

How to  
Feel at Home in Oz  
Musings of a Wanderer

Table Talk  
What This Table Tells About Our Past

Little Ways to  
Change a Big World  
Building Homes in Swaziland

Your  
Financial Legacy  
4 Loving Things You Can Do  
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Sanitize Your Soul  
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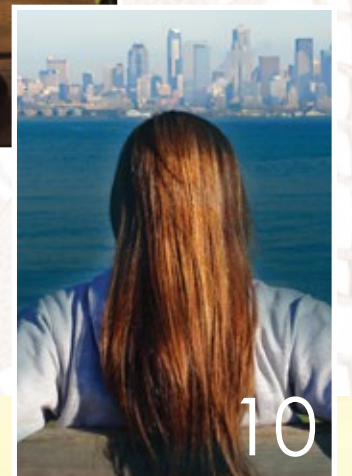
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# Letter From the Executive Vice President

## Home on the Range by Brett Robinson



Brett Robinson,  
 Executive VP, Leisure Care

As I consider the theme "Home" for the winter edition of LIV FUN magazine, the classic western song "Home on the Range" keeps playing in my head.

*"Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
 Where the deer and the antelope play,  
 Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,  
 And the skies are not cloudy all day."*

Realizing that Leisure Care is not in the ranching or cowboy business (although it is likely that the zany staff at your community have thrown a party with a similar theme), I actually see some relevance.

The sentiment in this song (Roy Rogers' version please) is about a sense of appreciation and true belonging that makes one feel at home. This is exactly what we strive for every day at our communities. We want each of our residents to thrive and feel that deep sense of belonging that one associates with home. This is achieved when residents and their awesome community teams engage and share their lives together. We encourage you all to roam and play, to feel encouraged and make every day one full of sunshine — or at least not cloudy all day.

So this winter, whether you have lived with us for many years or only just moved in, embrace your Leisure Care home by making a new friend, deepening existing friendships, or joining a new activity group. Let your staff know how they can help you better connect with your community. After all, life and living in community is all about being part of a family and feeling part of something bigger.

To celebrate your lives and your Leisure Care home, how about gathering around a piano or a sitting area with a group of friends and creating your own rendition of "Home on the Range"? It will put a smile on your face and hopefully create a warm sense of belonging that makes you feel exactly how we want you to feel — at home.

Thank you for calling us home; we never take that for granted.

Happy trails,

**Brett Robinson**  
 Executive Vice President

*We want to hear from you!*

Send your article ideas and personal stories for consideration for "Retire Like You Mean It," as well as feedback on the magazine to:

[livfun@leisurecare.com](mailto:livfun@leisurecare.com)

The next issue's theme is "Imagination."



# Style Wise

Expressing Your Unique Self

# OZ

Or Bust

Maybe just  
a scrap of my  
gypsy soul  
really longs  
for a home  
on the range.

by Skye Moody

Novelist, essayist, photographer and world traveler

*“I live in my own mind, Ain’t nothin’ but a good time,  
No rain, but just the sunshine, Out here in my own mind.”*

—Lyle Lovett

When Dorothy says, “We’re not in Kansas anymore,” we don’t learn what Toto thinks of Oz, but Dorothy’s clearly spooked. Similarly, Through-the-Looking-Glass Alice knows for a fact that Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee have no business smoking their hookah pipe in the tree branches of Kensington Gardens where Christopher Robin romps with his homeboy, Pooh. Red Riding Hood’s naïve take on “*mi casa es su casa*” nearly lands her in a heap of furry trouble. We’re tempted to conclude that only fey children and smarmy sentimental weaklings embrace the concept of homesickness.

Like Lyle Lovett, I live in my own mind. So I say. Sounds braver than admitting just a scrap of me feels nostalgia for a home on the range — deer and antelope optional. I’m proud that most of my furnishings consist of carry-on luggage and that I often catch myself staring into shop windows displaying suitcases, analyzing the baggage options as a homemaker might scrutinize couches and coffee tables. I’m a Planet Earth native, a global citizen; home for me is wherever the floatplane is landing or where the sled dogs slow to a stop. Wherever I alight, eventually I’ll find an excuse to depart, yet I always leave behind a piece of my heart. I thrive on the exotic, the exotic being whatever place or people I haven’t yet experienced. No place ever feels really foreign to me, yet no place ever seduces me into putting down roots. I can feel at home anywhere, with one exception. (Answer at the end of this column.)

As for planting roots, the idea threatens my inborn global explorer; a portable design that’s genetic; my ancestors were sea captains who sailed to and from their properties in Liverpool, their real home being the seas and the ships

they commanded. Occasionally, their wives and children accompanied them abroad. The Captain’s Quarters were furnished in the fashion of English domiciles; often a piano graced the parlor, the flatware and family linens were engraved with the ship’s name, and art hung on the salon walls, every touch intended to create a home. Whether harbored in Gibraltar or riding out a typhoon on the China Sea, they were at home. Their portable roots were nurtured by air, wind and saltwater.



I’m more at home in water than on dry land, and confined to soil, my roots would wither, however beneficial the locale. Yet, like a barnacle, I’m comfortable almost anywhere (excepting that one place I simply can’t call home — see below). The sameness of my species — humans have so many traits in common — lends familiarity, if not coziness, to almost any locale, even, alas, to a war zone. Familiarity is said to breed contempt. Possibly, so I move on to avoid ticking off the natives.

Changing environments keeps my batteries charged, feeds my craving curiosity and a need to identify the familiar in the differences: The doughy

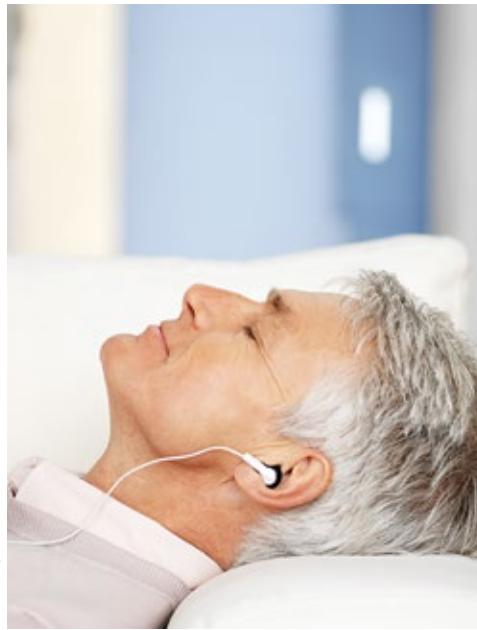
*durian* in Thailand has a similar tactile feel to Siberian dumplings, the thatched huts of Masailand suggest the thatched roof cottages in rural Estonia, and the savage tests of courage in Arctic Lapp initiation ceremonies border on the brutal coming-of-age rites in many African countries. Cruel, kind, warring or peaceful, humankind serves up a mixed salad of familiar habits and strange cultural practices that feeds my hunger for variety while slaking a thirst for something comparatively like home. I arrive “home” easily, that is, until the Sirens’ song lures me. When I haul anchor, am I anticipating a voyage home?

We expats form a diaspora of freaks more curious and alienated than homebodies. Some psychologists posit that we who nourish our roots in foreign soils, or who dwell on the sea constantly changing harbors, are in fact needy for attention, a specialness we play out by appearing “different” amidst a foreign tribe, standing out from the natives physically and in mannerisms. A human paradox by nature draws attention. Consider the “great white hunter in colonial Africa” or Gauguin in Indonesia. Expats concede a partial truth to this theory of outlanderism, yet there’s more to going abroad than seeking visibility among the natives. Anyway, the era of foreigners as exotic beings has all but passed.

Today, most of the planet’s tribes are dispersed, diluted and culturally ransacked. As the world hastens to stir its genetic and ethnic soup, as diverse flavors simmer and stew, the exotic reeks of the ordinary. So, why travel when at “home” — being wherever I am at the moment — I can saunter down to the corner deli for a Korean meal, slip into an Uber car and talk in Swahili with the driver, or probe politics with my Egyptian neighbor?

**Oz or Bust:** *Continued on page 37*





# ENTERTAIN Your Brain!

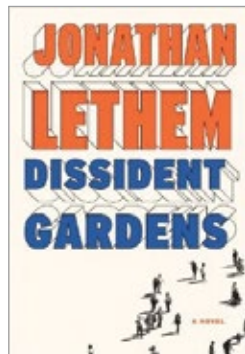
*Dive into what shapes us, forms us, and makes us who we are ... the stories about home, in books, music and movies.*

books | movies | music

## BOOK REVIEWS

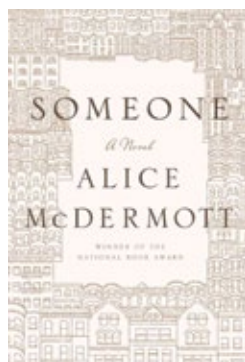
Where we come from has a huge impact on who we are. Witness the truth of this in our book choices about home.

by Misha Stone / Readers' advisory librarian & Booklist Magazine blogger



**Dissident Gardens** by Jonathan Lethem (Vintage Contemporaries, \$15.95)

Revolution is a force that can be passed down from generation to generation. Rose Zimmer, dubbed the Red Queen of Sunnyside, Queens, still forges her life from the force of her past political convictions, while her daughter, Miriam, takes up the baton in a different manner. The mother-daughter relationship at the center of the novel illustrates how, for so many, home is something you cannot find until you set off in search of it yourself. Rose and Miriam, by the force of their personalities, draw people to them, and these characters fill the pages and speak of New York City's diversity. From the professor Cicero to the chess aficionado Lenny to the folksinger who captures Miriam's heart, Lethem paints on a large canvas and presents a vibrant and diverse cast. Capturing the foment of 1930's communism through to the 1970's utopian ideals, Rose and Miriam's story arcs draw the reader through American history through the eyes of the radicals forever straining to drag their country along with them.



**Someone** by Alice McDermott (Picador, \$15.00)

Winner of the National Book Award, McDermott's layered novel explores the life of Marie Comford and her family's Brooklyn neighborhood with quiet precision. Marie is 7 in pre-Depression-era America when the novel opens and the vicissitudes of her Italian American enclave unfold to reveal a community beset by grief, poverty and common aspirations. Narrated from Marie's naïve vantage, from her gawky youth to her life as a wife and mother, a picture of a simpler time emerges. At a formative time in her life she serves as the "consoling angel" at the local mortuary where the funeral director grooms her to set the bereaved at ease, an experience that gives her a more expansive view on life and death. The small moments that make up a life — a meal, an exchange with a beloved neighbor, a late revelation — are given poignant weight as Marie reflects on her time and her accomplishments.



**Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More** by Janet Mock (Atria Books, \$24.99)

Stories of transgender people have been with us for decades, from jazz musician Billy Tipton to tennis player Renee Richards, but as *Time* magazine announced on its cover, we are at the tipping point for these stories reaching the mainstream. If the body is a home, then transgender voices remind us that some have to fight to assert their true selves and feel at home in their bodies. Enter Janet Mock, who became a media darling following a *Marie Claire* article in 2011. In her memoir, she sets out to tell her personal story of a youth shuttled between Hawaii and California, her time as a sex worker, and her eventual attainment of self-confidence and success. The author dovetails her personal story with a broader picture of how hard it is for transgender people and particularly those of color. As Mock discovers within her Hawaiian heritage, gender variance has been more accepted in other cultures than her own throughout history. Eye-opening memoirs like Mock's touch on the need for understanding within a compelling story of perseverance and strength.

## MOVIE REVIEWS

Enjoy three of the best movies about home and family.

by Robert Horton / Film critic for *Seattle Weekly*



**Meet Me in St. Louis** (1944)

Just as they're anticipating the grand 1904 World's Fair, the Smith family of St. Louis must consider a serious change: Papa has been offered a job in New York. Will their idyllic existence be torn up by this new development? In this beloved Technicolor classic, home is a powerful presence, not just in the beautiful period set created on the MGM back lot but also in the intensity of feeling and sense of place (author Sally Benson based the story on her own childhood). The great cast is led by two extraordinary turns: Judy Garland as the lively middle daughter, and Margaret O'Brien — in one of the best-ever child performances — as the youngest daughter "Tootie," whose Halloween initiation with the neighborhood kids is an unforgettable sequence. Garland sings "The Trolley Song" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," and if it seems like the movie is in love with her, there's a reason: She would later marry director Vincente Minnelli. Warm and funny, yet melancholy around the edges, *Meet Me in St. Louis* is almost a collective dream of an American home — even if it never existed quite like this.



**Dan in Real Life** (2007)

Maybe it was mis-marketed as a slapstick Steve Carell comedy, but this film merits a second chance. Carell plays a single dad who takes his daughters to the annual Burns family Thanksgiving weekend. Based on a five-minute conversation — but what a conversation! — he's convinced he's met his soul mate (Juliette Binoche) while en route to his parents' home. Of course, the soul mate turns up at the homestead on the arm of his brother (Dane Cook), which is going to make the weekend very complicated. The film's got lots of silly gags, but what makes it work is the authentically sweet-and-sour mood of the family gathering, all played within the wonderfully rambling Rhode Island house where the action is set. Writer-director Peter Hedges also did *Pieces of April*, another low-key film about family and holidays.

**Entertain Your Brain:** *Continued on page 36*



# Out and About

Journeys Completed or Contemplated

*“I was in the place where I could unapologetically be the strange cocktail of me and there was no need to explain it.”*

# SAFE HARBOR

by Pam Mandel

Freelance travel writer and photographer

The terminally un-addressed consider having a place to leave their things and get their mail a shackle rather than an anchor. **Nonsense.**

There is this perfect moment. It doesn't matter what time of day it is, or what season, or what the weather is like, but it always happens in exactly the same way. I squeeze my roller bag between the rows of airplane seats, trying not to knock into any still-seated passengers. I step out the cabin door on to the jetway. There is always a gap there, a small one sometimes, but still, a gap, and the air leaks in from the outside. If I've been away for four weeks or four days, it makes no difference. That moment, when I get my first breath of Seattle, is when I know I am home.

I have lived in Seattle longer than anywhere else. It's been my home for nearly 20 years. As a child, my family was subject to the whims of my father's career. As a young adult, I had boundless wanderlust. It took me to Europe, to the Middle East, to India and Pakistan. A divorce brought me to Seattle — I had only one friend here, but desperately seeking change, I made a great

leap of faith and I am still here.

I can still remember the exact moment in which I realized I was home. I was driving back from hiking in the Cascade Mountains. The sky was that blue of the best summer you can remember, ever. I lived in a shared duplex with a friend, I was always strapped for cash, and I had an uninteresting job working retail. But I was content; even better, I was happy. I

wrote to a friend in Germany the next day. "I have found home," I said. "This place feels like home."

This did not mean I had outgrown my desire to roam, it did not mean I had settled down, it did not mean I had become conventional. It meant that I was in the place where I could unapologetically be the strange cocktail of me and there was no need to explain it. I drove the smooth curves of Highway 2 in an old Toyota under a perfect summer sky, and I knew that I was living in the best possible place to be myself.

My husband is from a small mountain village half a planet away; he

grew up and spent his entire life there. In his 20s, when he moved in with his girlfriend "in town," it was less than 20 miles from his parents' house. When his older sister moved to "the city," it was a mere 80 miles away. He grew up always knowing where home was; there was no question about it.

Then I came along to mess things up. When it was clear we would stay together, his assumption was that I would move to his turf. But that was wrong. I had never had a home before, not like I had in Seattle, and I was not going to give it up. I insisted on

**Safe Harbor:** *Continued on page 37*



# TALES FROM LICKSKILLET

Digging into the dark, rich soils of the past helps one woman recognize home in her heart.

by **Sally MacDonald**  
Freelance writer

*“... she came from Licksillet, Mom told me, putting on that face that said I had best not go there.”*

*My* mother's family homestead is at the leafy green intersection of Johns Road and Johns Gin Road, named for her people who farmed cotton and ginned it there.

They called it a plantation. But even in its heyday it wasn't one of those gracious *Gone With the Wind* plantations that sprawled across the Civil War landscape of the South.

Rather, it was a large farm, a once-bustling presence in the rural heartland of Northwestern Louisiana, near Shreveport. Home was a comfortable single-story white house of wood perched atop brick stilts as tall as a man. Wide steps led to a shady veranda across the front. An open breezeway ran through the middle of the house, with bedrooms and sitting rooms on either side.

In the old days, the cookhouse was a separate building out back. The space under the main house was a commissary with packed dirt for a floor, where tobacco, food staples and quinine for malaria were once doled out to slaves, and, after the war, to those who continued to scratch out an existence in the fields.

Mom took me there a few years ago when I was going through one of those “where did I really come from?” periods. We didn't know who owned the house now, so we peered through the trees from the side of the road as Mom talked about days gone by.

I suppose we all have questions like the ones that haunt me now and then, times when we obsess a little over what our forebears were really like, what they thought about the world





Mom (Alice McCoppin) at the Old Time Store in Lickskillet.



From the roadway, trees obscure views of the old house.



Alice McCoppin at the grave of her grandmother.



A business in Bethany, LA, celebrates its old identity as Lickskillet.

they lived in, and what life lessons may have been lost in the debris of family history.

That homestead was the backdrop for stories that told Mom who she was and who her people were.

But today we are a society that moves often and discards easily. The lessons of home that the soul recognizes the values and moral compasses we inherit are perhaps more elusive for my generation and the ones that will follow.

Mom was 89 when she took me to the corner of Johns and Johns Gin Roads to share the memories of her girlhood. She never lived there (the place belonged to her aunt and uncle, not her parents), but she visited often and still recalled the smell of that commissary — all “dankness, snuff and medicines.”

After the Civil War, times were bad in the parishes of Northwestern Louisiana. The plantation wouldn't support all the family. So the Johns boys — Mom's father, John Bunyan, and his brother, Asa Dick were given a choice. One could go to college, and the other would inherit the plantation.

My grandfather chose education and proceeded to become a poor country doctor while his brother prospered on the farm.

My mother was one of eight siblings. Her given name was Alice, pronounced the French way (a-LEESE), a bow to the Cajun and Creole families who also settled the region.

The Johnses lived in a series of houses in nearby towns. When Mom was a girl, they lived in a sneeze-

and-you-miss-it hamlet called Lickskillet (a hog-holler sounding name that was later changed to the more genteel Bethany).

Local lore insisted it was called Lickskillet “because after dinner they'd call in the old hound dogs to clean up the dishes,” Mom said. “I don't think that's true, but that's what they said.”

Any time the other kids wanted to embarrass her, they said she came from Lickskillet, Mom told me, putting on that face that said I had best not go there.

I don't have much from Mom's side of my heritage — a flowery platter and an ugly green vase that Grandmother Johns handed down as heirlooms, the tiny diamonds from her wedding band I had made into a casual ring, and her love of crossword puzzles. That's all — unless you count the repulsion I have for our family's slave-owning history that I hope I inherited from my grandfather, the one who chose an education over a farm.

Even with this darker aspect of my family's history, I've mostly thought of my ancestral roots as being sunk deep in the furrows of the Johnses' cotton plantation.

But recently I've been thinking a lot about another family home that contributed to the core of my body and being. It was established in East Texas, not far from Lickskillet, by George Clinton McCoppin, an immigrant great-grandfather on my dad's side.

We know something about George, but not much.

He came to America from Ireland

in 1835, when he was just 15, with two older brothers. He settled in Mississippi, married Rebecca Washington there, and moved on to Texas about the time of the Civil War. He fought at Vicksburg on the losing side. Family tradition says he traded a sweater knitted by Rebecca for a horse to ride back home afterward.

We have no idea where he was born in Ireland or why the brothers left for America. We don't know why they separated at some point, forever, leaving my great-grandfather to grow up on his own and become whatever he might. We don't know where the other brothers went.

George belonged to the Masons, and my family has the soft, white leather Masonic apron decorated with black-and-white symbols he wore as a member of that secret society.

I inherited nothing else of his.

I have nurtured for years a romantic but despairing vision of George's story, of his and my ancestral home in Ireland.

It features a mother weeping at the doorway of a thatched-roof cottage either in anguish because her boys were leaving home and she most assuredly would never see them again or in sad relief because that would be three fewer boys to compete for too few potatoes.

I don't know if any of that would ring true in my ancestors' ears. But I am planning a “roots trip” to Ireland before long to see our homeland for myself.

I've joined several “find your roots” websites and arranged with an amateur genealogist in Ireland to

try to nail down George's birthplace. His surname, McCoppin, is Mom's married name and my maiden name. It's rare in America, and I thought it might be more common in Ireland.

All my efforts have so far led nowhere. Apparently, there are no people by that name still in Ireland. And no easily found account of George Clinton McCoppin's birth. My best bet, it seems, is to pore through the records of the thousands of Irish churches, any of which might harbor the fact of his birth.

The genealogist suggested the family may have lived in Longford County, in Central Ireland. There were families named McCoppin there in the past, and some of their given names were the same as in my family.

So I will go to Longford.

I won't be seeking a tangible homestead there. No point in that.

I may long for roots and home as part of this on-the-move society I live in. But such permanence can be

elusive, a fading memory of bits and pieces of whatever came before.

No house will be there in Ireland to help bring me clarity.

I do hope to find in the green countryside of Longford a match to the green at the junction of Johns and Johns Gin Roads. And I think I'll recognize “home” in the heart of who I am, a fitting link between the Johnses of America and the McCoppins of Ireland. ♦

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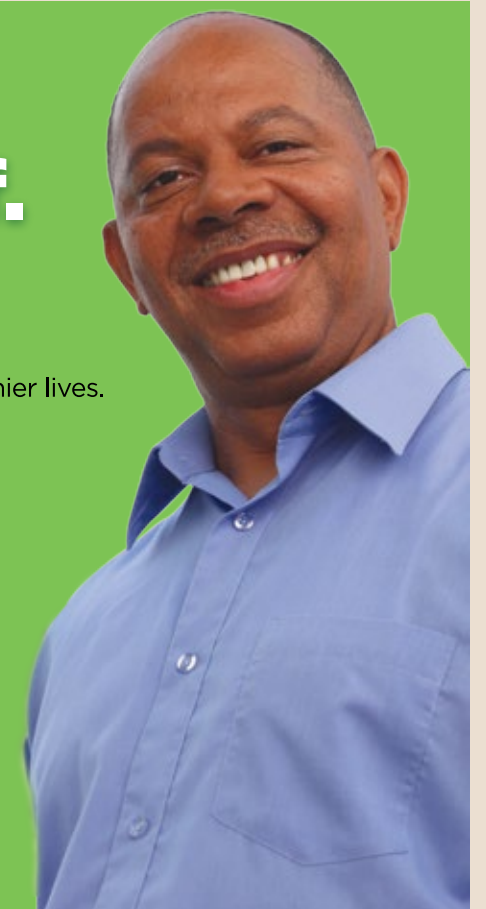
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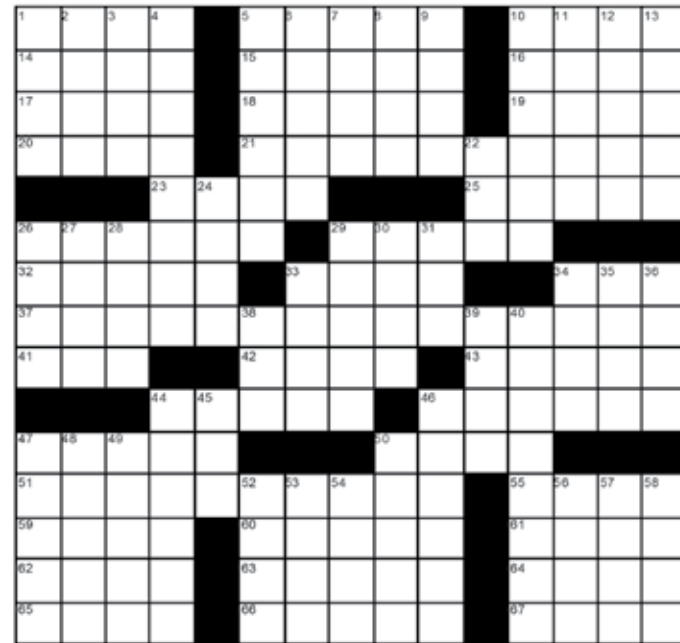
The three Senior Corps programs — RSVP, Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering.





## Crossword Puzzle

There's No Place Like Home



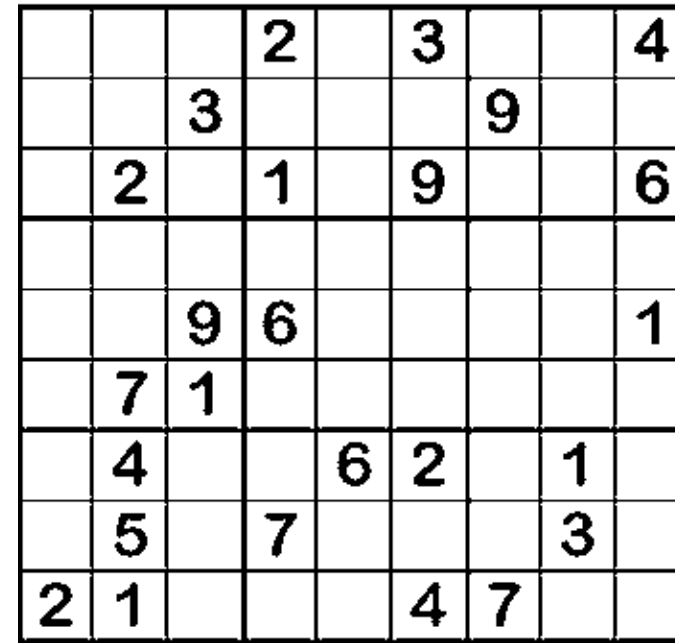
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### ACROSS

- 1 Home \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Scold
- 10 Culinary craftsman
- 14 Greek hero
- 15 Comfy cozy
- 16 Type of Admiral
- 17 Sour
- 18 After big or before orchard
- 19 Interested in
- 20 Northern Ohio tribe
- 21 Homes
- 23 Riches counterpart
- 25 One who has a secret?
- 26 Easy
- 29 Close call
- 32 "Bless you" prompter
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_ she blows!
- 34 Terminal posting
- 37 What home is
- 41 Unopened
- 42 Viewed
- 43 NHL venues
- 44 College homework
- 46 Get back
- 47 A lot more than never
- 50 Engage
- 51 What HOMES stands for
- 55 Beats
- 59 Bad witness
- 60 Merge or blend together
- 61 Uncharted location, possibly
- 62 Countess' mate
- 63 Sound heard at a Gallagher show
- 64 School zone warning
- 65 Some martinis and whiskeys
- 66 Bell's action for whom?
- 67 Home \_\_\_\_\_

## Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.



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DIFFICULTY: ★★★★★

### DOWN

- 1 Reduce intensity
- 2 Cracked open
- 3 Indian garment
- 4 What's outside?
- 5 Battery need, sometimes
- 6 Some may be high
- 7 Little devils
- 8 Where to find a hero
- 9 Looked
- 10 Pun reaction?
- 11 Consequently
- 12 Gone
- 13 American Poet
- 22 Something to lend
- 24 Succulent familiar to puzzlers
- 26 First year deer
- 27 Workout result
- 28 Munch
- 29 Precipitous
- 30 Tuneful Sammy
- 31 Exist
- 33 Old you?
- 34 Famous volcano
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**BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS ON PAGE 38**

# Healthy U

Good Health 101 and Beyond



## Safe at Home: Avoiding the Fall

by Stephan J. Smith

Doctor of Chiropractic

Home: that place we should feel most safe and most protected. Unfortunately, it's also a major source of injuries for senior citizens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one-third of adults aged 65 or older fall each year, and 20 to 30 percent of those who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries like hip fractures, head traumas or lacerations. In fact, most fractures in older adults are caused by falls, and up to 55 percent of those falls occur in the home.

The sad thing is, less than half of those who fall talk to their doctors about their tendency to stumble or lose their balance. If they did, they might learn some simple health checks that could go a long way toward keeping them safer.

Why do seniors fall? Actually, many reasons can be cited. Tripping over obstacles, dizziness and vertigo, vision problems, and lack of strength and balance are a few common ones.

To make matters worse, people who fall, even if they are not injured, will

develop a fear of falling again. This fear prevents them from participating in activities where there is a risk of falling, which prevents them from doing things that are active, healthy forms of exercise. This only compounds the waning strength and balance issues they may be experiencing.

What can be done to prevent older adults from falling and sustaining other injuries around the home?

**Exercise:** Get regular exercise. Many seniors have lost strength in their legs and core stabilizing muscles (low back, abdominals and pelvic areas), and this can lead to a higher risk of falling. Join an exercise class in your area that emphasizes core strength and balance along with cardiovascular exercises. The more strength and stability a person has, the less likely they are to fall.

**Health checkup:** Have your doctor check to make sure your prescriptions are not causing side effects that impair balance, vision or mental alertness. Then have your eye doctor check your vision, ruling out any ocular

disease or need for eyeglass prescription changes.

**Remove trip hazards:** Remove the potential hazards in your home like extra furniture, small tables, piles of books or magazines, and other clutter that you are often walking around. Make sure area rugs lie flat and don't skid. Avoid putting things you use every day up in high places that require step ladders.

**Improve stability:** For extra stability, add railings where needed throughout your home. This includes shower stalls and bathtubs, around toilets and in stairways. In kitchens, the use of extension grippers to reach high objects helps avoid falls due to over-reaching. Kick steps can be added under lower cabinets, which allow you to step up for easier reaching into upper cabinets.

With these four simple steps, our homes can again be our castles, our places of safety and refuge and not a source of injury. ♦





# Inside these four walls

The beautiful art of creating a legacy of love with your assets

by James H. Lewis

Owner, Kokopelli Financial Management in Brighton, MI

Home is where the love is. Is it under a warm and comfy blanket snuggled with your significant other or maybe a favorite cat?

Does it feel like home when the grandkids come over, you bake goodies, they share stories about their day, and you are whisked away together?

Maybe you find home in that room with the perfect view as you sit in your favorite chair,

sipping tea and looking out the window at your lively birdhouse.

Whatever home is to you, it makes you feel good inside. As you look back over time at the different places you have owned, rented and lived in, they probably all evoked some pleasure.

That's because home truly is where your heart is. Your heart is love.

Home is also the place where your loved ones

## Money Matters

Common Sense and Professional Advice

*“Whether you reach a lot of people or have a profound impact on a few, their memories of you are your afterlife.” — Greg Graffin*

come to you, and it is where one day you will no longer be. Then they will come to that place, go through your things, and decide who gets what and why. And as they feel your absence, they'll realize that it's not the four walls or the knick knacks that defined your home; it's the heart that lived there and the love they experienced. You can make that eventual day an easier one for your family while creating joy in the present by giving now what will someday be theirs. You don't have to wait to give away those things that hold the most emotional value — like the mixer you used to make cookies with the kids and then the grandkids. Or that certain pendant that you wanted your daughter to wear and then pass down to her girls. Or even your money. If you have enough financial assets to get you through, why not consider distributing some of the extra now when you can see it being used and enjoyed?

Whatever you plan to leave behind, the more planning you can do now, the easier it will be on the ones who remain behind.

Some advance planning and giving strategies might include:

**An Estate Plan:** This usually includes several documents to handle the financial, medical and legal aspects of all your “stuff,” and it can include your will, financial trusts, a living will, and financial and medical powers of attorney. If you don't have these documents, or haven't updated them in a while, talk to your financial planner and get some advice now.

**A Planned Giving Strategy:** Planned giving allows you to create a personal financial legacy by giving money to people, nonprofits or other organizations that are important to you.

**Simple Gifts:** For simple cash gifts, you can do this through your regular will.

**Legacy Gifts:** You can also plan to give retirement accounts, real estate and other financial assets to an organization and even designate that it be used for a particular purpose. For example, you may want to leave some money to your alma mater to establish a scholarship in your name.

**Life insurance,** if your health qualifies you for it, is also a useful part of a

planned giving strategy, and it can allow you to pass on money to your heirs with important tax advantages.

**Bequeathing Valuable Possessions:** This would include those special pieces of art or jewelry or maybe even clothes or furniture that you'd like to distribute to certain people. After you've decided how, what and when to give, sit down and plan a dinner and invite the kids and maybe even the grandkids over. Share your thoughts on how you will distribute your wealth both now and after you die. This can be a wonderful way to share special memories and pass along important family traditions at a happy time, rather than one filled with grief at your passing.

Now may be the time for you to pass on the things that you used with the recipient, like the chessboard spent hours bent over together or the family recipe book from Great Grandma. Create new memories now, at a time when you can both enjoy them.

The best part of giving away some of your things while you're still around is that you get to see the faces of the recipients and know how much it means to them. You get to add that memory to your own and write a little bit more of your story together. You get to make your home just a bit sweeter and more filled with love. Later, when you have moved on, dealing with the rest of your things will be easier for them having had this experience.

There won't be fighting over those special memories.

There won't be hurt feelings about misunderstood intentions.

There will be peace and understanding.

In the end there will be sweet memories that everyone can share about your times together when your four walls held the heart of your home.

As they gather together, remembering everything you shared, your house will once more become the home they all knew and loved. ♦

*(For more information on estate planning or a planned giving strategy, contact your financial planner or contact the author at [www.KokopelliFinancial.com](http://www.KokopelliFinancial.com) for a free consultation.)*





# the KITCHEN TABLE

It's just an old table, but if this table could talk...

by Nancy Gertz

Health and well-being coach in Boston

## Your Life Well Lived

Wellness Advice for Mind, Body and Spirit

The kitchen table in my new, modern townhouse made its first debut in the theater of my family life before I had a family. We were a young couple without kids living in a sweet, one-floor Victorian with a small adapted kitchen with no cupboards, vents or proper countertops — attached to a sun-filled and rather snug room being asked to function as a dining room. It was all OK with my husband and me; in many ways we were also being asked to function in ways to which we weren't accustomed.

Without a place to eat in the make-shift kitchen, we began the search for a dining room table that our budget and different tastes would allow. I was lucky to have an uncle in “the business” who called in a chit to a guy who called in another chit and landed us a suitable table for a very absorbable price. Buying things that were above \$99 had to be well-justified, and we declared this to be a long-term investment; it was built to last.

Today the table sports a gray and cream scrolled tablecloth, courtesy of my mother and Williams-Sonoma, in my spanking new dining room. As nice as it looks, it doesn't seem right to keep the table covered, despite its bruised appearance. It has graced two kitchens and two dining rooms in four different homes over 28 years. It started out as a pine table with a natural stain and two leaves that were easy to insert. It's now of the “distressed” but fashionable style, painted white on the top and black on the base, and it screams, “I've been here for a while.”

The surface has been mauled by my sister's carbonated black Labrador retriever, scarring it with parallel divots made by three-clawed paws. The babies' clip-on seats left impressions like little roads on the far left. My 10-yr-old football player left a leaking sports bottle on the other end, and the moisture caused the trim on the edge to peel away, so now one end juts out, but only a little, and nobody seems to mind. A friend tried to fix the broken

edge once, but alas, he lost interest and left it worse for the effort. The table had taken another hit, blindsided by good intentions.

Last year at this time I was sorting, rummaging, piling, discarding and donating 13 rooms of furniture, in preparation to downsize into my new home. I worked on this project for months, determined to unburden myself of everything I really didn't need, want, or feel hugely attached to. I was ready to go Zen. Less is more. What could be better than having someone else use my things that I no longer really wanted? Come one, come all, and they did, and my pickings got slimmer and slimmer. But nobody wanted the weary table, and I found that I couldn't give it up anyway.

*“Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.”*

— William Morris

I was a child of the late '50s. My parents served all four of us a family meal soon after 5:30 p.m. when my father had come home from work, removed his boots, and read through the first section of the newspaper. Mom rang the bell on the front stoop, and we assembled from all corners to sit in our places and eat the meal she prepared for six of us, every night. We sometimes had a starter of some kind, like sectioned grapefruit halves, and that felt very special, particularly when I did the slicing and placed the maraschino cherries on each serving. The food wasn't gourmet, and the conversation usually centered on who did what and when, stories of our friends, and any other gossip we could find.

On occasion, punishments for bad behavior got doled out. We shared our good news, and there were an-

nouncements too, as the pasta got passed around.

“We are all going to visit the cousins on Sunday.”

“There will be no more TV until homework is done.”

It was at that table that I learned that Papa had died. It was there, on the far end, where my grandmother sat, after Papa had been buried. The table provided the set for countless scenes of family life — the good, the bad and the forgettable. When my mother replaced that table years later, she looked for one that was almost exactly the same. Memories were overlaid on the new table, preserved, because it was so similar to the original.

I'm not ready to part with the memories that sit around my table. All the family dinners that I too laid down, not just because I loved nurturing my family, but also because I knew that a family that comes together once a day, even briefly, feels more connected and supported.

The table was also the de facto command center of our home. We sat there and discussed my first breast cancer diagnosis, when a friend rang the bell and entered, placed a small pot of violets at its center, and sat down to be part of things. It's where we sat for college planning, years of homework, and birthday parties. It's where we created budgets and imagined vacations, sorted bills and divided tasks, constructed poster boards for science night, and tutors leaned over my shoulders. Just before I moved, the table was silently draped with a blanket by the home-visit vet who came to tenderly send our beloved Cosmo to dog heaven.

Most of the time now I sit at this table alone, at least in the physical sense. The table is a totem, a touchstone, a book of short stories, and a canvas of wonderful memories to warm my heart. The memories often join me, and they happily show up just as I did when the dinner bell had been rung so many years ago. ♦



# Retire Like You Mean It

Your Life, Your Rules

Highlighting the *Leisure Care* community, out there grabbing life by the horns, getting things done their way.



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## Introducing Our Two Features This Issue



© Photos courtesy of Leisure Care

**Agnes McKee**

Fairwinds – Ivey Ranch, Oceanside, CA



**The Rev. Dr. William Collins Jr.**

Fairwinds – Sand Creek, Idaho Falls, ID

## Retire Like You Mean It ~ Feature One



© Photo courtesy of Leisure Care

Agnes McKee gets the VIP treatment at the Padres game this summer.

# Padres Fan Is in the Big Leagues Now

by Randi Pisapia

Programs Director at Fairwinds – Ivey Ranch, Oceanside, CA

At 105 years old, Agnes McKee's latest exercise plan — tucked in between her bridge games and bingo sessions — included stretching her throwing arm to get ready for a landmark achievement: Pitching in the major leagues.

"It's never too late to try something new," says Agnes, recognized as one of the San Diego County's oldest residents.

McKee became the oldest person ever to toss out the ceremonial first pitch at a Padres game when she took the field on July 20, 2014, four days

after celebrating her 105th birthday. In true Agnes style, she opened with an MLB-worthy wind-up before making her toss to the Padre's catcher.

"It was such an honor to be asked to throw out the opening pitch," said Agnes, who weighs all of about 90 pounds and stands not quite five feet tall.

Her opening pitch is the latest milestone in a life marked with optimism and a sense of adventure.

"I don't dwell on anything or worry about something that might happen,"

McKee said about her key to longevity. "If it's going to happen, it's going to happen."

Though the recent trip to Petco Park was her first big public appearance, McKee is accustomed to grand celebrations. A photo album tucked beside her floral-printed sofa commemorates her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, with congratulatory letters from President Barack Obama, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a California senator, plus pictures of her with Oceanside Mayor Jim Wood at her party.





Top photo: Agnes with the Fabulous **Mar Dels** at Fairwinds - Ivey Ranch Summer Concert Party. Bottom left: Agnes on her 105th birthday with Mayor Woods, his assistant and the Oceanside Fire Chief. Bottom right: Agnes and fellow resident John Sharp dancing at happy hour.

When McKee crossed the 100 mark, she was invited to a show-and-tell session in a first-grade class at the elementary school across the street from her home in Fairwinds – Ivey Ranch, Oceanside.

“They were so surprised to see somebody that old,” McKee said with a soft chuckle, recounting that the students were quite amazed to hear about her Wii bowling league adventures. Since then she has visited a few other elementary schools, including a trip this spring that was planned to coincide with the 104th day of school. Scheduling the event was no easy task, as Agnes keeps a busy schedule of exercise and activities.

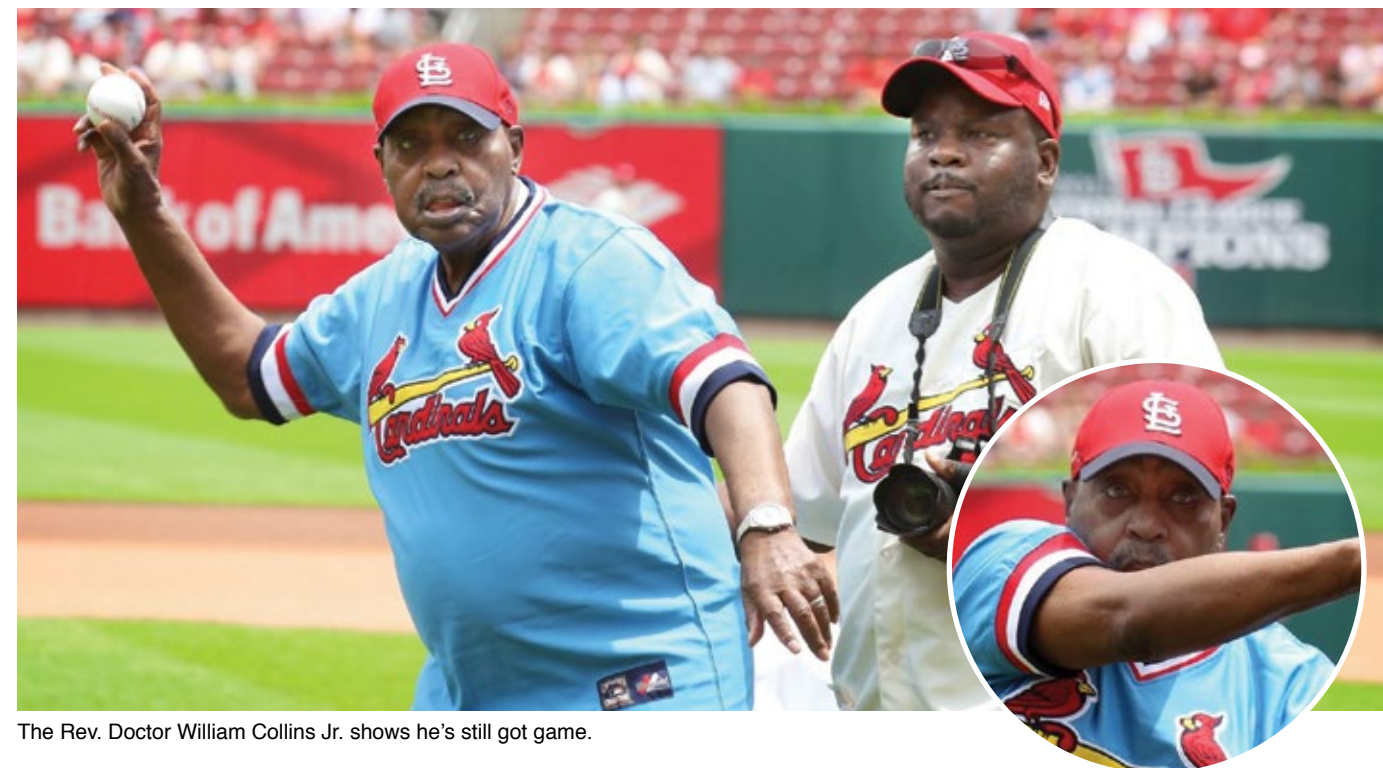
Born on the outskirts of Indianapolis in 1909, Agnes was one of five sisters raised on her family’s small farm, which had a few crops plus chickens and pigs. She credits her mom, who worked hard and saw the good in everything, for her positive life attitude.

After graduating from high school, Agnes moved to Cleveland just before the Great Depression shook the country. That’s where she launched 66 years of marriage with her husband, Harry McKee. Agnes says he was the true baseball fan, and they went to several games together before he died six years ago.

“He would be so proud,” she said about her recent pitch. “He would not be surprised at all. He always knew I was up for an adventure.”

One of the best ways to live a long and happy life, according to Agnes, is by indulging your passions. And her new goal? To get rid of the walker that she has used since she broke her hip two years ago. Talk to any of her many friends and the staff at Fairwinds – Ivey Ranch and they’ll tell you she can do it. With this attitude and zest for life, anything is possible for Agnes.

(Read more about Agnes and Harry at [tinyurl.com/wise-agnes](http://tinyurl.com/wise-agnes).)



The Rev. Doctor William Collins Jr. shows he’s still got game.

# Another Major League Celebration of a Great Life

by Sylvia Wetzel

Daughter of Fairwinds – Sand Creek Resident

Missouri is known as the “Show Me” state, so it’s no surprise that the people of St. Louis really know how to put on a show! After a full year of planning, the city’s red carpet was rolled out to celebrate the 90th birthday of St. Louis’ own Reverend Doctor William (Bill) Collins, Jr., Pastor Emeritus of the Antioch Baptist Church.

The festivities began when Bill and his entourage flew in from Idaho Falls, Idaho, and were whisked by limo to the downtown Marriot Residence Inn. After a “meet and greet” with long-time church members, they were treated to a world famous Imo’s Pizza.

It was Saturday, Cardinals baseball day, and Bill had been chosen to throw out the first pitch at the game. His pitch made a lasting impression on the

crowd. Bill says he owes it all to Fairwinds – Sand Creek Physical Therapist Mark Osadchey, who practiced with him and instructed him how to handle the ball. Family and friends filled two private party boxes at the stadium, and the overflow guests were seated in sections around the boxes. After the game on Saturday evening, he was welcomed by the fine folks at Sweetie Pies and enjoyed a delicious, home cooked meal.

The highlight of the weekend came on Sunday when Bill worshipped at the Antioch Baptist Church, where he pastored for 45 years. The service was attended not only by locals but those from out of town who wanted to join in the celebration. Former students, colleagues, dignitaries, family, church members and friends gathered to wish

him the happiest birthday.

During the service he was presented with a proclamation from the City of Saint Louis Board of Aldermen in recognition of his service to the community and in celebration of his 90th birthday. And a letter from the governor was read to the congregation, sending birthday greetings and well wishes. Following the service and dinner, the renowned Gospel Unlimited Choir performed “A 90th Birthday Celebration of Songs.”

It was an unforgettable weekend for an unforgettable man, and Bill flew back to Idaho Falls on Monday eager to reconnect with his wife, Margaret, his friends, and the entire family at Fairwinds - Sand Creek. ♦



## Three Thirds in Action

Highlighting the people, events and actions that define our community



© Photos courtesy of Cameron Stark

# With These Hands

A powerful story of the type of home that love can build

by Cameron Stark

Connections Manager, Treeo in Orem, Utah

Land locked between Mozambique and South Africa sits Swaziland, a country about the size of New Jersey, where more than 60 percent of the population lives in poverty, the average life expectancy is 46 years old, and one in six children under the age of 15 are parentless from HIV/AIDS.

My first real impression of this country were the stories of women who sacrificed by taking in orphans, sometimes standing all night in their homes holding a tree branch to secure a wall of their one-room home to protect the children from vicious storms. Later I heard about substandard medical care from lack of supplies and doctors and yet was shown images of children who celebrate every day of life as a blessing.

Thanduxolo is one of those children; and he stole my heart long before I ever ventured to Swaziland. I first learned about Thanduxolo in May 2013, when this young boy was rushed to the hospital with a distended abdomen. At the government hospital, he was given medication to ease his pain and sent home to die. Fortunately, the staff at The Mkhombokati Care Point, a community center primarily for local children, didn't give up without a fight. They took Thanduxolo to the Women and Children's private hospital, where he was rushed into surgery and pleas for financial aid and prayers were sent out.

One of my friends had just returned from Swaziland and shared Thanduxolo's story with me. Without hesitation, I logged onto Children Hope Chest's

website and donated to a special fund that had been set up for Thanduxolo.

It was with similar eagerness that I accepted an invitation to join a trip to Swaziland shortly afterwards. At the time, I was in a season of transition in my life. I had left my job of 13 years to find a better work-life balance. A peace came over me after I had accepted, and I knew this experience would help me find that balance. But as luck would have it, shortly after signing up for the mission trip, I landed a new job with Leisure Care as Connections Manager for their new Treeo community in Orem, Utah. And even better, when learning of my trip, they were excited I was already working toward a three-thirds lifestyle of family, philanthropy and work.

*“My first real impressions of this country were the stories of women who sacrificed by taking in orphans, sometimes standing all night in their homes holding a tree branch to secure a wall of their one-room home to protect the children from vicious storms.”*

During the months leading up to the trip, our team collected school supplies, hygiene kit items and clothes to provide much-needed amenities for the Swazi children who regularly attended the Care Point. We planned logistics to repair and replace houses so mothers would have sturdy homes and could sleep in peace with their children. We learned basic SiSwati and planned a week with the kids at the Care Point that would leave their lives better.

Nestled upon a hilltop, Care Point is about 30 minutes outside of Manzini, Swaziland. As we pulled in on the first day, I saw two humble buildings, painted a light blue, with a sturdy tree between them. Just behind the tree sat a small greenhouse and a giant garden. After nearly 40 hours of transit,





Two boys eat pap for lunch at Care Point (left), while Thanduxolo and volunteer Kelly Johnson share a hug (above).

as I stepped off the shuttle, a sense of joy and relief enveloped me. I began soaking in the sunshine and absorbed the views from this awe-inspiring plot of land. Quickly, the surreal peace and quiet of the moment was interrupted by the need to start working, a process that was to repeat itself every morning I awoke here.

Our team of 14 greeted the Bomake, the five women who volunteer their time to cook and care for the more than 200 children who regularly visit the Care Point. We then had a quick team meeting to prepare for the day. It seemed the preschool-aged children knew when we were finished with our meeting, as they immediately started coming up the hill and into the Care Point at its conclusion. Upon seeing us,

they smiled and began running to see the new faces.

Before we knew it, almost every member of the team was holding a preschooler, kicking a soccer ball with three or four children, or playing some sort of game. Laughter filled the air, and these children were soaking up all the love our team was pouring out and were sharing love with us in return.

Meanwhile, the Bomake were under the sturdy tree, scrubbing large cauldrons with water and an old Altoids can to begin preparing pap (a corn-based porridge similar to grits) and beans for the kids' lunch. Oftentimes the meal these children received at the Care Point was the only meal they would have for the day, so the Bomake take the preparation very seriously.

These five women have been working together for years and toil in sync, like a perfectly choreographed dance. Each Bomake kept an eye on what the others were doing. As one task neared completion, another Bomake jumped in and began the next task to be efficient and spread the workload.

When the Bomake are not cooking or caring for the children, they create crafts, primarily bags, ornaments and clothing for Timbali Crafts. Together with dozens more Bomake from about 15 other Care Points in Swaziland, they use the money earned from these handmade treasures to support their families.

As schools let out for the older kids, they made their way to the Care Point for their lunch as the preschoolers finished up. They ate their pap and

then headed into the multipurpose building, where we all sang and gave a small lesson. It was here my heart truly began to melt.

Mbuso, one of the Care Point staff, started the lesson each day and led the Swazi children in song. Hearing their innocent and beautiful voices sing notes of pure love and joy simply took my breath away. Their blissful sounds often caused me to hide behind my camera, so the children didn't see me tearing up. I can still hear Mbuso leading the children in a fun-filled rendition of "Making Melodies," complete with actions. I was compelled to join in and learn the song.

Over the months that I prepared for the trip, my thoughts had often returned to Thanduxolo. Throughout

the previous year I had followed his progress as he underwent surgery after surgery to get him back to health. I hoped, during those months, that I would someday have the chance to meet him in person.

When Thanduxolo arrived for lunch that first day, I finally had my chance. I learned that he was recovering from yet another hospitalization the prior week. He was frail, and looked as if I could wrap my hand around his leg and have my index finger and thumb touch. As I greeted him, our connection was fast and deep.

After the lesson, we played with all the kids for about an hour, then our team would break into small groups to visit some of the homesteads that were in the most need of help. We took bags

of beans, fruit, household items, and corn maize for pap.

Throughout the trip we worked in teams that either played with the kids or worked at the Bomake homesteads. We painted a newly completed home and dug the foundation for a new one, so the Bomake would not need to hold up falling walls with a stick or secure the roof with baling wire tied around a boulder. While digging the foundation with a heavy pickaxe and clearing with a shovel, our group of four quickly appreciated the invention of the backhoe. We were much slower than the three Swazis we were sent to help and marveled at their speed and efficiency.

Thanduxolo didn't make it back to the Care Point until our last day. He

**These Hands:** *Continued on page 38*



# Advice for the Journey

## Personal Advice and Expert Opinions

by Evan Kimble

Psychotherapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)

**Q. My daughter-in-law hates me and has said vile things to me. She thinks I'm evil, and she's stolen my son from me. When they first started dating, she adored my son and was very good to me. After they got married, she somehow decided I was the enemy. Now she won't let me see my son or even talk to him on the phone. She berates him all the time, and I've learned she threatened to kill herself if he tries to leave her. She is so angry that I can imagine her going crazy sometime and hurting him. What on earth can I do?**

**A.** From your description, it sounds like your daughter-in-law may be suffering from severe mental illness. While it could be several different conditions, you are describing many of the symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). One BPD symptom involves viewing people in black and white, either all good or all bad. Often, someone who suffers from BPD can start by idolizing someone. Then, after they are (inevitably) let down in some way, they view the other person as bad, dangerous or even evil.

One of the most painful things for a person with BPD is that they can't manage their emotions. Their moods swing wildly back and forth. They often feel desperate, like an abandoned child. In order to keep people from leaving them (or even from setting healthy boundaries with them about their behavior), they will make threats — like killing themselves.

BPD can be effectively treated, usually through a combination of individual and group therapy. The most effective approach is called Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and it teaches patients to manage their emotions and their relationships. Your daughter-in-law would have to be willing to get help. This may not happen unless someone — your son most likely — is willing to take a strong stand and stop complying with her dysfunctional behavior.

Try to find some way to talk to him directly. Can you deliver a message to him through a buddy of his or contact

him at his place of work? Don't create a web of secrets with him; just have a plain talk about your concerns and learn if he is willing to take action.

Hopefully, something productive can be done, but it may also be that your daughter-in-law is too abusive for the situation to be salvaged. If you are worried that your son is in immediate danger, you can call 911. But I would be extremely careful about taking this step — because if the cops don't find domestic violence occurring at the time they visit, this will only escalate her hatred and mistrust of you, and possibly her abuse. She might also be able to manipulate the situation to cause your son to be arrested.

Please do everything you can to take care of yourself. Consider consulting with a mental health professional or an expert on domestic violence to figure out how best to respond to this situation. If you fear she might act out against you directly, you can request a temporary restraining order from the courts to protect yourself. And be sure to get plenty of support from your friends and family.

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For thought-provoking questions and stories on male abuse, visit [www.VerbalAbuseOfMen.com](http://www.VerbalAbuseOfMen.com).

Find more help at the Domestic Abuse Helpful for Men and Women at [www.dahmw.org](http://www.dahmw.org).



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# KITSCHE & CONDEMNATION

If home is where the heart is, a secluded mountain cabin is where your city friends think you're loony.

by Jeff Wozer

Humorist and stand-up comedian

*"Aren't you afraid of a crazed ax murderer breaking into your place?" asked a friend's wife, implying that murderers armed with medieval weaponry are commonplace in outlying areas.*

© iStock

Moving from city to full-time cabin residency is an easy transition, provided you're not dependent upon sweeping approval from friends, particularly those whose idea of an "outdoor experience" is a window seat at Olive Garden.

I discovered this reality after moving into a remote perch located at the end of a dirt road along the north side of a pine-packed ridge at 8,425 feet in the Colorado Rockies. Limited to three rooms and a loft, the cabin looked as if built by Habitat for Humanity on a budget in a location only slightly more accessible than North Korea. Despite size limitations it harbored everything I craved in a home: out-the-door access to forest, front and back decks, a visible night sky, wildlife, close proximity to ski areas, and a large fieldstone fireplace for ambiance and warmth — everything but endorsement from friends.

When I announced I was abandoning the city for a remote mountain cabin, the majority of my friends expressed the type of astonishment I might have expected if I had declared I was going in on a Myrtle Beach time-share with Vladimir Putin.

"Why?" they'd ask. "You've got everything here — cineplexes, restaurants, shopping malls." The question itself provided answer. But rather than point this out, I nodded as if heeding their counsel; an easier response than reciting poet Wendell Berry's line, "Better than any argument is to rise at dawn and pick dew-wet red berries in a cup."

Even before I'd moved to Colorado I had always exhibited the neighborhood preferences of a marmot, favoring remote over residential. This move was not an abrupt personality deviation, but rather an extension of self. But in the minds of friends, it was inconceivable, prompting me to conclude that if home is where the heart is, a secluded mountain cabin is where your city friends think you're loony.

It's easier for people to understand quantum theory than it is for them to grasp the idea of solitude. In today's connected world solitude carries negative connotations. Openly claim a permanent need for it and people become suspicious, immediately theorizing you're "up to something" or doomed to the kind of demise only read about in Stephen King novels, living in a place where even the birdhouses are haunted.

Their unease became especially apparent during initial visits. They didn't know what to say, prompting naive quips and strange questions.

"Aren't you afraid of a crazed ax murderer breaking into your place?" asked a friend's wife, implying that murderers armed with medieval weaponry are commonplace in outlying areas. I almost answered, "About as much you fear your gated community being attacked by a catapult" but refrained, appreciative for how she modified "ax murderer" with "crazed" so as to eliminate any confusion with a friendly ax murderer.

Another friend upon arriving commented, "This is a great place to bury a body, huh?" Rather than respond, I let it pass, imagining the real

estate listing for such an intended use: *Large, private treed lot. Perfect for mafia hitmen, undertaker hobbyists and ironic archaeologists.*

One of the most repeated quips was, "What? Are you writing the next great American novel?" After the umpteenth time of being asked this I began replying, "Hell no — too ambitious. I'm instead focusing on writing the next great Nicaraguan novel."

But the most common question was, "What do you do up here?" The polite side of me would respond, "Ski, hike, write, read, chop wood." But what I really wanted to answer was, "Try to find space for all the animal-themed house-warming gifts." Move into a cabin and everyone assumes you share the decorating tastes of

**Kitsch:** Continued on page 37

*"Move into a cabin and everyone assumes you share the decorating tastes of Cracker Barrel."*



## Ethics and Spirituality

Reflections and Contemplations on Life and Living

# The Housework of the Soul

by Elana Zaiman

Rabbi, chaplain and writer in Seattle

We clean  
our walls  
and our floors,  
but do our  
internal homes  
need a good  
purge as well?

*“The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts.”*

— Marcus Aurelius

*My* grandmother was in her early 70s when she moved from her home in Scarsdale to an apartment in New Rochelle. It was her decision. My grandfather had died about five years earlier, and her large sprawling house and her even larger sprawling lawn were too much for her. She was determined to downsize. This meant giving away furniture, lamps, linens, and an attic full of relics.

As she aged into her 90s, she continued to downsize. She gave away even more of her possessions — earrings, purses, pins, rings, necklaces, bracelets, sweaters, books — to people she loved, hoping these items would bring as much pleasure to their new owners as they had brought to her. “What do I need them for?” she would say. “It’s time for me to let things go.”

Aging isn’t the only reason people let go of their things. There are people who let their things go much earlier in their lives. I recently saw the documentary *Tiny: A Story About Living Small*, produced and directed by Christopher Smith and Merete Mueller. *Tiny* follows Christopher as he builds his 124-square-foot house and is interspersed with interviews from individuals and couples who have decided to live in houses ranging from 100 to 400 square feet.

Now in my early 50s, with two hips surgeries behind me, I have no desire to climb a ladder to a loft bed, nor do I have the desire to live in such close quarters — essentially one room — with my husband and teenage son. Yet I do find myself being drawn to letting go of the things that don’t really matter, to focus on the things that do.

So I spend a weekend cleaning and packing bags with things I want to re-gift or trash — clothes, books, shoes, art, linens and electronics. It feels good, so good, as if a weight has been lifted, that I have a plan in place to do more. And while I know this is important work, I also know that it is not enough. I know there are other things I must let go of — nonphysical things — like hurts, disappointments, negativities, sorrows, guilts, shames, pains and blocked energies that encumber my soul and that inhibit me from living a life of deeper spiritual depth.

This idea that we must periodically cleanse our spirit’s home in the soul is an element of most religions and spiritual practices. The Hasidic Master Nachman of Bratslav had a daily practice of walking in an open field for one hour during which he would talk out loud to God, even yell at God, to clear out his soul of all that was troubling him. I, too, have gone out into a field and have opened my heart to God. Somehow hearing myself speak out loud the things that weighed heavily upon me enabled me to understand them in a different way and inch myself forward. (Nachman says even a special room will work.)

Native Americans practice a cleansing ritual called smudging that involves the use of incense and a feather to cleanse the soul of negativity and hurt. I have a good friend who is a practitioner of this ancient spiritual practice. She offered to smudge me, and as she did, she encouraged me to intentionally think about what I wanted to let go of. She then asked me to face the four directions, and while I faced each bearing, in turn, she touched me with a feather where she sensed I was holding my negativity and hurt to aid in its release. The smell of sage and the touch of her feather expanded my experience of “letting go” into the visceral realm.

This concept of expanding our spirit’s home in the soul need not be based on religious beliefs or particular spiritual practices. We can try a more relational approach. For instance, I’ve begun confiding my imperfections, fears, failures, shames and pains to close friends. Not that I didn’t before, but I am intentionally doing so more and more. I have found that the more I share with another, the more that person shares with me. This reciprocal sharing decreases some of the pain and loneliness each of us feels and helps us each move forward with greater strength.

Letting go of the things that weigh us down — the physical possessions we no longer need and the hurts that live inside — can help lighten our load, improve our health, and allow us to live in the home of our souls with greater intention. Perhaps it’s time for a little downsizing of your own, inside or out? ♦





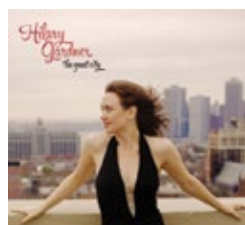
**Moonrise Kingdom** (2012)

In the singular vision of director Wes Anderson (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*), running away from home seems an almost sacred duty. That's how passionate adolescents Sam and Suzy (played by Jared Gilman and Kara Hayward) see it, anyway; on a certain pre-arranged day in the summer of '65, they meet in the wilds outside their New England homes and share an adventure away from the grown-up world. Anderson's sympathy for these two — who soberly go about creating their own new home at a seashore campground — is so great that the adult characters (played by the likes of Bill Murray, Frances McDormand, and Bruce Willis) pale by comparison. People love to call Anderson's films "quirky," but what strikes you about this portrait of youth is how authentic the behavior is within this wacky, stylized realm — even when the dialogue sounds cracked ("I love you, but you don't know what you're talking about"), it carries the ring of truth. No wonder this film touched a nerve in audiences well outside the indie world.

**MUSIC REVIEWS**

Recreate the warmth of home with these three pieces of music.

by Joe Rodriguez / Freelance music writer



**The Great City** (Album) — Hilary Gardner, 2014

Growing up, I never thought that my hometown would produce any talent beyond hockey players and dog mushers. That has all changed, and I am happy to say that Wasilla, Alaska, will be known for more than a politician who can see Russia from her yard. Hilary Gardner brings her sultry, soulful and wistful vocal talents to this tribute to her adopted home, New York City, a majestic and daunting metropolis that both fulfills and feasts on people's dreams every day. Standards from Sinatra, Johnny Mercer and Nancy Wilson are intertwined with some amazing renditions of contemporary artists like Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, and Joni Mitchell, weaving a marvelous canvas of the dirty, the clean, and the iconic life of being a musician in New York City.



**I Feel Home** (Single) — O.A.R., Any Time Now, 2002

Rockville, Maryland, jam band O.A.R. started out as a small college ensemble that has grown way beyond the college circuit. From their years of live performances around the country, they have cultivated a die-hard following that rivals that of Dave Matthews, and they've released more live albums than actual studio ones. The road can take its toll on musicians, and you can hear in lead singer Marc Roberge's voice the desire and need to find home again and see the things that matter most: friends, family and familiarity. The live version of the song captures all of this desire and the sincerity that a studio version never could. Written way before the group became well-known, Roberge's lyrics capture that fleeting essence of friendship and the time spent hanging out "back in the day." It's a musical experience that helps him stay grounded and sane in a world where "home" is a shifting memory.



**A House Is a Home** (Single) — Ben & Ellen Harper, Childhood Home, 2014

*Childhood Home*, released on Mother's Day this year, is Grammy winner Ben Harper's 12<sup>th</sup> album. Teaming up with his mother, Ellen Harper, to create 10 raw and acoustically stark tracks, he takes us full circle back to his folk roots, after his forays into rock and soul. "A House Is a Home" is the beautifully poignant opening track that harkens back to the great early folk songs of the '50s and '60s. Harper's smooth, soulful vocals interweave simply and naturally with Ellen's maternally bluegrass voice to tell the truth about what family life is like for most of us. The home may be a mess or the lawn may need a mow, but the family inside is what matters the most. Working to make sure home and family are taken care of and cherished as they rightly deserve is the ongoing theme of this simple but sweet track. ♦

**Oz or Bust:**  
Continued from page 6

Here's the catch to keeping home fires burning: Too much time standing in one spot on familiar ground causes my sea legs to buckle, my curiosity to itch, and my spirit to wither. Selfishly, I pack up my fond memories but leave my newly minted friends behind. Sorry, but the wayward wind has me in its clutches. I take wing with an albatross' vision, and no matter where I am, the color of the weather matches my clothes.

I'm in St. Petersburg, Russia, when suddenly my brain craves the rush brought on by a Coke and a Big Mac. Sure, I can hit the local Russian-franchised McDonald's, but the food tastes different, and for a good reason. The wheat used in the burger's bun was grown in Russian soil, its amber waves of grain bent into a subarctic concoction of pollenated breezes, and the Coke's water element springs from a more saline source.

The Japanese have perfected McDonald's signature tastes. A Big Mac tastes exactly the same in Kyoto as it does in Kansas, but that triumph stands out amongst the plethora of food-mimicking on the franchise world's banquet table. "Eat local" is a wisdom expats wisely embrace. They know better than to hit up Rome's Burger King or Argentina's Black Angus.

Home is where you make it, yada, yada. I say home is more than that. Our tribes, our communities, our caves, our piece of carry-on luggage, however temporary, represent our identity as part of a group, and perhaps more importantly, as individuals. If not hanging on the walls of her hut, what expat doesn't keep "pictures from home" on her mobile phone?

Forgive me, Dorothy: Try as I might, and I shan't, Kansas could never — ever — feel like home. There, I've said it. On the other hand, Oz is my kind of town, and I admit to being somewhat of a jingoistic Ozian. ♦

**Safe Harbor:** Continued from page 11



Pike Place Market, Seattle, WA.

the impossible. Since he would always know where home was and I had never known home until this city on Puget Sound, he would make the move.

No one was particularly happy about this at first, but when his mother came to visit and liked it, things got better. Cousins showed up, and friends, and we sold the tiny apartment I owned and moved into a house where we could walk to the beach from our front porch. The in-laws came again and again, and as they grew to love Seattle, so did my foreign husband. Now, this is his home too.

During the course of my frequent travels, I meet people who eschew the idea of home. The terminally un-addressed consider having a place to leave their things and get their mail a shackle rather than an anchor in a safe harbor. They consider having a home a liability or a capitulation to some outdated construct of what it means to be a fully actualized adult. Or they'll

talk some nonsense about being at home anywhere, which sort of defeats the idea of travel for exploration, that celebration of places that are different than home. And I pity them because they never experience the great comfort of return.

Puget Sound smells of ocean air. It smells of forest. Even in the airport. I sense the rough bark of the giant Sitka spruce, the woody smell of cedar. The air smells open, fresh, green and blue. In winter, if it's cold enough (which isn't often), there's that low bite of snow in the air, or mulch, the decaying of wet leaves. In the spring and summer, the smell is brighter, sweet underneath, grass, maybe, or tree pollen.

When I meet those people who swear by the untethered life, I don't bother to argue. Instead, I mentally transport myself to that moment on the jetway when I get the first reminder of home. I've found mine, and there is no need to explain. ♦

**Kitsch:** Continued from page 33

Cracker Barrel. I had so much kitsch — chainsawed carved bears, moosehead fan pulls, slate coasters with elk tracks — my cabin resembled a warehouse for a Smoky Mountain gift shop. This same type of gift giving doesn't apply to other homes. I would never arrive at a friend's housewarming party in the city bearing gifts of switch plates adorned with strip mall motifs or slate coasters with the shoeprints of metermaids.

A few hours of sitting on the cabin's front deck in the pure mountain air would generally alter opinions. Upon leaving, many would ask that I keep them in mind should I need a housesitter. But there were others who said they could never call such an isolated place home. Which is OK. All the more red berries for me to pick. ♦



**These Hands:** Continued from page 29

was still frail and simply sat watching the other kids play as he ate an apple. He would point out his family members who were running around the Care Point. Thanduxolo couldn't finish his piece of fruit, so he gave the rest of it to his younger brother Wakile. He saved other food for his brothers, placing it in boxes to take home. As the day came to a close, he took charge by corralling his siblings and instructing them to help. Each one immediately listened to him and completed their task. He proved that despite his frail frame, he was strong in spirit and wasn't going to let an illness stop him from living.

As we drove the family home, Kelly Johnson, one of our team members, carried Thanduxolo from the shuttle into his house. Kelly described this experience: "As we walked together to his home, Thanduxolo wrapped his arms around me. Not limp like he had been just a few short days before, but strong. He was thin, but intentional and strong. I don't know if he had any idea what he was doing for me in that moment. As he reached around me, he clasped his hands, tightened his grasp and tightly squeezed. My heart had melted for him earlier in the week, broke for him earlier that day, and erupted for him in that instant. I was reminded clearly and concisely that, despite our circumstances, the most important thing for Thanduxolo was the most important thing for me. Love. To be loved. To feel love. It is the only thing in this world that makes everything okay."

We set him inside on the one piece of furniture in the home, a love seat that had seen better days, and talked with his mother for a minute. As I gave him a hug to say goodbye, my hands could feel every bone in his ribs and every vertebrae in his spine. He smiled, said thank you and waved goodbye. Like Kelly, my heart erupted.

A couple days later when we packed up and started our trek back to the airport, we received word that Thanduxolo was again in the hospital for severe dehydration. He had been having problems eating food and drinking enough water. They were trying to find a vein to run an IV, but with his frail condition, that proved to be difficult. A few hours later, when we made a stop to stretch our legs, we learned that they were able to run the IV and Thanduxolo was doing better. He is still not out of the woods, but every day he gets a little closer.

During my trip, I fell in love with these children, who should be mad at the world for the cards they have been dealt yet were happy with the simplest of things. They reminded me that the most serious problems could often be solved with a smile and a hug. They taught me that all the excess I have in life means nothing if I don't have the basics, someone who will love me and look after me. I went to Mkhombokati to help the kids and Bomake, but they ended up helping me more than I thought possible. While I have returned to work at Treco in Orem, part of my heart remains in Swaziland, and I am so privileged to be a part of the Leisure Care family that allowed me to bless these kids.

To learn how you can offer support to the children in Swaziland, contact Children's Hope Chest at [www.hopechest.org](http://www.hopechest.org).

If you are interested in purchasing some of the crafts of the Swaziland Bomake, please visit Timbali Crafts at [www.timbalicrafts.org](http://www.timbalicrafts.org).

To contact Cameron about his journey, email him at [cstark@betreeo.com](mailto:cstark@betreeo.com). ♦



**BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS / From Page 16**

**Answers to Crossword Puzzle**

BASE	CHIDE	CHEF
AJAX	HOMER	REAR
TART	APPLE	INTO
ERIE	RESIDENCES	
	RAGS	AGENT
FACILE	SCARE	
ACHOO	THAR	ETA
WHERE	THEHEART	IS
NEW	SEEN	RINKS
	PAPER	REGAIN
OFTEN	MESH	
GREAT	LAKES	TOPS
LIAR	ELIDE	ISLE
EARL	SPLAT	SLOW
DRYS	TOLLS	TOWN

**Answers to Sudoku**

6	9	5	2	8	3	1	7	4
1	8	3	4	7	6	9	2	5
7	2	4	1	5	9	3	8	6
5	6	2	3	9	1	8	4	7
8	3	9	6	4	7	2	5	1
4	7	1	8	2	5	6	9	3
3	4	7	9	6	2	5	1	8
9	5	6	7	1	8	4	3	2
2	1	8	5	3	4	7	6	9

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