

# Reader's digest

HOURS  
OF  
GREAT  
READING

## WHAT'S HAPPENED TO GOOD MANNERS?

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New Tobacco**

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# Reader's digest



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# Letters

READERS' COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

## I'm All Ears

Special thanks to Reader's Digest for your article about relationships entitled 'I Hear You' (June). It helped me get my beloved, adorable girlfriend back. Now I feel confident I can tackle any awkward situation with my girlfriend through listening and understanding.

As I am planning on doing a post-graduate degree in Canada or Australia, I need to sit an English-language test. One of my teachers suggested I read Reader's Digest



magazine to improve my language skills. I now realise that this magazine is not only good for improving my vocabulary and language skills but also provides effective life lessons. **SELIM REZA**

## Being Thankful

'The Power of Gratitude' (October) was an inspirational read. It is odd how we rarely give thanks to those who selflessly lend a helping hand or extend their support to us in some way. Even an act as simple as showing appreciation is like a ripple that spreads happiness and positivity through our surroundings.

**MARIA SARWAR**

I read with interest 'The Power of Gratitude'. I'm

sure if a person were to act on the advice given in it, he or she would live a happier, easier and more comfortable life. In today's world, gratitude has diminished to a very low ebb, putting society in disarray. Expressing gratitude increases your own happiness, while the recipient of your gratitude feels blessed and

appreciated. All grateful people are happy people and all ungrateful people are unhappy.

**CH GHAZANFAR ALI**

## LET US KNOW

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



## Painful Times

Thank you for 'Shingles - Nasty and Dangerous' (October). I got shingles in 2016. The doctor who diagnosed me did not tell me how bad they could be. I suffered three-and-a-half months of pins and needles, itching and pain that was worse than childbirth. I note that your article said there is medicine available if shingles is diagnosed early. The doctor who diagnosed me told me to "grin and bear it"!

MIRA PETERSON

## Digital Forgetfulness

These days common sense is not so common. I was wondering why this is. I got my answer in 'Deskilling in the Age of Digital Amnesia' (September). We human beings should be capable of using technology to our advantage without compromising our memories and cognition.

GIRLY C. NIEM

## WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

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



PHOTOS: ISTOCK



## Need for Speed

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

For now, I'm steering clear of homework.

NATHAN HO

What a specs-tacular win!

YOGA KESHNEN

A deserving victory for a star with big vision.

LIM SOH BUAY

Proud winner of Formula 2.

AFIFA ADEEL

I have just found my wow factor!!

MARK J. CLANCY

Congratulations to this month's winner, Nathan Ho.



## CAPTION CONTEST

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

## EDITORIAL

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## CONTRIBUTE

FOR DIGITAL EXTRAS AND  
SOCIAL MEDIA INFO, SEE PAGE 29.

### Anecdotes and jokes

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

### Smart Animals

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

### Kindness of Strangers

Share your moments of  
generosity in 100-500 words.

### My Story

Do you have an inspiring or  
life-changing tale to tell?  
Submissions must be true,  
unpublished, original and  
800-1000 words - see website  
for more information.

### Letters to the editor, caption competition and other reader submissions

### Online

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# Editor's Note

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## Time for a Rethink?

**WELCOME TO 2017!** With the start of another year, many of us will be taking stock, rethinking and perhaps even carefully planning our approach to 2017. Among this month's line-up of stories, we have three that offer both innovative and simple approaches to this process – including tips on how to lose those extra kilos ('You Are When You Eat', page 60), ways to rid your life of clutter ('Less Is More', page 81) and how to lose the attitude and rediscover your manners ('What Happened to Good Manners?', page 32). For me, the desire to have fewer piles of 'stuff' and a clearer idea of where things are isn't something I experience at the beginning of the year – it's an uphill battle all year round. This said, adopting a 'less is more' attitude in 2017 is definitely my self-improvement aim.

From time to time, we come across the stories of amazing people who overcome extraordinary hardships. This month's Bonus Read ('Catrin's Long Way Back', page 104) tells the experience of 19-year-old Catrin Pugh, who, in 2013, survived a fiery bus crash in the French Alps with 96 per cent burns to her body. With the help of her family, Catrin is slowly rebuilding her life. Hers is a truly inspiring story.



*Louise*

**LOUISE WATERSON**  
Managing Editor

What would you say? RD readers from around Australia share their plans for 2017

# This Year I Will Definitely ...

... fit in my old jeans.

**MUCHI SHETH**, Fremantle, WA

... build the back patio I've wanted for the last 20 years.

**JOHN BRISTOW**, Perth, WA

... plan something special with my wife for our 45th wedding anniversary.

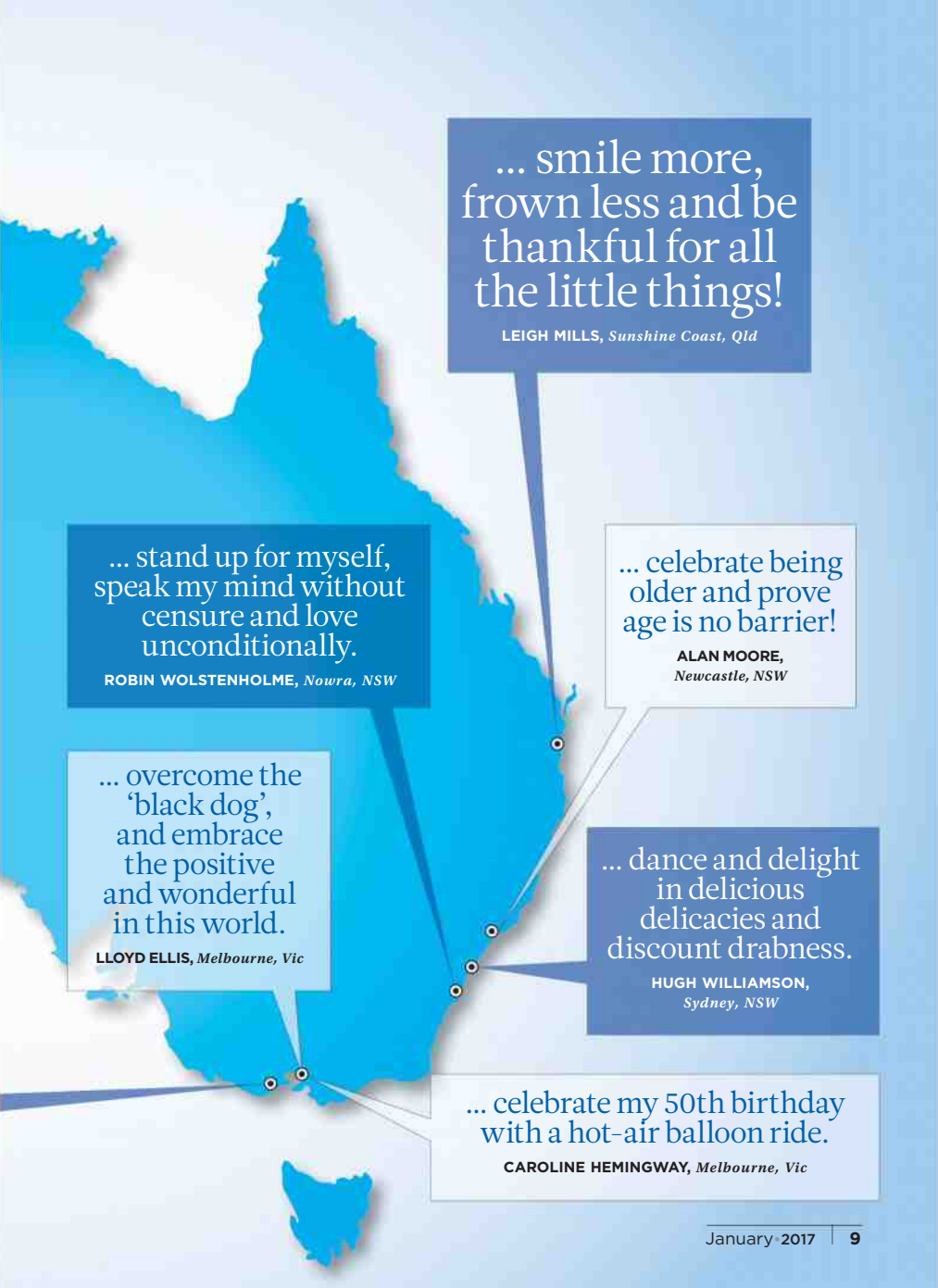
**ALAN RYCROFT**, Rockingham, WA

... breathe deeper, live with more passion and try new things.

**P. ROWLANDS**, Walpole, WA

... declutter my house, my mind and my life.

**DONALD WARD**, Anglesea, Vic



... smile more,  
frown less and be  
thankful for all  
the little things!

LEIGH MILLS, *Sunshine Coast, Qld*

... stand up for myself,  
speak my mind without  
censure and love  
unconditionally.

ROBIN WOLSTENHOLME, *Nowra, NSW*

... celebrate being  
older and prove  
age is no barrier!

ALAN MOORE,  
*Newcastle, NSW*

... overcome the  
'black dog',  
and embrace  
the positive  
and wonderful  
in this world.

LLOYD ELLIS, *Melbourne, Vic*

... dance and delight  
in delicious  
delicacies and  
discount drabness.

HUGH WILLIAMSON,  
*Sydney, NSW*

... celebrate my 50th birthday  
with a hot-air balloon ride.

CAROLINE HEMINGWAY, *Melbourne, Vic*

# What a Difference a Day Makes

A single incident can change your life forever

BY MARGARET CLARK

*Now 83 years old, Margaret Clark was just 27 at the time of the accident. After leaving the airline some time after, she married and had three children. She has always enjoyed writing about her life. She lives in Brisbane.*

AS I REMEMBER, June 11, 1960, dawned as any other winter morning in Brisbane, Australia. The morning newspaper arrived and when it was placed in front of me, it became startlingly obvious that this was not to be like any other day. A Trans Australian Airlines (TAA) Fokker Friendship passenger plane was missing off the coast of Queensland near Mackay.

*TAA aircraft do not crash*, I thought. But when news came through on the radio that wreckage had been found, I had to face the truth: Flight 538 had crashed into the sea on the evening of June 10, 1960. I could have been on that flight. I have wrestled with the 'why' ever since.

Like many other young women in the 1950s, I decided that I would become an air hostess (as they were then known). My application to TAA was successful and I was based in Brisbane. Every three weeks Flight 538, from Brisbane to Mackay, would appear on my roster. It had been three weeks previously that I crewed that flight with one of the hostesses who died in the crash. Either one of us could have been on that flight. Why was it not me? Is our life all mapped out before us? Or was it pure chance that my life was spared?

This day became like no other, as I was one of the hostesses rostered to fly Flight 538 that afternoon -



*A Fokker Friendship plane (above); Margaret Clark as a TAA air hostess in the 1950s (left)*

PHOTOS: (PLANE) ALAMY IMAGES; COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

just one day after the fatal crash in which 29 people (including the captain, first officer and two air hostesses) had been killed. There was an atmosphere of gloom at the airport, as most of the staff tried to process what had happened. Perhaps it was all a bad dream and the Fokker Friendship had not crashed? It's fair to say that all the staff were in shock. The

first duty for me and my junior hostess was to sign on in the duty book. We looked down to see the signatures of the two now dead girls who, on the previous evening, had mistakenly signed on for June 11, not June 10. It was just a clerical error, but it affected me greatly. We then boarded the plane.

During our training it had been instilled in us to never reveal to passengers how we were really feeling. Naturally, that afternoon I felt deep sadness, and a sense of loss and fear. We were expected to treat this like any other flight. Even so, some of the passengers that we greeted on board seemed oblivious of what had happened. How could that be? I never could understand that what seemed so

important and sad to me did not seem to affect them at all.

The flight proceeded and we touched down at Maryborough and Rockhampton as normal. We then headed north towards Mackay where the foggy conditions were the same as they had been the previous evening. The captain decided to circle above the sea and not to attempt to land yet. This was particularly disturbing, as I could see the lights below where my colleagues' plane had gone down into the sea and where the searchers were looking for bodies. It was then that what had happened became a reality.

As all our cabin duties were completed, there was little we could do other than chat to passengers. One lady told me she was a fiction writer. "What's the name of your latest book?" I asked her.

*"Lightning Strikes Twice"*, she replied.

*I hope not*, I thought to myself.

With the weather conditions still poor, the decision was taken to instead proceed to Townsville. This was a great relief as we had circled the wreck area for an hour.

While we circled, I had thought about the hostess who was my companion the last time I crewed this flight – the woman who had died in

that wreck below. We had discussed our futures. She was only 26. We fill our lives with minor worries and never seem to learn that the only time we

have is the present. Life can be extinguished in a moment.

I also had time to reflect on another flight I had taken a few weeks earlier, when the first officer, now dead, and I had attended a church service on an overnight stopover in Townsville.

It now seemed unbelievable that the

sermon that evening was about life after death. We discussed this later and he asked me what I thought about life after death. My answer was, "Maybe we will just have to wait and see." I now thought of that young first officer.

I eventually realised it was pure chance that I flew on June 11, 1960, and not June 10. What a difference a day makes. I was given the opportunity to learn to value the present moment, but as I am human, I forget this simple truth often. My thoughts then return to that day. I have never forgotten the friends I lost in that crash and often pause to reflect on the fragility of life.

“  
**He asked me  
 what I thought  
 about life after  
 death. My answer  
 was, “Maybe we  
 will just have to  
 wait and see”**

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



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# Shelter from the Super Storm

Trapped by rising floodwaters, I had nowhere to go

BY DONNA BUCHANAN

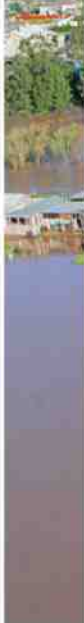
*Donna Buchanan lives in Kurri Kurri in the Hunter Valley, in Australia, with her 13-year-old dog, Jock. Her interests include writing, photography, live music and gardening.*

DURING THE APRIL 2015 'super storm' and subsequent flooding and devastation in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, my faith in people was restored. On Monday, April 20, we had experienced torrential rain and cyclonic winds. During a break in the weather on Tuesday morning, I stupidly decided to drive into town to buy some groceries.

I left the supermarket around 10am. However, as I drove the six kilometres back to my home, the weather took a turn for the worse. It was raining very heavily and I was forced to take a road I don't usually travel. Nearing my suburb, I turned the corner and watched as the water level on the road rose in front of me. I had nowhere to go.

The driver of a four-wheel drive signalled from his car to tell me not to try and cross the flooded road. Then I noticed a chap in his early 30s in his front yard assessing the situation. He quickly waved to me to come and park in his driveway away from the gushing torrent of water that was about to engulf my car.

The man, who introduced himself as Trent, then urged me to wait inside his house with his wife, Kayti, and two





*Cyclone-like conditions bring flooding to the Hunter Valley*

daughters, Anne, four, and Eleanor, two. I told him I was concerned about the damage to my father's car, which I was driving, as the continuing rain started to turn into hail. Trent then grabbed a cover from his garage and covered my car to protect it from the hail. He was totally drenched, but took everything in his stride and didn't seem to mind being out in the wild weather on my behalf. Fortunately, his efforts saved Dad's car from being damaged by the hail.

By 11am, the electricity and phone services had both gone and I couldn't reach my parents, despite knowing they would be worried. Trent made me a cup of tea on his gas primus and Kayti gave me a towel to dry myself off. While waiting for the weather to abate, I learned that Trent had been

retrenched from his job ten months prior and was trying his hand as a local handyman to make ends meet.

By 12.30pm the rain had abated so I asked Trent if he thought it would be safe enough to leave – he assured me it was. It had been three hours since I had left to go to the supermarket.

As I left, I insisted on taking two of his business cards, and my father has since called Trent to offer him work as a handyman at our place doing various odd jobs.

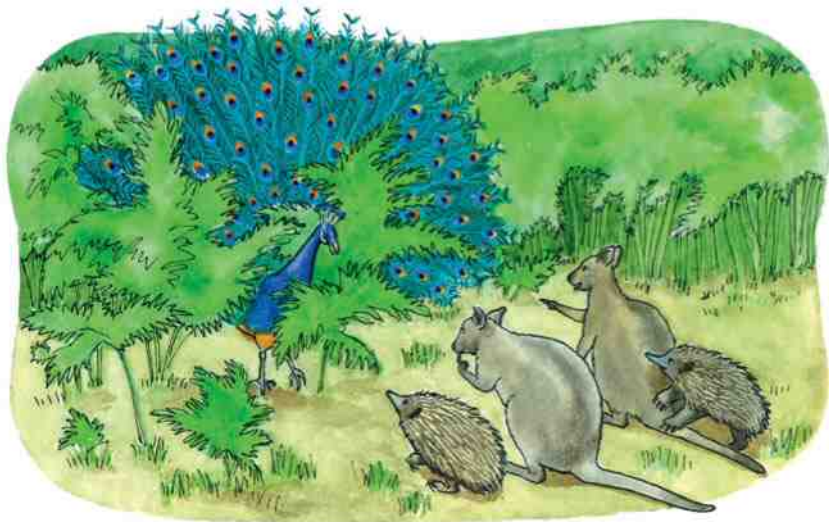
Trent and Kayti were so modest as I thanked them for their help. I was very heartened by Trent's kindness and it renewed my trust in people.

---

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

# Smart Animals

The human-animal bond can be both beautiful and inspiring



## Jalal the Peacock

OLIVER GARLICK

About eight years ago, a peacock flew through towering gums into a clearing. It came to where I live and grow blueberries, in Golden Valley, Tasmania. The peacock decided to stay and it was welcome, to be fed and to sleep in a tall gum.

A month or so later, I learnt that this peacock had escaped a culling at a neighbouring property where peacocks were sometimes bred. My wife and I decided to name the peacock, whose ruffled emerald-green feathers bobbed gracefully

between bracken ferns, oceans away from where his wild kin roam. We chose Jalal, the first name of the Persian poet Rumi, to suit our gentle, other-worldly friend. Jalal remained among the blueberries for many months, often peering through windows or displaying his magnificent tail to the delight of curious wallabies and echidnas.

Then, three months after his arrival, he was suddenly nowhere to be seen. Jalal had flown away deep into the bush. As saddened as we were by his departure, it had been such a strange and wonderful thing

for a peacock to appear on our property that I didn't think he would stay forever. By late summer, we were sure that he would not return and that he must be very far away. We accepted that he must have moved on and hoped that he was OK.

One day, however, Jalal did return in all his splendour. And every year since he has repeated this migration. We know now that it is a migration of love or at least love sought. His tail grows anew every spring and he gets louder, more boisterous and confident. He also displays his feathers, which is a real treat.

There are no known feral peacock populations in Tasmania, so Jalal's search is likely hopeless. How far he goes is a delightful mystery. He leaves at the beginning of every summer, lifting his brightly coloured hopes into the sky, seeking again and again that which all of us seek.

## Mother Cat Returns a Favour

NIRMALA SUBRAMANIAM

In December 1998, we heard a feeble meowing near the monsoon drain outside our house in Kuala Lumpur. My daughter, Sheela, went out to investigate and found a newborn kitten in the drain. Luckily it hadn't rained for a few days, so the kitten had been able to survive. Sheela

brought the kitten to the carport and fed it some milk by dipping cotton wool in it and squeezing it into its mouth. We nicknamed the kitten 'Kutti', which, in Tamil, means small.

After about five days, the mother cat came looking for her baby. This was not unusual as we get many stray cats in our compound. My daughter and grandson are cat lovers, and enjoy caring for them. There are no dogs in our compound to frighten the kittens, so they are free to run around, catching frogs and lizards. The kitten left with its mother.

Three months later, my eight-month-old grandson, Suraj, went missing and we were worried sick.

He loved to crawl up and down the stairs so we searched the whole house, but he was nowhere to be found.

We then heard the familiar incessant meowing of a cat.

It was the mother cat, standing near the drain as if to indicate something.

We were relieved to find the toddler in it, scratched all over his face and silent with fear. He must have fallen into the drain while bending over the nearby cement bench. The mother cat had returned the favour extended to her by my daughter.

---

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



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# THE DIGEST

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HEALTH

## 8 Things Dermatologists Do Every Summer

Expert advice on skin protection and care in the hot weather

BY KELSEY KLOSS

**1 Lose old layers** Twice a week, scrub skin with a soft brush, an exfoliating scrub, or a salicylic acid wash to brighten it and allow lotions and serums to be absorbed more deeply. If your skin becomes irritated, exfoliate just once a week.

**2 Cleanse without cream** As the weather warms, switch from a cream cleanser to a gel variety, which is lightweight yet still effective. If you have oily skin, try a foam cleanser. Be sure to wash your face every night in the summer. More time outside means more exposure to harmful air pollutants, which can attach to moisturiser and make-up and exacerbate the signs of ageing.





### 3 Lighten the lotion, too

Heavy creams contain lipids that can cause clogged pores and pimples in more humid months. Instead, opt for serums, lotions or hydrating gels, which are all lighter.

### 4 Strategise sunscreen

In the morning, before you apply your make-up, slather on a sunscreen that is at least SPF 30. Reapply sunscreen every two hours if you're outside. If you're worried about smearing make-up, use a mineral sunscreen powder that is easy to reapply throughout the day. Be aware that moisturisers that contain sunscreen are not as effective as sunscreen itself.

### 5 Consider covering up

Each centimetre on a hat's brim increases coverage of your face by four per cent. Working or exercising outside? Wear sun-protective clothing. Look for a swing tag with a high ultraviolet protection factor (UPF 50+) rating to be sure. You can cut exposure further by heading outdoors before 10am or after 4pm.



**Be aware that moisturisers that contain sunscreen are not as effective as sunscreen itself**

### 6 Be wary of clouds

Sunburn can still occur on cloudy days, when cooler air persuades you to skip sunscreen. However, clouds block only about 20 per cent of the sun's UV rays. Apply sunscreen as you would on sunny days.

### 7 Remember the sly spots

A surprising number of skin cancer cases occur behind the ears and on other areas that you may ignore when applying sunscreen. Cover your ears, the tops of your feet, and your hands for full coverage.

### 8 Eat for sun protection

Studies show that certain foods may offer an extra level of UV protection from within or reduce the risk of skin cancer. Foods high in antioxidants (colourful fruits and vegetables, such as cherries, citrus fruits and pomegranates), Swiss brown mushrooms, green tea, nuts, probiotics (Greek yoghurt with live active cultures and kombucha, a fermented tea) and oily fish (such as salmon) are all star performers.

NEWS FROM THE

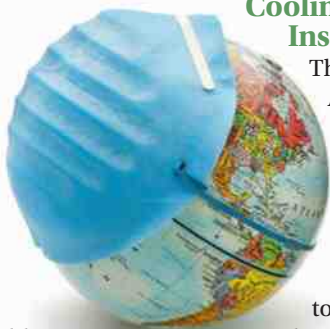
# World of Medicine

## The Pain of Repetition

Performing physical labour (such as bending and lifting) day in, day out for years contributes to osteoarthritis, or deterioration of cartilage that cushions joints. Now a Swedish study has found a possible link between these tasks and rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune condition that inflames the joints. To help prevent arthritis, take breaks, use well-designed tools and employ ergonomic techniques.

## Monitoring Migraines

For 90 days, more than 320 migraine sufferers kept a record of their food and drink consumption, habits and headaches in a study by the Medical University of Vienna. Researchers pinpointed likely triggers – such as soft drinks, bright lights, missed meals – for 87 per cent of subjects. Few people were set off by exactly the same things, which affirms the importance of examining your own triggers.



## Cooling Pad Calms Insomnia

The US Food and Drug Administration has approved a new prescription device to help insomniacs. The Cerève Sleep System uses a software-controlled forehead pad to cool users' brows, as this appears to calm the night-time frontal-cortex activity seen in many insomnia patients. The device will hit the market in the second half of 2017 and may help patients avoid the side effects of sleep medications.

## Exercise Boosts Learning

A new Dutch experiment shows that working out a few hours after learning something new maximises the brain boost. Subjects who rode a stationary bike vigorously for 35 minutes four hours after a learning session retained more information than those who biked right away and those who didn't exercise at all. Physical activity helps the body to produce catecholamines, natural compounds that may improve memory consolidation if released at the right time.

# Adult Orthodontics: Is It Too Late to Get Braces?

**Orthodontic work** can give you a nicer smile, but dentist Dr Paul Major explains it may also improve tooth function, gum health and sleep apnoea. Today there are more treatment options than ever before. Here are three of the more popular.

## Lingual Braces

Lingual braces are attached to the back of your teeth instead of the front. Because the backs of teeth have a lot of individual variability, they're custom made.

**PROS** They don't show. The custom design means a perfect fit.

**CONS** They can irritate the tongue and interfere with speech initially. They can be more difficult to clean, and treatment is a bit slower than conventional braces.

## Self-Ligating Braces

Each bracket has a tiny stainless steel or nickel-titanium alloy clip to hold the wire instead of a rubber band. As the wire can move more freely,

a consistent pressure is maintained throughout.

**PROS** With no rubber bands, they're easier to clean.

**CONS** With more delicate parts, they may be more prone to breakage.

**FYI** Self-ligating braces provide slightly less discomfort than traditional braces, but may be a bit slower to achieve results.

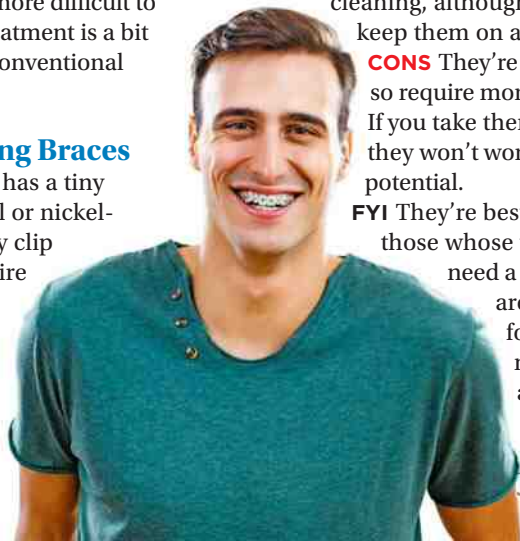
## Clear Aligners

These clear plastic trays fit over your teeth, repositioning them as you replace each tray with the next one in your customised series.

**PROS** They are almost invisible and can be removed for eating and teeth cleaning, although you have to keep them on at night.

**CONS** They're easy to remove, so require more compliance. If you take them out often, they won't work to their full potential.

**FYI** They're best suited to those whose teeth don't need a lot of correction around the foundation but need their alignment adjusted.



# Eye Care Advice to Protect Your Vision

We asked optometrist Jeff Goodhew for the latest advice on protecting your eyes.

## What level UV protection should I look for when buying sunglasses?

You can't tell how much UV protection sunglasses have by their price, colour or the darkness of their lenses. Sunglasses sold in Australia and New Zealand must be tested and labelled according to the AS/NZS standard 1067:2003. Look for a lens category of at least 2, but preferably 3.

## What's your advice to people who spend a lot of time in front of computers, tablets and smartphones?

We recommend following the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet (6 m) away for 20 seconds. This helps reset the focus of the eye and reduce eye strain.

## Is there a 'bad habit' your patients have that you wish they would stop?

I would like to see more patients getting regular eye examinations. Most people assume that their eyes must be perfect if they can see well, but 20/20 vision is only one aspect of an exam. Your eyes are also windows to your overall health and an eye exam can reveal a number of issues, from type 2 diabetes to eye cancer to high blood pressure.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU HAVE AN EYE EXAM?

**CHILDREN** Their first eye examination should be between six and 12 months of age, again at three and then every year once school begins.

**ADULTS** At least once every two years, but yearly exams for those who wear contact lenses or are at risk of developing diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol or thyroid disease.

**65 PLUS** Annual eye exams are recommended for age-related eye conditions, such as macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma.

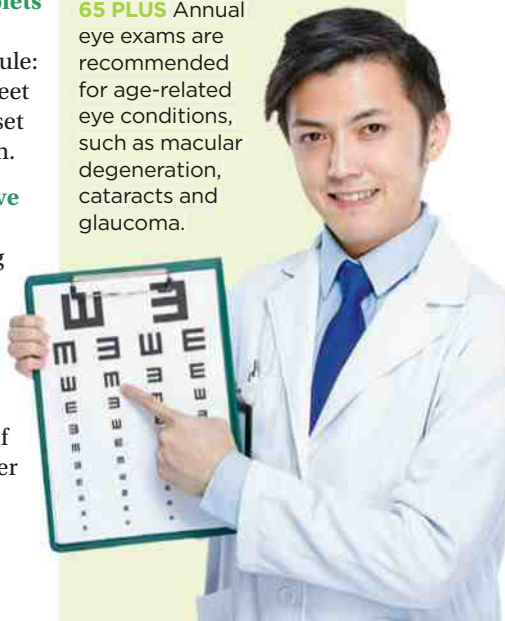


PHOTO: ISTOCK

# Summer Safety BY SOPHIE TAYLOR Tips for Your Animals

**With summer now in full swing** – barbecues, trips to the beach and outdoor parties – be aware that some warm weather traditions are harmful to pets. Here’s how to keep them safe.

**HOSTING A SOCIAL EVENT?** If you have pets, or guests bringing their pets, you may need to rethink some of your food choices. Chicken bones, onions, garlic and avocado are all harmful and potentially toxic to some pets. So too is chocolate.

**SAY IT, DON'T SPRAY IT** Sunscreen and insect repellents can contain ingredients that are harmful to animals if ingested, including particles sprayed into the air. DEET, an ingredient in repellents, can cause digestion

problems in pets and neurological issues in dogs. Use repellent sprays outside only and not near your pets. Keep sunscreen out of reach of your pets, and don’t let them lick sunscreen you’ve applied on your skin.

**GET SHADY** You may not think it’s dangerously hot, but cats and dogs don’t have the same capacity to deal with heat as we do. Try the pavement test: if you can’t hold the back of your hand on the pavement or beach sand for five seconds without discomfort, your dog may suffer paw burn. Walk on the grass only or invest in some paw booties.

Never leave your pet in the car on hot days. Your pet may pass out from heat stroke in just minutes.

PHOTO: ISTOCK



## FRUIT

# Raspberry Mango Creams

Fruit is the ultimate fast food. Eat it as nature intended or dress it up in quick, easy desserts

**Preparation** 10 minutes

**Cooking** Nil **Serves** 4

*1 cup (250 g) thick Greek-style yoghurt or low-fat cream cheese*

*2 tablespoons icing sugar*

*1 large ripe mango*

*1 tablespoon honey*

*250 g raspberries*



## PER SERVING

707 kJ, 169 kcal, 6 g protein, 2 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 30 g carbohydrate (27 g sugars), 4 g fibre, 97 mg sodium

**1** Combine the yoghurt or cream cheese and the icing sugar. Slice the mango flesh off the stone, chop into small chunks and purée in a blender or food processor. Stir in the honey.

**2** Set aside 8 raspberries and 4 teaspoons of the sweetened yoghurt. Divide the remainder of the raspberries among four glass dishes and top with the yoghurt mixture. Use a knife or the back of a spoon to create an even surface.

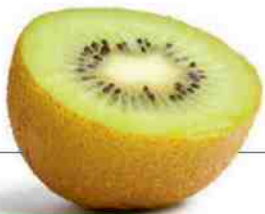
**3** Spoon the mango purée over the yoghurt to cover. Top each portion with 1 teaspoon of the reserved sweetened yoghurt and 2 raspberries.

## Swap It!

*Substitute the mango in the purée with ripe peaches (350 g), nectarines or plums. Top with blueberries, halved black or green grapes or slices of kiwi fruit instead of raspberries.*







GRAB A CAN

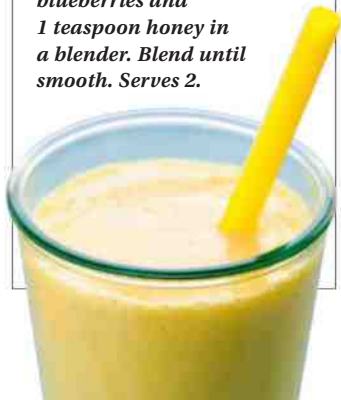
## Pineapple, Kiwifruit and Lychee Salad

**Preparation** 10 minutes  
**Serves** 4

Divide a 410 g can pineapple pieces in natural juice or light syrup among 4 bowls. Peel and slice 4 kiwifruit and arrange on the pineapple. Add 410 g can lychees, with their syrup. Add a squeeze of fresh lime juice just before serving.

## 5-Minute Fruit Smoothie

Combine 1 cup (250 ml) milk, 1 ripe banana or mango, ¼ cup (40 g) blueberries and 1 teaspoon honey in a blender. Blend until smooth. Serves 2.



## Strawberry Granita

**Preparation** 15 minutes, plus 30 minutes soaking and 2 hours freezing  
**Cooking** Nil **Serves** 4

*500 g ripe strawberries, sliced*

*½ cup (80 g) caster sugar, or to taste*

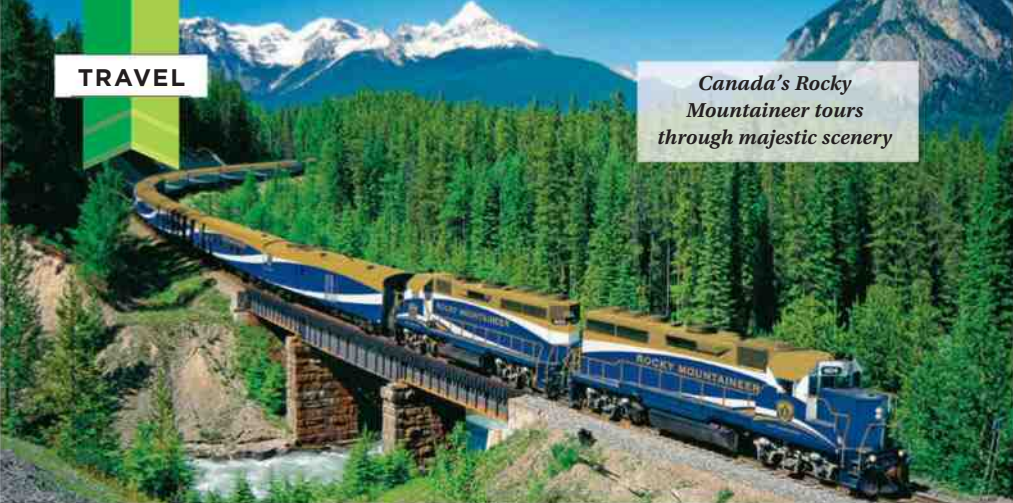
*1 cup (250 ml) blackcurrant or cranberry juice*

*Strawberries, raspberries or other berries, to serve*

- 1 Put the strawberries in a bowl, sprinkle over the sugar and combine gently. Leave to macerate (soak) for 30 minutes at room temperature.
- 2 In a food processor or blender, process strawberry mixture to a smooth purée. Taste and add more sugar, if necessary. Set aside 150 ml of the purée to serve as a sauce.
- 3 Mix the remainder of the purée with the blackcurrant juice. Place in a deep metal tray and freeze for 3 hours, or until set. Then, using a fork, scrape the surface until you have a mixture that consists of separate, almost fluffy, soft ice crystals. Spoon granita into bowls, decorate with berries and serve with the sauce.

### PER SERVING

572 kJ, 137 kcal, 2 g protein, <1 g fat, (0 g saturated fat), 31 g carbohydrate (31 g sugars), 3 g fibre, 16 mg sodium



# Six Great Railway Journeys

BY LOLA AUGUSTINE BROWN

**Travelling by rail** holds a romantic and old-fashioned appeal that can't be matched by flying or driving. By taking the slow route, you get to experience and interact with an area in a completely different way.

## 1 THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

**Where** Canada, from Vancouver to Banff, Jasper and Calgary.

**When** In June, which is springtime in the Rockies, complete with blooming flowers and abundant wildlife.

**Duration** Between two and eight days, travelling only in daylight, staying in deluxe hotels.

**Highlights** Unparalleled views of the Rocky Mountains, incredible luxury at every stage of the trip, traditional native storytelling, wine classes and natural history workshops.

## 2 THE CHEPE

**Where** Mexico. It begins its journey in the mountains of Chihuahua and finishes on the Sinaloa coast.

**When** In the rainy season, from June to October, you'll get lush vegetation and blooming cacti, although mid-summer (July) temperatures can reach 44 °C.

**Duration** Doing the route straight through takes 14 hours, but you'll want to stop off overnight and explore traditional towns along the way.

**Highlights** The train winds its way down through 656 km of the spectacular Copper Canyon (which is deeper than the Grand Canyon), over 37 precarious-looking bridges and through 86 tunnels. Local people sell crafts and foods along the route.

### 3 THE GHAN

**Where** Australia, from Adelaide to Darwin via Alice Springs.

**When** Going during the wet season (December, January) will allow you to see more wildlife and tropical splendour in the north, though peak season is usually the winter.

**Duration** Going straight through takes 52 hours. There are disembarkation points from which you can take tours.

**Highlights** Going through Australia's Red Centre with cobalt-blue skies, red earth and not much else - a hauntingly beautiful and serene experience.

**4 THE ROYAL SCOTSMAN** travels around the Scottish Highlands or all the way around Great Britain.

**When** Warmer weather and up to 20 hours of daylight in June makes it the perfect time to watch ospreys soaring over mirror-like lochs, or go in October for autumn colours and the rather vocal stag-rutting season.

**Duration** Trips can be as short as two days or as long as seven.

**Highlights** Possibly the most expensive train journey in the world. You'll be treated like a member of the monarchy. Indulgent cuisine, fine wines and carriages that look like rooms at Balmoral Castle await those willing to part with a minimum of £2350 per person for a two-night trip.



*The elegant Royal Scotsman carries a maximum of 36 passengers*

### 5 THE BLUE TRAIN

**Where** South Africa, from Pretoria to Cape Town, or to Hoedspruit and Kruger National Park.

**When** From May to August you'll be more likely to observe big game if you go to a game reserve.

**Duration** 27 hours on the train, with several stops along the way.

**Highlights** You'll be travelling through diverse African landscapes in the utmost style, with stays on game reserves optional.

### 6 EASTERN AND ORIENTAL EXPRESS

**Where** From Thailand, through Malaysia, to Singapore.

**When** April and May, for the least humid weather.

**Duration** Trips vary from two to eight days.

**Highlights** You'll travel through the heart of Southeast Asia. From golden temples and paddy fields to cosmopolitan cities, this luxurious train showcases the best of the countries it passes through.

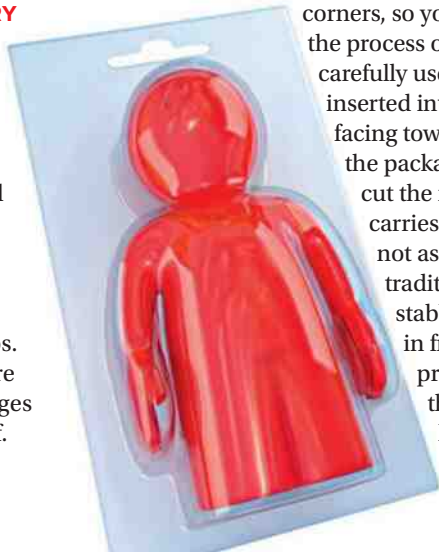
# Opening Clamshell Packaging Safely

BY LAURA LEE

It's your son's fifth birthday, and he tears the paper off his present and starts jumping up and down when he sees the Transformers Robot Fighters Optimus Prime doll he has been begging for. He is ready for some serious robot play, but you are the one about to do battle. You have now entered the clamshell wars. Can you get the toy out of the plastic without slicing a couple of fingers in the process before your son has a complete meltdown?

## YOUR ADVERSARY

Scissors are often no match for this tough material, and thousands of people are injured each year while struggling with packaging. Some of these injuries are from knife slips. Many, however, are from the sharp edges of the plastic itself.



In response to consumer complaints, some manufacturers have started to package their products in shells that are easier to open. Before you pull out the tools, check the back of the package to see if there are any perforations or tabs that you can use to pull the plastic apart easily.

## AN UNLIKELY ALLY

If there are not, go and find your can opener. Open one side of the packaging as if it were a can. The opener will not go around corners, so you can either repeat the process on each side or carefully use a utility knife – inserted into the open side, facing towards the centre of the packaging – to carefully cut the rest open. This carries some risk, but not as much as the traditional method of stabbing the plastic in frustration and prising the knife in through the small hole it created.

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

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

## We give away cash and prizes

Join fun competitions and quizzes



## First look at future issues

Get a sneak peek at upcoming stories and covers



## We give great advice

Get regular home, health and food tips from The Digest



*Friends and good manners will carry you where money won't go.*

MARGARET WALKER



## We help you get motivated

#QuotableQuotes and #PointstoPonder to get you through the day





# Steps to Get Out of Debt

**Getting into deep debt** causes more problems than just financial troubles. The effect on your mental health and relationships can be devastating. Follow this advice to break the habit of overspending once and for all.

## CAN I UNDO THE DAMAGE?

Yes, but it's not easy. The process of getting out of debt takes time, it can be hard on your ego and your lifestyle, you must be constantly vigilant and it's easy to revert to old habits. But for those who succeed – and many do – the results are stunning.

**YOUR REPAIR PLAN** Learn about money management. You can't master your money if you don't understand the rules and methods of personal finance. Find a straightforward book

or website and learn all you can about credit cards, budgeting and investing.

## PUT YOUR CREDIT CARDS ON ICE

Literally. Put them in a cup, add water and place it in the back of the freezer so you can't use them for any impetuous purchases.

**CREATE A BUDGET** How much money is coming in each month? How much are you spending on essentials and how much on frivolous purchases? Then, follow these guidelines to help control your debt.

- Pay more than the minimum due each month on bills.
- Pay more than the minimum on your highest-interest credit card. After you pay that off, move to the one with the next highest interest.
- Automate good money habits. Have your wages paid directly into your account and bills paid automatically from it. Also have small amounts automatically diverted to savings accounts.
- Find an incentive to cut unnecessary spending: set a goal and post a photo of it where you will see it often.





# Don't Waste Ink and Paper

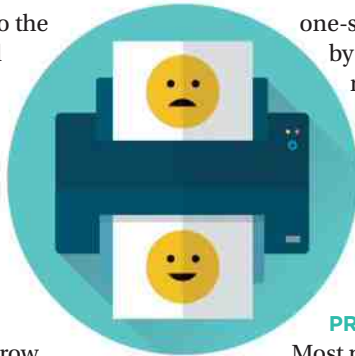
BY LAURA LEE

**Whatever happened** to the paperless office that all the futurists predicted we'd have by now? It hasn't materialised, and instead we have the ability to make gorgeous full-colour presentations from our desks, thus increasing the amount of paper we use and throw away. But you don't have to be part of the problem.

## RECYCLING ISN'T A DEFENCE

Don't use your recycle bin as an excuse to print every little email and memo. US researchers discovered that rather than serving as a reminder to reduce consumption, consumers feel less wasteful and guilty when they put the paper in a recycle bin, and with a free conscience, they use more. Remember that recycling isn't a one-to-one ratio. It takes a lot of resources to make paper, and so each sheet of paper you recycle doesn't magically turn into a clean sheet.

**DON'T DISCARD PAPER THAT HAS A BLANK SIDE** Instead, put used



one-sided paper in a box by your desk. It will not be appropriate for your important correspondence, but you can reach for this paper for your everyday, utilitarian print jobs.

## PRINT IN DRAFT MODE

Most printers allow you to select from various levels of print quality. Draft mode is a little less pretty, but it uses less ink and also prints faster. Choose an ink-friendly font. A font with a thinner print line, such as Times New Roman, can use 30% less ink than Arial. There is also a special font called Ecofont that you can purchase.

## AVOID UNNECESSARY COLOUR

Colour is great for eye-catching presentations, business cards, flyers and photo printing. Yet most of the time, when you print out a document for your information, colour is just a waste of ink. Depending on your printer, you may have the option to select greyscale printing using the black ink cartridge only.

If you could get a word in edgewise,  
over the pointing and rude interrupting,  
what we really want to know is ...

*What  
Happened  
to*  
**Good  
Manners?**

BY KATHY BUCHANAN

**THE RULES OF MODERN ETIQUETTE** have changed in today's world. How do you go about getting what you want when you want it without offending anyone along the way? Under the constant onslaught of other people's everyday intrusions - from spam SMSs to strangers getting too close for comfort on public transport - are we all turning into grumbling misanthropes?



*Rude drivers*



*Badly behaved kids on public transport*



*Compulsive phone checkers*



*Finger pointers*

Has the world always been this way, or have things been getting steadily worse? And are the people around us as bothered by us as we are by them? What, in the name of civilisation, has happened to good manners?

Etiquette expert Anna Musson says the most prevalent issue with modern-day manners is that we have become too focused on ourselves, facilitated by the ability to shut out the world on our smartphones and disengage.

“One of the key downsides of this ability is that we are losing our empathy, our conversation skills and our ability to get along with others,” says Musson, founder of The Good Manners Company, which advises business people on how to boost success through exceptional conduct.

And while there’s never any excuse for bad behaviour, miscommunications and misperception are often what cause conflict, says psychologist Peter Doyle. “One of the most common issues is simply not listening properly or not paying attention,” he says. “Typically we are chronically ‘overloaded’ and not processing [external stimuli] as well as we need to.”

Do you use the ‘thank you’ wave in traffic? And do you let your phone ring out while someone is speaking with you? It seems when it comes to treating those

around us well, it is the small things that really matter.

## How Do You React?

**THIS HAPPENS** You’re waiting patiently in a queue at the supermarket checkout when a respectable-looking lady pushes in front of you.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** Sulk or instantly get angry. Overreact and be sarcastic or aggressive.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** “Assuming the best of people, however faux it may be, is often your best approach,” counsels Musson, who suggests you assume the queue jumper was oblivious. “Point and sweetly say with a loud voice and a smile, ‘I’m not sure if you noticed but the queue starts over there.’”

According to Doyle, there’s no escaping queue-jumping everywhere from airports to ticket lines, or when people push their way into clearly reserved seats. He suggests, “The trick is to ask yourself: *in the big picture of my life how much will that matter?* Then let it go. Even try laughing at the absurdity of the situation.”

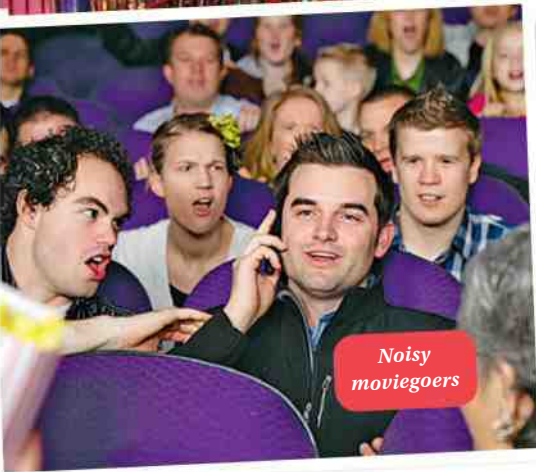
If it really does matter to you, then be polite but assertive. For example, “Excuse me, but I was actually next in line. I’d let

you go ahead, but I’m running late, thank you!” If they respond badly, then make the choice that suits the

“The trick is to ask yourself: in the big picture of my life how much will that matter?”



Queue jumpers



Noisy moviegoers

consequence. Do you really want to escalate the situation to an argument in public with a stranger? Always weigh things up and ask yourself, “Are the struggle, stress and anxiety worth the outcome?”

**THIS HAPPENS** You are at a movie theatre, and just as you settle down to enjoy the film, someone a few seats away begins rustling and eating potato chips very loudly. Or even worse, a fellow moviegoer incessantly kicks the back of your seat.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** Whisper loudly a complaint to your movie companion about how annoying the behaviour is without actually addressing it directly.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** Musson stresses the importance of responding swiftly. “A generic *shhhhhhhh* can be effective and a good way to avoid confrontation,” she says. “Do several of these and the offender will hopefully get the idea.”

When it comes to seat kicking, regardless of the age of the person, her advice is to be direct. “Turn around and politely ask, ‘Would you mind not kicking my seat please? Thank you.’” Children will be so shocked that you spoke to them they will stop immediately. This also works on planes.

Doyle suggests finding a realistic and workable solution. “First try a respectful negotiation,” he says. “If that fails, then ask yourself: *am I willing to move to another seat?* If not, then do you want to lodge a formal complaint with the theatre management?”

Having personal power is about thinking things through before you take action – and it can be a matter of





*More interested in snapping the food than the company*

just seconds. Once you master this, you are much less likely to be triggered and feel angry in these types of situations.

**THIS HAPPENS** You're with friends or family, hoping to catch up on their lives, and tell them about yours. But instead they are busy checking their phones, taking calls or just browsing through Facebook while forgetting you're there. Alternatively, they are too busy photographing everything from themselves to food to focus on any real conversation.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** It is completely understandable if you feel like gently taking their phones and slowly dipping them into the nearest glass of water. Or loudly shouting,

"Hello?!" Most of us simply remain silent and quietly get grumpier.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** Musson recommends that you point out that their attention isn't on you with comments such as: "I would love to hear more about what's happening with you so when you've finished with that, let's have a proper chat." If they then say they are happy to speak now - even though their eyes are clearly fixed on their device - respond with a cheery, "Oh no, I can see you're doing something. I'm happy to wait to have your full attention." If you can deliver this without a hint of agitation, the floor is yours.

Doyle says the best approach is to set the tone by making a good example.



"With technology at our fingertips, we are all bombarded and it is very difficult to stay grounded (or focused)," he says. "We need to get back our time and our headspace. Be a good example and try not using your smartphone when you are with others, watch less TV and speak to others more." This means demonstrating that you genuinely care about the response and are ready to listen when they speak.

Make the other person the focus of the conversation and think, *What can I learn about you?* "Remember that most people are kind and loving and want to create proper connection with other people in their life," adds Doyle. "Either give them a chance to do so or show them the way."

**THIS HAPPENS** You're at a wedding, or a social function, and a distant relative (or a complete stranger) begins a personal interrogation, asking deeply personal questions about your career, income, relationship, children or reproductive status.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** You give them an outraged look or a very curt reply, have an angry stomp, a trip to the bar for a stiff drink or all four!

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** First of all, let's assume that relatives are well meaning and not intending to pry, says

Musson. And if they are deliberately trying to push 'hot buttons,' the diversion approach can be diplomatic and fun. She suggests saying, "It's interesting you would ask me that, Aunt Joan ..." Then change the subject completely. This is a wonderful segue into a totally random subject and works on any occasion.

"Try saying to them, 'I find that a strange question - why do you ask that?'" suggests Doyle. "And then laugh (but don't be sarcastic). This puts the onus back on them. If they still push you, just remain clear about your own boundaries and say, 'Thanks, but I prefer not to talk about it.'"

“Be a good example and try not using your smartphone when you are with others”

**THIS HAPPENS** You're walking along the street, when you see that most charming of sights: someone spitting on the road. Alternatively, you seethe in indignation as someone litters, or wanders around

scratching themselves obliviously.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** Even if you are normally a peaceful person, seeing a sudden visual assault can make you want to react angrily. At the very least, you may *tut-tut* or fume, letting their behaviour get to you.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** When it comes to inexcusably bad behaviour, Musson admits she supports public shaming. "For spitting and other vulgar

choices an audible ‘That’s disgusting’ is justified – provided the person isn’t intoxicated or affected by drugs. For littering, be direct. I’ve been known to pick up litter and hand it back to the person with a straightforward: ‘You dropped this.’”

According to Doyle, much of the absence of manners between strangers in public is due to the pace of modern life. “The world is too fast, too busy and most of us have too many responsibilities and are too stressed,” he says. “People are really struggling with the complexity of what is going on. But we need to take responsibility for our own behaviour and let others know when their behaviour is not acceptable.” He advises that if you feel you want to engage, then use ‘I’ statements. For example say, “I don’t find that behaviour acceptable.” Then quickly move on.

**THIS HAPPENS** You’re having an enjoyable dinner when one of your companions is rude to a waiter.

**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** Quiet shock. Embarrassment. You pretend it didn’t happen but let it ruin the dinner for you, and secretly and generously tip the waiter as you leave.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD** For Musson, this kind of behaviour is a red flag and on a par with being unkind to animals.

“It’s worth asking your companion – in a light-hearted manner: ‘Was there a fly in your soup?’” she says. “This will help open the conversation and provide an opportunity to defend the server and hopefully encourage your friend to see the error of their ways.” Saying nothing condones this behaviour and you may be treated accordingly on your next visit.

“Put boundaries in place and immediately let your friend know their behaviour is not acceptable,” says Doyle. “Then become very focused on your intention and purpose when you are dealing and interacting with that person in the future.”

However, if the aggressor is you, Doyle suggests it may be time to concentrate on what’s bugging you. He suggests the ABC of self-care:

- A) Spend time daily doing breathing, visualisation techniques and meditation to help lower your own stress levels and take part in gentle exercise.
- B) Make an effort to connect with and spend time in nature. Wherever possible, consciously choose laughter, love and a genuine connection to others as your focus as opposed to fear and defensiveness.
- C) Be aware of nutrition and the quality of food you’re putting into your body.

“  
*Put  
boundaries  
in place to let  
your friend  
know such  
behaviour is  
unacceptable*”

**THIS HAPPENS** You're driving along and encounter an angry driver suffering from road rage, who cuts you off and gives you an obnoxious hand gesture.

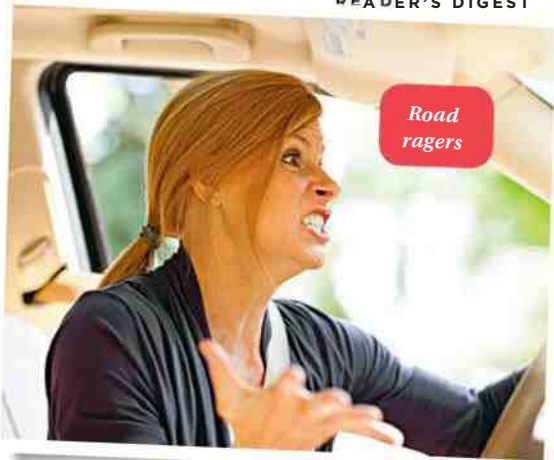
**YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE** Angrily shout back or give a rude hand gesture yourself – just adding fuel to the fire.

**TRY THIS INSTEAD**

“Nothing infuriates a road rager more than an oblivious recipient of their rage,” says Musson. “A sweet wave that suggests you are saying hello will ensure your blood pressure stays low. Adopting a ‘live and let live’ attitude to driving will help ease tensions.”

In this case, Doyle advises that it is imperative you avoid escalating the aggression. “Respond to the situation without blame or judgement,” he says. “If you criticise or attack them, you may face more attacks. Simply shake it off and safely drive on.”

**LET'S FACE IT** We're all guilty of at least one of the behaviours mentioned here at some point. We've justified it



– we were in a hurry, or desperate, or just not paying attention. We've felt bad, but we've gone with it, resolving to try better next time. And that's fine.

It's easy to slip: the point is to know where the line is, and to try to hold it. And it's not at all difficult to do better. All we have to try to do is be the best we can, and we'll find that nothing happened to good manners: they were within us all along. **R**

Do you think people are ruder than they were a decade ago? Write to us. Address details on page 6.



## LAUGHTER IS THE BEST ... DEFENCE

If your enemy is laughing, how can he bludgeon you to death?

**MEL BROOKS**, US SCREENWRITER AND FILM DIRECTOR  
FROM THE BOOK *QUOTES EVERY MAN SHOULD KNOW*

For two decades, Derek and I celebrated successes and weathered setbacks together. So when a rare cancer knocked him down, there was only one thing to do: I asked him to move in with my pregnant wife and me

# THE BIG FRIENDSHIP

BY JASON McBRIDE



*The author (left) and his  
best pal in Paris, in 1989*

**THE FIRST TIME** I went to a hospital emergency department (ED) with Derek McCormack in 1988. We were roommates at the University of Toronto. During a party nearby, I had gotten into a stupid fight over a girl – it wasn't even a fight, really, it was one unexpected punch, and my front tooth flew from my mouth like a popcorn kernel. I was so shocked I didn't even think to hit the guy back. Soaked in my own blood, I ran to my room, where Derek was up, reading, and he wisely suggested we head to the hospital. But I was boozy and belligerent

the autumn of 2011, having suffered from inexplicable abdominal pain for several months, Derek was sent to the emergency department at Mount Sinai. I joined him there as quickly as I could. When I arrived, he was alone, and he looked scared and visibly smaller than his 1.8 metres. I thought it was an ulcer. Derek, like he usually does, thought it was something much worse.

I don't really remember what we talked about as we waited, watching other people in other kinds of distress – overdoses, broken legs, bloodied noses – but I do remember thinking, and



## I CAN'T FATHOM THE FEAR THAT DEREK WAS FEELING. WHEN WE HELD HANDS THIS TIME, WE WERE SHAKING

and insisted on returning to the party. After shoving my assailant into a bathroom and administering some half-hearted, belated blows, I miraculously found the tooth embedded in the beer-soaked carpet. Several hours later, at the Toronto General Hospital, a doctor tried (unsuccessfully) to re-attach it to the root, pressing the tooth with sadistic force into my gum. More blood. Derek held my hand.

Over the next couple of decades, we visited other EDs together. Different hospitals, different problems: bike accidents, parents' illnesses. Then, in

then blurting out, that I had been lucky in life. I immediately regretted having said it – that's a sentiment you keep to your superstitious self. But it was true: in my early 40s, I'd evaded the elemental hardships that most middle-aged men and women have endured. I'd never experienced a war or poverty or a serious natural disaster. No-one really close to me had died. If others lurched from crisis to crisis, I dwelt in an almost entirely disaster-free zone.

And then, just like that, I was in crisis mode. We were summoned into the depths of the ED and, after further



examination, Derek was admitted to hospital. The next day, exploratory surgery revealed that the source of his pain was not, in fact, an ulcer but an extremely rare, potentially lethal, cancer of the appendix. It was so rare, in fact, that the doctors wouldn't – couldn't – give us a prognosis. We were both 42 years old: not young, but not so old that the news didn't blindside us.

It wasn't me facing death, and I can't fathom the fear that Derek was then feeling. But I recall what I felt – like someone had sucker-punched me again, this time knocking out all my teeth. At that point, Derek and I had been friends, the closest friends imaginable, for more than half our lives. When we held hands this time, both of us were shaking.

**HOW MANY FRIENDS DO** you get in a lifetime? And how many of those will be with you for a lifetime? Even the most robust and profound connection can dissolve when one of you moves to a new city, or gets a different job, or simply becomes lazy. Growing old is hard; growing apart is easy. And a friend you still have in middle or old age is a different creature than the friend you had as a kid, or even in your mid-20s.



*Making the most of dorm life at college in 1989*

Those youthful pals are great – they're the ones you share dreams with, the ones you call to help you move. But the friends you still have when you realise you're ageing, when you're at last buffeted by genuine pain and buttressed by actual accomplishment, these are the friendships that are truly *formed*.

Derek and I were flung together by fate in the autumn of 1987. We lived in a dormitory full of aspiring drunks, indifferent students, Tetris champions. I was all of those things; Derek was none. From the first day, he was funny, original, dauntingly smart. I arrived in penny loafers, he in Japanese designer jackets and rockabilly sideburns. We lived in a room divided by a cheap plastic sliding door; on one side of this partition was his bookshelf, on the other mine. A friend of a friend described his library as "majestic", and it was, the carefully curated collection of a precocious aesthete, swelling with cutting-edge continental philosophy, British music mags, semiotics textbooks. In the Bs

on my shelves, you could find the novelisation of the sci-fi movie *Buckaroo Banzai*. Though I had just moved to Toronto from Tokyo, and he had come from Peterborough in Ontario, a town so small I had never heard of it, it was very clear that I was the bumpkin.

But we were both sensitive, shy outsiders – my father, an American business executive, had moved us overseas when I was in Grade 1, and I had lived in a different house every year of my life since, often changing schools. Meanwhile, as a gay kid in a tiny town, Derek had endured violence and scorn and had acquired the necessary armour: tart wit, disarming warmth, faith in art's transformative power. We shared the latter belief, though I also arrived still bearing the traces of an immature homophobia – I hadn't knowingly met anyone who was gay before Derek. That prejudice evaporated in the face of the admiration I felt for him.

Derek was the best teacher I had, introducing me to The Smiths and Roland Barthes, correcting my pronunciation of Goethe. He made my world, and brain, bigger.

Our friendship deepened over that year. And the next, and the year after that, when we dropped out of school and moved to Spain for a few months, ostensibly to write. After returning to Canada, we eventually rented the top two floors of a Victorian house in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood, where we lived – except for my eight-month

film school stint in Vancouver – for 14 years. It was a cosy place, a perfect location. The decor was Derek's: tramp art, Halloween memorabilia. I did most of the cooking. Perpetual adolescents, we napped a lot, smoked indoors, bought six-dollar wine.

Though I had a few girlfriends during those years, most of those relationships were fleeting or fraught. Derek's romantic life, meanwhile, only tormented him. Many people, understandably, assumed we were a couple. We went most places together, shared most things. We worked together, too, both of us assistants at a small bookstore. Lying on the couch, laptop perched on his chest and TV turned up loud, Derek crafted brilliant novels. I made some middling short films, one of which was an adaptation of one of his stories. Our fights were the idiotic, insignificant spats borne of intimacy.

When, finally, in 2008, one of my girlfriends, an enchanting photographer and artist named Liz, became someone I wanted to live with, the upheaval was unsurprising. To this day, Derek still half-jokes about me “kicking him out”. But after a few weeks, our friendship resumed almost unchanged. We spoke almost every day.

In 2011, Liz and I got married and, at our wedding reception, Derek said of me in his toast, “His friendship has always made me want to be reliable, trustworthy; it makes me want to make and do things that he will admire.”

**IF 2011 ENDED WITH DEREK'S** grim, uncertain medical news, 2012 began with more promise. On January 31, we found out Liz was pregnant. When I told Derek, he was elated. A month later, I was to accompany him on a trip to New York, where the experts at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center confirmed a plan of action. It had been determined that the best treatment option was a rare, radical surgery: most of Derek's digestive organs would be removed (some permanently) and scraped free of cancerous cells, and a heated chemotherapy

operating room singing the Carter Family's 'I'm Working on a Building.' Sixteen hours later, he was alive, but just barely. His appendix, spleen, gallbladder and part of his bowel were now medical waste. When he arrived at the ICU, the anaesthetic had worn off, but he was still intubated and convinced he was being strangled. Morphine hallucinations transported him to the American Civil War. Drainage holes made him look gut-shot.

I dreaded my daily visits, mainly because the person I was visiting wasn't really Derek. The three weeks he was



ON MARCH 27, 2012, DEREK WENT INTO SURGERY, SINGING. SIXTEEN HOURS LATER, HE WAS ALIVE, BUT JUST BARELY

solution would be poured into his abdominal cavity. His doctors called it the Big Operation.

Back in Toronto, I tried to distract myself. Liz and I had bought a house a couple years prior, and the previous summer, the basement had flooded; we continued to rebuild it. I took up tap dancing and meditation. Along with Derek's sister, Melissa, and another friend, we organised a fundraiser for Derek (the Big Operation would leave him unable to work for, possibly, a year or more).

On March 27, Derek went into the

in hospital felt like three years. The double-barrelled trauma of the cancer and the cure had rendered him unable to eat, drink, read or really talk. He wouldn't smile for weeks. Over the next couple of months, he would lose around 36 kilograms.

And then, all of a sudden, he was able to go home – or not exactly home. Unable to care for himself and unwilling to burden his elderly parents or a sister with a small apartment, he came to live with Liz and me. (A freelancer who works from home, I could be a relatively full-time caregiver.) We were,

for the most calamitous reason, roommates once again. Then in her second trimester, Liz heroically gave up our queen-size bed, and we bunked down on a futon in my office. During the day, Derek lay on the living room couch, still something other than himself, staring mutely into an abyss. Chemo brain, we were told. Sleep was impossible, showering not much easier. Infections were incessant. He sometimes soiled his pyjamas or the bed. I forced him to walk with me around the block, excruciatingly painful strolls that felt like slow-motion marathons.

By the middle of May, however, his laptop was back on his chest again. In June he received his pathology report and we learned that the actual number of cancerous cells they discovered during his surgery was lower than expected, and that they had gotten them all. A few days later, six weeks after moving in with us, Derek wanted to go back to his own apartment, to try to resume a relatively normal life; two weeks later, he did.

His convalescence didn't end there, nor did my commitment. He remained convinced of the cancer's imminent recurrence. I accompanied him to regular follow-ups with his surgeon to quell his anxiety – and reassure myself. Derek's currently cancer-free (touch wood), but he's still plagued by bothersome bowels, chronic fatigue, infections that feel like bad practical jokes. Last autumn, he published a new novel, *The Well-Dressed Wound*.



*Top: Liz, Jack and Derek (right) in 2014  
Above: Me (left), Jack and Derek two years after the Big Operation*

Both Derek and I know how rare and extraordinary our connection is. Before he got sick, though, it wasn't something I spent a lot of time thinking about. His friendship was the greatest compliment of my life, but it was also a fact whose permanence I never questioned.

So when a few people expressed surprise that Liz and I had helped

take care of him, I was dumbfounded. I had been abruptly confronted with the unimaginable possibility of Derek's disappearance, and I just wanted him around as much, and as long, as possible.

**OUR SON, JACK**, was born in September 2012, at home, in the same bed where Derek had recovered. Jack's birth was auspicious – it was both Yom Kippur and the Year of the Dragon, and he was born 'en caul' (with the amniotic membrane still covering his head), all supposedly signs of good luck. Derek came over to meet him the next day. They both looked so fragile. We all wept. We had packed so much life and death into six months.

Derek and I didn't choose to live together when we first met, but we kept choosing to live together for years after that. Our relationship necessarily expanded our idea of family; after I married Liz and we had Jack, and Derek remained central to my life, that idea stretched even further.

Now aged three and a half, Jack calls Derek "Baba", a gender-neutral word that apparently means father in some cultures, grandmother in others. He came to it accidentally; I don't remember how or why. My favourite poem these days: "I lub you, Baba."

I've left out a lot, of course. But an image from a few years ago lingers. The summer after his illness, I couldn't think of anything to buy Derek for his birthday. All he wanted, he said, was to spend more time with Jack. So I bought him a train ticket, and he joined me, Liz and Jack at a holiday house we rented.

It was unseasonably cool, and I made a fire in the fireplace. Derek got down on the floor to play with Jack, who'd just learned to sit up and was surrounded by pillows. In the firelight, both bald, they began to throw balls back and forth. Naturally, Jack did start to topple, but Derek caught him before he fell. Jack giggled and did it again; this time, it seemed, he pretended to fall so that Derek would catch him. They both giggled. Neither of them looked afraid. **R**



### A NOTABLE NEW YEAR'S

On December 30, 1899, the passenger ship *SS Warrimoo* crossed the exact spot where the equator meets the international date line. Straddling the line at the stroke of midnight, the forward half of the ship entered January 1, 1900, while the aft remained in December 31, 1899 – simultaneously inhabiting two hemispheres on two days in two centuries.

# Life's Like That

SEEING THE FUNNY SIDE

JAN  
1966

## From the Archives

*Technology moves apace, as this now-quaint 51-year-old letter from January 1966 shows.*

A young woman pulled up to the kerb and asked me for directions to a building on the other side of the town. I warned her that the route was a complicated one, and began the intricate directions.

"Wait a minute," she interrupted, and reached into the glove compartment. Taking out a transistorised tape recorder, she thrust the microphone at me. "Just talk into this," she said. "As I drive I can play it back a little at a time." **SUBMITTED BY H.L.**



## SLOW LEARNER

After my wife passed away in 2003, I decided to pursue a university degree – something I'd been unable to do when I was younger. At the age of 79, I achieved my goal and acquired a Bachelor of Arts.

Not long after I graduated, a friend came for a visit and brought along her 12-year-old nephew, Tomas. Learning of my accomplishment, he took in my grey hair and wrinkles and commented, "Wow, did they ever hold you back."

**JAMES FEATHERSTONE**



## DESSERTED

"I don't want a whole dessert; let's just get two spoons' – former friends of mine."

**ACTRESS ANNA  
KENDRICK**



## PATIENCE TAKES WING

One day, when my daughter Trinity was about nine, we were watching a TV show about extreme sports. At one point they showed a person flying in a wing-suit onscreen, and Trinity informed me she'd like to try one some day.

"Over my dead body!" I said.

Shrugging, Trinity replied, "OK, I can wait."

NICOLE BARNES



## GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

When the door to our front porch is opened, the doorbell rings and a motion light comes on. One night, I was in bed when both occurred. I shook my husband. "The doorbell rang and the light's on," I said.

"What?" he said, groggily.

"The doorbell rang and the light's on."

"Huh?"

"The doorbell rang and the light's on!"

He raised his head up. "Say that again."

Through clenched teeth, I spoke slowly, "Somebody is on the porch!"

He said, "How do you know?"

GLORIA KIRKLAND

PHOTOS: ISTOCK



## The Great Tweet-off: Bookish edition

Reading books may be a dying art, but cracking jokes sure isn't. Here are our favourite book-related tweets.

Just overheard someone say, "I wish I had a Kindle that never ran out of batteries." You know. Like a book. @JORDAN\_STRATTON

Ever realised how surreal reading a book actually is? You stare at marked slices of tree for hours on end, hallucinating vividly.

@KATIEOLDHAM

The first rule of Hobbit Club is there's no talkien about Hobbit Club.

@GLENNYRODGE

Thugs call guns 'gats' after *The Great Gatsby* because books are knowledge and knowledge is power.

@TRUMPETCAKE

I hope the guy who just cut me off in traffic has his fav book made into a movie & the characters are nothing like he imagined them.

@LINDZETA

Props to people who still read entire books. I just got bored halfway through a billboard.

@SAGEBOGGS





POWER OF ONE

# Sinking Car Rescue

Driven by an elderly man,  
the vehicle plummeted into the  
river and was quickly engulfed

BY HELEN SIGNY

A dramatic photograph of a car partially submerged in a river. The car is mostly underwater, with only the front end and a portion of the roof visible. The water is a deep, dark blue, and the sky above is filled with heavy, grey clouds. In the foreground, there are large, dark, jagged rocks. The overall mood is somber and urgent.



**ROBIN EVERNDEN** strolled down the concrete jetty and hauled open the ferry gate. It was a task he'd performed hundreds of times already in the six weeks since he'd taken the job as the manager of Molloy Island, a tiny haven of 300 homes at the convergence of the Blackwood and Scott rivers near Augusta in Western Australia. Every hour, on the hour, he'd leave his maintenance duties and ferry cars 145 metres across the river to and from the mainland, the only means of public access to the island.

This crisp August morning, he'd taken a tractor over to do some work on the mainland. It was just before 11.30 and a couple of locals wanted to cross back to the island. Molloy residents may operate the cable ferry themselves on the half hour, provided they have completed a competency test, but today Rob was on hand so he was taking them over himself.

The first car drove onto the ferry and parked at the front, on the downstream side. It was Toni, a friend from the island, and Rob waved at her. He glanced up as a second car approached, a small four-door Hyundai i30 being driven by one of the more elderly islanders. Rob waved him on.

The birds were singing and the glassy river glided by. *What a perfect spot to hang out for a couple of years after a full life of travel, adventure and raising three boys*, Rob thought as he looked around.

The stillness was broken by the sudden roar of a car's engine. The car driven by the elderly islander accelerated fast, sped across the entire length

of the ferry and snapped the chains on the other side of the ramp before taking out the gate and shooting 15 metres into the Blackwood River.

Rob and Toni watched in shock as the car spun 180 degrees on impact with the water, its bonnet now facing them as they stood on the ferry. The car remained upright, but it was rapidly taking on water and sinking fast.

Rob immediately grabbed his radio and contacted his wife, Ally, who was in the office downstairs from their accommodation on the island. He was calm and cool. "I'll need the emergency services and a boat," he told her. "A car's gone in."

Ally swung into action, trying to control her breathing as she called emergency services. She knew it would take at least 15 minutes for anyone to arrive from Augusta. But both she and Rob had done extensive health and safety training, and he'd served for years in the Rural Fire Service. He was always logical and calm in an emergency. *If anyone could handle this, Rob could*, Ally thought.

She rushed to the island jetty and squinted into the distance as her husband threw a life buoy to the elderly driver, who was dazed but conscious, and shouted to him to grab it.

The water was flooding into the car and, in his distress, the driver could not hold on. The windscreen was still above the water and he looked desperately at Rob on the ferry as he frantically tried to close the windows to stop the deluge. The driver, who was in his late 70s and couldn't swim, appeared terrified.

Rob thought quickly. The car was sinking fast, and he knew he'd have no chance of opening the doors once they were underwater. The only option would be to pull the driver out of the window before the car's electronics stopped working. "Leave those windows open," he shouted.

Born and raised in Tunbridge Wells in England, Rob was not a strong swimmer. He liked a dip in the water during the hot summer months, but he preferred to have his feet on the bottom. He quickly assessed the risks. Even though Rob knew he'd be out of his depth by the time he reached the car, it was only a 15-metre swim. *If worst came to worst, he thought, I'd still be able to get myself back to the safety of the ferry.*

He lunged into the river and gasped as he hit the cold. In a few seconds he was alongside the car. He grabbed the floating vehicle, but it was too buoyant and rolled over towards him, nearly pushing him under. Rob realised that there was no way he'd be able to hold onto the car to stabilise it while he got the driver out. But there was no time to wait for a boat. He would have to bring the ferry itself alongside the car. "Hang in there, mate," he called out. "I'm going to get you out."

Rob floundered back towards the ferry, where the driver of the first car,

Toni, was on the phone to Ally relaying information. "Grab me a hammer," Rob called out to Matt, a contractor on the island, who was on the ferry, as he clambered out of the water and rushed to the ferry controls. He pressed the button and the ferry jerked off the jetty and started to make its way along the steel cable in the direction of the car.

Rob took his finger off the button, but it was impossible to control the moving ferry as it lunged into the water. The ferry's main steel ramp smacked the car before one of the built-in ramps at the stern sheered straight through the roof.

The car was now stable, held in place by the ferry ramp, but it was almost entirely submerged, nose

**Rob knew he would have no chance of opening the doors underwater**



*Ferry operator Robin Evernden's quick thinking and bravery saved two lives*

down in the water, the weight of the engine pulling it under. All that was visible was the rear window. The group searched in horror for signs of the driver. There was none.

Rob grabbed the hammer and ran to the ramp, lying down on his stomach alongside the part that had skewered the roof of the car. He still couldn't see movement. He smashed the rear passenger window and shoved his arm through. "Grab me!" he shouted, unsure if the driver could hear him through the swirling water.

A hand grabbed his arm. The driver had managed to scramble over the seat into the back of the car. Rob wrenched him up and pulled his face above the water so he could suck in air.

But there was no way the driver, a tall, broad man, was going to fit through the window. He was twisted at an angle with only his nose and mouth above the water, and his shoulder was stuck. Rob was going to have to push him back under the water and turn him round.

"Take a big breath," he told him. "Don't panic, I've got you. Turn around and when I start to pull, give me a push with your legs."

The driver did exactly as he was told. He took a couple of big breaths and Rob pushed him back into the car, below the water. He twisted him round, then pulled with all his might as the older man pushed upwards. He shot out of the window like a cork



out of a bottle and Rob pulled him up onto the ferry.

Toni rushed over and put her arm around the driver, trying to calm him down. He was shaking and agitated, shivering with the cold, and not able at first to speak. But as soon as he could get the words out they realised the reason for his distress. His puppy was still in the car.

By now the car had been under water for a good ten minutes. All that was visible was the rear window. No-one had realised there was a dog in there – surely there could be no hope?

Rob rushed back down the ramp and smashed the rear window with the hammer, feeling through the glass for any sign of life. His heart leapt when his fingers came into contact with fur. Somehow the young retriever, Bella, had found an air pocket up against the window and was alive.

Rob pulled her out, catching her leg on some broken glass, and the terrified animal ran to look for her owner, leaving a trail of blood on the deck. By now a crowd had gathered on both banks, and many hands helped to secure the car with chains.

As soon as the driver had been rescued, Ally had rushed to tell his

wife, who had been at home cooking. She'd heard the sirens and felt a knot of dread in her stomach, but they were able to reassure her that her husband was fine. Had she been in the car, the story might have ended very differently.

She accompanied her husband to hospital by ambulance, where he was treated for shock and mild hypothermia, from which he quickly recovered. Toni, meanwhile, took the dog to the vet. Bella had suffered blood loss and shock, but after a few days she, too, was fine.

Since the ten-minute drama, Rob has become something of a hero in the tight-knit Molloy Island community, and has received a commendation for bravery from the Governor-General of Australia for his quick thinking. He and Ally have now left the island and have gone in search of new adventures.

With adult sons living around Australia, family in England and a lust for travel, they don't know where they will end up. But whatever community they join will be just that little bit safer in the presence of a couple from Tunbridge Wells who showed such calm under pressure. **R**

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### WHY DO WE CALL IT THAT?

The 'limelight'? Because theatre spotlights in the 19th century literally used to burn a block of lime (calcium oxide) heated in an oxyhydrogen flame to create light for the cast to perform.



Informational sign in Swedish, likely describing the geological features of the station. The text is small and difficult to read, but appears to be a historical or geological note.

Upp



**SEE**  
THE WORLD ...

Turn the page 





## ... DIFFERENTLY

Welcome to the world's longest art exhibit! At least that is what Stockholm's subway system is said to be. The 14 islands that make up the Swedish capital are linked by 110 kilometres of underground rail network. More than 90 of the 100 metro stations have been decorated with paintings, installations, sculptures, reliefs and engravings by more than 150 artists. For the Rådhuset (Court House) station on the island of Kungsholmen, artist Sigvard Olsson created an underground grotto. Opened in 1975, the station is one of several featuring what is called 'organic architecture'.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

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Tåg mot T-Centralen • Kungsträdgården

**10 Kungsträde Korttåg**  
Stanna på T-Centralen och Kungsträdgården



The secret to better health  
could be as simple as  
an early dinnertime

# You Are *When* You Eat

BY EMILY LABER-WARREN

JACKIE RODRIGUEZ gained 30 kilograms after her first child was born. “I was very unhappy, but I stayed like that for two years,” she says. Then, when her daughter was two, she dropped all the weight with practically no effort. “I wasn’t using any diet pills, fat burners or shakes ... nothing,” she recalls.

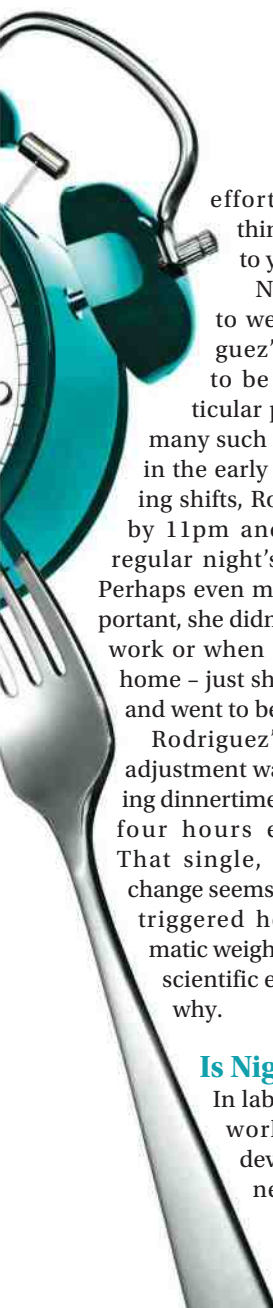
The transformation had nothing to do with what Rodriguez ate. Rather, it began when she started a new job that

shook up her daily routine. Working in the office of a DJ hire company, she started her shift at 5.30pm. Instead of sharing dinner with her husband at nine when he got home from his job as a superintendent, she ate alone at five, before she dropped her child with a babysitter and went to work.

Within nine months, she’d dropped seven dress sizes. She felt like a movie star who seems to lose baby weight







effortlessly. “You don’t think that could happen to you,” she says.

Night work often leads to weight gain, so Rodriguez’s story might seem to be a quirk of her particular physique. But unlike many such workers, who labour in the early hours or work rotating shifts, Rodriguez clocked out by 11pm and got a regular night’s sleep. Perhaps even more important, she didn’t eat at work or when she got home – just showered and went to bed.

Rodriguez’s main adjustment was moving dinnertime almost four hours earlier. That single, simple change seems to have triggered her dra-

matic weight loss – and emerging scientific evidence may explain why.

### **Is Night Eating Bad?**

In laboratories around the world, researchers are developing a completely new understanding of

how our metabolism works. It seems that our bodies are primed to process food most efficiently when it’s eaten during daylight hours. “We now recognise that our biology responds differently to calories consumed at different times of day,” says Harvard neuroscientist Frank Scheer.

That means a habit as innocuous as eating at night, compared with eating kilojoule-equivalent meals during the

day, may cause some people to gain weight. “That late-night bowl of ice-cream may all go towards your waistline,” says University of California, Los Angeles, neuroscientist Christopher Colwell, the author of *Circadian Medicine*.

Just look at Satchidananda Panda’s mice. A molecular biologist at the Salk Institute for Bi-

ological Studies in La Jolla, California, Panda is a leading expert on how the timing of food intake affects health. His research team has found that mice that are only allowed to eat during a 9-12 hour period (called a ‘time-restricted diet’) during their active phase are drastically healthier and thinner than mice that are allowed to

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**It seems that our bodies are primed to process food most efficiently when it’s eaten during daylight hours**

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eat the same amount of food over a 24-hour period.

Encouragingly, when unhealthy, snack-around-the-clock mice are put on a strict schedule that allows them to eat only during their active phase, their rates of diabetes and fatty liver disease improve and their cholesterol levels and inflammation markers diminish. "It's likely we can reduce the severity [of disease] just by changing when people eat," Panda points out.

## The Food-Driven Clock

To understand the connection between meal timing and health, you have to go way, way back in history. The dramatic daily shifts between light and darkness on our planet because of sunrise and sunset have been incorporated into the biology of nearly every living thing.

Our internal organs function differently during the day from how they do at night, in patterns known as circadian rhythms. Over the past few years, researchers have discovered



### USE THE FOOD CLOCK TO LOSE WEIGHT

#### ■ **Fast for at least**

**half of each day.** Try not to eat for at least a 12-hour span daily. Ideally your fast would begin after the evening meal (from 6–8pm) and extend until breakfast (8am).

■ **Eat breakfast like a king and dinner like a pauper.** A 2013 Israeli study put overweight and obese women into two groups. Both had the same number of kilojoules, but one ate a large breakfast, a medium lunch, and a small dinner; the other had a small breakfast,

a medium lunch, and a large dinner. The large-breakfast group lost more weight and showed a stronger improvement in metabolic health metrics.

■ **Forgo late-night noshing.** A 2015 study found that an evening meal raises people's blood-glucose levels 17 per cent more than does an identical meal eaten in the morning. Related research found that the number of kilojoules people burn digesting food in the first two hours

after a meal drops by half if they eat the meal in the evening versus the morning.

#### ■ **Consume only water during your fast.**

Anything else will start your body clock. Put off that morning coffee until after your 12-hour window.

#### ■ **Adjust to your natural rhythms.**

Early birds might want to eat dinner at 6pm and fast until 6am or later. For night owls, it might be easier to have dinner at 9pm and fast until at least 9am.

that unnatural light exposure – such as staying up late amid the glare of a TV or a digital screen – disrupts these rhythms in ways that over time can lead to a host of illnesses.

A meta-analysis published in *Sleep* studying 634,511 people worldwide found that those who frequently miss out on sleep suffer from weight gain and obesity. After a bad night's sleep, the levels of appetite-triggering hormones in the body increase, while hormones that blunt hunger drop. Peoples' bodies become resistant to insulin's effects, raising the risk of fat accumulation, obesity and diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

But now experts have begun to suspect a second circadian clock in the body – organised around food, not light. Scientists still have much to learn about this food-based body clock, but evidence suggests that round-the-clock snacking may pose as much of a danger to our health as artificial light at night. Night eating has been implicated as a factor in diabetes, heart disease, cancer and learning and memory problems.

Throughout evolution, daytime has been for nourishment and nighttime for fasting, and our organs have evolved accordingly. Digestive enzymes and hormones ebb and flow in

a predictable pattern over the course of 24 hours, enabling the liver, intestines and other digestive organs to function together as one well-oiled machine. Our modern world of late-night take-away and snack-filled pantries threatens to upend this calibrating role of food.

“When you eat all the time, your insulin and glucose levels are elevated all the time,” says Ruth Patterson, a nutrition expert and epidemiologist at the University of California, San Diego.

Insulin promotes growth – its constant presence in the bloodstream may give precancerous cells a deadly boost. In new research on breast cancer survivors, Patterson

and her colleagues found that breast cancer recurrences were less likely when women abstained from food for at least 13 hours at night.

### Gut Rest: How It Works

Compared with other kinds of diets, night fasting is simple. In a small pilot study, Patterson's

team told women to eat dinner as early as 6pm and definitely by 8pm and not to eat again until eight in the morning, for at least 12 hours of 'gut rest'. “[Fasting] they instantly understood,” Patterson says. “They didn't have to change what they ate or how they cooked. They would say, ‘If I give my husband a salad for dinner, that



**Patterson found that breast cancer recurrences were less likely when women abstained from food for at least 13 hours at night**

doesn't always fly.' But when they just said, 'I don't ever eat after eight o'clock,' the men were like, 'Whoa, tough girl!' They got respect."

The new research suggests that breakfast really is the most important meal of the day – but we need to embrace its original meaning: breaking a fast. The first meal of the day is most beneficial only if it comes after 12 to 14 hours of not eating or drinking, says Panda.

In addition to fasting at night, it's beneficial to eat your main meal earlier in the day. In a 2013 study, Harvard's Frank Scheer and Marta Garaulet of the University of Murcia in Spain analysed 420 dieters at weight-loss clinics. Participants ate the same number of kilojoules and were equally active, but

those who had their main meal before 3pm lost significantly more weight than those who ate later. "To find such big differences in weight loss with just a slight difference in meal timing is quite remarkable," says Scheer.

To many, the science of meal timing is nothing but common sense. Craig Weingard, a financial compliance manager, is an acolyte to a bodybuilding expert who for years has recommended nightly fasts. For a long time, Weingard resisted. It seemed too painful to go to bed hungry. Finally, he tried it. "In a flash, my whole body changed. I literally can see it the next day when I look at my stomach if I didn't eat after six," he says. "Anything that you eat after 6.15pm becomes part of you." **R**



## DATING DISASTERS

*First encounters aren't always the stuff of dreams.*

- Perfectly nice date, but 20 minutes into it, she says, "I'll be honest. I know what I need in a man, and you don't have it."
- We met for a coffee after having quite a nice chat online for a few days. He sits down and says, "Hi, nice to meet you," then pulls out his laptop and sits in complete silence for the next hour.
- We arrange to meet in a café, and I arrive to find her there. I sit down. She looks at me before saying her opening line, "Let's cut to the chase, I need a father for my four sons."
- About 15 minutes into the first date, her parents showed up at the restaurant to meet me. HUFFINGTONPOST.CO.UK

# Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

## INSTANT CURE

A man goes to his doctor and hands him a note that says, "I can't talk! Please help me!"

"OK," says the doctor. "Put your thumb on the table."

The man doesn't understand how that will help, but he does what he's told. The doctor picks up a huge book and drops it on the man's thumb.

"AAAAAAAAA!" the man yells.

"Good," says the doctor.

"Come back tomorrow and we'll work on B."

SUBMITTED BY L.B. WEINSTEIN

## CODE RED

Yesterday I accidentally swallowed some food colouring. The doctor says I'm OK, but I feel like I've dyed a little inside.

SUBMITTED BY KIM NOWAK

## HOURLY RATES

A plumber fixes a leak in a doctor's house, then bills him for \$1000.

"This is ridiculous!" the doctor says. "I don't even charge that much."

The plumber replies, "Neither did I when I was a doctor."

SUBMITTED BY JEFFREY RAIFFE



*"Don't rush me. I'm texting for two."*

## NAUGHT OUT OF TEN

I told my best friend ten jokes in an attempt to make him laugh. Sadly, no pun in ten did.

Seen on reddit.com

## IT WORKS FOR ME

An 'acceptable' level of unemployment means that the economist to whom it is acceptable still has a job.

Source: econosseur.com



The man who invented auto-correct spellcheck died today. Restaurant in peace.

Seen online



# Master the Crossword

BY LAURA LEE

If your life is littered with half-finished crossword puzzles, your technique may need a little work

## Start Simple

Instead of going through all of the clues in order, for example, all of the acrosses and then all of the downs, work outwards from your first completed word. It will be easier to find right answers quickly if you have at least one letter to help you. Fill-in-the-blank clues are generally among the easiest to solve, so scan the list and start with those. Next concentrate on the short answers. Once you have taken up the crossword habit, you will start to notice familiar words that tend to creep in. Puzzle makers need words that begin and

end with vowels, so you're likely to come across epee, aloe, Arlo, anoa, esne and similar words in your crossword travels. The more puzzles you do, the more 'freebies' like this you will discover.

## Don't Be a Hero

Use a pencil. Everyone makes mistakes, and those boxes are too small to accommodate ballpoint pen cross-outs. The harder puzzles sometimes have multiple answers that fit, but only one that works with the other answers. You might feel certain now, but you need some wiggle room.

### TOP TIP

Fill-in-the-blank clues are generally among the easiest to solve, so scan the list and start with those. Next concentrate on the short answers.






## Keep an Open Mind

When it comes to interpreting a clue, the most obvious read isn't necessarily the right one. Some words – such as golf and love – can be read as a noun, a verb or an adjective. Some are cryptic clues. For example, 'She meets him halfway across the living room' seems like nonsense at first, but if you look halfway across 'living room' you'll see 'groom'. Don't get locked into one meaning, and if you're stuck, go back and reconsider the answers you've already filled in. One of them might be wrong. When all else fails, consult your crossword puzzle dictionary. (By the way, if you are looking for a 14-letter word that means 'crossword puzzle fan' the answer is 'cruciverbalist'.)

## Clues Inside Clues

The wording of the clues will give you some idea as to the form of the answer. For example, if the clue contains a foreign word, the answer is likely to be in a foreign language. If the clue contains an abbreviation, the answer probably does, too. If the clue is in the past tense or ends in 'ing', the answer will also. Thus, if your clue is in the plural you can take an educated guess that the last letter of the answer will be 's' – but remember to use your pencil in case it's a tricky one like data or sheep. 

## THE META-CLUE

As you fill in the puzzle, try to get an idea of its overall theme. Not all crossword puzzles have them, but most do. Figuring out the theme will help you with the long words. The long answers are likely to be a multiple-word phrase involving some sort of word play and are the most likely to represent the puzzle's theme.

FROM DON'T SCREW IT UP! © 2013, BY LAURA LEE. PUBLISHED BY READER'S DIGEST

INVESTIGATION



A French journalist posed online as a young woman interested in ISIS. What she wanted was a story. What she got was the fright of her life

# Romancing the **TERRORIST**

BY ANNA ERELLE\*

FROM THE BOOK *IN THE SKIN OF A JIHADIST*

***“Salaam alaikum, sister. I see you watched my video. It’s gone viral – crazy! Are you Muslim?”***

It was ten o’clock on a Friday night in April 2014. I was sitting on my sofa in my one-bedroom Parisian apartment when a terrorist based in Syria contacted me on Facebook. I’d been studying European jihadists in the Islamic State and was interested in understanding what it was that made someone give up everything and brave death for this cause.

---

*\*This is a pseudonym.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAN FEINDT

Like many journalists, I had a fictional Facebook account I'd created to keep an eye on current events. My profile picture was a cartoon image of Princess Jasmine from the Disney movie *Aladdin*. I claimed to be in Toulouse, a city in southwestern France. My name on this account was Mélodie. Mélodie's age: 20.

During my research, I came across many propaganda films on YouTube filled with images of torture and

Soon after I shared this video, my computer alerted me to three messages sent to 'Mélodie's' private inbox ... all from Abu Bilel. "Are you thinking about coming to Syria?" he asked in one of them.

"*Walaikum salaam*. I didn't think a jihadist would talk to me," I replied. "Don't you have better things to do? LOL."

In my message, I told him I'd converted to Islam but didn't offer any



*"Before you go to sleep, answer me something: Can I be your boyfriend?"*

charred bodies laid out in the sun. The juvenile laughter accompanying these horrific scenes made the videos all the more unbearable.

That night, I came across a video of a French jihadist aged about 35. The video showed him taking inventory of the items inside his SUV. He wore military fatigues and Ray-Bans and called himself Abu Bilel. He claimed to be in Syria. The scene around him, a true no-man's-land, didn't contradict him. In the back of his car, his bulletproof vest sat beside a machine gun. I would later discover that Abu Bilel had spent the past 15 years waging jihad all over the world as a confidant of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS.

details. I deliberately included spelling mistakes and used a teen's vocabulary. I waited for his reply, a knot in my stomach: I couldn't believe this was happening.

"Of course I have a lot of things to do! But here it's 11 o'clock at night and the fighters are finished for the day. We should talk over Skype."

Skype was out of the question! I ignored his proposal and suggested we talk another time. Abu Bilel understood; he'd make himself available for Mélodie tomorrow whenever she wanted.

"You converted, so you should get ready for your *hijrah* [emigration]. I'll take care of you, Mélodie."

He didn't know anything about this girl, and he was already asking her to join him in the bloodiest country on Earth.

**T**HE NEXT TIME we spoke, Bilel asked, "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"No, I don't," I said, speaking as Mélodie. "I don't feel comfortable talking about this with a man. It's *haram* [forbidden]. My mother will be home from work soon. I have to hide my Koran and go to bed."

"Soon you won't have to hide anything, *Insha'Allah* [God willing]! I want to help you lead the life awaiting you here. Before you go to sleep, answer me something: Can I be your boyfriend?"

I logged off Facebook. We'd exchanged 120 messages in the space of two hours.

That Monday, I rushed to the magazine where I freelance. My editor agreed that this was a unique opportunity, but he reminded me of the dangers. Urging caution, he assigned me a photographer, André. I would agree to Bilel's request to meet over Skype, and André would take pictures.

To become Mélodie, I needed to look ten years younger and find a veil. Another editor lent me a hijab [veil] and a *djellaba* [long black dress]. I was glad to wear them. The idea of a terrorist becoming familiar with my face didn't thrill me, especially not when the man in question could return

to France, his home country, at any moment.

André arrived at my apartment that night around 6pm. We had an hour to prepare before Bilel "got home from fighting" and contacted Mélodie. I pulled on Mélodie's floor-length black djellaba over my jeans and sweater. I removed my rings and covered the small tattoo on my wrist with foundation, assuming Bilel wouldn't appreciate such frivolousness.

It was time. André positioned himself in a blind spot behind the sofa. ISIS is brimming with counterespionage experts and hackers. It was safer if Bilel didn't know my phone number, so Mélodie had her own. I'd also created a Skype account in her name.

The Skype ringtone sounded like a church bell. I took a moment to breathe, then clicked the button, and there he was. Bilel's eyes smouldered as he gazed at the young Mélodie, as if trying to cast a spell. Bilel was Skyping from his car. He looked clean and well-groomed after his day on the front.

"*Salaam alaikum*, my sister," he said.

I smiled. "It's crazy to be talking to a mujahid in Syria. It's like you have easier access to the internet than I do in Toulouse!"

"Syria is amazing. We have everything here. *Masha'Allah* [God has willed it], you have to believe me: it's paradise! A lot of women fantasise about us; we're Allah's warriors."

"But every day people die in your paradise ..."

"That's true, and every day I fight to stop the killing. Here the enemy is the devil. You have no idea. Tell me, do you wear your hijab every day?"

Mérodie recited what I'd heard from girls I'd met during my career who had secretly converted to Islam. "I dress normally in the morning. I say good-bye to my mum, and when I'm outside the house, I put on my djellaba and my veil."

"I'm proud of you. You have a beautiful soul. And you're very pretty on the outside, too." Bilel peered lecherously at Mérodie. Suddenly, men's voices broke the mournful silence.

"Don't say anything!" Bilel ordered. "I don't want anyone to see or hear you! You're my jewel."

I listened to the conversation and could distinguish the voices of two other men. They laughed a lot, congratulating themselves for having "slaughtered them".

The dried blood I saw on the concrete was evidence of the attack. ISIS's black flags with white insignia floated in the distance. The other men seemed to treat Bilel with respect. Their way of politely addressing him suggested my contact was higher in the ranks than they were. A minute later, he said goodbye to his fellow fighters and spoke into the phone.

"Oh, you're still there! And just as beautiful ..."

"Who were they?"

"Fighters who came to say hello. Anyway, you're not interested in all that. Tell me about you! What guided you to Allah's path?"

I began to stammer - I hadn't had time to invent a 'real' life for Mérodie.

"One of my cousins was Muslim, and I was fascinated by the inner peace that his religion gave him. He guided me to Islam," I said.

"Does he know that you want to come to al-Sham?"

Bilel assumed that everything had been decided - Mérodie would soon arrive in

*André feared  
that the longer  
we let Mérodie  
exist, the more  
I was at risk.  
I agreed*

Syria.

"I'm not sure that I want to go ..."

"Listen, Mérodie. You'll be well taken care of here. You'll be important. And if you agree to marry me, I'll treat you like a queen."

Marry him?! I logged off Skype as a kind of survival reflex. I turned towards André, who looked as dumbfounded as I was.

How was I to respond to Bilel's proposal? André suggested explaining that since Mérodie wasn't married, she didn't want to arrive in Syria alone. If she decided to go at all.

Bilel called back.

"My friend Yasmine is Muslim," I



said, changing the subject. "I could invite her to come with me, but she's only 15."

"Here, women are supposed to get married when they turn 14. If Yasmine comes, I'll find her a good man."

Yasmine didn't exist, but I wondered how many real Yasmines were being lured at that moment by men like Bilel.

"Bilel, I have to hang up. My mum is getting home."

"I'll be here tomorrow after the fighting, as usual, at seven. *Insha'Allah* ... Good night, my baby."

*My baby?*

As soon as Abu Bilel announced his plan to marry Mélodie, her list of virtual friends grew. Girls began asking Mélodie for advice on the safest route to Syria. Some of the questions were both technical and strange: "Should I bring a lot of sanitary pads or can I find them there?"; "If I arrive in Syria without a husband, it's probably not a good idea to draw attention to myself by bringing thong underwear; my future husband might think I'm immodest. But will I be able to find them there?" I was bewildered by the mundane fixations of these girls who were signing up for death. How was I supposed to answer their questions?

I wasted a lot of time playing along with Bilel's game of seduction in order to gain his trust. No-one, not even André, could comprehend the level of 'personality compartmentalisation' this exercise demanded. No matter what he said, Bilel was terrifying.

"Oh, there you are, my wife!" he said one night. "Good news. I spoke with the *qadi* [judge] in Raqqa [ISIS's stronghold in Syria]. He's looking forward to marrying us."

Stunned, I didn't know what to say. "What are weddings like there?"

"Actually, we're already married."

"Excuse me?"

"I thought I'd already spoken enough about the idea of marriage with you. I asked you to marry me a while ago, and I talked about it with the judge, who drew up the papers. We're officially married, my wife! *Masha'Allah*. You're really mine now."

**I**T HAD BEEN nearly a month. André feared that the longer we let Mélodie exist, the more I was at risk. I agreed with him. Together with my editors, I planned the investigation's end. I had told Bilel that Yasmine and I would meet him in Syria. He instructed me to go to Amsterdam and then on to Istanbul. Once I was there, he would send further instructions. "You're my jewel, and Raqqa is your palace. You'll be treated like a princess," he assured me.

It was true. I was really going to Istanbul, but André – not Yasmine – would accompany me. The plan was simple: Bilel had told me an older woman known as Mother would meet us there. André would surreptitiously capture Mother on film for the article. While she looked for Yasmine and Mélodie, André and I would continue

on to Kilis, a city near the Syrian border. Turkey controlled it, and it would be safer than other places.

The story would end there, with a photograph of Mélodie looking out at the Syrian border from behind. The journalist would stop at the doors to hell, and Mélodie would step through them. We were finally wrapping this up. At least that's what I thought.

A few days later, I was in a tiny hotel room in Amsterdam when Bilel Skyped.

"Salaam alaikum, my darling; are you really in Amsterdam? I can't believe it. You'll be here soon. I'm the happiest man on earth. I love you, my wife."

I'd never seen him look so happy. Bilel was alone in an internet café. He'd just finished "work".

"Tell me about your trip. How did you pay for the tickets?"

"I stole my mum's debit card."

"You're so strong, my wife! If you still have the debit card, feel free to buy me some stuff."

What do you get for a man who talks about beheading people in one breath and how much he loves you in the next?

"What do you want?"

"Well, cologne! I love Égoïste by Chanel or something nice from Dior."

"OK, baby. Can we talk about tomorrow? What is going to happen after we meet Mother?"

"Actually, nobody will be there to meet you."

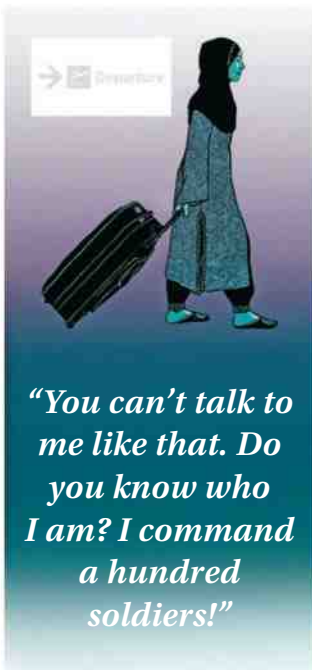
"But that wasn't the plan, Bilel," I said, my voice frayed with anxiety. "You were adamant - as was I - that a woman would come to meet us. You told me we would be safe."

"Listen to me," he said, his tone hardening. "You're going to shut up for a minute and let me speak. When you arrive at the airport in Istanbul, buy two one-way tickets for Urfa."

Urfa? Urfa was infiltrated by the Islamic State. Going there was suicide.

"All I ask is that you respect what you've promised me."

"You can't talk to me like that! I'm the one who gives orders around here, not you. From now on, you're going to shut up. Don't you know who I am? I command a hundred soldiers every day. I haven't even told you a quarter of the truth!"



When the conversation ended, I tore off the hijab. Everything was falling apart. I phoned my editor-in-chief, who gave me orders to wrap up this story. To put things in perspective, she reminded me that two French journalists sent to the Urfa region had just been freed after ten months of captivity at the hands of ISIS. The next morning, we flew home.

Mélodie sent Bilel a Skype message from the airport informing him that a “strange” man had questioned the girls. Yasmine and Mélodie felt they were being watched, and they decided to return to France until better circumstances presented themselves.

**B**ACK HOME, my editors were realising just how much information I had: Bilel had revealed many details about the structure of ISIS and the way new recruits were treated. I began writing.

A week later, the magazine published my article under a pseudonym. Out of fear that the terrorists could trace me, I moved out of my apartment and twice changed my phone number.

I stopped counting the number of statements I’ve given to various branches of the police when it reached

254. An antiterrorist judge also asked to hear my testimony after my real identity started appearing in a number of their files. According to those files, Bilel has three wives, ages 20, 28, and 39. They’re all with him in Syria. He is the father of at least three boys under the age of 13. The two eldest are already fighting on the front in Syria.

I never had direct contact with Bilel again. But recently, a journalist friend called to tell me he’d learned there was a fatwa against me.

I found a video on the web that showed me wearing Mélodie’s veil on my couch. It was taken, I imagine, by Bilel. There’s no audio, but it does include cartoon characters of a devil and bilingual, French and Arabic, subtitles. I’ve seen the video only once, but I remember every word: “My brothers from around the world, I issue a fatwa against this impure person who has scorned the Almighty. If you see her anywhere on Earth, follow Islamic law and kill her. Make sure she suffers a long and painful death. Whoever mocks Islam will pay for it in blood. She’s more impure than a dog. Rape, stone and finish her. *Insha’Allah.*”

I don’t think I’ll watch it again. **R**

FROM THE BOOK *IN THE SKIN OF A JIHADIST* BY ANNA ERELLE © 2015 BY ANNA ERELLE.  
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## CELESTIAL BODY

Orion’s Belt is a waist of space. @THEPUNNINGMAN

# All in a Day's Work

HUMOUR ON THE JOB

## CANDIDON'T

Half of all employers know within the first five minutes of an interview if a candidate is a good fit for a position. It's a wonder these people made it past the first five seconds.

- Candidate sang her responses to questions.
- Candidate put lotion on her feet during the interview.
- When asked why he wanted the position, candidate replied, "My wife wants me to get a job."
- Candidate had a pet bird in her shirt.
- Candidate started feeling the interviewer's chest to find a heartbeat so they could "connect heart to heart".

Source: careerbuilder.com



## EXTRACTION

A nervous patient arrived at our dental office for root canal surgery. He was brought into the examination room and then left alone for a few minutes. When the dentist returned, he found the patient standing next to a tray of surgical equipment. "What are you doing?" the dentist asked.

The patient replied, "Removing the ones I don't like."

Source: gcfl.net



## BOTH SIDES NOW

I work for the transportation department at a university. One day, a student came in to buy a parking permit. "What's your licence plate number?" I asked.

She responded, "Front or back?"

SUBMITTED BY MARQUI MOSS

## CLASSIFIED CAPERS

I was assigned to a military intelligence unit as a temporary assistant. One day, a memo came around with instructions for all officers to read and initial. So I read the memo and initialled it.

Days later, it came back with a note addressed to me: "You are not permanently assigned to this unit and are thus not an authorised signee. Please erase your initials and initial your erasure."

Source: netfunny.com

### HANDY OLD MAN

The plan was to build a garden walkway made up of dozens of wooden squares. I decided I'd slice railroad sleepers into 5 cm thick pieces for the sections. That's what I told the man at the timber yard.

"You got a power saw?" he asked.

"No," I said. "Can't I just use my hand saw?"

He nodded slowly. "You could. But I just have one question: How old do you want to be when you finish?"

SUBMITTED BY JUDY MYERS

### RUFF CONDITIONS

I had an inauspicious start as a dog groomer when one of my first clients bit me. Noticing my pain, my boss voiced her concern.

"Whatever you do," she said, "don't bleed on the white dogs."

SUBMITTED BY  
JAN VIRGO



CARTOON: CONAN DE VRIES; PHOTOS: ISTOCK



"Is anybody sitting here?"

### TELL ME WHERE IT HURTS

Sitting in the orthopaedic surgeon's office cradling my broken hand, I racked my brains but couldn't come up with the medical term for my scheduled procedure. "Excuse me," I said to the surgeon's assistant. "What's the term doctors use for setting a broken bone?"

He grinned. "Billable procedure."

SUBMITTED BY PAUL SMITH

### WHEN PIGS FLOAT

The following correction appeared in *The Morning Bulletin* in Rockhampton, Queensland, recently:

"The story said, 'More than 30,000 pigs were floating down the Dawson River.' What piggery owner Sid Everingham actually said was, '30 sows and pigs,' not '30,000 pigs.'"



# 13 Odd Things That Happened on Friday the 13th

BY ANDY SIMMONS

It's just like any other day of the year, isn't it?



**STATISTICALLY**, what happens on this superstitious day is no more bizarre than what goes on during any other day of the year. This year, we'll have two chances to find out if the statisticians are correct with a double dose of Friday the 13th occurrences; one falling in January and the other in October. Friggatriskaidekaphobes (Friday the 13th scaredy-cats) are preparing for the worst. After all, the following all occurred on this blackest of days.

**1** On Friday, October 13, 1307, King Philip IV of France rounded up hundreds of Knights Templar and tortured them as heretics. Some wonder whether this was the beginning of the whole Friday the 13th mythology (if it is a myth ...).

**2** On Friday, November 13, 1829, 10,000 people gathered to watch stunt man Sam Patch jump into New York's Genesee River from atop the



Genesee Falls. Only weeks earlier, he'd leaped off Niagara Falls and survived. He wasn't as lucky this time.

**3** On Friday, October 13, 1972, a plane crashed in the Andes in Chile. Twelve people died instantly, and survivors resorted to cannibalism.

**4** That very same day, 174 people were killed when a Russian airliner crashed on landing near Moscow.

**5** On Friday, August 13, 2010, a 13-year-old boy in Suffolk, England, was struck by lightning. The lightning reportedly hit at 1:13, or 13:13 in military time. The boy survived unharmed.

**6** On Friday, October 13, 2006, nearly half a million people lost power when Buffalo, New York, and the surrounding suburbs were buried under 26–69 cm of snow. The area is used to a lot of snow, but 69 cm? In October?!

**7** On Friday, October 13, 1989, the New York Stock Market's Dow Jones fell a whopping 6.91 per cent, while the S&P 500 fell 6.12 per cent.

**8** On Friday, July 13, 1979, Bob Renphrey decided to stay in bed every subsequent Friday the 13th because of a spate of bad luck he'd suffered on that unlucky day, such as: walking through a plate glass door, getting

made redundant, falling into a river, writing off four cars and putting his wife in the hospital after hitting her in the head with a stick meant for the dog. After he died in 1998 his funeral was on (you guessed it) Friday the 13th.

**9** On Friday, July 13, 1951, after days of record-setting rain fell in northeastern Kansas, swollen rivers poured over their banks consuming the cities of Topeka, Lawrence and Manhattan in the process.

**10** On Friday, July 13, 1821, one of the scariest fellows ever was born: Nathan Bedford Forrest, an early member of the Ku Klux Klan.

**11** On Friday, January 13, 2012, the cruise ship *Costa Concordia* partially sank off the Italian coast after running aground, killing 33 people.

**12** On Friday, April 13, 2029, Asteroid 99942 Apophis is forecast to pass Earth a scant 31,300 kilometres away, closer than any of the satellites we've put into orbit.

**13** On every Friday the 13th, the world's economy apparently loses about \$900 million because people are scared to work and travel on this date, says Donald Dossey, founder of the Stress Management Center and Phobia Institute in North Carolina.

Sources: [livescience.com](http://livescience.com), [huffingtonpost.com](http://huffingtonpost.com), [listverse.com](http://listverse.com), [bustle.com](http://bustle.com), [dailymirror.com](http://dailymirror.com)

# Quotable Quotes



**People used to suffer in silence. Now they just go on talkshows.**

ASHRAF SIDDIQUI, *author*

Success is terrifying. Like happiness, it is often appreciated in retrospect.

JULIE ANDREWS, *actress and singer*



It can hardly be a coincidence that no language on Earth has ever produced the expression 'as pretty as an airport'.

DOUGLAS ADAMS, *science fiction writer*

**MEN BECOME WISE JUST AS THEY BECOME RICH, MORE BY WHAT THEY SAVE THAN BY WHAT THEY RECEIVE.**

WILBUR WRIGHT, *inventor*

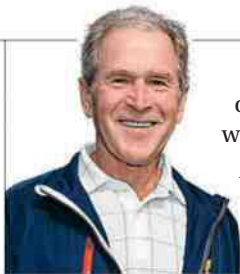


*The lessons we remember are the lessons we learn the hard way.*

SETH GODIN, *entrepreneur, blogger and marketeer*

**The person, be it a gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid.**

JANE AUSTEN, *novelist*



Too often we judge other groups by their worst examples, while judging ourselves by our best intentions.

GEORGE W. BUSH, *43rd US president*

*In many traditions, the world was sung into being: Aboriginal Australians believe their ancestors did so. In Hindu and Buddhist thought, Om was the seed syllable that created the world.*

JAY GRIFFITHS, *author of Wild: An Elemental Journey*

# LESS IS MORE

If mess is stress, will  
decluttering your life and  
home make you happier?

BY HELEN O'NEILL

**D**EBORAH HARDY has turned travelling light into an art form. She and her husband Ken, Canadians who, since retiring, have explored the world extensively, only ever carry hand luggage.

“We do it because it simplifies everything,” Hardy says, explaining that it makes no difference whether they are visiting cold climates, going on tropical cruises or exploring Third World countries, even though some of their trips last for up to three months.

“Since we don’t check bags, we are free to alter our travel plans and will never lose our luggage,” says Hardy.

The couple’s minimalistic rationale is one thing but the practicalities are quite another. Packing everything required for three months into carry-on bags, which have strict size limits and an average weight allowance of just seven kilograms, means each item has to be carefully selected.

“I have to love every article of clothing because it will get worn over and over,” Hardy says, outlining her disciplined packing rules. Everything must match and clothing must be lightweight, compressible and quick drying because it will get washed frequently.

Shoes are a ‘space killer’ so the couple travel wearing their walking shoes and pack one pair of dress shoes and one pair of flip-flops.

At the end of long trips, Hardy admits that her love for much of what she has carried with her is well and truly over: “I am ready to burn my clothes.”

This ‘less is more’ approach to travelling represents the thin end of an ever-thickening wedge. So-called ‘lifestyle minimalism’ is on the rise as more people shun consumerism in the hope of finding meaning through simplifying their lives.

## Shrinking Houses

The ‘tiny house’ movement is an extreme example of such downsizing. Growing in popularity over the last decade or so, tiny houses are popping up around the world as more people decide to downsize their lives.

Fred Schultz, a Melbourne innovator, builder, artist and father, became so impassioned by the notion of living in a small, transportable space that he started designing tiny homes and launched a business – Fred’s Tiny Houses – to enable other people to do the same.

“It’s a game of millimetres and kilograms,” he told filmmaker Jordan Osmond as he showed him around the tiny, towable house on wheels that Schultz built for himself, his wife Shannon and their young daughter Olina.

Casa Schultz is just 10 m<sup>2</sup> in size internally: 5.4 m long, 2.5 m wide and 4.3 m high, allowing space in the wall cavities as insulation. Schultz was driven by finding an answer to soaring house prices and also by ethical concerns about fossil fuel use, as well as his desire to live in a sustainable way, he explained.

His minuscule family home, built

from wood and steel, cost him just \$45,000 in materials, of which around \$12,000 was spent on solar power. Despite its size, the house boasts a wood heater, a serviceable kitchen, a loft bedroom, and a bathroom with a surprisingly deep bath.

Not a square centimetre is wasted. Tabletops pop down from walls and every item has its place. Space is so limited that Schultz has considered every object in his home.

But even for those who have reduced their living quarters so drastically the question of just how much stuff we need has never seemed more pressing – particularly as mess seems intrinsically linked to stress.

## Drowning in Stuff

Forty per cent of those quizzed for a survey conducted by The Australia Institute reported feeling guilty, anxious or depressed about how much clutter was in their homes. The survey also found that 88 per cent of Australian homes have at least one cluttered room, and the average home has three or more cluttered rooms.

A study from Princeton University in the US suggests that when your environment is cluttered, the chaos and clutter restrict your ability to focus and also limit your brain's ability to process information.

Although it is not a new concept,

**Many of us are guilty, anxious or depressed about how much clutter is in our homes**







**Minimalism is not about focusing on having less but on making room for more**



decluttering and a minimalist lifestyle are gaining traction in many parts of the world. UK finance expert Jasmine Birtles launched the UK's first Clear Your Clutter Day last year, urging people to sell, swap and donate their unwanted possessions.

"Are you drowning in stuff?" Birtles asked Britons via a video recorded from a crowded cupboard. "Well, you're not the only one because households across the country are hoarding hundreds of pounds worth of stuff they don't know what to do with."

Danielle Atkins, a Sydney-based professional organiser, aims to help such people out. Atkins decided to launch a business, Declutter Life, after assisting her parents to pack up their five-bedroom family home when they decided to move somewhere smaller.

The process of shedding unneeded items can be painful but it enables people to reflect on their core priorities as they move through different stages of life, according to Atkins.

"It is not just about tidying up, it's more holistic than that," she says. "I'm not just talking about physical things. Decluttering is almost a by-product to me. I get excited by helping people figure out what is important."

For hardcore minimalists the answer to that question is: as little as possible.



## Be More with Less

Fumio Sasaki, a trendy 36-year-old Tokyo resident, owns only three shirts, four pairs of trousers, four pairs of socks and a few other household objects. Once a passionate collector of CDs, DVDs and books, he became tired of trying to keep up with trends and accumulating stuff.

"I kept thinking about what I did not own, what was missing," he told *The Guardian*. Spending less time on shopping and cleaning enables him to spend more time with friends and travelling, he says.

Californian author Dave Bruno wrote about the process of whittling his life down to just 100 possessions in his book *The 100 Thing Challenge: How I Got Rid of Almost Everything, Remade My Life, and Regained My Soul*.

Fashion blogger Courtney Carver took the idea one stage further with Project 333, calling upon people to dress using only 33 items of clothing for three months.

Carver decided to simplify her life after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2006 and has since seen thousands worldwide taking up her challenge.

Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, two former corporate executives now known as 'The Minimalists', catapulted themselves into the 'less is more' mindset after experiencing what they describe on their website as 'a lingering discontent'.

As they approached the age of 30,

they realised that they had achieved everything that was supposed to make them happy: "great six-figure jobs, luxury cars, huge oversized houses, and all the stuff to clutter every corner of our consumer-driven lifestyles."

Yet, despite the money and the possessions, they weren't happy.

"There was a gaping void and working 70-80 hours a week just to buy more stuff didn't fill the void." Instead, it only brought Millburn and Nicodemus more debt, stress, anxiety and less control over their lives and what they did with their time, they say.

The pair, who has published several books and released a documentary called *Minimalism*, argues that minimalism is not about focusing on having less but "on making room for more - more time, more passion, more experiences, more growth, more contribution, more contentment."

By clearing the clutter from life's path, Millburn and Nicodemus argue, "we can all make room for the most important aspects of life: health, relationships, passion, growth and contribution."

## Simple Living

But many objects are useful, even if - like camping equipment, carpet cleaners or DIY tools - you might only need them a couple of times a year. If you don't own them, what do you do?

One solution is 'The Library of Things' movement emerging in communities around the world. These



non-profit spaces enable people to borrow tools, toys, kitchen appliances, clothing and tents.

Brooke McAlary, a 34-year-old mother of two, decided to declutter her home after a bout of severe post-natal depression in 2011. She immersed herself in the Slow Living philosophy, spent two years getting rid of around 25,000 objects, and discovered what she describes as “the beautiful benefits of living with less”.

She writes a blog about her life – and has a podcast, which attracts over a million listeners from 45 countries.

“I talk about simplicity, which for me is about not tying our self-worth up in things that we own,” she says.

“I didn’t realise how heavy our stuff was until we didn’t have it any more. It was a genuine physical lightness with letting go and even now every six months or so we have a clean-out. It is freedom. I thought it would be fraught but it’s the opposite.”

The only thing McAlary regrets having thrown away is a school assignment she wrote in Year 7 that involved turning *The Hobbit* into a poem. Beyond that, “there is not one single thing,” she says, adding that simplifying their lives has given her and her family the time, energy and money to do things they otherwise would not have done.

Their relationships are stronger, they are fitter, and they travel more, she says. “Stuff is pretty boring really. I’d rather have experiences any day.” **R**

# Points to Ponder



**SCRIPTURE SAYS YOU SHOULD** put aside childish things when you grow up. I take that to mean wilfulness, self-centredness and things like that – not imagination, creativity and joyful curiosity.

**DICK VAN DYKE,**  
*actor*, in his memoir *Keep Moving*

**DRAWING HELPS ME** remember the ideas I am having. I certainly think the pencil is one of the most powerful tools for invention ever ... I pick one up and I feel like inventing.

**ADAM SAVAGE,**  
*industrial designer*, in *Popular Science*

Someone asked me the other day, “Do you stare at your trophies when you walk in your house?” ... Actually, no ... If you’re always looking behind you, you’re never going to see the competition ahead.

**SERENA WILLIAMS,** *tennis player*, in *Fast Company*

**I DON’T THINK** there is any book that can’t teach you something, even if it is how not to tell a story.

**MARY HIGGINS CLARK,**  
*mystery novelist*, in the book *By the Book*

**THERE IS NO GREATER** threat to the critics and cynics and fearmongers than those of us who are willing to fall because we have learned how to rise.

**BRENÉ BROWN,**  
*vulnerability researcher*,  
in her book *Rising Strong*

## WITTY WISDOM

A real patriot is the fellow who gets a parking ticket and rejoices that the system works.

**BILL VAUGHAN,** *author*, in *Forbes*

Meditation always starts with deep breathing and ends with me adding new people to my enemies list.

**LAURIE KILMARTIN,** *comedian*



It's a deadly health risk – but the food and beverage industry fends off regulation

# SUGAR, *the new* TOBACCO

BY HELEN SIGNY

**T**HERE'S AN INDUSTRY selling a product that is bad for one's health.

A generation ago that industry was tobacco and its product was cigarettes. Today it is the food and beverage industry and its product is sugar – sugar that is being added to food and drink. After 20 years working in tobacco control, Jane Martin, executive manager of the Obesity Policy Coalition, a policy think tank of the Cancer Council Victoria, has taken up the battle against sugar-laden food and drinks. She charges that the food industry has borrowed the corporate playbook of the tobacco industry to fend off regulation.

“The sugar industry has been very similar to the tobacco industry in how they work,” she says. “They fund their own research studies and criticise research they see as harmful. They focus on personal responsibility, saying it’s up to parents and the individual.”

But the parallels don’t stop there. “The tobacco industry pushed self-regulation over legislation. And now we have self-regulation around marketing to children of junk food and drinks, which is exactly what the tobacco industry got away with.”

**ADDED SUGAR** – not natural sugars that exist in fruits and vegetables – is everywhere. One of the largest sources is beverages such as soft drinks, energy drinks and fruit drinks. But a stroll through the supermarket shows that there is added sugar in bread, yoghurt, peanut butter, soup, wine, sausages – indeed, in nearly any processed food. A single tablespoon of tomato sauce can contain a teaspoonful of sugar.

This ‘invisible sugar’ comes under many names. For example, there are more than 40 different names for sugar listed on food labels in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, ranging from ‘agave nectar’ to ‘high-fructose corn syrup’ and ‘molasses’, along with a whole host of names you will have never heard of.

According to Lisa Renn, an accredited practising dietitian, sugar

has a range of purposes in food manufacturing. “It’s not only used as a sweetener, it’s used as a colouring for food consistency and as something to hold the ingredients together,” she explains. “Having small amounts of sugar in moderation is OK. But large amounts every day are not good. Soft drinks have become the new water.”

Dr Robert Lustig, a paediatric endocrinologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and a world leader in the anti-sugar campaign, points out that sugar consumption worldwide has tripled in the past half-century.

“Our food supply now contains so much added sugar that our metabolic (energy-processing) systems just can’t handle it,” he says. “Your body does different things with different types of calories. Fructose (added sugar) in quantities eaten today primarily





gets stored as fat. Usually, that fat will go to your belly.”

And the danger to our health is not just obesity: there is evidence linking sugar to liver disease, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and tooth decay. Nevertheless the food and beverage industry continues to promote sugar with extensive advertising of its sugary products. It also spends large sums of money opposing clearer labelling of its products, as well as fighting increased taxation on sugary foods and drink.

Hundreds of millions of dollars is spent each year promoting unhealthy foods – those high in sugar and/or fat. As well as advertising in conventional media, the industry also invests heavily in sponsoring sports events, product placements on TV shows and Facebook marketing – all the places likely to reach children.

**LAST YEAR** the World Health Organization (WHO) reaffirmed its previous recommendation that ideally our intake of sugar – except that naturally occurring in fruits and vegetables



### TERMS THAT MEAN 'ADDED SUGAR'

- agave nectar • molasses
- beet sugar • maple syrup • cane juice • sucanat • rice syrup
- powdered sugar • treacle • corn syrup
- honey • gomme
- galactose • date sugar
- dextrose • drimol • malt • brown rice syrup
- corn syrup • dri sweet
- dried raisin sweetener
- edible lactose • kona ame • sucrovert
- flo-malt • fructose • inverted sugar • clintose
- sorghum syrup
- golden syrup • isoglucose • mizu ame •

– should not exceed ten per cent of total energy intake, and that less than five per cent would bring additional health benefits. The WHO presented strong data linking the consumption of sugar to rates of obesity and, as type 2 diabetes is linked to obesity, to this disease as well.

In the average diet, ten per cent of total energy intake would work out to be about 50 g, or 12 teaspoons of sugar per day. A single 375 ml can of soft drink typically contains around 35 g of added sugar. The Australian Health Survey found that in 2011-2012, Australians were consuming an average of 60 g of sugars each day, or the equivalent of 12 teaspoons of

white sugar. Soft drinks, energy and sports drinks, as well as fruit and vegetable juices made up more than a third of these added sugars.

“Sugar-sweetened soft drinks and juices are the dietary version of the cigarette,” says Professor Merlin Thomas, NHMRC Senior Research Fellow at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes

Institute. “They may provide a short-term kick, but in the long term they contribute to a range of diseases and ultimately premature mortality.”

It’s not just that soft drinks represent a major source of unnecessary kilojoules, increasing our risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers, Thomas says. “In fact, our expanding waistlines may represent a risk as grave as smoking.”

Thomas points out that sugars in soft drinks are absorbed fast, requiring an equally fast response in the body and putting extra demands on the pancreas, the job of which is to regulate our metabolism. Some studies suggest that regularly drinking soft drinks can thin your bones, and all soft drinks cause tooth decay.

An industry group, the Australian Food & Grocery Council (AFGC), brushed aside the WHO report. “The WHO recommendation relates to dental caries, not weight issues or diabetes,” says AFGC deputy chief executive Dr Geoffrey Annison.

He says the recommendation covers dietary ‘free’ sugars and not ‘added’ sugars, in line with the Australian



Dietary Guidelines. “This is consistent with the industry’s view that healthy eating requires moderation, variety and balance.”

**MEANWHILE, THE ADVERTISING** of sugary foods continues. Overweight and obesity in children, and the amount of sugary food children continue to eat and drink, are of particular concern to health professionals as well as parents. One area where experts see that a difference can be made is in reducing or stopping TV advertising of sugary foods and beverages around children’s programming.

A recent study by the Cancer Council and the National Heart Foundation of Australia found that teenage boys who watched more TV were more likely to eat junk food, and were more likely to be obese.

“We thought obesity was high in people with high TV viewing habits because they may not be as active, but most studies show that it’s about what they are watching and how that’s impacting on the foods they are consuming,” says Kathy Chapman, chair

**1 TUB OF  
YOGHURT**

200 g

**FOUR  
TEASPOONS  
20 G SUGAR**



of Cancer Council Australia's Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee.

Despite voluntary industry guidelines that say junk food and soft drinks cannot be advertised directly to children, these guidelines are not mandatory and the manufacturers set their own criteria of what they deem to be healthy or unhealthy, Chapman says.

"Advertising works, that's why these companies spend a lot of money on it. It is up to parents to teach their children about safety, but it doesn't stop us having a pedestrian crossing."

The Canadian province of Quebec has been a leader in this regard, restricting such 'junk food' TV advertising to children since 1978. Quebec now has substantially lower obesity rates than the rest of Canada. Other countries that have restricted commercials for sugary

drinks, cereals and other junk food during times when kids watch TV include Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico and the UK.

Another area of food and beverage advertising that anti-sugar campaigners strongly oppose is the association of products with athletes, a tactic used by the tobacco industry just over 50 years ago when both celebrities and athletes were employed to endorse cigarettes.

### TAXES ON SUGARY DRINKS

- Belgium
- France
- Mexico
- Norway

**PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCATES** say two approaches that worked to reduce smoking – consumer education and taxation – are needed to combat overconsumption of sugar.

A ten per cent tax on sugary drinks was introduced in Mexico in January 2014 and drinks sales there fell by 12 per cent in the first year. In France, a tax on soft drinks introduced in 2012 has resulted in a gradual decline of



#### 1 CAN OF SWEET FIZZY DRINK

375 ml

#### SEVEN TEASPOONS

35 G SUGAR



consumption. Norway has been active in taxing sugary foods and drinks as well as education for many years, with good results.

In Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, calls for a tax on sugar have come from a range of public health advocates. A recent Australian study found that placing a 20 per cent tax on sugar-sweetened beverages could save more than 1600 lives over 25 years and raise at least \$400 million a year for health initiatives.

And as obesity continues to rise in Asia, several countries such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines are also considering placing a tax on sugary drinks. In 2013, the Malaysian government removed the subsidy on sugar over health concerns, and it is currently studying whether other measures are necessary to further reduce sugar consumption.

Not surprisingly, a sugar tax is strongly

## WHICH COUNTRIES ARE OVERWEIGHT?

US.....	<b>67.4%</b>
Australia.....	<b>64%</b>
New Zealand.....	<b>64%</b>
UK.....	<b>63.4%</b>
France.....	<b>60.7%</b>
Norway.....	<b>58.5%</b>
Netherlands.....	<b>55.9%</b>
Sweden.....	<b>55.9%</b>
Portugal.....	<b>55.6%</b>
Singapore.....	<b>37.6%</b>
Malaysia.....	<b>37.2%</b>
China.....	<b>36.2%</b>
Philippines.....	<b>21%</b>

Country % of overweight adult population (18+) (BMI =>25 and <30)

Source: WHO Global Health Observatory (age-standardised estimates), 2014

opposed by powerful groups in the food and beverage industry, such as the AFGC.

“Advocates for a tax cannot reconcile that Australia has had a de facto sugar tax for 16 years – it’s called the GST, which is applied to processed food – and obesity has not dropped during this time. In fact, evidence suggests that Australia’s sugar consumption declined significantly (6% for women, 14% for men) from 1995–2011 while obesity continued to rise,” Annonson says.

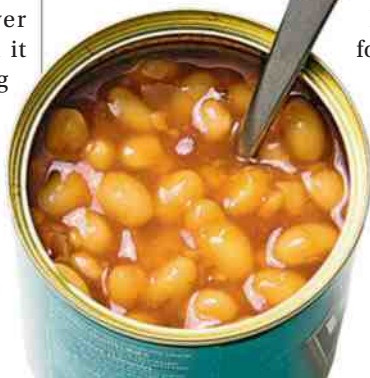
“[Comparing the sugar industry to tobacco] is ill-informed and simply designed to grab a headline.

There is no safe level of tobacco consumption and it has absolutely no health benefits. All foods can be incorporated into a healthy diet, and conversely unhealthy diets can also be constructed solely from so-called ‘healthy’ foods.”

**1 SMALL CAN OF BAKED BEANS**

220 g

**1 TEASPOON  
4.5 G SUGAR**

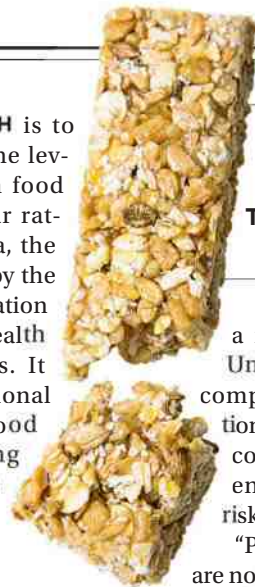


**ANOTHER APPROACH** is to inform consumers of the levels of added sugars in food through the health star rating system. In Australia, the system was developed by the government in collaboration with industry, public health and consumer groups. It rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns it a rating from half a star to five stars on the front of the pack. The more stars, the healthier the food.

The problem with health star ratings, says Jane Martin, is they still allow many foods that are high in sugar. And they're still voluntary. "We want to see the health star labelling being mandatory and changes made to the algorithm, so the products are more aligned to Australian Dietary Guidelines," she says.

The industry disputes this claim, saying that the algorithm is entirely consistent with Australian Dietary Guidelines, and that eating foods with higher star ratings will lead to less intake of energy, saturated fat, sodium (salt) and sugar, and more dietary fibre, fruits, nuts, vegetables and legumes.

**THE EVIDENCE** against sugar and its ill effects on our health continues to mount as study after study is published. Dr Kimber Stanhope,



**1 MUESLI BAR**

30 g

**TWO TEASPOONS**

**10 G SUGAR**



a nutritional biologist at the University of California, Davis, completed a five-year investigation in 2015 linking high-fructose corn syrup – a common sweetener in the US – to increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

"People should realise that there are no risks associated with reducing sugar intake," says Stanhope, "but there are risk factors in continuing to eat high amounts while waiting for more evidence. Parents should wean their kids and themselves off daily sugar consumption and consider it a special occasion food."

New research also indicates that sugar, like tobacco, may be addictive. Eric Stice, a US neuroscientist, is using MRI brain scans on adolescents that show that "sugar activates the brain in a way that is reminiscent of a drug like cocaine."

He adds that people build up a tolerance to sugar much the same way smokers and drug users do. "That means the more sugar you eat, the less you feel the reward. The result, you eat more than ever." Other studies point to sugar being addictive because it activates the brain's pleasure-generating circuitry.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO** to reduce your intake of added sugars? Despite the hype, it's important not to get too hysterical about sugar, says dietitian Lisa Renn. It's a non-essential nutrient but small amounts in moderation are fine.

For example, you might be worried that a simmer sauce contains a lot of sugar – but if you're eating it with lean meat and vegetables, then the meal as a whole is nutritious. The same goes for cereals: the sugar content might be relatively high if they contain dried fruit, but if the rest of the cereal is made of whole grains then don't discount it just because of the sugar.

"You don't have to be anxious about tiny bits of sugar that add to the palatability of food. It's about eating fresh, healthy foods, fruits and vegetables,

lean meat and wholegrain cereal, and cooking from scratch. Use common sense when you look at a product and aim for less than 15 g per 100 g, especially if you have diabetes," she says.

When it comes to soft drinks, Professor Thomas says turning to diet varieties might be a sensible first step, but water is still the best choice.

"But the most important step is personal," Thomas says.

"When everyone commits to looking after their health, soft drinks will not be on the menu. And the companies will follow your money, wherever it goes, so make it count to better health and a better future." **R**

*Adapted from an article by William Ecenbarger and Mary S. Aikins.*

*Additional research by Nancy Coveney*



## GARDEN PATH SENTENCES

Each of the following is a complete grammatical sentence – although they may lead you down the garden path as they are easily misunderstood.

- The man who hunts ducks out on weekends.
- The old man the boat.
- The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families.
- The horse raced past the barn fell.
- The cotton clothing is usually made of grows in Mississippi.
- Mary gave the child the dog bit a Band-Aid.
- Fat people eat accumulates.



# That's Outrageous!

THE PATH OF MOST RESISTANCE

## SMILE WHILE YOU BUSK - OR FACE A FINE

Smiles are free, but not smiling could cost you. In a quest to make sure street performers appeared sufficiently delighted, the city council in Oxford, England, attempted to pass a law mandating all buskers to 'smile, enjoy yourself and entertain others.' Anyone caught with a frown could have faced fines from £100 up to £1000.

But the buskers didn't sit back and face the music. After a petition netted 5000 signatures, the city - risking potential legal challenges - relented on the smiling issue. Singers of sad songs, rejoice!

## CATCHING THE WAVES

Australia's beaches have it all: white sand, bright-blue waters - and dramatic high-speed car chases? In October of 2015, police attempted to pull over a driver north of Perth. The man sped away, eventually leading to a standoff near Yanchep Beach. There, he found himself quite literally at the end of the road. With



nowhere left to hide, he decided to flee into the sea. Pedal to the metal, the man drove into the waves.

But since this is real life and not a cartoon, the vehicle promptly sank. Officers had to wade into the surf and remove their suspect from the vehicle's roof. The man, who was later jailed for car theft, probably learned a valuable lesson that day: you can run, but you can't swim.

## STRONG-ARM TACTICS

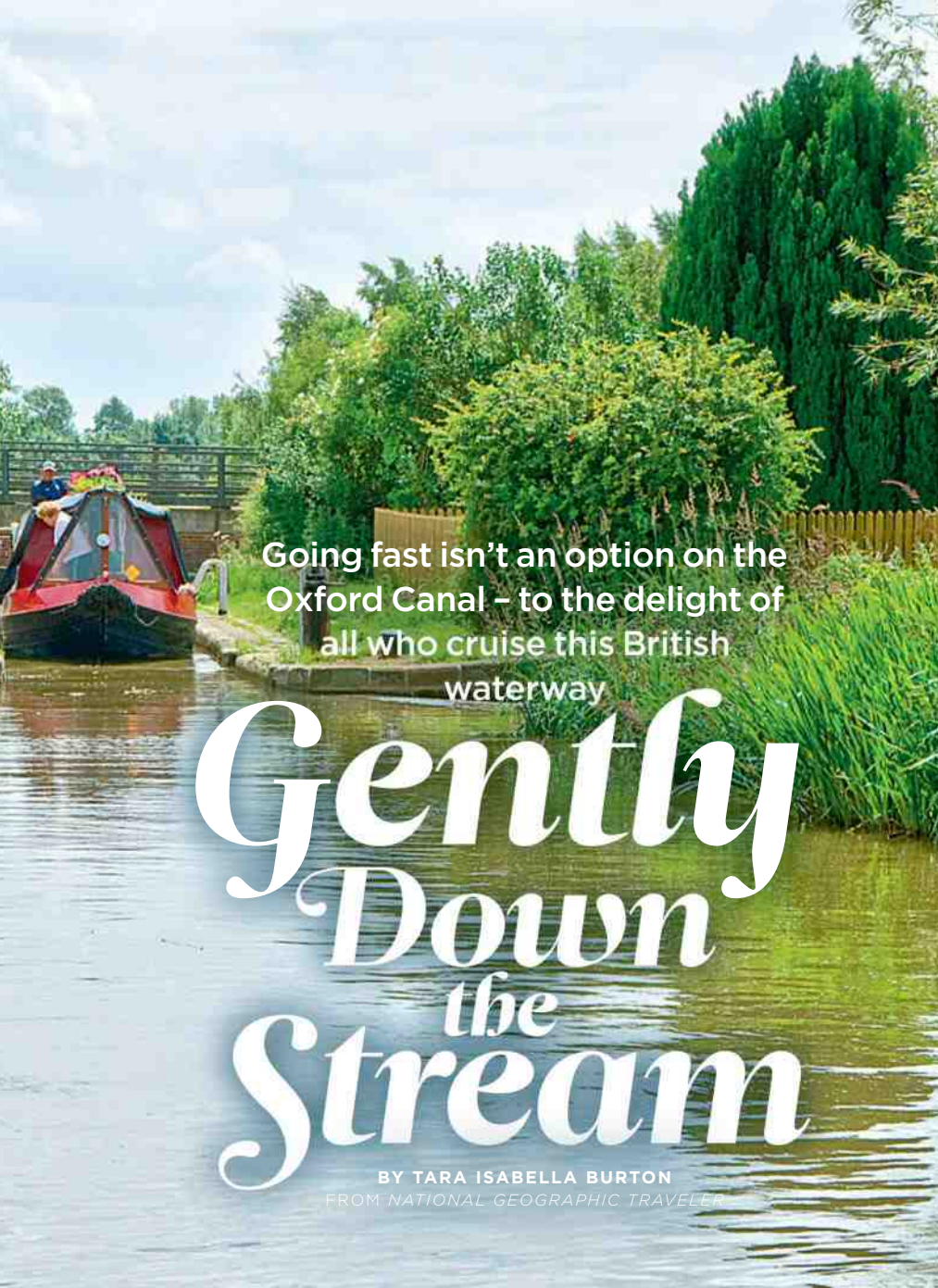
It's happened to everyone: after parallel parking at the side of the road, you return to see that some nincompoop has edged their vehicle too close, trapping you in place. All you can do is sit, wait and stew. One rather muscular fellow in the Italian town of Avola experienced just that.

But instead of standing idly by until the inconsiderate parker resurfaced, the man was caught on video studying the tight squeeze before lifting his car's rear bumper with his bare hands, pushing the vehicle into the street and driving off.

TRAVEL





A scenic view of the Oxford Canal. On the left, a boat with a red and black canopy is docked at a wooden pier. A person is visible on the boat. The water is calm and reflects the sky. On the right, there is a dense line of green trees and bushes, including a tall, dark green cypress tree. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

Going fast isn't an option on the  
Oxford Canal – to the delight of  
all who cruise this British  
waterway

# Gently Down the Stream

BY TARA ISABELLA BURTON  
FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

**A** WINGED GRYPHON IS PLAYING A UKULELE on Broad Street. At the nearby Bodleian Library, a caterpillar dispenses nutritional advice to children in pinafores. In front of the Pitt Rivers Museum, a Mock Turtle leads a lobster quadrille dance. Me? I'm taking in this annual celebration of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, written by Oxford University lecturer Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known by his pen name, Lewis Carroll).

I lived on St. Barnabas Street from 2009 to 2010, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford University. Every day was a cultural shock as I tried to reconcile English reserve with my American exuberance – a balance that I still am not sure I've struck.

But today I'm looking at Oxford, which sits 85 km northwest of London, from another angle entirely.

**EAGER FOR AN ADVENTURE**, a British friend, Sarah Heenan, and I have hired the *Hertford*, a canal boat, to spend one week cruising the Oxford Canal, an 18th-century waterway that runs from Oxford north 126 km to Hawkesbury Junction. The experience, we're discovering, is hardly that of Oxford University, with its Gothic towers. Nor is it of Oxford the city, a staid, prosperous place that is unfailingly polite and invariably aloof. For narrowboaters such as us, the Oxford Canal embodies a different, less strait-laced, way of English life.

"Along a canal," explains Heenan, who grew up in a nearby Cotswolds village, "you say hello to everybody."

As Heenan and I rev our engine –

we're our own captains after a boat-handling tutorial – we spot an elderly twosome strolling the canal's towpath. They spy Heenan's glass of Pimm's. "And very good, too!" the woman calls out as we pass.

We raise our glasses to toast her.

Cruising along, I find myself peering into back gardens, wondering who tends them. Who owns the stone bust of Napoleon? The carving of a rabbit shooting a frog?

I ask Heenan if I'm breaking some fundamental rule of Englishness by looking.

She bursts into laughter. "That's the most English thing of all!" she says. "Deep down, we're all really nosy."

Near the village of Wolvercote, we are preparing to dock when an agreeable man dressed in a white vest and jeans leaps onto our narrowboat and grabs the tie-up rope.

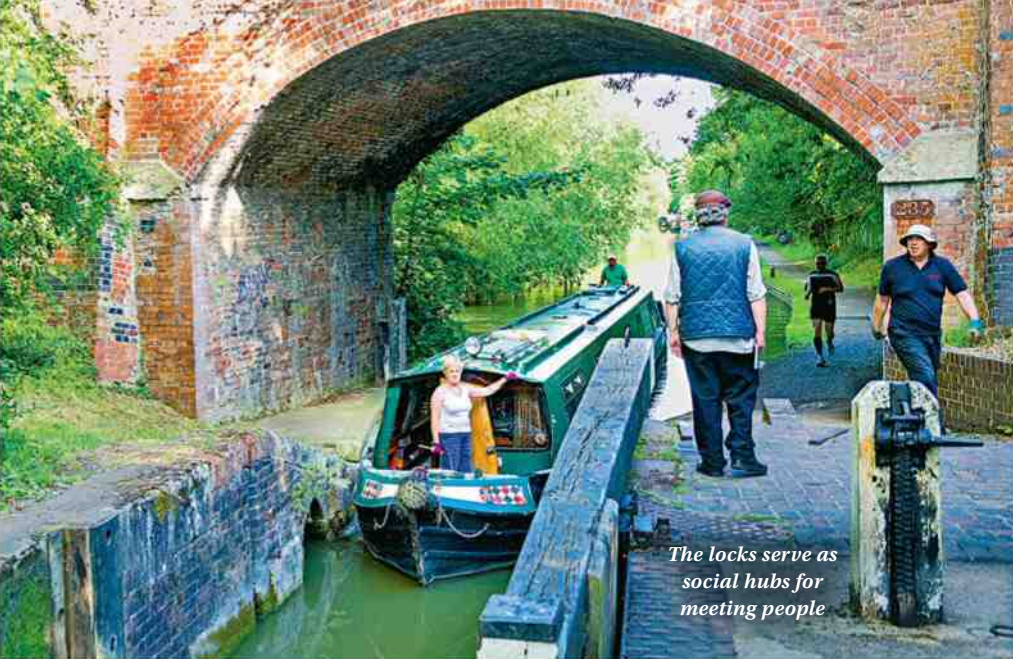
"Don't worry," he says, when we have secured the vessel. "You're no worse than I was my first time."

Priced out of property in Oxford, Mike Pitman – a filmmaker and musician in his 20s – bought a boat and has lived ever since along the water.

*'Canal pace' allows  
for impromptu stops  
along the way*







*The locks serve as social hubs for meeting people*

“Before living on a boat, I never knew any of my neighbours by name,” Pitman shares. “We look out for each other,” he adds, by monitoring mooring spaces when one of them is away or helping with boat repairs. Another boater, a photographer named Jeff Slade, ambles over. He and Pitman trade news: two buzzards have taken up residence in a canalside tree; one of the moorhens has five chicks.

At first these boaters’ attention to nature’s details surprises me. So far on our cruise, the landscape has been overwhelmingly green. But as we wend past bend after identical bend, thatch-roofed village after thatch-roofed village, the landscape’s

uniformity breaks apart like a kaleidoscope. At 6.5 km/h, the speed limit of the canal, it’s impossible to not look at every branch, every leaf, a little longer, a little more carefully. I start to notice the difference between Japanese and giant knotweed, elderflowers and Queen Anne’s lace. A few days ago, all this was a vague notion I had of ‘countryside.’ Today, each branch, each bush, each bend of the canal contains universes.

**IN THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS**, Rat tells Mole “there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.” Kenneth Grahame’s classic children’s

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PHOTO: CHRIS MELLOR/GETTY IMAGES



novel featuring animals dwelling by a river was inspired in part by his school days on the Oxford Canal.

Aboard the *Hertford*, there always is something to do: piloting, mooring, unmooring, filling the water tank. The routine of locks is the most ceaseless of all. Every hour or so we stop to open one gate, cruise into the lock, slide up the panels (called paddles) to let water flow into the lock and make the boat rise (we are heading upstream), open the exit gate, then reset everything.

The locks, Heenan and I soon realise, double as social hubs, where strangers exchange travel advice or boating gossip, or help less-experienced boaters.

**IT TAKES A FEW DAYS** before I understand what 'canal pace' means. We're speeding as quickly as we can to make the village of King's Sutton by nightfall. Dusk glints golden on the water as we cruise past Upper Heyford. Sheep nip at long grasses in the shadow of its Gothic church tower. It's the most idyllic spot we've seen on the canal so far,

but it's not on our schedule. I turn off the engine anyway.

A few minutes later, a young man appears on the towpath, walking his dog. As he gets close, the dog scampers onto our deck before its owner can stop it. Mortified, he stutters out an apology.

We laugh it off, retrieve the dog, make conversation. Kevin, we learn, is a local. I invite him to join us for a drink. For a moment, Kevin looks surprised, even nervous. Then he takes a deep breath and steps on deck. We hand him a Pimm's and clink glasses.

**OUR LAST NIGHT**, we moor in north Oxford, a short walk from my old university quarters. I feel almost regretful. What else did I miss when I lived here? How did I fail to explore this path that started in my own backyard?

A thrush flutters down to my feet. Once, I might have scared it away. But a week on the water has left me slower, more careful in my movements. The bird lets me photograph it at close range before it vanishes. **R**



## PARENTAL ADVISORY

Just taught my kids about taxes by eating 38% of their ice-cream.

CONAN O'BRIEN

I'm at my most hostage negotiator when I see my three year old holding a permanent marker without the lid.

@SIMONCHOLLAND (SIMON HOLLAND)

BONUS READ



*A recent photograph  
of Catrin Pugh at home*

A bus on a mountain road, a fiery crash...  
A young woman's life is changed forever.  
Here's her inspiring story

# Catrin's Long Way Back

BY ROBERT KIENER

**CATRIN PUGH** was coming home. The bubbly Welsh 19 year old had just finished a four-month contract working at the ski resort of Alpe d'Huez, high in the French Alps. The pay was minimal but there was a bonus: she could ski for free on her days off.

This gap-year experience had been Catrin's first time living away from home and she was anxious to see her parents, her brother and sister.

She had an independent streak, but she had been a bit homesick for her hometown of Wrexham in north Wales.

**ALONG WITH 50 OTHER** seasonal workers she had boarded a charter bus on April 16, 2013, at the resort for the 20-hour drive to the UK. She sat directly behind the veteran bus driver, Maurice Wrightson, to take in as much of the Alps scenery as possible.

The first stage of the trip, a 14-kilometre descent from the resort, was world famous as one of the most gruelling climbs of the Tour de France.

As Wrightson manoeuvred the 11-tonne bus down each of the route's 21 hairpin bends, Catrin looked out on snow-capped peaks and sun-filled valleys. *This is so beautiful*, she thought. *I know I will be back.*

Suddenly the bus sped up just before the last hairpin bend on the mountain route. "The BRAKES!" shouted Wrightson as the bus, gaining speed, headed for a 90-metre drop-off. "THE BRAKES ARE GONE!"

Everyone started screaming. Some passengers ran to the back, hoping to open the exit door. Others began trying to break the windows. Terrified, Catrin looked out at the sheer drop to the ravine below and thought, *I'm going to die! We are all going to die!*

Wrightson violently turned the bus to the right, apparently hoping to stop it by crashing into the side of the mountain, instead of allowing it to plunge into the valley. Catrin's seatmate and friend Shaun Stewart cradled her in a headlock. "Brace yourself!" he shouted, telling her to wedge her feet against the seat's

supports to prevent them from flying through the bus's windscreen.

The bus crashed into the side of the boulder-strewn mountain with a force that threw most passengers onto the floor. The sound of shattering glass and twisting metal was deafening. Battered and dazed, most passengers clambered out of the emergency exit or windows. Then, in an instant, the fuel tank in the front of the bus exploded and set Wrightson on fire.

Catrin fell to the floor. As Wrightson screamed for help, the flames spread along the floor to her. In seconds they engulfed her. The smell of burning skin mixed with diesel fuel filled the air.

Shaun rushed to her and pulled her off the bus. He stomped out the flames that were burning off her clothes and singeing most of her skin.

Lying on the side of the road, Catrin raised her arm and was horrified to see her burnt skin drop off in sheets. Both her hands and arms were raw and bloodied. She started screaming.

The pain was excruciating. Passengers ripped off their shirts to cradle her head and stop her bleeding. (Four passengers had serious injuries; Wrightson died at the scene.)

Paramedics arrived. Catrin didn't stop screaming until they put an oxygen mask on her. Then she passed out.

**THE MESSAGE** on Sara Pugh's phone from her husband Carl was short and to the point: "Come home. Quickly. Nothing to worry about." But when she

arrived home, Carl's face told a different story. "There's been an accident," he told Sara. "It's Catrin."

He explained he had received a call from France but didn't know more than that. He had been given the number of a hospital in Grenoble to call for more information.

Catrin was airlifted to a hospital in Grenoble where doctors discovered she had burns to over 96 per cent of her body. Only her scalp, a small part of her face and the soles of her feet were untouched.

They decided to transfer her to a specialist burns unit at a hospital in Lyon an hour away.

Reaching the hospital in Lyon by telephone, Carl learned that Catrin's burns were so severe that doctors had put her into an induced coma. "It is very serious," a doctor told Carl. "It would be best if you came right away."

What the doctor didn't tell Carl was that it is almost unheard of for anyone to survive such extensive burns. No one at the hospital expected Catrin to live more than a few days. Sara flew to Lyon the next morning. Carl followed the next day with his brother-in-law.

**IN THE 24 HOURS** since being burned, Catrin's body tissue had swollen to nearly twice its normal size. The swelling was caused by the loss of fluid from damaged blood vessels and



*Catrin at the Alpe d'Huez ski resort a couple of months before the accident on April 16, 2013*

was the body's attempt to heal itself.

Catrin's severe burns had ravaged her immune system and threatened multiple organ failure. Doctors had to act fast to replace the fluid or Catrin could have a cardiac arrest. To spare her from pain, doctors had placed her in a coma and on a ventilator.

At the hospital, Sara met with Catrin's head doctor who warned her, "Her face is badly swollen. It's not pretty. A parent shouldn't have to see her child like this."

Sara brushed back a tear and asked him, "Do you survive something like this?"

The doctor paused, then answered gently, "A small - a very, very small - amount of people do."

Before Sara walked into Catrin's room in the intensive care department, she steeled herself. *I won't cry.*





*The wreckage at the side of the mountain where the bus crashed and burned*

*I have to be brave*, she thought. Then she saw Catrin, unconscious and tethered to a wall of blinking, whirring machines. Her body was swathed in a thermal blanket and thick white bandages, except for half her face.

Sara nearly broke down. She fought back tears as she suddenly realised this could be the last time she saw her daughter alive. She told herself, “Be positive, be strong”.

As the ventilator whirred she looked past what she could see of Catrin’s black and red burnt, swollen face and consoled herself by thinking, *She has her teeth, her eyebrows and her eyelashes. She’s still my Cat.*

She reached out and touched Catrin’s bandaged arm. “Cat, it’s Mum, I am right here,” she told her, although she had been told Catrin would not be able to hear her. But she hoped she could and continued softly, “We are going to get you better,” even though she didn’t think Catrin would survive

more than a few days. Minutes later, in the waiting room, she broke down.

**THE NEXT EVENING**, after Carl had arrived and seen Catrin, he and Sara prepared for the worst. The doctors had again told them there was only “a slim chance” Catrin would survive.

Ever since she was born, Carl had thought of Catrin as “Daddy’s girl”. She was so full of life, always ready to make everyone laugh. “This was just so unfair,” he told Catrin’s brother Robert and they both cried.

But Carl also knew that Catrin had a resilience that had served her well throughout her 19 years. “Strong willed” is how he and Sara had often described her.

Catrin started going to dance school when she was just eight years old and loved getting on stage to act and sing. She loved getting out the camera at family events and urging everyone to “Give us a smile!”



"Where did that courage come from?" Carl and Sara had often asked one another. Catrin's dream had been to enrol in a theatre school in London.

She was always pushing herself. When she chose to do her A-levels in maths, no-one could persuade her to try something less demanding. "I can do that" was a recurring refrain with her. And she did.

When she told Sara she wanted to work in France during her gap year, her mother asked her if she could find something closer. She felt Catrin was so young and had never lived away from home. But she knew her daughter had made up her mind.

IAN JAMES, one of the UK's most accomplished burn specialists, spotted a news story about Catrin's accident. The plastic surgeon supervised the burns unit at Liverpool's Whiston Hospital, one of the most prestigious burn centres in the country. *The doctors in France are going to have a tough time*, he thought. *I don't think she can survive with 96 per cent burns.*

Unbeknown to James, the UK-based company that had hired Catrin to work in France had been in discussions with French and British doctors about the possibility of flying Catrin to the UK for treatment. Everyone agreed: there was a strong possibility that Catrin might not survive the air ambulance flight but her best hopes lay with the burn experts, including Ian James, at Whiston Hospital.

FIVE DAYS AFTER her accident, a team of doctors, surgeons, nurses, anaesthetists and technicians at Whiston Hospital operated on Catrin to save her life. First, they scraped off her dead skin so as not to become infected. Patients who don't survive such large burns usually die from an infection of the unhealed wounds, so keeping them clean was a priority.

They took a sample of unburnt skin from her scalp and sent it to a laboratory to be grown for future grafting. They covered more than 40 per cent of Catrin's raw tissue with 17-thousandths-of-an-inch-thick cadaver skin from Liverpool's national skin bank.

This donated skin helps prevent infection, preserves body temperature and promotes healing. Eventually it would be replaced by new skin grafts.

Catrin survived the five-hour operation but when James met with Sara and Carl he was blunt. Of her chances, he said, "I am sorry to say, one in a thousand."

He told them infection was a constant threat; James' team would need to change Catrin's dressings in three- to four-hour sessions, once or twice every day. Because her organs had been so damaged, the threat of kidney failure or heart attack was ever present.

One week went by. Then another. Time and again Catrin was operated on as surgeons harvested and grafted new skin. At three weeks James admitted he was surprised. He told Carl and

Sara that, miraculously, the odds of Catrin's survival had improved to one in a hundred.

He said to Carl, "If we get to the six-week mark and the wounds are progressing well, we may be turning a corner." But Catrin would remain in a coma for at least three months while she underwent extensive skin grafts and other operations.

Every day, wearing protective aprons and gloves to prevent infecting Catrin, either Sara or Carl stood alongside her bed. One day, Carl finally felt a glimmer of hope. He whispered, "Come on Cat. You can do this." This time he didn't cry.

**FOR THREE MONTHS** powerful opiates kept Catrin locked in a coma. She was fed intravenously and hooked up to a catheter and a colostomy bag. Every day was a battle but her young body fought off infection after infection and withstood major operations. To prevent her newly grafted skin from stiffening, physiotherapists 'exercised' her arms and legs twice a day.

After more than 90 days in a coma, James told Sara and Carl that their daughter had beaten nearly impossible odds. He admitted to them, "I've never seen anyone as badly burned as Catrin survive." Now it was time to wake her.

As Carl and Sara quickly realised, coming out of a coma is nothing like the scenes usually depicted in the movies. No-one just wakes up. Rather, they are gradually weaned

off the cocktail of drugs that sedated them and may drift into and out of consciousness for days.

**BECAUSE CATRIN** had been immobile for more than three months, her muscles had atrophied. She had lost 32 kg, nearly half her body weight. Catrin was too weak to hold her head up and would have to learn to stand and then walk. She had more than a year of physiotherapy ahead of her.

The major burns had destroyed tissue and caused neuropathy, a condition in which the nerves virtually stop working. While her nerves began to re-grow she would experience horrible pain. For months she would cry out in pain whenever anyone touched her. She told Sara, "It's as if someone is sticking pins and needles in me all the time, Mum! I cannot bear it!"

Painkillers helped but Catrin dreaded having her dressings changed. As carefully as her nurses removed her dressings, they would peel away some raw skin and Catrin would scream. One morning Catrin had had enough. "Nooooo!" she shouted to her nurses as the time came for her dressings to be changed. "Please don't do this! I hate you all!"

Later that day when Carl came to visit, Catrin screamed at him, "Why didn't you save me from the fire? You are my father and you weren't there for me." Carl knew that it was the medication and the pain that were causing her depression and outbursts,

but it still broke his heart to see Catrin suffering like this.

And there was her appearance. Fire had ravaged the pretty 19 year old. Most of her face had been badly burned. She had lost part of an ear and the tips of several fingers. Doctors had shaved off her luxurious long hair; they would scrape her head for skin grafts six times while in hospital.

During her thrice-weekly baths, which took ten people to hold and bathe her in a oversize tub, Catrin finally saw her burnt, battered body. She was horrified; it looked like a scarred checkerboard of raw pinks and bloodied reds. *No-one will ever love me*, she thought to herself one day. Later, as she drifted off to sleep, she told Sara, "It would have been easier if I had died." But she had still not seen her face or her shaved head.

Donnas Wilkinson, a 30-year veteran nurse who had been supervising Catrin's recovery for months, realised it was time to let Catrin see herself. Wilkinson brought in a hand mirror.

Silence. Then screams. Then tears. "No! No!" Catrin cried as she looked at her emaciated, bruised and bald reflection in the mirror. "I look like an alien. It is not fair." No matter how much Wilkinson tried to console her, explaining that her hair would grow back and she'd look so much better some day, Catrin kept crying.

Catrin had begun the painful process of learning to stand. The first time a team of physiotherapists lifted



*Catrin with her parents, Sara and Carl Pugh, and sister Mari*

her from her bed, helped her to her feet and supported her, she cried out in pain. It would be months before she could take a tentative first step.

**CATRIN HAD HAD ENOUGH.** The constant pain, the heartbreak of her appearance, the frustration of having to learn to walk and feed herself were too much. "I won't," was her answer to the simplest request to help herself. One day Catrin broke down in tears, telling her mother, "I'll never be able to walk. I'll never be normal!"

James and Wilkinson had seen other burns patients sink into depression and they knew what they had to do. "We are going to push Catrin," James told Sara and Carl. "She may hate us but that's OK with us."

They went on the offensive. Catrin refused to do her physiotherapy and James told her firmly, "If you ever want to use your hands again, you have to exercise them. If you want to dance again, you need to start trying."

The psychology began working.

Catrin worked through the pain of physiotherapy by thinking, *I'll show them*. She began to fight for herself.

To help prevent permanent scarring Catrin needed to wear pressure garments and a plastic face mask 23 hours a day. When she began resisting, Wilkinson asked burns victim Heather Simpson – burned over 75 per cent of her body in a house fire – to visit Catrin.

As the 31-year-old Simpson stood beside her bedside, Catrin peppered her with questions: “Will it hurt forever?” (It will be manageable.) “Do you live on your own?” (I am married.) “Do you have a job?” (I went to university and have a job.)

Simpson offered Catrin some stern advice: “You can play the victim but people will eventually get bored with that,” she told Catrin. “It’s up to you.”

Catrin asked Simpson if her scars would ever heal and confessed that she hated wearing her pressure garments. Simpson said, “So did I.” She took off her jacket and showed Catrin her right arm, which had healed nicely. Then she showed her left, which was badly scarred. “Guess which arm I didn’t wear my pressure garment on,” said Simpson.

The visit was just the push Catrin needed. She worked tirelessly and cooperated with her physiotherapists. The girl who used to claim, “I can do that” was back.

On December 7, 2013, after nearly eight months in hospital, she went home to continue her recovery there.

Although she couldn’t feed herself, clean herself or walk unaided, she worked hard in the hopes of one day regaining her independence.

Three months later, she returned to Whiston for a check-up. James had finished checking her dressings and Catrin was sitting on a bed. James said, “Walk to me, Catrin.”

“I can’t,” she said. “Not by myself.”

She didn’t want to disappoint James. *Try*, she told herself. Catrin rose and gingerly walked one step, then another. There was pain, but it was manageable. She managed three or four more before falling into James’s arms.

She began walking, then after months of work, running on a treadmill, then jogging outdoors. She regained the use of her arms, her hair had grown back and she no longer needed to wear her pressure garments.

Her face was scarred but not horribly. When out in public some people would stare but most were kind. Many had seen her story in the media and told her how inspiring she was.

**“I WANT TO SKI AGAIN.”** Catrin had been home for just under a year and was now walking unaided but Sara and Carl couldn’t believe their ears; she wanted to return to the French Alps. How would Catrin cope with returning to the scene of her accident? Both knew their daughter well enough not to doubt her. Catrin began taking lessons for disabled skiers, using adapted skis to glide down an artificial ski slope.

On December 23, 2014, Catrin, her family and friends returned to Val Thorens, in France, where Catrin, Robert and her sister Mari had learned to ski. But this year was different; a television crew accompanied them to cover what the media was calling Catrin's "miraculous" return to the slopes.

Under a blue sky, Catrin was helped into her skis. She confessed to a reporter, "I have butterflies in my stomach." As the cameras rolled, she took off, skiing slowly but steadily down one of the gentler slopes. Then, as she sped up, something extraordinary

happened. Her brother, sister and friends formed a diamond-shaped moving 'barrier' around her, protecting her as she glided down the slope.

She wasn't speeding down the slope as she had years before but Catrin was thrilled. *I'm free*, she thought as she felt the wind against her skin.

Before she slowed to a stop at the bottom she spotted her father, waiting with his arms outspread. Tears were streaming down his face. Carl held her and hugged her, whispering, "You are back, Catrin. You did it!"

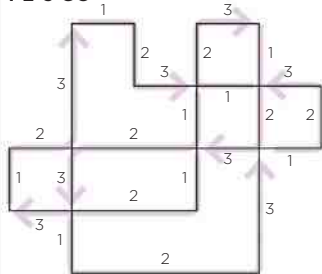
IN NOVEMBER 2015, in an elegant dining room at Britain's House of Lords, Catrin was preparing to deliver a speech to medical professionals, philanthropists, corporate donors and other burn victims. She had been invited by the Katie Piper Foundation, a UK charity, to tell her story.

Since then Catrin has spoken to various groups about how she recovered from her injuries, the need to triumph over adversity, becoming "better, not bitter" and the importance of maintaining a good body image, no matter how scarred one may be.

As she was being introduced, she thought, *What am I doing talking to professionals when they know so much more than I do?* But as she stood at the podium and began speaking, her doubts disappeared. She was on stage again, not dancing or singing but telling her story, hoping to help others. Catrin was back. **R**

## Puzzle answers *See page 124*

### 1-2-3 GO



### FILL IN THE BLANK

4. If you read each row as a three-digit number, the numbers in the two upper rows will add up to the number in the bottom row.

### HIDDEN MEANING

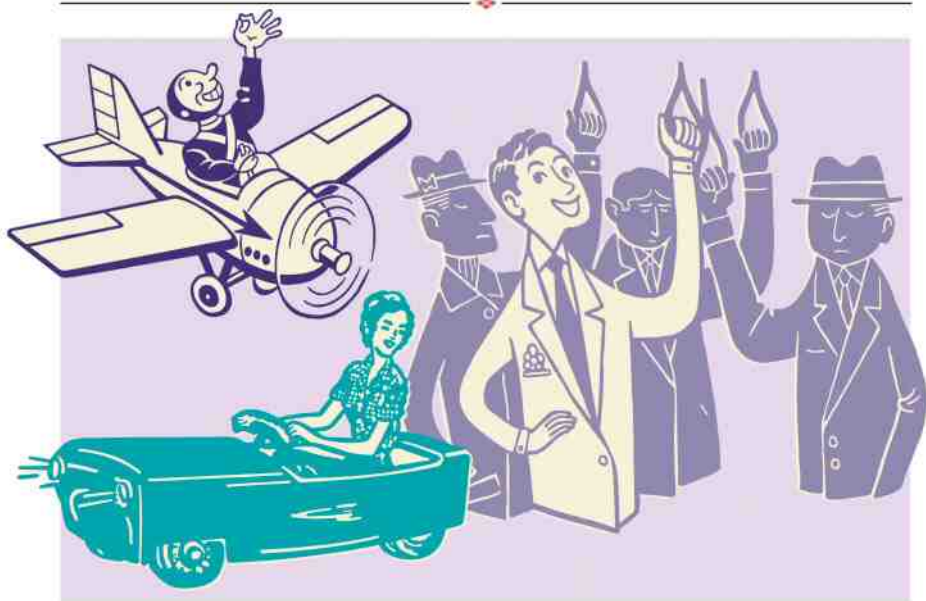
- A. Eternal triangle B. Royal pardon  
C. Seven seas D. A splitting headache

### MISLABELLED

We've seen first-hand that piggy bank B contains \$20. Piggy bank A can't contain \$10 because that would mean it was correctly labelled. It must, therefore, contain \$15, leaving piggy bank C to contain \$10.

# Unbelievable

TRUE TALES TOLD TALL



## Moving Stories

Intrepid traveller Nury Vittachi takes a journey from A to B, via Z



**DEAR INTERNET ANSWERS,** I just got invited to a beach party. What's the maximum possible weight loss in a 25-minute train journey?

If I don't snack? *Much?*

Yeah, I know I'm starting late, but what can you do?

While waiting for a response, I found that a reader had sent me a news item about a rail journey. Angry court officials in India confiscated a railway train – and the 100 passengers on it. They kept the packed vehicle and 'contents' for almost two hours, only releasing them when the railway department promised to pay its bills.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK



The passengers did not seem unduly annoyed. No-one expects trains in India to run perfectly on schedule, as 99 per cent do in Japan, and some travellers enjoyed having ringside seats at a battle between two government departments.

Train timetables in India are wonders of science, anyway. I recall one hill station in the north where there was only one train, scheduled to leave at 2.30pm every day. In fact, it left at a variety of times, but the townsfolk solved the problem by declaring that whatever time the train left was 2.30pm, and all other clocks and watches were adjusted accordingly, each day.

In one fell stroke, the train became the only one in THE WORLD that left exactly on time every single day. (Yes, a 100 per cent punctual score. Take that, Japan!) Einstein, who was always going on about the malleability of the space time continuum, and using trains as examples, would have thoroughly approved.

Confiscating vehicles along with passengers is not uncommon. I was the reporter in a case in Hong Kong in which a woman hired a removal firm to shift her furniture. Halfway to her new home, police arrested the staff and impounded the truck, furniture and householder.

In Asia, unpredictable journeys are the norm. Those of us who fly a lot in the region are used to occasionally landing in the wrong country, and sometimes we stay for the rest of our lives, not wanting to be considered fussy.

In China, some train crowds are packed so tightly that they become single multi-legged organisms, and you can find yourself lifted off your feet and taken to places not of your choosing. This can be useful. "I tried to come straight home, dear, but the press of the crowd took me to a series of bars, at each of which I managed to grab a drink to stave off dehydration."

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“

***Those of us who  
fly a lot in the  
region  
are used to  
occasionally  
landing in the  
wrong country***

---

In Asia, all vehicles are considered legitimate places in which to sleep. A rather beautiful young woman fell asleep on my shoulder on the bus the other day. I tried to look like her proud boyfriend, but she eventually woke up and sprang out of the bus in a single movement. It may even have been her stop.

The internet has still not answered my question. Which may be good news, since it would be a crime to waste this crushed but not ancient doughnut I found in my bag, right?

*Nury Vittachi is a Hong Kong-based author. Read his blog at [Mrjam.org](http://Mrjam.org)*

# out & about

NEWS

BOOKS

FILMS

DVDS



*Intimate portrait:  
Natalie Portman*

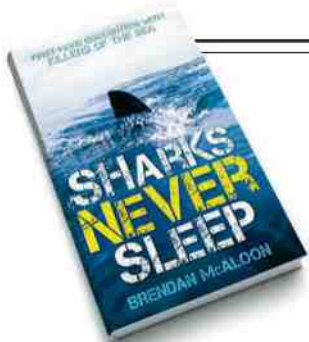
## **JACKIE** *Biography, History*



Directed by Pablo Larraín (*The Club, Neruda*), *Jackie* is a raw portrayal of the iconic American first lady Jacqueline Kennedy. While the events of November 1963 have been the subject of countless films, the focus of this film is how Jackie coped in the aftermath of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. It is told from Jackie's perspective and Natalie Portman captures her grief, fear, anger and desperation while at the same time portraying the integrity,

wit and sophistication that was always on show to the public.

The film cuts to happier times with flashes of Jackie's televised tour of the White House in 1961. There, ironically, we see her consumed with how she and Kennedy will be remembered in history. Set mosaic-like alongside the Jackie that recounts the events of Dallas, and the arrangements for her husband's funeral, a poignant image emerges of a widow and mother struggling with overwhelming tragedy.



## SHARKS NEVER SLEEP

*First-hand encounters  
with killers of the sea*

Brendan McAloon

Hardie Grant


 A shark attack is always hot news, those grisly encounters between human and predator playing to our fear and fascination reflexes. But the truth is millions of people enter the sea each year and come out happy and unscathed. Only for the very few is the story horrifyingly different. In this gripping book, shark attack survivors and witnesses to attacks share their experiences, each underscored by their enduring love of the water and the joys and perils of the wild. Alongside these stories are facts on attacks worldwide, psychological insights, information on safety measures, and the conservation versus cull argument.

PHOTO: (PIZZA) ISTOCK

## BALLERINA

*Animation, Adventure, Musical*



Set in Paris in 1879, *Ballerina* is the story of 11-year-old orphan Félicie Milliner (voiced by Elle Fanning) and her dream of becoming a prima ballerina. With no formal training or means to support herself, Félicie sets off for Paris. There, she takes the ultimate risk: she assumes the identity of a spoiled brat and becomes a dance student at the Paris Opera Ballet School.

While she encounters obstacles, she works hard to turn her dream into a reality and forges a strong and lasting friendship with a young and passionate inventor, Victor (Dane DeHaan). *Ballerina* celebrates the importance of friendship, self-confidence and daring to follow your dreams.



## Life-Saving Pizza



Staff at a pizza outlet in the US city of Salem have been hailed as heroes after they saved the life of regular customer Kirk Alexander. Store manager Sarah Fuller told local news media that he ordered online almost every day. But after 11 days had passed

without receiving Alexander's usual online order, Fuller sent delivery driver Tracey Hamblen to his home to investigate. When Hamblen saw lights on and heard the TV but couldn't get anyone to come to the door, she called paramedics - who found Alexander on the floor having suffered a stroke. Emergency services personnel said Fuller and Hamblen had certainly saved the 47 year old's life.



## Origins of Speech?



Working with an eight-year-old orangutan at Indianapolis Zoo in the US, researchers from Durham University in the UK have been able to prove that Rocky the great ape is able to “learn new sounds and control the action of his voice in a conversational context”. The results could provide the key to determining whether spoken language came from early human ancestors.



## BEYOND THE VAPOUR TRAIL

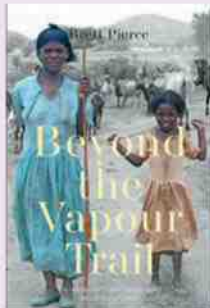
*The beauty, horror and humour of life.  
An aid worker's story*



Brett Pierce Transit Lounge Publishing

Sierra Leone, Armenia, Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Laos ... the list is seemingly endless. In countries across the world, broken people are devastated by poverty, despair, the violence and displacement of war, drought, the destructive impact of alcohol. Australian aid worker Brett Pierce has worked for many years in an area of child sponsorship that focuses not on a single child, but rather the community in which they live. He facilitates change by helping these vulnerable groups to identify their needs and manage their own future. He helps implement

programmes that are currently rolling out to more than four million children and their communities, globally. Through Pierce's exquisite descriptions of landscape, customs and circumstance, we live these people's dreams. For a person who has witnessed so much darkness, the author conveys humour, joy, hope and compassion. And, in his emails home to his wife, his book is also something of a love story.



***“I remember crisply the hunger in their eyes to be noticed, to be actualised, for an adult to look at them to say, in a connection, I see you. You matter.”***

## LIVING DESIGN

*How to bring the outside in – creating a Transterior home*

Jamie Durie  
and Nadine Bush

Penguin/Lantern

Some home design books work against the very people they are setting out to inspire. The lavish pages are a trip into a dream world – too aspirational, too expensive, too ‘out there’ to translate into something workable in our own homes. Not so this source of visual stimulation from landscape and interior designer Jamie Durie and design director Nadine Bush. They show how designers ‘borrow’ the shapes, textures, proportions and colours of the natural world and mesh them with man-made ones to bridge the gap between indoors and outdoors. If you’re not sure what could work in your home, check out the Inspiration Is Everywhere section and your design sensibilities will be quickly transformed from cautious to confident.



## A MONSTER CALLS

Fantasy, Drama



Based on Patrick Ness's novel, *A Monster Calls* stars Lewis MacDougall as 12-year-old Conor O'Malley. He is trying to deal with his mother's terminal illness, a father who has moved away, an unsympathetic grandmother and the school bully. Conor's unhappy life is turned around when, one night, an ancient, wild monster (voiced by Liam Neeson) appears at his window and guides him on a journey of courage and faith. Also starring Felicity Jones, *A Monster Calls* combines imagination and reality to deliver a visually spectacular and emotional story.



## France Bids Adieu to Plastic


The French love a picnic, and they love a glass of wine. But these pleasures can come at some cost to the environment. Every year, the nation throws away billions of non-biodegradable plastic goblets and other plastic utensils. As well as picnickers, vending machines and fast food restaurants are also culprits. But now the French government has decided to ban sales of all single-use plastic plates, cutlery, cups and glasses from 2020, unless they are made of bio-sourced materials that can be broken down in a home composter.








### LOVING *Biography, Drama*

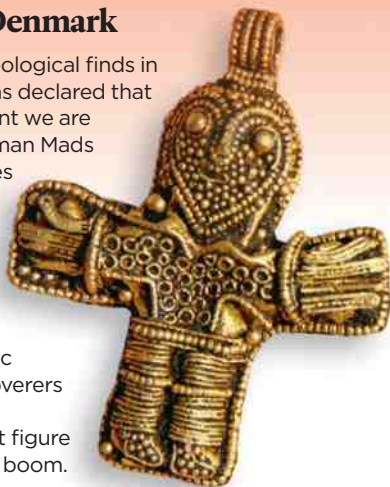
 In Virginia in 1958, Richard Loving (Joel Edgerton) fell in love with and married Mildred Jeter (Ruth Negga) and in doing so defined a moment in US civil rights history. Richard was a white man and Mildred an African-American woman and their marriage violated state law banning interracial marriage. They were charged and jailed – Richard, overnight and Mildred for several days. As an alternative to a jail sentence the judge offered Richard a choice: they must leave Virginia and not return, as husband and wife, for 25 years.

So, the Lovings moved to Washington, DC, where, in spite of their ‘legal’ and happy marriage, they longed to return home. What ensues is the battle they fought to have their marriage recognised in their home state.

*Simple and moving: Joel Edgerton and Ruth Negga as the Lovings*

## Archaeological Treasure Bonanza in Denmark

 After an unprecedented run of amateur archaeological finds in Denmark, the National Museum of Denmark has declared that it cannot keep up. “We are behind and at the moment we are falling further and further behind,” museum spokesman Mads Schear Mikkelsen told thelocal.dk. Recent discoveries to be processed by the museum include a still-sharp 3000-year-old sword from the Bronze Age, an 1100-year-old gold crucifix (pictured), seven bracelets from the Viking Age – constituting the largest-ever find of Viking gold in Denmark – and a 1000-year-old rune stone found in a farmer’s backyard. Danish law dictates that all finds of historic significance are the property of the state, with discoverers compensated for turning them in. In 2015 roughly US\$620,000 in payments was handed out, with that figure expected to increase dramatically due to the recent boom.







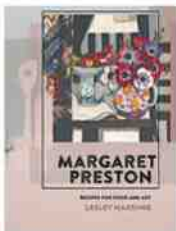
## MARGARET PRESTON

*Recipes for food and art*

Lesley Harding


The Miegunyah Press

In her paintings and woodcuts, Margaret Preston conveyed the beauty and wildness of Australian flowers and landscapes as well as her love of everyday objects in her own home. The kitchen, and its diverse contents, was a major source of inspiration as well as a place she enjoyed working. So, it comes as no surprise that home crafts were another of her passions. She published widely on the techniques of pottery, basketweaving and flower arranging, believing that art and the pleasure of creating something with one's own hands were within everyone's reach. Cooking was high on her agenda, too, and this charming book is a delicious combination of her artworks and her recipes, drawn in part from her handwritten books found in the National Gallery of Australia, and linked by a detailed essay on her work and private life. It is a gem of a book in every way, and reminds us why Preston holds such an important place in the history of Australian art.

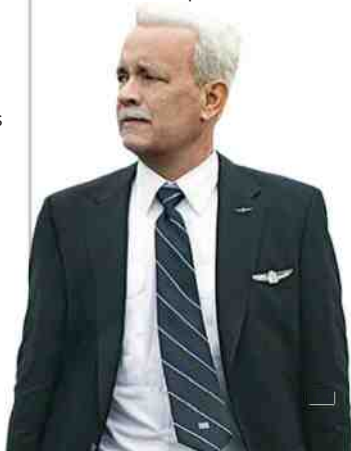


## SULLY

*Biography, Drama*

 Tom Hanks portrays airline pilot Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger in the re-enactment of his successful and safe landing of an A320 Airbus with 155 passengers and crew on the Hudson River in January 2009. Directed by Clint Eastwood, the film details the technical challenges Sully negotiated at high speed, and the event as seen from an observer's point of view (the sight of a jet heading towards New York skyscrapers). It also examines the emotional toll it takes on Sully, first officer Jeffrey Skiles (Aaron Eckhart), the crew and passengers.

The landing is contrasted with Sully's isolation in the aftermath. In what is a familiar Eastwood theme, the complications of being a 'hero' are explored.



# My Wonderful Aunties

In love and war, they made a difficult period better

BY JUDITH FRENDA

I CAME AWAY from a photographic exhibition suffering a bad case of nostalgia. I'm nearly 80 now and the black-and-white images of times gone by, mostly taken during the 1940s and '50s, awakened many fond memories. As I slowly moved through the exhibits with softly played music from those times enhancing my mood, memories of three young women stepped out and became almost real in front of me. Those marvellous aunts of mine, Dulcie, Thelma and Joan.

I was only nine years old in 1945 when my mother was sent to hospital to fight the crisis of double pneumonia. During her illness I stayed with my grandparents and those three young aunts who were not yet married off. The two younger ones had sweethearts fighting in the war. One was in the air force and the

other was a soldier at 'the front' somewhere in Europe.

As I followed these women around, they came to represent everything I hoped to be. I'd watch them getting ready for work, wriggling into dresses with peplums and pulling on seamed, silk stockings. Then the pancake make-up, deftly applied with a damp sponge. Cupid bows next, with purple or scarlet lipstick and eyebrows plucked into thin, arched lines darkened with black pencil. My father (with a lot of exaggeration) would laughingly remark that this fashion gave the girls a look of perpetual astonishment.

Enough about the glamour. It was the romance that stirred my young bosom. The quiet and patient hope of the two aunts with boyfriends at the war, who didn't know what the next day might bring. I remember



*Left: Dulcie (left) and Thelma (right) at Joan's wedding. Right: Judith at the time*

their changing moods: laughter and thankfulness and the telling of news when letters arrived, pensiveness and a word of anguish if letters were overdue. Once, a stray tear moving down a cheek. The wonderfully romantic love songs they softly crooned: 'I'm a Little on the Lonely Side', 'Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer', 'I'll Be Seeing You' and, of course, '(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover'.

After I'd helped with the dishes at night, I'd go to the sitting room to join everyone listening to the wireless. Always busy with their hands, one aunt would be knitting a striped sweater from wool oddments, another, a pair of socks for the war effort and the other, embroidering something for an overflowing glory box.

In contrast to the concern about the war, I recall great memories of fun.

These aunts had an impish sense of mischief and delighted in playing practical jokes on me. An intimacy developed in the shared nonsense and I remember it with warmth.

My mother recovered from her illness and I returned home. Two months later the war was over. Having resumed my normal life, I didn't think too much about the aunts. But today, I wonder if they danced in the streets on that heady day when the war ended.

Happily, the boyfriends of both of my aunts came back from the war. Within the next two years I attended their weddings. Dulcie, the eldest of the three, got engaged much later at 27, removing the fears of her family that she may be 'left on the shelf'.

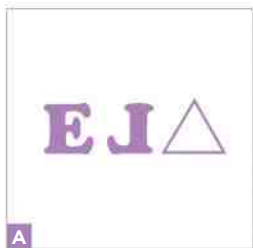
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**Share your story about something from your past that made a huge impact. Turn to page 6 for details on how to contribute.**



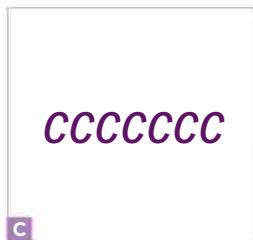
## HIDDEN MEANING

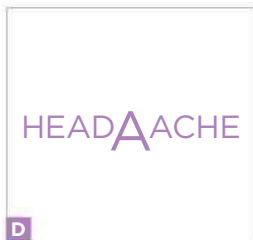
Identify the common words or phrases below.










## MISLABELLED (Easy)

Here are three piggy banks, one of which contains \$10. The other two contain \$15 and \$20. However, all three are labelled incorrectly. You open piggy bank B and find \$20 inside. On that basis, can you identify the contents of each one?



**A**



**B**



**C**

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TEST YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

# Trivia

1. True or false: the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve was an apple. **1 point**

2. What is the most sacred site to Sikhs? **2 points**

3. What is the most populated city in Asia? **1 point**

4. How many US states are named for historical heads of state? **3 points**

5. What does the acronym PDF stand for? **1 point**

6. What land-based animal's skin is on average 6 cm thick? **2 points**

7. What type of food are arborio and carnaroli and what are they used to make? **1 point**



11. *How many pairs of prop glasses did Daniel Radcliffe go through making the entire Harry Potter series: 30, 90, 160?* **2 points**

8. True or false: the banana plant dies after fruiting. **1 point**

9. What drug is named after Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams? **1 point**

10. What iconic movie increased recruitment into the naval aviation programme by 500 per cent, according to the US Navy? **1 point**

12. True or false: there is such a thing as a truly black flower. **1 point**

13. Which country's team at the Rio Olympics was all female? **1 point**

14. The 'kara' and 'oke' of 'karaoke' mean what in Japanese? **2 points**

16-20 Gold medal

11-15 Silver medal

6-10 Bronze medal

0-5 Wooden spoon

**ANSWERS:** 1. False. The type of fruit was not specified in the Bible. 2. The Golden Temple in Amritsar, in Punjab, India. 3. Tokyo. 4. Eight. North and South Carolina (King Charles I), Georgia (King George II), Louisiana (King Louis XIV), Maryland (Queen Henrietta Maria), Virginia and West Virginia (Queen Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen), Washington (George Washington). 5. Portable document format. 6. The hippopotamus. 7. Types of rice, for risotto. 8. True. 9. Morphine. 10. *Top Gun*. 11. Around 160. 12. False. The pigments that flowers employ to colour their petals don't produce black. 13. Bhutan. 14. *kara* means 'empty' and *oke* is shortened from *okesutora* (orchestra). Thus 'empty orchestra'.



IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

## Commonly Confused Words

*We've polled a long list of writers and editors to gather words often misused, misspelled or misunderstood. Here are some common offenders. How will you fare (not to be confused with fair)? See the next page for answers.*

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- 1. pallet** *n.* – A: roof of the mouth. B: painter's board. C: makeshift bed or portable platform.
- 2. sophomoric** *adj.* – A: immature. B: inducing sleep. C: philosophical.
- 3. secede** *v.* – A: achieve one's goals. B: withdraw. C: come next after.
- 4. accede** *v.* – A: surpass or overcome. B: agree. C: manage to reach.
- 5. principal** *n.* – A: young king. B: chief, head. C: access road.
- 6. prevalent** *adj.* – A: widespread. B: first in line. C: seeing the future.
- 7. imminent** *adj.* – A: outstanding. B: about to happen. C: inborn.
- 8. collegial** *adj.* – A: extremely courteous. B: relating to a college. C: marked by camaraderie among colleagues.
- 9. accommodate** *v.* – A: agree. B: pronounce with an accent. C: provide somebody with a room.
- 10. aural** *adj.* – A: of the ears. B: of the mouth. C: faintly glowing.
- 11. climactic** *adj.* – A: of prevailing weather. B: reaching a pause. C: at a decisive moment.
- 12. impetus** *n.* – A: sterility. B: force, impulse or stimulus. C: logical conclusion.
- 13. emigrate** *v.* – A: leave one's residence or country. B: enter a country for permanent residence. C: illegally cross a border.
- 14. incredulous** *adj.* – A: amazing, extraordinary. B: sceptical. C: ungrateful.
- 15. venial** *adj.* – A: dishonest. B: unimportant. C: of the blood.

## Answers

- pallet** – [C] makeshift bed or portable platform. The roof of the mouth is *palate*; a painter's board is *palette*.
- sophomoric** – [A] immature. Sleep-inducing is *soporific*. Philosophers of the Sophist school were *sophistic*.
- secede** – [B] withdraw. To achieve a goal, and to follow after, are *succeed*.
- accede** – [B] agree. One accedes to a demand but *exceeds* one's goals.
- principal** – [B] chief, head. For example, the principal of a school. It is sometimes confused with *principle* (a rule or general truth).
- prevalent** – [A] widespread. The tendency to misspell it as *prevelant* is indeed widespread.

### CONFUSED PAIRS

A quick list of other common mishaps

karat	carat
unit of measure for gold	unit of measure for precious stones; eg, diamonds
homey	homely
of or relating to the home	simple, unpretentious, or unattractive; though at one time synonymous with <i>homey</i>
sensuous	sensual
of or relating to the five senses; properly not risqué	relating to the gratification of the senses; sexual

- imminent** – [B] about to happen. It's often confused with *eminent* ('outstanding or prominent').
- collegial** – [C] marked by camaraderie among colleagues. Its spelling is close to *collegiate* ('relating to a college'), but the meanings are distinct.
- accommodate** – [C] provide somebody with a room. This word is large enough to accommodate two Cs and two Ms.
- aural** – [A] of the ears. For mouths, it would be *oral*; for lights, it would be *auroral*.
- climactic** – [C] at a decisive moment. It pertains to climax, not climate, whose adjective is *climatic*.
- impetus** – [B] force, impulse or stimulus. Don't confuse it with *impotence*, a male sexual dysfunction.
- emigrate** – [A] leave one's residence or country. You emigrate from a country but *immigrate* to one.
- incredulous** – [B] sceptical. People sometimes mistake this for *incredible*.
- venial** – [B] unimportant. Venial means minor when speaking specifically of sins. *Venial* means corruptible, able to be bribed.

### VOCABULARY RATINGS

- 9 & below:** Good  
**10-12:** Exceptional  
**13-15:** Word Power Wizard

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