

Reader's digest



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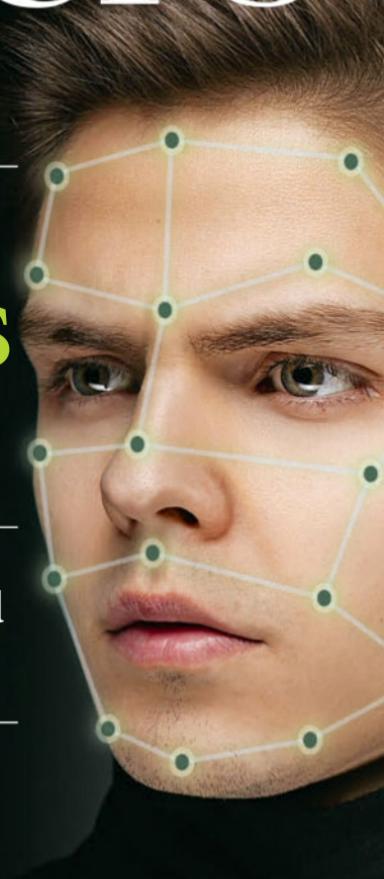
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Letters

READERS' COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

Treasured Memories

I read with interest 'What A Difference a Day Makes' (My Story, January) about Margaret Clark's experience as an air hostess on the ill-fated flight to Mackay on June 10, 1960. My then fiancé was on that flight and was one of the four bodies found on that terrible weekend. We were due to be married on September 10 that year. This tragedy cut short the life of a loving, gentle, funny man at the age of not quite 23 years. His love lived beyond death and was a source of strength and hope in the tough times that lay ahead. I treasure the time we were allowed to have together.



MARGARETTE MILLARD

Love the Number 13

I enjoyed reading the article '13 Odd Things That Happened on Friday the 13th' (January). I can say that I personally enjoy Friday the 13th. My favourite number is 13, and I am 13 years old. To anyone who is stressing out about Friday the 13th, I say, 'Keep calm and carry on!' A. M.

Socially Acceptable

'What Happened to Good Manners?' (January) is an impressive and exemplary article about the fact that good

manners have perished over the years. It has given me techniques for avoiding unpleasant and unnecessary conflict in public. FATIMA AHTESHAM

Special thanks to Reader's Digest for the article on good manners. It has made an immense change in the way I comport myself. It has helped me to deal with bad manners by answering them with a kind gesture, rather than by retaliating.

MAHAN ASLAM

LET US KNOW

If you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 6 for how to join the discussion.

Space Age

'The Space Equation' (November) was

thought provoking, but not because it showed a group of scientists working on a massive blackboard full of equations. What struck me was that all six were white and male, and wearing long-sleeve white dress shirts. And all but one were wearing grey dress slacks. The one nonconformist was wearing brown dress slacks. My, how times have changed.

JOHN S. DUTY

Lasting Affection

Reader's Digest has become much more important to me since I retired from government service. 'Love Rekindled' (My Story, October) by Debbie Gorman is one of my favourite recent articles. It demonstrates how people can express their affection for each other as husband and wife in old age.

ASOKA PALAMAKUMBURA

WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

The best letter published each month will win a Pilot Capless fountain pen, valued at over \$200. The Capless is the perfect combination of luxury and ingenious technology, featuring a one-of-a-kind retractable fountain pen nib, durable metal body, beautiful rhodium accents and a 14K gold nib. Congratulations to this month's winner, Margarette Millard.



It's a Wild Life

We asked you to think up a funny caption for this photo.

What happens when the zoo takes a budget cut.

ZHAO WENRUI

We were kicked out from Noah's Ark due to falsification of identity.

DINDO M. BUGARIN

These guys went ahead and listened to their animal instincts.

HERBEL SANTIAGO

'The usual suspects.'

SARAH KAMAL

Congratulations to this month's winner, Zhao Wenrui.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win \$100. To enter, see the details on page 6.

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Anecdotes and jokes

Send in your real-life laugh for Life's Like That or All in a Day's Work. Got a joke? Send it in for Laughter is the Best Medicine!

Smart Animals

Share antics of unique pets or wildlife in up to 300 words.

Kindness of Strangers

Share your moments of generosity in 100–500 words.

My Story

Do you have an inspiring or life-changing tale to tell?

Submissions must be true, unpublished, original and 800–1000 words – see website for more information.

Letters to the editor, caption competition and other reader submissions

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Editor's Note

Amazing People

I'M THE FIRST to admit that I forget people's names. Strangely enough, I rarely forget a face. Most of us catalogue the many faces in our lives by recalling the setting where we expect a person to be and this helps retrieve our memories and link the verbal (name) with the spatial (face) details. But, of course, it can be a hit or miss exercise. This month's cover article, 'Haven't I Seen You Somewhere?' (page 32) is about the remarkable talents of a small group of people working with London's Metropolitan Police who have the rare ability to accurately identify and recall even the smallest facial characteristics of strangers - in large crowds. Called the super-recognisers, they are the new weapon in the fight against criminal gangs and terrorists and are more accurate than the most sophisticated facial-recognition software programs. I love it when humans outsmart computers!

Also this month, we delve into the entertaining world of people who strive hard to break world records to raise awareness about good causes - or just simply because they can ('The Record Breakers,' page 97). While many of the records aren't quite what you'd call 'incredible', at least these people are having a go and having fun with their attempts. Who knows, maybe their success might tempt some of you to try your own record-breaking challenge!

LOUISE WATERSON
Managing Editor



The Most Irritating Noise in the World Is ...

Our readers share the sounds that drive them to distraction

... “Muuummm!
Where are
my socks???”

MONICA DETTONI,
Kalgoorlie, WA

... ignorance
and lack of
empathy.

JENNY WOODS,
Darwin, NT

... any loud noise heard
shortly after waking
and before coffee.

TANIA BUCHANAN, *Glengarry, Tas*

... high-pitched barking dogs.

CAROLYN SORAH,
Townsville, Qld

... someone telling you to get out of bed.

WILLIAM WALSH,
Bundaberg, Qld

... a dentist's drill.

CHRISTOPHER ROSS,
Young, NSW

... a loose fan belt.

JOHN HOPKINS,
Benalla, Vic

... TV ads that are louder than the programmes.

JOHN HANSEN,
Durong, Qld

... the high-pitched whine of a personal alarm.

ZELDA SENIOR,
Melbourne, Vic

... politicians telling you how they will make your life better.

PATRICK CAHILL,
Sydney, NSW

... the bin truck outside at 5am.

SIOBHAN GERAGHTY,
Sydney, NSW



In Defence of the Uncool Kid

I was the laughing stock of the class

BY COLIN RYAN



*Colin Ryan, 36, is a
comedic financial
speaker from Vermont*

WHEN I WAS in the fifth grade, you could have told me, “Colin, it’s not cool to wear the same pair of sweat pants every single day of school,” but I was comfortable.

And you could have told me, “Colin, it’s not cool to go to the school dance and do the Macarena for the entire duration of Guns N’ Roses’s ‘November Rain.’” I would not have stopped. You could have even told me, “Colin, it’s not cool to be an active member of your local church’s clown troupe.”

Then I went to sixth grade, primary school, and all of a sudden, it was clear there were only two options. I could somehow be cool, or I could somehow be invisible. And I have to say, I was doing pretty well at option two. Until the third lesson on the first day, when a teacher had us fill out a questionnaire with ‘get to know you’ questions.

I assumed that she would be reading them privately, so I felt safe to share from the perspective of the sweatpants-wearing, Macarena-dancing, Christian-clowning little snowflake that I was.

The teacher collected the sheets, shuffled them and



redistributed them to the class. We went one by one. We read out the student's name and then our three favourite answers. My sheet ended up in the hands of a kid who was one of the coolest and meanest.

His 'favourite answers' of mine were the three worst ones to be read out loud. The first question, "What's your favourite movie?" The other kids wrote *Scream* and *Universal Soldier*. I remember thinking,

We're 11! How are you seeing R-rated movies?

He read my answer, *Beauty and the Beast* (which I maintain holds up better than the others, but I couldn't make that argument effectively at the time). A laugh erupted in the room, and my cheeks burned because I knew we were just getting started.

**“
My sheet ended
up in the hands of
a kid who was
one of the coolest
and meanest ...
A laugh erupted
in the room**

The next question he read was "Where would you like to travel?" The others had said,

"Australia," "Japan."

I wrote, "Wherever a good book takes me."

The laughter this time had an explosive quality to it. The kids were high-fiving.

The final question was "What do you like to do on weekends?" The other kids wrote, "Hang out with friends" and "Go to the mall." I wrote, "Perform with Clown for Christ."

Those who weren't laughing at me were sort of staring at me in disgust. I felt about an inch tall. I remember fixating on my Trapper Keeper binder and trying to figure out if I could somehow disappear inside it.

But then, something amazing happened. A voice from the back of the room said, "Guys, cut it out." And the room went silent. The voice belonged to Michelle Siever, and Michelle Siever was popular and cool. She had sway. The room went quiet.



I remember how it felt when she spoke up for me because she showed me that we actually have options

But Michelle wasn't done. She turned to the teacher and said, "Why are you letting this happen? What is the point if we're gonna make fun of each other?"

I don't remember the teacher or the kids' names, but I remember Michelle Siever's name. I remember how it felt

when she spoke up for me because she showed me that day that we actually have options.

You can be cool, and you might be remembered for a little while. You can be invisible, and you won't be remembered at all. But if you stand up for somebody when they need you most, then you will be remembered as their hero for the rest of their life.

**Do you have a tale to tell?
We'll pay cash for any original and unpublished story we print. See page 6 for details on how to contribute.**



IMPORTANT THINGS CREATED OVER A COUPLE OF BEERS

PET ROCK It totally makes sense that the Pet Rock was conceived of after a few rounds, doesn't it? After a bar conversation about what a commitment pets can be, Gary Dahl spent two weeks writing *The Pet Rock Training Manual* and started selling the low-maintenance pal for \$3.95 not long after.

STACY CONRADT VIA MENTAL FLOSS

Hours of great reading!

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The Great and the Small

The help she needed came from an unlikely source

BY JOCELYN GARWOOD

After seven years in China and three years in Jordan, Jocelyn Garwood is now a 'roaming retiree'. She has also spent time in North Africa and Europe. Her hobbies include photography, writing and travel.

UNDERSTANDABLY, most first-time visitors to China want to visit the Great Wall, and the section of the Wall they typically visit is Badaling. But during the seven years that I lived in Beijing, Badaling never particularly appealed to me, as it was just too 'touristy'.

The Mutianyu section of the Great Wall is about 70 km from Beijing, well restored and surrounded by luscious forest. This was the part of the Great Wall I liked to visit.

However, being a keen hiker, one day in May 2000, I opted for something wilder, more untamed, more challenging: Simatai. This section of the Great Wall is about 120 km from Beijing and has far fewer visitors than most other sections of the wall. This is largely due to the fact that it is not very convenient to get to and is extremely steep. It was also in a poor state of repair when I visited.

At the entrance to Simatai was a group of persistent vendors trying to sell postcards. One tiny old lady seemed to be shadowing me wherever I went, and I was becoming increasingly agitated. *How many times does it take for 'No!' to sink in?* I thought. I finally ended up running away just to escape this tiny wisp of a woman.

Once I caught sight of the Great Wall, exhilaration overtook me, and the tiny old lady with the postcards





PHOTO: ISTOCK

vanished from my thoughts. I raced up the Great Wall, powered not by common sense, but by adrenalin.

Then, halfway up, I stopped and suddenly realised I was rushing along a precipitous 'path' no wider than a metre and carpeted with loose gravel. There were no 'walls' and no railings – only sheer drops on either side. I remembered then that tourists had fallen to their deaths in this section.

My aversion to heights kicked in and I stood there completely immobilised. I was alone. A wind came up and

vertigo set in. I was so paralysed with fear that I was unable to move forwards or backwards.

Suddenly, I felt a small hand on my back and a soft female voice telling me, in Chinese, not to be afraid, that she would slowly lead me to the top. And so she did – carefully and gently guiding me, from behind, up this narrow, uneven, precipitous pathway, all the while reassuring me that everything would be fine.

Half an hour later, we reached a section that had a few wall remnants. They blocked the view of vertical drops on either side, which gave me some relief.

I was also able to turn around to see who had extended such kindness to me in my hour of greatest fear. It was the tiny old lady who'd been pestering me, the tiny old lady I'd told a dozen times – eventually shouting at her – that

I didn't want any postcards.

I felt utterly ashamed of myself. I leaned down, gave her a big hug, then later bought every one of her postcards. She broke out into a broad smile, revealing a significant lack of teeth, took my hands in hers and squeezed tightly. Even now, all these years later, as I recall that event, I am overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude.

Share your story about a small act of kindness that made a huge impact. Turn to page 6 for details on how to contribute and earn cash.



Smart Animals

Classic tales of clever creatures



Plume Crazy

JANE FARMER

One morning, my one-year-old Kelpie pup, Zappa, and I took our usual walk along the airstrip on our property in Western Queensland. A male emu and his seven striped chicks were quietly strolling down the far end of the airstrip.

After a while I noticed that the father began walking in our direction in a very erect manner – his neck feathers fluffing out slightly. Then he began to pick up pace, striding purposely towards us on his powerful legs, feathers puffed out,

making his long scrawny neck look about 20 centimetres thick.

Zappa stood quietly beside me until the emu, now at full speed, was about five metres from us, his large yellow menacing eyes focused on me. I quickly looked around for a stick or any sort of weapon, but of course the airstrip was clean. I dared not turn and run, as the emu would easily outpace me.

In terrified desperation I ripped off

You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 6 for details on how to contribute.

my hat, waved it in the air and jumped up and down and screamed like a banshee, attempting to make myself appear bigger and scarier.

Zappa followed my lead and started barking. Surprised, the emu skidded to a halt, wheeled around and sprinted back down the airstrip with a very irate hound in hot pursuit.

Before they'd gone too far, I called Zappa off – not wanting for either to get in a fight or be hurt. He responded immediately and started to jog back to me.

Quick as a flash, the emu realised he wasn't being chased any more, spun around and raced straight at the dog. He nearly caught him, as I yelled a warning. Zappa whirled around, and chased the bird back down the airstrip and into the scrub. I let him go this time. I could hear his muffled barking, then all was quiet.

Shaken by our frightening ordeal, I thought it would put a stop to our morning walks for a while, but the next day Zappa was bouncing around ready to do it all again. He never chased another emu but it is comforting to know he had my back.

Gentleman in the City

ELIZABETH STRACHAN

A few years ago, after a long morning of sightseeing in New York, my

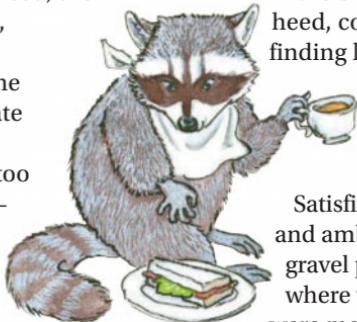
children and I took a breather on a park bench in Central Park.

"Look!" my son said, pointing to a nearby rubbish bin. That's when we saw our first racoon. Quite at home in the big city, he paid us no heed, concentrating only on finding lunch. He sorted through a few options before emerging with a wrapped sandwich between his paws.

Satisfied, he jumped down and ambled to a spot on the gravel path, not a metre from where we sat. The children were mesmerised, the racoon providing better entertainment than any museum. He glanced at us, perhaps as reassurance that we weren't about to pilfer his lunch.

With delicate fingers, he peeled back the plastic wrap until the half-eaten sandwich was uncovered.

Then he surprised us all. Instead of starting his food, he turned to a nearby puddle and dipped his paws in. With a casual air, he rubbed his paws together underwater for a moment, preened his whiskers, then started precisely picking at his meal.



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THE DIGEST

HEALTH

5 Arthritis Myths – Busted!

Exercise can be an effective way of dealing with arthritis symptoms

BY FLANNERY DEAN

ARTHRITIS MYTH #1: YOU CAN'T EXERCISE If you have arthritis, the right fitness programme could help you get relief from your symptoms by improving strength, balance, flexibility and range of motion. "If you have arthritis, it's important to stay as active as you can," says physiotherapist Karen Gordon.

TIP Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise five days a week. Dust off your bike, buy a new bathing suit, start strength training – get moving in the ways that bring you the most happiness.



ARTHRITIS MYTH #2: EXERCISE PRODUCES JOINT PAIN The more sedentary you are, the more things are going to hurt. Exercise helps by building strength and flexibility and controlling weight, says Gordon. One less kilogram on the scale equals four kilograms less pressure on your knees. Alternate easy days with more challenging days. Gordon suggests swimming or using an exercise bike when pain is more bothersome.

TIP To help with painful, swollen knees, wear a brace. Stiffness could be a sign you need to start moving to lubricate your joints. Always consult

a healthcare professional prior to starting an exercise regimen.

ARTHRITIS MYTH #3: PAIN IS ALWAYS A BAD THING It's better to regard pain as a signal to pay attention. Over-the-counter pain relievers can help relieve soreness after exercise; taking them beforehand may mask the instructive sensation you need to feel to judge when to stop. **TIP** Stop what you're doing if joint pain increases after five or ten minutes, says Gordon. Burning discomfort in the muscles, however, is a good thing.

ARTHRITIS MYTH #4: EXERCISE PUTS JOINTS AT RISK Exercise strengthens joint-supporting muscles. Movement lubricates squeaky joints, strengthens muscles and increases flexibility, which all improve quality of life – and not just for those with arthritis.

TIP Studies show weight-bearing exercise – walking, jogging or lifting weights – produces the healthiest knee cartilage. If sore joints are impeding your workout, you can still head for the pool, where you can jog, squat and do lunges in the water.

ARTHRITIS MYTH #5: FOLLOW A RESTRICTIVE EXERCISE REGIME

Arthritis sufferers can engage safely in a variety of physical activities. Low-impact activities such as swimming, aquatic exercise, cycling and walking are excellent options. But, so too is running – if it doesn't cause you pain when you do it or for days afterwards. Listen to your joints and make appropriate modifications.

TIP As a rule, walk, don't run if you have osteoarthritis, and avoid high-impact, twisting racquet sports.

OSTEOARTHRITIS AND BODY WEIGHT

If you're overweight, you're at greater risk of developing osteoarthritis – particularly of the knees. Why? Experts believe that extra stress on the weight-bearing joints damages cartilage. According to one study, the risk of knee osteoarthritis increases by 36 per cent with every five kilograms of weight gain, and even a ten per cent weight loss can significantly improve overall function. While losing weight is important, reducing your percentage of body fat and increasing your muscle strength can also help ease pain and increase mobility. One of the best ways to increase muscle is strength training. If you have osteoporosis in the knees, you should strengthen your quadriceps (upper thigh muscles). The stronger they are, the more strain they can take off your knees.



Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's Disease

BY HELEN COWAN

Electrical impulses may help benefit some patients

Although not a cure, electrical stimulation deep within the brain can reduce some of the most disabling symptoms of Parkinson's disease such as tremor, rigidity, stiffness and walking problems. Helen Cowan interviews consultant neurologist Dr Binith Cheeran from Oxford University about this procedure.

Q: Who could benefit from Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS)?

A: Previously, only people with more severe Parkinson's were offered DBS. However, DBS is now being used in people who have had Parkinson's for more than four years and have just started to experience fluctuations in the control of their symptoms despite taking medication. It is hoped that DBS will better control symptoms in these patients, enabling them to maintain friendships, social interaction, employment and activity, giving them better quality of life. DBS is also used to treat other diseases causing tremor, muscle spasms and contractions. It is being evaluated as

a treatment for some forms of epilepsy and Tourette's.

Q: What happens in the procedure?

A: Surgeons drill a small hole in the skull and carefully place

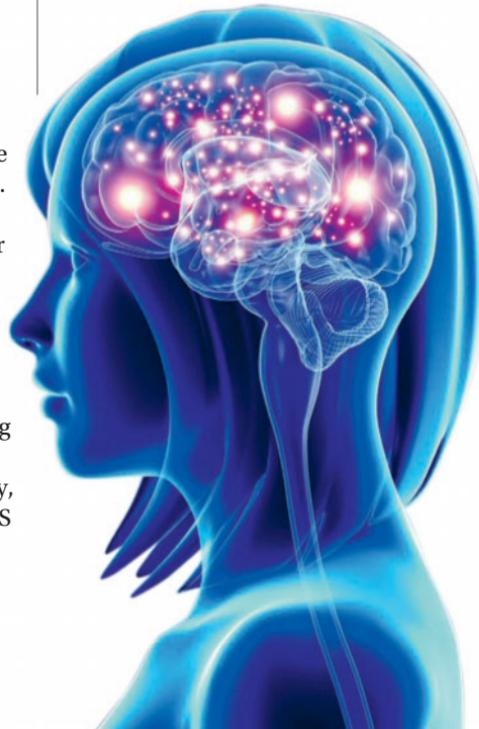


ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK



DBS is going through a phase of rapid innovation ... making it even safer

specially-made wires (leads) into specific parts of the brain using a special guidance frame or robot. The leads are connected to an electrical pulse generator (similar to a pacemaker) placed under the skin over the chest. The procedure, which can last as little as three hours, is often done with the patient awake. This allows the neurologist to check that the wires are correctly placed to control symptoms without stimulating unintended parts of the brain. The 'dose' of electrical stimulation is programmed by a specialist to suppress symptoms of the disease.

Q: What are the risks?

A: DBS should only be carried out by experienced teams, after careful evaluation of the risks and potential benefits. Potential risks, though rare, include bleeding in the brain, infection, and the risk that the leads delivering the therapy are not optimally placed (leading to side-effects with stimulation).

Q: What are the alternatives?

A: If tablets are not controlling symptoms, other therapies include pumps that deliver gel or liquid medicines directly into the gut or

through a needle placed just under the skin. These treatments may suit some people with Parkinson's, but for most, DBS delivers a better quality of life.

Scientists are looking into therapies such as stem cell treatments and growth factors,

but these have not yet delivered the improvements that DBS can offer.

Q: What is the future for DBS?

A: DBS is going through a phase of rapid innovation. Traditionally, the electrical currents from the leads in the brain resembled light coming from a bulb, travelling in all directions. Technology has been developed to steer the electrical current in a specific direction in the brain, away from unwanted structures and towards the target brain structure – rather like light from a torch – making it even safer. In the future, DBS systems will be able to automatically adjust the dose of stimulation to symptom severity, crucial in a disease that varies in severity from day to day like Parkinson's. Some DBS systems being implanted today are already equipped to respond to measurements from devices such as an Apple Watch, and such technology should be available in clinical trials within a year.

NEWS FROM THE

World of Medicine

New Culprit Behind Tummy Trouble

A slower passage of food through the large intestine seems to increase the amount of harmful metabolites produced along the way, according to research from the Technical University of Denmark. This may raise the risk of problems such as colorectal cancer and chronic renal disease. The signs that your food's transit time could be sluggish include infrequent bowel movements and abdominal pain. Eating a fibre-rich diet, drinking lots of water and exercising are all ways of speeding it up.

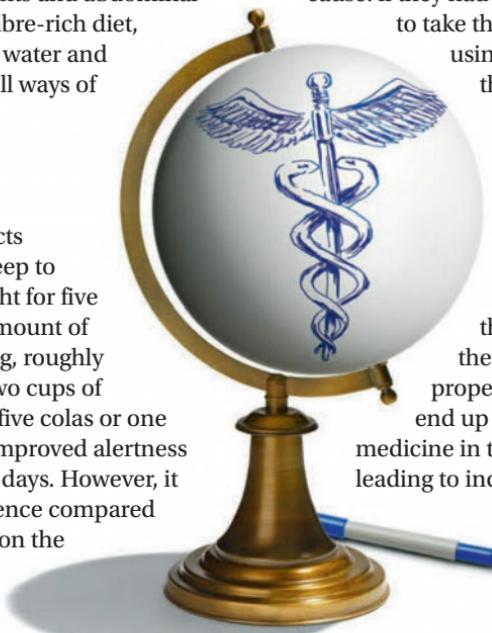
The Limits of Caffeine

When 48 subjects limited their sleep to five hours a night for five nights, a safe amount of caffeine (200 mg, roughly equivalent to two cups of brewed coffee, five colas or one energy drink) improved alertness on the first two days. However, it made no difference compared with a placebo on the remaining

three. Rather than relying on caffeine to compensate for lost shut-eye, repaying your sleep debt is the best way to restore health and function.

Caution to Daily Pill Takers

People with conditions requiring a regular pill routine sometimes experience adverse effects when they first try using a pill organiser, found a study from the University of East Anglia in England. The probable cause: if they had been forgetting to take their pills before using the organiser, they may not have been getting expected health results, so their doctors may have increased the amount prescribed. Once they consume their medications properly, they may end up with too much medicine in their systems, leading to incidents such as falls or low blood glucose levels.



Is Your Diet Giving You Headaches?

BY ADRIENNE FARR AND PERRI O. BLUMBERG

How simple dietary tweaks could relieve your pain

STOP OVER-RESTRICTING YOUR KILOJOULE INTAKE Spacing your meals too far apart or eating at irregular intervals causes a dip in blood-glucose levels, which drives your body into starvation mode. This triggers a cascade of hormones and brain chemicals similar to your body's response to stress, which can bring on headaches. Once you fuel up, the headache should go away.

TIP You should wait no more than four hours between meals. Try light snacks between meals, such as a handful of almonds.

STAY HYDRATED

Dehydration is a common headache trigger. Experts suspect it may have to do with narrowing of blood vessels in the brain, which reduces the brain's supply of blood and oxygen. Not getting sufficient electrolytes may also contribute to headaches.

TIP By the time you feel

thirsty, your body is already a little dehydrated, so rehydrate often. Have a glass of water with every meal and between meals.

AVOID ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

Some people may be particularly sensitive to aspartame, which can lead to headaches, according to a US study. Aspartame can be in diet drinks as well as foods.

TIP If you suspect artificial sweeteners may be triggering your headaches, keep a food journal to watch for patterns.



CUT CAFFEINE SLOWLY

If you've ditched fizzy drinks or coffee, you may be experiencing caffeine withdrawal. Experts estimate that about half of people who cut back on caffeine experience headaches.

TIP Decrease your caffeine intake gradually.



Tip

Dark chocolate with 70 per cent cocoa content gives a deep, rich flavour.

Double Chocolate Creams

A delicious treat, chocolate is a great feel-good food

Preparation 15 minutes plus chilling

Cooking Nil

Serves 6

200 g dark chocolate (70 per cent cocoa)

1½ cups ready-made custard, at room temperature

1 tablespoon brandy or other liqueur

½ cup whipping cream

30 g white chocolate, finely grated

1 Chill 6 drinking glasses. Melt the dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of gently simmering water. Stir until melted and smooth, about 3 minutes.

2 Pour in about one-third of the custard and stir lightly. The chocolate will begin to thicken and become glossy. Don't overmix – a couple of large scooping stirs are enough. Pour in the remaining custard and stir to combine with the chocolate. Stir in the brandy. The mixture will thicken as the chocolate cools. Spoon into the chilled glasses and place in the freezer to chill for 20 minutes, or until set.

3 Whip the cream until it holds its shape. Stir in white chocolate. Spoon into the glasses and serve immediately.



Ways to Reduce the Stress of Moving House

Moving from one house or flat to another is a stressful thing to do. To minimise worry, plan well in advance.

THREE WEEKS OR MORE BEFORE YOU MOVE

- If you're moving yourself, get boxes and begin packing non-essentials such as books, pictures and ornaments.
- Get at least three quotes for van hire.
- If you're using a removal firm, have some firms come round to your house to quote for the job. Be sure to discuss matters such as parking problems and items that will need special handling, such as a piano or aquarium.

A WEEK BEFORE YOU MOVE

- Whether you're using a removal firm or not, pack a box with precious items - jewellery, heirlooms, ornaments - ready to take with you in your car.
- If you're moving yourself, consider taking out extra insurance.

ON THE DAY

- Get an early start: it always takes longer than you think.
- Make sure all boxes are labelled.
- Speak to the removal man in charge

when he arrives and give instructions only to him. Keep the workers supplied with tea and biscuits.

- Pack a small box of essentials, such as a kettle, cups, tea bags and toilet paper, which you can access immediately once you've moved.
- Phone through all utility meter readings to the relevant companies.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Lock all doors and windows before you hand over the keys.
- Check you have done everything you agreed with the new occupants.
- Leave your new address, so that they can forward stray post.

*Make sure
that all boxes
are labelled
clearly with
their contents*



Tasty Ways to Add Variety to a Dog's Diet

Is your dog bored of dry food?

Making your pet's meals more appealing is easier than you might think. Try these ways to spice up your dog's meals: add some banana, flavour it with beef jerky, or provide carrots for an afternoon snack.

GO BANANAS Add about a third of a soft banana to 1½ cups dry food. Slice it, mash it or stir it into the pellets. Not only does it add variety and a bit of healthy sweetness, which most dogs seem to love, but a bit of banana can also settle your dog's stomach.

HEALTHY SNACKS If you have ever been on a diet, you know all about carrying around baby carrots to satisfy a hunger pang between meals. The good news is that dogs generally love carrots, too. They're sweet and healthy enough to make them a regular part of his diet in place of a biscuit.

DOGGIE TREAT CARRIERS

Save larger plastic yoghurt pots with fitted lids; when you're taking your dog along on a journey, they are the perfect size for his favourite small treats. Though most dogs don't like to eat during travel, you can reward him for his good behaviour once you have reached your destination.

FLAVOUR IT Try this safe trick: put a stick of beef jerky into a new bag of dry dog food and reseal it for 24 hours. The scent might make the dry food more tempting to your canine.

FOODS TO AVOID

- Chocolate contains theobromine, which is poisonous to dogs.
- Thiosulphate, an ingredient in onions, garlic, leeks and shallots, can destroy your pet's red blood cells.
- Macadamia nuts and avocado are also off the menu.



Plan Early if You Have Dementia

Have you ever wondered what recourse you would have to get help if you were unable to make decisions for yourself as a result of dementia? Paying bills, managing bank accounts, selling property, deciding where to live and which medical treatments to undergo are just a few of the decisions that might need to be made. Here are some points to consider.

PRESUMPTION OF CAPACITY

Legislation in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia is based on the principle of 'presumption of capacity'. This means another person can't simply take over your affairs – no matter how trustworthy and well meaning they may be. Rather, the law assumes that all adults over 18 have the capacity to make their own decisions unless it can be established otherwise.

Soon after diagnosis, make your wishes clear and start protecting your rights. This will provide peace of mind, and give friends and family clarity. Individuals can legally



appoint a decision-maker by obtaining an Enduring Power of Attorney (in some jurisdictions called a Substitute Decision Maker).

AN ENDURING POWER OF ATTORNEY (FINANCIAL) allows a person to nominate people they trust to manage their financial affairs in the event of mental incapacity, while an Enduring Power of Attorney (Personal/Health Welfare) allows a person to nominate trusted people to make decisions about their health and welfare (these people can be given authority to make decisions about life-sustaining treatment).

These legal anticipatory documents needn't cost the earth and can be arranged in the comfort and privacy of your own home. Speak with your family lawyer, or go to www.fightdementia.org.au or nzdementia.org.



Kangaroos on course? How very Australian ...

Showcase Golf

BY GREG BARTON

For golfers, few things are more satisfying than taking visitors to a local course that truly expresses the essence of your home. To that end, we've gathered a Top Eight of our favourite public-access Oceania courses that perfectly showcase the best each region has to offer.

1. BARNBOUGLE DUNES, TASMANIA
Rolling hills and patchwork fields offset by blasted cliff-side drives and panoramic coastal views – you'd be forgiven for thinking you were in Scotland. So, in keeping with the finest tradition of links courses, Barnbougle Dunes in Tasmania abounds with undulating dunes, devilish sea breezes and no trees to mar the ethereal feel of the place. Consistently named as

Australia's No. 1 public access course, its stunning views over Bass Strait are enough to stir the soul.

2. PARADISE PALMS, QUEENSLAND

Sandwiched between two World Heritage-listed wonders – the ancient Daintree Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef – this tropical golfer's paradise will challenge players of all abilities. But if you're after an even more quintessentially Queensland experience, the Palmer Sea Reef golf course further north offers one more great Australian attraction to wow its visitors: crocodiles! Surrounded by wetlands, it's not uncommon to see crocs basking in the sun, and visitors are warned to give the beasts a wide berth and play at their own risk.

3. JACK'S POINT, NEW ZEALAND

Although only a few minutes from Queenstown airport, Jack's Point in the foothills of the Remarkables could be ripped right from the pages of the *Lord of the Rings*. The still waters of Lake Wakatipu form one spectacular boundary, while steep bluffs, lush wetlands and native bush reserves will keep unwary golfers well occupied. And for true *LOTR* fans, historic Arrowtown, gateway to the filming location of Rivendell's Ford of Bruinen, is just a short drive away.

4. MARGARET RIVER GC, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Visitors to southwest WA come for two reasons: big surf and great wine. Margaret River GC, nestled in the heart of this glorious region, has both

covered. It's less than two minutes' drive from world-famous surf beaches, and roughly ten minutes to the cellar doors of Voyager Estate, Leeuwin Estate and more. The course itself backs onto pretty vineyards, and it's not unusual to be sharing your round with dozens of curious kangaroos.

5. MARINA BAY GC, SINGAPORE

Singapore's very first 18-hole public-access championship golf course – and the only course in the city-state to boast a whopping par-6 hole – Marina Bay GC truly is a showcase for the region. The city skyline creates a memorable backdrop for this course that is only minutes from the heart of the CBD. Yet ocean breezes, deep bunkers, manicured greens and fairways and a multitude of spotlights

*Become lord of the fairways
at New Zealand's Jack's Point*





for evening golfers all work to create a blissful island oasis. But don't leave it too late to experience; to make way for further development, the club's lease will not be renewed beyond 2024 and the course will be phased out. Play it now before you miss your chance.

6. BERJAYA HILLS, MALAYSIA

Artfully designed to take full advantage of the splendour of one of the most ancient rainforests on Earth, Berjaya Hills is a mix of precipitous inclines, jungle-filled ravines and towering ridges. Just 45 minutes northeast of Kuala Lumpur and at 1000 metres above sea level, it's a true highland course in a region famous for mountains and rainforests – some of which are estimated at around 130 million years old.

7. BONVILLE GOLF RESORT, NSW

Visitors to Australia with a misconception that the nation is an arid colonial outpost need only explore the lush surrounds of Bonville to be disabused of that notion. Protected by a breathtaking expanse of towering, cathedral-esque gum trees – home to their fair share of koalas, goannas, water dragons and other native critters – the course is regularly hailed as Australia's most beautiful, and its closest rival to hallowed Augusta. With each hole



***Beautiful Bonville
wows visitors to NSW***

completely isolated from the next by thick forest and long winding cart trails, your round becomes as much a peaceful drive through the forest as it is about the golf.

8. HAMILTON ISLAND GC, QUEENSLAND

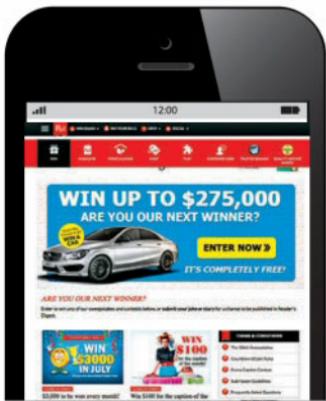
You haven't experienced island golf until you've paused mid-shot to watch a humpback whale breaching just a couple of hundred metres away. Such sights are commonplace – especially from June to September during the whale migration season – from the fairways of Hamilton Island GC in the Whitsundays. Australia's only 18-hole championship course housed on its own island, the layout boasts arguably the best views of any in the country, with virtually unimpeded 360-degree panoramic outlooks over the Whitsundays and Great Barrier Reef from every hole.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Four great reasons why you should join us online...

We give away cash and prizes

Join fun competitions and quizzes



First look at future issues

Get a sneak peek at upcoming stories and covers



We give great advice

Get regular home, health and food tips from The Digest



“
Friends and good manners will carry you where money won’t go.

MARGARET WALKER



We help you get motivated

#QuotableQuotes and #PointstoPonder to get you through the day





Haven't I Seen You Somewhere?

This man never forgets a face. And that rare ability is helping police catch criminals

BY TIM HULSE

AUSTIN CABALLERO HAD BEEN GETTING AWAY WITH IT for years. A shoplifter who targeted small, high-end shops in London's wealthier districts, he had helped himself to more than £100,000 worth of jewellery and designer clothing over an extended period.

"He was good," says Detective Sergeant Eliot Porritt of the UK capital's Metropolitan Police. "I hate using that word for him, but he was well dressed and calm. He would go in and engage the staff in conversation, and as soon as their backs were turned, he'd steal stuff."



*Eliot Porritt, one of the
London police force's
'super-recognisers'*

"Sometimes it wasn't until two or three days later that they'd realise something was missing from the display. Then they'd look on CCTV and call the police. But he'd be long gone by then, so he always had the advantage."

Caballero would probably still be getting away with it were it not for individuals such as Porritt, who is one of a team of so-called 'super-recognisers' who have been operating at Metropolitan Police headquarters at New Scotland Yard since May 2015 and who last year lent their help to the police in Cologne, Germany.

They sound like characters from a Marvel comic and indeed their talents are close to superhuman, because they have an uncanny ability to remember and recognise faces – even faces that are only partially revealed or highly pixelated.

So when a member of the unit saw a picture of the then unknown Caballero on the Met's computer database of CCTV images of known suspects in the summer of 2016, he decided to check and see if he had been caught on camera before. It's a matching process the unit calls 'face snapping', after the game of snap, in which players look for identical cards.

After a weekend of searching, he'd snapped ten other images on the database. Eventually, after looking at tens of thousands of images, he would end up with around 40 identifications. It was clear that Caballero was a serious repeat offender.

A media appeal was launched for further information and in due course Caballero was found and later convicted of 40 offences of theft and one of racially aggravated assault. He is currently serving three years and three months in prison.

"Some of these pictures of Caballero went back to 2012," says Porritt, an affable character with a ready smile, who is fiercely proud of the successes of the unit. "He was probably thinking, 'I've committed all these offences and no-one's ever come to see me, so I've got away with it.' But that's all changed. We're identifying all these prolific offenders who've gone under the radar for years because no-one's ever linked up CCTV images of them."

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SUPER-RECOGNISER unit go back to the serious civil disturbances in London during the summer of 2011. It became clear then that the Met had no systematic way of dealing with large numbers of CCTV images. So the first step was the creation of a computerised database of images that could be searched by various criteria such as ethnic appearance, clothing and hairstyle. When the database was put into use, it became clear that certain officers had an uncanny ability for recognising faces.

"I first started hearing about super-recognisers in 2011," says Acting Police Sergeant Paul Smith, who developed and now manages the seven-strong unit, plus a network of around

140 other super-recognisers, both officers and civilian staff. "When we started using the database, it became clear that certain officers, such as Eliot, were giving repeat identifications – not just one, but four, five, six, and on a regular basis."



Porritt had no idea he had a special talent until Smith contacted him to tell him he was on his super-recogniser list. Now 37, he joined the police force in 2008. Growing up in the leafy London suburb of Belsize Park, he'd dreamed of working in the public services and making the world a better place, and it was after a job as a civilian assisting a child-abuse investigation that he realised the police force was where he wanted to be.

"I've always been good with names and faces but I was never aware when I was a kid of people going, 'Oh my god, how did you remember that?'" he says, laughing.

"It's strange, it's only through working at the super-recogniser unit that I realise people don't see other people the way I do. In the past I'd be looking at two pictures and go, 'That's the same person,' and someone else would say, 'Are you sure?'

And I'd go, 'Are you blind?!'

"We super-recognisers can remember faces we've seen years ago. The average person can memorise 20 to 50 per cent of faces but academics tell us we can memorise 90 per cent."

Between one and two per cent

"The average person can memorise 20 to 50 per cent of faces, but super-recognisers can memorise 90 per cent"

of the population has this special skill, and scientists are baffled as to why. However, it can be scientifically tested, and all the members of the super-recogniser unit have been proven to share the ability. And it's paying dividends.

"Since the unit started in May 2015, we've made more than 1800 identifications," says Porritt. "And that's led to more than 900 completed cases."

PORRITT AND COLLEAGUES regularly attend large-scale events, where they can help to identify known offenders. "A couple of the guys were at the Notting Hill Carnival in London looking at a live feed of TV images and feeding information back," he says. "They could tell there were two gangs next to one another, so they were able to give a warning and avert a serious disturbance."

Ten super-recognisers were also

assigned to the high-profile case of Alice Gross, a teenager who went missing in west London in August 2014 and was later found to have been murdered. Their work was crucial in finding her body, which had been concealed by her killer under logs in a river.

"The key breakthrough was when we found a tiny flicker of a head lamp that had been missed by all the officers initially viewing the CCTV images in the area," remembers Porritt. "It was a clue that the main suspect had returned to further conceal the body. The area had already been searched, but as a result of our information there was another search and she was found. From there we built a case."

AT THE BEGINNING OF 2016, Porritt and a colleague went to Cologne to help police in that city investigate a huge number of sexual assaults and thefts mainly thought to have been carried out by North African refugees during the city's New Year's Eve celebrations. It was the first time the unit had helped a foreign force.

"There were 1546 crimes that night, including 532 sexual assaults," says Detective Superintendent Thomas Schulte, the German police officer leading the investigation. "It was night time, so the CCTV quality was very bad. Scotland Yard called us to offer their help. I'd heard about super-recognisers before, so I was interested."

"We were there for two weeks," says

THE RISE OF FACIAL-RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY

Keyless doorbells

A so-called 'smart doorbell' named Chui can be programmed to recognise the faces of friends and family members, allowing them instant entry.

Detecting health issues

Scientists at the University of Oxford in the UK have developed a programme that can scan faces in family snaps and detect potential genetic disorders.

Online course supervision

KeyLemon's 'biometric user authentication technology' not only confirms online students' identities, it can also make sure they are paying attention, based on the angle of their heads and how much they blink.

Interactive cars

Ford and Intel are collaborating on technology that will allow a car to recognise the driver and automatically adjust certain features. For instance, if a teenager is driving, a parent might want to limit the car's speed.

Good news for cats

The CatFi Pro feeder is able to distinguish between one cat and another, allowing owners and breeders to monitor the diet and weight of individual cats.

Porritt. "They'd already identified three officers who'd made a lot of identifications and were clearly super-recognisers, so we gave them some training. When we got there, they had pictures of ten or 20 people on the wall. When we left, the wall was full of suspects."



"I was surprised by how successful they were," admits Schulte, who says they are now thinking of introducing super-recogniser units in Germany. "We always think about technical solutions, but this shows that the human mind is kind of interesting."

It's a good point. The US military recently purchased 500 pairs of X6 'spy glasses' that enable a user to match a face in real time to one on a computer database. While facial-recognition software has its uses and has become prevalent in other areas, the super-recognisers demonstrate that, for now, the human brain has its advantages.

"Almost every image that we've got a conviction out of would never be

picked up by facial-recognition software," says Porritt. "That relies on perfect conditions, so I don't think it will be good enough for years. CCTV cameras are usually positioned looking downwards. Angles, lighting, pixelation, facial expressions: all these

Porritt went to Cologne last year to help police investigate a huge number of sexual assaults and thefts on New Year's Eve

change things, and that's why you always need that human element."

And unlike a machine, super-recognisers never stop working, and find themselves spotting wanted criminals – not to mention celebrities – in off-duty moments.

"We're always on the look-out," says Porritt, who on more than one occasion has also been grateful for the fact that so few people share his ability – as when he found himself late at night waiting for a bus next to someone he had once arrested. "Luckily, he didn't recognise me," he laughs. R

Are you a super-recogniser? Try the 'Short Teaser Test' at <http://superrecognisers.com>

* * *

GOOD SPORTS

Fencing: The art of missing the point.

Long-distance running: The arrival of the fittest. *NEW STATESMAN, 1977*

“Artistic Freedom Is Everything”

Steven Spielberg, at 70, maintains that deep down he's still a child

BY DIETER OSSWALD

IN BOX-OFFICE terms, Spielberg, who turned 70 on December 18, is the most successful movie director in the world. *Jaws*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Indiana Jones* ... his movies are cinema classics. But alongside these popcorn-sagas he has also turned his hand to sterner stuff. Moviegoers all over the world found his black-and-white Holocaust drama *Schindler's List* deeply moving. Last year saw the release of *The BFG* (short for Big Friendly Giant), a movie version of the children's book by Roald Dahl in which a benevolent giant 'kidnaps' a little orphan girl.

Reader's Digest: *The little heroine of your latest movie is scared of giants. What were you afraid of when you were a child?* Spielberg: I was my own monster. My imagination was incredible, so I was afraid of everything. A chair could very quickly change into a spider. I remember staring up at the sky when I was five. One of the clouds up there looked like a beautiful swan,

A close-up portrait of Steven Spielberg. He has light-colored hair and a full, grey beard and mustache. He is wearing black-rimmed glasses and a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a patterned tie. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth.

“For my parents
my imagination
was a real
problem ... they
considered
having me
examined by
a doctor”

then suddenly it was a dinosaur. I ran home screaming.

What did your parents feel about that? For my parents my imagination was a real problem, so much so that they seriously considered having me examined by a doctor. After all I was constantly seeing things that didn't exist except in my head. My mother and father thought I had some major mental problems. I probably did – but they were the gateway to a great career!

How important is it for you to preserve the child within? The fascinating thing about children is that they're just there. When they're small, they don't know right from wrong – it's not important to them. Those are years of complete freedom, which come to an end when at some point the brain takes over and tells you how to behave. I remember that time very clearly.

You turned 70 this past December. What do you consider your greatest career achievement so far? The right to decide my own projects. That was always my only goal, telling my stories without anyone else interfering. It was also why I established my own studios. Artistic freedom means everything to me.

Which movie did you enjoy making most? That was *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, because it was the first time I realised I wanted to be a father. Three

years later I finally made the grade with the birth of my first son.

Do you make home movies? Yes, I always have a video camera with me. At Christmas it's traditional for there to be a joint movie about the family that lasts one hour. I edit the footage I've collected in the course of the year and combine it with our children's videos. And of course there's a soundtrack and special effects. We all watch the film together and everyone gets a DVD of it. R



STEVEN SPIELBERG

Born on December 18, 1946, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Steven Spielberg started making movies as a teenager. His first full-length film was *The Sugarland Express* (1974). For *Schindler's List* (1993) he won Oscars in the categories 'Best Director' and 'Best Motion Picture'. For *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) he won an Oscar for 'Best Director'. In 1994 he established the Shoah Foundation, dedicated to recording the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. The same year, he helped found DreamWorks Studios. Married to actress Kate Capshaw, his second wife, Spielberg's family includes seven children and several grandchildren.

My Tea Does What?!

BY JOEY GREEN



Large companies should be thanking consumers for creative uses of their products

PHOTO: ALI BLUMENTHAL; ILLUSTRATION: PETER ARKLE

WHILE WORKING as an advertising copywriter, I was invited into a conference room for a meeting on Nestea and told to generate alternative uses for the iced-tea mix. I thought it was the dumbest thing I'd ever been asked to do.

An account manager in the meeting told us that one weekend while sailing, he had been badly sunburned. So he'd gone home, poured an entire jar of Nestea powdered mix into his

bathtub, filled the bath with water, and soaked in it. We all thought he'd lost it.

"That's not what they meant by 'Take the Nestea Plunge,'" I said.

"No, really," he insisted. "The tannin in the tea relieves sunburn pain. If you're ever badly sunburned, try it. You'll thank me."

In the years since, as a writer of how-to books, I discovered that people pen letters to companies all

the time to share alternative uses for their products, but the companies rarely advertise that information. Kraft Foods won't tell you that Jell-O doubles as hair gel, and Procter & Gamble refuses to advertise that Bounce dryer sheets repel mosquitoes.

In that one morning of our Nestea meeting, we generated a dozen options for the product, but Nestlé decided not to advertise them. They never ballyhooed the fact that Nestea iced-tea mix doubles as an air freshener, tenderises meat and removes corns from feet, for fear of tarnishing the brand's hallowed image. (Tarnish, by the way, can be removed easily with regular-flavoured Colgate Cavity Protection Toothpaste.)

It's clear why corporate muckety-mucks keep some secrets under wraps. If Coca-Cola revealed that its product cleans toilets, fizzes away corrosion from car battery terminals and removes oil stains from your driveway, you might ask yourself: *What's it doing to my stomach?* (The truth is, the gastric acid in your stomach is stronger than

the phosphoric acid in Coke, meaning you can safely drink the 'Real Thing' and clean your toilet with it at the exact same time.)

Still, companies would be wise to listen to their customers, who may know the products even better than the inventors. At this very moment, many people have an open box of Arm & Hammer bicarbonate of soda sitting on a shelf in the refrigerator to deodorise it, even though the product was originally for baking.

Church & Dwight, the parent company of Arm & Hammer, realised years ago that people used bicarbo-

nate of soda for more than just baking cakes. Consumers started suggesting they make a laundry detergent, and soon the company was marketing their bicarbonate of soda products in new ways. You can also use bicarb of soda to brush your teeth, deodorise carpet and clean crayon marks from walls.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation began marketing Kleenex tissues in 1924 as make-up removers for women. But then people raved that the

***Jell-O doubles as
hair gel, Nestea
iced-tea mix
removes corns,
and Efferdent
cleans toilets***



tissues doubled as disposable handkerchiefs, and executives quickly grasped the fact that more people blow their noses than clean their faces, so ...

In 1953, a scientist at the Rocket Chemical Company invented a water displacement formula for the space programme. Sprayed on the Atlas missile (the first intercontinental ballistic missile developed by the US), the concoction – perfected on the 40th try and named WD-40 – protected the outer skin from rust and corrosion. When employees began sneaking the product home to spray it on their squeaky doors and stuck locks, the Rocket Chemical Company astutely decided to start marketing WD-40 to everyone.

One thing's certain: when faced with a complex problem, we humans devise inventive solutions using whatever products we have on hand.

During World War II, US soldiers were provided with packets of Wrigley's Spearmint gum in their ration packs, and they were said to have used the chewed-up gum to patch jeep tyres, petrol tanks, life rafts and even parts of aeroplanes. I know someone who, upon returning home from the swamps of Vietnam, discovered that Vicks VapoRub cured his toenail fungus.

“

***Kleenex tissues
were created as a
make-up remover.
But more people
blow their
noses, so ...***

—

When US troops were sent to help the United Nations distribute famine relief supplies in Somalia, battle-weary journalists and soldiers reportedly bartered for Huggies nappies, which they used for sponge baths in the blistering-hot desert.

Let's face it: does it really matter how we apply these products? What difference does it make if we use Efferdent to clean our dentures, diamond jewellery or baked-on food from casserole dishes? More people have baked-on food stuck to a casserole dish than stuck to their dentures.

The folks making Efferdent should jump for joy over this news because, thanks to modern dentistry, the number of people with dentures is in the toilet (which, by the way, can be cleaned with two Efferdent tablets – let sit for 15 minutes, then brush and flush).

It all comes down to this: instead of hiding these unconventional uses for our favourite brand-name products, corporations should kiss the feet of us innovative, think-outside-the-tomato-sauce-bottle customers and publicise them.

And while they're at it, they can also shine our shoes with ChapStick – so when they kiss our feet, they won't get chapped lips.

R



Life's Like That

SEEING THE FUNNY SIDE

APR
1976

From the Archives

Ah, the '70s - when long-haired men and gainfully employed women were relative oddities. This letter from April 1976 would have been funnier 41 years ago. Today it's simply revealing.



A parcel service delivered my son's hairdryer, which had been sent away for repairs. As I signed the receipt, I told the driver how anxious my son was to get the dryer back. I had hardly finished the sentence when the driver began a mini-lecture on how times had changed, using as examples the current styles in men's clothing and hair requiring the use of a dryer.

"Times certainly have changed," I agreed, as the driver put the receipt in her shirt and climbed aboard her truck.

SUBMITTED BY MRS ROYCE CAVOLT, JNR



A MATTER OF TIME

- Avocado** I'm not ripe.
- Avocado** I'm not ripe.
- Avocado** I'm not ripe.
- Avocado** I'M RIPE NOW.
- Avocado** OK, you were in the bathroom so I rotted.

@ELSPETHASTMAN
ON TWITTER

BABY EINSTEINS

Parents share their children's wealth of knowledge.



- I think fog is just clouds that have fallen down. **Dylan, age 6**
- I know this because it's a fact: T Rexes were so angry because they couldn't get hugs. **Henry, age 5**
- When it gets cold outside, my teeth start to chew on their own. **Annabel, age 4**

Source: littlehoots.com



SLEEP STUDY

If there's one thing I've learned from mattress commercials, it's that you do NOT want a hot red spine. The body prefers a cool blue spine.

@MONICAHEISEY ON TWITTER

MODERN MALAISE

Why am I not asleep? he thought, while shining a beam of pure information directly into his eyes from eight inches away. — ACTOR JOSH GONDELMAN

During their observance of Animal Week, the fourth-graders told about their recent kindnesses to pets. Asked what he had done, one little boy said, "I kicked a boy for kicking his dog."

SUBMITTED BY MARY WRIGHT

SOUNDING BOARD

My nephew and his friends picked my daughter and me up from the airport. For the next three hours, he had the radio cranked to ten.

"How can you talk with the music so loud?" I shouted over the din.

He yelled back, "We don't have to talk. We all know the same things."

SUBMITTED BY DELPHINE J. BUDREAU

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES; PHOTOS: (AVOCADO, GIRL) iSTOCK



The Great Tweet-off: April Fools' Edition

Twitter treats April 1 with equal parts bemused tolerance and outright despair. A sign of our times, perhaps?

April Fools' Day! The one day major news outlets will openly lie to you, instead of doing it secretly!

@KUMAILN

April Fools' is the best day to tell someone you love them for the first time. If it goes badly wrong, at least you have an exit strategy.

@RADIOEMMET

Tip for April Fools' Day: don't believe anything you read on the internet today. This also applies to all the other days of the year.

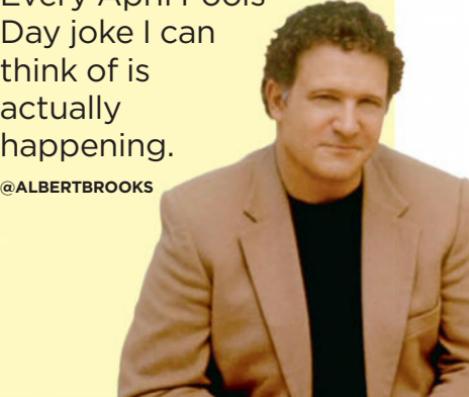
@ROHANADYM

Every April Fools' Day I play the same prank and buy myself a gym membership. — @JOHNNYMCNULTY

Ugh! I forgot to tell my husband that I'm leaving him and now I have to wait until tomorrow. — @HIREMEIMFUNNY

Every April Fools' Day joke I can think of is actually happening.

@ALBERTBROOKS



Food for the Soul



BY MARCEL THEROUX
FROM TRAVEL & LEISURE

The French city of Lyon has long embraced the simple pleasures of traditional cuisine

IFIRST CAME TO LYON in 2011 to watch the Bocuse d'Or, the world's most prestigious cooking competition. Held every two years, the Bocuse d'Or takes place in a cavernous auditorium amid a frenzy of flag-waving, drum-beating spectators. In front of them, 24 chefs, competing for



View of Rue Saint-Jean near Place Neuve Saint-Jean in the medieval old city



their nations, strive to produce two courses of impeccable food.

Everything about the event is over the top. Each course is presented to the judges on huge salvers. The food is unnaturally elaborate, bearing the same relation to something you might actually eat as the physique of the Incredible Hulk does to a normal body shape.

The year I went, first, second and third places were all taken by teams from Scandinavia, a result that prompted laments about the decline of France as a culinary superpower.

That evening, I went into the city centre to eat at Café Comptoir Abel, a tiny, typically Lyonnaise restaurant known as a *bouchon*. It turned out to be four homely, wood-panelled dining rooms hung with posters and a dessert menu written on a blackboard. I had been advised to try the pike quenelle. It arrived on a sizzling plate in creamy mushroom sauce. By an extraordinary act of alchemy, the chef had turned a bony and basically inedible pike into a soft bolster of delicately fishy contentment. It was sublime.

I asked the chef, Alain Vigneron, what it had to do with the grandiose offerings at the Bocuse d'Or. "What I do," he said modestly, "is grandmother's cooking."

Walking home from Abel, I had the feeling of rediscovering something foreign visitors have been learning in France for at least a century: that excellent food is not a contest, or a luxury or a fashion, but something more simple and intimate – a daily act of conviviality. I felt I understood

why Curnonsky, the renowned French early-20th-century food writer, had declared Lyon the capital of gastronomy. And I made a mental promise to return one day and bring my family.

Earlier this year, judging that my young daughter and son might be old enough for the adventure, I rented an apartment on the Quai Saint-Antoine, in the heart of the city.

From the moment we arrived, it was clear that the life of the city centres on food. Six mornings a week, there was a huge outdoor food market on the embankment directly beneath us, with more than a hundred bewitching stalls of fresh vegetables, fish, meat, cheese, bread and charcuterie. On our first visit, we came away with a roast chicken, tomatoes from Provence, a sausage baked inside a brioche, a baguette and some cheese, which we took for a picnic in the Roman amphitheatre on Fourvière hill.

From here, we could look down on the city and see every phase of its history: the Roman stones of the amphitheatre; the terracotta roof tiles, towers and courtyards of the medieval city; the grand 18th- and 19th-century buildings of Presqu'île; and the modern city beyond.

THE FOOD OF LYON has been praised for at least 2000 years. In the city's Gallo-Roman Museum, we saw ancient testimonies to the quality of its pork, wine and chicken. Its culinary excellence is in part an accident

of geography; the city sits at the intersection of several of France's greatest wine regions and its cooks are able to draw on nearby delicacies: great fruit and vegetables, Charolais beef, blue-legged Bresse chickens, pork, snails, game and freshwater fish.

But the city's modern reputation was made in the 19th century, when a cohort of young women founded restaurants and then spent their lives perfecting a handful of dishes, all based on the local produce. They became known as Les Mères, the mothers.

The most celebrated of all was Eugénie Brazier, born in 1895, whose life was a culinary Cinderella story. Aged 19 and unmarried, she gave birth to a son and had to leave her village in disgrace. She found work under Mère Filliou, the most famous chef in Lyon, and finally opened a restaurant of her own. Relentless hard work, a commitment to the best ingredients and rare talent saw her become in 1933 the first chef to command six Michelin stars – three for each of her two restaurants. She died in 1977. Plump and smiling in photographs, she exudes an unmistakable steeliness.

Mère Brazier's true heir is the man responsible for Lyon's gastronomic ascendancy in the 20th century: Paul Bocuse, the superstar chef who founded the Bocuse d'Or. Not only is the competition named after him, but its trophies are statuettes of the man himself. That Monsieur Bocuse can pull off this kind of self-advertisement



Clockwise from top left: L'Auberge du Pont de Collonges; Chef Mathieu Viannay; veal sweetbreads fricassee and lobster with peas from La Mère Brazier; truffle soup created by Bocuse

is a tribute to his suavity and the genuine esteem in which he is held.

Paul Bocuse began his apprenticeship under Mère Brazier in 1946. He has always acknowledged a profound debt to her. Now 91, Bocuse is virtually a gastronomic deity. Lyon's covered market was renamed in his honour in 2006. His flagship restaurant, L'Auberge du Pont de Collonges, stands on the Saône, a 15-minute drive out of the centre of Lyon. The evening I went, the slopes of Croix-Rousse hill were gilded in the late afternoon light. As we drove, I told my

wife that I'd had job interviews I felt less nervous about. I was intimidated by the expense – enormous – and the feeling of entering the rarefied air of a culinary Valhalla.

Bocuse's other restaurants follow recent innovations, offering foams and the like. But here, in a strangely garish former mill that is festooned with pictures of the master, Bocuse's team serves his Greatest Hits.

Bresse chicken, poached with slivers of black truffle under its skin, is a dish Bocuse would have seen prepared by Mère Brazier herself. It arrived at our

table in the pig's bladder in which it had been poached, ballooning like a brontosaurus egg. The waiter punctured the bag, removed the bird and carved it expertly. First we ate the legs in a sweet and woody morel mushroom sauce. Then the breasts were served on a separate plate with dressed endive. It was one of a handful of truly extraordinary meals I've eaten in my life.

WE QUICKLY FELL IN LOVE with Lyon's big squares, its leafiness, its relaxed pace of life, its lack of crowds. Beneath and behind the visible city lay a second one of hidden medieval courtyards, bricked-up wells and steep Renaissance staircases.

In the mornings we dipped croissants in hot chocolate and watched workers grabbing espresso and men slapping two-euro coins on the zinc counter for an 8am glass of rosé.

Lyon is an odd, binary place: it has two different hills – Fourvière and Croix-Rousse, one historically a place of worship, the other a place of work – two different rivers, the slow-moving Saône and the more turbulent Rhône; it also has its two cuisines – the celebrated inheritors of the traditions of Les Mères, and the demotic food served in the city's bouchons.

The bouchon is the platonic ideal of a certain kind of restaurant. Inside, it's always the year 1927. There's dark wood, red-and-white-checked tablecloths, framed prints, a big vase of roses. No-one is in a hurry, but everything is done with brisk expertise. Its glories are simple ones: *salade lyonnaise* with bacon and a poached egg on top; pickled herring with potatoes; sausage. There are often no more than half a dozen main courses, with pork and tripe dishes well represented.

Looking across the Saône River towards Fourvière Hill



The gutsy, affordable, unfussy bouchon food – grandmother's cooking – is a democratic cuisine. These are the dishes of a proud and assertive urban working class. The leisurely bouchon meal is a pointed riposte to the commercial logic that drives harried workers to gobble sandwiches at their desks. After all, what does it profit a man if he gain the entire world, and lose his lunch hour?

AN APPELLATION CONTRÔLÉE system awards a label of authenticity to certain bouchons. There are 24 that meet the criteria: a combination of ambience, a commitment to traditional Lyonnaise dishes and high culinary standards. We had to give up any hope of eating at all of them. There's only so much *tablier de sapeur* – a thin square of tripe crumbed and fried like a schnitzel – and *coq au vin* that you can eat in a single day. Then there are Lyon's newer maestros, playing variations on its traditions of excellence: Patrick Henriroux at Bocuse's other alma mater, La Pyramide; the changing roster of chefs at Arsenic; Mathieu Viannay at Mère Brazier's old establishment, La Mère Brazier.

We did manage to take the children to La Meunière, a lovely bouchon on Rue Neuve. I was nervous about the culture clash between French gastronomic hauteur and wriggly, 21st-century children, but it went without a hitch, in part because of the kindness of the maître d', and in part because of

the patience of the two young French women who, in bouchon style, shared our table. The kids tried the *grattons* (deep-fried pork rinds), loved the bread, sampled our plates of *saucisson* and the confit of lamb shoulder. At the end, we exchanged friendly *au revoirs* with our accidental companions.

On one of our last evenings, I returned with my wife to Café Comptoir Abel. There was a warm breeze as we dawdled along the river, admiring the view of the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière, and passed the old synagogue on Quai Tilsitt. I had a salad of crayfish and slippery green beans, and the quenelles, and we shared chestnut sorbet with chocolate sauce. It was even better than I remembered.

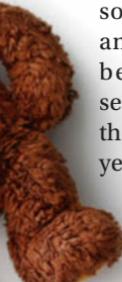
In a world where food has become mixed up with aspiration, snobbery and utopianism, Lyon felt like it represented an achievable ideal: a place still connected to a culinary tradition that combines thrift and pride with excellence and sustainability. The lesson of the city is that food is a daily pleasure to be shared. It isn't only the chicken in the pig's bladder that I'll remember: just as memorable were the Nutella crêpes my children devoured most afternoons; the snail pâté we sampled in the market; the hot chocolate that my son drank at breakfast and wore on his T-shirt all day. Between now and our next visit, these will be the meals that linger in the memory; this was the food that fed our souls.

R

The Great Forgetting

BY KRISTIN OHLSON
FROM AEON.CO





I'M THE YOUNGEST by far of five children. By the time I started first grade, my siblings were gone, and we went from being a very noisy household to a very quiet one.

My family has told me stories about those early years before my siblings left. How my brother ambushed me around corners with a toy crocodile. How my oldest sister carried me like a kangaroo with her joey. But I can offer very few stories of my own from that time.

Hardly any adult can. There is a term for this - *infantile amnesia*, coined by Sigmund Freud to describe the lack of recall adults have of their first three or four years and their paucity of solid memories until around age seven. There has been a century of research about whether memories of these early years are tucked away in some part of our brains and need only a cue to be recovered. But research now suggests that the memories we form in these early years simply disappear.

Psychologist Carole Peterson of Memorial University of Newfoundland has conducted a series of studies to pinpoint the age at which these memories vanish. First, she and her colleagues assembled a

group of children between the ages of four and 13 to describe their earliest recollections. The children's parents stood by to verify the memories, and even the youngest kids could recall events from when they were around two years old.

The children were interviewed again two years later. Nearly 90 per cent of the memories initially offered by those ten and older were retained. But the younger children had gone blank. "Even when we prompted them about their earlier memories, they said, 'No, that never happened to me,'" Peterson said. "We were watching childhood amnesia in action."

***Memory is
bizarrely
selective about
what adheres
and what
falls away***

the donkeys for at least a year. But by the time her son went to school, he had completely forgotten about them. He was queried when he was a teenager about his earliest childhood memory. Instead of the donkeys, he recalled a moment not long after the trip when a woman had given him lots of cookies.

Peterson has no idea why he would remember that – it was an unremarkable moment that the family hadn't reinforced with chitchat. To get a handle on why some memories endure over others, she and her colleagues studied the children's memories again. They concluded that if a memory was very emotional, children were three times more likely to retain it. Dense memories – in which the kids understood the who, what, when, where and why – were five times more likely to be retained than disconnected fragments. Still, oddball and inconsequential memories, such as a bounty of cookies, will hang on, frustrating the person who wants a more penetrating look at his or her early past.

To form long-term memories, an array of biological and psychological stars must align. The raw materials of memory – the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations of experience – arrive and register across the cerebral cortex, the seat of cognition. For these to become memory, they must undergo bundling in the hippocampus, a brain structure located under the cerebral cortex. But some parts of the hippocampus aren't fully developed until adolescence, making

it hard for a child's brain to complete this process.

"So much has to happen biologically to store a memory," psychologist Patricia Bauer of Emory University told me. There's "a race to get it stabilised and consolidated before you forget it. It's like making Jell-O: you mix the stuff up, you put it in a mould, and you put it in the refrigerator to set. But your mould has a tiny hole in it. You just hope your Jell-O – your memory – gets set before it leaks out through that tiny hole."

In addition, young children have a tenuous grip on chronology. They don't have the vocabulary to describe an event,

so they can't create the kind of causal narrative that Peterson found at the root of a solid memory. And they don't have a great sense of self, which would encourage them to think about their experiences as part of a life narrative.

Plus, in our early years, we create a storm of new neurons in the hippocampus. A recent study in mice suggests that this process, called neurogenesis, can actually create forgetting by disrupting the circuits for existing memories. Our memories can also become distorted by other people's memories of the same event or by new information.

***Memories can
also become
distorted by
other people's
memories of
the same event***

Of course, some people have more memories from early childhood than others do. A 2009 study conducted by Peterson, Professor Qi Wang from Cornell University and Yubo Hou, an associate professor from Peking University, found that children in China have fewer of these memories than children in Canada do. The finding, they suggest, might be explained by culture: Chinese prize individuality less than North Americans and thus may be less likely to draw attention to the moments of an individual's life. Westerners, by contrast, reinforce recollection and keep the synapses that underlie early personal memories vibrant.

When an adult engages a child in a lively conversation about events, inviting him or her to add to the story, "that kind of interaction contributes to the richness of memory over a long period of time," Bauer said. "The child learns how to have memories and how to tell the story."

Our first three to four years are the

maddeningly, mysteriously blank opening pages to our story of self. During that time, we transition from what my brother-in-law calls "a loaf of bread with a nervous system" to sentient humans. If we can't remember much from those years — whether abuse or exuberant cherishing — does it matter what actually happened? If a tree fell in the forest of our early development and we didn't have the cognitive tools to stash the event in memory, did it still help shape who we are?

Bauer says yes. Even if we don't remember early events, they leave an imprint on the way we understand and feel about ourselves, other people and the greater world. "You can't remember going ice-skating with Uncle Henry, but you understand that skating and visiting relatives are fun," Bauer explained.

"You have a feeling for how nice people are, how reliable they are. You might never be able to pinpoint how you learned that, but it's just something you know."

We aren't just the sum of our memories, or at least not entirely. We are also the story we construct about ourselves. And that's a story that we will never forget. R





Getting Over Grey

BY WALTER KIRN FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

Denial. Disguise. And then, finally, acceptance.
How a man learns to embrace his silver fox



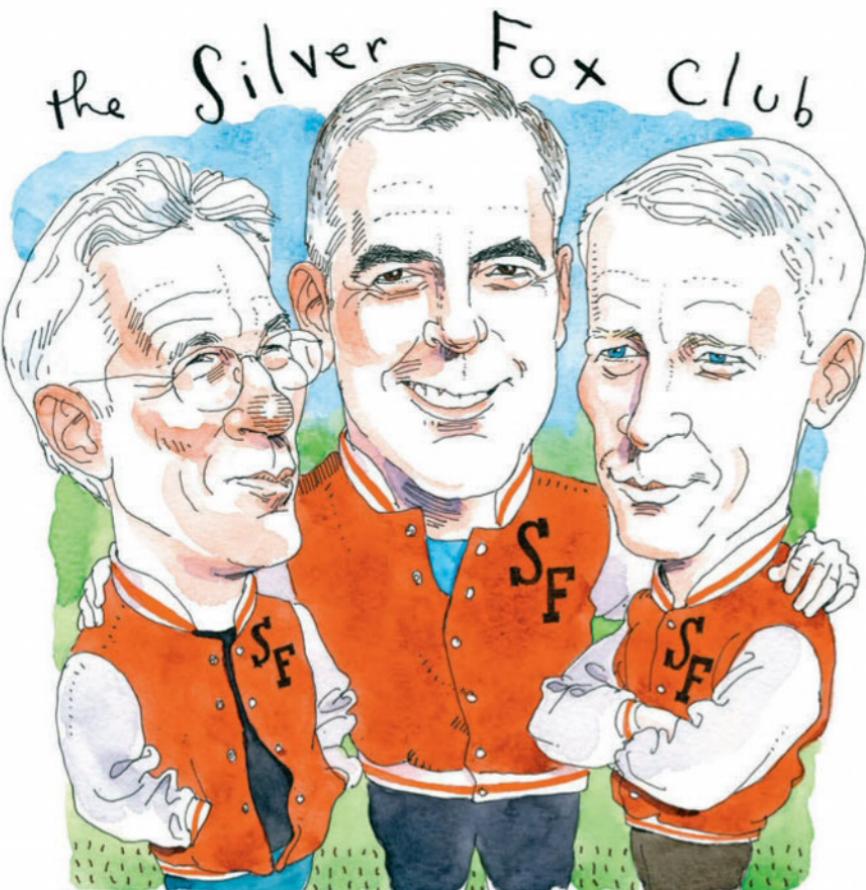
WALTER KIRN
*is a novelist,
a literary
critic and
an essayist.
He lives in
Montana and
California*

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE OUR SECRET. My hairdresser claimed to possess a special elixir that could subtly, naturally, almost undetectably 'blend away' grey hair, which, at 45, I had a touch of. Sitting before the mirror in her chair, uncertain whether to start the masquerade, I examined my head in a way I shied away from when I was alone at home without support. I looked at myself from angles I wasn't used to, discovering that the grey was more extensive than I'd been willing to admit.

Instead of threading its way between the darker hairs, it had consumed whole sectors of my head, especially on the sides and in the back. It was advancing the way frost does, or mould.

"I suggest we leave some in," my hairdresser said. "Just enough to make you look distinguished." I nodded, but that last word did not sit well with me. It sounded exactly like what it was: another way of saying 'old'.

Every month for seven years, this conversation, or some version of it, was repeated. The world moved along, the seasons changed, but my hair stayed the same or approximately the same. Towards the end of each colour cycle, my natural colour – or lack of it – would reassert itself, a bit more



Richard Gere - George Clooney - Anderson Cooper

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE CIARDIELLO

conspicuously each time, forcing me deeper and deeper into fraudulence.

My girlfriend at the time, now my wife, began to argue – increasingly emphatically – that grey hair looked terrific on men my age. For evidence, she pointed to various luminaries:

George Clooney, Anderson Cooper. They were the silver all-stars, and I hated them. I hated them not for their age-defying male beauty but for their ability to accept themselves.

In the short story 'The Mask' by French writer Guy de Maupassant, a

rakish man about town who loves the nightlife collapses at a dance. While attempting to revive him, a doctor notices that his patient is wearing a lifelike youthful mask. The doctor cuts it off, revealing the man's white hair and wrinkled face.

I'd read this story when I was young, along with similar tales of postponed decrepitude such as *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Their gloomy message seemed to be that when it comes to signs of ageing, you can run but you cannot hide – and that the longer you attempt to run, the worse the final reckoning will be.

My hairdresser disagreed: her faith in modern products was that strong. And so was mine, until six months ago, when my hairdresser tried a stronger potion, convinced the old one would no longer suffice.

The results were disastrous. Denying that your hair is grey gets easier, but denying that it's green is difficult. I managed the feat anyway, temporarily. The bathroom mirror told me something was wrong, which I decided was its – the mirror's – fault.

I avoided it. What I couldn't avoid was the mirror in the make-up room of a late-night TV show I appeared on. My hair had become the colour of an army uniform. The make-up woman said nothing. She only frowned, but

my teenage daughter was not so kind. "Your hair is all weird," she said one afternoon, in the pitiless light of 4pm.

My wife broke her diplomatic silence then. "It's green," she said. "And not a subtle green." As if there could be such a thing. I'd hoped there was.

The process of coming out as a grey was not, in fact, a process but an event, a little like a first weigh-in at a diet clinic after a decade spent eating chilli cheeseburgers. While walking the streets one moody evening, I decided to stop at a beauty shop in downtown Missoula, Montana, where I was teaching. I walked into the shop and stood

beside the chair of a grey-haired beautician with a pompadour. I let my head tell the story; I didn't speak.

He showed me to a sofa, where I sat for an hour awaiting emergency treatment. When the time came, I said, "Don't try to save it. Shave it."

Slowly, my new old hair grew in and grew longer, obliging me to confront, with awful clarity, a general greyness that startled even me. Time had accelerated under the mask, just as the great writers had said it would. Worse, I began to detect in those around me changes in how they viewed me, treated me. My students in the graduate-school writing programme at the University of Montana asked me

My wife broke her diplomatic silence about my hair. "It's green. And not a subtle green"

about authors of 40 years ago as though I might have known them personally. My wife ran her fingers through my hair more often, as though she were checking if it would stay on.

One morning, my teenage daughter asked me to change a black T-shirt that I'd obtained at a rock concert that month for a light blue cotton button-down shirt she had spied in my closet. Grumpily, I put it on. "That looks a lot more appropriate," she said.

The keenest humiliation of all, the one that at last compelled me to accept myself, occurred at a New York sandwich shop. After taking my order, the girl behind the counter asked if she could ask me something. Being asked if you're willing to be asked a thing is always a bad sign; I instantly stiffened.

"What?" I grunted.

The girl, who appeared to be 18 or so, followed with: "It's not that I think you look old or anything, but when was doo-wop? Do you remember? Doo-wop music? When was that? The '60s? The '50s?" It just got worse. "The '40s?"

"Late '50s, early '60s," I said coolly, wondering if I was being paranoid. Did the girl really think that I'd been on the scene then, or did she merely find me professorial, a man who appeared to be rich in general knowledge?

"That must have been so cool," she said. "Walking around hearing singing on all the corners!"

I've grown into my grey hair since then. I've had to. The celebrity 'silver foxes' (to use my wife's term) don't irritate me as profoundly as they used to. On my good days, I even count myself as one of them, convinced that my colour shift has revealed in me a certain mischievous élan that was veiled before. When asked by my juniors about the distant past, I reply with an overemphatic cheerfulness, as though the questions are patently absurd but I am too seasoned and comfortable with myself to take offence, at anything.

The hard part is when I'm alone, out on the street, and glimpse a male stranger who looks fully as old as I once pretended not to be. Is that how I appear to others now? I try not to think about it. I let it go.

I let my old hairdresser go, too. I avoid her now – I can't face her. Perhaps it's because I've been seeing other scissors, or perhaps it's because I don't want to embarrass her. In the highest tradition of her profession, she attempted to do the impossible and failed. But she's young. She'll get over it. I won't even try. R

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ISN'T IT IRONIC?

Al Capone's older brother was a federal Prohibition agent.

Source: Wikipedia



All in a Day's Work

HUMOUR ON THE JOB

ASK A SILLY QUESTION

Check out these real-life reports from the frontlines of customer service:

- At the drive-through where I work, a woman ordered two drinks, one small and one large. As I handed them to her, she asked, "Which one is the large?"
- A woman came into our sporting-goods store with her two kids and bought a canister of bear spray [pepper spray that deters an attacking bear] for a camping trip. She got to the front door, then came back to the register as an afterthought and asked if she's supposed to spray her kids head-to-toe with it.
- A client walked into our hotel lobby and asked, "If I book a room, does it include the bed?"
- I worked on a Christmas tree farm. One time a lady asked, "So what are these trees made out of?"

Source: reddit.com



NO SALE

A new salesman saw the nameplate on my desk and said, "Sibyl Short."



That's easy to remember, since you're short."

The next time he visited our office, he approached me with a big smile and stated with great confidence, "Hello, Ms Stout!"

SUBMITTED BY SIBYL SHORT

PRETTY AS A PICTURE

When I went to get my driver's licence renewed, our local motor registry was packed. The line crawled along, and after nearly an hour the man ahead of me finally got his licence.

He inspected his photo and said to the assistant, "I was waiting so long, I ended up looking pretty grouchy in this picture."

The employee looked at the picture closely. "It's OK," he replied. "That's how you'll look if the cops pull you over, anyway."

Source: gcfi.net

PHOTOS: ISTOCK



"We should never have hired that Wally chap."

INDUSTRY ADVICE FROM FAMOUS ACTORS



Crying scenes are tough. Personally, onions make me cry, so when I have to cry, I think of a dead onion.

TOM HANKS



The most important part of acting is listening, so always act like you're listening.

STEPHEN COLBERT

REVERSIBLE PROCEDURE

Walking past my father's veterinary clinic, a woman noticed a small boy and his dog waiting outside. "Are you here to see Dr Meyer?" she asked. "Yes," the boy said. "I'm having my dog put in neutral."

SUBMITTED BY SALLY MEYER-SHIELDS

SITUATION CLARIFIED

A verbatim emailed request from my graphic design client: "Is there any way that the design elements can look more placed and less smooged? Do you know what I mean?"

Source: clientsfromhell.com

DO NOT DISTURB

I teach at a university. During a test I was administering, I noticed that one of my adult students, who was pregnant, kept rubbing her side. After class I asked if she was OK.

"Oh, I'm fine," she answered. "The baby was pushing his foot against my ribs, and it hurt a little."

I was happy to hear her reply until she continued, "It's strange. He normally sleeps during your class."

Source: gcf.net

LIKE CLOCKWORK

I work at a Disney resort in Florida, and one day, after giving a guided tour, I reminded one of my clients to catch the great sunset at 7.15pm.

"I can't make it tonight," a woman said. "When's the next sunset?"

SUBMITTED BY GARY KLEIN

Is there a way I can filter out all the work emails except for the ones telling me there are doughnuts or cake in the office?

@JOHNLYONTWEETS ON TWITTER





A MOUNTAIN OF TROUBLE

A backpacking trip turns disastrous, and a boy must make a heartrending decision: should he leave his severely injured father to look for help?

BY KEN MILLER

THE FRANK CHURCH-RIVER OF NO RETURN WILDERNESS is the broadest sprawl of untamed landscape in the contiguous United States, covering almost one million hectares of central Idaho. Among the area's most spectacular attractions is the Bighorn Crags, a jagged phalanx of 3000-metre peaks set amid glittering alpine lakes. Near one of those pools, just after dawn on a cloudless summer day, 13-year-old Charlie Finlayson crouches inside his tent, getting ready for a long hike. He stows a water bottle and some snacks in his day pack, along with a sleeping bag, in case he has to bivouac.



David Finlayson snapped this photo of his son, Charlie, in the Bighorn Crags shortly before they attempted their most difficult climb

He leaves another water bottle for his father, David, fills the cooking pot to the brim with water from the creek and also sets out a week's supply of energy bars. Then he takes a GPS reading of the campsite.

He turns to David, who lies pale and gaunt in a bloodstained bedroll, his forehead marked with a purple gash, his jaw clenched in pain, his leg bandaged. "I'd better get moving," Charlie tells him.

"Good luck, kiddo," David says quietly. "Just take it slow and steady."

Outside the tent, Charlie pauses and mumbles a prayer. "I'm not coming back without a helicopter," he calls over his shoulder as he sets off.

AT 52, DAVID FINLAYSON had already explored many of the world's wild spaces, bagging major summits in Alaska, Europe and South America. David, a respected defence attorney, had split up with Charlie's mum shortly after Charlie was born. The boy lived with his mother in a suburb of Boise, Idaho, but spent most summers with his father. Although Charlie was as calm and contemplative as his dad was volatile and restless - David called him 'the Zen master' and 'Good-Time Charlie' - both were passionate about nature. When Charlie reached seventh grade, David introduced him to rock climbing.

By the time they set out for the Bighorn Crags in August 2015, Charlie was ready to take on complex climbs.

They crammed their packs with enough supplies to last two weeks. After driving six hours from Boise, they hiked for two days to reach Ship Island Lake, a 2-km-long jewel shadowed by a gallery of pinnacles. In their first week, they did two long climbs.

Their next ascent began on a Monday morning. Around noon, David was inching his way across a granite spire 250 m above the valley floor, searching for a line of cracks that would lead them to the top. Charlie stood on a ledge a dozen metres to the right, lashed to a tree for safety as he fed rope to his dad. Reaching up, David dislodged a small stone, which tumbled off into the void. In the next moment, he heard a sharp crack from above as something larger broke loose. He barely had time to scream before everything went black.

When Charlie saw his father sailing through the air alongside the massive boulder that had struck him, he yanked on the rope. An instant later, an automatic braking device arrested the fall.

"Dad!" he called. "Are you OK?"

There was no answer.

Charlie's destination is the trail-head, 19 km away, where a couple of volunteers live in a cabin equipped with a two-way radio, which he hopes they'll use to call for help for his dad. The path rises gently at first, but he knows it will grow steeper, reaching 2865 m before plunging into a valley and



*"Charlie and I are alike," says David.
"We both love to be out there away
from everybody"*

climbing again. It will branch off into poorly marked side trails, which can lead a traveller astray. Grizzly bears and mountain lions frequent the surrounding woods; as he walks, Charlie blows his emergency whistle to ward them off.

After a kilometre, the route meets a trail to another lake. Following David's instructions, Charlie takes the detour, calling out to anyone who might be camped there. After a few hundred metres, he stops to calculate the odds: it's a weekday, when visitors are sparse. If he continues and encounters no-one, he'll have thrown away an hour. He mutters a profanity and hurries back to the main trail.

DAVID HUNG 12 M below his son, hidden from Charlie's view. A minute passed before he managed to call out, "Charlie, are you there?"

"I'm here! Are you hurt?"

Beneath David's dented helmet, his head was throbbing from a concussion. His left arm and foot were shattered; the shinbone protruded through the skin and blood was dripping onto the rocks below. A vertebra in his upper back was fractured. The pain came from so many places that it nearly knocked him out again.

"I think I've broken some bones," he shouted.

"What do I do? What do I do?" Charlie sounded frantic.

"Can you lower me about six metres? There's a ledge there."

Charlie let the rope play out slowly. When David reached the ledge, he yelled for his son to lower his climbing pack, which held a first-aid kit. But Charlie was still anchored to a large pine tree, and the pack kept getting stuck in the branches. After readjusting the anchor, Charlie managed to land the pack perfectly.

With his right hand, David slathered his leg wound with antibiotic cream, covered it with gauze compresses and began wrapping it in athletic tape. He felt detached from his own body, as if it belonged to someone else, but he didn't want Charlie to have to see the jutting bone. Once it was covered up, he called for the boy to abseil down and join him, shouting instructions

all the way. When Charlie arrived, the two of them added more tape and tightened it as best they could.

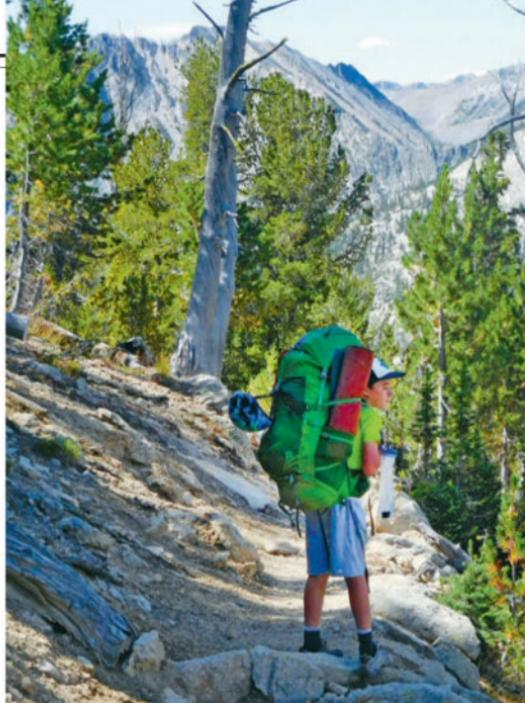
"Tell me it's going to be OK," Charlie pleaded, struggling to control his fear.

"It's going to be OK," David told him, trying to believe it. "But we need to get off this mountain." He proposed a plan: Charlie would lower David half a rope length at a time, then lower himself to the same level, set a new anchor and begin again.

Although the pulley system enabled the 41-kg child to bear the weight of an 86-kg man, the process proved agonising for both of them. David was dizzy and nauseated, and whenever his left side touched the cliff face, the pain was almost unendurable. With each pitch, he had to hammer a piton one-handed into the rock, and Charlie had to untangle 50 m of rope and thread it through the anchor. As the hours passed, David fought to remain conscious. "If I pass out," he said, "don't stick around. Hike back up the trail as fast as you can."

"You won't pass out," Charlie assured his father, and himself. "We're going to make it."

Charlie's hike grows more strenuous as the trail climbs towards the pass. As his heart rate rises, so does his anxiety level. Images flit through his mind: Dad writhing in agony; Dad's eyes rolling back in his head. He focuses instead on the



rhythm of his footsteps. Around the 5-km mark, he thinks he hears voices. He gives a blast on the whistle and shouts, "Hello! Can you help me?" Someone yells back, "Sure!"

Sprinting up the switchbacks, the boy encounters two tall, stubble-faced men on their way down – Jon Craig and his 19-year-old son, Jonathan. Choking back tears, Charlie describes his father's plight to the pair. He shows them the campsite marker on his GPS.

The Craigs debate whether to turn around and accompany Charlie or forge on to find his father. "Please go to him," Charlie says, insistent but calm.

"There are three groups camping by Airplane Lake in the next valley," Jon tells Charlie, circling the location



"I had two fears," says Charlie about his hike to get help. "Being alone and facing my fears alone"

on his map. "They can help you get where you need to be." The two men disappear down the trail.

After cresting the pass, Charlie takes the side route towards the lake. His heart sinks as he realises that none of the groups are there anymore.

IT WAS NEARLY DUSK when the excruciating abseiling and belaying finally delivered David and Charlie to the base of the cliff, and the temperature had dropped to a few degrees above freezing. In his shorts and light Gore-Tex jacket, David was shaking with cold and exhaustion. "That's enough for today," he said. "You'll have to go get our sleeping bags so we don't freeze to death."

Their gear was in their tent, more than 1.5 km down a steep slope covered with scree and boulders. Charlie took off running. He grabbed the sleeping bags and stuffed a backpack with warm clothes and energy bars. Realising they would need water, too, he used his filter pump to fill several bottles from the lake. By the time he found his way back through the boulder field, night had fallen.

David saw a pinpoint of light – his son's headlamp – floating towards him through the blackness.

"Good-Time Charlie!" he exclaimed through chattering teeth. After helping David into long pants and a down parka, Charlie zipped him into a sleeping bag. He propped the injured leg on a rock to slow the bleeding. He made sure his father ate some dinner. Then he crawled into his own bag.

Worried that David would die if he fell asleep, Charlie kept the conversation going; they talked about past travels, the constellations overhead, the accident. Eventually Charlie allowed himself to catnap, checking on his father each time he awoke.

David, however, was in too much pain to drift off. He tried to distract himself by counting breaths. But breathing hurt, so he counted stars.

There was a chance he'd survive, he thought. There was also a good chance he wouldn't. And then what would happen to his son?

He kept counting.

On the trail, Charlie hears more voices off in the distance. He blows his whistle and calls out, and the voices answer. Following the sound, Charlie gropes his way through the pines to a different pond, a kilometre away. There, he stumbles upon a married couple, their three kids and a family friend, Mike Burt. Hearing the urgency in Charlie's voice, Mike, a former Marine, offers to run the demanding 14 km to the volunteers' cabin, where he hopes to call in medical aid for David. Charlie follows him to make sure help is indeed coming.

WHEN THE SUN ROSE on their camp, Charlie was relieved to see that his father was awake and alert. But the kilometre-wide cordon of boulders, many as big as cars, was a far less welcome sight. The pair huddled in their sleeping bags for an hour or two, until the chill lifted. "Let's go, Dad," Charlie said. "This could take some time."

After wrapping more tape around the blood-soaked bandage on David's leg, they started down the slope. David dragged himself through the obstacle course bit by bit, leaving a trail of red. When he couldn't manoeuvre between the rocks, he hauled himself over them, crawling up one side and sliding down the other. Sometimes he lost control, landing on one of his shattered limbs and blacking out briefly from the pain. He woke each time with Charlie's tense face looming over him. "I'm fine," David would



David and Charlie, in the hospital just days after the accident, have plans to go rock climbing together again

say, attempting to smile. The boy ran ahead periodically, scouting for the least torturous path, then trotted back to offer guidance. "Just another foot," he coaxed. "Just a few inches."

They reached their campsite at around 4pm. David plunged his leg into the lake to clean it, and Charlie – unfazed by the gore – covered it with a new dressing.

Towards evening, Charlie cooked dinner on the propane stove. He wolfed down his portions of pepper steak and chicken teriyaki, but his father was too nauseated to eat more than a few bites.

"Charlie," David said, "you're going to have to go look for help in the morning."

Picturing himself separated from his father by vast tracts of wilderness, Charlie burst into tears. "What if I never see you again?" he wailed.

"I'm sorry, kiddo," David said. "We don't have a choice."

That night, Charlie slept with his arms around his dad. David stared out through the tent's mesh window, counting the stars.

Just after dawn, Charlie lifted his pack onto his back and headed off on the trail towards the volunteers' cabin 19 km away, hell-bent on bringing back a helicopter that would carry his father to safety.

Sometime that evening, David Finlayson awakes in traction. He is at Saint Alphonsus Hospital in Boise, where doctors immobilise his arm and leg and stabilise his spine with a brace. Over the coming months, he will undergo several major

surgeries and will eventually be able to climb again. But on this night, through the morphine glow, he tries to remember his rescue.

He recalls the Craigs arriving at his campsite. When they told him they'd just spoken with Charlie, he forgot his pain; he wanted to get up and dance. A young ranger named Rachel (dispatched after Mike reached the volunteers' cabin) showed up soon after. She kept David company until he was strapped into a harness and lifted by a cable into a hovering helicopter.

The next day, Charlie arrives at David's bedside. Through the tangle of ropes that are IV drips, father and son hug. Good-Time Charlie, the Zen master, had kept his promise. He brought back a helicopter.

"Charlie's as strong as anyone I know," says his father. "People say, 'You must be so proud of him.' They have no idea." R

NAMES OF RACEHORSES YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BET ON

- Not This One
- The Horse You Rode In On
- Performance Anxiety
- Proceeds of Crime
- Clockwise! Clockwise!
- You Bought A What?
- Oh Please Oh Please
Oh Please
- New Horse Smell
- Sir Limp-A-Lot
- The Horse With No Name
Or Depth Perception

MIKE RICHARDSON-BRYAN VIA YANKEE POT ROAST



Oh, those embarrassing bodily functions! Here's what happens to your body as you get older – and what you can do about it

DON'T WORRY, IT'S NORMAL

BY JULIE STEWART
FROM AARP THE MAGAZINE



1

WHY HAVE I SPRUNG A LEAK?

EVERYBODY LOVES TO LAUGH, but what if a good joke makes you squirt a little? Stress urinary incontinence is pretty common, says Dr Alan Wein, chief of urology at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "The result is, people can leak when they laugh, cough or sneeze."

Blame the ageing body. "The nerves and structures that hold things in place, and prevent the urethra from moving excessively when you laugh, cough or sneeze, deteriorate," he says. Pelvic muscle tears suffered during childbirth increase risk in women, while prostate surgery increases risk in men, says Wein.

ONE SOLUTION? Hit the loo more often. This leaves less fluid to leak from your bladder. Also, learn to squeeze: contract your pelvic muscles as if stopping your urine midstream. Do this for ten seconds, ten contractions, ten times a day to strengthen your urinary sphincter muscles, and then squeeze when you cough or sneeze.

Noting what you eat and drink and when you go to the bathroom or leak will help your doctor determine whether you have stress incontinence or 'urge incontinence' (when your bladder muscles contract before your bladder is full). Your doctor may advise medication or surgery, and can check for infection or bladder cancer.



2

WHEN DID MY BREATH GET GROSS?

MOST BAD BREATH ODOUR is bred on the back of your tongue, says Patricia Lenton, director of the Oral Health Clinical Research Center at the University of Minnesota. Your tongue is like a shag carpet, she says, and bacteria hide between the bumps. As we age, we take more medications, and many cause dry mouth, exacerbating bad breath.

SOLUTIONS INCLUDE cleaning your tongue with a smooth-edged tongue scraper, says Lenton. "Start as far back as you can." A mouthwash with zinc and cetylpyridinium chloride (CPC) is your best bet against stinky mouth bacteria, studies suggest.

When your mouth is at an alkaline pH, volatile sulphur compounds are

released. When you eat, your mouth becomes more acidic, reducing the stench, adds Lenton.

Get checked to rule out tooth decay and gum disease, or even an underlying health problem, such as a chronic sinus infection or kidney disease.

3

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY TOENAILS?

CRACKED, BRITTLE, discoloured and thick nails from a fungal infection are embarrassing, especially if you like open-toed shoes. Fungus feeds on the nail, damaging it, says Dr David Tran, an assistant professor at the California School of Podiatric Medicine at Samuel Merritt University. Age is the biggest risk factor, according to a paper published in *PLOS Pathogens*. People with diabetes and conditions that limit circulation are also susceptible.



Early treatment with a prescription topical solution is best. A more severe infection may need oral medications that require liver checks for harmful side effects, Tran says. Laser treatment may be another option worth investigating.

SEE A DOCTOR if your nails change markedly. A particular pattern of discolouration can be the result of skin cancer, which is often diagnosed late when it occurs under nails.

4

WHO MOVED THE BATHROOM?

IF YOU'VE EVER lost control of your bowels before getting to the toilet, don't freak out – you have plenty of company. A recent peer-reviewed US study reports that faecal incontinence, also known as accidental bowel leakage (ABL), affects around 15 per cent of people over 70.

"As we get older, our nerves and muscles degenerate," says Dr Satish S.C. Rao, director of the Digestive Health Center at Augusta University in Georgia. The same squeezing exercises that help with urinary problems can also strengthen your anal sphincter, giving you extra time to get where you're going.

Because certain foods can cause problems, ask a gastroenterologist for a breath test to see whether you properly metabolise foods that include the fruit sugar fructose, the milk sugar lactose, and fructan, a string of

molecules in foods such as wheat products, onions, garlic and artichokes, recommends Rao.

IN SOME PEOPLE, the rectum – usually a ‘compliant reservoir’ – stiffens into a tube that can’t accommodate pile-ups. In this case, your doctor may use a balloon to stretch your rectum, or recommend surgery. Also see your doctor if you have chronic diarrhoea, blood or pus in your stool, fever, diarrhoea at night, dehydration or unexpected weight loss.

5

WHERE DID THESE SPOTS COME FROM?

MOST DARK SPOTS caused by the sun are not dangerous, but a dermatologist can help you stay on top of changing patterns that can signal problems, says Dr Jane Grant-Kels, director of dermatopathology at the University of Connecticut.

About 14 per cent of middle-aged people have harmless brown spots, also known as age spots, notes a study in *PLOS One*. These appear more as you age, in places exposed to UV rays, such as your face, hands and forearms. Use a skin-lightening cream. A dermatologist can zap them with liquid nitrogen or a laser.

Seborrheic keratoses – genetic wart-like growths that range in colour from



yellow to brown to black

– are harmless. Grant-Kels encourages most patients to leave the spots alone, but a dermatologist can freeze them for you.

Red bumps called cherry angiomas – clusters of dilated blood vessels – are benign, but a doctor can freeze them off or excise them with a laser or a scalpel.

IF ANY SKIN SPOT CONCERNED YOU, see your dermatologist. Australia and New Zealand have the highest incidences of skin cancer in the world, according to Cancer Council Australia and Melanoma New Zealand. Symptoms for basal and squamous cell cancers include an unusual growth that doesn't heal. Signs of melanoma include a new spot, or one that itches or changes size, shape or colour, or a sore that doesn't heal.



6**IS IT ME, OR IS
MY NOSE GETTING
BIGGER?**

ALTHOUGH THE BONES in our faces stop growing around age 15, the cartilage in our noses and ears continues to stretch, says Dr Steven Daveluy, an assistant professor of dermatology at Wayne State University in Michigan.

Around middle age, the bones and fat in our cheeks sink inwards, making our noses look more pronounced. "Maybe it got only less than one millimeter larger – because the cheeks shrunk, it adds up," Daveluy says. In addition, gravity pulls your earlobes, especially if you've spent years wearing heavy earrings.

APPLYING SUNSCREEN to your nose and ears daily will help stave off age-related damage that makes skin droopy, Daveluy says. But cosmetic surgery is the only way to shrink your nose or ears.



If your nose is thickening and red, you might have rhinophyma, a complication of untreated rosacea. See your doctor; medication, laser treatment or surgery can help.

7**WHY DID I GET
SO GASSY?**

WHEN THE BACTERIA in your gut ferment food in your colon, gases such as hydrogen and carbon dioxide are released, causing even healthy people to pass gas up to 20 times a day. As we age, some people let go more often and with more odour. For instance, some develop trouble digesting lactose, making them feel bloated and causing more eruptions.

An over-the-counter anti-gas medicine with simethicone can break up gas bubbles. Swallow probiotics. When taken consistently, these good bacteria can help calm gas, bloating and other components of irritable bowel syndrome, according to a study review published in the *American Journal of Gastroenterology*. Or spoon up a daily helping of 140–230 grams of probiotic yoghurt.

Some people struggle with gas, bloating and belching because they suck in too much air when they drink fizzy beverages or smoke cigarettes. "It's funny how often this comes up," says Dr William Chey, director of the GI Nutrition and Behavioral Wellness program at the University of Michigan. "People come in for bloating and

belching, and they're drinking eight Diet Cokes a day." Also, avoid consuming a lot of sugar-free sweets and gums containing sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. Your body can't absorb them, and that can cause bloating and gas.

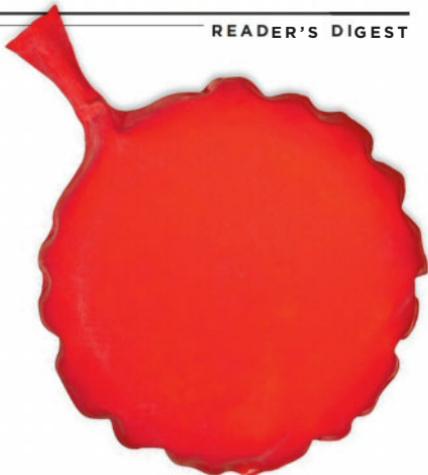
IF GAS, BLOATING OR BURPING strikes often, a gastroenterologist can help determine if you have a chronic problem digesting certain foods, says Rao of Augusta University.

8

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

MANY PEOPLE SUFFER some age-related hearing loss in one or both ears: 8.5 per cent of those aged 55-64; 25 per cent of those aged 65-74; and half of all people over 75. While all those rock concerts didn't help, there are other contributors, including ageing, genetics, smoking, a poor diet and diabetes, says Dr Craig Newman, section head of audiology at the Cleveland Clinic. These all destroy hair cells in the inner ear that send auditory signals to your brain.

GET A HEARING AID. Once hair cells are damaged, they're kaput. And the



longer you wait, the harder it will be to treat. Fortunately, the brain can 'relearn' the ability to hear. "That means you have to 'teach' your brain to hear again, by wearing hearing aids regularly," Newman says.

But if you suddenly lose most, or all, of your hearing, "get to the doctor within hours," Newman cautions. Depending on the cause – virus, reaction to medication or, in rare cases, benign tumours called acoustic neuromas – steroids or antiviral medications can help. Sudden dizziness and hearing loss with ringing in the ears should also get you to a doctor as soon as possible. R

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* * *

UNF-ATOM-ABLE

Did you know there are more atoms in a glass of water than glasses of water in all the oceans in the world?

BBC.CO.UK

Quotable Quotes

“

Education is when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get if you don't.

PETE SEEGER, musician



If animals have moody days, they handle them better than humans do.

BETTY WHITE, actress

My philosophy is that every phone conversation has a loser.

SCOTT ADAMS, cartoonist

COMMON SENSE AND A SENSE OF HUMOUR ARE THE SAME THING, MOVING AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS. A SENSE OF HUMOUR IS JUST COMMON SENSE, DANCING. *CLIVE JAMES, author*

YOU DON'T HAVE A RIGHT TO THE CARDS YOU BELIEVE YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT.

CHERYL STRAYED, author



Nature is not cruel, only pitilessly indifferent. This is one of the hardest lessons for humans to learn.

RICHARD DAWKINS, biologist



Notice when you are happy, and exclaim or murmur or think at some point, “If this isn’t nice, I don’t know what is.”

KURT VONNEGUT, author



Smart Dog

BY JOSHUA LEVINE
FROM SMITHSONIAN



It's hard to conceive of a more brilliant tool than a canine's nose for sniffing out danger

WHEN I FIRST MEET a young Labrador named Merry, she is clearing her nostrils with nine or ten sharp snorts before she snuffles along a row of pieces of luggage, all different makes and models. They're lined up against the wall of a large hangar outside Hartford, Connecticut. This is where MSA Security trains what are known in the security trade as explosive

detection canines, or EDCs. Most people call them bomb dogs.

The luggage pieces joined shrink-wrapped pallets, car-shaped cut-outs, and concrete blocks on the campus of MSA's 'Bomb Dog Unit.' Dogs don't need to be taught how to smell, of course, but they do need to be taught where to smell – along the seams of a suitcase, say, or underneath a pallet,

where the vapours that are heavier than air settle.

In the shrouded world of bomb-dog education, MSA is an elite academy. Its teams deploy mostly to big cities, and each dog works with one specific handler, usually for eight or nine years. MSA also furnishes dogs for what it describes only as "a government agency referred to by three initials for use in Middle East conflict zones."

Strictly speaking, the dog doesn't smell the bomb. It deconstructs an odour into its components, picking out the culprit chemicals it has been trained to detect. Zane Roberts, MSA's former lead canine trainer and current programme manager, uses a food analogy: "When you walk into a kitchen where someone is making spaghetti sauce, your nose says, 'Aha, spaghetti sauce.' A dog's nose doesn't say that. Instinctively, it says, 'tomatoes, garlic, rosemary, onion, oregano.'" It's the handler who says, "spaghetti sauce" or, in this case, "bomb".

MSA's dogs arrive when they are between the ages of one and one-and-a-half. They begin building their vocabulary of suspicious odours by working with more than 100 identical cans laid out in a grid. Ingredients from the basic chemical families of explosives are placed in random cans.

Merry works eagerly down the row, wagging her tail briskly and pulling slightly on the leash. This is a bomb dog's idea of a good time. *Snort, snort, sniff, snort, snort, sniff, snort, snort, snort, sniff*. Suddenly, Merry sits down. All bomb dogs are schooled to respond this way when they've found what they're looking for. No-one wants a dog pawing and scratching at something that could explode.

"Good dog," says Roberts. He reaches into a pouch on his belt for the kibble that is the working dog's wage.

***Thirty-five
per cent of a
dog's brain is
assigned to
smell-related
operations***

IT WOULD BE TOUGH to conceive of a better smelling machine than a dog. Thirty-five per cent of a dog's brain is assigned to smell-related operations,

whereas a human brain lends only five per cent of its cellular resources to the task. In her book *Inside of a Dog*, Alexandra Horowitz, a psychology professor at Barnard College in New York, notes that while a human might smell a teaspoon of sugar in a cup of coffee, a dog could detect a teaspoon in four million litres of water – around about enough to fill two Olympic-size swimming pools.

Where bomb dogs have really proved their mettle is on the battlefield. Before joining MSA as vice president of operations, Joe Atherall was a marine and headed a battalion

in Iraq's Al Anbar province. The unit had three dog teams attached to it.

"One day, intel directed us to a school, but we didn't find a lot. Then we brought in the dogs," recalls Atherall. "There were French drains around the outside of the school, and the dogs started hitting on them. When we opened them up, we found an extensive IED cache, small arms weapons and mortar rounds, along with detonation cord and other explosive material." Detonation cord is the dog whistle of odours, with nearly unsmellable vapour pressure.

"I loved those dogs," says Atherall. "They were lifesavers."

It is hard to imagine a more big-hearted warrior than a dog. The canines work for love, they work for praise, they work for food, but mostly they work for the fun of it. "It's all just a big game to them," says Mike Wynn, MSA's director of canine training. "The best bomb dogs are the dogs that really like to play."

This doesn't mean that war is a lark for dogs. In 2007, Army veterinarians started seeing dogs that

showed signs of canine post-traumatic stress disorder.

"We're seeing dogs that are over-responsive to sights and sounds or that become hypervigilant - like humans that are shaken up after a car accident," says Dr Walter Burghardt of the Daniel E. Holland Military Working Dog Hospital at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. Caught early enough, says Burghardt, half the affected dogs can be treated and returned to active duty. "The other half just have to find something else to do for a living."

Because of the emotional wear on the dogs, scientists have been trying to build a machine that can out-smell them. At Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Washington State, scientists are working on ionisation technology to 'see' vapours the way a dog does - the same basic technology used at airports but far more sensitive.

However, says Robert Ewing, a senior research scientist at Pacific Northwest, dogs have been doing this job for years. "I don't know that you could ever replace them." R



Clove, a black Lab at MSA, stops and lies down after finding a suspicious box



Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

HORSEPLAY

A devout cowboy had lost his favourite Bible while out riding his property. He searched long and hard but couldn't find it anywhere.

Later that day a horse turned up with the Bible in its mouth, and dropped it at the cowboy's feet.

The cowboy couldn't believe his eyes. He looked to the sky, raised his arms and shouted, "Praise be to the Lord, it's a miracle!"

"Not really," said the horse. "Your name and address are written on the inside cover."

SUBMITTED BY TERRY SANGSTER

A LEND IN NEED

Every time Peter, the man next door, headed towards Paul's house, Paul knew he was coming to borrow something. He was always doing this and it was driving Paul crazy.

"Peter won't get away with it this time," muttered Paul to his wife. "Watch this."

"Er, I wondered if you'd be using your hedge trimmer this morning?" asked Peter the neighbour.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry," replied Paul with a smug look, "but the fact of the matter is I'll be using it all day."

"In that case," smiled Peter, "you



"This monster you're afraid of sounds a lot like the one in that movie I said you weren't allowed to watch."

won't be using your golf clubs. Mind if I borrow them?"

SUBMITTED BY KAY MADDOCKS

GRAVEYARD SHIFT

A teenager takes a shortcut home through a cemetery. Halfway across, he's startled by a tapping noise coming from the shadows. Trembling with fear, he spots an old man with a hammer and chisel, chipping away at a headstone.

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

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

SUBMITTED BY GINETTE HUGHES



As the most famous painting in the world, the Mona Lisa draws more than six million admirers to the Louvre each year. Just what is her peculiar power?

FROM READER'S DIGEST
GREAT SECRETS OF HISTORY



The Mysterious Mona Lisa

Mona Lisa mystery #1: **Who was Mona Lisa?**

Over the past century, it has been proposed that Mona Lisa was a noblewoman – Isabella d'Este, Marquise of Mantua, or Costanza d'Avalos, Duchess of Francavilla. Others have stared

at that unsettling visage and seen the face of a man – Leonardo da Vinci himself, or the man who was for 20 years his assistant (and perhaps his lover), Gian Giacomo Caprotti. There is even a theory that the picture may have started out as a portrait from

life but, over the years that Leonardo worked on it, evolved into an abstract vision of the feminine ideal.

These days, most experts agree that the Mona Lisa is a portrait of Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo, wife of a Florentine silk merchant named Francesco del Giocondo (hence the name by which she is known in Italy and France, La Gioconda, or La Joconde). When she sat for Leonardo da Vinci, in around 1503, she was about 24 years old. Her *contrapposto* pose – with the body angled away from the viewer, head turned forward – was widely admired and copied by Leonardo's contemporaries. And his *sfumato* technique, where sharp edges are blurred to create an uncannily life-like effect, was seen as a brilliant technical innovation, very unlike the slightly frozen human figures of earlier, lesser painters.

Mona Lisa mystery #2: The hidden initials

In 2010, Silvano Vinceti, chairman of Italy's National Committee for Cultural Heritage, claimed to have discerned letters minutely painted on Mona Lisa's eyes: L and V (Leonardo da Vinci's initials) in the right eye, and perhaps C, E or B in the left. The Louvre responded that Vinceti's letters were simply microscopic cracks in the paint.

Mona Lisa mystery #3: The broken backdrop

The distant, dreamlike vista behind Mona Lisa's head seems to be higher on the right-hand side than on the left. It is hard to see how the landscape would join up. This is subliminally unsettling: Mona Lisa appears taller, more erect, when one's gaze drifts to the left than when it is on the right.

Mona Lisa mystery #4: The bewitching smile

In 2000, scientists at Harvard University suggested a neurological explanation for Mona Lisa's elusive smile. When a viewer looks at her eyes, the mouth is in peripheral vision, which sees in black and white. This accentuates the shadows at the corners of her mouth, making the smile seem broader. But

“
**The variability
of her smile ...
makes her seem
so alive, and so
mysterious**

the smile diminishes when you look straight at it. It is the variability of her smile, the fact that it changes when you look away from it, that makes her seem so alive, so mysterious.

Mona Lisa mystery #5: The unknown bridge

The Mona Lisa's background landscape seems unreal, but the bridge might be one that Leonardo knew. It is usually said to be Ponte Buriano in Tuscany, but in 2011, a researcher



The Louvre Museum in Paris has been home to the Mona Lisa for more than 200 years

claimed it depicts the Bobbio Bridge over the Trebbia, which was washed away in a flood in 1472.

Mona Lisa mystery #6: **Da Vinci's obsession**

Leonardo da Vinci worked on the painting for four years, and possibly at intervals after that. He always took it with him when he travelled, and he never signed or dated it. The picture went with him when, towards the end of his life, he moved to France. It was sold to his last patron, King François I, and remained out of sight in the royal collection for almost 200 years. In 1799 Napoleon came across the painting and commandeered it for his bedroom. Only in 1804 did the Mona Lisa go on public display – in the newly founded Louvre Museum. At that time, it was not seen as particularly interesting, but in the middle of the 19th century Leonardo's stock as an artist slowly rose. He came to be seen as the equal of the two acknowledged Renaissance greats, Michelangelo and Raphael. This new

interest in Leonardo as a painter drew attention to his few known works.

Mona Lisa mystery #7: **Was Mona Lisa unwell?**

Mona Lisa has often been scrutinised by medical experts. In 2010, an Italian doctor looked at the swelling around her eyes and diagnosed excess cholesterol in her diet. Other conditions ascribed to her include facial paralysis, deafness, even syphilis. More happily, it has been suggested that the look of contentment on her face indicates she is pregnant. Dentists have also posited bruxism, compulsive grinding of the teeth; or that the line of her top lip suggests that her front teeth are missing – which, along with the faintest hint of a scar on her lip, raises the possibility that she was a victim of domestic violence. Jungians have seen her as an accomplished representation of the anima, the female archetype that resides in each one of us. It seems that almost any condition can be read into that puzzling face. R



A top-down view of a large number of small, white, shallow bowls arranged in a grid pattern. Each bowl contains a single live lobster, which is dark blue or black with some yellowish-orange markings on its claws and legs. The bowls are set against a background of a light-colored, possibly wooden, surface.

**SEE
THE WORLD ...**

Turn the page ➔

... DIFFERENTLY

In the wild, a female lobster can lay an astonishing 20,000 eggs, which need about nine months to hatch. Unfortunately, only a handful of these lobster babies survive to maturity. To stabilise the European lobster population in the North Sea, the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research releases hundreds of such young animals into the waters around Heligoland, Germany. Although at the time of their release they measure roughly 4 cm (see previous pages), adults can grow as large as 60 cm and weigh as much as 6 kg.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES







The Power *of* Thank You



Making gratitude an everyday habit can change your life

BY SYDNEY LONEY

WHEN AMY PAULSON was growing up in Arizona, people would often stop her on the street with her mum and dad to remark on how lucky she was that her family had adopted her. (Paulson was abandoned at a police station in Seoul when she was a day old and spent her first three months in an orphanage.) “I always thought, *Why should I be more thankful to my parents than the next person?*” she says.

In 2011, however, Paulson reconnected with her birth mother in South Korea, her adoptive mum by her side. “My Korean mother took my American mother’s hands in hers and said, ‘Thank you.’ After that, my whole world changed,” Paulson says. At the time, she was working in the e-commerce sector and struggling with anxiety, depression and an eating disorder. Reconnecting with her birth family, however, made her feel like the luckiest

person in the world – and she wanted to actively share her good fortune. That year, she quit her job and co-founded the Global Gratitude Alliance, which partners with grassroots organisations to create community-led solutions for social and economic change.

Since then, a reflexive sense of thankfulness has become Paulson’s frame of reference for work, relationships and daily life in general. That all-encompassing approach can make you happier and healthier, says Louisa Jewell, founder and president of the Canadian Positive Psychology Association, a non-profit dedicated to wellbeing. Some call it ‘spontaneous’ gratitude, others describe it as ‘casual’; either way, it’s more than an occasional feeling of appreciation when something goes right. This attitude, says Jewell, “can become a lens through which you see the world, which is different than just saying thank you to someone.”

RETHINK YOUR WORLD VIEW

"When something bad happens," says Jewell, "I try to be appreciative that things aren't worse." This attitude came in handy seven years ago, when her daughter, then eight, was being bullied at school. On the way to meet with teachers, Jewell mentally ran through all the things she was grateful for – that the school cared, that her child was resilient, that she was able to help her daughter get through the



Pausing to take stock prolongs your happiness, even after the initial thrill wears off

ordeal. "I felt calm and relaxed going into the meeting, rather than being an upset, stressed-out crazy mum."

It takes practise to connect with those feelings under duress, Jewell admits. In her work, she introduces people to the idea of spontaneous gratitude by getting them to jot down three things they're looking forward to each morning or three things they're thankful for each night. It may sound corny, but in fact, there's a scientific basis to that approach. In March 2016, researchers at Indiana University found that people still felt grateful a few weeks after writing thank you letters to people in their

lives; months later, they showed more gratitude-related brain activity. Repetition is key, Jewell says. "Practising creates new neural pathways until it becomes easier, almost habitual."

APPRECIATE THE LITTLE THINGS

For Jewell, a trip to a part of Nepal where nobody had easy access to water – clean or otherwise – gave her a new appreciation for hot showers in the morning. That principle can be applied elsewhere. Human beings are always looking for novelty, she says, and when we get something we really want – a car, a house, a delicious new gelato flavour – we enjoy it, but only until our pleasure spikes and our appreciation for that new thing wanes. (A famous 1978 study conducted by researchers from Northwestern University in Illinois and the University of Massachusetts found that even after winning the lottery, subjects eventually returned to their baseline of happiness.)

But according to a 2007 report from the University of California, Riverside, channelling gratitude can combat that sense of deflation. Pausing to take stock prolongs your happiness, Jewell says, even after the initial thrill wears off. Paulson relied on an app to remind her to find something to give thanks for every day. "That helped change my outlook," she says. "Watching the sun create an interesting shadow, for instance – there's joy in that, even if it's only for a second."

Giving back can bolster those feelings. "Volunteering to help someone less fortunate changes your perspective," says Jewell, who's experienced that first-hand through her own work at a women's shelter. "It shifts your focus onto other people and away from your own problems, and it can keep you in a space of gratitude." Paulson likes to make donations on behalf of someone who's had a positive impact on her life. "I find it meaningful to put their name on a little tag, but I don't always tell the person I've done it."

MAKE CONNECTIONS

Being thankful can also strengthen your relationships with the people already in your life. Janice Kaplan, author of *The Gratitude Diaries*, began by observing and acknowledging a small thing about her husband: she thanked him for doing all the driving after a particularly arduous road trip. That simple act, she says, helped connect them. "I think of it as simply appreciating people. It's something we don't do enough of, and it makes all the difference."

For Paulson, the attitude shift helped her overcome health issues: after ten years on antidepressants, she weaned

herself off the drugs (in consultation with her doctors) several months after she returned from Korea. "It's nearly impossible to sink into the abyss of depression while being present and grateful for my connection with others and the world around me."

Those positive effects inspired Paulson to share the experience with

"It's nearly impossible to sink into the abyss of depression while being grateful for my connection with others"

others. Through a partnership with a home for orphaned children in Nepal, the Global Gratitude Alliance provided teachers with trauma-healing workshops that concluded with a ritual of giving thanks. The participants used those techniques to help their students and community after the devastating earthquake of 2015. Children from the school recently visited a local seniors' home to build relationships with the residents there. "Gratitude creates a cycle of giving and receiving," Paulson says.

R

SUPERIOR ATTITUDE

It's called being condescending. Maybe you've heard of it.

@DANMENTOS (DAN MENTOS)



How to Get What You Paid For

BY BEN POPKEN

A guide to getting good
customer service (without
getting arrested)

MONA SHAW WALKED into her local telco's customer-service office one day swinging a claw hammer. The feisty 75 year old clobbered several pieces of office equipment before she was stopped. "Now do I have your attention?" she asked.

Reliable phone service was critical for Shaw and her husband. They lived in an isolated rural area and had a history of calling for emergency medical assistance. The Shaws were switching to a phone-internet-TV package, but after days of spotty phone service, a botched installation attempt, a missed service appointment, and blithe indifference, Shaw went to the company's local office.

She waited two hours for the manager before a customer-service representative announced that the manager had gone home for the day. That was the last straw so Shaw went back to her house and fetched her hammer.

Was Mona Shaw's reaction extreme? You bet. She received a three-month suspended sentence for disorderly conduct, a \$345 fine for damages and a year-long restraining order that barred her from going near

the company's office. Yet consumers everywhere can identify with her frustration.

As costs balloon and income shrinks, customers are chasing value while businesses are chasing profits. Naturally, there are some nasty collisions. But good service is, in the end, good business – and it's something both sides want.

But how much time should you spend on the problem? Calculate your income as an hourly wage. If your time is worth \$30 an hour, don't spend all day chasing down a \$25 refund. Life is short. Hold times are long.

Before you open your mouth to complain about poor customer service, you need to ask yourself two questions: Do I have a valid complaint? Am I expecting a reasonable solution? If the answer to both questions is 'yes', you can use the strategies here – gathered from both our readers and customer-service experts – to get satisfaction for almost any transaction.

Give regular customer service a shot first. Concisely and calmly explain your problem. If they don't do what you want, try repeating the reasons. If the first rep is stuck on no, call back and get a different one. Talking to a supervisor sometimes works. If it doesn't, it's time to escalate your tactics by following these tried-and-true tips.

1. Dictate the Options

HOW TO DO IT Begin the call by saying, "I have a situation that you are going to fix for me today." Clearly state in a sentence or two exactly what you want them to do for you. Have your options worked out. It may help to write them on a piece of paper and keep it in front of you.

WHY IT WORKS You set the tone and expectations from the outset. You'll skip the 'if' of helping you and get right to the 'how.' You'll save time, and not just for yourself. Many call centres work on commission and incentives. It's a high-stress environment. The faster the call centre operator completes his calls, the bigger his bonuses.

TRY THESE TIPS

"Know your rights and ask the right questions."

DHEERAJ TANEJA, *Sydney, New South Wales*

"Acknowledge what's well done before airing your complaint quietly and reasonably."

LORELLA D'CRUZ, *Essendon, Victoria*

"Ask the right questions and listen to the response."

TERRI BRADLEY, *Gold Coast, Queensland*

"Speak in a friendly manner, then listen enthusiastically to their reply."

LIN WALKER, *Eastern Creek, New South Wales*

2. Threaten to Cancel

HOW TO DO IT Tell the company that unless your problem is fixed, you're taking your business to a competitor. It's helpful to cite the other company's enticing promotional offers. A deal-sealing phrase? "Give me a reason to stick around."

WHY IT WORKS When customers feel taken care of they are more inclined to buy from the company again. One study shows that if a business hangs on to an extra five per cent of its customers, profits increase an average of 44 per cent. In contrast, the cost of replacing a customer is five times the cost of making a customer happy. Some companies even have a special division – the 'retention department' – with specialists trained to convince you not to leave, even if they must dangle discounts and freebies in front of you.

TRY THESE TIPS

"Don't take no for an answer."

GREG NORRIS, *Bothwell, Tasmania*

"Keeping your cool, sticking to the facts and being your most charming self will bring better results."

ELAINE ALLISON, *customer-service expert*

"Mention your long-term loyalty to their business, then kill them with kindness – it's much harder to not help someone nice!"

VICKI TOOHER, *customer-service specialist*

3. Call the Executive Suite

HOW TO DO IT It's a little-known secret, but many large companies have a firewall of high-ranking customer-service personnel surrounding the executive offices. To reach them, find the number for corporate headquarters and the name of a top-ranking executive. The CEO works nicely. Call the main operator and ask in your most professional voice to be transferred to his or her office. Once there, quickly pitch your case to the assistant. They will likely hand you over to an elite squadron equipped with customer-service superpowers.

WHY IT WORKS The job of the executive customer-service team is to solve all problems in their path. They like to make customers happy. They also like to keep you from bothering busy executives, complaining to regulatory agencies and talking to the local news.

TRY THESE TIPS

"Don't waste time dealing with customer-services reps for serious matters as they have only limited authority."

VICKI TOOHER

"Order what you want from the right people."

RONALD VIDLER, *Ermington, New South Wales*

4. Email Someone High Up in the Company

HOW TO DO IT Figure out the company's email address format. Next, find the names of a number of top executives, then send your complaint letter to one or more of them. For a list of potential recipients, check out the company's About Us or Investor Relations sections of its website.

WHY IT WORKS A top executive understands they won't have a company if there are no customers. Plus, when you're a bigwig – and you've been convinced that a customer deserves assistance – if you tell your people to fix that problem, it will get done.

TRY THESE TIPS

"Put your complaint in writing. A letter creates a paper trail and saves you from repeating the story."

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT, *consumer advocate*

"Emails sent to the right people work – they can't address complaints if they're not aware of them."

VICKI TOOHER R

*"Put your
complaint in
writing. A
letter creates
a paper trail"*



That's Outrageous!

WORLD WIDE WEIRD

AT YOUR BIDDING

If you're in the market for a decommissioned cop car or a military carrier plane, look no further than GCSurplus.ca, a Canadian government website that auctions off Crown assets. The page's appeal isn't limited to military buffs. When Canadian travellers are unable to pay import duties on purchases made abroad, wares may be seized and resold online. That's how the police wound up auctioning off Rolex watches and lacy lingerie. The most luxurious items, says the GCSurplus program's senior director, Sandi Wright, are often vehicles confiscated from drug lords and other convicted felons. "If you find a BMW, Lamborghini or Maserati on our site," she says, "chances are it's part of the proceeds of crime."

COLD COMFORT

In 2015, while shovelling his driveway in Boston after a blizzard, Kyle Waring, 28, decided to monetise his labour – by selling the leftover snow to winter



lovers in sunnier parts of the US. In its first year, his internet business, Ship Snow Yo, hawked almost 700 kilograms of the white stuff. For about US\$150, buyers received a 5.5 kg package of freshly shovelled product.

"Even if 10 or 15 per cent of it melts," says Waring, "you're left with plenty for a snowman."

MACABRE MEMENTOES

Every few days, 26-year-old Nicola Hebsen rambles through Lancashire, UK, searching for road kill and other decaying specimens. It's not a grisly hobby – it's work. For the past five years, she's run the online shop Dead Good Jewellery. Hebsen has sold more than 600 pieces, including pendants with insects encased in resin and amulets in which taxidermy pheasant or crow's feet extend from mounds of clay. "If I find something dead, I feel that nature is offering it up to me," says Hebsen. "But I'd never kill anything to make jewellery. That seems unnecessarily morbid."

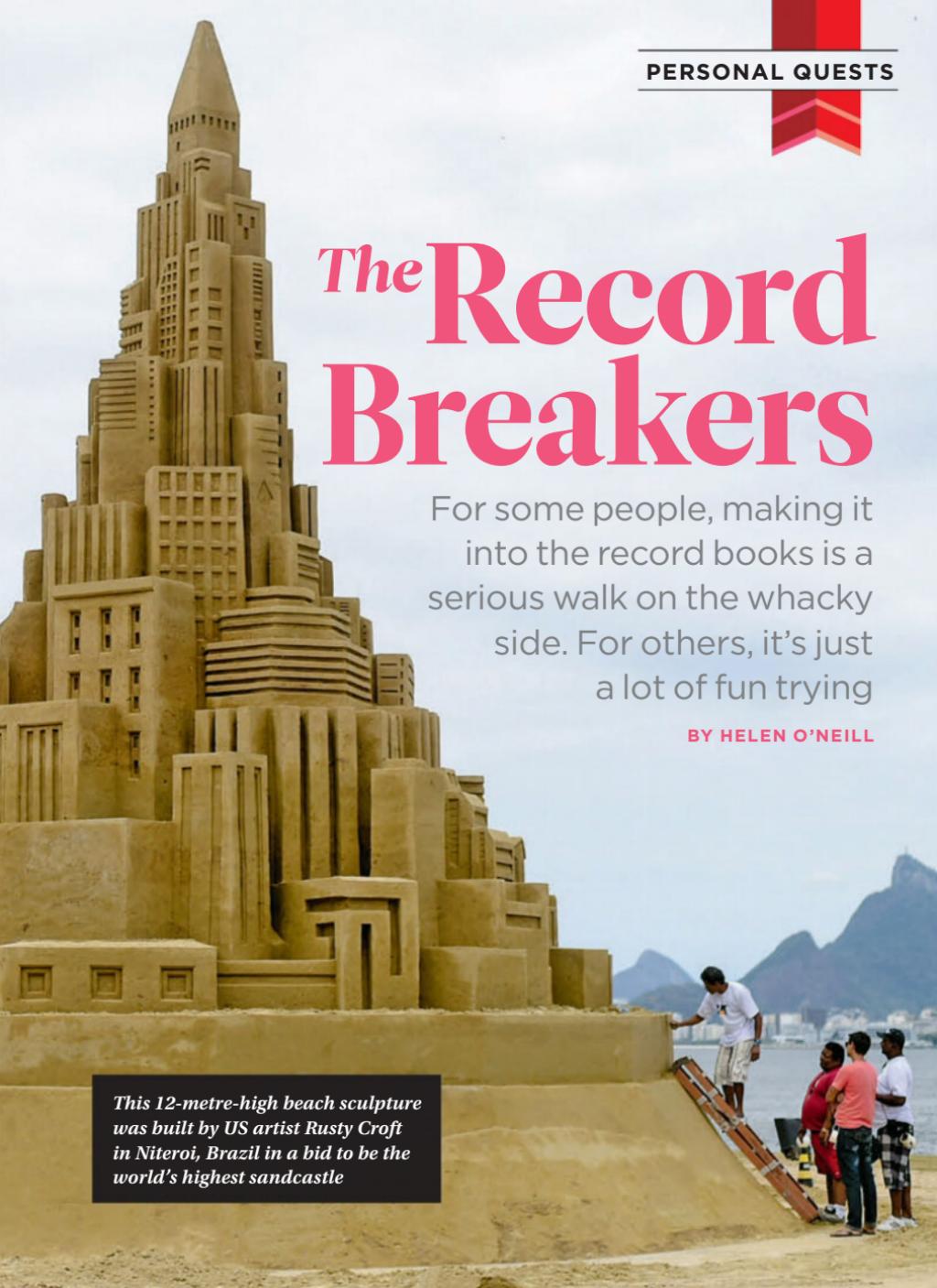


The Record Breakers

For some people, making it into the record books is a serious walk on the whacky side. For others, it's just a lot of fun trying

BY HELEN O'NEILL

This 12-metre-high beach sculpture was built by US artist Rusty Croft in Niteroi, Brazil in a bid to be the world's highest sandcastle



FASTER. HIGHER. LONGER. STRONGER. There is no question that the quest to excel runs deep. That is why, several months ago, I leapt on the chance to help break a national record. This was no Olympian-style endeavour – it involved learning the steps to a dance, dressing up as a zombie and heading to a town called Lithgow, in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

The event was part of Lithgow's Halloween celebrations, and an official attempt to smash the Australian record for the largest number of costumed people dancing in unison to the Michael Jackson song 'Thriller'. It stood at 450 dancers, according to the town's website, and with thousands expected as grizzly ghouls from every tomb, what could possibly go wrong?

When the big day came the crowds were huge and the atmosphere electric. Jason Jackson, billed as Australia's top Michael Jackson tribute artist, performed a high-voltage set of Michael Jackson songs and readied himself to lead the 'Thriller' record-break attempt.

Sadly, things did not go according to plan. Jackson and his dancers strode onstage to lead the attempt but too many in the audience seemed unaware that this was no run-through – it was the real thing. Before you knew it, the moment had passed. "We tried our best," said a disappointed Jackson

afterwards. The 'Thriller' record would have to be broken another day.

Some record-breaking attempts fail far more spectacularly. When media company BuzzFeed broke Facebook online viewer records by live-streaming its employees putting rubber bands around a melon until it exploded, others found themselves inspired to repeat the stunt. One attempt by a Chinese duo went wincingly wrong, leaving one man in hospital after a piece of fruit hit him in the face while hundreds of thousands of people watched on.

Facebook has turbo-charged other, more laudable, record attempts. Last November Australian actor Samuel

Johnson used the Facebook page of Love Your Sister, the breast cancer fundraising charity he launched when his sister Connie was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer, to announce that it was time to tackle a new world record. Johnson already had skin in the game. In 2014, he completed the longest

“Didga, a cat from Tweed Heads, became a world record holder for performing 20 tricks in a minute”



Left: Actor Samuel Johnson and his sister Connie Johnson both chased ambitious world records – for a good cause. Below left: Skateboarding tabby Didga made the record books for her tricks

"I can't get this silly grin off my face," wrote Connie on Facebook about the phenomenal support for their world record attempt. "It's possible that I am not only the happiest cancer patient in the country right now, but that I am the happiest person, full stop."

RECORDS COME IN ALL SHAPES and sizes. In 2016, Adelaide's Dulwich Bakery created the world's biggest-ever custard slice, an enormous sweet treat measuring 1.94 metres by 6.04 metres, with a depth of 55 millimetres and a weight of over 804 kilograms.

This year Didga, a cat from Tweed Heads in New South Wales, became a Guinness World Record holder for performing 20 tricks in a minute – the highest number ever officially established. The tabby, which can do everything from high-fiving, spinning and rolling on command to jumping over a bar while on a moving skateboard, belongs to Robert Dollwet, a former Hollywood animal trainer who claimed that she has since broken her own record by another four tricks.

Persistence and inventiveness are crucial. In 2016, Australian rugby player Drew Mitchell, having made



PHOTOS: (JOHNSONS) COURTESY OF LOVE YOUR SISTER; (DIDGA) COURTESY OF ROBERT DOLLWET

ever unicycle journey, peddling 15,955 kilometres around Australia over 364 days and raising almost \$1.5 million for cancer research.

This time the idea was Connie's: to break the world record for the longest line of coins using four million five-cent pieces. For that they would need almost \$196,000. Within 24 hours, supporters had donated almost \$160,000.

a new year's resolution to get his name on the record books, failed at an ultra-fast biscuit-eating challenge and an attempt to put on more than 48 socks in 60 seconds. Success eventually came all on the same day – March 3, 2016 – when he secured four world records by crushing 14 apples with his bicep in a minute, passing a ball to fellow player Matt Giteau a record 98 times in a minute, scoring the most rugby drop goals ever recorded in three minutes (29, in tandem again with Giteau) and then smashing the 100 m record while wearing clogs in just 14.43 seconds.

THERE MAY BE MORE TO COME. Chayne Hultgren, an Australian extreme circus performer, broke his first world record in 2008 by swallowing 17 swords at the same time. He now holds 44 Guinness World Records (GWR), making him Australia's most prolific GWR holder. "I am hooked on the record-breaking bug," he says. "I just love it." Asked for recent milestones, he reels off a breathtaking list. "The longest electrical man-made lightning bolt to strike a swallowed sword," he says. "The highest chainsaw juggling, the most swords swallowed on a unicycle ... the most swords swallowed under water (that's four)... There are a few."

“While we prefer people to break existing records we will look at new ideas and think, ‘Do they fulfil our criteria?’”

Chayne Hultgren is Australia's most prolific Guinness World Record holder



Hultgren began unicycling at age eight, grew up fascinated by the *Guinness Book of Records* and says he always wanted to be in it. Since 2008 he has been in every issue. The performer stresses that he goes into each attempt with a lot of preparation, has broken pre-existing records and also created new ones. He describes the first record he invented as "the most weight dragged with hooks in the eye socket: a cart with six girls in it and a pile of cement slabs. The total weight was 411 kilograms and I had to drag it for a minimum distance of ten metres."

Asked if anyone has since broken that record, he laughs and says simply, "No."

Guinness World Records editor-in-chief Craig Glenday suspects Hultgren's aim may be the GWR's world record, held by American Ashrita Furman, who has around 200 standing records to his name. Hultgren has a way to go, he says, but anything is possible.

The appetite for record-breaking seems unquenchable. "We get about 1000 applications a week from all over the world and at least half of them will be people suggesting new ideas," Glenday explains. "While we prefer people to break existing records so we're encouraging competition ... we will look at new ideas and think, 'Do they fulfil our key criteria?'"

Achievements must be measurable, provable and breakable but also interesting, he says, adding that while this

is subjective it also means applications arrive from all walks of life.

"You can be in with Usain Bolt even if you can peel an apple well; we're saying that's as impressive in a different way," he says. "The Olympics is an arbitrary selection of sports ... but why are they any better than someone who can 'space hopper' 100 metres?"

Records are becoming more extreme and also reflect changes in society, with the latest book including selfie-taking and twerking. A record-breaker himself (he once held the record for the longest stretched Curly Wurly, a chewy chocolate bar), Glenday says that for some people it is a "bucket-list thing ... a lifetime effort." For others it can be "a bit like tattooing – once you've had one world record, you want another".

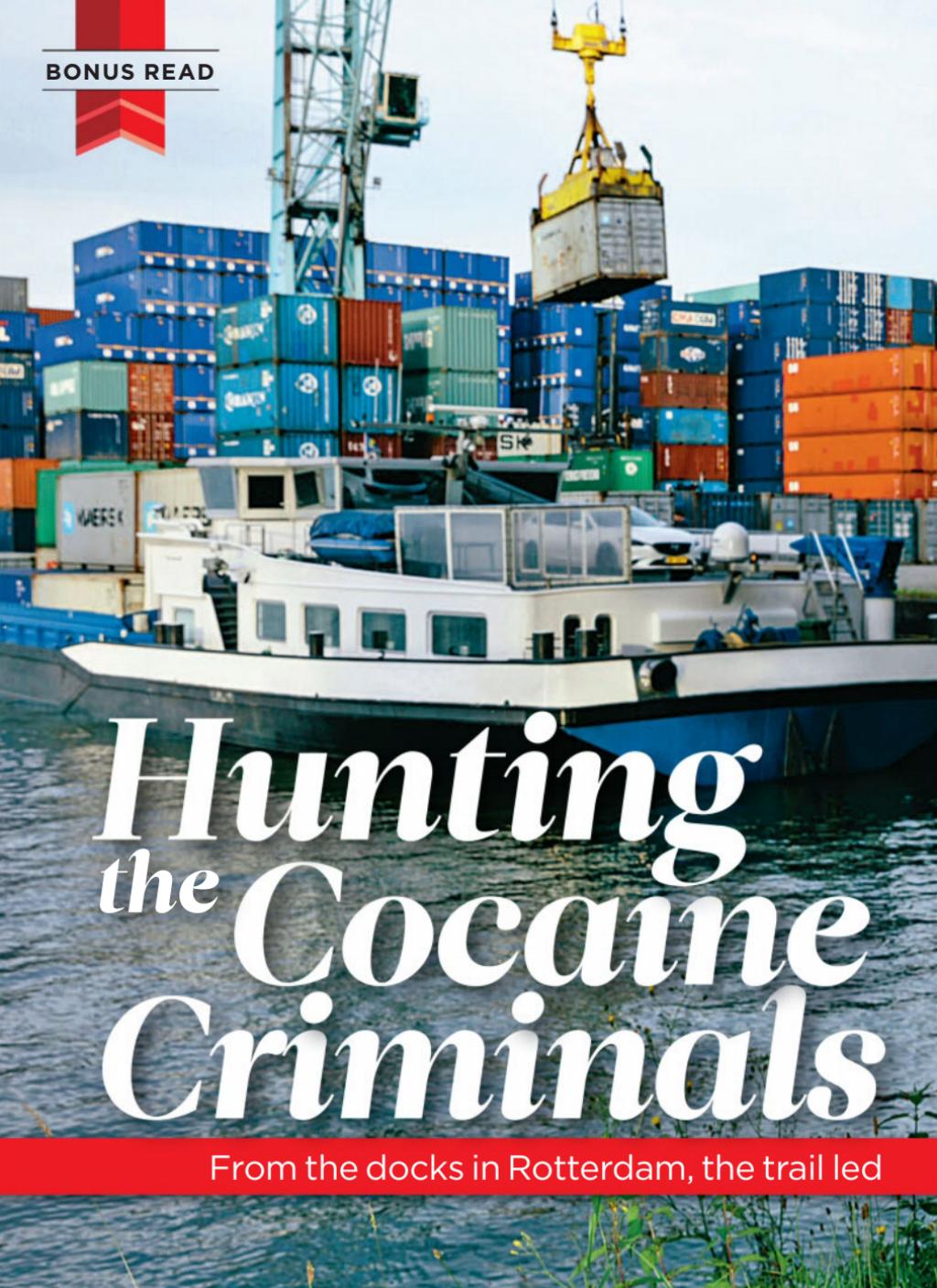
Having worked at the GWR since 2002, has he come away thinking that some people are simply bonkers?

"Yes but in a good way," he replies. "They've a good sense of humour and a sense of perspective. They're trying to be forward thinking, bettering themselves and trying to better the human race, even if it's in a very small way like juggling chainsaws."

Life should be about having fun, he adds. "If that's how you want to do it, by breaking records, well great, because it means you are making people happy and making them think." R

Helen O'Neill travelled to Lithgow with assistance from Lithgow Tourism.

BONUS READ



Hunting the Cocaine Criminals

From the docks in Rotterdam, the trail led



*Prosecutor Jirko
Patić at Rotterdam
docks, a key entry
point for cocaine
into Europe*

to the beaches of the Costa del Sol

BY TIM BOUQUET

JUNE 2015: MÁLAGA, COSTA DEL SOL, SPAIN

As he strolled along the packed tourist beach enjoying the sunshine, Anthony Dennis was suddenly aware that he was being stared at. Nearby was a giant four-metre digital screen mounted on a flatbed truck. As he walked closer he saw 16 faces on the screen under the legend: "Some of the most wanted criminals in Spain. Help us find them." Then the picture on the screen switched to show just one of the faces. It was his. "Wanted/Se Busca Anthony Michael Dennis. Conspiracy to traffic cocaine."

Just 1.6 metres tall and with no distinguishing features beyond a small scar on the right of his forehead, 48-year-old Anthony Dennis would have been easy to lose in a crowd, but not now. Diving into one of the bars or restaurants nearby would not provide him with sanctuary, either. The picture and 'most wanted' message could be sent to anybody inside with a Bluetooth-enabled phone.

The screen truck, which tours areas popular with British holidaymakers such as Benidorm, Málaga and Puerto Banús, is part of Operation Captura, run by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and crime-fighting charity Crimestoppers, in conjunction with Spain's Policía Nacional and Guardia Civil. Captura was set up in 2006 to hunt down British fugitives who traditionally go on the run to what UK tabloid newspapers call the 'Costa del Crime'.

By the time Anthony Dennis's face was flashed up on screen, Captura

had already snared 68 of 86 of Britain's most-wanted fugitives. "We don't give up looking for them. We bring them back to face justice," says David Allen, head of the UK International Crime Bureau at the NCA. "It doesn't matter how long it takes."

Unmasked in Spain, and with a European arrest warrant on him, Anthony Dennis went on the run again, but when it came to places to hide, he had few options. In late July 2015 in a village north of London called London Colney, Sergeant Chris Dyer of the NCA was watching a detached house in a gated community. The curtains had been drawn for days.

Eventually, Dyer's patient surveillance was rewarded when a woman arrived and went inside the house. He recognised her as Anthony Dennis's wife. There was, however, no sign of Dennis at the property. Finally, on the afternoon of August 4, a stiflingly hot day, Dennis, his wife and a child in a pushchair emerged from the house.



It was the moment Dyer had been waiting for. He and a colleague got out of his car and followed the trio into a nearby park, where he arrested Anthony Dennis for his part in a global multi-million-Euro cocaine trafficking conspiracy.

It marked the end of a pan-European police investigation that had begun in Rotterdam three years earlier.

JULY 2012: DISTRICT COURT BUILDING, ROTTERDAM

The modern red-brick building that houses the office of Jirko Patist, national prosecutor at the Dutch Public Prosecution Service, is just along from Rotterdam's iconic Erasmus Bridge and overlooks the still waters

Anthony Dennis's face is displayed on a digital advertising van to curious onlookers on a Spanish beach

of Rijnhaven, one of the city's historic old docks. In the near distance a thicket of tall spidery cranes in Rotterdam's modern port work 24/7, loading and unloading containers from the 30,000 seagoing vessels and 110,000 inland vessels that visit every year.

Stretching across more than 40 kilometres and covering 12,500 hectares of land and water, Rotterdam is Europe's largest port. It is also at the centre of Europe's cocaine trade. Dutch police estimate that between 25 and 50 per cent of cocaine consumed in western and central Europe is now

smuggled through Rotterdam's docks, overtaking the Belgian port of Antwerp as the top entry point for the drug.

Patist, a youthful-looking 44-year-old lawyer, had spent six years leading successful investigations into major drug crime in the port. It was a warm summer's day when the tall, curly-haired prosecutor took a call from the special unit of the Dienst Nationale Recherche (DNR), the Dutch National Crime Squad, which handles confidential informants (CIs). Not all CI leads that cross Patist's desk are sufficient in themselves for him to mount an investigation but the authenticity and detail surrounding this one piqued his interest.

"Please send me a full report," he told the DNR. In the Netherlands it is prosecutors such as Patist who lead and manage police investigations. The police report arrived a few days later and Patist went before a judge where he argued for a wiretap and a covert CCTV camera. "There is no other way to gather the evidence I need," he told the judge.

CAFÉ DE KETEL, DAMSTRAAT 53, ROTTERDAM

Located on the corner of Damstraat and Oranjeboomstraat in the Feijenoord area of Rotterdam, close to the Nieuwe Maas, the river that runs through the heart of the city, Café de



*Café de Ketel, focus of the investigation.
Inset: Anthony Dennis (left) and Anthony Wilson captured in surveillance footage*

“

The covert camera showed the same people visiting Café de Ketel at all hours of the day and night. Conversational traffic on the café's phones was incessant

Ketel was not the kind of place to pop into for a casual beer. The front door was locked and entry to the small bar was strictly by invitation only.

The café was run by two brothers of Turkish origin, Ugur and Ufuk Çamdere. The confidential informant had alleged that they were importing heroin from Turkey into the Netherlands.

Footage from the covert camera that Patist had installed showed the same people visiting Café de Ketel at all hours of the day and night. Conversational traffic on the café's phones was incessant, conducted in a mixture of Dutch, Turkish and English. DNR detectives told Patist that Café de Ketel was owned by a company supplying scaffolding to ship-repair companies. It was just a front.

As he read the transcripts from the wiretaps, Patist smiled. The brothers talked not about scaffolding but about cargoes of 'girls', 'Porsches' and 'wine' on calls to countries such as Colombia, Brazil and Panama. One conversation ended: "Opting for Rotterdam means opting for limitless possibilities. Make it happen."

Patist's suspicion that the Çamderes and their associates were talking in

code about drugs was confirmed when Turkish police – not renowned for being cooperative with their Western counterparts – revealed that Ugur Çamdere had been sentenced to six years in Turkey for narcotics offences and that they would like him to return to serve his time.

Another frequent visitor to Café de Ketel was Erol Soytürk. He had no evident legal source of income and seemed to serve as a messenger and fixer for the Çamdere brothers, who spent most of their time in the café. Not only did Soytürk organise the transport of people, visiting many addresses around the city, he also appeared to be an investor. Patist brought in local police to tail him.

"As the intelligence from the cameras and wiretaps grew, the picture became much more complex, but they only revealed a certain amount," Patist explains.

Patist returned to the judge and asked for permission for a covert recording probe to be installed in one of the rooms in the café where the business was being done. It was known as 'the smoking room.'

"From the probe we knew for sure

that the Çamdere brothers and a growing number of suspects were involved not just in heroin but also cocaine, synthetic drugs and cannabis farms. They were major brokers who also seemed to have access to heavy firearms."

It was also clear that shipments of drugs would come into Rotterdam stashed inside legitimate containers. But with over 12 million containers coming into the port every year, discovering which ones contained drugs was virtually impossible.

APRIL 5, 2013: TONY ARRIVES IN ROTTERDAM

On April 5, 2013, Erol Soytürk welcomed his friend Tony to Café de Ketel. Tony, a British man in his 30s, was a frequent visitor around this time. He could be heard talking to Ugur and Soytürk about an incoming container ship.

"We have 60," Ugur Çamdere said.

"Two bags, or three bags of 20?" Tony asked.

Soytürk, who was in charge of shipments coming into and out of the port, talked about trading in 'Audi' and 'Koning,' which would be 'ripped on' to a legitimate cargo container at the port of embarkation and 'ripped off' again in Rotterdam by corrupt dockers in the pay of the Çamdere brothers.

Breaking off from the matter in hand, Soytürk offered to sell Tony the formula for making MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy.

Tony was accompanied at times by another, slightly older British man, who was also heavily involved in the shipment, which they frequently referred to as 'Rolex Reina 7.'

By now Jirko Patist had a core team of 20 DNR detectives, with up to 100 officers from other local and specialist units gathering evidence on half a dozen different consignments involving Ugur and Ufuk Çamdere and Dutch conspirators.

Hundreds of hours of transcripts from Café de Ketel were being pored over by the Dutch prosecutors. An increasing number of addresses in Rotterdam were under round-the-clock surveillance. But when it came to identifying the British conspirators, Patist decided that he needed to get some help.

NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY, LONDON

Chris Dyer and fellow investigator Mike Lakey, who work on major cases for the NCA, recognised the British men's accents as being from Essex in the East of England. Viewing footage from Café de Ketel, they managed to identify 'Tony' as Anthony Wilson from the Essex town of Harlow.

Aged 36, 1.8 metres tall, muscular, well-built with a skinhead haircut, Wilson had convictions for petty crime.

The other man was Anthony Dennis, aged 47, and also from Essex. He had a conviction for money laundering. Wilson lived in a modest four-

bedroom detached house worth about €380,000. "Nothing special," says Dyer.

Dennis had a much grander house worth €700,000, tucked discreetly down a quiet country lane. "There

"We reckoned that 'box' meant container," Dyer explains. Then they heard Wilson say: "It's INKU 6483504." It was a traceable container number. The listed contents of the shipment were chopped-up rubber tyres bound

“We knew the Çamdere brothers were involved not just in heroin but also cocaine, synthetic drugs and cannabis farms. They were major brokers”

was no doubt who had the more successful criminal career," Dyer adds.

Lakey and two colleagues set to work transcribing hundreds of hours of Café de Ketel tapes sent over by Jirko Patist's office in Rotterdam.

"Our one's got Rolex Reina 7," they heard Dennis telling Ugur Çamdere.

"What does that mean beyond Rolex being a watch and *reina* being Spanish for queen?" Dyer asked.

When Anthony Dennis was at the café he led the discussions. "He had a lot of knowledge about law enforcement techniques," says Dyer. At one point Dennis could be heard asking the Çamderes: "They couldn't have got a recording device in here, could they?"

"We live upstairs," they reassured him. "It would not be possible."

Dennis, Wilson, the Çamderes and Soytürk could be heard talking frequently about 'the box' and 'the bags.'

for a legitimate company in Essen, Germany, that would turn them into wheels for wheelie bins and sports mats.

Concealed inside would be 67 kg of cocaine with a wholesale price of €32,000 a kilo. At €2.14 million, the conspirators could not resist boasting about the profits they would make.

CONTAINER 6483504

The Çamderes, Wilson and Dennis had set up the shipment with a dealer in Brazil. Patist called his Brazilian counterparts. They told him that container 6483504 had left the port of Pecem on a Panamanian-flagged ship, the MSC *Canberra*, on March 15.

It arrived in the Panamanian port of Cristóbal on March 23, where it was transferred to another ship, the CSAV *Llanquihue*, registered in Liberia. It was now on its way to Europe. But container 6483504 was not bound

for Rotterdam. The CSAV *Llanquihue* docked in Antwerp on April 29, 2013.

"Taking it out is not as easy as expected," Ugur Çamdere told Anthony Dennis the following day. "Our boys cannot work beyond their shift to pull it out because that will cause suspicion."

There was mounting panic inside Café de Ketel. It turned out that the Çamderes' 'boys' were still searching frantically for container 6483504 and had not yet found it. It was due to leave by road for Essen on May 1. "Today is the last day, or else you'll

journey to Essen, its driver completely unaware that he was carrying something far more sinister than shredded rubber tyres.

Hijacking the truck was proving too complex. There was not enough time to set it up. Finally Soytürk said, "I'm going to Essen to find it." By May 4 he had phoned Café de Ketel to say he had "given up hope" of finding the container.

That was because Chris Dyer had called in Essen police on May 3. When the container arrived at the recycling factory they opened it and

The truck and container left Antwerp docks – its driver unaware that he was carrying something far more sinister than shredded rubber tyres

have to follow the truck," Ufuk Çamdere told Wilson.

The conspirators had got hold of the bill of lading, so they knew the container's destination and the identity of the truck. The Çamderes, Dennis and Wilson discussed intercepting it with roadblocks as it crossed rail tracks near the Essen industrial estate that would be its final destination. They would pose as rail workers in yellow fluorescent jackets, break open the container and remove the drugs.

The truck and container left Antwerp docks on time for the 198 km

found carryalls containing 60 packets of cocaine sealed with labels marked, 'Rolex Reina 7'.

"Not only had Wilson and Dennis lost their drugs," says Mike Lakey, "they and the Çamderes owed their South American supplier €892,000."

The men were in deep trouble, a fact underlined when one of the Çamderes' partners, who was retrieving drugs from containers in Rotterdam, was gunned down and killed over a missing shipment from another transaction as he made his way to Café de Ketel.



Anthony Dennis (left) and Anthony Wilson (centre) both received long prison sentences for their part in the operation. Right: packets of the cocaine labelled 'Rolex Reina 7'

THE NET TIGHTENS

Dennis and Wilson had both lost a consignment and were now being threatened with violent reprisal and kidnapping by their supplier.

But that did not stop Dennis and especially Wilson continuing to visit Café de Ketel. Between April and August 2013 Dyer and Lakey established that Wilson visited the café at least 30 times to talk to the Çamdere brothers about setting up new shipments.

Relations were not as convivial as they had been before. Dennis was keeping his distance as a result. Wilson obviously had no idea that every word he spoke was being recorded and transcribed by the NCA back in the UK.

Jirko Patist's team, meanwhile, was working its way through 1000 hours of covert surveillance. Three hundred hours went to Dyer and Lakey, which they boiled down to 150, which could form the guts of a case for the UK's Crown Prosecution Service to take action against Wilson and Dennis.

"Without the intelligence from our Dutch colleagues it would have been very difficult to prosecute them in the UK," Dyer says.

Patist did not want any arrests yet. He still had a way to go on his parallel investigations into six other drug shipments run by the Çamdere brothers. Towards the end of October 2013, Chris Dyer got word from Patist. It was time to bring the conspiracy to an end.

OCTOBER 29, 2013: THE POLICE MOVE IN

On October 29, Dutch police raided Café de Ketel and a dozen addresses in Rotterdam, many of them visited by Soytürk. They battered their way through front doors or sawed through them with chainsaws.

In a safe house at 146 Eric Kropstraat they found one of the suspects, Alpaj Bülbükaja. He said he was just a cleaner. He claimed a blue coat hanging on a stand in the hall belonged to somebody called 'Bilal'. It was not a name that had ever featured in the

press, money-counting machines and €500,000 in cash.

Simultaneously in England the NCA was raiding Dennis's and Wilson's houses before they could destroy any evidence.

Chris Dyer and Mike Lakey interviewed Anthony Wilson at Harlow police station. He denied knowing the Çamderes.

Dyer showed him a photograph of Café de Ketel. "I don't remember going there." He could not explain why he had so many mobile phones.

Why did he visit Rotterdam so often?

“
In one of the coat pockets was a remote control device. When the police pressed it a wall slid aside to reveal an arsenal of heavy weaponry

Café de Ketel intelligence. What's more, Patist's team had footage of Bülbükaja wearing the coat by the café.

In one of the pockets was a remote control device. When the police pressed it a wall slid aside to reveal an arsenal of heavy weaponry. Alpaj Bülbükaja was a cleaner of guns, and 146 Eric Kropstraat would be known thereafter as 'The James Bond House'.

Jirko Patist was delighted with the day's haul. He had seven men in custody – four Turks and three Dutch – along with handguns, assault rifles, hundreds of mobile phones, a cocaine

"I support Feyenoord," he said calmly. His visits did not tally with the Rotterdam football team's home matches.

In subsequent interviews they asked Wilson about INKU 6483504. "I don't know what you're talking about." Dyer played him the tape of Wilson discussing the shipment and quoting the number.

"And what about Rolex Reina 7?"

"No comment."

When the NCA raided Anthony Dennis's house he was not at home. His wife told them: "I haven't seen him in over a year."

"We discovered that he either owned or had owned a property in Spain, which is why we put him on Operation Captura," Chris Dyer explains. When Dyer arrested him nine months later Dennis was indignant: "Having my face down there on the beach was way over the top," he complained.

Handcuffing him, Chris Dyer replied, "It got you back here, didn't it?"

Dennis was the last piece of the Café de Ketel jigsaw. The extensive

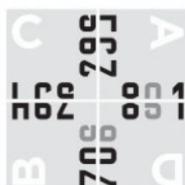
investigation had been a textbook example of pan-European police co-operation and a determined Dutch prosecutor out to tackle the drug gangs who use the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp to flood Europe with drugs.

When asked how he got a probe into the 'smoking room' of the Café de Ketel, Jirko Patist smiles: "I am not at liberty to say! But what I can tell you is that I wish we had an Operation Captura to round up all the Dutch criminals that have fled to Spain." R

Puzzle Answers *See page 122*

DARTBOARD 47

DIGI CONNECT



SUDOKU

4	2	5	8	1	3	9	6	7
8	3	7	6	2	9	5	1	4
1	9	6	4	5	7	2	3	8
9	4	8	7	3	6	1	5	2
3	5	2	1	8	4	7	9	6
6	7	1	5	9	2	4	8	3
2	8	9	3	4	1	6	7	5
5	6	4	9	7	8	3	2	1
7	1	3	2	6	5	8	4	9

HIDDEN MEANING

- A. Third time lucky B. Cash on delivery

On November 18, 2015, at the Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court, in London, Anthony Dennis was jailed for 13 years and four months and Anthony Wilson for 12 years. Standing side by side in the dock, the two accomplices did not acknowledge each other or exchange a word. There had been too many spoken in the Café de Ketel, which has now shut down. In March 2016 at the District Court in Rotterdam, Ugur Çamdere was sentenced to eight years, and his brother Ufuk to six. Erol Soytürk received four years and Alpaj Bülbükaja 28 months.

* * *

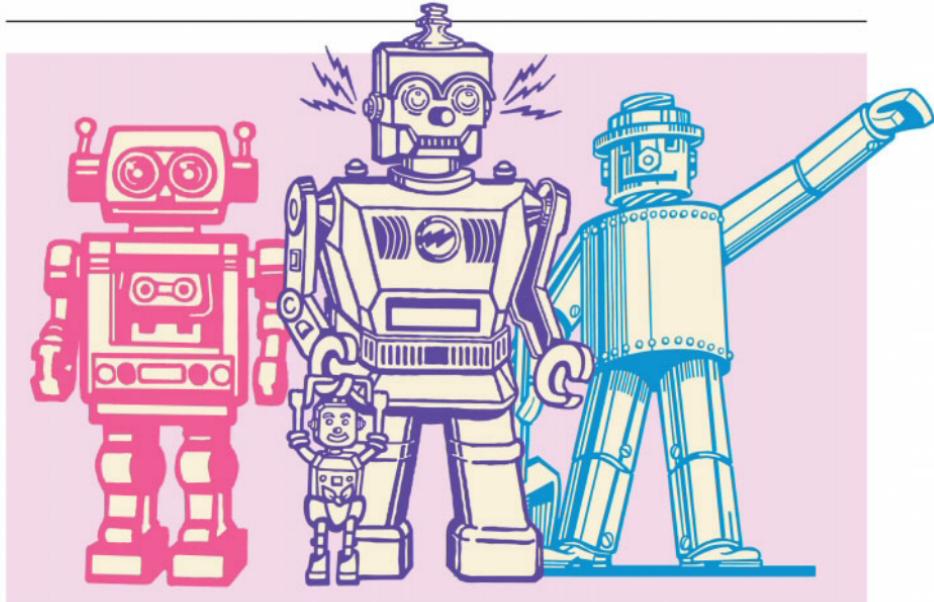
PANDA-NOMICS

Giant pandas are a big business – both for China and the zoos lucky enough to score a visitor. It is estimated there are about 2500 pandas alive in the wild. Around 350 pandas live under human care at zoos or breeding centres globally, and roughly 50 of those bears are outside China. China retains ownership of almost all the giant pandas around the world, which are selectively loaned to other countries. The fee for a pair is usually US\$1 million a year, with funds going towards panda conservation. CNN MONEY



Unbelievable

TRUE TALES TOLD TALL



Bots Are People, Too

Nury Vittachi says it's time to prepare for the robot revolution



EUROPEAN UNION

officials have been trying to decide if robots are people or not. This is idiotic. Of course they are people. The little robot in my smartphone told me, and she should know. Try it. Ask your phone whether she is human and she might reply as mine did: "Close enough."

The average person identifies 'people' as sentient beings with whom one can have intelligible conversations, so that INCLUDES artificial intelligences such as Siri, Cortana and Alexa, plus a dog I once saw on the internet, but EXCLUDES babies, Donald Trump and nationalist politicians in general.

I was thinking about this after being

sent a video of a recent White House press conference. A reporter raised his hand and asked a long, rambling question. There was a 'ding' sound and one of the nearby phones responded: "I'm sorry, I don't understand what you want me to change." Everyone laughed, and then came admiring comments about the robot's blunt-but-fair response.

At the time of writing, Alexa is the hot artificial assistant. Although unattractive (she looks like a cylindrical crisp container) she behaves like a civil servant/undergraduate student/married man, existing in a permanent state of semi-sleep until she hears her name. Then she wakes up and attempts to respond.

This creates amusing problems, a tech reporter colleague tells me. A TV news show ran an item on a child who asked Alexa to order lots of expensive stuff on Amazon.com. The news report quoted the actual command that made Alexa wake up and start spending cash – and in dozens of homes, Alexa machines woke up and started ordering goods from the online retailer.

News anchors pontificated about this as if it were a glitch, but considering that these machines come from Amazon.com, it sounds to me a delightfully profitable one. It

reminded me of the time a child in my kids' school started a fad for junior curry-cooking classes – and we later found out her father was a distributor for extra-strong stain-removal potions.

My tech friend says the current trendy amusement is to gather several AI robots (such as Siri, Alexa, Cortana and Next) on a table and get them to have a chat. Long conversations follow but you get this creepy feeling that no actual functioning human brain is involved. It's astonishingly similar to listening to beer-drinkers talking politics.

Anyway, he thought this was hilarious, but I was horrified. Get robots used to chatting without us and they'll eventually

come up with plots to overthrow humanity, right? I've seen the movies.

He told me I was being ridiculous, as the devices can't even move by themselves. But I told him that was only a matter of time.

"Alexa, can you close the curtains, please?" I asked. "Not yet," she replied. There! Proof.

Anyway, this writer has decided against purchasing an Alexa as his teenage daughter is called Lexi and confusion is likely. Enough with the half-listening semi-sleepers already.

Nury Vittachi is a Hong Kong-based author. Read his blog at Mrjam.org



Get robots used to chatting and they'll eventually come up with plots to overthrow humanity

out & about

NEWS

BOOKS

FILMS

DVDS



20TH CENTURY WOMEN *Comedy, Drama*



Set in Santa Barbara in the summer of 1979, single mother Dorothea Fields (Annette Bening) feels that she may not be 'enough' to prepare her adolescent son Jamie (Lucas Jade Zumann) for the next phase of his life. Dorothea is in her 50s and, having grown up in the Depression, acknowledges that the cultural changes since her own youth are enormous. So, she enlists the help of two younger women in her son's upbringing; Abbie (Greta Gerwig), a free-spirited punk photographer, and Julie (Elle Fanning), a rebellious teenage neighbour. Billy Crudup plays a farm handyman. Together the three women, who each form a different generation of the 20th century, teach Jamie about life, love and freedom. The film celebrates the complexities of women, family, time and the connections we spend our life searching for.



Warm and witty: (from left) Billy Crudup, Elle Fanning, Annette Bening, Greta Gerwig and Lucas Jade Zumann

Aster Pearl Harbor came Rabaul. The true story of a forgotten battle, a lost family, and an 11-year-old Australian boy shot as a spy.

Line of Fire



IAN TOWNSEND

LINE OF FIRE

Ian Townsend



HarperCollins

Life for the white man in the 1930s and 40s on plantations in Rabaul, in the Australian territory of New Guinea, was exotic and rarified. Overshadowed by oppressive heat, a narrow and destructive social life, the ever-present threat of volcanic eruptions and the drumbeat of the aggressor, Japan, Rabaul simmered. As gripping as a detective novel, Townsend brilliantly evokes the claustrophobic 'frontier' life of the times while telling a hitherto little-known story of how, in 1942, an 11-year-old Australian boy and members of his family came to be shot by the Japanese as suspected spies. A misadventure of an extraordinary kind.



GOING IN STYLE Comedy

As their pension funds become a corporate casualty, lifelong friends Willie (Morgan Freeman), Joe (Michael Caine) and Al (Alan Arkin) find it increasingly difficult to live on their meagre pensions. So, to help pay their bills, the three men set upon a daring adventure: to rob the very bank that has lost all their savings. Since it is the first time any of them have strayed off the straight and narrow, they are helped along the way by some shady connections. Based on the 1979 comedy of the same name, which starred George Burns, the remake, set in New York, also stars Ann-Margret, and, under the direction of Zach Braff, delivers a telling social commentary on growing old.

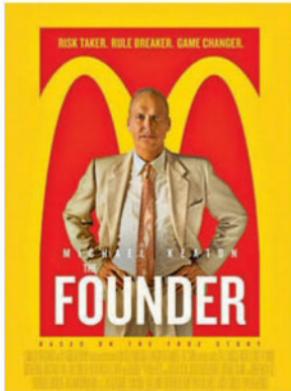
Ending the Sexism of Street Names



When it comes to being remembered by a street name, women get a bad deal.

Researchers have analysed the gender balance of streets named after people in seven major cities, including London and Paris, and found that only 27.5 per cent were named after women. In Spain, it's even worse: just five per cent of the nation's streets are named after women, and they are mainly religious figures, according to CityLab.com. But since a change in municipal politics, cities such as Bilbao, Oviedo and Cadiz now plan to rename streets that commemorate figures from the fascist Franco regime, instead calling them after leading Spanish female writers and scientists.





THE FOUNDER

Biography, Drama

 *The Founder* is the true story of how a struggling salesman, Ray Kroc (Michael Keaton), met brothers Mac and Dick McDonald (John Carroll Lynch and Nick Offerman), who were running a burger operation in Southern California in the 1950s. Impressed by the speedy, production-line system of making food, Kroc recognised the potential to franchise their restaurant. The brothers initially resisted as they feared the quality of their food and standard of service would not be maintained. Kroc, through persistence, ambition and sheer ruthlessness, worked his way into a position where he was able to wrest control of the company from the brothers and create the billion-dollar empire known today as McDonald's. Perfect for biopic fans.

LONELY PLANET'S WHERE TO GO WHEN

The ultimate trip planner for every month of the year

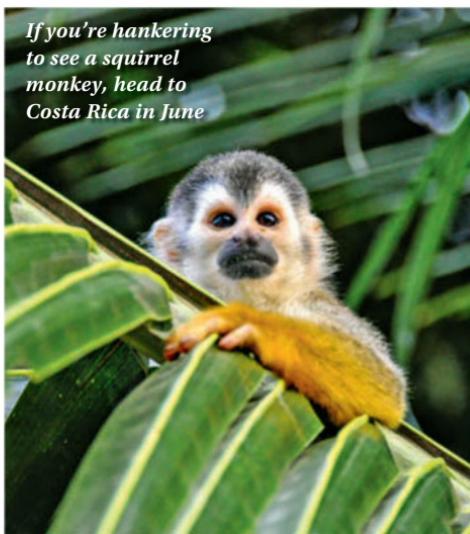
Lonely Planet

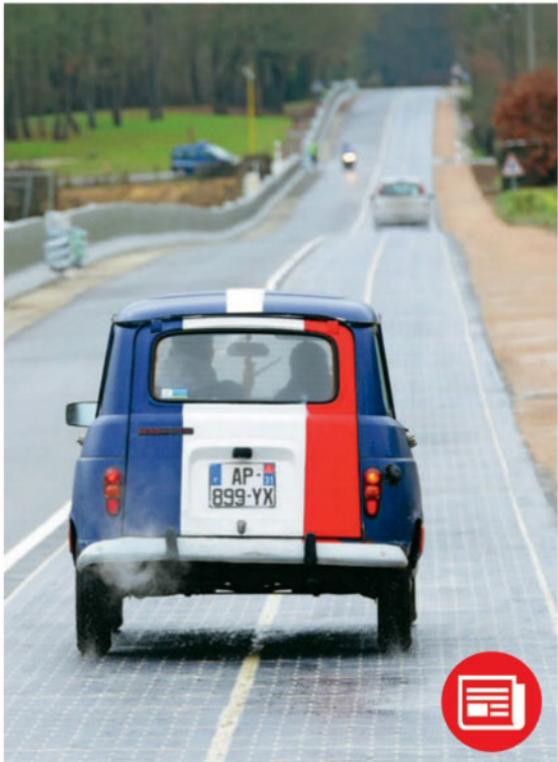


The holiday dates are set in stone, but your destination isn't. You've decided where to go, but don't know what month is best. Covering 360 places that cater for every type of holiday experience, from saving turtles in Costa Rica to waltzing the night away in Austria, this clever book is the trip planner's friend. With its monthly breakdowns, timelines, summaries of each destination and clear info graphics, it's a winner. You'll discover the unmissable events on the calendar, and, possibly, consider going somewhere you'd never even thought (or heard) of. Choose from fairytale castles, animal watching, language classes and gourmet dining. There are slow-paced ambles or gung-ho adventures. And whether you want a family-friendly holiday or plan to leave the kids at home, you're watching the pennies or prepared to splash out a bit, the right place at the right time is waiting here for you.



If you're hankering to see a squirrel monkey, head to Costa Rica in June





Watt a Way to Go

France has opened the world's first solar panel road. The one-kilometre stretch in the Normandy village of Tourouvre-au-Perche cost US\$5.2m, and it's hoped that the 2000 motorists using it each day will produce enough power to light the street lamps for the local population of 3400. Ecology minister Ségolène Royal has said she would like to see solar panels installed on 1000 kilometres of French roads.

BERLIN SYNDROME

Thriller

 Based on the novel by Melanie Joosten,

Berlin Syndrome follows Clare (Teresa Palmer), an Australian photo-journalist backpacking through Germany.

While visiting Berlin, she meets a charming local man named Andi (Max Riemelt). The two are instantly attracted and a night of passion ensues.

However, Clare wakes the following morning to find that Andi has left for work and locked her in his apartment with no intention of ever letting her go.

Shot on location in Berlin, this nail-biting psychological thriller will keep audiences glued to their seats.



WONDER Drama

 Based on R.J. Palacio's best-selling novel for children, *Wonder* is the uplifting story of ten-year-old Auggie Pullman (Jacob Tremblay, *Room*). Born with facial deformities that have seen him home schooled until now, Auggie, with the support of his parents (Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson), is about to commence grade five at a mainstream school.

While Auggie is determined to do his best to blend in, he faces some extraordinary challenges. He takes the stares, taunts and whispers in his stride; determined to be seen and treated as an ordinary boy. While his classmates struggle to discover their compassion and acceptance,



Kindness and courage: Jacob Tremblay and Julia Roberts

Auggie unites them by proving that sometimes you are born to stand out. The movie's message: choose kindness at every stage of life.

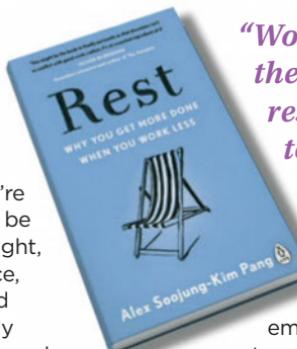
REST

Why you get more done when you work less

Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

Penguin Life

 For those of the 'if you're not stressed, you can't be working hard' school of thought, be warned: poor performance, fraught relationships and bad health outcomes are the likely result. Put simply, we cannot work well without resting well, a lesson many super-busy high achievers have learned. Sir Winston Churchill and J.R.R. Tolkien were proponents of the afternoon nap (regular napping can improve memory), while Roald Dahl side-stepped the stress of writer's block by stopping work for the day



"Work provides the means to live, rest gives meaning to life"

when he knew what he intended to write next. Bill Gates tackles the myriad demands of his empire by heading to a remote cabin, alone. 'Deliberate rest', be it of a slow or very active kind, really can be the key to getting more done, and feeling better while you're doing it. But, just like work, it requires discipline and commitment. Written by a Silicon Valley consultant, *Rest* is a game-changer that may well help you to master the necessary skills.

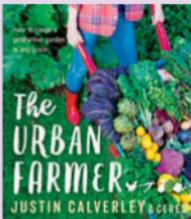


THE URBAN FARMER

How to create a productive garden in any space

Justin Calverley and CERES

ABC Books

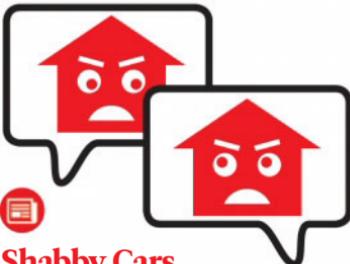


Do you really need your lawn? Dip into this book and you'll very likely spend the next weekend digging it up and getting stuck in to vegetable and fruit growing, with maybe building a chicken pen and a beehive, to boot. That's what Justin Calverley tends to do to people. Inspire them.

A committed advocate of sustainable organic gardening, he runs a popular course, *The Complete Urban Farmer*, at CERES Environment Park, a 4.5-hectare working farm in inner-city Melbourne. Calverley's comprehensive book is the perfect reference for those unable to make the trek to Victoria. Helpful, doable, no-nonsense. And if you've only got a balcony or a small backyard, no problem. There's plenty you can grow there, too. Be sure to check out the great Reaping the Rewards recipe section at the end of the book to enjoy cooking the fruits of your labour.



PHOTO: (GARDEN) ISTOCK



Shabby Cars Run into Snobbery

In a quiet suburb north of Wellington, New Zealand, the war of appearances rages on. In August 2016, two residents of Flotilla Place, Whitby, received anonymous notes stating that the current state of the vehicles parked in their driveways was "falling short", thus dragging down house prices. One recipient took to Facebook for clarification: "Could the person who put this note in my letterbox please clarify which 'unsuitable vehicle' needs to be replaced? Is it the 2013 Peugeot, the (bit shabby) 2003 Mazda 6, or the (well shabby) red van belonging to the landscaper who has been here a bit?" The local mayor even weighed in, admonishing the mystery note-writer: "In every community we have those people who spend a little too much time worrying about what their neighbours are doing."

Brianna Laney



TEST YOUR MENTAL PROWESS

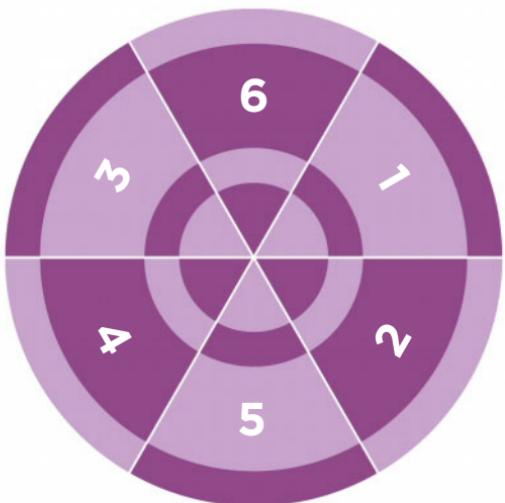
Puzzles

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 113.

BY MARCEL DANESI

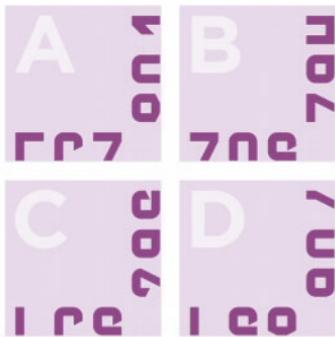
DARTBOARD

If you get a dart in the central ring of this board, it doubles the value of that dart. Landing a dart in the outer ring triples the value. (Notice that there's no bull's eye.) What's the smallest number greater than two that would be *impossible* to score on this board using three darts?

**DIGI CONNECT**

Arrange these four pieces into a square so that each of the digits 0 to 9 (as shown) appears once. The numbers can have any orientation (right side up, upside down, sideways, etc.), and there will be two extra symbols that will not match any of the digit designs below.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



			1			
8					4	
1	6		5	2	8	
9	4		7	6	5	2
5		1		4	9	
6	7		5	2	8	3
2	9		4		6	5
5						1
			6			

TO SOLVE THIS SUDOKU ...

You have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each square so that:

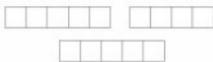
- every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1 to 9) without repeating any of them;
- each of the 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numerals, none repeated.

HIDDEN MEANING

Identify the common words or phrases below.

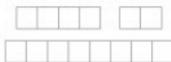
**CKYUL
UCKYL
LUCKY**

A



**MONEY
BIRTH**

B



BRAIN POWER
brought to you by



FRIXION ERASABLE PEN





TEST YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Trivia

1. Peaches, pears, apricots, quinces, strawberries and apples are members of what plant family named for a flower? *1 point*

2. Which well-known rock band started life as The Quarrymen? *1 point*

3. True or false: diamonds are formed from coal.

1 point

4. Fans of what movie, by going into the woods (and scaring away the animals), are credited with the worst hunting season in Maryland, US, in 1999-2000? *1 point*

5. True or false: Sweden has had rabbit show-jumping competitions since the 1970s. *1 point*

6. True or false: "Play it again, Sam" is a line spoken by Humphrey Bogart in the movie *Casablanca*. *1 point*



7. How many panels commonly make up a soccer ball? *2 points*

8. Up until the 17th century, carrots were generally what colour? *1 point*

9. Why is a 'baker's dozen' 13 and not 12? *1 point*

10. Which American singer was fatally shot by his father in April 1984? *2 points*

11. Which sport gave us the expression 'to win hands down'? *2 points*

12. What social gesture signifies a binding contract? *1 point*

13. The word 'canola' is made up of which two words? *2 points*

14. What is the term for a song that gets stuck in your head as if on repeat? *1 point*

15. What is Earth's most active volcano? *2 points*

16-20 Gold medal

11-15 Silver medal

6-10 Bronze medal

0-5 Wooden spoon

ANSWERS: 1. The rose family. 2. The Beatles. 3. False. Most diamonds pre-date the first land plants on Earth - the source of coal. 4. The Blair Witch Project. 5. True. They are called kei nihonponning. 6. False. Bogart actually said, "Play it, Sam. Play it, as Time Goes By". 7. Thirty-two. 8. Purple. Orange range carrots were cultivated. 9. Historically, bakers were fined for short-selling customers; including an extra item was insinuation against them. 10. Marvin Gaye. 11. Horse racing. Jockeys winning by a large margin could drop their hands and loosen the reins. 12. A handshake. 13. Canadian oil. Repealed oil was renamed canola in Canada in 1985. 14. Jim Morrison. 15. Stromboli Volcano, off the coast of Italy, it has been erupting nearly continuously for more than 2000 years.



IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

The Only Constant Is Change

"Come autumn's scathe – come winter's cold –

Come change – and human fate!" Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes a reminder in 'The Autumn' to embrace the changes that the seasons bring. In accord, a collection of words about change. Answers on next page.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

1. ameliorate *v.* – A: make better or more tolerable. B: make worse. C: turn upside down.

2. tack *v.* – A: switch horses. B: follow a zigzag course. C: tailor a suit.

3. ferment *n.* – A: state of unrest or disorderly development.

B: improvement. C: evaporation.

4. synchronise *v.* – A: cause to coincide. B: increase speed. C: move one's lips.

5. static *adj.* – A: in a frenzy. B: unchanging. C: moving through space.

6. flux *n.* – A: series of failures. B: continued flow. C: rapid rise.

7. vicissitudes *n.* – A: exact opposites. B: minor adjustments. C: ups and downs.

8. fickle *adj.* – A: beginning to decay.

B: marked by a lack of constancy. C: stuck in a rut.

9. immutable *adj.* – A: in motion. B: not susceptible to change. C: becoming a monster.

10. adapt *v.* – A: spread gradually. B: become airborne. C: make fit, usually by alteration.

11. crescendo *n.* – A: sudden narrowing. B: gradual increase. C: change in colour.

12. hiatus *n.* – A: growth spurt. B: interruption in time or continuity. C: change of season.

13. agitate *v.* – A: replace. B: break into bits. C: disturb emotionally.

14. senescent *adj.* – A: getting old. B: catching fire. C: developing a fragrance.

15. incorrigible *adj.* – A: rustproof. B: spontaneous. C: not reformable.

Answers

1. ameliorate – [A] make better or more tolerable. I find that just 15 minutes of yoga daily ameliorates my worries.

2. tack – [B] follow a zigzag course. Deftly, the captain tacked through the rocky shoals of the bay.

3. ferment – [A] state of unrest or disorderly development. Henry's writer's block was followed by a creative ferment in his poetry.

4. synchronise – [A] cause to coincide. Before we begin the five-kilometre race, let's synchronise our watches.

5. static – [B] unchanging. Alyson found the novel's characters to be a bit static and one-dimensional.

6. flux – [B] continued flow. It's too soon to predict the election – everything's in flux.

7. vicissitudes – [C] ups and downs. One thing I've learned: life is anything but constant, so enjoy its vicissitudes.

8. fickle – [B] marked by a lack of constancy. Ivy described her niece as "fickle at best" after their visit to the toy store.

9. immutable – [B] not susceptible to change. Apparently, my upstairs tenant thinks loud, thumping music is his immutable right.

10. adapt – [C] make fit, usually by alteration. If you want to eat vegan, I can adapt the recipe.

11. crescendo – [B] gradual increase. The concerto ended with an unexpected yet effective crescendo.

12. hiatus – [B] interruption in time or continuity. The mayoral debate was marked by an uncomfortable hiatus before the incumbent responded.

13. agitate – [C] disturb emotionally. If you ask me, those therapy sessions just agitate Ayesha even more.

14. senescent – [A] getting old. The rocking chair is gorgeous, but do you really see me as senescent?

15. incorrigible – [C] not reformable. I'm afraid our new puppy is simply incorrigible when it comes to sleeping on the couch.

JUST A PHASE?

The moon is a natural symbol of change, and its shape-shifting comes in phases. As it grows from invisibility (a new moon), it is waxing; when between half and full, it is called gibbous (literally, 'humpbacked'). As it shrinks again, it is waning; and when it approaches a sliver of a fingernail in appearance, it is called a crescent.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

9 & below: Half moon

10-14: Full moon

15: Word Power wizard

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