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or Both?

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THEME
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SURVIVING A DAY
AT THE PARK

BY FYLLIS HOCKMAN

It's that time of year again, right before school begins, when kids everywhere start clamoring for that most dreaded of family excursions—that last foray to a nearby amusement park. Whether it's Kings Dominion, Six Flags, or Disney World, theme parks are among the most sought-after family attractions. Still, the hot sun, long lines, and walk-weary kids can turn the most promising outing into a disaster. A little advance planning and theme park strategy can go a long way toward ensuring a successful visit to the midway.

July and August, of course, are the busiest months, which makes September even more appealing. And if you can still schedule your visit midweek, you can avoid the crowds that descend en masse on Saturdays and Sundays.

Some parks vary their starting times according to the number of visitors they anticipate on a particular day. Call ahead to learn when the gates open, then get there before that time. You'll start reaping the benefits of an early arrival long before you get to the attractions, in the form of empty parking lots and entry gates. If you have older kids, consider a nighttime visit; the parks take on a special glow in the evening, and the lines are generally shorter.

Most people tend to stop at the rides, pavilions, and shops they see when they first enter. Resist that temptation; start your day at the far end of the park and work your way back. That way you'll miss the biggest lines and end up near the exit late in the day when you're tired and ready to leave.

Lunchtime is an opportunity in disguise. While

the rest of the troops are heading for the fast-food stands and restaurants, head for the rides. They will have traded one line for another while you, if you can wait to eat until later in the day, can avoid both lines. Bringing a snack or a juice pack to keep the kids busy while in line might help temper the long wait. Arriving around dinnertime can accomplish the same thing.

Don't expect everyone in the family to want to see and do the same things. Get several maps of the park, select the must-see attractions of general interest, and plan the order in which to visit them. If part of the group separates to pursue different interests, decide on a definite time and place to meet. Make sure it's somewhere easy to find and with a definite name so it can be easily described when asking for directions.

Because there's so much to see and do, families often try to do more than they have time or energy for. Hitting all your favorite rides and shows might seem like a good idea at the start of the day—and a frustrating impossibility by day's end. Kids especially wilt under a hectic pace; they often need some extra time to just relax along the way. Be flexible, and be prepared *not* to do everything on your list.

Many theme parks rent strollers and wagons for easier transportation. That goes a long way to maintaining a young child's enthusiasm as the day wears on and the child wears out. Dressing in loose-fitting clothes and comfortable sneakers also helps.

With theme park ticket prices skyrocketing almost as high as the roller coasters they entitle you to ride, consider other ways to save while traipsing around

Busch Gardens, Water World, or Disneyland. Food at parks, as at airports, is priced according to the captive audience syndrome: you pay their prices or go hungry. Instead, bring a picnic lunch to enjoy on a shaded bench while people-watching.

Steer clear of machines, games, and arcades that cost extra money. Kids can quarter-and-dollar you to death, so be clear on the ground rules ahead of time. The same goes for souvenirs. Young children are as happy with a \$1 balloon as an \$8 hat. If you know you can't convince your kids to leave empty-handed, try to budget ahead for something you know they'll want and need, such as a T-shirt or baseball cap. Be sure not to buy those items in the weeks before your trip to the park. And stick to whatever monetary limits you set.

Wait until you get to the park and can check out prices before promising any extra shows or treats. Costly sideshows often sound more appealing than they actually are. Focus instead on free street entertainment, such as mimes, jugglers, and musical groups. Once again, letting your kids know ahead of time what to expect often diminishes disappointment. Emphasize all that they *are* doing and seeing to take their attention away from what they might think they are missing.

Anticipate a wonderful time. Be prepared for setbacks. Remember that, whatever the realities of the day's outing, when you hear your children describe it to their friends, it'll sound just *awesome!* ♦

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Mark & Friends

Finding Purpose in the Unexpected: How All Things Work Together for Good

Have you ever found yourself in the middle of an agonizing situation, an unexpected illness, or a heavy season of rejection and wondered, “Where is God in all of this?”

When life takes a sharp turn, human nature tempts us to measure our circumstances purely by our immediate comfort. Yet the Gospel offers a far grander perspective—one that reassures us that even our darkest moments are being woven into a larger, eternal plan.

On a recent broadcast of *Mark & Friends* (aired Tuesday, August 4), board member Bishop Franklin and visiting international leader Bishop Wilson Madegwa from Migori, Kenya, joined host Mark Burns. The group gathered to reflect on the bedrock promise of Romans 8:28: “And we know that all

things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Their conversation offered a powerful reminder that God’s definition of *good* often looks like spiritual refinement, divine protection, and deeper intimacy with him.

Bishop Madegwa shared how this scripture sustained him through moments of isolation—including early in his faith walk, when giving his life to Christ in 1987 caused painful tension within his own family. Drawing a parallel to gold being refined in the furnace, he noted that God often allows us to pass through difficult fires, not because he has abandoned us, but because he sees potential in us that others cannot. The heat of trial prepares us for the work he has called us to do.

Furthermore, the panel discussed how our current struggles are often protective. Just as a loving parent guides a child away from unseen hazards, God frequently uses closed doors or delayed timing to pull us out of spiritual danger. When we shift our focus from temporary pain to eternal purpose, we can thank him, even before we see how the package unfolds.



Scan to listen

Rooted in the group’s discussion, here is a practical blueprint for trusting God’s hand when life feels uncertain:

Anchor in His Eternal Purpose. Remember that “all things working together” includes both the pleasant and the painful. Trust that God is using your current hardships to refine your character, draw you into deeper intimacy, and prepare you to be a light to others.

Listen for His Voice. A healthy relationship is a two-way street. Move beyond simply bringing a shopping list of requests to God; carve out quiet time in prayer to listen to his leading, align with his heart, and walk in his daily direction.

Value Godly Community and Counsel. God uniquely gifts those around us—whether a discerning spouse, a trusted pastor, or a praying friend—to speak wisdom and warning into our lives. Stay humble, listen to wise counsel, and honor the protective relationships God places in your path. ♦

For the full conversation and to explore a complete archive of broadcasts, visit www.greatnewsradio.org.

Body Part Idioms

To help someone; to lend a hand = Echar una mano (a alguien). I need to wash the car. Can you give me a hand? = Tengo que lavar el carro. ¿Me echas una mano?

Tread softly. = Andar con pies de plomo: I met a very pretty girl, but I’m treading softly. = He conocido una chica muy bonita, pero ando con pies de plomo.

To not sleep a wink, or to not close your eyes (all night). = No pegar ojo: My little sister cried all night long. I didn’t sleep a wink! = Mi hermana pequeña lloró toda la noche. ¡No pegué ojo!

To tease someone; to pull someone’s leg. = Tomar el pelo (de alguien): Did you really win the lottery, or are you kidding me? = ¿De verdad ganaste la lotería o me estás tomando el pelo?

To cost an arm and a leg. = Costarle uno un ojo de la cara: It’s a nice car, but it cost me an arm and a leg. = Es un buen carro, pero me costó un ojo de la cara.

To be fed up (with someone or something). = Estar hasta las narices (de algo): I’m fed up with my noisy neighbors. = Estoy hasta las narices de mis vecinos ruidosos.



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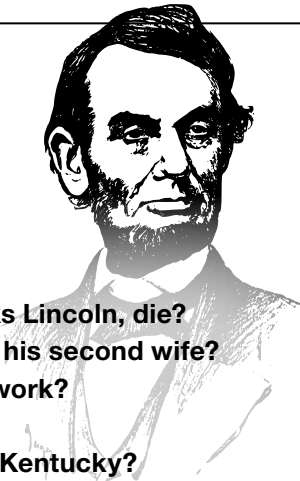
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LIFESTYLES

President Lincoln Trivia

This trivia quiz is about our sixteenth president.

1. In what year was Abraham Lincoln born?
2. Where was Abraham Lincoln born?
3. When did Abraham Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, die?
4. Whom did Thomas Lincoln (Abe’s dad) choose as his second wife?
5. At what profession did Thomas Lincoln typically work?
6. How many years did Abe Lincoln live in Indiana?
7. How did the Lincolns come to lose three farms in Kentucky?
8. Why were there muddy footprints on the Lincoln cabin ceiling?
9. Why did the Lincolns move to Indiana?
10. Where in Indiana did the Lincolns settle?



Lincoln Trivia Quiz Answers

1. Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809.
2. Abraham Lincoln was born near Hodgenville, Kentucky.
3. Abe Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died at age 34, on October 5, 1818, when Abe was 9 years old. She had been born in Virginia, and she died in the Little Pigeon community in Spencer County, Indiana. The likely cause of her death was milk sickness, caused by drinking milk from a cow that had eaten the snake-root plant.
4. Thomas Lincoln (Abe’s dad) married Sarah Bush Johnson as his second wife. She soon became a mom to young Abe.
5. Thomas Lincoln was a carpenter, though, like many other early Americans, he also farmed.
6. Abe Lincoln lived in Indiana for 14 years, from 1816 to 1830.
7. Boundary disputes (based on overlapping shingle surveys) caused the Lincolns to lose all three farms, one after the other, to others whose claims overlapped theirs.
8. Abe was a great prankster. His head often touched the ceiling, leaving oil on it, because at 17, he was already six foot six. He once asked two neighbor kids to walk through mud, then held them upside down so they could walk along the ceiling and leave muddy footprints. Abe ended up cleaning the footprints off the ceiling, of course.
9. The Northwest Land Ordinance and its Congressional Land Survey made for much more reliable property boundaries, based on meridians. Thus a person who legally claimed land in Indiana was unlikely to lose it to someone with an overlapping claim, a too common occurrence in Kentucky. It is interesting that Daniel Boone, who surveyed much of Kentucky, at one point owned nearly a third of what would become that state. He lost it all to boundary disputes.
10. In the winter of 1816, the Lincolns moved to and settled in present-day Spencer County in the Little Pigeon community.

SKYWATCHER

One of the year’s biggest astronomical events is the **September 7 total lunar eclipse**. As the earth’s shadow sweeps across the moon’s surface, the moon changes to a deep red color, sometimes referred to as a “blood moon.” Various religious and superstitious meanings are attached. Unlike solar eclipses, lunar eclipses are completely safe to watch with the naked eye.

The moon will be high in the southern sky during the eclipse. Binoculars can dramatically enhance your view of the color changes.

The eclipse is followed 20 days later by the **full Harvest Moon**, which appears very large. That is on **September 27**, and it is the full moon closest to the autumnal equinox. Its name goes back to when farmers used this very bright moon’s extended light to work after sunset in the field. Several evenings in a row, the moon rises just after sunset, providing additional hours of natural light. Look at the eastern horizon, just after sunset.

Best Nights of September 2026 and What to See

Date	Event
September 8	Moon occults Beehive Cluster from 04:00 CDT until dawn
September 11	New moon (dark of the moon)
September 14	Lunar occultation reappearance of Venus (04:30 CDT)
September 23	Northern Hemisphere fall equinox
September 26	Neptune reaches opposition and Full Harvest Moon

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Publisher
Mark Burns
mark@primelifetimes.com

Editor in Chief
Nick Brzozowski
nick@primelifetimes.com

Copyeditor
Rob Siedenburb
rob@primelifetimes.com

Graphic Design
Kelli Roos
kelli.roos@gmail.com

Office Manager
Karen Harrison
staff@primelifetimes.com

Account Representative
Holly Burns
holly@primelifetimes.com

Proofreader
Jim Miller
jpmiller61874@yahoo.com

Webmaster
Noah Nielsen
noah@primelifetimes.com

Editorial Intern
Samuel Carroll
scarroll@isionline.org

Editorial Intern
Esther Aardsma
eaardsma@proton.me



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Lake Glendale (79 acres) is surrounded by southern Illinois’s scenic Shawnee National Forest. The lake is only 80 inches deep, but it has a wonderful beach and is welcoming to swimmers.

Kinkaid Lake is one of the few bodies of water to successfully stock muskie, large mouth bass, spotted bass, bluegill, sunfish, and other species of fish.

These inland bodies of water are two of many scattered around the United States, which provide enough variety to meet virtually any preference.

Lake Champlain, located among New York, Vermont, and Canada’s Quebec Province, is believed by some to be inhabited by a monster. Legends of the creature trace back to Abenaki and Iroquois Native Americans who lived in the area. A granite block bears an inscription dedicated to Champ and “people in Vermont who have seen Champ.”

Other lakes also are associated with nonhuman creatures. Sightings of one such creature in Bear Lake along the Idaho–Utah border, were first reported in 1868. It was described as a large brown serpent with small legs and a head resembling an alligator. A man later admitted he had fabricated the story.

Another hoax occurred in 1921 when a newspaper reporter claimed to have seen, in Walgren Lake, Nebraska, a mermaid-like creature that spat water into the air.

Of course, lake settings have much more to offer in appeal than beasts, mythical or not. The town of Chelan, Washington, was settled by European immigrants in 1886.

Today, Lake Chelan is a major draw for visitors. That clear body of water stretches about 50 miles. Near its upper end, it is overshadowed by 6,600-foot-high mountain peaks. The charming town for which the lake is named is surrounded by more than 30 wineries that welcome visitors for tastings and other treats.

Equally inviting is Grand Marais, Minnesota, perched on the shoreline of Lake Superior. Once inhabited by Ojibwe indigenous people, the tiny

town (population about 1,300) was, in the 1700s, a fur trading station, populated largely by French Canadians from whom it got its name, which means “great marsh.” That recalls a wetland area that once occupied the area.

Summersville Lake in West Virginia spans just 2,800 acres, but it still ranks as the largest lake in the state. Created by a dam to control flooding, it has developed into a popular recreation destination. It attracts fishermen, boating is popular, and scuba divers come to search for a vessel that was intentionally sunk to give them something to explore. The only working lighthouse in the state overlooks the scene.

Much larger expanses of water make up central Florida’s Chain of Lakes. In contrast with the pristine atmosphere of many locations, this area has appeal for those seeking a variety of man-made attractions.

The Legoland Florida Resort includes a theme park, water park, and amusement area. Lake Eloise is the self-described water-skiing capital of the world. Numerous movies have been shot at Cypress Gardens, and the area is dotted by water ski schools.

My personal favorites are the six bodies of water that comprise western Maine’s Rangeley Lakes, where for decades I have spent pleasant summers. Some of their names alone—Umbagog (Abenaki Native American meaning “shallow water”) and Mooselookmeguntic (“moose feeding place”)—titillate the imagination.

The town (population about 1,200) perched along the lakeshore is named after James Rangeley, an Englishman who, in 1796, inherited a tract there from his father and established an estate. Today the area offers winter skiing and snowmobiling, spring and summer fishing, biking, bird watching, and more.

When you’re longing for a brief respite by a lake—or a longer stay—the choices are varied and inviting. ♦

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

Doug Ryherd
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HEALTH & WELLNESS

New Options in Cataract Surgery

by Kevin Glancy

The insertion of intra-ocular lenses as part of standard cataract surgery has been the norm for over 40 years now, but the options available in these lens implants have never been greater than today. For many years, the standard was to measure the curvature of the cornea (front surface of the eye) and measure the length of the eye to calculate the strength of the implant that would give a patient the lowest need for distance prescription after healing from the surgery. If a patient had an astigmatism before surgery, there would be astigmatism after the surgery. If the surgery went as well as possible, a patient would just need reading glasses after healing, and sometimes the drugstore *cheaters* would be adequate for near-vision needs.

Now there are a multitude of choices for patients facing cataract surgery. The standard surgical option of the best distance vision with a single vision implant lens is still done most of the time, but now more patients are opting for lenses that can mostly eliminate the need for any type of eyewear after the procedure. There are several multifocal implants that work well to balance the distance and near vision. Most patients that receive a multifocal implant as part of their cataract surgery feel that they have a very good distance vision, and near vision that functions well under normal lighting. Sometimes a low power *cheater* is used to give a little boost for ideal near vision or for very fine print.

If a patient has a significant astigmatism, a toric (astigmatism-correcting) implant is offered. These lenses



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can reduce or eliminate the need for astigmatism correction in glasses after surgery. There are also implants that combine both the astigmatism treatment and a multifocal, again to reduce the need for glasses after surgery. The latest development in lens implant technology is the LAL, or Light Adjustable Lens. These lenses are made from a plastic polymer that can have its shape changed, and therefore the prescription changed, by exposing the lens to an ultraviolet wavelength of light. Generally, two to three weeks after surgery, the prescription is measured, and if it is not at the best level for the outcome that the patient and surgeon were looking for, the lens is adjusted to a better prescription in a 90-second procedure. Usually, there are one to three *adjustments* to each eye to finetune the vision before the lenses are locked in. Patients like the ability to customize their final vision in these lenses.

With the expanding number of options now available to patients facing cataract surgery, it is wise to have a conversation with the surgeon at the initial evaluation to choose the best lens for the desired after-surgery vision. Medicare and insurance do not cover the cost of these upgraded lenses, but the long-term savings that come with not having to purchase glasses or contact lenses usually make up the difference. Do your research and get educated about your choices. ♦ Dr. Kevin Glancy is a 1989 graduate of the Indiana University School of Optometry, and he has practiced optometry in Champaign ever since. Champaign Eye Professionals are independent doctors of optometry. Reach him at kgvision@aol.com.

September Observances

We (United States and Canada) celebrate **Labor Day** on the first Monday in September to honor working people for their contributions. The day is a holiday in both countries.

Grandparents Day is celebrated the first Sunday after Labor Day (September 13 this year) to honor grandparents.

Patriot Day, September 11, honors those killed in the 9/11 attacks.

Hispanic Heritage Month starts September 15 and continues into October.

The **International Day of Peace** is observed on September 21.

The **Autumnal Equinox** will fall on September 22 this year. It begins at 1:19 p.m. Central, 2:19 p.m. Eastern Time. The following day and night are precisely the same length.

National Coffee Day 2026 is on Tuesday, September 29, 2026. It falls on the same date each year. This year, Circle K, Aroma Joe's, and other hot drink distributors have discussed offering free coffee to customers, especially rewards members. If you're looking for National Coffee Month, you might have missed it. That was last month, in August.

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Let's just stay home and watch the food channel.

Yeah!

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LIFESTYLES



Curious, Sneaky, or Both?

They shouldn't have, but our elementary, junior high, and high school teachers sometimes left classrooms unattended while students worked on assignments or read quietly. Teachers gathered in the hallway and chatted, even with classes in session. Another thing teachers shouldn't have done was to leave printouts of standardized test scores lying on their desks. For some reason, my classmates either weren't curious enough or were too cautious to look. I, however, felt I had a right to know my own scores. We took the Iowa Basic Skills Test each year—though our school was across the border in Illinois—as well as periodic aptitude and IQ tests. When the opportunity presented itself, I looked. The problem was that I couldn't see *only* my scores. My class was small, and my eyes inevitably wandered to others' results. Even now, decades later, I can remember some of them. One student consistently scored near the bottom of the scale; another regularly tested in the genius range. Once seen, those numbers could not be unseen. Our teachers also misunderstood what achievement tests measure: *achievement*. Such tests estimate the grade level at which a student is functioning academically. I routinely scored well above my grade level, despite earning only mediocre classroom grades.

Nearly every teacher I had reached the same conclusion: A teacher would compare my achievement-test scores with my report card and decide that I simply wasn't learning enough. To me, the scores suggested the opposite—that, despite my lackluster classroom performance, I *was* learning quite a bit. I continued to score a couple of years above my grade level. Years later, my curiosity and self-sanctioned access to information surfaced in a quite different setting. Our son was born in 1976. After my late first wife's final postpartum checkup, she told the office staff that, as she would no longer be seeing that physician, she'd like her medical records. The receptionist flatly refused. According to office policy, patients could not even view their records, much less leave with them. My wife was becoming increasingly irritated and appeared ready to deliver a lengthy lecture on the subject. A former Catholic nun, she knew how to read the riot act. I quietly but firmly suggested we simply leave. Smiling at the receptionist, I told her I understood that she was only following instructions. While the discussion had been taking place, however, I had seen a nurse place my wife's medical file on top of a row of filing cabinets for later filing. I unbuttoned the top of my shirt, slipped

the folder inside, and rebuttoned the shirt. During my active-duty Army service, I had kept my own medical records. I was not stationed on a base, so I needed them for visits to American military or civilian German doctors. Once in the car, I pulled the file out and handed it to my astonished wife.



The maneuver wasn't as spontaneous or creative as it might sound. While working in military intelligence, I frequently transported highly classified documents in exactly that manner. Our entire team carried sensitive materials from one secure location to another, tucked inside our shirts. We also carried orders saying that we were authorized to transport classified documents. Passing through security and entering the proper facility, we would surrender the documents, in return for a signed receipt.

Maybe I was destined for intelligence work from an early age. Between peeking at test scores and liberating medical records, I certainly developed a talent for obtaining information. Our team's document transport methods also gave a new meaning to the old expression, "Keep your shirt on." ♦ Copyright © Rob Siedenburg. When not writing these articles, Rob teaches a Bible study, gardens, and works with students who want to learn English.

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Millie Fleur Saves the Night,

by Christy Mandin

reviewed by Esther Aardsma

The town of Garden Glen is terrified of the dark. The moment the sun sets, everyone races to the safety of their brightly lit homes. Everyone, that is, except Millie Fleur. Poor Millie is sad that ever since she moved to Garden Glen, she hasn't seen a single night creature, and her moon garden hasn't been able to grow.

When Millie's mom helps her remove the lightbulb from the streetlamp, the townspeople are angry—and scared. "But the Dark isn't scary," Millie tells them. "You just need to get to know her."

Millie Fleur (2025) is an adorable picture book that reminds its readers of nighttime delights and encourages them to appreciate the silence, stillness, and nature of the nocturnal. Mandin's text leaves the reader with a sense of coziness and safety—the night isn't an enemy, but a friend. Or maybe many friends.

The nighttime illustrations in the beginning of the book are intentionally on the spooky side. Millie Fleur lives in the quintessential shadowy mansion surrounded by twisted trees on a hill behind iron gates. The Dark is represented by furry humanoid monsters (one a giant) with glowing yellow eyes. There is no profanity, violence, or sexual content. Millie's garden contains humorously fanciful fauna and flora such as "Sleepwalking Turnips" and "Twilight Tulips." While Mandin uses the phrase "save the night" several times, she does not appear to push a "save the Earth" agenda.

Millie Fleur teaches Garden Glen to enjoy the night through warmth and friendship, and this creative picture book shares that warmth and friendship with its readers. Mandin's endnote discusses her own childhood fear of the dark, and her journey to enjoying the night's treasures—especially living lights. "But they can only be seen in the dark," she writes. "So, turn out those lights!" ♦ Copyright © Esther Aardsma. Esther, busy homeschooling mom of five little ones in Philo, Illinois, is an enthusiast for all things creative. Email her at eaardsma@protonmail.com.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Blast from the Past!

“Disco Duck,” by Rick Dees & His Cast of Idiots

by Randal C. Hill

Silly novelty songs were once commonplace on the radio. The 1950s brought us “The Purple People Eater” (Sheb Wooley) and “The Chipmunk Song” (the Chipmunks). The next decade offered “Alley Oop” (the Hollywood Argyles) and “Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh” (Alan Sherman). But when shots unexpectedly rang out in Dallas on a bright, sunny Friday in November 1963, nothing on the radio seemed funny anymore.

Flash forward to the fall of 1976. Rick Dees (born Rigdon Osmond Dees III in 1950) was a fun-loving Memphis radio disc jockey who had earned a reputation for creating preposterous promotions such as the world’s largest fruitcake (3,000 pounds), the world’s largest jelly doughnut (300 pounds), the world’s largest lollipop (150 pounds), and the world’s largest T-shirt (9 feet by 14 feet).

In the mid-1970s, disco reigned as a dominant musical force, and disco was what DJ Dees hyped as a part-time hustle at a local club, where he spun records and cracked jokes. Sensing that the time

was right for a disco parody, and recalling a 1966 dance hit called “The Duck,” by singer Jackie Lee, Rick came up with “Disco Duck” after hearing a fellow named Ken Pruitt making silly duck noises at a gym where the two worked out.

See if you can spot the error in Dees’s lyrics:

*Went to a party the other night
All the ladies were treatin’
me right
Movin’ my feet to the disco beat
How in the world could I keep my seat?
All of a sudden I began to change
I was on the dance floor actin’ strange
Flappin’ my arms, I began to cluck
Look at me, I’m the disco duck*

Rick found a minor-league Memphis recording home—Freetone Records—for “Disco Duck.” Before long, Dees’s yuk-producing novelty began earning radio airplay throughout the South, eventually appearing poised to go nationwide. As a result, Freetone leased the recording master for \$3,500 to the powerful RSO label, an outfit that was keeping the charts afire with one peppy Bee Gees hit after another.

RSO mogul Al Coury admitted later, “I didn’t even want to hear it.” He didn’t mind doing a bit of



research, though. “I don’t generally use my kids as a barometer, but I’ve got to admit they made me think about the universal appeal this thing might have.”

There’s little doubt that everyone involved (including Rick) watched in slack-jawed astonishment as the wacky item rocketed to the peak of the Billboard charts and eventually sold a reported 6 million copies.

RSO rushed out an LP called “The Original Disco Duck,” which struggled to Number 157 on the album sales lists. The next single pulled from that record was “Dis-Gorilla,” a romp describing the joys of a disco-dancing gorilla. But it never hit, and follow-up 45s tanked. Apparently, the record-buying public had had enough such foolishness.

Did you spot the lyrical faux pas? Ducks don’t cluck. They quack. Chickens cluck.

But then, how hip would something called “Disco Chicken” have sounded? ♦

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What Does Financial Fulfillment Feel Like?

by Darrold A. Kennedy

Feeling financially fulfilled means so much more than just the number in your bank account.

It’s about being able to take your family out to dinner without calculating whether you can afford it. It means sleeping soundly on a Sunday night, knowing that if the water heater gives out tomorrow, you can handle it. And it’s saying yes to a vacation because you planned ahead and the money is there.

In short, financial fulfillment is the feeling that your money is supporting the life you want.

Yet true fulfillment is surprisingly rare. Only 16% of Americans are financially fulfilled, according to a 2026 study by Edward Jones and Gallup. Those at the other end of the spectrum, the financially stressed (32%), often say that money regularly controls their daily decisions. Most Americans (51%), however, fall in the middle—the financially conflicted. They manage to get by but often carry a persistent undercurrent of worry.

Notably, where you land on this spectrum has less to do with your income than you might expect. More than half of households earning \$175,000 or more are still financially conflicted.

Building the foundation

So, the question becomes, “What do financially fulfilled people do differently?” Simply put, they tend to have foundational planning structures in place. Five behaviors show up consistently among the financially fulfilled, and they’re simple steps you can take, too.

Build an emergency fund (98% of fulfilled have this). Aim for saving three to six months of living expenses in a liquid, easily accessible account. When you know you can handle the unexpected, you stop bracing for it, and lower stress gives you a higher quality of life.

Create a financial plan for retirement (91% of financially fulfilled have one). It’s hard to feel in control if you don’t know where you’re going. A retirement plan puts a real number on what you’ll need and lays out a clear path to get there, with built-in protection against life’s unexpected curveballs.

Save intentionally for major milestones (87% of financially fulfilled do). A home renovation, a

new vehicle, or a child’s education don’t have to feel disruptive. Setting money aside deliberately for the milestones you anticipate means you can say yes without scrambling.

Put an estate plan in place (66% of financially fulfilled have). Estate plans are not just for the wealthy. A will and basic estate plan help ensure what you’ve worked for still reflects your wishes after you’re gone.

Work with a financial advisor (60% of financially fulfilled who sought any guidance have used an advisor in the past year). The internet is great, but real guidance comes from a credentialed person who knows you and your family and what you want your money to do for you.

Knowing that your money is working toward the life you want doesn’t happen by accident. Feeling financially fulfilled is worth the effort and might be more achievable than you realize. ♦

This Edward Jones article was provided through 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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JUMBLE

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

TOQAU

POGUR

IQLDIU

FEULUS

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“”

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

THE CEPHALOPODS CAME TO A RECIPROCAL BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT THAT WAS ---

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



MONEY MATTERS

It's Not Retirement if You Think Rewirement

by Marvin Weinbaum

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”
—George Bernard Shaw

Every season of our lives, we face challenges. There are opportunities, but the challenges demand our attention. As children and adolescents, we need to make friends and fit in; as young adults we want to forge a career, perhaps begin a family. In middle age we seek to prosper and build financial resources to live comfortably. Moving into our senior years, we want to be thought of well—perhaps even admired—closing out our careers and our parenting with something like *mission accomplished*.

And then we retire, and work—one of the anchors of our life—comes to an abrupt end. We face the question, “Where do I go from here?”

With familiar boundaries and schedules removed, we face the freedom—and responsibility—to design our own days. And we need to prepare ourselves emotionally for new beginnings.

If you are already retired or considering retirement, let me offer some suggestions:

Retirement is a Change of Identity

We’ve always answered the question, “What do you do?” with our occupation. Retirement means building a new identity based on our values, emerging priorities, and new activities, rather than a job title.

We must reinvent ourselves. We can travel, take classes, go to the gym, walk, meditate, do yoga. We can indulge our hobbies, care for our homes, see friends. Some of us—not me—play golf, pickleball, tennis. We have time to read, to write, to draw, and to paint.

Contrary to commonly held fears about boredom in retirement, you might find that there are hardly enough hours in the day. That’s what I have found.

Stay Curious

- The second half of life isn’t a sequel. It’s a new story with few boundaries and a new beginning. If you remain curious, you will find that life can be a series of explorations from a sound base.
- Retirement isn’t graduation from learning—the brain enjoys new challenges at every age—so take classes, go to museums, read nonfiction; let every new possibility fuel your curiosity.

Rewire Your Calendar

- Retirement gives us the freedom—and responsibility—to construct our own days based upon our newly emerging priorities.
- A blank calendar is liberating—fill it thoughtfully.
- Purposeful routines and achievable outcomes create the momentum to reach our goals.

Redefine Achievement

- You don’t outgrow purpose and meaning—you simply outgrow old definitions of them.
- Ask: “Who can benefit from my experience? What knowledge do I have



that shouldn’t retire with me?”

- Mentoring, volunteering, coaching, and helping family can provide deep satisfaction.

Invest in Relationships

- Loneliness is one of retirement’s greatest risks; connection is one of its best remedies.
- Strengthen family ties, friendships, and your place within your community.

Accept That Rewirement Takes Time

- Retirement is less a destination than an ongoing redesign.
- It’s normal to experiment. Some new activities won’t fit; others will surprise you.
- Be intentional. You are stronger and more creative than you think.

Retirement isn’t the end of productive living—it’s an invitation to rewire your talents, relationships, and sense of purpose.

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.” —Chinese proverb ♦

Marvin Weinbaum is a senior life coach and columnist. Feel free to send your questions to marvin@coachweinbaum.com.

Laughing Matters

Blond Man Jokes: The Latest in Politically Incorrect Humor

A blond man looked across the street and saw his friend on the other side. “Hey,” he asked, “How do I get over there to the other side of the street?”

His friend, also blond, replied, “Just stay there, man. You’re already on the other side.”

A blond man was in the shower. His wife called in through the closed bathroom door, “Honey, did you find the new shampoo I put in the shower?”

“Yes, I did, but I can’t use it,” he replied.

“Why not?” she asked.

“It says ‘for dry hair,’ but I already got mine wet.”

A blond man saw a long envelope lying on his front step. Stamped on the front in large letters were the words, “DO NOT BEND.” Despite thinking about it for a long time, he couldn’t come up with any way to pick up the envelope without bending over.

A blond man called 911 and shouted to the operator, “Sally is having her baby! The contractions are only about a minute apart!”

“Is this her first baby?” asked the operator.

“No,” the man answered. “This is her husband.”

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LIFESTYLES

el pelo

the hair

la cabeza

the head

el pecho

the chest

el antebrazo

the forearm

la mano

the hand

la pierna

the leg

la rodilla

the knee

el tobillo

the ankle

el pie

the foot

la frente

the forehead

el cuello

the neck

el brazo

the arm

el torso

the torso

la pantorrilla

the calf

el pulgar

the thumb

Hola

你好

Hello

Bonjour

El Cuerpo Humano / The Human Body

la cara

the face

el ojo

the eye

la boca

the mouth

la mejilla

the cheek

la nariz

the nose

las cejas

the eyebrows

la oreja

the ear

el diente

the tooth

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 crown³ 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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thoughts to ponder

by Tim Barber

N

ational monuments are fascinating. We all have seen them and know something about why they deserve such a prominent place, showcasing our nation's history. It says more about me than this particular person, but I had never heard of a monument to the inventor of the screw propellor. I guess I wasn't listening when they taught about that back in grade school. But better late than never.

John Ericsson, born in Sweden in 1803, immigrated to the United States in 1839, and helped design that famous ironclad warship, the USS Monitor for its famous 1862 Civil War battle with the Merrimack. (After three hours of fighting, they called it a draw.) The Monitor was the first ship with a rotating gun turret, and it was powered by a steam engine connected to that famous screw propellor.

Ericsson's marble monument was unveiled in 1926, so for around 100 years he's been quietly sitting there, just south of the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C. Did he ever see himself having a monument like that? Did he know the impact his invention would have on the history of our world?

For the most part, we would laugh at the idea of our having a monument in D.C. for our accomplishments. What have we ever done to deserve such an honor? However, do you really have any idea of the influence your life is having in our world? "Little" acts of kindness, patience, love, and courage can make significant differences in the lives of those around us.

So, we might not have a monument like Ericsson's, but our actions can be crafted into the lives of others to have *living monuments* as a testimony to our godliness. Understanding that can be a life-changer for how we treat family, friends, and anyone we'll meet today. Thank God for those who have done the same for us. ♦

Copyright © Tim Barber. Tim is a retired pastor in the Champaign-Urbana area: tbarber@illinois.edu.

LIFESTYLES

SEVENTIES FLASHBACK

Were You in the Mood for a Ring?

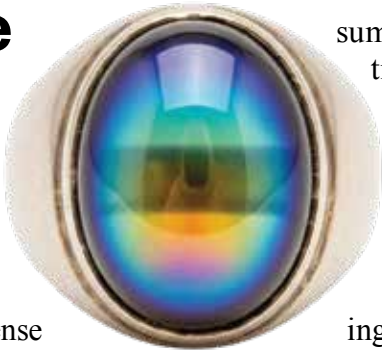
by Randal C. Hill

Every decade has its fads—intense and often silly crazes that set the popular culture ablaze, only to quickly flame out and disappear overnight. The 1950s saw the coming and going of 3-D movies, Davy Crockett caps, and Hula Hoops. Mini-skirts, lava lamps, and tie-dyed clothing helped to define the next decade. The 1970s brought us Pet Rocks, waterbeds, and mood rings.

Ah, yes. Mood rings. How cool were those! Pieces of jewelry that claimed to change color to reflect a wearer’s emotional state. If you were happy, your band turned blue. Brown meant that you were a grouch. Black? You lived under a cloud of gloom. (Cheer up, please!)

The fact that mood rings responded to body temperature rather than emotions didn’t seem to concern anyone.

What do you remember about these once-hot hoops? They hit their popularity peak in the



summer and fall of 1975, and, in addition to the rings themselves, additional mood-revealing items included mood nail polish, mood shoes, and mood underwear. (One assumes that the last-mentioned involved the smallest audience.)

Though the rage was fresh and exciting during the middle of the decade, the technology itself was old hat. Inside the quartz stones was heat-sensitive liquid crystal, chemically synthesized from grease extracted from sheep’s wool. Sheep’s wool had also been utilized in an earlier craze: 3-D glasses.

Okay, so what was unique about these baubles? One answer is that they were associated with the psycho-spiritual gibberish of the time. For this, we can praise or blame (depending on your point of view) a business-driven Wall Street dropout named Joshua Reynolds.

During a search to overcome debilitating anxieties, Reynolds had discovered biofeedback—a modulating of one’s brain-wave emissions. This led him to establish Q-Tran (*Tran* for tranquility), a meditation center in the Big Apple. Here, stressed-out patrons were promised relief if they were hooked up to a complicated biofeedback machine. But a pair

of problems clouded the picture: the machine was jaw-droppingly expensive, and it broke down with seeming regularity.

Reynolds countered both issues with a simple solution: create a “portable feedback aid” in the form of a band that featured about a dime’s worth of liquid crystal. He hired a press agent, convinced the cosmetic company Fabergé to back him, and soon found himself rocketing to pop-culture popularity.

For a while, mood rings reigned as the ultimate *in* item. On the first day they went on sale at Manhattan’s posh Bonwit Teller department store, 1,000 rings were snapped up at \$45 each (around \$275 in today’s money). By the end of the year, 15 million had been sold. The knickknacks ranged from \$5 knockoffs to 14-karat-gold specialties, with a \$250 price tag. Superstar celebrities (Paul Newman, Barbra Streisand, Muhammad Ali) vouched for them. Muhammad even wrote a poem about his.

Eventually, mood rings ended up on the slag heap of discarded fads once deemed essential to coolness. Today they are remembered only with a smile, and possibly—or probably—a bit of embarrassment. ♦

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Who Was Polly Cooper?

by Rob Siedenburg

In the spring of 1778, General George Washington’s Continental Army was suffering through the aftermath of a brutal Valley Forge winter. Thousands of soldiers had already died of starvation, disease, and exposure; those who survived faced severe food shortages. At this critical moment, Polly Cooper, an Oneida woman, traveled more than 200 miles on foot to Valley Forge with 47 Oneida warriors, carrying precious white corn in handwoven baskets.

The Native Americans came in answer to Washington’s plea for food, scouts, and assistance. Invaluable guides and scouts during the Revolutionary War, the Oneida fought in such battles as the one at Oriskany, New York (where Native Americans fought on both sides of the conflict). But even before the Oneida

warriors entered battle, Polly Cooper’s knowledge helped save the struggling Continental Army.

The Oneida arrived at Valley Forge in mid-May. Though a soldier’s journal mentions the arrival of “40 Indians, of the Oneida nation,” it does not name Cooper. Her contributions have been preserved through Oneida oral tradition, later recorded by a descendant, Oneida historian Chief William Honyst Rockwell (1870–1960).

The Oneida were one of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, a model of cooperation that influenced some early American leaders as they planned the structure of the new United States. In Oneida society, women played a central role in preserving agricultural knowledge, basic skills, culture, and community traditions. Polly Cooper came to Valley Forge as an expert in these essential skills.

The Oneida had declared neutrality when the Revolutionary War began. During the earlier French and Indian War, they had fought alongside the British against the French. Their neutrality ended after British loyalists and Mohawk warriors, led by Joseph Brant, destroyed the Oneida village of Oriska in 1777. In response to Washington’s urgent appeal, Chief Shenandoah agreed to send warriors and supplies to aid the American cause.



Polly Cooper, bronze statue

porridge (hasty pudding, or cornmeal mush). She encouraged them to add berries and nuts when available. While the Oneida warriors joined American forces in the field, Cooper remained at camp teaching soldiers how to prepare the corn safely. Her practical knowledge likely saved countless lives.

Most of the original Oneida warriors returned home by June, but the Oneida Nation continued to provide couriers, guides, and scouts for the Continental Army throughout the war. After the War, when the Army offered to pay Polly Cooper for her invaluable service, she refused payment, considering her efforts a gift to those in need.

The Oneida Nation paid a heavy price for supporting American independence. British forces and their Native American allies destroyed Oneida villages, forcing many from their homes in an event the Oneida remembered as the “Whirlwind.” Although Congress later provided financial compensation and promised the Oneida the right to remain on their ancestral lands (the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua), those guarantees were largely ignored, and those promises broken. Over time, many Oneidas were forced to relocate to what is now Wisconsin.

More than two centuries later, Polly Cooper’s contributions have finally received national recognition. In January 2026, the U.S. Mint released the annual Native American one-dollar coin, honoring Polly Cooper and the Oneida Nation. The coin commemorates the generosity, courage, and knowledge that helped sustain Washington’s army during one of its darkest moments and recognizes a Native American contribution that played a significant role in the success of the American Revolution. ♦

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Valley Forge, 1777. Gen. Washington and Lafayette visiting the suffering part of the army courtesy of Library of Congress



LIFESTYLES



© ChrisVanLennepPhoto / AdobeStock

by Greg Williams

Psalm 93

“The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

We all know what it feels like to experience instability. It is like standing up against the crashing weight of the ocean’s huge, unrelenting waves. In an era marked by cultural division, global instability, and relentless political unrest, our collective foundations can feel shaken at the core. It becomes common that we quietly wrestle with uncertainty, insecurity, and systemic distrust in the leaders who campaigned for peace.

It isn’t just the anticipation of constant conflict that exhausts us: it is the chronic, lingering dread of tomorrow that settles in after we labor through our hardships. Like a relentless tide, the 24-hour news cycle also batters our minds, leaving us feeling

exposed and unprepared for the next crisis. Psalm 93 speaks directly into this space of human powerlessness. The focus is not on the intrusive noise or the threat of the developing storm, but on a declaration of absolute certainty: *“The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty.”* The Psalmist reminds us that our security does *not* depend on our capacity to calm the sea, but on the character of the One who rules it.

In contrast to the chaos of our world, we are redirected to the sovereign authority of God, stating that *“the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.”* Anyone who has stared into a crisis knows that roaring sound—it is the overwhelming noise of grief, financial strain, or global panic. Yet, the scripture immediately pivots to a higher truth: *“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea.”*

If the raw, untamed forces of nature ultimately submit to the orchestration of the Creator, why do we live as though chaos had the final word? The very laws that sustain the entire universe serve as a testimony to his faithfulness. Nothing catches him off guard; no geopolitical shift or personal tragedy operates outside of his permissive will.

Viewed through this lens, the unrelenting trials of our lives are radically transformed. The swelling tide that threatens us becomes a fierce reminder to look to God, our sustainer. It compels us to anchor our faith, not in our anticipated fate, but in the Immutable Sovereign, whose throne was forever established.

When the world roars, we do not have to dread. We can stand firm, knowing that the One who commands the deep is the very same One who loves us intimately and remains eternally faithful to us. ♦ Copyright © Greg Williams, M.D. Psychiatrist Greg Williams loves the Psalms. He lives west of Chicago, Illinois, with his lovely university professor wife.

Respect Doesn’t Come with an Expiration Date

by Marvin Weinbaum

Lately, I’ve noticed a troubling trend. Turn on the television, browse social media, or listen to political debates, and you’ll hear an increasingly familiar refrain: older Americans are somehow the problem. I knew I would face challenges, but I never imagined that living into my eighties would be a dilemma—for others.

We’re told we’re occupying jobs that should belong to younger people. We’re blamed for rising health-care costs, accused of clinging to outdated ideas, and criticized for collecting Social Security and Medicare—as though these benefits were gifts, rather than promises earned over a lifetime of work.

Apparently, we’re in the way. Well, I don’t agree.

Most of us didn’t arrive at our senior years by accident. We spent decades raising families, paying taxes, serving in the military, volunteering in our communities, building businesses, teaching children, caring for aging parents, and contributing to society in countless ways. We’ve earned not only our Social Security benefits but also things less tangible and perhaps even more valuable: wisdom and perspective.

That doesn’t mean age never matters. I don’t expect many eighty-year-olds to be fighting wildfires, boxing, or playing professional football. Some jobs require youthful strength and stamina.

That said, should an experienced accountant, artist, professor, physician, or entrepreneur be judged

deficient while still productive and passionate? I suspect investors would be uncomfortable telling Warren Buffett that the date on his birth certificate disqualifies him from making wise decisions.

The same principle applies in the political arena. If voters believe certain elected officials have become too old to serve effectively, our democracy provides an answer: elect someone else. Age alone doesn’t determine competence. Some people lose their edge at sixty; others remain sharp and effective well into their eighties. The question should always be a measure of competence, not birthdays.

Certainly, our system of governance would benefit from reforms that encourage fresh leadership. Many people support term limits. Others argue that reducing the influence of money in politics would make it easier for new candidates to compete. And all of us would be well served by understanding where a candidate stands on issues, instead of relying on allegiance to political parties, slogans, or television ads.

An engaged, informed electorate is one of democracy’s greatest safeguards.

I’ve also heard people protest, and rightly so, over the high cost of medical insurance, sometimes suggesting seniors are receiving special treatment. My response is simple: instead of resenting older Americans for having health coverage, perhaps we should focus on ensuring that every American has access to affordable, high-quality medical care. Envy rarely solves problems; thoughtful public policy sometimes can.



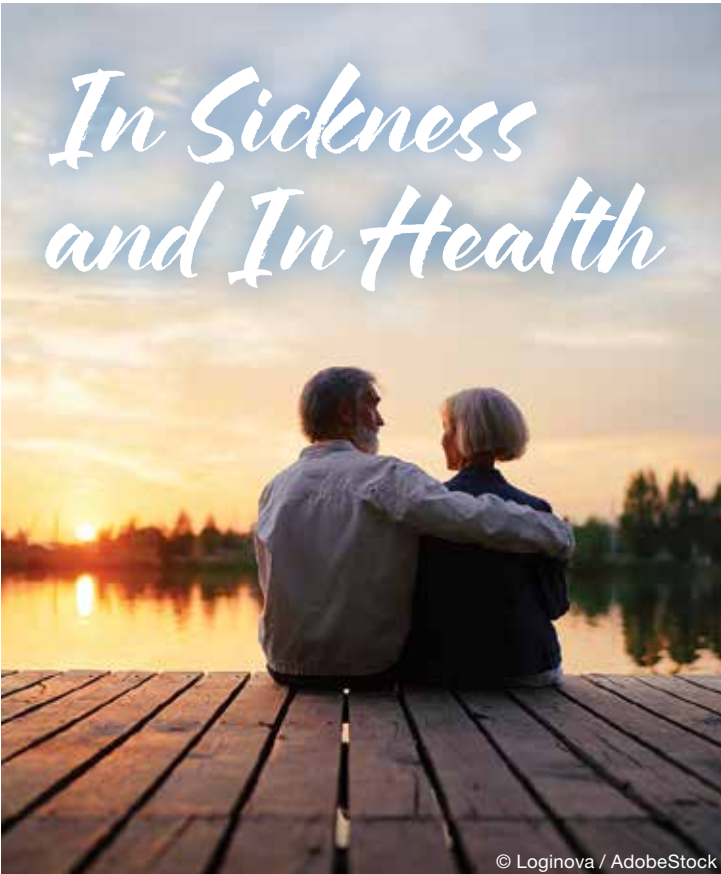
Generational finger-pointing has never built a stronger nation.

Every generation inherits challenges from those who came before and leaves opportunities for those who follow. Younger Americans bring energy, creativity, and new ideas. Older Americans contribute experience, judgment, and historical perspective. We need both.

The truth is that none of us escapes aging. Every younger person is simply a senior citizen in training. So, let’s stop treating age as a flaw. Let’s judge people by their character, competence, and contributions—not by the number of candles on their birthday cakes.

Value doesn’t come with an expiration date. ♦ Marvin Weinbaum, senior life coach and columnist, writes about aging with purpose, dignity, curiosity and resilience, translating insight into practical guidance for everyday life. Send your questions to marvin@coachweinbaum.com.

HEALTH & WELLNESS



by Cynthia Germain

For many couples, growing older happens side by side.

For years, you moved through life on fairly equal footing. You worked, raised a family, traveled, made plans, and divided responsibilities. You might have had the occasional illness or surgery along the way, but for the most part, neither person thought of herself or himself as “the healthy one” or “the one who needs help.”

Then something changes.

One spouse develops a chronic health condition. Mobility becomes more difficult. There is a serious

illness, a fall, changes in memory, or simply a gradual decline that makes everyday activities harder than they once were.

Suddenly, two people who have spent a lifetime as partners might find themselves in very different roles. One becomes the person who needs more help. The other becomes the person providing it. That shift can be difficult for both.

The person experiencing health changes might struggle with the loss of independence or feel uncomfortable relying on someone who has always been an equal partner. The healthier person might begin taking on more—driving, cooking, household responsibilities, appointments, medications, and decisions—often without ever consciously deciding to become a caregiver.

And somewhere in all of that, the relationship itself can begin to change. Perhaps one of the most important things couples can do is acknowledge that change.

Pretending everything is the same can make things harder. It is okay to talk about what has changed, what each person is worried about, and what each needs. Those conversations might be uncomfortable, but they also create an opportunity to decide together how to move forward.

It is also important to protect the partnership whenever possible. When one person needs more help, it can be easy for every conversation to become about medications, appointments, meals, or what needs to be done next. Finding ways to remain partners and friends matters. Watch a favorite movie. Sit outside together. Go for a drive. Share a meal with friends. Continue the small rituals that have always belonged to the two of you.

Another important step is to accept help before

you are overwhelmed. Many couples are accustomed to managing life on their own and might resist asking others for assistance. But accepting help with transportation, meals, household chores, home maintenance, or simply companionship can preserve energy for the things that matter most. Help does not have to mean giving up independence. Sometimes accepting a little help is exactly what allows independence to continue.

And the healthier person also needs permission to continue having a life of his or her own. That can be difficult. There might be guilt about going to lunch with friends, attending an activity, or simply taking time away. Yet maintaining friendships, interests, and time for yourself is not abandoning your partner. It is part of sustaining yourself for what might be a long journey.

Perhaps both people need to recognize that fair does not always mean equal. For much of a relationship, responsibilities might have been divided fairly evenly, but as health changes, one person might naturally carry more. The goal might no longer be to keep everything equal, but to find a new balance that respects the needs and abilities of both people.

“In sickness and in health” is a phrase many couples said years ago, without knowing exactly what it might someday require. When that day comes, perhaps the answer is not simply to endure the changes, but to adapt to them together, to ask for help when needed, protect the relationship that existed before illness entered the picture, and continue finding ways for both people to have connection and joy.

Because even when health is no longer equal, the partnership can still be one of equals. It might simply look different from how it once did. ♦

Cynthia Germain, MBA, is extremely knowledgeable in the field of aging, nonprofit community-based organizations, and meaningful services.

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Three Words Made Carol Connors Rich

by Nick Thomas

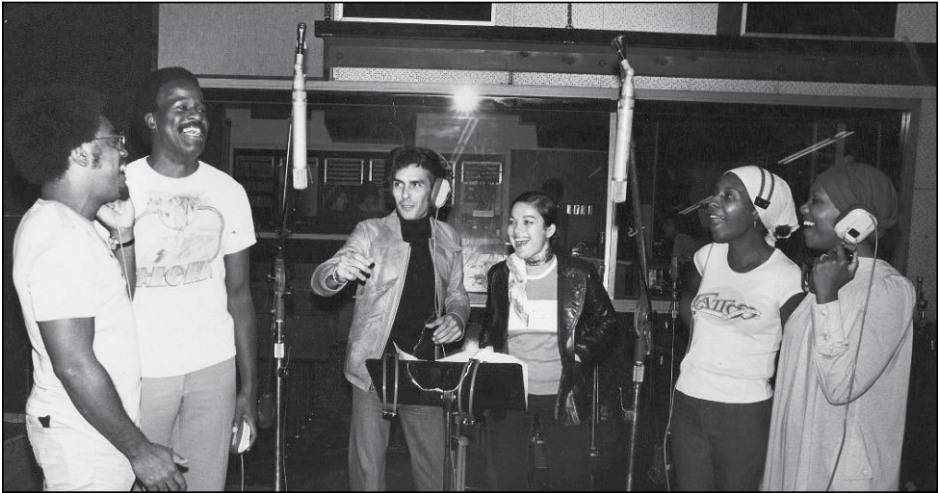
Fifty years ago, a scrappy boxing film with a surprisingly low budget, starring a little-known, starving actor, knocked out star-laden productions such as *A Star is Born* and *All the President's Men* to win the coveted title of highest-grossing film for 1976. *Rocky* went on to win three Oscars, including one for Best Picture.

Contributing to the film's success, audience eardrums were pelted with one of the most stirring and memorable movie themes of the twentieth century during Rocky's rigorous training scene. As the intensity of the training increases, so do the music and lyrics, culminating in the famous dash up the stone stairs of the Philadelphia Museum of Art as Carol Connors's three inspiring words leap from the soundtrack.

"It's the film's iconic moment when Rocky runs through the streets, punches the meat, then climbs those stairs and thrusts his fists in the air," Connors told me from her home in Beverly Hills. "Then you hear 'Gonna Fly Now.' I was actually one of the voices because we didn't have a big budget to hire a high-priced singer."

Connors doesn't hesitate when asked what the film's theme has meant to her over the past 50 years. "It paid for my Beverly Hills home!" she said. "But beyond that, it captured a movie moment that represents believing in yourself, while demonstrating perseverance, hope, and courage. It's something we can all identify with and is such an enormous high in the story."

Connors cowrote the lyrics with Ayn Robbins; (now veteran) composer Bill Conti scored the music.



Carol Connors and Bill Conti, center, and other singers recording Gonna Fly Now

The three had the same agent, who had informed the trio of "a little film about a boxer" that needed a theme song. After watching a rough cut of the partially scored film, everyone in the viewing room knew it needed a more powerful theme—and "Gonna Fly Now" was born.

The up-front payment of \$500 for Connors's contribution didn't go far in the late 70s, but royalty checks soon began arriving. They continue to this day, whenever the movie airs or the song plays. "The entire music budget for the film was \$18,000," she recalls. "You couldn't write four notes of a movie theme for that today."

Connors recalls Conti arriving at her house after the screening, sitting at her piano, and belting out the Rocky melody. "After he left, I remember thinking, 'How could anyone write words to that music?'" she said. "I went into the shower, and the film and training scene were still fresh in my mind. I pictured Rocky reaching the top of those stairs and thought, 'Oh, my God, he could even fly now. So that's where 'Gonna Fly Now' came from."

With cowriter Robbins, the pair constructed an entire song, but the director (John Avildsen) used only 30 words, basically three short verses, in the final score. "It begins with 'trying hard now,' then 'getting strong now,' and the final verse 'gonna fly now,' so three movements, each one-upping the ante, until Rocky reaches the top of the stairs and knows he can go the distance," explained Connors.

Nominated for Best Original Song at the fortieth Academy Awards, Connors attended the ceremony and was seated next to veteran film scorer Henry Mancini, a four-time Oscar winner. As "Rocky" began winning awards, Mancini leaned in with encouraging words, at least initially.

"He said to me, 'You're going to win the Oscar!'" she recalled. "Then Barbara Streisand got up and

sang Evergreen (from 'A Star is Born'), and he said to me, 'I don't know how to tell you this, Carol, but you just lost the Oscar.' And we did, but it was an honor to be recognized for my work on the film."

The following year, Connors and Robbins received a second Oscar nomination for writing lyrics to Sammy Fain's "Someone's Waiting for You" melody for Disney's animated feature, "The Rescuers."

This was not Connors's first hit. Two decades earlier, she had been recognized with a gold record for selling over 2.5 million copies of the massive 1958 hit, "To Know Him Is to Love Him" as lead singer of The Teddy Bears. The song was one of the first written by legendary record producer Phil Spector, who also performed with the group before it quickly disbanded.

Five years later, Carol Connors, with a little help from her brother Marshall, wrote the music and lyrics to The Rip Chords' "Hey Little Cobra." Cashing in on the race-car culture of the 60s, the song became a Top 5 hit in 1963.

Details of Connors's career, including her numerous film and TV composing credits, were published in her 2024 autobiography *Elvis, Rocky, and Me*, coauthored with Steve Bergsman. (Carol had dated Elvis for several months in the 1960s.) Based on the book, the documentary film, *Elvis, Rocky & Me: The Carol Connors Story* was released in early 2026, winning awards at numerous film festivals.

Turning 85 later this year, Carol Connors continues to write music that still packs a punch. She even occasionally belts out a tune, continuing to inspire others—just like *Rocky*. "Music has been my life," she says. "I'm glad I could share it." ♦

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama, and has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers. See www.getnickt.org.



The Teddy Bears - Carol Connors (known as Annette Kleinbard early in her career), Marshall Leib, and Phil Spector, left.



Carol Connors and publicity photo

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LIFESTYLES



If you write poems, you probably have the desire to improve your poetry. But to answer the question “How do I get better at writing poetry?” you must also ask “How do I measure progress?”

The metrics of progress will look different for each person, based on their individual goals. To set good goals, keep these five factors in mind:

- 1. Specific.** Define exactly what you are going to do, and how you are going to do it.
- 2. Achievable.** Is it something you can realistically achieve through your own effort?
- 3. Challenging.** Does your goal push you at least a little out of your comfort zone?
- 4. Measurable.** What specific metric will you use to measure progress toward your goal? For instance, this could be word or poem count, number of types of poems to try, or minutes per day that you spend writing or reading poetry.
- 5. Finite.** A good goal has a clear end point, whether it’s a number of repetitions or a deadline date.

For example, the statement “I might write more someday” is a poor goal. It’s not specific, measurable, or finite—and not necessarily challenging, either. There is no explanation of how progress will be measured, no breaking the process down into doable yet challenging pieces, and no firm point at which to evaluate progress. An alternative, better goal might be “I will write at least five haiku poems a week for the next month.” This goal is specific, achievable yet challenging, measurable, and finite.

At the end of the goal’s period, the goal can be reevaluated: Did you reach it? Why or why not? What factors stood in the way of completing the goal? Will the next goal be less challenging, more challenging, or the same for another period of the same length? A good goal gives a built-in method to measure progress, and a natural point at which to consider the direction you are going.

Your turn. Where do you want to grow, learn, and improve? What goals will you set for yourself? ♦

Award-winning writer Esther lives with her family in Philo, Illinois. Contact her at eaardsma@protonmail.com.



WORDSMITH’S WORKSHOP
by Rob Siedenburg

I was about twelve when my older sister, Delight, acquired a pen pal from a school in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in West Africa. A family friend and missionary nurse, Juanita Smith, arranged the correspondence.

In their first exchange of letters, the girls sent photographs of their families. Our family’s youngest child, Merry, a very photogenic four-year-old, appeared in one of the pictures. Delight’s pen pal remarked in her next letter that Merry seemed a delightful little chap.

I had never thought of a chap as being a girl. The usage sounded odd. At twelve, my world was small. I’ve long since heard groups of girls calling to one another, “Come on, guys!” Language is not static, though at times it might resemble static.

Our word *chap* comes from the sixteenth-century term *chapman*, a merchant, trader, or peddler. The word traces back to Old English *ceapman*, literally “market man.” Over time, *chap* became a shortened form referring to a buyer or seller, then a customer, and eventually a man, boy, fellow, or guy.

(Ironically, English *cheap* comes from the same root.) By the 1700s, *chap* was a colloquial term for a man or lad.

English is full of surprises. A husband and wife might cleave together, while a meat cleaver cleaves things apart—opposite meanings from the same root. We even speak of cloven (cleft) hooves. Likewise, thanks to Old English *ceapman*, a modern person could conceivably be a cheap chap.

I say, old chap! ♦

Copyright © Rob Siedenburg. When not writing these articles, Rob teaches a Bible study, gardens, and works with students who want to learn English.

Brotherly Love

by Phyllis Godwin

My husband, David, and I now have the dubious honor of being the last surviving siblings in each of our families. I miss my brothers and sisters, and I have heard more than once that grief is the price for love. Well, I sure loved them, and there is a lot more time to think as we get older, so I carry a big bag of grief, along with a lot of happy memories. Those memories seem to pop into my consciousness uncontrollably.

For several days now, I have had recurring memories of a hot July morning. I am upstairs looking down on the front yard. Five of my older brothers are white cocoons rolled in their sheets and scattered in the green yard below—having quit the house on a sweltering night. Not only is the memory intact, but the delight I felt then of seeing that is still retrievable. I must admit I was probably upstairs where they had slept to see if any loose change lay around.

It must have been the Fourth of July weekend, because they were young men living in other places who had come home for a celebration. Or maybe one or two were home on leave from the Armed Forces, and they got together for a weekend. The house was full of laughter and loud guffaws as they teased each other and shared their adventures. I remember they recalled a fight in a bar in the next town the previous night. Some guys were picking on Wayne, the smart-mouthed smallest, and how Roy, the biggest and boldest, rescued him. The story was about Wayne being wedged in a phone booth and surrounded by people intent on smashing his face. Wayne probably instigated it.

There were other weekends when they were all together. There was an Easter when the brothers took all of us littles, five of us to be exact, to woods in the county to go mushroom hunting. Each of us had a gunnysack filled with high hopes.

Scampering up and down hills and splashing in creeks was a great adventure for us. We lost track of five-year-old Gary but soon heard him screaming. Everyone ran toward the noise and out of the trees. We found him sitting in the middle of a meadow, surrounded by a bevy of huge morel mushrooms which he was frantically collecting. Gary and the older brothers were able to find a big mess of morels—enough to satiate a crowd. I was teased because all I brought home in my gunnysack were eight turtles.

I hope I’ll keep those great memories intact—and I wish the same for everyone. ♦

Freelance writer Phyllis Godwin lives in Urbana, Illinois, with husband David. A retired administrative assistant and graduate of the University of Illinois–Springfield (in addition to writing), Phyllis loves cooking, creating stained glass art, and taking road trips with David. Email her at pgodwin43@gmail.com.

Puzzle Answers

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

Crossword
puzzle on A-6

Jumble on A-8

Jumbles: QUOTA GROUP LIQUID
USEFUL

Answers: The cephalopods to a reciprocal
business arrangement that was —
“SQUID PRO QUO”

Sudoku on A-8

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

Scrabble Grams on A-6

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION												
J ₈	O ₁	C ₃	K ₅	I ₁	S ₁	H ₄	RACK 1 = 119					
U ₁	S ₁	E ₁	L ₁	E ₁	S ₁	S ₁	RACK 2 = 57					
F ₄	I ₁	N ₁	I ₁	T ₁	E ₁		RACK 3 = 9					
K ₅	I ₁	M ₃	O ₁	N ₁	O ₁	S ₁	RACK 4 = 68					
PAR SCORE 145-155							TOTAL 253					
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PEOPLE & PLACES

Musically Speaking

“Bridge Over Troubled Water” by Simon & Garfunkel

by Roger L. Wisegarver

Paul Simon wrote “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” very quickly. Inspired by an old southern gospel song, in 1970 it would become Simon & Garfunkel’s second single from their fifth album, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. One of the folk duo’s biggest hits and their signature song, it topped the U.S. and U.K. charts and won five Grammy awards in 1971, as well as being Song of the Year. The LP by the same name was Record of the Year. As he was listening to the southern gospel group Swan Silvertones’ 1959 song “Oh Mary Don’t You Weep,” one particular line rang out to Simon,—*I’ll be your bridge over deep water / If you trust in my name*—which helped Simon finish “Bridge Over

Troubled Water,” and its more gospel elements. Inspired, he wrote the core of the song in about two hours, saying later that the main musical essence took about 20 minutes, and the first two verses were finished in a couple of hours. “It was the music that was in my mind most of the time, and every time I came home, I put that record on, and I listened to it,” Simon told Dick Cavett in a rare 1970 interview. “I think that must have subconsciously influenced me, and I started to go to gospel [chord] changes.”
*When you’re weary
Feeling small
When tears are in your eyes
I will dry them all
I’m on your side
Oh, when times get rough
And friends just can’t be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down.*

The third verse, added later, lengthened the song to just short of 5 minutes and accommodated a fuller, instrumentally rich swell in its ending. Though this greater length exceeded AM radio’s preference of a length of 3.5 minutes or less, that did not impede its success. The “silver girl” opening was a nod to the strands of white hair Simon’s wife had just noticed. Though Simon wrote the song, he insisted that Art Garfunkel sing it. The duo produced the song with longtime collaborator Roy Halee. Simon later regretted having Art sing the song after he saw what a soaring success the song became for the pair: 25 million copies sold worldwide! Despite the accolades, the duo decided to split up. They parted company later, in 1970, and this would be their final album. Both were 30 and had

been friends since sixth grade. Garfunkel continued his film career, and Simon worked intensely with music. They are both still living and, at times, singing, at age 84. The line *Like a bridge over troubled water* is a metaphor for those living through a trying time in life. *I will lay me down* refers to people’s sacrifices and perseverance as they find their way through difficulty. When the song was written (1969), America was full of protests, rebellions, and riots, and in the midst of the Vietnam War. Richard Nixon was president, and we were still reeling from the loss of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, both assassinated in 1968. “Bridge” spoke to those times, and it continues to have a place in recent times, being used as an uplifting anthem around more tragic events. In 2005, Simon & Garfunkel reunited to sing the song to fundraise for Hurricane Katrina destruction. In 2017, British artists remixed the song for Artists for Grenfell, following the tragic fire at the 24-story Grenfell Tower in London that claimed 60 lives.

Throughout the past 50 years, everyone from Willie Nelson, Elvis Presley, The Jackson 5, Peggy Lee, The Imperials, The Supremes, Roberta Flack, Andrea Bocelli, Johnny Cash, and Aretha Franklin (who won a Grammy for her 1972 version)—and more—have performed this classic. Today (2026) if you look around, you see that our current world has no lack of turmoil, either. What should we do in times like these? We find people who need to be loved, and we love them. We find people who need care, and we care for them. We find people struggling in the turbulent seas of life, and we become for them a bridge over troubled water. ♦
*Roger, Monticello, Illinois, resident, combines his interest in music and history:
roger_wisegarver@msn.com.*

Paul Simon & Art Garfunkel in Dublin, 1982 © Eddie Mallin





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