

Reader's digest

OCTOBER 2014

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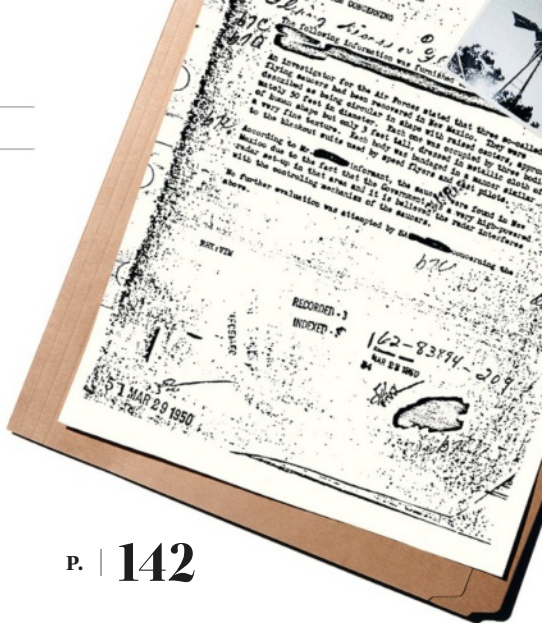
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Editor's Note

Can We Talk About Talking?

 **SOME PEOPLE SAY** everything they think, but I'm not one of them. My default setting is quiet.

I worked hard to override that tendency when my twins were born. The parenting magazines were clear: Read to your baby, certainly, but it's even more enriching to talk to them. Words of all kinds matter, as long as they come from a human being and

not a screen. Through my haze of exhaustion, I tried (joyously some days, valiantly others) to chat, ramble, and converse with the cooing, crying, insatiable new loves of my life.

Today the studies continue to roll in. As I learned from Melissa Fay Greene's fascinating story about reading to children, "Word Power for Babies" (page 88), the volume of words a baby hears in the first few

years of life is even more vital to brain development than scientists had first thought. By the time their kids are three, some parents have spoken 30 million more words to them than others have! Children who hear fewer words may never catch up.

I have to say, I read Greene's story and worried. As I'd emptied their Diaper Genie, had I been giving my daughters an appropriately



EVGENY KARANDAEV/ALAMY (FRAME)

verbose blow-by-blow? Knowing me, I can't imagine it. But I know they grew up around enough language to be OK. Confident, curious, doing well in school, Sophia and Olivia developed fine. When they don't answer my calls to the dinner table, I just think, I must have talked their ears off.

WHILE WE'RE TALKING, I have some news about your *Reader's Digest* subscription. We have decided to adjust the frequency of the magazine to ten issues per year.

Because we increased the frequency from ten times a year to 12 only two years ago, some of you might be confused. Why another change? At the time, we believed that the number of digital readers (people who enjoy reading our magazine on a Kindle, Nook, or iPad) would eventually outpace the number of print readers and that our production costs would come down.

Well, I am happy to report: Print is alive and well! The vast majority of you still enjoy the feel of our pages and get great satisfaction from sharing *Reader's Digest* with friends and family. Meanwhile, paper and postage costs continue to increase. We could have raised the price of the magazine to accommodate this. But

based on reader input, we chose to decrease the frequency so that our readers would not have to pay more.

If you have already paid for 12 issues, you will get 12 issues; your subscription will simply extend over a longer period of time. And rest assured that we will maintain the improvements that delighted you and formed the cornerstone of our January redesign: high-quality paper, clean layouts, and more stories and fewer advertisements. Other than a change in frequency, your magazine will remain the same.

In mid-November, the December/January issue will arrive in your mailbox. In the summer, we will mail a July/August issue. This, in addition to monthly issues during the other eight months, will be the new schedule going forward.

I dearly hope that you will appreciate our desire to give you a reading experience that you enjoy, at a price that's agreeable to you, on a schedule that's sustainable. Meanwhile, we will pour our hearts into collecting and crafting even more inspiring stories, funny jokes, and helpful advice on rd.com during the months with a combined issue. May your hearts grow fonder. **R**



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

Letters

COMMENTS ON THE AUGUST ISSUE



Terror at the Beach

This story left out one critical fact: The site of the sand dune rescue was blocked off, with several signs warning people not to enter. Thanks to the firefighters, EMTs, excavators, and others, this story had a happy ending.

KIMBERLY DAVIS, *South Bend, Indiana*

This should have been called the Terror Issue! Halfway through, I was almost afraid to continue reading for fear of the next scare.

SARA BALIGH,
Hillsborough, North Carolina

The Kindness of Our Readers

Your Editor's Note touched me deeply—we have gotten to a point where we see, hear, and read so much hate. There are a lot of honest, sweet, loving people in the world. God bless them all.

RAY MYERS, *Roseburg, Oregon*

The Word That Killed Our Friendship

I'm 62 years old and had a similar experience. I had befriended one of the few black kids at my school, and

I hurt him tremendously when he overheard my calling someone else the N-word. I haven't seen or heard from him since then, but I stand up for him every chance I get.

LOWELL RAUCH, *via e-mail*

The \$99,000 Outhouse

In this list of "follies," you criticize an NIH-funded study on happy marriages that produced an expected result. But research starts with asking the right questions, not with having the right answers in the beginning.

EDWIN ANDREWS, *Malden, Massachusetts*

Spiderwebs and Other Inspirations

Janine Benyus's biomimicry work is absolutely fascinating, and as I read the facts accompanying the photo of alpine ibex goats (See the World ... Differently), I wondered what Ms. Benyus could do if she studied these animals and their gravity-defying nature. Having these two stories in the same issue was a nice coincidence.

JANIS WISNER, *via e-mail*

Queens of the Road

I think the author of this story needs to step back and embrace her mom's uniqueness. We live in a culture that often does not teach the next generation to respect seniors, and this is a prime example.

LISA TAYLOR, *Laurel, Maryland*

Make Your Own Darn Gift

I completely agree with Nick Offerman: It is far too easy to send a premade gift to someone across the globe with the click of a mouse. We have become obsessed with electronic media—perhaps this is why there are no modern-day Einsteins or Beethovens.

DOUGLAS BENN, *Spokane, Washington*

The Lion Whisperer

I have always been devastated by animal cruelty, so I love that Kevin Richardson is trying to do something to right this awful wrong in South Africa. I'm only 21 and too scared to walk among the lions, but I'd like to help with this effort. And I'd really like to thank Mr. Richardson.

DESIRÉ SIMMONS, *Boise, Idaho*

I'm a Telemarketer. Here's How to Get Rid of Me

What frustrates me about this article is that the author makes it seem like we must take steps to deal with telemarketers, as though they have the right to invade our homes with their calls. It is a shame that our government isn't doing more to protect the rights of its citizens from telemarketing companies that refuse to play by the rules.

TOM GORYCKI, *Pfafftown, North Carolina*

The National Do Not Call Registry is a boiler-room telemarketer joke. The best way to get rid of pesky telemarketers is to use a good call-blocking device with caller ID to automatically screen your calls.

MIKE BABCOCK, *Lancaster, California*

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EVERYDAY HEROES



When a woman screams, a barber and his client sprint into the line of fire to help

Two Men Against One—with a Gun

BY MELODY WARNICK

 A FEW MINUTES AFTER opening the New Era Barbershop for business one morning, barber Henry McHenry, 40, chatted with his first customer of the day, Michael Cade, 46, as he clipped his hair. He paused only when a manicurist who worked in the salon two doors down ducked in to say hello, as she often did. On one of those visits, she'd confided in Henry about her abusive husband. "If you ever see a guy pull up in an F-150 truck, he's coming for me," she had told him.

Henry couldn't picture that here, in this very public strip mall in the Northside district of Houston. Nevertheless, a few minutes later, four gunshots broke the quiet of the May morning. Henry dashed to the window. The walkway outside was strewn with shattered glass. A white Ford F-150 had pulled up in front of the nail salon. "I knew right then," Henry remembers, "he's here, and he has just shot at her. That was the scariest moment of my life."

Henry hurriedly dialed 911, 

"Henry was cutting my hair, then we heard shots," says Michael Cade, right.



while Michael cracked open the door. In a haze of gun smoke, he watched a brawny man with a buzz cut emerge from the salon, pulling his estranged wife by the hair and holding a gun to her head. "Somebody help me!" she was screaming.

Michael had spent years as a military police officer, then a federal cop. As the man forced the woman into the truck, Michael knew he had to act right away.

Without a word, Michael slipped out of the shop. "Are you crazy?" Henry hissed after him.

Crouching, Michael ran around the truck to the open driver's-side door, hoping to charge the man while his back was turned. But the man was waiting for him. Suddenly, "my face was jarred as if someone thumped me," Michael says. He'd been shot in the head.

Michael's vision went dark; he fell to the ground. Lying in a puddle of blood on the parking lot asphalt, he believed he was dying.

But suddenly, he says, he felt new energy course through him—which he credits to his faith in God.

From where he was lying, Michael then grabbed the shooter's legs, dragging him to the ground. When

he tried to get his hands on the weapon, though, the man hit him in the shoulder with the butt of the gun, fracturing Michael's collarbone.

During the fracas, the woman fled into the barbershop, where Henry was waiting.

Looking out the window, Henry saw Michael drenched in blood. I can't let him die, Henry thought.

Just as the man aimed the gun at Michael again, Henry burst out of the barbershop and flung his arm around the man's head, putting him in a choke hold, a move he'd learned as a black belt in karate.

While the guy flailed, Michael grabbed his gun. Minutes later, the police arrived and arrested the man, who was identified as the woman's husband, Truc Nguyen.

Amazingly, the bullets had missed the vital areas of Michael's brain and exited his body. He was treated for gunshot wounds and received stitches for cuts to his face. Michael was able to return to his job as a vocational rehab specialist just weeks later.

The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission recently gave the two men medals for their heroism. But Henry gives Michael all the credit, saying, "He put his life on the line for a stranger." **R**

NOMINATE A HERO! In 100 words or fewer, tell us about someone who has impressed you with a brave deed, kind act, or humanitarian effort in 2014. The story could be published in a future issue. E-mail the details and your name, location, and phone number to heroes@rd.com.

*"It's humbling
to change
people's lives,"
says Cathy.*

She's Lifting Cars and Spirits

BY BETH DREHER



SOCIAL WORKER Cathy Heying noticed a growing trend among the homeless and unemployed folks she served for nearly a decade at St. Stephen's Catholic Church in Minneapolis. "At least twice a week, someone would mention car trouble" as a reason for missing a job interview or not getting the kids to day care, says Cathy, 44. "I thought if I could offer car repairs, I could prevent these problems."

So in 2008, with little more automotive experience than tinkering with her own motorcycle, Cathy signed up for a mechanics program. After two years of juggling a full-time course load and a part-time job, she received an associate's degree in auto technology from Dunwoody College of Technology.

Then she opened the Lift, a non-profit garage offering affordable

car repair for needy people. "I had no mechanics, no volunteers, and only a few tools," says Cathy. She operated from a bay in a friend's garage. But she made it work.

One of Cathy's first customers, Linda Granger, was unemployed when her social worker referred her to the Lift. Her 20-year-old pickup truck had a new heater, timing belt, and brakes installed by Cathy and a volunteer for \$600 total, which Linda is paying off in \$20 monthly installments. The same repairs would have cost at least \$1,800 at a typical garage.

"There's no way I could have afforded it otherwise," says Linda.

"It's been a hard journey" from social worker to mechanic, says Cathy. "But compared with other people's struggles, I have nothing to complain about."

R

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VOICES & VIEWS

Department of Wit

Client Feedback On the Creation Of Earth

BY MIKE LACHER
FROM MCSWEENEYS.NET



MIKE LACHER
is a humorist
and former
creative
director at
BuzzFeed.

Hi, God,

Thanks so much for the latest round of work. Really coming together. Few points of feedback:

- 1 Love the whole light thing but not totally sure about the naming system. *Day* and *night* are OK, but we feel like there's more we can do here. Thoughts? Definitely need to nail this down ASAP.
- 2 Re: the "sky." Not feeling the color here. Would like something that pops more. Please send additional options.
- 3 Appreciate the work on the sea and land, but right now there's way too much sea. The land is getting lost in it. In general, sea does not resonate well with our users. Was ➔

talking with the team, and the idea of having no sea at all came up. Thoughts?

4 Noticed you've covered the ground in vegetation bearing seeds according to its kind and trees bearing fruit according to their kind. Is this intentional? Please advise.

5 Right now, we're seeing only two great lights in the sky—a greater one for day and a lesser one for night. Thinking that maybe we weren't clear in the original briefing. Definitely need more than just two great lights. Need to make this a memorable, high-value experience for our users. Please revisit slides 13 and 14 in the deck. Shout with questions.

6 Seas teeming with life is fine, but again, we need to reduce the sea. This is a deal breaker for us.

7 Are the winged birds final or placeholder? Some kind of weird stuff going on with those. Just want to get clarification before giving more feedback.

8 Can we get more livestock and wild animals that move along the ground according to their kinds? Again, the passion points for our target users (slide 18) are land and animals. Whatever we can do to increase the amount of land will go

a long way toward converting our users from passive consumers into brand evangelists.

9 Re: "mankind." Interesting take on the brief here. Big pain point is that mankind is coming across as largely made in your image. As you hopefully recall from the deck, our users are a diverse group (slide 27), and we definitely want to make them feel represented (slide 28). Afraid that if our users see fleshy bipedal mammals positioned as "ruling over" the land and sea (if we're having sea), they might feel alienated and, again, less willing to convert into brand evangelists. Let's fast-track an alt version with mankind removed. Doable?

10 Please cut all the "be fruitful and multiply" stuff. We're a family brand, and this doesn't fit with our voice (slide 34).

Realize it's Saturday, and you were planning to be OOO tomorrow to admire your creation and everything, but I'm hoping you can keep rolling on this through the weekend. Need to get this in front of my exec team by EOD Monday. Will be around all weekend via e-mail and chat if anything comes up. Looking to you and your team for a big win here.

Thanks!
Mike



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The words were my father's, and the message guides me to this day

“Always Go to the Funeral”

BY DEIRDRE SULLIVAN FROM THE BOOK *THIS I BELIEVE*



DEIRDRE SULLIVAN is a lawyer in Brooklyn, New York. She says her father's greatest gift to her family was how he ushered them through the process of his death.

❧ I BELIEVE in always going to the funeral. My father taught me that.

The first time he said it directly to me, I was 16 and trying to get out of going to calling hours for Miss Emerson, my old fifth-grade math teacher. I did not want to go. My father was unequivocal. “Dee,” he said, “you’re going. Always go to the funeral. Do it for the family.”

So my dad waited outside while I went in. It was worse than I thought it would be: I was the only kid there. When the condolence line deposited me in front of Miss Emerson’s shell-shocked parents, I stammered out, “Sorry about all this,” and stalked away. But, for that deeply weird expression of sympathy delivered 20 years ago, Miss Emerson’s mother still remembers my name and always says hello with tearing eyes.

That was the first time I went un-chaperoned, but my parents had been taking us kids to funerals and calling hours as a matter of course for years. By the time I was 16, I had been to five or six funerals. I remember two things from the funeral circuit: bottomless dishes of free mints and my father saying on the ride home, “You can’t come in without going out, kids. Always go to the funeral.”

Sounds simple—when someone dies, get in your car and go to calling hours or the funeral. That, I can do. But I think



a personal philosophy of going to funerals means more than that.

“Always go to the funeral” means that I have to do the right thing when I really, really don’t feel like it. I have to remind myself of it when I could make some small gesture, but I don’t really have to and I definitely don’t want to. I’m talking about those things that represent only inconvenience to me but the world to the other guy. You know, the painfully under-attended birthday party. The hospital visit during happy hour. The shivah call for one of my ex’s uncles. In my humdrum life, the daily battle hasn’t been good versus evil. It’s hardly so epic. Most days, my real battle is doing good versus doing

nothing. In going to funerals, I’ve come to believe that while I wait to make a grand heroic gesture, I should just stick to the small inconveniences that let me share in life’s inevitable, occasional calamity.

One cold April night, my father died a quiet death from cancer. His funeral was on a Wednesday, middle of the workweek. I had been numb for days when, for some reason, during the funeral, I turned and looked back at the folks in the church. The memory of it still takes my breath away. The most human, powerful, and humbling thing I’ve ever seen was a church at 3:00 on a Wednesday full of inconvenienced people who believe in going to the funeral. **R**

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Life

IN THESE UNITED STATES



"It's about time."

WHILE HE WAS visiting, my father asked for the password to our Wi-Fi.

"It's taped under the modem," I told him.

After three failed attempts to log on, he asked, "Am I spelling this right? T-A-P-E-D-U-N-D-E-R-T-H-E-M-O-D-E-M?"

SHARON MCGINLEY, *Talbot, Tennessee*

BEFORE BEGINNING the service, our pastor read aloud a note he'd been handed moments earlier. "It says here that I should announce that there will be no B.S. tomorrow morning," he said. He tucked the piece of paper into a pocket and added, "I'm hoping they mean 'Bible Study.'"

BARBARA GEERTS, *Davenport, Iowa*

ONE HARD THING to explain to teens is how legitimately exciting it used to be when someone would wheel in an overhead projector. @JULIUSSHARPE

WE WERE AT a red light when a car pulled up, its music blasting. “He’ll be deaf before he’s 25,” I said.

“It won’t help us,” my wife replied. “He’ll only turn it up.”

KENNETH SKAUGHT, *Lakewood, Washington*

THINK THE COMMENTS on Internet posts are tough? See what happened when the *Washington Post* asked its readers to write intentionally angry letters to actual headlines:

■ **Headline:** 20,000 Pound Pavement to Help Homeless

Response: “Are you people idiots? What the homeless need are homes, not ten tons of additional pavement!”

■ **Headline:** Maryland Agrees to Tobacco Settlement

Response: “Well, that’s all we need—an entire settlement of people devoted to their cancer sticks. What’s next, a drunk-driving commune?”

■ **Headline:** C.C. United Se Une Hoy a Campana Solidaria Pro Centroamerica

Response: “I was disgusted with the sloppy spelling for [this] article. There were so many typos, I couldn’t understand a word.”

From gcfl.net

DID YOU KNOW a bird is the only animal that you can throw and you’d be helping it? *Comedian SEAN O’CONNOR*

FUNNY ROAD SIGNS



I think it’s my turn to oG.



But swimming is fine.



We’re bullish on our pedestrians.

From rd.com/slideshows/funny-road-signs

A guy says, “Doc, something funny happened to me!” The doc says, “Send it to rd.com/submit, and you may get \$100!”

Your True Stories

IN 100 WORDS

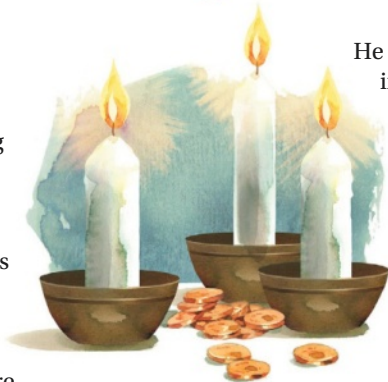
PENNIES FOR CANDLES

When I was a child, during the Great Depression, my mother sent me to the store to buy candles because our electricity had been turned off. I gave the clerk in the store my pennies for the candles, and he sarcastically said, "Didn't pay the electric bill?" I held my head up high and replied, "Of course we did, but we want to have dinner by candlelight tonight." I still laugh when I recall our "candlelight" dinner and the look on the clerk's face after my retort. We didn't have much money, but we had pride.

JEAN SMIDT, *West Milford, New Jersey*

FORGIVEN

"Mom, I'm having heart surgery tomorrow and know I'm not going to make it. I'm just calling to tell you goodbye and ask you to forgive me for all the heartache I've caused. I know I'll have the smallest funeral ever because I don't have any friends left. Please forgive me."



He died three days later in prison, loved and not forgotten by friends. A Facebook posting resulted in his funeral not being the smallest one ever, as he'd feared. His childhood friends, neighbors, and extended family members were there, and the chapel was full to the brim.

EDNA PETERS, *San José, California*

BABY IN THE BASKET

When I was about two, we visited Aunt Dorrie's house. She had a large oval willow basket like the one my mama always used for laundry. Standing on tiptoe, I peeked into this basket, and there was a baby! I was breathless with astonishment. How could laundry turn into a baby? I never asked, but for years after that, I checked Mama's basket frequently, in case hers had that same baby-producing capability. It didn't seem to, but I always felt it might if I could catch it at *just* the right moment ... And I still believe in magic.

KATIE O'BRIEN, *Hoquiam, Washington*

FLOATING TO FREEDOM

The uncooked noodles were left on the porthole by someone who no longer wanted it. By the looks of it, no one else would want it, because it had become moldy. I didn't care, I was hungry. Our riverboat had been on the South China Sea for days, battered by a typhoon, making its way to freedom, to the Malaysian shores. We were escaping Communism during a premature post-Vietnam War decade, seeking anything better—my parents told me we were “going to visit Grandma.” The noodles tasted bitter but gratifying. We made it to freedom two days later.

TUAN TRAN, *Taunton, Massachusetts*

GRAND ADVENTURE

We met in 1966: two little girls. The adventures we've shared in our 48 years are exquisite. Buying the kitten, hiding her in Denise's bedroom for a week. We weaved tall tales at the playground. Teen angst set in; we “ran away” from home, taking a Greyhound bus on a Friday night with a paper sack of clean


underwear and Oreos. In 1978, a road trip to California, just two naive girls with a tin can of cash and my Plymouth Scamp. We're moms now. Our children shake their heads as we laugh, giggle, and embarrass them. Grown-ups we're not!

JEAN POESCHL, *Apple Valley, Minnesota*

HOW TO HAVE YOUR BABY ON THE FLOOR

- 1) Have doctors who believe you've just got a bladder infection during your ninth month.
- 2) Scream at your husband to run to get doctor-prescribed bladder medication.
- 3) Start to panic when you realize a human is emerging from your body!
- 4) Have your mother-in-law scream that even though she has had five children of her own, she has never seen it from this angle!
- 5) Plead with your mother-in-law to catch the baby!
- 6) Close your eyes!
- 7) Welcome baby girl.
- 8) Have the best true story ever.

HEATHER KRIZOVSKI, *La Vista, Nebraska*

 Send us your true story of 100 words or fewer—it might be worth \$100. For details, go to rd.com/stories.



THE GREATEST DISGUISE

I wonder if Halloween is the one day of the year Lady Gaga wears sensible slacks.

JIMMY KIMMEL

AMERICA'S FAVORITE COMEDIAN

Reader's digest
BOB HOPE

THE OFFICIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

Making Us
Laugh for
100
YEARS

Introduction
by Linda Hope

INSIDE THE HOPE FAMILY ARCHIVES
A Never-Before-Seen Collection of Bob's
Most Intimate Photos, Stories, and Treasures

ON NEWSSTANDS NOW!



Can a school ban wristbands because of a slogan?

The Case of The Breast Cancer Bracelets

BY VICKI GLEBOCKI

AFTER BREAST CANCER claimed the lives of Kayla Martinez's aunt and a close family friend of Brianna Hawk's, the middle schoolers each began wearing a pink silicone bracelet with "I [heart] Boobies!" written across it in big white letters. It was fall 2010, and many students at their school in Pennsylvania's Easton area district were displaying the wristbands, part of a nationwide campaign by the Keep a Breast Foundation to spark breast cancer awareness among young people. However, by the end of October, the administration had declared the bracelets

off-limits, saying the message violated the school's dress-code policy because it "conveyed a sexual double entendre."

On Breast Cancer Awareness Day, many students and teachers donned pink T-shirts, and Martinez, then 12, and Hawk, then 13, wore their bracelets despite the ban. A security guard noticed the girls' bracelets and escorted the students to the office, where an assistant principal asked them to remove the wristbands. The girls refused. Administrators accused Martinez and Hawk of "disrespect," "defiance," and "disruption" and ➤➤

assigned them a day and a half of in-school suspension and barred them from attending a school dance.

On November 15, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Pennsylvania filed a complaint against the district on the girls' behalf, claiming that by prohibiting the bracelets, the district had violated the right to free expression under the First Amendment and that suspending Martinez and Hawk was "unconstitutional." ACLU attorney Mary Catherine Roper asked the federal district judge to issue a preliminary injunction (a ruling

made before the end of a trial) to force the school to lift the ban on the girls.

At an evidentiary hearing in December, middle school principal Angela DiVietro explained that prohibiting the bracelets "makes a statement that we as a school district have the right to make discretionary decisions on what types of things are appropriate and inappropriate for our schoolchildren."

Did the school violate the students' right to free speech by banning the bracelets? You be the judge.



THE VERDICT

In April 2011, the district court granted the preliminary injunction, which meant the girls could wear the bracelets to school. The school district appealed, citing two previous Supreme Court decisions that supported its right to ban. The first decision held that the First Amendment doesn't prevent administrators from regulating speech—like the word *boobies*—that they have "reason to anticipate ... would substantially interfere with the work of the school." The second decision held that the school board has the right to determine if student speech could be seen as obscene. "We thought this was a no-brainer," says the school district's attorney John E. Freund III.

But in August 2013, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit upheld the injunction. It was the first time a federal court of appeals ruled that student speech, even if it contains possibly lewd language, is protected as long as it comments on a political or social issue. The district tried to appeal in March 2014, but the Supreme Court refused to hear the case. **R**

Agree? Disagree? Sound off at rd.com/judge.

Do you think you have a case? Send a synopsis of it with your name and location for a chance to be in an upcoming story. Go to rd.com/judge for details.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright pink and yellow sari, is captured in a dynamic pose, dancing in front of a rustic wooden cabin. The sari is billowing out around her, and she has her arms raised. The cabin behind her features large, triangular windows and a wooden deck. The scene is set outdoors on a grassy area with trees in the background.

FACES OF AMERICA

BY GLENN GLASSER

Pat Marggraf

BERKELEY SPRINGS,
WEST VIRGINIA

"I was born without hip sockets. Growing up was rough. Children were cruel. But one of the reasons I can belly dance so easily is *because* my hip sockets are different!"

A stranger would

**...burned
the house
down**

on Christmas Eve when
I was three years old.

JAYMIE LONG

**...don't have a
belly button.**

CHANDRA M. VOELTZ

...dropped out of high
school but
**graduated
from college**

(first of three degrees)
when I was 18.

NANCY SCOFIELD

Colorado City, CO

**...am
terrified**

of balloons.

KERRIE RAGSDALE

...attended school

**in a
boxcar.**

SHEILA BOLING

...am married to someone
**32 years older
than I am.**

We will celebrate our 20th anniversary
next month.

LYNN V. ELLINGTON

Santa
Clara, CA

San Diego, CA

never guess that I...

**...have seven
brain tumors**

and lead a normal life.

CARYN MOY

Aberdeen,
SD

Machesney Park,
IL

Jacksonville, IL

Chester, NY

**...care about
them.**

KELVYN RAM

Bartlesville,
OK

**...can read Braille
with my
eyes!**

JANE BREEN

Talladega, AL

Charlotte, NC

**...pick up
worms**

in the street and put
them in the grass so they
will be safe.

GINNY BRADLEY GRIDALE

Dallas, TX

**...wrote and
published my
first book**

while being homeless
and destitute.

CABOT BARDEN

From funny beginnings, he just can't stop cracking us up: Now, a new TV show ...

Billy Crystal Kids Around

BY ANDY SIMMONS

☞ MOST ACTORS just want to talk about their latest film or TV project. But while Billy Crystal, 66, has much to discuss—his new show, *The Comedians*, debuts in 2015 on FX, and his recording of his memoir *Still Foolin' 'Em* just won audiobook of the year—ask about his childhood in Long Island, New York, and everything else takes a backseat.

Crystal was raised in a house full of family and fun. His father and uncle were jazz producers, so his extended clan included musicians like pianist Willie “the Lion” Smith, an African American cantor who spoke Yiddish, and vocalist Billie Holiday, who took Crystal to see his first film. “They were such great spirits,” Crystal says of his relatives, blood and otherwise. “They were so encouraging and charismatic that not only did I want to be around them, I wanted to be them. They were my first audience and maybe my best audience.”

I just read your book. What a wonderful childhood you had. My family loved to laugh. My brothers and I would entertain, and they showed their appreciation by sticking coins on my forehead. When my forehead was full, the show was over. My aunt Edith, who's still alive at 107, always gave me a dime. That was her thing: “Here's your lucky dime.” I actually found some not long ago, along with my high school graduation cuff links and other stuff—two dimes I'd put in a Lucite box.

The great thing about dimes is you can fit more of them on a forehead. Exactly. So with inflation, I might do pretty good. My family was eclectic. My uncle Milt produced Bill Haley's “Rock Around the Clock”; my aunt Lee was one of the first woman bank presidents in America. We also had baby-bonnet salesmen, accountants, doctors, furriers, and housepainters.



You're an impressionist, and imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery. Anyone not feel that way?

One—Sammy Davis Jr. I'd been his opening act, and I studied his every move. So when I was hosting *Saturday Night Live* in 1984, I did him. I come home afterward, and there's a message. It's Sammy saying, "What the hell is this? I didn't see it—people told me about it. I would love to have known, that's all."

Were you two fine after that?

Oh, yeah; he grew to like it a lot. I remember opening for him in the '70s, and I hadn't worked with him

up to that point. After my set, he came onstage and told the audience this story about how I had come to a Reno hospital the year before when he was sick and held up a sign: "Get well, Sam. I can't do this without you." He said, "That's what this young man is all about." Big applause. I'm standing in the wings, thinking, That never happened. The second show, he told another story that never happened. We did 28 shows, and every night, there was a different story about me that never happened. I loved them. I never asked why he did it, because I got it—it was show business. It was great to hear his imagination about this wonderful world we had together. He was charismatic, hilarious, and incredibly smart.

This year is the 25th anniversary of When Harry Met Sally. You became a romantic lead overnight.

Did women look at you differently? Yeah. I was regarded in a different way from just being the funny guy, and that was more than flattering.

And did your wife, Janice, treat you any differently?

No. It was "Hey, Harry, take out the garbage!"

You recently reunited with your costar, Meg Ryan, at an event honoring that film's director, Rob Reiner. Was it like old times?

Definitely. I hadn't seen her in a long time. A couple of days before, we talked about what we would say, and we just fell right into it again. There was this wonderful natural chemistry. Then when Meg and I walked onstage at the event, the audience went crazy. It was really kinda terrific, you know? We stood arm in arm, watching all these clips from the movie, and we just looked at each other, smiled, and had a warm embrace.

As far as me being a romantic lead, I don't think it was me; it was us as a couple. We were the perfect pair for that movie.

You have lots of famous friends. If you had to move, whom would you ask to help you?

Would they actually have to lift stuff and do all of that?

Some would lift; some would tell you where to put things.

Then I'd say Rob Reiner. He's a director; he would take charge. Whoopi Goldberg, for sure, because she'd



Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal reunite onstage 25 years after *When Harry Met Sally*.

be practical: "That goes here, that goes there, that goes there." And I'd include Robin Williams, just for laughs. [Editor's note: This interview was conducted before Williams passed away.] He'd help as different people. He and I have the greatest phone relationship in the history of ... well, my phone. We call as different characters, and sometimes we never break character until we hang up.

You tweet from time to time. If you were to sum up your life story in 140 characters or fewer, what would it be? Oh, man. [Pauses] "Once funny, still funny. #WishIWasTaller."

Your size is a recurring theme with you. So I'll ask you a question my daughter asked me: Would you rather be a giant hamster or a tiny rhino? [Laughs] You've been up all night, haven't you?

I've got a million of these.
How big is the hamster wheel?

It'd be huge.
Who lives longer? I think rhinos. I would opt for that. A tiny rhino—small and powerful!



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The Youth Hormone...

Everyone's talking about it. But can it really reduce body fat, increase lean muscle mass, boost mood, heighten sex drive, give you plenty of energy, get rid of wrinkles and tighten saggy skin?

Barbara just had another birthday.

She watches her diet, exercises when she can, and is in pretty good shape. In fact, she could be the poster child for the "Fountain of Youth" headline we see on the covers of fashion mags around the globe. What's her secret? It's not just the occasional Botox, peel or filler, or even her assortment of skin creams that could rival the anti-aging section of your local Sephora. Barbara, who was always "cutting edge," has become a believer in what is fast becoming the most popular (if not the most expensive) anti-aging treatment in the USA... Growth Hormone Therapy.

—By Tiffany Strobel*

it seems everyone is talking about human growth hormone lately. No less than the famed Dr. Oz began a recent show by asking his audience, "How many of you want to start feeling 20 years younger right now?" *Allure* magazine, in its "Anti-aging Special" issue, highlighted growth hormone as its 2013 call-out. *Shape* magazine began a recent growth hormone article with the provocative lead in: "When you see a 50-year-old actress who can pass for 35, you can bet that good genes aren't the only

things responsible for her youthful glow." *Fox News*, *The Today Show*, *CNN*, *ABC*, and *CBS* have all contributed to the current frenzy.

VANITY FAIR says: "A 20-year-old produces more than twice as much hGH as [she] will when [she's] 40... hGH, by turning back the body clock, turns back the aging process."

DR. OZ says: "I have been searching for this from the day we started the show. I've been looking for ways of increasing hGH naturally because I don't like getting the injections."

Why all the fuss?

Simple. hGH disciplines... and to many like Barbara, hGH therapy is truly a religious experience... believe hGH can help reduce body fat, increase lean muscle mass, boost mood, heighten sex drive, give them plenty of energy, get rid of wrinkles and tighten saggy skin... making them look and feel decades – not years, but decades – younger. Celebrities, CEOs, Wall Street execs, models, housewives, athletes and even some high-ranking politicians all seem to be drinking from the same pitcher of Kool-Aid. There's no doubt about it; in our current fast-paced, "youth-oriented" culture, hGH therapy is hot.

The controversy

The controversy isn't over whether or not hGH plays an essential role in our health and aging (virtually everyone already agrees on that). Instead, the controversy lies in the best way to maintain our body's supply of human growth hormone. Until recently, most felt the best way was through expensive prescription injections (although costs can run as high as \$1500 per month). However, some experts argue against the use of these synthetic injections, because they fear introducing synthetic hGH into the body may upset natural hGH production.

The breakthrough

Because of growth hormone's potential, researchers have spent the last thirty years searching for a reliable, clinically proven way to promote pituitary health, thereby increasing human growth hormone levels naturally. So it's no surprise that when an oral compound capable of increasing mean, endogenous, bioactive, serum (blood) growth hormone levels... by 682%... was presented at the prestigious Obesity Society's

most recent Scientific Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, The Academy of Women's Health's 21st Annual Congress in Washington, D.C., and then again at The 9th World Congress of Cosmetic Dermatology held in Athens, Greece, it created a serious stir.

The revolution

The formula that was the subject of these research findings is now being sold by SanMedica International™ under the trade name Serovital®. And when Dr. Oz disclosed

SHAPE says: "When you see a 50-year-old actress who can pass for 35, you can bet that good genes aren't the only things responsible for her youthful glow!"

that "a recent study [on Serovital-hgh] showed patients given a special blend of amino acids saw their hGH levels spike more than 6 times..." and added, "I have been searching for this from the day we started the show. I've been looking for ways of increasing hGH naturally because I don't like getting the injections," you can imagine the frenzy he created. Before long, SanMedica was having trouble keeping Serovital in stock. It went from underground sensation to full-blown phenomenon. Even the United States Patent Office has added to the Serovital mystique

by issuing not one but **six** U.S. Patents to protect the Serovital formula from imitators.³

Thanks to the release of Serovital, the hGH revolution has finally arrived. Now that there's an easy-to-swallow capsule that can raise growth hormone naturally, an awful lot of people have stopped asking if they should be increasing their hGH levels and started asking which hGH-boosting option is right for them.

Is it worth it?

To me, anything that may reduce wrinkles, tighten saggy skin,

decrease body fat, increase lean muscle mass, strengthen bones, and boost mood, while giving you plenty of energy and improving sex drive, is a no-brainer. However, make no mistake about it, the "established" medical community (and of course, they know everything) would say its benefits are largely anecdotal, and based on research that's preliminary. But there's no denying that something that has a chance of making you look and feel decades, not years, but DECADES, younger, is... at the very least... irresistible. Frankly, I'm ready to try it... How about you?



RETAILERS say: "Frankly, we haven't seen this much customer excitement in years."

So what's the catch?

Dr. Amy Heaton, PhD, Director of Scientific Affairs for SanMedica International, says: "There are three. First, as with hGH injections, Serovital is not a 'magic bullet,' but one part of a healthy lifestyle choice including a sensible diet and exercise regimen.

"Second, for proper absorption, you have to take Serovital-hgh on an empty stomach. That means you either have to take it first thing in the morning and then not eat anything for two hours, or take it at night, at least two hours after your last meal... before you go to bed.

"And last but not least, while Serovital is far less expensive than prescription hGH injections, it's still not cheap... Serovital will cost you about \$100 a month."

Where can I get it?

Having a hard time finding Serovital-hgh? It's currently available at all Ulta stores, Kohl's, and select GNC locations. Over the next few months it will be available on a limited basis at prestige retailers across the U.S.

Featured Product!



Can't wait? You can order it directly from SanMedica International by calling 1-800-355-8680 or visit their website at www.Serovital.com. Use the promo code HGH256 at checkout and shipping is free!

Points to Ponder

CHECKING YOUR PHONE after someone else pulls out their phone is the yawn of our generation.

JOHN LEFEVRE,
parodist, on Twitter

IF YOU'RE A NAZI war criminal and then spend the next 40 years doing good deeds and feeding the hungry, does that make up for [the past]?

GEORGE R. R. MARTIN,
Game of Thrones creator, in Rolling Stone

WE NEED TO LEARN to live with the noise and tolerate the noise even when the noise is stupid, even when the noise is offensive, even when the noise is at times dangerous.

JON LOVETT,
speechwriter, in the Atlantic, about free speech

I DON'T THINK I am abrasive. I hope I am clear. Unfortunately, clarity is often mistaken for abrasiveness.

RICHARD DAWKINS,
evolutionary biologist, on reddit.com

YOU DON'T BECOME GREAT by trying to be great. You become great by wanting to do something and then doing it so hard that you become great in the process.

RANDALL MUNROE,
creator of the Web comic xkcd,
in his comic Marie Curie

PEOPLE LOOK AT RIGHTS as if they were muscles—the more you exercise them, the better they get.

ANTONIN SCALIA,
Supreme Court justice, in a speech

Humans aren't the only animals to suffer from emotional thunderstorms. Every animal with a mind likely has the capacity to lose it.

LAUREL BRAITMAN,
science historian, from her book
Animal Madness

👉 Sign up for our daily Points to Ponder e-mail at rd.com/ptp.





You know how you go to a dinner party and everyone's pretty much acting the same? ... But occasionally you meet people who are different, and to me, those are the most interesting to ... be around.

KRISTEN WIIG,
actress, in *Elle*

I GOT ADDICTED to the empty endorphins of being online. So I need to dry out and remind myself of the deeper tides I used to be able to swim in—in pages, and celluloid, and sounds, and people.

PATTON OSWALT,

comedian, on Facebook, about his Internet hiatus

IT'S NOT UP TO THE PERSON who creates something to say they are an artist. How arrogant is that? It's up to the people who see what you do to say you're an artist.

GENE SIMMONS,

singer and bass guitarist of Kiss, in *Time*

AMERICA IS A COUNTRY FOUNDED by people from someplace else on ideas borrowed from someplace else, ultimately to try to distinguish itself from everyplace else. It is a fraught balance of identity.

JEB LUND,

writer, on *theguardian.com*

WE NEED TO BE SPENDING more on the next generation ... I am not the future. My 12-year-old son is. But if you look at the spending, you'd think I [am].

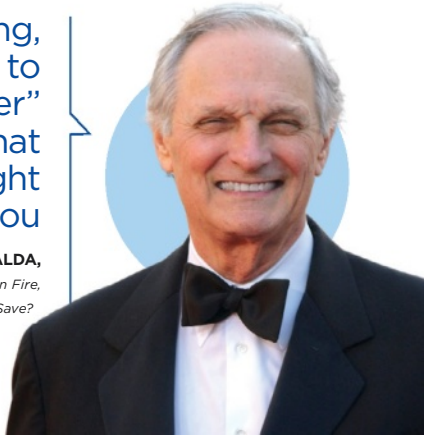
BOB KERREY,

former U.S. senator, in the *New York Times*

Uncertainty can be freeing, because isn't it so much easier to say "I just don't have the answer" than to concoct a structure that won't even stand up in a light wind, to support that which you wished were true?

ALAN ALDA,

actor, from the book *When Your Life Is on Fire, What Would You Save?*



Are you part of the
95% not getting
enough fiber?



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ART *of* LIVING

You Can Save It!

We uncover surprising and easy fixes for life's biggest annoyances

BY KIERA AARON

Dying Plant

Whether you've underwatered or overwatered your favorite houseplant, always repot. Since both maintenance mishaps result in brown, shriveled leaves, touch the soil to see if it's damp or dry. Overwatering—the number one cause of problems—creates root rot, depriving the plant of air in the soil. Transferring it to a new pot ensures that there will be little lingering bacteria, says Barbara Pleasant, author of *The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual*. Underwatered plants, on ➔



the other hand, require a slightly larger pot, to let the roots stretch out and absorb more H₂O. Sit the pot in a pan of water for five minutes to hydrate dry pockets deep within the soil.

After repotting, spray the under-watered plant with coconut water—which contains cytokinins, substances that promote plant growth—three times a week until it perks up.

Misdated Plane Ticket

You may be able to get out of the change fee, but only if you act fast. Since 2012, all major airlines (even international ones) serving the United States have been required to allow consumers to cancel a purchased ticket within 24 hours of booking, as long as it was bought at least seven days before the departure date. Ask your airline for a refund or to rebook you without a fee.

Accidentally Deleted Computer File

First, stop everything you're doing—including checking e-mail. "When you delete a file, the information isn't immediately erased, even if you've emptied your trash," says J. Alex Halderman, an assistant professor of computer science and engineering at the University of Michigan. "Your computer simply marks that file's spot

on the hard drive as available to store other data." That means the more you use your computer, the more likely your hard drive will overwrite your deleted file with newer information. Next, turn to recovery software like iSkysoft Data Recovery for Mac (\$89.95) or Windows (\$39.95), which thoroughly scans your hard drive to retrieve deleted files.

Oversalted Food

Your plan of action depends on the dish. Salty soup is simple: "The salt is floating in the liquid, so you can add a sodium-absorbing starch, like potatoes, to sop it up," advises James Briscione, director of culinary development at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City. Before serving, remove the potatoes and, in turn, the excess salt. For oversalted noodles, top with a milky sauce made with a mild cheese



like Gouda, which will mask the salt. As for meat, “acid and fat counteract sodium, so serve it with a vinaigrette, like chimichurri, which has oil (fat) and vinegar (acid),” says Briscione. Finally, consider opening a bottle of bubbly. “A dry sparkling wine like prosecco washes away lingering saltiness with each sip,” he adds.

Bitter Coffee

An unexpected fix: In this case, you want to *add* a few pinches of table salt to the pot. “Salt seems to reduce the ‘bitter’ signal sent from your taste buds to your brain,” says Russell Keast, PhD, a professor of exercise and nutrition science at Deakin University in Australia, who studies taste. Also, sip your java from a stainless steel thermos. In a *Food Quality and Preference* study, the metal reduced the taste of bitterness.

A Sore Neck

Here’s your quick pain prevention plan: Brew a cup of chamomile tea as soon as you start to feel achy—the plant can soothe muscle spasms. Then sit in a reclined position to reduce muscle tension, and apply a heating pad (or a towel soaked in hot water) to your neck for 20 minutes. “Heat increases blood circulation, which brings nutrients and natural pain-relieving chemicals to the area,” says Charles Swanik, PhD, a professor of physiology at the University of Delaware.

Next, give yourself a gentle massage, which can trick your muscles into relaxing, adds Swanik.

Overroasted Vegetables

It’s all about the add-ons. To restore lost moisture, top your veggies with gravy and serve as a side dish, or mix them into a sauce to pour over pasta. To add texture, try battering or breading them, says Aliya LeeKong, author and judge on the Food Network’s *Kitchen Casino*. “Frying adds some of the crunchiness back to the dish.” Another idea: Use them for all kinds of delicious dips. “Combine with cream cheese and herbs like chives, cilantro, and parsley for a vegetable dip,” LeeKong says.

Yellowing Photos

If your shots are turning sepia, blame the sun. “Many photos are made of chemicals that can oxidize when exposed to light, causing them to turn yellow over time,” says Silvia Marinas-Feliner, museum conservation program director at New Mexico State University. For a fast fix, upload pictures onto your computer and use a free online image editor like PicMonkey to apply corrective filters. To safely display your shots, place them in UV-coated glass frames, which block damaging rays. Another handy storage option: Pop your favorite pictures into an album with uncoated polyester sleeves, which are free of harmful chemicals and acid. **R**

The Wake-Up Call

BY DEBORAH SKOLNIK

“WHAT’S THAT?” my ten-year-old daughter, Genie, asked, peering over my shoulder. She’d caught me laughing at a piece of mail I’d just opened. “Wake Up Service,” it read in crude stencil, “\$2.50 per call leave message.” At the bottom was a phone number and a drawing of a rotary phone, like the one my great-aunt Sara had owned 40 years ago.

“Is that mail funny?” Genie asked.

“Not really,” I admitted. “It’s just outdated.”

She frowned. “What’s a wake-up call?” she asked, proving my point. I explained how, before smartphones, people sometimes paid someone to wake them with a call. “Who sent this flyer?” she pressed.

“Probably someone older, who doesn’t think wake-up calls are outdated,” I ventured, “and could use some money.”

Her eyes lit up. “Can we order a wake-up?” she asked.

I snorted. “We don’t need it.”

The next day, I was awakened by Genie standing by my bed, poking

me with the flyer. “Can we order a wake-up call?” she pestered.

“We don’t need one,” I reminded her. “At least I don’t. I have you.”

That evening, the flyer was still on my nightstand. I picked it up and headed for the recycling bin, past Genie, who was doing her homework. “Wait!” she shrieked. She leaped up and snatched the sheet away.

“I feel sorry for the wake-up man, if he needs some money,” she said, tearing up. “Can’t we order?”



I looked at the flyer with its drawing of a rotary phone. I remembered, again, my great-aunt Sara and her rotary phone. As a kid, I'd visited her over Labor Day, when Jerry Lewis would host his annual telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Inevitably, Aunt Sara would squeeze my hand, then reach for the rotary phone, dialing the number on the screen. Holding the bulky receiver between us, we'd announce to the operator, "We'd like to help Jerry's kids."

Now here was my own child, showing the same big heart I'd once been encouraged to have, and I was ignoring her. I've always told Genie to consider the less fortunate, but she's met none in our leafy suburb, blessedly free from worry and want. Finally she thought she'd found someone she could help, one on one. How could I blow that off?

I Googled the flyer's return address. It's amazing what you can find with just a few clicks these days. The address belonged to a man I'll call Raymond, who lived in a less prosperous town 20 miles away. He was in his mid-60s.

We called him and, holding the receiver between us, the way Aunt Sara and I used to, told him we needed his services. "Great!" Raymond said in a shaky but friendly voice, clearly as amazed at receiving an order from a child as I was at our placing it (especially when Genie requested a 7 a.m. call on a Saturday). When I asked how to pay the \$2.50, he answered, "Mail a check."

Genie beamed all week. Friday night, I put the phone by her pillow so she could answer Raymond's call. She bounded to my bedroom to tell me all about how he'd wished her a good morning and told her to have a great day, which she did.

Technology has made some things obsolete. But others, like kindness and generosity, are things the world will always require. Many older people need to receive them simply to get by. All children need a chance to practice them, simply to grow. And parents need to let them. In the rush and hustle of my daily life, I'd temporarily forgotten that. I guess I just needed a wake-up call. **R**

* * *

EXTRA CHEESY

QUESTION: What do you call a steak that's been knighted by the queen?

ANSWER: Sir Loin.

QUESTION: Who was the fattest knight at King Arthur's table?

ANSWER: Sir Cumference.

The Dirt on Clean Bedding

BY JOLIE KERR FROM DEADSPIN.COM

THEY MAY LOOK FRESH, but your sheets are covered in sweat, drool, and dead skin. Not to mention the dust mites that feed on that dead skin. And if you're prone to acne, an oily buildup on bedding will only contribute to breakouts.

How Often to Wash

FOLLOW THIS BASIC SHEET-WASHING SCALE:

- Once a week: Ideal
- Once every two weeks: Totally acceptable
- Once a month: That's fine. Not good. Just fine.
- Once every six weeks: Dicey
- More than two months: [CLUTCHES PEARLS]

How to Really Wash Them

SHEETS AND PILLOWCASES

Generally speaking, you can launder sheets in hot or warm water with any detergent you choose. A strong laundry booster like OxiClean or borax will help cut through and dissolve the oils and skin cells that can gunk up sheets.

PILLOWS AND COMFORTERS

Check the care tags, but more often than not, you'll be able to toss these in the washing machine on a cold-water setting and dry them on a low-heat setting. Hit a dry cleaner if you've got an extra-fluffy duvet.

THROW BLANKETS

Wash them a few times a year according to the care-tag directions. If you've been sick and have curled up and moaned under your blankie, be sure to launder it once you've recovered.

R



MARK LUND/GETTY IMAGES



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Want to Learn? Lose the Laptop

BY FRED BARBASH

FROM THE *WASHINGTON POST*

IF YOU REMEMBER taking class notes in longhand, there's a good chance you also remember more about a variety of topics than today's students do. A study investigated whether taking notes by hand helps you learn better than taking notes on a laptop. It was no contest.

Study authors and psychologists Pam A. Mueller of Princeton University and Daniel M. Oppenheimer of the University of California-Los Angeles conducted three separate experiments involving a total of 327 students. All students got the same lectures, but some used laptops, and others took notes by hand.

When it came to learning the concepts, the handwriters won. When it came to retrieving facts, the groups were comparable, except when given time to go home and look at their notes, at which point the handwriters did better.

"Even when allowed to review



notes after a week's delay, participants who had taken notes with laptops performed worse on tests of both factual content and conceptual understanding," the study states.

Learning suffered not because of "multitasking" or the distraction available to students using Wi-Fi-enabled laptops. In the lab, scientists allowed no extraneous activity. Students who paid attention and took deep notes on their laptop still didn't learn as well—in fact, the study suggests the thoroughness of their notes contributes to the problem.

Laptop users tend to record long, verbatim quotes, which they type mindlessly. Handwriters are more selective. They "wrote significantly fewer words than those who typed," according to the study. By processing and selecting the more important information, they studied more efficiently, said researchers.

Here's what's a bit frightening: When the laptop students were instructed to cut down or eliminate the verbatim note taking, they couldn't. The study adds to a ton of evidence that for learning, writing is better and that the hand has a "unique relationship with the brain when it comes to composing thoughts and ideas."

Of course, the chance of persuading students to put away their laptops is probably zero. Many of them can't write longhand, a forgotten subject in many American schools, itself a source of controversy.

So are we stuck with traditional classrooms and learning techniques if we want the brightest pupils? Perhaps not: Another possibility, some have suggested, is apps that permit handwriting on tablets, a compromise that students might accept. **R**

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YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLD WHEN ...

... you're more worried about what time the party ends than when it starts.

@ROBINMCCAULEY

... you can't tell the difference between current band names and typos.

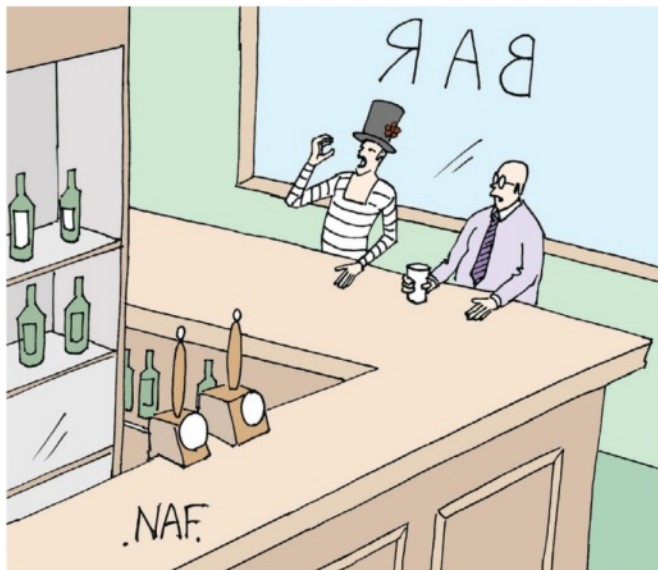
@TOYNS

... all the names in your black book have *MD* after them.

HARRISON FORD

ALL IN

A Day's Work



“Slow down there, buddy. You’ve had quite a few already.”

SHANE WORKS IN the deli department of a large supermarket chain, where he often finds himself in trouble. Just look at the notes management has supposedly written to him:

■ “Shane, stop putting Some Assembly Required stickers on the eight-piece chickens.”

■ “Shane, any free samples you give must come from the deli, not electronics.”

■ “Shane, when a customer asks where to find a product, give them an aisle number, not directions to Albertsons.”

Source: foodbeast.com

OUR BOSS ASKED the new mail-room guy to make three copies of an office key. The guy returned ten minutes later with the copies ... which he’d made on the Xerox machine.

GORDON KNIGHT, Stamford, Connecticut

SCENE: Me driving by a Taco Bell.

Sign: Now Hiring Managers.

[Two weeks later ...]

Sign: Now Hiring Managers. Background Checks Required.

From notalwaysworking.com

WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. Some are just more public than others, like these real newspaper typos: ■ “Here the bridal couple stood, facing the floral setting, and exchanged COWS.”

Modesto News-Herald (California)

■ “It took many rabbis many years to write the Talmud.”

Holland Evening Sentinel (Michigan)

■ “Mrs. ____ fell down stairs at her home this morning, breaking her myhodudududu-dudududosy, and suffered painful injuries.”

Ohio paper

■ “A headline in an item in the Feb. 15th edition incorrectly stated ‘Stolen Groceries.’ It should have read: ‘Homicide.’”

Enquirer-Bulletin

From *Just My Typo*, by **DRUMMOND MOIR**
(Three Rivers Press)

RIGHT NOW, I’m at work, using the Internet. But in my mind, I’m already at home, using the Internet.

@BRIDGER_W

THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE helps Brits traveling abroad. Here are some odder requests they’ve fielded:

■ A man who was hospitalized in Cambodia when a monkey hit him with a stone wanted assurance that it would not happen again.

■ A man asked consular staff in Stockholm to check the credentials of a woman whom he had met online.

■ A man asked staff in Rome to translate a phrase for a tattoo that he wanted.

Source: gov.uk

BOSS TO UNDERLING: “When I told you that you smelled like bacon grease, it was a compliment.”

Source: overheardintheoffice.com

OR MAYBE IT WAS AQUAMARINE?



Spotted at the Blue Willow Bookshop in Houston, Texas

Forget blue; think green! Your work-related anecdote could be worth \$100. See page 7 or rd.com/submit for details.

An achy back, incontinence, and pelvic pain may all have one sneaky cause. And your doctor has probably never mentioned it.

The Pain Down There

BY SARI HARRAR FROM PREVENTION

THE PAIN BEGAN like an odd muscle pull around her groin. “Within days, the area felt like it was on fire,” says Lisa, 36, a New Jersey mom of two and a human resources executive. “I’m a strong woman. But the pain was excruciating. At one point, I was curled in a ball at work, sobbing.”

It was the summer of 2012. Lisa trudged to 11 doctors in one month, but none found anything wrong. Tests for infections came back negative. Antibiotics, antivirals, and antifungals were useless. A psychiatrist hinted at marital discord (“So not true,” Lisa says). “I hated waking up and wondering if I’d get through work and be able to spend time with my kids and husband or end up just lying on the couch again,” Lisa says.

Then, as she sat in yet another doc-

tor’s waiting room, a book caught her eye. It was *Heal Pelvic Pain*, by physical therapist Amy Stein. Lisa found familiar symptoms and a phrase that she’d never heard: *the pelvic floor*. This melon-size web of muscles, ligaments, and exquisitely sensitive nerves at the bottom of the pelvis supports the uterus, bladder, colon, and rectum. It stabilizes the trunk and hips and affects everything from orgasm to continence. If something goes awry, it can cause searing pain in a wide array of organs and tissues.

Lisa finally got her diagnosis—pelvic-floor dysfunction (PFD)—though only after she saw a pelvic-floor physical therapist. This relatively new breed of practitioner has expertise on how to fix what goes wrong in male and female pelvises.

A problem in the pelvic floor (shown in red) can cause pain throughout the body.



Pelvic Pain: Who's at Risk

For a condition so hard to diagnose, PFD is surprisingly common. By some estimates, it affects one in three American women. Giving birth boosts your chances of developing a pelvic-floor issue by 18 percent if you've had one child and 32 percent if you've had three or more, according to the Herman & Wallace Pelvic Rehabilitation Institute in Seattle.

Hormonal declines in menopause and loss of muscle mass with age are among other culprits for women. Surgery or an accident (like falling on your hip or tailbone) may play a role, as can obesity. In your 50s and 60s, your PFD risk nearly triples, compared with in your 20s or 30s.

Though pelvic-floor dysfunction is less prevalent in men, it's still underdiagnosed. Some 90 percent of chronic prostate infections, for example, are not caused by bacteria; experts suspect a weak pelvic floor may be a factor. Surgery, injury, obesity, and chronic constipation can damage the pelvic floor in men, leading to incontinence, pain, and problems with sexual performance. Men may be embarrassed to seek treatment—and, like women, they are often misdiagnosed if they do.

For patients like Lisa, PFD manifests as pain in the vulva. In others, it presents as a bowel disorder; endometriosis; or bladder, hip, back, or abdominal pain. "Often, doctors treat symptoms in the affected organ or

joint rather than find the real cause," says Amy Stein, the pelvic-floor physical therapist in New York City whose book set Lisa on the path to a diagnosis. "They try to treat just the vulva pain, the constipation, or the hip joints. But when you miss the cause, you can't really fix the problem."

A Sneaky Back-Pain Trigger

Anatomically speaking, the pelvic floor is the center of your physical power, keeping both sides of your body balanced. If the muscles tighten or lose mobility, they can cause pelvic bones to torque. That's what happened to Alexandra, a Washington, DC, lawyer in her mid-50s who struggled for years with severe back pain.

Her doctors said that her sacrum (a triangular bone at the base of the spine) and her sacroiliac joint (twin kidney-shaped bones between the sacrum and the largest pelvic bone) had rotated, twisting her spine like a wrung-out dishcloth. Conventional physical therapy, muscle relaxants, and cortisone shots had little impact.

Then she sought help from a pelvic-floor physical therapist. It turned out that scar tissue and adhesions from a hysterectomy had stiffened Alexandra's pelvic-floor muscles, pulling her pelvic bones off center.

The Path to Real Relief

PFD is gaining recognition among pelvic-pain specialists, gastroenterologists, urologists, gynecologists,

colorectal doctors, and urogynecologists, who have expertise in both bladder and pelvic health. The first step to relief is a pelvic-floor evaluation, followed by physical therapy.

"The exam is a lot like the gloved internal check a gynecologist does, although we focus on muscle function," says Holly Tanner, a pelvic-floor physical therapist and curriculum director for the Herman & Wallace Institute. The therapist will look for tenderness, pain, and tension in the muscles. Men are diagnosed by a urologist or other specialist after a thorough examination of the groin and a rectal exam.

"This should be frontline treatment," says urogynecologist Colleen Fitzgerald, MD, medical director of the Chronic Pelvic Pain Program at Loyola University in Chicago. "If you're not seeing a specialist who understands the impact these muscles have on pain, you may not be getting the best care. Less than half the women who would benefit from a pelvic-floor evaluation get one."

While there are drugs for and surgical solutions to some pelvic-floor problems, physical therapy plus home routines may help many

patients feel better. A 2014 study of nearly 800 women with PFD found that most saw incontinence, constipation, and/or pain improve by at least 80 percent with pelvic-floor physical therapy. In another study, people with lower-back pain got extra relief when they added pelvic-floor exercises to back exercises and ultrasound. For Alexandra, months of pelvic-floor therapy strengthened weak muscles, easing her back pain.

Other treatments include massage-like work inside the vagina by a therapist to release tight spots, with biofeedback to train a patient to tighten and relax the muscles herself. "It's not weird. Treatments are very professional," says Lisa. Patients also do daily exercises at home, including Kegels to strengthen weak muscles and relaxation exercises for tense muscles, hip flexors, and glutes.

Lisa had a couple of scary pain relapses, but she got more physical therapy and continued home exercises. "My life is back to normal," she says. "I rock-wall climb, paddleboard, and wear jeans with heels to go dancing, which I was terrified I would never do again." **R**

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THAT'LL SHOW 'EM

"Wait til those jerks in high school see the sandwich I'm eating!"
(40 percent of social networking) @AARONFULLERTON

Holistic Heart Doc

The Most Dangerous Times For Your Heart

BY JOEL K. KAHN, MD



JOEL K. KAHN, MD, is a clinical professor of medicine at Wayne State University and the director of cardiac wellness at Michigan Healthcare Professionals.

IN 25 YEARS of treating heart patients, I've noticed that heart attacks don't always strike randomly. There are certain predictable "danger zones," especially for patients with heart disease or a risk for it, like smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure. Being aware of these high-risk windows might lead you to tweak your lifestyle and lessen your chance of problems.

■ **THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE** Researchers who analyzed thousands of U.S. heart attack victims found that those grieving a death were more likely to have an increased heart attack risk in the week following their loved one's passing. Swedish research found that the heart attack risk remains elevated for several years after the death of an adult sibling. If you are suffering from a loss and feel alone or depressed, seek out counseling and support from your doctor, friends, and family. Don't sit home alone and suffer.

■ **A BOUT OF FLU** As if extreme exhaustion, achiness, and high fever weren't bad enough, the flu may quadruple your odds of having a heart attack for up to three days following the illness. The virus may trigger an inflammatory response that can damage arteries. Being dehydrated thickens blood, making it prone to clot. A fever can increase your heart rate, forcing the heart to work harder. A few days after contracting the flu, seek medical help.

■ **A DEVASTATING NATURAL DISASTER** In the three weeks following the 8.9-magnitude earthquake and accompanying tsunami that killed thousands of people in Japan in 2011, the rate of heart attacks among survivors increased threefold, compared with the rate during the same calendar weeks in past years. It's important for first responders and health-care providers to be aware of this.



■ **A BIG SPORTING EVENT** Believe it or not, even cheering for your team can break your heart—if you get so wrapped up in the game that your emotions spiral out of control. Soccer's World Cup is serious business in Brazil. When researchers studied four Cups' worth of data, they found that heart attacks increased during the tournament's finals and rates were highest when Brazil was playing compared with other teams. If you're a screaming sports fan, you could ask your doctor about taking a daily baby aspirin. Better yet, try to take things down a notch.

■ **A MANIC MONDAY** Sunday-night blues make your heart sad too. A day-by-day breakdown of the incidence of heart attacks reveals that attacks

spike on the days when we return to work after a break. Stress over the coming workweek raises levels of adrenaline and cortisol, which may increase blood pressure and clotting. Starting the week on a calmer note with even five to ten minutes of morning yoga or meditation has helped my patients. Walking at lunch to relieve midday stress is another good idea.

■ **SHOVELING SNOW** The cardiac stress of cold weather and heavy labor can be extreme. In case studies, researchers have described heart attacks in patients who suffered a clot in a previously placed heart stent during or soon after shoveling snow. (We've seen similar heart attack risks in hunters dragging game out of cold fields.) I tell my patients with heart disease to dress warmly, take frequent breaks, stay hydrated, and, in some cases, just play it safe and leave shoveling to someone else. **R**

The Whole Heart Solution (Reader's Digest, \$24.99) shares Dr. Kahn's 75 integrative remedies for a healthy heart; available wherever books are sold.



Doctor's Orders

5 “Good” Habits That Can Backfire

BY THE PHYSICIANS OF *THE DOCTORS*

1 Researching Health Info on Wikipedia

The crowd-sourced encyclopedia is so popular that even up to 70 percent of physicians admit to using it as a reference. But when researchers recently compared Wikipedia entries with peer-reviewed medical-journal articles on such conditions as back pain, diabetes, depression, and high blood pressure, they found multiple errors for nine out of ten health conditions they studied. Use any health info you research online as a conversation starter with your doc—not as the final answer.

2 Daily Workouts

We applaud your efforts to hit the gym. But if you don't take a break from the same daily exercise regimen, you could be at risk of experiencing an overuse injury, like tendinitis or a rotator cuff tear. You don't need to be a fitness newbie: Our colleague Keri Peterson, a New York City

internist who's been a regular exerciser for years, got tendinitis in her shoulder from using the elliptical machine every day for a few months. She recommends that patients never repeat the same routine two days in a row. So if you jog on the treadmill today, do yoga or strength training tomorrow.

3 Relying on To-Do Lists

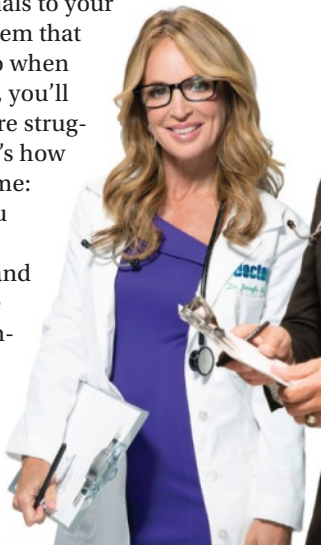
Yes, lists and apps help keep you organized, but jotting down every errand can weaken your memory, Chester Santos, a past winner of the USA Memory Championship, told us. The “use it or lose it” principle applies just as much to your brain's memory center as it does to muscles in the body, he notes. To flex your memory, Santos suggests a technique that involves storytelling to animate your lists. For example, if the first three things on your grocery list are milk, eggs, and bread, try this: Imagine a gigantic carton of milk,

dancing and jumping around. Then it suddenly explodes, and eggs come popping out of the milk carton. Then the eggs start dancing and tapping and begin to crack open; out of the eggs comes a loaf of bread. You can keep adding items to this list and successfully recall all of them by replaying the story in your mind.

4 An Early Bedtime

We were surprised when sleep medicine specialist Michael Breus, PhD, told us that the majority of people with insomnia go to bed too soon. It sounds counterintuitive, but staying up later signals to your body's homeostatic system that you need more sleep, so when you do finally go to bed, you'll conk out sooner. If you're struggling to fall asleep, here's how to find your ideal bedtime: Start with what time you need to wake up, then count backward seven and a half hours. If after one week you can wake without an alarm, you have found your sleep need.

Cohost Jennifer Berman, MD



5 Squatting over a Public Toilet

You think this keeps your behind free from bacteria lurking on the bowl, but lately urology experts have been saying that squatting could lead to a urinary tract infection. Hovering above the toilet contracts pelvic muscles, which can prevent your bladder from completely emptying and allow bacteria to grow. If you're really freaked about germs, cover the seat with toilet paper instead. **R**

Cohost Drew Ordon, MD

THE DOCTORS

Reader's Digest and *The Doctors* bring America the health information that helps you thrive. Watch the show daily (check local listings).



NEWS FROM THE

World of Medicine

BY REGINA NUZZO

Soothing Restless Legs

A new device offers a drug-free treatment for restless legs syndrome (RLS). Recently FDA-approved, the Relaxis foam pad gently vibrates under patients' legs, soothing those annoying throbs. In studies, it improved sleep about as well as commonly prescribed RLS drugs, without side effects like nausea and dizziness. The pad will be ready this fall for about \$750 with a prescription.

What Fitness Lovers Have in Common

How you think about exercise might make a big difference in how much weight you lose. In one study, participants walked the same one-mile course, but half were told it was exercise, while the rest thought it was purely for the pleasure of listening to music. Afterward, the "exercisers" were more tired and grumpy and scarfed down more

sugary treats at a lunch buffet. Focus on the fun in your physical activity, and you may feel happier and less like snacking later.

Cynical? You're Raising Your Dementia Risk

Trusting your fellow humans might keep you sharper longer. A Finnish study of more than 600 older people found that those with the highest levels of cynical distrust—who believed that "most people would lie to get ahead" or that it's "safer to trust no one"—were likely to develop

dementia at more than three times the rate of those with low levels of distrust. The link held up even after the researchers controlled for other risk factors like age and poor health.

Fast to Boost The Immune System

In a recent University of Southern California pilot study, researchers



found that chemotherapy was less toxic yet just as effective when patients fasted for three days before taking the drugs. When the body senses starvation, it tries to clean house and dump what it doesn't need—including old immune system cells. Then, when the body gets food again, it starts producing new immune system cells. Researchers are at work on a bigger clinical trial. They caution patients to fast only under medical supervision.

Coffee Flour: A New Superfood

Coffee beans are actually seeds from the coffee plant's nutritious berrylike fruit, usually left to rot during the coffee-milling process. Now a Vancouver company wants to turn that discarded berry pulp into flour. The result is gluten-free, with five times more fiber per serving than whole-grain wheat flour and more iron per serving than any grain or cereal in the USDA database. A serving of coffee-flour brownies has only a fraction of the caffeine buzz in a cup of coffee, and the taste is more like that of roasted fruit than java. The flour should be available in the United States next year.

6,000 Steps a Day for Healthy Knees

A study published in *Arthritis Care & Research* looked at nearly 1,800 adults who either had knee osteoarthritis or

were at risk for it. For every extra 1,000 steps volunteers took each day, their risk of serious mobility problems fell by about 17 percent. Six thousand steps—about an hour of walking—was the minimum number that seemed to protect against any kind of disability.

Look Prettier with Perfume

Smelling nice might make us appear more alluring. In a recent small study, men and women viewed photos of women's faces—computer-manipulated to simulate ranges of aging and attractiveness—while various scents wafted through the air. While sniffing an aroma of roses, participants rated faces as significantly more appealing than those they saw while inhaling something fishy. Smells have a powerfully direct path to the emotional parts of the brain that make snap judgments.

The “Pill” That Gets Digestion Going

A vibrating pill might ease chronic constipation. The Vibrant Capsule houses a tiny motor and starts gently jiggling about seven hours after being swallowed—about the time it enters the large intestine. It triggers contractions that help move stool along. In a small study, patients who took the pill twice a week nearly doubled their bowel movements. Unlike many laxatives, it had no side effects.





When the view goes on forever, I feel like I can too.


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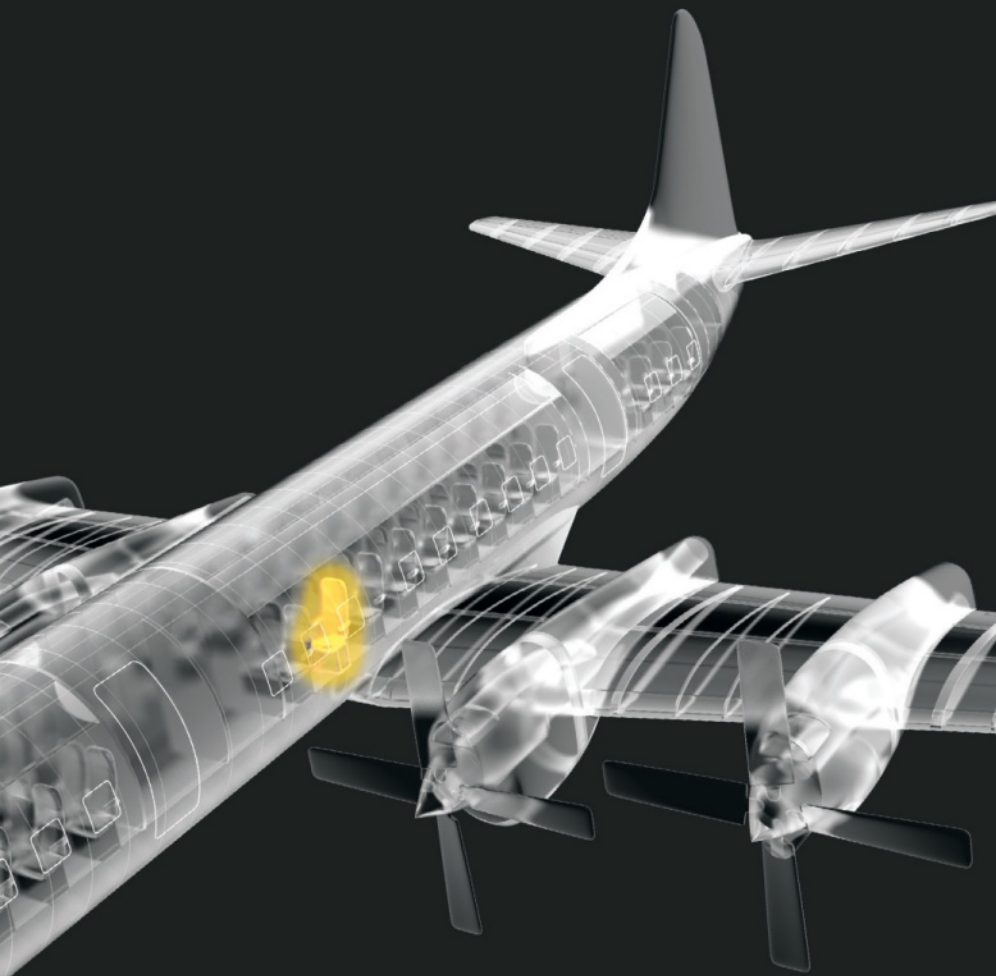
The odds of surviving even the most serious plane crash are 76 percent. The odds of being the only one left alive are infinitesimal. This is what it's like to be the ...

SOLE *Survivor*

A detailed illustration of an airplane fuselage, shown in a cutaway or wireframe style, revealing the interior seating and structural components. The illustration is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping the title.

BY JEFF WISE

ON JUNE 30, 2009, French schoolgirl Bahia Bakari, 12, and her mother, Aziza Aboudou, 33, were aboard a packed Airbus A310 on their way to Comoros, a group of islands off the eastern coast of Africa, to visit family for the summer. Minutes from touchdown, Yemenia Flight 626 shook violently in the swirling 40 mph winds; the lights flickered, the engine stalled, and the plane, holding 142 passengers and 11 crew members, plunged into the Indian Ocean, breaking apart on impact.



The illuminated area represents where passenger George Lamson Jr. was seated when Galaxy Airlines Flight 203 crashed, killing 70 people.

Bahia was ejected from the plane. With no life vest, food, or drinking water, she clung to a piece of wreckage for 13 hours until a sailor from a private rescue boat plucked her from the ocean. Days later, as she recovered from her wounds in a Paris hospital, a psychologist shared unlikely news: Bahia was the only survivor of the disaster.

Call it a miracle, coincidence, or luck—the distinction of *only one left alive* is a heavy weight, says Ky Dickens, 36, whose 2013 documentary film *Sole Survivor* tells the stories of several plane-crash survivors.

“They feel an incredible amount of pressure,” says Dickens, a survivor of a car crash in her teen years that killed several of her friends. Drawn to the topic partly because of her personal experience, Dickens contacted George Lamson Jr., a passenger on a plane that crashed, killing everyone else on board, including his father, and enlisted him to help other survivors share their stories with the world. Says Dickens, “Naturally they wonder, Was I spared for a reason? Am I supposed to do something amazing?”

Here Lamson Jr. and two sole survivors from other crashes, Annette Herfkens and Jim Polehinke, describe what they live with every day as members of a tiny club they never sought to be part of but are very fortunate to have joined.

SURVIVOR: *George Lamson Jr.*

- **Date:** 1/21/1985
- **Flight:** Galaxy Airlines 203
- **From:** Reno, Nevada
- **To:** Minneapolis
- **On board:** 71
- **Crew deaths:** 6
- **Passenger deaths:** 64
- The flight crew had significantly reduced power to the engine to eliminate unusual vibrations. The captain lost control of the aircraft, sending it plunging into an RV sales lot near downtown Reno.



AFTER MY FATHER and I found our seats, I settled in and tried to sleep. Pretty soon, two men came up to us and said, “Hey, you’re in our seats.” That wasn’t true, but my dad said OK, and we switched seats with them. Our new seats were in the first row right behind a bulkhead.

After takeoff, everything seemed smooth at first. Then we hit turbulence, and the plane started to bank to the right. It didn’t seem serious, but as I was looking out the window, I could see we were losing altitude pretty quickly. Over the loudspeaker, the pilot said that we were going down. It must have been five to ten seconds

before we hit the ground. We hit three times, and the third time the plane hit an RV lot and broke apart. It was going about 140 miles an hour. I was thrown more than 40 feet onto a street near downtown Reno.

The wreckage was on fire, and I searched through it trying to find anybody alive. One memory I can't shake is of finding the man who took my seat. He was lying out in the field, facing the fire, and I could see his eyes were open. I went to him trying to help, but I realized he was dead. If I hadn't switched seats, that would have been me.

After the ambulances arrived, they took me to the hospital with another sur-

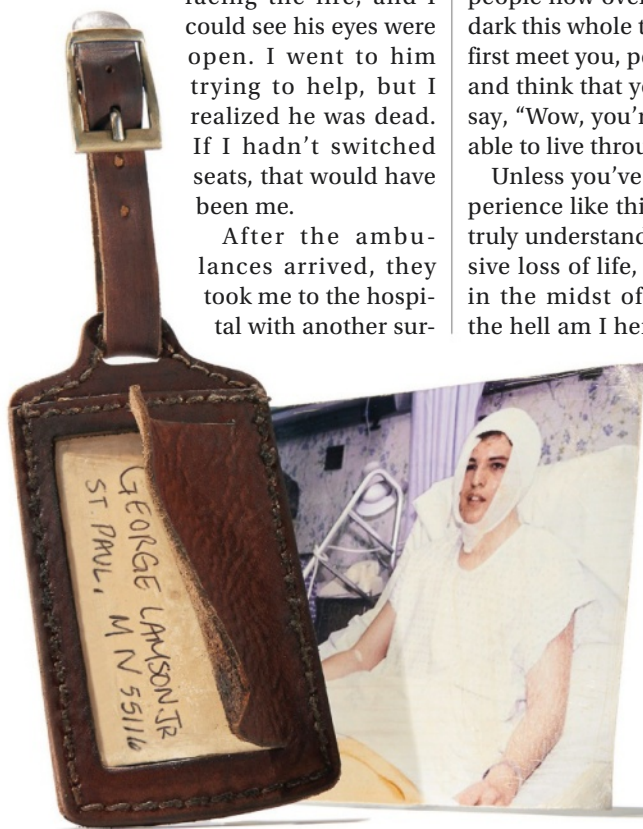
vivor. He had third-degree burns all over his body. His skin was black from the fire. I said to him, "I can't believe I couldn't find anybody. Here we are, still alive and talking." And his answer was, "There's nobody." I didn't think he was that hurt, but once we were getting treated, I remember him yelling in pain from all his burns. He died a few days later.

I have a hard time explaining to people how overwhelmingly sad and dark this whole thing was. When they first meet you, people will look at you and think that you're special. They'll say, "Wow, you're amazing; you were able to live through this."

Unless you've gone through an experience like this, it's not possible to truly understand. You've seen a massive loss of life, and you're standing in the midst of it wondering, Why the hell am I here? Why are all these people mangled? Why are all these people dead?

After I got out of the hospital, I went home. I finished high school and started college. I had a future.

Lamson Jr., 17 and a high school senior at the time of the crash, sustained only minor injuries.



I'd always imagined that I'd get a degree, maybe join the Air Force and become a pilot. When the holidays hit after my first semester of college, it sunk in that things weren't going to be the same again, because I didn't have my father anymore. My mom and my sister were having a very hard time dealing with the loss. I made it through the holidays as best as I could, and then I went back to school. But then the *Challenger* disaster happened, and it triggered me into a depressed state. I dropped out of college and later moved to Reno. Today I work in a casino as a dealer.

Compared with the plans I'd had when I was younger, my life feels like it has come up short. I imagined that the family members of the people who died would say, "Look at this guy—he got a second chance at life. I lost my dear husband, I lost my dear son, I lost my dad. Why is this guy alive? He's not even doing anything major with his life. I know my dad would have done something; I know my brother would have done something." I suppressed a lot of this, and it would come back and bite me with depression or fits of anger. It was very hard to cope with.

In July 2010, I made a trip to Minnesota to meet with the families of three

of the passengers aboard my flight. I was really dreading the meetings. I felt physically ill as I drove to the first family member's house in Minneapolis. Sarah had lost her mother, her father, and two grandparents on that flight. She was six years old when it happened. I thought about how traumatic that must have been for her.

When I got to her house, I walked in, I gave her a hug, and we made some small talk. Then we sat down at her kitchen table, and she handed me a photo of her father and mother. That was the moment everything changed. This sounds weird, but I sensed the presence of

“
I sensed the presence of her family. It gave me a wonderful feeling of relief and love.
 ”

her family in the room. I felt like they were standing right by her and smiling. It felt like I was forgiven for not letting my life be as perfect as it should have been. She was happy to see me, and I was happy to see her. I was looking at a picture of her when she was six years old, and I was seeing her in front of me, in her 30s, and I was in tears. I felt like I was with the family. It was a wonderful, authentic feeling of relief and love. It felt really good.

After moving to Reno in the '90s, Lamson married and had a daughter, now 18 years old. Lamson and his daughter still live in Reno. **R**

SURVIVOR: *Annette Herfkens*

• **Date:** 11/14/1992 • **Flight:** Vietnam Airlines 474 • **From:** Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam • **To:** Cam Ranh, Vietnam • **On board:** 31 • **Crew deaths:** 6
 • **Passenger deaths:** 24 • After flying into a tropical storm, pilots lost control of the three-engine airliner, and it struck the ridge of a mountain.



FROM HER BOOK,
*TURBULENCE:
 A TRUE SURVIVAL STORY*

WE WERE 49 MINUTES

into a 55-minute flight when the plane made a tremendous lurch. I told my fiancé, Pasje, “Don’t worry. It’s just an air pocket.” Then we dropped again, and people started screaming. I reached for Pasje’s hand. That’s the last thing I remember.

I later learned that the plane had hit a ridge at 300 mph. One wing ripped off, and the rest of the plane crashed into the side of the next mountain. When I woke up, I was still inside the plane, pinned under a dead body. Pasje’s seat had flipped backward, and he was lying on it with a sweet little smile on his lips, dead. I could see jungle greenery through a hole in the cabin where the cockpit used to be. I had gaping wounds all over my body. Four inches of bluish bone were sticking out of my shin. When I tried to move, I felt an excruciating pain in my hips.

Somehow I managed to get out of the plane. Dead bodies were

scattered all around me, and people were moaning in pain. A very kind Vietnamese man assured me that help would arrive soon. “I am a very important man,” he said. “They will come for me.” Over the next few hours, his breathing grew weaker. I saw the life go out of him. He closed his eyes and was gone. There was no more sound or movement from anyone. I have never been so alone.

For eight days, I lay on the jungle floor, waiting. Leeches covered my hands. My feet were swollen to twice their normal size, and my toes turned black. I had nothing to drink, but when it rained, I was able to squeeze some water from my wet T-shirt and pieces of aircraft insulation into my mouth. The body of the man next to me began to decompose, so I used my elbows to pull myself to another spot. The crash had made a clearing, and I could see a mountain rising in the distance. I felt like I was one with the beauty and the process of decay around me.

Finally, on the eighth day, a group of Vietnamese men arrived and

carried me down the mountain on a piece of canvas slung beneath a stick. The journey took so long that we had to spend another night camped in the jungle. Then we reached a village, and I was driven to a hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. The next day, I was

flown to a hospital in Singapore. Two weeks later, I was flown back to my native Holland, where doctors took skin grafts from my thigh to cover the wound on my shin and checked four pins that had been inserted into my broken jaw. I was in constant pain.

Two and a half months after the crash, I returned to my job as an international bond trader and my home in Madrid. Being alone again in my apartment, I was hit by Pasje's absence in a way I hadn't been before. My Pasje—my compass, my alter ego—was gone. Bitter thoughts ran through my head day after day. I was angry—angry at death, angry at life, at all my unmet expectations.

After the accident, I spent most of my energy on appearing the same as my old self, the same as my peers. Perhaps I did this to comfort

*Herfkens, 31,
in a Singapore
hospital ten
days after her
rescue*



others, perhaps to comfort myself. I kept the jungle to myself and tried hard to blend in and make the world forget the survivor part of my identity.

In 2006, I went back to Vietnam. I traveled to the village where I'd been taken after the crash and met some of the men who had carried me all those years before. The next morning, a group of us got up before dawn and started to hike. After wading across six rivers, we started to climb. It took us more than five hours to arrive at the crash site.

I sat down on the leaves. And twigs. I looked down the mountain through the trees. It was so much more claus-

trophobic than I remembered. And not as green. Not as pretty.

I looked behind me and tried to imagine the fuselage. With Pasje in it. Here was where his life ended. I didn't feel his presence there—not stronger than usual, at least.

I worked my way farther up the mountain and stopped at a rock. I searched in my backpack for the small wooden dolphin and the little white seal I had brought. I placed them on the rock. "Bye, Pasje," I said.

Herfkens, her husband, Jaime Lupa, and their children, Maxi and Joosje, live in New York City. **R**

SURVIVOR: *Jim Polehinke, copilot*

- **Date:** 8/27/2006 ● **Flight:** Comair 5191 ● **From:** Lexington, Kentucky
- **To:** Atlanta ● **On board:** 50 ● **Crew deaths:** 2 ● **Passenger deaths:** 47
- The pilots steered the airplane down a runway that was too short. The plane continued past the runway end, knocked down a metal fence, and continued onto a field, where it struck several trees and burst into flames.



AS THE PILOT in command taxied the plane from the terminal to the runway, I was going through the preflight checklist of equipment settings, so I didn't look out the window to check the runway number like I would before most flights. Even if I had, I might not have noticed that the markers along the

taxiway didn't match the runway we'd been assigned, because so many of the lights at the airport were broken.

We waited to be cleared for takeoff, and then the captain said, "OK, let's go." He taxied out onto the runway, turned, and straightened us out. He said to me, "OK, your brakes, your controls." I said, "My brakes, my controls," and away we went.

I don't remember anything after that. On the cockpit voice recorder, you can hear me say, "That's weird, no lights." A few seconds later, we ran off the runway and hit an embankment. The plane rose into the air for a short distance, then clipped the airport fence, hit some trees, and broke into pieces.

When the rescue crews arrived, they heard me coughing and cut me out of the wreckage. Instead of waiting for an ambulance, they put me into their vehicle and took me to the hospital.

I was in an induced coma for four

days. My body was like a broken rag doll. My left tibia and femur were both fractured. My right heel bone came out of my foot. I had broken ribs and fingers and a pelvic fracture. My right lung had collapsed, and I'd suffered a traumatic brain injury.

Once they got me out of the coma, they waited for my head to clear up. My wife was there. I thought, OK, I'm in the hospital, and I'm really messed up here. So what happened? That's when my wife explained that I'd been in a plane crash. My response was a question: "Was everybody else OK?"

Stowed in a closet near the cockpit, Polehinke's flight bag, shown here, survived the crash unscathed.



And she said, "No. You're the only survivor." When I heard that, I pretty much lay there and cried.

For the first week, the doctors kept cleaning out the left leg to try to save it. Finally the doctor came to me and said, "Listen, we can do one of two things. We can see if this is going to work, and there's a possibility that you could die from an infection, or we can amputate." Once they took my left leg, the rest of my body recovered very quickly.

Emotionally and psychologically, I was very black the first couple of years after the crash. I was angry that all the blame was put on the captain and me. And I felt sad for the family members of those who had died. Sometimes I'd say to myself, "I'm alive!" And a split second later, I'd think about the 49 families who had lost loved ones. And I'd wonder, Should I be happy to be alive, when all those people are gone?

I'm grateful that my wife, Ida, is as strong as she is. She was my rock. She supported me, took care of me. I'm grateful that I have the wife that I do.

My advice to somebody else in my situation would be "Keep looking forward." Keep looking for that light at the end of the tunnel. You can't change the past, so just always keep moving forward.

"I miss flying dearly," says Polehinke, now 52. "I was lucky to have had that privilege."



I'm basically paralyzed from my right knee down. If somebody took me out of my wheelchair and said, "Stand up on one leg," I'd drop. But I love to ski, and I get out whenever I can on a monoski. When I'm at the top of the mountain, I don't think about the crash. I look out over the world stretched below me and say, "Maybe I don't have a reason to complain. Thank you, God, for allowing me to be alive and able to do this."

After the accident, Polehinke and his wife moved from Florida to southwestern Colorado, where he is president of Colorado Discover Ability, an organization that promotes outdoor activities for disabled people. **R**

Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE



AFTER TRICK-OR-TREATING, a teen takes a shortcut home through the cemetery. Halfway across, he's startled by a tapping noise coming from the misty shadows. Trembling with fear, he spots an old man with a hammer and

chisel, chipping away at a headstone.

"I thought you were a ghost," says the relieved teen. "What are you doing working so late?"

"Oh, those idiots," grumbles the old man. "They misspelled my name!"

Submitted by S. K., via Internet

A HUSBAND AND WIFE had been married for 60 years and had no secrets except for one: The woman kept in her closet a shoe box that she forbade her husband from ever opening. But when she was on her deathbed—and with her blessing—he opened the box and found a crocheted doll and \$95,000 in cash.

“My mother told me that the secret to a happy marriage was to never argue,” she explained. “Instead, I should keep quiet and crochet a doll.”

Her husband was touched. Only one doll was in the box—that meant she’d been angry with him only once in 60 years. “But what about all this money?” he asked.

“Oh,” she said, “that’s the money I made from selling the dolls.”

IN HEAVEN, you get back all the Chapsticks you lost.

@IAMENIDCOLESLAW

A PENNSYLVANIA COUPLE had trouble selling their home after strange apparitions and sounds forced them to admit in their ad that it was “slightly haunted.” The *Week* asked its readers to put a more positive spin on the sales pitch:

- “A home suited for free spirits”
- “Mostly not haunted”
- “113-year-old Victorian, still cared for by original owners”
- “A place for all your possessions”
- “This house has good bones”
- “Your kids will make new friends”

AFTER 12 YEARS OF THERAPY, my psychiatrist said something that brought tears to my eyes. He said, “No hablo inglés.”

Comedian **RONNIE SHAKES**

Richard Branson has announced plans to develop a new type of plane that can fly from New York to Tokyo in one hour. Apparently, the engines are powered by human screams.

SETH MEYERS



A BRITON FLIES into Australia and is asked by the immigration officer, “Do you have any felony convictions?”

The Briton replies, “Sorry. I didn’t realize that was still a requirement.”

I SHAVE EACH MORNING in front of my car’s passenger-side mirror. That way, I get a closer shave than it actually appears.

Submitted by **PHILIP ROGERS**,
Latham, New York

Think you can beat these jokes? Yours may be worth \$\$\$. See page 7 for details, or go to rd.com/submit.

How to **CRACK** America's Sugar Problem

ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK *SUGAR SAVVY SOLUTION*

IMAGINE MAKING A nearly life-size sculpture of yourself out of sugar cubes and consuming it over the next 365 days. That's essentially what many of us are doing. The typical American eats an average of 128 pounds of added sugars each year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And it affects our bodies on every level.

People who got between 10 and 25 percent of their calories from added sugar were almost three times more likely to die of heart problems than those who consumed less than 10 percent of their calories from sugar, researchers reported earlier this year in

a major medical journal. The stats held up even after they accounted for overall diet quality; in other words, sugar may harm your health even if you're thin and eating reasonably. Previous studies have found links between sugar intake and higher levels of triglycerides and LDL cholesterol and lower levels of HDL cholesterol. Excess sugar is also associated with inflammatory chemicals that raise heart disease risk.

Countless other studies link our sky-high sugar intake to obesity, type 2 diabetes, and even certain cancers. Sugar interferes with your brain's satiety signals, which is a fancy way of saying that normally, your brain



would tell you that you're full, but you can't hear it over the sugar buzz, so you keep stuffing yourself. Excess sugar hinders fat-burning enzymes, encouraging fat storage.

Worst of all, even if you know the health consequences, you may still find it hard to stop eating sugar. That's because sugar can be addictive. When rats eat sugar, their brains flood with dopamine, the same chemical released during gambling and cocaine use. As the rats eat more sugar, their brains'

reward systems adjust, so the animals need more food to get the same effects.

Human brains appear similarly vulnerable. Last year, a paper in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that high-sugar chocolate milk shakes lit up the reward centers of participants' brains more effectively than milk shakes that were calorically identical but higher in fat and lower in the sweet stuff. This sugar-stoked reward system can drive compulsive eating, the researchers believe.

A Sweet Solution

AS SCIENTIFIC STUDIES and media headlines scream about the dangers of sugar, public health experts urge people to cut back. In March, new World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines proposed that people consume less than 5 percent of their daily calories from added sugar—that's about six teaspoons a day, or about the amount in one 8-ounce bottle of sweetened lemon iced tea. The average American consumes almost quadruple the WHO recommendation—22 teaspoons of added sugar a day.

But sugar-proofing your diet is tricky. Sugar has infiltrated so much of our modern food supply that you'll find it where you would never think to look, including healthy cereal, savory salad dressing, and yogurt. Lurking on the ingredients lists of processed

foods are more than 50 different names for sugar, from *fruit juice concentrate* to *maltodextrin* to *rice syrup*.

To make a permanent change, you need to understand what's really in your food—and what to eat instead.

Working at the forefront of this effort for more than 30 years is nutrition and fitness expert High Voltage (aka Kathie Dolgin), who recently appeared in *Fed Up*, the Katie Couric- and Laurie David-produced documentary about the nation's sugar crisis. Decades ago, she beat her own food addictions by eliminating excess sugar, white flour, and salt from her diet, then developed a plan called Energy Up, which she took to girls at New York City high schools. When Columbia University Medical Center studied the program, researchers found that over nine

months, more than half of students lost weight and obese girls shed an average of 13 pounds.

This year, High Voltage teamed up with *Reader's Digest* to adapt the program for people of all ages, then asked 15 women with various food and health issues to try it. In six weeks on our *Sugar Savvy Solution* plan, the women cut sugar cravings and lost almost 168 pounds—and gained energy and confidence. Many saw lower blood pressure, blood sugar, and triglycerides.

“My taste buds have changed. I want healthy foods instead of junk,” says test panelist Megan Johnston,

22, who lost 13 pounds in six weeks. Patricia Nolan, 47, who shed 16 pounds, rediscovered a love of fresh fruits and vegetables. Before *Sugar Savvy*, Cheryl Lee, 50, was a self-described “carb junkie” who would eat cookies and cake all night. Now she’s strong enough to resist when her daughter wants to order fried chicken and biscuits or other junky fare.

Sugar Savvy Solution is not a diet; it’s an effort to change how you think about food. “I have one very simple motto,” says High Voltage. “Eat what you want, but *Sugar Savvy Solution* will change what you want.”

QUIZ: ARE YOU A SUGAR ADDICT?

Answer **yes** or **no** to the following:

1. If you reach for one cookie or chip, is the bag empty before you know it?
2. Can you skip dessert but empty the bread basket—and the pasta platter?
3. Can you control your food intake during meals but lose it when you start to snack, especially on chips and crackers?
4. When you want to lose weight, is it easier to skip meals altogether rather than just eat smaller ones?
5. Are you tired all the time? Are there things you’d love to do but just don’t have the energy for?
6. Once you’ve had “just a taste” of bread, bagels, muffins, crackers, pasta, or rice, do you go back for a second (or third) helping?
7. Do you spend the day on a roller coaster of snacking highs and lows, hitting the doughnuts in the morning, the vending machine chips or candy in the afternoon, and the ice cream at night?
8. Do you eat healthy around other people but lose it when you’re alone?

■ If you answered yes to two or more odd-numbered questions, your food addiction likely lies with sweets or salty snacks—cookies, chips, cakes—that have been carefully engineered by food scientists to keep you eating and eating and eating.

■ If you answered yes to two or more even-numbered questions, you are highly susceptible to the addictive powers of white flour (which acts like a sugar during digestion).

■ If you answered yes to two or more odd- and even-numbered questions (at least four total questions), you are highly susceptible to food addiction, period.

How to *Stamp Out* Sugar

THESE FOUR PRINCIPLES can help anyone cut down on sugar intake.

1) Eat no more than 24 grams (or six teaspoons) of added sugar in 24 hours. One teaspoon/cube equals four grams. When you see sugar grams on a label, divide by four to get the number of teaspoons. A packet of oatmeal can have 12 grams of sugar—that's three teaspoons, or half of what *Sugar Savvy Solution* recommends for the day. Yogurt can have more than 24 grams—your whole day's allotment. High Voltage recommends that everyone track his or her sugar intake for one week. Many women echo what test panelist Aris Pacheco, 35, said after she did so: "Once I learned how much sugar was in all those things, I didn't want them anymore."

2) Kick out trigger foods. Think of those that send you into a state of out-of-control eating, says High Voltage. You want just one spoonful of Nutella, and suddenly you're scraping the bottom of the jar. You intend to have a few french fries, only to end up eating them all. You probably have

some idea of what foods may be problematic for you, but the food-triggers quiz on the previous page can help you zero in. Get these foods out of your kitchen, out of your purse, and out of your office snack drawer.

3) Hydrate correctly. Proper hydration gives you energy, but not if your drinks are loaded with sugar and chemicals. By eliminating soft drinks and other non-diet beverages, the average woman can lose a pound a week. *Sugar Savvy Solution* calls for drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day. Adequate water intake may quell your appetite, boost your metabolism, and combat bloating.

4) Fuel every two to four hours. "People complain that they don't eat all day and still can't lose weight," says High Voltage. "If you come home starving, you eat anything and everything, and your body puts it straight into storage because it's afraid you're going to starve it again."



C'MON AND GET SUGAR SAVVY

The book (\$24.99, available wherever books are sold) is a six-week plan to kick sugar and transform your mind, body, and spirit. You'll learn to spot hidden sugar, identify trigger foods, and enjoy 40 delicious recipes and sample menus.



Reset Your *Taste Buds*

THE SUGAR SAVVY Palate Cleanse is a powerful way to jump-start healthy eating while wiping your taste buds clean from the dulling effects of sweetened and processed food. It's not a fast; High Voltage worked with registered dietitian Jessica Issler to make sure the cleanse was nutritious and healthy (though it's a good idea to consult your doctor before making any major diet changes).

The secret is soup—or what High Voltage calls Souपालicious!—which floods your body with energy-boosting and nutrient-packed whole foods so

you'll learn how good they make you feel. Test panelist Nancy Barthold, 51, says the Palate Cleanse stopped her desire to constantly hunt for food: "It made me acknowledge true hunger as opposed to just wanting to eat."

How to do it: Make a batch; eat one to two cups every two hours or so for three to five days. Drink water with and between meals. (If it seems boring to have only Souपालicious Soup all day, experiment with different combos of veggies and spices—get more ideas in *Sugar Savvy Solution*—or try it chunky instead of pureed.)

SPICE 'N' NICE SOUPALICIOUS SOUP

- 1¼ cups dried white beans, soaked overnight
- 1 cup dried black beans, soaked overnight
- 12 cups water, divided
- ⅓ cup coconut or olive oil
- 2 large sweet potatoes (about 5 inches long), peeled and chopped
- 2 large bell peppers, any color, chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 1 small jicama, peeled and chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 1 small bunch chard, coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 to 2 tbs. chopped cilantro
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- pinch of onion powder and ancho chile powder to taste

1. Rinse beans thoroughly. In large pot over high heat, place beans and 6 cups water. Boil; reduce heat; simmer for an hour, or until beans are tender.
 2. Add remaining ingredients (including remaining 6 cups water); simmer for an additional 30 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.
 3. Puree in blender or with immersion blender.
- Recipe makes enough soup for 2 days.*

SUGAR SAVVY SAMPLE MEALS

On the *Sugar Savvy Solution* plan, you'll eat five times a day: four small, nutritious meals built around vital veggies (leafy greens and nonstarchy produce) and supercharged carbs (whole grains and starchy veggies like sweet potatoes). A daily power drink (made with fruits, veggies, yogurt or a nondairy milk, and a healthy fat) is an easy and filling way to amp up nutrition.

Power Meal 1: Homemade Granola with Greek Yogurt Preheat oven to 300°F. Combine 1/4 cup dry rolled oats and 2 walnut halves, chopped, with 1/2 tsp. melted coconut oil on baking sheet. Bake until oats are lightly browned (about 5 to 10 minutes). Remove from oven and let cool. Top 9 oz. fat-free plain Greek yogurt with granola and 1/2 cup strawberries.

Power Drink 2: Kale-Apple-Pear Power Drink Combine and puree in blender until smooth: 1/2 cup fat-free plain Greek yogurt, 1 cup chopped kale (ribs removed and discarded), 1 cup baby spinach, 1/2 cup sliced apple, 1/2 cup sliced pear, 1/2 small banana, 2 tbs. flaxseed meal, and 1 tbs. chia seeds.

Power Meal 3: Sweet Potato & Chicken Salad (at right)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine 2 cups halved Brussels sprouts and 1/2 cup peeled, cubed sweet potatoes; mist with olive oil, and roast for about 20 to 30 minutes, or until tender. Mix warm vegetables with 2 cups baby spinach and 2 tsp. tahini. Serve with 2 oz. grilled chicken breast.

Power Meal 4: Veggie Stir-Fry In 1 tsp. olive or coconut oil, sauté 1 to 2 cloves garlic, minced, 1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper, 1/2 cup water chestnuts, 1/2 cup broccoli, and 1/2 cup snow peas until tender. Add 3 to 6 oz. light tofu fortified with calcium and vitamins D and B12; heat through. Toss in 2 cups baby spinach; cook until spinach is just wilted. Add 1/2 cup cooked brown rice; stir to combine all ingredients.

Power Meal 5: Portobello Cheesesteak Preheat broiler. In 1 tsp. olive oil, sauté 1 medium (4 oz.) portobello mushroom, sliced, 1/4 cup diced yellow onion, and 1/4 cup chopped, roasted red peppers until softened. Top 1 slice toasted whole grain bread with 1/2 cup salad greens, 1/4 cup mashed black beans, and mushroom mixture. Top with 1 slice (1 oz.) low-fat provolone. Broil until cheese melts.



Weekend With Uncle Gutta

BY BRIGID DUFFY FROM QUEST FOR KINDNESS



BRIGID DUFFY
is a writer
and editor who
lives in New
York City.

I HAVE A HABIT of looking up the etymology of words before I start writing. Usually, it's just a way to procrastinate. But sometimes, when I know where a word has been, I feel more equipped to take my words where they need to go.

When I set out to write an essay about my uncle Gutta and kindness, I learned that the word *kindness* is related to *kin*. To be treated kindly is to be treated as if one were a relative, a part of a family. It is to be welcomed in, to be claimed. How funny that the kindness we bestow upon family members can often be the most difficult type to impart.

Uncle Gutta's phone calls were not always met with enthusiasm, but he called often, persistent in winning over my family's affection. Whenever his area code lit up our caller ID, my two sisters and I tossed around the phone like a game of hot potato. "You answer it!" "I answered it last time!" "It's your turn!"

It wasn't that we disliked our uncle, but the man could talk. Answer the phone, and the next 90 minutes of your life would dissipate like snowflakes in the Delaware River.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (DUFFY)



One dog day in late July, Uncle Gutta rang. I knew it was a hazardous time of year to pick up the phone, as he would inevitably urge us to make the long drive to his home in Pennsylvania and attend the Renaissance Faire with him. But after seven years of politely saying, "I'm busy all 12 of those weekends," I was running out of excuses. Still, when I picked up the phone, I was calculating an escape strategy.

"Hey, Uncle Gutta. What's up?"

"I'm sorry to have to tell you ..." he began. There was an unfamiliar exertion in the way he spoke, like he had a lump in his throat. "Ballsey just passed away unexpectedly."

"Oh, wow ... I'm so sorry." Who the heck was Ballsey?

"He was one cat that lived up to his name. But he's in a place of peace now."

"Of course."

"So when are you guys gonna come out to my pad? I tell you what, the Celtic Fling at the Renaissance Faire is this Saturday. How 'bout you come over for that?"

"That sounds great," I said, my mouth doing the talking without my consent.

"Really? Great!" he replied. "I'll see you on Saturday around 8 a.m."

He hung up before I could change my mind. It was the shortest phone call of Uncle Gutta's life.

When my younger sister and I got into the car to drive to our uncle's

the following weekend, it was already 96 degrees. The air was rich and seedy, like an overripe watermelon. I looked over at my sister, whom I had dragged into this visit, in the passenger seat. Scorn emanated from her small frame.

A couple of hours later, we pulled onto the road where Uncle Gutta lived, and he was waiting on his front porch. A beefy six-foot Marine with nine and a half fingers, he was wearing a Scottish kilt, a body-hugging Irish-flag shirt, a do-rag, and a 30-inch sword. I couldn't tell if he was going for "pirate" or "Renaissance dude"—the distinction was negligible. After we hugged, he showed us around his backyard, which was part enchanted garden and part junkyard.

"This is a scratching post that Ballsey preferred. But he also liked that one," he said, pointing at some outdoor knickknacks.

"And this is where he used to take naps a lot," he continued as he steered us toward an undifferentiated spot on the ground.

"This is a special rock that I dedicated to Ballsey. He liked it here a lot too. And this is a spot where I come to pray for our family ... and for Ballsey," he said. He paused, and I noticed that he had tilted his head back, as if hoping his eye would reabsorb the tear that fell down his cheek. "You know, it's really great you guys came here."

It was the only statement I'd ever heard him say without that goofy-uncle undertone. And in that moment I real-

ized: Here was not only our uncle but a simple guy who lived in the boonies and missed the heck out of his cat.

"I'm glad we came, too, Uncle Gutta," I said. The moment the words left my lips, I realized they were true.

"Me too," my sister chimed in. And when I looked, I saw that she had also softened.

Then the moment passed, and it was back to business. Uncle Gutta had mapped out our schedule for the Faire: a Tartan Terrors performance, jousting, Irish step dancing, Her Majesty's Royal Performers, and then the Tartan Terrors again. That afternoon, we laughed and jostled and ate turkey legs and danced. It was the silliest and freest I had felt in a long time.

On the ride home, as our near-heatstroke subsided into exhaustion, I thought about why, out of all the times that Uncle Gutta had begged us to visit, I'd said yes this time. Perhaps being part of a family is to recognize—

even subliminally—when one of your kin is in need of some care. We monitor our actions so painstakingly with friends, coworkers, and strangers. But family members often get our autopilot selves. Within families, showing kindness is often not a

deliberate act. Rather, it is an instinctive reaching out, a recognition of a need in our kin, and doing our best to fill that need—even while kicking and screaming.

When my sister and I saw Uncle Gutta at Thanksgiving, he presented us each with our own shiny broadsword. My mother took one

look at them and muttered, "What on earth are you gonna do with that?"

But to Uncle Gutta, the broadswords were a crucial accessory for next year's Fling. "This year, you got your feet wet, but next year, you guys gotta go all out."

We smiled, knowing it was his way of saying, "Thanks for coming." **R**

“

Being part of a family is to recognize—even subliminally—when your kin is in need of care.

”

QUEST FOR KINDNESS (APRIL 21, 2011), COPYRIGHT © 2011 BY BRIGID DUFFY, ALICIABESSETTE.COM.



TAKE THIS DOWN

The next best thing to being clever is being able to quote someone who is.

MARY PETTIBONE POOLE

A large stack of books and scattered pages on a green background. The books are piled high, with many pages flying out and scattered around the base. The background is a solid, light green color. The overall composition is dynamic and suggests a sense of abundance and movement.

NATIONAL INTEREST

To break the cycle of poverty, young children need something that's as free and abundant as air. An extraordinary program is giving it to them.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
RUSS AND REYN

Word Power *for* Babies

BY MELISSA FAY GREENE



B

ABIES NEED a few basic things to get started: mother's milk, or something like it; love, attention, and playtime; clean clothes; and a safe place to sleep. All over the world, high- or low-income, desert or forest, high-rise or countryside, doting parents give their babies these essentials. But educational researchers have

uncovered something else babies need, and this they're not getting equally up and down the income scale. The missing element is not an heirloom-quality cherrywood changing table, an all-leather car seat with cup holder, or an ergonomic Scandinavian stroller (none of which has been linked to positive life outcomes anyway). The missing element costs nothing and is as plentiful as air, yet the devastating lack of it hampers brain development.

Many low-income American children are suffering from a shortage of words—songs, nursery rhymes, storybooks, chitchat, everyday stuff. How can that be? All parents issue directives—"Time for your bath" or "Let's put on your jammies." In low-income families, where parents often have had less education and limited access to parenting guidance, that's usually the end of it; while in wealthier families, directives are only a small part of an ongoing conversation. "Let's put on your jammies. Your jammies are so soft! What color are these jammies?"

They're yellow. And look at these little animals on your jammies. What are those? Those are ducks! 'Quack, quack, quack,' say the ducks!" All that babbling isn't silliness; it's mind-building. Words streaming from radio or television, or from parents or caregivers chatting on cell phones, are of no benefit, however—a finding that merits attention from *all* parents.

In many low-income families, warm and loving parents may struggle desperately to provide all the other basics, without a clue that their relative silence—and the lack of bedtime stories, picture books, and lullabies—hurts the babies.

Beginning in the 1990s, researchers at Rice and Columbia Universities reported eye-opening findings about how many more words middle-class and affluent kids hear day in and out. Using interview techniques and tracking devices including "word pedometers," they've determined that well-off children hear 30 million more words in the first three years of life.

The deficit has astounding and

bitter consequences. More than any other strand in the lives of poor children, the 30-million-word gap has been linked to poor school performance, a failure to learn to read, a failure to graduate from high school, and an inability to prepare for and to enjoy career success.

TAMMY EDWARDS, 31, grew up on the South Shore of Long Island, on the Poospatuck Reservation, a shady village of about 100 families affiliated with the Unkechaug Nation. It's a windy beach town, the asphalt roads and scruffy grass yards giving way to sand dunes and parcels of tangled coastal forest. Massive maple and pine trees rustle with sea breezes. In summer, it looks like a vacation town, full of barefoot kids with Popsicles and folks relaxing on their porches. But it's also a poor town, with high unemployment; more than a quarter of the households are below the poverty line. Out-of-work men linger in the streets. Smoke shops dominate the retail scene, most operating out of trailers, and some men—in desperation—freelance, flagging down cars to sell individual packs of cigarettes. Four or five families anchor their mobile homes on the same half acre of land and hang up their laundry

and raise their children together in the common yard.

Tammy Edwards is a kind and serious young woman who works two jobs while caring for her aging father and young daughter in her mobile home. When exhausted, she might take a moment to smooth back her thick hair and secure it with bobby pins, maybe glancing out the window and quickly tallying how many tasks lie ahead before nightfall. When a bit of humor comes her way, for instance when watching her five-year-old, Ayanah, dance, Edwards's face lights up with an enormous,

“*At 18 months, every child still has the potential to invent Facebook.*”

disbelieving, happy smile.

She's used to being on her own. “My mother died when I was 11, and my father couldn't really take care of me,” she says. She grew up moving from house to house on the reservation, where everyone calls everyone else Cousin; in fact, her grandfather was a chief. “The Unkechaug Nation is my family,” she says.

But though Tammy grew up feeling loved, she, like millions of young Americans, heard too few words. “We didn't have many books,” she says. “They had a Christmas program for the kids on the reservation, and one year, I won a set of encyclopedias. I was so happy! It felt like winning a



*Tammy Edwards
and her daughter,
Ayanah, who likes
books about dogs,
frogs, giraffes,
horses, chickens—
and people*

whole bunch of money. Afterward, folks would come to me to ask if they could borrow one to do a project. I was happy to share. I graduated high school and got a certificate in medical billing and a certification in home health care. I took a little bit of college, but my grades weren't too good. I had thought about becoming a teacher."

Edwards has big dreams for Ayanah, an ebullient girl whose Native American name is Bright Star. And she is lucky because help was nearby.

"AT 18 MONTHS, every child still has the potential to invent Facebook," says Sarah E. Walzer, chief executive officer of an extraordinary nonprofit called the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP). A former legal counsel in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Walzer is a slight, fast-talking woman in her early 50s, with flyaway graying brown hair and a gentle smile. She has devoted her career to trying to level the playing field for poor children.

In the PCHP program, she explains, literacy specialists make home visits to help parents and very young toddlers close the word gap—because by the time a child enters school, it may be too late to catch up.

"Here's a child on his first day of kindergarten," Walzer says. "His teacher tells the class, 'You can pick out a book from the shelf and take it back to your seat.' But this child has never held a book before. He doesn't know how to handle it, how to turn the pages. He doesn't know how to get pleasure from it. He's failing his first day of kindergarten."

From there it gets worse. "The data show that a child who is behind in kindergarten will be behind in third grade, behind in sixth grade, and at high risk of not completing high school," she says.

To address the lag, some states mandated pre-K for four-year-olds. But the low-income four-year-olds were ill-equipped for pre-K too. Federally funded programs like Head Start reached out to children as young as three, but—to the alarm of experts—even the three-year-olds were behind national standards.

Today, it's widely accepted that the best time to start engaging in verbal interaction—to share rhymes and songs and picture books—is at a child's birth. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently stated that advocacy for early reading would become part of all well-baby checkups.

"Our job is to get there before the word gap magnifies," Walzer says. To

***By the time
a child enters
school, it may be
too late to close
the 30-million-
word gap.***

put parents at ease, the early-literacy specialists often come from the communities in which they're working, and 25 percent of them are parent-graduates of the program. They visit up to twice a week for two years, with the idea of having fun together, using not only the books, puzzles, and toys provided by the program but also everything available. A visitor will demonstrate how to make sorting laundry a learning experience and how a trip to the grocery isn't really complete without naming fruits and vegetables, shapes and colors.

It's a simple strategy, and it works: "Children who go through our program graduate from high school at rates 20 percent higher than those of their national peer group," Walzer says. Currently the Parent-Child Home Program serves 7,000 families in 12 states. New York, where Tammy Edwards lives, is one of them.

IN 2010, Helen Fechter, a PCHP specialist who works within Edwards's school district, reached out to Tammy Edwards personally. One of Fechter's first contacts on the Poospatuck Reservation, Edwards had never heard of the program—nor of the importance of early language enrichment—

but she was open to learning more.

"Helen told me that introducing a child to reading at 18 months will help them going into school," Edwards says. "I had ordered a set of picture books for Ayanah but never took the time out to actually sit down with her. I was really happy to have to set a date to do it."

Edwards's experience confirms another of Walzer's observations: "The half hour the visitor spends with a parent and young child is a refuge. The visitor relays, 'No matter what the house looks like, no matter what's going on with the rest of your life, let's enjoy this

time of reading and playing with your beautiful child.'"

Edwards soon learned that her basic reading skills were more than adequate to meet her daughter's needs. "We have clients who cannot read at all," Walzer says. "We assure them that their knowledge of the world will enrich their child's experience. You can spend half an hour on two pages of a picture book, enjoying all the details. You can make up the story."

"Ayanah's first book was *Clifford the Big Red Dog*," Edwards says. "Oh my goodness, she loved that dog! She was 18 months old and had a favorite book. She still talks about that book. She's in Head Start now and doing

"
***A child who's
 behind in third
 grade has a
 higher risk of
 not completing
 high school.***
"

really well. She loves all books so much! If she sees a book she feels like reading, like the *Dora* the Explorer books, she just picks it up."

"I like *Dora!*" Ayanah agrees. "And Diego. Diego is *Dora's* cousin. *Dora* is a big girl like me. I like the *Frozen* book. I like books about frogs. I like books about the ones that have long necks, named giraffes. Also horses. Chickens. And birds. I like books about birds."

As Tammy Edwards began referring friends on the reservation to PCHP, more and more parents opened their doors. Helen Fechter became such a regular at Poospatuck that, today, as she drives through the village, everyone waves. "I feel like a celebrity," Fechter says.

To date, 23 families have participated in PCHP as a result of Edwards's endorsement. And when Ayanah graduated from the program, Edwards went through training to become an early-literacy specialist herself.

In November 2012, PCHP named her a Parent Literacy Champion and gave her a \$1,000 scholarship. Edwards plans to go back to school to earn her teaching certification.



RECENTLY, EDWARDS visited with two-and-a-half-year-old Jailah Overton and Jailah's mother, Shavon, to introduce a new book. Jailah was all dressed up in a gray-and-pink top, her round clean face glowed, and her hair had been tightly woven and braided with little white beads. Her mother couldn't stop smiling with pride and excitement as she sat down with her daughter for their lesson. Ayanah, now five, tagged along to help and chose one of her favorite books to share: *Are You My Mother?* by P. D. Eastman.

Jailah listened intently as Edwards read the classic plight of the baby bird

who hatches while his mother is off hunting for food. Off he treks in search of her, asking a dog, a kitten, a hen, a cow, and a steam shovel if any of them is his mother. Jailah looked captivated, probably as awed by the importance of this momentous half hour as by the page-turning plot.

“Are you my mother?’ he said to the cow,” read Edwards. “How could I be your mother?’ said the cow. ‘I am a cow.’” A little worried, Jailah glanced at her own mother for reassurance.

Suddenly Ayanah intervened, feeling she could do a better job of holding the book and turning the pages. Edwards smiled and read on.

“Just then, the mother came back to the tree!” she read with excitement.

“She came back!” echoed Jailah’s mother. Jailah scrunched up her little face in glee.

“Look, who is that?” asked Edwards, drawing Jailah back to the book.

“That’s the mommy bird—that’s her mommy!” explained Ayanah.

“Yes, I know who you are,’ said the baby bird,” read Edwards. Jailah gazed up into the faces of Edwards, Ayanah, and her mother and then

back to the page, taking in all the great news. “You are my mother!”

At this, Jailah, overcome, collapsed sideways into her mother’s lap.

AT THE END of the two-year program, Walzer says, some parents grow anxious. A parent will say to a home visitor, “I don’t mind if you don’t bring any more books or puzzles, but can you please keep coming?” The visitor will say, “We still have some time left, but you need to know that you have done all of this, not me; you are the one who has been educating your child.”

“Pretty early on,” Walzer says,

“usually within the first week or two, when the child comes out with a new word or completes a rhyme, a parent will say, ‘I had no idea my child could be so smart.’ That’s the moment that changes the whole trajectory because when parents have high expectations, their children tend to succeed. The parent starts saying, ‘You are so smart, you’re going to graduate from high school. You are going to college.’” **R**



SEND US YOUR PICS!

The Reader’s Digest Foundation is proud to announce a two-year \$500,000 grant to the Parent-Child Home Program that will kick off a national partnership to celebrate reading and improve children’s literacy.

You can help raise awareness with a simple snapshot of you reading to the children in your life! For details, go to rd.com/readtogether.

Laugh Lines

QUIP OR TREAT!

When it comes to candy bars, the term *fun-sized* is misleading. There is nothing fun about your candy bar being $\frac{1}{8}$ the size of a regular bar. You should call them what they are: “disappointment-sized.”

JIMMY KIMMEL

People always ask kids the same stupid questions. “What are *you* supposed to be?” I’m supposed to be done by now. You wanna move it along with the 3 Musketeers?

JERRY SEINFELD

I used to love the candy Nerds, but I stopped eating them when I realized that for me, it was basically cannibalism.

ROB O'REILLY

“Pretend to be someone you’re not, and receive candy.” Quick: Halloween or Valentine’s Day?

@AARONFULLERTON

I’m on the Paleo diet, except I’m the cave-man who discovered Snickers.

@REXHUPPKE

My parents used to stuff me with candy when I was a kid. M&M’s, Jujubes, SweeTarts. I don’t think they wanted a child; I think they wanted a piñata.

WENDY LIEBMAN



Hollywood gets police work completely and utterly wrong. Here's what it's really like to do this job.

CONFESSIONS OF A COP

AS TOLD TO ROBERT EVANS FROM CRACKED.COM

People Are Serial Liars

Ninety-nine percent of everything people say to me is untrue. The most common: "These aren't my pants." We hear it during virtually every case in which someone gets shaken down and drugs or guns are found. Apparently there are ownerless pants just floating around, and people grab them off a communal pile before leaving the house.

We're Cautious in Some Neighborhoods for a Reason

I always imagined it was because those places were littered with armed gangsters, but the reasons are much more complicated. I was cruising about one

night and saw this drunken guy riding a horse, clopping into oncoming traffic. I turned on my lights and tried to pull him over. He galloped away on horseback, headed for *that* apartment building. Our protocols dictate any officer entering that building must be accompanied by at least three other officers.

He stopped the horse inside, possibly assuming no officer would follow him for drunk driving a horse. I leaped out of the car to grab the rider. The guy, in keeping with the old joke, immediately assured me, "The horse is sober."

But the guy was not, and wacky circumstances don't grant you license to endanger yourself and others while



under the influence. I knew I wasn't getting horse registration, so I started to book him, at which point this little old lady came up and asked why I was arresting Horse Guy. I began to explain that he was drunk driving and that horses do count as vehicles under the transportation code, when some

random dude ran up and punched the old lady in the head.

Punching little old people is a felony, so my partner and I chased the assailant through the complex. He vanished somewhere in the labyrinth, so I made my way back to the car, hoping maybe the lady knew who

he was. But she had disappeared too. As had the drunken rider. The horse, however, had been left behind. You would not believe how many phone calls I had to make to get that horse back to its rightful owner.

Kicking in Doors Doesn't Look like It Does in the Movies

I have kicked down way more doors than I ever thought I would. The movies get that whole action completely wrong. At no point should you ever stand directly in front of the door. Doors aren't bulletproof, and if some bad guy behind the door hears you kicking at it, he's going to shoot.

The goal is to stand off to one side with your back to the wall so that only your leg is in front. Then give it a good donkey kick, right under the knob.

One time, I kicked a guy's door. Nothing. We tried a sledgehammer as an impromptu ram. Nothing. We borrowed the fire department's pry bars. Nothing. The firefighters broke out the *Jaws of Life*, and we peeled the entire wall of his apartment away to get inside, only to see that all three hinges had been welded shut and the door locks had been welded shut, and he'd also welded a metal pole to a brick of steel behind the door and mounted that pole into the floor.

And after all of that? We didn't charge him with anything. (We were there to stop him from harming himself, and fortifying your home isn't a crime.)

The Sight of Police Lights Turns People into Idiots

Myth: Cops use their emergency lights whenever they want, often as an excuse to break traffic laws. Truth: Police vehicles log when an officer turns on the lights, so a cop abusing this will have to explain to an annoyed fleet sergeant why he keeps running down his batteries for no good reason.

While you'll often hear complaints of police speeding just for the heck of it, in my hometown in Texas, protocol sets our maximum speed at 80 miles an hour. When we turn on our lights to get to an emergency, everyday commuters—who routinely exceed our maximum set speed limit—pass us on the highway.

In theory, a police car with lights flashing should be able to clear a path. Everybody knows to pull off the road, or at least clear a lane, when he sees lights and hears sirens. But some people see that left lane open up, and they rush over there, completely oblivious to the cop car racing toward them (yes, a lot of wrecks happen this way).

Even more puzzling are the accidents that happen when the cop's vehicle is sitting still with the lights on. Despite the fact that our lights are carefully designed to be bright and annoying enough to get even the most jaded commuter to pay attention, people constantly crash into parked, lit-up police cars.

A Search Is the Slowest, Most Intense Game of Hide-and-Seek

I have the legs of an Oompa-Loompa, but chasing people is a surprisingly awesome part of the job. There's a primitive part of the brain that makes us love chasing. If you're a businessman or a barista, and you see some dude running down the street, you can't chase him. But it's socially acceptable for cops, and it's just the best.

The slow, tedious version of this is a building search: We check every possible hiding spot big enough to house a human. Once we got a call from federal agents guarding an unnamed bigwig in my city. Someone had left a door ajar, and we had to go room by room, opening every cabinet, closet, and locker. It turned out that a janitor had left the door open by accident when he went home. We were still clearing the place when he showed up for work the next day.

I've found suspects hiding everywhere, from water heater recesses in the maintenance closet to ice chests in the break room. Here's a tip: When

hiding from the police, choose the nastiest place you can imagine. Dry-clean-only uniforms are a total pain (politely ask your cleaner if he'll get out blood, feces, or fleas—see how that goes), so cops don't really want to get disgusting unless they have to. It'll definitely cut down your odds of being found. I've gotten fleas twice from nasty places I searched.

But if you are caught, surrender immediately. Procedure demands that we get you out of there. I've had to Taser people to get them out from under Dumpsters. One guy tried to lock himself in his car, which could have led to a SWAT call. We preempted that by dispersing pepper spray in the AC vents.

I Love Calls About Wild Animals

We once got a call that two men—one in boxers, the other a Speedo—were bothering some peacocks. Now, I have experience with big birds, so I suspected this would be a self-correcting issue. Sure enough, a new call came in: "Two naked males being attacked and chased by feral birds." **R**

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LIFE OFF THE GRID

RadioShack has stayed in business with a name combining something no one buys anymore and a type of building no one wants to go into.

@JELVISWEINSTEIN

My Louisiana

GHOST *Story*

BY ANDREW EVANS

FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

I **N AN UNNAMED HOUSE** in an unnamed town in a state named after King Louis XIV, I met a ghost.

We were never introduced properly—in fact, the housekeeper denied any and all ghosts the minute I walked in.

“It’s not haunted—at least, I’ve never seen anything,” she announced as she led me through the grand entryway and into a hallway dressed up with fall flower arrangements. The century-old house was massive—one huge square room after another, and each one decorated with antique parlor furniture, large potted plants, heavy-framed mirrors and paintings, and crystal chandeliers that hung like glowing upside-down wedding dresses.

It was a beautiful Southern mansion that, like so many in Louisiana, now functioned as a luxurious bed-and-breakfast. The housekeeper showed me my



suite for the night—it had a tremendous king-size bed smothered in a pile of pillows and more white lace and satin than a royal christening.

“You’ll be staying alone in the house,” the housekeeper added. “There are no other guests tonight.”

“As long as you say it’s not haunted,” I joked.

“No, it’s not haunted,” she reassured me. “Oh, there are stories, but nobody’s ever seen anything.” She paused. “I’ve never seen anything.”

I asked her to tell me more about the “stories,” and out of the housekeeper’s mouth tumbled one Grade A Southern ghost story. Apparently, the Cajun family who had once owned the house reported seeing the ghost of a little girl who, when she was alive, used to get locked up in the wooden closet under the stairs. Trapped in the dark, she would scream and kick against the door, a habit that she carried on into the next life.

Despite closing that door every night, the Cajun family would always find it wide-open in the morning. Eventually, they began leaving toys inside the closet at night to appease the unhappy little ghost.

“Last year we had a Halloween party in the house. Guess what my costume was.” She was suddenly cheerful again. “I dressed up as the little girl from under the stairs.”

I think I could have handled just about anything—if the housekeeper had told me that someone had

hanged himself in the foyer, or that the mansion was under some swamp curse, or that it was built on top of some old French cemetery. But no—instead she was describing a bothered little girl ghost trapped in a closet with an armful of old-fashioned toys. Now, that was creepy.

“Oh, you’re gonna hear things tonight. You will.” She laughed nervously. And then she left. I was now in the house alone. It was evening.

A FEW LIGHTS had been left on in some of the rooms, and I did not feel the need to start walking around the huge house to turn them off. Instead I made my way to my first-floor bedroom and then into the bathroom, where I changed for bed and brushed my teeth.

That’s when I felt it—that dreadful sensation of being watched. I felt coldness on the back of my neck, and my spine tingled. I stared at my face in the mirror, but there was nothing else there—no apparitions or vague reflections. I left the room and then shut the glass-paneled bathroom door, certain that I was simply scaring myself.

I sat down at the table, opened my laptop, and began answering e-mail. It was a quarter till 11, and the glow from my computer pulled me away from any fears and kept me focused on the mundane realities of our digital lives.

At eleven o'clock, the noises started.
Sh-sh-sh, sh-sh-sh-sh.

A pair of feet shuffled across the bathroom floor. I turned toward the door I had just closed. It was still closed—the only entrance into that room. The noise repeated itself—a pair of feet shuffling across the floor, then stopping right at the other side of the bathroom door.

My fingers froze on the keyboard, and I tried to think rationally. My mind went through all the things that might be making the noise—someone else entering the house, some (very large) wild animal scurrying about—but no, those had been feet patting along the floor.

That's when I crawled into the giant bed and took up my defensive position, armed pitifully with my cell phone and laptop.

At midnight, I heard a loud thump upstairs. Then another, followed by another. Soon there was clatter all about—dull thuds, a few bangs, followed by the sound of someone walking around on the second floor. I remained frozen in my bed, tweeting my terror out into the great digital cloud: "There are strange noises coming from upstairs."

Yes, I was terrified. I hadn't taken the housekeeper seriously, and now it

was nearly midnight, and I was stuck in a giant bed in a giant mansion that had suddenly come alive with strange noises.

No, they were not simply "old house" noises that old houses make. There was no air-conditioning or heat running. It was not simply the humid air turning cooler and the house settling back into its foundations, as many Twitter followers tried to explain to me.

A few minutes later, I heard the sound of someone running down the stairs. Whatever it was had joined me on the first floor. I stared at the bedroom door, then reverted to Facebook.

I chatted with friends in different countries, explaining my dilemma—

that I was wide awake in a house that was most likely haunted by a traumatized little girl and that honestly, this was the kind of adventure on which I'd be happy to take a pass.

Eventually, the footsteps went back up the stairs, and the clatter intensified. I wanted to laugh—but couldn't—as I read my Twitter friends arguing about the existence of ghosts; all the while I was listening to what sounded like bowling balls rolling around on the floor above me and doors slamming shut.

Via social media, I began to get



***I heard
the sound
of someone
running.
Whatever it
was had joined
me on the
first floor.***

a flood of real-time advice on how to deal with my real-time haunting. Some said to confront the “thing,” others said to call the police and report intruders, some said to pray to St. Michael, and others said St. Joseph was better with this sort of thing. The Hindus in India said to burn incense. My friend who’s a nun told me to leave the house immediately.

Eventually my body grew so tired that I lay down, wrapped up like a mummy in my blankets. The house became silent once more, and for several hours I listened to the quiet, still terrified but hopeful that the worst was over. All I had to do was make it until morning.

I AWOKE AT AROUND 4 A.M. to the sound of crystal glasses clinking against crystal. Then somebody was stacking china.

I thought of the Cajun family who had lived here, how they had appeased the ghost with toys. I had no toys to offer—the only thing I had in my bag was a small harmonica that I had recently purchased. For a second I was relieved, as if I had something positive to offer the ghost, but then I realized that if I suddenly heard a harmonica playing in the darkness, I would probably die of cardiac arrest.

And so I stayed in bed until morning, not sleeping and not moving. I waited until I heard the housekeeper



arrive and begin preparing breakfast in the kitchen. Only then did I crawl out of bed.

The housekeeper acted nonchalant. She gave me some food and chatted about the weather until I finally interrupted. I told her what had happened—all the different sounds that I had heard and how I had been kept awake for most of the night.

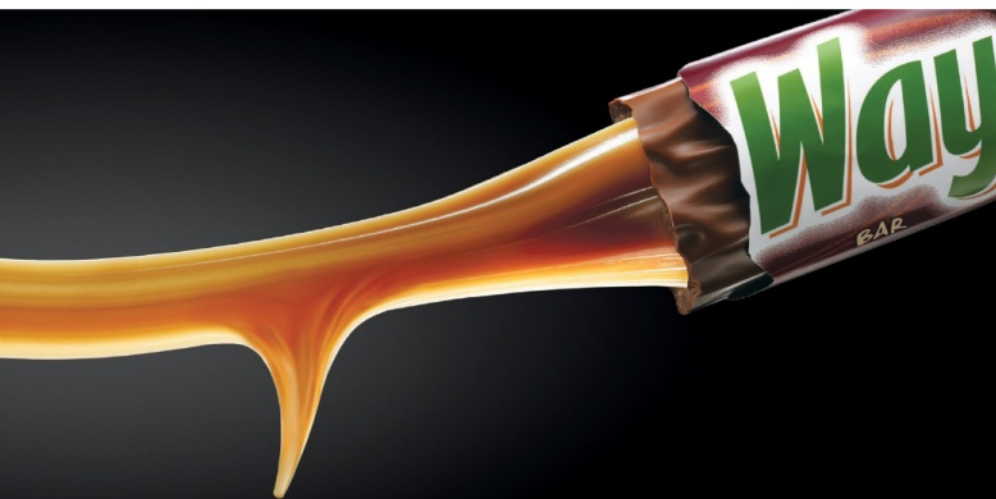
“You know, my son won’t even set foot in this house,” she confessed. “He’ll come to the door but won’t ever cross into it.” As a teenager, he played with the owner’s son inside the house and had one creepy experience that

he still won’t discuss, and that has kept him away ever since. The housekeeper also told me about her little niece talking alone upstairs, chatting with some unseen friend.

And yet she would never admit that she had any proof of anything. She needed the house not to be haunted, which made sense to me. If I worked all day in a big old Southern mansion, I would not want it to be haunted either. **R**

Andrew Evans is a travel writer. He reports live from around the world for *National Geographic Traveler* via @WheresAndrew.

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This Halloween get into the Chocolate, Caramel and Nougat.



BOOK BONUS

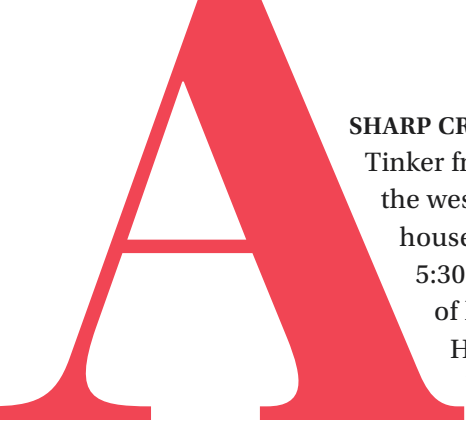
"We buried the pain tonight," Coach Nick Saban declared at the 2012 national championship.

After a tornado devastated Tuscaloosa, a coach and his team became the lifeline for an entire town

The Storm & The Tide

BY LARS ANDERSON ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK *THE STORM AND THE TIDE*





SHARP CRACK of thunder startled Carson Tinker from his sleep. He peered through the west-facing window of his wood-frame house in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It was 5:30 a.m., April 27, 2011, and flashes of lightning fractured the dark sky. He watched mesmerized as the bolts danced and skittered.

The storm passed quickly, though, and soon the air outside turned quiet and calm. Carson, a 21-year-old junior at the University of Alabama, began his morning routine. He left his house, a four-bedroom rental at 611 25th Street, and headed for campus, where he attended class, and then met up with his girlfriend of 11 months, Ashley Harrison, a senior honors student. The two had been introduced the previous spring, and Carson's immediate thought was that he had no chance with this girl, a lovely brown-eyed brunette whose soft smile made him weak in the knees. But soon afterward, he asked her out, and it wasn't long before the two of them were constantly at each other's side.

Ashley and Carson were in love, and they talked of a future together. She prophesied to Carson that in January, on the day before they would celebrate her 23rd birthday, she would watch him play for the national college football championship in New Orleans. She was a fan, if not an aficionado—when Carson told

Ashley that he was a long snapper on the team, she had called her father in Texas and asked, "Dad, what's a long snapper?"—and she would be there in the Superdome as Carson helped lead the Alabama Crimson Tide to the title. That was Ashley Harrison's vision.

After their classes on April 27, 2011, they drove to Carson's house, where they spent the afternoon building a flower bed in the front yard. The sky had turned gray again, but there was no rain. After taking a shower, Carson returned to the living room and saw that Ashley and his two roommates—Alan Estis and Payton Holley—were fixated on the TV screen. A weatherman declared that a tornado was bearing down on Tuscaloosa.

Just after five o'clock, Carson and Payton stepped onto the porch and searched for a funnel cloud; all they saw was a darkening sky. Seconds later, Carson's cell phone rang. It was his grandfather Jim Cartledge, calling from Hoover, Alabama, about 50 miles northeast of Tuscaloosa. "Carson, you need to take cover now!"

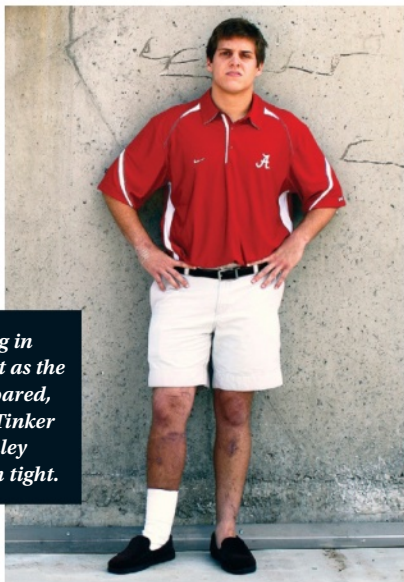
"Yes, sir," Carson replied.

The young men dashed inside. What they didn't see was the danger lurking four miles to the west. The most powerful long-track tornado ever to descend on Alabama was on the ground—a huge twister with winds of 190 mph, roaring toward Tuscaloosa. Quickly the four students, with the boys' two dogs, wedged themselves into a closet. Carson wrapped his six-foot-one, 220-pound frame around Ashley.

"We're going to be OK," he whispered into her ear.

Five miles away, in eastern Tuscaloosa County, electrician Bob Dowling and his family scanned the skyline from the front door of their mobile home. Dozens of their neighbors were running to an underground shelter, located in the middle of Chalet Ridge Mobile Home Park. At that moment, 13-year-old Marilyn Dowling raised her right hand to the sky. Bob looked up and froze in astonishment: A van was spinning in the air 300 yards above them—a van!—soaring past like some Hollywood special effect. Then, lowering his eyes, he saw, for the first time, the twister. It was only a quarter mile away. Worse, it was hugging the ground, charging directly into the valley where they stood, and he could see that they didn't have time to reach the shelter. "We're in big trouble!" he yelled. "Let's move to the laundry room—now!"

Cowering in the closet as the winds roared, Carson Tinker held Ashley Harrison tight.



Cowering in the closet, Carson Tinker held Ashley tight. As the winds roared, they could hear the walls creak. "I'm scared," Ashley said, trembling.

"It's going to be OK," he shouted above the noise as the house began to disintegrate. He wrapped his arms around Ashley like she was the most precious thing on earth. "It's going to be OK, Ashley," he shouted again.

But it wasn't. Seconds later, Carson was sucked out of the closet, catapulted into the air like a stone from a slingshot, and thrown 65 yards into a field across the street. He blacked out, concussed. When he opened his eyes moments later, he didn't recognize anything. His house had utterly disappeared; there was now just a big pile of

indistinguishable rubble on the other side of the road. And Ashley was gone.

In the sudden perfect silence characteristic of the aftermath of a tornado, Carson stood and wandered around the field, looking for Ashley. He had a broken right wrist, gashes in his head, and a severe cut on his right ankle. Blood covered his face. His body moved in slow motion, as if in a desperate dream. “Ashley, where are you?” he screamed. “Ashley!”

At around 7 a.m., Carson, still in his bloodstained clothes and with tiny fragments of glass in his hair, awoke in a private hospital room, chaos still filling the halls outside. His mom, in tears, was at his bedside. He immediately asked if they’d found Ashley. She told him that Ashley was gone.

“No, she can’t be,” Carson said. “You’re wrong. You’re wrong.” His mother gently

explained that Ashley’s body had been found, her neck broken. Carson cried until he had no tears left.

The next day, Carson demanded to attend the memorial service for Ashley. But the doctors, citing his head trauma and the potential for infection in his ankle wound, refused to release him from the hospital. Carson would not relent. He kept begging and badgering until the medical staff finally agreed. With his family at his side, he was strapped onto a rolling bed and wheeled into the back of an ambulance, which carried him to where Ashley lay in her casket. His bed was tilted up so that he could see her. Looking at her through watery eyes, Carson softly offered his everlasting goodbye to the girl he’d been certain he would marry one day. It was

a moment so profoundly painful that he would never want to speak of it—or think of it—again.

Carson's house, on the right side of the street, was reduced to rubble. He was thrown into the field on the left.



It was just after daybreak on April 28, the Day After. Nick Saban, the already famous coach of the University of Alabama's exalted football team, the Crimson Tide, had spent the early hours at home with his daughter and her sorority sisters, who were desperately trying to contact Ashley Harrison, not realizing she had died. At first light, Saban drove to the football offices to meet with Thad Turnipseed, director of athletic facilities. "We've got to do something," Saban said. "I'm going to change clothes, and then we're going out there to do whatever we can."

The two men filled the back of Turnipseed's white pickup truck with 20 cases of Gatorade and bottled water that had been left over from spring practice. With Saban riding shotgun, Turnipseed drove to the Ferguson Center, the hub of student activity in the center of campus. More than 300 scared, confused students had gathered outside the building. Upon

seeing their anxious faces, Saban stepped out of the truck and climbed to the top of a small brick wall. The students fell silent, stunned by the sudden appearance of their beloved coach.

"Your time will come," Saban began, "when you will be able to help and volunteer. We're going to need everybody's effort for a long time to get our city back on its feet. Life is all about challenges, and now we're facing a really big one. But working together, we will get through this. Remember, we have to do this together as one team."

The tornado had missed the campus, but less than a mile away, Turnipseed and Saban discovered a wasteland. Nearing 15th and McFarland, their truck rolled close to the intact home of Saban's 24-year-old son, Nicholas; just one short block away, every structure had been obliterated. It was then—on this soft, blue-sky morning—that Saban fully comprehended the terrible capriciousness of the Tuscaloosa



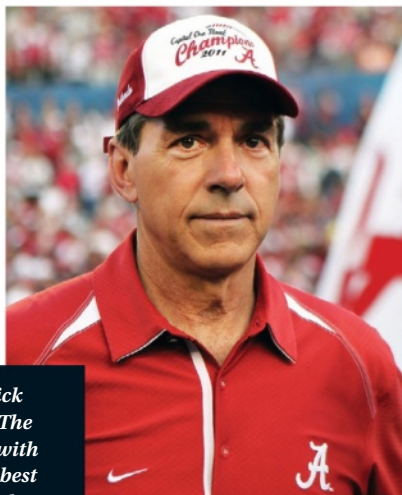
tornado. The final death toll from the storm would be reported as 53, including six students.

Saban understood that he was now more than a football coach. He was the person whom others looked to for assurance, the one people wanted to tell their story to. His wife, Terry, said that the days after the tornado were the first time in his professional life that he stopped thinking about football.

Nick Saban stood in front of his team in the large recruiting room at Bryant-Denny Stadium, the only space with electricity where the coaches and players could meet. It was two days after the storm and the first time the team had been together since the tornado. As the players ate a catered meal, Saban's voice was emphatic: "I know you all have seen a lot of things in the past few days, and if you have any issues, come see us. I've found through the years that professional help can get you through major things. But we've also got a community to support. We can't just be a team for them on Saturdays. The fans are with us in the best times, and we have to be with them in the worst of times. Just by your presence and being with them, you can help people."

After the meeting, Saban went to the hospital to try to comfort Carson Tinker. He had no magic words—they simply didn't exist—but he emphasized

Coach Nick Saban: "The fans are with us in the best times, and we have to be with them in the worst of times."



to his player that he wasn't alone. "You have to have gratitude for being alive," the coach said, gathering Carson's hand in his. "We are here for you, all of us, everyone on the team and the entire university." More than 50 of Carson's teammates and coaches would visit him at the hospital.

Football player Barrett Jones was out on the streets at the first blush of sunlight, some 36 hours after the tornado had struck. He was riding shotgun in a souped-up golf cart known as a Gator, with a chain saw lying across his big thighs. His younger brother, Harrison, drove him block to block; wherever they found a downed tree that had barricaded a street or cleaved a house, the six-foot-five, 305-pound left tackle would yank the chain saw to

life and go to work, slicing the trunks and branches into movable pieces. As the brothers moved through the destruction, a steady flow of ambulances rolled by, carrying the dead away.

Barrett soon organized a group of his teammates to help. For three 12-hour days, the football players were fixtures in the hardest-hit areas, attacking the downed trees like a pack of Paul Bunyans. "It was not the textbook, safest thing to do, but we felt like we had to do something meaningful to help," he said a few days later. "Alabama football is just so big here. Next season we're not going to play for ourselves, I promise you; we're going to play for Tuscaloosa. That will be the biggest motivation we've ever had, to do something special on the field for this town." Saban's mandate had become a mantra.

Ground was broken at 4214 5th Street Northeast in July, less than three months after the tornado destroyed the Dowlings' trailer. The family had survived without injury, and now Habitat for Humanity was building a new house for them, with help from Nick Saban's charity, Nick's Kids. Two weeks after the first shovels dug into the dirt, Bob Dowling's wife, Dana, greeted the fresh-faced college kids who'd come to volunteer. Her eyes were drawn to a hulking fellow who looked as if he could single-handedly lift a small house and set it down on the site. D. J. Fluker, it turned out, was

a lineman for the Tide, and seven other Alabama players were with him, including Barrett Jones.

Over the next six weeks, the players would return again and again. So would members of the gymnastics team, along with rowers, soccer players, and scores of other athletes. The female Crimson Tide cheerleaders would stand on the shoulders of the male cheerleaders to paint the higher reaches of the single-story structure.

On the first day of September, two days before Alabama's home opener against Kent State, a dedication was held at the Dowlings' new home. With Saban and several of his players standing in the front yard, Pastor Kelvin Croom of College Hill Baptist Church spoke to the gathering. "I anticipate the Alabama nation coming together," he said, "and remembering how good God was to bring us through such a powerful storm. We, of course, will remember those who lost their lives. They will always be a part of us. Healing has to occur. What is a better way to heal than with Alabama football?"

It is visible from nearly ten miles away, rising above the Tuscaloosa skyline the way the Colosseum towered over ancient Rome. Bryant-Denny Stadium is a place so holy to Alabama fans that hundreds—perhaps thousands—have secretly scattered the ashes of loved ones on its grass field. From the highest reaches of the sold-out stadium, fans who'd come for the

season opener could look out and see clearly the long scar of destruction from four months earlier, the stark detritus of lives shattered and painful evidence that the rebuilding of the city had only just begun.

Inside the locker room, Saban delivered a simple message. “This is when it all starts,” the coach told his team. “How do you want to be remembered? Play hard, and play smart. Let’s do this for our city, our state, and our fans.”

The teams ran onto the field for the opening kickoff. Photos of the starters flashed on the scoreboard; when the picture of Carson Tinker appeared, the student section roared its loudest cheer of the afternoon, and it continued for 15 seconds, rocking the stadium. It wasn’t just a salute to the athlete in recognition of all that he had endured, though it certainly was that; it was also a cheer for Tuscaloosa, a signal that the people and the city were on the mend.

From their seats, Bob and Dana Dowling hugged at the sight of Carson Tinker. Dana’s smile never left her face during the three-and-a-half-hour game, relishing a dominating performance by some of the young men who had helped build her house. Alabama won 48–7. It felt to the Dowlings like they’d regained something they’d feared they might never have again: the joy of feeling normal.

For the Dowling family, like so many others in T-Town, the games were a kind of group-therapy session, a chance to come together and release their emotions, to soak themselves in the sweet ecstasy of Alabama football.

On December 14, two weeks before leaving for New Orleans and the Bowl Championship Series national title game, Barrett Jones sat in the football offices. The Alabama–Louisiana State rematch had moved squarely into the hot center of the national sports

spotlight. Earlier in the season, on November 5, LSU had beaten Alabama in overtime. In addition to the usual media

inquiries—How will this game be different from the first? Can Alabama protect its quarterback from the fierce LSU rush?—everyone was asking about the Tuscaloosa tornado and the impact it might have had on the team. By now, the players had become not only passionate about the subject but also increasingly articulate.

Barrett Jones explained again what those days after the storm had meant to this championship quest. “When we as a team went out there into the community of Tuscaloosa and did everything we could to lend a hand in the recovery from the tornado, it definitely made us closer,” he said. “It gave us the opportunity to know each other

“***This is when it all starts,***
Saban said. “How do you
want to be remembered?”

in a different way. It strengthened our bond as teammates. And it definitely made us want to do something special on the field for our town."

With 4:44 remaining in the fourth quarter, Alabama was up 15-0; all those points had been made on field goals. Then the Tide scored the only touchdown of the game, clinching the title. As the clock ran out, the scoreboard showed the shutout: Alabama 21, LSU 0. Carson Tinker gazed in the direction of Darlene and David Harrison, Ashley's parents, who sat in the Superdome stands. Ashley would have turned 23 at midnight—only 90 minutes away—and she'd promised Carson that this game, this victory, would be the beginning of her birthday party. Accompanied now by a reporter, Carson walked along the field, tears in his eyes, his mind on Ashley.

"There's not a day goes by that I don't think of her," he said as he looked up at the still-cheering fans in the stands. Moments later, a few players grabbed Carson, hugging him hard and bellowing, "This one was for you!"

Saban and his team crammed into the tight locker room. They had won their second national title in three seasons, but this one was different, and they all knew it. Saban raised his right hand, and the locker room fell perfectly silent. The coach waited, his eyes slowly scanning one by one the faces around him, and then he finally declared, "We buried the pain tonight."

The players showered, filed out of the stadium, passed a swarm of cheering Alabama fans held back by police barricades, and climbed onto the team buses. Darlene and David Harrison stood in the crowd, wanting a last glimpse of the team, to feel connected one more time to this emotional night. Darlene checked the time: It was a few minutes before 12:00. The Harrisons had determined earlier that they wanted to be by themselves at the moment Ashley would have turned 23, so they turned together and walked away.

At exactly midnight, Darlene's cell phone chimed with a text message. It was from Carson.

Happy Birthday Ashley, it said. **R**

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RIDDLE ME THIS ...

QUESTION: What word begins with an *E*, ends with an *E*, but has only one letter?

ANSWER: *Envelope.*

He used to be a man who rarely smiled. Then something astonishing happened.

The Pope Who Burns With

Joy

BY AUSTEN IVEREIGH



AUSTEN IVEREIGH's *biography of Pope Francis, The Great Reformer*, will be published in November by Henry Holt.

WE MET FOR ONLY A MINUTE in June 2013, a few months after his surprise election, and although he had his hand on my arm the whole time, he didn't speak. My wife thinks it was because I didn't let him get a word in edgewise.

But the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics doesn't normally say much, if he has nothing particular to say; and anyhow, he was worn out. His breathing was labored—he'd nearly died in lung surgery when he was 21—and there was sweat on his forehead, a little. He was a man of 76 who had just spent



two hours under the sun in St. Peter's Square greeting and hugging those he calls God's holy faithful people. On occasion—such as the time he kissed the man appallingly disfigured by neurofibromatosis—the image is so tender that newspapers put it on their front pages, which is not what they used to do with popes.

The point is that the front-row-Wednesday-audience-ticket people like me come last these days. We're not Pope Francis's focus. It's the disabled and the sick and the old and the homeless whom he puts first, just like in the Gospel.

Yet Pope Francis was totally present during that minute, listening closely to every word of my Spanish. And it was enough to get a sense of what people who meet him talk about—this thing, this quality, that comes off him. The archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, nailed it when he met him a few days after I did. The Pope, he said afterward, was “humanity on fire.” That's it. If joy were a flame, you'd need to be made of asbestos not to get burned up by Pope Francis.

In the Pope's native city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, this joy astonishes even the people who knew him best. Sure, his smile has always been delightful, but it didn't come out much during his 12 years as cardinal.

He didn't like cameras, hardly ever gave interviews, and was famous for his austerity and shyness. You'd never find him at a dinner party, and although the slum dwellers and the hookers and the anti-trafficking syndicates knew him well, he could get on and off buses and subways without

being recognized. His words were always elegant, and they stabbed home, but they were delivered in a funereal, hushed voice. Now look at him, they say in Buenos Aires. You can't believe it. He's a day on the beach.

Here's what happened. It's not a secret,

because he's told it to a number of people, including the evangelical pastor in Buenos Aires who told me; but not many know. On the evening of his election, March 13, 2013, under Michelangelo's great frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, the cardinals' votes had gone his way—past the 77 he needed to be elected—and he was asked if he accepted. “Yes,” he said, “even though I am a great sinner.” To a subsequent question, he said he would take the name Francis, after the poor man of Assisi. It was all done confidently, without a moment of doubt, because he knew this was his task now, his mission.

But after vesting in the white papal soutane and starting down the long corridor toward the balcony of the

“
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 as cardinal in
 Argentina.***”



*Pope Francis in
St. Peter's Square,
March 2014*

loggia of St. Peter's to show himself to the world, he was suddenly beset by doubt and darkness. Providentially, his predecessor, Benedict XVI, had modified the procedures to allow the new Pope to pray in the Pauline Chapel before going out on the balcony. There, with his friend the Brazilian cardinal Cláudio Hummes kneeling by his side, Jorge Mario Bergoglio had an experience of light and freedom that banished the dark feelings and that has never left him since.

The director of Vatican TV, who was following the Pope with a camera, has confirmed all of this. Monsignor Dario Viganò said that when Pope Francis entered the chapel, he looked as if the whole weight of the world was on his

shoulders, but when he left, he was a different man, as he is now. "It's the grace of the office," Pope Francis tells Argentine friends who ask him why he's changed.

I was on the roof of a convent overlooking the square that night, commentating for the British TV channel Sky News. I would have been as flummoxed as the other pundits who hadn't had Cardinal Bergoglio on their lists had it not been for a tip-off from a cardinal too old to vote, who had seen him emerge as *papabile* in the cardinals' pre-conclave gatherings. "If it's a short conclave," was the message that reached me, "it could be Bergoglio." So I had a few minutes to prepare some points (76-year-old Jesuit; humble,

man of the poor; runner-up in previous conclave—that kind of thing), but all the while, I kept thinking, Wow. They’ve elected an Argentine.

I knew his country. Twenty years ago, I lived in Buenos Aires, researching a thesis on the Church and politics. I learned to love this captivating and infuriating city, its people and its rhythms, its culture and history and music; and in time, my Spanish sprouted local inflections and colorful idioms.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio isn’t just an Argentine but a *porteño*—from the port city of Buenos Aires—who sucks the green smoky tea called *maté* through a gourd and metal straw and is crazy for the plucky San Lorenzo football team: When he was ten, he witnessed with his dad the amazing run of goals scored by René “the Egg” Pontoni. He loves tango and *milongas* and the nostalgic cowherd poems of the 19th century, with their lament for a vanishing frontier. When he was active in the Jesuit order, he taught for two years at a high school and managed to invite the great short-story teller Jorge Luis Borges—who at that stage could barely see but was entering his prime—to tell the kids about gaucho poetry. Need I go on? The Pope is as *porteño* as a couple

sliding to an accordion down on Corrientes Avenue.

So I felt this strange connection with the smiling figure in white who emerged on the balcony that rain-cooled night in Rome, who bowed his head and asked for our prayers. And that sense only increased the next morning, when I watched the message he live-streamed back home, to the folk outside his cathedral on the Plaza de Mayo. On the balcony, he had spoken in accented Italian; but now out came this lilt-ing, colloquial *porteño*—think of a pope speaking Noo Joisy or Brooklyn, and you’ll get the idea.

“
***It’s a strange
 kind of grief:
 Your friend, your
 spiritual father,
 went to Rome
 to elect a pope
 and got elected
 himself.***”

His gentle message asked them to care for one another, not to rub one another the wrong way. But he used a colloquial Argentinism—“don’t take anyone’s skin off”—that comes from the days before refrigeration plants, when *gauchos* flayed the cattle and just left the carcasses. It seemed odd to think of a pope speaking like that. And as each day went by, as he wooed the world, I became more and more anxious to know his past. Then came that minute’s meeting in June—a Canadian cardinal had got me the tickets—when I realized I could make this Argentine’s past intelligible to English speakers.

In October last year, armed with a

book contract, I was back in Buenos Aires, spending weeks interviewing those who knew him: the Jesuits, the parish priests, and the bishops; the rabbis and the imams and the pastors; the philosophers and the politicians, the migrant slum dwellers and the war veterans. I even had my hair cut at his barber's. Sometimes, taking Line A of the subway—which used to carry him from the Plaza de Mayo, where he lived in the diocesan offices, to his home barrio of Flores—I imagined him sitting opposite me, head cocked as he listened to someone's hope or anxiety.

Some of the most moving interviews were with those who knew him well, who said goodbye to him at the start of 2013. He had laughingly reassured them there was no risk, that he was too old, that he'd be back for the Easter liturgies. He never came

back. But nor did he die or disappear. He was on billions of TV screens, in white—gone yet not gone. It's a strange kind of grief: Your friend, your spiritual father, went to Rome to elect a pope and got elected himself. His lawyer friend Alicia was in a bar at the time of that shock and burst into tears. "He's my friend," she told the bar, by way of explanation.

There are two keys to Pope Francis. One is that you can't eradicate poverty except by loving the poor. The other is that you can't love the poor if you cling to stuff—your schemes and your ideas—and that if you can let go, you can let God be God. That's what he was showing that day in the square. It's why he didn't need to say much. And it's why I didn't need more than a minute with him to be set on fire. **R**



CORPORATE TIME EQUIVALENTS

- Just a sec = 5 minutes
- Just a minute = 10 minutes
- No more than 5 minutes = 1 hour
- Quick meeting = 3 hours
- Could use a hand = 1 week
- Cool little project = 6 endless months
- Interesting opportunity = 2 years
- Job = crap, has it really been X years?
- Let's revisit this later = never shall we speak of this again

From **MARCO KAYE**, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*

That's Outrageous!

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

HELPLESSNESS is defined by slipping a dollar into the office vending machine, only to watch your Twix get stuck on the coils. That's what happened to an Iowa man. But unlike the rest of us, he had a forklift at his disposal, which he used to jostle the machine until it freed his booty. He was fired the next day.

Source: the *Des Moines Register*

COWORKERS OF a New York City court stenographer guessed he was having a rough day after he'd handed in a transcript. He had purportedly typed *I hate my job, I hate my job, I hate my job* over and over again. The man was fired for misconduct.

Source: the *New York Post*

A FLORIDA RESIDENT came home to find his apartment ransacked. After speaking with neighbors, the police zeroed in on the culprit: the break-in "victim," who had been spotted acting suspiciously. The homeowner admitted to staging the burglary because he just didn't feel like going to work.

Source: baynews9.com



A SOUTH CAROLINA pizza deliveryman had an unusual way of keeping the pizzas hot in transit. The man, who was also a volunteer firefighter, would flash his emergency lights so traffic would pull over and let him pass, according to reports. The police used *their* sirens to arrest him.

Source: the *Week*

A MAN STORMED into a Florida electronics store wearing a ski mask and ordered an employee to lie on the floor. When she ran, he drew his Taser, only to tase himself. He then fled empty-handed. Hours later, he returned ... to start his shift.

Source: the *Tampa Bay Times*

BOSS OF THE YEAR! At a party in China, an employer plopped down money and told his employees that it was their bonus. But to get their share, they would have to drink him under the table. Said one teetotaler, "Men were given 500 yuan for each shot," and women were given twice that. In the end, some cashed in—and some passed out.

Source: globaltimes.cn

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To Send Your Wife to Mars



JASON STANFORD, 44, a political analyst and consultant, lives with his wife and two sons in Austin, Texas.

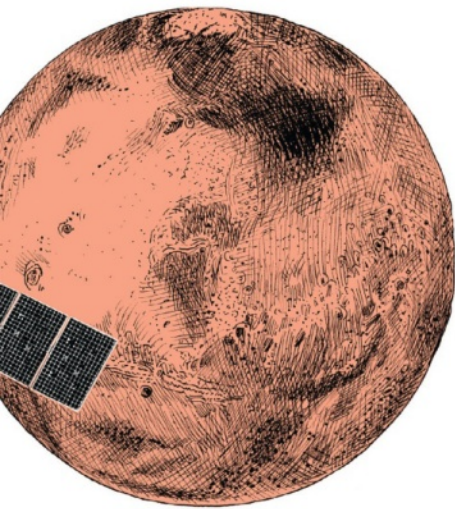
BY JASON STANFORD FROM *TEXAS MONTHLY*

MOST OF US RUN through certain hypothetical scenarios when getting married. Would you forgive me if I cheated? Would you stay if I were paralyzed? If I were brain-dead, could you pull the plug? Do you really mean it when you say you'll stand by me in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, till death do us part?

I looked at the wedding vows that my wife and I had written, and there is no asterisk, no out clause releasing me in the event of extraterrestrial excursions.

You may have read about my wife of four years, heard about her on the radio, or seen her on TV. She's Sonia Van Meter, 36, the Austin woman (and stepmother to my sons, Henry, 13, and Hatcher, 11) who was chosen as a candidate by Mars One, the privately funded European nonprofit that is recruiting people to be sent to Mars in groups of four, starting in 2024. Unlike astronaut wives who have to hold out only a week before their

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE MCKENDRY (STANFORD)



husbands come back, I will never see Sonia again if she goes to Mars. The Mars One Project is a one-way trip to establish permanent human life there.

When Mars One whittled the 200,000-plus applicants down to 1,058, Sonia, a political consultant, got enough media coverage to become a minor celebrity around town. It doesn't hurt that she's easy on the eyes. I love her, the camera loves her, and now strangers do too.

When we go to parties, we hear whispers. "That's the Mars girl," people say. Women—it's always women—approach to congratulate her on her bravery. Some ask, Will she, you know, have to help populate the planet? (For the record, human reproduction is not part of the mission.)

Rarely does anyone engage her, as a space geek, to talk about what she hopes to find up there, but if someone

did, he or she would open the discussion to Sonia's innate curiosity and her enthusiasm about humanity's drive to explore and expand our understanding of what is possible. She honestly does not get why everyone doesn't want to go to Mars, though she knows I would last about half an hour up there before getting bored.

But that's not what people talk about when they comment about her on the Internet. No sooner had a story about my wife's astronomical ambition aired than strangers took it upon themselves to diagnose our obviously flawed marriage.

"Nothing says 'I love you' more than a one-way trip to Mars," tweeted one stranger.

"She must really be sick of her husband," wrote another.

One Internet commenter posting under the pseudonym "Acup" wrote, "Wow Im glad Im not married to her." True enough, since she would probably tell him where he could place his apostrophes.

More to the point was "buck," whose keen insight resulted in this trenchant observation: "Going to Mars and abandoning your husband and children forever? Brave? Hardly. Selfish? Most definitely."

Sonia had not learned the first rule of the Internet: Never read the comments. Excited to see reaction to the story, she read, aghast, as strangers sat in anonymous judgment of our

marriage. What started as a brave woman claiming her ambition had become a public hazing.

"I want you to tell me honestly," she said, tears welling in her eyes. "Am I being a bad wife?"

Neil Armstrong probably never had to ask his wife this. Or maybe he did. Maybe his wife had to demonstrate to him that the fullest expression of her commitment was to love him to the ends of the Earth and then one very large step beyond. Maybe she had to reinforce to Neil that all she wanted was for him to become the biggest version of himself. Maybe she loved him "no matter what," and risking his life in space was the "what."

This mission is, admittedly, a literal long shot. They have to raise more than \$6 billion, build a new generation of spacecraft, and figure out how to sustain human life on a cold, airless planet that has neither water nor pizza delivery. Not even Netflix. But regardless of whether this actually happens, the possibility of my wife flying into space some day in the future

forces me—right here, right now—to accept that this may happen.

Watching the launch will be the easy part. Living without her will be an agony that I will have to share with the world. I'll be Mr. Sonia Van Meter for the rest of my life, telling her story here on Earth. I joke about endorsing products ("While my wife is exploring Mars, I'm doing the laundry with new Cosmos Detergent. It's out of this world!"), but some will view me as a cautionary male, cuckolded by an entire planet.

If she were the man and I the supportive wife, she could be understood as an explorer, and I the determined source of support back at home. If I were the wife, I could say I want what Sonia wants, and people would nod approvingly at how nice it must be to have such love and support.

But until the culture grows up, my answers will only puzzle those who want me to describe the view as I look into the abyss. I will miss her. I will not like any of this, but I love her, and this is a horizon worth crossing. **R**

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MORE TALKING ABOUT TALKING

Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain.

LILY TOMLIN

Internet commenters are people who think the news is an incomplete Mad Lib.

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PHOTO

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**Photograph by
Brian Skerry**

**Chosen by
Leigh Henry,**

*senior policy advisor at
the World Wildlife Fund*

“This is a southern right whale, which is recovering from near extinction, thanks to the ban on commercial whaling. I love this photo because it conveys trust between whale and human—a trust we have a responsibility not to betray. I work every day to ensure that my daughters grow up in a world where encounters like this remain a real possibility, not photographic history.”





WHO

?

KNEW

13 Things Urgent Care Centers Won't Tell You

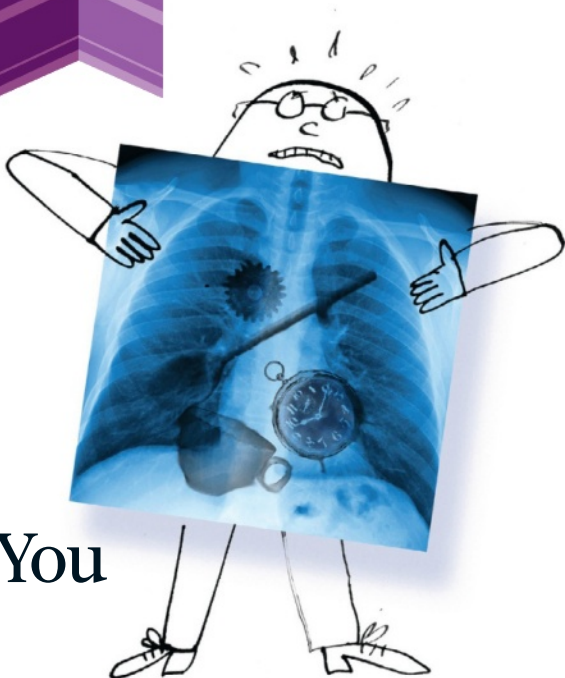
BY MICHELLE CROUCH

1 ER or urgent care? Always head to the ER for chest pain, severe bleeding, difficulty breathing, a neurological issue such as a seizure, or a serious head trauma with loss of consciousness.

2 The next time your regular doctor says it will be months before you can get an appointment, we may be able to help. Many urgent care centers offer STD tests, school

and sports physicals, adult vaccinations, Pap smears, skin allergy treatments, and more.

3 Some primary care docs don't like us because they say we skim the easy work and avoid responsibility for more complex matters. For instance, we'll sew up the laceration on an inebriated person, but we won't address bigger issues like alcoholism and high blood pressure.



4 Sorry, you won't save money if you come here when you really need to go to the ER. If we transfer you by ambulance to the hospital, you may be responsible for co-pays at both places, plus the ambulance ride, which can double your fee.

5 All urgent care centers are not created equal. Some can handle only basic ailments: sore throats, simple wounds, colds, and coughs; they don't have an X-ray machine or a lab. Others can take on diagnoses and tests.

6 We're happy to give you a sample of the latest drug for your treatment. But that tends to be the most expensive. Ask for a less pricey but equally effective option so you can refill your prescription with ease.

7 If I suggest a specific test or procedure, ask whether you really need it and what it will cost. To protect us from potential lawsuits, our clinic guidelines may require us to suggest various treatments even when they're not really needed.

8 If you're paying cash, don't be afraid to negotiate on price. We may be able to reduce your bill, but there has to be a reason. Some urgent care centers even have special cards you can purchase that guarantee you a discount at every single visit.

9 To save time, call to see if you can get on the waiting list before you come. Some centers will send you a text message 30 minutes before someone can see you.

10 Very few of our doctors start in urgent care. Many are burned-out ER or primary care doctors looking for less stress and easier hours.

11 Because we're partially judged by patient-satisfaction scores, we're under pressure to please. So if you want a steroid shot or an antibiotic for your cold, we'll probably give it to you, even if it's not necessary. The one thing we're stingy about? Narcotic pain medications, since we know drug dealers can sell them.

12 Even if there's a doctor on-site, you may never see him or her. Most urgent care centers are staffed with physician assistants and nurse-practitioners; typically, a doctor is consulted for complicated cases.

13 We don't have time to sanitize our waiting room after every patient. If you're coming in at the height of flu season, stay safe by asking for a mask and using the hand sanitizer we have out. **R**

Sources: Ryan Welter, MD, PhD, of Tristan Medical Primary Care Centers in Massachusetts; Richard Young, MD, of Fort Worth, Texas; Gerry Cviatanovich, of MHM Urgent Care in Louisiana; Mitchel Schwindt, MD, author of *The Patient's Guide to Urgent Care and the Emergency Room*; and Abimbola Fasusi, PA-C, physician assistant for Metro Immediate & Primary Care in Washington, DC.

Fun Facts About Color

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

Why Soccer Balls Are Black-and-White

Turns out the sports staple was made for TV. For the 1970 World Cup in Mexico—the first of its kind to be broadcast live on television—Adidas created the iconic black-and-white paneled ball, intended to catch the eyes of viewers better than a single-colored one would as it moved across black-and-white TV screens. The black pentagons also helped players and referees recognize the swerve and flight of the ball.

Why the Purple Heart Is Purple

When the Continental Congress forbade George Washington from promoting soldiers during the American Revolution, the revered general got crafty. On August 7, 1782, he established the Badge of Military Merit: a purple cloth or silk heart to be worn over a soldier's left breast and signify an elevated status. While it's hard to know why Washington opted for that hue, the history behind the color purple's regal reputation dates

back to the 15th century BC, when ancient Mediterranean clothiers created the shade from sea snail secretions in a long and expensive process. The result: Only royalty could afford purple clothes.

Why Surrender Flags Are White

Some believe the peacemaking symbol comes from the bland garb of ancient times. Soldiers and civilians alike had white clothes handy, and since they were highly visible against neutral backgrounds, the clothes could be waved to easily convey passivity.

Why Taxis Are Yellow

If you hailed a New York City cab in 1905, a car painted red and green would screech to a halt before you. So how did the color change from two-tone to bumblebee-bright? In 1907, Albert Rockwell created a taxi cab with an innovative 15-horsepower engine at his car company in Connecticut. Legend has it that his wife suggested the



cars be painted yellow, and they've been that way ever since. By 1909, yellow taxis were zipping around New York City, courtesy of Rockwell's cab company.

Why Bubble Gum Is Pink

Fate would have it that hot pink dye was readily available at the Fleer

Chewing Gum Company when employee Walter Diemer experimented in 1928 with a new gum recipe—as he liked to do in his spare time. The 23-year-old created a less sticky and more flexible formula that resulted in bigger bubbles. He poured pink dye into the batch, and America's favorite oral fixation was born.

Why Money Is Green

Why don't ATMs spew purple bills? Because of long-lasting dye. When paper notes were introduced in 1929, the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing opted to use green ink because the color was relatively high in its resistance to chemical and physical changes. Also, at the time, green pigment was available in large quantities for quick printing.

Why Karate Belts Are Black

There are a lot of myths surrounding the martial arts' most prestigious designation. The most likely story, however, claims that white belts used to be dyed to a new color upon a student's advancement to a higher level. Hence the increasingly darker order: white, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, brown, red, and black.

Why Prison Jumpsuits Are Orange

Shows like *Orange Is the New Black* have colored the perception of everyday prison garb. To set the record straight: Some say that prisons started putting inmates in orange uniforms to make them easy to spot while in transit or in public. As for day-to-day uniforms, it depends on the prison. California outfits its male prisoners in denim jeans and jackets and blue chambray shirts, while the federal maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado, issues khaki trousers and tops.

Why First-Place Ribbons Are Blue

Some scholars say we have an old nautical award to thank. In the 1860s, the Blue Riband—a pennant flown from a ship's mast—was a prize given to the passenger ship making the fastest transatlantic crossing. Scholars speculate that over time, the spelling *blue riband* was changed to *blue ribbon*, serving as a symbol of general excellence.

Why a Matador's Cape Is Red

Bulls charge at the sight of red, right? Wrong. Bulls are color-blind. Thus, a fighting bull is likely enraged by the cape's quick movement instead of its color. So why the bold hue? Some say it helps mask one of the more gruesome aspects of a bullfight: splatters of the animal's blood.

Why Wedding Dresses Are White

The classic white dress came from a European fashion trend. In 1840, England's Queen Victoria donned a white lace gown to marry Albert of Saxe-Coburg. At the time, brides were married in any color—even black was popular. The queen's choice, however, quickly inspired other brides to opt for white. In the early 19th century, *Godey's Lady's Book* issued its blessing: "Custom has decided that white is the most fitting hue for a wedding." **R**



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SUNSHINE
HEART

This FBI File Has Been Read Over A Million Times

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

IT'S THE MOST POPULAR file in the FBI Vault—a high-tech electronic reading room that houses all kinds of bureau records released under the Freedom of Information Act. Yet this file is only a single page, relaying an unconfirmed report from an Air Force investigator, and was never even followed up on. Dated March 22, 1950, the memo is addressed to J. Edgar Hoover, and it reads:

"They [the saucers] were described as being circular in shape with raised centers, approximately 50 feet in diameter. Each one was occupied by three bodies of human shape but only 3 feet tall, dressed in metallic cloth of a very fine texture. Each body was bandaged in a manner similar to the blackout suits



used by speed flyers and test pilots."

The memo goes on to say that the saucers had been found because the government's "high-powered radar" in Roswell, New Mexico, had interfered with "the controlling mechanism of the saucers," which ultimately resulted in the crashes. It ends stating that "no further evaluation was attempted." Once the file went public, people wondered what had happened to the supposed saucers. Unfortunately, without any further research from the FBI, the case became just another unsolved mystery. R

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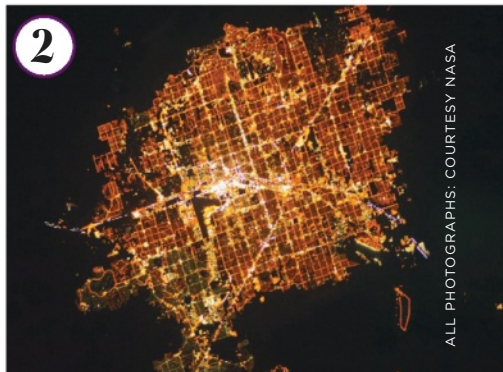
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Quiz

Spot the Shimmering Cities

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

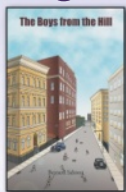
🌀 **YOUR BEDROOM BULB** is contributing to your city's glowing fingerprint, a pattern of shining dots captured by a space station-mounted camera. Can you name these four U.S. cities based on their light signatures? **R**



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ANSWERS: 1. Baltimore; 2. Las Vegas; 3. New York; 4. San Francisco

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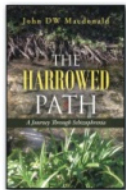
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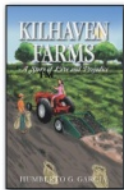
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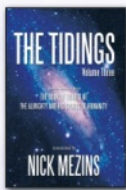
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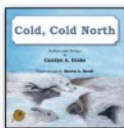
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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

This year's Scripps National Spelling Bee was the first to end in a tie since 1962. In honor of the winners, here are tiebreakers from bees past. They're all hard to spell, indeed, but are they easy to define? Answers on the next page.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. fracas** ('fray-kes) *n.*—A: fight. B: winter coat. C: drilling operation.
- 2. milieu** (meel-'yer) *n.*—A: huge number. B: environment. C: French chef.
- 3. sacrilegious** (sak-ree-'li-jes) *adj.*—A: worthy of worship. B: of all faiths. C: failing to respect.
- 4. appoggiatura** (ah-pah-jeh-'tur-uh) *n.*—A: embellishing note. B: statement of regret. C: breakdown.
- 5. kamikaze** (kah-meh-'kah-zee) *n.*—A: suicidal crasher. B: stand-up comedian. C: labyrinth.
- 6. cerise** (seh-'rees) *adj.*—A: steeply inclined. B: shade of red. C: cool and calm.
- 7. vouchsafe** (vowch-'sayf) *v.*—A: swear under oath. B: supply. C: protect.
- 8. eczema** ('eg-zeh-muh) *n.*—A: itchy skin condition. B: hasty departure. C: former lover.
- 9. semaphore** ('sem-uh-for) *n.*—A: half circle. B: lover of summer. C: signaling with flags.
- 10. dulcimer** ('duhl-seh-mur) *n.*—A: stringed instrument. B: period of calm. C: sea monster.
- 11. gladiolus** (gla-dee-'oh-les) *n.*—A: street fighter. B: high praise. C: plant.
- 12. incisor** (en-'siy-zer) *n.*—A: tooth. B: troublemaker. C: earthworm.
- 13. elegiacal** (eh-leh-'jiy-eh-kul) *adj.*—A: approving or complementary. B: menacing. C: lamenting.
- 14. deteriorating** (de-'tir-ee-uh-rayt-ing) *v.*—A: stopping. B: growing worse. C: improving slowly.
- 15. insouciant** (in-'soo-see-ant) *adj.*—A: uppity. B: nonchalant. C: incomplete.

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

Answers

- 1. fracas**—[A] fight. Both dugouts emptied as a wild *fracas* erupted at home plate.
- 2. milieu**—[B] environment. A sailor's natural *milieu* is the ocean blue.
- 3. sacrilegious**—[C] failing to respect. Uncle James considers it *sacrilegious* if you don't eat his homemade salsa.
- 4. appoggiatura**—[A] embellishing note. "If you ask me," Karl sniffed after the performance, "the concerto blatantly abused the *appoggiatura*."
- 5. kamikaze**—[A] suicidal crasher. Jimmy jumped from the flight of stairs like a *kamikaze* on a mission.
- 6. cerise**—[B] shade of red. When Shana gets excited, her face turns a bright *cerise*.
- 7. vouchsafe**—[B] supply. Suzie *vouchsafed* her ID but didn't look happy about it.
- 8. eczema**—[A] itchy skin condition. Nothing works better than shea butter to soothe my *eczema*.
- 9. semaphore**—[C] signaling with flags. Unable to get a word

in edgewise at the table, Alison resorted to *semaphore* with napkins.

- 10. dulcimer**—[A] stringed instrument. Andy's Appalachian *dulcimer* didn't really fit in with our punk rock band.
- 11. gladiolus**—[C] plant. "I'm so sick of the deer eating all my *gladiolus*!" Mom barked.
- 12. incisor**—[A] tooth. I think I cracked an *incisor* on your grandmother's biscuits.
- 13. elegiacal**—[C] lamenting. The pastor was remarkably sensitive in mixing in humorous recollections during his *elegiacal* speech.
- 14. deteriorating**—[B] growing

worse. The already tense relations between the North and South are now *deteriorating*.

- 15. insouciant**—[B] nonchalant. Taylor's boss noted that she has a decidedly *insouciant* way of attending to her daily priorities.

HISTORY OF "BEE"

The word *bee*, as in *spelling bee*, refers to a group of people gathering to accomplish something specific, usually to help someone. How it came to be associated with spelling isn't entirely clear, but the general meaning of "community" dates back to the 18th century. It is perhaps an alteration of the English *been* or *bean*, meaning "voluntary help given by neighbors."

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Q: Why is the letter A the most like a flower?

(**A:** Because the B is after it.)



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Love a chill? Among our reviews: Megan Abbott's *The Fever* (the fear is contagious), Sara Shepard's *The Heiresses* (beautiful people, suspicious deaths), and Kate Racculia's *Bellweather Rhapsody* (if Wes Anderson set a mystery at a school music convention in a once-luxurious hotel).

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RELATIONSHIPS

5 Lies That Are OK to Tell Your Partner

Sometimes honesty is not the best policy. One example: When you're arguing, experts say, it's perfectly acceptable to respond with "You're right" even if you don't agree, just to keep the peace.

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Humor in Uniform



PENTAGON ANNOUNCES NEW NAVAL BASE

OCTOBER 1, 2014—The Navy has contracted with Three Little Pigs, Inc., to expand its operations. The pigs, seen here with naval brass, will contain costs by “using straw,” said First Little Pig. “If that doesn’t work, we’ll try sticks,” said Second Little Pig. “And if that’s blown down, brick,” said Third Little Pig. Calls to competitor Huff & Puff, Ltd., a division of Big Bad Wolf Industries, were not returned.

I WAS IN THE BATHROOM brushing my teeth when my squad leader barged in. He was holding a toothbrush, which he proceeded to use to scrub underneath the rim of a toilet.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Hazing the new guy,” he said with a grin.

“You do know that he could get ill from the bacteria on the toilet.”

His reply was quick and to the point: “You didn’t.” **JEFFREY S. CARR,**
Jacksonville, North Carolina

AIR FORCE TRUISMS:

- “Never fly in the same cockpit with someone braver than you.”
- “The only time you have too much fuel is when you’re on fire.”
- “Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.”
- “Airspeed, altitude, and brains: Two are always needed to successfully complete the flight!”

Your funny military anecdote may be worth \$\$\$! See page 7 or rd.com/submit.

How a Chicago Doctor Shook Up the Hearing Aid Industry with his Newest Invention

New nearly invisible digital hearing aid breaks price barrier in affordability

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Quotable Quotes



Being realistic is the most commonly traveled road to mediocrity.

WILL SMITH



Having a baby is like getting a tattoo on your face. You really need to be certain it's what you want before you commit.

ELIZABETH GILBERT, author

THE CLOSED FIST RECEIVES NOTHING.

MICHELE OKA DONER, artist

Saying a subject is too awful or painful to joke about is like saying a disease is too awful to be treated.

LOUIS C.K.



DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THE GOAL IS WORTH THE RISKS INVOLVED. IF IT IS, STOP WORRYING.

AMELIA EARHART

I have always had a half-baked philosophy that having a Plan B can muddy up your Plan A.

CHARLIE DAY, actor



My parents said marrying was an optimistic thing to do in pessimistic times.

OLIVIA WILDE, actress

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