

Your

Healthy & Happy Home News™

From the Desk of Roy & Pam Wood

April 2017

How to Separate Fact from Fiction: Consider the Source

Fake news has been, well, in the news over the past few years. While the Internet has taken much of the blame for made-up news that goes viral, it's worth remembering that fake news predates the Internet by years.

Take, for example, War of the Worlds, a 1938 CBS radio show based on H.G. Wells' 1897 science fiction novel of a Martian invasion of the United States. The broadcast, enhanced by so-called live news reports, was said to have caused panic in the streets of New York.

Even some legit news media organizations reported that people were hospitalized from shock, and one individual was said to have died from a heart attack induced by the broadcast. Except that, like the invasion, the panic didn't happen. Later reports proved this beyond a shadow of doubt.

Most of us don't want to be fooled or, worse still, embarrassed by passing on something that's later debunked, so how do we distinguish?

Ironically, by turning to the Internet. The place where most fake news is disseminated is also the place to find help. Google, as well as Snopes.com and other reputable fact-checking websites, are great debunkers of rumors, urban legends, and online scams. The expression "consider the source" (usually accompanied by eye-rolling) is bang on. And GIGO (Garbage In; Garbage Out) is not just for computer nerds. Get your news from reliable sources. (And please note, supermarket tabloids – everyone's guilty pleasure – don't qualify.)

It's a Strange Old World: Bizarre News You Might Have Missed

In southern California, a little-known local publication pays tribute to an unlikely figure each month: a squirrel. The *Thousand Oaks Acorn* has featured a "squirrel of the month," selected from reader submissions, since the mid-1990s.

"Ew" alert: An Oregon woman became an online sensation when she posted pictures of her pet ball python stuck in her stretched-out earlobe. She reportedly had the snake (carefully) removed in a hospital ER.

For Valentine's Day, the Santa Fe Animal Shelter & Humane Society produced a video version of the TV reality series *The Bachelor* starring Stewart, the dog. The Society matched Stewart with human competitors eager to adopt him.

The San Francisco Library recently received a book it had lent out 100 years ago. The reader died before the due date, and her family lost track. The book's title: *Forty Minutes Late and Other Stories*.

Was This Year's April Fools' Day as Cyber-Pranky as Last's?

While April Fools' Day has always been a day dedicated to prank-playing, it was verging on an old, tired event for kids who pranked their parents. But with the Internet came new ways to prank – some good, some maybe not so good.

The jury's out on whether this April Fools' Day was better (worse?) than last year's. In the meantime, we revisit some of 2016's crazy cyber pranks:

Google mic drop

This "joke" was a mistake. Google celebrated the day by adding a working feature to Gmail that allowed users to end an e-mail thread with an instant GIF of a Minion character dropping a microphone. But people reported that, due to the button's proximity to "Send," they accidentally used the prank GIF for work e-mails. Google pulled it shortly after.

Netflix's John Stamos documentary

Netflix partnered with the stars of TV's *Full House* on this prank, which saw the entertainment company tweet about a trailer for an upcoming John Stamos documentary. The doc was supposed to highlight the actor's other career as a musician, and was complemented by a video of a fake Stamos meltdown when he realizes Netflix was joking about the documentary. Or was the meltdown fake?

Trader Joe's closes

The day before April Fools', Yahoo ran a fake news article with a headline that read "Trader Joe's to Close All Stores by 2017; Plans to Discontinue Products." Fans were up in arms until the foodie grocery store denied involvement. Yahoo had to delete the item.

So, how did 2017 compare?

Helpful Hints ♦ Savings Offers ♦ Online Rewards & more...

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Thanks!

For All The Kind Words

"Came in and did a fantastic job with no hassle!" *Michael W.*

"Very satisfied, Would refer your company to others!"

Mildred M.

Worth Quoting

This month, some famous quotes on the topic of news:

News reports don't change the world. Only facts change it, and those have already happened when we get the news.
Friedrich Durrenmatt

In the case of news, we should always wait for the sacrament of confirmation.
Voltaire

Be able to notice all the confusion between fact and opinion that appears in the news.
Marilyn vos Savant

Winning Friends & Influencing People the 21st-Century Way

Dale Carnegie's classic how-to book still makes a lot of sense: even in the 21st century, it's human nature to want (and need) friends.

In a recent FastCompany article, Stephanie Vozza points to a Harvard University study that indicates making friends is important for good health: "A lack of strong relationships increases your risk of premature death from all causes by 50%."

But finding new friends can be tricky.

Of course, we live in a digital world, and if making online friends is your goal, it's a cinch. Mind you, some of those new digital friends may turn out to be bots or algorithms, but they can give the impression of friendship.

It's different with real people. And if you want to know who would make a good friend and who would not, there's lots of

advice available. Notes Jon Levy in Speed, a pop-up blog from *New York Magazine*, "Don't invest too much time engaging with the wrong people. When approaching someone, begin with a litmus test." For example, "If you wave at someone from across the room and they wave back, they're friendly, you can approach."

Levy also says we are more likely to connect with someone with whom we have something in common. Just find out what, and connect.

Vozza, too, has suggestions for making new friends, including not waiting for others to make the first move, and following up on their overtures.

It seems the basic tenets of Dale Carnegie's system still work. You can make real friends. Even in 2017.

This Month's Sudoku

	6	5	7			4		
2	9	3		4	8			
	7				5			
5	2						1	
		6		5		3		
	8						9	6
			4				5	
			9	8		6	3	2
		2			6	8	4	

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One room is an area up to 200 sq ft or stairs

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Improvements That Increase Your Home's Value

This year, if you're looking to increase the value of your home but are unsure what home improvements to make, think curb appeal. According to a recent report from *Remodeling* magazine, curb appeal projects, such as changes to windows, siding, and doors, lead to a higher return on investment (ROI) than interior improvements.

Over the past 30 years, *Remodeling* has compared the average cost of improvement projects with their value at resale, based on the experience of real estate professionals. The magazine's 2017 Cost vs. Value Report supports the generally held opinion that today's home buyers, while still enthusiastic about the bells and whistles, want to ensure their homes are structurally sound with all

systems functioning efficiently.

Remodeling's projects include a basement remodel, an entry door that was replaced with 20 gauge steel, and the addition of stone veneer. All of the 29 projects tracked returned on average 64.3 cents per dollar spent.

Among the trends, the higher return of curb appeal projects and projects that required the replacing of windows, doors, etc. Replacement projects generally scored higher than remodeling projects; the ROI of replacement was 74% and of remodels was 63.7%.

As in the previous year, adding loose fill insulation to the attic returned 107.7% and was the only project on the list whose value exceeded its cost. Steel door replacement

and addition of stone veneer also paid off, at 90.7% and 89.4% respectively. Interestingly, these are among the cheapest projects, although their costs were up over the previous year.

Those who want to tackle an interior project might do well to consider a basement remodel, providing it's done well; a high-end basement remodel was perceived as high value, returning 7.4% more than the same project last year, while a mid-range basement remodeling project only increased in value by 3.3% over the previous year. Something to consider when you're planning your next home improvement project.

Western" Diet May Cause Brain Changes

Obesity and diets high in fats and sugar (a.k.a. the "Western diet") may be damaging our brains. According to a recent article on NPR's website, that's the conclusion of various researchers, including some at the American University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Cambridge.

The damage often shows itself through memory loss: in one study, obese kids struggled more with memory-related tasks than children who weren't obese. As American University psychologist Terry Davidson noted, a "vicious cycle" of poor eating choices is resulting in brain changes. He says, "I think the evidence is fairly substantial that you have an effect of these diets and obesity on brain function and cognitive function."

With the growing interest in the link between obesity and brain changes, scientists may be homing in on ways of targeting obesity. For example, one study showed that eating while watching TV resulted in overeating and increased the likelihood of getting hungry sooner. Says Lucy Cheke, a psychologist at the University of Cambridge, it's one of the "small, easy changes that people can make that don't involve a lot of self-control ... but that can still make a significant difference."

It's April. Let's Celebrate ... Guitars?

As it turns out, April is a month that honors more than just April Fools' Day and (sometimes) Easter.

So bust out your calendars to note these sometimes weird, sometimes wonderful, April observances:

International Guitar Month: A celebration of guitars, guitarists, and guitar products. Rock on.

National Couple Appreciation Month: Apparently founded in 2010, this

designation is meant to inspire couples to do something that reinforces their bond.

National Decorating Month: Just in time for spring cleaning, get inspired and give your home a fresh look.

National Soft Pretzel Month: A great excuse to eat one (or two, or three) delicious, pillowy, salty or sweet soft pretzels.

Salted Chocolate Pecan Pie Bars

Happy National Pecan Month!

Makes 15 to 20 bars

1 cup butter, softened
½ cup brown sugar
2½ cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
3 eggs
¾ cup light corn syrup
½ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
8 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
2 cups pecan halves
1 teaspoon flaked sea salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9 x 13 in. baking pan with parchment paper, leaving a 2 in. overhang on two sides. In a mixer, cream butter and sugar for 2 minutes. At low speed, add flour and salt until combined. Press dough evenly into pan. Bake 30-35 minutes until slightly browned. Remove and cool. Meanwhile, whisk eggs, syrup, sugar, and vanilla until smooth. Fold in chocolate and pecans. Pour filling over crust. Bake 30-40 minutes until the center is set. Remove and sprinkle with salt. Cool completely before cutting into bars.

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Worth Reading

Getting Older, Sleeping Less

By Jane E. Brody
The New York Times

Seniors experience insomnia more than young people. But thanks to young peoples' use of their tech screens before bed – an activity that promotes insomnia – they're also at risk. Brody's article describes different kinds of insomnia, what causes it, and how to prevent and treat it. Read this for more information – just not on a screen before going to sleep.

More:

<https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-sleep>

Six Things You Should Know about Flying, According to Flight Attendants

By Kristin Wong
Lifehacker.com

Here are all the things flight attendants wish passengers knew. On a Reddit thread, flight attendants shared ... and shared. The common theme: passengers cause most of the in-flight turbulence; for example, passengers initiate accidents when they don't wear seat belts. So when an attendant says, "See you next time," it's likely to mean: "I hope I'll never have to fly with you again."

More:

<https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-flying>

How to Recover from Emotional Exhaustion

By Ingela Ratledge
Real Simple

What to do after a big family blowup or receiving bad news? It's hard to go on, so the day after may be worse than the day of. Ratledge presents three scenarios and tips on getting up and dealing with it. If your kids were upset, ask them why. If you've gotten bad news and need to take some time off, take some time off. It's real simple. It works. Try it.

More:

<https://tinyurl.com/April-2017-on-recovering>

Small Homes Are Trending with First Time Buyers

According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), first-time homes are coming in smaller packages.

The Association recently released the NAHB Home Builder Preferences Survey indicating that smaller homes are selling well, primarily to first-time buyers, such as the latest cohort – the millennials. The home builders interviewed for the report suggest that many people now prefer to purchase small. And U.S. Census Bureau figures support that position: the average home built in 2016 was 2,634 sq. ft., down from 2,689 sq. ft. in 2015.

Says Rose Quint, NAHB's assistant vice president of survey research: "2016 marked the end of an era that began in 2009, when homes got bigger and bigger with more amenities. I expect the size of homes to continue to decline as demand increases from first-time buyers."

Smaller homes are finding favor with other groups as well. Retirees who enjoy traveling find that smaller, lock-and-leave residences fit their on-the-go lifestyles, and economic realities mean that they now have to think small.

While both the downsizing and millennial buyers are comfortable with less space (and the resulting savings on utility bills), they still expect the luxurious finishes and modern amenities available in larger homes. Millennials, because that's what's trendy now, and retirees, because they don't want to feel they're settling for less.

As a result, home décor magazines and TV network programs are touting the benefits of small homes and showcasing elegant space-saving solutions designed for those who want to scale down their homes without changing their lifestyles. Because they won't.

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Take your best guess then email me right away. Remember, your chances of winning are better than you expect.

This month's *eTrivia* question is...

What part of your hand typically isn't affected by carpal tunnel syndrome?

a) Thumb b) Palm c) Little finger

General Knowledge Quiz. Answers below.

What is associated with the left hemisphere of the brain?

What part of the brain is associated with creativity?

What is the most common form of traumatic brain injury?

What does the average adult human brain weigh?

(Answers: Tasks involving logic; the right side; concussion; approximately 3 lb (1.36 kg))