Summer reading

Recommendations:
60+ light, compelling, or informative books
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TRAVEL: Books that take readers to different places, times, or ways of thinking

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ON THE COVER: Illustration by Krieg Barrie
NOTES FROM THE CEO

Caroline Harbin was an editorial assistant with our organization until her retirement in May 1982.

We’re not a big organization now, but we were even smaller then. We couldn’t pay a whole lot, and we didn’t offer a retirement plan, so our board of directors came up with a novel way of helping Mrs. Harbin in her retirement years. To supplement her Social Security benefits, our directors instructed us to pay Mrs. Harbin about $220 per month through our payroll. That doesn’t amount to much, but that’s what we could afford, and it did give Mrs. Harbin just a little extra to cover her bills.

I didn’t know Mrs. Harbin. But that shouldn’t surprise. Only two of our current employees ever met her during her time here: One is June McGraw, the editorial assistant who replaced Mrs. Harbin in 1982 and is, this month, celebrating her 35th year here.

The other is Joel Belz. This week he handed me a clipping from the local paper with the headline “Mrs. Harbin to celebrate 100th birthday.” He told me the short version of the story I’ve told you here, and he asked, “Do you think we’re still paying her?”

As a matter of fact, we are. After all these years, our payroll still includes the same $220 every month for Mrs. Harbin. If that payment meant only a little back in 1982, it means even less now, I’m sure.

Still, it’s good to know we’ve kept our promise all this time, even if we didn’t know the promise we were keeping.

Kevin
Kevin Martin
kevin@wng.org
“Your silence these days,” a friend of mine challenged me, “makes you look like a wimp. The nation’s in an uproar. Certainly WORLD must have an opinion.”

“No,” I countered. “WORLD magazine isn’t always ready to stake out an opinion. Various ones of us as individuals may have opinions. Not a single one of us speaks for the whole team.”

“You’re scared, don’t you think? At least a little. Scared if you say something really critical of President Trump, like you did during the campaign last fall, hundreds of your readers will desert you. Scared if you say something positive, maybe even more readers will conclude you don’t know what you think.”

“No,” I said, “not for a second do I think WORLD’s staff is scared. We’re committed to a sovereign God. And we’re excited to be involved in the journalistic task of chronicling truthfully what that sovereign God is doing in this perverse and crooked culture.” (As our friends at Tabletalk magazine emphasized in a recent devotional: “Christ is ‘Lord of lords and King of kings,’ and He will defeat all of His foes. This is such an important truth for us to remember as we live in this fallen world. So often, we experience seeming defeat in our battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the good news of the gospel tells us that these defeats are only temporary.”)

“But,” my friend asked, “how do we sort out the good guys from the bad guys? How do we know who represents ‘the world, the flesh, and the devil’? We laymen out here like to keep things simple. It would really help us if you professionals at WORLD would spell out who’s worth supporting and who we should regard as dangerous. We need that guidance in complex settings like the Middle East—and we need it almost as much in not-quite-so-complex settings like Washington, D.C.”

Well, I thought. I understand the tendency to oversimplify. Journalists face that temptation every day. It is, I’ve found, a human inclination. Yes, we could research and then publish an annual “WORLD Voter Guide” so you could, on any given issue, see exactly how we think you should vote. But that just isn’t the kind of journalism WORLD has sought to practice. Instead, our main task has been to report to you as truthfully as we can all the evidence we can find, and then invite you to decide what to do with it. Drilling for oil in the Arctic? Here are the pertinent facts. Read them, digest them, and then vote accordingly. Put some tighter restrictions on the internet? We’ll tell you what some thoughtful people have to say about that, and why. If those thoughtful people have some Biblical arguments to back up their opinions, so much the better. But we won’t try to make up your mind.

 Obviously, those somewhat elastic standards don’t apply when we’re talking about clear Biblical principles. If simple honesty is at stake, for example, we won’t hesitate to bring the discussion closer to the ballot box. Sometimes much closer! For example, if it can be demonstrated right now that President Trump’s Democratic and media critics have simply made up their current charges about Russian influence and obstruction of justice; or if President Trump keeps stonewalling when asked to provide evidence that “4 or 5 million false ballots were cast in the November election,” then we’ve moved on from opinion to issues of demonstrable fact. Fake news isn’t to be accepted or rejected by degrees; if an account isn’t provably true, it’s a transgression of the Ninth Commandment. And WORLD won’t sugarcoat the evidence just because there’s an election coming up.

“So,” I told my good friend, “maybe WORLD hasn’t been as silent as you thought. Maybe you were expecting to find something WORLD never really intended to offer.”

But I couldn’t resist asking my friend one question of my own. Would he back off his skeptical frame of mind if the rest of Trump’s presidential performance so far had matched the quality of his notable personnel picks, for both his Cabinet and his support staff. “You bet,” he said. “And especially so if you’re referring to names like Pence and Gorsuch.”
“Medi-Share covered me in prayer in ways they didn’t even know.”
— Vanessa

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Honoring the lost

A mourner gathers with others in Albert Square in Manchester, England, on May 23 after a terrorist attack killed at least 22 people and injured dozens more at a concert in the city the previous day. Police identified Salman Ramadan Abedi, 22, as the suspected suicide bomber. Children were among the terrorist's victims.
Investigative reporting is back. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a journalist in possession of a byline must be in want of a scandal to expose. When Jane Austen wrote an opening sentence similar to that, she hadn’t encountered Barack “No Drama” Obama.

For eight years White House reporters knew that investigation of wrongdoing would make their colleagues mad. They chose to follow a version of the Groucho Marx doctrine: “I never forget a face, but in your case I’d be glad to make an exception.”


True, yet why does journalism have to be brought back? Why its eight-year slumber? Washington newshounds in mid-May bayed at President Trump for purportedly revealing secret information to a Russian official, but Instapundit collected a trove of Obama administration leaks that gained little attention: In 2010, revealing classified information about cyberattacks on Iran’s nuclear facilities. In 2011, outing the Navy SEAL unit that killed Osama bin Laden, along with the name of its ground commander. In 2014, exposing the CIA’s top Kabul operative. In 2016, offering Cuba’s Communist government U.S. intelligence information.

Washington is notoriously gossipy, but in May we saw a record number of anonomice scurrying around, leaving droppings, and then heading back to holes. The Washington Post has taken sourcery to the extreme. It now quotes anonymous sources talking about an anonymous person who may represent other anonymous persons, as in this sentence from May 18: “At least one senior staffer has begun privately talking to friends about what a post-White House job would look like, according to two people close to the staffer.”

WORLD stories and columns criticized both Trump and Hillary Clinton last fall before the election. Trump won, and we have given him the respect an elected president deserves. He won because of his pro-abortion opponent and because millions of evangelicals prioritized his commitment to nominate judicial conservatives: Liberals have only themselves to blame for the Constitution-twisting that made such appointments the No. 1 issue. Impeachment is for high crimes and misdemeanors, not to undermine an election verdict. Let’s wait to see if anything more substantial than gossip emerges, and let’s pray that Trump will not do more to undermine himself.

Prayer, as always, is essential—and so is journalistic training. Since May 15 seven members of WORLD’s staff have been teaching 27 young journalists at our 19th annual World Journalism Institute (WJI) college course. This year at Dordt College in Iowa we’re offering writing tips (such as how to avoid a semi-colonoscopy) and discussing big questions about the purpose of Biblical journalism.

Lots of older WORLD members are worried about the younger generation: “Are the kids OK?” is a frequently asked question. On social issues, judging by a survey to which the WJI students responded anonymously, the answer is yes. One hundred percent of our students called abortion morally wrong.
(A Gallup survey showed 43 percent of Americans saying abortion is morally acceptable and 49 percent calling it morally wrong.)

The students also, with one exception, called homosexual relations and heterosexual adultery morally wrong and overwhelmingly opposed same-sex marriage. (Two-thirds of Americans termed adultery and gay or lesbian relations morally acceptable and called same-sex marriage as valid as traditional marriage.) A Pew survey found the American public split down the middle on the question “Would you rather have a smaller government and fewer services or a bigger government and more services?” Our students went for smaller government by a 25-2 margin.

Two of the findings might lead to thoughtful discussions between parents and children. Only 7 percent of the students said they had “a lot of confidence in the future of the U.S.” (The figure for the general populace: 41 percent.) And, while evangelicals remain largely supportive of President Trump, most of our students disapproved of his job performance.

Older WORLD readers can also receive WJI training. Next January in the Olasky living room in Austin, Texas, my wife and I plan to have our ninth annual intensive week of journalism instruction for WORLD members who would like to write occasionally for our magazine, website, or podcast.

We’ve enjoyed having 80 mid-career students over the years, 10 at a time. Some are doctors, teachers, engineers, or college journalists who took time off to raise kids, and others with writing ability just love WORLD and want to be part of it. The course emphasizes reporting and writing news and features. It’s not for those whose goal is to write devotionals, fiction, or poetry, or to be the next Andrée Seu Peterson: There’s only one of her.

Thirty WJI graduates are now on WORLD’s masthead on page 2. Others are occasional correspondents willing to be activated if something big (and probably bad) happens in their cities. If you’re interested, please get more information and apply at worldji.com. @molasky@wng.org @MarvinOlasky

BY THE NUMBERS

86
The number of billionaires living in London, the most of any city in the world (New York has 82).

$8.8 billion
The amount of U.S. funds subject to a new Trump administration rule barring federal aid dollars from reaching foreign nongovernmental organizations that perform or promote abortion.

300,000
The number of unaccompanied children migrating between countries in 2015 and 2016 combined. The United Nations said child migration has grown nearly fivefold since 2010.

107 million
The number of Americans who have auto loans, up from 80 million in 2012.

639
The total marijuana-related emergency room visits by teens and young adults at one Colorado hospital system in 2014—up from 146 such visits in 2005 before the state legalized the drug.
Human Race

Died
Roger Ailes, founder and former CEO of Fox News, died on May 18 at 77, prompting a wave of shock and grief. Ailes apparently fell, hitting his head on the bathroom floor in his mansion and died soon after, a year after his dismissal from Fox News in a sexual harassment scandal. It was in 1970, as an aide to Richard Nixon, that Ailes wrote a paper sketching his idea for Fox News. In 1996, he launched the channel with a “Fair and Balanced” slogan and high-tech production. Fox News challenged the liberal media and boldly expressed conservative positions. In 2016, Ailes became an informal adviser to presidential candidate Donald Trump. Then, a year ago, Megyn Kelly and other female employees accused Ailes of sexual harassment and the company released him.

Broken
Bryson Verdon Hayes, a 101-year-old D-Day veteran, on May 14 became the oldest person in the world to skydive. When the former British Army lance corporal turned 90, he expressed his wish to learn to skydive. His wife talked him out of the idea; but after she died, Hayes decided to give it a try. He jumped for the first time when he was 100 and then decided to break the record, then held by a Canadian. The great-grandfather jumped again at age 101, 15,000 feet from a plane, landing safely. He was “over the moon” about it, he told the BBC.

Escaped
Days before 82 schoolgirls abducted from Chibok, Nigeria, returned home as part of a May 20 prisoner exchange between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram, government troops found a 15-year-old Chibok girl who had escaped the Muslim terrorist group. Boko Haram has kidnapped thousands of people during its eight-year rebellion, most famously campaign in September, he implied his opponent had used a verse from the Quran to trick people to vote against him. An edited version of Purnama’s speech went viral, and thousands took to the streets. Purnama lost the election to his Muslim rival, and his case went before Jakarta’s top court. Some of the judges’ decisions cited hardline Islamic groups as experts.

Accused
Baylor University football players are habitually making videos of gang rapes and staging dogfights, according to a new federal lawsuit against the university. An unidentified former Baylor volleyball player filed the lawsuit, claiming four or more players gang raped her in 2012. She says the players later followed her and harassed both her and her family, eventually driving her from school. The woman says she talked to her coach, who she says contacted the current football coach and athletic director, but nothing happened. More than a dozen women have sued Baylor, all claiming the university ignored or mishandled their sexual assault cases.

Sentenced
An Indonesian court on May 9 sentenced the outgoing governor of Jakarta, a Christian named Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, to two years in jail for blasphemy. During Purnama’s reelection
In this honest and practical guide for parents and Christian leaders, John Stonestreet (president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview) and Brett Kunkle explore questions such as:

- What unseen undercurrents are shaping twenty-first-century youth culture?
- Why do so many kids struggle with identity?
- How do we talk to kids about LGBT issues?
- How can we steer kids away from substance abuse and other addictions?
- How can we ground students in the biblical story and empower them to change the world?

This inspiring book will enable you to help your kids influence the culture, rather than let the culture change them.
‘Watch. Share. Slay.’

**PLANNED PARENTHOOD** in a blog post promoting a video that Buffy the Vampire Slayer creator Joss Whedon made for the organization. The post said “every single one of us has a hero inside; and it’s our responsibility to use our superpowers to slay.” Students for Life noted, “They slay over 320,000 innocent children every year.”

‘You can use that on the press.’

Homeland Security Secretary **JOHN F. KELLY** to President Trump after Trump received a ceremonial saber at the commencement for the Coast Guard Academy.

‘The National Science Foundation last year used your taxpayer money to fund a climate change musical. Do you think that’s a waste of your money?’

**MICK MULVANEY**. director of the Office of Management and Budget, on complaints about President Trump’s proposal to make cuts to the planned budget of the NSF.

‘Can we have a crisis-free day? That’s all I’m asking.’

**U.S. Sen. SUSAN COLLINS** R-Maine, on the scandals facing the Trump White House.

‘It would be terrible to think that life has no meaning, that we are going nowhere, and that what we do until we die is a matter of indifference. That is what tortures so many today.’

**U.S. Supreme Court Justice SAMUEL ALITO** in an email to Eric Banecker, editor of Seminarian Casual, before Alito spoke at the Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary graduation in Philadelphia.
Serious singing

Chinese officials intend to propose a new law in June they hope will give the country’s national anthem a boost in solemnity. Recent state media reports of chaotic renditions of the “March of the Volunteers” has led officials to set parameters for where the anthem should be sung and at what tempo. State news blamed a rash of frivolous renditions, wherein audiences sang the anthem too slow or too fast and also amid laughter, on “a lack of legal constraints.”

Sands of time

More than three decades after a 1984 storm washed all the sand off a beach on Achill Island, Ireland, the beach is back. A freak tide this April deposited sand at Dooagh beach, transforming the rocky shore back into a 300-yard sandy beach for the first time in 33 years. And that’s good news for the local economy. “We have a beautiful little village as it is, but it is great to look out and see this beautiful beach instead of just rocks,” local restaurateur Alan Gielty told The Guardian. “Since people have seen the news of the beach, we have had plenty more visitors from the middle of the country.”

Arrest that goose

An Indiana man is feeling ruffled after receiving an animal cruelty ticket for beating a Canada goose he said was attacking his son. Indianapolis father James McDaniel said the problem started when he and his 4-year-old son were playing outside. “A goose actually came from the other side of the field...and proceeded to go full wing-span and chase after my son,” McDaniel told WXIN. The man grabbed what was nearest—a whiffle ball bat—and took a swing at the goose. But a bystander who McDaniel insists misunderstood the situation called Marion County Animal Services, which later wrote McDaniel a ticket.

Lunch money

It started with a phone call. Seattle dad Jeffery Lew had heard that some families at his third-grade son’s elementary school owed money through the school lunch program. According to school district policy, Seattle students in eighth grade or below without money in their school lunch accounts may get meals for three days before the district disables their accounts and bills parents. “The entire school debt was about $97 and some change,” Lew told KIRO. “Why not just tackle the entire Seattle Public School District?” So Lew began an online fundraiser on May 9 and began sharing the idea on social media. By May 13, Lew and donors from around the world had given enough to cancel the entire $20,531.79 lunch debt owed by students in Seattle schools.
Department of aggravation

A New Jersey college lost $1.25 million of federal funding for a remarkable reason: School administrators failed to submit the grant application in the correct double-spaced format. As a result, the New Jersey Institute of Technology announced it may have to eliminate its college-prep program for low-income high-school students.

Warning sign

Joseph Kowalchick has a surprise for the vermin who keep stealing his campaign yard signs: a human-sized rat trap. The candidate for a township supervisor position in Norwegian Township, Pa., says his frustration with vandals in early May forced him to design a new yard sign as part of a 250-pound spring trap. The trap is not actually functional—but don’t tell that to the sign thieves. “Yeah, it’s meant to be a little funny,” Kowalchick told WPXI. “It’s meant to prove a point that we’re actually fed up with it.”

Finding her prince

One Japanese princess has decided she’d rather be happy than royal. Japan’s 25-year-old Princess Mako, the oldest grandchild of Emperor Akihito, says she plans to marry Kei Komuro, a law firm worker she met while attending International Christian University in Tokyo. But since Komuro, also 25, is a commoner, under imperial law Princess Mako must give up her royal status in order to become his wife. Princess Mako’s aunt, Princess Sayako, also surrendered her royalty when she married a government worker in 2005.

The working dead

For Adam Ronning, it feels good to be alive again. In 1988, someone in the bureaucracy of the United States government filed a form accidentally declaring Ronning, then 4 years old, to be dead. Since then, Ronning has worked and filed taxes, but gotten back only a portion of his IRS tax return. The Minnesota man said he’s been trying to call and fix the error for years so that he can collect the $20,000 owed to him in federal tax refunds. “I’d call... and they were like, ‘Oh, OK, we’ll give him to the hold monster,’” Ronning told KMSP-TV. He finally found satisfaction when he contacted his U.S. senator, Amy Klobuchar, who used her clout to resolve the issue with a few phone calls.

Star Wars culture

Kylo Ren may be the central villain of the 2015 Star Wars film The Force Awakens, but many parents seem to see him in a more heroic light. According to data from the Social Security Administration, the name Kylo was the 901st most popular first name for newborn American boys in 2016, up from 3,269th place the year before. The jump was big enough to make Kylo the fastest-rising name in 2016.
Ready for the worst?

SPIRITUAL PREPPING FOR A DISASTER LOOKS A LOT LIKE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Quick self-quiz: (1) If the power grid in your area went down completely as a result of nuclear warfare, your first concern would be for (a) your neighbors, (b) your food supply, (c) survival. (2) Once it’s clear that power is not coming back on for months, your chief goal is (a) helping your neighbors, (b) preserving your family, (c) survival.

It’s not a fair test, but seriously, what kind of scenarios play in your mind at the thought of apocalyptic disaster? A generation ago, Americans trembled in front of their televisions as the miniseries The Day After played out the horror of full-scale nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Those fears mostly died with the Soviet Union, but now they’re back with the rise of unstable third-world nuclear powers like Pakistan, North Korea, and Iran. With North Korean sabers rattling on the other side of the DMZ, another threat joins the parade of horrors, namely that of an EMP, or electromagnetic pulse.

A nuclear EMP is an above-ground blast releasing a surge of energy so massive it can take down the electrical grid of an area as large as the Midwest. No power means no computers, no gas pumps, no distribution. Planes fall out of the sky, support systems collapse, the world slows to a crawl. People start dying within hours, and killing each other within days. That’s the scenario imagined by One Second After and other best-selling apocalyptic novels.

Military experts and physicists agree that an EMP is possible, though they disagree on how likely and how severe. My research indicates it’s not likely, but even without that particular threat, nuclear and biological weapons in the hands of crazy regimes have generated plenty of worst-case-scenario news items. Should we be worried?

I was disturbed enough by One Second After to pack some emergency supplies in a backpack for the trunk of my car, just in case disaster strikes while I’m away from home. “Prepping” is now big business, and it seems only prudent to store extra provisions for the unforeseen emergency. But preparation goes beyond inverters and filtration systems. How should we prepare our souls for a worst-case scenario? What spiritual resources should you add to your emergency supply list? What about:

- Food: the Word of God. Memorize it, to store the Word where it needs to be—in your mind and heart.
- Weapons and ammo, and training in their use: Practice prayer. This is not optional.
- Back-up power: Practice good works, “according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy” (Colossians 1:11).
- Back-up heat: Cultivate relationships in your church, “all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25). We’ll need each other.

Actually, spiritual prepping looks like the normal Christian life as described in the Bible. As Paul warned the Thessalonians, the “mystery of lawlessness” is always at work in the world—that stubborn refusal to repent and believe that leads to all sorts of evil. Christians caught up in the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, the Reign of Terror, the Nazi occupation, or the Cambodian killing fields probably thought the end of the world was at hand. For many of them, it was.

Don’t be quickly shaken, says Paul, but “stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught.”
Take This Engrossing Mystery on Your Next Beach Trip!

Paving the way for a new cold-case task force, Illinois State Police Detective Evie Blackwell is reexamining some old missing-persons cases: the disappearance of a young girl and a family of three that vanished without a trace over ten years ago. With the help of Sheriff Gabriel Thane, she scrutinizes the evidence to pull out a few tenuous leads—with startling implications.

“Suspense at its best and impossible to put down.”
—Christian Market

“The mysteries explored in the story are nuanced and their resolutions surprising.”
—RT Book Reviews

“Leaving as many mysteries in limbo as solved, Henderson ends this story with plenty of fodder for future installments.”
—Publishers Weekly
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In the first scene of *Alien: Covenant*, billionaire space-exploration funder Peter Weyland (Guy Pearce) posits that the only thing that matters in life is discovering the answers to two questions: Who made us and for what purpose?

The scene is rife with thematic portent as David, himself, is a brilliantly constructed entity. And, as we saw in *Prometheus* and even further in this film, he is capable of free will that runs counter to his creator’s intended design.

These are weighty concepts that, for a time, seemed to preoccupy writer/director Ridley Scott’s work. Certainly, they did in *Prometheus*. Unfortunately, beyond the opening scene, Scott doesn’t use much of the story to extend the discussion and instead goes right for the jugular (and spine and stomach, and oh, just about any body part capable of being ripped off and squirting blood).

The script makes passing references to religion in the character of Christopher Oram (Billy Crudup), captain of a ship carrying 2,000 colonists to a new, hospitable planet. Oram frets that his beliefs have undermined his career, complaining, “If you’re a person of faith, the company thinks you’re an extremist and not to be trusted with authority.”

**D***
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**Design flaws**

**HORRIFICALLY VIOLENT ALIEN: COVENANT DOESN’T DEAL WITH WEIGHTY CONCEPTS**

by Megan Basham
To be fair, given all the decisions Oram makes after this, his superiors would be perfectly right to think he can’t be trusted with authority, person of faith or no. After a mysterious transmission arrives from an unmapped planet midway through their journey, nearly every decision he and his crew members make is idiotic beyond belief.

First, they scuttle their in-the-making plans and start hiking through ponds and rivers, smoking, disrupting local spores and pollens until doom in the grossest and most R-rated form arrives. The action is undeniably well-paced and jolting, but Scott unfortunately once again frames his horrific assaults on the human body with disturbing sexual and reproductive imagery.

When the crew at last stumbles upon a character last seen in Prometheus, the plot turns to a been-there-done-that mad scientist scenario. If the film means this to offer any sort of answer to Weyland’s philosophical questions, it’s ultimately a nihilistic and despairing one.

Anne with an E

In Canada, where Anne Shirley is one of the country’s most recognizable names, the new Netflix series Anne with an E is billed simply as Anne. But at times, it’s not easy to recognize Lucy Maud Montgomery’s 1908 novel Anne of Green Gables in this television adaptation. Anne with an E, produced by the CBC, is now available in the United States on Netflix. Creator Moira Walley-Beckett (Breaking Bad) had promised this version would be “gritty” and “off-book.” Happily, Anne herself hasn’t changed much.

Amybeth McNulty is fabulously awkward playing the red-haired adoptee who turns to a richly imaginative inward life in order to cope with outward circumstances. What is darker, however, is what happens to Anne. Although beautifully shot on location, this series takes liberties by diving deep into the trauma Anne experienced before arriving on Prince Edward Island—like a beating at the hand of pseudo-foster father, Mr. Hammond—and even the trauma she experiences on the island itself, in the form of bullying.

The series also includes adult themes: In one awkward scene, Anne uses euphemisms to explain the facts of life to a few classmates.

Classic moments like the raspberry cordial scene survive, but other Montgomery storylines are stretched beyond recognition. These eventually touch on topics like menstruation, same-sex relationships, and suicide.

To be fair, Montgomery’s original novels contained adult themes too: child labor, death, and a teacher-student relationship, for example. And despite some of the positive feminist themes found here (like whether or not girls should go to school), it’s often hard to find the original Anne amid the extraneous storylines.

—by LAURA FINCH
Movie

Everything, Everything

On its surface, *Everything, Everything*, based on Nicola Yoon’s book by the same name, is a cutesy story about a sickly teen girl’s first romance. But as face-to-face encounters in Maddy’s imagination: a nice touch, but still—yawn.

Early in the film, Maddy mentions she’s just turned 18—likely a tip to viewers that her character is legal for the ensuing sensuality. (Olly never mentions his age.) An implied sex scene earns the film its PG-13 rating. Their conversation is mostly innocent, but the camera isn’t. Clad in tight-fitting white garments, Maddy monopolizes screen time. Olly’s a shining knight in black T-shirt and pants. Maddy has always dreamed of setting foot in the ocean; Olly can help there. She’s never kissed a boy; Olly to the rescue. (Fancy that.) So, it’s a foregone conclusion that Olly can enable Maddy’s escape.

Parents make mistakes, but the film’s lone plot twist seems designed to send a more hostile message: The deadliest childhood disease is a parent who won’t allow her daughter to liberate herself on her own terms.

—by BOB BROWN

Documentary

Syria’s Disappeared

News footage has brought to light heartbreaking images of Syrian civilians gasping for air, targets of their government’s chemical weapons attacks. But little evidence to date has detailed the systematic kidnapping, torture, and murder of suspected political dissidents by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. That changes with *Syria’s Disappeared: The Case Against Assad*, a new documentary written, directed, and produced by Sara Afshar.

Afshar examines evidence of atrocities from two main sources—a cache of 600,000 documents smuggled out of Syria and nearly 7,000 photographs supplied by a defector who once worked as a forensic photographer for the Syrian military police. Key documents reveal high-level government officials coordinating a network of military detention centers that includes hospitals. Photographs from those locations show (and viewers see) the emaciated bodies of young men, skin burned and eyes gouged out, their last moments of pain frozen on their faces.

Many of the photographs contain a tag with identifying information, like “Corpse 320.” So much evidence exists, the legal case against Assad is a “slam dunk,” according to Stephen Rapp, a former U.S. ambassador for global criminal justice.

*Syria’s Disappeared* includes a clip of a February 2017 interview with Assad. He looks at some of the same photographs and suggests they’ve been “photoshopped” or depict inadvertent casualties of the country’s civil war, but are “not policy.” Yet Assad’s “not policy” has resulted in tens of thousands of victims murdered, missing, or still in custody.

Numbers don’t tell the personal stories. Through tears Mazen describes how security forces jumped on him until his ribs broke. They then suspended him in the air by the wrists with handcuffs and assaulted him with a clamp and a pole in ways, he says, that “can’t be imagined.”

The documentary lays out a solid case against Assad. How will the international community respond?

—by BOB BROWN

See all our movie reviews at wng.org/movies
Each year on Memorial Day we remember those who died to defend others—but why did so many have to die in history’s biggest bloodbath, World War II? How did darkness squash a supposedly Enlightened nation and deviltry triumph so dramatically in the land of Kant and Goethe?

Four D’s have appeared prominently in historical accounts of Hitler’s rise: World War I Defeat followed by hyper-inflationary Disaster followed by economic Depression, with ideological Darwinism providing an overarching “survival of the fittest” rationale. But two other D’s also were important: the Deutsche Kirche (a Nazi-backed perversion of Christianity) and Drugs.

David Pietrusza’s 1932: The Rise of Hitler and FDR (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016) artfully narrates the events of that crucial year and the anti-Christian impulse that Hitler frankly acknowledged: “National Socialism is a form of conversion, a new faith. … Once we hold the power, Christianity will be overcome and the Deutsche Kirche established … without a Pope and without the Bible.” Roosevelt’s speeches reflected an America still based in Christianity, but for a crucial mass of Germans the defeat of 1918 had become more important than the victory of Christ over Satan—and that change unleashed satanic forces.

Norman Ohler’s Blitzed: Drugs in the Third Reich, translated by Shaun Whiteside (Houghton Mifflin, 2017), is a history bestseller gaining praise in just about every media outlet from The New York Times to Playboy. Ohler’s tautly written account, based on previously overlooked documents, shows the role of drugs in fueling Hitler’s rapid rise during the 1930s and sensational fall during the second half of World War II. Among the conclusions: Methamphetaminees distributed to millions of soldiers made possible the blitzkrieg that killed France in 1940. Hitler became dependent on a witch’s cornucopia of heroin and other drugs during World War II.

But not all was lost. Hanna Schott’s Love in a Time of Hate (Herald Press, 2017) effectively tells the story of André and Magda Trocmé, a pastor and pastor’s wife who led other Protestants in a small French town, Le Chambonsur-Lignon. At great risk to their own lives, they saved more than 3,000 Jewish children and adults from Nazi annihilation. Sometimes they lied to the murderers, but many of them noted that the Exodus 20:16 text sometimes quoted as “You shall not lie” actually reads, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” They asked, What if we did not bear false witness against our neighbor but for our neighbor? André Trocmé’s message to his daughter when she turned 40 struck me: “You have to learn to laugh at yourself [and] live for others … since those who instinctively hold on to the egoism of their youth in their older years have no future at all.”

Another book to counter depressing World War II books is Christianity in Eurafrica by Steven Paas (New Academia Publishing, 2017). Its 552 pages of succinct entries on the church north and south over 2,000 years show the ups and downs of history and many comebacks from apparently fatal ecclesiastical diseases.

IS THIS OUR TIME?

Readers of the Q&A with Trevin Wax in WORLD’s May 13 issue have asked me about his new book, This Is Our Time (B&H, 2017). It communicates well some basic truths. Among them: We should not settle for being lie-detector Christians who spot falsehood (as in LGBT propaganda) but miss the longing behind the falsehood. Those who say “just be happy” often don’t know what makes us happy.

Wax at age 35 may be most helpful in speaking to Christians in their 20s who keep postponing marriage. Among the thoughts millennials should take to heart: Sex is superficial and marriage matters. To say, “I don’t need a piece of paper to love you,” is to say, “My love for you has not reached the marriage level.” Weddings are bases, not mountaintops. Fiftieth anniversaries are summits. —M.O.
**SCRATCH** *Manjula Martin*

Anyone who wants to make a living by writing will find helpful bits in this book of essays by and interviews of writers on the topic. Most of the writers are young, have been through MFA programs, and share a left-wing sensibility that’s critical of capitalism and sometimes whiny. Nonetheless, the volume includes useful stuff about ghostwriting, agents, and the ups and downs of the writing business. Several writers talk openly about advances and royalties; most don’t. As in any book with many bylines, the quality of the essays varies—as does the language. (No surprise: Some writers enjoy cursing.)

**THE SELECTED LETTERS OF LAURA INGALLS WILDER** edited by William Anderson

Laura Ingalls Wilder was a prolific letter writer. Her letters capture the ordinary concerns of this important author and show her developing confidence as a novelist and how she discussed book-related details with her daughter Rose, an accomplished writer. Rose traveled internationally, and Laura’s letters often note her daughter’s far-flung adventures; but sometimes Laura was on the move, traveling with Rose: She wrote home to her husband about bad roads in Kansas, the pleasures of Colorado, and the sights along the way. The letters provide insight into the author and life during the 1920s and 1930s.

**THE ZOO: THE WILD AND WONDERFUL TALE OF THE FOUNDING OF LONDON ZOO: 1824-1851** *Isobel Charman*

This well-told history brings alive the excitement that great men felt at the idea of establishing a zoo in London in the 1820s. Charman shows that Christian faith motivated some of the founders who envisioned the zoo as an opportunity to display creation. Others had more worldly concerns: Architects relished the challenge of building suitable buildings, and veterinarians wanted to study exotic beasts. (Since no one knew how to feed and house them, they had plenty of dead bodies to autopsy.) The project cost financial fortunes, resulted in many animal deaths, and overcame both changing tastes and competition from other zoos.

**PORTRAITS OF COURAGE** *George W. Bush*

The book includes portraits of 66 soldiers wounded in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Alongside the portraits are profiles of the pictured soldiers along with details of their service and their connection to Bush 43. The book is striking because it shows President Bush really looking at and seeing the soldiers he put in harm’s way. He confronts the heavy burden they bear for his decisions—and by being included in a book, these men and women will continue to represent all those who fight. Bush’s expressionistic painting style captures the personality and vitality behind the broken bodies.

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**AFTERWORD**

Tony Reinke’s *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (Crossway, 2017) is well worth reading, dog-earring, and coming back to. He understands and writes about the tremendous power in our phones, and the great temptation they pose to us. He asks important questions: Does Facebook make us lonely? In our loneliness do we turn to it and feel worse? He points out hard truths about how we use our phones to gain approval, and he gives pastoral counsel: “If you crave fame and seek it through self-promotion, I plead with you to stop.” We are all tempted to misuse this great technological gift, especially when it comes to images, so Reinke wants us instead to “fill our hearts to the brim with glory so that our eyes learn to supernaturally scroll past the vapid images that naturally appeal to our eye lusts.” –S.O.
Technology tamers
BOOKS TO HELP PARENTS AND KIDS WISELY STEWARD IPHONES AND INTERNET reviewed by Emily Whitten

THE TECH-WISE FAMILY: EVERYDAY STEPS FOR PUTTING TECHNOLOGY IN ITS PROPER PLACE
Andy Crouch
Too often tablets, TVs, and other pixelated wonders disconnect us from one another and the real world. In this book, former Christianity Today executive editor Andy Crouch shares up-to-date insights (using graphs and illustrations) into the challenges of technology. He then offers 10 commitments to put technology “in its proper place.” Not everyone will agree with all of Crouch’s suggestions, such as keeping kids away from screens until age 10. But even tech-loving parents will appreciate Crouch’s hopeful vision for how families can use technology and flourish.

HELP! MY KIDS ARE VIEWING PORNOGRAPHY
Tim Challies & Paul Tautges
This 64-page “LifeLine Mini-book” offers front-line triage for parents in the area of internet pornography. Challies begins with stories and statistics to help parents understand the extent of the problem. He then explains why porn is sinful and points readers to Christ for help. A final chapter helps families install accountability software and other parental controls to keep pornography out of kids’ reach. Challies acknowledges the role of family communication in this battle, although he gives little instruction for building that dialogue. Overall, a good first resource for families in crisis.

LIKED: WHOSE APPROVAL ARE YOU LIVING FOR?
Kari Kampakis
In Liked, Kampakis cheerfully but soberly thinks through the dangers of putting too much emphasis on others’ approval. She uses real-life stories, Bible verses, and straightforward application to point teens to God, whose love for them cannot be shaken. Kampakis excels at coaching girls to examine their hearts as they navigate relationships. Even teens who don’t normally think about social media in theological terms will find her reasoning logical and winsome. One criticism: Though filled with much godly wisdom, the book largely overlooks repentance, a critical part of gaining and keeping God’s approval.

52 WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE OBSESSED KID
Jonathan McKee
While McKee’s books often aim directly at teens (see The Guy’s Guide to God, Girls, and the Phone in Your Pocket), 52 Ways helps parents entice kids willingly to put their phones away. Occasionally, his advice seems too laissez-faire (“If you come across inappropriate content [in their music], simply ask questions”), and his suggestions repeat themes of eating, working, and playing together. Still, frustrated parents looking to reconnect with kids may appreciate his field-tested ideas, which range from hiking and biking to buying a hot tub. Discussion questions promote listening and leading rather than lecturing.

AFTERWORD
Families with public library accounts may find apps like OverDrive and Hoopla to be cheap, convenient ways to access library resources. Both apps can be downloaded for free onto mobile devices. Patrons then use the apps to borrow e-books and audiobooks (and movies and music where available).

These apps also create potential for harm, however. Overdrive alone offers more than 2 million book titles from 5,000-plus publishers, some of which include pornographic or otherwise objectionable material. Children who access the app directly may come across these materials.

Adults and parents who keep oversight of book selection may still find the apps worthwhile. Among the dross, my library offers audio versions of kids’ classics like Basil of Baker Street: The Great Mouse Detective Book 1 by Eve Titus (Oasis Audio, 2017) and The Enchanted Castle by Edith Nesbit (Dancing Unicorn Books, 2017). —E.W.
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Michael Wear worked in the 2008 Obama campaign and in 2009, at age 20, became one of the youngest presidential aides in American history. He now heads Public Square Strategies, a public relations company, and is the author of Reclaiming Hope: Lessons Learned in the Obama White House About the Future of Faith in America. Here are edited excerpts of an interview in front of students at Patrick Henry College.

You grew up in a Catholic home but not one that emphasized belief? It was a Catholicism of fish fries and not something that penetrated my heart.  

Your older sister evangelized you? She became a Christian a few years before I did and started working on me immediately, like a homing missile. She’d sit me down and go through Scripture with me. I built up an antagonism, but she finally got me to go to her youth group: I thought, I’ll go and get more ammunition so I can make fun of her and tell her how silly all this is. You went home with a handout of Romans. Just Romans: no commentary, just Paul’s letter. I took it home, read it, read it again—and it changed my life. It’s a perfect antidote to someone who thinks “there is no there there” in Christianity. What really hit you as you were reading? I knew that at Easter, Jesus died and rose again. But why did that have to happen? The wages of sin is death. Why don’t Christians act like Jesus all the time? It’s because I do not do what I want to do. What does it mean to enter into Christian life? The logical argument engaged me, but the Holy Spirit moved me.  

You then went to George Washington University and in your freshman year became a leader in the College Democrats. Why Democrats rather than Republicans? I already was a Democrat, partly for family history: My grandfather was a union guy. Probably the first substantive policy issues I cared about were civil rights...
June 10, 2017 • WORLD Magazine 25

@MarvinOlasky

Was it love at first sight? I don’t know about that. John Kerry in 2004 was a religiously inept nominee, but at the convention nominating him Barack Obama talked about the awesome God we serve. That perked me up. In 2006 he gave a speech calling the secularist idea that we should take faith out of our public debates a “practical absurdity.” I had seen him in bold, unconventional ways advance a positive vision for faith, so I had a pre-existing interest. That’s why it was so crazy, out of all people, to see him in the lobby.

Then you worked for him in Iowa: more fun and more educational than just sitting in a classroom? That’s right. In Iowa I knocked on doors, but then I started doing religious outreach.

Which led to your work in the White House faith-based office in 2009. Did you feel a bit like Cinderella, or—switching to My Fair Lady—did you want to sing, “I Could Have Danced All Night?” I was on the street where Barack Obama lived. A My Fair Lady reference, sorry.

Soon to be a major musical. Right. You never forget that you’re working in the White House. You never quite get used to it. But I didn’t really have much time to gawk. We were trying to figure out what a faith-based office would look like. It had only operated under one administration.

Barack Obama’s statement in his first campaign for president that he was open to restrictions on abortion—political posturing? What is clear is that in the campaign he said he supported abortion restrictions, and in office he not only vetoed the ones that got to his desk but never put forth any restrictions. You’d think that would be an option.

Is there room in the Democratic Party for pro-life people? In 2006, because Democrats were out of power and had lost two straight elections, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee intentionally recruited candidates in conservative districts who were pro-life, and we had dozens of pro-life House members as a result. We’ve lost a lot over the last six years.

That was a successful strategy in 2006, and normally when political parties see a successful strategy they want to continue it. Seems to me that if the Democratic Party was not radically pro-abortion, Democrats would have won in 1980, in 2000, in 2016. So what keeps the Democratic Party from doing what political parties normally do: adjust to win? When we have the White House, an ideological calcification goes on: Same thing happens when Republicans are in control.

I had been involved in developing compassionate conservatism, so the way it turned out in the Bush administration was disappointing, but I always thought it was a long shot. We go back and ask, “Had I approached it this way instead of that way, would the outcome have been different?” But I wasn’t the person making the decisions. My role was primarily in outreach and in making sure that the views of the faith community were represented.

Chris Hayes at MSNBC said he was troubled by presidential misleading, particularly about same-sex marriage. Did the Obama administration end up increasing cynicism? Politics is about taking two steps forward, one step back. I’m not more cynical. The troubling thing for me was not that the president changed his mind, if there was a change of mind. The problem was people applauding how astutely the change happened. It wasn’t just that he was going to religious groups and saying that he supported the traditional definition of marriage. Less than a week before the 2008 election, he was on MTV, telling teenagers who generally support gay marriage, “I support marriage between a man and a woman.” It was a clear part of his campaign. We can’t accept that it’s OK to mislead the public, if that’s indeed what happened.

You’re saying “if.” The only evidence we have for this is David Axelrod saying the president supported gay marriage at least as early as 2007. If the president writes in his memoir or says publicly that Axelrod’s book is wrong, that’s a whole other thing. Hasn’t done that. The question is hanging out there. That’s significant.

Troublesome? Absolutely.!

For other excerpts from our Michael Wear interview, please go to wng.org/2017/05/no_political_home
For the first time in nearly a decade, the music industry saw its revenues rise in 2016. The reason had nothing to do with the sales of hard-copy or digital music. Those numbers continued to drop. What changed was the number of people subscribing to online music-streaming services that allow them to listen to their favorite music without paying for individual albums or songs. For the first time, streaming accounted for the majority of music consumption (51 percent). And there’s no indication of a change in direction anytime soon.

Reading the writing on the wall, the venerable classical-music label Deutsche Grammophon has made a bid to engage the streaming generation with a new 10-album series called The Essentials. Each 25-track collection focuses on a single composer, emphasizing his most popular melodies in a bid to hook the curious and eventually reel them in. The composers, in chronological order, are Vivaldi, Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Puccini, Debussy, Rachmaninov, and Ravel. Never has a more gifted lineup baited a mercenary hook.

And mercenary the hook certainly is. For example, what besides the instant recognizability of The Four Seasons explains Vivaldi’s finding his way onto Deutsche Grammophon’s Mount Rushmore when Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, to name just three, surely deserve pride of place? (The “compromise” of including Vivaldi among The Essentials is mitigated somewhat by his playlist’s sticking to the cream of his crop, particularly the brisk first movements of two of his worthier compositions: Stabat Mater, featuring the sublime singing of the countertenor Michael Chance, and Gloria in D.)

There’s no compromise where the performers are concerned. Drawing upon Deutsche Grammophon’s vast archive of exemplary recordings, the curators have fielded the musical equivalent of all-star teams, matching the melodies with those instrumentalists and singers most, or at least reasonably, capable of making sure the bloom stays on the rose.

And as with literal all-star teams, fun can be had with the statistics. The great Argentine pianist Martha Argerich, for example, appears on six of the collections for a total 13 times. The more famous Vladimir Horowitz appears only five. Ensembles conducted by the early-music specialist Trevor Pinnock make 12 appearances, 11 of those performing Vivaldi. Plácido Domingo makes six, all of them singing Puccini.

The significance of such observations is less that they can give rise to interesting musings (whether, say, the cosmopolitanism of Argerich’s source material, which exceeds that of Pinnock, Horowitz, and Domingo, yields dividends in terms of audibly benefiting everything that she assays). Their significance is that a project as ambitious as The Essentials can inspire them. And because it can, the listener can not only enjoy the project but also learn from it—learn whether he prefers glistening Baroque perfection to Beethoven’s Classical vigor or Tchaikovsky’s lush Romantic melodies to the more subjective beauties crafted by Debussy and Ravel, and why.

For some novices, simply realizing that one can detect the stylistic differences among the different periods without serious training (or that there were Hungarian Rhapsodies before Queen’s “Bohemian” one) will come as a revelation.

“Culture,” wrote Albert Jay Nock, “is knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world.” It is also knowing the best that has been composed and captured on tape or any other storage medium. In making such knowledge possible, the 250 selections contained in The Essentials guarantee that, although battered and bruised, culture is not yet ready to go down without a fight.
NEW OR RECENT ALBUMS
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

THANK YOU, FRIENDS: BIG STAR’S THIRD LIVE... AND MORE Big Star’s Third
Nayayers claim the note-for-note recreations of highlights from Big Star’s first two albums (CD 1) and most of Sister Lovers (CD 2) by a rotating cast of mostly gray-haired indie-rock luminaries is superfluous. Maybe. But seeing the luminaries rocking a packed theater on the DVD could give you chills, so obviously do they love this agelessly radiant power pop. How do they love it? There are too many ways to count, but enlisting Carl Marsh to conduct the Kronos Quartet deserves special mention.

POWER CORRUPTION & LIES TOUR 2013
Peter Hook & the Light
Imagine John Cale singing The Velvet Underground and Nico, and you’ll have a good idea of what Hook singing this minor New Order classic sounds like. Not only is Hook an alumnus of the band whose album this recording captures him performing, but he also has his Cale impersonation down pat. The Light, meanwhile, come off surprisingly unfettered for a group engaged in reproducing other people’s music, more than ably picking up whatever slack may result from Hook’s sounding no more like Bernard Sumner than Cale does Lou Reed.

50 YEARS OF BLONDE ON BLONDE
Old Crow Medicine Show
One drawback of Bob Dylan’s The Cutting Edge was that its sheer bulk made hearing Blonde on Blonde feel like work. This high-spirited live recording of Blonde on Blonde in its entirety restores the fun, blending a recklessness worthy of the Rolling Thunder Revue with a hootenanny’s bonhomie. It also provides such useful services as stripping “Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands” of its somnolent properties and making sure that “Rainy Day Women #12 & 35” gets appreciated for the great martyrdom joke that it has always been.

CARRIE & LOWELL LIVE Sufjan Stevens
Skip the full-length, free-on-YouTube video. Watching Stevens and friends solemnly enraptured onstage undoes what’s best about simply hearing them—namely, detecting open windows by which the original album’s hermetic sensitivity/self-pity gets a means of escape, giving the songs a chance to breathe. The spell-breaking applause at the end of each track doesn’t hurt either. It brings the music down to earth, you might say. What keeps it there: the apparently unironic rendition of Drake’s “Hotline Bling” with which Stevens encore.

ENCORE
Admittedly, albums by ex-Ramones inhabit a narrow niche. But now that both CJ Ramone (né Ward, bassist 1989-1996) and Richie Ramone (né Reinhardt, drummer 1983-1987) have released their latest solo efforts, a few words about the risks of not letting the legacy of the world’s greatest punk band rest in peace may be in order.

Like Reconquista and Last Chance to Dance before it, American Beauty (Fat Wreck Chords) finds CJ making music that actually could’ve been written and played by his late bandmates. And he’s good at it. But he sounds more willful and less spontaneous with each go-round. Lesson: Sooner or later, the law of diminishing returns will kick in.

Richie’s Cellophane (DC-Jam) takes a less literal approach, going for (and often attaining) the spirit if not the letter of the Ramones law. The fly in its ointment? Richie’s histrionic singing, which parodies Billy Idol (or maybe Sid Vicious) for no discernible reason. —A.O.
My Dutch burglar

CHANGE AND LOSS ARE THE THINGS WE KNOW WE CAN COUNT ON

Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard said it’s not an adventure until something goes wrong. Adventure for me began on a drizzly Saturday night in downtown Amsterdam when a burglar made off with my bag.

I was seated in a coffee shop, working over my laptop and drinking coffee with my youngest daughter, newly graduated from college and joining her mom for a brief reporting trip. It was a brightly lit place, daylight in northern Europe lasting until after 9 p.m. in spring. I was too absorbed in what I was doing, and a thief came in, coat over his arm, bent down as if to pick something up, and, without my sensing what was happening right at my feet, swept up and out with my possessions, including needed cash and my passport.

You can plan for the contingencies of overseas travel, the “what to do ifs...,” and still be thoroughly surprised and rattled when one of them happens. I spent several minutes in disbelief. I actually asked the barista if someone had turned in a bag. The shop owner let us watch the security camera footage with him, where we saw the whole thing unfold. The owner drew a map to the police station, and later caught up with us to see if we were all right.

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to,” said Bilbo in Tolkein’s Lord of the Rings.

Thinking you’re ready for adventure and being ready for the adventure that shows up are different things. In the blue-green late-night light of a police station in dark Amsterdam, I had to face for myself what I write and teach about. First, I’d written last in this space about loving enemies. My daughter and I sat down on a bench and prayed for the burglar. I wouldn’t have done that apart from writing about it (and getting mail from some of you that day).

The global village fools us into thinking we have, even in a foreign country, more control than we do.

I often tell journalism students about the prerequisites for being an overseas reporter, or a reporter anywhere. In fact, my schedule included spending an hour with World Journalism Institute students via Skype the week the theft happened. Job qualifications aren’t having the right degree or language fluency, I tell them. They are more about how willing you are to step out on a limb; to ask stupid questions, stumble through language barriers and into new subject areas; to generally feel out of your comfort zone yet somehow find your purpose there.

And there I was, trying to figure out what to do with a police report issued in Dutch, a closed U.S. Embassy, and a schedule that had us leaving the country early the next morning. My daughter was on the phone with my bank, canceling a card, but the young officer helped us come up with a plan forward.

Striking into uncharted territory used to be the American way. In one journal entry, Meriwether Lewis reports stumbling on “a plum forest” of 9 square miles, discovering prairie dogs, then spotting 3,000 buffalo—all before 8 a.m. Now we are a country more of planners than adventurers.

With an adventure, we are more alive to all our senses, aware of new details about our surroundings, and thrust into depending on others, plus depending on God to help us be wise depending on others.

All those things happened on our little Dutch adventure. The streets of Amsterdam became more important to navigate and read well. Our reliance on strangers grew: from the coffee shop owner to the police officer to the hotel owner who stayed up late to let us back in, and more as the week progressed.

The global village—with its ubiquitous cell phone service, Wi-Fi, and American chain stores—fools us into thinking we have, even in a foreign country, more control than we do. Yet at home or abroad, change and uncertainty are actually the things we can count on. A stolen bag is a small loss, but a reminder of this uncertain world and its fleeting possessions, and of more and better adventures ahead. ☮
More Muslims came to Christ in the last 50 years than in the previous 1400 years since Islam began.

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Beach

SUMMER READING
IT'S SUMMERTIME. GRAB A BLANKET AND SUNSCREEN AND ESCAPE WITH A LIGHT, COMPPELLING, OR INFORMATIVE BOOK

by Marvin Olasky

Illustration by Krieg Barrie
out 10 years ago with *Free Food for Millionaires*, a realistic novel centering on Korean-Americans in New York City.

If you’re heading to the beach and want epic fiction that will last you for a vacation, try Herman Wouk’s sweeping World War II novels, *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*: adventure and romance without pornography. Wouk, born in 1915, published those in 1971 and 1978, so they reflect a mature wisdom—and he’s still alive, with May 27 marking his 102nd birthday.

If you like Flannery O’Connor, you may also like Tim Gautreaux’s *Signals: New and Selected Stories* (Knopf, 2017). I worried that his emphasis on grotesque Cajun people and places might leave Northern readers with a sense of superiority rather than an awareness of our common need for redemption—but the last two stories in the collection, “Welding with Children” and “What We Don’t See in the Light,” are perfect. Another short story collection, *What’s Left Out* by physician Jay Baruch (Kent State University Press, 2015), includes tales by what he knows well, life within hospitals and clinics.

If you like spy novels, I recommend Charles Cumming, David Downing (his World War II series), Alex Dryden, Mark Henshaw, Alan Furst, Philip Kerr, Jason Matthews, and Daniel Silva: None of their novels overflows with objectionable elements, but the main characters are in an occupation where violence is inevitable, sex is sometimes weaponized, and some words resemble grunts. So, round up the usual caveats.

That also goes for detective fiction that typically features moral heroes in corrupt societies: Since it’s harder to find more corruption than Russians have put up with for a century, you might try novels by Martin Cruz Smith, Tom Rob Smith, and William Ryan set in Moscow or thereabouts. Qiu Xiaolong looks at Chinese society similarly. For more about these books, see “Down Moscow’s mean streets” (WORLD, April 18, 2015) and “Down Berlin’s mean streets” (May 17, 2014).

I’ve just read my first spy novel by Alex Berenson, who has a series of 11 starring John Wells, a maverick CIA fighter against Islamic terrorists. Wells curiously becomes a Muslim in an early book, but comments like this from his girlfriend are rare in contemporary fiction: “I’m barely in the door, say I’m pregnant, the first thing the tech says, Is this baby desired? Like, You like this sweater or should I put it back on the shelf?... This baby desired? Is that really the relevant question? This baby’s a baby. I guess some women say no.”

Berenson also brings us into the brain of a French spy chief who had often gone to interments at Père Lachaise, the largest cemetery in Paris. A hand grenade is about to put him there as a victim, not a mourner: “His last thought, not a prayer. For like so many French, he was a rationalist, an atheist. Even now, God didn’t come for him. Instead... *All those trips to Père Lachaise, I never guessed at the evil in this world.*”

After this look at life-and-death novels, you might enjoy Angela Lu’s look on the next page at books that generate more laughs. ©
Laughs allowed

RECENT BOOKS THAT SHOW A LIGHT TOUCH  by Angela Lu

**Little Victories: Perfect Rules for Imperfect Living** by Jason Gay

- Written after his own battle with testicular cancer and his father’s death, *Wall Street Journal* sports columnist Jason Gay’s book focuses on the little things in life that turn out to be most important: Don’t try so hard to be cool. Marry someone you find interesting. Spend time with difficult family members before it’s too late. And of course, eat more tacos. The book is at times touching, such as portions about his relationship with his dying father, and at times laugh-out-loud funny, like his rules for playing Thanksgiving touch football (Rule No. 10: “No whining, taunting, or sobbing in Thanksgiving touch football. That’s what Thanksgiving dinner is for”).

**Best. State. Ever.: A Florida Man Defends His Homeland** by Dave Barry

- Humor columnist Dave Barry knows his home state is the butt of jokes. Rather than refute that reputation, he takes the reader to the most Floridian attractions: an underwater mermaid show, a search for the Bigfoot-like “skunk ape” in the Everglades, Gatorland, and the world’s largest retirement community. Crazy facts often make the funniest material: Along Route 19 stands a 58-foot-long pink concrete dinosaur originally created to attract people to a wildlife museum. A taxidermy shop specializing in deformed animals replaced that low-attendance museum, and then a fudge shop replaced it. (Caution: some sexually suggestive descriptions, especially in a chapter about the boozy Key West.)

**Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood** by Trevor Noah

- Daily Show host Trevor Noah was born to a white father and black mother during the apartheid era in South Africa when sex between different races was a crime. So Noah spent his younger years hidden inside his grandmother’s house. Even after apartheid ended, he struggled to fit into a society segregated by color. While the book delves into heavy topics such as racism, domestic violence, and class mobility, Noah humorously describes his relationship with his single mother, a fiercely independent and Jesus-loving Xhosa woman. He clearly loves and respects her for handing out “Old Testament” discipline and providing him opportunities to see that a world existed outside the ghetto. (Caution: some language.)

**Based on a True Story: A Memoir** by Norm Macdonald

- Fans of *Saturday Night Live* alum Norm Macdonald will be unsurprised that his “memoir” consists of tall tales only loosely connected to the truth. The straightforward comedian often criticizes the current genre of confessional comedy. Instead, he sets up absurd (or disturbing?) moments where he teases a reveal-all, then follows with drug use, nongraphic men and the world’s largest retirement community. Crazy facts often make the funniest material: Along Route 19 stands a 58-foot-long pink concrete dinosaur originally created to attract people to a wildlife museum. A taxidermy shop specializing in deformed animals replaced that low-attendance museum, and then a fudge shop replaced it. (Caution: some sexually suggestive descriptions, especially in a chapter about the boozy Key West.)

**SPOTLIGHT** For a lovely picture book with a light touch, try *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall (Candlewick, 2017). Jabari has finished swimming lessons and contemplates diving from the high dive. He says he’s ready and watches other children jumping, but then fear sets in. His dad tells him it’s OK to be scared and shares a trick for overcoming it. Pencil, watercolor, and collage illustrations highlight father/son interactions and give expression to Jabari’s range of emotions. (Ages 4-8)

For ages 6-12, *Growing Up Pedro* by Matt Tavares (Candlewick, 2017) focuses on the relationship between great Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez and his brother Ramon, a star in his own right. The story begins in the Dominican Republic where the brothers practice pitching by throwing rocks at mangoes in trees. The book shows Pedro’s admiration for his big brother. —Susan Olasky
Although publishers put out a steady stream of new mystery titles, finding stories that are clean and well-written can be difficult, especially if you don’t want to read about deranged serial killers or rapists. The mystery website “Stop, You’re Killing Me!” is a good place to find new writers and oldies that you may have missed. Here are a few older series worth checking out:

- Birder and nature writer Steve Burrows begins his Birder Murder Mystery series with *A Siege of Bitterns*. The series features an unconventional police inspector who loves bird-watching more than he loves detecting. Detective Chief Inspector Domenic Jejeune is a Canadian who has just landed a job in the U.K., where he lives near a salt marsh that’s home to many species of birds. Naturally, the first murder victim is a fellow birder. The book will appeal to those who enjoy nature writing and murders growing out of the seven deadly sins rather than a deranged psyche. Though Jejeune is in a cohabiting relationship, there’s no sexually explicit material or language.

- J.A. Jance also pens a series set in the Southwest—Brady. It features female sheriff Joanna Brady, who is also a mother and wife. In the most recent book in the series, *Downfall*, Brady is pregnant, dealing with the violent death of her mother and stepfather, and coping with family tensions surrounding the funeral. She’s also working on a double homicide. Her investigation uncovers sexual abuse and domestic violence, but Jance deals with those hard subjects without graphic detail or language.

- Sharan Newman’s *Death Comes as Epiphany* won the Macavity Award in 1994 for best first novel. Featuring brilliant young novice nun Catherine LeVendeur, the series set in 12th-century France begins with the abbess Heloise sending young Catherine back to her parents under the pretext that she’s too prideful to become a nun. In reality the abbess wants Catherine to investigate a potential heresy that threatens the convent. Historical figures like Peter Abelard and Heloise mingle with fictional ones in this series. Newman’s degrees in medieval history help her bring everyday details to life. For other medieval mysteries see Ellis Peters’ Brother Cadfael mysteries and Mel Starr’s Hugh de Singleton. Starr’s series has the advantage of a protagonist who ponders theology as he goes about his medical and bailiff duties.

- Two decades ago Francine Mathews wrote a series of Nantucket mysteries featuring policewoman Merry Folger, daughter of the local police chief. Soho Crime recently reissued them. *Death in the Off-Season* is the first book in the series. In it Folger must solve her first murder, that of a man found dead in a cranberry bog. All the novels exploit their island setting, playing up the tensions between locals and summer people. Mathews (under the pen name Stephanie Barron) went on to write a series featuring Jane Austen as a detective.

- Coming in August is *From Holmes to Sherlock: The Story of the Men and Women Who Created an Icon* by Mattias Boström. This entertaining account of Sherlock Holmes shows the famous detective’s beginning in Arthur Conan Doyle’s imagination; his proliferation through the work of agents, editors, and actors; and his current revival.

*Good Old-Fashioned Mysteries to Ponder and Puzzle Over* by Susan Olasky

WORLD Magazine • June 10, 2017
There are many ways to travel, including back in time. That's what *Lark Rise to Candleford* by Flora Thompson does. First published in 1939, the memoir is set in 1880s England, in a small hamlet and nearby market town in Oxfordshire. Thompson grew up there and bases the books on her childhood observations, offering unsentimental portraits of people, events, and ways of thinking. Although she never writes in the first person, “Laura” is based on her childhood self. She describes old country ways—including a generous helping of childhood rhymes and ballads—as they were fading away. Her engaging prose and eye for detail make the work a *Little House on the Prairie* for grown-ups. The BBC series is a charming complement to the book. —S.O.

Flora Thompson
Heavy books, lifted spirits

BEACH READERS DO NOT LIVE BY LIGHT BOOKS ALONE by Jamie Dean

In the waning hours of a warm afternoon in Sunset Beach, N.C., a friendly woman in a floppy hat approached my beach chair on a mission. She had been sitting in a nearby spot all week and was curious: What book had absorbed me every day?

When I hoisted a sandy copy of David McCullough’s 700-page biography John Adams, her face flashed a mixture of bewilderment and mild sympathy: This was beach entertainment?

Beach reading is a personal luxury, and I always enjoy watching fellow vacationers dig into whatever they prefer: Kindles, crosswords, paperbacks, magazines, and even the occasional hardback packed with a highlighter.

I usually stop short of the highlighter, but I don’t mind lugging a bulky volume in a bulging beach bag: Even on vacation, hefty books can soar the spirit.

In 2015, I tucked into my low-slung chair near my John Adams spot and dug into McCullough’s delightful account of The Wright Brothers. It seemed fitting to sit on a North Carolina beach and read about the famous siblings testing their earliest glider on the Outer Banks a few hours up the coast.

The Wright brothers weren’t sipping Coke Zero or occasionally dozing during their considerably more rustic beach trips in the fall of 1900. But as I read about how they studied the aerodynamics of sea gulls and tweaked the mechanics of their first flyer, I’d peer overhead and watch the gulls still bobbing effortlessly in the wind.

Occasionally, a plane would fly over the ocean, and I’d ponder how a pair of men a century ago created a monumental invention by observing God’s creation. The Wright brothers’ hard work displayed how people made in the image of their Creator reflect His image by becoming mini-creators themselves. God’s glory shines in birds, in planes—and in books that describe them.

God’s glory also shown brightly in For the Glory—my 2016 beach read about Olympic runner and missionary Eric Liddell. Author Duncan Hamilton describes Liddell’s inspiring 1924 Olympic gold medal run, after the athlete forfeited his best event to honor the Sabbath day.

When I glanced at the North Carolina coast stretching in front of me, I could imagine Liddell running down another beach with abandon in a famous Chariots of Fire scene.

But the most glorious part of Liddell’s life was the part less seen. After the Olympics, Liddell returned to China—where he had been born to missionary parents—to take up missionary work of his own.

As war loomed, he sent his wife and children to Canada but resolved to stay in his post. Eventually, he and many other foreigners landed in Japanese internment camps in dismal conditions.

Surviving camp members describe Liddell’s service as extraordinary. Despite immense suffering and deprivation, Liddell organized church services, schoolrooms, and prayer meetings. He counseled strangers, gave up his own food, and took on the hardest chores for the weakest prisoners.

Liddell died of an undiagnosed brain tumor hours after conducting a Bible study from his deathbed. The body of the athlete once hoisted onto the shoulders of fellow Olympians was now placed in a gnarled coffin and lifted by beleaguered camp members he loved to the end. Liddell had finished the race set before him.

How did he excel under such harrowing conditions in the last half of his short life? In part, by following the same rule he said helped him complete races: “I run the first 200 meters as hard as I can. Then, for the second 200 meters, with God’s help—I run harder.”

Inspiring words—even while on vacation. It’s a gift to read about the service of others and then return to the callings God gives us. For many of us, God made us to love words. And when we read, we feel His pleasure.

Liddell is paraded around Edinburgh University after winning the 400 meters at the 1924 Paris Olympics.
**Friends and enemies**

**FRIENDS AND ENEMIES: FOUR BOOKS OF WARTIME HISTORY**

*by Timothy Lamer*

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**The Lost Airman: A True Story of Escape from Nazi-Occupied France**
by Seth Meyerowitz with Peter F. Stevens

- Some among the French were brave during World War II. If you don’t believe that, read some of the numerous books about civilians in occupied France who sheltered downed Allied airmen. In this one, Seth Meyerowitz uses diaries, declassified reports, and interviews with elderly Frenchmen to piece together his late grandfather’s successful evasion from German capture in 1944, including several close calls in and around Toulouse. It’s a compelling story made a bit less so by instances of what almost has to be speculation on the authors’ part.

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**The Heart Mender: A Story of Second Chances**
by Andy Andrews

- In a twist on *The Lost Airman’s* theme, Andy Andrews writes about an American widow during World War II who falls in love with a wounded German U-boat officer she finds washed up near her home off the Alabama coast. The story, Andrews writes, is true “for the most part,” but some parts must be pure speculation, such as the thoughts of a Nazi fanatic hours before his death. An otherwise lovely narrative gets bogged down at times with lectures on history and forgiveness—and Helen, the widow, really should have turned in Josef, an enemy combatant.

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**Killing the Rising Sun: How America Vanquished World War II Japan**
by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard

- This installment of O’Reilly’s “Killing” series provides a history of Harry Truman’s decision to drop two atomic bombs on Japan and gives the context behind that decision: Allies facing a sadistic enemy that was growing more fanatical as U.S. forces advanced. The authors maintain a readable narrative even as they describe Japanese atrocities and the horrors that soldiers, sailors, and marines faced. The book, though, suffers from a problem that afflicts some other popular histories of the Pacific War: too much MacArthur, not enough Nimitz.

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**My Fellow Soldiers: General John Pershing and the Americans Who Helped Win the Great War**
by Andrew Carroll

- Carroll tells the story of U.S. involvement in World War I in large part through letters home from the Americans involved—from Pershing down to privates and even civilians, such as volunteer ambulance drivers, who went “over there” before U.S. entry into the war. It’s fascinating to read the thoughts of the young officers and doughboys, including ones who would later become famous. Capt. Harry Truman, for example, gained a reputation for fearlessness under enemy shelling that scattered his unit. To fiancée Bess Wallace he gave the rest of the story: “I was too scared to run and that is pretty scared.”

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**SPOTLIGHT**

*The subtitle of Tom Clavin’s* **Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West** (St. Martin’s, 2017) isn’t hyperbole. Cowboys in the 1870s arrived at the famous Kansas railhead after long cattle drives, and they had loaded guns and money to spend. Clavin recounts the details (without getting graphic) of how they spent the money: on whiskey, gambling, and ever-present prostitutes—and how the combination sometimes led to violence.

But the cowboys and the cattle drives were important to the city’s economy, and the mission of lawmen like Earp and Masterson was not so much to clean up Dodge as to keep the wickedness south of the “Dead Line” and to keep the city’s famous Boot Hill Cemetery from growing too quickly.

Bat comes across as having a bit higher character than his friend Wyatt. (Clavin credits Bat’s decision not to seek personal vengeance after cowboys killed his brother Ed—but instead arrest the suspects—as a defining moment in the taming of the Wild West.) But both Bat and Wyatt were committed to “lawing” when not making money, and Clavin gives an entertaining and measured account of their run-ins with an array of colorful outlaws. —T.L.
When Lynn Vincent zooms by on her gleaming Harley-Davidson bike, people stare, amused at the sight of a 5-foot-3, 120-pound figure straddling a massive machine. But when she’s with her Harley Owners Group (HOG) friends and their collective engines howl guttural vrrroom-vrrrooooooms like a pack of street beasts, people grab their young and hurry away, mistaking the group of Harley-Davidson enthusiasts for hooligans.

The 50-year-old Vincent is hardly a rabble-rouser or an attention hogger. Shorn of her bejeweled Harley-Davidson leather jacket, black riding chaps, and 755-pound turquoise Heritage Softail bike, she’s a mother of two with curious blue-green eyes, scarlet-manicured nails, and free-flowing laughs.

She’s also the co-author of 11 non-fiction books including *Going Rogue*, *Same Kind of Different as Me*, and *Heaven Is for Real*. All three made it onto *The New York Times* bestseller list, and the latter two became blockbuster movies—all impressive achievements, particularly for a self-taught college dropout whose books manifest her conservative Christian convictions.

Vincent’s own life is the kind of story she loves to tell. She grew up with an alcoholic mother in condemned drug houses, then lived in a tent on the beach until she borrowed a quarter to catch a cross-island bus. At 14, Vincent left a home for runaways in Manoa, Hawaii, and flew to the muddy riverbanks of Scottsboro, Ala., where her grandmother raised her. There in the Deep South, a culture-slapped Vincent heard someone spit out the N-word for the
SOPHIA LEE visited her Mediterranean-style ranch house on a secluded hill near San Diego, Vincent, her husband, and four other HOG members zipped on a four-hour cruise through the winding paths of green-and-gold-speckled country hills—round-the-bend curves that Vincent calls “twisties.”

Vincent once feared those “twisties.” Before she learned to trust her skills, her neck tensed, her grip tightened, and her mind raced faster than her bike as it sped toward the dreaded corners: “Am I going to make it? What should my entry speed be, when should I press on the handlebar, how fast should I accelerate?”

Similar cacophonous thoughts ricochet in her mind when she’s tackling a new book project, each more challenging than the last. In the thick of discouragement, she wonders, “Who am I fooling? Is this the project that finally proves I’m not a writer after all?” Then she remembers the insights she learned from riding: Be where you are. Focus on what’s right ahead of you and take things one sharp turn, one keystroke at a time. She looks across her desk at the shelf where she keeps her published books, and breathes out slowly: “OK, you’ve done this before. You can do it again.”

Vincent began her writing career in 1992 freelancing for “free magazines that you find in laundromats.” In 1998 she began freelancing for WORLD and joined the staff in 2000. Even as a journalist, Vincent gravitated toward challenging stories with strong justice components, such as her 1999 piece on trafficked aborted human fetal parts and her 2002 investigation into sexual abuse among Protestant clergymen.

Her 11 years at WORLD taught Vincent how to tell a good story. “I still have a little Marvin who sits here on my shoulder,” Vincent said, referring to WORLD’s editor in chief, Marvin Olasky. “He looks over at my page like this”—she raised her eyebrows, pursed her lips, and arched her neck forward—and this imaginary Marvin grills her: “How do you know that’s true? Needs more specific detail.”

After interviewing thousands of individuals—tragedy victims, politicians, church leaders, activists, and soldiers—Vincent has fine-tuned the art of extracting intimate anecdotes and key facts. Her drill-sergeant persistence and unending questions excavate the details needed for the engaging prose, come-to-life characters, and vivid imaginations that earned her recognition in the literary world. By 2009, when Sarah Palin picked her to ghostwrite her autobiography, Vincent was the most successful writer few have ever heard of.

Vincent prefers it that way. It’s why she loves hanging out with her HOG buddies every weekend: Nobody ever asks what she did for a living. Nobody blinked when they finally found out she’s a best-selling author. Once on the bike, all they care about is the road ahead—and to Vincent, who admits to being “a bit of a workaholic,” that simplified, one-tunnel mental zone is sweet, clean relief.

Currently, she’s working on her first historical nonfiction book, about the 1945 sinking of the USS Indianapolis, the greatest at-sea disaster in naval history and the one made famous by Robert Shaw’s gripping monologue in the movie Jaws. Vincent undertook this project because it contained all the elements that interest her—military history, intrinsically human stories of tragedy and courage, notes of justice—but “I had no idea what I was getting myself into.”

For all of her previous books, she simply picked up her phone and called her sources to procure the details she needed. But almost all the witnesses for the USS Indianapolis tragedy are dead. That means in order to write a brief scene about a young crewman getting a midnight meal, Vincent had to dig through national archives, memoirs, interviews, and reporting notes: What sandwich did John Woolston order? Did he sip or chug his coffee? What was Woolston thinking and feeling at the time?

Writing is a “maddening, but fun” process that requires strict discipline, Vincent said. Every Tuesday through June 10, 2017 • WORLD Magazine 39
Staff picks

WE ASKED WORLDLINGS TO RECOMMEND A LIGHT READING BOOK OR TWO

- **News of the World** by Paulette Jiles (William Morrow, 2016) is a Western set in post-Civil War Texas. Jiles’ character-driven story depicts vividly the chaos of that place and time. Written as a 200-page prose poem, the novel offers typical poetic virtues: compression, resonance, beauty, and power. It shows how rich and deeply imagined the historical novel can be. —Graphic Designer Rachel Beatty

- **Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush** by Jon Meacham (Random House, 2015) is a fascinating, fast-moving, and straightforward biography of the straightforward 41st president, whose integrity in office is legend (now more than ever) and whose Steady Eddie style was crucial to bringing a definitive end to the Cold War. —Senior Editor Mindy Belz

- **The Life of Elves** by Muriel Barbery (Europa Editions, 2016) draws on the novelist’s admiration of Tolkien and Orson Scott Card to create a fantasy anchored in the humble day-to-day reality of two European farm girls and a World of the Mists. The first of a two-part tale. —Mindy Belz

- **Dear Mr. Knightley** by Katherine Reay (Thomas Nelson, 2013) is a novel about a 23-year-old orphan who receives a scholarship from an anonymous benefactor. She sends letters chronicling her progress and finds confidence to hide no longer behind the personas of her favorite literary characters. —Editorial Assistant Kristin Chapman

- **Hero of the Empire** by Candice Millard (Doubleday, 2016) is an action-adventure account of young Winston Churchill’s experience in South Africa during the Boer War and how it helped shape him into one of the giants of the 20th century. —National Editor Jamie Dean

- **Princes at War: The Bitter Battle Inside Britain’s Royal Family in the Darkest Days of WWII** by Deborah Cadbury (PublicAffairs, 2016) is a fascinating account of the four sons of King George V before and during World War II. (Also good historical perspective for those watching Netflix’s *The Crown* miniseries.) —Jamie Dean

- **Three Years in Afghanistan: An American Family’s Story of Faith, Endurance and Love**, a memoir by Matthew Collins (CreateSpace, 2016), describes engagingly what life in Afghanistan was like for him. —Editorial Assistant Amy Derrick

- **The Homeschool Experiment** by Charity Hawkins (Familyman Ministries, 2012) is a humorous novel about what might transpire over a year in the life of a homeschool family. —Amy Derrick

- **The Other Side of Infamy** by Jim Downing (NavPress, 2016) is a memoir by the second-oldest Pearl Harbor survivor (103) that gives an inside look at that infamous day and
how his faith in Christ helped him navigate World War II and beyond.
—WORLD Radio Managing Editor J.C. Derrick

**Under Our Skin** by Benjamin Watson (Tyndale Momentum, 2015), longtime NFL player and homeschool dad, explores how Christians can approach race, bias, and justice with Biblical truth at the foundation. —J.C. Derrick

**Marry Wisely, Marry Well: A Blueprint for Personal Preparation** by Ernie Baker (Shepherd Press, 2016) offers a Bible-rich guide to help singles (including me) think wisely about finding a life partner. This Biblical-counseling professor shows how to evaluate readiness for marriage, uncover idols of the heart that influence relationships and attraction, and understand how God leads us to the right person.
—Managing Editor Daniel James Devine

**The Girl on the Train** by Paula Hawkins (Riverhead Books, 2015) is a London-set psychological thriller about a depressed woman called Rachel who fantasizes about a couple she sees on her daily train commute. Then the wife suddenly disappears, and Rachel realizes she might know who the culprit is. Three women narrate the story—an alcoholic, a liar, and a cheat—and the reader can trust none of them. Caution: some language and sexual references.
—Reporter Sophia Lee

**Son of Hamas** by Mosab Hassan Yousef (SaltRiver, 2010) is a memoir by the son of a founding member of Hamas, now a Palestinian terrorist group. Mosab grew up as the son of a devout imam, fought for the Palestinian cause as a Hamas leader, turned over to spy for Shin Bet, and eventually converted to Christianity. His story gives an insider’s view into Hamas, Shin Bet, the Muslim-Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Palestinian world. —Sophia Lee

**The Enchanted** by Rene Denfeld (Harper, 2014) is a dark, realistic, yet magical novel about the world seen through the imaginative mind of a death row inmate in solitary confinement. Through him, readers delve into the inner pains of The Lady, an investigator who digs into prisoners’ pasts to rescue them from execution. She also digs into the secrets of a fallen priest who offers absolution to inmates but suffers from his own self-condemnation. Beautiful, easy-to-read prose, yet profound and moving in its themes of redemption, identity, innocence, and guilt. —Sophia Lee

**Unscripted: The Unpredictable Moments That Make Life Extraordinary** by Ernie Johnson Jr. (Baker Books, 2017) offers short, inspirational, autobiographical vignettes, where the host of TNT’s Inside the NBA touches on his media career, his faith, his marriage, parenting and fatherhood, adoption (international, special-needs, and at-risk children), cancer survival, and sports. Johnson sprinkles his stories with what he calls “blackberries”—unscripted but life-changing moments to cherish. The conversational style of this first-time author makes the book a quick and enjoyable read. —WORLD Digital Executive Editor Mickey McLean

**The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency** by Alexander McCall Smith (Berlin, 1998) is the first novel in the series about an energetic and funny Botswana woman who sets up the country’s first detective agency and the cases she handles.
—WORLD Digital Reporter Onize Ohikere

**Oliver Twist** by Charles Dickens (Richard Bentley, 1838) is an enduring classic that dives into the plight of London’s street children through one orphan’s experience with workhouses and pickpockets.
—Onize Ohikere

**The Beltway Bible** by Eliot Nelson (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2016) is a lighthearted guide through D.C. jargon from “Jumbo Slice” to “omnibus” as told by a sometimes funny, cynical Washington journalist.
—WORLD Digital Reporter Evan Wilt

**The Nightingale** by Kristin Hannah (St. Martin’s Press, 2015) is an action-packed novel set in World War II France about two sisters who resist the human instinct to crumble in the hardest of circumstances. —Evan Wilt
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VENezuela’s crushing collapse offers lessons for outsiders drawn to big-government systems that can’t deliver

BY JAMIE DEAN

WHEN SAMUEL OLSON BUMPS INTO ACQUAINTANCES OR colleagues he hasn’t seen in a few weeks, the Venezuelan pastor often notices an obvious difference: His friends are losing weight. Olson’s friends aren’t alone.

A recent study reported 3 out of 4 Venezuelans say they’ve lost weight in the last year. Nineteen pounds is the average. The losses don’t come from trying to slim down. They come from struggling to find food, as the country with the world’s largest proven oil reserves descends into pitiful hunger.

Venezuela was once a stable democracy and the wealthiest country in Latin America. These days, thousands of citizens flood the streets to protest a corrupt government, and scores wait in daylong lines for limited food supplies that often sell out.

The country’s triple-digit inflation rate last year was one of the highest in the world, a figure some economists estimated at more than 400 percent. Local currency is nearly worthless.

Medicines are scarce, and surgeons often urge patients to bring their own sheets, toilet paper, and gauze. In one city, physicians used seltzer water to wash their hands when the hospital’s water supply shut down. They operated in blood-soaked rooms because no soap was available for cleaning.

What happened to Venezuela?
A shopper looks at what’s left on the shelves of a grocery store in La Vela, Venezuela.

MERIDITH KOHUT/THE NEW YORK TIMES/GETTY IMAGES
Olson offers a concise answer. “We have slowly slipped out of democracy into a false democracy, and we are now becoming a radicalized socialist nation,” he says. “The general saying is that we are becoming the next Cuba.”

Is there a way to stop the spiral?

Throngs of Venezuelans hope so, even as their daily street protests meet brutal security crackdowns: At least 48 have died during clashes with police in the last few weeks. In May, an armored tank plowed into demonstrators in the capital city of Caracas.

Many protesters want regime change, but Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is defiant. The protégé of former socialist dictator Hugo Chávez denies the unfolding calamity, and he refuses outside humanitarian aid, even as his own people starve.

As street protests grow, Maduro has shut down opposition leaders, vowed to rewrite the constitution, and promised to crush “brutal, fascist attacks.” He declares to critics, “I am no Mussolini.”

Maduro may not be Mussolini, but his regime is a disaster, and the tragedy offers a warning to Americans with romantic notions of socialism. “We’ve seen this movie played out all over the world,” says Latin American expert José Cárdenas. “And it invariably fails miserably.”

**VENEZUELA WASN’T ALWAYS FAILING.**

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Venezuela experienced democratic reforms and improved living conditions across the country. Farms prospered and oil production rose.

Economic downturns in the late 1980s led to turmoil, and a group of leftist military officers attempted a coup led by Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez. The government thwarted the takeover, but Chávez’s popularity soared, as Venezuelans grew disgruntled with their leaders.

Chávez won the presidency in 1998, promising to improve economic conditions and provide for the poorest citizens. With oil prices booming, Chávez undertook vast social welfare programs, and he paid for them with the country’s oil profits. Many struggling Venezuelans revered him as a modern-day Robin Hood, and the largess cemented Chávez’s political support.

Meanwhile, Chávez consolidated power. His efforts abolished the upper house of parliament, eliminated term limits for the presidency, packed courts with cronies, censored critical media, formed an ironclad alliance with Cuba, and pushed through what he called an “anti-capitalist” constitution.

(He also famously loathed America. During a speech at the United Nations in 2006, Chávez called President George W. Bush “the devil” and told the assembly that the spot where Bush had stood earlier “smells of sulfur still today.”)

In 2001, Chávez began seizing land. “This land is not yours,” he told landowners in a televised speech. “The land is not private, but the property of the nation.”

Seized farms languished, along with other companies Chávez nationalized, as the government parcelled out profitable farms to inexperienced workers. Government price controls meant many farmers couldn’t make a profit. Production plummeted, and the country grew more dependent on food imports.

By the time Chávez died of cancer in 2013, his handpicked successor won by less than 1 percent of the vote. But President Nicolás Maduro vowed to continue chavismo—Chávez’s crumbling system of dictator-based socialism.

In 2014, the system imploded.

Oil prices sank, and the government couldn’t pay for the unsustainable subsidies and welfare programs it had created under Chávez. The country’s other gutted industries couldn’t respond, says Cárdenas, a foreign policy official...
during the George W. Bush administration: “It laid the whole bankruptcy of the system bare.”


These days, many Venezuelans line up at grocery stores before dawn, hoping to buy scant quantities of items like sugar, oil, or eggs. A national identification number dictates the single day each week a shopper may queue for price-controlled goods. Some people miss work to wait for items they can’t find. Flour is a rarity. Toilet paper is a luxury. Bread shelves are barren.

Some items in stores aren’t price-controlled, but they’re often too expensive for many shoppers. Black markets flourish, but many of those goods are out of reach for plenty of Venezuelans as well.

That doesn’t mean food isn’t arriving. Imports have plunged as the government runs out of money, but the items that do arrive in Venezuelan ports often languish in a web of corruption.

Maduro placed military officials in charge of the country’s food system, and an Associated Press investigation in December reported widespread corruption and waste.

For example, when local grocer Jose Campos ran out of food supplies for his store, he says he visited an illegal market in the middle of the night to buy flour from military officials. He paid 100 times the government-set price. “The military would be watching over whole bags of money,” Campos told the AP. “They always had what I needed.”

Luis Pena, a director at a Caracas-based import business, told the AP he has to pay off military officials to bring food imports into the country: “It’s an unbroken chain of bribery from when your ship comes in until the food is driven out in trucks.” If he doesn’t pay the bribes, the food sits and spoils.

Daniel Arteaga, a crane operator, told the news agency he watched as workers at a state-run warehouse buried hundreds of boxes of spoiled meat imported by the government. The report said photos showed men in military fatigues burying beef and chicken at a local dump. Residents at a nearby slum said they dig up food when the military leaves to see if they can find something for their children. (In a study of Venezuelan children under the age of 5, the Catholic relief agency Caritas found that 11 percent suffered from acute malnutrition.)

But hunger isn’t just a problem for the poor. The extreme shortages mean Venezuelans across classes struggle to find food. Samuel Olson, the Venezuelan pastor, says middle-class members of the large church he leads in Caracas are sometimes embarrassed to admit their families are hungry: “You can see the hurt and sense of shame on their faces.”

A church elder with a stable income recently told Olson he couldn’t feed his family of five. “One can hardly believe it,” says the pastor.

“That this person has been going hungry for a week or two weeks, but has said nothing until the hunger becomes too great.”

Meanwhile, government officials deny the severity of the calamity, and they refuse to allow outside assistance. “The humanitarian corridor assumes the existence of a humanitarian crisis,” declared Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez. “It’s a theory constructed by the Pentagon so that the U.S. can intervene.”

Hunger isn’t theoretical for the Venezuelans seeking help from Olson’s church. The members of Las Acacias Evangelical Pentecostal Church—the largest evangelical church in Caracas—pool resources and try to help others. Olson, who is also head of the Evangelical Alliance of Venezuela, says God has provided items for the church to share.
Each week, the congregation distributes food parcels to families with no supplies. Every other week, congregants make soup for members of the community and offer a gospel-based message. They call the midday gatherings the “Lord’s Lunch.”

For smaller churches, resources are even more limited, and efforts are often entirely grassroots. David Berkey, an evangelical missionary in Caracas since 1992, says the few dozen members of his church help each other with basic networking. If a member finds an unexpected stock of items at a store, he’ll sometimes buy as much as he can to share or trade with others.

“It’s given people lots of opportunities to help each other, which is what we’re supposed to do as believers in Christ,” he says. “We’re having to make that very practical these days.”

Berkey and his wife have avoided long lines by purchasing items that aren’t price-controlled. But those items are limited too, and Berkey says they make meals out of what they can find at the store. Like many Venezuelans, they’ve lost about 20 pounds. Supporters have offered to send funds to buy food for those in need, but Berkey says it’s complicated when items just aren’t available: “This is not a problem that money can solve.”

Not all losses are physical. The church is losing people as well. Members who grew up in the congregation have left Venezuela to find work elsewhere. They’ve studied in universities, but can’t find jobs in their home country. They’ve scattered to Spain, Canada, the United States, Peru, and China. Their parents watch their children leave and raise families in another country.

“These are people who have a lot to offer as Venezuelans,” says Berkey. “But they are being squeezed out.”

Some 2 million Venezuelans have left the country since Chávez took office in 1999, according to Venezuelan migration expert Tomás Páez. The country’s population is 31 million. Venezuela now leads the world in asylum requests to the United States, surpassing China last year.

Even if Venezuelans can find enough to eat, they face another major hurdle: finding decent healthcare. The country has had socialized medicine, but without sufficient supplies, doctors can’t treat basic illnesses.

Over the last year, infant mortality has jumped 30 percent. Maternal mortality is up 66 percent. Most of the deaths are preventable: Mothers sometimes get infections because hospitals don’t have soap for cleaning. They die from infections because hospitals don’t have access to antibiotics.

According to the Venezuelan group Doctors for Health, 64 percent of hospitals reported having no baby formula. Last year, the Pharmaceutical Federation of Venezuela reported 85 percent of all drugs are either difficult or impossible to find.

In one border town, a Catholic organization that once served Colombians displaced by violence now helps Venezuelans displaced by hunger or illness.

For some of the people most vulnerable and forgotten, conditions are deplorable. Last fall, The New York Times published a series of harrowing photos from a state-run psychiatric hospital in the city of Barquisimeto.

The hospital had limited food, and some patients were withering. Water was running only a few hours a day. The hospital had no soap, no toothpaste, and no toilet paper.

Patients without medications for severe mental illnesses sometimes posed a danger to others, and nurses had no access to sedatives to calm down distressed patients. “In courtyards,
women who are functional while medicated are now curled on
the floor hallucinating, crying, screaming, rocking back and
forth for hours,” the Times reported.

In some cases, nurses locked patients in rooms alone or tied
them with restraints to keep them from hurting themselves or
others. The head nurse said most patients had been abandoned
by their families and had no one else to help them: “God have
mercy on us.”

WILL MADURO SHOW MERCY?
The leader hasn’t shown signs of backing down.
Instead, he’s attempted to strip power from the opposition-
controlled legislature, and says he’ll rewrite the country’s
constitution.

International pressure mounts: President
Donald Trump called Venezuela’s humanitarian
crisis “a disgrace to humanity,” and the United
States placed sanctions on eight members of the
country’s Supreme Court in May. Maduro
responded by taunting Trump: “Get your dirty
hands out of here.”

Even as security forces fire tear gas into crowds
and crack down on protesters in violent clashes, the
president appears in bizarre propaganda videos,
dancing to hip-hop music and planting a tree. He
promises peace will prevail, but offers no explana-
tions for when Venezuelans will vote in elections,
or how they will find their next meal.

“This is a purely Cuban response,” says expert
José Cárdenas. He notes Maduro relies on Cuban
counsel: “You never devolve power to sectors of
society that you can’t control… The message from
Havana is the people can always absorb more
hardship.”

As Venezuelans absorb crushing
hardship, a significant group is
beginning to join the protests: the
poor. Initially, street demonstrations
largely included students and
middle-class citizens, but poorer
residents fed up with grinding
hunger are slowly joining some of
the protests as well.

It’s a risk for them: Some say
they’re afraid to lose what little help
the government still distributes in
some of the poorest neighborhoods.
But Cárdenas says the growing
number of poverty-stricken demon-
strators may prove a turning point in
Maduro’s efforts to retain power, as
they grasp the futility of a system
they once trusted.

The futility of Venezuela’s
system offers a stark lesson for
Americans enamored with social-
ism. When presidential candidate
 Bernie Sanders proposed $18 trillion
in government spending over a decade, his socialistic message
gained substantial traction.

In 2015, a Gallup poll found nearly 70 percent of U.S.
millennials would be willing to elect a socialist president. It’s
a notable contrast with another statistic: In Venezuela, nearly
70 percent of young people living under a socialist regime say
they want to leave the country.

Others say they will stay. Pastor Olson says it’s unclear
where the crisis is heading, but says he’s thankful for
Venezuelans committed to staying under worsening
conditions.

“We do believe in this God who gives us the strength to go
through one tragedy after another tragedy,” he says. “We do
believe in this God who provides. We do not know the hows
and the whens, but we know that the Lord is faithful.”

jdean@wng.org  @deanworldmag

June 10, 2017  •  WORLD Magazine  49
It was a day Denise Shick had been dreaming about for years. She stood at the church foyer in an ivory hand-stitched gown, her mind racing and her heart thumping. When the wedding march began, her father crooked his left arm toward her, and as they took their first step, he leaned in and whispered, “I wish it were me in that gown.”

Shick almost tripped. While father and daughter walked down the aisle, she was internally screaming with fury and hurt: Why? Why did she have to deal with the pain and confusion of her father’s transgender identity on her special day? Once again she remembered the day her father took the then-9-year-old Shick to a grassy hill outside the house and said, “Denise, I want to be a woman.” She remembered all those times when her father rustled through her underwear drawer and sneaked into motels to cross-dress. Now as her father’s words echoed in her mind throughout the ceremony, Shick wondered if she would ever break free from this broken, twisted relationship with her father.
Shick's turmoil on her wedding day was just one of many ways her father's transgender identity affected his family. Too often, the media and society frame the transgender issue in terms of individuals' choices and desires (see “Suffer the children,” April 15). Transgenderism has become a civil rights movement, a human rights campaign, a cultural revolution—but the roar of all these cultural and political upheavals has drowned the voice of family members who also experience a life-changing transition.

That day when her father told her he was a woman trapped in a man's body, Shick felt she had lost a father. As a child Shick did not understand and could not give her father the empathy and affirmation he craved. Her father's internal war with his biological identity wasn't just his—it roiled over and smothered the whole family—long before he ultimately left them so he could transition into “Becky.”

Shick watched her mother morph from a confident woman who wore lipstick and puffed her hair to a genderless shadow who lost all desire to express her femininity. Shick, too, became uncomfortable with her own blossoming womanhood. All the life events that should have brought her joy—her first period, her prom night, the wedding, her first child—instead plunged her into distress as she saw her father's expression of envy and displeasure. Instead of celebrating her womanhood, she wondered: “Is this the experience he covets? Does he hate me for being a woman?” As a budding teenager she wore shapeless clothes to obliterate all her feminine curves and smuggled makeup to school to apply it there, far away from her father's stares.

For years, Shick kept the family dysfunction secret: What's the point? Who could ever understand all the day-to-day chaos of her anxiety and stress and tension? Who could help? By age 13 she was drinking heavily and avoiding home, and by 15 the temptation of suicide stalked her. At times she questioned her own gender and sexuality—if God had made a mistake with her father's biology, surely He could have made a mistake with her too?

One man's struggle brought multi-tentacled angst to the entire family. Yet not many professional resources are available for families of transgender-identifying or gender-nonconforming individuals. Most of what's available advocates unequivocal support for the loved one's self-affirmed gender: Accept your loved one's chosen identity, many groups warn, or tragedies such as suicide will happen. Few alternative resources exist for families who grieve the whole process of losing a parent, spouse, child, or sibling. Many family members who hold on to Biblical truths about sex and gender feel extreme pressure from relatives and friends to “just accept” their loved one's new gender expression.

After her father died of cancer, Shick searched two years for an organization that provides Bible-based help and support to families of transgender-identifying individuals. She couldn't find any. But the burden for such a ministry continued to weigh upon her until Shick got on her knees and begged God to either take the burden away or open up the doors.

In 2004 Shick founded Help 4 Families, a Christian ministry for family members of individuals struggling with gender identity issues. Help 4 Families currently provides various support and resources such as one-on-one conversations, support groups, workshops, and conferences. Much of Shick's work involves listening to spouses and parents who feel utterly alone and helpless. She receives about 60 calls a month, but that number is now growing with calls from distressed spouses and parents of increasingly younger kids who identify as transgender. These calls spike during holidays, school breaks, and whenever another celebrity “comes out” as transgender.

Howard and Karin Chavis are one such couple who called Shick, desperate for help and comfort. Their only son, now 31, had decided to undergo gender reassignment surgery in Thailand, and he wanted his mother to accompany him. Karin Chavis agonized over the decision—as a mother, she longed to be with her son during a major surgical operation in a foreign country. But as a Christian who believes in God's gender design, she told her son no. The Chavis family didn't hear from their son for months after that phone call.
Ever since their son came out as gay and then transgender, the Chavises tried to maintain good relations with him. They visited him wherever his latest home was—San Francisco, Colorado Springs, Palm Springs—and met his then-lovers. Each time their son announced yet another major transition—hormone therapy, name change, plastic surgery, and breast implants—his parents reeled from shock and loss all over again. “It means no weddings, no baby showers. . . . You’re just given this big long line of noes,” Howard Chavis said. They worried about their son’s safety, his health, his relationship choices, the permanent self-mutilation, and most of all, his deliberate rebellion against God.

Karin Chavis likened her grief to a train wreck: “You have all these different emotions that are attached to these railcars that are now suddenly derailed from the train crash. That’s the devastation. I didn’t want to live anymore. I just wanted to die.” She blamed herself, at times turned her finger to her husband, then simply let herself drown in guilt, anxiety, and despair.

When they were first dealing with this issue, church friends and relatives heaped advice on them—“You should pray more.” “You should celebrate it!” “You know, being transgender is a sin!” “Just love your son”—but it wasn’t until they found a support system with other Christian family members going through the same issue that they felt heard and understood.

Today the Chavises receive calls from parents desperate for a listening ear and prayers. “Now we’re becoming a resource for other parents,” Howard Chavis said. And perhaps one day, these parents too will become a resource for more family members.

Karin Chavis remembers the countless times she cried out, “Why, God? Why my son?” and begged God to fix him. She said she didn’t understand God’s purpose and didn’t want it at the time; but after she finally stopped fighting against Him and asked God to help her die to herself, she says, she began to feel at peace: “I pray for God to breathe for me.”

‘It means no weddings, no baby showers. . . . You’re just given this big long line of noes.’
—Howard Chavis
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As a forester, Bob Naeger has mapped parts of the Trail of Tears with a state archaeologist and found forgotten cemeteries in the middle of kudzu-covered timber tracts. But last year he and his wife Renee purchased an old Mississippi cabin and found on the property a forgotten trunk. When he unlatched the trunk’s rusty hinges, he set free seven decades of smells clinging to its contents. Beneath a wallpapered panel he found 25 letters.

U.S. Army Air Corpsman John Allen Price, stationed at Wheeler Field on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, wrote them to his mother from 1939 through 1941. The first said: “I kinda hate to start writing. ... It seems as if I should just wait until I come home and tell you everything then.” But the 24-year-old airplane mechanic decided to keep writing. For two years he sent home precisely one letter each month, each with a 3-cent, indigo-colored Thomas Jefferson postage stamp on the front of the envelope and a sprawling return address on the back.

Price also sent part of his wages home to his mother, Leona. Widowed at 25, she had raised five children of her own, plus four belonging to her sister. When Price learned of Leona’s surprise remarriage, he penned congratulations: “I have always thought lots of George Little, but even as good as...”
he is, he is no more than my precious mother deserves.” Three letters later, Price called his new stepfather “Pop.”

Price wrote about a tonsillectomy that kept him in the station hospital (and away from KP duty) for nine days, a mumps quarantine that kept his squadron from the barbershop, and a new spark plug’s ability to make a P-40 pursuit plane “run like a sewing machine.” He described maneuvers involving planes fully loaded with 1,000 rounds of ammunition, during which “everyone wears a .45, with two loaded clips in his belt.” He described the challenges of being a crew chief. When one of his men made a suicide leap from a cliff, he took it hard. “I wasn’t as friendly toward him as I could have been.”

Price’s last letter, dated Nov. 23, 1941, was weighty, and not merely because of the double postage affixed to the envelope. War loomed, and the recently promoted staff sergeant sent his mother four pages of thoughts: “I know it is lonesome and trying for you, but you shouldn’t feel so badly about your two sons being away. For there are some poor mothers who are no doubt giving up more sons than you ever had.... I still do not like the army life, but I have a job to do for my country. As long as it is in danger, I will remain in this life to do that job. Of course, I will come home if possible when my time is up.”

On Dec. 1, Price bought a classic snow-and-holly Christmas card for his mother. He signed it with a simple “your son, John,” and dropped it by the post office at 3:30 p.m. Six days later, just minutes before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, dive bombers targeted Wheeler Field and its air defenses, killing Price and 34 others there. Nearly 3,500 Americans were killed or wounded in the overall Pearl Harbor attack.

The Naegers found 107 condolence letters tucked away in the trunk. They also found a Western Union telegram that arrived on Dec. 10, 1941: John Manthrop of Life magazine requested a photo for a story on the first casualties of the war.

Price’s remains didn’t return to Mississippi until 1947. A newspaper then featured his military portrait and funeral details, including the expected three-round volley and folded flag. In 1970, Leona’s headstone was placed just yards away from her son’s grave at Pleasant Hill Cemetery. The Naegers do not know why the trunk ended up in an old smokehouse on the family property, where it stayed for almost a half-century.

Price had longed for home. “I have been here one year, one month, 14 days, and about six hours,” he recorded on Sept. 16, 1940, just after Congress enacted America’s first peacetime draft: “How are all the boys taking the passing of the conscription bill? Tell them that I will probably see them sooner than I expected.”

—Kim Henderson, a graduate of the World Journalism Institute mid-career class, is a mom with her own stash of Marine mail
Scientists have long known that sick people smell different from healthy people. The odors emitted by our breath, skin, and body fluids reflect complex changes in our metabolism and immune system, and a growing body of research points to the possibility of diagnosing diseases using smell.

Much of this research has focused on using animals—particularly dogs—to sniff out the differences between sick and healthy people. But the rapidly maturing technology of artificial odor sensors suggests we may soon see inexpensive and reliable odor-based diagnostic tools.

Britain’s National Health Service is underwriting a 3,000-patient clinical trial of an odor-detecting silicon chip from Owlstone, a Cambridge-based manufacturer of chemical sensors. The chip has layers of metals and gold electrodes that act as a chemical filter. “You can program what you want to sniff out just by changing the software,” Owlstone co-founder Billy Boyle told The New York Times. “We can use the device for our own trials on colorectal cancer, but it can also be used by our partners to look for other things, like irritable bowel disease.”

Other researchers are teaching artificially intelligent sensors to improve their diagnosis of diseases by sniffing the combination of chemicals that make up a unique disease odor. “We send all the signals to a computer, and it will translate the odor into a signature that connects it to the disease we exposed to it,” Hossam Haick, a chemical engineer at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, told the Times.

According to the newspaper, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and the Monell Chemical Senses Center are developing a DNA-based odor sensor that detects ovarian cancer in samples of blood plasma. Groups in Austria, Switzerland, and Japan are also developing odor sensors for medical diagnosis.

Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX, wants to close the divide between those with access to broadband internet and those without. His solution: launch a constellation of thousands of internet satellites.

SpaceX’s vice president for “satellite government affairs,” Patricia Cooper, testified early in May before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. She revealed details about the company’s planned 4,425-satellite network it claims will provide global broadband internet to remote and underdeveloped parts of the world.

Cooper said SpaceX would begin launching prototypes to test the system as early as the end of this year, with the goal of launching the first phase of the constellation in 2019 and completing the entire system by 2024.

SpaceX’s constellation would operate in low Earth orbit between 690 and 823 miles above the Earth’s surface, creating a “mesh network” that could, in theory, provide high broadband speeds on par with fiber optic cable.

Cooper suggested that improved technology as well as reductions in space launch costs—due in part to the success of SpaceX’s reusable launch vehicle, the Falcon 9 booster—“are all driving an era where large constellations of satellites orbiting close to the Earth can provide...reliable, high-quality broadband service to areas of the United States and the world that have been underserved or not served at all.” —M.C.
Physicians, heal thyseves

POLITICS AND THE AMA’S SHRINKING MEMBERSHIP by Charles Horton

The American Medical Association (AMA) considers itself the voice of American doctors, and it used that bully pulpit in its recent fight against the American Health Care Act (also called the Obamacare replacement bill). The New York Times cited it as “a powerful lobbying group representing the nation’s doctors”; to The Huffington Post, it was simply “the doctors.” There’s just one problem with this, a truth that the AMA doesn’t like to discuss: Most doctors aren’t members.

The group won’t say how many of its members are still in medical school, but the benefits that come with an all-but-free student membership—everything from anatomy flashcards to a UPS shipping discount—mean that thousands of students sign up each year. Most don’t stick around when they graduate: A 2011 article in the CMA Journal estimated that only about 15 percent of practicing U.S. doctors are members.

The article cited “bowing alone,” or declining interest in joining organizations, as a potential reason. Specialty organizations often attract what interest remains—roughly half of surgeons, for example, belong to the American College of Surgeons. One other possibility the author mentions: the AMA’s politics.

The AMA famously supported Obamacare, losing thousands of members in the process, and the resolutions it adopted at its 2016 annual meeting read like the hard left’s wish list: A resolution opposing assisted suicide got a thumbs-down, whereas a resolution for the euphemistic “aid-in-dying” will get a closer look by a committee.

Most resolutions were not political: Between assorted pleas for less bureaucracy and simplified paperwork, the AMA advocated sunscreen use, safe ways to dispose of unwanted prescription drugs, and steps to prevent dosing errors in hospitals. But where politics enter the picture, the direction is almost always a hard left.

The same story—only more so—shows up with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. This isn’t academic: As the pre-eminent OB-GYN association, ACOG influences national policy in its field.

Alternatives exist, but they are small: The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons counts only about 5,000 members. The American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists claims 2,500 members, but not all are doctors. The American College of Pediatricians—founded by a past president of the 60,000-strong American Academy of Pediatrics in protest of AAP’s stance on adoption in same-sex “marriages”—has about 500. (That stand earned ACP the predictable stamp of “hate group” from the Southern Poverty Law Center.)

It wasn’t always this way: The AMA counted some 75 percent of American doctors as members in the 1950s. Not coincidentally, its focus was on issues of concern to all doctors: opposing the primitive HMOs of the time and leading resistance to the proposals that ultimately became Medicare.

If the AMA would like to reverse its steady membership decline and truly speak for American doctors once more, one prescription stands out: remembering its roots.
The news earlier this year that Family Christian Stores would close its more than 240 retail shops startled many of its customers. But it didn’t surprise anyone familiar with the company’s recent history. Despite receiving forgiveness for more than $80 million in debt two years ago, the company still couldn’t pay all of its bills.

The closing of Family Christian Stores left suppliers, including Christian book publishers, on the hook to absorb millions of dollars in losses.

Family Christian’s recent troubles started in 2012, when a group of Atlanta businessmen bought the chain from private investors and converted it into a nonprofit organization. The new owners financed the purchase with up to $78 million in bank loans and promised to use the company’s profits for the care of widows and orphans.

Over the course of three years, Family Christian donated $300,000 of its proceeds to missions-related causes, according to court filings from the company’s bankruptcy.

When it declared bankruptcy in early 2015, it had racked up $127 million in debt. One of the three Atlanta investors, Richard Jackson, had already paid millions of dollars to JPMorgan Chase & Co., presumably to avoid a loan default.

After months of wrangling with attorneys and creditors in court, Family Christian was able to reorganize as a newly formed company that would keep close to $40 million in liabilities—a portion of which had been secured by Jackson—and walk away from the rest. (The new company also assumed $48 million worth of leases and contracts.)

“They tried to keep most of their stores open, [but] had reduced terms from many vendors,” said David Lewis, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Baker Publishing Group, one of Family Christian’s suppliers.

“We just figured there was no way in the world that they could remain open without a constant infusion of capital from their owners.” Family Christian lost about $16.6 million over about 17 months during the bankruptcy, according to court documents.

Publishers trod lightly with Family Christian after the bankruptcy. Jonathan Merkh, vice president and publisher at Howard Books, told Publishers Weekly his company sold products to the store on a pay-as-you-go basis, as opposed to offering them on credit.

In February Family Christian representatives called both Baker and Tyndale publishing groups. Lewis said they asked Baker Publishing for more time to pay invoices and for a 15 percent price discount, and Baker said yes.

But others, including Tyndale, had gone as far as they could to help the struggling retailer. “They asked us for humongous increases in the discount at which we were selling to them, and we just said, no, we’ve already given you our best deal,” Tyndale CEO Mark Taylor said.

The following week, Family Christian announced its plan to liquidate and close. WORLD contacted other publishing houses that supplied the stores, but they declined to comment about Family Christian’s requests to vendors before the liquidation.

Family Christian did not respond to WORLD’s multiple requests for comment. An employee who answered the company’s customer service line and wasn’t authorized to talk to the media simply said, “Several different liquidators bought us out.”

“This is the second time in three years that we’ve taken a big hit in bad debts because of Family,” Taylor said. (He declined to name the dollar amount of Tyndale’s loss.) Lewis said Baker Publishing expected to lose between $350,000 and $400,000.

“One of the things that’s unknown is how much Rick Jackson is going to have to write off,” Taylor said. Jackson is the Atlanta businessman who had backed some of the company’s debt over the years. “We’ll be frustrated and disappointed if he walks away without taking a loss and all the suppliers have to take a loss,” Taylor said.

Through a publicist, Jackson declined to comment for this report.
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VOICES / Mailbag

‘Children’s Books of the Year’

I usually check out your recommendations with anticipation and your first choice, The Night Gardener, was a magical and touching story. It’s a beautiful book of hope and redemption as joy creeps into the sad little town. Among the runners-up, A Hat for Mrs. Goldman also has hope; but The Red Prince is scary, and We Found a Hat lacks substance.

—JOANN NABB / Matthews, N.C.

I love and use WORLD’s book reviews so much. I just spent a half hour going through recent issues reserving books at the library and adding others to my lists on Goodreads and Amazon. You’ve shown me books in genres I wouldn’t have explored otherwise, and I’ve had delightful moments reading with my kids.

—TINA WILSON / Fort Collins, Colo.

‘Rent-a-womb’

Homosexual couples buy babies to create the illusion of a real family because they can create no life, while other people rent their bodies to create children for money. It was depressing, until Marvin Olasky put it into perspective (“A miraculous existence”). God warns us that sin has consequences, but “the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases.”

—BILL RUSSELL / Brighton, Mich.

Surrogacy reeks of the exploitation of women. And any man who doesn’t understand the bonding of mother and child prior to birth is either ignorant or stupid.

—JANET SEAGRAVES on wng.org

This practice commoditizes human beings and is a horrendous form of human trafficking.

—K. WILLIAMSON on wng.org

How does society decide whether to advocate for the surrogate, the child, or the gay couple when their interests conflict? There are principles involving integrity here that, if ignored, may cause untold injury to humanity.

—KEITH KIGARASHI on wng.org

‘A miraculous existence’

Humans are always producing results that in a purely naturalistic universe would be incredibly improbable. Someone who places a coin heads-up 202 times in a row has done what wouldn’t happen “naturally” in the universe’s 13.8 billion year lifetime.

—STEVE FERRIER / Corvallis, Ore.

‘Something out of numbing’

Yes, President Bashar al-Assad is horrible, but what is the endgame of American involvement in Syria? If we depose Assad, will someone even worse fill the power vacuum? Those who advocate intervention need something better than just bombing an airfield. It’s only a “just war” if it can be won.

—I.M. HANS DECKER on wng.org

I struggle to process the atrocities we hear about each day, but we can’t let ourselves be overwhelmed; we have to be able to function. We can best respond by voting for people who will do something about the problems and by giving to agencies that use their resources wisely.

—MARY LAMB on wng.org

‘Bad words’

Thank you for your distinction between profanity and vulgarity, but I disagree with your conclusion. Most children are not mature enough to be discerning in their reading, and being exposed to profanity or vulgarity at a young age could plague their minds with inappropriate thoughts.

—TIM BLACKSTAD on wng.org

I never thought I’d see an example of using “bad words” in the same issue as this column, but “Let’s do lunch?” included the word bloody. It was once considered very vulgar in the U.K. but has recently become more acceptable.

—ALLEN E. BELTLE / Brick, N.J.
‘Let’s do lunch?’

APRIL 29
At first I didn’t much like how direct people were at my New York college, but I accepted it when I realized that I didn’t have to wonder what people said behind my back; they were perfectly willing to say it to my face.
—KAREN TALLENTIRE on wng.org

‘Her father’s daughter’

APRIL 29
This was a fascinating and challenging article on human rights advocate Katrina Lantos Swett. I take seriously the challenge to stand for right and oppose wrong, regardless of which political party or religion it comes from.
—STEVE SHIVE on wng.org

‘No mercy’

APRIL 25
You reported how authorities charged pro-life activists from The Center for Medical Progress for their undercover videos but turn a blind eye to similar pro-abortion activities. As long as the mainstream media ignores this uneven playing field, only those reading WORLD and other pro-life sites will be aware of how the law is being unequally prosecuted.
—JOHN COGAN on wng.org

‘Living skillfully’

APRIL 15
As a homeschooling mom of two young boys who leave me feeling like a lion tamer and monkey trainer, Andrée Seu Peterson’s smart and observant writing challenges me to continue wrestling my wriggling little boys into stalwart men.
—MARISSA NANCE / Lexington, S.C.

‘Homeless on the streets of LA’

APRIL 1
I commend those who reach out to the homeless but am weary of programs that apply Band-Aids to serious problems. Offering help without demanding a serious lifestyle change is no help at all.
—BEVERLY ROBERTS / Houston, Texas

Correction
The photo accompanying the obituary of computer pioneer Harry Husky was of Harry Sello (Human Race, May 13, 2017).

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Fault lines

HOW CAN WE DEFINE FAIRNESS IN THE CASE OF BRANDON BOSTIAN?

If it had been concocted by a college ethics professor to test students’ grasp of the principles of fairness, you couldn’t have found a more challenging case than the Brandon Bostian story.

On May 12, 2015, the Amtrak train he was conducting accelerated to 106 miles per hour in a 50 mph zone at the Frankford Junction curve in Philadelphia, derailing the seven cars and resulting in the deaths of eight people and injury to over 150.

Two years later an investigation still found no evidence of drugs, alcohol, or cell phone use as culpable explanations, and the 34-year-old Bostian, a lifelong train aficionado, remembers nothing of the incident. I read with interest in the local papers that after the National Transportation Safety Board reached its conclusions, Philadelphia’s district attorney’s office declined to press charges on the engineer.

Then I waited for the other shoe to drop. It dropped the next week when, under a Philadelphia statute dating from colonial times that allows private citizens to file criminal complaints, relatives of one of the victims caused the inquiry to be reopened, and the state attorney general filed criminal charges against Bostian, who now faces eight counts of involuntary manslaughter. On May 18, authorities took him away in handcuffs.

So what do you think? I know what the plaintiffs’ lawyer thinks: “There are people in relentless, debilitating, brutal pain, who have lost their jobs, and who have lost their futures, because of Mr. Bostian’s actions” (Thomas Kline). And there is no gainsaying that: People have been hurt and killed.

We live in times in America when a tragedy is always someone else’s fault—and somebody’s going to pay!

“Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight. / At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more. / When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death, / And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again” (C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe).
Why get married?
A CONFLICT BETWEEN CONVENIENCE AND COVENANT

Seventh in a once-a-quarter series of short fiction...

On their first day as Yale students, David and Aisha happened to stand next to each other in front of the Nathan Hale statue. She wore a hijab. He wore Bermuda shorts. They both read Nathan Hale’s reaction to the British army’s death sentence: “I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country.” David stared at Aisha and wisecracked, “My only regret is that I’ll have but one wife to gain for my comfort.” Aisha stalked away.

A year later they happened to sit next to each other in a Chinese 1 class. This time they both wore jeans. Aisha wore a scarf. When the professor said they’d need to spend two hours every day copying Chinese ideograms, David didn’t come back.

After graduation he joined J. Putterman, the company that sells golf clubs and clothing through a catalog with fanciful stories. David excelled at writing lines like, “After a hole-in-one, Absalom put on his authentic cowboy shirt. His hands looked bigger. Was that damsel over there giving him a come-hither look? Yes, and he knew what to do.”

Meanwhile, Aisha went to China and taught English in Chengdu. She enjoyed the spicy smell of mouth-numbing Sichuan pepper in restaurants selling wontons and pork. She no longer thought much about Allah. Once, prodded by her best student, she visited a house church and heard a sermon comparing Jesus to Isa, the name for Jesus the Quran uses 187 times. The big difference: The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Son of God.

Aisha found this “Son of God” concept weird but fascinating. She walked out with a Bible and read it. She was amazed that it made perfect sense to her. One year later Aisha flew home, expelled as part of a government crack-down on “American missionary-agitators.” Unemployed in New York, she grabbed on to the first job offered her—writing catalog copy for J. Putterman, reporting to David.

We need not list the cute incidents that happened on their way to falling in love and, as is now sadly customary, sleeping together while unmarried. Aisha periodically dragged David to a monthly Bible study and mused about covenant marriage versus consumerist cohabiting, but he told her, “I’m happy just as I am.” So let us cut to a May day one year later when David saw an email from Sheila, a cute intern. She attached her draft of a catalog tale starring a golfer whose shot slices over a privacy fence into a nearby backyard. Predictable result: The golfer climbs the fence wearing his Putterman Power Slacks and impresses a sunbathing damsel.

The story’s premise was slushy and the writing sloppy, but Aisha, now associate editor, tried to rescue Sheila’s effort. She gave up. David saw a way he could make it work and sent it forward to publication. As he brushed his teeth that night, David cheerily told Aisha what he had done. She exploded: “I spent an hour on it. She has no talent. When I’ve decided a story won’t work, why are you second-guessing me?”

David said he merely wanted to help a struggling young writer who happened to be female. The mattress he and Aisha shared had a featherbed top. Over the next three nights they created body-sized depressions on the left and right sides, with a ridge in the middle. On the fourth evening they went to Aisha’s Bible study, during which participants could bring up passages they had found particularly meaningful.

David read from Luke, “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?” David said, “When editing I always try to give young writers second chances.”

At the food break Aisha told him, “Way to go, champ. How to weaponize the gospel. Congratulations.”

When they reassembled, Aisha pointed the group to Judges, Chapter 19, where a Levite pushes his concubine toward vicious men who rape her. She dies. “Bet he wouldn’t have done that if they were married,” Aisha said.

The next morning David went to 47th Street in Manhattan, the Diamond District, and bought Aisha an engagement ring.
Adam and Eve... Really?

I’ll be honest with you. It all sounds like a fable... Like someone got tired of thinking about a rational explanation for good and evil.

So, as long as I’m more good than evil, I’m good.

Right?

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