

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

IMAGE COPYRIGHT ESTATE OF CARL RUNGUIS



Carl Rungius (Germany, 1869–1959), "In the Clouds," circa 1940. Oil on canvas. 30 inches by 40 inches. JKM Collection, National Museum of Wildlife Art.

ART

Beauty Is a Vacation

Exploring the works
of wildlife artist
Carl Rungius

Beauty offers respite from the tedious; it transports us beyond the ordinary to something sublime.

ANDREA NUTT FALCE

Why are human beings attracted to beauty? However we explain the pull, beauty draws us. It engages the eyes, tantalizes the intellect, and elevates the spirit. It reminds us of the excellence of nature, life, and creation. The effulgence of creation points to a marvelous creator.

Beauty offers a respite from the tedious; it transports us beyond the ordinary to something sublime. Beauty is a vacation.

The Beauty of Beauty

When planning a vacation, people don't generally favor ugly places. We daydream about escapes into loveliness. Sitting at a sushi bar recently, I enjoyed the "oohs" and "aahs" of my children as our meal was prettily prepared.

Gratified by appreciation, the chef began to chat with the kids and me. He informed us that he had attended culinary school on the island of his birth, Bali.

"Do you know [it]?" he inquired proudly. I had to admit we had never been, but we had seen pictures.

Who doesn't know of Bali? The perimeter of the island may take a mere three hours to circumnavigate, but the quality of the coastline renders size inconsequential. Bali is famously beautiful. Still, our host spoke about the happiness he'd found half a globe away from his paradisiacal birthplace.

"I like it here. Florida has work and opportunity—pretty beaches, too," he said.

Loveliness exists all over the world, in fascinating niches large and small. It can be found in food, the sea, the mountains, in our actions, and in the art that we make. Beauty is powerful and cathartic to the human person. It transports us beyond the ordinary, beyond the downtrodden.

Why else do people make art? The goodness and power of beauty constitute a noble impetus.

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From Addiction to Helping Others Find Healing

Former sportscaster Rachel Baribeau is focused on helping people 'change the narrative' and find their purpose

LOUISE CHAMBERS

As a child, Rachel Baribeau was heartbroken when she learned her dad wasn't her biological father. Convinced herself she must be unlovable, she succumbed to cocaine addiction and for years led a double life: working as a successful sports broadcaster by day and drug addict by night.

It would be the voice of God that even-

tually woke her from this nightmare and led her to accomplish greater things in helping others. Now in Yulee, Florida, she shared her story with The Epoch Times.

"I've lost both my parents, I've lost all my worldly possessions, have almost taken my own life," said Baribeau, who was raised in a military family with two brothers in Atlanta. "I've battled through addiction, an abusive relationship. ... I've done all of that, and through every one of those instances, there was still joy.

"My middle name is Joy, it's my given name. So I inspire people to see the joy that is around them.

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COURTESY OF RACHEL BARIBEAU

After battling with addiction, Rachel Baribeau now embraces joy.

ART

Beauty Is a Vacation



(Above) Carl Rungius (Germany, 1869–1959), “Under Pyramid Peak,” circa 1935. Oil on canvas, 30 inches by 40 inches. JKM Collection, National Museum of Wildlife Art.



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Carl Rungius, Wildlife Artist

Born in 1869, Carl Rungius is a fine historical example of man’s positive devotion to beauty, art, and nature. Like many great Americans, Rungius arrived in the United States from Germany as an immigrant. Moved by the natural appeal of the landscape, the ideals of American opportunity and independence paired perfectly with Rungius’s talent and determination, giving way to excellence.

Growing up in Berlin, Rungius was one of nine children born to Magdalene Fulda and Pastor Heinrich Rungius. The family enjoyed art, hunting, and taxidermy. Upon attending an exhibition of the work of German wildlife artist Richard Friese, the teenage Rungius became inspired to choose painting as his career. Wary of such a profession, his father insisted

(Above) Carl Rungius (Germany, 1869–1959), “Gray Wolf,” Wyoming, 1927. Oil on canvas, 60 inches by 75 inches. Gift of the Jackson Hole Preserve, National Museum of Wildlife.

(Above Right) Carl Rungius (Germany, 1869–1959), “Lake O’Hara,” circa 1925. Oil on canvas, 40 inches by 50 inches. JKM Collection, National Museum of Wildlife Art.



Carl Rungius (Germany, 1869–1959), “The Humpback,” circa 1945. Oil on canvas, 30 inches by 40 inches. Edwina H. F. Cox, National Museum of Wildlife Art.

that the youngster apprentice as a house painter so that he could fall back on painting trim and walls should his artistic ambitions fail.

But Rungius was always intrigued by animals, and while training to paint walls, he dedicated much of his free time to sketching and studying the structure and movements of animals housed at the Berlin Zoo. He would also frequent the glue factory, though he considered it a most unpleasant undertaking. He viewed an understanding of animal anatomy as essential to his artistic designs.

In 1894, Rungius’s uncle, Clemens Fulda, invited him to join in a moose hunt in Maine. Though the trip was unsuccessful in terms of bagging moose, it proved to be life-altering in inspiration. Rungius’s eyes were opened to the beauty of the United States. In 1895, he visited Wyoming. The stunning mountain peaks, vastness of

scenery, and abundance of big game led Rungius to say, “My heart was in the West.” By 1896, he immigrated.

Rungius’s entrance into the United States happened to coincide with an increasing awareness of the need for wildlife conservation. President Theodore Roosevelt turned national attention to bird reserves, game preserves, national parks, and the essential nature of good stewardship over the land.

During his early years in the country, Rungius’s refined knowledge of animal anatomy and skillfulness in the hunt brought him to the attention of William Temple Hornaday, the first director of the New York Zoological Park, known today as the Bronx Zoo. Hornaday helped Rungius to connect with wealthy patrons who guided his way to success.

He began to work as an illustrator for hunting and nature magazines, as well

as on campaigns to preserve endangered species. Like many great hunters, Rungius and his colleagues became prominent proponents of proper land conservation and ethical hunting practices.

In 1909, Rungius, still a dedicated hunter, gave up illustration to become what he had long wanted to be: a fine artist. Some call Rungius a big game painter. He is, in truth, probably the greatest American painter of wildlife to date, but Rungius didn’t prefer to be characterized as a genre artist. He didn’t want to be known as an outstanding painter of wildlife, but simply an outstanding painter.

Wildlife was the niche of beauty that inspired his talent and productivity. At the end of the day, Rungius achieved his goal: He became a great artist, full stop.

Seeing the Sublime in the Grand Tetons
This summer, it was my good fortune to

In gratitude for the splendor about him, Rungius offered an ode to the North American outdoors, an ode to life.

visit Wyoming. My husband and I explored Grand Teton National Park. What a stunning landscape! Thankfully, the area remains well preserved by a series of parks and reserves kept pristine for the joy of all visitors. A fine and open park system is a gift facilitated by good stewards over generations. It’s the legacy of those who appreciate beauty and life.

Today, the Jackson Lake Lodge sits on the spot chosen by Theodore Roosevelt himself. Lucky to reserve a time and space within it, my husband and I saw more colors over Mount Moran than I previously knew to exist.

From the balcony of our room at dawn, we observed great birds, elk herds, and even a pale-haired wolf in pursuit of a cow moose and her calf. The moose acted aggravated; skirting through the tall grass below, a stalking threat came clear. The moose pair proved as tough for the stealthy predator to trap as they were a century ago, when Rungius pursued them with a paintbrush and easel.

Before we checked out of the awesome escape, we checked in with Gill Beck, the current director of hotel operations. He inquired about our stay and relayed interesting stories, including that years before, his parents had stayed in the very same Moose Pond Cottage suite we had stayed in. From the upper balcony, they had been startled by a sudden crashing through the bushes below. There came a scattering of elk, followed by a huge grizzly bear! The family has recounted the astonishing scene of the grizzly hunt evermore.

Nature’s beauty has a memorable effect. It refreshes one’s appreciation for life.

Beck also told us of the lengthy and meticulous efforts being made to preserve the Jackson Lake Lodge for visitors to come. A fine and historically faithful restoration is underway—but not in the way. Keeping to the original designs is well worth the effort. Rungius’s paintings still hang where

they were first placed in the great lobby in complement to an incredible picture window. However, for the sake of proper preservation, the paintings there now are copies.

Beck directed us to find the originals just a few miles away at a museum in Jackson Hole. What a treat it was to find them!

Beauty Through the Years

The National Museum of Wildlife Art houses the largest collection of Rungius’s paintings in the United States. Within its walls, the museum offers a crisp and glorious view of the natural world, and how man is touched by it. It’s one of the most delightful buildings I have ever entered. Nestled into a mountainside and embellished with bronze statuary, it’s as if animals leap from without to within. The relatively small museum represents a sanctuary for the senses.

While on vacation in the United States, Rungius discovered a landscape that enlightened his imagination. He made a home of the august land, even though it came with long, harsh winters. In gratitude for the splendor about him, Rungius offered an ode to the North American outdoors, an ode to life.

The next time you’re in search of an elevated escape, consider the transportive power of paintings. Bright beaches are dazzling, and brilliant mountains are magnificent, but summer slips away so quickly, and travel isn’t always on the agenda. Inspiration is often closer than we think.

Beauty is a vacation, and it can be found all around you.

Andrea Nutt Falce is a happy wife and mother of four. She is also a Florentine-trained classical realist artist and author of the children’s book, “It’s a Jungle Out There.” Her work can be found at AndreaNutt.com

From Addiction to Helping Others Find Healing

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I’m alive in a way that I’ve never been alive before, like my soul has little tentacles and sensors. ... My soul is on fire!”

Unloved and Unwanted

Thirty-five years ago, Baribeau’s outlook was bleaker. Her mother and adoptive father divorced when she was 7, though he remained present throughout her growing-up years. “He didn’t have to ... but he chose to,” Baribeau said. During a telephone call after her mother remarried, he repeated something he had told her when she was little: that he had met her mom when Baribeau was a toddler. She was dumbfounded—and hadn’t recalled anyone ever telling her she was adopted.

“I felt like a bastard,” she said. “I felt unloved and unwanted. ... You don’t have to call your child something bad for them to believe that about themselves. Nobody ever told me I was unwanted or unlovable, but ... as somebody who loves God, the devil is the enemy, right? I believe he planted those seeds.”

In high school, Baribeau’s sense of rejection amplified. While studying media and television at Auburn University, she went to a party and tried hard drugs for the first time; yet she remained an outgoing, active student on campus.

“I’ve always been a people person,” Baribeau said. “At first, I thought I was going to broadcast regular news. ... What I recognized was that I could not do the heavy



(Left) Rachel Baribeau speaking to students at Texas Tech University. (Right) Rachel Baribeau works with colleges and schools, Customs and Border Protection, law enforcement, state halfway houses for ex-prisoners, and churches to help anyone who has strayed from their purpose to find hope and meaning in life once more.

ground running with a two-day-a-week spot on a local radio/television show alongside DJ Jones.

“Now, listen, there were few women in sports radio then. ... I thank him to this day. The fact that he gave little old me an opportunity broke everything else wide open,” Baribeau said, who soon found herself “climbing the ladder” with a daily radio show in Columbus, Georgia.

Climbing the Ladder
Baribeau graduated in 2003. She hit the

“Whether you’re addicted to food, porn, shopping, gambling, sex, drugs—whatever it is, a lot of times you can hide it,” she said. “Then it gets to a point where you can’t. ... My darkest moment came when I began to deal hard drugs to support my habit, because not only was it affecting me; I was contributing to the takedown, the delinquency, of other people.”

Raised a Christian, Baribeau felt she was “living life apart from him” but never stopped hearing God’s words. At her lowest point, she heard a familiar message from



God with fresh ears: “I created you for more than this, Rachel!”

“He’d given me a vision right before I got clean that said, ‘You’re a runaway train going down the track right now, and unless you change course, get clean ... you’re going to kill somebody else, kill yourself, end up in jail, break your family,’” she said. “I knew I was very close to doing that, so I used drugs one last time.”

Afterward, she wept like she’d never wept before. The next day, she couldn’t drive to church fast enough.

‘I Should Be Dead’

“I am nothing short of a miracle. I should be dead,” she said. “God [is] my best friend, my everything. He’s my constant companion. He’s my father, He’s my protector, he’s my provider. ... When people ask me, ‘Why are you so crazy about God?’ I say, ‘If you’d been where I’ve been, if you’d seen what I’ve seen, if you’d been saved when you should have been dead, 10 times over, you would be crazy about him, too.’”

After nearly a decade of addiction, Baribeau was rinsed clean, and she never looked back. Recovery only strengthened her will.

“I worked and hustled, worked and hustled, and by the end of my career, I became the first female host on Sirius XM,” she said. “I went from local radio to Tuscaloosa and covered a national championship team. I was a field reporter. I was a host at a startup radio show. ... I was also a sideline reporter for the ACC network.”

Baribeau was inspiring girls and women

everywhere to break the mold and follow their dreams in broadcasting. One of the highlights of her career was the first-ever college football playoff in 2014 between Ohio State and Oregon in Dallas.

“I remember looking over the stadium and looking to the director of the college football playoff, Bill Hancock. I said, ‘Bill, do you recognize we are literally writing the history books?’” she said.

Changing the Narrative

By 2016, Baribeau’s ambition only burned brighter. She wanted to share her story and inspire others, so she founded the mental health nonprofit I’m Changing the Narrative. Working and performing outreach simultaneously, she heard God’s voice again: “You’re supposed to pick up your cross, you’re supposed to do this full time, this is what I put in front of you.”

Five years earlier, Baribeau had told herself likewise. While standing in a press box at a game, her hand over her heart during the national anthem, she told herself, “I’ll quit when I no longer get the chills.”

In 2019, the chills went away. “That fall, we hosted a ‘mental health’ game between Minnesota and Maryland, the first-ever collegiate game with two Big Ten teams, fully focused on mental health that whole week leading up to the game,” Baribeau said. “I got on a plane the next day, at 33,000 feet, and I wrote my retirement letter.”

For the past three years, Baribeau has devoted herself to her nonprofit. She now

travels and works with more than 60 colleges and schools, Customs and Border Protection, law enforcement, state halfway houses for ex-prisoners, and churches to help anyone who has strayed from their purpose to find hope and meaning in life once more.

“There’s so many people that are wishing for Friday and dreading Monday, and that is not the way to live,” she said. “Changing the narrative [means] taking the headlines back for something good ... changing the narrative of your life, your mental health, your relationships, not having to repeat generational patterns and traumas just because it happened to somebody in your family.”

Recently, she was invited by the NFL, saying the gig was “like going to the Olympics as a public speaker.”

Baribeau’s overarching message is twofold: Help others and take that leap of faith.

‘Life Is Short and Precious’

One of Baribeau’s most impactful relationships is with Border Patrol, which she has visited five times since 2019. During a humanitarian trip to El Paso, Texas, she had a chance to meet men and women putting their lives on the line to protect Americans from gangs, drugs, and other dangers flooding across the border. Contrary to certain narratives, illegal migrants crossing the border are “treated humanely.”

“There was tons of food, there was air conditioning,” Baribeau said. “I fell in love with the Border Patrol agents that are overworked. The things they see every single day are horrific, and they’re dealing with their own issues of depression and suicide. ... I just decided I was going to start helping them.”

“We’re in a time and place right now where a lot of people say, ‘Not my business, not my problem.’ ... We’re pulling out our phones to record something and somebody’s getting beat up, shot, or assaulted. I teach people that we’re going to go against culture right now. ... We’re going to spread kindness, we’re going to help people even if we don’t know them.”

Baribeau connects with her audience via social media and often receives heartwarming feedback. Stories of family reconciliation, forgiveness, and forging new bonds are typical.

Her first book is due out in June 2023. Its overarching message is twofold: Help others and take that leap of faith.

“To anybody who’s reading this who’s on the fence about whether to take a leap of faith: Leap. Do it, because life is short and precious. ... The magic is in the uncomfortable,” she said. “If it fails, so what? You’re still loved, you’re still valuable, you still have breath in your lungs, you can regroup, you can do something else. But I’d rather try and fail than never try at all.”

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Cowboy Turns Scrap Metal Into Sculptures

A world-renowned artist from South Dakota makes incredible animal sculptures out of scrap metal

LOUISE CHAMBERS

A sculptor from South Dakota is immortalizing the cultural heritage of the land he loves by turning rusted scrap metal and old farming equipment into breathtaking, life-sized works of art.

John Lopez, 51, lives on a 14-acre hobby ranch in Lemmon, South Dakota, the town where he was born and raised. Besides his two live horses, Lopez's ranch is home to a welding shop where he works on sculptural livestock and wildlife commissions full-time. Animals are at the forefront of his work. He renders everything from bison to bucking broncos, from tigers to T-rexes.

"Whether it's a whale or an octopus, a wolf or a bison, I'm really inspired by nature and by living creatures," he told *The Epoch Times*.

"For me, it's really important for the animal

to look like it's alive, like it's going to move. I really study the anatomy and the muscle, but ... it kind of takes on an abstract view as you start moving closer and see how the scrap metal is arranged. It's the best of both worlds."

Lopez starts out by sculpting a maquette—a small wax model—to best understand his subject's anatomy. He then takes the maquette into his welding shop to use as a model, aiming to replicate the detail and "capture the same energy" as the highly gestural miniature in the final work.

Rather than beat his chosen scraps back into shape, Lopez retains their dents, dings, wear, and rust as a patina.

"The pieces are beautiful and it tells a story," he said. "They have a previous life, and now they have a new life in the sculpture ... it creates really interesting textures, too."

Lopez estimates that some of his biggest bison sculptures weigh up to a ton. Accordingly, he keeps a forklift onsite. A commission takes him about six months to complete.

Thanks to the internet, Lopez gained international

His sculptures are erected outside restaurants and other public spots for all to marvel at.



John Lopez.



"Dakotah" by John Lopez. This was his first scrap metal work, completed in 2010.

recognition around 10 years ago. Now, most of his clients are commercial. His sculptures are erected outside restaurants and other public spots for all to marvel at. He estimates he has finished around 40 scrap metal pieces to date.

Besides his wildlife, one of Lopez's most famous works is a series of 12 life-sized presidential portraits for The City of Presidents project in Rapid City, which he executed from 2003 to 2010.

Two of his favorite works include a draft horse pulling a plow, titled "Black Hawk," and the American fur-trapper and explorer Hugh Glass, who was famously attacked by a grizzly bear. Glass survived and reputedly crawled some 200 miles to safety to tell the tale.

Growing up in ranch territory, Lopez said he "wasn't really school material" but was, nevertheless, encouraged to attend college to become a commercial artist. He enrolled at Northern State University in Aberdeen. There, sculpting in wax led to bronze, and he fell in love with the metallic medium.

Lopez shares his father's taste for Western art and the work of Charles Russell and Frederic Remington. Lopez's sculptures of horses and bison are intended to emulate Russell's clay works. Upon landing a job working for bronze sculptor Dale Lamphere in the Black Hills, Lopez's work grew in scale.

That job lasted nearly 20 years until a loss in the family brought him home in 2006. He was called upon to create a memorial.

"I made an angel for the cemetery gate for my aunt [from] scrap metal, tractor parts, old chains, and gas tanks off of motorcycles," he said.

Now on his own ranch, Lopez has found his milieu.

"I put my sculpting ability to work, and just started building stuff out of farm equipment," he said. Uncles and neighbors provide ample "junk," chock-full of character, to work with.

Lopez has a gallery space, Kokomo Gallery, on Main Street in Lemmon. He has worked for big brands, such as the fashion giant Hermes, has been featured in exhibitions as far abroad as Qatar, and was commissioned to make sculptures for the Princess of Monaco's 90th birthday celebrations.

While Lopez still admires Russell and Remington, he hopes to fuse that heritage with a more contemporary syntax going forward.

"Something that stands the test of time but yet it's my own style," he said.

Now, he is working on a global exhibition and hopes his scrap metal sculptures will be seen in the same way Buffalo Bill's Wild West was seen in Paris and London.

"I love meeting new people, seeing what other artists are doing, and experiencing new places ... that's what makes life interesting," Lopez said. "I've been very fortunate. I'm making a good living doing what I love to do."

Lopez shares his extraordinary work on Instagram at [Instagram.com/JohnLopezStudio/](https://www.instagram.com/JohnLopezStudio/)

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN LOPEZ



"Tree of Life" by John Lopez.



John Lopez working on "Black Hawk."



John Lopez welds a scrap metal T-rex.

Man Reunites With Nanny 45 Years Later

After nearly half a century of separation, Juanito Jonsson flew halfway around the world to surprise his childhood nanny

LOUISE CHAMBERS

After spending almost four happy years with a very special nanny in Bolivia, a Swedish-born boy moved halfway across the world with his family, to Spain. Forty-five years later, the desire to reconnect with the woman who loved him as her own overwhelmed him, and he thus traveled across the world to see her.

Pastor Juanito Jonsson was born in Lycksele, Sweden, in 1973. Today, he lives in the southern Spanish town of Fuengirola, Málaga, with his wife and their three sons aged 23, 19, and 9.

The son of Swedish missionaries, Jonsson moved to Cochabamba, Bolivia, with his parents and two siblings when he was just 6 months old. His father worked in churches in the mountains and his mother, a nurse, gave vaccines to people in need. Since Jonsson's siblings were in school, his parents hired Ana, who was a nanny they knew through the Swedish missionary community.

"Before [Ana] came into our family she was very sick," Jonsson told *The Epoch Times*. "She had lost her husband in a labor accident, she had two daughters, 4 and 1 year old, and everyone said she was going to die of her sickness. No one gave her hope to live. She was presented with the option to give her daughters away in adoption, so that was what she did."

Yet after surrendering her daughters to Swedish adoptive families, Ana recovered. Tragically, she had no legal rights to her children. When she accepted the job as a nanny to Jonsson between 1973 and 1976, she loved

him like her own.

"She gave me all the love she had for her daughters, and I received it," Jonsson said.

In 1979, Jonsson's family moved to Sweden and then a few years later to Spain. While in Spain, Jonsson met his wife and has lived there since.

'Something Was Missing'

While attending a conference in Peru in 2017, Jonsson had the impulse to revisit his old home in Bolivia.

"I had two or three days free and I thought to myself, Peru is too near Bolivia to not go back to Cochabamba," he said. "I took an airplane ... [then] a bus nine hours through the mountains, and then I reached Cochabamba."

Jonsson rented a room in the Swedish mission where his older brother had attended school, and even found the house his father built where Ana had raised him. He befriended the new owners and relived old memories over breakfast.

"That opened up something in my soul because it was like something was missing," Jonsson said. "Something happened in 2017: a need to reconnect and find Ana."

However, due to the pandemic his trip to reunite with his nanny was delayed. At the beginning of this year, with the help of his mother who had a contact, Jonsson found out that Ana was 79 years old, still alive, and living as a candle seller in the small town of Yacuiba, on the Bolivian border with Argentina.

He then talked to Ana's son, Daniel, and planned a trip in April 2022 to surprise

his beloved nanny.

Looking back on his reunion with Ana, Jonsson is grateful he had the chance to honor his beloved former nanny for the love and care that enriched his childhood.

'Ana, My Ana'

At 7 a.m. on April 26, Jonsson arrived in Yacuiba. Daniel met him at the bus terminal and surprised him with the news that Ana lived just two blocks away. Jonsson was moments away from the reunion he had dreamed of.

In tear-jerking footage of Jonsson and Ana's reunion, Jonsson approaches the elderly woman's home and she turns to greet him, smiling, but without recognition.

Jonsson said: "When I said, 'I'm Juanito,' she knew exactly who I was. She said, 'Are you Juanito, the one that used to hug me and say Ana, my Ana?' and then we hugged each other ... for her, the feeling must almost have been like reconnecting with a son that she had not seen in 45 years."

Jonsson also recalled one of the first things Ana asked him: "Are you serving God?" because she was a strong believer.

"I said, 'Yes, I'm a pastor and I serve God,' and she raised her hands up to Heaven and

said, "Thank God ... I've been praying that you would serve God all my life." Jonsson added.

Ana invited Jonsson into her simple home for breakfast. Jonsson presented her with a photo album that had pictures of himself and his siblings as children, his parents, and his family today.

He also gifted her some money collected from family toward home repairs. Ana, who shares her home with Daniel, his wife, and their two kids, was overcome with emotion.

'A Miracle'

Daniel then took Jonsson and his three other companions on a tour of the town. Afterward, they returned to Ana's home and took her out for dinner in a good local restaurant, where they shared memories.

"We talked more into the night, then I walked with her, hand-in-hand, to the bus terminal," Jonsson said.

Reflecting on his reunion with Ana, Jonsson shared: "She's 79 years old, she sometimes struggles with her lungs ... she also has some problems with her sight, but she's very strong, she's very independent ... I never thought that she would be so bright in her mind."

"She has been praying for me all her life; meeting me was a miracle for her."

Jonsson later compiled the video of his reunion with Ana during his bus ride out of Yacuiba and uploaded it to social media for his friends and family. He then flew from Bolivia to Spain with a layover in Brazil. During that 17-hour journey, everything changed.

"From 60 followers I had more than 20,000, and many millions of views, the video went viral on TikTok," he said. "When I came home to Spain and reached Málaga, people started to call me from Bolivian television ... it was a little crazy!"

Since reconnecting with Ana, Jonsson has spoken with his childhood nanny weekly via

video chat, with Daniel's help. Jonsson is planning his next trip to Yacuiba in June 2023. In the meantime, he is raising money for a much-needed refurbishment of Ana's home.

'An Urge in My Soul'

Jonsson has been working in churches since the age of 19 and is currently a pastor at a Christian church founded by his father. His church has an orphanage in Nigeria, and he also helps 140 families in need with food banks and other resources. Despite having roots in Bolivia, Jonsson never had the need to visit South America until 2017.

"Even though I lived in my European bubble ... I was always proud and had a strong identity from my roots in Cochabamba," Jonsson said. "Whoever would ask, 'Where do you come from?' I would say, 'I'm from Sweden, but I was raised in Bolivia.' That has always been part of me."

Juanito is not even his given name; it is a Spanish-speaking diminutive of "Juan," or "John" in English. His real name is the Swedish equivalent, Yohannes, yet Juanito claims "almost no one in Spain knows my real Swedish name."

Looking back on his reunion with Ana, Jonsson is grateful he had the chance to honor his beloved former nanny for the love and care that enriched his childhood.

He said: "Sometimes we say things to people when it's too late, so I had an urge in my soul to reconnect and be able to show my appreciation ... I'm still thinking and trying to understand everything that happened, but I'm happy that honoring people while they're alive is a message from this."

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CHOOSING JOY

When Your Holidays Aren't So Joyful

Even amid hardship and heartache, you can find joy

GREGORY JANTZ

The holiday season is everyone's favorite time of year—or is it?

The cultural image of the holidays, fueled by glittering media images, is a delightful time of family harmony, delicious feasts, brightly lit houses, kisses under the mistletoe, and wide-eyed children gathered around the tree.

The good news is that those kinds of heartwarming moments do happen for most of us. Sometimes. Some years. But they certainly don't happen every year. And even during years when we find ourselves having a relatively merry Christmas, it's likely that the merriness is coexisting with other, less cheerful emotions as well.

In other words, life isn't a Hallmark movie, is it?

Sometimes, the cheery holiday images and grand expectations only emphasize the painful gap between the Hallmark holiday dream and real life.

Who hasn't had "real life" intrude at Christmastime? If you've lived any length of time, you've undoubtedly had holidays when you experienced heartache, loneliness, grief, or disappointment. Perhaps you were grieving the recent death of a loved one, longing for someone away at war, lamenting a broken relationship, scraping by amid financial hardship, or battling illness in your own life or the life of someone you loved.

During the trying times in our lives, the holidays can feel like a season to endure rather than enjoy. It's little wonder that many people report feeling more depressed at Christmastime than at any other time throughout the year.

Perhaps the most devastating part of a less-than-joyful season is feeling like you're alone—as if everyone else in the world is celebrating their best Christmas ever while you're the only one who's suffering. The idea that Christmas is supposed to be a huge banquet of bliss is one of the more destructive deceptions we can buy into.

A study by the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that 64 percent of people with existing emotional struggles (such as depression and anxiety) report that the holidays make their conditions worse. If your holiday season is unfolding amid emotions of loss, depression, loneliness, or even panic, understand that your feelings aren't unusual. You're certainly not alone.

Bring Joy Into Your World

While it's a reality that many people struggle greatly during the holidays, it's also true that anyone can find joy even amid difficulties. Like most good things, joy must be nurtured before it will grow and bear fruit. Here are ways to get started:

Give yourself permission to not feel merry. If you're not feeling cheerful this season, there's no need to pretend that you are. When you're going through a tough time, chiding yourself for not feeling celebratory is one of the least helpful things you can do. Your experience is your own, and you don't need to live up to any preconceived ideas.

Give yourself permission to feel joy. Sometimes when we're going through hard times, we hesitate to admit to ourselves when we feel stirrings of happiness or joy, as if admitting their presence diminishes the significance of our pain. But joy and sadness aren't mutually exclusive—they can exist together in the season. Giving yourself permission to acknowledge joy when you feel it is an important step out of the dark place and into a brighter place.

Maintain activities that replenish you. If you're not careful, experiencing hardship can preoccupy you to the extent that you forget the activities that used to bring you peace and joy. A big part of healthy self-care is continuing the endeavors that invigorate you and make you smile. Take a moment to identify at least five activities that bring you happiness, such as meeting a friend for lunch, going for a bike ride, or playing a round of golf. Then begin scheduling these activities and following through.

Avoid unhealthy escapes. When we're struggling emotionally, it's tempting to

turn to excessive eating, spending, or substance abuse. That's because we want to do something to change our mood. Of course, the list of unhelpful and unhealthy escapes could go on and on. Negative escapes only spread the negativity throughout your entire life.

Escape in healthy ways. Thankfully, not all escapes are negative or destructive. In fact, taking a mental and emotional break from the source of pain is a powerful way to improve how you cope, transform your perspective, and help you identify long-term solutions. An escape could be as simple as spending an hour with an enjoyable book by your fireplace or as elaborate as planning your next vacation.

Take good care of your body. One of the best things you can do to handle the hardships of life is to fortify your health and body. Eating right, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly relieve feelings of anxiety, improve your mood, and energize your body, brain, and emotions.

Stay connected to the people closest to you. When you're dealing with depression, anxiety, or other struggles, the tendency is to isolate yourself from other people. But isolation only compounds any painful emotions that you're already experiencing. Reach out to people in your life who bring you happiness and offer you support. Studies have shown that social support can provide a key source of emotional energy and ongoing resilience. In the journey of life, your friends offer support during hard times, share laughter during good times, and believe the best about you at all times.

Envision your best possible self and life. Each day for the next two weeks, spend 15 minutes thinking about and writing about the best possible circumstances in your future. Ponder your goals and dreams—and envision that everything works for the very best. Then spend another five minutes visualizing this best future life as vividly as you can, with a lot of details.

This exercise is more than just a feel-good pep talk for yourself; you'll be retraining your mind by redirecting your thoughts. A study published in *Psychiatry Research* demonstrated that this exercise significantly boosted the participants' levels of optimism.

Joy and sadness aren't mutually exclusive—they can exist together in the season.

Choose to laugh. At first glance, this advice may seem absurd. That's because most people mistakenly believe laughter is like water from a faucet and that only a happy feeling can turn it on. Feel happy first, then come the smiling and laughing.

The truth is, researchers have discovered that laughter and genuine joyfulness are two sides of an equation that works in both directions. Sure, spontaneous laughter is fun. But in less happy moments, there's power in choosing to smile or laugh—because emotion has a way of following along, with measurable mental and physical health benefits. Invariably, what begins as a choice to pursue joyfulness turns into the real thing and is highly contagious.

Cultivate generosity. Like the bumper sticker says, "Practice Random Acts of Kindness." But the key word there isn't "random"—it's "practice." That's because, like laughter, generosity isn't always our first impulse when feeling down. We all have problems of our own that can feel overwhelming and push thoughts of "doing unto others" right out of our minds. It takes practice and determination to make generosity a part of who you are.

Slow down. Most people have busy lives during the first 10 months of the year, and the holiday season cranks up the busyness even more. Creating joy for yourself is difficult, if not impossible, when you consistently feel hurried and hurried. Identify what parts of your life are essential, then begin trimming the rest. Knowing what brings you joy is much easier when you make time to be still and quiet.

This holiday season, don't wait for joy to find you. Make your life an open invitation every day.

Gregory Jantz, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the mental health clinic *The Center: A Place of Hope* in Edmonds, Wash. He is the author of *Healing Depression for Life*, *The Anxiety Reset*, and many other books. Find Jantz at [APlaceOfHope.com](https://www.APlaceOfHope.com)

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Juanito Jonsson and Ana at their reunion.

HISTORY

Georgetown Classics Professor: ‘Rome Is a Cautionary Tale’

DUSTIN BASS

Josiah Osgood, one of the leading scholars on the subject of ancient Rome, is a professor of classics at Georgetown University and has written extensively on the subject of the fall of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. While on “The Sons of History” podcast, he discussed his latest book, “Uncommon Wrath: How Caesar and Cato’s Deadly Rivalry Destroyed the Roman Republic,” which examines how two powerful political leaders, Julius Caesar and Cato the Younger, extensively divided the Senate and ultimately drove the republic toward civil war.

With the current political divide in the American republic, it’s a timely analysis.

The rivalry between the two ultimately began in 63 B.C., during the debate over what to do with five senators who had been found conspiring with Lucius Catiline, an aristocrat and politician who was plotting to overthrow the Roman government after losing the election for consul. The Senate had assembled and was debating on the punishment.

Rome had just experienced a civil war just 20 years prior, known as Sulla’s Civil War. The violent memories and the tyranny of Sulla may have played a role in the desire for quick executions of the senators.

With the current political divide in the American republic, it’s a timely analysis.

“This is one of the haunting questions of the late Roman Republic,” Osgood said. “That was, in my view, one of the wounds that was still open. In the earlier civil war, there were a lot of atrocities; people were killing each other, grabbing each other’s estates. It probably did in a way brutalize a whole generation, even if people were trying to restore peaceful self-government. Tyrannicide, the fear of a dictator, could justify an extreme situation.”

Political Polar Opposites

Although the culprits’ guilt was certain, Caesar warned against hasty judgments and sentences without habeas corpus. The right to trial was one of the pillars of the Roman Republic’s rule of law and was obligatory for Roman citizens. Caesar forewarned that this type of decision would come back to plague the republic.

“But you say, who will criticize a decree passed against traitors to the Republic?” Caesar asked rhetorically—in Osgood’s recent translation—and then immediately answered:

“Changing circumstances will, and the passage of time, and Fortune, whose pleasure rules nations. Whatever comes to pass for these men will be deserved; but, Senate Fathers, consider what sentence



“The Course of Empire: Desolation,” 1836, by Thomas Cole. Even a republic that has stood for centuries can be destroyed by a long civil war.



“The Death of Caesar,” circa 1859 to 1867, by Jean-Léon Gérôme. Just as Caesar and Cato did during that debate in 63 B.C., political figures who see each other’s proposals as extremes can undermine the stability of a republic.

you are passing on others. All bad precedents have arisen from good actions. When power comes into the hands of men who are not acquainted with it or are crooked, that new precedent is transferred from the guilty, who deserve such treatment, to the innocent, who do not.”

The Senate agreed with Caesar. That was, until Marcus Cato stood to speak.

“Other crimes you may prosecute after they have been committed. But if you do not take care to stop this one from happening, once it does take place, you will appeal to the courts in vain,” he stated, noting that Catiline and his army were planning to march on Rome and that other conspirators were already within the city. “In a captured city, there is nothing left for the vanquished.”

In a moment of extreme partisanship, he then directed an antagonizing and practically accusatory tone toward Caesar:

“If, therefore, Caesar fears dangers from these men, his proposal is useless. If, in the midst of universal terror, he is the only one not to be afraid, all the more should

would invoke his name to warn about an individual, such as Alexander Hamilton about Aaron Burr. But Caesar shouldn’t be viewed completely as villainous, Osgood suggests, and to do so misses a major point from this historical moment:

“Part of the point of my book is to show that Caesar does have principles. Part of the tragedy is that these differing viewpoints come into collision.”

The War of Politics

“Politics does need to be a fight, or an argument, to put it more positively,” he said. “The problem is sometimes one side—and it’s hard to say who does it first (of course, if you’re highly partisan you’ll ‘know’ it was the other side)—goes a little more extreme, and the other side feels justified in doing the same. As each side gets a little more extreme—and this is where I think Romans influence some of our rhetoric—they may say, ‘If this is allowed to happen, this will be the end of the republic.’ And once you get into that mindset, it becomes easier to start breaking norms.”

Osgood noted that each side often provides a logical argument, just as Caesar and Cato did during that debate in 63 B.C. But just as those two political figures saw each other’s proposals as extremes, American politics continues to do the same.

“I think that’s part of the explanation, that it’s logical for one party, or one politician, but collectively it starts to become corrosive. Collectively, you risk destroying the whole system,” he warned. “I think each side has to stand up for what they believe, but if both sides are always going to the extremes, at least the Roman Republic shows that it can be a very dangerous dynamic.”

Rome: The Cautionary Tale

Ultimately, the political showdown between Caesar and Cato devolved into a military showdown. It was known as Caesar’s Civil War, which ended with Caesar’s return to Rome in triumph and Cato’s suicide. After having been a republic for several hundred years, Rome would never be the same. Even the assassination of Caesar, an attempt by senators to return Rome to its republican form, would prove futile. The great republic regressed into an empire to be ruled by emperors.

“Rome is a cautionary tale. A republic that functioned very well, in many ways for hundreds of years, can suddenly become unhealthy, and even, if locked into a long civil war, ultimately destroy itself,” Osgood stated.

“On the other hand, Caesar was warning the Senate that this would come back to cause problems and would be open to abuse. Once you start letting senators on a line vote say that we can kill some of our colleagues, that’s an extremely dangerous precedent. And the civil war that would come later reflected that mentality he was warning against—that if we view someone as enough of a threat, we will take up arms.”

Osgood noted that Caesar’s name was often used as an insult, citing figures from the American Revolution who

I be afraid for myself and for all of you.”

On his recommendation, the Senate agreed to sentence each of the five conspirators to death by hanging.

The Cost of Expedience

“Cato is in the short-term proven right in the sense that executing these conspirators was expedient, as a lot of the supporters melted away and it probably saved some of the lives of soldiers who would have been sent to put down this army. So that’s the one hand,” Osgood said.

“On the other hand, Caesar was warning the Senate that this would come back to cause problems and would be open to abuse. Once you start letting senators on a line vote say that we can kill some of our colleagues, that’s an extremely dangerous precedent. And the civil war that would come later reflected that mentality he was warning against—that if we view someone as enough of a threat, we will take up arms.”

Osgood noted that Caesar’s name was often used as an insult, citing figures from the American Revolution who

of competition or resentment you might feel when comparing yourself to others. That uneasy feeling you sense when you see someone else doing well is jealousy. When you wish you were doing better than someone else or even wish someone else was doing worse than you (which isn’t the same thing), you are harboring jealousy, and that is sure to steal away your joy.

Jealousy is, of course, very common but worth ridding yourself of to the greatest extent possible. It’s like a poison that harms only yourself. To be free of it is to find true joy and a sense of peace.

If you feel that you struggle with jealousy, practice reframing the way you interpret your perception of the gains and losses of the people in your life (or those you see on the internet, for that matter). The next time you sense that uneasy feeling, see if you can’t adjust your

thoughts to be inspired instead. When others are succeeding in one way or another, in a way you wish you were, try to be happy for them and thankful for showing you what’s possible. Recognize that your uneasy feeling may be pointing you to an area of your life that you truly wish to improve. Furthermore, aim to be happy for others, cheer other people on, and wish wholeheartedly for others’ success, happiness, and fulfillment. You’ll find that your joy hasn’t gone anywhere.

Choosing Compassion

The opposite of jealousy is compassion. The two sentiments are incompatible. Compassion is something you can foster in yourself over time. Think of others not as people you’re competing with in life but as fellow souls you’re sharing this journey on Earth with. Everyone in life experiences tribulation and suffering. To see one another as an enemy breeds jealousy. To see one another as a brother or sister, be able to put down selfishness, and consider others even ahead of yourself is compassion.

Comparison can be helpful in life, sometimes. It isn’t necessarily the thief of joy. Jealousy, though, surely is. Feeling genuinely happy for the good fortunes of others is joyful indeed.

The Problem With Comparing Highlight Reels

‘Comparison is the thief of joy,’ as the saying goes

BARBARA DANZA

They say that “comparison is the thief of joy.” This quote has been attributed to many people, including President Theodore Roosevelt and author and scholar C.S. Lewis. It seems to ring true, doesn’t it?

Comparison Trap

We humans tend to compare ourselves to each other all the time. Have you ever caught up with an old friend and felt a little uneasy after learning how well they’re doing financially, how impressive their home is, or how young and thin they look? Have you ever found yourself feeling a bit proud after reuniting with someone you perceive to be a bit behind you in terms of their success in life? We may not want to admit having experienced either scenario.

Social media has, obviously, exacerbated this phenomenon. We take in other people’s “highlight reels,” as they say, and often feel

bad about not being as successful, happy, accomplished, famous, fit, adored, or as productive as those we scroll by. We are constantly comparing ourselves to others and other ideals.

While all of this comparison seems to have a negative impact on self-esteem and general happiness, perhaps the act of comparing isn’t the root cause of our dismay. After all, if comparison can help you see areas in which you can improve, or can inspire you to reach for higher aims than you previously believed you could, then comparison becomes a good thing, doesn’t it?

Root of Jealousy

What’s truly a thief of joy is the sense



DEAN DROBOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Unlike comparison, which breeds jealousy, compassion fosters empathy.

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LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

White Haven in St. Louis: President Grant’s Rural Retreat

DEENA C. BOUKNIGHT



Julia Dent Grant.
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Built between 1812 and 1816, White Haven was one of the oldest homes in St. Louis County.

Julia Dent Grant grew up in the two-story federal-style home, and it was the first place her future husband, Ulysses S. Grant, would visit as a guest in 1843 when he was stationed militarily in St. Louis. Named White Haven by the Dent family to keep the title of former family residences owned prior to 1820, the house was painted the popular 19th-century color “Paris green” after the Grants purchased the home from her parents at the end of the Civil War.

Built between 1812 and 1816, White Haven was one of the oldest homes in St. Louis County. Nick Sacco, acting historian and curator of the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, refers to the architectural style as an “I-frame house,” the vernacular designation for symmetrical architecture at least two full stories in height and with other distinctions.

“Many homes in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa embraced this style of architecture,” Sacco said.

The house features 10 rooms: a basement,

six main-level rooms (parlor, dining, sitting, kitchen, mudroom, and office), two second-level bedrooms, and an attic. The approximate square footage is 2,500. And part of the home’s construction is the distinct vertical log style, once prevalent along the Mississippi River due to French Canadian settlers preferring the method over horizontal log construction.

Although not showy architecturally, other than the distinct exterior hue, the home was apportioned with furnishings that were primarily practical but just ornate enough to convey the proper impression of affluence and social standing to anyone visiting.

A 30-plus-year writer-journalist, Deena C. Bouknight works from her Western North Carolina mountain cottage and has contributed articles on food culture, travel, people, and more to local, regional, national, and international publications. She has written three novels, including the only historical fiction about the East Coast’s worst earthquake. Her website is DeenaBouknightWriting.com



The wallpaper design is a Roccoco Revival foliated pattern “most likely manufactured in France and acquired by the Dents through a St. Louis merchant between 1845 and 1855,” according to the curator of the Ulysses S. Grant historic site, Nick Sacco. The current reproduced wallpaper in the dining room matches the pattern that adorned the walls in Grant’s day, although two previous layers covered the room’s walls in the early 1840s.



1. Although a reproduction of the 18th president’s actual desk he used at White Haven, it serves as a peek into Ulysses S. Grant’s daily go-to spot for correspondence and business before, during, and after his time in the White House. The solid wood, leather-topped desk is indicative of the style of the times, with the only ornate feature being its carved legs.

2. The Grants’ “game station” in the 1800s was a glass door cabinet, such as this mahogany antique, housed in the sitting room and stuffed with such popular activities as marbles, playing cards, ring toss, dominoes, and more. Books were also housed in the solid-wood cabinet. Family photographs commonly graced furniture surfaces, such as the one of Julia and her mother, father, and brother, as well as Grant as a young Army supply officer.

3. Chess and checkers were the favorite games played by the Grant family. The solid-wood, silk-damask upholstered antique chairs are suggestive of the ones used in White Haven’s sitting room.

4. Bark-covered log beams and stone construction are the main architectural elements for the functional basement-located winter kitchen, where the fire to cook the food also heated the home. A simple solid pine rectangular table, such as this antique featuring a natural stain, typically served as the prep space for the family’s meals.

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Parents have the right and responsibility to oversee their children's education.

EDUCATION

The Bad News Is the Good News for Parents

Being a parent educator is both a serious responsibility and a deep joy

JEFF MINICK

I'm a Brussels sprouts before the cheesecake kind of guy, so let's get the bad news out of the way first: You're responsible for your children's education. It doesn't matter what school your son or daughter attends—a mediocre public school, the best private academy in the city, or homeschool—you're the one who bears the weight in the end: the CEO of Operation Education.

Yes, you can blame the teachers and the curricula if your son enters eighth grade unable to read "Tom Sawyer" or if your high school daughter can't compute 8 times 30 without using her fingers, and certainly all those years your child sat in a classroom may then appear a desert of time and resources. And yes, the school is at fault for that failure. Unfortunately, so are you. You figured school was a wrap. All you had to do was get the kids there on time, dressed, lunch and books in hand, and then pick them up at the end of the day. Theoretically, that's the way it's supposed to work, but lots of things are broken these days.

OK. Enough of the bad news. Here's the good news: You're responsible for your children's education.

The teachers matter; the headmaster or the principal matters; the attitudes and influences of your child's classmates matter; but in the end, you're responsible. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You're the one who changed their diapers, showed them how to double-knot their shoes, taught them to say please and thank you, and sat by the bedside when they had the flu. You know this human being better than anyone else in the world. And no matter what anybody else says, you have the right and responsibility to oversee their education.

And with that responsibility comes freedom, maneuverability, and even joy.

Your third-grader is still stumbling over words and sentences in her reader? Pop "Reading Eggs" into the computer for 15 minutes every evening or sit down with a guide to phonics—start with the basics—

With books and computers at our fingertips, and mentors and tutors available in the guise of relatives and friends, you're living in an educator's paradise with countless options just waiting for you.

As you oversee your children's education, you can call upon all sorts of resources to supplement their current schooling.

and spend that quarter-hour on a sofa, sounding out words together.

Your poor 11-year-old still can't get through the times tables without falling to pieces? The same formula applies here. Put aside that "new math" textbook and devote 15 minutes every evening to chanting the multiplication tables, and in just a few weeks 9 times 7 will be as embedded as 2 times 2.

You want your middle-schoolers to read good literature but have no clue as to which books to select? Buy a copy of Gladys Hunt and Barbara Hampton's "Honey for a Teen's Heart: Using Books to Communicate with Teens," and you've just purchased lists and mini-reviews of hundreds of titles that will carry your teen through high school and beyond. Don't forget her younger brother. Pick up a copy of "Honey for a Child's Heart: The Imaginative Use of Books in Family Life," and you've purchased that 8-year-old a map and compass into the realm of good literature. (The authors of these guides approach literature with a Christian worldview, though most of the selections are secular. Hunt and Hampton also include, along with explanations, novels such as the Harry Potter books or the Philip Pullman series. Practice your parental discernment, and you'll be fine.)

Unhappy with the history your high schooler is being taught—or, for that matter, not being taught? Sites such as YouTube are loaded with all sorts of documentaries and historical dramas. More formal instruction, like Wilfred McClay's text "Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story" or the resources at Hillsdale College, is also readily available.

Discouraged and need some inspiration? Read "Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story," the story of neurosurgeon, writer, and politician Ben Carson. He grew up poor in Detroit, and his mother was semi-literate and worked long hours, but she demanded her sons turn off the TV and read books. Soon, those two boys were reading their way through the public library, and from there, the world was their bucketful of oysters. If you need fast emergency inspiration, scout out Janet Denison's online article "Dr. Ben Carson's Mom."

With books and computers at our fingertips, and mentors and tutors available in the guise of relatives and friends, you're living in an educator's paradise with countless options just waiting for you.

Think of your role this way. Imagine your child as an actor making a movie. On that set are the usual swarm of people—costume designers, makeup folks, the camera crew, the hairdressers, and all the others who contribute to a film. Only on this set, there are teachers, grandparents, mentors, coaches, tutors, and peers, all of them standing by to make the kid great.

All this scenario lacks is a director. And that's you. You're the one with the special chair and the megaphone. You're the one in charge. All it takes is one good old Hollywood cliché from you—"Lights! Camera! Action!"—and those cameras start rolling, with you guiding the action.

In "What's Wrong With the World," a book published more than a century ago, G.K. Chesterton wrote, "The only persons who seem to have nothing to do with the education of the children are the parents."

If you haven't done so already, it's time to put paid to that idea. Be a hands-on, eyes-on parent educator, and give your children a gift for a lifetime.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."

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From celebrating family traditions to opening presents, some preparation is key.

FAMILY

Holiday Prep: Christmas Morning

Create the perfect Christmas morning by getting the jump on all the preparations ahead of time

BARBARA DANZA

For the magic makers at Christmastime (you know who you are), there are many details to prepare. Christmas morning itself—from the opening of presents, to the menu, to the ambiance and family traditions—requires some preparation. Here are some ideas to help you plan one of the most memorable mornings of the year.

Keep It Simple

Christmas morning should be an enjoyable time for the whole family. That includes you! Aim to keep the morning casual and simple, and do as much of the prep work as you can in advance.



Matching Pajamas

Is your family a matching-pajamas kind of family? If so, be sure to order those early. They tend to become hard to find as Christmas draws near.

Color-Coded Wrapping

Want to make finding everyone's gifts super simple? Give each recipient their own wrapping paper. Further, don't leave all of your wrapping to the few days before Christmas. Wrap as you go. As the holiday approaches, make a nightly habit of closing your bedroom door and wrapping a few gifts you've acquired. You'll feel on top of things all season long.

Make-Ahead Menu

Choose simple breakfast items that can be easily prepared in advance. Casseroles and crock pot recipes are great. Have someone pick up fresh bagels in the morning. Cut fresh fruit the night before and don't forget to program the coffee maker!

Plan the Playlist

Make sure you've got your family's favorite holiday tunes ready to go by creating a playlist that will last throughout the morning.



Clean and Tidy

Get your home in top shape a few days before Christmas. Declutter spaces, prepare for any guests you're hosting, and clean your home so you feel great about it on the big day.

Stuff the Stockings

Don't forget about the stockings. Keeping smaller items in a separate bag will help keep those last-minute tasks easy and organized.

Charge Your Batteries

Don't forget to charge the batteries of your camera so you can capture the wonderful moments you've looked forward to.



Cookies for Santa
Don't forget to check out the evidence that Santa was there. Sometimes he leaves behind an empty milk glass or a half-eaten cookie. I've even heard that some children have seen glittery or snowy footprints.

Make a List

Christmas Eve may entail festivities of its own. Prepare a list of that night's to-do's—those things you want to be sure not to forget—and keep it tucked away with the presents until it's time. You'll take the guesswork out of the late-night activities and feel confident that you're covering all your bases.

Don't Sweat It

It seems like every year we wonder how in the world it's going to come together—and every year, it does. Have confidence in yourself and rest assured that as long as you're together with your family celebrating the spirit of Christmas, it will be a magical memory your family will treasure.



FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

Bread

By John B. Tabb

Still surmounting as I came
Wind and water, frost and flame,
Night and day, the livelong year,
From the burial-place of seed,
From the earth's maternal bosom,
Through the root, and stem, and blossom,
To supply thy present need,
Have I journeyed here.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

HOW IS A HISTORY BOOK JUST LIKE A FRUIT CAKE?



GESHAS/SHUTTERSTOCK



TOSTPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

BRAVERY ON THE BUS



Rosa Parks circa 1955. PUBLIC DOMAIN

On Dec. 1, 1955, African American seamstress Rosa Parks was riding a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. When the driver noticed white riders standing, he asked the black riders who had seats to relinquish their seats in favor of white passengers. Parks refused, in violation of the segregation laws of that part of the country at the time. She was subsequently arrested. Her act was one that helped ignite the civil rights movement in the United States.



The No. 2857 bus on which Parks was riding before her arrest (a GM "old-look" transit bus, serial number 1132), is now a museum exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum.

RMHERMEN/CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHAKE ALIKE 3.0 UNPORTED

By Aidan Danza

A DUCK TO WATER

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A mallard.

Ducks are perfectly at home in the water.
A happy duck will swim around contentedly, dabbling (tipping its tail into the air and its head into the water) or diving for food. They sleep on the water, they sometimes play in it, and they bathe in it as well.

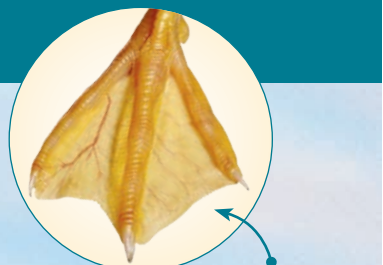
A duck is so comfortable in water in large part because of the oil it has in its feathers. This oil is called preen oil, and it's secreted by a gland just above the tail. When the duck preens (arranges and maintains its feathers with its bill), it dabs its bill with this substance and greases its feathers with it. The oil waterproofs the duck and also plays a role in the duck's buoyancy.

Ducks have a big problem, though: swimming in cold water. Hypothermia (when body temperature drops, causing major organs to cease functioning) can kill creatures that aren't specialized for life in the water, humans included. Ducks are even smaller creatures than we are, so how is it that a duck can withstand water temperatures that we can't?

The answer is through a peculiarity in the duck's circulatory system called the "countercurrent exchange." The duck's arteries, the channels that take blood from its heart to the rest of its body and are warmed by the duck's body temperature, are positioned right next to the veins that run from the duck's feet back to its heart. The blood in the veins is very cold, but it's warmed right back up again when it comes into contact

with the warm arteries. This warms the veins, which keeps the duck warm.

If ducks weren't uniquely designed this way, when they got wet, they'd sink and freeze. Yet they don't because they have been given two very special blessings. Nature really is miraculous.

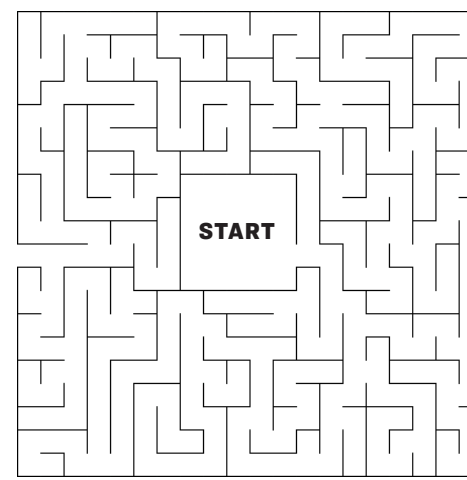


The arteries and veins in the duck's webbed foot.



A wood duck.

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	7		
1	4		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Easy 1
1 - 4 - 7 + 7

Medium puzzle 1

13	18		
11	15		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Medium 1
81 - 11 - 91 + 81

Hard puzzle 1

20	26		
16	23		
+	-	x	÷

Solution For Hard 1
82 - 91 + 02 + 92



HIDDEN TREASURES by Liz Ball
www.HiddenPicturePuzzles.com

WORD SEARCH: When The Going Gets Tough, the Tough Bake!

C	A	N	O	P	E	N	E	R	V	A	S	F	T	B
B	M	U	F	F	I	N	T	I	N	T	K	L	B	R
O	A	I	J	E	R	S	W	U	T	R	Z	O	P	E
W	A	X	L	P	E	T	I	N	K	I	U	G	A	
L	I	L	T	K	K	S	M	Z	C	N	C	R	K	D
S	K	T	I	A	E	N	S	A	A	G	M	A	B	F
O	U	Z	C	I	E	A	R	P	N	H	R	P	A	S
B	S	P	K	V	L	G	E	I	O	E	F	R	F	U
Y	U	O	U	N	K	R	X	W	O	C	O	R	G	
C	O	D	T	I	A	U	I	V	Y	N	N	O	A	
C	G	A	L	C	R	S	M	S	C	O	N	E	S	R
Z	P	O	A	C	K	V	K	B	E	H	T	F		
S	O	Y	E	A	S	T	O	Z	Z	H	G	V	I	P
C	M	D	M	U	F	F	I	N	S	G	H	N	I	
D	U	T	C	H	O	V	E	N	H	Q	S	X	G	E

- Apron
- Bowls
- Bread
- Butter
- Cake pan
- Can opener
- Cookies
- Cooking rack
- Cupcake
- Dutch oven
- Eggs
- Flour
- Frosting
- Measuring cup
- Milk
- Mixer
- Muffins
- Muffin tin
- Oven mitts
- Pie
- Scones
- Spatulas
- Spoon
- Sugar
- Whisk
- Yeast



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