

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

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The Stories Behind the Music

The music we know and love binds us together as people.

The inspiration behind some Christmas song favorites

JEFF MINICK

Christmas delivers more traditions, festivities, and entertainments than all other American holidays combined.

Worshippers sing traditional carols and hymns, and light Advent candles. In their churches and homes, they set up nativity scenes, a practice created in 1223 by St. Francis of Assisi.

On the other side of the fence are secular holiday traditions. Originally modeled on a fourth-century bishop, St. Nicholas of Myra, Santa Claus has long been an icon

'Silent Night' has a backstory that is almost as beautiful as the carol itself.

of the Christmas season. We set up and decorate fir trees in our living rooms, fix stockings to the mantle, send out Christmas cards, buy sleigh loads of presents, and tell the little ones about Santa's elves and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

The world of arts and entertainment exuberantly joins these festivities. We read books such as Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" and share poems with our children like Clement Moore's "The Night Before Christmas" or Dr. Seuss's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Hollywood has pumped out scores of Christmas movies, ranging from classics like "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Miracle on 34th Street" to comedies, religious stories, and Hallmark romances.

Meanwhile, families practice their own holiday customs. That newly wedded couple must decide whether they're going to open presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Some families watch

"A Christmas Story," while others stick to "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." Some repeat the Thanksgiving menu of turkey and stuffing for their holiday meal while others enjoy roast beef, goose, or ethnic foods.

And then, of course, there is the music.

Songs, Songs, and More Songs

There are so many Christmas songs and so many different artists who have recorded them that certain radio stations fill their December air time with this fare without strain or repetition. Load copies of all these recordings into Santa's sleigh, and even that bearded wonder and his 12 reindeer might have trouble making lift-off.

Some of these compositions are more than 1,000 years old, while others have popped up in just the past decade.

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Charlotte Brontë wrote deeply about suffering experienced by the titular character in "Jane Eyre."

Surviving Suffering Like a Champ

ANNIE HOLMQUIST

When a friend challenged me to a reading contest on Goodreads a couple of years ago, I was reluctant. Did I really want my reading selections broadcast on the internet for friends and strangers to see? Despite this qualm, my arm was twisted, and I began recording the books I read, often giving them a starred rating based on how much I liked the book.

Let me be clear: I'm rather stingy with my five-star ratings. A book really must speak to or move me before I will give it such high marks. Yet as I think back on the books that I have given a five-star ranking to, a common theme stands out: suffering.

Suffering may seem like a gloom and doom topic, especially during this time of year when everything is supposed to be joyous and bright. Yet during the holiday season is when many of us most struggle with suffering, whether it comes through

the need that comes with the loss of a job, or the loneliness that results from a broken relationship or death, or the sadness of hurts and memories from past seasonal gatherings that rear their ugly heads. And how we deal with suffering in our own lives is what makes or breaks us as individuals.

As I think back on the books that I have given a five-star ranking to, a common theme stands out: suffering.

Take just a moment to peer at my bookshelf of five-star favorites. Here, we see the suffering of "Jane Eyre," in which Charlotte Brontë's title character experiences painful

loss and physical hardship because she believes it necessary to remain true to her principles. Next to it stands Lee Strobel's "The Case for Christ," which reveals the historical and academic evidence for the physical and mental sufferings of the one who gave birth to the largest religion in the world. "Pandemia" was recently added to this five-star shelf, and in this latest book from former New York Times reporter Alex Berenson, we see more clearly the sufferings of the COVID-19 pandemic that have been inflicted upon all of us through the dictates of our leaders and bureaucrats. And finally, "A Path Through Suffering" and "The Path of Loneliness," both by the late author and speaker Elisabeth Elliot, demonstrate ways to overcome hurt and pain.

It's this last author who has particularly amazed me this year.

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The Stories Behind the Music

The inspiration behind some Christmas song favorites

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Some celebrate the coming of a savior, like “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” and “Go Tell It on the Mountain.” Others center our attention on the symbols of the season, like “O Christmas Tree” and “Here Comes Santa Claus.” Some take a turn toward romance, as in “All I Want for Christmas Is You” and “Christmas Every Day.” There are even silly Christmas songs: “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus,” “All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth,” and “Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer.”

Behind many of these songs are intriguing stories of their creation and their meaning. Here are just a few of these histories.

Antiques

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” has its roots in the monasteries of the ninth century. That early version was in Latin, of course, and is just as beautiful, if not more so, than the English we sing today. Originally, monks or nuns antiphonally sang verses and psalms from the Old Testament, anticipating the arrival of a savior. Discipleship Ministries of the Methodist Church offers this interesting observation on the original arrangement. Each of the antiphons began with the words below:

O Sapientia (Wisdom)
O Adonai (Hebrew word for God)
O Radix Jesse (stem or root of Jesse)
O Clavis David (key of David)
O Oriens (dayspring)
O Rex gentium (King of the Gentiles)
O Emmanuel

(Bottom left) Silent Night Chapel in Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria, where the carol “Silent Night” was first performed on Christmas Eve in 1818.

(Below) “Silent Night” was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber.

By the seventh antiphon—O Emmanuel—the first letter of these words read in opposite order gave listeners an acrostic “Ero Cras,” which means “I will be present tomorrow.”

Another song from the Middle Ages, “In Dulci Jubilo,” we now know as “Good Christian Men, Rejoice.” German folklore holds that Heinrich Seuse composed this carol sometime around 1328, after he had heard angels singing it.



Surviving Suffering Like a Champ

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Elliot, a well-educated linguist, was the wife of Jim Elliot, who was martyred in the 1950s along with four other missionary men by the tribe of natives they were trying to minister to in the jungles of South America. Their story reached mainstream America via Elliot’s biography of the men and continued through Life magazine’s photo essay on Elliot’s later life working among the very tribe who murdered her husband. The many works Elliot wrote on suffering emerged not only from this tragedy, but also through other losses, such as the death of her second husband from cancer.

When going through suffering, it’s easy to dismiss the help and advice of others with the thought that they have no idea what they’re talking about. But with Elliot, the case is different. She went through loss, through suffering, through pain, through loneliness. And instead of frantically seeking to push hurt aside and fill the painful void in our lives with other things, she counsels us to look up and find “a refuge

for our loneliness” in God.

“To stop our frantic getting, spending, and searching,” she says in “The Path of Loneliness,” “and simply to look at the things God has made is to move one step away from despair. For God cares.”

How we deal with suffering in our own lives is what makes or breaks us as individuals.

If anyone had cause for bitterness over the loss and pain she endured, it was Elliot. Yet she tells us that “it is possible both to accept and to endure loneliness [and by extension, all forms of suffering].” How do we do so? Elliot gives us the answer:

“In circumstances for which there is no final answer in the world, we have two choices: accept them as God’s wise and loving choice for our blessing (this is called

faith), or resent them as proof of His indifference, His carelessness, even His non-existence (this is unbelief).”

Elliot obviously chose the first option, explaining that she accepts her suffering as a gift from God, and then gives it back to him as an offering in return. That’s a foreign concept in our society today, not only because we are encouraged to play the victim—even when receiving the smallest hurts and offenses—but because many Americans regularly relegate God to a corner of their lives, or not at all.

But what if we tried Elliot’s approach to suffering? Instead of continually bemoaning our troubles—both public and personal—what if we accepted them as a gift from God—a gift that, although painful at the time, could turn into beautiful character or other benefits further down the road? Doing so gives us a completely different lens to view the world through, and in a world that is increasingly broken and strewn with victims who only wallow in their suffering, a few individuals who choose to do the opposite will make a world of difference.



Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht “Silent Night” has a backstory that is almost as beautiful as the carol itself.

Just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a young Austrian priest, Joseph Mohr, took a walk on a winter’s evening and was struck by the peace and beauty of the snow-covered village below him. He wrote down the words for “Silent Night,” and two years later, in need of a hymn for Christmas Eve, he paid a visit to his friend Franz Gruber, a school teacher who was also the church’s choirmaster, and asked him to compose the music for his lyrics.

That night, at Midnight Mass, Gruber and Father Mohr, playing on the guitar, gave the world one of its most beloved carols. Eventually, “Silent Night” was translated into more than 300 languages and is today sung around the world. One fascinating historical note: During World War I’s Christmas Eve truce of 1914, soldiers from both sides of no man’s land gathered and sang the carol in English and German.

Secular Songs of the Season

The past 100 years have seen an explosion of non-religious holiday songs. Of these, “White Christmas” remains one of the most popular, and again the music comes with a special story.

The Russian-born Irving Berlin, who gave us such hits as “God Bless America” and “Puttin’ on the Ritz,” also wrote “White Christmas.” Though the Jewish composer didn’t celebrate this holiday, some have speculated he may have written the song in memory of his 3-week-old son, who died in 1928 on Christmas Day. For years afterward, Berlin and his wife annually visited their son’s grave on that day. Certainly, the opening lines and the slow, rather melancholy tune might point to such a loss:

“I’m dreaming of a white Christmas/Just like the ones I used to know/Where the treetops glisten and children listen/ To hear sleigh bells in the snow.”

In 1941, Bing Crosby first brought the newly published “White Christmas” to the airwaves just days after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. During the war, whenever Crosby appeared overseas to entertain the troops, the soldiers again and again requested this song.

“I hesitated about doing it because invariably it caused such a nostalgic yearning among the men, that it made them sad,” Crosby said in an interview. “Heaven knows,

I didn’t come that far to make them sad. For this reason, several times I tried to cut out of the show, but these guys just hollered for it.”

Those men wanted that reminder of home and what they were fighting for.

Cultural Bonds

If we explore the origins and histories of such songs and carols, we find that many of them come with these special stories. “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” for example, finds some musicologists who believe that the gifts mentioned in the song, from a partridge in a pear tree to 12 drummers drumming, refer to certain symbols of the Catholic faith while others contend this strange array of presents derives from a child’s memory game.

While learning these stories can be fun and instructive, it’s the music we know and love. It’s a small bit of that glue that binds us together as people. We would be hard-pressed to find a child, or an adult for that matter, who had never heard of Rudolph or The Grinch. Whatever our religious beliefs, we’re familiar with “Silent Night” and “Joy to the World.” We may not know the words, but we can hum along with songs like “Little Drummer Boy” and “I’ll Be Home for Christmas.”

To my readers, I’ll conclude by way of one more song title: “We Wish You a Merry Christmas!”

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

During World War I’s Christmas Eve truce of 1914, soldiers from both sides of no man’s land gathered and sang the carol in English and German.

Living historian Paul Thompson poses as Gen. Walter Congreve VC at the National Memorial Arboretum as he reads the general’s letter from the trenches describing the Christmas Day Truce of 1914, in Alrewas, England, on Dec. 4, 2014.



Book Review: ‘I, Citizen: A Blueprint for Reclaiming American Self-Governance’

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

DUSTIN BASS

In many of their writings, the Founding Fathers often indicated what they were working to secure for the American people: safety and happiness. These two words were a reflection of what Thomas Jefferson meant when he wrote that “governments are instituted among men to secure these rights.” The Founding Fathers’ goal was to institute a republican form of government that would ensure their safety and happiness by securing the rights of the citizens.

Tony Woodlief, in his new book “I, Citizen,” describes how our government has continued to stray further and further from our founding principles. The author provides ample examples of how this has taken place, including our ever-expanding administrative state, our three branches of government that seem confused about their proper roles, and a population that has forgotten the purpose of citizenship.

How We Got Here

How did this begin? Woodlief highlights two very obvious figures that helped perpetuate the decline in self-governance and the rise of what Thomas Hobbes would call the leviathan of government: Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. These two presidents and their administrations ushered in the superiority of the expert, where control over how the country is run is no longer subject to the citizens and their representatives, but to unelected bureaucrats. With the creation of federal agencies to tackle issues within the country, the author points out how our three branches of government failed to do their jobs and have greatly failed to rein in an administrative state with agencies possessing the power of all three branches.

From school boards to city councils to simple community engagement, American communities need their citizens—those regular level headed citizens—to be active.

Is this unwelcome intervention intentional? After reading Woodlief’s book, it is hard to see it as anything but, at least from the perspective of the agencies themselves. The author suggests that one of the problems is that there are too many political scientists (of which he is one) directing the country. His chapter “Scientists, Mad and Political,” breaks down the goals of these “mad scientists” and why they believe their goal of top-down control is not only achievable but workable (his example of the National Forest Service is unforgettable).

Ultimately, Woodlief makes the case that America is in trouble from within. We now have a government solely focused on safety, while disregarding the happiness of its citizens, and in many cases—and most cases in recent mem-



The Capitol in Washington on Dec. 17, 2018.

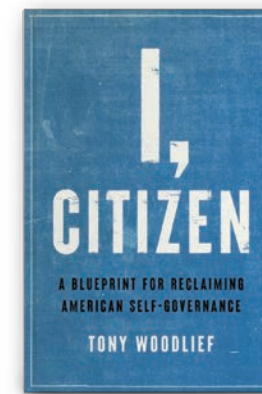
Woodlief presents a “mostly neglected report” that was presented to the American Political Science Association in the 1950s and how it opened the floodgates for how our current two-party system operates. Although there are many reasons to read this book, this chapter alone will open readers’ eyes to exactly how citizens continue to be duped by politicians, regardless of party.

How We Get Back to Self-Governance

Woodlief brings information that citizens need to know and understand. He discusses how our system, which started off so well, has been slowly but surely dismantled. Part of that is the lack of engagement by citizens themselves. The author makes it clear that high-level citizen participation in politics is too often done by ideologues rather than regular level-headed people. (I can hardly agree more.)

Not only has engagement in politics decreased, leading more and more people to become unintentional ideologues by voting strictly according to party affiliation, but Woodlief makes the case that people are becoming less engaged with each other. A society that does not engage with each other can hardly be expected to trust each other, and if that society is not built on trust, then that society must ultimately fail. Woodlief encourages readers to be engaged in their community for its own sake.

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‘I, Citizen: A Blueprint for Reclaiming American Self-Governance’

Author
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ory—safety according to an arbitrary measure. Yet, Woodlief admonishes the reader to not aim for Washington, D.C. as the starting point. That isn’t where citizenship begins.

Citizenship starts in the community and then branches out from there. The author makes a convincing argument that the only way to diminish the size of this “monster,” as Woodlief describes it, is to make certain that communities and cities are based on self-governance. From school boards to city councils to simple community engagement, American communities need their citizens—those regular level-headed citizens—to be active. Woodlief discusses various ways to accomplish that goal at the end of his book.

A Call to Citizen Action

“I, Citizen” is a call to action for Americans to begin playing the traditional role of good, concerned citizens. This, as Woodlief also points out, doesn’t mean jumping on social media to address the country’s ills, but doing as Theodore Roosevelt suggested and actually getting in the arena.

This book is a necessary read in a time when there is a lot of concern about the direction of the country and confusion about how to actually put it back on course. Woodlief wisely states that we won’t see our country get back to where it should be in our lifetime, but that if we start now, we can move it back in the right direction and begin to witness the increase in freedoms that we, along with our elected officials, have relinquished.

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

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

Advice to My Future Great-Grandchildren

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

The advice I leave here for my future great-grandchildren is the same I’d give to my children and grandchildren if they were to ask me.

First things first:

1. Make the Lord our God your No. 1. Know Him personally, accept Him, pray to Him, and worship Him. I regularly pray for all of you. When I hear the 2020 song “The Blessing” by Elevation Church Worship, I cry every time. The lyrics speak to my soul. If you don’t know it, look it up on YouTube.
2. Be loyal to the United States of America. Specifically, show your allegiance to our flag and national anthem. Never, ever disrespect our flag or the national anthem; many people bled and died for it. Be grateful to our servicemen and women, and honor them in every way



Though the holidays are meant to be a joyous time, it is far from the case for some.

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you can. If you can serve our country in the armed forces or another way, please do. Vote every time.

3. Dedicate yourself to our family. My elders and yours leave a long legacy for you. Celebrate our wonderful family members, especially your parents and grandparents, but also aunts, uncles, and cousins. Always help each other when you can. We have some great traditions, like taking a family photo every Thanksgiving Day and making old family recipes. I hope you continue those but also make some of your own for your family. Stick up for each other!

4. Make lasting friendships. Be there for them and support them, encourage them. Share yourself with those you can trust. You can be there for each other over the years.

5. Serve others in your community. Your parents can tell you about how Pop and Grandmom as well as your own parents and grandparents served through a variety of organizations. Give generously of

your time and give monetarily as you are able. Choose those organizations whose causes you are passionate about. I hope you become a Rotarian!

6. Take care of yourself, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually. When all these are in balance, you will be healthy. No one else can do this for you! Encourage each other to do this.

7. Be mindful of your values. Create what you want to be. Be honest, have integrity. This will require your thoughtfulness, but it’s worth the effort.

8. Choose worthwhile work that fits your gifts, and do it with excellence. I am teased a bit by your parents for my “pickiness”—that’s what they call it when I do something “perfectly.” Make your bed every day, and do it well! Try to bring your best effort to everything you do.

9. Be careful of your money. Do your very best to avoid debt—it is truly a millstone. This requires you to live within your means, so have a budget that covers your expenses, gives you a chance to save,

and provides some opportunity to give. Understand the difference between getting the least cost and the greatest value.

10. Have fun!

—Deborah M. Bowen, North Carolina

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

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Brainstorm with your kids about different and fun ways to spend the evening while counting down to midnight

Celebrating New Year's Eve in Your Homeschool

KAREN DOLL

Welcome to the sparkliest time of the year—New Year's Eve. It's a time for reminiscing and cherishing memories from the past year and welcoming in the new year with shouts of good cheer and toasts to prosperity for the year to come. Spend some time in the days leading up to New Year's Eve learning about the traditions of the holiday, enjoy quality time together celebrating family, and plan your celebration. Let the countdown begin!

Learn About Auld Lang Syne

The popular New Year's Eve song, "Auld Lang Syne," which means "Old Long Since" or the days of long ago, is based on the poem of the same name written by Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1788. The song is about cherishing longtime friendships and taking time to reminisce together. "Auld Lang Syne" has a long, fascinating history that will take your kids on a journey to Scotland: the land of legends, majestic mountains, ancient castles, scenic railways, and home to the world's first floating wind farm.

Read aloud the original version of the poem—written in the Scots language—to your kids and take a closer look at the words and phrases. How are these words similar to English and how are they different? Read some of Burns's other poems and discuss them together.

Research the Scottish people's unique New Year's Eve tradition of forming a circle with their loved ones, holding hands, and singing "Auld Lang Syne," and then try it with your family.

Make a Time Capsule

Did you know that Paul Revere and Samuel Adams created the oldest known time capsule in the United

Celebrate like royalty by encouraging everyone to dress up in their fanciest party clothes.

States? It's true. In 1795, the two men made the capsule in honor of the construction of the Massachusetts State House. It was opened in 2015. Do a little digging to discover what was found inside and read about some other famous time capsules.

Making a family time capsule is a perfect way to capture the best moments of 2021. Some items your family might want to include are current family photos. Encourage everyone to dress up in their Sunday best and take a picture for posterity. Then, have everyone dress in mismatched clothing and take a silly picture, and put both photos in your time capsule. Then, add photos of each of your kids wearing their all-time favorite outfit and holding a sign showing current age and height, pet photos, holiday and birthday photos, awards, lists of favorite activities, movies, books, and some newspaper clippings of current headlines.

If you want to actually bury your time capsule in your backyard just be sure to use an airtight metal container. If not, you can use a sturdy shoebox or a plastic bin, decorate it, and label it with the year 2021. Then hide it up in the attic or in a closet and open it up on New Year's Eve 2022.

Research Celebrations in Other Countries

How do people in other countries celebrate New Year's Eve? In Turkey, sprinkling salt on your front doorstep at midnight is believed to bring peace and prosperity into your home. Germans welcome in the new year by eating jelly-filled donuts called Pfannkuchens.

Visit your local library and look for some children's books to use as a stepping stone to fascinating tales of happy New Year's celebrations such as "Freedom Soup," a Haitian story by Tami Charles, and "Happy New Year Everywhere" by Arlene Erlbach.

Do your kids love to color? In the coloring book "Happy New Year Around the World," author Sylvia Walker shares illustrations depicting the New Year's Eve traditions from 30 different countries.

Celebrate!

Celebrate like royalty by encouraging everyone to dress up in their fanciest party clothes and make some easy DIY Happy New Year crowns. Cut out a crown shape from white poster board and set out colorful markers, stickers, ribbons, bows, and any other decorative trinkets you have and everyone can decorate their crowns for the evening. When finished, tape the ends together. And don't forget to deck your halls. Get some silver and gold helium-filled bal-

loons and let them free-float up to the ceiling, hang different colored streamers around the house, and ask each of your kids to make a Happy New Year banner.

Brainstorm with your kids about different and fun ways to spend the evening while counting down to midnight (or earlier for younger kids) such as having a dance party, taking a walk, playing a card game, making a New Year's prediction, playing Twister, and doing karaoke. Write each idea down on a piece of paper and drop them all into a basket. Take turns picking one or two to do each hour.

Ring In the New Year

Get ready to make some noise! Gather any musical instruments from your homeschool such as bells and tambourines and raid the kitchen for pots, pans, and spoons. Make DIY noisemakers using clean, upcycled plastic mayonnaise or peanut butter jars. Fill them with coins and bells, write "Happy 2022" on the lid, then tie colorful ribbons around the top.

As avid bird watchers, we threw handfuls of birdseed onto the grass every year at the stroke of midnight as a gift to our beautiful, feathered friends. This is also a nice, less messy alternative to indoor confetti.

Make a toast with a quick, easy-to-make, child-friendly punch—combine a 64-ounce bottle of cran-raspberry juice, a carton of raspberry sherbet, and 1-liter of lemon-lime soda.

Sing "Auld Lang Syne" together. Gather together on the couch and end the evening with a quiet and calming Happy New Year read-aloud. Read "Shante Keys and the New Year's Peas" by Gail Piernas-Davenport, "Squirrel's New Year's Resolution" by Pat Miller, and "New Year's Day" by Lynn Peppas.

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



Try making a time capsule.

How the Kindness of a Stranger Helped a Family

The Nazios lived in tents for weeks after Hurricane Ida destroyed their home

LOUISE BEVAN

A Louisiana family that had been sleeping in tents after Hurricane Ida ripped through their house has been gifted a trailer by a kind benefactor. With renewed access to hot showers and warm beds, the grateful family members are now able to focus their attention on rebuilding their home.

The Nazios of Paradis, Louisiana, evacuated to Texas on Aug. 28 ahead of the storm. Two days later, when the eldest son of Hypolite Nazio Jr., 47, went to check on their house and take photos, they found the place to be unlivable.

"After the heartbreak of seeing the house that my grandfather and uncle built with extensive damage, I knew we had to make a plan," Nazio told The Epoch Times. "I sat my family down in the hotel we were staying in and made a plan. ... I told them, 'Even though the house is damaged, we're still going to live there. We will put up tents in the yard and live like that as long as we can.'"

The house, in which Nazio was raised, had shifted on its foundation, had extensive roof damage, and had water leaks under the house. People lent the family tents, and they set up a "tent city" in their yard. With an unanswered request to the state for temporary housing, they camped outside for two months—until Nazio did interviews with multiple media outlets in early November.

One Twitter post by a local New Orleans reporter that displayed pictures of the Nazios' makeshift tent caught the attention of 39-year-old Matt Rookard, chief executive



Hypolite and his family beside the trailer.



Hypolite and his family lived in tents after their home was destroyed by Hurricane Ida.

of Terrebonne Economic Development Authority (TEDA) and its sister nonprofit. He felt compelled to reach out to the family.

Rookard, who lives in New Orleans, said he knew nothing of the family's struggle until he read the reporter's post on Twitter, which also had a reminder that many were still living in unsuitable conditions two months after Hurricane Ida.

"That tweet mentioned there were three kids in the family as well," he said. "As a father of three myself, I decided to just reach out. ... I had a trailer available that would be big enough for his family, and I simply couldn't have slept that weekend had I gone home on Friday night without doing everything in my power."

After receiving Nazio's contact information from the reporter, he immediately called and offered the family a trailer.

"I asked if I could call him back so I could talk to my wife," Nazio said about his call with Rookard. "She asked how long we would be able to use it. I told her, 'I think he wants to give it to us.' At that point, I think we were both in shock: Nowadays you just don't see that kind of generosity very often."

According to Nazio, Rookard called him at about 5:30 p.m., and the trailer was parked in their driveway just three hours later. The family's property was on Rookard's commute route.

For Nazio, the gift was a "blessing." "I would go as far as saying it's a miracle," he said. "Matt may have brought us the trailer; however, I believe God put it on his heart to help us, and he did. ... That first night under a roof was great."

The family had used a Coleman stove to cook while they were living in tents, but the wind often blew the burner out. Nazio built a fire pit and covered their tents with a tarpaulin, but strong winds and rain still presented a constant challenge to cooking.

However, after receiving the trailer from Rookard, Nazio, an independent contractor with DoorDash; his wife, Brandy, 42, an associate at Walmart; and their three kids—Jaden-Xavier, 15, Samson-Davis, 14, and Chasity-Alexis, 10—were excited to once again sleep in warmth and swap daily bathing with a cup and boiled water for piping hot showers.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOUISE BEVAN

TEDA's Bayou Business Community Housing Initiative, which is supported by a number of major funders, is helping many of the hardest-hit families recover from the storm by donating trailers. Rookard believes that the Nazios were more than deserving of a trailer.

"They are just self-reliant, down-to-earth folks," he said. "They don't need much, but this has been a little more than they can handle as a family. Getting them secure space so they can begin rebuilding is critical."

Rookard—who praised the Louisiana locals for their resilience—fears that the ongoing plight of hurricane victims is fading into obscurity. Nazio echoed the same sentiment.

"People are still struggling, living in tents, under tarps, and even in damaged houses," Nazio said. "People are still fighting with insurance and struggling with the government for help."

Thanks to an act of unprecedented kindness, Nazio and his son are now working on tearing down the roof of their damaged house and will save some of the ex-railroad cypress for the rebuilding of their home.

"My grandfather had the house brought here, and he built the back part. The front part is either 100 years old or older," Nazio said. "My wife and I figured out that four generations have lived in the house since my grandfather."

"For me, it's more than four walls or a house: It's a lifetime of memories."

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Boy, 11, Dedicates Soccer Game to Late Mom

LOUISE BEVAN

A young soccer player who lost his mother to cancer just 48 hours before a league game paid tribute by dedicating his game to her. With a heartfelt handwritten message on his T-shirt, he won the hearts of all who attended—even his opponents.



Luca Güerci, 11.

"I have seen gestures depicting many values, and when the game ends, rival players have consoled one another, but this surpassed everything."

Alvaro Iuri

Eleven-year-old Luca Güerci, who plays for the 10th division of the Alumni de Azul soccer club in Buenos Aires, Argentina, traveled 50 miles to Pedro Bordenave stadium in Atlético de Tapalqué for a game on Nov. 20, despite the recent loss of his mother.

Alvaro Iuri—who owns and runs the Argentinian sports news outlet Tarde Redonda (Round Afternoon)—was covering the game, and noticed that Luca surely had strong emotions before gameplay as his mother had

passed away just 48 hours prior.

Luca's mother, he told The Epoch Times, was in treatment for a long time and had battled cancer.

Bolstered by his teammates, Luca, who wore the number 2 on his shirt, scored a goal and later donned a white T-shirt with a handwritten message: "Thanks for everything, Mama. Kisses to heaven, I love you."

Locals at the Atlético stadium showed immense support for the young grieving player. Most notably, players on the rival team came forward to offer their condolences without being prompted. At the end of the game, they huddled around Luca and hugged him warmly.

Iuri says it was the most moving display of solidarity among kids' league players that he's ever seen.

"I have seen gestures depicting many values, and when the game ends, rival players have consoled one another, but this surpassed everything," he said, according to a Spanish translation. "What happened was very exciting; a gesture of very good values in children that has become an example for the world."

Luca, he added, is very grateful to everyone who has shown him love.

"It was very good for him to feel so much affection at this very difficult time in his life," Iuri said.

Tarde Redonda shared a photo of brave Luca in his handmade shirt on Twitter, with the caption, "Muchas fuerzas, Luca!" ("Much strength.")



Officer Jan Dykes with the young boy who asked her to pray with him.

A Young Boy's Prayer

Police officer moved by boy who "just wanted to be that positive light"

LOUISE BEVAN

A Kentucky boy on his way to school brightened a patrolling officer's day when he stopped her at a bus stop and asked her to pray with him.

Officer Jan Dykes didn't catch the little boy's name and doesn't know where he lives, but his gesture on the morning of Nov. 5 made a lasting impact. When Louisville Metro Police Department took to social media to celebrate its officer's sweet encounter, the post went viral.

"On patrol in the First Division, Officer Dykes takes time to visit kids before school," the department wrote. "This fella asked her to pray for him, a moment to keep in her heart forever."

A photo accompanying the post shows Dykes crouched on one knee, her left hand placed over the little boy's heart and her right hand placed over her own. Both officer and child have their eyes closed tight as they share their prayers for the day.

"He said, 'I want to pray for this officer's safety. I made a new friend; I really hope her day goes great, and hopefully, she makes a lot of lives better,'" Dykes told Wave 3 News.

The boy, the officer added, also prayed for himself as he headed to school to meet new people.

Dykes returned to the bus stop that same afternoon, hoping to find the little boy who changed her day but to no avail, according to the report. She hopes he, and others, know how impactful a gesture as simple as a shared prayer can be.

"Often times, people are thinking how can you go and help them, and it's just nice to see he wanted to do that for me," the officer told Wave 3 News. "It made me really happy, and especially to see someone so young and so moldable. He just wanted to help, and he just wanted to be that positive light."

Dog Lover's Legacy Helps K-9s

EPOCH INSPIRED STAFF

A lifelong lover of dogs—especially German shepherds—Pamela Mobbs left a gift of more than \$32,000 from her estate to the Volusia County, Florida, Sheriff's Office for its K-9 officers upon her death in October 2020 at the age of 90.

The sum is to be divided exactly in half, respectively going toward supplying bulletproof vests for K-9 units in the field and training additional dogs for the force.

Pamela, from Daytona Beach, Florida, became enamored with dogs when she was a little girl in England, her daughter Jane Mobbs said in a statement from the sheriff's office. Pamela's grandfather had a "fierce" guard dog that aroused fear in those who encountered it.

"My mother wandered out into the backyard, and although her grandfather feared the worst, the dog was super gentle with her and protected her always," Mobbs said. "She had many shepherds in her life."

Decades later, Pamela became enthralled

with police dogs when her daughter took her to a K-9 unit demonstration near the Bandshell in Daytona Beach.

"She thoroughly enjoyed the K-9s and watching the officers handle them," Mobbs said. "My mother wholeheartedly believed all its K-9s should be fitted with bulletproof vests as they often go into uncertain areas first to help apprehend suspects."

"She would be so happy to know that she is making a difference in a dog's well-being."

The sheriff's office currently has a roster of 18 dogs that are trained for various jobs, such as detecting narcotics, locating bombs, and sniffing out bad guys in dangerous locations.

The Volusia sheriff received two separate checks from Mobbs's estate, each for \$16,428.16 (\$32,856.32 in total).

"This is an incredible gift to our agency and it represents this woman's amazing love for dogs," Sheriff Mike Chitwood said. "Her legacy will continue to positively impact the Sheriff's Office and our citizens for years to come."



Pamela Mobbs, who died in October 2020 at the age of 90, gifted more than \$32,000 to the Volusia County, Fla., Sheriff's Office.

COURTESY OF VOLUSIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Visit the elderly in a nursing home or volunteer at a food pantry as a family for Christmas.

IAMLUKYEE/SHUTTERSTOCK



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Christmas lights in London.

Let There Be Light

Christmas lights lift spirits during the dark winter days

ANITA L. SHERMAN

When I was growing up in the '50s and '60s, the passage from Thanksgiving leftovers to packages under the tree started with my mother.

On the first Sunday of Advent, she would assemble an evergreen wreath with four candles—three purple and one pink. Some years, she would attach satin ribbon bows to the base of the candles. Each week leading to Christmas, she would light one candle. On Christmas Eve, a white candle would be placed in the center of the wreath. I loved the ritual and the spiritual preparation.

The history of the Advent wreath hails from Germany in the 16th century predominantly practiced by Lutherans and Catholics.

My father's preparation for the Christmas season was the hanging of the lights on our outside porch. He would produce a cardboard box tangled with evergreen-colored

Like the Advent wreath, the history of Christmas lights also started in Germany during the 17th century.

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 Warren, Va. Anita can be reached at anitajustwrite@gmail.com

strings of large bulbs that were at least three inches long. They didn't flicker or twinkle or make any noise. And when one of them went out, he simply unscrewed it and replaced it with a new one. They were brightly colored—reds, greens, blues, and yellows.

When the winter days turned to night, he would turn them on and their brightness would be reflected in the large living room picture window that looked out onto the porch. I can remember fondly sitting on the couch and looking through the window at those lights. They were steady beaming pockets of color against the darkness. On foggy evenings, their color was softer and blushed against the night air.

Between mother's Advent wreath and dad's hanging of the big bulbs, the winter darkness was brightened. Through my parent's caring, they brought light into the house.

Learning From the Light

Like the Advent wreath, the history of Christmas lights also started in Germany during the 17th century. Candles were carefully placed on the branches of pine trees. They were also carefully watched often, with buckets of water nearby. Eventually, this practice of lighting things up during the Christmas season spread to other parts of the world, including America.

In an effort to market one of his latest inventions, the incandescent light bulb, Thomas Edison hung lights outside of his laboratory in 1880.

A few years later in 1882, one of his entrepreneurial employees, Edward Hibberd Johnson, came up with the idea of stringing red, white, and blue lights around a Christmas tree—it would definitely cut

down on fires caused by burning candles. Passersby were intrigued. The idea took off and eventually General Electric bought the patent from Edison. The fact that several presidents started showcasing lit Christmas trees at the White House made it just more fashionable, although very expensive at the time.

Johnson's original string had 80 lights. By 1884, he had upped that number to 120 bulbs. Certainly, ahead of his time, Johnson's brilliant idea just got better throughout the years. His marketing miracle has had decorative lights glowing and growing each year.

Luminosity during the holidays has reached new heights. It's estimated that roughly 150 million light sets are sold in America each year. They light up some 80 million homes and consume 6 percent of the nation's electrical load each December.

According to data from Statista.com, in 2019, the value of the global outdoor lighting market amounted to about \$10.7 billion. The value of this market is expected to rise to \$23.8 billion by 2030.

From those large luminous bulbs of my youthful remembering, the variety and amount of outdoor lighting are now staggering—aisle after aisle of bubble lights, twinkling lights, rope lights, or LED lights in a myriad of shapes and sizes. Many of them are remotely controlled or you can set them on a timer and they'll come on or go off as you choose. Hanging from the rooftops, draped on bushes and trees, adorning fences, surrounding doorways, they blast their way brilliantly into the night.

Our daughter, Sophia, and her family moved to Warrenton from Alexandria, Virginia, this past spring. Now, celebrating their first Christmas in their new home, she excitedly phoned me.

"Mother, we've got to drive you through our neighborhood, it's like a Hallmark movie. So many houses lit up, it's beautiful."

She wasn't wrong. Whether it's a single electric candle adorning each window of a colonial to dazzling displays, some with projected, moving snowflakes, I was delighted to see so many homes shining.

Lights Glow for All to Appreciate

When it comes to lighting up our homes and neighborhoods, religious and secular lines blur. You don't have to be a practicing Christian to adorn your home with lights. Even though the practice of adding a glow to the season hails back again to Germany, and those candles on the tree and the burning of the Yule log—all offering welcome light during dark winter days and looking forward to the return of the sun. Christian churches adopted the light from the Yule log burning to represent the light of the world to come—Jesus.

Christmas lights have become a generic word for decorating during the winter season. The burning of the Yule log brought welcome brightness, as did Johnson's novel idea of stringing Edison's invention on Christmas trees.

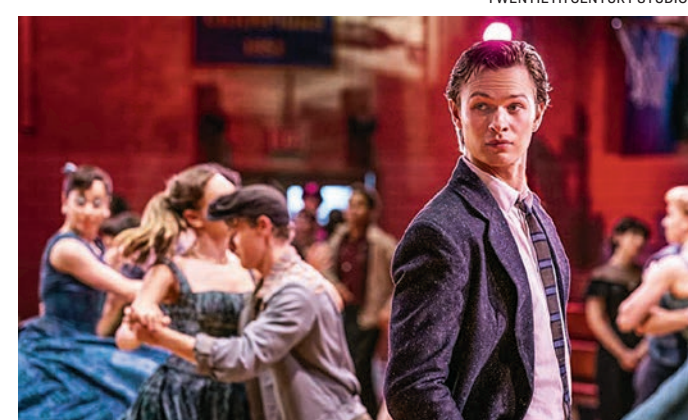
Today, as our American urban and rural communities turn on the lights, I, for one, find this inspiring and very hopeful. It's a wonderful tradition that has deep roots in many cultures, including our own.

This spirit-lifting light from our homes and neighborhoods that brings big smiles from my granddaughter, awe from my daughter, and inspiration to me is just what we need, particularly in December, as we celebrate Christmas and prepare for the coming of a new year.

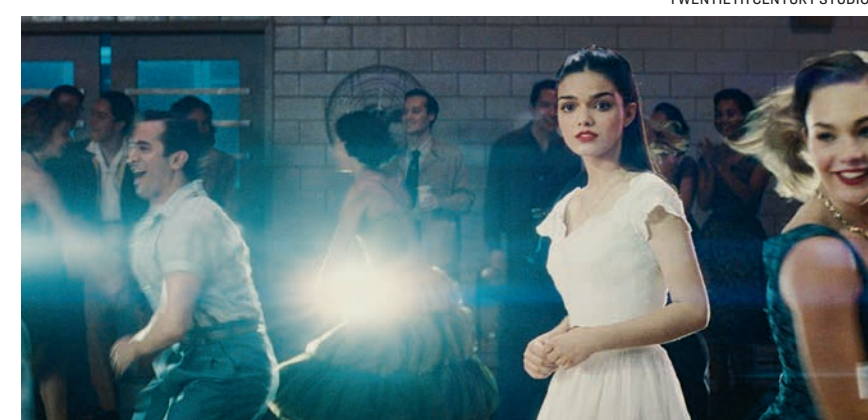
Let there be light and let it shine brightly for all to see.



The Jets and the Sharks face off in Steven Spielberg's 2021 update of "West Side Story."



Tony (Ansel Elgort) at the dance, where he meets Maria.



Lovely Maria (Rachel Zegler, in white) at the dance.

AMERICAN TREASURES

Will Director Steven Spielberg's 'West Side Story' Replace the Original Film?

STEPHEN OLES

Hollywood tends to ruin its remakes of classic movies with clumsy attempts to update them and make them "relevant." Two examples are the cheesy 1976 "King Kong" and Amazon's current desecration of "Cinderella."

So, like many others, I cringed when I heard that Steven Spielberg was filming a new "West Side Story." The 1961 original is a national treasure. How many ways would they find to mess it up? Before answering that question, here's some background.

The Making of 'West Side Story'

In 1949, the great choreographer Jerome Robbins approached composer Leonard Bernstein with an idea: How about updating "Romeo and Juliet," replacing Shakespeare's feuding families with Jewish and Italian gangs in the slums of New York? They could call it "East Side Story."

"Prejudice will be the theme of the new work," Bernstein explained, but he and Robbins were too busy. The project was shelved, according to Humphrey Burton's "Bernstein."

A few years later, Bernstein and playwright Arthur Laurents revived the idea, changing the setting to a different part of town (hence "West Side Story") plagued by a turf war between two teenage gangs: the native-born Jets and the Sharks, immigrants from Puerto Rico.

Shakespeare's Juliet became Maria, a girl who defies her overprotective brother, Bernardo, leader of the Sharks, by falling in love with Tony, who, after founding the Jets, left the gang to get his life together.

With a "rumble" looming, Tony's buddy Riff tries to lure him back into the fight against the Sharks, while Bernardo's feisty girlfriend Anita is torn between her love for him and her loyalty to her best friend, Maria. This tangle of alliances triggers a showdown that leaves three dead—murders as heartbreakingly pointless as the hundreds committed every year by today's more lethal, more heavily armed "gangstas."

Robbins was signed to direct and choreograph. Bernstein planned to write music and lyrics, but as usual, ran out of time, so 25-year-old prodigy Stephen Sondheim was hired to help out. He acquitted himself so well, Bernstein ended up giving him sole credit for the lyrics.

The show's gestation was rocky, even for Broadway. When the producer quit six weeks before rehearsals started, theater gossips looked forward to a memorable disaster. Who would want to see a musical about prejudice that included several deaths and an attempted rape? But the talented team pressed on, discovering that Shakespeare's tale fit surprisingly well into its new setting.

Leonard Bernstein Contributes

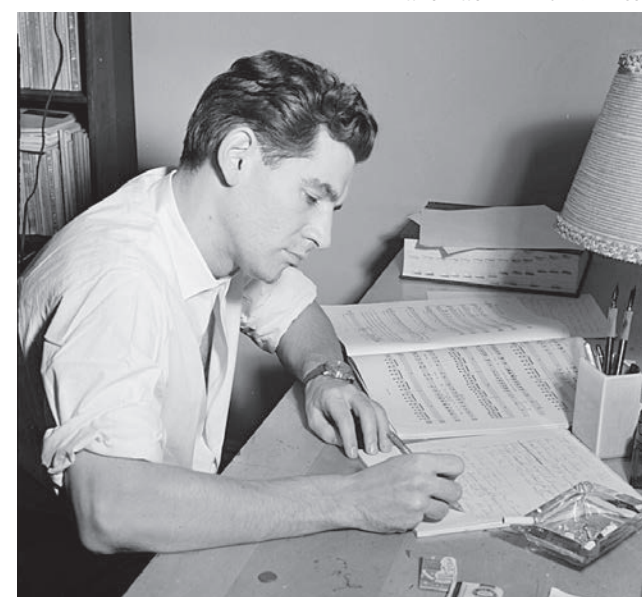
In the 1950s, Bernstein seemed to be everywhere: conducting orchestras, writing symphonies, teaching young musicians, scoring movies (notably Elia Kazan's masterpiece, "On The Waterfront,") while dashing off two Broadway hits ("On The Town" and "Wonderful Town"), an operetta ("Candide"), a modernist opera, and a book. Bernstein even conquered television with his "Omnibus" lectures and "Young People's Concerts," as Burton explains. Even today, issued on DVD, these programs are a delightful way to introduce children and adults to the wonders of classical music.

Although Bernstein often composed in the highbrow, dissonant styles favored by mid-century musicologists, in "West Side Story," he supercharged his modernism with straightforward emotion. The result was a torrent of passion and yearning that flowed directly from his heart into the hearts of listeners.

For all its grit and tragedy, "West Side Story" is the most romantic American musical. The soaring lyricism of songs such as "Maria" and "Tonight" tempers the dark themes of hatred and violence, creating a whole much greater than the sum of its parts.

Other Assets

But the other parts were great, too. Sondheim's lyrics for his first Broadway show were so inspired and true to character that even he would never top them. Laurents's taut, suspenseful book actually improved on Shakespeare in places, and Robbins's dynamic choreography amazed.



Leonard Bernstein (circa 1948) composed the music for the musical.

Opening on Broadway in 1957, the show was well-reviewed and fairly successful, but it took the 1961 movie to make "West Side Story" the beloved classic it is today. The director was Robbins, but his obsessive perfectionism put the film behind schedule and over budget, so he was replaced by the dependable Robert Wise ("The Sound of Music").

Natalie Wood, the star, was led to believe she would sing Maria's songs, but her decent if limited soprano wasn't up to the score's near-operatic demands, so producers had the great ghost-singer Marni Nixon dub her. (Nixon also did the singing, un-billed, for Deborah Kerr in "The King and I" and Audrey Hepburn in "My Fair Lady.")

Wise's movie won 10 Oscars and remains one of Hollywood's finest achievements.

The Cast Can Sing and Dance

Now, exactly 60 years later, comes Steven Spielberg's take. Avoiding the regrettable modern practice of casting A-list actors who can't sing or dance in musical films ("Sweeney Todd," "Mamma Mia"), this one wisely uses young, lesser-known performers who can do it all without being dubbed.

Ansel Elgort (what a name!) is a better Tony than Wise's Richard Beymer, and he does his own singing. Mike Faist and David Alvarez shine as adversaries Riff and Bernardo.

Rita Moreno, the perfect Anita in 1961, returns at age 89 to play the kindly shop owner who tries to make peace between the gangs. Her hushed delivery of "Somewhere" is touchingly effective. Anita this



Director Steven Spielberg (C) with leads (L-R) David Alvarez, Ariana DeBose, Rachel Zegler, and Ansel Elgort who appear in the new production of "West Side Story."



Natalie Wood and Rita Moreno star in the 1961 film version.



Foreground: Ariana DeBose (C) and David Alvarez add fire to the dances.

time is Ariana DeBose, a fine singer whose fiery dancing almost gives off sparks.

The entire cast is excellent, but I've saved newcomer Rachel Zegler for last. She's everything Maria should be—lovely, innocent, proud, determined, and finally consumed with grief and rage. As if that weren't enough, her exquisite singing gives Marni Nixon a run for her money. Remember the name—she's going places.

Screenwriter Tony Kushner gives each character its due and its humanity, even the cops, who are actually portrayed more sympathetically than in the 1961 film. Sometimes characters speak a little Spanish (a touch not in the original) but not enough to confuse viewers who don't. When they do, Anita reminds them: "Speak English! We have to practice!"

Gustavo Dudamel and the New York Philharmonic more than do justice to Bernstein's immortal score, Justin Peck's choreography channels Robbins, adding a few new moves, but above all this is Spielberg's show. His camera swoops and glides, always in service to the story, and he finds exciting new ways to stage the iconic balcony scene and the dance at the gym.

So much could have gone wrong, but almost nothing did. The few missteps are minor. "Cool," sung by Tony to his crew, can't touch the thrilling explosion Robbins made of it in 1961. And the pace flags near the end where it should accelerate, as it does in Wise's version.

Will this new "West Side Story" replace the 1961 classic? No, but it can stand proudly by its side. We can stop cringing now and start thanking Spielberg and company for bringing this masterpiece to life again for a new generation, with deep feeling and phenomenal skill.

Stephen Oles has worked as an inner city school teacher, a writer, actor, singer, and a playwright. His plays have been performed in London, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, California. He lives in Seattle and is currently working on his second novel.

105-Year-Old Runner Sets New World Record at Senior Games

MICHAEL WING

A hurricane wearing running shoes swept across the track at Southeastern Louisiana University's track complex in Hammond, Louisiana, last month, crossing the 100-meter finish line to set a world record.

Running the race solo, Julia "Hurricane" Hawkins made history at the 2021 Louisiana Senior Games on Nov. 6. She became the first American over age 105 to finish the 100-meter event while establishing a new 105-plus age category.

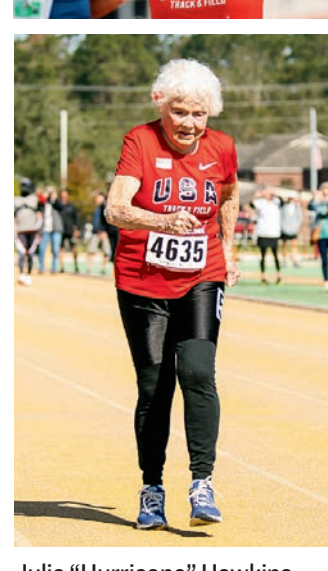
Hawkins, also known as "The Flower Lady" for her gardening skills, stepped up to the mark with her signature flower tucked in her hair. Briskly, she strode forward, and with a time of 1:02.95 seconds, collected the new world title and blazed a new path in the sport. She had hoped to finish in under one minute, she said. When an onlooker pointed out that her time of 102 was less than her age of 105 and asked if that made her feel better, she responded, "No."

This wasn't the first time the "Hurricane" had blown into new territory. The retired

teacher captured the world's attention at the 2017 National Senior Games (NSG) in Birmingham, Alabama, setting world records in the 100-104 age category with times of 39.62 seconds and 18.31 seconds in the 100- and 50-meter events, respectively. Two years later, she competed in the 2019 NSG in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but didn't eclipse her earlier performance, but did garner media attention.

In September, Hawkins's 100-meter record was broken by Ohio's Diana Friedman at the Michigan State Senior Olympics. Hawkins, seeking higher ground, moved on to new territory in her age category, where few seniors have ever gone before. Just two other centenarians have competed in the 105-plus group: Japanese shot-putter Hidekichi Miyazaki and Polish runner and discus hurler Stanislaw Kowalski.

Before venturing into track and field, Hawkins started racing at age 80 in NSG cycling events, winning several gold medals, but eventually she parked her bike, saying, "There wasn't anyone left my age to compete with!" Turning 100, though, rekindled that competitive fire with new



Julia "Hurricane" Hawkins at the 2019 National Senior Games.

opportunities to blaze a trail—this time on the track, wearing running shoes.

"I love to run, and I love being an inspiration to others," she told media after her record-setting performance. "I want to keep running as long as I can. My message to others is that you have to stay active if you want to be healthy and happy as you age."

Hawkins, who races against herself and strives to be an ambassador for healthy, active aging, said she might compete in the 2022 NSG race, which will take place May 10-23 in the greater Fort Lauderdale, Florida, area.

"She has time to decide, and we aren't pressing for an answer," Del Moon, National Senior Games Association media director, said in a statement. "As usual, Julia Hawkins calls her own shots and will wait for the right time to decide if and how her track career will go on."

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ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF COMEDY WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2021



"The Comedy Wildlife" by Gurumoorthy Gurumoorthy. An Indian chameleon in Tamil Nadu.

JUST FOR LAUGHS

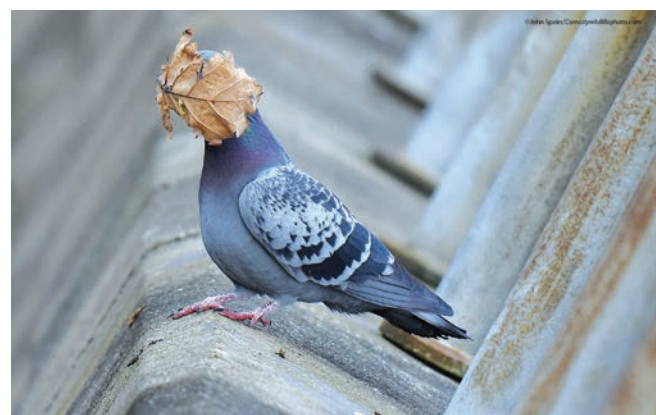
Wildlife Shows Humorous Side in Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards

EPOCH INSPIRED STAFF

Laughter is the best medicine, they say. Humor can build bonds between people, making us feel closer to each other—and can even help us see our counterparts in the animal kingdom with greater sympathy and compassion—which is one reason why the Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards global competition was created. The winning photographs of this year's CWPA reached an audience of millions of viewers across the planet. Here are some of the winners for your perusal. Hopefully they will tickle your funny bone as they did ours.



"Let's dance" by Andy Parkinson: "Two Kamchatka bear cubs square up for a celebratory play fight having successfully navigated a raging torrent (small stream!)."



Creatures of the Air Winner "I Guess Summer's Over" by John Speirs. "I was taking pics of pigeons in flight when this leaf landed on bird's face," Speirs said.



"I got you" by RolandKranitz; he said, "I spent my days in my usual 'gopher place' and yet again, these funny little animals haven't belied their true nature."



Creatures of the Water Award "Time for School" by Chee Kee Teo. An otter takes its offspring to a swimming lesson.



Nicolas de Vault: "This raccoon spends his time trying to get into houses out of curiosity and perhaps also to steal food."



Alex Walker's Serian Creatures on the Land Award "Ninja Prairie Dog!" by Arthur Trevino: "When this bald eagle missed on its attempt to grab this prairie dog, the prairie dog jumped towards the eagle and started it long enough to escape to a nearby burrow. A real David vs Goliath story!"

HOLIDAY PICKS

Children's Books: Christmas Stories to Read Together

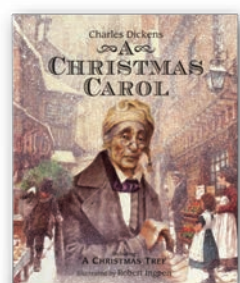
BARBARA DANZA & ANNIE HOLMQUIST

What's your favorite book to read with your children during the holidays? Here are some true-and-tested picks.



"The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey" by Susan Wojciechowski, illustrated by P.J. Lynch (Candlewick Press)

This is an absolute treasure. This beautifully written and illustrated Christmas tale depicts a journey of hope brought forth by the simple request of a young widow and her son to a "gloomy" woodcutter at Christmastime. While perhaps not as well-known as the other titles on this list, this one is not to be missed. Please note that the subject matter may be too heavy for little ones.



"A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, illustrated by Robert Ingpen (Penguin) Regarding great literary classics, I prefer to present my children with the true and unabridged version rather than a watered-

down approximation when possible. This is surely possible with Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." This edition features just enough illustrations to keep younger readers interested while providing the complete, masterfully written tale.

This pick calls for a greater investment of time and can be read chapter by chapter or enjoyed as an audiobook. You can find readings on Librivox.org for free or enjoy a particularly well-done recording by actor Tim Curry via iTunes. The audiobook would make a great accompaniment to any long drives to visit family this season.



"The First Christmas: A Changing-Picture Book" by Sophy William (Templar Books)

A soft retelling of the Nativity, it is a beautifully illustrated summary of the fundamental meaning of Christmas and would provide the perfect basis for bedtime during the Christmas season.



"The Night Before Christmas" by Clement C. Moore, illustrated by Ted Rand (North-South Books) If there's one book you simply must read this year, it's this one—on Christmas Eve, of course.

While we have numerous versions of this on our shelves, this is my favorite, as it's a sturdy board book that will stand the test of time and the illustrations are just right. Other noteworthy editions to look out for are Jan Brett's and the nostalgic Little Golden Book publication illustrated by Corinne Malvern.



"Christmas in My Heart: Book 17," compiled and edited by Joe Wheeler (Pacific Press Publishing Association) Every volume in the "Christmas in My Heart" series should be read (there are 27), but number 17 is extra special, for it republishes stories from the classic turn-of-the-20th century "St. Nicholas Magazine" for children. Heartwarming and wholesome, these stories will likely become a Christmas tradition in your family.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Week 50, 2021

The Cookie Jar

by Edgar Guest



You can rig up a house with all manner of things, The prayer rugs of sultans and princes and kings; You can hang on its wall the old tapestries rare Which some dead Egyptian once treasured with care; But though costly and gorgeous its furnishings are, It must have, to be homelike, an old cookie jar.

There are just a few things that a home must possess, Besides all your money and all your success— A few good old books which some loved one has read, Some trinkets of those whose sweet spirits have fled, And then in the pantry, not shoved back too far For the hungry to get to, that old cookie jar.

Let the house be a mansion, I care not at all! Let the finest of pictures be hung on each wall, Let the carpets be made of the richest velour, And the chairs only those which great wealth can procure, I'd still want to keep for the joy of my flock That homey, old fashioned, well-filled cookie crock.

Like the love of the Mother it shines through our years; It has soothed all our hurts and dried away tears; It has paid us for toiling; in sorrow or joy, It has always shown kindness to each girl and boy; And I'm sorry for people, whoever they are, Who live in a house where there's no cookie jar

WHAT'S THE BEST THING TO PUT INTO APPLE PIE?

YOUR TEETH.



IRINA WILHAUK/SHUTTERSTOCK

The more you know the more you can create. There's no end to imagination in the kitchen.

JULIA CHILD (1912–2004), AMERICAN COOKBOOK AUTHOR AND TELEVISION PERSONALITY



ANASTASIA_PANAIT/SHUTTERSTOCK

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

By Aidan Danza, age 15

PLANTS THAT SURVIVE THE WINTER

(IRISES; LENTEN ROSE; BACKGROUND) SHUTTERSTOCK; (BROAD BEANS) PUBLIC DOMAIN

Most flowers simply aren't tough enough to survive a cold winter. Most plants lose their leaves or even die. There are some, though, that can bear the cold and the snow—no easy feat for something that lives outside, day and night, stuck in frozen ground.

IRISES

These small, usually purple flowers are actually quite tolerant of the cold. They need full sun, however. If you want to plant them, you should do it in the late fall, or the early winter. Dig a five-inch deep hole for each bulb, and space three inches apart. Water the bulbs heavily when you've planted them, but don't water them until they sprout. If they're cared for properly, irises can live for up to 20 years.



LENTEN ROSE

This plant will not only bloom from January to March, it will bloom in every state of the Union except Alaska, Hawaii, and the southernmost parts of Florida, Texas, and California. It's not actually a rose, nor does it look

like one, but is grouped with the buttercups. There are a wide group of species and varieties of lenten rose, but all of them are perennial, meaning that once you plant it, it will live for years, blooming winter after winter.



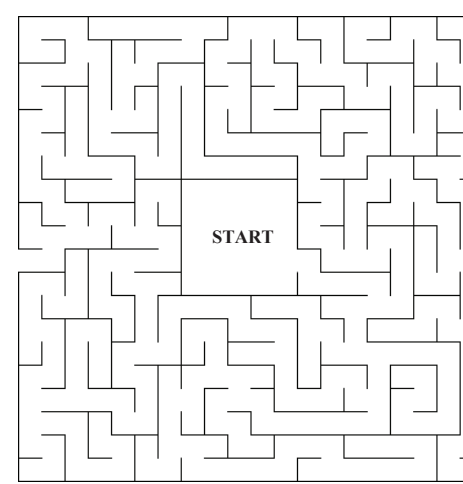
BROAD BEANS

Broad beans are one of the few plants that can be planted in spring, summer, or fall. If you plant them in the fall, they should grow through the winter in the lower 48 states, tolerating temperatures higher than 15 degrees. However, if subjected to temperatures above

80 degrees, they may not do so well. If you want to plant them, sow the seeds one to two inches deep about six inches apart. They will need to be tied to a stake when young, so the stems don't fall over and break. They will also need to be watered with an inch of water per week. Other than that, they really don't require much care.



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

4	9		
2	5		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
2 × 9 = (9 - 6)

Medium puzzle 1

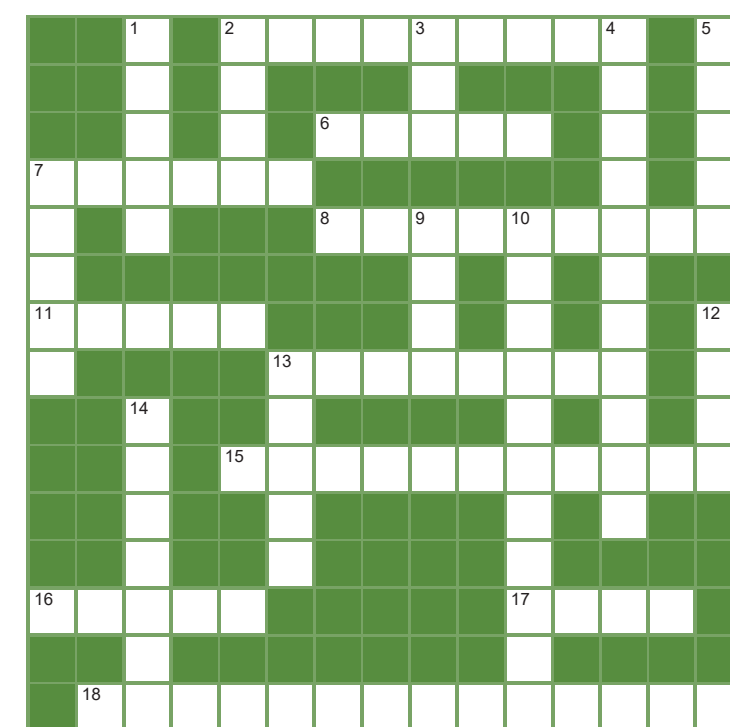
11	16		
4	12		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Medium 1
7 × (21 - 11 + 9) (21 - 9) × (9 + 1)

Hard puzzle 1

17	24		
17	23		
+	-	x	÷

Solution for Hard 1
82 - 21 × (21 - 12)



Across

- 2 Kitchen appliance (9)
- 6 It may be wheat or sourdough (5)
- 7 Quick breads (6)
- 8 Baking gloves (9)
- 11 Shirt protector (5)

Down

- 1 It may be wooden (5)
- 2 Wedding reception centerpiece (4)
- 3 "As American as apple ____" (3)
- 4 Turkey site (11)
- 5 Multipurpose containers (5)
- 7 Sweetener (5)
- 9 Sponge cake ingredient (4)
- 10 They come in a set (11)
- 12 Half of half-and-half (4)
- 13 Baker's need (5)
- 14 Baked treat often wrapped in fluted paper (7)

- 13 Cake sauce (8)
- 15 Where hot treats sit (11)
- 16 It makes bread rise (5)
- 17 Kitchen mixing tool (4)
- 18 It may be used to add tbsp. or a tsp. (14)

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