

Reader's Digest

DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019

The Church That Wouldn't Burn

By BILL HANGLEY JR.

BELIEVE IN
MIRACLES

REAL-LIFE STORIES OF HOPE

Secrets of
HOLIDAY
SHOPPING

An RD ORIGINAL

A 4-Year-Old
Hunger Activist

By CLAIRE NOWAK

Unfreeze
Your Brain

From the book
ELASTIC

32 Brilliant
Made-Up
Words

By BILL BOULDIN

The Man Who
Rigged the
Lottery

From THE NEW YORK
TIMES MAGAZINE





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FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
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PLOT TWIST
WE ADDED BANANA SLICES



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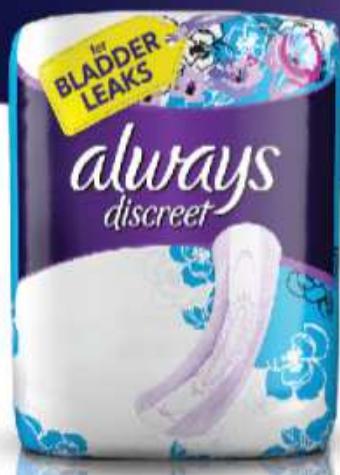
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DEAR READER

The Miracle of Memory

AS I HANG the first ornament, I'm singing along with Eartha Kitt. I know I look like a fool in my Santa hat, belting out "Santa Baby," but it's the Sunday before Christmas, tree-dressing day.

I've chosen the towering Bavarian stick-skier in a red quilted jacket that my dad loved. "Not right in front, it's dorky," Rachel protests. She is grown, a working nurse, but revisiting the "OMG, Dad!" role of youth.



When I was a kid, my mother had the Christmas-tree bug, and I've taken the same silly joy in the ritual. I remember her holiday jazz albums (Jimmy Smith, Stan Getz) dropping from the stack onto the turntable as my two older brothers and I danced, quibbled, and dressed the tree.

So I string the lights and build the fire, then let each ornament trigger smack talk and memories. The ugly glass owl? A memorial to Neil's obsessive hunting for owl pellets when he was a kid. "I was a freaking Steve Irwin," he deadpans. The handmade sleeping kitty with a crack across it? My sweet mother-in-law, Ruth, glazed that in honor of our first cat. Only the ornament remains, glued and proud.

Each object fills me with emotions I can't otherwise always tap. Our dear friends the Nashes sent the jaunty mini cowboy boot after they'd moved away from us to Texas. The tiny San Francisco Giants baseball in glass brings back the incredible day in 2010 when we all finally celebrated, for real.

Bent, awkward, or old ornaments join the pretty bulbs up front. We sing along with Luther Vandross—"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"—and I feel all the people and places life has lucked me with.

*Bruce Kelley,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF*

**Write to me at
letters@rd.com.**



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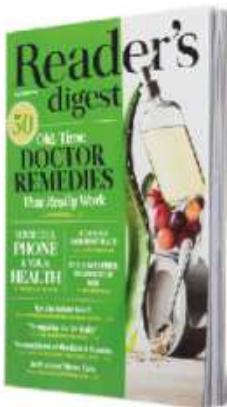


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LETTERS

NOTES ON THE
October ISSUE



Old-Time Doctor Remedies That Work

I can't treat eyestrain by placing cucumber slices on my eyelids because I'm allergic to cucumbers. I tried to achieve similar results by closing my eyes for 15 minutes, but I failed since I couldn't resist reading the rest of your fine magazine. However, I still wonder whether the secret to avoiding eyestrain is simply to close your eyes once in a while.

—MARKELL RAPHAELSON WEST *Laurel, Maryland*

You encouraged people to use aloe vera for burns, but you failed to mention that bottled aloe vera products may actually contain very little aloe vera. The most reliable source is the real plant. Everyone should have one on their windowsill.

—T.B.
via e-mail

How to Conquer Panic Attacks

I had panic attacks for 28 years, took every prescription drug in the book, meditated, exercised, etc. Three years ago, I went on a vegan diet but continued to eat seafood because my nutritionist advised against quitting meat cold turkey. In four months, my

panic attacks were gone. I have not had one since.

—JANY SABINS
Maplewood, New Jersey

Learn to Not Fall

I would add: Do not wear backless shoes. Twice, more than 30 years apart, I had falls from wearing backless shoes. The last one led to a broken arm—and the inability to do some ordinary things for myself. There is also a psychological component to a serious fall.

—ALICE MARCUS
SOLOVY Highland Park, Illinois

Sympathy for My Bully

I was bullied from sixth to eighth grade. When I complained to our vice principal, she told me she didn't believe the young man would do such things. I recently learned that, after being in and out of jail, my bully passed away of an overdose at 30 years old. I can't help but wonder, What if my report had been respected? Might it