**December 2nd, 2021: A Canadian woman who was woken in the middle of the night by a loud crash was shocked to discover that a softball-size meteorite had smashed through her roof – and landed on a pillow just inches from her face. “I’ve never been so scared,” said Ruth Hamilton. The Golden, B. C. resident called police, who determined that the 2.8 pound rock was part of a meteor shower that had lit up the sky. Hamilton says the experience has given her a new appreciation for the fragility of life. “You’re sound asleep, safe, you think, in your bed, and you can get taken out by a meteorite, apparently.” *(The Week magazine, October 29, 2021)***

**November 27th, 2021: A missionary to Africa has related the story of his work with a tribe that was mysteriously poverty-stricken, even though other tribes in the same region were relatively prosperous. He was curious about this strange phenomenon. He spent years researching all aspects of their culture. He came up with but one possibility: in their tribal language, they had no word with which to express gratitude. Perhaps, through some quirk of evolution, they had forgotten how to say thank you. He drew no conclusions, but he did ask a question: “Could this loss of the spirit of thanksgiving have been responsible for their poverty?” It is an interesting and revealing possibility. (Dr. Eric Butterworth, in Spiritual Economics, p. 92)**

**November 13th, 2021: Panning for diamonds in Arkansas: There’s a reason why the diamond is Arkansas’ state gem, said Katherine LaGrave in Afar. Crater of Diamonds State Park, the only active diamond mine in the U. S., is also the world’s only diamond-bearing site that allows visitors to try prospecting. “What you find, you can keep,” and some visitors have struck it rich – “really, really rich.” More than 34,000 diamonds have been found on site since the 911-acre park was established in 1972, including the Esperanza, a teardrop-shaped gem worth an estimated $1 million that was found in 2015. “You don’t need to be a professional gemologist to hunt diamonds.” Surface searching is strolling with an eye out for glinting gems, ideally after it rains. Dry sifting involves shoveling gravel onto a screen (rented from the park) to sift it. Wet sifting requires lugging soil to the park’s water troughs for cleaning. “It is monotonous work, though occasionally shot through with a streak of white-hot adrenaline.” And miracles do happen: Just last month, a visitor from California, found a 4.38-carat yellow diamond sitting on top of the ground. *(The Week magazine, October 29, 2021)***

**November 9th, 2021: Henri Dunant, at age 30, was a wealthy Swiss banker and financier. His life would probably have continued much as it had except for one fateful day, June 24, 1859, which changed everything. Dunant had been sent by his government to talk to Napoleon. He was to discuss a business deal between the Swiss and the French which would benefit both. But Napoleon was not in Paris; he was on the plain of Solferino about to do battle with the Austrians. Henri Dunant tried to reach the scene before the battle began, but he was too late. His carriage came to a halt on top of a hill which overlooked the battlefield. Suddenly trumpets blared, muskets cracked, cannons boomed. The two cavalries charged and the battle was on. Henri Dunant, as if in a box seat at the theatre, sat transfixed. He could see the dust rising, hear the screams of the injured, the dying. Dunant sat as if in a trance at the horror below him. But the real horror was later – when he entered the small town after the battle was over. Every house, every building was filled with the mangled, the injured, the dead. Driven by pity at the suffering he saw all around him, Dunant stayed in the town for three days doing everything he could to help. He was never the same man again. War was barbarous. The world should abolish it. This was not the way to settle differences between nations. And most of all there ought to be a worldwide organization to help people in times of suffering and chaos. Henri Dunant returned to Switzerland, but in the next few years he became a fanatic on the subject of peace and mercy. He began to travel all over Europe preaching his message. Eventually his business suffered in the effort and he was soon broke. But he persisted. At the first Geneva Conference he carried on a one-man assault against war. As a result, the Conference passed the first international law against war – a movement that was to give birth eventually to both the League of Nations and th U. N. In 1901 Dunant was awarded the first Nobel Peace prize. And though he was penniless and living in a poorhouse, he gave the entire prize to the worldwide movement he had founded. Henri Dunant died in 1910 almost totally forgotten by the world. But Dunant needed no monument to mark his grave. As a symbol of the organization he had fathered, he had taken the Swiss flag, a white cross on a red background, and reversed it: a red cross on a white background. The organization which became his everlasting monument was the Red Cross. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**November 2nd, 2021: Past performance is usually a pretty good indication of a man’s future potential – but not always. In 1860 a thirty-eight-year old man was working as a handyman for his father, a leather merchant. He kept books, drove wagons, and handled hides for about $66 a month. Prior to this menial job the man had failed as a soldier, a farmer, and a real estate agent. Most of the people who knew him had written him off as a failure. Eight years later he was President of the United States The man was Ulysses S. Grant. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**October 25th, 2021: There is a story that when Harry Truman was speaking at a Grange convention in Kansas City, Mrs. Truman and a friend were in the audience. Truman in his speech said, “I grew up on a farm and one thing I know – farming means manure, manure, manure and more manure. At this, Mrs. Truman’s friend whispered to her, “Bess, why on earth don’t you get Harry to say fertilizer?” “Good lord, Helen,” replied Mrs. Truman, “you have no idea how many years it has taken to me to get him to say manure.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**October 18th, 2021: Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War under Abraham Lincoln, was well known for a highly inflammable temper. The pressure of war kept his nerves frayed and his tongue sharp. Once, when he complained to Lincoln about a certain general, Lincoln told him to write the man a letter. “Tell him off,” Lincoln advised. Stanton, bolstered by the President’s support, promptly wrote a scathing letter in which he tore the man to shreds. He showed the letter to the President. “Good,” said Lincoln, “--first rate. You certainly gave it to him.” As Stanton started to leave, Lincoln asked, “What are you going to do with it now?” “Mail it, or course,” said Stanton. “Nonsense,” snorted the President, “you don’t want to send that letter. Put it in the stove! That’s what I do when I have written a letter while I’m angry. You’ve had a good time writing that letter. Now write another.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**October 11th, 2021: In 1933 two young men, Joe Schuster and Jerry Siegel, created a comic strip for a publishing company in New York. Money was hard to come by in those Depression days and the two sold all rights to the company five years later for the sum of $130. The comic strip – The Adventures of Superman – became very popular and made millions for the publishing company that held the copyright on it, and for various movie and television producers who made films from it. The two young men who had started it all, however, never got a dime of those profits. The story does, however, have something of a happy, if belated, ending. A company called Warner Communications eventually acquired all rights to Superman, the man from the planet Krypton. And though it was not legally required to set the matter right, the company felt it had a moral obligation to do so. Accordingly, it agreed to pay each of the men $20,000 a year for the rest of their lives. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**October 4th, 2021: Astronaut John Young learned, on his return from the moon, that a Georgia Tech professor had petitioned the university to erase a D he had given Young some 20 years ago and to replace it with an A, since the astronaut-to-be had had excellent grades otherwise. Young wrote to the professor: “Thank you for the Mech 302 grade-change consideration. Unfortunately, I can assure you that the D grade was earned fair and square. Therefore I would appreciate it if you would let the grade remain a D. It would grieve me considerably to think that Georgia Tech was getting soft or that Tech professors ever made ‘errors of judgment’ that they would admit to anyone. After all, Georgia Tech is an outstanding – but tough – engineering institute. Yours for keeping it that way. Warm regards, John Young.” *(Hugh Park, in Atlanta Journal)***

**September 27th, 2021: Recently, a friend of mine told me about an elderly lady who had worked as cook for a family since she was a young woman. The lady of the house noticed that practically every day during the long summer months, after the noonday luncheon dishes had been washed and put away, Auntie Bea made her way to a chair in the back yard to sit with eyes closed, facing the sun. One day, becoming a little concerned, her employer walked out to her and asked, “Auntie Bea, are you asleep?” The little old lady raised her soft brown eyes and smiling contentedly said, “No, Ma'am, I'm just sittin’ here lettin’ God love me.”(Freda K. Routh, in Between Us)**

**September 20th, 2021: One day an eight-year-old boy went to the pet store with his dad to buy a puppy. The store manager showed them to a pen where five little furry balls huddled together. After a while, the boy noticed one of the litter all by itself in an adjacent pen. The boy asked, “Why is that puppy all alone?” The manager explained, “That puppy was born with a bad leg and would be crippled for life, so we’re going to have to put him to sleep.” “You’re going to kill this little puppy?” the boy said sadly while patting it. “You have to realize that this puppy would never be able to run and play with a boy like you.” After a short conversation with his boy, the dad told the manager that they wanted to buy the puppy with the bad leg. “For the same amount of money, you could have one of the healthy ones. Why would you want this one?” To answer the manager’s question, the boy bent over and pulled up the pants on his right leg, exposed the brace underneath and said, “Mister, I want this one because I understand what’s he’s going through.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**September 13th, 2021: Time might fly when you're having fun, but it can also drag slowly. Scientists believe that our sense of time might be related to how tired our brain cells are. When people are sleep deprived, some neurons in the brain slow down, leading to delayed responses to things going on around us. Researchers observed neuron activity in volunteers. As neurons slowed down, participants estimated that things felt like they took a lot longer than they actually did. In their perception, time was crawling by slowly. Time might not be objective at all, but a subjective experience based on the perceptions of the individual. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**While watching the CNN Special last Sunday evening, I remembered that I had put this excerpt on the website many years ago:**

**September 6th, 2021: According to a new report by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, if the 9/11 hijackers had hit the World Trade towers later in the day, when the building was fully occupied, the death toll could have reached 14,000. *(Associated Press, in The Week magazine, July 15, 2005)***

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**August 29th, 2021: The history books are full of stories of gifted persons whose talents were overlooked by a procession of people until someone believed in them. Albert Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read. Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school. A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had “no good ideas.” Wernher von Braun failed ninth-grade algebra. Haydn gave up on making a musician of Beethoven, who seemed a slow and plodding man with no apparent talent. There is a lesson in such stories: Different people develop at different rates, and the best motivators are always on the lookout for hidden capacities. (Bits & Pieces)**

**August 22nd, 2021: 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)***

**August 15th, 2021: It was the late 1800’s and an important Member of the British Parliament was hurrying through the rain and fog of the bleak Scottish countryside to deliver a crucial speech. Still miles from his destination, his carriage was forced off the road, its wheels plunging axle deep in mud. Try as they might, the horse and driver could not move the carriage. So important was his speech that even the aristocratic Englishman, in his formal attire, gave a hand. But it was no use. The carriage would not budge. A young Scottish farm boy happened to be driving a team of horses past the distraught parliamentarian and volunteered to help pull the carriage loose. After much effort and considerable exertion, the carriage was finally pulled free. When the boy steadfastly refused to take any money for his help or for his clothes which were torn and dirty from the ordeal, the Englishman asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. “A doctor, sir. I want to be a doctor,” was the reply. The gentleman was so impressed with the boy and so grateful for his kindness that he said, “Well, I want to help.”  And surely enough, he kept his word. Through his generosity, he made it possible for the young lad to attend the university. More than fifty years later Winston Churchill became dangerously ill with pneumonia while in Morocco. His life was saved by a new wonder drug called penicillin, which had been discovered a few years earlier by a Scottish-born physician, Sir Alexander Fleming. Fleming was the farm boy who helped the Member of Parliament on that dark and rainy night in Scotland half a century before. The Member of Parliament? None other than Winston Churchill’s father, Randolph. *(Richard & Mary-Alice Jafolla, in The Quest, p. 88)***

**August 8th: A German university is offering "idleness grants" worth nearly $1,900 to applicants who promise to do nothing. Applications consist of simple questions such as What do you not want to do? For how long? Why is it important not to do it? Answers will be used in an exhibition called "The School of Inconsequentiality: Towards a Better Life," and successful applicants must submit a report on their inactivities. Friedrich von Borries, an architect and design theorist who developed the program, hopes to show that traditional achievements are overrated. "Doing nothing isn't very easy," he said. *(The Week magazine, September 25, 2020)***

**August 1st, 2-21: If only Elizabeth Taylor were still alive. A planet made largely of diamond has been identified in orbit around a star that is visible to the naked eye. The high-carat makeup of the planet, named 55 Cancri e, became clear through an analysis of its mass and radius and the composition of its host star. “The surface of this planet is likely covered in graphite and diamond rather than water and granite,” Yale astronomer Nikku Madhusudhan tells Space.com. Researchers have long theorized the existence of such so-called carbon planets, where that element is as prevalent as oxygen is on Earth, and in 2009 located one orbiting a neutron star 11,000 light-years away. But 55 Cancri e, which is only about 40 light-years away, is the first such planet identified circling a sun-like star. It is very close to its sun, and thus has an estimated surface temperature of 3,900 degrees. The intense heat has combined with the pressure of geological forces to turn much of the planet’s original carbon mantle into a mass of pure diamond. There’s millions of times more diamond there than has ever been mined on Earth. *(The Week magazine, October 26, 2012)***

**July 26, 2021: In 1977, Pearl Bailey received an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Georgetown University, gave the commencement address -- and got an idea. "Who knows, folks," she told the audience, half jokingly, "I may be coming to this school." Sure enough, the following January, a 58-year-old freshman enrolled for a full schedule of courses at Georgetown. Pearl proved to be a dedicated student, taking her books wherever she went. Eventually she made the dean's list, and on May 25, 1985, she was awarded a B.A. in theology. Pearl loved being an example for others. "When I went back to school, fans would write: 'I'm 65. Is it too late for me to do the same?' I'd write back: 'Go for it, honey. My religion is action.'" *(Cab Calloway, in Reader's Digest)***

**July 19, 2021: Gordon Bushnell always thought there ought to be a straight highway from Duluth to Fargo. About twenty years ago, he got tired of waiting for the state to build it. He decided he better just build it himself. Of course, it takes hundreds of people to build a highway. Everyone knows that -- except Gordon Bushnell. Here is a retired dairy farmer, with nothing but a wheelbarrow, a No. 2 shovel and an ancient John Deere tractor, building a highway all alone. After 20 years of dickering with landowners, obtaining easements, buying the land when he had to -- though he's far from a rich man -- Gordon Bushnell has finished nine miles. He has 191 miles to go. Gordon Bushnell is 78 years old. *("On the Road With Charles Kuralt," in Reader's Digest)***