

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday July 3 2022



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Supernova Remnant: The Veil Nebula

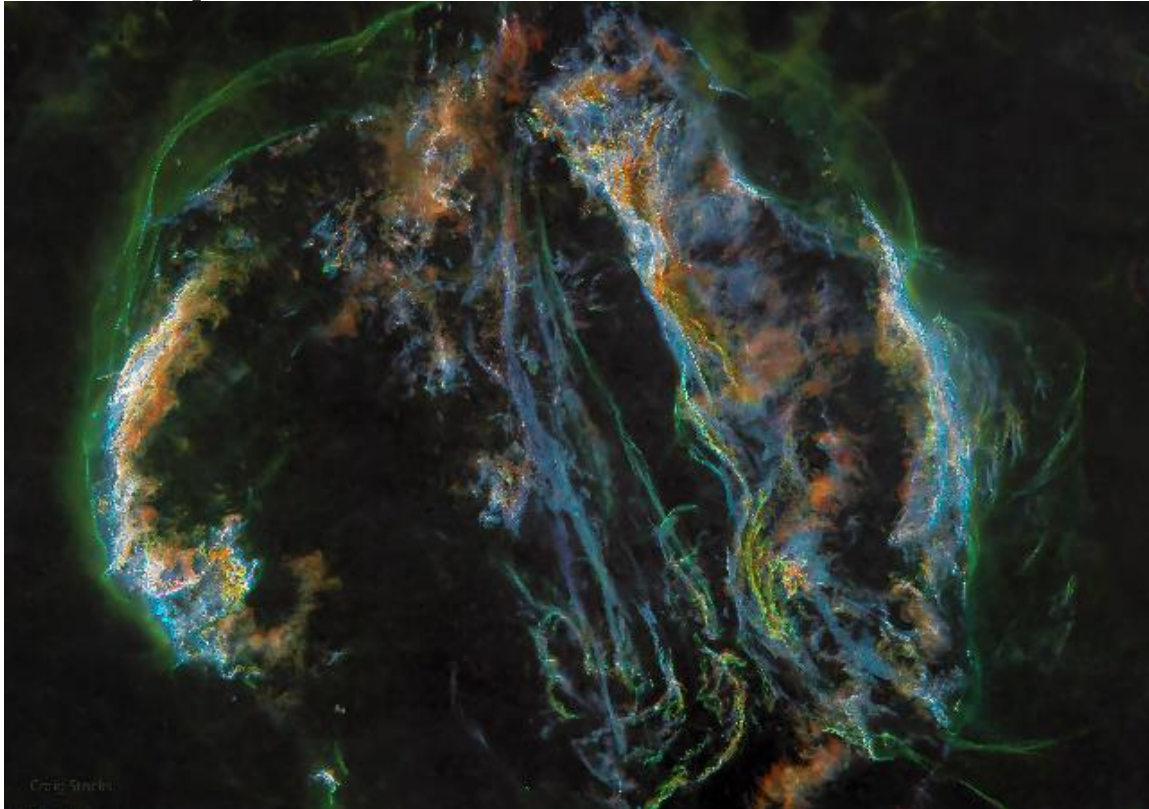


Image Credit & Copyright: Craig Stocks (Utah Desert Remote Observatories)

Ten thousand years ago, before the dawn of recorded human history, a new light would have suddenly have appeared in the night sky and faded after a few weeks. Today we know this light was from a supernova, or exploding star, and record the expanding debris cloud as the Veil Nebula, a supernova remnant.

Imaged with color filters featuring light emitted by sulfur (red), hydrogen (green), and oxygen (blue), this deep wide-angle view was processed to remove the stars and so better capture the impressive glowing filaments of the Veil.

Also known as the Cygnus Loop, the Veil Nebula is roughly circular in shape and covers nearly 3 degrees on the sky toward the constellation of the Swan (Cygnus). Famous nebular sections include the Bat Nebula, the Witch's Broom Nebula, and Fleming's Triangular Wisp. The complete supernova remnant lies about 1,400 light-years away.

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Jester's Cap

Jingles on the June 26 Ode



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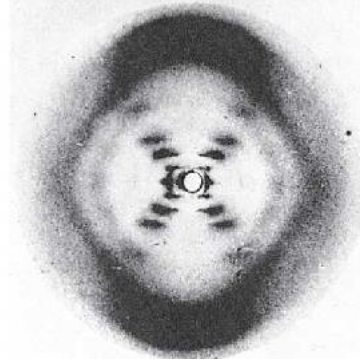
Covid/unintended consequences

There's supposedly a reason that God marched Moses and my people around the desert for 40 years. It wasn't that Moses had lost his GPS receiver. It was that we'd been enslaved for a few hundred years, i.e., 20-25 generations, and we got used to that. God wanted us to be free and that meant that the slavery mindset had to go. Which, in turn, meant that the last slaves had to die off so only the newbies crossed the river.

People were initially terrified of covid since no one really knew much about it except that some had died from it. We didn't know the denominator of that fraction. The government and the media kept people glued to tv so they could hear the latest horror stories, outrages (mostly sham, but convincing), learn how to signal virtue ("I'm not going to be a granny killer, so I always wear a mask"), etc. What this has bred is a two-sided US. One, happily smaller part still masks much of the time regardless because they're either afraid of getting or transmitting the bug or they wear them as a badge to show the rest of the world how wonderful and socially conscious they are. The rest of us don't care. Or are tired of the whole charade. Fauci wildly overplayed his hand after being given essentially czarish control. Health-related arms of government were determining rental/mortgage and eviction policies. And eventually a Florida judge finally called "Hogwash" on the whole thing. The revolution was complete.

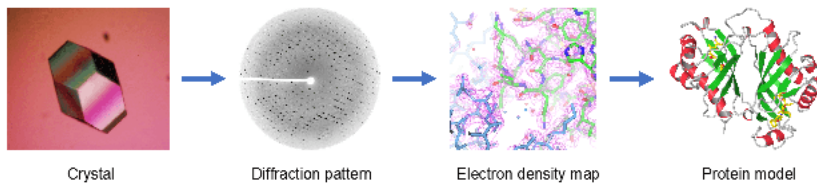
Atomic-level molecular detail

I'm not clear what about this one was supposed to be new. With x-ray crystallography, we've been getting literally atomic-level detail of macromolecules' structures for years. The first famous one was Rosalind Franklin's x-ray crystallogram of DNA that Jim Watson happened to glimpse in her desk drawer. While this didn't get resolution to the atomic level, it did resolve bases:



It's a famous theme--famous enough to have its own tattoo:

Not much later resolution improved to the atomic level. By knowing the structures of individual amino acids in a protein chain and knowing the structure of the protein's backbone, we can know the exact coordinates of each atom in the molecule:



X-ray-Crystallography-Platform-1.png

This has been around for a lot of years....

As has Rational Therapeutics, which is in your back yard. When I was in medical school, we learned about bacterial cultures and sensitivity studies. You show up in the ER with a serious infection and they draw some blood, get some sputum and urine, and they all go to Petri dishes. About a day later, there's an obvious culprit or small group of them. That's the culture part--we've cultured the bugs. But what antibiotic will stop them from dividing? To find that out, we do a second study called sensitivity test:



The grayish stuff is the layer of bacteria that are actively dividing on the growth medium, whatever that happens to be. Each little white circle contains a different antibiotic, which diffuses out from it into the medium (which is a gel). The size of the "halo" around each white dot is the sensitivity of the bug: the farther you get from the disc, the lower the concentration of the antibiotic since it gets there just by diffusion. You'll notice that a couple of the discs don't seem to have the bugs' attentions at all--they seem to be unimpressed by those antibiotics. The one at 12 o'clock, though has a

pretty big halo, so the bacteria are definitely sensitive to it as they are to most of the others.

When we were learning about things like the efficacies of chemotherapeutic drugs for cancers, we were presented with various figures: such and such a drug is effective in treating 64% of patients with so and so kind of cancer while this other drug is only 37% effective. And this other one is only very rarely effective. And this magic bullet is good in 88%! Well, that's great--if you're among the 88%, but if you aren't, not so much. And since they're all poisons, they all make patients pretty sick. So why not, I wondered, grow cells in tissue culture and then see what chemo agent(s) stop them from dividing? I asked the surgeon--a Dr. McDonald--who gave the lecture about that and he basically told me to shut up and learn what he told us was important. I decided then and there that I would never trust this troll to so much as give me a tetanus shot.

On the other hand...Drs. John Daniels and Robert Nagourney are two oncologists in California, each of whom started companies that do exactly what I suggested. (It was an obvious thing to do--they didn't do it because I suggested it.) And it works remarkably well. I don't know whether John's company is still in business, but Roberts' certainly is--in spades. In fact, that kind of testing is an integral part of the Nagourney Cancer Institute.

<https://www.nagourneycancerinstitute.com> Robert's about the smartest oncologist I know. If I had cancer--or someone I loved did--that would be my first stop. He's not in the immortality business, just in the bespoke chemotherapy business. Disease-free remission is the name of the game. eventually they mostly come back, but having quality time before that happens is a very big deal.

And, of course, Peter Sellers....

"I like to watch..." him act. I'm not sure what my favorite role of his is, but it might well be Guy Grand in *The Magic Christian*, a spoof by Terry Southern. Some of the skits in the movie aren't in the book and vice versa, so it's fun to read it first, then watch the movie. *Being There* didn't really do it for me--apart from a couple of the scenes, especially with Shirley McLaine. *Strangelove* was the best, for my money--especially the interactions between him (Group Captain Lionel Mandrake) and Sterling Hayden (General Jack D. "Our Pure Essence" Ripper); and between him and Keenan Wynn ("Colonel "Bat" Guano, if that's really your name"): *Group Capt. Lionel Mandrake* : Colonel... that Coca-Cola machine. I want you to shoot the lock off it. There may be some change in there.

Colonel "Bat" Guano : That's private property.

Group Capt. Lionel Mandrake : Colonel! Can you possibly imagine what is going to happen to you, your fame, outlook, way of life, and everything, when they learn that you have obstructed a telephone call to the President of the United States? Can you imagine? Shoot it off! Shoot! With a gun! That's what the bullets are for, you twit!

Colonel "Bat" Guano : Okay. I'm gonna get your money for ya. But if you don't get the President of the United States on that phone, you know what's gonna happen to you?

Group Capt. Lionel Mandrake : What?

Colonel "Bat" Guano : You're gonna have to answer to the Coca-Cola company.

I didn't know about this until I just now read it on IMDb:

The US version opens with the following text being displayed before the Columbia lady appears:

"It is the stated position of the U.S. Air Force that their safeguards would prevent the occurrence of such events as are depicted in this film. Furthermore, it should be noted that none of the characters portrayed in this film are meant to represent any real persons living or dead."

An entire alternate ending scene was cut from the film involving a huge custard pie fight between everyone in the war room.

Following is the events as they occurred:

This footage began at a point in the War Room where the Russian ambassador is seen, for the second time, surreptitiously taking photographs of the Big Board, using six or seven tiny spy-cameras disguised as a wristwatch, a diamond ring, a cigarette lighter, and cufflinks.

The head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General Buck Turgidson (George C. Scott) catches him in flagrante and, as before, tackles him and throws him to the floor. They fight furiously until President Merkin Muffley intervenes:

"This is the War Room, gentlemen! How dare you fight in here!"

General Turgidson is unfazed. "We've got the Commie rat redhanded this time, Mr. President!" The detachment of four military police, which earlier escorted the ambassador to the War Room, stands by as General Turgidson continues:

"Mr. President, my experience in these matters of espionage has caused me to be more skeptical than your average Joe. I think these cameras," he indicates the array of ingenious devices, "may be dummy cameras, just to put us off. I say he's got the real McCoy concealed on his person. I would like to have your permission, Mr. President, to have him fully searched."

"All right," the President says, "permission granted."

General Turgidson addresses the military police: "Okay boys, you heard the President. I want you to search the ambassador thoroughly. And due to the tininess of his equipment do not overlook any of the seven bodily orifices."

The camera focuses on the face of the ambassador as he listens and mentally calculates the orifices with an expression of great annoyance.

"Why you capitalist swine!" he roars, and reaches out of the frame to the huge three-tiered table that was wheeled in earlier. Then he turns back to General Turgidson, who now has a look of apprehension on his face as he ducks aside, managing to evade a custard pie that the ambassador is throwing at him.

President Muffley has been standing directly behind the general, so that when he ducks, the president is hit directly in the face with the pie. He is so overwhelmed by the sheer indignity of being struck with a pie that he simply blacks out. General Turgidson catches him as he collapses.

"Gentlemen," he intones, "The president has been struck down, in the prime of his life and his presidency. I say massive retaliation!" And he picks up another pie and hurls it at the ambassador. It misses and hits instead General Faceman, the joint Chief representing the Army. Faceman is furious.

"You've gone too far this time, Buck!" he says, throwing a pie himself, which hits Admiral Pooper, the Naval Joint Chief who, of course, also retaliates. A monumental pie fight ensues.

Meanwhile, parallel to the pie-fight sequence, another sequence is occurring. At about the time that the first pie is thrown, Dr. Strangelove raises himself from his wheelchair. Then, looking rather wild-eyed, he shouts, "Mein Fuhrer, I can walk!" He takes a triumphant step forward and pitches flat on his face. He immediately tries to regain the wheelchair, snaking his way across the floor, which is so highly polished and slippery that the wheelchair scoots out of reach as soon as Strangelove touches it

We intercut between the pie fight and Strangelove's snakelike movements -- reach and scoot, reach and scoot -- which suggest a curious, macabre pas de deux. When the chair finally reaches the wall, it shoots sideways across the floor and comes to a stop ten feet away, hopelessly out of reach. Strangelove, exhausted and dejected, pulls himself up so that he is sitting on the floor, his back against the wall at the far end of the War Room. He stares for a moment at the surreal activity occurring there, the pie fight appearing like a distant, blurry, white blizzard.

The camera moves in on Strangelove as he gazes, expressionless now, at the distant fray. Then, unobserved by him, his right hand slowly rises, moves to the inner pocket of his jacket and, with considerable stealth, withdraws a German Luger pistol and moves the barrel toward his right temple. The hand holding the pistol is seized at the last minute by the free hand and both grapple for its control.

The hand grasping the wrist prevails and is able to deflect the pistol's aim so that when it goes off with a tremendous roar, it misses the temple. The explosion reverberates with such volume that the pie fight freezes. A tableau, of white and ghostly aspect:

Strangelove stares for a moment before realizing that he has gained the upper hand.

"Gentlemen," he calls out to them. "Enough of these childish games. Vee hab vork to do. Azzemble here pleeze!" For a moment, no one moves. Then a solitary figure breaks rank: It is General Turgidson, who walks across the room to the wheelchair and pushes it over to the stricken Strangelove.

"May I help you into your chair, Doctor?" he asks. He begins wheeling Strangelove across the War Room floor, which is now about half a foot deep in custard pie. They move slowly until they reach the president and the Russian ambassador who are sitting crosslegged, facing each other, building a sandcastle.

"What in Sam Hill..." mutters General Turgidson.

"Ach," says Strangelove. "I think their minds have snapped under the strain. Perhaps they will have to be institutionalized."

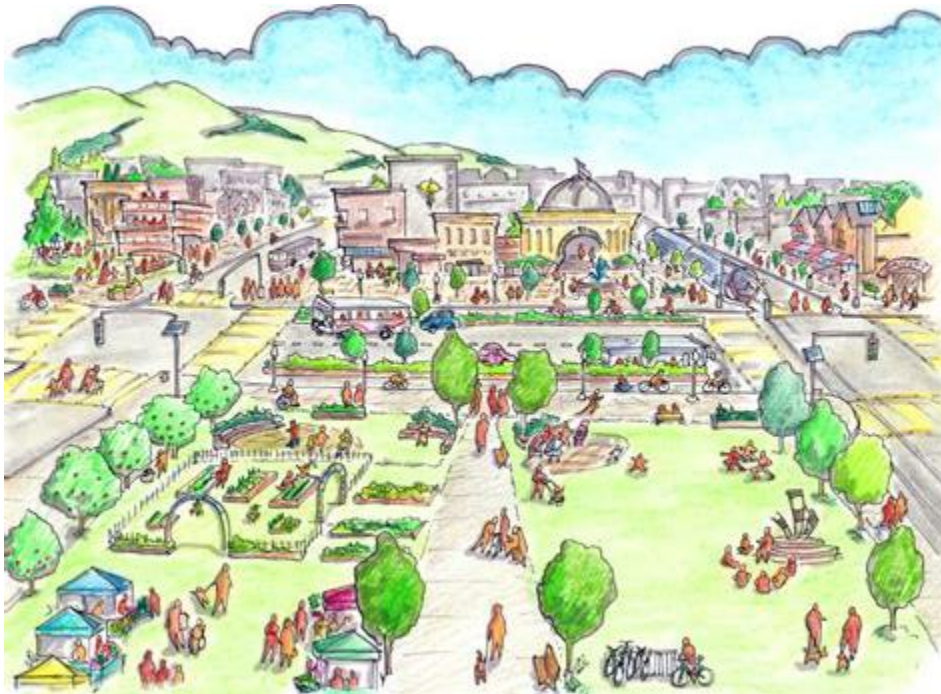
As they near the pie-covered formation of generals and admirals, General Turgidson announces gravely: "Well, boys, it looks like the future of this great land of ours is going to be in the hands of people like Dr. Strangelove here. So let's hear three for the good doctor!" And as he pushes off again, the eerie formation raise their voices in a thin, apparition-like lamentation:

"Hip, hip, hooray, hip, hip, hooray!" followed by Vera Lynn's rendition of "We'll Meet Again."

The camera is up and back in a dramatic long shot as General Turgidson moves across the War Room floor in a metaphorical visual marriage of Mad Scientist and United States Military. The End.

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Healthy Communities 2022

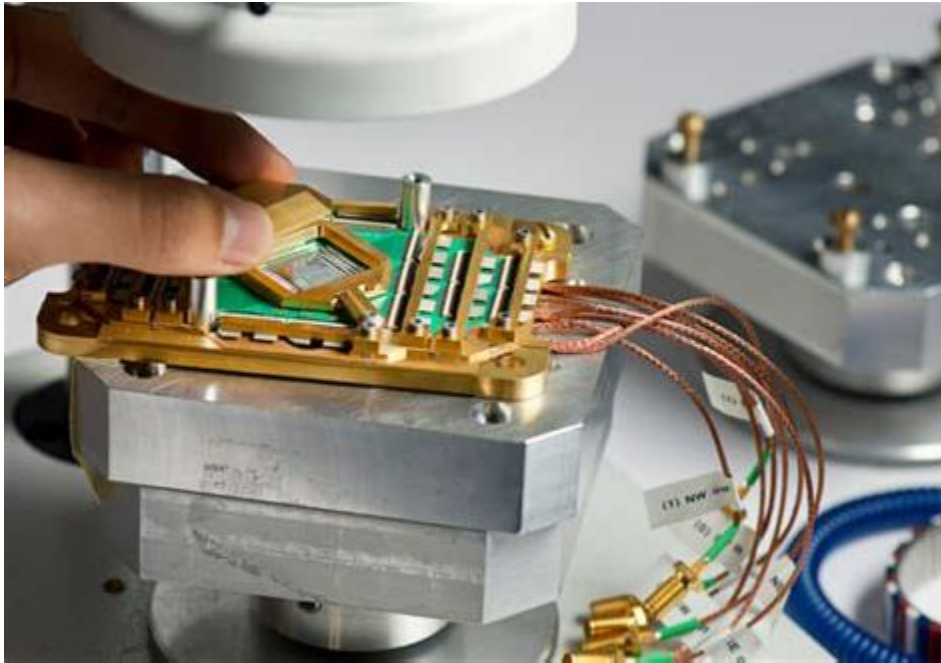


https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/rankings?utm_source=join1440&utm_medium=email

This looks at a number of metrics that provide a snapshot of national rankings and a 'howgozit' on your own county. Yeah, it's Q&D but useful. Give it a shot.

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The Floppotron 3.0 - Computer Hardware Orchestra



<https://youtu.be/kCCXRerqaJI>

The big upgrade of the PC hardware orchestra. 512 floppy disk drives, 16 hard disks and 4 scanners. What do you want to hear next?

Playing: Entrance of the Gladiators (by Julius Fucík). More details on how it works -

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SkyWest Hopes to Save Small Market Routes with Charter Subsidiary

By Russ Niles –



SkyWest may have found a neat workaround to sustain scheduled service to small markets while filling the flight decks with its most experienced captains and least experienced FOs.

The regional giant has created a small charter subsidiary called SkyWest Charter LLC (SWC) and applied for a Part 135 commuter air carrier authorization. It proposes to use CRJ-200s with 30 passenger seats to serve communities that have lost or are at risk of losing scheduled service because of the staffing shortage.

As a charter, the new subsidiary is not covered by the minimum 1500-hour experience rule for right seaters, nor is it bound by the 65-year-old mandatory retirement age for old hands. FOs will need a commercial multi-IFR certificate and 250 hours and the captains can keep flying until they lose their medicals.

The big SkyWest has already flown the same aircraft on the same routes, and the charter would potentially prevent the mother airline from cutting or eliminating service to those communities.

SkyWest says it's ready to get the service going and is asking the FAA for a quick decision, listing 11 markets that could be cut. "The requested authority is critical to maintaining service in the underserved markets identified herein," the company said in its submission. It also suggested the flying public will not notice a change in the service other than a livery change to remove the United Express association. "In fact, most of the key personnel have hands-on experience providing service in these markets with the same aircraft type that will be used by SWC making SWC particularly well suited to provide the scheduled commuter air transportation services for which authority is being requested."

The really interesting part is that it overcomes the really stupid airline age-related mandatory retirement regulation. Take that ALPA.

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Something old, something now...the Proud Bird

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Kelli Christine O'Hara



The American actress and singer is most known for her work on the Broadway and opera stages. A seven-time Tony Award nominee, she won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical for her performance as Anna Leonowens in the Lincoln Center Theater revival of *The King and I*.

She also received Tony nominations for her performances in *The Light in the Piazza* (2005), *The Pajama Game* (2006), *South Pacific* (2008), *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (2012), *The Bridges of Madison County* (2014), and *Kiss Me, Kate* (2019). O'Hara also received a 2019 Olivier Award nomination for her performance as Anna in the West End revival of *The King and I*.

O'Hara made her debut at The Metropolitan Opera in a 2014 production of Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. In 2018, she played the role of Despina in the Met Opera's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. She has also played roles in television series, such as *Masters of Sex* and *13 Reasons Why*, receiving a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for her starring role in the 2017 web drama series *The Accidental Wolf*.

They Don't Let You in the Opera

<https://youtu.be/Q2PBOAbdIcU?list=RDQ2PBOAbdIcU&t=1>

Kelli O'Hara performing "They Don't Let You in the Opera (If You're a Country Star)", music and lyrics by Dan Lipton & David Rossmer.

I presented this 15 months ago, promising to bring it back again after I finished laughing. I haven't managed that quite yet but here she is again anyway.

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Curiosity Captures Stunning Views of a Changing Mars Landscape



https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/nasas-curiosity-captures-stunning-views-of-a-changing-mars-landscape?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=nasajpl&utm_content=daily20220622-1

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How to Corral Spam Calls and Text Messages



https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-block-calls-and-spam-messages/?bxid=617fdd8c62717d23af47aa50&cndid=67131721&esrc=WIR_etrans&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_GADGET_LAB_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=WIR_062022_GadgetLab_HowTuesday&utm_mailing=WIR_062022_GadgetLab_HowTuesday&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=WIR_GadgetLab

Sick of trash. Tired of talking to someone from Bangladesh about your auto maintenance insurance? You may want to save this and take it to heart.

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We Need a More Sustainable Battery than Lithium-Ion



<https://magazine.caltech.edu/post/next-generation-battery-technology>

Lithium-ion batteries can store a large quantity of energy and recharge many times with minimal degradation. However, they carry a few pronounced downsides. Researchers such as Kimberly See, Caltech assistant professor of chemistry, are experimenting with new combinations of materials in pursuit of better, sturdier, and more sustainable batteries with which to power our future.

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An Interactive Look at The World's Historical Boundaries.



https://hanshack.com/point-in-history/?utm_source=join1440&utm_medium=email&utm_placement=newsletter#2.8/16.28/78.5

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Joscho Stephan



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16chiyN55MA>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUeuVEN8b_M
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZdy41sWCsY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBzyp-2kNhg>

Bill Warner suggests these pieces should appeal to anyone who loves the music of Django Reinhardt and jazz manouche.

"I don't know much about him, except that he's German and a strong virtuoso," Bill explains, who always appears to be having a great time performing, which counts for a lot, too. Stephan also seems to enjoy jamming to no end, so there's plenty of footage of him teaming up with such luminaries as Richard Smith and Tommy Emmanuel (check out their take on "Caravan").

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John Coltrane: My Favourite Things - East meets West



Sachal Jazz ensemble

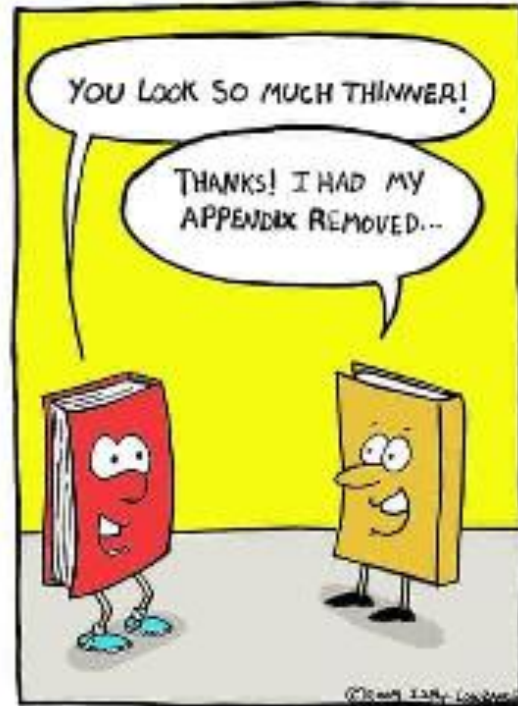


Wynton Marsalis quintet

https://youtu.be/8d9cD_Es9k4

John Coltrane's interpretation was influenced by music from the Indian subcontinent. This tribute therefore makes total sense. The Sachal Jazz ensemble from Lahore, Pakistan and the Wynton Marsalis quintet at The Marciac jazz festival, July 2013. The magic in this arrangement for me is Baqir Abbas on flute!

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Ricky Pasta (Per Bill Warner)



Sicilian pasta recipe from Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes series

Ellen and I nicknamed this dish "Ricky pasta," having scrawled it down while watching Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escape one night on Amazon Prime.

It's become one of our very favorites--a great summer dish, for sure, although we cook it year-round and usually once a week. It's quick and easy, for one thing, but it's also

just about impossible to screw up. Hence, we have no measures for the ingredients -- just experiment a little and go with whatever your intuition/palate might suggest.

Or watch the Mediterranean Escape (highly recommended). I believe there is a Rick Stein cookbook based on the series, too, so if you can find that, the recipe is probably somewhere in it.

Ingredients

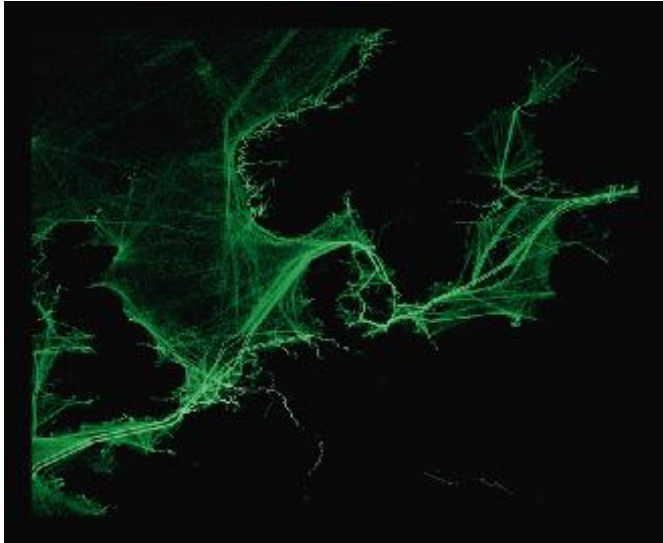
Spaghetti
Vine tomatoes
3 or 4 cloves garlic
Olive oil
Fresh mint
Capers
Fresh Italian parsley
Black pepper
Salt
Red pepper flakes
Grated parmesan

Preparation

Cook the spaghetti in a separate pot
Quarter the tomatoes and squeeze out the seeds
Chop tomatoes
Chop mint
Chop parsley
Brown the garlic in olive oil, then remove
Pour in tomatoes and stir
Add red pepper flakes
Add mint
Add capers
Add parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
Stir until a "dry" sauce forms, one that will suitably cling to the pasta
Add the cooked pasta, toss and serve
Top with grated parmesan

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Maritime Traffic Around the World



The Danish Straits

<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cp/mapping-shipping-lanes-maritime-traffic-around-the-world/>

These graphics bring to mind the immense environmental burden bunker fuel has relative to those from automotive and aviation sources.

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Marcel the Shell with Shoes On



<https://youtu.be/k98Afd7Nf3Y>

Marcel the Shell with Shoes On is a stop-motion animated short film about Marcel, an anthropomorphic seashell outfitted with a single googly eye and a pair of miniature shoes.

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I Love You Sweetheart



To live in a loving relationship with their husbands. The women were asked, "How many of you love your husband?"

All the women raised their hands. Then they were asked, "When was the last time you told your husband you loved him?"

Some women answered today, a few yesterday, and some couldn't remember.

The women were then told to take out their cell phones and text their husband - "I love you, Sweetheart."

Next the women were instructed to exchange phones with one another and read aloud the text message they received in response to their message.

Below are 11 hilarious replies. If you have been married for quite a while, you understand that these replies are a sign of true love. Who else would reply in such a succinct and honest way?

1. Who the hell is this?
2. Eh, mother of my children, are you sick or what?
3. Yeah, and I love you too. What's wrong?
4. What now? Did you wreck the car again?
5. I don't understand what you mean.
6. What the hell did you do now?
7. Don't beat about the bush, just tell me how much you need.
8. Am I dreaming?
9. If you don't tell me who this message is actually for, someone will die.
10. I thought we agreed you wouldn't drink during the day.
11. Your mother is coming to stay with us, isn't she?

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Daylight Robbery



First off, THANK YOU EVERYONE for your concern. I'm ok, just a little shaken up, but I'll be ok.

For those of you who don't know what happened, I was robbed yesterday morning at the gas station. I gathered myself together, my hands were still shaking, I was dizzy, and I honestly think I was in shock. My money was gone.

I called the police, they were fantastic and called for medical assistance as my blood pressure was through the roof. The police asked me if I knew who did it, and I told them "Yes, it was pump number 2."

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The Role of Serendipity in the Beatles' Success



https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-beatles-may-owe-some-of-their-success-to-pure-serendipity/?utm_source=promotion&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement&utm_content=link&utm_term=SA_ENGMT_v1_s1&spMailingID=71645894&spUserID=NTE4NTY0MjU3NTM5S0&spJobID=2243503504&spReportId=MjI0MzUwMzUwNAS2

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Coming to Grips with Dufferdom

The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us." – Bill Watterson

As I've grown older, I've learned that pleasing everyone is impossible, but pissing everyone off is a piece of cake.

I'm responsible for what I say, not what you understand. Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it the most never use it.

My tolerance for idiots is extremely low these days. I used to have some immunity built up, but obviously there's a new strain out there.

It's not my age that bothers me, it's the side effects.

I'm not saying I'm old and worn out, but I make sure I'm nowhere near the curb on trash day.

Me, sobbing: "I'm not coming back here anymore ... I'm not going to let you hurt me again." My Trainer: "It was one sit-up."

As I've gotten older, people think I've become lazy. The truth is I'm just being more energy efficient.

I haven't gotten anything done today. I've been in the Produce Department trying to open this stupid plastic bag.

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Why can Parrots Talk?



<https://youtu.be/1EYUhpimyxc>

I think it's because they enjoy parrot jokes as much as I do.

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My Walking Thoughts



For July 3 2022

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Independence Day...2022

Nearing the quarter millennium mark in our country's radical departure from the standard belief that people existed to serve the government, how do we feel about our forefathers pledge of their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to establish one in which

the government was subservient to the rights of individuals within the bounds of its authority?

I think that is the crucial question the nation faces today, and it is not clear to me that freedom from the tyranny of government remains as our defining goal. If not exactly the opposite, at least there appears to be a growing belief that central authority is better able to deal with ills we in concert with citizens of other nations face.

I fear that globalization, this unwritten 'amendment' to the compact we as citizens of a nation born in the purposeful pursuit of liberty is one we are in the process of adopting. Why? Perhaps because it seems so...so what...so ecumenical?

Tomorrow, with all the hotdogs, fireworks, and parades, I hope you will find some time to think about the course we are on...that rather than congratulating ourselves for being recipients of a bequest from those who came before, determine what legacy we intend to leave to those of the next quarter millennium.

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Another outtake from Phantoms from Vietnam

This is about Gordon's early education in the snug confines of the San Joaquin Valley while the rest of the world was embroiled in World War Two

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Miss Apfelbaum's Influence

Entering the third grade meant many things to Gordon, beginning with the fact that he was to celebrate his 9th birthday on September 10th, 1943, the second day of school that year. Another was that his class' teacher this year was Miss Apfelbaum, a firm fixture in the school's pantheon of task mistresses.

Miss A, as she was known to teachers and students alike, was of solid German descent and indeterminate age with a penetrating gaze that warned those in her presence to mind their Ps and Qs. Additionally for the sake of possible biographers, Miss A eschewed drinking, smoking, or smiling except when safely sheltered within the confines of her tidy one-bedroom home next to the hamlet's Memorial Park. There she exhibited a different persona.

If Miss A had a first name, Gordon nor anyone else had ever heard it spoken. Nor was the destination of her frequent Friday afternoon Greyhound bus trips southward to somewhere on the far side of the Tehachapi range known, though there was much time wasted throughout the community in speculation.

Miss A had no use for a great number of modern conveniences, automobiles at the top of that list. Instead, she kept a blue and ivory Schwinn Hollywood bicycle hanging on pegs on the wall of her garage, "just in case," she told Randy, the feral cat who showed up each evening in time for the day's leftovers and saucer of milk before attending to his duties as solacer of lonely felines in the fen by the railroad siding.

Miss A marveled at the fact that Randy could prowl night-after-night the evil haunts possessed of bobcats, coyotes, kit foxes, and the occasional black bear, and live to tell the tale. Luckily for all in the community, whatever cataclysmic events might cause her to fetch her doomsday device from the pegs were few and far between, no one more thankful than Randy who depended on the source of nourishment that allowed his nightly activities.

When satisfied she had completed her daily tasks, like her revered papa Herr Doctor Alphonse Apfelbaum, professor emeritus of Agronomy at the Northern Branch of the College of Agriculture at Davis, she'd pour herself a generous snifter of Teacher's Highland Cream, fire up a fat Cuban cigar, and settle in for an evening's visit to faraway places.

All of this was, of course, of no consequence to Gordon and his classmates as they awaited in silent anticipation the beginning of the school year, announced by the strident clamor of the 8 o'clock bell followed immediately by the unmistakable thumps of Miss A's intent footfalls in the short corridor that led from the faculty coffee lounge to the line of classrooms, theirs being number 4.

"Good morning, students," she greeted her new class before she was halfway into the room in a voice leaving no doubt in anyone's mind that summer foolishness was over.

The first order of business as Gordon and his classmates had learned from her former students was baseball, or more particularly the Pittsburgh Pirates, or even more precisely how a certain shortstop, Gunther Apfelbaum had performed at bat and in the field against the St. Louis Cardinals in the previous Sunday's double header.

Gunther Apfelbaum—known around the league as Gunner for the way he could make the little horsehide ball sing on its way from the left side of the diamond to its target at first base—had gone three-for-five with a double and triple in the first game and two-for-three with a triple and stolen base in the seven inning nightcap...an above average outing for the shortstop who sported a 297 batting average, 443 slugging rating, and a 633 onboard percentage. At 36 but sporting a damaged left leg that made him run with a sort of hippity-hop gait, Gunner had been pronounced 4-F by his draft board, allowing him to avoid military service, a situation some thought a bit odd considering he might be better suited tossing hand grenades than mowing down base runners.

Of course, everyone knew that Miss A used this daily exercise from April to October each year, to glorify her cousin...everyone but Mr. Chalmers, the school principal who watched these proceedings with great interest.

Hidden from view was Miss A belief that baseball was a silly pursuit for grown men and a terrible waste of Gunther's intellect. Nonetheless, she saw it as an almost perfect tool for sneaking such advanced subjects as statistics, geometry, and national tradition into the curriculum without her students or the State School Board being any the wiser. Ditto her use of world geography to provide a basis for understanding the factors that knitted one group of people into a unified whole, at the same time putting them at odds with other groups.

Such visions came from the venerable A. Apfelbaum—Alfie to his cohorts—who believed passionately that such subjects should be taught to kids while still in their nappies.

“A shame they have to wait until high school,” he complained to his unsympathetic companions at Anthony’s Study Hall, a comfortable if seedy watering hole on the west side of Sacramento frequented by an eclectic assemblage of academic castoffs.

The lackluster town—blazingly hot in the summer and agonizing cold in the winter with an alleged fortnight of endurable weather at the either equinoxes—was for some unknown reason the state’s capitol...“a waste of good farmland” in the pious opinion of most longtime residents. Taxpayers in other parts of the state considered it a reasonable place to stick the state’s political scum-suckers who had managed thus far to avoid the offer of free room and board at San Quentin or Alcatraz.

The more probable reason for its selection as the state’s throne, and the one Miss A, passed on to her students, was that since, unlike its predecessors to the title—Oakland, San Francisco, and Monterey—Sacramento was land-locked and therefore of little value to anyone wishing to take dominion by amphibious assault.

Though she would never show it, Miss A looked forward to this year’s fourth grade class more eagerly than was her wont, an expectation rooted in the regard of the group’s prior teachers, that there were some of Miss A’s *Specials* in its ranks, Gordon at the head of the column. The terms *Specials* was not necessarily one of approbation, indeed quite the opposite in many of her colleagues’ minds, referring to students who made things difficult for those of an authoritarian bent, a fair representation of whom could be found in the teachers’ room across the hall.

I’ll continue this next week as Miss A. applies herself to the task of expanding Gordon’s Horizons.

I actually liked this sideslip into Gordon’s youth, but faced with a limit of somewhere in the vicinity of 100k words for the tome, it had to go...as would detours into his trips to Manzanar to visit the Nakanos.

You may sense that like Miss A. I too believe statistics and geometry belong in the curriculum by the third grade.

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