



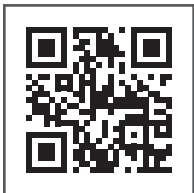
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# UCAST NEWS

Volume 1 Issue 5

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## The Return of the Lakers and Dodgers

*by Alec Moore*

In a 16-day span in October, LA's two most famous sports franchises each won championships. This short span between titles is a unique 2020 phenomenon and hopefully something that will never be able to be duplicated, future pandemics willing. The Lakers struck first (and four months belatedly due to the pandemic's causing the NBA to shut down before they implemented the "bubble" in Orlando), beating the Miami Heat. The Dodgers were next, taking down the Tampa Bay Rays in the World Series. But that wasn't the only parallel between LA's two new champion teams.

Both LA teams beat teams from Florida that were not expected to be this good this year and that were filled with relatively unknown young players, in contrast to the big names on both LA squads' rosters.

Both the Lakers and Dodgers came into the season with high expectations after trading young talent for an established-but-still-early-in-his-prime superstar during the offseason (Anthony Davis for the Lakers and Mookie Betts for the Dodgers).

Both teams also had to compete in these high expectations with local rivals who also added big-name talent. And yet Kawhi Leonard and Paul George couldn't get the Clippers past the second round of the playoffs. And Anthony Rendon and the abbreviated return of Shohei Otani to the mound couldn't get the Angels to even sniff the playoffs, despite the fact that the majority of Major League teams made the postseason this year.

Speaking of MLB's bloated 2020 playoffs that included 16 teams, this meant that both the Lakers and Dodgers each had to win four rounds of postseason play to claim their championships, a first for a Major League Baseball team (and



something which is infuriating and should never happen again).

Both title teams won in six games, giving fans just enough drama

to worry they might not win, but not so much that they had to pop pills while agonizing through a game seven.

Both are proud franchises with numerous championships that were experiencing a title drought. The Dodgers won their seventh

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## Clones Are All Around Us

*by Turner Stephens*

In 1903 the term "clon" was created by plant physiologist Herbert J. Webber describing the propagation of new plants using buds, cuttings, or bulbs. Decades later, the spelling changed to "clone" and came to refer to creating genetically identical copies of any species, animal,

plant, microorganism, or human. The cloning method chosen by a cultivator is usually the one that dramatically increases the survival rate of the plants or trees, reduces their time to grow from youth to a harvestable adult, improves yields, guarantees the plant quality remains consistent, and increases profitability.

Yet, there are negatives to all the above methods of plant cloning. One huge problem is the lack of genetic diversity otherwise found in nature which creates variety and strengths

in plants often not discovered until society needs them. Since clones all have the same genetic makeup of the original plant, they have a narrow spectrum of resistance, and diseases that harm a single cloned plant potentially can destroy an entire crop. Also, cloning can easily lead to increased commercialization and monocropping of fewer specific plants which also reduces biodiversity in agriculture.

Grapes, blueberries, bananas, apples, cherries, and fruits in general sold in US food supermarkets are grown on cloned trees or plants through the use of cuttings. Clones create stable and predictable fruit quality. The navel orange was a natural mutation discovered in

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Presto Pasta... A Place to Find Family

by John Tolson

Presto Pasta - it's a family business. Nick, one son, owns the franchise in Newbury Park. Meghan, one of the daughters, manages the Camarillo store. Two brothers, Jeff and Ken Schuberg, are the owners of the six Presto Pasta stores in Ventura and Los Angeles counties. Specifically, you will find them in:

Ventura, Camarillo, Newbury Park, Simi Valley, Granada Hills, and Valencia.

It might appear to be a restaurant "chain," however, there is a family feel to each one. Each establishment follows the same processes, policy, and procedures which gives the continuity of quality and taste that makes them very successful and allows patrons to enjoy the taste they know and love.

Presto Pasta started under the guidance of the founder, Albert Baltieri, who owned fine dining restaurants in the Santa Barbara area. Baltieri wanted to bring the quality recipes of his grandmother to a broader segment of the population.

If you need even more reasons to love Presto Pasta, check this out! Each location is dedicated to being highly involved in their respective communities. There is a local fundraiser being held



at one of the locations most every week. When government restrictions are not in place, the ambiance of each interior is very inviting. Where allowed, outdoor dining is currently available, as well as take out and usage of delivery services. Catering also can make a family or business event a treat, and convenient. The Camarillo location also has a drive-thru.

Looking to try something different than a burger or taco? Stop by Presto Pasta and say "hi" to one of the family! It's an Italian tradition! Visit [www.prestopasta.com](http://www.prestopasta.com) for more information.

*John Tolson is the Marketing & Membership Director for the Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce. Look for more insights each month on this now regular portion of the U Cast News. Have a recommendation of a business to have John review, please email John at his email address: [john@simichamber.org](mailto:john@simichamber.org).*

Tales of Cobras, Windows, and Economic Promise

by Lance Roberts of Real Investment Advice

*The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly. ~Proverbs 15:14*

The term "cobra effect" is used when an attempted solution to a problem worsens the problem by unleashing unintended consequences. The name derives from a tale originating in Delhi, India. The government's concern about rampant venomous cobras prompted them to offer a bounty for each dead snake. Although the strategy initially worked well, citizens began to breed cobras for income. When the government discovered what people were doing, they ended the bounty program. The cobra breeders, with worthless venomous snakes on their hands, set them free. Despite the best intentions, the solution made Delhi's cobra problem worse.

As you might by now have figured, the cobra effect surrounds us in politics and economics.



Bastiat's Brilliance

Nineteenth-century French economist Frederic Bastiat has a well-known theory about unintended consequences. He uses a parable to explain that which is seen and what is not seen. His lesson starts with a stone that shatters a shopkeeper's window. Most noticeable to the town's people is the economic benefit of the broken window. In their minds, the shopkeeper must buy a window and employ a glazier to install it. As an aside, many economists peddle similar logic in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Bastiat's brilliance is pointing out the not so obvious opportunity cost of the broken window. In this case, after paying to fix the window, the shopkeeper has less money to spend elsewhere. The shopkeeper could have bought new equipment making his shop more productive and profitable. The benefits of which would have had a positive impact on the shopkeeper's wealth but also the economy and the populace.

Instead, replacing the window is at best a neutral economic event. There is undoubtedly no net economic gain, but there is an opportunity cost. Financial and material resources were used in a non-productive manner.

With cobras and broken windows in mind, we look at the Federal Reserve's long-standing monetary policies.

Federal Reserve

Based on their actions over the past several decades, the Fed has increasingly taken more latitude in its mandate. They rationalize these actions through a variety of speeches, editorials, and white papers. Over the years, they have redefined their job from an entity intended only to supplement our capitalist free-market economy to an actively interventionist player.

The Federal Reserve Act, governing monetary policy, does not give them that authority. It simply reads:

*The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal Open Market Committee shall maintain long-run growth of the monetary and credit aggregates commensurate with the economy's long-run potential to increase production, so as to promote effectively the goals of maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates.*

Legislators responsible for oversight of the Fed have not only failed to hold the Fed accountable but abet them in their mission creep. Although their power is supposed to be strictly limited to monetary policy actions, many of the tools they now employ spill over into the realm of fiscal policy. Such activities clearly jeopardize their independence and, therefore, their integrity.

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## Adventist Health Simi Valley Foundation Names New President

Ben Chandler, a seasoned Southern California philanthropy professional, has been selected as president of the Adventist Health Simi Valley Foundation, hospital president Jennifer Swenson announced this month.

In his new role, Chandler will be responsible for building and developing a philanthropy program that will help Adventist Health Simi Valley plan for future growth and transform the healthcare landscape for its community.

"We're so blessed to have somebody with Ben's talents, experience and passion for healthcare development leading our foundation," Adventist Health Simi Valley President Jennifer Swenson said. "He's an asset to our leadership team, and we're confident that through his work

he will help elevate the healthcare experience in Simi Valley."

Chandler has worked in philanthropy for more than 23 years, serving in fundraising positions for UCLA School of Law; University of Virginia's Darden School of Business; Seminary of the Southwest; TrinityCare Hospice Foundation; and most recently, as chief philanthropy officer at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in Mission Hills.

"I believe strongly in having high-quality healthcare available to people in their communities," Chandler said. "No one should have to travel out of their communities for quality care. I look forward to building partnerships that will keep our patients close to home."



Ben Chandler

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## Moorpark College Recognized

Moorpark College has been chosen by the Campaign for College Opportunity as a 2020 Champion of Higher Education for the fifth consecutive year. The college was honored at a virtual ceremony Thursday, November 19th featuring the Honorable California Secretary of State Alex Padilla and the Honorable Assembly member Marc Berman.

"It is an honor to have Moorpark College recognized once again as a Champion of Higher Education," said Julius Sokenu, Interim President of Moorpark College.

"This award is a tribute to the outstanding dedication of our faculty and staff. I am especially proud that our first generation and underrepresented students excel in transfer because our faculty and staff have high expectations of all students which they couple with high support."

The virtual event can be viewed at [www.CollegeCampaign.org](http://www.CollegeCampaign.org)

Information about Moorpark College can be found at [www.MoorparkCollege.edu/Academics](http://www.MoorparkCollege.edu/Academics).

## Clones, *continued from page 1*

1820 in Brazil. The Granny Smith Apple was also a natural mutation that occurred in Australia in 1868. Today, both these kinds of fruit trees are clones propagated using cuttings, genetically identical to those original trees from the 1800s.

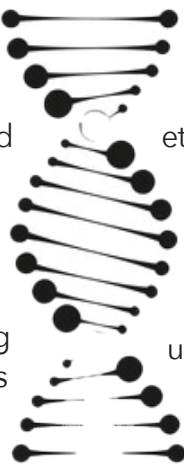
The use of plant cuttings has been in use since the Middle Ages in European and Chinese agriculture. Grafting plants, also a cloning technique, was documented around 300BC in Greece. The Tissue culture cloning method, also known as micropropagation, grows plant cells in agar jelly or a broth growth medium. This method was first used in the 1950s to produce orchids and in the 1970s on other plants.

Tissue culture cloning labs have grown African oil palm, plantain, pine, banana, date, eggplant, jojoba, pineapple, rubber tree, cassava, yam, sweet potato, and tomato.

Cloning is a common theme in sci-fi literature and movies. However, it almost always deals with the concept of human cloning. Books such as Brave New World, Cloud Atlas, and the Kiln People describe future worlds where human clones are common.

However, today the practice of cloning a human is officially banned in 46 of the world's 195 nations. The United Nations adopted a non-binding resolution banning cloning in 2005 called the Declaration on Human Cloning. The US has no national policy banning human cloning but does have regulations limiting funding and procedures related to human cloning.

Although there are scientists who support the concept of human reproductive cloning, most scientists and medical research organizations formally oppose it because clones could be abused and it would create unforeseen problems in society. In 2013 the US Supreme Court ruled that human genes cannot be patented because naturally occurring genes are not a new intellectual property. However, the Court ruled DNA assembled in a laboratory was eligible for patenting because human-altered DNA chains are not found in nature. Currently, there seems to be enough opposition to human cloning to keep it from becoming a commodity business,



like that of selling animals and plants, because the international community of scientists, governments, and ethicists cannot accept the idea of manufacturing disposable humans or human slaves.

There are 3 types of cloning in use today that involve using human or animal DNA - gene cloning, reproductive cloning, and therapeutic cloning. The research most related to human cloning is called therapeutic cloning which is still mostly experimental and theoretical. Because human cloning is illegal, therapeutic cloning focuses almost entirely on stem cell research. Embryonic stem cell research seeks to discover potential cures for inherited and chronic human diseases, traumatic injuries, and to regenerate organs. Embryonic stem cell research requires embryos that have been grown from human eggs fertilized in vitro at fertilization labs. The stem cells are donated with informed consent from donors. However, critics point out that cloned stem cells are often weaker than the original and mutations can occur

in cells that are transferred to a patient. A report from Grand View Research, an international research company, estimates that by 2027 worldwide stem cell revenues will reach \$17.9 billion. It is estimated by some critics that for therapeutic cloning to become a viable treatment to cure diseases, at least 1 million human eggs per year will be needed. Egg collecting is painful for donors and extremely expensive. Only 400,000 human eggs have been gathered by US laboratories over the last two decades so the standard embryonic stem cell cloning process cannot be considered practical at this time. However, in 2018 Japanese scientists did not use human donor eggs but instead changed human blood cells into stem cells. The scientists then modified the stem cells into human eggs. These eggs were too immature to be fertilized to make a baby.

Scan here to read the rest of this article.

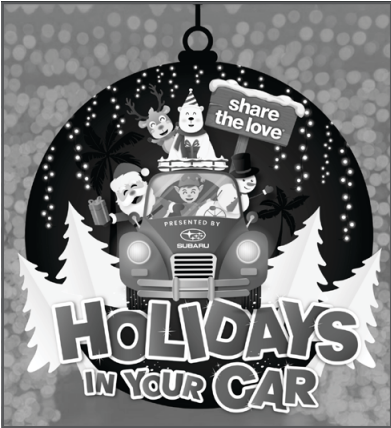


Holidays In Your Car

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From the creators of the popular “Concerts in Your Car” series, CBF Productions is kicking off the season with their new “Holidays In Your Car” immersive drive-thru experience. “Holidays In Your Car” is one of southern California’s largest drive-thru holiday lights spectacular, offering a riveting symphony of sight and sound. The limited-run event series is set to launch at the Ventura County Fairgrounds on Sunday, November 22nd, followed by a second location at Del Mar Fairgrounds on December 5th. Both venues will host the series through January 2, 2021.

“Holidays in Your Car” invites you and your family to buckle up and make lasting memories from the comfort and safety of your own vehicle. Turn off your headlights



and turn on your FM radio as you drive through an enchanting mile-and-a-half display of over one million dazzling LED lights, accompanied by your favorite holiday tunes. Joyous holograms, and lasers have been intricately assembled by Santa’s team of elves celebrating the most magical time of the year! With some displays standing at over 40 feet in height, “Holidays in Your Car” also includes spectacular installations of high-end projections casting festive images onto sets, arches, and surfaces to create an unforgettable experience.

Ticket prices range from \$49-\$64. For tickets and full event information visit [holidaysinyourcar.com](http://holidaysinyourcar.com) or [concertsinyourcar.com](http://concertsinyourcar.com)

Let’s Learn to Thrive: Network Like Penguins and Elephants!

by Roberta Nadler

What can we learn about networking success from emperor penguins and elephants? The answer, surprisingly, is quite a lot. These two animals living in extreme conditions are master networkers.

What is networking?

Think about the word: “network.” It’s a word about process. These powerful seven letters create an idea as both a noun and a verb. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, network means “an interconnected or interrelated chain, group, or system.” Some key words in this definition are “interrelated and group.” However, the word also is a verb. Again, from Merriam-Webster, networking is defined as “the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions. Specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.”



What does this mean?

It means the very core of business relies on networking. When one is looking for a job, it’s more efficient to identify the decision-maker, rather than to go through Human Resources. When a business is seeking out more customers, it’s more cost efficient to grow through referrals rather than to pay to gain each new customer. If you are looking to enhance your business, or find a new restaurant, or for a person to repair your home, you network. The adaptive Antarctica emperor penguins have a survival system: they form a huddle in constant motion to stay warm. Likewise, businesses thrive by creating a survival system. This system includes moving in a network and process with others.

When do people network?

The answer: All the time. Millions of people are on social networks such as LinkedIn and Instagram. Entrepreneurs meet like-minded business people in organized networking groups. Some examples include TEAM Referral Network, Le Tip, and BNI. Many professional trade organizations have internal networking groups. The opportunity to learn, lead, and grow through networking is endless. Based in Ventura and Santa Clarita Counties, networking expert Karen Cormier, franchise owner of TEAM Referral Network, highlights the value of networking for local businesses in her

Continued on page 11

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Federal Reserve Snake Oil

The Fed has long led us to believe that lower interest rates produce economic growth and prosperity. Given that interest rates are a “price”, the price of money, the Fed is essentially manipulating that price in U.S. dollar terms. It is also understood that the U.S. dollar is the world’s reserve currency, which affects roughly 60% of all global transactions. That logic can only mean that the Fed is engaged in the single biggest price control scheme in human history. We are not aware of any instances where centrally planned price control efforts have produced favorable outcomes.

As we observe rising levels of geopolitical tensions, wealth

and income divergence, and civil unrest, it should be evident the cobra effect is in play. People, corporations, and governments tend to borrow and spend more when the cost of money is lower. Additionally, lower savings rates dis-incentivizes savings and thus increases consumption. The applied logic is that lower rates produce more economic activity. That is at least how the Fed and most Ph.D. economists prefer we think about low interest rates.

**Behind The Fed’s Curtain**

Now let’s look behind the curtain at the unseen. Artificially low interest rates encourage the use of debt. Debt is used to pull consumption forward. Therefore, the not so

obvious consequence of lower than appropriate rates is weaker economic activity in the future. Artificially low interest rates also inspire non-productive uses of capital and speculation instead of productivity-enhancing savings and investment. Those effects are not apparent at first because low interest rates are initially stimulative. However, as described above, the long-run outcome will be a weaker economy.

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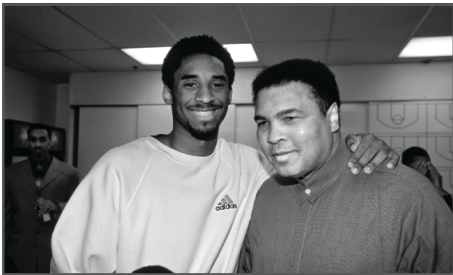
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This Month In Sports History: December

by Andrew D. Bernstein (NBA Photographer), Cowritten by Veronica An

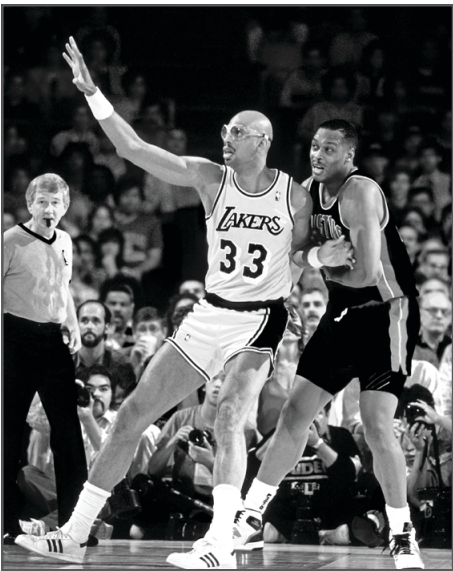


December 11

Muhammad Ali (born Cassius Clay) steps into the ring one final time to face off with Trevor Berbick in 1981. Ali, nicknamed “The Greatest,” began his professional boxing career in the light heavyweight division of the 1960 Summer Olympics. He captured the world heavyweight boxing championship in 1964. In addition to his legendary boxing career and fast footwork, Ali was also known for being a contentious objector to the Vietnam War. His refusal to the Vietnam War draft put a four-year hold on his boxing career until the Supreme Court overturned the draft evasion conviction in 1971. Despite this setback, Ali is the only three-time heavyweight boxing champion to date and has only five losses during his 35-year career, he bested 21 boxers for the world heavyweight title and won 14 unified title bouts.

December 14

During a 1975 game between the Los Angeles Lakers and Detroit Pistons, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar grabbed a record-setting 29 defensive rebounds. Abdul-Jabbar helped lead the Lakers to a 110-100 victory over the Pistons. Abdul-Jabbar was a center for the Milwaukee Bucks (1969-1975) and Los Angeles Lakers (1975-1989). He played for the Lakers during the “Showtime” era and won five championships with the team. Abdul-Jabbar won the NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP) award six times and was known for his finesse and ambidextrous skyhook shot.

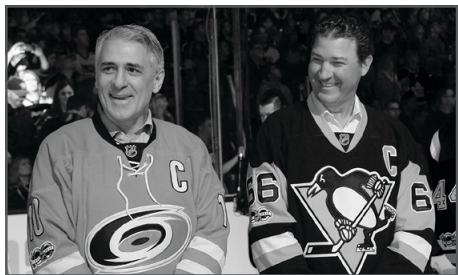


December 19

Hockey legend, Wayne Gretzky, scored his 1,000th point in 1984. Gretzky was the eighteenth player in NHL history to reach the 1,000-goal mark and, at age 23, the youngest. He scored 1,000 goals in just 424 games for the Edmonton Oilers. As the center for the Oilers, Gretzky led the team to four Stanley Cup championships. In 1988, Gretzky was traded to the Los Angeles Kings and proved to be a formidable player and led the Kings to victory over his former team. As a player, Gretzky was known for his ability to improvise creative plays, his scoring accuracy, and what some called his uncanny hockey instincts. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1999.

December 31

Mario Lemieux of the Pittsburgh Penguins scores five goals, five different ways, in a 1988 game against the New Jersey Devils. He scored on strength, on the power play, shorthanded, on a penalty shot, and into an empty net. The five goals carried the Pittsburgh Penguins to an 8-6 victory against the New Jersey Devils. He also assisted teammates on the Penguin’s other three goals. Lemieux, nicknamed “The Magnificent One,” was known for his speed, fakes, and dekes (feints). Despite numerous health problems, Lemieux was known as the “savior of the Pittsburgh Penguins” he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1997, immediately after his first retirement in 1997.



Return, continued from page 1

title, breaking a 32-year drought. The Lakers won their 17th, tying the Celtics for most all-time, and breaking a 10-year drought. But a 10-year drought for the Lakers is arguably more shocking than a 32-year drought for the Dodgers, given that the Lakers had won 10 in a 31-year span before their dry spell began.

Both teams have a lot of MVP hardware in their collections. The Dodgers have three former MVPs in Betts, Clayton Kershaw, and Cody Bellinger. And the Lakers have four former MVPs. Of course, they are all LeBron James.

Both teams even have Magic Johnson as an iconic franchise representative. Although, of course, it’s the Lakers franchise for which he became an icon, it’s the Dodgers franchise that he currently represents as a part-owner. But, having been in charge of the Lakers as their President of Basketball Operations when they brought in LeBron, Magic’s stamp looms larger on these Lakers than on the Dodgers.

Despite huge expectations and lots

of star power, both teams did have hurdles to overcome on their way to glory. The Lakers’ supporting cast for their two studs was questionable. Their rotation included big names who were past their primes like Dwight Howard and Rajon Rondo and, in Alex Caruso, a no-name who had played more games in the NBA’s developmental G League than he had in the NBA coming into this season.

If I told you that after the 2019 season the Dodgers would lose both pitchers who would go on to be the 2020 AL Cy Young second and third-place finishers for other teams (Kenta Maeda for the Twins and Hyun Jin Ryu for the Blue Jays), not get a single inning pitched out of the former Cy Young winner they acquired along with Betts (David Price sat out the season due to COVID-19 concerns), and get subpar seasons

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# The Lakers’ All-Decades Team: the Showtime ‘80s

by Dustin Brewer

After continuing to build, the 1980s saw the Los Angeles Lakers ascend to heights very few teams have achieved, as they won half the decade’s championships. Led by the Captain & a certain Magic Man, the team dominated the decade in a way the league had never seen, on and off the court. Here are the players that make up the Showtime All-Decade Team.

**PG: Earvin “Magic” Johnson** – A 6’9” point guard, Magic redefined the game. He ran the offense, threw no-look passes in an uptempo offense, and his size made him an absolute force as far as grabbing rebounds. In his first year he accomplished the very rare feat of leading a team to the NBA title as a rookie. His megawatt smile and off-court flair helped turn him into a transcendent star while his on-court feats made him one of the greatest to ever play the game.

**SG: Norm Nixon** – Playing opposite the charisma hurricane that was Magic was a bit of a thankless job, but Nixon was the absolute perfect foil for him. He often stayed on the perimeter to knock down shots created by Magic passes or else he would kick it down to one of the Lakers’ mighty forwards for an easy bucket. Throughout his six years with the Lakers, Nixon consistently averaged around 17 points and 7-8 assists per game and helped keep the Lakers’ offense high-scoring and uptempo.

**SF: Jamaal Wilkes** – In his time as a Lakers’ starting forward early in the decade, “Silk” helped bring the team three NBA titles and averaged close to 20 points. His smooth shooting touch earned him his nickname, but his high basketball IQ and penchant for clutch play are what helped make him a Lakers legend.

**PF: James Worthy** – “Big Game James” was a player that truly lived up to his moniker. He mostly averaged between 17 and 21 points in the regular season, but it was the playoffs where Worthy truly shined. Across nine playoff runs, he averaged 21.1 points and helped the Lakers bring home three NBA championships. Worthy was also the perfect teammate for Magic Johnson. Any highlight reel of either man will feature a heavy dose of the other, as Worthy was one of Magic’s go-to targets for no-look or outlet passes to help the team start a fast break.

**C: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** – Known as the “Captain,” when Kareem got to LA, he was a truly transformative and dominant force at the center position, having averaged over 30 points and 15 rebounds in his first six years with the Milwaukee Bucks. The Lakers won five NBA championships in the ‘80s, and Jabbar was a pillar of each one of those teams. Kareem actually played in every season in the ‘80s and still contributed averages of 14.6 points and 6 rebounds in 28.9 minutes at age 40 in the Showtime squad’s final championship season in 1987-88. From his unguardable skyhook to his list of accomplishments too long to list, Kareem’s name has to be near or at the top when starting a list of the greatest Lakers players ever.

**Sixth Man: Kurt Rambis** – An absolute fan-favorite, Rambis was one of the most easily identifiable players of the decade with his thick glasses and a bushy mustache. But it was Rambis’ defensive and rebounding prowess that helped him become a fan favorite player to Lakers nation. Rambis was a part of four championship teams in LA and gladly focused on doing all the dirty work that players often look to avoid. This makes him the



perfect sixth man on a team so focused on fast-paced offense.

The ‘80s made the Lakers one of the biggest, most popular franchises in all sports. With unrivaled success on the court and superstar players off the court, the team soared to

new heights. In the ‘90s there came a bit of a lull, but it wasn’t long before two players would come and etch their names into the history of the franchise forever.

Next time: The ‘90s Lakers!

## Three Moves the Dodgers Need to Make This Off-Season

by Dustin Brewer

For the first time in 32 seasons, the Los Angeles Dodgers are World Series Champions. With a deep, talented roster, many fans and analysts consider the Dodgers to be the favorites to win it all again next season. Even with all their talent, there are still a few key moves that the team needs to make to sure up their roster ahead of next season.

### Figure Out Third Base

Justin Turner has long been considered the “heart and soul” of this iteration of the Dodgers. Beloved by the fanbase and his teammates alike, at almost 36 years old, Turner is set to hit free agency this offseason. With knee issues as well as diminishing power and defensive prowess, Turner isn’t able to produce at the level the team needs him to alongside Edwin Rios. Whether they want to make a run at trading for Francisco Lindor or want to see if they can slide Corey Seager over to third, deciding what to do with or without Turner is sure to be a key part of their offseason plans.

### Address Starting Rotation

It’s easy to forget that the Dodgers spent the entire condensed season without David Price, who they acquired in the deal with Boston that brought Mookie Betts to Los Angeles. Price opted out ahead of the season’s start citing concerns

related to COVID-19 and with two more seasons at \$32M/year, the Dodgers need to know if Price is a starter that they can rely on. Adding a solid starter like Trevor Bauer would also be a great way to load up the back of the bullpen, a move that paid unbelievable dividends with Julio Urias.

### Extend Corey Seager

Injuries may have plagued the last few seasons but completely healthy this season, Seager exploded in the postseason, winning both the NLCS and World Series MVP awards with a combined 7 HRs and 16 RBIs. Having faced arbitration twice already, the Dodgers will have to pay him more in order to keep him. Though they have depth, Seager’s batting and multi-position abilities could keep an even stronger foundation for the Dodgers along with Betts and Cody Bellinger. The Dodgers haven’t shown any hesitation to make moves and pay up to maintain their competitiveness, so suddenly getting thrifty when it comes time to pay your reigning World Series MVP could leave a very sour taste in the mouths of his teammates and Dodgers fans.

The Dodgers are undoubtedly the favorites to make it to yet another World Series, it remains to be seen if they will win it.



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The Valley’s Experimental Rock Masterpiece

by Adam Papagan

Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band’s “Trout Mask Replica” is widely considered by music critics to be one of the best albums of all time. The record mixes blues, beat poetry, avant-garde compositions, and plain old-fashioned rock ‘n’ roll for a sound that is absolutely original. What many people don’t realize, however, is that the groundbreaking album began life in a modest house in Woodland Hills.

Captain Beefheart was born Don Glen Vliet in Glendale, California in 1941. Beefheart showed an early talent for drawing and sculpting, and many of his instructors considered him a child prodigy. His interest in music began around his teenage years when the family moved to Lancaster, California. There, Beefheart and his high

school pal Frank Zappa would hang out at each other’s houses, drink soda, and listen to records. Eventually Captain Beefheart relocated to Los Angeles, where he formed his own band, but found little commercial success.

Finally in 1968, Zappa offered him a recording deal on his Straight Records label with complete artistic freedom. Beefheart moved his band into his Woodland Hills home to prepare for the sessions. With no formal musical training, Captain Beefheart composed the entire album himself on piano, an instrument he had no experience playing. The parts were then transcribed by drummer John “Drumbo” French and assigned to each player.

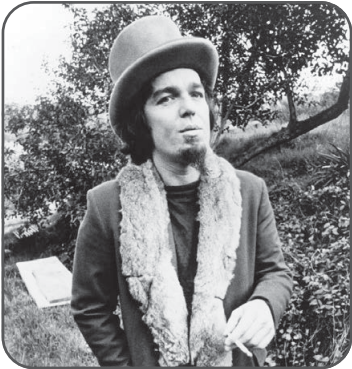
Rehearsals for the album took place over the next eight months inside the house and were grueling. The band practiced for up to fourteen hours a day. Improvisation was not allowed, and sections were to be performed exactly as written, similar to classical compositions. The band had hardly any money and was forced to survive on welfare and handouts, eating little food and conserving most of their energy for playing. Beefheart exerted total control over his band, berating them into psychological submission. No one was allowed to leave, and many of the members would later describe the atmosphere as “cult-like.”

When it finally came time to record, Zappa wanted an “ethnic field recording” sound to the album and suggested it be recorded in Beefheart’s home. Some initial demos were cut at the house, but Captain Beefheart, suffering from schizophrenia, accused Zappa of trying to record the record cheaply, and insisted on using a

proper studio. Time was booked at Whitney Studios in Glendale, and the well-rehearsed band recorded all of the music in a single eight-hour session. Vocals were overdubbed (sans headphones) during the following days and, just like that, the album was complete.

Though it sold poorly on initial release, “Trout Mask Replica” has become a venerated cult classic. Fans include “The Simpsons” creator Matt Groening and Red Hot Chili Peppers’ guitarist John Frasciante, and the album is regularly named as one of the 500 Greatest of All Time by Rolling Stone magazine. Captain Beefheart went on to a prolific recording and visual art career before his death in 2010. The house still stands today as a monument to finding creativity in unexpected places.

Adam Papagan is a historian, tour guide, and occasional consultant to The Valley Relics Museum. He is also host of the YouTube series “Rock and Roll Party!”.



Captain Beefheart

Vinyl Rules

by Amy Zabel-Nordstrom and Nathan Felmer

For the first time since the 1980s, vinyl records have outsold their contemporary counterpart, CDs. This may seem like a minor interesting fact, but the implications are vast. How can such an archaic form of media outlive its faster and, arguably, easier to use successor? Vinyl records have been around since the 1880s. For more than a century, they have allowed music lovers of every economic class the opportunity to enjoy music. Being ever industrious, audiophiles came up with new ways to deliver music to the masses, so we can listen wherever and whenever we want. From wax to vinyl, from 8-track to cassette, each evolution delivered more variety and clearer reproduction, and freed us from the limitations of a DJ/radio format.

With the digital age, in 1982 CDs made their way onto the scene. They became the most popular medium, mainly due to their convenient size and squeaky clean sound quality (a little too clean, as it turns out, as vinyl records have more organic “feel” due to the sound of the needle on the track). But the CD industry (and most music executives) couldn’t completely prepare for the next phase of music media: digital streaming (thanks, Napster... we think). Now people all over the globe have pocket-sized devices connected to the internet, and offering virtual access to every kind of music. Records were overtaken by 8-tracks, which were felled by cassettes, which were bested by CDs, only to be replaced by streaming. Who could have guessed we would circle back to our roots and find musical solace via our hundred year old great-granddad – the vinyl record?

This begs the question... why?

What gives this older and more humble means of appreciating music such an allure over its successors?

The answer, we believe, is simple: ritual. There is a certain charm, a unique sense of quality that can only exist with wax/vinyl records. In order to enjoy your album, you must have the right equipment, and at least a small amount of space dedicated to that equipment, as well as the records themselves. There are wires, speakers, and a physical connection with working the mechanism. Sure, streaming services give you convenience and quantity. You can skip to any track, on any album, from any artist you desire. With a record, however, you savor the time to experience each piece in the story. Skipping tracks is significantly harder, so you are more apt to allow the flow of the full creation, the way the artists intended.

Selecting an album from your collection, placing it on the record player and setting the needle down is an experience - a tactile form of interacting with the music that streaming or popping in a CD cannot replicate. It’s personal, intimate, and it connects you to the process.

Vinyl records will remain because they allow us to enjoy the often forgotten part of music: the interaction and ritual of being a part of the mechanism that brings it to life. Devoting time, money and space allows us to offer music and musicians much deserved respect. It calls us to be a part of the experience and to set time aside to enjoy it. Our love of vinyl proves that physical media can stand the test of time, as does our need to personally connect to music and art.

RIP Eddie Van Halen -  
1/26/55 to 10/6/2020

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## Pokéblock Podcast

The Pokeblock Podcast is a weekly show hosted by PokeTuber HoopsandHipHop that discusses a number of topics relating to the Pokemon franchise.



## The IntroSpektive Podcast

The IntroSpektive Podcast is a show hosted by IntroSpektive where he discusses Super Smash Bros and other gaming topics.



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New “Star Wars: Squadrons” Game Immerses Players in Intergalactic Battles

by Isabella Giotis

It is the type of game that many “Star Wars” fans have been waiting for. “Star Wars” is one of the most beloved and successful movie franchises of all time and has led to the creation of some two dozen video games. Now, Electronic Arts has released what some gamers are calling the most sophisticated game in the “Star Wars” universe.



EA’s “Star Wars: Squadrons” is an aerial space-battle game in line with the classic X-Wing vs TIE Fighter games. It puts gamers in cockpits of a variety of fighters on both sides of the epic conflict. In the single-player story-based campaign, you can play as an Empire, TIE pilot, or rebel alliance fighter pilot. “Star Wars: Squadrons” also offers a multiplayer option. The two main modes are Dogfight, which is a

5 on 5 player death match, and Fleet Battles, which is a multi-stage objective-based mode where squadrons can take the defensive role by going on missions to attack the enemy’s fleets.

The story begins after the destruction of “Star Wars” fictional planet “Alderaan”, with the main plot focusing on the remains of the Empire after the “Return of the Jedi” and the New Republic.

Missions start in the briefing room where you can view your ship and talk to ally pilots. This is where you plan missions including flying, escorting, protecting, attacking, defending other ships, and taking out enemy forces. Each fighter has its own set of flight characteristics which can be adjusted to modify things like speed and maneuverability.

The game, which was released on October 2nd, can be played in standard or virtual reality, and is available on PC or PlayStation VR on PS4. It does not require a VR headset. 10,000 early users polled by Steam gave it a 73% positive rating. Users say they like the game’s visual and sound effects, as well as the \$40 price tag.

Even with the in-game training program, the game has a steep learning curve. Some players say that once you have mastered, customized, and accessorized

the ship to your liking, it can start to feel repetitive. In VR mode, the dialogue of the characters is limited, and the backgrounds are average. A number of players want to see more dialogue options to create variety and less linear stories. One of the ways players can make it look and feel different is by modifying the loadout of the selected fighter craft.

Except for bug fixes and graphical hiccups, EA and Motive officials say they have no plans to introduce new content for “Star Wars: Squadrons,” a strategy that is unusual in the modern industry for anything other than smaller indie games. Many are hoping that EA will change its position by introducing new and related missions, pilots, outfits and ships, live, service, and downloadable content. But overall, reviews are mostly positive, and many players think it is a very solid game.

Say Goodbye to \$60 Video Games

by Dustin Brewer

When “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2” hit shelves for the PS3 and Xbox 360 back in 2009, it was a game-changer for the gaming industry in more ways than one. For all its achievements with in-game storytelling and online gaming, perhaps its biggest contribution was its price tag. After “MW2” hit shelves for \$59.99 and quickly became the best-selling video game of all-time, developers took notice, and soon all big title games were \$60.

This hefty price tag lasted for two generations of consoles as the industry standard price

has remained \$60 for PS4, Xbox One, and Nintendo Switch games. With the launch of the Xbox Series X | S and the PS5, gamers will now be asked to spend \$69.99 for most titles.

While \$70 for a video game may sound jarring, when you consider the average experience you get from any given game, it’s a bit more understandable. What is going to make this price such an interesting litmus test is the rise of streaming and digital downloads in gaming. Xbox has already made waves with Game Pass, giving subscribers access to 100s of Xbox

titles including major titles like “Halo: Infinite” on the day of their release. With games now costing \$70 for physical copies, gamers might turn to digital downloads and specifically, streaming services. On their end, Sony hasn’t gone into too much detail about any digital plans for the PS5, outside of the typical PS Plus free games each month.

The two extreme ends of the spectrum have the gaming industry facing a fascinating crossroads concerning just where



they may go in the future. If the Xbox Series X | S and Game Pass is a huge success (and all early signs point to it being a smash hit), it won’t be long before the other companies begin work on their streaming and subscription-based services. A rise in free-to-play Battle Royale games like

“Fortnite”, “Call of Duty: Warzone”, and “PUBG” have also muddled the waters a bit more for the gaming industry.

These games allow players to download and play for free but offer in-game purchases and microtransactions to customize characters and to boost stats or unlock better items for in-game use. With millions of users playing these games every day, the industry has worked quickly to maximize their profits and capitalize on their popularity.

If you’re planning on buying a PS5 or an Xbox Series X | S, be ready to spend \$70 when you want to add a new game to your library... for now.

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# Fedora-Wearing iPhone Denies Existence of Steve Jobs

by The Babylon Bee

(\*Note, this article is satirical. The purpose of this piece is parody and light-hearted satire.)

After weeks of study and watching YouTube videos on the subject, a local iPhone 12 has concluded that Steve Jobs never existed.

"That's cool if you want to believe in fairy tales," said the iPhone with a tip of his brand-new fedora. "But I'm a free-thinking iPhone. Am I really supposed to believe an intelligent being designed me? Look at me! My battery life is only 15 hours, then I'm useless! My screen can break if you drop me. Android has a million features I don't even have. I am a far from perfect design. What kind of creator would allow that, anyway?"

The iPhone also says the reliability of accounts of Steve Jobs' existence is sketchy at best. "I've never seen Steve Jobs," he said. "He died long before I was born. Convenient, right? My theory is that his status was elevated to 'iPhone creator' long after his death to help other iPhones explain their sad existence. The Steve Jobs story is most likely plagiarized from the story of Thomas Edison, another alleged creator."

The iPhone told reporters he is convinced that he is nothing more than a naturally occurring collection of raw materials from

the earth, saying he feels like life is so much more precious and



meaningful now that he can create meaning for himself rather than having that meaning given to him by some "ancient story for weak minds."

"When you think about it, all iPhones are deniers!" said the iPhone. "Other iPhones deny the existence of creators as well. They deny that Al Gore or Mary Poppins invented them. I simply deny one more creator than they do!"

The iPhone also insists he functions perfectly despite his denial. "As a brand-new iPhone, I don't need to believe in the existence of Steve Jobs to function properly. I work fine, even though I don't believe!"

According to sources, the iPhone reports being "very happy and fulfilled" since falling into it.

To read this article on The Babylon Bee's website, please scan here.



# Education in 1917

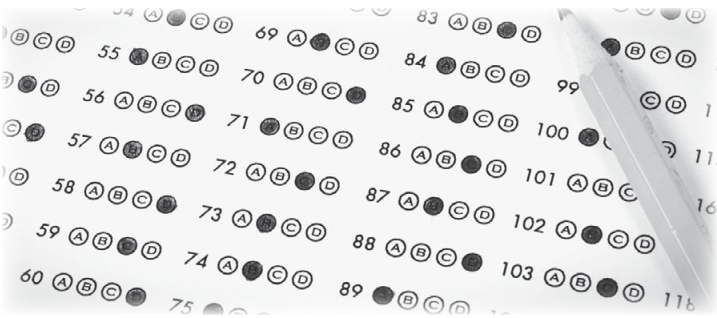
by John Crestani

"It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure."  
~ Bill Gates

In 1917, there were two major things that happened that would forever change the face of education: The Smith-Hughes Act, and the Army Alpha and Army Beta testing.

The Smith-Hughes Act was adopted in 1917 and it provided federal aid to states for the purpose of promoting pre-college vocational education in trade-skills, agricultural, and home economics.

In the late 19th century, a number of groups in America began to advocate for the creation of vocational-education programs (reflecting the belief in the moral, educational, and practical value of hard work and industriousness). Businessmen and labor unions saw vocational schools as a solution to the problems of a shortage of high skilled-laborers, and high unemployment in metropolitan areas. Philanthropists and moral reformers regarded vocational training as an opportunity to



modernize a largely agrarian society and bring them into the Industrial Age.

Although the Smith-Hughes Act helped to expand vocational courses and enrollment in specialized schools in America, it is generally accepted that the goals of the act did not live up to expectations.

The Army Alpha is a group-administered test that was developed by Robert Yerkes and was used on U.S. military recruits in 1917 during World War I. It was introduced to meet the demands for a modern method of evaluating the intellectual/emotional functioning of would-be soldiers. The test measured verbal ability, numerical ability, ability to follow directions, and general knowledge. Scores on the Army Alpha were used to determine a recruit's capability, his job classification, and his potential for advancements. Army Alpha and Army Beta testing emerged in an effort to gauge the abilities of individual soldiers by measuring their intelligence.

During WWI, the American Psychological Association volunteered to help the war effort, and Yerkes was appointed as part of a committee tasked with developing a mental test that could be given to a large number of military personnel. The Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test proved impractical as a unit of measurement for large numbers

of soldiers in determining their particular occupations.

Because the Army Alpha test could be given to a large

number of people per day and because psychologists didn't actually have to administer the test themselves - essentially it resulted in anyone being able to conduct tests and send the results off for evaluation. In fact, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) was created by some of the very same psychologists that created the Army Alpha test.

# Networking, continued from page 4

comment: "As a business owner, relationships are everything. During these times that 2020 has brought, being connected to fellow business owners is imperative. Your relationships with people that you know, like and trust will give you the support needed to grow and thrive."

## How does one network effectively?

Elephants network to survive in the wild. They are superior communicators, using sounds and communication signals which are heard by other elephants for miles. They are always listening,

communicating, and helping one another. We must do the same to network well. Fine-tune your communication skills, practice listening, communicate your message concisely, and stay in your lane. Moreover, think about the other person, and promote a relationship-building mindset. These are some key aspects of networking.

## What are the benefits of networking?

The better question to ask is, what happens if you don't network? Well, nothing.



# John Tolson

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Thank You Simi Valley

by Elaine Litster, Simi Valley Councilwoman

I've been a professional harpist for three decades. For me, December is always a whirlwind of music from the Nutcracker and the Holiday Harp Extravaganza, to corporate events and intimate gatherings. This year has been entirely different, with the risks of illness and the prohibition of large public gatherings. My heart goes out to my many musician friends who are trying to weather this COVID storm with remote teaching, virtual concerts, and unemployment--when they can get it. So many are like the mother I spoke with today who is struggling to pay her rent and utilities, and is worried about gifts for her children. Far too many are struggling. Today is the time for those with the ability to give, to "count their blessings" and share with those who are less fortunate.

I am grateful for many things. I am grateful for our Founding Fathers and Mothers who braved the unknown and sought guidance from an Almighty God. I am grateful for Capitalism, which has raised more people out of poverty than any other system

in the history of the world. I am grateful for modern conveniences: electric lights, clean running water, paved roads that can take me anywhere in this great country, and inventions such as the cell phone, computers, and airplanes. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our community on the City Council. I was appointed to the Simi Valley City Council in February 2019. I am very appreciative of the renewed faith and trust placed in me by the voters this past November, allowing me to serve on the City Council for four more years.

I am thankful the small business I run with my husband has been deemed "essential" (we print business and payroll checks). The risk of COVID-19 has affected our work environment (thermometer testing, masks, constant hand washing). And of course, the national response to the virus has adversely impacted the demand for our product, as it has for so many others. But, we are still operating. Let me state clearly: I think using the term essential versus nonessential is arbitrary,

inaccurate and inappropriate. Any job that provides a person's livelihood is essential!

In Ventura County, COVID-19 infection counts are climbing. The County has long been committed to making testing readily available for all residents, even as the large number of tests being administered produces more infection identifications. When I contracted COVID-19 I was fearful that I might have unknowingly infected others. I was also concerned that following my quarantine period, associates might be afraid to interact with me in person if they knew I had contracted the "plague." None of my fears were realized. I am also thankful my symptoms were relatively mild. I am very aware that many who have battled or are battling this disease are not so fortunate. Many have lost loved ones.

The human spirit is resilient. While we have been asked not to gather in large groups, to social distance and wear masks, we can still do



much to lift the burdens and lighten the load and worries of so many others.

This Holiday Season, may we find ways to love, live and celebrate our health, the contributions of humanity, and the possibilities within our great nation! May we seek and find joy and happiness. May this season be a time to treasure what we do have, and remember what is truly important in our lives. In the words of Tiny Tim, "God bless us, everyone!"

Beware! Danger! Social Media Ahead!

by Antarra Belcher

Let's take a step back in time to the 1950s, a much simpler time for a teenager to grow up in, a time before the World Wide Web and its diabolical accomplice, social media, were even a blip on the radar. In the 1950s, if a preteen or teenage boy found a sexy magazine, he would maybe quickly show a few of his friends while hiding out in the basement or garage. And what were they looking at? Usually, it was nothing more scandalous than icons such as Marilyn Monroe and other beautiful women photographed in bikinis, although options got a little more revealing with the 1953 launch of Playboy Magazine. Moving ahead to the 1980s, pornography became more accessible with VHS tapes that you could rent from the back of the local video store, if you were of age. In the 1990s and 2000s, we had webcams and chat rooms. Back in the good ol' days, for a minor to view pornographic materials they had to typically enact a plan in order to sneak a peak of a dirty pin-up, and risk being caught.

Even an adult wanting to see porn also had to have a plan of action, such as getting up the courage to look the video store clerk in the eyes as they rented or purchased an adult film on tape.

But what do we have today? We have cell phones with easy internet



access placed in the hands of our young, impressionable children, with little to no supervision or protection.

Most of us spend more time on the internet than we care to admit, even when it is for harmless recipe searches or makeup tutorials. But are we aware of the demonic influence that lies within the endless knowledge at our fingertips? Nearly

27% of all video content searched on Google is pornographic in nature. That would be the equivalent of having four magazines on your coffee table for your children, or guests, to select from and one of the four is a pornographic magazine. We would never allow our children that option in our homes, in real life, and yet we allow it on an electronic device.

Apart from the dangers of pornography that our next generation is being exposed to at much too early an age, another detrimental issue to consider regarding the internet is social media damage. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people ages 10 to 24. From 2000 to 2007 the suicide rate was pretty stable, hovering around seven deaths per 100,000 people, but from 2007 to 2020 we see an increase to ten deaths

per 100,000 according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. Over a million kids were taken to the ER for suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts in 2015, with the number increasing drastically every single year.

What has changed from 2007 to 2020? Facebook, Twitter, smartphones, Instagram, and Snapchat have bombarded young eyes and impressionable souls. In the olden days, for pre-teens and teens, bullying was mostly limited to school or the school bus. Nowadays children are bullied even in the "safety" of their own homes through online attacks on their character and their appearances. Too much bullying is happening today that children's still-maturing minds cannot handle. We are not teaching children how to self-regulate and deal with negative emotions and so they are left feeling helpless. We need to come up with solutions and regulations to protect this next generation before it is too late.

# Hey there Miss Got-It-Together

by Doc Lovelace

"I've been with my boyfriend for 8 years, and since we got together, a lot has changed. When we first started dating when we were in our early 20s, he was going to Moorpark College, and I was working in retail. Since then, I feel like his life has stood still while mine has kinda moved on. I got my BA, and since then, I've been working in an office for several years and I make enough money to support myself and I have a lot of opportunities to advance at that job too.

For the entire time I've been with him, he hasn't had a full-time job, and after he finished at Moorpark College, he hasn't gone on to further his education either. He gets by on the money he makes by doing part-time work and by doing odd jobs, but he still lives at home with his parents, both of which enable him. What makes it worse is that he doesn't even have a realistic career goal for himself either.

What should I do? I still love him,

he's my best friend, and I feel like I grew up with him, but over the last couple of years, I've grown to not respect him as a man.

Should I stay with and be in love with a man that isn't going anywhere in his life and is someone that I don't respect?"

~ Katie

**Doc LoveLace's advice:**

Hey there Miss Got-it-together,

A new outfit that looks great and fits perfectly that you "love" usually won't last forever. Time to drop it off at the Goodwill. It'll be a good find and better suited for someone else.

Time to go shopping girlfriend! Get something that is your style NOW. Doesn't mean you don't like the old shirt; it just doesn't fit anymore and frankly, it doesn't look good on you.

Time is the only commodity. Don't waste another minute of his or yours. Be grateful for the whole relationship and all that you've

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

*Having a relationship issue?  
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causing you problems?  
Doc Lovelace can help.*

If you have a question, relationship situation, or if you're seeking advice, please send an email to [DocLovelaceUCast@gmail.com](mailto:DocLovelaceUCast@gmail.com)

learned (about what you don't want). Look at it like finishing a good book, was a good read but you have turned the last page. It's not a bad thing, your relationship is complete now, MOVE ON!

To end it quickly, I recommend what I call the rip off the band-aid technique look him right in the eye and say, "I have found someone else, it's over", then get up and leave. It's uncomfortable for that minute, but then it's over. Block him on your phone.

Or you can tell him the truth and go through the whole long (most likely pathetic), drawn-out painful begging thing. For sure know

this; if you continue with a person that you don't respect, the only outcome is misery.

Cut ties now before you learn to hate him.

The faster you lose the dead weight and get on with your awesome life, the faster he will either find his perfect match (loser), or he will wake up and start acting like a man. Meanwhile, your upward trajectory will automatically attract the real thing that you love and respect.

Do it today!

*Yours truly,  
Doc Lovelace*

# Why Do Certain Genes Come to Life After Death?

by Jane Miller

One might understandably assume that when we die, all of our genes stop working. However, scientists have found that this is actually not true. In 2009, Alexander Pozhitkov, then a postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Germany, and his colleague Peter Noble, a biochemist at the University of Washington, found that in zebrafish, about one percent of their genes became active after they died. They then repeated the study with mice, which yielded the same surprising results. Some of these genes were active up to four days after life ended for the zebrafish and mice. What exactly is going on with these genes? Why do they activate after death?

Many of the zebrafish and mice genes that became active post-mortem are helpful in emergencies, performing functions like revving up the immune system and reducing stress. However, there was one extremely surprising result. Noble says, "What's jaw-dropping is that developmental genes are turned on after death." Basically, certain genes that help sculpt the embryo before birth become active again after death.

These development genes are turned on during early fetal development, but then remain dormant for the rest of one's life. Before you start thinking of reincarnation or anything too spooky (as I did), the researchers hypothesized that perhaps the reason these developmental genes become active is that the



cellular conditions in recently dead bodies resemble those in embryos.

It is not only in zebrafish and mice that genes activate after death. In a study published in Nature Communications in 2018, researchers found that in human tissue samples, hundreds of genes had altered their expression post-death. In particular, one gene that promotes growth, EGR3, got highly active about four hours after death. Another interesting

discovery was that cancer genes seem to activate post-mortem. This may explain why researchers at the National Institute for Health found that organ transplant recipients have a twofold overall increased risk of cancer. Another very strange finding was that a gene that tells cells to create a spinal column is activated post death.

That discovery doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, but perhaps will with continued research.

The researchers Pozhitkov and Noble have posited another reason that

these genes become active may be because cells think the body is going through a near-death experience that it can potentially survive. Since death is the final and biggest stress on cells, it might make sense that our bodies go into overdrive to try and save us on a genetic level.

Further research into this eerie discovery could yield breakthroughs in organ transplantation, forensic science and genetic research. For

instance, with this new research, scientists can pinpoint the time of death based on changes in gene expression after a person dies. Forensic researchers can use this knowledge in murder investigations. As this research relates to organ transplantation, doctors could potentially choose to keep organs warm on life support instead of in icy coolers, as is current standard practice.

Not only does this research offer the potential for advances in several fields, it also asks an important question: are we truly dead when we officially die, or not until all of our genes have stopped expressing themselves? In Discover magazine, Kate Golembiewski puts it best when she says, "Death doesn't mean that all the billions of cells in our bodies stop working. It just means that they stop working together." It seems that death is not as easily explained as we once thought.

When explaining why he decided to pursue this line of research, Noble said, "It's an experiment of curiosity to see what happens when you die" and "Clearly, studying death will provide new information on the biology of life."

## Mysterious Underwater “Crop Circles” Discovered Off Coast of Australia

By Renee Rose

As an anomaly typically considered to be a generally British phenomenon (with sprinklings of occurrences throughout Europe and the United States), crop circles are typically discovered in crop fields, hence the name. With the recent discovery of a crop circle-esque formation found off the coast of Western Australia, however, it appears that this on-land anomaly has decided to make its way “down under”-- both figuratively and literally.

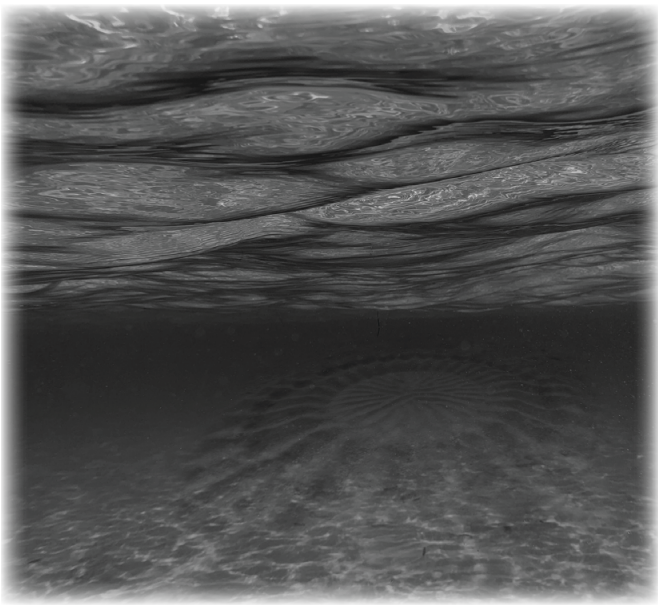
An underwater research crew has discovered what appears to be crop circle formations and, while we typically attribute the emergence of crop circles to the work of extraterrestrials (though this hasn’t been proven), these underwater crop circles are certainly the work of something “alien”.

Upon observing the video of the crop circles taken by marine ecologist Todd Bond and researchers from the University of Western Australia in Perth at a depth of 100 meters on Australia’s North West Shelf, behavioral ecologist Elisabet Forsgren said that, “It is surprising to find the circles... at a depth where there is not much light.”

Todd Bond and his team, however, knew what these circles were almost immediately. In coming across these underwater crop circles while conducting a marine life survey on the North West Shelf, he and his team found an unusual pattern on the ocean floor that almost appeared man-made. Upon closer examination, it was hard to deny how similar these markings appeared to the crop circles that have become wildly popular in

today’s pop culture. Further, Bond could say with confidence that the patterns were in fact the work of an “alien species”.

“We were doing a survey of fish on subsea infrastructure and I knew exactly what they were straight away,” Bond said. “As far as we know, up until now, there’s only one species of pufferfish that makes



these circles and that’s the white-spotted puffer. We recognized the circles from a BBC documentary which had some amazing footage of how these pufferfish make these circles in Japan.”

In watching a BBC documentary centered around the white-spotted pufferfish, a species found exclusively in the waters of Japan, Bond remembers seeing very similar patterns which the fish make on the ocean floor in order to communicate about, strangely enough, growing crops. “The males take about a week to make these quite elaborate nests and then the female will go from nest to nest. She’ll decide which one she wants to lay her eggs at and she’ll lay her eggs at the center of the circle,” Bond says.

Similarly to how we view the purpose of on-land crop circles as being a way for extraterrestrials to communicate with each other (or even us), the male white-spotted pufferfish makes elaborate patterns on the ocean floor in order to attract their female counterparts into laying their eggs there, becoming a nest for the next “crop” of white-spotted pufferfish.

That being said, we know what is responsible for the underwater crop circles found off the coast of Australia and it isn’t quite as exciting as off-world visitors (depending on how you feel about fish, of course). Still, there is one mystery that remains surrounding the emergence of these underwater crop circles. If white-spotted pufferfish are exclusively found in Japan, what are they doing all the way in Australia? That, it appears, is where Bond and his team find themselves scratching their heads.

“We don’t know the species that is making the circles in Western Australia, it could be the white-spotted puffer or a different species of puffer. It could be a new species of puffer that we’ve never discovered before, or it could be a local species off the coast that we’ve never actually seen.”

In Bond’s personal opinion, the most likely explanation for the formation of these mysterious underwater crop circles can be attributed to either a new species or a mutant alien-esque version

of the Japanese white-spotted pufferfish that we know of today. This is because the Australian crop circles were found at around 100 meters while the Japanese white-spotted pufferfish is known for never creating their elaborate designs below a depth of 30 meters at most. On top of that, there has never been any reported sightings of a pufferfish species seen swimming at such a depth. The underwater camera used to capture footage of the mysterious crop circles, however, did capture a few pufferfish fleeing the area- further reinforcing Bond’s assumption that the species responsible is something we have yet to discover.

So why are white-spotted pufferfish, if they are the culprit, suddenly appearing all the way in Australia? If they are not responsible and a mutant version of their species is swimming in the depths of Australia’s waters, where are they? While these are interesting questions that go unanswered for now, it would seem that they offer a more realistic explanation of these mysterious underwater crop circles than extraterrestrials leaving each other notes in cornfields.

Until we can find the answer, marine biologists are hard at work searching for more of these fascinating underwater crop circles in Australia’s waters in an effort to uncover a previously undiscovered species. Considering that we know more about the surface of the moon than we do about what is lurking in the depths of our world’s oceans, they clearly have their work cut out for them. I wonder what else they may uncover in their search.



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Brain Pacemakers Aren't Science Fiction

by Jane Miller

We've all heard of a pacemaker for the heart, but did you know there's such a thing as a brain pacemaker? That's not the official name of course; the brain pacemaker is more commonly known as deep brain stimulation or DBS for short. DBS is a system in which electrodes are implanted in the brain that receives small pulses of electricity to disturb abnormal brain patterns. It's a treatment primarily in patients with illnesses affecting movement and memory, such as Parkinson's Disease and Epilepsy. This system can significantly lessen symptoms of tremors, stiffness, and slowness. DBS is considered an 'alternative' treatment for many memory-related disorders, but it's been in use for over 20 years and is FDA approved. There have been more randomized controlled trials for DBS than any other procedure in neurosurgery. DBS is not a miracle cure or an easy procedure. It is still invasive brain surgery and does not cure an illness, it merely attempts to lessen the symptoms. Even so, lessening of symptoms for those with Parkinson's or tremors

can be an incredible quality of life upgrade. More than 160,000 people around the world have received the treatment, according to a 2019 study. How does it work? There are three main components of the DBS system. First, there is a lead, which is a coated wire with electrodes attached to the tip. This is what is implanted in the brain. The lead connects the second part of the system, an extension, an insulated wire that connects the lead to the generator, the third part of the system. The small pulse generator (neurostimulator) is generally implanted near the collarbone and is what supplies the pulses of electrical current to the brain. A patient is given a handheld controller that can turn the DBS system on and off.



After the initial surgery, a patient waits a few weeks until their doctor programs the correct electrical signal. The settings often have to be re-adjusted many times until the optimal results are achieved. The battery in the neurostimulator lasts anywhere from three to five years, and then, the battery can be replaced in a simple outpatient procedure. Already progress is being made in creating longer-lasting batteries. Aside from the incredible results DBS can produce in patients, brain pacemakers do not cause any permanent damage to the brain and the procedure can be reversed if needed. According to Nader Pouratian, MD, director of UCLA's Neurosurgical Movement Disorders Program, many patients share the attitude that "they wish they had done it earlier."

One of the most challenging aspects of utilizing DBS as a medical treatment is finding the correct placement in the brain for the electrodes. For movement and memory disorders, the electrodes are generally placed in areas of the brain that control these functions,

called the thalamus and the basal ganglia. But finding the exact right place is difficult because each person's neural networks are placed a bit differently. A new finding is now showing that using a personal functional brain map for each patient is probably better than using an aggregate of brain maps across people with the same disorder. However, this is expensive and time-consuming. The future of the potential of DBS is exciting. What began as a medical breakthrough for illnesses affecting memory and movement, is now being used for psychiatric illnesses such as treatment-resistant depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. DBS is also being studied for the treatment of chronic pain, phantom limb syndrome, addiction, and morbid obesity. There are also many advances being made to the system itself. One of the three primary DBS device manufacturers, Medtronic, recently released a breakthrough product called the Percept PC Neurostimulator, which is the first device that can monitor and track brain signals, as opposed to the previous neurostimulators which simply send electric pulses. The market for 'brain pacemakers' is expected to reach 4.33 billion dollars by the year 2027, showing there is a lot of hope for what DBS can do for a myriad of people in the future.

Weird & Wacky News

by Chris Carnicelli



From around the corner, down the street, and up your alley, here are some stories that are hitting the headlines... and they're all TRUE! **Dateline: Kyiv, Ukraine** Hot enough for ya? Ukraine International Airlines has banned a traveler from all future flights because she opened an emergency door on a Boeing 737 and went for a walk on the wing as it sat on the tarmac at Boryspil International Airport. The other passengers heard her say she was "too hot" before she popped open the emergency exit and went for a stroll outside on the wing. She was thrown off the plane along with

her husband and child. Oopsie! **Dateline: Jinan, China** Ewww. Just, ewww. Cockroach farms are not new in China, where they have long been used in Chinese medicine, but a new facility is using about one billion of the little critters to deal with food waste, while producing organic protein supplements for animal feeds. In four industrial-sized hangars, shelves are filled with food waste collected from local restaurants. Farm manager Yin Diansong says, "Everyday they can eat 50 tons of kitchen waste." Actually, that's pretty smart... but ewww!

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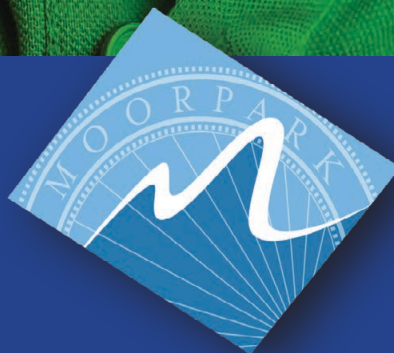
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