

# NEW ZEALAND Reader's Digest

**RD  
TALKS**  
OUR STORIES  
AS PODCASTS

**TRUE  
STORIES**  
*From Our  
Archives*

**HEAD OF  
THE FAMILY**  
**A Teen's Brave  
Decision**

PAGE 80

**ESCAPE TO  
FREEDOM**  
**In A Hot-Air  
Balloon**

PAGE 118

**THE CAT THAT SAVED**  
**A Family From Itself**

PAGE 22

**HUMAN KINDNESS**  
**On The Olympic Stage**

PAGE 66



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# CONTENTS

JANUARY 2023

44



66

## Features

22 **RD**  
TALKS

**MARCH 1971**

### **A Pretty Good Teacher, For A Cat**

Tiger slotted into the family whenever his special brand of guidance was needed.

MONTE BOURJAILY, JR

28

**OCTOBER 1964**

### **The Night The Stars Fell**

Sparking children's curiosity about the world will open endless universes for them.

ARTHUR GORDON

34 **RD**  
TALKS

**FEBRUARY 1985**

### **Hanging By A Thread**

A freak accident on Singapore's cable car system leaves 13 people trapped in a nightmare scenario.

RICHARD BLAIR

44

**JULY 1954**

### **Wise Animals I Have Known**

From snakes to squirrels, a naturalist shares the joys and delights of nature.

ALAN DEVOE

50

**FEBRUARY 2001**

### **The Secret Life Of A Swamp**

A New Zealand man is about to drain the swamp on his farm, when he discovers the amazing life within.

ALAN HINDMARSH

56 **RD**  
TALKS

**JANUARY 1997**

### **Ticket To A Murder**

Detectives working on a seemingly unsolvable murder get an unexpected piece of luck.

MICHAEL BOWKER

66 **RD**  
TALKS

**AUGUST 1996**

### **Triumph Of An Olympian**

Good sportsmanship is put to the test when there is an Olympic medal to be won.

DOUG SMALL

**ON THE COVER:** CLASSIC COLLECTION



96

## CONTENTS

74

SEPTEMBER 1994

### The White Picket Fence

A widow's emotional walls come tumbling down when a garden offers her the promise of peace.

MARION BOND WEST

80 

SEPTEMBER 2000

### Amy's Choice

Barely old enough to look after herself, a young woman is determined to keep her family intact.

RENA DICTOR LEBLANC

90

MAY 1997

### Renoir's Invitation To A Party

The Impressionist artist's bohemian friends enrich his painting – and illustrate his life.

DAVID STEWART

96

JUNE 1972

### Katie And The Hard Hats

Actress Katharine Hepburn charms her way onto a building site.

GARSIN KANIN

104 

MARCH 1950

### Exploits Of Charles

A kindergarten pupil named 'Charles' rebels against school and authority figures.

SHIRLEY JACKSON

110 

JANUARY 1960

### A Day At The Beach

A doctor prescribes an unusual cure for a man stuck in the doldrums.

ARTHUR GORDON



90

PHOTOS (HEPBURN AND Renoir) GETTY IMAGES. ILLUSTRATIONS (BALLOON) BALLOON FILM; (ALL OTHERS) GETTY IMAGES

118 **RD**  
TALKS

MARCH 1980

### The Great Balloon Escape

Two families plot a crazy, impossible route to freedom.

JÜRGEN PETSCHÜLL  
CONDENSED FROM  
DER STERN



118



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## Departments

14

### THE DIGEST

- 16 **Pets Corner**
- 18 **Health**
- 21 **News From The World Of Medicine**
- 129 **RD Recommends**

### REGULARS

- 4 **Editor's Note**
- 6 **Letters**
- 10 **News Worth Sharing**
- 12 **Staff Picks**
- 14 **Smart Animals**
- 78 **Viewpoints**
- 88 **Picturesque Speech**
- 109 **Patter**
- 117 **Points To Ponder**



### HUMOUR

- 42 **Life's Like That**
- 64 **Laughter**
- 102 **All In A Day's Work**

### THE GENIUS SECTION

- 134 **But Fish Can't Even Read**
- 138 **Puzzles**
- 141 **Trivia**
- 142 **Puzzle Answers**
- 143 **Word Power**



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# *A Century In Circulation*

**THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL CLASSICS COLLECTION** is particularly special given it is the magazine's 100th anniversary year. Peeling back the covers of the thousands of editions, published in numerous countries, and dating back to the first issue in February 1922, is always a task we enjoy doing.

This collection offers a wide range of different subjects. Each one we hope will inform, delight, amuse and perhaps even confound our readers: from stepping inside the French artist Pierre-Auguste Renoir's inner circle of friends ('Renoir's Invitation To A Party', page 90), to finding peace from depression in a solitary walk on the beach ('The Day At The Beach', page 110) and meeting a cat who held a family together as they began to fall apart ('A Pretty Good Teacher, For A Cat', page 22).

My favourite article, 'Exploits Of Charles' (page 104), is written by a mother about the increasingly odd behaviour of a little boy in her young son's kindergarten class. What a handful this young Charles proves to be. *His poor mother!*, she thinks to herself. I'm certain you'll enjoy this amusing and relatable account of a small boy adjusting to his new classmates and teacher.

With an endless supply of wonderful stories, surprising insights and experiences to share, Reader's Digest remains a place to find fresh perspectives – and a great read.

Happy reading!



LOUISE WATERSON  
Editor-in-Chief



# NEW ZEALAND Reader's Digest

Vol. 204  
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For more details, see page 8

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# LETTERS

## *Reader's Comments And Opinions*

### **Portrait Of A Queen**

The portrait of Queen Elizabeth II with Sparky on the front cover of Reader's Digest (November 2022), by Michael Leonard, instantly reminded me of Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of *The Mona Lisa*. Queen Elizabeth was a modest soul and receptive to the common person. When the Princess of Wales died, I composed a poem and sent it to the Queen. She thanked me through her Senior Correspondence Officer, which I proudly treasure.

RIFAQUAT ALI



### **We All Love The Digest**

When I was 15 my mother was given a subscription to Reader's Digest by a pen friend. I loved reading it and consequently 12 months later when the subscription was up for renewal, I took over the payment. When I left home and settled in my own home, I renewed the subscription and

have now been reading the Reader's Digest for 60 years.

DOREEN GREVE

### **A Dog Is Not Just For Christmas**

'Teaching Kids Pet Care' (November 2022) came at the perfect time. My grandchildren, aged four and six, launched a very emotional campaign on why their parents

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 8 for how to join the discussion.

should get them a puppy for Christmas. I love dogs and would love them to experience the joy that a pet brings but I could not convey, in a way that they'd listen to and understand, that a pet requires commitment.

I sat with them and together we went through all the tips Dr Katrina Warren recommends. I did not manage to convince them to wait a few more years but the three of us had a wonderful discussion and hopefully they understand that pets aren't toys. ANNETTE SIMSON

### Best Books For Self-Education

Tom Hallman's story about Steph Clemence and the lifelong influence of her inspiring, wise English teacher, Dorothy Clark, was a gem to read ('Instead Of University, I Read

### WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

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### SICK AS A DOG

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

I'm not feline well!

**BILL NEWNHAM**

Feline blue.

**BARBARA MALECKI**

And a cat scan as well, please.

**MERVYN COLLINS**

I heard that I get a R.A.T. if I am feeling sick... So here I am!

**WAYNE HODSON**

Yep, I think you should call the purramedic!

**KEITH HARKIN**

**Congratulations to this month's winner, Bill Newnham.**



### CAPTION CONTEST

**Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win**

**\$100. To enter, email**

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**or see details on page 8.**

## READER'S DIGEST

These Books', October). What lies between the covers of books can never be underestimated.

Offering everything from escapism to adventure and so much more in between, we have education at our fingertips. One could say that we have access to the universities of the world between the covers of books. I know I won't be the only reader to sift through 'Mrs Clark's Book List' to check on my progress, or the last one to continue on this wonderful journey.

JUDITH CAINE

### Farewell To Queen Elizabeth

It was lovely to read the tribute article ('The Queen's Portrait', November) to Queen Elizabeth II and to have imprinted in our minds the beautiful portrait by Michael Leonard. Somehow the colour yellow that she was wearing leaves us with feelings of warmth – not to mention it colour co-ordinates beautifully with her beloved corgi.

I personally identify colour with our 'Betts', as in her long reign, she wore every colour imaginable, and wore them beautifully.

In our weary, anxious world of today, the Queen brought us colour and castles, palaces and carriages, princes and princesses, jewels and more, that had the capacity to transport us, even if momentarily. Fare thee well, beautiful Betts.

DEL DENNIS

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## Fostering Global Tech Talent

**I**n rural Kenya, 4000 students in ten schools are busy sharpening their computer skills on refurbished machines. They learn everything from typing to coding to robotics, and even take part in remote tutorials with NASA scientists. Before participating in the classes, few students even knew what a computer was.

TechLit Africa is the brainchild of Nelly Cheboi, a 29-year-old software engineer who grew up in poverty in the Kenyan village of Mogotio. In 2012, she received a full scholarship to attend college

in the US where she discovered a love for computer science. After graduating, she founded the school, Zawadi, in Kenya, which became a launching pad for TechLit. Her organisation now works with US colleges and businesses to source recycled computers. Cheboi hopes TechLit will give students skills to find job opportunities. “If all you have is your small village, then your thinking is small. Once you come to the internet, you become global – and by being global, you can help the world,” Cheboi said.

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COMPILED BY VICTORIA POLZOT

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PHOTO: COURTESY TECHLIT AFRICA

## The Power Of Storytelling

**B**uilt on the belief that everyone has a right to tell their own stories, an organisation in Jordan is hosting mindfulness, creative writing and public-speaking workshops for more than 1500 refugees. The sessions, which have also been held in Turkey, Lebanon and Germany, are hosted by #MeWe International. The non-profit helps participants work through severe trauma. According to New York-based founder Mohsin Mohi Ud Din, the key to the workshops is that they are taught by other refugees, creating a unique community that's "for the people, by the people".

The results are compelling, he says: participants have reported reduced aggression and improved communication skills. At the end of the sessions, they can tell their stories through several means including theatre productions and book projects.



## Too Good To Waste

**P**lums destined for landfill are being rescued and turned into delicious icy treats.

Montague Orchards in Victoria has partnered with Peters Ice Cream to reduce food waste by turning any imperfect plums into sorbet.

Scott Montague, the orchard's managing director, says that 20 to 30 per cent of Australia's stone fruit ends up in landfill because of small cosmetic issues.

"So much stone fruit in this country goes to landfill because we have high expectations about what fruit should look like on the shelf, despite the fact that they taste just as good as any other piece of fruit."

In 2019 he started looking into how to prevent 500,000 kilograms of fruit going to waste, and after a meeting with Peters Ice Cream came up with the idea for 'Rescue Pops' – plum-flavoured sorbet treats which are packaged with the slogan 'Too good to waste'.

## STAFF PICKS

*We enjoyed putting this issue together for your reading pleasure. Here are some of our favourites*



### **THE GREAT BALLOON ESCAPE**

I love a good Cold War escape story, so naturally I was drawn to 'The Great Balloon Escape', which describes in terrifying detail how two East German families made a crazy plan to make their own hot-air balloon and fly to freedom.

DIANE GODLEY, SENIOR EDITOR

### **RENOIR'S INVITATION TO A PARTY**

Invitation to a party? Count me in! And especially if it's a party on the banks of the River Seine in beautiful Paris. The Maison Fournaise of Chatou is where Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted his famous *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. It's fascinating to discover who the bright young things depicted in this masterpiece actually were.

HUGH HANSON, ART DIRECTOR

### **A PRETTY GOOD TEACHER, FOR A CAT**

Anyone with a pet knows just how much joy they bring. They love unconditionally and, unwittingly, teach us compassion, friendship and responsibility. My heart filled, then broke as I read about Tiger. He was an excellent teacher – for a feline.

VICTORIA POLZOT, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

### **SECRET WORLD OF A SWAMP**

As someone who lives near mangroves, I can attest to the incredible diversity of life found in areas people are quick to dismiss as muddy, boggy and unproductive. I am with farmer Gerard Hindmarsh as he gives up on his dream of keeping cows and instead devotes his life to maintaining and cherishing a valuable ecosystem.

MELANIE EGAN, CHIEF SUBEDITOR





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## SMART ANIMALS

*Wild or domestic, they are protective of their loved ones*



### Wise Parents

JUDITH CAINE

While there are many birds that visit our leafy garden, it's the pair of tawny frogmouths that have been returning for years to raise their young that bring the most excitement. It's been wonderful to observe how both parents take on the serious duty of caring for their young.

Last summer the frogmouth family, parents and two babies, was happily sitting in a gum tree close to our back deck enjoying the late afternoon sunshine. With little warning, dark clouds emerged, and light rain began to fall.

At first the birds seemed to enjoy the rain and moved out along the

branch, fluffing up their feathers to take advantage of the wet weather. But within minutes, day turned to night. Dark clouds unleashed a sudden ferocious storm; crashing thunder and blinding lightning, wild winds and driving rain turned the garden into an unsafe place for the little family.

Through the flashes of lightning, we watched in amazement as the parents shepherded their little ones back along the branch until they were all huddled close to the tree

---

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trunk, both parents spreading their wings over their young to protect them from the raging elements. When the storm passed, the family shuffled back out along the branch and spread their wings to soak up the sunshine.

When I look up at the pair of tawny frogmouths who continue to visit our garden, I know I'm not just looking at devoted parents, but very wise ones.



## Getting Her Goat

DIANNE EVANS

Among our many goats is a white and black Alpine called Agnes. We love her for all her unique traits and personality. She climbs on the tractor seat and into the ute when the doors are left open and has convenient deafness when you call out to reprimand her. Another of her traits is sulking, which she only ever uses on my husband Peter.

Peter is a shift worker and all the goats seem to know his comings and goings, especially Agnes. Some

mornings she comes to the gate calling out when Peter goes to work. Sometimes he goes over to her, which she loves, but other times, he calls to her and goes on his way. Agnes will continue to call until she realises he won't be coming to her.

When this first started to happen, I would go over to the gate and reach out to pat her. Sometimes she would allow me to give her a pat, but she would always walk away letting me know that she was hurt.

There were times when Peter would return from the night feed and say, "Agnes totally ignored me tonight." So, I started to pay attention to her behaviour. I worked out that on the mornings that Peter didn't go to Agnes when she called, she would ignore him in the evening. I told Peter that I thought she was punishing him for ignoring her. I suggested that the next time she called for him, he should go and see what happens at feed time. After doing this several times it became clear that if he attended to her she wouldn't sulk.

Agnes has been with us for nine years now.

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**PETS CORNER**

# 6 Life Lessons

## *I Learned From My Old Dog*

*Elli H. Radinger, author of The Wisdom of Old Dogs, shares some simple but important observations*

---

**DISCOVER WHAT REALLY MATTERS** I gave up working as a freelance researcher to stay with my old dog, Shira, until she dies. My priorities have changed. The time I spend with my dog now has become the most intense time of my life so far. As dog owners, we get a sudden fright when we realise that our pet is getting old. How much time do we have left? We don't know when the end is coming. What we can do, though, is live and love to the full. And make every moment with our pets the most precious moment of our lives. Because that is all that matters.

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT** We humans sacrifice precious time and a great deal of money altering our appearance in our constant search for self-

improvement and perfection. Dogs don't care about their appearance. They're content with the gifts that nature gave them. This makes their lives simple and straightforward.

It's important to recognise that what gives our lives meaning is not our accomplishments, our appearance or our achievements, but the depth and truth of our relationships with the people and creatures around us.

**THINGS AREN'T IMPORTANT** Compared to us, dogs are refreshingly frugal. They have very few needs and wants. When I'm with Shira, I rediscover my sense of perspective. She reminds me of the important things in life, the things we can enjoy together.

When we get older, we're probably readier to let go of items that

aren't important to us anymore, because we know we can't take them with us when we die. For Shira, happiness is simply having her tummy stroked, going for a walk, and getting a treat. She takes pleasure in the simplest things and lives to love and be loved.

**LIVE IN THE PRESENT** For dogs, every single day is important and exciting. They wait for us to come home, relish the opportunity to say hello to a visitor, and are thrilled when we pick up their lead, because it means walkies.

We can learn so much just by observing how they make the most of the simple pleasures in life. For Shira, every day is an adventure that is still to be revealed.

**ACCEPT WHAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE** Old dogs make us realise how precious the time is that we spend with our loved ones. When our dogs grow old, we have to learn to deal with change,

## EVERY DAY IS AN ADVENTURE THAT IS STILL TO BE REVEALED

to accept the inevitable and to live consciously every moment. In order to live a fulfilled life, we must overcome the fear of losing someone.

Shira daily makes me aware of the finiteness of both our lives and

makes me enjoy every moment.

### **FORGIVE AS LONG AS YOU LIVE**

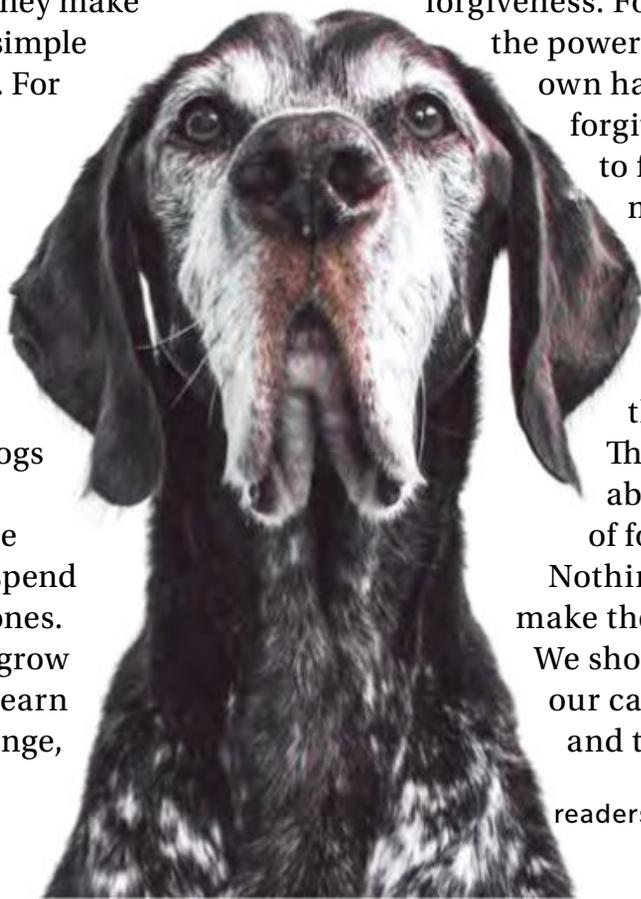
Forgiveness is something we consider often enough, but actually going through with it can be very difficult. Anger and hatred are an emotional burden. They prevent us moving forward with our lives.

Ultimately, we only harm ourselves if we are incapable of forgiveness. Forgiveness puts the power back into our own hands. When we forgive, we are able to find peace and move on.

Dogs forgive us without a second thought.

They're the absolute masters of forgiveness.

Nothing we do can make them leave us. We should learn from our canine friends and their big hearts.



HEALTH



# Bright EYES

*Four tips to prevent vision loss*

BY Allison Baker

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX GORODSKOY

## GET EYE TESTS

The eyes may be a window to the soul, but they can also be a window to our vascular health. “It’s one of the few places where you can look inside the body,” explains ophthalmologist Dr Colin Mann. For instance, since a branch of the carotid artery travels from the heart up each side of the neck and to the eyes, an optometrist can examine the blood vessels in the back of the eye to detect conditions that might not have manifested symptomatically.

Narrow blood vessels in the retina could indicate high blood pressure; swelling of those same vessels might be a sign of diabetes. Left untreated, diabetes can lead to diabetic retinopathy, a condition in which high blood sugar levels damage blood vessels, eventually resulting in vision loss or blindness.

As well as maintaining healthy blood glucose levels, Dr Mann emphasises that getting regular eye tests – at least every two years – is the best form of prevention.

## EAT FOODS RICH IN ANTIOXIDANTS

As we metabolise food, our cells produce chemical by-products called free radicals that steal electrons from nearby healthy cells, causing damage. Usually, the number of these free radicals is kept in check by antioxidants. But when antioxidant stores are depleted, free radicals can

overwhelm and harm cells, leading to an imbalance known as oxidative stress. Research suggests that this imbalance occurs as we age and plays a role in the development of a number of illnesses and conditions, including cataracts.

Cataracts are most common in people over the age of 60 and are somewhat inevitable. In fact, cataract surgery, where the cloudy lens is removed and replaced with an artificial one, is the most common surgery in the developed world. The good news for people with healthy diets, though, is that food like dark leafy greens, red berries and nuts are rich in antioxidants – including lutein, zeaxanthin and vitamin C. These can all help the body defend itself against free radicals and delay the development of cataracts.

You can also reduce your risk of cataracts by blocking ultraviolet rays with sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.

### QUIT SMOKING

“Smoking is a significant risk factor for macular degeneration, which causes vision loss,” says Shamrozé Khan, assistant clinical professor of optometry at the University of Waterloo. In fact, smokers are up to

four times more likely to develop this condition, which causes the cells in the centre of the retina to deteriorate.

### TRY MEDICATED EYE DROPS

Open-angle glaucoma – the most common form of the condition – is caused by the clogging of drainage canals in the eye. This increases pressure in the eye and damages the fibres that make up the optic nerve (the part of the eye that transmits images to the brain). Due to its painless, insidious nature, glaucoma often goes undiagnosed until it’s in an advanced stage; people with glaucoma may only notice it when their field of vision narrows, sometimes

## REDUCE CATARACTS RISK BY BLOCKING ULTRAVIOLET RAYS WITH SUNGLASSES AND A WIDE-BRIM HAT

described as ‘tunnel vision’.

While surgery like a trabeculectomy, which involves creating an opening under the eyelid to allow fluid to drain, can stop the progression of the condition, the vision loss can’t be recovered. With regular eye tests, however, glaucoma can be caught early and treated with prostaglandin analogues – medicated eye drops that dissolve blockages. An earlier treatment needed to be administered as much as 50 times in a 24-hour period, but now, thanks to the discovery of more effective compounds, once-a-day will do.



HEALTH

# Do Retinoids Really **REJUVENATE** Your Skin?

BY *Leslie Finlay*

In contrast to some of the rejuvenating skincare trends out there, topical vitamin A-based drugs called retinoids may reduce fine lines and wrinkles. Dermatologists consider tretinoin the gold standard for keeping skin smooth and glowing.

Tretinoin is a vitamin A derivative called a retinoid. It was originally studied in the 1960s to treat keratotic disorders – conditions that cause the skin to become thick and painful. Researchers recognised that tretinoin also worked to fight acne and started prescribing it in the 1970s. By the 1980s, people were using it to treat fine lines, wrinkles and sun damage. Tretinoin is only available by prescription in topical creams and gels sold under brand names such as

Retin-A, Renova and Avita.

Dermatologist Dr Brooke Jackson says tretinoin works as an exfoliant, irritating skin to speed up natural cell turnover. “As your skin cells turn over faster, the dull, dry, damaged skin will be replaced with brand-new skin cells,” she says.

“Tretinoin can also regulate the genes involved in collagen production,” says dermatologist Dr Tanya Kormeili. Collagen is essential for skin firmness and elasticity, but we produce less of it as we age.

Tretinoin can enter skin cells and switch on the genes responsible for collagen production.

Retinol, a less potent retinoid found in many over-the-counter anti-ageing creams and serums, “is less effective at turning on the [collagen] genes,” says Dr Kormeili.

Skin specialists say that most people can start using tretinoin long before wrinkles appear. However, it’s not recommended for pregnant women and those with ultra-sensitive skin, and it takes several months of regular use before you’ll see results.







MARCH 1971



# A Pretty Good Teacher, For A Cat

*Proud and independent, Tiger made contributions to this maturing family that will never be forgotten*



BY *Monte Bourjaily, Jr*

**G**wyn, my youngest daughter, helped Tiger as we drove down the country road to the vet's on what was to be his last Friday morning. Privately, both of us nursed a forlorn hope. We joked and laughed, trying to ignore the spectre that hovered over the cat sitting quietly in her arms.

At 16, Tiger was old for a cat. In quiet dignity, he let Gwyn pet him, perhaps understanding that this was a special trip. I glanced at the two as I drove, and thought back to the day when Tiger first entered our lives.

He had been a Christmas present to my second son. Brian, at six, wanted something that was his alone, something not handed down – as were his clothes and toys – from his older brother. Sadly, even our dogs had merely tolerated Brian, responding more eagerly to my commands, and those of my wife and older boy.

And so, on Christmas Day 1954, I rose early with my wife to put the tiny kitten a neighbour had given us into the stocking that Brian had carefully tacked to the mantelpiece the night before. The first of my vivid memories involving Tiger is the look of joy on Brian's face when he saw the kitten's head poking out of the stocking, and heard the plaintive 'meow' that proved his present was alive.

From then on, Tiger's life was filled with love. Brian lavished care on him, fed him, played with him. For a sometimes rough, sometimes clumsy child, Brian showed a co-ordinated

gentleness with Tiger that was amazing. And late at night, when I checked on the children, I would invariably find Tiger on Brian's bed, stretched out beside him.

My next clear memory of Tiger is also a happy one, which came after near-tragedy. One evening our next-door neighbour rang the front doorbell. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said when my wife answered the door, "but when I backed out of the driveway this afternoon, I'm afraid I ran over your cat. I tried to help him, but he jumped up and ran away. I don't know where he went or how badly he was hurt."

Four weeks passed with no sign of Tiger. Stoically, Brian tried to hide his fear that his friend had crawled away to die. It was a fear we all shared. And we came to accept his death – all of us except Brian.

Every evening Brian would go to the door and call Tiger's name. Finally, on the 28th day after the neighbour's unwelcome announcement, he had an answer. Out from under the front porch came Tiger, his tail high, walking with the pride and majesty he customarily displayed,

behaving as if he had never been away. As he approached the door, Brian's face was transformed with joy. But neither he nor Tiger displayed open affection in front of the family. There was a calm acceptance, an honouring by each of the other's dignity. That night, though, when I checked Brian's room, I saw that his cheeks were wet and a blissful smile was on his face. And his arm encircled his cat, who lay purring quietly beside him.

The years passed. When Tiger was 12 and Brian 18, he fell victim to the communication-gap, identity-crisis syndrome. The tensions were too great. He had to get away. And so he left our home to join others of his generation who were seeking answers to questions for which their parents had no answers – in part because they did not know what the questions were.

Yet, unlike many of his peers, Brian maintained a connection with home. From time to time, at odd hours and without warning, he would appear or call. And always he would ask, "How's my cat? How's Tiger?"

And then one night a call came from a phone booth in Washington. "Brian is sick," an unidentified youth said. "He's asking for you. You'd

better come and get him. He's at the 'cave' on P Street." It was 4.15am.

Two hours later, following the educated guess of a policeman, I found the 'cave'. It turned out to be a slum basement where 20 to 30 teenagers slept in crowded squalor. Brian was there. He had pneumonia.

"Hello Father," he mumbled. "I blew it again, didn't I? How's Tiger?"

We brought him home to recover. But Brian could not stay at home, not with all those unanswered questions: *Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?*

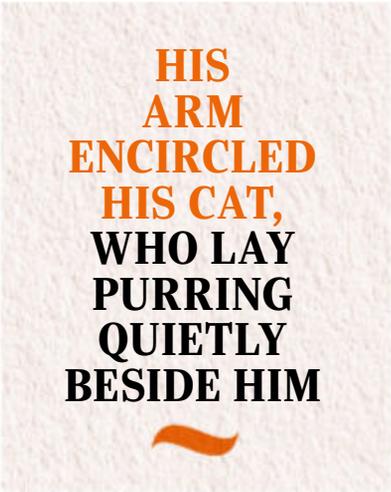
The next call, from Philadelphia, came at a more reasonable hour. It was 6.15pm and we were just starting dinner.

"Father, can I come home?" Brian asked. "I've been robbed. Of everything. My clothes, my wallet, my guitar, even my poetry."

There was a catch in his voice. This, I think, was the final blow in a series of hard knocks which persuaded Brian that there are serpents in the flower children's Garden of Eden.

"Of course you can," I said. The conversation ended on a familiar note: "Tell Tiger I'll be home tomorrow."

So, once again, Brian came home. But again he left. This time it was for good, leaving us his cat while he



**HIS  
ARM  
ENCIRCLED  
HIS CAT,  
WHO LAY  
PURRING  
QUIETLY  
BESIDE HIM**

began to find some answers to adulthood. Today, married, he visits from time to time. He is making his own life with his new wife - without Tiger.

After Brian's initial departure, Gwyn, age ten, assumed responsibility for Tiger's care. Small and slightly scatterbrained, she was passionately in love with the animal world, and refused to watch movies or television programmes in which animals might get hurt. Gwyn was miserable in school, but we did not know it then, for in some ways she was harder to communicate with than Brian. For her, as for Brian, Tiger became the companion to whom she could pour out her heart and on whom she could lavish her love without fear of rejection or ridicule. And she profited from the discipline of maintaining a regular feeding schedule for Tiger and cleaning out his sandbox.

Late in the summer before Tiger's 16th year began, Gwyn became increasingly concerned with his health. He was slowing down noticeably, and his hearing and eyesight were failing. One night, Gwyn came to me with the inevitable question: "Father, what if Tiger dies? What am I going to do?" And with that question came the tears.

Tiger was stretched out on the floor,

his ears pricked, his eyes looking at Gwyn. Then he turned and looked at me, as if to say, "Well, old man, how do you handle this one?"

"Gwyn," I began, "everyone must die. And when someone dies, those who love him weep and mourn his death. But when we weep at the death of someone we love, or at the realisation that death will soon take him away, aren't we weeping at our *own* loss?"

"Think about it. Do you pity Tiger because *he* is going to die, or do you feel sorry for yourself because *you* are going to lose him? Tiger has had a long life - longer than most cats. He has been loved and cared for. If he could tell you how he wants to be remem-

bered, I think he would say that he wants you to recall the happy times, the joy and comfort that he brought you, the good lessons that you have learned from him. I think he would want you to remember him with smiles.

"Tiger is going to die, Gwyn. Not tomorrow, maybe, but soon. He will get sick and be in pain. Then you will have to decide: will Tiger be kept alive, even if he is suffering, just so you can delay losing him for a few days? Or will you ask the vet to end his suffering?"

This one time, Gwyn sat quietly

**HE LOOKED  
AT ME, AS  
IF TO SAY,  
"WELL, OLD  
MAN, HOW  
DO YOU  
HANDLE  
THIS ONE?"**



listening to me and not bouncing as she usually did. And Tiger, as I ended my speech, put his head down, closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

**WHEN WE REACHED** the vet, Gwyn had to carry Tiger inside. For several days he had been unable to keep his food down. He had lost control of his body functions. The flesh had evaporated from his frame leaving his ribs showing, his hips sharply prominent.

At the vet, the doctor examined Tiger for long, grave moments. "Well, Gwyn," he said finally. "I can keep him here for a few days, feed him on a liquid diet, try to build him up – but I can't make any guarantees. His nerves are breaking down. He can't control himself. It's senility – old age."

Gwyn searched the doctor's carefully neutral face. "I don't want him to suffer," she said. "I want what's best for him."

She picked Tiger up from the examination table and held him tightly to her breast, his head on her shoulder. Her eyes grew moist. Tiger was completely quiet in her arms, as if awaiting her decision.

"I want you to put him to sleep," said Gwyn. Her voice broke, and tears spilled down her cheeks. She put Tiger back on the table. Then she turned to me and smiled through her tears.

I said nothing. I couldn't. Instead, I put my arm around her shoulders and squeezed. Again she smiled at me through the tears, a tremulous smile

that told me she was satisfied with her decision. At the door we paused and turned for a last look. Tiger was sitting quietly on the examination table. He looked at us, eyes bright, ears perked. Though weak from hunger, he sat up tall and calmly watched us go through the door.

Gwyn and I got into the car. I put my head down onto the steering wheel and sobbed – the first time I had cried in years. Gwyn sobbed, too. But when I could look at her, she was smiling once again, a glowing look through the tears now drying on her cheeks.

Later that day, after I had called Brian, I wept again. *Could I not, I asked myself, accept the advice I had given Gwyn? Did Tiger's loss mean so much?* Then the thought came: my tears were not tears of sadness. They represented a number of emotions: I was proud of Gwyn and the courage and the firmness of her decision; I was grateful to Tiger for the contributions he had made in maintaining our communication with Brian, and to Gwyn's maturing; I was satisfied with myself as a father who had been able to impart to his youngest child an insight to help her through an emotional crisis.

And, finally, I was filled with awe of a creature who had been a pretty good teacher, for a cat. 



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OCTOBER 1964



# The Night The Stars Fell

*The most precious gift you can give a  
child is to spark their flame of curiosity*



BY *Arthur Gordon*

**O**ne summer night in a seaside cottage, a small boy felt himself lifted from bed. Dazed with sleep, he heard his mother murmur about the lateness of the hour, heard his father laugh. Then, with the swiftness of a dream, he was borne in his father's arms down the porch steps and out onto the beach.

Overhead the sky blazed with stars. "Watch!" Incredibly, as his father spoke, one of the stars moved. In a streak of golden fire it flashed across the astonished heavens. And before the wonder of this could fade, another star leaped from its place, then another, plunging towards the restless sea.

"What is it?" the child whispered.

"Shooting stars. They come every year on a certain night in August. I thought you would like to see the show."

That was all: just an unexpected glimpse of something haunting and mysterious and beautiful. But, back in bed, the child stared for a long time into the dark, rapt with the knowledge that all around the quiet house, the night was full of the silent music of the falling stars.

Decades have passed, but I remember that night still, because I was the fortunate seven-year-old boy whose father believed that a new experience was more important for a small boy than an unbroken night's sleep.

No doubt I had the usual quota of childhood playthings, but these are forgotten now. What I remember is

the night the stars fell. And the day we rode in a caboose [back car on train], the time we tried to skin the alligator, the telegraph we made that really worked. I remember the 'trophy table' in the hall where we children were encouraged to exhibit things we had found - snake skins, seashells, flowers, arrowheads, anything unusual or beautiful.

I remember the books left by my bed that pushed back my horizons and sometimes actually changed my life. Once my father gave me *Zuleika Dobson*, Max Beerbohm's classic story of undergraduate life at Oxford. I liked it, and told him so.

"Why don't you think about going there yourself?" he said casually. A few years later with luck and a scholarship, I did.

My father had, to a marvellous degree, the gift of opening doors for his children, of leading them into areas of splendid newness. This subtle art of adding dimensions to a child's world doesn't necessarily require a great deal of time. It simply involves doing things more often *with* our children instead of *for* them or *to* them.

One woman I know keeps a 'Why not?' notebook, and in it she scribbles all sorts of offbeat and fascinating proposals: 'Why not take kids to police headquarters and get them fingerprinted?' 'Why not visit a farm and attempt to milk a cow?' 'Why not arrange a ride on a tugboat?' 'Why not follow a river dredge and hunt for fossilised shark's teeth?'

And so they do.

I asked her where she got her ideas. "Oh," she said, "I don't know. But when I was a child, I had this wonderful old ne'er-do-well uncle who...".

Who used to open doors for her, just as she is opening them now for her own children.

Aside from our father, we had a remarkable aunt who was a genius at suggesting spur-of-the-moment plots to blow away the dust of daily drudgeries.

"Can you stand on your head?" she would ask us children. "I can!" And, tucking her skirt between her knees, she would do so. "What shall we do this afternoon?" she would cry, and answer her own question instantly: "Let's go pawn something!" Or, "There's a palm reader on the edge of town. Let's have our fortunes told!"

Always a new dimension, always a

magic door opening, an experience to be shared. That's the key word: we shared.

The easiest door to open for a child, usually, is one that leads to something you love yourself. All good teachers know this. And they know the ultimate reward: the marvellous moment when the spark you are breathing on bursts into a flame that henceforth will burn brightly on its own.

At a United States Golf Association tournament a few years ago, a pigtailed ten year old played creditably in the junior girls' championship.

"How long have you been interested in golf?" someone asked.

"I got it for my ninth birthday," she said.

"You mean your father gave you a set of clubs?"

"No," she said patiently, "he gave me golf."

The possessor of a wonderful realm had wanted his child to share the magic kingdom. No doubt it took some time and effort, some patience, some mystical transference of enthusiasm. But what a reward for both of them! And it might equally well have been music or astronomy or chemistry or collecting butterflies – any world at all.

**MY FATHER  
HAD, TO A  
MARVELLOUS  
DEGREE,  
THE GIFT OF  
OPENING  
DOORS FOR  
HIS CHILDREN**



Children are naturally inquisitive and love to try new things. But someone must offer them the choices. Years ago, when the Quiz Kids were astonishing American radio audiences with their brilliance, a writer set out to discover what common denominators there were in the backgrounds of these extraordinary children.

He found that some were from poor families, some from rich, some had been to superior schools, some had not. But in every case investigated there was at least one parent who shared enthusiasms with the child, who watched for areas of interest, who gave encouragement and praise for achievement, who made a game of searching out the answers to questions, who went out of his way to supply the tools of learning.

No doubt the capacity for outstanding performance was already there, but it took the love and interest and companionship of a parent to bring it out.

I have a friend, a psychiatrist, who says that basically there are two types of human beings: those who think of life as a privilege and those who think of it as a problem.

The first type is enthusiastic,

energetic, resistant to shock, responsive to challenge. The other type is suspicious, hesitant, withholding, self-centred.

To the first group, life is hopeful, exciting. To the second, it's a potential ambush.

And, he adds, "Tell me what sort of childhood you had and I can tell you which type you are likely to be."

**THIS,  
SURELY,  
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LEGACY  
WE CAN PASS  
ON TO THE NEXT  
GENERATION**



The real purpose, then, of trying to open doors for children is not to divert them or amuse ourselves; it is to build eager outgoing attitudes towards the demanding and complicated business of living.

This, surely, is the most valuable legacy we can pass on to the next generation: not

money, not houses or heirlooms, but a capacity for wonder and gratitude, a sense of aliveness and joy.

And for those of us who care what becomes of our children, the challenge is always there. None of us meets it fully, but the opportunities come again and again.

Many years have passed since that night in my life when the stars fell. But the Earth still turns, the sun still sets, night still sweeps over the changeless sea. And next year, when August comes with its shooting stars, my son will be seven. **R**

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FEBRUARY 1985



# Hangi By A Thread

*A freak accident leaves 13 people  
stranded in mid-air*



*BY Richard Blair*

**S**even people had just plunged to their deaths and 13 others huddled fearfully in crippled cable-cars suspended high above Singapore's harbour. Any moment they could be torn loose from their frail hold on survival.

As the afternoon drew towards a close on the resort island of Sentosa, hundreds of visitors began making their way to the cable-car station for the 1.75-kilometre trip back to Singapore. It was Saturday, January 29, 1983, and grey clouds were rolling in. Everyone hoped to beat the rain.

At 5.50pm, seven members of a family from India boarded a bright-red gondola and were lifted up over the South China Sea. From 54 metres above the jade-coloured waters of Singapore harbour, the view from the bubble-shaped car was breathtaking.

Inside, Manmohan Kaur, 25, her mother-in-law, Pritam Kaur, 60, a sister-in-law, Harbhajan Kaur, 43, and a brother-in-law, Mahinder Singh, 44, looked across the harbour and chatted. Manmohan held Harbhajan's eight-year-old son, Jagjit. Manmohan's own sons, Tasvinder, 22 months old, and Balvinder, four years old, watched the tugboats below.

Suddenly, their car began swinging wildly. Manmohan froze as she saw a blue car up ahead oscillate violently, and plunge into the churning waters below.

Further ahead, a red car lurched off the main cable and tumbled into the

bay, spilling passengers through an open door.

Manmohan's car somersaulted completely round the main cable. The door popped open. In a lightning move, Mahinder, who was holding Tasvinder, threw the boy away from the door. But he lost his own balance and pitched head-first through the opening. Springing up, Pritam grabbed her grandson. She slipped and plunged out the door with Tasvinder. Manmohan fainted from fear and shock.

In a few moments of horror, seven people had been thrown to their deaths. (Miraculously, Tasvinder would survive.) The remaining 13 cable-cars had stopped moving. Inside four of them, 13 people were dangling helplessly above the darkening sea, paralysed with fear.

**ON THE 14TH FLOOR** observation deck of the harbourside building, Colonel Lee Hsien Loong, Chief of Staff of Singapore's Air Force Rescue Squadron, viewed the accident scene. In charge of the rescue operation, Lee listened to a briefing on the disaster from Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) officials.

An oil-drilling ship being towed out to sea had broken loose from its tugboats, and its drilling rig, 68 metres tall, had hit the main cable-car line. One car had been wrenched free from its 42-millimetre support cable and was now hanging only by the tow cable, 29 millimetres in diameter – there was no telling how long it would hold.

Winds and rain were blowing up to eight knots. “Anything we try will be risky,” one of Lee’s aides warned.

Lee called in a shipborne crane, hoping to lower the cable-car passengers to safety in a basket. But when it arrived, it proved to be too short. So Lee summoned two helicopter-rescue teams.

**LIGHTNING CRACKLED**, and a cold wind howled through the empty window frame of the car holding Dorothy Jean Gilliland from the US and a Canadian couple, John Huisman, 43, and his wife Catherine, 36. In pain from a broken collarbone, Huisman sprawled on the metal floor. Catherine Huisman, her clothes bloodstained from cuts on her face, wept helplessly. Dorothy Jean Gilliland fought back the pain from a badly bruised arm and tried to calm

her companions. But their situation seemed less precarious than in the nearby car – which was held aloft only by the tow cable – that carried Manmohan Kaur and the surviving members of her family.

Two young soldiers from New Zealand, Allan Brown of Oamaru and Stephen Wells of Nelson, were in a car suspended over land some 150 metres from the Singapore terminal.

In a fourth car were four young residents of Singapore, Leong Siew Keng, Halijah binti Manaf, Low Hock Seng and Hamed bin Jom; their gondola had just left the Sentosa station and hung suspended over the island’s verdant woodland. They

attempted a few Malay songs to keep up their spirits. But they couldn’t remember the words, and their singing dissolved into sobbing.

In Manmohan Kaur’s car, the two women cried, prayed and pleaded for help until their throats were hoarse. Harbhajan was suffering from broken bones in her hand and had a severely wrenched back. Only four-year-old Balvinder remained calm.

Consoling his mother and cousin, he reminded them of temple teachings about the love of God and the need to have faith in that love. “Don’t

**WHEN  
THE  
SHIPBORNE  
CRANE  
ARRIVED  
IT PROVED  
TOO  
SHORT**



worry," the boy said at one point. "God will help us, you'll see."

It was soon after midnight. The rain had slackened but the wind had picked up to 12 knots. Officials in the tower were worried that the down-draught of the rescue helicopters, combined with the wind, might blow the cars into the sea.

The drilling rig was still caught in the cable; mooring lines were made fast between the mother ship and the wharf, and tugs were helping to keep the rig from drifting down the harbour and carrying the entire cable system with it. The sound of screeching metal borne on the wind emphasised the precarious situation of the 13 trapped people.

*Rescue One Zero*, piloted by Singapore Air Force Lieutenant Kao Yit Chee, made a trial run on an empty car – then moved down the line to the first stranded car, holding the pair from New Zealand.

Swinging in the wide pendulum-like swoops on the end of a winch cable 15 metres below the helicopter was Kao's winchman, Lance Corporal Phua Kim Hai. Phua was taking a fearsome risk. If he became entangled in the tramway cables, Lieutenant Kao would have to order

the severing of the winch cables, sending Phua to almost certain death in the dark waters of the harbour. The alternative would be to risk losing the helicopter and its four-man crew.

It took more than 15 minutes of manoeuvring to edge Phua to the side of the New Zealanders' car. He opened the door and hoisted himself inside. Allan Brown emerged first, strapped

into a rescue harness. Pulled into the chopper 30 seconds later, Brown hugged the floor and muttered with relief, "Thank you, Singapore!" Both New Zealanders were transferred to hospital.

Kao's crew then moved to the car nearest to Sentosa, and lifted the four terrified Singaporeans to safety.

The two 'easy' rescues had been accomplished. The challenge now was to save the seven people in the two remaining cars, one of which was held aloft only by the tow line.

The piloting part of this job fell to Lieutenant Geoff Ledger of the Royal Australian Navy, who was in Singapore helping its armed forces to train helicopter pilots.

Ledger lifted *Rescue One One* into darkness and manoeuvred towards the car in which the Canadian couple and the American lay injured.

Sighting the cable and its concrete

**THE  
SOUND OF  
SCREECHING  
METAL  
EMPHASISED  
THEIR  
PRECARIOUS  
SITUATION**



support tower, Ledger started turning the helicopter so that his winchman, Lance Corporal Selvanathan, could approach the car from the side. Suddenly, as the aircraft yawed in the wind, Ledger lost sight of his hover reference. He backed off, realising that he would have to depend on directions from his winch operator, Staff Sergeant Ho Tsu Keng, the only crew member who could see both the winchman and the car.

Ledger cut off radio contact with the ground in order to concentrate on intercom instruction from Ho. "Geoff, you gotta move left... more... steady!"

In spite of his 11 years' experience as a pilot, Ledger found it impossible to keep his machine from lurching in the wind gusts. A violent billow of wind slammed against the aircraft. "Pull back!" the winch operator shouted. A flash caught the corner of Ledger's eye as sparks shot up from below. Selvanathan's winch wire had touched the support cable. "We overshoot," shouted Ho.

Ledger checked his watch. He'd been manoeuvring for only 15 minutes, but it seemed like hours. His hands and wrists ached. He pointed the helicopter's nose towards the stranded car.

"A bit more right. That's it now, steady... he's got hold now. He's in!"

The Huismans and Dorothy Jean Gilliland were transferred safely to land. Now Ledger faced his toughest task.

Observers in the PSA tower and on the drilling rig had reported that the four occupants of the last car seemed, understandably, to be in a state of panic. If they moved suddenly, rushing the winchman, for example, the thin cable supporting the car could be dislodged. Ledger jerked his head back and forth, fighting the stiffness in his neck muscles. This time he would have only the fine tow wire as reference to help him hold his

chopper steady.

**HARBHAJAN KAUR** lay semi-conscious on the floor. Manmohan sat on a bench, Balvinder tied to her with a scarf. *I will go mad with this terror*, she thought.

When the helicopter approached, the car shuddered in the draught. Manmohan was certain the end was near. She bowed her head in prayer. When she lifted it again, Lance Corporal Selvanathan was swinging into the doorway. "I've come to take you home," he said.

**A VIOLENT  
BILLOW  
OF WIND  
SLAMMED  
AGAINST  
THE  
AIRCRAFT.  
"PULL BACK!"**



## READER'S DIGEST

Little Balvinder seemed most composed, and the winchman put the harness round him first.

"Don't drop me," Balvinder said. "You be careful now."

"Don't worry," Selvanathan told the boy. "We're going for a helicopter ride!"

When he returned for Jagjit, however, without his cousin to give him courage, the little boy cowered in a corner. Selvanathan spoke gently, "Your cousin is waiting for you. Come on, it'll be all right."

Slowly, Selvanathan slipped the rescue harness over the boy's head and arms as both he and Manmohan petted him. Then Selvanathan took the boy in his arms and, with Jagjit sobbing away on his shoulder, he stepped back through the opening and ascended to the chopper.

Manmohan was lifted out next. But when Selvanathan re-entered the car and attempted to strap Harbhajan into the rescue harness, each movement brought screams of pain.

Desperately, Selvanathan struggled with the harness, knowing that Ledger could not hold his hover for more than a few minutes. Finally, with the harness in place, the

exhausted winchman struggled to his feet and eased the woman's limp body through the door. **R**

*Update: After falling 56 metres into Singapore harbour, 22-month-old Tasvinder Singh had been plucked from the tidal currents by an alert bystander, Abdul Latip, who jumped aboard a moving ferry and dived into the water for the rescue. Tasvinder was rushed to hospital suffering from shock, a fractured skull and bleeding lungs. At first, his blood pressure and pulse were so weak that doctors had difficulty recording them. But, after ten days, recovered from his injuries, he was reunited with his family.*

*All the crew members received letters of commendation from Winston Choo, Singapore's Chief of General Staff, for courageously braving the perils of injury or death when 13 lives were hanging by a thread. Geoff Ledger became the first foreign national to receive such an award since the formation of the Republic of Singapore.*



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### Cartoon Quips

RD MAY 1987

**Doctor to unfit patient: The root of your problem is that you're a  
'Type A' personality in a 'Model T' body.** *The Wall Street Journal*

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## LIFE'S LIKE THAT

### Seeing The Funny Side

#### RD JULY 1992

◆ After weeks with my colicky newborn, I was at the end of my tether. My husband suggested I try to 'bond' with the new baby.

In frustration one morning, after my son had been crying for hours, I phoned my husband at work. Before he could say hello, I let our son scream into the receiver.

Then I hung up.

An hour passed, and my husband finally called back. I asked what took him so long. He said he was in a meeting all morning and when he returned to his desk he found a note saying: "Your son called."

JEAN SORENSEN

◆ On our 25th wedding anniversary, my husband took me out. Our teenage daughters said they'd have supper waiting for us when we returned.

After we got home, we saw the dining-room table was beautifully set with china, crystal and candles, and there was also a note that read: "Your supper is in the refrigerator. We are staying with friends, so go ahead and do something we wouldn't do!"

"I suppose," my husband responded, "we could vacuum."

ANETTE OLSON

◆ My son Kelly once took our German shepherd and Labrador with him to



◆ One afternoon, a man came into the bank where my wife, Laura, is a teller. As he stood in the doorway wiping his glasses with a handkerchief, she asked if she could help him.

"You're damn right," he answered. "Ever since I bought these glasses here, I haven't been able to see a thing."

"I believe you want the optician next door," Laura replied. The man put his spectacles on, looked around the bank and said, "I told you these glasses aren't any good."

STEVEN WOOD

town to get farm supplies. He had to park his utility a long way from the shop, so he admonished the usually obedient dogs to stay in the back until he returned.

Kelly was in the shop longer than he had anticipated. As he left, a woman asked him, accusingly, whether the two dogs that had been running in and out of the next building were his. Embarrassed, Kelly said, "I'm sorry," and rushed back to his vehicle.

There were the dogs, tails wagging, the perfect picture of innocence – except that they were sitting in the back of the wrong utility.

PATRICIA FORT

◆ A widow, my friend Casey, was dating again at 62. Once, she was sitting in a golf cart when her escort reached over, patted her leg and said, "Now I suppose you're going to tell me I can look but don't touch."

"Robert," Casey quipped, "at my age you can touch – but don't look!"

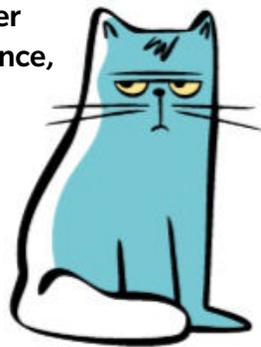
NANCY ALBERT

## RD NOVEMBER 1995

◆ My daughter, one of two women in a firefighting crew, works 24-hour shifts. At her wedding reception, her workmates marched up to the bridal table and introduced themselves to the groom. "Congratulations," the first one said with a laugh. "You're about to meet the other ten men your wife sleeps with."

MARY ANN JENSEN

◆ One day at the veterinary surgery where I take my cat, a man and the receptionist were verbally sparring. The vet's nurse came to her colleague's defence, asking the man, "Do you know what happens to aggressive males in this surgery?"



VIVIANE HUESTIS

◆ After moving into our first house, my wife and I decided to put a new window in the kitchen for more light. A do-it-yourselfer, I took on the project.

The first task was to cut a hole in the exterior wall. I was pounding out the last few pieces with a sledgehammer when I felt someone watching me. I turned. "Forget your key?" asked my neighbour.

BILL BORGES

◆ As I backed the car down our driveway, I noticed our six-year-old son playing on the front lawn. Just then I heard a crunch behind the car.

I wound down my window and angrily told my son, "Jacob, that's what you get for leaving your bike behind the car!" He looked over, shrugged his shoulders and replied, "That's not my bike, Dad. That's the lawnmower."

C.P. MACDOUGALL





JULY 1954



# Wise Animals I Have Known

*A naturalist is bowled over by the  
instinctive acts of animals*



BY *Alan Devoe*

**M**ost of my life has been spent in getting to know animals. When I was five or six the animal was an ol' houn'-dawg — one of the wisest persons in the world I thought at the time. I may have been right. Later it was rabbits, guinea pigs, white mice. Then in my adult life as a naturalist it has been deer, raccoons, skunks, foxes and a long parade of other wild animals observed in close intimacy outdoors. If I live to be 80 and still greet the mornings with a praise like prayer, it will be because I knew animals.

They are very close, said Saint Francis, to the paternal heart of God. I think they must be. By instinct, an animal puts infinite trust in life.

This morning at sunrise I watched Thomas, our cat, greet the new day. Thomas is now (in human terms) going on for 80.

Every morning I share daybreak with him. It is great medicine. First there is his rush up the cellar stairs, lithe and springy as a tiger, from the place where he sleeps by the furnace.

While I fix his food I watch him. He always begins with the ritual of stretch-ing. Nothing trivial or hasty, mind you, but a leisurely, carefully relished luxury that does him as much good as a holiday. Left front paw, right front paw, now both hind legs, now a long bend of the back... *aaah!* A brisk shake; the big green eyes open wide; the ears perk up.

He dashes to the French window, rears up with forepaws on the glass,

and peers out all quivering and tail twitching with excitement. *Sunshine! Trees! Great heaven, there is a leaf blowing hop-skip across the lawn!*

Thomas has looked out through this same pane hundreds of mornings, but every time it is fresh and challenging and wonderful.

And so with breakfast, you'd think he had never seen this old chipped dish before. He pounces on his food like a man finding uranium. Then, when the last bit has been neatly licked from the plate, comes the ecstatic moment for going out to the new day.

Thomas never just goes through the doorway. (Animals don't take these moments lightly.) First he glides halfway through, then stands drinking in the sounds, scents, sights out there. Another inch or two and he stands again. At last, very slowly, he slips over the threshold. If so much wonder were to hit Thomas all at once he could hardly stand it.

Now he rushes to the middle of the lawn and there this octogenarian performs a riotous caper. He takes a flying jump at nothing in particular, then zigzags after non-existent mice. He leaps in the air and claps his paws on invisible butterflies. Then some quick flip-flops, rolling over and over, all four paws waving. In a minute it is finished and he steps gravely off to his day's adventures.

What better lesson in living could one have? Here is joy in every moment, an awareness of the electric excitement of the Earth and all that's in it. One further lesson from Thomas: when he sleeps, he sleeps. He curls up in a ball, puts one paw over the top of his head and turns himself over to God.

All animals give themselves wholeheartedly to the joy of being. At dusk, in my woods, flying squirrels play aerial roller-coaster. I have seen an old fox batting a stick in absorbed rapture for half an hour. Children react thus simply to the world about them, before reason steps in to complicate their lives.

One summer dusk I watched a buck deer browsing along a pasture hedge-row. His whole being was given over to the taste of the earth-cool grass, the caress of the slanting evening

sun on his tawny flanks. He was as relaxed as putty. Nature was saying to him, "Taste, and enjoy yourself, old man," and he was doing just that.

Suddenly a snake wriggled almost under his nose. In a flash the buck became a taut, fighting fury. "Get it!" said Nature, and he plunged to answer. Slash! Twack! The sharp, cutting hoofs flailed and in a moment it was over.

Then the voice said to him, "Back to your peace and your browsing, old man." All knots of fight and fear were gone out of the buck's body; again free and relaxed he sauntered up the pasture hill, and the soft dark of evening wrapped around him like an arm.

**HERE IS  
JOY IN  
EVERY  
MOMENT,  
AN AWARENESS  
OF EARTH'S  
ELECTRIC  
EXCITEMENT**



If animals can be said to have a philosophy, it is as simple as this: when Nature says, "I give you the glory of the senses and of awareness, and the splendour of Earth," surrender yourself to these things, not worrying if it looks undignified to turn somersaults at 80. When the word is 'fight', pitch in and fight, not weighing hesitant thoughts about prudence.

"Rest," says your monitor. "Play." "Sleep." "Feed and breed and doze in God's green shade by the brookside," each in its season. Heed the voice and

act. It is a simple philosophy. It holds the strength of the world.

Animals do not know worry. What bird could raise a family if worried about the problems to be overcome, the impossible number of feeding trips in a day to keep those clamouring mouths stilled with food? That is not the way birds or animals respond to life. Nature says, "Feed them!" and the mother bird goes ahead and does it.

Between dawn and sunset a tiny wren must make hundreds of such round trips to feed her brood.

An animal doesn't know what brotherhood means, but when it hears the call "Help!" it answers instinctively. If a prairie dog is shot, the others in the prairie-dog village come tumbling out, not giving a hang for gunfire, and haul their fallen fellow underground. Big-game hunters have seen elephants, disregarding danger, lift a wounded comrade to his feet with their tusks and, supporting him by one member of the herd on each side, help him walk to the forest depths.

Even small birds work miracles of valance. I once nearly had the daylights beaten out of me by a pair of phoebes, of all things. I had spied their nest on the underside of an old

wooden bridge across a stream and was working my way from boulder to boulder in the rushing water to have a close look at the nestlings. Suddenly Mother Phoebe shot past me, only an inch from my nose.

I had hardly recovered from my dodge of surprise when she turned and flew straight at my eyes. I jumped sideways and one leg went into the water. At that moment Father Phoebe dive-bombed, and his wings knocked my glasses off. These parents were acting on the message "Get him!" They did. I came out from under that bridge as if bears were after me.

Not only do the wild things meet life in all its aspects wholeheartedly; they greet death the same way. "Sleep now, and rest," says Nature at the end.

When my old dog Dominie died he lay down in a favourite corner, gave a long sigh and was gone.

I remember an old woodchuck that died in my pasture. As I watched him he stretched out on a sun-warmed stone, breathed his last and surrendered himself to what Nature was saying to him. To do that could have seemed strange to him - he had been doing it all his life. In animals shines the trust that casts out fear. **R**

**I CAME  
OUT FROM  
UNDER THAT  
BRIDGE AS IF  
BEARS  
WERE  
AFTER ME,  
NOT BIRDS**



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FEBRUARY 2001

# Secret World Of A Swamp

*I bought my little patch of New Zealand cheap.  
Then I discovered a veritable wonderland*



BY *Gerard Hindmarsh*

**I** was scratched by scrub and knee-deep in mud when we found it. Cleverly secreted in a bowl of tufted rushes and surrounded by dense tangle fern was the finely woven nest of a rare fernbird. Ornithologist Graeme Elliott used both hands to part the vegetation as we craned our necks to look inside the nest, little bigger than an eggcup. Neatly arranged within, partially obscured by a necklace of tiny feathers, were three speckled pinkish eggs, each no bigger than my thumbnail.

“What a find!” Elliott whispered excitedly. “Incubation for fernbirds is only 12 and a half days and they nest only in swamps. There are not many left, because yours is one of the last undrained wetlands left in coastal Golden Bay.” I gazed at the little eggs, and could think of nothing but the huge excavator I had booked to drain my swamp the next day.

Over dinner, back at my home that night, Elliott, a student at the university of Canterbury doing a thesis on fernbirds (*Bowdleria punctata*), gave me a crash course in swamp biodiversity. “Wetlands are full of life,” he told me passionately, “probably with 50 times the number of species you’d expect to find in a paddock of grass.”

I cancelled the excavator. My love affair with a swamp had begun.

It could of course have been in my blood. My own surname, Hindmarsh, can probably be traced back to one humble John in 11th century Northumberland who lived behind the marsh of the town. When I decided

to throw in my job in 1976 as a cartographer and move out of Wellington, I spent my entire \$2000 savings as a deposit on 5.6 hectares of land at Tukurua in Golden Bay, north-west of Nelson, feeling an urge to be a homesteader. The full purchase price of \$7500 was cheap by comparison with other sections nearby, because it was considered an unproductive wasteland.

Much of it was a snaking primeval bog, half a kilometre long and 150 metres at its widest, that has its soggy beginnings in a rain-soaked hinterland. The swamp was ten centimetres deep in parts for much of the year. From a distance, the thick vegetation around it was scrubby in appearance, almost unattractive. On the hard ground of an overlooking knob, I built a house, all the time plotting to put my wetland into productive pasture, which would mean I could keep two cows instead of one.

That was until Graeme Elliott stepped out of my bog that December

morning and introduced himself. Over that dry summer, while farmers took advantage of the weather and incentives to drain thousands of hectares of swamps around the country, Elliott introduced me to the avian inhabitants of my own wetland.

“Let the fernbird come to you,” he told me on his second visit, showing me how to breathe in while flicking my tongue against the roof of my mouth to imitate the bird’s agitated challenge, a soft but sharply repeated click, click, click. Sure enough, one of the secretive but highly territorial birds bustled with annoyance from the undergrowth to within metres of us.

As my understanding of the swamp’s ecosystem and its inhabitants grew, new creatures began to appear that I had barely noticed before. Caught out in the open, a brown bittern ‘froze’ absurdly just metres from me, pointing its bill skywards. Elliott told me later that this is the bird’s surveillance posture; their eyes can look all around from this pose.

**ONE FEBRUARY MORNING** I was excited when a white heron made a guest appearance, fresh from the species’ only breeding colony near Okarito. Maori called them *kotuku*,

bird of a single flight, to be seen perhaps once in a lifetime, symbol of things beautiful and rare.

As I waded through my wetland, commonplace inhabitants began to enthral me, like the extended family of 14 pukeko swamp hens, which would periodically move in from an adjoining farm to bring the swamp alive with their screeching, strutting antics.

Over a period of several weeks, I watched a group of males build a selection of nests atop outcrops of flattened rushes. After much inspection, only one was chosen by the picky females, who then shared it to lay a huge clutch of red-blotched eggs that both sexes incubated.

I found the swamp hens’ movements akin to ballet, blue-and-scarlet-feathered bodies elegantly balanced on long slender legs as they went about stripping seed heads.

Then there were the fish to discover, native trout seeking perfect sanctuary in ankle-deep braided channels overhung with dank vegetation. They remained elusive at first, leaving only ripples as they streaked for cover when I approached. That was until I discovered ‘fishville’ some three years ago, a knee-deep pool scoured out by periodic flooding, where fish would congregate. These I encouraged with

**AS MY UNDER-  
STANDING  
OF THE  
SWAMP GREW,  
NEW  
CREATURES  
BEGAN TO  
APPEAR**



daily feedings of crushed-up dog biscuits, until I could count on a swirling mass of some 50 fish to turn up.

As part of a regional freshwater survey of mudfish, Nelson-based ecologist Belinda Studholme set caged minnow traps throughout the swamp in March 1999. "Even if it all dries up in a hot summer," she said, "these tough little fish go into a torpor-like state and can survive for months in the mud."

Next morning, I helped her pull up the traps. No mudfish, but I was face-to-face with a gasping booty of banded kokopu, another indigenous species. We released them after careful recording. This, I discovered, was one of five species of whitebait that live out their adult lives in swamps and secluded waterways like mine.

**MORE EXPERTS CAME AND WENT,** all keen to observe and to share their secrets with me. Department of Conservation botanist Simon Walls did a flora survey. Through new eyes I realised I had a veritable Garden of Eden! Flourishing between the swamp flax I had fine baumea rushes, aptly named hard fern and tangle fern, along with many native herbs and shrubs.

Bush-bashing up the steep valley

sides above the swamp, I could clearly see the associations of darker spindly manuka along the swamp fringe giving way to more robust kanuka trees on drier ground. It fascinated me how it all fitted together, harmoniously, complementary, in perfect balance. Inwardly I thanked myself that no excavator had come to wreck it.

A thickly vegetated swamp is not the easiest thing to get about in. Our horse ventured in, got stuck and nearly drowned. Only the effort of ten neighbours and a tractor pulled him out. But when I rescued my eight-year-old son, who was in up to his thighs, I made a decision. "We need a walkway," I told my wife, Melanie.

My priority became a wooden causeway that we could use as a safe swamp crossing. After a year of weekends labouring knee-deep in mud, driving posts deep and nailing boards onto rails, I gathered family, neighbours and friends and called on my six-year-old daughter to cut a red ribbon. Melanie announced that the 100-metre-long by 55-centimetre-wide structure was open for anyone who wished to savour the delights of a swamp.

Spring would see channels flush with returning whitebait, with

**THROUGH  
NEW EYES  
I REALISED  
I HAD A  
VERITABLE  
GARDEN  
OF  
EDEN**



long-finned eels in slithering pursuit. Sunrise was the best time to view mythical creatures like the darting dragonfly, long horn beetle and ghostly white widower moth. They climb to the top of the undergrowth to catch the first rays of the sun and begin their daily rituals: drinking dewdrops collected from their bodies, then callisthenics and stuttering warm-up flights. Soon, with percussive bursts, the insect orchestra strikes up. The day has begun.

Water levels rise as winter approaches, flushing out the detritus of a previous growing season. Insect populations decrease, then bounce back in greater numbers than before.

It was all like magic to me, but could I rely on the enthusiasm of others to protect it after I was gone? I decided that no one else should make the same mistake as I almost did and destroy this fragile world. Upon my application, official protection of my wetland was conferred by the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, recognising the ecological value of the area and binding successive owners to keep it intact.

As a passionate gardener, I was now keen to build on my most abundant natural asset, the water. Hoping to make it pause a little longer, I tapped into an overflow along one side of the swamp, and spent three months with a shovel in an adjoining paddock, digging five ponds. These run parallel to the wetland,

each trickling into the next before finally rejoining the swamp further down.

My kids will never forget that summer we spent armed with nets and sieves, marauding the local ponds for frogs to populate our waterway. The swamp was soon reverberating to the high-pitched trill of tiny whistling tree frogs and the twanging of southern bell frogs.

**THESE DAYS**, much of my spare time is spent in and around my swamp: keeping tracks clear and boardwalks maintained, cutting out invasive gorse and replanting trees like northern rata and kahikatea that once flourished around here. Encouraging an indigenous ecosystem is my priority, but I believe I'm a realist. We'll never eradicate all 'new' species, so I'm not adverse to planting around the edges the odd flowering Australian eucalypt that encourages native birds to banquet and deposit their droppings of native seeds.

Maintenance has become an obligation, but there is something hugely rewarding about contributing to preserving the diversity and health of life around us. In my district, 94 per cent of swamps have been drained and only eight per cent of those remaining are protected. We must ensure they never disappear. They must remain a refuge, a place, where with patience, one can witness the daily dramas of life in a small, fragile world. **R**

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JANUARY 1997



# Ticket To A Murder

*Nearly a thousand leads had turned  
up nothing. Then the detective got  
an unexpected call*



BY *Michael Bowker*

**D**onna Ream glanced at the clock on the wall of the convenience store where she worked in Eugene, Oregon. It was 10.30pm on Sunday, April 10, 1994. Only half an hour more and I can close, she thought.

As she wiped down the counter, Ream overheard her workmate, Fran Wall, talking to her husband on the public phone in an alcove. The two women, both 28 years old, were friends and neighbours in a nearby housing estate.

"I'll be home soon," Wall told her husband. "I love you." She hung up and went around the corner to the rear of the alcove, where the toilet, stockroom and walk-in cool room were located.

Just then, Ream saw a young man outside the entrance. He was dressed in black, his long blond hair pulled back in a ponytail. He was about 175 centimetres tall and had a babyish face riddled with acne. Ream remembered him from earlier that day when he'd come in to buy cigarettes. She had asked for proof of age and his identification card showed that he was born in June 1975.

The man entered the shop, setting off the electronic door chimes. As Ream continued working, she noticed that the shop's roll of scratch lottery tickets, in a plexiglass case by the register, was almost gone. She reminded herself that tomorrow she needed to scan the bar codes on a

new roll of tickets into the computer to activate them for sale. What she didn't know was that another assistant had already done so. A new roll of 200 tickets was wedged between the register and the case.

### **MENACING SNARL**

Ream looked up and noticed a second young man, with a thin face and long nose, at the back of the shop. His long brown hair dropped around his face. He reminded her of a grotesque comic book character. Suddenly she was startled by a growl coming from her right. She spun around to find a tall bearded man looming over her. He held a long steel bar in his fist and was making snarling sounds.

*We're being robbed*, thought Ream, backing up in fear. The blond kid darted into the stockroom. Please don't let him hear Fran in the cooler.

"Open the cash register!" the bearded man thundered.

Ream punched the cash register and the drawer sprang open. The man grabbed the cash and handed it and the pipe to yet a fourth man who had suddenly appeared. "Watch her!" the big man ordered, then went around the corner, towards the cooler.

Ream stared at the assailant who guarded her. He was little more than a boy. "Please take the money and go," she pleaded. "I have four children at home. Please don't hurt me."

The boy ignored her and kept the pipe raised over her head. Ream felt weak and tremulous. *What are they doing in the alcove?* she wondered.

A few minutes later, the bearded man and blond man returned. The latter had blood splattered across his face, shirt and pants. *My God!* Ream thought fearfully. *What did they do to Fran?*

"Come on," the blond man ordered, pointing to the alcove. "We're not going to hurt you."

*They're going to kill me,* Ream thought, panicking. She grabbed a heavy beverage trolley and pushed it at the men. The bearded man blocked it with his leg and shoved her hard against the stockroom wall.

"Hit her!" the blond man yelled. "Can't you even kill a woman?"

Ream screamed and shrank back against the wall as the bearded man advanced, the bar in his fist raised high. She threw her arms above her head as the first blow crashed down.

He swung the pipe repeatedly, splintering the bones in her arms and hands. Despite the incredible pain,

Ream kept her arms raised, protecting her head. *If I black out, I'll never see my children again,* she thought. She tried to fight back, but then a savage blow knocked her to the floor. She curled up as the men kicked and hit her.

"Get the knife," the bearded man growled. A moment later, he stabbed Ream in the arm, but she was in so much pain, she didn't realise it.

"I killed mine, why can't you kill yours?" the blond man taunted. Now Ream felt new despair. *These animals killed Fran,* she thought.

Suddenly the blows ceased. Ream peered out between her arms and saw the men looking away, distracted.

*This is my only chance,* Ream thought. Pulling herself into a crouch, she lunged towards the toilet almost two metres away.

*I've got to get in and lock the door,* she thought frantically. She reached the toilet, slammed the door shut and grabbed for the lock. But the bearded man burst through the door, shoving her against the back wall.

"Why don't you die, bitch!" he snarled, jamming the pipe into her mouth. Her breath came in gasps, and she fought with all her strength.

Suddenly, the bearded man turned

**"I KILLED  
MINE, WHY  
CAN'T YOU  
KILL YOURS?"  
HE TAUNTED.  
REAM  
FELT NEW  
DESPAIR**



his head as though listening. It was the front door chimes. A customer!

He stepped outside the toilet and looked towards the front of the shop.

Ream slammed the door and locked it. Then she collapsed, expecting the killers to come back. But there was no sound. Finally, she unlatched the door and peeked out. Seeing no one, she ran to a nearby house and pounded on the door.

A woman opened it. "They've killed Fran," Ream sobbed. "Please help me."

## LEAD ROLE

At 11.05pm, Ron Roberts, 32, a rookie homicide detective, was notified of the murder. Roberts rang his partner, Pat Ryan, 42, a 20-year police department veteran. Five minutes later the two detectives were on their way to the convenience store. Homicide Detective Sergeant Rick Gilliam met them there. "I'm putting the two of you in charge of this case," he said, speaking directly to Roberts.

Roberts felt his stomach tighten. He had been a beat policeman for six years, but this was his first lead role in a homicide case. He had been promoted over more experienced officers to the homicide office, and he knew people would be looking over his shoulder.

"Donna Ream, the injured woman,

gave us good descriptions of the four assailants," Gilliam said. "It's a miracle she's still alive. The other woman wasn't so lucky." He motioned to the cool room. "You'd better prepare yourselves."

They opened the door to the cool room, then stopped. Fran Wall lay dead on the floor, her skull brutally crushed. Ryan said, "We've got to catch these guys. If they can do this to a woman who had no dispute with them, they won't think twice about killing again."

It took 400 surgical staples to close Ream's scalp wounds and several hours of surgery to begin repairing the damage to her arms, now in casts up to her shoulders. She was discharged after eight days in hospital. But her husband, Rick, noted that his once strong and confident wife was now terrified.

"Those men are still out there, and I'm the only person who can identify them," she sobbed.

Eager to help the police, Ream agreed to an interview with Roberts on the day she came home from hospital. He arrived with a mug file of 100 photos. "Would you see if you recognise any of these men?" he asked.

Although he didn't let on, Roberts was worried about the case. *It's been*

**"IF THEY  
CAN DO THIS  
TO A WOMAN  
WHO HAD NO  
DISPUTE  
WITH THEM,  
THEY'LL KILL  
AGAIN"**



*eight days; we should have caught the killers by now*, he thought. Most murders that were solved, he knew, were unravelled within 72 hours.

Ream had already described the assailants and every other detail she could remember, including the June 1975 birth date on the blond man's ID card. Roberts was optimistic that she could recognise the men if their pictures were in the mug files.

Ream eagerly reached for the photos, but several minutes later felt a keen disappointment. "They aren't in there," she said crying. "You have to find the men who did this."

Roberts's heart went out to her. "We'll find them," he assured Ream, hoping he could keep his promise.

Two months later, nearly a thousand leads had been logged and followed up, but Roberts and Ryan still had nothing. The motive for Wall's murder continued to baffle everyone. The shop owners said only \$50 had been stolen from the register.

Then, on July 27, Roberts got a call from a representative of the State Lottery Commission. "I think we have something that may interest you," he said. A few minutes later, Roberts excitedly told the news to Ryan. That morning the convenience store auditor had found that 200 scratch lottery tickets were missing. It was the roll that had been squeezed between the register and the plexiglass case.

The auditor called the Lottery Commission to see if the tickets had

been scanned into the state's lottery computer and activated for sale. They had – on the day of Wall's murder.

"Some of the tickets were winners," Roberts told Ryan. "Somebody cashed them in just a month ago, right here in town." It was the first fresh lead they'd had in weeks.

Within moments, Roberts had called two of the three shops where the tickets had been cashed. Both times he hung up disappointed. The assistants told him they didn't keep tickets if the amounts were less than \$50. Taking a deep breath, he called the last shop on his list.

"We do save some of the winning tickets as part of our record-keeping process," the manager said. "Hold on; I'll see if we have the tickets with those numbers on them."

Roberts grew tense as a long moment slipped by. Finally the manager came back on.

"I've got them right here."

"Are any of them signed?" asked Roberts. He knew it was a long shot because assistants don't usually get winning tickets of less than \$50 signed. None of the tickets stolen from the shop was worth more than \$10.

"Yes, one is," the manager said. "We had a new assistant who asked everybody to sign their tickets. A 'Michael Heywood' signed this one."

Roberts's pulse raced. *Could this be the break I've been hoping for?*

Two hours later Roberts sat in front of his computer, completely

discouraged. A fingerprint expert had told him no latents could be lifted from that type of paper. Worse, Roberts had run a check on the name 'Michael Heywood' and found no one matching the descriptions of any of the four assailants.

That night Roberts slept fitfully, finally waking at 5.30am. *There's something I'm not getting here*, he thought.

*I'm close to these guys, I can feel it.* Then it came to him. From his years patrolling the streets, he knew that when criminals were put on the spot to identify themselves, they often lied by using a derivative of their real name.

Roberts logged on to his computer. Three hours later he typed in the name 'Michael Hayward' and stared at the screen. It listed 'Michael James Hayward' who was once arrested for malicious mischief in a convenience store. He was described as blond, 175 centimetres tall and weighed 65 kilograms. His birth date was in June 1975 - the same date Ream had seen on the suspect's ID.

Hayward's address was close to the shop where the winning lottery ticket had been redeemed. Roberts was excited, but knew there was one last critical step: Ream had to positively identify Hayward.

Roberts obtained Hayward's photograph from state records and mixed it in with a stack of mug shots. Slowly, Ream examined the photos. She had looked at more than 600 over the past five months. Suddenly her face grew animated. "This is the man who killed Fran!" she cried. It was Hayward.

Roberts and Ryan decided not to arrest Hayward immediately, however.

They had to find the other three men, and only Hayward could lead police to them.

During the next three weeks, Hayward was followed and his telephone tapped. Soon, officers identified three of Hayward's friends who matched Ream's descriptions. Detectives secretly photographed them,

and Roberts mixed their pictures in with other mug files and took them to Ream's house. Ream accurately picked Hayward's three friends and turned to Roberts, her eyes brimming with tears.

"I knew you would keep your promise," she said, hugging him.

### ARRESTS AT LAST

On September 3, 1994, police arrested 19-year-old Johl Brock, the long-faced man. The following day Roberts and Ryan, backed by the local SWAT team, arrested the other three men while they were camping south

**THERE'S  
SOMETHING  
I'M NOT  
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THOUGHT  
ROBERTS.  
THEN IT CAME  
TO HIM**



of the city. The suspects were taken to separate interview rooms. Roberts questioned Daniel Rabago, 16, who had stood watch over Ream while Wall was killed. Rabago said he and the other assailants were Satanists whose goal that night had been to “kill somebody”. He said they were plotting more murders when they were arrested.

Hayward admitted he didn't know Fran Wall and added with a shrug, “If I had it to do over again, I wouldn't change anything. Her life, or any other person's life, means nothing to me.”

Like Hayward, Jason Brumwell, 19, the bearded man, seemed unconcerned at being apprehended. He said they robbed the shop to get drug money.

Roberts and Ryan felt an adrenaline rush when they took the suspects

to the city gaol and were given the victory sign by other officers.

The exhausted detectives walked out of the gaol house into the afternoon sun, stopped for a moment and grinned at each other. There was no need for words. 

*Brumwell was sentenced to life imprisonment plus 20 years, without parole. Rabago and Brock pleaded guilty to murder, assault and robbery, and were given 11- and 12-year sentences, respectively. Hayward was convicted of the aggravated murder of Wall and was sentenced to death. Roberts's work was recognised by the Police Department. In July 1996 he was promoted to sergeant.*



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### So To Speak

RD MAY 1985

We all know that old chestnut about the elderly lady who saw *Hamlet* for the first time and came out complaining that it was full of quotations. But there is also an unintended point to the story: it was Shakespeare's unique ability to clothe a thought, original or familiar, profound or trivial, in words that have rooted themselves in the innermost consciousness of millions. If you have no idea what I am talking about and declare “It's Greek to me”, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you insist that your lost dog has vanished “into thin air”, you are quoting Shakespeare; and if you narrowly avoid being run over and call the errant driver “a blinking idiot”, you are quoting Shakespeare. BERNARD LEVIN

# LAUGHTER

## The Best Medicine

### RD JANUARY 1952

◆ Two little boys in a children's ward were discussing their hospital experiences. "Are you medical or surgical?" asked one.

"I don't know what you mean," the other answered.

The first boy, who had been a patient in the ward for some time, looked scornfully at the newcomer. "Were you sick when you got here," he said, "or did they make you sick after you came?"

DAVE CASTLE

◆ The small nephew of an actress visited her dressing room following a performance and, after some general conversation, asked rather worriedly, "Do you really kiss that man?"

"Well," said his aunt, "yes. As a matter of fact, I do."

A look of revulsion, tinged slightly with incredulity, appeared on the boy's face. "Doesn't he mind?" he asked.

THE SPECTATOR

### RD JANUARY 1953

◆ "Any physical defects?" asked the army draft-board doctor.

"Yes, sir," replied the hopeful inductee. "No guts!"

THE CALIFORNIA PLASTERER



◆ An erratic driver ignored a red light and smacked a brand-new sedan amidships. Before the echo of the crash had died away, the driver was angrily climbing out of her car.

"Why don't you keep your eyes open?" she demanded. "You're the fourth car I've hit this morning."

THIS WEEK

### RD JANUARY 1958

◆ The New York musical *My Fair Lady*, based on Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, is sold out many months in advance.

Two women sat in the stalls, an empty seat between them. At the intermission one said, "I waited eight months for my ticket."

"So did I," said the other.

"What a shame – this empty seat," said the first.

◆ The first grade pupils were on a field trip to observe the birds beginning their migration. Explaining that the birds were noisy and excited because they were going on a long journey, the teacher asked the class, "What do you suppose they are saying?"

"I imagine," said one little girl shyly, "that the Mother birds are telling their children they'd better go to the bathroom before they start." EDITH FAIR



"Oh, that's mine, too," replied the other. "It was my husband's, only he died."

"But couldn't you have brought a friend?"

"No," the woman said, shaking her head. "They're all at the funeral."

LEONARD LYONS

◆ The instructor in a charm school course was urging her students to give their escorts every chance to be gallant. "Remain seated in the car until he has time to step around and open the door for you," she said.

Then, bowing to reality, she added, "But if he's already in the restaurant and starting to order, don't wait any longer!"

LYNNE DAVIS

◆ On his tenth anniversary, a bandleader who had played at over 2000 dances was asked, "What have you had the most requests for?"

"Where's the men's room?" answered the maestro.

HERB CAEN

◆ A man who arrived at a posh resort hotel at the height of the season was told that not a single room was available.

"There must be a room. There always is," the man said.

"No," the hotel receptionist insisted.

"Look," said the man, "if you heard that the President was coming, you'd find a room. Right?"

"Right," said the receptionist.

"Well, the President can't come," said the man, "so he let me have his room."

LEONARD LYON

## RD APRIL 1958

◆ A writer who often gets an idea in the middle of the night keeps a pad and pencil on his bedside table. Before going to sleep, he says to himself, "Write it down! Write it down!"

The other night he woke up, scribbled something on the pad and went back to sleep. The next morning he found this note: "Write it down".

EARL WILSON



**Bob Van Osdel  
(left) and Duncan  
McNaughton greet  
one another at the  
Olympic field**



AUGUST 1996



# Triumph Of An Olympian

*Competitors from different countries,  
the two men showed the world the true  
meaning of sportsmanship*



BY *Doug Small*

**S**orting through the mail one morning in the spring of 1987 in his comfortable home outside Austin, Texas, Duncan McNaughton spotted a letter from the wife of his old friend Bob Van Osdel. Pulling the note from the envelope, he began to read, and sadness crept over him. Bob, his friend for half a century, was dead at the age of 77.

With the note was an obituary from the *Los Angeles Times*. As Duncan, then 76, read the headline – ‘Trojan Olympian Offered Costly Advice’ – his grief turned to anger. *They’ve got it all wrong*, he thought.

As he sat down to write a note of condolence to Bob’s wife, his mind went back to the day when two young men took each other on in a heart-stopping high-jump competition and cemented a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

It was July 31, a balmy afternoon in Los Angeles and the first full day of competition at the 1932 Summer Olympic Games.

Arriving at the high-jump pit with 18 other keyed-up jumpers from 11 different countries, Duncan and Bob exchanged a quick, amiable greeting and went their separate ways to limber up.

For more than two years, the two men had been members of coach Dean Cromwell’s fabled University of Southern California (USC) Trojan track team. School work commanded most of their time, but the

two practised together two or three times a week and often spent weekends together at various meets. Almost inevitably, they had become friends.

Though united by their sport, the two were quite different. Bob was a studious, bespectacled dental-school student from Long Beach in southern California, with a masterful grasp of the techniques of high jumping. Duncan was a carefree science student from Kelowna, Canada, a born athlete who took to high jumping as he did to most sports, easily and naturally.

In high school Duncan had preferred basketball to track and field. He’d taken up the latter in the off-season and taught himself the ‘western roll’ high-jumping technique from an athletic how-to book.

He was soon a star, winning championships in jumps, sprints and hurdles. But he might have dropped track for basketball had he not won a scholarship to the University of Southern California, where he fell under Bob’s wing and made the Trojan high-jump team.

Bob had helped the younger man perfect the revolutionary mechanics of the western roll. The jumper plants the foot closest to the bar as he reaches his take-off point, then kicks up hard with the other to elevate his hips. The kick, that upwards thrust of the outside leg and foot that lifts the body, is at the heart of a successful jump. As he clears the bar, the jumper, his side parallel to the bar, begins to roll, so that he is facing down as he lands in the pit.

With the 1932 Olympics approaching, Canadian officials soon realised that the 21-year-old Duncan could be added to their team at little cost, a major consideration as the Depression began to bite.

Although he had been improving steadily, Duncan was still losing to Bob three times out of four in lower-level competitions, and the lanky Canadian had no illusions about his ranking in the high-jump universe. The heights he'd been jumping suggested he was sixth or seventh in the world that year, not only well back of his friend but also others on the American team.

With luck he figured he might make the top four in the Olympics. But only just. The Olympic high-jump record,

set in 1924, was 1.98 metres. Duncan had never jumped higher than 1.94 metres; Bob, on the other hand, had jumped more than 2 metres.

Suddenly July 31 – opening day – was upon them. Neither man had ever competed before a crowd as large as the 100,000 or so rapidly filling the seats of the newly expanded Los Angeles Coliseum, and both were doing everything they could to keep their nerves in check.

Duncan fixed his attention on the area in front of the high-jump stand, noting the soft, somewhat spongy condition of the turf as he marked off the distance to the bar. *Don't slip*, he thought, as he drew a mental sketch of the approach

he'd make, the kick that would send him skywards and the soaring roll that would see him clear the bar.

As officials set up the black-and-white striped bar for the opening jump of the afternoon, Duncan stripped off his warm-up jersey, glanced down at his singlet with the Canadian red maple leaf above the number 73, and painted another mental picture of his first jump, now only moments away.

Opposite him, on the left side of the jump, Bob stretched, adjusted his glasses and did the same. Of the

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two, the 22 year old was the clear favourite.

The bar was set around 1.8 metres just after 2.30 in the afternoon when an official gave Duncan the signal to make his first attempt. He fixed his eye on the bar 15 metres ahead.

Everything went just as he'd visualised it. Hitting his take-off point, he planted his right foot, kicked up with his left and sailed over. Landing in the sawdust on the other side, he felt himself relax. As the afternoon wore on, the official black-and-white striped bar inched inexorably upwards, and the 20-man field began to narrow.

Dunc, as everybody called McNaughton, preferred big meets and usually performed better as the stakes increased. But his nerves were being rattled by the jumper just ahead of him, who would take out a tape before each try and remeasure the length of his run to the jump.

But now even this minor irritation was gone; that jumper had just sent the long bar flying and was out. So was another potential threat, American George Spitz, who was the favourite after clearing two metres on five occasions earlier in the year. But Spitz slipped in the soft take-off area at the base of the Olympic jump and

went out at 1.85 metres. His friend, Bob, however, was having a good day, soaring over the bar time and again with the style and assurance of a champion.

By late afternoon, Duncan's hopes of making the top four had been realised. The field was down to a Los Angeles high-school student named Cornelius Johnson, Simeon Toribio of the Philippines, Bob, and Duncan.

The bar was raised to 2.007 metres. All four failed. An expectant buzz spread through the stands and wafted out over the field in the still summer air.

When the bar was lowered, Duncan and Bob made it over. Toribio and Johnson did

not. The two friends would go head-to-head for the gold.

With all eyes on the high jump, officials quickly called a halt to competitions elsewhere in the massive stadium. An attentive crowd tensed for the showdown.

Bob had proved himself the better jumper. But as that long afternoon wore on, as the two hurled themselves over the bar again and again, Duncan found himself with an unexpected advantage over his friend.

As a teenager he'd packed gear for his father, a civil engineer. Hauling

**HIS FRIEND  
WAS SOARING  
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STYLE OF A  
CHAMPION**



all that powder, lumber and equipment over mountain ridges and down into valleys had been ideal training for an aspiring high jumper, adding to his stamina and strengthening his legs.

It was nearly six o'clock, and the two had been jumping for more than three hours – Duncan from the right side, Bob from the left. Both were succeeding on some tries and missing others, but never in a sequence that would make one or the other the winner.

Relaxed and loose, oblivious to the intermittent roars of the huge crowd, the two were feeling less and less like rivals in a high-stakes Olympic match and more like buddies at a daily practice session.

As time went on, however, both jumpers seemed to be tiring from the prolonged competition. Bob, long accustomed to watching his amiable acolyte with a critical eye, had winced when the Canadian had hit the bar and knocked it off on his last jump. As Duncan readied himself for another try, Bob walked over to him.

“Dunc,” he said, “you’ve got to get that kick working. If you do, you’ll be over.”

Bob would lose if Duncan succeeded, but he never gave it a thought.

Duncan hadn't been conscious of the problem with his kick. Now that he was, he focused on it. He crouched, fixing his eye on the bar. Then,

springing forward, he hurtled ahead to his take-off point. He planted his right foot and kicked like he'd never kicked before. He exploded upwards into the air, his arms outstretched like wings, and in one suspended, unforgettable moment, he was free of the Earth and over the bar.

Bob then took his jump, taking the bar with him into the pit. Duncan had won the gold medal with a first jump clearance of 1.97 metres.

It came to him not as a flash of euphoria or flush of triumph but as utter surprise. *What happened here?* he asked himself as the stadium erupted in cheers. At his side was his tired friend and temporary rival, Bob, smiling a generous well done.

Then an exuberant Australian shouted congratulations for “beating the hell out of those Yanks,” and Duncan came back to Earth, appalled.

Those were his teammates the Aussie was putting down. And more to the point, it was Bob's last-minute advice that had helped him win. It was a selfless gesture, and with it, Bob had expressed the highest ideals of Olympic competition.

From that day on, Bob and Duncan's friendship would never falter. Bob graduated in dentistry from USC in 1934, and Duncan earned a master's degree in science from the California Institute of Technology in 1934. Then World War II caught up with both men.

Duncan enlisted with the Royal

## READER'S DIGEST

Canadian Air Force and flew 57 trips as a Lancaster bomber pilot, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war he completed a PhD at USC and became a successful consultant in the oil and gas exploration business. Through it all, the bond with Bob remained strong.

Bob served in the US Army Dental Corps, and when he returned, he settled in Los Angeles where he became Duncan's dentist and the godfather of his oldest daughter.

And when Duncan's gold medal was stolen from his car during a move, Bob had a new one made for

**"I MAY HAVE  
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ARE MADE OF"**



him using a mould cast from his own second-place silver.

After learning of Bob's death, Duncan remembered his friend's sportsmanship as a great moment in Olympic history.

"I may have won the gold that day," he said, "but Bob Van Osdel showed what champi-

ons are made of."

More important than medals, than winning, was the gesture of a friend.

Duncan McNaughton died on January 15, 1998, at age 87. **R**



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### Turning Points

**RD OCTOBER 1949**

A radio programme hitting the air at 7am each day received this note from a feminine fan: "Before I tuned in your programme, I could never get my husband out of bed in the morning. Now he can't get out of the house fast enough." NEAL O'HARA, MCNAUGHT SYNDICATE

**RD NOVEMBER 1972**

A job applicant listed this reason on an employment form for leaving a job: "Turnover." The interviewer thought that odd, as the company in question is a stable, prospering one.

"What do you mean by turnover?" he asked.

"They turned my job over to somebody else," the applicant explained. GEORGE DOLAN IN *Fort Worth Telegram*

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SEPTEMBER 1994



# The White Picket Fence

*When things happen that you don't like, you  
have two choices: you get bitter or better*



BY *Marion Bond West*

**W**hen my husband, Jerry, died of a brain tumour, I became angry. Life wasn't fair. I hated being alone. By my third year of widowhood, my face had become a stiff mask.

One day, driving down a busy road in my town, I noticed a new fence being built round a home I'd always admired. The house, well over a hundred years old, faded white with a large front verandah, had once sat back from a quiet street. Then the road was widened, traffic lights went up, and the town began to look like a city.

Now the house had hardly any front garden at all. Still, that dirt garden was always swept clean and flowers burst forth from the hard ground.

I began to notice a small, aproned woman raking, sweeping, tending to the flowers and cutting the grass at the back. She even picked up the rubbish thrown from the countless cars that whizzed by.

Each time I drove past the house, I watched the rapid progress of the picket fence. The elderly carpenter added an overhead rose trellis and a gazebo. He painted it all snow-white, and then did the whole house to match.

One day, I pulled off the road to

stare long and hard at the fence. The carpenter had done such a magnificent job that I blinked tears away. I couldn't bring myself to leave.

I turned off the engine, walked over and touched the fence. It still smelled of fresh paint. I heard the woman trying to crank the lawn mower at the back. "Hi!" I called, waving.

"Well, hey." She stood up straight and wiped her hands on her apron.

"I - I - came to see your fence. It's beautiful."

She smiled. "Come and sit on the front verandah, and I'll tell you about the fence."

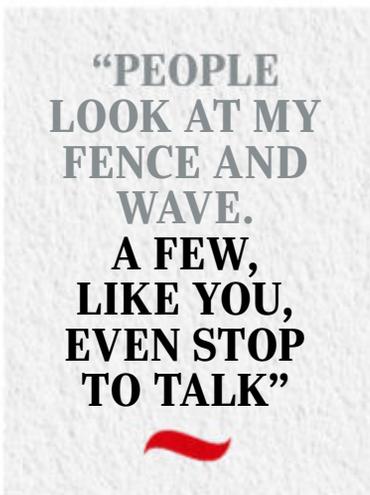
We walked up the back steps, and she opened the screen

door; it squeaked like the long-ago door from my childhood. The kitchen was strewn with remains of a fresh garden-vegetable meal.

We walked over worn linoleum, across wooden floors and out to the verandah.

"Have a rocker," she said, smiling.

I was suddenly overjoyed that I was on the verandah having a cold



drink with the marvellous white picket fence surrounding me.

**“THE FENCE ISN’T FOR ME,”** the woman explained matter-of-factly. “I live alone. But since so many people come by here, I thought they’d enjoy seeing something really pretty. People look at my fence and wave. A few, like you, even stop and sit on the verandah to talk.”

“But didn’t you mind when this road was widened and there was so much change?”

“Change is part of life and the making of character.

“When things happen that you

don’t like, you have two choices: you get bitter or better.”

When I left, she called out: “Come back any time. And leave the gate open. It looks more friendly.”

I carefully left the gate ajar and drove off, feeling something deep inside me. I didn’t know what to call it, but I could picture the hard brick wall round my angry heart crumbling. And in its place this neat little white picket fence was being built.

I planned on leaving the gate open for whatever or whoever might come my way. **R**

FROM *GUIDEPOSTS* (APRIL '91), © 1991 *GUIDEPOSTS ASSOCIATES, INC.*, CARMEL, NEW YORK



### Sign Language

RD JANUARY 1960

In a men’s shop during the festive season: **“Many Happy Returns – We Expect Them.”** THOMAS GRIFFIN IN *NEW ORLEANS ITEM*

A Yale undergraduate left this placard on his door: **“Call me at 7 o’clock; it is absolutely necessary that I get up at seven. Make no mistake. Keep knocking until I answer. Try again at ten.”**

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, QUOTED BY RUDOLF FLESCH IN  
*THE BOOK OF UNUSUAL QUOTATIONS*

On an automobile association vehicle:  
**“Call us at any hour. We’re always on our tows.”**

BARRY MATHER IN *VANCOUVER SUN*

On an electric company truck: **“Let us remove your shorts.”**

MARGARET H. COLGIN

Desk sign: **“Things to Do Today: 1. Get organised. 2. Talk to wife. 3. Get reorganised.”** MITCH WOODBURY IN *TOLEDO BLADE*

# VIEWPOINTS

## Musings And Opinions

### RD MARCH 1933

◆ To quote to me the authority of precedents leaves me quite unmoved. All human progress has been made by ignoring precedents. If mankind had continued to be the slave of precedent we should still be living in caves and subsisting on shellfish and wild berries.

VISCOUNT PHILIP SNOWDEN

### RD FEBRUARY 1941

◆ Let me give a word of advice to you young fellows who have been looking forward to retirement: have nothing to do with it.

Listen: it's like this. Have you ever been out for a late autumn walk in the closing part of the afternoon, and suddenly looked up to realise that the leaves have practically all

gone? And the sun has set and the day gone before you knew it – and with that a cold wind blows across the landscape? That's retirement.

STEPHEN LEACOCK, *TOO MUCH COLLEGE*

◆ *It is a mistake to take oneself too seriously. That only ends in self-consciousness, which is just as deleterious a habit of mind as self-pity. No doubt it is an excellent thing to know oneself, but self-consciousness is a heavy price to pay for that knowledge. Indeed, perhaps the main reward of knowing oneself is the power to forget about oneself.*

E. F. BENSON, *FINAL EDITION*

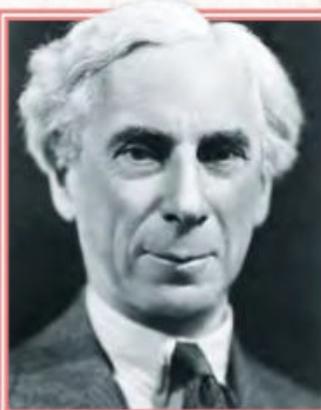
### RD AUGUST 1951

◆ Some sense of security is necessary to happy or helpful living,



◆ Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live; it is asking others to live as one wishes to live. And unselfishness is letting other people's lives alone, not interfering with them. Selfishness aims at creating around it absolute uniformity. Unselfishness recognises infinite variety as delightful, accepts it, acquiesces in it, enjoys it.

OSCAR WILDE IN 1891



◆ If we were all given by magic, the power to read each other's thoughts, I suppose the first effect would be to dissolve all friendships. The second effect, however, might be excellent, for the world without friends would be intolerable, and we should learn to like each other without needing a veil of illusion to conceal from ourselves that we did not think our friends absolutely perfect.

BERTRAND RUSSELL IN 1930

but you cannot get it by refusing to take chances, any more than a country can get it by living behind walls. Living is too dangerous a business for there to be any sense in courting danger for its own sake, but the readier we are to accept it when we have to, the less it will usually hurt us.

LAWRENCE GOULD, *THE FAMILY CIRCLE*

◆ *As a rule it is better to revisit only in imagination the places which have greatly charmed us, or which, in retrospect, seem to have done so. Seem to have charmed us, I say: for the memory we form of places where we lingered bears often but a faint resemblance to the impression received at the time; what in truth may have been very moderate enjoyment shows in the distance as a keen delight. On the other hand, if memory creates no illusion, and a certain place is associated with one of the golden moments of life, it were rash to hope that another visit would repeat the experience.*

*For it was not merely the sights that one beheld which were the cause for joy and peace; however lovely the spot, however gracious the sky, these things external would not have availed but for contributory movements of mind and heart and blood, the essentials of the man as he then was.*

GEORGE GISSING,

*THE PRIVATE PAPERS OF HENRY RYECROFT*

◆ The world, we think, makes a great mistake on the subject of saying, or acting, farewell. The word or deed should partake of the suddenness of electricity; but we all drawl through it at a snail's pace. We are supposed to tear ourselves from our friends; but tearing is a process which should be done quickly. Who has not seen his dearest friends standing round the window of a railway carriage, while the train would not start, and has not longed to say to them, "Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once."

ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *THE THREE CLERKS* (1857)





SEPTEMBER 2000

# Amy's Choice

*Four young siblings.  
No parent at home.  
And just one teenager*



BY *Rena Dictor LeBlanc*

**I**t was nearly midnight by the time 19-year-old Amy Waldroop returned to her cramped Los Angeles apartment, and she was exhausted. After a full day's work at a florist shop, she had put in another six hours waiting tables before heading home.

Pushing the key into the lock, she quietly opened the door so as not to wake her younger siblings. She stepped into the front room, and froze. The apartment was a shambles: plates of half-eaten food were scattered in front of the TV; toys littered the floor; clothes, shoes and homework were strewn everywhere.

Amy's eyes welled with tears.

*This is just way too much for me,* she thought. Her worst fears began to race through her mind. Soon she was sobbing. *Would the court tell her she couldn't care for her family anymore? Would the kids go through the torture once more of being split up and sent away?* She was so young, almost a child herself, and yet Amy knew everything depended on her. Everything. At that moment, she wondered if she would ever find the strength to see it through.

**AMY WALDROOP** had been born dead. Physicians fought and saved the smaller twin of a drug-addicted mother, and she'd had to fight for everything in life ever since.

From earliest childhood, Amy took care of her younger siblings. First it was her sister Amanda, four years

younger. Then, when Amy was ten, along came Adam, followed by Joseph and finally Anthony. With a mother so often high – if not gone altogether – it frequently fell to Amy to feed and change the babies, lull them to sleep when they cried, and care for them when they were sick.

Once, when the children all came down with chickenpox, Amy ended up at the chemist asking the assistant what to do. Handed some anti-itch lotion, the ten year old stared at the instructions on the bottle, unable to make sense of them. Back home she bundled her siblings into the shower and afterward spread the lotion on them with bunched-up toilet paper. They healed.

Jan, their mother, only added to the family chaos by careering in and out of her children's lives. Sometimes they lived in apartments, sometimes in shelters or drug-infested motels.

At school – when the kids attended – they kept mostly to themselves, not wanting classmates to know how they were living. But it inevitably showed. Amy and her twin Jessica, for instance, went without meals at school because Jan sometimes failed to sign them up for the lunch programmes.

They would sit hungry and desolate in the school yard as the other kids gobbled their sandwiches.

Meals at home were a different challenge: when Jan was around, the twins were expected to cook. Once, a boyfriend of Jan's became enraged because Amy did not have dinner promptly on the table. He grabbed the child by the hair and threw her against the refrigerator.

The girl suffered other violence and finally told her social worker. The woman was stunned.

"My God, why didn't you tell me before?" she asked.

"I thought we'd be taken away," Amy replied.

Two weeks later social workers came knocking and the young girl's nightmare unfolded. Amy and Jessica were to be taken to a juvenile detention centre.

Meanwhile, Amy watched, distraught, as her other siblings were trundled out to waiting cars, bound for separate foster homes. Looking into their anguished faces, she could only manage to say, "I'm so sorry ... I'm so sorry...".

The kids, lonely and depressed, spent six months apart from each other until they were sent to live with their maternal grandmother. Although

Jan was forbidden to stay with her children, Amy's grandmother took pity on her daughter and allowed her to re-enter the children's lives, plunging them back into chaos. At 14, Jessica left home for good. Meanwhile, all the children were falling further and further behind in school. As a ninth-grader, Amy could read only at a fourth-grade level. With

envy she watched the kids who dressed well and excelled in class, and wished she could somehow enter their world. And leave hers behind forever.

**WALKING ACROSS** the school grounds one day, Amy spotted a table littered with university brochures. She browsed through

pictures of spacious campuses and happy kids – all of it looking impossibly glamorous and unachievable.

But a guidance counsellor soon gave her unexpected hope. Amy could attend university, she was told, and for free. It would take a scholarship, though, and for that she'd need much better grades.

Amy immediately signed up for summer school. During her final two years of high school, she diligently attended classes, then went to work after school from 3.30 to 11.30, returned to her grandmother's place

**WITH ENVY  
SHE WATCHED  
THE KIDS  
WHO  
DRESSED  
WELL AND  
EXCELLED  
IN CLASS**



and ploughed through homework till the early hours of the morning.

Amy's resolve was strengthened further during these tough months by a boy she met at school, Jerry Robinson\*. For the first time in her life, Amy felt that someone really listened to her and truly cared. Their friendship turned to love, and Amy had no doubt that the two would marry and have children together.

But during this time, unknown to the social workers, Jan had come to live in her mother's house, throwing the family into fresh tumult. Amy's grandmother couldn't turn her daughter out of her home, even when Jan was high on drugs. One afternoon Amy was summoned to the Vill Park High School. A social worker was waiting for her. "We know your mother has been staying with you," the social worker said, "and that Joseph pricked his finger on a drug needle."

Amy braced herself, knowing what was coming next. "We're going to have to put you guys in foster care."

"No! Don't split us up!" the girl blurted. "Can't you just leave it the way it is?" The social worker shook his head. Amy's voice then rose like the howl of a lioness protecting her cubs:

"Why can't I take them? I take care of them all the time anyway."

The social worker hesitated, then said, "Maybe. Once you're 18, you could apply to become their relative caretaker. Then you'd be their foster mother until we find a home where all of you can be together."

"I'll do it," Amy said. She hadn't a clue what was involved, but that mattered little. She would just forge ahead, a day at a time, as she had all her life.

And, somehow, she would make things turn out right.

**AMY SOON REALISED** the full price of her commitment. One afternoon she came walking home from school, clutching a

sheet of paper. It was a letter from the University of California, Los Angeles, inviting her to come see the lush campus. It was what she'd longed for, a place where no one would know about her awful background, where she could study to become someone special – a nurse, perhaps, or maybe even a lawyer.

Yet the letter only ripped Amy apart inside. The entire walk home she kept imagining herself at this prestigious university, kept picturing a life free of the worries and duties she'd always known. Then, as she turned a corner,



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\*Name has been changed to protect privacy.

she saw her brothers playing outside her grandmother's house, running, laughing. Adam ... Joseph ... Anthony. She'd fed them, held them when they were scared, read them stories, sung them songs. Her dreams for herself, she realised, were no match for the love etched in her soul. She crumpled the letter up and threw it away.

One month later, after tediously filing piles of paperwork, Amy sat before a judge in family court. "You're so young," the judge said to her. "Are you sure you want this responsibility?"

"There's no other way to keep my family together," Amy replied simply. The judge's ultimate decision was a remarkable victory for an 18-year-old girl: Amy was named guardian of her siblings for a six-month trial period.

Meanwhile, instead of going to her high-school graduation dance, Amy had searched for a place to live. Finally she found a run-down one-bedroom unit. The salary from her two jobs – as a florist-shop assistant and as a waitress – along with her savings and foster-care payments from the state of California, enabled her to pay the first month's rent and security deposit.

Her siblings didn't make her task any easier in the months ahead. The boys sometimes ditched school and would curse at Amy when they were angry. And she had more than a few face-offs with Amanda.

"You're not my mum!" the 14 year old would shout at Amy when things grew particularly tense.

One day Adam rebelled at doing his reading assignment for school, hurling his book across the room. Only after some coaxing did he tell Amy what was really going on.

"Every kid in the class can read," Adam said, bursting into tears, "and I can't."

Remembering her own shame about reading, Amy began taking all the kids to the library. And for many weeks afterwards she set aside special time to tutor each of them separately. Adam took pride in the way his reading skills improved.

As always, though, a fresh obstacle appeared – one that came as a huge shock to Amy. Despite taking birth-control pills, she became pregnant with Jerry's child. The timing was horrible, but there was no way she'd consider either an abortion or giving up the baby for adoption. Her love would enfold this child just as it had the others. And so another little boy, Donavin, entered Amy's life when she was 19.

The strain of things built up remorselessly. Finally it reached a breaking point that late night when Amy returned from work to an apartment in shambles. She had left the boys in the care of Amanda, who had fallen asleep in Amy's bed.

Shaken, Amy felt overwhelmed once more by the enormity of all she had taken on. But she knew she had no choice: She could never let her siblings be ripped away from

one another again. To make it as a family, she'd just have to get them to work together.

"All of you, get in here right now!" she yelled, trembling with frustration.

The three boys stumbled into the room. "How could you do this?" she asked, her words coming in a torrent. "You know they're checking up on us."

Within a few minutes, the wave of anger ebbed. "Guys," she said more gently, "all we have is each other. If you want to stay together past six months, we've got to show we're responsible. We've got to keep this place neat. And you need to watch your tongues. Also, don't eat all the food as soon as I buy it, or there won't be any next week. And you have to be bleeding before you can miss school."

Startled, the kids agreed to begin pulling their weight.

Unfortunately, Jerry soon asked that Amy choose between a life with him and their child, or continuing to care for her siblings. She chose – and their relationship ended.

If anything, Amy grew more tenacious with every setback. And her efforts were rewarded when the court allowed her to continue as guardian. To the boys, this was a great comfort. But Amy's relationship with her younger sister continued to sour. At 15, Amanda went to live with an aunt.

Now left with Donavin and the three boys, Amy dangled a prize before them: "If we save enough for a deposit, we'll get a house of our own,"

she said. "And we'll even get a dog." Nothing could have been more tantalizing to them.

Amy's relief at remaining the kids' guardian was undermined by the pressure she always felt to measure up. The boys were still dependants of the court. Social workers still looked regularly over her shoulder and asked the boys humiliating questions: "Does she feed you well? Does she ever try to harm you?"

There was no way she could be sure her siblings would never be taken away again. Or so she assumed, until the day a visiting social worker dropped a bombshell. "We'd like to get the boys out of foster care and adopted into homes," she said.

Sensing that the family was about to be split apart yet again, Amy replied, "Fine, then. Call it adoption if you want, but they're not going anywhere."

To her surprise, the social worker took her terse remark seriously. She explained that if Amy were to adopt the boys, they would become like any other family. They'd be free to live their lives without constant monitoring.

That night at dinner Amy told the boys about the idea. "Cool!" Joseph said. And with playful exuberance he threw a piece of corn at Adam. His brother flicked it back, and pretty soon corn was flying. Amy rolled her eyes. They didn't have far to go to be like any other family.

Once she began struggling with the rules and paperwork for adoption,

Amy felt intimidated and often lost. At last, in a hearing in March 1999, the family appeared before Judge Gail Andler, who terminated the parental rights of Jan, the father of Adam and Joseph, and the father of Anthony. This was a major step towards full adoption.

The judge's eyes filled as she addressed Amy. "I'm very proud of you," she said. "Not many family members would do what you're doing, especially for this many children."

Judge Andler then turned to the three boys. "The next time I see you, you'll be heading for adoption. How do you feel about that?"

"And we won't ever have to leave the family?" Joseph asked.

The judge shook her head. "The plan is for you to be a family forever."

The final step came in November 1999. Amy's siblings sat on either side of her in Judge Andler's court as the young woman signed three separate papers - one for each of the boys. As the proceedings ended, Amy thanked everyone. "No," Judge Andler said, "thank you. You saved three kids."

On a lazy spring day, in a modest Los Angeles neighbourhood, Amy stood in front of a neatly kept one-storey house. She watched her brothers

playing basketball and heard the playful bark of their dog, Tahoe. The young woman had made good on her promise: they had rented a home, a real home, and the boys had got a dog. Above all, Amy relished knowing that her family was now a world away from the mean streets they had once known.

As if on cue, she heard the tinkling music of an approaching ice-cream van. And, like any mother, she went to round up her kids. **R**

**THE SOCIAL  
WORKER  
DROPPED A  
BOMBSHELL:  
"WE'D LIKE TO  
GET THE BOYS  
ADOPTED  
INTO HOMES"**

*Update: After this story was originally published in 2000, hundreds of readers sent donations to help Amy's family stay on its feet. She went on to successfully raise her*

*brothers, Adam, Joseph and Anthony, and her son, Donavin. In 2004, a movie version of Amy's story, Gracie's Choice: A Story of Love, debuted on US TV. For many years, Amy worked as an investigator at a law firm that handled foster care cases, abused children and adoptions. She is now married and works at a high-tech firm in California.*



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Towards A More  
**PICTURESQUE SPEECH**

## Twists And Turns Of Phrase

### FEBRUARY 1940

- ◆ *The sinister weapon of tact.*
- ◆ As stay-at-home as a turtle.
- ◆ *As nervous as a candle flame.*
- ◆ She would rather be looked around at than up to.

*An old mirror,  
blind with age.*

### JANUARY 1944

- ◆ One dollar down and the rest in uneasy payments.
- ◆ *She loves so many servicemen it's platoonic.*
- ◆ A little anxious smile like the wag of a dog's tail.
- ◆ *Her opinions are cut on the bias.*
- ◆ What we really need is a feud administrator.

*Poplars at  
attention, willow  
trees at ease.*

### JUNE 1946

- ◆ Wrought-iron trees against stained skies.
- ◆ *A jet-propelled sneeze.*
- ◆ Mr and Mrs -- announce the betrayal of their daughter --.
- ◆ *I bought an album on the splurge of the moment.*

*A coiffure  
that looked like a  
sparrow taking  
a bath.*

## JULY 1972

- ◆ Summer vacation usually puts the kids in the pink and daddy in the red.
- ◆ *There's a girl who has been trying to run away from home: every time she gets out the door the phone rings.*
- ◆ Noise pollution needs a sound solution.
- ◆ *Credit cards are what people use after they find that money can't buy everything.*
- ◆ Suburbia is where the houses are further apart and the payments are closer together.
- ◆ *The best way for a housewife to have a few minutes to herself is to start doing the dishes.*

*Tyres  
screaming their  
treads off.*

## AUGUST 1975

- ◆ Church bells serenading the dawn.
- ◆ *Popcorn waging war against a lid.*
- ◆ A brace of orthodontists.
- ◆ *A quibbling of siblings.*
- ◆ A scoop of reporters.
- ◆ *A drove of chauffeurs.*

*The names of  
perfumes suggest  
that virtue doesn't  
make scents.*

## OCTOBER 1976

- ◆ At a masquerade party it's easy to tell the good guise from the bad.
- ◆ *The difference between a bird with one wing and a bird with two wings is a matter of a pinion.*
- ◆ All those frightening things being said about sprays that come in cans are enough to scareosol to death.
- ◆ *A budding botanist.*
- ◆ A rookie chess player.

## AUGUST 1979

- ◆ The 'b' in debt is silent, but not entirely useless. It suggests the sting.
- ◆ *Golf tournaments are par wars.*
- ◆ Tennis umpires are net prophets.
- ◆ *A high jump is a soar feat.*
- ◆ Fat dumpling clouds.
- ◆ *Thin wafer moon.*
- ◆ Concrete pretzel of freeways.
- ◆ *Blackbirds peppering the sky.*





MAY 1997



# Renoir's Invitation To A Party

*In his famous painting are actresses,  
journalists, a banker, a diplomat – and the  
country girl who became the painter's wife*



BY *David Stewart*

**I**n the summer of 1880, guests assemble at the Restaurant Fournaise on an island in the Seine outside Paris. They will be immortalised by Impressionist painter Pierre Auguste Renoir. And his Luncheon of the Boating Party will become one of the world's most popular works of art.

I am convinced that one reason this painting compels our attention is that many of the people in it were Renoir's friends. Today, over 100 years later, scholars still argue about the identities of some of the models. But the stories of the boating party invite us into the painter's life.

The muscular, bearded man on the left is **Alphonse Fournaise**, who was responsible for boat rentals at Restaurant Fournaise. His father opened the restaurant on Chatou Island (part of which is now named Island of the Impressionists) around 1860.



The small islands in the Seine offered 19th-century Parisians the opportunity to indulge in two new sports – rowing and swimming – that were all the rage. And there were festivals, dances, regattas, concerts and alfresco dining.

Poets and writers were among the first to discover these places. But it was the Impressionists, especially artists like Claude Monet, Edgar

Degas, the American Mary Cassatt and Renoir, who captured these scenes most notably.

“You could find me any time at Fournaise's,” Renoir once stated. “There I found as many splendid creatures as I could possibly paint.”

**Aline Charignot**, 21 (seated below Fournaise), wearing a bright straw hat, is one of the ‘splendid creatures’



Renoir found. A spirited country girl 18 years younger than the artist, she married him ten years later. She followed Renoir from poverty in Paris to comfort in Cagnes. Two of their three sons were wounded in World War One.

In *Renoir, My Father*, their second son, the noted film director Jean, writes: “Renoir was painting the portrait of Aline Charignot before he knew her. The figure of Venus (on a vase painted when he was 16) is my mother – before she was born.”

Leaning pensively is a woman some identify as **Alphonsine**

## Renoir's Invitation To A Party

**Fournaise**, Alphonse's sister. She is 34 and was called 'the lovely Alphonsine' by the patrons of the restaurant.



At 18 Alphonsine married a Parisian, but seems to have been widowed at an early age. She remained unmarried for the rest of her life.

Investing in Russian bonds, she lost everything. The Fournaise family home fell apart, and she died in poverty at 91.

It's possible some of the paintings Renoir gave the Fournaises when he was poor and unknown helped Alphonsine in her later years.

Jean Renoir recreates this conversation between his father and the family:

**The Fournaises:** You've let us have this landscape of yours.

**Renoir:** I'm giving fair warning, nobody wants it.

**The Fournaises:** What difference does that make? We have to put something up to hide these patches of damp.

**Renoir:** If only all art lovers were like that!

The paintings Renoir gave the family became immensely valuable.

### LOVERS AND OTHERS

Although we do not see his face, the man whom Alphonsine appears to be giving her full attention was



central to the creation of *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*. He is **Baron Raoul Barbier**, a diplomat who helped assemble the painting's

14 models. Barbier's enthusiasms were women, horses and rowing; he insisted that he knew nothing about painting. Perhaps that is why he and Renoir became friends.



Another friend less interested in painting than in pursuing women was the journalist **Paul Lhote**. He is the bearded

man wearing a straw hat and striped jumper in the threesome at the picture's top right.

Lhote seems to have enjoyed the company of artists because of their proximity to female models. Renoir, no prude himself, but a forthright, practical man, remarked, "I feel sorry for men who are always running after women. On the job day and night, not a minute for respite!"

Lhote is shown flirting with **Jeanne Samary**, 23, a leading actress who admired Renoir's work. The admiration was mutual, but marriage was not a prospect.



“He is not the marrying kind,” Samary is said to have remarked of the painter. “He marries all the women he paints, but with his brush.”

To the left of Lhote and Samary is **Eugène Pierre Lestringuez**. An eccentric civil servant, it is said that he once hypnotised a friend, ordered him to undress and sent him into the street.



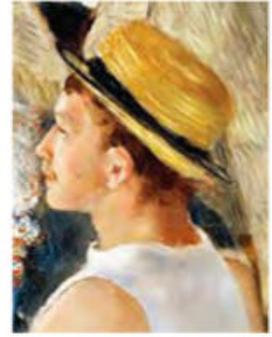
Behind the Samary trio, **Charles Ephrussi**, a collector of Impressionist paintings, talks with **Jules Laforgue**, his personal secretary. Ephrussi's formal top hat seems incongruous, but as a wealthy banker, he simply attended wearing urban fashion from Paris.

### PAINTER AND MODELS

**Gustave Caillebotte**, the young man in a sleeveless shirt in the threesome at the painting's bottom right, is given a

prominent place perhaps because he was a very close friend.

An Impressionist painter, he supposedly once said, “I hope someday my paintings will be good enough to hang in the ante-chamber of the living room in which Renoir's are hung.”



The fashionable young man who is hovering over Caillebotte is a journalist, **Maggiolo**. Seated with them is a woman in a dashing hat covering much of her red hair. It is probably **Ellen Andrée**, an actress and favourite model for many of the Impressionists.

Another popular model is **Angèle**, who sits gazing over her wine-glass at the far table, next to an as-yet unidentified man. (Some scholars, by the way, believe that the redhead is





**Restaurant Fournaise's famous terrace with its cheerful striped awning today**

Angèle, while this woman is Ellen Andrée.) Angèle met Renoir when he had a temporary studio in a rough neighbourhood in Paris. She was devoted to him.

One night, Renoir was attacked by several men. He tried to run but was pinned to a fence. He feared the worst when suddenly one of his assailants recognised him. "Why, it's Monsieur Renoir!" he exclaimed.

Renoir was pleased to think his reputation might have saved him until the man went on, "We're not going to strangle any friend of Angèle's!"

Eventually the tiny, magical island in the Seine became crowded and cluttered.

By 1978 the Restaurant Fournaise was near collapse. Demolition was imminent when a coalition of local

residents, the French government and art lovers came to its rescue.

In November 1990, Restaurant Fournaise once again welcomed guests to the famous terrace with its cheerful striped awning.

More than a hundred years before, Renoir had written to a friend, "I can't leave Chatou now because my painting isn't finished. Come here and have lunch with me. There's no lovelier site."

His invitation is still open. Each summer there's a festival on the island with music, dancing and period costumes.

Or if you are in Washington, drop in at Renoir's own *Luncheon of the Boating Party* at the Phillips Collection. **R**

1996 BY DAVID STEWART, FROM *THE WASHINGTONIAN* (SEPTEMBER 96, WASHINGTON)





JUNE 1972



# Katie And The Hard Hats

*Every Wednesday for months,  
one of the most poignant scenes in the  
Broadway musical, Coco, took place  
across the street from the theatre*



BY *Garson Kanin*

**W**hen Hollywood actress Katharine Hepburn arrived in New York for the rehearsals of the musical, *Coco*, she took a keen interest in every part of the production: choreography, casting, scenery, costumes, lighting and, of course, the theatre itself.

Experienced professionals know that plays have failed because they were in the wrong theatre, one that was too large or too small, or simply not right. Kate has played virtually every size and shape of theatre, but was anxious to become acquainted with the one that had been booked for *Coco*. Producer Alan Jay Lerner and co-producer Freddie Brisson took Kate to see it a few days after she arrived in New York.

After walking on the stage to study the auditorium and walking about the auditorium to study the stage, Kate announced, "It's a fine theatre, but we can't use it. What else is available?"

The management was speechless. Theatres, especially sizeable ones for musicals, are not easy to come by in the shrinking world of Broadway. Moreover, the deal had taken months to arrange. The idea of changing theatres was out of the question.

Finally, Brisson said, "What are you talking about?"

"What's the matter with you people?" Kate responded. "Can't you see anything?"

"Like what?" asked Alan.

"Across the street," said Kate, patiently, "they're beginning the construction of a skyscraper. They're excavating now. It means two things. That this theatre is going to be very hard to get to, and it's going to be impossible to play the Wednesday matinee. I don't care how good we are, we can't beat hammering."

Everyone (probably including Kate) knew that they were already committed, but Kate wanted to make her point. As it happened, she was correct on both counts.

As construction progressed, the theatre company did its best to work against the increasing noise, but it was soon apparent that large sections of the audience, particularly those on the left side of the house towards the rear, were having a tough time at Wednesday matinees.

Kate, as *Coco Chanel*, had several numbers in the first act that she was able to belt out successfully, even against the racket. But towards the end of Act One came a delicate scene during which she sang the moving title song.

Finally, at one matinee, Kate found it impossible to perform the number properly in the overwhelming noise from across the street.

The following Wednesday, she left for the theatre an hour early. She went directly to the construction site, found the supervisor's office and asked to see him. He was up on the structure, but Kate made the matter seem so urgent that an assistant led her out on to the job. Wearing the mandatory hard hat, she found herself facing the supervisor.

"Look here," she shouted. "My name is Katharine Hepburn and I work across the street."

The astonished supervisor gaped at her. "Holy smoke!" he said. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"I have to talk to you," Kate shouted.

### GIFT OF SILENCE

Carefully, the man escorted her to his office, and Kate explained her problem. "I know you've got to build this building," she said, "but we've got to give a show over there. We can't ask you to stop – but at least you can help us out."

"How?"

"There's one main spot," Kate said.

"It's my 'Coco' number. On Wednesdays, that number starts at five past three and goes on until about three-fourteen. Just for that little time, couldn't you possibly hold the hammers?"

"Well, jeez, I don't know, Miss Hepburn," said the supervisor.

"Sure you could," urged Kate. "Give them a coffee break or something. I'll pay for the coffee."

"Yeah," he said, "but who'll pay for the time? You know what these guys get, don't you?"

Kate gave him 'The Hepburn Look' and said softly, "You can do it if you want to."

He took a deep breath, and said, "Let me see what I can figure out."

At 3.05 that afternoon, as the introduction of her soft number began, the world outside fell suddenly silent. The audience may not have been aware of the abrupt change, but everyone connected with the *Coco* company was. Some of those who were momentarily free stepped out into the street to see what had happened. Up and down the structure they saw the workers signalling for silence and looking at their watches.

At 3.14 the applause for the number was augmented by all hell breaking loose across the street. The following

**"JUST FOR  
THAT LITTLE  
TIME,  
COULDN'T  
YOU  
POSSIBLY  
HOLD THE  
HAMMERS?"**



## READER'S DIGEST

day Kate made a special visit across the street to thank her new friends.

So it went for week after week. Every Wednesday afternoon at the specified time, the construction gang gave Kate the gift of silence. Then came the afternoon when an outside crew turned up on the corner to make a cable repair. At 3.05, when the building work stopped, the uninformed repair crew continued. Whereupon, from every part of the structure, the shouts rained down.

“Hold the noise, you guys!”

“Shut up down there! Katie’s on!”

“Quiet!”

In addition to the yelling for silence, an ad hoc committee went dashing over to enforce the rule.

At the end of the matinee, Kate was handed a note from the supervisor, explaining that the short burst of noise at the beginning of her number was “not us, but that crazy repair crew – which we have now straightened out!”

After that, there were no more interruptions. R

*In her later years, Katharine Hepburn would recall playing Coco Chanel in Coco (1969-1970) as a transformative moment. Although Hepburn was in her early 60s, it was her first stage musical. In the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, Hepburn's star continued to rise through roles that she carefully selected herself, including winning an Oscar for On Golden Pond (1981).*



### Pert And Pertinent

RD JANUARY, 1953

**It's nice for children to have pets, until the pets start having children.** WILDROOTER

**The prime purpose of eloquence is to keep other people from speaking.** LOUIS VERMEIL, AFFAIRS OF STATE (SAMUEL FRENCH)

**It's getting to the point where children may have to be educated to realise that 'damn' and 'taxes' are two words.** THE ANVIL CHORUS

**If a woman likes another woman, she's cordial.  
If she doesn't like her, she's very cordial.** IRVIN S. COBB

**The second day of a diet isn't too hard – because by that time you're off it.** MRS EARL WILSON, QUOTED BY EARL WILSON

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## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

### *Humour On The Job*

#### **RD FEBRUARY 1982**

◆ A friend of mine, with excellent credentials, applied for a high-level position with a leading firm. At the interview, however, after admitting that her resume was outstanding and her qualifications were exceptional, the firm's manager turned her down, saying "I prefer men."

"So do I," she answered. "But what's your excuse?"

WANDA FREYNICK

◆ Concerned about how fast the cars were travelling along the road in front of my house, I called the roads department. Almost immediately, a signmaker and his assistant arrived to remedy the situation.

After much deliberation, however, the signmaker and I still could not seem to agree on the best way to get motorists to slow down. The assistant, who had not said a word throughout the entire argument, spoke up and said, deadpan, "'Bridge Out' should do it."

SUSAN VOGEL

◆ Flying a helicopter by instruments is difficult unless you do it every day. One afternoon on the tower frequency I heard a pilot report

matter-of-factly that he had joined the holding pattern over the outer marker beacon at 3000 feet. Immediately, another voice cut in.

"You can't be there!" it said in a panic. "I'm holding at 3000 feet, too!"

After a pregnant pause, the first pilot's voice came back on the air. "You idiot," it said. "You're my co-pilot."

FRANK DAVIS

#### **RD SEPTEMBER 1984**

◆ My mother owns a salon called 'Beauty and the Beast Beauty Shop'. One day, as she was giving a woman a perm, the customer said, "Your shop's name puzzles me. I understand 'Beauty', but why 'Beast'?"

Just then a large, shaggy-haired man with a long, unruly beard walked in and sat down.

The female customer promptly said, "Never mind. I get it now."

JIM PETTETT





◆ Our state was recruiting for the police force and women were encouraged to apply. Since I had studied criminal law, I considered sending in an application. My husband demurred.

One day when we were in the car, still arguing about whether I should apply, my husband spotted a policeman directing traffic. "Officer!" he shouted. "Will you please tell my wife why the police force is no place for a lady?"

The traffic officer turned round and strode purposefully towards us. "Tell your wife what?" she asked, removing her hat to reveal a cascade of curls.

I submitted my application that afternoon.

R.L.

◆ The caretaker of our parish church is a student who struggles to fit his duties into a busy social and academic schedule. While on an errand for the rector, Father Peter, I spied a note on his desk from the young man: "Peter asked for a clean men's room and God harkened to Peter's plea and the men's room was clean. Peter asked that the hallway be swept and God harkened unto Peter's plea and the hallway was swept. Peter asked for a clean office, but God was tired. He will clean Peter's office tomorrow." JAMES NAYLOR

◆ A doctor was making morning rounds and stopped to see a patient of his who was scheduled for surgery the following day. Would he tell her once more, she asked, what it was he planned to do to her?

"Why, Mrs Smith," he said, "I've explained this to you several times. I thought that you understood."

"Yes, I know you did, doctor," she replied. "But the woman who cleans my room told me there's another way of doing it."

KATHLEEN SHARP

◆ My late husband, a policeman, once spotted a young boy fishing in the town's river. "Hello," he said to the youngster. "Nice day for fishing."

"Yes," came the reply. A minute or two passed, and my husband asked the boy why he wasn't at school that day.

"Well, officer, as you said - it's a nice day for fishin'."

W.H.

◆ I was making my daily rounds as a postman when a four-year-old boy ran to his family's mailbox and planted himself squarely in front of it. With his feet spread wide and his little arms folded, he told me sternly, "My mum says she just can't take any more bills."

ED MCGRATH





MARCH 1950



# Exploits Of Charles

*Starting school can be a steep learning curve – for children and parents alike*



BY *Shirley Jackson*

**T**he day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave goodbye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly becoming raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody here?"

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister's milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

"How was school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"Alright," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked.

Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing. The teacher spanked a boy, though. For being cheeky," he added, his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully cheeky."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie and left while his father was

still saying, "See here, young man!"

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles hit the teacher."

"Good heavens," I said. "I supposed he got spanked again?"

"He sure did," Laurie said.

"Why did Charles hit the teacher?" I asked.

"Because she tried to make him colour with red crayons," Laurie said. "Charles wanted to colour with green crayons. The teacher said nobody should play with Charles but everybody did."

The third day Charles bounced a seesaw on the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside during recess.

On Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during storytime because he kept pounding his feet on the floor.

On Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday I remarked to my husband, "Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this

toughness and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence.”

“It’ll be alright,” my husband said reassuringly. “Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later.”

On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. “You know what Charles did?” he asked.

“Charles yelled in class so they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him.”

“What did he do?” I asked.

“He just sat there,” Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. “Hi, Pop, y’old dust mop.”

“What does this Charles look like?” my husband asked Laurie.

“He’s bigger than me,” Laurie said. “And he doesn’t ever wear a jacket.”

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going. I wanted passionately to meet Charles’s mother.

On Tuesday, Laurie remarked suddenly, “Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today. A man who came and made us do

exercises; we had to touch our toes. Look.”

He squatted down and touched his toes. “Like this,” he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, “Charles didn’t even do exercises.

“The teacher’s friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him.”

“What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?” Laurie’s father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. “Throw him out of school, I guess,” he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine: Charles yelled during storytime and hit a boy in the stomach and made him

cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family: the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it though the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled the telephone, ash-tray and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, “Looks like Charles.”

But during the fourth week it seemed that a reformation was

**CHARLES  
YELLED  
DURING  
STORYTIME  
AND HIT A  
BOY AND  
MADE HIM  
CRY**



taking place in Charles. Laurie reported grimly at lunch one Thursday, "Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple."

"What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?"

"Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterwards and the teacher said he was her helper."

For over a week Charles was the teacher's helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

"The PTA meeting's next week," I told my husband one evening. "I'm going to find Charles's mother there."

"Ask her what happened to Charles," my husband said. "I'd like to know."

On Friday of that week things were back to normal.

"You know what Charles did today?" Laurie asked at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. "He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed."

"What happened to Charles?" my husband asked.

"Nothing," Laurie said. "He was passing out the crayons."

At the PTA meeting that Monday

I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough.

After the meeting I sought out Laurie's teacher.

"I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."

"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.

"Well, he certainly likes kindergarten," I said. "He talks about it all the time."

"We had a little trouble adjusting the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course."

"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles's influence."

"Charles?"

"Yes," I said, laughing, "you must have your hands full in that kindergarten with Charles."

"Charles?" she said again.

"We don't have any Charles in the kindergarten." 



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### Home Truths

RD DECEMBER 1977

Most would agree the only thing worse than sick kids when you're well is well kids when you're sick. *The National Observer*

## Quips And One-Liners

### AUGUST 1931

◆ *Although not in the etiquette book, one must learn how to bow to the inevitable.* BOSTON TRANSCRIPT

◆ A scientific expert says that fish kill mosquitoes. But who wants to keep fish on his pillow? PUNCH (LONDON)

◆ *Golfer's alibi for neglecting his business: "My doctor says I must take my iron every day."*

BOSTON TRANSCRIPT

*Most of these  
love triangles turn  
into wrecktangles.*

BOSTON TRANSCRIPT

### MAY 1933

◆ A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

◆ *About the only exercise some folks take is jumping at conclusions.*

◆ Some men have a den in their home, while others just growl all over the house.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER

### MAY 1938

◆ *The often-married movie star thinks that 'a new groom sweeps clean'.* LOS ANGELES TIMES

◆ A hair in the head is worth two in the brush. REVEILLE ECHO

◆ *It got to a point where I had to get a haircut or a violin.*

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT,  
QUOTED IN PRESS CONFERENCE

◆ I had bad luck with both my wives – the first divorced me, and the second wouldn't.

CARTOON BY REAMER KELLER  
IN COLLIER'S

### DECEMBER 1939

◆ *A certain hospital patient's challenge, at every knock on his door: "Who goes there? Friend or enema?"* HERBERT SPENCER

◆ No horse can go as fast as the money you bet on him.

NATE COLLIER, CARTOONIST

◆ *Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution, yet.* MAE WEST, ACTRESS

◆ An intelligent girl is one who knows how to refuse a kiss without being deprived of it.

HOUSE & GARDEN





JANUARY 1960

# The Day At The Beach

*How a wise and understanding  
doctor's 'prescription' helped me  
regain my sense of purpose*



BY *Arthur Gordon*

**N**ot long ago I entered one of those bleak periods that many of us encounter from time to time, a sudden drastic dip in the graph of living when everything goes stale and flat, energy wanes, enthusiasm dies. The effect on my work was frightening. Every morning I would clench my teeth and mutter: "Today life will take on some of its old meaning. You've got to break through this thing. You've got to!"

But the barren days went by, and the paralysis grew worse. The time came when I knew I had to get help.

The man I turned to was a doctor. Not a psychiatrist, just a regular doctor. He was older than I, and under his gruffness lay great wisdom and compassion. "I don't know what's wrong," I told him miserably. "I just seem to have come to a dead end. Can you help me?"

"I don't know," he said slowly. He made a tent of his fingers and gazed at me thoughtfully for a long while. Then, abruptly, he asked, "Where were you happiest as a child?"

"As a child?" I echoed. "At the beach, I suppose. We had a summer cottage there. We all loved it."

He looked out the window and watched the autumn leaves sifting down. "Are you capable of following instructions for a single day?"

"I think so," I said, ready to try anything.

"Okay. Here's what I want you to do." He told me to drive to the beach alone the following morning, arriving

no later than nine o'clock. I could take some lunch, but I was not to read, write, listen to the radio or talk to anyone. "In addition," he said, "I'll give you a prescription to be taken every three hours."

He tore off four prescription blanks, wrote a few words on each, folded them, numbered them, and handed them to me. "Take these at nine, noon, three and six."

"Are you serious?" I asked.

He gave a short bark of a laugh. "You won't think I'm joking when you get my bill!"

The next morning, with little faith, I drove to the beach. It was lonely, all right. A northeast wind was blowing; the sea looked grey and angry. I sat in the car, the whole day stretching emptily before me. Then I took out the first of the folded slips of paper. On it was written: '**Listen carefully.**'

I stared at the two words and thought, *The man must be mad.* He had ruled out music and newscasts and human conversation. What else was there?

I raised my head, and I listened. There were no sounds but the steady roar of the sea, the creaking cry of a gull, the drone of some aircraft high overhead. All were familiar sounds.

I got out of the car. A gust of wind slammed the door with a sudden clap. *Am I supposed to listen carefully to things like that?* I asked myself.

I climbed a dune and looked out over the deserted beach. Here the sea bellowed so loudly that all other sounds were lost. And yet, I realised suddenly, there must be sounds beneath sounds – the soft rasp of drifting sand, the tiny wind-whisperings in the dune grasses – if the listener got close enough to hear them.

On an impulse I ducked down and, feeling faintly ridiculous, thrust my head into a clump of sea-wheat. Here I made a discovery: if you listen intently, there is a fractional moment in which everything seems to pause, to wait. In that instant of stillness, the racing thoughts halt. For a moment, when you truly listen for something outside yourself, you have to silence the clamorous voices within. The mind rests.

I went back to the car and slid behind the wheel. *Listen carefully.* As I listened again to the deep growl of

the sea, I found myself thinking about the immensity of it, the stupendous rhythms of it, the velvet trap it made for moonlight, the white-fanged fury of its storms.

I thought of the lessons the sea had taught us as children. A certain amount of patience, because you can't hurry the tides. A great deal of respect, because the sea does not

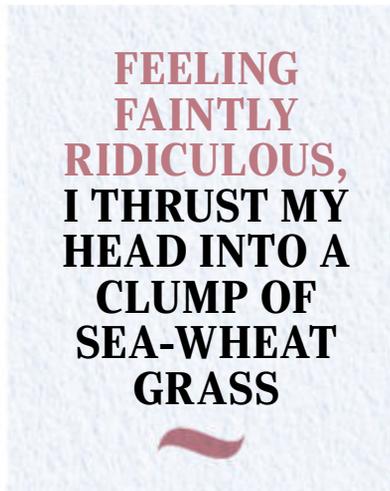
suffer fools gladly. An awareness of the vast and mysterious interdependence of things, because wind and tide and current, calm and squall and hurricane, all combine to determine the paths of the birds above and the fish below.

And the cleanness of it all, with every beach swept twice a day by the great broom of the sea.

Sitting there, I realised I was thinking of things bigger than myself – and there was relief in that.

**EVEN SO**, the morning passed slowly. The habit of hurling myself at a problem was so strong that I felt lost without it. I wistfully eyed the car radio.

By noon the wind had polished the clouds out of the sky, and the sea had a hard, merry sparkle. I unfolded the second 'prescription'. And again I sat there, half amused and half



exasperated. Three words this time: 'Try reaching back.'

Back to what? To the past, obviously. But why, when all my worries concerned the present or the future?

I left the car and started tramping reflectively along the dunes. The doctor had sent me to the beach because it was a place of happy memories. Maybe that was what I was supposed to reach for: the wealth of happiness that lay half-forgotten behind me.

I found a sheltered place and lay down on the sun-warmed sand. When I tried to peer into the well of the past, the recollections that came to the surface were happy but not very clear; the faces were faint and faraway, as if I had not thought of them in a long time.

I decided to experiment, to work on these vague impressions as a painter would, retouching the colours, strengthening the outlines. I would choose specific incidents and recapture as many details as possible. I would visualise people complete with clothing and gestures. I would listen (carefully!) for the exact sound of their voices, the echo of their laughter.

The tide was going out now but there was still thunder in the surf. So I chose to go back 20 years to the last

fishing trip I had with my younger brother. (He died in the Pacific during World War II and was buried in the Philippines.) I found now that if I closed my eyes and really tried, I could see him with amazing vividness, even the humour and eagerness in his eyes that far-off morning.

In fact, I could see it all: the ivory scimitar of beach where we were

fishing, the eastern sky smeared with sunrise, the great rollers coming in, stately and slow. I could feel the backwash swirl warm around my knees, see the sudden arc of my brother's rod as he hooked a fish, hear his exultant yell. Piece by piece I rebuilt it, clear and unchanged under the transparent var-

nish of time. Then it was gone.

I sat up slowly. *Try reaching back.* Happy people were usually assured, confident people. If, then, you deliberately reached back and touched happiness, might that not release little flashes of power, tiny sources of strength?

This second period of the day went more quickly. As the sun began its long slant down the sky, my mind ranged eagerly through the past, reliving some episodes, uncovering others that had been forgotten. For example, when I was around 13 and my brother

THE DOCTOR  
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OF HAPPY  
MEMORIES



was ten, our father had promised to take us to the circus. But at lunch there was a phone call; some urgent business required him to go into town. We braced ourselves for disappointment. Then we heard him say, "No, I won't be there. It'll have to wait."

When he came back to the table, my mother smiled. "The circus keeps coming back, you know."

"I know," said our father. "But childhood doesn't."

Across all the years I remembered this, and knew from the sudden glow of warmth that no kindness is ever really wasted, or ever completely lost.

By three o'clock the tide was out; the sound of the waves was only a rhythmic whisper, like a giant breathing. I stayed in my sandy nest, feeling relaxed and content – and a little complacent. *The doctor's prescriptions*, I thought, *were easy to take*.

But I was not prepared for the next one. This time the three words were not a gentle suggestion. They sounded more like a command: '**Re-examine your motives.**'

My first reaction was purely defensive. *There's nothing wrong with my motives*, I told myself. *I want to be successful – who doesn't? I want a certain amount of recognition – but so does everybody. I want more security than I've got – and why not?*

*Maybe*, said a voice somewhere inside my head, *those motives aren't good enough. Maybe that's the reason the wheels have stopped going around.*

I picked up a handful of sand and let it stream through my fingers. In the past, whenever my work went well, there had always been something spontaneous about it, something uncontrived, something free. Lately it had been calculated, competent – and dead.

Why? Because I had been looking past the job itself to the rewards I hoped it would bring. The work had ceased to be an end in itself; it had been merely a means to make money, pay bills. The sense of giving something, of helping people, of making a contribution, had been lost in a frantic clutch at security.

In a flash of certainty, I saw that if one's motives are wrong, nothing can be right. It makes no difference whether you are a postal worker, a hairdresser, an insurance salesperson or a stay-at-home parent. As long as you feel you are serving others, you do the job well. When you are concerned only with helping yourself, you do it less well. This is a law as inexorable as gravity.

For a long time I sat there. Far out on the sandbar I heard the murmur of the surf change to a hollow roar as the tide turned. Behind me the spears of light were almost horizontal. My time at the beach had almost run out, and I felt a grudging admiration for the doctor and the 'prescriptions' he had so casually and cunningly devised. I saw, now, that in them was a therapeutic progression

that might well be of value to anyone facing any difficulty.

**Listen carefully:** to calm the frantic mind, slow it down, shift the focus from inner problems to outer things.

**Try reaching back:** since the human mind can hold but one idea at a time, you blot out present worry when you touch the happinesses of the past.

**Re-examine your motives:** this was the hard core of the 'treatment', this challenge to reappraise, to bring one's motives into alignment with one's capabilities and conscience. But the mind must be clear and receptive to do this – hence the six hours of quiet that came first.

The western sky was crimson as I

took out the last slip of paper. I read six words this time. A few metres below the high-water mark I stopped and read the words again: 'Write your worries on the sand.'

I reached down and picked up a fragment of shell. Kneeling there under the vault of the sky, I wrote several words on the sand, one above the other.

Then I walked away, and I did not look back. I had written my troubles on the sand. And the tide was coming in. 



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### Times Change, But Good Stories Endure

The article on the previous pages was originally published in January 1960 – yes, more than 62 years ago! Yet its theme, about slowing down and appreciating what's truly important in life, is more relevant than ever. Over its 100 years, Reader's Digest has strived to include stories in every issue that offer ways to address challenges we all face. Stories that are uplifting and optimistic. Stories that endure. Admittedly, looking back through our archives, we've spotted some articles that would be very much out of date today, both in fact and in tone. For example: 'Why We Aren't Running Short Of Oil' (1950) and 'What Makes The Perfect Wife?' (1968). And here's a gem: 'England Going Sober' (1930).

But most often, our older stories are just as relevant now: 'Can The World Banish Malaria?' (1930), 'Your Mind Can Keep You Young' (1947), and 'Overweight: Our Primary Health Problem' (1953).

The goal of Reader's Digest founder DeWitt Wallace was to share what he called "articles of lasting interest", many of which were about the often-complicated art of living. Enjoy.

# POINTS TO PONDER

## Wise Words About Life

### APRIL 1958

◆ There are only two ways to be unprejudiced and impartial. One is to be completely ignorant. The other is to be completely indifferent.

Bias and prejudice are attitudes to be kept in hand, not attitudes to be avoided.

CHARLES P. CURTIS

IN A COMMONPLACE BOOK

◆ It's hard to decide which are the most exasperating to be with – stupid people who never talk, or the bright people who never listen.

SYDNEY J. HARRIS IN MAJORITY OF ONE

### JULY 1965

◆ The world is a looking glass and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly, kind companion.

WILLIAM THACKERAY IN VANITY FAIR

### APRIL 1962

◆ To show a child what has once delighted you, to find the child's delight added to your own, so that there is now a double delight seen in the glow of trust and affection, this is happiness.

J. B. PRIESTLY

◆ Love is blind, friendship tries not to notice.

OTTO VON BISMARCK

### DECEMBER 1963

◆ I notice that the wicked of this world usually hang together even when they hate each other. This is their strength. Good people are scattered, and this is their weakness.

YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO

◆ One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

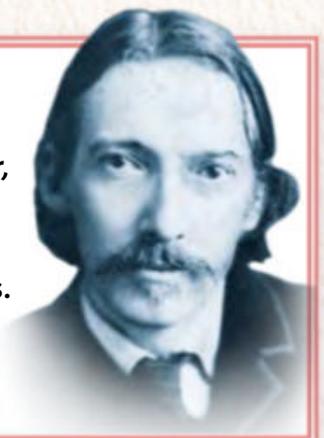
### SEPTEMBER 1965

◆ Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it.

DAVID STARR JORDAN

◆ Everybody, sooner or later, sits down to a banquet of consequences.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON







MARCH 1980



# The Great Balloon Escape

*Two families dare to ride  
the winds to freedom*



BY *Jürgen Petschull*

CONDENSED FROM **DER STERN**

**W**herever people are caged, some will always make a break for freedom. Over the years thousands risked death and imprisonment to flee the oppressive conditions of communist East Germany. They climbed the hated Berlin Wall, tunnelled beneath border barriers, and dived underwater at night to swim to asylum in the West.

Many of them never made it. Some paid the ultimate penalty and died in the minefields or strung out on the wires of the 'death strip' along the border. But still they tried.

This is the remarkable story of two East German families who, ten years before the Wall would come down, built a hot-air balloon – and dared to ride the wind to freedom.

Settled among cornfields and green valleys with pine forests marching towards the horizon, the towns of Pössneck and Naila seemed identical in the 1970s. Geographically they were only 64 kilometres apart. Yet politically their inhabitants were not even on the same planet.

Naila was in West Germany, and its 9700 residents were free. But Pössneck, with 20,000 people, was in East Germany. Television aerials on the rooftops of houses there faced towards Naila; it was through TV that people in Pössneck were constantly reminded of how much better off people were on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

On March 7, 1978, in his home on the outskirts of Pössneck, 35-year-old electrical engineer Peter Strelzyk sat with his friend Günter Wetzels,

a 22-year-old bricklayer and truck driver. For years the men – each married with two kids – had been trying to come up with a way to escape with their families to the West. They couldn't walk over the border because of the 'death strip' of electronically controlled machine guns set up to kill escapees, and swimming across even a small river was too dangerous because of the many watchtowers, not to mention the mined river banks. Until now, neither had thought of another way: by air.

"I have it!" Peter suddenly shouted, leaping up and slapping his friend on the back. "We'll go by balloon."

Günter looked at him in amazement. "And where do we find a balloon?"

"We don't," said Strelzyk. "We build our own."

### FIRST FAILURE

Why not? It was such a crazy, impossible way to freedom that nobody – not even the police – would think that anyone would attempt it. The next morning Peter and Günter began combing the bookshops and libraries in Pössneck. But they could find nothing on ballooning techniques. So they settled for a book called *The Technology of Gas Fitting* and a physics encyclopaedia.

The next day they drove to the nearby small city of Gera. In the cooperative store they spotted a big roll of brown cotton fabric. The salesperson looked at them oddly when they asked to buy 800 metres of it, so they told her that they were making tents for a youth camp.

The two of them lugged the material to the fourth floor of the Wetzels' house. Günter and his wife, Petra, blacked out the attic's windows. Next, Günter cut the cloth into long triangles and began the massive job of stitching the panels together on a 40-year-old, pedal-powered sewing machine.

Within two weeks a balloon about 15 metres in diameter and 20 metres tall began to take shape. Then Günter and Peter built a little platform in a

makeshift workshop in the Strelzyks' house, and a month later the balloon was ready for a test.

The two men drove to a secluded clearing 24 kilometres north of the West German border. But when they tried to inflate the balloon, the air escaped through the cotton and the fabric lay limp on the grass; they had bought the wrong material.

Bitterly disappointed, they took the balloon home and cut it up into small pieces, meticulously burning each one in the boiler of the Strelzyks' central heating system.

### CRASH LANDING

Over the next several months the men tested various types of fabric for air and

heat resistance, and finally settled on a thick taffeta. This time, to avoid arousing suspicion, they drove 120 kilometres to Leipzig to make their major cloth purchase. When buying the 800 metres of taffeta, they told the salesperson that they belonged to a sailing club.

Stitching the taffeta together went more quickly than their initial attempt with the cotton. But one night Peter's wife, Doris, almost let slip their secret. Visitors were at the Strelzyk home and together they watched a film on West German

**PETER AND  
GÜNTER TOLD  
THE SALES-  
PERSON  
THEY WERE  
MAKING TENTS  
FOR A YOUTH  
CAMP**



television about hot-air balloons. During the programme, Doris unthinkingly boasted: "We have a balloon in the attic that's 500 cubic metres bigger than that." Her husband almost fainted. Beads of sweat ran down his neck. Fortunately, the guests did not catch on.

Meanwhile, however, Günter was having second thoughts. One night after a long talk with the Strelzyks, he decided he and his family would not attempt the balloon escape. His wife had become doubtful that it would ever work, and besides, Günter knew that the balloon would have a better chance of flying with just the four Strelzyks aboard.

Peter continued to work on the balloon. After several tests with a burner, he accidentally discovered an effective system. By using propane gas in liquid form, he found that he could produce a durable, efficient flame. In June 1979, the homemade balloon was finally ready for lift off. Now all they needed was the right weather.

On Tuesday, July 3, the weather vane on top of the town hall swung its black arm to point south - towards the West German border. That night at 11.30pm, the Strelzyks drove

19 kilometres until they reached a lonely spot about ten kilometres north of the death strip along the East-West border. It took only five minutes to inflate the balloon.

"Come on, come on, let's go!" shouted Peter.

The balloon lifted into the sky with the Strelzyk family perched on its tiny platform. It was now 2am.

For 34 minutes the balloon was airborne. Then it happened. Thick fog enveloped them, and within seconds the added weight from the water on the balloon cover sent it plummeting towards Earth. They came down in the middle of a small pine wood. The trees shredded the balloon

**AFTER  
SEVERAL  
TESTS WITH  
A BURNER, HE  
ACCIDENTALLY  
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SYSTEM**



but softened their landing.

Doris and the children crawled into the undergrowth and hid in a clump of bushes while Peter reconnoitred the area. About 200 metres away he spotted two wire fences. They were more than three metres high with a strip of ploughed land between them. It was the dreaded death strip - and they were on the wrong side!

At any moment they expected to see soldiers and snarling dogs crashing through the undergrowth. But the forest was silent.

Huddling against one another,

trembling with cold and fear, they hid until dawn.

At first light, the four began to pick their way out of the area. The ground alongside the border was covered with coils of wire, each only a few metres from the next, each leading to alarm devices that were connected to the nearest watch tower. Backs bent, constantly casting glances in all directions, the four would-be refugees worked their way further back into East Germany.

Eight hours after starting their abortive flight they finally reached the clearing where they had left their car. It was undisturbed, and they drove back to Pössneck without incident. No agents from the state security service were waiting at their house. There was only their black-and-white cat Purzel, who emerged from the garden purring with joy to rub against Peter's dirty trouser legs.

Though it was still morning, they were all exhausted and decided to go to bed. But Peter was unable to sleep. He paced the floor in the living room, which now seemed to be a prison cell. Then he sat down in his gold lounge chair and burst into tears.

### **“WE’LL COME”**

Later that month Peter Strelzyk went to see Günter Wetzels, the first such visit for some time. Günter had been expecting Peter to call. A friend had told him that a balloon had been found near Lobenstein, close to the

border, and that the state security agents were looking everywhere for the balloonists.

The two men sat in the living room for a while, then Günter asked, “Were you the ones in the balloon near Lobenstein?”

“Yes,” replied Peter.

“A fine mess!” said Günter.

Peter told him what had happened. “It can be done, Günter, with the new gas system,” he said. “But we can’t do it without you. Please come with us.”

A week later, Günter gave his reply: “We’ll come.”

For the third time within 17 months, the Strelzyks and Wetzels started to build an escape balloon. The task was more difficult than ever. The balloon had to be both larger and stronger, and consequently, more air had to be heated. Moreover, since the discovery of the last balloon near the border, the men feared that all shops selling fabric in the southern part of East Germany had been warned to report anyone asking for more than a few metres of closely woven, air-resistant cloth. Even so, during the next few weeks the families covered more than 3800 kilometres by car and visited almost 100 towns and villages trying to purchase nylon rope, taffeta and other items.

Günter joined his partner for the first few shopping trips, then withdrew to the Strelzyks’ cellar and started to sew the meagre bits of multicoloured material together.

## READER'S DIGEST

On August 14, Peter Strelzyk drove home tired and irritable. Doris greeted him and murmured, "I've put the newspaper in the living room cupboard. You had better look at page two ..."

He saw a small photo showing a barometer, a clock, a pocket knife, and a pair of pliers. The headline stated: 'The People's Police Request Your Help'

Peter read on in increasing panic. "After being used in a serious crime, the articles illustrated here were abandoned by the criminals." The detailed description of the objects was followed by an appeal: "Any readers able to provide information on persons formerly in possession of these articles should contact the People's Police."

"Well, that's it," Peter said, as he put the newspaper down with trembling hands. "They are hunting us properly now."

From then on Günter Wetzel scarcely left his seat at the sewing machine. Twenty-hour working days were common. Withdrawing their entire savings, Peter, Doris and Petra continued their search of shops for suitable fabric. In Magdeburg they acquired 20 metres of nylon rope, in Halle a bumper crop of 150 metres of nylon material. Their stockpile grew in all the colours of the rainbow. On September 14, in a Jena department store, they managed to purchase the final 30 metres of material.

Inflated, their balloon would have a diameter of 19 metres and a height

of 25 metres - about the same size and shape as an eight-storey building. They had patched together one of the largest hot-air balloons ever built in Europe.

Meanwhile, Peter Strelzyk had constructed a larger burner system and built a platform, adding a clothes line that served as a safety rail. The floor, which was to support the eight escapees, was sheet metal less than a millimetre thick. Petra Wetzel was terrified when she saw this light-weight floor panel: "We will burst through it and fall out!" To reassure her, Peter put blocks beneath the panel's corners and had the four adults and 15-year-old Frank Strelzyk climb aboard and jump up and down. The metal vibrated - but supported them. At long last the third balloon was ready to take to the air.

## NIGHT FLIGHT

On Saturday, September 15, 1979, an afternoon thunderstorm burst over the surrounding forests. Later the cloud cover broke up. It became a cold night with a star-filled sky and a floating moon. The wind was blowing in the direction of the West German border. Tonight was the night.

The two families left Pössneck shortly before midnight and drove to a wooded clearing in Thuringia. Slowly the blower pumped cold air into the slack balloon skin that lay like a deflated dinosaur on the grass. Then Günter, and Doris and Frank

Strelzyk, held the neck of the balloon open while Peter turned the flame thrower full on. Helped by the blower, a 15-metre-long tongue of orange flame darted into the skin, singeing Peter's hair.

At the edge of the clearing Petra Wetzel and the three small children watched apprehensively. After 15 minutes the balloon towered above them. Ropes from the balloon mouth were stretched taut to the rickety gondola. Günter ignited the burner standing with the four propane bottles, and Peter gave it a 30-second burst with the flame thrower. But it was too much. Heated by two flames, the balloon strained skywards.

Peter Strelzyk screamed across the clearing. "Get in! Quick, quick! We're off!" They clambered aboard. Suddenly, the fabric at the neck of the balloon caught fire as the strong wind tilted the craft dangerously.

They knew from their reading what happens when a balloon skin burns: the vast hot-air pressure drives the balloon upwards, sometimes for hundreds of metres; only when the skin is burned completely does the gondola – and its occupants – plunge to Earth. Günter quickly put out the flame with a fire extinguisher, and he and Frank

whipped out their knives and cut two ropes. A third anchor stake was catapulted out of the ground, injuring Frank Strelzyk and two-year-old Andreas Wetzel.

Günter then cut the last connecting rope. The platform immediately righted itself, and the flame again pointed safely upwards. Its red glow lit up the faces of the eight fugitives as the 750-kilogram balloon lifted skywards.

The platform was quiet, the only sound was the hiss of the gas jet as the balloon drifted on the wind.

### SEARCHLIGHTS

Some 2000 metres beneath them lay the landmines, the ferocious dogs, and the barbed-wire-topped

wall of the death strip. Then fingers of light suddenly stabbed upwards through the darkness as communist border guards probed the night with searchlights. Petra Wetzel cried, "Damn, they're looking for us!"

Beams from three searchlights merged into one thick finger of light groping up towards them. For several heart-stopping moments the balloon was almost caught in the beams. To leave the probing white lights behind, Peter turned up the burner flame and the craft climbed to the bitter cold of 2600 metres.

**THE WIND  
TILTED THE  
CRAFT  
DANGEROUSLY  
AND THE  
FABRIC  
CAUGHT  
FIRE**



Petra Wetzel knelt down on the metal floor and gathered the shivering Andreas in her arms as she waited for the tracer bullets that would surely rip into the belly of the balloon and end all their lives. She softly sang a lullaby: *"There's a small teddy bear strolling from toyland and his fur is cuddly soft/At once call all the children ..."* Although she knew the song by heart, she couldn't remember any more of the words.

Twenty-three minutes into the flight the gas burner nearly stopped. Peter and Günter frantically tried to produce a larger flame, but failed. The 44 kilograms of propane gas had all been used, and the balloon was now descending. Though it was dark there was a moon, and as the ground came ever closer, they were able to pick out details in the hills, woods and farms below them.

Then, with a shudder, the balloon hit, bending a young acacia tree and landing with a spine-jarring crash. The 28-minute flight was over – and the families still didn't know for certain whether they were safe.

"Come, we'll walk in the direction of the moon," said Günter.

Together they scuttled along the edge of a newly harvested cornfield

until they reached the cover of a thicket. Leaving the women and children hiding in the bushes, Peter and Günter reached a barn. Inside was a wagon with the farmer's name on it – something unknown in the East.

At that moment, a Naila police patrol car, alerted by reports from local residents of a flying saucer, pulled up.

"Are we in the West?" Peter shouted.

"Yes," answered a police officer.

Peter and Günter threw their arms around the officers, shouting, "We've done it! We've done it!"

Günter lit a red flare as an all-clear signal, and the men's wives and children ran across the corn stub-

ble to embrace them.

Then, Frank Strelzyk, with tears streaming down his face, went back to the balloon and picked up the bottle of sparkling wine his mother had smuggled aboard.

At the Naila police station, with its flower-filled boxes and its cheerful policemen, they raised their glasses. The toast was poignant in its simplicity: "To freedom." 

**TWENTY-  
THREE  
MINUTES INTO  
THE FLIGHT,  
THE GAS  
BURNER  
ALMOST  
STOPPED**



ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AS 'DAS IMMELFAHRTS-KOMMANDO' IN THE WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE STERN (40/1979). REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF PICTURE PRESS.

**Update:** *The relationship between the Wetzel and Strelzyk families broke down shortly after their successful escape. Why? Peter Strelzyk gave the initial media interviews while Günter Wetzel recovered in hospital from a leg injury he suffered during the landing. According to Wetzel, Strelzyk took sole credit in the media for the escape idea and construction of the balloon.*

*After reaching freedom, Wetzel and his family settled in Hof, a town not far from where the balloon came down. They stayed there for some 40 years, where Wetzel worked as a master mechanic. He has since retired. Peter Strelzyk opened an electrical shop in Bad Kissingen,*

*some 120 kilometres from where the families landed.*

*With the reunification of Germany in 1989, the Strelzyks returned to their old home in Pössneck. Peter Strelzyk died there in 2017 at the age of 74.*

*In 1982, Night Crossing, a Disney film depicting the escape, was released; and in 2018 in Germany, the German-language film Balloon was released in cinemas.*

*The Berlin Wall came down in 1989, paving the way for German unity.*



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### Cartoon Quips

RD AUGUST 1962

**Sign in finance company window: ‘For the man who has everything but hasn’t paid for it.’** BO BROWN, *The Christian Science Monitor*

**Girl to girl: “It wasn’t much of a proposal. He suggested we pool pay envelopes.”** JOSEPH MIRACHI, *Look*

**Boss to employee: “Wilkins, it should give you some pleasure to know it’s costing us \$250,000 to replace you with a computer.”**

VON RIEGEN, *Saturday Review*

**Florist, standing by ‘Say It With Flowers’ sign, to young man: “I’m afraid 50 cents’ worth would be practically inaudible.”**

DICK TURNER, NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE ASSN.

**Wife to neighbour as husband waters garden: “Last year, all that came up was our water bill.”** TIPPIT IN *Parade*

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## RD RECOMMENDS



Movies

### **A Man Named Otto** **Drama Comedy**

**B**ased on the comical best-selling novel *A Man Called Ove* by Swedish author Frederik Backman, the film, *A Man Named Otto* starring Tom Hanks, tells the story of Otto Anderson, a grumpy man with staunch principles, strict routines and a short fuse.

When his wife dies, Otto is forced into retirement, leaving his job of nearly 40 years. The 60 year old, whose only joy comes from criticising and judging his

exasperated neighbours, discovers he has met his match when a boisterous young family – including the quick-witted and very pregnant Marisol and her two chatty and lively daughters – literally smash their way into the neighbourhood. The last straw is a cat that attaches itself to him.

But behind Otto's cranky exterior is sadness. A funny, heartwarming story about how some families come from the most unexpected places.

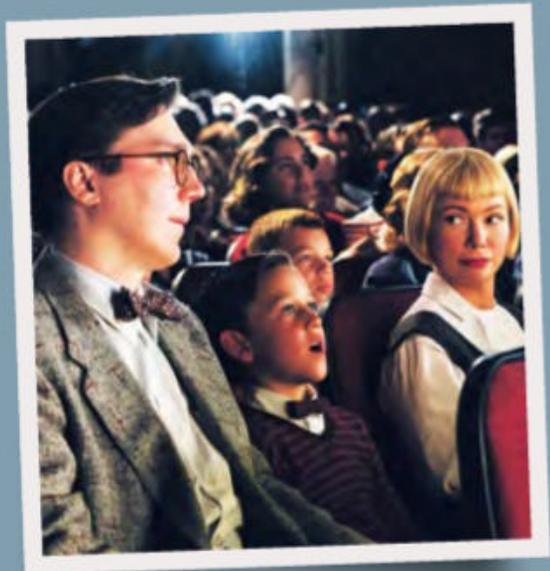


### **Puss In Boots: The Last Wish** Family

**H**aving burnt through eight of his nine lives, the sword-fighting cat is discovering that his passion for adventure has taken its toll. So what does Puss in Boots do? He sets out on an epic journey to find the mystical 'Last Wish' to restore his nine lives. However, Goldilocks and the Three Bears are on his tail. A spin-off of the *Shrek* franchise, this film is the sequel to the 2011 *Puss in Boots*, with Antonio Banderas and Salma Hayek reprising the voice roles of Puss and Kitty Softpaws. If the kids or grandkids are at a loose end these holidays, this animated comedy should keep them entertained for a few hours.

### **The Fabelmans** Drama

**C**o-written and directed by Steven Spielberg, this story is loosely based on his family and childhood. It follows 16-year-old aspiring filmmaker Sammy Fabelman who falls in love with movies after his parents take him to see *The Greatest Show On Earth* as a boy. Growing up in post-World War II Arizona, Sammy, whose home movies delight his artistic mother, discovers a shattering family secret and explores how the power of film can help him see the truth.





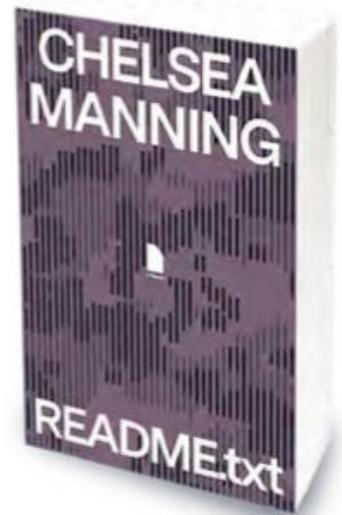
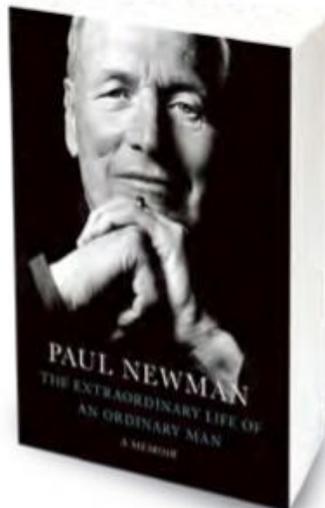
## Memoirs

**Spare****Prince Harry**PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

Published globally on January 10, the highly anticipated memoir of Prince Harry, brother of the next in line to be the king of England, takes readers immediately back to one of the most searing images of the 20th century: two young boys, two princes, walking behind their mother's coffin as the world watches on in sorrow – and horror. As Diana, Princess of Wales, was laid to rest, billions wondered what the princes must be thinking and feeling. *Spare* goes behind the palace walls to reveal what's happened since.

**Paul Newman:  
The Extraordinary Life  
Of An Ordinary Man****Memoir**PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

Described as a man many admired but few really knew, this posthumous memoir is culled from thousands of pages of transcripts only recently rediscovered. Newman's voice is powerful, while additional voices – from friends, family and film and theatre collaborators – provide context. Newman recounts his often traumatic childhood, his teenage insecurities, his rise to stardom, the death of his son ... and his enduring relationship with Joanne Woodward.

**README.txt****Chelsea Manning**PENGUIN  
RANDOM HOUSE

If the name rings a bell but you can't quite place it, think back to the WikiLeaks affair. In 2010, US intelligence analyst Bradley Manning leaked classified military information and was imprisoned for 35 years. One of the world's most famous whistle-blowers and trans women, Manning describes her pleas for increased institutional transparency and government accountability while fighting to defend her rights as a trans woman in this intimate and engrossing memoir.



Non  
Fiction



## Just One Thing

**Dr Michael Mosley**

HACHETTE

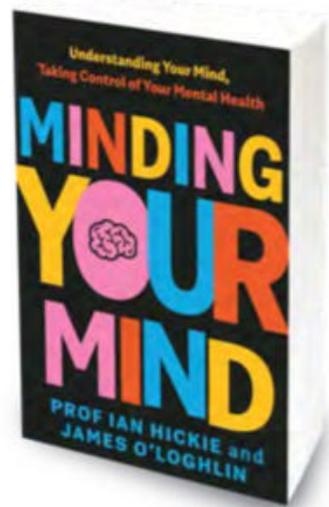
You're sure to have heard of bestselling author and presenter of numerous BBC health and wellbeing TV series, Dr Michael Mosley. In his latest book, a hardcover Australian and New Zealand edition, Dr Mosley investigates how simple changes in your daily life can greatly improve your health. For example, did you know that standing on one leg can have huge health benefits? Having talked to experts and road-tested all his tips, Dr Mosley explains in easy-to-understand detail how it all works, with every topic supported with a case study.

## Salamat! Hamed's Persian Kitchen

**Hamed Allahyari with Dani Valent**

MURDOCH BOOKS

Slow-cooked Lamb, Split Peas and Eggplant; Walnut and Pomegranate Chicken Stew; Stuffed Meatballs; Tray-baked Saffron Salmon – if these dishes are making your mouth water, you may want to investigate the flavours of Iran. Packed with easy-to-create recipes and brimming with colourful images, this hardcover cookbook is a gateway to Persian culinary culture. In *Salamat!*, Hamed shares his life in food and provides dishes from street food to soups to mains and desserts.



## Minding Your Mind

**Professor Ian Hickie & James O'Loughlin**

PENGUIN

RANDOM HOUSE

Psychiatrist Professor Ian Hickie is a leading advocate for mental health. Together with comedian and author James O'Loughlin, he presents the podcast 'Minding Your Mind' (on which this book is based), that explores our mind and mental health. Written with compassion, this book is split into three parts: 1. How our minds work; 2. When things go wrong; and 3. How we can improve our mental health; and is for anyone who wants the best for their mental wellbeing.

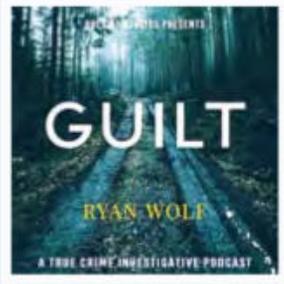


## Podcasts



### The Biker With A Big Heart

The organ donation of a heart from a surgeon who died in a helicopter crash saved the life of an ailing cyclist. So he rode 2300 kilometres across the country to meet the parents of the donor, and to thank them for the ultimate gift.



### Guilt

In this hit true crime podcast, actor and lawyer Ryan Wolf investigates some of New Zealand's most enduring unsolved criminal cases. Season 1 delves into the strange shooting death of a much-loved pizza shop owner, while season 2 examines the baffling mystery of a man who simply vanished.



### Frugal Friends

This New Year, maybe you have dreams of saving just a little more, paying off debts or finding a side hustle. There are plenty of good financial podcasts, but a fun one is *Frugal Friends*, to help you get in touch with your inner frugal. It's chatty and opinionated with some useful suggestions.



### Atomic Habits

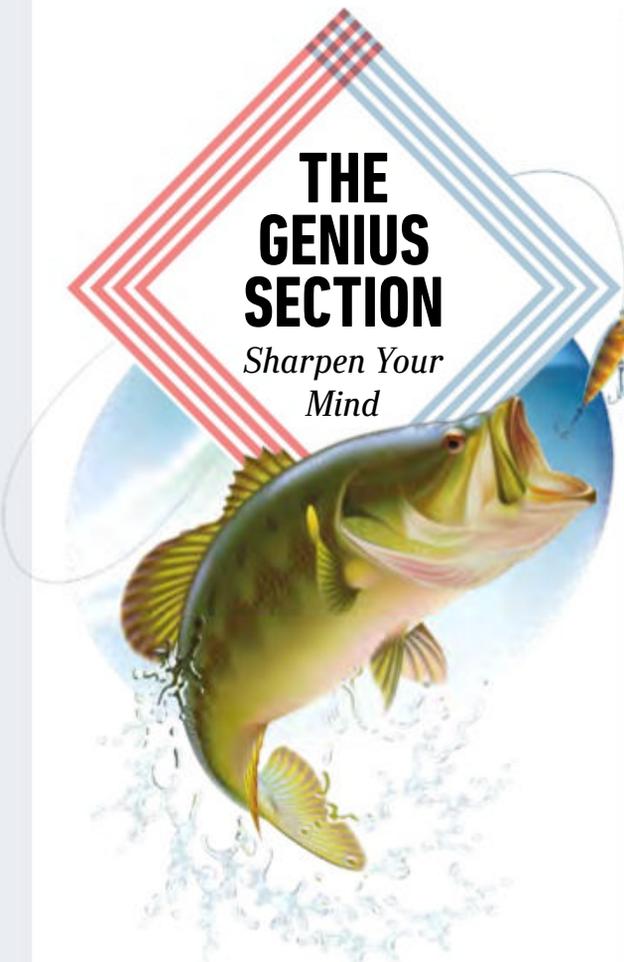
To help kick-start any resolutions for 2023, James Clear's bestseller is a primer for breaking old habits and creating new (and hopefully better) ones. A key premise is that tiny changes – ie, doing five push ups a day – add up over time. It is available from Audible.



**HOW TO GET PODCASTS** To listen on the web: In a search engine, look up 'Guilt', for example, and click on the play button. **To download:** Download an app such as Podcatchers or iTunes on your phone or tablet and simply search by title.

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**THE  
GENIUS  
SECTION**

*Sharpen Your  
Mind*

# But Fish Can't Even **READ**

*Angling advice  
from 1940...*

—  
BY *Donald Hough*

**T**en million people are planning to go fishing this summer. One million of them are already spending many hours over the selection of fancy lures, lines and rods, or exhausting themselves learning how to drop a fly lightly in the water so that it won't sink.

When they actually go fishing they will probably have no luck until they get a snarl on their line. While they are unsnarling it the fly will sink and a three-pound trout will grab the fly and catch himself. This will disconcert the angler, who thinks fish ought to play according to the rules.

An additional five million anglers are pondering the colours of their casting plugs and arguing about the tints that fish like best. But fish are colour-blind.

Millions of fishermen are examining flies under magnifying glasses to be sure they are exact replicas of living flies. More are testing plugs in the bath-tub to find one that has the closest possible approach, in action, to the movements of the fish it is supposed to represent.

But fish bite best on flies that have no counterpart in nature, and the deadliest casting lure ever invented is the common spoon hook, which looks like nothing on Earth - or in its waters - other than a spoon hook.

Anglers are prone to regard fish as their mental superiors, and in this

way the lives of innumerable fish are saved. Anglers now planning their specific campaigns would do well to spend a few hours in a fish market, looking at the fish. They are just as dumb as they look. When treated as a fish, the fish is easy prey.

A fellow I know once caught a big trout which lay in a creek directly under a bridge. My friend first drifted a dry fly under the bridge, then a wet fly. He caught a grasshopper and tried that. No luck. Then the doughty angler figured that he had been drifting his lures downstream and the trout could see the line. So he performed the difficult feat of casting beneath the bridge, the lure striking the water just in front of the trout. But the trout paid no attention. As the angler cast again, his reel dropped off and sank to the bottom. Quick as a flash the fish turned, swooped down on the reel and grabbed it. My friend nearly landed him before he let go.

If you really want to be a smart angler, be dumb like a fish.

In every stream there is a deep pool in which lives a legendary fish, regarded as a combination of heavy-weight champion and Rhodes scholar. His name is Old One Fin, Old Spotted Tail, or Old Something Else. Every week some leading local angler tries his luck – and an infinite variety of scientific lures – with him. Sometimes

the fish is hooked and lost. Sometimes he won't bite. You can see him down there reading Shakespeare, but he is too 'wary', too smart to be caught.

Sometimes this grandpapa of all fishes disappears. That is a sure sign that some kid has come along with a bunch of big angleworms or a chunk of bacon on a hook big enough to catch Moby Dick, and has hauled him out. Old Spotted Tail has a good reason for not biting on fancy flies. It takes about as much energy for a large fish to rise to the surface of a pool and return to its depths as a single fly supplies. A six-pound fish that kept

## ANGLERS REGARD FISH AS THEIR MENTAL SUPERIORS

---

chasing No. 16 flies would soon be a four-pound fish. To put it another way, a man who walked a block every day to eat a peanut would die of exhaustion quicker than one who just sat on the kerbstone and ate nothing.

The kid comes along with a hunk of bacon. Old Split Fin is lying deep in the pool because he is interested in food that is heavy enough to sink. He never saw a piece of bacon before, but it is his size and he goes for it.

Men have too much imagination to be good fishermen. They place themselves in the position of the fish and select lures they would go for if they were fish. It irks them to look upon fishing as a simple exercise undertaken by simple men and simpler fishes. They like to feel that



when they have caught a fish they have overcome tremendous obstacles.

Try to look at the fish as he really is. He has just sufficient brain power to open his mouth when he sees something to eat, and to swallow it if it turns out alright, or to wiggle his tail away from there if it does not. He does not know what a fish-hook is, or a line, or a leader. He

## MEN HAVE TOO MUCH IMAGINATION TO BE GOOD FISHERMEN

is colour-blind – scientifically established – and he will bite on anything that moves and on most things that stand still.

When you come home with a big string of fish, don't swell with pride. You

have not caught the fish; they have caught themselves. **R**

THIS STORY FIRST RAN IN THE US EDITION OF READER'S DIGEST IN JUNE, 1940.



### Today Leads To Tomorrow

RD JUNE 1933

Life is simply a matter of concentration: you are what you set out to be. The things you read today are the things you become tomorrow. You are a composite of the things you say, the books you read, the thoughts you think, the company you keep, and the things you desire to become.

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From desks to lighting, tips to work in a more ergonomic way.



**TRAVEL**

## 7 BREATHTAKING RIVER CRUISES AROUND THE WORLD

Float down the Amazon or gaze at romantic castles; river cruises combine sight-seeing with leisure.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

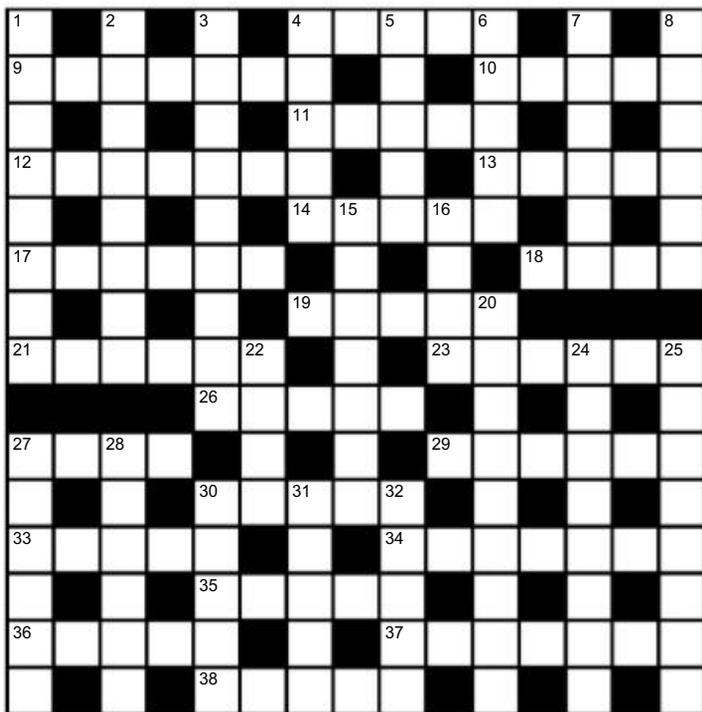


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# PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 142.



## ACROSS

- 4** Thick slices (5)
- 9** American name for porridge (7)
- 10** Result (5)
- 11** Efface (5)
- 12** Recover (7)
- 13** Path (5)
- 14** Common people (5)
- 17** Type of gum (6)
- 18** Cried (4)
- 19** Wet (5)

- 21** Elephant (6)
- 23** Swiss city (6)
- 26** Vends (5)
- 27** Plant that grows in dark, damp places (4)
- 29** Bitter conflict (6)
- 30** Armed strongholds (5)
- 33** Thank you (French) (5)
- 34** Type of bath (7)
- 35** Cowboy display (5)
- 36** Metal spikes (5)
- 37** Diviners (7)
- 38** Adjusted (5)

## Crossword

Test your general knowledge.

## DOWN

- 1** Invariable (8)
- 2** Natives of e.g. Venice (8)
- 3** Calming medicines (9)
- 4** Doze (5)
- 5** Diminish (5)
- 6** Prophets (5)
- 7** Guarantee (6)
- 8** Forsake (6)
- 15** Notice (7)
- 16** Stopper (4)
- 20** 24 hours ago (9)
- 22** Make over (4)
- 24** Qualified (8)
- 25** Purple quartz (8)
- 27** Instant (6)
- 28** Vile (6)
- 30** Being before all others (5)
- 31** Radioactive gaseous element (5)
- 32** Offered oneself for election (5)

# Puzzle Answers

PAGES 142

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

## Sudoku

**HOW TO PLAY:** To win, you have to put a number from 1 to 9 in each outlined section so that:

- Every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numerals (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- Each of the outlined sections has all nine numerals, none repeated.

### IF YOU SOLVE IT WITHIN:

**15** minutes, you're a true expert

**30** minutes, you're no slouch

**60** minutes or more, maybe numbers aren't your thing

**BRAIN POWER**  
brought to you by

**PILOT**

**FRI XION**  
point  
CLICKER



**"Write, Erase, Rewrite"**

# FAMILY FUN

**Puzzle Answers**  
PAGE 142

## Spot The Difference

There are ten differences. Can you find them?

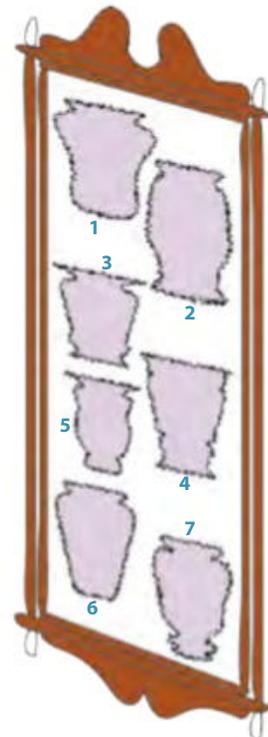
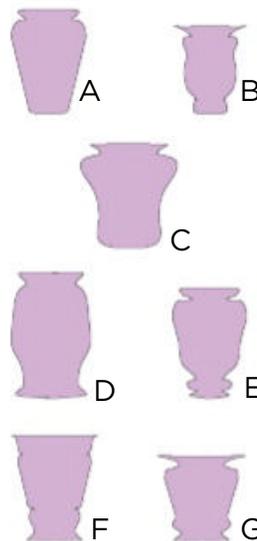


.....  
distorted) image in the mirror?

### Magic Mirror

Maggie's magic mirror reflects very strangely! Can you match each vase to its correct (although misplaced and somewhat distorted) image in the mirror?

- A = ..... E = .....  
 B = ..... F = .....  
 C = ..... G = .....  
 D = .....



ILLUSTRATIONS: VECTEEZY.COM

# TRIVIA

## Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** What was the first superhero movie nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture? *1 point*
- 2.** What innovative comedy show did David Attenborough authorise to begin airing in 1969, when he was the BBC's director of programmes? *1 point*
- 3.** What popular Reader's Digest section did poet and publisher Wilfred Funk start in 1945? *1 point*
- 4.** What widely-used connectivity technology was named after tenth-century King Harald of Norway? *1 point*
- 5.** What historic first did UK man Walter Arnold achieve by driving 13 kilometres per hour in 1896? *1 point*
- 6.** What record did the *Guinness Book of World Records* earn in November 2004? *1 point*
- 7.** What is the logo for the Royal New Zealand Air Force? *1 point*
- 8.** In 2007, Allison Cirioli was born 26 minutes after her twin. Why did the birth certificate say that she was born first? *2 points*
- 9.** What do a nine-dart finish in darts and a 147 in snooker have in common? *1 point*
- 10.** Researchers at the University of South Australia have invented drones that can monitor what from the air? *2 points*
- 11.** What American scientist won a 2019 Nobel Prize at age 97 for contributions to lithium-ion batteries? *2 points*
- 12.** The Severan decree forbade what combatants from fighting in 200 CE? *2 points*
- 13.** Who invented the phrases 'wild goose chase' and 'in a pickle'? *1 point*
- 14.** What is regarded as the world's smallest mammal? *2 points*



**15. Citrine gemstones are made by applying 400° to 925° Celsius heat to what semi-precious gem?**  
*1 point*

---

**16-20 Gold medal    11-15 Silver medal    6-10 Bronze medal    0-5 Wooden spoon**

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**ANSWERS:** 1. *Black Panther* (2018). 2. *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. 3. Word Power. 4. Bluetooth (his nickname). 5. First speeding fine. 6. The bestselling book of all time still under copyright. 7. A kiwi, a flightless bird. 8. Daylight saving ended between births. 9. Both are a perfect score. 10. Blood-oxygen levels in people. 11. John Goodenough. 12. Female gladiators. 13. Shakespeare. 14. Kitt's hog-nosed bat, also known as the bumblebee bat and is found in western Thailand. 15. Amethyst.

# PUZZLE ANSWERS

From Page 138

## Sudoku

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

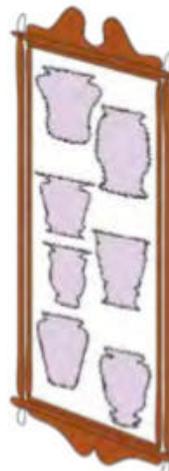
## Spot The Difference



## Crossword

1	C		2	I		3	S		4	S	5	L	6	A	B	7	A		8	D
9	O	A	T	M	E	A	L		B		10	E	N	S	U	E				
	N		A		D			11	E	R	A	S	E			S			S	
12	S	A	L	V	A	G	E		T			13	R	O	U	T	E			
	T		I		T			14	P	15	L	E	16	B	S		R		R	
17	A	R	A	B	I	C		E		U			18	W	E	P	T			
	N		N		V			19	R	A	I	N	20	Y						
21	T	U	S	K	E	22	R		F		23	G	E	N	24	E	V	25	A	
						26	S	E	L	L	S		S		L		M			
27	M	O	28	S	S		D		E		29	S	T	R	I	F	E			
	O		O			30	F	O	R	T	31	S		E		G		T		
33	M	E	R	C	I		A			34	T	U	R	K	I	S	H			
	E		D			35	R	O	D	E	O		D		B		Y			
36	N	A	I	L	S		O			37	O	R	A	C	L	E	S			
	T		D			38	T	U	N	E	D		Y		E		T			

## Magic Mirror



- A=6
- B=5
- C=1
- D=2
- E=7
- F=4
- G=3



## WORD POWER

### *An Accent On Meaning*

*Many English words include accents – think blasé or château – which clue you in to pronunciation and differentiate between terms (eg, resume vs. résumé). Many have French roots, but we've featured other etymologies, too.*

BY Sarah Chassé

- 1. exposé** – A: low neckline.  
B: camera lens. C: public disclosure.
- 2. pied-à-terre** – A: second home.  
B: leisurely walk. C: small garden.
- 3. doppelgänger** – A: mobster.  
B: cyclone. C: double.
- 4. née** – A: unmarried. B: formerly known as... C: born-again.
- 5. soupçon** – A: small amount.  
B: folk song. C: large kettle.
- 6. piñata** – A: birthday party.  
B: decorated container.  
C: green salsa.
- 7. coup de grâce** – A: rebellion.  
B: ballet step. C: final blow.
- 8. flambé** – A: drench and ignite. B: top with custard.  
C: bring to a boil.
- 9. tête-à-tête** – A: fistfight.  
B: private talk. C: drum solo.
- 10. mañana** – A: immediately.  
B: long past. C: in the future.
- 11. maître d'** – A: dinner jacket.  
B: serving tray. C: headwaiter.
- 12. risqué** – A: suggestive.  
B: dangerous. C: strategic.
- 13. curaçao** – A: gunpowder.  
B: citrus liqueur. C: tropical bird.
- 14. vis-à-vis** – A: in relation to.  
B: despite. C: on top of.
- 15. séance** – A: afternoon nap.  
B: long speech. C: meeting with spirits.

## Answers

**1. exposé** – (C) public disclosure. The newspaper's exposé uncovered corruption in the mayor's office.

**2. pied-à-terre** – (A) second home. Are Christine and Blake at their pied-à-terre in Queenstown this weekend?

**3. doppelgänger** – (C) double. You must have a doppelgänger, because I'd swear I saw you on TV last night!

**4. née** – (B) formerly known as... Jacqueline Kennedy (née Bouvier) was famous for her style and elegance.

**5. soupçon** – (A) small amount. This stew needs just a soupçon more salt.

**6. piñata** – (B) decorated container. We whacked the piñata filled with lollies until it burst.

**7. coup de grâce** – (C) final blow. For many struggling businesses, the pandemic was the coup de grâce that forced them to close.

**8. flambé** – (A) drench and ignite. "Why don't we flambé our Christmas ham in rum this year?" suggested Dad.

**9. tête-à-tête** – (B) private talk.

Adrian's boss scheduled a tête-à-tête to discuss his performance review.

**10. mañana** – (C) in the future. I'm too busy to clean the garage – I'll do it mañana.

**11. maître d'** – (C) headwaiter. "Do you have a reservation?" the maître d' asked, consulting his list.

**12. risqué** – (A) suggestive. The novel was considered risqué when it was first published, but it's tame by today's standards.

**13. curaçao** – (B) citrus liqueur. Though curaçao is flavoured with dried orange peel, it's often dyed an electric blue.

**14. vis-à-vis** – (A) in relation to. Miguel keeps a detailed spreadsheet tracking his income vis-à-vis his spending.

**15. séance** – (C) meeting with spirits. Madame Zelda's séance failed to conjure my late uncle.

---

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

**5–8:** Fair

**9–12:** Good

**13–15:** Word Power Wizard

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