

*The Funniest People in Families,*

*Volume 3:*

*250 Anecdotes*

**David Bruce**

**Dedicated with Love to Randy and Rosa**

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**This is a short, quick, and easy read.**

**Anecdotes are usually short humorous stories. Sometimes they are thought-provoking or informative, not amusing.**

**Educate Yourself**

**Read Like A Wolf Eats**

**Be Excellent to Each Other**

**Books Then, Books Now, Books Forever**

**\*\*\***

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**Dedicated to Carl Eugene Bruce and Josephine Saturday Bruce**

**My father, Carl Eugene Bruce, died on 24 October 2013. He used to work for Ohio Power, and at one time, his job was to shut off the electricity of people who had not paid their bills. He sometimes would find a home with an impoverished mother and some children. Instead of shutting off their electricity, he would tell the mother that she needed to pay her bill or soon her electricity would be shut off. He would write on a form that no one was home when he stopped by because if no one was home he did not have to shut off their electricity.**

**The best good deed that anyone ever did for my father occurred after a storm that knocked down many power lines. He and other linemen worked long hours and got wet and cold. Their feet were freezing because water got into their boots and soaked their socks. Fortunately, a kind woman gave my father and the other linemen dry socks to wear.**

**My mother, Josephine Saturday Bruce, died on 14 June 2003. She used to work at a store that sold clothing. One day, an impoverished mother with a baby clothed in rags walked into the store and started shoplifting in an interesting way: The mother took the rags off her baby and dressed the infant in new clothing. My mother knew that this mother could not afford to buy the clothing, but she helped the mother dress her baby and then she watched as the mother walked out of the store without paying.**

**My mother and my father both died at 7:40 p.m.**

## Chapter 1: From Activism to Children

### Activism

- In 2007, Eileen Daffern was 93 years old, but that did not stop her from being an activist, especially when it came to resisting nuclear weapons. She says, “The great challenge is to make people realize the power they have to change the world. It can be changed, you know.” She is healthy for her age, she inherited good genes from her parents, and she takes pride in her appearance. When her mother was 90 years old, Eileen saw her looking at her appearance in the mirror. Eileen says, “Her gestures were those of a young girl preening herself. ... I, too, look in the mirror.” In fact, when she sees photographs that make her look “too ancient,” she gleefully destroys them.<sup>1</sup>
- In 1999, Duke University was not known for tolerance of homosexuality; instead, homosexuality was virtually invisible on campus. This bothered Lucas Schaefer, Leila Nesson Wolfrum, and a few of their friends, and they decided to take action. Figuring that the problem was not outright discrimination against gays and lesbians, but rather a refusal to acknowledge their existence, they designed and ordered a T-shirt that bore the message “gay? fine by me.” Soon, lots of people were wearing these T-shirts, thus acknowledging both that homosexuals exist and that lots of people were OK with that fact.<sup>2</sup>
- In 1912, Margaret Higgins Sanger wrote about such topics as conception and sexually transmitted diseases in a series of articles titled “What Every Girl Should Know.” These articles were published in the radical newspaper *The Call*. Unfortunately, the United States Postal Service confiscated the issue of *The Call* that included the article on sexually transmitted diseases. The next issue of *The Call* included another article on “What Every Girl Should Know.” However, the text of that article stated, “NOTHING, by order of the Post-Office Department.”<sup>3</sup>
- In 1982, Howard Zinn, the author of *A People’s History of the United States*, and his wife were marching in a huge anti-nuclear protest in New York. The scene, of course, was very crowded and very confusing. While marching in the protest, Mr. and Mrs. Zinn looked up and saw that the banner they were marching under bore this message: “Lesbians From Hoboken Against Nuclear War.” They laughed.<sup>4</sup>
- In 1968, the New York Radical Women protested the Miss America pageant because they regarded it as being sexist. The activists filled a trash can with objects that they believed oppressed women, including bras, girdles, stiletto heels, and tweezers, and they chose — and put a crown on — their own, alternative Miss America: a live sheep.<sup>5</sup>

### Advertising

- Great advertising slogans appear in ordinary life, if only someone is around to recognize them. Here are three examples, all from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first example: A sign painter was working on a billboard advertising Camels cigarettes when a man bummed a cigarette from him. The sign painter smoked Camels cigarettes, and so he gave one to the man, who enthusiastically proclaimed, “I’d walk a mile for a Camel.” The sign painter liked what he heard and passed it on to his boss, saying that it might be a great slogan to use on a billboard. The second example: J.W. Packard founded the company that manufactured the Packard automobile. A man once wrote him, asking him to provide proof that the car was dependable.

Mr. Packard wrote the man a letter and gave him the name and address of a man in his area who owned a Packard. The letter included a sentence that became a famous advertising slogan: “Ask the man who owns one.” The third example: Harry and David Rosenberg grew pears in Oregon and hired an advertising company that created much new business for them. In fact, business was so good that the advertising company suggested to David that he and Harry buy a full-page ad in *Fortune* magazine. David thought for a moment and said, “Imagine Harry and me advertising our pears in *Fortune!*” As you would by now expect, that sentence became the headline of the full-page advertisement in *Fortune*.<sup>6</sup>

- When children’s book author/illustrator Tomie dePaola was growing up in the 1940s, Burma Shave signs were popular. These were a series of rhyming signs designed to be read one after another by people riding in a car, and the last sign always said, “BURMA SHAVE.” Usually, the signs were humorous, although some also contained a serious message. One series that young Tomie saw said, “DON’T STICK YOUR ELBOW / OUT SO FAR / IT MIGHT GO HOME / IN ANOTHER CAR / BURMA SHAVE.”<sup>7</sup>

- When Whoopi Goldberg’s daughter gave birth to a girl, Ms. Goldberg knew that the tabloids would be very eager to print photographs of her granddaughter. She wanted the first photographs made available to the public to be tasteful, so when the Gap asked her to do an advertisement, she suggested that they use a photograph of her and her family — her mother, her daughter, and her granddaughter — in the advertisement.<sup>8</sup>

- Clever but misleading (and unethical) product promotion has been with us for a long time. In the 1950s, the makers of Heineken beer wanted to get established in New York City, so they hired a group of 30 college students to go into bars, ask for Heineken, and if it wasn’t available, to leave the bar en masse. Bars quickly stocked Heineken beer.<sup>9</sup>

- Darrell Waltrip is a race-car driver who once was sponsored by a beer company. However, after a mother complained to him that he was giving the message to children that alcohol and driving go together, he quickly changed sponsors. (Now children can learn that driving and laundry detergent — his new sponsor — go together.)<sup>10</sup>

## **Animals**

- Police officers in small towns with little crime sometimes come up with creative ways to keep from being bored. In Fort Fairfield, Maine (population 4,300 at the time of this incident), a police officer discovered a chicken roosting on his police car. The police officer arrested the chicken for such crimes as criminal trespass, criminal mischief, resisting an officer, indecency (the chicken was naked), and littering. On the official crime report, the police officer wrote down the chicken’s name as Cee Little. Later, the police officer explained, “It started out as a joke and shouldn’t have gone as far as it did, but in a town like Fort Fairfield, you have to do something to keep from going crazy.” (The day following the arrest, the chicken was released into the custody of a person who liked to eat eggs.)<sup>11</sup>

- *Guardian* columnist Michele Hanson called the British Guy Fawkes celebration “dog-breakdownseason” because the fireworks scare her dogs so badly that they are unwilling to relieve themselves outside. In 2007, her dogs cried and whined all Guy Fawkes weekend. They wanted to go outside to relieve themselves, but each time they tried, fireworks would go off and they would run back inside the house. Ms. Hanson complained about “no sleep for me, of course, because of the whining, farting dogs, running up and down the stairs, begging to go to

the toilet. Again and again I tottered to the back door, opened it — BANG — they chickened out and stood quivering on the doorstep. All night for three nights. I am a wreck.”<sup>12</sup>

- Helen, the sister of opera singer Mary Garden, was very good with animals. Each morning, she would load a basket up with meat and cheese, then walk down the streets of her village, giving each cat and dog in the village a piece of food. A garage in the village had a ferocious dog fenced up, and Helen was the only person who would approach it. The owner of the garage told her, “Madame, if anybody steals anything from my garage, I’ll know it is you because nobody else in the village could pass that gate and live.”<sup>13</sup>

- Children’s book author Gary Paulsen and his wife, Ruth, once bought a pig to raise for food. Knowing that they intended to butcher it, they didn’t want to get emotionally close to the pig, and so they didn’t name it, but just called it “Pig.” The plan didn’t work. Pig became one of the Paulsens’ many pets, and when Pig died in old age, weighing almost 500 pounds, he died the way a pig would wish to die — with his snout in a feeding trough.<sup>14</sup>

- A very famous advertising illustration — and trademark — of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed a dog listening to an early Victor Talking Machine. The slogan that went with the illustration was this: “His Master’s Voice.” The person who created the illustration and slogan was an English painter named Francis Barraud, who once saw Nipper, his dog, sitting in front of the horn of the talking machine, listening to the voices that came from it.<sup>15</sup>

- When science fiction writer Anne McCaffrey was a child, she owned a cat named Thomas which she dressed in a doll’s clothes and pushed around in a stroller. Thomas so loved Anne that he would put up with this treatment for a while, but eventually he would jump out of the stroller, shake off the doll’s clothes, and start acting like a cat again.<sup>16</sup>

- War has many consequences, not all of them obvious. During World War II, so many British cats became casualties of war that the rat and mice populations started growing out of hand. Therefore, many American cats were shipped to Britain.<sup>17</sup>

## Art

- Stand-up comedian Margaret Cho married Al Ridenour in 2003. Mr. Ridenour used to be a member of the Los Angeles Cacophony Society, a group that engages in performance art and happenings. For example, they once walked down Hollywood Boulevard. Not so unusual, you say? True, but as they walked, they picked up pieces of litter and glued them to their bodies. On another occasion, they satirized the attention given to fad toys by creating some very heavy teddy bears they named the Cement Cuddlers. They then smuggled the teddy bears onto the shelves at Toys “R” Us and pretended to be frenzied customers of the teddy bears — as frenzied as the Tickle Me Elmo customers when that was a fad toy.<sup>18</sup>

- Some people whom you would not expect to appreciate art learn to appreciate art. During the Great Depression, the United States government paid artists to create works of art. For example, in 1936 Lucienne Bloch created a mural titled *Cycle of a Woman’s Life* for New York City’s Women’s House of Detention. The inmates there were tough, but Ms. Bloch discovered that they responded to the children she painted in her mural, giving them names and even “adopting” them.<sup>19</sup>

- Alberto Vargas, from Peru, became renowned for his depictions of Vargas girls — all of whom were impossibly beautiful and idealized women. When Mr. Vargas was asked why he

seemed to create only works of art that featured beautiful women, he replied, “Show me something more beautiful than a beautiful woman, and then I’ll go and paint it!”<sup>20</sup>

## **Baseball**

- Professional baseball player Bobby Bonds sometimes watched Barry, his son, play baseball in high school; however, he would not watch from the grandstands, being afraid that his celebrity would take attention away from the players on the field. Instead, he would park his car in some trees beyond the outfield, and then watch from there. Of course, he would give his son criticism and advice after the game. One thing he didn’t like was that Barry would sometimes get angry after striking out. Bobby told Barry, “Throwing down your helmet is not going to get you a hit.” Of course, Barry became a great professional baseball player like his father, Bobby, who had at least 30 steals and at least 30 home runs in five seasons — the first professional baseball player to do that. Bobby once said, “Know what I’m proudest of? That I’m now known as Barry Bonds’ father.”<sup>21</sup>

- Back when the Dodgers were in Brooklyn, Danny, the seven-year-old son of Dodger pitcher Carl Erskine, made his Little League team as an outfielder. At first his father thought that Danny might have had an edge since he was the son of a Dodger, but Danny’s coach said that Danny had earned his spot on the team: “He catches fly balls better than anybody I’ve got.” Later, the Dodgers announced that they were moving to Los Angeles. Of course, lots of people in Brooklyn were upset, including Danny’s coach, but Danny’s coach was upset for a reason different from that of other people: “I’m going to lose the best center fielder in the league.”<sup>22</sup>

- Fans of baseball understand the words “Tinker to Evers to Chance.” They were a famed team of Chicago Cubs infielders who made many double plays when shortstop Joe Tinker stopped the ball, then threw it to second baseman Johnny Evers, who then threw it to first baseman Frank Chance. Fans of baseball include entire families, of course. When sportswriter Steve Jacobson was growing up, and his father passed the potatoes to him, and he then passed them to his mother, his mother would say, “Tinker to Evers to Chance.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Bathrooms**

- When children’s book writer Tomie dePaola was in the second grade, he often got a ride home after school with the father of Jeannie, a friend at school. However, often Tomie dawdled and missed his ride and had to walk home. When this happened, he sometimes needed to go to the bathroom, so he would knock at the door of the home of another friend, Carol, whose mother would let him use their bathroom. One day, Carol’s mother was not at home, so young Tomie wet his pants and walked home with wet, uncomfortable corduroy pants. His mother simply cleaned him up when he got home, but Buddy, his older brother, laughed and told him, “Just go in the bushes.”<sup>24</sup>

- Maureen Stapleton was afraid of flying, and on a cross-country trip she sat next to friend and fellow actor Eli Wallach and held his hand. At one point he told her that he had to go to the restroom, and she told him, “All right. Let’s go.” She held his hand as she walked with him to the restroom, then waited outside. When he left the restroom, she held his hand and walked with him back to their seats. She then told him, “Buckle up — and no more bathroom privileges for you.”<sup>25</sup>

- Some children are very honest and direct in what they say, and some children know anatomical words to use when speaking honestly and directly. When Constance Ledlow's daughter was in the second grade, she raised her hand to ask permission to go to the bathroom. The teacher asked what she needed to do: number one or number two? Ms. Ledlow's daughter replied, "Neither, my vagina itches and I need to scratch it, then wash my hands." (She probably meant to say "vulva.")<sup>26</sup>

## Children

- Quaker humorist Tom Mullen once took his family to Old Town, a section of Chicago that he knew as an artists' hangout, but that unfortunately had been invaded by strip clubs, porno theaters, prostitutes, pimps, and johns. His seven-year-old daughter, Ruthie, was all eyes, staring through the car window and asking embarrassing questions such as "Why isn't that woman wearing any underwear?" and "What does 'l-u-s-t' mean?" Eventually, she asked, "How come all those men are going into that place?" Mr. Mullen replied, "Ask your mother, dear" — a reply that he admits may possibly be grounds for divorce. However, his wife gave an honest answer: "Those men are buying tickets to see someone's bare bottom." Ruthie asked, "Why would anyone pay money to see somebody's bare bottom?" Indeed. An advertisement asks, "What kind of man reads *Playboy*?" Mr. Mullen answers that question: "Witty, sophisticated types who pay to see somebody's bare bottom."<sup>27</sup>

- Grover Dale started out poor, but became a millionaire through dance; however, he became involved in dance through accident. A neighbor wanted her son to have a companion in his tap-dance class, so she offered to pay for nine-year-old Grover's lessons if he would attend the class with her son. Mr. Dale says, "If that woman had not come to my house that day, I don't think I would have ever stepped foot inside a dance studio." Another woman who greatly helped him was Lillian Jasper, the dance teacher. He enjoyed dancing and had obvious talent for it, but when the other kids started teasing him by calling him Mr. Tap Toe, he was ready to quit dancing. Fortunately, Ms. Jaspers told him, "Don't quit! I'll pay you to assist me." She paid him \$9 a week, and if not for that money, he would have given up dance. Of course, Mr. Dale became a dancer on Broadway and later published and edited *L.A. Dance and Fitness*.<sup>28</sup>

- Two of the creators of the TV sitcom *Cheers* were brothers Glen and Les Charles. Glen was five years old when his brother was born, and he did not know what to think of the new addition to the family. Glen says, "I just looked at him, not sure what he was. Here was this little blob. I didn't know what to think of him." Later, he figured out what to do with him. For example, when he got a set of bow and arrows as a gift, he let his little brother be the settler in a game of Western warfare and shot arrows at him. (Please exercise more caution than Glen did — Les still has a scar on his hand from that game.) One day, they made lemonade to sell. To make sure that the lemonade was all right, they tasted it. Unfortunately, they did not sell much lemonade. A neighborhood kid told everyone who came by, "Don't buy it. They already drank out of the pitcher."<sup>29</sup>

- What should we call the children of biracial couples? A 1984 article in *Newsweek* called them "Children of the Rainbow." Audra Johnson has a white father, and a black/Cherokee mother. Audra says, "If anyone ever asks, and a few people have — whether I'm black or white — I just tell them I'm a chocolate and vanilla swirl!" Another child, Chandree, also has parents of different races, and whenever someone asks her why her skin is so dark, she tells them, "I was out in the sun too long!" One summer, Chandree was out in the sun a lot and one of her arms



tanned darker than her other arm. Therefore, she says, “So when somebody asked me about my color, I held up one arm like this and said, ‘This is my black side, and the other is my white side.’ Then I told them my dad’s black and my mom’s white, so that makes me mixed.”<sup>30</sup>

- Sarah Michelle Gellar, an Emmy Award winner for her role in *All My Children* and a Saturn Award winner as the star of TV’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, was discovered at age four when she started singing in a restaurant. An agent who happened to be in the restaurant asked her, “Do you want to be on TV?” Sarah’s mother didn’t think that the agent was serious, but little Sarah was intrigued. She had recently learned her address and telephone number in case she ever got lost or was kidnapped, so she gave the agent that information. A week later, the agent called, and after some persuading, Sarah’s mother agreed to let her audition for TV commercials and roles in movies.<sup>31</sup>

- Even before she could print letters, Joan Lowery Nixon knew she wanted to write. Sometimes she would tell her mother, who encouraged creativity, “I have a poem. Write it down.” Later, as an adult struggling writer, she bought a pair of bookends for the books she would write and placed them together with this note in between them: “Watch this space grow!” Over 100 published books later, she needed many more than two bookends. (Her friend and fellow writer Mary Blount Christian bought a trash can when she started writing seriously — to hold all of her rejection slips! Today, Ms. Christian has also published over 100 books.)<sup>32</sup>

- Charles M. Schulz, creator of the comic strip *Peanuts*, grew up among some original relatives. Just two days after Charles was born, an uncle gave him the nickname that became his for the rest of his life. The uncle named him “Sparky,” after the horse Spark Plug, which had just become a character in the comic strip *Barney Google*. As a young boy, Sparky practiced hockey against another relative with originality: his grandmother. In the basement, he attempted to hit tennis balls with a hockey stick into a goal guarded by his grandmother. This was no mismatch. Sparky says, “She made a lot of great saves.”<sup>33</sup>

- Matt Damon, who starred in and won an Oscar for writing (with friend Ben Affleck) *Good Will Hunting*, was forced to be creative when he was a child because of a lack of toys. His mother disliked the violent toys that were and are prevalent in modern society, so she wouldn’t buy such toys as cap guns and light sabers for Matt and Kyle, his older brother. Therefore, they had to create their own fun. Kyle would make some costumes, and he and Matt would dress in them and act out stories. Matt, of course, became an actor and screenwriter, while Kyle became an artist and sculptor.<sup>34</sup>

- Yo-Yo Ma started playing music early, but he did not seem to care for the violin. His parents wondered why he didn’t like the violin, and young Yo-Yo told them, “I don’t like the sound violins make — I want a big instrument!” His father took him to an instrument shop, where Yo-Yo found a cello made for children. To try out the cello, Yo-Yo couldn’t sit on a chair — all of them were too big for him. Therefore, he sat on three big telephone books. Of course, he got the cello and became a world-renowned cellist.<sup>35</sup>

- When Ralph Nader and his siblings were growing up, the local library ran into a problem because children were not returning the books they had borrowed. The local McDonald’s started a promotion to get the books back by offering a free hamburger to each child who returned his or her library books. Ralph’s mother, Rose, opposed this promotion. She felt that children ought not to be bribed to do the right thing. Ralph and his siblings returned their library books without getting a free hamburger.<sup>36</sup>

- As a child, Dorothy “Dot” Richardson was a ball of frenetic energy. In the days before laws required small children to ride in car seats, she traveled with her parents from Orlando to California. Because she constantly crawled around in the car, eventually her parents placed her in a box to keep her relatively immobile. According to her mother, “Dorothy never walked as a baby — she ran.” The exercise paid off — Dot won gold medals in women’s softball at the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games.<sup>37</sup>
- Cheerleaders can be role models for young children. For example, the first graders at a Catholic school idolized the cheerleaders who were in the eighth grade. In fact, at one recess the first graders imitated the older cheerleaders. One first grader led the chants: “Give me a B ... give me a Q ... give me an R ... what’s that spell?” Since none of the first graders knew how to spell yet (and since the letters in fact did not spell a word), one first grader answered, “I don’t know!”<sup>38</sup>
- As a child, Jackie Bouvier spoke the truth. One day, she and Lee, her little sister, got in an elevator, which was operated by a man with some white hair standing straight up from his forehead. Lee said politely to the elevator operator, “You look pretty well today.” But Jackie said, “That’s not true, Lee. You know very well he looks like a chicken.” Later, she became famous as Jackie Kennedy Onassis, a woman who closely observed the rules of etiquette.<sup>39</sup>
- Francis Crick was born on June 8, 1916. Shortly afterward, his sister carried him — at the request of their mother — up to the roof of their home. Why? This act symbolized that young Francis would someday reach the top — and he did reach the top of his profession. Working together, friends James Watson and Mr. Crick discovered the structure of DNA, for which in 1962 they won a Nobel Prize.<sup>40</sup>
- Comedian Steve Allen and his wife and son were in a limo in Tokyo, Japan, when they were trapped in an anti-American demonstration led by Japanese students who chanted, “Yan-kee, go home.” Mr. Allen’s six-year-old son, Bill, rolled a window down, then began chanting in sync with the Japanese students, “We’re go-ing home Thurs-day. We’re go-ing home Thurs-day.”<sup>41</sup>
- Eric Gregg used to umpire in the Dominican Republic, where the poorer kids made sneaking in an art form. They waited until the national anthem of the Dominican Republic was being played, then swarmed over the fence, because the people standing up made hiding easier and because they knew that the police would not chase them while the national anthem was being played.<sup>42</sup>
- When dancer Ann Miller was only 15 years old — everyone thought she was 18 — she had her first Hollywood date in 1938 when Hermes Pan took her to the Academy Awards. Because she wanted to be sophisticated, she put on lots of makeup, but Mr. Pan looked at her and absolutely refused to take her to the Awards until she washed all that “junk” off her face.<sup>43</sup>
- When Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles*, was nine years old, he started collecting Buck Rogers comic strips. However, when some schoolmates started teasing him about his collection, he tore it up. He felt bad about doing this, and he cried — and he decided to follow his bliss from then on and not worry about what other people thought of him.<sup>44</sup>

- As a student, Arthur Mitchell once happily danced a Military Tap Salute at his public school; unfortunately, midway through the number, he forgot his routine. He handled it well. He simply told the audience, “You’ll have to excuse me. It could happen to anyone. It’s because I’m not a professional.” (Later, of course, he became a professional.)<sup>45</sup>
- Michelle Trachtenberg, young co-star of TV’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, knew at an early age that she wanted to be an actress. When she was three years old, she watched a TV commercial in which a little girl braided Barbie’s hair. She told her parents that she wanted to be on television, and, she says, “I wouldn’t move until I was told I could be.”<sup>46</sup>
- One of the closest Presidential elections in history took place when John F. Kennedy defeated Richard M. Nixon. Even after Mr. Kennedy went to bed and awoke the morning after election day, no one was sure who had won — except for Caroline, Mr. Kennedy’s young daughter, who greeted him with, “Good morning, Mr. President.”<sup>47</sup>
- Children love to be read to. When the young grandson of young people’s author Judy Blume learned how to read (on his own!), he tried to keep it secret because he was afraid that no one would read to him anymore. Of course, Judy and others reassured him and kept on reading to him, including every night before he went to sleep.<sup>48</sup>
- Many dancers got started in dance for the same reason that Martha Graham dancer Jane Dudley did. She was an energetic young girl, and her mother hoped that dance lessons would use up some of that abundant energy. In fact, when Jane was a little girl, her mother’s nickname for her was “Janie Wiggle.”<sup>49</sup>
- When she was a child, Merrill Ashley took the study of ballet seriously and wore her hair in a bun even at school. Her school newspaper once made a list of notable personalities among the students, including Miss Popularity, Miss Congeniality, and Miss Hospitality. Young Merrill was Miss Bun.<sup>50</sup>
- When Jackie Bouvier (later known as Jackie Kennedy Onassis) was very young, she wandered away from her nanny and baby sister in New York City’s Central Park. A police officer asked her, “Are you lost, little girl?” Young Jackie replied, “No, but my nurse and baby sister are.”<sup>51</sup>
- Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury loved children, and children loved him. One little girl heard that he was coming for a visit, so she ran home and shouted, “Mother, I want my face washed and a clean apron on, for Bishop Asbury is coming and I am sure he will hug me up.”<sup>52</sup>
- In his book *More Funny People*, comedian Steve Allen tells a story about a time when David, his then-four-year-old son, caused trouble and Mr. Allen asked him, “What do you think you are anyway, a little baby?” His son replied, “I’m *not* a little baby. I’m a *big* baby.”<sup>53</sup>
- When he was a child, the parents of comedian Chris Rock took in foster children, and they treated them like their own children. One day, young Chris came home, and a strange kid in the yard told him, “I’m your brother.” Chris asked, “Who are you?”<sup>54</sup>
- Each morning, Linda Pace and her young children prayed. One morning, her three-year-old son prayed, “God, please help Sissy not to suck her thumb.” Hearing that, Sissy prayed, “And, God, please help my brother to stop reminding me.”<sup>55</sup>

- J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, was born in South Africa. Shortly after he was born, a family servant “borrowed” him so he could show him to his friends and neighbors — they had never seen a white baby.<sup>56</sup>

## Chapter 2: From Christmas to Education

### Christmas

- Brendan, the son of Beth Quinn, a columnist for *The Times Herald-Record* in the state of New York, had a Blankie when he was little. He carried it around and slept with it for a long time, then he kept it on the floor by his bed, and finally he stored it in his closet. Occasionally, Beth would find it and say, “Oh, look what I found. Blankie.” Brendan would reply, “I know. Leave him there.” Beth did. When Brendan was eight years old, he met Josie, his half-sister, and they bonded quickly over a shared love of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, the Smurfs, and their Blankies. Later, Josie moved away, and Brendan and Beth found out that older children at her bus stop were picking on her. Upset, Brendan took action. He cut out a square from Blankie and then had Beth send it and a Smurf doll to Josie along with this message: “Here is a Smurf and part of Blankie. Keep these with you at the bus stop so no one can hurt you.” Apparently, it worked, as Josie grew up to be an adult. For Christmas of 2006, Beth restored Blankie — but left the hole created when Brendan cut out the square — to make a gift for Brendan’s soon-to-be-born daughter, Devon Elizabeth.<sup>57</sup>

- While Maria Tallchief was dancing the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy, she was annoyed by a child who was playing the part of the Prince because he kept critiquing her performance out loud on stage, telling the little girl who was playing the part of Marie, “She’s kind of off tonight.” Therefore, as soon as Ms. Tallchief’s back was to the audience, she looked him in the eyes and told him, “Shut up!” Many years later, choreographer Eliot Field brought his dance troupe to Chicago, where Ms. Tallchief had a meeting with him. He asked her, “You don’t hate me?” Ms. Tallchief was surprised by the question until he explained, “I’m the little boy you told to shut up during *The Nutcracker* 23 years ago!”<sup>58</sup>

- When Jan Berenstain, co-creator of the Berenstain Bears books with Stan, her husband, was a little girl, she had a baby doll with a delicate china head. The baby was dressed in a christening gown, and sometimes Jan pretended that she was christening her doll. Unfortunately, when she played a little too rough with her doll, she would have to wait until Christmas to get another delicate china head for her doll.<sup>59</sup>

- Felia Doubrovska taught at George Balanchine’s School for American Ballet for 30 years, so she taught many famous dancers, among them Allegra Kent. For Christmas, Allegra once gave Ms. Doubrovska a present, who reminded her of the school’s rule: “No presents for teachers.” Allegra, however, ran away, saying, “There are no rules for me.”<sup>60</sup>

### Clothing

- Henning Mankell grew up in Sweden, but he learned the importance of dignity in Africa. Mozambique was devastated by civil war during the 1980s and until 1992. Mr. Mankell visited the north of that country in November of 1990. The country had little food, and many people had been killed or crippled. However, he was impressed by a young man whom he saw wearing rags. The young man had no shoes or even sandals, so he had gotten dye from the earth and painted shoes on his feet. Mr. Mankell writes that “in doing so he boosted his awareness that, despite all his misery and destitution, he was a human being with dignity.”<sup>61</sup>

- Scientists engaged in genetic research occasionally spent time at Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, where they both relaxed and talked science. Some scientists there, including friends James Watson and Francis Crick, who discovered the structure of DNA, for which they won a Nobel Prize in 1962, formed an RNA Tie Club that consisted of the top 20 RNA scientists in the world. Each member of the club wore a tie decorated with an illustration of the particular amino-acid chain that had been "given" to them when they joined the club.<sup>62</sup>

- Mina Shaughnessy loved fine clothing, and she dressed extremely well while teaching at CUNY, although her students often faced extreme financial hardships. Critic Irving Howe once met her after she had just finished teaching a class, and he asked her if her students were ever put off by her stunning clothing. She replied, "But, Irving, my students know I dress up for them."<sup>63</sup>

## Dance

- Because of a mishap, Edward Villella began to take ballet lessons. While growing up in Queens, he was very athletic and played many games. One day, while playing Running Bases, he was hit in the head with a ball and knocked unconscious. The children he was playing with picked him up, carried him to his home, put him down, rang the doorbell, and ran. He woke up healthy, but his mother felt bad because she had not been at home when the children rang her doorbell; instead, she had been with Edward's sister, who was taking a dance lesson. Therefore, the next time his sister had a dance lesson, his mother took him along, too. The dance teacher felt that Edward's presence would be distracting to her students unless he was also taking dance lessons, so he began to take lessons. Later, his sister auditioned for and was awarded a partial scholarship with the School of American Ballet. When SAB administrator Natalie Molostwoff found out that the new partial-scholarship dancer had a brother who was taking dance, she was very interested: "He's a boy? Can he walk? Bring him!" (Male dancers are much more rare than female dancers, and thus are in demand.) Young Edward auditioned for the SAB and was awarded a full scholarship, and of course he became a star dancer for the New York City Ballet.<sup>64</sup>

- Eve Gentry, nee Henrietta Greenhood, took dance seriously. Each Saturday, she traveled from San Bernardino to Los Angeles for her dance lesson, taking a streetcar, a train, and two buses to get there, no matter what the weather. Sometimes, she would arrive for her 9 a.m. dance lesson just as a parent called the receptionist to say that a child would not show up for the dance lesson because of rainy weather. The receptionist would reply, "Well, Henrietta's here." After a while, Henrietta started taking every class offered on Saturday. A little while longer, she stayed with one of her cousins so she could take a dance class on Monday. And a little while longer, she stopped going home to San Bernardino at all so she could take dance classes each day they were offered. Unfortunately, she neglected to tell her parents what she was doing. Her parents worried, and a truant officer even paid a visit. However, her parents eventually allowed her to stay in Los Angeles with relatives so she could take dance lessons whenever she wanted. She could be firm minded in other ways as well. When she discovered modern dance, she gave up ballet — and set her toe shoes and tutus on fire!<sup>65</sup>

- On opening night of *The Hot Mikado*, starring the great dancer Bill Robinson, aka Mr. Bojangles, several uniformed police showed up. One of them told the hatcheck girl, "We don't expect any trouble. We couldn't get seats, so if nobody minds, we'll just stand around. It wouldn't be fair to Robinson not to have his real pals at an opening." Mr. Bojangles was a true

friend to the police. Whenever a police officer or firefighter died in action, Mr. Bojangles would get entertainers to perform at a benefit, then he turned over all the money raised to the widow.<sup>66</sup>

- When he was a child, New York City Ballet dancer Nikolaj Hübbe wanted to study ballet. His parents knew that it was a big commitment, but they knew that he wanted to do it, so they let him. Of course, sometimes at 6:30 on a dark and cold morning in Copenhagen, Denmark, he would not want to go to class, so he would tell his parents, “Oh, I think I’m sick today.” Knowing that he wasn’t sick, they would tell him, “Really? Well, you know, you started this, you wanted this, so now you get your butt out of bed and do it!”<sup>67</sup>

- At 14 years of age, modern dance pioneer May O’Donnell started taking dance lessons — and she made sure that her friends were practicing their lessons, too. When she started taking dance lessons, all the other young dance students had to practice their high kicks with her — or she wouldn’t let them be her friends.<sup>68</sup>

- Buddy and Vilma Ebsen were a famous brother-and-sister dance team during the 1930s. The members of some acts didn’t get along, but they always did. Occasionally, Vilma couldn’t dance as well as she normally did, but afterwards, all Buddy ever said to her was, “Where do you want to go to eat?”<sup>69</sup>

## Daughters

- When Bill Clinton was first running for President, he attended a father-daughter dance at the YWCA in Little Rock, Arkansas. This would have been a good photo-op for political purposes, but Hillary declined to let campaign workers notify the media, saying instead, “No. This is Chelsea’s night.”<sup>70</sup>

- The first song ever sung by Taylor, the daughter of country music superstar Garth Brooks, was his song “Fever.” Well, she kind of sung it. Mr. Brooks says, “She knew one word, and she’d run around naked in the house screaming ‘Fever.’”<sup>71</sup>

## Death

- Many parts of Africa were devastated by the AIDS epidemic, killing off the young adults and leaving the children and the elderly behind. In Uganda, many parents who knew that they will die from AIDS left behind memory books so that their children would have something to remember them by. These are small exercise books which contain preprinted prompts, such as “You First Talked When You Were ...” and “When You Were Little, You Loved to ....” Parents wrote the answers to these prompts as well as other messages to their children. One parent answered the prompt “I Always Laughed When You ...” by telling about how Peter, her young son, was so proud because he was better than his friend in school. His friend was ranked number 1 in class, while Peter was ranked number 35. His mother tried to explain that being ranked number 1 was better than being ranked number 35, but Peter kept on believing that the bigger the number a student was ranked, the better the student was.<sup>72</sup>

- In 1944, Ed McKeever coached the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame; unfortunately, that year, Notre Dame was no match for a strong Army football team, and even more unfortunately, Mr. McKeever’s father was dying. Before the Notre Dame-Army game, Mr. McKeever told his Fighting Irish that his dying father would be in the hospital, listening to the game on the radio. He also told them to play an offensive game, figuring that would be the best way to at least

keep the score close. Unfortunately, Notre Dame kept being intercepted, and Army ran up a big lead. Late in the third quarter, with Army piling up the points, the Notre Dame quarterback told his fellow players in a huddle, “Well, it doesn’t matter what play we run now. McKeever’s old man is sure as hell dead by this time.”<sup>73</sup>

- Some of the relatives of science fiction writer Anne McCaffrey had a kind of extrasensory perception — as she herself did. Her Grandmother McElroy once worried about her sister and whether she would like the afterlife, since during life she had not been generous with praise, saying often, “Oh, it’s not so bad.” One night, Grandmother McElroy prayed very hard, and the ghost of her sister appeared to her. Grandmother McElroy asked how she was finding the afterlife. Before disappearing, the ghost said, “Oh, it’s not so bad.”<sup>74</sup>

- Phoebe A. Johnson took her five-year-old daughter to a cemetery, where they saw a man push a rod into the earth, then hang some flowers from the rod. Ms. Johnson’s daughter asked why he had done that. She replied, “He wanted to remember the person who died.” Her daughter then asked, “Will someone do that for me when I die?” After hearing that someone would, the daughter said, “It won’t be fair. All I’ll see is the stick.”<sup>75</sup>

- Addison Mizner once thought about committing suicide in San Francisco over a failed love affair. He got a gun, then rode a streetcar out to Golden Gate Park, where he found an isolated spot. At this time, he remembered that he had a large hole in his underwear. So he returned home to change his underwear, and during the ride back home, he decided that the woman really wasn’t worth committing suicide over.<sup>76</sup>

- Many people feel strongly about movies. When Western film maker John Ford died, some film scholars, including Jim Agnew and Alex Ameripoor, drove to Los Angeles to visit his grave, where they stood and sang, “Shall We Gather at the River,” a song that is often sung in funerals in Western movies.<sup>77</sup>

## **Easter**

- The parents of eight-year-old Lulu divorced, but her mother kept a good home for her. Near Easter, Lulu arrived home to find her mother hopping around the house while dressed as the Easter Bunny with bunny ears, pink tights, and a powder puff for a tail. Not surprisingly, her family’s motto is “Proud to Be Weird.”<sup>78</sup>

## **Education**

- Born in Mexico, Guadalupe Quintanilla grew up speaking Spanish and did not attend much school. At age 13, she moved to Brownsville, Texas, where she had to take a test in order to be admitted to school. However, the test was in English, and she didn’t know English. Of course, she scored very low on the test, and the school’s administrators thought that she was mentally retarded, so they put her in the first grade. Soon, she grew frustrated and dropped out. Later, she got married and had children. Her children spoke only Spanish and they, too, had trouble in school and were placed in a class of “slow learners,” who also spoke only Spanish. Ms. Quintanilla realized that she needed to learn English in order to help her children, so she attempted to sit in on classes where English was spoken. First, she tried to sit in on a class for aides at a hospital where she volunteered, but her request was rejected. Next, she tried to sit in on a class at a high school, but the school counselor told her that her records showed that she was mentally retarded. Next, she went to Texas Southmost College to enroll in classes, but at



first she wasn't allowed to because of her poor English skills. Refusing to give up, she waited for two hours, then spoke to the registrar of the college, who finally allowed her to enroll in courses, but who also told her not to bother him if she failed. She didn't fail. Her first semester grades were good enough for her to make the Dean's List. She continued to do well in her studies, although algebra literally made her vomit one day. In 1976, she earned a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Houston. What about her children? She helped them with their schoolwork, their grades got better, and all three children eventually earned doctorates. One child became a physician, and her two other children became lawyers. Whenever someone calls her house to ask for Dr. Quintanilla, she has to ask, "Which one?" Her family has four Dr. Quintanillas.<sup>79</sup>

- Young people's author Judy Blume is one of the worst standardized test takers of all time. When she took the college boards, she had had no experience with this kind of test before. Therefore, she says, "Every word and number swam in front of me." She ended up filling in the little circles on the standardized answer sheet randomly — she didn't even read the questions. Her guidance teacher knew how intelligent Judy was — Judy was an A student — so her guidance teacher was shocked by Judy's low test scores. Fortunately, Judy got into college because of teacher recommendations, high grades, and extracurricular activities. She says, "I do know standardized tests can't measure our creativity. If I had been judged only by that test and nothing else — if the rest of my life depended on that test — I'd be in terrible shape now, a failure." By the way, Ms. Blume's book sales number over 80 million!<sup>80</sup>

- A bully named Zachary picked on classmate Elliot Rafael at school, calling him a "n\*gger" several times. Elliot's mother, Tina, went to the school principal, who took no action. Finally, it was Elliot's kindergarten teacher who took appropriate action. She told her class that she and Elliot were going to be together. She also said, "All those in the class who want to use ugly names and call Elliot a 'n\*gger' will have to call me one, too." Tina was grateful, and the bullying and the name-calling stopped immediately. (And the next day Elliot gave Zachary a big hug and told him, "What you need is some love, Zachary." He also told Zachary's mother to spend time with her son, adding, "He just needs to be loved, so he won't be so mean.")<sup>81</sup>

- Couples about to get engaged sometimes engage in mock, funny arguments. Balanchine dancer Barbara Milberg and her future husband, Howard Shreve Fisher, enjoyed crossword puzzles, and they once argued about how to pronounce m-i-s-l-e-d. He thought it should be pronounced "mizzled," and she thought it should be pronounced "my-zilled." After retiring from dancing, Mrs. Fisher became a very good student — and eventually a Ph.D. In dance, she had learned that she had to be present when the curtain went up, and so she never handed in a paper late. In addition, when studying ancient Greek, she practiced the language by using it to write her grocery lists.<sup>82</sup>

- Larry Doby, the second African-American athlete to integrate major-league baseball, was born in Camden, South Carolina. Wealthy white people used to ride through black neighborhoods and throw nickels and dimes on the ground for little black children to pick up. And when the black children stood up again, the wealthy white people would rub the top of the children's heads — for luck. Larry's grandmother always told him, "Don't you ever — don't you *ever* — do that." When Larry was 10 or 12 years old, she explained why he must never pick up those coins. Picking up the coins resulted in a lack of dignity; the dignified way to act was to turn your back on those coins.<sup>83</sup>

- In 1950, George Balanchine went to England to work with the Sadler's Wells Ballet in staging *Ballet Imperial*. While there, he stayed with the noted choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton. Later, they talked over those good old days together, and Mr. Balanchine told Sir Frederick, "You know, you really taught me something." Mr. Balanchine's then-wife, Tanaquil Le Clercq, listened closely, hoping to learn something important about ballet, but Mr. Balanchine explained, "Yes, you taught me *always* to pile up the dinner dishes in the sink and run water over them before your charwoman arrived."<sup>84</sup>

- Father Damien, the leper priest of Molokai, was different from other people even as a child. For example, he once persuaded four of his siblings to not go to school one day but instead to play hooky with him. But they didn't go swimming or play amusing games; instead, they knelt and remained silent all day, playing "Hermits." Later, when he was studying to become a priest, he carved into his desk the words "Silence, Recollection, and Prayer." His teacher reprimanded him, telling him that he would do better to carve the words not into his desk, but into his heart instead.<sup>85</sup>

- Ratemyprofessors.com is, as you would expect, a website where students can rate professors anonymously. Some of the comments the students make about professors are quite funny: 1) "You can't cheat in her class because no one knows the answers." 2) "His class was like milk, it was good for 2 weeks." 3) "Houston, we have a problem. Space cadet of a teacher, isn't quite attached to earth." 4) "I would have been better off using the tuition money to heat my apartment last winter." 5) "Three of my friends got A's in his class and my friends are dumb."<sup>86</sup>

- Sometimes young children don't learn what their teacher attempts to teach them. For example, at a Catholic school a Sister began to teach her young pupils addition. However, after introducing the subject to the children the Sister got a telephone call from a mother wondering why her son was saying, "One plus one, the son of a b\*tch is two. Two plus two, the son of a b\*tch is four." The Sister explained that she had been teaching the children to recite, "One plus one, the sum of which is two. Two plus two, the sum of which is four."<sup>87</sup>

- Where some college athletes get their grades can be a mystery. Truett "Rip" Sewell, who later became a professional baseball pitcher, played sports at Vanderbilt, but the academics were too tough for him, and he dropped out. Two weeks later, he ran into English professor Dr. Eddie Mims, who asked how he was doing. Mr. Sewell explained that he had dropped out and hadn't been to class in two weeks. Dr. Mims said, "That's impossible! We had an exam yesterday, and I passed you!"<sup>88</sup>

- When he was ready to enter junior high school, Eric Gregg, who was later to be the third black umpire in the major leagues, looked at the school in his neighborhood in inner-city Philadelphia. He decided that the school was "nothing but a dead end," and he decided that he wasn't going there. Therefore, completely on his own, he faked an address and attended a much better junior high in another neighborhood, riding city buses by himself to get to the school for classes.<sup>89</sup>

- Famed Canadian portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh took many photographs of World War II leaders to be added to the Canadian National Archives. Among the people whose portrait he took was Viscount Alexander, who led British soldiers to victory in North Africa and Italy. During the portrait session, Mr. Karsh asked him, "What is the greatest lesson the war has taught us?" Viscount Alexander replied, "Not to have another war. Next time all of us will be obliterated."<sup>90</sup>

- When Muhammad Ali was still known as Cassius Clay, he almost did not graduate from high school because of his poor grades. However, Atwood Wilson, the principal of his high school, wanted him to graduate, in part because of Mr. Clay's growing fame as a boxer. Mr. Wilson stated, "One day our greatest claim to fame is going to be that we knew Cassius Clay or taught him. Do you think that I'm going to be the principal of a school that Cassius Clay didn't finish?"<sup>91</sup>
- As children, young people's author William Sleator and Vicky, his sister, talked often about all the popular kids they hated in school. Their father advised, "Don't waste your hate on them. Save it up for important people, like the president." Since young William and Vicky were well educated, they quoted to their father a line from Euripides' *Medea*: "Loathing is endless. Hate is a bottomless cup: I pour and pour."<sup>92</sup>
- When Hillary Rodham Clinton was 14 years old, she wrote NASA to find out what was necessary for her to do to become an astronaut. NASA wrote back that they "weren't taking any girls." This letter made her furious. Later, when she was deciding which college to attend, a Harvard professor told her, "We don't need any more women." She ended up at Yale.<sup>93</sup>
- When she was a child, renowned opera singer Mary Garden took violin lessons. She once asked her teacher, "Mr. Phelps, how long will it take me to become a good violinist and how good will I be?" Her teacher was honest and replied, "Mary, you will probably become a good amateur in 20 years."<sup>94</sup>
- Children's book illustrator Peter Sís was amazed when Madeleine, his very young daughter, read Wanda Gág's *Millions of Cats* to him. His wife had to explain that their daughter wasn't actually reading the book — Madeleine had memorized it.<sup>95</sup>

## Chapter 3: From Fathers to Husbands and Wives

### Fathers

- Comedian Zero Mostel was born Samuel Joel Mostel on February 28, 1915, in Brooklyn. His father was Israel Mostel, who supported a wide variety of relatives during much of his life. Among other jobs, he made sacramental wine to be used in Jewish ceremonies. Mr. Mostel used to tell a story about how his father would look out for his children. At the supper table, his father would ask his children, “What did you learn in school today?” Each child would then tell something he had learned. After each recitation, the father would say, “Such a scholar deserves an extra piece of meat,” and he would take some meat from his own plate and put it on his child’s. Frequently, all of his meat ended up on his children’s plates.<sup>96</sup>

- Barry Bonds’ father, professional baseball player Bobby Bonds, taught him many things. For example, he taught him competitiveness by playing pool with him at home. The winner of the game would get candy, while the loser had to do push-ups. Barry says, “When I played with my dad, he was such a competitor — he couldn’t lose.” In addition, Bobby taught his son not to lower himself in reaction to racists. When Barry was young, occasionally he got into fights with white boys who disliked him because of his color. One day, young Barry came home and told his father, “I don’t like white people right now.” Bobby told him, “Don’t ever come in my house like that again. Be proud of who you are. Do not allow their stupidity to make you stupid.”<sup>97</sup>

- Maureen White of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, came out when she was 19 years old to her father. She told her father, “Dad, I want to tell you something,” then she said, “Dad, I’m gay.” Her father’s response was simply, “I know.” He explained that he knew because of the people she chose as friends and because he had once seen a book about lesbian iconography in her room. Then he added, “You’re still my daughter. And I feel like a big weight has been lifted off of my shoulders. I’ve been waiting for you to tell me. And I love you.” Her reaction was, “This is awesome.”<sup>98</sup>

- The father of ballerina Violetta Verde died when she was very young, and she wanted a father. One day, when she asked her mother for a father, her mother told her to look out the window for a man who might become a father for her. Later, she returned to the room where Violetta was looking out the window, and forgetting what she had told her daughter to do, asked what she was doing. Young Violetta replied, “Still looking for a father, Mama.” Her mother replied, “I have looked, too, but you see, my child, it is not so easy to find one.”<sup>99</sup>

- Dick DeVos’ father was one of the founders of Amway. At age 16, Dick worked as a part-time tour guide at Amway; however, he always introduced himself as Dick Marvin (his middle name) so visitors wouldn’t know he was the boss’ son. Frequently, people asked him about Rich DeVos, not knowing he was Dick’s father, and Dick was able to honestly reply that Rich DeVos was always supportive — even to a part-time tour guide such as himself.<sup>100</sup>

- Pete Postlethwaite played an important role in the movie *In the Name of the Father*, which was about the relationship between a father and a son. His appearance in the movie kept him from being mugged in New York one night when he was walking alone. The would-be mugger recognized him and said, “Weren’t you in *In the Name of the Father*? I hadn’t spoken to my dad for 30 years — after I saw that film, I got straight on the phone.”<sup>101</sup>

- When Jean Little, now a young people's author, was 15, her father gave her an important gift. He had some of her best poetry published in a book and even got the noted Guelph artist Evan Macdonald to illustrate it. Ms. Little was justifiably proud of the book (although she disagreed with some of her father's editorial changes to her poetry), but she was especially happy when he told her, "This is only your *first* book."<sup>102</sup>
- Some famous dancers are lucky to have a family who keeps them grounded. After finishing her first season with the New York City Ballet, Jennie Somogyi was tired and happy to sleep in. However, she was 17 years old and her father thought that it was time for her to learn how to change the oil in a car, so he woke her up early. At 8 a.m., wearing jeans, she learned how to change the oil in a car.<sup>103</sup>
- In 1987, while 70-year-old movie star Kirk Douglas was walking down the street, a young girl stopped him and asked for an autograph. He smiled at her, and the girl gushed, "Wow! Michael Douglas' father." At first, Kirk had not wanted his son to act, but he quickly realized that his son had talent, and at age 91, Kirk said, "Now he's one of my favorite actors. He's so much better than I was."<sup>104</sup>
- The father of Charles M. Schulz, creator of the comic strip *Peanuts*, was a barber. Sometimes, young Charles would be sitting in the barber chair getting a haircut when a town VIP would walk in. When that happened, his father would stop cutting Charles' hair and instead cut the VIP's hair. Only after the VIP had been taken care of would Charles get the rest of his hair cut.<sup>105</sup>
- Ralph Nader's father, Nathra, ran a small-town restaurant. He raised his children to act correctly, and he wanted other parents' children to act correctly. One day, he noticed some teenagers laughing as they put pepper in the sugar bowl. He walked over to them and asked, "Why are you insulting your parents?" Then he took the sugar bowl away from them and walked away.<sup>106</sup>
- At the 1946 NCAA tournament, a basketball fan kept booing Referee Ike Craig, unaware that Mr. Craig's wife and small son were sitting near him. At one point, the fan yelled, "That referee is a dope." Mr. Craig's small son responded, "That dope is my daddy." The fan, out of respect for Mr. Craig's small son, remained quiet for the rest of the game.<sup>107</sup>
- The father of Anne McCaffrey, author of the Pern novels about telepathic dragons, was a military man. He taught his young children how to march in formation and do close-order drills, and when he called them using his parade-ground voice, the neighborhood for three blocks around could hear him.<sup>108</sup>

## Food

- Comedian Stan Freberg was running late at the St. Louis airport, and he bought a big, beautiful sandwich, hoping to eat it before getting on the plane since he knew this was a no-meal flight. Unfortunately, because he was running late, he had no time to eat his sandwich. Not wanting to eat in front of the other people on the plane, he took one bite of the sandwich, then he left it, wrapped up, on an ashtray. However, the air conditioning was busted on the airplane, and all the passengers had to disembark. There on the ashtray was Mr. Freberg's sandwich, just as he had left it. He was still hungry, so he picked the sandwich up. Behind him, he heard a little girl say, "Mommy! That man took a dirty old sandwich off the ashtray!" He

then bit into the sandwich and made a show of enjoying it: “Mmmmmm, delicious!” The little girl said, “Eeeeyooo! Now he’s *eating* it!” Mr. Freberg got quite a bit of attention, but the sandwich was delicious.<sup>109</sup>

- The wife of a newlywed husband made him a burrito. It was a horrible burrito, but he was a newlywed, so he ate it and asked for another, which he also ate. The next morning, the burritos began to disrupt his lower digestive system while he was on his way to work, so he left the subway early and started looking in desperation for a bathroom. He didn’t find one in time, soiled his pants, and hailed a taxi and paid the driver \$100 to take him home — the extra money was for obvious reasons. At home, he took a shower, then turned on the TV — only to see footage of a plane that September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, crashing directly into his office at the World Trade Center.<sup>110</sup>

- Always a comic, Zero Mostel entertained whenever a crowd was present — a crowd being defined as himself and one other person. Even when eating in restaurants, Mr. Mostel tried to make the other diners laugh. Amused by the pretentiousness of the waiters at Maxim’s in Paris, Mr. Mostel asked the sommelier for a Coke, then began an elaborate pantomime of tasting and sniffing the soft drink. Finally, he spit the drink back in the glass and told the sommelier to take it back because it was “too young.” In addition, at the end of the meal Mr. Mostel often glared at the waiter as he paid his bill, then said, “My lawyers will be here in the morning.”<sup>111</sup>

- Ramones lead singer Joey Ramone was a nice guy. Early in his career, he would go to a New York deli and order two cups of coffee. Feeling bad because this was such a small order, he would also order two bottles of Evian water. He then would take the order back to his apartment and drink the coffee, but usually not drink the water. He also was a bachelor housekeeper who seldom cleaned his apartment. His friend Daniel Rey would visit Joey and see dozens of deli bags, dozens of empty coffee containers, and dozens of unopened bottles of Evian water. Joey would ask, “Hey, you want a water?”<sup>112</sup>

- Hunger and poverty can and do exist in the United States. However, frugality and intelligence also exist. When Patt Morrison was growing up, her father had a job climbing electric lines. Her family had a garden and was frugal, but once in a while her family would have what her mother called “special treat” pancake suppers. The name made these suppers sound attractive, and to young Patt, they were special treats. However, when she was a lot older, she discovered that “special treat” pancakes were served on days when very little food was left in the house just before payday.<sup>113</sup>

- Shortly after getting married to Hershell (Nick) Nixon, mystery writer Joan Lowery accompanied him on a trip to western Montana. (He worked as a geologist for Shell.) One day, they ate at a restaurant that seemed to serve nothing but steak and potatoes. Ms. Nixon asked the waitress if the restaurant served salads, and the waitress said, “Sure” — then brought her potato salad.<sup>114</sup>

- Growing up during the Great Depression in Morgantown, West Virginia, comedian Don Knotts was lucky to have the mother he did. She could take very little meat and turn it into a great amount of meatloaf. In fact, when young Don went to the grocery store to buy a quarter-pound of hamburger, the grocer would joke, “Are you people having company again?”<sup>115</sup>

- When Madeleine L’Engle, author of *A Wrinkle in Time*, was a mother with three young children, she grew irritated because it seemed that during every meal at least one child spilled a

glass of milk. Therefore, at one meal she announced, “Whoever spills the next glass of milk will leave the room!” Unfortunately, a little later, Ms. L’Engle spilled her glass of milk, so she had to leave the room.<sup>116</sup>

- When Yoshiko Uchida, author of *Journey to Topaz*, was a little girl growing up in California, people of Japanese ancestry faced a lack of understanding. One day, the post office called her father to ask him to pick up a package of “rotting” food. Actually, the food was pungent long white radish (*daikon*), but the Caucasian man at the post office regarded it as something disgusting.<sup>117</sup>

- Luciano Pavarotti was a big man with a big appetite. He and soprano Mirella Freni were both born in Modesto, Italy, in October of 1935. Neither of their mothers created enough breast milk, so Luciano and Mirella shared the same wet nurse. Years later, knowing how big Luciano had grown, Mirella used to complain that he had gotten all of the breast milk!<sup>118</sup>

- Fred Astaire became friends with the janitor who cleaned his dressing room and invited him and his wife to dine with the Alfred Vanderbilts. At the dinner, no one believed him when he said, “I’m a janitor,” then turned to Mr. Astaire and said, “And you’ve got to start picking up your beer tops, because it’s adding to my work.”<sup>119</sup>

- Joe Franklin was a famous radio and TV personality, but when his mother visited him, she would bring him little bags of celery and carrots, just as she had done when she had made snacks for him when he was a little boy. He used to wait until she visited the restroom, then he would scarf down what he really liked: coffee and Danish.<sup>120</sup>

- While growing up, Hana Ali, one of boxer Muhammad’s daughters, didn’t like to eat her vegetables. However, she had an understanding father. Often, he would convince her to eat them, but when he couldn’t, he would either eat the vegetables for her or let her visit the bathroom so she could flush them away.<sup>121</sup>

- When comedian Jackie Gleason was a child, he was very poor and his family never had a lot to eat. Sometimes he went to a shop where he got free food — which always had a label on it that said “free food.” Of course, as soon as Jackie left the shop, he tore off the label.<sup>122</sup>

## Friends

- Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield became friends in the seventh grade while attending Merrick Avenue Junior High School in Merrick, New York. They were slow and chubby and not at all good at sports. Their gym teacher wanted his class to run a mile around a track. All the other boys finished quickly, leaving Ben and Jerry far behind. The gym teacher tried to motivate them by yelling, “Gentlemen, if you don’t run the mile in under seven minutes, you’re going to have to do it again.” Ben was a rebel, and he told the gym teacher, “If I don’t do it under seven minutes the first time, I’m *certainly* not going to do it under seven minutes the second time.” Jerry thought that Ben made sense, and he decided that he wanted Ben to be his friend. “This was a guy I wanted to know,” Jerry says. “This was a real *thinker*.” Later, the two friends became famous for their philanthropy and for their Ben and Jerry’s ice cream.<sup>123</sup>

- Although Ramones lead singer Joey Ramone was a good person, he once got into a fight with his friend the journalist Joan Tarshis that led to both of them throwing things and her calling the police. The police arrived and looked at Joey’s apartment, which was in its usual untidy state. Fifty albums were lying on the floor, and the police noticed a novelty souvenir towel

from the Bates Motel (of *Psycho* fame) that looked as if blood was on it. The police said, “Wow! You must have had a very big fight. Where does it hurt?” Later, Joan wanted to make up with Joey, so she sent him a hammer and a note that said, “If I ever get out of line again, hit me with this.” Joey immediately called her to joke, “I’m keeping that hammer in a holster for when I’m with you.”<sup>124</sup>

- Elise Reiman was always very friendly with choreographer George Balanchine, and when he was married to her friend Maria Tallchief, she saw a lot of him. Later, he and Maria had divorced, and Elise was a teacher at the School of American Ballet, Elise saw much less of him, but at least once she was able to let him know how much he meant to her. They had been to a dinner at the home of a friend of hers, and afterward when he was taking her home in a taxi, she kissed him and said, “It’s so wonderful to see you, because I miss you.” She says, “I think it pleased him. I just wanted to let him know that I still adore him.”<sup>125</sup>

- When Anne McCaffrey, author of the Pern novels about telepathic dragons, moved to Ireland, her young daughter was worried about making friends. Young Gigi needn’t have worried. She found out from a new neighbor where another girl her age lived, and then she visited that house, saying that she was there to make Anne Kelly her new friend. Very quickly, Gigi had a new friend.<sup>126</sup>

- A Scottish woman named Angela was HIV-positive, and eventually she decided to tell a female friend about it. When they were out together, Angela turned to her friend and asked, “What do you feel about people with HIV?” Her friend gave a comforting answer, so Angela said, “Well, I’m HIV.” Her friend laughed, and then she replied, “So am I!”<sup>127</sup>

## Games

- In the days when children’s book author Gary Paulsen owned a Great Dane named Caesar, they liked to play a game called Get the Kitty. Caesar understood the word “Kitty,” and when things were boring, Mr. Paulsen would yell, “Get the Kitty! Get the Kitty!” Caesar would then tear around the house looking for the nonexistent kitten. Because Caesar, in his eagerness to get the kitty, upset tables and jumped over furniture, this was a game that they played only when Mrs. Paulsen was not at home.<sup>128</sup>

- When ice skater Peggy Fleming became pregnant with her second child, she and her husband decided to make telling their son into a game. They hid clues all over the house, and their son went on a treasure hunt to find the clues. When the clues were all put together, they spelled out, “YOUR BABY BROTHER ARRIVES IN SEPTEMBER.” They also made a videotape of the treasure hunt and of their son’s face lighting up, followed by his eyes filling with tears.<sup>129</sup>

## Gays and Lesbians

- Bill Serpe of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, came out when he was 24 years old, although he had realized that he was gay at age 19. For five years, he led a double life, talking at his day job as a shoe salesman about dating women although at night he was really dating men. One day, his boss asked him what he had done the evening before, and Mr. Serpe replied that he had been on a date. That’s when he realized that he couldn’t keep lying, that he had to be open about his sexuality. When his boss asked what her name was, Mr. Serpe replied, “His name was John.” His father was in denial about Mr. Serpe’s sexuality, and although they discussed it once, they didn’t discuss it further for a very long time. When Mr. Serpe was 29 years old, at



Thanksgiving he visited his family, then left to see his partner. His father asked, “Why don’t you pick her up and bring her back here?” Mr. Serpe replied, “It’s not a her.” Hearing this, his stepmother asked, “Then why don’t you bring him back here?” That’s when Mr. Serpe came out to the rest of his family. He says, “It was difficult at first, but we worked through it. I’ve been a very lucky gay man.”<sup>130</sup>

- Film critic and entertainment journalist Lydia Marcus knew a boy named Robert who was gay and who came out in an interesting way. He didn’t use words, but when he was 14 years old, he visited Lydia’s house while wearing his mother’s big white hat and her pedal-pusher pants. This was enough for both Lydia and her parents to know that he was gay. In the ninth grade, he came out to his classmates. Again, he didn’t use words, but he did go to school wearing a white sweatshirt *Flashdance*-style, with the low-cut scoop neckline revealing a naked shoulder. This was enough to draw large amounts of attention to him at lunchtime. Lots of people who are aware of homophobia might advise Robert to learn how to run fast, but fortunately he knew how to fight anyone who attempted to harass him, so he didn’t have to learn how to run.<sup>131</sup>

- Education can happen in many ways and in many places, some of them unexpected. When Nirpal Dhaliwal was a young man, one of his friends was a black, militant lesbian. He was and is straight, but he hung out with her, and often they ended up in gay bars, where gay men would hit on him. At first, he thought that he and his friend ended up in gay bars because his friend was comfortable there, but then he realized that she was trying to educate him. He says that he realizes now that his friend had a plan “to queer up the uptight Asian boy and broaden his horizons.” What is Mr. Dhaliwal’s reaction to his friend’s secret plan? He states, “I will always be thankful to her for that.”<sup>132</sup>

- Like heterosexual couples, gay couples have stories about how they got engaged. In 2004, on New Year’s Eve, Amber and Carol were playing Trivial Pursuit with two friends. When the clock struck midnight, Carol knelt and tried to propose — she tried because in the middle of the proposal, Amber yelled, “You’re doing it now? It’s happening now?” Yes, it was happening, and yes, Amber said yes. Amber and Carol share the last name of Dennis after getting married on July 4, 2006.<sup>133</sup>

- The mother of a friend of gay author Frank DeCaro’s wanted to see what a gay bar looked like, so Mr. DeCaro offered to take her to one. For the occasion, she dressed up, wore a blonde wig, and painted her face. A gay man in the bar saw her and asked Mr. DeCaro, “Kid, is that your father?”<sup>134</sup>

## **Good Deeds**

- Ohio State University football coach Woody Hayes visited Vietnam a few times to show football films and talk to soldiers. Once back in the United States, he would telephone (at his own expense) the families of the servicemen he had met or write to them. He once went to a very small firebase in Vietnam, where he projected football movies on a sheet. There he met Parker Jarvis, who had attended Ohio State for a while, but who had not graduated yet. Coach Hayes asked him about his parents, his wife, and any teacher that he wanted to say “hi” to. (Assistant coaches wrote down all the contact information.) Mr. Jarvis says, “Six weeks later, he had called my wife three or four times and talked to my dad for 45 minutes. He called my mom separately and talked to her and called the professor I had talked to him about. That was Woody. He never asked for any adoration or recognition. He was a pretty special fellow.”<sup>135</sup>

- Chana Levine, whose husband was Rabbi Aryeh Levine, did good deeds like her husband did. She took care of her father after he became widowed, but after making sure that he would be well taken care of, she visited her sister, who lived in Israel. Before she left, her father gave her a beautiful necklace that had belonged to his wife, her mother. After Chana had arrived in Israel, her sister asked what had happened to the necklace. Chana realized that her sister valued the necklace, so she said, “I have it; Father gave it to me to give to you.” After Chana died, her husband revealed the good deed she had done.<sup>136</sup>

- After Hana Ali, one of boxer Muhammad Ali’s daughters, came home from school one day when she was seven years old, she went upstairs and found a strange person snoring in her bed. Then she ran to her father to tell him that a burglar had broken into their home. Mr. Ali explained that he had brought home a homeless family with nowhere to stay and nothing to eat.<sup>137</sup>

- Family-owned businesses are more likely to help impoverished families one-on-one than chain stores are. During the Great Depression, Ralph Nader’s father, Nathra, was very aware that impoverished families could get credit from the local grocery, but they could not get credit from the A&P, a supermarket chain. He gave many hungry people free hot meals at his restaurant.<sup>138</sup>

- The great dancer Bill Robinson, aka Mr. Bojangles, performed many good deeds in his life. On a visit to Richmond, Virginia, he noticed that an intersection had no streetlights, making it dangerous for schoolchildren. He wrote out a check for \$1,240.70 and gave it to the city of Richmond to pay for four streetlights at the intersection.<sup>139</sup>

## **Halloween**

- After leaving the New York City Ballet, Balanchine ballerina Allegra Kent began to teach small children dance lessons. One of the first things she learned was when to cancel class. Before Halloween, she thought that probably most of her children would be trick-or-treating rather than attending her dance lesson; however, when she asked her students about their plans, every student promised to show up for the dance lesson. Actually, only one student showed up. Allegra gave a one-on-one dance lesson, and in the future she remembered to cancel class on those days that fell on holidays. Allegra turned out to be a popular dance teacher — and not just with her students. She remembered a father telling her about a student dance recital that had lasted a torturous four hours, so when she choreographed a recital for her students she made sure that it ended in only 50 minutes. The fathers of her dance students were deeply grateful.<sup>140</sup>

## **Husbands and Wives**

- Some people whose photographs appear in such magazines as *InStyle*, *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *Star*, *OK!*, and *Us* are not famous, which means that they have to work very hard at appearing in these magazines. One such person is Phoebe Price, who spends a lot of time and money going to parties at Cannes, the Emmys, the Grammys, and the Oscars. One of her tips for being photographed in expensive and skimpy clothing at such parties is this: “Say I find a Dolce & Gabbana dress, and I think it’s really hot and I think someone else [who is famous] might wear it. I’ll wear it so that it might get compared in a magazine.” Ms. Price even has an informant at Saks Fifth Avenue who tells her what celebrities are planning to wear to parties where the paparazzi will be around. Ms. Price also says that when the paparazzi have her in their sights,

“I always do side angles and over-the-shoulder. I give them 15 to 20 looks.” Joel Stein, a humor columnist who interviewed Ms. Price for the *Los Angeles Times*, decided to try to get the paparazzi to take photographs of Cassandra, his wife. Mr. Stein announced to the paparazzi that Cassandra Barry was about to walk down the carpet to a party. Immediately, members of the paparazzi shouted, “Cassandra, up top!” As Cassandra gave the paparazzi side angles and over-the-shoulder looks, the cameras snapped, and she ended up giving the paparazzi 15 to 20 looks.<sup>141</sup>

- New York City ballet dancer Edward Villella’s first marriage was to the sometimes temperamental Janet Greshler. At a choreographing session in which Todd Bolender was slowly creating steps, some of the dancers got bored and began talking, upsetting Mr. Bolender, who told them, “If anybody doesn’t want to be in this ballet, he or she can just leave.” Ms. Greshler was the only dancer to leave. After they were married, she continued to be temperamental. Both Edward and Janet went on tour to the Soviet Union with the New York City Ballet. Knowing that certain kinds of food and drink would not be available on tour, Mr. Villella smuggled in some bottles of beer. He had drunk all of the beer except one bottle, which he was saving for a special occasion; however, he never got the chance to drink it. During an argument, Janet opened the bottle and poured it on him. Mr. Villella admits that he was also capable of “petty revenge.” One night, following an argument with Janet, he decided to get even. Knowing that she always ate two soft-boiled eggs for breakfast, he stayed up late and hard-boiled every egg they had.<sup>142</sup>

- Famed film director Werner Herzog is also an actor, but he says that he is most convincing when he plays “debased, dysfunctional, and hostile characters.” For example, he played one of these characters in Harmony Korine’s film *Julien Donkey Boy*, where he was very convincing indeed. In fact, some friends of his wife saw the film, then they telephoned her to say, “You are married to this monster; we are only one flight away and can give you shelter if you need it.” (Such misunderstandings do occur. The writer of this book has friends who were watching a video of the film *The Color Purple*, which includes scenes of a man beating a woman. They wanted to hear some dialogue that was partially covered up by screams, so they kept turning up the sound and watching the scene over and over. Eventually, police officers knocked on their door — a neighbor had telephoned and told the officers that a man was beating his wife.)<sup>143</sup>

- At one time, Hollywood producers thought about doing a biopic on the life of Ohio State University football coach Woody Hayes, but decided that it would be popular in and around Ohio State University but not nationally because of a lack of sex. Harold Schechter, faculty representative for Ohio State, advised the Hollywood producers about Woody’s life. He told Woody’s wife, Anne, that the Hollywood producers had decided not to do the biopic because Woody’s life didn’t have “a damn bit of sex of it.” What did Mrs. Hayes say? According to Harold, “She agreed ... completely!” Actually, Woody and his wife had a son named Steve. (Mrs. Hayes once said, “I have to fight 85 to 100 football players for attention, but that is better than one skinny blonde.”)<sup>144</sup>

- Shuichi Amano decided to make changes in his life after his wife’s response to a comment surprised him. Several of the middle-aged friends he worked with were getting divorces, and he asked his wife if she thought that was strange. She commented, “I think you will be next.” He broke out in a cold sweat, then realized that he had been behaving badly: “I realized I had only communicated three things to my wife: *furo*, *meshi*, and *neru*, which mean ‘bath,’

‘dinner,’ and ‘sleep.’ It is the typical way for a strong husband to communicate with his family.” He saved his marriage by doing such things as taking out the garbage and washing the dishes, and in 1999, Mr. Amano founded Japan’s National Chauvinistic Husbands Association, whose purpose is to teach husbands such things as how to tell a wife, “I love you.”<sup>145</sup>

- Abigail Scott Duniway was an early feminist, and she founded a newspaper titled the *New Northwest*, which advocated women’s rights. One day, she was on a stagecoach with a man who opposed women’s rights. He told her, “Madam, you ought to be at home, enjoying yourself, like my wife is doing. I want to bear all the hardship of life myself, and let her sit by the fire, toasting her footsies.” After he said that, the stagecoach dropped him off at his house, and all the passengers in the stagecoach saw the man’s wife — chopping wood for the fireplace. Mrs. Duniway remarked, dryly, “I see, my friend, that your wife is toasting her footsies!” (By the way, the man acquired a new nickname that day: Old Footsie Toaster.)<sup>146</sup>

- Country music superstar Garth Brooks met his first wife, Sandy Mahl, in a women’s restroom. He was working as a bouncer in an Oklahoma bar called Tumbleweeds. An incident happened in the women’s restroom, and he was called for assistance. There he found an attractive blonde woman who needed help to remove her fist from a hole she had made in the plywood wall. The blonde woman explained that she and another woman had been fighting over a man and “I missed.” That woman was Sandy, and she and Garth were married on May 24, 1986.<sup>147</sup>

- When author Gary Paulsen first competed in the Iditarod, a 1,049-mile dog-sled race beginning in Anchorage, Alaska, he trained at night, when skunks are active. After a skunk sprayed Mr. Paulsen one night, his wife asked him to sleep in the kennel with the dogs. Mr. Paulsen thought that this was an excellent idea, as it would help him understand his dogs better for the race, and he started spending much time in his dog kennel.<sup>148</sup>

- In the early 1930s, choreographer George Balanchine bought a sports car. He drove it for a few months, but he ran into a problem when he shipped the car from England to France. He discovered that he could not pay the import duty. Since he also could not afford to pay to put the car in storage, he simply gave the car away to a bystander. This upset his wife, Alexandra Danilova, because she had bought a lot of green clothing to match the green sports car.<sup>149</sup>

- Musician Tennessee Ernie Ford was in a small midwestern American town to perform when he decided to go to a local drug store. While he was there, a star-struck local citizen was amazed to see him. The local citizen asked everyone he met, “Would you believe it if I told you that Tennessee Ernie Ford is in that drug store?” Eventually, he asked his question to Mrs. Tennessee Ernie Ford, who replied, “Yes, I would. I spent the night with him.”<sup>150</sup>

- Beverly Sills scored a triumph in Donizetti’s *Robert Devereux*, and many people gave her a standing audition at the end of Act 2. In the audience was her husband, Peter Greenough, who applauded but remained seated. A woman in the audience asked him, “Aren’t you Beverly Sills’ husband? Why aren’t you standing and screaming like everybody else?” Mr. Greenough replied, “Yes, I’m her husband — but not her cheerleader.”<sup>151</sup>

- When Joe Kuhel was managing the Washington Senators, he brooded after his team lost 10 games in a row. After dinner, he sat quietly in the living room, still brooding. Eventually, his wife, Billie, went to bed. Two hours later, in the dark, she called to him, “What are you doing,

Joe?” Still brooding, he replied, “Reading.” She then told him, “Well, then, why don’t you turn on the lights?”<sup>152</sup>

- Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451*, met and fell in love with Marguerite (Maggie) McClure. He was just beginning his career as an author, and Maggie’s friends advised her not to marry him, saying that he would be unable to amount to much as a writer. However, he told her, “I’m going to the moon. You want to come along?” She did, and on September 27, 1947, they married.<sup>153</sup>

- Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo mostly had a happy marriage, but occasionally they had disagreements. Mr. Rivera liked Ms. Kahlo’s hair — including her unibrow and her mustache. In fact, he got angry when she once shaved off her mustache. When they had big quarrels, Ms. Kahlo would get back at her husband by cutting off her long, luxurious hair.<sup>154</sup>

- The British often have a silly sense of humor. To celebrate their wedding anniversary, Joyce Grenville’s husband came to breakfast wearing pajamas — but over the pajamas he wore the coat that he had worn when he had married her 42 years earlier. (In keeping with the British sense of humor, throughout breakfast, he didn’t mention the coat he was wearing.)<sup>155</sup>

- Some wives of major-league baseball players don’t know much about scoring the game. Betty Erskine, the wife of Dodger pitcher Carl Erskine, was scoring a game he was pitching when another baseball wife became upset because Betty had written “PU” by her husband’s name. Betty had to explain that “PU” was an abbreviation for “Pop Up.”<sup>156</sup>

- Rabbi Aryeh Levine was once shocked when a man asked how he should treat his wife. He replied, “A wife is exactly yourself. Treat her exactly as you treat yourself.” Afterward, the rabbi’s wife’s foot began to hurt her, so the good rabbi took her to a doctor and said, “Her foot is hurting us.”<sup>157</sup>

- Eli Wallach’s wife, Anne Jackson, was an understudy for the role of Peter Pan when she became pregnant. She told her physician that as Peter Pan she would be required to fly over the audience, but her physician told her, “No, no flying for you. You’re grounded.”<sup>158</sup>

- While comedian Bill Cosby was courting Camille Hanks, whom he married on January 25, 1964, he used to drive 200 miles from New York to Maryland to take her on a lunch date, then drive 200 miles back to New York to perform at a club.<sup>159</sup>

## Chapter 4: From Illness to Mothers

### Illness

- Liz Hartel was a much-loved Olympic athlete in Denmark. Her story is remarkable because at the age of 23, in 1944, while pregnant, she contracted polio, which almost completely paralyzed her. She started rehabilitation by learning to raise her arms again, then learning to use her thigh muscles again. Eventually, she learned to crawl and then to walk with crutches. She never again regained complete use of her legs; however, she still wished to compete in dressage, so she told doubters, “Why can’t my horse be my legs?” She started to compete, was successful, and qualified for the Olympics. Despite having to be helped onto and off her horse, she won the silver in dressage at both the 1952 and the 1956 Olympic Games. Each time she finished second to Sweden’s Henry St. Cyr, and each time he helped her climb up to the second-place platform when the Olympic medals for dressage were handed out. Ms. Hartel lived this Danish proverb: “Life is not holding a good hand. Life is playing a poor hand well.”<sup>160</sup>

- Joel Siegel, film critic for *Good Morning, America*, died of colon cancer at age 63 in June of 2007. Ten years previously, at age 53, he had a colonoscopy, which revealed that he had cancer. He fought the cancer for 10 years, and once he asked his oncologist what might have happened if he had had a colonoscopy at age 50 instead of at age 53. Mr. Siegel wrote, “He said there was a 75 percent to 80 percent chance they would have nipped it in the bud, and I never would have had to deal with any of them.” Mr. Siegel’s friend, film critic Roger Ebert, writes, “It was because of Joel that I got my own colonoscopy.”<sup>161</sup>

- An Englishwoman named Sarah learned that she was HIV-positive, and she decided to tell her parents. She says, “They were just wonderful. So supportive. They were cuddling me and holding me — when you’re HIV you don’t get touched — it was what I needed, to have somebody. I needed to talk and talk.” Her family supported her in other ways, too. Her brother even bought a bigger house so that he could take care of her living children — a baby daughter died of AIDS — should the time come when that was necessary. He told her about the bigger house, “There’s always those rooms for anybody.”<sup>162</sup>

- At a hospital in England, nurses lent small children teddy bears for as long as they were in the hospital. However, the teddy bears tended to leave the hospital along with the children, although the teddy bears were supposed to stay behind so they could cheer up other ill children. The nurses found a creative way to keep the children from taking the teddy bears. They put a bandage on each teddy bear and convinced the children that the teddy bears had to stay in the hospital so they could get well.<sup>163</sup>

- Frank DeCaro’s mother did very poorly at school. She used to say that the one time she knew the answer to a teacher’s question was when she was ill with laryngitis. The teacher saw her raise her arm to answer the question, then told her, “Put your arm down — you can’t talk anyway.”<sup>164</sup>

### Kisses

- On the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the characters played by Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy) and David Boreanaz (Angel) had an on-screen romance. The two, who are friends in

real life, often played jokes on each other before their characters' romantic moments onscreen. For example, before a kissing scene, they would eat such things as tuna fish and pickles. And if Angel was supposed to unbutton Buffy's blouse, Sarah would pin it or sew it to make the unbuttoning as difficult for David as possible.<sup>165</sup>

- As a young teenager, Cassius Clay, who later became Muhammad Ali, was shy. When he first kissed a girl (Areatha Swint), he fainted, shocking the girl, who thought he was joking. However, eventually she ran to get him a cold cloth to put on his forehead. (Mr. Ali got over his shyness; he married several times and had several children.)<sup>166</sup>

## Language

- Language changes over time and so can cause misunderstandings. Carolyn Alessio once taught Stephen Dunn's poem "Biography in the First Person" to a class of inner-city children who misunderstood Mr. Dunn's line "My father a crack salesman." The children were sad because they thought that Mr. Dunn's father was a drug dealer, and even when Ms. Alessio explained that when Mr. Dunn wrote the poem, the word "crack" meant "crackerjack" or excellent, they declined to believe her because they thought that she was cleaning up the poem for them.<sup>167</sup>

- Children's misunderstanding of the meanings of words can be funny. Marty, editor of *Bartcop Entertainment* on the *WWW*, remembers that when she and Johnny, her brother, were little, their father had varicose veins that needed to be removed surgically. Because the varicose veins were about the size of small walnuts, Marty and her brother called them "nuts." Johnny was in kindergarten, and Miss Pat, his teacher, asked him, "Why is your daddy in the hospital?" Little Johnny replied, "He's having his nuts cut off."<sup>168</sup>

- Yoshiko Uchida, author of *Journey to Topaz*, was born and raised in California. Once, she and her family visited the village of Cornwall, Connecticut. Most people there had never seen any Japanese Americans, and one woman complimented Yoshiko on her English.<sup>169</sup>

## Letters

- In 1942, the Toronto Maple Leafs were down 3-0 in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup playoffs, and no one thought the Maple Leafs had a chance to win because no team had ever come back from a 3-0 deficit to win. Well, one fan did. A 14-year-old girl wrote the coach to say that she was confident that the team could rally to win the series and that she would be praying for the Maple Leafs. Maple Leaf coach Hap Day read the fan's letter to his team, and the players dedicated themselves to winning. They rallied to win four games in a row and to win the Stanley Cup — the first team ever to do so.<sup>170</sup>

- When she was an adult, comedian Phyllis Diller knew that her aged father was fading and that he would die soon; therefore, she wrote him a very nice letter thanking both him and her mother for giving her a happy life and for everything that they had done for her during her then-30 years of life. After both of her parents had died, she went through their belongings and found that letter. Its much-worn condition showed that her parents had treasured it and had read it many times.<sup>171</sup>

## Mishaps

- Theodor Geisel, who is better known as Dr. Seuss, disliked public speaking because of an event that happened in his youth. In 1918, Theodor was a Boy Scout, and he was among the 10 Boy Scouts who had sold the most Liberty Bonds in his hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts. As a result, he and the other Boy Scouts were to be awarded a medal by former President Theodore Roosevelt. At the awards ceremony, President Roosevelt awarded the first nine Boy Scouts their medals, then he ran out of medals. Not knowing that Theodor was also supposed to receive a medal, he asked Theodor why he was on the stage. Theodor ran off the stage, embarrassed. Later, when he was a successful author, his wife, Helen, asked him to accept the invitation to speak in Westchester, New York, at a women's college. The audience waited two hours for him to arrive to give the speech, but he never showed up. Later, Mr. Geisel confessed to his wife that he had stayed in the train station because he was too afraid to go on stage and speak in public.<sup>172</sup>

- Emily Yoffe, a columnist for the online magazine *Slate*, had the misfortune, along with her young daughter, to get lice — which is common in elementary school. She vigorously attacked the lice with Nix cream and special combs, but of course it took time to eradicate the lice. After she and her daughter spent two hours treating their scalps with insecticides and thorough combings, they ate dinner. At one point, Ms. Yoffe tossed her hair and a louse fell on the tablecloth. Her husband commented, “You are one classy lady.” Of course, things would have been better if she and her daughter had been males; that way, they could get crew cuts. In fact, Ms. Yoffe had earlier told her daughter that a male classmate of hers had looked cute with a crew cut. Her daughter had replied, “Mom, it's not a hairdo; it's because of lice.”<sup>173</sup>

- Perhaps because of the influence of movies, Americans sometimes associate England with mistresses. One day, the English journalist Mr. Frank Giles interviewed an American. After the interview, the American asked Mr. Giles and his wife, who was not present, to dinner. Mr. Giles accepted the invitation, and the American said, “I look forward to seeing you and to meeting Mrs. Giles this evening.” However, Mr. Giles was married to the daughter of Earl de la Warr, meaning that his wife should be referred to as Lady Giles, not as Mrs. Giles. Therefore, Mr. Giles said, “Actually, she's not Mrs. Giles.” The American, misunderstanding what Mr. Giles meant, and interrupting before Mr. Giles could explain, replied, “That's quite all right. Bring her anyway. I used to keep a little woman myself once.”<sup>174</sup>

- When Merrill Ashley was a young student at the School of American Ballet, she had the chance to dance in a workshop before an audience. Alexandra Danilova told all the dance students, “Remember, you have to play to the balcony. Don't forget.” Young Merrill thought that she knew what the advice meant, so she held her head high and looked at the balcony the entire time she danced. Afterward, Diana Adams told her, “I never noticed it before, but you have this strange habit of holding your head really high when you dance, as though you're looking up at the ceiling.” Merrill quickly corrected this “habit.”<sup>175</sup>

- In 2007, actress Tori Spelling starred in the independent film *Kiss the Bride*. She played Alex, a woman who is engaged to a man but who then discovers that he had a previous serious relationship — with a man. Unfortunately, when Ms. Spelling made the movie she was four months pregnant, although her character was not pregnant. When director C. Jay Cox showed an early edit of the movie (when it was still in post-production) to a group of women, they amused themselves by looking for scenes where Ms. Spelling's pregnancy was noticeable: “Oh, pregnant there, pregnant there.”<sup>176</sup>



- In the 1946-47 ballet season in Paris, Violette Verdy — then a young teenager — performed as a sylph in *La Sylphide* along with other young teenagers. Unfortunately, during a scene in which the sylphs flew, her high-wire apparatus malfunctioned, leaving her hanging in the air with only her feet visible to the audience for 15 minutes. However, her ballet teacher, Madame Rousane Sarkissian, complimented her: “You pointed your feet very well, anyway!”<sup>177</sup>

- At Chasen’s Restaurant, famous author/illustrator James Thurber once spent several hours drawing a mural depicting the War Between Men and Women. The owner of the restaurant, Dave Chasen, was delighted with the mural, but the next day the restaurant’s cleaning lady walked out of the men’s restroom and told him, “Some drunk scribbled all over the walls in there, but I finally got it washed off.”<sup>178</sup>

## Money

- Nathan Rothschild was a tremendously wealthy man. One day he presented a note from one of his tremendously wealthy brothers and asked the Bank of England to cash it. The Bank of England refused, saying that it cashed its own notes and not those of individuals. “The Rothschilds are not individuals,” said an angry Mr. Rothschild as he left the bank, adding, “If you won’t trust Rothschild notes, I won’t trust yours.” The next morning Mr. Rothschild and nine of his clerks walked into the Bank of England. Each man was carrying Bank of England notes, and each man went to a Bank of England teller and asked that the notes be exchanged for gold. This went on all day, and at the end of the day, the Bank of England’s gold reserves had been lowered by £100,000. The next morning, Mr. Rothschild and nine of his clerks walked into the Bank of England. Each man was again carrying Bank of England notes. The Bank of England Board of Directors quickly held an emergency meeting and decided to honor the notes of the Rothschild brothers.<sup>179</sup>

- Las Vegas financial planner Dennis Filangeri once wanted to help a two-income, middle-management couple with a major problem: They couldn’t save money for their newborn son’s future college education. Mr. Filangeri had them keep track of their expenses for a month by having them write down how they spent every penny, and he discovered that 30 percent of their income was spent on unnecessary daily expenses, such as vending-machine snacks and magazines. To motivate them to save money, he asked them to display two photographs in their home. One photograph showed their son, and the other photograph, which was displayed next to it, showed a Twinkie. These photographs showed what they could do with their money: save it for their son’s college education or spend it on such things as Twinkies.<sup>180</sup>

- Jewish comedian Sam Levenson’s mother had to drive a sharp bargain when he was growing up because money was scarce. She would go into a grocer’s, hold up two cucumbers, and ask how much they were. When the grocer replied, “Five cents,” she would hold up one cucumber, and ask how much it was. When the grocer replied, “Three cents,” she would say, “All right, I’ll take the other one.” One day, young Sam needed a tie, so she took him to a tie salesman. The tie salesman said that the price for the tie she wanted to buy was 50 cents, and she immediately agreed to pay the full price, astonishing young Sam. When he asked her about it later, she replied that she had never liked the tie salesman, and “Tonight he will kill himself because he didn’t ask me for a dollar.”<sup>181</sup>

- Divorce can be expensive. Movie actor Dennis Hopper knows art, and he bought a Roy Lichtenstein painting titled *Sinking Sun* for \$1,100. In 1969, he had his first divorce, and his ex-wife ended up with the painting. She sold it for \$3,000 to west coast gallery owner Irving

Blum, and she thought that she had gotten a good deal. In turn, Mr. Blum sold it for \$6,000 to his partner, Bill Helman, and Mr. Blum thought that he had gotten a good deal. Mr. Helman, in turn, waited a while, and then he sold it for \$15,780,000. (Something tells me that Mr. Helman thinks that he got a good deal.)<sup>182</sup>

- For a while, Whoopi Goldberg was on Welfare. When she began making enough money, she gave her Welfare check back, but she kept her Welfare ID card and framed it to remind herself of her difficult years. Years later, she appeared with Senator Ted Kennedy and with Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, to protest against a Republican plan to weaken Welfare. Ms. Goldberg said, "The Welfare system works. I know it works because I'm here. I'm proud of it. ... The country was there for me, and the system worked for me."<sup>183</sup>

- Celebrity interviewer Joe Franklin once invited Al Jolson to be a guest on a radio show hosted by Martin Block along with a woman who had been Mr. Jolson's girlfriend 25 years previously. Mr. Jolson explained that when the woman had been his girlfriend she had bad teeth. After Mr. Jolson had spent \$5,000 of his own money to fix her teeth, she had broken up with him. Mr. Jolson added, "I didn't mind the breakup, but I resented that she was laughing at me through my own teeth."<sup>184</sup>

- On January 1, 1965, comedian Soupy Sales got in trouble and was suspended from his daytime television children's show because he told the children to tiptoe into Mommy and Daddy's bedroom, look for their parents' wallets and billfolds, then take out all the green pieces of paper and mail them to him. He told the children, "If you send me those pieces of paper, you know what I'm gonna send you? A postcard from Puerto Rico."<sup>185</sup>

- Karl Menninger, a psychiatrist, disliked all physicians who were more interested in making money than in taking care of patients who needed help. He felt that too many people "grab on to the material things of life," and to remind himself not to overvalue the material things of life he kept a symbol on his desk: a jar of pennies.<sup>186</sup>

- Wah Ming Chang once made a purse for Mildred Taylor, who was practically his foster mother. As an extra-special touch, he put her initials, M.T., on it. She joked that the purse justified the initials — it was frequently eMpTy. As an adult, Mr. Chang created special effects, including the Tribbles, for the television series *Star Trek*.<sup>187</sup>

- Comedian Phyllis Diller used to send Peter, her son, checks for \$5,000. However, he didn't want to take her money, so he would cut the checks up into paper dolls and send them back to her.<sup>188</sup>

## Mothers

- Balanchine soloist Barbara Milberg almost didn't survive to become a dancer. Dysentery at age four left her weighing only 15 pounds. Her mother stayed with her constantly, feeding her the only food she was allowed: little bites of raw apple. During the time young Barbara was ill, her mother's hair turned white on one side. Later, it grew in again, first grey, then its normal brunette color. Her mother definitely took care of her when she was young, even teaching her chess as soon as she was able to learn to play, and letting her win — until she was 12. Then, figuring that Barbara was old enough to be beaten in chess, her mother defeated her quickly. Twelve-year-old Barbara was so surprised and shocked that she upended the table, scattering chess pieces everywhere, and then she ran out of the room. Barbara's mother also had an

interesting childhood. Growing up in Czarist Russia, Barbara's mother remembers when her father took her to the home of a rich man so she could see a light that did not burn: an electric light. She was even able to touch it. (It did not burn her, as it was only about 15 watts.) In his village, her grandfather was known as Beryl Schreiber — Beryl the Writer. (His real name was Beryl Marantz.) When people in the village needed a letter written, they went to him to write it for them.<sup>189</sup>

- Professional women's basketball player Lisa Leslie was tall from a very early age. In fact, in the second grade, she was already the tallest student in her class; she was even taller than her five-foot-two teacher. Of course, her height — and that of Dionne, her older sister — was no surprise. Their parents were both tall. Their father, Walter, was six-foot-five, and their mother, Christine, was six-foot-three. (Lisa's adult height was six-foot-five.) Their mother wanted the two sisters not to feel conscious about their height and often told them, "Being tall is nothing to be ashamed of." She also told them that being tall was a sign that they were descended from African royalty. One of the things that their mother did to make them feel good about their height was to hold an at-home fashion show at the end of each summer when she bought them their school clothes for the upcoming academic year. Both sisters would take turns modeling their outfits. The training their mother gave them paid off — Lisa later did some professional modeling in addition to playing in the WNBA.<sup>190</sup>

- Pablo Morales won Olympic swimming medals for the United States team in Los Angeles in 1984, but failed to make the United States Olympic swimming team in 1988. This devastated him, but after his mother died of cancer, another thing that devastated him, he decided to attempt to make the team so he could compete in Barcelona in 1992. On March 2, 1992, he competed in the United States Olympic trials in Indianapolis, hoping to swim well enough to make the Olympic team. His father, Pedro, was in the stands, watching. His father says, "I was there with my daughter. I asked my daughter whether she had brought a picture of Mom. She took it out of her purse and handed it to me. I held it up during the entire race so that she would be watching Pablo." Pablo swam well, winning both his race and a spot on the Olympic team. And in Barcelona, he won gold in the 100-meter butterfly.<sup>191</sup>

- Sometimes it is very difficult to protect children from knowing more than they should. After Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, Tomie dePaola, who was then in the second grade, was scared. His school practiced air raid drills, although no one was willing to tell him what an air raid is. At a double feature at the movie theater, young Tomie and his mother and a young friend and her mother enjoyed an animated feature titled *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*, and then a newsreel came on that showed London during the Blitz with lots of air raid sirens, explosions, and burning buildings. Of course, the two mothers got their children out into the lobby as quickly as possible and talked to them. Tomie's mother told him, "I'm sorry. I didn't want you to see that!" Mr. dePaola's 2006 book about the beginning of his war years is titled *I'm Still Scared*.<sup>192</sup>

- Margaret "Peg" Cohn, Dean Emerita of the Ohio University Honors College, remembers carpooling with other mothers. On one occasion, she had a carload of children when they came across an intersection in which someone had written in large letters a four-letter word beginning with "F" and ending with "K." Ms. Cohn's seven-year-old carefully said each letter aloud and then asked, "Mom?" Ms. Cohn braced herself, afraid that she would have to give a sex education lesson to a carload of children, but fortunately her seven-year-old asked merely, "How did they do that without getting run over?" Ms. Cohn answered that question, happy that

she had remembered “a cardinal rule for parents: Be sure what the question is before you give the answer.”<sup>193</sup>

- When Ralph Nader’s mother, Rose, was in her eighties, he and she took a five-hour plane ride to San Francisco. Sitting in the row behind them was a young man who kept talking for the entire five hours, with brief breaks only to quickly eat a meal or to visit the restroom. After the plane had landed, his mother told Ralph, “He didn’t learn much in the last five hours, did he?” Her advice to her children while they were growing up — and after — was this: “The more you talk, the less you’ll have to say. The more you listen, the more sensible will be what you say.”<sup>194</sup>

- Vice President Dick Cheney’s daughter, a lesbian named Mary, gave birth to a son: Samuel David Cheney. Mary Cheney and her significant other, Heather Poe, will raise the boy. Such a situation makes some religious people uneasy, but not others. A church-going woman living in a conservative part of Houston thinks that the situation has its advantages. This woman is happily married with two little sons and a baby daughter, but she says, “Boy, wouldn’t it be great to let Mommy No. 2 take over while I get my hair done?”<sup>195</sup>

- The parents of comedian Chris Rock greatly encouraged him and their other children. One day, Andre, his brother, had an assignment that required him to complete this sentence: “My Mom says I’m....” The other schoolchildren wrote sentences such as “My Mom says I’m a slob” or “My Mom says I’m late to dinner.” Andre, however, wrote, “My Mom says I’m the best thing that ever happened.” His and Chris’ mother, Rose, is especially proud of that and has never forgotten it.<sup>196</sup>

- Comedian Don Knotts grew up in Morgantown, West Virginia, during the Great Depression. He got his first experience as a comedian making his mother laugh as he reenacted scenes from the Abbott and Costello movies and the Laurel and Hardy movies he watched. After he became famous, he was asked how an impoverished kid from West Virginia ever came to think that he could become a famous entertainer. Mr. Knotts replied, “My mother told me I could.”<sup>197</sup>

- The family of stand-up comedian Margaret Cho ended up very proud of her, although early in her career they thought that she should earn her money doing something else. In fact, Margaret’s mother was so proud that when she attended one of Margaret’s performances, she would go into the ladies’ restroom and say, “Hi, I’m Margaret’s mother. I’m so happy. Thank you for coming to see my daughter.”<sup>198</sup>

- Joyce Grenfell’s mother was quite a beauty and had good legs all her life. When she was 65, an American sailor saw her from behind and gave a wolf whistle. Pleased by the whistle, she turned around and said, “I’m afraid you’re about 50 years too late.” The sailor replied, “No, ma’am, it’s never too late with legs like those.”<sup>199</sup>

- Dora, comedian Sam Levenson’s sister, once wanted their mother to go to a PTA meeting, but their mother said she was too busy. Dora pleaded, “There’s going to be an important speaker. She’s going to talk about sex appeal.” Mrs. Levenson — the mother of seven boys and one girl — replied, “I already gave.”<sup>200</sup>

## Chapter 5: From Music to Work

### Music

- In 1956, Elvis Presley was a recording phenomenon, turning out hit after hit, and songwriters — including friends and colleagues Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, writers of “Hound Dog” — really, really wanted him to record their songs. Mr. Stoller was on the Italian ocean liner *Andrea Doria* when it collided with another ship at sea, and he was one of the fortunate people who managed to survive. When Mr. Stoller arrived back home, safe and sound, meeting him was Mr. Leiber. However, rather than talking about Mr. Stoller’s recent escape from death, Mr. Leiber wanted to talk about a more pressing matter: “Elvis Presley’s recorded ‘Hound Dog’! Elvis Presley’s recorded ‘Hound Dog’!”<sup>201</sup>
- In January of 1991, Yo-Yo Ma played all six Bach cello suites in one evening for a New York audience. Afterward, he celebrated, and when he returned to the apartment of his wife’s parents, with whom he was staying, he discovered that he had forgotten his key to the apartment. Because the time was 3 a.m., he did not want to wake them up, so he slept in the hallway. They discovered him at 6:30 a.m. when they opened the door to get the newspaper.<sup>202</sup>
- Children can be the harshest critics. Luigi Arditi, a conductor, was playing the score of *Tannhäuser* on the piano when his daughter, who was in another room, asked, “Who’s playing the piano, mama?” Her mother replied that her father was playing the piano, and the little girl said, “Oh, I thought it was the piano tuner.”<sup>203</sup>
- When African-American conductor Dean Dixon was growing up, the radio was off limits to him because his parents wanted him to listen to good music, not popular music. (At the time, classical music was not often played on the radio in his area.)<sup>204</sup>

### Names

- When the youngest sibling of young people’s author William Sleator was born, William’s parents did not know what to name the boy, so they did not name him right away. He was called the New Baby, which was soon shortened to Newby. When Newby was two years old, the Sleators decided that it was time to name him, so they named him everything: Tycho Barney George Clement Newby Sleator. However, since the new baby was used to being called Newby, he would not answer to his new official name of Tycho, but would pout and look away when he was called that. His older siblings found this response hysterical.<sup>205</sup>
- How did Ben and Jerry’s ice cream get its name? Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield were friends who knew that they wanted to name their company either Ben and Jerry’s or Jerry and Ben’s. They spoke out loud the two combinations of names and decided that Ben and Jerry’s sounded better. Don’t worry about Jerry, however, because he got a remarkable consolation prize. To make things fair between the two partners, Jerry got to be the president of their company, while Ben became the vice president.<sup>206</sup>
- In 1953, macho actors Burt Lancaster and Frank Sinatra worked together on the film *From Here to Eternity*. Mr. Sinatra spent a lot of nights getting drunk, and Mr. Lancaster spent a lot of nights taking Mr. Sinatra home, undressing him, and putting him in bed. Because of this, Mr. Sinatra started addressing Mr. Lancaster by a special nickname: Mom. Later, Mr.

Lancaster said, “He’ll find me on my birthday no matter where I am, and say, ‘Happy birthday, Mom.’”<sup>207</sup>

- Alison Smith had a difficult time remembering names. After marrying writer Russel Crouse (co-author of the Broadway hit *Life With Father*), she tried to introduce him to Alexander Woollcott, saying, “Alec, this is Mister ... Mister ....” Mr. Crouse reached into his wallet, pulled out one of his cards, gave it to his wife, and said, “Crouse is the name, dear.”<sup>208</sup>

- All of the children of Bill and Camille Cosby have names that begin with E: Erika, Erinn, Ennis, Ensa, and Evin. Why? According to Mr. Cosby, because E stands for Excellence.<sup>209</sup>

## **Old Age**

- In 1970, when Maggie Kuhn reached the age of 65, she was forced to retire by the Presbyterian Church, which gave her a sewing machine. Ms. Kuhn never even took the sewing machine out of the box, preferring instead to form the Gray Panthers, an organization dedicated to fighting ageism: discrimination against seniors. She believed that seniors have a lot to contribute to society, saying, “We are the elders of the tribe; the elders are concerned with the tribe’s survival and not their own.”<sup>210</sup>

- Six months before she died of old age, Anna Sokolow was still choreographing, despite her need for round-the-clock care. Her caregiver, Jason, would watch her, and he knew that she was still creating steps: “Anna still choreographs, you know. She choreographs in her mind. At night I watch her eyes moving behind her lids. She sees movement. She hears music. Dance is her life.”<sup>211</sup>

## **Parties**

- Balanchine ballerina Allegra Kent planned a party, but before it started she discovered that the caviar she had purchased was mysteriously disappearing. She solved the mystery when she discovered that Trista, her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, and Jennifer, Trista’s three-year-old cousin, had learned that they liked caviar. When no one was looking, they would go to the refrigerator, get a spoonful of caviar, then run to the bathroom and eat it.<sup>212</sup>

- In 1995, Sarah Michelle Gellar missed her prom because she was busy attending the Daytime Emmy Awards, for which she was nominated as Outstanding Younger Leading Actress in a Drama Series for her role as Kendall (the daughter of the character played by Susan Lucci) on *All My Children*. However, when she attended the after-prom party, she took her new Emmy award with her.<sup>213</sup>

## **People with Handicaps**

- Alice Trillin worked at the Hole in the Wall Camp for children with handicaps, where she made friends with a little girl who had two major genetic diseases that made it difficult for her to grow bigger and to digest food — she was fed at night through a tube. Despite these handicaps, Alice called the little girl “the most optimistic, most enthusiastic, most hopeful human being” she had “ever encountered.” During a game of duck-duck-goose, when the little girl took her turn being chased around the children’s circle, she needed someone to hold her mail, so she asked Alice to do it. Because of the little girl’s handicaps, it took her a long time to go around the circle and Alice noticed that the top letter was from the little girl’s parents. Wondering how the parents could have produced such a wonderful little girl, Alice peeked at

the letter and saw this: “If God had given us all of the children in the world to choose from, we would only have chosen you.” Alice showed the letter to her husband, telling him, “Quick. Read this. It’s the secret of life.”<sup>214</sup>

- Jean Little, a young people’s author, was born with nystagmus, strabismus, eccentric pupils and corneal opacities — in other words, she had very bad eyesight. Because of this, her parents thought that she was blind. One day, her mother, a pediatrician, was examining a small child who reached for her stethoscope. She felt sad because little Jean had never reached for anything. However, Jean’s parents noticed that she always moved to face the window when she was in bed, no matter how they placed her in the bed, so they realized that she could distinguish light from darkness. Finally, one day when her mother was feeding her, little Jean reached for a spoon, and her mother was so happy that she cried.<sup>215</sup>

### **Problem-Solving**

- In Houston, Texas, problems sometimes arose between Anglo members of the police force and Hispanic members of the community. To help solve the problems, educator Guadalupe Quintanilla and two other people started the Cross Cultural Communication Program. In the program, Anglo police officers learn several words and phrases in Street Spanish, and they learn about differences between Anglo and Hispanic cultures. For example, one problem the Anglo police officers said they faced was that Hispanics would lie to them about their names. Ms. Quintanilla quickly identified the source of the problem. Hispanics often put their surname (the family name; not the given name or mother’s maiden name) in the middle and their mother’s maiden name last. When police officers would ask for a male suspect’s last name, the suspect would tell them his mother’s maiden name, which to the suspect is his last name. The police officers would find out that the name given was not the suspect’s surname, and they thought the suspect had lied to them. By the way, Spanish-speaking children sometimes serve as tutors in the program, so that the police officers can learn how Spanish words sound when spoken by different voices. Once, some children tutoring the police officers wrote this sentence on the board to teach them some Spanish vowels: “*El burro sabe más que tú.*” When the police officers figured out the meaning of the sentence, they thought it was funny: “The donkey knows more than you.”<sup>216</sup>

- When children’s mystery writer Joan Lowery Nixon was a young woman, middle-class women wore hats at fashionable dinners. Unfortunately, while in San Francisco for a convention after her father became auditor of Los Angeles County in 1938, Joan, age 16, discovered that she had forgotten to pack a hat. Her mother was understandably upset, but Joan said that she would go across the street to buy a hat at an expensive store just in time for the dress-up dinner. However, her mother, who had survived the Depression, refused to let her buy a hat for full price. (Also, the store was closed.) Fortunately, a flower vendor was still in the street, and Joan requested that he fashion a hat for her out of fresh flowers. The vendor guessed, “Your mama’s real mad at you. Right?” Joan admitted that he was right, and the flower vendor made a hat for her out of pale pink carnations, florist wire, and some black netting. The flower hat was the fashion hit of the evening.<sup>217</sup>

- When Stan Berenstain was courting Jan Grant, whom he would later marry and with whom he would create the popular children’s book characters the Berenstain Bears, they ran into a problem. During World War II, when Stan was in the Army, her mother found a packet of letters from him to Jan. (Stan admits that the letters were “steamy.”) Jan’s mother decided that

she didn't want Stan and her daughter to exchange any more letters. Fortunately, Stan's mother came up with a solution. Stan's letters to Jan were sent to his mother's house, and Jan picked them up there. Jan solved another problem by herself. She and Stan didn't have engagement rings, so Jan, who had studied the making of jewelry and who was working as a Rosie the Riveter at an aircraft plant, made two engagement rings out of aircraft aluminum and sent him one. On April 13, 1946, Stan and Jan married.<sup>218</sup>

- The mother of architect Julia Morgan was growing feeble, but she refused to move in with any of her children, so Julia took action with her siblings. Julia built a house on a plot of land next to her sister's house. This new house had a room exactly like the room their mother had been living in — the windows and door were in exactly the same places. While their mother was visiting Julia's sister, all of their mother's possessions were moved to the new house. After their mother had finished visiting the sister, they took her to her new home. Her new room was exactly the same as her old room — the furniture was in the same place, and her possessions were in the same places — and their mother never said anything about the switch in houses.<sup>219</sup>

- Back when Theodor Geisel, who later became better known as Dr. Seuss, was courting his future wife, Helen Palmer, he and she bought a motorcycle so that they could more easily travel around Oxford University, where they were first-year students. Unfortunately, Oxford University had a policy against first-year students owning motorcycles. Of course, the future Dr. Seuss was creative, and he figured out a way to keep out of trouble. He simply bought some plucked dead ducks and tied them to the handlebars, so that onlookers would think that he was a poultry shop's delivery boy.<sup>220</sup>

- While completing her residency in medicine and working sometimes 20 hours in a row, Dorothy "Dot" Richardson still worked on her softball. Because of a lack of time to get to a regular batting cage for practice, she rigged up a net and a batting tee in her bedroom so she could practice batting. To help keep from annoying her neighbors with the noise of her hitting the softball, she used a bat that she had wrapped with tape. Her hard work paid off in both endeavors. She won gold medals in softball at the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games, and today she is an orthopedic surgeon.<sup>221</sup>

- When the parents of Roberta and Alex divorced, they wanted their children to feel secure, and one way they felt they could do that was not to make their children move from place to place so the children could spend one week with one parent and the next week with the other parent. Instead, the children stayed put in the home they had grown up in, and their parents spent alternate weeks moving into the home and staying with them. Fourteen-year-old Roberta says, "They made it as easy as possible for us kids, and I'm grateful to them for doing that."<sup>222</sup>

- People who work with patients who have dementia need to be problem-solvers. One patient who suffered from dementia often asked the workers at the nursing home where he lived, "What time does the train leave for Boise? I need to go home to Boise." Reasoning with the man did not work — it just made him angry enough to throw things. However, one housekeeper told the man, "Jim, there is no train coming today, but you can stay at our hotel." This answer kept the man calm, although he continued to ask occasionally about the train.<sup>223</sup>

- Two friends went traveling in a trailer to spend a weekend fishing. They drove to the lake, camped out, then realized that they had forgotten to bring an alarm clock so that they could get up at dawn to start their fishing early. No problem. They tossed a couple of pieces of bread on



the roof of the trailer, and at dawn they were awakened by the beaks of birds tapping on the roof of the trailer while they pecked at the bread.<sup>224</sup>

- Jacques Offenbach, a composer noted for his overtures, sometimes forgot to button the fly of his pants. This happened so often in public places that his wife devised a code to let him know secretly that he had done it again. Whenever she began to talk about “Monsieur Durand,” Mr. Offenbach would excuse himself, leave the room and button his fly.<sup>225</sup>

- Teachers sometimes have to be quick-witted. Librarian Sue Pattillo once witnessed a teacher in a library showing a young girl the fine points of a religious reference book. As the teacher turned a page, she found a condom in the book. Quickly, the teacher put the condom in her pocket as she continued to tell the young girl about the book.<sup>226</sup>

## Religion

- Bob Hope was not a Catholic, but his wife, Dolores, was a devout Catholic. One day, two of their young children, Nora and Kelly, talked about religion. Kelly asked Nora, who was the youngest in the family, “Is everybody in our family Catholic?” Nora replied, “Everybody but daddy. He’s a comedian.” According to Mr. Hope, with comments like that his daughter “could have been one of my writers.”<sup>227</sup>

- One frontier preacher worked hard six days a week, but every Saturday he went fishing. A member of the preacher’s congregation felt that fishing was “idleness,” and so he told the preacher that Satan certainly didn’t take any time off from his work. “That’s true,” replied the preacher, “but I’m not following Satan’s example.”<sup>228</sup>

- As a very young girl, modern dance pioneer May O’Donnell found confessing her sins a “trial.” The problem was not that she had horrible sins to confess. Instead, the problem was that she couldn’t think of any sins she needed to confess — so she used to make up sins to confess to the priest.<sup>229</sup>

- Fred Astaire occasionally went to church with his mother. Whenever George Roosevelt, a friend of his, was taking up the collection, he used to tease him by tying a string to the dollar bill he was donating, put it in the collection plate, then yank it out again.<sup>230</sup>

## Sports

- Les Charles, one of the co-creators of the TV sitcom *Cheers*, played football in high school. Unfortunately, his team was not very good, and when he was a sophomore, his team lost every game it played, including a 75-0 loss against the team that became state champions that year. Members of the team were definitely embarrassed by their record. Today, Mr. Charles says, “When we’d see kids from other schools, we’d turn our letter sweaters inside out.”<sup>231</sup>

- In the late 1960s, John Somogyi scored 3,310 career points while playing basketball for Saint Peter’s High School in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1992, his 24-year-old record was broken by a player who wore Mr. Somogyi’s uniform number — 24 — and who scored 3,899 career points. He wasn’t upset that his record had been broken; after all, the record breaker was Kristen Somogyi, his own daughter.<sup>232</sup>

- During a Little League game, a baseball came ice skater Peggy Fleming’s way, so she picked it up and fired it over to the first-base coach. Her son was properly impressed: “Wow, Mom —

you don't throw like a girl." The comment made Ms. Fleming proud, but she adds, "If *anyone* but my son made such a patronizing remark, I wouldn't feel quite so warm and proud about it."<sup>233</sup>

## **Tobacco**

- Not all rules in school are strictly enforced. For example, one school had a rule against students smoking on school premises. However, as you might expect, the school restrooms were frequently cloudy with cigarette smoke, and teachers were supposed to go occasionally into the restrooms and fill out a report on whichever kids were caught smoking. The teachers disliked doing this because the time spent filling out forms cut down on the time they could do their own smoking. Therefore, before entering a restroom, the teachers would yell, "Put them out!" Students threw their butts into the toilets, the teachers would walk into the restroom, and later the teachers could honestly say that they had not caught any students smoking.<sup>234</sup>

- Andrew Tobias' financial software program *Managing Your Money* has a Life Expectancy determiner. If you type that you're 13 and you smoke, the program will tell you, "You're 13 and you smoke? ARE YOU CRAZY?"<sup>235</sup>

## **Travel**

- When Larry "Moon" Mullins was a football coach, he traveled frequently — according to his wife, much too frequently. One day, after he returned from yet another away game, his wife met him at the door and said, "Good afternoon. I'm Mrs. Mullins, and I would like to introduce your children. This is Larry, this is Mike, this is Mary Ellen, this is Kathleen, this is Anne, and this is Maggie." (A rival coach once asked Mr. Mullins how many children he had. Hearing the answer — six — the rival coach said, "I'm not surprised. You never were one to hold down the score.")<sup>236</sup>

- A couple who lived in New York City went on vacation in rural Maine. They met an old man, bonded with him, and asked him what the good things were about living in the country. The old man said, "Well, everybody knows everybody else. People often come and visit me, and I often go and visit them. And there are lots of children here." The couple then asked, "What are the bad things about living in the country?" The old man thought for a moment, then said, "Well, the same things, really."<sup>237</sup>

## **Weddings**

- A new form of wedding photos appeared in the mid-2000s — photographs that show the bride after the wedding more or less destroying her very expensive wedding gown — or at least wearing it in an unexpected place. (The average wedding gown then cost approximately \$1,800.) Louisiana photographer Mark Eric even created the website <trashthedress.com> in September of 2006. However, the photographer who really started the trend — as Mr. Eric acknowledges — is Las Vegas wedding photographer John Michael Cooper, who has a company called altf (which is short for "Alternative F\*\*king Photography"). He found an area of burned-up mesquite, and he thought that a remarkable photograph would result from placing a fabulous bride in a fabulous wedding gown in this terrain. Four brides turned down his request to photograph them there, so he bought a wedding gown on eBay for \$100 and used a friend to model the gown in the burnt-up terrain. These photographs were remarkable, and

brides started requesting similar photographs. Many remarkable photographs have been taken of brides lying on the sand or swimming in their expensive wedding gowns.<sup>238</sup>

- When Wah Ming Chang became engaged to Glennella “Glen” Taylor, a white woman, in 1941, things became pretty tense. Ms. Taylor’s parents didn’t want her to marry a man of Asian heritage. In addition, because Ms. Taylor lived in Texas and Mr. Chang lived in California, they had a difficult time seeing each other due to wartime shortages of gasoline. Because of these difficulties, they decided to get married right away rather than wait, so then they had to decide who would travel to whom for the marriage. After investigating marriage laws, they discovered that in California, marriages between Chinese and Caucasian people were not permitted, so the marriage was held in Texas instead. Later, his wife’s parents completely accepted Mr. Chang, and California changed its laws.<sup>239</sup>

- Heather Marie Michaud and Jeff Thomas had a conventional legal wedding at a courthouse on May 7, 2005 (Ms. Michaud, who dressed as a fairy princess at the unconventional wedding, calls it a haiku wedding and refers to the date as 5-7-5), followed by an unconventional wedding that probably would not have met legal requirements. The unconventional wedding included anti-vows. For example, Mr. Thomas was asked, “Do you promise to tell only jokes that are funny?” He replied, “I do not.” And instead of a conventional wedding cake at a conventional reception, Ms. Michaud’s sister instead made over 40 wedding pies.<sup>240</sup>

- Some early preachers knew exactly how to get paid well for officiating at a wedding. When the groom asked how much the officiating cost, the preacher would say, “I don’t make a charge, but I allow the groom to measure his generosity by the estimate he puts on his bride. When I marry such a fine-looking couple as you are, I always get five or ten dollars. But when I marry an indifferent-looking couple, I don’t expect more than two or three dollars.” The groom would almost always pay at least five dollars — which was real money at that time.<sup>241</sup>

- Peter Bruegel enjoyed painting peasants. He and a friend named Hans Franckert used to dress in peasant clothing, then go as uninvited guests to peasant weddings. If a member of the groom’s family asked who they were, they said that they were members of the bride’s family. If a member of the bride’s family asked who they were, they said that they were members of the groom’s family.<sup>242</sup>

- “Judge” Roy Bean married many couples in the American frontier. When he officiated at a wedding, his closing words were usually, “I, Roy Bean, Law West of the Pecos, by the authority vested in me by the constitution and laws of the State of Texas, do hereby pronounce you man and wife. And may God have mercy on your souls!”<sup>243</sup>

## **Work**

- As a child, comedian Bob Hope sold newspapers in Cleveland, Ohio. One day, a man bought a newspaper from him, but young Bob didn’t have change. Bob didn’t want to get change because he would lose business and not sell as many newspapers due to the time lost in getting change, so he told the man to pay him the next day. However, the man insisted, “No! Go get change!” Bob did, and when he returned with the change, the man told him, “See, you lost business because you didn’t have change. The way to run a business is to always be ready and always deal in cash and have ready change and don’t give credit.” The man giving Bob that advice was at the time the world’s richest man: John D. Rockefeller, Sr.<sup>244</sup>

- On Nantucket Island long ago used to live a man named Benny Cleveland, who made a living doing odd jobs. Many of the men on the island spent a lot of time at sea, and Mr. Cleveland was very useful to their wives. Among his many jobs was to sleep over at women's houses if they were pregnant or if they were ill. That way, he made them feel safer and he was right there in case of an emergency. Because everyone knew that Mr. Cleveland was harmless, his sleeping over was never regarded as scandalous. One day, Mr. Cleveland decided that he wanted more of this type of work, so he took out this ad in a newspaper: "Women slept with, twenty-five cents a night. Nervous women, fifteen cents extra."<sup>245</sup>

- For a while, architect Julia Morgan worked for John Galen Howard, but she was determined to leave his employ and open her own office, especially after she learned that Mr. Howard was telling people that she was a wonderful architect and he had to pay her nearly nothing — because she was a woman. After she quit, he became her enemy, and for 25 years he kept her from getting commissions to design buildings at the University of California, of whose building projects he was the supervising architect. In her 47-year career, Ms. Morgan found work anyway, and her name is on over 700 buildings.<sup>246</sup>

- Madeleine L'Engle, author of *A Wrinkle in Time*, was a good mother, but not necessarily a good baker. When her children asked her to bake a cake for a school bake sale, she did, but the cake was lopsided. Therefore, she sent a note to the school, asking, "Is there anything else I could do, more in line with my talents? Is there a play we could help with, or anything like that?" The following week, she and her husband, a professional actor, found themselves in charge of directing the school Christmas pageant.<sup>247</sup>

- As a teenager, baseball player Truett "Rip" Sewell worked at a drugstore, where he created a window display one evening, using pretty bottles and pretty boxes from the shelves of the store. Unfortunately, the owner of the drugstore saw the window display the following morning and fired him. Why? The pretty bottles contained a laxative, and the pretty boxes contained toilet tissue. Mr. Sewell, however, said, "Quite a display, it seemed to me. It looked real nice."<sup>248</sup>

- When John F. Kennedy was elected President, he wanted Robert, his brother, to serve as Attorney General of the United States, although he knew that he would be accused of nepotism. However, when he announced his choice to the media, he first explained his brother's qualifications for the job, and then added, "Besides, I see no reason why Bobby shouldn't get a little experience before he goes out to practice law."<sup>249</sup>

- J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* and creator of the wizard Gandalf, served as a soldier in World War I, and one of his sons, Michael, served as a soldier in World War II. At one point, Michael transferred to the Royal Air Force from the Army, and while filling out a form that asked for his father's occupation, he wrote, "WIZARD."<sup>250</sup>

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## **Appendix B: About the Author**

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Comedy*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

## **Appendix C: Some Books by David Bruce**

### **Anecdote Collections**

*250 Anecdotes About Opera*

*250 Anecdotes About Religion*

*250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2*

*250 Music Anecdotes*

*Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories*

*The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes*

*Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes*

*Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*

*The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes*

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