

A Jedi's Journey

Sharing My 'Star Wars' Obsession With My Son

I can still remember the first time I saw "Star Wars IV: A New Hope." I remember sitting in the car with my parents at the drive-in, just shy of grade school age, and being astonished at what was unfolding on the screen. At the time, there was nothing like it! The effects alone were cutting edge, and the story just added to the whole experience. It really was one of the best movies I have seen.

That was the day my lifelong appreciation of "Star Wars" began, and as May 4 (May the Fourth) has been dubbed "Star Wars" Day, it only seems fitting that I feature it on my cover! It also happens to be my birthday. I guess I was always destined to be a "Star Wars" fan!

This might reveal me to be a big nerd, but I had all the "Star Wars" toys, space ships, and action figures growing up. I would battle with my lightsabers, and I even used a "Star Wars" lunchbox. Whenever I had a birthday or Christmas came around, I was always asking for more "Star Wars" gear. If it was Halloween, I was dressing up as Luke Skywalker. I just could not get enough.

I still love "Star Wars," but the coolest part about the franchise today is that I get to enjoy it with my son.

Turns out, Mikey is just as into "Star Wars" as I am! He wanted a Yoda cake at his birthday party, he dressed up as "Star Wars" characters for Halloween, and he still wants to watch the movies. As a dad, it's pretty cool to share something with my son that I enjoyed so much as a kid. (Mikey can't believe something from my childhood is still around. He must think I grew up with the dinosaurs!)

As the new movies have come out, Mikey, one of his friends, my wife, and I have made it a tradition to see the films within the first week they premiere. All of us liked the new movies, but we'd like anything "Star Wars" related! However, one of our favorite new "Star



"Galaxy's Edge," and my son and I were soaking it all in. The creators have done a fantastic job of encapsulating you in the experience. You can't see any other part of the park from "Galaxy's Edge," and characters from the franchise walk around too. You're transported into the "Star Wars" universe!

It's been amazing to see how this film that blew my mind when I was just a little kid has led to a phenomenon that I now enjoy with my son. After more than a dozen movies, multiple television shows, hundreds of toys, and a few theme parks, my "Star Wars" appreciation has only continued to grow.

The part that makes it the sweetest is sharing it all with Mikey.

May the Fourth (May the Force) be with you all!

-Michael Monteforte Jr.

P.S. I like to have fun on my blog at MonteforteLaw.com, and when the latest installment in the "Star Wars" universe came out in December 2019, I offered "Top 5 Estate Planning Tips for a Galaxy Far, Far Away." Check it out if you're a "Star Wars" nut like me!



Wars" releases has to be "The Mandalorian" on Disney+. Every time a new episode came out last year, Mikey and I would text back and forth about when we would have time to watch it! It's must-see TV.

Our love of "Star Wars" hit a new level this winter when we visited "Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge" at Disney World. As you may remember from my March 2020 newsletter, our family was at Disney World recently to watch Gabby's dance company perform. Around the same time, Disney opened its new park installation,



THE PROS AND CONS OF BUYING A HOME IN A 55-PLUS COMMUNITY

Depending on your wants and needs, buying a home in a 55-plus community might be a financially savvy way to set yourself up for retirement. But is it the right decision for you? Here are a few financial pros and cons associated with moving into one of these neighborhoods.

PRO: THE HOMES ARE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION.

Oftentimes, 55-plus communities provide maintenance services, including housekeeping and landscaping. Also, it's likely that only a handful of people have occupied the home since it was built, so buying in a 55-plus community means you'll get a property in excellent condition with less wear and tear.

CON: YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY A MONTHLY FEE.

Unfortunately, all the great stuff doesn't come free. Usually, you'll have to pay an extra monthly bill, similar to a homeowners association fee, to live in a 55-plus community. Some communities include all maintenance and amenities in the monthly rent or mortgage (some even cover utility bills), but make sure you understand what is and isn't covered before you sign a contract!

PRO: AMENITIES ARE INCLUDED.

Most 55-plus communities include amenities like exercise classes and educational programs for their residents. They also invite community



organizations and leaders to speak about local issues or upcoming elections. Some even have a clubhouse or dining hall for social gatherings. Save money by taking advantage of these programs instead of paying for a gym membership or a course at the local community college.

CON: IT'S A LIMITED BUYER'S AND RENTER'S MARKET.

Most people who buy in a 55-plus community plan to retire there. If this is your original intention but your plans change down the road, you might have a harder time selling your home here than you would in a community that is open to people of all ages. Make sure to budget for those potential holding costs and plan accordingly.

Regardless of where you decide to buy, be sure to consult an experienced real estate agent and a financial planner. Here's to living out your golden years in comfort and convenience!

THE \$60,000 HEIST YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF Crimeless Theft in Cyberspace

In 2017, sometime between Sept. 11 and 12, a total of \$60,000 worth of digital assets were stolen from people around the world. The conspirators didn't hide their identities, and they faced no criminal charges. As it turns out, there are no laws against stealing spaceships in a video game — even if they're worth thousands of real-world dollars.

EVE Online is a massively multiplayer online game (MMO) that was launched in 2003, and it was on this game that the theft occurred. This science-fiction game is all about spacefaring, but one notable feature of the game is that it allows players to purchase in-game assets with real money. This attracts players who can spend large sums on the game, with some of the game's largest spaceships costing \$9,000. But one thing to note in EVE Online is that no matter how much you pay, once you lose an asset, it's gone forever.



Because of the risk-reward nature of the game, many players unite in huge factions for safety and to pool their resources. One of these groups, Circle of Two or CO2, was the target of the 2017 attack. Within a matter of hours, CO2's bank accounts were drained and the space stations holding their fleets of ships were sold to their enemies. It was clear from the beginning: This was an inside job.

The thief was CO2's own head diplomat, a player called "The Judge." For years he'd worked his way through the alliance's ranks, only to use the access he eventually gained to rob it blind. But greed may not have been his only motivation. He'd had public disagreements with CO2's leader called Gigx, and a rival faction was able to capitalize on this internal conflict. During an in-person EVE Online summit held in Iceland, representatives from The GoonSwarm Federation convinced The Judge to leave CO2 and commit the single largest robbery in gaming history on his way out.

In the real world, The Judge's actions were completely legal — currently, international law doesn't treat such virtual objects as personal property. But this perception may be changing. As in-game purchases become more widespread in video games, legal lines have blurred, causing an increasing number of lawmakers to rethink what constitutes "ownership" in the digital age. But, for now at least, it seems like a good time to be a space pirate.

TAKE A BREAK

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1	5	3	7	6	3	1	2	9



STICKY AND SWEET PORK 'RIBS'

Inspired by Bon Appétit

Whether you're celebrating your mom or those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country, there's no better recipe to grill up than these delectable country-style pork ribs.

Ingredients

- 2 heads garlic, cloves separated
- 3 thumbs ginger, chopped
- 1 cup hoisin sauce
- 3/4 cup fish sauce
- 2/3 cup honey
- 2/3 cup rice wine
- 1/2 cup chili oil
- 1/3 cup oyster sauce
- 1/3 cup toasted sesame oil
- 5 lbs boneless pork shoulder, flattened
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsp molasses

Directions

1. In a blender, purée garlic, ginger, hoisin sauce, fish sauce, honey, rice wine, chili oil, oyster sauce, and toasted sesame oil until smooth.
2. Reserve and chill 1 1/2 cups for later use.
3. In a bag, add the remaining mixture and pork shoulder. Marinate for at least 8 hours.
4. Using a convection plate on the grill, cook pork until the thickest part reaches an internal temperature of 140–145 F.
5. In a large saucepan, simmer brown sugar, molasses, and reserved marinade for 6–8 minutes.
6. Baste the pork with the brown sugar glaze for 2 minutes before serving.

THE STORY OF GRANDPA MASON

How a Feral Cat Came to Care for Orphaned Kittens

When cats are orphaned as kittens, they don't get the chance to develop all the skills needed to become successful cats. Just like human children, kittens need older role models too. The most famous cat role model had a rough start in life but became an inspiration for kittens and humans alike. His name was Grandpa Mason, and during the last years of his life, he stepped up and gave love, care, and guidance to the orphaned kittens that lived with him.

The Canadian animal rescue group TinyKittens rescued Grandpa Mason in 2016 from a property that was scheduled to be bulldozed. The poor feral tabby was suffering from many health problems, including severe dental issues, a badly injured paw, and advanced kidney disease. Since TinyKittens is a no-kill rescue organization, euthanization was out of the question.

Given his health conditions, veterinarians predicted the battle-scarred Grandpa Mason didn't have long to live, so TinyKittens' founder, Shelly Roche, took him in and provided him with a comfortable place to sleep, plenty of food, and time to relax in the last months of his life. Grandpa Mason had a hard time adjusting to domestic life and would often shy away from being petted. In an interview with The Dodo, Roche described him as "an elderly gentleman [who] lived his whole life a certain way, and then, all of a sudden, [was] forced to live completely differently."

After Grandpa Mason grew accustomed to his home, Roche took in several foster kittens, and those new roommates completely altered Grandpa Mason's behavior. Roche expected him to hiss, swat, or growl at the kittens when they invaded his space, but he didn't. Instead, he allowed them to crawl all over him and appeared to enjoy it when they licked his ear. Suddenly a playful, affectionate, and gentle personality came out of Grandpa Mason as he played with, bathed, taught, and cared for the orphaned kittens that Roche welcomed into her home. Potentially due to the kittens' influence, Grandpa Mason surpassed his prognosis by more than two years.

During the last few years of his life, Grandpa Mason passed on important lessons and good manners to the kittens he looked after and adored, as a true grandfather should. He passed last September, but he spent his last night in his ultimate happy place: snuggling in his bed surrounded by kittens.





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HOW WILL YOU SPEND MEMORIAL DAY? POWERFUL WAYS TO HONOR OUR VETERANS

Every year, Memorial Day reminds us to honor those who paid the ultimate price for their country. While Veterans Day recognizes all service members, Memorial Day is dedicated specifically to those who lost their lives during their service in the U.S. military.

The holiday, celebrated on May 25 this year, also marks the unofficial start to summer. While you're enjoying your three-day weekend, don't forget to honor those who died while protecting your rights. Here are some ideas for how to do so.



ATTEND A PARADE

Memorial Day parades are common across the nation and feature local veterans, organizations, and bands celebrating with patriotic pride. Last year, the National Memorial Day Parade, the largest of its kind in the country, celebrated its 15th anniversary in Washington, D.C., with appearances from celebrities, musicians, and veterans. The parade honors veterans from as far back as the Civil War. If you can't attend this parade in person, you can livestream it online. Check with your local municipality for updates on parade statuses, and if you can't attend one, put on your own parade at home!

VISIT MEMORIALS

Many parks, public buildings, and monuments feature memorials that honor veterans who have lost their lives. Visit one of these monuments and spend some time learning about our nation's history and the tragic cost of war. This is a great opportunity to teach your children about our nation's military,

and it can even be a fitting moment to learn more about local military connections. If you feel like giving back more directly, consider using this opportunity to spruce up your local park or memorial. Just be sure to talk to your municipality before you get started.

VOLUNTEER

Giving back to veterans through organizations that help families who have lost loved ones can be a powerful way to spend your Memorial Day. Do you have specialized skills or knowledge in health care, construction, or art? If so, check with your local Veterans Affairs office to see if you can partner with an organization to provide resources to those in need. If you can't give up your time, try donating food, clothing, and supplies to veterans or those serving today.

Find more activities and information about Memorial Day at VA.gov. Thank you to those who served and to the families of those who were lost in the line of duty.