**Influence / Impact**

**I realized the effect advertising had on children when I asked my four-year-old niece what she had named her true-to-life baby doll. Without hesitating, she replied, “Anatomically Correct.” *(Elizabeth A. Centi, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Over 25 years, AIDS has killed 25 million people worldwide. Another 65 million people are now infected, and one-third of new infections are transmitted heterosexually. *(Newsday, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 16, 2006)***

**About 98 percent of Hiroshima’s construction was flattened by the atomic bomb. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Australia is No. 1 on that list of foreign destinations Americans say they’d most like to visit. Up from No. 49 in 1983. Most observers credit into Mideast terrorism, but one jaunty young man on television. You’ve seen the fellow, eh mate? *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Could be you, too, have a few Barbie dolls around your home. Report is 19 out of 20 little girls own Barbie dolls. And the average among them owns seven. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**It’s easy to make a buck. It’s a lot tougher to make a difference. *(Tom Brokaw)***

**Child abuse doesn’t just scar the psyche, says Science. It can actually alter the functioning of a child’s DNA, making him or her more vulnerable to stress and depression into adulthood. Scientists at McGill University in Montreal conducted autopsy studies of the brains of men who’d been abused as children, comparing them with the brains of those who had not been abused, and found a telling difference in the genes in the portion of the brain that responds to stress. In most people, these genes respond to stress by ordering the production of special proteins that shield the brain against the effects of the stress hormone cortisol. But in children who have been abused, the researchers found, the flood of stress hormones early in life prevents these genes from “turning on” properly, making life much more stressful and painful. It’s as if their nerves are exposed, with no defense against negative experiences. As a result, abused children have much higher incidence of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicide. *(The Week magazine, March 13, 2009)***

**Why some teams seem cursed: Sports teams with a history of choking under pressure are more likely to choke again, says a new study. The study, by the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, found that a team’s previous failures – even if they happened years earlier – make current players more self-conscious and more likely to perform badly under pressure, reports Miller-McCune. Researchers analyzed 30 years’ worth of championship soccer penalty-kick shoot-outs, the high-pressure encounters used to decide tied games. They found that kickers on teams that had lost their last shootout were 20 percent less likely to score than those on teams that had won theirs – even those earlier games took place long before the current players made the roster. The caliber of the players themselves – and their teams’ recent success – didn’t seem to change their odds of succeeding in the clutch. Playing for a team with a history of losing big games, the study authors theorize, infects athletes with crippling “performance pressure.” Playing for a winning team, on the other hand, provides “lower levels of emotional distress, making players slow down their preparation and focus more on the shot.” (The Week magazine, October 21, 2011)**

**We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us. (Winston Churchill)**

**Driving through Texas, a New Yorker collided with a truck carrying a horse. A few months later he tried to collect damages for his injuries. “How can you now claim to have all these injuries?” asked the insurance company's lawyer. “According to the police report, at the time you said you were not hurt.” “Look,” replied the New Yorker. “I was lying in the road in a lot of pain, and I heard someone say the horse had a broken leg. The next thing I know this Texas Ranger pulls out his gun and shoots the horse. Then he turns to me and asks, ‘Are you okay?’” (Norman R. Augustine)**

**Scientists say: The color combination with the most visual impact is black on yellow. (Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 313)**

**The single longest-running commercial in television history is the ad for Life cereal featuring Mikey (“Let Mikey try it. He hates everything.”), which aired nationally for 12 years. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 37)**

**The influence of the U.S. Constitution can be seen in nearly all of the 162 national constitutions in existence today. Poland and France drafted their original constitutions in 1791, just four years after the United States did. They were the second and third of many modern constitutions to follow. *(Joseph W. Tkach, in Plain Truth magazine)***

**Since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, more than 25 million American women have had abortions. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 30, 2005)***

**Any time you think you have influence, try ordering around someone else’s dog. *(The Cockle Bur)***

**Amusement-park attendance goes up after a fatal accident. It seems many people want to ride upon the same ride that killed someone. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 197)***

**The sound of fingernails on a blackboard is similar in frequency to the danger cries of some jungle primates. It is this similarity – hardwired into our biological makeup long ago – that scientists believe causes nearly every human to have such a strong “negative” reaction to it. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 150)**

**Ralph: “This is the last straw! Funworld amusement park took out my favorite attraction, the Haunted Shack! From now on, I’m boycotting Funworld!” Wife: “Ralph, you haven’t been to Funworld in 28 years!” Ralph: “Good! I hope they’re starting to feel the pinch!” *(Kevin Fagan, in Drabble comic strip)***

**Roger McGuinn, leader of the Byrds, started the 1960s granny glasses craze when he found a pair at a secondhand clothing store and bought them so he’d have something to shield his eyes from the glare of the lights during a performance. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 160)**

**A lot of guilt comes from the feeling that we have more influence than we really do. *(Dan Gottlieb)***

**Just handling a gun can make a man more aggressive, says a new study. Researchers at Illinois’ Knox College tested the saliva of two groups of 15 students after one group was asked to assemble a board game, and another to put together a large handgun. Testosterone levels soared in those who handled the gun, but didn’t change in the board-game group. The two groups were then asked to create a drink containing hot sauce for a student volunteer. Those who’d handled the gun laced the drink with about three times as much mouth-burning sauce as the other group. That, researcher Tim Kasser tells The New York Times, indicates a strong level of aggression. Those men were so primed for conflict, in fact, that many were disappointed when they found out their incendiary concoctions wouldn’t actually be given to the next volunteer. *(The Week magazine, May 26, 2006)***

**Having watched the various telecasts and innumerable New Year’s Day football games one year, the Miami News commented: “We saw so many instant replays yesterday, we hope it hasn’t affected us. We saw so many instant replays yesterday, we hope it hasn’t affected us.” (Roger Devlin, in Tulsa Tribune)**

**“Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun.” This jingle promoting McDonald’s Big Mac sandwich wsas written and performed by Mark Vieha in 1975. The ad campaign only lasted a year and a half, but the slogan was memorable. During a scene in the 2004 Morgan Spurlock documentary Super Size Me, people on the street were unable to correctly recite the Pledge of Allegiance, but they all knew the words to the Big Mac jingle. *(Lynne Patrice, in Tidbits)***

**A fisherman accidentally left his day’s catch under the seat of a bus. The next evening’s newspaper carried an ad: “If the person who left a bucket of fish on the No. 47 bus would care to come to the garage, he can have the bus.” (Sri Lanka Sunday Island)**

**A man named Ulysses S. Grant won a primary race in Delaware and believed his name helped him win. It didn’t work out so well for his opponent – Fred bin Laden. (Jay Leno)**

**Ziggy: “I must be a magician ‘cause when I do my card tricks, all my friends disappear!” *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**$12 billion: The amount malaria costs Africa each year, according to the World Health Organization. A WHO official said the disease was curbing development on the continent, because it affected productive workers. *(MSNBC News, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, April 26, 2005)***

**A meteor broke up in the sky above the Mexican village of Pueblito de Allende and scattered thousands of stones across an area about 30 miles wide. The largest piece weighed 4,400 pounds. The Allende meteorite is often described "the best-studied meteorite in history." *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**Newtown’s very limited impact: Despite all the outrage that followed December’s Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, said Massimo Calabresi, that tragedy may ultimately “make almost no difference in federal gun-control laws.” Four pieces of legislation have emerged from weeks of negotiation, and only one is highly likely to become law. It makes straw purchasing and trafficking of guns a felony, with tough penalties. Republicans support it mainly because it would outlaw the kind of proxy gun-buying involved in the Justice Department’s “Fast and Furious” scheme. Meanwhile, a ban on assault weapons “is already near death, and so is the ban on large-capacity magazines.” Most Republicans won’t vote for these bans, and neither will Democrats from rural states. A proposed law to require background checks for all gun purchases, which would close the gun-show loophole, still has a chance – but only if it includes a Republican demand that the government be forbidden to keep records of gun purchases. So “here’s the hard truth”: Like Columbine, Aurora, and all the gun massacres before it, Newtown is fading into history, with little impact on our nation’s gun culture. (The Week magazine, March 22, 2013)**

**Nobody notices what I do, until I don’t do it. (*Bits & Pieces)***

**The man passed out in a dead faint as he came out of his front door onto the porch. Someone called 911. When the paramedics arrived, they helped him regain consciousness and asked if he knew what caused him to faint. “It was enough to make anybody faint,” he said. “My son asked me for the keys to the garage, and instead of driving the car out, he came out with the lawn mower.” (Tidbits)**

**Go down to the fish market and look into the crab barrel. They never have to put a lid on it because if one crab starts to crawl out, the others will grab on to him and pull him back down. That’s what negative peer pressure does. *(Ben Carson)***

**How to disarm men: If you want to undermine a tough, male negotiator, show him a picture of an attractive woman. Men with high levels of testosterone drive the hardest bargains, a study found, but are the first to crumble if they are given lingerie to handle, or shown photos of women in provocative photos. (The Week magazine, December 29, 2006)**

**When a plague recedes like a spent tsunami, it reveals a world forever altered. Outbreaks of infectious disease – the bubonic plague, smallpox, cholera, the Spanish flu, AIDS – have been pivot points in human history. Plagues fueled the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. They eroded feudalism and gave rise to capitalism and the middle class. They devastated indigenous people in the Americas and paved the way for European colonization. We have just begun to see the first glimpses of how Covid-19 will reshape our society, but it’s already clear that work will never be quite the same. (William Falk, in The Week magazine, October 29, 2021)**

**Anybody who doesn’t cut his speed in the sight of a police car is probably parked. *(Pittsburgh Green Sheet)***

**Political polls are banned in France starting a week before national elections. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When the Popeye cartoons were popular, spinach became one of kids’ favorite foods. *(Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 233)***

**I had asked my parents for a portrait of themselves, and after several years they finally had their picture taken by a professional photographer. When they gave me my copy, I was pleased to see that my usually serious-looking father was smiling. “How did he get Dad to smile?” I asked my mother. “He,” Mom replied, “was a she.” (Karen Atwood, in Reader’s Digest)**

**A saleswoman arrived at the reception desk of a company, presented her card, and asked to see John Cagel, head of the purchasing department. She watched as the receptionist wound her way through aisles to an office with a glass partition. She saw the receptionist hand the card to a man, and saw the man shake his head and throw the card in a wastebasket. The receptionist came back to the saleswoman and said that Mr. Cagel was busy. “That’s too bad,” said the saleswoman, “May I please have my card back?” Annoyed, the receptionist went back to Mr. Cagel. As the saleswoman watched, she saw Mr. Cagel rummaging through the wastebasket. Then he reached in his pocket and handed something to the receptionist. When the receptionist returned she handed the saleswoman a dime, explaining that Mr. Cagel had misplaced the card but didn’t want her to be out-of-pocket for its cost. The saleswoman handed the receptionist four more cards and said, “Please give these to Mr. Cagel. The cards cost me only two cents each.” The receptionist wended her way back to Mr. Cagel’s office, handed him the cards and he immediately burst out laughing. Then he threw up his arms in resignation and beckoned the saleswoman into his office. *(Bits & Pieces*)**

**The grand promise of the American Revolution was that people here (except for slaves and women, who at the time were legally defined as moderately subhuman) should have the right, guaranteed by law, to live, to be free and to struggle for happiness. Once that incredible promise was made, people everywhere began howling for their rights. The French, Russian and Chinese revolutions followed. (John Gardner, in Reader’s Digest)**

**If it’s clear a teacher thinks a student is intelligent, that student tends to make better grades. All educators know this. It's called the “Pygmalion effect” in specialized studies of such matters. Yes, the reverse is true, too. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Refrigerators with freezers are what actually killed all of those little neighborhood ice cream parlors, say business analysts. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Our four children had been very involved in refurbishing our old home. But little did we know how much they were learning until our five-year-old son, Adam, was visiting the pediatrician. As the doctor was gently tapping on my son’s chest with his fingers during the physical exam, Adam looked up and said, “Did you find any studs?” (Judith Woods, in Reader’s Digest)**

**“Roots,” a 12-hour version of Alex Haley’s novelized family history, aired on television January 23-30, 1977. The story of African-born slave Kunta Kinte (John Amos) and his descendents set viewership records – 85 percent of U.S. families with TVs tuned in – and sparked interest in genealogy and African-American history. It also launched the consecutive-night miniseries. (Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)**

**The sales trainee was trying to explain his failure to close a single deal in his first week. “You know,” he said to his manager, “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” “Make him drink?” the manager sputtered. “Make him drink? Your job is to make him thirsty.” (Bits & Pieces)**

**One invention inspired more than 37,000 other inventions -- the sewing machine. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Zagat Surveys reported that the Beatles were chosen as the most influential artists of all time. Upon hearing the Zagat ranking, all Rolling Stones, Elvis, and Led Zeppelin fans realized they had been worshiping the wrong artist and repented. *(Jon Stewart)***

**Apparently television was having more of an effect on our five-year-old daughter Kate than we had thought. One afternoon when my wife asked her what time she would like her snack, Kate replied, “Five o’clock Eastern time, four o’clock Central. (Gregory A. Hinkle, in Reader’s Digest)**

**There are no conditions of life to which a man cannot get accustomed, especially if he sees them accepted by everyone around him. (Leo Tolstoy)**

What is the point of being alive if you don't try to do something remarkable? (John Green, author)

**There are actually two incarnations of Wild Kingdom. The first ran from 1963-1988, with zoologist Marlin Perkins serving as the narrator for most of the run. The original series won more than 40 awards, including four Emmys. Wild Kingdom also received an endorsement from the National PTA, recommending the show as suitable for family viewing. Thanks to the series, knowledge of issues such as conservation, environmental awareness, and ecology increased dramatically in the United States. (D. L. Nashton, in Tidbits)**

**When Robin Williams turned up to audition for the role of an extraterrestrial, Mork, on the ABC sitcom Happy Days in the late 1970s, the show’s producers asked him to sit down the way an alien might. Without a moment’s hesitation, Williams – wearing rainbow suspenders – stood on his head on the office chair, wiggled his legs around, and pretended to drink a glass of water using his finger as an imaginary straw. Happy Days creator Garry Marshall hired him on the spot. He was, Marshall recalled, “the only alien to audition.” *(The Week magazine, August 22, 2014)***

**A good woman inspires a man; a brilliant woman interests him; a beautiful woman fascinates him, and a sympathetic woman gets him. *(Helen Rowland)***

**Mom says to Dad while watching PJ laying around on the floor with the dogs and cats: “I think PJ is adopting the wrong role models.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**In the early 1920s, taxicab company owner John Hertz (who would later go on to start a rental car business) funded a University of Chicago study to determine which color in the spectrum was most visible from a far distance. When the answer came back “yellow,” he had all of the cars in his fleet painted exactly that, beginning a tradition that would catch on nationwide, and carry over to school buses and traffic signs. *(David Hoffman, in Who Knew?, p. 126)***

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