**Flexibility**

## And, behold, there was also another great eagle with large wings and many claws: and, this vine bent its roots toward him, and shot forth its tendrils toward him, that he might water the soil where it was planted. (Ezekiel 17:7)

**The albatross has the largest wingspread, anywhere from 10 to 12 feet, of all creatures flying today. This bird has adapted so well to life in the winds of the Atlantic Ocean that once the young albatross leaves the island of its birth it may not touch any land again for two years. Because of its tapering wing design, it excels at gliding and flying. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 119)***

**The tarsier, a sort of ape in Southeast Asia, can turn its head 180 degrees to look exactly backwards. It can’t move its eyes in their sockets, though; at least not much. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The armadillo is a master of family planning: if a pregnant female encounters severe environmental stress, she can halt the development of her embryo for a year or more, then allow it to resume when conditions improve. This extraordinary ability, discovered recently, is unknown in any other mammal. (*Boyce Rensberger, in Washington Post)***

**Consider the example of the young man who wanted to attend West Point Military Academy to become a soldier. He was defeated when he failed the chemistry exam and was turned down for admission. He turned his efforts toward art and achieved fame as the American artist James McNeill Whistler. He later chuckled, “If silicon had been a gas, I might have been a major general.” (Charles Dickson, in New Realities magazine)**

**Thomas Hardy, the English author of the novels Far from the Madding Crowd*,* The Return of the Native*,* The Mayor of Casterbridge*,* andTess of the D’Urbervilles, was stung by the storm of protests from critics and clergy when they read his novel Jude the Obscure. He turned from fiction and wrote only verse -- eleven volumes of it! -- in the remaining thirty-two years of his life. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 201)***

**It was Sunday morning and the church was filled. The muffled shouts of a group of boys playing baseball in the nearby school yard could be heard, as the mass began. Suddenly a baseball came crashing through the window, landing about four feet from the altar. A freckle-faced altar boy got up, genuflected, and walked over to the ball. He picked it up, hurled it back out the window. Then he solemnly tiptoed back to the altar and continued serving mass, just as if nothing had happened. (Greg Beck, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Major league ballplayers are breaking more bats than ever. Most of the breaks occur with bats made of maple, a weaker and less flexible wood than ash, which until the late 1990s was the industry standard. Maple soared in popularity after Barry Bonds hit 49 homers in 2000 and 73 homers in 2001 with a maple bat. (USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 10, 2005)**

**The bird that can take quick flight backwards faster than any other is the crocodile bird. That's the one that perches in the open mouth of a crocodile to pick the crocodile's teeth.  *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The bridges across the Mississippi River are at their shortest in winter. In midsummer, they’re all several inches longer. *L. M. Boyd, in Boyd’s Book of Odd Facts, p. 3)***

**My usual bus ride to work was enlivened one morning when a woman I had never seen before boarded and spoke with the driver. He nodded and she took the seat behind us. We then made three unscheduled stops; at each, the new passenger dashed to the door and yelled to a startled woman on the sidewalk: “Quick! Get on the bus! My car wouldn't start.” Her car pool collected, we all settled back and made it to work on time. (Barbara Barrier, in Reader's Digest)**

**In 1915, Coffee City, Alabama, was nearly starving due to the destruction of the cotton crop by the boll weevil. The renowned scientist George Washington Carver advised the people to grow peanuts instead of cotton. From the peanut, he proceeded to isolate valuable chemicals for soaps, inks, plastics, and cosmetics with the result that the community became prosperous. Had the community held on to the old ways, it might have continued to live in the night of defeat without ever experiencing the sunrise of prosperity. (Dr. Charles Dickson, in New Realities magazine)**

**A cat fell from the twentieth floor of a building in Montreal, in 1973, and suffered only a pelvic fracture. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 335)  
 Studies show that if a cat falls off the seventh floor of a building it has about a 30 percent less chance of surviving than a cat that falls off the twentieth floor. It takes about eight floors for the cat to realize what is happening, relax, and correct itself. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 60)***

**The great cathedral of St. Sophia at Constantinople (Istanbul) has sustained for 1,600 years what was until very recent times the largest self-supporting dome ever constructed. Moreover, it has done so in an active seismic region. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 292)  
Of cats that fall from windows two to six stories high, 10 percent die. From windows seven to 32 stories high, only 5 percent die. The farther the fall, the more time the cats have to right themselves, reach terminal velocity and land on four feet. Researchers checked veterinarian records to get these statistics. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Henry Perky, a lawyer with stomach problems, built a contraption that would press boiled wheat into filaments, which could then be shaped and baked into easily digestible biscuits. Hoping to sell his patented “cereal machine” to others who also suffered from dyspepsia, he rode around in a horse-drawn carriage, passing out free samples of the dried wheat snack his invention could make. However, when it quickly became clear that it was the pillow-shaped biscuits – and not the appliance – that people wanted to buy, Perky dropped plans to market the machine, and opened a bakery called the Shredded Wheat Company. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 43)**

**For 11 years, John Ratzenberger played America's favorite letter carrier, Cliff Clavin, on the TV show Cheers. But few people know that Ratzenberger had originally auditioned for the part of Norm, only to be rejected in favor of barfly extraordinaire George Wendt. “To save my dignity, I asked the producers if they had a bar know-it-all,” Ratzenberger says. He then quickly improvised a character he had performed in a stage act, a guy who spouts useless facts whether or not anyone else is interested. Ratzenberger got a guest spot as Cliff and wound up as a regular. The rest is television history. (Bill Carter, in New York Times)The tiny discs of chlorophyll in plant cells move about within those cells to adjust for different light and heat conditions. When the sunshine is too strong, they can turn edge on. On a gray day, they may roll to turn broadside to make the most of the available light. (Isaac Asimov)  
Now, as a minister, I'd like to think of myself as holding to a higher awareness, but it's all too easy to slip. I remember one winter when the church was struggling just to pay the rent. We had our Christmas service all planned, when a huge snowstorm hit Portland unexpectedly. We had to cancel all the services at the last minute--which meant that a Christmas offering the church badly needed was also canceled. I struggled with fear and feelings of victimization. Unable to confront Mother Nature face-to-face, I blamed the weatherman on TV. If he were any kind of responsible meteorologist, I fumed, he would have seen this thing coming sooner and not put our lease at risk. Eventually I canceled my pity party and moved away from blame. As I remembered that my true power lay in how I chose to respond to this situation, an idea popped into my mind. Why not have Christmas a week later? The staff organized a phone tree to call all the congregation, and the following week our services drew what was for us at that time a huge crowd. Not only did all our parishioners turn out, they brought their friends from other churches whose holiday services had also been canceled. We had a great celebration of Christ's birth, and the church received plenty of funds with which to begin the new year. And I offered a silent prayer of blessing for the weatherman. (Mary Manin Morrissey)**

**Heat lengthens the Concorde airliner by 8 inches during a flight. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Dodgers (Originally Brooklyn Dodgers): This name came from the term “Trolley Dodgers”, indicating agility on the street rather than the infield. Term referred to the people who quickly avoided the many trolley lines that crisscrossed the borough of Brooklyn. (Bingo Directories, Inc.)**

**A dragonfly in fast flight can reverse itself within its own body length to zip off in the opposite direction. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The eagle also can soar effortlessly for hours on rising thermals, without ever flapping its wings. Behind this ability to soar is a body that seems almost lighter than air. All its bones are hollow, and its entire skeleton weighs only half as much as the eagle’s 7000 or so feathers. (Mark Walters, in Reader’s Digest)**

**The height of the 984-foot-tall (usually) Eiffel Tower varies, depending on the temperature, by as much as 6 inches. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 292)   
  
During a severe windstorm or rainstorm the Empire State Building may sway several feet to either side. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 182)**

**In the middle of the speech, the fire in the stove went out. When Charles Fillmore noticed this, he did not stop his speech--he went right on--but he came down from the platform and picking up a stick of wood took out a knife and began to whittle kindling. With this kindling he re-lighted the fire. As he worked, he kept on speaking calmly, occasionally emphasizing his remarks by gesturing with the stick of wood from which he was whittling. When he had the fire going once more to suit him, he remounted the platform, speaking all the while. (James Dillet Freeman, ,in The Story of Unity, p. 7)Once when a student read a paper, Mr. Fillmore questioned a certain statement that was read. The student replied, “But Mr. Fillmore, this is a direct quote out of your book!” With that, Mr. Fillmore turned to May Rowland, the director of Silent Unity, and said, “Make a note to take that out of the next printing of that book. I’ve changed my mind about that!” His marvelous ability to flow with the revealment of Truth was one of his greater strengths. (Dorothy Pierson, in Daily Word magazine)  
A fish known as the Black Swallower can devour other fish two to three times bigger than itself. That's because its mouth, throat, and stomach can stretch like balloons -- and its teeth can lie down flat in its mouth. (Clark/Long, in Weird Facts, p. 10)  
  
Henry Ford had been successful making cars available in only one color (‘Any color you want as long as it's black’). He believed that he had a formula that worked, and he didn't want to change it. This prevented him from seeing the rise of a post World War I consumer class that wanted a variety of styles and colors from which to choose. As a result, Ford lost market share to General Motors. (Roger von Oech)**

**It was a hot September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the State House, 39 delegates were signing their names to a document that is now the oldest and most successful written national constitution in force. On that day, 81-year-old Benjamin Franklin -- inventor, writer, politician, savant -- spoke his feelings about the revolutionary new document. “Mr. President, I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them. Thus I consent, sir, to this Constitution.” (Paul Kroll, in Plain Truth magazine)**

**A frog that can go without fresh water for two years survives in central Australia. When it rains, the frog drinks until it is bloated, then crawls into a hole where it exudes a sealant. It sort of shrink-wraps itself. No more rain for two years is not unusual in those parts. The frog can handle it. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
A ball of glass will bounce higher than a ball made of rubber. A ball of solid steel will bounce higher than one made entirely of glass. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 130)  
Gold is so malleable that a single ounce can be beaten out into a thin film (less than 1/282,000th of an inch) that would cover a hundred square feet, and so ductile that a single ounce can be drawn into a fine wire fifty miles long. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 17)  
When the Statue of Liberty was refurbished for her 100th birthday in 1986, artisans gilded her symbolic flame with almost 6000 squares of dazzling gold leaf. Workers in Bernard Dauvet's gold-beating shop in Excenevex, France, laminated matchbox-size gold ingots into 120-foot-long ribbons, each two inches wide and a thousandth of an inch thick. This was cut into squares and pounded until the gold was as thin as gossamer. “Two hundred fifty thousand leaves make an inch-high stack,” Dauvet explains. (Joseph A. Harriss, in Reader's Digest)**

**A gun invented in Germany during World War II actually could shoot around a corner. (Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Weird Inventions and Discoveries, p. 28)**

**You must be very careful not to just go down a road because you had planned to. *(Katharine Hepburn)*  
  
Sherlock Holmes stories were created because the man who wrote them had failed as a doctor. Sherlock Holmes books were written by Arthur Conan Doyle, who started his career as a physician. But so few patients came to see Doyle, he began writing stories in his office to pass the time. When the stories became popular, Doyle gave up medicine. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 164)  
What special talent does Bob Hope have that enables him to have success in the toughest business for an unheard-of fifty years? He started out in vaudeville, moved on to Broadway, then movies, radio, and finally to television, mastering each medium along the way. He was able to recognize the changes taking place around him. He saw the industry changing and tailored his style of performing accordingly. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business, p. 47)**

**Harry Houdini, probably the best escape artist the world has known, attributed his success to his well-trained muscles. By holding his breath for long periods, and by expanding and contracting his various muscles, there was no situation from which Houdini could not escape -- including locks, handcuffs, chains, straitjackets, and sealed trunks under water.  
*(Barbara Seuling, in You Can’t Sneeze with Your Eyes Open, p. 30)***

**Along the Amazon River, a lot of huts are built on stilts with flood-time floors. Adjustable, as the river rises. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Johnson & Johnson, the maker of products such as Band-Aids and baby shampoo, once decided to start selling medical technologies. To move into these new areas, J & J had to change from a corporate bureaucracy to a decentralized management structure. This new structure would ensure the flexibility needed in the health care field. The change caused many J & J executives to leave because they couldn't adjust to the loss of autonomy. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business,, p. 48)**

**The key to managing your twenty-something employees is flexibility. As a generation that's often felt starved for attention, they'll respond well to your spending extra time with them. Get them involved in the business. Listen to their ideas and let them know they have an impact. You'll be more than rewarded for your flexibility with more productive and happier employees -- in the workplace and out. (Claire Raines)**

**Each zoo has more than 25 different species of eucalypts—“gum trees"-- because the koala must switch species at certain times of the year or risk poisoning by prussic acid which, for unknown reasons, his free lunch counter suddenly generates. Only he knows when to make the change. (Fred Dickenson, in Curious Creatures, p. 142)**

**E. E. Perkins in 1927 invented a drink mix he called “Kool-ade.” The Food and Drug Administration said no can do, because “ade” means “made from.” Perkins re-spelled it “Kool-Aid.” Rest is history. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In 1850, Levi Strauss, a 20-year-old Bavarian immigrant, arrived by sailing ship in San Francisco to seek his fortune in the gold fields. He brought with him a stock of dry goods, including some heavy brown canvas he planned to sell to miners for tents and wagon covers. Tents, he soon found, were not in demand, but few prospectors had work clothes sturdy enough to stand up to the rough life of the diggings. The enterprising young man had a tailor make pants out of his rugged canvas. Word spread that “those pants of Levi's (hence Levi's) were the strongest around, and they sold quickly.” (Jean Libman Block, in Reader's Digest)  
The Norderney Lighthouse, Germany, 197 feet high -- to enable it to withstand the violent winds was built so that it sways as much as 2 feet off center. (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Odd Places, p. 52)  
The “Negrophobia” of Illinois led it to vote overwhelmingly in 1848, just ten years before the Lincoln-Douglas debates, to amend the state constitution so as to deny freed blacks all right of entry to the state. The average vote of the state was 79 percent for exclusion, though southern and some central counties were probably more than 90 percent for it. Abraham Lincoln knew the racial geography of his own state well, and calibrated what he had to say about slavery according to his audience. (Garry Wills, in Atlantic Monthly)**

**Odd thing, mercury. It can be pressed through heavy steel plate. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The mosquito shows remarkable agility in flight. She can hover, loop-the-loop, speed up suddenly or slow down, dart between slapping hands, even fly upside down, sideways or backward. According to English insect specialist, J. D. Gillett, some mosquitoes can fly through rain, dodging drops, and arrive dry at their destination. (Richard Conniff, in Reader's Digest)**

**On December 7, 1906, one Christopher Timms slipped on Mount Elie de Beaumont, a 10,200-foot peak in New Zealand. He skidded, bounced, plummeted 7,500 feet down the ice face into a crevasse. Climbing companion was killed, but he lived -- with bruises, concussion, injuries to one hand. Longest fall ever survived by a mountain climber, according to record books. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A mouse can get through a hole you couldn’t shove a dime through. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A confined octopus can escape through any aperture no wider than the distance between its eyes. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are more pliable. *(Laurence J. Peter, Canadian-born author and educator)***

**Plants tend to grow a lot faster than animals because they mainly rely on stretching cells that already exist instead of the much slower process of creating new ones. Seaweed grows extremely fast, and the rubbery giant kelps of Pacific waters can ultimately reach 900 feet in length. Bamboo doesn't get as large as kelp, but it grows faster: as much as forty-seven inches in only twenty-four hours. (Bartleby Nash)**

**The only insect that can turn its head is a praying mantis. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 55)***

**A full-grown adult rat has a body that is so flexible he can squeeze through a hole less than one inch around. He can also gnaw through cinder blocks, fall five stories onto concrete and scurry away unhurt and swim for three days without resting. (Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 90)**

**On September 12, 1912, plans were unveiled for a 3,000-mile gravel road that would stretch from New York to California. When private funding fell through, another project was begun and completed using $1.7 million in federal funds. The paved road was christened the Lincoln Highway, which was the predecessor to Route 66. (MOMENTS IN TIME – The History Channel)**

**Sears, Roebuck has always successfully adapted to a changing market need. Until the 1920s, Sears provided quality goods by mail order to the remote farmer in America. When the automobile arrived, Sears again adapted to a changing market. They shifted their emphasis from mail order to retail stores in cities. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business , p. 212)**

**The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measure anew every time he sees me, whilst all the rest go on with their old measurements, and expect them to fit me. (George Bernard Shaw)**

**Those shrimp who live in the sea have the ability to change color for camouflage and can be green, brown, gray, yellow and even cherry red by day. (Ann Adams, in National Enquirer)**

**A standard slinky measures 87 feet long when stretched. (Catholic Digest)  
A slug can stretch out 11 times its normal length and, in that condition, can obviously worm its way through remarkable small openings. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A new species of snake, with the ability to change color at will, has been discovered in a mountainous rain forest in Borneo. The World Wildlife Fund said the Kapuas Mud Snake was found in the wetlands along the Kapuas River in West Kalimantan more than a year ago. It’s likely the poisonous snake uses the ability to change color as a disguise to catch prey. (Steve Newman, Universal Press Syndicate, 2006)  
  
If you're rigid, you panic and thus miss out on the greater dream awaiting you. I heard somewhere that the Apollo 11 spacecraft was off course 90 percent of the time during its long voyage. But the destination was preprogrammed, and the spacecraft kept correcting and adjusting its bearings until finally it reached the moon. (Mary Manin Morrissey)**

**Stainless Steel can be rolled into strips thinner than human hair. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 93)***

**Pro tennis players say amateurs are less likely to get tennis elbow if they use loosely stringed rackets. (L. M. Boyd)  
Report is that Goodyear is working on a computer-controlled tire that will deflate or inflate itself a bit according to road conditions. (L. M. Boyd)  
There is a story about a sturdy pine tree and a willow that grew side by side on a mountain. Every day, for years, the pine tree would scream and holler at the willow. “Do you have to bend and sway with every little breeze that comes along? Can't you stand erect and unwavering like I do?” The willow never answered the pine. It continued to grow and yield to the forces of nature. One winter evening an especially severe snow storm hit the mountain. The wind blew at gale force and the snow fell continuously. As each snow flake landed on the sturdy pine they began to build up thick layers of heavy snow. Its unyielding branches began to snap and fall to the ground. But the willow allowed each snowflake to fall softly off its leaves and its resilient branches continued to bend and sway with the driving wind. In the morning the pine tree was dashed and brutally beaten to the ground, while the willow was none the worse for wear, ever magnificent in its outstretched limbs, proudly displaying its unique ability to overcome the forces of nature. (Judie Wilkinson, in Reflections)**

**Wineries that stuck it out through 13 years of Prohibition were able to survive by switching to raisins and jelly. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Did you ever find out why woodpeckers don’t get headaches? Their brains are in slings, sort of. Muscular shock absorbers in their skulls. (L. M. Boyd)  
  
The Wrigley Company initially sold soap, then branched out into baking powder. In 1892, Wrigley ordered some chewing gum from the Zeno Manufacturing Company to offer jobbers as an inducement to buy his baking powder. Wrigley's salesmen dispensed two packs of gum with each 10-cent package of baking powder, and the jobbers soon reported that they found it much easier to sell the gum than peddle the powder. It didn't take Wrigley long to see the possibilities. (Richard B. Manchest**er)

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