

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

COURTESY OF ELIDA DAKOLI

Pianist Persecuted in Communist Albania Warns Against Socialism in the US

A 'bad biography' designation by the communist regime targeted Elida Dakoli's family for generations

PETA EVANS

An accomplished classical pianist who grew up in communist Albania and overcame political persecution is now using her family's story to warn people that "socialism is a cover-up for communism."

Elida Dakoli, an American Albanian who was born in the city of Durrës, Albania, couldn't escape the designated label as a child. It all began with her maternal great-grandfather and paternal grandfather, who were eventually poisoned to death by the communist party.

"My family was given the label of 'bad biography' on both sides," Dakoli told The Epoch Times.

"On my mother's side, her grandfather was a prominent pro-democracy political figure. On my father's side, his father was a successful businessman who refused to turn over his self-earned property to the Party. Both were disruptors of the order the Party had worked hard to impose."

Now residing in Dallas, Texas, with her husband and three children, Dakoli said she's read that communist persecution of a family often goes on for up to three generations, but in her family's case, it went on for longer.

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Elida Dakoli is the founding ambassador of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation's Dallas Commission and the executive director of the Dallas Institute of Musical Advancement.

JULIA M CAMERON/PEXELS

PARENTING MATTERS

How to Talk About Politics With Your Kids

PARNELL DONAHUE

Today's politicians are much like the blind men who "saw" the elephant in John Godfrey Saxe's classic poem. Written almost 250 years ago, "The Blind Men and the Elephant" is based on a very old Hindu parable. It has been used for centuries as an aid to teaching philosophy, religion, and character development. In the mid-1850s, Saxe set this folklore to verse.

With all due respect for those who can't see, Saxe tells how each man felt a different part of the elephant, the tail, the side, the knee, the ear, the trunk, or the tusk. Each came away with a different opinion about the elephant; consequently, they argued "loud and long" about which man was right.

While the legend argues against relative truth and the theological relativism that follows, it also argues against our po-



During the convention, our family would cheer and argue about which candidate was the best and which one would win.

litical system and the media's portrayal of it. Relativism in politics as well as in religion teaches that there is no absolute truth; truth can be changed to fit the situation. But that line of thinking is anathema to religion, liberty, and freedom.

When your kids are near voting age, will they pay attention to what's going on in the world, or will they be like the blind men and become so confused that they deny interest in politics, public service, and voting?

Their decision depends largely on how you and your spouse think, talk, and act regarding politics. Get better informed by watching the news on both CNN and FOX, reading the editorial page in newspapers and, I would add, The Epoch Times!

Help your future voters understand why they should be interested in the survival of our country and our great Constitution.

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Pianist Persecuted in Communist Albania Warns Against Socialism in the US

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As a great-granddaughter of one of the founders of the first Albanian pluralist Congress in 1921, Dakoli endured sabotage of her musical endeavors by her classmates and teachers, not to mention having been robbed of the inheritance of her family's hard-earned wealth, which had been sequestered from her grandparents in 1945 by the then-new communist government.

After the fall of communism in Albania in 1991, things began to change for Dakoli, who was then a teenager. She has since gone on to become an international concert pianist, recording artist, educator, entrepreneur, published author, and human rights advocate.

Most recently, Dakoli joined the National Advisory Council of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC). As the founding ambassador of the VOC's Dallas Commission, she successfully appealed to the Texas Congress to pass legislation commemorating the victims of communist regimes. As a result, in May, Texas became the fourth state to officially recognize Nov. 7 as "Victims of Communism Memorial Day."

To Dakoli, this commemoration day is of great importance. She pointed out that, despite the fact that Karl Marx clearly revealed in his "Manifesto of the Communist Party" that socialism is the first step toward communism, alarmingly, socialism among the younger generation is turning into a trend these days.

"This ideology is managing to infiltrate their minds through the usual lie as a perfect solution, playing on the uncertainties of capitalism," she said. "Capitalism is the only option that offers you the freedom of family life, success, and liberty."

"Our goal is to educate new generations about the ideology, history, and legacy of communism to ensure that the millions who suffered—and still suffer—under communist regimes are not forgotten."

Political Persecution

Dakoli's great-grandfather on her mother's side, Hysen Myshketa, was a well-known attorney and city mayor of Durës, a patriot, and a leading supporter of democracy. He was elected as a congressman in the new Albanian Congress in 1943 but was subjected to an assassination attempt on Oct. 4, 1943, just days before the opening of Congress, where he was to give the opening speech.

"He was walking home to eat the lunch his lovely wife had prepared for them at home, and he was shot twice in the street," Dakoli said. "The two shots didn't kill my great-grandfather. He miraculously survived and started to feel better after a few days in the hospital."

Dakoli's grandfather Isa Myshketa—Hysen Myshketa's son—was there at the shooting, and decades later, after the advent of democracy, was able to relay to his grandchildren what had happened. After discovering that the two shots had hit his father but not killed him, he grabbed his father's arm to walk him to the nearby hospital, but the communist assassins kept firing at both father and son as they walked. Though they failed to kill him that time, the assassins continued their pursuit by going every day to the hospital where Hysen was recovering, with concealed revolvers. They couldn't get past the guards, but eventually, a nurse poisoned his milk. He died on Oct. 10, 1943.

"Even though he was being guarded at all times, communists somehow managed to achieve their goal of killing a fighter for freedom," Dakoli said.

His Congress opening speech ended up being read by one of his friends.

Dakoli said the communist party was supposedly fighting for the so-called freedom of the country; however, their ulterior motive was "eliminating the elite of the country."

"This way, they would have an easier ride in taking power," she said. "To justify their actions, they always used the Marxist-Leninist slogan 'in the name of the people.' But who were these people? The 'people' were terrorized."

Dakoli's paternal grandfather, Sadik Dakoli, was also a target of the commu-

A 'bad biography' designation by the communist regime targeted Elida Dakoli's family for generations



Elida Dakoli with her father, Egrem Dakoli, at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation's Triumph of Liberty Conference & Gala Dinner.

"The Party didn't want people like me to be educated. The system, the teachers, and the students had worked against me for so long, but I still managed to persevere."

Elida Dakoli



Elida Dakoli with her husband and three children.

they do not deserve to live in luxury with the money they have gained by sucking the blood of the working class. Their property has been officially transferred to the state and they are being evicted from this home, effective immediately."

"This family, who had worked so hard for generations to develop the economy of their city and country, who had created an international business that represented Albania with pride all over the world, from this terrible night on, never again saw a beautiful day in their lives."

While her grandfather Sadik became a work slave in a gulag, her grandmother, her father, and his siblings went to live in one room with her grandmother's brother and his family. Sadik later died behind bars in 1951.

"He was also poisoned," she said. "His family wasn't notified. My grandmother only found out weeks later after waiting for hours to visit him when a guard told her that Sadik no longer existed, so there was no reason to wait. To this day, we don't know where his grave is."

A 'Bad Biography'

Dakoli revealed that a person in communist Albania only had a "bad biography" if they were related to someone who didn't agree with the communist view.

"To have a 'bad biography' was to be a second-class citizen that bears the mark as an 'enemy of the people,'" she said. "Many with 'bad biographies' were murdered, like my great-grandfather, or imprisoned, like my grandfather, but even more were persecuted."

This designation, Dakoli said, was a way for the communist regime to punish political dissidents with the suffering of their families for generations to follow.

"Those with a 'bad biography' did not have the same privileges as the rest of their community," she added. "Their job options were limited, as most were not permitted to pursue advanced education or careers. They were often forced to move to the country to work and farm the government-owned land."

Dakoli remembers Albania during communism as a place where people lived with fear, unable to trust anyone. Even if a person didn't have a "bad biography," living conditions were still very poor.

"In a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment, the Party would place two families that never met each other before to live together," she said. "Everything was rationed. Only 10 eggs for the family a month, half a pound of cheese, and so on. Everything was so limited. However, no one was able to complain as they would end up in prison and their families would be persecuted with a 'bad biography.'"

Dakoli lived in cramped conditions, sharing a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment with her parents and brother; her uncle, his wife, and their two children; and her grandmother.

Yet Dakoli's daily obstacles as a child during the 1970s and '80s went beyond just living in poor conditions. Daring to aim high with her musical aspirations from the age of 6 despite having been designated with a "bad biography" since birth, young Dakoli's first obstacle as an aspiring pianist was that she had no piano.

"They were considered private property and only the elite party members could own one," she said. "Therefore, I had a long sheet of paper with keys drawn on to use for practice. This was my piano for the first few years, but my parents always encouraged me to visualize and imagine playing in a concert hall."

Later, Dakoli was finally assigned a time at the school to rehearse, but because of her "bad biography," she was given the earliest time. Each day, her mother would wake her at 5 a.m. to dress her while she was half-asleep, and an hour later, her father would take her to school on his bicycle before work. In addition, each day, she had to prepare for "a new form of sabotage." The one that stands out most in Dakoli's memory is "the missing lightbulb."

"On my first day of the new practice session, the lights were out," she recalled. "Next session, it happened again, and I could not see while practicing. We discovered that children or their parents

had started taking the lightbulbs from the overhead light."

From that day on, Dakoli's family started bringing their own lightbulbs, but eventually, even those didn't work, as the breaker had been shut off. "So we brought an electrician just to practice," she said.

"This happened because the competition was so intense. But my father always encouraged me to see the positive side of things and redefine setbacks as new little adventures. He would joke by saying, 'Now it's time to show your strength and perform like a true artist that isn't scared of anything—the weather, broken keys, or a missing lightbulb.' This mentality of setbacks as an adventure has been pivotal to my success as Elida today."

For Dakoli, being accepted into the Academy of Arts, the only music university in the country, as one of five pianists, was the first major way in which she "triumphed over repression."

"The Party didn't want people like me to be educated," she said. "The system, the teachers, and the students had worked against me for so long, but I still managed to persevere."

Dakoli eventually left Europe to pursue a graduate degree at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and subsequently earned her doctor of musical arts in piano performance degree from Louisiana State University. She is also the founder and professor of the Entrepreneurship in the Arts program at Dallas Baptist University and is executive director of the Dallas Institute of Musical Advancement (DIMA), which she founded in 2017. In addition, she is a Mason & Hamlin artist and serves as the face of and a recording artist for PianoDisc.

It wasn't until living in the United States and pregnant with her third child that Dakoli began to find out the full story of the persecution endured by her own parents, who now also live in America. While reading and translating her father's book—which he wrote for Dakoli and her brother, as well as for future generations to read—she learned the truth of her own childhood and the sacrifices her parents had made.

"I couldn't stop crying for hours," she said. "I couldn't believe all that happened to them and yet, they came home, put on a happy face, and carried on as if their



Elida Dakoli's paternal grandfather, Sadik Dakoli, was targeted by the Albanian communist regime, sent to a gulag, and eventually poisoned.

"Our goal is to educate new generations about the ideology, history, and legacy of communism to ensure that the millions who suffered—and still suffer—under communist regimes are not forgotten."

Elida Dakoli

life was simply perfect, for the sake of our happiness.

"I learned that many things I believed about my childhood were just a cover-up to protect us as children from the brutal reality. Much of my poor treatment at school, I thought, was just because I wasn't good enough. However, it was simply because of my 'bad biography.'"

Educating About the Victims of Communism

Dakoli highlighted that studies consistently reveal that America's high school and college students don't know basic facts about the history of communism and the suffering and damage it has inflicted upon millions of people.

"An entire generation of Americans is unaware of the true nature and history of communism, and is warming to collectivist ideas because they don't know the facts," she said. "Socialism is turning into this trend of greatness. The reality is that such a thing doesn't exist. This perfectionism called socialism or communism is just an ideology, not a reality."

"Perhaps this is the reason that communism doesn't allow the freedom of religion; they are scared of anything being praised as better or greater than what they portray themselves to be."

Dakoli said she has learned that the Chinese regime has control over a large population of Chinese people in the United States, not just inside China. "Many are afraid to speak, as they have businesses in China. They are aware that the Chinese government is watching every step very closely. I wonder if the same thing is happening with the [U.S.] government."

"I was amazed to learn that they have infiltrated deep in the heart of society here, even in Dallas. That's why bringing awareness to the reality of past and present communist regimes is of the utmost importance at this very moment."

This is precisely why Dakoli became the ambassador for the VOC Dallas Commission and encourages others like her to join a local commission.

"Be yourself, find your uniqueness—and remember, socialism is a cover-up for communism that won't allow any of these. They want control, and the only way to that is by brainwashing this ... generation. Don't fall for it!"



Elida Dakoli's maternal grandparents, Naxhije and Isa Myshketa (son of Hysen Myshketa).



Elida Dakoli playing the piano as a child in Albania.

PARENTING MATTERS

How to Talk About Politics With Your Kids

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Remind them that many of the online political posts are written by bloggers blinded by the elephant fragments they have picked up during their short, or worst yet, long years of examining only the trunk, ear, or other individual parts of the whole.

Most importantly, discuss political issues in civil conversation with your family and friends, even those who have a different political philosophy. Listen to the candidates' speeches. Watch the conventions!

I must admit, today's political conventions are not as interesting as they were when I was a teen. I remember in the summers of 1952 and 1956 sitting in the shady backyard with my siblings and listening on the radio to the presidential conventions. There were not many primaries then, so no one came to the convention already nominated, with the exception in 1956 when incumbent President Eisenhower had little competition. Because no one knew who would be on their party's ticket, the convention was intriguing, much like a game, a contest, with many contestants all aiming for the same goal.

Listening to the competition made shucking peas from our garden almost fun. We didn't have television football or other sports to entertain us, and the competition energized us.

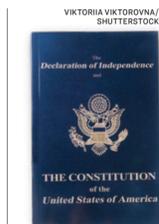
Each candidate had at least two nomination speeches, each followed by a demonstration through the auditorium with a band blaring patriotic marches and leading the candidate's supporters.

After the last candidate was nominated, his demonstrators were cleared from the floor, and the roll call vote of the states began. During the convention, our family would cheer and argue about which candidate was the best and which one would win.

After listening to both 1952 conventions, my siblings and I liked Gen. Eisenhower and were so happy a few weeks later when he came to a city near us. Our folks made the trip to hear him but they left us home. Later, when we asked Mom how she and Dad voted, she told us voting was by secret ballot and no one was to know who voted for whom.

I still miss the excitement of a competitive convention.

As important as parents are in shaping



Help your future voters understand why they should be interested in the survival of our country and our great Constitution.

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their kids' political views, they are not the only influencers. Teachers, coaches, neighbors, and peers can sway your kids' thinking.

Even if their schools offer what we used to call civics, you won't know which part of the elephant their teachers have touched. Teachers, politicians, and other adults often see and teach politics with the perspective of the blind men who saw the elephant. And like Saxe's blind men, they are unwilling to acknowledge the opinions of the others.

Don't be afraid to ask your kids what their teachers are saying about politicians' views, policies, and solutions. Then discuss your kid's views, their teacher's views, and yours. But, keep personalities out of the discussion. Listen while your teenager explains his solutions and let him know why your and or your teacher's views may be different.

Remember, we are all looking at the same problems, we all want what's best for the country but, like the blind men, each of us sees things differently and may seek different solutions. Your job is to point out why you think your solutions are best after you listen to your kids' solutions.

Not every election is for president, but all elections are important. Voters of every age need to know what each candidate, from the school board member to the president, plans to do and what each believes on the issues. And most important of all, they must how the political parties differ.

With today's ever-present media, it should be easy to understand the issues if we know the basics of the Constitution. How else can a person, parent or kid, get his head around politics? You and your family may find a short study of the Constitution interesting and helpful. By getting your kids involved at a young age, you can be assured they will be well-educated when they are old enough to vote.

If we are to keep this country free, with the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; if we recognize that all men are created equal and endowed with these inalienable rights by their creator, and if we desire equality and justice for all, then we must have informed voters. And, as in all other areas of living, learning values and mores begins in the home, taught by parents.

Enjoy the children in your life, and may God continue to bless you and your family!

The Blind Men and the Elephant

By John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

*It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.
The First approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"*

*The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried,—"Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear,
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"*

*The Third approach'd the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see,"—quoth he—"the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"*

*The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,"—quoth he,—
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"*

*The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said—"E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"*

*The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see,"—quoth he,—
"the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"*

Dr. Parnell Donahue is a pediatrician, military veteran, author of four books, and the blog Parenting-WithDrPar.com, and host of WBOU's "Parenting Matters" show. He and his wife, Mary, have four adult children; all hold doctorates, two are also MDs. Contact him at Parenting-Matters.com

On Rush Limbaugh, Crushing Cancel Culture, and Speaking Up

James Golden,
aka Bo Snerdley.

The radio show host was deaf for most of his career, but kept speaking

JAMES GOLDEN

“What’s your question or comment for Rush?”

For more than three decades, that’s how I greeted callers to the program. Hundreds of thousands of them. I didn’t want to know their name, where they’re calling from, or why. I had to find out what someone wanted to say, and fast, because each caller was one of about 90 people I’d talk with in three hours.

If you couldn’t immediately tell me what you wanted to talk about and make it interesting, it would be a short call.

If you got past my first question, I’d ask a top-secret series of questions, because I wanted to know what led you to this call. What’s your real point? What’s behind the first answer you gave me? Because if Rush drilled down into your comment, he would locate your true agenda—with half his brain tied behind his back just to make it fair—and my reputation was on the line for any bad calls as call screener and “official program observer.”

Here’s the takeaway for anyone who wants to use their voice in a positive way. Before you speak up, you’ve got to know what you want to say—and why—then frame your words clearly.

Over the years, I developed the ability to screen callers and listen to Rush at the same time. I somehow remembered things he said years earlier and occasionally offered opinions, questions, and ideas for the show. You may remember the occasional “Mr. Snerdley just reminded me ...” segue. I sure do, and I miss those moments dearly.

During a short hiatus from working at the EIB studio, I began to notice that something was off with Rush’s voice in 2001. The timing, the pauses, the pitch, and the tone of his voice were off. At times, he seemed to slur some of his words. Concerned, I called him one morning. “What’s going on, Rush? Something sounds different.”

“Look, James. I’m sorry, but if I told you what was going on, you wouldn’t believe it.” He was right.

So I called the president of the company, and I asked him what was going on. John didn’t go into detail, but he told me Rush’s hearing was compromised.

“I need to be there with him,” I said. “Please get me on the first plane tomorrow.”

The next afternoon, I drove my rental car to the new EIB Southern Command Headquarters in Palm Beach. As I pulled up, Rush was in the parking lot walking to his car. Without either of us saying a word, I gave him a big hug. He knew why I was there: You’re not going to go through this by yourself, my friend. I’m here.

My own media consultancy was gaining clients, and I knew my experience with interactive communications could make my company a leader in the industry. But my career has never been about money. The moment I heard Rush was having challenges, I knew what I had to do. I have never doubted my decision and I’ve never regretted it. This is where I need to be.

There was never a formal discussion with anyone at EIB about whether I should come back or not. It was simply understood and celebrated.

Rush’s progressive hearing loss was rapid,

COURTESY OF JAMES GOLDEN



and he was expected to become completely deaf, so the team brainstormed ideas that would enable him to stay on the air. During this time, the Democrats continually ramped up their attacks on Rush and other conservative voices. But even deafness couldn’t silence Rush. Through the years, he’d faced every kind of attack, bent on silencing him.

The left always got its way ... until Rush Limbaugh. The mainstream media tried to project their thinking as the mindset of the country. Rush exposed the fact that the mainstream media was not the conscience of the American people. Exposing this divide between the few elite and the vast majority of Americans is one of the greatest elements of his legacy.

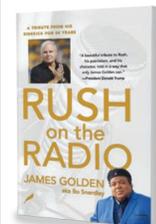
Cancel culture—threats to boycott companies and destroy careers—has become so extreme we now have comedians like Chris Rock talking about how it’s impossible to tell jokes because millennials are so sensitive. Conservatives are losing a high percentage of millennial votes because they fall prey to this mindset, instead of standing up to it.

Canceling opposing views is a step toward an authoritarian state, which is what the left wants. If you don’t think the way they do on any number of issues, like transgender women athletes competing against biological women, liberals say you’re a bigot and try to shut you up.

It’s one thing to be trolled online, it’s another to be shouted at in person. When I was at WABC Radio in New York doing my own weekend show in the ’80s, I spoke out about some of the hateful language coming out of the Nation of Islam. A few days later, I was out in public and confronted by three members of the group. Honestly, I was a bit intimidated and wondered if the situation would end badly for me.

Thankfully, it didn’t. Shutting up is dangerous because people assume that if there’s only one voice talking, that voice must be the consensus—and correct—when there’s no opposition to it. If I lie

Before you speak up, you’ve got to know what you want to say—and why—then frame your words clearly.



‘Rush on the Radio’

Author
James Golden

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is repeated often enough, it’s adopted as the truth unless it is challenged.

Beethoven was deaf. Yet through the vibrations he felt and his memory of what notes sounded like, the composer was able to create some of the greatest music the human race has ever heard. Rush, at a crucial point in his career, became totally deaf. Yet through advances in technology, like the cochlear implant, his own inner muscle memory of sounds, and his sheer determination, Rush was able to continue a powerful discourse that resonated for decades. In fact, Rush spent more of his syndicated radio career deaf than he did with the ability to hear. Despite every reason to quit, he kept speaking.

It’s a remarkable achievement for anyone to overcome challenges and persevere because of their love for their vocation. Through willpower—and of course, if you’re a person of faith, with the strength that comes through that belief—you can still achieve astounding things. Whether it’s about Rush’s career, my career, or the challenges you may face, my charge to you remains: achieve anyway. Speak anyway.

By refusing to be silenced, he achieved. The same holds true for us. We may ultimately lose the things we want to hold on to, but achieving anyway means that we don’t give up. We are can-do people who can persevere. And sometimes, if perseverance is all the legacy we leave, that’s enough.

Before you speak up, you’ve got to know why. And when you know why, speak clearly. Don’t be silenced.

James Golden, under the pseudonym ‘Bo Snerdley,’ was with *The Rush Limbaugh Show* for almost 30 years, serving as a call screener, “official program observer,” and producer with guest hosts. He speaks and consults on media, broadcasting, and political action. He is the author of *Rush on the Radio* and radio host with WABC-AM. His website is JamesGolden.com

As summer ended and the mountains grew cold, Brittany and Danny worried, but comforted themselves with a family motto: ‘As long as we are together, and healthy, that’s what matters.’

is selling—it’s tough.

“Money was never the issue, but finding a place that we could all fit was difficult. To add to that, when you say you have 11 children, not many are willing to give you a chance.”

They spoke to local news media to publicize their story in July, concerned that other families were also facing homelessness due to the shortage of properties. Someone local reached out to offer a small storage unit, a blessing to the Sheltons, but a blow to have to part with many of their belongings. An international audience reached out to donate food, blankets, clothing, and prayers.

“But no houses,” said Brittany. “One person stated that they owned some land, but it was 30 minutes outside of town.” Nonetheless, the family was out of options. They set up camp on that land and stayed there for three long months.

“Living in a tent with 13 people was crazy,” Brittany reflected. “[We] had no running water or bathrooms. There was dirt everywhere all the time. We were cooking on a barbecue grill and had no fridge. The

Book Review: ‘The Falcon Thief’ by Joshua Hammer

ANITA L. SHERMAN

One of the treatises written by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194–1250), king of Sicily and Jerusalem and Holy Roman Emperor, was “De Arte Venandi cum Avibus,” or “On the Art of Hunting With Birds.” It’s also known by the title of “The Art of Falconry.” Basking in a court noted for its highly cosmopolitan and intellectual life, his reign could have signaled the beginning of the Italian Renaissance.

His book not only deals with the art of hunting with birds but copious descriptions of their habitats. He was fond of falcons and their powerful and precise method for taking down prey.

Frederick II wasn’t alone in his admiration for exotic wildlife. Possessing these magnificent creatures has a rich tradition that crosses many cultures. Long before him, the Bedouins in the Arabian desert trapped and trained peregrines to hunt.

Hammer notes at the beginning of his book: “During falconry’s boom times in the Middle Ages, relationships between Eastern and Western falconers flourished. In 1228, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, the Holy Roman Emperor, hunted in the desert with Malik al-Kamil, the fourth Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, for three months during a lull in the Sixth Crusade. Twenty years later, Emperor Frederick relied on the knowledge imparted to him by Syrian falconers who he had brought back to Europe to write his classic work.”

Fast forward several centuries to May 2010, when South African resident Jeffrey Lendrum is apprehended at Britain’s Birmingham International Airport with 14 peregrine falcon eggs strapped to his stomach. They had been snatched from remote cliffs in Wales.

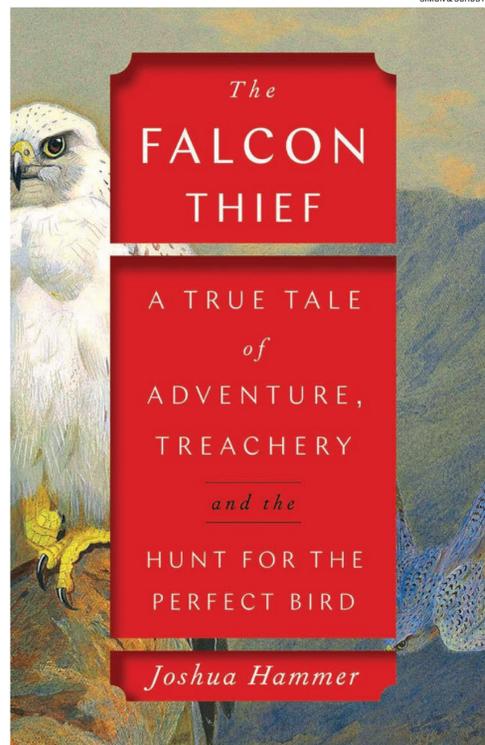
Having taken up birdwatching toward the end of his police career and with an affinity for conservation, detective Andy McWilliam of the United Kingdom’s National Wildlife Crime Unit is called in to investigate.

Beyond troubling, the business of bird egg smuggling is fraught with dangerous deceptions, unscrupulous motives, and immense sums of money

McWilliam isn’t unfamiliar with crimes related to wildlife but Lendrum’s daredevil approach to rare-egg stealing has him captivated and committed to putting an end to his predatory obsession.

How many of us are familiar with falcon racing and the lengths that wealthy owners will go to acquire the strongest and fastest flyers?

Author Joshua Hammer does a masterful job of storytelling. This is a true-crime narrative, as well as a high adventure story. It takes readers into a world where the players take extraordinary risks for potentially high rewards. Hammer takes us behind the scenes to learn more about the egg thief, his upbringing, the influ-



ence of his father, his globe-trotting explorations, entrepreneurial business schemes, and perhaps ironically, his love of nature.

Lendrum lies prodigiously. When he’s caught on several occasions, he seems taken aback and surprised.

His nemesis, McWilliam, is cast as a committed and caring law enforcement officer with a quirky sense of humor who, likewise, has a love of nature, but sees in Lendrum that it has taken a twisted path.

As the main protagonists are revealed for their strengths and weaknesses, the world in which they navigate is brought to life, from Zimbabwe’s Matobo National Park to Patagonia to the deserts of Dubai.

The story is a cliffhanger—literally. Readers will see the thrill-seeking Lendrum dangling hundreds of feet down from a hovering helicopter while nimbly snatching multi-colored eggs from nests perched on cliff ledges.

Reading nearly like the flight of a falcon, the story has its dips and dives set against an incredibly mesmerizing natural backdrop. Beyond troubling, the business of bird egg smuggling is fraught with dangerous deceptions, unscrupulous motives, and immense sums of money. Sympathies will no doubt be with the sought-after birds of prey rather than their human predators.

As Hammer writes: “The rare-bird underground was far more extensive than a handful of launderers in England sneaking into areas in Scotland and Wales. Criminals roamed from Southeast Asia to the former Yugoslavia to the Amazon jungle, plundering birds

‘The Falcon Thief: A True Tale of Adventure, Treachery and the Hunt for the Perfect Bird’

Author
Joshua Hammer

Publisher
Simon & Schuster, 2020

Pages
336

of prey, flouting export and import regulations, smuggling chicks and mature birds abroad in often horrific conditions, and feeding a voracious market for exotic fauna.”

The allure of the wild is alive and well. Hammer notes that while captive-bred birds are available, it’s the young chick or egg straight from a nest that fetches the higher prices. It’s believed that these birds will be stronger, fiercer, and faster, their wild and soaring souls intact.

For the most part, Lendrum is a sophisticated, one-man operation. As clever as he is, Lendrum is caught—several times in fact. Remorseful and penitent, he always vows that his egg theft days are behind him—until the next time he finds himself free of prison.

McWilliam has an uneasy relationship with Lendrum, as much admiration for his sleuthing skills to abhorrence for the nature of his crimes. The dynamic of the two, the hunter and the hunted, is an engaging and compelling page-turner. It’s also an eye-opener to a world both mystifying and malevolent, where predators and protectors collide.

Hammer, also the author of “Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II,” has given readers another gripping tale that informs as well as instructs and inspires.

In an interview with Washington, D.C. journalist Deborah Kalb, Hammer spoke about what he hopes readers will take away from his book: “I’d like readers to come away with an appreciation for the richness and diversity of the natural world, and of birds in particular, a respect for the unsung heroes like McWilliam who are fighting to protect the wild from predators such as Lendrum, and a fascination for the obsession and greed that can drive a person like Lendrum to destroy the very things he purports to love ... I’d like readers to be both entertained by Lendrum’s riotous antics and appalled by his bad behavior.”

You don’t have to be an ornithologist or bird fancier to enjoy this suspenseful read and Hammer’s elegant writing style.

If you’re fortunate enough to see a falcon fly, you’ll have a greater appreciation of what it is, what its world is about, and the lengths that man will go to possess it.

Anita L. Sherman is an award-winning journalist who has more than 20 years of experience as a writer and editor for local papers and regional publications in Virginia. She now works as a freelance writer and is working on her first novel. She is the mother of three grown children and grandmother to four, and she resides in Warrenton, Va. Anita can be reached at anitajusturrie@gmail.com



◀ Reading nearly like the flight of a falcon, the story has its dips and dives set against an incredibly mesmerizing natural backdrop.

A New Home for 13

Family sleeps in a tent for 3 months until guardian angel steps in

LOUISE BEVAN

A family of 13 that was given 30 days’ notice to leave a rented house in Utah suddenly found themselves with nowhere to live. With scant options for a family of their size, they moved into a tent. However, their fortune took a turn when a local real estate agent heard of their plight and offered to buy their dream property.

Brittany and Danny Shelton, aged 39 and 40, are raising their kids in Tremonton, Utah, as a city firefighter and EMT, respectively.

They were working on buying their rented house—their treasured home of seven years—until the housing market changed, and their landlord decided to sell; he told

them on June 29 that they had 30 days to find somewhere to live.

“We had no clue,” Brittany told *The Epoch Times*. “The future that we had planned in this home was no longer happening. We paid our rent and took great care of the home; we even paid to have new flooring put into it just weeks before this happened.”

The prospect of leaving their friends and neighbors was equally devastating for the Shelton kids, ranging in age from 16 to 1: Adler, Teagan, Aryiana, Takoda, Aimryn, twins Azlyn and Tedric, Albricht, Thaydin, Aurorah, and baby Trezlyn.

They had to stay in Tremonton because, if Danny left, he would lose his job. However, Brittany said that for the few rental homes that exist in the area, there were “long waiting lists.”

“We were blindsided!” she said. “With our family size, in the best conditions, it’s hard to find a place, and with the housing shortage, especially to rent, because everyone

kids couldn’t play as normal because there were snakes and coyotes, and we even saw a mountain lion.”

As summer ended and the mountains grew cold, Brittany and Danny worried, but comforted themselves with a family motto: “As long as we are together and healthy, that’s what matters.”

Their guardian angel came along in the nick of time. Realtor Russell Faucett of Salt Lake City heard the Sheltons’ story from a local radio station through which he advertises, and called them with a proposition: he wanted to buy a house to rent to them, but he wanted them to choose it.

Brittany and Danny had reservations and refrained from telling their kids.

“Things had been so hard, letdown after letdown; we didn’t want to get too excited and have it not happen,” Brittany said.

Yet the prospect of a new home in their time of greatest need was irresistible. They began searching and found a four-bedroom home in Tremonton, fully refurbished. Faucett even hired a team to transform half the family room into two additional bedrooms,

as the Sheltons wanted.

Everyone cried the day they got the keys in mid-September and the kids saw their new home for the first time. Brittany said that “thank you” is not enough for “amazing, good-hearted” Faucett and his immense generosity.

“He has been such a huge blessing to our family,” she said. “He reached out to help and went above and beyond. He never really shared why he decided to help us other than he heard our story, knew he needed to do something, and was in a position to help at the time so he did.”

While house-hunting, Brittany and Danny met numerous families in the same position who were “being kicked out and nowhere to go.”

“There are no homes to rent because everyone is selling and the few that are up for rent, there is a waiting list, giving people in this situation no hope,” she said. “Landlords know they have the upper hand in this situation and can charge above and beyond because people are desperate to keep a roof over their heads. I’ve met so



Danny (2nd L) and Brittany Shelton with their children.

many families on this journey, and it’s sad that this is happening to so many good families.”

Lucas Martin, director of human services for Bear River Association of Governments, told KUTV in July that the housing shortage in Utah’s Box Elder, Cache, and Rich counties is “a tremendous challenge,” particularly in rural areas. Over the course of

a “normal year,” the association receives roughly 300 requests for emergency rent assistance. In June alone, they had 109.

But selfless deeds of kindness can change lives just like the Sheltons experienced. They plan to purchase their new home from Faucett one day, making it their own.

“He has said we could do it at any time,” Brittany said. “He told us that this is our home and to treat it as such.”

Brittany said that their family learned a lot from this situation, which was by far “the hardest thing” they have ever been through.

“Now our issue is replacing the furniture we had to get rid of, but we figure in time it will happen. We have a home, and that’s enough for us!” she said.

Ashdeep Sarao contributed to this report.

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



Older generations should pass on hard-won gems of wisdom to the younger ones, writes Maureen Alley.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION

Lessons to Remember

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

There are so many skills lost by one single generation failing to pass along their knowledge and wisdom to their children. How to live simply, how to live within one's means, how to build a fire or cook on a wood-burning stove, and how to prepare foods and meals passed down for generations have become replaced by convenience and "experts" dictating what is "best." In the end, the tastes and knowledge of the past are lost.

My kids and grandkids hated to hear the mantras, but eventually mud will stick to any wall. So here are a few of the things that I have found important to glean from our elders, should the younger generations of today choose to take heed:

Don't Waste

Don't waste food. You may not like what you are served, but it is better than going hungry.

Don't waste material goods—toys, tools, pencils, paper, etc. There may come a day when they cannot be replaced. Learning early to take care of what you have will pay

“While these skills are old technology, one day they may come in handy if and when modern technology no longer works. They may even save your life.”

Maureen Alley, Georgia

dividends in the long run.

Don't waste money. Learn to handle it properly and you will not be wanting.

Learn From Your Elders

The older generation can teach you valuable life lessons, like how to maintain healthy and moral habits instead of neglect of body and soul, discipline instead of impulsivity, work before pleasure, etc.

The older generation can teach skills they knew from long ago that have been replaced by technological advancements. While these skills are old technology, one day they may come in handy if and when modern technology no longer works. They may even save your life.

The older generation can show you how to avoid mistakes they made so that the younger generation will not have to repeat the same learning process.

Don't lie! Lying destroys trust. If a person lies, restoring trust with others, especially those closest to you, will be far harder than if the lie was never told.

Don't Be Shallow and Naive

—Learn to Think for Yourself
There is no greater gift to yourself than to think clearly and learn deeply.

Don't just accept what your peers, society, a movie or sports star, the media, teachers, politicians, even your doctor tell you. Research for yourself. What might work for one person isn't necessarily good for you.

Never be satisfied with what you are told to think or do. Question it. See if there is more that either you can do, or you can learn. The more questions you ask, the more knowledge you gain. The more you learn, the more intellectual experience you will have when faced with choices in the future.

Learn to search for Truth, and it will come if you look hard enough. If it were easy to attain, it wouldn't remain in your heart and mind for long. Truth is hard-won, and, once reached, isn't likely to be taken from you by lies or shallow opinions.

To live shallowly is to simply try to find the easy way out of any situation, no matter how minor. And, in the end, that can cost you more of yourself in the long run than what you should be willing to lose.

Above All, Learn to Give

Learn to live simply.

Love what you have and what you are given, but never so much that you wouldn't be willing to give it all away.

Above all, give generously to others. No greater pleasure can be attained from giving to others, especially those unable to help themselves. Living for instantaneous gratifications and pleasures of this world will never give lasting satisfaction in this life. The only thing it produces is the desire for more things, more pleasures. But to give to someone else is a satisfaction that expands your heart with love for those around you. And that is a lasting treasure far greater than any material gain.

Learning from one's elders is filled with invaluable life lessons. And there are far more lessons to learn than what is listed here. No older generation should miss the opportunity to give those gems of wisdom to those younger than themselves. It would be selfish to keep those lessons to one's self. Pass that knowledge forward and keep the momentum going.

Remember that you—moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, and uncles—are the bridge between knowledge lost or knowledge retained for generations to come.

—Maureen Alley, Georgia

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

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

The Petit Trianon of Versailles: A Garden Palace Retreat Away From the Royal Court

JAMES HOWARD SMITH

In 1761, King Louis XV (1710-1774) commissioned architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel to design a modest palace set far back in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles as a place of respite, away from the pressures of the main palace court. It became known as the Petit Trianon.

Gabriel had previously worked with his father, Jacques V. Gabriel, on various decorative designs in Versailles. They were designed in the Rococo style, which had become increasingly elaborate over time. However, in the Petit Trianon, Ange-Jacques's work took inspiration from the more reserved Classical Greek architecture.

Classical Greek architecture was defined by an overall simplicity, with an emphasis on symmetry, proportion, and simple geometry. The Petit Trianon is arranged in a cuboid shape. Each façade is symmetrically made up of five vertically proportioned window bays that each included a rectangular lower window and a square upper window. The main façade is defined by four Corinthian columns, emphasizing the tall proportions of the three central window bays, creating an upright quality.

The beauty of the Petit Trianon comes with its subtlety. The plain walls emphasize the minimal and carefully expressed ornaments. These refined ornaments give an overall elegance to the façade.

In the age of the elaborate Rococo, Ange-Jacques had created a refreshing and refined example of the classical tradition and an early step toward what would become known as the neoclassical style.

James Howard Smith, an architectural photographer, designer, and founder of Cartio, aims to inspire an appreciation of classic architecture.



The main façade of the Petit Trianon. The structure has a balustrade atop the roof that softens the edge of the building and extends the vertical lines established by the Corinthian columns.

(Below left) The music room's pastel green walls and white panelling provide a subtle backdrop for the gold framed mirrors, chandelier, and the red fabrics. (Below middle) The main dining room, where summer lunches and dinner parties were held. The grand windows and doors on the lower floor provide a desirable view of the garden, as the building was mostly enjoyed in the summer. (Below right) The main two floors of the Petit Trianon are arranged around a grand staircase. The reserved colors and sculpted motifs help emphasize the ornamental wrought iron balustrade.

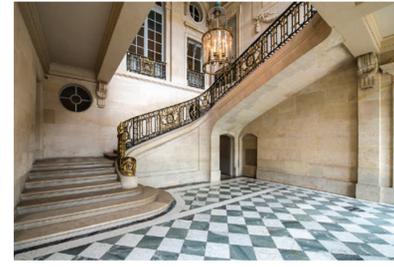
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T. GARNIER/CHATEAU DE VERSAILLES



(Above left) Reflective of a more restrained neoclassical interior, the monotone walls and ornamentation create a pure, serene setting for a spiritual space: the chapel. (Above middle) Marie Antoinette's apartment on the mezzanine floor that looks out over the English garden. (Above right) The antechamber, or entry room opens out onto the estate garden.

T. GARNIER/CHATEAU DE VERSAILLES



(Above) As one draws closer to the building, the window and cornice ornamentation and the Corinthian column capitals (crowns) become prominent and invite one to admire the refined design and craftsmanship. (Left) A long, formal French garden leads and gives emphasis to the main façade of the Petit Trianon.

The Organized Parent: Preparing for the Holidays

A conversation with organization expert Nikki Boyd

BARBARA DANZA

Parents this year are feeling the urge to jot down their holiday checklists earlier than normal, as reports of supply chain problems, post office slowdowns, and increasing inflation collude to ensure a bumpy holiday shopping season.

If it's peace and joy you're after this time of year, the key is to get organized. I asked organization expert, YouTuber, and author of "Beautifully Organized: A Guide to Function and Style in Your Home" Nikki Boyd for her advice on navigating this unique holiday season. Here's what she said.

The Epoch Times: What are some key organizational strategies you employ each year to smoothly navigate the holiday season?

Nikki Boyd: One strategy that is key in the success of organizing a beautiful holiday season is to downsize your home possessions prior to the start of the holidays. This way you can go into the season with a fresh new space. I recommend starting with your closet. Purge and remove all items that no longer bring you joy, or fit your needs or current lifestyle. I then recommend taking this process throughout the rest of your home. In addition to refreshing your home with a pre-holiday declutter, I recommend refreshing those areas of your

home that get high use during the holidays such as your kitchen seasonings. (You would not want to use outdated spices in that holiday pie). Also, you will want to test all of your kitchen appliances to ensure they are working properly.

The Epoch Times: What are some of the ways in which you make your home feel special during this time of year?

Ms. Boyd: To make my home feel special during this time of year, I love to create different experiences in my home for my family and friends. I use the five senses—smell, touch, taste, sight, and sound—to help guide me with implementing special holiday experiences. One idea is to create a holiday-themed coffee and cocoa bar that stays open 24 hours. If you live in a small space you can create this by using a bar cart. Also, leave things like games and blankets around the house to encourage family and friends to engage and relax.

The Epoch Times: It seems there may be some extra challenges this year when it comes to holiday shopping and checking off gift lists. What adjustments do you recommend people make this year in their holiday preparations?

Ms. Boyd: Because of the challenges that we have this year, it is important to start early when it comes to preparing for the



COURTESY OF NIKKI BOYD

“It is also important to delegate responsibilities to the entire family during the holidays.”

Nikki Boyd

holidays such as buying gifts and decor for your home. You may want to also think about giving more creative gifts such as handmade gifts or experiences.

The Epoch Times: Moms, especially, can feel overwhelmed during the holidays as they anxiously aim to make magical memories for their families. How do you recommend moms approach their holiday aspirations while maintaining their inner peace and enjoying the season along with everyone else?

Ms. Boyd: It is especially important that moms think about their joy as they work to prepare for a joyful holiday. Moms should create a self-care routine during the holidays. Pamper yourself with a day at the spa or create your own spa [experience] at home. It is also important to delegate responsibilities to the entire family during the holidays. Scheduling a time to do things with your girlfriends is a great way to get a break from the overwhelm of the holidays.

The Epoch Times: What are the holiday traditions that you most enjoy preparing for your family?

Ms. Boyd: One of my favorite traditions that I enjoy putting together for my family is my annual holiday invitation. I create an interactive invitation to get everyone excited about the holidays. I do this by creating a fun package with hints of what is to come for the holiday festivities and give it to my family.

HOMESCHOOLING

6 Ways to Celebrate the Spirit of Christmas in Your Homeschool

KAREN DOLL

Welcome to the merriest time of the year—Christmas time. Joy floats through the air on the notes of cheerful holiday melodies, and your kids are bright with anticipation. So how can you keep those smiles on their faces and complete necessary schoolwork at the same time?

Well, whether or not you're able to take a longer break during the holidays, you can sprinkle these holiday-themed activities into your days.

Make and Give Gifts From the Heart

Generosity is always a welcome gift because it comes from the heart and warms the hearts of others. Making and giving gifts with your children teaches them about the best gift of all—giving.

We sent homemade holiday cards to help brighten the spirits of young patients at local hospitals, made goodies for lonely seniors, and baked dog biscuits for animal shelter residents. But don't forget the birds! Spread peanut butter all over both sides of mini bagels and press each side into a bowl of birdseed. Attach a colorful string and hang them up on your trees.

Help faraway family and friends

feel not so far away with personalized concerts, plays, and holiday greetings. Dress your family in their finest, sparkliest holiday attire and sing Christmas carols, recite holiday poems, or just wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

Try some of these or create your own traditions of giving.



By fostering a cat or dog, kids can learn the value of responsibility.

MINKINOVA/MARIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Build a Gingerbread House

Want to add a bit of sugar and spice to your holiday history lessons? Bake some gingerbread and start building.

I think making a gingerbread house might just be the ultimate holiday challenge, but one of the best family activities. Of course, there are kits available if you are a novice builder, but it might just be that much more fun to plan and build it from the tabletop up.

The craft of building gingerbread houses originated in Germany in the 1500s and

may have been the inspiration for the story of Hansel and Gretel written by the Brothers Grimm. Gingerbread eventually found its way to America via the English colonists who settled here.

Did you know that the world's biggest gingerbread house was built by the Traditions Golf Club in Texas and was 60 feet long, 42 feet wide, and about 20 feet high?

Foster Animals

Fostering a needy cat or dog during the holidays is a great way to comfort frightened and lonely shelter animals and improve their chances for adoption. Gentle and caring family interactions and your loving home environment help to bring out their true pet personalities hidden inside while living at the shelters. This insight helps staff to place each animal in its perfect forever home.

Shelters will provide your family with all the essentials necessary to care for your new furry friend: food, bowls, a collar and leash, and a crate for when you're not at home.

The hands-on experiences of pet ownership, even if only temporary, can help teach responsibility, time management, selflessness, compassion, and accountability. We fostered cats, orphaned kittens, pregnant mama cats and their litters, retired racing Greyhounds and other dog breeds, and even a few needy baby goats throughout the year, and the rewards are immeasurable.

Celebrate Holiday Traditions Around the World

It's fascinating and such fun to learn about the Christmas traditions of other countries whose culture is so different from our own. Some museums, libraries, and city visitors' bureaus sponsor a display of decorated Christmas trees from around the world. Visit the displays and use this as a stepping stone for learning about the Christmas customs of other countries.

Visit Model Railroad Displays

This is inspired by my husband David's love of trains. Model railroad clubs throughout the country host open houses during the holiday season. Your kids will be in awe of these delightful miniature villages and



FAMVELO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Making a gingerbread house is fun family challenge.

Making and giving gifts with your children teaches them about the best gift of all—giving.

Karen Doll is a freelance writer and homeschooling consultant based in the small village of Wasergass, Pennsylvania. She enjoys writing about homeschooling, gardening, food and culture, family life, and the joys of chicken keeping. Visit her at AtHomeWithKarenDoll.wordpress.com

landscapes, many of which are modeled after their local towns with historic landmarks and businesses. Check your newspaper for a listing of dates and times for the open houses.

Most displays are interactive and operated by club volunteers who are always happy to talk about the display and answer any questions. A simple visit just might elicit a conversation about railroading history, industry, or inspire your kids to start planning and building a display of their own.

Create a Holiday Collage

I save all the Christmas cards we receive each year as keepsakes and use them as inspiration for making my own cards. You could also encourage your kids to get a little crafty and choose their favorite images and scenes, cut them out, and make a collage of Christmas spirit. Frame it and hang it in a central location where everyone will be able to see it and feel the joy every day of the year. If you haven't saved your cards in the past, consider doing so this year.

It's such a special gift to be able to sprinkle the spirit of Christmas into your homeschool days. It brightens attitudes. It sparks creativity. And your kids might be astonishingly motivated to work on schoolwork when they're snuggled up all warm and cozy with their new furry friend.

Holidays With the Family

BERNADETTE BONANNO

Unlike the picture-perfect holiday images we see on Facebook and TV, real-life family interactions are often complicated. Some members look and sound like us. These similarities often make us feel a wee bit uncomfortable. Childhood nonsense gets dug up. If we're at the top of our game, we laugh, reminisce, and time flies. When we're not, the party drags on.

Recently, while cooking dinner, I felt gratitude for the appliances in our home, especially my kitchen oven. Multiple times a week, it withstands heat, spills, and burning. Then, when necessary, it cleans itself.

So, please indulge me as I share four valuable lessons I've learned from my reliable appliance about navigating holiday family gatherings.

LESSON 1 When activated, ovens generate heat. There's bound to be heat now and then. So, if necessary, keep a safe distance.

LESSON 2 When I lean in too closely to check the food in the oven, my eyelashes get singed and stubby. A few singes are inevitable. So, relax. They grow back.

LESSON 3 When I get home from work, before taking off my coat, I plan dinner. I remove the stack of baking pans stored inside the oven. Then, I rotate the dial to preheat. The order of removing the pans first and turning on the power second is crucial. I recently switched the order and burned my hand as well as the sleeve of my brand-new coat. My hand hurt, and I needed to purchase a new jacket. So, before heading to the party, come up with a plan and stick to it.

LESSON 4 A few years ago, 20-plus fam-

PIXEL-SHOT/SHUTTERSTOCK



Family holiday gatherings can be fraught with adventures.

There is always a Plan B with my mother, and this evening was no different.

ily members came over for dinner during the holidays. I cleaned my oven and purchased an oversized foil pan to prepare one colossal, impressive lasagna.

After baking for well over an hour, my masterpiece was ready. I carefully bent down and pulled the shelf to remove the heavy pan, but it slipped and dipped forward. My lasagna, although intact, was now at the bottom of the oven! The empty pan was in my hand. I let out a painful moan, reminiscent of childbirth. Within seconds, my mom appeared at my side.

There's always a Plan B with my mother, and this evening was no different. She instructed me to scoop up the lasagna from the bottom of the oven and put it back into the pan. I resisted at first but acquiesced after glancing into our living room packed with hungry guests.

She wiped up the bottom of the oven with a wet towel and told me to grate more cheese. She smoothed and flattened the messy lasagna noodles, covered the top with sauce and cheese, and put it back into the oven. When the cheese melted, she took it out, sliced, and served it. It was delicious, and nobody noticed the difference! So, at family gatherings, hang out with people who have your back!

I often spend time with an elderly woman. Without a family, her days and nights are spent alone. Through tears, she frequently states that loneliness is the most painful experience of her life.

Ovens and families, although complicated at times, are a blessing. If we make a plan, anticipate the heat, and buddy up with a true-blue friend, we'll enjoy the gifts we have been given, both in our appliances and in one another.

Bernadette Bonanno lives in Albany, N.Y.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Chanukah, Oh Chanukah

song lyrics by Chayim B. Alevsky

Oh Chanukah, Oh Chanukah
Come light the Menorah
Let's have a party
We'll all dance the Horah

Gather around the table
I'll give you a treat
Sevivon to play with
And latkes to eat

And while we are playing
The candles are burning low
One for each night
They shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago



ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

HOW MANY POTATOES DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE POTATO PANCAKES?



Latkes

This Week in History

COUNTRIES AGREE ON ANTARCTICA

Esperanza Base is Argentina's research station in Antarctica.

On Dec. 1, 1959, 12 countries signed an agreement making Antarctica a demilitarized zone and one preserved for scientific research. The Antarctic Treaty was signed by Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Since then, other agreements have been added and 54 parties have signed on to what is now known as the Antarctic Treaty System.



SEVA ESTVANK/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Aidan Danza, age 15

ANIMALS OF THE WINTER

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES

As another cold winter approaches, many birds will flee the cold weather, migrating south in search of a better climate, while many mammals will hibernate through the season. However, there are a number of animals that stick around through the cold.



COOPER'S HAWK

These hawks are present in most of America year-round, with some hawks leaving cold northern states like Maine, upstate New York, and Montana. With no leaves on the trees, they are more conspicuous than usual, which results in great views but hungry hawks, since their prey can see them more easily. The Cooper's Hawk is categorized as an accipiter, which means it has a long tail and short wings, and a light, small body, especially compared to a red-tailed hawk or a bald eagle. These traits make the hawk specially suited for speed and agility, so it can chase down birds through dense woods. It twists its long tail to steer quickly, while the wings are better suited for fast flapping than soaring.

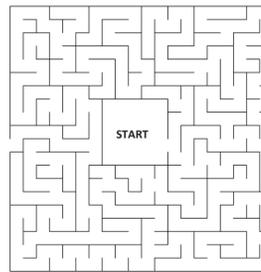
WHITE-TAILED DEER

White-tailed deer are present in ever-increasing numbers around the country. Without a doubt, they are the most common large mammal in the East. A deer's life becomes much more difficult in the winter, when the edible vegetation dies away or is covered by snow, they are forced to subsist on pine or other conifer needles. Males grow antlers in April or May and shed them anytime from January to March. Deer will also grow thick winter coats, which are grayer than their thin summer coat, to keep warm.

NORTHERN CARDINAL

The male of this species, bright red with a black eye mask, is very easy to spot in the winter, especially with snow on the ground. Females are a modest brown with some red tinges. They love sunflower seeds, and in the winter, when food is scarce, they will flock to bird feeders, sometimes in large numbers. Sadly for westerners, the cardinal isn't present west of the Rockies, though if you live in southern Arizona or New Mexico, you might see one.

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 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1+ (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1



Solution For Easy 1

1 + 7 * (7 + 3)

Medium puzzle 1



Solution for Medium 1

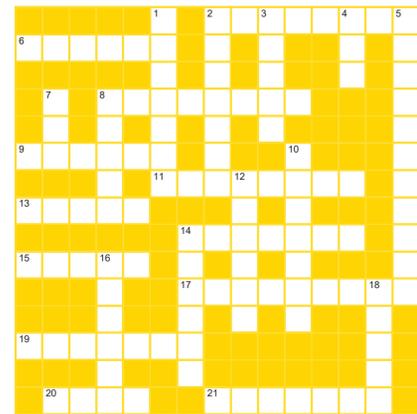
71 - 71 * (01 - 21)

Hard puzzle 1



Solution for Hard 1

86 - 8 + 8 * 12



Across

- 2 Latke ingredients (8)
- 6 Where the Shamash (helper candle) is in a menorah (6)
- 8 They spin the dreidel (8)
- 9 Follow (6)
- 11 Fun candle activity (8)

Down

- 1 Hanukkah spinner (7)
- 2 Kugel (7)
- 3 Jewish calendar month (5)
- 4 One cruse of it lasted eight days (3)
- 5 Latkes, Sufganiyot, Rugelach, etc. (11)
- 7 Creator (3)
- 8 Holiday spirit (5)
- 10 'Shul' or 'shtetl' (7)
- 12 Jewish chant of praise (6)
- 14 Primary language of Israel (6)
- 16 Jewish homeland (6)
- 18 Talents (5)
- 13 Traditional Hanukkah food category (5)
- 14 Break from school or work (7)
- 15 A way to celebrate (5)
- 17 God's provisions (9)
- 19 "Impossible" happening (7)
- 20 Coin-shaped Hanukkah candy (4)
- 21 They go in a menorah (7)



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