

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CANDACE CRISCIONE



Candace Criscione traveled to Sicily in search of her relatives and family history. She now lives in Tuscany with her Italian husband and their three sons. (Above) Her wedding in Tuscany in 2013 brought together family from the U.S. and Sicily.

FAMILY ROOTS

The Joys and Labors of Genealogy

As many people explore their family trees, surprises often await

JEFF MINICK

Norman Rockwell's 1959 painting "Family Tree" offers viewers an entertaining and instructive look at ancestry and pedigree. A pirate who weds a Spanish beauty, a Confederate and a Union soldier, a Native American woman, a mountain man and cowboy, a starchy New England clergyman—all these progenitors lead to a modern-day couple and their smiling son.

At the beginning of "Look Homeward, Angel," Thomas Wolfe, like Rockwell, reminds us of our exhaustive heritage: "Each of us is all the sums he has not counted: subtract

We humans are living links between the past and the future.

us into nakedness and night again, and you shall see begin in Crete four thousand years ago the love that ended yesterday in Texas."

We humans are living links between the past and the future. The blood of our deceased grandparents runs in our veins even as we tenderly repair a granddaughter's knee cut in a fall while running on the sidewalk. In the gray eyes and dimples of our grandson we see the inherited gifts of his great-grandmother.

And while many of us either through indifference or neglect lack the interest to explore our own family tree, content with a few family stories gleaned from relatives, others enjoy the pursuit of their heritage, exploring their ancestors for fun and to learn more about their roots.

Americans and Lineage

Unlike much of the rest of the world, where caste and ancestral lines determined status, Americans have often shown little regard for titles and heredity. This was a country where men and women came to make of themselves what they could by dint of their hard work and intelligence. "Root, hog, or die," was the maxim of Westward bound settlers, meaning those pioneers needed to struggle and fight against circumstances if they were to survive. Bloodlines mattered less than grit.

But there were exceptions. In Massachusetts, those who claimed descent from the Pilgrims, and later from the Puritans, took pride in their lineage. To a lesser extent, the same held true for New York City. Families like the Cabots of Boston and the Roosevelts of New York knew where they



Candace and her husband on their wedding day in Tuscany in 2013.

hailed from and believed it bought them a special ranking in society as well as greater responsibilities.

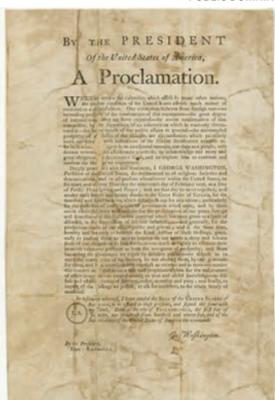
Unlike New England, parts of the South were settled by aristocrats, often gentlemen who were seeking to escape the rule of primogeniture, which gave the family estate intact to the oldest son. Names like Lee, Byrd, Berkeley, and Page were signposts of this informal aristocracy, eventually leading to the organization "the First Families of Virginia (FFV)." Citizens of South Carolina, particularly Charleston, also claimed status based on rank and name. An amusing aside: Because of its humble beginnings, North Carolina was once called "a vale of humility between two mountains of conceit."

A Genealogical Sea-Change

Today is different. More and more people have taken up investigating their ancestors. Genealogical societies abound.

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PUBLIC DOMAIN



George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation from 1795.

Don't Let Anyone Steal Your Gratitude

This Thanksgiving Day, let our hearts and minds be focused solely on gratitude

DUSTIN BASS

Ingratitude has somehow become vogue in America. It seems the more we progress in technology, science, entertainment options, food and clothing accessibility, self-managing appliances, and a laundry list of other blessings, the more opportunities there are to complain rather than be thankful. Even the middle-class, and some lower-class, individuals and families in America possess lifestyles that would rival the kings and queens of old.

Americans can point to the many pioneers and geniuses who have walked this land in order to provide such a quality of life. From before our nation's founding to today, we have so much to be thankful for and so many to thank.

Reflecting on the Miracles of the Pilgrims and Indians

In regard to our ancestors, many of us are already bracing for the inevitable assault on Thanksgiving. It shouldn't be a day of reflection upon the ills of our country's past, but rather on the good. We should think fondly upon those Pilgrims and Indians who met 400 years ago and indulged in a three-day festival together. We should think fondly on Tisquantum (Squanto), who practically saved the Pilgrims. William Bradford, governor of Plymouth at the time, called him "a special instrument sent of God." We should think fondly on Bradford and the rest of the Puritans who stuck together and, by the providence of God, survived and eventually thrived.

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COURTESY OF MICHELLE O'DONNELL



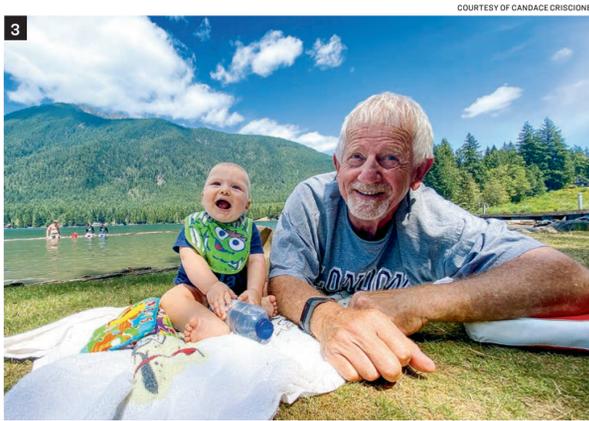
COURTESY OF CANDACE CRISCIONE



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COURTESY OF ALI ANWAAR



COURTESY OF CANDACE CRISCIONE

FAMILY ROOTS

The Joys and Labors of Genealogy

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Here in Virginia, for example, there are scores of historical and genealogical associations, the existence of which speaks to a deep desire on the part of many to explore the past.

And this desire to survey family history extends around the globe.

For example, Ali Anwaar, who is in his final year of law school in Rahimyar Khan, Pakistan, said his ancestors hailed from “a region where written records of births and deaths are only a recent phenomenon.” Despite the difficulties presented by this dearth of information, the intrepid Anwaar pressed on. Here is his account of that search:

“I started my research by outlining a list of all elders in my entire family, immediate and extended. I then proceeded to rely upon the computer program GRAMPS to record individual generations of my family before moving onto the rest. It was an extremely exhilarating process as no names would come out without a story, revealing interesting details about a lot of my ancestors that I had no idea about! Over a period of two months, I managed to collect adequate information about five generations of my family along with a large number of interesting personal stories that added a lot of value to my family’s genealogy.”

Regarding his motivation in tracking down his ancestors, Anwaar said, “This deep dive into my family history was more of a search for identity, almost like a frantic

1. Michelle O’Donnell (R) and Krystal, the sister she discovered via Ancestry.co.uk, on the first occasion that they met.

2. Candace Criscione’s husband and their three boys with their Italian great grandmother.

3. Candace Criscione’s youngest son with his grandfather on a visit to the United States.

4. Ali Anwaar found a great affinity with his great-grandfather, Khan Muhammad, “one of the most remarkable men to influence my life despite the fact that I never met him!” He was known as a man of honor, and the two of them also share similar facial features.

5. Ali Anwaar found this photo that his uncle took of his grandfather and his grandfather’s sister in the fields outside of their ancestral village. “I think this picture reflects a lot on how happiness and grace does not rest between financial or social circumstances for many people... some people are just... happy and content anywhere,” Anwaar said.

sailor searching for the coast where he set sail from, for no other beach would feel the same under his feet as the one that bore him.”

Unexpected Delights

After her graduation from Arizona State University as a computer science major and some time spent studying Italian in Florence, Candace Criscione traveled to Sicily in search of relatives and her family’s story. Here she reports, “I met my family, and I’ll never forget the warm hugs they gave me or the fabulous meals or seeing one of my distant cousins for the first time as he walked over a hilltop with his flock of sheep.”

That genealogical foray changed Criscione’s life. She found work in Italy, met her husband, and now the two of them and their three sons live in Tuscany, where she specializes in planning family vacations in Italy.

Other Surprises

Other readers also reported unforeseen endings to their research.

Marc McDermott is a genealogist who operates the website GenealogyExplained.com. When he started his own research, he discovered one of his ancestors had fought in the American Revolution. “That made it all worth it for me; there were so many hours spent poring over dusty records that turned into something really amazing,” he said.

Michelle O’Donnell is from Great Britain and currently resides in Toronto. She began looking into her absentee father’s history and discovered he was of Irish descent, making her eligible for an Irish passport. But there was another greater surprise: “I also—unexpectedly—discovered I had a sister six years older than me named Krystal. Not so much an ancestor, but I discovered her when digging around my ancestral history. I reached out to her,

and we are now very good friends, which is great.”

And in examining his maternal relatives in Ohio and Indiana, Larry Williams uncovered all sorts of family history involving the Civil War and its aftermath, in which his ancestors played important political and cultural roles, serving in high office and corresponding with different officials, including Theodore Roosevelt.

The Places You’ll Go

If we wish to find out more about our family history, that task today is easier than ever. We have online sites that can help us track down those who came before us. We can follow in the footsteps of Criscione, fly to distant countries, and do on-the-ground direct research. We can take as our example Anwaar, who persevered and found that beach he was searching for.

And as all of these respondents know, we may be happily shocked by what we find. There may be villains in our family tree, like Norman Rockwell’s pirate, but we may also discover, as Larry Williams, that those who have gone before us were noble souls to be admired.

In “The Story of My Life,” Helen Keller wrote, “There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his.”

Poke around in that family tree, and be prepared to be surprised.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin in 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.

Don’t Let Anyone Steal Your Gratitude

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Part of that providence stemmed from someone else for whom we should be thankful: Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag people.

The Wampanoag and the Pilgrims became strong allies and cultivated a trusting friendship between the two peoples for half a century. This relationship resulted in more than a trading partnership or on-going festivals: It proved to be mutually providential.

Two years after the three-day festival, Massasoit became deathly ill. The news reached the Puritans, which prompted Edward Winslow to visit the chief. Upon Winslow’s arrival, he found the chief to be blind and unable to eat or drink due to massive swelling in his mouth. Winslow provided medicine, scraped the inside of his mouth, and made him a meal of chicken broth soup. Within half an hour, the chief was improving and his blindness had dissipated.

Massasoit and the Wampanoag informed the Pilgrims of a planned attack by the Massachusetts Indians. Myles Standish led the Pilgrims and some of the Wampanoag men to bring an end to the plot.

That same year, another moment of provi-



PUBLIC DOMAIN

“Thanksgiving at Plymouth,” 1925, by Jennie Augusta Brownscombe.

dence arrived, but it wasn’t provided by the Wampanoag or the Pilgrims. Rather, it was provided by the One who sent Squanto.

A drought had hit Plymouth right after planting season. With no rain, there would be no crops. If this drought had persisted, it would have eventually decimated the colony. Winter rations were gone. Fishing had become the primary source of food, but this was hit or miss (as fishing typically goes). By mid-July, Bradford noted that the ground was “parched like withered hay.” If God had secured their voyage, brought them to the specific location where Squanto would find them, and introduced them to a friendly and beneficial tribe, then it seemed probable that God would provide a way out of this predicament.

Bradford declared a day of “humble and fervent prayer” and fasting for the colony. A day that started out hot and cloudless ended with a heavy rain that saved the crops and the colony. The Indians also witnessed this miracle and how it transpired.

Our Nation’s First Thanksgiving Day Proclamation

One of our ancestors who was no stranger to miracles was George Washington. The

very facts that the Americans had defeated the greatest empire on earth, that the states’ “firm league of friendship” had survived to establish a union under the Constitution, and that all those states had ratified the Constitution were miracles in themselves. For these reasons and so many more, Washington put forth the first Thanksgiving Day Proclamation.

On Oct. 3, 1789, he announced that there should be a “day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God.” That recommended day was assigned to “Thursday the 26th of November.”

A National Thanksgiving Day

It was nearly a century later before the United States began celebrating Thanksgiving Day federally. Though most states celebrated the holiday on the same day, some states chose their own days. One of the most influential people of the 19th century, Sarah Josepha Hale, implored presidents and politicians to advocate a national Thanksgiving Day. Most of those presidents referred back to Thomas Jefferson’s reasoning that proclaiming such a day would be an infringement on the First Amendment’s freedom of religion clause.

It wasn’t until Abraham Lincoln chose to make the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation in 1863 that it stuck (though it wasn’t officially a national holiday until Congress made it so in 1870). His proclamation and that Thanksgiving Day fell on the same days as Washington’s: Oct. 3 and Nov. 26.

Lincoln hoped that Americans, despite being “in the midst of a civil war unequalled in magnitude and severity,” would “set apart and observe” that day “as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father.” He recommended that the people

of the nation should also “fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it.”

The war would continue for another 19 months, but the nation would be restored.

The Modern Thanksgiving Day Must Recall the Past

Now here we are, nearly 160 years later, dealing with a wounded nation in need of restoration. Our annual day of thanksgiving is often met with cynicism and ingratitude, though arguably that negativity tends to originate from a loud and incessant minority. Yes, there are ills in our country—economically, politically, and morally—which must be addressed in order to heal and restore. It’s no different than nearly any other time in our nation’s history. There have always been and will always be issues to deal with and problems to solve.

Despite this, Thanksgiving Day shouldn’t be added to the list of days in which we find ourselves complaining or pondering our ills. It should be the day that our hearts and minds are focused solely on being thankful for the blessings we have. We can look back over the 400 years of incredible—even supernatura—prosperity and providence bestowed upon the United States. Despite our ills, our land is the most sought after on the globe. It’s evident that the grateful words of Edward Winslow continue to echo across borders and oceans: “by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”

This coming Thanksgiving Day, let us be partakers of that plenty, not simply in food, but in reasons to be grateful.

Dustin Bass is the co-host of The Sons of History podcast and an author.

FROM A READER:

‘One Thanksgiving at a Time’

April 1989: I was 48 years old. On the surface, I was doing quite well. But underneath the façade of my many successful family, professional, and community accomplishments was a life in turmoil. I was so empty.

No matter what I had accomplished, I was always on to the next project. I suffered from the addiction of “more.” Maybe therapy would help. I heard about this new hotshot Ph.D. in town. Maybe he could somehow explain my behavior. I felt so alone, so lost. There really was “a hole in my soul.” Nothing ever seemed to satisfy me. Nothing was ever enough.

Little did I know that his suggestions were going to change my life forever. Wait till you hear this one. He suggested—no, he insisted—that I try leading a sober, moral, spiritual, God-centered life. Where in the world did that come from? It still amazes me, all these years later, that I actually agreed to try it. If I had problems initially pulling it off, the suggestion was: “Fake it till I make it.” That seemed preposterous.

Could a new relationship with a higher power, whom I called God, along with my new friends in AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), teach me how to lead a more productive life? Judge for yourself. Thirty-two years later, still sober, still speaking to the man upstairs for guidance, understanding, and support, my life has truly been transformed. But it really started in November 1989, when I attended my first life-changing Thanksgiving.

I always thought that the whole point of Thanksgiving Day was the football games, the Macy’s Parade, and of course, the great family get-together with the outstanding food.

But that was about to change. It seems that every year, my new AA home group ran an all-day, holiday “party.” From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., they had their own brand of Thanksgiving. Open to everyone, in reality, it was a safe place, a haven for anyone alone or in need of help.

It was “suggested” that I volunteer, even if it was only for an hour. Everyone in my group took part. Some actually cooked food for the day-long event. Some set up the room. Some served the food. Others cleaned up afterward. Why would they do that? What did that have to do with my new life, and especially, my new relationship with God?

I really was much too busy that day. Their reaction reminded me of the look on my mother’s face when, as a teenager, I had violated one of her many mandatory rules. I was just beginning to understand that these were not “suggestions” at all. They were a necessary part of my new life.

So, on Thanksgiving Day, before my family’s get-together had even begun, before the opening kick-off, I headed over to the Port Washington’s United Presbyterian Church and AA’s all-day Thanksgiving Day celebration.

What a shock! What a surprise! The church basement room was filled with all sorts of people, some familiar faces, others I didn’t know. Some came for a cup of coffee, others “hung out” all day. Some enjoyed our food. Others just tried our amazing deserts. It didn’t take long before I figured it all out. Thanksgiving had taken on a totally new meaning. Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I met people who were alone and unfortunately had no family at all.

Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I found myself serving food to people who were down and out and really needed a good meal.

Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I spoke to others who were close to picking up a drink or a drug, and needed our help to talk them out of a really bad decision.

Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I met people who actually had no place to go other than our AA meeting or the neighborhood bar.

And most important, instead of thinking only of myself, I “worked” hand in hand with sober, spiritual, God-loving people who taught me the true meaning of Thanksgiving.

That day, 32 years ago, in that church basement, my life changed forever. It became clear to me that, compared to other people’s problems, mine weren’t so bad after all. And it also became obvious that in order for me to stay sober and truly live a spiritual God-centered life, I would have to reach out and extend a helping hand to those less fortunate.

Only then would I see that God had blessed me with a life beyond my wildest dreams. “He has done for me what I couldn’t do for myself.”

I returned home with a whole new attitude. I learned that:

- It’s not the food.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

There really was ‘a hole in my soul.’ Nothing ever seemed to satisfy me. Nothing was ever enough.

- It’s not the football games.
- It’s not the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade.

- It’s not the frivolous, boring conversations with people I only see on holidays.

- It’s certainly not the expensive wine. It is absolutely about the satisfaction of knowing that I have made a difference in the life of another human being.

For years, until I moved to Nashville six years ago:

- sure, I watched the parade and football games.

- sure, I enjoyed a great family-oriented Thanksgiving dinner. But I always found the time to attend that glorious celebration where I was reminded of everything I had to be grateful for.

Have a glorious holiday, everyone. Hug your kids. Tell your spouse or your loved ones that you love and appreciate them. Reach out and help someone in need. Pray for those less fortunate.

Only then will God bless you with “a life beyond your wildest dreams.”

“One Thanksgiving at a time.”

— Dr. Steve Morris, Tennessee

“Freedom From Want,” 1941-1945, by Norman Rockwell. National Archives at College Park.

Making the Most of the Season of Giving

7 simple ways to practice generosity

BARBARA DANZA

‘Tis the season to be giving. If you are looking for simple ways to practice generosity, here are some ideas you might start with. You’re sure to find that not only does stepping up your acts of generosity bless the recipient, but the rewards come to you as well. It’s such fun and colors the whole season with the spirit it’s meant to have.

Overtip

One of the simplest ways to incorporate giving into your regular life is by overtipping. If it’s possible to budget extra funds for this idea, establish the habit of going above and beyond the typical amount you’d normally tip for services received.

Whenever you go out to eat, pick up your dry cleaning, receive a delivery, get a haircut, check out of a hotel, or have any professional service performed at your home, you have an opportunity to tip big. If it’s in the budget, choose moments to offer an unexpected blessing to someone this holiday season.

Treat Your Neighbors

Our neighbors play a special role in our everyday lives. One way to show your appreciation for them is to offer them special holiday treats this season. Deliver fresh-baked cookies, a pie, or some specialty you’re adept at; pick up something you know they just love; deliver them a note sharing your gratitude for having a neighbor like them, or simply give them a personal holiday card to let them know you’re thinking of them at this special time.



RAKURTE/UNSPLASH

Receiving a holiday card via snail mail is always a nice surprise, and a nice change from the usual bills or advertisements.

Send It Snail Mail

We are so accustomed to lightning-fast communication at our fingertips, that receiving a thoughtful note or package in the mail means more than ever before. Make a loved one’s day by sending them a care package filled with curated treats you know they’ll love or a simple note of appreciation.

Simple gestures warm the heart and are greatly appreciated. This works beautifully for relatives and friends who live far away, but also for those close by. When mail usually comprises junk and bills, a surprise message of love is a total delight.

Give Your Undivided Attention

Not every act of generosity requires money or things, of course. Something that is becoming an ever more rare commodity is undivided attention. Make an extra effort to step away from the screens and other distractions when you’re with others and offer them your undivided attention. This may take a surprising amount of practice, but if you aim for progress throughout the season, you may be thrilled to find that you’ve been able to deeply connect with the people in your life. Let your cares be light and share your lightness with those around you.

Cure Someone’s Loneliness

The events of the past couple of years have certainly exacerbated the problem of loneliness for many. Take stock of how your loved ones—or even acquaintances—are doing and offer your time and attention to those feeling lonely. Paying a visit, sharing a cup of coffee or tea, or ringing them on the phone may mean more than you’d imagine to people who have been suffering from loneliness. Make the effort and spread holiday cheer to those who most need it.

Surprise Someone

The element of surprise in giving can be such a delight to both the recipient and the giver. Offer surprises to anyone you can this holiday season. An unexpected gift, a freshly baked treat, a candy cane hung on a doorknob, a Christmas dinner to someone in need, or picking up someone else’s bill are all ways that you can surprise someone else and have such fun giving of yourself this holiday season.

Generously (and Genuinely) Compliment and Thank

Finally, and perhaps most simply, look for the good in others, and offer genuine compliments or words of thanks. Gratitude for the simplest things in life is one of the easiest and most effective ways to share hope, beauty, and goodness within yourself and with those around you. Be a light this holiday season—a refreshing, uplifting, and optimistic influence on the environment around you.



Hard Times, Strong Men

Difficult times provide unique opportunities to embrace virtues such as integrity, forbearance, and faith

RYAN MOFFATT

A certain quote has been making the rounds on social media this past year. Its pervasiveness is an indication of its relevance. Of unknown origin, the quote reads: “Hard times create strong men. Strong men create good times. Good times create weak men. And weak men create hard times.”

It’s an accurate description of the cycle of prosperity and regression in society, one that has held true throughout the ages. It was echoed by Cyrus the Great when he conquered the rich and abundant soil of Persian rulers. Instead of occupying the fertile ground of his conquered foe, Cyrus opted to remain in the mountainous terrain of his home, saying, “Soft lands breed soft men; wondrous fruits of the earth and valiant warriors grow not from the same soil.” The 21st century has largely been one of enjoying the fruits of our forebears. We are content with luxuries and accustomed to abundance, rarely questioning the source or transitory nature of our good fortune. Many of us have relatives who lived

through hard times. They save every dollar, scrape every morsel from their plates, and admonish us for any waste. We find their behavior odd, even comical at times, but they know better than us that prosperity doesn’t last. When hardship does arrive, they’ll be prepared, while the wasteful will be left wanting, unaccustomed to austerity.

In light of present circumstances, it would be wise to remember the inevitability of discomfort and adopt, out of choice, a habit of fortitude and self-discipline, before it becomes a necessity. Grit, tenacity, and endurance are skills that can be learned and honed through purposeful practice. They allow us to thrive with little material means at our disposal.

Courage and Convictions

We may well be coming to the end of a prolonged period of “good times.” This isn’t pessimistic or defeatist. Quite the contrary. Through this challenge, we can forge ourselves into the worthy inheritors of our ancestors. But turning the tide toward liberty and prosperity requires a fortitude that has been dormant in this generation.

As Solzhenitsyn reminds us, ‘The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie.’

When a largely passive population is seemingly oblivious to the authoritarian controls adopted by traditionally democratic countries, it’s up to the strong to reaffirm our humanity by living authentically and truthfully. This is the first and most important step in society regaining its bearings. It is the primary attribute of the “strong man,” and the foremost revolutionary act.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Soviet concentration camp survivor and author of “The Gulag Archipelago” championed the role of the individual in resisting authoritarianism: “You can resolve to live your life with integrity. Let your credo be this: Let the lie come into the world, let it even triumph. But not through me.”

In this day, when certain inalienable truths are taboo and only sanctioned narratives are deemed acceptable for public discourse, the individual who dares to seek and speak the truth displays a strength and character much needed in these times. Indeed, it’s no small thing to act with virtue and integrity in the face of external pressure to do otherwise.

The 20th century is rife with examples of authoritarian control and tyrannical actors on the world stage. These tendencies are in the human DNA, ready to bubble to the surface unless they are kept at bay by the clear-minded and courageous. Those who are willing and able to take up the challenge of the times are given the opportunity to become the “strong men” needed to usher in the next wave of prosperity. Courage is contagious and the ripple effects of noble action are the seeds that change society from the inside.

As Solzhenitsyn reminds us, “The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie.”

In the end, integrity, forbearance, and faith are the attributes of a worthy existence on this earth. These virtues don’t manifest readily in times of ease, and we should be grateful for the opportunity to embody them.

Jordan Peterson, a great admirer of Solzhenitsyn, has been exploring this generation to find its strength and tilt the scales in favor of retaining our hard-earned freedom. His book “12 Rules for Life,” contains many passages relevant to the internal and external battles of our age.

He writes, “To stand up straight with your shoulders back is to accept the terrible responsibility of life, with eyes wide open. It means deciding to voluntarily transform the chaos of potential into the realities of habitable order.”

Ryan Moffatt is a tradesman, father, writer, and musician.

Pushing the Pause Button on Profanity

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

While out on an evening walk in a local park, I heard a fellow walker coming down the path behind me, talking on his phone. His tone was even-keeled and calm ... but it seemed like every fifth word was an expletive, uttered in the same calm manner.

I cite this incident not because it’s out of the ordinary, but because it is, in fact, very ordinary. It seems one can’t go through a day—or even an hour—without hearing someone use words related to bodily functions or religious terminology in an angry, flippant, or even nonchalant way. What once was the vocabulary of sailors, not to be uttered in a lady’s presence, is now what spews from many mouths, including female ones.

The mainstreaming of profanity, and the implications that it brings, is disturbing on many levels. Despite this, I was recently struck by how those who want to advance the good, the true, and the beautiful can combat this trend and even turn the situation into an encouraging endeavor.

The idea that profanity has increased in the world is not just a figment of imagination. According to a 2017 study headed by psychologist Jean Twenge, books published in the mid-2000s were 28 times more likely to contain a list of seven specific swear words than they were in the 1950s. In all likelihood, the same can go for movies and television as well. To test this, all one has to do is pull up a modern movie and time how long one can watch without hearing profanity. If I were a betting girl, I would wager a person couldn’t get through five minutes of a film—and that might be generous.

This increase suggests several things, the first of which is a decline in intelligence. Those who approve of vulgarities are fond of touting studies showing that the opposite is true, namely, that highly intelligent people are capable of a wide range of colorful profanities and don’t have “pover-

ty-of-vocabulary.” However, true intelligence includes tactful awareness, and as an article in Scientific American explains, studies suggesting that swearing is a sign of heightened intelligence “tell us nothing about how speakers use taboo words, just what they would be capable of saying if they chose to use them.” As such “those with greater verbal fluency” may actually “swear less because they have the lexical database required to actually express themselves in other ways.” Thus, as we hear our profanity quotient increasing, it seems probable to suggest that vocabulary and knowledge are decreasing.

Second, profanity shows the state of our innermost being. Although vulgarity is now offered casually, it often comes hand-in-hand with anger. This fact is most easily seen in the expletives regularly leveled at today’s leaders (regardless of party). The fact that these expletives are also often sexual in nature may lend insight into anger expressed through profanity, for lust, desire, and pornography usage are often at the root of angry tirades. A wise old book tells us that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” If such is the case, does it not seem that the heightened profanity is a sign of an angry and lustful national character?

Finally, society’s high level of profanity is something that is used to take down our country. In 1958, W. Cleon Skousen listed 45 goals the communists had in hopes of eventually overthrowing America in his book, “The Naked Communist.” No. 25 on that list reads, “Break down cultural standards of morality by promoting pornography and obscenity in books, magazines, motion pictures, radio and TV.” A simple walk down the street amid a profanity-laced culture seems to demonstrate that this goal has been accomplished.

Yet, this review of the facts isn’t to make us depressed that we have become a dumb, angry country that is occupied by the en-



The idea that profanity has increased in the world is not just a figment of imagination.

emy ideology of communism. Instead, it gives us a glimpse of one small thing we have control over in this out-of-control country: ourselves.

When average individuals despairingly wonder what they can do to make a difference and save our flailing country, one thing any person can do is clean up his own mouth. Anger, frustration, and baseness don’t have to come out through our words. They don’t have to dwell in our minds, either, and one good way to boot them out of the mind is not to listen to them. Turn off that TV, radio program, or movie that freely throws profanity around.

Reclaiming our country starts small. Let’s start that small effort by watching what comes out of our own mouths.

Annie Holmquist is the editor of Intellectual Takeout and the online editor of Chronicles Magazine, both projects of the Charlemagne Institute.

When we are at a loss at what we can do to make a difference for our country, we can remember that it starts with us, and that small acts like speaking kindly do have an impact.

BOOK REVIEW

‘The Viking Heart: How Scandinavians Conquered the World’

Arthur Herman proves how much the world owes the Scandinavians

DUSTIN BASS

The Vikings were a warring people steeped in mythology and legend stemming from the very wars and battles they fought. Known for their brutal savagery from factual and fictionalized retellings, the Viking rule remains one of the most captivating eras of world history. In Arthur Herman’s new book, “The Viking Heart: How Scandinavians Conquered the World,” the reader is taken on a chronological journey covering nearly 1,200 years, from 793, when Vikings struck the island monastery of Lindisfarne in northeast England, to the contributions of World War II and post-World War II Scandinavians.

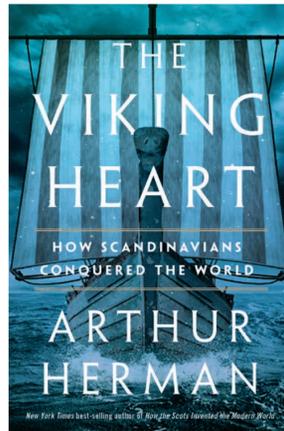
Interest in the topic of Vikings has recently witnessed a massive resurgence with the hit show ‘Vikings’ from The History Channel.

In much the same vein as one of his previous works (and one of my favorite books), “How the Scots Invented the Modern World,” Herman presents the struggles and triumphs of a people that in the modern age have been seemingly overlooked. When it comes to historical significance, the Scandinavians have unfortunately often been relegated to their Viking forebears, when there is so much more to the Norsemen’s history.

A Deep Look at the People From the North

Interest in the topic of Vikings has recently witnessed a massive resurgence with the hit show “Vikings” from The History Channel.

Herman’s book tapped into that interest, but the timing wasn’t the reason he wrote it—rather, it was time to do it. When his book about the Scots was published 20 years ago to great acclaim, he said his uncle suggested writing a book about his Scandinavian ancestry—Norwegian, to be precise. It was a long and thorough process, full of research, travel, and long family discussions. This labor of love is truly a lovely book that will



‘The Viking Heart: How Scandinavians Conquered the World’

Author

Arthur Herman

Publisher

Mariner Books, 2021

Pages

512

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

Our Conscience, Not Emotions, Should Guide Us on This Earthly Journey

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

Dear Next Generation:

My experience has taught me that living by the principles of truth and justice is essential to leading a fulfilling life. Today’s culture tries to persuade us that feelings should become the principal influence in our decision-making. Yet it is self-discipline and sacrifice that compel us to achieve the selfless goals that contribute to the betterment of society. Just look at the soldiers in the American Revolution and our Founding Fathers, all of whom risked their lives for the cause of truth and justice so that one nation, under God, could freely come to fruition.

We all must take responsibility for our daily decisions and consequences. Yes, life on this earth is not always fair. Yet there’s always hope. I believe an eternal destiny or heavenly award awaits us if we choose to embrace the virtues of selflessness, self-control, and fortitude. It is our conscience that should guide us in this earthly journey, rather than our ever-changing, transitory, and fleeting emotional state. To possess a well-formed conscience requires us to have a well-informed conscience. It is trendy for people today to claim that “your truth” is different from “my truth,” which results in the “dictatorship of moral relativism,” so aptly described by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. If there is no objective truth or moral standard to which we may conform our conduct, then we are lost at sea with no possibility to navigate and no moral compass by which to judge our actions.

So where can we discover timeless, moral principles, based upon justice and truth? A



“Leif Eriksson Discovers America” by Hans Dahl.

undoubtedly make any person of Scandinavian origin or descent proud—much like I was after reading the book about the Scots (my mother is a McDonald).

The author does a fine job of tracing the Vikings’ dominance and endurance in the Scandinavian countries. He makes a convincing presentation that the Vikings, much like many other civilizations, evolved, trading their primary economic source of war and plunder for the economics of trade.

The reader is able to follow the rises and falls of the Nordic people—from Ragnar Ladbok to William the Conqueror to Gustavus Adolphus; their great adventurers—from Leif Erikson to Charles Lindbergh Jr.; their women—from Rusla to Queen Margaret of Denmark; their writings—from the epics and sagas to the works of Carl Sandburg; the transition from paganism to Christianity; their early institution and practice of democracy; and their individual and collective contributions to saving the world from fascism, saving millions from starvation, and establishing the gold standard in honoring those who work toward the prize of peace.

A Timely Read

“The Viking Heart” is a timely book, especially given the current climate in which America finds itself. With the ongoing social narratives that attempt to convince people to be ashamed rather than feel a sense of pride about their heritage, this book gives countless reasons for the latter.

Before starting the book, I sensed the inevitability of a fun read. With Vikings in the mix, how could it not? Herman didn’t

all stages of life, but it’s especially important to form virtuous habits during childhood and adolescence so these habits can become ingrained, reinforced, and perpetuated throughout the rest of our lives. Cheating on an exam, stealing from a fellow employee, engaging in extramarital affairs, or plagiarizing the work of others are just a few examples of behaviors that may provide instant gratification. Frequently, each of these vices may have started in one’s youth with “a little white lie,” which, if unchecked, gradually evolves into much more serious offenses.

Satisfying one’s arbitrary feelings in an imprudent, irresponsible manner can adversely impact the direction of one’s life in the blink of an eye. For example, anyone can become an instant victim of a careless drunk driver. All our decisions and actions have consequences. While we may not intentionally set out to hurt another human being, imprudent decisions and actions may have lifelong, adverse consequences. On the other hand, making judicious, moral decisions and leading temperate lives based on the principles of honesty, compassion, and integrity will help us serve society in many noble ways, depending on the God-given, vocational gifts we choose to employ. As the Bible reminds us, “The truth will set you free.” Your personal interactions on a micro-level can gradually transform the world, one person at a time, into a global society of truth, justice, and peace.

Developing self-mastery requires patience and fortitude. My late mother, a child of the Depression, always told me that anything worth doing is worth doing well. Her encouragement helped me to persevere in achieving two master’s degrees (in music education and psychology) and a doctoral degree in organizational leadership. With the help of God, I have persevered, receiving my first master’s degree in 1985, and my most recent master’s in 2019. The longer I live, the more I humbled I become because I realize there’s always so much more to learn, from a moral, pedagogical, and philosophical perspective.

Finally, while we seek justice and truth, there are times when these moral virtues must also be tempered by the virtues of compassion, humility, mercy, and forgive-



“Fortitude and Justice,” 1743, by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.

ness. We possess a concupiscent nature, which means we all have the propensity to engage in behavior that offends God and others. Yet each day starts anew—another gift from God. We can choose to make amends, to reform our lives, and to impart forgiveness to those who may have offended us. In turn, we must also humbly ask others for their forgiveness. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The Golden Rule is timeless and applicable to everyone, regardless of one’s cultural, ethnic, religious, or ideological background. We are all equal in the sight of our Creator.

—Anne Marie Vale, Ph. D., Rhode Island

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



Trahan with the paramedics who performed life-saving interventions onsite and transported him to the hospital. The officers were later honored with a "clinical excellence" award for saving his life.

Caleb Trahan shakes hands with an officer who helped him before he was taken to the hospital. They have developed a unique friendship since then.



Dr. Julie E. Schaferling (L) with Caleb Trahan and his family.



Trahan hit a traffic light pole on his way back home on May 14, 2017.



Caleb Trahan, 29, from Conroe, Texas, survived a near-fatal car crash on Mother's Day in 2017.

Paying It Forward

Man survives near-fatal accident, becomes EMT

EPOCH INSPIRED STAFF

Four years ago on Mother's Day, about 4:30 a.m., Laurie Trahan received a devastating call. After a near-fatal crash, her 25-year-old son was fighting for his life.

High-spirited and always ready to help others, Caleb Trahan, now 29, of Conroe, Texas, was running on just two hours of sleep after back-to-back work shifts when the vehicle he was driving hit a large traffic light pole on his way home that night. Partially ejected, he was stuck in the windshield, lying on the engine block. It took first responders almost an hour to cut him out of his truck.

If it wasn't for Julie E. Schaferling, an emergency room doctor who happened to pass by and stop to assist, the Trahans would have lost their son. Between resuscitation and a total of 50 surgeries, Caleb's heart stopped three times, but he made an incredible recovery.

He told The Epoch Times in an interview that he's grateful to the selfless service of his caretakers and first responders—the real-life heroes who inspired him to become an emergency medical technician (EMT).

"She had no reason to stop," Caleb said of the doctor. "She was almost home. She didn't have to do that. She did. She held my hand until the paramedics got there. Then she walked up to the street ... she sat there and she watched. She went home and held her kids, and she cried all day long.

"When I came into the ER, I was actively dying. And when I met her [post-recovery], she said, 'I wasn't going let you die by yourself, not on Mother's Day. Your mom needed someone there with you.'

"That's a role model for not even medicine, but just life and being a good person. That's the commitment to what you do that is completely not demanded of you. So now I wear that [EMT] uniform, and it's really an awesome feeling. It's been a great process."

Recalling that fateful night, Caleb said a friend had called him up late in the evening saying his truck had broken down. After they finished the repairs at around 1 a.m., Caleb's friend took him to a local bar to buy him a drink.

After two drinks, Caleb decided to drive home. However, a few minutes later, he fell asleep while behind the wheel and crashed into a pole.

"Seven miles down the road, I fell asleep driving," Caleb said. "My vehicle left the road. I hit a large pole. I was partially ejected. I was pained and trapped so badly. They did a procedure that cut my chest open to

relieve air.

"I had several broken bones, my face, I broke my neck, my back. I broke both my collarbones, my shoulders—all of the ribs on my left and most of my right. My sternum was broken. My liver was lacerated. So I was bleeding out internally. My left leg was snapped in half, my right leg was crushed, my right ankle was crushed. I had burns to my chest, and both my lungs collapsed."

After driving 20 minutes to the hospital, his parents anxiously waited for news in the emergency room. When Laurie and her husband were escorted to the trauma room, they found Caleb unconscious and wrapped in blankets covering the blood. He was rushed into surgery.

Five days later, he awoke with his mother leaning over him with tears in her eyes, and asked his mother if he had hurt anybody else.

"I can't even describe the amount of pain that I was in," he said. "What sticks with me the most is the look on my mom's face. She was leaning over me, she was rubbing my hair. You could tell she had been crying. But she was smiling and so happy."

During the journey to the hospital, Caleb needed to be resuscitated three times. With his life-threatening trauma, there were doubts as to whether he would live. While at the hospital, he had 15 surgeries.

The doctors had to fix both legs and put a bypass in to restore blood in the right leg, which was crushed in the accident for about an hour and had no blood flow for almost six or seven hours.

Caleb was discharged from the hospital in June 2017, and since then, he's had four procedures. While on the road to recovery, he faced several challenges since coming home from the hospital.

"I was stuck in bed," he said. Before the accident, "I was someone who was always on the go. Sitting still, without friends, two weeks out of the hospital, I remember wishing that I would not have lived. I remember trying to find a way to kill myself and make it look accidental."

Caleb realized that committing suicide wouldn't be fair to his parents who had just gone through this "humongous roller-coaster ride of emotions." He needed to make a choice, and that was the time when he reached out to the ER doctor, his guardian angel.

"Her response to me was, 'You don't walk away from that. So don't take it for granted,'" he said, adding that he decided to "pay it forward" and become an EMT.

Over a month after leaving the hospital, though Caleb was able to walk somewhat, he was told to stay in bed for six months.

"I started EMT school, and my legs were still broken, my neck was still broken. But I was on a mission. I wanted to help someone else. That's what, I think, saved my life."

Caleb Trahan

Share your stories with us at emg.inspired@epochtimes.com, and get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for the Epoch Inspired newsletter at TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter

However, in October that year, he started his studies.

"I started EMT school, and my legs were still broken, my neck was still broken. But I was on a mission. I wanted to help someone else. That's what, I think, saved my life," said Caleb, who'd had a rough childhood and served in the Army from the age of 17 through 19.

"I towed it to everyone and myself to create a success story."

Caleb's recovery time is nothing short of inspirational. Four years after his accident, he has fully recovered, with the exception of his right leg. He still needs regular checkups at the local hospital.

When looking back on the incident, Caleb is thankful for the people who saved his life and says they're a big reason why he's now an EMT. When asked at a job interview if he would be upset to get a late emergency call after the end of his shift, his response was that his "job doesn't have an off time."

"The doctor who saved my life didn't have an off time. She got there on her way home, and did everything she could to try to keep me alive," he said.

Having been a patient in recovery for a long time, he now takes real pride in saving other people's lives.

"I was the patient before I was the health care provider. And I'm able to connect with that," he said. "I'm able to relate with my patients on a different kind of platform. It's good for both of us."

Every now and then, Caleb kindly offers to go to local schools in front of thousands of children to share his inspirational story.

When speaking at local schools, Caleb tells the children that he imagines he's receiving a phone call to say that a loved one has been in an accident. He tells the kids they should consider making a moral pact with their loved ones to not do anything that might lead them to receive this kind of phone call.

Caleb has some strong words for those who are considering driving but might not be fully clearheaded or are exhausted.

"If you don't think that you are safe to drive, whether you had too much to drink, or you've taken drugs or medications, or you are tired, distracted, emotional, you're crying, whatever—whatever the case is, don't do it. It's not worth it," he said.

The brave EMT's family has been there for him through every step of this long process. Despite the circumstances, Caleb says, he wouldn't change a thing.

"It's made me pretty strong. We're very strong," he said. "It's been a journey. We've had our ups and downs, and I'm a work in progress. But I am happy with where I'm at."

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CALEB TRAHAN



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

A Lighthearted Northern Irish Tale Told Amid 'The Troubles'

MARK JACKSON

Most young British actor standouts will have the ermine mantle of "The next Lawrence Olivier" immediately draped on their shoulders to try out for size. Olivier is widely considered to have been the greatest stage actor of all time, in addition to being an old-school Hollywood movie star, an accomplished and prolific director, and founder of one of the most prestigious theater companies in England. It's a ponderous cape, but I remember thinking at the time of his breakout performance in Shakespeare's "Henry V" that actor-director-writer Kenneth Branagh might indeed be able to succeed in bearing the weight of it.

Branagh exploded out of the showbiz starting gate in 1989, directing and starring in "Henry V" at the tender age of 29. It was a virtuoso turn, the battle scenes of which have informed to this day the likes of "Braveheart," "Lord of the Rings," and any medieval battle involving horses and whistling overhead arrow-voleys taking place in muddy fields. All his filmed Shakespeare directorial endeavors, including Laurence Fishburne as Othello, have been impeccable.

The precocious ambition was staggering. Branagh was barely off and running, and already he was writing a memoir.

The young Branagh didn't have movie-star looks, but his Shakespearean acting was untouchable and transporting—the honey-tongued tenor voice capable of enormously beguiling theatrical magic. Unfortunately, his American accent, while flawless, oddly turned him into a sort of younger blonde Mandy Patinkin, which gave the American public pause, so he couldn't quite best Olivier in the international matinee idol category.

FILM REVIEW

'King Richard': The Williams Family Patriarch as Abrasive Stage Dad

MICHAEL CLARK

The storybook ascension of tennis-playing sisters Venus and Serena Williams to the top of their sport is that of legend. Unlike the preteens of well-to-do families with limitless budgets, the younger Williams girls played on rundown courts in bad neighborhoods with hand-me-down equipment and—most importantly—no ability to pay for professional lessons.

For most parents, this would mean their children would remain talented amateurs for the rest of their lives, but for Richard Williams (Will Smith), it's a mere stumbling block. In one of his few instances of reality and clarity, Richard is correct in recognizing that his daughters will be future major stars. His mission is to convince others he's right, and in the long run, he succeeds. But along the way, he gains many enemies, which ultimately makes the journey all the more tenuous for Venus and Serena.

Smith, Venus, and Serena Are Co-producers

Three of the six producers of the film are Smith, Venus, and Serena, which in itself wouldn't be an indicator of favorable bias, yet they went even further by hiring a little-known feature director (Reinaldo Marcus Green) and a first-time screenwriter (Zach Baylin). For such a high-profile movie from a major studio with a high-dollar star (Smith was reportedly paid \$40 million), hiring relatively neophyte filmmakers is suspect. It seems the writer and director here are merely hired guns following orders.

Even in his most wanting films ("Gemini Man," "Collateral Beauty," "Focus," all of the "Bad Boys" flicks), Smith displays an innate charm and immense appeal that can't be faked or learned; he's very likable. In "King

Richard," Smith plays a man who uses his children for personal gain, yet masks it under a cloak of concerned and caring father and mentor. In Richard's defense, Venus (Saniyya Sidney) and Serena (Demi Singleton) are portrayed as willing participants in the journey.

Yet given Richard's draconian methods, the girls likely had little choice in the matter. At one point, perceiving a slight from them on the way home from a match, Richard drops his daughters off at a convenience store in Compton and drives away, leaving them to find their own way home on foot. Only after a stern admonishment from their subservient mother, his then-wife, Brandi (Aunjanue Ellis), does Richard stop and allow the girls to get back in the family van. By anyone's definition, this is child abuse, if not outright child endangerment.

UK superstar Kenneth Branagh indulges himself in a personal, nostalgic walk down memory lane.

'Belfast'

For the first few minutes of "Belfast," I was actually under the impression that it was a Northern Irish tourism commercial. It was drone-footage intensive, brightly colored, and had fellow Northern Irish countryman Van Morrison dominating the soundtrack, doing what sounded like new versions of his old songs. Granted, any Irish, blue-eyed soul is immediately reminiscent of "The Commitments," one of my favorite movies, and I settled in for what I anticipated to be a movie as delicious as that one.

"Belfast" is clearly a nostalgic walk down memory lane in terms of Branagh's childhood in Northern Ireland, regardless of the fact that the time period depicted is the late-1960s and early-'70s time of "The Troubles,"



ROB YOUNGSON/FOCUS FEATURES

Kenneth Branagh directs Jude Hill on the set of Branagh's movie "Belfast."

as they were called in Ireland. It's when Northern Ireland's capital, Belfast, exploded, often literally, with the beginning of the decades-spanning civil and religious war between its Catholic and Protestant factions.

Since the rest of the film is shot in black and white, the obviously semi-autobiographical, coming-of-age story comes off as an extremely mild, often amusing, Northern Irish version of "Schindler's List" with (obviously) little of the gravitas of Spielberg's magnum opus.

Buddy (Jude Hill) is clearly Branagh's young-boy self. Buddy's dad (Jamie Dornan of "Fifty Shades of Grey") is a bricklayer, mostly working remotely in London, a huge point of contention for Buddy's parents. Buddy's mother (Caitriona Balfe) is a stay-at-home housewife, tending to Buddy and his older brother. Paternal grandparents (Ciaran Hinds and Judi Dench) live around the corner, and there's lots of cozy multi-generational family time.

Protestants

Buddy and family are all Protestants. As mentioned, there's violence in the streets, and local militants aren't happy with the pacifism of Buddy's pa. The family struggles to stay alive during civil unrest, economic desolation, lock-downs, and food shortages, but as bad as all that sounds, this movie is far more about the unsinkable-ness of the Northern Irish spirit. It's a small wonder that the Unsinkable Molly Brown was of Irish heritage.

The film is mostly about witty dialogue, schoolboy crushes, delightful grandfather-grandson discussions and coaching about the mystery of women (with grandma tut-tutting nearby). Young Buddy is pining intensely for a little blonde-haired classmate. This is very reminiscent of the scenes be-

tween Liam Neeson and Thomas Brodie-Sangster in "Love Actually." It's easily the best part of the movie.

The soundtrack is a bit too heavily dominated by Branagh's fellow Belfast native Van Morrison for my tastes. I'd have preferred less of the American musical influence. As one character jokes, all any Irish person needs to survive abroad is a pub and the sheet music to "Danny Boy." Only an Irishman can get away with a statement like that, of course, but I'm personally a huge fan of "indigenous," traditional Irish music: There's little that beats a lonely, a cappella Irish tenor in my book.

Acting-wise, Caitriona Balfe may win something come award season, but the stand-out is child actor Jude Hill's work. Look for him to stick around in movies for a good long while.

"Belfast" is cute, amiable, and amusing. Sometimes a bit boring. But one can indulge UK superstar Branagh indulging himself in a personal, nostalgic walk down memory lane. He needed some time off from his ongoing siege of Olivier's legacy.

'Belfast'

Director: Kenneth Branagh
Starring: Jude Hill, Jamie Dornan, Caitriona Balfe, Ciaran Hinds, Judi Dench
Running Time: 1 hour, 38 minutes
MPAA Rating: PG-13
Release Date: Nov. 12, 2021

★★★★★



WARNER BROS. PICTURES

(L-R) Serena (Demi Singleton), Richard (Will Smith), and Venus (Saniyya Sidney) Williams, in "King Richard."

'King Richard'

Director: Reinaldo Marcus Green
Starring: Will Smith, Aunjanue Ellis, Saniyya Sidney, Demi Singleton, Jon Bernthal, Tony Goldwyn
Running Time: 2 hours, 18 minutes
MPAA Rating: PG-13
Release Date: Nov. 19, 2021

★★★★★

Richard," Smith plays a man who uses his children for personal gain, yet masks it under a cloak of concerned and caring father and mentor. In Richard's defense, Venus (Saniyya Sidney) and Serena (Demi Singleton) are portrayed as willing participants in the journey.

Yet given Richard's draconian methods, the girls likely had little choice in the matter. At one point, perceiving a slight from them on the way home from a match, Richard drops his daughters off at a convenience store in Compton and drives away, leaving them to find their own way home on foot. Only after a stern admonishment from their subservient mother, his then-wife, Brandi (Aunjanue Ellis), does Richard stop and allow the girls to get back in the family van. By anyone's definition, this is child abuse, if not outright child endangerment.

Richard's Goal Is a Free Ride

From the get-go, it's made clear that Richard's ultimate goal is to get professional-level

Richard is not an admirable role model; he's a textbook example of a misguided, self-absorbed, tunnel-vision parent.

instruction (read: free lessons) for his daughters, and he does so twice, then, through misguided ego, self-sabotages his efforts.

After convincing the coach of John McEnroe and Pete Sampras (Tony Goldwyn) to give Venus a chance, Richard usurps him by interrupting and contradicting him at every turn.

Another coach (Jon Bernthal) makes a deal with Richard—one that included all-expense-paid full-family relocation to Florida with all of the perks—but, on a whim, he attempts to renege on the arrangement. Although it's alluded to that Richard has other children, there's no mention of his two previous marriages (and another after Brandi) or out-of-wedlock offspring delivered by various non-wives.

In the movie's most troubling scene, Richard (carrying a gun owned by a security company he works for) is seconds away from murdering a local hoodlum who aggressively hits on one of his (non-tennis playing) daughters. But at the last second, Richard is beaten to the punch for other reasons.

On multiple occasions (three each) Richard utters an offensive racial slur. He also mentions multiple past encounters with the Ku Klux Klan while he was growing up in Louisiana, none of which could be verified through any other reputable sources.

If this is the "softened" movie version of Richard, one can only imagine the true nature of the genuine article.

Painfully Overlong and Just Plain Painful

"Selective omission" and sugarcoating aside, "King Richard" simply isn't a very

good movie. Running 138 minutes, it's at least a half-hour longer than it needs to be and spends far too much time in the third act concentrating on one of Venus's early professional matches.

The production also treats Serena as a fleeting, almost incidental character. Granted, this is a movie mostly about Richard, but relegating the Serena character to such low visibility and little importance is a huge disservice to the audience.

Making a compelling movie about the Williams family is difficult on many levels. First and foremost, we already know it has a happy ending, so any and all possible narrative hurdles will be ultimately overcome. Had this been a film about black tennis pioneers Althea Gibson or Arthur Ashe, there would have certainly been more on the line, story-wise. But next to nothing here comes as a surprise.

There has been much talk and industry-insider buzz regarding Smith's performance—much of which has made him a likely nominee in the upcoming Oscar race. Given the lack of truly memorable leading male performances (thus far) in 2021, it's easy to understand this train of thought, and given Smith's clout and the perceived "messaging" of the film, a nomination is beyond likely.

In this movie, Richard is an unintended anti-hero ostensibly looking to make life better for his children but somehow seems more concerned with protecting his easily-bruised, thin-skinned ego. He's not an admirable role model; he's a textbook example of a misguided, self-absorbed, tunnel-vision parent.

But it is "great acting" when a nice guy actor of respectable range strips himself of all appeal and plays what might be the most disliked stage dad in the history of professional sports?

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has written for over 30 local and national film industry media outlets and is ranked in the top 10 of the Atlanta media marketplace. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a regular contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling Your High Schooler

A conversation with homeschool expert Julie Bogart

BARBARA DANZA

Many homeschool parents can wrap their minds around teaching the ABCs and 123s. They can easily read books with their children on their lap and enjoy crafts, experiments, and field trips as they progress through the elementary years.

As children advance, though, subjects such as math become more complicated, and their children grow in independence and competence. Parents can envision the high school years more clearly on the horizon and it can be intimidating. Can Mom and Dad really give each child what they'll need to cross the finish line and head out into the world to college or to begin a career?

I asked Julie Bogart for her advice for homeschooling parents trying to wrap their minds around the high school years. She's a homeschooling veteran, curriculum creator, and author of "The Brave Learner: Finding Everyday Magic in Homeschool, Learning, and Life." Here's what she said.

The Epoch Times: Homeschooling parents often feel intimidated by the idea of homeschooling high school. How does homeschooling typically change as kids enter the high school years?

Julie Bogart: Homeschooling high school is a time to "triangle in" other adults in your child's life. It's a time for teens to do some big, bold activities that expand their horizons and provide them with meaningful risks and adventures. For instance, some teens will join a Shakespeare acting troupe in town, others will volunteer at a local animal shelter or elementary school in the middle of the school day. Some teens take up rock climbing or a select sport. Others will hire tutors to learn Latin or they'll join a co-op to learn chemistry. Lots of teens travel whether as exchange students or backpackers in Europe. Other teens develop talents like writing their own music and performing or joining an e-sport.

The key to homeschooling high school is to get clear on who your teen is and what that teen needs. In my own family, some of my teens were even able to participate part time in the local public high school for activities like marching band or choir. Look at the college trajectory of your student and then reverse engineer the life that makes the most sense for that student. Not all kids want college right at 18. There's no harm in allowing a teen to explore options and make that decision later in life. High school is a great time to dive deep into a passionate interest, even while still learning the core subjects.

A great book on the topic is "The Teenage Liberation Handbook" by Grace Llewellyn.

The Epoch Times: Some homeschooling parents wonder if they should enroll their kids in a traditional high school when the time comes. What factors do you recommend they consider when working through such a decision?



COURTESY OF JULIE BOGART

Author and curriculum creator Julie Bogart.

High school is a great time to dive deep into a passionate interest, even while still learning the core subjects.

Julie Bogart, author and educator

Ms. Bogart: This is a great question. I had one child who tried the local high school experience and hated it. I had another who chose it and thrived! Each homeschooled student has learned a valuable lesson by age 13: Their appetite for learning is more important than the method. If the method quells that love of learning, they will resist. That said, lots of teens are ready for the experience of competing with peers or participating in the group-oriented extracurricular activities that a high school can provide. Talk with your teen about their goals. Take a look at whether the local school district allows for part-time enrollment. I had a daughter who took classes like French, chemistry, and acting at the local high school while doing all the rest of her education at home or with tutors. She loved that halftime experience.

The Epoch Times: What can homeschooling parents do to best prepare themselves and their children for the high school years?

Ms. Bogart: Be careful not to borrow worry



MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Teens may explore their interests in bolder ways—whether that's volunteering, traveling, arts, or sports.

from the teen years into the preteen years. It's not more important that you "prepare" for high school than that you enjoy junior high with your preteens now. Making comments like "A high school teacher would never let you get away with that" or undue pressure on your preteen to make up for lost time or to get ahead undermines the power of home education in the present moment. Instead, use these years at home to indulge all the ways home makes learning a joy. Do the experiments, go on the field trips, read a book for an entire day curled up by the fire, take the necessary time to learn math—don't race through. As you prepare for high school, think about what gives your child the best chance to flourish as a person; think less about being a student. Colleges love homeschoolers and homeschooled kids are quick to make up any lost ground because they are usually more motivated and less burnt out than traditionally educated kids.

The Epoch Times: What are some common challenges parents face when it comes to homeschooling high school?

Ms. Bogart: The biggest challenges are teaching your teens the subjects you don't know well as an adult. For instance, I didn't have a science background so I outsourced biology and chemistry to parents who were educated in science who taught a group of homeschooled kids together. I taught high school academic writing to their kids as a swap! Same goes for math or learning another language. These are seen as sometimes difficult to provide as a parent. Co-ops, tutors, and online classes can fill in the gaps there.

The other challenge is social. Teens are ready to make friends and have lives outside the home. Remember: Homeschooling is your adventure. For your kids, it's just ordinary life. By 13 to 14, your kids want to get out of the house to test their wings in the bigger world. They can do that by joining organizations, getting a job, being in a performance group of some kind—whether sports, ballet, theater, or martial arts—and travel. They need friends and it's important to find places for them to make them.

The Epoch Times: What are some benefits to homeschooling high school that parents may not realize?

Ms. Bogart: Homeschooling high school is amazing for kids who have passions that drive them. My oldest used his teen years to learn Klingon, to teach himself advanced math, computer programming, and constructed languages. He participated in a Shakespeare company for teens. He got into urban gymnastics. I know teens who've developed successful music platforms, who've started nonprofits, who've learned to build low-tech housing in their backyard, and one who cross-bred fish! Truly, when given time and space, many teens take advantage of these years to become more of who they dream of being.

Another benefit is that you get a front-row seat to the development of your teen's worldview and beliefs. This is an exciting time to watch their minds grow!

The Epoch Times: What was your favorite part about homeschooling your children through the high school years?

Ms. Bogart: I love the conversations! This is the time of life when teens are asking the big questions, testing their unconventional answers, and discovering that more ideas are out there than the ones they learned at home. It's such an incredible time of cognitive development! And naturally, I loved working on their writing with them. That was deeply satisfying. I also loved watching them perform. There's something about seeing your teen participate in a group that is satisfying. They look grown-up for the first time!

Teens are amazing and high school is a great time to explore all their interests and passions. Homeschooling allows you to do that in ways that are sometimes prevented by a full school schedule.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 47, 2021

Nothing Gold Can Stay
by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

KOLPAKOVA SVETLANA/SHUTTERSTOCK

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DID PILGRIMS LISTEN TO?
PLYMOUTH ROCK

PIKELICAZI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.
EPICETUS (CIRCA A.D. 55-135), GREEK STOIC PHILOSOPHER

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

This Week in History

A CARTOONIST IS BORN

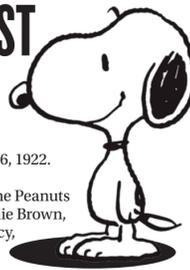
American cartoonist Charles Schulz was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Nov. 26, 1922. He lived to be 77.

He was the creator of the Peanuts cartoons featuring Charlie Brown, his friends Linus and Lucy, and his dog Snoopy. Schulz was nicknamed "Sparky" as a child and grew up enjoying a Sunday morning ritual of reading the funnies with his father, a barber. He went on to study drawing via a correspondence course and served his country in the Army. His first Peanuts strip appeared on Oct. 2, 1950, in seven newspapers nationwide.

The rest is history, as they say, and audiences today still enjoy his cartoon strips in newspapers and his animated cartoons—especially this time of year.



Charles Schulz drawing Charlie Brown in 1956. PUBLIC DOMAIN



By Aidan Danza, age 15

DUCKS OF WINTER

In the autumn and winter, many species of ducks migrate from their breeding grounds in the north to various ponds, lakes, and bays all across America.

AMERICAN WIGEON

The American wigeon is a dabbling duck, meaning that, instead of diving, like the scaup, it tips its head into the water, with the tail floating above the water, sticking up, so as to eat plants growing in shallow water. In my personal experience, wigeon are less common than scaup, and arriving and leaving the lake earlier than the scaup, but this may differ from state to state, and maybe even from lake to lake. It was once called the baldpate, because of the male's head, being white on the top and green on the sides, it vaguely resembles a bald man's head. The female doesn't have these markings.

MALLARD

The mallard is the most common and familiar duck in the United States. The female is mottled brown, while the male has the trademark green head, chestnut chest, and gray body. If you see no other duck at your pond, you will probably see a mallard, whatever the time of year.

GREATER AND LESSER SCAUP

These are among the more common diving ducks. In their favorite lakes, they will form great rafts (flocks) on the water. Scaup, both male and females, are darker ducks. Lesser and greater scaup are quite difficult to differentiate. The usual technique used to distinguish between them is observation of the head: The lesser's head is more conical or pointed in shape, while the greater's is round and full.

NORTHERN SHOVELER

The male of this species is at first glance similar to the mallard, but its chest is white, the sides are a rusty brown, and, above all, its bill looks like an enormous plow or shovel, perhaps. The female is a drab mottled brown and has the same enormous bill. Unlike the wigeons and the scaup, which will stay in large flocks, the shovellers stay in pairs or individually, swimming in circles and skimming algae and tiny invertebrates on the surface.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Missouri Artist Paints Tribute to Veterans, Law Enforcement, and First Responders

EPOCH INSPIRED STAFF

Staged with her paints set up and ready to get to work, Missouri artist Sandra Pemberton climbed the scaffold with a piece of soapstone and started etching out, freehand, the contours of a patriotic American mural on a sheet of metal siding.

The 36-year-old painter from Neosho, Missouri, has always preferred to work without the hindrance of a projector. She traversed the 20-foot-wide, 12-foot-high building side—visible from Highway 63 Pomona in Howell County, Missouri, as her patron had intended.

The process of making her mural started with an eight-by-10-inch concept painting. Then the prep work began, with the procurement of scaffolding, ladders, paint tables, and, of course, speakers for her music.

"I often must step back away from the wall and look at the design as a whole, getting all of the proportions correct," Pemberton said.

Then she and her husband Matthew started "filling in the design like a coloring book." The first stages looked rough and were just

for covering the entire surface in paint.

"I will go over it to correct mistakes, shade, and add detail later," Pemberton said. "I paint in layers, working from the general to the specific, and adding layers of color."

In "The Howell County Tribute Mural," rendered in mainly warm hues, an American flag sweeps across the eaves above, arcing over a bald eagle whose wings are outstretched, as if it's lifting the Stars and Stripes. At the bottom right, flag-raising soldiers, depicted in the famous photo from the Battle of Iwo Jima, strike a bold silhouette before a glowing sunset. Centered beneath the eagle, "We The People" is rendered calligraphically on parchment. At the bottom left, a tribute to first responders and law enforcement is emblazoned.

The work was completed in five days in September—with a brewing storm costing them an evening of work. After the painting's completion, a heavy clear coat was applied to protect it from the sun fading out the colors and scratches, as well as to make the colors sing.

Images of Pemberton's mural have been

Veterans message me thanking me for painting it and it's hard to wrap my head around. I feel as if the painting is my thank you to them.

Sandra Pemberton



COURTESY OF SANDRA PEMBERTON

shared 30,000 times on Facebook, with visitors traveling from as far as Illinois and South Carolina to check out her mural.

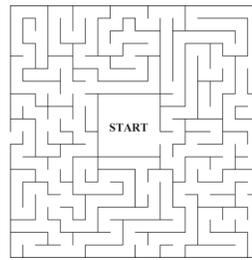
"I am beyond blessed to be given these opportunities. I have been contacted by people all over the United States," she said.

Since the project's completion, Pemberton has been asked to travel to more states than she can remember to paint more work.

"Veterans message me thanking me for painting it, and it's hard to wrap my head around. I feel as if the painting is my thank you to them. I don't deserve a thank you," she said. "They put their lives on the line in order for me to have the life I am blessed with. I am just so very thankful to be able to give them something that they can feel good about."

▲ Sandra Pemberton's "Howell County Tribute Mural" is located near Pomona, Mo.

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: $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$ and $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$

Easy puzzle 1

6	8		
16	8		
1	8		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1

$1 \times 8 + (8 - 8)$

Medium puzzle 1

12	15		
51	14		
3	14		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1

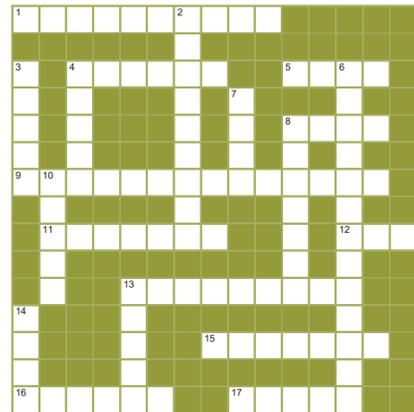
$8 \times (21 - 91 + 91) (21 - 91) \div (8 + 91)$

Hard puzzle 1

4	/		
54	/		
/	/		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1

$8 + 4 + 52 + 92$



Across

- Fall door decoration (10)
- Who gathers on Thanksgiving (6)
- Where people go on Thanksgiving (4)
- An uncommon Thanksgiving dish (4)
- Squantum (Squanto) for example (14)

Down

- Have a party, say (9)
- Squirrel's Thanksgiving stash (5)
- Spread (5)
- Boston ___ (13)
- How you cook a Pumpkin pie (4)
- "That's what ___ are for" (7)
- "As American as ___ pie!" (5)
- Thanksgiving honor (5)
- The most colorful season? (4)

Squares

- Squantum's tribe (7)
- Thanksgiving pork dish (3)
- Early arrivals (9)
- Gravy morsels (7)
- Nature's Thanksgiving decorations (6)
- Frank's accompaniment (5)

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