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WELCOME TO THE SHOW!

I think we're getting our Christmas bonuses today. The boss came into the office carrying rolls of quarters.

PRESIDENTIAL WIT & WISDOM ([click here to buy the book](#))

(None on the weekends.)

"I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life; I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well." – Theodore Roosevelt

BIBLE VERSE OF THE DAY

"Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit." --*Proverbs 15:4*

Psalm 62:7 = My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

HEARTLIGHT DAILY VERSE, PRAYER & THOUGHT

(From VerseOfTheDay.com)

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. — Romans 12:17-18

Thought: REDEMPTIVELY — That's how Jesus lived! He sought to make a difference in the lives of others. His goal wasn't getting even, getting what was rightfully his, or even winning the arguments. His focus was to interact with people redemptively and to leave them more blessed than where he found them.

Prayer: Forgive me, O God, for the grudges I've harbored and the evil things I've thought about others. Help me to see and to value them as Jesus does. In his name I pray. Amen.

The Thoughts and Prayers for Today's Verse are written by Phil Ware. You can email questions or comments to phil@heartlight.org.

"BIRTHDAY VERSE" OF THE DAY (*The chapter and verse correspond to the month and day!*)

Proverbs 12:20 NIV = There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace.

TODAY IS WEDNESDAY – DECEMBER 20, 2017

(NOTE: Some holidays may be duplicated due to various calendars reporting conflicting dates)

WEIRD, WACKY, STRANGE, ZANY, ODD, BIZARRE, QUIRKY, UNUSUAL HOLIDAYS!
THERE ARE ONLY 04 SHOPPING DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS.

Today is **I'VE GOT MY BIG FAT GUY PANTS ON DAY**, a day to wear anything you want as long as it's comfortable and roomy. ***Actually, I've been wearing my fat guy pants ever since Thanksgiving dinner.

Today is **NATIONAL GO CAROLING DAY**. ***Even if your name isn't Carol. I prefer to "go a wassailing" actually – that's good stuff.

Today is the first day of **INTERNATIONAL LIPSTICK WEEK**. ***Why do they call it lipstick when your lips can still move after you apply it?

Today is **BPT REMEMBRANCE DAY**, a day to see if you can remember what breakfast was like before Pop Tarts. ([Comedian Brian Regan talks about Pop Tarts!](#))

TODAY IS ALSO...

International Human Solidarity Day
Games Day
Mudd Day
National Sangria Day
Poet Laureat Day
World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

COMING UP NEXT *(Just a list, we are not endorsing the holidays posted below. Find more holidays and link to their websites at BrownieLocks.com)*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

Ann & Samantha Day (Summer & Winter Solstices. Also June 21)
Celebrate Short Fiction Day (Always on Winter Solstice)
Crossword Puzzle Day
Forefathers Day
Free Shipping Day (3rd Thursday at Participating Retailers)
Humbug Day
International Dalek Remembrance Day
National Flashlight Day (Shortest Day of The Year)
National Homeless Persons' Remembrance Day
National Re-gifting Day (3d Thursday)
Phileas Fogg Win A Wager Day
Short Girl Appreciation Day (Shortest day of the year)
World Peace Day/Winter Solstice
Winter (Winter Solstice) 11:28 AM EST
Yalda
Yule

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

Be A Lover of Silence Day

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

Festivus
Human Light Celebration

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve
Egg Nog Day

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

A'Phabet Day or No "L" Day
Christmas
Christmas Pudding Day

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

Boxing Day (Canada)
National Candy Cane Day
National Thank-you Note Day
National Whiner's Day

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

Free Balloon Day (SpongeBob Squarepants)
Howdy Doody Day
Visit The Zoo Day

ON THIS DAY

1879: Thomas Edison demonstrated his incandescent light at Menlo Park, New Jersey.

1920: English-born Leslie Townes Hope became a U.S. citizen at age 17. He had lived in the U.S. since he was five. Though he dreamed of becoming a boxer, instead he became comedian Bob Hope.

1938: The kinescope was patented by Russian immigrant Vladimir Zworykin. Today known as the cathode ray tube or CRT, which until recently was used in most television sets and computer monitors. ***Remember those big heavy TVs and computer monitors that would throw your back out whenever you tried to take them out of the car? Yep – those are the ones.

1946: The film "It's a Wonderful Life" premiered in New York City. It starred Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey, Donna Reed as Mary Bailey, Henry Travers as Clarence Oddbody (trying to earn his wings) and Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Potter.

1963: The Berlin Wall was opened for the first time to West Berliners, who were allowed one-day visits to relatives in the Eastern sector for the holidays.

1975: Guitarist Joe Walsh joined The Eagles, replacing Bernie Leadon.

1988: Warner Chappell Publishing paid \$25-million to buy Birchtree Limited, including Birchtree's rights to the song "Happy Birthday to You." The song's copyright will remain in effect until 2030. ***Meaning, every time you sing Happy Birthday you can expect a bunch of lawyers with a "cease and desist" order barging down your door. Now have a great birthday.

1988: Neil Fletcher Sr. died at age 84. He invented the corny dog.

1988: A woman calling herself "Billie Jean Jackson" pleaded guilty to violating a restraining order to stay away from singer Michael Jackson. She claimed to be Jackson's wife and the mother of his children.

1989: A 20-year-old Wichita woman was kidnapped outside her workplace, taken to a local mall and was then forced to shop against her will for five hours. ***Believe it or not, both the police and her husband believed her.

1998: A 15-pound concrete garden frog was returned to its home in Swansea, Massachusetts, after a seven-month vacation. The owners had received a letter, saying the frog just needed to get away from the grind of garden life, but would be home for the holidays. They also received photos and postcards from the frog in New York, Venezuela, Venice, and Indonesia.

1998: A Houston woman gave birth to seven more babies after delivering the first infant 12 days earlier. The smallest baby died a week later. They were the only known set of octuplets to be born alive in the United States (until January 2009 when Nadya Suleman gave birth to her eight babies).

2002: Ted Williams' eldest daughter, Bobby-Jo, dropped her objections to her siblings' decision to have the Hall of Famer's body frozen at a cryonics lab in Arizona.

2003: Judge Tom DuBois in Columbia City, Indiana, continued his Christmas amnesty tradition of letting minor traffic offenders off without a fine -- if they stand up in court and sing a Christmas carol. Some singers need a little help, so he sometimes forms duets, trios and quartets. Most offenders sing either "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," or "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

TODAY IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

1560: The first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland took place.

1576: Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury, sends a letter to Queen Elizabeth protesting her order that he tell preachers throughout England to stop speaking so often. She felt three or four sermons per year were sufficient. Grindal's refusal to enforce her wishes earned him house arrest.

1803: Death of Samuel Hopkins, the first Congregationalist pastor to become an abolitionist (calling for the end of slavery). He had studied under Jonathan Edwards.

1913: Howard Goss and Eudorus N. Bell call for a general council of Pentecostals (the Apostolic Faith Movement) because excesses, spiritual error, and lack of education were threatening to destroy it. Out of this emerges the Assemblies of God.

HOLLYWOOD, SPORTS AND CELEBRITY FIGURE BIRTHDAYS

- o actor (21 Jump Street, Moneyball, Wolf of Wall Street), Jonah Hill, 34
- o actor ("The Practice") Michael Badalucco 63 ([audio clip](#))
- o actress ("The West Wing") Jenny Agutter is 64 ([audio clip](#))

BEE-BOP BIRTHDAYS

(Music Artist Birthdays From SongFacts.com)

1871 : Henry Kimball Hadley

1898 : Irene Dunne

1939 : Kim Weston

1944 : Bobby Colomby ([Blood, Sweat & Tears](#))

1945 : Peter Criss [Kiss]; Born George Peter John Criscuola

1948 : Little Stevie Wright ([The Easybeats](#))

1949 : Alan Parsons ([The Alan Parsons Project](#))

1966 : Chris Robinson ([The Black Crowes](#))

1990 : [JoJo](#)

SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE (Answering questions that have plagued mankind for minutes!)

Why do we use Poinsettias at Christmastime?

Early Mexican Christians called it the "Flower of Holy Night" and legend has it that a small boy was upset on Christmas Eve because he had nothing to offer the Christ Child on His birthday. While the boy was praying at his village church altar, a flower sprang up with its brilliant red and green. The plant was named after the American ambassador to Mexico, J. R. Poinsett, who found out they grew well in the U.S. after sending some to his home in S. Carolina. Poinsettias have long been considered poisonous to humans, but according to the POISINDEX information service, a 50 lb child would have to eat around 500-600 leaves. The AMA handbook just lists occasional vomiting as side effects of ingestion of leaves.

NEWS KICKERS

(None on weekends. Want a customizable version with your specific station tag, FREE? [Email me for more information!](#))

NEW NEWS KICKERS...

(Not posted on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

The animatronic Donald Trump is now part of the Hall of Presidents attraction at Disneyland and Disney World. Some have said he looks more like John Voigt than Trump though. ***Which explains why the animatronic Angelina Jolie will have nothing to do with him.

In Arlington, Arizona, 18-year-old Hipolito Rodriguez has been arrested for shooting at power plant employees in the desert-and it was his sandals that did him in. According to deputies Rodriguez was wearing unique sandals that exactly matched the prints left at the shooting scene. The sandals were made from recycled tires and numbers from those tires made the distinctive shoe prints at the scene. Later officers searched Rodriguez's home and found a shotgun they believe was used in the murders. When they interviewed Rodriguez, they found he had meth on him. He was booked into jail on two counts of aggravated assault and one count of promoting prison contraband. (AZFamily.com) ***I'm guessing his life started spiraling out of control when he realized his name was "Hipolito". Sounds like he was named after a hippo wearing a tutu.

ISIS has put out a video, claiming that it has hacked the U.S. Army and State Department and is sending assassins to employees' homes. ***If they dress as Girl Scouts we're all doomed.

In Ireland, two straight senior men are getting married because, by doing that, one won't have to pay an inheritance tax on a house when the other dies. ***Sounds like the LGBTQ version of a green card.

TMZ says that Selena Gomez's mom is so upset about her getting back together with the Justin Bieber that she's been hospitalized. ***So we're not the only ones who think Selena is nuts for going back to him.

NEWS KICKER EVERGREENS...

(Not posted on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

A recent study offers evidence to support what many people have learned for themselves: never go grocery shopping when you're hungry. Researchers found that people who hadn't eaten all afternoon chose more high-calorie foods in a supermarket than those who were given a snack just before food shopping. ***Following the same rule, you probably also should not go clothes shopping while naked.

Scientists have known for a long time that lycopene, the chemical that gives tomatoes their red color, fights cancer. Now, new research indicates the yellow liquid surrounding the tomato's seeds prevents heart attacks and strokes. The fluid keeps the blood from forming clots, which can clog arteries, interrupting blood flow to the heart or brain. ***So from now on, be sure to ask for your pizzas with EXTRA sauce.

What if you could be fat but avoid heart disease or diabetes? Scientists trying to break the fat-and-disease link increasingly say inflammation is the key. In the quest to prove it, a major study is under way testing whether an anti-inflammatory drug - an old, cheap cousin of aspirin - can fight the Type 2 diabetes spurred by obesity. And intriguing new research illustrates how those yellow globs of fat lurking under the skin are more than a storage site for extra calories. They're a toxic neighborhood where inflammation appears to be born. ***So I can be fit and healthy if I just take Ibuprofen?

A survey of more than 7,000 U.S. mothers reveals that the average mom rates her stress level an 8.5 out of 10. What's got them so stressed? For 46 percent of moms, husbands are a bigger source of stress than kids. ***I'd like to take this moment to apologize to my wife. Okay... moving on...

New research (James Cook University) could drastically reduce the impact the agricultural industry has on the global environment. A professor of aquaculture at James Cook University in Australia has been studying the effects seaweed can have on cow's methane production. They discovered adding a small amount of dried seaweed to a cow's diet can reduce the amount of methane a cow produces by up to 99 percent. ***Forget the cows - start putting seaweed in Taco Bell and Chipotle menu items!

AS THE JUNGLE TURNS

(Not updated on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

[CLICK HERE](#) TO DOWNLOAD WEDNESDAY'S EPISODE

OPEN: When last we left the jungle, all of the animals were worried about not being able to get enough done in the day. They held seminars on time-management, made lists of things to do, tried to prioritize their chores in order of importance - they even got up an hour earlier each day just to have more time... but that wasn't working either, because they just found more they had to do!

CLOSE: So now the animals are so busy that can't even find a single day off to spend time together! How busy can animals get? We'll find out how busy next time - As the Jungle Turns!

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MOMENT OF DUH

SOMEONE SHOULD DECK HIS HALLS

When you think of Santa, you think of a white beard, big belly and red suit, right? Children in London had the unfortunate experience of seeing Santa in handcuffs being hauled away by the police.

The incident took place at a resort's Christmas parade. But instead of a jolly Ol' Saint Nick, young onlookers saw Santa Claus embroiled in a fist fight with a teenager in a nearby marketplace. Police had to cuff and arrest both men in front of distraught little kids who were in tears. The Santa in question was not part of the resort's procession and police assured the children that the brawling Santa was a fake and that the "real" Santa was on his sleigh in the parade. ***MARLAR: Sounds like someone is going to be on the "naughty list" for a long time.

TOP TEN

TOP TEN WAYS TO CONFUSE SANTA

10. Take everything out of your house as if it's just been robbed. When Santa arrives, show up dressed like a policeman and say, "Well, well. They always return to the scene of the crime."
9. While he's in the house, go find his sleigh and write him a speeding ticket.
8. Leave him a note explaining that you've gone away for the holidays. Ask if he would mind watering your plants.
7. While he's in the house, replace all his reindeer with exact replicas. Then wait and see what happens when he tries to get them to fly.
6. Keep an angry bull in your living room. If you think a bull goes crazy when he sees a little red cape, wait until he sees that big, red Santa suit!
5. Leave a note by the telephone, telling Santa that Mrs. Claus called and wanted him to pick up some milk and a loaf of bread on his way home.
4. While he's in the house, find the sleigh and sit in it. As soon as he comes back and sees you, tell him that he shouldn't have missed that last payment, and take off.
3. Paint "hoof-prints" all over your face and clothes. While he's in the house, go out on the roof. When he comes back up, act like you've been "trampled." Threaten to sue.
2. Leave out a copy of your Christmas list with last-minute changes and corrections.
1. Dress up like the Easter Bunny. Wait for Santa to come and then say, "This neighborhood ain't big enough for the both of us."

THE FILES OF LAW & DISORDER

A helpful tip as you deal with Christmas decorations this year... throw away the Christmas lights from last year and just buy new ones. Otherwise you might end up not only frustrated, but in the files of Law & Disorder!

FILE #1: James Craig Wilson planned to spend the afternoon decorating for the holidays. Instead, upset by mishaps with his outdoor Christmas lights, he grabbed his .45-caliber pistol and began firing into the ground behind his suburban home. He ended up in the Clark County Jail for investigation of reckless endangerment. Wilson told sheriff's deputies he started getting angry when he found the lights were tangled. His wife had balled them up and tossed them in the garage after last Christmas, he said. As he tried to unroll the string of lights in his driveway, his daughter returned home and drove over the lights. Wilson told his wife not to be alarmed while he shot off some rounds in the back yard to let off steam. He sent his daughter across the street to tell a reserve deputy who lives there that no one had been hurt. Soon after, five deputies arrived and arrested him. "I thought discharging my gun would help me discharge my anger," Wilson said. "I guess I'm going to lose my concealed weapons permit."

FILE #2: You never see this one on TV. In Watertown, Massachusetts, 23-year-old Kudzai Kwenda was playing around at home and accidentally locked handcuffs on his wrist. He figured if anyone could help him it would be the police. So he sauntered down to the nearby police station all handcuffed up. Must have seemed like a gift from heaven for the officers there. Seems Kudzai forgot there happened to be an arrest warrant out for him. So they got the cuffs off, and then put him in a cell.

FILE #3: Normally you lose money if someone were to steal your debit card. In the case of Michael Halford, he actually made some. It seems the thief placed a horse-racing bet, by phone, using Michael's debit card. And as a Godly justice would have it, the bet won \$745. Why is it "Godly justice?" Because the bet was paid for by the thief using his victim's (Michael's) debit card, the winnings automatically went into Michael's checking account.

STRANGE LAW: In Maine, after January 14th you will be charged a fine for having your Christmas decorations still up.

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON DRUGS

“This Is Your Brain On Drugs” is about people doing dumb things under the influence, but addiction is no laughing matter. If you or someone you know needs help, there’s a toll free number you can call 1-800-438-0380. That’s the Addiction Hope and Help Line at 1-800-438-0380.

It was a Big N’ Tasty burger and one trip to jail “to-go” for a woman suspected of DWI in St. Paul.

Police said a 26-year-old woman pulled into a McDonald’s drive-thru with squad car lights flashing and sirens blaring behind her. The woman had time to eat a couple of fries before police caught up to her and arrested her on suspicion of drunken driving. The woman said she saw the cruiser at the McDonald’s, heard an officer honking the horn and figured she was getting pulled over because her driver’s license was revoked. She told the St. Paul Pioneer Press in a jail interview: "I thought they were fixing to mess with me. ... I was fixing to get something to eat."

PHONER PHUN

What are you asking Santa for this year?

BIBLE BRAIN BUSTER!

QUESTION: According to the Law, how much tax did all adult Israelites have to pay when the census was taken?

ANSWER: A half shekel each. (Exodus 30:12-16)

QUESTION IMPOSSIBLE

QUESTION: In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of fried fish, lettuce, and what vegetable?

ANSWER: Spinach. The meal is traditionally eaten after the Christmas Eve service, in commemoration of the supper eaten by Mary on the evening before Christ's birth.

TRUE OR FALSE

Pay attention! If our next player doesn’t answer all ten T/F questions correctly we start all over from question #1! First person to answer question #10 correctly is our winner!

1. The title of the first Chipmunks Christmas song was simply, "The Chipmunk Song". (True. We now know it as either the "Chipmunk Song" or "Christmas Don't Be Late.")
2. The song "Silver Bells" was written by the same guys that wrote the theme to the TV show, "Mr. Ed." (True – Jay Livingston and Ray Evans.)
3. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Pilate was the king of Judea. (False – Herod was king.)
4. In the state of Oregon you can find Humbug Mountain, Humbug Creek & Humbug point. (True.)
5. Speaking of Oregon, they produce more Christmas trees than any other state. (True.)
6. Mistletoe is the Official State Flower for Oregon. (False – it’s the official state flower for Oklahoma. Oregon’s state flower is Oregon Grape.)
7. Before settling on the name of Tiny Tim for his character in "A Christmas Carol," Charles Dickens originally considered naming the character "Puny Pete." (True - three alliterative names were considered by Charles Dickens. They were Little Larry, Puny Pete, and Small Sam.)
8. Charles Dickens' initial choice for Scrooge's statement "Bah Humbug" was "Bah Christmas." (True.)
9. Child singer Jimmy Boyd was actually 19 years old when he sang the Christmas favorite, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." (False - he was 12 years old... and eleven months! The song hit the top of the pop charts.)
10. Christmas caroling began as an old English custom called Wassailing. (True. Wassailing is toasting neighbors to a long and healthy life. They did it door-to-door singing carols. Eventually it just became known as caroling.)

TABLOID MATCH GAME

You have to match the blank in the tabloid headline with the word or phrase that has been removed!

WORLD'S _____ WOMAN (SHORTEST)

NAGPUR, INDIA – A high school student in central India was crowned the world's shortest woman by Guinness World Records.

On the day she turned 18, Jyoti Amge, officially became the world's shortest woman. She is just 24.7 inches tall – shorter than the average 2-year-old.

Guinness representatives visiting from London measured her at a ceremony attended by about 30 relatives and friends in the town of Nagpur, in Maharashtra state.

A teary-eyed Amge, dressed in one of her finest saris, called the honor an "extra birthday present" and said she felt grateful for being small, as it had brought her recognition. After receiving a plaque, she and her guests cut a birthday cake.

THE WAY TOO EARLY IN THE MORNING TO UNDERSTAND THE PUNCHLINE EVEN AFTER TWO CUPS OF COFFEE JOKE OF THE DAY

JOKE #1

There once was a czar in Russia whose name was Rudolph the Great. He was standing in his house one day with his wife. He looked out the window and saw something happening. He says to his wife, "Look honey. Its raining."

She, being the obstinate type, responded, "I don't think so, dear. I think its snowing."

But Rudolph knew better. So he says to his wife, "Let's step outside and we'll find out." Lo and behold, they step outside and discover it was in fact rain. And Rudolph turns to his wife and replies, "I knew it was raining. Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"

JOKE #2

John was tasked with bringing the Christmas decorations up from the basement and start decorating the house and tree. During one trek up the stairs, heavily laden with boxes, he slipped and luckily only fell about two steps before landing square on his behind.

His wife heard the noise and yelled, "What was that thump?"

"I just fell down the stairs," he explained.

She rushed into the room, "Anything broken?!"

"No, no, I'm fine."

There was just a slight pause before his loving wife said, "No, I meant my decorations? Are any of them broken?"

JOKE #3

The man passed out in a dead faint as he came out of his front door onto the porch.

Someone called 911.

When the paramedics arrived, they helped him regain consciousness and asked if he knew what caused him to faint.

"It was enough to make anybody faint," he said.

"My son asked me for the keys to the garage, and instead of driving the car out, he came out with the lawn mower."

USELESS FACTS

A recent study shows that children taught at home by parents or tutors do just as well, if not better, than kids educated in public schools. While some educators feel that home schooled children fail academically and socially, the study does not support that. ***Personally, I think it's just because the food is better.

A new study says that revenue from "product placement" advertising will triple in the next three years. ***This fact brought to you by the University of Coca Cola's Toyota Frito-Lay Research Lab.

FEATURED FUNNIES

POLITICALLY CORRECT HOLIDAY GREETING

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, my best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all.

We also wish you a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the onset of the upcoming generally accepted calendar year, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make America great (not to imply that America is necessarily

greater than any other country or is the only "AMERICA" in the Western Hemisphere), and without regard to the race, creed, color, age, physical ability, religious faith, or sexual preference of the wishee.

By accepting this greeting, you are accepting these terms: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for her/himself or others, and is void where prohibited by law, and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher.

This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year, or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.

Happy Holidays!

KIDS' CHRISTMAS RIDDLES

How many reindeer does it take to change a light bulb?

Eight! One to screw in the light bulb and seven to hold Rudolph down!

How does Rudolph know when Christmas is coming?

He looks at his calen-"deer"!

What do you give a reindeer with an upset tummy?

"Elk"-a-seltzer!

What's the first thing elves learn in school?

The "elf"-abet!

IT MUST BE TRUE BECAUSE I HEARD IT ON THE RADIO!

THE QUICKEST CHRISTMAS CARD

Folks in England are now claiming that the world's "fastest" Christmas card has been sent – via postal carrier, that is.

"Tis the season for Christmas cards". And with each passing day you wait to send out your cards out, there's a chance they won't arrive before the 25th. But folks in England are now claiming that the world's "fastest" Christmas card has been sent. Unofficially, postal workers believe a record was set for a card, which was delivered to its destination in England, within 74 hours of being posted 10,500 miles away in Australia. The card was postmarked in Sydney at 6pm on December 4 and arrived at the home of Nigel Couldwell in Central England at 10am on December 7. How quick is that? Taking into account the 10-hour time difference between the countries, the card achieved an average speed of just over 140-mph for the journey. ***MARLAR: No word on whether the card got to the right person, but hey -- it got there really fast!

INSPIRATIONAL INSPIRATION

joy
grace
hope - love
faith - peace
honor - purity
courage - loyalty
goodness - prudence
sympathy - humility
fortitude - temperance
brotherhood - cooperation
and
God
is
love

DRIVE TIME DEVOTIONAL

The message of Christmas is that God intrudes upon the weak and the vulnerable, and this is precisely the message that we so often miss. God does not come to that part of us that swaggers through life, confident in our self-sufficiency. God leaves his treasure in the broken fragmented places of our life. God comes to us in those rare moments when we are able to transcend our own selfishness long enough to really care about another human being. On the wall of the museum of the concentration camp at Dachau is a large and moving photograph of a mother and her little girl standing in line of a gas chamber. The child, who is walking in front of her mother, does not know where she is going. The mother, who walks behind, does know, but is helpless to stop the tragedy. In her helplessness she performs the only act of love left to her. She places her hands over the child's eyes so she will at least not see the horror to come. When people come into the museum they do not whisk by this photo hurriedly. They pause. They almost feel the pain. And deep inside I think that they are all saying:

"O God, don't let that be all that there is."

God's hears those prayers and it is in just such situations of hopelessness and helplessness that his almighty power is born. It is there that God leaves his treasure. In Mary and in all of us, as Christ is born anew within.

LEFTOVERS

MR. GRINCH

Bennington, Vermont is not looking at all like Christmas! It seems that someone playing "The Grinch" has been working overtime to remove almost all the light bulbs within reach that were put up this year.

...It's turned into a problem for the town, and if it continues, the decorations will be turned off. Bennington's streets have been beautifully decorated with lighted garlands and wreaths and almost all the bulbs have been removed twice from those decorations. Vandals are also stealing lights from the community tree and tampering with the reindeer figures in a downtown park. Mr. Grinch has even gone so far as to somehow remove all of the lights on the pole in front of the police station.

LIFE... LIVE IT

BURN BABY BURN

Good news for holiday treat lovers! You can burn several hundred calories a day -- the equivalent of a cookie or two -- by fidgeting!

...that's right, twiddling your thumbs, tapping your feet, and talking with your hands will burn calories according to Prevention magazine. Instead of focusing on what you shouldn't eat during the holidays, focus on how you can move more -- even if you don't have time to make extra trips to the gym. Just add a little extra effort and physical activity to your daily routine, including fidgeting. Nutrition scientist Ann Yelmokas McDermott from Tufts University offers these tips:

- o Walk 10 minutes at the mall and you can burn as many as 100 calories.
- o Park your car at the far end of the lot.
- o Skip the elevator.
- o Carry your packages to the car for a combination of cardio- and weight-training in one.
- o Take the kids ice skating.
- o Pull a Griswold and cut your own Christmas tree and be sure you hike through the woods to find the perfect one.

REGIFTING ETIQUETTE

Whether or not you like the idea of regifting, it happens. If you do decide to regift, just be sure to use proper etiquette.

With more Americans regifting this holiday season, the The Emily Post Institute has weighed in on regifting etiquette. Here are the rules:

- o *Good gifts only:* Regifting is perfectly acceptable, yet while this is a practical solution you must give good gifts only. In other words, nothing from last year or two years ago.
- o *Regift with care:* Gifts must be unused, and in their original condition & never, ever regift one-of-a-kind items or something that was handmade especially for you.
- o *Match unwanted gifts with recipients:* Only regift items if you think the recipient (whether a person or charity) will use, and appreciate the item. To avoid potential embarrassment, like the item making its way back to the original giver, only regift outside your immediate circle of family and friends.
- o *Don't delay:* If you wait too long, you may actually forget who the gift originally came from.

JUST FOR FUN

LET THEM EAT CAKE?

Those poor, poor prisoners in New Zealand are upset because they can't have Christmas cakes. New Zealand prison authorities have banned relatives from giving inmates home-made Christmas cakes. The Corrections Department says the cakes could have drugs and contraband inside. The move also follows complaints from inmates last year that cakes were arriving damaged at their cells. Howard League for Penal Reform secretary Kathy Dunstall says the department is being "mean-spirited". ***MARLAR: Am I missing something here? The people are in prison because they've done something bad and now we're supposed to feel sorry for them because they can't get a homemade cake? Someone needs to explain the concept of punishment to these guys again.

FUN LIST

YOUR COMPANY CHRISTMAS PARTY STINKS IF...

- The eggnog smells suspiciously like Liquid Paper.
- The mistletoe has been replaced with a tree-shaped air freshener.
- Because of corporate "downsizing" the Santa is only 113 lbs.
- The only food available is something called "reindeer kebabs".
- The Christmas tree is really just an intern with a green sweater.
- The party is held on July 23rd.
- Someone suggests playing "Slam-Dunk the Cheeseball" into the punchbowl.
- You feel compelled to propose a toast to your beloved boss, "Das Feuhrer"
- You're told that despite your many job duties, you only get one turn at the gift exchange.
- Your Christmas bonus ends up being a box of red and green paper clips.

MORE SHOW PREP STUFF...

MOM CALLS FROM IRAQ, CHILD GETS IN TROUBLE FOR IT

Kevin Francois gave up his lunch break to talk to his mother, but it ended up costing him the rest of the school year.

(From 2005) Kevin, a junior at Spencer High School in Columbus, Ohio was suspended for disorderly conduct after he was told to give up his cell phone at lunch. What makes this story outrageous though is that he was talking to his mother... who is currently deployed in Iraq and rarely has the opportunity to speak with her son at all! Kevin's mother, Sergeant 1st Class Monique Bates, left in January for a one-year tour and serves with the 203rd Forward Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. According to Kevin, "This is our first time separated like this." This all happened when Kevin stepped outside the school building to get a better reception when his mother called from Iraq. A teacher saw the student, and told him to get off the phone, which he didn't – resulting in his suspension. School policy does allow kids to have cell phones, but they're not supposed to use them during school, because, according to assistant principal Alfred Parham, "if they were allowed to do that, they could be text messaging each other for test questions." Kevin said he told the teacher, "This is my mom in Iraq. I'm not about to hang up on my mom." Kevin said the teacher tried to take the phone, causing it to hang up. The student said he then went with the teacher to the school's office where he surrendered his phone. His mother called again at 12:37 p.m. and left a message scolding her son about hanging up and telling him to answer the phone when she calls. Good to know the school wants to support our troops, isn't it?

OTHER STUFF I WANT TO CRAM INTO TODAY'S PREP

(Not posted on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

(PERENNIAL) Whether it's hanging the stockings or baking gingerbread cookies, all of our favorite Christmas traditions have a fascinating history. But no matter where or how you celebrate the holiday season, you might honor a rather unusual custom: finding oranges in your stocking on Christmas morning. No, this isn't just an off-family quirk. People across many different countries and age groups include this citrus-centric tradition in their festivities. What gives? As it turns out, there are several competing theories as to why we put oranges in Christmas stocking to begin with. According to the original story of St. Nicholas, now called Santa Claus, the saint gave three bags of gold to a poor man. The money helped the man pay for his each of daughter's weddings, and St. Nick has had a reputation for generosity ever since. Meanwhile, the oranges are thought to represent the gold he left the girls. Some believe, on the other hand, that the practice originated during the Great Depression. Because many families couldn't afford to buy Christmas gifts or candy, "luxury" foods like oranges and walnuts were placed under the tree, instead. (Reader's Digest)

(PERENNIAL) The favorite holiday in the U.S. is Christmas. Well duh. Americans enjoy their holidays. Whether it's surprising a lover with a romantic dinner on Valentine's Day, gathering on a picnic blanket for fireworks on the Fourth

of July or stuffing tummies with turkey on Thanksgiving, we take great pleasure in our family holiday rituals and traditions. While holidays occur throughout the year, we don't anticipate or enjoy them all in the quite the same way. When The Harris Poll asked 2,462 U.S. adults to think about all the holidays that occur during the calendar year and say which one is their favorite, Christmas came out on top.

The top 10 favorite holidays in the U.S.:

1. Christmas
2. Thanksgiving
3. Halloween
4. Fourth of July
5. Easter
6. New Year's
7. Memorial Day
8. Labor Day
9. My birthday
10. Valentine's Day and Hanukkah (tie)

When it comes to holidays, we share the same pleasures. The top two holidays for men and women in every generation from 20-somethings to seniors are Christmas and Thanksgiving. The third favorite holiday for young adults is Halloween, while older adults like the Fourth of July.

It seems like every day another job is taken over by technology, and these outdated occupations are no exception. Some of these may have gotten the boot because they are just downright ridiculous. Some crazy jobs that no longer exist: elevator operator, Billy boys (young apprentices in training that would make tea for the other men at work), bowling alley pinsetters, clock winders, knockeruppers (people who came by and tapped on your window so you weren't late for work), Lectors (people who read outloud to employees), ratteners (people who captures live rats), resurrectionists (dug up dead corpses and sold them to medical schools), and town crier. ***Radio hosts can also be automated, but I'm trying not to let the boss know about that.

<http://aka.ms/lu9mu4>

The key to longevity isn't in food, drink or exercise. Happiness is the key to a longer life. That's the word from researchers at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, who have concluded that people who are happier live longer -- by as much as a decade. "Happiness does not heal, but happiness protects against falling ill," lead study author Ruut Veenhoven wrote in the Journal of Happiness Studies. It is because of this protective effect that Veenhoven concluded that happiness prolongs life among healthy people. Veenhoven said the effects of happiness on longevity were "comparable to that of smoking or not."

Some light haired ladies are literally dye-ing to keep their jobs, and they're not dumb blondes, either they know they'll be looked upon as smarter and more efficient with brown hair. With layoffs all over and jobs hard to come by, experts estimate 1 in 3 female employees with light hair are taking a ride on the darker side. A recent study backs them up, too. Researchers say 62% of people think brunettes look more professional in the workplace triggering a great number of blondes to try to stain to make a gain on the job. "It's incredible how changing your hair color can alter people's perception of you," explains expert Dan Hadley. In the study, 38% of blondes feel their hair color has held them back in their careers. And 38% of blondes who've dyed their hair believe they are being taken more seriously by their boss.

SOUL-GLO

(Feel-good stories! Only posted as new stories come available. Not posted on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

More than 450 people enjoyed the fun and free food at an annual holiday party thrown by a 100-year-old Vermont resident. Anthony Pomerleau says he pays for the entire party each year in Burlington, with this year's bill costing around \$13,000. He tells WPTZ-TV he doesn't mind the cost because he "was brought up the hard way" and wants to help the less fortunate with his money. /the first party took place 37 years ago. Pomerleau says the party has fed at least 40,000 under-privileged children over the years.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/article189136494.html#storylink=rss>

TOTALLY OUTRAGEOUS!

(Only posted as stories come available. Not posted on weekends and U.S. holidays.)

In Reading, Pennsylvania, 42-year-old dad Patrick Jason Rossi says he just forgot about his son whom he left in a baby carrier on the sidewalk. But police say when he came back in the extremely cold leather to find the baby, he was under the influence of alcohol. Rossi told police he forgot the baby as he was loading items into a vehicle at his home. Police found the baby left alone, so they canvassed the neighborhood looking for the parent. About half an hour later,

Rossi came back, drunk, to pick up his son. He was arrested and charged with endangering the welfare of a child. (Penn Live)

AND I LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT

The mall was a crush yesterday when I was Christmas shopping. I commented to the lady in line next to me how packed the place was and she said, "That's interesting. Now get out of the ladies room."

THE TICKET Movie Reviews with MARIE ASNER

Marie Asner has been reviewing films for over 35 years. Her outlets include radio, print and Internet. For more in-depth movie reviews of the following films, visit www.Tollbooth.org. Ratings from 1 (Low) to 5 (High).

DECEMBER 15, 2017...

Star Wars: The Last Jedi--- This holiday season at the movie box-office has special treats for fans, from "The Shape Of Water" to the animated "Ferdinand" to the new version of "Jumanji." The biggest treat may be the new "Star Wars" film about The Last Jedi. It begins right at the end of the first "Star Wars" (2015) where Rey (Daisy Ridley) finds Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and that was that. Now, we see what will happen, and the familiar characters are there from R2D2 to C P30 to Princess Leia (the late Carrie Fisher) and how that is handled. Also, Chewbacca has a new actor, Joonas Suotamo has replaced Peter Mayhew. Onboard is also John Boyega as Finn and Adam Driver, all dressed in black. Planning ahead to the holiday season of 2019, will come Episode 9. "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" is rated PG 13 and a rating of 4 and the fans know who they are. May the Force be with them all.

I, Tonya---The world of sports can be knife sharp in competition, down to .001 at times, and one of the most competitive is figure skating. This wasn't always the case, but with years of media coverage, the sport has taken on almost a fashion look as well as an athletic one. Rivalry is intense and none more so that in women's figure skating. "I, Tonya" (played by Margot Robbie) presents Tonya Harding's side of the story in which she allegedly hired someone to injure her rival, Nancy Kerrigan. Talk about front page news. Harding's ex-husband, Jeff Gillooly (played by Sebastian Stan) was the villain, with Harding's mother, LaVona (played by Allison Janney) as a hard-hearted stage mother. Several aspects of that particular situation are presented by director Craig Gillespie. The idea of trying to harm/maim your rival is a harsh one and the press had a field day. "Tonya" is rated R. Rating of 2 for fans.

Ferdinand---This charming animated film is about a Spanish fighting bull, but he doesn't have fight in him. Instead, he likes flowers. Adapted from the story of "Ferdinand," by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson, we see what happens when Ferdinand is accidentally taken into a bull ring. What to do? He has friends, though, a horse, dog and hedgehog. Voices are of John Cena as Ferdinand, and Kate McKinnon and Anthony Anderson. "Ferdinand" is rated PG. Rating of 3 for fans.

Gotti---John Gotti was a famous mobster in New York City. He ruled the town and in this film, John Travolta takes on the role of Gotti, with Kelly Preston as his wife and Spencer Lofranco as his son, John Gotti, Jr. Violence follows the life of someone in crime. Also in the cast are Stacy Keach and Leo Rossi. "Gotti" is rated R. No rating.

The Shape Of Water---Sally Hawkins is making a name for herself as an actress this year. Not only did she do a splendid job as Maud Davis in "Maudie," playing a woman with disabilities who overcomes great difficulty to become an artist, but now in "The Shape Of Water," she does it again. A mute. This film is a science fiction/fantasy film of wanting to communicate and not being able to do so. Facial expression and body language do the acting instead of vocal expression. This is a Guillermo del Toro film, so expect the unexpected. The storyline is in the mid 1960's, the Cold War, and an experiment that is Top Secret. Hawkins and her friend, Octavia Spencer, are janitors in this special lab, but they do a bit of investigating and find something quite, quite unexpected and what an experiment, it is. Human? "The Shape Of Water" mixes science with compassion and, of course, the government that is just a step behind everyone who is curious. Also in the film are Doug Jones, Michael Shannon as the villain, and Richard Jenkins. Terrific soundtrack. "The Shape Of Water" is rated PG 13. Rating of 3 for science fiction fans.

DECEMBER 20, 2017...

Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle---The first "Jumanji" came out in 1995, starring Robin Williams, and was a hit with its special effects. This update version of a game board that doesn't want to give up, The updated version has four people who get caught up in a video game and find themselves in another world and in other bodies. The stars are Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Karen Gillan and Jack Black. The names of some of the characters they portray are colorful including Dr. Smolder Bravestone and Ruby Roundhouse. Set in Hawaii, there are jungle animals. Slapstick humor, too, whereas the first film, was kid-minded, this one is gadget minded. That all said, "The Rock" has gone from

one action movie to another and more planned for the future. Kevin Hart is a comic who blends in with any actor. Beware, jungle. As far as "The Rock," what a career for a man who began as a professional wrestler. We will see how this new version of the board game works. "Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle" is rated PG 13. Rating of 2 for fans.

DECEMBER 22-25, 2017...

Bright---How about living in a fantasy world where humans and fantasy creatures have co-existed for eons. This is an alternate Earth, and policeman Will Smith and his Orc partner, Joel Edgerton, are on duty. However, there is evil afoot and they have to find a magic wand before anyone else. Also in the cast are Noomi Rapace and Lucy Fry. "Bright" is rated PG 13. No rating.

Downsizing---Bet you thought this term mean problems in the work force. Think again. In this film, it concerns shrinking people (shades of "The Incredible Shrinking Man.") There is a purpose in this movie, though, and that is if you want to control populations and have the environment last, make the people smaller. Hmm, does that mean family pets, too? One swipe of that paw and....! To begin the experiment, a group of people are purposely shrunk to four inches and live together, but then problems come forth. Stars are Matt Damon, Christoph Waltz, Udo Kier and Kristen Wiig. "Downsizing" is rated PG 13. Rating of 2 for fans.

Happy End---This is a depressing film about a family with poisoning and suicides in their past. The story centers on a teenage girl named Eve (Fantine Hardoin) with a troubled past and uncertain future. She eventually lives with her aunt (Isabelle Huppert) and still has problems. Others in the cast are Toby Jones and Jean-Louis Trintignant. French language film. "Happy End" is rated R. No rating.

Father Figures (also called "Bastards")---This film stars Owen Wilson and Ed Helms as fraternal twins. Their Mom is Glenn Close and they, as adult, find she doesn't know who their biological father(s) are. What to do? The search is on. Also in the cast are Christopher Walken and J. K. Simmons. "Father Figures" is rated PG 13. No rating.

Hostiles---Christian Bale stars in this western as an army officer in 1892, who agrees to escort a Native American tribal chief and his family back to their family ground. Of course, there are problems along the way with outsiders and weather. The cast includes Wes Studi, Adam Beach and Rosamund Pike. "Hostiles" is rated R. No rating.

Pitch Perfect 3---This is supposed to be the last film in the series, but then everyone says that. The group goes separate ways after winning their championship. Trouble is, they are bored, so along comes a chance to join the USO and entertain troops abroad. But, of course, they get into trouble. The stars include Hailee Steinfeld, Anna Kendrick, Rebel Wilson, Ruby Rose and Elizabeth Banks. "Pitch Perfect 3" is rated PG 13. No rating.

The Greatest Showman---Hugh Jackman is quite the performer, from "Wolverine" to Broadway. Here he takes on the role of P. T. Barnum and how he put together his wonderful circus. There are animals, clowns and trapeze artists, which brings us to singer, Zendaya, who plays Anne Wheeler. She is a trapeze artist who falls for P. T. Barnum's partner, played by Zac Efron. Zandaya did most of her own stunts in this film. Also in the cast are Rebecca Ferguson and Michelle Williams. Music by John Debney and Justin Paul. How to put a show together? The Big Top has it all. "The Greatest Showman" is rated PG. Rating of 2 for fans. For children over age ten.

The Phantom Thread---Daniel Day Lewis submerses himself in his acting roles. From "My Right Foot" to "The Last of the Mohicans" and now a fashion designer in "The Phantom Thread." Lewis has said that this is his final film and then he will retire from acting. However, sometimes a tempting role does come along... A phantom thread is a part of fabric/design in which, if you have the right thread, can unravel the garment. Much like a government, in which one small detail can bring the house down. In this film, set in the 1950's in London, Daniel Day-Lewis is a couture fashion designer to nobility, along with his sister (Lesley Manville) and they have a structured life. Enter the outspoken, Alma (Vicky Krieps) who gives new fashion inspiration to Daniel, but his sister begins to see the facade crack and doesn't know how her brother will handle, perhaps, love? Jonny Greenwood composed the score and the film was written and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson. "The Phantom Thread" is rated PG-13. Rating of 3 for fans of fashion and the stars.

DECEMBER 29, 2017...

Film Stars Don't Die In Liverpool---An odd title for a movie, but then this film isn't about your usual actress. It is about Gloria Grahame, an actress in the 1950's who won a Best Supporting Actress Award for "The Bad and the Beautiful." Other memorable roles were in "Oklahoma," "Sudden Fear" and "It's A Wonderful Life." Annette Bening takes on the role of Gloria Grahame, whose regular life was more colorful than her screen life. She had several husbands and married her step-son, here played by Jamie Bell. Also in the cast are Vanessa Redgrave and Julie Walters. "Film Stars Don't Die In Liverpool" is rated R. Rating of 2 for fans.

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