

***The Funniest People in
Families, Volume 6:
250 Anecdotes***

David Bruce

Dedicated with Love to All My Nephews and Nieces

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Cover Photographs

Top: Caleb and Hartley

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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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Chapter 1: From Activism to Children

Activism

- Richard Reynolds, author of *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Handbook for Gardening Without Boundaries*, is a guerrilla gardener. He and other guerrilla gardeners do their best to make dull and dreary neighborhoods beautiful by planting flowers on public land and other people's land without first obtaining permission. This leads to much midnight gardening and to seedbombing land that could benefit from flowers. In 1973, in New York City, a painter named Liz Christy coined the term "guerrilla gardening" after she noticed tomato plants sprouting in heaps of trash in derelict lots near where she lived. She figured that if tomato plants could grow there, then she could and should plant flowers and shrubs there. She and her friends made a garden on the corner of Bowery and Houston streets; the garden has weeping birch trees and flowering perennials, as well as grapes, turtles, and bees. Some guerrilla gardeners scatter seeds from their cars, while others engage in seed bombing, a method of delivering seeds along with compost and water to help the seed germinate. Some guerrilla gardeners create their seedbombs from empty chicken eggs, which they fill with seeds, compost, and water, and then throw where flowers are needed. Such a seedbomb is 100 percent biodegradable. Most people support the guerrilla gardeners, once they know that they are not vandals or terrorists. Sometimes, police officers are quite friendly to guerrilla gardeners.¹

- Folksinger Joan Baez avoids doing what she thinks is nonsensical or wrong. As a child attending school in California, she declined to go outside during a bomb drill. She figured that if someone were to drop a nuclear bomb on the school, going outside wouldn't help her or anyone else. During the Vietnam War, she declined to pay taxes that she knew would support the war effort, so she went to jail.²

- Feminists are often good activists. Several women, including Robin Morgan, Carol Hanisch, Alix Kates Schulman, and Kathie Sarachild, protested the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 by crowning their own winner — a sheep! They also filled a garbage can with "instruments of torture to women": issues of *Playboy*, girdles and bras, high-heeled shoes, etc.³

- One of the early women mountain climbers was Annie Peck, who at age 44 climbed the Matterhorn. After climbing a mountain in Peru, she left behind a flag that bore this message: "Votes for Women."⁴

Animals

- In 1900, an eccentric teacher in Germany named Wilhelm von Osten bought a horse named Hans. Wilhelm believed that animals are very intelligent, and he gave the horse lessons. Lessons in what? In history, math, music, and spelling! Wilhelm invited people to ask the horse questions. Hans shook his head for no, and he nodded his head for yes. To answer a math question, he would tap his hoof: one tap meant one, two taps meant two, and so on. Amazingly, Hans always answered correctly. Of course, a scientist figured out that Hans was picking up cues from the people who asked him questions, even though they didn't know that they were giving Hans cues. They always knew the correct answer, and Hans was able to tell how many taps to make from something in the way people acted. Therefore, the scientist arranged for people to ask Hans questions that they didn't know the answers to, with the result that Hans was no longer able to answer the questions correctly. Of course, Hans really was Clever Hans;

it takes cleverness to pick up subtle cues from people. But Hans was not clever in the way that Wilhelm thought he was.⁵

- After George Boyle was paralyzed in a car accident, he started using a capuchin monkey named Gizmo to do things for him that he can no longer do. George sometimes uses a laser light on a rod that he can hold in his mouth to show Gizmo what needs to be done. If George shines the beam on a book, Gizmo brings the book to George. (Gizmo can even turn the pages for George.) If George shines the beam on a light switch, Gizmo turns on the light. Gizmo can also refill George's water bottle (when George says, "Gizmo, change"), bring him a videotape, and open the refrigerator door. He can even wipe George's forehead — or scratch him when he itches. The good people at Helping Hands in Boston, Massachusetts, trained Gizmo.⁶

- Bob Denver once had a pygmy marmoset as a pet. She was only four inches tall and for food ate a grape a day. On a flight to LA, Mr. Denver put the box containing his pet in the overhead, then a man placed a box in the overhead. Mr. Denver rearranged the boxes so his pet could breathe, then the man rearranged the boxes. Mr. Denver rearranged the boxes again, then the man rearranged the boxes again. Finally, Mr. Denver said, "Listen, I have a tiny monkey in my box. I want to be sure she's getting air." The man also had live animals traveling in his luggage, so he said, "I've got the same problem." Fortunately, the two men were able to arrange the boxes in a way satisfactory to both.⁷

- On January 27, 1997, Lisa Harry and her son, two-year-old Sean, were visiting his grandmother, Phyllis Ingham, in Boston, Georgia. Sean was playing outside on a warm day. Lisa heard him scream, and when she looked up she saw a three-foot-long poisonous water moccasin by Sean. The Ingham family pet, a tiny Chihuahua named Haven, took action. Haven grabbed the snake in her jaws and ran off with it, leaving Sean safely behind. Later, Haven showed up, safe and sound and acting as though nothing had happened. The Ingham family had gotten Haven from an animal shelter, and Phyllis Ingham says, "The good Lord meant for us to have Haven."⁸

- One pet of the family of country comedian Jerry Clower is a black poodle named Freckles. Freckles isn't allowed on the couch, but whenever Mr. Clower's wife walks out of the room to go to the bedroom, Freckles jumps up on the couch, then stands facing in the direction of the bedroom and listens. As soon as Mr. Clower's wife comes out of the bedroom and heads to the living room, Freckles jumps off the couch and lies curled up on the floor as if she had been lying there the entire time.⁹

- When Elizabeth Taylor was 14 years old, she became a sensation by starring in the movie *National Velvet*. When renowned portraitist Yousuf Karsh arrived to photograph her, she was playing with one of her newest pets: a cat. Mr. Karsh named the cat Michael. The next day, both young Elizabeth and Mr. Karsh were on the MGM studio lot, and Elizabeth had her cat with her. She called out to Mr. Karsh, "Look who I have with me: Michael Karsh Taylor."¹⁰

- John Christie used to arrange Mozart festivals at Glyndebourne, an old manor house in England. Occasionally, contemporary music would also be played, which he could not stand. During a performance of contemporary music, someone saw Mr. Christie standing in a garden near the performance. Mr. Christie pointed to some fields and said, "Do you see those cows off in the distance? Yes? Well, when we do Mozart, they are always right here."¹¹

- A preacher once told a story about how we pay the price for doing stupid things. As a boy, he had once seen dozens of pigeons in a grain bin, so he told his friends to watch as he scared the pigeons. He then ran into the grain bin and shouted, and the pigeons immediately took flight. However, the preacher asked, “Do you have any idea what a hundred pigeons do when they’re scared?”¹²
- When she was very young, children’s book author Betsy Byars and her best friend used to occasionally set up a free zoo in the backyard of her home. They got leeches to exhibit by wading in a creek, then pulling the leeches off their legs. However, their most popular exhibits were snails and box turtles.¹³
- Natalie Schafer, who played Mrs. Thurston Howell on the TV series *Gilligan’s Island*, had a small French poodle, Fifi, as a pet. Fifi was too small to jump onto Ms. Schafer’s bed to sleep with her, so Ms. Schafer had a ramp built so that Fifi could climb into bed with her.¹⁴
- While Jay Leno was in high school, he would sometimes hide a dog in a locker. The custodian would have to open as many as 15 lockers before he found the dog. (Jay and his friends used to bet on how many lockers the custodian would have to open.)¹⁵
- Actor Peter Lorre had an impish sense of humor. His driveway displayed this large sign: “Beware of ferocious dogs.” The “ferocious” dogs were a couple of tiny Pekinese.¹⁶
- Actor Patrick Macnee’s father was an expert on horses. When Patrick was born, his father looked him over and said, “Good loins. Pity he’s only got two legs.”¹⁷

Art

- When young adult author Tamora Pierce was born, her mother wanted to name her Tamara. Unfortunately, the nurse who recorded the name was unfamiliar with how it was spelled and instead of writing Tamara, she wrote Tamora (rhymes with camera). When Tamora was five years old, her mother was majoring in English in college. One of her textbooks was Janson’s *History of Art*, and while she was studying it, Tamora came over and saw a full-page reproduction of Michelangelo’s *David*. As is the case in much art, the *David* was nude, and Tamora’s mother was afraid that she might have some explaining to do. Fortunately, all Tamora said was, “Mum, that man is barefooted.”¹⁸
- Georgia O’Keeffe preferred to paint rather than entertain the visitors, many of them beginning artists, who sometimes showed up uninvited at her door. She once said, “What can you say to visitors, especially to aspiring artists? ‘Go home and work!’ or else, ‘Nobody’s good at the beginning.’”¹⁹
- It took decades for sculptor Louise Nevelson to become recognized as a major American artist. After she had become famous, a museum executive arrived 10 minutes late for a meeting with her, and he apologized. Ms. Nevelson replied, “What’s 10 minutes? Where were you 10 years ago?”²⁰

Baseball

- Derek Jeter and his sister, Sharlee, are biracial — their father is black, and their mother is white. Both parents, Charles and Dorothy, are very supportive of their children. When Derek played his first major-league game, his father flew to Seattle to watch Derek, a New York

Yankee, play. Derek's mother stayed home because Sharlee was playing a softball game for Kalamazoo Central High School. Later, Charles, Dorothy, and Sharlee drove to Cleveland to see Derek play for the Yankees. Unfortunately, the game was snowed out, and so Charles and Sharlee drove back home because Sharlee had a softball game to play the following day. This time, Dorothy stayed behind to watch Derek play.²¹

- Each spring, the New York Giants used to go to West Point for an exhibition game. Giant manager Leo Durocher once called umpire Tom Gorman ahead of time to suggest that they put on a show. In the fourth inning, Mr. Durocher would find something to get an argument about, they would argue for a while, and then Mr. Gorman would throw him out of the game. They performed the show as planned, and the West Point cadets got a big kick out of the performance, which they thought was real.²²

- When he was a child, major-league baseball star Bobby Bonilla used to sleep with his baseball bat in his bed. Sometimes he would get up during the night and practice his swing. Javier, his little brother, was always careful when he got out of bed. He says about Bobby, "He almost hit me a couple of times." Bobby even took his bat along when he visited a girlfriend, whose mother would put away a glass centerpiece just in case Bobby got a little careless with his bat.²³

- Catcher Joe Garagiola played with many baseball greats. Once, he was asked what it was like to play against the great hitter Stan Musial. He replied, "Whenever I caught against him, he'd step up to the plate and ask me about my family — but before I could answer he'd be on third base."²⁴

Birth

- When Mem Fox, the Australian young people's author of *Possum Magic*, was giving birth to Chloë, her daughter, she remembered reading somewhere that singing songs was supposed to lessen the pain of childbirth, so she started singing "Penny Lane." The pain remained the same, but at least the expressions on the faces of the nurses were amusing. The pain of childbirth was so great, in fact, that at one point she told her husband, "This is the last time, my darling. I'm never doing this again." The reward of childhood is a child, and Mem greeted her firstborn — who is also her only child, more because of the pressures of having a career than because of having made a declaration during childbirth — with "Hello, my darling."²⁵

- David and Diana Berggren thought that they would be having twins, so they weren't surprised when their doctor told Mrs. Berggren in the delivery room, "You have two fine, beautiful boys." Just then, another doctor said, "Here's a surprise!" The first doctor told Mrs. Berggren, "We have a C," and she asked, "What's a C?" The doctor explained, "A C is baby number three — you have triplets."²⁶

Children

- As a reporter for the *Chicago Examiner*, Charles MacArthur was given a great story by his editor, Walter Howey, who had it on what he thought was good authority that a little girl had been accidentally locked in the railroad safe at the Moline station. The safe was very old, had been kept open for years, and no one alive knew the combination. Mr. MacArthur's job was to go to Joliet State Prison, promise a governor's pardon to a couple of safecrackers, and get them to open the safe before the little girl suffocated. He sprang into action, working all night to get

the safe open and save the little girl's life — but when the safe was finally opened, no little girl was inside. (The little girl had been angry at her grandmother, so she had hidden in the attic.) The safecrackers screamed for their pardon anyway, but were taken back to Joliet at gunpoint. Mr. MacArthur figured that there wasn't a story, but Mr. Howey told him to write it anyway, saying, "It's a story about humanity. The goodness in people's hearts. The safe blowers, vice-presidents, doctors, nurses, the warden, the governor, ... everybody who answered a cry of human distress." Mr. MacArthur dictated his story for an hour — it appeared on the front page under the seven-column headline "It's a Wonderful World."²⁷

- It's important to stay active one way or the other. [Amy Guthrie](#), a writer for the *Broward-Palm Beach New Times*, played coed tee ball when she was five years old. The other little girl on the team, Krista, became her friend. While playing in the field, the two little girls would practice their splits, ignoring any ball that rolled past them and then arguing with each other about who should pick up the ball. Ms. Guthrie says that while she and Krista were arguing "our fathers were smacking their foreheads in frustration." Later, she grew to like softball — a lot. When she became batgirl for her older sister's team, she was so proud that she wore her uniform for an entire week — despite her mother's pleas to let her wash it. However, at age 13 she gave up softball, disappointing her sports-enthusiast father greatly. Instead, she took ballet classes. Because five-year-olds were in the beginners' class, she took classes with the adults. Her ballet teacher suggested to Amy's father that he also take ballet classes, and Amy says, "So my father and I learned ballet together."²⁸

- Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, was born in Lochfield, Scotland, in 1881. He grew up on a farm on which lots of snow fell during the winter. Occasionally, he would have to find sheep that had been completely covered by snow. He did this by looking for holes that had been created in the snow by the sheep's warm breath. As a boy, he attended a one-room schoolhouse. He and the other children would bring peat moss to school during the winter to be burned in the fireplace to keep the school warm. His mother used to give him two hot baked potatoes on cold mornings. He put a hot potato in each pocket of his coat and used them to keep his hands warm as he walked to school, then at noon he ate them. The school sounds primitive by today's standards, but Mr. Fleming said that he learned very quickly there.²⁹

- On September 24, 1974, the daughter of actors Michael Williams and Judi Dench was born. She was named Tara Cressida Frances, but everyone called her Finty. Because Finty's parents were Shakespearean actors, she learned quotations from Shakespeare as a tiny tot. One parent would say, "I'll put a girdle around the earth ...," and Finty would finish the quotation: "in 40 minutes." If a parent asked her what King Lear says, Finty would answer, "Never, never — FIVE times!" In a Nativity play, Finty played the innkeeper's wife, and when she was asked what the play was about, she replied, "It's about this innkeeper's wife, of course." When Finty was 11 years old, she told a friend that a play her mother was appearing in was "without doubt the most boring play I've ever seen in the whole of my life."³⁰

- As you would expect, Roald Dahl, author of *Matilda* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, told lots of stories to his own children. In fact, that is why he became a writer of children's literature. He had written a book of short stories for adults (*Kiss, Kiss*), the book was successful, his publisher wanted more writing from him, he didn't have any ideas for adult literature, and so he started writing down the stories he had been telling his children, starting with *James and the Giant Peach*. He once said, "Had I not had children, I would not have written books for children, nor would I have been capable of doing so." Patricia Neal, his first

wife, said, “Roald had a foolproof system for developing his tales. He would tell them to his children, and if they asked to hear one again, he knew he had a winner.”³¹

- On an October day in 1988, an earthquake hit Watsonville, California. Five-year-old Vivian Cooper had always avoided a 100-pound Rottweiler named Reona that lived nearby, but when Vivian started crying in her family’s kitchen when the earthquake hit, the sound traveled to Reona, and Reona came running. Reona pushed Vivian against some kitchen cabinets and then sat on her. As the earthquake continued, a heavy microwave oven fell on the spot where Vivian had been standing. Following the earthquake, Vivian was no longer afraid of the big Rottweiler. Reona’s owner, Jim Patton, says, “Now, there’s a bond between them that just won’t quit.”³²

- Identical twins and triplets, of course, are very much alike — although they do have different fingerprints. For example, identical triplets David, Donny, and Darren Berggren all wear glasses, but because they have the same prescription, they can trade glasses if they want to. Mothers of identical triplets soon learn that whatever happens to one will soon happen to the others. For example, David lost a baby tooth. A few days later, the family had chili for dinner, and Donny said that there was something hard in his soup. After his mother said there weren’t any hard ingredients in the soup, Donny took a close look and said, “Oh, my gosh. It’s my tooth!”³³

- After the death of May, the sister of Louisa May Alcott, who wrote *Little Women*, Louisa adopted May’s daughter: Louisa “Lulu” Nieriker. Lulu was quite an adventurous child. On a trip to the seashore, Lulu heard that Europe was on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, so she started walking into the sea, on her way to Europe. Of course, Lulu was stopped from pursuing her journey, but not before she was neck deep in water, and she complained about not being allowed to see the “little twabs” at the bottom of the ocean.³⁴

- Bette Midler’s daughter is a Chinese scholar who has attended Beijing University. Ms. Midler says that her daughter has “always loved the Asians.” For example, when she was 13, she wanted to go to Japan. Ms. Midler was touring a lot back then, so she brought her daughter with her to Japan. Sounds educational, right? Actually, her daughter hung out the window while they were driving around Tokyo, saying, “Ooh, he’s hot! Ooh, what a hottie!” Ms. Midler laughs and says, “She tricked us!”³⁵

- When children’s author Jane Yolen was a little girl, she was warned many times not to go wading in the dirty bay near where she lived. She used to go wading anyway, and she always got into trouble — her parents knew that she had been wading because the fuel oil that had leaked from ships stuck to her legs. Of course, when she was a little girl, she was naïve. When her father returned home after fighting in World War II, he told her that he had won the war all by himself — she believed him.³⁶

- **Dodger pitcher Carl Erskine knows a good way to tell how popular a particular player is: simply ask a kid — after all, kids tend to be honest. One day, Mr. Erskine was signing autographs for kids, and he noticed that a particular boy came back for a second autograph, and then a third autograph. He asked the boy why he wanted three autographs, and the boy said, “Actually, I would like to have six. If I can get six of yours, I can trade them for one of Jackie Robinson.”³⁷**

- Some of the children of Texas preacher Edwin Porter thought about digging through the Earth to China, but decided against it because they were afraid that while digging to China they might inadvertently dig into Hell. Soon after, a missionary from China preached at their church, and during the question-and-answer period one of the preacher's sons, Gilderoy, spoke up, "I'd like to ask you a question. Did you have to go through Hell to get to China?"³⁸
- Autograph hunters come in all shapes and sizes. A mother and her child once approached comedian Red Buttons — the child was holding a piece of paper and a pencil. The mother nudged the child and said, "Tell Red Buttons what you want." The child was silent, so the mother again told the child, "Tell Red Buttons what you want." Finally, the child spoke up and told Red Buttons what he wanted: "Ice cream."³⁹
- On a train, Samantha Shen Yanping of Singapore once observed a couple of children, one three and the other five years old, holding four brightly colored balloons. Other families, including one family with two toddlers, then boarded the train. Attracted by the bright colors of the balloons, the toddlers pointed at them and began to cry. The three-year-old and the five-year-old walked over to the toddlers and gave them the balloons.⁴⁰
- According to world-class gymnastics coach Bela Karolyi, the best time to teach gymnastics to students is when they are between seven and eleven because then they are fearless and obedient. After the students reach puberty, they are harder to teach. Mr. Karolyi says that when they reach puberty, they begin to say, "Wait. I am cute. What for am I falling on my face and bending my nose?"⁴¹
- When she was a girl, ballerina Tanaquil Le Clercq assisted at her parents' cocktail parties by carrying around a big plate of hors d'oeuvres to offer guests. However, every so often — without her parents' knowledge — she would disappear with the plate beneath a table and gorge herself with peanuts, sandwiches, potato chips, dips, olives, and anchovies.⁴²
- Children's book author Betsy Byars has published over 50 books, but even she has her failures — books that never get published. One night, Guy, her nearly eight-year-old son, had insomnia, and he asked to read one of her failures. Ms. Byars says, "He read for about three minutes ... and fell fast asleep. It was a humbling moment."⁴³
- When Balanchine ballerina Allegra Kent was a child, her parents divorced, and she lived with her mother. One of the things her mother taught her was to say bad things about her father. One day, some classmates of young Allegra asked her what her father did for a living. Allegra replied, "I don't know, but he's a fool."⁴⁴
- At age two, Frances Gumm — the future Judy Garland — sang two songs ("Jingle Bells" and "When I Take My Sugar to Tea") at a theater where her father was performing. She liked the applause so much that she wouldn't leave the stage, and finally her father had to bodily pick her up and carry her off.⁴⁵
- Patrick Bissell, a ballet dancer with American Ballet Theatre, studied dance as a boy while being raised in a farm community in Ohio. The other boys thought that ballet was for sissies, so young Patrick got into so many fights that his teachers in school thought he was a troublemaker.⁴⁶
- After Mary Lou Retton won gold in the all-around competition at the 1984 Olympics, she went back to her gym to train, and lots of eight-year-old gymnasts she had trained with asked

her for her autograph. Ms. Retton was surprised: “What do you *mean*, autographs? You *know* me.”⁴⁷

- Choreographer Twyla Tharp was raised to be a success. Her father told her, “I don’t care if you dig ditches, as long as you dig the best ditches.” When she was born, her mother sent out birth announcements, on which she had written, “She’ll grow up to be famous.”⁴⁸
- One of Peg Bracken’s friends has an 11-year-old son who enjoys reading industrial-strength philosophy: Kant, James, Hegel, etc. When the friend travels, she insists that her son keep the titles of the books hidden so that the family can pay half-fare for him.⁴⁹
- As a 12-year-old child, Phyllis Diller was teased about her looks. One day, she looked at herself very carefully in the mirror, then said, “Honey, you’d better settle for inner beauty.” As an adult, Ms. Diller said, “I still wish I’d had a choice.”⁵⁰
- Peg Bracken blew up many balloons for her daughter’s sixth party, but rain fell, necessitating a cancellation until better weather arrived. Her daughter was disappointed, saying, “It seems like a terrible waste of balloons.”⁵¹
- Pisistratus wanted to remarry, but his sons tried to stop him by asking, “Aren’t you satisfied with us?” He replied, “Very — that’s why I want more like you.”⁵²
- Comedian Joey Adams had a five-year-old niece who sometimes slipped into bed without saying her prayers because “there are some nights when I don’t want anything.”⁵³

Chapter 2: From Christmas to Education

Christmas

- When Beth Quinn, former columnist for New York's *Times Herald-Record*, was a child, she and her sister looked forward to two big presents — one for each of them — each Christmas. The two big presents came in two big boxes, the tops of which were wrapped in colorful paper. One box's top was red; the other box's top was blue. To open the box and see the present, all a child had to do was to take the top off of a box. When Beth was about eight years old and wondering if Santa Claus was real, she came across these two boxes in her family's storage area. To Beth, this was disturbing evidence that perhaps Santa Claus was not real, so she asked her father about the boxes: "Why are they here? Why doesn't Santa have them?" Her father explained the situation well: "What are you, nuts or something? You think Santa can haul everything around with him? He asked your mother and me years ago to keep those boxes here. He said to put them out on Christmas Eve so he can fill them." This made sense to Beth, who realized, "So that's why the lids come off like that! So he can fill them and doesn't have to wrap them each time!" Her father agreed: "He's a smart guy, that Santa."⁵⁴
- Eric Sean Nall is the frontman for the music group Foxy Shazam, which recorded the album *Introducing*. One of the songs on the album, "A Black Man's Breakfast," is about Karen, Mr. Nall's girlfriend, a Proctor and Gamble scientist who develops shampoos. When the album came out, Mr. Nall's girlfriend wrote down the lyrics for most of the songs so they could appear in the CD booklet, but when Mr. Nall took the lyrics to a printer, he added a couple of lines to "A Black Man's Breakfast": "Karen, I love you so much. Will you marry me?" He gave her a copy of the CD and booklet on Christmas Eve, and when she read the lyrics, she cried — and she said yes.⁵⁵
- Sophie Tucker understood the value of treating fans well. She met many fans backstage, and she kept a list of their names and addresses. Before coming back to a town to perform, she would send her fans in that town a postcard telling them about the performance. She also sent out a great many Christmas cards to fans. Each year, she sent out 7,000 handwritten cards to her fans.⁵⁶
- When she was a child, choreographer Agnes De Mille gave her uncle, movie director Cecil De Mille, a Christmas present: a book of colored reproductions of paintings by Jan Vermeer. Mr. De Mille was pleased with the present; he gave her \$100 and asked to go to the store where she had purchased the book and to buy a copy of all the books they had similar to it.⁵⁷
- When Donald W. Dugan's daughter, Nancy, was four, he explained to her the real meaning of Christmas. The family enjoyed a wonderful Christmas, and a few days afterward, Mr. Dugan overheard Nancy tell her older sister that she had had a wonderful time on Christmas. Nancy added, "I sure hope Joseph and Mary have another baby."⁵⁸
- During a Christmas church service, the priest asked the little children of the parish to come and see a Nativity scene, then he asked the children what could be done to keep the baby Jesus warm. A child suggested giving Jesus a blanket, a second child suggested bringing straw into the manger, and a third child suggested, "Shut the door."⁵⁹

- *MAD* magazine once came out with a board game that parodied the board game Monopoly. (Parker Brothers published both games.) The second Christmas of the *MAD* game's existence, nothing had been changed in the game, so it was advertised as "NOT NEW or IMPROVED!"⁶⁰

- In the episode "Birds Gotta Fly, Fish Gotta Talk," Alan Hale, who played the Skipper, also played Santa Claus. He was such a good Santa that crew members brought in their children to sit on his lap — even though the episode was filmed in the middle of August.⁶¹

Clothing

- Freddie Mercury, gay lead singer of Queen, invited celebrity photographer Richard Young to his birthday party at the Hilton in Munich, but there was a catch: All the invitees, including Mr. Young, had to come in drag. This was no problem, even though Mr. Young had a beard. Mr. Young's wife, Susan, found a dress for him, then went shopping for a wig for him. She told a saleslady, "I'm looking for a wig. Well, actually, it's not for me. It's for my husband. The saleslady replied, "Don't worry, dear. We get a lot in here like you." When Mr. Young left the party, a German woman saw him, looked him over, and said, "Your shoes give you away." He replied, "My shoes? What about my beard?"⁶²

- Beatrice Lillie knew how to put people down when they needed to be put down. At a dinner party, Ms. Lillie was wearing a string of pearls that aroused the envy of a woman who asked, "Are they real?" Ms. Lillie replied, "Of course." However, the envious woman didn't believe her, so she grabbed the pearls, put them in her mouth, and bit them, then said, "No, they're not. They're cultured." Ms. Lillie smiled sweetly, then said, "And how would you know — with false teeth?"⁶³

- Men who wear women's clothing often wear large sizes. Hearing that a student at Miss Vera's Finishing School for Boys Who Want to be Girls planned to dance the night away in 4-inch heels, Miss Veronica Vera asked if 4-inch heels would be too challenging. The student replied that 4 inches weren't all that high when the student was wearing size-14 shoes.⁶⁴

- In her sculptures, Louise Nevelson used a lot of wood pieces. One evening, when she was dressed very well — wearing a chinchilla fur coat — she came across a garbage can filled with wooden barrel staves. Thinking that she could use the staves in her sculptures, she began to fish them out of the garbage can — while a police officer incredulously eyed her.⁶⁵

- Long ago, while acting in a play produced by the very stingy Jules J. Leventhal, an actress named Madeline (actor Jack Gilford's future wife) was forced to go on stage wearing size-seven shoes, because her size-five shoes — which had cost \$3.98 — were lost. The next day she asked Mr. Leventhal, "Do you want to spend \$3.98 or replace me with someone who can fit into these shoes?"⁶⁶

Couples

- When Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre was in the ninth grade, he met his future wife and mother of his children: Deanna Tynes. At a birthday party for his brother, Brett held Deanna's hand for perhaps five seconds and kissed her quickly on the lips. As a professional football player, Brett is known for coolness under pressure, but this close contact with a girl had him sweating — a lot. Still, he got the job done — she agreed to be his girlfriend. One of the things they did was to play catch together. Brett, of course, threw hard. His father heard the sound of

the hard-thrown baseball slapping into Deanna's glove, so he came over to the couple and told Brett not to throw the baseball so hard to Deanna. Brett asked, "Why? She's catchin' 'em."⁶⁷

- In Nebraska was a Quaker girl with high spirits who enjoyed saying things to shock her parents. Once, the girl, who was named Hulda, was discussing a recent elopement that had upset the Quaker neighborhood. Hulda said, very loudly to be sure her mother overheard her, "If my parents wouldn't let me marry the man I wanted, I'd elope, too." Her mother's voice came from the next room: "Thee needn't, Hulda — thee may have him."⁶⁸

- Dating today is much different from dating in the good old days. Anita Curry, who was born in 1902, remembered dating at Danville, Kentucky's Centre College in the 1920s. The boys would make dates for Saturday. At 7:30 p.m. the boys would go into the girls' dormitory, which was the only place they were allowed to go to for a date. Until 9 p.m., the couples would find a place to sit and talk — preferably behind some ferns, so they could kiss occasionally.⁶⁹

Dance

- American dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis once wanted to dance in a peacock costume, but had difficulty finding a suitable ornament for the headdress. A visitor wearing a hat with a feather crest came to tea at her house. Ms. St. Denis looked at the visitor's hat, saw the feathered crest, and said, "That's the very thing." She took the visitor's hat, snipped off the crest, returned the hat to her visitor, then left the room to attach the crest to the headdress of her costume, leaving her husband, Ted Shawn, behind to deal with the startled guest.⁷⁰

- Ballet stars are celebrities. Peter Martins of the New York City Ballet was constantly bothered by a woman who wrote him marriage proposals and sent him photographs of herself. After about two years, fortunately, she sent him a photograph of himself — torn up — then left him alone.⁷¹

Death

- After his first wife died, celebrity photographer Richard Young was left with a void and two motherless children. As you would expect, he was depressed for a while and in desperate need of a nanny. One day he saw a policewoman giving his Harley a parking ticket, and he went over to her and begged her not to give him a ticket, saying that he had recently suffered the death of his wife and he had two young sons who needed a nanny. Luck was with him. The policewoman told him that she was tired of being a policewoman, and she became his two young sons' nanny.⁷²

- In 1968, baseball player Bob Uecker's father had a major heart attack — a Code Four — in a hospital. He almost died, but the physicians and nurses worked on him and saved his life by giving his heart an electric shock and by pounding on his chest. But when his father regained consciousness, he was angry. Everything had been really soft, pleasurable, and mellow — then suddenly a bunch of physicians and nurses had started pounding on him.⁷³

- When her father died when she was 13, Alicia Marks took over for him. Among other things, such as making a living for the family through her dancing, she performed the male role at the ritual each Sabbath. (The Marks family was Jewish.) Alicia Marks was renamed Alicia Markova when she joined the dance troupe of Sergei Diaghilev.⁷⁴

- After author Alice Walker’s father, Willie Lee, died, her mother, Minnie Tallulah, spoke these words to him as he lay in his casket at the funeral: “Goodnight, Willie Lee, I’ll see you in the morning.” This became the title of Ms. Walker’s third volume of poetry, which was published in 1979.⁷⁵
- Composer Jeremiah Clarke (1670?-1707) decided to commit suicide because of a failed love affair. To determine how he would die — whether by drowning or by hanging — he threw a coin in the air. The coin landed on its side in the mud, so Mr. Clarke shot himself.⁷⁶
- When Diamond Jim Wilson, who had been a fire chief as well as a bar proprietor in Nome, Alaska, died, a large paper wreath decorated his tombstone. Perhaps a different inscription should have been chosen, for the wreath bore these words: “Gone to his last fire.”⁷⁷
- The Model T was a much-beloved car. In 1915, the *Denver Express* published a story about an old-timer who wanted to be buried in his Model T. Why? “The darned thing pulled me out of every hole I ever got into, and it ought to pull me out of this one.”⁷⁸
- Even at age 10, Maria Montessori was busy doing and learning things. Her mother stayed constantly by her side when Maria was very ill, but Maria told her, “Don’t worry, Mama, I cannot die; I have too much to do.”⁷⁹
- An epitaph in a cemetery near Stockton, Somerset County, Maryland, said, “You wouldn’t come to see me / When I was alive / Don’t come to see me / Now that I’m dead.”⁸⁰

Easter

- Father Richard Carton, the associate pastor of St. Catherine Siena Church in Mountain Lakes, New Jersey, once asked a group of second-graders what Jesus said after His resurrection from the dead. One little girl said she knew the answer: “Tah-dah!”⁸¹

Education

- Wandering warrior Zhang Liang once met an old man on a bridge. The old man deliberately kicked off a sandal, then asked Zhang Liang to retrieve it and to put it back on his foot. After Zhang Liang had done so, the old man told him that he was worthy to be taught and to meet him at the bridge in the early morning in five days. Five days later, Zhang Liang arrived at the bridge a few minutes after daybreak, and the old man told him to arrive earlier in another five days. Five days later, Zhang Liang arrived at the bridge earlier, but the old man was already there and told him, “Arrive earlier in another five days’ time. This is your last chance.” Five days later, Zhang Liang arrived at the bridge around midnight, and the old man arrived a few minutes later. The old man, who was named Huang Shi Gong, then taught Zhang Liang the military strategy that enabled him to help Liu Bang become the founder of the Han Dynasty.⁸²
- Sports can be educational. In the fifth grade, Balanchine ballerina Allegra Kent was taught how to high jump. At first, the bar was set low so that everyone could jump it easily while practicing technique. Then the bar was set to four feet. Other students could not jump that high, but Allegra concentrated, and she jumped it on her first try. Her teacher congratulated her, “You are just a little taller than that pole. You did a great job.” Another teacher gave her a nickname: Mighty Mouse. The experience with the high jump, Ms. Kent wrote in her autobiography, “reinforced my belief in learning correct technique and incorporating it along

with desire and coordination. I had listened carefully to the instructions, followed them, and they worked.”⁸³

- Dalmatians are associated with firefighters. In Springfield, Missouri, a trained Dalmatian named Becky Thatcher taught children fire safety. A firefighter would talk at a school assembly or other event to children about safety, and Becky did tricks to make the lessons easy to remember. For example, the firefighter would talk about what to do if your clothing caught on fire: stop, drop, and roll. As the firefighter talked, Becky stopped, dropped, and rolled. Following one of these assemblies, a parent wrote the fire department that because of the firefighter and Becky, in an emergency the parent’s own child had stopped, dropped, and rolled — and put out the flames.⁸⁴

- When Mem Fox, the Australian young people’s author of *Possum Magic*, attended drama school, she frequently changed her hair color. Her teacher, Rose Bruford, once whispered to her when her hair was a bright blonde, “Merrion [Mem’s real name], do something about your hair.” Immediately, Mem changed it back to her original hair color — assuming that she remembered what her original hair color was. Ms. Bruford summoned Mem to her office and told her, “Sit down.” Mem sat down, and Ms. Bruford said, “Your hair looks lovely.” Then she immediately added, “You may go.” Mem rose, thanked Ms. Bruford, and left.⁸⁵

- While teaching a large college dance class, modern dance pioneer Martha Graham asked the students to sit down one at a time so that she could see how they sat. After the students had seated themselves, one of the students asked, “Miss Graham, why did you ask us to sit?” Ms. Graham explained, “I simply wanted to see which ones of you cherished your genitals. If you crash down to the floor, it means you have no concern for them.” She added, “And if you are indifferent to your creative areas in a physical sense, you will be indifferent to your creative forces in an artistic sense — and you will never become dancers.”⁸⁶

- Life is important, and one’s priorities must be set correctly. This is true, but how can people learn this lesson? In South Korea, companies are engaged in teaching exactly this lesson. They sell mock funerals to young people in college. These college students do these things: 1) write their will, 2) put on traditional Korean burial clothing, and 3) lie still as other people nail them into their coffin. Of course, being nailed in the coffin is only temporary — but it is very effective in being a reminder of death, and very effective in educating people to set their priorities correctly.⁸⁷

- A young author named George Zournas once took a class taught by modern dance pioneer Martha Graham. Wearing new blue swim trunks on a hot day, he arrived at the class taught in a studio that had just had its floor refinished. Unfortunately, due to the warmth of the day, he began to perspire and the dye of the new blue swim trunks started staining the floor. Ms. Graham told him, “I forbid you to perspire. It’s only self-indulgence.” Mr. Zournas held her with such high reverence — and was so scared of her — that he stopped perspiring.⁸⁸

- Barbara Johnstone used to be a librarian for a juvenile detention center, where she would bring her used copies of *National Geographic* magazine and give them to social studies teacher Cathy Dowd. Ms. Dowd, in turn, gave the maps in the magazines to her students, who hung them as prized possessions on the walls of the dorms. One boy, however, was upset after the maps had been given out. He looked at a nearby boy, then told Ms. Johnstone and Ms. Dowd, “He got a map of the whole world. All I got was sh*tty old Virginia.”⁸⁹

- The parents of children’s author Jane Yolen wanted her to go to a good school, and once they even lied about where they lived to get her into the best school possible. Unfortunately, Jane was too young to remember that she was supposed to give the authorities a pretend address, so she had to go to a different school. She was a smart student, and she was instantly promoted to the second grade when her first-grade teacher discovered that young Jane had read her first-grade reading textbook overnight.⁹⁰
- A high school sophomore waited until the last minute to read a book for his book report. In desperation, he read a book for 3rd graders and wrote his book report on it. Of course, his teacher was not fooled and enjoyed a good laugh while reading the book report, but the high school sophomore did receive a C+ — a C for writing something, and a + for having the courage to turn in a report on a book for 3rd graders.⁹¹
- Education can occur late in one’s life. When Socrates was 70 years old, he was condemned to die by a jury. In prison, he asked for a teacher of the musical instrument known as the lyre to visit him so he could take lessons. His friends protested that he would be executed in only three days. Socrates calmly replied that he had three more days to live and therefore he had three days left during which he could study the lyre.⁹²
- As a child in military school, actor Walter Slezak committed an infraction that landed him in the school prison for a day. He didn’t mind too much until the jailor brought him bread and water for the traditional prison lunch. Feeling that such a diet was an outrage, he bribed the jailor and dined on goulash, apple strudel, and some wine (the jailor shared the wine with him), plus he enjoyed the Sunday newspaper and a few cigarettes.⁹³
- When Beverly Cleary, the young people’s author of the Ramona books, was very young, her father taught her that the world is round, and he used an orange to demonstrate that you could walk around the world and end up where you started. Having learned that lesson, Beverly set off to walk around the world. Fortunately, her father caught up with her at the edge of their farm, and then he taught her how big the world is.⁹⁴
- Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, had an older brother named Tom who wanted him and yet another brother, who was named Robert, to keep up their studies after they had started to work for a living. Tom would ask Alexander and Robert to each contribute a coin, then he would quiz them on math, geography, and history. The brother who answered the greatest number of questions correctly got both coins.⁹⁵
- Michele L. Hardie was teaching a Sunday School class about God’s Creation of the World. After teaching the class, she asked the class these review questions: “What did God create the first day?” and “What did God create the second day?” After the class had answered these questions correctly, she asked, “What happened the third day?” A child in the class answered, “He rose from the dead!”⁹⁶
- The townspeople of Northampton, Massachusetts, became upset because some of the female students at Smith College occasionally undressed without drawing their shades. They met with Smith College President William Allan Neilson and asked him to tell the female students to pull down their shades. President Neilson replied to the townspeople, “Pull down your own shades.”⁹⁷

- On her very first day of kindergarten, ballerina Jillana confided a secret to her teacher: “Don’t tell anyone, but I’m really a princess.” As a ballerina, Jillana has danced many regal roles, including that of the Princess in *Firebird*. By the way, Jillana’s real last name is Zimmerman, and as a pretty teenager, she was known as Jill-bait.⁹⁸
- When he was a young man, Ernest Rutherford, the father of nuclear science and a future Nobel-Prize winner in Chemistry, occasionally taught his three youngest sisters at the request of their mother. They were fidgety, so he kept them from fidgeting by tying the braids of each sister to the braids of another sister.⁹⁹
- Rufus Jones was an educator at Haverford College. Once, a student snuck out of his dorm room one night when he was supposed to be in bed, and he ran smack into Professor Jones. “Oh, my God,” the student said. Professor Jones, who was a Quaker, replied, “No, just one of His humble servants.”¹⁰⁰
- Richard Watson once told fellow philosopher Richard Rudner that he had been studying the philosophy of sex for 15 years and that so far he had written only seven pages. Mr. Rudner replied, “Fifteen years is not long enough, and seven pages are too many.”¹⁰¹
- Comedian Lenny Bruce kept on learning, even after becoming famous. Once, he enrolled in a typing class that met late in the afternoons. Every day, he brought his elderly teacher an apple.¹⁰²

Chapter 3: From Fathers to Grandparents

Fathers

- Larry Gelbart, who developed *M*A*S*H* for television, got his first job as a humor writer because of his father, a barber to the stars, including comedian Danny Thomas, who then appeared on *Maxwell House Coffee Time*. His father kept praising young Larry to Mr. Thomas, who eventually gave in and asked him to have Larry write something. Mr. Thomas read what Larry wrote, liked it, and showed it to head writer Mac Benoff, who asked Larry, “Why don’t you come by my house, where I write the show, sit with me, and think up some jokes?” Larry did, and some of his lines appeared in the show. When the show shut down for the summer break, Mr. Benoff gave Larry a check for \$40 and told him, “Buy yourself a sport jacket.” Mr. Gelbart says, “That many years ago I could have bought myself a car.”¹⁰³
- NBA star Grant Hill has a famous father: former star NFL running back Calvin Hill. When Grant was young, having a famous father actually made him uneasy at times because he wanted to be like the other kids in his class. One day when his father spoke at his school, Grant actually faked a stomachache so he could visit the nurse and not have to see his father. And whenever his parents picked him up after school, Grant wanted them to drive an old Volkswagen instead of one of their luxury cars. Grant says, “I’ve always just wanted to blend in and be like everybody else. I didn’t want anybody, especially my friends, thinking I was better than them. I just wanted to be a down-to-earth guy and have my own identity.”¹⁰⁴
- The father of young people’s author Bruce Coville was not himself a bookish man, but one thing that he did for his son was to give him a love of books. How did he do that? He read out loud to him each evening after the evening meal a chapter from the book *Tom Swift in the City of Gold*. As an adult, Bruce said, “I was enthralled, listened raptly, waited anxiously for the next night and the next, resented an intrusion, and reread the book several times later on my own.” This is the only book that his father ever read to him, but it is the book that had the greatest effect on his life because, Bruce says, “I was hooked on books.”¹⁰⁵
- When Ohio University student Lindsey DeStefano was growing up, she and Erin, her younger sister, were afraid of monsters. Fortunately, they had a loving father who protected them. He invented “Monster Spray,” a concoction that he sprayed in all corners, under the bed, and in the closet to keep away monsters of every kind. Later, of course, they learned that the Monster Spray consisted of ordinary tap water, but when they were young, they believed in it. One night after their father had finished spraying, Lindsey called him back because she thought that he had missed a spot.¹⁰⁶
- At one time, teenagers had much more freedom than they do now. One summer in Yamhill, Oregon, when he was 15 years old, Chester Bunn, the father of young people’s author Beverly Cleary, was sent to town to buy beefsteak. Instead of buying beefsteak, he kept right on going and worked on ranches for all summer in eastern Oregon. When Chester returned home, his father didn’t ask where he had been all summer. Instead, he asked, “Did you bring the beefsteak?”¹⁰⁷
- The parents of major-league baseball star Bobby Bonilla divorced when he and his siblings were young, but although the children lived with their mother, their father stayed involved in their lives. Each evening, he would stop his car in front of the apartment building where they

lived. He would honk his horn and wait until all four of his children showed themselves in a window so that he knew that they were safe at home.¹⁰⁸

- In the Neil Simon play *Come Blow Your Horn*, actor Lou Jacobi talks to an empty chair — a piece of acting business that he copied from his own father. Mr. Jacobi's father saw the play, and his actor son was worried about what he would think of the business with the chair, and so he asked, "Pop, what did you think of my performance?" His father replied, "You know, son, I've known men just like that."¹⁰⁹

- Perhaps the most joyful woman John J. Boucher of Hicksville, New York, ever knew was a Native American woman who had grown up in a large and impoverished family. Still, the family was always happy. Whenever the family was down to its last \$5, her father used to spend the money on ice cream and invite the neighbors over for a party.¹¹⁰

- While in China, ballerina Margot Fonteyn's father was greatly bothered by mosquitoes, as his mosquito netting was not completely effective. According to Margot's father, the mosquitoes were very intelligent. The parent mosquitoes would push their tiny young through the netting so they could grow up inside the netting and torment him.¹¹¹

- The father of professional baseball player Ernie Banks worked hard to give his son a chance to make it big. When Mr. Banks signed his first contract to play professional ball with the Chicago Cubs, he sent this telegram to his father: "WE DID IT!"¹¹²

- Composer Michael Tilson Thomas' father greatly respected nature. He would go into the desert, which he especially appreciated because even when he turned his hearing aid all the way up, he couldn't hear anything.¹¹³

- Two little girls were discussing their Sunday School lesson. "Do you believe there's a Devil?" asked the first little girl. "No," replied the second little girl. "I believe the Devil is just like Santa Claus — he's your father."¹¹⁴

Flowers

- Dancer Ruth St. Denis cared little for flowers — a common gift to dancers — and would throw them away after a performance. Her husband, fellow dancer Ted Shawn, would often rescue the flowers and put them in water after reading the card that came with them. Sometimes, a visitor came backstage to visit her, and Mr. Shawn would whisper to her something like, "Mrs. Jones — red roses." Ms. St. Denis would then say, "Mrs. Jones. Those beautiful red roses. They went right to my heart. Oh, my dear, thank you. Thank you so much."¹¹⁵

- E.B. White loved living things, and living things loved him. After he died, two short phrases on his funeral service notice revealed his personality: "Everyone is welcome" and "Please, no flowers." Because he loved living things, his family knew that he would prefer that the flowers keep on living rather than be cut and killed for his funeral service.¹¹⁶

Food

- Health expert Charlotte Hilton Andersen used to be a waitress, and of course she had a few irritating customers. She says, "In my past life as a waitress, there were few customers more irritating than the woman who would order the prime rib with mashed potatoes and creme

brulee but then insist that all the fat be trimmed from her meat, her potatoes be made with the skins on and cooked with no butter in soy milk and the creme brulee be fat free with Splenda caramelized on top.” Usually, the restaurants would do nothing more than to try to serve the woman what she wanted. Unfortunately, sometimes the woman would keep sending the food back to the kitchen to be “fixed.” In those cases, revenge happened. The woman had ordered a high-calorie meal but insisted that it be a low-calorie meal — an impossibility. Therefore, the restaurant staff would make it an extra-high-calorie meal. They would give the woman Coke instead of Diet Coke. They would put oil and butter on the woman’s vegetables. For a very rude woman, the chefs would choose the fattiest cut of meat available and would give the woman extra Bernaise sauce. Ms. Andersen does comfort non-rude customers: “All of which is not to say that you should fear your waitress every time you go out to eat. We saved this awful behavior for the select few who made royal pains out of themselves.”¹¹⁷

- Marian Christy once interviewed Julia Child about food and cooking. Ms. Child’s position was that good food and good cooking are necessities in a home. Ms. Christy’s position was that a busy woman may not have time to cook good food. Ms. Child ended up winning the argument. A few days later, she telephoned Ms. Christy to come over for lunch. When Ms. Christy arrived, Ms. Child added a little mayonnaise to some crabmeat, put it on a leaf of lettuce, then added a sprig of parsley. She then poured out glasses of chilled white wine and put on the table some bread she had heated in the oven. The time it took to do this was only a few minutes — and the food was good.¹¹⁸

- In between the two world wars, European actor Walter Slezak (the son of opera singer Leo Slezak) walked into a New York restaurant, was surprised to learn that oysters were very inexpensive, and ordered three dozen. When the waitress brought him his order, he was further surprised by their large size. (In Europe at this time, oysters were very small and very expensive.) Mr. Slezak managed to eat only 34 of the 36 oysters.¹¹⁹

- Before meeting Ronald Reagan, his future wife, Nancy, knew a good deal when she saw it. On dates at the Stork Club, she used to put any leftover dinner rolls in her pocketbook and take them home. One day, she was embarrassed when a waiter gave her some butter, along with a note from the owner saying that the butter would make the leftover dinner rolls taste better.¹²⁰

- A waitress once asked American Quaker Rufus Jones what he wanted for breakfast. He replied, “Coffee, boiled egg, toast, and a kind word, please.” She quickly brought him the items of food he had ordered, and when he asked for the kind word, she replied, “I wouldn’t touch the egg if I were you.”¹²¹

- When Kerri Strug was growing up, Sundays at her home were family days. Members of the family took turns deciding what the family would do that day. Kerri’s choice was always the same — pigging out on Chuck E. Cheese pizza.¹²²

- A little boy wondered why at every suppertime, the family had to pray for its daily bread, instead of simply praying once a week. His older brother knew the answer: “We have to pray every day so the bread will be fresh.”¹²³

- Gymnast Bart Conner had little trouble losing weight while competing in some rural parts of China — the parts that served fried baby sparrows with every dinner.¹²⁴

Friends

- When the Dodgers played their first game in Los Angeles, over 80,000 fans attended. Dodger pitcher Carl Erskine really didn't know many people in Los Angeles, so he gave a complimentary ticket to one friend whom he did have in LA: Matt Brinduse, who drove a truck delivering laundry. The Dodgers won the game with Mr. Erskine pitching, and afterward at the news conference, Dodger manager Walt Alston fielded questions from sports writers, many of whom he did not know. From the back came this question: "Mr. Alston, Erskine pitched a great game today, didn't he?" Mr. Alston answered, "Yes, Carl did a good job for us." A little later, the same voice asked from the back, "Mr. Alston, Erskine is one of the best pitchers you've had, right?" Mr. Alston answered, "Well, Carl's been a productive pitcher all along." A little later, and again came the voice from the back, "Mr. Alston, wouldn't you say that Carl's your ace?" Hearing this, Mr. Alston turned to the Dodger traveling secretary, Lee Scott, and asked, "Who the hell is that?" Of course, the voice belonged to Matt Brinduse, driver of a laundry truck and close, personal friend of Carl Erskine.¹²⁵

- Tamora "Tammy" Pierce's first novel, *The Song of the Lioness*, was written for adults, but agent Claire Smith read half of the manuscript and suggested that she rewrite it as a quartet (series of four books) for young adults. Tamora thought that Claire was just being polite and she was surprised later when Claire asked her how the rewrites were coming along. On hearing that Tamora thought that Claire was being nice in giving her a suggestion, Claire looked at her and said, "Tammy, I am never nice." Tammy did rewrite it for teenagers, and when the first volume, *Alanna: The First Adventure*, was published in September 1983, Tamora looked for it in bookstores. Finding it in a B. Dalton bookstore, she started crying and saying over and over, "It's real. I can't believe it's real." Another day, Tamora and some of her friends were in a bookstore when a sales clerk came over and started praising Tamora's book. Tamora's friends pointed at her and sang out, "She's the author!"¹²⁶

- As young men, friends Rob Reiner and Albert Brooks were out riding in the country when they got lost, so Albert stopped the car and asked a cow for directions. The cow moved its head, probably because of a fly, and Albert started driving in that direction, saying, "He knows. He lives around here." The cow's directions were accurate, and Albert and Rob made it back home again.¹²⁷

- William Bacon Evans of Westtown School was a Quaker and a naturalist. Once, he asked a new resident at the Quaker study center if he had met the oaks yet. The Quaker replied that he had not met them yet, so Mr. Evans took him to a display that showed leaves from various kinds of oak trees growing in the neighborhood.¹²⁸

- Gossiping can sometimes lead to embarrassing situations for deaf people. For example, a deaf person was using sign language in a restaurant to gossip about a deaf friend. Midway through the conversation, he looked up to see his friend was also in the restaurant — and had been watching his every word.¹²⁹

- A friendship between actor Ralph Richardson and conductor Georg Solti sprang up in an elevator. The other passengers politely avoided looking at the two famous men, and Sir Ralph complained to Sir Georg, "The trouble with being famous is that nobody speaks to you in the lift."¹³⁰

- Shandy Lim Diew Noi of Singapore has a kind neighbor. Shandy hangs her laundry to dry on a line outside her window. Whenever it starts to rain, her neighbor uses a bamboo pole to tap

on Shady's windowsill to let her know that she should bring in her laundry before it gets wet.¹³¹

- Fred Astaire used to wear grey flannel quite often. When he gave Audrey Hepburn a photograph of himself she had asked for, she had a special frame made for it — it was covered in grey flannel.¹³²

- Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker once shared a tiny office in the Metropolitan Opera House studios. According to Mr. Benchley, “One cubic foot less of space, and it would have constituted adultery.”¹³³

Games

- Roald Dahl played games with his children. One day, Tessa, his young daughter, woke up to find her name burned in the lawn. Roald claimed that fairies had done it. Actually, of course, he had. When he took his children out to eat, he encouraged them to make up wild stories about the strangers they saw in the restaurant. After a wild story-telling session, he would ask the strangers to introduce themselves to his children.¹³⁴

- Charades used to be a popular parlor game. Marc Connelly, a writer who loved to act, once made several extravagant gestures to illustrate a title, which Russel Crouse guessed as Mr. Connelly described the second syllable. Mr. Connelly was disappointed and told Mr. Crouse, “You *spoiled* it.”¹³⁵

Gays and Lesbians

- All too often, we don't see what others can see — for example, our own beauty. One Sunday afternoon, the girlfriend of Malinda Lo, managing editor of <afterellen.com>, told her that she looked beautiful. Ms. Lo laughed off the compliment, saying, “Whatever — you're biased.” But her girlfriend said, “No, you look beautiful when you're dressed up or when you're wearing a T-shirt or whether you're wearing makeup or not.” Then she added, “Sometimes we can't see what others can see more easily.” Ms. Lo writes, “I still, often, think of myself as less than beautiful, and that's because *beautiful*, in contemporary American culture, is indeed about being tall, thin, blond, and blue-eyed. That definition excludes the vast majority of the population. How could I possibly believe that?”¹³⁶

- Drag queens can be obsessive about getting the women's clothing they want. After Lee Brewster, a major supplier of women's clothing to drag queens and other cross-dressers, died, a drag queen who did not know he had died called his store (where some of Mr. Brewster's friends had gathered to talk about him and to express their grief) to ask some questions about women's clothing. Informed that Lee Brewster had died, the drag queen asked, “Does this mean I can't order my corset?”¹³⁷

- Author Boze Hadleigh has a friend who came up with this idea for a bumper sticker: “Family Valued: We Love Our Gay Son, Too.”¹³⁸

Gifts

- Lina Beacon, who was born in 1898 and who was a life-long resident of Long Island in New York, remembered when trash began to be picked up. Previously, people had just buried it in

their yards. She used to wrap the trash in a nice, neat package, and sometimes even tied pretty party ribbons (that she had saved from gifts that she had received) around it.¹³⁹

- Early in her gymnastics career, Svetlana Boginskaya was given two cars. However, she was too busy to learn how to drive, so she gave both cars away. One she gave to her brother; the other she gave to her parents.¹⁴⁰

Good Deeds

- According to Deuteronomy 24:19, if you reap your field and you forget a sheaf, you are not permitted to go back to your field and get it; instead, you have to leave it for the poor. A Hassid was conscientious in his life, and for many years he did not forget a sheaf in his field, but one harvest he forgot a sheaf and he rejoiced because he had the opportunity to obey a command of God. He told his son to prepare a great feast: to sacrifice one bull for a burnt-offering and another bull for a peace-offering. His son wondered why his father was so happy about forgetting a sheaf in his field, and the father told him, “All the other duties of the Torah come to us by paying attention, but this one comes to us by inattention. All the earnestness and good intentions in the world will not bring us the merit of this deed, only a moment of forgetfulness.”¹⁴¹

- Brian Fitterman of Please Promotions did some work for *MAD* magazine, such as making *MAD* jackets for the staff members. He decided that he wanted a subscription for *MAD*, but he didn't want *MAD* publisher William M. Gaines to know because he might feel obligated to give him a complimentary subscription. Therefore, he simply did what everyone else did and sent in a subscription request and check through the mail. However, he didn't know that Mr. Gaines opened all the subscription mail himself, and so he was surprised when Mr. Gaines returned his check and gave him a complimentary three-year subscription. He asked *MAD* writer Dick DeBartolo, “Dick, how could Gaines, the *publisher* of *MAD*, know I had subscribed? Who do you think gave him my letter?”¹⁴²

- As a youth, Ernest Rutherford studied under the schoolmaster Jacob Reynolds in his native New Zealand. After he won the 1908 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, Mr. Rutherford wrote his old schoolmaster a thank-you letter “for the way you initiated me into the mysteries of Latin, Algebra, and Euclid.” He also enclosed some money.¹⁴³

Grandparents

- Actor Dule Hill played the personal aide to the President on the TV series *The West Wing*. After three years of playing the role, he was honored when a full-page photograph of him appeared in a book about the series. He bought a copy of the book and gave it to his grandmother. Of course, she was very happy to receive the book. Looking at the full-page photograph of her grandson, she said, “Look what I lived to see.” Mr. Hill says, “I remember that moment — knowing her journey. She'd worked as a seamstress, walked to the bus in the middle of winter.... It taught me that when you pursue your dreams and sometimes you keep working hard, working hard and you may not get the reward yourself — but for the grace of God, it all works out in the long run. That taught me a lot. You don't know what you do today how it affects tomorrow.”¹⁴⁴

- While conductor Leopold Stokowski was in his sixties, he married Gloria Vanderbilt, who was in her twenties. Ms. Vanderbilt was at the time a drama student. One morning, a classmate

dropped by to pick her up, but she had already gone. It was early in the morning, so when Maestro Stokowski explained the situation to the student from a balcony, he was wearing a bathrobe and his famous long white hair was rumpled. Later, Ms. Vanderbilt started to apologize to her classmate, but the classroom told her not to apologize, because “your grandmother explained everything.”¹⁴⁵

- Joey Adams’ grandfather was an unhappy, cantankerous man for many years, but he changed and became a gentle, happy soul. Noticing the change, his neighbors asked what had happened. Joey’s grandfather replied, “I’ve been striving all my life for a contented mind. It’s done no good — so I’ve just decided to be contented without it.”¹⁴⁶

Chapter 4: From Husbands and Wives to Mothers

Husbands and Wives

- In 1949, journalist James Morris married Elizabeth Tuckniss. Later, Mr. Morris got a sex change and became Jan Morris. Because of the sex change, the married couple was forced to divorce, but they continued to live together. In 2008, in a civil service ceremony, Jan Morris, now a writer, re-married Elizabeth Tuckniss. Ms. Morris pointed out, “I have lived with the same person for 58 years. We were married when I was young ... and then this sex-change, so-called, happened, so we naturally had to divorce ... but we always lived together, anyway. So, I wanted to round this thing off nicely. So last week, as a matter of fact, Elizabeth and I went and had a civil union.” Ms. Tuckniss says, “After Jan had a sex change, we had to divorce. So there we were. It did not make any difference to me. We still had our family. We just carried on.” Why do some marriages endure that seem unlikely to endure? British journalist Stuart Jeffries says, “You know what — it’s none of our business. ... Enough that some mysteries remain just that.”¹⁴⁷

- Opera singer Mary Garden gave much of the credit for her success to American women because they dragged their husbands to the opera houses to hear her sing. One of Mary’s sisters witnessed a typical example of this in Paris when Mary was singing in *Thais*. An American man complained to his American wife, “I didn’t want to come here, and you know it. I wanted to go to the Folies Bergère.” His wife replied, “Well, you’re here now, darling, and you’re going to hear Mary Garden in *Thais* with me.” Once the opera started, and Ms. Garden was singing, the man said, “Gee, this is swell. Give me your glasses” — and he kept his wife’s opera glasses throughout the opera.¹⁴⁸

- Some people choose to live in very small houses, both because the houses are affordable and because they are good for the environment. In Madison, Wisconsin, Robert and Deborah Luther live in a very small house — 396 square feet downstairs, and 156 (not-quite-finished) feet upstairs — on the shore of Lake Monona. Robert bought the house, then married Deborah. To get room for her to live in the very small house, he says, “I threw out half of my stuff so she could move in. She threw out the other half of my stuff.” Another advantage of living in a very small house is that cleaning the Luthers’ house takes only 25 minutes.¹⁴⁹

- Country comedian Jerry Clower became a professional entertainer by accident, but he had plenty of practice because he was always telling stories and making people laugh while relaxing at home and while working as a fertilizer salesman. Someone once asked his wife, Homerline, how long her husband had been an entertainer. She replied, “I’ve known Jerry Clower since I was 13 years old, and I’ve never seen a day when he wasn’t entertaining someone.”¹⁵⁰

- Getting married occurs naturally and easily for some people. Others have to work at it. Barbara Feldon, who played the role of Agent 99 on TV’s *Get Smart*, knows someone who treated the process of finding someone to get married to like a problem that needed to be solved. She telephoned lots and lots of friends and acquaintances and told them to fix her up with a male — she was willing to date any man at least once, no matter what the man looked like. After a couple of years of doing this, she got married.¹⁵¹

- E.B. White and Katherine Sergeant Angell got married on November 13, 1929. Their co-workers learned about the marriage when the happy couple returned to the office the next day. To express his feelings, Mr. White sent his wife an inter-office memo that consisted of a *New Yorker* cartoon depicting a man thinking while sitting on a curb. For the cartoon's caption, Mr. White had written, "E.B. White slowly accustomed himself to the idea that he had made the most beautiful decision of his life."¹⁵²
- John Steinbeck discovered while watching television news on October 25, 1962, that he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. His wife, Elaine, who was frying bacon, was so excited that she put the hot pan with sizzling bacon in the refrigerator. Later, when a reporter asked Mr. Steinbeck, author of *The Grapes of Wrath*, if he had deserved to win, Mr. Steinbeck replied, "Frankly, no."¹⁵³
- When Queen Caroline was dying, her husband, King George II, appeared by her bedside. She told him to remarry after she had died, but he replied, "Never. I shall always take mistresses." Queen Caroline had been aware of his extracurricular activities during their marriage, so she told him, "That shouldn't hamper your marrying."¹⁵⁴
- Stand-up comedians quickly learn that the best way to meet a particular woman they see in the audience is to stand near the women's restroom. Sooner or later, the woman they want to meet will use the facilities. In fact, that is how Jay Leno met his wife, Mavis.¹⁵⁵
- Not everyone cusses on a regular basis, and so when they attempt to cuss, they can make mistakes because they are out of practice. For example, *Tucson Weekly* columnist Tom Danehy says that his saintly wife once tried to cuss and said, "I don't give a hell!" He asks, "What does that even mean?"¹⁵⁶
- For a long time, sculptor David Smith created his works at home, wielding his blowtorch in his small Brooklyn apartment. His wife, Dorothy, was forced to follow him around and douse fires with a sprinkling can until she found him another place to work: the Terminal Iron Works.¹⁵⁷
- When Tom Gorman was umpiring in the International League, a fan started to ride him pretty heavy. Unfortunately for the fan, Mr. Gorman's wife was in the grandstand. She clobbered the fan with her pocketbook — and the crowd gave her an ovation.¹⁵⁸
- Once, a couple of people streaked stark naked across the baseball diamond of a game Yogi Berra was playing. Later, his wife asked him if the streakers had been male or female. Yogi replied, "I don't know — they had bags over their faces."¹⁵⁹
- Back when playwright Charles MacArthur was successfully courting actress Helen Hayes, she told him that she was playing Cleopatra in George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Mr. MacArthur replied, "I wish I could play the asp."¹⁶⁰
- Actor Alan Ladd was short — Sheldon Leonard estimates perhaps five-feet-four. His being short didn't bother him, but it did bother his wife, who insisted that he either play opposite short actors or wear six-inch elevator shoes.¹⁶¹
- Comic actress Carole Lombard was well known for her swearing in Hollywood, but when she married Clark Gable, he requested that she stop. According to Mr. Gable, "I will do the swearing in this family."¹⁶²

- In Sandy Spring, Maryland, lived a Quaker woman who had never married. When she was asked why she had remained single all her life, she replied, “It takes a mighty good man to be better than none.”¹⁶³
- Michael Douglas once interviewed the Japanese wife of singer and animal-lover Wayne Newton, asking, “Have you always liked animals?” She replied, “No, not until I met Wayne.”¹⁶⁴
- Stage actress Ina Claire was married to silent movie star John Gilbert. When a reporter asked her what it felt like to be married to a celebrity, she replied, “You’d better ask my husband.”¹⁶⁵
- Composer Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was unhappily married. His wife did not respect his work, and she sometimes cut his music compositions into strips to use to curl her hair.¹⁶⁶
- Danny Kaye’s wife was Sylvia Fine. Mr. Kaye used to joke, “I have a Fine head on my shoulders.”¹⁶⁷

Language

- Margot Fonteyn once telephoned Hungarian ballet dancer Viktor Rona to invite him to dance with her at a benefit. However, when he told the other dancers that the great Fonteyn had called him, they replied, “And I suppose the President of the United States invited you to Washington, too! Come off it.” And when he asked the theatre administrator for a leave of absence so he could dance with Ms. Fonteyn, the administrator also refused to believe him. Finally, Ms. Fonteyn herself called the theatre administrator, and so he was forced to believe the story. When Ms. Fonteyn and Mr. Rona finally met for the first time, he told her before giving her a huge hug, “You are my heart’s desire. Only you for me!” The press and Ms. Fonteyn loved it. Mr. Rona had learned these two sentences from a movie — they were the only English sentences he knew.¹⁶⁸
- When Art Linkletter was in France, he needed to go to a bank to buy a coupon for gasoline because of rationing. No one at the bank spoke English, so he was forced to rely on his knowledge of French, which he thought was passable. However, after he bought his gasoline coupon and drove to a gasoline station, the attendant looked at the coupon, shrugged, then squirted only a pint of gasoline into his car — which was the amount of gasoline the coupon was good for.¹⁶⁹
- Sir Ralph Richardson was capable of losing his temper. At a Christmas lunch, he once threatened to “flatten” Lindsay Anderson unless he stopped using four-letter words in front of his son — Sir Ralph’s son, Charles, was nineteen years old at the time.¹⁷⁰

Letters

- William K. Sessions, like his father, William H. Sessions, is a Quaker humorist. William H. did not cross his T’s, and after William K. read in the *Times* of London that Sir Walter Scott also did not cross his T’s, he sent the *Times* this letter: “Waller Scoll d1d nol cross h1s lls. L1ke S1r Waller Scoll, my Falher d1d nol cross h1s lls, and furlhermore d1d nol dol h1s 11s. lhis was a consc1ous dec1s1on by my Falher: as a young man he dec1ded lhal, 1l would cumulal1vely save h1m a lol of l1me (dur1ng an acl1ve long l1fe of e1ghly e1ghl years). I wonder how many readers of your excellenl l1mes newspaper have s1milar wr1l1ng eccenlr1c1l1es?” Unfortunately, the *Times* did not print the letter.¹⁷¹

- All beginning authors have to deal with rejection slips. Young people's author Bruce Coville calls them "ugly baby letters." He says, "It's like getting a letter that says, 'Dear Mr. Coville, We have carefully examined photographs of your child, and boy, do you have an ugly baby!'" Mr. Coville also says that beginning authors have to keep on writing and sending out manuscripts — if they don't, they will never be published.¹⁷²

- John Custis and Fidelia Custis were from Arlington and Williamsburg. When John first fell in love with Fidelia, he wanted to write her a perfect love letter. However, he did not feel up to the task, so he paid a teacher at William and Mary to write a love letter for him. How much is such a love letter worth? Mr. Custis paid the teacher 500 pounds of tobacco.¹⁷³

Mishaps

- Joy-riding is not a new activity. Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, was a mischievous girl, in contrast to Anna, her rule-abiding older sister. Louisa, Anna, and a friend named Clara walked to school one winter day. They saw a sleigh and horse, and Louisa and Clara borrowed the sleigh and horse, riding it up and down the street before returning it to its rightful place and continuing their walk to school with Anna.¹⁷⁴

- Wilson Mizner once installed a loud cuckoo clock in his bedroom. Coming home sober one night (a rare occurrence), he was in a bad mood, and he was annoyed when the clock awoke him at 3 a.m. So he got a double-barrelled shotgun, sat down, and waited for 4 a.m. When the cuckoo came out of the clock to announce the hour, he shot it with both barrels.¹⁷⁵

- When Jack Lemmon was a kid, the boy next door claimed to be a woodsman. On a dare, Jack stuck his foot out and allowed the "woodsman" to swing at it with an axe. The woodsman was supposed to narrowly miss Jack's foot but he instead cut off the toe of Jack's shoe. (Fortunately, he did not cut off Jack's toes.)¹⁷⁶

- Kermit Schafer, the collector of Bloopers in several record albums and books, once was interviewed on BBC-TV 1 in England. His TV interviewer said on air, "Before we continue our chat with American TV producer Kermit Schafer, here is our weather girl, Linda Lee, to tell about her warm front."¹⁷⁷

- Art Linkletter learned Japanese to prepare himself for a trip to Japan. When he boarded his plane, he saw an Oriental flight attendant, so he told her "Good morning" in his very best Japanese. The flight attendant smiled and bowed, then told Mr. Linkletter, "Your accent is beautiful, but I'm Chinese."¹⁷⁸

- Deaf people are sometimes at a disadvantage in doctors' offices. For example, a deaf man was giving a urine sample when a nurse knocked on the door. Of course, the deaf man didn't hear the knock, so he didn't warn the nurse he was in there, and the nurse caught him in an embarrassing position.¹⁷⁹

- After the wedding of ballerina Suzanne Farrell and dancer Paul Mejia, she was pleased that the airport personnel stamped their luggage with her initials, "SF," before she and her husband boarded their flight for Hawaii. Later, they discovered that their luggage had been flown to San Francisco.¹⁸⁰

- Olympic gymnast Bart Conner and his two brothers, Bruce and Michael, were very active as kids — always hanging from things, jumping off things, and performing flips off a swing set.

One summer, the three Conner boys set a family record — as a result of their play, they required 37 stitches.¹⁸¹

- Some people look for love in the wrong places. Philosopher Richard Watson once knew a man who was looking for his perfect soulmate: a woman who was willing to sail around the world with him. Mr. Watson asked, “And you’re looking in St. Louis, Missouri?”¹⁸²
- Early in his career, actor Peter Sellers met a woman at a dance whom he immediately liked. After the dance, he wanted to walk her home, so he suggested that they walk on a bridle path. She replied, “It’s far too early to think of getting married.”¹⁸³
- Judi Dench often wore her hair short when she was a young actress. An American woman once looked at Ms. Dench, then asked actor John Neville, “Does your son come with you everywhere you go?”¹⁸⁴

Money

- While growing up poor in New York City, the Marx Brothers had to struggle for whatever they could get out of life. Their family scraped together enough money to pay for piano lessons for Chico, but because they didn’t have enough money to pay for piano lessons for Harpo, Chico was supposed to teach him — which Chico never did. Entirely on his own, Harpo learned to play two pieces on the piano: “Waltz Me Around Again, Willie” and “Love Me and the World is Mine.” Because Harpo looked so much like Chico, he would sometimes substitute for him on piano-playing jobs. Harpo would play his two pieces over and over again, playing them in different keys and different tempos, until his trick was discovered and he was thrown out.¹⁸⁵
- When she was 22, Mellody Hobson, the President of Ariel Investments, learned from a very successful friend a lesson that has stayed with her: “No one ever got rich through earned income.” The friend explained, “Look at all the great wealthy families. From Carnegie to Rockefeller, it was never how much they made at work that made them wealthy — it was their investments.” She learned the lesson well. Today she says that the lesson “made me shift from thinking about a paycheck to thinking about building equity and long-term wealth. And it has helped me a lot.”¹⁸⁶
- In Europe, people often leave their shoes outside their rooms so servants can polish them during the night. An Englishman once stayed at Rufus Jones’ house, and the Englishman followed this custom. However, Mr. Jones was a Quaker who lived simply, without servants, and so he polished his guest’s shoes. At the end of his visit, the Englishman gave Mr. Jones a tip for the servant who had polished his shoes. Mr. Jones accepted the tip and said, “The man who polished thy shoes can put it to good use.”¹⁸⁷
- Dr. F.P. Keppel, the president of the Carnegie Corporation, which financially supported many libraries, made several visits to the Denver Public Library and the University of Denver Library. He was impressed by the number of visitors to the libraries, and once joked to librarian Malcolm Glenn Wyer, “Now tell me, Malcolm, how much has it cost you to hire all these people to keep coming in and out of the library during the days I was here?”¹⁸⁸
- Edwin Porter was a Texas Methodist preacher in the first half of the 20th century. Each week, he took 10 percent of his weekly salary and doled it out in dimes and quarters for his eight children to put in the collection plate. According to Rev. Porter, pennies and nickels were to be

used for soda pop and chewing gum; they weren't important enough to be used for the Lord's tithes.¹⁸⁹

- Some people were raised to believe that speaking about money is vulgar. A friend of Peg Bracken will talk about prices only in relative terms — she states the price in terms of the cost in bottles of bourbon. For example, she will say about a recent purchase, “A really great dress, and only a six-bottle job.”¹⁹⁰

- As a young teenager and an elite gymnast, Kerri Strug often trained away from home. However, she did manage to keep in close contact with her family. Frequently, the monthly bills for her long-distance telephone calls home were over \$300.¹⁹¹

Mothers

- The mother of comic actor Brad Taylor Negrón, who has appeared on TV's *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and in many movies, is a true original. A native New Yorker, she and her family moved to Los Angeles. In New York, Mr. Negrón's grandmother's house was often filled with exiles, including some lesbians who had fled Castro's Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis. Mr. Negrón says, “Those lesbians were a big part of my childhood, arriving midday wearing military gear and sporting masculine pompadour haircuts. They'd show up with hot bread in thin bags and produce sticks of sweet guava paste while my grandmother poured strong coffee.” They also danced with his mother, who was strictly straight, and who tells him, “Why don't you remember the skiing and the leather jacket we got you? It's always the lesbians with you!” During World War II, she had a job in which she made medals for United States soldiers, but when she put the medals in their blue velvet boxes, she added a slip of paper containing her name and address. Once, Mr. Negrón asked her if she had met any of the soldiers who had received one of those medals. She replied — sheepishly — “Yes.” No doubt there is more to the story, but she is not telling it. For a while, the Negrón family operated a batting cage with machines that spit out baseballs as fast as those hurled by Don Drysdale. As a youth, Mr. Negrón had the job of loading those pitching machines with baseballs — a job in which mishaps frequently occurred with the result that the upper part of young Brad's body was black and blue with bruises. The bruises came to the attention of school authorities who wondered if, perhaps, Brad had anything he wanted to tell them about — such as abuse at home. He told his mother what school authorities were wondering, and she exploded, “Who the hell is going to abuse you? You tell that Vice Principal that if he thinks there is funny business going on in this house, then he should come down here and try loading up that Don Drysdale machine.” When her children were very little, she would play hide and seek with them, crawl under laundry to hide, and fall asleep while waiting to be found. Mr. Negrón says, “I only wish that all the children of the world had been raised in such an atmosphere of 20th-century optimism and keen encouragement. My mother once looked at my drawing pad filled with watercolors, closed the book, and with great intensity, pointed her finger and said, ‘I am going to tell you something right now.... You are better than Matisse.’ And she meant it.”¹⁹²

- While growing up in Gulfport, Mississippi, Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre was tough. Working as a five-year-old ballboy, he was accidentally hit with a bat by a player who was taking a warmup swing. His mother says, “His forehead was one big egg.” In the emergency room, the doctor said, “Must've knocked him out.” Brett's mom replied, “Nope.” The doctor then said, “Well, surely it knocked him down.” Again, Brett's mom said, “Nope.” By the way, Brett's mom is plenty tough herself. When Mr. Favre became a starting Green Bay

quarterback, sports reporters asked him where he had gotten his strong arm. Mr. Faure replied that at first he had thought he had gotten it from his father, but now he thought that he had gotten it from his mother. He explained, “She got mad at me last summer and threw a pastrami sandwich and hit me in the head — hard. She really had something on that sandwich.”¹⁹³

- The mother of Kate Mostel, the wife of comedian Zero Mostel, made a part-time career of cheating insurance companies. This career started when she was driving the wrong way down a one-way street, and another car hit her. Remarkably, the judge in the case awarded *her* damages. Later, she got her arm caught in a train door and collected \$500. After these experiences, she fell down anytime there was a chance of collecting damages from an insurance company. Once, Kate saw her mother standing in a doorway at home, banging her arms in order to make sure the insurance adjuster would see bruises. One of the pieces of advice she gave her daughter was, “Never get hit by a mail truck. You can’t sue the government.”¹⁹⁴

- Not all anecdotes are funny; some simply reveal an important insight such as this one: Even very good mothers have bad moments. Author Molly Magid Hoagland once read some old journal entries that her late mother had made. In one entry, her mother severely criticized herself because she had yelled at Molly, who was then five years old, so hard that Molly was terrified and used her hands to cover her ears. Her mother wrote, “I will never do that again.” Fortunately, Molly, who is herself a mother now, says, “I don’t remember that incident at all, nor any other episodes of scary yelling, and the fact that I don’t is a great comfort to me in my worst moments as a mother.”¹⁹⁵

- J.K. Rowling, creator and author of the Harry Potter books, was not as poor as the media have made her out to be when she was writing the first Harry Potter book, but she was a single mother who did lack money. One day, she visited another mother whose boy was roughly the same age as J.K.’s daughter. That little boy had a room full of toys, and J.K. remembers, “When I packed Jessica’s toys away, they fitted into a shoe box, literally. I came home and cried my eyes out.” Those feelings of depression are the kind that the Dementors give in the Harry Potter books.¹⁹⁶

- Ranai Carlton was teaching a Sunday School class about forgiveness, and she asked a child in the class, “Lisa, when is a time when you might need God’s forgiveness?” However, Ms. Carlton’s son told Lisa, “You don’t have to tell her.” Then he turned to his mother and said, “We don’t have to tell you our problems. This isn’t *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.”¹⁹⁷

- Comedian Totie Fields was married with two kids. When her children grew up and left the home, she suffered from Empty Nest Syndrome — briefly. She says, “The first week you’re miserable and miss them, but by the second week you’re walking around the house naked again, and it’s fun.”¹⁹⁸

- When singer/songwriter Neil Sedaka made his first recording, his mother used to listen to the radio and whenever her son’s record started playing, she would stick her head out of a window and shout, “My son is singing on the radio!”¹⁹⁹

- Lady Antonia Fraser, author of *The Weaker Vessel*, taught her children to keep diaries. Her daughter, on her honeymoon, startled her husband when she said, “I have to write in my diary.”²⁰⁰

Chapter 5: From Movies to Work

Movies

- Long ago, as a publicity stunt for the opening of a movie which had the word “Smith” in its title, the manager of a movie theater on Broadway decided to let people named Smith into the first showing free. However, he was very unhappy when many black people named Smith showed up to claim their free seat — the theater discouraged blacks from watching movies there. However, since he had advertised that a free seat would be given to anyone named Smith, the theater manager decided that he had no choice but to let the blacks in. After the movie was over, the theater manager changed his opinion about black patrons. He said, “There wasn’t a bit of trouble with that Smith crowd. The blacks and the whites were all mixed together and everybody had a good time. Not a single argument. From now on, any blacks want to come in this theater, they’re welcome.”²⁰¹

- Movie director Steven Spielberg was talented at telling scary stories to his younger sisters while they were growing up. One story was called “I’m the Moon,” and it was about the Moon visiting the Earth. Sister Anne says, “He gave me a phobia for a couple of years. I had nightmares about the Moon.” And at night, Steven would scratch on Anne’s window, which was by her bed. At first, she would say, “Steve, I know it’s you. I’m not opening the curtains.” Of course, eventually she would be so curious that she would open the curtains. Greeting her would be something like a plastic model of a skull with a flashlight under it to cast it in an eerie light.²⁰²

- Robert Benchley made several comic movie shorts in Hollywood. In one of them, he ended up lying on telephone wires strung up in the studio. While lying there waiting to shoot the scene, he called to his wife, “Remember how good in Latin I was in school?” After she replied, “I do,” he said, “Well, look where it got me.”²⁰³

Names

- When she was a child, Joanna Kathleen Rowling, aka Jo, became friends with two kids in her neighborhood: a brother and sister named Ian and Vicki Potter. Ian liked hijinks and dares. He once dared Vicki and Jo to run through some wet cement — they did. Of course, Ian and Vicki’s last name became the last name of J.K. Rowling’s most famous literary creation: Harry Potter. As an adult, Ian read the Harry Potter books out loud to his children. He remembers how he, Jo, and Vicki would play dress-up when they were kids: “And nine out of ten times, it would be Joanne who had the idea, and she’d always say, ‘Can’t we be witches and wizards?’” J.K. Rowling’s own last name has led to her having lots of nicknames: Jo Rolling Pins and Miss Rolling Stone. When she taught English as a second language in Portugal, her students sometimes sang the theme song from the TV series *Rawhide* to her: “Rolling, rolling, rolling ... keep those wagons rolling!”²⁰⁴

- Neave “Puddles” Brayshaw was a beloved teacher at Bootham School, a school for Quakers. The pupils there told this story about Puddles: Mr. Brayshaw died and appeared before the Pearly Gates leading to Heaven. St. Peter looked for the name of “Neave Brayshaw” in the Book of Life, but he could not find it, so he asked Mr. Brayshaw if he had another name. Mr. Brayshaw replied, “The laddies call me ‘Puddles.’” St. Peter exclaimed, “Puddles! Come in at once. We’ve been expecting you.”²⁰⁵

- The three Marx Brothers had interesting names, which were given to them by a friend while a song titled “Knocko the Monk” was popular. Harpo got his name because he played the harp. Groucho got his name because of his disposition. Chico got his name because he liked women.²⁰⁶
- Mary Lou Retton had great energy as a youngster, so great that her mother packed her off to gymnastics classes in an attempt to burn off some of that energy. In fact, her mother gave her the nickname of “the Great Table Smasher and Lamp Toppler.”²⁰⁷
- Children tend not to have pretensions. When actor Patrick Macnee was growing up, he had a collie as a pet. His family called the collie “Buckingham Palace,” but little Patrick called it “Stinker.”²⁰⁸
- Opera singer Mary Garden’s parents always wanted a boy, but they became parents to four girls. Before the girls were born, each was given the tentative name “Robert,” after their father.²⁰⁹

Practical Jokes

- Sid Grauman, of Grauman’s Chinese Theater, wanted to play a joke on actor Douglas Fairbanks, so he rented a trained duck as a going-away present and had it delivered to Mr. Fairbanks just before he went on a train trip. When Mr. Fairbanks opened the package containing the duck, the duck began quacking loudly and flapping its wings — as it had been trained to do. However, Mr. Fairbanks had the last laugh. He recognized the duck as being worth thousands of dollars (because it was used in the movies), and he knew that Mr. Grauman had paid a lot of money to rent the duck. So Mr. Fairbanks telegraphed Mr. Grauman from the train: “GOD BLESS YOU! FOOD ON THIS TRAIN HORRIBLE. WE ATE THE DUCK.”²¹⁰
- Bill Cosby once played a practical joke on Sheldon Leonard, who had hired him to co-star with Robert Culp in *I Spy*. When Mr. Leonard guest-starred on *The Bill Cosby Show*, Mr. Cosby sent a stretch limousine to pick Mr. Leonard up and take him to his dressing room. Mr. Leonard arrived to see his name engraved on a brass plate on the door, but when he opened the door, he saw cobwebs everywhere, broken furniture, and rats running around the floor. (His real dressing room turned out to be quite luxurious.)²¹¹
- Lord Halifax was at one time the British Ambassador to the United States. While he was traveling to Bath in a compartment with two middle-aged ladies, the train entered a long, dark tunnel. With the compartment darkened, Lord Halifax kissed the back of his hand noisily several times, then after the train had left the tunnel, he asked, “To which of you two ladies am I indebted for the charming incident in the tunnel?”²¹²
- As a painter in New York City, Hugh Troy was hired to help paint the huge globe of the world that revolved in the lobby of the *Daily News* building. Among other things, he painted a group of islands called the “Troy Islands.” He’s not sure that there are any islands at that particular place in the world, but if there are, he’s sure that they are named the Troy Islands.²¹³
- As a prank, some high school juniors decided to remove all the erasers from the high school after classes had let out. (Because they were volunteers in the Audiovisual Department, they were entrusted with keys to the classrooms.) Not being malicious, the juniors put all the erasers into a box and mailed it anonymously to their principal.²¹⁴

- Robert Benchley was bothered by a bank security officer who always looked suspiciously at him, so one day, in full sight of the officer, he rolled up a sheet of newspaper, placed it against the marble wall of the bank, set it on fire, and ran away.²¹⁵

- As a very young student, dancer Suzanne Farrell played pranks on other girls, such as leaving anonymous messages on their school slates: “I love you, I love you” or “Phone 765-9832.”²¹⁶

Problem-Solving

- A man had an ugly wife, and in a fit of anger one day he took a vow that he would not sleep with her until he could find something about her that was beautiful. He quickly regretted his vow, and being Jewish, he sought a Rabbi to help him find a way out of his difficulty. Rabbi Ishmael ben Rabbi Yosi asked the man whether his wife’s head was beautifully shaped. It was not. Was her hair beautiful? No. Were her eyes beautiful? No. Were her ears beautiful? No. Lips? No. Neck? No. Belly? No. Legs? No. What about her name? Was it beautiful? No, the man answered, because her name is Muck. The Rabbi said, “Your vow is fulfilled. Her name suits her beautifully.”²¹⁷

- Malcolm Glenn Wyer was a librarian with the Denver Public Library. Occasionally, the *Denver Post* ran an article about the public library, and when it did so, it usually ran a photograph of Mr. Wyer. Unfortunately, Mr. Wyer disliked the photograph, but although he requested that the *Post* use a different photograph, it kept using the same one. Eventually, the *Denver Post* asked Mr. Wyer to give a couple of talks about books and printing. Mr. Wyer agreed, but only on condition that the *Post* use a more flattering photograph of himself in its articles about the Denver Public Library. The *Post* agreed.²¹⁸

- At one time, Rudolf Bing, who became general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, worked in an English store where he was in charge of several departments, including ladies’ hairdressing. Once in a while, an angry customer would demand to see him. Fortunately, he soon learned how to handle the complaint, no matter what it was. He would reach out, seize a curl, pull it toward him, then let go and say, “But, madam, it springs back beautifully.” This always worked, although Mr. Bing had no idea why it worked.²¹⁹

- When a bunch of friends in Omaha, Nebraska, got together to form the indie-pop band Tilly and the Wall, they didn’t know a drummer. No problem. One of the band’s singers, Jaime Pressnall, said, “Well, I’ll tap dance until we get one.” The tapping worked out great, and a few years and a few CDs later, Tilly and the Wall still don’t have a drummer. The other members of the band are more than OK with the tapping. Bassist-singer Neely Jenkins says, “I was always excited about it because it was so different.”²²⁰

- Jessica Bruinsma, age 24, used her intelligence and her bright red sports bra to save her life. In the Bavarian Alps, she had fallen onto a narrow ledge, where she was stranded for three days because of her injuries. Fortunately, she noticed a cable used in logging, and she tied her bra to the cable. Eventually, the cable started moving, carrying her bra with it. A logger saw the bra, and being aware that a hiker was missing, notified the proper authorities, who rescued Ms. Bruinsma.²²¹

- People who work in the White House need to be masters of diplomacy. Once, the wife of a foreign diplomat was in line waiting to meet President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Unfortunately, her underwear slipped to the ground. White House doorman John Mays picked up the underwear, folded it and put it on his arm as if it were a towel, then carried it away.²²²

- In New York City, it's often difficult to find a parking spot. However, Hugh Troy didn't have a problem. He used his artistic skills to carve a fire hydrant out of balsa wood, then he left it at his accustomed parking space whenever he went for a drive. When he returned, he would park next to the fire hydrant, then pick it up and stow it in the trunk of his car.²²³

- Peg Bracken once knew an elderly woman who wore a ragged, but very comfortable corset during her travels. The elderly woman worried about having a heart attack during the night and people seeing her ragged corset, so she solved her problem by hiding the corset in a wastebasket each night and retrieving it to wear the next morning.²²⁴

- Crows in Japan are very intelligent. They enjoy eating walnuts, and they have an interesting way of opening them. They put the walnuts on the streets at intersections. They wait for cars to run over and crack the walnuts, and then they fly down to the street and eat the walnuts.²²⁵

- "Sally HH," a reader of Andrew Tobias' Web site, once won a newspaper contest that asked, "How do you cure a cold?" She says, "I used my great-uncle's remedy: Put hat on bedpost. Get into bed. Drink gin until you see two hats."²²⁶

- When he was young, choreographer Bob Fosse was a favorite target of bullies because he took dance lessons and because he was small. Therefore, to keep from being beat up, he used to carry bribes — chocolate candies.²²⁷

- As a very young child, Maria Montessori once stopped a quarrel between her parents by pushing a chair in between them, climbing up on it, then grabbing her parents' hands and holding them in her hands.²²⁸

Siblings

- Movie director Steven Spielberg teased his younger sisters a lot while they were growing up, and when sister Anne grew old enough, she helped Steven torture the other sisters. Sometimes, Steven would fight with sister Sue. His arms were longer than her arms, and he would hold her away from him as she struggled to get close enough to fight him. Eventually, he would shout, "Anne! Quick! She's hysterical!" That was Anne's cue to rush in with a glass filled with water and throw the water in Sue's face. Sue says, "That was how the fights would usually end."²²⁹

- When Derek Jeter and his sister, Sharlee, were growing up, their parents made them sign a handwritten contract that contained such things as their curfew, the grades they were expected to get, the chores they were expected to do around the house — and a promise to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Sharlee says, "I always tried to negotiate, but Derek just sat there and nodded. It was hard having this older brother who did everything he was supposed to do."²³⁰

- When Joan Davis starred in her own sitcom in the 1950s, she cast her own daughter to play her sister on the show. She said later, "I always promised Beverly a sister, but neither one of us ever imagined it would turn out to be me."²³¹

- Adele, Fred Astaire's sister, had a strange habit: Whenever she got mad at someone, she would write that person's name down on a piece of paper, then stick it in her shoe.²³²

Travel

- In 1888, a dog entered the Albany, New York, post office and fell asleep on a mail bag. When the postal workers found the dog, they decided to adopt him and they named him Ownley. Ownley was a traveler. He followed the post office workers on their rounds, and he even started getting on board the mail cars on railroads and going where they went. On his first train trip, he went to New York City, then returned to Albany. Afraid that their dog might get lost, the post office workers made a tag for him to wear on his collar. The tag read, "Ownley, Post Office, Albany, New York." Ownley traveled frequently and far, and people who took care of him often attached tags to his collar to show where he had been. Eventually he had so many tags and medals (for Most-Traveled Dog) that John Wanamaker, the Postmaster General of the United States, had a harness made for him so he could wear all the tags and medals. Ownley traveled to Canada, and perhaps Mexico, and on August 19, 1895, while in Tacoma, Washington, he walked up the gangplank of the steamship *Victoria*, where Captain Panton took care of him. In Yokohama, Japanese potentates saw his many medals and treated him respectfully. Ownley kept following the mail — to Foochow in China, back to Japan, and then to Hong Kong, Singapore, Suez, Algiers, and the Azores. Eventually, the *Port Philips* carried him back to New York. Post office workers in Albany arranged for Ownley to go back to Tacoma, Washington, where on December 29, 1895, he completed his 132-day round-the-world journey.²³³

- Near the end of his life, John Steinbeck and his pet poodle, Charley, traveled throughout the continental United States in a truck equipped with a camper, a journey he wrote about in *Travels with Charley in Search of America*. At the end of his journey, he drove into New York City, then pulled the truck over at the side of the street and started laughing. When a police officer asked if anything was wrong, Mr. Steinbeck replied, "I've driven this thing all over the country — mountains, plains, deserts. And now I'm back in my own town, where I live — and I'm lost."²³⁴

- In 1987, author Alice Walker took a trip to Bali, where the thing she saw that made the greatest impression on her was a mother hen guiding her chicks across a road. Ms. Walker recognized that the hen was taking care of its chicks the way a human mother takes care of its infant. As a result, she decided to pursue a much more vegetarian diet. The essay she wrote about her trip is titled "Why Did the Balinese Chicken Cross the Road?"²³⁵

- Dorothy Parker once attempted to get a cab, but the cabbie said, "I'm engaged." Ms. Parker snapped, "Then be happy."²³⁶

War

- The state of Qin decided to invade the state of Chu; therefore, the King of Qin sent an envoy to Chu on the pretext of inspecting its treasures but for the real purpose of assessing its defenses and preparedness for war. However, the King of Chu understood the envoy's real purpose. When the envoy arrived and asked to see the Chu treasures, the King of Chu led the envoy to a room where the Chu statesmen were sitting, then he introduced the envoy to the statesmen, saying that the statesmen were the real treasure of Chu. The King of Chu then invited the envoy to ask any questions he wished. The envoy did ask questions and soon he discovered that the statesmen were doing a good job of keeping the Chu citizens healthy, happy, prosperous, and well trained in military matters. Realizing that the Chu citizens would fight hard for their well-governed country, the envoy returned home and advised the King of Qin not to invade Chu.²³⁷

- During World War II, United States Army nurses stationed in New Guinea were given two helmets of water a day. The nurse's helmet was put in a stand and used as a sink. One helmet of water was used for washing their body, and the other helmet of water was used for washing their undies. Many of these nurses ended up in Tacloban, Philippines, where they were still given two helmets of water a day. Alice Weinstein remembers that if an air raid occurred while someone was washing, "Zip! There went your water! You had to put your helmet on your head!"²³⁸

Weddings

- On December 15, 1944, Army Nurse Sally Hocutt married soldier Richard Offutt, whom she had met a little over a year earlier, beside a bomb hole. About a month after they met, it was Christmas, and Sally arrived late at the mess hall and was disappointed because it had run out of turkey. Fortunately, Richard saved her day because he had saved a turkey leg, and the two had their own private Christmas feast together. They were married in Mutzig, France, and because the city mayor did not want their wedding cake to be made from powdered eggs, he ordered the citizens of the town to donate fresh eggs. Sally was married in a real wedding gown that was mailed to her by her Aunt Ruth. When Aunt Ruth mailed the package containing the wedding gown and the bridesmaid dresses, the Raleigh, North Carolina, postmaster was astonished because he thought that the package would never be delivered in a war zone. Aunt Ruth replied, "You send them. My niece Sally asked for them, and she will surely receive them." Sally says, "Sure enough, they came through."²³⁹

- In the pre-Civil War South, slaves had what were called broomstick weddings. On the ground, a broomstick was placed. Friends and family gathered in a circle around the broomstick. The preacher would ask the groom, "Do you take this woman to be your wife?" The man would answer, "Yes." The preacher then would say, "Well, jump the broom." He would jump over the broom. The preacher would then ask the bride, "Do you take this man to be your husband?" The woman would answer, "Yes." The preacher then would say, "Well, jump the broom." She would jump over the broom, and the preacher would say, "I pronounce you man and wife." Just like today, a supper and dance usually followed the wedding.²⁴⁰

- In 1981, the step-daughter of the daughter of English romantic novelist Barbara Cartland married the Prince of Wales. During an interview, Ms. Cartland was asked whether, in light of the marriage, she thought class barriers had lessened in importance in Great Britain. She replied, "Of course they have. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here talking to someone like you."²⁴¹

- A father once asked Themistocles whether it were better for him to marry his daughter to a man with good character but with no money, or to a man of poor character but with lots of money. Themistocles replied, "If I were in your shoes, I should prefer a man without money to money without a man."²⁴²

- John Bratby, an artist and writer, was formerly married to a woman named Jean. While he was marrying his second wife, Patricia, she asked him, "John, will you ask George [the best man] for the ring." Out of habit, he replied, "Yes, of course, Jean."²⁴³

- Dorothy Parker married fellow writer Alan Campbell. Following the wedding and reception, they were finally alone together. Ms. Parker said, "Alone at last," and then she looked at Mr. Campbell and said, "Except for you."²⁴⁴

Work

• A student developed a problem, and a teacher helped the student learn how to solve the problem, and the teacher was proud of her work. The teacher's home developed a plumbing problem, and a plumber took care of the problem, and the plumber was proud of his work. The plumber's car developed a problem, and an automobile mechanic took care of the problem, and the mechanic was proud of his work. The automobile mechanic developed a health problem, and a doctor took care of the problem, and the doctor was proud of her work. And so on and so on. The moral? All trades have their experts.²⁴⁵

• The son of Rev. Jeff Knighton of the First Christian Church in Scott City, Kansas, wanted to go swimming one Sunday; however, his father explained that he couldn't take him swimming because he had to be present at the church that afternoon to help honor the senior members of the church. The boy was quiet for a moment, and then he said, "I guess I won't be one." His father asked, "One what?" The boy answered, "A preacher. It's just too much work." Rev. Knighton took his son swimming the very next day.²⁴⁶

• Middle-aged librarian Vera H. Henegar started a new job at an elementary school. One day, as a group of young students arrived at the library, Ms. Henegar bent over to pick up a book card from the floor. As she straightened up, she groaned and said, "I must be getting old." One of the young students told her, "Why, Mrs. Henegar, you can't be getting old! This is your first year here!"²⁴⁷

• Dawn Wells, who played Mary Ann on the TV series *Gilligan's Island*, started a company that manufactures clothing designed especially for people who have difficulty dressing themselves — for example, people suffering from arthritis. This has greatly pleased her fans, who sometimes write her, "Oh, I just *knew* Mary Ann would end up doing something nice like that."²⁴⁸

• Erika Sanborn teaches skydiving, an occupation in which she finds being a woman is sometimes an advantage. Many of her students are afraid to skydive and are in danger of not going through with a jump. Occasionally, a big, burly man will tell her, "I'm scared to death, but there is no way I'm gonna chicken out in front of a girl."²⁴⁹

• During World War II, many American women became Rosie the Riveters. One such woman, Nova Lee McGhee Holbrook, worked at the Kaiser Shipyard in Richmond, California. When her boss warned her that being a welder meant that she would get dirty, she replied, "I can wash it off."²⁵⁰

Appendix A: Bibliography

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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's degree in English and a master's degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

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

The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes

The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes

Seize the Day: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

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