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Sky's the Limit!

Relax at Rooftop Swimming Pools

by Victor Block

Dan and Doris Beatty spent an afternoon at a beautiful oceanside beach, enjoying the sun and surf—but not without drawbacks. Biting insects, strong currents, and lingering sand made their experience less than perfect. Meanwhile, Sam and Judy Crawford had a quite different day: They lounged in the sun, cooled off in clear water, and returned to their room clean and comfortable, all without ever leaving their hotel. Their *beach day* took place at a rooftop pool in Champaign.

Rooftop swimming pools have become a popular feature at hotels across the country, offering guests a convenient and relaxing alternative to traditional beach outings. These elevated retreats provide ambiance, scenic views, and curated experiences that frequently rival seaside destinations. Even without oceanfront vistas, many rooftop pools create a similar sense of escape.

As travel habits shift—with rising gas prices and ongoing airport unpredictability—more people choose closer-to-home getaways or "staycations." Rooftop pools play into this trend by delivering a vacation-like atmosphere without the need for long-distance travel.

In Washington, D.C., visitors and locals alike unwind at the Arlo Hotel's rooftop pool. Surrounded by comfortable loungers and a bold mural, it offers sweeping views of the U.S. Capitol and the city skyline. Similarly, in Miami's Wynwood district, guests at another Arlo property enjoy a heated rooftop pool complemented by vibrant artwork from a renowned graffiti artist, along with panoramic city views.

At Hotel Effie, in Sandestin, Florida, the rooftop pool experience includes oversized chess pieces, private cabanas, and views of the Gulf's Emerald Coast. Guests can participate in such activities as yoga, wine tastings, and bingo nights, blending relaxation with entertainment.

New York City offers its own dramatic rooftop scene. In Brooklyn, the Arlo Williamsburg Hotel features a rooftop pool deck with stunning skyline views. A bar overlooking the pool and private cabanas enhances the experience. Hotel guests can reserve pool time; non-guests gain access through booking platforms.

One standout feature at this location is a converted water tower on the roof. Though such towers are a common sight in New York, this one doubles as a unique event space. Equipped with a private bar and accessible by elevator, it hosts gatherings ranging from weddings to photo shoots.

Arlo Williamsburg, NY - Pool Cabanas

For those seeking more excitement, some rooftop pools go beyond relaxation. In Las Vegas, Caesars Palace offers a surfing simulator known as the FlowRider Wave Ride. Advanced technology creates artificial waves that allow guests to safely practice surfing high above the Strip.

In Dallas, the Joule Hotel presents a different kind of thrill. Its rooftop pool extends beyond the building's edge, with a transparent wall that gives swimmers the illusion of floating above the street below. Though perfectly safe, the design adds an adrenaline-inducing twist to a typical swim.

Not everyone is looking for high-adventure features like rooftop surfing or glass-edged pools. Still, such unique elements highlight how rooftop pools can transform a simple amenity into a memorable experience. Whether offering peaceful lounging, artistic surroundings, or a touch of excitement, they provide a versatile and appealing option for travelers.

In the end, rooftop pools deliver the essence of a getaway—sun, water, and relaxation—without the inconveniences often encountered at traditional beaches. For many, that makes them an ideal way to unwind. ◆

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

LIFESTYLES

This Month's Mark & Friends

Our Daily Bread: Finding Provision in the Minutiae

Have you ever felt some of your requests were too small for the Creator of the universe? We often reserve our prayers for the *big* moments—health crises, financial shifts, or major life decisions—while trying to navigate the small details of our day in our own strength.

On a recent segment of *Mark & Friends*, aired Friday, April 24, 2026, Mark sat down with a group of friends from across Central Illinois—friends from Jacksonville to Champaign–Urbana—to discuss a single, profound line from the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." The conversation served as a powerful reminder that God invites us to trust him not just for the monumental, but for the minutiae of our everyday lives.

Nothing is too insignificant for God. Though we might feel silly praying for something as small as a parking spot, the group noted that, for God, everything is simple and easy to accomplish. He is faithful to provide one step at a time and one day at a time.

By bringing the small things to the Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that he created us, delights in us, and designed us to flourish. This shifts our perspective from self-reliance to a state of constant, intentional connection with the One who cares for us.

The group also delved into the theological reality of our sin nature and how it impacts our daily walk. Left to our own devices, our desires can become corrupted, leading us off course. This is why the "daily" part of "daily bread" is so vital: it requires a humble, daily surrender of our will to His.

Prayer acts as a redirecting power. When we come before Christ in humility, acknowledging that we don't have all the information, but that he does, our Lord is able to order our steps and lead us into those *divine appointments* he has planned for our day.

Using the Lord's Prayer as a template, we can see a blueprint for how to remain anchored, even when our own flaws or the pressures of the world try to pull us away:

Acknowledge the Source. Start by recognizing that it is God who provides the strength and the "bread" needed for the next twenty-four hours.

Seek Redirection. Humbly ask God to keep you from being driven off course by pride, anger, or your own sin nature.

Embrace Dependence. Rest in the fact that, even when you don't know what you want or need, God has all the information and knows how to help you flourish.

Ultimately, the goal is to pray with more intentionality. When we seek God properly—with the surrender of our lives and our will—we find him faithful to provide exactly what we need for today. ◆

To hear the full conversation and learn more about how to follow Jesus through every season of life, navigate to www.greatnewsradio.org for a full archive of Mark & Friends.

Scan to listen

How Spanish Verbs Work

Unfortunately for us English speakers who want to learn Spanish, that language has a very complex verb structure. There are three basic types of verbs: -ar, -er, and -ir verbs. Those letters signal how the infinitives of the three types end, namely with those three sets of letters. This table might be helpful—or it might scare you away altogether from learning Spanish. Remember, every day, millions of babies are learning Spanish. You can, too.

Verb ending	-ar	-er	- ir
Verb infinitive Pronunciation	**hablar** (to speak) ah-BLAHR	**comer** (to eat) koh-MAIR	**vivir** (to live) vee-VIR
Pronoun to use			
yo *yoh*	habl**o** *AH-bloh*	com**o** *KOH-moh*	viv**o** *VEE-voh*
tú *too*	habl**as** *AH-blahs*	com**es** *KOH-mās*	viv**es** *VEE-vās*
él/élla/usted L/Ā-yah/oo-STETH	habl**a** *AH-blah*	com**e** *KOH-may*	viv**e** *VEE-vay*
nosotros/nosotras noh-SOH-tros/ -tras	hablam**os** *hah-BLAH-mohs*	comem**os** *koh-MAY-mohs*	vivim**os** *vee-VEE-mohs*
vosotros/vosotras *voh-SOH-tros/ -tras*	habl**áis** *ah-BLAIS*	com**éis** *koh-MAIS*	viv**ís** *vee-VEES*
ellos/ellas/ustedes *Ā-yohs/ Ā-yahs /oo-STETH-ās*	habl**an** *HAH-blahn*	com**en** *KOH-men*	viv**en** *VEE-ven*

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MONEY MATTERS

Ease the Squeeze on Your Retirement Income Plan

by Darrold A. Kennedy

Rising prices might not dominate headlines as they did a year or two ago, but if you're retired, you're probably still feeling them. Even when overall inflation cools, the costliest expenses—health care, utilities, insurance, and property taxes—tend to rise faster than broad inflation numbers suggest. That creates a squeeze that can make you question whether your retirement income plan is built to last.

Fortunately, you can often adjust without drastic cuts that affect your lifestyle. Start by understanding where the pressure comes from and how to build more flexibility into your plan.

Inflation hits retirees differently. You've likely noticed that your grocery bill, prescription drug costs, and heating expenses haven't returned to *normal*. Even small increases compound over time and can chip away at your buying power.

If your income plan was created years ago, it might assume lower inflation or relatively stable price increases over time. Recent years have shown that's not always the case.

Why some income plans feel strained. Any plan relying on fixed withdrawals or rigid budgets can feel tight when living costs rise. If you're drawing from investments, you might hesitate to increase your withdrawals because of market volatility. And if you depend on fixed income sources, like Social Security or a pension, yearly costofliving increases might not keep pace with your expenses. You might live 25 to 35 years in retirement, giving small annual cost increases decades to add up.

What you can do without sacrificing stability. A few adjustments can help you stay ahead of rising costs and maintain your financial confidence.

First, review your withdrawal strategy. Ask your financial advisor about flexible approaches that increase income when markets and portfolios perform well, and pull back during tougher times. This protects your long-term plan with room to respond to rising prices.

Next, rebalance your portfolio. You might uncover opportunities to shift toward investments with more consistent income or better tax efficiency. Sometimes a small tweak can generate extra cash flow without increasing overall risk.

Finally, look at your income sources. You might be less affected by rising costs if you delay taking Social Security, work a part-time job, add inflation-protected bonds, or create predictable lifetime income with annuities, if appropriate for your situation.

Don't overlook health care. Health care costs often grow faster than general inflation. Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket expenses can rise annually, and the need for long-term care remains a big financial uncertainty for retirees. Building health care–specific inflation into your plan now can help prevent surprises later. Any savings you have in a health savings account can help you cover health care costs. And many pharmaceutical companies offer financial assistance programs to help pay for costlier medications.

Stay flexible and informed. Today's retirement looks different from that of even a decade ago. The key is staying flexible, reviewing your plan regularly, and making small adjustments before pressure builds. A financial advisor can help you find the right approach to navigating rising costs without disrupting the life you've worked hard to build. ◆

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.

Venus will appear to nearly touch Jupiter, June 8 through 9. (These are our two brightest planets.) You can view this lovely phenomenon (a *conjunction*) with the naked eye. The third (last) quarter moon begins at 5:00 p.m. local time on June 8. The new moon (dark of the moon) occurs Sunday, June 14, at 9:54 p.m. local time. The first quarter of the moon appears Sunday, June 21, at 4:55 p.m. CDT (5:55 p.m. EST). June's full moon occurs Monday, June 29, at 6:56 CDT (7:55 p.m. EST). ◆

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Way to Go, Ernie

by Donald Freeman

Have you ever heard of singer Tennessee Ernie Ford from the 1950s? He's best known for his hit, "16 Tons." But he had many hits on the charts, including 6 hits between 1949 and 1955 that were in the Top 15. In 1956 he charted a song I had never heard until yesterday on the radio: "That's All, That's All". One verse says this:

Now man came from monkey some folks say; but
the "Good Book", brother, don't tell it that way.
If you believe that monkey tale like some folks do;
I'd rather be that monkey than you.

My jaw dropped. While I listened to these words, three thoughts went through my mind in quick succession.

First: Way to go, Ernie.

Second: How our culture has changed in 70 years. Hard to imagine such a song could make its way up the charts. It would be mocked, possibly censored, and maybe even categorized as hate speech.

Third: Then my mind raced as I thought of how a typical tenured professor in our universities today would respond to such lyrics. He would deem Ernie and his ilk as delusional. Clinging to the Bible and God when every educated and clear-thinking person knows that science has long ago proved the Bible wrong and abolished the God myth. We are all just a product of random time plus chance and molecules.

Truth for me is not the same as truth for you. There are no absolutes. Our moral choices have no significance. There is no ultimate meaning to our lives. We are not only related to monkeys but to all the vegetables in our garden and all single-celled plant and animal life. We all came from a single-celled life-form. We are different only because we won the time plus chance lottery. We are liberated from all moral restraints. We are free to live life as we want to.

He still encounters such students that file into his classroom, believing what Ernie believed. Twenty years of tenured teaching has made him confident that he is right to disabuse such students of their delusion. He's doing them a service.

Then his self-assured thoughts are interrupted by a phone call. His only daughter, on another college campus a few hundred miles from his own, has been murdered by a man with a history of violent crimes. In the crushing grief and anger that engulf him, a phrase emerges in his soul so violently that he cannot contain or suppress it but gives voice to it and screams in agony: "*This is evil!*"

He does *not* mean it's just evil to him. He does *not* mean this thought was just the product of his DNA or of the synapses of his brain. He does *not* mean that if you think it's not evil "that's okay." This is *absolute evil*. He knows it to be true. And as he hears the phrase echo in the room from his own voice, he knows that this new conviction contradicts every tenet of what he has believed and espoused his whole life.

Later, after he has emerged somewhat from the mire of his own grief and agony, he will sort it out. He will come to terms with his encounter with absolute evil. Absolutes do exist. They can be explained by only the existence of God. And in a matter of a few weeks or months, he will understand that Ernie and his ilk were not the ones who were delusional. ◆

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Laughing Matters

At a wedding reception, a guy walks up to the bar. He asks, "Is this the punch line?"

My best friend was a giant of a man. A former SEAL, he was a martial arts expert and a master of hand-to-hand combat. I thought he had a bearskin rug on his floor. Later, I discovered that the bear was actually still alive. He was just afraid to move.

Did you hear the rumor going around about butter? Wait. I guess I really shouldn't spread it.

I own what was once a very valuable pencil. It was actually owned by William Shakespeare. My cat chewed it up so badly that now I can't tell whether it's a 2B or not 2B.

Have you heard the one about the jump rope? Never mind; skip it.

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LIFESTYLES

The Lighter Side of Aging

by Lori Borgman

Someone once said, "With age comes wisdom."

Then someone else immediately said, "Yeah, but sometimes age comes alone."

My experience is that with age comes *usefulness*.

A granddaughter, eager to pass me in height, frequently *measures up* with me by standing nose-to-nose to see who is the tallest. She measured up the other day and announced, "I now come to the second line on Grandma's forehead!"

I knew there was a reason I don't get Botox. It's good to feel needed.

One day, helping first-grade English-as-a-second-language students with reading, I could see that the little Burmese boy following my finger as I pointed to words was intently studying the back of my hand.

I lifted my hand with aging skin, pointed to it, and slowly said, "Wrinkles. Wrinkles."

He repeated after me, "Wrinkles." He grinned from ear to ear and his eyes lit up upon learning a new word.

It is wonderful to be helpful, although this wasn't exactly what I had in mind.

I've always had curly hair—and it's become even curlier with age. Recently, a granddaughter asked, "Grandma, if you let your hair grow really, really long, would it hang down straight or just get bigger and bigger?"

The latter, darlin'. I'll cite Dolly Parton on this one: "Big hair puts you closer to God." How wonderful to be consulted on something like the potential trajectory of curly hair.

I think.

With age also comes the distinct advantage not only of having read a lot of history, but of having lived a lot of history.

No, I did not personally know George Washington, Abe Lincoln, or Teddy Roosevelt—or help build the Panama Canal—but I can tell you about telephones that hung on kitchen walls, milkmen who delivered milk to your front door; ketchup that came in glass bottles; record players; June, July, and August heat without air conditioning; and a summer job I had in college doing data entry that fed into a computer so enormous it took up an entire room.

Due to age, I am frequently the go-to person for an assist on Jumble word puzzles. Far be it from me to ruin the cloud of adulation by explaining I excel at jumble because I have made so many typos over the years that every misspelled word looks vaguely familiar.

By far, the greatest laurel of *maturing* is having rushed around like a madwoman to get a meal on the table for a large group, being seated at the table, and hearing a gentle voice say, "You're a good cook, Grandma."

Then another and another and another says, "You're a good cook, Grandma." I might be a good cook, but it could also be that no one at the table wants to be outdone. If competition is the means by which I am showered with praise, then so be it. I accept. ◆

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Verb Exercise

1. ¡Yo (odiar) _____ cuando ella (hablar) _____ en voz alta!
   I hate it when they talk (speak) out loud!
2. (Tú) (deber) _____ tener más cuidado.
   You should be more careful.
3. (Tú) (comer) _____ mucha comida.
   You eat a lot of food.
4. Ella (amar) _____ la música. (Él) (vivir) _____ para su esposa.
   She loves music. He lives for his wife.
5. Yo te (amar) _____. ¿Me (tú) (amar) _____ también?
   I love you. Do you love me, too?

Using Spanish Verbs in Sentences

Manipulating verb endings to fit the grammatical context is called *conjugating* the verbs. I'll provide the infinitive, and you can put the correct form in the blank provided. Follow the pattern for -ar, -er, or -ir verb as appropriate.

See answers on page A-10

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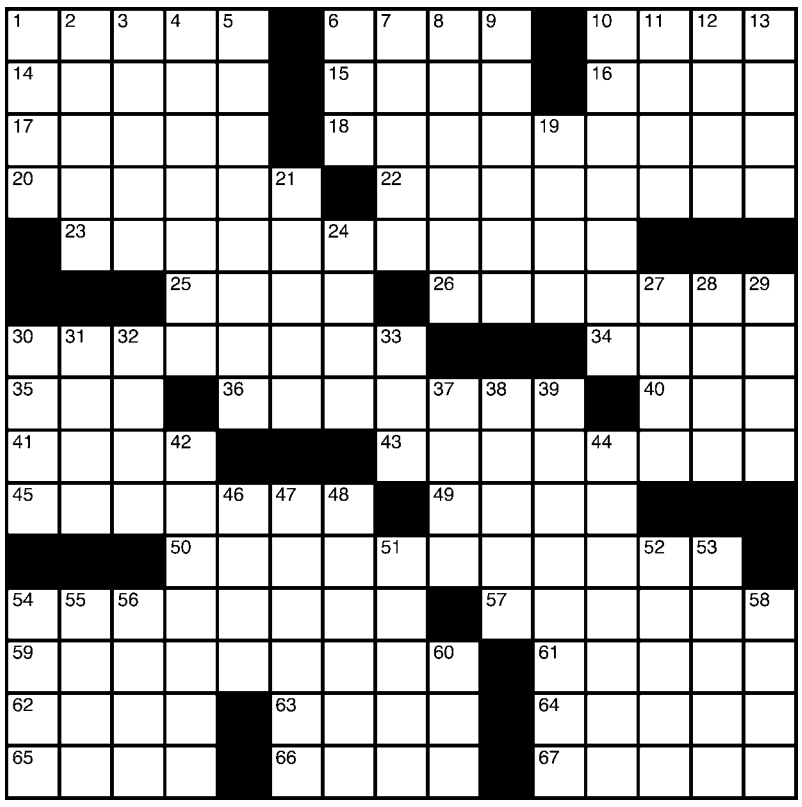

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6 Sawbuck halves
10 "Pencils down"
14 World capital once called Thang Long
15 Zoom
16 Human rights lawyer Clooney
17 Bonus feature
18 Sea creature who lived across the Strait of Messina from Scylla
20 Like good things happening to good people
22 Not obviously true
23 Objects for separating subjects
25 Staffer
26 Norman Lear's specialty
30 Establish anew, as authority
34 Sandwich cookie
35 End of a professor's address
36 Seafood appetizer often seasoned with Old Bay
40 Heat quickly
41 Mattress option
43 Some "Percy Jackson & the Olympians" characters
45 Onset of
49 Isolated group of employees
50 Land of giants in "Gulliver's Travels"
54 Person experiencing the bystander effect, perhaps
57 Heroic sister of children's literature
59 Rodentlike features, and a phonetic hint to a segment of 18-, 23-, 36-, and 50-Across
61 Ticked off
62 Check status
63 Cozy retreat
64 Truly stuck
65 Home of Lucas Oil Stadium, familiarly
66 SoCal school
67 Snail trail

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1 Literary citation abbr.
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6 Character's beginning, middle, and end
7 Faith founded in Persia
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10 Hot sauce from Louisiana
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12 Vote by __
13 Otherwise
19 Circular shelter
21 Beer alternative
24 Designer Wang
27 Short-cut pasta
28 Beer alternative
29 Soaks (up)
30 Penalizing sorts, for short
31 Trade unions for onions?
32 Vibe
33 Brief "Not sure yet"
37 Comedian Lydic
38 Chatting on Slack, for short
39 Voyagers of 1620
42 Victim in Clue
44 Sister of Regan and Cordelia
46 "Iliad" city
47 Arcade currency
48 Did as instructed
51 Shift, for one
52 Arcade pioneer
53 Phrase beginning a chase scene, maybe
54 Slangy "Duh"
55 Club light
56 Put down
58 Journo's intro
60 "The Simpsons" disco guy

See Answers on A-15.

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E1	E1	I1	U1	R1	F4	G2	1st Letter Double	RACK 3
O1	O1	U1	W4	L1	F4	T1		RACK 4

PAR SCORE 150-160
BEST SCORE 227

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 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. **SOLUTION TOMORROW**

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See Answers on A-15.

LIFESTYLES

Book Reviews

Hana's Suitcase, by Karen Levine

reviewed by Esther Aardsma

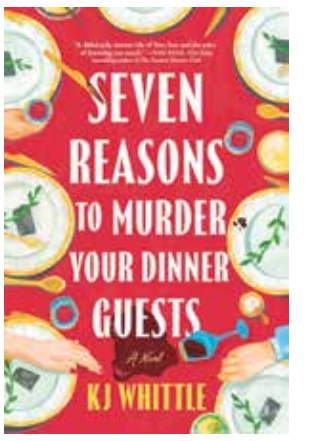
In 2000, Fumiko Ishioka, director of the Tokyo Holocaust Center, begged other, larger Holocaust museums around the world to loan her tiny, new museum several Holocaust artifacts. Fumiko wanted to help children understand and relate to the awful realities of Hitler's regime. In response to her requests, the Auschwitz museum sent her a child's sock, shoe, and sweater, a Zyklon B poisonous gas canister, and one suitcase.

The suitcase seized the children's—and Fumiko's—interest, for written on the suitcase is a name: Hanna Brady. Who was this Hanna? Where did she live? What was she like? Did she survive the Holocaust? Fumiko sought answers, but no one knew anything about Hanna . . . until Fumiko visited the Auschwitz museum in person, where she found a trail of clues. When Fumiko followed that trail, she discovered the full, vivacious life and tragic death of the young girl (her name truly spelled "Hana") who owned the suitcase.

Hana's Suitcase, by Karen Levine (2016), is a moving story about a young Jewish girl who *didn't* survive the Holocaust. Hana's narrative is interspersed with Fumiko's throughout the book, which imbues the story with hope and optimism despite the difficult themes intrinsic to the Holocaust. Levine focuses on Hana's relatability and handles the more difficult parts of her story with discreet gentleness, making this book a great resource for teaching children about Hitler's genocide (starting around maybe fourth grade). Included in the book are photographs from Hana's childhood before the Nazis invaded her hometown, and images of drawings she created while living in Theresienstadt, a Jewish ghetto.

"Who would Hana, a normal girl just like us, have become?" That is the question *Hana's Suitcase* asks, and the book softly answers itself: she wanted to become a teacher—and she is still teaching today. ◆

Seven Reasons to Murder Your Dinner Guests, by KJ Whittle



reviewed by Susan McKinney

This debut novel by K. J. Whittle is a page-turner. The story takes place in and around London in 2015–2019, with the final chapter in 2025. Each chapter is broken into first-person perspectives by the various strangers at the dinner party, with a *fly-on-the-wall* perspective for parts of the scenes.

Seven people received very posh invitations (gold printing on black stationery) to a dinner party. When they arrived, they were strangers to each other. They were in a very intimate dinner setting, with beautiful, albeit somewhat strange, decorations. There is a place card for each guest (again gold on black stock), however, each place card has a picture of an animal in finery.

Guests are Vivienne, a magazine editor, Matthew, a stock market financier, Stella, a social influencer, Janet, owner of a high-end lingerie company, Melvin, a police officer, Tristan, a computer programmer, and Gordon, a doctor specializing in nutrition and diet.

A silent serving staff brings out the various courses of the dinner and waits on them. The waiters are unable to answer any of their questions. The conversation reveals the personalities of the various guests and how each views life. As they finish up their dinner, they are surprised to see a miniature black envelope at each place, with each guest's name on an envelope.

When Janet opens her envelope, she is horrified by its contents. The small black card inside reads, "You will die aged forty-four." This causes a rather large eruption from all the guests. They quickly end the dinner party with vows of tracking down the sick person who has played this sick joke and with threats of lawsuits. Not everyone takes their envelope, nor does everyone who takes their envelope open it.

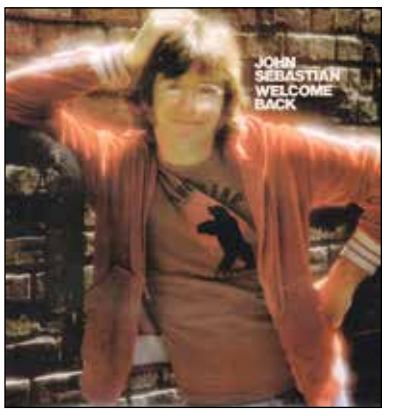
Two weeks pass, and the youngest guest, Stella, dies by falling onto a subway track: she was 23. Thus begins the meat of the novel. Was she murdered by their mystery host? Was it by one of the attendees? As the story progresses, other dinner guests die at the ages the card predicted.

This book is a homage to Agatha Christie. It's well laid out, and the reader learns information as the characters learn it. I really enjoyed it to the very end. It reminded me of "And Then There Were None," by Dame Christie. I can't wait to see where the author goes with her next novel. ◆

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

"Welcome Back," by John Sebastian

by Randal C. Hill



From 1965 to 1968, the John Sebastian–led Lovin' Spoonful band racked up ten Top 40 singles on Kama Sutra Records. Eventually, though, the quartet's "flower power" folk rock gave way to heavier sounds by such groups as the Doors and the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

When the Spoonful disbanded, Sebastian recorded as a solo artist, but with the magic seemingly gone, the one-time hitmaker faded from the music scene—until a serendipitous event years later returned him briefly to the spotlight, ironically as a one-hit wonder to a new audience.

John recalls, "I got a call from a guy called Alan Sacks from Brooklyn, who was writing a TV show with [comedian] Gabe Kaplan." The fun-fueled ABC-TV program, which was to be named "Kotter," was to focus on a teacher who had once been a student at the same New York high school where the story takes place, and in an isolated classroom set aside for the institution's bottom feeders, nicknamed the Sweathogs. Thanks to Mr. Kotter, the cast members (which included a then-unknown John Travolta) would have fun and yet find hope for the future in each half-hour airing.

Sacks wanted a short, lighthearted, Lovin' Spoonful-ish ditty to play over the opening and closing credits. What better artist to tap than Spoonful founder/leader Sebastian!

John recalled, "I saw a pilot and read some early scripts and went away thinking, 'I could hit this out of the park!'" But Sebastian was thrown a curve ball when he slammed into a creative wall: he simply couldn't find an appropriate rhyming word for "Kotter" at the end of a lyric line, having tried—and tossed—such terms as "otter," "water," "daughter" and "slaughter." In the end, John eliminated the teacher's name in his "Welcome Back" lyrics, even though the show's title itself would become "Welcome Back, Kotter."

Sebastian's composition ran just 53 seconds. But when the production team heard the theme song, they (and interested disc jockeys) asked that the catchy creation be expanded. John added a second verse, and "Welcome Back"—with the name "Kotter" absent from the lyrics—morphed into a hit Reprise Records single that ran nearly three minutes. Just right for Top 40 radio airplay.

Welcome back, your dreams were your ticket out
Welcome back to that same old place that you laughed about
Well, the names have all changed since you hung around
But those dreams have remained and they've turned around
Who'd have thought they'd lead ya
Back here where we need ya

Ironically, Sebastian was about to be dropped from Reprise because his past several singles had tanked. Not so this time, as "Welcome Back" rocketed to Number One on the Billboard Hot 100.

In a later interview, John admitted that he would probably have been a "Sweathog" when he was a student in New York. "As a dyslexic kid, I was always the guy with those marks where the teacher says, 'John seems to be an intelligent boy,' and then the rest wasn't as flattering." ◆

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PEOPLE & PLACES

The VIMI in the Philippines

by Naomi Roberts

The children celebrating their backpacks

Recently, the Volunteers in Missions International (VIMI) went on a mission trip to the Philippines. VIMI is a great organization that gets things done and teaches people how to improve their lives. The organization also undertakes projects like collecting funds to build and repair churches.

Our mission actually started at the Chicago airport, where we met a couple going home to the Philippines to see their grown son, who had suffered a stroke. Deb and her husband were very worried about their son Jake. The six of us prayed for them in the airport. When we deplaned and I saw the couple again, I put my hands together in prayer and nodded at them; Deb smiled and nodded too.

Our first stop in the Philippines was Bohol. We worshipped at the Sagbayan United Methodist Church with Pastor Lyster. The six of us spent the next few days opening boxes of supplies we had sent to the church in November of last year. Among these supplies were eight sewing machines, which VIMI would leave there for the women to continue to use. Debbie Nuske and Cindy Cook taught the women to sew. Debbie, a seamstress, sews costumes for such plays as *Frankenstein* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Deb taught the women how to pin patterns and cut out the material for their dresses. After she taught two or three, an amazing thing happened. The women began to teach and help each other.

With the help of an interpreter, Cindy Cook taught the women how to sew their creation together. It didn't take long for the women to learn to sew. After about five days, the women held a fashion show. They were very proud to have made their own dresses.

This, of course, is the wonderful part of VIMI. We get to watch people learn skills and teach them to others.

We also sponsored a medical day. We took 400 pairs of glasses with us. We tested people's eyes, then had them look through ten pairs of test glasses to determine which glasses they needed. The person then received an appropriate pair of glasses.

During medical day, a mental health coordinator, Juliegen Policher, had participants complete a mental health test to determine whether they were suffering from sadness, grief, or anxiety. Once "Julie" evaluated the test, people came to the prayer corner where Pastor Careen, Ron Hursey, and I prayed for each person.

Prayer requests weren't so different from what we pray for here in the United States. Participants requested prayers for safety and for family members in different parts of the world, or at home, having to make decisions about school and work.

After we prayed for a person, the next station was to see the doctor and receive medicines for allergies, sinus infections, and infections from cuts and abrasions. Along with the medicines, they were given toothbrushes and toothpaste.

We also had a children's day led by Sharon Hicks. Each child received a backpack with paper, pencils, glue sticks, a water bottle, and toothbrushes.

Dana Saal helped people make a banner for their church, and Sharon Hicks made a stained-glass window with Jesus knocking at the door.

Cindy Cook, Deb Nuske, and Sharon Hicks have been participating in mission trips to the Philippines for many years, some for four or five times. They never return to the same place. Ron Hursey, Dana Saal, and I were first-timers. Along with us were Pastors Rico Esguerra and Edward Granadosin, both born and raised in the Philippines, but now pastoring churches here in Illinois.

What amazed me about the Filipino people was their joy and spirituality. They opened worship with song and dance, usually led by young teens. Their joy captivated my heart and renewed my faith, with a boost of energy to work more for God.

I've been on mission trips before, but going to the Philippines was truly a mission. We went thinking we were going to teach others. We *did* teach them things to help in their daily lives, but *they* taught *us* how to sing with joy and dance as David danced before the Lord. It was a great time of spiritual renewal and drawing closer to God. ◆

Naomi Roberts is a freelance fiction and nonfiction writer. She lives in Urbana with her husband. Email her at guitars52@hotmail.com.

Left: Stained glass made by Sharon Hicks
Right: Cindy teaching sewing.

SUDOKU

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

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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.

UCONE

LYSYH

BPLEEB

ALFTUN

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

THE

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BLISS

"Seems like only yesterday you were chasing me around this old oak tree."

PEOPLE & PLACES

Musically Speaking

"Oh Happy Day," by The Edwin Hawkins Singers

by Roger L. Wisegarver

"Oh Happy Day," written by Edwin Hawkins in 1967, is a landmark gospel song inspired by a forgotten eighteenth-century hymn. Recorded in Berkeley, California, by the Northern California State Youth Choir, this soulful version became an international smash hit in 1969, reaching the top five in multiple countries and revolutionizing gospel music. It is still among the best-selling gospel songs of all time.

Loosely adapted from a 1755 hymn with the same title, written by English clergyman Philip Doddridge (based on scripture in Acts 8:35), Hawkins's new arrangement contained only the repeated "Oh Happy Day" refrain, omitting all original verses. Edward Rimbault's music has an upbeat tempo, jazz-influenced piano, and soulful, modern backing vocals. When the choir made the recording in 1967, lead singer Dorothy Morrison added some lyrical improvisations influenced by James Brown, which, she said, "made the song feel even more current."

The young choral group was from the Church of God in Christ in California and had nearly fifty members. After the success of "Oh Happy Day," the group split up in 1969. Those who stayed with Hawkins became the *Edwin Hawkins Singers*.

The recording begins with muted piano, drums, and bass backing lead singer Morrison. It alternates twice with a full-throated chorus, then concludes with a return to the muted sound from the beginning. Its full, clear sound was remarkable, given the modest, two-track, borrowed recorder they used.

The song gained popularity after underground radio DJs in the San Francisco Bay Area began playing it, helping it transcend its original church context. It became one of the first gospel songs to cross over into the pop charts, hitting number four in the US in 1969.

Hawkins's arrangement quickly became a standard, since recorded by hundreds of artists. It has been included in movies such as Secretariat and Sister Act 2. George Harrison of the Beatles cited it as an influence for his song "My Sweet Lord." It made the Recording Industry Association of America's *Songs of the Century* list and won Hawkins for Best Soul Gospel Performance (1970). In 2005, "Oh Happy Day" was among 50 recordings chosen by the Library of Congress for the National Recording Registry.

Hawkins never had another major crossover success, but his steady gospel output during his career led to 19 Grammy nominations and three more wins. Besides sharing the gospel through music, Hawkins worked in an official church capacity in Oakland, California, until he died from pancreatic cancer in 2018.

Though "Oh Happy Day" was too contemporary for some church leaders of the day, Hawkins stated, "What makes gospel music is the message. Not whether it's hip-hop or contemporary or country, but the message of the song." ◆

Roger, Monticello, Illinois, resident, combines his interest in music and history: roger_wisegarver@msn.com.

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LIFESTYLES

Answers to exercise A-5

Correct Answers to Verb Exercise

Note that a question in Spanish has an upside-down question mark before the sentence, and an exclamation has an upside-down exclamation point before it.

1 ¡Yo (odiar) **odio** cuando ella (hablar) **habla** en voz alta!
yoh OH-dee-oh CWAN-doh AY-yah AH-blah en VOHS AHL-tah
I hate it when they talk (speak) out loud!

2 (Tú) (deber) **debes** tener más cuidado.
too DĚ-bays te-NER mahs cwee-DAH-do
You should be more careful.

3 (Tú) (comer) **comes** mucha comida.
too KOH-mays MOO-chah koh-MEE-dah
You eat a lot of food.

4 Ella (amar) **ama** la música. (Él) (vivir) **vive** para su esposa.
Ā-yah AH-mah lah MOO-see-kah L VEE-vay PAH-ra soo eh-SPOH-sah
She loves music. He lives for his wife.

5 Yo te (amar) **amo**. ¿Me (tú) (amar) **amas** también?
YOH teh AH-moh may AH-mahs tahm-BYEN
I love you. Do you love me, too?

thoughts to ponder

by Tim Barber

Some lines in the movies are unforgettable. The following one shows up in several films: "If you are watching this, it means I'm dead." You can't stop watching after an opening line like that.

This line can mean the person wants to clear something up that should have been said before—or they were in great danger, and this was the last attempt at finishing their legacy. Maybe it's a warning, an apology, or some critical information to make sense of what has since happened. What might *you* want to say if you knew you weren't going to be alive when others heard your message? How might you sum it all up so others would be grateful for your life?

There is a statement in the Bible that's a real eye-opener. A king of Judah, Jehoram, was a horrible person, leading the nation into all kinds of wicked things. (See 2 Chronicles 21.) Then we read the account of when he died: "And he departed, with no one's regret." What a legacy! *We're all glad you're gone. Good riddance.* Ever heard those things said during funeral testimonials? Probably not, but how about this terrible legacy being recorded in the best-selling book of all time?

Rather, may our legacy be like that described by Francis Schaeffer in his book, *No Little People*. "For each of us as Christians, the important thing is that there are some people, whether great or small, who can be thankful that we have lived and that God has worked through us."

"I am thankful that they lived and that God worked through them." I've heard this said about many people, I have said it, and I pray it will be said about each of us.

Now, if you are reading this . . . ◆

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Why you need dental insurance in retirement.

Medicare doesn't pay for dental care.[1]
That's right. As good as Medicare is, it was never meant to cover everything. That means if you want protection, you need to purchase individual insurance.

Early detection can prevent small problems from becoming expensive ones.
The best way to prevent large dental bills is preventive care. The American Dental Association recommends checkups twice a year.

Previous dental work can wear out.
Your odds of having a dental problem only go up as you age.[2]

Treatment is expensive — especially the services people over 50 often need.
Unexpected bills like $299 for a filling ... $1,471 for a crown[3] can be a real burden, especially if you're on a fixed income.

When you're comparing plans ...

- Look for coverage that helps pay for major services.
- Look for coverage with no deductibles.
- Shop for coverage with no annual maximum on cash benefits.

Simply put – without dental insurance, there may be an important gap in your healthcare coverage.

[1] "Medicare & You," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. [2] "Aging changes in teeth and gums", medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. [3] FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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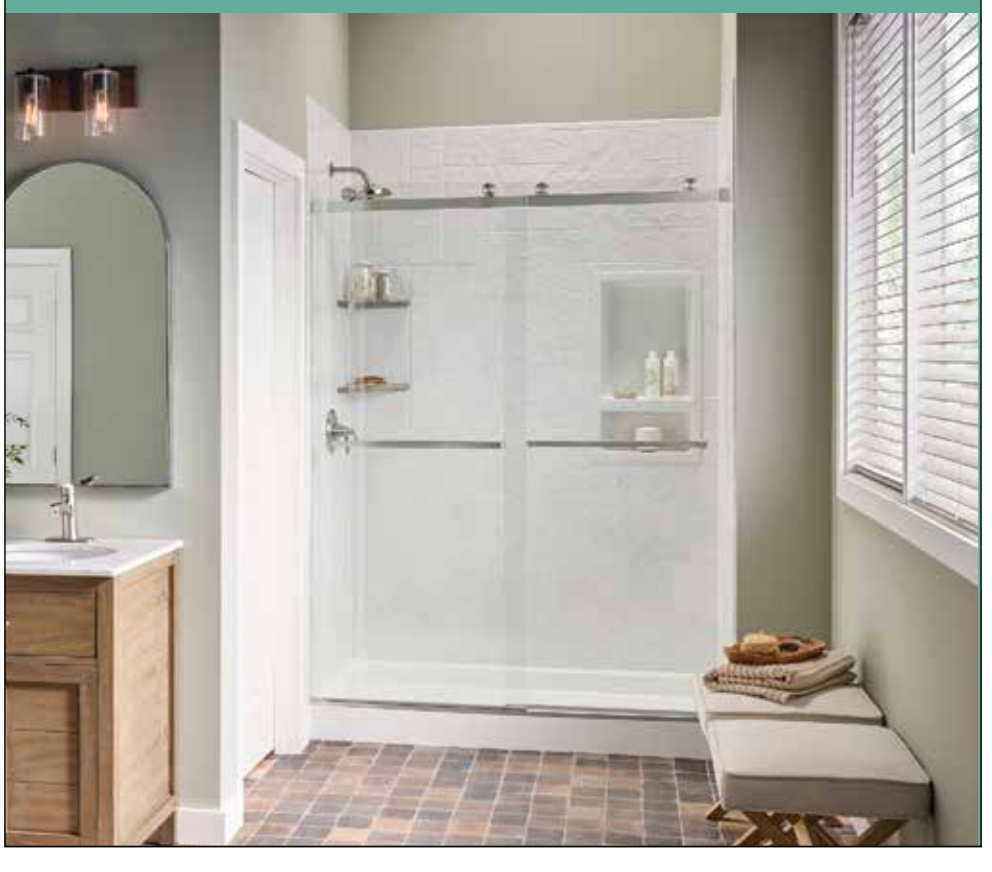

LIFESTYLES

Abstract Poetry

by Esther Aardsma

Just as a blindfolded painter can splash paint on a canvas and call it "art," *abstract* poetry is a category of poetry that is controversial. Is abstract poetry *really* poetry? That's a decision the reader (or viewer, as some abstract poetry has little to actually *read*) must decide on her or his own.

An abstract poem can take different forms. According to Britannica.com, the abstract poem is "a poem in which the words are chosen for their aural quality rather than specifically for their sense or meaning." Abstract poems can be written around the *texture* of the words, or they can be written to be nonconcrete, or they can be detached from reality—or have a combination of these factors. Most poems employ concrete words for their specific meanings and descriptive qualities—but *abstractions* are words (or symbols) that have no clear meaning and are used to invoke emotions in the reader instead of images or sensual experience (meaning, of our five senses).

Dada poetry is a form of poetry birthed in 1916 as a rejection of rules and formality. One way to create Dada poetry is to string artificially generated words together. In 1916, this was accomplished by cutting up papers with words on them and then selecting the words from a pool and arranging them strictly in the order in which they were selected; now Dada poetry generators are available online.

Some famous creators of abstract poetry are e. e. Cummings (try his poem "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r") and Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," for example. Hugo Ball's "Karawane" is an abstract poem of nonsensical gibberish. Another example is André Duhaime's "migraine" poem, which consists of the letters "migr ine" [sic] surrounded by @ symbols.

Would you try your hand at Dada poetry? Is abstract poetry something you might enjoy creating? ◆

Copyright © Esther Aardsma, a Champaign County native, currently resides in Thomasboro with her busy family. She is passionate for creativity, especially with words—and shares that love through editing, coaching writing one-on-one, and presenting to groups. You can find her at writewithesther.com.

PrimeLife Poets

My Spirit Set *Free*

by R. L. Bear

My spirit screamed!
My heart, it cried!
Overwhelming emotions
Ripped through me inside.

My heart's filled with love,
And I just want to share
With all those around me,
'Cause I truly do care.

So, I cracked my cocoon,
Metamorphed to begin,
And then, like a butterfly,
Soared into the wind!

With my spirit set ***free***,
I can laugh; I can sing.
I've been given new life.
I can do *anything*! ◆

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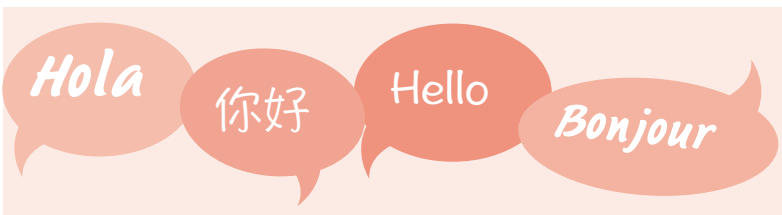


Common Greetings in Spanish

¡Hola! *OH-lah*
Hi.

Buenos días. *BWAY-nohs DEE-ahs*
Good morning (hello) (used until noon)

¿Qué tal? *K tahl*
What's up? How's it going?

¿Qué onda? *K OHN-dah*
What's up? (in Mexico).

¿Qué pasa? *K PAH-sah*
What's happening?

Time-specific Greetings

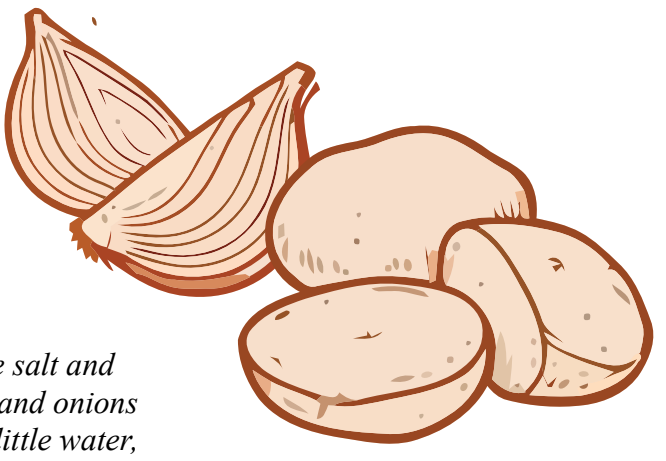
Buenos días *BWAY-nohs DEE-ahs*
Good morning (hello) (Used until around noon or lunchtime)

Buenas tardes *BWAY-nahs TAR-des*
Good afternoon, good evening (Used from noon until sunset).

Buenas noches *BWAY-nahs NOH-chās*
Good evening, good night (Used as a greeting and as a farewell after dark).

Bushes: An Emergency Dish

by Jean Brady



1 lb. ground beef
2 potatoes, sliced thin
2 onions, sliced thin
Salt and pepper to taste

In large skillet, brown ground beef. Drain excess fat. Layer potatoes and onions on top. Sprinkle salt and pepper overall. Cook until potatoes and onions are soft, 10–15 minutes. May add a little water, especially if ground beef is very lean. Ketchup can be added at the table.

Bushes was born in an emergency: there was no time to cook. The Scottish poet Robert Burns said, "The best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry." ["Best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley."] That was my day. Debby and Tim were staying with us for a week while their parents attended a conference. I took them to several of Chicago's museums that week, to keep them busy, and also to allow my night-shift husband to sleep.

We had gone to the Museum of Science and Industry, across town from our Northside home, and we were leaving there in time to get home, cook supper, and send my husband off to work. As we exited the museum, Debby and Tim spotted a mounted policeman surrounded by children; both Debby and Tim wanted to pet the horse. We really didn't have the time, but I felt a few minutes wouldn't matter. Finally, we were in the car, headed for home, but now we had an emergency.

How wrong I had been! Tim had a violent allergic reaction to the horse: his whole face began to swell, and his throat to close up—a real medical emergency. Now the doctor's office, not home, was our destination. Thankfully, the doctor was able to treat him, and he was okay, but now my regular dinner preparations were impossible. The ground beef, potatoes, and onion mix was my solution.

But why the name *Bushes*? The previous evening, Debby had monopolized the conversation with one of those "shaggy dog stories" that goes on and on, with no point to it; every few words was "bushes." When somebody asked me what this new dish was called, I replied "Bushes." In the following years "Bushes" made the menu many times. ◆

Copyright © Jean Brady. Jean, a pastor's widow and a church pianist, writes in Farmer City, Illinois. Email her at canadajean35@yahoo.com.

PEOPLE & PLACES

SEVENTIES FLASHBACK

A Wonder to Behold

by Randal C. Hill

In 1941, educational consultant William Marston was hired by a publishing house that would become DC Comics. Asked to create a collection of superheroes known as the Justice League, Marston soon devised a roster of six fictional folks.

One was a female do-gooder called Wonder Woman. As the lone lady on the baddie-bashing team, Diana Prince (her "normal" name before frantically spinning to become Wonder Woman) was a character drawn from Greek mythology. "She'll fight for democracy, but she'll be fighting for equal rights for women," Marston explained. "And her superpowers will be love and truth and beauty."

Much of that would change 33 years later—except for the part about beauty.

ABC-TV decided to film a show based on the iconic crime-fighter. Enter Lynda Carter, a beauty contest winner—Miss World USA in 1972—who had moved from Phoenix (where she had sung in two bands during high school) to Los Angeles. A few minor film roles and TV commercials had come her way before Carter auditioned for the starring role in the forthcoming *Wonder Woman* show. When offered the part, Lynda was down to $25 in the bank and proclaimed her contract a godsend—or so she thought.

With the growing women's liberation movement, she felt this was the perfect time for the appearance of a tall (she's 5′ 9″), brave, and powerful female. The men behind the television production, though, focused more on other things.

She was resplendent in a tight-fitting outfit of red, gold, and blue, and Lynda's striking face and hourglass figure often took precedence over the scripts that regrettably emphasized her appearance over her validity as a formidable female. Production men seemed leery of promoting feminism and focused instead on how alluring they could make Carter for public consumption.

Cameramen and other crew members often ogled Linda in her provocative outfit and whispered comments; barely suppressed giggles were frequent occurrences on the *Wonder Woman* set.

She became famous. One Lynda Carter poster sold a million copies, fan mail poured in, and she was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Wonder Woman had middling ratings, but ABC-TV axed it after one season. CBS-TV then picked up the program, and, according to Carter, an overdone erotic aura was added to each episode, while Lynda was made to wear an even more daring outfit.

After two more seasons, *Wonder Woman* mercifully ground to a halt.

"I never meant to be a sexual object," she groused later. "I hate men looking at me and thinking what they think. And I know what they think; they write and tell me." To distance herself, she became a recording artist, but the public always associated her with the TV role.

Writer Andy Mangels maintained that *Wonder Woman* represented importance and believed that Wonder Woman was the purest embodiment of what a brave, strong woman could be. "She stood for peace, love, and equality," he says. "She made statements regularly about the strength of sisterhood and about treating people well." ◆

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Randal writes at home in Bandon, Oregon, where you can email him your questions and comments (wryterhill@msn.com).

WOW!
LOOK AT THE COVERAGE!

FAMILY OF STATIONS

Beardstown	93.5 FM
Bloomington	90.3 FM
Bloomington	104.7 FM
Carlinville	90.1 FM
Central Illinois	89.7 FM
Central Illinois	107.3 FM
Central Illinois	1370 AM
Clinton	97.1 FM
*Decatur	100.1 FM
East Central IL	89.3 FM
East Central IL	102.5 FM
Jacksonville	93.5 FM
Keokuk, IA	90.9 FM
Lincoln	100.1 FM
Lincoln	105.3 FM
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Macomb	89.7 FM
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Springfield	105.3 FM
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LIFESTYLES

by Marvin Weinbaum

"I like flaws and feel more comfortable around people who have them. I myself am made entirely of flaws, stitched together with good intentions."

—Augustine Burroughs

When we're young, we're driven by many impulses: A desire for control, perfection, acknowledgement, success. Our flaws feel like liabilities. If they are recognized at all, they are denied and hidden. Over time, the flaws begin to reveal themselves. The passage of time opens our eyes, and the experiences—especially the failures—provide an opportunity for growth. Flaws create resilience, and we have the chance to adjust our expectations and resolve our contradictions. We see that we cannot always hit homeruns. It becomes clear that not everything is within our control, and that, though outcomes matter, our intentions matter more.

We are not perfect, nor are those around us. But we have the opportunity for a greater understanding of ourselves and others. If there is less physical energy, there is also less energy for pretense and more appreciation of honesty. Wrinkles, slower movement, and the occasional lapse in memory are not only signs of decline—they are markers of a life lived.

So, if we can't live perfectly, can we at least live well?

Live with acceptance. A good life begins with acceptance. Aging brings undeniable changes—physical limitations, loss, and changing roles in family and community. Living well doesn't mean resisting these realities but rather adapting to them with grace. Acceptance allows us to focus less on what we've lost and more on what remains: We can adjust our priorities and shape each day with intention. Certainly, on occasion, we will lapse into regret. If we can remember that the past is only a memory, whereas the present is a miracle to be lived, we can weather that storm.

Live with gratitude. In a perfect world we would all live in palaces. But, like us, the world is far from perfect. We live among the homeless. Over 50% of the world's population lives without indoor plumbing. One UN survey claims that about 2 billion people, almost a quarter of humanity, live in *danger zones*—areas within five kilometers of *violent conflict.* That said, most of us live in safety, have heat and hot water, a roof over our heads, a comfortable bed, kitchens and bathrooms, a car, and considerate neighbors. When was the last time you felt gratitude for those simple pleasures?

Eat well. In a perfect world, we would have a zero-tolerance policy for smoking. We would consume fewer saturated fats, eliminate red meat, reduce our sugar intake, and avoid processed foods. In a perfect world. Our imperfect selves would do well to find compromise solutions: Perhaps one lunch each month of a favorite prime rib entrée (my special indulgence), a drink when dining out, the occasional sweet treat. This approach reduces the feeling of total deprivation. The goal? Find your individual sweet spot among abstinence (hard to maintain), moderation, and indulgence.

Stay connected. Kenny Rogers sings, "You can't make old friends." Sadly, this is true. When we are young, we make friends organically, in school, at the park, on the block where we live. As we age, making friends and establishing connections takes some work. It takes intention. Join groups, take classes, pursue hobbies, go to the gym and the library. Join a Bible study. Smile generously. There's a world full of people looking for connection. Just like you.

Fight off frailty. Go to the gym. Religiously. Do strength-building exercises. Stretch. Do yoga. Fight lethargy. Walk everywhere.

"Do not regret growing older. It is a privilege denied to many."

—Mark Twain.

Ultimately, to age well means accepting that we are not perfect. But, building on our experiences, we can get things mostly right. ◆

Marvin Weinbaum coaches seniors. Find him at www.coachweinbaum.com. Email your questions to marvin@coachweinbaum.com.

What We Celebrate in June

June is, among other things, Caribbean American Heritage Month, Men's Mental Health Month, National Immigrant Heritage Month, and National PTSD Awareness Month. In Canada, June is set aside to recognize ALS and ALS patients.

June 12, Loving Day, celebrates civil rights and racial justice. June 16 and 17 commemorate Al-Hijra, the Islamic New Year. June 18 emphasizes the International Day of Countering Hate Speech, emphasizing human rights and equity. On June 19, we celebrate Juneteenth, commemorating the freeing of enslaved Black Americans in Texas—and Black history and liberation in general. June 21 is celebrated as Father's Day, and June 27 is National PTSD Awareness Day. ◆

The Nudge of God

by Greg Williams

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. . . ." (Psalm 107:1–2)

Have you ever felt a physical *nudge*? Perhaps in a crowded room or a quiet meeting when someone pressed an elbow into your side? Typically, that nudge is followed by a subtle tilt of the head or a pointed look. It's a silent signal: *Pay attention. There is something here you need to see.*

In the rhythm of our daily lives, God often works as that *Nudger.* Our Heavenly Father is deeply invested in a meaningful relationship with us—but we are distracted people. We get caught up in the noise of our careers, the clutter of our interests, and the weight of our worries. In his mercy, God finds ways to grab our attention, redirecting our focus toward the only thing that truly matters.

As the Psalmist concludes in verse 43, *"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."*

This Psalm reminds us to recognize God's divine nudges. The writer outlines four specific landscapes where we often find ourselves, reminding us that God is persistent in his effort to reveal his love to us.

1. The Wilderness of Wandering and Want

Sometimes life feels like a desert. We feel isolated, *homeless* in our spirits, or consumed by a deep, aching hunger for something more (vss. 4, 9). Whether we are facing actual displacement or a season of profound loneliness, God nudges us through our thirst. He allows the "longing soul" to feel its emptiness so he can be the one to fill it with goodness.

2. The Prison of Our Own Making

We have all experienced the "shadow of death"—that dark place where we feel bound by the consequences of our own poor choices (vss. 10, 17). The Psalmist acknowledges that sometimes we are "fools" because of our transgressions. Yet, even in the bondage of our addictions, our pride, or our mistakes, God's nudge is present. He doesn't leave us in the dark: he waits for the cry of the heart to help break the chains.

3. The Storms of the "Great Waters"

For many of us, the nudge comes through our work and our "business in great waters" (v. 23). We encounter seasons where the waves of life mount up to the heavens and crash down again. When we are at our "wits' end" because of financial loss, career instability, or sudden disaster, God often uses our storm to remind us that he alone controls the winds and the waves.

4. The Seasons of Change

God also nudges us through the shifting tides of circumstances. He turns rivers into deserts and wilderness into standing pools (vss. 33–35). Whether he is humbling the prince or elevating the poor, these shifts are meant to stop the mouth of iniquity and cause the righteous to rejoice. Our successes and our failures are both essential in recognizing our dependence on him.

The Verdict of Mercy

If we distill this Psalm down to a single message, it is this: **Life cannot throw anything at us that can derail God's mercy.** Regardless of whether our hardships are viewed as *undeserved*, or are the direct result of our own foolishness, the refrain of the Psalm remains: *"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses."*

Dear friend, the next time you feel that spiritual nudge—pay attention. It is not a coincidence. It is your loving and merciful Father, reminding you that he is right there beside you. ◆

Copyright © Greg Williams. *Psychiatrist Greg Williams, MD, who loves the Psalms, lives west of Chicago, Illinois, with his lovely university professor wife.*

LIFESTYLES

Americans *Must* Increase Productivity and Production

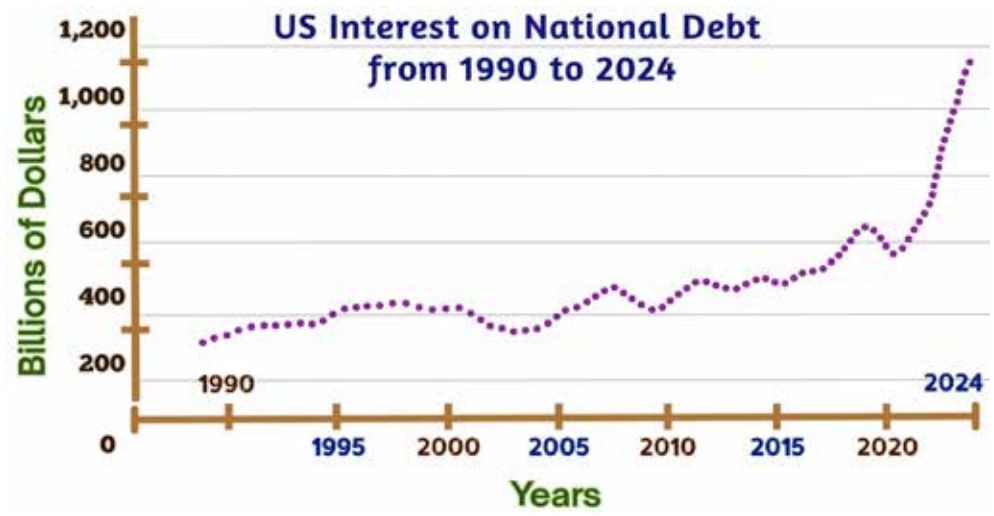
Our country is facing enormous problems that could lead to economic depression and governmental crises, unless we greatly increase productivity and production. Technological advances and the economies of scale of giant oligopolies are increasing labor productivity. Automation and greater economies of scale, however, can also cause unemployment, leading to personal poverty and bankruptcies. To prevent such increasing poverty and potential economic crisis and to fund government, we must become more innovative and produce more for internal use and export.

It would be a blessing if Americans could migrate into innovative, higher paying, and more productive work. We could then use technological advances to produce more to meet domestic needs, help others, fund government, and avoid economic crisis.

Major Economic Burdens during Our Economic Depression Era

America is in a depressionary era, on the downside of the Kondratieff wave ("Kondratieff Wave," September 2024, *PrimeLife Times*), but so far, we have avoided a major depression. The government is printing money to deal with our looming economic problems. Here are two of the many problems we face:

A national debt of nearly 39 trillion dollars—and annual interest on that debt of about a trillion dollars! (*See* Fig. 1).



It's evident from Figure 1 that the annual cost of interest on our national debt began to increase exponentially in 2020.

Since 2008, the US government has funded our economy and government activities *and* kept the country out of dire poverty by borrowing and printing money. The government has also supported corporations, banks, and consumers with trillions of dollars in grants and loans. Yearly, officials declare that we must continue deficit spending and stimulus to prevent depression and even economic collapse.

Thus, it was inevitable that our debt load would increase: in 2024, the $36 trillion national debt was more than double the 2019 debt of $17 trillion.

In November 2024's *PrimeLife Times*, I quoted Larry Burkett: "Let me restate an absolute principle of economics: No one, government or otherwise, can spend more than he or she makes indefinitely. At some point, the compounding interest will consume all the money in the world." ("The Coming Economic Earthquake," p. 181.)

In my article, "Are We Facing a Near-future Economic Depression?" I wrote, *"The $30 trillion of deficit spending since 2008 for stimulus, subsidies, and funding government activities has kept the depression from occurring so far.* ***Unless something drastically changes in the US economy to increase production and productive employment and to stop the accelerating growth of interest and debt****, increasing unemployment could trigger a near-future financial crisis and a depression."*

In my September 2024 article, our country entered an economic depressionary era in 2008 because of the transition of major, mature industries from the product innovation stage to the process innovation stage.

Automation and Oligopoly Formation Drive Rising Unemployment

The maturation of American industries has caused some dire economic issues, such as increased unemployment. Increasing production and productivity can help our country navigate safely through these issues.

In the September 2024 article, I explained that American industry entered its mature stage of development about 1998, as companies emphasized automation and oligopoly formation. During the mature stage, a monopolistic company captures (or several big oligopolies capture) the entire market of each industry, primarily through mergers and acquisitions (M&As) and increasing economies of scale.

When oligopolies form, automation and greater economies of scale drive sharp increases in labor productivity, but also in unemployment. From 2020 to early 2026, we saw record M&A activity. In that same September 2024 article, I described similar industrial maturation stages in the 1930s and 1940s, and from the 1830s through the 1850s, both of which resulted in US economic depressions.

How Can We Avoid Economic Disaster?

To achieve higher productivity and production, US industry should move back to the manufacture of high-end industrial goods, such as computer chips and sophisticated electronics, markets Taiwan now dominates (manufacturing over 50% of semiconductors). We must shift to a tax system that rewards innovation, manufacturing investment, and domestic energy production, rather than such current short-term policies, as temporary tax waiver incentives.

Robotics and AI seem poised to cause massive layoffs. If American industry were again to gain leadership in the innovation of sophisticated innovative products, we could again dominate high-tech export markets, even during the coming decade of AI and robotics revolution.

No single group can solve our financial problems—Americans at every level must choose production and innovation over complacency, and long-term stability over short-term fixes. Without decisive action, the structural forces already in motion will deepen inequality and instability. But, if we act now, we can turn this high-risk moment into a new era of growth and resilience. ◆

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LIFESTYLES

WORDSMITH'S WORKSHOP
by Rob Siedenburg

Confusables

Many English words can be confused with other, similar words. These are known to the Grammar Police as *confusables*. Unfortunately, such words are so often used interchangeably (and incorrectly) that such initially incorrect usage (and often pronunciation) eventually makes its way into our dictionaries.

There are two philosophies in dictionary-making. Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* is largely *descriptive* of how people use the language. The competing *American Heritage Dictionary* is more *prescriptive*. If enough people speak and write a word in a certain way, the *Collegiate Dictionary* accepts that as standard usage. At least for a few years, the *American Heritage Dictionary* seems to fight what it apparently considers unwarranted corruption of the American English language (my words, not theirs).

A *gantlet* is a line for punishment: the paleface ran the gantlet, a long, double line of Native Americans, armed with clubs and the will to use them. A *gauntlet* is an armored glove, sometimes tossed on the ground as a challenge to someone to fight a duel. These words are now so hopelessly entangled that this paragraph might well be wasted.

Ironically, the word *gantlet* derived from the word *gauntlet*, and though *gauntlet* is frequently misused for a trial or punishment ritual, I've yet to hear of a glove being called a *gantlet*.

Gamut and *gambit* are often pronounced nearly identically. A *gamut* is a range or series, as the *gamut* of notes in the "Do-Re-Mi" song in *The Sound of Music*. A *gambit*, on the other hand, is a calculated move, such as the opening *gambit* in a chess match. A close synonym is *strategy*, or, *stratagem*: a *gambit* can also describe words spoken to get a conversation started.

We get our word *gambit* from Spanish *gambit;* they got it from Italian *gambetto*—the act of tripping someone. The word derived from Italian *gamba*, which means *leg* (also used for table and animal legs). Nice, gams, buddy!

Don't let someone's gambit trip you up! ◆

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A la Crecy

The French cooking term *A la Crecy* refers to any dish containing carrots or garnished with carrots. The typically orange carrot can also be purple, black, red, white, or yellow. Carrots are common in French cuisine. The term *A la Crecy* derives from Crecy-en-Ponthieu, a small northern French town that produces some of the world's finest carrots. It's usual in France to name dishes after the place where they originated. ◆

Greetings at Church

Qué Dios le bendiga (a usted).
K dyohs lay ben-DEE-gah (ah oo-STETH)
God bless you (formal, last name basis)

Dios la bendiga *dyohs lah ben-DEE-ga*
God bless you (formal or informal, addressing a female)

Dios lo bendiga (for a man) *dyohs loh ben-DEE-gah*
God bless you (formal or informal, addressing a male)

Dios te bendiga. *dyohs tay ben-DEE-gah*
God bless you (informal, for a person you're on a first-name basis with)

Bendiciones. *ben-dee-SYOHN-es*
Blessings (To use with anyone)

Farewells

Adiós. *ah-DYOS*
Goodbye.

Chao *CHOW*
Bye (informal).

Hasta luego. *AH-stah LWAY-goh*
Later.

Nos vemos. *Nohs VAY-mohs*
See you.

Puzzle Answers

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

Crossword puzzle on A-6

Jumble on A-8

Jumbles: OUNCE SHYLY PEBBLE FLAUNT

Answers: The most popular sitcom episodes featuring the Brady family were the —BEST OF THE BUNCH

Sudoku on A-8

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

Scrabble Grams on A-6

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION

P3	A1	I1	S1	L1	E1	Y4	RACK 1 = 86
R1	A1	W4	H4	I1	D2	E1	RACK 2 = 64
F4	I1	G2	U1	R1	E1		RACK 3 = 14
O1	U1	T1	F4	L1	O1	W4	RACK 4 = 63

PAR SCORE 150-160 TOTAL 227

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LIFESTYLES

Rural Memories

Millie and the Exuberant Price

During my many years in college, I had an idea I would complete two bachelor's degrees and two master's degrees (it seemed a good idea at the time). A couple of summers, I served on active duty as an Army foreign-language instructor for a full three months, earning money toward my schooling.

Another time I served as a summer federal park ranger, a terrific experience. This was at Coralville Lake, an Army Corps of Engineers reservoir and park north of Iowa City. Every day brought learning opportunities.

I got so many radio messages from the local sheriff's office and the State Patrol that I started carrying a small cassette recorder in my vehicle so I could record messages and properly log and respond to them. Once a heavily armed desperado, "considered dangerous," was loose in the area. The message was, "Apprehend and hold for police." We rangers were unarmed. I opted for extreme caution and vigilance, spending a long night shift on the lookout for this suspect. He had slipped out of the area and was later apprehended many miles away, probably a good thing for me!

The park contracted with fee-takers at each location where paid camping was permitted. One well-meaning fee-taker apprehended a fisherman with what he believed to be an illegal catch of fish. As evidence, he put three large plastic bags of fish guts and other fish body parts into my ranger vehicle. I smelled those fish all summer because these special trash bags were perforated along the bottom to let water run out at the fish-cleaning stations. That intended good deed caused an uproar among the rangers, who vied to avoid the vehicle.

Another night I got a radio call from a fee-taker. An elderly couple were trying to launch their houseboat onto the lake, but a thick, giant cloud of mosquitoes near the launch site had already yielded so many bites, they were getting ready to head 100 miles back home. As I drove down toward the ramp, I could see millions of mosquitoes, the biggest, densest swarm I had ever seen.

I shut off the vehicle (yes, the fishy one) and walked over to the couple's pickup. I found a creative solution for them, treating their houseboat and camper as a camping trailer on wheels (which it was at that moment). I then permitted them to park and camp in a no-fee area overnight. The next morning the mosquitoes were gone.

Gone from the launch area, that is. Unfortunately, another ranger, likely to rid the Jeep of the stale dead fish smell, had left a back door side window down about two inches. The dome lights in the vehicles stayed on for about 10 minutes after the car doors closed, just long enough to attract thousands of mosquitoes. I added those mosquitoes to the fish smell and was officially assigned as sole driver of that vehicle. I finally had to repeatedly spray insecticide *and* deodorant into the vehicle to make it usable for other rangers!

At the far north end of the park, widow Millie held court as fee-taker, in her lovely camping trailer. I visited her regularly to collect fee money and registration forms and to resolve other issues. She loved to talk: She told me story after story of being a farm wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a schoolteacher. A delightful lady, she had an interesting vocabulary. Many of her words were very close to being correct, but not quite on the mark: malapropisms.

I remember she told me how much she loved her camping trailer. I also remember her saying that she had paid an *exuberant* price for it. Well, she was certainly an exuberant lady, and a joy to be around. ◆

Rob operated a small dairy goat farm, but between planting crops and harvesting them during his college years, he often resorted to creative means of making a living so as to stay in college. By the time he finished, his two adopted daughters were already in grad school.

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