BOB tales

Brotherhood of the Balloon Member Newsletter | **October 2024**

"The more you are grateful for what you have, the more you will have to be grateful for." –Zig Ziglar

Dear Members (a note from Deb Hickey):

Life has thrown its fair share of obstacles my way, often testing my resolve. Managing a chronic illness—corneal neuropathy due to an autoimmune condition—can be exhausting, both physically and emotionally. There are days when the fatigue feels overwhelming, and the pain can be a constant reminder of my limitations. Yet, I've come to realize that my attitude towards these challenges shapes my experience. By focusing on what I can control—my mindset—I've found many moments of joy and resilience.

Parenting has also been a journey filled with its own set of challenges. My daughter, who has faced significant learning difficulties and is now dealing with new psychological issues stemming from adoption, often requires extra patience and understanding. There have been moments of frustration and uncertainty where I questioned my ability to support her effectively. However, I've learned that approaching these challenges with a positive attitude can make all the difference. Instead of viewing our struggles as insurmountable, I try to see them as opportunities for growth—for both my daughter and myself.

By embracing a mindset of gratitude and hope, I've been able to celebrate the small victories along the way. Each step forward, no matter how minor, becomes a reason to rejoice. I've learned to appreciate the beauty in our unique journey, understanding that setbacks do not define us but rather help shape who we are.

I share this with you not just as a reflection of my own experiences but as a reminder of the incredible power that our attitudes hold. In the face of life's inevitable challenges, it's our perspective that ultimately determines our path. By choosing to

focus on the positives and maintain a hopeful outlook, we can find strength and resilience to overcome even the toughest obstacles. Our Final Thought this month also reinforces these important points.

This month, we begin with an article about a groundbreaking discovery related to a gene that plays a crucial role in the early stages of prostate cancer. This is an update to our 2019 article highlighting the same gene as a key driver in the spread of the disease. We also explore a new method for tracking the Bragg peak in real-time 3D, which promises to enhance the safety and effectiveness of proton therapy. Additionally, we share findings from a recent study on the long-term effects of proton therapy for localized prostate cancer and delve into how diet—specifically the role of antioxidants—can help reduce erectile dysfunction (ED).

In our Flashback feature, we revisit the inspiring story of Charlie Einsiedler. When Bob initially wrote about Charlie in 2007, he was 94 years old and had undergone proton therapy for prostate cancer at age 87.

In our Health section, we present insights from a popular doctor on reducing the risk of dementia and emphasize the importance of making and maintaining friendships, particularly for men. We also report on a new study revealing that pure vegetarian diets may not be as protective against neurological diseases in the elderly compared to diets that include fish.

And finally, we're *thrilled* to share the most exciting news this month: one of our generous members has made a remarkable $1 million contribution to Loma Linda University Health's *Stronger Together Campaign.* His motivation? Not only does he want to advance this groundbreaking initiative, which focuses on innovation in clinical care and academics to benefit future cancer patients, but he also wants to pay it forward. After receiving life-changing proton therapy at Loma Linda University Cancer Center more than 17 years ago, he's giving back to ensure others receive the same exceptional care—whether through proton therapy or any of LLUCC's cancer treatments.

And as usual, there's much more.

We welcome any suggestions you have on improving the value of the *BOB Tales* to our members. Please send your feedback to DHickey@protonbob.com.

Deb Hickey

Reminders:

1. We have a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/protonbob where we share the latest news on prostate cancer, proton therapy, and member stories that may not appear in our monthly newsletter. Please visit and "like" the page to stay informed!

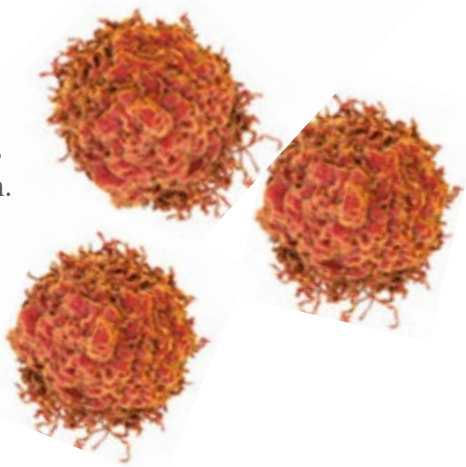
2. One of our members, Bob Hawley—a professional editor who proofreads our newsletter—has been selling BOB bumper stickers for many years. The stickers read, "Prostate Cancer? www.protonbob.com." If you're interested in purchasing one, just send $6.00 to Bob Hawley at P.O. Box 45, Mt. Angel, OR 97362 and he'll mail you one. Proceeds go to the *Marckini Chair for Proton Research* at Loma Linda University Cancer Center.

- Breakthrough Discovery Reveals Hidden Driver Behind Prostate Cancer
- Real-Time 3D Tracking of Bragg Peak During Proton Treatment
- Long-term Results: Proton Therapy Toxicity Outcomes for Localized Prostate Cancer
- New Research: Dietary Antioxidants May Cut Erectile Dysfunction Risk
- 94 Years Old and Going Strong
- Member Gives $1 Million
- Doctor Shares 9 Simple Ways to Reduce Dementia Risk
- Pesco-Vegetarian Diets Lower Death Risk in Elderly
- Are Bananas and Countertops Radioactive?!

Breakthrough Discovery Reveals Hidden Driver Behind Prostate Cancer

In 2019, we reported on the NSD2 gene, which was identified as a key driver in the rapid spread of prostate cancer. Research on mice showed that "switching off" NSD2 in tumor cells significantly reduced cancer metastasis.

New research from the University of Michigan, published in *Nature Genetics*, reveals that NSD2 plays a crucial role in the earliest stages of the disease. The study found that NSD2 alters the function of the androgen receptor, which typically helps maintain a healthy prostate. However, in the presence of NSD2, the receptor's behavior changes, accelerating cancerous growth by affecting how it interacts with DNA. Notably, NSD2 is found only in cancer cells, making it a promising therapeutic target.



The study also explored the potential of targeting both NSD2 and its partner protein, NSD1, to slow cancer growth. A compound that degraded both proteins effectively destroyed prostate cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue, suggesting a novel treatment approach.

Although the compound is not yet ready for human trials, this breakthrough points to the possibility of combining these therapies with FDA-approved drugs for more effective prostate cancer treatment in the future.

news briefs

Proton Radiation Enhances CAR T Cell Therapy in Pancreatic Cancer

Researchers at PENN Medicine have developed a promising treatment for pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma, an aggressive and difficult-to-treat cancer. Their approach combines proton therapy with CAR T cell therapy, which specifically targets a protein called mesothelin (MSLN) found on cancer cells.

Results from a study on mice models showed that proton therapy increased the presence of MSLN on cancer cells, making it easier for CAR T cells to find and attack the tumor. The combination also reshaped the tumor's environment, making it less resistant to immune attacks.

These findings suggest that using protons before CAR T therapy can enhance its effectiveness against pancreatic cancer by exposing more of the tumor to attack and creating a friendlier environment for immune cells.

Real-Time 3D Tracking of Bragg Peak During Proton Treatment

The Bragg Peak:

The point at which the proton beam releases the most energy, allowing doctors to focus the most powerful part of the beam on the cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue.

In proton therapy, the Bragg peak is a sharp rise in the energy delivered to cancer cells, followed by a rapid drop-off—something not seen in traditional photon (X-Ray) therapy. This unique feature allows for highly targeted treatments that concentrate the dose on the tumor while sparing surrounding healthy tissue. However, because the transition between high and low doses happens over a very short distance, precise delivery is crucial. Accurately pinpointing the Bragg peak has been challenging, leading to uncertainties in treatment outcomes.

To address this, researchers from University of California, Irvine have developed a new method called "protoacoustic imaging" (PAI), which uses ultrasound technology to create 3D images of the Bragg peak in real time. The system features an array of 256 ultrasound sensors that provide high-resolution imaging, allowing doctors to track the proton beam and ensure accurate delivery of radiation to the tumor. This approach has been successfully tested in liver and prostate cancer treatments, showing potential for more precise and adaptive radiotherapy.

By offering real-time feedback, PAI improves the safety and effectiveness of proton therapy, reducing side effects and potentially leading to better outcomes for cancer patients.

[Can Upright Treatment Increase Access to Advanced Radiotherapy?]

Upright radiotherapy, where patients stand during treatment, is gaining attention for its potential to reduce costs by eliminating large gantries, making advanced treatments like proton therapy more affordable. It also offers better positioning flexibility, improving radiation delivery. However, challenges include new imaging systems, treatment planning methods, and ensuring precise patient positioning. Early results show it to be comfortable for patients, with ongoing research aimed at expanding its use.

[How Proton Therapy Treats Dangerous Heart Conditions]

A clinical trial at the Mayo Clinic is exploring proton beam therapy to treat ventricular tachycardia (V-tach), a dangerous condition marked by a rapid heartbeat. Roger Thomsen, a 69-year-old patient who struggled with V-tach and underwent several unsuccessful catheter ablations, enrolled in the trial. Nearly a year later, Thomsen has shown no abnormal heart rhythms, highlighting the potential of this non-invasive treatment.

Long-term Results: Proton Therapy Toxicity Outcomes for Localized Prostate Cancer

A recent study from MD Anderson highlights the long-term effects of proton therapy in treating localized prostate cancer, specifically examining potential side effects.

The findings are promising: most men who underwent proton therapy reported very few severe long-term side effects. Out of 2,772 patients, only 9—equating to just 0.3 percent—experienced serious complications related to the urinary or gastrointestinal systems, such as bladder or bowel issues. Notably, these patients had received a higher radiation dose of 78 Gy.

Interestingly, the study also suggests that reducing the radiation dose slightly to 76 Gy could still effectively treat the cancer while further minimizing the risk of severe side effects.

This research reinforces that proton therapy is a safe and effective option for prostate cancer treatment. By adjusting the radiation dose, healthcare providers can continue to enhance patient safety, making proton therapy even more beneficial for those affected by the disease.

New Research: Dietary Antioxidants May Cut Erectile Dysfunction Risk

A recent study sheds light on how diet could play a role in reducing erectile dysfunction (ED), with a focus on the benefits of dietary antioxidants. The study, published in *Scientific Reports*, uses data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) to explore the connection between ED and the Compound Dietary Antioxidant Index (CDAI)—a score reflecting one's intake of antioxidants like vitamins A, C, E, zinc, selenium, and carotenoids.

Understanding ED

ED, a common condition among aging men, occurs when there's an issue with blood flow to the penis, making it difficult to maintain an erection. Several factors, such as aging, poor lifestyle habits (smoking, lack of exercise, alcohol), and chronic conditions (diabetes, heart disease), contribute to its development. Oxidative stress, caused by an excess of reactive oxygen species (ROS), plays a key role in the vascular problems that lead to ED. Antioxidants help neutralize these ROS, reducing oxidative stress and improving blood vessel health.

Key Findings

The study, which includes over 3,600 men, shows that those with ED have significantly lower CDAI scores, suggesting that they consume fewer dietary antioxidants compared to men without ED. Interestingly, men with higher CDAI scores have a reduced risk of developing ED, even when accounting for factors like age, body mass index (BMI), smoking, and alcohol use.

The results show a clear trend: as antioxidant intake increases, the risk of ED decreases—up to a point where it plateaus. This dose-response relationship highlights the importance of antioxidants in maintaining sexual health.

The Bigger Picture

While the findings are promising, the study has some limitations. It's cross-sectional, meaning it can't prove cause and effect, and the data comes from the early 2000s. However, the message remains clear—eating a diet rich in antioxidants helps protect against ED. More research is needed to confirm these results and explore how modern dietary habits impact ED risk today.

In short, what you eat might be as important for your love life as it is for your heart—so load up on those fruits and veggies!

flashback

We've been producing BOB Tales *newsletters for more than 23 years. During this time we've published articles that many new members haven't seen, and some older members may have forgotten. So, we periodically re-run articles from past* BOB Tales. *This one, written by Bob Marckini, is from October 2007.*

94 Years Old and Going Strong

I spoke with the most "senior" of our members last month, Charlie Einsiedler. Charlie is 94 years young and more active than most 60-year-olds. You can never find Charlie home, as he's always out doing something, whether it's attending his 70th reunion at Cornell, driving with his wife Betty from their home in Rhode Island to Northern Vermont or Northern Maine to visit relatives, or just playing golf.

Charlie was 87 when he was treated with protons at Loma Linda in early 2001. He had excellent results and is active in promoting proton therapy for prostate cancer. His testimonial is posted on our website and it's a good read. We also did a Featured Member story on Charlie in our September 2004 *BOB Tales*.

Pauline and I had dinner with Charlie and Betty a few months ago along with BOB member Ted Fuller and his wife, Kris. We had lots to talk about and before we knew it, it was closing time for the restaurant. Charlie was ready to go someplace else to continue our talks or maybe go dancing, but Ted and I – a few years younger than Charlie – said we were a little tuckered out and felt we should call it a night.

One of my favorite stories about Charlie is a conversation I had with him a couple of years ago, when he was 'only' 92. "I can't understand it," he said during our conversation about golf, "I find myself getting tired after only nine holes."

► **BOB Comment 2024:** Charlie lived to 102; that's 15 years after his treatment at age 87. He was strong and active right to the end, and often talked about how proton therapy gave him so many more healthy and happy years with his beloved wife.

We're often asked, "When are you too old to be treated for prostate cancer?" Clearly there's no simple answer to this question. It depends on the patient's overall health (including co-morbidities) and expected longevity. And we think it also depends a lot on attitude.

Charlie had an incredibly positive attitude, and he kept busy physically and mentally. About three months before he passed, he shared with us that he was making excellent progress on his re-design of the combustion engine, one that he predicted would greatly increase the efficiency with which the engine would burn gasoline.

Charlie's health was excellent, and even though his urologist discouraged treatment of any kind at age 87, Charlie insisted. And being an engineer (Bob can relate to this), Charlie did his homework and selected the treatment that would destroy his cancer and maintain the quality of his active life – proton therapy.

making a difference by giving back

From $25 to $1 Million: Every Gift Makes a Difference

As the year draws to a close in less than three months, many of us are thinking about giving back to the causes we care about most. With so many worthwhile organizations doing incredible work, it can be difficult to decide where to focus our support. For Bob and Deb, however, one choice is easy—Loma Linda University Health (LLUH).

LLUH saved Bob's life and preserved its quality. We couldn't be more thankful for the care and treatment he received, and we know that many of you, our members, share in this gratitude. LLUH took a bold step more than 30 years ago, pioneering proton therapy at a time when it was still in its infancy, primarily used in physics labs and far from the medical mainstream. They invested heavily and at great financial risk, all to develop this life-saving technology.

Today, thanks to their efforts, proton therapy is a proven and widely used treatment, with 45 proton centers in the U.S., 50 more across the globe, and many additional centers on the horizon. It's a remarkable achievement, but it's just one of many reasons why LLUH deserves our continued support.

Loma Linda University Health isn't just leading the way in proton therapy. As one of the nation's top medical institutions, they treat thousands of patients each year, utilizing cutting-edge technology in nearly every medical specialty. And their

commitment to innovation continues—they're making significant investments in three more groundbreaking fields: theranostics, CAR T-cell therapy, and boron neutron capture therapy. Traditional cancer treatments often fall short because they can't detect tiny metastases early enough. But these new cellular-level treatments are set to change that. CAR T-cell therapy harnesses the power of a patient's own immune cells to attack leukemias and lymphomas. Theranostics combines therapy and diagnostics to target metastatic prostate cancer and other malignancies with incredible precision. Boron neutron capture therapy targets aggressive brain cancers like glioblastomas. These technologies offer a beacon of hope for curing complex cancers previously deemed incurable.

As you consider your year-end giving, we ask that you reflect on the life-changing impact LLUH has had on so many—and the groundbreaking work they are doing now to advance cancer treatments and research. By making a gift to LLUH this season, you can help them continue their extraordinary efforts and extend access to even more patients in need. Together, we can help ensure that LLUH remains at the forefront of medical innovation, saving lives and improving the quality of life for countless individuals.

Last month, one of our long-standing and generous BOB members made an incredible *$1 million* contribution to LLUH. Of course, we don't expect everyone to give at that level. In fact, many of our members donate as little as $25 when they're able—and every donation, regardless of size, truly makes a difference.

Stay tuned next month for more fascinating insights into the life and achievements of this $1 million donor!

In the meantime, as you plan your year-end giving, please consider making a gift to Loma Linda University Health to support their leading edge comprehensive cancer care initiatives. Your gift can and will save lives.

More Giving Options

- **Online:** Donate here. From the pull-down menu, choose where you'd like to direct your gift — 1) Cancer Center Vision; 2) Proton Research through the *James M. Slater Chair;* 3) Proton Research through the *Robert J. Marckini Chair;* or 4) Other (specify any area you'd like your gift directed in the space provided)

- **By Check:** Make your check out to "LLUCC." Specify where you'd like to direct your gift in the memo line — 1) Cancer Center Vision, 2) *Slater Chair,* 3) *Marckini Chair,*

- or 4) write “unrestricted” so LLUH can use it where it’s needed most. Mail your check to: LLUH, Office of Philanthropy P.O. Box 2000, Loma Linda, CA 92354.
- **By Phone:** Call Regina Joseph at 909-558-5010.

health

Doctor Shares 9 Simple Ways to Reduce Dementia Risk

Dr. Jake Goodman, a psychiatry resident physician at the Miami Miller School of Medicine and global mental health activist with more than 2.1 million followers on social media, is on a mission to help people reduce their risk of dementia. After losing his grandmother to dementia and treating many patients with the condition, Goodman has developed a nine-step plan to keep your brain healthy as you age.

Here’s how:

1. **Exercise regularly**: Physical activity is key. Whether it’s walking, yoga, or strength training, keeping your body moving has been shown to significantly lower dementia risk. Even household chores count!
2. **Learn new skills**: Challenge your brain! Picking up new hobbies—whether it’s gardening or freestyle rapping—helps form new brain connections and build cognitive resilience.
3. **Stay social**: Meaningful social interactions stimulate mental activity, boosting brain health. Isolation, on the other hand, can increase dementia risk by 50 percent.
4. **Eat healthy**: A Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, and olive oil can reduce dementia risk by up to 23 percent. Avoid ultra-processed foods.
5. **Avoid smoking**: Smoking damages blood flow to the brain, raising your odds of developing dementia by 30 percent.
6. **Limit alcohol**: Excessive drinking ages your brain, quite literally shrinking it. Moderation is key to protecting those brain cells.
7. **Manage diabetes and high blood pressure**: Poorly controlled diabetes and hypertension can damage your brain’s blood vessels, doubling your risk of dementia.

8. **Get good sleep**: Seven to nine hours of sleep a night is ideal for flushing toxins from the brain, enhancing memory and learning.
9. **Protect your head**: Wearing helmets and protecting your brain from injury helps prevent long-term damage.

Goodman's advice is simple but powerful: By making small changes in your daily routine, you can safeguard your brain and lower your risk of dementia.

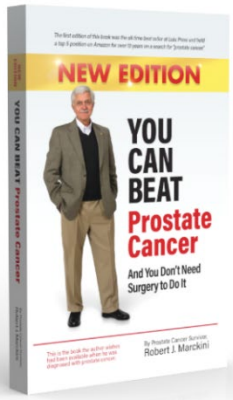
Pesco-Vegetarian Diets Lower Death Risk in Elderly

A new study from Loma Linda University Health reveals that while vegetarian diets are generally linked to lower mortality, they may be less protective against neurological diseases in very elderly people. The study, part of the Adventist Health Study-2 cohort, analyzed over 88,000 subjects and found that pesco-vegetarian diets (which include fish) provided the best protection, reducing the risk of death by 18 percent. Strict vegetarians, particularly those over 80, showed a slightly higher risk for conditions like stroke, dementia, and Parkinson's, but overall, vegetarian diets still offered substantial health benefits.

Lead researcher Dr. Gary Fraser noted that while vegetarian diets are highly protective in middle age, this advantage wanes for those in their 80s, especially for neurological conditions. The findings suggest that diet might need to be adjusted in later life to maintain its protective effects. Despite this, the pesco-vegetarian diet still holds a clear edge over both non-vegetarian and stricter vegetarian diets, even in advanced age.

This research contributes to the growing body of evidence that diet plays a crucial role in longevity, with vegetarians—especially those who include fish—showing significantly lower mortality rates.

You Can Beat Prostate Cancer: And You Don't Need Surgery to Do It – *Second Edition*



Still Strong in Amazon!

Bob's book continues to significantly impact people's lives, as evident by the feedback received on Amazon and by the many daily email messages we receive.

In Amazon, the book is *still* holding strong in the No. 2 position on a list of more than 6,000 books on prostate cancer. And, the first and second editions have a combined 774 reader reviews, averaging a five-star rating.

Following is an excerpt from the latest review.

★★★★★

Excellent: *While the author obviously chose proton therapy, he presents good information about many options. I ultimately chose proton therapy myself and have just started treatment. I am fortunate to live only 75 minutes away from a treatment center, so I don't have to relocate for two months like so many. I found this book to be very helpful in weighing many options, but I did plenty of other research. I highly recommend this book as a good starting place for your own research.*

Was the book helpful to you?

If Bob's book was helpful to you and you'd like to help others find it on Amazon, please write a review. *Every single review contributes to the credibility and visibility of the book.*

Last Month's Brain Teaser

In a box there are 30 billiard balls – 10 black, 10 white and 10 red – scattered haphazardly. They all weigh and feel the same. If you are wearing a blindfold, what is the fewest number of balls you must draw out to *ensure* you get a pair that matches: that is, two white balls, two black balls, or two red balls?

Answer: Four draws. The reasoning is as follows: You start by assuming the worst-case scenario, which is that your first three draws result in your picking three balls of three different colors – white, black and red. The fourth ball you draw out – no matter what color – will match one of the three colors outside the box, since it can only be white, black, or red.

Winner: Congratulations to Rich Bradley of Nokomis, FL, our latest brain teaser winner! Rich is currently undergoing treatment at the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute in Jacksonville, where he's on his 19th of 28 sessions. Once he completes his treatment, he'll head home to care for his wife as she recovers from shoulder surgery.

Congratulations, Rich! Your signed copy of Bob's book is in the mail.

New Brain Teaser

How many ways can you make change for a dollar?

Warning: You may not want to figure this out on paper at home. It could keep you up all night.

Suggestion: You could easily look up the answer on the Internet. But just for fun, assuming you don't check the Internet or spend all night working out the answer with a table full of pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars, etc., why not take a wild guess? The person who comes closest to the correct answer will be the winner.

Hint: The number is between 100 and 300.

Send your brain teaser answer to DHickey@protonbob.com for a chance to win a signed copy of Bob Marckini's **second edition book,** *You Can Beat Prostate Cancer.*

Little Billy and the Pastor

Following Sunday services, eight-year-old Billy walked up to the pastor and said, “When I grow up, I’m going to give you a lot of money. “Well, thank you so much, Billy,” said the pastor, “And why is that?” Billy pulled his shoulders back, puffed up his chest and proudly stated, “Because my dad says you’re the poorest preacher we’ve ever had.

Some Corny Humor

To get rid of unwanted junk during the holidays, put it in an Amazon box and leave it on the front porch.

Troubled Parent Posted: This morning my kid said his ear hurt and I said, “on the inside or outside?” So he walked out the front door, came back in, and said, “Both.” Moments like this got me wondering if I’m saving too much for college.

If you get a loan at a bank, you’ll be paying it back for 30 years. If you rob a bank, you’ll be out in 10 years. Follow me for more financial advice.

Do y’all remember, before the Internet, that people thought the cause of stupidity was the lack of access to information? Yeah, it wasn’t that.

I let my buddy, who’s blind, borrow money the other day. He told me he’d pay me back the next time he saw me. …Wait a minute.

Once you understand why pizza is made round, packed in a square box, and eaten as a triangle, then you will understand women.

I got gas today for $1.39. Unfortunately, it was at Taco Bell.

I’ve never seen anyone jogging and smiling, so that’s all I need to know about that.

Real Headlines

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures

Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead

Psychics Predict World Didn't End Yesterday

City Unsure Why Sewer Smells

Missippi's Literacy Program Shows Improvement

County to Pay $250,000 to Advertise Lack of Funds

Meeting on Open Meeting is Closed

Parents Keep Kids Home to Protest School Closure

odds & ends

Did You Know…?

Ants are incredibly strong. They can lift and carry more than 50 times their own weight!

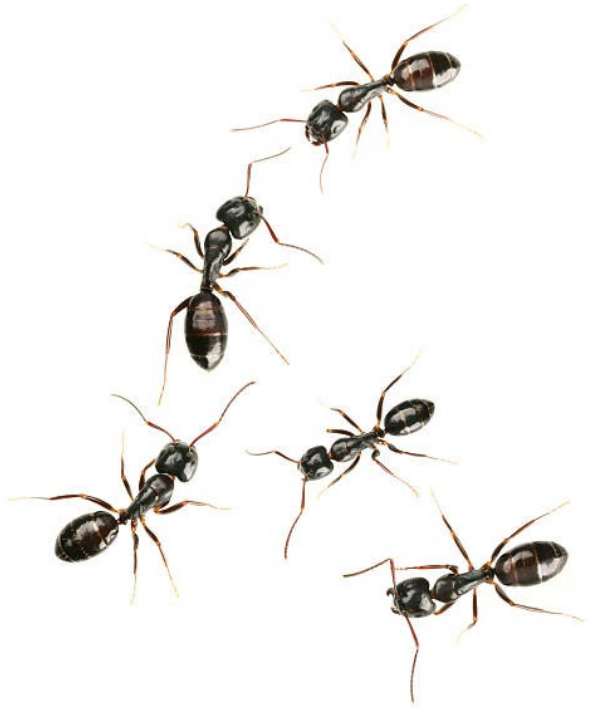
We only see one side of the moon. Since the earth and the moon's rotations are synchronous, we only ever see one face.

Giraffes are much more likely to get hit by lightning than humans. Their fatality rate from lightning strikes is a whopping 30 times higher than ours.

Someone held their breath under water for nearly 25 minutes! On March 27, 2021, Budimir Sobat, a 56-year-old free-diver from Croatia held his breath for a total of 24 minutes 37.36 seconds.

Bananas are radioactive. It's true, and so are potatoes, spinach, Brazil nuts, oranges and granite countertops.

Source



Quote of the Month:

"Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you're aboard there's nothing you can do about it." –Golda Meir

final thought

Attitude is Everything *Source*

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He's always in a good mood and always has something positive to say: When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I'd be twins!" He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and said, "I don't get it. You can't be a positive person all the time. How do you do it?" Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood, or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim, or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining, or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life. "Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested.

"Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. Bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left Tower Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life

instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower.

After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw him about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied. “If I were any better, I’d be twins. Wanna see my scars?” I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. “The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon to be born daughter,” Michael replied. “Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live.”

“Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?” I asked.

Michael continued, “the paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, ‘he's a dead man.’ I knew I needed to take action.”

“What did you do?” I asked.

“Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me,” said Michael. “She asked if I was allergic to anything. “Yes,” I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, “Gravity.”

Over their laughter, I told them, “I’m choosing to live. Operate on me as if I’m alive, not dead.”

Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully.

Attitude, after all, is everything.

Low PSAs to all,

Bob Marckini and Deb Hickey

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