**Using What's Available**

**Having gifts that differ**

**according to the grace given to us,**

**Let us use them.**

***(Romans 12:6)***

**Spend the afternoon; you can’t take it with you. *(Annie Dillard)***

**Faced with a surplus of aluminum and a staff of skilled metalworkers after World War II, Henry Neils of Flour City Ornamental Iron Company in Minneapolis began building aluminum boats, a revolutionary idea in an age when boats were made of wood. The first Alumacraft boat rolled off the assembly line in 1946. The company today is located in St. Peter, Minnesota, and Arkadelphia, Arkansas. *(American Profile magazine)***

**One of the first western items the Japanese copied was a baseball. The game was introduced there in 1873 with an imported ball. Eventually, that ball wore out. They took apart the remains and made something similar - with a boot sole for the core and unraveled socks for the yarn.  *(L. M. Boyd)*  
It is better to take what does not belong to you than to let it lie around neglected. *(Mark Twain)***

**Caesar Salad has nothing to do with Julius Caesar. It was invented in 1924 by Caesar Cardini, an Italian-American chef working in Tijuana, Mexico. During the Fourth of July weekend that year, food supplies were short, so Cardini made do with what he had – Romaine lettuce, Parmesan cheese, anchovies, eggs, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, croutons and spices. To cover for the lack of ingredients, he instructed his waitstaff to construct the salad tableside with a dramatic flair. *(Tidbits)***

**My friend Mark and I work in a lawn-mower-parts warehouse. Somehow Mark got the idea that his wife did not want a card on Valentine’s Day, but when he spoke to her on the phone he discovered she was expecting one. Not having time to buy a card on his way home, Mark was in a quandary. Then he looked at the lawn-mower trade magazines scattered around the office -- and got an idea. Using scissors and glue, he created a card with pictures of mowers, next to which he wrote: “I lawn for you mower and mower each day.” Mark’s wife loved it. The card immediately graced their refrigerator door. *(Gene Hyde, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Trappist monks at the New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, Iowa, are well known for their high-quality handcrafted wooden caskets, made from timber harvested from their own forest. *(American Profile magazine)***

**In 1926, when a Los Angeles restaurant owner with the all-American name of Bob Cobb was looking for a way to use up leftovers, he threw together some avocado, celery, tomato, chives, watercress, hard-boiled eggs, chicken, bacon, and Roquefort cheese, and named it after himself: a Cobb salad. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 164)***

**Here’s to a lady named Merlitta Bentz who in 1909 made a filter out of her son’s notebook paper and invented the world’s first drip coffee maker. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Adolph Coors came to America from Germany in 1868 at age 21. Five years later, he opened his brewery along the banks of Clear Creek in Golden, Colorado. Using Rocky Mountain spring water, Coors built an empire that became America’s third largest brewer. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**The roads on the island of Guam are made of coral. This is because the ground coral sand of the beaches is used to mix concrete instead of importing regular sand from thousands of miles away. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 162)***

**Lucky people take second looks at things others barely see the first time. A young disc jockey in Oakland, California, found his on-air humor didn’t impress the station’s general manager. Musing on what to do, he pulled a discarded magazine out of a studio wastebasket. It contained biographies and record-sales statistics on pop singers and musicians. That night, before playing a record, the D.J. teased listeners with some obscure fact from the magazine about a singer. After a record or two, he identified the singer and played one of that artist’s songs. Listeners loved it, and Casey Kasem was launched toward his nationally syndicated “American Top 40” radio career. *(Ralph Kinney Bennett, in Reader’s Digest)***

**It all began when Chester Greenwood’s ears got cold. Allergic to the woolen scarves that others tied around their heads, the industrious teenager wanted a better way to warm his ears in Maine’s chilly winter weather. So, using wire, beaver fur, cloth and a pair of pliers, he fashioned the first set of earmuffs in 1873. Only 15 at the time, he hardly could have imagined that, a century later, his hometown would dedicate a day in his honor, complete with a parade, speeches from local dignitaries, and the raising of a Chester Greenwood Flag at the Franklin Country Courthouse. However, that’s exactly what the town of Farmington, Maine, has done each year since 1977 when the state Legislature designated Chester Greenwood Day, celebrated on the first Saturday in December. (Richard Matthews, in American Profile magazine)**

**Ernest Gallo grew up on a vineyard owned by his father, an immigrant from the wine-rich region of Piedmont, Italy. After their parents died, Ernest and his younger brother Julio began E. & J. Gallo Winery in 1933 with $5,900 and a wine recipe from a public library. With Ernest directing the company’s innovative marketing campaigns, the duo turned the distinctly American family business into one of the world’s largest wine-making empires. *(Time magazine)***

**I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use. *(Galileo Galilei)***

**Byron Nelson, who owned two of golf’s oldest and prestigious records, grew up on a cotton farm in Waxahachie, Texas. He was 10 years old when he entered the world of golf, working as a caddie in a country club in Fort Worth. When no golfers were using the links, Nelson stole out to play the course alone. At night, he would place a white handkerchief next to the hole so he could putt in the dark. *(The Week magazine, October 13, 2006)***

**A group of birds called “megapodes” do not sit on their eggs like other birds. Instead, they incubate their eggs using volcanic heat or the heat of decaying plants. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Don Briggs, a 57-year-old physical-education teacher, has always wanted to scale mountains. But in his pancake-flat hometown of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, mountains are mighty scarce – so Briggs has begun creating them. On many frozen winter mornings, he sprays water on several 70-foot-high grain silos at a friend’s farm. The resulting ice, 4 foot thick in spots, offers an exhilarating challenge for frustrated climbers, some of whom have come from Ohio, Minnesota, and even China. More than a dozen Midwestern farmers have asked Briggs how they can turn their silos into climbing walls. “Once you get to the top, the view is amazing,” Briggs says. “It feels like you can see the entire world.” *(The Week magazine, January 26, 2007)***

**You know ocean-going freighters of the 19th century sailed south out of Boston with ice blocks cut from New England’s lakes. But did you know ice then accounted for more tonnage so shipped than anything else but cotton? *(L. M. Boyd)***

**During World War II, construction of ice-ships was considered. Unlike crude icebergs, these ships would be engineered and metal-clad, enormously strong and especially buoyant. According to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, “Had not the atomic bomb been dropped on Japan and the war come to an end, ice-ships would almost certainly have appeared certainly have appeared on the oceans of the world.” *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 258)***

**The value of an idea lies in the using of it. *(Thomas Edison)***

**As a young editor struggling to start a pocket-size journal that would condense and present the most interesting articles of the day, DeWitt Wallace, co-founder of Reader’s Digest, was eager to read every magazine he could lay his hands on. But he could scarcely afford subscriptions. Instead, he went each day to the library’s periodicals room. When, nearly 60 years later, Wallace’s magazine had become the most widely read publication in the world, he gave a lasting thank-you to the New York Public Library. It was a debt of gratitude happily paid to an institution that gave him and countless others easy access to a world of knowledge. *(Reader’s Digest)***

**The Mayflower was dismantled by the Pilgrims and turned into a barn. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 275)***

**Mayonnaise is said to be the invention of the French chef of the Duke de Richelieu in 1756. While the duke was defeating the British at Port Mahon, his chef was creating a victory feast that included a sauce made of cream and eggs. When the chef realized that there was no cream in the kitchen, he improvised, substituting olive oil for the cream. A new culinary masterpiece was born and the chef named it Mahonnaise in honor the duke’s victory. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 165)***

**People were making music over 20,000 years ago. They played flutes made of reindeer antlers and bear bones. They made whistles from hollow bird bones and the toe bones of deer. *(The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 84)***

**While away on business, a colleague and I decided to catch a movie. As we approached the theater, we read the marquee. It bore the name of the feature film followed by the numbers “7,” “5,” and “9”. Assuming these were the show times, we were somewhat perplexed by their order. I went inside to ask about it. “Our next show is at eight o’clock,” the woman in the box office announced. “Eight o’clock?” I said surprised. “But the marquee says seven, five and nine.” “Right,” she agreed. “That’s 7:59. We lost our number eight.” *(Diane Clancy, in Reader’s Digest)***

**With its soft meaty body, the octopus is an attractive target for predators. So it constructs a protective den in the rocks, sometimes with a peephole for it keen eyes to peer out from. If good rocky crevices aren’t available, it will learn to use whatever is around it – a shell, an old crate, or the champagne bottle tossed decades ago from my adviser’s shipboard wedding just offshore from the Hopkins Marine Laboratory in Pacific Grove, California. An amazing video making the rounds on the Internet shows octopuses in Indonesia that have learned to forage the increased numbers of coconut shell discarded from tourist boats and pull together two halves to make a spherical suit of armor. (Rafe Sagarin, in Learning From the Octopus, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 23, 2012)**

**Have you ever wondered why the little red schoolhouse was painted red? The custom originated in the Northeastern United States, where red paint was cheaper than any other color. *(Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia)***

**A panda’s diet consists almost entirely of bamboo stalks, shoots, leaves and roots. When given a chance, they will also eat many other foods including fish, flowers, mushrooms, carrion and small mammals. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Pandas eat bamboo shoots because they can get them. They’ll eat meat, too, when they can catch it, if ever. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The peanut butter and jelly sandwich was invented during World War II, when GIs combined the two from what they had in their rations. *(Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 240)***

**Gary Dahl dug up some rocks from his backyard in Santa Cruz, California, and decided to take a chance on a joke. A lot of people thought he was crazy, but Dahl put his rocks in a box, wrote a funny pamphlet, and became a millionaire. People bought Pet Rocks like crazy and Dahl is still laughing. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 94)***

**Lacking flowers, the Chukche tribesmen of Siberia, decorate the graves of their dead with reindeer antlers. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Mary Anning collected fossil shells on beaches near Lyme Regis in southern England and peddled them to tourists. To support her widowed mother. If you’ve never heard of her, maybe you’ve heard the line about her: “She sold seashells by the seashore.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A doctor who had devoted his life to helping the poor lived over a liquor store in the ghetto section of a large city. In front of the liquor store was a sign reading Dr. Williams Is Upstairs. When he died, he had no relatives and he left no money for his burial. He had never asked for payment from anyone he had ever treated.  Friends and patients scraped enough money together to bury the good doctor, but they had no money for a tombstone. If appeared that his grave was going to be unmarked until someone came up with a wonderful suggestion. They took the sign from in front of the liquor store and nailed it to a post over his grave. It made a lovely epitaph: Dr. Williams Is Upstairs*. (Bits & Pieces)***

**In 1873, Fred Hatch built the nation’s first upright silo on his father’s farm near Spring Grove, Illinois. He dug an 8-foot-deep hole, lined it with rock and mortar, and extended the wooden tower 16 feet above ground to store corn silage. *(American Profile magazine)***

**In Philadelphia in 1929, Charles Darrow lost his job as an engineer. He found himself with plenty of spare time, so he spent hours inventing a board game on his kitchen table to keep himself busy. For the game, he used street names from Atlantic City, New Jersey, where he used to visit. The name of the game was Monopoly, which became one of America's most popular games, and Charles Darrow became rich -- all because he had lost his job. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 123)**

**Junk box: The first television was made by John Logie Baird, a Scottish engineer, in 1924. He used cardboard, scrap wood, needles, and string for some of the parts. *(The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 174)***

**The Twinkee Defense: 75, the age of the sweet treat that James A. Dewar came up with as a Hostess bakery manager in Chicago. Dewar wanted to use the shortcake pans that sat idle all year except during a short strawberry season. So in 1930 he came up with a little golden cake injected with a banana crème filling, changed to vanilla during a World War II banana shortage. Say what you will about the springy food, but it’s an American icon. *(Rocky Mountain News, April 20, 2005)***

**The wok began as a Bronze-Age Mongolian helmet that doubled as a cooking pan. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 65)***

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