Little Things Add Up

**Air travelers left behind $960,105.49 in unclaimed cash in bins at TSA checkpoints last year as they dashed to catch flights, a 10 percent increase from the previous 12 months. The agency is planning to use the recovered money for "checkpoint training." *(CNBC.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 14, 2019)***

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**American Airlines saved $40,000 in 1987 by eliminating one olive from each salad served in first-class. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 56)**

**Cutlery Cutback: $80,000: Amount Continental Airlines will save a year by removing plastic knives from breakfast trays in coach sections of airplanes. The cuts are part of a wider effort that will save the airline $350 million annually. The knives will be available on request. (Rocky Mountain News, August 21, 2002)**

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**The microscopic floating algae, so abundant that they have been called the grass of the sea, are the basis of all marine food chains. The primary producers of food in the ocean and other bodies of water, they are fed upon by microscopic animals that are eaten in turn by larger animals. Without the hosts of unseen algae adrift in the sea, there would be no shrimp, no clams, no oysters, nor any other seafood delicacies. *(Reader’s Digest: ABC’s of Nature, p. 77)***

**It was not the big protist animals that led the way in evolution toward beings of many cells. The individuals in this top level of one-celled life with the fanciest equipment represent a dead end of evolution, for such self-sufficient bodies could not fuse easily to form many-celled life, and did not have the urge to do so. Instead, it was the little protists -- the algae -- that unlocked the secret of sun power and with this energy carried life to higher spheres. The secret was the green pigment chlorophyll, the magic ingredient of the photosynthesis process that catches the energy of sunlight.  In a split second this energy is imparted to a molecule in which carbon from air, and hydrogen from water, are combined. We call the resulting product carbohydrate, or sugar. *(Rutherford Platt, in The Living World of Nature)***

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**Change enough of the little pictures, and you’ll find you’ve changed the big picture. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**By doing just a little every day, I can gradually let the task completely overwhelm me. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

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**The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough. *(Rabindranath Tagore, poet)***

**Bankrupt Chuck E. Cheese will spend $2.3 million to destroy 7 billion prize tickets. The chain says that destroying the tickets, which would fill 65 cargo-shipping containers, costs less than the $9 million that would have to be spent if they were redeemed for prizes. *(The Week magazine, October 2, 2020)***

**Walter Husak, a Burbank, California, aerospace-parts manufacturer, began collecting coins at 13 when his grandparents gave him some old pennies for doing chores. Last week, Husak’s hobby paid off when he auctioned 301 of his rare cents for $10.7 million – the biggest sale ever of a penny collection. Two examples, one from 1793 and the other from 1794, fetched $632,5900 each. “It was a fabulous night,” said Greg Rohan, president of Heritage Auction Galleries. “Every major coin collector of American cents was either there in person, bidding online, or on the telephone.” *(The Week magazine, February 29, 2008)***

**The big Democratic donors who helped fuel Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign aren’t as enthusiastic this year. Contributions from financial firms are down 68 percent; from lawyers and law firms, down 47 percent; and from the entertainment industry, down 49 percent. The campaign is relying more heavily on small donors, with 58 percent of total fund-raising coming in checks of less than $200. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 4, 2012)***

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**Report is the average bushel of corn has 72,800 kernels. This makes enough corn syrup to sweeten 324 cans of non-diet cola. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**To illustrate the huge amount of corn produced each year in this country, it has been estimated that if just one more kernel were added to each ear of corn grown the annual yield would be increased by as much as seven million bushels . . . enough to feed the starving people of an entire country for six months. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 232)***

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**Statisticians calculate that if a 100-store supermarket chain were to alienate one customer per day at each store, the loss in repeat business would cost the company almost $95 million a year. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. *(Annie Dillard)***

**For the first time, scientists have established the age of the Carisbad Caverns, a spectacular natural limestone cave that is a national park in eastern New Mexico. The caverns are 3.9 to 4 million years old and were carved out of ancient limestone by the slow drip of water enriched with sulfuric acid, geologist Victor Polyak said Thursday. A report on the study was published Thursday in the journal Science. Polyak said he and his colleagues were able to establish when the Carlsbad Caverns were carved by age-dating alunite, a clay mineral formed as acidic water cuts its way through the limestone. *(Associated Press)***

**Fidgeting is an important way of burning up calories, and some people squirm and wiggle away the equivalent of jogging several miles each day, researchers have found. By the end of a day, some of the people had burned up as many as 800 calories in moving about and in nervous habits such as toe tapping and finger drumming, while others had disposed of only 100 calories. *(Reader’s Digest)***

**The good that people can do emanates and multiplies from the good that one person does. *(Lewis Richmond, in A Whole Life’s Work--Living Passionately, Growing Spiritually)***

**In suburban Hoffman Estates, a Conant High soccer game had to be postponed because players kept slipping on grubworms. *(Bill Flick)***

**It may be that at first you can devote only one hour a day to the activity that really matters to you. But even one hour a day can mean seven hours a week, 3650 hours in ten years. You can accomplish much in that period of time -- take a course, write a book, paint a portrait. *(Dr. Ari Kiev, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Insects account for 73% of all species of animals and outnumber people 200 million to 1. Insects are responsible for pollinating fruits and vegetables that make up one-third of our diet. We owe everything we know about genetics to the common fruit fly. Worldwide, the annual value of agricultural crops dependent on the pollination services of bees is estimated at $1.6 billion. *(Joseph Wagner, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**A swarm of migrating ladybugs flying over Southern California was so enormous, it showed up on the National Weather Service radar as a large storm. The ladybug "bloom" was flying at heights between 5,000 and 9,000 feet and spread over about 640 square miles. A spotter told the weather service, "I don't think they're dense like a cloud," but more like "little specks flying by." The weather service notified followers on Twitter that the big blob on radar images "is not precipitation, but actually a cloud of ladybugs." *(The Week magazine, June 21, 2019)***

**40 years' worth of lattes: Does buying a daily latte put your retirement nest egg at risk? asked Barry Ritholtz in Bloomberg.com The answer is -- probably**

**not. But let's say you consume five lattes a week, spending a total of $100 a month. If instead you "save it over the course of your 40-year working life, and earn a market return of 8 percent," that's $350,000. Adjusting for inflation, that's about $131,000 in today's dollars. "Not all that impressive, but still not nothing." However, the bigger issue is that fixed costs keep going up. "Housing, health care, and education are all expensive -- and necessary." So, you're right to worry about the big things like income, debt, economic mobility, and inflation. Coffee, on the other hand, is a "trifling issue and won't make much difference." *(The Week magazine, April 19, 2019)***

**Harvey Mackay was about 18 when his father, stressing the importance of building a network of contacts, told him to write down the name and number of anyone he met whom he might want to get in touch with later. Mackay was in his 50s and the owner of a successful envelope-making company in Minneapolis when he decided to write a book about the lessons he had learned as a businessman. A publisher agreed to take it on, but would print only 10,000 copies. Mackay wanted a printing of 100,000. So he pulled out his well-organized file of 6500 names and addresses, many of them highly placed corporate executives and celebrities. With this starting list of potential buyers, Mackay was able to talk the publisher into a larger print run. Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive went on sale complete with testimonials**

**culled from Mackay’s list. The book vaulted to the top of the best-seller charts and became one of the leading business-advice books of all time. “Little things mean everything,” says Mackay. “When you add up all the tiny steps, the result can be a big success.” *(Robert McGarvey, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Between April and June, shoppers purchased $346 million worth of masks from sellers on Etsy. More than 100,000 sellers started offering masks on Etsy during those three months. *(TheVerge.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 2, 2020)***

**Michelangelo was once putting what appeared to be the finishing touches on a sculpture when a friend dropped in for a visit. Days later, the friend dropped by again and was surprised to find the artist still working on the same statue. The statue looked the same to the friend as it had days earlier, so he said, “You haven't been working on this statue all this time, have you?” “I have,” Michelangelo replied. “I've been busy retouching this part, and polishing that part; I've softened this feature, and brought out that muscle; I've given more expression to the lips, and more energy to that arm.” “But all those things are so insignificant,” said the friend. “They're mere trifles.” “That may be so,” replied Michelangelo, “but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.” (Bits & Pieces)**

**Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land. So the little minutes, humble though they be, make the mighty ages of eternity. *(Julia Fletcher Carney)***

**If we take care of the moments, the years will take care of themselves. *(Maria Edgeworth, Irish author)***

**Some grizzly bears will spend their entire summer eating only moths that they find congregating under rocks high in the Rockies. A bear can consume up to forty thousand moths in one day. That’s about twenty thousand calories’ worth. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p.4))***

**In the past two years, Nevada casinos have installed 7,000 penny slot machines and removed 12,000 machines requiring bigger bets. In fact, penny slots are the only form of gambling that has grown in Nevada during the recession. Casinos make more money on penny slots, even though gamblers bet less. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 11, 2009)***

**One New Year’s Eve the Pendulum stopped -- in contemplation of its work for the new year. “The task is too great,” it said. “I find I have to swing back and forth 31,536,000 times this year. It can’t be done!” And it rebelled against the clockmaker. “But,” said the clockmaker, “it is easy enough. Nobody wants you to do that all at once. Just keep on going -- one swing at a time. You can do that. You are a sturdy fellow. You certainly can swing once in a second. And this is all that is asked of you.” The Pendulum knew it could do that. So it proceeded -- one swing at a time the whole year through, and found it easy. At the end of the year it had accomplished the remarkable feat of swinging 31,536,000 times. Yet it had not even noticed the hardships and difficulties which it thought impossible. *(Sunshine Publicity)***

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**Good week for: Penny pinching, after residents of Picayune, Mississippi, collected over 10 million pennies to raise funds to refurbish a local park, which will now get a tree house and other features. *(The Week magazine, April 29, 2011)***

**It’s time to kill the penny: “Should we make cents?” asked John Fund. Our friends in Canada no longer think so. The Canadians have decided to stop minting pennies next year on the grounds that the coins have become “a nuisance.” The U.S. should follow suit. Each penny costs more than a cent to mint, so the U.S. Treasury loses more than $100 million a year on the coin’s production. Many people no longer value them, so many of the 4.3 billion pennies the Treasury churns out every year end up being thrown in jars or lost down the backs of sofas. Drop a penny on the street, and no one even bothers picking it up. Pennies are also a waste of time. An MIT scientist has calculated that we each spend 2.4 hours a year counting out pennies in stores. Supporters of the penny warn that eliminating the coin will cause retailers to round up prices to the nearest five cents. Even if that were true in every case, consumers would lose all of $18.25 a year. So let’s consign this grubby little coin to history. When one cent has become essentially worthless, a penny saved is no longer a penny earned. *(The Week magazine, April 13, 2012)***

**Walter Husak, a Burbank, California, aerospace-parts manufacturer, began collecting coins at 13 when his grandparents gave him some old pennies for doing chores. Last week, Husak’s hobby paid off when he auctioned 301 of his rare cents for $10.7 million – the biggest sale ever of a penny collection. Two examples, one from 1793 and the other from 1794, fetched $632,5900 each. “It was a fabulous night,” said Greg Rohan, president of Heritage Auction Galleries. “Every major coin collector of American cents was either there in person, bidding online, or on the telephone. *(The Week magazine, February 29, 2008)***

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The tiny mountain pine beetle has chewed through 40 million to 45 million acres of timber in the West and British Columbia in the last 12 years, killing about 12 percent of the forested land west of the Mississippi, and causing serious lumber shortages. Subzero winter temperatures used to kill off the beetle, but a long string of mild winters has enabled it to flourish. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 9, 2012)*

Entrepreneurs and their small enterprises are responsible for almost all the economic growth in the United States. *(Ronald Reagan)*

**I have always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of misery to an end. *(Albert Schweitzer)***

**In 1995 Pacific Bell Telephone told its 4,500 directory assistance operators to answer calls with either: “Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_, what city?” or “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_, what city?” According to Pac Bell, these new greetings take 1.2 seconds to say, compared to 1.7 second when “please is used. The phone company calculated that shaving half a second off of each call makes it possible for operators to handle 135,000 more calls per hour. *(Uncle John’s All Purpose Bathroom Reader, p. 247)***

**“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a coal-mouse asked a wild dove. “Nothing more than nothing,” was the answer. “In that case, I must tell you a marvelous story,” the coal-mouse said. “I sat on the branch of a fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow – not heavily, not in a raging blizzard – no, just like in a dream, without a sound and without any violence. Since I did not have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the 3,741,953rd dropped onto the branch, nothing more than nothing, as you say – the branch broke off.” Having said that, the coal-mouse flew away. The dove, since Noah’s time an authority on the matter, thought about the story for awhile, and finally said to herself, “Perhaps there is only one person’s voice lacking for peace to come to the world.” (Kurt Kauter, in New Fables, Thus Spoke The Carabou)**

**The average snowflake is made up of 180 billion molecules of water. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 14)***

**Even before the campaign was officially launched, people began responding. Bridgeport, Connecticut, concluded that a gift to Miss Liberty was a perfect way to say thank-you to the nation. Early in December 1982, a local toy center for poor children, known as Christmas Village, had been destroyed by arson. Sympathetic people from all over the country had donated enough money to restore the center before the holiday. Instead of sending thousands of thank-you letters, Bridgeport organized its own fund-raising campaign and collected $3,600 for the Statue of Liberty, all from nickels, dimes and quarters contributed by school-children. *(Thomas Fleming, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Two dark-suited IRS agents showed up at a California car wash, hand-delivering the owner an unpaid tax bill of 4 cents. Aaron Zeff of Harv’s Metro Car Wash in Sacramento, says the agents were “deadly serious” about the $0.04 bill from 2006, which had accrued $202.31 in late fees and taxes. “It’s hilarious,” said Zeff, who paid the bill. “I think the IRS may have a problem with priorities.” *(The Week magazine, March 26, 2010)***

**Why did Scotland pick the purple thistle for its national flower? Invading Danes, barefoot in attack, squealed mightily when they hit the thistles, so retreated. This, 1,000 years ago. The Scots appreciated it. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Passengers left behind a total of $409,085.56 in change when they passed through U.S. airport security checks last year. The unclaimed money goes into the coffers of the Transportation Security Administration. *(The Hill, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 27, 2012)***

**Good week for: Trickle-down security, with the news that travelers left behind $674,841.06 in small change while going through security checks at U.S. airports last year. The unclaimed money ends up helping to fund the Transportation Security Administration. *(The Week magazine, April 17, 2015)***

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**Assuming a rate of one drop per second, a leaking tap wastes about seven thousand liters of water in a year. (Noel Botham, in *The World’s Greatest Book of Useless Information, p. 70)***

**When Wilbur and Orville Wright conducted their historic first flights beginning in 1901, few newspapers took notice. Not many people appreciated that "many incremental moments, over years" would add up to the invention of the airplane. *(The Week magazine, May 27, 2016)***

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