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Dare Mightily

★ by Randal C. Hill

Sunday, September 8, 1974.

Robert “Evel” Knievel was nervous. “I can’t sleep nights,” he had told *Sports Illustrated*. “I toss and turn, and all I can see is that big ugly hole in the ground grinning up at me like a death’s head.”

Near Twin Falls, Idaho, about 15,000 fascinated fans had crowded onto land that rimmed the Snake River Canyon, the “big ugly hole” Evel had referred to. The professional daredevil had rented several acres for what he promised would be a spectacular achievement—soaring across the quarter-mile-wide river canyon in a steam-powered rocket.

A comic-book superhero come to life, the ruggedly handsome adrenaline junkie had been on the national scene since the 1960s with his spectacular motorcycle jumps—and crashes.

For years, 35-year-old Knievel had boasted that he would one day leap the Grand Canyon. When the Department of the Interior turned thumbs down on that oddball idea, he instead took on Idaho’s less magnificent, but still imposing, Snake River Canyon.

His team had set about constructing a 13-foot homemade rocket that Evel dubbed the Skycycle. In reality, it was a dubious contraption, assembled from a discarded airplane fuel tank and a seat from an old go-kart. The risk-taker had explained to the press that he would blast off from the canyon rim, clear the abyss, and parachute down to a soft landing, aided by a shock absorber on the rocket’s nose to cushion the impact.

At least, that was the plan.

That afternoon at 3:36 p.m., Knievel crawled into the cramped cylinder, flipped the launch switch, and shot up the steeply angled 108-foot-long ramp at 200 miles an hour. As he lifted off from Earth, an emergency parachute at the back of his craft unexpectedly unfurled. It released the main chute, which caused the rocket to roll, then flip downward and begin a lazy drift toward the river below.

The machine fell out of the crowd’s sight, as people, including Knievel’s wife and children, feared the worst. Falling into the churning water, everyone knew, would mean certain death for the daredevil strapped inside the Skycycle.

Miraculously, however, the rocket bounced off a canyon wall and came to rest seven feet from the river’s edge. Moments later, a rescue helicopter lifted Evel from the shore and hurried him to the launch site.

The event had lasted 16 minutes.

Most in the crowd were overjoyed that Knievel had returned safely, but some claimed Evel had released the emergency chute on purpose, and that what had unfolded had all been planned. He, in return, argued that he had delivered on his promise to make the attempt. End of discussion.

Years later, the undaunted performer shared a favorite quote from President Teddy Roosevelt: “Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory or defeat.” ♦

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Laughing Matters

Q: Why do Eskimos avoid sitting directly on polar ice? A: To keep from getting polaroids.

I got fired from my job at the bank today. An old lady asked me to check her balance. While I was pushing her from one side, she fell over.

On our way home from South Carolina, I was feeling a bit tired. Not sleepy, but tired. I considered stopping at a rest area but decided to continue to the next one about an hour farther on.

As we passed the rest area, a state trooper pulled out behind us and turned on his siren and light. I pulled over. When he came to my window, I asked him why he had stopped us.

He asked whether my wife had suggested we stop, and I admitted that yes, she had. He then read me my rights and said I was under arrest.

When I asked him what the charge was, he replied, "Resisting a rest."

"Mandy" Barry Manilow

by Randal C. Hill

Imagine you are a multitasking singer–pianist, who just isn't *happening* in the music-recording world. You might ask yourself, "What would it take to soar to the heights of this world, ride high on the hit charts, and sell out concerts night after night? I've got both the pipes and the looks for success. Over the years I've learned the ins and outs of the record business. I've even managed to sign with a small label and release an LP—though it bombed."

Such is a conversation 31-year-old Barry Manilow could have had with himself, as the year 1974 wound down.

Eventually he would grab the elusive brass ring, but he nearly blew his chance when he did.

He met the right person—record-business veteran Clive Davis, who would soon change the life of the frustrated Brooklynite. After being a Columbia Records executive, Davis was about to take over Bell Records—Manilow's recording home—and rename it Arista Records.

To see what Barry had to offer, Clive went to evaluate him when Manilow opened a show for Dionne Warwick. "I was really taken by his performance," the businessman enthused later in his autobiography. "He was a terrific singer, and his manner was upbeat, funny, and self-deprecating. The audience loved him."

Davis believed that none of Manilow's maiden LP tracks had shown the potential to be hit singles (at the time a necessity for most new artists seeking success). To the super-savvy Clive, there was nothing more important than to correctly match the just-right singer with the just-right material and the just-right production.

Manilow knew that Davis had worked primarily with rock artists, but Barry had no real interest in

rock 'n' roll. Clive thus set about casting for something suitable—no, *perfect*—for his talented protege. Davis had nurtured the early careers of several recording luminaries, and he knew how to connect good artists with good songs.

Sifting through hundreds of discs, Clive was drawn to an obscure tune called "Brandy," a mid-chart 1971 British hit by American expatriate Scott English. But when Davis showed Manilow the hauntingly beautiful ballad of lost love and regret, Barry balked, thinking "Brandy" would at best be an album-track *filler* and that English's tune would be of no help to him as a career-launcher. Clive disagreed and pushed hard for a first-class production and promotion. Eventually, Manilow decided not to argue with his new boss (good idea!) and reluctantly agreed to record the song.

Davis had the disc's title tweaked to avoid confusion with the 1972 *Looking Glass* hit "Brandy ("You're a Fine Girl")." To Barry's amazement, "Mandy"—as it was now known—shot to the top of the Billboard chart, and Barry Manilow was instantly catapulted into the pantheon of recording superstars.

You can see and hear the original British hit of "Brandy." Go to Google, key in YouTube, add "Brandy Scott English," then select the concert video clip. You'll find that it's 1971 UK *cool* at its very best! ♦

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For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Jeremiah 29:11 ESV

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PEOPLE & PLACES



CASTLES

Boldt Castle (rear) and Power House Boreccy/Dreamstime.com

Castello di Amorosa Brizardh/Dreamstime.com

Some visitors to Charleston, Illinois are surprised to spot a castle that might seem more at home in Europe. The towers, turrets, and battlements of the Old Main Castle building on Eastern Illinois University's campus resemble counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Those who drop by the Clayshire Castle Bed-&Breakfast in Bowling Green, Indiana, find accommodations that feature such medieval features as reproductions of ancient tapestries and artwork from famous fairy tales.

If the word *castle* conjures up images of turreted medieval strongholds scattered around Europe, that's no surprise. An estimated 25,000 such citadels stand in Germany, about 11,000 throughout France, and 1,500 in the United Kingdom.

People in the United States can also capture the color and enjoy the ambience that a castle offers without traveling overseas. A choice of opulent chateaus awaits exploration from coast to coast.

Old Main Castle Jim Roberts/Dreamstime.com



Hammond Castle, perched on a cliff overlooking the Gloucester, Massachusetts, harbor, brims with features and furnishings brought back from ancient European buildings. It has doors that once graced a church, courtyard decorations dating back to the fourteenth century, and a collection of Roman artifacts.

Architectural attractions are one claim-to-fame of the colorfully named Castello di Amorosa (Castle of Loving) in California. Another is that it doubles as a winery. Set amid rolling fields blanketed with grape vines, it features a barrel cellar and tasting rooms. The moat, drawbridge, and defensive tower are faithful to the twelfth- to thirteenth-century period.

A treasure of collectibles resides at the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California. Publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst (known as the "Great Accumulator") brought architectural elements from Europe, along with entire monasteries and a medieval barn, which were installed in his huge home.

Given that New York has long been a center of wealth in the United States, it's not surprising that the state hosts several notable castles. One is in the heart of the city, in Central Park. Completed in 1872, Belvedere Castle was situated to provide views of

Hammond Castle decorations Mark Nassal/Dreamstime.com



the surrounding woodlands, ponds, and cityscape.

Lyndhurst, in Tarrytown, New York, also occupies a park-like setting, overlooking the Hudson River. Commissioned in 1838 by William S. Paulding, Jr., retired military officer and politician, it was nicknamed "Paulding's Folly" because of the fanciful turrets and asymmetrical outline.

My personal favorite is Boldt Castle, on an island in the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. Alighting from the tour boat, I was dwarfed by what was among the largest private homes in the nation when it was built. George Boldt, proprietor of the famous Walford-Astoria hotel in New York City, planned the castle as a gift to his wife, but when she died in 1904, he called a halt to the project. The unfinished castle and other stone structures suffered from harsh winter weather until, in 1977, a nonprofit corporation acquired the island and began restorations.

I was awestruck by the renovated six-story masonry castle as I strolled through the furnished first and second floors. Even more enticing to me was the separate Power House, originally built to hold a steam generator; its walls are lined with historic photographs of the castle and New York's Thousand Islands region.

The nearby Alster Tower is believed to have been modeled after a turret constructed in Germany in 1895, even to the slanting, uneven walls, ceilings, and roof. It was intended to provide a choice of recreational activities for guests, and it included a two-lane bowling alley, library, billiard room, and theater.

This is but a sampling of American-style castles that await exploration around the country. Some might be near where you live—and others might be enjoyed during your travels. ♦

Travel writer Victor Block shares what he sees, does, and learns on his travels throughout the United States and abroad.

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PEOPLE & PLACES

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Searching out the Nelsons: Ozzie, Harriet, David, and Ricky

by Doug Quick

Initially, both Ozzie (full name: Oswald George Nelson) and Harriet Hilliard (real name: Peggy Lou Snyder) had entertainment careers. He was the well-known leader of a popular big band. She was a singer who had appeared in a short 1932 musical film. He spotted her in that movie, arranged a meeting, and hired her as his band's girl singer.

Ozzie Nelson used his band to work his way through Rutgers College and law school. He continued his music career, despite earning a law degree. Ozzie and Harriet were married on October 8, 1935. Their eldest son, David, was born in 1936, and their youngest, Eric ("Ricky"), was born in 1940.

After working on several radio shows, the Nelsons were invited to The Red Skelton Show, in 1941. That job lasted until Skelton was drafted for World War II. Ozzie then started working on the concept of a radio sitcom, based on the Nelsons at home. At first, two actors were employed to play their sons, but in April of 1949, Ozzie brought in his real sons, David and Ricky, to play themselves. This new radio series started airing on October 8, 1944, and it continued through June 18, 1954. First, it was on CBS, then on NBC, and, eventually, on the ABC (radio) network.

The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet started as an early ABC television series, on October 3, 1952, and continued through September 3, 1966. It was one of TV's longest-running sitcoms. The storylines were simple, and they reflected a simpler time, as David, Ricky, and their friends, in later years college boys, drank Coca-Cola (a sponsor). By accident, Ricky became a teen singing sensation in the Fall of 1956, when a song he performed, "Teenager's Romance," became a Top 40 hit, selling millions of records. His popularity among the younger audience contributed to the sitcom's longevity, as he featured a song at the end of many episodes.

Determining where central Illinois television viewers saw "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" is complicated. It was an ABC series, supported by advertising agencies (alternating sponsorship by Coca-Cola and Eastman Kodak).

Central Illinois initially included several television markets. Each metro city, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign-Urbana, and Danville, comprised a TV market. It was an era in which technology was such that it didn't allow for regular reception of the UHF stations (channels 14+) WICS, Channel



20, Springfield; WTVP, Channel 17, Decatur; or WDAN-TV, Channel 24, Danville, much beyond 30 miles from each broadcast tower. On the other hand, WCIA, Channel 3, was seen throughout east-central Illinois, within an 80-mile radius of Champaign, being the only VHF station (channel 2-13) in central Illinois.

Ad agencies needed to attract the largest possible TV audience. To appease them, ABC stepped up and purchased broadcast time on WCIA. ABC eventually pulled the series from WTVP. It was first seen nationally for the 1958-1959 season, beginning at 7:30 pm (CT) on Wednesday, October 1, 1958. It would instead air across Central Illinois on WCIA, starting the following Friday at 8:30 pm (CT). WCIA would air a 16-mm film of Ozzie and Harriet, including network commercials. WDAN-TV, though, continued to air Ozzie and Harriet as it had, directly from the network, since late December 1953.

During the very early years, from 1953 to 1956, I couldn't find any Central Illinois station other than WDAN-TV that aired The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet. KTVI, Channel 2, in St. Louis, was the only listing in TV Guide when the series first aired. It wasn't until October 1, 1958, that WTVH, Channel 19, in Peoria, first aired Ozzie and Harriet, along with KTVI, from the network. As I said, it was complicated!

A 1960 sponsorship change allowed WTVP, and later WAND, Channel 17, Decatur, to air the series live from the network. The series continued through September 3, 1966. ♦

Doug Quick, retired radio/TV broadcaster, broadcast historian, voice-over talent, author, and webmaster—curator of Central Illinois's On-Line Broadcast Museum at dougquick.com. Email dougquick@dougquick.com



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SKYWATCHER

The Quadrantid Meteor Shower, known for producing large, bright fireballs, peaks **January 3-4**. On **January 4**, Earth is the shortest distance of the entire year from the sun, and Saturn will be occulted (blocked) by the moon.

On **January 10**, the moon forms a conjunction with Jupiter, *King of Planets*, and Venus will be at its greatest eastern elongation, 47.2° from the sun. On **January 13**, the full (Wolf) moon meets up with Mars, then eclipses it, between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. local time, across the United States. Mars will be its brightest (until 2031).

On the night of **January 15-January 16**, Mars reaches opposition. (The planet is on the opposite side of Earth from the sun.) On **January 18**, Venus will be 2.2° north of Saturn in the evening sky.

A six-planet alignment will be visible across the United States on **January 22**: Just after sunset, you can view Mars, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune, Venus, and Saturn aligned in the sky. A telescope or binoculars will be necessary to see Neptune and Uranus. **January 29's** new moon (dark of the moon) will provide good viewing of faint galaxies, planets, and stars.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Sermon on a Sidewalk

by Jean Brady

Each morning as I walked, this workman's signature on a few sidewalk squares turned my thoughts to bygone days. When I met the Harding family of 4772 Keystone, laying cement was no longer a part of their lives. A new generation had come to that address and had no memory of the Hardings—another family lived there. Yet there it stood: "Harding Bros 4772 Keystone Chicago 1949"—mute testimony to workmen who labored well. The squares were still smooth and strong, the markings clear, after 40 years of rain, sleet, and snow—40 years of bicycles, hopscotch, and roller skates. The work of the Harding Bros' lives spoke to me of good materials and good workmanship.

As I looked around, I saw other squares of much more recent vintage, whose surfaces were pitted and crumbling, and whose markings were faded and difficult to read—time had tested the work of those men as well.

Then I looked inward. I, too, was building, not with concrete, but with the clay of human lives. Each life I touched was imprinted by my attitudes and actions. What will time reveal about *my* workmanship?

Those who lay cement stamp it with their own name. My heart's desire is not to leave *my* name, but that of the *Master*. He bought us with his own blood, and as we believe on him, he has marked us as his own. Now we labor together, under his su-

pervision, seeking to leave his stamp on those around us.

I think of an obscure Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball—whose influence on D. L. Moody launched one of the greatest evangelistic movements this world has ever seen. I think of a faithful mother and grandmother team who left their mark on young Timothy—who became a faithful servant in the early church.

I think of Hannah, who imparted her love for God to young Samuel—who would later call his nation back to God. I think of Ruth, who changed Naomi's bitterness into joy. I think of Esther, whose courage delivered her people, through whom the Savior came. I think of Mary of Bethany, whose gift of love poured out completely and filled the room, touching everybody present. I think of the patience of Barnabas, "The Encourager," whom God used to shape both Paul and John Mark into useful servants of God.

Then I think of others, such as Abraham, whose failure to acknowledge Sarah as his wife was reproduced in the life of his son Isaac, who lied about his wife Rebekah. I think of Jacob, whose scheming and deceit were reproduced ten-fold within his own family. I think of David's sin, which affected generations to follow. I think of Lot, whose compromise led to complete destruction, ending with infamy in a cave.



© Lost_in_the_Midwest/ Adobe Stock

But here *I* stand, desiring to be a good workman, leaving the mark of Christ on those whose path *I* cross. Yet how far short *I* fall in total obedience and unfettered love. Then Christ reminds me, "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." He reminds me that "[his] grace is sufficient for me," that "[his] strength is made perfect in weakness."

God has chosen all of us, weak vessels—cracked pots if you will—to hold and display the glory of this heavenly treasure, our Lord Jesus. Our prayer can be only this: "Cleanse us, Lord, and make us vessels fit for the Master's use. Leave your mark, Lord, not only on our lives, but on those we are privileged to touch."

Harding Bros 4772 Chicago survived in a few sidewalk squares, which have likely now disappeared, victims of bulldozers. But those whose lives are touched by the gospel in us will endure into eternity. Let us take heed how we labor. ♦
Jean Brady, widow of a pastor and a church pianist, writes in Farmer City, Illinois. Email her at canadajean35@yahoo.com.



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CROSSWORD CLUES

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Across

- 1 Starts a triathlon
- 6 Airplane assignments
- 11 Short lines at the register?
- 14 Chocolate source
- 15 "I've __ up to here!"
- 16 Swelter
- 17 *When "you can see forever," per the classic song
- 19 Watch chain
- 20 Top __
- 21 Requests
- 22 DVR pioneer
- 23 Rich cake
- 25 Air purifying gadget
- 28 Skateboarding star Tony
- 30 *Genetic lab project
- 32 Qatari bigwigs
- 34 "__ I say more?"
- 35 *Almost got the gold
- 42 Word on Irish euros

43 Finnish hot spot

- 44 *Long, curved barrette
- 50 Academic acronym
- 51 Glasses for bookworms
- 52 Court attire
- 54 Itch
- 55 Han who said, "It's not wise to upset a Wookiee"
- 56 [shrug]
- 59 __ sale
- 60 Quantity applied to dubious advice, and what's found in the answer to each starred clue
- 64 Put away
- 65 Very serious
- 66 Leading
- 67 __ light bulb
- 68 Cookie source
- 69 Ready to flow

Down

- 1 Person in Paisley
- 2 Diminish

3 "Gosh, no one is happy with me!"

- 4 PC alternative
- 5 __ power
- 6 Like some martinis
- 7 AirPods holders
- 8 Total
- 9 Hermana de la madre
- 10 Farm pen
- 11 Florence gallery with Botticelli's "Birth of Venus"
- 12 Tried and true
- 13 Seven of Nine of "Star Trek," for one
- 18 Founded, for short
- 22 Pewter component
- 24 Gumbo vegetable
- 25 Cold, slushy treat
- 26 World Cup chants
- 27 Network connections
- 28 She/_ pronouns
- 29 "No question is too personal" session, for short
- 31 "Yosemite Valley Winter"

photographer Adams

- 33 Part of an act
- 36 Storyteller
- 37 Tolkien creatures
- 38 Wholesale quantity
- 39 Get the better of
- 40 U-turn from SSW
- 41 Hydroelectric power source
- 44 Merciless
- 45 Gas up?
- 46 Hounded
- 47 Stand buy
- 48 Wrinkle remover
- 49 Casual top
- 53 Awesome, in showbiz
- 55 Etsy, e.g.
- 57 "Frozen" sister
- 58 Start of an address
- 60 Shoot the breeze
- 61 Color TV pioneer
- 62 North Sea diving bird
- 63 Transgression

See Answers on A-15.

PSYCHIATRIC

Schwabron 12-19

"Tell me more about your fear AI is taking over the world ..."

THE MIDDLETONS

BY RALPH DUNAGIN & DANA SUMMERS

IT'S SAD TO SEE THE DECORATIONS COME DOWN. YEAH. IT'S SO FINAL.

I'VE ALWAYS HAD THE LITTLE-GIRL BELIEF THAT THE SEASON LASTS FOREVER. THERE, THERE.

I'M OK NOW, REALLY. POST-HOLIDAY DEPRESSION NEVER AFFECTED ME.

BUT THEN, GRIMES NEVER TOOK DOWN HIS CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BEFORE.

SCRABBLE G R A M S

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A ₁	E ₁	O ₁	G ₂	G ₂	D ₂	P ₃	
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E ₁	I ₁	O ₁	L ₁	M ₃	P ₃	R ₁	
							RACK 2
O ₁	U ₁	T ₁	B ₃	M ₃	S ₁	C ₃	
							RACK 3
E ₁	E ₁	I ₁	L ₁	N ₁	T ₁	N ₁	
							RACK 4
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							RACK 5

PAR SCORE 255-265 FIVE RACK TOTAL _____
 BEST SCORE 332 TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN _____

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 5th Edition.

For more information on tournaments and clubs, email NASPA - North American SCRABBLE Players Association info@scrabbleplayers.org. Visit our website - www.scrabbleplayers.org. For puzzle inquiries contact scrgams@gmail.com 08-18

See Answers on A-15.

Gasoline Alley

JIM SCANCARELLI

Good job, Slim! Aw! You wrote it! I just put the letters up!

SOME FOLKS DON'T PRACTICE WHAT THEY PREACH, BECAUSE THEY DON'T PREACH MUCH! PASTOR I.M. PRESENT

You know, Slim! If some folks preached what they practice... ..they'd have to be censored! I never thought about it that way!

How do you come up with these cool ideas for sermons, Pastor? Well... ..I pray for God to open my mind with worthy stuff... ..and to shut my mouth when I've said enough!

LIFESTYLES



I stopped at a farmstead and asked the lady whether I could use her phone. She graciously consented. I called home to beg my wife to come get me. I had to explain exactly where I was. Yes, those were the days before cell phones and GPS. She found the right house, and the owner let me leave the tractor and hay loader there overnight.

I did use that loader behind a 1955 heavy-duty F-150 pickup that had what we called a *Granny Goodrich* low gear. I could drive across a field at about 2 miles per hour. I loaded the hay into the pickup, then forked it off into the haymow. After one of my son's schoolteachers offered to buy the loader, I contracted with a neighbor to bale my hay. It cost me 5 cents per bale for baling and another 5 cents per bale for a man on the hay wagon. A third nickel per bale got me help putting the hay into the mow.

I also made hay on the halves for some neighbors who had limited use for hay. Of course that doubled the rate per bale. I took home only half of the hay, and I also paid for help putting up hay in my neighbors' barns.

Still, it was a good deal, all around. I had a sickle-bar mower and an old side-delivery rake, a close twin to Dad's original one. Dad always had trouble with that machine on hillsides: it tended to swing downhill on steep side slopes. Though my little farm



was hilly, I didn't farm hillsides, but only the top and bottom—which led to friendly quips about my two-story farm.

That farm might have been a two-story one—but through the years it has yielded lots more than two stories for this column! ♦

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The Old Hay Rake

As we drove past a hilly patch of brush on his four-wheeler, my brother pointed something out to me. There, nearly overgrown, was our old side-delivery hay rake, now a relic of the past.

That farm implement was once a dark green color, though the paint had long since faded. The large steel wheels drove the tines that raked the hay. This rake (like much of Dad's other farm equipment) had started life as a horse-drawn implement. There were also dump rakes, which collected the hay evenly, then dumped it on command. One built windrows sideways with that.

I once owned a hay loader. I had not seen many in action. You pulled it behind a hay wagon, and it loaded the hay from behind the wagon. An old friend, with emphasis on *old*, sold it to me for \$15, and I drove my Farmall H the 20 miles to his little farm to retrieve it. That round trip took longer than I had counted on, and darkness overtook me 7 miles from home.

The Farmall had a top speed of 16 miles per hour. I didn't go that fast though, because the contraption I was pulling had a vast sheet of light metal where the hay went up. That thing made such a racket, I thought it would deafen me. The last problem, a more serious one, was that I had no working lights on the tractor.

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Cheers to a new year!

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LIFESTYLES



A Ruse of Shadows, by Sherry Thomas

reviewed by Susan McKinney

Sherry Thomas is back with another Lady Sherlock novel. *A Ruse of Shadows* takes place immediately after her previous novel, *A Tempest at Sea*. The novel begins with a flash-forward of Charlotte Holmes being questioned about her involvement in the murder of Lord Bancroft Ashburton, the brother of Ash, Charlotte's longtime friend.

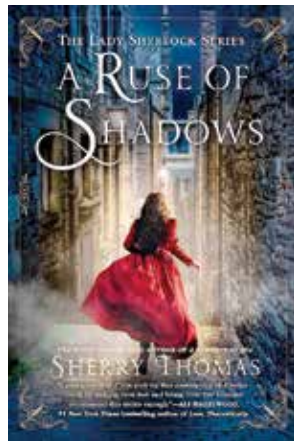
In a previous book, Charlotte proved that Lord Bancroft had been selling secrets to the Empire's enemies. At the time of *A Ruse of Shadows*, he is currently serving time at Ravensmere, a very private prison for high-level prisoners. He summons her to his prison and tells her that his most loyal henchman and righthand man, Underwood, is missing. He demands she find him because, though her searches usually end badly for the subject being sought, she does find those she looks for.

Charlotte has also just learned of her special-needs sister Bernadine's kidnapping by Moriarty's agents. Charlotte knows the two kidnappings must be related. As she talks with Lord Bancroft, she questions him about her sister's kidnapping and the details of Underwood's disappearance. She surmises that Underwood could already be dead, but Lord Bancroft wants details. Charlotte also demands certain concessions for Bernadine. After gaining such assurances, she leaves to begin her investigation.

Thus begins the mystery. Charlotte starts investigating Underwood's last known interactions and his ties to illegal boxing and boxers. All the while, she worries about her sister and what Moriarty would do this time. You will have to read the book to find out when and how Lord Bancroft is murdered and why Charlotte becomes the main suspect. You will also learn more of Charlotte and Ash's love for each other and how they keep it hidden from normal, genteel society.

I truly enjoy these mystery novels. I love Thomas's tweaking of the Holmes legacy and her reworking of the Arthur Conan Doyle mysteries to fit her vision of a female Sherlock Holmes. Charlotte is not perfect and does make mistakes. Her sister Olivia can be grating. Watching three women (Charlotte, Olivia, and Mrs. Watson) try to live independent lives, outside of society's concept of women and what they can accomplish is a pleasure to read. Mrs. Watson, with her worldly knowledge and experience, is a calming eye in Charlotte's storm. I really, really like Mrs. Watson's character. She is a lot smarter than many people give her credit for. ♦

Susan McKinney, St. Joseph Township-Swearingen Memorial Library librarian, is an avid reader who enjoys mystery, suspense, fantasy, and action novels.



The Astronaut Who Painted the Moon, by Dean Robbins

reviewed by Esther Aardsma

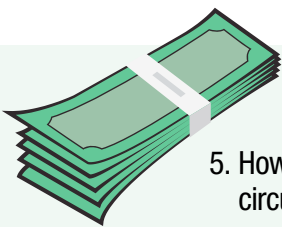
Alan Bean, only the fourth person to walk on the Moon, couldn't adequately express the wonder and awe of his experience to the folks back home. Photographs felt empty and expressionless. Words failed. How could he convey the "wonder of walking on a new world"? To convey his magical and mysterious experience of being on the Moon, Bean turned to paints and canvas.

In *The Astronaut Who Painted the Moon*, Dean Robbins tells the story of Alan Bean, astronaut-artist, through a warm, child-friendly story and enjoyable illustrations. The end of the book includes several real images of Bean's canvases, compared to the photographs that inspired them. Of note, *The Astronaut's* cover illustration is mildly misleading—it shows an astronaut painting at an easel on the Moon. Bean did *not* paint while on the moon; he painted images of his time on the Moon only once he had safely returned to Earth. The book contains no content concerns; the closest being a couple references to Bean as a Navy pilot, and references to the failed space shuttle missions *Challenger* and *Columbia* on the timeline at the back of the book.

The Astronaut encourages readers to wonder and marvel—not only at the strange beauty of a foreign space world, and at Bean's masterful creativity, but also at their own futures: *What could I become?* Robbins's book naturally segues into discussions of God's glorious artwork: "The heavens declare the glory of God: the skies proclaim the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1), and "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well" (Psalm 139:14). ♦



Currency Trivia Quiz



See Answers on A-14.

1. What country near the United States has plastic currency?
2. Where is New Zealand's currency printed?
3. What is the average lifespan of an American dollar bill?
4. How much American paper money is in circulation?
5. How much counterfeit American currency is in circulation?
6. Who provides the paper for printing U.S. currency?
7. Who prints U.S. currency?
8. What are the denominations of U.S. currency?
9. Does the U.S. mint still make the fifty-cent piece?
10. Does the U.S. government still print the \$2 bill?

SUDOKU

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	4			3				

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See Answers on A-15.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

- LROYG
- DHEEG
- LATICI
- LNCIHF

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Answer here:



BLISS



"OK, I have to use the bathroom ... guys?"

PEOPLE & PLACES

New 2025 Illinois Laws

House Bill (HB) 3144 ends the statewide 1% grocery tax. Local governments can reinstate the eliminated tax without asking voters. Senate Bill (SB) 3362 extends Illinois and local sales taxes to out-of-state businesses that ship products to Illinois (targeting online shopping).

SB 2936 allows municipal governments to reduce property taxes for newly remodeled single-family residences, up to the value of the alteration.

SB 3455 commissions the Illinois Department of Revenue to study the Illinois property tax system, including a comprehensive review of assessments, collections, exemptions, and tax levies.

SB 2907 requires the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to publish a report on all state and federally funded job training and workforce development programs to “identify successful programs, areas for improvement, and potential areas of duplication or

overlap in order to optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of State and federally funded job training and workforce development efforts.”

SB 3155 gives DCEO discretion to *not* require businesses that failed to maintain the minimum employment numbers from March 2020 to the beginning of 2024 to repay tax credits. This bill provides some latitude to employers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but leaves the final decisions to DCEO.

SB 3211 reduces the work experience needed to exempt a family therapist from needing to pass the licensing examination otherwise required.

SB 3467 expands exemptions for speech-language pathology assistants and candidates to perform duties under the supervision of licensed speech-language pathologists.

SB 3767 allows registration of a landscape architect registered under the laws of another state or country—if the licensing requirements

at the time of issuance in that other jurisdiction were substantially equivalent to the Illinois requirements, then in force.

SB 3740 allows real estate agents from any state that meets certain requirements to qualify for an Illinois license. Illinois has expanded telehealth op-

tions and added additional personnel requirements for hospitals in an insurance network. SB 2586 and HB 5087 establish the practice of remote-based dentistry and physical therapy, “reducing barriers and expanding options” for Illinois patients. (Here’s hoping the remote-based dentistry hurts less!)

SB 2461 requires every in-network hospital for health insurance providers to have at least one radiologist, pathologist, anesthesiologist, and emergency room physician as a preferred provider in a network plan. It gives the Illinois Department of Insurance the authority to require additional types of medical specialists to be included as preferred providers in similar plans.

To eliminate some plastic waste, and in imitation of recent New York State legislation, The Illinois Small Plastic Bottle Act bans hotels from offering single-use plastic bottles containing personal care products, such as shampoo, in their hotel rooms. Hotels may provide single-use bottles by request at a location other than guest rooms or public or shared restrooms, such as at the front desk or reception.

To reduce mercury poisoning, HB 2363 bans the sale and distribution of most common fluorescent light bulbs by 2026. Pin-based fluorescent light (PFLs) bulbs can be sold until 2027. The bill makes narrow exceptions for medical, photography, photocopy equipment, and certain other specialized uses.

Illinois has banned corporal punishment in public schools since 1994. That policy did not apply to private schools. A newly signed law says nonpublic school personnel may not slap or paddle a student, place a student in a physically painful position, or inflict intentional bodily harm on a student. This new law takes effect January 1, 2025. ♦

Movie Reviews

FRONT ROW SEAT

by Larry Stephens



Unlike a lot of crime thrillers of that period, the film’s protagonist, Walter Neff (MacMurray), has no criminal background or connections. He’s just a smooth-talking insurance salesman, out to write policies and collect commissions. His darker impulses are aroused, however, when he has a chance encounter with Phyllis Dietrichsen (Stanwyck), the unhappy trophy wife of one of his customers. What starts out as flirtation, leads to an affair and, ultimately, to a plot to commit murder.

Though this might not sound like a particularly original storyline, it’s made more interesting by the fact that Walter is no dupe. Before their affair begins, Phyllis asks him whether she could take out an accident-insurance policy on her husband without him knowing. She says it’s because her husband is too proud and would be embarrassed to know she’d done it, but Walter sees right through her ploy and tells her he knows what she’s up to. He even walks out. Yet, when she shows up unannounced at his apartment later that night, he still lets her in. In this way, *Double Indemnity* feels a little like a Shakespearean tragedy and not just another run-of-the-mill crime thriller.

This is film noir at its absolute best. It has a stellar cast, fantastic writing, and a visual aesthetic that continues to influence film makers to this day. It truly is one of a kind. ♦

When Larry isn’t sweating a deadline or fending off humorless grammarians, he likes to unwind with a good movie. If you have comments, email him at larryav8r@gmail.com, or visit his Web site at chewytype.com.

Double Indemnity (1944)

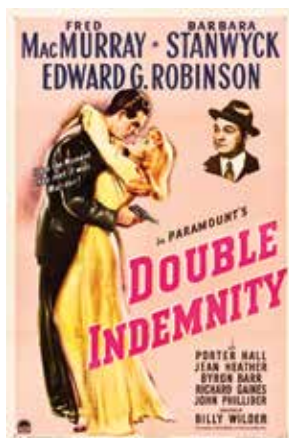
Directed by Billy Wilder

Starring Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward G. Robinson

Runtime 1hr 47min

Available on Blu Ray, DVD, Amazon Video, Apple TV, YouTube, Fandango

The bad thing about using superlatives to describe anything is that these words are so overused in everyday language, they’re all but meaningless. Take *awesome* for instance. It is now employed to describe everything from the mind-altering majesty of the Grand Canyon to tacos from a food truck. Yet there is one superlative that still has enough cachet left to properly convey my esteem for the film-noir masterpiece that is *Double Indemnity*: perfection.



From the opening credits to the last line of dialogue, there is not a boring or pointless moment. It slowly, relentlessly ratchets up the suspense and keeps you riveted right up to the end. High praise, I realize, for a movie in which the main character is an insurance salesman played by Fred MacMurray. Sure, the movie does benefit from the star power of Barbara Stanwyck and Edward G. Robinson, but the magic in this film is largely due to the direction of Billy Wilder and the screenplay he cowrote with pulp fiction master, Raymond Chandler.

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tions and added additional personnel requirements for hospitals in an insurance network. SB 2586 and HB 5087 establish the practice of remote-based dentistry and physical therapy, “reducing barriers and expanding options” for Illinois patients. (Here’s hoping the remote-based dentistry hurts less!)

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MONEY MATTERS

Time for Financial Resolutions

by Darrold A. Kennedy

Now that the calendar has flipped, it's time for some New Year's resolutions. You could decide to exercise more, lose weight, learn a new skill, reconnect with old friends—the possibilities are almost limitless. But, this year, why not add a few *financial* resolutions to your list?

Here are some to consider:

Reduce your debts. It might be easier said than done, but cutting down your debt load increases your cash flow and provides more money available to invest for your future. Look for ways to lower your expenses and spending. You might find it helpful to use an online budgeting app.

Boost your retirement savings. Put as much as you can afford in your IRA, your 401(k), or other employer-sponsored retirement plans. If your salary goes up this year, it's a good opportunity to increase your contributions to these retirement accounts. Once you turn 50, you can make pretax catch-up contributions to your 401(k) and traditional IRA. You might also want to review the investment mix within your plan to determine whether it's still providing the growth potential you need, given your risk tolerance and time horizon.

Build an emergency fund. It's a good idea to maintain an emergency fund with six months' worth of living expenses, keeping the money in a liquid, low-risk account. Without such a fund, you might be forced to dip into your long-term investments to pay for short-term needs, such as an expensive auto or home repair.

Keep funding your nonretirement goals. Your traditional IRA and 401(k) are good ways to save for retirement—but you likely have other goals for which to save and invest. For example, if you want your children or grandchildren to go to college or receive some other type of post-secondary training, you might want to invest in a tax-advantaged 529 education savings plan. If you have short-term goals, such as saving for a wedding or taking an overseas vacation, you might want to put some money away in a liquid account. For a short-term goal, you don't necessarily need to invest aggressively for growth—you just want the money to be there when you need it.

Review your estate plans. If you haven't already created your estate plans, you might want to do so in 2025. Of course, if you're relatively young, you might not think you need to have estate plans in place just yet, but life is unpredictable, and the future is not ours to see. If you have already drawn up estate plans, you might want to review them, especially if you've recently experienced changes in your life and family situation, such as marriage, remarriage, or the addition of a child. Because estate planning can be complex, you'll want to work with a qualified legal professional.

You might not be able to tackle all these resolutions in 2025. But by addressing as many of them as you can, you might find that by the end of the year, you have made progress toward your goals and set yourself on a positive course for all the years to come. ♦

This Edward Jones article was provided to your local Edward Jones Branch financial advisor, Darrold A. Kennedy, AAMS: Edward Jones, 1912 Round Barn Road, Suite E, Champaign, IL 61821; phone (217) 398-6562; toll-free number (800) 203-5679; fax (888) 819-2146.



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thoughts to ponder

by Tim Barber

Were you surprised a lot in 2024? I remember the Olympic swimmer who looked up at her time, and, surprise: a new record! Perhaps you were surprised when you stepped on the scale: a new record! You lost five pounds. Opening the power bill can be quite a surprise as well. . . . Surprises come over the telephone, in the mailbox, while driving, and in the grocery store. Just maybe, one of your biggest surprises began something like this: "Guess what, honey?"

Along those lines, do you suppose Mary said something of the sort to Joseph? We tend to hurry past Christmas and get on with the new year, so I'd like to take a step back to look at a few surprises in the Christmas story. Way, way out east of Bethlehem, somebody said, "Hey guys, come look at this. A new star!" Surprise! And so began a journey of hundreds of miles in search of a newborn King.

An elderly Jewish priest and his wife (Zechariah and Elizabeth, Luke chapter 1) were surprised to discover that they were going to be parents. Joseph was most certainly surprised when he heard Mary's explanation for her condition. An angel told you what? And then, surprise! Joseph got his top-secret clearance and found out Mary had been telling the truth all along.

King Herod was surprised to learn of a new King, born in Bethlehem. Joseph was surprised to learn he was going to Egypt with his new family to escape a surprise Herod would spring on several families around Bethlehem. Male children two years old and younger were going to be killed. Some surprises are hard to deal with.

All this to say, "Surprise!" God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Mary's surprise was a little baby who would be named *Jesus*, "for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). We are all his people.

Jesus would bring many more surprises. This new year of 2025 will be filled with surprises, so let God's greatest surprise help you deal with each one of them. ♦

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PEOPLE & PLACES

TAKE A HIKE!
BY NICK THOMAS

**IN PALO DURO
CANYON, TEXAS**

Considering its vast area, it might be surprising that Texas is home to just two national parks. If the U.S. National Park Service ever expressed interest in adding a third, Palo Duro Canyon could be a compelling candidate—assuming the Feds could pry it away from the Texas State Park system. As the second-largest canyon system in the United States, this spectacular natural wonder is nicknamed the “Grand Canyon of the Lone Star State.”

In the Texas panhandle, about a half hour’s drive south from Amarillo, summers are predictably shadeless and brutally hot, so take the obvious precautions if hiking during those months. Winter, early spring, and late fall are the best times to hike any scorching trail, and there are plenty of them here—more than 15, spread over some 30 miles around the 30,000-acre state park.

Our first stop was the visitor center, just as it was closing, but the manager kindly invited us to look around and use the restrooms, then answered a few questions. It’s a great place to begin and to appreciate the incredible canyon rim view from the car park.

Turning right on Park Road 5 from the visitor center, the road winds around for about a mile to

a small parking area on the right, with a “C.C.C. Trail ¼ Mile” sign. This is the entrance to the short Triassic Trail, which, in about a quarter mile, intersects with the longer CCC trail at its approximate midpoint. (Download a map of Palo Duro Canyon State Park trails at https://tpwd.texas.gov/publications/pwdpubs/media/park_maps/pwd_mp_p4506_0007p.pdf.)

CCC stands for the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program developed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide jobs for the unemployed during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The CCC built a road to the canyon floor, trails, picnic areas, small foot bridges, cabins, and the visitor center.

The Triassic Trail is an easy half mile to the bluff and back over a few rocks and some uneven surfaces, but it affords breathtaking canyon views. Because the trail hugs the canyon rim, hikers can watch as cars wind down the canyon basin road below, to where the Pioneer Amphitheater hosts popular outdoor events throughout the year.

Pets are welcome at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, but they must be leashed during your hike. Cactuses dot the Triassic Trail and obviously protect the park’s resources. Off-leash dogs could re-

gret leaving their scent on prickly plants! Keep in mind that it can be very gusty in the region—nearby Amarillo is among the windiest U.S. cities. The park has an all-terrain wheelchair for use on some trails. Reserve the chair in advance by contacting the park at (512) 389-8900.

Other easy trails include Pioneer Nature Trail, a short 0.4-mile loop leading to the river, and the scenic 2-mile out-and-back Paseo Del Rio Trail, which follows the riverbank. Many more challenging trails await the adventurous, including the CCC Trail that offers a rugged descent into the valley. This historic path, carved into the canyon nearly 90 years ago by the Civilian Conservation Corps, stands as a testament to the men whose efforts helped shape this less-traveled gem of the Texas State Park System.

Entrance costs \$8.00 per adult. Kids 12 and under enter free. ♦

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University, Montgomery, Alabama. He writes features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. His hiking column describes short trails, hikes, and walks from around the country that seniors might enjoy while traveling. See www.ItsAWonderfulHike.com.

Entrance to Palo Duro Canyon State Park photo by Nick Thomas



Unmarked trailhead of Triassic Trail that crosses the CCC Trail photo by Nick Thomas



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Seasonal Affective Disorder

by Jim Russell

About half a million Americans suffer from seasonal blues. Each year, like clockwork, depression sets in as the days get shorter and the weather turns colder. Instead of jumping out of bed, ready to greet the day, many people want to crawl under the covers and wait for spring. More than just *winter blues* or *cabin fever*, seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a serious form of depression that can impact health, productivity, and relationships.

Though scientists aren't clear what exactly causes SAD, seasonal and geographic patterns suggest the disorder is linked to diminishing daylight. This decrease in sunlight might disrupt your body's internal clock, reduce levels of such feel-good chemicals as serotonin in the brain, and disrupt hormones that govern sleep patterns and mood. The good news? You don't have to suffer in silence. SAD treatments are remarkably effective. If you take preventive measures before the season hits, you might stave off the blues altogether. Here are five strategies to manage seasonal blues:

1. Let in the light. The cornerstone of SAD treatment is light therapy, delivered by a device (usually a lightbox) that contains white, fluorescent (or LED) tubes, covered by a plastic screen to block ultraviolet (UV) rays. The best lightboxes provide 10,000 lux of illumination, much more intense than typical indoor light. Sit near the light (but avoid looking directly into the box) for 15–30 minutes, 2–3 times each day. With properly timed and dosed light therapy, you could start feeling



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better within a week. Even if you don't go the route of a lightbox, don't sit in the dark. Enjoy the sunny days when they come, and light up your house on the inside when they don't.

2. Exercise outside. Netflix and Apple are poor replacements for sunshine and exercise. Even if it's cloudy, or you need to bundle up a bit, exercising in the great outdoors can go a long way toward alleviating SAD symptoms. Not only do you get the benefits of fresh, outdoor air, you can also enhance your mood through the feel-good chemicals that exercise releases in the brain. A bonus: being fit can help you feel better about yourself, too, which offers an instant mood boost.

3. Practice mind-body therapies. Practicing meditation, yoga, tai chi, and other mind/body practices profoundly alters brain function and improves our quality of thoughts and feelings. Even

just breathing deeply and practicing mindfulness can help you tune into your experience as it unfolds, rather than judge it.

4. Shift your thinking. Even though SAD is biological, studies show that changing your thoughts and behavior can help alleviate symptoms. With cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), patients learn to identify and challenge negative thoughts and behaviors that contribute to depression—and come up with alternate strategies to improve their mood. Instead of hibernating on the couch when you're feeling down, invite a friend out for coffee, hit an ice-skating rink, or take up a new hobby—anything that breaks you out of the habits that keep you down.

5. Get help. If your symptoms are severe or persist for more than two weeks, talk to your doctor about medication. If you have a history of SAD, your doctor might help you prevent depressive episodes by prescribing antidepressants for the upcoming season. Though there's no surefire solution for SAD, these strategies can help you manage symptoms. If a standard bout of the holiday blues becomes unbearable or lasts more than two weeks, visit your doctor for an evaluation. You don't have to wait for spring to feel better!

Reading this article can't make you an expert. It cannot substitute for care from your physician or a mental health professional. These articles provide basic information about the issues they address, from a variety of sources, not all original with this writer. ♦

Jim Russell, MS, LCPC, is executive director of the Vermilion County Mental Health 708 Board.

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LIFESTYLES

Trophy Time

by Steve Mey

In early November, we were driving to Chicago—the first 100 miles are farmland, so I kept occupied checking the corn and bean fields—I didn't see one unharvested field: Corn 100% and beans 100% harvested in my survey along the Interstate (of the fields I saw).

Why would I pay attention to corn and bean harvests? Because when one lives in the middle of farmland, there are frequent commercials for seed, fertilizer, and farm implements. And are the fields too wet? Are the crops dry enough? Is there enough rain?

During this study, my mind switched back to my glory days as an athlete, most specifically as a budding tennis star. When I was a soph in college, there was an intermural mixed doubles tennis tournament. I teamed up with Mary Krick for the event. There were more than sixteen and fewer than thirty-two entrants because, in the first round, we got a bye—and on to the Sweet Sixteen!

The games were arranged among participants—you worked out the schedule and just had to be finished in a couple days. Our opponents in the round of sixteen were busy with academics and could not find a time to play—so they forfeited! On to the Elite Eight!

Sadly, in this round our opponents were a couple who had had a spat and split up, so they were no longer playing together. So, on to the Final Four! In our semi-final match, we were pitted against Stan Stroup, a former high school tennis star, and his future wife Sylvia. Now Stanley had just dislocated his shoulder and couldn't lift his playing arm above his waist, so they might have forfeited, but he decided to tough it out and hit everything underhand.

They were not overwhelmed by my serve (which Phil Krick described as “a hand-grenade toss,” or “a windmill action,” which did not seem to catch on with the tennis elite). Somehow, they managed to slip past us. But no matter! Semifinalists got a trophy—about a 3-inch square wood base with the upper part about 3 inches tall! What a wonderful sight! My first (and last) trophy. After that success, I retired from tennis tournaments.

Of course, there were also the high school freshman football team fourth string guard and the softball team that went 0–12, typically losing about 30–3. Apparently, I needed to pick my teammates better.

And now I'm wondering how the ole mind works: had I ingested some strange herb that caused my mind to switch from the cornfields to the tennis courts? ♦
Steve Mey worked for the University of Illinois for about 30 years. For practical purposes, he retired when he got out of the Army in 1971. He can be reached by email at yemevets@gmail.com.

PrimeLife Poets

My Hearthroom's Glass Still Glows

by Esther Aardsma

I was one of you.
I did all you do.
I tasted of victory—
I saw the sights you see.
I was on the path to the mountaintop—
Momentum no one could stop—

Then
—my body failed me.
Betrayal: utmost agony.
I find myself abandoned in the dust,
Relegated to moths, webs, and rust.

Rejected, I crawl the final mile,
Realize I've not been home in a while.
I turn the knob: the door creaks in the
gloom:
I'm alone in the dark in this life, in
this room.

I stumble to my rag-covered bed—
Weeping dust trails, I bury my head.
“Never to rise!” I swear to my heart.
“I'm abandoned—abandoned, I'll part.”

But after a while, my tears trickle out;
I become restless with this endless pout.
I throw off the burden of quilted rag,
And decide to burn up this dread
white flag—

I stalk to the hearthroom; cold dank stone
Greets me, reminds me just how alone
I am. Brushing tears and ashes away,
I clean the hearth, and new wood lay.

I grope for the striker, but my fingers find
Nothing to start this new fire of mine.
Despair, hovering in periphery,
Steps in and grips in its misery:

The darkness, the loneliness, come all
crashing in.

I give up, I give in, I know I can't win!
Hope has vanished evermore—
But then
—I hear a knock on the door.

I have no strength to rise and greet,
Yet my friend comes in from the street.
To my shame he finds me on the floor:
At my worst he is gentle all the more.

He brings the flame, starts a warm blaze;
Dull with cold, I am numb and dazed,
Yet he helps me kindly to a chair,
Tucks me in, asks if I can spare

Him for a moment. Next I know,
The windows start to glow
With a fresh newborn clean—
I'd forgotten the last time I'd seen

The vivid colors through those panes.
I'd been too frantic in the busy lanes.
While pondering my time in the race,
Tears soak my face, tears that grace

Would still be mine now, all these years,
After all the fails and all the fears—
Crippled, ugly, aged, and slow—
My hearthroom's glass still glows. ♦

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Snowfall

by Esther Aardsma

Hushing whispers of falling snow
Paint this field a magical scene;
Muting the noise, breathing a slow
Faint rhythm of soft white. I lean

On a fencepost, wood black with wet,
And drink in the sweet sparkling quiet.
A lone rabbit pauses, confused by my prints
Already fading to mere human hints.

A flake, tiny art crystal, drifts to my glove—
A memory to hold, of lace on black—
It melts. Kissed by the gentle cascade above,
I sigh and turn to head back. ♦



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LIFESTYLES

After Loss—How Our Feelings Work

by Greg Williams, MD

Loss produces unexpected disruptions in our life routines. The loss could be losing a job, experiencing divorce, or suffering the death of a friend or family member. Such incidents have the power to leave us numb and confused. Our comfortable, familiar worldview and everyday experiences seem suddenly swept away, severing us from the very identity that has defined us. Tragic events can cause us to feel dissociated because our identities are shaped by our beliefs, routines, social circles, possessions—and how we interact with the world. When someone is deeply woven into our lives, the abrupt disturbance of that person’s loss can leave us asking, “Where do we go from here?”

Disassociation after a significant loss is a normal experience, related to how our brains construct our identities. Associated emotion-tags imprint our memories into our brains, where common emotion tags connect memories with other similarly tagged memories. If asked, “What comes to mind when I say church, bride, and groom?” you’d likely respond, “a wedding,” as in a word association game.

The terms *bride* and *groom* narrow the meaning of the term *church* to the more specific answer of a wedding in a church setting. We have emotional tags related to each of these terms, and their combined connection resonates where they are all connected.

Our recollections of events are frequently merged with those of other persons, places, and objects that share emotional markers in common. Emotionally related experiences and memories are frequently evoked collectively. We often encounter a familiar event that unexpectedly triggers memories of other locations, people, and events—because of connected associations. After a loss, revisiting such previously shared settings frequently serves as a trigger to the pain of loss. For some widows and widowers, the inability to tolerate painful reminders contributes to avoidance of social activities through seclusion or isolation.

In bereavement, some days will be easier than others. But our emotions are not limited to just the sorrow of losing someone we love. We experience

and recycle other emotions, such as anger, guilt, shame, anxiety, and depression, as we live life going forward. We must expect mixed emotions as we adapt to life’s journey without our loved one. One person rarely experiences grief in the same way as another person does. People express their grief differently, and the duration of people’s mourning can be different.

Grieving is an important part of our life experience. The pain and heartache of loss reminds all of us how we contribute to each other’s meaningfulness. After our grief has been given its proper place in our life, it’s important to eventually take steps to move forward with living meaningful lives for ourselves and others. And those steps can help us move forward. ♦ *This article is not intended to replace appropriate medical or mental health care from a licensed professional. Greg, a medical doctor and clinical psychiatrist, has also done neurological research and even brain surgery. He is a personal life coach.*



Currency Trivia Answers

1. Canada uses plastic currency.
2. New Zealand’s currency is printed in Canada.
3. The average lifespan of an American dollar bill is about six and a half years.
4. As of 2020, there were 2.26 trillion U.S. dollars in circulation.
5. Since 1879, Crane and Co., a Massachusetts-based company, has provided the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing with paper for U.S. currency. This paper is 25% linen and 75% cotton.
6. According to the United States Department of the Treasury, about \$70 million in counterfeit bills are in circulation, approximately 1 counterfeit banknote for every 10,000 in genuine currency.
7. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing, part of the U.S. Treasury Department, prints all U.S. currency.
8. U.S. currency is available as bills valued at \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. Larger bills are no longer printed, but some are still in circulation, and they are still valid currency.
9. No, the U.S. Mint has not made half dollars since 2002 because there were so many in stock at banks.
10. Yes, the government still prints the \$2 bill. In 2022, 204 million \$2 bills were printed.

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LIFESTYLES



Holiday Bazaars and Serendipity

by Phyllis Godwin

Words We Mispronounce

It bothers me when people mispronounce words, but that's just me. Being a wordsmith suggests one should correctly pronounce words, though I have, of course, been guilty of mispronunciations, too.

On my list are *tarpaulin* (sometimes mispronounced as **tar-PULL-ee-un**), *harass* (**HA-rus**, increasingly mispronounced as **ha-RAS**, a rare pronunciation before WWII), and *err* (now almost always mispronounced to rhyme with air and heir, instead of correctly, to rhyme with purr and Ur [of the Chaldees, Abraham's ancestral home]).

Other words on my list include *nuclear* (not **NU-cu-lar**), *açai* (the ç is pronounced as an s), *anemone* (the accent is on the second of three syllables, not on the first), and *Arkansas* (though natives get to say **ar-KAN-zus**).

I grew up hearing **il-i-NOISE**, **mi-ZUR-ah**, and **I-oh-way**. But here's the real problem. Pronounce the words on my list correctly (as fewer and fewer people do), and your correct pronunciation will get you raised eyebrows and other funny expressions.

Don't try to defend yourself. People won't accept that. They know what they said and what they meant, and that's pretty much the end of it for them. In any case, as mispronunciations persist, they eventually show up in the dictionary, which is, after all, primarily a record of how we use our language. ♦

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We just went through a season of holiday bazaars—a two-month stretch! My daughter and I attended a few and even participated in a couple of the bazaars—one to sell our own creations and one for our church's yearly fundraiser. Each offered gifts, crafts, and baked goods.

We were happy to be able to have a table at the Farm Bureau Home Extension holiday bazaar. Most of the women exhibiting and selling their crafts were members who had been decorating and creating for many years—some 50 to 60 years. They knew how to make beautiful art for home and family, and it was fun to see all their creations.

There was one artisan who visited our table during a lull, who told us she had just found some Christmas ornaments she had made 50 years earlier; she had put them away and forgotten about them. Upon examining the handmade ornaments, we saw that she had intricately hand-stitched each one—there was neither a machine stitch nor a drop of glue anywhere on them. Of course, we had to have some. The artisan (Bev) is still creating, and she had a table full of handmade items. We marveled at her talent and stamina, particularly when we learned she was 91 years old. Bev did not want her last name used because, at 91, she feels vulnerable, as do many of us. Bev was mentally sharp and kind, and it was a pleasure to meet her and acquire some of her handiwork



to put on our Christmas tree. Kudos to all the ladies who keep on creating and loving through their art and handicrafts. ♦

Freelance writer Phyllis Godwin and her retired pastor husband David have two children and five grandchildren. She enjoys her hobbies and road trips with David. Email her at pgodwin43@gmail.com.



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Puzzle Answers

S	W	I	M	S		S	E	A	T	S		U	P	C		
C	A	C	A	O		H	A	D	I	T		F	R	Y		
O	N	A	C	L	E	A	R	D	A	Y		F	O	B		
T	E	N		A	S	K	S					T	I	V	O	
				T	O	R	T	E		I	O	N	I	Z	E	R
H	A	W	K		D	N	A	C	L	O	N	I	N	G		
E	M	I	R	S			N	E	E	D						
R	A	N	A	C	L	O	S	E	S	E	C	O	N	D		
				E	I	R	E			S	A	U	N	A		
B	A	N	A	N	A	C	L	I	P		S	T	E	M		
R	E	A	D	E	R	S		R	O	B	E	S				
U	R	G	E					S	O	L	O		M	E	H	
T	A	G				G	R	A	I	N	O	F	S	A	L	T
A	T	E				A	C	U	T	E		F	I	R	S	T
L	E	D				B	A	K	E	R		O	N	T	A	P

Crossword puzzle on A-6

Jumble on A-8

Jumbles: GLORY HEDGE ITALIC FLINCH
Answers: Their fist few flights barely got off the ground, but the Wright Brothers were — FLYING HIGH.

Sudoku on A-8

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

Scrabble Grams on A-6

SCRABBLE: G R A M S												SOLUTION		
P ₃	E ₁	D ₂	A ₁	G ₂	O ₁	G ₂	RACK 1 =					62		
I ₁	M ₃	P ₃	L ₁	O ₁	R ₁	E ₁	RACK 2 =					61		
C ₃	O ₁	M ₃	B ₃	U ₁	S ₁	T ₁	RACK 3 =					89		
L ₁	E ₁	N ₁	I ₁	E ₁	N ₁	T ₁	RACK 4 =					57		
S ₁	U ₁	B ₃	C ₃	O ₁	D ₂	E ₁	RACK 5 =					63		
PAR SCORE 255-265												TOTAL		332

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Micro Ball Lightning and Gigantic Atmospheric Ball Lightning

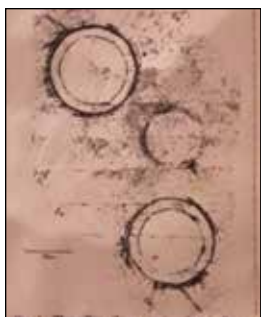
by Edward Lewis

Did you know microscopic-sized ball lightning (MBL) and giant ball lightning (BL), hundreds of yards in diameter, exist? BL is a natural phenomenon that sometimes (though rarely) appears during thunderstorms. Their characteristics baffle physicists. They astound people so much that some believe they must come from outer space. **What are they like? What do they do?**

Micro Ball Lightning

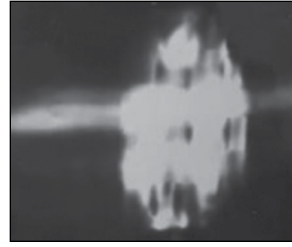
BL appears to behave uniformly, regardless of size. My article in the July 2024 *PrimeLife Times* explained the basics of natural atmospheric BL characteristics. Micro ball lightning (MBL) behaves just like bigger BL. Until the 1990s, no one knew BL existed in microscopic form.

MBL were identified in 1992, when Japanese researcher Hiroshi Matsumoto detected microscopic ring markings about 50 micrometers wide on particle detection film he put outside an electrolysis cell. **Figure 1**, with 3 rings, shows a sample of rings he discovered at that time. They are smaller than 80 micrometers in diameter, a little smaller than the diameter of a human hair. Like snowflakes, each individual MBL (and BL) is unique. I realized he was producing MBL because natural BL can leave ring markings. There was evidence that they transmuted elements.



Since 1992, about two dozen groups of researchers have studied MBL. They produce them easily with electrical discharges.

Figure 2 portrays a group of MBL in a geometrical cluster, 15 millimeters long. BL and MBL arrange themselves geometrically. They typically occur as chains or rings, but more complex patterns appear, too. You can imagine why people seeing a big BL in the sky might call it a UAP (an unidentified anomalous phenomenon, formerly a *UFO*). (Figure first published by Bogdanovich, et al., 2019).



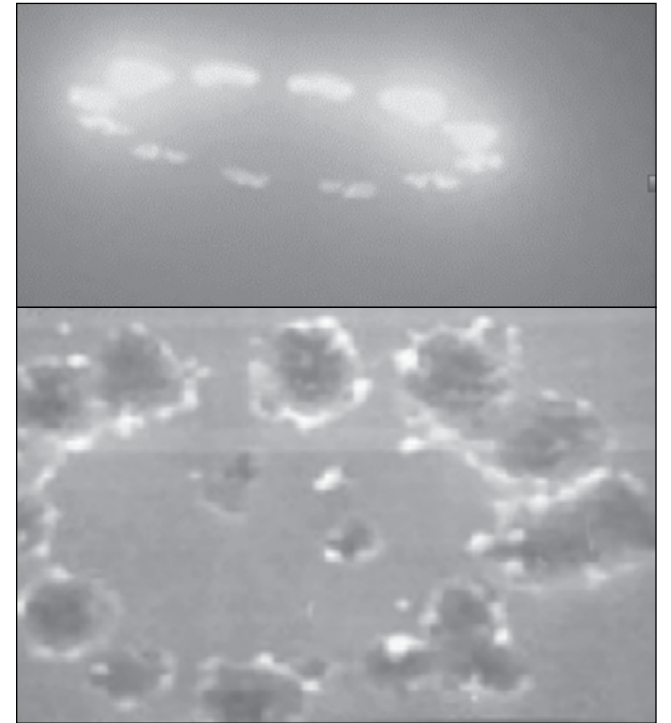
Giant Ball Lightning

Giant BLs form in storm clouds or emerge from the earth during volcanic eruptions and earthquakes; some exceed 100 meters in diameter. They have been seen and videoed around volcanoes, and some have labeled them “orbs.”

Equally large BL can occur in storm clouds. According to several meteorologists who published in the 1950s and 1960s, nimbus and cumulonimbus storm clouds can have big, round, blue, blinking lights inside. Meteorologist Herbert L. Jones called them “tornado pulse generators.” He wrote that the tornado pulse generators generally occur at an altitude of six kilometers, “somewhere in the middle of a massive thunderstorm structure,” and appear as “blinking, pale blue, circular area[s] of light on the side of the thunderstorm cloud.” 1

As explained in several papers, such as “Tornadoes and Ball Lightning” (padrak.com/ine/ELEWIS3.html), a big BL the author observed became a huge, powerful, brilliantly shining blue tornado an hour later.

Figure 3 portrays a photograph of a big ring of shining, giant BLs over Tijuana. The ring resembles



the shape of the ring of pits left on material by the ring of MBL pictured next to it.

What They Are—A Fifth State of Matter!

These objects behave quite differently from material in the four common states of matter: plasma, gas, water, and solid. In the early 1990s, I realized that BL and MBL are in a fifth state of matter. There is evidence that small patches of this state of matter persist for months or even years in components of electrical discharge and electrolysis experiments. At times, such equipment continues to emit MBLs for months or years. People find that microscopic patches of such BLs move very slowly, transform in shape, and transmute after the experiment ends.

1. H. Jones, “The Tornado Pulse Generator,” *Weatherwise*, **18**, no. 2, 78 (April 1965). ♦
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