

Reader's Digest

DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023

**GREAT
GIFTS**

P. 96



HOLIDAY MAGIC

**Tales to Warm
Your Heart**

**SECRET
SANTAS**
Your True Stories

**Librarians
UNDER ATTACK**
From the NEW YORK TIMES

**Passenger
Lands Plane**
A DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

**NEW CANCER
TREATMENTS
That Work**
By LIA GRAINGER

13 Things About
CROSSWORDS
An RD ORIGINAL



CALLING ALL HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE PATIENTS: **COLD AND FLU SEASON IS UPON US.**

If you have hypertension — like 47% of U.S. adults — there's something important you should know this cold and flu season. Many cold and flu products have the potential consequence of raising your blood pressure.

To keep your blood pressure in check, healthcare professionals recommend steering clear of over-the-counter decongestants and multi-symptom cold remedies that contain decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, naphazoline, oxymetazoline and phenylephrine.

Why are many cold and flu products a risk to those with hypertension? Simply put, products containing decongestants shrink swollen mucous membranes in the nasal cavity by constricting blood vessels. But that mechanism can also constrict other blood vessels in your body as well, raising blood pressure along the way.

While it's a good time to stock up on tissues, you don't have to go it alone if you do get sick — products like **DayQuil High Blood Pressure and NyQuil High Blood Pressure** have been specially formulated for people with High Blood Pressure (HBP), and deliver fast, powerful, daytime and nighttime relief of your worst cold and flu symptoms. DayQuil and NyQuil HBP are also sugar-free, alcohol-free and decongestant-free.

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A Trusted Friend in a Complicated World



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Holiday Magic

WE HAVE A motto at *Reader's Digest*: Find something good in the world and praise it. On our best days, we inspire someone to create good in the world.

That is what happened with our holiday issue last year. Our article "Angels in Action" included a touching story about a couple shopping for a recumbent bicycle for the wife, who was battling Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS. Moved by their story, the owner gifted them the bike.

Reader Michael Puz from Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, wrote to us, "I was really touched by the generous action of the shop owner who, after learning about the wife's condition, tore off the price tag and

gave the couple the expensive bicycle for free. The article also resonated with me because my father had ALS."

Later the same day that he had read the article, Puz was contacted by someone interested in buying his father's curio cabinets, which Puz had been trying unsuccessfully to sell for a year. His father had used the wooden curio cabinets to store his large collection of Button Box Kids figurines. The buyer was hoping to purchase the cabinets for his wife to store her own collection of figurines.

The deal changed for Puz when the buyer shared that his wife had a condition similar to ALS.

"I just couldn't stop thinking about the *Reader's Digest* article and the ALS connection between the woman in the story, my dad and this guy's wife," said Puz. "I just knew in my heart that those curio cabinets were meant for her."

Puz tore off the price tag and gave the couple the cabinets for free.

"Somehow, I think my dad wanted those cabinets for her," said Puz. "I forgot to mention what his wife was going to place in the curios: her angel collection!"

Here's hoping you find, inspire and create joy this holiday season.

Jason Buhrmester,
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

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Book Mobile

THERE'S PLENTY TO do at Taylorsville Lake State Park, southeast of Louisville, Kentucky—boating, fishing, hiking. And now reading. At the behest of park manager Carey Ruff, local wood hobbyist Gene Balter built a little library as a book exchange for campers in need of something to read under the stars or on a rainy day. Resembling a classic Airstream camper, the library is filled with westerns, romance novels, instruction manuals, kids books and more. And it's almost as popular as the hiking. It had been up only a couple of weeks, says Ruff, "and we've already had to restock it." **R**

COURTESY GENE BALTER



EVERYDAY HEROES

A Christmas Story

A mystery turns an unassuming couple into Santa Claus

BY *Andy Simmons*

JIM GLAUB AND Dylan Parker had just been handed the keys to their new Manhattan apartment on 22nd Street when the outgoing tenant said something curious: “Just so you know, there’s this thing where letters addressed to Santa come to the apartment.” The previous tenants received the mail too. It had been coming for years and no one knows why. “But it’s not that big a deal.”

Glaub and Parker settled in to their new home, and for the first two years only a few letters trickled in from kids or parents asking “Santa” for gifts they could not otherwise afford: Toys, coats, a doll. Then in the months leading to Christmas 2010, they were deluged. Every day, they’d open their mailbox to find it brimming over with

letters to Santa. They responded to as many as they could, writing notes, even buying gifts. But they could do only so much.

Glaub, of course, is not Santa. He runs a Broadway marketing company. But one night, when he and Parker threw a 1960s-themed Christmas party, a solution appeared. Guests, dressed in mod outfits and hippie beads, noticed the hundreds of letters they’d yet to act upon tucked in the corner of their dining room and asked about them.

“I told them the story,” Glaub says. His guests were intrigued. “A lot of people were like, ‘I’ll take a letter. I’ll fulfill it.’”

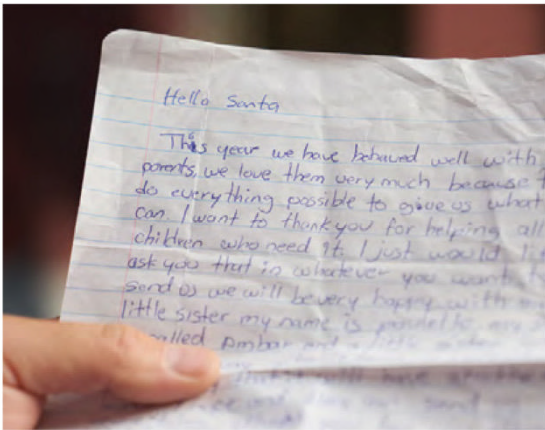
That’s when Glaub and Parker realized they didn’t have to fulfill all

Jim Glaub has no idea why letters came to his apartment.

these letters themselves. “People want to help.”

And so was born Miracle on 22nd Street, a community-based volunteer organization that responds to children’s letters to Santa with season’s greetings and gifts.

To spread the word, they started a website, miracleon22ndstreet.com, and a Facebook page. Working with other nonprofits that help those



One of the thousands of notes to Santa

in need, they invited families from around the country to go online and request gifts for their children. Likewise, donors, aka “elves,” can sign up to buy gifts for a child or family, accompanied by a signed note with *Elf* before their name, such as Elf Jim or Elf Jody. Both families and elves are vetted either by the nonprofits or by Miracle on 22nd Street.

Letters typically request popular items, such as Paw Patrol and CoComelon for little kids, makeup and bikes for older ones. One child living in a crowded household wrote

that he suffered back pain from sleeping on the living room couch. With the OK from the boy’s parents, the child’s elf bought him a bed.

Some letters are heartbreaking. One child wrote: “Dear Santa, For Christmas, I want my brothers to get better. My younger brother has a hard time walking and has to use his wheelchair. I wish he could play like me. I also wish my baby brother could eat like me and not have his feeding tube. I no these are not real presents, but this is all I want this year.”

That’s a tough ask for any elf. But Miracle on 22nd Street did send the children gift cards and a kind note.

Last year, Glaub and Miracle on 22nd Street helped more than 800 families. One beneficiary wrote on Facebook: “Huge shoutout to my kids elf! You helped give this newly single momma of 4 the best present ... you gave my babies a reason to smile and enjoy their Christmas after everything we’ve been through. All I wanted was to see them happy and I got just what I wanted.”

Glaub no longer dwells on why the letters come to the apartment. Putting in the long hours to help the families is what it’s all about for him.

“It’s part of Christmas for me,” he says. “It’s the same for the elves and families. They look forward to it. Not to do it would be very sad for a lot of people. It wouldn’t be Christmas without it.” **R**



MAX STRENGTH **FAST SORE** **THROAT RELIEF**



Midnight Plunge

BY *Andy Simmons*

There is no way they just drove into that water, thought Corion Evans. The 16-year-old was hanging out with friends in a parking area underneath a Moss Point, Mississippi, highway in July when a sedan with three teenage girls inside propelled off a boat ramp and into the Pascagoula River. It came to rest some 20 feet from land, then sank. The driver, Evans would learn, had blindly followed erroneous directions from her GPS.

It was around 2:30 a.m. by the time Evans and brothers Karon and Caleb Bradley got to the river's edge. In the darkness, they could barely make out the girls clinging to the roof, the only part of the car still, barely, above water. But they could hear screaming.

Evans ripped off his shirt and shoes, tossed his phone down, then dived into the water, a river he knew alligators called home. He helped the first girl he saw and, keeping her head above water, led her ashore.

Just then, a man called out. Police Officer Garry Mercer had arrived. He dived into the river to help another of the girls. But halfway back to shore, she panicked and went underwater,



Corion Evans was honored for his actions by Mayor Billy Knight.

pulling Mercer down with her.

Evans jumped back into the water and helped them until they could stand. "If he hadn't been there, who knows?" Mercer told the *Washington Post*.

There was still one girl in the water. Cora Watson, 19, could not swim. She was gulping water, struggling to stay afloat. And scared.

"I heard Cora screaming 'Help!' and I thought she was done," Caleb told WLOX in Biloxi.

"I just knew my last breath was coming," Watson said. "My mind said, *You're slowly losing yourself*." She began to go under. Then, a jolt. "Corion had grabbed me."

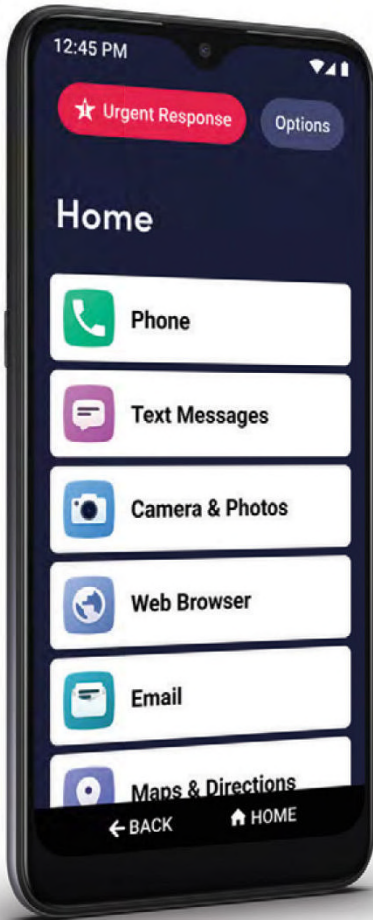
The three girls and Officer Mercer were taken to the hospital and released. They're alive because Corion Evans risked his life to save them. They're alive, says his mother, Marquita Evans, because Corion Evans broke his curfew.

But she's not mad, she told the *Post*. "He had a good reason." **R**

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DEPARTMENT OF WIT

Yule Be Sorry!

A husband's fib about a beloved holiday melody backfires spectacularly

—
BY D.H. Irving



MY WIFE LOVES Christmas songs, and she looves to sing them. Sixteen years ago, while we were driving on vacation, she decided to pass the time by singing “The Christmas Song.” You know, “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire ...”

She didn’t sing it once. She didn’t sing it twice. She sang it over and over again.

So, I decided to mess with her.

When she got to the line “Jack Frost nipping at your nose,” I blanched.

“Why are you singing *that* song?” I said, in my most mortified voice.

When she looked confused, I feigned surprise that she was unaware of her faux pas.

I proceeded to inform her that, like many a Grimm’s fairy tale, Christmas songs often have a dark past and that Jack Frost was the name of a violent patient who broke out of an insane asylum on Christmas in the 1920s and went around devouring faces, particularly noses, which he had acquired a taste for.

She bought it hook, line and sinker.

She was shocked—no, horrified!—that people would sing about him. It’s all we talked about for the duration of the ride, Jack Frost’s antics growing darker and darker as the miles flew by.

Fast-forward to a couple of years ago. It’s snowing outside and I’m in a good mood. I start singing “The Christmas Song” and my wife chastises me in a teasing voice for singing an ode to the world’s most infamous Yuletide maniac.

I have *no* idea what she is talking about.

She then confides that Jack Frost, the serial nose biter, had forever ruined that song for her. I laugh and confess that I was teasing that day and that I honestly didn’t think she believed me.

I was wrong.

She got mad—*mad* mad.

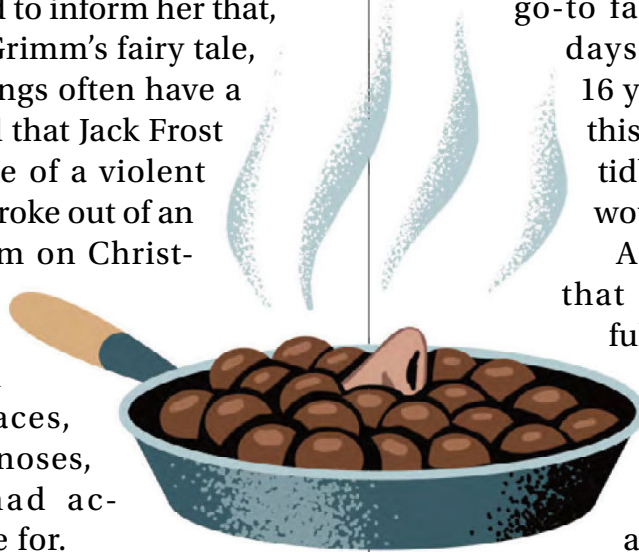
Apparently, this had been her go-to fact during the holidays, and for the past 16 years she had shared this dark and gruesome tidbit with anyone who would listen.

As it dawned on her that she’d been cheerfully spreading a lie to these many years, I guess a sea of confused and disbelieving looks and a flashback of people staring at her as

if *she* were a nose biter emerged to haunt her.

As for me, I am now the King of Lies who is never to be trusted again.

So much for sharing the holiday spirit. **R**



Chewy outperformed all dogs in his level at the Greater Cincinnati Weimaraner Club's 2022 competition.



BEST PET PALS

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Chewy the Champ

COVINGTON, KY

AS A PUPPY, Chewy was plagued by health issues. He developed pneumonia, needed gastrointestinal surgery and ulcerated his eye all before he was a year old. He remained a strong, playful puppy despite it all.

To manage his energy—high for an English bulldog—we went to agility classes. He'd sprint across the full-height dog walk and leap off the end, both frightening and impressing us.

We tried dock diving so he could run and leap to his heart's content—into

water. In 2022, we signed him up for a big dog show in Louisville, Kentucky. It used a mobile dock, new to him, and the noise, lights and metal floor spooked him. But when it was go time, Chewy navigated the crowd, braved the slippery floor and bounded up the metal stairs like a champ. He even released his toy when he emerged from the water, which he usually resists.

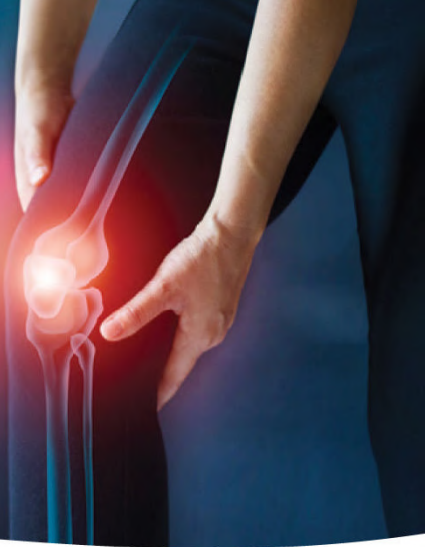
Chewy is an underdog because of his non-sporting breed. Still, he holds an American Kennel Club "Excellent" title and has a personal best jump of 16 feet 1 inch, proving that any underdog can succeed with practice, perseverance and a can-do attitude. 🐾

—Nominated by MICHELLE KINDER

MICHELLE KINDER



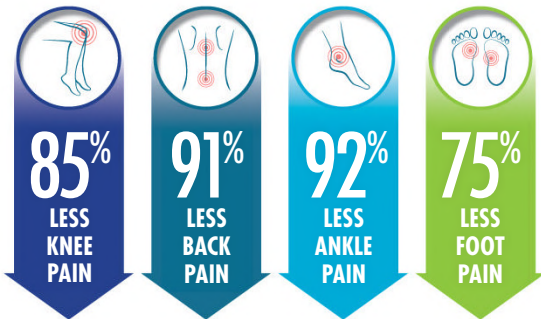
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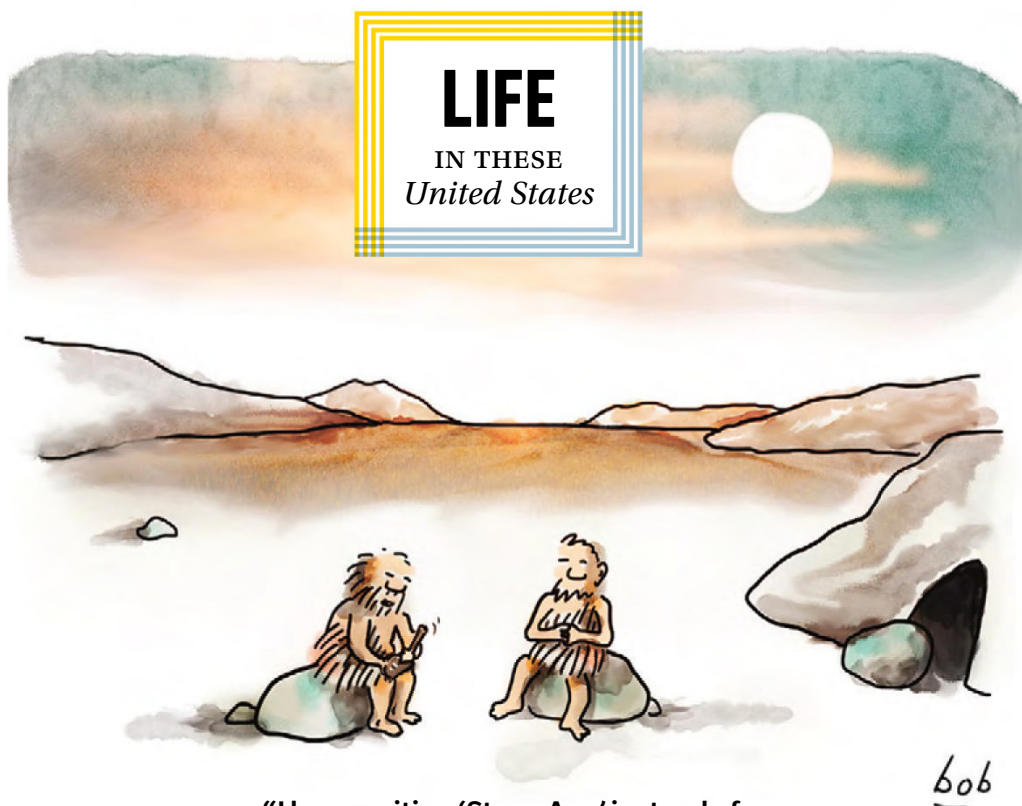
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"I keep writing 'Stone Age' instead of 'Bronze Age' on all my checks."

bob

The word *vintage* means different things to different people. To me, at 71, *vintage* means early 20th century. To my 43-year-old daughter, it's the 1950s. So, when my

13-year-old granddaughter wanted something vintage for Christmas, I had to ask what she considered vintage.

"Oh, you know," she said, "back when they

used to communicate using paper."
—SUSAN REYNOLDS
Anaheim, CA

Growing up, we called one set of grandparents Big Mama and Big Daddy. No one thought much of it until the day one of the grandkids told them they were soon to become great-grandparents. That's when Big

Every year when I get the Christmas lights out of the garage, I am struck by how little respect last year's me has for this year's me.

—@ANDYRICHTER



Mama put her foot down and told us that, while she never minded her nickname, she refused to be called Great Big Mama.

—RICHARD HUDSON
Fayetteville, AR

I laughingly threatened my 8-year-old with coal for Christmas and, without missing a beat, he replied, “You mean my future diamonds?”

—[@](#)
CRANKYPANTSKNIT

As my husband read his post-op instructions, one directive stood out: “You must sleep without pillows for 48 hours.”

He was appalled, protesting, “I’m not sleeping that long!”

—NELLIE
STROWBRIDGE
*Pasadena, NL,
Canada*

We sat down at the dining room table. On the menu: leftovers.

As we were saying grace, I noticed that my young son wasn’t joining in. I asked him why.

His response: “Because I already blessed it last night.”

—JUDY MOORE
Henderson, NV

YOUR FUNNY STORY about friends or family could be worth \$\$\$\$. For details, go to page 4 or [RD.COM/SUBMIT](#).

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT’S BEEN

For many, the holidays are a time to travel. For others, it’s a time to recover from traveling.

Why is no one talking about the sheer pleasure of coming home from vacation and using your own bathroom?

—[@](#)ALOOVIBES

Difference between being on vacation and being home: Last night I had a 10-oz. filet mignon for dinner. Tonight I had Fruity Pebbles.

—[@](#)RODLACROIX

Car trips with my wife are great, ‘cause I get to listen to 10 seconds each of 400 songs she hates.

—[@](#)DADDYGOFISH

I’m in England, Great Britain AND United Kingdom all at the same time?! Girl! What is the name of this country?

—[@](#)DULCESLOAN



I am 32 years old and still deeply terrified that consuming anything from the hotel minibar will bankrupt my entire family somehow.

—[@](#)ARMANDDOMA

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& HOW TO

1 ENTERTAINING Keep the Bubbles in Your Bubbly

Champagne, like its bubbles, is fleeting and effervescent. It doesn't take long until an opened bottle falls flat. If you happen to have leftover bubbly on New Year's Eve, slide the handle of a spoon into the top of the bottle before putting it in the fridge. The metal spoon won't exactly replace the cork, but it'll keep air in the neck cold and act as an obstacle for the escaping carbon dioxide (that's what makes champagne frothy) for a night. It'll be as fizzy in morning mimosas as it was for your midnight toast.

SOURCE: RD.COM



TMB STUDIO

2 **MONEY**
Insure Your Costco Run

Should your power cut out and take the entirety of your fully stocked fridge and freezer with it, don't eat it—literally or figuratively. Homeowners insurance policies often cover the cost of spoiled food if the outage is caused by “perils,” such as lightning, wind, fallen objects, water damage or snow. Keep or photograph your receipts after bulk shopping trips and during seasons with inclement weather. Some policies will cover up to \$500.

SOURCE: LIFEHACKER.COM

3 **HOLIDAY**
Upgrade This Year's Holiday Caroling

If you're among the 16% of Americans who carol, Red Pelican, a music school in Los Angeles, has a few notes for you to hit. Stay away from “O Holy Night” and “What Child Is This?” They go high toward the end, and it might be tough for your group (or audience) to keep up. “Jingle Bells,” “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “Silent Night” can be sung with just melody, so they're good group choices. Instead of going door to door, try singing near small businesses. If you do go door to door, do no more than three songs per stop.

SOURCE: RED PELICAN MUSIC

4 **TRAVEL**
Stay Balanced in Airplane Aisles

Grabbing another passenger's seat on the way to the airplane restroom isn't ideal, but how else can you stay upright? Reach for the hidden handrail under the overhead bins: That scalloped lip provides a grip. When you see flight attendants seemingly skim the closed bins as they walk, they're holding the handrail. What's better than frequent fliers are courteous ones.

SOURCE: RD.COM

5 **HOME**
Keep a Tension Rod Tense

Got a tension rod that's just a little too zen? Use drywall screws to secure two water bottle caps into the studs in your closet walls, then mount the rod between the caps. The lip provides just enough support to prevent it from slipping down all the time. The tension belongs in the rod—not your jaw. **R**

SOURCE: FAMILYHANDYMAN.COM





“Oh, are you attacking from home today?”

When I was an Air Force colonel, I was aboard an intelligence aircraft filled with complex gear. A young major showed me his computer screen. “That’s a chat screen, sir,” he said. “We use it to relay enemy information to the crew. It’s like instant messaging.”

Nodding, I moved down the line. Flashing on an airman’s screen several feet away was this

warning: “Heads up! The colonel’s on the way!”

—GCFL.NET

During the war my granddad survived mustard gas and pepper spray. He’s a seasoned veteran.

—VETERANLIFE.COM

Enlisted men: Never volunteer for any duty, no matter how enticing. At formation, a sergeant asked, “How

many of you like music?” Three of us raised our hands. “Good. You three report to the orderly room. You’re going to move a piano into the day room.”

—RICHARD T. FLOERSHEIMER
Florham Park, NJ

YOUR FUNNY MILITARY story could be worth \$\$\$*. For details, go to* **RD.COM/SUBMIT**.

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[^]Source: Euromonitor International Limited; Consumer Health 2022 Edition; Sleep Aids, all channels, retail selling price, Global Brand Name ZzzQuil 2021 data

^{^^}Vitamins B6 and B12

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Not Your Grandfather's Anchovies

BY *Emily Tyra*

IF YOU HAVEN'T thought about tinned fish like anchovies and sardines lately (or ever!), you're missing out on an affordable, portable nutritional powerhouse. They're one of the healthiest snacks around, packed with omega-3 fatty acids, protein, calcium and vitamin A. And how many other superfoods come in tins pretty enough to gift?

Zingerman's, the famed mail-order culinary emporium in Ann Arbor, Michigan, stocks more than 70 types of tinned fish, including aged varieties. But no need for a special occasion to open up a vintage tin, co-founder Ari Weinzweig says. "Eat them as is, just like an awesome aged cheese."

Sardines appeal to almost everyone, he says, "from salt-of-the-earth workers to culinary elites." Weinzweig notes their presence in various food traditions. "Sardines were a staple of

the coastal Native American diet long before Europeans arrived," he says. "There are many stories of poor Jewish families honoring the Sabbath tradition of eating fish by sitting down to a Friday meal of nothing but tinned sardines and hard-boiled eggs. In Michigan, sardines were a staple in the lunch buckets of ironworkers who built the Mackinac Bridge in the 1950s."

Irresistible on their own, little fishes' briny depth of flavor makes them a perfect "back-pocket" ingredient in many dishes. A dab of anchovy in sauces brings "a burst of umami," says Chris McDade, chef and author of *The Magic of Tinned Fish*, calling anchovies "a chefs' secret." Indeed, many people don't realize that anchovies add zing to Worcestershire sauce, some steak sauces and many Caesar dressings.

Tinned fish are fantastic with salads and fresh vegetables. "I love a green goddess dressing made with mayo, sour cream, mustard, anchovies, lots of fresh herbs, and jalapeno for spice," McDade says. Try it drizzled on grilled broccoli, showered with pistachios and a handful of herbs.

Little fish are a sustainable option, McDade adds, because they are lower on the food chain. "Everyone loves tuna, swordfish and halibut, but we have to eat the smaller stuff. It's the only way to keep the balance going."

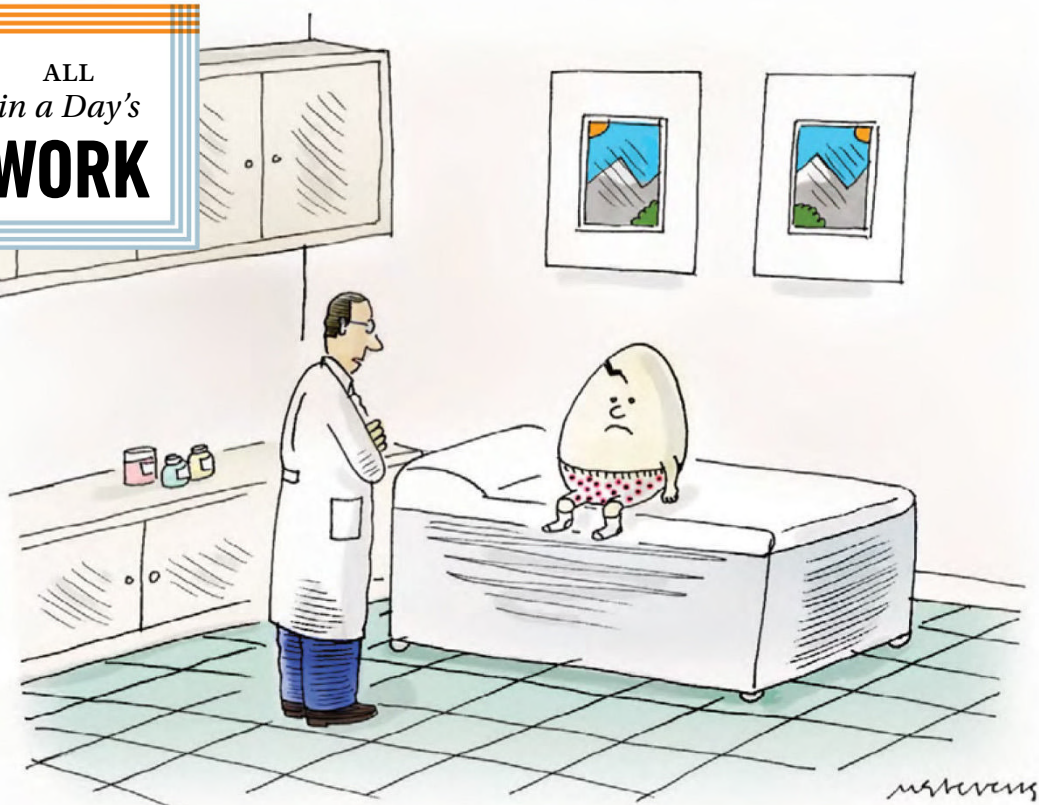
And with so many nutrients and so little mercury, tinned little fish are a good way to keep your internal nutritional balance going too. **R**



BIG FLAVOR IN SMALL PACKAGES

Try sardines on toasted rye with cream cheese. Melt anchovies into a simple garlicky lemon pasta dish. Or top avocado toast with little fish for a perfect power lunch.

ALL
in a Day's
WORK



“It could be nothing or it could be the beginning of an omelet.”

To ensure that a new business contact would remember his name, my father introduced himself by using a mnemonic device: “My name is Ron Reader—Reader, like in *Reader’s Digest*.”

It worked, as evidenced by the fact that later that day, his new acquaintance introduced Dad to an associate by saying,

“Jim, meet Ron Digest.”
—PAM HERTNER
Biltmore Lake, NC

Our rookie waiter handed the cook a slip with the diner’s order. Next to *salad*, he’d written *A*. Now, we often abbreviate salad dressings, like *F* for French or *R* for ranch. But neither the cook nor I could figure out what *A* was. So I asked.

“A?” said the new guy, incredulously.
“A is for *AH-talian*.”
—HOPE VANDER HEIDE
Middleville, MI

I went to Macy’s to buy something. As I pulled out my parking ticket, I asked the lady behind the counter to validate me. She hugged me and said, “You’re a good person.”
—[@MARK_KAWADA](#)

I asked my 11-year-old to help me write my vacation away message, and she suggested, “I am on vacation, so your email will be deleted.”

—@KRISTENBOTT

Scene: First-year Spanish class

Student: “So a bull would be *un toro*, right?”

Teacher: “Correct.”

Student: “Then a female bull would be *una tora*?”

Teacher: “Um ...”

—AMANDA DUMMER
Gardiner, MT

Overly honest

LinkedIn confessions

◆ “Quite possibly the only person on LinkedIn who isn’t a ‘results-orientated team player with excellent interpersonal skills.’”

◆ “I have managed to keep up a sales job for the last 10 years without completely losing my soul.”

◆ “I don’t believe in spamming people.

Unless you do, in which case I’m totally fine with that.”

◆ “Would prefer job with no real responsibility.”

—COBURG BANKS

I ordered customized lanyards to go with the new office security access cards. When the lanyards arrived, at first glance they looked great. But not so much on second glance. Instead of saying “Department of Juvenile Justice,” they read “Department of Juvenile Gestures.”

—DOUGLAS MACK
Richmond, VA

YOUR FUNNY WORK
story could be worth
\$\$\$.
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QUEEN OF QUIPS

Queen Elizabeth’s former bodyguard, Richard “Dick” Griffin, told Sky News about the time he and the queen ran into two American hikers while strolling in the hills of Scotland. The Americans had no clue whom they were speaking to and proceeded to regale them with all the places in Great Britain they’d visited. Then, one of the men asked the kindly elderly lady—aka the queen—where she lived.

“I live in London,” she said. “But I’ve got a holiday home just on the other side of the hills.”

“And how often have you been coming up here?”

“Since I was a little girl, so over 80 years.”

“Oh, then you must have met the queen.”

Gesturing to Griffin, the queen said, “Well, I haven’t, but Dick here meets her regularly.”



13 THINGS

Clued In About Crosswords

BY *Emily Goodman*



1 IF YOU'VE ever picked up—and then put down—a crossword puzzle, don't get discouraged. Crosswords are less about intelligence and vocabulary than you might think. The real key is understanding the clues. For instance, question marks indicate some element of word play. So, while the answer to "Job that involves watching the kids" might be **BABYSITTER**, add a question mark to the end of the clue and it's more likely **GOATHERD**.

2 SPEAKING OF kids, they were among the earliest solvers. Primitive versions

of the puzzle first appeared in British children’s books in the 1800s. But in the United States, crosswords developed into an adult pastime—and passion—after Arthur Wynne published his original “Word-Cross” puzzle in the *New York World* on Dec. 21, 1913 (the anniversary of which is now National Crossword Puzzle Day). Weeks later, the name became “Cross-Word.”

3 SOON, ALMOST all daily newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic were running crosswords, with one notable exception. In 1924, the *New York Times* described the craze as “a sinful waste in the utterly futile finding of words,” and didn’t publish a puzzle of its own until 1942. Now, the maker of perhaps the world’s most famous crossword has a different outlook, likening the puzzle to “mental yoga,” both challenging and relaxing at the same time.

4 TO BECOME a *cruciverbalist* (a person skilled at solving crosswords) learn these other impressive words: *alee* (on the side of a ship that is sheltered from the wind), *aga* (a Turkish officer), *eider* (a type of duck), *eland* (an African antelope), *epee* (a practice sword in fencing), *etui* (a small cosmetics case) and *oleo* (a butter substitute). These all show up disproportionately often in crosswords because of their unique letter combinations.

5 EACH CLUE in a “cryptic” crossword is a riddle, often relying on anagrams, double meanings and words inside other words. So the answer to the clue “Tours streets and wishes one hadn’t” could be RUES, as the French for *streets* is the English for *regret*.

6 LAST FEBRUARY, the *New York Times* delighted devotees with the clue

“The better of two major sci-fi franchises” because both possible answers (STARWARS and STARTREK) fit. With the last letter, the clue “Let out, in a way” worked with either LEASED or LEAKED.

7 CROSSWORD CLUES can deceive and mislead just like good mysteries. It’s not surprising, then, that they come up in crime novels, notably in Ruth Rendell’s *One Across, Two Down* and in Agatha Christie’s *The Curtain*. Here’s a clue Hercule Poirot contends with: “The chaps between the hills are unkind.” With *men* (for “chaps”) between two *tors* (for “hills”), you get TORMENTOR. Quite a workout for those little gray cells!

8 WHETHER OR not regular crossword-ing can improve mental acuity and even delay cognitive decline is the subject of much scientific research and debate. One of the

more interesting case studies was that of an amnesiac who was able to acquire and recall information about events that happened after his amnesia set in when he learned that information through crossword puzzles.

9 THE BRAND name Oreo appears in crossword grids so much that some call it the puzzle's "official" cookie. OREO has appeared in the *New York Times* crossword alone at least 389 times. Perhaps more remarkable: It's been clued nearly 300 ways, some mundane ("Nabisco cookie"), others head-scratching ("It has 12 flowers on each side").

10 IN MANY papers with a daily crossword, the puzzles get harder

as the week goes on. Monday puzzles are the easiest and Saturday's are the hardest. Sunday puzzles are typically of midweek difficulty.

11 CROSSWORD CREATORS have, on occasion, helped lucky fans of the puzzle pop the question. Editors at newspapers including the *Boston Globe* and *USA Today* have worked the answer WILLYOUMARRYME into their puzzles at the request of loyal solvers.

12 FAMOUS FANS of crosswords include the actors John Lithgow, Joy Behar and Jesse Eisenberg, the singers Lisa Loeb and Weird Al Yankovic, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, and cartoonist Garry Trudeau. While in

office, former President Bill Clinton was known to complete crossword puzzles—in pen—while simultaneously carrying on political conversations.

13 AT THE annual American Crossword Puzzle Tournament in Stamford, Connecticut, one speedy solver walks away with \$3,000. This is the nation's oldest crossword competition; the 2023 event will be the 45th. But you can compete anytime in any number of online contests—as long as you aren't tempted to look up the answers. Google sees huge spikes in searches referenced in national crosswords for a day or two after they're published. Is that cheating? That's for you to puzzle out. **R**



A New Kind of Lemon Law

A car's color can help or hurt its resale value, and the hue that holds its value best (depreciating 70% less than the average vehicle) is yellow.

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Yoga for Weight Loss

Striking a pose can help with more than just muscle tone and mindfulness

BY Jennifer Huizen

ILLUSTRATIONS BY James Steinberg

YOGA HAS A well-deserved reputation for helping to improve balance and flexibility and for inducing calm and relaxation. But when it comes to weight loss, many people assume that other types of exercise, like cardio or strength training, will be more helpful. While you might not burn as many calories by practicing yoga as you would by running or doing some other high-intensity aerobic activity, yoga can still raise your

heart rate and help build muscle—and, at rest, muscle burns about twice as many calories as fat does.

“Studies show that aerobic forms of exercise, which is any exercise that uses your large muscle groups and raises your heart rate, are beneficial for weight loss,” says Sally Sherwin, a yoga teacher with the Cleveland Clinic Wellness Yoga. “Power or vinyasa yoga, a type of high-intensity yoga, fits this category.”

Just how many calories you burn varies depending on how long and intense your workout is, as well as other factors, such as your weight, age and gender. But according to Erin Casperson, lead faculty with the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, practicing yoga can also help you burn more calories long after you hit the mat, even if you don't do more intense forms of yoga. That's because yoga's other benefits

can help with weight loss too. Here's more about how yoga is a complete body and mind workout.

Reducing Stress, Reducing Pounds


Yoga helps manage stress, and studies show that high levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, can lead to an increase in abdominal fat. Cortisol surges can also increase your cravings for high-fat and high-sugar foods and drinks while simultaneously reducing your muscle mass.

“Yoga has an impact on the body's stress response and reduces the production of hormones linked to weight gain, such as cortisol,” Casperson says.

Several studies have confirmed that doing yoga does reduce cortisol levels. In one study, researchers found that practicing yoga seemed to impact the hypothalamus, reducing cortisol production. And a 2020 study found that

I TRIED IT...

Probiotics for Depression



When my sixth-grade daughter started suffering from severe migraines—and became depressed because of it—I started sinking into depression too. We tried a therapy called biofeedback, and our health-care provider near our home in Boulder, Colorado, suggested that we also try “healing her gut” with a probiotic designed specifically to boost mood and brain health by repopulating the microbiome with beneficial bacteria. I bought some for both of us. Within one week of taking the probiotic, I felt the dark cloud over me begin to lift, and after a month my depression was gone. My daughter's headache broke and her mood improved too. Now I take the probiotic three days a week for maintenance. —*Name withheld, as told to Charlotte Hilton Andersen*



doing meditative yoga reduced participants' salivary cortisol levels.

Moving Well, Eating Well

“Many people think of yoga as a fitness workout, but traditional yoga has a much greater scope,” Sherwin explains. She says that one of the key tools she uses with patients is the concept of mindfulness—or “tuning in” to the body physically, mentally and emotionally, and observing what’s happening in the moment with openness and acceptance. She says this is a powerful practice that helps break old habits and unconscious patterns of behavior.

“If you head for the cookie jar when you’re stressed, a few deep, slow breaths can help you to stop, identify the emotional need behind the craving, and allow you to choose to care for yourself and your needs in a healthier way,” she says. “Someone practicing mindfulness feels more in control of their life and well-being.”

In a 2016 study, participants involved in yoga practice also realized that they tended to notice not only the amount of food they ate, but also what type of foods they ate and the impact of eating those foods. “Subjects reported becoming aware of the effect of certain foods on their bodies

during their yoga practice, including sugar, dairy, meat and alcohol," wrote the authors of the study.

Making Weight Loss Last

Recent research shows that doing yoga long term not only can help people lose weight but also can strengthen cognitive skills to help keep it off. Jessica Unick, an associate professor at Brown University and The Miriam Hospital's Weight Control

“SOMEONE MAY BE LESS LIKELY TO ‘MINDLESSLY’ EAT WHEN NOT HUNGRY.”

and Diabetes Research Center, led a multiyear study beginning in 2019 that was the first of its kind to examine the feasibility of yoga for weight loss maintenance.

In the study, 60 overweight or obese women were enrolled in a 12-week behavioral weight loss program in which they were prescribed calorie intake and exercise goals and taught behavioral strategies for losing weight. After the 12 weeks, individuals received either 12 weeks of yoga classes or 12 weeks of cooking/dietary education classes.

“Our findings, although preliminary, suggest that yoga may help to improve long-term weight loss outcomes via improvements in distress

tolerance, mindfulness and self-compassion and a more positive mood,” Unick says. “For example, if someone experiences improvements in mindfulness, they may be less likely to ‘mindlessly’ eat in response to emotions such as boredom, stress, anger and other external stimuli like the presence of tasty foods, rather than eating only when hungry.”

She adds that someone experiencing a more positive mood who is also more self-compassionate may be less likely to overeat in response to negative emotions, or may be able to get back on track more easily after an overeating episode, versus feeling guilty about overeating and continuing to engage in unhealthy practices.

Choosing the Right Type

A 2021 study found no difference in weight loss totals for participants practicing a gentle, restorative hatha yoga versus a more vigorous vinyasa type of yoga. While some styles of yoga may be more intense than others, most of the studies support the idea that there's no one style of yoga that's best for weight loss.

“Ultimately, the best yoga is the practice that fits for you—the one you'll commit to,” says Sherwin. “There are now many accessible styles of yoga that meet you where you are no matter what your size, age, physical challenge or background. Everybody and every body can benefit from a yoga practice.” **R**



Why It's Time to Quit Vaping

BY *Kimberly Holland*

FOR ANYONE WHO thinks that vaping is a healthy alternative to smoking cigarettes, it's time to think again. Evidence is mounting that vaping—inhaling a liquid containing dozens of chemicals—causes lung damage and can even be deadly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports close to 3,000 cases and 68 deaths from a new vaping-related lung disease.

Like cigarette smoking, vaping is addictive, making it difficult to quit. And while vaping has a reputation as a teen habit, an estimated 5.7 million American adults are vaping too. Quitting might be tough, but the benefits make it worth the effort. Here's a rundown of the health improvements you'll see, starting in just minutes.

Twenty minutes after you stop ... “Your heart rate returns to normal, your blood pressure drops and your circulation starts to normalize,” says Nikola Djordjevic, MD, project manager of Med Alert Help, a public health information website.

One day later ... “Your heart attack risk starts to decrease thanks to the lowering of blood pressure and rising blood oxygen levels,” Dr. Djordjevic says.

Two days later ... Your ability to taste and smell food may have improved.

One month later ... “Your lung capacity improves; there's noticeably less shortness of breath and coughing,” says Dr. Djordjevic.

After three months ... Your blood vessels are returning to their normal diameter and your blood circulation is continuing to improve.

After nine months ... Your lungs can fight infections again “thanks to the renewal of microscopic structures that help push out mucus,” says Dr. Djordjevic.

After one year, your risk of having a heart attack is half of what it had been. After five years your stroke risk will be significantly lower, and after 10 years your cancer risk is lower too. And there will come a day when, finally, your former habit will no longer have any impact on your health.

“After 20 years, your risk factors will be similar to those who never smoked or vaped,” says Dr. Djordjevic. **R**



News FROM THE
**WORLD OF
 MEDICINE**
 BY *Mark Witten*

LOSING SLEEP CAN SNOOZE OUR RELATIONSHIPS

According to a Swedish study, after one night of no sleep, participants were more likely to interpret an angry face as less trustworthy than rested folks were. They also rated neutral and fearful faces as less attractive. This is because people spent less time analyzing facial expressions after a sleepless night, which could lead them to misinterpret the faces or overreact to them. Unfortunately, when we do this, it can lead us to withdraw socially. So next time you're feeling sensitive in this way, it's probably time for a nap.

What One Hour Away from Your Phone Can Do

More than 3.5 billion people worldwide spend an average of three hours a day glued to their smartphones—on social media, texting, checking emails. According to a German study, there's good reason to cut down. Researchers found that people who lowered their usage by one hour every day were happier, spent more time being physically active, were less depressed and reduced anxiety symptoms by more than 30%. Cutting back was more effective than total digital detox: People who had spent one hour less per day on smartphones during the one-week intervention were more likely to successfully change their habits over the long term than abstainers who had put their smartphones away entirely for a week.

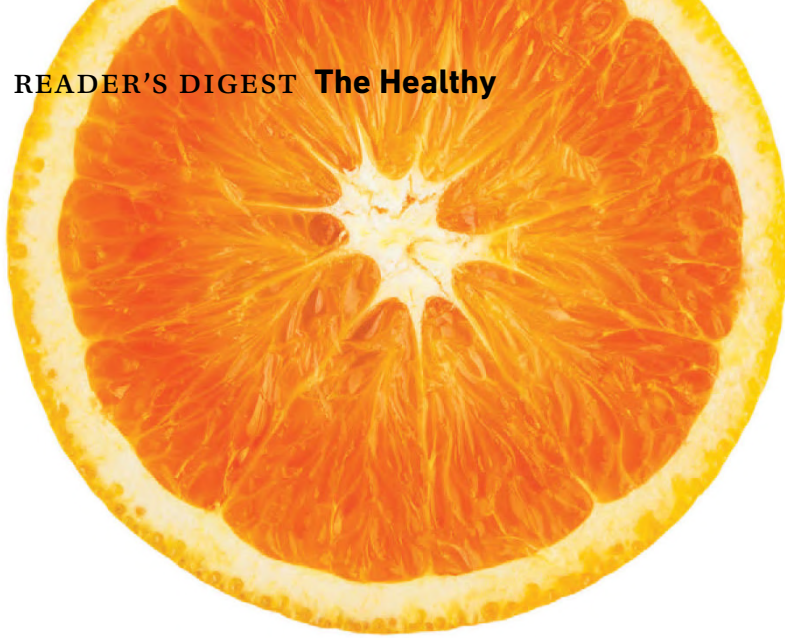
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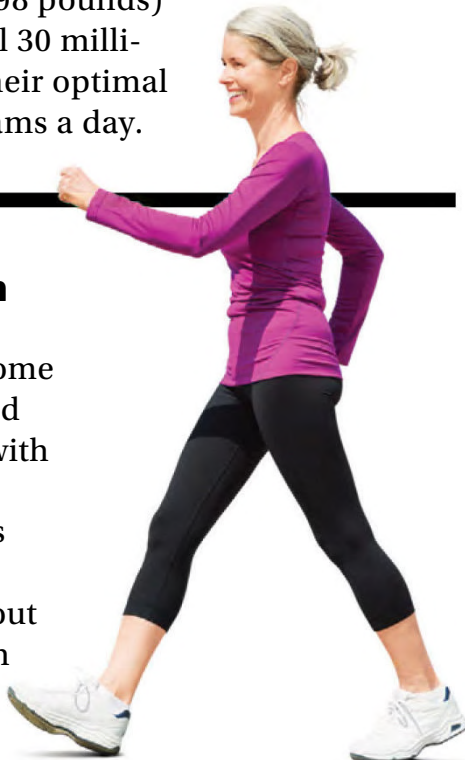


How Much Vitamin C Is Best for You?

To determine your optimal dose of vitamin C, it's best to take your weight into account. Researchers in New Zealand recommend that a person weighing 60 kilograms (132 pounds) consume 110 milligrams of vitamin C per day through a balanced diet, while someone weighing 90 kilograms (198 pounds) needs an additional 30 milligrams to achieve their optimal dose of 140 milligrams a day.

Don't Slow Down

A British study of some 400,000 adults found that fast walkers—with a walking pace of more than 3.9 miles per hour—could be expected to live about 16 years longer than slow walkers.



THE BRAIN'S POWER OVER PAIN

How patients talk to themselves about their chronic pain can either increase or diminish their suffering, according to new research from the University of Colorado. For the study, some participants with back pain underwent eight one-hour sessions of pain reprocessing therapy (PRT), a method that helps patients to parse the difference between pain hurting and causing harm. They then learn to replace the message that pain is dangerous, which immobilizes them and worsens symptoms, with the message that pain can be OK—and gentle physical movements can heal rather than harm. In the end, 66% of the people who received the treatment became totally or nearly pain-free. **R**

TETRA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES (WALKER); WACHARA KIREWONG/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES (ORANGE)

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LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*

A psychiatrist with two young sons—one a pessimist, the other an optimist—tries an experiment. For Christmas, he fills the pessimist's room with beautifully wrapped presents, while in the optimist's room he dumps a huge heap of horse manure.

On Christmas morning he finds his little pessimist, surrounded by gifts, crying, "What if I don't like any of them?" The father then walks into the next room, where he finds his optimistic son excitedly digging through

the odorous pile.

"What are you doing?" yells the father.

His optimistic son replies: "There's gotta be a pony in here somewhere!"

—CENTREFOROPTIMISM.COM

A lovely thing about Christmas is that it's compulsory, like a

thunderstorm, and we all go through it together.

—GARRISON KEILLOR, *humorist*

Jokes from the Fringe Festival, held in Edinburgh, Scotland:

◆ "I used to live hand to mouth. Do you know what changed my life? Cutlery."

—TIM VINE

◆ "I tried to steal spaghetti from the shop, but the female guard saw me and I couldn't get pasta."

—MASAI GRAHAM



"Password cannot be same as last password." OK, but why not? It's clearly very hard to guess. I couldn't crack it and I'm the one who made it.

—[@ROASTMALONE_](#)

◆ “By my age, my parents had a house and a family, and to be fair to me, so do I—but it is the same house and it is the same family.”

—HANNAH FAIRWEATHER

A weeping woman

bursts into her hypnotist’s office. “I have been faithful to my husband for 15 years, but yesterday I had an affair!” she said, sobbing. “The guilt is killing me. I just want to forget that it ever happened!”

The hypnotherapist sighs. “Not again ...”

—HAHA.CAFE

Parental Christmas Songs:

- ◆ “Jingle Bells my teen smells, he won’t take a bath”
- ◆ “Dashing out the door, late again to school”
- ◆ “All I want for Christmas is my kid to brush her teeth”
- ◆ “On the first day of Christmas my kid

gave to me, another stomach flu”

—[@MARYFAIRYBOBRRY](#)

Overheard a teenage girl ask her dad to explain what started World War II. He tried to play it cool, but I could see it in his eyes:

This was the moment he’d been waiting for for 15 years.

—[@_APF_](#)

GOT A FUNNY JOKE?

It could be worth \$\$\$. For details, go to page 4 or [RD.COM/SUBMIT](#).

A PRESENT WITH GLOWING REVIEWS

Odd gifts have a long history, dating back to the ’50s when chemistry sets, like the Gilbert U-238 Atomic Energy Lab, came with real uranium. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the U-238 set also came with a comic book featuring Blondie’s Dagwood Bumstead, titled *Learn How Dagwood Splits the Atom*. Here are a few odd gifts people on Reddit got:

“A car crash kit. It had a disposable camera for recording the scene, a form for both parties to fill out, and some chalk, for what I assume was for marking out where the dead bodies landed.”



“A set of miniature butter knives with ceramic fruit and vegetables as the handles. From an aunt who said that I was ‘so hard to shop for.’ I was 7.”

“50 pounds of russet potatoes.”

“My grandpa planned to give me a tissue box with money in it (not sure why). But he wrapped the wrong box, and I opened a box of tissues on Christmas morning.”

FROM TOP: FRANCESCO CARTA FOTOGRAFO/GETTY IMAGES. LILIBOAS/GETTY IMAGES

WHERE, OH WHERE?

Named the nation's best garden holiday lights display by *USA Today* readers four years running, this spot attracts nearly a third of its annual 1.5 million visitors from mid-November to early January, when its 400 acres twinkle with more than half a million outdoor lights. The Christmas-time crowd is big enough to fill nearby Lincoln Financial Field six times over. Guests can stroll the sprawling campus or snuggle up by several fire pits while colorful fountains dance to holiday music. Where is this? (*Answer on PAGE 111.*)

- A** Crestwood, Kentucky
- B** Kennett Square, Pennsylvania
- C** Clemson, South Carolina
- D** The Bronx, New York





Holiday Magic

*Stories of serendipity and selflessness
remind us why this is the most wonderful
time of the year*

Real Live Elves

When local kids needed more than toys, strangers started checking off Santa's list

BY *Derek Burnett*

FOR YEARS, JESSIE the Elf had been a holiday fixture in Stephanie Levinson's pre-K classroom at San Fernando Elementary School in Los Angeles County. A veteran teacher in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood, Levinson knew that her young students had it rough—some were homeless, many were in foster care, others were crammed into garages or single rooms with eight to 10 other family members—so she made sure that Jessie, the class's Elf on the Shelf, was good to them every holiday season.

It was hard to do on a teacher's salary, but from the post-Thanksgiving return until the Christmas break, every day Jessie managed to bring the kids some little token of holiday magic—a pack of crayons, a pencil, something. No matter how small the gift, her students were always grateful.

And there was a good chance it would outshine whatever their families could afford to give them. Despite

being surrounded by wealthy neighborhoods, their community was so poor that when it rained, kids came to school wearing trash bags. Some didn't brush their teeth because they didn't own a toothbrush.

Then the pandemic hit and the district switched to online learning. Zoom opened the educators' eyes to many other physical hardships their students faced. For Levinson and her colleagues, it was a peek behind the curtains into their students' home lives—and what they saw broke the teachers' hearts.

One kindergartner spent her daily six hours of Zoom hunkered at the back of a mini-mart while her father worked. Others attended virtual class from motel rooms where their families were temporarily sheltering. On screen, some students had several siblings in the background, all sharing one bed and doing online school for various grades.

Levinson began to hear a common complaint. "They would tell me they were cold," she says. "They'd be trying to type on the computer, and you could see that their little fingers were cold." It was Southern California, so the temperatures weren't frigid—but it did drop down into the 40s, and a lot of the kids were working in unheated spaces.

Levinson knew she had to do something. But on her limited means, how could she possibly keep all her students warm? She created a simple



wish list on Amazon: a blanket for each of her 24 students to stave off the cold. On the Nextdoor app, she made a heartfelt plea to the residents of her well-heeled neighborhood: “Help Keep My Students Warm and Bundled on Zoom,” she wrote. She explained the situation, pointed any potential donors toward her Amazon wish list, clicked Send and hoped for the best.

Five minutes later she got a text from a neighbor. “I’m looking at your wish list,” the message read, “but there’s nothing there.” Levinson reopened the Amazon page. Just like

that, in five minutes flat, her neighbors had fulfilled the wish in its entirety.

Quickly, Levinson reached out to her colleague who taught the school’s other pre-K class. “Can I add your class?” she asked.

“Sure!”

And just as quickly, the second class was showered with donated blankets. Still more messages came in: “We want to buy. We want to help. There’s nothing there.”

So Levinson looped in a third classroom and kept updating the wish

list. How about hoodies for the kids? Scarves? Mittens? Umbrellas? School supplies?

Her plea had gone viral, and in the days that followed, it seemed that whatever she asked for, generous donors—from California to Texas to Pennsylvania—were willing to provide.

EACH OF THE SCHOOL'S 600 STUDENTS RECEIVED A BACKPACK FILLED WITH SUPPLIES.

Levinson had always been touched by how caring and generous her students were. If they received some small gift, they'd often ask shyly if they could share it with their siblings. If classmates were having a bad day, their little friends would surround them with questions and hugs, seeking to make things better.

So, when the donations came pouring in, Jessie the Elf joined Levinson's Zoom class to deliver an important message: "I hear you're being good! You'll be getting rewards soon, and gifts from Santa."

The packages piled up in Levinson's one-bedroom apartment. With the help of colleagues, she'd sort the

donations and carry them to a distribution point for grateful parents to pick up. Often the kids were along for the ride, giving Levinson another chance to reiterate Jessie the Elf's message: "Jessie brought all these things because you're working so hard and you're so kind. She wants you to be warm and happy, because you make her happy every day." And each new morning, Jessie made her appearance on Zoom to reveal what new reward the kids' generous behavior had wrought.

Christmas comes but once a year, but giving knows no calendar. As the summer of 2021 drew to a close, and students and teachers prepared to return to in-person schooling, Levinson started hearing from her pool of donors. "We want to help with back-to-school," they said. "Do you need stuff? Can we help?"

With school supplies as expensive as they are, of course the families needed help. Once again, Levinson put up a wish list, and the response was so overwhelming that she arranged for each of the school's 600 students to receive a backpack filled with supplies.

For Christmas 2021, the community again came bearing gifts, and Jessie the Elf again did her part by distilling the enormous generosity down to fit

a child's magical worldview. So many items poured into the school that the library stood unusable for weeks, piled as it was with packages. Besides the blankets, hats, gloves, scarves, hoodies, umbrellas and backpacks, the kids received toys, play dough, art supplies, water bottles, fuzzy robes, markers, stuffed animals, books, pajamas, socks, jackets, printers for their classrooms, tablets and more.

"Parents were in awe of the generosity of complete strangers," says Jennifer Valdemar, the school's assistant principal. At the end of a school day when cars lined up to collect the kids, she says, it was not uncommon for parents to roll down their windows and ask, "Who can I thank? How can I thank them?"

Monique Luna was one of those parents. "I don't think there's enough words," she says. "There's not enough thank-yous to give to them. Especially during the pandemic, when we were all suffering, still there's somebody willing to help out a random person they don't even know. I wish there was more I could say or do to thank them."

But most of the donors were happy to remain anonymous. Like Levinson, they were not in it for the publicity or even for the thanks, but because their hearts couldn't bear

to see kids lacking basic necessities.

For Levinson, one of the great surprises in all of this was just who chose to give so selflessly. On neighborhood forums, she says, "there's so much slander and hate and political stuff. People bashing teachers. But when something like this comes up, everybody jumps in to help, even the people who have been so negative. It's just beautiful. It's just absolute community. I've cried a lot."

For the students of San Fernando Elementary School, their universe is simple. "They absolutely, 100 percent believe that Jessie brings all this stuff, and that their kindness is why it's happening," Levinson says. "I love that they believe this."

In the world of a young child, what matters is being kind and caring, looking out for one another, sharing what you have. Jessie the Elf represents a 2,000-year-old narrative in which a severely disadvantaged child—one born to penniless parents in a drafty barn—would go on to teach the world that it's the children who have it right, that our differences are trivial and that love is the thing that matters most. In our troubled times, it's easy to believe that the lesson has been lost. But it hasn't. It's just that sometimes we need the little children to reawaken it in us. **R**



A Home for Christmas?

An expectant couple and a wise man (not the ones you're thinking)

BY *Derek Burnett*

IT WAS IN the bleak midwinter, and the wayfaring couple trudged through the frigid night, seeking shelter. The father-to-be scanned the roadside for some home, some inn, some stable where his struggling

companion might rest safely for the night. He looked over at her frequently. She labored along, her way made heavier by the new life growing inside her. They needed a warm, dry place safe from the bitter wind. When her time came, it must not be out here along the roadway.

Their names were not Mary and Joseph, but Pepper and Cooper. Nor were they man and wife, but rather a pair of beagles, and the place was not Bethlehem but Bethel, Ohio, on a rural highway outside of town.

That December night, Gus Kiebel, a county wildlife officer, was driving home from work when he spotted the pair in the flash of his headlights. It was snowing so hard it was difficult

to see, but he could tell the dogs were wearing collars and tags. What were they doing out here on this stretch of road? He parked his truck and approached the animals.

Gus squatted and stretched out his hands to the beagles, which made no effort to escape. Gus read their tags by his truck's headlights. He pulled out his phone to call the number listed, but it was snowing so hard that his screen blurred.

He placed the dogs in his truck, on the floor of the passenger side. By the time he came around to the driver's side, he found that they had climbed onto the passenger seat and were snuggled together there. Gus dried his phone, snapped a picture of the pair and sent it to his wife, Katie Kiebel.

Then he dialed the number from the dogs' tags. A man answered and immediately grew defensive when Gus told him why he was calling.

"I gave those dogs away," the man said. "They're not mine anymore."

"Well, do you want them back?"

"No. I can't take care of them."

The man hung up.

These beagles—who looked ragged and uncared for—were abandoned, then. No home at all in this world. Gus looked over at them, their large hound eyes pleading. Gus called the county dog warden's office, but it was after hours, so he left a message. Then he called Katie.

"You cannot put them back in the snow," she said. "Bring them home."

The Kiebels prepared a bed for the dogs in a crate on their warm enclosed porch, and laid out food and water. The exhausted animals lay together, Cooper, the male, periodically lifting his head to fuss over Pepper.

Although Gus had dreamed of owning beagles as a boy, keeping this pair was out of the question—the Kiebels already had a dog. But he knew someone at a no-kill shelter, the League for Animal Welfare in nearby Batavia.

THESE BEAGLES WERE ABANDONED, THEN. NO HOME AT ALL IN THIS WORLD.

The next day, Katie took the dogs to the shelter to drop them off—on one condition. "I'm not signing the dogs over to you if you're going to separate them," she said. The shelter workers promised her they'd keep the couple together.

In the days following, Katie phoned the shelter repeatedly to check up on Pepper and Cooper. Soon after Christmas, the beagles were adopted—as a pair, to a loving family.

It's a simple story—kindhearted people give shelter to a vagabond couple—but it speaks to the best of our nature. And when kindness and love triumph over cruelty and neglect, it can feel like the greatest miracle of all. **R**

An Old Friend Comes Through

The year Santa's suit went from signature red to true blue

BY *Tammy Rabideau*

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

ON A FRIDAY evening in December, two weeks before Christmas, I lost my job. I hadn't seen it coming. I was excited for the weekend, when my daughter, Kristil, then 12, and I planned to get our Christmas tree. Then I listened to my voicemail: "We're sorry but your work assignment has ended as of today." My heart sank.

I wasn't just a single parent; I was the only parent. My paycheck was survival.

The next day as we searched for our tree, I struggled to be cheerful as I eyed each price tag.

"Is everything OK?" Kristil asked. "You seem worried."

"I got some bad news yesterday," I told her. "I lost my job."

"Oh no," Kristil said. "Well, I have \$100 from Grandma I can give you."

"Absolutely not," I told her.

Monday morning, I dropped Kristil at school and set off on my moneymaking pursuits. I headed to the pawnshop with a garnet ring set in 14-karat gold that my mother had given me a decade earlier.

"Best I can do is \$70," the owner said. "The stones are worthless. We're only interested in the gold."

Next was the antiques store. I sold six Precious Moments figurines for \$150 and ended the day \$220 richer.

Over the next week, I furiously applied for jobs as my bank account grew smaller. I felt as if the world was closing in on me.

On a weekend afternoon, I dropped Kristil in a wealthy gated community for a birthday party. I watched as she went in, surrounded by all the nice things we couldn't afford. I drove home defeated.

Back at home, I glanced out the window. It had been snowing on and off all morning. I noticed a petite woman with short white hair struggling to open her car door against the wind. As she got out, I realized it was my old professor, Sister Esther Hefferman. I hadn't seen her since we'd met for lunch three months ago.

I'd first met Sister Esther 10 years earlier when I was her student at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin. Kristil was 3 at the time, and I sometimes took her to class. Sister Esther was understanding and would bring coloring books to occupy Kristil.



Even after I graduated, Sister Esther kept in touch. I had grown to love her like family.

I rushed to the front of my building. “What are you doing out in this weather?” I asked as we hugged.

“Well, I tried to call last week but couldn’t get through. Then I called your job and they said you weren’t working there anymore, so I thought I would come by,” Sister Esther said. “I have gifts for you and Kristil.”

I made her a cup of tea, and we talked. Just being in Sister Esther’s presence gave me hope that things would be all right.

As she got up to leave, she handed me a Christmas card. “This is for you,” she said as she kissed me on the cheek. I walked her to her car and waved as she pulled away.

When I opened her card, I gasped in shock. Hundred-dollar bills fell onto the table. Tears of gratitude puddled in my eyes as I counted. Sister Esther had given me \$1,000.

On Christmas morning, Kristil and I gathered around

our tree, and I joyfully watched as she opened her gifts. I silently thanked Sister Esther in my heart.

It has been 14 years since that Christmas, but I’ve never forgotten what Sister Esther did for us. In 2020, at age 91, Sister Esther died, but the love she gave during her life lives on in the hearts of many. I am lucky to be one of them. **R**

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Mixed Metaphors

The pen can’t be mightier than the sword if actions speak louder than words.

Someone needs to make up their mind here!

@MISTERD78UK

YOUR TRUE STORIES

Secret Santas

*The big guy's best-kept secret?
He's got elves everywhere.*

BY *Reader's Digest* Readers



STEFAN TOMIC/GETTY IMAGES

I'd Like to Propose a Roast

Our entire household caught COVID-19 just a few days before Christmas. Amid the stress, I forgot that I'd already ordered a rib roast for our holiday dinner. When the butcher called to tell us it was ready, I told him that, unfortunately, we'd caught COVID and couldn't pick it up. He replied, "I'll drop it off when I get off work. You shouldn't be without Christmas dinner." The doorbell rang at 5:15 p.m. The roast was hanging on the doorknob. The butcher waved from the end of the driveway, and I asked how to pay. He said, "Merry Christmas. Just get better."

—VICTORIA SEFRANEK *Bethlehem, PA*

thank them, but it's been 51 years and I still remember their faces.

—JOANNE NICHOLS *Niceville, FL*



Earning His Wings

I was fresh out of college and had my first business trip on Dec. 26. That morning, I said goodbye to my visiting family and left for the airport—or tried. My car battery was zapped. It was pre-cellphone. My family had already left my new place, I didn't know anyone in the area and there were no cabs. It was my first real job. I was supposed to meet executives at the airport and board the corporate jet. Panicked, I started walking the 5 miles to the office. It was pitch black and snowing. I must've been a sight: a suit walking along a slushy road at 5:30 a.m., struggling with my luggage and briefcase. Before long, a motorist stopped and graciously offered me a ride. I made it to the airport on time, and laughter replaced my fear of getting fired as I shared the tale of my crazy morning with the happy outcome, thanks to the kindness of a stranger.

—ROBERT OWSIANY *Canal Fulton, OH*



Guardian Angels

It was my first Christmas as a newlywed and mother in Cadillac, Michigan. I had our Christmas shopping fund in cash in my pocket. But when I got to the register, it was gone. I retraced my steps and found two strangers standing guard over my bank envelope on the aisle floor. I guess the relief on my face was enough evidence it belonged to me. They walked away before I could



A Forest of Goodwill

In my early 20s, I was poor and living alone, and desperately wanted a

Christmas tree. The year before I had done without. I went to the Lions Club lot and told them I had only \$10, but did they have a little Charlie Brown tree I could buy? The wonderful man looked at me and said I could pick any tree I wanted. From then on, I always bought my trees from them.

—DOROTHY DOUGHTY *Carlsbad, CA*

Clearing Things Up

I had 16 inches of snow to clear just before Christmas. After struggling for nearly four hours, I was ready for a break. But there was still a 3-foot snowbank at the end of the driveway. As I mustered the energy to make an opening for the mail carrier, the city plow driver paused his route to clear it for me. I was cold, exhausted and so thankful I wanted to cry. This gentleman made a 60-year-old woman's day. I chalk it up to the Christmas spirit.

—LARAINE BOGOSIAN *Waltham, MA*

Points Well-Taken

My husband and I were at checkout with a full cart of groceries just after Thanksgiving. Money was tight and the bill was adding up. We started picking which items to put back. Suddenly, a woman appeared, begging us to let her pay. She said she needed the points on her credit card. She swiped, signed and disappeared. My husband, the cashier and I were all stunned. Moments earlier, we were worrying about how we would buy Christmas

gifts for our grandkids. Now we had groceries and plenty of Christmas cash.

—KIRSTEN MOSELEY *Lisbon, ME*

Ave, Grande, Venti, Trenta

My father's favorite song was "Ave Maria." He'd sing it every morning while he got ready for work. Last year, while I was shopping, I heard his song playing in a coffee shop. I automatically thought of my dad, who had passed years ago, and I got teary-eyed. When my coffee was ready, the barista handed it to me and said, "Merry Christmas. The person in front of you paid and asked me to deliver the message."

—CONNIE LIGHTFOOT *Cincinnati, OH*

A Class Act

One Christmas, I was buying gifts for my Sunday school class: an angel-ornament picture frame and some candy for each student. On the way



to the register, I saw *The Christmas Fox*, a wonderful book to help kids (and adults) understand that it's not what you bring, but that you come. I stopped in the aisle to count my cash and realized I was blocking a couple's path. I apologized and explained, then moved over and resumed counting. I was short by a few dollars. As I debated whether I should buy the ornaments or the books, the woman gave me a handful of bills and told me to buy both. For me, Christmas is always sweeter because of the memory of this generous stranger.

—KYMBERLY PARKER *Hackett, AR* 




My Brother, My Hero

Shortly before I was born, my father, making a Christmas promise he never expected to keep, told my brother that if I arrived on his birthday, he could name me. This is how, for a short while, I was known as Clark Kent Loggins.

KENNY LOGGINS, IN THE BOOK STILL ALRIGHT





UNEXPECTED CASUALTIES IN THE WAR ON BOOKS

Librarians were once considered honorable public servants, but today, local book-banning efforts cast them as the enemy

BY Elizabeth A. Harris AND Alexandra Alter

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

WESTEND61/GETTY IMAGES (BACKGROUND). AJT/GETTY IMAGES (BOOKS)



Martha Hickson, a high school librarian in Annandale, New Jersey, heard in fall 2021 that some parents were going to call for her library to ban certain books. So at 7 p.m., when she and her husband would usually watch *Jeopardy!*, she got comfortable in her recliner and turned on a livestream of the local school board meeting.

A parent stood up and denounced two books, *Lawn Boy* and *Gender Queer*, calling them pornographic. Both books, award winners with LGBTQ characters and frank depictions of sex, have been challenged around the country. They were available at the North Hunterdon High School library, where Hickson worked. Then the woman called out Hickson by name for allowing her 16-year-old son to check out the books.

“This amounts to an effort to groom our kids to make them more willing to participate in the heinous acts described in these books,” said the parent, Gina DeLusant, according to a video recording of the meeting. “It grooms them to accept the inappropriate advances of an adult.”

Hickson said the accusation left her sick to her stomach, with a tightness in her chest. “I was stunned,” she said. “I couldn’t believe it.”

As highly visible and politicized book bans have exploded across the country, librarians—accustomed to being seen as dedicated public servants in their communities—have found themselves on the front lines of an acrimonious culture war, with their careers and personal reputations at risk.

They have been labeled pedophiles on social media, called out by local politicians and reported to law

**1,597 BOOKS WERE
CHALLENGED IN 2021,
THE MOST SINCE THE
LIBRARY ORGANIZATION
BEGAN TRACKING.**



enforcement officials. Some librarians have quit after being harassed online. Others have been fired for refusing

to remove books from circulation.

In many communities, putting books on the shelves has become a polarizing act and has “turned librarians into this political pawn,” said Ami Uselman, the director of library and media services for Round Rock Independent School District in Texas.

“You can imagine our librarians feel scared,” she said, “like their character was in question.”

Librarians are taught to curate well-rounded collections that represent a range of viewpoints, especially on contentious topics, according to the American Library Association. They use award lists, reviews and other publications to inform their choices.

Addressing book challenges has always been part of the job, but efforts to ban books have spiked over the past year, reflecting a clash over whether and how to teach children about issues like LGBTQ rights and racial inequality. The library association tracked 1,597 books that were challenged in 2021, the highest number since the organization began tracking bans 20 years ago.



Librarian Martha Hickson said that when the personal attacks started, she lost sleep over it.

Traditionally, concerned community members might approach the library staff to discuss a title. Parents could often prevent their children from checking out specific books. Or, if they thought a title should be removed from circulation, they could fill out a form to start a reconsideration process in which the book’s suitability would be reviewed by a committee.

These challenges would come from both the right and the left—there might be objections to LGBTQ

characters or to the racial slurs in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Those quieter confrontations continue today, librarians said, but conflicts around books have drastically escalated. Now, the Proud Boys, a right-wing extremist group, might show up at a school board meeting because books are on the agenda, as they did in November 2021 in Downers Grove, Illinois. In June 2022, members of the Proud Boys disrupted a drag queen–hosted library story hour for families in San Lorenzo, California, and an LGBTQ-themed story time at Pine Valley Library in Wilmington, North Carolina.

In Cabot, Arkansas, the local police department investigated a woman who said that if she “had any mental issues,” staff at a local school library would be “plowed down” with a gun, according to a police report. The police determined that the incident—which took place at a meeting of Moms for Liberty, a group that has pushed for book bans



Some of the books that were questioned at a New Jersey school library

around the country—was not made in the context of a threat, and that there was no need to file charges.

Frequently, these battles are portrayed as liberal librarians defending left-wing books, but Carolyn Foote, a retired librarian and a founder of the group FReadom Fighters, which organizes to defend librarians, said the idea that everyone in the profession is liberal isn't true, especially in Texas, where she lives. For most librarians, she said, the issue is not one of politics but of professional ethics.

“It’s crushing,” she said of efforts to restrict access to certain books. “You know what your job is, you know what the best practices and standards are for your profession, and you’re being made to do things that you know violate all of that.”

Increasingly, the personal and professional integrity of librarians is also being called into question.

In May 2022, Tim Anderson, a Republican state representative in Virginia Beach, Virginia, filed a Freedom of Information Act request to learn the identities of librarians at schools that had books some parents complained included sexually explicit material.

“The question is: How are pervasively vulgar books getting into the schools?” he said. “Is it the librarians that are doing this?”

Some of the conflicts have gotten so heated that people have tried to seek criminal charges against librarians. In Hickson’s district in New Jersey, a

complaint was made to the Clinton Township Police Department about obscene materials in a library book. The Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office said none of the information it received indicated criminal conduct. In Granbury, Texas, a county constable opened an investigation about books available in a high school library after receiving a complaint.

Many librarians have quit—or lost their jobs—after clashes over books. In March 2022, Suzette Baker was fired as the head of Kingsland Branch Library in Llano County, Texas, after she repeatedly refused to remove books as county officials had demanded, according to a lawsuit. Residents filed the lawsuit the following month against the county officials, saying they had violated the First Amendment by censoring books. Among the titles the officials wanted removed were two books that deal with racism: *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi and *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Debbie Chavez, who worked as a librarian for 18 years, decided to leave the profession after a parent who met with her to discuss his objections to *Lawn Boy* posted excerpts from their conversation on Facebook, and commenters called for Chavez to be fired and said she was “grooming children.” She received vicious messages on her school email, she said, and ultimately left her job as a high school librarian in Round Rock, Texas.



FAMOUS REPEAT OFFENDERS

These classics have made multiple appearances on the American Library Association's "Most Challenged Books of the Year" lists since 2000.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
by Mark Twain

The Bluest Eye
by Toni Morrison

To Kill a Mockingbird
by Harper Lee

Of Mice and Men
by John Steinbeck

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
by Sherman Alexie

Harry Potter (series)
by J.K. Rowling

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
by Maya Angelou

The Catcher in the Rye
by J.D. Salinger

The Kite Runner
by Khaled Hosseini

The Color Purple
by Alice Walker

“It was horrific to see that my words were being used as a rallying cry for the book censors, and to see that my conversation had been misrepresented,” she said. “And I was supposed to still get dressed and go to school and do my job.”

Tonya Ryals resigned as the assistant director of the Jonesboro Public Library in Craighead County, Arkansas, in February 2022 after her library board introduced a slate of new policies, including requiring board approval for every new book acquired for the children’s collection. The policies were voted down, but the vitriol she encountered online became too much, she said.

“THERE WERE COMMENTS ABOUT LIBRARY STAFF ... SAYING ALL THE BOOKS NEEDED TO BE BURNED.”



“There were comments about library staff, calling us groomers and pedophiles and saying we needed to be fired, we needed to be jailed, we needed to be locked up, that all the books needed to be burned,” she said. “It got to a certain point where I thought, *Do I want to live here? Is this something I can subject myself to?*”

Sometimes the books in question

disappear from the shelves, even though library policies generally dictate that books should remain available until the challenge process is complete. Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom at the American Library Association, said her office has received reports that some groups are checking out books they deem objectionable so other readers don’t get the chance.

Libraries also face increasing pressure from legislators who are crafting new laws and procedures intended to make it easier to remove books that are challenged. At least five states, including Arizona, Georgia and Kentucky, have passed laws that change the way libraries handle complaints about material, or the way library board members are appointed, according to EveryLibrary, a political action committee for libraries.

Many states have laws that shield teachers, researchers and librarians from prosecution so they can use educational materials that some might consider objectionable. Those laws are also being challenged.

Oklahoma recently passed a law



IAN THOMAS JANSEN-LONNQUIST/THE NEW YORK TIMES



Tonya Ryals left her library job in Arkansas and began asking herself, “Do I want to live here?”

that will remove exemptions for teachers and librarians “from prosecution for willful violations of state law prohibiting indecent exposure to obscene material or child pornography.” To some librarians, the moment has been especially jarring because when the pandemic restrictions were in place, they were hailed as heroes for delivering books and laptops to students at home.

Now, librarians are seen by some as villains, said Audrey Wilson-Youngblood, a library services coordinator in Texas.

“It felt like a knife in my heart,” she said of allegations that library staff members were doing harm to students. “That grief is what led me to make really difficult decisions, to make changes for myself and my family.”

Wilson-Youngblood resigned in June 2022 from her position at the Keller Independent School District because of the toll the stress was taking on her family. She had worked there for 19 years. **R**

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WINNING AGAINST CANCER

THESE BREAKTHROUGHS ARE
REASONS FOR REAL HOPE

BY LIA GRAINGER

A CANCER DIAGNOSIS NO longer means what it used to. Just a few decades ago, the survival rate beyond five years was less than 50%. Now, nearly 70% of those who get cancer survive that long, and that proportion is set to rise. Why? Because, more than ever, chemotherapy and radiation, once the only heavy hitters of cancer treatment, are being paired with or replaced by a slate of new drugs and treatments.

For example, the first medication for what was previously considered an “undruggable” lung cancer mutation was recently approved in the United States, Canada, Europe and the U.K. And a brand-new precision chemotherapy drug delivered directly to breast cancer tumor cells is giving hope to patients with the aggressive HER2-positive form of the disease.

An even bigger newsmaker has been the promise of a treatment called immunotherapy, as researchers around the world have discovered ways to harness the body's own immune system to battle cancer cells.

Also driving hope is a focus on prevention. Decades of research and public education have led to greater awareness of how lifestyle changes can reduce our risk of developing cancer. According to an article from the journal *Pharmaceutical Research* and published by the National Institutes of Health, 90% to 95% of cancers can be attributed to environment and lifestyle, rather than to genetic factors.



Here are some of the strides scientists are making against cancer.

PREVENTION

▶ HPV VACCINE

Cervical cancer was once one of the most common women's cancers and the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. In recent decades, Pap test screening led to a decline. But a preventive tool in use for more than a decade—a vaccine against the human papilloma virus (HPV), which is responsible for more than 95% of cervical cancer cases—has been a game changer. Here's how:

◆ Since 2006, when the vaccine was introduced in North America, HPV infections have dropped more than 80% among teen girls and young women

in the United States.

◆ A study published in the *Lancet* at the end of 2021 found that in England, where the immunization program was introduced in 2008, cervical cancer has been almost completely eliminated in women born since 1995 (those who were vaccinated at ages 12 or 13).

◆ An 11-year Swedish study of 1.7 million women published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2020 indicated that women

vaccinated before age 17 were 90% less likely to get cervical cancer.

◆ In March 2022, Australia announced that it was on track to become the first country to eliminate the cancer.

The World Health Organization's goal is for 90% of girls to be vaccinated globally by 2030, eventually eliminating cervical cancer entirely.

▶ MRNA CANCER VACCINES

The speedy development of COVID-19 vaccines was thanks to foundations already laid by researchers who had been working for years to create mRNA vaccines to fight cancer. These vaccines use a specially programmed molecule to activate an immune response in the body's cells. Unlike

the COVID-19 vaccines designed to help protect billions of people, each cancer mRNA vaccine is tailor-made to treat a single patient's cancerous tumors. Dozens of clinical trials testing their effectiveness against a range of cancers, including pancreatic, are underway.

"In theory, this personalized approach can be made for everyone, and for every cancer," says Patrick Ott, director of the Center for Personal Cancer Vaccines at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

SCREENING

► GALLERI BLOOD TEST

Catching cancer early can be challenging. Current screening methods in wide use—for example, the mammogram since the 1970s and the colonoscopy since the 1990s—look for one type of cancer. And blood tests look for markers like blood cell count as

well as proteins and chemicals made by cancer cells, but these tests are not highly specific; they are often used only after cancer has been detected by another method.

Now, a test known as Galleri, made by California-based global biotechnology company Grail, promises to detect more than 50 types of cancers with one blood draw. Galleri detects tumor-generated genetic material that has entered the bloodstream; it reveals the presence of cancer and

**THE GALLERI TEST
DETECTED CANCER
50% OF THE TIME.**

where it originated. In a study published in the *Annals of Oncology* in June 2021, researchers found that the

"HALLELUJAH!"

► **SUSAN FALBO** had gone 20 years without taking a sick day. So it came as a shock in 2017 when doctors told the 59-year-old Shadyside, Ohio, resident that she had mesothelioma cancer in the membrane covering her right lung. Surgery, 30 rounds of radiation and four rounds of chemotherapy stabilized her for a year, but then tumors began to grow again. She recalls one oncologist telling her, "You know you're not going to survive this, right?" Then she discovered she was a prime candidate for a trial using immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) therapy along with the drugs nivolumab and ipilimumab. She began in October 2019, and within three months, all four of her tumors had shrunk. Today, three are virtually gone, and the fourth has shrunk by three-quarters. "I'll hit my five-year mark in September," says Falbo. "Hallelujah!"

test detected cancers more than 50% of the time and predicted a cancer's origin with 89% accuracy.

The test holds particular promise for cancers such as pancreatic and ovarian, which are so deadly because symptoms are elusive and there are no screening methods. This past June, the U.K.'s National Health Service announced a massive trial of 140,000 participants to assess Galleri's effectiveness.

TREATMENTS

► ENHERTU

Though breast cancer mortality rates have been falling for three decades, it's still the most common cancer in the U.S. (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) and in Europe. One of

the deadliest types is that in which the tumors overproduce a protein called HER2. Affecting about 1 in 5 breast cancer patients, this type usually grows and spreads faster than other breast cancers—and is more likely to return after treatment.

But in 2019 in the U.S. and in 2021 in Canada, Europe and the U.K., Trastuzumab deruxtecan (Enhertu) was approved. The precision chemotherapy drug dramatically slows progress of this aggressive cancer.

"This is very important," says Rebecca Roylance, a medical oncologist at University College London Hospitals. Dr. Roylance specializes in breast cancer and was involved in administering the U.K. trials of Enhertu. "A drug that is well tolerated is so



“LIKE PAC-MAN”

► **IN 2010**, Owen Snider, then 63, was diagnosed with lymphoma. Chemotherapy sent the disease into remission. When it returned in 2016, Snider had a stem cell transplant. But when his lymphoma returned again in 2020, doctors told him he had a few months to live. Then he got a call: There was a spot in a CAR T-cell immunotherapy trial. “It was a ray of hope,” says the retiree, who lives near Ottawa in Ontario. Doctors extracted T-cells and sent them to a lab where they were genetically modified and allowed to multiply. Meanwhile, Snider received three days of a milder chemo treatment, and then doctors injected him with the modified cells. “They went to work like Pac-Man, chomping up all the cancer cells,” says Snider. Thirty days later, there was no trace of lymphoma. Now, two years on, he is still cancer-free.

important to improve patients’ quality of life despite the impact of their cancer and treatment,” she says.

It works by transporting a chemotherapy drug directly to HER2 tumor cells to destroy them. Enhertu delivers more than double the chemo payload of existing treatments, and also destroys nearby cancerous cells. An international trial published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in July 2022 showed that patients taking Enhertu went a median of 10 months without tumor growth compared to about five months with the current standard treatment.

► LUMAKRAS

Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer in Canada and the United States, accounting for almost a quarter of cancer deaths here. It’s the leading cancer killer in Europe, too, causing 20% of cancer deaths there.

Until very recently, there were no drugs to treat lung cancers caused by a dangerous mutation in the KRAS G12C gene. The mutation, which causes the cancerous cells to duplicate wildly, affects about 13% of patients. Currently, the only treatment has been additional chemotherapy that might give these patients a few more months, at most, to live.

A new KRAS-inhibiting drug that has been recently approved for use could transform that prognosis.

“IT OFFERS HOPE TO PATIENTS WHOSE PROGNOSIS IS GRIM.”

Results of a phase-one trial published in June 2021 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* are promising.

Patients previously treated with both chemotherapy and immunotherapy took a daily sotorasib pill (brand name Lumakras). Around 40% of patients experienced tumor shrinkage of 30% or more. And according to a recent update, 1 in 3 was still alive two years after starting treatment.

“It offers hope to patients whose prognosis is grim,” says Ferdinandos Skoulidis, an oncologist at the MD Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas and the lead author of the groundbreaking study. “It’s a hugely important discovery.”

► **IMMUNOTHERAPY**

Immunotherapy alters cells in the body’s immune system, allowing them to recognize and fight cancer cells. The field is barely a decade old, yet it dominates cancer research: Nearly 5,000 immunotherapy cancer trials are being conducted worldwide.

“There has been a revolution in the treatment of several cancer types in recent years thanks to immunotherapies,” says Marco Donia, a medical oncologist at Denmark’s National Center for Cancer Immune Therapy.

The field is so groundbreaking that in 2018, immunologists James P. Allison of the United States and Tasuku Honjo of Japan were awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for their discovery of the principle behind immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICIs), the most common type of immunotherapy cancer treatment used today.

The treatment, administered intravenously, is used against many cancers but is particularly successful against lung, skin and some colon cancers. The effects of ICIs can last long after treatment ends. A 2021 survey of progress made in the treatment of melanoma, published in the journal *Cancers*, reports that ICI combination

“I HAVE FAITH IN THIS MEDICINE”

► **IT WAS 2017** when Susanne Andersson Barkels, then 36, of Stockholm, Sweden, noticed lumps in her breast and armpit. Doctors diagnosed her with the aggressive HER2-positive breast cancer. After enduring chemotherapy, surgery and radiation, her cancer went into remission. But by 2021 it had metastasized to her spine and brain. She underwent more treatment, but the tumors continued to grow. Then her oncologist told her about a new drug that targets HER2-positive breast cancers: Enhertu had just been approved in Europe. After three doses, the largest tumor in Barkels’s brain had shrunk by more than 50%. She continues taking Enhertu, hoping to shrink it further. “I have faith in this medicine,” says Barkels, “and I have hope that other new cancer treatments are on the way.”



therapy results in long-term survival for more than 50% of metastatic melanoma patients.

“This is the first time we’re seeing patients with solid cancers with a six-month median survival rate essentially being cured,” says Dr. Donia. (“Solid” cancers are those with tumor masses, as opposed to “liquid” cancers, such as those that occur in blood.)

Another type of immunotherapy, called Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy (or adoptive cell transfer), also shows great promise. The personalized immunotherapy, first used in 2017, involves extracting some disease-fighting white T-cells from a patient’s blood, genetically engineering them to recognize and target a specific cancer protein, and then reintroducing them into the patient’s bloodstream. Then they circulate, attacking and destroying cancer

cells. The therapy has been shown to add years of life to people with blood cancers.

The treatment has been approved for specific types of adult lymphoma and child and youth leukemia in the U.S., Canada and Europe, but because it is so individually tailored, CAR T-cell therapy is used relatively rarely—and it’s expensive. Researchers are investigating development of universal CAR T-cell therapy.

In Canada, a national trial of CAR T-cell therapy is underway. Results so far have been promising: For 13 of the 30 people enrolled, cancer cells can no longer be detected in their blood, according to Natasha Kekre, a scientist and hematologist at The Ottawa Hospital and the trial’s principal investigator.

“This will allow us to cure so many people,” she says. **R**

'I HAVE NO IDEA
HOW TO FLY
THIS
PLANE!'

*A passenger gets an emergency
flying lesson when his pilot passes out
10,000 feet above the ocean*

BY *Robert Kiener*



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The selfie Darren Harrison has just taken shows him dressed casually in white shorts and a T-shirt with his bare feet propped up on a plush gray leather seat. He is the lone passenger in the roomy six-seat cabin of a single-engine Cessna 208 turboprop some 12,000 feet above the Atlantic off the east coast of Florida.

He sends the photo to his wife, Brittney Harrison, who is six months pregnant with their first child. Harrison, a 39-year-old flooring sales executive, is returning to his home in Lakeland, Florida, after taking part in an offshore deep-sea fishing tournament in Marsh Harbour, Bahamas.

It's around noon. The early May weather is perfect and the views—brilliant blue skies and crystalline ocean below—are drop-dead beautiful. The plane is being flown by Ken Allen, a 64-year-old veteran pilot. To Allen's right in the co-pilot's seat is his friend Russ Franck, 70. Franck's no pilot, but he does enjoy going along for the ride.

Some 45 minutes into their scheduled 75-minute flight to Treasure Coast International Airport in Fort Pierce, Florida, air traffic controllers in Miami clear Allen to begin his approach to Fort Pierce, which is now some 70 miles to the west. They instruct him to descend to 10,000 feet.

"November 333 Lima Delta, Roger, Miami Center," says Allen, using the plane's call sign.

A few minutes later, as Allen continues his descent, the right side of his head starts pounding: *Boom! Boom! Boom!* Every time his heart beats, Allen feels as if his head is being hit with a hammer.

What the heck ...? Allen wonders as he winces in pain. Out of his right eye, he begins seeing bright blue lights flashing.

THE PLANE IS NOW CAREENING TOWARD THE SEA WITHOUT A PILOT.

"Guys. I don't feel good!" he tells Harrison and Franck. The pain is severe. The pounding intensifies. His voice shaking, he says, "Everything is fuzzy!"

Harrison answers immediately, "What does that mean?"

"I don't know. My head is killing me! I don't ..." Allen suddenly stops talking and Harrison watches him



slump back in his seat. The plane is now careening toward the sea without a pilot.

Harrison manages to undo his seat belt and, fighting G-forces that want to pin him back to his seat, stumbles a few feet to Allen. He and Franck try to rouse Allen. No response. The pilot is unconscious. And the plane is out of control, plummeting in a deep, dizzying 340-mile-per-hour dive to the ocean below.

Instead of blue sky, the two men see whitecaps on waves below that are getting bigger and bigger as the plane continues to drop to 9,000, then 8,000, then 7,000 feet. The Cessna Caravan's automatic emergency alarms are wailing. Although he's never taken a flying lesson, Harrison has flown on enough small planes and observed enough pilots to know that he has to pull back on the plane's yoke to bring the plane's nose up. But



he has to do it slowly or the motor could stall, or the wings may be ripped off. Squatting behind Allen's seat, he reaches over the unconscious pilot and grabs the yoke while Franck grabs the co-pilot's yoke.

As the plane falls, both Harrison and Franck struggle to level off the plane, which has dropped nearly 4,000 feet in 30 seconds. Soon, the plane's nose levels off and turns up, before climbing back to 9,000 feet.

"Can you hold this steady?" Harrison asks Franck. While holding the co-pilot's yoke, Franck helps Harrison unbuckle Allen's seat belt, and Harrison pulls him off the seat and gently lays the unconscious pilot on the floor of the cabin. Harrison quickly climbs into the pilot's seat and takes stock of the situation.

First and foremost, they are alive. But they are a long way from home. And neither man has ever flown a plane before.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER Chip Flores has been on duty in the control tower at Fort Pierce's Treasure Coast International Airport since 7 a.m. Because the winds have recently picked up, many of the student pilots who would normally be flying have been grounded, and Flores is thankful for the low traffic.

The quiet is interrupted when Flores gets a call on his headset. It's Harrison: "Traffic. N Triple 3,

Lima Delta. Come in," he says, using the plane's call sign the way he'd heard Allen say it.

Flores responds, "Caravan 333, Lima Delta, Fort Pierce tower."

"I've got a serious situation here," says Harrison. "My pilot ... uh ... has gone ... incoherent. I have no idea how to fly the airplane ..."

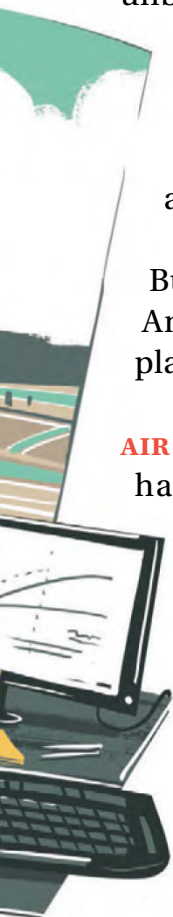
Flores jumps from his seat and hits a button on his console that broadcasts the radio transmission through the control tower's loudspeakers. Alerted to an emergency, everyone in the tower drops what they are doing and listens to the call.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL'S MISSION: TEACH A PASSENGER TO LAND A PLANE.

Flores asks Harrison, "What's your position?"

"I have no idea. I see the coast of Florida in front of me and I have no idea."

Flores takes a deep breath. What he doesn't know is that somehow the Cessna's display screens have gone blank. Harrison must have hit a switch that turned them off when he tugged Allen from his seat. The only instruments that are still operational are the altimeter, a basic compass, and the attitude indicator, which shows whether



shows whether the plane is level.

What Flores does know is that he may lose radio contact with Harrison at any minute because the plane is flying south and will soon be beyond the airport's radio transmission limits. Flores is also concerned about those first words Harrison said: "I have no idea how to fly the airplane."

TOO STEEP A TURN COULD CAUSE THE PLANE TO SPIRAL TO THE GROUND.



Harrison, Flores decides, needs a quick flying lesson. He radios Harrison and calmly tells him, "Try to hold the wings level and see if you can start descending for me. Push forward on the controls and descend at a very slow rate."

Flores and the entire tower team await Harrison's response.

"Yeah, we are descending right now at 550 feet a minute. ... What heading do I need to be at?"

Flores never gets the chance to tell him. He's lost contact with the plane as it flies out of the airport's radio transmission zone.

Flores radios Harrison, "This is Fort Pierce tower. Are you on the frequency?"

No answer.

Inside November 333 Lima Delta,

Harrison and Franck realize they have lost contact with the tower. Flores's voice is replaced by static, then nothing. Once again, Harrison and Franck are on their own. While Harrison holds the plane steady, Franck tries to figure out where they are. And if they are even flying in the right direction. Franck had ceded control of the plane to the younger Harrison under the mistaken belief that he may have had some flight simulator experience because he seemed so focused.

Franck peers out his window and says, "Look, there's the coast over there." He checks his compass to double-check his bearings. "We need to go west to get to the airport."

Harrison nods and makes a gradual turn toward the coast.

Franck instinctively reaches down to where Ken Allen is lying on the floor and taps his feet. The stricken pilot moves ever so slightly and Franck whispers, "Hang in there, Ken. Hang in there, my friend."

AS THE PLANE flies into Palm Beach International Airport airspace, air traffic controllers there take over from Flores. Their main mission: Find someone to teach a passenger who has never flown before how to land a plane.

Greg Battani, air traffic control specialist at the Palm Beach airport, pages Robert Morgan, who is sitting outside reading a book on his break. Morgan, an experienced air traffic



controller and flight instructor, hears the page: "Morgan! Come to the radar room immediately." He slips on his shoes and rushes inside.

The airport's operations manager, Mark Siviglia, meets him at the door and quickly briefs him: "We have passengers flying a plane, a Cessna 208. The pilot is unconscious. Can you help land this plane?"

Morgan's eyes widen and he thinks, *Is this really happening? This sounds like a movie!*

Morgan sits down at a radar scope in the darkened radar room and thinks, *What am I going to tell this guy?* Gathering his nerves, he radios Harrison, who is now about 20 miles to the south and flying west toward the Florida coastline. "This is 322 Palm Beach approach ... What we are going to do is to get you to Boca Raton airport."

Harrison responds, "I am not a pilot. My screens are black."

"No problem. I want you to make a shallow turn to the north and hold steady at 3,000 feet."

Morgan and the other controllers follow the Cessna on their radar screens as it turns slightly to the north on a heading for the airport at Boca Raton. Morgan radios Harrison, "That's great. You look good." Then, because he knows it's important to keep in radio contact with a trainee pilot, he adds reassuringly, "Don't worry. I'm here for you."

Standard practice in an aviation

emergency is to get the plane on the ground as soon as possible. In this case that would mean landing at the Boca Raton airport. But Boca Raton is a congested area, and the airport has only one runway. So Morgan decides to reroute Harrison farther north to the larger Palm Beach International Airport with its three massive 10,000-foot-long runways and a host of emergency services.

"Maintain your height at 3,000 and start a shallow turn to the right." Shallow turns are key. Too steep a turn by an untrained flier could cause the plane to spiral to the ground.

As soon as Morgan radios the change, the Palm Beach International Airport staffers swing into action. Air traffic controllers man the radios, stop all departures at the airport and place incoming flights into holding patterns. Emergency responders are ordered into positions along the runway, and all vehicles and planes are moved away from the airport's three runways.

HARRISON AND FRANCK are glued to their headsets, listening to Morgan's instructions. Franck scans the ground for familiar landmarks. He sees the I-95 freeway and nudges Harrison. They follow it north to Palm Beach International Airport.

As they do so, Harrison practices controlling the Cessna's altitude, pushing the yoke forward to descend a bit and pulling it back to go up again. He also makes some small

turns to the right, then to the left.

The plane is now about 6 miles south of the Palm Beach airport. “You should see the airport straight ahead,” Morgan tells Harrison. “I want you to start descending to 2,000 feet.”

As Harrison descends, Morgan grows concerned that Harrison is still flying too fast for a safe landing. He’s also worried about 28 mph crosswinds swirling around the runway, which can easily force a small plane off course on landing. Morgan tells him to make a slight turn to the west.

“We’re going to bring you out to the

“Your speed looks fine,” Morgan tells Harrison. “As you get closer the runway will get wider and once it gets really wide, I want you to pull the power back to you and also pull back on the controls.”

“Hey! I don’t know how to use the brakes. What do I do when I land?”

“When you get to the ground just put your feet on the top of the pedals and apply a bit of pressure.” Morgan quickly adds, “Gentle! Be very gentle when you press on the pedals.” What he doesn’t mention is that putting too much pressure on the brakes too

“ARE YOU STILL THERE?” TORTUOUS SILENCE FOLLOWS AS THE CONTROLLERS STARE AT BLANK RADAR SCREENS.

west and give you more time to get lower and perfectly lined up with the runway,” he says.

Harrison follows each of Morgan’s instructions and is now turning the plane back to the airport to make his approach to the massive Runway 10L.

“Let’s slow you down,” says Morgan. “See that black throttle control in front of you? Pull that back a little bit. Keep your speed above 110 knots.”

Harrison throttles back and lines up the runway, which is 3 miles away. The radar room is quiet; everyone’s eyes are glued to the radar screens, watching this final approach.

early can blow a tire, causing Harrison to lose control of the plane, possibly crashing on the runway.

As the Cessna nears the airport, Morgan reads out the plane’s altitude to Harrison, “600 feet ... 500 feet ... 400 feet. ... You’re doing great!” Harrison, now 1 mile from landing, descends to 300 feet and is on target to land on Runway 10L. The airport’s radar cannot pick up planes under 300 feet, and November 333 Lima Delta disappears from Morgan’s screen.

“Are you still there?” Morgan shouts.

Ten seconds of tortuous silence



follow. Morgan swallows deeply as he and the other controllers in the blacked-out radar room stare at the blank radar screens.

Three seconds ... four seconds ... five seconds ... six seconds. ... Nothing.

Seven seconds ... eight seconds ... nine seconds ...

Then the room's loudspeaker crackles to life. It's Harrison. "I'm on the ground. How do I stop this thing?"

Morgan hits the radio call button: "Use the toe brakes—nice, gently!"

Harrison, still barefoot, presses the tops of pedals gently and brings the plane to a stop, smack-dab in the middle of the runway, 25 minutes after taking the controls.

The radar room erupts in cheers. Exhausted but flushed with adrenaline, Morgan stands and blinks back tears.

Harrison, feeling comfortable at the plane's controls, radios Morgan, "Hey, do you want me to taxi this off the runway?"

Morgan chuckles. "Amazing," he says to himself. "That guy is amazing."

Editor's note: Ambulances rushed Ken Allen to the nearby Palm Beach Gardens Medical Center, where he was diagnosed with an aortic dissection, a tear in the inner layer of the aorta that is often fatal. Doctors operated immediately, and he is expected to make a full recovery. R

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10 ... 9 ... 8 ...

*The Times Square ball drop
is just one way we ring in
the new year*



SHUTTERSTOCK/BRILLIANTIST-STUDIO (CONFETTI THROUGHOUT)

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

Outside the Palace Saloon, which has served cowboys since 1877, revelers give each outgoing year the boot—a 6-foot-tall cowboy boot, that is.



BLUETHING CACTUS PHOTOGRAPHY

Cactus Super Tower

SARASOTA, FLORIDA



The crowd that gathers to watch this symbol of southern hospitality descend on the aptly named Pineapple Square is 25,000 people deep, roughly half the city's population.



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PLYMOUTH, WISCONSIN



A giant wedge is hoisted high above the “cheese capital of the world,” where 10% to 15% of all cheese consumed in the United States is made.



LOUIS LUJINA VIA PLYMOUTH ARTS CENTER

**BETHLEHEM,
PENNSYLVANIA**



New Year's Eve stretches into a two-day festival here, where the marshmallow candy called Peeps are made. Fans can watch this 400-pound replica drop on Dec. 30 or 31—or both!



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Peeps
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Peeps

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LIST
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Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery

Starring Daniel Craig

IF THE 2018 HIT *KNIVES OUT* sharpened the murder-mystery genre, its sequel, *Glass Onion*, peels the layers back even further. Daniel Craig's winking detective Benoit Blanc investigates a new case with a new group of eccentric suspects in an exotic new locale: a private Greek isle featuring an

imposing structure nicknamed the Glass Onion. A tech billionaire played by Edward Norton welcomes his famous friends—played by the likes of Janelle Monáe, Kate Hudson, Kathryn Hahn, Leslie Odom Jr. and Dave Bautista—for a weekend of intrigue. Blanc is once again an unexpected (and allegedly uninvited) guest, but he comes in handy after a partygoer bites the dust. Who did it and why? Just focus on the how: As in the original, there's supreme delight in watching all the stars charm their way through a clever story that expertly fits all its intricate pieces together. (*Streaming on Netflix Dec. 23*) —Mara Reinstein

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Spoiler Alert

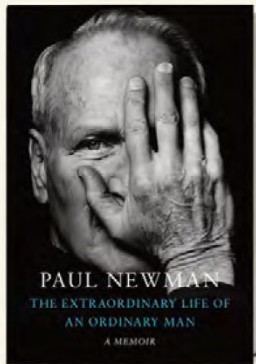
Starring Jim Parsons

TV journalist Michael Ausiello wrote about life’s beauty and mess while covering shows like *Gilmore Girls* and *Grey’s Anatomy*. Then his own life became more tumultuous and poignant than any prime-time drama. Adapted from his 2017 book, *Spoiler Alert: The Hero Dies*, the film follows Ausiello’s (Jim Parsons) 13-year relationship with his partner, Christopher “Kit” Cowan (Ben Aldridge). One night, the two lock eyes in a crowded room. Though they’re mismatched on paper—Kit doesn’t even own a TV!—they fall in love and move in together. Their bond evolves when Kit is diagnosed with cancer. The ending is true to the book’s title, and the film instead smartly focuses on what it means to be there in sickness and in health. At first, Ausiello fears his new lover will break his heart. He tears it wide open. (*In theaters everywhere Dec. 16*) —MR





TO:
Book Lovers
New releases on our
wish lists



The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Man

By Paul Newman

In 1986, Paul Newman tasked his best friend, Stewart Stern, with interviewing collaborators, family and friends for his memoir, recently unearthed from Joanne Woodward's home nearly 15 years after her husband's passing.

Sweet, Soft, Plenty Rhythm

By Laura Warrell

In this novel, Boston trumpet player Circus Palmer is jammed up by unexpected pregnancy news—especially since he's yet to rectify his relationship with the daughter he already has, who idolizes him despite his absence. Can the old-school jazz musician and ladies' man face the music?



The Space Shuttle

By Roland Miller

A mission-by-mission log of NASA's space shuttle program, with descriptions and details as breathtaking as its photos of Earth.



Cook As You Are

By Ruby Tandoh

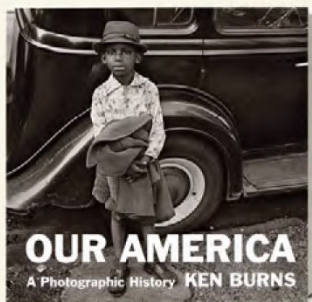
The Great British Bake Off veteran Ruby Tandoh meets readers more than halfway to make quality home cooking accessible: Recipes range from people-pleasing meals for big groups to easy one-pot dinners for nights to yourself.

KNOPF (THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE); JACKET ART BY ALEXANDIRA COE, JACKET DESIGN BY LINDA HUANG (SWEET, SOFT, PLENTY RHYTHM); NASA (THE SPACE SHUTTLE); ALFRED A. KNOPF (COOK AS YOU ARE); HATMAN12/GETTY IMAGES (GIFT TAG); NOUN PROJECT (BOOK ICON)

Our America

By Ken Burns

Master documentarian Ken Burns chronicles 180 years of U.S. history in just 245 photos, ranging from Civil War-era Yosemite National Park to a “Me Decade” Lower Manhattan.



The Boy and the Dog

By Seishu Hase

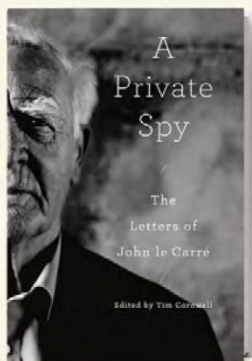
In this Japanese bestseller translated to English, Tamon, a dog displaced by the 2011 tsunami, touches the lives of the six different people who take him in during his five-year quest to return to his owner.



From Scratch

By David Moscow & Jon Moscow

Adventurous Anthony Bourdain-esque eaters and readers will savor David Moscow’s every word as he travels far (ciao, Sea of Sardinia) and near (howdy, Texas plains) to learn from farmers, hunters, fisherfolk and scientists about how our food reaches our plates.

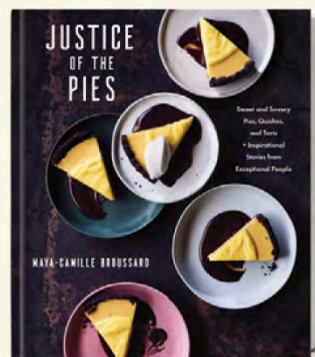


A Private Spy

Edited by Tim Cornwell

Letters from the real father of espionage novels,

John le Carré (take a hike, Ian Fleming!), as edited by his son Tim Cornwell. (That’s le Carré’s true surname—he created the alias when his MI6 employers wouldn’t let him publish under his real identity). The collection includes letters from the *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* author to politicians, spies, fans, writers and movie stars such as Ralph Fiennes and Stephen Fry.



Justice of the Pies

By Maya-Camille Broussard

Chicago-famous Maya-Camille Broussard—who opened her social justice-oriented bakery to honor her father, a criminal justice attorney and avid pie-maker—juxtaposes dozens of scrumptious pie recipes with profiles of American activists who’ve inspired certain recipes and Broussard herself.

KNOPF (OUR AMERICA), PERMUTED PRESS (FROM SCRATCH), PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE (PRIVATE SPY), CLARKSON POTTER/PUBLISHERS (JUSTICE OF THE PIES)



Life Moves Pretty Fast: The John Hughes Mixtapes

From Demon Music Group

Just try hearing “Don’t You (Forget About Me)” without picturing Judd Nelson’s leather-clad fist in the air. *Life Moves Pretty Fast* is the official music compilation from films of the legendary John Hughes. The 74-track set features songs from *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, *Sixteen Candles*, *Uncle Buck* and more. Listen on CD, vinyl or the way Hughes and his music supervisor Tarquin Gotch swapped songs—on cassette. (On sale Nov. 11) -CF



Hues and Cues

From The Op

What color is a strawberry milkshake? Don’t just say pink—we mean down to the *shade*. *Hues and Cues* challenges players to place their piece as close to the correct color as possible out of the 480 on the board using only one- and two-word clues. The closer your piece, the more points earned. Lend a little color to game night! -CF



Trails: A Parks Game

From Keymaster Games

In this game, players don’t choose a thimble or hat to mark their places. Instead, they navigate a tiny hiker across a board that represents the National Park system. Rather than collecting rent, hikers collect leaves, rocks, badges and wildlife photos—whoever has the most by sundown wins! -CF

COURTESY: THE OP (HUES GAME). KEYMASTER GAMES (TRAILS). HATMAN12/GETTY IMAGES (RIBBON). NOUN PROJECT (MUSIC ICON)

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

You have the power within you to create a life greater than any fairy tale you've read.

—Meghan,
Duchess of Sussex,
IN *NEW YORK MAGAZINE*



The act of reading is extraordinary—whole worlds created out of black squiggles on a white ground.

—John Banville,
NOVELIST, IN THE
NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



If my dogs are happy, I'm happy. That sounds like something my mother used to say about her children, which I thought was ... way overstated. I was wrong.

—Isaac Mizrahi,
DESIGNER, IN *VANITY FAIR*

I'm a terrible rearview-mirror guy. I prefer the windshield.

—Pharrell Williams,
MUSICIAN, IN *PEOPLE*



You have to use your voice, even if it shakes. There are times when you will ask for change, and there are times when you'll create it.

—Allyson Felix, SPINTER, TO GRADUATES OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

MAX MUMBY/INDIGO/GETTY IMAGES (DUCHESS OF SUSSEX). JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES (MIZRAHI). THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES (WILLIAMS)



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*The products you feel good about,
according to our annual home
and family brands survey*

BY *Emily Goodman*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Maria Amador*

AS ONE OF the most recognized and respected brand names in the United States for 100 years now, *Reader's Digest* takes an interest in finding out which other companies have earned such confidence from consumers. To do that, we partner with the research firm Ipsos every year to ask Americans about the companies they trust, from cleaning supplies to cruise lines.

This year, for our seventh annual survey, we included some new product categories, such as streaming services, all-inclusive resorts, vacuums and food storage. These names came out on top after our sample of 4,000 Americans voted on which home and family brands they trust most:

AUTO

Auto Insurance

State Farm

Passenger Cars (excluding trucks)

Toyota

SUVs/Crossovers

Toyota

ELECTRONICS

Streaming Service

Netflix

Wireless Provider

Verizon

Earlier this year, Verizon gave unlimited call, text and data to customers in areas affected by wildfires. It also debuted a new tool to connect first responders during such disasters: the Tactical Humanitarian Operations Response—aka THOR's Hammer.



FOOD/DRINK

Coffee Maker (single serve)

Keurig

Food Storage/Organization

Ziploc

ENTERTAINMENT

All-Inclusive Resort

Sandals Resorts

Cruise Line

Carnival

Cruise Line



Whenever a young patient at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital has a birthday, Carnival supplies the cake. One of its newer ships, *Mardi Gras*, even features artwork made by some of the kids undergoing treatment.

FINANCES

Retirement/Investment Services

Fidelity

HOME

Home Furnishings Retailer

Ashley Furniture HomeStore

Home Insurance

State Farm

Home Security

ADT Security Services

Household Cleaning Product

Lysol

Interior Paint

Behr

These paint pros conduct an annual survey of their own to crown the Color of the Year. Blank Canvas (a “hopeful and welcoming warm white”) has emerged as the top shade for 2023.



Laundry Detergent

Tide

Mattress

Serta

Paint Primer

Behr

Trash Bags

Hefty

Not only was Hefty the first to offer drawstring trash bags, its new orange EnergyBag



for hard-to-recycle plastics has already helped divert nearly 2,000 tons of plastic waste from local landfills.

Vacuum Cleaner

Dyson

PETS

Cat Litter

Tidy Cat

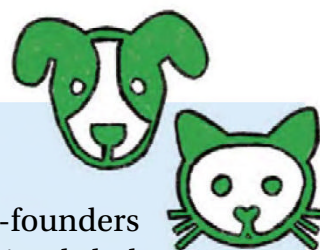
Pet Food

Purina

Pet Insurance

Healthy Paws

The company's co-founders met at a no-kill animal shelter. One was the shelter's director and the other was an insurance executive. Now, their nonprofit, the Healthy Paws Foundation, helps other animal shelters care for sick homeless pets.



Pet Retailer

PetSmart

Pet Treats

Milk-Bone



No Eyes on the Prize

A professor at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, hid \$50 cash inside a locker last year for any of his 70 students to find, but none of them did. The instructions for how to locate and open the locker were “hidden” on the second page of his class syllabus.

THE NEW YORK TIMES



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Fact or Fiction?

MEDIUM Determine whether each statement is fact or fiction. To reveal the solution to the bonus question at the bottom, write the letters indicated by your responses in the corresponding numbered blanks. Turn the page upside down for the answers.

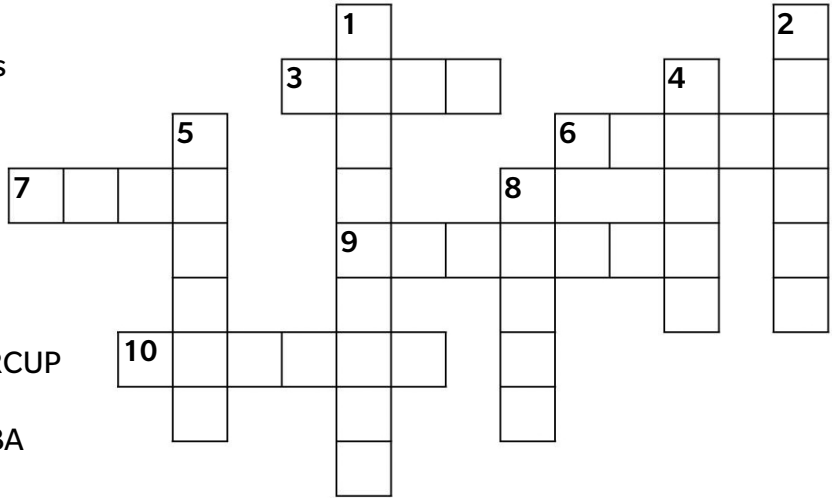
<p>1. A dog's mouth is cleaner than a human's.</p>  <p>FACT: P FICTION: J</p>	<p>2. George Washington loved eggnog.</p> <p>FACT: K FICTION: R</p>	<p>3. The highest-grossing Christmas movie is <i>Home Alone</i>.</p>  <p>FACT: A FICTION: R</p>
<p>4. Ice skates have been around since ancient times.</p>  <p>FACT: O FICTION: T</p>	<p>5. Only about 20% of people achieve their New Year's resolution.</p> <p>FACT: C FICTION: W</p>	<p>6. Dreidel, the Hanukkah game of spinning tops, has become a competitive sport.</p> <p>FACT: L FICTION: H</p>
<p>7. The largest snowflake ever recorded was 15 inches wide.</p> <p>FACT: I FICTION: E</p>	<p>8. F. Scott Fitzgerald was named after a famous lyricist.</p>  <p>FACT: N FICTION: T</p>	<p>9. Mount Everest is the world's tallest mountain.</p> <p>FACT: T FICTION: G</p>

BONUS QUESTION Which author's bestselling series is frequently among the most challenged books of the year? (Need help? Turn to "Unexpected Casualties in the War on Books" on page 58.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Answers: 1. Fiction. 2. Fact; he and Martha even had their own recipe. 3. Fiction; <i>The Grinch</i> is. 4. Fact; a pair found in Europe is estimated to have been worn around 3000 B.C. 5. Fiction; it's less—not even 8% do. 6. Fact; Major League Baseball hosts tournaments each year. 7. Fact. 8. Fact; he was named after his distant relative, Francis Scott Key. 9. Fiction; Hawaii's Mauna Kea is. (Everest's summit is the highest point above sea level.) Bonus Question: J.K. Rowling.								

Quick Crossword

EASY “It’s not easy being green,” laments Kermit the Frog, and perhaps these other verdant characters would agree. Can you fit all their names into the grid?



- GRINCH BUTTERCUP
- SHREK HULK
- SLIMER ELPHABA
- YODA OSCAR
- YOSHI GAMORA

Either/Or

MEDIUM Use the following either/or pairs to identify a secret eight-letter word. In each pair, only one of the words is made entirely from letters in the secret word. The other word may also have letters within the secret word, but at least one of its letters isn’t.

Hint: All letters in the word are unique.

- Either BONE or CHIN Either CHOP or RIBS*
- Either CHIME or PIANO Either BEAR or CAMP*



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Jim Woods, VP, Magazine Planning

Cookie Cutter

DIFFICULT Everything in this neighborhood is logical in its near monotony. What number should be painted on the blank mailbox?



Cascade

EASY What number belongs in the empty cell?

1	4	6
5	2	1
7	8	3

4	8	9
4	5	9
6	1	6

?	3	2
4	8	7
5	4	9

Tear Through It

MEDIUM Each digit in the addition operation below has been replaced with the same letter everywhere it appears. Can you reconstruct the numbers in the operation's two addends and their sum?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{RIP} \\
 + \text{RICE} \\
 \hline
 \text{PAPER}
 \end{array}$$

For more Brain Games, go to RD.COM/BRAINGAMES.

For answers, turn to **PAGE 111**.

MARCEL DANESI (CASCADE). FRASER SIMPSON (TEAR THROUGH IT). DARREN RIGBY (COOKIE CUTTER)



WORD POWER

Season's greetings! The words in this quiz come straight from the pages of *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens's classic tale of a coldhearted miser who learns the true meaning of the holiday. Will you earn a humbug, or a ho-ho-ho? Turn to the next page for answers.

BY Sarah Chassé

1. avarice *n.*

('av-uh-riss)

- A goodwill
- B guidance
- C greed

2. fettered *adj.*

('feh-terd)

- A garnished
- B chained
- C silver-plated

3. jocund *adj.*

('jah-kuhnd)

- A cheerful
- B fertile
- C muscular

4. scabbard *n.*

('skab-erd)

- A beggar child
- B tiny quantity
- C blade's sheath

5. gainsay *v.*

(gayn-'say)

- A profit
- B deny
- C suppose

6. dirge *n.*

(derj)

- A song of grief
- B snow squall
- C hooded spirit

7. congenial *adj.*

(kun-'jee-nee-uhl)

- A pleasurable
- B related by marriage
- C from birth

8. garret *n.*

('geh-ret)

- A attic room
- B top hat
- C poorhouse

9. misanthropic *adj.*

(mih-sun-'thrah-pik)

- A nearsighted
- B antisocial
- C animal-like

10. vestige *n.*

('veh-stij)

- A trace
- B church bell
- C lost love

11. capacious *adj.*

(kuh-'pay-shuss)

- A qualified
- B fickle
- C roomy

12. brigand *n.*

('brih-gund)

- A workhorse
- B coal-burning stove
- C bandit

13. pendulous *adj.*

('pen-juh-luss)

- A next to last
- B hanging loosely
- C spectacular

14. bestow *v.*

(bih-'stoh)

- A hide
- B give
- C bless

15. inexorable *adj.*

(ih-'nex-suh-ruh-bull)

- A relentless
- B hopeful
- C uncertain



We Wish You a Merry ... Easter?

Early in *A Christmas Carol*, Mr. Scrooge grouses: “Every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding.” But by the end, he’s shouting the greeting to everyone. Why a merry Christmas? (We don’t say “Merry birthday!”) The answer is murky, but “Merry Christmas” appeared in writing as early as 1534, and it was included on the first commercial Christmas card in 1843—the same year Dickens published his Yuletide classic, which itself popularized the joyful phrase.

Word Power ANSWERS

1. avarice (C) *greed*

Fed up with the avarice of his corporate job, Antwan quit and joined the Peace Corps.

2. fettered (B) *chained*

The defendant entered the courtroom, head down and fettered at the wrists.

3. jocund (A) *cheerful*

Though usually reserved, Lynda felt quite jocund after having a glass of rum punch.

4. scabbard

(C) *blade's sheath*
Pulling his sword from its scabbard, the prince charged at the dragon.

5. gainsay (B) *deny*

I won't gainsay it: I put up my Christmas tree in October!

6. dirge (A) *song of grief*

The aria begins as a slow dirge, then builds to a soaring finale.

7. congenial

(A) *pleasurable*
We spent a congenial evening catching up with friends.

8. garret (A) *attic room*

To reach her garret apartment, Maya climbs three steep staircases.

9. misanthropic

(B) *antisocial*
My misanthropic neighbor's lawn is covered with No Trespassing signs.

10. vestige (A) *trace*

Historians believe there was a monastery here, but no vestiges of the structure remain.

11. capacious (C) *roomy*

Carmela downsized from a capacious mansion to a cozy cottage.

12. brigand (C) *bandit*

Unhand me, you brigand!

13. pendulous

(B) *hanging loosely*
Basset hounds are known for their pendulous ears.

14. bestow (B) *give*

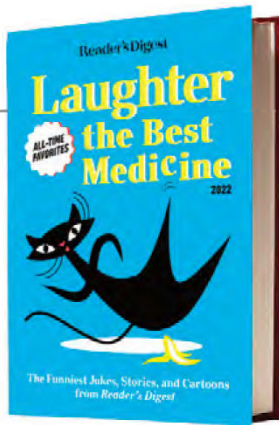
The Medal of Honor is the highest award the military can bestow.

15. inexorable

(A) *relentless*
Over the past century, inexorable advances in technology have transformed our daily lives.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: silent night
10-12: a thrill of hope
13-15: comfort and joy



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JOLEEN ZUBEK (BOOK)

ANSWERS

WHERE, OH WHERE?

(page 44)

B. Longwood Gardens is in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. (Lincoln Financial Field is where the Philadelphia Eagles play.)

BRAIN GAMES

(pages 107-108)

Quick Crossword

ACROSS

3. HULK
6. YOSHI
7. YODA
9. ELPHABA
10. GRINCH

DOWN

1. BUTTERCUP
2. SLIMER
4. OSCAR
5. GAMORA
8. SHREK

Either/Or

The word is CHAMPION.

Tear Through It

$$\begin{array}{r} 921 \\ + 9268 \\ \hline 10189 \end{array}$$

Cascade

7. The numbers 1 through 9 appear in ascending order diagonally starting at the top left and ending in the bottom right.

Cookie Cutter

55, written in green.

Given that everything on each house is color-matched, it should be clear that some vandal has mixed up the mailboxes. Once they're put back, each mailbox displays the number of panels on the door to the house times the number of window panes.

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