about 3:30 p.m., they reached a stream near their campsite. The water was shallow, clear, and shockingly cold. For feet that had been in hiking boots all day, the stream offered relief. Castañeda-Mendez was walking barefoot in the water when Dyer saw something coming toward them. "Polar bear!" he shouted. "Get back here!"

The animal was about 150 yards away and approaching them. It looked larger and had a fuller coat than the female they'd seen that morning. Castañeda-Mendez rejoined the group, and the hikers clustered, following polar bear defense protocol: Stand together. Make yourself seem big. Make loud noises, especially metal on metal.

Still, the bear kept coming. Gross pulled out his flare gun. "I'm gonna shoot," he told Chase when the animal was within 50 yards. "I think that's a good idea," she replied.

The flare shot forward with a flash

of light, but the bear kept advancing. Only when the shell landed in front of it, causing a second burst, did the bear run off. The group cheered and clapped. But the bear didn't go far. It settled on a ledge about 300 yards away, with a clear view of the camp.

By the time the hikers reached the safety of their camp, rain was coming down hard. Most members of the group went to their tents to nap, but Dyer was uneasy. He stayed outside, watching the bear for an hour, until he took a nap.

Afternoon turned into evening, and still the bear remained nearby. At 5 p.m., the campers went to the cooking area. Using the zoom lenses on their cameras, they watched the bear roll on its back and lie on its belly. To Frankel, it looked like a big dog. But to others, it was disconcerting.

Over dinner, they laughed, sharing stories of their past trips and lives back home. They didn't talk much about the bear that was observing them. It seemed almost like a piece of the landscape—just another detail in the majestic setting.

Castañeda-Mendez felt reassured by their bear interactions that day. The mother and cub weren't interested in them, and the bear on the ledge had shied away from the flare. But Dyer couldn't shake his unease. "Why don't we post a watch?" he asked. But Gross wasn't worried. "That's what the fence is for," he told Dyer.

Isenberg slept fitfully, and every

time he woke up, he checked to see if the bear was still there. It was. But by about 1 a.m., it had disappeared.

**T**HE NEXT MORNING was cold and rainy, and the hikers loaded their daypacks and went exploring. They reveled in the wildlife: whales in the fjord, caribou, and ptarmigan. By afternoon, the weather had begun to improve, and they stopped at a rock above the campsite to take silly pictures of one another.

That night, before Gross turned in, he walked the campsite's perimeter, confirming that the electric fence was on. Before he crawled into his sleeping bag, he tucked the flare gun into his boot. He fell asleep listening to the waves.

At 3:30 a.m., he woke to screams.

From the window of her tent, Chase saw a polar bear a few feet away. It was down on all fours, eyes level with her, huge and white except for the black of its eyes and nose. "Rich!" she screamed, yelling for Gross. The bear tore at a neighboring tent and dragged it into the darkness.

Gross grabbed his flare gun, ran out in his long underwear, and aimed at the bear. The animal was 75 feet away, heading west. Something was dangling from its mouth. He saw that what was in the bear's mouth was not a thing at all—it was Dyer.

Dyer had been sound asleep when something—he wasn't sure what—caused him to stir. As his eyes adjusted, he saw two paws, each a foot

wide and silhouetted by the bright Arctic moon, sweep across the thin nylon of the tent. "Bear in the camp!" he remembers shouting. "He's got me! He's got me!" The bear clamped its mouth around the crown of the man's head and ripped him out of the tent. Dyer heard his jaw break as huge teeth punctured his head and neck. He could smell the fishy, oily stench of the bear's saliva.

Dyer stared at the animal's white stomach and the yellow stains on its hindquarters as it carried him away. He noticed with odd detachment that one of his socks had fallen off. And then he heard noise coming from

mercifully, and couldn't feel any pain.

Gross handed his gun to Frankel so she could cover him. "I've got to get out there," he said. Isenberg went with him. About 75 feet from the campsite, they found Dyer's crumpled, blood-drenched body. They thought he was dead. But when Isenberg knelt beside him, he saw the man breathing. Castañeda-Mendez and Rodman ran out, and the four men carried Dyer's limp body back. They laid him down on a sleeping pad in the middle of the camp, covered him with two sleeping bags, and placed a sack under his head. Gross and Castañeda-Mendez pulled up the cook tent and placed



***Isenberg was terrified. Dyer was in critical condition, and they were hundreds of miles from help. He held Dyer's hand and prayed.***

behind him—the shouts of his friends.

The bear turned toward the hikers, whipping Dyer into the air and slamming him against the ground. Without losing its grip on Dyer's head, it moved toward the water.

Dyer had sometimes thought about how it would feel before he died, what that terrifying last moment would be like. But instead of fear or panic, he was filled with a great sense of calm. With his head in the bear's jaws, he saw a flash of light and heard the flare gun. The bear dropped him hard and fled. Dyer was in shock,

it over Dyer. The teepee-style shape would give Isenberg, the onetime physician, room to work while protecting Dyer from the wind and the cold.

All Isenberg had was a basic medical kit—four-by-four gauze pads, a roll of gauze strip, antibiotic ointment, splints, scissors. Dyer's face was swollen and bruised, and his jaw was displaced, but at least he was talking. "Thank you. Oh, thank you," he said over and over, his voice a whisper. Isenberg hacked through Dyer's blood-soaked hair with scissors. Wounds ringed his face and head, but they

were oozing blood, not pumping it—a positive sign. The biggest wound was a gash on his neck that looked as if it had been filleted open. Isenberg could see Dyer's carotid artery, the principal blood supplier to the head and neck. The artery was intact, but if anything caused it to tear, Dyer would bleed to death.

Isenberg was terrified. Dyer was in critical condition, they were hundreds of miles from help, and Isenberg hadn't practiced medicine in 15 years. He held Dyer's hand and prayed.

Meanwhile, Chase used the satellite phone to call for help. At 3:45 a.m., she reached a police dispatcher and told him her group had been attacked by a polar bear. One hiker needed to be evacuated, and the rest of them were in danger. But the area was enveloped by fog, and until it cleared, there was no way to launch a rescue.

The electric fence was in tatters. Frankel circled the campsite with a flare gun, her eyes scanning the horizon. Castañeda-Mendez and Rodman took turns patrolling with the second gun. Gross stayed outside the cook tent to assist Isenberg. Every 15 minutes, Chase called the police dispatcher to check on progress.

At 4:20 a.m., Isenberg announced that Dyer was stable. If his carotid artery didn't rupture and he kept breathing, he'd survive. The sun was finally rising. If a bear came their way, at least they could see it.

By 8:30 a.m., the clouds were lift-

ing. Minutes later, the group heard the thump of a helicopter and saw it moving toward them. It landed, and medic Larry Brandridge got off. He and the hikers carried Dyer to the helicopter. Isenberg climbed aboard to help, leaving the others to wait for a boat that was coming to pick them up.

**T**HE CHOPPER touched down around 8:30 a.m. at Torn-gat Mountains Base Camp & Research Station, a hub for scientists, visitors, and park staff. Dyer's stretcher was taken to the medic tent, where Brandridge inventoried and cleaned Dyer's wounds. He began with the bite and claw marks on his face, which were dripping blood into Dyer's eyes.

"How are you feeling?" Brandridge asked the hiker.

"Like crap," Dyer whispered.

"That's not bad for someone who just got attacked by a polar bear."

Then the medic peeled off the big bandage on Dyer's neck. The odor of flesh filled the tent. To Brandridge, it smelled like death. The hole in Dyer's neck was about the width of a pencil and went behind his jugular and toward his esophagus. Each time Dyer inhaled, he was wicking blood into the wound. Brandridge quickly realized that he didn't have the equipment or expertise needed to save Dyer's life, so he and the base-camp staff put Dyer back into the helicopter and sent him to George River, a town 45 minutes



away, where a first-response team with more sophisticated equipment was waiting. From there, he'd be flown to Kuujjuaq, a small Inuit community, and then to Montreal.

In Kuujjuaq, doctors found that Dyer's lung was punctured. Dyer was heavily sedated, and a breathing tube was inserted. At about 8 p.m., Quebec's flying intensive-care unit arrived to take him to Montreal.

Around midnight on July 25—20 hours after being attacked by the polar bear—Matt Dyer was finally admitted to Montreal General Hospital. He had two broken vertebrae, but they were high enough that the doctors weren't worried about paralysis. His jaw had been crushed. His left hand was broken in several places. His right lung had collapsed. He had at least a dozen wounds, including the hole in his neck. A tendon in his right arm was punctured. Despite his injuries, Dyer regained consciousness just past midnight.

On July 27, the rest of the hikers arrived at the hospital. Gross and Chase went into Dyer's room first. Dyer couldn't speak because of the breathing tube in his throat, but he had been

given an alphabet board. He pointed to the letters, and slowly he spelled out a question: Would they all like to come to his house for a lobster bake? It was the kind of random humor that had endeared him to the group, and seeing it was a huge relief to the trip leaders. Dyer really was OK.

**T**ODAY DYER has recovered from his ordeal, evident only by scars on his face and neck and the husky rasp that is now his voice. He has a new tattoo on his arm: a polar bear surrounded by six stars, one for each of his travel mates. It's a reminder of just how close he came to death, the friendships he forged in the most dire circumstances, and the animal he has come to admire.

A year after his trip, a group of journalists invited him to join them for a week in the Torngats, and he immediately accepted. He wanted to build new memories of the park's awe-inspiring splendor rather than the horror of the polar bear attack. In August 2014, accompanied by two armed Inuit guards, Dyer revisited his former campsite. Within minutes, he saw a polar bear. **R**

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## JEALOUS GRIN

My extra-sensitive toothpaste doesn't like it when I use other toothpastes.

 @SENDERBLOCK23

# Readers Set To Get Free Survival Food For Their Families

Farmers vow to keep up with the demand to supply all readers who call toll free and beat the deadline to claim up to four free 72-hour survival food kits.

Over 85% of Americans believe that the nation is headed in the wrong direction, according to a recent survey. We've all seen the evidence to know that something bad can happen and we should look out for ourselves because no one else will.

In a crisis, your #1 need is food. But not just any food... experts recommend you keep at least a 72-hour supply of non-perishable food on hand.

Well right now – in what truly is an unprecedented move – 72-hour Food4Patriots survival food kits are being given away to readers as long as they call a special toll-free hotline and beat the program deadline.

These meals are made from scratch here in America. They taste great and provide essential nutrition. The breakthrough “Low Heat Dehydration” method and the space-age packaging material (like that used in NASA space suits) guarantee the amazing 25-year shelf life.

Your family will enjoy familiar dishes like Liberty Bell Potato Cheddar Soup, Blue Ribbon Creamy Chicken Rice, Travelers Stew, and Granny's Home-style Potato Soup.



*Readers are lining up to claim their free 72-hour survival kit before the deadline.*

Usually the 72-hour kit costs \$27.00 plus shipping. But readers who act now will pay only the \$9.95 shipping for each. “We don’t want any families left out, but we have a limited supply of free kits,” Bates warned. “Once word got out that we were giving away free survival food, our phones started ringing off the hook.”

This program will end no matter what at midnight, April 30, 2016.

## HOW TO GET YOUR FREE 72-HOUR SURVIVAL FOOD KITS:

Food4Patriots is committed to giving as many as four free 72-hour kits to readers who call the toll-free hotline with the approval code shown below. Provide your delivery instructions and agree to pay the \$9.95 shipping fee for each kit claimed.

**Approval Code: 72FREE**  
**Toll-Free Hotline: 1-800-725-4196**  
**Offer Cut-Off Date: 04/30/2016**

Food4Patriots will continue to give away 72-hour kits for as long as their supplies last. Due to media exposure, phone lines may be busy. Just keep calling and you will get through.

# The Moth

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## THE SMALL-TOWN PRISONER

BY WANDA BULLARD

FROM THE BOOK *THE MOTH*

**M**Y DAD'S NAME was George Bullard. He was born in a rural area, right up in the northeast corner of Mississippi that most folks call British County and the locals just call paradise. My dad was about 50 when I was born, but I was very fortunate to have had him.

He raised and trained bird dogs his whole life. If the bird dog business got a little slow, he'd paint a house or two,

but after he got up in his 60s, someone persuaded him to get into politics. He ran for the board of aldermen, and he was elected by a landslide. Everybody loved him.

His assignment was fire commissioner. Now, the only things the previous fire commissioners had done were go to meetings and make political decisions. My father liked to get involved, though, so he went to the

CHRISTIAN LEONARD/COURTESY THE MOTH

telephone company and said, “Can’t y’all hook my telephone up with the one at the fire department?”

So they did, and every time the fire department telephone rang, our phone rang—one long, continuous ring until you picked it up—and then you didn’t talk; you just listened to see where the fire was so he could go. And he went to all the fires, day or night. He knew almost nothing about firefighting, but he knew how to encourage young men, so he’d go and encourage ‘em.

I got involved because my father had almost stopped driving at night because of his age, and as a teenager with a driver’s license, I’d drive him at three o’clock in the morning.

After his few turns as board alderman, several people, myself included, persuaded him not to do that anymore. But when he left, he found that he missed the camaraderie he had formed with the firemen, and because the firemen and the police department were in the same building, he missed the policemen too. So he would just go down there to visit every now and again. And this being a small town, they worked out something which might not have been real legal, but they taught him how to operate the police radio, and anytime anybody

wanted a day off or was sick, he’d go in and work an eight-hour shift.

But one day, he got to his job down at the police department, and he discovered, to his amazement, they had a prisoner!

I did say it was a small town. It was most unusual.

And that morning, he really didn’t have much to do. He’d wander back and talk to this young man, and when he went out for lunch, he brought a couple hamburgers back for him. Well, by one or two o’clock, he had made a decision about this young man, and he always trusted his instincts about people. He had decided that in spite of being long-haired—way down to here, which my father hated—he was a decent young man, so he’d see if he could help him.

He started to inquire of him, “Why are you still here? You seem like such a nice young man. Won’t anybody come get you out of jail?”

And the young man told him, “Well, I had a little too much to drink last night, and they arrested me for drunken disorder, and here I am.”

My dad said, “Well, what would it take to get you out?” And he said, “Well, I have to pay a two-hundred-dollar fine.” My dad said, “Well, why can’t your family pay the two-hundred-

## THE MOTH

**Reader’s Digest is proud to partner with the Moth on storytelling “Grand Slam” events in 19 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).**

dollar fine?" He said, "Well, I think if I could talk to my father face-to-face, I could get the two hundred dollars from him, but I don't know how he's going to react to a collect call from the Boonville jail."

My dad mulled this over a little while, and he said, "Well, do you think if I turned you loose, you could go find your father and get two hundred dollars and come back?"

I'm going to remind you that my father's only duty was operating the police radio that talked back and forth with the cars.

So the young man said, "Well, see, I'm from Corinth, Mississippi, and that's about 20 miles north. They impounded my car. I got no way up there."

And my daddy said, "Well, is it a blue Chevrolet?" And he said, "Yes, sir." And then my daddy said, "It's parked out in the parking lot. I can probably find the keys."

So he scrounges around in the desk drawers and finds the keys, and he not only releases the prisoner, over whom he has no authority, he gives him a getaway car.

Well, as the kid leaves, my father says, "Now, son, I believe if I could borrow two hundred dollars from my daddy, I'd borrow another five to get me a darn haircut."

At about four o'clock, the policemen started coming back to change shifts, and as they came in, they check in on the prisoner. And they discovered, to their dismay, that they didn't have one. And they said, "Mr. George, what happened to the prisoner?"

My daddy was busy doing his closing-up paperwork, and he said, "Oh, yeah. I turned him loose."

And the police officer said, "You did what?"

"Turned him loose."

"Mr. George, why did you do that?"

Daddy said, "Well, he just seemed like a nice young man, and he'll be back in a little while with his two hundred dollars."

And the police officer was kind of taken aback. He'd known my father all his life; my father was like a grandfather to most of those guys. The officer said, "OK, well, we'll take care of this," and he went back to the other policemen to try to figure out how they were gonna get out of this without my father losing his unofficial job, and one of them says, "Well, we ought to remind the chief that George Bullard helped get him elected." But another of 'em said, "Oh, I got a better idea. Let's just tear up the paperwork, and we'll just pretend we never arrested that boy."

Well, my father wouldn't hear of

“*What happened to the prisoner?” asked the policemen. “I turned him loose,” Dad said.*”



it. He said, "Oh, no. I know that boy's coming back. I know he is."

And the police officer said, "How can you be so sure? You don't even know him."

And my father's answer was simple: "He told me that he would."

They waited around, and 4:30 came and five o'clock, and of course, no young man returned. And at about 5:15, they're trying to get my dad to go home, 'cause his shift ended at five.

He's kind of stoic, and he says, "No, I'm gonna wait around until he comes back."

One of 'em observed, "Might be kind of a long wait." But no, my dad didn't get discouraged.

All of a sudden, the door opens, and the young man walks in—shaven, short hair—walks up to the counter, and they don't even acknowledge him, 'cause they're still mulling over what they're gonna do to save my dad, and finally the young man says, "Excuse me; I'd like to pay my fine." And that kind of

got their attention, but they still didn't recognize him, and one of 'em walked to the counter and said, "What fine is that you're talking 'bout?"

He said, "Well, you guys arrested me last night—locked me up. I owe two hundred, and I'm here to pay it." Started counting out 20-dollar bills. When he got to 200, the police didn't say a word, but they wrote him out a receipt. They thanked him. The boy started to leave. When he got to the door to go out, he turned around and—almost as if he knew what the situation was like there in that office with my dad—said, "Oh, by the way, Mr. Bullard, I'm sorry I was late getting back, but I had to wait in the line at the barbershop." **R**

A teacher for more than 42 years, Wanda Bullard worked with emotionally disordered kids in Brunswick, Georgia. Her famous Sunday-afternoon cookout included the Moth's founder, George Dawes Green, among many others. Telling stories on Wanda's porch inspired him to launch the Moth.

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.



## WHY BRIDES STAND ON THE LEFT

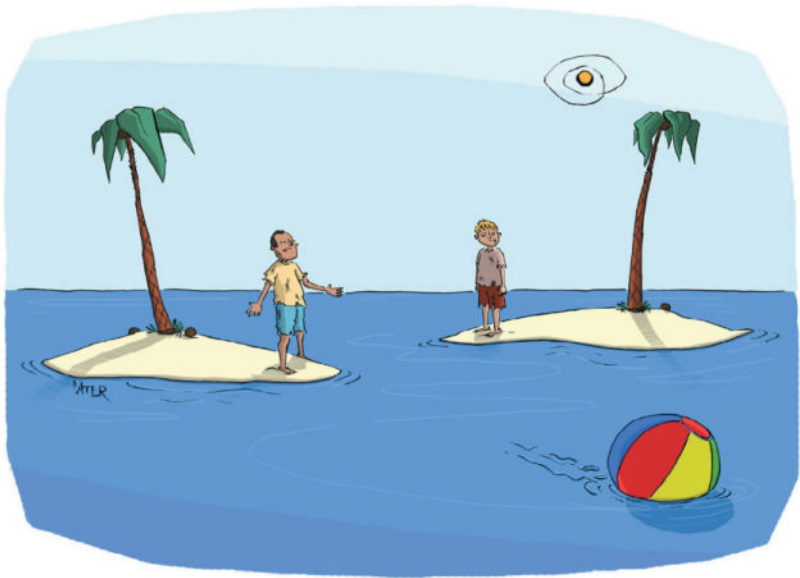
In the old days of "marriage by capture," the groom needed to leave his right hand free. Why?

In case he needed to grab his sword and fight off another suitor trying to steal his bride at the last minute.

Source: theknot.com

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



*"Nice throw. Now we're dying of thirst, hunger, and boredom."*

**THERE IS NOTHING** more awkward than the moment you realize you're getting a double-cheek kiss.

✉ @MICHMARKOWITZ (MICHELLE MARKOWITZ)

**"POOR OLD FOOL,"** thought the well-dressed gentleman as he watched an old man fish in a puddle outside a pub. So he invited the old man inside for a drink. As they

sipped their whiskeys, the gentleman thought he'd humor the old man and asked, "So how many have you caught today?"

The old man replied, "You're the eighth."

*From A Prairie Home Companion*

**INSTAGRAM IS JUST TWITTER** for people who go outside.

✉ @JOSHGONDELMAN

**A DEFENDANT** isn't happy with how things are going in court, so he gives the judge a hard time.

**Judge:** "Where do you work?"

**Defendant:** "Here and there."

**Judge:** "What do you do for a living?"

**Defendant:** "This and that."

**Judge:** "Take him away."

**Defendant:** "Wait; when will I get out?"

**Judge:** "Sooner or later."

*Submitted by PAT FERRY, Mesa, Arizona*

**I'M TRYING** to get into classical music, but I can't find any original recordings. All the music is performed by cover bands. **DAN BURT**, on humorlabs.com

**I THINK IT'S PRETTY COOL** how the Chinese made a language entirely out of tattoos.

*Submitted by ADAM JOSHUA SMARGON,  
Newark, Delaware*

**Know what else is pretty cool? Your joke or funny list is worth \$\$\$.** See page 7 or [rd.com/submit](http://rd.com/submit) for details.

## CELEBRITIES WITHOUT MAKEUP

**Papi, Beverly Hills Chihuahua**



Father Time has not been kind to this jalapeño-size actor. Papi was snapped alone and leashless by the "Papirazzi" as he left a Lakers game.

From: thehiggsweldon.com

**Babe**



Rumors of the lovable hog's having gone to pot are true! The porker would be wise to step away from the trough.

**Budweiser "Lost" Puppy**



This pup's natural good looks shine through even behind bars, which is where he landed after a spat with former best friend Budweiser Clydesdale.

**SpongeBob SquarePants**



The public soaked up the sight of this subaquatic superstar wearing no makeup ... or pants! ... as seen in this hacked photo from his cell phone.

# Family Vacations

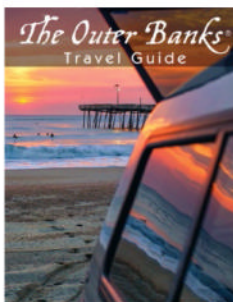
## North Dakota

— *North Dakota* —  
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# Family Vacations

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W.B. thought donating his organs  
would bring meaning to his ALS diagnosis.  
He was shocked to discover that patients like him  
are banned from this final act of heroism.

# A Legacy DENIED

BY JOSHUA MEZRICH, MD, & JOSEPH SCALEA, MD  
FROM THE *ATLANTIC*

OUR PATIENT—WE'LL CALL HIM W.B.—is a 56-year-old father of three who, until two years ago, had always been healthy. He had worked in jobs ranging from automotive repair to sales, taking great pride in providing for his family. All of that ended in February 2014, when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. A neurodegenerative disease characterized by progressive muscle weakness, ALS leads to the loss of all voluntary movement, difficulty breathing, and, in the end, death.

Once the initial shock passed, W.B. began researching his condition intensively. He learned that he was unlikely to survive five years and that in the meantime, his quality of life would diminish dramatically. With limited options, many patients retreat. But, quite bravely, W.B. had other ideas. He decided that if he was going to die, he would like to try to save another person's life in the process. And so in May 2014, he approached the University of Wisconsin's transplant program, where we are surgeons, as a prospective organ donor.

Initially, W.B. had assumed that he would arrange for his organs to be procured when he died, but then he read that kidneys from a living donor work better and last longer. For one thing, the death process takes a toll on organs, between the decreased flow of blood and oxygen and the release of inflammatory proteins. For another, kidneys that are removed after death inevitably endure "cold time"—when they are outside the body, on ice, without any blood flow.

"Why not fork out a kidney before it becomes compromised by all the meds I am taking?" W.B. asked us when we met him. But he didn't stop there. Beyond a kidney, he explained, he wanted to donate the rest of his organs once his condition deteriorated so much that he could no longer breathe on his own.

W.B. spoke calmly about his situation and about how ALS "steals

your ability to do things"; already, he told us, "I have a hard time getting a spoon from a bowl to my mouth." He knew that in the near future he would be confined to a bed or a wheelchair. As for the end of his life, he remarked that he could only "look forward to suffocating." When he said this, he didn't seem sad so much as at peace with his coming death. "It is what it is," he said. "I can't change it. I probably won't be here in five years. To be honest, I may not be here in two years."

W.B. hoped to turn his tragedy into someone else's miracle. But although his mind was clear and his intentions unmistakable, we had no choice but to disappoint him.

## Do No Harm

Two major obstacles have prevented us from helping W.B. The first concerns his desire to donate a kidney while he is still alive. In his weakened state, will he tolerate anesthesia and surgery, or will they hasten his death?

As doctors, we have sworn to do no harm. And yet, every Wednesday and Thursday morning, we remove kidneys from living donors. These patients don't get any medical benefit—to the contrary, they accept a small risk of complications, including hypertension and a slightly increased likelihood that their remaining kidney will fail. But they do experience a very real, if intangible, benefit: the experience of saving someone's life.

In evaluating W.B.'s request, we had to weigh carefully not only the risk to him—which W.B. clearly understood—but also the risk that a donor death would pose to our hospital. Transplant-surgery programs in the United States are scrutinized by an alphabet soup of federal and nongovernmental entities. A single bad outcome involving a living donor can lead to an investigation. While there are good reasons for this monitoring, it can cause surgeons to avoid complicated cases and innovation.

The more difficult issue relates to his other organs. W.B.'s prognosis is poor: His doctors indicate that in the near future, W.B. will no longer be able to breathe for himself and will need a tracheostomy and a ventilator to live. At this point, some ALS patients forgo further life support and succumb to their disease. But there is currently no way to end one's life in this manner without jeopardizing one's organs and, with them, the chance to save other lives.

From the earliest days of transplantation, surgeons subscribed to an informal ethical norm known as the dead-donor rule—that organ procurement should not cause a donor's death. This meant waiting

until patients were by all measures completely dead—no heartbeat, no blood pressure, no respiration—to remove any vital organs. Unfortunately, few organs were still transplantable by this point, and those that were transplanted tended to have poor outcomes.

In 1968, in an effort to address the shortage of transplantable organs (as well as the delivery of futile care to people in irreversible comas), an ad hoc committee at Harvard Medical School suggested that patients with no identifiable brain function could be designated as brain dead and become candidates for organ donation. This led to new laws enacted by most states; under them, doctors could remove organs from patients whose hearts were still beating without violating the dead-donor rule.

## Failing to Die Fast Enough

But what about people who are terminally ill, like W.B.? Neither the dead-donor rule nor the laws regarding brain death address his situation. Terminally ill patients' best—in many cases, only—chance of passing on their organs is via a wrenching process known as donation after circulatory death, or DCD. A patient's doctor



**He decided that if he was going to die, he'd like to save another's life in the process.**

withdraws all life support while an organ-recovery team stands by. For organs to be successfully transplanted this way, however, the donor typically needs to die within an hour or two of being taken off life support—otherwise, decreased blood flow leaves the organs unsuitable for transplantation.

Over the course of a single week while we were writing this article, three potential DCD donors at our transplant center had had life support removed with the intention of donating their vital organs but had failed to die quickly enough. No transplants resulted.

When organ donation works, families view it as a positive end to a tragedy. Our team remembers vividly the case of another ALS patient, a young father of three teenagers. He knew that he would never get off a ventilator, and he also knew that his organs could allow several other people to go on living. He wrote out goodbyes to his wife and children, they hugged him, and then, with his family surrounding him, his doctors removed his breathing tube. Once he had taken his last, labored breath, our team rushed him into the operating room. We were just in time to recover his kidneys and liver. In the midst of

their heartbreak, his family members were able to find some comfort in the idea that their husband and father had saved three people's lives.

Unfortunately, not every withdrawal of life support ends with

this heroism. We also remember a young boy who had suffered major head trauma. Because the boy's family believed deeply in organ donation, they had made the difficult decision to have life support withdrawn in the cold, sterile environment of an operating room. While our team waited in the wings, the boy died in his mother's

arms. But not quickly enough to allow for the transplantation of his organs. This came as a particularly terrible blow to his parents, who had hoped that their loss might help prevent someone else's.



**If we could help  
W.B. donate  
a kidney, it  
might add real  
value to his  
remaining days.**

## **New Rules That Honor Life**

The term *brain death* was meant to provide an objective legal definition for a group of patients whom we might otherwise describe as unrecoverable. But for terminally ill patients, a more useful ethical standard could involve the idea of imminent death. Once a person with a terminal disease reaches a point when only extraordi-



nary measures will delay death; when use of these measures is incompatible with what he considers a reasonable quality of life; and when he decides to stop aggressive care, knowing that this will mean the end of his life, we might say that death is imminent.

If medical guidelines could be revised to let people facing imminent death donate vital organs under general anesthesia, we could provide patients and families a middle ground—a way of avoiding futile medical care while also honoring life by preventing the deaths of other critically ill people. Moreover, healthy people could incorporate this imminent-death standard into advance directives for their end-of-life care. They could determine the conditions under which they would want care withdrawn and whether they were willing to have it withdrawn in an operating room, under anesthesia, with subsequent removal of their organs.

Some may argue that such a model could compromise doctors' care of critically ill patients. People who distrust the health-care system sometimes make similar arguments, accusing physicians of providing lesser care to those who have signed up to become organ donors.

In practice, though, a donor's doctors have little connection to those involved with organ recovery to avoid any conflict of interest. We can't imagine a scenario in which doctors would give a patient inferior care

so that her organs could be procured. Large numbers of hospital patients have no chance of meaningful recovery, including many of those with progressive neurological diseases like ALS or severe cardiac disease, as well as some stroke victims. A number of these brave people—and their families—wish to commit a final act of pure heroism in the form of organ donation. But even as the transplant waiting list stretches more than 120,000 patients long, the current system denies them this legacy.

## A Dying Wish

As doctors, we are taught to do no harm. It may be time to redefine what we mean by *harm*.

When we sent W.B. a draft of this article, we were nervous about how he might react. What can it be like to read a magazine article about whether your own organs should come out while you are still alive? He responded calmly and thoughtfully. His e-mail read: "I can no longer type so I am using the voice command module on my tablet. This means that sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation kind of go out the window so bear with me." He agreed with our main ideas, and without skipping a beat, he challenged us again to remove one of his kidneys while it still had the best chance of saving a life.

To his great disappointment, we informed him again that he is not a candidate for living donation. But we

are still haunted by W.B.'s request. As W.B. prepares to die, the thing he wants most is to save the lives of strangers.

Shortly before this article went to press, W.B. told us that his disease was progressing faster than expected. He asked us what he could do to keep his organs oxygenated so that they could remain viable for transplantation. He had not planned on having a breathing tube put in when the time came, but he said that he would now consider doing so if it meant he could still be a donor. And he implored us, once again, to do more homework and figure out how he could pass on his organs before it was too late.

Maybe we will yet find a way to honor his dying wish. If we were to help W.B. donate a single kidney and he survived, the experience might add some real value to his remaining days. For months, as we have turned W.B.'s request over in our minds, we have repeatedly come back to one realization: that we are not as courageous as he is.



### **An update on W.B.**

*Since this article was first published in April 2015, W.B.'s health has deteriorated quickly. Confined to a wheelchair, W.B. has lost the use of his legs, arms, and hands. He receives all nutrition and medicine through a feeding tube. Given his current situation—very healthy in spite of physical ability losses—we explored the possibility*

*of proceeding with living donation of a kidney, knowing he would probably remain on a ventilator after surgery. Despite the controversial nature of this procedure, our medical center was quite supportive. Unfortunately, given the current laws in our state and in many others, even if W.B. survived and could breathe on his own after surgery, there is significant risk that we and our entire team, as well as our hospital, would be held accountable for accelerating his death, leading to the loss of our medical licenses as well as to legal charges.*

*We hope the law will change someday and that donation of at least one kidney will be an option for consenting patients with imminently terminal illness. This won't happen in time for W.B.*

*The only way to honor his final wish is to wait until he can no longer breathe and call an ambulance. In the intensive care unit, he would be placed on a ventilator (something he wants to avoid unless for donor surgery) and evaluated for organ donation. Eventually, all support would be withdrawn. If he died "naturally" within a finite time, his organs would be procured.*

*We will try to make this work, but the timing is challenging and may limit his success. W.B. recently asked how to know when to come to the hospital. We told him: "When each breath is too painful to take, and you are not sure you will be able to take one more, come in then."* **R**

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As steel and concrete rose around us, my unlikely friendship with an intriguing old woman grew too

# Edith's House

BY BARRY MARTIN WITH PHILIP LERMAN

FROM THE BOOK *UNDER ONE ROOF*

**I** WAS NERVOUS, that first day on the job, walking up to Edith Macefield's house. I'd heard so much already. Developers had purchased most of a city block in Seattle, Washington, to build a shopping mall. They'd gotten every inch of the property they wanted except for this one little ramshackle house. They'd even offered her \$1 million for it, and she had declined. So they had had to build around

it. If people even tried to talk to the woman, she would chase them away.

Edith was tending to her garden when I approached her and introduced myself. "Miss Macefield," I said respectfully, "I just want to let you know that we're going to be making a lot of noise and a big mess, so if you need anything or have any problems, here's my number."

"That's very nice of you," she said, holding my card close to her one good eye. "It'll be nice to have company."





*The home in  
downtown Seattle.  
Left: Edith, 23, in 1944.*



Edith's gate was about 40 feet from my construction trailer, so whenever I saw Edith outside, I wandered over for a chat. One morning, she called my cell phone and asked if I would mind driving her to the hairdresser. I was surprised by the request: She seemed to value her independence above everything else. Whenever I went to check that she was OK, I had to make it look like I just happened to be there; otherwise, she'd get angry.

At the appointed time, I stood next to her blue 1989 Chevy Cavalier. She had a booster seat on the driver's side so she could see over the steering wheel. I sat down on it and hit my head on the inside of the roof.

"I guess you're a little bit bigger than me," she said, and laughed.

"Yeah, and getting wider every year." When I dropped her home after her haircut, she thanked me.

"Not a problem," I said. "And Edith, your hair looks really nice."



**A**S THE WEEKS went by, I found it easier and easier to talk to her. But then, six weeks later, I went to take her to the hairdresser again, and she was furious with me. “I just want you to know I didn’t appreciate that call this morning. You boys keep on hounding me to move—well, save your breath!”

I had no idea what she was talking about. “Your friend over there at the developer’s office tried to sound all polite, but I know what he was up to.”

offered to bring someone in to take pictures of her house so that they could build an exact replica somewhere else. They mentioned the \$1 million again and said they would buy a new house for her.

“I’m not sure why I need \$1 million,” said Edith. “If I get sick, it probably won’t cover the medical bills, and if I don’t get sick, I don’t need it. And if you’re going to make the new place look just like this one, why should I bother?”



*Edith seemed so vulnerable and so independent at the same time. I felt strangely protective of her.*

“Listen,” I replied. “I work by the hour, and it makes no difference to me whether you stay or go, but let me ask you one question: Why don’t you want to move?”

She looked out the window. “Where would I go? I don’t have any family, and this is my home. My mother died here, on this very couch. I came back to America from England to take care of her. She made me promise I would let her die at home and not in some facility, and I kept that promise. And this is where I want to die. Right in my own home. On this couch.”

She was so frail and so strong at the same time, vulnerable yet fiercely independent. I felt strangely protective of her. It was such a simple request.

At another meeting, the developers

Before long, I was taking her to doctor’s appointments as well as to the hairdresser. Then I was scheduling her appointments myself. On one of our drives home, she was wondering out loud what she might make herself for lunch. I told her that one of the boys was going out for hamburgers, and she said that sounded good. “Don’t bring any fries, though,” she told me. “They’re too fattening.”

Instead, I told him to bring her back a vanilla shake. That was the day I learned what a sweet tooth Edith had. She would stick the straw into her mouth and not stop until the shake was gone. Then she started calling me about once a week to ask for “a hamburger and one of those vanilla things.”

It wasn’t long before I was cooking

her dinner every night too. I would put a TV dinner in the oven, go to the grocery store, buy her groceries, turn around and come back, and put the groceries away, and dinner would be ready.

One evening, I noticed a picture sitting on the dusty bookcase in the living room. It was of Edith wearing wire-rimmed glasses and holding a clarinet, looking like the great jazz musician Benny Goodman.

"Edith, how old were you when you started playing the clarinet?" I asked.

"My cousin Benny gave me one of his old clarinets; that's how it started." It was the second time she had mentioned him, and it got me thinking. Was this actually true, or was this just an old lady with a few loony tunes? So I started flipping through her Benny Goodman albums and, sure enough, one was signed "To my cousin Edith, with love, Benny."

**A**S THE SHOPPING center was beginning to rise up from the ground, I got my first call from Edith's social workers. They didn't think she was capable of staying in the house by herself. Could I help persuade her to move? What if something happened? And I said that something could happen anywhere, and I was just 30 seconds away and would keep checking on her. "Well, if something goes wrong, you're going to be responsible," they told me.

At that point, something welled up

in me; it was the first time I understood how much I was learning about growing old from Edith.

"How am I responsible? I'll check on her, but she's a grown woman. She's perfectly capable of knowing what she can or cannot do, and if she wants to take that risk because it means staying in her own house, that's her right."

I was beginning to understand how we do things for old people to make things easier for ourselves. We don't listen to what they are trying to tell us. When Edith swatted my hands away as I tried to help her tie a shoelace, she would roar, "I can do it myself." Just as with children, you try to persuade them to let you help them, not for their sake but for your own, just to get through the day a little quicker. Dignity is hard to let go of, especially for someone who had lived the kind of exciting life that Edith seemingly had.

That autumn, as the days grew shorter, I had given up all pretense that there was some separation between my life with and without Edith. I wasn't spending weekends with her, but during the week, I was in and out of her house from dawn until way after dark, making her meals, taking care of the bills and the chores, the shopping and the laundry, as well as watching TV with her. On the days when I'd make it home before dark, more often than not, Edith would call me with some problem, some excuse, to make me drive back. I've had an accident, she'd say, or you forgot to leave

water for me. I swear she would take the jug of water I'd left on the table and struggle over to the sink to pour it out just to get me to come back.

I wonder, looking back, how my wife, Evie, coped with all of this. With two teenagers at home, there was always too much for one person to do. But when I asked her, all she would ever say was that she was proud of me: "It takes a special person to do this."

**E**DITH FELL DOWN a number of times that winter. Too often, I'd come over and find her on the floor. But still she wouldn't let me bring in any help, and she was becoming more and more demanding. It seemed like every time I tried to leave, she manufactured some kind of crisis.

One night, she called me at home and told me she'd fallen. Evie gave me a thermos of hot chocolate and a kiss goodbye as I headed out the door.

"You don't know," Edith said as I left after one of these "crises," "how sometimes I lie awake for hours, longing for the sound of your key in the door."

It was probably the first time that she got close to saying thank you. I leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. "I love you, old woman. Now get some sleep."

Edith seemed more fragile every day. She kept losing weight. Finally she agreed to go to the hospital for

tests. The news was not good—she had pancreatic cancer.

She was so strong, so in control that, even though she was 86, I guess I never thought to look around that particular corner. Or maybe I just didn't want to. I had come to love Edith in the same way I loved my family. Now we talked about options, the chemo and surgery and all, but of course she didn't want any of those things. Instead, she seemed relaxed. Relieved, even.

She got out of the hospital and went back to her little house. And then, two years after I first walked onto that construction site, on June 15, 2008, she died at home, on the same couch where her mother had died.



*Edith Macefield left her house to Barry Martin. In 2009, as he cleaned it out to sell to an architectural firm, he found notes to Edith from people like Clark Gable, Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, and Maurice Chevalier. One note was signed, "Your cousin Irving Goodman," Benny's brother and fellow band member.*

*The tiny house eventually landed in the hands of the owner of the shopping center that surrounds it. But real estate broker Paul Thomas, who represented Edith's house for years, told the Seattle Times that its fate remains unclear. "I do not expect it to be coming down tomorrow or next month or even next year." R*

# Laugh Lines

LITERARY LAUGHS

I'm writing my book  
in fifth person, so  
every sentence starts  
out with: "I heard  
from this guy who  
told somebody ..."

DEMETRI MARTIN

I used to love correcting people's  
grammar until I realized what  
I loved more was having friends.

🐦@MARAWRITESSTUFF (MARA WILSON)

We get it, poets:  
Things are like  
other things.

🐦@SHUTUPMIKEGINN  
(MIKE GINN)

Yeah, I'd probably  
freak out too if  
a raven flew into  
my house. That  
poem still holds up.

🐦@SEANWHITECOMEDY  
(SEAN GILBERT WHITE)

Starting a cover  
band called  
A Book so no one  
can judge us.

🐦@DAEMONIC3  
(TERRY F.)

If people say they  
just love the smell  
of books, I always  
want to pull them  
aside and ask,  
To be clear, do  
you know how  
reading works?

🐦@BRIDGER\_W  
(BRIDGER WINEGAR)

Been reading  
up on the  
thesaurus  
lately because  
a mind is a  
terrible thing  
to garbage.

🐦@DINOKITTEN







A French journalist posed online  
as a young woman interested in ISIS.  
What she wanted was a story.  
What she got was the fright of her life.

# Romancing THE **TERRORIST**

BY ANNA ERELLE\*

FROM THE BOOK *IN THE SKIN OF A JIHADIST*

***“Salaam alaikum, sister. I see you  
watched my video. It’s gone viral—  
crazy! Are you Muslim?”***

It was ten o’clock on a Friday night in April 2014. I was sitting on my sofa in my one-bedroom Parisian apartment when a terrorist based in Syria contacted me on Facebook. I’d been studying European jihadists in the Islamic State and was interested in understanding what it was that made someone give up everything and brave death for this cause.

*\*This is a pseudonym.*

Like many journalists, I had a fictional Facebook account I'd created to keep an eye on current events. My profile picture was a cartoon image of Princess Jasmine from the Disney movie *Aladdin*. I claimed to be in Toulouse, a city in southwestern France. My name on this account was Mélodie. Mélodie's age: 20.

During my research, I came across many propaganda films on YouTube filled with images of torture and

world as a confidant of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS.

Soon after I shared this video, my computer alerted me to three messages sent to "Mélodie's" private inbox ... all from Abu Bilel. "Are you thinking about coming to Syria?" he asked in one of them.

"*Walaikum salaam*. I didn't think a jihadist would talk to me," I replied. "Don't you have better things to do? LOL."



*"Before you go to sleep, answer me something: Can I be your boyfriend?"*

charred bodies laid out in the sun. The juvenile laughter accompanying these horrific scenes made the videos all the more unbearable.

That Friday night, I came across a video of a French jihadist who looked to be about 35. The video showed him taking inventory of the items inside his SUV. The man in the video wore military fatigues and Ray-Bans and called himself Abu Bilel. He claimed to be in Syria. The scene around him, a true no-man's-land, didn't contradict him. In the back of his car, his bulletproof vest sat beside a machine gun. I would later discover that Abu Bilel had spent the past 15 years waging jihad all over the

In my message, I told him I'd converted to Islam but didn't offer any details. I deliberately included spelling mistakes and used a teen's vocabulary. I waited for his reply, a knot in my stomach: I couldn't believe this was happening.

"Of course I have a lot of things to do! But here it's 11 o'clock at night and the fighters are finished for the day. We should talk over Skype."

Skype was out of the question! I ignored his proposal and suggested we talk another time. Abu Bilel understood; he'd make himself available for Mélodie tomorrow whenever she wanted.

"You converted, so you should get

ready for your *hijrah* [emigration]. I'll take care of you, Mélodie."

He didn't know anything about this girl, and he was already asking her to join him in the bloodiest country on earth.

**T**HE NEXT TIME we spoke, Bilel asked, "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"No, I don't," I said, speaking as Mélodie. "I don't feel comfortable talking about this with a man. It's *haram* [forbidden]. My mother will be home from work soon. I have to hide my Koran and go to bed."

"Soon you won't have to hide anything, *Insha'Allah* [God willing]! I want to help you lead the life awaiting you here. Before you go to sleep, answer me something: Can I be your boyfriend?"

I logged off Facebook. We'd exchanged 120 messages in the space of two hours.

That Monday, I rushed to the magazine where I freelance. My editor agreed that this was a unique opportunity, but he reminded me of the dangers. Urging caution, he assigned me a photographer, André. I would agree to Bilel's request to meet over Skype, and André would take pictures.

To become Mélodie, I needed to look ten years younger and find a veil. Another editor lent me a hijab [veil] and a djellaba [long black dress]. I was glad to wear them. The idea of a terrorist becoming familiar with

my face didn't thrill me, especially not when the man in question could return to France, his home country, at any moment.

André arrived at my apartment that night around six o'clock. We had an hour to prepare before Bilel "got home from fighting" and contacted Mélodie. I pulled on Mélodie's floor-length black djellaba over my jeans and sweater. I removed my rings and covered the small tattoo on my wrist with foundation, assuming Bilel wouldn't appreciate such frivolousness.

It was time. I sat cross-legged on my sofa. André positioned himself in a blind spot behind the sofa. The Islamic State is brimming with counterespionage experts and hackers. It was safer if Bilel didn't know my phone number, so Mélodie had her own. I'd also created a Skype account in her name.

The Skype ringtone sounded like a church bell. I took a moment to breathe, then clicked the button, and there he was. Bilel's eyes smoldered as he gazed at the young Mélodie, as if trying to cast a spell. Bilel was Skyping from his car. He looked clean and well-groomed after his day on the front.

"*Salaam alaikum*, my sister," he said.

I smiled. "It's crazy to be talking to a mujahid in Syria. It's like you have easier access to the Internet than I do in Toulouse!"

"Syria is amazing. We have everything here. *Masha'Allah* [God has willed it], you have to believe me: It's

paradise! A lot of women fantasize about us; we're Allah's warriors."

"But every day people die in your paradise ..."

"That's true, and every day I fight to stop the killing. Here the enemy is the devil. You have no idea. Tell me, do you wear your hijab every day?"

Mérodie recited what I'd heard from girls I'd met during my career who had secretly converted to Islam. "I dress normally in the morning. I say goodbye to my mom, and when I'm outside the house, I put on my djellaba and my veil."

"I'm proud of you. You have a beautiful soul. And you're very pretty on the outside too." Bilel peered lecherously at Mérodie. Suddenly, men's thick voices broke the mournful silence.

"Don't say anything!" Bilel ordered. "I don't want anyone to see or hear you! You're my jewel."

I listened to the conversation and could distinguish the voices of two other men. They greeted Bilel in Arabic, then switched to French. They laughed a lot, congratulating themselves for having "slaughtered them."

The dried blood I saw on the concrete was evidence of the attack. ISIS's black flags with white insignia floated in the distance. The other men seemed to treat Bilel with respect.

Their way of politely addressing him suggested my contact was higher in the ranks than they were. A minute later, he said goodbye to his fellow fighters and spoke into the phone.

"Oh, you're still there! And just as beautiful—"

"Who were they?"

"Fighters who came to say hello.

Anyway, you're not interested in all that. Tell me about you! What guided you to Allah's path?"

I began to stammer—I hadn't had time to invent a "real" life for Mérodie. "One of my cousins was Muslim, and I was fascinated by the inner peace that his

religion gave him. He guided me to Islam," I said.

"Does he know that you want to come to al-Sham?"

Bilel assumed that everything had been decided—Mérodie would soon arrive in Syria.

"I'm not sure that I want to go—"

"Listen, Mérodie. You'll be well taken care of here. You'll be important. And if you agree to marry me, I'll treat you like a queen."

Marry him?! I logged off Skype as a kind of survival reflex. Pulling the hijab down to my neck, I turned toward André, who looked as dumbfounded as I was.

*André feared  
that the longer  
we let Mérodie  
exist, the more  
I was at risk.  
I agreed.*

How was I to respond to Bilel's proposal? André suggested explaining that since Mélodie wasn't married, she didn't want to arrive in Syria alone. If she decided to go at all.

Bilel called back.

"My friend Yasmine is Muslim," I said, changing the subject. "I could invite her to come with me, but she's only 15."

"Here, women are supposed to get married when they turn 14. If Yasmine comes, I'll find her a good man."

Yasmine didn't exist, but I wondered how many real Yasmynes were being lured at that very moment by men like Bilel.

"Bilel, I have to hang up. My mom is getting home."

"I'll be here tomorrow after the fighting, as usual, at seven. *Insha'Allah* ... Good night, my baby."

*My baby?*

As soon as Abu Bilel announced his plan to marry Mélodie, her list of virtual friends grew. Girls began asking Mélodie for advice on the safest route to Syria. Some of the questions were both technical and strange: "Should I bring a lot of sanitary pads or can I find them there?"; "If I arrive in Syria without a husband, it's probably not a good idea to draw attention to myself by bringing thong underwear; my future husband might think I'm immodest. But will I be able to find them there?" I was bewildered by the mundane fixations of these girls who were signing up for death. How was

I supposed to answer their questions?

I wasted a lot of time playing along with Bilel's game of seduction in order to gain his trust. No one, not even André, could comprehend the level of controlled schizophrenia that this exercise demanded. No matter what he said, Bilel was terrifying.

"Oh, there are you are, my wife!" he said one night. "Good news. I spoke with the *qadi* [judge] in Raqqa [ISIS's stronghold in Syria]. He's looking forward to marrying us."

Stunned, I didn't know what to say. "What are weddings like there?"

"Actually, we're already married."

"Excuse me?"

"I thought I'd already spoken enough about the idea of marriage with you. I asked you to marry me a while ago, and I talked about it with the judge, who drew up the papers. We're officially married, my wife! *Masha'Allah*. You're really mine now."

**I**T HAD BEEN nearly a month. André feared that the longer we let Mélodie exist, the more I was at risk. I agreed with him. Together with my editors, I planned the investigation's end. I had told Bilel that Yasmine and I would meet him in Syria. He instructed me to go to Amsterdam and then on to Istanbul. Once I was there, he would send further instructions. "You're my jewel, and Raqqa is your palace. You'll be treated like a princess," he assured me.

It was true. I was really going to



Istanbul, but André—not Yasmine—would accompany me. The plan was simple: Bilel had told me an older woman known as Mother would meet us there. André would surreptitiously capture Mother on film for the article. While she looked for Yasmine and Mélodie, André and I would continue on to Kilis, a city near the Syrian border. Turkey controlled it, and it would be safer than other places.

The story would end there, with a photograph of Mélodie looking out at the Syrian border from behind. The journalist would stop at the doors to hell, and Mélodie would step through them. We were finally wrapping this up. At least that's what I thought.

A few days later, I was in a tiny hotel room in Amsterdam when Bilel Skyped.

"Salaam alaikum, my darling; are you really in Amsterdam? I can't believe it. You'll be here soon. I'm the happiest man on earth. I love you, my wife."

I'd never seen him look so happy. Bilel was alone in an Internet café. He'd just finished "work."

"Tell me about your trip. How did you pay for the tickets?"

"I stole my mom's debit card."

"You're so strong, my wife! If you still have the debit card, feel free to buy me some stuff."

What do you get for a man who talks about beheading people in one breath and how much he loves you in the next?

"What do you want?"

"Well, cologne! I love Égoïste by Chanel or something nice from Dior."

"OK, baby. Can we talk about tomorrow? What is going to happen after we meet Mother?"

"Actually, nobody will be there to meet you."

"But that wasn't the plan, Bilel," I said, my voice genuinely frayed with anxiety.

"You were adamant—as was I—that a woman come to meet us. You told me we would be safe."

"Listen to me," he said, his tone hardening. "You're going to shut up for a minute and let me speak. When you arrive at the airport in Istanbul, buy two one-way tickets for Urfa."

Urfa? Urfa was infiltrated by the



Islamic State. Going there was suicide.

"All I ask is that you respect what you've promised me."

"You can't talk to me like that! I'm the one who gives orders around here, not you. From now on, you're going to shut up. Don't you know who I am? I command a hundred soldiers every day. I haven't even told you a quarter of the truth!"

When the conversation ended, I tore off the hijab. Everything was falling apart. I phoned my editor in chief, who gave me orders to wrap up this story. To put things in perspective, she reminded me that two French journalists sent to the Urfa region had just been freed after ten months of captivity at the hands of ISIS. The next morning, we flew home.

Mérodie sent Bilel a Skype message from the airport informing him that a "strange" man had questioned the girls. Yasmine and Mérodie felt they were being watched, and they decided to return to France until better circumstances presented themselves.

**B**ACK HOME, my editors were realizing just how much information I had: Bilel had revealed many details about the structure of ISIS and the way new recruits were treated. I began writing.

A week later, the magazine published my article under a pseudonym. Out of fear that the terrorists could

trace me, I moved out of my apartment and twice changed my phone number.

I stopped counting the number of statements I've given to various branches of the police when it reached 254. An antiterrorist judge also asked to hear my testimony after my real identity started appearing in a number of their files. According to those files, Bilel has three wives, ages 20, 28, and 39. They're all with him in Syria. He is the father of at least three boys under the age of 13. The two eldest are already fighting on the front in Syria.

I never had direct contact with Bilel again. But recently, a journalist friend called to tell me he'd learned there was a fatwa against me.

I found a video on the Web that showed me wearing Mérodie's veil on my couch. It was taken, I imagine, by Bilel. There's no audio, but it does include cartoon characters of a devil and bilingual, French and Arabic, subtitles. I've seen the video only once, but I remember every word:

"My brothers from around the world, I issue a fatwa against this impure person who has scorned the Almighty. If you see her anywhere on earth, follow Islamic law and kill her. Make sure she suffers a long and painful death. Whoever mocks Islam will pay for it in blood. She's more impure than a dog. Rape, stone, and finish her. *Insha'Allah*."

I don't think I'll watch it again. **R**

She's been the soundtrack to my life—  
and one of my greatest teachers

# Billie Holiday *Sang to Me*

BY LARA DOWNES FROM THE RUMPUS



LARA DOWNES  
*is a concert  
pianist,  
recording  
artist, and  
writer.*

EVERY SATURDAY MORNING, when I was a little girl, my sisters and I went to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for what we called Saturday classes: piano lessons, theory, music history—serious classical music training for serious little musicians. After we got home, we had a ritual. We'd get out our “dress-up” from the vintage steamer trunk that housed a collection of my mother's 1960s party dresses and my grandmother's furs, go through my parents' record collection—the Beatles, Sinatra, Charles Aznavour, Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday—and dance around the living room. The Billie Holiday records stopped me in my tracks. I was enthralled by Lady Day, her dark eyes shaded by a white gardenia, her world-worn voice, and the mood and phrasing, line and color that she brought to even the simplest tune.

In my diary, when I was eight, I made a careful list in perfect cursive of all my favorite things. My favorite song was Billie Holiday's “I Cover the Waterfront”—such a sad song, about watching and waiting for a love that's gone. That year was the last year of my father's long, slow dying. After he passed away, I spent foggy afternoons at the window, looking out over the San Francisco Bay, waiting for the grief to lift. I pulled out the old records at

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (DOWNES)



night. “I cover the waterfront,” Billie sang. “I’m watching the sea / Will the one I love be coming back to me?”

My father was born in Harlem and grew up steps from the clubs where jazz blossomed in its golden age and where Billie Holiday was singing during his childhood. He loved jazz. In my earliest memories, he is listening to records, the long length of him stretched out in our living room. In the end, he left us the memories and the records.

**OUR FAMILY BURIED** our loss in our music. My mother took me and my sisters to Europe, where we lived in the great capitals and studied at the great conservatories with the legendary artists of a quickly vanishing generation. It was a very different life, surely, than the one my father had imagined for us. American culture was something far away, accessed through overdubbed TV reruns, the occasional jar of peanut butter from an Army base commissary, and the cheap East Bloc bootleg jazz CDs we bought at open-air markets.

My sisters and I were growing up. I had my first love affairs. I spent one cold winter in Vienna practicing Schumann all day and listening to Billie Holiday records all night, missing a boy an ocean away. Schumann and Lady Day both knew a thing or two about heartache. “I’ll be looking at the moon, but I’ll be seeing you,” she sang.

Ten years later, I moved back to the States. I made my way, very alone,

through the unknown landscape of the New York music world. I was starting over, and it was hard. There were moments of despair and defeat. I practiced Ravel and Liszt all day in a windowless sublet and listened to Billie Holiday records at night. “Beautiful to take a chance,” she sang. I found new courage and took some chances and had some astonishing luck—a competition win, a Carnegie Hall debut recital, a recording contract.

I was hungry for American music, for a reconnection with what was home. I played music by Copland, Gershwin, Bernstein, Ellington. There was something I needed to find in a musical tradition “beyond category,” as Ellington put it—a musical sea made of waves of immigration and tides of change. This distinct sound, from the concert halls to the clubs, spoke to me because it is everything we are, coming from so many different places and people.

On my bedside table I have two posed studio photographs from the 1930s. My two grandmothers: Grandmother Fay, one of seven sisters born to Jewish immigrants from the town of Belz in Ukraine, who grew up in Buffalo, New York, and came out to San Francisco when my mother settled there, who lived just a few blocks away from us when I was little but whose story I wish I knew better. And my Jamaican grandmother, Ivy, who moved as a young woman to Harlem, who died when my father was very small, and whose story is lost to family



history and memory except for the equation of nose and cheekbones that I see whenever I look in the mirror.

My story of race and roots is captured in these two faded portraits. Two women, looking out at me in the bloom of their youth, framed inside the parameters of a time in which a relationship between them would have been buried under layers of impossibilities and prejudices. Looking into their eyes, I see proof of how much change has come in two short generations, how very recently their granddaughter's version of American life became possible.

My parents met at a sit-in in San Francisco in the mid-'60s, and they dreamed for their three caramel-colored girls of a future color-blind America in which race wouldn't matter. But, of course, it did. From the beginning, I was well aware of the undercurrent of racial complexities and complexes that run through our culture. Being caramel colored in America comes with a burden of confusions, assumptions, and questions. Living abroad shifted that burden, but when I came back, I felt it again.

**A** MUSICIAN IS BORN and then made. Everything folds together: all the music you hear, study, practice, and perform, all the lessons you're taught and the



*Two women who made the author who she is: her grandmothers Fay Harwitz (left) and Ivy Downes*

ones you learn on your own. So when I decided to pay tribute to Billie Holiday by recording a piano album of her songbook, I had to take a hard look at this lifetime I've lived with her music. I had to turn back to the nights when her voice had sung me out of sadness to sleep, back to those Saturday afternoons of my childhood, and to ask myself what I'd learned from her, as a musician and a woman.

She was one of the most innovative and distinctive musicians of any genre. She was a brilliant, mesmerizing, self-destructive woman whose life swung from tragedy to triumph and back again. Her voice spoke volumes about hard living and heartbreak and about improvising your way through it all. She took a song, any song, and made it immediately and forever her own. She didn't follow anyone's rules. "If I'm going to sing like anyone else," she said, "then I don't need to sing at all."

When I was eight, Billie Holiday's music taught me that something beautiful could be made from sadness. For a musician, that is one of the most powerful lessons to learn. It's what saves us. She lived a short and troubled life, but the happiness and luck that she did find, she found through music. And finding your joy and strength in music is something I know. I know what it's like, when things have fallen to pieces, to put on a satin dress and go onstage and find the secret power of a woman in a satin dress and make your listeners fall in love with the music. Just like I fell in love with Billie Holiday's songs.

She gave away her heart boldly and foolishly, and every time it was bruised, she turned that pain into something graceful and moving, in a song. "Love is funny or it's sad, it's a good thing or it's bad," she sang, "but beautiful." There have been times when I've given my heart at the wrong time to the wrong man. One spring I played Rachmaninoff during the day and listened to Billie Holiday at night. "I'm a fool to want you," she sang, a phrase I echoed in my head.

It's been hard to hold on to hope this year. I'm raising a caramel-colored boy of my own and would like to think that my parents' dream can come true

for him. But I am afraid it is still out of reach. I've been sad and turned to the music that taught me how to find the beauty in pain. I've been playing Billie Holiday songs across America with my musician's voice reaching back to join hers. I've met people who heard her sing in Harlem when my

father was a boy, people who were her friends and lost her too soon, people who have lived their whole lives with her records, as I have.

This music has made me new friends, told me new stories, brought back things I thought I'd lost a long time ago. It's brought me home.

After all the years, all

the travels, all the music, I've understood the lesson I've learned from Lady Day: that the magic in making music, as in living life, is to forget about all the definitions and rules you ever learned, to lean back against the launchpad of your history and your experience, your losses and heartaches and joys, to look out into the future and to make something that is completely your own. Something that reaches deep to your center and pulls out a truth powerful enough to illuminate the moment and to shine far ahead, into memory. Something unexpected, something indefinable, perhaps complicated, but beautiful. **R**

“  
***The magic in  
making music,  
as in living life,  
is to forget  
about the rules  
you've learned.***”

# That's Outrageous!

HELP WANTED

## NEEDED: SOMEONE WHO WILL ANSWER THE PHONE LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.

New York City's Department of Health may have a job opening soon if one of its employees doesn't stop screwing around. It seems that management does not care for the fact that the twice-suspended help-line operator keeps answering IT calls by talking like a robot.

Source: *New York*

## CAN YOU PASS A SIMPLE TEST?

An Egyptian bus driver had an ingenious plan to beat a mandatory drug test: He used his wife's urine. Nevertheless, he failed the test. He found out when his boss handed him the results and reportedly said, "Congratulations; you're pregnant."

Source: *BBC News*

**LOOKING FOR A HOUSE SITTER WHO WILL ACTUALLY WATCH THE HOUSE.** A San Francisco couple got quite the surprise when they returned home from the Burning Man Festival last September—the

house sitter they'd hired had rented out their apartment on Airbnb.

Source: *seattlepi.com*

## DO YOU HAVE A PULSE? YOU'RE HIRED!

The city of New York had trouble with another employee. This one, his bosses claimed,

abandoned his job when he missed 18 months of work. An administrative law judge even recommended firing the slacker when he didn't bother to show up for his hearing. Turns out, the employee would have loved to have gone to work—even to the hearing—save for one small detail: He was dead.

Source: *rawstory.com*

## WANTED: A FRANK SINATRA FAN.

When singer Zayn Malik quit the British boy band One Direction last year, young women were inconsolable. How upset? An employment firm reports that companies were inundated with requests from female employees for time off while they recovered from the devastating news.

Source: *telegraph.co.uk*



# WHO ? KNEW

## 13 Things Sleep Doctors Won't Tell You

BY MICHELLE CROUCH



**1** You may not need eight hours of sleep. The latest research shows the right amount is what leaves you energized the next day. I'm a sleep doctor, and I've been a six-and-a-half-hour sleeper my entire adult life.

**2** Ditch the pajamas. Sleeping in the buff lets your skin breathe and keeps your body cool, which makes it easier to fall asleep and sleep soundly. It also boosts intimacy. One study found couples who sleep naked are more likely to report being happy in their relationships.

**3** I've cured more insomnia than you can imagine by telling people it's OK to fall asleep with the TV on. A lot of people simply can't turn off their brains, but watching TV helps. Put it on a timer so it doesn't disrupt your sleep later in the night.

**4** Many people can't sleep unless certain music is playing. Some adults always sleep with teddy bears. I even have one patient who has to shake a leg vigorously for 15 minutes while she falls asleep. I have no idea why, but it works for her.

**5** A nightcap doesn't work. It may relax you so you nod off quicker, but studies show you'll wake up more and get less of the REM sleep you need to feel rested.

**6** Have a snoring bed partner? Hidden allergies are a big cause of snoring. Congestion narrows nasal passages, creating the vibrations that cause snoring. A decongestant or an antihistamine can help quiet it.

**7** One woman was worried because she woke up every day at 4 a.m. and couldn't get back to sleep. But when I asked her what time she went to bed, she said 8 p.m. In certain cases, you don't have insomnia; you're just going to bed too early.

**8** To calm a racing mind, write down your worries and how you'll address them tomorrow. Then try a mental exercise to occupy your brain, like counting up by sevens.

**9** If you have insomnia, consider a referral to a clinical psychologist who specializes in sleep. He or she will use an effective technique, cognitive behavioral therapy, that gets to the root of the problem. Some studies show it works better than drugs.

**10** No one is immune to caffeine. Even if you can easily nod off after a cup of joe, the caffeine keeps you in light stages of sleep. During

sleep studies, we see a difference on your electrocardiogram (a recording of your heart's electrical activity) from just one cup of coffee.

**11** Sleeping on your stomach is the worst position for your neck and spine. The best? On your back with a pillow under your knees for support.

**12** Most people have no idea how many strange sleep disorders there are. People with REM sleep behavior disorder act out violent dreams. Those with sleep paralysis are awake but can't move for a few seconds to a few minutes. Those with exploding head syndrome experience loud noises in their heads as they transition in and out of sleep.

**13** I once treated a State Bureau of Investigation agent who was taken out of the field because he fell asleep during stakeouts. He had severe sleep apnea, so I put him on a CPAP machine (which delivers constant air to the nose). Two weeks later, his wife hugged me and said, "Thank you for giving me my husband back." As they walked out, she handed me a stack of papers and said, "I won't need these anymore." It was their divorce papers. That kind of story is why I'm a sleep doctor. **R**

Sources: Board-certified sleep specialists Stephanie Silberman, PhD, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Muhammad Najjar, MD, at Northshore Sleep Medicine in Evanston, Illinois; Meir H. Kryger, MD, former chair of the National Sleep Foundation; and Michael Breus, PhD, author of *Good Night: The Sleep Doctor's 4-Week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health*



# Mind-Blowing Facts About Some Beloved Songs

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR

■ The first commercial CD pressed in the United States was Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.*

■ Bob Marley gave songwriting credits on "No Woman No Cry" to his childhood friend Vincent Ford, who ran a soup kitchen in Jamaica. Royalties from the hit song helped keep the kitchen running.

■ Simon and Garfunkel bickered nonstop while recording "Bridge over Troubled Water." Garfunkel wanted Simon to sing it ("I'm sorry I didn't," Simon has said), and Simon never liked Garfunkel's closing "Sail on, silver girl" verse.

■ The iconic whistle in "(Sittin' on) the Dock of the Bay" was improvised when Otis Redding forgot what he was supposed to sing during the outro.

■ Michael Jackson was so absorbed in writing "Billie Jean" on a ride home from the studio one day that he didn't even notice his car was on fire. A passing motorcyclist alerted him—saving the King of Pop and one of the world's catchiest tunes.

■ Paul McCartney woke up one morning with the tune to "Yesterday" in his head but not the lyrics. The placeholder words he worked with: "Scrambled eggs ... oh, my baby, how I love your legs ..."

■ The BBC banned Bing Crosby's "I'll Be Home for Christmas" during World War II, worried its "sickly sentimentality" would lower the morale of homesick troops.

■ Barry Manilow's "I Write the Songs" was written by ... someone else (on-again/off-again Beach Boy Bruce Johnston, to be exact).

■ Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" was the most-requested radio song of the '70s. Yet singer/lyricist Robert Plant once pledged \$1,000 to a public radio station that promised to never play it again. ("I've heard it before," he later said.)

■ The dude in Aerosmith's "Dude (Looks like a Lady)" is Mötley Crüe frontman Vince Neil, whose long blond locks Aerosmith mistook for a woman's at a bar one night.



PROP STYLIST: JOJO LI FOR HELLO ARTISTS

■ The Caroline in Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" is none other than Caroline Kennedy, whom Neil saw in a magazine photo in the '60s.

"It was a picture of a little girl dressed to the nines in her riding gear, next to her pony," he recalled.

■ The chord that starts Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" is a tritone—known as the devil's interval and banned from some Renaissance church music for sounding too evil.

■ Number of songs Elvis Presley recorded: more than 800. Number of songs Elvis Presley wrote solo: zero. (He earned a few cowriting credits.)

■ "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" was written by ... a boy. Philadelphia singer Robert Hazard wrote and recorded the original version four years before Cyndi Lauper made it a hit.

■ "Somewhere over the Rainbow" (listed by American Film Institute as the greatest film song ever) is about a girl lifting herself up from rural Kansas but also about America rising up from the Great Depression under FDR's New Deal, of which song cowriter Yip Harburg was a supporter.


■ Queen and David Bowie wrote "Under Pressure" in one night (then got pizza). **R**

# LOOK

TWICE ...

---





... What do you see?

- A) Waves hitting a red beach,
- B) ice-cold fruit punch, or
- C) tonight's main course?

Answer: C. Photographer Cherry Li snapped this close-up of an icy fish fillet for a Beijing sushi bar that prides itself on using quality ingredients—and in the sushi biz, that rarely means “catch of the day.” To kill parasites and preserve flavor, most of the uncooked fish used in sushi must be frozen at subzero temperatures for anywhere from 15 hours (the FDA’s recommended minimum) to several years. Your taste buds would never know the difference.



CIA psychologists dig into the mysterious minds of world leaders in these incredible secret reports

# Psychoanalyzing Dictators

BY DAVE GILSON FROM MOTHER JONES

**A SECRET PENTAGON 2008** study concluded that Russian president Vladimir Putin's defining characteristic is ... autism.

Scrutinizing hours of Putin footage, the Department of Defense researchers found "that the Russian president carries a neurological abnormality ... identified by leading neuroscientists as Asperger's syn-

drome, an autistic disorder that affects all of his decisions."

Putin's spokesman dismissed the claim as "stupidity not worthy of comment." But it was far from the first time the intelligence community tried to diagnose foreign leaders from afar on behalf of American politicians and diplomats. The CIA has a long history of crafting psychological



profiles of international figures, with varying degrees of accuracy. Enjoy this sampling of its attempts to get inside the heads of heads of state.

## ADOLF HITLER

In 1943, the Office of Strategic Services, the CIA's World War II-era predecessor, commissioned Henry A. Murray of the Harvard Psychological Clinic to evaluate Hitler's personality based on remote observations. Murray and his colleagues returned with an unsparing 240-page assessment.

**DIAGNOSIS:** Hitler was an insecure, impotent, masochistic, and suicidal neurotic narcissist.

### FROM THE REPORT:

■ "There is little disagreement among psychologists that Hitler's personality is an example of the counteractive type, marked by intense and stubborn efforts to overcome early disabilities, weaknesses, and humiliations (wounds to self-esteem), and by efforts to revenge injuries and insults to pride."

■ He suffered from "hysterical blindness" while he was a soldier in World War I. "This psychosomatic illness was concomitant with the final defeat of Mother Germany, and it was after hearing of her capitulation that he had his vision of his task as savior. Suddenly his sight was restored."

■ The dossier predicted eight possible finales for the führer, including going insane, sacrificing himself in battle, contriving to be killed by

a Jewish assassin, and committing suicide: "Hitler has often vowed that he would commit suicide if his plans miscarried; but if he chooses this course, he will do it at the last moment and in the most dramatic possible manner ... For us it would be an undesirable outcome."

## NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

The CIA profiled the Soviet premier in advance of his 1961 meeting with President John F. Kennedy in Vienna. Reading up on his adversary got JFK hooked on CIA personality profiles—particularly "salacious secrets about foreign leaders." Meanwhile, the Soviets also profiled Kennedy for Khrushchev, describing him as a "typical pragmatist" whose "'liberalism' is rather relative."

**DIAGNOSIS:** The CIA saw Khrushchev as "a crude peasant who liked to be unpredictable and two-faced."

### FROM THE REPORT:

■ "An uninhibited ham actor who sometimes illustrates his points with barnyard humor, Khrushchev is endowed on occasion with considerable personal dignity."

■ "He is immoderately sensitive to slights—real or imagined—to himself, his political faith, or his nation, all of which he views more or less interchangeably."

■ "Capable of extraordinary frankness, and in his own eyes no doubt unusually honest, Khrushchev can also be expert in calculated bluffing."

It is often hard to distinguish when he is voicing real conviction and when he is dissembling.”

■ “It is also difficult with Khrushchev to tell whether his anger is real or feigned ... He is less able to conceal his formidable temper when he is tired.”

## FIDEL CASTRO

The CIA’s psychiatric staff published a secret report on the Cuban leader in December 1961.

**DIAGNOSIS:** Fidel Castro is not technically “crazy,” the CIA says, “but he is so highly neurotic and unstable a personality as to be quite vulnerable to certain kinds of psychological pressure.”

### FROM THE REPORT:

■ “The outstanding neurotic elements in his personality are his hunger for power and his need for the recognition and adulation of the masses.”

■ “Castro has a constant need to rebel, to find an adversary, and to extend his personal power by overthrowing existing authority.”

■ “Whenever his self-concept is slightly disrupted by criticism, he becomes so emotionally unstable as to lose to some degree his contact with reality.”

■ “Castro’s egotism is his Achilles’ heel.”

## MUAMMAR QADDAFI

In the early 1980s, the CIA tried to make sense of the Libyan strongman whose erratic actions were worrying the Reagan administration. Investigative journalist Bob Woodward quotes the study in his book *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA*.

**DIAGNOSIS:** “Despite popular belief to the contrary, Qaddafi is not psychotic,” the report said. He was, however, “judged to suffer from a severe personality disturbance—a ‘borderline personality disorder.’”

### FROM THE REPORT:

■ “Under severe stress, he is subject to bizarre behavior when his judgment may be faulty.”

■ His behavior could have been attributed to “an approaching or actual midlife crisis.” **R**

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## HOW MUCH IS A BUTTLOAD?

It’s 130 gallons. According to the imperial measurement system, a butt (from the French *botte*, meaning *boot*) is the second-largest size of wine cask you can get.

Source: gizmodo.com

# CONNECTIONS:

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Since eBay launched in 1995, its users have sold more than three billion items. Once in a blue moon, something truly invaluable shows up.

## 6 Priceless Things Sold on eBay



BY MARC MANCINI FROM MENTAL FLOSS

### 1 A CHUNK OF MARS

Starting price: **\$450,000**

Sold for: **\$450,000**

The odds against a rock forming on Mars, being knocked into space by an asteroid, and crash-landing on Earth are, well, astronomical. In fact, of the roughly 60,000 meteorite specimens known to science, only 124 have originated from Mars. A fragment from one of these was auctioned in 2003.

### 2 ONE OF ALBERT EINSTEIN'S HANDWRITTEN LETTERS

Starting price: **\$3,000,000**

Sold for: **\$3,000,100**

In 1954, the great physicist penned a candid letter to Jewish philosopher Erik Gutkind in which he defended his views on ethics, religion, and human nature. Nearly six decades later, it caused a minor media sensation by showing up on eBay.

### 3 THE ORIGINAL "HOLLYWOOD" SIGN

Starting price: **\$300,000**

Sold for: **\$450,400**

Built in 1923 as a real estate gimmick, the maiden set of oversize HOLLYWOOD letters overlooked L.A. until it was replaced by a newer group in 1978. The former landmark finally found a home after being auctioned off in 2005.

### 4 THE TOWN OF BRIDGEVILLE, CA

Starting price: **\$700,000**

Status: **SOLD—TWICE!**

"You get an entire working town," proclaimed a 2002 ad. "With the proper development, Bridgeville can become an economic powerhouse." An anonymous businessman emerged victorious by laying down an impressive \$1.77 million but backed out of the deal upon actually visiting some of the town's dilapidated homes. Nevertheless, the town did find a new buyer, who proceeded to resell it through eBay in 2006—this time for \$1.25 million. Since then, Bridgeville has changed hands yet again (without eBay's help).

### 5 A NEW SPECIES OF SEA URCHIN

Starting price: **\$9.50**

Sold for: **\$138**

Draped in warm hues of cream and purple, the *Coelopleurus exquisitus* urchin is a dazzling creature. But incredibly, marine biologists didn't discover it by exploring the open sea; they found it on eBay. Two colleagues at the Natural History Museum in London determined that a specimen being sold there by one collector did, in fact, hail from a species previously unknown to science.

### 6 THE MEANING OF LIFE

Starting price: **1 CENT**

Sold for: **\$3.26**

A mystical North Carolinian decided to give Monty Python a run for its money back in 2000. "I have discovered the reason for our existence," he wrote, "and will be happy to share this information with the highest bidder." Since then, neither the buyer nor the seller has gone public with the contents of his revelation. **R**

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*Latin is not the official language of any country today, but far from defunct, it's thriving in hundreds of our common English expressions. Whether it's alias ("somewhere else") or veto ("I forbid"), Caesar's language is entwined with ours. Pro bono (that is, "free") answers on next page.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

**1. verbatim** (ver-'bay-tuhm) *adv.*—A: slowly and carefully. B: without stopping. C: word for word.

**2. mea culpa** (may-uh 'kul-puh) *n.*—A: congratulations. B: acknowledgment of fault. C: wavering decision.

**3. bona fide** ('boh-nuh fiyd) *adj.*—A: genuine. B: secret. C: at home.

**4. non sequitur** (nahn-'seh-kwuh-tuhr) *n.*—A: odd man out. B: comment that doesn't follow logically. C: failure to obey.

**5. ad infinitum** (ad in-fuh-'niy-tuhm) *adv.*—A: imitating. B: without end. C: making a bold display.

**6. status quo** (sta-tuhs 'kwoh) *n.*—A: good reputation. B: current state of affairs. C: complete sentence.

**7. magnum opus** ('mag-nuhm 'oh-puhs) *n.*—A: masterpiece. B: large debt. C: giant squid.

**8. per capita** (per 'ka-puh-tuh) *adv.*—A: financially. B: in block letters. C: for each person.

**9. ergo** ('er-goh) *adv.*—A: as soon as. B: therefore. C: otherwise.

**10. circa** (suh-'kuh) *prep.*—A: about or around. B: after. C: between.


**11. persona non grata** (per-'soh-nuh nahn 'grah-tuh) *adj.*—A: fake. B: thankless. C: unwelcome.

**12. semper fidelis** (sem-per fuh-'day-luhs) *adj.*—A: at attention. B: innocent. C: always loyal.

**13. carpe diem** (kar-peh 'dee-uhm) *interj.*—A: happy anniversary! B: seize the day! C: listen, please!

**14. quasi** ('kwah-ziy) *adj.*—A: a bit seasick. B: having some resemblance. C: part time.

**15. quid pro quo** (kwid proh 'kwoh) *n.*—A: something given or received for something else. B: vote in favor. C: generous tip.

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

## Answers

**1. verbatim**—[C] word for word.

If you don't repeat the magic spell *verbatim*, the cave door won't open.

**2. mea culpa**—[B] acknowledgment of fault. Whenever Art misses a fly ball, he says, "*Mea culpa!*"

**3. bona fide**—[A] genuine. I was waiting for a *bona fide* apology after my argument with customer service.

**4. non sequitur**—[B] comment that doesn't follow logically. We were discussing the film when Taylor threw in a *non sequitur* about her new kitchen.

**5. ad infinitum**—[B] without end. Don't get my sister started on politics, or she'll start hurling her opinions *ad infinitum*.

**6. status quo**—[B] current state of affairs. The new CEO's structural moves have really changed the *status quo* for the better.

**7. magnum opus**—[A] masterpiece. I think of "Good Vibrations" as Brian Wilson's *magnum opus*.

**8. per capita**—[C] for each person. Ever the economist, Mom said, "Just one lollipop *per capita*, kids."

**9. ergo**—[B] therefore. The groom was late; *ergo*, the crowd—and the bride—appeared unsettled.

**10. circa**—[A] about or around. It was *circa* 1978 that Juliana first started collecting *Peanuts* memorabilia.

**11. persona non grata**—[C] unwelcome. After I dropped the ball and didn't call my best friend for years, he declared me *persona non grata*.

**12. semper fidelis**—[C] always loyal. Jack typically shortens the U.S. Marines motto to a yell of "*Semper fi!*"

**13. carpe diem**—[B] seize the day! Don't sit around procrastinating, you sluggard—*carpe diem!*

**14. quasi**—[B] having some resemblance. With a broom handle and three wires, I invented a *quasi* guitar.

**15. quid pro quo**—[A] something given or received for something else. Offer me trading advice, and I'll chip in some tech help; it's a *quid pro quo*.

### TRIVIAL PURSUIT

The word *trivia* is Latin for "three roads" (*tri* + *via*). What's the connection? In ancient times, at a major crossroads, there was typically a kiosk listing regional information. Or you might find a group of local gossipers there. Travelers could learn local facts at these intersections—but the information might sometimes have seemed commonplace.

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**9 & below:** cum laude

**10–12:** magna cum laude

**13–15:** summa cum laude

# Humor in Uniform



*"Let's try this one more time, soldier—where's the other shoe?!"*

**IN COLLEGE**, my freshman-year roommate was in ROTC and came from a long line of military men. Trask (his last name) used that heritage to lord it over me. But I had the last laugh.

One night, he returned to the dorm in his perfectly pressed uniform, his newly acquired name tag in his hand. Reluctantly, he showed it to me. In large gold letters was printed: TRASH.

GARY SEVERSON, *Nooksack, Washington*

**MY 90-YEAR-OLD DAD** was giving a talk at our local library about his World War II experiences. During the question-and-answer period, he was asked, "How did you know the war was over?"

He replied, "When they stopped shooting at me."

LYNETTE COMBS, *Norfolk, Virginia*

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# Quotable Quotes



**WE DIDN'T LOSE  
THE GAME; WE JUST  
RAN OUT OF TIME.**

**VINCE LOMBARDI,**  
*former Green Bay  
Packers coach*

Anxiety's like a rocking  
chair. It gives you  
something to do, but it  
doesn't get you very far.

**JODI PICOULT, author**



**Shared joy is double joy, and  
shared sorrow is half-sorrow.**

**SWEDISH PROVERB**

**A STRANGER RINGS;  
A FRIEND KNOCKS.**

**DAVE EGGERS, author and publisher**



***It has always been easy to  
hate and destroy. To build and to  
cherish is much more difficult.***

**QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

I wish I could tell you  
it gets better, but it  
doesn't get better.  
You get better.

**JOAN RIVERS,**  
*comedian*



**A SHIP DOES  
NOT SAIL  
WITH  
YESTERDAY'S  
WIND.**

**LOUIS L'AMOUR, novelist**

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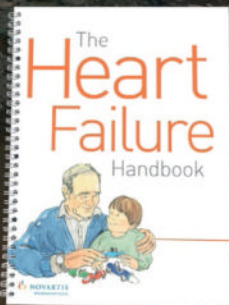


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