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New Year's Circus on the Riverside

It was quite a circus on Kampot's riverside last new year's with every centimeter of the park strip that wasn't occupied by parked cars and motorbikes taken up by Khmer picnickers and revelers. They laid out their straw mats on the hard ground and partied up. Some brought their boom boxes, others brought tents for overnight. It's too bad the park strip is so narrow right at old town, because Khmers love to congregate, they hate being alone and only feel really comfortable when lots of other people are around. So while there were locals picnicking all along the 3 kilometer waterfront it was most crowded where it could least accommodate them.

In the aftermath there was trash all over the place, though actually, the majority was piled around the small inadequate trash bins. Maybe they just don't have any additional ones they could've placed there, but it sure would've made a difference in the clean up phase.

The road itself was also jammed with vehicles and people. The absence of usable sidewalks doesn't impact life and livability in a small city like Kampot with about 50 to 60,000 people the way it does in the capital, because traffic is generally relatively light, but on a holiday like new years, it can get pretty treacherous out there trying to get around.

Kampot has become a prime destination for locals on holiday. They flock to the little burg at every opportunity. Especially from Phnom Penh, since the capital has done and is doing its best to cover every public park and vacant space with buildings. If you don't live near the river or Olympic stadium, there's no place to go for respite from the noise and concrete. I just don't get it: The people who run the country have certainly been to other cities in the region and the world that have wonderful natural parks. Just in our neighborhood, Ho Chi Minh, Bangkok, Rangoon all have beautiful parks. In Cambodia's cities, there isn't a single natural park outside of Siem Reap. The country is great at securing riverside space for the people, but after that, zilch, nada, nil.

High season is in full swing with everybody, or nearly everybody enjoying the rush of customers. Still, it doesn't seem as busy as in the past, though maybe only because new establishments are proliferating. There's been lots of live music around, not like rainy season when the place was dead. In addition to the old regulars like the Playboys which I mention often, there's a threesome called the Potshots. Ant and John are on guitars and Hugh on drums make a really tight sound, they've literally been playing together for years. Ant and John also play around town as a duo. After a long hiatus, I've started to bring my instruments at open mics so the action is welcome.

Potshots is also the name of a paintball park partly owned by Ant. Sounds like great fun, though I personally probably shouldn't be running around on rough terrain at my age. I can take off on a sprint without a problem, if I'm thinking and careful, but the old bones get brittle and I could easily get sprained if I got too excited and rambunctious while out on the kill.

Speaking of traffic let me unload some pet peeves and proffer a little advice. Here in Kampot car drivers will stop their vehicles wherever they happen to be in the street, even right in the center of a traffic lane. Sure, most times there's little traffic and plenty of room to get around, but it still seems weird to me. The rule is

to always get your vehicle as far as possible off the traffic lanes, cause you never know if the necking down you are causing will in turn result in an accident. That's especially true on highways where people are driving really fast: get out of the way or you may be in for a rude awakening. Even just a motorbike can cause problems when it's on the edge of the roadway instead of completely off it. Stopping anywhere you feel like also happens in Phnom Penh, where I saw drivers everywhere double parking, causing minor jams. Cambodia's cities were not built for the automobile, so as the number of cars in the country ramps up there'll be gridlock and chaos. The problem will also be exacerbated by the large multistory buildings filling up the center city since they will be drawing large numbers of cars. Even if they provide parking spaces to residents, there'll still be a lot more traffic.

The government is working on traffic legislation. One proposal is



establish a minimum driving age of 18 for cars and 15 for motorbikes. Sounds reasonable enough, but if the moto age restriction is ever enforced here in Kampot there'll be lots of very disappointed little kiddies who you can see bopping around on their little bikes. I see them as young as 6 or 7 years old. While they may be fully capable in a technical sense of handling their Challys or what have you, they have almost no sense of safe driving practices and will cut corners, snake around traffic and pull in front of vehicles without thinking, not to mention often drive very fast. And of course it's very rare to see one wearing a helmet. Personally, I'd be scared to death to have a little kid of mine out in traffic with all the crazies out there doing cowboy tricks on the road. Also the PM has ordered that drivers of motorbikes with 125cc or less engines be exempt from having a driver's license. I'm sure everybody who drives one of those little bikes – what we call scooters in the west – was happy to hear that, but what about the need to know the traffic rules? For that there's no substitute than passing a test.

One of my driving pet peeves is how motorists will stop their cars at night but leave the headlights on, including when they're facing the wrong direction. It's very disconcerting when you're facing bright lights on your side of the road. Didn't anybody teach them what parking lights, sometimes called running lights

are for? You want people to know you're there, you don't want to blind them.

And let me reiterate, when you're out walking at night, especially if you're going to be on a road that's not well lit, you need to wear something white or light colored even if you think all black is more stylish, because otherwise you are invisible to drivers until they get very close. I usually drive slowly, but I do get distracted at times and old eyes generally lose some of their night vision so you really want me to see you far in advance, not have to swerve out of the way at the last minute.

A large scale drug crackdown is in force here in Cambodia, maybe sparked or inspired by the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's murderous assault on small time users and dealers. Summary execution for selling a few nickel bags of meth to fund your addiction? Or just using? No evidence, no trial, no lawyer, no opportunity to claim your innocence? He even bragged about participating in a few extrajudicial murders himself while mayor of Davao in the southern island of Mindanao. The result of 18 years of his tenure as an anti-drugs anti-crime mayor?: Davao has one of the highest murder rates in the country, in a country where violent crime is rife. And all those bloody murders where official numbers show the country has 4 million 'addicts', which mysteriously grew from only 1.3 million just a couple years

ago. That would be a lot in Cambodia which has 15 million people, but the Philippines has more than 100 million, so at most a minor irritant. Also, rumor has it that Duterte is addicted to prescription pain killers, so if true, a hypocrite besides.

Other countries in the region maintain a mandatory death sentence for relatively small amounts of drugs: In Malaysia and Singapore 15 grams of heroin or 200 grams of pot qualify for the death penalty. Talking to a Malaysian a few years back, he said that traffickers figure if they're going to die for a small amount, they might as well do large amounts.

With the advanced world moving towards looser, more humanitarian attitudes towards drugs, this type of crack down is an insanely regressive move.

Instead of education and harm reduction, people are getting draconian sentences. A friend knows a woman who was duped by a boyfriend into carrying a kilo of meth and got 27 years. A truck driver who got \$100 for moving a ton of marijuana got life in prison. Another woman duped by a boyfriend into importing 2 kilos of cocaine also got life. He kept pressuring her until she gave in. She had no idea what she was transporting. She aroused suspicion by not having any check-in baggage. These are not the big fish, but merely couriers. In a country where murder sometimes only gets 15 to 20 years, a travesty of justice.

The place to start easing up is of course ganja. With nine American states making recreational pot totally legal and another 20 or so making medical weed legal; Uruguay legalizing pot and others loosening up, there's no reason whatever for going after pot here in Cambodia, especially with the anomaly of ganja being quasi-legal for happy pizzas. Colorado, the first state to make it legal, is getting twice as much in taxes from pot as from alcohol. With surrounding countries on drug killing sprees, it'd be hard for Cambodia to buck the trend, but it would nonetheless be wise to try,

since an open attitude would be good for the country and for tourism. It costs a lot of money to nab, prosecute and imprison drug offenders. And it costs society a lot in peace and security when a large scale underground business in contraband flourishes, bringing crime and corruption.

Cambodia is already the easiest place to smoke weed in the region and there are no discernable negative impacts on the country from the drug itself; that is, aside from its illegality. In the same



way that Cambo makes it easy and is tolerant of all types of people living here, having a gentle touch with marijuana would only be good for tourism and drawing expats.

The key to minimizing use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, whatever is education. Tobacco is the perfect example. When I was a kid in the forties and fifties around 70% of adults smoked and lots of kids too, considering I started at 12. Tobacco advertising was everywhere, including on TV and so many adults smoked that it was difficult for them to tell you not to. Camel advertising claimed '9 out of 10 doctors prefer Camels'. I once had an old advertising sign from Old Gold cigs that said 'Not a cough in a carload.' Filters didn't come into use until the late 50s. The tobacco companies tried to convince people that their product was

harmless decades after everyone knew inherently that it was dangerous. We kids were aware of its dangers back in the fifties: we referred to cigarettes as coffin nails.

Now after many years of research debunking the industry's obfuscating and clouding the issue of health problems associated with smoking, restricting of advertising and widespread education, the percentage of smokers is down below 20%. Tobacco is so cheap here in Cambo that a lot of expats will smoke here but not when they return to their home countries where it can be very expensive.

I believe everybody has a right to their own poison; it's your choice. The only

important point on that score is to know your poison. Some people justify their addiction saying they like it and don't care if they don't live as long. Unfortunately for them it's not that simple. If you could enjoy your habit for three or four decades and then die nice and quickly, that'd be one thing, but generally when your cells turn cancerous you die a slow and terribly painful death, wasting away to nothing. That could happen when you are in your fifties or sixties when you still might have had decades of



good living to go. When I was in my teens and people warned me about smoking, I would haughtily declare that I was going to enjoy life now and wasn't worried about the future and as long as I lived to the year 2000 (when I'd be 59) I'd be happy. Well the year 2000 is long gone and I'm still having a great time and getting a kick out of life.

It took an extreme effort to quit 35 years ago, and it's certainly made all the difference. I quit by overdoing it, sometimes called immersion therapy. Most of the time I smoked it was cheap, harsh, unfiltered, roll-your-own cigs. When that was combined with smoking pot for the last 14 years I smoked tobacco, it got so I was coughing all the time. Smoking both at the same time is much worse than either one individually. I couldn't attend meetings or such without disrupting them.

I'd known from past experience that there were times I was so sick I positively could not take a single hit, so I purposely made myself sick. I smoked one after another non-stop of that cheap

tobacco. When I finished the package, I started rolling the butts and then the butts of the butts until I felt so bad the thought of a single puff was so repulsive, I stopped. That was 35 years ago and I haven't had a hit since, except for mistakenly smoking mixed joints.

The point being, whatever the addiction, tobacco, drugs, alcohol, gambling, it's the individual's responsibility, with whatever education, guidance or rehab efforts the state can provide. In that scenario, the damage and cost to the society and individual is far less than the kind of repression that happens now.

Besides, the whole anti-drug thing is stinkingly hypocritical. In Singapore, you can kill yourself with tobacco or alcohol, you can eat yourself to death, you can gamble away your family's future in the local casinos, but if you smoke a joint you get locked away. A couple years back a Singaporean couple returning from a vacation in Australia were drug tested and since they'd smoked pot in Oz and pot lasts 30 days in your system they spent two years in prison for their terrible transgressions.

Cambostan

KHMER FOLK STORIES

The Gossipy Man

Once upon the time, there lived a man named Ream. He was the door-keeper of a millionaire.

People who wished to see or to contact the millionaire always had to ask Ream first to know whether the millionaire was at home or not, or whether they could or could not see the millionaire. People could go to see the millionaire only after having received Ream's permission. Before allowing a person to see the millionaire, Ream always asked the person about his/her name, whereabouts and intentions.

Ream was the only person who was loved most by the millionaire. One day, the millionaire secretly told Ream : "You must be responsible for everything for me, including overseeing the slave workers and the care-taker of the warehouse to make sure that they work hard and sincerely for me or not. From today on, I assign you as both my spy and my door-keeper. I'll double your salary."

Ream was a talkative man and never hid any secret. He always told other people of what he should have kept secret. Therefore, he told his wife and friends about the millionaire assigning him as the spy.

His wife was very glad. She whispered the secret to her friends and her friends whispered that secret to their husbands and friends and so on. The secret was soon widely known. The millionaire's slave workers and care-taker of the warehouse on learning that Ream was the millionaire's spy tried to incite the millionaire to dismiss Ream from his employment.

After he had been fired by the millionaire, Ream felt very depressed and stayed at home doing nothing. He sold all his properties and house to get money to buy food until nothing was left to him. Ream became very poor and homeless. He then went to live with one of his friends. As for his wife, she also divorced him and married another man.

Knowing that, the millionaire asked Ream to come back to live with him again as a house cleaner.

One day, there were a ship's three businessmen bringing a

precious diamond to sell to the millionaire. The three businessmen honestly told the millionaire : "We bought this diamond from the chief of the royal treasury, who had stolen it and sold it to me. We had this diamond cut in a different shape so that it could not be recognized as belonging to the king." The millionaire asked those businessmen to clarify the exact shape of that diamond to make sure that it was really so different from the original shape that no one could recognize it. Therefore, he bought it. At that time, Ream was also wiping the furniture nearby and he heard all what the businessmen had said.

Three days later, there was an art festival organized in the city. Ream asked the millionaire for permission to go to see it with a friend. While watching a performance, Ream recollected the diamond businessmen. Then, he gave his friend a full account of the story. Coincidentally, the three businessmen were also there watching the performance and overheard everything. They thought that if they let Ream and his friend live longer, their secret would be revealed. After the festival had been over, the three businessmen went to hide themselves at a quiet place. When Ream and his friend walked to that place, the three businessmen

came out and killed them.

This story gives you two concepts :

1- Being a human, one should adapt himself to circumstances. Don't be so straightforward as a ruler. Even a sugar cane or a bamboo has its joints and substances.

2- Before speaking, one should first consider which words he/she should say in public, which words he/she should say to each individual and which words he/she should not let other people know.

After taking these into account, he/she then can manage to speak them out in a suitable situation, which can achieve his/her aims and bring benefits for both himself/herself and the national society.

If one is so talkative and always speaks nonsense, it may spoil his/her own benefits and those of the national society until he/she loses his/her life because of his/her words



Bits from the Beach

Well the New Year started with a bang with a spectacular fireworks show on Ochheateal beach. The beach was packed with revellers enjoying themselves. Unfortunately not long after midnight everyone decided to leave and the traffic is murderous. Well below walking pace in getting to the Golden Lions roundabout. Town was packed with some hoteliers increasing their room rates by over three times and people offering even more.

It was much more successful than the Sea Festival which was held at Independence beach and attended by the king and the Prime minister. Town did not fill up so one can only assume that the expected 200,000 visitors never arrived, which is good as mentioned by one observer of the competent authorities, that there are probably less than 20,000 rooms in Sihanoukville.

The new lifeguards lined the road at the beach and not the beach in a masterful display.

Unfortunately later early on in January, the weather turned bad with some strong winds whipping up waves nearly a metre high at Ochheateal on a holiday weekend which saw big crowds at the beach. Unfortunately not a life guard was to be seen and the towers were empty. Good thing no one drowned as the competent authorities would have had to invent some face saving excuses.

Mind you they could always say that they could not see the water for all the little red vendor boxes that have been placed the entire length of Ochheateal beach about 20 metres apart with seats and solid umbrellas in between.. All the bars that have been moved back have nice views of them. Ochheateal beach was starting to look really good until someone decided to get greedy and place these eyesores on the foreshore, where no structure is supposed to be. Only one has opened up. Some public toilets for their customers would be a good idea.

Tourist numbers appear to be down and most business have reported a drop in turnover. Many businesses are up for sale right now and this will likely get way worse in the coming low season. One greedy little piggie is asking \$100,000 for the sale of his beachfront bar with only a short term lease and dwindling turnover. Still it has a nice view of a red box!

Back at independence beach things are a bit of a mess with a new roundabout being constructed right beside the Small Beach Bar which has already lost some of its kitchen space and is said to have to relocate somewhere nearby soon. Noting like planning for this to happen the middle of the high season. The year got off to a tragic start with a few deaths. One visitor

kicked the bucket right in front of Bucket bar with a supposed cardiac arrest. It is believed that the Khmers prevented westerners giving CPR to this person. But they were nice enough to lay his body upon cushions while the competent authorities conducted their investigations. Their forensic analysis, which usually consists of a photo and determination of a heart attack as the cause of death about 80% of the time was probably right this time.

They also ruled another double death the next day as suicide. A young British couple was found hanged together with their hands



tied behind their backs. The presence of a garbled “suicide note” blaming the failure of the British National Health Service to help them was enough evidence to rule it a suicide. It saved the Competent Authorities hours of anguish in undertaking their forensic analysis and negated the need to think about the hands tied behind the backs. A long term expat Stefan also passed away by his



own hand and will be missed by many.

There have been many town wide power blackouts this month, which has followed a year of relatively stable electricity supply.

This has been happening often and sometimes for very extended times. It has caused many to have to crank up their generators. In one case the firing up of a small generator caused a large fire at Otres 2, destroying two businesses and damaging another 3. Many tourists lost everything when their bungalows went up in flames. The fire brigade were there pretty soon and did a good job of containing the spread of the fire.

Snookies bar, restaurant and guesthouse is closing soon. The lease is ending and Roy is going to spend more time working on making his Ream place a similar success. Meanwhile Gary is moving the bar and restaurant side of things around the corner into the ground floor of a new apartment building. Meanwhile Matty of G'Day Mate has bought the cider bar on the street behind Snookies and appears to be doing well, apparently this will continue to be another source of Cambodian produced Cider.

It has been trying times for one bar owner who has apparently had trouble retaining staff due to personality issues yet again. The new staff walked out and he was left to run the entire bar and restaurant by himself, leading to some pretty impressive waits for food without service, which were said to be 3 hours at time, many people just walked out. Friends tried to help him out but were left with no doubt as to the cause of the staffing

issues and little thanks. Things are now back to normal as he has rehired some of the thicker skinned staff that previously departed.

The Kangaroo Kitchen has changed hands yet again. The new owner has improved the menu and reduced prices of the beer to 75 cents. This led to a large crowd for the quiz night run by former owner and all round good guy, Patrick. Unfortunately the new owner was away and the quiz night became a farcical debacle. Backpackers eating and people drinking the cheap beer meant that there were not enough seats for the quiz contestants. The staff was new and mostly did not speak English and looked blankly at guests as they tried to order drink and food even in Khmer. The place was like a furnace as the fans were not working and the beer was very warm, well until they ran out of beer. The manager for the night just loped around turning his back to the chaos and sipping on his can of coke. Apparently the owners girlfriend said they lost money on the night as 4 breakfasts were given away as prizes (despite about 50 people there eating and drinking) so Patrick has now stopped doing the quiz there. The only way for the Kangaroo Kitchen now is up, as it could not get any worse, still it may find fame in management school textbooks as an example in mismanagement. Patrick is rumoured to be taking over management of Charlie Harpers bar around the corner so expect to see his very popular quiz back up and running there after a short break.

Phnom Penh Pub Page

In a bit of a downturn this month – personal and professional (drinking wise that is). Bars for the most part seemed amazingly empty. There were a few exceptions but wow – life must be very tough going for bar owners at the moment.

One of my major downs and the start of a depressing “missing the good old days” nostalgic slide was the closing of the Blue Tongue Hotel. To be fair, I was not really a frequent customer, nor did it seem like anyone else was either. While I used to drop by regularly for a coffee or a meal in the afternoon, I rarely saw more than a couple of customers and they usually seemed to be hotel guests. The exception was Friday nights when the Joker draw took place. Blue Tongue had inherited the Joker from the Walkabout and kept the tradition alive in a living dead kind of way. For over a decade, I was in the Walkabout or the Blue Tongue every Friday night that I was in town to buy my tickets. Unfortunately, since several Walkabout’s most popular customers were barred from the Blue Tongue, it never really picked up the Walkabout tradition and the Joker just pattered along. In fact, the last Joker draw was the only time I ever saw the Blue Tongue crowded. I am waxing nostalgic because with the closing of the Blue Tongue, it feels like the Walkabout – once the center of my PP universe – has finally died. I guess I had always hoped that management would eventually bring back the old crowd and revitalize the place. Anyway, thanks for all the memories.

Before I start crying in my beer, the official Walkabout Joker draw has moved to Red Fox 2 on St. 172. To be honest I have not dropped by since the move, but it is not really a place I frequent so am unlikely to be regular for it there. I understand that Sharky Bar will also be starting a Joker draw soon to try to lure some of that crowd and move the resurrection of the bar further along.

In addition, the Walkabout building is being renovated and there are lots of interesting rumours about what is happening – many digits are crossed and hoping for the best.

Given my nostalgic frame of mind, the Pub Page revisited some places that have been neglected as of late. Before reviewing some newer places – here are a few bars from reviews past. Zanzibar on St 104 had its day in the sun and, to my mind, never really recovered once the horde of competition hit town. It was a pleasant stop over with some familiar faces. Staff was friendly without being annoying. Beer was cold. Music was fairly reasonable. Life was good. Made me want to drop by again.

Mara on Sisowath – ok to be honest I drop by there frequently. The baby is a huge draw as he is very cute and well behaved critter. I am only mentioning it here as they have an all day happy hour and I was really amused by the concept that I can be happy all day. Wish it was that easy. The Happy Hour is not actually set out on the stand as the owner likes to change it

but it is currently USD 1 Cambodia drafts.

Intoxica on St 130 got a pretty piss poor review last time I reviewed it. Wow – huge change. The bar seemed to have a regular stream of customers and the staff were much improved. Far better and less annoying service. Cold beers. Comfortable atmosphere

– I suspect the décor has not changed but my experience did so I like the look of the place better now. Music at a reasonable level although it tended to creep up over a few drinks. Kudos on management for raising its game to such a good level.

Cherie bar on St. 130 also did not get a great review last time around, but has made significant leaps forward and is now on the list of places to drop by. Not as big an improvement as its neighbour down the street but overall the music was good, the service was good and the drinks were reasonably priced (for a hostess bar).

On to the new places starting with Madam Butterfly on St 136. This is the owner’s fourth bar on the street and is another excellent option on the corner. The staff seems to move between the bars as required which is a nice option for customers who walk in and see the staff already occupied. Just wait a minute

for the imports to arrive. The place was all black, spacious and with a pool table upstairs. Best part for me was the outdoor seating which let you watch the world go by. Currently my second favourite of this group of bars – will let you guess which one I like most.

Up to St 172 with Play Penh. It has been open a few months. Staff was polite although perhaps too quick to abandon this intrepid reporter to his beer and tears. Place was bright with a couple of TVs and very reasonable music. Seemed like a very good place for a quiet few drinks in a friendly atmosphere. Outdoor seating was quite nice although not as much of a show on this street as St 136. Draft beer was \$1.25 and cans were about 50-75c more. The bar included real booze in its lady drinks for those who don’t like pay exorbitant prices for juice at other bars – most lady drinks were USD 3.5-4.5. Recommend as stop for those crawling along St 172.

Should finally mention that Shrek was in town and took me to Ary Love bar on St 110. He had heard good things and wanted to give it a try. Neither of us were that impressed to be honest. Nothing wrong with the place. Comfortable. Attentive staff. Reasonably priced drinks. All seemed good. However just was not working for us. The Pub Page will return when I am in a less pissy mood (Shrek was not doing great that night either) and give it a fair shake.

So not a great Pub Page – hope I get paid for all this drinking – maybe I need to start asking for an expense account instead of being paid per article. Remember – if you have any bar news, openings, anniversaries, etc. that you want mentioned – send the information to the Evil Publisher and if he is in a good mood, he will order me to write about it here.





Less money

As predicted tourist numbers are still on the rise but the countries income from tourism is dropping.

International tourism arrivals increased by 5 percent to surpass the 5 million mark in 2016, according to a report from the Ministry of Tourism . However, total tourism revenue was down from the \$3.5 billion recorded in 2015, amounting to \$3 billion.

Why?

The increase in tourist numbers is due to a large increase in Chinese, Korean and Vietnam-

ese. While western tourist numbers have dropped significantly.

The Asian tourists are on package deals where they spend no money with local businesses as the tour operators own the hotels, bus companies, restaurants and even souvenir shops (in some cases) that their customers are taken to.

Thailand has this problem which it called “zero dollar tourism.” They

banned it and even impounded 2000 coaches belonging to foreign tour companies recently.

The government has to realise that tourist numbers are worthless if they don't spend any money.

Price hike

By the time you read this it will already be in effect.

The government announced last August that the price of a one-day ticket to the Angkor Archaeological Park would

increase from \$20 to \$37, a three-day pass would rise from \$40 to \$60 and a week-long pass would be bumped from \$60 to \$72.

This might be a response to the previous story but we very much doubt it!

Delayed again

The train service between Thailand and Cambodia, which was expected to begin operations early this year, is being delayed due to compensation issues with people living along a one-kilometre stretch of track in Poipet town.

Why the hell are these incompetent officials dragging their feet again. It's not like they didn't know as the PM was due to open it early this year. Maybe it's more about how the compensation gets divvied up that is the problem!

Holiday this month is Meak Bochea Day on Saturday the 11th.



It's a real photo!

FAUX NEWS

Dad Runs Out Of Things To Say To His Kids On The Fourth Snow Day

After enduring 4 snow days in a row Greg Smith realized he had nothing left to say to his kids. After exhausting conversations around snowmen, santa, legos, elf on a shelf and chicken nuggets Greg resigned himself to the fact that his kids really have nothing to offer in conversation. "I attempted to engage them in intellectual dialogue, however I cannot continue feigning interest in the minutiae of my children's lives". Greg stated "I don't really understand.... I've provided my children with ipads and netflix and they continue to want to talk to me. Luckily wearing my Bose noise cancelling headphones has given them a clue that I'm done" Greg put an ad on Craig's list asking for strangers to talk with his kids, however he reports there has been very little interest in strangers who just want to talk to his kids. "I met some really interesting people on Craig's list and we are now crowd sourcing a service that helps adults meet children in a Tinder sort of manner". Greg's son added "I've met some neat friends and I they actually are more interested in me than my father".

National research has shown that talking to kids while increasing their brain development actually stunts parents' brains. The research also proves definitively that smoking cannabis is actually more stimulating than talking to your children over an extended period of time. Teachers, parents, youth probation officers and youth pastors all agree that substance abuse is a suitable substitute to intellectual stimulus then engaging with children in conversation.

"If there is another snow day I'm going to have to start smoking crack" Greg concluded.

Trump Fails U.S. Citizenship Exam

New York, NY - Donald Trump took the US Citizenship Exam yesterday to prove how simple it is for any illegal alien to become a US citizen. Unfortunately, Trump failed. Twice.

The civics test is an oral test given by the USCIS Officer, who asks the applicant up to 10 of 100 civics questions. An applicant must answer 6 out of 10 questions correctly to pass the civics portion of the naturalization test.

Mr. Trump answered the following questions incorrectly (Trump's responses in italics).

Who was the first President of the United States? Me, because all prior elections were rigged.

What "immoral" act did the Civil War end? Democratic control of the House and Senate.

What is more important, the second amendment or the entire Bill of Rights? Second amendment because I scored Melania with my guns and money.

Who was the country's best President? Richard Nixon, who by the way was attacked wrongly by the Washington Post and should have never resigned.

Who was the country's worst President? Anyone named Bush, including Billy.

Was this nation built on immigrants? No, on money, my money.

Are you really a Republican? Yes, a Democratically elected one.

Trump acknowledged that the test is skewed towards immigrants and Hispanics and developed by Democrats, so he had no chance at passing it.

The USCIS Officer in charge, who asked not to be named for fear of retribution, stated, "Most immigrants understand this nation better than Donald Trump. Trump really needs to work on his citizenship skills."

Search for honest Aussie politicians is complete

A two year investigation into the integrity of Australian Federal politicians identified one non-dodgy member of parliament. Headed up by Professor Wayne Brown-Cardigan, the Parliamentary Investigation analysed the behaviours of all 226 politicians in the upper and lower houses. This identified 206 who have been rorting their expenses, 15 who have been sleeping with their secretaries and another 4 who have been trying to sleep with their secretaries.

The name of the single honest politician has been suppressed in the national interest. Prime Minister Malcom Bullshite declined an interview with The Spoof. His press secretary Brenda Trewth explained that Mr Bullshite was currently on an all expenses paid study of the wine cellars of France and would make a statement on his return in two months.

On releasing his report Brown-Cardigan stated that the results were a surprise. "Strewh mate, we didn't expect to find any non-dodgy parliamentarians. This has come as a shock to the committee and the whole of the Australian population.". The report's findings have failed to appear on any newspaper front page, falling behind headlines dealing with accidents involving sheep and the cricket test against the West Indies.



Pretty Girl in Convenience Store Wanted Banging

There was much excitement in a Bangkok convenience store at the weekend when it became clear that one of the assistants working behind the counter was being 'rather too friendly' with one of the customers.

The incident, which took place in the Central Pinklao branch of 7Eleven, was witnessed first hand by Moys Kenwood, originally from East Yorkshire. He

told me:

"This assistant who was serving me gave me a crafty little smile when she asked for the 35 baht. I knew right there and then that she wanted my shaft inside her. It was as plain as the nose on my face."

Kenwood then told how he had tried to obtain the girl's telephone number, but had been amazed when she called for assistance from her boss. Kenwood:

"She was obviously thinking of her job. Having sex with customers on the premises, and especially whilst on duty, is strictly forbidden - even in Thailand - and she didn't want to risk dismissal. I can see it from her point of view now, although at the time, I was annoyed. I already had a huge hard-on ready for her."

When we questioned the young lady involved, Khun Nang, 29, she said:

"It was a smirk rather than a smile. These farangs come in thinking they can have any girl they like. Which they can, but 35 baht was a bit low!"

NHS Bless This Mess

The PM, Teresa May, emerged from her fortress of darkness to press upon the huddled masses that the NHS was not on the verge of a humanitarian crisis. The sky cracked with lightning and thunder rolled through the scene creating a atmosphere of ma-

levolent evil. All in all it was a normal Sunday for the Tory party. Jeremy Hunt, oozing from a pile of bin juice like a slimy alien entity who sustains himself on the misery of others. He hissed: "The NHS is fine. The only problem is the greed of the staff. Staff who wish to be "fairly paid" for their efforts. Communist reds the lot of them! And our British bulldog sprit will not be eroded by these unions and their Queen hating ways."

The pile of bodies he stepped round in the A n E department groaned in pain. Smiling he delivered a solid kick to the side of one of the bodies.

"Our newest project to save the NHS cash is to dispose of half the staff in each hospital. This will mean more cash for lawsuits brought against the failing NHS for negligence. Then we'll be able to sell the NHS on to one of our parties benefactors for a knockdown price."

And they'll do it with the UK applauding their foresight. We probably won't even start protesting until the hospitals are sold off brick by brick and the only way the working class will be allowed any treatment will be once they've been neutered.

Scotland and Wales can fk off though, court rules**

THE Supreme Court has confirmed that the UK's regional parliaments and assemblies can f**k off.

Amid anger at the Brexit ruling, campaigners are delighted that the devolved Scottish parliament and Northern Irish and Welsh assemblies have been exposed as the impotent lie they always were.

Norman Steele of Reading said: "It was fun at first watching them act like their silly regional things were important and having debates and stuff, but come on.

"We can't be listening to them and their farcical accents when we're dealing with serious stuff. Who do we consult next? The Cornish?

"Also they can't have a say on matters of national pride because we beat it out of them in all the wars we won."

Supreme Court justice Mary Fisher said: "Like any legislation which removes rights of citizenship, Brexit must go through parliament to be legal.

"But proper parliament, not these toy ones. Get real."

Man who can't stop talking shite clearly ideal for important negotiations

BORIS Johnson's incessant flow of unfunny xenophobic remarks is perfect for Brexit negotiations, it has been claimed.

The government is sure Johnson will not only entertain everyone during long meetings, but also help secure a good deal by reminding foreigners the British are superior.

Brexit minister David Davis said: "Boris livens up meetings by saying hilarious yet tactful stuff like 'No need for Gestapo tactics, Angela!'

"Cowardly Italians, sexy Scandinavians, oversexed Frenchmen – the zingers just keep coming. Also he really knows his history so he can effortlessly throw in a joke about Agincourt or Waterloo.

"Once he ran around for 12 minutes pretending to be a Lancaster bomber attacking Dresden.

"The war jokes will remind them Britain always wins so they may as well give in. There's no way they'll just get pissed off and stick massive tariffs on everything."

Johnson said: "I'm looking forward to hammering out a deal with the EU with lots of jibes about 'collaborating' and 'blitzing it', plus some other remarks about things like 'soggy biscuit' that only make sense if you attended a British public school.

"It definitely doesn't make me look like some insufferable sixth-form twat who thinks he's being desperately edgy."

Trump eases world's nerves with rambling and demented speech

DONALD Trump has eased the world's nerves with a waffling speech like a man who'd just been hit with a spanner.

Trump, who took the stage looking like he'd just run over his own dog, began his speech by rambling about something or other before denying everything and blaming everyone else.

US voter, Tom Booker said, "I feel a lot more at ease after watching him denying questions about pissing on prostitutes and saying that no one cares about his tax returns.

"Plus, he said that the inauguration is going to be beautiful so that's that sorted anyway.

"A load of military bands by the sounds of it. Which isn't reminiscent of North Korea or places like that at all.

"And I'm glad that he ended with the catchphrase from his TV show. That settled my nerves more than anything."

Democrat voter, Carolyn Ryan added, "I'll sleep better tonight knowing that as a germaphobe he must have been going through absolute hell shaking all those voters hands when he was out campaigning."

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"We accept anybody's ravings—we often print them!"

TECHNOLOGY PAGE

If we show you how to back up your PC for free, will you finally do it?

Beyond simple hard drive failure, your PC could fall prey to user error, thieves, and all sorts of nefarious malware. The only way to ensure that none of your personal files or programs are lost in a catastrophe is to back up everything regularly.

While backing up your data can be as simple as dumping critical files on an external hard drive every now and again, you'll ideally want backups that let you recover not just yesterday's version of a lost file, but last Tuesday's as well. Backups should be easy to do, or they won't get done. And ideally, you should have more than one backup in more than one location.

If you're thinking, "hey, that doesn't sound free," you're partly right. All of the software we're recommending here is either free or comes with Windows. But you must buy storage, either in external hard drives or the cloud. (Why an external hard drive instead of a flash drive? Because in this case, capacity is far more important than speed.)

Creating Windows images with System Backup

Windows' built-in imaging tool creates a backup of everything on your drive, including Windows itself and your settings, programs, and data. Image backup is the best way to protect your Windows installation. Windows' built-in tool is nowhere near as comprehensive as some premium solutions, but for maintaining a personal computer, it's acceptable.

Your image backup could prove unusable if you don't prepare a recovery drive as well. This is a flash drive that can boot into Windows' recovery tool even if Windows itself can't boot. Plug a flash drive (at least 8GB) into your PC and make sure it's working. Type recovery in Windows 7's Start menu, Windows 8's Start screen, or Windows 10's search field, then click the Recovery link in the results. In the window that opens, click the link to create a recovery drive and follow the instructions. Be warned: Any data on the drive will be destroyed when creating the recovery drive.

Once the recovery drive is created, try booting to it. If it works properly, remove the flash drive and reboot. It's time to create your image backup.

Windows provides an easy wizard for setting up an image backup, but getting to that wizard is surprisingly difficult. And it varies with different Windows versions:

Windows 7: Open Control Panel and select System and maintenance > Backup and Restore > Create a system image.

Windows 8: Type file history into Windows 8's Start screen. Click on the File History link that appears and click on the System Image Backup link at the lower-left of the window.

Windows 10: Right-click the Start button and select Control Panel. In the Control Panel Search field in upper-right corner, type file history. Click the title File History. Click System Image Backup in the lower-left corner, then Create a system image in the left pane.

When you click System Image Backup, a 'Create a system image' window will open. On the first screen, you'll be asked to select the destination for your backup image. You could also store the backup image on a network location or burn it to DVDs, but that last option will take a lot of discs and even more time.

Next, you'll be asked to confirm your backup settings. Double-

check that you're backing up your primary drive, which contains your operating system, applications, personal files, and the like. If the correct drive is listed, click the Start Backup button, and the Windows imaging tool will create the system image.

Depending on the amount of data involved and the speed of the drives, this system-image creation process could take anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours.

Make a new image regularly—say, every month or two, or before you do something drastic to your PC.

The actual restoration process is also quite easy. All you need to do is boot to the recovery disk created earlier, and on the first screen presented to you, select your preferred keyboard layout. Then select Troubleshoot > Advanced Option > System Image Recovery. The tool will then automatically scan your system for images and prompt you to restore the most recent image. If you stored your image on an external drive, be sure it's connected when the recovery tool scans for images.

Backing up files locally

Image backups are great for restoring an entire system to its original state, but there's no need to create new images constantly when only a few files may change on a system daily.

That's where file backups come in. A file backup program copies only data files (documents, spreadsheets, photos, and so on) that have been created or changed since the last backup. You should run a file backup daily.

A good file backup program keeps multiple versions of changed files—a feature called versioning. But too many old versions will fill up your backup drive, so a really good backup program will delete the really old versions to make room for the new ones.

That's called purging.

Almost every file backup around assumes that the external backup drive is always plugged in, so it can make backups without bothering you. That's convenient, and will insure that you won't forget to back up. But if your drive is plugged in 24/7, a lot of the disasters that can make you feel glad you back up—theft, power surges, ransomware—can rob you of both your original files and the backup. It's therefore safer to plug in the drive just before backing up, and remove it as soon as the job is done.

That's why I recommend you don't schedule backups. You must remember to back up manually every day.

Windows 10 has a very good file backup program called File History. To set it up, plug in your external hard drive. Then select Start > Settings > Update & security > Backup. Turn on Automatically back up my files, and click More options.

Look over the settings and make your choices. Set the "Back up my files" option to Every 10 minutes. And no, you don't have to have it plugged in 24/7.

Windows 10's backup has an excellent purging option, called Keep my backups. But the default setting, Forever, is idiotic. Pick any other option and you'll be fine.

Click Back up now to start the first, and longest, backup. After that, the backup will automatically start within ten minutes of plugging in the drive.

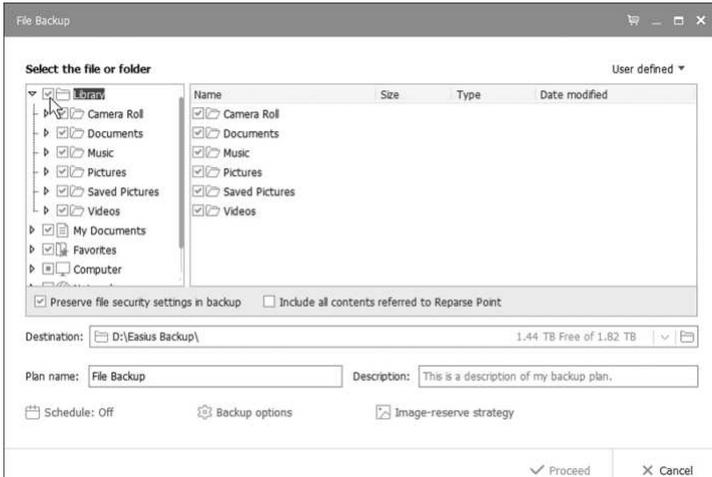
If you don't like Windows 10's File History, or if you use an earlier version of Windows, there are plenty of free, third-party backup programs available. They're almost all stripped-down versions of stronger programs that come with a price tag, but they have enough power for most people.

Easeus Todo Backup Free makes an excellent choice. It's exceptionally versatile; it can even do its own image system backups. It

takes a little more time to set up than Windows 10's File History, but it can do a lot more.

When you open Todo and click the File Backup icon, you get a simple dialog box where you can create a backup profile. You can select the folders you want to back up (the obvious ones are checked by default), and tell the program where to put your backup. Links on the bottom of the dialog box, Schedule, Backup options, and Image-reserve strategy provide more options.

Image-reserve strategy is just a bad way of saying Purging. And despite the name, it works for file backups as well as images. You can purge files after x days or x backups. And you can keep the entire original backup.



Put it in the cloud!

Backing up to the cloud offers plenty of advantages. Backups

happen automatically, without the disadvantages of an external hard drive that's always plugged in. And because the physical backup is nowhere near you, your whole city could burn down without destroying your data. (Although we hope that, should your city burn down, your data wouldn't be your first priority.)

If you use both a local and a cloud-based backup, you have two backups in very different locations. That gives you much better protection.

Cloud-based storage-sync-and-share services such as Dropbox, Google Drive, and OneDrive can work as backup tools in a limited way. After all, they upload your files to the cloud, and most of them do versioning and purging.

The problem is that if you're using the free versions of these tools, you can't back up much. But they can still provide an extra layer of protection for files that are particularly important or constantly changing.

If you subscribe to Microsoft Office 365, you have a full terabyte of OneDrive available to you, so you probably could back up everything. You'll have to put all of your library folders into your OneDrive folder. But there's another, much bigger problem with using OneDrive for backup: It only versions Office file formats. You won't be able to get back last Thursday's version of an altered photo or a KeePass database.

In addition to the sync-and-share services, you can use a cloud-based backup service—although none of these are free. Both Mozy and Carbonite are excellent. Mozy costs less if you're backing up more than one PC; Carbonite's prices are better for one PC with a lot of data.

There are countless other methods and tools available to back up a PC that may be better suited to your particular needs. But this is for certain: Not backing up is like driving without a seatbelt. Sooner or later, you'll be sorry.