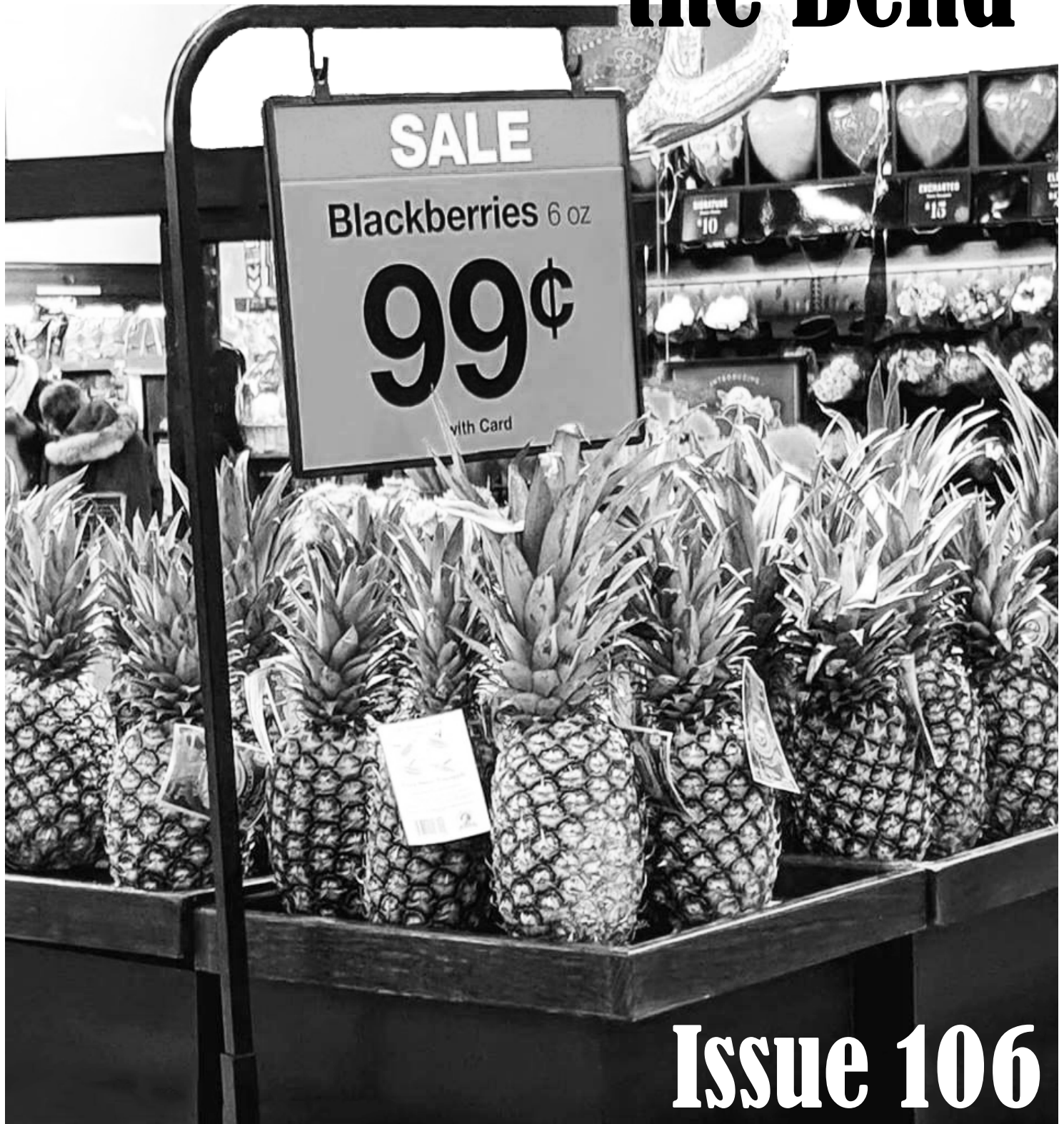


News From Around the Bend



Issue 106



NEWS FROM AROUND THE BEND

ERRATA, EPHEMERA, ET CETERA.

ISSUE #106

JUST BARELY DECEMBER 2021

A periodical brought to you periodically by
The Northcraft Entertainment Organization

Cover: Still good on cereal either way.

Publisher/Editor for Life
ACOUSTIC ROSS

Known & Suspected Contributors To Your Delinquency This Month

SHAWN BRETT
JENNIFER COLLINS
GINNY GREENAWALT
The JOHNSONS

The KNARRS
The MASONS
GLORIA SHADE
THE YUNGKURTHS

send links & clippings
to ross@nfatb.com

This Month's Cartoons

Matt Bors (I think) for **The Nib** (p. 3 top)
buttpoems (@buttpoems on instagram) (p. 3 bottom)
Bizarro (bizarro.com) by **Dan Piraro** (p. 4)
Joe Dator for **The New Yorker** (p. 5)
Avi Steinberg for **The New Yorker** (p. 6)

Tom Bachtell for **The New Yorker** (p. 9)
Luci Gutiérrez for **The New Yorker** (p. 11)
Shannon Wheeler for **The New Yorker** (p. 12)
Emily Flake for **The New Yorker** (p. 14)
P.C. Vey for **The New Yorker** (p. 15)

NOTES FROM THE SKEPTIC TANK

SEASON'S CRETINS!

We're here once again, after another long gap¹, here we are in the last 48 hours of 2021, squeezing in a new issue before we head into a 2022 that we absolutely *do not trust one single bit just yet*.

Back in the early years of NFATB, I used to put together a holiday greeting card every year, sent to all subscribers, with a dozen or so news clippings of the **Short But Sweet** variety (typically just a sentence or two describing someone doing something extremely not-very-smart), always with the same inscription inside: **Season's Cretins**.

It's been a very long time since a round of those cards went out², but the universe has continued to supply PLENTY of cretins to fill EVERY season.

Our cretin cup runneth over. You'll see a lot of them in this issue.

This month, my eyes were once again bigger than my edit, so in assembling the 13 pages of content I needed, I pulled enough new stories and clippings to fill 23. Which means we're likely to be back very soon. Since our 31st anniversary is due just around the bend™ in February 2022, if I were one to wager on my own actions³, then I'd bet those extra 10 pages will be published soon, as part of our 31st Anniversary Issue, a month or so hence.

In the meantime, enjoy the new issue, Happy New Year (to those who celebrate such things), and we'll see you soon.

– RmG³, NFATB CEO, December 30, 2021–



¹ do we even need, in this current day and (as they say) age, to explain such gaps? I submit that we do *NOT*

² while writing this, I thought "probably since the early aughts," so I checked, and indeed the last such card went out in 2002, *quite* an early aught

³ I am not, and I would further point out that our 30th anniversary was in February 2021, in the middle of the 16-month between-issue gap we just closed

⁴ admit it, you just scanned the column again to see where the ⁴ was

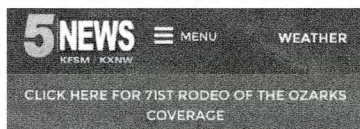


Tiny House Goes for Big Bucks

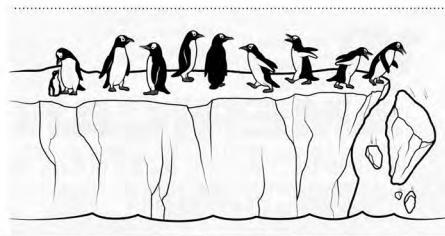
Newton, MA (AP, 11/4/2021) — A tiny home in a wealthy Boston suburb has sold after about a month on the market, albeit for far less than the original asking price of almost \$450,000. The roughly 250-square-foot (23-square-meter) home in Newton sold on Monday for \$315,000, according to Coldwell Banker Realty's Hans Brings Results agency. The home, on a 0.06-acre lot (0.02 hectares), went on the market in late September.

The house built in 1970 is described as an "adorable tiny studio home ... featuring completely open living space," with a loft and "ready to finish basement," and recent renovations including a new bathroom and electrical upgrades. Several unusual homes in the Boston area's hot real estate market have sold for high prices in the past several months. Boston's famous 10-foot-wide Skinny House sold in September for \$1.25 million, and a home gutted by fire in Melrose sold for nearly \$400,000.

Pretty sure leaving out the 'or' alters the goal here somewhat dramatically



'Drive Sober Get Pulled Over' Campaign
Taking Place This Holiday Weekend



250 billion

Rough weight in tons of the Antarctic ice lost each year since 2009, per a new study; researchers found that the ice has melted significantly faster in recent years

Some marvelous James Bond type of inventions from Britain's World War II SOE (Special Operations Executive):

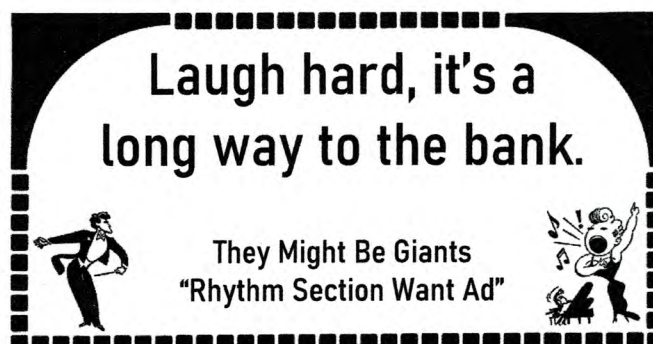
- Incendiary shaving foam. A shaving brush handle was hollowed out and filled with pure metallic sodium. A small hole was bored in the stub of the brush to allow water to seep through, and when the brush was used, the sodium was ignited by contact with the water, causing a fierce explosion.
- More than 185,000 fake dog and horse droppings meant to explode and disrupt road traffic were produced.
- A bicycle pump that blew up when pushed down
- A soap bar filled with moisture-activated sodium, which fiercely exploded when water touched it
- An exploding book—the ultimate murder novel



Flat Earther Tests Theory, Ends Up Flat
Bob Brigham, rawstory.com, 2/22/2020

Barstow, CA – A man died in what authorities described as a rocket crash in the desert, KTLA reported. Per the TV station, "Authorities did not identify the pilot pending positive identification by coroner's officials. Witnesses and news reports indicted the launch was an event hosted by local daredevil 'Mad Mike Hughes,' an amateur rocket builder intent on proving that the Earth is flat."

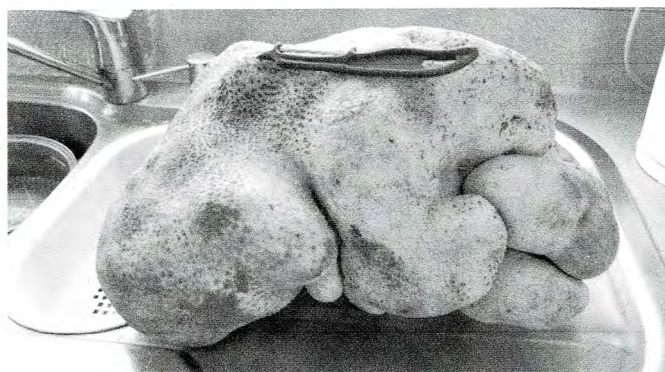
Shocking video from the event showed a rocket launch, with a parachute deployed shortly afterward. The rocket appeared to crash in the desert, launching a plume of dust. The rocket was reportedly self-made.



BARRY LARKIN, 2003
Reds shortstop, on his future with the team, which had an interim manager and no G.M.:
"We've decided to take a wait-and-see approach—mostly wait, because we don't know who to see."



JEFF INNIS, 1991
New York Mets pitcher, on an unflattering photo of him:
 "That picture was taken out of context."



8-kilogram Mutant Spud "Doug" Could Be World's Heaviest Potato; DEVO Unavailable for Comment

(Sky News, 11/4/2021) – A small farm owner weeding his garden got a giant surprise when his hoe struck an object beneath the soil's surface.

At first, Colin Craig-Brown thought it might be some strange fungal growth. But after digging it out, scratching the skin's surface and tasting it, he realized it was... a monster potato. "We couldn't believe it," his wife, Donna, said. "It was just huge."

The couple from Hamilton, New Zealand, believe the potato is self-sown and may have been growing for a couple of years or more. They are waiting to find out if the spud, weighing 7.8kg (17.2lbs), has made it into the Guinness World Records book as the world's heaviest potato.

The current record has been held since 2011 by a potato from Shepton Mallett, Somerset - which weighed a mere 4.98kg (10lb 14oz).

Since deciding to call their mutant-looking vegetable Doug, it's been enjoying a bit of celebrity status. They have built a small cart to tow the ugly potato around town. "We put a hat on him. We put him on Facebook, taking him for a walk, giving him some sunshine," Craig-Brown said. But the monster find is proving difficult to look after, as it begins to dry out and get moldy. Craig-Brown insists the potato has not had its chips yet – he's left it in his fridge and plans to turn it into potato vodka.



Network evolution, and time it would take to download a movie in HD



1G
 1 MO.
 The first cell phones
 1983



2G
 17 HR.
 Texting introduced
 1991



3G
 1 HR.
 Brought us online
 2001



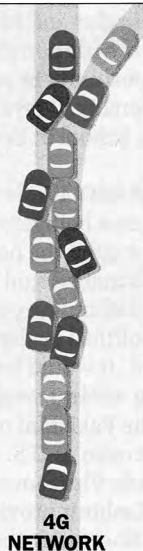
4G
 2 MIN.
 Now streaming
 2010



5G
 4 SEC.
 Super speeds
 2019

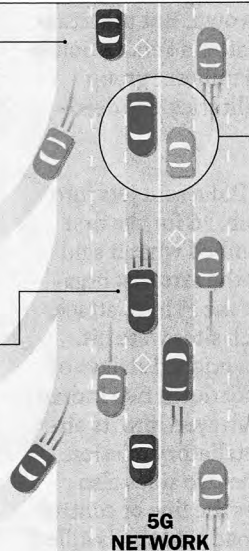
Getting to 5G

Networks are like a road: higher volume means slower speeds. But the next generation of technologies need reliable and fast connectivity to work—which is what 5G promises.



Wider roads
 Data travels over designated waves on the radio spectrum. Tapping into frequencies beyond the designated range is like adding lanes.

Carpooling
 Similar to HOV lanes, higher frequencies can carry more data—though they don't travel far because they can't penetrate physical objects.



Two-way traffic
 Cell towers with over 100 antenna ports boost capacity by sending and receiving more data simultaneously.

Alternate routes
 Like cars taking local roads, devices will connect to small receptors that will be installed all over cities as an alternative to cell towers.

The Metropolitan Opera's costume shop estimates it has produced some 50,000 millinery pieces — Valkyrie helmets, doomed monarch crowns, wacky Turandot headdresses and other assorted headgear — since moving to Lincoln Center in 1966.

How's That Again? Department

From the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

A new video briefly describes three unusual species of researchers found during the excursion.



Duncan MacMaster: The Internet's Sweetheart
@FuriousDShow

My favourite, criminalized onions.



536 dancers break Guinness record for longest soul train line
Ben Hooper, UPI, 11/23/2021

Cable network BET broke a Guinness World Record in New York by recruiting 536 people to dance in the world's longest soul train line.

BET, which arranged the event in advance of Sunday's Soul Train Awards, said the soul train line that danced through Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem included original dancers from the iconic Soul Train TV shows, the Brooklyn United marching band, the 40+ Double Dutch Club and hundreds of local residents.

A Guinness adjudicator was on hand to ensure participants followed the record-keeping organization's rules. They were required to dance in pairs for at least 40 feet to qualify as a soul train.

Guinness confirmed the soul train line featured 536 dancers, enough to take the record from Goodyear Ballpark in Arizona, which convened a soul train line of 426 dancers in 2014.

In Charleston, South Carolina, Cara Koscinski and her whole family were looking forward to her son Jacob's May 19 graduation party. The Post and Courier reported he had excelled in his Christian-based home-school program, earning a 4.79 GPA and the summa cum laude distinction, an honor Koscinski included in the wording on the cake she ordered online from her local Publix store. When the software informed her "profane/special characters (are) not allowed," Koscinski made clear that phrase was Latin, meaning "with the highest distinction," and even included a link to a website explaining it. Still, when the cake arrived, it read: "Congratulations Jacob! Summa --- laude Class of 2018." Jacob was embarrassed, and Koscinski had to tell her 70-year-old mother why the store had censored the word. Publix offered to remake the cake, but as Koscinski noted, "You only graduate once."

**I'm going to memorize your name
and throw my head away.**

OSCAR LEVANT

The System Works Just Fine:

43 Cents' Worth of Mtn Dew = Felony and 7 Years Prison Time

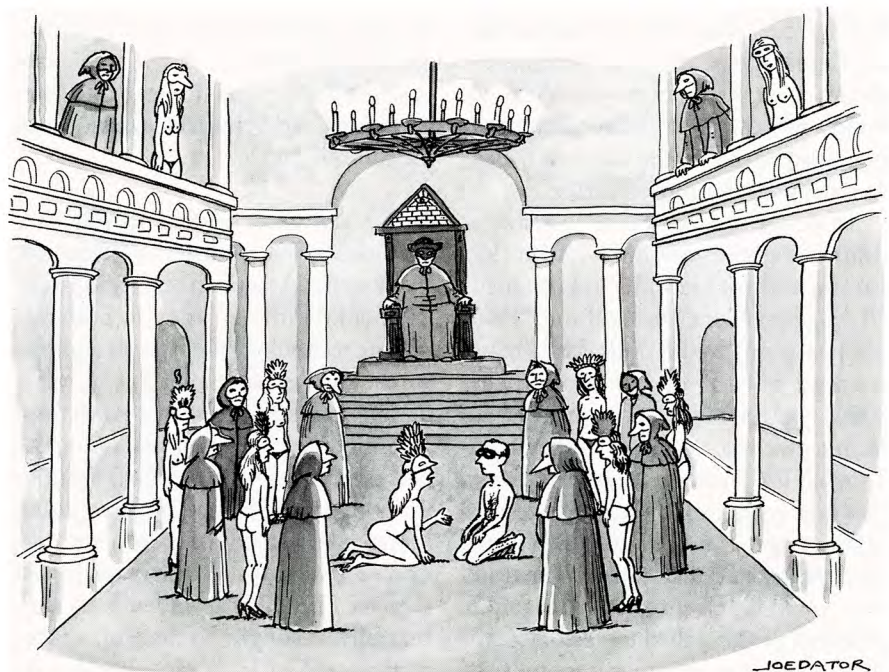
Harrisburg, PA (AP, 10/26/2021) — Pennsylvania prosecutors have dropped a felony theft charge against a man who underpaid for a bottle of Mountain Dew by 43 cents. Prosecutors in Perry County dropped the theft charge against Joseph Sobolewski, 38, and downgraded another charge, the Patriot-News reported.

In August 2021, Sobolewski went into an Exxon in Duncannon and saw a sign advertising two 20-ounce Mountain Dew bottles for \$3, he said. He took one bottle, slapped \$2 on the counter for what he thought was a \$1.50 soda and walked out, not realizing the discount did not apply to a single bottle. The bottle really cost \$2.29, so including tax, he owed the store 43 cents.

State police found Sobolewski and arrested him on a felony charge. A judge ordered him held on \$50,000 cash-only bond. He was in jail for seven days before his public defender successfully argued for his release, the newspaper reported.

Sobolewski had twice in the past 10 years been charged with theft, once for not paying for a tank of gas and another time for stealing a pair of shoes from a store. Under Pennsylvania's three-strikes law, a third theft charge must be a felony, regardless of the amount or value involved. He faced up to seven years in prison.

**Gum stuck to your clothes? Heat up
some vinegar and rub it on the area.
It will come off immediately.**



*"I feel like our ritual Illuminati death orgies have
become routine Illuminati death orgies."*

Come, Mr. Tally Man, Tally Me the Cocaine

Warsaw (Reuters, 6/11/2021) – Supermarket chain Carrefour SA notified local police after employees at one of its Warsaw stores found suspicious parcels in a delivery of bananas, which police later confirmed to be cocaine. “They immediately notified the police, who quickly secured the batch of goods and started an investigation that is currently underway,” Carrefour said in an email to Reuters, adding that it was cooperating with the investigation.

Warsaw police said the packages contained over 160 kilograms (352.74 lbs) of cocaine worth 30 million zlotys (\$8.14 million). “Drugs were discovered at several branches of one of the chain stores,” Warsaw police said on Twitter. State run news agency PAP reported that the first packages with cocaine were found in a Carrefour store in the center of Warsaw and that later the drug was discovered also in other shops in the capital and nearby.



“Not to lecture, but the skull of your fallen enemy is reusable and much less wasteful.”

Luke, I Am Your Moving Company’s Nightmare
Ben Hooper, UPI, 11/15/2021

A man who recently moved with his wife from the Washington, D.C., area to Texas brought along something unusual -- his collection of more than 70,000 items related to Star Wars villain Darth Vader. Bill McBride, who recently moved to the Rio Grande Valley with his wife, Rebecca, said he started collecting Darth Vader items when he was young and turned the "Vader Vault" into a serious collection about 30 years ago.

McBride estimated in 2015 that he had spent about \$270,000 on what was then just over 60,000 items, and his collection has since grown to more than 70,000 items, with the total price unknown. "I couldn't afford my own collection today," McBride told KVEO-TV.

McBride said his collection of toys, paintings, unique helmets and other items continues to grow. "It's something that still brings me joy and still truly makes me happy to do it. We all have our hobbies and our interests, and this is something I truly enjoy," he said.

McBride said one item that he takes particular pride in is an original stage performance helmet from George Lucas' Super Live Adventure in Japan.



Eric Weiskott
@ericweiskott

ah yes, the 17 genders

Key and mode descriptions from Marc-Antoine Charpentier's Regles de Composition ca. 1682

Key	Descriptive comments
C major	gay and warlike
C minor	obscure and sad
D major	joyous and very warlike
D minor	serious and pious
Eb major	cruel and hard
E major	quarrelsome and boisterous
E minor	effeminate, amorous, plaintive
F major	furious and quick-tempered subjects
F minor	obscure and plaintive
G major	serious and magnificent
G minor	serious and magnificent
A major	joyful and pastoral
A minor	tender and plaintive
B major	harsh and plaintive
B minor	solitary and melancholic
Bb major	magnificent and joyful
Bb minor	obscure and terrible

H/t Jeff Ramos @ohjefframos

Tag yourself, I'm F minor



Sporting goods companies pay me not to endorse their products.
BOB UECKER



NO COMMENT DEPARTMENT
From the Greensboro (Ga.) Lake Oconee News.
HONEY BUNS FOUND IN
GREENSBORO MAN’S PANTS

AS ANY SOUTHERNER knows, there's nothing like a backhanded compliment from a proper southern lady. Here are some favorites from the Alabama-based website al.com. Y'all feel free to borrow them:

- “I just love how you don’t care what people think. That takes a special person.”
- “I bet those shoes are comfortable.”

- After you tell her you lost nine pounds: “Well, that’s a wonderful start.”
- After you arrive for a visit: “What’d you do, sugar, drive all the way here with the windows down?”
- After you’ve cooked: “That was good. I must have been hungry.”
- “I bought this the other day, but it’s too big on me. Do you want it?”

Election Ends in Tie, Then Gets Twisty

Portland, ME (AP, 11/3/2021) – A ranked choice ballot where numbers were crunched by a computer ended in a tie in a City Council race, so the contest will be decided with a low-tech solution: basically, drawing straws.

The race for an at-large council seat resulted in a numeric tie between Roberto Rodriguez and Brandon Mazer, city officials said. The two candidates both had 8,529 votes after the votes were calculated in a four-way race, officials said. The election will be settled in public, in front of Portland City Hall, when lots — something such as random straws — are drawn on Thursday.

Portland is one of a handful of cities that uses ranked voting for local races, allowing voters to prioritize candidates in races where there are more than two people running. If no one gets more than 50% of the total vote, second-choice votes come into play.

NFATB EDITOR'S NOTE:

This story got even better when I went online to see who won the straw-draw. When the time came for the draw, officials drew Mazer's name from a hat, declaring him the winner. Rodriguez asked for a recount of the original vote, which was granted. On November 10, after a recount of the more than 21,000 votes, Rodriguez was declared the winner, with a margin of about 35 votes.

As reported by Annie Ropeik for Spectrum News Maine: Mazer said he's proud to have been part of a historic moment in Portland politics, regardless of the outcome: "It's been incredible. If you're going to lose, lose with a tie, a draw and then a recount." The whole saga is thought to be the first tie in a ranked choice election anywhere in the country, and the first time Portland has had to invoke its tie-breaker provision.



It's very easy to
presume that I'm
not a human being.

FRANK ZAPPA

In then-contemporary English, a portmanteau was a suitcase that opened into two equal sections. The etymology of the word is the French *porte-manteau*, from *porter*, "to carry", and *manteau*, "cloak" (from Old French *mantel*, from Latin *mantellum*). In modern French, a *porte-manteau* is a clothes valet, a coat-tree or similar article of furniture for hanging up jackets, hats, umbrellas and the like.

YOU GUYS. PORTMANTEAU... IS A PORTMANTEAU.

Underwater Lot for Sale;
No Interest from Local Flippers
Julie Gordon, Reuters, 7/5/2021

Ottawa, ON – A 19-acre (7.7-hectare) lot for sale in a protected bay on the Canadian side of Lake Erie may look like a steal at C\$99,000 (US\$80,292), especially with the average home in Canada now worth C\$688,000, but there is a catch: it's entirely underwater.

The vacant lot on Brock Street in Shrewsbury, Ontario, has no actual address, though the neighborhood gets high marks for being quiet and car friendly. "This property is presently under water but could have endless possibilities in the future. Be creative," the listing reads. The real estate agent representing the property declined to comment on what those future possibilities might be.

Water lots, or submerged lands, are not very common in Canada. They are typically used for the storage of boats and other water vessels, or even for logs, and in some areas, they are home to fish farms.

A water lot could potentially be used for mooring a houseboat or floating home, but it would need to include some type of land access: the Brock Street property does not have any. There are currently at least three entirely "underwater" properties listed on Canada's multiple listing services.

Therein Lies a Tale Dept.

From the Associated Press.

A former meerkat expert at London Zoo has been ordered to pay compensation to a monkey handler she attacked with a wine glass in a love spat over a llama-keeper.

Doing nothing for others
is the undoing of ourselves.
HORACE MANN

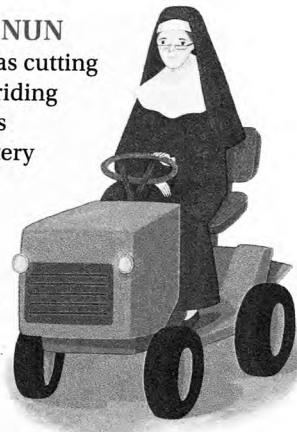


The final episode of the 1977 mini-series "Roots" — which told the story of an African slave and traced his progeny through over 100 years of American history — was viewed by 51.1 percent of all American homes with televisions.

THE DAREDEVIL NUN

One day while I was cutting my grass on my riding lawn mower, two nuns from a nearby monastery stopped to chat. One of them said, "I've always wanted to drive a tractor." So I offered to let her drive mine. I set it at the lowest speed, and she drove off. "It's like driving a car," I remarked to the other nun. "She's never driven a car," she replied. Looking up, I saw the first nun heading straight for the fire hydrant. I ran after her, yelling, "Turn it!" The other nun called out, "She can't hear, either."

LULA MAE GOSTLEY, *Evansville, Indiana*



Tulsa World
@tulsaworld

In 1963, Jack Ruby shot and mortally wounded Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, and more events that happened on this day in history.



tulsaworld.com
Today in history: Nov. 24

**I never realized how many
other events Jack Ruby shot that day!**

5-Hour Bus Tour for the Sleep-Deprived

Alice Fung and Matthew Cheng, AP, 10/21/2021 (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

HONG KONG — Travel-starved, sleep-deprived residents might find a new Hong Kong bus tour to be a snooze.

The 76-kilometer (47-mile), five-hour ride on a regular double-decker bus around the territory is meant to appeal to people who are easily lulled asleep by long rides. It was inspired by the tendency of tired commuters to fall asleep on public transit.

"When we were brainstorming new tours, I saw a social media post from my friend saying that he was stressed out by his work, he couldn't sleep at night," said Kenneth Kong, the marketing and business development manager of Ulu travel, the organizer of the bus tours. "But when he was traveling on the bus, he was able to sleep well. His post inspired us to create this tour that lets passengers just sleep on the bus."

Tickets cost between \$13 to \$51 per person, depending on whether they choose seats on the upper or lower deck. A goodie bag for passengers includes an eye-mask and ear plugs for better sleep. The first "Sleeping Bus Tour" in October 2021 sold out entirely. Some passengers came prepared, bringing their own blankets and changing their shoes to slippers, while others brought travel pillows.

The bus stops so passengers can take photos at scenic spots on the city's Lantau Island. One stop is the aircraft maintenance area near Hong Kong's airport, where passengers can snag selfies with aircraft in the background. Passenger Marco Yung said that he joined the tour because he usually falls asleep on long-distance bus journeys, saying it was a "great opportunity" to get some sleep.

The tendency to fall asleep on public transport is a type of conditioning, according to Dr. Shirley Li, the principal investigator of the Sleep Research Clinic and Laboratory at the University of Hong Kong. "People in Hong Kong don't have enough time to sleep," Li said. "That's why we have to kind of use other times to sleep, which is our daily commute, especially when we are travelling on public transport."



When you tell your friend to look at the person behind them but don't make it obvious



Headline in the Portola (Calif.) Reporter.

MARIJUANA ERADICATION CALLS FOR JOINT HELP

Better rolling technique might help the cause, experts say.

THE NEW YORKER, APRIL 23, 2018

**There are no dull subjects.
There are only dull writers.**

H.L. MENCKEN

**We learn from history that
we do not learn from history.**

GEORG FRIEDRICH WILHELM HEGEL

O. DAMMIT.

Nothing Wrong, That's Just Man's Name, He Wants It Changed.

Harrisburg Daily Independent,
Pennsylvania, June 3, 1913

Jennifer Snowpez, Brr-rito, and Steve

Montpelier, VT (AP, 11/19/2021) — Captain Snowpants; Yo Bro, No Snow; and Jennifer Snowpez are among the names that will be on some of Vermont's snowplows this winter.

Vermont school students participated in the state transportation department's Name a Plow contest to come up with names for the snowplows serving their communities. The entries ranged from "creative and clever, to cute and silly," the agency said.

Participating schools got a visit from their newly named plows this week. One child was so upset she had missed the visit from the snowplow named Super Snow Storm that the driver and plow will visit again, said Amy Tatko, spokesperson for the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Colorado, Michigan and Minnesota have also had contests to name snowplows.

The full list of the Vermont names — including Snowbegone Kenobe, Plowy McPlowFace, Brr-rito and Steve — can be found on the transportation department's website.

BROTHER RAY PAGE, 1994

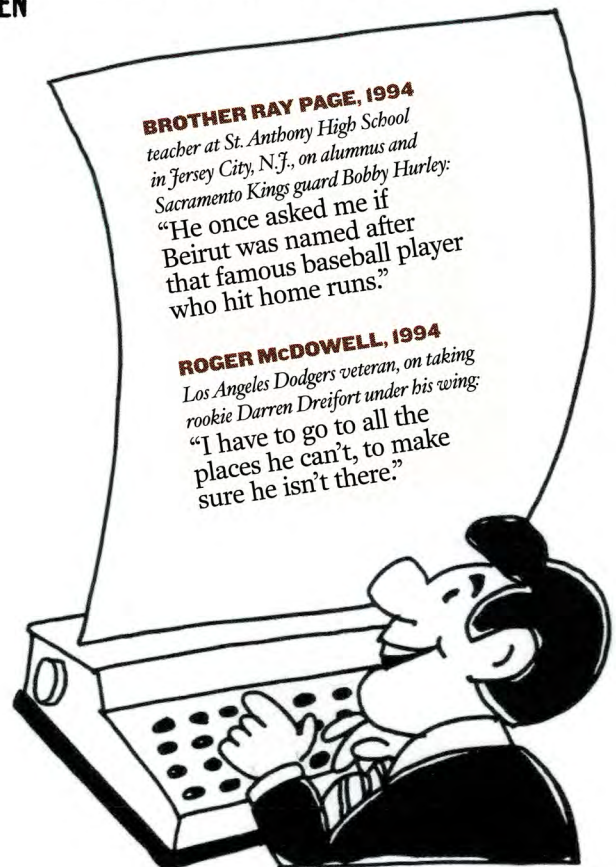
teacher at St. Anthony High School in Jersey City, N.J., on alumnus and Sacramento Kings guard Bobby Hurley:

"He once asked me if Beirut was named after that famous baseball player who hit home runs."

ROGER McDOWELL, 1994

Los Angeles Dodgers veteran, on taking rookie Darren Dreifort under his wing:

"I have to go to all the places he can't, to make sure he isn't there."



8 IMPROBABLE MOVIE PARENTS

from The Book of Lists (90s Edition)
by David Wallechinsky & Amy Wallace

NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959)

Jessie Royce Landis, 54, plays mother of Cary Grant, then 55

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (1962)

Angela Lansbury (37) plays mother of Laurence Harvey (34)

STEALING HOME (1988)

Blair Brown (39) plays mother of Mark Harmon (36)

BEACHES (1988)

Lainie Kazan (45) plays mother of Bette Midler (42)

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE and FAMILY BUSINESS (BOTH 1989)

Sean Connery (58) plays father of Harrison Ford (46) in the first,
and father of Dustin Hoffman (51) in the second

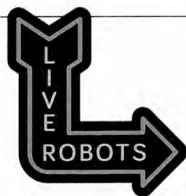
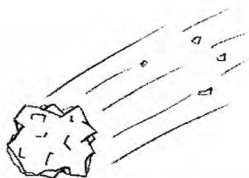
THE GRADUATE (1967)

Anne Bancroft (36) plays mother of Katharine Ross (25)

WEEDS (1987)

Anne Ramsey (58) plays mother of Nick Nolte (46)

The only person in recorded
history killed by a meteorite
is **Manfredo Settala**, in 1680.



ROBOT BORDELLOS

Houston officials have been polio-ticking to stop a brothel staffed by humanoid sex robots from opening. Robo-bordellos are open for business in Barcelona, Turin, Moscow and Toronto.

Alcohol made from radioactive Chernobyl apples seized by Ukraine government

Brandon Specktor, livescience.com, 5/11/2021

The makers of 'Atomik' say that Ukrainian Secret Services took 1500 bottles in violation of the law.

In 2019, a group of scientists and distillers decided to create a bold new type of booze: Atomik, an artisanal alcoholic spirit made from ingredients grown in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant's still-radioactive exclusion zone. (The booze itself was not radioactive after the distilling process.)

Now, the first batch of Atomik is finally complete — and all 1500 bottles of it have been seized by Ukrainian Secret Services agents for unknown reasons, according to a statement from Atomik's manufacturer, The Chernobyl Spirit Company.

"It seems that they are accusing us of using forged Ukrainian excise stamps, but this doesn't make sense since the bottles are for the U.K. market and are clearly labelled with valid U.K. excise stamps," Jim Smith, founder of the company and a professor at the University of Portsmouth in the U.K., said in the statement.

Elina Smirnova, a lawyer representing the company, added that the seizure was a "clear violation" of Ukrainian law. If Atomik does make its way onto shelves, it will be the first consumer product from the Chernobyl region since the infamous 1986 meltdown, the company said.

Soon after the nuclear disaster, officials deemed the Chernobyl exclusion zone — the 1,000-square-mile (2,600 square kilometers) area surrounding the damaged power plant — uninhabitable by humans for 24,000 years. However, plants and animals are now thriving in the region — and so is tourism. According to local tourism officials, Chernobyl sees upwards of 60,000 visitors a year, with visits spiking after the May 2019 debut of HBO's "Chernobyl" miniseries.

Atomik is made from apples grown in Ukraine's Narodychi District, which sits on the edge of the exclusion zone and was heavily polluted by fallout from the meltdown. This region still has a population of nearly 10,000 people, according to Ukraine's State Statistics Service, and must abide by stringent agricultural restrictions.

In the meantime, would you care to try a bottle of wine exposed to cosmic radiation aboard a space station for 14 months? Christie's has announced that it is selling a bottle of French wine that spent more than a year in orbit aboard the International Space Station. The auction house thinks a wine connoisseur might pay as much as \$1 million to own it. The Pétus 2000 is one of 12 bottles sent into space in November 2019 by researchers exploring the potential for extraterrestrial agriculture. It returned 14 months later subtly altered, according to wine experts who sampled it at a tasting in France.



When In Quarantine

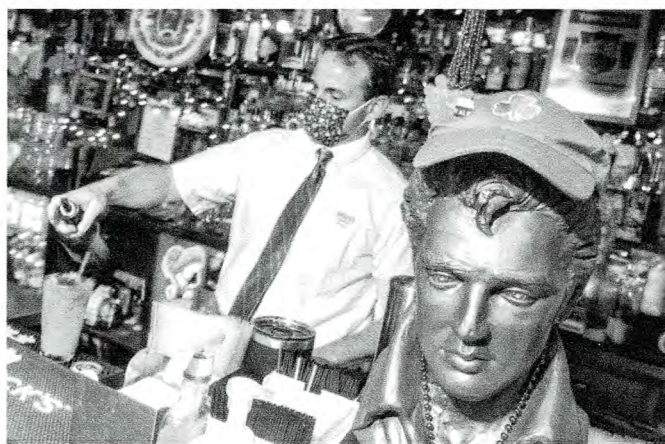
PEOPLE who are in quarantine are not isolated if they have a Bell Telephone.

The Bell Service brings cheer and encouragement to the sick, and is of value in countless other ways.

Friends, whether close at hand or far away, can be easily reached, because Bell Service is universal service.



NEW YORK TELEPHONE CO.



A bust of Elvis Presley complete with a shamrock cap and beads stands guard as bartender Tom Eckstein mixes a drink for a St. Patrick's Day partier Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at Jimmy's Bar in West Peoria, Ill. (Matt Dayhoff/Journal Star via AP)

West Peoria, IL — The King of Rock n' Roll is back in the building.

An Elvis Presley bust that was swiped from a central Illinois bar has been returned after the story of its theft attracted international attention.

Somebody who ain't nothin' but a hound dog made off with an Elvis Presley bust from Jimmy's Bar sometime on October 23, 2021. Six days later, employees at Jimmy's Bar found the missing bust sitting on a porch outside the West Peoria saloon, the Peoria Journal Star reported.

"He's back!" pub owner Jimmy Spears said early Friday, attributing the bust's return to the widespread attention its theft had attracted. On Wednesday, the bar's Facebook page had made an appeal for its return: "No questions asked."

Spears said he was considering ways to improve security for the bust, but for now it's back in its familiar position overlooking the saloon and greeting customers from atop the center of its long bar.

Spears, the bar's owner for 39 years, said his niece bought the bust about 15 years ago at a garage sale for \$20, and it soon became the business' bar-top mascot.

Martin K. Tytell, a typewriter expert, was known as Mr. Typewriter. The post office would deliver to him any letter addressed simply to "Mr. Typewriter, New York." When he mistakenly inserted a character upside down on a Burmese typewriter, it became a standard, even in Burma.

14

Number of write-in votes received by Gritty, the Philadelphia Flyers mascot, for various local offices in Camden County, New Jersey, during the midterm elections



■ Astronomers using an Australian radio telescope believed they might have discovered evidence of alien life when they picked up a distinctive signal at the same time every day. Seventeen years later, in 2015, they learned its source: The signal was coming from a microwave oven used by staff members to heat up their lunches.



Two injured as pigs storm golf course
Casey Magloire, Sky News, 11/25/2021

Two people have been injured after two large pigs charged on to a golf course in West Yorkshire.

The hogs caused chaos at the Lightcliffe Golf Club, Calderdale, by storming one of the greens and knocking over bags.

Club professional David McKidd, 40, said the two black pigs were first spotted on the course on Sunday, injuring a golfer by causing cuts to his leg.

"We don't know where they came from," said Club president Philip Marshall.

They later returned on Tuesday and injured a male worker at the club who had attempted to usher them off the course.

Both people suffered minor injuries on their legs and were treated in hospital for protection against tetanus, McKidd said.

The pigs damaged one of the greens by digging small holes before being caught by police on Knowle Top Road. The club was forced to close for safety reasons but has since reopened.

TRAVEL

Instagrammed to death

With Instagram tourists flocking to the picturesque Rue Crémieux in Paris, its residents are asking the city for street gates that can be locked on evenings and weekends. Here, other spots struggling with social-media fame. —Abigail Abrams



THREE POOLS

After photos of the swimming hole in Oregon led it to blow up in popularity, the U.S. Forest Service limited parking on the site in 2015 to prevent fires. It added new rules in 2017 prohibiting alcohol too.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Choi Hung Estate is a decades-old public-housing complex in Hong Kong. But its rainbow-colored backyard and basketball courts have been overrun by people lying down or interrupting games to take photos.

DEVIL'S BATHTUB

A hiking trail to a Virginia swimming hole went viral on social media in 2014, though locals said it's nothing special. The wave of unprepared hikers led to a spike in costly rescues, according to officials.

America is a large, friendly dog in a very small room. Every time it wags its tail, it knocks over a chair.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE, BRITISH HISTORIAN, 1954



A matter most meaty

The reader's question was simple enough: How did Spam get its name?

Well, the storied gelatinous lump started out as Hormel Spiced Ham and did OK, but in 1937 it was reborn as Spam, an amalgam of Spiced Ham, and sales took off.

Its popularity has never died and today it's the subject of a vigorous worldwide Internet debate.

Among other things, the world is saying Spam is:

- "The coolest wall spackle around."
- "Not only the world's most versatile substance, but it also comes in a pretty pink color."
- "Good for breakfast on top of doughnuts."
- "Much like ambrosia, the food of the gods."
- "Tastes like a wet dog smells."
- "Makes me feel all warm and squishy inside."
- "Seals the holes in my canoe very well."
- "(S)atan (P)osing (A)s (M)eat."

The smallest book in the Library of Congress is *Old King Cole*. It's 1/25 of an inch by 1/25 of an inch, and the pages can only be turned with a needle.



Pizza Roll Pooper No Longer on Prowl

David Moye, huffpost.com

Shirley Wright-Johnson had a crappy shopping experience on September 15, 2021 — literally. Wright-Johnson said she was picking up some items at a grocery store in Moore, Oklahoma, with her two daughters when she reached for a bag of frozen pizza rolls. She quickly discovered something else in her hand: human excrement.

"I pick up a bag of pizza rolls and there's literally shit," she said in a video obtained by Oklahoma City NBC affiliate KFOR-TV. "Human shit. Excuse my language."

Someone defecated inside a supermarket freezer onto a bag of Totino's Pizza Rolls, then covered the mess with another package of the treats, police told the TV station. "I grabbed the bag, I felt something smushy on the bag, so I turned it over and there it was," Wright-Johnson said. "I was upset, I was disgusted, I feel like I was violated."

The ride home was miserable, she said, even though she quickly scrubbed off her hands. "All the way home [my kids were] still were like, 'Mom, I can smell it, I can smell it.' I'm like, 'I smell it too, baby.'" Moore police, using surveillance video from the scene of the grime, flushed out a man they identified as a person of interest. He was booked into the Cleveland County Detention Center on unrelated charges while the poop probe continues, according to KFOR.

Medieval Shrine Gets Modern Carving: Face Wearing COVID-19 Mask

Mindy Weisberger, livescience.com, 5/11/2021



Photo credit: St. Albans Cathedral

A historic cathedral in the United Kingdom recently renovated a 14th-century shrine with an update that acknowledges the COVID-19 pandemic: a carved mask covering a stone face.

St. Albans Cathedral in Hertfordshire, England, is Britain's oldest site of continuous Christian worship, completed in 1115 at the burial location of the Christian martyr Alban, Britain's first saint. It includes a shrine to St. Alban, who lived during the third century and was executed after helping future saint Amphibalus (then a Christian priest) escape from Roman authorities. The second, newly-renovated shrine, added in 1350, honors Amphibalus.

In addition to repairing and rebuilding the damaged parts of the shrine, stoneworkers added the new carving to commemorate the health crisis that transformed the world in 2020 and 2021, St. Albans representatives said in a statement. "This tiny little figure on the corner of the shrine of St. Amphibalus will be an important reminder for centuries to come of the events of the past year," tweeted Reverend Abi Thompson, sub-dean of St. Albans.

Shrines in medieval cathedrals held relics of martyred saints. They were important destinations for Christian pilgrims, many of whom traveled great distances to pray at the sacred sites for blessings, forgiveness and healing, according to restoration experts at Skillington Workshop in the U.K. who repaired the damaged shrine and carved the new mask-wearing face. However, many such shrines were damaged or destroyed during the English Reformation in the 16th century, and this included the shrines at St. Albans. Broken pieces of these shrines were found during a cathedral restoration in 1872, and they were reconstructed in the early 1900s. St. Amphibalus' shrine "remained looking rather forlorn," according to Skillingtons, and has now been restored as well.

"The masked figure reminds us that the history of St. Albans stretches forwards as well as backwards," Reverend Thompson said in a statement.

Carrie L. Hitt, 42, of Junction City, Oregon, died after her Ford Bronco left the road on Territorial Highway and rolled on Oct. 4. Hitt was ejected from her car and then struck by a second vehicle, driven by Nadine M. Killmaster, 32, of Yakima, Washington. Oregon State Police told The Register-Guard they believe Hitt was using a mobile phone just before the crash.

Correction of the Week

From the Times.

November 16, 2016

An Op-Ed article on Monday about the death of Leonard Cohen rendered Mr. Cohen's Hebrew name incorrectly. It is Eliezer ben Nisan ha'Cohen, not Eliezer ben Natan ha'Cohen. It also misstated the title of a Cohen song. It is "I'm Your Man," not "I'm in Your Man."

**Our second Chernobyl story this month is, uh...
a little less fun than the one about adult beverages.**

Chernobyl's nuclear fuel is 'smoldering' again, could explode

Brandon Specktor, livescience.com, 11/14/2021

(NFATB EDITOR'S NOTE: told ya)

Tons of nuclear fuel in the wrecked plant's basement has started to react again, and it's showing no signs of stopping. Nuclear reactions are smoldering again in an inaccessible basement of the wrecked Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, according to news reports.

Researchers monitoring the plant — which infamously exploded in a deadly 1986 meltdown — have detected a steady spike in the number of neutrons in an underground room called 305/2. The room is full of heavy rubble, concealing a radioactive mush of uranium, zirconium, graphite and sand that oozed into the plant's basement like lava, before hardening into formations called fuel-containing materials (FCMs).

Rising neutron levels indicate that these FCMs are undergoing new fission reactions, as neutrons strike and split the nuclei of uranium atoms, creating energy.

For now, this radioactive waste is smoldering "like the embers in a barbecue pit," Neil Hyatt, a nuclear materials chemist at the University of Sheffield in the U.K., told Science magazine. However, it's possible that those embers could fully ignite if left undisturbed for too long, resulting in another explosion.

This potential explosion wouldn't be anywhere near as devastating as the one that shattered the plant in 1986, which resulted in thousands of deaths and spewed a radioactive cloud over Europe, says Maxim Saveliev, a senior researcher with the Institute for Safety Problems of Nuclear Power Plants (ISPNNP). If the nuclear material ignites again, the blast will be largely contained within the steel and concrete cage known as the Shelter, which officials built around the plant's ruined Unit Four reactor one year after the accident.

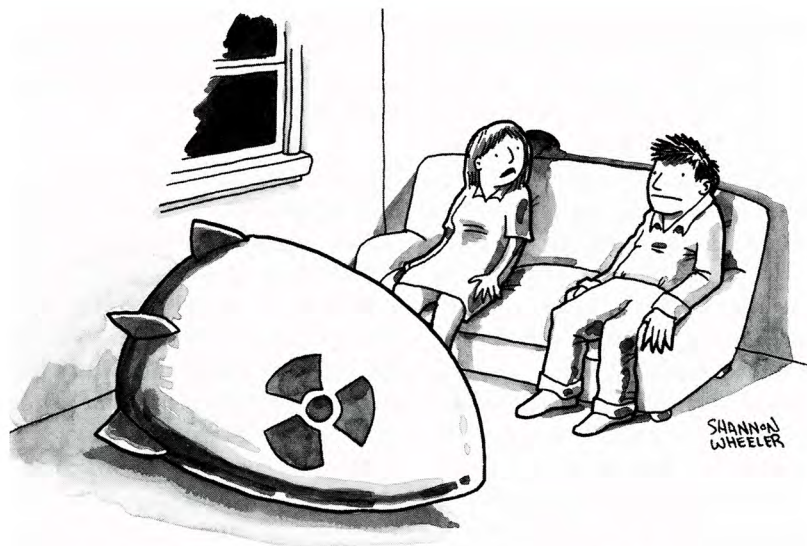
Still, even a contained explosion would make the long-term mission of removing the plant's FCMs much harder, Saveliev said. The Shelter is old and could easily crumble from the force of an explosion, filling the area with heavy debris and radioactive dust. (The Shelter itself is contained in a larger steel structure called the New Safe Confinement, which was completed in 2018.)

Neutron levels have been steadily rising in room 305/2 for four years, Saveliev said, and could continue rising for several more years without incident. It's possible these nuclear nuggets will fizzle out on their own in that time. But if neutron levels keep rising, scientists will have to intervene.

That is more easily said than done, of course; plant managers have yet to figure out how to access the tons of radioactive material buried below the room's thick layers of concrete debris. Radiation levels are too high for humans to endure, but radiation-resistant robots might be able to drill through the rubble and install neutron-absorbing control rods into the room, according to the ISPNNP.



Seeking dietary advice? See a dietitian, not a nutritionist. The term "dietitian" is legally protected, but anyone can advertise themselves as a nutritionist, regardless of education or credentials.



"A second bomb will not make us safer."

**DOGS OR CATS?
MALE OR FEMALE?
LITERS OR PINTS?**



*You can't depend on your eyes if
your imagination is out of focus.*

--Mark Twain
American writer

Seemingly fluffy, airy clouds are actually quite heavy. The water droplets forming a small cumulus cloud weigh more than a mid-size car.

Popular Myths That Won't Go Away (LiveScience.com, as reported in *The Week*)

Myth No. 16

The five-second rule

The facts: Having an arbitrary rule justifying the consumption of food dropped on the floor within a certain time frame is convenient, especially when said food is a brownie. Unfortunately, tests (and logic) confirm that germs will stick to most foods right on contact.

Myth No. 17

Animals can predict natural disasters

The facts: There is no evidence that animals possess a mysterious sixth sense allowing them to predict natural disasters. Their keen senses of smell and hearing and sharp instincts alone are enough to send them scattering for the hillsides during a hurricane or tsunami. And even so, animals often die during natural disasters, so if they do have some sort of sixth sense, it's not worth much.

Myth No. 18

Seasons are caused by the Earth's proximity to the sun

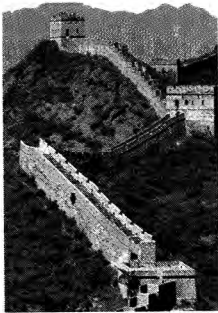
The facts: The Earth's distance from the sun during its yearly elliptical orbit actually has little effect on temperature. It's the angle of the Earth's tilt—toward the sun in the summer for the Northern Hemisphere and away in the winter—that dictates climate.

Myth No. 19

The Great Wall of China is the only man-made structure visible from space

The facts: There are several variations on this folkloric statement, and they're all quantifiably false.

Astronauts can spot the Great Wall from low Earth orbit, along with plenty of other things like the Giza pyramids and even airport runways.



But they can't see the Wall from the moon.

Myth No. 20

It takes seven years to digest gum

The facts: While it may prove a bit more difficult to break down than organic foodstuffs, chewing gum gets no special treatment from the digestive system. Doctors figure this old wives' tale was invented to prevent kids from swallowing the rubbery substance.



34

Distance in miles that the magnetic North Pole has been moving on average each year since 2000; "erratic" magnetic-field shifts prompted the National Centers for Environmental Information to release a Feb. 4 update to its models

MAGIC JOHNSON, 1986

on how well he and teammate James Worthy work together on the court: "It's almost like we have ESPN."

Lyons, New York, resident Jesse Graham, 53, must have been surprised when deputies of the Wayne County Sheriff's Department appeared at his door on May 11. WHCC TV reported that Graham, a fugitive wanted by the Mooresville (North Carolina) Police Department, had apparently accidentally dialed 911, summoning the deputies himself. Graham was charged with being a fugitive from justice and possession of marijuana, and he awaits extradition to North Carolina.

Colin O'Brady climbed each of the "Seven Summits" (the highest peak on each continent) and skied the last degree to both poles in just 139 days in 2016, claiming a world record that he still holds.

'Super Death' Coaster Shut Down for Breaking Riders' Bones Ed Mazza, huffpost.com, 8/26/2021

A roller coaster in Japan known for its "super death" acceleration to triple-digit speeds was reportedly shut down after riders suffered serious bone fractures.

Multiple news agencies reported four cases of fractures in the back or neck linked to the Do-Dodonpa coaster at Fuji-Q Highland Park. Vice reported at least six cases of fractures in total, including four in the back or neck.

The BBC described the four back and neck cases as "significant injuries," including a "cervical fracture and a thoracic spine fracture." Japan's Mainichi newspaper said the riders needed up to three months to recover from their injuries.

The theme park billed the coaster as having the world's fastest acceleration, hitting 112 mph in just 1.56 seconds — or what the company called "super death" acceleration.

Although no cause of injury has been identified yet, one woman said in December that she "might have been leaning forward during the ride," Mainichi reported.

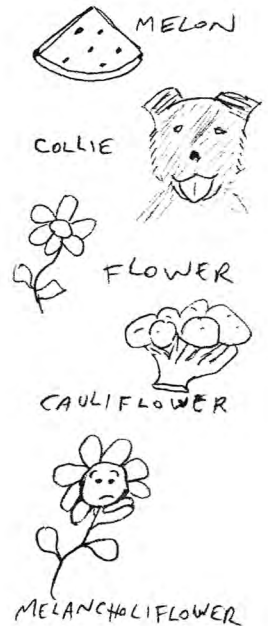
The theme park is coming under fire for not reporting the incidents to the government quickly enough.

"We should have reported earlier," Fuji-Q Highland spokesperson Kimie Konishi told The New York Times. "Now, we hope the injured people will recover as soon as possible."

Do-Dodonpa opened in 2001 and was modified in 2017 to make it even faster. The name is an onomatopoeia referring to the sound of drums. Drum sounds are also used around the ride.

The theme park made global headlines last year when it advised patrons to "please scream inside your heart" instead of out loud to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

When it comes to spine or neck fractures, however, the screams were likely to be much more audible.



"Yes, the operator should have seen the deer, and yes, it should have been removed."

WALTER BORTREE, PENNSYLVANIA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION,
ON A ROAD REPAIR CREW THAT PAVED OVER A DEAD DEER

NFATB Editor's note: When I first moved to **Tulsa, OK**, in 1996, I expected to stay for 2-3 years and move on to another job in another town. I've changed jobs more than a few times since then, but I'm still in Tulsa after all of those changes, with no signs of that changing anytime soon. In honor of my **25 years (and counting)** here, I present a classic news story from just after I arrived in Tulsa. I've long since lost track of who wrote this copy for **KOTV's** morning newscast, but it's one of those stories that write themselves anyway:

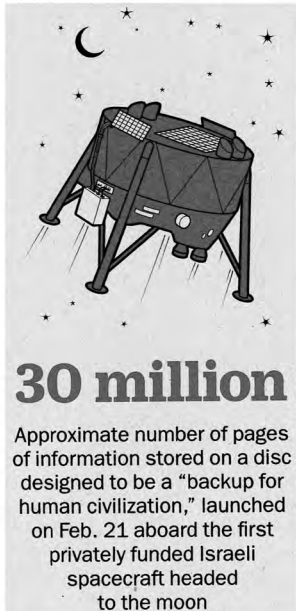
Tracking down a thief usually offers a challenge for police... unless the bad guys leave a trail of doughnuts. Tulsa Police say a donut delivery truck was backed up to a QuikTrip for a delivery early this morning when it was stolen. The thieves apparently drove off down West 51st Street – because that's where officers found a trail of donuts. They followed the trail to the 4300 block of South Yukon, where they found the abandoned truck. In the meantime, Glenpool police reported a donut spill in the middle of the road near 141st and Highway 75. Police are piecing together the holes in the donut caper to see if the two spills are related.



"Son, if you can't say something nice, say something clever but devastating."

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

■ In an article in Saturday Life section, a quote was mistakenly attributed to Dylan Biggs, and he was not drinking beer. The reporter erred.



HOA vs. Spirit of Christmas

Tampa, FL (AP, 11/19/2021) — A Florida family is in trouble with their homeowners association for putting up their Christmas lights too early.

The Moffa family hired a company to decorate the yard of their Tampa home on Nov. 6, WFLA reported. Days later, they received a letter notifying them that they now face a fine for violating their HOA agreement. If they don't remove the lights, they could face fines of \$100 a day, up to \$1,000, the letter said.

Moffa said he has no plans to remove the lights. "That was their only availability, and I can't climb up on the roof myself," he told the TV station, adding he didn't know it was against the rules to put up Christmas lights before Thanksgiving.

An attorney for the Westchase Community Association said a neighbor complained about the display. "Which led to community manager to investigate it," Jonathan Ellis told WFLA. "One of the things they're preventing is from the person that has the holiday lights up all year round or things along those lines." Ellis said the rules are in place to be followed, but said the board is open to discussing changes. Moffa said, however, that the association hasn't been receptive even after they offered to keep the lights off until Thanksgiving.

Honestly, my biggest fear about becoming a zombie is all the walking.
 @GASHLEYMADISON

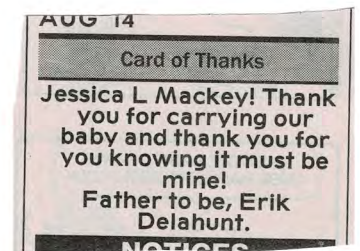
Actual Announcements from Church Bulletins:

The Rev. Adams spoke briefly, much to the delight of his audience.

The church is glad to have with us today as our guest minister the Rev. Shirley Green who has Mrs. Green with him. After the service we request that all remain in the sanctuary for the Hanging of the Greens.

The 'eighth graders' will be presenting Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in the church basement on Friday at 7pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Teller County (Colorado) Sheriff Jason Mikesell listed his SUV for sale on Craigslist in November, and he was a little perplexed when he received a response from Shawn Langley, 39, of Vail, offering to trade the SUV for four pounds of marijuana. Langley even provided photos of his black market booty and boasted about its quality, reported The Colorado Springs Gazette. "I saw that text, and I started giggling," Mikesell said. Detectives set up a meeting and arrested both Langley and Jane Cravens, 41, after finding the promised four pounds of marijuana in their car. Sheriff Mikesell has removed his SUV from Craigslist.



Following the end of World War II, Hungary printed notes of ever-higher value to finance its recovery. The fastest-ever recorded hyperinflation resulted: At its peak in July 1946, prices doubled every 15 hours.



Walking Across the USA in a Bear Costume

Jesse Larios has perfectly round cheeks, a giant head, and a bobble tail. Dressed as a character he calls Bearsun, he's walking across the United States to raise awareness for mental illness, autism and other causes.

The AP reported in April that Larios was walking from Los Angeles to San Francisco in the costume. "It was an impulsive decision for sure. I didn't plan it out," said the 33-year-old in the 75-pound brown and white suit he designed. But the journey Larios began on April 12 morphed into something bigger and drew fans from all over. After completing the initial trip to San Francisco, Larios decided to continue the journey, setting out to walk to New York City in the costume.

On the California leg of the walk, he made occasional stops for meals and to clean up, sleeping inside the suit wherever he found himself at the end of the day. In New Mexico, he made a new friend, Ashkia Trujillo, who has joined him on the journey ever since. "And with this walk, not only am I helping him, I want to bring a message to my youth, you know, the indigenous youth to be selfless," said Trujillo.

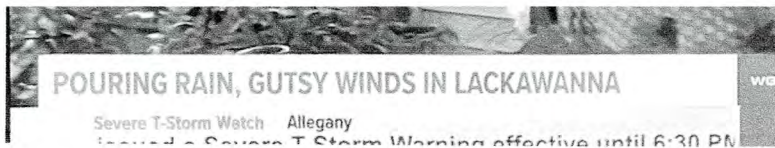
Larios and Trujillo made it to New York in November. In his trek across the U.S., Bearsun raised \$85,287 for a variety of charities:

- Villa Esperanza services, a disabled community (around \$17,000)
- National Breast Cancer Foundation (around \$16,000)
- "Active Minds", a mental health organization (around \$19,000)
- Autism Society of America (around \$19,000)
- Environmental defense fund (around \$15,000)



"SANCTUARY!" Cried the 10-point Buck

Sturgis, MI (AP, 11/16/2021) — A 10-point buck sought sanctuary inside a southern Michigan church on opening day of the state's firearm deer hunting season. Pastors at Grace Sturgis encountered the buck inside the church's auditorium on Monday before it leapt through a window and back into the wild. A Facebook video shows the buck wandering around the church. Pastors Amanda & Luke Eicher and Justin Wickey erected barricades in a hallway to try to keep the animal from the rest of the church. At one point, it climbed stairs to a balcony. "I was just shocked by how high he could jump," Amanda Eicher said. "I was amazed at how big he was." The buck didn't appear to have any gunshot wounds and was bleeding just a bit from what appeared to be cuts from the glass, she told the Kalamazoo Gazette. Besides the broken window, the only other damage was blood stains on the carpet. "We all need reasons to laugh, especially with the hard seasons from the past two years," Eicher said. "I'm glad we could provide some laughs."



In Oklahoma, winds sweep down the plain, but in New York they've got NERVE



■ This post originally quoted photographer Tom Sanders as saying it takes him five years to get on the dance floor. It takes him five beers.

slate.com



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