

A Little April Foolishness

What Research Shows

By Ted Pease

Having spent most of the last 40+ years in academe, including many years as editor of various stuffy, high-blown academic research journals, I can tell you that people will do research on anything (see page 18).

Don't get me wrong — science is a good thing, and you never know what will expand human knowledge in important and useful ways.

Although sometimes you have to wonder. For example, in their quest for promotion and tenure, researchers have published research like this (as comic genius Dave Barry says, I am not making this up):

• "Sword swallowing and its side effects," British Medical Journal, 2009.

• "Dung Beetles Use the Milky Way to Navigate," Current Biology, 2013

• The impact of wet underwear on comfort in cold climates, Technical University of Denmark, 1994.

• "The nature of navel fluff," Vienna University of Technology, 2013.

Where was I going with this?

Oh, right . . . The point is that there is also quite a lot of scholarly research on the importance of laughter and humor on human health (mental and otherwise).

You might think that the value of laughter and good humor is obvious, and I would not disagree with you (and I won't go for the easy yuk-yuk and say that this is no joking matter, because most of you have already thought of that gag).

During the interminable past year since COVID-19 arrived as an uninvited houseguest and has refused to leave, a good **Continued on Page 20**



ALL LAUGHS at Dell'Arte's 2019 Clown Show: from left, Rachele Riccio, Abby Maguire, Kudzai Sevenzo and Eliza Kim. Mark Larson photo.

'You Were So Funny, I Almost Laughed'

By Michael Fields

In the mid-90s, Dell'Arte created a play called SLAPSTICK.

The idea was twofold. First, it was born from our desire as actors/creators to work with the classic slapstick routines while we phys-

ically still had the chops to do it and to do it well.

Second, we were interested in the marriage of violence and comedy, as most of the classic routines are based Continued on Page 17

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TEDtalks: Elephant in the Room

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Proofreaders: René Arché, Brenda Cooper, Mark Larson. © 2021 HSRC **S** o let's say there's an elephant in the living room.

That sounds like the set-up for a joke, right? And it could be. The classic parable of a group of some blind people who come upon an elephant and try to understand what it is by touching it also describes how we try to understand humor.

In the same way that one blind person may feel the elephant and pronounce it a wall and another at the trunk end perceives a serpent, we all have trouble defining and understanding what's funny.

This month's Senior News wouldn't try anything as presumptuous as defining humor, but we thought everyone could lighten up a little after a hellaciously stressful year.

The original April Fools' Day dates to 1582, some say, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. People who didn't get the word that the year would start on Jan. 1 instead of April 1 were fools — the butts of a classic bait-and-switch gag. In France, an April fool is a "poisson d'avril" (April fish), which is funny all by itself.

Just like the folks trying to understand the elephant, you may disagree with what our contributors (and editor) think is funny. That's the danger of telling jokes: What one person sees as a wall, another knows is just an elephant. (But what's an elephant doing in the living room anyway, and how the heck are we going to get it out of here before it makes a, ahem, unsavory deposit on the sofa? Now that's funny.)

So happy April Fools' Day. And while we're at it, let's try to expand that to a happy and more light-hearted month.

Laugh on, Humboldt!

A Plea for Subscriptions. Senior News has always been a free publication, with a mission of communicating to anyone who gets a little bit older every day. That is still our goal.

For many years, one of the ways we've done that has been by paying to have Senior News inserted into the Times-Standard, so its readers will get our paper free. For the last year or so, we've also paid to go to Mad River Union subscribers. We also put free stacks around town.

As the Times-Standard's reach declines, however, and as the pandemic prevents most businesses from offering our free newspaper racks, we are looking for ways to continue to connect.

The one way to assure that you'll get Senior News every month is to subscribe, and we'll mail the paper to your home. Our cover price is about to increase (slightly, to \$25/ year), but if you subscribe in the month of April, we'll sign you up for the old price of \$20. Call 707-443-9747, and we will happily set it up.

That's a bargain. And it's no joke.

Ted Pease is editor and chief bad jokester of Senior News.

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True Foolishness Abounds in the Arcata Police Log

By Kevin Hoover

Why, Ted asked me, is the Mad River Union's Arcata Police Log "so darn funny?" First, it's good to know someone of Mr. Pease's erudition considers the "cop log" funny.

As to how it gets that way: when I see a staccato, bare-bones police dispatcher entry — and after writing the thing since 1993 - a coarse snapshot of the value-added Union version pops into my mind. Then I start hooking words together.

Fiction writers know all the basic storytelling themes, but no one has the imagination to come up with what plays out on our real-world streets daily. In other words, you can't make this stuff up. You can dress it up, though.

In the newspaper, the cop log's column "badge" features bongos, implying a beat, and the Fibonacci sequence, suggesting the inescapable universality of the doings therein.

Along with the classic elements, the incidents logged by Arcata Police Department frequently include a secret ingredient begging to be drawn out and celebrated: the sheer banality of the evil.

Fascination lies in the short-term deals that wrongdoers make with destiny to attain some evanescent gratification, endlessly repeating the cycle of pointlessness. Now that tickles my brainbone.

Highlighting these thematic threads and embroidering in some legal context, adding a scoop of *reductio* ad absurdum, a few dollops of setting and scene plus the occasional cultural reference and fourth-wall breakout are some of what makes the cop log fun for me to write, and to read later.

Getting even more granular, wellaimed bits of antiquated terminology such as Shakespeare-era epithets always help. Awkward metaphors? If the shoe fits, run it up the flagpole. A schmear of scoldiness adds a pleasingly tart note, as do intentionally clunky turns of phrase. Bad puns can help illustrate truly craptastic drain bammage. And if existing terminology can't capture the snarling malevolence of a bad actor, just point out his snarvulence.

Can we make it too baroque, too grandiloquent, too wincingly garish and overwritten? Oh, I think not. As journalism teachers get the vapors, readers will get the picture.

A couple of items from last year exemplify some of this:

• Thursday, January 30, 2020 2:42 a.m. Meanwhile, back at the donut shop, a man bedazzled the bleary patronage with a hat of gold, down from which rained long, curly blond tresses. His shimmering, Zeus-like nimbus radiated with all the majesty of a coronal mass ejection, though he tarnished the display by blurting forth the same old dumbellian oaths and curses we've all had quite enough of, thank you. And in keeping with tradition, the alpha fail's steadfast pledge not to leave when asked instantly evaporated at news of incipient copsequences.

And then there are the bongos. They and their plucky pilots always get a limerick.

• Sunday, August 30, 2020 4:23 p.m.

At Samoa and H Street the clatter

Of bongos and worse was a matter

Best left to the pros

Who brought to a close

The pestiferous pitter and patter.

Look, no one is more astounded than me that I've collected a paycheck for doing this for the past 28 years. But it's more fun than working at Radio Shack, this I know.

If you want your no-frills dispatcher bulletin straight from APD, visit cityofarcata.org. But for more "kitch-



Submitted photo.

en prose and gutter rhymes" like this, visit madriverunion.com and click the "Arcata Police Log" tag, or just search for "bongo."

And do try and behold this year's April Fools edition of the Union.

Kevin Hoover, 67, of Sunny Brae, is editor-at-large of the Mad River Union and longtime editor of the late lamented Arcata Eye, whose Arcata Police Log lives on in the Union.

Head-Scratching Headlines: 'Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim'?

These are the things that keep copy editors and proofreaders awake nights - when your boo-boos appear in big headline type. Like these:

- "Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge," Milford (Conn.) Citizen, 1982.
- "Forecasters call for weather on Monday," Pittsburgh Gazette, 1999.
- "Air Force considers dropping some new weapons," New Orleans Times-Picayune, 1983.
- "Miracle cure kills fifth patient," The Associated Press, 1994.
- "Literarcy week observed," Brandenburg (Ky.) Messenger, 1985.

- "Never Withhold Herpes Infections From Loved One," Albuquerque Journal, 1984.
- "Students Cook & Serve Grandparents," 1998.
- "Defendant's speech ends in long sentence," Minneapolis Tribune, 1981.
- "One of the greatest gifts you'll ever give your family may be your funeral," advertisement, 2018.

Errare humanum est.

-Ted Pease

Aunt Norma, the Funniest Woman I Never Met

By Jan Ostrom

Aunt Norma. She was always there in conversations and stories about the family farm in Alabama at the turn of the 20^{th} century.

Her picture in a gold filigree frame with the round mirror and ruffled front sat on my grandmother's dressing table as though it had grown there. I never saw it moved.

Grandma said Aunt Norma never married because no man would put up with her sharp tongue. She was patently unable to tell a lie. Raised in an orphanage, she had no upbringing in the social graces.

In her 30s, Aunt Norma took in a young church girl whose parents had died in a fire, and went to work in a large home to support her and her child.

Aunt Norma never let propriety stand in her way when she wanted something done. With a hitch of her apron, a bit of "tobacky chaw" in her cheek, she tacked any problem like it was a rug on the line to beat. She coined a term "head comologer" for public officials she didn't agree with, and made any discontent with them a

jousting tournament that they always lost. When the mayor announced that the road in front of her house would not be scraped and graveled for the summer, she marched to city hall and gave him what-for.

Witnesses described his face, glasses and starched white shirtfront as "mightily splotched with dripping brown tobacco splatters." Grandma said Aunt Norma's road got graveled every year after that.



NO NONSENSE — Aunt Norma cracks a grin in her rose garden in the early 1900s. Submitted photo.

My favorite Aunt Norma story is when her daughter married a boy from the next town and had a baby, Norma's pride and joy. She went to visit and care for the infant. taking him out in his stroller for some fresh air the first day she was there. A neighbor lady came strolling her own grandbaby from the opposite direction, a woman Aunt Norma

could not abide — "a haughty, snobby gal," she called her.

As they approached each other, Aunt Norma made up her mind to control herself, to "go high." Gritting her teeth and forcing out the words, she said, "That's a mighty pretty baby you have there."

The neighbor stopped and took a long look at Aunt Norma's grandchild. With a slow headshake, the woman drawled, "Well, I wish I could say the same for yours."

Time stopped. Bodies stiffened. Aunt Norma took in a deep breath and the hiss of a thousand snakes came out of her mouth. "You could have, if you'da tole a damn lie like I did!"

I never met her, but when people tell me I am funny, I thank the genes from my Aunt Norma.

Jan Ostrom, 74, of Eureka is a retired professor of film and theater who knows a good joke when she hears it.

Can't Remember? Ask Brother Mel (Brother Elephant)

Bv Ellsworth Pence

Whenever one of my two sisters or I need to verify a date or an event from our childhood, we go to our older brother, Mel.

He seems to have an inexhaustible fund of memories on which to draw, whatever the subject, whatever the occasion. And he readily executes this phenomenon with such aplomb that we have no choice but to believe him.

"When did Aunt Tillie have that child out of wedlock?" one of us might ask. "And who was the father?" Mel would answer as if he were the immediate and trusted conduit of Aunt Tillie, dead or alive.

This behavior is gratifying to us, but it also tends to erode confidence in our own mental state. How can he, so many years our senior, be keeping it together while we can barely remember what we had for breakfast?

Well, for me the curtain was pulled aside, at least partially, when we were discussing an event that occurred in rural Ohio shortly after Mel was born. Before fairly recent successful flood control efforts, the Ohio River would periodically overflow its banks and cause untold damage from Pittsburgh to the Mississippi River. Such a disaster came about in 1936-37, when Mel was but a few weeks old.

Our mother frequently told us about bundling up infant Mel and, with our father, making a tour of the raging flood scene around Athens, Ohio.

To this day, Mel says he remembers this, being held in his mother's arms

while they blithely toured the tragedy.

Come on, Mel, do you expect us to believe that?

And yet why should he lie? There will always be that niggling and hopeful belief that he was once touched by the elephant.

> Ellsworth Pence, 84, of Blue Lake is a retired Humboldt State University professor of French.

HEALTHY LIVING

ASK THE DOCTOR Healing Laughter

By Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.

When under stress, humor is a common coping mechanism. When my father was hospitalized, quite ill, awaiting a heart transplant, my brother and I often turned to humor. In fact, I can clearly remember those moments of humor even now, almost 30 years later. I have seen humor used a lot in the past year as people deal with the ongoing pandemic.

Why is humor such a relief to us?

It is a bit difficult to do randomized controlled trials to scientifically evaluate the exact dose of laughter needed to heal people. It might have something to do with the number of research doctors it takes to screw in a light bulb, but who really knows? Yet we do know there is a connection between laughter/humor and healing.

Laughter therapy (intentionally guided laughter) might reduce blood sugar levels in diabetes and bad outcomes in heart and other vascular diseases. It might increase pain tolerance, reduce agitation in dementia and help those with mental health issues cope and feel better.

Laughing seems to make us better able to retain information and perform better on cognitive tests. Just don't laugh too loudly during the important part of a lecture, like when the teacher is telling you what is going to be on the exam.

It helps to incorporate humor intentionally, especially during stressful events or illnesses. This might be a class like laughter yoga. It might be setting aside time to watch a funny show or talk with someone who has a great sense of humor. By tapping into laughter, we prompt our brains to release hormones that lead to positive physiological changes.

A study done in 2016 at Northwestern University looked at the effect of comedy improvisation sessions on people with Parkinson's Disease. They met with faculty from the Second City comedy group weekly, and after 12 weeks, the participants were found to have improvement in their ability to do activities of daily living, had lessened their symptoms and found joy in the activity.

But what if you do not feel like laughing? There are other ways to tap into the positive hormones that can lead to health benefits. These include exercise, yoga (without laughter if you prefer), dancing, listening to or playing music, keeping a journal and mindful meditation.

Simply smiling at others can also lead to health benefits (although it is hard to know how our masks affect this). I do think you can see a smile in someone's eyes. And you can feel your own smile doing its magic.

My dad got an extra six years of life from his heart transplant. When it was finally his time to go, we were gathered around his bed. His last words — I kid you not — were a joke. As sad as that moment was, I hold on to that memory.

He was someone who spent most of his life trying to make the world a better place. I don't remember

Continued on Page 19

Care Facility Reform

The California Legislature has several bills under consideration addressing concerns about skilled nursing care facilities, including two focused on transparency of care, accountability and management.

The proposed legislation comes in the context of growing criticism of the practices, management and quality of care at California nursing care facilities, including Brius Healthcare, the largest private operator in the state, with 80 facilities in California.

In Humboldt County, Brius owns Granada Rehabilitation and Wellness, Seaview Rehabilitation and Wellness, Eureka Rehabilitation and Wellness and Fortuna Rehabilitation and Wellness.

In 2018, according to a Washington Post investigation, Brius, owned by Shlomo Rechnitz, collected more than \$800 million in Medicare/Medicaid fees, 70% of which it paid back to itself through "related parties" companies it owns.

Another recent report on nursing facilities by the New York Times offers a scathing review of a nationwide five-star rating system to "help" consumers select care for their elderly loved ones. The system "badly distorted" quality of care, the report said, using "sleight-of-hand maneuvers to improve ratings and hide shortcomings."

Part of the complaint about Brius and its practices stems from its lack of transparency as a privately held corporation, and from inadequate state oversight.

California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR.org) has sponsored or supports various bills to address some of these issues.

One of these is the Corporate Transparency in Elder Care Act of 2021 (SB 650). "Californians are paying more for nursing home care for fewer residents than ever before, and we are not getting our money's worth," CANHR said in a statement. "Complaints against facilities are at record highs and the care provided is often abysmal."

Pointing to the practice of profits from payments to "related parties," SB 650 requires annual financial reporting and greater transparency. "The public has the right to know how much of its money is supporting nursing home residents versus how much is being spent on the lifestyles of billionaire nursing homes owners," CANHR said.

Another CANHR-sponsored bill is AB 1502, The Skilled Nursing Facility Ownership and Management Reform Act, which would address "a growing problem of nursing homes being operated by unsuitable, unapproved, and unaccountable persons and entities." The bill would give the California Department of Public Health greater oversight of ownership and management of skilled nursing facilities.

Other proposed legislation to watch:

• AB 279, Prohibiting Resident Eviction During the Pandemic.

• AB 874, Restoring Enforcement of Nursing Home Resident Rights.

• AB 6, Health Facilities: Pandemics and Emergencies (best practices).

CANHR is a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization "dedicated to improving the choices, care and quality of life for California's long-term care consumers." For more information on these and other proposed state laws affecting seniors in care facilities, go to CANHR.org.





HOMEGROWN BY JULIE FULKERSON

Tiny Boxes

'How could my belief

system and worldview

be so different?'

I made my first attempt to understand the universe at an early age, around 7.

I remember being sure that each of us lived in a different world from others. Inside my box, I had a complete world with everything inside that I needed. What I could see, hear and feel was unique to me. And, each of us had a box with an interior world unlike any other.

My biggest concern about this

construction was a worry and this unanswerable question: from inside my box: how could I know

what the world is like for you inside your box? Since each world was one-of-a-kind, how would we even describe to others what it was like? How would words even help? How would we translate the experience to each other?

Thankfully, I was not obsessed with this consideration. I didn't even try to explain it to anyone. They couldn't have understood anyway.

A decade later, I enrolled in my first college course, Philosophy I, and studied Sophocles to existentialism. Between classes, I worked as a waitress, where I learned to be the liaison between chef, owner and customers. Eventually, with a teaching credential, I taught for a few years. I was perplexed by students who sat in the back of the classroom with an expression of "just try and teach me something." So I returned to college to study psychology to see if I could unwrap the mystery and my perceived resistance of these young minds. I was a school counselor and even co-founded a community service for families and individuals.

In a nutshell, my study and work were aimed at understanding differences, finding ways to seek similarities and agreements, and ultimately to reach shared goals.

> Now, I have been tossed back into my world of metaphorical tiny boxes. In the mildest terms, I

am confounded by the news, voting trends, blogs, public opinion, the assault on the U.S. Capitol, the Senate vote. I have asked myself the same questions I had as a 7-yearold: How could my belief system and worldview be so different from others'?

As far as I know, we do not really live in separate boxes or universes. We have water, air, land, color, sound, feelings and science pretty much in common. I am still learning how we absorb facts so differently. Even biological diversity builds stronger systems.

Do we have the ability to deeply listen and understand how each of us sees our internal worlds, or even to accept that others see the world so differently?

Julie Fulkerson is Humboldtgrown but takes a global view. Contact: juliefulkerson@mac.com.

My Last Trip to Costco

Yesterday I was at Costco, buying a large bag of Purina dog chow for my loyal pal Owen, the Wonder Dog, and was in the checkout line when a woman behind me asked if I had a dog.

What did she think I had, an elephant?

So, because I'm retired and have little to do, on impulse, I told her, "No, I don't have a dog. I'm starting the Purina Diet again."

I added that I probably shouldn't, because I ended up in the hospital last time, but that I'd lost 50 pounds before I awakened in the intensive care ward with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IVs in both arms.

"But it's a perfect diet," I said. "The way that it works is to load your pants pockets with Purina nuggets, and just eat one or two every time you feel hungry." The food is nutritionally complete, (certified), so it works well, I told her, and I was going to try it again.

Horrified, she asked if I ended up in intensive care because the dog food had poisoned me.

No, I told her: I tried to chase a squirrel across the road and a car hit me.

I thought the guy behind her was going to have a heart attack, he was laughing so hard.

Costco won't let me shop there anymore. Watch what you ask retired people. They have all the time in the world to think up crazy things to say.

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-Submitted anonymously





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Answers on JFK Death?

By Steven Saint

This is the year when we may know, at long last, who killed President John F. Kennedy. In the name of national security, the federal government has withheld thousands of documents from public

view since 1963.

In 1992, on the heels of Oliver Stone's conspiratorial blockbuster "JFK," Congress passed the JFK Records Act, which mandated that all documents related to the fateful Dallas shooting be made public 25 years later.

That meant 2017.

But then-President Trump kicked the can four years down the road on the advice of then-CIA Director Mike Pompeo and FBI Director Christopher Wray.

Some 15,000 documents must be released by Oct. 26 unless President Biden holds the release up once again.

This decades-long shroud of national-security secrecy has provided fertile ground for conspiracy theories. Even the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in 1979 that JFK "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy," although the committee was unable to identify the other gunman or the full extent of the conspiracy.

The three main conspiracy contenders have been the CIA, the Mafia and the Soviet Union. The latter gets a boost from a new book by James Woolsey, President Clinton's CIA director from 1993-95.

The book, "Operation Dragon: Inside The Kremlin's Secret War on America," is based on claims by Woolsey's collaborator, former Romanian intelligence chief Ion Mihai Pracepa. The pair propose that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev personally ordered KGB asset Lee Harvey Oswald to kill JFK. "Operation Dragon" was a disinformation campaign aimed at blaming the conspiracy

on others — like the CIA and the Mafia.

Is Woolsey's book the truth about a secret Soviet disinformation campaign, or is it part of a CIA disinformation campaign to divert attention from its own sinister role?

Either way, Woolsey's book coming out ahead of what could be the final JFK records release raises a ques-

tion that more and more people are grappling with: In a digital-media age marked by hyper-partisanship, how do you separate the truth from fake news?

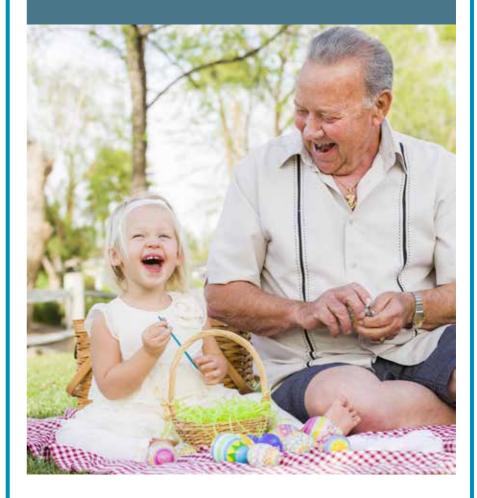
For the journalist, sources are everything. Can we find credible sources with firsthand information knowledge? Will these sources go on the record, putting their names and reputations out for public scrutiny? Will they testify under oath?

If we can find several credible sources that point us in the same direction, we are approaching the facts. Corroboration, convergence of narrative and documentation give us a higher probability that maybe we'll find the truth this year.

Steven Saint of McKinleyville, a 30-year journalist, has written for more than 65 news outlets including Time, the Denver Post and Reuters. He also teaches online classes in conspiracy studies, from JFK to QAnon.

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PAINTING THE OCEAN By Margaret Kellermann

April A to Z

Despite the wearisome year waiting and not understanding what I was waiting for exactly, not hearing anything that sounded like a clear answer, waiting for something to break open ... and in all this not-knowing, deciding to "trust in the slow work of God," as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote, and to release everything to the sky — I've found that small good things still spring out to surprise joyfully.

In 2009, I wrote a song on my beloved piano to express gratitude despite hardship. Here's part:

All the deer have left the forest. Now they're dancing in the meadow. Weep no more, child, dry your tears. Gloom might last a thousand years, but joy comes in the morning. Joy comes with no warning. Throw off your sackcloth; dance around. Everywhere is holy ground.

Right in the middle of everything I don't understand, I'm grateful today for April A to Z:

Artists standing at ease with easels on beaches.

Breathing.

Coffee being served at wooden tables outside ...

Diners.

Eggs of many colors in cartons. Farms owned by families for four generations.

Gentle responses.

Horses walking over to the fence to say hello.

Ice cream sellers who remember my name and favorite flavor.

Jewel tones of waves.

Kids excited to walk together to school again.

Long walks along country roads that finally fade into the fields.

Musicians playing at farmers' markets (symbiotic relationship).

Neighbors who leave their front doors ...

Open to let in the sun.

Pastel chalk art on sidewalks made by tiny artists.

Quiet listeners who...

Really care, not just saying so. **S**wallows at dusk.

Teachers dressed as small grandchildren on FaceTime.

University workshops: complete two-hour OLLI classes on Zoom.

Vinca major dripping over rock walls.

Writing my next novel on my back porch.

eXcellent cafes offering takeout. Yellow in every garden.

Zipping along a beach road home.

For me, finding joyful surprise in small things comes in large part from practicing gratitude at the end of each day. Not needing to create an A to Z list every day, I just come up with three gratitudes. When I practice nightly gratitude, I feel hope for more times of joy. Real, deep joy, the kind that shakes the darkness away and promises new openings soon. Which makes me happy to think about.

Margaret Kellermann's work can be found at bluelakestudio.net.



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"A day without sunshine is, you know, night."

-Steve Martin, actor and comedian.

51 Years Later, We Need a New Earth Day

By Brian Tissot

We once lived in a world where, despite (or maybe because of) our great prosperity, skies were covered in brown smog, suds came into our sinks, trash carpeted our landscape, and poisons permeated our streets and our foods.

But we changed all of that. Somehow, through slow, hard work over decades (and without the benefits of the modern tools of communication like Twitter), politicians, scientists, women, young Americans and conservationists simultaneously focused on environmental issues. And through their efforts, through *Earth Day*, they — *we* — changed the world.

That was April 22, 1970. It was a profound change and one that, 51 years later, still resonates throughout America. Politically, it led to the bipartisan establishment of most of our environmental laws to protect our common interests. At that time, and arguably today, these were not partisan issues — who doesn't want clean water to drink, clean air to breathe, uncluttered landscapes and unpolluted countrysides in which to enjoy nature's bounty? believe America to be a country with longstanding commitments to the environment directed toward protecting the "beauty" of our country. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth; we are now, in 2021, faced with attitudes

actions and momentum, one might

and changes in policy that are returning us to the brown skies and dirty waters of the 1950s. Growing up in the 1960s and '70s, I imagined

a future country so prosperous, so enlightened through ethical growth, that we would respect all the living creatures on which we depend. To think otherwise seems illogical, for we are clearly connected to nature and depend on the land, air and water for our personal health and wellbeing. A clean environment is a part of who we are, essential for a full life, and something every American should share in.

So today on Earth Day 2021, I find myself amazed that we struggle with the same issues. In many ways, we seem farther from these goals than

we were in the 1960s. Indeed, the only things that have changed are the priorities and source of the problems.

Today, we face air pollution of unprecedented magnitude from unchecked forest fires resulting from long-term climate change. Although we still suffer from unclean water and the pesticide

pollution of our past, we are also altering the temperature and chemistry of our oceans in unprecedented ways, destroying nearshore ecosystems.

Meanwhile, a lack of a political leadership, driven by economic interests in a narrow sect of American society, prevents long-term changes endorsed by a broad scientific consensus that has clearly and accurately predicted the devastating effects of sea level rise and increasing frequency of droughts and destructive storms.

What we face now is no less important and less urgent than it was in the 1960s. In 2021, we face a challenge of such magnitude and scale that it dwarfs our early concerns about clean air and water and endangered species. Now we are faced with no less than a slow, insidious extermination of many key ecosystems.

So how do we move forward, how do we combat the largest threat our planet has ever faced? We need a new Earth Day, one that dwarfs the efforts of the past. We need what the Hawaiians call a $Ho'ol\bar{o}kahi$ — a coming together in harmony and unity of purpose. We need a collective action of epic proportions to combat an insidious global threat. The time is now.

Brian Tissot of Trinidad is a professor of marine biology and director of the Telonicher Marine Lab and the Humboldt Marine and Coastal Science Institute at Humboldt State University.

Given our history and our previous

Celebrating the Birth of the Environmental Movement

Before 1970, factories and communities could spew unlimited amounts of smoke into the air and dump whatever sludge or sewage they wanted into streams and rivers. Urban waterways, especially back East, routinely killed fish or caught fire.

There was no Clean Water Act, no Environmental Protection Agency, no Clean Air Act... and no Earth Day. In 1962, Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" focused attention on pesticides that had been in use since the 1940s; by the late 1950s, birds were dying from DDT.

Environmental concerns expanded to water and air pollution through the 1960s - in 1969, an oil platform off Santa Barbara blew more than 3 million gallons of crude into the Pacific. That summer, the Cuyahoga River in northeast Ohio caught fire (it has burned more than 50 times).

It was time to show Mother Earth a little love. Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson, a dedicated conservationist, recruited Republican California Congressman Pete McCloskey to co-chair an event featuring campus teach-ins on the environment, and a young campus activist, Denis Hayes, to draw in the energy and enthusiasm of the anti-war movement. They chose April 22, 1970, as the first Earth Day to fit in college schedules to maximize student participation. The nationwide event drew more than 20 million people, the biggest single-day protest in history.

The environmental movement was born; the federal Environmental Protection Act was adopted later that year.



AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

Back to 'Normal?'

It has been more than two weeks since my second Pfizer vaccination.

Now what?

Well, I have announced to my friends that the "I am 74. When will I get *my* shot?" anxiety has been replaced with a "What now?" existential dread. Many, with great empathy, have assured me that slowly my life can return to normal.

Back to normal?

The problem is that there are aspects of "normal" I do not want to return to, and that I do not want us collectively to return to.

I want to think of my vaccination card, in some grotesque, Beckett-like way, as a passport that allows me *not* to do things the way I always have. Of course, the more of us who get vaccinated, the more of those passports we will have. So, as a culture, we can begin to think about what we collectively do not want to return to. Now, having obtained our vaccination passports, we will wait for Godot no longer.

It might be that a more productive way to move forward is to "grieve the life we once knew," mourn and say our goodbyes, so we might all participate in creating a new normal that is fundamentally better than our pre-pandemic one.

With vaccination passports in hand, let us identify institutions and policies that this pandemic has negatively highlighted. Do we really want to return to the pre-pandemic education policies, or to an outdated and barely functional mental health system? Can we create a new normal medical/insurance system that values the health and well-being of all of us?

The coronavirus hit our skilled nursing facilities harder than any other part of our country. According to the New York Times — one out of every 10 nursing home residents died from COVID-19. Does that suggest a normal you want to return to?

That's more than 130,000 residents of skilled nursing facilities; more than one out of every five U.S. pandemic deaths are nursing home residents. Those disturbing statistics are mostly the result of pre-pandemic conditions that no one should want to return to.

Those conditions are reflective of another normal we should not return to, and that is how we value and treat the elderly in general.

There are many personal normals that I will grieve, mourn and say goodbye to. I hope, however, that those of us who have those precious vaccination passports in hand can engage in the collective hard work of creating some new cultural norms that serve and value all of us.

John Heckel, Ph.D., 74, of Eureka, a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology, has his "I've Got My COVID-19 Vaccine!" sticker.

Earth Day

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HSRC News

'I Work for Everybody,' says HSRC Handyman

By Thea Rowan

HSRC.

Elderly) participants and others at

"I work for everybody!" said Tom,

folks at HSRC.

"I usually do at

day." While his

knees give him

work keeps me

going," he said.

participants that

a man named

will be helping

them, I've often

heard, "Oh. I

know Tom!" It

is obvious that

he has made an

impression all

his life, either

when he worked

construction, as

Tom Jones

When I tell my

a hard time, "my

least one job a

who has plenty of work in the com-

munity, but his priority gig is serving

You might recognize Tom Jones by his American flag mask and his bright teal pickup truck. Or you might see him on his motorcycle. Or you might see him installing a ramp outside your neighbor's front door.

A Humboldt native all of his 71 years, Tom Jones is a pillar for many older adults in our community. I first met him when I started working as a social work care manager for MSSP (Multipurpose Senior Services Program) three years ago. I heard his laugh before I saw his face, and once you hear it, you'll probably recognize it anywhere.

If you're not familiar with MSSP, a program of the Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC), we serve Medi-Cal-eligible older adults who might otherwise have a hard time living at home independently due to complex medical or social needs.

For many participants, navigating their homes safely can be a challenge. But Tom, a jack-of-all-trades handyman, makes it possible.

at a friend's house doing a job for his dad, who was frail and homebound. That day, he found and treated a bad case of black mold. As luck would have it, an MSSP social work care

About seven years ago, Tom was

manager was there for a home visit, and a match was made.

Tom became a formal vendor for MSSP, and we started using his services to help participants who needed safety-oriented, minor home repairs. Since then, he has also started serving Redwood Coast PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the

VERY HANDY - Versatile jack-ofall-trades Tom Jones, with care manager Thea Rowan in front of HSRC in Eureka, can fix just about anything - or he's willing to try. Claudia Padilla photo.

a millwright, as the singer of his band (no, not THAT Tom Jones), or as a beloved member of his community.

Andrea and Kevin of Indianola. for whom Tom installed a grab-bar recently, described him as "gregarious. He has an infinite knowledge of building. He's a real character!" Tom said he once really made someone's day when he brought his guitar along and sang "Green Grass of Home" to one delighted participant.

His favorite part of serving the older adults? "Everyone has a story," he said. "You really get to know people over time. And I know that I've made someone's life a little easier."

The last thing Tom said to me was, "We're all here for only a short while." Very true. So let's all take an extra moment when we can to listen. Thanks for the reminder. Tom.

Thea Rowan of McKinleyville is an MSSP care manager at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center in Eureka.

Nutrition Blooms as Farmers Flock Back to Markets

There is something so special and fresh about this time of year, when the days finally start to get a little longer, a little warmer, and the willows and alders transform from gray branches to bright new greenery.

From SoHum to Orick to Willow Creek, farmers are working their fields, and the sprouts of future meals are showing.

What's more, the main season of the Arcata Farmers' Market starts Saturday, April 3. If the farmers are flocking back to the Plaza, it's a sure sign of spring.

So this is a good time for an update from CalFresh, the statewide program to help lower-income Californians add up to \$234 per person to their monthly budgets for fresh, healthy and nutritional food and produce.

CalFresh benefits have been increased by 15% from January through June under the COVID public health emergency, giving participant households even more bang for their food bucks.

What better place to spend those benefits than at the North Coast Growers Association farmers' markets, which have partnered with CalFresh since 2005? Your benefits go farther under the Market Match program, which doubles CalFresh dollars up to \$10 when you use your EBT card at the farmers' market.

CalFresh is a great benefit for those who qualify. The monthly cash amount varies depending on income, household size and expenses, and other factors, and may be used in local grocery stores, farmers markets and other food providers.

For information on CalFresh, visit cdss.ca.gov/calfresh. To apply for CalFresh benefits, go online to Get-CalFresh.org, call 1-877-410-8809, or go to the DHHS CalFresh office at 929 Koster St. in Eureka.

-Ted Pease





The new HSRC Fortuna Adult Day Health & Redwood Coast PACE Center on Newburg Road is open, offering modified services with pandemic safety in mind. The Senior Dining Center in the Gene Lucas Community Center is offering meals for those 60 and older.

Humboldt Senior Resource Center provides a wide range of programs and services to help older adults in the Eel River Valley community remain as independent as possible.

All HSRC programs are available to Eel River Valley residents:

- Adult Day Health A therapeutic day program for ages 18 and older with chronic conditions
- Alzheimer's Services Resources for those with any dementiarelated diagnoses
- Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) –
 A care management program to
 help frail elders remain at home
- Nutrition Program Offering meals for pick-up by senior diners or delivery to homebound elders



Redwood Coast PACE –
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 care and in-home support for qualified adults

Referrals are being accepted for all programs. For more information, call us at 707-443-9747 or visit www.humsenior.org.

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"A clown is like an aspirin, only he works twice as fast."

-Groucho Marx (1890-1977) comedian.

HSRC Programs & Services Update

All HSRC programs are open and operating as follows:

Administrative Services: Open as usual, but please call 707-443-9747 before coming to our Eureka campus or Fortuna Center and we will assist you remotely if possible. We have locked the doors of our buildings, but staff are available for on-site assistance.

Activities Program: The firewood program has been discontinued. Senior Home Repair is now open for Eureka residents. Call the Senior Services Office at 707-443-9747, x1240, for information about Dial-a-Ride tickets. All other activities are suspended until further notice.

Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's Services: Modified services are offered; Day Centers are closed. Staff available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

MSSP (Multipurpose Senior Services Program): Services continue, but contact with clients is primarily via phone. Staff are available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

Redwood Coast PACE: Open in Eureka and Fortuna; Day Centers are closed. Staff are available by phone. New referrals are being accepted.

Senior News: Open as usual. Free copies available at some area groceries and businesses, but many regular distribution sites are closed. Available online at humsenior.org. Subscriptions, \$25/year. Call 707-443-9747 with credit card info, or mail a check to 1910 California St., Eureka CA 95501.

Nutrition Program: Status of

HSRC Nutrition services:

Home Delivered Meals service continues.

Senior Dining Centers continue to provide take-out meals via weekly drive-by pickup only. Meals are available by **reservation only** for those 60 and older and their spouse. Reservations must be made no later than seven days prior to pick-up day. Call the Senior Dining Center of your choice below for reservations or for questions about menus.

Each package includes a variety of five meals. Pick-up schedules:

Arcata: Arcata Community Center, 321 Martin Luther King Parkway, Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Drive to the main entrance on the north side of the building; an Arcata city staff person will direct traffic, and provide directions for those on foot. Reservations: 707-825-2027.

Eureka: 1910 California St., Tuesdays 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Enter the parking lot from California Street and staff will direct you. **Reservations:** 707-442-1181.

Fortuna: Gene Lucas Community Center, 3000 Newburg Road, Thursdays from 12-12:30 p.m. in front of the Fortuna Senior Center wing; staff will bring the meals to you. **Reservations:** 707-725-6245.

Information may change without notice. For questions regarding any HSRC program, call **707-443-9747.**

We thank community members for their understanding and flexibility during this time.

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Arcata Thursday, April 15, 10:30-11a.m. Arcata Community Center 321 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway

Wednesday, April 21, 10 -11:30 a.m. Humboldt Senior Resource Center 1910 California Street

A Mouse in the House

By Ralph Nelson

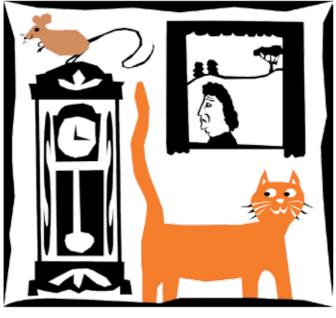
It was early Monday evening when a scratching at the front door told me that my cat, Celeste, wanted inside.

When I opened the door, she walked right past me and not until the door was closed did I see that she was carrying a mouse in her mouth. She dropped it at my feet. I was a bit startled and when I moved the mouse jumped up and scur-

ried to the other end of the room. Celeste simply sat there watching the action.

The mouse bolted out of the room with me in full pursuit, and disappeared. So I found some mousetraps, loaded them with peanut butter, placed them strategically and went to bed.

In the morning, after checking the untouched traps and making another round of the house, I went to work. That night, there was



Annie Kassoff illustration.

While heating her water in the

pounding came

I knew before

on the front door.

opening it that it

was Aunt Gruter-

stock, hammer-

ing on the door

"You need

porch," she said,

Before set-

across the top

of the fireplace

mantel. "Get me

a cup of Alexan-

der's green tea,

two lumps."

to sweep your

striding in.

with her cane.

Page 13

kitchen, I heard her yell, "You have a cat in the house! How disgusting."

look stopped me in my tracks. Cuddled up under

On Saturday morning, I was a lounging in my

Too tired to attempt any action, I simply stumbled to my bed while Celeste and her guest

easy chair reading the newspaper when a loud

her extended paw was the mouse.

remained contented where they were.

Then came a scream, "A MOUSE!"

Before I could get there, Aunt Gruterstock had rushed out the door and was stomping down the front path.

I turned to see Celeste and the mouse calmly observing the action from the middle of the room, and couldn't help but smile. It looked like I had two pets. I would come up with a proper name for the critter in due time.

Ralph Nelson, 92, watches for mice and other unwanted visitors at home in Eureka.





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still no mouse to be found. All this time, Celeste remained complacent to all my action.

The next night, while watching television, I saw the mouse scurry across the room. It ran into the kitchen with me close behind, and I cornered it. While it stood looking at me, I schemed for a way to kill it. On the counter was an unopened pint pickle jar. I could drop it on the critter.

Reaching for the jar startled the mouse into movement. I aimed the pickles toward my moving target, but hit the toe of my left tennis shoe. Wow! That hurt!

After a long day Thursday, I returned home late, worn out. As I limped through the living room, I saw Celeste asleep on the sofa. A second tling in my chair, she ran a finger



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Pushing Back with Zoom & [Bad] Jokes

By Ted Pease

"We're nuts," said one of the six women gathered via Zoom one recent Thursday for their weekly laugh-fest.

Back in August 2019, Lvnn Robbins, Jo Anne Godinho and a few others formed a regular Laughter Yoga group at the Humboldt Senior **Resource** Center in Eureka. Then. last March, the

pandemic lockdown hit. "We were all sad when the Center activities were suspended," said Jo Anne. "For a while we were on pause."

But you can't keep a bunch of nuts down. Missing their time together, the friends started getting together regularly by phone, and then they graduated to Zoom.

"This group of ladies has been quite the lift for me," said Jane Gagner. "It's a funny and wonderful lifeline, a connection I couldn't have had this year."

Lynn Robbins, one of the found-



ZOOMING IS FUNNY for the HSRC Laughter Yoga group. From left to right, top: Karen Zeck, Ted Pease, Margaret

felt alone during the lockdown," she said. "We see each other each week. Friendships have deepened. Sometimes it has been what gets us through the week."

Meeting via Zoom makes many of the standard laughter yoga routines impossible, of course ("We miss our balloons."), but the group has adapted with innovative silliness that may be limited by the size of the Zoom box, but always includes (bad) jokes and high hilarity.

"I look forward to our Thursday laughter Zoom meetings for the laughter, of course, but mostly for the friendships we have forged together with our laughter," said Karen Zeck. "We don't do much physical activity now days, but we surely get our laughter on."

Laughter yoga is a real thing, created in India in 1995 to focus less on stretching and more on breathing to promote physical wellness. Proponents say the mere act of laughing raises levels of "happy hormones"

- seratonin, oxytocin and dopamine - and enhances mental and physical wellbeing.

Robbins, Jane Gagner,

Jo Anne Godinho;

bottom: Barbara

Schumacher.

"During this pandemic, our time laughing together has become one of the highlights of my week." Jo Anne said. "I value the sense of lightheartedness and positive energy we create and share together. At the end of our gathering, I have more resiliency to face the demands of daily life."

Interested? Call at 707-499-8657.

Ted Pease tells bad jokes to his dog in Trinidad.



ing members, agreed. "We haven't

Easter Lilies and Cats, a Deadly Combination

By Sherida Phibbs

Easter is right around the corner, and one of the most commonly gifted plants during this holiday is the Easter lily (Lilium longiflorum). Unfortunately, as popular and beautiful as the Easter lily is, all parts of the plant are potentially lethal to cats.

In fact, not only the Easter lily, but all *Lilium* species — including Asiatic, Daylily, Japanese Show Lily, Tiger, Rubrum, Stargazer and Wood lilies — are a danger to our cats.

Lilies are so dangerous that if a cat brushes the anther and a drop of pollen grain comes in contact with their

ing observation lately

regarding my wife of

51 years

becoming

more like a

cat as we age.

For instance.

whenever she

walks by a pile of stuff

on any flat surface around

fur and they ingest it while grooming themselves, it can kill the cat. Drinking water from a vase that held a cut lily or eating any parts of the plant can also result in an emergency visit to the veterinarian.

If you suspect your cat has encountered a lily, seek immediate veterinary care even if the cat is asymptomatic. Timing is important; the faster you can get your cat to the vet, the better its chances of survival.

It's no laughing matter — Garfield the cat loves to terrorize Jon's ferns, but this is not the comic page.

While Liliums are potentially lethal to cats, many other plants in your home and garden are also toxic to your pets. Many common plants and flowers can cause various reactions to animals and people, ranging from mild stomach disorders to death.

Since I have caught your attention, you might want to take a look at the online presentation by University of California master gardener Kelley Gelderman, D.V.M. (retired), who combines her knowledge of animal medicine and horticulture. As a pet owner myself, I found this a presentation worth watching.

This free recorded presentation, plus other information on poisonous plants, can be found on our website: ucanr.edu/PetsAndPlants.



Sherida Phibbs of Fortuna is University of California Cooperative Extension master gardener coordinator for Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

51 Years of Marital Bliss with My Wife, the Cat

By John Meyers

I've made an interestthe house (any flat place is asking to get stuff piled on it), she reaches out and casually pushes something off onto the floor . . . just like a cat does. - she's

Then she enjoys playing the "Bend and Stretch" game. She bends over to pick up whatever she dropped while I sing "bennnd and streeeetch "

She insists on playing that game 10 or 12 times a day now, so I know she likes it. I think it's a hilarious game, too. Oh, those playful cats!

She also naps a lot in the sun these days, just like a cat. And just like a cat, if I start doing something, she decides that it needs her full attention.

She can be sound asleep in her chair, and if I quietly open a package of cookies in the kitchen, suddenly she's right there asking, "What'cha doin'?" How does she know? She was sound asleep in the living room.

If she gets upset with me, she'll ignore me for an hour or two just

like our cats used to do. Maybe that's where she learned it.

Oh, but you should hear her purr when I hug and cuddle her.

I haven't pointed any of this out to her, of course, and it would probably be safer (for me) if you didn't mention it to her, either.

John Meyers, 72, sometimes walks a fine line at home in Trinidad.

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Page 16

By Sue Blick

The annual village-wide rummage sale always takes place in our hometown of Belgium, Wisconsin, on first Saturday in May. Our daughter and her husband had the prime location for the annual event, living on the little town's main street, so they would welcome family and friends to set up tables on their front lawn, which we took advantage of.

One item in particular that we were desperate to sell was an antique upholstered rocking chair in the color of Halloween orange. By the end of the day, we had lowered the price to FREE! for the special person who would haul it away. But no takers.

So we hauled it back to the barn, to the same spot it had already taken up residency for a while.

Then, during one of my spring cleaning frenzies, it was time for this piece of furniture to move on.

Playing pranks on friends was an ongoing game of wits for us. When we learned that our dear friends, Sandy and Dennis, were going to be gone for a long getaway weekend, our scheme began to take form.

Play the Crossword Puzzle on page 22

The crossword puzzle is a productive way to pass the time and helps keep the mind active.

Would your company or nonprofit like to sponsor the monthly **Crossword Puzzle**?

Call Liz at 443-9747 ext 1227 or email ewhitley@humsenior.org.

While they were gone, my husband, Jim, and I hauled this lovely orange chair to their house and positioned it on their front porch to blend in with their lovely wicker furniture. (Not so much!) When they returned and realized us as the perpetrators, they had some choice words

Our next evening out with Sandy and Dennis was for a Friday night fish fry, a very popular event in Wisconsin. As usual, we met them in the

to share, all in fun.

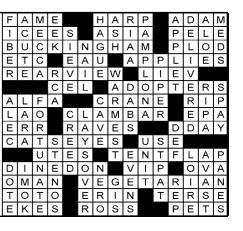
bar for a drink before dinner. On this particular night, the hostess led us on a detour before we reached our reserved table, and we ended up outside on their patio dining area.

There was the Halloween-orange rocking chair, glowing in the moonlit night, with a big sign on it: "For Sue. Love, Sandy & Dennis!"

Our friendship has been strong for many decades and our pranks continue to give us belly-bursting laughs.

Anyone want a nice rocker?

Sue Blick, 73, rocks on her porch in McKinleyville.



YOU WERE SO FUNNY ... From Page 1

on someone hitting, falling, striking and basically abusing someone else. The laughter comes from the audiences knowing that it isn't real and doesn't really hurt.

But what if it did? Why do we laugh at this?

We landed on a theme of exploring these routines in the context of cycles of violence in families and, in particular, how to break those cycles. A family vacation in a pop-up RV with a mom, dad, kids, grandpa and a stuffed raccoon named Skipper became the story. Hidden secrets emerged in routines like "Slowly I Turn," "High-Low" and "The Plank."

But we kept it funny, and our musician provided the rim shots and underscore that punctuates physical comedy.

Wherever we toured in the U.S., we were met with gales of laughter. We filled a slot in the San Diego Rep season. That meant eight shows a week of a very physical piece. As grandpa, I had to do a back fall in a routine with a uncooperative lawn chair. There was a thin mat, and I was doing the fall correctly, but I was 40 and still thought I was 20.

After the Tuesday night show in San Diego, I woke up the next morning and couldn't move. That began my relationship with chiropractors.

But all I could think of in that moment was "seven more shows to do this week."

The show was then invited to a major theatre festival in Denmark. We were excited for the opportunity. We played in a large space with a big crowd. We expected some big laughs, but there was hardly a laugh at all. Silence mostly. And we started feeling that dread that actors feel when they know it is all going down the toilet.

If you push, try too hard, then you only make it worse. It smacks of a kind of desperation. And this was a play that U.S. audiences had roared at.

Thankfully, it ended. We were backstage and heavy silence filled the dressing room. Then one of the audience, this Danish guy in a suit, comes around the corner, coughs a bit to get our attention and says in a thickly accented English, "You were so funny I almost laughed."

And then we did. We laughed. To quote a brilliant Danish comedian, Victor Borge, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

Michael Fields of Arcata, who just retired after 35 years as producing artistic director of Dell'Arte International in Blue Lake, has still got it.

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Further Research Not Needed

However seriously academic scholars may seem to take themselves (see page 1), the following offers compelling evidence that these brainiacs may be pulling our legs.

These published research studies are real, recipients of the Ig Nobel Prizes, spoofs on the Nobel Prizes and announced at about the same time each year.

"The prizes are intended to celebrate the unusual, honor the imaginative, and spur people's interest in science, medicine and technology," an Ig Nobel organizer said. The prizes are "for achievements that first make people laugh, and then make them think."

Certainly, these samples have to make you think things like, "What the heck are they smoking up on campus?"

• Examining the tonal qualities of a female Chinese alligator bellowing in helium-enriched air, Journal of Experimental Biology, 2015.

• "Injuries Due to Falling Coconuts," an impactful report in the Journal of Trauma, 1984. • The U.S. General Accounting Office, a 2012 report calling for a report on the impact of a report designed to reduce the number of government reports.

• "The Effect of Country Music on Suicide" (2009) discovered a strong link between country music radio and suicide rates among the white population in that area.

• "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis" uncovered a hidden code in the Bible, Statistical Science, 1995.

• "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners," master's thesis predicting human-robot love by 2050, Masstricht University.

• How income inequality affects frequency of kissing, by nation, Scientific Reports, 2019.

• "How do wombats make cubed poo?" Bulletin of the American Physical Society, 2018.

Works like these also call into question the standard stock phrase required in many serious academic studies: "Further research is needed." Not so much.

-Ted Pease



ASK THE DOCTOR ... From Page 5

a single day spent with him that didn't involve some sort of humor on his part.

Life is not easy, but laughter is natural to us. It can offer some light in even the darkest times. And it can remind us that while we cannot control the world around us, we can control how we respond to it.

Humor can heal us, and can offer a healing moment to those around us.

Dr. Jennifer Heidmann *is medical director and primary*

care provider at Redwood Coast PACE (443-9747). This column should not be taken as medical advice. Ask your medical provider if you have health questions. Send comments to seniornewseditor@ humsenior.org.

Resources: Laughteryoga. org; Parkinsonism & Related Disorders, Vol. 34, 62-65, Jan. 1, 2017; Northwestern Medicine, nm.org; UofMhealth.org, "Healing Through Humor," Aug. 31, 2020.



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Letter to the Editor All Opinions Accepted

To the Editor:

I am responding to Sherman Schapiro's letter in the March edition of Senior News ["Extreme Letters, page 20]. Mr. Schapiro complained about the "pointed political letters" starting with Bruce Hitchko in January (pro-Biden) and Gloria Bosco in February (pro-Trump).

Mr. Schapiro says the Humboldt Senior Resource Center "should be a welcoming place for individuals of all political flavors"... apparently unless Mr. Schapiro finds those opinions too extreme for his tastes. Then the offending party must resort to the "local newspapers instead, just as I do," Schapiro asserts.

This is what editor Ted Pease must read after working so hard to bring the paper so far, appealing to the 50+ crowd and others as well. Senior News doesn't really count, according to Mr. Shapiro.

Funny, because I generally agree with Mr. Schapiro and have enjoyed, even envied, his letter-publishing exploits. I am not worthy.

But regarding the letters that Mr. Shapiro criticizes: I fear that if a generation grows up with the idea that if any election does not go their way, they don't have to accept it, the seeds of American demise will have been sown. Many of us had to accept defeat in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2016, even though Gore and Clinton both won the popular vote. In 2020, Biden/Harris won the popular vote *and* the electoral vote. Trump/ Pence lost. Live with it.

Timothy Crlenjak, Eureka

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WHAT RESEARCH SHOWS ... From Page 1

laugh has appreciated significantly in value.

At Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, Mary Laskin is a believer in "the healing power of laughter." She instructs her chronic pain patients in laughter exercises alongside more traditional practices. "This pandemic is like a tiger creeping toward us, a huge slow-motion stressor that makes the experience of pain worse," she said. "Humor helps my patients relax and release their grip on pain."

Dr. Marilyn Mendoza of the Tulane Medical Center psychiatry department says the pandemic has spread fear and depression along with the virus. "So what is there to laugh about?" she asks. "It is because of all these dreadful, horrible things that we need to find laughter in our lives – even if it is something that makes us smile just for a moment or gives us a brief laugh. We need it to sustain us for the sake of our sanity and our physical well-being."

The research — serious research, now — shows that laughing reduces cortisol, a hormone that our adrenal glands produce when we are stressed or frightened. Cortisol is the body's "built-in alarm system," says Web-MD; it tells your brain to be on alert, makes the heart pump faster and fuels your fight-or-flight response.

Too much stress = too much cor-

tisol, which can result in anxiety and depression, headaches, heart disease, memory problems and more. "Humor, laughter in particular, significantly reduces the presence of cortisol and therefore reduces the physical effects of stress, which in turn brings our emotional state back to a calm condition," said psychologist Brian King, who, conveniently, is also a comedian.

"People need humor all the time," King said, especially after a year of pandemic. "Humor, and the laughter it inspires, is our built-in mechanism for handling stress."

Comedian Paula Poundstone couldn't agree more (of course). "Humor is healthy for you; that's why we need it now," she said. "It's definitely a coping mechanism and an important part of both mental and physical health."

Poundstone says humor has helped get her through the pandemic (so far). "There's such a relief there," she said. "I probably have laughed until I've cried more in the last six months than in the rest of my life."

"I truly would rather laugh than cry right now."

Good advice.

Ted Pease does serious research from his home in Trinidad.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Senior News welcomes letters to the editor. To be considered for publication, letters should be received by the 12th of the month, must not exceed 300 words, and may be edited for space. Submissions must include the writer's full name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. Senior News reserves the right to reject any letter. The same requirements apply to those interested in submitting longer commentary columns (up to 400 words). Mail to Senior News, 1910 California Street, Eureka, CA 95501 or E-mail tpease@humsenior.org.

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The Senior News Funny Page

Oh, The Places You Will Go!

I have gone many places in my life, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone — you have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. At least, no one recognized me there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven. I have made several trips there, thanks to friends, family and coworkers. For me, it's a short drive.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not much of a jumper anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. It's a sad place and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I get older.

One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenaline flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age, I need all the stimuli I can get.

And, sometimes I think I am in Vincible, but life soon shows me otherwise.

People keep telling me I'm in Denial, but I'm positive I've never been there.

So far, I haven't been in Continent, but my doctor/travel agent says it's on the list . . .

- Thanks to Jim Slade and The Gadfly.

Sven and Ole were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking up. A woman walking by asks what they were doing.

"Ve're supposed to find da height of dis flagpole," said Sven, "but ve don't haff a ladder."

The woman took a wrench from her purse, loosened a couple of bolts, and laid the pole down on the ground.

Early Rural Broadband

Scientists at an excavation in New York unearthed traces of copper wire dating back 100 years, and came to the conclusion that their ancestors already had a telephone network more than 100 years ago.

Not to be outdone, a few weeks later, a California archaeologist dug to a depth of 20 feet, and the story in the Los Angeles Times read, "California archaeologists, finding traces of 200-yearold copper wire, have concluded that their ancestors already had an advanced high-tech communications network a hundred years earlier than the New Yorkers."

One week later, the Aberdeen American News in South Dakota reported the following: "After digging as deep as 30 feet in his pasture near Aberdeen, Ole Olson, a self-taught archaeologist, reported that he found absolutely nothing. Ole has therefore concluded that 300 years ago, South Dakota had already gone wireless."

Ahead of their times, these South Dakotans . . .

-Submitted by Mark Larson

Sven & Ole's Flagpole

Burning Calories

A recent* report by the Southern California Medical Association pointed out that proper weight control and physical fitness cannot be attained by dieting alone.

Many people who are engaged in sedentary occupations do not realize that calories can be burned by engaging in strenuous exercises that do not require physical exertion.

The following is a list of calorie-burning activities and the number of calories per hour they consume.

Beating around the bush75				
Jumping to conclusions 100				
Climbing the walls150				
Passing the buck				
Throwing your weight around 300				
Dragging your heels 100				
Pushing your luck250				
Making mountains out of molehills 500				
Wading through paperwork				
Bending over backwards75				
Balancing the books				
Running around in circles				
Eating crow				
Tooting your own horn25				
Hitting the nail on the head				
-				

-Anonymous contributor, reprinted from the *March 1982 edition of Senior News.

Then she pulled a tape measure from her pocketbook, took a measurement, announced, "Twenty-one feet, six inches," and walked away. Ole shook his head and laughed.

"Ain't dat just like a voman! Ve ask fer da height and she gives us da length!"



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Senior and Homebound/Disabled List. The HEAP program helps qualified households on a once per year basis with a credit on their PG&E bill or assistance with firewood or propane. RCAA's weatherization program improves health and safety conditions and installs energy saving measures in the home.



To qualify for RCAA's Senior and Homebound/Disabled List for the 2021 program, you must be at least 70 years old or a homebound/ disabled person and meet the federal income guidelines below.

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2	\$3,179.11
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5	\$5,423.19
	YOUR HOUSEHOLD 1 2 3 4 5

Beginning December 15th, 2020, through April 30, 2021, call 707-444-3831, ext. 201. Follow message directions and leave the appropriate information to get put on the senior list.



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It's a Girl! No Joke

In 1974, I was expecting my first child. She ("it" in the old days) was due in mid-May. However, in early April, Nature said, "New baby, here we come!"

I called my boss to say I would not be at work and was whisked off to the hospital. Several hours later, I had a healthy baby girl.

My husband, of course, called the new grandparents (a first on my side of the family). So, my mom is called and, in mid-sentence, says to my husband, "Wait a minute!"

Apparently she had rushed to the calendar. "Oh, come on now," she said to my husband. "This is an April Fool's joke, isn't it?"

"Grandma, that was YESTER-DAY!"

PS: In 2014, "Grandma" passed away on April 1st! (NO joke!)

-Louise Bacon-Ogden

Grandma's Cherry Pie

On April Fools Day in 1993, our son, Anders, was 4½ years old, an age when the sense of humor is not fully formed. We were eating dinner at my parents' house in Blue Lake. After dinner my mother brought out a cherry pie and a little cherry tart for Anders.

The tart was a perfectly golden brown, crimped half-circle with a cherry on the top. Anders took a big bite and pulled away with a mouth full of cotton. All the adults around the table started laughing uproariously, and my mother exclaimed, "April Fools!"

Anders' eyes got big and he looked like he was on the verge of tears, but as he looked around the table at his laughing parents and grandparents, his expression changed and he, too, began to laugh.

This was the first April Fools prank he experienced. I am pleased to say he developed a great sense of humor and still enjoys a good April Fools trick.

-Sydney Larson

God's Fitness Plan

Most seniors never get enough exercise.

In His wisdom, God decreed that seniors become forgetful so they would have to search for their glasses, keys and other things, thus increasing their movement and walking.

Then God perceived another need. In His wisdom, He made seniors lose coordination so they would drop things, requiring them to bend, reach and stretch — passive physical exercise. Then God considered the function of bladders, and decided seniors would have additional calls of nature, requiring more trips to the bathroom, thus providing more exercise.

God looked down and saw that it was good.

So as you age, if you find you are getting up and down more, remember it's God's will. Even though you mutter under your breath, it is God's exercise plan to keep us healthy and help us live longer.

You Can Be in Senior News

• MAY is a time of rebirth, green growth and new beginnings. What are your thoughts on renewal — in the garden and, as more of us get vaccinated, the new normal of living with COVID?

• JUNE is National Great Outdoors Month, so let's celebrate by getting out of the house in Humboldt. What are your favorite outdoor activities and escapes? Take a hike? Hit the beach? Climb a tree? Bike to Canada? Let us know!

Contact SN editor Ted Pease: tpease@humsenior.org, or 707-443-9747, x1226.



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