

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

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**Dedicated with Love to
Aunt Marge and Michelle**

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 Actors to Coaches

Actors

- In Michael Strange's play *Clair de Lune* is a hot romantic scene between a duchess and a hideous crippled person. Because the duchess seemed to be by far the most interesting role for a woman in the play, dramatic critic Alexander Woollcott wondered why Ethel Barrymore did not choose that role for herself. However, the reason why is evident when one considers that the hideous cripple was played by John Barrymore, her brother. In fact, one actress remarked, "Ethel could hardly have played the duchess. It would have been adding incest to injury."¹
- Ellen Terry was famous in large part because of her acting in plays by William Shakespeare, and she was willing to criticize the actions of his characters. In her copy of *King Lear* she annotated the scene in which Cordelia declines to express her love for her father when he is dividing his kingdom. Her comment was succinct: "FOOL."²
- Edwin Forrest had a magnificent voice. One day, before he made his entrance on stage, he cursed his dresser in the wings. The audience heard him speaking and applauded, thinking that the play had begun with his first words being spoken off stage.³
- Megs Jenkins was once rehearsing the play *A Day by the Sea* with Ralph Richardson. She asked him for advice about how to say a line, and he advised her, "Don't let's talk about it. Let's just do it."⁴
- Bret Morrison was one of several actors who played the Shadow on old-time radio. He sometimes gave this autograph: "May I be the only Shadow in your life."⁵

Alcohol

- Robert Benchley, who was known for being plump, never exercising, and enjoying an occasional drink, was once stopped by the Inquiring Photographer of the *New York Daily News*, who asked him for an answer to the question, "Do you feel any different, now that you are a success, than you did when you started your career?" Mr. Benchley wrote his answer on an envelope: "When I started what you call my 'career,' I wore a size 14 1/2 collar, did exercises to develop my chest, and had never had a drink. You ask if I feel different now?"⁶
- William Frawley played Fred Mertz on TV's *I Love Lucy*. He gave a certain panhandler a dollar for coffee each time they met, and one day he asked what the panhandler really did with the money. The panhandler replied that he didn't buy coffee with the money, but instead bought whiskey. Hearing that, Mr. Frawley said, "At least you're honest. Come have a drink with me." They went into a bar, where Mr. Frawley ordered, "Two double scotch-and-sodas." The panhandler spoke up, "Make mine the same."⁷
- During World War II, Alexandra Danilova set sail for South America. During the voyage, she was shocked to see that a group of naval officers were drinking — of all things — milk! Immediately, she went to the officers and told them, "You can lose the war drinking milk. You must drink vodka." She then ordered a bottle of vodka for the officers, who responded by ordering a bottle of champagne for her.⁸
- During poker games on rainy nights, Heywood Broun used to serve bad port, then say, "Any port in a storm." Once, Alexander Woollcott forgot to bring a special liquor called kummel to a

poker game, so Mr. Broun said that he would go to Mr. Woollcott's house to pick it up because he would "walk a mile for a kummel."⁹

Animals

- People get dogs for various reasons, including to replace a deceased pet. One older man came to the Friends of County Animal Shelters (FOCAS) to look for a puppy that was born after March 20. He asked Peggy, a volunteer there, "Do you believe in reincarnation?" Peggy replied that she was willing to believe in a lot of things if it would persuade the man to adopt a pet. The older man explained that his dog had died on March 20. Of course, he had grieved over the death of his pet, but an angel had appeared to him in a dream and told him that he would have to look for his dog but that his dog would return to him. "So," said the man, "here I am to start looking." He looked at several dogs, and one dog that he looked at looked at him. He said, "There she is!" Peggy pointed out that the dog was three or four years old and definitely not a puppy, but the man was satisfied. When the cage door opened, the dog ran to the man, who said, "I'll take this one; this one is mine." Outside, after the adoption forms had been filled out, the man and the dog walked to his car. The dog waited by the passenger's side until the man opened it, and then she jumped in the car. The man and the dog then drove away together.¹⁰

- Sometimes pets choose families, instead of the family choosing the pet. When ballerina Alice Patelson was a little girl, a cat that had been hanging around her family's yard for a few days scratched at the door. Her father opened the door and the cat walked in and began looking through the house — first downstairs, then upstairs. Then the cat went outside. A few minutes later, the scratching began again, the door was opened, and the cat appeared with a kitten in her mouth, which she deposited in an upstairs bedroom. The cat went outside a couple of more times and brought in a total of three kittens. That is how Mittens chose to belong to the Patelson family.¹¹

- Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre grew up in Gulfport, Mississippi, and he could fish for bass from his porch because of the bayou. The bayou can be dangerous because of the alligators, one of which ate Brett's dog. Even as an adult, Brett lived by the bayou. One summer, two of his Green Bay teammates — tight end Mark Chmura and center Frank Winters — visited him. They went out on the bayou in a boat, and Brett wanted everyone to jump in for a swim. Mr. Chmura remembers, "All of a sudden, a dead animal floats by with no head. And Frank says, 'What the h*ll is that?' And Brett says, 'Oh, that's a beaver — just got his head bit off by an alligator — you guys ready to go swimming?'"¹²

- Dogs have sensitive noses, and often those noses are put to work. For example, Chewy (a dog that has a shaggy coat and therefore was named after the *Star Wars* character Chewbacca) hunts truffles, a fungus that grows under the ground. Chewy's talented nose finds 50 pounds of truffles a year. Once, Chewy and his owner guested on David Letterman's TV show. Before filming began, Mr. Letterman put a truffle in one of his pockets. Chewy quickly sniffed it out. Why train a dog to hunt truffles? Truffles are used in gourmet food, and their price is usually more than \$1,000 a pound.¹³

- Russian bass Feodor Chaliapine once attended a tea party at which several young ladies were present. While sitting at the table, he felt a pressure on his foot and he wondered which of the young ladies was flirting with him. Upon rising from the dinner table, however, he noticed that one of his shoes shone with blacking while the other shoe was wet and had no blacking. Just

then, a Saint Bernard dog came from under the dinner table, licking its chops, which were covered with blacking.¹⁴

- Ballerina Alicia Markova was fond of cats, and she often made friends with the cats in whatever theaters she performed in. Unfortunately, at His Majesty's Theater in London, this almost led to a faux pas on stage, when Peter, the theater cat, decided to look for Alicia. Just before he trotted onto the stage where Alicia was performed, he was intercepted. After that incident, she was discouraged from making friends with theater cats.¹⁵

- When Jacqueline Bouvier, who was later better known as Jackie Kennedy Onassis, was five years old, she showed a dog — a Great Dane named King Phar, in a dog show. A newspaper article stated, “Miss Jacqueline Bouvier showed her dog, which was about the same size as she.”¹⁶

- Not everyone likes dogs. Susan Conant's father loved dogs, but her mother hated dogs. Her mother once placed this classified advertisement in a newspaper: “My husband's fifty-dollar puppies for twenty-five dollars. If a man answers, hang up.”¹⁷

- Being an aviator in the early days of flying had its disadvantages. Aviators wore goggles, and the sun tanned the skin around the goggles. Amelia Earhart wrote that after a long air trip, she used to resemble a “horned toad.”¹⁸

Birth

- The famous dancer Rudolph Nureyev was preceded in birth by three sisters. When his sister Lida was born, his mother, knowing that her husband wanted a son, wrote him a letter and told him that a boy was born. This meant that when Rudi was born and she telegraphed her husband that he finally had a son, she felt that he wouldn't believe it.¹⁹

- Ballerina Maria Tallchief gave birth to Elise, who gave birth to Alexandra. When Alexandra was born, Ms. Tallchief referred to her as “the newest Sugar Plum Fairy.”²⁰

Books

- When fantasy author Tamora Pierce was in the 7th grade, her teacher, Mary Jacobsen, introduced her to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. One Friday afternoon, Tamora complained that she didn't have anything to read, and so Ms. Jacobsen gave her *The Fellowship of the Ring* to take home. On Saturday morning, Tamora sat down to read the book, and at 2 a.m. she finished reading it, then she started crying because she thought that was the end. Fortunately, on Monday her teacher gave her the other two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* to read.²¹

- Children's book author Lois Lowry, a two-time winner of the Newbery Medal, learned to read early. When she was three years old, children in her nursery class did such things as pretend to be elephants, swinging their arms in front of them as if they were elephant trunks. This embarrassed young Lois, who much preferred to sit in a corner and read a book while the other children played those games.²²

- When Randy, Judy Blume's daughter, was a toddler, she used to mix together soap, shampoo, and baby powder while taking a bath and then pat her face with the goo, which she called “freckle juice.” Judy knew a good title when she heard it, and in 1971 she published *Freckle Juice*.²³

Cars

- Michael Bennett helped create *A Chorus Line* and treated himself to a Rolls Royce after it became a success. However, he soon switched to driving a regular car again. He complained, “Every pot hole in the city destroyed my Rolls. It was always in the shop being repaired.”²⁴
- Comedian Flip Wilson’s most famous character is probably sassy Geraldine, whose boyfriend is named Killer. On his Rolls-Royce, Flip put a vanity license plate that read, “KILLER.”²⁵

Children

- As a child, Bo Jackson was a bully. He used to make other children give him their lunch money, and then he would lend it to them until the next day when he would collect it along with “interest.” He says that he became so wealthy doing this that he could afford to pay other kids to beat up anyone he didn’t like. His mother warned him over and over again that he would mess up his life acting like a bully, and a couple of incidents made him decide to straighten up. Once, he started a fight with an older boy and was beaten up, so he decided to get even. He took his brother’s .22 rifle and aimed at the boy who had beaten him up. Fortunately, he remembered his mother’s warnings, so he unloaded the rifle and went home without shooting the boy. On another occasion, he started throwing rocks at the pigs on a farm owned by a minister and killed several of them. He was caught, and he got a job so he could pay for the pigs he had killed. Finally, he decided to direct his energies to playing sports rather than bullying and making trouble. Eventually, he played both professional baseball and professional football. By the way, Mr. Jackson’s real name is Vincent Edward Jackson, but people called him “Boar Hog” because he was so tough as a child. That name eventually became shortened to “Bo.”²⁶
- Children have no inhibitions, and they tell it like it is. Actress Gladys Cooper once played the ever-youthful Peter Pan on stage, and when Wendy asked Peter how old he was, a youthful voice from the audience called out, “About forty-five, I’d say.” And Tom O’Connor once ran into a youthful truth-teller while appearing in *Dick Whittington*. He was being chased by the Wicked Owl, and as the script demanded, he kept asking the audience, “Where’s the Owl?” The audience was supposed to be excited and yell, “It’s behind you.” Unfortunately, he said one too many times, “Where’s the Owl?” A youthful voice called out, “Don’t tell him — the man’s obviously an idiot.”²⁷
- Django is a dog that dog trainer Liz Teal rescued from an ASPCA adoption van, and then taught to work with developmentally disabled and/or mentally challenged children. Ms. Teal has learned to trust Django. While they were visiting some developmentally challenged children, Ms. Teal announced that she would allow every child to brush Django. When she thought that every child had brushed Django, she said, “Django, let’s go!” But Django didn’t go to her. Instead, he went to one remaining child who hadn’t yet had a chance to brush him. Now, Ms. Teal asks Django if they are done instead of saying, “Let’s go.”²⁸
- In chapter 1 of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom gets out of being whipped by his Aunt Polly by exclaiming, “My! Look behind you, aunt!” She does look behind her, and Tom escapes over the backyard fence. When Mark Twain’s daughter Suzy wrote a biography of her famous father when she was 13, she wrote about herself and her sister Clara, “Clara and I are sure papa played the trick on Grandma about the whipping, that is related in *The Adventures of*

Tom Sawyer.” In his *Autobiography*, Mr. Twain wrote, “Suzy and Clara were quite right about that.”²⁹

- Many world-famous dancers started dancing early. When Fred Astaire was four-and-a-half years old, Adele (his sister) was enrolled in a New York dancing class. Rather than arrange for a babysitter for young Fred, his mother enrolled him in dance classes, too. When choreographer Martha Graham was two years old, her parents took her to church. As the organist began to play, she got up from the pew and started dancing down the church aisle. This horrified her parents.³⁰

- Actors have different reasons for agreeing to play a certain role. For example, Amy Sedaris will take a role such as playing Snow White on *Sesame Street* or appearing in *Yo Gabba Gabba* or *Shrek the Third* simply because it will make her the cool aunt. After all, she and David, her brother, are competitive about being the cool aunt or the cool uncle. David is stiff competition for her. He is a writer, and the kids have given him the nickname “Uncle Money.”³¹

- Jane Withers was a child movie star who started a doll collection that eventually numbered over 14,000. In her big break, the movie *Bright Eyes*, she played a little girl who was mean to Shirley Temple. In one scene, she was required to tear Shirley’s doll to pieces. This upset her, so she made the prop man promise to collect the pieces of the doll so that she could sew them together later. The doll ended up in her collection.³²

- Kids are kids, even when they are the kids of celebrities. Actor Eric McCormack and his wife, nee Janet Holden, have a son named Finnegan. When he was six years old and in kindergarten, he went to the set of his dad’s TNT sitcom, *Trust Me*, where he was able to watch him film a scene. His dad warned him that in the scene he would kiss a woman, and Finnegan said, “That’s gross.”³³

- When playwright Lillian Hellman was a young girl in New Orleans, she sometimes played hooky from school and spent time up in a favorite fig tree reading. The hideout was comfortable — a sling held her schoolbag, a fishing pole was stowed away, a rope helped her haul up her lunch, and a nail held her dress and shoes so she wouldn’t get them dirty as she read in the tree.³⁴

- Maria Callas’ mother, Evangelia, knew that her daughter’s voice was special when young Maria was playing the piano and singing “La Paloma” on a warm day with the windows open. Evangelia looked outside and noticed a group of people attentively listening to young Maria. After that, Evangelia resolved to get the best professional training for Maria’s voice.³⁵

- How much of a football town is Green Bay, Wisconsin? When Brett Favre became a quarterback for Green Bay, all the games were always sold out, and the waiting list for tickets was 35 years long. Parents used to put their infants’ names on the waiting list in hopes that the infants could see a game live and in person before they were middle-aged.³⁶

- At age 12, Suzanne Farrell danced on the Music Hall stage in Cincinnati. The experience convinced her to make ballet her life, and to commemorate her decision, she peeled a large splinter from the wooden Music Hall stage. In her autobiography, *Holding On to the Air*, she writes that she still has that splinter.³⁷

- As a child, Marian Anderson sometimes sang at church events. Once, her mother sent her to the store to buy a loaf of bread, and she found a flyer lying in the street, advertising that she

would soon sing at an event. Marian was so excited by the flyer that she bought potatoes instead of bread at the store.³⁸

- Groucho Marx once asked Melinda, his little daughter, what she did at nursery school. She replied, “Oh, Daddy, all we do is paint and go to the toilet.” Groucho called this “the most accurate description of a nursery school that’s ever been uttered.”³⁹

- As a schoolchild, *Peanuts* cartoonist Charles M. Schultz used to draw the character Popeye on his notebooks. Other schoolchildren saw his artwork, and they asked him to draw Popeye on their notebooks, too.⁴⁰

- Some famous people and characters have been adopted — Superman; Batman’s ward, Robin; Moses from the Old Testament.⁴¹

Christmas

- On Christmas Eve of 1989, the Detroit Lions played the Atlanta Falcons. In this game, played on the final day of the regular season, Detroit’s Barry Sanders, playing his first season as a pro, needed 169 yards to become the National Football League’s leading rusher. With one minute left in the game, and Detroit leading 31-24, Mr. Sanders needed only 11 more yards to become the leading rusher of the year. However, when coach Wayne Fontes asked Mr. Sanders if he wanted to go back into the game and break the record, he replied, “Coach, let’s just win it and go home.” Throughout his career, Mr. Sanders has always been more concerned about winning games than breaking records.⁴²

- In 2008, *Los Angeles Times* columnist Chris Erskine bought an \$89 Christmas tree, which he and his family brought home, and then discovered that the tree was poorly mounted and did not stand up straight. They tried to fix it, but after they decorated the tree, it began to lean again. No one wanted to de-decorate the tree, re-cut its bottom, re-mount it, and re-decorate it, so it continued to lean. A family friend called it the Leaning Tower of Christmas.⁴³

Clothing

- During times of war, such things as clothing can be rationed. During World War II, British opera/lieder singer Kathleen Ferrier began to become famous. The dress in which she sang at her first notable success was made out of material intended for curtains.⁴⁴

- Actress Julia Marlowe believed in thoroughly preparing for her roles in plays by Shakespeare. Before appearing in *King Henry IV, Part I*, as Prince Hal, she wore the character’s armor at home until she felt comfortable in it.⁴⁵

Coaches

- As coach of the Minnesota Vikings, Bud Grant lay down rules about what his players could eat and where they could smoke. Once, he even spent 30 minutes drilling his players in how to stand at attention while the National Anthem was being played. Some of his players regarded such rules as being “Mickey Mouse” rules, so they would whistle “Mickey Mouse” when Mr. Grant’s back was turned. (But once the team started winning — the once-losing Vikings won the league title only three years after he started coaching them — Mr. Grant earned the respect of his players.)⁴⁶

- One season, Pepper Rodgers had a rough time as coach of the football team at UCAL. The team was losing, and the media and the fans were turning against him. In fact, even his own wife and his own family were unhappy at the way the team was playing. The only friend he seemed to have was his dog. Mr. Rodgers told his wife, “A man needs more than one friend, especially at a time of crisis.” His wife got him another friend — she bought him a second dog.⁴⁷
- Players did what coach Vince Lombardi ordered them to do. When Green Bay Packers linebacker Tom Bettis reported overweight to training camp, Mr. Lombardi was not pleased. He was also not pleased with Mr. Bettis’ reason for being overweight: “I’m built that way.” Mr. Lombardi told him, “H*ll with your build. Get that weight off, or you’ll go home on the first plane out of here.” That week, Mr. Bettis lost 12 pounds.⁴⁸
- Herman Hickman, football coach of several losing teams at Yale, once grew angry at a referee who was stepping off a 10-yard penalty against Yale in a game against Princeton. Mr. Herman was so angry that he complained to the ref, “You don’t even know the rules — that penalty should be 15 yards.” The referee replied, “I know what the penalty is, but the way this team is being coached I’m giving it a break.”⁴⁹
- Bud Grant, coach of the Minnesota Vikings, always seemed to have a laid-back approach to football, and he kept strict control of his emotions. Once, he was ten minutes late for a bus taking his team to the game. Professional football is big business, so his excuse was interesting: He had lost track of the time while fixing his son’s bicycle.⁵⁰
- Herman Hickman used to coach football at Yale. In one game, as a referee was counting off a 5-yard penalty against Yale, Mr. Hickman told the referee that he stank. The referee calmly added an additional 15 yards to the penalty, then asked Mr. Hickman, “How do I smell from here?”⁵¹
- Long ago, Iowa beat Purdue in football by the odd score of 4-0. Afterward, Iowa coach Eddie Anderson joked, “We had them licked with that first safety, but we wanted to run up the score.”⁵²

Chapter 2: From Couples to Fathers

Couples

- After getting divorced, children's book author Lois Lowry dated a few men, including some who wanted to borrow money from her and some who turned out to be still married. But then a man who worked in an insurance office asked her out. On their date, he said to her, "You have good ideas, Cornelius. When I am king I will give you a green hat." At first, Lois thought she was in the presence of a weirdo, but then the man explained that he was quoting Babar the Elephant, the hero of a popular series of children's books. Lois thought that was interesting, she paid attention to him, and soon they were living their lives together.⁵³
- When Alexandra Danilova and George Balanchine were living together, Ms. Danilova loved to go shopping for hats. While shopping, she would try to find a hat that Mr. Balanchine would like, but he always said, "That's awful — go and change it." Finally, she thought, "To h*ll with him" — and she chose a hat she liked. When she returned home, Mr. Balanchine said, "How nice. It suits you."⁵⁴
- For a while, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates dated Ann Winblad. Both were often in different cities due to business, so they went on "virtual movie dates." Both would attend the same movie in different cities — at approximately the same time, and both would talk to each other about the movie on their cell phones on their way to and from the movie.⁵⁵
- Back when writer/actress Carrie Fisher was going with musician Paul Simon, they had a big fight one morning. Ms. Fisher had to travel, so Mr. Simon drove her to the airport. Ms. Fisher said to him, "You'll feel bad if I crash." Mr. Simon shrugged, and then he said, "Maybe not."⁵⁶

Crime

- Sir Rudolf Bing, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, lived in New York City, and he experienced some of the same things that other New Yorkers experience. For example, he was held up in Central Park and robbed of his money and a watch. The watch was inexpensive — worth approximately \$25 — but he valued it because it was a British Army watch and a reminder of the time when he was a wartime fire warden. The newspapers reported the robbery, and the next day Zinka Milanov told him, "The general manager of the Metropolitan Opera does not carry a watch worth only \$25."⁵⁷
- Very early in his career, Russian bass Feodor Chaliapine traveled with a group of singers through Cossack country. Seeing heaps of watermelons piled along the road on a very hot day, they took advantage of the situation and helped themselves to the thirst-quenching melons. That night, however, they were awakened by gunfire. They then discovered that the men firing the weapons were Cossacks who had come to demand the payment of 20 kopeks per head for the theft of the watermelons. Mr. Chaliapine and the others paid, then continued their journey.⁵⁸
- Tom Waits' ravaged voice reveals a life devoted to cigarettes and booze as well as singing and songwriting. Asked whether he does anything to protect his voice, he replied, "Protect it from what — vandals?"⁵⁹

Dance

- By the time of choreographer George Balanchine's last bows on stage, he had grown frail and easily lost his balance. When he took a bow with the other members of the New York City Ballet, he whispered to ballerina Merrill Ashley as he took her hand, "I need to hold your hand. Don't let go." And when he later took a solo bow, he was discreetly holding onto the curtain to help him maintain his balance.⁶⁰
- Suzanne Farrell attended Rhodes High School for a while. In the early 1960s, she was promoted in her dance career, and *Ingenue* magazine ran her photograph. A classmate from Rhodes High School told her, "You must be really famous. Your picture was on a page opposite the Beatles!" Because she had been so busy with dancing, Ms. Farrell asked, "Who are the Beatles?"⁶¹
- Peter Martins once wrote a list of Do's and Don'ts for the dance season. For example, DO "Read," but DON'T "Write a book." DO "Read critics," but DON'T "Take critics seriously." DO "Bum cigarettes from friends, if you must smoke, rather than buy a carton yourself," but DON'T "Smoke more than a pack a day, or a week, or during the whole season."⁶²
- Dancer Fred Astaire sometimes had an odd effect on other people. At a party, he asked a woman named Slim Keith to dance with him. She was flattered, but she was also so terrified to be dancing with the great Fred Astaire that when the music started, she was unable to move. She had to tell him, "Thank you very much, but I'm too scared," then sit down.⁶³
- In Utrecht, Holland, very few people came to see Anna Pavlova and her troupe dance on a bitterly cold day. Ms. Pavlova's husband asked the manager of the theater why so few people were in the audience. The manager replied, "But my dear sir, you cannot expect anybody to be here — it is the first ice. Even the Queen of Holland herself will be skating!"⁶⁴
- Peter Martins once had an argument with a ballerina who criticized him. After the argument was resolved, she coached him through each performance, telling him — on stage — exactly what to do. For example: "Touch me higher, right on the tits. Come on, don't be afraid; they aren't going to bump into you 'cause there isn't much of them anyway."⁶⁵
- When Twyla Tharp was in Paul Taylor's dance company, she was not well liked. Once, Mr. Taylor asked the members of his company to vote on whether to keep Ms. Tharp in the company. Only one person voted yes.⁶⁶
- In the late 1920s, Alexei Tolstoy's friends insisted that he watch a performance by young ballerina Galina Ulanova. Afterwards, he said, "I don't know why you are so excited. After all, she's just an ordinary goddess."⁶⁷
- When Cynthia Gregory was a little girl, her favorite teacher told her that she would "dance her way to heaven." Later, she became a professional ballerina and danced the lead in *Swan Lake*.⁶⁸

Death

- NFL player Walter Payton was a kind man who did many good deeds. One day Bill Magrane, the Chicago Bears director of administration, got teary eyed as he watched Mr. Payton speak with a high school student who was dying of cancer. The high school student had watched a practice and wanted to meet Mr. Payton, who talked with him for 15 minutes and let him wear

his football helmet. Later, Mr. Payton heard that the student had died. Mr. Payton said about the student's death, "It's OK. We talked, and he was OK with this."⁶⁹

- Groucho Marx loved appearing on television. The money was good, and he made people laugh. He also became very recognizable on public streets. Once he was in Chicago when a middle-aged couple saw him, stared at him, then walked over to him. The woman asked, "You're him, aren't you? You're Groucho?" Groucho admitted the fact, then the woman touched him on the arm and said, "Please don't die. Just keep on living."⁷⁰

- African-American dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham accomplished many things in her life, winning the National Medal of the Arts and the Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime achievement. She once said, "I used to want the words 'She tried' on my tombstone. Now I want 'She did it.'"⁷¹

- As we all know, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died young, leaving behind an impoverished widow. She remarried, and when her second husband died, she had this tombstone inscription made: "Here Rests Mozart's Widow's Second Spouse."⁷²

Education

- While General Manager of the Minnesota Timberwolves, Kevin McHale spent hours teaching rookie Kevin Garnett how to play under the basket. At one point in his rookie season, Mr. Garnett worried about his statistics; they were lower than he would have liked, perhaps because he had entered the NBA straight out of high school instead of playing basketball in college like most other NBA stars. Mr. McHale showed Mr. Garnett the rookie stats of such NBA stars as Shawn Kemp and Scottie Pippen. Mr. McHale told Mr. Garnett, "Take a good look. These aren't much different from your numbers. These players have gone on to become stars. The last thing I need is for you to get discouraged. I don't care how good you are. I care how good you will be." Mr. Garnett was good, and he quickly became much better.⁷³

- Professor Charles Townsend Copeland, or Copey, of Harvard was beloved by his students and by other people. John Barrymore was a great admirer, and he figured out a way to keep Copey seated and talking even after Copey had announced his intention to leave. Mr. Barrymore would simply let fly with a remark about life, art, or literature that was hopelessly obtuse, and Copey would sit down again and try to straighten him out. Once, New York drama critic Heywood Broun went to visit Copey in his chambers, but Copey waved him away and said, "Come back at 5:30 this afternoon." Mr. Broun so respected Copey that he did, although it meant he had to telegraph his article to his newspaper and stay overnight in Boston.⁷⁴

- When Bo Jackson first started attending Auburn University, he was lonely and felt out of place, so he went to a bus station to get a ticket and go home. However, at the bus station, he started thinking about how disappointed his family would be if he came home. For six hours, he thought about what he should do, and eventually he went back to Auburn. Because he was past curfew, he got into trouble with his football coaches and had to do extra running up and down the steps in the stadium. However, Mr. Jackson didn't complain. Instead, he did the extra running, then he became a football and baseball star at Auburn. Eventually, he turned pro in both sports.⁷⁵

- Ferdinand Demara was the Great Imposter — a man who took over other people's identities so that he could get jobs as a physician, a professor of psychology, etc., without having the

proper credentials. While pretending to be Robert Linton French, Ph.D. in psychology, he got a job at Gannon University in Pennsylvania. The job required him to teach, and he managed to do a credible job by spending every spare minute studying. Often, he ran late into the classroom because he had been studying so hard and was forced to ask his students, “What am I teaching today?” The students thought he was joking, and they laughed, although they also told him what he was supposed to teach that day.⁷⁶

- Ballerina Patricia Bowman took lessons from the great choreographer Michel Fokine. When she auditioned for him as a teenager, he asked her, “Do you know how to run?” She thought this was an odd question because of course she knew how to run. She ran around the room, but Mr. Fokine told her, “You’re very good, but you don’t know how to run.” Then, Ms. Bowman says, “He took off like lightning, and he ran around the room twice. He was up on his toes, and his chest was back and his head was back. He ran without faltering. He was gaited in precise rhythmic patterns. It was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen!”⁷⁷

- A mother once lectured her daughter about ignoring a school project until it was too late to complete the project on time. The mother said, “You’ll have to tell your teacher you didn’t finish it, and he’ll take it off your grade.” Her daughter suggested, “I could lie and say I left it on the kitchen counter.” But her mother pointed to the “What Would Jesus Do?” bracelet her daughter was wearing and said, “Jesus would never lie. Jesus is Truth itself. So what would Jesus do here?” Her daughter replied, “Jesus would never have gotten Himself into this mess in the first place.”⁷⁸

- Between the fifth and sixth grades, children’s book author Walter Dean Myers picked up a lot of information about female anatomy from his friends; unfortunately, much of the information was not accurate. For example, he learned that if a boy touched a girl’s breasts, the girl could get pregnant. This was believable to him because he had once hit his sister on a breast. She had complained to their mother, and their mother had told him never to hit a girl on a breast. Young Walter thought that his sister had complained because she was worried about getting pregnant.⁷⁹

- British schoolchildren learn much Shakespeare by heart. Once, Sir Ralph Richardson appeared as John of Gaunt in *Richard II*, and apparently he hesitated too much in between phrases for the schoolchildren in the speech, “This royal throne of kings, this scept’red isle / This earth of majesty, this ...” Eight hundred schoolchildren sang out, “... seat of Mars.” In 1952, Sir Ralph appeared as Prospero in *The Tempest* at a matinee in Stratford, and the schoolchildren recited the lines along with him. Sir Ralph refused to be upset about this, saying, “They know it better than I do.”⁸⁰

- Isiah Thomas left college before he graduated so he could make big bucks in the NBA. His not getting a degree disappointed his mother even though he bought her a nice house in a nice neighborhood, so she made him sign a contract saying that he would earn his college degree. On the same day that her son made a last-second shot to win a playoff game against Atlanta, she picked up his diploma. Talking with Isiah on the telephone, she was so excited about his getting a degree that she didn’t even ask him about the playoff game.⁸¹

- Many of Aesop’s fables contain wisdom — something that you would expect from teaching stories. For example, the fable of the lion and the mouse teaches children about kindness: A lion caught a mouse and prepared to eat it. The mouse begged for its life, and the lion felt pity and released it. Soon afterward, a trap made of ropes caught the lion, and although the lion

struggled mightily, it could not get free. The mouse heard the lion's roars and quickly chewed through the ropes, releasing the lion.⁸²

- A teacher thought about having each of her students make up a list of the 10 greatest Americans, but then she decided that 10 was too obvious a number, so she instead asked her class to make up a list of the 11 greatest Americans. One boy spent longer than the others in making up his list, and she asked why he needed so much time. The boy replied, "I can't decide on the fullback."⁸³

- When Twyla Tharp was young, her mother drove her hundreds of miles to music and dance lessons. Once, her mother estimated that during Twyla's youth, she had driven young Twyla 30,000 miles to her lessons. And when Twyla Tharp graduated from college, she didn't bother to attend the graduation ceremony. Instead, she went to a dance rehearsal with Paul Taylor.⁸⁴

- After graduating from Ohio State University, R.L. Stine, the author of the *Fear Street* and *Goosebumps* series of children's books, taught at a high school in his native Columbus, Ohio. Whenever his students did good work throughout the week, he allowed them to read in class all day Friday. (Mr. Stine frequently spent his Fridays in class reading comic books.)⁸⁵

- In 1975 at the Kirov Theater, Ludmila Lopukhova had the misfortune to fall on stage while dancing in Yuri Grigorovitch's *Legend of Love*. She recovered quickly and finished the dance, but as she exited, the director of the Kirov, Igor Belsky, said, "What a catastrophe!" Ms. Lopukhova calmly replied, "Who does not fall will never learn to fly."⁸⁶

- Elena Vasilievna Shiripina taught ballet at the Kirov School in Leningrad. Once, ballet student Natalia Makarova lost her sense of direction while dancing *tours chaînés* on the diagonal. Ms. Shiripina told her, "Keep going, little one, all the way to the door." Young Natalia did keep going and danced through the door — and Ms. Shiripina slammed it in her face.⁸⁷

- When Samuel Langhorne Clemens was a schoolboy, he was very good at spelling and usually won the Friday afternoon spelling bee in his class. However, one Friday he deliberately misspelled a word so a young girl he liked would win. As an adult writer, Mr. Clemens used the pseudonym "Mark Twain."⁸⁸

- Before going to Australia on tour, W.C. Fields loaded a trunk with every book he could find on Australia so he could read them on the long voyage to down under. (Another trunk was loaded with classic books.) An Australian reporter wrote, "This American knows more about us than we know about ourselves."⁸⁹

- Jackie Bouvier, who was later known as Jackie Kennedy Onassis, attended Miss Porter's Finishing School in Farmington, Connecticut. That was a good idea, as she did need finishing. At the school, she once dumped a chocolate pie — upside down — onto the lap of a teacher she disliked.⁹⁰

- Anna Pavlova was once annoyed by several dancers outside her dressing room door who were all talking at the same time. She opened the door and asked, "Who is listening?" All of the dancers quickly became silent.⁹¹

- Very young people can be very kind. Justin Dingman, a four-year-old pre-schooler, held the hand of a pre-schooler who was frightened on his first day of pre-school.⁹²

- Important questions can be asked in strange places. A man once made a habit of stopping people on the street and asking, “What’s your excuse for cluttering up the earth?”⁹³

Family

- When NBA star Isiah Thomas was growing up, his father taught Isiah and the rest of his seven sons a lesson: stick together. He used to hold seven sticks in his hand and tell his sons, “It’s a lot harder to break seven sticks together than one at a time.” Unfortunately, Isiah’s parents separated. Fortunately, his mother was very capable of taking care of her children. Some gang members showed up at the Thomas house one day and told Mrs. Thomas, “We want your boys. They’re old enough to join us.” Mrs. Thomas replied, “There ain’t but one gang in this family — the Thomas gang.” She also showed the gang members a sawed-off shotgun and told them, “If you don’t get off my porch, I’ll blow you across the expressway.” The gang members got off her porch.⁹⁴

- As a young man, Thomas Beecham became estranged from his father, and he did not see him or other members of his family for many years. While he and some members of his orchestra were touring the buildings of a women’s college, a young lady came up to him and gave him a hug. This shocked Mr. Beecham, who told the principal of the college, “What delightful customs you have in your college, Madam, but may I ask who this charming young lady is?” The principal replied, “She is your youngest sister.” Mr. Beecham had not seen her in 10 years.⁹⁵

- Jane Schmidt awoke one Saturday morning to discover that her husband was making breakfast. To show that she appreciated his thoughtfulness, she sat on his lap and gave him a hug. Later, in the afternoon she and her husband were having a “heated discussion” when their four-year-old son walked in and said, “Mommy, try to remember how you felt when you were on Daddy’s lap.”⁹⁶

Fathers

- When he was a kid, Jason Kidd played sports with a lot of determination. While playing football on the street, he ran with the ball, knocked over a mailbox, thought he had broken his jaw — and kept on running! However, his father, whose name is Steve, stopped him from playing football because he felt that Jason was too aggressive and would hurt himself. Fortunately, Jason kept playing basketball and became an NBA point guard. His father taught him a lot. Jason bowled when he was young, and he made excuses because he didn’t play well. His father told him, “Quit that. The reason you’re not a good bowler is you don’t practice.” Jason adds, “And he was right. Now, if I have a defect, I work at [getting rid of] it. I don’t make any excuses.”⁹⁷

- The father of children’s author Jane Yolen worked in public relations, and he wrote copy for such children’s toys as Slinkys and Double Bubble bubblegum. This was great for young Jane and her brother because they were the first in their group of friends to play with toys that later became popular, and if one of their Slinkys ever became tangled, they could get six more Slinkys. Jane and her brother were photographed for Double Bubble bubblegum advertisements, but because of a lack of truth-in-advertising laws at the time, the big bubbles coming from their mouths were actually balloons, not bubblegum bubbles.⁹⁸

- Agnes de Mille’s father was William de Mille, a playwright, scriptwriter, and movie director. (He was also the brother of director Cecil B. De Mille.) As a writer and director, he understood how to reveal character. For example, in the movie *Nice People* a streetwalker eats dinner at a gentleman’s house. Before she begins to eat, she carefully cleans the silverware with her napkin — something that would be a necessity in the greasy spoon restaurants where she would normally eat.⁹⁹
- British soccer player John Terry has children, and he plays soccer with his little boy, as you would expect. Of course, his little girl has some different interests, and since he loves his little girl, too, he allows her to put makeup on him. In addition, he plays hide-and-seek with his children, but he can never find them. After all, he explains, “Kids are good at hiding, aren’t they?”¹⁰⁰
- According to comedian Tim Conway, his father once installed a doorbell, but he installed it incorrectly so that it rang all the time, stopping only when someone was at the door. Whenever the doorbell would stop ringing, his father would say, “I’ll get it,” and go to the door.¹⁰¹
- Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Phoenix, Arizona, house of David, his son, but he sometimes upset his son and his son’s wife by entering their house and rearranging their furniture.¹⁰²

Chapter 3: From Flowers to Language

Flowers

- The Soviet Union respects its ballerinas. During World War II, some Soviet soldiers freed a village from the invading Nazis. In a cottage, they found a photograph — damaged by bullet holes — of famed ballerina Galina Ulanova dancing *Swan Lake*. A Soviet soldier wrote her to say that they were taking good care of the photograph, and an orderly had been given the duty — during lulls in the fighting — of placing flowers in front of it each day.¹⁰³
- Anna Pavlova enjoyed the flowers in her gardens, including the wild flowers. Once, she heard her gardener cutting the grass with a lawn mower. She ran to him and said, “Paul! Do let the daisies live a little.”¹⁰⁴

Food

- Diamond Jim Brady loved good food. He once ate a fish sauce in a restaurant in Paris and loved it. Unfortunately, the recipe was the property of only one restaurant in the world, and that restaurant’s chef guarded the recipe and kept it secret. But Diamond Jim wanted the recipe, and Charles Rector, the owner of Diamond Jim’s favorite restaurant in New York City, wanted to keep his biggest-eating — and biggest-spending — customer happy. Therefore, he took his son out of law school and sent him to Paris to work at the restaurant that had the secret fish sauce. After several months, he was entrusted with the recipe, memorized it, and then returned home. Diamond Jim met him at the pier and yelled at him while he was still on the boat, “Have you got the sauce?” That evening, Diamond Jim ate nine plates of fish with the special sauce, then told Mr. Rector, “If you poured some of that sauce over a Turkish towel, I believe I could eat all of it.” (Don’t believe that a restaurant owner would go to so much trouble to keep a customer happy? Believe it — according to Mr. Rector, Diamond Jim was his “best 25 customers”!)¹⁰⁵
- When movie critic Roger Ebert was a boy, he took his first train trip alone on the Panama Limited train back in the days when trains had dining cars with heavy pewter dishes that would not tip over. He made his way to the dining car to eat breakfast, and he was seated with a man who turned out to be illiterate. In those days, diners wrote what they wanted on a guest check, and young Roger wrote “Pancakes and Coffee.” This was a big deal for him because it was his first cup of coffee ever as well as his first train-ride alone ever. The illiterate man seated with him simply said, “I’ll have what he’s having.” When the meal arrived, Roger poured what he thought was the maple syrup over his pancakes and what he thought was the coffee into his coffee cup, and then he tasted his pancakes. Oops. He had made a mistake. Embarrassing, but not an unsolvable problem. He picked up his coffee cup and poured syrup over his pancakes. The illiterate man watched him, and then poured his coffee over his own pancakes.¹⁰⁶
- In 2008, Darlene, the daughter of *Tucson Weekly* columnist Tom Danehy, was involved in a contest with Jessica, one of her college volleyball teammates. They competed to see who could drink Starbucks coffee in the greatest number of states. One rule is that the person has to actually be in the state. Another rule is that the person has to keep the Starbucks receipt as evidence. Darlene once went to Vermont to buy Starbucks coffee, having been disappointed by missing Vermont on a previous trip to New England. Her father went with her, and while he was eating a roast beef sandwich, a female vegetarian asked him, “How can you eat that?” He

replied, “The bread makes it difficult. I wish there were some way I could hold the beef together with two pork chops.” She laughed and then moved to another, further-away seat.¹⁰⁷

- Ali Liebegott is not a fan of poverty. She says, “I don’t really believe in the myth of being poor but happy. At the poorest times in my life I wasn’t happy. I was just hungry. And the poorest times in my life can’t even compare to the poorest times of most people in the world.” Still, people romanticize poverty, sometimes with good reason. She remembers when her parents were arguing over cooking utensils, with her father wanting a special bowl. Her mother told her, “Your father doesn’t remember the days we were so poor we were making dinner in the coffeepot because we didn’t have a pan to cook in.” Ali says, “I love to imagine my parents as newlyweds, all jacked up on new love cooking dinner in the coffeepot.”¹⁰⁸

- In a scene from *Camilla*, Lillie Langtry’s character was supposed to give a white camellia to Armand. Noticing that the camellia was not in its regular place, she told a stagehand. With no time to spare, he gave her something to take its place. On stage, Ms. Langtry recited, “Take this flower, Armand. It is rare, pale, senseless, cold but sensitive as purity itself. Cherish it, and its beauty will excel the loveliest flower that grows but wound it with a single touch and you shall never recall its bloom or wipe away the stain.” She then handed him half a stick of celery — which the stagehand had been eating when she told him about the missing camellia.¹⁰⁹

- World-famous window-dresser Simon Doonan’s maternal grandfather was an Irishman named D.C. “Davey” Gordon. He was a good-looking widower, and lots of ladies regarded him as eligible. Because of that, he went to extremes to discourage visits. For example, if he were forced to entertain a widow and serve her tea, he would serve her bread that came from his bin of chicken feed. The widow would look at the bread and say, “Davey, is this bread no’ a wee bit moldy?” He would reply, “Notatall! Sure, it’s fresh the daay!”¹¹⁰

- In 1947, Ralph Richardson was knighted because of his service to theater and acting. On TV, he was asked how being made a knight had changed his life. Sir Ralph paused, then replied that at a luncheon following the knighting ceremony, he had opened his oyster and found a pearl.¹¹¹

- As a very young ballet student in the Soviet Union, Natalia Makarova flirted with a handsome boy by saying that she could eat six quarts of ice cream. However, when she tried to do it, she disgraced herself — she was able to eat only four quarts.¹¹²

- Elizabeth Alexander’s mother once said, “It’s not hard to lose weight. You just eat no sugar, no carbohydrates, and half of everything else.” Elizabeth’s little brother replied, “But there is nothing else.”¹¹³

Friends

- Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert became famous after they started to review movies on television (which is also when they became friends), and people started to recognize them even when they were not in Chicago, causing Mr. Siskel to remark to Mr. Ebert, “Life is going to change.” When they attended the National Association of Television Program Executives (NAPTE), the convention of syndicated TV shows, they walked around together because their producer, Joe Antelo, told them, “Together, you’re an advertisement. Apart, you’re tourists.” People started to ask them, “Aren’t you those two guys?” One day, when they were on an elevator with some ladies they didn’t know, the ladies started whispering. When Mr. Siskel and

Mr. Ebert got off the elevator, Mr. Siskel told the ladies, “We’re those two guys.” Of course, Mr. Ebert has many good stories about Mr. Siskel, who was a very good poker player and was a big winner at his own bachelor party. Unfortunately, at Mr. Ebert’s bachelor party he was a big loser. When Mr. Ebert asked why he had lost, Mr. Siskel explained, “What went wrong is that your friends don’t know how to play poker. A good player can never win against someone who makes a bet just for fun.” When Mr. Ebert and his wife, Chaz, were looking for a house to buy, they asked for Mr. Siskel’s advice. He walked through the house and then quickly said, “Don’t buy it.” He then explained, “I don’t like the skylight. From their windows, your neighbors can see you walking to the bathroom.” For a long time, Mr. Siskel was a bachelor, and his apartment, which was crammed with everything he had ever owned, still placed wherever he had set it down, showed that. For example, Mr. Siskel had once won a TV in a bet. The delivery people put the TV down just inside the door. And there the TV stayed, although Mr. Siskel was unable to fully open the door because of the TV set. When Mr. Siskel became serious about a woman, he asked his sister for a favor: To clean his apartment “just enough so I can have a cleaning person come in.” By the way, he proposed to the woman — Marlene — in front of a Pizza-Fotomat. She accepted, they married, and they had children. Mr. Siskel once took his young daughters, Kate and Callie, to an animated film for children. Unfortunately, the movie was not very good. After the movie, he asked them their opinion of it. One of his daughters said, “I didn’t like it, daddy.” Mr. Siskel replied, “Honey, you’ve just made me the proudest pop in the world.”¹¹⁴

- As a young man, Robert Bloch was a fan of the horror writer H.P. Lovecraft and wrote him letters, to which Mr. Lovecraft responded. They struck up a friendship, and later, Mr. Bloch started writing his own horror stories and novels — he wrote *Psycho*, on which the Alfred Hitchcock film is based. His story “The Shambler from the Stars” features a character based on Mr. Lovecraft, who was amused because the character dies in the story. Returning the favor, Mr. Lovecraft created a character based on Mr. Bloch — Robert Blake in “The Haunter of the Dark” — and killed him off.¹¹⁵

- Singer-songwriter Tom Waits and his friend film director Jim Jarmusch once formed a club called “The Sons of Lee Marvin” — the one purpose of the club was to watch movies starring Lee Marvin.¹¹⁶

- Fred Allen never used the shift key when he typed — all of his letters were written in lower case. Mr. Allen explained why in a letter to his friend Goodman Ace: “i have never been able to shift for myself.”¹¹⁷

Fumbles

- In 1952, the Oklahoma Sooners had a wonderful football team, but way too many fumbles, especially in the first half, led to a loss against Notre Dame, although the Sooners were favored to win. At halftime, an Oklahoma drum major threw a baton high in the air, but missed catching it when it came down, and it tumbled crazily on the ground. A fan told Oklahoma coach Bud Wilkinson, “I see you coach the band, too.”¹¹⁸

- The Nebraska Cornhuskers were losing a game, so coach Bernie Masterson sent in a sub with the orders, “Get in there and play as you’ve never played before.” Unfortunately, the sub promptly fumbled twice. Mr. Masterson pulled him out of the game and told him, “Perhaps you misunderstood me. I didn’t say play as *though* you’ve never played before.”¹¹⁹

Gays and Lesbians

- American dance pioneer Ted Shawn, who was a homosexual despite being married, worked with costumes and so became very familiar with colors. During World War I he joined the U.S. Army and was tested for color blindness. Asked to identify the various colors, Mr. Shawn called out, “Taupe. Lime. London smoke.” The sergeant told him, “Look, soldier, just answer red, yellow, blue, brown, gray.” Mr. Shawn then managed to pass the test.¹²⁰
- Many homosexuals don’t want to come out of the closet, but it can have advantages. For example, when lesbian comedian Kate Clinton wants a little privacy, she will sometimes come out to her neighbors on a fairly crowded airplane so she doesn’t have any neighbors.¹²¹

Gifts

- If you are a gay boy, having a lesbian for a sister can be advantageous, and vice versa. World-famous Barney’s window-dresser Simon Doonan grew up knowing he was gay, and his sister discovered that she was a lesbian later in her life. They often traded gifts. He would say to her, “I’ll give you this toy airplane if you’ll give me your plastic lacy parasol.” And she would say to him, “I’ll give you my golliwog [a black doll], the one in the gingham dress with the two rows of rickrack [a zigzag ribbon] on the hem, if you’ll give me your toy shovel.” While they were kids, they played Robin Hood and Maid Marian. She was Robin Hood, and he was Maid Marian.¹²²
- While touring the Philippines, dancer Anna Pavlova and assistant ballet master Pianowski had an argument about Poland, which resulted in Mr. Pianowski becoming so angry that he broke his gold-headed walking stick across his knee and threw away the pieces. Later, the two made up, but the broken walking stick bothered Ms. Pavlova, so she asked her music director, Theodore Stier, to find a walking stick exactly like the one Mr. Pianowski had broken. Nine months later, in Nice, France, Mr. Stier found one. Ms. Pavlova purchased it and presented it to Mr. Pianowski, who at first thought the walking stick was a miracle.¹²³
- When 10-year-old Alicia Marks was dancing on Dec. 27, 1920, in South London, a young student was so overwhelmed by her performance that he spent the last of his allowance on some white chrysanthemums to give to her. The young student was Patrick Dolin, who later partnered Ms. Marks as they danced under the names of Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin.¹²⁴
- Ballet dancer Anna Pavlova loved and owned dozens of shoes. Members of her dance troupe with small feet were lucky because whenever she bought new shoes she had to give away some of her other shoes to make room for them in her traveling trunks.¹²⁵

Good Deeds

- Ohio State University football coach Woody Hayes spent a lot of time visiting ill children in Children’s Hospital. One day, he got a telephone call from a woman he didn’t know, but who had a daughter — an Ohio State football fan — with cancer in Children’s Hospital. Coach Hayes told his secretary that he was leaving for the day, he picked up a lot of Ohio State football memorabilia, and he headed to Children’s Hospital, where he spent three or four hours with the girl and some other young Ohio State fans. Player Steve Myers, who was there, says, “When we got there, you could tell it meant everything to the girl, and all the kids there went berserk. ... Woody was just great to those kids.” In addition, Mr. Myers says, “He did that stuff all the time, and it was always [imitation of Coach Hayes speaking], ‘I don’t want to read

about this in the papers, do you understand?’ He was that private about the things he did for people.”¹²⁶

- Donna Delfino Dugay of Harper Woods, Michigan, grew up in California, where her family had a picnic at the beach when she was 11 years old. Her mother fixed each of the children a plate of fried chicken and potato salad, and then, Donna says, “When I looked up from my plate, my mother was fixing one more plate She turned away from us and walked over maybe 20 or 30 feet to where there was a man by himself. And he was picking his way through the trashcan. And my mother — I don’t know whether she just put the plate there or whether she touched him gently or whether she said a few words — but I remember him turning to her in a gesture of thankfulness.” Years later, when Donna asked her mother about this good deed, her mother claimed not to remember it; however, Donna says, “But for me, I remember it very well because for me, it was the touchstone for what good deeds became in my life.”¹²⁷

- Audrey Hepburn did a lot of good works with UNICEF. At one camp, where no one knew that she was a movie star, children lined up for a bowl of porridge. One girl was mesmerized by Ms. Hepburn, whose kindness she had witnessed, and she didn’t know whether to go to Audrey, who was busy talking to other people, to get a hug or to stay in line and get a bowl of porridge. Both needs are important. Eventually, Audrey looked at the little girl, and the little girl left the line to get a hug from Audrey. John Isaac, UNICEF photographer, did not take a photograph because it was such an intensely personal moment.¹²⁸

- Talk show host Oprah Winfrey is a member of a Big Sisters group, where she gives good advice to economically disadvantaged girls. For example, she tells them, “If you want affection, you don’t need a baby — get a kitten!”¹²⁹

Halloween

- *Los Angeles Times* columnist Chris Erskine’s young son once seriously prayed, “Dear Jesus, I hope you had a good Halloween.” Just before the son turned six, he and his father went by the hospital where the son was born. Mr. Erskine told him, “Hey, that’s where you were born.” The young son thought for a moment, and then said, “I wonder if they miss me.”¹³⁰

Husbands and Wives

- When Metropolitan Opera soprano Frances Alda married Metropolitan Opera director Giulio Gatti-Casazza, she worried that others might think that she would be getting prized roles because she was the director’s wife. However, she was unprepared when she overheard Otto Kahn tell Henry Russell, the director of the Boston Opera, “As the director’s wife, it is much better that Alda should not sing here next season.” This made Ms. Alda angry, and she confronted Mr. Kahn: “I suppose it would be all right if I were his mistress instead of his wife. I resign right now.” For a year she sang at concerts throughout the United States, then she rejoined the Met.¹³¹

- George W. Bush fell in love with Laura Welch rather quickly, and he telephoned her frequently. Once, when he was visiting his parents at Kennebunkport, Maine, he telephoned her and a man answered. He decided that he had visited his parents long enough, and he flew back to Texas to court Laura. Soon, they were engaged, and when George W. brought Laura home to meet his family, Jeb (his younger brother) knelt on one knee and asked, “Did you pop

the question to her, George, old boy?” Laura answered for George: “Yes, as a matter he has, and I accepted.”¹³²

- Hector Berlioz’s wife, Marie, was a very bad singer, even though she insisted on performing in his concerts. Berlioz used to tell this story about his wife. As Marie was practicing her singing in the morning, a neighbor woman passed under her window. That afternoon, Marie began practicing again, and once more the neighbor woman passed under her window. “My goodness,” said the neighbor woman. “It’s 3 o’clock, and the baby still isn’t born!”¹³³

- When George Burns and Gracie Allen first teamed up as a comedy act, George tried to give himself the funny lines. What was supposed to happen was Gracie would ask him a straight question and he would give her a funny answer. However, the audience laughed at Gracie’s questions, and they didn’t laugh at George’s answers. No fool, George quickly made himself into a straight man for Gracie. Later, George and Gracie married.¹³⁴

- A dog named Max stopped by stable manager Liz Cochane’s home one day and stayed. Liz says, “He’s good at communicating what he wants. He will stare intently at a door, willing it to open (often it does), or at a potato chip, willing it to fall into his mouth (often it does).” Of course, he rewards Liz with love. A woman whom Liz knows says, “I only wish my husband would look at me the way Max looks at Liz.”¹³⁵

- Hedda Hopper’s real name was Elda Furry. When she married De Wolf Hopper, she was his fifth wife. His previous wife’s names had been Edna, Ella, Ida, and Nella. Because her first name was so similar to theirs, she decided it was no longer suitable: “I changed it to Hedda because I was afraid he wouldn’t know who I was.”¹³⁶

- Actor John Barrymore married poetess Michael Strange, then appeared in her play *Clair de Lune*. Many critics wondered why Mr. Barrymore would appear in such a macabre piece, but only Mr. Whittaker of the *Chicago Tribune* headlined his review “For the Love of Mike.”¹³⁷

- On TV’s *Newlywed Game*, each groom was asked about the size of the bed in the bridal suite. One groom replied, “A double bed — and I know I’m right because we were so used to a king-size bed.”¹³⁸

- Enrico Caruso could be jealous of his wife, Dorothy. Once, he told her, “I wish you to become very fatty so no one look at you.”¹³⁹

Illnesses and Injuries

- Visualization can aid in healing. Sam Brodsky, a martial arts expert, once performed a demonstration before his students. He attempted to break nine one-inch concrete slabs with his bare hands; unfortunately, he injured his hand while breaking only seven of the slabs. His doctor examined the hand, then said that after a year of healing, he would be able to regain only partial use of it. Each night, Mr. Brodsky imagined that his hand was a building site and that a horde of little men was working all night long with mortar and cement to rebuild his hand. Each morning, he imagined a whistle going off after the little men had worked all night on his hand. The next time Mr. Brodsky saw his doctor, the doctor said that the healing process was remarkable, but that his knuckles were frozen together, creating a stiff hand. Therefore, Mr. Brodsky changed the visualization process and imagined the little men working with files and oil to sand the rough edges off his knuckles and lubricate them. The visualization worked.

Instead of a year, the healing process took only 10 weeks. Six months after that, Mr. Brodsky again attempted to break nine one-inch concrete slabs with his hand and succeeded.¹⁴⁰

- Landon Ronald was a conductor in England who occasionally worked with Thomas Beecham; however, eventually Mr. Ronald seemed to disappear from the music scene. Mr. Beecham shared the same doctor as Mr. Ronald, so he took occasion to ask the doctor if anything serious had happened to him. The doctor replied, “Not at all; it is only a case of wine, women, and song, and I have told him that he must make up his mind to drop one of them.” The next time Mr. Beecham saw Mr. Ronald, he asked him which of the three he had decided to drop. Mr. Ronald replied, “Song.”¹⁴¹

- In 1974, during a playoff game, Minnesota Vikings defensive lineman Doug Sutherland stuck his fingers through the facemask of Conrad Dobler of the St. Louis Cardinals. Mr. Dobler reacted in what he felt was an appropriate way: “I figured he was not there to stroke my moustache. It was not a friendly act. So I bit him.” At halftime, Mr. Sutherland asked for some kind of guard to protect his fingers. He also asked to be tested for rabies.¹⁴²

- Opera singers go to extremes to avoid colds. In February of 1992, Luciano Pavarotti announced at a press conference in Scotland that he was going on a diet to lose the excess pounds that he had carried around for much of his adult life. All reporters were required to stand behind a line made of white tape so that they would not get close enough to Mr. Pavarotti to give him their germs.¹⁴³

- Maria Tallchief believes that her long years of intense physical activity as a ballerina resulted in her suffering from arthritis after she retired. Her pharmacist once asked her, “You’re now paying for all those years — it was worth it, wasn’t it?” Ms. Tallchief replied, “It certainly was.”¹⁴⁴

- On an opening night, Ralph Richardson stepped out of character on stage and asked the audience, “Is there a doctor in the house?” A man stood up and identified himself as a doctor, and then Sir Ralph asked him, “Doctor, isn’t this play awful?”¹⁴⁵

Language

- Dancers with no talent sometimes came to Nicolas Legat’s classes, and he used to shower praise on them, arousing the anger of the good dancers in his classes. Phyllis Bedells once complained to him, saying, “How can you say it is good, maestro, when they are so bad?” Mr. Legat replied, “They are enjoying themselves. Why disillusion them? They will never dance anyway.” Sometimes he would praise bad dancers, then smile and say in Russian (which they did not understand), “Dog up a lamp-post!” Such insults delighted those of his students who understood Russian.¹⁴⁶

- Sir Henry Wood was a wonderful conductor, but his English was not polished, and he had a habit of ending many of his sentences with the phrase “regardless of,” as in, “What are you cellos doing, regardless of?” Once, he received some advice about how to improve his English, and at a rehearsal, he asked, “What are you violins doing?” The entire orchestra chimed in and shouted, “Regardless of.”¹⁴⁷

- Ballerina Alice Patelson had a grandmother who had come from Finland, emigrating to the United States in 1912. When she was a little girl, Alice asked Grandmother Eine to teach her

Norwegian. One day Alice decided to memorize a poem in Norwegian, which she then recited at school during show-and-tell. Her teacher was pleased, but the students were bewildered.¹⁴⁸

- When Giulio Gatti-Casazza (who was later the director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York) was courting soprano Frances Alda, he sent her love letters in Italian. Because her Italian was weak, Ms. Alda would go to her scores of Italian operas, pick out a love aria, then copy a few of its lines and send them as a letter back to Mr. Gatti-Casazza.¹⁴⁹

- When Sook Nyul Choi, author of *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, arrived in the United States, she found it difficult to communicate in English instead of her native Korean. For the first couple of years she lived in the United States, she says, “My Korean-English/English-Korean dictionary never left my hands.”¹⁵⁰

- When Mark Twain decided to take his family to Germany, his family started to study German. He even instructed Rosa, his German maid, to speak only German to his children. His daughter Susy tried to learn the language, but she said to her mother, “I wish Rosa was made in English.”¹⁵¹

- David Niven enjoyed using bad language — over 400 four-letter words had to be edited out of his first book. However, Mr. Niven so liked his friend Fred Astaire, who didn’t use bad language, that he refrained from using four-letter words in his presence.¹⁵²

Chapter 4: From Mishaps to Music

Mishaps

- When World War II hero John F. Kennedy first entered politics, he became a United States Representative, and then he started campaigning for a seat in the Senate. While running for Senator, he campaigned in Fall River, Massachusetts, where many people were of French descent. Unfortunately, his Fall River manager, Ed Berube, made a notable mistake when he introduced Mr. Kennedy at the very first Fall River political meeting. Mr. Berube stood up and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like you to meet Congressman Joe Martin.” Not only did Mr. Berube get Mr. Kennedy’s name wrong, but Joe Martin was a Republican! Mr. Berube thought he would be fired, but Mr. Kennedy thought the mistake was funny and went ahead with his campaign speech, saying, “Maybe Ed would rather be working with Joe Martin, but I’d rather have him working for me.”¹⁵³
- Early in Walter Payton’s NFL career, his helmet cracked in back — something that is not supposed to happen. The manufacturer of the helmet wanted to look at the helmet to see why it had cracked, but Mr. Payton was fond of the helmet and didn’t want to give it up since he was afraid that any tests would destroy the helmet. However, the manufacturers of the helmet explained that lots of high school football players were wearing the same kind of helmet and for their protection it was important to find out why the helmet had cracked. This made Mr. Payton pay attention. He brought in the helmet, and the manufacturers did tests and discovered that the paint on the helmet had attacked the plastic, weakening it. Of course, the manufacturers began using another kind of paint. Mr. Payton’s concern was for the high school football players, and he asked, “Are you sure that the kids will be safe?”¹⁵⁴
- Jacques d’Amboise studied ballet as a child after school. Unfortunately, he sometimes got into trouble at school and for punishment had to stay after school — until his mother requested of the nuns at his Catholic school that they not detain him because of his ballet lessons. This, however, led to a problem. Instead of serving detention, young Jacques would be excused with this public announcement that embarrassed him but amused the other truants: “Mr. d’Amboise is excused now to take his ballet lesson.” The first time he danced in public was equally embarrassing. He danced at his school, and he says, “I tried to do as many pirouettes and entrechats as I could.” Unfortunately, he was concentrating so hard on these acrobatic dance feats that he was totally unaware until the dance was over that he had split his pants.¹⁵⁵
- Janice Barringer and Edward Stewart were performing in Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* when a disaster occurred. Ms. Barringer, as Juliet, and Mr. Stewart, as Romeo, were in bed together. Romeo was supposed to awake, slip his arm out from under Juliet’s head, kiss her, and then stand up. Unfortunately, some hooks in Mr. Stewart’s costume got caught in Ms. Barringer’s hair. Some gentle tugs didn’t free the costume, so Mr. Stewart was forced to give a giant yank — and a hunk of Juliet’s hair was pulled from her scalp. Meanwhile, Ms. Barringer had to stay in character, pretending to be asleep — and looking serene.¹⁵⁶
- Not everyone who studies acting in college goes on to become an actor. In 1973, Miranda Fowler graduated from Yale Drama School and quickly found work playing a maid in *Private Lives*. Her debut was inauspicious — she missed her entrance six nights in a row. During the second week, the actress playing Amanda became ill and Ms. Fowler, who was her understudy, was asked to go on in her place. It was then she realized that she had memorized not the lines of Amanda, but of Sibyl. At this point, Ms. Fowler decided not to be an actress.¹⁵⁷

- Not all ideas work out in the long run. In 1956, Chicago Bears coach Ray Richards started using transistor radios to communicate on the field with his quarterback. This worked out well for a while, but Giants coaches Jim Lee Howell and Vince Lombardi also got transistor radios and started listening to conversations between Mr. Richards and the Bears quarterback. Of course, the Giants coaches were able to know what the Bears were going to do on the football field before they did it, and the Giants won, 21-9. Coaches stopped using transistor radios.¹⁵⁸

- Theatrical director Tyrone Guthrie once made a mistake in directing an actress in *Henry VIII*. Diana Wynyard was playing Queen Katherine, and Mr. Guthrie told her that she was saying a line wrong and to look it up. Later, they were rehearsing the scene again, and Ms. Wynyard said the line the same way she had said it previously. Once again, Mr. Guthrie told her that she was saying the line wrong and to look it up. Ms. Wynyard said, “I have looked it up. I am right, and you are wrong.” Mr. Guthrie replied, “In that case I apologize and I have a very red face.”¹⁵⁹

- Marvel Comics maven Stan Lee was having lunch with a friend in a crowded restaurant when he gestured and knocked over his glass of milk onto another man. Of course, the soaked man was angry, but Mr. Lee apologized profusely and offered to pay to have his suit cleaned. The man calmed down, and another glass of milk was brought to Mr. Lee, who made another gesture and spilled this second glass of milk onto the same man. This time, Mr. Lee did not apologize. Instead, he and his friend ran out of the restaurant.¹⁶⁰

- Henry Thornton was an actor at the turn of the 19th century. He was once in a play where he was supposed to hand over a letter that held the key to the plot, and then die. Unfortunately, he forgot about the letter one day and “died” before handing it over. Another actor on stage whispered, “Mr. Thornton, the letter! The letter!” Hearing him, Mr. Thornton came to life again and said, “One thing I had forgot through a multiplicity of business. Give this letter to my father. It will explain all,” then he died again.¹⁶¹

- While the Old Vic Company was performing *Twelfth Night* in Philadelphia, problems arose because members of the cast frequently got lost between the dressing rooms and the stage in the large, unfamiliar theater, forcing the other cast members to improvise while waiting for an absent actor. The actress playing Maria said her line, “Get ye all three into the box-tree. Malvolio’s coming down the walk,” and actor John Neville made her laugh when he whispered, “Wanna bet?”¹⁶²

- Margot Fonteyn and the Sadler’s Wells Ballet once gave a disastrous performance on the slippery floor of Constitution Hall in front of President Harry Truman. Dancers came out on the stage, slipped and fell, and then, after the dance, with tears streaming from their eyes, returned to their dressing rooms, saying, “It’s impossible. I just couldn’t stand up.” Ms. Fonteyn was filled with confidence and thought, “That won’t happen to *me*,” but she too ended up falling on her face.¹⁶³

- Mike Coglan was pastoring a small church at which he heard Jack, one of the parishioners, complain about back pain. Talking to Jack’s wife, Pastor Mike discovered that Jack had recently had surgery. Therefore, during the service, Pastor Mike prayed for Jack, asking specifically that Jack be restored to full function. Pastor Mike was mystified by the smothered laughter that followed that request — until he discovered that Jack’s operation had been a vasectomy.¹⁶⁴

- Barry Sanders was small when he was in high school, so many collegiate football programs refused to give him a scholarship despite his obvious rushing talent. In fact, his high school coach put together a highlight film of Barry on the football field and sent it to Nebraska, which returned it without even looking at it. Later, they were sorry. Mr. Sanders not only played extremely well for Oklahoma State University but also became a star for the Detroit Lions.¹⁶⁵
- A visitor to the house owned by the parents of Yoshiko Uchida, author of *Journey to Topaz*, slipped and fell down the four front steps outside. Therefore, her mother took action and painted PLEASE WATCH YOUR STEP on the four front steps — one word per step. Unfortunately, while painting, she put the words in the wrong order, so that visitors read STEP YOUR WATCH PLEASE while descending the steps.¹⁶⁶
- On October 18, 1981, Wake Forest was playing Maryland in football. A rainstorm knocked out the telephone lines, so Assistant Maryland Coach Jerry Eisman, who was in the press box, started communicating with his bench by walkie-talkie. Suddenly, a voice came over the walkie-talkie: “Get off! This is a police emergency frequency.” Mr. Eisman replied, “This is an emergency — it’s third down!”¹⁶⁷
- During the 1946 game between Notre Dame and Army, Notre Dame quarterback Johnny Lujack was intercepted three times by Army safety man Arnold Tucker. After the game, Notre Dame coach Frank Leahy asked his quarterback, “Tell me, Johnny, why did you throw so many passes to Tucker?” Mr. Lujack replied, “Coach, he was the only man open.”¹⁶⁸
- Anna Pavlova and her dance troupe once performed in a theater in which the only way to go across the back of the stage behind the rear curtain was to go through the men’s dressing room. When Ms. Pavlova was forced to go through the men’s dressing room, she said, “I no look! I no look!”¹⁶⁹
- When she was growing up, ballerina Darci Kistler was asked to appear in a scene in the movie *The Turning Point*, which starred Mikhail Baryshnikov. Unfortunately, as she and her family discovered when they went to see the movie, Darci’s scene was cut.¹⁷⁰

Money

- Richard Tucker negotiated his own New York Met contracts with Sir Rudolf Bing, who was also a tough negotiator. At one point, the two disagreed over how much Mr. Tucker would be paid per performance, with Sir Rudolf offering \$700 and Mr. Tucker holding out for \$750. Finally, Mr. Tucker offered to let a coin flip decide how much he would be paid for singing: “Let’s say if it’s heads, you win and I get \$700. If it’s tails, you pay me \$750.” Before Sir Rudolf could agree, the coin was flipped. The two watched it land on the carpet, then Mr. Tucker said, “Heads! Damn! As the saying goes, Mr. Bing, ‘Win some, lose some.’ Today I had the luck of the Irish. The h*ll of it is, I’m Jewish. So \$700 it is!” Later, Sir Rudolf called this “the most unorthodox negotiation I can recall.”¹⁷¹
- As a child early in the 20th century, Willie Covan was touring as a dancer with several other children. Out West, a cowboy saw him and the other dancers and asked if they wanted to make some money. They were agreeable, so the cowboy loaded them up in a battered Ford and took them to a saloon out in the country. The children danced, the cowboys in the saloon threw coins, and the children picked up the coins, stuffed them in their pockets, and continued dancing. Afterwards, the children were really excited because their pockets were filled with

coins — pennies, they thought, which were worth something back then. However, the cowboy asked them to take a look at the coins. They did and discovered they were gold coins. A gold rush was occurring in those parts, and the cowboys were happy to pay extremely well for entertainment.¹⁷²

- While working together on the movie *The Hustler*, about some people who bet on games of pool, Paul Newman challenged Jackie Gleason to play pool and make a friendly wager of a dollar a ball, not knowing that Mr. Gleason was quite the pool player due to a job in his youth that allowed him to play as much pool as he wanted for free. Mr. Gleason ran 50 balls straight, and Mr. Newman didn't even get to chalk his cue. Mr. Gleason later joked, "The b*stard got even with me, though. Next day, he paid me off with a jar filled with five thousand pennies."¹⁷³

- Both Andrew Tobias, author of *The Only Investment Guide You'll Ever Need*, and Janet Tavakoli, author of *Dear Mr. Buffet: What an Investor Learns 1,269 Miles from Wall Street*, know a lot about money and stock. In October of 2007, Ms. Tavakoli severely criticized the stock of Merrill Lynch, which was selling at \$75 a share. Mr. Tobias e-mailed her and asked, "Where's the stock going?" She replied, "I don't know, but not in MY portfolio." As I said, she knows a lot about money and stock — the stock then fell to \$11 a share.¹⁷⁴

- While husband-and-wife dancers Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis were touring together with the Ziegfeld Follies, they occasionally found themselves short of money. Once they needed \$6 to make a short bus ride but Mr. Shawn had only \$5 on him. Ms. St. Denis came up with 95 cents in silver and two pennies. Mr. Shawn then searched his pockets and found three more cents. They then bought their tickets and boarded the bus, without even a cent on them. And yet they were making \$3500 a week.¹⁷⁵

- Judy Blume's series of *Fudge* books have been amazingly popular. Elliott, her grandson, inspired one of the *Fudge* books. They were eating in a restaurant at Key West, and Elliott asked his grandmother to buy him some wearable art from a street vendor. She told him that she didn't have any money, so he requested that she pay a visit to the nearest ATM machine. This inspired the book *Double Fudge*, in which Fudge becomes obsessed with money and with what money can buy.¹⁷⁶

- Johnny Logan was batting for the Braves when umpire Al Barlick called a strike on him. Mr. Logan disagreed with the call, so he took his bat and used it to draw a line in the dirt a few inches inside, which was where he thought the ball had been. Umpire Barlick did not say a word, but he took the bat from him and used it to write in the dirt, "\$50 fine," then went back to umpiring.¹⁷⁷

- Geri Jewell has cerebral palsy, but she didn't let it stop her from becoming a professional comedian. The first time she appeared at the Comedy Store she wore a T-shirt she had made that said, "I'm Not Drunk. I Have Cerebral Palsy." She then told the audience, "Each one of these letters cost thirty cents, you guys. This is one time I wish I had polio instead." The crowd loved her.¹⁷⁸

- Under dance teacher Nicolas Legat, André Eglevsky learned how to turn 12 pirouettes in a row. He soon learned to put this accomplishment to good use. As an impoverished dancer in New York, Mr. Eglevsky used to get money to buy his lunch by betting with George Balanchine that he could turn 12 pirouettes in a row.¹⁷⁹

- My brother George is a big tipper. He leaves tips of 30 percent, 40 percent, 50 percent, and sometimes more of the cost of the meal. (Advice to servers: Keep his coffee cup full.) As an extra, added attraction, he uses his knowledge of origami to fold the tip into an interesting shape.¹⁸⁰
- Willie, the son of the great 19th-century actor Joseph Jefferson, once cabled him to send £200 at once. Mr. Jefferson cabled back, “What for?” His son sent back this reply: “For Willie.” Mr. Jefferson sent the money.¹⁸¹
- Enrico Caruso was walking on a road in Italy when a boy asked him for a penny. Mr. Caruso asked, “And if I don’t give you a penny, what then?” The boy replied, “Then, signor, I will still have the sun.”¹⁸²
- Sir Rudolf Bing was once asked if Birgit Nilsson was difficult to work with. He replied, “Not at all. You put enough money in, and glorious sound comes out.”¹⁸³

Mothers

- The paparazzi could be annoying to Audrey Hepburn. Once, a photograph of Audrey with her newly bearded son appeared in a magazine. Because of the new beard, the paparazzi had not recognized her son, so this caption appeared with the photograph: “*Audrey com il nuovo amore della sua vita.*” Translation: “Audrey with the new love of her life.” She said, “Well, apart from the ‘new,’ for once they got something right.” That was one media photograph she cut out and framed.¹⁸⁴
- Hal Lebovits used to be a Cleveland sports columnist, and before that he was a football referee. In one game, he threw a player out of the game, and after the game, the boy’s father — a big bruiser — looked him up and asked, “Why’d you throw my boy out of the game?” Mr. Lebovits explained that the boy had become frustrated and had thrown a punch. The boy’s father thought a moment, said, “Takes after his mother,” and left.¹⁸⁵
- As a boy, George W. Bush used profanity — something that his mother, Barbara, did not like. One day, they were playing golf. George hit a bad shot on the first hole, and he swore out loud. His mother told him not to use profanity, but George swore out loud on the second hole, too. Barbara ordered him to leave, and George sat in the car while Barbara and a friend (actually, George’s friend) played the remaining 16 holes of golf.¹⁸⁶

Movies

- When Charlie Chaplin was directing and starring in *Modern Times*, he was on location with a mass of camera equipment and crewmembers. He looked around, then sadly said, “We used to go into the park with a stepladder, a bucket of whitewash, and Mabel Normand, and make up a picture.”¹⁸⁷
- After actress Judi Dench won an Oscar for her performance in *Shakespeare in Love*, she flew back home to England. On the flight, many people congratulated her, and when she woke up after a nap, she even found a congratulatory note pinned to her sleeve.¹⁸⁸

Music

- Opera singers Emma Calvé and Elena Sanz once sang a duet incognito in a courtyard, where a man shouted at them from a window, “How long is this howling going to continue? Who are

these witches, destroying my peace with their hideous voices and false notes? Concierge! Concierge! Turn these women out!” Ms. Calvé and Mr. Sanz ran away. Wondering whether they had really sang badly, they went that night to a party at the Spanish Embassy, where they again sang the duet, this time to great applause. In a happy coincidence, the man who had shouted at them from his window earlier in the day was present, and he had the grace to be greatly embarrassed.¹⁸⁹

- Lionel Hale was once at a hotel in Sussex, talking with a friend about disillusionment. To illustrate a point, he said, “It is wrong to know too much. For instance, a woman is talking at the table behind me. Her speaking voice is enchanting: one could listen to it forever. I don’t wish to see this lady, for I’m sure her looks would spoil it!” His friend looked at the woman, recognized her as a talented and attractive opera/lieder singer, and replied, “You are wrong about the looks, but right about the voice. It’s Kathleen Ferrier.” It’s interesting to note that although Ms. Ferrier did grow up to become an attractive woman, when she was young her mother was worried about her looks, saying, “She’s going to be so plain.”¹⁹⁰

- Anna Pavlova and Alexandre Volinine once danced at a benefit to a waltz written and conducted by John Philip Sousa. Because the waltz was long, they met before the benefit and decided where to cut it. However, during the benefit, Mr. Sousa conducted the long version of the waltz, forcing Ms. Pavlova and Mr. Volinine to improvise until the waltz ended, by which time they were exhausted. Afterward, Ms. Pavlova criticized Mr. Sousa for forgetting about the cut they had decided upon. Mr. Sousa explained, “Madame, I did not forget it, but I was so happy that Pavlova was dancing my favorite waltz, that it was quite beyond my power to end it so quickly.”¹⁹¹

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart once wrote an opera about the legendary lover Don Juan. His opera *Don Giovanni* includes an aria in which the lover’s conquests are enumerated: 91 in Turkey, 100 in France, 231 in Germany, 640 in Italy, 1,003 in Spain — in total, 2,065. However, since Don Giovanni’s number of successful seductions in his own opera is zero, this enumeration may be an exaggeration.¹⁹²

- Early in her career, Marian Anderson, an African-American contralto, sang for Finnish composer Jean Sibelius in his villa. After her song, Mr. Sibelius called for champagne rather than coffee, and he complimented her in a toast by saying that the roof of his home was too low for her voice. Later, he wrote the song “Solitude” and dedicated it to her.¹⁹³

- Choreographer Tommy Tune says that when he listens to music he sees steps in his head. For example, he once went to a dentist for a two-hour appointment, and the dentist put on a Steely Dan album. The album was so fabulous that Mr. Tune’s “inner body started dancing,” and when Mr. Tune left the dentist’s office, he was carrying the album with him.¹⁹⁴

- After reading a book titled *The Son of the Great Eunuch*, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart wrote a Broadway musical based on it. In the musical, the son has no interest in becoming a eunuch. At one point, he is being carried away so the operation can be performed, and Mr. Rodgers’ music includes a few bars of Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker Suite*.¹⁹⁵

- Serious music can pop up when you don’t expect it. George Balanchine’s *Square Dance* includes a lot of swing-your-partner steps and do-si-dos — but they are performed to the music of Italian composers Arcangelo Corelli and Antonio Vivaldi.¹⁹⁶

- When violinist Norman Foster auditioned for the London Symphony Orchestra, conductor André Previn asked, “What are you going to play?” Mr. Foster replied, “If you don’t know it when you hear it, then we’re both wasting our time.”¹⁹⁷
- Not all elevator music is bad. Pianist Richard Goode was once in an elevator where the music was a Chopin nocturne. Even after arriving at his floor, Mr. Goode stayed in the elevator, listening to the nocturne until it was over.¹⁹⁸

Chapter 5: From Names to Work

Names

- While playing football at the University of Tennessee, Peyton Manning watched so much film that he acquired a new nickname: Caveman. He was also such a good passing quarterback that a street in Knoxville acquired a new name and sign: Peyton Manning Pass. Mr. Manning was loved in Tennessee. For one thing, he did not pass up his senior year to turn pro, although he would have made millions. In fact, the Tennessee Legislature passed this resolution: “In this time of unbridled greed and diminished loyalty, it is indeed refreshing to see a young man honor his commitments to his school and his teammates. He represents everything that is admirable about our young people today.”¹⁹⁹

- Dancers Mikhail Baryshnikov and Lisa Rhinehart have a dog named Jesse that they found nursing a litter of puppies under an abandoned car. They found good homes for the puppies, and they decided to keep Jesse for themselves. Jesse has a nickname — Nostradogus — because she predicts when bad storms are coming. Two days before the bad storm arrives, she hides and trembles. They think that Jesse must have lived through some bad storms when she was homeless.²⁰⁰

- When he was a child, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders had a dog named Foffy, which in its old age ate too much of everything. When Timothy’s first child, Isca, was born, her eating habits resembled those of the elder Foffy, and soon Isca had a nickname: Foffy. Fortunately, when Isca became older and wanted to know where her nickname of Foffy had come from, she thought the explanation was funny.²⁰¹

- At a party once, a rich woman imperiously gestured at Groucho Marx and said, “Come here, you. I want to talk to you.” This rankled on Groucho’s nerves, so he said, “Who are you to speak to anyone in that tone? You’ve got a nerve.” “I’m Mrs. Vanderbilt,” the woman replied. “Oh, I know you,” Groucho said. “They named some alley in New York after you.”²⁰²

- In the British Isles, Grampian Television was formed. However, the first name proposed was not Grampian Television, but Scottish Highlands and Islands Television. The name was abandoned once people looked at its initials.²⁰³

- When talk show host Oprah Winfrey bought a Chicago production studio in 1988, she named it “Harpo” because “Oprah” spelled backwards is “Harpo.”²⁰⁴

Old Age

- *Guardian* journalist Oliver Burkeman once asked his 85-year-old grandmother whether her old age had brought her happiness in any way. She replied that her old age had made it easier to get rid of telemarketers. For example, if a telemarketer started telling her about “broadband internet,” she simply told the telemarketer, “I’m in my 80s!” The telemarketer would assume that she was too old to understand or care about the definition of broadband internet and so the telemarketer would hang up the telephone. (Actually, she understands perfectly well what broadband internet is.)²⁰⁵

- Someone once asked Dodger Duke Snider what batting average Ty Cobb would have if he were batting against the pitchers of today. Mr. Snider replied that Ty Cobb would probably

have an average of between .250 and .300. His questioner was surprised: “Why, Ty Cobb batted .367 lifetime over a 24-year career. You mean he’d hit only .250 today against modern pitchers?” Mr. Snider pointed out, “Well, you have to realize that Ty Cobb would be over 90 years old.”²⁰⁶

Parents

- Mystery writer Agatha Christie learned to read at an early age, but this upset her mother, who believed that it was bad for children to read before reaching age eight. Therefore, her mother tried to cut down on young Agatha’s reading by not allowing her to read during the morning hours. Sometimes, however, young Agatha used to hide and read a book in the morning anyway.²⁰⁷

- NBA star Kevin Garnett’s biological father was named O’Lewis McCullough, but his nickname while he was playing on his high-school basketball team was Bye Bye because so many times when you looked for him he was leading a fast break. Of course, Mr. Garnett plays basketball well, too, and when he got his first NBA paycheck, he bought his mother a house.²⁰⁸

Parties

- The football team of Macalaster College in St. Paul, Minnesota, lost 50 games in a row before finally winning, 17-14, in its 1981 season-opening game against Mt. Senario College of Wisconsin. However, this didn’t make the students of Macalaster happy. One sophomore student complained, “We party before and after every home loss. Now there won’t be anything to look forward to.”²⁰⁹

- Comte Robert de Montesquiou lived in an exquisitely decorated house filled with works of art. In fact, he admitted that at his parties, the only troublesome aspect of the decor was the guests.²¹⁰

Practical Jokes

- A Notre Dame tradition at the end of spring training was a game between the old-timers and the new varsity. The old-timers were varsity players who were graduating as well as some former players who were now alumni. At age 35, Notre Dame coach Knute Rockne, who had played for the school, decided to put himself in the game for two plays. For the first play, all of the players on his side deliberately refrained from blocking, allowing all 11 players on the new varsity to tackle him. Knute picked himself up, laughed, and on the next play threw a pass for very good yardage, then took himself out of the game. This is what he did in real games, too. He would not take a player out of the game after the player had made a bad play; instead, he would let the player make a good play, and then he would take him out. That way, he boosted the player’s confidence rather than destroyed it.²¹¹

- Often, people know their singing idols only through records and not through live performances, so they have little idea what their idols look like. Baritones Adolfo Mariani and Titta Ruffo once were in a restaurant talking about and comparing the great baritones of the past and the present when their waiter told them, “You signori know NOTHING about baritones. You haven’t even mentioned the greatest of them all, Titta Ruffo, who comes from my hometown, Pisa.” Wanting to have some fun, Mr. Ruffo told the waiter, “Oh, come off it. Compared with Riccardo Stracciari, Ruffo’s voice was a f*rt.” The waiter was offended —

until Mr. Ruffo identified himself, and then the waiter was overcome with joy to meet the baritone he so much admired.²¹²

- Famous pianist Moritz Rosenthal traveled with a silent keyboard so that he could practice in his hotel and not disturb the other guests. Once, a maid entered his room and, astonished, saw him playing the keyboard although she heard no sound. He told her that he was playing a magic piano. Its sound was beautiful, but people who had sinned within the last 24 hours could not hear it. The maid blushed and ran out of the room.²¹³

- Oakland Raiders coach John Madden used to start practices by saying, “OK, let’s get started.” Linebacker Ted “Mad Stork” Hendricks borrowed a horse one day, rode onto the football field just before practice, and said, “Coach, let’s get started!”²¹⁴

Problem-Solving

- The general managers of opera houses have to know how to handle opera singers who call in sick when what they suffer from is just an attack of nerves. Metropolitan Opera general manager Giulio Gatti-Cazazza was not surprised when tenor Giacomo Lauri-Volpi called in with a sore throat, saying that he could not sing that night. Mr. Gatti-Cazazza knew that Mr. Lauri-Volpi was NOT sick, but he murmured a few sympathetic words and told him not to worry, for he would find a replacement to sing in his place that night. He waited a little while, and then he called Mr. Lauri-Volpi to tell him that Beniamino Gigli — Mr. Lauri-Volpi’s arch-rival — was in wonderful voice and had agreed to sing in Mr. Lauri-Volpi’s place that night. Soon after Mr. Gatti-Cazazza had hung up the telephone, it rang again. Mr. Lauri-Volpi was calling to tell him that his throat was much better and that he could sing after all. No fool, Mr. Gatti-Cazazza had not even bothered to call Mr. Gigli, but had made up the story of Mr. Gigli replacing Mr. Lauri-Volpi.²¹⁵

- When he was a kid, Jason Kidd was often the very youngest player on the basketball court. This meant that he was often the last player chosen, and sometimes when lots of bigger, older players were around, he was not chosen at all. Therefore, in order to get chosen quicker and to get playing time, he learned to pass. He says, “I figured the bigger kids would want me on their team if they knew I was more interested in getting them the ball and their shots in than in putting the ball up myself.” Jason became good very quickly. In high school, he was such a star that he autographed basketballs so they could be sold to raise money for his school. A basketball that he had autographed was once auctioned off for \$750. In the NBA, he was a star point guard.²¹⁶

- The Southwest Florida International Airport had a problem with an overabundance of birds camping out on the runways. Occasionally, collisions occurred between the birds and the aircraft, and not unsurprisingly, the birds suffered the greatest amount of damage. This is not to say that the aircraft did not sustain expensive damage in the collisions. Very definitely, the aircraft did. Fortunately, the airport officials found a way to reduce the number of collisions and to avoid killing birds and having aircraft damaged. They simply hired the services of a dog. Before an aircraft lands, they let loose the dog and he very happily clears the landing area. The first dog whose services they hired was named Jet, a name he acquired before being trained to do this particular job. After Jet was retired, they hired the services of a new dog, whose name was Radar.²¹⁷

- While touring in California, Emma Calvé awaited a registered letter. Hearing that it had arrived, she went to the post office to pick it up. However, she lacked identification papers and the post office clerk told her that she did not look like Ms. Calvé, whom he had seen on stage recently. The clerk then told his friends, “Calvé’s much prettier than this one!” Ms. Calvé overheard what he had said and replied, “I am delighted that I appear to be more beautiful than I am. I will sing the ‘Habañera’ for you, and I hope my voice at least will seem as good nearby as it does at a distance!” Apparently, her voice did seem as good nearby as it did at a distance, for the clerk gave her the letter.²¹⁸

- Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne was a master at motivating his team to win. At halftime, Northwestern led, 10-0, and in the locker room Knute’s players, who realized that they had played poorly, waited for him to show up to give them a pep talk — and they waited, and they waited. Finally, Knute opened the door and took one step into the locker room, then he pretended to be horrified and said, “Pardon me, girls. I thought this was the Notre Dame team.” In those sexist times, this was enough to rally the Fighting Irish to a 13-10 victory.²¹⁹

- Jim Thorpe played for the Carlisle Indians, a team that upset the powerful Army team in football. At one point, Mr. Thorpe ran for what seemed to be a touchdown, but a referee caught Little Vederneck holding, declared the touchdown void, and penalized Carlisle 15 yards. Mr. Thorpe walked over to Little Vederneck and told him, “I’m going to carry the ball again. This time, put your hands in your pockets.” On the next play, Little Vederneck put his hands in his pockets, Mr. Thorpe carried the ball, and Mr. Thorpe ran 90 yards for a touchdown.²²⁰

- Marvel Comics maven Stan Lee used to ride horses in Central Park. Galloping was forbidden, but Mr. Lee wanted to gallop, so whenever a mounted police officer saw him galloping, he would urge the horse to gallop faster and he would yell to the police officer, “I can’t stop him. He’s running away with me! Help!” The mounted police officer would chase after Mr. Lee, who kept yelling for help. Eventually, the police officer would catch and stop the horse, then tell Mr. Lee to ride a horse he could control next time.²²¹

- Physicist Stephen Hawking suffers from Lou Gehrig’s disease. His first wife took as much care of him as she could, but eventually the disease progressed so much that he required extra help. Therefore, the Hawkings invited research students to live with them with free room and board, provided that they help take care of Professor Hawking. Professor Hawking has pointed out one disadvantage of this arrangement: “It was hard for a student to be in awe of his professor after he has helped him to the bathroom.”²²²

- Part of Rudolf Bing’s job as a manager in opera was keeping singers happy. While working at Glyndebourne in England, he knew that occasionally Salvatore Baccaloni, who sang the part of Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, would angrily burst into his office and start shouting. Mr. Bing did not understand Italian, but he would listen until Mr. Baccaloni stopped shouting, then he would give him a £5 note. This always made Mr. Baccaloni happy.²²³

- In 1915, Jim Thorpe played his first professional football game. His team, the Canton Bulldogs, played the Massillon Tigers, one of whose stars was Knute Rockne. Mr. Rockne tackled Mr. Thorpe twice in a row, and then Mr. Thorpe ran right over Mr. Rockne, knocking him out. When Mr. Rockne regained consciousness, Mr. Thorpe told him, “That’s better, Knute. These people want to see Big Jim run!”²²⁴

- While Jim Thorpe was playing professional football, he ran into a problem with an opposing linesman who kept hitting him after he tackled him. Therefore, on the next play, Mr. Thorpe got the football and placed it on the ground between him and the linesman. Of course, the linesman picked it up — and Mr. Thorpe tackled him with such force that the linesman was knocked out.²²⁵

- Martial arts master Bruce Lee used visualization to get rid of negative thoughts. He would imagine himself writing down the negative thought on a piece of paper. Then he would imagine himself wadding up the piece of paper and setting fire to it. After the piece of paper had burned, the negative thought would no longer enter his mind.²²⁶

- Jerry Spinelli, the author of *Maniac Magee* and *Stargirl*, wrote at home in a house with six kids. Of course, they made a lot of noise, so he bought a gizmo that made ocean sounds such as surf in an attempt to drown out the noise of the kids. Did it work? Mr. Spinelli says that “there’s no surf that’s a match for six kids in the house.”²²⁷

- Famous pianist Anton Rubinstein’s musical sense was, of course, well developed. Whenever he didn’t want to get out of bed, his wife knew that all she had to do was to go upstairs to the piano and play an unresolved chord. Mr. Rubinstein would jump out of bed, run upstairs to the piano, and play the finishing notes.²²⁸

- Maria Callas once performed triumphantly in Buenos Aires, Argentina, but was shocked to learn that she could not take out of the country the money she had earned there because of a law created by the Peronist government. She solved her problem by buying furs, which she was allowed to take out of Argentina.²²⁹

- Ernest O. Flatt, choreographer of *Lorelei* and *It’s a Bird, It’s a Plane, It’s Superman* on Broadway, found an interesting way to think in the midst of the bedlam that creating a musical can be. He went into a corner, looked at the two walls, and discovered that he was able to think very clearly.²³⁰

- According to comedian Tim Conway, his father was bothered by the noise of a cuckoo clock, so to solve the problem, he taped shut the door through which the cuckoo would come. At the top of each hour, he would listen to the sound of the cuckoo trying to get through the door, and then he would smile.²³¹

- While directing Joan Crawford for an episode of *Night Gallery*, Steven Spielberg worried that such a famous star wouldn’t take direction, but absolutely no problem occurred. Nevertheless, to ensure that he stayed on Ms. Crawford’s good side, he gave her a rose every day.²³²

- Olga Preobrajenska was a very strong ballerina and teacher of ballet. As an old lady, she lived in a nursing home, but whenever she was fed up with the nurses, she stacked all the bedroom furniture against the door so that they couldn’t come in and bother her.²³³

- Loïe Fuller (1862-1928), an American dancer who took Paris by storm, started a dancing school whose pupils danced for her. Whenever they were on tour, she insisted that they wear matching red coats to decrease the chance of their getting lost.²³⁴

- The Spanish pianist and conductor José Iturbi did not know English when he first arrived in England. At a cafe he wanted tea, but he was not able to make himself understood. He solved the problem by sitting at a piano and playing “Tea for Two.”²³⁵

- Joel Perry knows a very effective way of getting rid of bores. Whenever a conversation becomes uninteresting to him, he simply turns the conversation to sucker-footed bats, and the person who has been talking to him quickly goes away.²³⁶
- Lots of people play a parlor game in which they answer the question, “If you could bring one thing out of a burning house, what would it be?” Comedian Kate Clinton answers the question by saying, “The fire.”²³⁷

Weddings

- Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates married Melinda French, who was a product manager at Microsoft. He proposed on an airplane, and when she accepted, he had the airplane land in Omaha, Nebraska, where his friend Warren Buffett owned a jewelry store that he (Mr. Buffett) ordered to be open on Sunday so that Melinda could choose a ring. Jay Leno joked on *The Tonight Show* about what would be appropriate wedding guests for a man who is occasionally the richest man in the world: A Nintendo game would be too small a gift for such a rich man, so why not give Mr. Gates Nintendo?²³⁸
- While John F. Kennedy was running for a seat in the Senate, he stopped in Fall River, Massachusetts, and ate some cupcakes baked by “Babe” Piourde. Enjoying the taste of the cupcakes, Mr. Kennedy told Ms. Piourde, “Babe, if I ever get married, you’re going to bake the wedding cake.” On September 12, 1953, Mr. Kennedy married Jacqueline Bouvier. “Babe” Piourde baked the wedding cake.²³⁹
- When Bharati Mukherjee, author of *The Tiger’s Daughter*, came to the United States and fell in love, she and Clark Blaise were married after a courtship of only two weeks. Only after she was married did she tell her parents, who were busy arranging a different marriage for her back in her native India.²⁴⁰

Work

- Comedian Jackie Gleason’s hiring procedures were somewhat unorthodox. He once hired a woman named Sydell to be his secretary because he liked her answer to one of his questions during an interview. He asked, “Do you know shorthand?” She replied, “Yes, but it takes me longer.” Sydell turned out to be an excellent secretary. Mr. Gleason once wanted to talk to President Lyndon Baines Johnson. She got through to an undersecretary of state who first apologized to her because the President was meeting with his cabinet and then promised her that President Johnson would return her call later. President Johnson, a big fan of Mr. Gleason, in fact returned her call. On a train trip, Mr. Gleason ordered a dozen barbequed pork ribs in the train’s dining car. Unfortunately, they weren’t on the menu. No barbequed pork ribs? When you have a secretary like Sydell, that is not a problem. The train stopped, she sent a telegram ahead, and soon the train stopped again, and a deliveryman from a Chinese restaurant met the train and delivered the barbequed pork ribs.²⁴¹
- While working at McDonald’s, Joel Perry discovered that he absolutely hated to do some jobs — he also discovered that if he did the jobs incompetently he would no longer have to do them. For example, he hated unloading the truck and putting the supplies in the storeroom, so he would carelessly throw boxes onto high shelves and seem to accidentally break fluorescent lights. After about 15 minutes, he was not allowed to unload the truck and instead started pouring drinks again. At a later job, his boss asked to bring him coffee. Mr. Perry added to the

coffee Sweet 'n' Low — and cigarette ashes. Very quickly, his boss stopped asking Mr. Perry to bring him coffee.²⁴²

- Theater director Tyrone Guthrie could be outspoken. Once, several VIPs tried to attend a first rehearsal in America, arriving at the theater and taking seats. Mr. Guthrie walked over to them and said, “Distinguished guests, we are now going to get to work, so will you kindly f**k off.”²⁴³
- When Pierre Monteux was in his eighties, he signed a contract that made him principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra for the next 25 years — but he insisted that the contract include an option allowing him to conduct for an additional 25 years.²⁴⁴
- Violinist Josef Gingold had a good sense of humor. Once he played with the NBC Concert Orchestra so successfully that one of his more competitive colleagues was somewhat depressed. Mr. Gingold told the colleague, “Cheer up — it wasn’t that good.”²⁴⁵
- Ballet is glamorous, but it is also hard work. Ballerina Cynthia Gregory always used two pairs of pointe shoes to dance the lead in *Swan Lake*. All too soon, the first pair would be soaked with perspiration and too soft to use anymore.²⁴⁶
- In some ways, mystery writer Agatha Christie was old fashioned. Whenever she filled out a form that asked for her occupation, she wrote “married woman” rather than “author,” because for her writing was a sideline, rather than a career.²⁴⁷
- Phyllis Diller found it easy to acquire experience as a comedian. She simply called the Red Cross and said, “I’m available for shows. Where do you want me?” There wasn’t any pay, of course, but the experience was valuable.²⁴⁸
- Some agents go out of their way to help a client. While in New York City, actor Ralph Richardson started to paint, so whenever his New York agent came over to his apartment to listen to his lines, she also posed nude for him.²⁴⁹
- When F. Scott Fitzgerald’s first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was published, he immediately quit his job, and then ran out into the street to stop cars and tell people he was a published author.²⁵⁰

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Appendix A: About the Author

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B: 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

Notes

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