# "Written by the people, for the people"

Volume 5 • Issue 01

Serving Gold River and Sacramento County

January, 2017

#### **BACK ON THE HAPPY TRACK**



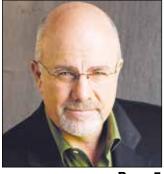
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#### **GERIATRICS GUILTY** OF FAT SHAMING



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#### **DAVE RAMSEY SAYS: WIFE WINS**



Page 5

# of Many New 2017 Laws

**DMV Reminds Motorists** 



Just one of the new 2017 DMV laws will be (SB 838, Vehicle Registration Fee): This law increases the vehicle registration fee on every vehicle or trailer coach from \$43 to \$53 beginning April 1, 2017.

SACRAMENTO AREA, CA (MPG) - With the New Year just around the corner, the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) wants to inform the public of several new laws or changes to existing law that, unless otherwise noted, take effect on January 1, 2017. The following are summaries of some transportation-related laws taking effect.

• Use of Electronic Wireless Devices (AB 1785, Quirk): Driving a motor vehicle while holding and operating a handheld wireless telephone or a wireless electronic communications device will be prohibited, unless the device is mounted on a vehicle's windshield or is mounted/affixed to a vehicle's dashboard or center console in a manner that does not hinder the driver's view of the road. The driver's hand may only be used to activate or deactivate a feature or function on the device with the motion of a single swipe or tap of the

driver's finger, but not while holding it. The law does not apply to manufacturerinstalled systems that are embedded in a

- Child Safety Seats (AB 53, Garcia): This law requires a parent, legal guardian, or the driver of a motor vehicle to properly secure a child who is younger than 2 years of age in an appropriate rear-facing child passenger restraint system, unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds or is 40 or more inches in height (3 feet, 3 inches).
- Motorcycle Lane Splitting (AB 51, Quirk): This law defines "lane splitting" as driving a two-wheeled motorcycle between rows of stopped or moving vehicles in the same lane. The law authorizes the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to develop educational guidelines relating to lane splitting in a manner that would ensure the safety of motorcyclists, drivers,

and passengers. In developing these guidelines, the law requires the CHP to consult with specified agencies and organizations that have an interest in road safety and motorcyclist behavior.

- Vehicle Registration Fee (SB 838, Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review): This law increases the vehicle registration fee on every vehicle or trailer coach from \$43 to \$53 beginning April 1, 2017.
- Environmental License Plate (SB 839, Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review): This law increases the fee for the issuance of Environmental License Plates from \$43 to \$53, starting July 1, 2017. This law also increases the fee for the renewal, retention, transfer, or duplication of Environmental License Plates (personalized) from \$38 to \$43, starting January 1, 2017.

Continued on page 3

## **CRPD Appoints New District Administrator**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Cordova Recreation and Park District announces the appointment of Patrick Larkin as its new District Administrator. The CRPD Board of Directors unanimously selected

Larkin after an extensive national search and approved his employment agreement at the December 21, 2016 Board meeting. Larkin January 2017. "We



pleased to have someone with such

vast experience in parks and recreation join us at CRPD," said Board of Directors Chair Terri Leimbach. "We are confident he will work diligently to keep the District moving forward to even greater things in the future."

Larkin comes to the District with a background of more than 16 years in administration, public service and park and recreation, including his most recent position as Recreation Superintendent for the Cosumnes Community Services District (CCSD) in Elk Grove, California. As Recreation Superintendent, Larkin oversaw 20 full-time and 150 part-time staff and a budget of \$5.5 million. In his more than 10 years with CCSD, Larkin has developed award-winning youth and community programs, managed capital improvement projects and fostered critical business and community partnerships.

Previously, Larkin served in leadership roles with the City of Palo Alto and the City of Sunnyvale in California. Larkin has also been recognized as a regional and state leader in parks and recreation, including the California Parks and Recreation Society. Larkin graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Communications and a minor in Sociology from Central Connecticut State University.

Source: CRPD

# Sales Tax Rate to Decrease in January 2017

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On January 1, 2017, the statewide sales and use tax rate decreased one quarter of one percent (0.25%) from 7.50 percent to 7.25 percent. The decrease in the statewide rate is effective for all cities and counties in California; however, in many jurisdictions in California the actual sales and use tax rate may still be higher than the statewide rate due to the addition of district taxes.

Why is the sales and use tax rate decreasing? Proposition 30, The Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012 that was approved by California voters in November 2012 to temporarily increase the sales and use tax by 0.25 percent expired December 31, 2016.

To find the correct rate in your city or county, visit our Find a Sales and Use Tax Rate

webpage and enter the address as prompted. Additionally, a listing of sales and use tax rates for each city and county is available on the California City & County Sales & Use Tax Rates webpage. Please note, however, the 0.25 percent statewide tax rate decrease will not be reflected on these webpages until January 1, 2017.

A retailer who continues to charge and collect the higher statewide sales and use tax rate after January 1, 2017, must either refund the excess tax collected to their customer or pay the excess tax to the Board of Equalization (BOE). If the excess tax collected has been paid to the BOE, the retailer may request a refund on behalf of their customer by completing form BOE-101, Claim for Refund or Credit.

For merchandise delivered after January 1, 2017, the applicable sales and use tax rate is the rate that is in effect at the time the sale occurs. Generally, the sale occurs when the merchandise is delivered to the customer, unless the sales contract specifically states that title to the merchandise passes to the customer prior to delivery. With returned merchandise, the customer should be refunded the amount of tax at the rate that was charged and collected from the customer at the time of the original sale.

For information on how this affects fixed-price contracts, partial tax exemptions, fuel sales, and filing split returns, visit the BOE website, or call our Customer Service Center at 1-800-400-7115 (TTY:711), weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00



Proposition 30, The Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012 that was approved by California voters in November 2012 to temporarily increase the sales and use tax by 0.25 percent expires December 31, 2016.

p.m. (Pacific time), except state taxes and fees in California, holidays.

For more information on other

visit the California Tax Service

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# Less Than Stellar **Year for CalPERS**

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The California Public Employees' Retirement System has not had a good 2016. Its investment returns were microscopic, it faced sharp criticism from a prominent financial website for alleged unethical behavior and Gov. Jerry Brown had to intervene to prevent the nation's largest pension fund from continuing to enable latecareer pension spiking by public employees.

But year's end brought good news of a morbid nature to CalPERS, the California State Teachers' Retirement System and all agencies with actuarial responsibilities: It appears that U.S. life expectancy has plateaued after the nation previously seemed on track to eventually join Iceland and Japan as nations where it was common for people to reach their 90s.

This upward trend was blamed in San Francisco for the failure of pension reforms enacted in 2011 to provide much relief, as CalPERS reported last year, and has been one more factor in making long-term pension reform such a daunting test.

But after more than two decades of incremental but cumulatively significant increases in life expectancy, life expectancy went down

the National Center for Health Statistics. There were increases in eight of the 10 leading causes of death, including heart disease, diabetics, drug overdoses, Alzheimer's, diabetes and suicide. Cancer was the only notable bright spot, with deaths down 1.7 percent.

U.S. life expectancy rose from 75.4 in 1993 to 78.9 in 2014 before dropping to 78.8 in 2015, according to the latest report.

The findings were in line with a report last year from Princeton economists that showed an increase in death rates among middle-aged whites, a development that was linked to the opioid epidemic and other selfdestructive behavior.

#### CalPERS knocked for slowness in adjusting actuarial formulas

While social scientists and elected leaders ponder the implication of this development for the nation, it could provide a sense of relief at CalPERS. The pension fund has faced sharp criticism of "cooking the books" not just by having unrealistic expectations of earnings but by being slow to acknowledge its pensioners were living longer.

In early 2014, the Bay Area News Group's Dan Borenstein wrote a column about CalPERS' actuaries' struggle to get the expectancy forecasts. The actuaries got their way after grousing from some board members that this would increase costs for member agencies.

But Chief Actuary Alan Milligan remained worried that not enough was being done. In January 2015, CalPERS posted a mortality report that noted mortality had improved "a bit faster" than pension fund actuaries expected. It noted that CalPERS was now "predicting faster improvements than we had in the past."

The prediction might still prove right. While most public-health experts agreed that the National Center for Health Statistics report was bad news, there were some who warned against an overreaction to the findings.

Slate published an analysis by Ben Hanowell, a data scientist who works for a company that connects the aging with assisted living. He warned against positing broad trends from one year of data and noted that some groups - such as middle-aged Hispanics and African Americans — continued to see their life expectancy increase.

As of June 30, CalPERS had 68 percent of funds for its anticipated obligations to public employee retirees — \$139 billion less than needed.

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# New Year, New Challenges

#### Job Demand and Hiring Trends Shifting for Local Companies

- The first three months of the New Year offer opportunity for employment and bring new concerns for employers as political change includes some uncertainty for workforce planning in

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

2017. The Sacramento employment marketplace remains robust as most regional firms polled on hiring in the first quarter continue to seek new workers to grow their workforces.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the top regional employers polled directly by phone are planning to hire in the first three months of 2017. Pacific Staffing discovered in direct contacts with regional employers between November 28, 2016 and December 20, 2016 that forty-five percent (45%) of hiring in January, February and March is motivated by employers expanding workforces.

Increased opportunity to find work includes demand to fill shortages of entry and general construction labor, call center, customer service, general office and Sacramento regional companies across the spectrum seeking delivery and route drivers.

Seasonal hiring was indicated by four percent (4%) of reported demand in the first quarter. Just one firm noted a seasonal layoff in the first quarter, while thirtyseven percent (37%) reported no plan to hire anyone in the first three months of 2017.

High demand for Class A drivers continues with reported shortages of entry level and general labor for manufacturing and construction work. Customer service, general office/clerical, call center/tech support, sales and product assembly, warehouse and

shipping backgrounds are also sought by Sacramento employers in the first quarter of 2017.

Sacramento regional employers also expressed in anecdotal comments some fear that political change would require new time and investment in changes to healthcare, overtime and minimum wage in 2017. This has raised uncertainties after spending time and money to implement ACA and other recent changes to workplace benefits and wages. Some employers also expressed some frustration with retention of employees in some cases based on concerns about wage pressure from nearby Bay Area firms.

For more information, employment blogs & market surveys go to www.pacificstaffing.com.

Source: Pacific Staffing

# **Are You Nuts!**

#### Non-Profit Goes Nuts, and Berries!

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA prizes, including a 10 (MPG) - Sacramento's heroes of nature, The Wildlife Care Association (WCA) is changing up a major fundraiser. The Nuts & Berries fundraiser will move from December to a new date in February, and reformat as a raffle. WCA President Theresa Bielawski says, "The new format gives everyone a better chance of winning prizes, and will help grow the funding for giving wildlife a second chance." The Nuts & Berries Raffle event takes place at WCA, 5211 Patrol Road, McClellan Park on Saturday, February 4th from 11am-2:30pm.

Formerly a silent auction event, the new Nuts & Berries Raffle offers the community a way to save wildlife and a more level playing field for all. With more than \$12,000 in raffle

hmfdentistry.com

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Day Cruise to Alaska, tickets are \$75 each, two for \$140 or three for \$200. No limit on the number of tickets you may purchase with all

money supporting the non-profit mission to save regional wildlife.

With the \$4000 valued Alaskan Cruise donated by Zoe's Cruises & Tours, other Nuts & Berries Raffle prizes include Birdseed for a Year donated by Wild Birds and Gardens, a California Wolf Center Tour for 4, Pier 39 Fun Packs, sport packages including Oakland Athletics tickets, Wildlife Coin Sets, with more prizes in addition to the ones listed here. No prize will have a value of under \$125. Some prizes include restaurant gift certificates such as Outback, Olive Garden, Garcia's. In

addition, we have fine wines, Starbuck's coffee, paint ball, laser tag, museum admission tickets and more!

Go to the WCA website at www. wildlifecareassociation.com.

Make sure you click the BUY RAFFLE TICKETS button not the DONATE button. Payment must be received no later than Monday, January 30th. You will not receive tickets in the mail, only an acknowledgement of how many you purchased and your ticket number (s). You can also purchase tickets on February 4th at the event.

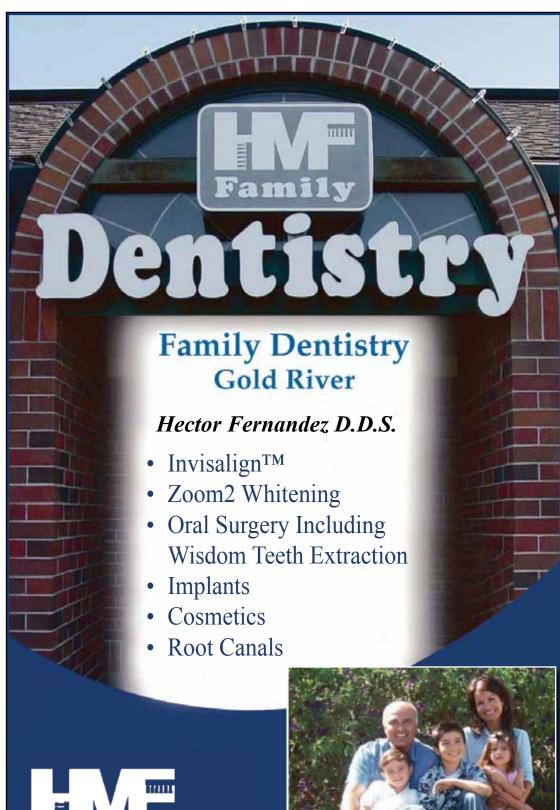
Information on watching the Nuts & Berries Raffle draw live online will be posted on our website by February 1st, 2017. For more visit www.wildlifecareassociation.com.





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# **DMV Reminds Motorists** of Many New 2017 Laws

Continued from page 1

- · Accident Reporting (SB 491, Committee on Transportation and **Housing):** This law increases the minimum financial threshold for property damage that is required to be reported to the DMV from \$750 to \$1,000 when a driver is involved in a motor vehicle collision.
- Vehicle Safety Recalls (AB 287, Gordon): This law enacts the Consumer Automotive Recall Safety (CARS) Act, and requires the DMV to include a general advisory regarding vehicle recalls and needed repairs on each vehicle registration renewal notice. This law prohibits a dealer or a rental car company from renting or loaning a vehicle with a manufacturer's recall no later than 48 hours after receiving the notice—until the vehicle has been repaired. This law gives a limited exception for a licensed dealer or a rental car company with a fleet of 34 or fewer loaner or rental vehicles. The law authorizes the DMV to suspend or revoke a vehicle dealer's license if they violate the CARS Act.
- Year of Manufacture License Plates (SB 1429, Nielsen): This law expands the Year of Manufacture (YOM) license plate program to include vehicles and license plates manufactured through 1980. This law benefits owners of

vintage motor vehicles who obtain license plates from the year corresponding to the vehicle's model-year, and wish to use those vintage plates in lieu of regular license plates. Such plates are commonly found from different sources, including relatives, garage sales, estate sales, etc. The program will include the blue and yellow license plates issued for use on California motor vehicles from 1970 until 1980.

Background Checks of **Drivers of Transportation** Network Companies (AB **1289**, Cooper): A transportation network company (TNC) will be required to perform a comprehensive background check of all their drivers. This law also specifies penalties for a TNC that violates or fails to comply with this requirement. A TNC will be prohibited from contracting with, employing, or retaining a driver if they are registered on the U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender public website, has been convicted of specified felonies, or within the previous seven years, has been convicted of a misdemeanor assault or battery, domestic violence, or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Any TNC in violation of the specified requirements is subject to a penalty of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$5,000 for each offense.

Installing Counterfeit or Nonfunctional Air Bags (AB 2387, Mullin): This law prohibits knowingly and intentionally manufacturing, importing, installing, reinstalling, distributing, or selling any device intended to replace an air bag system in any motor vehicle if the device is a counterfeit or nonfunctional air bag system, or does not meet federal safety requirements. The law also prohibits selling, installing, or reinstalling any device that would cause a vehicle's diagnostic system to fail to warn when the vehicle is equipped with a counterfeit, nonfunctional, or a case in which no air bag was installed. This violation is a misdemeanor punishable by a \$5,000 fine and/or up to a one year in county jail.

Never miss the latest news from the CA DMV. Sign up now for DMV News Alerts! It's an easy way to receive up-to-date information from the California Department of Motor Vehicles. This new tool also offers customization to obtain specific DMV related topics, such as AB 60, autonomous vehicles, and office openings and closures.

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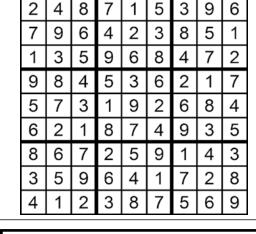
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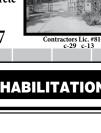
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of time. Amen.

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Dave Says



#### By David Dickstein. Gold River resident

I weigh 249 pounds. By government standards, that would be a healthy weight for me if I were 7 feet tall. Alas, I'm 5 feet 10 inches and, like most of us at a certain age, slowly shrinking. Those measurements classify me as being "obese," according to the U.S. Department of Put Down the Fork, America. Other than the IRS, that could be the nastiest of all government

Besides making my weight public, here's another confession: I've been plus-sized ever since becoming a father 22 years ago -- never did drop the sympathy weight. Over the past decade or so this 55-yearold desk jockey has fluctuated between 235 and 260 pounds, and as sure as nothing tastes as good as thin feels, or so Jenny Craig wants you to believe, I definitely don't want to get to the heights of that range again. Cursed with fat genes from my parents, a love of carbs and close proximity to an In-N-Out, I'm doomed if I don't do more about being less.

That's why my New Year's resolution for 2017 is to get down to my 230s again. This would have me fitting comfortably in all my 42-inch pants, not just the "relaxed" or stretchy ones. I'd even be able to wear these forgiving size-40 Ralph Lauren jeans that's been pushed to side of my closet where all the once-fitting, too-expensive- todonate clothes are put on inactive

Helping me make good on my anti-rotund resolution will be rediscovered willpower, an accurate bathroom scale, my well-meaning doctor and the pressure I brought on to myself by not only going public, but the vow to report on my progress every few months in this column.

If that isn't enough to get me

# 'Fool's Gold'

#### **Geriatrics Guilty of Fat Shaming**

have a certain population of Gold River that will never let me forget about why I need to diet. And that would be a small subset of our oldest citizens who blur the line between caring and insensitivity. You might have had your own run-ins covering any number of personal subjects, but for me and these intrusive elders, it's always been about weight. And other than at the Gold River Racquet Club, which is a wonderful safe zone, this unsilent minority seems to strike wherever and whenever you least expect it.

Like at the local Outback Steakhouse. There I was a few years ago, enjoying a lovely dinner with my family when I noticed an acquaintance from our village getting up from her table. As she turned toward us, I gave the 75-year- old woman a big smile and said hello by name. She looked at me with a blank stare and only when she glanced at my boys and wife did she connect the dots. "Oh, hello!" she said to all of us. Then she turned her eyes back toward me. "I didn't recognize you because you've gained weight." Talk about the paunch. I'd like a punch to to say that my response was gentlemanly and respectful, but I can't. "And you've gotten more wrinkled," was my knee-jerk retort.

OK, so I didn't score points with Miss Manners. My response did, however, reflect how intolerant I am to those senior citizens who think they can say anything they darn well want to just because of their age. I have tremendous respect for the aged, and go out of my way to help them and any neighbor in need, but starting that evening, I was done taking the high road with the nosey ones who aren't even friends or family.

Before I tell you about the other times, let me finish with the queen of tact from Outback. I'd be lying if I didn't enjoy the shocked look on her face after I gave it right back to her. The awkward scene was mercifully brief; she walked away and out of the restaurant without saying another word. I'm sure to this day she thinks I'm the rudest man in town, never acknowledging that

serious about losing weight, I'll her insolence provoked my comment. Shame on me for saying "hi"

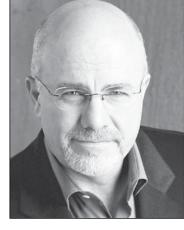
to her in the first place. Thinking back to previous times my plumpness prompted a person to play their "senior card," a few years ago I was at the nearby Marriott for a reception. As I stood beside a slender acquaintance who shares my first name, a man of around 80 walked toward us, prompting introductions. "This will be easy," I said cheerfully, "because we are both Davids." As the man shook our hands, he uttered, "But only one of you is pregnant." Really? He's lucky I stood there petrified as the old coot sauntered off to the open bar.

At another party, this one on my own street, I wasn't there two minutes when a neighbor in his 80s greeted me with, "Looks like you've gained weight!" Yes, I was wearing an oversize shirt, but no, not cool. Offended, I promptly turned down a glass of high-fat wine and left the anti-social social gathering for home. At a recent dinner party, a man in his 80s told my youngest I should go on a diet. So

This reverse elder abuse has also targeted the family dog. Our dear, now-departed Roxie was being nothing but sweet to an octogenarian neighbor when out of the blue he snarked, "Your dog sure hasn't missed a meal, has she?" That's my daughter he was insulting. Out of respect, I let it go. But a few weeks later, the man's wife got in her dig. "Your dog is sure fat," she said, to which I responded, "And your grandchildren are ugly." The couple never insulted my dog again, and I'm sure Roxie will give me an extra lick at the Rainbow Bridge for defending her honor.

When it comes to my weight, I'm figuring that the only way to stifle the meddlesome seniors of our neighborhood is to make good on my New Year's resolution. Then again, even if I reach my goal weight, I'm sure the elders will find something else to complain about. Like how rude I was to write this

David Dickstein is a Gold River resident. He can be reached at daviddickstein1@gmail.com.



Wife wins

Dear Dave,

We just started following your plan, and we have \$39,000 in debt. We make \$55,000 a year, and two of our smaller debts one car and a credit card — are both \$7,500. The credit card has a higher interest rate, so my wife thinks we should pay it off first. I look at the car as a necessity, and for that reason I think we should pay it off first. Who's right?

- Pat

Dear Pat.

When the rules of paying off debts from smallest to largest don't apply, I look at things this way: If you have two debts that are of equal amounts, I would attack the one with the larger interest rate first. In your case, that would be the credit card

I get what you're saying about the car. You guys might be in a bind if something happened and you lost one car. But it's also something you could work around if you had no other choice. So yeah, knock out the credit card first then move on to the car. Going this route will serve two purposes: First, it will save you some money. And second, I've got a feeling it will fire up your wife and get her on board with the plan even more

than she already is. She's taking this seriously if she's eyeballing interest rates, Pat. So use this momentum to work together, and knock out that debt!

—Dave

#### IRA to gold? Bad idea

Dear Dave,

What are your thoughts on transferring an IRA over to

- Sandy

Dear Sandy,

Honestly, I think that's about the dumbest thing a person could do. I hope I wasn't unclear.

Gold is going down like a rock right now as people start to believe in the economy and the economic direction of this country again. The stock market indicates this is true, and in the process, gold becomes worth less and less. Gold is essentially a fear-based product, and the less fear that's out there, the cheaper

That's not how you want to fund your IRA, Sandy. You want to fund it with something that has a long track record based on growth due to the performance of the companies involved not someone's greed or fear. Gold is a horrible investment, and I don't own any except for one nice watch and a pair of cufflinks. That's it!

-Dave

Dave Ramsey is America's trusted voice on money and business. He has authored five New York Times best-selling books: Financial Peace, More Than Enough, The Total Money Makeover, EntreLeadership and Smart Money Smart Kids. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 8 million listeners each week on more than 500 radio stations. Follow Dave on Twitter at @DaveRamsev and on the web at daveramsey.com. ★

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#### **2017 Technology Awards Nominations** Now Being Accepted by State Fair

California State Fair is now accepting nominations for the 2017 Champion of Technology Awards. Two technology champions will be selected for remarkable contributions to California's technology industry; one in the Individual Category, one in the Product/Organization Category. The deadline to apply is Friday, January 20, 2017.

Since 1854, the California State Fair has showcased the best of the best, including the progress and advancements of the state's strongest industries. Now in 2017, the California State Fair celebrates the 50th anniversary at the Cal Expo site. On this golden year, and as California continues to lead the

**SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)** - The world in innovation and technological achievements, the California State Fair is honored to present the Champion of Technology Awards.

> Nominees must demonstrate a benefit to California through commendable technological achievement. The 2016 Champion of Technology Award recipients were: Eric Brown, President and CEO of California Telehealth Network; Emergency Call and Tracking System by Direct Technology. The 2017 winners will receive their Champion of Technology awards at the annual State Fair Gala on

Thursday, June 22, 2017. Awards include Champion of Technology Award, Individual Category and Champion of Technology Award, Organization

Awards are open to California residents and organizations/ businesses headquartered in

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**California Department of Technology** Vianey.Nunez@state.ca.gov

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#### **CLUES**

1. The Mamas & the 6. Clingy plant 9. Half of Brangelina

. Poem at a funeral

14. 2nd largest bird in the world

15. Palm grease

16. Abraham's original name 17. \*Columbia introduced the

33 1/3 \_\_\_\_ record 18. Painting support

19. \*Originally known as safety cushion assembly

21. \*Penny Farthing, e.g. 23. G in music

24. Damp and musty

25. Teacher org.

28. Locus, pl. 30. Opposite of cantata

35. Tiny leftovers

37. Jimmy Kimmel, e.g. 39. Fat cat in the Orient

40. \*You can do this from afar with a telescope 41. Certain saxes

43. Org. headquartered in Brussels

44. Not Doric nor Corinthian

46. Novice 47. Ponzi scheme, e.g. \_! This is the

police!' 50. Trunk extension

52. Priestly garb 53. Sound of a bell

55. Deadeye's forte

57. \*Aid for the blind

61. Inquirers

64. Soup dispenser

67. Homeric epic

69. Like Tower of Pisa

70. North American country 71. Incessantly

72. Risky business, pl 73. p in mph

Down

fairy tale

74. Coastal feature

1. "The Princess and the

2. "Fantastic Four" actress

6. Cause of Titanic's demise

10. Reduced Instruction Set

Computer 11. Cain's unfortunate brother

12. Mark for omission

15. Call with a wave

20. Hello in 50th state

22. Deporting agency

26. Group of apes

27. Do penitence

31. Grannies 32. Manila hemp

33. Bottom line

29. \*Early gun maker

24. Make moonshine, e.g.

25. \*Jonas Salk's conquest

34. \*Manhattan Project invention

36. Largest organ of human body

5. It can be a mark, sign or word

\_winkle

3. \_\_\_\_wig or \_\_\_\_ 4. Petri dish jellies

7. Strike caller

9. Donkey cry

8. Cuban dance

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38. Reality TV's Spelling 42. Technical term for human bodies

45. Veal serving 49. Neighbor of Ger

51. \*Clothing named after a site of A-bomb testing 54. Reduce pressure

56. Cantaloupe, e.g.

63. Not loony

57. Spill the beans

58. Relative speed of change

59. Miners' passage

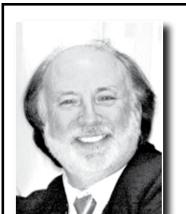
60. Misfortunes

61. #4 Down, sing. 62. Cambodian currency

66. Put into service 68. \*Nobel Prize-winning insecticidal, now banned

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The Gold River Messenger





6 • Gold River Messenger **JANUARY 2017** 

# Game **Plots**

**Artificial** Intelligence: Hiding the **Puppet Strings** 

By Noah Howard

In 2016, we finally passed the videogame Turing test. Amidst a year of surprises and widespread innovation, the most consistent trend has been the inclusion of self-reliable, fully-characterized AI (Artificial Intelligence) pulling the puppet-strings of nonplayer characters. Previously (and still), creating a believable companion to populate a game world was a daunting task, due not to the lack of graphics capabilities (games like this year's Uncharted 4 pulled off visuals as near-photorealistic as anyone could reasonably expect), but to the simple difficulty of making a cold, calculating computer behave like a living being: unpredictably.

The strongest example from the past year arises from the recentlyreleased The Last Guardian, a game about the bond between a young, unnamed boy and a massive feathered dog-beast (adorably named "Trico") as they make their way through crumbling ruins. The player has direct control over only the boy, and while they can order the monster around the environment, Trico is prone to stubbornness and absentmindedness. Nearly every review for the game recounts the critics' frustration when they knew what Trico needed to do to solve a puzzle, but simply couldn't get him to do it. He'd be persistently sniffing a tower, or running around exploring nearby, completely ignoring the player's orders. But though uncooperative AI is often bothersome, Trico's non-compliance mimics the behaviour of a real animal. Even a well-trained housepet does not



model of interaction was finally locked down and (arguably) perfected in

respond to commands immediately, and, when faced with the thrill of a squirrel or a bird, may not respond at all. As a result, these minor annoyances seem to be a calculated decision; they waste the player's time, but they also successfully create the illusion of life within Trico to hide the lackluster pre-programmed gears under the surface.

But unpredictability becomes somewhat more difficult when combat is thrown into the mix. Incompetent AI for friendly characters can stop the player from feeling like an action hero and make them feel like a babysitter, needing to constantly defend nonplayer characters. The player's allies in both Final Fantasy XV and *Uncharted 4* tackle this problem in an interesting way; they retain competence and predictability in combat situations (in both games I went down far more often than my AI compatriots), but incorporate unpredictability in their dialogue and interactions with the player character. In both games, AI characters draw from a pool of player-character or character-character dialogue, some interactions scripted to a specific time and place, some that can arise at any point during normal gameplay. This type of back and forth between friends (or, as is often in Uncharted 4, between husband and wife or between brothers), captures the improvisational nature of real human relationships, and pulls the veil over the mechanics driving these digital-robotic characters.

Though some ndie games from this past year (such as Event 0 and Oxenfree) experimented with dynamic dialogue systems that allowed players to speak almost freely and naturally to AI, their complex systems are, for the moment, still infeasible to implement in a wider variety of game genres. Nevertheless, while their innovations are representative of what player-AI interactions could look like in the future, the current, somewhat passive, model of interaction was finally locked down and (arguably) perfected in 2016. They've followed the path of Pinocchio, cutting their puppet strings, transforming wood into flesh, and, to some degree, starting to feel alive.

To respond to Noah's articles email him at digitalartsnoah@



William James said, "Things are not as they are, but as we are." We really do see through the eyes of our own experience and each of our experiences is different, so in every moment, we see everything from the perspective of the mood we're in. It's almost like we put on different glasses from moment to moment.

Have you noticed you can get in the habit of being in a bad mood? The good news is if you can get into the habit of being in a bad mood, you can get into the habit of being in a good one! Habits are breakable and like any habit good or bad, it just takes desire to

When you have a negative thought, if you don't get busy and call up positive thoughts, the negative thought will serve up more negative thoughts like a mental magnet. Misery loves company was probably originally written about negative thoughts. The sooner you can entertain positive thoughts, the quicker you can eliminate the negative thought and all its friends and get back to being happy.



### Make It Fun and It Will Get Done!

The Secret to Being Organized

#### Pam Young's Corner

#### **10 Minutes of Focus Can Get** You Back on the Happy Track

Sometimes it takes longer than 10 minutes

Once years ago, I was mentally pulled from my routinely solid state of happiness and contentment. It doesn't matter what the source of the discontent was. What mattered was, for a time I allowed circumstances to control my habitual center of peace and joy. When that happens, that's when a timer can come in handy. At a time like that when you're thrown out of your peace, you we can stop your mental and emotional free fall by setting a timer for 10 minutes of stillness for the purpose of breathing and regaining a positive direction of thought, and peace will usually return.

My husband was present through my tunnel of annoyance though that depressing day and when he'd look at me; there was always a question in his eyes: "Are you back yet?" I had to set that timer many times that day and readjust my thinking, and the next day, there it was again! It was just like the song, "It's a Small World After All," grating with its nauseating repetition. Sometimes those negative thoughts can be stubborn.

I wanted to spare myself another day of the needless repetition of a thought that didn't match my normal spirit, so I stuck with my 10 minute breaks and finally on the third ten minutes of day two, it worked!

When the timer dinged, I clearly realized I needed to walk. I hadn't walked for two days and I certainly didn't want to do it with my heavy heart, but the walk was a transfusion. I got myself back and with it came clear thoughts, free of negativity. Because of the needed exercise, my body called for more water and a nap.

Sleep, sweet sleep came and I woke up from my nap completely refreshed and healed.

Don't ever give up getting your spirit back. You were born to enjoy this wonderful life and you deserve to have peace all the time.

For more from Pam Young go to www.cluborganized. com. You'll find many musings, videos of Pam in the kitchen preparing delicious meals, videos on how to get organized, ways to lose weight and get your finances in order, all from a reformed SLOB's point of view.



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#### Natural Stress Relievers

What if you could safely and effectively treat yourself and your family at home for colds, flu, ear infections, even food poisoning without having to rush to urgent care ever again? Dr Kathleen **Fry**, a traditionally trained medical doctor, now a Homeopathic Doctor, says you can. Author of "Vitality" How to get it and keep it, and her upcoming book "There's A Remedy for That" revealed all on POPPOFF. With the holidays upon us, we talked about stress on with tips to deal with it in a natural way.

1) **DEEP BREATHING**. The fastest and simplest stress reliever is our own breath. Taking a few minutes to breathe slowly and deeply helps to lower cortisol levels and reduce agitation.

2) GET EXTRA SLEEP. Try getting into bed an hour earlier (without any electronic devices) to read something soothing or inspirational before sleep. If you have trouble falling or staying asleep because your brain just won't "turn off",

# POPPOFF!

with Mary Jane Popp

try the homeopathic remedy COFFEA CRUDA. You can take one pellet of the 30c potency at bedtime and repeat it again if you awaken in the night. It's not habit forming and won't make you feel groggy in the morning. Homeopathic remedies are made in a special way in licensed homeopathic pharmacies by serially diluting and shaking a concentrated "mother tincture" of any natural substance. A remedy of 30c potency has been serially diluted in 100 drops of water 30 times.

3) LIMIT CAFFEINE AND **ALCOHOL.** Caffeine is a nervous system stimulant and can worsen the symptoms of stress. Alcohol can disrupt your sleeping patterns not to mention wreak havoc on your gut.

4) SPEND TIME WALKING IN **NATURE.** Even 15 minutes walking around the neighborhood can make a difference.

LIMIT TIME UNDER ARTIFICIAL LIGHT. Try to get some time in natural light each day, especially in winter. Taking extra Vitamin D helps as well.

6) COMMON REMEDIES FOR STRESS. NUX VOMICA. 30c is for people working too much who suffer heartburn and irritability. (Also a great remedy for hangover). Take 1 pellet 1-2 times a day or as frequently as every 1-2 hours

when battling a hangover.

7) ARGENTUM NITRICUM 30c is a great remedy for people who get hot and sweaty just thinking about getting on an airplane.

8) GELSEMIUM SEMPERVIRENS 30c is a great remedy for people who get nervous before events like visiting the in-laws who voted differently than

they did. Also a big help for

stage fright or fear of speaking.

9) **RESCUE REMEDY** is one of the Bach Flower remedies that can be very helpful for relieving generalized, acute anxiety.

COUNTING YOUR **BLESSINGS.** Dr. Fry told me that whenever she is stressed, she stops and looks around at all the wonderful things in our beautiful world that brings her joy like her grandson Isaiah's sweet smile, the snow covered mountains, and the fresh air she is privileged to breathe. A positive mental attitude is the best antidote no matter what the stressors are in your life. Though things may look gloomy at times, there is always something or someone in your life that has blessed you on some level.

Here's your prescription. Relax and enjoy the beauty of this special holiday season and try not to sweat the small stuff. **MERRY CHRISTMAS...HAPPY** 

**NEW YEAR...GOD BLESS!** 

# **Commercial Food Waste Recycling = WasteRight!**



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Assembly Bill 1826 requires businesses that generate a certain amount of food waste per week to recycle it! The bill also includes "green" wastes that are generated by landscaping services such as lawn clippings, tree trimming and non-hazardous wood waste. Businesses such as restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, hotels, schools, hospitals, food processors, and landscapers are in some cases now regulated by this new law. Together these waste streams are called "organic wastes."

#### What is the Technical Definition of Organic Waste?

Organic waste as defined in the bill includes the following material: food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, nonhazardous wood waste, and food-soiled paper waste that is mixed in with food waste. These materials represent the largest subset of organic wastes that are currently disposed of in California landfills.



#### **Key Dates & Thresholds:**

January 1, 2017: Businesses that generate 4 cubic yards of organic waste per week must arrange for organic waste recycling services.

January 1, 2019: Businesses that generate 4 cubic yards or more of ANY solid waste per week must arrange for organic waste recycling services.

January 1, 2020: If the State (CalRecycle) determines that organic wastes have not been reduced by 50 percent of the 2014 amounts, they will expand the requirements to cover businesses that generate 2 cubic yards or more of commercial solid waste per

#### What are the Options?

Businesses that are required to recycle their organic waste must implement at least one, or a combination, of the following actions:

a. Separate organic waste from other waste and subscribe to organic waste recycling service that includes collection and recycling of organic waste.

b. Recycle your own organic waste onsite or take it yourself for recycling.

c. Subscribe to an organic waste recycling service that may include mixed waste processing that specifically recycles organic waste.

**d.** Businesses sell or donate their recyclable organic waste.

#### **Business Incentives - Early Adopters**

Businesses that get on board early with this new recycling requirement may also be eligible for saving on garbage service fees from their commercial waste hauler. Businesses are urged to contact their service provider for more information.

In addition, the Business Environmental Resource Center (BERC) has a recognition program through their Sustainable Business Program for businesses.

"One Early adopter to organic waste recycling is Nugget Market. Nugget has reduced landfill waste by 70%!

1 million lbs. meat and oil converted to tallow and biodiesel

500,000 lbs. mixed recyclables

√ 100,000 lbs. plastic film and plastic bags

Nugget Markets are stepping up to the challenge of reducing landfill waste. With these great practices they are one of the Sacramento Area's Sustainable Businesses.

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There are certain exemptions for businesses and multifamily complexes, such as if they generate less than a ½ cubic yard of organic waste a week or they donate their extra food. Contact BERC for more information.



Contact BERC: (916) 874-2100 or BERCadmin@saccounty.net

Visit: www.sacberc.org

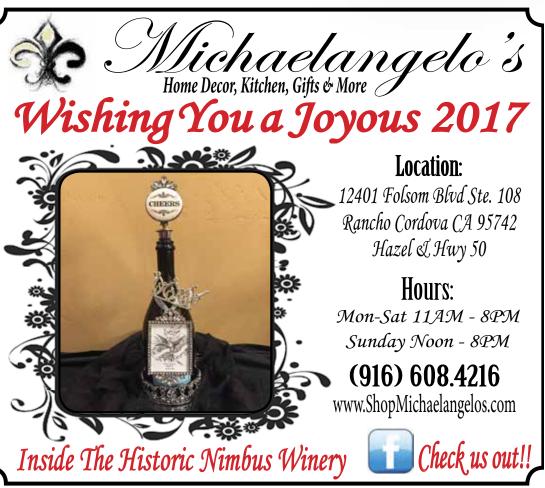








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ruins of Pompeii, which was

destroyed by the 79 AD erup-

tion of Mt. Vesuvius. That

appealed for the second visit.

Good call, too, as the "Exclusive

Amalfi Coast, Positano, Sorrento

& Pompeii" shore excursion

offered by Celebrity was 9 1/2

hours and \$355 per person well

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# Top Three Mediterranean Cruise Ports

By David Dickstein

Depending on the itinerary, a Mediterranean cruise can be the Whitman's Sampler of journeys. A taste of Santorini here, a nibble of Naples there, a morsel of Mykonos this day and a bite of Barcelona that day. And, in keeping with the candy analogy, like a box of chocolates first-timers never know what you're gonna get. That is, unless you either do your research or take the advice of those who have.

Having returned from two 10-day Mediterranean cruises within two months of each other, experienced on different cruise lines, I offer my Top 3 ports with recommendations based on personal experience heavily guided by hours of pre-planning and tips from the shore excursion directors of the Carnival Vista and Celebrity Reflection.

#### #1: Rome

Rome wasn't built in a day, so don't even try seeing it in a day. Unless the Eternal City is your port for embarkation or disembarkation, about 8 hours is what you may get to explore Italy's magnificent capital, factoring in the 90 or so minutes it takes to get to and from the dock in Civitavecchia.

When in Rome ... must-sees are all bucket list mainstays: the Colosseum, Roman Forum, Trevi Fountain and St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. With so much to do in so little time, let professionals be your guide to navigate with optimum efficiency. Carnival Cruises offers a "Rome at its Best & Inside the Colosseum" excursion (\$176) that lasts 11 hours and a lifetime. Other cruise lines provide identical tours by different names. By motor coach and hoof, Rome's "greatest hits" are explored (the Colosseum and St. Peter's amply, albeit without a visit to the Sistine Chapel) or given a drive-by, which is adequate for the Forum and the site of Circus Maximus, where the chariot races were held for nearly a millennium.

If visiting Rome is a bona fide once-in-a-lifetime experi-



Built nearly 2,000 years ago, the Roman Colosseum is the most famous monument to have survived from the classical world. Photo by David Dickstein

literature, theater, astronomy, philosophy, mythology and, oh yeah, the Olympics. Not to worry – as one of the world's busiest cruise destinations, Athens understands the time restraints a sea-arriving visitor is under. Ground transportation from the port of Piraeus to downtown Athens can be as quick as 30 minutes, even when multiple megaships are freshly anchored.

Checking off the city's two must-sees – the Acropolis and National Archaeological Museum - can be done with a single excursion booked directly with the cruise line. Carnival offers a 5-hour tour (\$100) that comfortably takes busloads to the richest collection of artifacts from Greek antiquity anywhere. From one most important museums in the world to the most important ancient site in the Western world, next up is the Acropolis, the sacred rock of ancient Athens graced by the Parthenon, amazing views and so much more. The climb takes about 10-20 minutes, slip-resistant shoes and a lot of patience on busy days. And they're all busy days.

Arriving early to the Acropolis helps avoid crowds and the midday heat, so it's wise to choose

to watch the colorful changing of the guard staged every morning at 11 sharp. He pulled up to the front with one minute to spare. That Papadopulos fella is *gooooood*.

#### #3: Naples

Pish-posh to tourists who dis Naples for its sprawling grittiness and high rate of petty crime. Just focus on its enthralling side, mind your valuables and become one with southern Italy's largest city. But if that isn't possible, get outta town and take a scenic drive to the tony Amalfi Coast.

Activities that were booked for both visits are enthusiastically recommended.

Daniela Ibelo, the licensed tour guide retained through ToursByLocals.com, was given a list of 12 points of interest in advance. Not only did she expertly navigate us through the city to check off each one, all but two via walking, she surprised us with such memorable moments as meeting a master lute craftsman in his shop. So generous was maestro liutaio Giuseppe Manna, he treated us to a private rendition of Italian standard "Funiculi Funicula." Priceless. Also special were popping into magnificent 14th and 15th century churches on a lark and visiting a depressed part of town to meander through the eerie Fontanelle Cemetery teeming with real human skulls. Caloric highlights ranged from sfogliatella, Naples' signature sweet pastry, washed down with Neapolitan espresso, of course, to lunch at Di Matteo, considered one of the top places to eat pizza in the city where it was invented. This was the only misstep. Next time it's Antica Pizzeria Port'Alba or Da Michele. Booking a guide that does not double as a driver will save you money. As a guideline, expect to spend about \$300 for an 8-hour tour at that level of service. Up to seven people can tour



Visitors flock to the ruins of Pompeii, destroyed by the 79 AD eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Photo by David Dickstein

ence for you, consider splurging on a licensed private guide, as I did on the second of my backto-back Mediterranean cruises. Everything is personalized, from the itinerary to historically accurate storytelling. Eyes of Rome, highly rated on Trip Advisor and now by me, more than accommodated my requests for a top-notch non-smoking guide with perfect English. Katie Farrar, a California-raised ex-patriot, led us on an 8-hour whirlwind of a day that included all the mustsees, including the overwhelming Sistine Chapel, overlooked Parthenon and overrated Spanish Steps, in addition to views and restaurants that weren't overrun with tourists.

#### #2: Athens

It's almost sacrilegious not to give even a full day to explore the birthplace of Western civilization, democracy, medicine,

the first departure if opting for a cruise-booked excursion, as I did on the Carnival Vista trip. Two months later, I booked a private driver through Athens Tours Greece. Four hours for 150 Euros (about \$160) is prudent and fair. A 7:30 a.m. pick-up at the ship had us beating the shore excursion busses at the Acropolis, and made the second visit to the National Archaeological Museum a dream. Our driver, who just might be Greek with the name Vassilis Papadopulos, isn't licensed to give tours inside either major attraction. Most private drivers aren't in the city, but between your guidebooks and abundant signage in English, a human guide is unessential. Our driver packed a lot into the remaining 90 minutes, including an ominous swing past the capital city's Syrian refugee camp, a glimpse of Hadrian's Arch and a stop at the House of Parliament



The Greek god Zeus is a popular subject at Athens' National Archaeological Museum, home of the world's richest collection of artifacts from Greek antiquity. Photo by Dou'd Disletting

at this price, so if you're traveling with family or friends, even

village of Positano due to the narrow, windy roads required to get there. Also, a 16-seat coach makes for intimate sightseeing and usually with the better guides and drivers. Splurging also means more time to shop (there's no "where's Bob?!") and an upgraded lunch in Sorrento. The Imperial Hotel Tramontano, overlooking the most beautiful section of the Gulf of Naples, did not disappoint the nine of us gastronomically or aesthetically. Skipping the line to go inside Pompeii also was heavenly, proving that "going small" is huge when touring the Amalfi Coast or Pompeii. So that's my Top 3

spent. Going cheaper is easy,

but bear in mind that tours that

cost about half as much use large

buses that can't reach the quaint

So that's my Top 3 Mediterranean ports, but please consider it merely a sample of what this amazing region

has to offer. We'll round out a Top 10 next time, covering Kusadasi, Rhodes, Santorini, Florence, Mykonos, Barcelona and Marseilles. A couple of dishonorable mentions also will be thrown in. Sorry Sicily and Crete.

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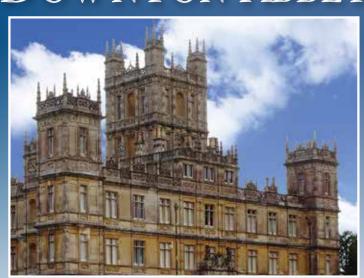
Giuseppe Manna: www.artistiliutai.it; Tours By Locals,

Tours By Locals, www.toursbylocals.com; Imperial Hotel Tramontano, www.hoteltramontano.it



**Every view of the Amalfi Coast is a picture postcard in the making.** Photo by David Dickstein

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# Is The Cup Half Empty or Half Full?

Dr. James L. Snyder

Many things in life have me in a tangle of confusion. I try to put on a good face so that nobody knows how confused I am at the time. I think I get away with it, at least most of the time.

The only person I cannot fool is the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. According to her evaluation, I am confused all the time. I would like to set her straight sometime, but I am really confused as to when would be the right time.

If I do not pick the right time, my confusion will be accelerated to the point of no return.

There is one thing, despite my professional confusion, I have not been able to understand. And it just bugs me to no end. Why are some things more confusing than others?

There is a positive side to confusion.

For example, someone is trying to explain to me something that is rather boring I can say, "That's too confusing for me."

What that does is help the other person think that he's a lot better than I am which is not a bad thing to get out of some boring situation at the time. Believe it or not, this is not too confusing for me.

Another side of this would be, somebody wants me to explain something and I am not really in the mood to do a lot of explaining, I say many confusing things and the person comes to the point where he says, "That's too confusing for me."

Winning is so wonderful.

Not long ago, I overheard somebody say, "Is that cup half full or half empty?"

For some reason I just cannot get that out of my head and it has confused me like nothing else in my life.

If, for example, a cup is half-full is it not also half-empty?

And, if it is half-empty is it all half-full?

I do not know if this is intentional confusion or if it is not supposed to make any sense at

I think "the half empty/half full" scenario is just for plain ordinary fools. In my experience, I have never met a half fool. Either they are all fool or they are not a fool at all. Just when you think you met a half-fool, they spiral into a complete fool. There is a question whether any fool can be complete or not, but that is too confusing for me.

Several times my wife will look at me and say, "Are you acting a fool?"

I would like to set her straight sometime, but I am a little confused as to be the right time. But I am not acting a fool. I have absolutely no skill in the thespian art of acting. Of course, when she addresses me with that question, I act like I am not a fool which I am not sure qualifies in the thespian arts category.

The confusion here is, if I am not acting a fool, how can I act like I am not a fool? What is the real difference here? Is there any difference at all? Oh, how confusing it all is.

I am afraid that confusion runs very deep in my life.

If I wanted to get out of the confusion syndrome, all I have to do is approach my wife and say, "I don't understand this, could you explain it to me?" After that, I am too confused to really understand that I am confused about it at all. Thanks, of course, to my wife who is confused about nothing that I know.

With her great skill in this area, she has helped me out of many a confusing situations.

Perhaps that is the primary difference between a husband and wife. The husband

is afflicted with the confusion

syndrome and the wife knows how to unconfuse her husband. She has a remedy, according to her, that will cure him immediately.

This is the great joy of my life to be able to ignore my confusion and trust my wife's judgment in this area. I can balance the checkbook, but I have a hard time balancing these confusion elements in my life. Thanks to my wife, I do not have to worry about it.

At my present junction in life, I do not know if I am really confused or not. It is rather a confusing aspect to think about right now. Am I confused or am I not confused. If I am confused, what are the symptoms? If I am not confused, how will I know?

Perhaps the most comforting aspect of life, at least for someone my age, is knowing you are confused, accept it and get on with life. Nothing is more satisfying in life than knowing what you are and being able to accept yourself as you are and then enjoy the rest of your life.

With so much to do in the world today, it is always comforting to know that there is something you do not have to do. I like what the apostle Paul said. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

In the midst of all your supposed confusion, sit back, take a deep breath and give thanks to God for his grace in accepting you as you are.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship Ocala, FL where he lives with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Call him at 1-866-552-2543 or e-mail jamessnyder2@att.net. His web site is www.jamessnyderministries.com. ★

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