Donald Trump was elected president of the United States on Nov. 8th, 2016. This was earth-shattering news to half the country. For former Nike executive Erik Hagerman, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Not liking the direction the country was going, he turned his back on the news and hasn’t looked back since. He started out thinking he was just taking a temporary break from the news as a way to preserve his sanity, but it quickly became a lifestyle choice. Hagerman questioned the value of being a news junkie following politics and events that were outside of his control. He said, “I had been paying attention to the news for decades, and I never did anything with it.” Choosing a life of willful ignorance isn’t easy. Despite living alone in rural Ohio, he must be very careful. He watches basketball with the sound turned off just in case a sports commentator might mention some non-sports related news. He uses headphones to listen to white noise in coffee shops to prevent him from overhearing people talking about current events. All of his friends, family and even the staff at the coffee shop he visits daily know about his strict no news rules. They are all prohibited from telling him anything about what is happening in the world. He calls his unique lifestyle choice, The Blockade. News of Hagerman sticking his head in the sand has ruffled some feathers. Some believe that we have a responsibility to be informed about what is happening in the world. A writer for website Mashable even called him the most selfish man in America. He writes, “If everyone did what Hagerman did, there would be no United States. There would be no democracy. There would be no forward progress or people helping others in times of need. There would be nothing but complacency in the suffering and exploitation of others.” Even Hagerman had some misgivings about his blockade in the beginning. He said, “It makes me a crappy citizen.” Yet, Hagerman does believe in contributing to society. In addition to being an artist, he has purchased 45 acres of land, which was formerly a coal mine. He plans to restore and protect the land and donate it to the public. According to a New York Times article dated March 10th 2018, Hagerman has spent more than a year completely shutting himself off from all news. At that time, he said he was emotionally healthier than he had ever been. While there has been no new news on Hagerman’s blockade, he may very well still be living in a news-free universe.

Ron and Diana Watson are creatures of habit. For six days a week, they take their seats in the same Texas Roadhouse at the same time of day and order the same meal. Over the last 15 years, the Watsons have been chowing down on barbecue chicken and “Road Kill” steak. It may sound dull, but the Watsons believe in the comfort of sameness. The Watsons’ need for routine is not surprising. In life, the unexpected and unfamiliar lurks around every corner. Is it any wonder we crave the security of the everyday and mundane? Members of the Dull Men’s Club would certainly agree. Leland Carson is a 77-year-old retired tax attorney who founded the club for men who like ordinary things. The idea came to him in a New York Athletic Club bar. He and a group of men were looking at the club’s monthly magazine. The pages were filled with boxing, judo, skiing, sailing, and other high-adrenaline pursuits. Carson and his friends didn’t do any of those things. They confessed to being rather dull. So, they decided to start a club-within-a-club, and a new movement was born. The Dull Men’s Club now has hundreds of members worldwide. Some collect airsickness bags. Others collect bricks. Some spend their days photographing mailboxes. And others just roam around sitting on benches. You won’t find any adrenaline junkies in the Dull Men’s Club. Those thrill-seekers are cut from a different cloth. They spend their time searching for new challenges and exciting experiences. Christopher Bergland is one of those thrill-seekers. He became an ultra-endurance athlete because he got bored so easily. He believes people have a biological need to struggle for survival. In other words, we’re hard-wired to enjoy taking risks and pushing boundaries. He says life in the digital age is causing our bodies and minds to become short-circuited. So we all need some element of danger in our lives to stay healthy. Kurt Vonnegut once wrote, “I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge, you see all kinds of things you can’t see from the center.” Walking a tightrope between personal safety and risk is something we all have to do when making choices. So perhaps finding our own sweet spot between the dull and the dangerous is the key to living a life of contentment.