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WELCOME TO THE SHOW!

Does anyone else do this? Every year our Christmas tree looks exactly the way it did the year before - but every year my wife insists on taking a picture of it anyway.

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

(None on the weekends.)

"Your love of liberty – your respect for the laws – your habits of industry – and your practice of the moral and religious obligations, are the strongest claims to national and individual happiness." – George Washington (In a letter to the residents of Boston, October 27th, 1789)

BIBLE VERSE OF THE DAY

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. --*Romans 8:28*

Psalm 33:8 = Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him.

When King Herod had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" — [Matthew 2:4-6](#)

HEARTLIGHT DAILY VERSE, PRAYER & THOUGHT

(From VerseOfTheDay.com)

Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. — [Proverbs 12:19](#)

Thought: "Tell the truth the first time, then you won't have to remember what you said." This truism by the famous Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, is good medicine for us today. Telling a lie seems gratifying at the time, but it nearly always catches up with us and gives us the added burden of trying to remember what we said and why. Truth endures; a lie is a momentary illusion that ends up a trap filled with burdens.

Prayer: Holy and Righteous Father, please forgive me for lying, exaggerating, and withholding the truth when it is needed. I want my heart and my lips to be invested in forever. In the name of Jesus. 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!*)

Romans 12:21 NIV = Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

TODAY IS THURSDAY – DECEMBER 21, 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 03 SHOPPING DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS.

Today is **FOREFATHER'S DAY**. ***Four fathers? Who the heck has FOUR FATHERS?!?! How is that even possible?!?! (Actually, this day marks the Pilgrim landing at Plymouth Rock on December 21, 1620. It wasn't until almost a year later that they celebrated the first Thanksgiving.)

Today is **LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE DAY** ([audio clip](#)) and **WORLD PEACE DAY**. ***But those will only work if you're ignoring Humbug Day.

Today is **HUMBUG DAY** ([audio clip](#)). Today everyone is allowed 12 "bah humbugs." Are you a Scrooge? Here's a few warning signs...

- o Your only holiday decoration is a rotting pumpkin.
- o The treats you leave for Santa include a banana, prune juice, and a venison steak.
- o The light display on your roof is in the shape of a howitzer.
- o Your idea of Christmas dinner is a Slim-Jim, and a cheese log.
- o The only tree in your house is a dead ficus.
- o You buy all of your Christmas Gifts in one night, at the same place you buy your gas.
- o You hang up wreaths made of poison ivy.
- o You dress up pit bulls as cows in the live nativity scene on your front lawn to take care of those pesky Christmas carolers.
- o Every Christmas gift you gave included the bill.
- o You set up surveillance cameras around your chimney just in case Santa wants to try any "funny business."
- o Every year you give your workers a 10% bonus: 10% of the amount you gave them the previous year.
- o You wrote chain letters on the other side of all of your Christmas cards.
- o You've set the words "bah humbug" to music. ([audio clip](#))

TODAY IS ALSO...

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

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](#)*)

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

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

Holy Innocents Day
Endangered Species Act Day
National Chocolate Day
Pledge of Allegiance Day

ON THIS DAY

1620: The Pilgrims left the *Mayflower* and went on shore for the first time since landing here, at what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. ***They actually arrived on Thanksgiving, but it took that long to find a place to park.

1838: Though she joked that the "D" in her name stood for "Devil," 18-year-old Charlotte D. Moon professed her faith in Christ to classmates at Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia. At a time when women were not "called" to be missionaries, Lottie Moon pushed her way through the Baptist Foreign Mission Board to spend 39 years ministering in China. Today, Baptists support some 5,000 foreign missionaries with their annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

1898: Radium was discovered. ***I don't know if it was AM or FM.

1913: The first crossword puzzle was published, in the *New York World*. (Did you know that doing crossword puzzles can slash your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by almost 50 percent?)

1937: The first feature-length color cartoon with sound premiered at Hollywood's Carthay Circle Theater. Walt Disney's *Snow White & The Seven Dwarfs* included 250-thousand of the one-million drawings 750 cartoonists completed for the project.

1955: Singer Laverne Baker recorded "Jim Dandy:" in New York City.

1966: The Beach Boys received a gold record for the single, "Good Vibrations."

1970: Elvis Presley met President Richard Nixon at the White House after the singer offered to become a "Federal Agent-at-Large" to help fight drug abuse. Elvis was not made an agent, but his photo with Nixon is the most requested reproduction from the National Archives, more than the U.S. Constitution.

1970: "Hey Old Man," the first single by the Festfolk Quartet - later known as ABBA - reached No. 5 in Sweden.

1979: Willie Nelson made his acting debut in the Robert Redford film, "The Electric Horseman."

1993: "TV Guide" reported that early "Gilligan's Island" press releases gave Gilligan's first name as "Willy." The name never was used on the TV show.

1993: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, in an interview with Associated Press, said her husband, President Clinton, had solicited her advice on major issues; but, she added, her powers were limited.

2000: President-elect George W. Bush resigned as governor of Texas. Lieutenant Governor Rick Perry was sworn in to replace him.

2003: A man who wanted to share his stock market winnings with the public tossed \$9,350 in small bills from the observation deck of a tower in Nagoya, Japan, causing a scramble for the money in the streets below. The man told police he had too much money, didn't need it, and wanted to give some back to the world. Police said the man did not break any laws. ***What about littering?

TODAY IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

1118: Thomas a Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury who clashed with England's King Henry II, is born in London.

1511: In Hispaniola, preacher Antonio des Montesinos counters the conquistador sentiment "Gunpowder against Indians is incense to the Lord" with a fiery sermon denouncing Spain's atrocities in the new world.

1620: English separatists known as the Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts.

1807: Anglican clergyman and hymn writer John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace," dies

HOLLYWOOD, SPORTS AND CELEBRITY FIGURE BIRTHDAYS

- o actor (Jack Bauer on "24", Young Guns, Lost Boys, "Designated Survivor") Kiefer Sutherland 51 ([audio clip](#))
- o actor/comedian ("News Radio") Andy Dick 52 ([audio clip](#))
- o actor-comedian ("Everybody Loves Raymond") Ray Romano 60 ([audio clip](#))
- o actor (Snakes on a Plane, Die Hard 3, Pulp Fiction, Unbreakable) Samuel L. Jackson 69
- o actress (Monster in Law, 9 to 5) Jane Fonda is 80
- o TV talker Phil Donahue 82

BEE-BOP BIRTHDAYS

(Music Artist Birthdays From SongFacts.com)

1926 : [Freddie Hart](#)

1940 : Ray Hildebrand ([Paul & Paula](#))

1940 : [Frank Zappa](#)

1942 : Carla Thomas

1943 : Albert Lee ([Ten Years After](#))

1943 : Gwen McCrae

1946 : Carl Wilson ([The Beach Boys](#))

1951 : [Nick Gilder](#)

1953 : Betty Wright

1965 : Gabrielle Glaser ([Luscious Jackson](#))

1971 : [Brett Scallions \(Fuel\)](#)

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

Where did we get the Nativity Scene?

It was not too long ago that nearly every community had a nativity set in the park or center of the town. Recent changes in the interpretation of laws have made this tradition unlawful in most communities. The nativity scene is a very old tradition. It is a tradition that started in 1223. Saint Francis of Assisi enjoyed the pageantry and glory of Christmas. He wanted this special season of the year to be festive and enjoyable. At Greccio, Italy in 1223 he re-created the birth of Christ with live actors and life-size scenery. He used living animals and a wax figure of the baby Jesus to reenact the glorious birth. The word crèche is a French word for crib. The crèche created by St. Francis succeeded way beyond his greatest hopes. Even within his own lifetime the crèche became quite popular. Ever since the first crèche, sculptors, architects and painters have fashioned and painted Nativity scenes. As medieval society grew more complex, the religious and secular began to merge in the celebration of Christmas. The crèche was often built in the town by the lay organizations like the craft guilds. At the same time, in the church, the same group of people would build the Nativity as parishioners. The Nativity scenes in some cities are quite elaborate and well known. Those built in Barcelona, Spain and Munich, Germany are famous for their ornate handiwork. One of the most famous and elaborate Nativity scenes in the world was built in the 18th century for King Charles III of Naples.

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.)

(This feature will be taking a break December 25th thru January 1st and will return Tuesday, January 2nd.)

"Saturday Night Live's" Pete Davidson has gotten a Hillary Clinton tattoo in honor of the former Democratic presidential nominee. Davidson posted an image of his new ink on his Instagram page, saying it was a "gift" for Mrs.

Clinton. He wrote: "Wanted to get (Hillary) a Christmas gift so I got a tattoo of my hero." ***Ironically, this is getting him more laughs than anything he's done on SNL.

Who came to the rescue of all those stranded travelers in Atlanta on Sunday during the power outage? Chick-fil-A showed up with food. Even though they're closed on Sundays. ***But they are all Christians, so feel free to hate them anyway as I'm sure many of you will try to do.

In California, a woman was kicked out of a Starbucks for telling two Korean students, "This is America. Speak English!" ***No wonder she was kicked out. It's California – where you are expected to speak SPANISH!

Colin Kaepernick says he's interested in joining an ownership group and purchasing the Carolina Panthers. ***Being the owner of the team is his best shot of being allowed to play again.

Every year someone decides to steal the baby Jesus from a public nativity scene. But police in West Bend, Wisconsin, are investigating after baby Jesus' head and arm were removed from a Nativity scene set up at a park. They left the rest of the Savior behind. An officer found the arm nearby — but the head is missing. ***I might be wrong, but I'm pretty sure decapitating the Christ child lands you on the naughty list.

NEWS KICKER EVERGREENS...

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

(This feature will be taking a break December 25th thru January 1st and will return Tuesday, January 2nd.)

(PERENNIAL) Planning on giving someone a gift card for Christmas? A consumer advocate group says millions of dollars are wasted on gift cards every year that are not used before their expiration dates. As many as one in three gift card recipients fail to cash in before time runs out. ***Which reminds me, I have about \$100 worth of fried cheese curds I gotta cash in before the end of the year...

According to a CDC study, nine out of ten teenagers aren't getting enough fruits or vegetables. ***The one in ten is getting their fruits through peach mango wine coolers.

Even though chewing gum has traditionally been banned in many schools, it actually helps teens boost their math scores, according to a recent study. Baylor University researchers found that those who chewed gum during math class got 3% higher scores on standardized tests and earned better grades at the end of the term. Investigators believe the chewing reduces stress so students perform better. ***Reduces stress! Did you hear that, all of you who are protesting and rioting because Trump was elected? Grab some Juicy Fruit and calm down!

After nine months of pregnancy — and its many discomforts — expectant moms are often willing to try anything to encourage their little ones to arrive. But few old wives' tales can claim the success that one tasty dish being served down South does. According to Yahoo foods, Since 1980, Scalini's Italian Restaurant in Cobb County, Georgia, has been cooking up a recipe for eggplant parmigiana that owners say brings on labor within 48 hours for hundreds of pregnant patrons per year. Myriad online testimonials, along with the photos of hundreds of babies hung inside of the restaurant's dining room, contribute to the dish's lore. In fact, Sometimes the action starts before customers even reach dessert. ***See, this is why I never eat eggplant parmigiana. I definitely do NOT want to give birth!

Americans need to relax. Over 40% of people in the U.S. say they are not doing enough to manage their stress, and the consequences of that could lead to all sorts of health-related problems. A recent study published in the journal Neuron showed people who are stressed have more difficulty with self-control and are more likely to choose to eat unhealthy food. According to the Time report stress also affects your breathing, heart, liver, muscles, and stomach. ***So I eat a whole bag of Cheetos in one sitting because I'm feeling stressed? But... if you take away my Cheetos, that makes me feel stressed!

AS THE JUNGLE TURNS

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

(This feature will be taking a break December 25th thru January 1st and will return Tuesday, January 2nd.)

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

OPEN: And now, FancyMonkey.com, (Show Name), and (Station Call Letters) bring you As the Jungle Turns! Last time, all of the jungle animals were suffering from having so much to do in their daily schedules. So much, in fact, that they even stopped sleeping just to get everything done! Planners, DayTimers, lists, appointments, it was getting so bad they didn't have time for anything else!

CLOSE: Sounds like the animals, in their rush to get things done, don't even have time now for common courtesy and niceness! Tune in again next time for more of As the Jungle Turns!

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MOMENT OF DUH

Sometimes it's the teacher that needs to learn a lesson.

Rhonda Bennett teaches preschool in Weston, West Virginia. Recently she was talking to her class about race. After bringing a bi-racial 5-year-old girl into her class as an example of people with "different" skin color, she then went on to explain to her class that the little girl looked different even than her parents because she was adopted. Unfortunately, the 5-year-old had no idea she was adopted. But she knows now.

TOP TEN

TOP TEN REASONS TO PUT OFF YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE

10. Let's face it, all wives snoop around the house blatantly looking for their presents, so what choice do we have but to hold off on our shopping?!

9. By ignoring the shopping frenzy until the last possible moment, we men are better able to focus on the true meaning of Christmas!

8. Life is so stressful these days because we have to constantly make choices. Why not look after ourselves and beat the holiday stress by limiting our choices to what's left in the local pharmacy at 6:30 pm on Christmas Eve?

7. Like a fine stallion, or a world-class runner, most men put in their best shopping performances just under the clock!

6. The best shoppers are those who examine the trends to see what gifts are "in" for this year. Obviously, the longer we wait, the more definitive the trend. Is it our fault that we are so thorough in our study that the "in" gifts are sold out when we go to buy them? NO! It is the greed of the big corporations and their heartless grab for cash that are to blame!

5. By perpetuating the stereotypical myth of men being uncaring, last-minute shoppers, we are, in fact, making women feel better about themselves. Our last minute scrambles, therefore, show us to have great concern and sensitivity.

4. At 6:30 pm Christmas Eve, whatever remains unbroken on the store shelves has proven its durability!

3. If you buy your present too soon, you may lose the receipts--or not be able to locate the guy selling stuff out of the trunk of his car!

2. How better to enter into the Christmas experience and share in Joseph's feeling of panic when he found out there was no room in the inn, than to hear: "There is no more stock on the shelves?"

1. It's a hunting and gathering, survival of the fittest, genetic thing! We're, therefore, just celebrating how God our Creator has made us!

THE FILES OF LAW & DISORDER

The British supermarket chain Tesco has a problem with thieves stealing Christmas trees from their store lots.

FILE #1: ..."Christmas trees are at the top of every thief's wish list," says Jacky Stephen, Tesco's tree buyer. "And the stolen trees are extremely easy to sell." So the store has hired security guards for the trees. Not just any guards: retired army commandos who will wear full camouflage gear and be equipped with night vision goggles. "We use a lot of tactics that we used to use in the army," said one of the guards.

FILE #2: Benjamin Todea was having trouble starting the engine of a car when two policemen happened by. Our friend thought it would be a good idea to ask the cops to help him start the car by helping to push it. However, when the policemen saw the car's stereo on the front seat they became suspicious and thought it would be a good idea to start asking questions. The jig was up when the guy didn't know the license number of what was supposedly his own car and he now faces up to five years in jail.

FILE #3: Police officers in Indiana caught a burglary suspect when he ran to the local jail. Christopher Newsome was suspected of breaking into the Randolph County Courthouse and taking money from a receptionist's desk. He ran to the front door of the jail in Muncie when sheriff's deputies gave chase. Chief Deputy Sheriff Ken Hendrickson said: "We love it when they run to the jail for us."

STRANGE LAW: Throwing snowballs will result in a \$50 fine in Provo, UT.

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.

Even Christmas isn't immune to brains on drugs.

Military police in Jacarepagua, Brazil, got suspicious when a street vendor selling Santa Claus dolls tried to run when he saw them. They chased the vendor down and took a close look at the toy Kris Kringles: they were all stuffed with cocaine. Officers recovered more than 200 grams of the drug from the St. Nick dolls.

PHONER PHUN

What Christmas TV special have you not seen for a while that you would really like to see this year?

BIBLE BRAIN BUSTER!

QUESTION: Who worked seven years to earn his wife?

ANSWER: Jacob (Genesis 29:18 = "So Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'")

QUESTION IMPOSSIBLE

QUESTION: The first printed reference to Christmas trees appeared in Germany in what year?

ANSWER: 1531

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. During the 12 days of Christmas in medieval England, people wore costumes to church and gambled on the altar. (True.)
2. Matthew's biblical account of the Wise Men says there were actually four wise men, not three. (False - the passage does not mention how many there were at all. The number was presumed to be three because of the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But that is only an assumption.)
3. Jesus was born on December 25th. (False. In fact, nobody knows for certain when Jesus was born, but in 350 A.D., Pope Julius I declared December 25 the official date. In 529, Emperor Justinian declared Christmas a civic holiday.)
4. The ringing of bells during Christmas is supposed to drive away evil spirits. (True - it's a holdover from pagan times. Unless, of course, you're referring to the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," at which point ringing bells means an angel just got its wings!)
5. King Richard II once had a holiday feast that needed 2,000 cooks to prepare the food. (True. In 1377, King Richard II had a magnificent holiday feast - for 10,000 people.)

6. As a tradition, caroling began in France. (False. It began in the Roman churches in the early second century, then spread to France, England and America.)
7. The Christmas card tradition wasn't born until the late 1800's. (False, it was born during the Victorian Era.)
8. Exchanging gifts on Christmas Day didn't become standard until the end of the 19th century. (True. Before that, Europe maintained the old Roman tradition of gift-giving on New Year's Day.)
9. Santa Claus is an American creation. (True. He serves as the model for England's Father Christmas.)
10. Green and red, the popular colors for Christmas, symbolize new growth and Christ's blood. (True and False depending on the source. The colors are also representative of holly, one of the earliest decorative plants used at Christmastime.)

TABLOID MATCH GAME

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

_____ SKULL FOUND (BIGFOOT)

A scientist in Idaho found a fossilized Bigfoot skull.

A week after a fossilized Bigfoot head was found in Utah, another one was found in Idaho!

Soon after, Ralph Barnkopf of Boise came by the West Coast offices of WWN and showed us a Bigfoot skull HE found in the woods outside Boise.

"It's definitely a Bigfoot head, for sure. I'd bet my dog's life on it," Ralph told WWN.

We contacted a number of Bigfoot experts. Dr. Lee Blanton of Alberta, Canada confirmed that the Barnkopf skull was, indeed, a Bigfoot skull. "If it looks like a Bigfoot skull, it's a Bigfoot skull," said Blanton.

"I went for a walk in the woods so that I would avoid having to talk to son-in-law, who's always a pain-in-the-butt when he comes over for Sunday supper," the ex-proctologist told WWN, "and then I tripped and fell over something that was sticking up out of the ground."

"After I got up, I looked at it and it looked like there was these two big eye holes looking at me. So I kicked it a few times to see if it was alive and then I realized it wasn't alive... it was a skull!"

The skull tips the scales at 90 pounds and is the biggest Bigfoot skull found in modern times. That is, after the skull that Mark Saal reported about in Utah.

"I've been watching *Finding Bigfoot* on the TV," Barnkopf said. "But I never in a million years, thought that I'd be the one to find him. I guess I'm a hero."

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

JOKE #1

Morris ran into Jacob while shopping at the mall the other day in front of one of the jewelry stores. Noticing a conspicuously small gift wrapped box in his hand, Morris asked if was a gift for Jacob's wife Becky.

Jacob told Morris, "With Christmas coming up, I asked Becky what she wanted and she said, "Oh, I don't know just give me something with lots of diamonds in it."

"So what did you get her?" Morris asked.

Jacob smiled and replied, "I bought her a deck of cards."

JOKE #2

Anne and her boyfriend met online and they'd been dating for over a year. She introduced Hans to her uncle, who was fascinated by the fact that they met over the Internet. He asked Hans what kind of line he had used as a pick-up line. Ever the geek, Hans naively replied, "I just used a regular 56K modem."

JOKE #3

An Irishman, a Mexican and a blond guy were doing construction work on scaffolding on the 20th floor of a building. They were eating lunch and the Irishman said, "Corned beef and cabbage! If I get corned beef and cabbage one more time for lunch I'm going to jump off this building."

The Mexican opened his lunch box and exclaimed, "Burritos again! If I get burritos one more time I'm going to jump off, too."

The blond guy opened his lunch and said, "Bologna again. If I get bologna sandwiches one more time I'm jumping too."

The next day the Irishman opens his lunch box, sees corned beef and cabbage and jumps to his death.

The Mexican opens his lunch, sees burritos and jumps, too.

The blond opens his lunch, sees the bologna sandwich and jumps to his death as well.
At the funeral the Irishman's wife is weeping. She says, "If I'd known how really tired he was of corned beef and cabbage I never would have given it to him again!
The Mexican's wife also weeps and says, "I could have given him tacos or enchiladas! I didn't realize he hated burritos so much."
Everyone turned and stared at the blonde's wife. "Hey, don't look at me," she said. "He makes his own lunch!"

USELESS FACTS

In the U.S. in 1882 an inventor patented a propeller-driven rocking chair. The propeller supplied movement to the chair from its mount at the top of the chair's back. Legend has it that the inventor, in his first demonstration of the chair, leaned back too far, got his hair caught in the propeller, and, well, you really don't want to know. ***Now the product goes under the name of "Epilady."

A study reveals that 86 percent of Americans love their jobs. ***The other 14 percent completed the survey when they knew their boss wasn't looking over their shoulder.

FEATURED FUNNIES

A POLITICALLY CORRECT CHRISTMAS POEM

*"Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck
How to live in a world that's politically correct?
His workers no longer would answer to "Elves"
"Vertically challenged" they were calling themselves.
And labor conditions at the north pole
Were alleged by the union to stifle the soul.
Four reindeer had vanished, without much propriety,
Released to the wilds by the Humane Society.
And equal employment had made it quite clear
That Santa had better not use just reindeer.
So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid
Were replaced by 4 pigs, and that sure looked stupid.
The runners had been removed from his sleigh,
The ruts were termed dangerous by the EPA.
And people had started to call for the cops
When they heard sled noises on their roof tops.
Second hand smoke from his pipe had the workers quite frightened
His fur trimmed red suit was called "unenlightened."
To show you the strangeness of life's ebbs and flows
Rudolph was suing for unauthorized use of his nose.
And had gone on Springer, in front of the nation
Demanding millions in over-due compensation.
So, half the reindeer were gone, and his wife,
Who suddenly said, she'd enough of this life.
Joined a self-help group, packed and left in a whiz
Demanding from now on her title was Ms.
And as for the gifts, why, he'd ne'er had a notion
That making a choice would cause so much commotion.
Nothing of leather, nothing of fur,
Which meant nothing for him, and nothing for her.
Nothing that might be construed to pollute,
Nothing to aim, nothing to shoot.
Nothing that clamored or made lots of noise
Nothing for just girls, or just for the boys.
Nothing that claimed to be gender specific,
Nothing that's warlike or nonspecific.
No candy or sweet... they're bad for the tooth
Nothing that seemed to embellish the truth.
And fairy tales, while not yet forbidden
Like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden.
For they raised the hackles of those psychological*

*Who claimed the only gift was one ecological.
No baseball, no football... someone could get hurt
Besides playing sports exposed kids to the dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist, and should be passé
And Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.*

*So Santa just stood there, disheveled, perplexed,
He just couldn't figure out what to do next.
He tried to be merry, tried to be gay,
But you've got to be careful with that word today.
His sack was quite empty, limp on the ground
Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.*

*Something special was needed, a gift that he might
Give to all without angering the left or the right.
A gift that would satisfy, with no indecision,
Each group of people, every religion,
Every ethnicity, every hue,
Everyone everywhere... even you.
So here is that gift, it's priced beyond worth.
"May you and your loved ones enjoy peace on earth."*

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

CHRISTMAS - MEN ARE BAD GIFT-BUYERS

When it comes to giving awful gifts, nobody does it better than a man.

33 percent of women say their man is guilty of giving them a gift that is far off the mark, and 32 percent say their guy has presented them with a present that was more appropriate for him. It gets worse: 51 percent of the ladies say their man's gifts are wrong at least 25 percent of the time and 11 percent give bad presents always or almost always. Here are some of the worst gifts that men have given to their wives:

- A gift certificate to a weight loss clinic. (Hey, I love you... but I'd like to see less of you.)
- A set of tickets to a Detroit Tigers game -- only her seat wasn't with his. (I hear you scream enough at home, don't make me listen to you scream at the game too!)
- A dress in size 16 for a woman who is only a size 8. (Saying you love her twice as much this year ain't gonna fly.)
- A divorce. Yep... some guy actually gift-wrapped divorce papers for his soon-to-be Ex!
- Vacuum cleaner bags. (That gift just sucks.)

INSPIRATIONAL INSPIRATION

*It's Christmas time and once again
The world repeats the story
Of peace on earth, good will to men.
And children sing the glory
Of angels and a shining star
And of a baby's natal day
So many years ago.
--Mirla Greenwood Thayne*

DRIVE TIME DEVOTIONAL

(modified from Campus Journal)

A man who plays Santa Claus in order to tell others about Jesus Christ!

I was eating breakfast in a New York City hotel coffee shop a couple of years ago when I saw him at a table not 15 feet away. Swept-back silver hair, twirled mustache and long bushy beard, rosy cheeks, and a belly that bulged under a red T-shirt with the image of a reindeer on the chest. Couldn't be! But it was mid-December.

On my way out, I stopped at his table and said, "I guess this is the time of year when some people just hand you a list to save time." He laughed and invited me to sit down.

Yes, Virginia, it was indeed Santa Claus (a.k.a. Jerry Powers), and he was working the Thanksgiving-to-Christmas-Eve season at a Macy's Department Store in a nearby mall.

Within a few minutes, we discovered that we shared a mutual faith in Christ. And then he said, "Some people don't think there's such a thing as a Christian Santa, but that's what I am. I don't promise kids toys for Christmas. I'm here to listen to them, look into their eyes, and ask the Lord to help me say a word of encouragement to them."

He told me about children who asked him if he could bring divorcing parents back together or help a grandmother get well. Some people asked him to pray for them. More than one person paused with Jerry as he talked to God on his or her behalf.

Some might call him a tool of commercialism while others would hail him as an innovative man of faith. But encountering "Santa" caused me to consider the many ways people serve Christ and make Him known. The apostle Paul prayed for the Christians in Thessalonica "that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith" (2 Thessalonians 1:11). Within the boundaries of faith in God and obedience to His Word, there are countless ways to serve the Lord and help others. Meeting Santa Claus helped me appreciate one I hadn't thought of before.

LEFTOVERS

HOLIDAY TIPPING

Good Housekeeping ran an article on holiday tipping, here's what they suggest:

- **Postal Service** -- Employees may receive gifts valued at \$20 or less, per occasion. There's a \$50 annual cap per giver. The USPS frowns on cash gratuities.
- **Teachers** -- Giving money isn't customary and many schools prohibit teachers from accepting tips. She recommends a gift to a teacher should be a personal expression of appreciation, something moderately priced that you and your child have selected.
- **Frequent baby-sitter** -- One or two evenings' pay plus a small gift from your child.
- **Barber** -- Cost of one cut and maybe a small gift.
- **Beauty salon staff** -- \$10 to \$60 each, a larger amount and maybe a small gift to those who do the most for you.
- **Day-care providers** -- \$25 to \$70 each (on the higher end if only one or two providers) plus a small gift from your child.
- **Daily dog walker** -- One day's pay.
- **Frequent housecleaner** -- One day's pay.
- **Massage therapist** -- One session's fee.
- **Newspaper deliverer** -- \$10 to \$30.
- **Private nurse** -- Gift, not cash.
- **Nursing-home workers** -- Gift, not cash.
- **Trash collectors** -- \$10 to \$20 each.
- **Frequent yard worker** -- \$20 to \$50.

LIFE... LIVE IT

SANTA TREATS

According to The American Dietetic Association (ADA), if Santa drinks a glass of whole milk and eats two butter cookies at every American household he visits, he will consume a shocking 14 billion calories and 6.1 billion grams of fat in one night alone!

- Try skim milk instead of whole, saving 64 calories and eight grams of fat for each glass he drinks.
- Offer Santa "skinny nog" -- a mixture of skim milk and low fat egg nog or use dry egg nog mix with skim milk to save 145 calories and 18 grams of fat per serving.
- Leave Santa gingersnaps or graham crackers in place of higher fat cookies conserving 169 calories and eight grams of fat per serving.
- Opt to give non-food gifts, like food and nutrition books, subscriptions to health newsletters, exercise tapes or equipment and gift certificates.
- And carrots, celery, apples and pears are great treats for Santa as well as his reindeer. With a little planning, it will be easy to expand Santa's food choices without expanding his waistline.

***Actually, come to think of it, this is all probably totally unnecessary, as Santa is burning off all of these calories by climbing up and down chimneys all night long while carrying hundreds of pounds of gifts on his back. Hmm. Never mind. My apologies to Santa, who I am sure listens to this show at the North Pole via the Internet. Sorry, Mr. Kringle!

JUST FOR FUN

THE OFFICIAL CHRISTMAS GIFT-GIVING CONTRACT

Agreement entered into this _____ day of _____, in the year of our Lord, _____, by Husband and Wife, hereafter called "Couple." Whereas, Couple often argue over ill-chosen gifts; and whereas, a gift-giving agreement may save Couple's marriage and/or reduce return trips to the mall.

SECTION A: Gifts for Wife

- Husband shall not give Wife practical gifts such as an iron, a toaster, a dishwasher or a vacuum cleaner... unless husband plans to use them.
- Husband shall avoid the following: a) Chocolate when Wife is on a diet. b) Tight clothing meant to encourage wife to diet.
- Husband shall keep track of Wife's clothing sizes, except those Wife refuses to divulge.
- Husband shall not give Wife anything that can be bought at an airport.
- Husband shall not buy Wife earrings that weigh more than her head.
- Husband shall remember that gifts should be personal. Gift certificates and cash are not personal... unless large enough to buy a diamond watch.
- Husband shall avoid the following: a) Any former girlfriend's favorite fragrance. b) His mother's favorite fragrance.
- Husband is encouraged to buy Wife gifts in the following categories: a) Anything specifically requested. b) Catalog items discreetly circled. c) Any object containing silver, platinum or gold.

SECTION B: Gifts for Husband

- Wife shall not give Husband anything that smells like perfume... no matter how macho its name or its spokesman.
- Wife shall not buy Husband home repair manuals.
- Wife shall not give Husband anything "cute" or containing the word organizer.
- Wife shall not get Husband anything used in a gym.
- Wife shall not buy Husband silk boxers, unless she agrees to wear a matching pair.
- Wife shall not give Husband anything that's for Husband's own good.
- Wife is encouraged to buy Husband items in the following categories: a) Anything Couple's 12-year-old son would like. b) Sporting equipment, provided Husband can exchange it for something with a better "feel." c) Stereo and electronic equipment provided Husband can exchange it for something with more "oomph."

SECTION C: Miscellaneous

- Husband concedes that writing thank-you notes for the entire household and buying gifts for Husband's business associates are not Wife's job.
- Husband concedes that there is no logical connection between gender and gift wrapping.
- If despite all precautions, one spouse buys the other something he or she hates (a gift you wouldn't give your worst enemy, well maybe, but only if it were on sale), couple shall behave in a diplomatic fashion. The following shall not be deemed diplomatic: a) "Are you totally insane?" b) "Give me the receipt, cheapskate!" c) "But you said you wanted this!"
- Couple shall cherish the loving thought that is behind every single gift... even the ones they exchange.

FUN LIST

SIGNS THAT GUY IN THE RED SUIT IS NOT THE REAL SANTA

- That rainbow-colored beard
- Just as I thought: that's a belly implant
- Allergic to elves
- Is that a reindeer burger?
- Pulls up in a Harley sleigh

MORE SHOW PREP STUFF...

12 WAYS TO CELEBRATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

(By Susan Dutton Freund, thinkmarriage.org)

What if a couple took the time to celebrate their love on each one of the 12 days of Christmas?

When most people think about the holiday season they think of spending time with friends and family and enjoying the spirit of the season. While all of that is fun, the reality is that the holidays can also add stress and activity to your everyday life. Often times, this means that a couple puts their relationship on the back burner and uses "divide and conquer" on daily tasks just to get everything done. Here's 12 ideas to help you deliberately invest in the health of your relationship this holiday season.

- Write a love letter. Love letters often become treasured heirlooms that are saved for a lifetime. Put your love into words and give a very special gift.
- Hold hands for five minutes or more. Sometimes something as simple as physical touch can reconnect a couple.

- Get home from work early and make your spouse's favorite dinner. He or she will appreciate your efforts and will love to find a home-cooked meal waiting after a hectic day at work.
- Tackle the pile of gifts that need to be wrapped, together!
- Finish this sentence: "I appreciate..." For example: "I appreciate you bringing me a cup of coffee this morning. You do that a lot, and it really helps me to start the day feeling loved." Do this five times today.
- Have a date night. With all of the holiday parties to attend, it's easy to let this one slip. But having a date night (where it is just the two of you, not the two of you in a crowd of all your friends) will give you the time to focus just on each other. Spend the date talking about your dreams for your future together.
- Watch a classic holiday movie together. Then talk about what you liked after the movie is over.
- Share your favorite holiday traditions you had while growing up with your spouse. Talk about what traditions you two have built together and how it has enriched your family.
- Go for a walk right after a light snowfall. Even a walk around the block is an opportunity to connect after a long day.
- Meet for lunch during a work day. Commitments increase during the holidays. Meeting for lunch guarantees some time together when you just can't fit one more thing into the day.
- Bake holiday cookies together. It's a great activity that can become a holiday tradition for the two of you.
- Volunteer. Helping a worthy cause is a great way to remember what the holidays are about.

OTHER STUFF I WANT TO CRAM INTO TODAY'S PREP

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

There's an interesting new study on nightmares - one New Science calls "one of the largest ever studies of nightmares in the general population." To better understand why some people who've suffered trauma have bad dreams and some don't, Oxford researchers gathered information on 846 people - including alcohol intake, amount of sleep, life struggles, and tendency to worry - then asked them to answer questions about the frequency and severity of their nightmares. They discovered that worrying before sleep boosted the chance of a person having a nightmare and so did getting too much sleep. Nightmares increased with more than nine hours of sleep per night, which suggests nightmares aren't simply caused by a negative experience. As study author Stephanie Rek explains, sleeping in long stretches may result in more rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, which is when nightmares usually happen. In fact, the scientists theorize that it may be the disruption of sleep from one nightmare that aggravates worries and causes people to sleep longer on subsequent nights - resulting in even more nightmares. In another surprise, however, the survey showed alcohol, which also results in more REM sleep, was not associated with nightmares. (New Scientist)

Like money and cigarettes? Well, seems like there's a new reason to give up that smoking habit, one that affects your income. According to a group of economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, smokers earn 20 percent less than non-smokers, on average. Twenty percent! That's no laughing matter. And it gets even more interesting: Their research found that the wages of both people who smoke a pack a day and social smokers are around equal. You know what that means? It's the fact that a person smokes, not how much, that is important. The reasoning behind this? NBC suggests that non-smokers are more educated than smokers. Higher level of education = smarter decision-makers in the job market.

Ladies, we don't mean to alarm you, but it is likely your purse contains more bacteria than the average toilet, according to tests conducted by the British company Initial Washroom Hygiene Solutions. "Handbags come into regular contact with our hands and a variety of surfaces, so the risk of transferring different germs onto them is very high, especially as bags are rarely cleaned," said Peter Barratt, technical manager at Initial Hygiene. "Once these germs are on the bags, they can easily be transferred via hands onto other surfaces." On the outside: Leather handbags have the most bacteria because the spongy texture provides perfect growing conditions. On the inside: The dirtiest item in most purses is hand cream. Bottles of hand cream were found to contain more bacteria than the average toilet seat. Tubes of mascara and lipstick also contain a high amount of bacteria. On the handles: The worst part of your purse could be the handles, which are smeared with enough bacteria to actually pose a risk to human health. What can you do? Your best defense is to wash your hands often and regularly and thoroughly clean your purse with antibacterial wipes or gel. If you use a cloth purse, you may be able to put it in the washing machine. Also, never place your purse on the floor of a public restroom.

To lessen the chance of divorce, wait to get married -- but not too long. The ideal age for marriage is between 28 and 31 years old, according to researchers from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The conventional wisdom has been that the longer you wait to marry, the better, because the relationship between the age at marriage and divorce risk is almost linear. That is, the older you are when you marry, the lower the chances of divorce. And that still holds true -- to a point. By analyzing data collected between 2006 and 2010 from the National Survey of Family Growth,

University of Utah professor Nicholas Wolfinger determined that those who marry after their 30s are more likely to divorce than those who marry in their late 20s. Teens still face an elevated divorce risk relative to older adults. Specifically, Wolfinger's data analysis shows that prior to age 32 or so, each additional year of age at marriage reduces the odds of divorce by 11 percent; however, after that the odds of divorce increase by 5 percent per year. "This is a big change. To the best of my knowledge, it's only recently that 30-something marriage started to incur a higher divorce risk," he said.

Considering how UPS workers are usually the ones delivering people's Christmas gifts, imagine this guy's delight over finding that someone had left out a gift for him. Tiffany Judd, a mother of two from Mississippi, conducts all of her Christmas shopping online – and because she knows how hard it can be to work in the freight industry during the holiday season, she decided to give something back to the diligent FedEx and UPS workers who showed up at her house every day. Judd then started putting snacks and water bottles under a Christmas tree on her porch so the mail staff could treat themselves to a bite to eat while they worked. Her security camera on the front porch captured the reaction of one UPS driver in particular – and it is incredibly sweet.

Watch the video at <http://darrenmarlar.com?p=20988>

SOUL-GLO

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

Christmas came a little early for JJ Lyons and his family. Last week, Lyons was hunting with family when the Williamsport firefighter got the call that his house near Turbotville was on fire. The fire, which started in the basement, caused nearly \$400,000 in damage, leaving the 10-year veteran of the fire department, his wife Jessica, and his 5-year-old daughter Jilline with few options, especially right before the holidays. That's where Joe Miller, a total stranger, comes in. His mother passed away earlier this year, and he looking to sell her 1,500-square-foot house. Instead, Miller decided to give it to the Lyons family until they can get back on their feet.

<http://wnep.com/2017/12/09/complete-stranger-donates-house-to-firefighter-who-lost-house-in-fire/>

TOTALLY OUTRAGEOUS!

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

Simon Bramhall is a 53-year-old surgeon in Great Britain—and he's going to prison for something so bizarre a prosecutor said it was "without legal precedent in criminal law." Dr. Bramhall has pleaded guilty to assault of two patients, for branding his initials onto their livers during surgery! He reportedly used an argon beam coagulator, which seals bleeding blood vessels with an electric beam, to mark his initials on the organs. At least the internal graffiti very likely did not cause any damage or impair the organ's function and the marks will usually disappear by themselves. But in one patient, Bramhall's brand did not heal over, and it was another surgeon conducting a follow-up surgery who discovered the letters S and B etched into the man's liver. An investigation discovered that Bramhall had branded a female patient's liver as well. In case you were curious, there were other medical professionals present as Bramhall branded his name on those livers so more people may be charged in the bizarre case. Bramhall is to be sentenced on January 12. (BBC)

AND I LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT

I bought my friend some gift-wrap for Christmas. I took it to the gift-wrap counter and told them to wrap it, but in different paper, so he'd know when to stop unwrapping.

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 than 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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