

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

KIRSTEN BUTLER PHOTOGRAPHY

Pianist and composer Eric Genuis has played nearly 1,000 concerts in prisons, including hundreds in youth prisons.



Why Music Reminds Us We Are Human, Even in the Darkest Places

CATHERINE YANG

There was a gang member who had been in prison all his life, who said he'd never once cried in all his years. He'd buried his mother, he'd buried his father, and he saw the door to his future close when he was sentenced to be locked up for decades, maybe the rest of his life. But then, in prison, he heard a chamber music concert, and he cried.

"This one man stood up after the show, covered in tattoos, the whole nine yards, and he said: 'I'm overcome with emotion. I've had no control over my tears for the last two hours during the show. I've never cried in my life. Never. My mom died, my father died, I was sad but I never cried. What is it?'" said Eric Genuis, the composer of the music that man heard.

"I remember being really taken by this," said Genuis, a pianist and composer. "Here's a man who spent his whole life in prison, tried and convicted as a teen, and is now close to 60. Well, what is it? It's the human heart."

Genuis has seen countless such reactions. In Massachusetts, another prisoner said: "I've killed a lot of people in my life. After hearing this, I've had a higher encounter with my humanity. I'll never hurt another person again."

"Now, that was really beautiful, but why did a prisoner stand up in front of other prisoners and demonstrate a certain vulnerability? That's a no-no, right? He comes up after the show and he starts talking about it: 'This is how cold I became in life, I was able to do this and it didn't affect me, I was able to do that,'" Genuis said.

"There was another man, 90 years old, in a walker. He said, 'I've lived with the pain and suffering that I've caused when I was a 19-year-old man.'"

"My concert invites deep emotion," Genuis said. "But it's the music that invites that. It's not just me walking in and talking to them, and they feel comfortable with me. You've broken down a barrier—music is very disarming."

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Joy Redoubled: Men, Loneliness, and Friendship

JEFF MINICK

In the movie "Saving Private Ryan," a detachment of American soldiers is sent behind German lines to rescue a Private Ryan, whose three brothers have all died that week in combat. After fighting different skirmishes and suffering casualties, these men finally find the missing private and demand he return home with them to rejoin his bereaved mother.

But Ryan refuses. "Tell her that when you found me, I was here," he says, "and that I was with the only brothers I have left and there was no way I was going to desert them. I think she'll understand that."

Men who have shared the ordeal of combat, high school boys who played sports together, college buddies—some of them become lifelong friends, and if they live near one another, may gather for drinks or supper a few times a year. My 40-year-old son-in-law, for example, still has close friends from high school—their shared experiences of that tough private school helped forge

those bonds—and he, my daughter, and their children regularly share time together with these men and their families.

His circumstances, I suspect, are unusual. Once we enter middle age, or even earlier, many men—and women, too, for that matter—find themselves bereft of friendship, isolated, and increasingly lonely.

And that loneliness can have deadly consequences.

Our Invisible Epidemic

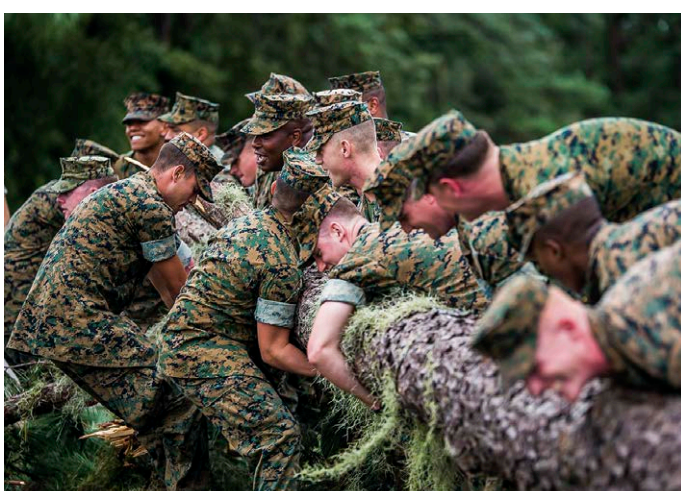
In his hit song "Piano Man," Billy Joel sings of men drinking in a bar, sad and in despair over their broken dreams: "Yes, they're sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it's better than drinking alone."

Lots of men are sharing that drink even as I write these words.

At the Boston Globe, journalist Billy Baker wrote a piece on male loneliness with this dire title: "The biggest threat facing middle-aged men isn't smoking or obesity."

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Some men who go through a shared experience, such as serving in the military, become lifelong friends. (R) Marines remove a tree from the main road at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina on Oct. 8, 2016.



DENGRIER BAEZ/MARINE CORPS CC BY-NC 2.0

DEAR JUNE

On Family and Relationships



Facing Family Strife With Calm

→ Focus on forgiveness first

Dear June,

I'm a conservative in a family of liberals/leftists, all of whom have gone along willingly with their party's slide into authoritarianism justified by Trump (and conservative) hatred.

I used to be an even more rabid leftist in my youth, but marrying a Russian Orthodox wife and joining her community here in San Francisco, and now having embraced faith with the help of Dennis Prager and Jordan Peterson, I've become a conservative. I try not to discuss politics with my family, but as they say, politics is downstream from culture. I find I have nothing in common with them, and they barely hide their contempt for my worldview.

For example, my two sons and I decided to visit my parents as a holiday surprise, a four-hour flight and several days' hotel stay, only to be turned away in a half-hour when my sister (who was staying with them) and brother intervened and convinced them that we presented a mortal COVID threat. My 83-year-old mother has been in bad health lately, but my 86-year-old father plays tennis with friends three times a week (!), gets outdoors every chance he gets, and my sister had been staying with them for two weeks.

I find their fear and COVID hysteria reprehensible, as they had previously both been very outgoing, social, and affable. With a 95 percent survival rate even at their age, I take their fear as a sign of moral cowardice, reinforced by the news they read. I feel this moral cowardice also explains my sister and brother's broken marriages and my second brother's homosexual "marriage" and lifestyle, which everyone but me embraces. I'm the only one of four children with an intact traditional family.

I regularly talk to my parents, as I take the Fifth Commandment seriously, but I really don't want to talk or be with my siblings again, nor to expose my sons to their cowardly worldview. Am I wrong?

Heartbroken in San Francisco

→ Dear Heartbroken,

Regarding your sons, I would trust your own judgment. Especially if they are under age 6, when they feel but cannot understand or distance themselves from negativity, I would keep them away from negative interactions as much as possible and concentrate on building up in them a love of what is right and good.

Theoretically, if they are older, these interactions might serve as powerful teaching moments. Either they will see their dad acting like a real-life hero—calm, strong, and rational in the face of attack—or if the attacks



"Fraternal Love" by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, circa 1851.

have cracked you, then as you admit your misstep, they will see what moral strength really looks like.

You mentioned Jordan Peterson, who is a great example of calm in the face of attack. Of course, being ambushed psychologically by family, as in your situation, may be much harder to cope with in the moment than being questioned by a hostile interviewer or panelist in a conversation where you expect the punches to come flying. However, it still takes a strong character to face negativity with calm, and it takes a process to get to this point.

I have recently seen my own shortcomings in this regard, so I don't stand in judgment, but with the belief in the utmost importance of continuing to fortify our hearts in love and forgiveness.

Regarding the "moral cowardice" of your family, I have a couple of thoughts. First of all, society has changed dramatically in the past four years as hatred has spun out of control. Hatred is irrational, meaning there is no logic to it. Now, if this hatred only existed in one camp, I think it would be easily overcome. But hatred is contagious, and what is happening is that the lack of logic and coherence on one side has infuriated many on the other—fueling what might seem to be righteous anger. But you can't fight fire with fire.

Communist revolutions draw life from the clash of different factions. It is actually a tactic of revolutionaries to rev up both sides because the resulting chaos sets the perfect stage for destruction and authoritarianism.

So we must keep the righteousness but understand that heated passions of hatred and anger are our real enemies. An analogy, which I saw on social media several months ago, speaks to this: If you're carrying a hot cup of coffee through a busy cafe and someone bumps into you, what is jostled out of your cup will be hot coffee. If you're carrying a cup of hot tea, then hot tea is what will spill on you.

To extend the metaphor, if we fill our cups with cool, pure water in the form of love, humility, and forgiveness, then when we are jostled, this is what will come out. Knowing that in today's culture, attacks and disturbing ideas may lurk around every corner, I try daily to fortify myself with that which allows me to transcend negativity.

So to deal with your family I would say first: Focus on forgiving them. See them as victims of an insidious culture that you escaped only by divine grace. You mentioned that it was in part your wife and her community that helped change your perspective. To me this seems a beautiful testament to the power of love and a spiritual perspective: Together these forces transformed a "rabid" youth into someone who clearly values goodness and truth. It makes me curious too: What did your wife think of your beliefs when you first met? Evidently, she saw something of value in you despite the rough surface.

No matter a person's age, he or she can still be transformed by love and encounters with people of virtue. Practically speaking, not everyone will undergo transformation, of course, but I think we cannot adequately judge, and as soon as we deem someone irredeemable, then we certainly will not be able to help them.

Secondly, another tool that might help in dealing with your family is to ask: Where am I wrong? Where am I not meeting a high enough standard?

Speaking from my own experience, it's one thing to be right in terms of facts (and truth is, of course, important) but there's a higher principle we must strive for as well: to manifest love and compassion, reflecting divine mercy in how we treat others. Now, I'm not saying I'm able to achieve this at all times, because as I said above, it takes a process to come to the point where you can face negativity with calm. But by measuring myself against this standard, I've been able to make a lot more progress.

When hatred is met with calm and

love, it becomes powerless and dissipates, and then reason and logic become effective.

So to answer your question of whether it's wrong to break contact with your siblings, I would say that if you're feeling heartbroken, then you should step back.

Then give yourself time to reconnect with those you love and renew your spirit. With peace of mind and heart, you will then start to have compassion for the suffering of your siblings. It seems they all have suffered a great deal with broken marriages and hatred defining their lives.

Your brotherly love could well be their saving grace, but let it come authentically and give it time to grow strong. Also, I'm sure your devotion to your parents is appreciated, whether or not it's acknowledged.

When you're ready, one idea for nourishing seeds of familial love is to share things with your children about your family, either past or present, that remind you of their best selves. If your children are older, you can talk about what you genuinely do admire and appreciate in family members. If your children are young, tell them stories about family members with an emphasis on the good qualities of each person. It is a universal characteristic of young children that stories about goodness make their eyes shine. It is a great way to help them build love and virtue into their character.

Sincerely,
June

Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to DearJune@EpochTimes.com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001.

June Kellum is a married mother of two and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

A Gift to Your Future Self

Simple actions to make tomorrow smoother

BARBARA DANZA

It's funny how we can be so short-sighted sometimes that we'll sacrifice the future for the sake of the present, as if the future were happening to someone else.

In one of his classic stand-up bits, comedian Jerry Seinfeld lamented the short-sightedness of "Night Guy":

"I stay up late at night because I'm Night Guy. Night Guy wants to stay up late.

"What about getting up after five hours of sleep?

"Oh, that's Morning Guy's problem. That's not my problem. I'm Night Guy. I stay up as late as I want.

"So, you get up in the morning ... your alarm ... you're exhausted, groggy ...

"Oh, I hate that Night Guy!"

Likewise, in an episode of "The Simpsons," Marge tries to warn Homer that he'll regret not having spent enough quality time at home with his family when his kids are grown.

Homer replies: "That's a problem for Future Homer. Man, I don't envy that guy."

So, how about Future You? Do you envy that guy? Or might you benefit from putting a little more thought into how your actions and efforts in the present will impact your future self?

Here are a few simple ways to make Morning Guy and Future You much happier.

Tidy Up

You're tired at night and perhaps you just want to flop on the couch and unwind until bedtime, but before you do, take a few minutes (and that's all it'll really take) to go around your home and tidy up. Put everything in its place so that tomorrow you wake up to a clean slate and you won't find yourself frantically looking for your

Put everything in its place so that tomorrow you wake up to a clean slate and you won't find yourself frantically looking for your keys as you try to rush out the door.

keys as you try to rush out the door.

Program Your Coffee Maker

It's like a gift to your future self: Take the time to prepare your morning coffee, or whatever essential morning beverage or breakfast you prefer, the night before.

Automate Savings

There are many strategic ways to save and invest your money. However, the simplest way to establish a habit of saving is to set up your bank's checking account so that it automatically transfers some amount of money—even a very modest amount—into your savings account on a regular basis, whether that's weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. Then, forget all about it and go about your life.

You likely won't even notice the absence of cash on hand, but it will add up quickly and your future self will surely be grateful for it.

Get to Bed Early

Remember Morning Guy and make sure to get substantial, quality sleep each night. For the best sleep, make sure you're not staring at your phone or another blue-light screen right before bed. Keep the temperature in your home on the cool side and get yourself to bed at roughly the same time each night.

Batch Cook

Each time you make the effort to prepare a meal, prepare much more than you immediately need. Set aside leftovers for packed lunches and repurposed ingredients for the rest of the week. You'll find that the effort required to make more of what you're already making isn't very significant, but will reap rewards for days to come.



Batch cooking saves time down the road.

Plan Tomorrow

Before the end of the day, take a moment to glance at your calendar and see what's on the agenda for tomorrow. Make a simple, short-to-do list to guide you through your day. Lay out the clothes you'll need and set out any bags or items you'll need on hand the next day. When you wake up prepped and ready, you'll feel on top of your game.

Book Something Fun

All work and no play is not what your future self wants. Get something fun or inspiring to look forward to on your calendar. Book a trip, make dinner reservations for a special occasion, plan a get-together with loved ones, or commit to an inspiring project. Having something great on the horizon is not only a joy to look forward to but also tends to create a higher level of engagement in life leading up to the big event.



A book club is one way to bring fellow men together.

Joy Redoubled: Men, Loneliness, and Friendship

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It's loneliness." While writing this article, Baker realizes he himself has lost contact with nearly all of his friends, in part because of inattention, in part because of his work obligations and the time consumed with his family.

He cites various studies of the effects of loneliness on human beings, including one from Brigham Young University, in which researchers who tracked 3.5 million people over a 35-year period found that "loneliness, isolation, or even simply living on their own" see their risk of premature death rise between 26 and 32 percent.

Baker's article acted as a mirror for me. In 2016, I moved to Front Royal, Virginia, where I lived with my daughter's family, helping to homeschool some of the children, driving them to a private school or homeschooling co-ops, and doing some work around the house. In 2019, she and her family moved to Pennsylvania, and I have lived here alone since then. Though I handle isolation better than many people, I admit I've hit some rough patches. Going to town and talking with a barista in the coffee shop for five minutes isn't the same as getting together with a friend.

Some Constructive Advice

To make friends, some psychologists and social critics believe men should aim to develop social skills similar to those of women. In her online article "Life as a Lone Wolf: Why Do So Many Men Feel so Lonely?" Zawn

Villines offers a list of suggestions for men desiring deeper relationships, including "Seek friendships with men who value alternative forms of masculinity," "Identify any harmful beliefs you have about friendship or masculinity. Do you believe that crying indicates weakness or that real men don't need others?" and "Model vulnerability to other men and boys."

These suggestions possess some validity, but they are grouped in a section titled "How to Build Bromance." With all due respect, "bromance" is an immediate turn-off for most men I know. We'd like friends and the ability to share parts of ourselves, but bromance? Please. I'm an old guy, and have one particularly close male friend, but never do we think of ourselves as involved in a "bromance."

Ugh. In the musical "My Fair Lady," professor Henry Higgins, a bachelor who doesn't understand women, particularly his new "experiment" Eliza Doolittle, sings what would now surely be considered a politically incorrect song, particularly by those without a sense of humor: "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" Today many among us insist on turning that tune on its head, asking, "Why can't a man be more like a woman?"

The Collapse of Male Institutions

"My Fair Lady" is the spin-off of George Bernard Shaw's play "Pygmalion," which was written and presented on stage in the early 20th century, an age when American men belonged to clubs and bars exclusively for

males, played hometown sports together, attended political events limited to males, and made up the majority of the working force. They joined civic groups such as the Elks Club, attended all-male colleges, and served in a largely male military.

Those days are long gone, and perhaps our emphasis on inclusion is for the best, but that erasure of male enclaves has proven disastrous for men and friendship. Community organizations such as the Lions Club—my dad was a member in the early 1960s—the combat units of the armed services, nearly all colleges and universities, even the Boy Scouts: All these formerly male institutions are now open to women.

For the first time in the history of Western civilization, we have largely erased organizations and gathering places exclusively designated for men and boys. Google "women's organizations" and then "men's organizations," compare them, and see what you think.

Meanwhile, our culture warns against the dangers of "toxic masculinity," with some urging parents to raise their sons inculcated with feminist values.

Since the beginning of recorded history, men who were celebrated as heroes, from the narcissistic Achilles to Beowulf, from George Washington to a few of our military, political, and cultural heroes today, displayed traditional masculine values. Do we really want to dump those values overboard? And more importantly, can our culture afford to do so?

Building Relationships

Which brings us back to friendship.

In the Boston Globe article mentioned above, Baker concludes with an account of Ozzy, who teaches kayaking classes and who every Wednesday evening gets together with his buddies. What these guys do in their "Wednesday evening" group—go bowling, grill out, share a drink—matters less than the fact that they are together.

Baker writes: "Everything about the idea seemed quaint and profound—the name that was a lack of a name (such a guy move); the placement in the middle of the week; the fact that they'd continued it for so long. But most of all, it was the acknowledgment from male friends that they needed their male friends, for no other reason than they just did."

In her piece, putting aside her use of "bromance," Zawn Villines also offers some good ideas about men connecting with men: joining church groups, for example, and participating in volunteer activities.

More Possibilities

A good while ago, my wife helped start a book club for women. Their monthly meet-

ings helped deepen both their appreciation of literature and their friendship.

Men can do the same. We can read authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Mark Helprin, Eugene Sledge, or Michael Walsh, and then come together to discuss the virtues of manhood, and its defects, that we find in such shared literature.

Movie clubs might bring similar bonds and enjoyment. Gather together once a month, watch a movie centered on male values—"Secondhand Lions," "We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young," "Cool Hand Luke," "Tender Mercies"—share a few drinks and snacks, and talk over the negatives and positives of the films.

Best of all, we can adjust our schedules and push ourselves harder to meet with male friends more frequently just to shoot the breeze.

Real-Life Conversations

We men need not give up manhood to avoid loneliness, but we might try emulating dangers of "toxic masculinity," with some urging parents to raise their sons inculcated with feminist values.

When we become more aware of the thoughts and feelings of others, we are giving friendship a chance to blossom. When a friend's parent or wife has died, for instance, we need to reach out to him. When we discover he has lost his job, we need to make the call or take him out for a beer, and be there for him. When he wins a promotion at work or buys the house he's always dreamed of, we need to congratulate him.

These gestures, however small, are the building blocks of friendship. Even if our friend fails on his end to express appreciation or congratulate us in a similar manner, it matters not. We have reached out, we have given our friendship a shot in the arm, and we will feel better for it.

In "De Amicitia," Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote, "Friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief."

True words then. True words now.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminarians of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels—"Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

“**I want to go and elevate people’s humanity, remind them of their humanity.**”

Eric Genuis

Why Music Reminds Us We Are Human, Even in the Darkest Places

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It allows them to have an encounter with their own humanity, maybe things that have been buried forever that they’ve been invited to sort of resurrect and rethink and ponder and heal from.”

Early in his career, Genuis decided he would go wherever there was a demand for his music. He’s played private concerts for movie stars, and he’s played under a bridge for homeless veterans. His guiding philosophy is to write beautiful music, music that communicates hope, and he works tirelessly to bring it to other people because he has seen the need.

“There is something mysterious about beauty, and it’s why everybody should be immersed in beauty,” he said.

Starved of Beauty

For nearly three decades, Genuis brought his music to places without hope—rehab centers, prisons, inner-city schools—on his own time and out of his own pocket, using the proceeds from his regular concerts. A few years ago, Genuis realized that wouldn’t be enough and started his foundation Concerts for Hope to further the mission.

Genuis says he’s played nearly 1,000 concerts in prisons since he started. This meant he’s also played in hundreds of youth prisons.

In one room of 300 prisoners, all tried and convicted as teens with sentences of several decades, Genuis remembered a young gang leader who sat right up front. He wasn’t interested in being required to attend a classical concert, but when the music began, he became entranced by the violin.

“He put his hand over his heart, threw his head back, and said, ‘That is the most beautiful thing,’” Genuis said. “He said: ‘Why have I never heard that before?’”

“Now, we live in the age of the internet so this boy can hear anything he wants, whenever he wants. We as parents, and as adults, and as schoolteachers and educators, as church leaders—all the leaders of the community have access to this boy, and what did we give him? He knows everything about gangster rap,” he said. “But never did anyone introduce him to something that goes in and moves his heart and uplifts his humanity, and stirs the awe and wonder and creativity in life and elevates him, and realizes the beautiful dignity he has as a person. And that’s the effect of beauty.”

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In the United States, there are about 2.3 million people in prison. Across the country, there are pockets of culture that revolve around prison. These young people tell Genuis no one would care if they went to prison; one told Genuis if he ever landed in prison, people would only ask him why it hadn’t happened earlier. He’s spoken to young adults about to get out of prison, asking about their plans, and they’ve told him that they’ll be back in prison in no time. And if they do some serious damage to a



KIRSTEN BUTLER PHOTOGRAPHY

Eric Genuis believes wholeheartedly in music: “This is the greatest thing I have to offer, and I am going to move mountains to offer it.”

rival gang, maybe kill one of their members, it’ll elevate their status once they do get sent back to prison.

“They’re not cared for, nobody cares for this person,” Genuis said. “There’s this whole population that is forgotten, that is abandoned, that has no mentorship, no love, no guidance, nothing.”

He once met a 23-year-old who joked about getting sentenced to three lifetimes. Genuis asked, “Are you OK?” But the young man wasn’t at all bothered.

“It was so familiar to him, so non-devastating, so nonchalant, that I thought, a good part of the population doesn’t look at throwing their life away as devastating, because maybe emotionally and internally, they’ve thrown theirs away a long time ago,” he said. In these places of forgotten people and of no hope, people have forgotten their humanity, and it has little worth for them.

“So what I want to do is elevate, I want to go and bring them hope,” Genuis said. In December 2019, a young woman in South Carolina stood up after one of his prison concerts and said: “I’m at the lowest point in my life. I was here, I forgot what it was like to feel human. I feel human right now.” So yes, beauty can uplift humanity.”

After she got out of prison, she wrote him a letter about her renewed hope and added, “This is a turning point.”

He said, “That’s what I want. I want to go and elevate people’s humanity, remind them of their humanity.”

After the pandemic, Genuis plans to focus more of his work on playing in schools and to set up a program called Project Detour for children, in hopes of changing the culture.

“I want to detour them from the idea that prison is just part of life,” Genuis said.

To Elevate the Soul

Confucius said if one wants to know the morals of a nation, “the quality of its music will furnish the answer.” And Plato said, “Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.”

“I believe these men were right,” Genuis said. “I believe music is a language that speaks to the heart, mind, and soul in ways words will never touch. Music and beauty have the ability—it is a language, it communicates—to elevate the mystery behind the person, to elevate that essence, to elevate that which animates them—the soul, if you will—but to elevate them and move them.”

“Music can create such awe and wonder in the imagination of people, so I think it is critical in the formation of our young to immerse them in beauty,” he said. There’s a place for fun music, too, Genuis added, but it shouldn’t come at the expense of beauty, which so many in our civilization are starved for.

In another life, Genuis might have stayed a physics teacher, happily on his way to retirement with a good pension by now.

“But when I was in class, I’d often be writing melodies, and then after class, I’d be in the library listening to Beethoven,” he said. Genuis is a talented pianist, but unlike most musicians who pursue music, he was driven to compose.

“I would just write and write and write,” he said. “I never thought I’d do this for a living, or that anyone would ever hear a performance, I’d just write for the sheer love of writing music.”

Genuis knew it was a gift. He believed he had been given this great thing, and it was meant to be shared, so he followed the audience. He found there was such a need for beautiful music and felt compelled to do it full time.

“It’s not about fame or any of that, it’s just about connecting with people. I started to play everywhere,” he said. Then he got invited to a prison, and thought, why not? “And then when I saw broken people react so strongly, I thought, wow.”

Genuis has gone through a lot of trouble to bring his music to people.

A day’s schedule might begin with packing up from the evening concert at midnight, driving three hours to the next city over, where a prison has invited Genuis to perform, taking a nap mid-trip at a rest stop, going through prison security early



After the pandemic, Genuis plans to set up a program for children called Project Detour “to detour them from the idea that prison is just part of life,” he says.



Genuis seeks to bring hope to others through his music.

KIRSTEN BUTLER PHOTOGRAPHY

in the morning to get all of his equipment or, playing three concerts at the prison and wrapping up by late afternoon, and then getting prepared for his evening concert in that city almost straight away.

“I’m in a lot of dark places in the world,” he said. “It’s very tough, I cannot tell you how many times at 3 a.m. in the morning and I’m exhausted, and I think: ‘What am I doing? I should be home sleeping!’ And you start questioning everything. Is there purpose? What is this?”

But Genuis is positive by intention, and he says it really does come down to the music. He believes in it wholly.

“This is the greatest thing I have to offer, and I am going to move mountains to offer it.”

“Through this music, I was able to live what I really believe,” he said. “I feel like it has been a gift to me and my humanity to provide this, I feel very lucky. Life is short, and for a short window, I can share this music.”

When Genuis composes, he reaches for hope. It’s this combination of awe and wonder, like a child picking up a block and seeing a castle, he explained. “That’s hope, because the awe and wonder for life. ‘Oh I wonder what I can build with this Lego,’ leads to ‘Oh, I wonder what life has in store for me.’”

“All this awe and wonder and hope, it’s humanity, it’s life. When that gets squashed in someone at 10 years old and nothing matters, like this 23-year-old [talking about his three life sentences], his hope was dead a long time ago,” Genuis said. But if you can show people hope, you can remind them of their humanity, and music—just ephemeral wavelengths—does it in a way words can’t.

“You bring them hope and you help them realize, you are human,” he said. “And even if you have to spend the rest of your life in prison, you can read books, you can discover things, you can always elevate your humanity. It may not turn into a big paying job but it can challenge you intellectually, it can challenge you spiritually, emotionally.”

“We all recognize beauty when we see it,

and it’s not something you can discuss or you can describe or you can comment on. Really it’s a language beyond,” he said. “A language beyond words that reaches and connects with us and we know it.”

“When we’re in a vulnerable situation like suffering and pain and we have an encounter with something beautiful, and we’re not distracted with other things—if we’re happy and joyful and running around busy with other things, maybe beauty doesn’t really knock us between the eyes—but when we’re poised and we’re reflective and it sort of elevates us, we know it, and it’s sort of involuntary,” he said. “It’s not even controllable.”

“Like this boy [moved by the violin], if he is starved for beauty so much, so is everybody else. The question is, why aren’t we giving it to them? I go in and play at universities, they don’t even know what a cello is,” he said. “[Music] has always had an entertainment quality but it’s never just been what it’s supposed to be.”

“There is this whole world, like a cave full of diamonds, a whole world that we’ve not explored, in our children’s education ... and the result of that is this boy puts his hand over his heart and says, ‘Why have I never been exposed to that?’ It’s like he was begging for his humanity. ‘Why have I not been able to feel like who I am?’”

After a concert Genuis gave at a PTSD clinic, a man who went from running fearlessly into battle to not being able to even set foot in a drugstore came up to Genuis and hugged him fiercely.

“He said: ‘I’ve done a lot of terrible things in war that I fear I’m going to have to pay for. I don’t feel like I can ever be forgiven or I can forgive myself. I don’t even remember what it’s like to feel human or to feel myself,’” Genuis said. “And then he says: ‘I remember who I am right now. I don’t want to let go. I fear if I let go, I’ll forget who I am again.’”

“It’s a story of suffering, but it’s a story of redemption. And who’s not in need of redemption? We all are, and we all should seek truth to do all we can to bring hope and to bring redemption to other people’s lives,” Genuis said.



Milton West became “Pop” when Cody Shugart became a father.

Cody Shugart and Milton West aka Mr. Chip.

How a Kind Neighbor Became a Father Figure, and Then an Honorary Grandfather

LOUISE BEVAN

A Texas man whose next-door neighbor helped raise him in the absence of a father is sharing his story with the world. Now grown with kids of his own, he has welcomed this beloved man into a brand-new role as an honorary grandfather.

“My story truly shows that a successful black American man truly inspired and educated a little white kid next door,” Cody Shugart told *The Epoch Times* via email. “He did not have to be a part of my life, he chose to, and I am thankful to God every day that he chose to help me.”

Cody and his wife, Aubrie Shugart, share four children: Colt Griffin, who was stillborn in 2014, Bob Wayne, 3, William West, 2, and Miles Jefferson, 4 months. Together, the couple runs the oldest dance studio in Victoria, Texas, the Aubrie Shugart School of Dancing.

Cody is also the corporate sales manager for a tractor dealership called Scherer Kubota.

“My mother, Yvett Shugart, raised me and my brother, Adam, by herself,” said Cody. A court reporter, Yvett moved with her children to Victoria when Cody was only 2 years old. That’s where they met “Mr. Chip,” whose real name is Milton West, and his wife, Shirley West. “The connection I had with Mr. Chip was started with our admiration and respect for him,” Cody said.

Mr. Chip owned multiple vehicles, a boat, and a nice home. He loved to entertain friends and family in the garage, and would always make sure Cody and Adam were included.

“I always saw Mr. Chip as a mountain of a man who had a mountain of personality,” Cody recalled. “As I got older, I found out how funny he is.”

Mr. Chip, a Vietnam War veteran with the U.S. Marines, played college baseball after returning home from deployment and worked as an operator for DOW Chemical Plant. Additionally, he left a profound influence on the Shugart boys.

“When I started cutting our lawn at my house, I thought I did a good job until I looked at how beautiful



When Milton West became “Pop,” his wife Shirley received the nickname “Lolli.” The Shugarts would tell their kids they were going to visit “Lolli Pop.”

his yard was,” Cody said. “I would ask [for] advice and he would tell me what I did wrong.”

Prone to getting in trouble, Cody found himself sitting in Mr. Chip’s driveway time and time again, receiving life advice from the kindly veteran. “He would always remind me how important it was to respect my mother and to behave,” said Cody. “I got a man to fill a void in my life.”

Cody also credits his outgoing personality and fearlessness to Mr. Chip.

“He taught me that the color of a man’s skin means nothing,” he said. “The only color that matters is the color of our heart, and how we choose to use it.”

Since Cody became a father, Mr. Chip has become “Pop” to Cody and Aubrie’s three children.

Mr. Chip got the name of “Pop” after Bob Wayne was born and said that he was his grandson. “When Mr. Chip and his wife Shirley saw him, they fell in love,” Cody shared on Facebook in 2018. “They babysit him sometimes ... The last time we were over there, Mr. Chip said he wants to be called ‘Pop.’ So we had to come up with a name for his wife. We decided on ‘Lolli!’”

“Bob Wayne and Pop are tight,” Cody told *The Epoch Times*, reflecting on the bond Mr. Chip and the young boy share. “I am certain it’s from all the cookies, candy, and bananas they have shared together.”

When Mr. Chip looks at his children, said Cody, “you see the pride and love in his eyes every time.”

The Shugarts’ next son, William, was even given the middle name “West” in honor of his Pop.

Mr. Chip is currently on dialysis, so the Shugarts have scaled back their visits to protect his health during the pandemic. Yet Mr. Chip, Cody said, calls him and pretends to threaten him with police action for not letting him see his grandbabies. “Once the rant is over, we have a great laugh together.”

Cody hopes that prayers from far and wide will reach Mr. Chip, Shirley, and their son Quinten, an active duty member in the U.S. Army, during these difficult times.

As Cody’s homage to a great man continues to circulate, he marvels at how many people his story has touched.

“I wanted people to see this great man I have known all my life,” said Cody, adding a personal message for Mr. Chip himself: “If I become a fraction of the man you are, I will know that my kids will be on the right path. I loved you then, I love you now, and I will love you forever.”

Share your stories with us at emg.inspired@epochtimes.com, and continue to get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for [The Epoch Inspired newsletter at TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter](https://www.epochtimes.com/newsletter)

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

‘Stop crumbling under peer pressure, stand up for yourself’

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

Dear next generation,

Every time someone graduates, I include a list of my own pearls of wisdom in the card with the check. These are two of my favorites.

“Be the Leader of Yourself.” If you do this, then you will not be persuaded to do something reckless, stupid, or illegal. You will always pause and use every opportunity to practice discerning judgment.

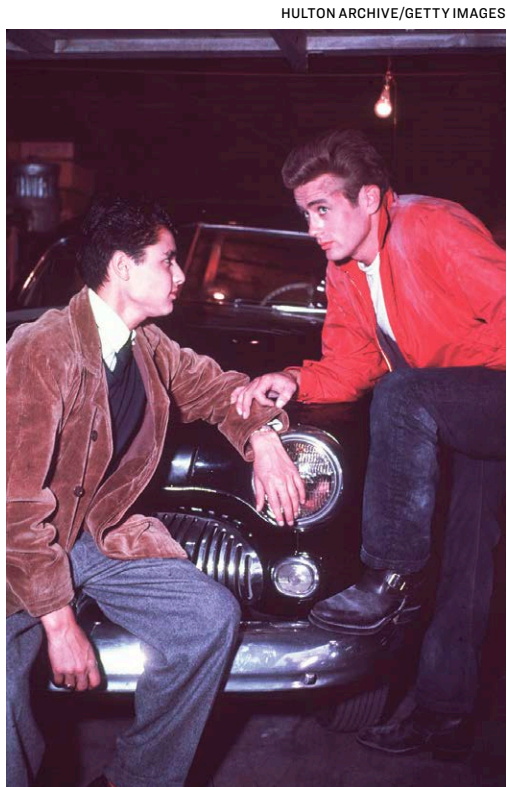
“Don’t Get Caught in the Poppy Fields on the Way to Oz.” The obvious reference is don’t do drugs, but it also means avoid any bad habits, negative influences, shiny objects that distract you from achieving your goals, that keep you from walking a path of integrity. Ask yourself often, “Would the child you were proud of the grownup you turned out to be?”

Be an asset to society, not a burden; and in a world where everything has a price, remember kindness is free.

—Cherie Holton, Louisiana

Dear next generation,

I was a teenager in Berlin, Germany, when I watched the movie “Rebel Without a Cause.” At the time I did not know I was a teenager. I was just a young person to whom nobody much paid attention. I was not thought to be wise or knowledgeable about world affairs and therefore no one sought my advice. Which was very lucky for the world. When discussing the rebels in America with my friends, we tried to



Ask yourself often, ‘Would the child you were proud of the grownup you turned out to be?’

Actor James Dean (R) (1931–1955) with actor Sal Mineo (1939–1976) in a still from director Nicholas Ray’s film “Rebel Without a Cause.”

understand their problems and could not find any. They had cars, they did not seem to pay much attention in school, and James Dean drank milk right out of a carton.

By the time I hit the ripe old age of 18, that teenage/trouble thing seemed to apply some to my life, but unfortunately, my parents did not seem to pay too much attention. When I told my mother that I was a troubled young person, she told me to smarten up and get with it. Seeing as the generations before me went through the same period, and as she had survived it intact, I was advised to take it easy, stop worrying, and enjoy life. Which I proceeded to do.

By the time I got to 25, I had come to understand that I had really not known

anything and that my parents were not the old fogies I had presumed them to be. They were actually quite smart and a wonderful source of information and advice.

Once I became a mother, I tried very hard to instill in my son the same values I was brought up with. One of which is to never take yourself too seriously and enjoy the years we have been given while at the same time contributing to society in a way that benefits everyone.

Coming from my German background, I have tried to heed my father’s advice: Don’t run with the crowd and never pay attention to people who scream to get themselves heard.

My advice most of all to young people is to be yourself. Stop crumbling under peer pressure, stand up for yourself. It is not easy but rewarding.

To the young girls today—could you please stop wearing the same hairstyle, parted in the middle and straight down? It is definitely not individualistic.

—Edie Williams, Surrey, British Columbia

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

BOOK REVIEW

‘The Enduring Tension: Capitalism and the Moral Order’

HERBERT W. STUPP

One of the selling points for those who embrace far-left progressivism and even socialism is the “morality” of redistributing income and even wealth from productive, hard-working Americans to others.

Opponents of these tried-and-failed philosophies can cite the empirical numbers, demonstrating that the outcomes of states and nations that have moved toward socialism have botched their economies and harmed their societies. But what about the morality of their plans, and how best to defeat the far left and move toward a vibrant economy and properly-ordered government?

Brooklyn-raised professor Donald J. Devine has written a persuasive case and political road map for re-invigorated capitalism in “The Enduring Tension: Capitalism and the Moral Order.” Expanding on his 2015 essay of the same name, Devine sets out the case that capitalism and freedom are the philosophies most compatible with virtually all senses of morality.

Devine taught political science for much of his career, ran for the U.S. House from Maryland, and advised Ronald Reagan during his quests for the presidency. That last role led to his being named the director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in President Reagan’s first year. He may have been the most innovative OPM director ever, given the reforms he implemented.

One was “merit pay” for federal employees, and as a Reagan administration executive myself then, I can attest that most of my workforce across six offices embraced pay for performance. That new staff eagerness to deliver results certainly enhanced my ability to manage federal employees. Sadly, the feds gave up on merit pay once Devine had departed.

Devine cites Pope Francis, who

criticizes “limitless” freedom as fostering a “fundamental terrorism against all humanity.” Francis came of age in Argentina and its mix of crony, state-managed capitalism, and creeping socialism. In the pope’s lifetime, Argentina declined from one of the world’s most prosperous nations to one with large swaths of poverty, as it moved more toward a state-managed economy.

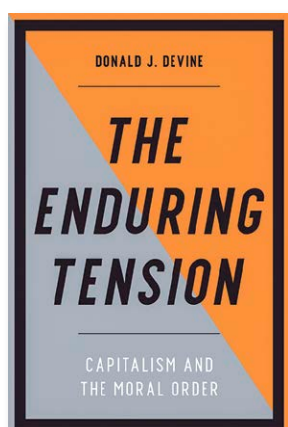
John Locke and Adam Smith made the “moral” case for capitalism, but added that free enterprise could flourish best in a Christian (more recently, we’d say “Judeo-Christian,” and still more recently, a “faith-based”) society. These learned individuals linked the importance of private property to any free society, something that Karl Marx wanted to obliterate, and as a priority.

During the terrible riots and spasms of looting in summer 2020, some bullhorn-enhanced protesters disrupted residential neighborhoods in Seattle, demanding that homeowners surrender their houses and condos to “displaced” groups. Marx would be pleased.

Free-market Nobel laureate Friedrich Hayek synthesized the notions of a “moral capitalism” ecumenically, concluding that “a successful free society will always in large measure be a tradition-based society,” given that freedom requires law and law requires traditional virtue.

Currently a senior scholar at The Fund for American Studies, Devine doesn’t simply posit for an absence of restraint on commerce, but argues for a well-ordered freedom. He echoes William F. Buckley Jr. as encapsulating a synthesis (or “tension”) for the way forward, his principles being: “freedom, individuality, the sense of community, the sanctity of the family, the supremacy of conscience, the spiritual view of life.”

Reagan appreciated and em-



“The Enduring Tension: Capitalism and the Moral Order” by Donald J. Devine
Encounter Books, 2021.

Currently a senior scholar at The Fund for American Studies, Devine doesn’t simply posit for an absence of restraint on commerce, but argues for a well-ordered freedom.

braced these principles of synthesis, the philosophy of which was coined as “fusionist conservatism” by Brent Bozell Jr. Along with Buckley, one of the other important polemicists for fusionism was erstwhile communist Frank Meyer, later a vociferously anti-communist senior editor of National Review.

At conferences of Young Americans for Freedom in the 1970s, I got to meet, hear, and question Buckley, Meyer, and Devine, leaving me with the gifts of their still relevant and always coherent thoughts.

Devine’s book has plenty of observations and facts documenting the failures of expansive, centralized government, noting that U.S. national debt now exceeds 90 percent of our gross national product, and is heading to 300 percent over the next 25 years.

That doesn’t include the unfunded liabilities of Medicare, Social Security, federal and state pensions, and other state debts! When Greece’s debt reached 312 percent of GNP in recent years, it became functionally bankrupt.

In Frank Meyer’s “fusionist conservative” epitome, the state has only three legitimate functions: “police, military and operating a legal system,” all necessary to control coercion, which is immoral if not restricted, according to Hayek. The framers of the Constitution envisioned a similarly frugal state, only supplementing Meyer’s future vision with a postal service, a treasury, federal roads, customs authority, and regulation of commerce between the states.

In this Biden era, we can hope that Republicans will rediscover their traditional role of questioning excessive and wasteful government spending.

Disciples of “fusionism” and the vision of the framers might also allude to the utter failure of those who’ve already had some success in reversing America’s ordered lib-

erty balance.

From candidate Joe Biden declaring the police to be “the enemy” to BLM and Antifa rioters and looters screaming to “defund the police,” the interim results of such policies are evident to all.

Those urban centers that have cut police funding are the ones that have suffered through dramatic violent crime spikes, looting, and other decay. Thousands of innocent lives have already been lost, thanks to the “police are the enemy” ideology.

Conversely, our progressives and socialists now call not only for redistributing income, but wealth. Then, they believe, they can “fund” all of the social justice programs they love, such as health care for noncitizens, solar power (forget Solyndra-style scandals), guaranteed incomes for all, funeral expenses for illegals, and much more.

They are reversing the vision and priorities of the founders at an accelerating pace. Federal indebtedness per taxpayer already exceeds \$200,000, and is expanding apace. It’s clear that capitalism bestows the most wealth on the most people, and that effective policing makes for safer communities. But what about that question of morality? Devine invokes St. Augustine, Jewish tradition, the Thomists, and other great spiritual influences. Yet two of the strongest moral voices come from recent history, and with the awful advantage of experience.

They are Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, a Pole and a German. Both had personally witnessed the horrors of Nazism and communism. Both holy fathers were ardent opponents of totalitarianism, and unflinching in their embrace of liberty and free enterprise. Who better to settle that morality question?

Herbert W. Stupp is the editor of GipperTen.com. He was a New York City commissioner from 1994–2002.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



(Above) Shells, leaves, and flowers are some of the themes of Rococo ornamentation. (Left) Wieskirche (the Pilgrimage Church) of Wies, in Bavaria, Germany, is a Rococo masterpiece and the best example of the Wessobrunn style of stuccowork. (Below left) Angels abound in the frescoes and on the stuccowork. (Below right) Some of the joyful, opulent stuccowork, gilded and painted in pastels.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Bavarian Rococo Joy: The Pilgrimage Church of Wies

On June 14, 1738, in Wies, Bavaria, part of the Holy Roman Empire, a wooden figure of Christ appeared to shed tears. Inspired by the incredible event, pilgrims from across Europe began to visit the tiny chapel that was built in 1740 to house the figure. So many pilgrims visited the chapel that the nearby Steingaden Abbey decided to build a church to accommodate them.

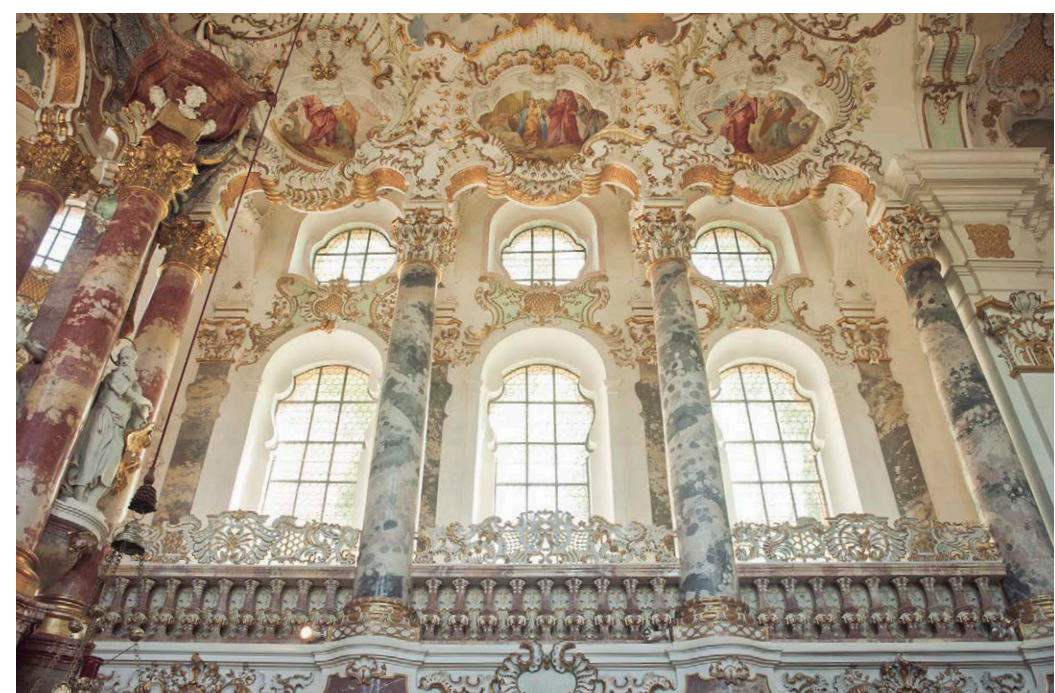
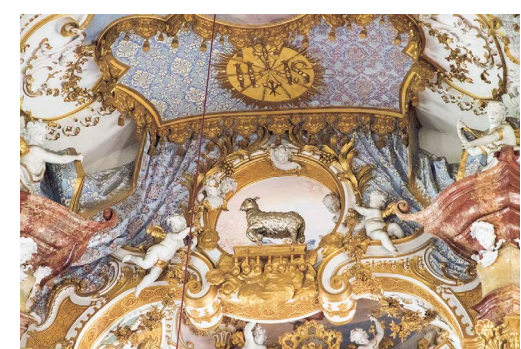
Constructed between 1745 and 1754, the Wieskirche, or Pilgrimage Church, is considered a Rococo masterpiece. The interior features astounding frescoes with trompe l’oeil, a painting technique that renders objects realistically so that they appear to be three-dimensional. It also features the stuccowork of the Wessobrunn School of stucco artists.

The Wessobrunn stucco style originated

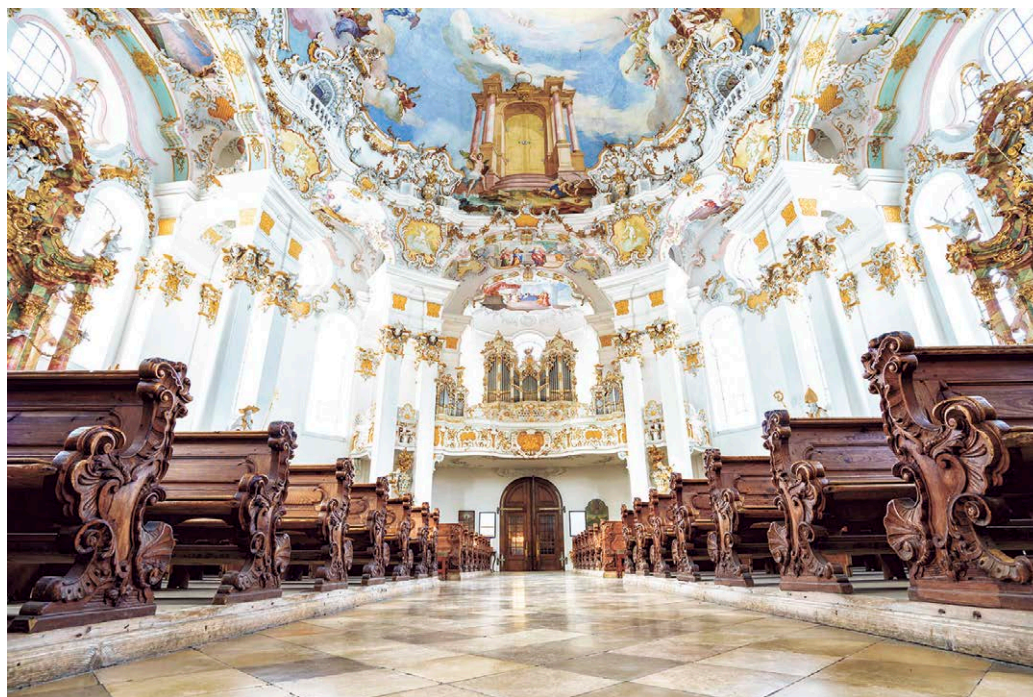
from the Benedictine abbey in Wessobrunn, Bavaria, around 24 miles north of the Pilgrimage Church. In the 17th century, the abbey was the epicenter of Europe’s stuccowork commissions, with orders coming from France, Poland, Hungary, and Russia.

Two of the most important Wessobrunn stuccoworkers were the Zimmerman brothers, Dominikus and Johann Baptist. The Pilgrimage Church that Dominikus built and stuccoed and Johann Baptist frescoed is considered a masterpiece of the Wessobrunn style.

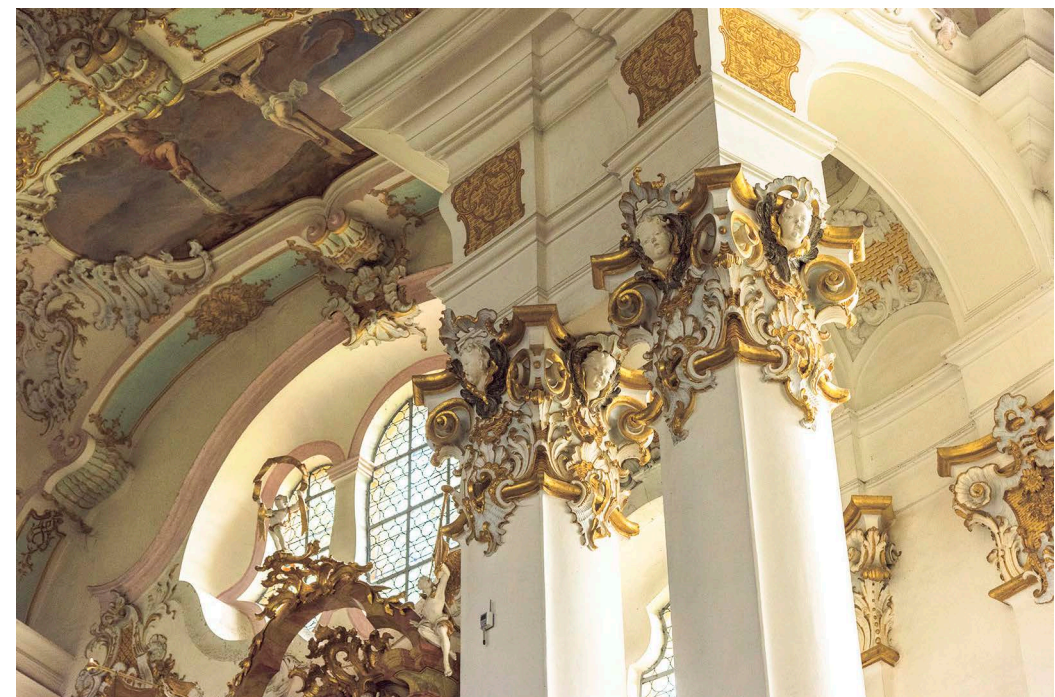
Dominikus built his home close to his masterpiece. And inside the church, he painted a pious portrait of himself kneeling in prayer before the wooden Christ. He signed the painting “D.Z. Ex voto A. 1757,” which roughly translates to “an offering, according to my vow.”



Sunlight streams through the church windows, further illuminating the divine art and architecture.



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(Above left) The light and airy interior of the church offers a gracious place for contemplation and prayer. (Above right) It’s adorned by elegantly gilded capitals. (Left) The oval building lies nestled in the foothills of the Alps. (Right) Sublime Bavarian Rococo designs permeate the church.



This Week in History

AMERICA'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK ESTABLISHED

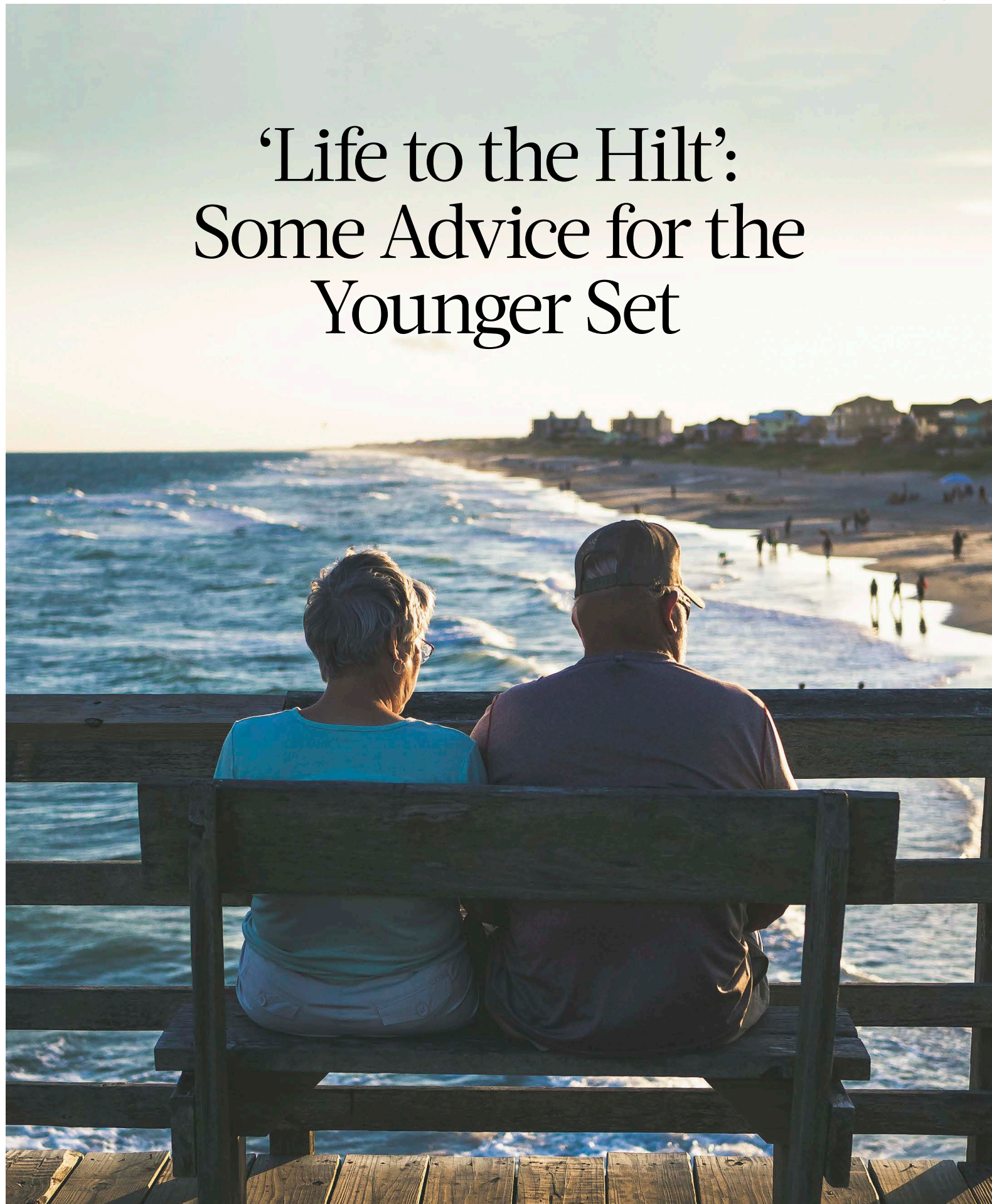


President Ulysses S. Grant.

On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone Act of 1872 designating around 2 million acres of public land in what would become Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana as a public "pleasur-ground" that was to remain free "from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within." This set the precedent for preserving the country's natural gifts going forward. Today, Yellowstone National Park welcomes more than 4 million visitors each year.



Yellowstone National Park's Upper Geyser Basin in Wyoming.



JAMES HOSE JR./UNSPASH

'Life to the Hilt': Some Advice for the Younger Set

The years fly, leaving us to wonder how everything went by so quickly.

JEFF MINICK

In a few days, I will turn threescore years and 10, or in modern parlance: I'll be 70 years old. Man, that age sounds rickety to me. After poking around online yesterday, I discovered a site featuring a "life expectancy calculator" that estimates how much longer I'll still be drinking coffee every morning. One of the questions asked of me was inadequate, and I fudged on another, but according to this life expectancy site, I will likely be sipping my cup of Joe for another 19 years. Knock off six years for my tomfoolery on the site, and I still have a way to go.

Good news? Bad news? I suppose that will depend on the state of my health. All I can say for certain is that turning 70 seems impossible to me, a huge chunk of days, weeks, and months. Our republic is 245 years old, which means I've breathed air and walked the earth for more than a quarter of that time.

And what a trip it's been. It Goes by Fast I was born during the Korean War, when Dwight Eisenhower occupied the White House. Since then, Americans have fought a dozen or more wars, won the Cold War, put men on the moon, gave untold billions of dollars in aid to the rest of the world, and created an economy never before seen in world history.

During that time, our nation has undergone immense changes. When I was in elementary school, for example, some farmers were still cropping tobacco with mules and sleds in Boonville, North Carolina; polio ravaged the nation before Jonas Salk found a vaccine to prevent it; schools were segregated; and kids still roamed the neighborhood and the town unaccompanied by grownups. Those days are long gone, but I remember so much of what happened along the way since then, bits and pieces, some vivid reminiscences, some dim with the shadows of time. So many memories, so many faces and names, so much joy and sorrow. An example: I recall taking my future wife into my arms on the Boston Common in the summer of 1976, the Bicentennial Year,



TETRAKTYS/CC BY-SA 3.0

An example of broad-mindedness: Emperor Marcus Aurelius shows clemency to the vanquished in a bas-relief from the Arch of Marcus Aurelius, now in the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

Don't let the sweep of your schedule hide the beauty that lies all around you.

From faith to family, appreciate the gifts in your life.



EYE FOR EBONY/UNSPASH

and kissing her, and the guys who passed by letting out catcalls and whistles. I remember finding her 28 years later dying on the floor of our bedroom, with my two sons on either side of her, and now I look at all those months and days we spent together, and they seem to have passed like a snap of the fingers. Young people—and by young people, I mean anyone half my age or less—odds are the minutes, hours, days, and years of your lives will fly by as well. At some point in the future, you'll be as I am today, looking back into the recesses of time and wondering how everything went by so quickly. Here are some bits of advice that may help you squeeze as much as possible from the time given to you on this earth.

Negative Examples

First up are some of my regrets, warnings of what to avoid. Often in my younger years, both busyness and business occupied me, blinding me to the beauty of a sunset, the magic of falling snow, and the joy behind a child's smile. Writing those words here has blurred my eyes with tears of contrition for failing to love and appreciate this whirling globe and those around me as they deserved. These days, I do pause to savor special moments,

to enjoy conversing with a friend or watching a grandchild at play with Legos, but why on earth did it take me so long to immerse myself in these pleasures?

A piece of advice: Don't let the sweep of your schedule hide the beauty that lies all around you. In addition, I regret harming people, several in small ways, and a few so deeply I feel shame every time I recollect the pain I caused them. Some of these people I wounded are now either dead or have cut me off with no chance of making amends.

Second piece of advice from this old guy: Seek peace and make amends with others while you still have the opportunity.

Appreciate the Gifts

Having reached threescore and 10 years, I look back with enormous gratitude at some of the blessings bestowed on me by life.

My marriage was one of those blessings. Often, as is the case with most marriages, Kris and I had our good and our bad seasons of love, but we stayed true to our vows and to each other. After her sudden death, I regretted so many words I'd left unsaid to her, wishing, again and again, that she'd better known what she meant to me. Some 14 years later, one of her dearest friends told me, "I hope you know this, but you were the love of her life."

Her comment stunned me, brought tears to my eyes, and bestowed an enormous sense of peace.

Our children were also wonderful gifts. All four of them have amazed me by their diligence, their religious faith, and their parenting skills. Though they participated in various co-ops and entered into the dual enrollment program at community colleges, we homeschooled them from kindergarten through high school. It wasn't always easy or enjoyable—they often disliked being so different from their peers—but today all of them recognize the benefits of that education.

For them, I am grateful beyond words. Finally, the religious faith I gave to them, and to myself, is another good I hadn't really foreseen earlier in my life. My conversion at age 40 to Catholicism set my children off on this same path, and later my wife, and all of them today live and practice their faith, and are passing it along to their children.

The lesson here? Recognize and cherish the boons that life brings you.

Live to the Hilt

Live to the hilt means to live as fully as possible, to see as deeply as possible into reality. The image is gruesome in its origins, as it stems from a sword or a dagger thrust into an enemy to the hilt, the cross piece on the handle of the weapon. To the hilt now means simply entering into some enterprise—business, marriage, or life—and engaging it as deeply, fully, and enthusiastically as possible.

In Mark Helprin's "A Soldier of the Great War," a dying woman, Ariane, leaves a note for her husband. I've read the novel twice, and have given away five or six copies to young men of my acquaintance, yet Ariane's note still puzzles me, though as I have grown older, I have come to realize its beauty and truth:

"As long as you have life and breath, believe. Believe for those who cannot. Believe even if you have stopped believing. Believe for the sake of the dead, for love, to keep your heart beating, believe. Never give up, never despair, let no mystery confound you into the conclusion that mystery cannot be yours."

To me, Ariane is speaking of God—her note comes up in a discussion of theology—and other readers may well detect a different meaning. But when she speaks of mystery, I believe she means the mysteries surrounding us, embedded in the very essence of what it means to be a human being, and that we can discover those mysteries by embracing life.

An example: We look at a loved one—a wife, a child, an uncle, a friend—yet how rarely we see them. Their hearts and souls shine like angels, but we see only flesh, nerve, blood, and bone.

I wish now I'd had eyes that could see truly when I was younger, that could have pierced the shadows and seen the light in other human beings, particularly in those I loved.

I'll keep working on this one and encourage readers to do the same.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels—"Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

I Remember, I Remember by Thomas Hood

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day;
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember,
And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then,
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow!

I remember, I remember,
The roses, red and white;
The violets and the lily-cups,
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday,—
The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

HOW CAN YOU FIND WILL SMITH IN THE SNOW?



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.

PIC5IVE/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Aidan Danza, age 14

HOW DIFFERENT ANIMALS SLEEP

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

A good night's sleep is very important for people as well as animals, but there are many ways different animals can sleep.

The bear is probably the best-known animal sleeper. Instead of trying to live normally in the lean years of winter, bears sleep through it. While sleeping, less energy is required to keep them alive than when they are awake and moving around, so they don't have to eat as much (or at all). Still, a bear has to prepare for this hibernation by eating large amounts of food in late summer and autumn, getting their fat reserves big enough to sustain them through the winter.

Bears don't actually hibernate in a technical sense, instead, they enter a state called torpor. Torpor isn't as deep a sleep as hibernation, but it's still more sedate than regular sleep. When in torpor, they can react more quickly if danger approaches. Most bears will hibernate in a den. Depending on the climate, and abundance of food, some bears will hibernate for 2 to 7 months. In mild winter, some bears won't hibernate at all, though pregnant females always do.

The sloth is the stereotypical tired, lazy animal. However, while they move very slowly and rarely, they don't sleep as often as one would think. In the wild, it's rare for a sloth to sleep for more than 10

hours, hanging from a branch, or curled in a ball, wedged into a tree fork.

Giraffes sleep even less: Usually, they sleep for around five minutes at a time, adding up to around 30 minutes. Even when they do sleep, one eye is open, and both ears are always twitching. Usually, they sleep standing up, but sometimes they do lie down.

Many animals, including marine mammals and most birds, only half-sleep. This way, they sleep with one eye open and one shut, sleeping in one half of their brain and awake in the other. This is so they don't fall out of the sky when migrating, in the birds' case, or don't stop swimming and breathing, in the case of the marine mammals. In cold temperatures, some birds will go into torpor, and lower their body temperature and heart rate, so as to expend as little energy as possible.

AMAZING ESCAPES!

USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 8 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1		Medium puzzle 1		Hard puzzle 1	
8	10	14	18	19	33
= 24		= 24		= 24	
8	8	9	15	8	20
+ - x ÷		+ - x ÷		+ - x ÷	
Solution For Easy 1		Solution for Medium 1		Solution for Hard 1	
8 + 8 x (8 - 0)		(9 - 0) x (6 - 0)		8 - 02 - 01 + 00	

Across

1	1	Birthday Cake flavor (9)
5	1	Birthday party entertainer (5)
6	1	Gingersnap, e.g. (6)
7	1	Birthday party guests (7)
11	1	Birthday greeting (4)
12	1	They are wrapped (5)
14	1	You might blow it (5,5)
16	1	Get together (9)

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‘I urge everyone to financially support you to offset the demonetization efforts by YouTube. God bless!’

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NICK MENDOZA

Because of the banning that Big Tech is doing to a lot of people, I would stay away from YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and some of the others. Go with free speech. I really like that you're on Censored.news. Keep up with the good work and the true facts.

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I truly admire your courage in reporting the truth about what is happening in the U.S. and our world, and your defiance of the big tech censors in reporting on issues that concern millions of us, including election fraud and abuse of power by big tech. I urge everyone to financially support you to offset the demonetization efforts by YouTube. God bless!

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I have heard that The Epoch Times YouTube channel has been demonetized. Consider developing a channel for media devices like Roku. I believe the quality of your content will make this successful and would allow you to sell advertising with (potentially) less censorship from tech companies.

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I just signed up and love your news. So wonderful to read truth, not the lies and spin of MSM [mainstream media]. I am sorry you were demonetized by YouTube. You are patriots!

JULIE WIRTEL

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BOB HULLEY

We saw one of The Epoch Times' ads on YouTube about four months ago and subscribed. You got us through the election informed and sane, with coverage of what was happening we could find nowhere else. I have shamelessly re-posted your articles on my blog, forwarded to others information for which your reporters have done all the spadework and talked at least 3 other people into subscribing. Your \$1 offer is so ridiculously reasonable we are sending a contribution for your full subscription price to cover the last 4 months (and to make up for the demonetization/censorship). You're worth it!

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