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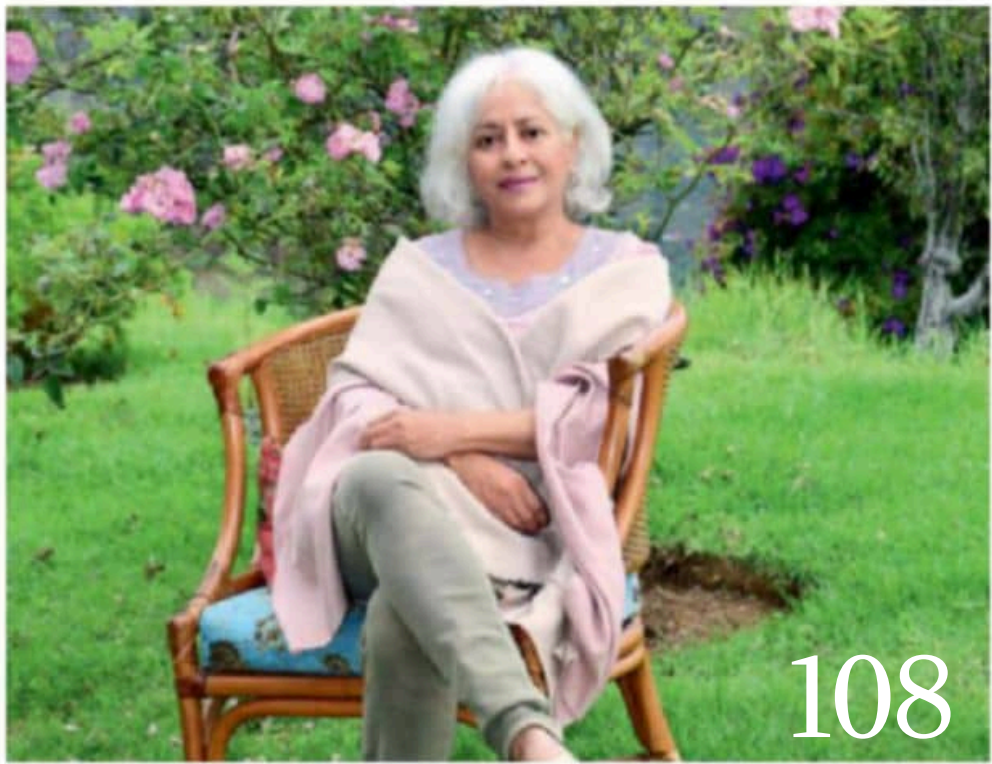
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Reader's Digest

A Trusted Friend in a Complicated World

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OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE
April ISSUE



A Lesson in Criticism

The story took me back to the day my first article was published. Seeing my name in print took me to cloud nine. But, my next piece of writing was subject to some criticism, and I remember feeling hurt and deflated at receiving that feedback. It took some time, but finally I was able to view it as motivation to better myself. Whatever field we find ourselves in, criticism can help us shine—nothing can be accomplished without conquering the fear of failure.

PREETHA RENGASWAMY, *Mylapore*

Preetha Rengaswamy wins this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs

Discovering Babasaheb

This classic prodded me to ponder upon the relevance of secularism and equality, and the importance of the Constitution in our country, especially now. Purification of ponds or water tanks by rituals after its use by Dalits, is not reported these days. However, discrimination continues to exist. Temple entry has never been a right for this community, but a few of their leaders and officials are allowed in. Dr Ambedkar, in order to escape the inhuman treatment at the hands of caste Hindus, switched over to Buddhism, along with others from his community. The Dalits, who persist under Hinduism, continue to live under humiliation without any respite, while the law continues to promises justice, which is often delayed or denied.

PRAFULLA CHANDRA SOCKEY, *Hazaribagh, Jharkhand.*

Unforgettable Classics

Going through the April issue put me aboard a time machine and took me back to 1961, when as an undergraduate student, I sighted my first copy of *RD*. My pen friend, Leonard Wilfert, had mailed it to me. From then on, Leonard would mail me copies every month. That's how I got addicted to *RD*. When *RD* came to India; I started reading the Indian edition regularly. Now a septuagenarian, I must be one of the very few who has not missed reading *RD* any month till date. Even when on overseas assignments, I used to get the editions of the respective countries. Now, while going through the classics again, I go into a rare kind of nostalgic ecstasy, as most of the pieces sound very familiar to me!

THARCIUS S.

FERNANDO, *Chennai*

The Unbelievable Mr Ripley

Curiosity is a phenomenon that has encouraged human beings to go beyond limits of knowledge over the ages. I loved reading *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* in newspapers. Therefore, finding a story about Bob Ripley in the April issue was very pleasant surprise—he was just as interesting and intriguing as one expects the creator of such a column would be.

DIBYASHA MISHRA,
Bhubaneswar

The Commando with the Tattoo

The reunion of Ganesh with his family after he had been 'missing' for 20 years, is a rare

happenstance, and one that hundreds and thousands of families who have had their loved ones go missing rarely get. A policy mechanism should be set up in the country to address the problem of missing and trafficked children.


K.VENKATA RAMANA RAO,
Karim Nagar, Telangana

Crawling in the Paddy Fields

Yu Yuh-Chao's tale is an amazing testament of hard work, exemplary courage, and back-breaking toil. I enjoyed this short story, reading it twice over, and can't stop admiring determination of the 8-year-old boy who worked 6 hours daily kneeling in mud, infested with

"bugs, worms and snakes", his aching back arched down under a blistering sun, bearing the raw stench of rotten plants to ensure that he could learn to do what his parents and brothers did! His pride in becoming an academic researcher is completely justified. Such 'character building' must be the reason behind the progress their country—Taiwan—has made!

KRISHAN KALRA,
Gurugram

 Write in at editor.india@rd.com. The best letters discuss RD articles, offer criticism, share ideas. Do include your phone number and postal address.

WHAT'S YOUR IRRATIONAL FEAR?

Just because it doesn't make sense doesn't make it any less scary. Like getting sucked out of an airplane by way of the commode—you know it's not going to happen, but you can't help thinking about it every time you flush. Maybe you've got xerophobia (fear of dryness—please pass the ChapStick) or hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia (fear of long words). Share your irrational fear at editor.india@rd.com, and your story might appear in a future issue of *Reader's Digest*. Unless you're scared!

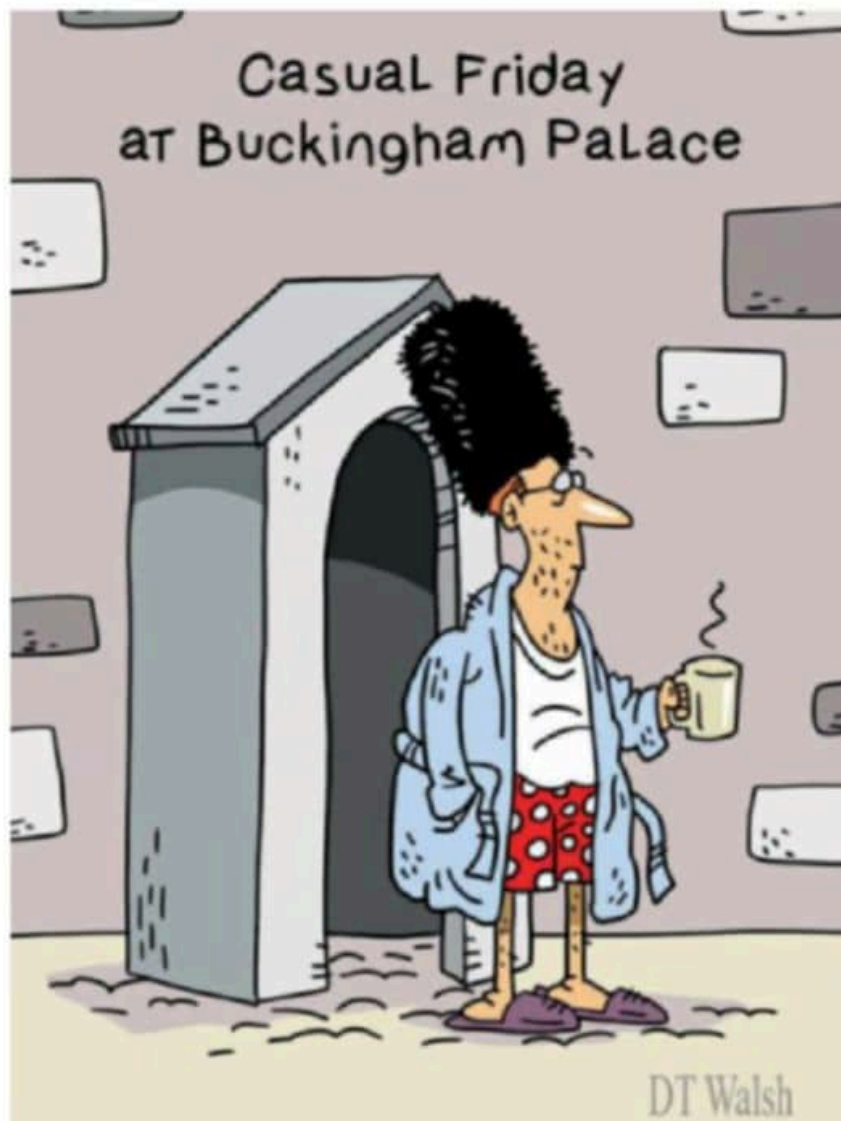


I got sloppy with my shaving one morning and nicked my skin. I stanced the bleeding and ran off to school where I was a substitute teacher. As it was Veterans Day, I let my first graders know that I, too, was a veteran. As I was talking, a student pointed to my face and said, “Your ear is bleeding.” As I wiped off the blood, his classmate whispered solemnly, “Remember, he was in the war.”

—ALAN WHITTEMORE

Before we embarked on a few days of survival training at our ROTC summer camp in Florida, our instructor raised the topic of snakebites.

“Since the venom of rattlesnakes, copperheads and water moccasins will affect the circulatory system,” he



told us, “their bites are to be treated with tourniquets, incisions and suction. The poison of the coral snake, however, affects the nervous system.” And with that, he closed his manual.

“Sir,” asked a cadet, “what do we do if a coral snake bites us?”

“Turn to page A1-7 in your manuals.”

We flipped to page A1-7. It consisted entirely of interdenominational prayers.

—GCFL.NET


The Navy has a language you won’t see in civilian life. Case in point, this sign in a latrine at Brooklyn’s Floyd Bennett Field: “All Hands Must Wash Hands Before Leaving the Head!”

—ROBERT MCAULEY

Reader’s Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email us at editor.india@rd.com

A World of
GOOD
REASONS TO SMILE

Heard Any Good Jokes?

THERE'S AN OLD pay phone in Washington, D.C., where, if you press a button, you can hear a gag like this: "How does the polygamist hippie count his wives? 'One Mrs Hippie, two Mrs Hippie ...'" The voice belongs to Don Rutledge, a teacher and the creator of the Jokes Phone. Because he thought it would be fun, Rutledge, who lives nearby, bought the phone online, replaced its guts with a computer and placed it on the street. Press *1 (it's free!) to hear a knock-knock joke or *2 for a kids joke. Pressing *5 plays fun facts. You can also press 0# to chat with "a random guy who thinks he has all the answers." That guy is Rutledge, who told *Washingtonian* that callers often are "freaked out that somebody actually answers," so they hang up. "But sometimes they stay on, and I just talk to them." 





Surf's Up ... Again

*A Hawaiian helps victims of a devastating fire
in the most Hawaiian way possible*

—
BY John Rosengren

THE FIRE RACED through Lahaina last August so fast that it killed 100 people and destroyed more than 2,200 buildings, most of them homes. It left more than 7,000 people without their possessions and in need of shelter.

That afternoon, Kalyn Lepre, a 36-year-old nutritional therapist, grabbed her wallet and her grandmother's pearls and drove out of town. She lost everything else in her four-bedroom house: clothes, documents, jewelry, GoPro gear, a computer and seven surfboards. Lepre surfed almost

every day; surfing was a source of joy and a means to maintain her mental health. Seeing her surfboards reduced to a pile of fibres—especially her prized baby blue Doug Haut custom longboard—was devastating.

"I was so in love with that board," she says.

Jud Lau understood. The 53-year-old Maui native has been riding the waves since he was a teenager, and he's been building surfboards for the last 15. He knows the value of a good surfboard.

"A surfboard is part of your whole being—especially in Hawaii, where

Jud Lau says he was
glad to give the
survivors “some
consistency back
in their lives.”



surfing originated," he says. "Losing a board is like losing a part of your soul."

So, wanting to help the victims in some way, he started thinking about all the surfers who had lost their boards. "And I thought, *That's my area of expertise*," he says. "Surfing is a healing thing for surfers—getting in the ocean, connecting to Mother Nature."

He realized he could give that back to them. Lau started by connecting people who wanted to donate extra boards to those who had lost theirs, about 200 boards total. Friends in

THE NEW BOARD ALLOWED HER TO GET BACK IN THE WATER AND START HEALING.

Oahu and California collected another 550 boards and shipped them to Maui for Lau to distribute.

But many surfers, like Lepre, use custom boards designed to accommodate their size or the type of waves they ride. So Lau solicited cash donations—raising about \$20,000—to cover the cost of materials for shaping custom boards to give away. Donating his labour, he made more than 40 boards that typically would have retailed for \$600 to \$1,500 each. He also enlisted the other shapers on the island, about a dozen of them, to make at least one board apiece, providing around 20 more surfboards.

Lau shapes the boards in his studio 56 km east of Lahaina, carefully designing and crafting them one at a time. He cuts each board from a block of polyurethane foam using a computer-aided machine, then takes an hour or two to finish it by hand with planes and sanding blocks. When that's done, he takes it to the glassing factory next door to be finished with coats of fiberglass and resin.

The recipients of Lau's efforts include a Lahaina fireman who fought the blaze but lost his home and his surfboards; a man who had worked in a surf shop Lau managed 30 years ago; and Lepre. She messaged him what she'd lost, and he shaped her a high-performance, 9-foot, single-fin board with a sunset fading from yellow to orange, and 'Lahaina' in deep red letters in the middle.

"I cried when I saw it," Lepre says. "He created an art piece for me, and this tool to help me move forward."

The new board allowed her to get back in the water and start healing. Her first time out was last September at Ukumehame Beach. She joined hundreds of others in the ocean to honour all that was lost.

"Just getting back in the water was one of the more powerful experiences of my life," says Lepre, emotion welling up in her voice. "It's part of the healing you know you need, but you don't know how to get. Feeling joy again helps the moving forward. Jud gifted me back a huge part of my mental health." **R**

QUOTABLE QUOTES

We confess the follies of youth without a blush; not so, those of age. However, keep me a little in countenance by considering, that age wants amusements more, though it can justify them less, than the preceding periods of life.

—Edward Young, poet, in *Conjectures Upon Original Composition*

Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States



What remains to be said must be said—repeated—clearly. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza are crimes against humanity.

—Arundhati Roy, author, in her acceptance speech upon receiving the 2023 P. Govinda Pillai award

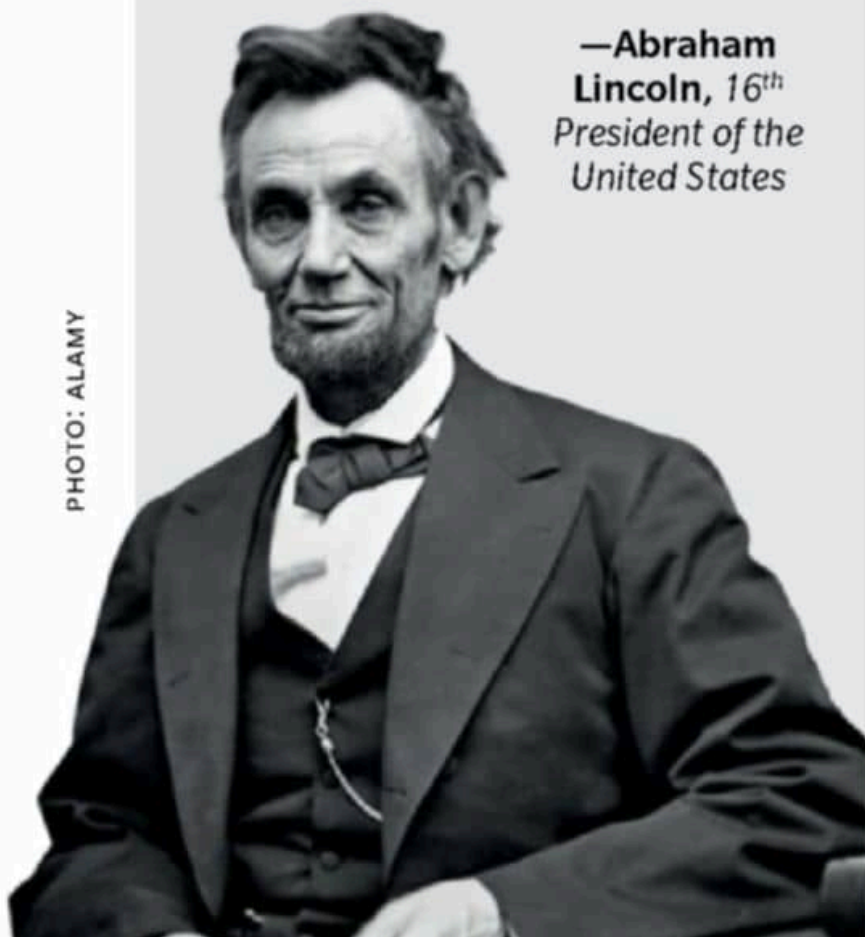
However God has made me, I am okay with it.

—Prachi Nigam, the Class 10 Board exam topper on being widely trolled online for her appearance

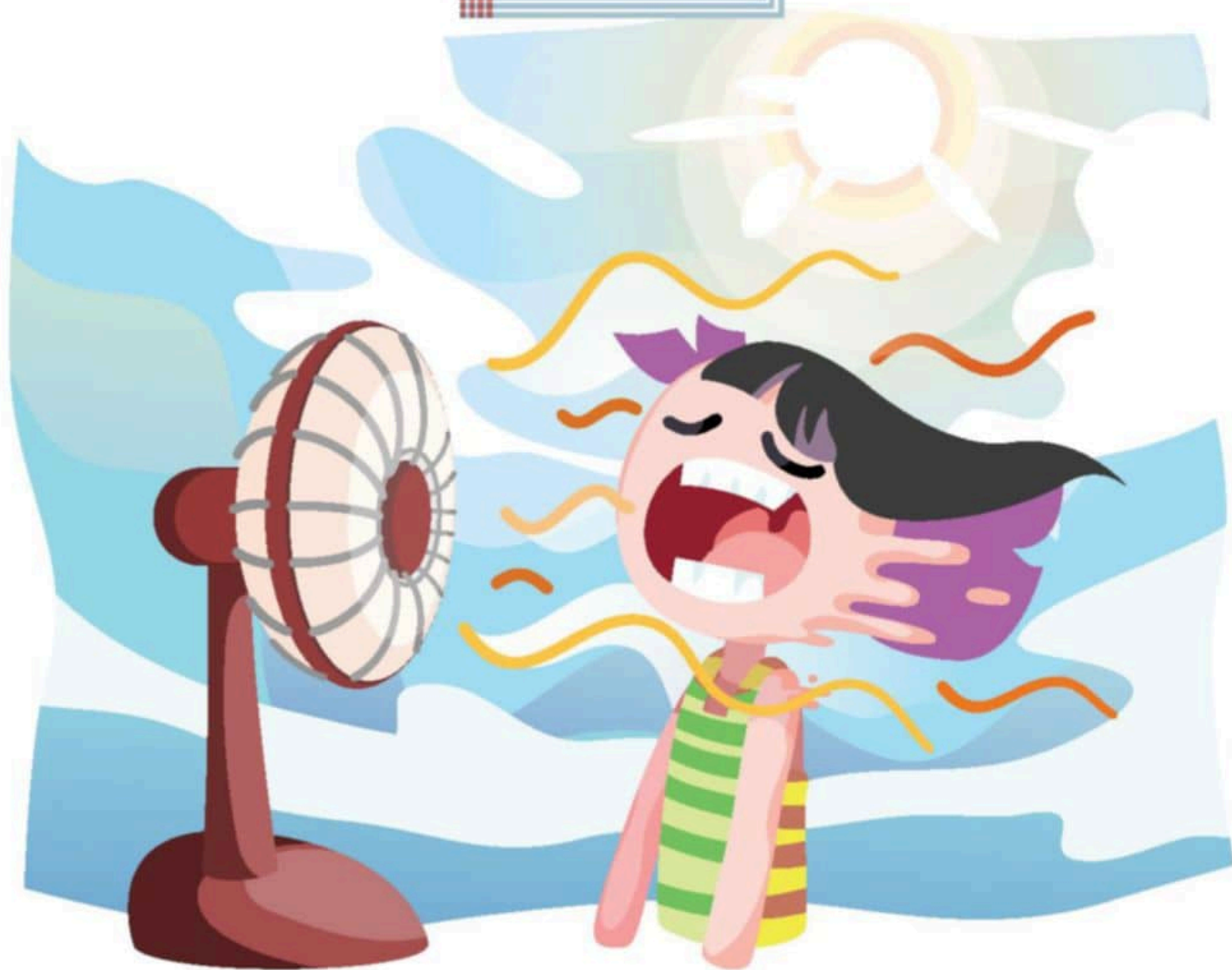
What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?

—Henry David Thoreau, poet and philosopher, in *Familiar Letters*

PHOTO: ALAMY



SMILE



Hot and (Un)bothered

BY Samit Basu

NOT THAT ANYONE in India needs to be reminded, but summer is here, and the collective energy dissipated by people complaining about the heat is making climate change even worse.

I was recently at a German cultural

centre for a literary event, and the person who ran the centre was puzzled by how quickly I was able to deduce that she had arrived relatively recently in Delhi. It was easy enough to spot—she was lamenting that the rising temperatures had made them

move their events indoors, and she wanted to spend as much time outside as possible. Outside! In the fresh air, soaking in the sun and its vitamin-D-activating bounty! Clearly new to the city.

Madam, this is not Berlin, with its parks and waterworks and human-friendly atmosphere. Please orient yourself to your new surroundings by watching the documentary *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

It will take a few weeks—a few months, if she is exceptionally stubborn—until Delhi teaches her to seek shade, darkness and cool air like the rest of us lizards. She will only become a proper Delhi-ite when she emerges outdoors, beaming, into the beautiful winter sun, and then runs back indoors immediately because of the pollution.

Climate change is one of the many, many global crises that everyone seems to be aware about but no one can actually help resolve. The few people with the power to fix things—assuming that we have not already crossed the tipping point which makes temperature-rise a permanent feature until we are all too sun-dried to care—are mostly distinguishing themselves by having annual meetings, where they all congregate at luxury destinations via private jets to achieve good vibes but little action.

Meanwhile, in the parts of the world where we hear the phrase 'Climate Change' and think, *Well,*

maybe it'll be for the better? (It will not get better), we are mostly too overwhelmed by our other various personal and social crises, or just too used to the weather being terrible, to even notice in particular.

In the worlds of books and films, though—publishers and producers have been trying, for a while, to sell 'climate fiction' in various forms, hoping to monetize people's growing anxiety about this clearly overheating planet. So my fields of work are also heating up about climate change.

It's been fun to watch—mostly because both climate anxiety, stories of survival during climate crises, and speculation about what the world will be like when everything has sunk or boiled have been a part of storytelling for generations in all media, and part of marketing new trends in the arts is about pretending that the extremely familiar is somehow a dazzling new invention. But here's a pro tip for those of you who want to get in on the climate-fiction trend—take your story in any form that everyone has rejected, insert a line that has your main character remembering an incident from a few years ago, and mention that it was less hot then than it was now. Boom! Climate fiction ... and remember to send me some money.

For those of you too overcome by the heat to do so much work, here's wishing you rest, shade, cold water, and ice cream.

Have a great summer, everyone! 



Betting on Humanity

An unlikely friendship teaches one woman the importance of taking a chance on others

BY Lisa Kanarek

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

OUR FAMILIES LIVED more than 700 km away, so a few weeks before Thanksgiving one year, my then husband and I decided to invite a guest over for the holiday. I called a senior centre in the Dallas area and they suggested Ilse, a woman I imagined would be quiet, soft-spoken, serene. I was wrong.

Ilse was a stubborn 78-year-old force of nature. She enjoyed complimentary gambling junkets to Las Vegas and kept a local bookie on speed dial. She favoured sequined T-shirts; her tiny wire-haired mutt, named Speckles; and spending time at the senior centre. Describing this opinionated, four-foot-four woman as a firecracker would be like referring to the Olympic torch as a disposable lighter.

On Thanksgiving, within minutes of arriving, Ilse plopped her oversize purse on the kitchen counter and, with a wide, denture-filled smile, welcomed the glass of wine my husband offered. By the end of the evening, we felt as if this quirky septuagenarian were an old friend. Two weeks later, I invited her to lunch.

The more time I spent with Ilse, the more she became like a surrogate grandma, albeit a saucy one. She wasn't afraid to share her opinion with others or to ask me when I was finally going to have children. "You're not getting any younger," she'd say.

I soon became her personal Uber driver (minus the fee), and I noticed that the more favours I agreed to do, the more she asked of me. Six months



after we met, desperate for backup, I called her only child, Ralph. He claimed he didn't have time to help. I questioned his "I'm too busy" excuse, but I kept my thoughts to myself.

A few months later, Ralph passed away. After the funeral, I realized Ilse was too distraught to be left alone and helped her hire a caregiver. Having known her for two years, I felt responsible for her. She was like family to me, and I was the only one left in her tribe.

Each time I stopped by her apart-

ment, Ilse seemed more disconnected than the time before. Late one afternoon, she called from the emergency room to tell me she had tripped over her monstrous coffee table. Using the spare key she'd insisted I make months before, I searched her apartment for other trip hazards. The table had to go.

The next morning, Ilse called to ask about her table. She was angry and told me how upset she was that I had given away a family heirloom. Then she hung up on me.

When Ilse called that evening to apologize, I told my husband to say I wasn't home. I was still angry and hurt.

The following day, I returned her call but was unable to understand what she was saying. I drove her to the emergency room, where the doctor confirmed she had suffered a mild stroke. During the next few days, I dropped by her apartment, but she was no longer the vibrant, obstinate Ilse I knew. At the end of the week, I received an early-morning call from her caregiver. "Please come over now," the woman said, her voice matter-of-fact. "She's passed away."

When I arrived, I saw Ilse lying on her bed, motionless, her eyes closed. I sat on the edge of the bed and held her frail hand, too shocked to cry.

The morning after Ilse's death, I pulled her will out of my file cabinet. Ilse had insisted I take a copy of it a year earlier. I read through it and stopped when I saw my name. She had left me \$50,000. I didn't remember her saying anything about her bequest. If she had, I would have insisted she donate the money to charity or give it to a friend she had known longer.

I knew I couldn't spend what she had left me on myself. Ilse was a

friend I'd helped out of loyalty and respect, not with the expectation of being paid.

Her attorney sent me a check, and I opened an investment account in her honour. Over the next 20 years, Ilse's gift grew and gave me the opportunity to disperse funds in her name to a cause she cared about deeply: children.

Various families and charities benefited from her donations. Some families received funds to send their grade-schoolers to summer camp. Through the local food bank's 'Food 4 Kids' programme, her donation provided children who relied on daily school meals with weekend backpacks filled with food to take home with them on Fridays.

A few days before my unconventional friend died, I heard her on the phone asking about 'the odds'. I don't know whether her last bet paid off—I didn't ask her bookie when I met her at Ilse's funeral. Yet the gamble I'd taken years before when I placed a call to the senior centre and met Ilse had definitely made my life richer. I took a chance on humanity, and Ilse's friendship was the jackpot. **R**

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Beware of Smombies!

What's a smombie? It's the portmanteau of 'smartphone zombie'—in other words, someone who crosses the street without looking up from his or her phone. (Could also be referred to as 'roadkill'.)



HEALTH

Why Water Workouts Work

Swimming and other aquatic exercises have special benefits

BY *Beth Weinhouse*

IMAGINE FINDING OUT that chocolate cake is the ideal health food. OK, that's not true. But it is true that something you might only associate with vacations, leisure time and sheer fun is one of the best exercises around. We're talking about swimming and other aquatic exercises.

Working out while all or partially submerged in water has multiple benefits for both the mind and the body and can be done by almost anyone of

any age and at any fitness level. A 30-year observational study at the University of South Carolina found that swimmers had about half the risk of death from any cause over the course of the study compared to participants who were runners, walkers or sedentary.

And you don't have to do the crawl, breast stroke, side stroke or even the dog paddle to get benefits. Water aerobics, pool walking and water workouts with weights are also great ways to get in shape. Journalist Jackie Duda even credits her pool workouts with giving her back her health and independence after a near-death experience.

A New Lease on Life

Duda, 61, suffered from multiple medical problems, including Crohn's disease, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (which affects the body's connective tissues) and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (a condition that causes a rapid heart-beat when a person stands up). She relied on a scooter and other mobility aids to get around. But it was undiagnosed diverticulitis leading to septic shock that nearly killed her in 2021. Duda was put on a ventilator and flown by helicopter to a Baltimore trauma centre, where surgeons removed a third of her colon and left her with a 10-inch scar and a temporary colostomy bag.

Months later, after her colon was reconnected, Duda began physical therapy. Down to 53 kilos, with scrawny legs and flabby arms from lack of muscle tone, she was barely strong enough

to lift her phone. Her primary care provider, physician assistant Renee LaPointe, recommended that she add water therapy to her programme.

"I walked, waded, marched and performed squats," Duda remembers of her first day in the pool. "I was amazed; I felt gloriously pain-free."

Duda went from swimming every other day to swimming every single day for more than a year. Today she says she has more energy and less pain than she's had in decades. In fact, she now swims six to eight kilometers a week, and walks for six or more kilometers every day without mobility aids.

The Many Benefits of Water Fitness

Exercising in water can help anyone become more fit, and the many advantages of water workouts—besides the fitness factor—may surprise you. Consider these perks:

★ Water's buoyancy minimizes the effects of gravity, meaning it's gentle on joints. This makes exercising in water an excellent choice for people with arthritis—and for people who want to prevent it.

★ Swimming engages most of the body's major muscle groups, including those in the legs, upper body and core. It's a combination of stretching, strength training and an aerobic workout. Swimming even helps strengthen bones.

★ While you don't feel as hot and sweaty in the water as you do when



you work out on land, swimming and other aerobic workouts in water still raise your metabolic rate, burn calories and help with weight loss.

★ Swimming and other water aerobics get your heart pumping without putting as much strain on the body as other aerobic activities. Regular swimming can help lower blood pressure and relax stiff arteries, reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

★ Swimming helps improve balance and coordination. One Australian study compared swimming with several other kinds of exercise, including calisthenics and workouts on treadmills, and found that only swimming helped people prevent falls.

★ Submerging yourself in water just feels good, sometimes bringing up happy summer memories from childhood. Like all aerobic exercises, swimming, pool walking and other kinds of water aerobics release the feel-good hormones called endorphins in your brain. The extra boost of these chemicals helps combat anxiety, depression and stress.

JACKIE DUDA EXPERIENCED many of these benefits, and for that reason she plans to keep up her water workouts for as long as she can. “After I get out of the pool, I feel like I’m 31, not 61,” she says. “Being in the water is what has made me feel like myself again.” **R**



My friend Tom runs a whale-watch cruise. Recently, his avid whale-watcher and friend, Buddy, died. So Tom cancelled his nightly cruise and organized a private memorial service. More than 80 of Buddy's friends and family members came to say a last goodbye. Among the passengers was a serious-looking young woman who sat quietly by herself and whom no one seemed to know.

The service went well, with lots of laughter, a few tears and great stories about Buddy. Then the boat

returned to the dock, and, as the young woman departed, Captain Tom thanked her for attending.

"Honestly," she said, "this was the worst whale-watch cruise I have ever been on."

—PHIL NICOSIA,
IN *The New York Times*

We should be able to call in healthy.
"Look, I'm not coming into the office today.
I feel really good and I don't want to
waste it on being at work."

—X@CAUSTICBOB



Moses's first and last day as a lifeguard.

Workers are at their most creative when coming up with excuses for missing work. Here are some I heard as the night shift supervisor at a textile plant:

- ★ "I brushed my teeth and had to go to the hospital for stitches."
- ★ "I have athlete's foot."
- ★ "I had to get hay for my donkey."
- ★ "I fell asleep on my way downstairs."
- ★ "I got stuck in a parade." (Again, we work the night shift.)

—PERRY ROSE

CARTOON BY *Dan Reynolds*

A frantic woman approached my co-worker outside of the health-care facility where we work. Her dog had escaped from her home while she was out, she said, and was last seen running near the busy freeway. My co-worker and I ran toward the freeway, spotted the dog, and spent the next hour running around until finally catching it. Hot and winded, we returned to work and handed the woman

her dog. Fifteen minutes later, she pulled back up. "This isn't my dog," she said. "My dog was safe at home." She then handed us the extra dog and drove off.

—KENNETH E. PURSELL

While training to be a doctor at CMC Vellore, Tamil Nadu, we learnt to test the facial nerve by asking patients to smile or bare their teeth.

During rounds, one of my colleagues

needed to perform this test and so asked the patient, "Can you show me your teeth?"

The patient, an elderly gentleman, promptly removed his dentures and handed them over.

—ANILA CHANDY,
Bengaluru

Reader's Digest *will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com*

WATCH OUT: HELICOPTER PARENT LANDING!

On *Huffington Post's* Facebook community page for parents, teachers spilled the beans on their oddest parental requests:

★ A parent emailed me to ask if their student could take an upcoming math test on a different day because they had a golf tee time scheduled during the test.

★ I once had a second-grade parent complain to the administration that they liked last year's teacher much better. I had taught this same student in first grade.

★ A mom complained to

my principal because she didn't like my fun Friday bubblegum font. I had to change it.

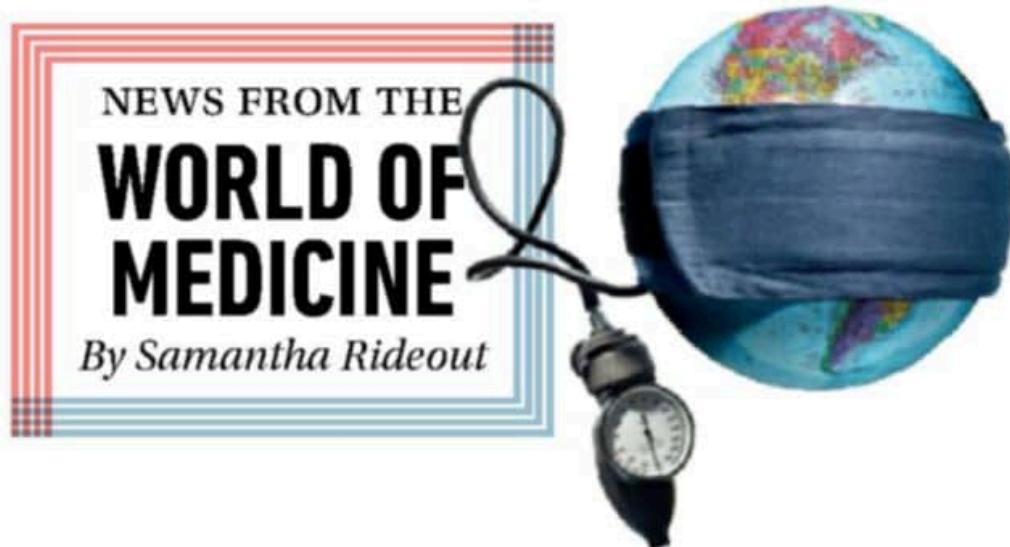
★ A parent wrote, "Since my child sees a speech pathologist for the half-hour after lunch, I'd appreciate it if you didn't teach anything new until he returns to the classroom."

★ A mom, concerned that her kindergartner son wasn't drinking

enough water, asked me to check the toilet after he used it so I could monitor the colour of his urine and report back to her.

★ I once had a parent accuse me of eating their kid's lunch and claimed they had an audio recording of me doing it.





BREATHING FOR BLOOD PRESSURE

Chances are that, unless you have respiratory problems, you don't think much about your breathing—it just happens. But your breathing can affect the health of your entire body, and a new study from Florida State University suggests that how you breathe can even lower your blood pressure. In the study, healthy adults with slightly elevated blood pressure were asked to breathe through the nose for five minutes and then through the mouth for five minutes, while at rest. Their blood pressure measurements were lower when they inhaled and exhaled through the nose only. The researchers hope that future studies will help determine just how to use these findings to help people manage or improve hypertension.

The Exercise That Takes Years off Your Brain

Most people work out to improve their bodies, but one popular workout may have a powerful effect on brain health too. Tai chi is a form of exercise popular among older adults who want to improve their balance, mobility and general fitness. Now it turns out that this ancient Chinese art may also help keep the brain young.

An Oregon study of more than 300 people in their mid-70s with mild memory loss found that practising tai chi for six months led to improved scores on memory tests, equivalent to gaining three to six years of brain health. The researchers believe that it's the combination of physical movement and the mental challenge of memorizing and executing sequences—much like learning a new dance routine—that's responsible for the effect.

The Sound of Diabetes

Diabetes is generally diagnosed through blood tests, urine tests and symptoms such as excessive thirst. Now scientists have found a change that might help diagnose type 2 diabetes even before someone shows up at the doctor's office for testing. Scientists recruited 267 participants, some with diabetes and some

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEVI BROWN. PROP STYLIST: PHILIP SHUBIN

without, and had them record a specific phrase on their smartphone six times a day for two weeks. The researchers then used artificial intelligence to analyze the recordings. The AI was able to detect subtle voice changes, not noticeable by human ears, that indicated type 2 diabetes with almost 90 per cent accuracy. While more research is needed, the scientists hope their work will lead to simpler, quicker and less expensive screening.

A Surprising New Use for Statins

Statins such as Lipitor (atorvastatin) are used to help millions of people lower their cholesterol. Now a new study shows that these drugs may also be useful for treating breast cancer. Researchers in Finland found that women who began statin therapy after a breast

cancer diagnosis had a significantly reduced risk of mortality. (Interestingly, those who were already taking statins did not see the same benefits.) Women with oestrogen receptor-positive tumours found the most benefits.

Foods to Start and End the Day Right

It's not just what you eat, but when you eat that matters. That's the conclusion of two separate studies, one looking at breakfast and the other at bedtime eating. In the first, published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, scientists studied the breakfast habits of more than

20,000 American adults. Those who ate breakfast regularly—especially if the breakfast didn't include inflammatory foods like red meat, processed meat and commercial baked goods—had lower rates of depression. In the second study, Penn State University scientists found that people who regularly ate berries—any kind, but especially blackberries—had fewer nights of short sleep (less than six hours). Add some blueberries to your morning oatmeal and have a bowl of blackberries after dinner, and sweet dreams. **R**



13 THINGS



For the Record: Facts About Vinyl

BY Alan Light

1 WE MAY live in an increasingly digital world, but sales of vinyl albums continue to boom. Last year was the 18th consecutive year that LP (long play) sales grew in the United States, and it was the biggest year for the format since Luminate,

a company that tracks music sales, began collecting data in 1991. Almost 50 million vinyl albums were sold in 2023, up 14.2 per cent from 2022—still a long way from the 1970s, when more than 300 million records would sell in a single year.

2 THIS RECENT surge is fuelled by none other than Ms Taylor Swift. Last year's top-selling vinyl album was her *1989 (Taylor's Version)*, the first record to sell a million copies in a calendar year since Luminate's launch. Swift had five of the top 10 bestselling albums of 2023. Total sales of her albums (almost 3.5 million copies) accounted for 7 per cent of all vinyl sold in the US in 2023.

3 IN 1948, Columbia Records unveiled the first LP: a recording of the New York Philharmonic performing Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E Minor*. While previous phonograph records were made of shellac and played at 78 revolutions per minute, the new PVC ('vinyl') disc played at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, hence better audio quality. It also increased the playing time from 5 minutes to 22 minutes per side.

4 LP SALES began to decline in the late '70s, with the success of cassette tapes and then compact discs (eight-track tapes didn't catch on the same way). By 1988, CDs were outselling LPs, but sales of all these formats dove dramatically in the 21st century, thanks to digital music distribution.

5 THE BESTSELLING albums in US history are all from the LP era. Here are the

top six according to RIAA, the trade organization for the music recording industry: *Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975* (Eagles); *Thriller* (Michael Jackson); *Hotel California* (Eagles); *Back in Black* (AC/DC); *Led Zeppelin IV* (Led Zeppelin); and *The Beatles*, aka the *White Album* (the Beatles).

6 MOST MUSIC lovers will tell you vinyl sounds better than digital music, but its audio quality compared to that of CDs is hotly debated. Though LPs can scratch and degrade, vinyl fans argue that records more closely reproduce what the artist originally played in the studio. Engineer Adam Gonsalves of Portland's Telegraph Mastering notes the "very warm" sound of vinyl, saying it comes closest to "the way that human beings hear music organically." CDs eliminate the surface crackles and pops, but for many, the imperfections of vinyl add to its charm.

7 LAST YEAR marked the 50th anniversary of hip-hop, a celebration that also marked the birth of DJ-ing. At a party in the Bronx organized by DJ Kool Herc on 11 August 1973, Herc unveiled a new technique he called the merry-go-round: He played the brief drum or rhythm section 'break' of one record, then switched to an isolated break from another record on a separate turntable. "The best part of records, I went to," Herc says. And from that, a new art form was born.

8 THE MOST expensive LP in history is the lone existing copy of Wu-Tang Clan's *Once Upon a Time in Shaolin*. The disgraced pharmaceutical exec Martin Shkreli bought it for \$2 million in 2015. But after he was convicted of securities fraud, the government seized his assets and, in 2021, resold the album to a cryptocurrency group for \$4 million.

9 WITH MORE than six million albums, Brazilian businessman Zero Freitas is believed to have the world's largest vinyl record collection. He is also a donor to the non-profit ARChive of Contemporary Music, which houses more than three million sound recordings—including 18,000 blues records contributed by Keith Richards. But the archives are in danger of becoming homeless: The organization recently learnt that its upstate New York space is designated for agricultural use, so it will be forced to move.

10 INDIA'S FIRST LP launched in the year 1954, under the label Bulbul, which was a trademark of the company Music Masters Limited, Bombay. In 2022, the LP was reissued by Tara Disc Record. A collector's item, the LP contains 14 rare tracks of Bollywood music, created by greats such as Lata

Mangeshkar, O. P. Nayyar and Shamshad Begum. The first Indian LP to become an international mainstream success was Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's 1955 sarod record, *Music of India—Morning and Evening Ragas*.

11 THE RECENT upswing in vinyl's popularity has led to a backlog at pressing plants, most of which were closed when it seemed CDs had taken over the market. In 2022, Jack White (formerly of the band White Stripes and the founder of Third Man Records) called on major record labels to build their own record-pressing plants. Last year, Metallica bought the plant in Virginia that they have used for their own projects since 2014.

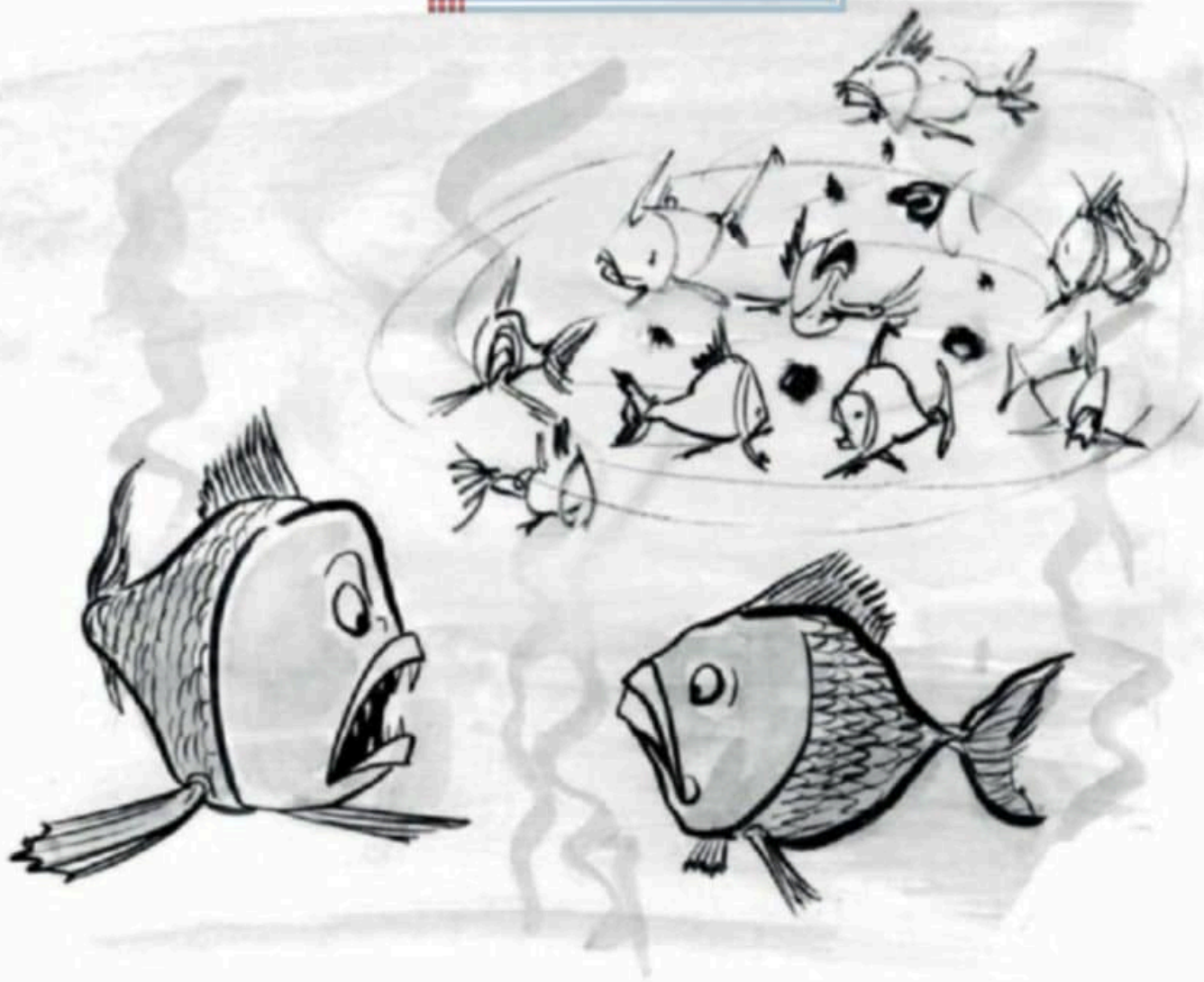
12 BUYING VINYL albums seems to be as much about fans showing allegiance to their favourite musical

artists—or using the records as an interior design element—as it is about actually listening to the albums. According to one study, half of all consumers who purchased a vinyl record in 2022 admitted that they don't even own a record player.

13 THE TREND of 'albums as art' has resulted in a surge in collectible releases, including records pressed on different colours of vinyl. A newer Taylor Swift release might have as many as 10 variants with different colours and track lists. There have even been a few recent examples of the lightweight 'flexi discs' that used to occasionally show up bound into magazines. But so far, there's no sign of a resurgence of cardboard discs, like those the Archies and the Jackson 5 put out on the back of cereal boxes decades ago. **R**

—WITH INPUTS BY NAOREM ANUJA

AS KIDS SEE IT



**"I don't care what the other piranha kids do,
I want you to chew 32 times before you swallow."**

While making a cake, I suddenly realized I was one egg short. My lovely next-door neighbour came to my rescue and gave me one of hers. After buying some more eggs, I asked my kindergarten to take our neighbour the egg I owed her. Shortly after, my daughter returned

empty-handed, looking very pleased with herself. "That didn't take long," I said. She replied, "No, Mummy, she wasn't home, so I put it through her letterbox."

—JO PARKER

13-year-old: I have to stay up late. I have homework.

Me: What were you doing earlier?

13-year-old: Resting so I could stay up late.

—X@XPLODINGUNICORN

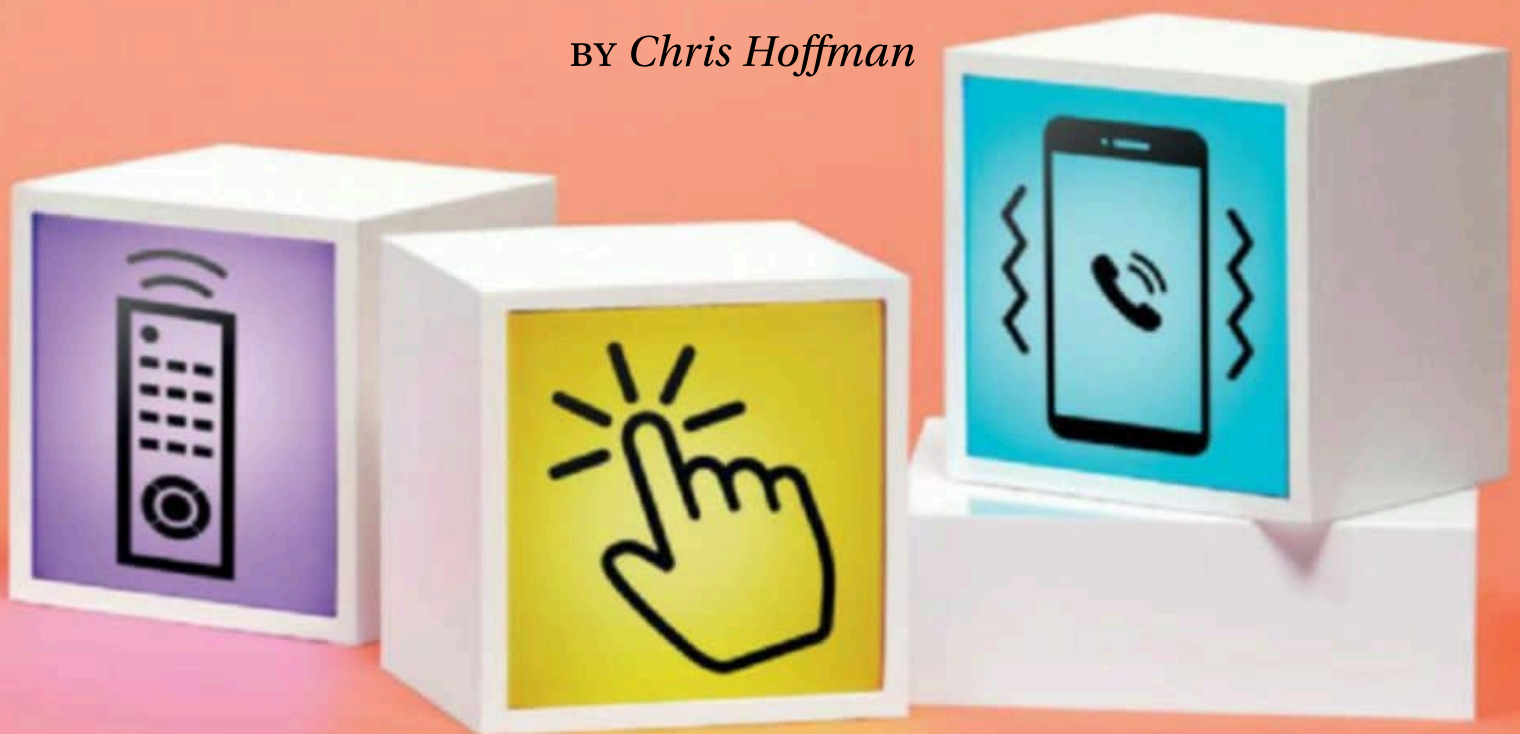
Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



DO MORE WITH YOUR TECH

You're undoubtedly missing out on cool features that can help make life easier, safer and even more fun

BY *Chris Hoffman*



While the tech industry is always hyping the next hot gadget, the reality is that you already own a lot of awesome gear. And you can certainly do much more with all the devices you already own. Here's how to use them to live a better life today—no purchase necessary!

Find Emojis on Your Computer

Smiley faces and party poppers aren't just for text messages on your phone. You can use emojis in many programmes on your Mac or PC, too, with an emoji keyboard just a quick keyboard shortcut away. On a Windows PC,



press the Windows key and the period key at the same time. On a Mac, press command, control and the space bar at the same time to reveal the emojis.

Get Your Smart Speaker Talking

If you have a smart speaker such as an Amazon Echo, Apple HomePod or Google Nest, you're probably asking Alexa, Siri or Google Assistant to set timers, play music, turn lights on and off and maybe even control smart home devices like the thermostat. But these speakers are a lot smarter than that. For one thing, you can use them as a convenient translation device. With an Alexa speaker, say "Alexa, translate Spanish" (or your language of choice) to get started. With a Google speaker, say "Hey Google, interpret French" (or your language of choice). Then just speak to hear your words translated. Apple's Home Pod, aka Siri, will



GETTY IMAGES: LYSENKO/ALEXANDER (MUSIC), MRSWILKINS (LAPTOP), MUZYKA DARIA (PHONE), SANTIMA.STUDIO (WIFI), VERONIKA MALYKHINA (CHATBOT), FOURLEAFLOVER (GEARS), RAMBO182 (E-READER), ELVINAGRAPH (TV, DOWNLOAD & REMOTE), SPRINGSKY (CLICK), HERBA MYKHAILO (PHONE), ON COVER, EDITOR LETTER AND THROUGHOUT

translate what you say from English, or whatever language it's set to.

If you have multiple speakers, you can use them to broadcast announcements. For example, say to your speaker, "Alexa, announce dinner is ready." The other connected speakers will relay your message to family members scattered around your home.

Use Your Phone in Your Car, Hands-Free

Depending on your car, you connect your phone via a USB cable or possibly wirelessly, then either press and hold a voice-control button on your steering wheel or say "Hey Google" (on Android) or "Hey Siri" (on iPhone), then speak

voice commands. Those commands can help you navigate to a location, choose a song to play, or listen and respond to incoming text messages—all while you keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel.

Watch Videos on a Big Screen

On most modern TVs, 'casting' content from a phone app to a bigger screen is "almost shockingly easy," says JR Raphael, who writes the *Android Intelligence* newsletter. "In the YouTube app, for instance, if you tap on any actively playing video, you'll see a rectangular icon with a Wi-Fi symbol in its corner. That's the Cast icon, and tapping it will let you play whatever video you're

watching on any compatible TV or display around you,” says Raphael. A menu of devices will pop up; just select the one you want. You’ll see the same Cast icon in other apps that play video. It works the same on iPhone and Android.

In some iPhone apps, you will also find an AirPlay icon that looks like a rectangle with an up arrow below it. Tap that and you can cast videos to a selected device using Apple’s AirPlay.

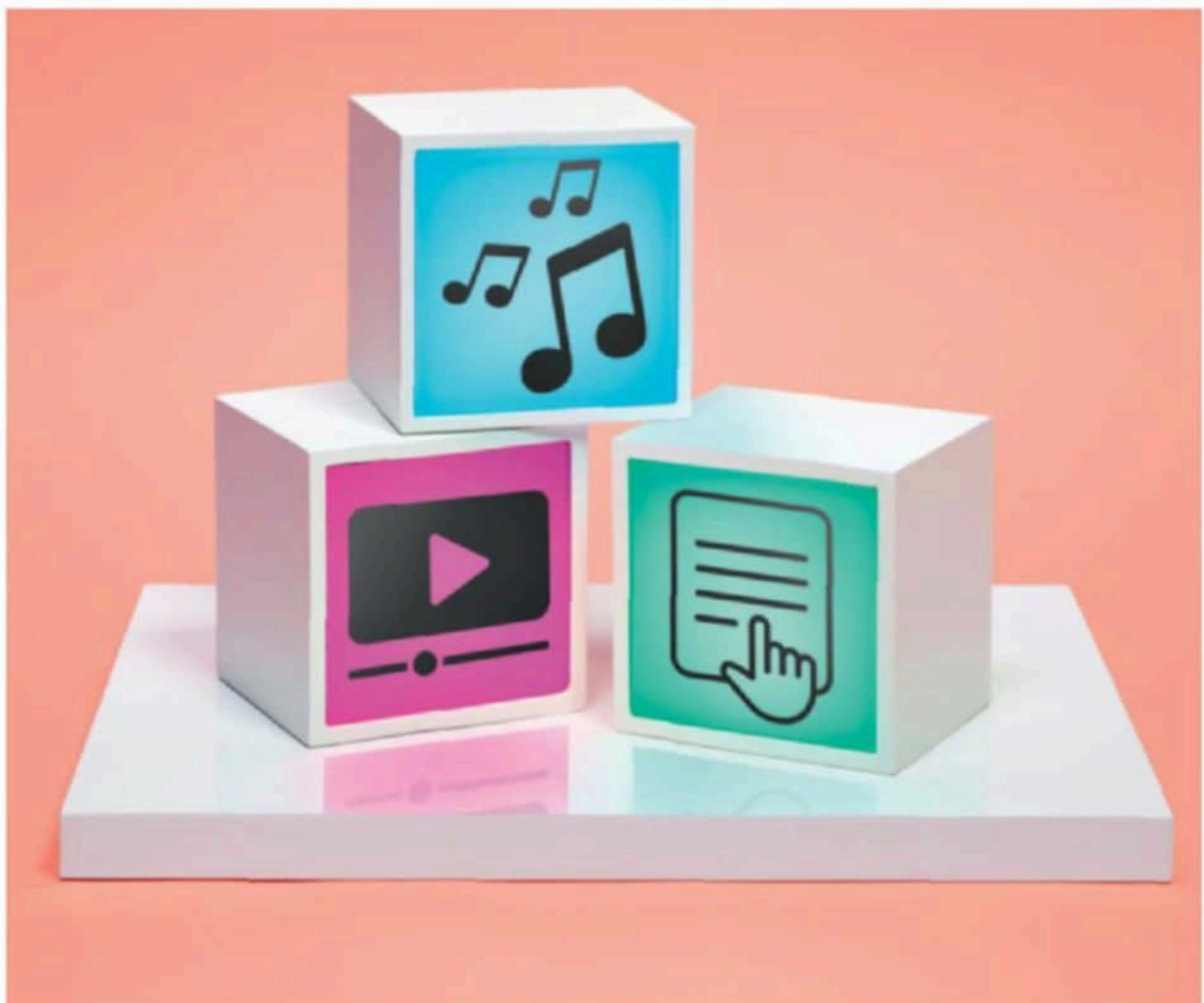
Play Music on Your TV

You can play music through your smart TV’s sound system as you do on a por-

table Bluetooth speaker. Start by going into your phone’s settings and choosing Bluetooth, then put your sound bar in pairing mode (by pressing a button on the speaker or remote—it varies) and choose it from the list of devices on the Bluetooth settings screen. You’ll be hearing your playlist in seconds.

Run Multiple Apps on Your Phone ...

On an Android phone, you can use the picture-in-picture feature to run Google Maps while using another app at the same time. Just open the Google



LUKMAN HAKIM/GETTY IMAGES (VIDEO)

Maps app and choose your destination, then switch to another app. The map will stay open as a thumbnail on your screen, navigating you on your way, while you use other apps.

You can't do that on an iPhone, but on both iPhone and Android, you can use picture-in-picture mode for video calls in apps like FaceTime and Zoom. While you're chatting, you'll see the other person's face while you simultaneously use other apps—for example, to look up what time a restaurant opens so you can decide what time to meet.

... and Your iPad

Newer iPads let you see two apps in action at once. To do this, first open one app, then swipe up from the bottom of the screen with one finger until the dock pops up showing all the apps. Touch and hold the icon for the next app you want to use, then drag it to one edge of your screen to use both apps side by side.

Watch Videos While Multitasking

Speaking of doing more than one thing at once: "Picture-in-picture is an incredibly useful multitasking option most folks tend to overlook," says Raphael. It lets you do things, like read a text message or pay a bill on your banking app, while a video plays on your iPhone or Android phone.

On an iPhone, just start playing a video in the Netflix app (or another video app) and then swipe up from

the bottom of the screen to switch to another app. The video will keep playing in a small player thumbnail.

On Android, once you've enabled picture-in-picture in Settings, you can open Netflix (or another video app), start watching a video and then switch to another app. The video will keep playing in picture-in-picture mode.

Tell Your TV What to Do

Many modern smart TVs and streaming devices have remotes with built-in microphones. Just hold down the mic button and speak to change the volume, say what you want to watch, launch streaming channels and more. On menus where you have to spell out your choices using an on-screen keypad, you may also be able to press and hold the mic button and speak to type with your voice instead of using the cursor to slowly choose each letter individually.

Get Free eBooks

Your library (all those books!) is just a few taps or clicks away. Download the Libby app on your phone or tablet, then sign in with your library to borrow e-books—free, just like the books you borrow from the building. The Libby app even lets you send borrowed e-books to your e-reader. Prefer to listen to your books? Good news: Libby provides free access to audiobooks too.

Save Money on Office Software

You don't have to pay for Microsoft

Office to get powerful office software. On a Mac, iPad or iPhone, you can use Apple's free iWork suite, with Pages (word processing, like Microsoft Word), Numbers (spreadsheets, like Excel) and Keynote (presentation software, like PowerPoint). These apps may come preloaded on your device, or you can download them free from the App Store.

On a Windows PC, you can use web-based versions of Microsoft Office (now called Microsoft 365) applications in a web browser. You get surprisingly full-featured versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Just head to *office.com* or *microsoft365.com* and sign in with a Microsoft account to get started.

Tap into Your Wi-Fi Network's Superpowers

Wireless routers are packed with great features. For example, you might see a Quality of Service or Traffic Prioritization feature that lets you prioritize specific devices. So even if your kid fires up the Xbox and starts downloading a huge game, your computer work won't be slowed down. Other useful features include parental controls and guest access to set up a temporary guest Wi-Fi hot spot.

Your router's manual will tell you all about these features and how to access them, possibly through an app or web browser. If you don't have a manual, you can probably find one on your



router manufacturer's website, or by doing a web search for the model of your router and 'manual.'

Watch Your Show in Every Room

Jared Newman, who writes the *Cord Cutter Weekly* newsletter, recommends using the same streaming platform on all your TVs. For example, if you have a Roku in one room, use Roku in your other rooms too. That way, you can quickly resume whatever you were last watching and get the same recommendations, all from your streaming device's dashboard.

Stream Your Shows in a Hotel

At some hotels, you can sign in to smart TVs for access to streaming services like Netflix, but it depends on the hotel and what services it supports. So why not travel with your own device and plug it into the hotel TV? Newman recommends Roku for this, as Roku devices have a Hotel and Dorm Connect mode for getting on hotel Wi-Fi connections.

"The Roku Streaming Stick 4K is ideal for travel as it doesn't require any external HDMI cables," he says.

Navigate Faster Using Your Laptop's Touchpad

Touchpads on modern Windows laptops and MacBooks respond to a lot of smartphone-style gestures. For example, you can place two fingers on the touchpad and move them apart to zoom in, or move them closer together to zoom out.



On Windows laptops, you can place three fingers on the touchpad and move them around to switch between applications. (Set this up in the Settings app, which you access from the Start menu. On Windows 10, it's in Settings under Devices > Touchpad. In Windows 11, it's under Bluetooth & devices > Touchpad.) On a Mac, swipe up on the touchpad with four fingers to open Mission Control and see all your open windows. (Set this up in System Settings, on the Trackpad screen.)

Try a Touchscreen

Many modern PC laptops come with touchscreens, so you can operate your computer by navigating around the screen with your fingers as you do on a phone or tablet. Apple users can simulate the experience by docking an iPad into a case with a built-in keyboard.

Go Back in (Browser) Time

Browser tabs you just closed aren't gone forever. In Chrome and Firefox, just right-click in the empty space at the right end of your browser's tab bar and select Reopen Closed Tab. On a PC, you can also press the control, shift and T keys at the same time to do this. On a Mac, press shift, command and T at the same time. To find a tab you recently visited, look under the History tab at the top of the screen and click the page you want to reopen.

Declutter Webpages

On web browsers, Reader Mode removes ads and clutter from webpages, making them easier to read, especially on phones' small screens.

In Safari for iPhone, tap the "AA" button on the bar at the top or bottom of the screen. (If you don't see it, swipe down to scroll up and it should appear.) and tap Show Reader. This option will be grayed out if it isn't available.

In Google Chrome on an Android phone, you can open the Google Play Store and install the Reading Mode app made by Google to get this feature.

In Safari on a Mac, click the Reader Mode icon, which looks like a piece of paper and appears to the left of the web address on the toolbar. (It will only appear while you're reading an online article, and it will be hidden if Reader Mode isn't available for the page.)

In Google Chrome on a computer, right-click a webpage and select Open in Reading Mode.

Banish Ads on the Web

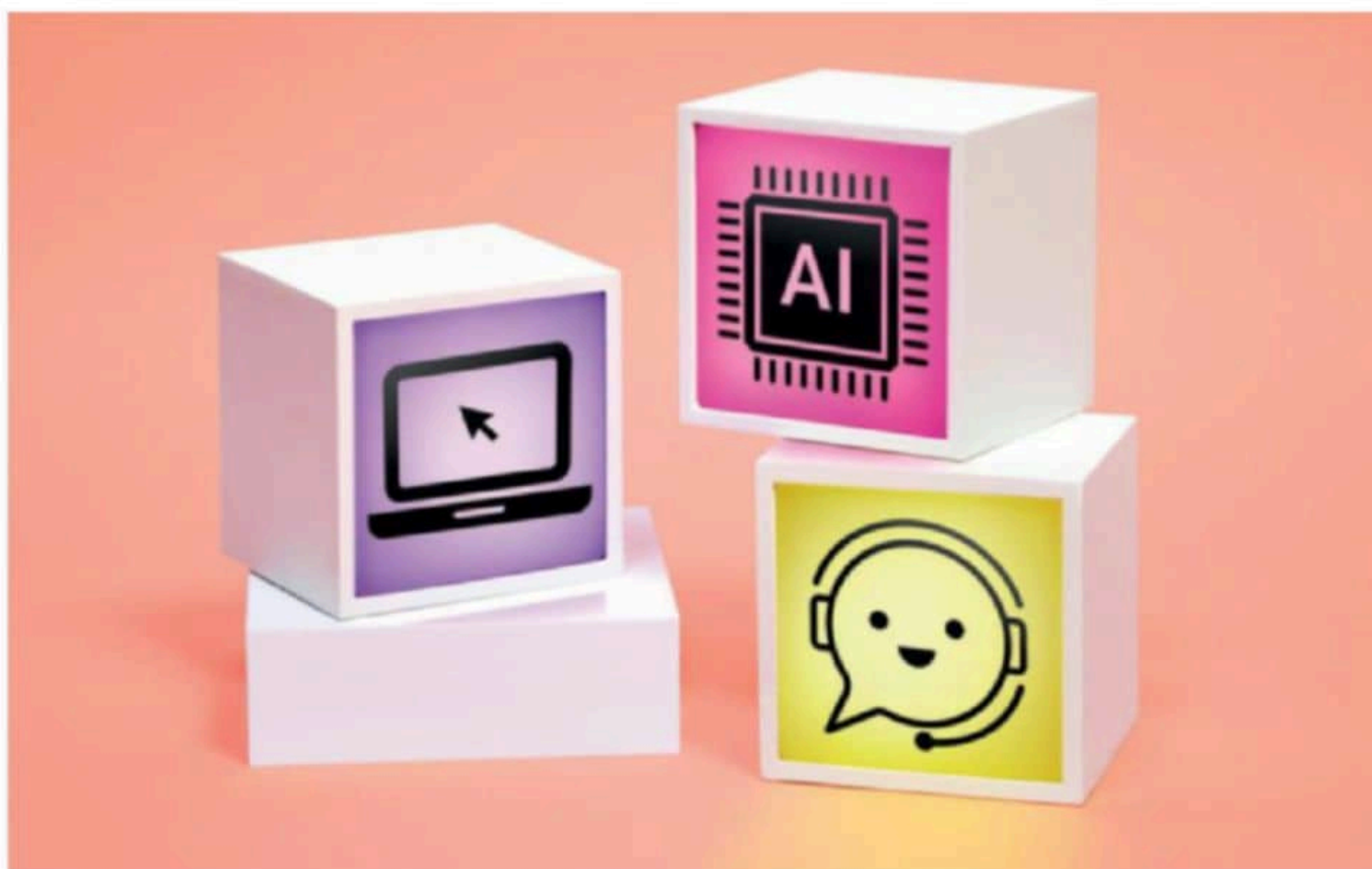
Instead of using Reader Mode, you can install an ad blocker to remove ads as you browse on your computer. I recommend uBlock Origin, available free at ublockorigin.com. Note that an ad blocker can cause problems with some websites, so if something doesn't work right, try disabling it for the site you're on. For example, click the uBlock Origin icon and then click the big power button in the pop-up to disable it. But ad blockers can cut down on distractions and speed up all webpages, so if that appeals to you, they're worth a try.

Enlist AI Assistance

Have you tried ChatGPT or other AI chatbots yet? Benj Edwards, AI reporter for the technology website *Ars Technica*, says AI can be a helpful assistant. He describes ChatGPT as "a good conversational mirror that can help you develop your ideas through discussion." So it can be useful for figuring out what you want to say in an email or letter, or outlining steps for a project, for example.

"It can help you fix logical mistakes and tone down heated language you might miss," says Edwards. Don't rely on any AI chatbot for facts, though, as they can inject false information into your project.

ChatGPT is free; you can sign up at chat.openai.com. Edwards recommends subscribing to ChatGPT Plus to access the more powerful GPT-4 model, which will better understand your



prompts and give you more accurate responses. But you don't have to pay \$20 (₹1,663) per month for access to this software. That more powerful GPT-4 AI chat experience is also free through Microsoft's Copilot AI tool, which is available on Mac and Windows

PCs, via Copilot apps for iPhone and Android, and at copilot.microsoft.com.

"But don't let it speak for you in an unnatural way—using words that you wouldn't use, for example—or people will know that AI wrote it," Edwards cautions. **R**

My Favorite Barista

One morning, I told my husband jokingly that he'd dropped the ball because he hadn't made me coffee and I was having trouble getting motivated to start the day. My five-year-old son overheard me and asked me to explain what 'dropped the ball' meant. A few minutes later, he came into our bedroom holding an overflowing coffee mug with a dishcloth underneath it to catch the drips. He said to my husband, "You dropped the ball, but I picked the ball up," and he handed me the worst-tasting, most watered down but sweetest cup of coffee ever

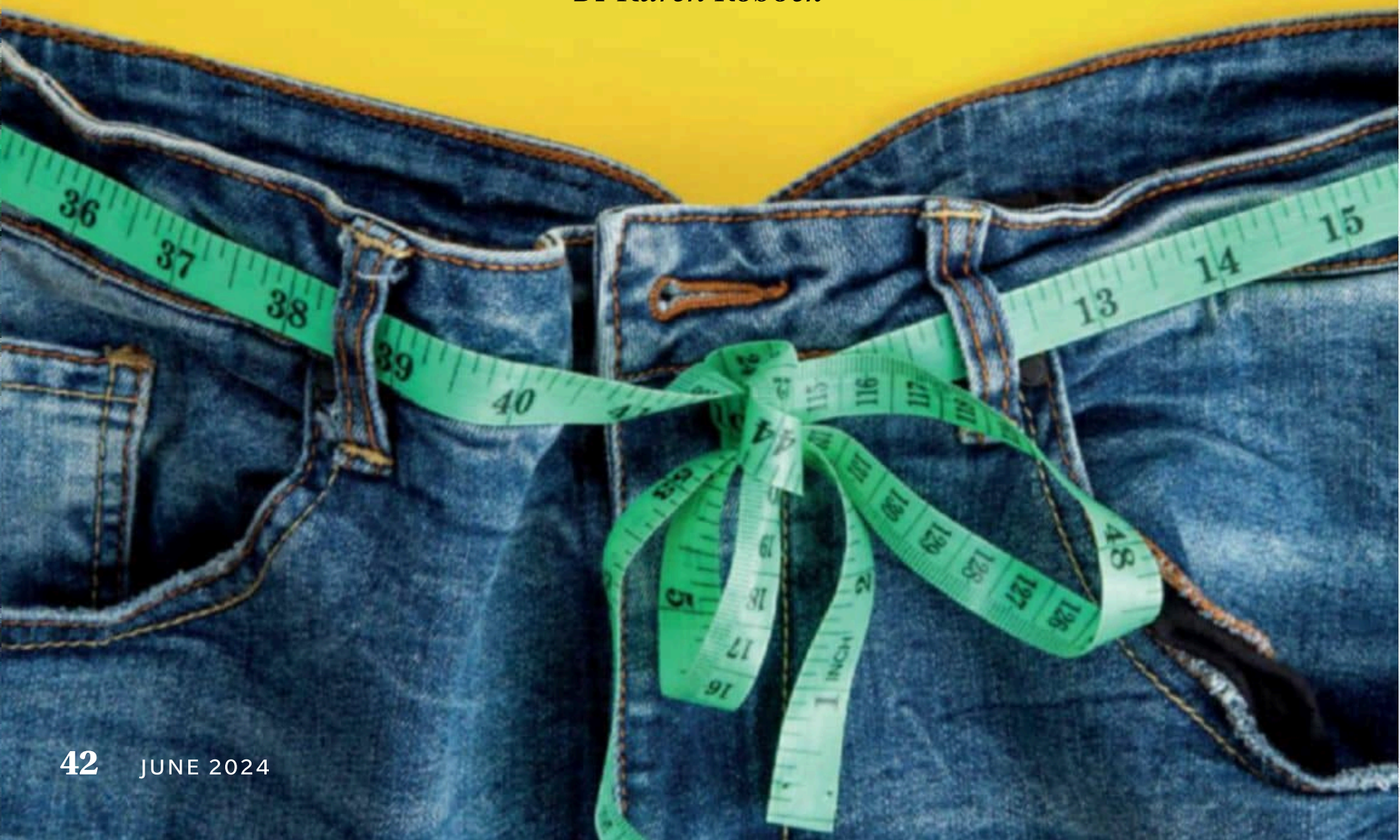
—CONTRIBUTED BY JENNIFER STOCKBERGER

HEALTH

IS EVERYONE ON OZEMPIC?

*Everything you need to know about the new diabetes
drugs shaping the weight-loss revolution*

—
BY Karen Robock



Weight is something that I've thought about every single day of my adult life," says Jennifer Blackburn*, a 49-year-old public relations professional in Toronto. Following decades of trying different diets and medications—and finding little success—in fall 2022 she started taking Ozempic, the diabetes drug that has become synonymous with celebrity weight loss.

"It has been life-changing," she says.

US health-care providers wrote more than nine million prescriptions for Ozempic and similar drugs during the last few months of 2022, around the time Blackburn received her script. Some 890 million adults have obesity worldwide, and weight-loss drug sales are forecast to grow to as much as \$100 billion by the end of the decade.

No wonder obesity medications are a hot topic. But there's still mass confusion around who should take them, whether the potential side effects are worth it, and whether people who truly need them can access—and afford—the limited supply.

How do the new obesity drugs work?

Ozempic was approved by the FDA in 2017 for the treatment of type 2 diabetes. Once the manufacturer, Novo Nordisk, tapped into the drug's added benefit of triggering substantial weight loss, it soon had another drug in the works: Wegovy, with a higher dose of the same active ingredient, sema-

glutide, was approved in 2021 for the treatment of obesity. The company also makes an oral form of semaglutide called Rybelsus for type 2 diabetes.

In addition to semaglutide, there is also tirzepatide, which is prescribed as Mounjaro for diabetes and Zepbound for obesity. (Again, the active ingredient is the same, but the drugs are prescribed under different names with slightly different doses.) Another diabetes drug, liraglutide, is marketed as Saxenda for weight loss. And dulaglutide is sold as Trulicity for diabetes management.

Due to staggered release dates of these medications and fluctuations in their availability, some people without type 2 diabetes (such as Blackburn) have been prescribed the diabetes drugs for the treatment of obesity. The practice of prescribing drugs 'off-label', which means for a use other than the one the medication is approved for, is not uncommon.

Semaglutide and tirzepatide work for people with type 2 diabetes by helping the pancreas produce more insulin when blood sugar is high and by preventing the liver from releasing too much sugar. And they provide a third action, the one that's getting all the attention: As GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide 1) receptor agonists, they mimic the gut hormone that communicates fullness to the brain. This false fullness cue helps patients eat less, which leads to weight loss—as much as 15 to 20 per cent of a patient's body weight. (Tirzepatide has the added benefit of also

triggering a hormone from the small intestine, which speaks to the fullness centre of the brain as well.) Other than Rybelsus, which is a daily oral tablet, they are all given as a self-administered injection just under the skin of the thigh, the abdomen, or the back of the upper arm. Saxenda is a daily jab, while the others are taken weekly.

For most people, the doses will need to continue indefinitely. Once someone stops taking the drug, their hunger cues are likely to return to their baseline and the weight comes back.

"The first time I see a patient, I tell them this is meant to be a long-term treatment plan," says Nidhi Kansal, an obesity medicine specialist at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago.

Whom can these drugs help?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 4 in 10 Americans have obesity. Defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher, obesity puts a person at increased risk of a range of health problems, from heart disease to sleep apnea. (It should be noted that BMI is a screening tool and does not on its own determine a person's fitness or health.) In obesity, metabolic hormones can be dysregulated, which means that for some people who are trying to do the right things in terms of diet and exercise, their bodies just won't respond the same way.

"That's where medication has been a game-changer," says Dr Kansal.

But since Oprah Winfrey and a slew of other influencers have raved about their slimming successes on these drugs, it seems everybody wants to try them. The overwhelming demand has led to shortages. Throughout 2023, people with type 2 diabetes struggled to access Ozempic. Periodic shortages are expected to continue this year. Novo Nordisk recently announced an earmarked \$6.5 billion to boost production facilities to bolster its global supply chain.

Those who can access these drugs face a significant financial cost. "These medications are mind-blowingly expensive," says endocrinologist Amy Warriner, director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham weight-loss clinic. A monthly supply of Wegovy or Zepbound will set you back more than \$1,000 (₹83,290). Some private insurers won't cover the cost; some place strict restrictions on who is eligible.

Seniors face an added challenge: "Medicare blocks all of these medications," says Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity medicine physician scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital. She hopes that the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act, a push to lift Medicare's ban on weight-loss drugs—a movement that has been underway for over a decade—will finally be passed, expanding and updating coverage. In the meantime, dozens more obesity drugs in development are certain to increase competition and eventually drive down prices.

Still, there is big money to be made. In spring 2023, WeightWatchers acquired

Sequence, an online weight-loss coaching company that provides support for diet and lifestyle modifications—as well as for use of prescriptions. Earlier this year, Eli Lilly and Co., makers of Mounjaro and Zepbound, launched a telehealth service called LillyDirect, where patients can, in consultation with an online health-care provider, order the drugs directly to their door.

Some practitioners worry that people are basically working around seeing in-person physicians who would be unlikely to prescribe to them, or turning to unregulated private telehealth services and weight-loss clinics to get unapproved generic versions of the drugs without a prescription.

“This is very concerning, as we are not sure what patients are actually taking,” says Dr Warriner.

How well do they work?

For perspective, it helps to compare these drugs to the alternatives. “Only

5 to 10 per cent of patients seeking treatment for obesity are going to get significant weight loss with diet and lifestyle modifications alone,” says Dr Stanford. Bariatric surgery (where a large portion of the stomach is removed) has a high success rate (between 50 and 85 per cent depending on the type), but not everyone is a candidate, and many patients don’t want to go under the knife.

The third option is a class of oral weight-loss drugs. The ‘old generation’ of obesity medications, such as phentermine with topiramate (Qsymia) and bupropion plus naltrexone (Contrave), help most patients lose an average of 5 per cent of their body weight. These medications are much more affordable than the newer ones, but the results aren’t nearly as impressive.

By comparison, studies show that those taking Wegovy shed an average of 15 per cent of their weight. The results for Zepbound are even better, with patients losing 20 per cent or more of their body weight when the drugs are taken in conjunction with exercise and dietary changes.

“These are results we’ve never seen before,” says Daniel Drucker, an endocrinologist at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute in Toronto, who helped identify the hormone that gave rise to these medications.

But that’s if, and only if, the medications work for you. “This is not talked about enough, but I do have patients—about a quarter of them—who are minimal to non-responders,” says



IAN HOOTON/GETTY IMAGES

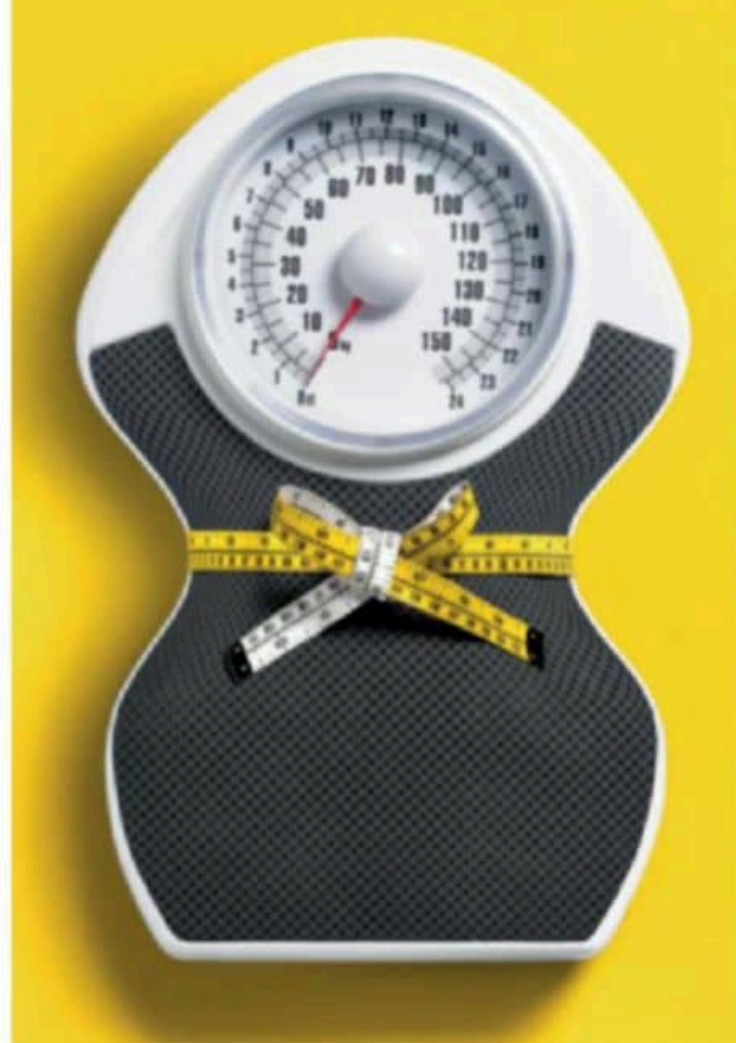
Dr Stanford. “That’s why I don’t use phrases like *miracle drug*, because it’s only a miracle if it works for you.”

What else can they do?

The benefits extend beyond the number on your scale, says Daniela Hurtado Andrade, an endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. The largest semaglutide study to date, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that the drug reduces the risk of heart attacks, strokes and cardiovascular death by 20 per cent. The patients in the study were all 45 years and older, overweight or obese, and had cardiovascular disease. Also, only 3.5 per cent of the patients taking semaglutide progressed to having diabetes, compared to 12 per cent in the placebo group. And a major new study published in the American Heart Association journal *Hypertension* found that people with obesity taking Zepbound experienced a significant drop in blood pressure.

“These medications are life-changing for so many people, allowing significant weight loss, but more importantly, leading to impressive health benefits including medical reversal of diabetes, improved mobility, reduced liver disease due to fatty infiltration and so many more,” says Dr Warriner.

Because we already know that GLP-1 drugs reduce inflammation in the heart, kidneys and liver, researchers are hopeful that this effect could be applied to treat inflammatory diseases of the brain and eventually Parkinson’s



and Alzheimer’s diseases. Additional research is looking at the potential of these drugs to treat non-metabolic conditions related to the reward centre of the brain, such as drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

But are weight-loss drugs really the answer?

Despite all the benefits, there are some definite downsides. Mental health issues are not listed among Ozempic’s possible side effects, but in July 2023 the European Medicines Agency (Europe’s equivalent of the FDA) said it was looking into a risk of thoughts of self-harm and suicidal thoughts with the use of Ozempic and similar drugs. Wegovy comes with warnings for depression or thoughts of suicide.

More common side effects include a range of gastrointestinal issues, including nausea, constipation and diarrhoea.

As many as 15 per cent of patients experience side effects, says Dr Kansal. Ozempic's list of possible serious side effects includes inflammation of the pancreas, kidney failure, gallbladder problems and thyroid cancer. In August 2023, Eli Lilly and Co. and Novo Nordisk were sued over claims that their drugs caused gastroparesis, a disorder that makes food move too slowly through the stomach on its way to the small intestine, which can cause severe pain, vomiting and dehydration. As of February 2024, over 55 personal injury lawsuits against Ozempic had been combined into a federal litigation that could grow to as many as 10,000 plaintiffs. The companies deny the claims. (At press time, all cases are ongoing.)

And a report published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has established a link between the use of GLP-1 agonists for weight loss and a risk of serious gastrointestinal conditions. Researchers looked at health insurance claims from more than 5,000 patients in the US and compared four gastrointestinal problems, including gastroparesis, in patients prescribed these drugs. Among people taking semaglutide, gastroparesis was seen at a rate of about 10 cases per 1,000.

"A rate of 1 per cent initially may seem small, but when you put it into the context of millions of people taking these medications, that could potentially affect tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people," says the report's lead author, Mohit Sodhi of the Univer-

sity of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine in Vancouver. With all this in mind, the experts we spoke with say we have sufficient data on the drugs to allow people—those who need them for medical use and have been prescribed under the care of a doctor—to feel confident taking them. But we don't know how the use of the drugs might play out over decades, or what some of the side effects of rapid weight loss will mean in the long run. (There are already some concerns about decreases in muscle mass and bone density.)

Despite all their potential, what the new obesity drugs can't seem to cure is the stigma of obesity. "It's a myth that obesity is a choice," says Dr Stanford. "The reality is that obesity is a disease." And still, the world judges people with obesity harshly—and people often condemn themselves too. "They think they are failures, and they think they are cheating if they are using a drug to manage their disease," says Dr Kansal. "We don't think about any other medical diagnosis in this way."

Jennifer Blackburn has discovered a new life on Ozempic. She has lost 35 pounds (and kept it off) and gained a new appreciation for her body. She no longer drinks, she is excelling at work, and she has started travelling, booking several walking trips in recent months.

"I feel happier, more confident, and I guess the word would be *empowered*," says Blackburn. "It's about so much more than size—it's like the weight has been lifted off my shoulders." **R**



A scammer called my friend's aunt insisting he had all her passwords. If he thought he'd found an easy mark, he was sorely mistaken because she responded excitedly, "Hold on, honey, I need a pen and paper. Now, what are they?"

—HAZEL BOWMAN

Me: Bathroom is cleaned.

Wife: Thank you.

Me: Why do we keep the toilet brush in the shower?

Wife: What?

Me: Why is the toilet brush in the shower?

Wife: What are you talking about?

Me: The puffy thing with the handle.

Wife: MY LOOFAH?!

Me: You named the toilet brush?

—X@RODLACROIX



"As a Father's Day gift, I'm going to let Dad explain a Bruce Springsteen song to me."

My favourite anecdote from *Life in These United States* was one where a woman admitted having embarrassed herself when, after watching *Game of Thrones*, she asked her husband, "When did dragons go extinct?"

I shared that with my roommate, and the two of us laughed and laughed. After we both caught our breath, my roommate said, "So when *did* they go extinct?"

—L.M.

The lies parents tell:

♦ While we were driving, I asked my dad what the purpose of

rumble strips were.

He told me they were for blind drivers.

♦ Toys R Us is closed when the R is backward.

♦ Mannequins in clothing stores are kids who didn't behave and were taken to the 'dungeon' in the store, where they were turned into mannequins.

♦ My dad told me my goldfish ran away.

—REDDIT.COM

When I was a kid, our neighbours had a large bell on their porch, and every night the father would ring it loud enough so that wherever his sons were,

I think part of the reason people cry during wedding speeches is because they've never heard their siblings say something kind about them.

—X@SYDNEYBATTLE

they would hear it and come home for dinner. I thought it was a great idea and suggested to my dad that we get one.

My very practical father replied, "We don't need a bell. We'll just eat when they do."

—KEITH CRAWFORD

There must be a story behind the names of these all-American towns:

- ♦ Big Bottom, Washington
- ♦ Hopeulikit, Georgia
- ♦ Beer Bottle Crossing, Idaho
- ♦ Number Eight, Missouri

- ♦ Cheesequake, New Jersey
- ♦ Dull, Ohio
- ♦ Whynot, North Carolina
- ♦ Accident, Maryland
- ♦ Handsome Eddy, New York
- ♦ Worms, Nebraska

—ZIPPIA.COM

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

THE LITTLE #\$\$% DARLINGS

In the United States, 18.8 per cent of women ages 40 to 44 do not have children. Stories such as these may explain why:

In his handmade birthday card for his grandmother, our grandson, 10, wrote: "I know birthdays get worse as you get older. But on the bright side, not many left now!"

—LARRY HENTGES

I was lying on a float in the pool when my 3-year-old grandson climbed on top

of me and had a close-up view of the hairs in my nostrils. "Grandma," he shouted, "you have

spiderwebs in your nose!"

—NANCY TOMLIN

Here's the joke I told my grandson: "What do you call a dinosaur that knows a lot of words?" The correct answer is "thesaurus." His answer: "You."

—SHARILYNN LA MAY



An aerial photograph showing a massive landslide of reddish-brown earth and rocks that has completely buried a section of a road or construction site. In the foreground, several large yellow and red excavators, along with other heavy machinery and vehicles, are positioned at the edge of the debris field. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees on a hillside.

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

Buried beneath a Mountain

*The amazing 17-day-long, multi-agency effort
to rescue 41 workers trapped inside the
Silkyara–Barkot tunnel*

By Bhavya Dore



PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Gabar Singh Negi normally spent Diwali with his wife and children at home in the mountainous north. Last November, on Diwali day, the 52-year-old Uttarakhand local looked forward to finishing work early and heading home to celebrate—light lamps through the house, perform a puja and feast with his family.

First, however, he would have to finish his 12-hour night shift as foreman at the worksite of the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi. Work had begun the previous night at 8 p.m., and would end by 8 a.m.. A few of the men had finished their shift early and headed off to enjoy the festivities. Then, at around 5:30 that morning, an earth-shattering explosion ripped through the air inside the tunnel.

When the chaos subsided, Negi grabbed his wireless handset and asked the operator: “What was that?!”

Some blast, he was told. “But how could it be a blast?” he remembers asking. “We are the ones doing the blasting, and we haven’t done any.”

Perhaps a short circuit, the man replied. But the newly laid lights inside the tunnel were still on.

An old hand, Negi had spent more than two decades on the job, and his instincts screamed that something was terribly wrong. He and a few others climbed into his Bolero and began

driving towards the mouth of the tunnel to investigate. But when the soft light of dawn that should have come into view never showed, Negi realized with dismay that he was right. The entrance to the tunnel was completely shut. There was no way out.

Signs of Life

It was 12 November 2023 and the 41 men working inside the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel in Uttarakhand found themselves suddenly sundered from the world. The 4.5-km-long, two-lane tunnel, meant to connect some of the state’s most sacred and popular pilgrimage sites and reduce travel time, had been under construction since 2018. Now a part of the tunnel’s roof had suddenly caved in and collapsed.

As the oldest, and the leader of the crew, Negi took charge. He sent out a message on the wireless that the other workers scattered through the site should stop what they were doing and assemble towards the front. After



Rescuers in the process of laying a 3-foot-wide pipe through the pile of debris.

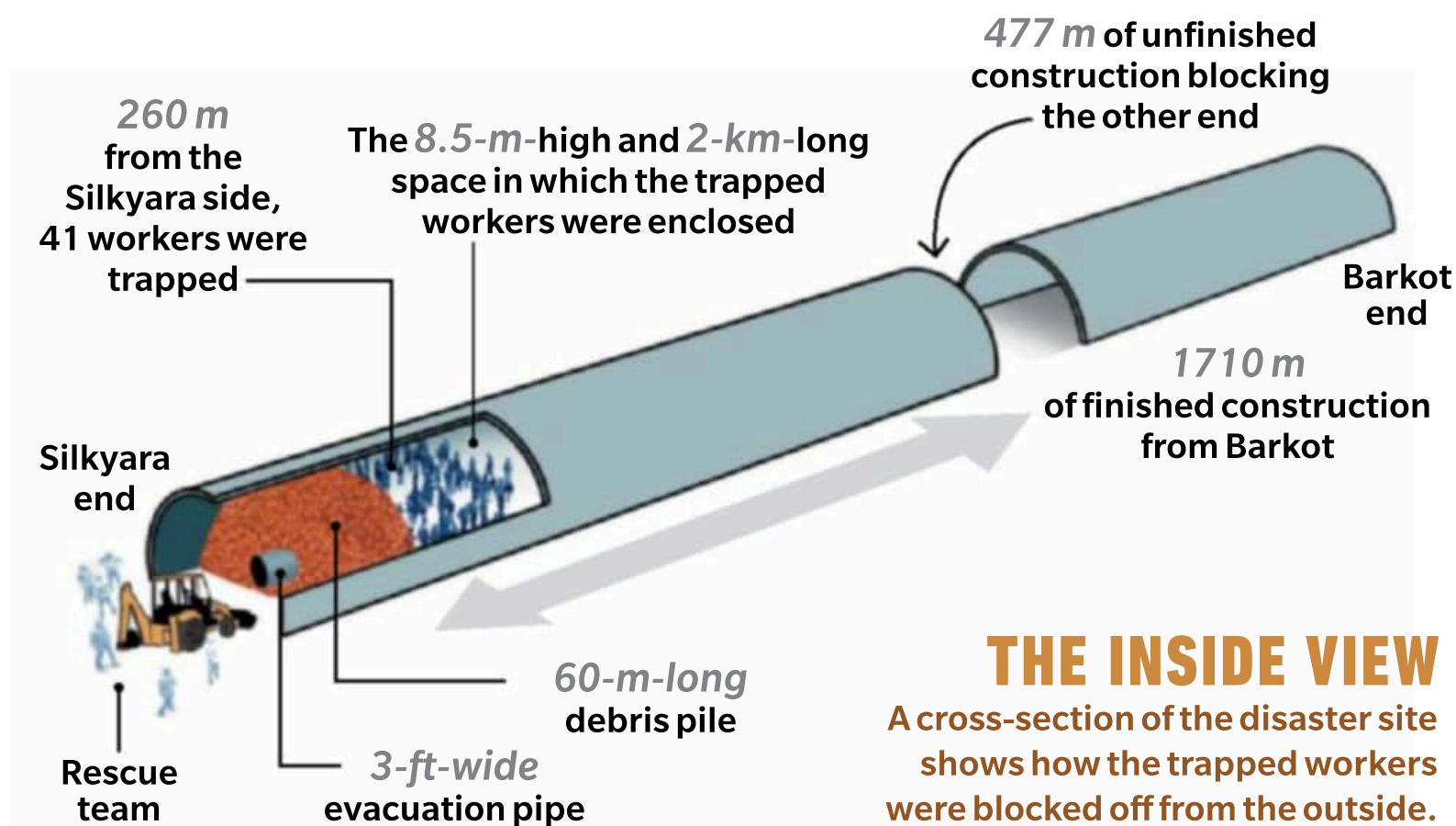
they regrouped, he collected as much natural water trickling down the tunnel's walls as possible for temporary succour, even though he feared it might be contaminated. He also foraged the peels of recently eaten peanuts, washed and distributed them amongst the group, comprising men from Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and elsewhere. It would likely be a while before they got help—it was a holiday after all, and most people were surely celebrating at home. “Happy Diwali,” he said wryly, to infuse a bit of cheer as they snacked on the leftovers.

Soon, though, the deafening silence seemed to engulf them. Did anyone know they were still in there? How could they send a message to their colleagues outside that they were alive, and needed help?

Negi had a mobile phone, but they were 260 meters inside the tunnel and there was no network. They suspected their crewmates would come by at some point, but had no idea how to get through to them.

The men tried shouting through the pipelines that ran all the way outside, and then funnelled water through them to signal their presence. But they had no idea which of the pipes had survived the collapse. Luckily though, a four-inch wide compressor pipeline had. That evening, they got a response from their teammates who had gathered outside.

“Don’t worry, we are trying to get you out!” Negi recalls hearing. An unsigned note of reassurance also arrived, telling them not to worry, that people were around.



A Race against Time

Meanwhile, the government machinery had whirled to life. Member of the National Disaster Management Authority, Lt Gen. Ata Hasnain (retd) was at home in Delhi when he received the news from the control room that people were stuck inside a tunnel in Uttarakhand. By this time, members of the national and state disaster response teams had already been mobilized by the government.

The situation was grim, but the workers' survival was not an immediate concern. The compressor pipe became a precious lifeline. Rescuers sent the men small packets of puffed rice, jaggery, water and other dry rations using compressed air to propel the items through to the other end.

But from the outset, there were a host of variables in play: Would the

rescue efforts trigger another collapse? Would they be able to reach the men inside in time before their condition grew worse? Hasnain was in charge of handling the coordination between teams and interfacing with the media in Delhi. "The question was how long will it take?" he says. "I always say disaster management is akin to war. In war-like situations, information is at a premium." Hasnain calmly addressed reporters, but always parried questions about a time-frame. The truth was that no one knew.

One thing was clear though: there would have to be several simultaneous plans and agencies in play. "It's what I call an 'all-of-government approach,'" he says. "The government of India did not leave it to one agency to handle."

The first plan of attack was to insert a 3-foot-wide pipe through the

60-metre-long blockade, made up of rocks, concrete, iron rods and other debris from the collapse, to get to the workers. Horizontal drilling from the Silkyara side had begun within two days of the incident. Soon, however, the rescuers needed a more advanced machine. This was then brought in from Delhi. Drilling reached roughly one-third of the way when the machine hit an obstacle. A day's delay ensued. The pressure was mounting.

Worried relatives thronged the site. Indrajeet Kumar Verma had rushed down from Rishikesh the day after he heard that his elder brother Viswajeet Kumar, 40, was among the trapped workers. That evening the brothers conducted their first conversation shouted across the pipeline. Viswajeet assured him that the men were uninjured and things on the whole were alright inside. This put Indrajeet at ease. His brother was well, though out of sight and separated by rubble. Over the days the brothers spoke periodically at least once a day. Verma was certain his brother would be rescued—whether it took two days or a week or a month. “The machines were at work,” he says. “I was there, watching the whole thing with my own eyes.”

Inside, Negi was in charge of keeping spirits high. He was determined to take it one day at a time, eking out morale and survival as long as possible. The men had grown accustomed to the dim, cavernous space—around 2-km long and 8.5-metre



Tunneling expert Arnold Dix

high—in which they were enclosed. They couldn't bathe or wash, but they talked, played games and did yoga. They even made a deck of playing cards from scraps of paper.

Outside, the rescuers' progress was promising, but painfully slow, given the challenges of sourcing specialized equipment, the delicate nature of the terrain and the complexity of the operation. The biggest issue, however, was the possibility of the remaining parts of the tunnel collapsing as well.

The site was thrumming with anxiety, frustration and frenetic activity, with visits from high-ranking officials, and a scrum of media. The team needed a fresh take on the problem and on 20 November, they got one from an internationally recognized tunnel expert from Australia.

Second Wind

The blades of the helicopter noisily sliced through the thin mountain air



Members of the team who were trapped pose for a photo with two of their rescuers, including Munna Qureshi (sixth from the left, in a white and grey shirt).

as Arnold Dix feasted on the gorgeous Himalayan landscapes unfolding before him. President of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association, Dix, 60, came with vast experience in the field including crisis management: from advising on a new airport in Qatar, to fire safety in the UK, and on metro upgrades in Australia.

Dix was in Germany when he first heard of the crisis from an Indian engineer he knew, and over the past week, he had been on consultation calls with experts and officials discussing the Silkyara situation and sharing ideas. But there were no clear answers at first.

“I can’t go to a book that says ‘Tunnel Rescue: Silkyara, Chapter 6—Do this.’ There’s no magic formula,” he

says. The bearded Australian, with a goofy sense of humour, was in Europe on work. As the days rolled on, it was becoming clearer just how tricky an operation it would be, given the delicate Himalayan ecology. “So they said, ‘Can you come to us?’ And I said, ‘Sure, I can come.’”

After a long and tiring journey from Ljubljana to Uttarkashi, Dix deplaned and headed first to a small local shrine before joining the rescuers at the tunnel. He knew things were grim—but inexplicably, something in the air spoke to him.

“Normally everyone just gets killed. But for some reason, and I can’t really explain why, I just had a good feeling about it. Not a good feeling like ‘it’s going to be an easy day,’ but more like,

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MUNNA QURESHI

if we can just stay focussed and work together as a team, we could do it.” He told the media that they would get the 41 men home before Christmas.

Dix slipped seamlessly into the team. As tunnelling proceeded from the Silkyara side, experts from different departments and ministries were plotting other lines of attack in case plan A of laying a pipe through the 60-metre-thick debris pile failed.

One was to drill down from the top of the mountain to reach the workers. But this approach ran the risk of hitting an aquifer, and accidentally drowning the men. Another was to drill from the opposite end of the tunnel—the side that opened

THE MOUNTAIN WAS MOODY. THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE IT WOULD NOT COLLAPSE AGAIN.

into Barkot. A fourth option was to deploy drift technology, to scrape the sides of the tunnel. Each of these options were in various stages of progress simultaneously.

Nine days after the collapse, rescuers were able to insert a small endoscopic camera through the pipeline. Shakily snaking its way through to the men trapped on the other side, images from inside the tunnel were slowly beamed to the watching world.

“Wipe the camera,” the voice guiding the men instructed. They then

picked it up. “Tell us your names one by one,” the voice said. The men passed the camera amongst themselves, still kitted in their helmets and fluorescent work jackets. For the first time in a long time, Negi felt seen. The fact that the world had not forgotten them felt real, and hope rekindled. A phone exchange was also operational on the site by now, with three medical professionals on call to advise, counsel and offer psychological support to the men.

But it wasn’t all good news. Dix and the rescuers could see “how fragile things were on the other side”. He knew they had to take it slow, because the mountain was moody. There was no guarantee it would not collapse again.

By 22 November, the auger machine—a 45-tonne corkscrew-like drilling device—had reached 45 metres; just about 15 to 18 metres to go. A breakthrough seemed imminent, and triumph just hours away. But then, the machine spectacularly broke down, its drilling parts lodged in the debris. How would the rescue proceed from here?

An Ace in the Hole

On 22 November, Munna Qureshi was at home when he got a call from a coworker about the disaster. The 33-year-old had spent years working in the dark and dank corners of Delhi laying cables and pipes below the ground. It was a dangerous existence, but the only one he knew.



NDRF personnel celebrate after the trapped workers were safely evacuated.

Qureshi's job entailed experience in a high-risk digging methodology primarily deployed in coal extraction, called rat-hole mining. The process requires a worker to manually dig shafts into the earth just wide enough for a single person to fit through to physically reach and extract resource deposits. Accidents such as cave-ins and suffocation are so common that the hazardous practice is banned in parts of the country. With the breakdown of the augur machine, it was men like Qureshi, with the necessary skill, experience and mettle for the job, who were now being called upon to assist.

It was a slow work week for Qureshi, who saw a video of the ongoing efforts and decided to head over—he was even prepared to pay his own way there. For him it was not just 41 men trapped in the tunnel—it was 41 families, brothers

and fellow citizens; hard workers like himself, in dangerous jobs.

The next night, Qureshi and a few of his colleagues bought the tools they needed and set out. They shook and shivered as their Innova wound its way through the hills. They arrived at dawn even as rescuers were still trying to tackle the broken machine.

Qureshi and the rest were ready to get to work after a short rest, that same evening. They surveyed the site and felt confident they could get the job done. But the authorities wanted to persist with the machines a bit longer. Frustrated, the men watched and tried to assist from the sidelines for three days as rescuers redoubled their efforts using special equipment. In the meantime, another team was working on the vertical drilling route.

Eventually, Qureshi and his comrades were called up. That day, Dix

swapped hats with one of them, taking their yellow hat as a sign of camaraderie and giving him his own white one. He then went to the local priest and had the hat blessed.

At 3 p.m. on 27 November Qureshi and his men got to work using spades and shovels to clear the debris and scoop it into trolleys as the path in front opened up. They worked non-stop for two hours at a time—the cramped space, scant light and low oxygen supply making longer shifts difficult. Little by little, they hand-cleared the earth, steel, concrete, and stuck bits of the broken machine. As they inched further in, the men on the other side sensed that the end of their ordeal might finally be near.

Twenty-six hours later, on the night of 28 November, the hand miners broke through. The trapped men clapped and cheered as they pulled Qureshi in. They lifted him off his feet and fed him from their rations of almonds and chocolates.

Having played their part, the tunnellers made way for the disaster response teams to take over. Stretchers fitted with wheels had been kept ready to wheel out the trapped labourers. But the men refused them, crawling and sliding through on their haunches instead. One by one, they popped their feet out of the evacuation pipe, and



Gabar Singh Negi shares a warm embrace with Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

felt the fresh air wash over their tired faces. Negi was the last one out. As the leader, he wanted to ensure no one was left behind.

Each of the rescued men was hustled into an embrace with the state's chief minister, garlanded and then sent off for medical tests. Ambulances at the site were pressed into action. Overall, it took around 300 people across government agencies to effect the gruelling 17-day operation.

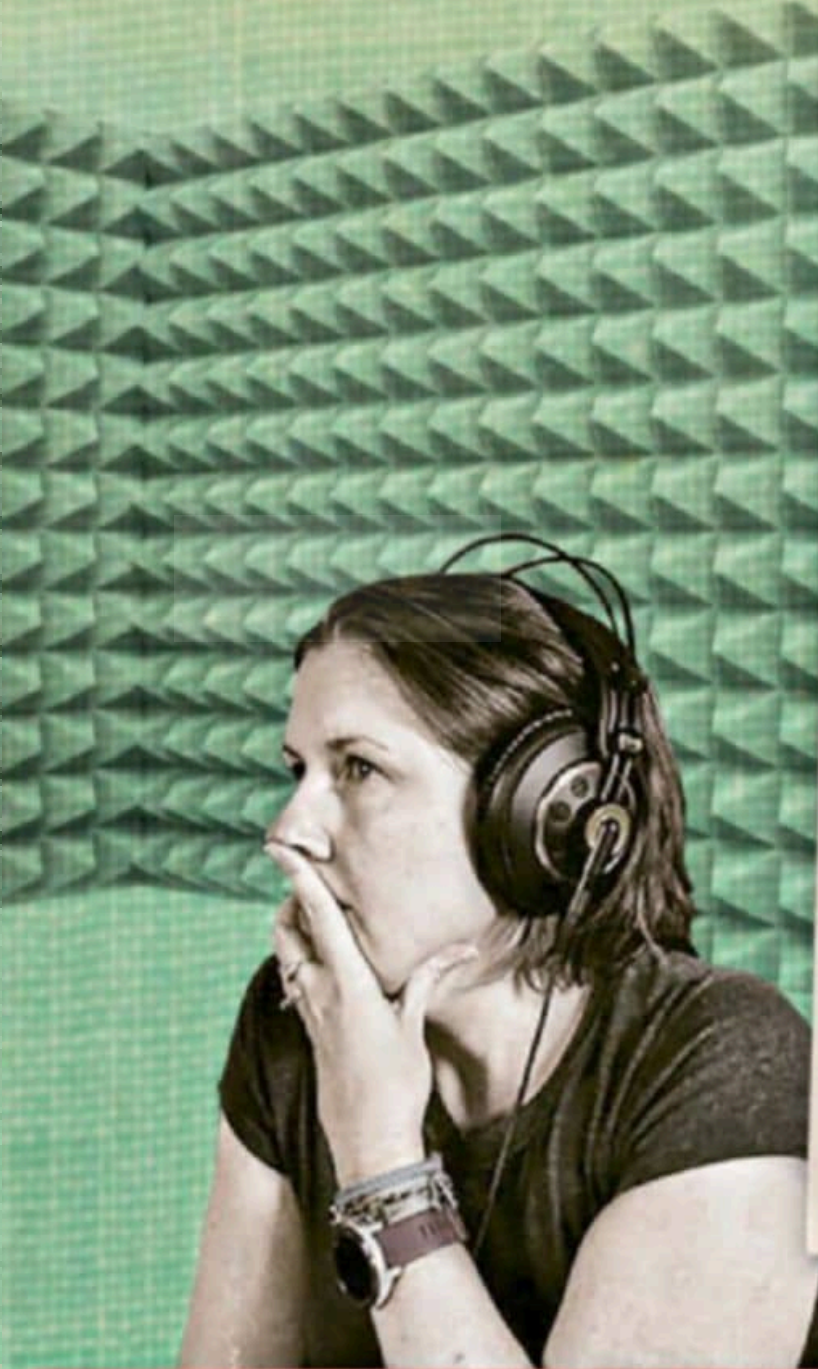
As the men were whisked away to hospitals, Dix went back into the tunnel to check on the rescue teams. He counted, made sure everyone was okay and then emerged. A sense of contentment washed over him.

Amidst the applause and cheers for the freed men, firecrackers lit up the sky. To Negi, it felt just like Diwali. But it wasn't just him celebrating. It felt like the whole country was too. **R**



Things I would like to do
in my lifetime!

- ① I would like to live a long healthy life at least to the year 2020.
- ② I would like to provide a comfortable ~~and~~ standard of living for my family.
- ③ Write and have a few novels published.
- ④ Have 5 songs recorded.
- ⑤ Make more money than I need.
- ⑥ Talk with the President.
- ⑦ Make 3 good family or friends movies.



Doing Dad's Bucket List

Laura Carney's father died suddenly, with unfinished business. So she started checking off the items for him

BY SYDNEY PAGE FROM *THE WASHINGTON POST*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Dana Smith*

The tattered paper was stashed away in a brown suede pouch, along with her father's driver's licence, a ring and various trinkets.

It was her late father's bucket list, scribbled on three pages torn from a spiral notebook. Laura Carney looked down at it, then she glanced up at her husband. Without a word spoken, they both knew: "I needed to finish it," says Carney, 46.

"She had been wanting to find a way to understand her dad a little better," says Carney's husband, Steven Seighman. "As soon as we saw the list, it was immediately like, *This is it.*"

Her brother, David, was the first to spot it. He uncovered the treasure in 2016—13 years after their father, Michael 'Mick' Carney, was tragically killed when he was 54 by a distracted driver.

The list, Carney says, was written in 1978, the year she was born. It had 60 tasks, five of which had already been checked off, including 'do a comedy monologue in a nightclub' and 'see a World Series game live.' One was marked 'failed'—'pay back my dad \$1,000 plus interest.' That left 54 items for Carney to complete. The tasks ranged from relatively simple undertakings, like 'swim the width of a river' and 'grow a watermelon,' to more complicated endeavours, like 'correspond with the Pope' and 'be invited to a political convention.' Several tasks were seemingly impossible (mainly, 'talk with the President'). Still, Carney was undeterred.

She was 25, an aspiring writer living in

New York City, when her father was hit by a driver who ran a red light while chatting on a cellphone in Limerick, Pennsylvania. In the immediate aftermath of her father's death, "I didn't talk about it," says Carney, who is now based in Montclair, New Jersey. "I really had some shame about it, because it felt like such an undignified way to die." A few years later, though, she became an activist for safe driving, writing articles about the subject, fund-raising and giving talks and interviews. She met a group of people "who were trying to do something to solve what had become a much more common way to die," Carney says.

But the trauma of her father's death lingered. For Carney, the bucket list was an unexpected opportunity to work through her pain and reconnect with her dad. "I found a way to keep his spirit alive in my life," she says. "It was a thing I needed to do so I could get back in touch with my real self."

When she first got the list, she crafted a tentative timeline. She put off pricier items—including going to the Super Bowl and visiting Europe—and the item that scared her most: 'Drive a Corvette.'

"The first couple ones that I did happened organically," Carney says. She had already signed up for a marathon, which allowed her to check 'run 15 kilometers straight' off the list.

Another item she completed early on was 'talk with the President.' She learnt that former President Jimmy Carter—who would have been president when Carney's father wrote the list—taught

Sunday school in Georgia. She and her husband flew there to meet him.

For some items, Carney used poetic licence, she says. For instance, one task was 'sing at my daughter's wedding.'

"The way we honoured him at my wedding was we drank a cabernet that he had purchased in 1978," says Carney, adding that he had left a note on the bottle, which said 'open on Laura's wedding day.' "It had been sitting there, waiting," Carney says. "I was thinking, *Well, our bellies were singing.*"

While Carney completed many of the bucket list tasks on her own—including a two-week trip to Europe—"it didn't really feel like I was doing things alone, because I knew my dad was with me," she says. "I feel like my relationship with him is very present." Carney's brother and mother accompanied her for some activities, and her husband joined her for others.

"After about the first year or two of doing this project, he would say to me that the person he had always seen in me was coming out," Carney says. "I had all these layers of grief and trauma and fear that I was leaving behind."

On 27 December 2022, Carney checked off the last task on her dad's list: 'Have five songs recorded.' She picked a few of her father's favourites, including 'The Rainbow Connection' from *The Muppet Movie* and the Beatles' 'Good Night'. She recorded them in a studio and did the final touches at home.

"My fondest memories of him are him singing to us before we went to bed at

night," Carney says. "It felt like I was singing with him again."


Completing the bucket list enabled Carney to get to know her dad in a way she hadn't had the chance to—and never thought she would. "These were his goals and his dreams," she says. "It helped me understand him better, to see him as a full human being instead of just my embarrassing dad. And doing that helped me to understand myself."

Like his daughter, Mick Carney was a writer. He spent his days working as a

"MY DAD WAS SUCH A DREAMER. HE KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE ALIVE."

salesman and his spare time singing, writing and performing.

"My dad was such a dreamer," Carney says. "He knew what it meant to be alive; he knew how to have fun." Finishing her father's bucket list was the most fulfilling experience of her life, she says. So she decided to write her own bucket list.

"I really encourage everybody to write down what they want to do," she says. "It helps you start living more intentionally. And when you're living intentionally, you feel more of a sense of purpose in your life." Carney says she isn't afraid of leaving some of the items on her own list unchecked. "Even if this doesn't happen in my lifetime," she says, "maybe somebody will do it for me. I like that idea." 





*We asked for it: What's the best
prank you ever pulled?*

BY *Reader's Digest* Readers

An Exercise in Futility

My best friend has always been competitive. Once, while we used adjacent ellipticals, I set mine to age 99 and 999 pounds so the display showed I was burning three times more calories than she was. She rode that machine like a bronco, trying to match me, until I gave in and told her what I'd done. Now we both mess with the settings to amuse each other.

—S.C.

The Dairy Queen's Jester

We live next to a Dairy Queen that, naturally, we frequent. My sister-in-law told us that if we saved enough of the little red spoons that come with the ice cream treats, we'd get a

free Blizzard. I saved and saved, but when I went to redeem my spoon collection, the cashier was confused. The manager broke it to me that there was no such promotion, then gave me a free cone anyway. My sister-in-law couldn't believe I fell for it—and considering she's a notorious prankster, neither could I.

—GERALD MAYNARD

Health Nut Glut

My aunt and uncle were religiously healthy eaters. So when they visited my medical office on April Fools' Day, I knew a prank was in order. I forged a medical article extolling white bread, eggs and red meat, and warning of the dangers of whole



grains and excessive vegetables. The longer they read, the lower they sank in their chairs. Until they got to the last line: “What can we conclude from this research? Never trust an article handed to you on April Fools’ Day.”

—GARY AUXIER

The Ol’ Switcherflu

My new boyfriend and I both scheduled flu shots. Mine was first, and before I got home I moved the bandage from my arm to my derriere. He was distressed at the thought of receiving a shot there. When we returned for his shot, he was relieved when the pharmacist told him to roll up his sleeve instead. We both laughed hysterically on the way home. We’ve been together for four years now, so I guess he can take a joke.

—PEGGY SQUIRES

Getting an Earful

A prankster in my office thought it would be funny to put a big glob of hand cream on the receiver of another co-worker’s landline so the goo would squish in his ear the next time he answered the phone. But the instigator didn’t think it was so funny when he found out—the hard way—that someone had switched the phones when he wasn’t looking.

—FRED MOORE

A Lightbulb Moment

I stayed home while my parents went on vacation. Back at home, they dragged their luggage through the door and began turning on lights. Except the lights weren’t working. My dad checked the breaker panel: No blown fuses. They checked the electric bill: It was paid. Finally, my

dad reached into a lamp to change the bulb. That's when they discovered that all bulbs in the house had been unscrewed just enough so they wouldn't work.

—DAVID SHELTON

Phoning It In

I work in a corporate IT department. One April Fools' Day I forwarded the phone calls for everyone in the entire office to one co-worker's line. Her phone blew up for hours with callers trying to find out why they couldn't reach their intended parties and asking when the situation would be fixed. It wasn't until the afternoon that she finally figured it out. Everyone else had a great day!

—BELLA WILLIAMS

Putting the 'Gas' in Gaslighting

Years ago, all my boss could talk about was the fantastic gas mileage of his new Volkswagen Beetle. We got so tired of hearing about it that we decided to help—by adding a gallon of gas to his car's tank every day.

He was getting 402 km per gallon by the time he learned what we had been up to.

—RICHARD PELUSO

A Prank for the Books

If a lost library card turned up at the branch where I worked, the no-nonsense head librarian would get on the intercom and announce the owner's name so the person could come to the desk and retrieve the card. That gave me an idea: I made a bunch of fake library cards and scattered them around the stacks on April Fools' Day. All day, famous literary characters—Anna Karenina, Ramona Quimby, Sam Spade, even Winnie “DaPou”—were getting paged to come pick up their lost cards. When I returned to the library years later, the head librarian recognized me and said, “You're the one who did the April Fools' prank.” Then I saw something I'd never seen in all my time working there—the head librarian's smile.

—VIOLET LEVOIT 



An AI Takeover

Any student that fails a class this term for not submitting a paper should also receive an academic integrity award for not using Chatgpt.

—X@CHRISTAPETERSON

All you people worrying about AI like it'll ever be smart enough to identify all the traffic light pictures in a grid of nine similar pictures.

—X@MATTHIGHTON



A group of rescued bears at Wildlife SOS's Bannerghatta Bear Rescue Center.

Leave the WILD Things Be

Wild animals have been made to serve a variety of human needs, including recreational ones. It's up to everyday folk to decry the use of animals for entertainment

BY Swati Sanyal Tarafdar

IN 2019, WILDLIFE conservationists, especially those caring for bears, celebrated a very special anniversary—the 10th anniversary of the rescue of the last ‘dancing’ bear from India’s streets. The sloth bear named Raju, who was eight years old at the time, was freed from Chikkaharavalli in Karnataka by Wildlife SOS, an organization dedicated to saving and rehabilitating abused wildlife. The case marked their 628th bear rescue.

This informal roadside entertainment, once rampant on Indian streets, came from a 400-year-old tradition of man’s pursuit of divertissement. The community that primarily made a living from this practice, the Kalandars, once regaled and delighted nobles by making bears perform tricks.

But the story behind the performances is far from pleasurable. Any service derived from animals is made

possible only through training practices grounded in deep cruelty. The bears for instance, would be captured as cubs after their mothers were killed. Their muzzles would then be pierced with hot iron rods, and threaded with thick ropes that, when tugged, made the animals jump and prance in pain. This was how Raju too spent his youngest years.

Now 23, Raju has a new name—Adit—and a new address at the Bannerghatta Bear Rescue Centre in Bengaluru, far from the miseries he endured on the streets. His rehabilitation, and that of all captive sloth bears, came after the Kalandars were empowered with new opportunities for education and alternative livelihoods. Kartick Satyanarayan, co-founder of Wildlife SOS, the group that pioneered the project, confirmed to *Reader's Digest* that not a single dancing bear can be found in India anymore.

The Cruelty of Captivity

The long-term trauma of the rescued animals, however, is far more difficult to erase. Aneesha, a formidable, 60-year-old pachyderm, for example, can often be found standing tentatively amidst her companions in the peaceful premises of the Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Centre (WRRC). But despite the calm surrounding her today, tell-tale signs of a lifetime of abuse remain. “When Aneesha came to us, she was handicapped with deformed forelegs and an open abscess

on her hip,” says Suparna Baksi Ganguly, co-Founder of WRRC and its sister organization, Compassion Unlimited Plus Action that together operate four centres across the peripheries of Bengaluru. “She had been abused in the timber trade and, once unable to work, was sold illegally multiple times.” Now thanks to a strict regime of medical treatment and companionship, she is doing better—at least physically.

“Elephants in particular are social animals, and do very poorly in isolation,” explains conservationist and social impact consultant Puja Mitra. Global studies have long recorded high emotional intelligence in elephants. Extended periods of isolation from their peers and societies, negligence and abuse, coupled with cruel training practices through negative conditioning can induce post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) in wild elephants. Just as in humans, PTSS manifests in the animals as abnormal startle responses, depression, unpredictable social behaviour, and aggression. Animals with PTSS require long-term, skilled care and consistent medical aid to recuperate. Says Ganguly, “Fluctuations and unpredictability in behaviour is common. It takes a long time, if ever, to re-initiate them into the wild again.”

Rehabilitation efforts, while critical and necessary, are ultimately forms of damage control—an attempt to somehow restore an abused animal's mental and physical quality of life. But prevention of such abuse, which lies



An Asian elephant carries a groom in a wedding procession. Years of hard training goes into forcing this forest animal to endure heavy loads, the noise and clamour of traffic and the burning asphalt of sun-baked streets—all for the sake of human ceremony.

at the heart of any solutions-driven approach to animal welfare, seems to lag behind.

The Legal Landscape

Provisions in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, enforced a ban on using wild and protected animals—bears, monkeys, panthers, lions, and tigers—for entertainment, such as in circuses, but elephants continued to be used in this manner until 2017. It took a year-long investigation by the Central Zoo Authority and their reports of severe cruelty towards and abuse of captive elephants, before they were removed from circuses too. Even so, elephants continue to be used in

temples, for transportation and labour in the timber and the travel and tourism industries. Monkeys, eagles, owls and other animals are used by people for occult rituals, or as pets, despite the fact that such animals are not suited for domestication or captivity.

The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 categorizes animal species under six different schedules each specifying the degree of protection accorded to the animals. Schedule I includes those facing the highest threats, and therefore needing maximum protection, such as the endangered Bengal Tiger, the one-horned Indian Rhinoceros, the snow leopard, the Asian Elephant, and dolphins. Wild elephants cannot

be captured by law, but the law also allows for private ownership—anyone can buy, sell or keep them if they come as gifts, opening up opportunities for trade, abuse and cruelty against these species. Owners only need a license—which can still be obtained by manipulating a flawed system.

“A licensing system has existed for a long time,” says wildlife conservationist and executive director of the Wildlife Trust of India, Vivek Menon, “but so have the loopholes. Licensed elephants for example are often sold, and the new ones captured from the wild are passed off under old permits.” Menon explains that even the system of microchipping captive elephants, instituted in 2002 under Project Elephant to control illegal trade, can be circumvented. “We would often see the microchip surgically moved from one elephant to another, or wrong microchip numbers be recorded.” Menon also points out that the religious significance the animal holds continues to tie it to captivity, “They are part of the temple tradition, and questioning such cultural practices is akin to speaking against religious beliefs.”

Striving for Solutions

Caught between such myriad legal and cultural complexities, how do wildlife protectors respond? Wildlife SOS, for one, began the ‘Refuse To Ride’ campaign, by reaching out to tourists and raising awareness of the suffering underpinning their holiday fun. By

confronting potential customers and urging them to refrain from offering patronage to places that offer elephant rides, the campaign allowed human compassion to tackle the issue. They set up hotlines, information desks, petitions, and in 2019, converted Gatiman Express, India’s first semi-high-speed train running a popular tourist route, into an outdoor awareness camp.

Puja Mitra founded Terra Conscious, a social enterprise promoting sustainable travel through a community-partnership model to transform dolphin-watching, a popular tourist activity in coastal destinations such as Goa. Local boats typically ferry tourists for a couple of hundred rupees into areas with a high dolphin presence, and chase them down, leading to panic and serious injuries from collisions. A 2016 study by the World Wildlife Fund examining how dolphins responded to human and vehicular presence found that 98 per cent of the time the dolphins became highly stressed, and would deep dive to avoid the intrusion.

“When I looked into the issue,” says Mitra, “I found that dolphin- and crocodile-watching and coral diving are all termed as water sports even though all three species are Schedule 1 animals. In many cases, the interest in the animal is secondary. Tourists purchase tickets, but there are no educative efforts. There’s music, dancing and alcohol on the boat; the dolphin is simply incidental.”



Wildlife SOS's 'Refuse to Ride' campaign urges tourists against choosing animal rides

When Mitra started Terra Conscious in 2017, north Goa had several boats with water-sports licences and the numbers were growing in the south as well. “I told the boat owners that we will follow the four internationally accepted rules: don’t chase or surround the dolphins, stay parallel to them when you’re moving, don’t obstruct their path, and if possible, switch off the engine or go into neutral.”

This worked well for everyone—for the boatmen who started earning more: for the interested tourists who knew what to expect and had a better time observing different marine species, and also for the dolphins. What started off with five people, is now one of the biggest boat associations in Goa, with 100 boats adopting sustainable measures in dolphin-watching.

Ultimately, the success of these programmes hinges in large part on kindness, compassion and basic respect for the natural world. So what can an individual do to help mitigate

the needless suffering of wild animals? To start with, leave them alone.

“Human beings are the worst contrast to wilderness and they should not try to keep wildlife at home at any level—turtles, tortoises, birds, monkeys, elephants,” says WRCC’s Ganguly. “If you want to learn about animals, you should observe them in the least intrusive manner, in their natural habitat,” adds Puja Mitra. Most NGOs working on animal well-being offer knowledge building and awareness sessions in schools and for citizen groups. Volunteering for and donating to responsible groups dedicated to caring for wildlife rather than using them as a meal-ticket results in both a rich learning experience and a better life for the animals.

Changing the belief that all non-human species are fundamentally lower life forms isn’t impossible. Menon cites the elephant as an example. Although an advocate for banning animal rides, he draws a distinction: “I am ambivalent about the use of animals in conservation. Elephants for instance, have been used to patrol parks and sanctuaries for a long time. There, they live in far more natural conditions and it is better than building roads and further polluting animal habitats. As for their use for cultural or religious reasons, I’ve compared the practice with Sati in my writings. Just like other tremendously cruel Indian traditions, this too will go away with time.” **R**

It Happens
ONLY IN INDIA

**Live from the
Polling Booth**

Election season is underway and its fever pitch seems to be driving some to wholly doing away with legal propriety, and even losing sight of self-preservation. Take Vijay Bhabhor, son of a local BJP leader; who abandoned the shadowy discretion that typically follows lawless pursuits and live-streamed what is being described as “bogus voting” from inside the Parthampur polling station in the Dahod Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat. The video has Bhabhor focussing on the Electronic Voting machine (EVM) and loudly proclaiming that “the machine belongs to my father” before he presses the EVM button. Upon the polling officials requesting him to leave, he is seen



“Leaving at 6:30?! Are you bunking work today?”

demanding that they let him stay for 10 minutes longer. He has been accused of allegedly casting votes on behalf of two other electors and detained by the police in this regard. Following the viral video, the Election

Commission (EC) has declared voting at Parthampur polling station null and void, taking into account a report submitted by the Returning Officer and Observer regarding irregularities, and ordered fresh polling.

If only Bhabhor had resisted the urge for social media spectacle.

SOURCE: THEHINDU.COM

Recline? Declined!

Stuck upright in their business class seats, surrounded by fellow passengers resting pretty in their fully reclined ones, a police chief from Telangana, Ravi Gupta, along with his wife Anjali were fed up. Onboard a Singapore Airlines flight from Hyderabad to Australia, the couple couldn't believe that at ₹66,750 a pop, the automatic recline feature on their seats was faulty and the backrest would only recline manually. Aghast at this "economy-class" treatment, the Guptas raised complaints to the airline staff, who apologized and offered to recline their seats as and when needed. The flight was booked out, and the couple couldn't be re-seated elsewhere. The airlines also offered the couple 10,000 frequent

flyer miles as reparations. However, the furious couple demurred and took the airlines to court for the "mental agony and physical suffering" they endured during the 5-hour flight. The incident took place a year ago and this May, the couple won over ₹2 lakh in damages in the case. We love the consumer-compensation celebration underway, but hand to heart dear reader, isn't employing trauma speak for some reclining struggle just way too laboured?

SOURCE: MONEYCONTROL.COM

Liberation Notes

To anyone present and witness to Aniket Randhir's last day at work, it would be adequately clear that the man had spent ample time thinking about this exit. Working as a sales associate in Pune, Randhir had often complained of a toxic environment at work to his friends—that his manager didn't respect him

was made abundantly clear in word and deed, and he hadn't received a raise since he joined the job. So, when D-Day arrived, along came Aniket, accompanied by *dhhol* players and friends, dancing his way to freedom right on the office premises. In the video shared by an Instagram influencer chronicling this escape from the 9-to-5 grind, Randhir can be seen calling his manager to join in the exit celebrations. His visibly agitated boss can be seen in the video pushing individuals and shouting at them, clearly displaying why Randhir preferred unemployment to an honest day's work at his now-former workplace.

SOURCE: BUSINESSTODAY.COM

—BY NAOREM ANUJA

Reader's Digest *will pay for contributions to this column. Post your suggestions with the source to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com*

We wanted to do a once-in-a-lifetime trek in northern Laos. Just getting there became the adventure

NEXT STOP:

WHO KNOWS?

BY *Bonnie Munday*

Dusk on the Nam Ou
River in northern Laos.

I recently read

that a new high-speed train route had opened in Laos at the end of 2021. The Lao-China Railway can get you the 150 kilometres from the ancient capital of Luang Prabang north to the Chinese border in just 90 minutes. It carries more than 1.5 million passengers a year, a game-changer for a country with very little transportation infrastructure.

As someone who has visited this remote corner of Laos, I wondered: *What fun is that sort of speed when you can take three days to do pretty much the same trip by boat—never knowing if you'll actually get there?*

IT WAS THE SPRING OF 2017, and my husband, Jules, and I had just spent two weeks travelling around Laos. We had poked around the humid, sprawling capital, Vientiane, in the south and explored the fascinating Plain of Jars in the middle of the country. We were really enjoying it—the people were kind, and it wasn't as touristy as we knew Vietnam, the country we planned to visit next, would be.

We saved Luang Prabang, Laos's historic former capital, for last. Located at the confluence of the Mekong and the Nham Khan rivers, the UNESCO World Heritage Site was quiet, with several gilded Buddhist monasteries.

Its well-preserved French colonial buildings date back to the first half of the 20th century, when Laos was part of French Indochina.

We strolled the peaceful back streets and colourful craft markets and climbed Phousi Hill to take in the view. Relaxing at a bistro across from a *wat* (Buddhist temple), we watched saffron-robed monks stroll by as we enjoyed coffee and croissants, another vestige of France's colonial regime. At a bamboo-stilted riverfront café we ate traditional Lao *larb*—spicy ground pork or chicken mixed with fresh seasonings—served with the refreshing local brew, the rice-based Beerlao.

As the sun sank on the Mekong River, we watched multicoloured longboats glide by while the breeze carried the deep, soft sounds of the *wats'* gongs. I couldn't think of a more serene place to spend our final days in Laos.

Then things took a sharp turn. Walking down Luang Prabang's main drag on our second-last day, Jules spotted a trekking outfitter that offered a multi-day hike among the Akha hill tribes outside the small city of Phongsali. It would mean travelling to the mountainous frontier area near Laos's northern border with China and Vietnam.

Jules and I had talked about visiting the area once we got to Vietnam. We had seen photos of Akha women wearing silver-beaded head-dresses, and we were intrigued by the fact that the ethnic minority Akha people, along with other tribes living in the mountainous

regions of Laos, Myanmar, China and Vietnam, had managed to maintain their traditional way of life.

But we'd been having second thoughts. Though numerous tour companies ran treks to the Akha villages in Vietnam, we weren't big fans of overly planned group tours. Maybe a hike to the Akha villages in less-touristy Laos, just the two of us with a guide, would be more our style.

"Let's not go to Vietnam yet," Jules said. "We should see more of Laos."

I liked the idea, but I needed to know how we'd get to northern Laos before committing to it. Phongsali was so far away and the roads weren't great. Our *Lonely Planet* guidebook had very little information about that part of the country.

Maybe we could go by plane? At the local tourism office we were told that Lao Airlines did not fly there at that time of year because of thick smoke: It was 'burning season' in central Laos, when farmers torch their fields ahead of planting.

We could catch a bus, but it would take 15 hours, much of it on mountainous switchbacks. What was worse, reviews on Trip-Advisor had tales of the bus drivers falling asleep at the wheel. That didn't sound like much fun.

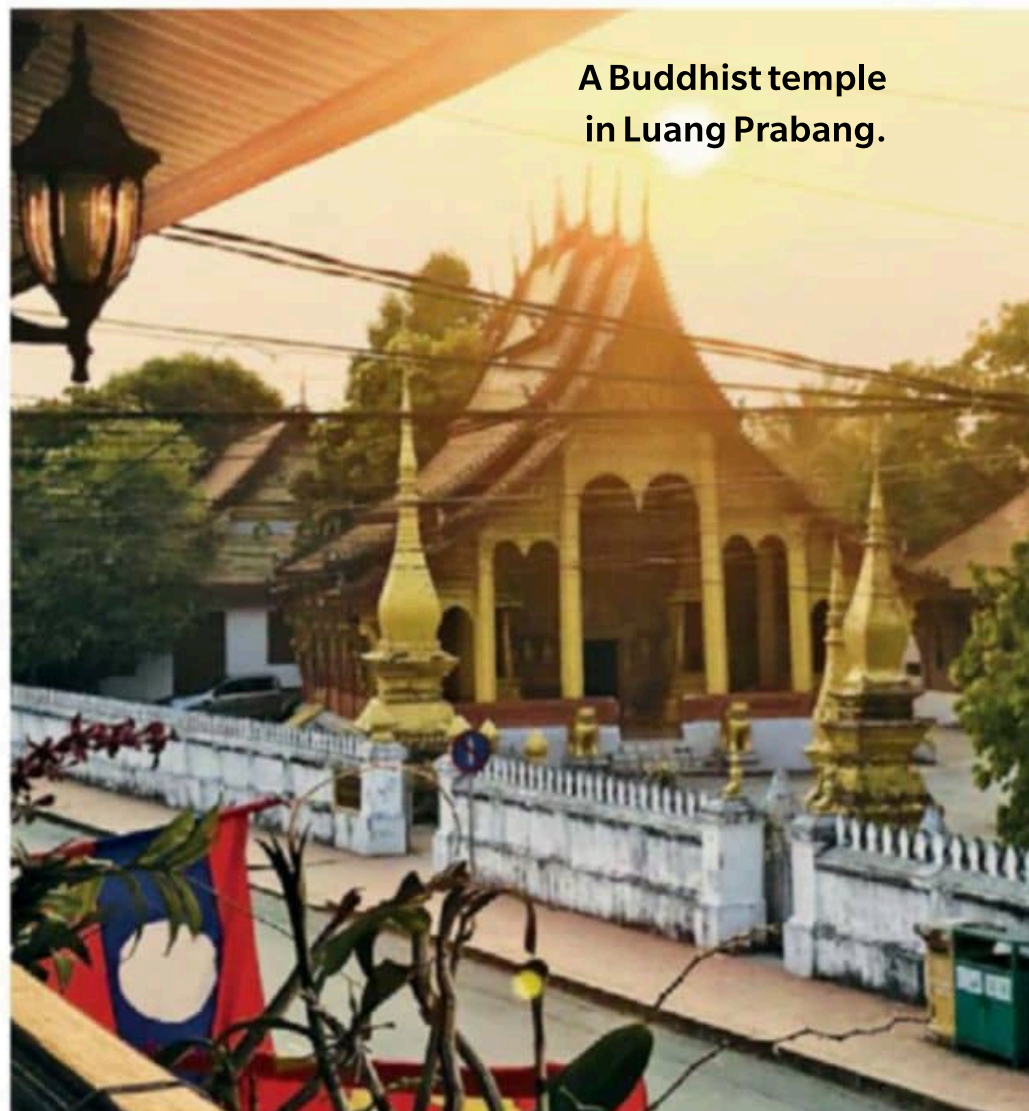
We called a trekking outfit in Phongsali on WhatsApp. "You might be able to get a river-

boat," the owner, Sivongxay, told us. "But I'm not sure. Call me if you make it here and we'll take you on a trek!"

So we would just head into the unknown? I'm the type who likes to plan my journeys, but the idea of travelling by river sounded very appealing. I tamped down my reservations and said to Jules, "Let's give it a try."

The local tourist office told us that any boat journey that *might* get us to Phongsali would be on the Nam Ou River. To get to the river, we'd need to take a four-hour minibus ride to a town called Nong Khiaw. Seemed reasonable.

"And from there?" I asked the young tourism officer.



A Buddhist temple
in Luang Prabang.

"I think boats go north, but I don't know how far," she responded. We bought the minibus tickets anyway, for the next morning.

That evening in our guesthouse we hit Google to find out about boat rides on the Nam Ou. We had no luck. While there was decent information about the popular tourist regions of Laos, there was hardly anything about the country's farther reaches.

One reason for this is that some areas are littered with unexploded bombs dropped by the Americans during the Vietnam War, as a deterrent to Viet Cong using the Ho Chi Minh Trail through eastern Laos. Nearly five decades later, the still-live bombs, partially or fully buried, remain a daily danger to farmers and road builders.

Our journey into the unknown had to start somewhere, and the first step was catching the minibus the next morning. We arrived in Nong Khiaw at about noon and walked to the riverboat ticket office. It was closed. But according to a schedule posted outside the office, a boat did head north once a day—and today's had just departed.

There are worse places to be stuck for a night: Nong Khiaw, which had a population of around 3,500 at the time, was surrounded by misty, jungle-covered limestone karst formations. We spent much of the afternoon exploring the town. Later we found a guesthouse that served noodles and Beerlao, plugged our phone into their speaker system, put on Nova Scotia band Joel Plaskett Emer-

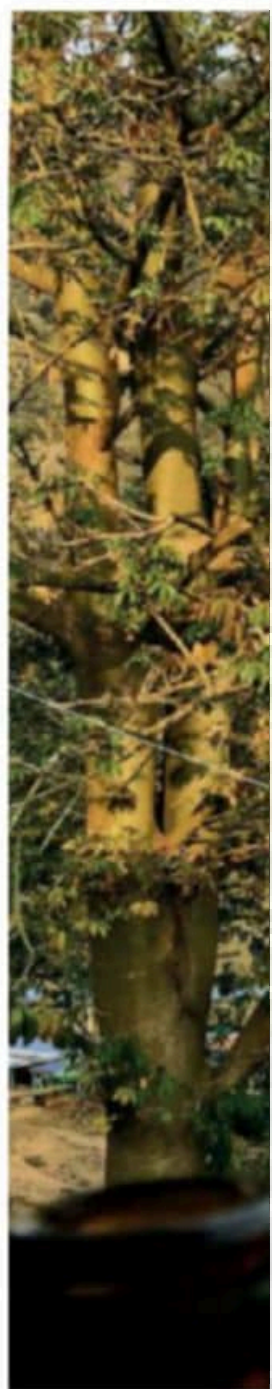
gency's *Ashtray Rock* and watched a mother washing clothes in the river while her kids splashed around, jumping to the beat of the music.

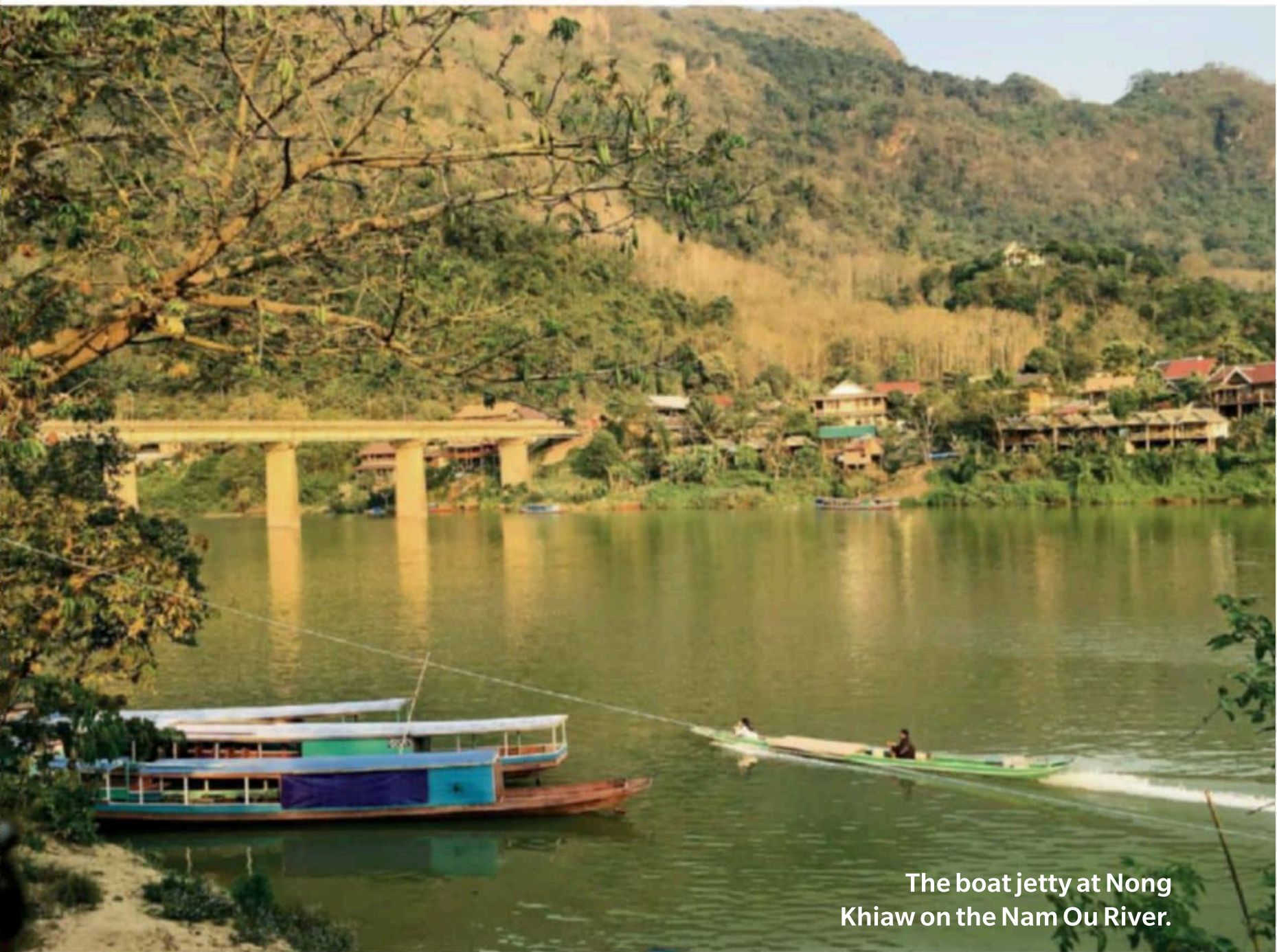
The next morning, we arrived at the boat office at 9:30. We were eager to find out how far these boats actually went and where in Laos we might end up sleeping that night. We learned that one leaving at 10:30 would take us to the village of Muang Khua, a five-hour journey.

Would there be another boat from there to Phongsalai? We couldn't get an answer, and our map of Laos, which was short on details, didn't help. The map did have one important piece of information: Muang Khua had a tourist office. We were confident our questions would be answered once we arrived there that afternoon.

We took the front two seats of the blue wooden longboat and placed our packs at our feet; a dozen young backpackers piled into the boat and sat down behind us. Two hours later, at the first stop, everyone except us got off. With the entire boat to ourselves for the next few hours, we sat back to enjoy the rest of our journey.

And what a journey it was, like something out of an Indochina period film: The Nam Ou was wide, smooth and brown, and the clear sky had a misty quality above the lush banks.





The boat jetty at Nong Khiaw on the Nam Ou River.

We munched on our packed lunch—water, apples and baguettes with Laughing Cow cheese—and sipped boxed red wine from our travel mugs as we slipped past tall, rounded karst landforms and quiet villages of bamboo huts where goats wandered the dusty lanes.

Children shrieked as they ran along the riverbanks in the shallow waters. Mud-covered water buffalo ambled down to cool themselves too. Women filled their woven baskets with the greens they grow on the edge of the river at

this time of year, when the water is low.

It was truly a blissful, magical boat trip that we treasure even more now. Because although we didn't know it at the time, we were among the last to experience this particular river journey, one that people had been taking for centuries. Just eight months later, in late 2017, a massive hydroelectric dam on this stretch of the river would be completed, ending a way of life for several villages whose lifeblood was the Nam Ou.

One by one, dams were being built along the river as part of the Belt and Road initiative, China's massive international infrastructure programme. Many villagers had been relocated, river transport was reduced to the short stretches between the dams, and fishing and local riverside agriculture had taken a hit, reducing local food resources.

We later realized that this was why we had so much trouble finding information about travel on the river: The dams were being built so quickly that it was hard for anyone who didn't live in the area to know what stage each one was at.

Oxen cooling themselves on the Nam Ou River.



JUST BEFORE 4:30 P.M. we stepped off the longboat at Muang Khua and walked up the steep road, packs on our backs, in search of the tourist office. We found it—just as the young woman who worked there was locking up. Uh-oh.

Still hoping to travel onward that day, we asked, “Is there a boat to Phongsali? A bus?” She shook her head and pointed to a sign that said the tourist office would open at 8 a.m. the next day. We were staying the night.

Walking the dusty roads along with strutting chickens and the odd wandering dog, we came across a concrete bunker of a hotel, checked in, dumped our bags and went in search of a café

where we might find other tourists we could ask about getting to Phongsali. We were in luck: At the only place in town with an English menu, we met a British couple in their 60s—and they had just come from Phongsali!

“Don’t take a boat any farther north,” the man warned. They had done it, but to get to the next stretch of the river, they had to bypass one of the massive new dams; they’d spent two hours in the back of a *songthaew* (a modified pick-up truck) on a rough road, hanging on for dear life. The road was packed with heavy trucks loaded with building materials.

"We kept getting hit with gravel coming off the trucks," the woman explained. "Once you get to the other side of the dam, there's no guarantee a boat will be waiting to take you the rest of the way. If there isn't, you're sleeping on the side of the river."

Instead, they said, we should take the eight-hour bus trip from Muang Khua to Phongsali. That definitely sounded better.

The next morning, we awoke to the sound of a tinny loudspeaker. It was blaring an authoritative female voice speaking in Lao and some really jarring marching music. We learnt later that it was a daily update from the central Communist government.

We got to the tourist office at 8 a.m. on the nose. A dapper middle-aged man arrived and unlocked the door. Luckily for us, he spoke English. "Good morning!" I said with a hopeful smile. "What time is the bus to Phongsali?"

He looked at his watch. "It left at 7:30," he replied. Jules and I stared at each other, crestfallen. It was the bus from Luang Prabang, the man explained (the 15-hour journey we had earlier decided not to take). It came just once a day.

Now what? "Time to call Sivongxay," Jules said, referring to the trekking guide we were hoping to meet up with in Phongsali. "Maybe he knows another option."

Sivongxay paused after Jules explained where we were. "I think there's a bus that starts in Vietnam and

goes through there," he said. "It comes up here a few times a week. I don't know if there's one today. If there is, it's maybe at noon? Or 2 p.m.? You have to flag it down."

Full of doubt, but with nothing better to do, we walked to Muang Khua's main street. Sivongxay had told us to look for a bus with a sign that said 'Phongsali' on the front. (Would 'Phongsali' be in English letters, Vietnamese characters or Lao script? And would the 'bus' be a

WE GRABBED OUR PACKS AND SCRAMBLED BEHIND THE BUS, WAVING FRANTICALLY IN ITS DUST.

full-size coach, a minibus or a *songthaeu*? We had no idea what to watch for.)

It was only 8:30 a.m. so we had hours to wait, maybe for nothing. We explored the town on foot, and later that morning we found a spot on the main street with some shade and two small plastic stools, complete with a litter of newborn puppies and their mother underneath. To pass the time, we read our books and drank thick, strong Lao coffee. We negotiated with a woman who lived nearby to use her outdoor bathroom—let's just say it was rudimentary—in exchange for a few *kip* (less than one paisa INR).

But mainly, as the sun moved across the sky, we kept an eye to the east—the

direction of the Vietnamese border some 70 kilometres away—watching for buses. There were plenty of all shapes and sizes, most with Lao script on the front. As noon approached, Jules started jumping up to stop buses as they barrelled into town stirring up dust.

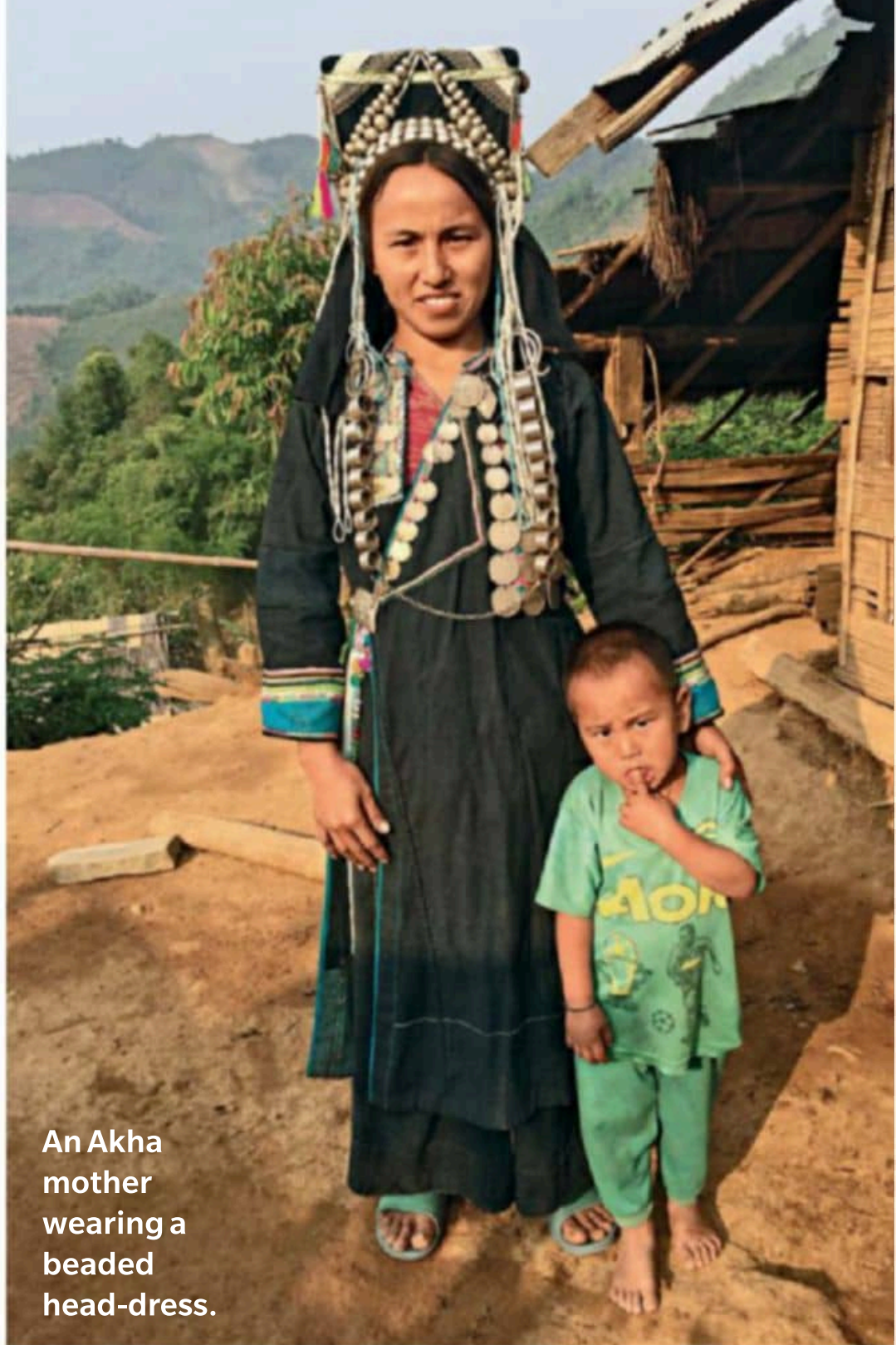
“Lodme Phongsalì?” he asked the drivers, using the Lao word for ‘bus’. Each time, the driver shook his head and sped off.

We were pretty much resigned to staying on the plastic stools for the rest of the afternoon, knowing that the bus might not come and we’d be back in the concrete bunker that night. We grabbed a snack for lunch from a nearby vendor and settled in. Then things changed—fast.

Looking up as yet another bus approached, we couldn’t believe our eyes: The sign in the front window read ‘PHONGSALI’. But it was flying past us. We threw down our lunch, grabbed our packs and scrambled behind the bus, waving frantically in its dust. You can’t imagine our relief when it slowed to a stop.

“Lodme Phongsalì?” we asked the driver in unison.

“Yes, each 40,000 kip,” he said—about ₹156. After paying, we were waved onto the minibus packed with sacks of rice, construction materials



An Akha mother wearing a beaded head-dress.

and other goods from Vietnam.

It was the start of another journey into the unknown.

WHAT FOLLOWED FELT LIKE a visit to another planet. We arrived in Phongsalì that evening, and the next day we met Zheng, a guide Sivongxay had hired for us. To start our trek to the Akha hill tribes’ region, Zheng (who spoke Lao, English and the Akha language) shepherded us onto a mini-

bus for a half-hour ride to the edge of the Nam Ou River. Yes, we were returning to the same river that had taken us from Nong Khiaw to Muang Khua.

A longboat took us farther north, and we were dropped off after an hour or so at a muddy landing point. Then, with small packs on our backs, up, up we climbed in the sweltering heat through a thickly forested mountainside toward the clouds and the cooler air of the Akha villages, where the views over the green hills are misty.

Over the next three days, we saw no other foreigners. As arranged by Zheng, we stayed with local families in the villages we visited and learnt about the traditional existence of the Akha—one in which the men hunt for food with slingshots while the women do just about everything else.

That includes growing cotton, turning it into thread, then using the thread to make fabric. After dyeing the fabric indigo, they make a long, embroidered jacket that, along with leggings and an elaborate headdress, they wear on their wedding day—and every day after that. The women's tasks also include collecting water in huge bamboo pipes, which they lug on their backs up the steep hills.

Bathing took place in the centre of each village, with designated hours for women and men to give everyone a measure of privacy. At least that was the theory. Neither Jules nor I was able to wash without drawing a crowd. We did our best to cover ourselves with towels.

Meals, which we ate at people's homes, consisted of rice, foraged greens and whatever meat was available—often chicken, but we had squirrel soup for dinner once, seated on short stools on a dirt floor while pigs and chickens hovered nearby, waiting for scraps. (Jules was thankful for their services when a squirrel skull ended up on his spoon; he quietly deposited it on the floor behind him.)

To an outsider like me, the lives of the Akha people look difficult. Yet they are managing to keep their culture alive in the quiet hills, up in the clouds, and avoid being assimilated into mainstream Lao, Chinese or Vietnamese society. Fortunately, in many villages the local chief has a motorbike, giving them access to markets and emergency healthcare when necessary.

I'M THANKFUL TO HAVE travelled a lot in my life, and whenever I am asked about memorable trips, I *always* mention this one-of-a-kind, never-to-be-repeated experience. I am so thankful there was no railway, high-speed or otherwise, to northern Laos back then. Our snap decision to abandon our original plan for one that literally had no road map added a layer to life I didn't realize I'd enjoy so much.

In the end, the journey was as rich as the destination. By willingly plunging into the unknown, I discovered what truly makes you feel alive: the surprises waiting around the next bend on a river less travelled. **R**

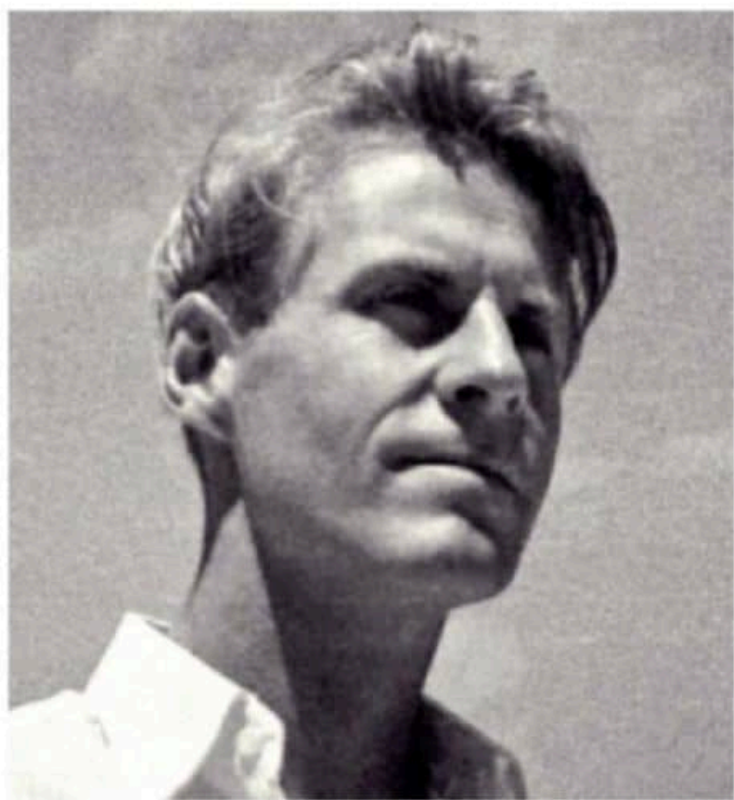


The Journey Of The **Kon-Tiki**

*Is it possible to cross the Pacific on a wooden raft?
Natural scientist Thor Heyerdahl risks
everything to prove it*

BY *Dirk Liesemer* AND *Lars Abromeil*

FROM **GEO**



It is a dangerous experiment. In 1947, natural scientist Thor Heyerdahl (above) and five companions set sail from Peru on a wooden raft. Their destination: Polynesia, some 7,000 kilometres away. Heyerdahl wants to prove that the island world in the Pacific was originally settled from South America. Experts ridicule the Norwegian. Recent genetic analyses, however, have shone a new light on the adventure.

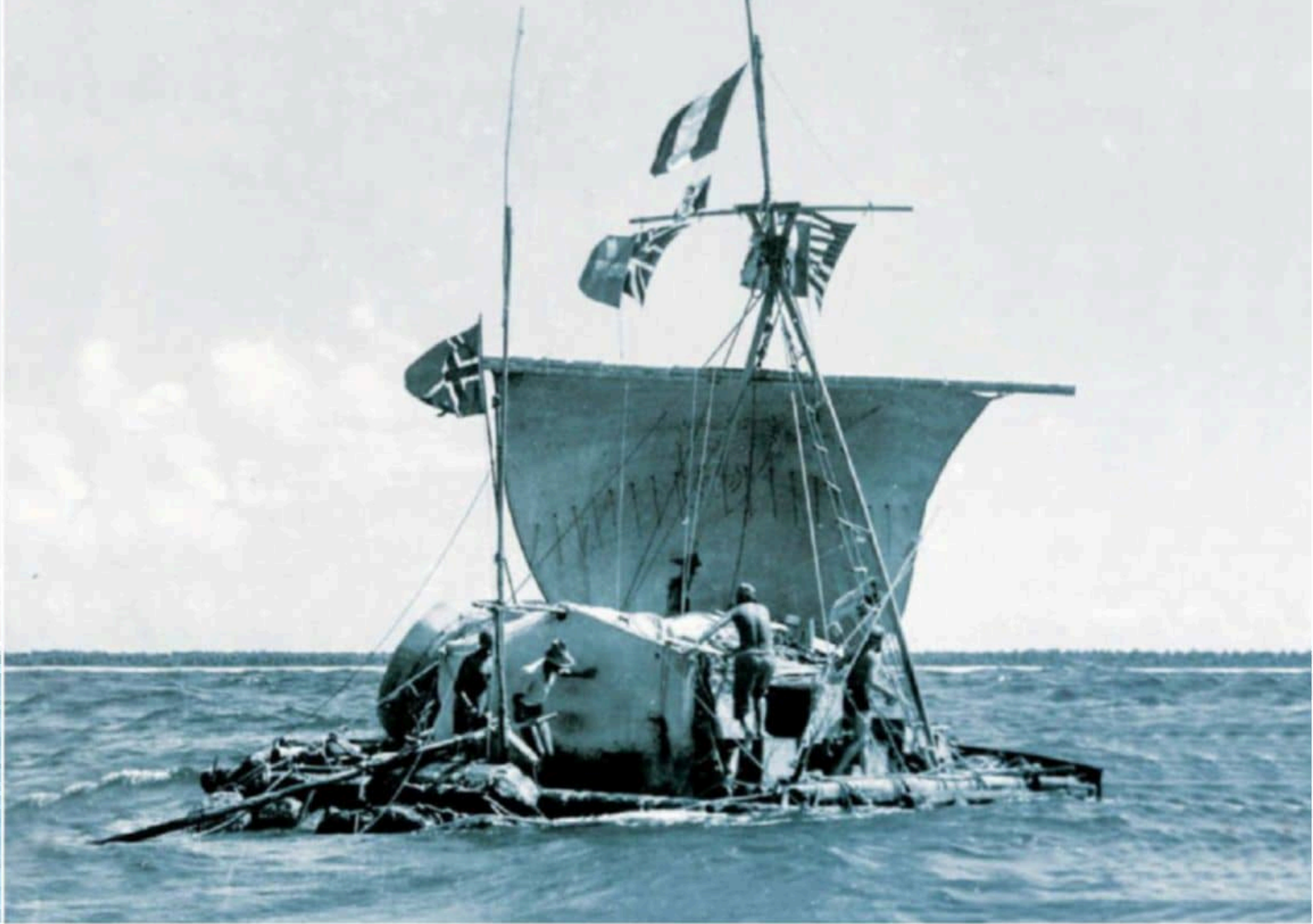
WITHIN MINUTES, the calm waters of the Pacific Ocean around the Kon-Tiki have turned into a stormy sea: dark clouds chase across the sky. Powerful waves lift the raft by five or six metres, then abruptly send it plummeting into deep, blue-black valleys. It lurches in the wind. And the logs from which the raft is built move against each other.

Thor Heyerdahl, the 32-year-old Norwegian leader of the expedition, clings to the bow in the rigging, when suddenly a cry for help cuts through the roar of the storm. A crew member has slipped from the raft. The man is drifting in the waves, trying to hold on to the rudder blade—in vain.

Heyerdahl yells commands, but no one hears him amid the roar. One crew member tries to throw a lifeline, but it's caught in its drum. Another hurls the life jacket into the storm; the wind tosses it back onto the deck. The man in distress is barely visible among the waves. The crew cannot turn the vessel; even tacking against the wind is out of the question. Finally, another crew member jumps into the ocean. He crawls through the waves with one arm, holding a life jacket in the other arm, which is moored to the raft by a line.

Twenty metres from the raft, the two men come together between the waves. The crew hastily pulls them back on board using the line.

But the force of the storm is still increasing. Seven-metre-high waves roll beneath the Kon-Tiki. Often, the helmsman at the stern is submerged up



Wind and current drive the *Kon-Tiki* across the sea. Manoeuvring is only possible to a very limited extent. Thor Heyerdahl, 32, leads the expedition

to his stomach. For a moment, the raft seems to pause, then the salt water runs off between the logs. And the *Kon-Tiki* pops up like a cork.

The six men desperately hold on to everything there is. They attach a board to the steering post so that their helmsman can stand securely. The deck has long since been covered with slippery algae. In the storm, the ropes that sit in deep notches around the nine balsa wood trunks loosen. Finally, the rudder snaps off, and a gust shreds the sail.

IT IS 21 JULY 1947, and the crew has been sailing across the Pacific for seven

weeks. On a raft built according to ancient South American tradition, Thor Heyerdahl and five companions want to make the approximately 7000-kilometre sea journey from Peru to the Polynesian Tuámotu archipelago; but exactly where they will end up, the men do not know. The journey is intended to solve one of the great mysteries of the migrations: Where did the Polynesians come from?

No island kingdom lies as far away from all continents as the Polynesian islets. People have lived on them for centuries. Around 1940, most scholars assumed that they came from Asia.



Heyerdahl, on the other hand, believes that indigenous people from South America conquered the distant island kingdom around 500 CE—with rafts made of lightweight balsa wood. His thesis is so daring that no one supports it: never, according to unanimous research opinion, did a raft reach a South Sea coast from South



(Top) The crew of the *Kon-Tiki* (from left): Knut Haugland, Bengt Danielsson, Thor Heyerdahl, Erik Hesselberg, Torstein Raaby and Herman Watzinger. Also on board is a parrot.

(Above) The raft being built at a shipyard in Peru. Heyerdahl and his companions based it on sketches of old watercraft copied by European explorers. 300 ropes made of sisal hold the raft together.

America. No one believed that his crew would even make it to the open sea with the *Kon-Tiki*. The raft consists of just nine balsa wood logs, moored together by sisal ropes and crossbeams. Only a hut made of bamboo canes provides the crew with protection from the elements.

THE STORY OF THE KON-TIKI begins 10 years earlier on the Polynesian island of Fatu Hiva. The young zoologist and geographer Thor Heyerdahl is commissioned by the University of Oslo to investigate how animals have spread from island to island on the wind and the currents. The Norwegian captures countless beetles and fish, identifies species and studies their populations.

One day, in the rainforest of Fatu Hiva, the researcher comes across chunky stone sculptures: creatures with grimacing faces and oversized

eyes. They resemble motifs on Peruvian wall reliefs that he had seen on earlier geographical excursions in South America. A little later, Heyerdahl meets a local who tells him about an old legend: "Once we lived in a great land far beyond the sea," reports Tei Tetua, the last descendant of a tribe that ruled the east coast of Fatu Hiva for generations.

The old man points to the east, to South America. It was Tiki—the divine ancestor—who led the forefathers to the islands. Heyerdahl is bemused: *How should it have been possible that the indigenous people of today's Peru or Ecuador reached the islands?* Then, on the beach, he observes how the waves roll in from the east with the trade wind. Since time immemorial, he notes in his diary, wind and clouds have moved across the Pacific islands from the direction of South America: a phenomenon that also determines the settlement of animals and plants on the islets. Life, he concludes, had spread to the islands from the east.

When he returns to Norway in 1938, he begins to search for circumstantial evidence that could prove early contact between the peoples of South America and Polynesia. Little by little he comes across astonishing similarities, and finally even a trace of that Polynesian patron god Tiki, of whom the native on Fatu Hiva had told him.

Virakocha, the Inca sun god, according to a work on South American mythology, was probably originally called 'Kon-Tiki' or 'Sun-Tiki'. Accord-

ing to a legend, he once sailed west, in the direction of Polynesia. Are 'Tiki' and 'Kon-Tiki' possibly identical? Did ancestors of the Incas reach the Pacific Islands from today's Peru or Ecuador?

Heyerdahl studies ancient sea routes and examines the winds and ocean currents between Polynesia and South America on nautical charts. He knows that many peoples of South America once made their rafts from the wood of balsa trees they cut in the coastal rainforests in what is now Ecuador. The Norwegian estimates their sailing and manoeuvring skills to be superior. He dates the settlement of Polynesia to about 500 CE. At that time, according to archaeologists' findings, the coastal peoples of Peru and Ecuador had solid rafts.

But hardly anyone is interested in Heyerdahl's theses. No publisher wants to publish his work. Scientists reject him. The indigenous peoples of South America, they say, had no sea-going ships. They could never have reached Polynesia. A scholar smugly suggests to him: "You could try to travel from Peru to the South Sea Islands on a balsa wood raft."

A raft trip with millennia-old technology: an incalculable risk. But at the same time a new way of scientific methodology. Never before has an archaeologist measured a thesis against its feasibility in such a spectacular way.

In the summer of 1946, he meets the Norwegian engineer Herman Watz-

inger at the Explorers Club in New York: Watzinger spontaneously wants to go along. A financier offers to support the trip. In a few months, Heyerdahl puts together a crew. He does without experienced seamen: no one should be able to accuse him that his men were able to sail and navigate better than the early sailors. Besides, he thinks, sailors do not understand more about rafting than inexperienced explorers. Instead, he invites Norwegian friends: in addition to Watzinger, the painter Erik Hesselberg and radio operators Knut Haugland and Torstein Raaby, who are to radio weather reports at sea to meteorological stations in Lima and send SOS in an emergency. They are later joined by Swedish ethnologist Bengt Danielsson.

Heyerdahl talks to the US Army and touts his trip as an endurance test for new types of equipment. He receives waterproof sleeping bags, matches that burn even when wet, the latest stoves and sunscreen, a special power food in handy packs, rubber bags, special shoes and 684 cans of pineapple. A British medical officer gives him a 'shark powder': sprinkling a few crumbs in the sea is supposed to make the predators disappear.

Then the adventurer travels with one of his companions to Ecuador, where the balsa trees grow in the forests of the coastal region. In the jungle, they cut down twelve large trees. They tie their trunks together with lianas to form two rafts and float down a river

to the Pacific Ocean. From there, a ship pulls them to Peru.

IN SPRING 1947, they set about building the Kon-Tiki near the capital Lima. Together with 20 marines, the men hew the balsa logs. They place the largest log, 14 metres long, in the middle. On either side, they symmetrically lay shorter and shorter poles so that the bow is shaped like a blunt plough. Finally, they tighten 300 ropes made of sisal in notches and knot them together.

They base their work on construction sketches of ancient watercraft once copied by European explorers. But also on the findings of archaeologists who found tiny miniature rafts in 1500-year-old South American desert tombs: their small trunks are knotted with hemp ropes or strips of seal skin. The models show how the trunks were shaped at the bow and stern to reduce water resistance. A rectangular reed sail still hangs from one mast—Heyerdahl had a similar one made from linen cloth for his raft.

Between the trunks of their Kon-Tiki, the men insert five two-metre-long pine boards: they are to serve as keels and prevent the raft from drifting with the wind.

At right angles to the trunks, they lay additional beams at intervals of one metre. On top of this they put a sturdy lattice of bamboo poles, which serves them as a deck. They cover this grid with mats of woven bamboo straw, on which they will sleep, walk and live. Later, the crew will stow

the boxes of provisions in the cavities created underneath.

On the deck, the men erect a hut as a sleeping den, and in front of it a mast made of mangrove wood. It consists of two poles moored together and carries a cross beam, a yardarm, to which they attach the sail. They fix a board to the top of the mast to serve as a lookout. In addition, a second, smaller sail can be rigged there.

As closely as they follow records and lore, not all questions can be answered before the trip: did the indigenous people impregnate their rafts, for example with solutions of resin, wax or rubber? How often were the logs detached again and brought ashore to dry out in the sun?

The expedition could cost them their lives, a fact of which Heyerdahl is becoming increasingly aware. The radio could fail; the dinghy, an inflatable boat, is neither seaworthy, nor can it accommodate all six men. And whether a ship will rescue the crew in an emergency, no one knows.

ON 27 APRIL 1947, the raft is christened after the Inca sun god. The next day, the fragile vessel sets sail. The Kon-Tiki is loaded with 1,041 litres of water in 56 jugs, bananas, sweet potatoes, bottle gourds and 200 coconuts. Each man

owns a private box. Two boxes hold sextants and anemometers and a 16-millimetre camera along with rolls of film.

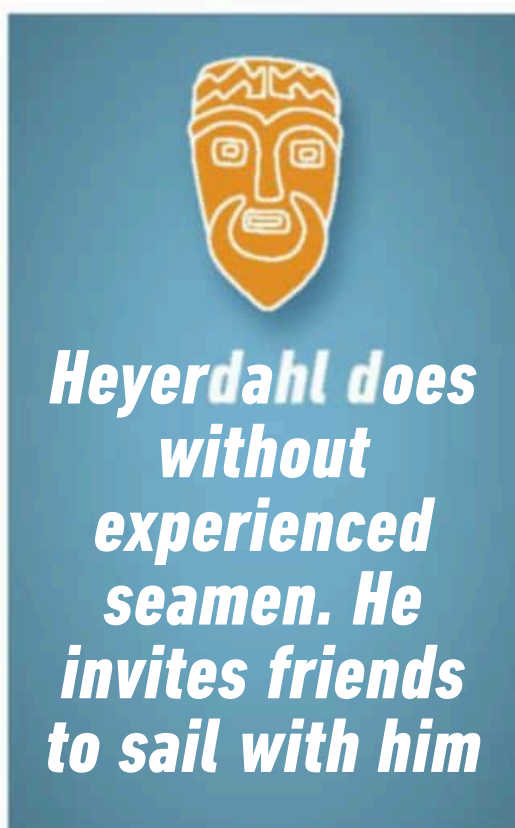
The men push cardboard boxes into steerage that they have previously sealed water-tight with a sticky layer of tar and sand. They store four months' worth of military rations inside: Heyerdahl estimates that they will have to sail at least 97 days to the Tuámotu archipelago—if the wind keeps them going.

Around 4.30 p.m., a tugboat pulls the Kon-Tiki 90 kilometres out so that the journey begins beyond the ship's routes. The men hoist the sail with the likeness of the sun god. They still know little of pre-Columbian sailing; no one has been able to teach them. They manoeuvre with a six-metre-long rudder, at the end of which a

rudder blade dives into the sea.

Soon the trade wind blows strongly and reliably billows the sail. Every two hours, the watch at the helm changes. To measure the speed, they throw a wooden chip into the sea at the bow and determine the time until it glides past the stern of the raft. From this they calculate the speed: frequently they manage more than 70 kilometres in a single day.

They glide along like driftwood. Colourful tropical fish gather beneath



them. In their sleep, the men feel as if they are on the back of a large, breathing animal, whose skeleton crunches and shrieks, cracks and screams on the waves, Heyerdahl notes.

Despite all the friction of the logs, the ropes do not chafe through: the sea has caused the outer layers of the balsa wood to swell, and so the ropes lie as if embedded in soft cork.

The deck protrudes so little from the water that once a wave washes a strange fish into one of the sleeping bags: *Gemphylus serpens*, a snake mackerel never before observed alive by researchers. "Perhaps one must sail on a raft," Heyerdahl notes, "to discover such strange fish."

Using fishing rods, they catch dolphinfish and yellowfin tuna, frying them on their stove next to the cabin. Researchers had previously assumed that marine animals were found primarily in offshore currents, and concluded that early seafarers would have starved to death on the open sea. But the adventurers find it easy to secure supplies. Sharks often circle around the raft. The crew collects rainwater in stretched canvas.

For weeks, the Kon-Tiki drifts westwards. Again and again, the men try to change the position of the sail to test the raft's manoeuvrability. Only after six weeks do they finally discover the simple technique the pre-Columbian sailors must have used to navigate: by raising or lowering the centreboards. For the first time, Kon-Tiki's crew gain

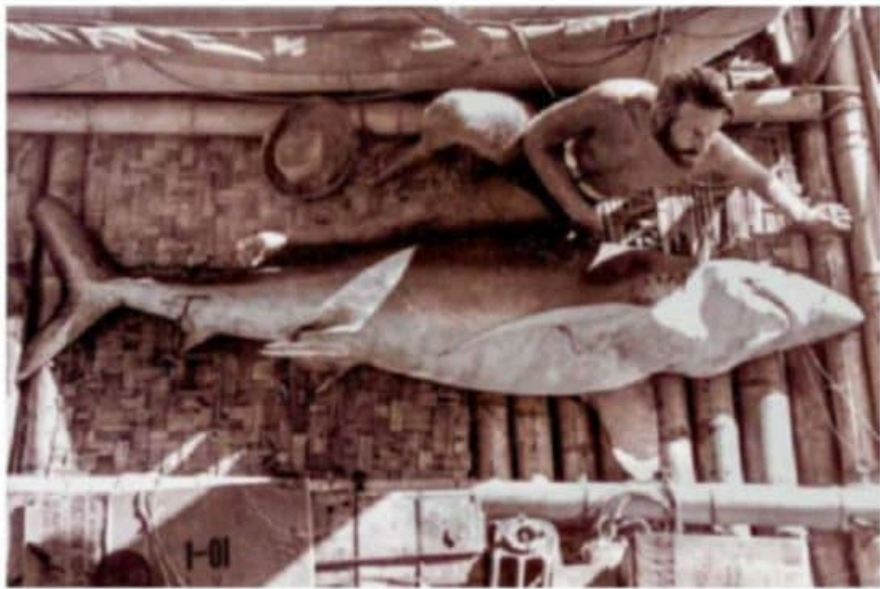
control over their vessel and are able to determine the rough direction.

Heyerdahl collects plankton, keeps the logbook or films with his camera from the leashed dinghy. Then, on 21 July, the 85th day of their journey: the storm. The man overboard. The rescue at the last moment. The storm rages for five days, wind and waves tugging at the raft. The men survive only because they strictly adhered to the millennia-old construction plans when building the raft. Steel ropes would have sawn the raft in the storm—but the sisal ropes still lie securely in their notches. And if Heyerdahl's team had used dried balsa wood in the construction, the logs would now be soaked with seawater and would sink. The sap, however, in the freshly cut trees apparently has an impregnating effect.

NINE DAYS LATER, on 30 July, seabirds circle the raft. A thin shadow looms on the horizon to the southeast. Puka Puka! An outpost of the Tuámotu archipelago in the outer east of Polynesia, the men conclude from their charts and measurements.

But wind and ocean currents carry the Kon-Tiki past the island. A few days later, they see land for the second time: Fangatau, 6,853 kilometres from Peru. But Fangatau is enclosed by an impassable coral reef.

On 7 August, they reach Raroia Atoll, part of the Tuámotu Archipelago. And this time they drift directly towards the island. Even from several hundred



Top: After about 7,000 kilometres, the Kon-Tiki has reached its destination. In the Rairoa Atoll, it strands on a coral reef.

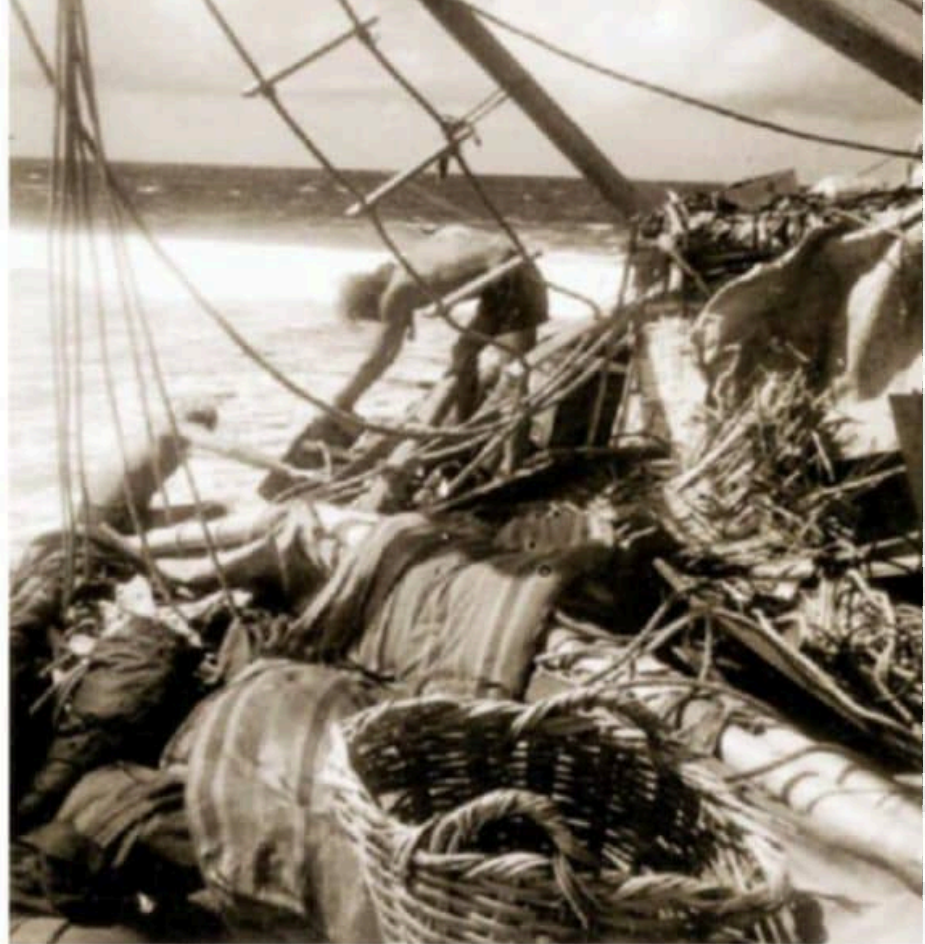
Above: During the journey, the ocean supplies food. Sharks often circle around the raft. The men catch them with a hook and pull them on board.

metres away, they can see powerful surf waves in the reef. Nevertheless, the cook calmly serves a meal. "The last one before the big joust," as Heyerdahl quickly notes. Then he stows away his precious log book.

At 9:50 a.m., one of the radio operators sends a message to a radio amateur on the island of Rarotonga further to the west, with whom he has been in contact since the previous day: If the crew does not respond within 36 hours, they should notify the Norwegian mission in Washington. Finally, he says, "OK, 45 metres to go. Here we go. Goodbye."

As the raft approaches the reef, the men cling to the rigging. Waves push the craft up and crash over their heads. "Look at the raft, it's holding! It's holding!" one yells.

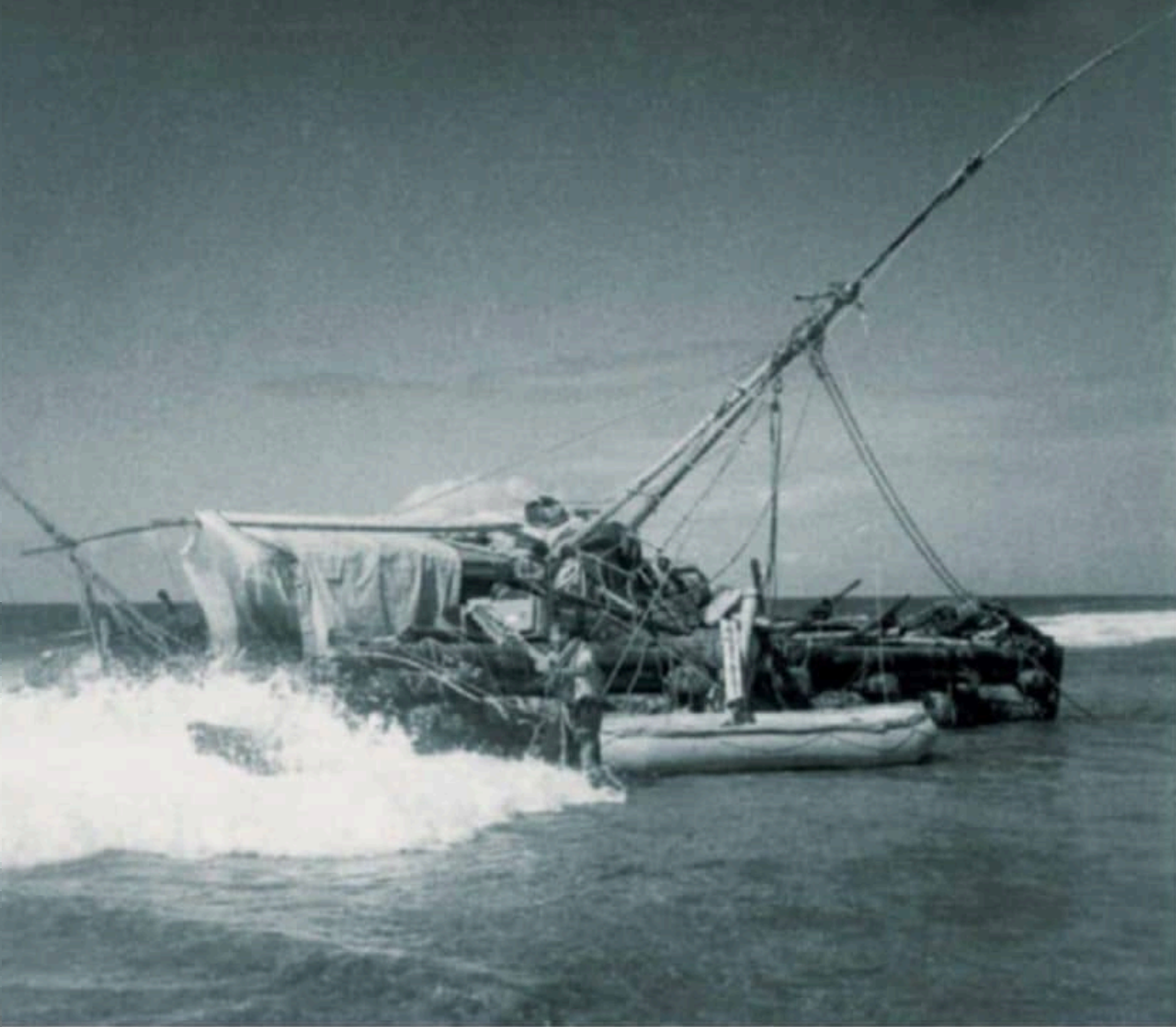
But then an eight-metre-high wave



rolls in and buries the Kon-Tiki underneath. The force snaps the mast and shatters the rudder. Crossbeams break. The deck rips open, the hut is compressed. The crew lies between ropes and the debris of the bamboo deck; only the nine thick balsa wood trunks have withstood the collision and are still moored.

A short time later, the wreck crashes against a step in the reef. Waves push it onto the stone roof of the coral garden. But even its sharp edges hardly damage the hull: although the corals have shaved six or seven centimetres off the mighty trunks in some places, they only cut four of the 300 ropes. All other sisal straps rest safely in their wooden notches.

From their wreck, the six men jump into the lagoon and wade to a small island on the atoll. After some 7,000 kilometres and 101 days at sea, they step ashore. No one is seriously injured. At most, they have suffered



scratches and minor puncture wounds. The radio soon works again, too. The men send a message. And then plant a coconut from Peru.

For six days they live on the uninhabited island. They salvage their boxes from the Kon-Tiki, feed on crabs, coco-



Top: On landing, the mast of the raft snaps. Its balsa trunks save the men from being injured by the sharp-edged corals. Their wardrobe, however, has suffered on the journey (above)

nuts and fish. Then the white triangular sail of an outrigger canoe appears on the horizon. The adventurers wave a flag on the beach until two locals moor their canoe on the beach. “*Ja ora na!*” shouts Heyerdahl to them in greeting, “Good day!” “*Ja ora na!*” they reply.

A second canoe docks. One of the locals tells them they saw the glow of a fire nights ago. They invite the newcomers to their village across the lagoon. There the chief welcomes them. He, too, speaks French and calls the Kon-Tiki a *pae-pae*, the Polynesian word for raft. While the Polynesians admire the balsa wood logs, the chief tells them that his ancestors once sailed on *pae-paes*.

News of the landing has already spread around the world. A schooner is ordered to the island to take the crew

and their raft to Tahiti. There the men are celebrated and baptised: with Tahitian chieftain names.

Heyerdahl is invited all over the world; becomes an honorary member of dozens of geographical societies and one of the most famous natural scientists of the postwar period. Some 40 crews imitate his sailing on a primitive raft. Yet many experts remain sceptical. For them, Heyerdahl is just a “daring Viking”, his raft trip “a nice adventure”.

In the years following the voyage of the Kon-Tiki, circumstantial evidence contradicts Heyerdahl’s theories. Relics of the early Lapita culture are discovered on many Pacific islands. And the ancestors of this culture clearly came to the Pacific from the west. Language studies and genetic tests have also since shown that the roots of the fair-skinned, tall Polynesians lie less in the New World than in Asia.

NOW HOWEVER, more than 20 years after Heyerdahl’s death, studies seem to prove him partially right after all. In 2020, a team from Stanford University proved through genetic analyses of 807 people from Polynesia and South America that their ancestors must have been in contact early on—presumably around 800 years ago.

In the DNA of test subjects from the Marquesas, among other places, the researchers found genetic traces that must have come from ancestors of indigenous people from Colombia and southern Mexico. Another genetic study on the time frame of the settlement of the Eastern Pacific confirmed the results in September 2021.

Had pioneers from South America, as Heyerdahl suspected, already established themselves on some islands in the eastern Pacific when sailors from the western archipelagos first arrived there? Possible, and perhaps more likely, is the opposite scenario: daring explorers could have advanced from the Marquesas to South America and then returned

accompanied by indigenous people from the mainland.

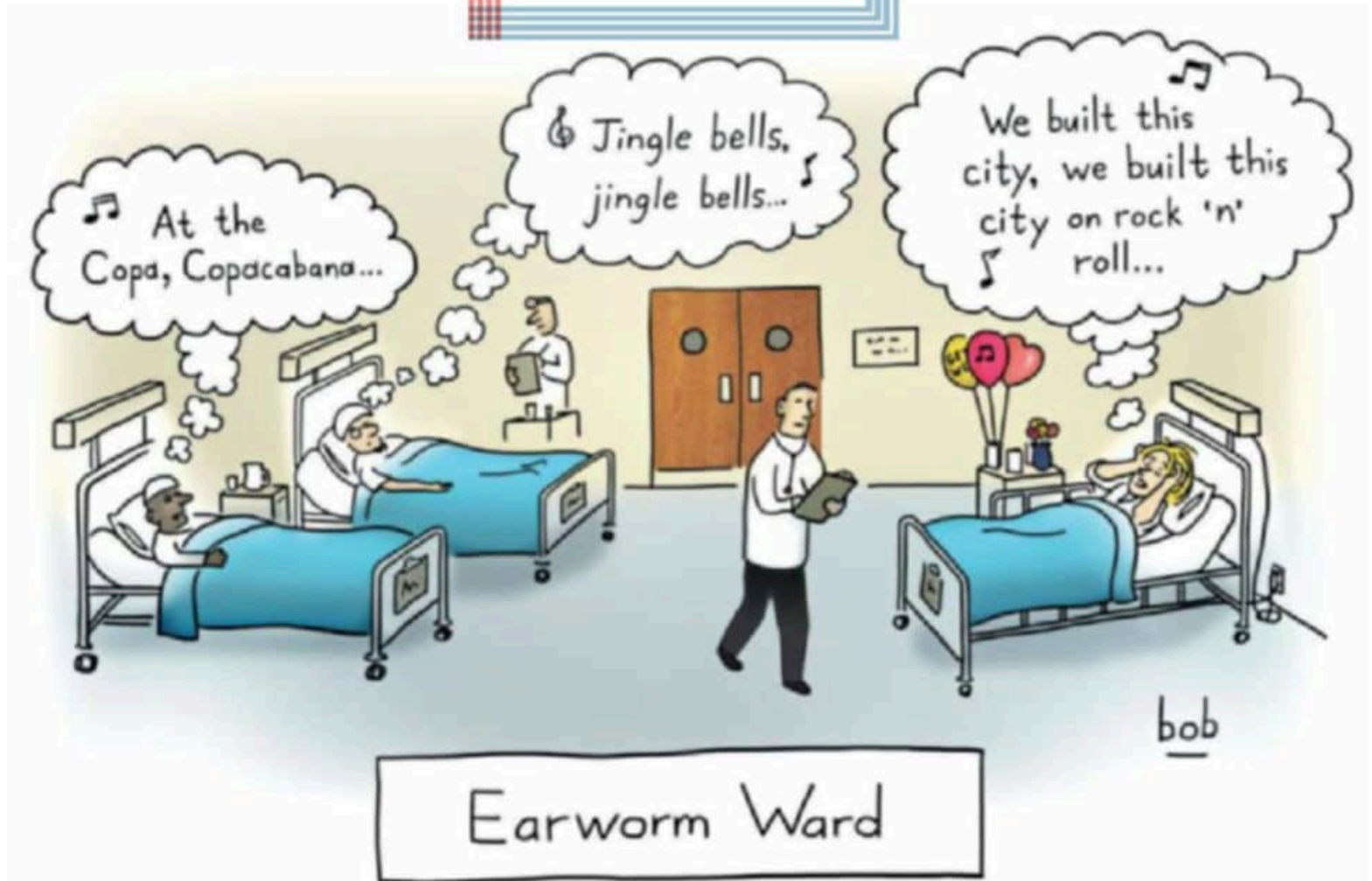
One thing is certain: long before the arrival of the Europeans, America and the South Seas were engaged in a nautical exchange—just as Heyerdahl’s raft voyage was to prove. Genetic analyses suggest that the first contact probably took place on Fatu Hiva—where the Kon-Tiki adventure also began. **R**

FROM *GEO* (FEBRUARY 2022); © DIRK LIESEMER, LARS ABROMEIT/GEO/DDP



LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*



An old-time pastor is rushing to get to church on time when his horse stumbles and pitches him to the ground. Lying in the dirt with a broken leg and no help in sight, the pastor calls out, "All you saints in heaven, help me get up on my steed!"

Then, with super-

human effort, he leaps on to the horse's back and falls off the other side. Once again on the ground, he calls to the heavens, "All right, just half of you this time!"

—CHRISTIANFORUMSITE.COM

To make a good movie even better, combine it with another. That's

what *Fark* readers did:

- ★Apollo 13 Going on 30
- ★Godfather of the Bride
- ★From Russia with Love Actually
- ★Kramer vs. Kramer vs. Alien vs. Predator
- ★Birth of a National Velvet
- ★All Reservoir Dogs Go to Heaven
- ★It's a Mad Max, Mad Max, Mad Max, Mad Max World
- ★The Grapes of Wrath of Khan

For the umpteenth time—no, I can't count!

—Submitted by DANIEL BROOKS

"Dear," a woman calls to her husband in another room. "Do you ever get a shooting pain in your stomach, like someone is sticking a pin into a voodoo doll of you?" Her husband, after thinking about it, replies, "No." A minute later: "How about now?"

—Submitted by

GARY KATZ

What font is alphabet soup? Times New Ramen.

—Submitted by

ALICE H. MURRAY

The ultimate knock-knock joke:

"Knock, knock."

"Who's there?"

"Grandpa."

"STOP THE FUNERAL!!!"

—Submitted by

PERRY ROSE

Whenever I'm worried that I messed up with my wife, I remember the time my brother gave an anniversary card to his current wife on the date of his first marriage.

—X@fizzie4prez

A little boy went to the library to check out a book titled *A Comprehensive Guide for Mothers*.

"Is this for your mom?" the librarian asked.

"No," said the boy.

"Then why are you checking it out?"

"Because I started collecting moths last week."

—THELAUGHLINE.COM

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

THE DAD COMMANDMENTS

According to the new book *Dad Law* (Chronicle Books) by Ally Probst and Joel Willis, all fathers follow the same rules. Here are a few:

A dad will guard the thermostat, and none shall be permitted to adjust it. If a family member states that they are cold, a dad will respond, "Hi, Cold, I'm Dad."

Upon receiving a bill at a restaurant, a dad will say, "You got this one?" while passing the bill to a child.

Upon running into a fellow dad, a dad must greet him with one of the following:

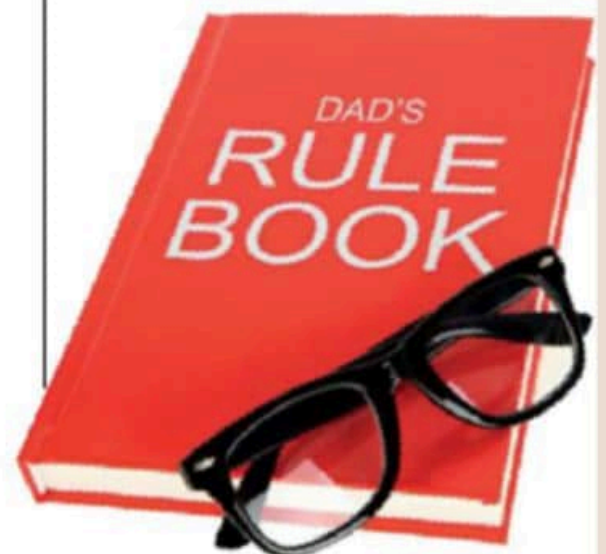
★ "Look at this guy!"

★ "Who let this guy in here?"

★ "I guess they're just letting anyone in here now."

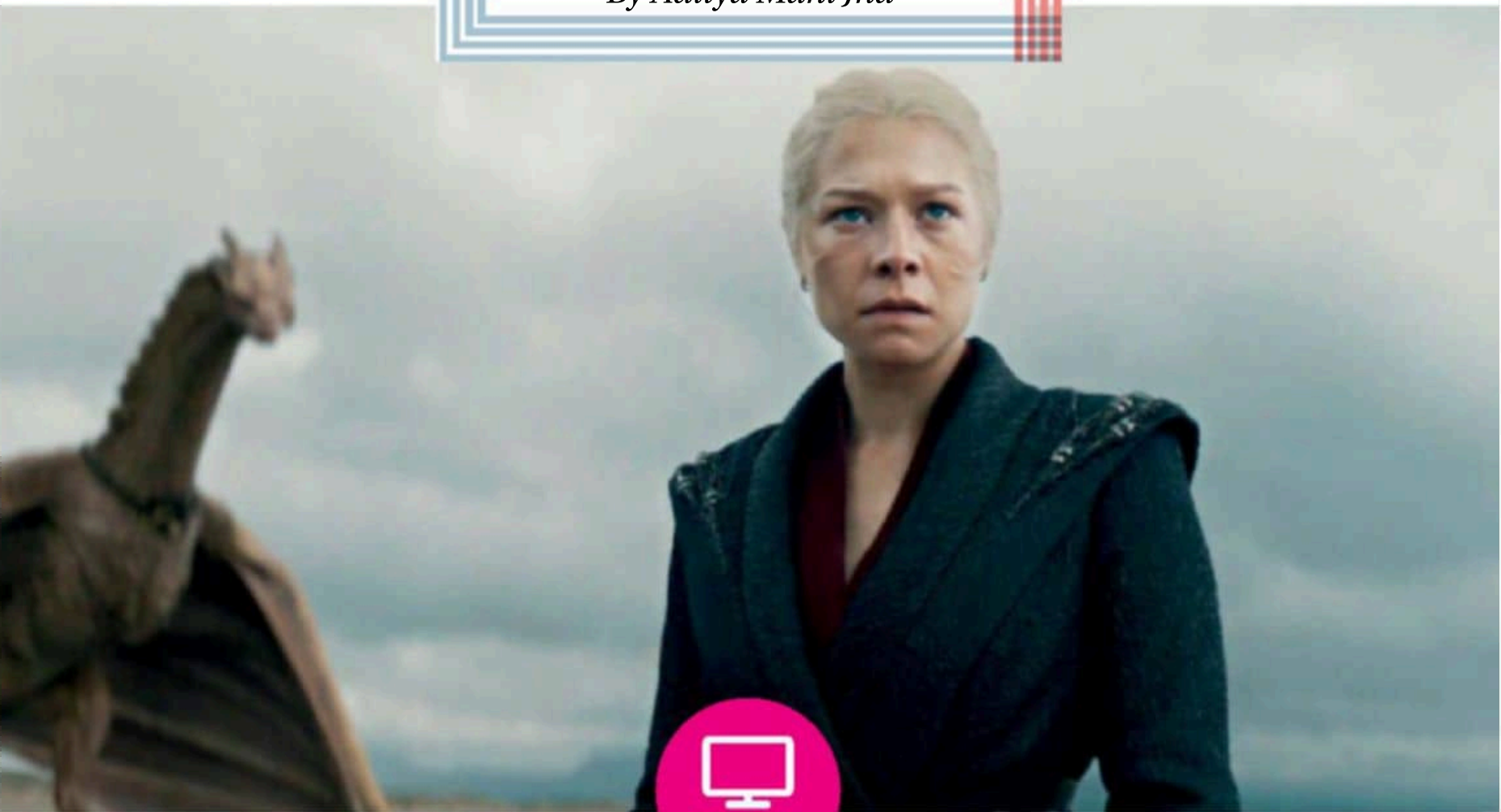
When speaking to an individual who had a haircut, a dad is required by Dad Law to comment: "Looks like you got your ears lowered."

If a dad is picking up a passenger, as the passenger approaches he's required to scoot the car up just a little. This may go on five to 10 more times.



RD RECOMMENDS

By Aditya Mani Jha



HOUSE OF THE DRAGON (Season 2)

On JioCinema (14 June)

No English-language streaming show has been more popular in India than *Game of Thrones*. So much so that Disney+Hotstar, which previously held the rights to air the show in India, would upload episodes at 7 am IST, so that Indian viewers can see it at the exact same time as American viewers. In the same vein, JioCinema is pulling out all stops for the *Game of Thrones* prequel series *House of the Dragon*, which tells the history of the Targaryen empire in detail. The second season of the show sees Queen Rhaenyra Targaryen (Emma D'Arcy) and her uncle/husband Prince Daemon Targaryen continuing their militant bid for the Iron Throne, much to the frustration of Ser Otto Hightower (Rhys Ifans) whose machinations have succeeded in placing his daughter Alicent upon the throne, following the death of her husband King Viserys.

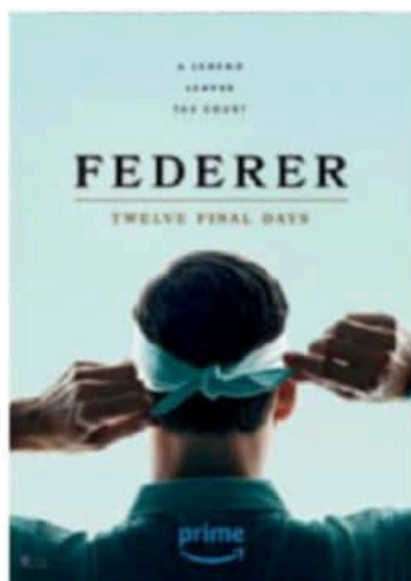
PHOTOS: IMDB



KALKI 2898 A.D.

In theatres (27 June)

Director Nag Ashwin's *Kalki 2898 A.D.*—the biggest and most expensive Indian film of all time—is a much-anticipated sci-fi action thriller story featuring several characters that are echoes of the mythological beings they're named after. Prabhas's titular character Bhairava/Kalki is the 'chosen one' in this universe, a bounty hunter-turned-warrior whose hidden powers can transform the world; Amitabh Bachchan's 'mysterious outsider' character is named Ashwathama, the Cain-like 'cursed immortal' doomed to wander the earth in perpetuity. As an impressive trailer revealed last month, actress Keerthy Suresh voices an AI system called Bujji which controls Bhairava's car, making her character similar to the much-loved JARVIS from the *Iron Man* movies. The visuals are looking world-class, to be honest, but it remains to be seen whether Ashwin's storytelling and world-building are up to the task.



FEDERER: TWELVE FINAL DAYS

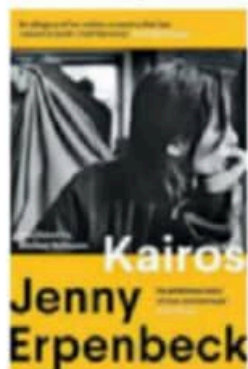
On Amazon Prime Video (20 June)

British filmmaker Asif Kapadia is known for some of the most acclaimed sports documentaries of all time, including *Senna* (2010) and *Diego Maradona* (2019). His films are driven not by boring 'talking heads' seated indoors, but by a strong sense of archival narrative and a novelist's eye for character arcs. For his latest effort, Kapadia followed tennis icon Roger Federer across the last fortnight of his storied career. If you're a Federer fan, you'll remember the wave of emotion that swept the globe during these fateful days. Kapadia's challenge, as always, is in capturing something that transcends the sport: What did the idea of Roger Federer mean for the billions who followed his career for two decades and more? What does his departure mean for the era of the 'genteel professional', as we move from soft-spoken, underplayed genius (Federer) to brash, divisive brilliance (Novak Djokovic)?

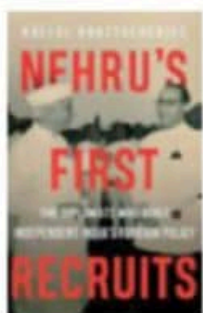


Kairos by Jenny Erpenbeck,
Michael Hoffmann (tr.) (Granta Books)

In the avant-garde Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* (2007), Heath Ledger and Charlotte Gainsbourg played a couple whose courtship and marriage end up lasting the exact duration of the US–Vietnam War, as though the atrocities unfolding there had somehow seeped down to their marriage. It's an audacious framing and I was reminded strongly of this while reading Jenny Erpenbeck's novel

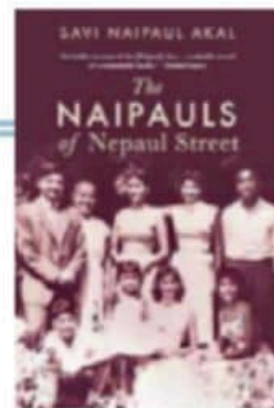


Kairos, recently awarded the International Booker Prize. This is a novel about the inception, life and dissolution of a May to December romance—one that mirrors the dwindling fortunes and eventual fall of East Germany. 19-year-old Katharina falls for the 53-year-old Hans, a married writer and broadcaster. The relationship's twists and turns provide allegorical fodder for Erpenbeck, who grew up in East Germany herself.



**Nehru's First Recruits:
The Diplomats Who Built
Independent India's Foreign Policy**
by Kallol Bhattacharjee, (HarperCollins)

As India took its first steps as an independent nation-state in 1947, it was paramount to present a united front to the world and our roadmap for the future. *Nehru's First Recruits* collects the stories of the pioneering diplomats who laid the ground for India's foreign policy. Bhattacharjee delves into the archives and comes up with some brilliant stories. This book is a great reminder of the delicacy of the diplomat's job, and the personal and professional sacrifices these men and women have to put in for the nation.



**The Naipauls of
Nepaul Street**
by Savi Naipaul Akal
(Speaking Tiger)

There is little doubt that the iconic novelist VS Naipaul makes for an intriguing subject, as the late Patrick French proved in 2008 with the biography *The World Is What It Is*. Now, Sir Vidia's sister Savi Naipaul Akal has written an account of their shared childhood in Trinidad. Fans of Naipaul's novel *A House For Mr Biswas* will recognize echoes of its central character in Savi's sketches of her father Seepersad, a journalist who died tragically early. Another tragic death, that of their brother Shiva (also a gifted novelist) haunts these pages, too. A must-read for Naipaul fans.



MUSIC

**WOMEN OF THE NOW**

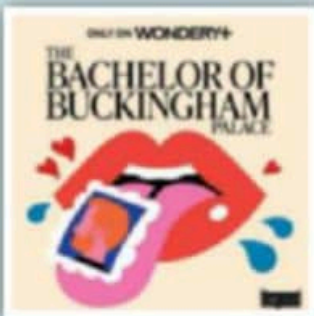
The EP (Extended Play) *Women of the Now* by FFS includes five songs—one apiece by Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Utsavi Jha, Sanjana Devarajan and Akanksha Sethi, plus a final track where all four singers are featured. ‘Nayee Nazar’ by Utsavi Jha is a classic feel-good acoustic guitar/mandolin track with dreamy vocals and relatively stripped-down production, a wistful harmonica being the only bit of flamboyance on display. Sanjana Devarajan’s ‘Behne Do’ features the sharp, contemporary, ‘trip-hop’ sound favoured by bands like Massive Attack. ‘Zahir’ by Akanksha Sethi has the most layered vocals on this EP and for good reason; Sethi is probably the most accomplished vocalist on display. However, the most addictive song here from a pop point of view is Sanjeeta Bhattacharya’s ‘Kaash’, which seems destined to be used in a Bollywood film one of these days. You might remember Bhattacharya as Helena the hacker from *Jawan*, and also from her YouTube videos as part of the Berklee Indian Ensemble, where she performed alongside A. R. Rahman.



PODCASTS

**SIMPLY HARSHA**

Harsha Bhogle, the veteran commentator often called the ‘voice of cricket’, finally has his own YouTube channel and it’s everything die-hard cricket fans would have hoped for. Amidst the shriek-a-minute commentary emanating from your typical IPL game, Bhogle’s reasoned, polished, compassionate commentary is a veritable oasis. It is also one of the best new podcast venues if you are looking for serious cricketing analysis.

**THE BACHELOR OF BUCKINGHAM PALACE**

In 2013, a dozen American women were whisked off to a gorgeous estate in the Berkshire countryside. Reality show producers told these women that they would be competing for the affections of none other than Prince Harry himself, during a show called *I Wanna Marry Harry*. In truth, however, the ‘Prince’ was an impersonator (a very good one, it has to be said) called Matthew Hicks. The Bachelor of Buckingham Palace retraces this crazy sequence of events, interviewing three of the women conned by the producers. Crucially, it also interviews Hicks himself, as he looks back upon his part in this fraud. Technically, this is a true-crime documentary but the sheer insanity of the premise makes it very different from its counterparts within the genre.



Kaarawaan

by **Gulammohammed Sheikh**, acrylic on canvas, 2019–2023, 80 x 257 inch

Any history of contemporary painting in India would be incomplete without highlighting the contribution of artist, theorist and teacher, Gulammohammed Sheikh, whose vast

knowledge of art, philosophy and literature has given shape to his work. *Kaarawaan* brings Sheikh's personal pantheon together in one canvas, providing insight into the movements and forces that inform his worldview, which he presents as a hopeful alternative to the divisions of the present. On a large ark, a vessel borrowed from Pahari painter Nainsukh's 18th-century *A Boat Adrift on a River*, Gandhi and

Kabir steady the churning of the waves that sweep the world. A dizzying array of visual quotations appear as fragments of existing paintings and portraits of individuals. *Kaarawaan* demonstrates one of the central tenets of Sheikh's approach to painting, which he has explained thus: "Living in India means living simultaneously in several times and cultures. One often walks into 'medieval' situations and runs into



‘primitive’ people. The past exists as a living entity alongside the present, each illuminating and sustaining the other. As times and cultures converge, the citadels of purism explode. Traditional and modern, private and public, the inside and the outside are being continually splintered and reunited.” These ideas held their own when Sheikh wrote this in 1981 in the catalogue of the exhibition ‘Place for People,’ which

announced a historic shift in Indian painting. They also hold true today if we are keen to halt the erasure of history and learn from radical dissenters of the past to create progressive visions of the future. Sheikh invites us onto the ark with visionaries like Bhupen Khakhar, Frida Kahlo, Leonardo da Vinci, Rabindranath Tagore, Saadat Hasan Manto as well as women from Amrita Sher-Gil’s *Bride’s Toilet* (1937), the figure of

‘Peace’ from the mural *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* by the 14th-century Sienese painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti, and even unnamed protestors of the anti-CAA/NRC sit-ins. As much as it is an encyclopaedia of art-history traditions and philosophies, and an accomplished condensation of Sheikh’s career, *Kaarawaan* is also a guide for those looking for ways to counter fascism. **R**

— BY ZEENAT NAGREE

ME & MY SHELF

Former director-general of the Delhi Policy Group, **Radha Kumar** is an academic, author and policy analyst. Her most recent book, *The Republic Relearnt: Renewing Indian Democracy (1947-2024)*, explores the triumphs and the democratic decay of the Indian Republic.



Speaking of Siva TRANSLATED BY A. K. RAMANUJAM, *Penguin Classics*, ₹240

My mother gave me this collection of devotional poems from Karnataka's Virasaiva movement when I was 20. I had not, until then, discovered the pared-down lyricism through which regional poets explored the powerful relation of self to God. I return to this translation time and again.



Sappho—A New Translation

BY SAPPHO, TRANSLATED BY MARY BARNARD, *University of California Press*, ₹1,619

I came upon Sappho's poems in this translation when I was 16 and, as a few years later with the Ramanujam collection, I was struck by how fresh, even contemporary, they seemed, and continue to seem each time I re-read them. My 21-year-old daughter feels the same.

A Lover's Discourse: Fragments BY ROLAND BARTHES, TRANSLATED BY RICHARD HOWARD, *Hill and Wang*, ₹1,216

A partner gave me this book in 1982 and I turn to it whenever I need to remember the poetry of love. I have never been able to read any other Barthes—but this one I treasure.

The Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946 to 1950

PARLIAMENT DIGITAL LIBRARY

I started reading these debates 10 years ago and wept for the people we had lost. I have now re-read them in part several times over, moved each time by what they reveal of our founders' love for their country and its people.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, DIGITIZED BY GANDHI SEVAGRAM ASHRAM (VOL: 1 TO 98)

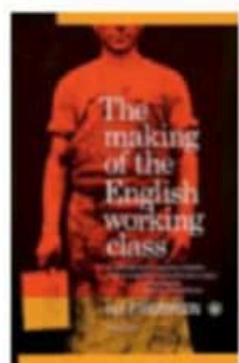
Unlike the other writers listed above, I find Gandhi's language somewhat

stilted and often mentally edit him for the insights that leap off his page. Yet it is to him that I turn for understanding of the deep roots of Indian political culture, its potential for change and what an inspired political leader can achieve.

Writings and Speeches of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar

DIGITIZED BY THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (VOLUMES 1 TO 40)

This 40-volume set provides counterpoint insights to Gandhi's. Reading the two in tandem, on common issues or the same events, is a must to encompass the debates that remain relevant today.



The Making of the English Working Class

BY E. P. THOMPSON,

Penguin Books, ₹872

While writing my PhD thesis, this iconic work

taught me how history could make real a people and a culture I had never known and ask how industrialization had disrupted and transformed lives in my own country.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947 to 1964,

EDITED BY G. PARTHASARATHI,

Oxford University Press India, ₹4,995

More than almost any other set of reflections, Nehru's letters reveal the patterns, shifts and struggles of a country seeking to invent itself. There

is no better source to grasp the complexities of administration, especially if read together with Sardar Patel's letters, edited by Durga Das.



Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism

BY SHEILA ROWBOTHAM, LYNNE SEGAL


AND HILARY WAINWRIGHT,

The Merlin Press, ₹2626

This is more than a book to me, it was a manifesto in my formative twenties. It embodied the humanist feminism that I had discovered as a student, and it raised fundamental questions of the Left's relation to women's liberation: though I was active in India and Sheila in the UK, we became friends and I continue to seek her advice and consolation through the decades.

The Very Best of the Common Man

BY R. K. LAXMAN, Penguin India, ₹181

I grew up with Laxman's common man. I would wait eagerly for the newspaper as a child, to see what this beloved figure with a bulbous nose, wild tufts of hair and air of good-humoured skepticism had to say. I believe I imbibed a subliminal understanding of Indian politics through Laxman in those years when I was not interested in it. Laxman's common man remains an exemplar for me, though I doubt I could be so detached. 

Brain

GAMES

SHARPEN YOUR MIND

Fact or Fiction?

MEDIUM Determine whether each statement is fact or fiction. To reveal the solution to the bonus question at the bottom, write the letters indicated by your responses in the corresponding numbered blanks. Turn the page upside down for the answers.

1. Babies usually say “dada” before they say “mama.”

FACT: **M** FICTION: **C**

2. The majority of the oxygen we breathe comes from trees.

FACT: **O** FICTION: **U**

3. USA’s three longest bridges are all in Louisiana.

FACT: **S** FICTION: **N**

4. Juneteenth has its own flag.

FACT: **K** FICTION: **C**

5. Alice Cooper’s song ‘School’s Out’ came out at the end of June.

FACT: **I** FICTION: **E**

6. In the Middle Ages, people thought the Earth was flat.

FACT: **E** FICTION: **T**

7. The most shoplifted book is the Bible.

FACT: **E** FICTION: **R**

8. Cicadas confuse the sound of lawn mowers for mates.

FACT: **E** FICTION: **G**

9. Bananas are berries.

FACT: **R** FICTION: **E**

BONUS QUESTION Which persona dominated Pablo Picasso’s later work?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Answers: 1. Fact; one theory is that it's easier to pronounce. 2. Fiction; roughly half comes from the ocean. 3. Fact. 4. Fact; it's red, white and blue and features a starburst. 5. Fiction; the single was released in April 1972. 6. Fiction; that the Earth is round has been common knowledge among the educated since the ninth century. 7. Fact; despite the "thou shalt not steal" part. 8. Fact; do your mowing in the early morning or late evening to avoid getting swarmed. 9. Fact; technically, "berries" are fruits that come from flowers with only one ovary. Bonus Question: Musketeer.

Piece of Cake

EASY Your new bakery business is off to a great start: You already have four cake orders. You've been asked to write something in icing atop each, but now you can't remember which message goes with which cake. Thankfully, you still have some of your notes.

From the following clues, can you determine which message to write on each cake?



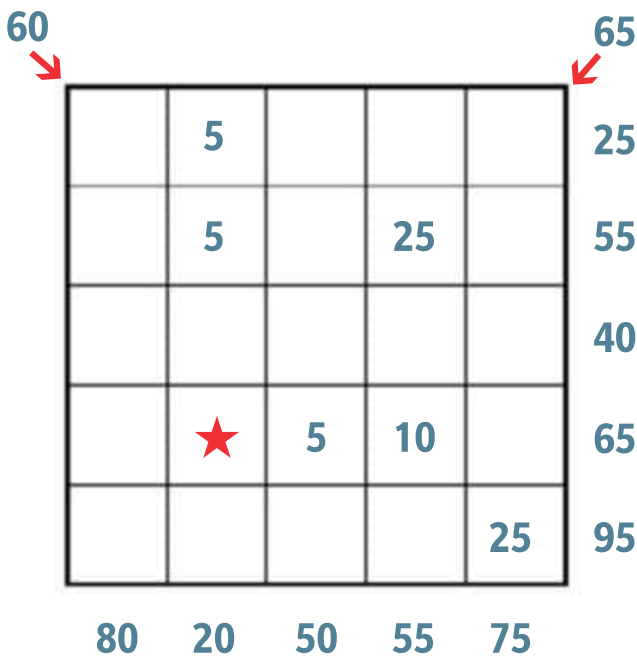
Cakes

- Black Forest
- Carrot
- Red velvet
- Seven-layer

Message

- "Congrats, Grad!"
- "Happy Retirement!"
- "Happy Anniversary!"
- "Happy Father's Day!"

- ◆ The Black Forest cake is for someone who isn't married and doesn't have kids.
- ◆ The carrot cake is for someone who celebrates the event on the cake every year.
- ◆ Neither the dad nor the grad in question requested a seven-layer cake.
- ◆ The person who ordered red velvet requested that the cake be shaped like a heart.



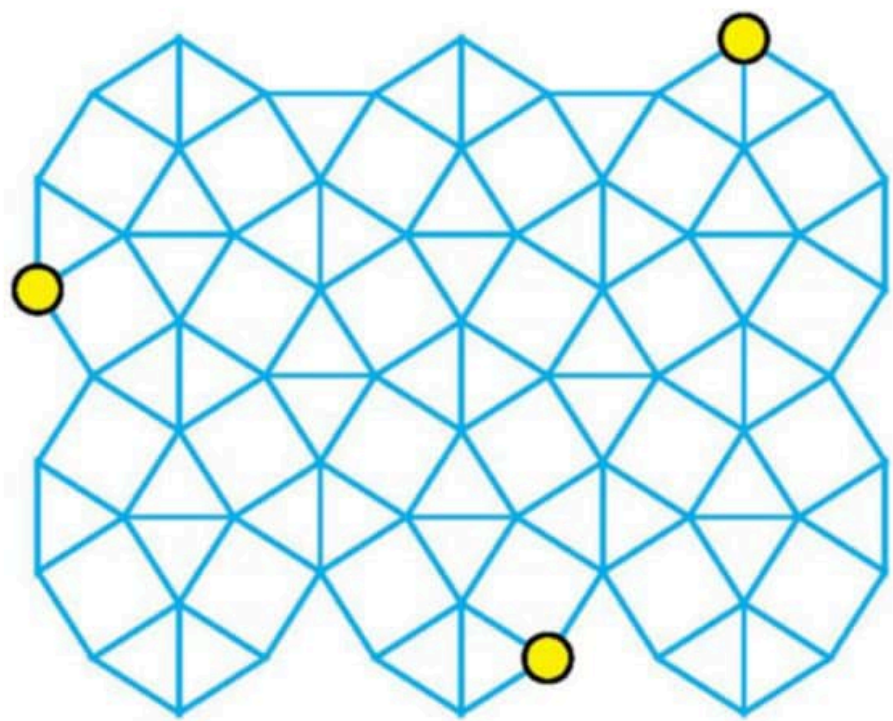
Place Your Chips

DIFFICULT You have a stack of poker chips that are each worth ₹5, ₹10 or ₹25. Place them on the squares of this grid—no more than one chip per square—so that their value totals the amount of rupees shown for each row, column and long diagonal. Not every square has a chip on it. Several chips and one blank space (designated by a star) have been placed to get you started. Can you finish the grid?

EMILY GOODMAN (PIECE OF CAKE). KRUGLI/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS (CAKES). FRASER SIMPSON (PLACE YOUR CHIPS)

The Last to Know

MEDIUM The diagram below represents a social network, and each intersection is a person. The yellow dots are people who all know the same secret. They'll pass it on, but only to the people who are immediately adjacent to them in the network. It's a good secret, so they tell everyone they can, then those people pass it on to all the people they're connected to, and so on. After four rounds of telling new people, everyone knows the secret ... except one person. Who is the last to know?



This, Not That

EASY Like most little kids, Amanda and Everett can be very fussy. They like only certain things. Can you figure out why they like what they do from the following clues?



- ◆ They like pajamas but not slippers.
- ◆ They like seltzer but not soda.
- ◆ They like singing but not dancing.
- ◆ They like hopscotch but not jump-rope.
- ◆ They like hummus but not chickpeas.

ANSWERS

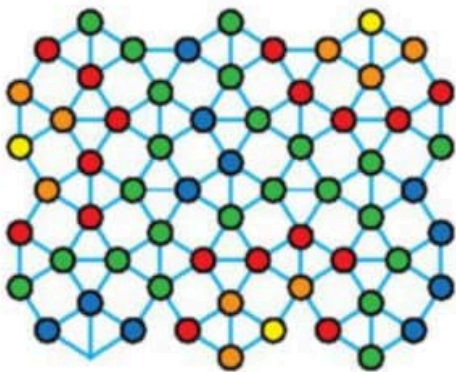
Piece of Cake

You should write "Happy Retirement!" on the seven-layer cake, "Congrats, Grad!" on the Black Forest cake, "Happy Father's Day!" on the carrot cake, and "Happy Anniversary!" on the red velvet cake.

Place Your Chips

10	5	5	★	5
10	5	5	25	10
10	★	10	10	10
25	★	5	10	25
25	10	25	10	25

The Last to Know



This, Not That

They like words with only one kind of vowel.

CREDITS: DARREN RIGBY (LAST TO KNOW). EMILY GOODMAN (THIS, NOT THAT). DIGITALVISION VECTORS/GETTY IMAGES (PAJAMAS)

WORD POWER

We're embracing the quiet life in this issue by featuring words with silent letters. Any letter can be mum in English—except V, which is always pronounced. (Who knew?) Do you have the knowledge to wrangle this quiz? No need to keep that hush-hush: Turn to the next page for the answers.

BY *Sarah Chassé*

1. pseudo *adj.*

(‘soo-doh)

- A** holy
- B** phony
- C** highbrow

2. gnu *n.*

(noo)

- A** horned frog
- B** African antelope
- C** flightless bird

3. codger *n.*

(‘kah-jr)

- A** elderly oddball
- B** handheld radio
- C** boarding house

4. limn *v.*

(lim)

- A** beat up
- B** branch out
- C** outline

5. apropos *adj.*

(a-pruh-‘poh)

- A** estimated
- B** suitable
- C** stolen

6. wrack *v.*

(rak)

- A** ruin
- B** sob
- C** stretch

7. coxswain *n.*

(‘cahk-sn)

- A** tail feather
- B** head sailor
- C** antique pistol

8. aesthetic *adj.*

(uhs-‘theh-tik)

- A** severe
- B** numb
- C** attractive

9. knell *n.* (nel)

- A** bell’s clang
- B** fierce wind
- C** grassy hill

10. rapport *n.*

(ruh-‘por)

- A** repetitive sound
- B** French cheese
- C** friendly relationship

11. chthonic *adj.*

(‘thah-nik)

- A** of the underworld
- B** on-and-off
- C** bitter-tasting

12. aplomb *n.*

(uh-‘plahm)

- A** shock
- B** poise
- C** haste

13. evanesce *v.*

(eh-vuh-‘nes)

- A** debate endlessly
- B** divide in half
- C** disappear like vapour

14. mitzvah *n.*

(‘mits-vuh)

- A** charitable deed
- B** 13th birthday
- C** ancient curse

15. viscount *n.*

(‘vigh-kownt)

- A** arched bridge
- B** British nobleman
- C** poll tax

Talk like a Townie

You know to leave out the s sound in Louisville, along with that c in Tucson. But, you might be flubbing these other locales with silent letters: Mackinac (‘ma-kuh-naw) Island, Michigan; Natchitoches (‘na-kuh-tuhsh), Louisiana; Schley (sly), North Carolina; and Worcester (‘wu-str), Massachusetts.



Word Power ANSWERS

1. pseudo (B) *phony*
“Instead of listening to pseudo health experts on Instagram, why don’t you ask your doctor?”

2. gnu
(B) *African antelope*
Gnus have boxy faces and big horns.

3. codger
(A) *elderly oddball*
Milton is a cranky codger who thinks smartphones are just a fad.

4. limn (C) *outline*
In Renaissance paintings, golden halos limn the heads of saints.

5. apropos (B) *suitable*
Nera’s sombre black outfit was more apropos for a funeral than a wedding.

6. wrack (A) *ruin*
Wracked by wildfires last

year, the island of Maui is working to rebuild.

7. coxswain
(B) *head sailor*
As a coxswain in the Coast Guard, Ashima is responsible for managing the boat and its crew.

8. aesthetic (C) *attractive*
Kai’s all-white living room is aesthetic, but not exactly practical with his three puppies.

9. knell (A) *bell’s clang*
After the queen died, the knells from the royal church rang for hours.

10. rapport
(C) *friendly relationship*
I didn’t like my new boss at first, but we’ve developed a rapport.

11. chthonic
(A) *of the underworld*
In Greek mythology, the chthonic watchdog Cerberus guarded the gates of hell.

12. aplomb (B) *poise*
The comedian handled the hecklers with aplomb, seeming to ignore their taunts.

13. evanesce
(C) *disappear like vapour*
A rainbow suddenly appeared in the sky, then evanesced into thin air.

14. mitzvah
(A) *charitable deed*
Isaac tries to perform a simple mitzvah every week, such as volunteering at a local soup kitchen.

15. viscount
(B) *British nobleman*
The TV show *Bridgerton* follows the romantic entanglements of viscounts, dukes and duchesses.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: Whisper
10-12: Whistle
13-15: Whoop

TRIVIA

BY *Naorem Anuja*



1. The Earth's temperature without the natural greenhouse effect would be well below freezing point. True or false?

2. What is the term for each of the 10 books into which the Rigveda is divided?

3. In Greek Mythology, Achilles' mother dipped him as a baby headfirst into a famous underworld river, which made him nearly invulnerable. What is the name of the river?

4. Feathers from the left wing of a bird were often preferred for quills. True or False?

5. What is the name given to the malware designed to take advantage of an unknown or unaddressed flaw in computer hardware, software and firmware?

6. The Keibul Lamjao National Park located in the Loktak Lake, Manipur is known for what unique floating biomass?

7. Launched in 1994, Amazon.com initially only sold one product. Which was the product?

8. Basketball player and hall-of-fame athlete Michael Jordan retired in 1993 and joined a league to play which sport?

9. Which state has the largest number of constituencies in Lok Sabha?

10. Where was the Caesar salad invented?

11. Which Indian city hosted the first Kabaddi World Cup in 2004?

12. Who was the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature?

13. The first woman to go space in 1963, Valentina Tereshkova hailed from which country?

Answers: **1.** True. Without the natural greenhouse effect, the average global temperature would be around -18°C (0°F). **2.** Mandala **3.** River Styx, it is one of the five rivers of the underworld. **4.** True. They were preferred because they curved away for right-handed writers. **5.** Zero-day attack, because the developer has zero days to fix the flaw, as the attackers have already exploited the vulnerability. **6.** Phumdi, a mass of soil, vegetation and organic matter at various stages of decomposition. **7.** The online retailer offered only books initially; it expanded to merchandise beyond books in 1998. **8.** Minor league baseball. He signed with the Birmingham Barons, an affiliate of the Chicago White Sox. **9.** Uttar Pradesh **10.** Caesar salad was invented in Tijuana, Mexico, in the 1920s. **11.** Mumbai **12.** Rabindra Nath Tagore **13.** Russia



A Trusted Friend in a Complicated World

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