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Back to the Grind

MIKEY GOES TO TEXAS AND GABBY GOES TO FLORIDA FOR COMPETITIONS!

After more than a year and a half of uncertainty and canceled events, our children's favorite activities are returning to normal (mostly), and this October is a big month for both of them. As they get older and some of their final days in baseball and dance approach, I'm soaking up every bit of this adventure with them — even if that means I'm on the road for three weeks!

In addition to a professional conference I'm attending, I'm also traveling to Texas with Mikey for a baseball tournament his team was invited to compete in. Traveling to a different state to play baseball isn't uncommon for Mikey. He's played in tournaments across the country, but this will be his first time in Texas.

This tournament will also be special because Mikey will have his whole team with him. It's not uncommon for players on the team to solely be invited to these tournaments. That's how club play functions, and this has always given Mikey opportunities to refine his skills with other players.

But there's something special about traveling with your team. As the catcher, Mikey influences nearly every pitch his pitcher throws, and to be able to work with pitchers he's played with for years is a tremendous benefit to the team. I know he's excited to share this experience with them, and I can't wait to watch. (Plus, it's always a fun challenge to play southern teams! They have a weather advantage that makes the games more exciting to watch.)



After baseball, the whole family is boarding a flight for Disney World to watch Gabby perform with her dance company in Disney's Halloween parade! If you're a longtime reader, you know this is something Gabby had the opportunity to do in 2019, but this performance will be much different. Not only will she be older and more experienced, but she is also dancing in a special Halloween parade. It's going to be so exciting!

This opportunity is so bittersweet for us. We love watching Gabby and her friends dance together, and it's so special to see it happen in a place like Disney World. Plus, we have invited my mom to join us on this trip. My mom loves watching Gabby perform, so to see her on Main Street at Disney World is an opportunity she didn't want to miss. The kids are already teasing her about going on the rides, too! My mom simply laughs.

However, this trip also marks the beginning of the end of dance for our family. Since she's a senior this year, this is Gabby's last year to perform with many of the dancers she's been performing with since she was 5 years old. You're probably going to find me sobbing at the parade — and likely at every competition Gabby dances at this year! I'm so proud of her, but it's also so hard to believe she's already a senior.

As a dad, there's nothing I want more than to see my children happy and healthy, and their respective activities allow that to happen. If I have to travel all month or wipe away a few (a lot) tears, it will all be worth it to see their smiles while they do something they love once again.

—Mike Monteforte Jr.

Man Sues Woman for Texting During a Movie Date

We've probably all found ourselves annoyed with someone who uses their phone during a movie at the theater, but have you ever been so annoyed that you sued them?

That's what Texas resident Brandon Vezmar decided to do back in 2017, following a "first date from hell" (as Vezmar put it) with Crystal Cruz. According to Vezmar, about 15 minutes into "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," Cruz was texting on her phone. When Vezmar asked her to stop texting, she refused. Then, Vezmar suggested that she step outside of the theater to text. Cruz took his suggestion and never returned.

Most people would chalk the experience up to a bad date and move on, but Vezmar was so indignant that he reached out to Cruz the next day and requested that she compensate him \$4 for the pizza and \$17



for the movie ticket he'd paid for. If she didn't pay, he threatened to go after the money in small claims court. When Cruz initially refused, Vezmar made good on his threat and filed a petition in Austin, Texas.

Vezmar made the case that Cruz had violated the cinema's no cellphone policy and had negatively impacted his and other moviegoers' experiences of watching a raccoon and a talking tree (among other beings) save the day. He claimed that while he sought modest damages, it was the principle of the thing that really mattered to him. He called Cruz's behavior "a threat to civilized society."

As entertaining as it might have been to see that case fully make its way through the legal system, the lawsuit was eventually dropped after the TV show "Insider Edition" reunited Cruz and Vezmar and filmed her paying him back for the date. As the camera rolled, he counted his cash and considered them square.

Unlike "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," there were no good guys in this story — but that doesn't make it any less entertaining to read about after the fact!

Corn Mazes Date Back to Ancient Greece? Historical Look at This Wacky Fall Tradition

Exploring a corn maze is a great way to get outside and enjoy the fall season with friends and family — but who came up with the idea of wandering around a corn field for fun? As it turns out, outdoor mazes are an ancient tradition, and the American corn maze of the '90s sprouted from the mazes of 17th-century European gardens. Don't believe it? Here's a quick tour of corn maze history.

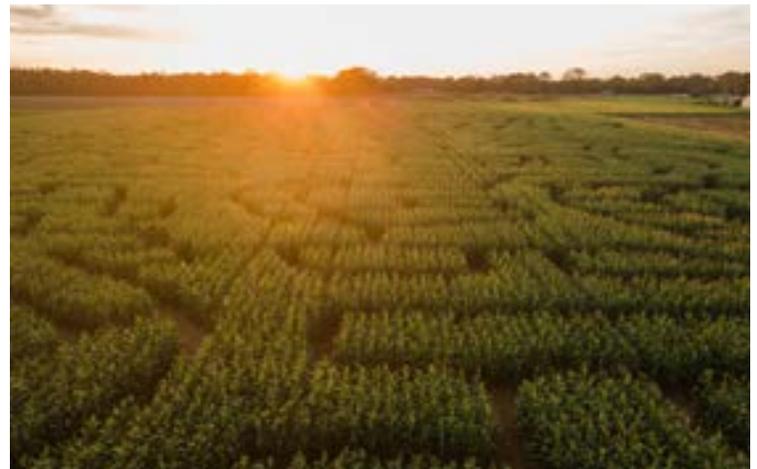
The Minotaur and the Maze

Have you heard of Theseus and the Minotaur? This ancient Greek legend tells the story of the hero Theseus, who ventured into an elaborate maze to kill the half-man, half-bull imprisoned there. The monstrous Minotaur was known to eat heroes, and the labyrinth was known to trap them, but Theseus managed to slay the Minotaur and find his way home with the help of a string that he unspooled as he walked.

This story isn't the first recorded example of a maze or labyrinth — according to the World History encyclopedia, "[L]abyrinths and labyrinthine symbols have been dated to the Neolithic Age in regions as diverse as modern-day Turkey, Ireland, Greece, and India, among others" — but it's perhaps the most famous ancient tale. If you've ever navigated a Halloween corn maze staffed by ghouls and ghosts, you can see the parallels!

Garden Art to Get Lost In

Mazes formed from bushes began popping up European gardens in the 17th century. They were a popular artistic feature of upper-class gardens in England, more for looking at than solving. One famous



example is the half-mile-long Hampton Maze, which was planted in 1690 and still stands today.

The Corn Maze: An American Invention

Garden mazes eventually hopped the pond to America but didn't become interactive puzzles until Don Frantz, Creative Director of the American Maze Company, came on the scene. In 1993, Frantz created the "first ever cornfield maze for private and public entertainment" to attract college kids in Pennsylvania. Today, every small-town corn maze is a descendant of his "Amazing Maize Maze." To learn more about that wacky history, visit AmericanMaze.com.

TAKE A *BREAK*



HALLOWEEN COOKIE PIZZA

Inspired by Pillsbury.com

Image sourced from Pillsbury.com/recipes/halloween-cookie-pizza/67172821-ddfb-49ce-b658-ddc4ef4b5cf3

This one's for the candy corn lovers! This "pizza" is far from traditional, but once you try it, you might find yourself making it every October!

Ingredients

- 1 roll Pillsbury Sugar Cookie Dough
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup candy corn
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup vanilla frosting (store-bought or homemade)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Grease a round, 12-inch pan and line with cookie dough, ensuring the dough covers all but the outer 1/2 inch.
3. Bake for 16–20 minutes until golden brown. Cool completely.
4. Spread the peanut butter over the cooled cookie dough, then sprinkle on the candy corn and chocolate chips.
5. In a small bowl, microwave the frosting for 15 seconds or until liquified.
6. Drizzle the frosting over the "pizza," slice, and serve!

THE DEADLIEST SURGERY IN HISTORY PERFORMED BY THE 'FASTEST KNIFE IN THE WEST END'

If you had to get surgery in the early 1800s, it could be a death sentence. Before the invention of anesthesia, patients needing amputations and other operations were awake and lucid the entire time. Plus, surgery looked more like something from a horror movie than a lifesaving procedure. And it was during this era that Dr. Robert Liston, who was ironically considered one of the best surgeons of his day, performed the deadliest surgery of all time.

Before getting into the particulars of what transpired during the surgery itself, you should know a little bit about Dr. Liston. Sure, he was a professional surgeon, but he was also a product of his time. He likely worked with dirty saws and knives while wearing a bloody apron in an unsanitary operating room.

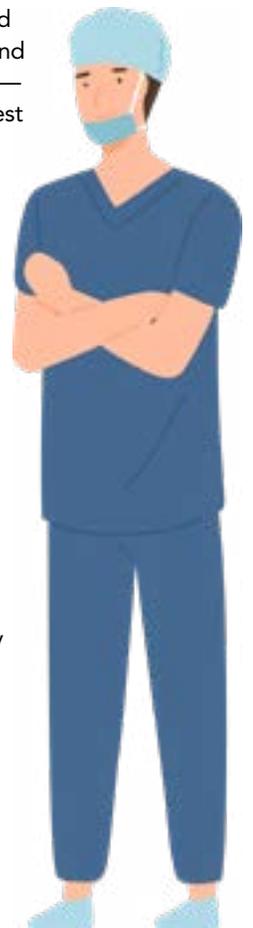
He was also named the "fastest knife in the West End" by medical historian Dr. Richard Gordon. He was known for performing surgeries very quickly, which, in the days before anesthesia, was as much as patients could hope for on the operating table. Only 1 in 10 of his patients died on the operating table, which sounds bad until you learn that a nearby hospital reported 1 in 4 people dying from similar procedures.

Also, in those days, much like crowds used to gather to watch a hanging, people found amputations to be morbidly entertaining — and who wouldn't want to watch the fastest knife in the West End at work?

So, on the fateful day of that deadly surgery, Dr. Liston, ever the showman, cut through his patient's broken, infected leg with incredible speed — so incredible that he didn't realize he had cut off two of his assistant's fingers in the process. Both later died of gangrene (remember the unsanitary tools?).

But theirs were not the only deaths that day. When Dr. Liston went for one of his knives, he whipped it about a little too closely to one spectator, slicing through his coat. While he didn't actually break the man's skin with his knife, the spectator thought he'd been stabbed and died of shock right there in the operating room.

So, instead of saving one life, Dr. Liston killed three people. It's the only known surgery to have resulted in a 300% mortality rate.





MONTEFORTE LAW, P.C.
(978) 653-4092
www.MonteforteLaw.com
400 TradeCenter, Suite 6890
Woburn, MA 01801

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** The Montefortes Stay Busy With Activities in October
- 2** Man Sues Woman for Texting During a Movie Date
Corn Mazes Date Back to Ancient Greece?
- 3** Halloween Cookie Pizza
The Deadliest Surgery in History
- 4** The Tiger King Remains Behind Bars

The Tiger King Remains Behind Bars

Judges Deny Joe Exotic's Appeal

Even more than a year after the release of "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness," Joseph Maldonado-Passage, more popularly known as Joe Exotic, continues to make headlines.

Following the fame that came with having his story at the center of a wildly popular Netflix series, Maldonado-Passage saw fit to appeal his 22-year prison sentence for plotting to murder big cat rescue activist Carole Baskin on a few different grounds. However, in July, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his appeal.

The primary reason for Maldonado-Passage's appeal, as reported by his legal team, was that Baskin was allowed to attend the entirety of Maldonado-Passage's trial, despite her role as a witness in the case. As a general rule, witnesses are not permitted to attend proceedings in their entirety, as other witness testimonies might affect the objectivity of their own testimony.

However, Baskin was also in attendance at the trial as a victim, since she was the target of Maldonado-Passage's murder-for-hire

scheme. Victims are allowed to attend court proceedings so long as the judge decides their testimony (if they are also a witness) will not be affected by their attendance.

Maldonado-Passage's legal team asserted that Baskin was not a victim of any sort, since the murder-for-hire plot did not result in her murder. However, U.S. Circuit Court judges ruled that she still suffered emotional and financial harm because of the incident.

In addition to this, since Maldonado-Passage conspired to have Baskin murdered two different times, the judge at his trial in 2019 had incorrectly considered them as two separate plots, rather than two attempts at the same murder. The U.S. Circuit Court judges ordered the trial judge to resentence him.

So, even for all that trouble, Maldonado-Passage remains behind bars. However, so long as the Tiger King's popularity continues, it won't be surprising if Joe Exotic and his legal team keep searching for ways to get him out of prison.