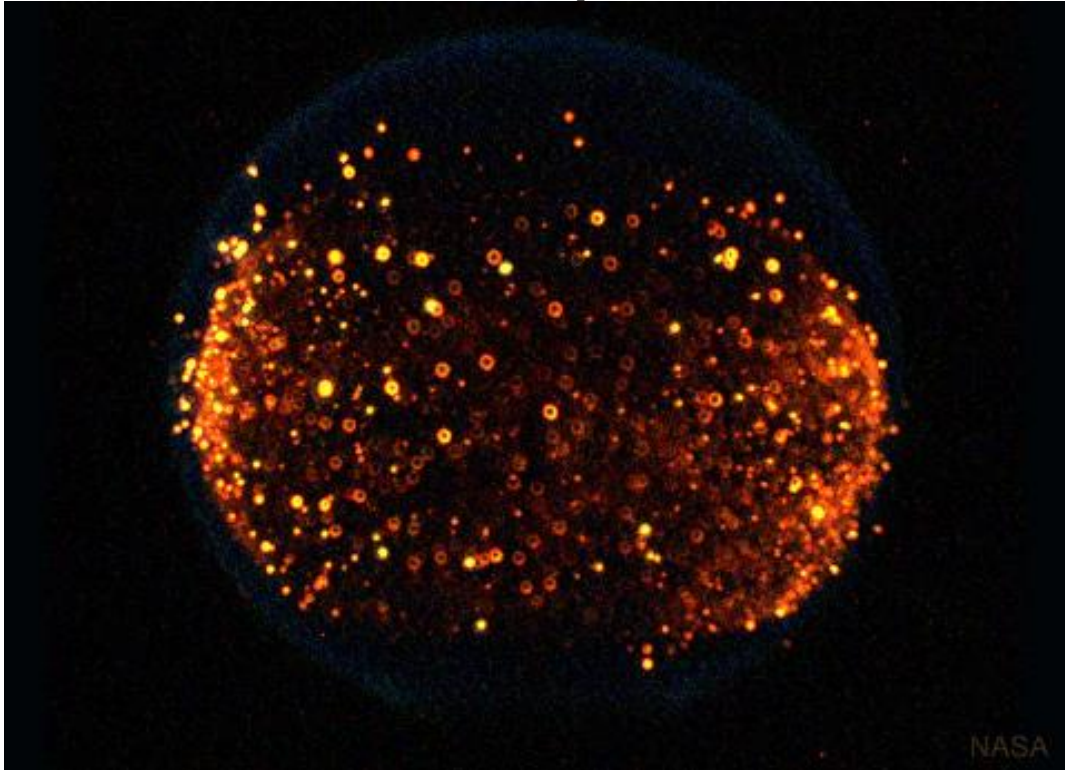


Ode to Happiness for Sunday August 15 2021

## Fire in Space



*Image Credit: NASA*

What does fire look like in space? In the gravity on Earth, heated air rises and expands, causing flames to be teardrop shaped. In the microgravity of the air-filled International Space Station (ISS), however, flames are spheres.

Fire is the rapid acquisition of oxygen, and space flames meet new oxygen molecules when they float by randomly from all directions -- creating the enveloping sphere.

In the featured image taken in the ISS's Combustion Integration Rack, a spherical flame envelops clusters of hot glowing soot. Without oxygen, say in the vacuum of empty space, a fire would go out immediately. The many chemical reactions involved with fire are complex, and testing them in microgravity is helping humanity not only to better understand fire -- but how to put out fire, too.

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## US Wildfire Map

Want to know details about fires in your area? If you live in a fire prone area, [\*\*you'll want to bookmark this.\*\*](#)



<https://www.fireweatheravalanche.org/fire/state/>  
*Merely add the name of your state to particularize it.*

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I don't get what humans see in this. *Boring.*

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**AI Neural TTS and Holograms at Microsoft Inspire**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auJJrHgG9Mc>

What if neither distance nor language mattered? What if technology could help you be anywhere you need to be and speak any language?

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## **How the Rosetta Stone Unlocked the Secrets of Ancient Civilizations**

*Discovered in Egypt by Napoleon's conquering forces, this plain-looking slab was the key to cracking the code of Egyptian hieroglyphics.*



By Erin Blakemore

When Pierre-François Bouchard's men discovered the ancient stone slab that would change the world on July 19, 1799, they weren't on an archaeological dig; they were doing a last-minute construction job. The French soldiers occupied a run-down fort in

Rosetta, Egypt, and had just days to shore up their defenses for a battle with Ottoman Empire troops.

As the men tore down a wall that had been built using the detritus of nearby ancient Egyptian sites, they discovered a large stone fragment covered in three types of writing, including ancient Greek. Intrigued, Bouchard wondered if the stone might say the same thing in three different languages. He shared his find with French scholars who had come to plumb Egypt for archaeological treasures.

They got more than they bargained for. The slab was the Rosetta Stone, and the letters and symbols carefully chiseled into its dark face would shed light on the glory of ancient Egyptian civilization. But first, scholars would have to crack its code.

### **A decree of loyalty**

Standing at about four feet high and 2.5 feet wide, the granite-like rock is just a fragment of a larger, now lost, stele. But though its text is incomplete, it is invaluable. It consists of a decree affirming the royal cult of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, an Egyptian king who took the throne in 204 B.C.

At the time, the Ptolemaic kingdom was at war and dealing with an internal revolt. The decree was passed by a council of priests who used it to honor the pharaoh and declare their loyalty to him. It was recorded on the stele in Ptolemaic hieroglyphics, Demotic Egyptian script, and ancient Greek script. Identical stelae were to be placed in every temple in Egypt.

### **Conquering scholars**

Fast-forward to 1798, when Napoleon led French forces to take over Egypt, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Scientists and historians were part of the conquering force, and streamed into the country to document what they found there. The Egyptologists gathered a large number of ancient artifacts they wanted to take back to France, including the Rosetta Stone.

But the British wanted Egypt, too, and in 1801 they prevailed over French forces. The French were allowed to evacuate, but the British demanded they hand over the antiquities collection before leaving. So in 1802 the Rosetta Stone made its way to London, where it was put on display at the British Museum almost immediately upon arriving. (Here's why Napoleon's military defeat in Egypt yielded a victory for history.)

But the stone had more than aesthetic value. Scholars had long puzzled over the meaning of the picture-like markings, known as hieroglyphs, made on ancient Egyptian slabs. Since it contained identical content in three languages, scholars thought the Rosetta Stone might be able to help crack the historic mystery.

Scholars raced to translate the Rosetta Stone. Though a variety of scholars across Europe would contribute to the work, the two most important contributions came from England and France.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO1tzmi1V5g>

Thomas Young, a British polymath best known for his scientific contributions, treated the mystery as a mathematical problem. After translating the ancient Greek, he took extensive notes on the hieroglyphs and systematically attempted to match each one to its translation. He also compared the glyphs to those on other statues. Young was able to identify the phonetic sounds some glyphs represented, figure out some of the characters, and piece together how words were pluralized. (Read more about hieroglyphics with your kids.)

But it was Jean-François Champollion, a Frenchman known as the founder of Egyptology, who would ultimately crack the code in 1822. Where Young had no experience with the Egyptian language, Champollion was fluent in Coptic and had extensive knowledge about Egypt. He figured out that the demotic script—the third writing system on the stele—conveyed syllables and that the hieroglyphs represented Coptic sounds.

It was a breakthrough. Famously, an ecstatic Champollion rushed into his brother's office shouting "Je tiens mon affaire!" ("I've got it!"). Then he fainted and did not recover for five days.

### **The Rosetta Stone's legacy**

Champollion used the stone to create an alphabet of phonetic hieroglyphic characters, then other scholars piggybacked on his research to fully translate the stone. The French Egyptologist's work was eventually validated by the discovery and translation of the Decree of Canopus, another stele written in hieroglyphs, demotic script, and ancient Greek.

The Rosetta Stone's translation became the backbone of Egyptology, and the iconic stele has been credited as one of the most important objects in history. But the stone itself is controversial as a spoil of war and colonial expansion. Was the Rosetta Stone taken to England or stolen by the British? That depends on who you ask. Over the years, there have been repeated calls to return the stone to Egypt, but it remains at the British Museum, where it has over six million visitors a year.

Why does the plain-looking Rosetta Stone retain such a luster today, two centuries after its code was cracked? Egyptologist John Ray told Smithsonian Magazine's Beth Py-Lieberman in 2007 that the stone "is really the key, not simply to ancient Egypt; it's the key to decipherment itself. We knew there were big civilizations, like Egypt, but they'd fallen silent. With the cracking of the Rosetta stone, they could speak with their own voice and suddenly whole areas of history were revealed."

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Husband's phone call:

"Honey it's me. I don't want to alarm you but I was hit by a car as I was leaving the office. Paula brought me to the hospital. They have checked me over and done some tests and some x-rays. The blow to my head was severe. Fortunately, it did not cause any serious internal injury. However I have three broken ribs, a compound fracture in the left leg, and they think they may have to amputate my right foot."

Wife's Response: "Who is Paula?"

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## **Metallic Glass Gears Up for 'Cobots,' Coatings, and More**



*Most metallic glass alloys form a hard, smooth surface. This gives metallic glass gears a long lifetime without the need for liquid lubricants, making them appealing for NASA robotics that operate in cold environments, where lubricants need to be warmed before operations.*

*Credit: NASA*

Bulk metallic glass could slash prices of collaborative robots and lead to advanced 3D printed metals.

### **Where are the robot assistants we were promised?**

For all the space that robots have occupied in the popular imagination for the last hundred years – and although the number of real-world automatons has been growing for decades – most people's interactions with them remain limited to a hands-free vacuum or a child's smart toy.

There are two main reasons for this, according to Glenn Garrett, chief technology officer of a NASA spinoff company, Amorphology Inc.: cost and safety. Most automated machinery is still only affordable to large manufacturers that can make major investments and expect long-term savings. And while robots take up more and more of the factory floor, they're generally segregated from their human colleagues due to safety concerns – largely oblivious to their surroundings, they're strong and dangerously clumsy.

In the mid-1990s, two Northwestern University professors patented an alternative concept under a new term: *cobots*. Collaborative robots, designed to cooperate with humans, would be smaller, smarter, more responsive, and more aware, with tighter

self-control and better manners all around. In the years since, leaps in artificial intelligence and sensors have made these “friendlier” robots a reality but cost still prevents their widespread adoption.

“That’s where the robotics industry is going,” Garrett said, noting that a handful of cobots are already making lattes and sandwiches, for example. “But if it costs \$40,000, it’s out of reach for non-industrial applications.”

The biggest cost drivers, however, aren’t always the advanced software and sensors. Instead, he said, it often comes down to some of the most rudimentary machine components: gears. “High-precision gears are at least half the cost of robotic arms.”

A strain wave gear converts the fast, low-torque rotation of an engine into slow, precise, forceful motion. As the oblong wave generator at the center spins, it deforms the flexspline around it, shown in red, which engages with the teeth of a fixed outer spline. The interaction causes the flexspline to rotate in the opposite direction of the wave generator, moving only two teeth for each turn of the motor. Credit: Jahobr, CC0 1.0

Now, Pasadena, California-based Amorphology hopes to drop the price of cobots with advances originally made for robots that were never intended for human interaction – NASA’s planetary rovers.

### **Rovers Adapt to Martian Climate**

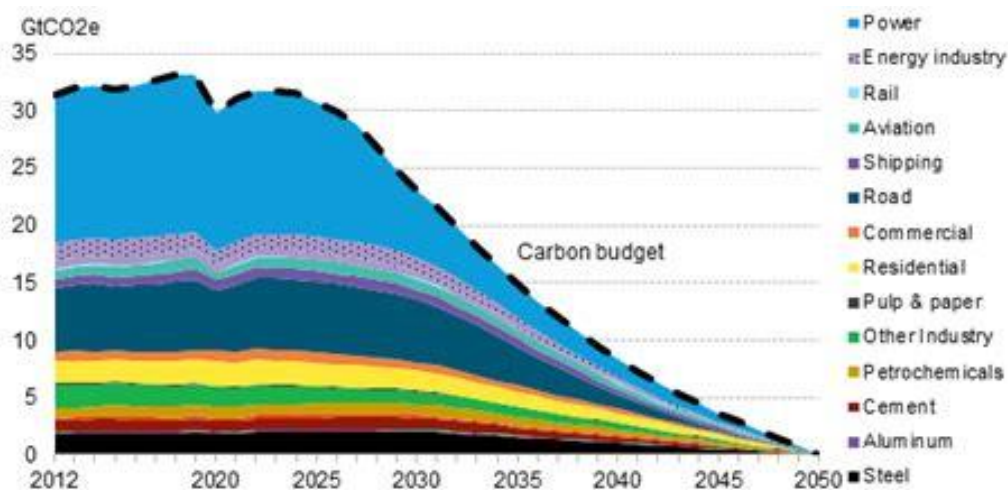
Gears on NASA’s rovers, like most gears on Earth, are made of steel, which is both strong and wear resistant. But steel gears need liquid lubrication, and oils don’t work well in frigid environments like the lunar or Martian surface. So, NASA’s Curiosity rover, for example, spends about three hours warming up lubricants every time it prepares to start rolling, using up about a quarter of the discretionary energy that could otherwise be used for science, said Doug Hofmann, principal scientist of the Materials Development and Manufacturing Technology group at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California. “So that’s really frustrating. It would be great if those gears could just turn on and drive.”

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## New Energy Outlook 2021: Bloomberg NEF

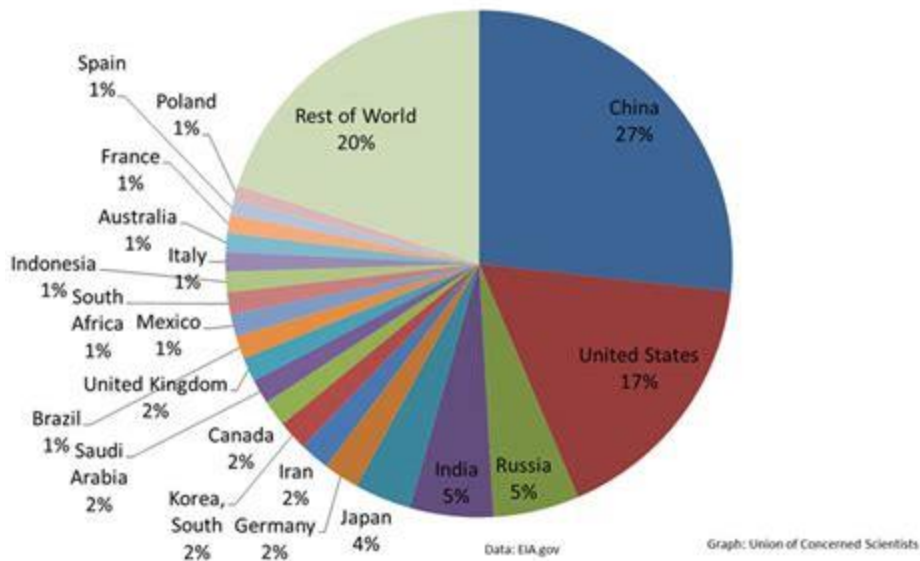


<https://assets.bbhub.io/professional/sites/24/NEO-Executive-Summary-2021.pdf>

This is a comprehensive look at energy possibilities viewed within the framework of carbon emissions. Missing in my estimation are the costs—energy and otherwise—of remediating the impacts of transition to the green and/or grey scenarios. But that's the subject of another day.



Each Country's Share of 2011 Total Carbon Dioxide Emissions from the Consumption of Energy



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## Driver's License as a Report Card



[driving-test.org](http://driving-test.org)

A mother is driving a little girl to her friend's house for a play date. "Mommy," the little girl asks, "how old are you?"

"Honey, you are not supposed to ask a lady her age," the mother replied. "It's not polite."

"OK", the little girl says, "How much do you weigh?"

"Now really," the mother says, "those are personal questions and are really none of your business."

Undaunted the little girl asks, "Why did you and Daddy get a divorce?"

"That is enough questions, young lady, honestly!" The exasperated mother walks away as the two friends begin to play.

"My Mom won't tell me anything about her," the little girl says to her friend.

"Well," says the friend, "all you need to do is look at her drivers' license. It is like a report card, it has everything on it."

Later that night the little girl says to her mother, "I know how old you are, you are 32."

The mother is surprised and asks, "How did you find that out?"

"I also know that you weigh 140 pounds."

The mother is past surprised and shocked now. "How in heaven's name did you find that out?"

"And," the little girl says triumphantly, "I know why you and daddy got a divorce."

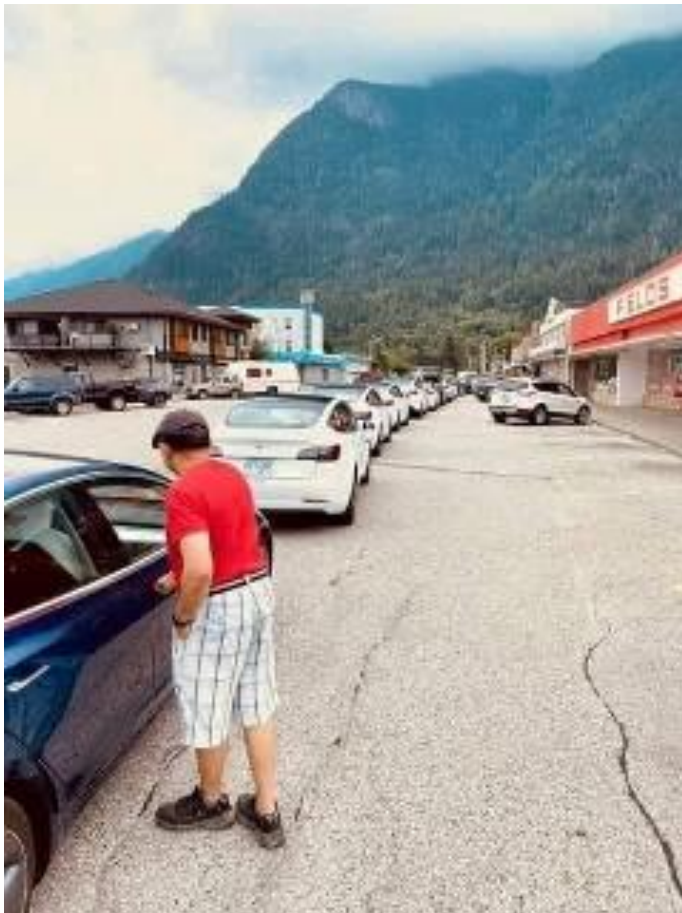
"Oh really?" the mother asks. "Why?"

"Because you got an F in sex."

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## What Does History Tells us About the Future of Electric Transport

Electrics were once the odds-on favorite, but...



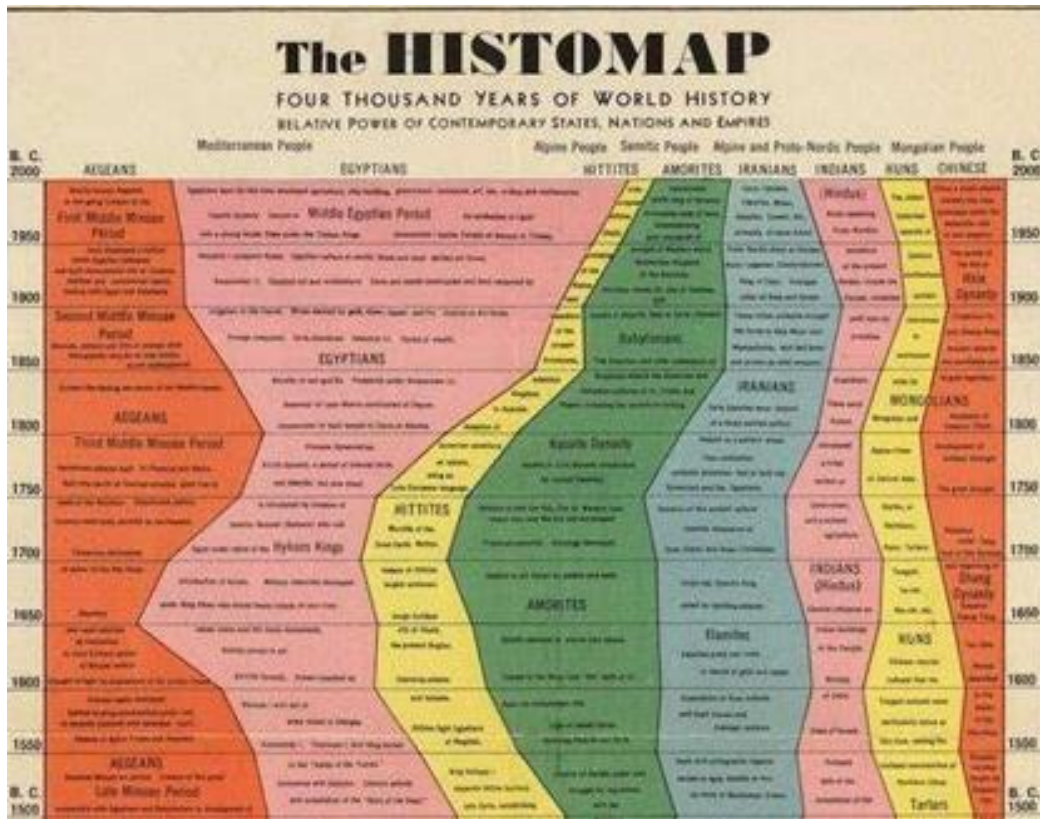
*Battery electrics wait their turn in Hope BC*

Though bright, there are challenges in the road ahead.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/technology/2021/aug/03/lost-history-electric-car-future-transport>

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# The History of the World: Every Year



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6Wu0Q7x5D0>

Since 200,000 BCE, humanity has spread around globe and enacted huge change upon the planet. This video shows every year of that story, right from the beginning.

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## How Olympic Divers Make the Tiniest Splash.

Team USA's head diving coach explains



*nl pinterest*

Elegant Olympic dives fly by in a matter of seconds. Because of that, it's hard to know what to look for when you try to judge the sport from your couch. One thing that's easy to see, though? The splash.

If you've watched any Olympics diving coverage, you may have noticed the splashes athletes make are tiny. Divers spend years training to perform with a minimal splash, in the same way gymnasts train to stick their landings.

In this video, Team USA's head diving coach Drew Johansen explains the three major components he uses to guide his athletes toward smaller splashes.

**The above water:** As divers approach the water, they must extend their body into a rigid, straight line. Importantly, they must put their hands one on top of the other with flat palms, to create what's called a rip entry (named because it sounds like a piece of paper is being ripped as the diver hits the water).

**The swim:** After divers hit the water, they must swim their arms out while keeping their lower body rigid. This helps disperse some bubbles.

**The underwater save:** As divers submerge, they pike (or fold in on themselves), trying to catch more bubbles with their bodies. This helps break big bubbles into smaller bubbles, making them less splashy when they rise to the surface.

When performed correctly, a perfect dive will use all these components to make a tiny splash.

And while the sport of diving isn't all about splashes, a small splash is the perfect punctuation to a job well done.

<https://youtu.be/8GqWTqDhahM>

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**Rome...the Next 2,000 Years**



Odester Bill Warner made this shot of the Colosseum during his visit to Rome in July. It gives the feeling the gladiators of yore looked up at such a sky and saluted.

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### **Words from 90-Year Old Regina Brett**



"To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the 45 lessons life taught me. It is the most-requested column I've ever written. My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:"

- Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
- When in doubt, just take the next small step.
- Life is too short – enjoy it.
- Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and family will.
- Pay off your credit cards every month.
- You don't have to win every argument. Stay true to yourself.
- Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
- Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
- When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
- Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
- It's OK to let your children see you cry.
- Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
- If a relationship must be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
- Everything can change in the blink of an eye, but don't worry.
- Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.
- Get rid of anything that isn't useful. Clutter weighs you down in many ways.
- Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
- It's never too late to be happy. But it's all up to you and no one else.
- When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
- Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
- Over prepare, then go with the flow.
- Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
- The most important sex organ is the brain.
- No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
- Frame every so-called disaster with these words 'In five years, will this matter?'
- Always choose life.
- Forgive.
- What other people think of you is none of your business.
- Time heals almost everything. Give time.
- However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
- Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
- Believe in miracles.
- Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.
- Growing old beats the alternative of dying young.

- Your children get only one childhood.
- All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
- Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
- If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
- Envy is a waste of time. Accept what you already have, not what you need.
- The best is yet to come...
- No matter how you feel, get up, dress up, and show up.
- Yield.
- Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift."

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### **Igor Moiseyev Ballet. Suite Greek Dance**



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4chpyTIE5Q.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4chpyTIE5Q)

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### **The Raven Performed By Vincent Price**





Now, here's what Edgar Allen Poe had to say in the matter, with Vincent Price performing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7zR3IDEHrM>



Many years ago I had a recording of the St. Louis Symphony under the baton of Leonard Slatkin in which Vincent Price performed a number of Poe's poems, the highlight of which was—of course—The Raven. If you're interested in learning more about this, go to:

<https://thesoundofvincentprice.blogspot.com/2016/02/leonard-slatkins-symphonic-take-on.html>

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## Laws They Don't Teach You in Physics Class

- Law of Mechanical Repair- After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch and you'll have to pee.
- Law of Gravity - Any tool, nut, bolt, screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible place in the universe.

- Law of Probability - The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.
- Law of Random Numbers - If you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal; someone always answers.
- Variation Law - If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now.
- Law of the Bath - When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone will ring.
- Law of Close Encounters - The probability of meeting someone you know INCREASES dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with.
- Law of the Result - When you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, IT WILL!!!
- Law of Biomechanics- The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.
- Law of the Theater & Hockey Arena - At any event, the people whose seats are furthest from the aisle, always arrive last. They are the ones who will leave their seats several times to go for food, beer, or the toilet and who leave early before the end of the performance or the game is over. The folks in the aisle seats come early, never move once, have long gangly legs or big bellies and stay to the bitter end of the performance. The aisle people also are very surly folk.
- The Coffee Law - As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.
- Murphy's Law of Lockers - If there are only 2 people in a locker room, they will have adjacent lockers.
- Law of Physical Surfaces - The chance of an open-faced jelly sandwich landing face down on a floor is directly correlated to the newness and cost of the carpet or rug.
- Law of Logical Argument - Anything is possible IF you don't know what you are talking about.
- Law of Physical Appearance - If the clothes fit, they're ugly.
- Law of Public Speaking -- A closed mouth gathers no feet!
- Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy - As soon as you find a product that you really like, they will stop making it OR the store will stop selling it!
- Doctors' Law - If you don't feel well, make an appointment to go to the doctor, by the time you get there, you'll feel better. But don't make an appointment and you'll stay sick.

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## **I Believe in Flash Mobs**



Irish Dancing

Flashmob in Essex by Aer Lingus Regional and London Southend Airport

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKCHgwzMjhw>

Almost 40 Irish dancers marked the launch of the new Aer Lingus Regional service from London Southend to Dublin with a stunning display at Lakeside shopping centre.

Organized by Aer Lingus Regional, London Southend Airport, Rathbone Perception Media and the McGahan Lees Irish Dance Academy.

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## **Pigeons Riot after Their Statue of Stonewall Jackson is Removed**



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**Bach With Your Coffee Anyone?**



Bach: Terzetto "Die Katze lässt das Mäusen nicht" from "Coffee Cantata", BWV 211

<https://youtu.be/YonkJDrJXgg?t=1>

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was also apparently a coffee enthusiast. So much so that he wrote a composition about the beverage. Although known mostly for his liturgical music, his Coffee Cantata (AKA Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht, BWV 211) is a rare example of a secular work by the composer. The short comic opera was written (circa 1735) for a musical ensemble called The Collegium Musicum based in a storied Zimmerman's coffee house in Leipzig, Germany. The whole cantata seems very much to have been written with the local audience in mind.

Coffee Cantata is about a young vivacious woman named Aria who loves coffee. Her killjoy father is, of course, dead set against his daughter having any kind of caffeinated fun. So he tries to ban her from the drink. Aria bitterly complains:

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## **Midsummer Night Groaners**

What's the one thing snipers can't tell their wives?

*I missed you this morning.*

When you're dressed all in black and some smart ass asks you who died, *simply look around the room and say, "I haven't decided yet."*

I decided to quit my job as a personal trainer because I don't feel I'm fit enough for the job...*I've handed in my 'Too Weak' notice.*

There's a knock at the door. I open it, but there's no one there. *Unsettled, I slow down a little and pull into the middle lane.*

Lawyer: "I'm not saying another word without my lawyer present."

Police: *"But you are the lawyer."*

Lawyer: *"Exactly - where's my present?"*

Looking for singles in your time zone? *Call the International Dateline.*

Twelve hundred bucks for a telescope: *they must've seen me coming.*

My dad has suggested that I register for a donor card. *He's a man after my own heart.*

Apparently one in three Britons is conceived in an IKEA bed *which is crazy because those places are really well lit.*

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## **A One-Person Electric Aircraft for the Cost of a Luxury SUV**

And you won't need an FAA pilot's license to fly it either, since Opener's Blackfly is certified as an ultralight aircraft.



*UFO in a WWII movie? No, that's just Blackfly.*

*Courtesy Opener, LLC*

If some world organization ever creates an award for the strangest-looking, yet practical personal aerial vehicle, Opener's Blackfly should capture the trophy. Blackfly last weekend performed for the crowds at AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisc., competing against Volocopter to be named as the first piloted eVTOL at a public event.

The California company expects to sell up to 25 of its ultralight category, computer-operated aircraft before the end of this year. Its website says that when Blackfly goes into mass production, "it will [sell for] the price of an SUV." Then it adds a slight disclaimer: "We are vague about the price so as not to overpromise."

The aircraft resembles two boat hulls, one forming the bottom, the other inverted to form the top, with a bubble canopy in the middle for the single person Blackfly carries. Attached to the shell are two wings—one in front and the other at the rear—each holding four electrically powered propellers.

The aircraft's computers can tilt the wings straight ahead, vertically, or anywhere in between, allowing Blackfly to operate like a traditional aircraft or helicopter. Surprisingly, Blackfly uses no wheels underneath. It simply touches down on the keel of the hull and lists to one side or the other until the winglet at the very tip of the airfoil settles to the ground.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPI0YOliqCE>

Created for the US recreational sport-vehicle market, Blackfly operates under Part 103 of the federal air regulations. That comes with a few restrictions. As an ultralight, Blackfly can weigh no more than 254 pounds and may not be flown at night or anywhere near populated areas.

But Part 103 also has its advantages. Because Blackfly requires no pilot's license, it's considered a recreational sport vehicle that comes with an optional BRS parachute that can be operated at altitudes of less than 100 feet above the ground. That's in case the redundant computers that control the machine should fail at the same time. The onboard computer even includes a return-to-home button, just like a drone, should the operator get lost. "We test Blackfly through a very wide flight-operating envelope, but then highly restrict what the computers will allow the aircraft to do," said CEO Marcus Leng on EAA Radio.

Blackfly's motors and batteries were all designed in house. "The proprietary propulsion system includes the most powerful motors in the world for their size," Leng said.

Blackfly flew four times at Oshkosh. Each time, it took off, flew a few hundred yards over a grassy area between the runways, and then returned to the original spot, landing gently on its keel, before tilting to one side.

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## **The Eagles**



The Eagles formed in Los Angeles in 1971, were one of the most successful musical acts of the 1970s. Founding members Glenn Frey (guitars, vocals), Don Henley (drums, vocals), Bernie Leadon (guitars, vocals) and Randy Meisner (bass guitar, vocals) were recruited by Linda Ronstadt as band members, some touring with her, and all playing on her third solo album, before venturing out on their own on David Geffen's new Asylum Records label.

Hotel California: <https://youtu.be/SDuB6YfCFDI>

Take it Easy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4v8KEbQA8kw>

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## **My Walking Thoughts**

**August 14 2021**

Today I decided to do my Vons-to-Vons beach walk, which it isn't quite, but close enough. I start off at the Seaward Avenue Vons parking lot, walk to San Buenaventura State Beach, onward to the park's western boundary at Seaside Wilderness Park, then after a pit stop and side trip out to the end of the Ventura Pier back to Vons...a total distance of around 8 miles.

Depending on the wind, Ventura Beach can present agreeable waves to surfers of every stripe...but not today with a brisk breeze from the west flattening the ocean into dyspeptic ripples, leaving the 2-footers wide open to the gremmies.

On the other hand, today is the answer to wind surfers' prayers. Watching these folks race back-and-forth, in-and-out, carving magnificent turns among the whitecaps is a joy to behold, tempting me to wish I were 60 years younger; but watching mishaps such as the one below gives me pause.

I watched as a real hotshot--definitely in the master rank--took a tumble during a vicious cutback and came down hard, head-first on his board. It was obvious even from the several hundred yard distance to where I stood, he was in trouble.

People along the elevated pathway began shouting and waving, eventually catching the attention of another windsurfer, who raced over and attended to the victim until he was able to make it to shore.

The hero of the moment retrieved the board that I heard one of the onlookers say was a formula board with a five-foot sail, but it could have been something entirely different. Mainly I thought that a buddy system would be a good idea for the high performance folks, but here again, what do I know.

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The Ventura Pier is a magnet to local fishermen, though I have seen scant evidence that their efforts will cover the gastronomical needs.

There are people in this world who are natural fishermen. My father wanted to be - spent some of the happiest hours of his life trying - but Henry Duque was the knock-down, drag-out, heavyweight surf fisherman champion in our neck of the woods if not the whole world.

I was (and am) the antithesis. I couldn't catch a fish if my life depended on it. I had to be content with seaweed, jellyfish, innertubes (tires used to have these when I was



growing up) and an occasional bathing suit traveling southward on the Japanese current.

What I could do with some success was catch soft-shelled sand crabs for the big people who would transform these at a ratio of 1-to-50 into corbina, a wonderful surf fish with soft flesh and few bones. At about the same ratio, my crabs would turn into perch which cannot be counted as fish since there is not a true mouthful in the largest unless you are a bone freak which I'm not.

Catching soft-shelled sand crabs is a black art requiring stealth, a killer instinct, quick feet, and a sand-crab scoop.

Soft-shelled sand crabs exist in nature at something on the order of 1 in 20, which is rather amazing as they seem to be the only of their sort with whom the fish will bother. Just why a crab who makes a very good living burrowing in the wet sand at water's edge safe from the predators of the deep, would want to venture into the hostile environs of four-foot water is a mystery to me, but presumably they do it without coaxing, or how else would a wandering corbina know enough to gobble one up.

It could not have been man who introduced the soft-shelled sand crab into the corbina's food chain and imprinted it in his DNA, there simply hasn't been that much time. The affinity has to have been there long before the first fisherman found corbina more delectable than sand crabs, but I still don't think that soft-shells should make a practice of getting in the face of corbina, unless they're on a hook of course.

In any event, there's nothing I could teach anyone about fishing. I could stand right next to Mr. Duque and cast my line so that my sinker splash was indistinguishable from his. His line would go taut as would mine. He'd jerk back to sink the hook and so would I, and then begin the laborious, eager job of reeling the catch in. Invariably his line would lead to a wriggling, shimmering three-pound corbina, mine a bunch of kelp.

I tried everything. I could out-cast my father or Mr. Duque for that matter. Dude Waycott could toss his sinker out farther than anyone in the area, but it didn't seem to help him much as his yield was mediocre even by my father's standards. I tried fishing next to anyone who had the knack, but none of it ever rubbed off. As a business, it was a disaster. Hooks and lead sinkers and nylon leader were expensive items that I contributed with great regularity to the surf-monster.

You'd have thought I had paid my dues. But no, my reward was tangled lines when the drag on my casting reel failed; or having to cut loose when I got hung up in a particularly large batch of kelp.

Lord knows I tried, but the result was always the same. For a while, my father tried to bolster my spirits, but in the end, he grumbled about the number of hooks and sinkers I managed to lose, and that's when I decided to confine my predatory endeavors to soft-shelled sand crabs.

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As a kid, I loved all the wonders the beach offers, sand, surf, sandcastles, and catching sand crabs. But above all it was roasting wieners and marshmallows in the late afternoon; counting the tiers in the sun's Japanese Lantern as it headed for its western home; singing now forgotten choruses of 'Home on the Range' to the crackles from driftwood embers sending showers of sparkles into the gathering dark; then as the giant moon climbed to its rightful throne ringed by a tiara of stars; the ultimate thrill of the day that lay in dashing to the water's edge to watch one of nature's grandest shows...thousands upon thousands of glistening grunion cascading shoreward in the spume, there to writhe triumphantly in fulfillment of their ancestral calling. Sigh.

## Root 66



It was Sunday and the road was, but for a few migrant souls such as we, deserted...no one to marvel at this zoomie apparition—one of the 6,339 Corvettes produced in 1957. Instead, we responded to the friendly greetings of Sahuaro cactus with waves of our own; watched with growing anticipation as the milestones to Phoenix dwindled until at the five mile marker we realized with surprise a civilization of a sort had magically emerged from the desert.

Still years in the future lay stirrings of today's booming metropolis with its twenty-mile corridor-glimmer of motels, eateries, business establishments, auto sales pavilions; all framed by billboards promising wealth beyond imagination from lawsuits, and guarantees of slender, sexy bodies by means too numerous to recall...but that's now.

Then, I don't recall anything that caught eye or fancy. It was dun-colored single-floor Hogans with great gaps between its yet-to-be-populated streets.

Before a solid awareness of the ambiance set in, however, the town was in our wake, leaving us with scant memories of the encounter except for the granite and sandstone camel kneeling in quiet grandeur 10 miles north of the highway.

Fifty miles and two strings of Burma Shave signs later we passed through Casa Grande, site of the Hohokam ruins and home to the Casa Grande Cotton Kings baseball team, whose name reflects the area's principal crop. None of these features enticed us to stop, so it was onward and slightly upward past Picacho Peak, the mining town of Marana, and from there to what was at that point Tucson's main drag, the ironically named Speedway Blvd.

Possibly because of its denser layout, Tucson seemed larger than Phoenix, at the time in the midst of a dramatic population boom. Why? Who knows. We weren't there for cultural enlightenment; food and airconditioned slumber were the order of the day...both solved by the kindness of the lovely and gracious Cindy Coe, sister of one of Tom's former charges at the Monterey Peninsula's Robert Louis Stevenson School.

We spent the afternoon making waves in her condominium's pool, ate three days' worth of hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes at her expense, unrolled our sleeping bags in her cool to almost cold living room, and soared to sleep in the Santa Cruz River floodplain where once the Hohokam clans advanced their pottery making skills to world class heights. Of course I was ignorant of such arcane knowledge until 40 years later when Bill Rathje, professor of archaeology at the University of Arizona--famed for his landmark studies on solid waste that earned him the sobriquet of *garbologist*--enlightened me on the subject.

Then there was the sun's blazing Monday morning welcome, leading to after another huge meal of bacon, eggs, French toast, juice, coffee, more eggs and...well you get the picture that we were well fortified to continue the adventure...we were on the road again.

Next episode, East of Tucson

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