Sue Coltman’s garage was looking a little like Santa’s Workshop. Coltman is the President of the Sunflower club who coordinated the effort to make sure that every child under 18 serviced by the Grafton Food Pantry would receive a Christmas Stocking this year.

Coltman said, “I wanted to make sure we collected enough Christmas stockings for all the children who may not be receiving other gifts for this holiday season. Through the help of generous residents, we were able to fill 200 unique stockings.”

The Garden Club has a tradition of donating stockings for the holiday. Three years ago, Marcia Myers coordinated efforts to donate 50 over-sized designer stockings that were filled by Garden Club Members and Buddy Groups. Last year the club coordinated efforts to donate 150 hand-crafted Christmas stockings.

This year Coltman wanted to have a goal that every child served by the pantry received their own stocking.

Harriet Ford, on the Board of Directors for Grafton Food Pantry, said, “We are so excited to receive this donation of Christmas stockings from the Sunflower Garden Club. In this very challenging time, it is comforting to know that so many sunflower Garden Club members and their neighbors cared enough to take the time to personalize stockings. There are items for all ages and many of them even contain a small gift card. How wonderful it is to imagine the joy on the children’s faces when they open their stockings to discover all the goodies inside.”

Coltman said, “Even though in 2020, our Club has not had the opportunity to conduct our usual events and activities, we thought it was important to continue to give back to the community.”

The Sunflower Garden Club also donated ten holiday dinners. Each $30 donation provides a holiday dinner for a family of eight. Grafton Food Pantry is open for anyone in need.

Ford said, “My hope is that someone who may read this article who needs help or knows of someone who needs help will reach out to us.”

* The phone number to the Grafton Food Pantry is 847-495-0922.

Sunflower Garden Club President Sue Coltman (Left) with Harriet Ford of the Grafton Food Pantry, present hand-made Christmas stockings filled with gifts for the Pantry.
You can’t compete with my Christmas tradition

For some, holiday traditions might start by finally turning on the Christmas music, putting up the tree, or caving to a Starbucks peppermint mocha.

But my tradition begins by spending three dollars at Trader Joe’s.

For those who don’t know, Trader Joe’s is home to the best one-dollar advent calendars. The chocolate behind each door is the perfect kind of waxy, and the art on the rectangular box is a little too quirky (last year’s featured illustrated llamas in Santa hats). But I’m not in it for the chocolate.

My mom, brother, and I have enjoyed these advent calendars for years, gathering together at the kitchen table to open the day’s door at the same moment to reveal what shape the chocolate will take that day.

But that was too easy. We couldn’t just open the doors and eat the chocolate. We had to guess what shape the chocolate would be.

The tradition officially became competitive when we started keeping a log of everyone’s guesses (correct and incorrect). We all knew that Day One’s chocolate would be in the shape of a candle.

Over the years, this had proven to almost always be true. But most of the other shapes behind the little doors were less predictable. In this way, the thrill was real. Sometimes, though, the answer wasn’t clear cut. One year, after much deliberation, we had to concede that the mysterious chocolate behind door number six could only be one thing: a UCO (unidentified Christmas object).

And on day 24, what did the person with the most correct guesses win? Their name would forever adorn the folder of loose, lined papers documenting our wins and losses over the years.

While the three of us live separately now, the competition is still as fierce as ever.

I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to the couple who ran over and stayed with me until they knew I was ok after a terrible fall by Eakin’s Field on November 17.

We were passing each other while out for a walk and as usual we socially distanced as we passed each other...I went on the grass. After passing each other I was attempting to return to the side walk.

I didn’t notice the sidewalk was nowhere near flush with the grass and I “face planted” into the sidewalk marring my face up big time. I ultimately went to immediate care and I’m glad to report no broken bones or brain bleed...just a bruised ego.

I didn’t get your names but thank you!!

Donald Calcagno
Sun City resident

Yesterday, the Sun City board unanimously approved budgets for community wide operations and association reserves. Separately, budgets for each APN[Attached Product Neighborhoods] were also approved. Beginning January 2021, each of the 5481 Sun City homes will be assessed $129.00 per month. The assessment has two components. One-hundred and five dollars of the $129.00 is being budgeted for Operations and $24.00 for the Reserve fund. Sun City is an $8,000,000 not for profit business. Making life worth living. Three words are key to the annual budget chore; budget; operations; reserves.

A Budget is a management tool to anticipate expenses for the year and to anticipate where that money will come from to pay the expenses. Operations include dozens of items including but not limited to: wages, management fees; landscaping; waste and snow removal; utilities; insurance; legal; Lifestyle printing; housekeeping; maintenance; etc.

Reserves are “rainy day” funds set aside to replace anything the association owns and which has reached the end of its life expectancy:

You can’t compete with my Christmas tradition
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Residents of Sun City may remember how during last year’s holiday season, the Woodchucks’ charitable efforts led to the charter club being featured on local news station, WGN9. However, their annual wooden toy making drive is not exclusive to just one year alone, as according to fellow Woodchuck and event organizer, Al La Pelusa.

“We’ve been running this program for about 15 years. How it works is we start organizing teams around July and I usually run the meetings, but the teams decide what toys they’re going to build. We set a deadline to have the toys done by Thanksgiving,” La Pelusa said. “When we make the toys, we wind up making twice as many so members can buy toys. We have a rule that you need to make a toy to buy a toy. By selling the toys to members, we recuperate money to buy supplies for the next year.”

Unfortunately, with the Millgrove Woodshop having been closed a majority of the time due to the pandemic, the Woodchucks were left with no choice but to cancel their annual toy making program for the first time since its conception. Yet despite this setback, the Woodchucks were not about to let COVID-19 get in the way of providing for underprivileged children this holiday season.

La Pelusa explained how the Woodchucks collect tips from any Sun City residents that ask for repairs to personal items brought into the woodshop. The tips this year totaled to be around $1,260, according to La Pelusa. Donating that money to the Grafton Food Pantry was simply not enough, however. The Woodchucks wanted to find a way for the children of the families who visit the pantry, to have something that they could enjoy for themselves.

“At first, we tried thinking of ways to buy children toys, but for the price that we were looking at spending per toy, you couldn’t get much and the quality wasn’t like the toys we build. So, one day I just went to Culver’s and talked to Richard about buying gift cards for the kids and he ended up throwing in a free scoop of frozen custard for each kid as an added bonus,” La Pelusa said.

Richard Myers, a member of the management team at the Culver’s of Huntley, said he was more than happy to help in any way he could as he explained how Culver’s has had a history of being involved with the Sun City community.

“The Woodchucks had an opportunity that was huge for them and we helped them along the lines with that to help fulfill and to help these kids that have a real need, especially, you know, during a critical time. All the team, including owners, are [huge supporters] for what the Grafton Food Pantry is doing and how the Woodchucks help each year. This was a perfect fit. In addition, we gave enough single scoop custard coupons so that the kids can have an extra treat,” Myers said.

The Woodchucks were able to purchase 210 $6 gift cards that will be placed in a specially labeled envelope that includes the Woodchucks’ logo. “The way its going to work out is that when the families go to the food pantry, they will receive a gift card for each child so each kid is getting a little gift card of their own. I know the kids will enjoy it. I think it’s going to work out fine,” La Pelusa said.
Sun City resident turns eye towards veterans this holiday season

The holidays may be tough for most this year, but Sun City resident Naples knows that some groups need extra cheer this year. Naples is asking for help to brighten up the holiday for veterans.

“Our veterans had to leave their home, family, jobs, and lifestyle to serve our country. Now is the time to repay some of the sacrifices that were made for us by remembering the men and women who went to protect us,” Naples said.

Naples works with TLS Veterans (legally known as Transitional Living Services) in McHenry Illinois. TLS’s mission is to provide veterans in need and their families the services necessary to experience hope and achieve success. Naples said, “When I realized what these men and women did for us I have tried to bring them some light to their lives and I have been continually gathering items they need. I felt for the times today we need to go one step further and adopt a veteran.”

Naples contacted TLS Veterans and discussed her idea for adopting a Veteran for the Holiday.

Naples said, “To start with, I have over thirty veterans that could use some caring.”

Suggested gift package ideas are gift certificates in any amount, any place, personal products, candy, gloves, scarves, blankets, or anything else that would bring some cheer.

Naples said, “I am planning to try to give each one of these veteran’s a small decorated tree that lights that up. They run about $30. They can keep them in in their rooms or apartments and my hope is the lights will remind them of a brighter future.”

Naples suggests that some clubs or neighborhoods could get together and adopt a veteran.

Anyone interested can contact Naples at naples.d@ yahoo.com for delivery and information.

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John Mayerhofer
Sun City resident

Illinois has higher rates of COVID 19, than most states, we are #9. The population of ILLINOIS is approximately 3.5% of the population of The US, yet, IL in Nov accounts for 10% to 12% of the total cases in the US. From Nov 4 to Nov 24 there were 224,599 cases in IL. That is 11,379 a day average. Year to date IL is 5.4% of the total in the US. Both the Governor and Lightfoot do little - NO PLAN but useless talk. The people are Not fooled, As they say, figures do not lie. I know -blame Trump - for everything - Our governor and mayor have yet to take responsibility for anything. Second point, they Do know how to spend our tax dollars on friends and family. YOU AND I - NOTHING -Maybe we will get a Jewel card. After 7 months - THOUSANDS - still waiting for unemployment checks - The governor must still be busy putting the toilets back in his second mansion after cheat- ing on his real estate taxes.

John Mayerhofer
Sun City resident
Rememberance

Yesterday, I cried for the us that is no more, for the couple, the two-some who moved through life together − sharing love, joy, faith, struggles, worries, accomplishments and successes, illnesses and loss, adversity and failures.

Yesterday I lamented the smiles not shared, hands not held, prayers not said, affection not exchanged, bed not slept in, memories not swapped, meals not shared, observations not made, arguments not had, vacations not taken, thoughts not offered, issues not discussed, music not listened to, dances not danced.

Yesterday I mourned the lack of sounds, of laughter over private jokes, of his footstep, of loud groans when favorite teams were losing, of sounds of appreciation with the first taste of a favorite food, of his excited voice when chatting with grandchildren or talking politics, of his affectionate voice as he said, “Hi Sweetheart.”

Yesterday I pined for his presence and aura, his intelligence and wit, his personhood. I grieved all my loved ones who no longer live in my world. They have all moved on to life in the spirit, leaving me behind.

Yesterday I wept for me, for the ten months and one day I have been alone, no longer a part of a couple, of one half of a whole. Single with an independence I didn’t ask for, responsible for all decisions great and small, unfamiliar with the me that is emerging, born fully grown. Sometimes Stoic and strong, sometimes tearful and sad, sometimes even content and at peace. Some days capable and efficient, other days preoccupied. Some days I consider this time as gift from heaven, as opportunity to grow emotionally and spiritually, to experience another way to live; other times it is a lonely burden.

Today I’m grateful for my life, for this trackless pilgrimage with peaks and valleys, sharp curves and rolling hills, crags and chasms, meadows and waterfalls that I never knew I would encounter − all coming at warp speed without advance notice.

Today I am grateful for the light of faith that reminds me to accept the present moment. My life still has meaning.

Today I hope to reclaim parts of myself that got lost or neglected when I became wife and mother. Today I am willing to consider the options solitude offers.

What will I embrace tomorrow?

Therese Salvato Luce
Sun City Resident

I know there is no way I’m going to change Vincent Froberg’s mind, but I can’t not respond to his letter to “Political Place” in the Nov. 5 edition of the Sun Day. Rather than refute his Fox News talking points, I would simply ask him to consider why ALL the mainstream media see and report what is happening one way, and “the only alternative … Fox News” (Mr. Froberg’s words) report it another? Could it be that Fox News is misinterpreting what is happening? Fox News is Mr. Froberg’s problem, not the mainstream media.

Steve Dunk
Sun City Resident

For political submissions, opinions, and views only.

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Full moons, like fond memories, follow us across the sky

Decades ago, when my son Dave was only about five years old, he sat in the back seat of the car, staring at the full moon as I drove through the night. He was quiet, lost in thought.

“Dad,” he finally said, “why does the moon follow us?”

“Follow us?” I said. “What do you mean?”

“Everywhere we go,” he said, “the moon has been following us. It doesn’t matter how fast we go, we can’t get ahead of it. It’s always there. But the other things don’t follow us.”

“What other things?”

“You know, trees and houses and stuff. When we drive past them, they fall behind. But the moon never falls behind. It follows us everywhere we go.”

I had to think about that a moment as I glanced out the window to confirm that he was right. There was a tree, a dashing past, and behind it a big building, sliding past at a bit slower rate. But up in the sky was that big full moon, keeping perfect pace with us.

I considered cracking a joke about roots and foundations keeping trees and buildings from keeping up with us while the round moon rolled across the sky, but I decided that this might be one of those moments when truth might be more entertaining than a wisecrack.

But how do you explain something like that to a kid?

“It’s because the moon is so far away,” I tried.

“How does that matter?” he asked.

“Well…” I said, unsure myself why it mattered, or how to explain it even if I knew. I wasn’t sure if I had ever thought of why the moon keeps pace with a speeding car, while trees and buildings dash past. “It’s a thing called perspective. That means that things look different to us far away than they look close up.”

He was silent, and I knew he had no idea what I was talking about. Which was apt, because neither did I.

I tried again. “It’s like…look up ahead at the cars in front of us. See how the car right in front of us looks big, but all those cars way up ahead seem to get smaller and smaller the farther away they are?”

He nodded. “That’s perspective,” I said. “All those cars are really the same size, just as big as ours is, but they seem smaller when they’re far away.”

He nodded. “OK, but what does that have to do with the moon?”

Good question. I hadn’t really thought about it, but it seemed to me that there was some connection.

“Well,” I said, “you know that the moon is actually really, really big, right?”

He nodded. “But it looks small because it’s so far away, like those cars way up in front of us.”

He nodded again.

OK, so far so good. What next?

“And that tree we just passed looks way bigger than the moon,” I ventured, buying time while I sorted it out. “It just looks bigger because it’s so much closer, because of perspective.”

He nodded, probably wondering how and when I was going to get to the point.

I was, too.

“Well,” I said, finally starting to get it myself, “it’s distance can make things look bigger or smaller, it can also make things look like they’re moving faster or slower.”

He just stared, probably regretting asking the question in the first place. But I wasn’t about to give up now, because I was just getting it figured out myself.

“I mean, if you were on the moon looking at us in this car, it would look like we’re standing still. Even if we went a hundred miles an hour, it would look like we’re barely moving. That’s perspective — and it works both ways. To the moon, we’re standing still. Just like, to us, the moon stands still. It’s always in the same place in the sky. Closer things like trees look bigger, and they fall behind faster. Far away things like buildings look smaller, and they fall behind slower — or not at all if they’re really far away, like the moon.”

I stopped trying to explain it further because now Dave was quiet, pondering the miracle of perspective — or maybe thinking about baseball and knowing it was best not to ask me why a batter gets four balls but only three strikes.

I don’t know why I remembered that long-ago car ride conversation today, but it seems to me that a memory is like the moon, isn’t it? At the time, it may seem small and insignificant, but over the vast distance of a lifetime, you come to realize how large it really was all along.

And the more distant the memory, the more fixed it will be in your own personal universe, staying with you no matter how far or fast you travel — like that simple car-ride question from a kid who is now a dad answering simple car-ride questions from his own kids.

Ah, perspective!

Now, if it could only explain baseball.

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TR Kerth
Columnist

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TR Kerth
Columnist
2020 has been a tough year. But Sun City has some relief thanks to David Mathis. Mathis has an enormous lights and music display in his yard and 11861 Sedgewick Drive. The lights are on from 4:30 to 10 p.m.

Mathis has created holiday displays for 50 years, putting in countless hours building an impressive-looking light show that rivals pro-level attractions.

“I moved to Sun City in 2001 and have been doing the decorations at this house for over 19 years. I try to add different things each year but kind of run out of different things to do, so I kind of play it by ear and just change things around each year. I have about eight thousand lights altogether.”

How long did it take to put up all those lights?

Mathis said, “I started the lights on November 2 and the ornaments on the lawn a week after the lights. It took me about ten days. The weather did me a favor, and it was not too cold to do it.”

How did he get the lights up so high in the tree?

Mathis said, “In the front, where the lights blink, I used an extension ladder. I used a 6-inch plastic zip cable at the top. Each string of lights is 34 feet long, so I ran each string of lights 17 feet up to the top and the other half 17 feet down. I have 72 aluminum spikes where I pounded each end into the ground to keep them from blowing away with the wind. There are six colors of each string of lights. There are 3600 lights on that pear tree.”

How did he get the star to float above the trees?

Mathis said, “For the topper stars, I took aluminum pipes and cut them off 18 inches for each tree. I then used two nails for each 18-inch pipe and nailed them to each tree. Each star is attached to an aluminum pipe that I ran down the tree into the 18” pipe that is nailed to the tree. I used bungee cords from the star to a branch to tighten the star so it does not move when it gets windy.”

Mathis has a yard full of decorative Christmas lights, Santa in a sleigh, Reindeer, Lighted Christmas Presents, a bear twirling a ball, and more.

Mathis said, “All the trees outside are lighted with LED lights so the amount of electricity I use is not that great. I have about 8000 lights in total.”

Thousands of blinking lights are synchronized to music.

“The music is on a computer called Mr. Christmas which I purchased on Amazon. The computer has three zones and plays twenty different Christmas Carols where the lights blink with the music. The computer has six outlets, so I plugged in each set of colors to a separate plug causing them to blink differently with each carol. Each zone has a different set of carols making the lights to blink faster or slower according to what song is playing,” Mathis said.

Are there any lights left for the inside of the house?

“I only have one seven-foot tree in the house which has about one-thousand led lights on it.” Mathis said.

Do any of the lights go out?

“For the last couple of years, I have had a lot of trouble with squirrels,” he said. “They like to chew on the light strings. This year I purchased an Ultrasonic Squirrel Repeller which is electric and sends out different sounds that squirrels can’t stand. Since I put that on this year, I have not had one of my light strings snipped off by the squirrels. They use to snipe the light strings off down so far that it was impossible to fix, so I had to throw the string away and buy new ones. Not one string has been damaged by the squirrels so far this year.”

Where does he store all these decorations?

“I have a three-car garage and only one car, so the other space in the garage is used for storage.”

The home is a winter wonderland, literally making all merry and bright. January 1, 2021 will be the last night for the lights.
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Sheldon Clark’s Creative Corner

What can you do with the Sun Day after reading it?

Did you know you can make paper-mache ornaments with Sun Day pages? Just Google paper-mache ornaments and you’ll have tons of fun tutorials and ideas for leftover edition of the Sun Day!
Where did I come from? Stories worth telling are worth passing down

By Stew Cohen
Staff Reporter

Some years ago, my eight-year-old son asked me, “Where did I come from?” For those of us 55 and better, we may still recall this question our children asked us. Based on the way my son ate his meals back then, I was tempted to tell him that he came from cave dwellers. That bit of information would probably have gone over his head so I chose to honestly answer as best I could. Problem was that I didn’t have much in the way of stories about my grandparents or my parents. My wife had more stories about her grandparents and parents, but we weren’t steeped in family lore. Never dwoned on me while my parents and grandparents were alive to write down their stories. By the time we got around to talking to my mother and father, they were already in the early stages of dementia and the details of their lives were erasing quickly.

Not for lack of trying to hear stories of my father’s WWII experiences but my father kept his D-Day soldiering to himself. I couldn’t get him to talk about something he’d rather forget.

Roy U Moed, a resident of London, England found the best way to get his father to talk about his experiences was to use a third party who would not only listen to his stories, but ask, “What happened next?” Another question might be “how did you feel about…” Why I’m bringing Moed into this column is because what he put into play involves me now. Moed decided not to let an opportunity pass by and engaged a friend as an interviewer and a ghostwriter and had his father tell his stories. His father said he was “remembering stories he did not know he had forgotten.” This decision by Moed, LifeTime founder, created the beginnings of a worldwide memoir company called LifeTime Private Autobiography, part of LifeBook Limited. The services provided through Moed were brought to the U.S. a few years ago and people began capturing their life time stories for future generations.

With my experience of having interviewed thousands of people during a 45-year radio career, I was brought in to LifeTime Books as a contract interviewer. My first assignment started a few months ago and will continue for another few months. I’m interviewing a person that LifeTime calls an author. The “author” is telling the stories and my job is to ask good questions that help generate depth and character and move the story through a timeline worked out by the author.

The author is passing down his or her stories to family members. You can’t put a value on a family treasure that becomes a beautiful book. The author has committed to passing down a lifetime of stories with details that have not yet been lost or forgotten. As an additional part of the service, LifeTime Private Autobiography also directs the author to read a portion of the book into a recording that will present in part an oral history in the author’s voice. Not only will family members read the stories, but they’ll also hear from the author.

“What’s your earliest childhood memory?” Think about this question for a moment. It may be a jumping off point for a whole lot of memories. But photos and documents will also give another view to one’s life and lead to additional dialogue in the mosaic of one’s life. Photographs and documents are gathered by the author who has committed to passing on a family treasure that will move the story through a timeline of events showing family members such as a marriage certificate as a child or of the author’s grandmother or grandfather or of a ship manifest showing family members came to America.

As we close in on the holidays, you might think what type of gift you can give your family of a lasting nature. Your story with your words is powerful and reinforces the love you have for them. They’ll know you worked very hard on answering the question, “Where did I come from?”

Q I am the primary caregiver to my aging parents, and to be frank, I am exhausted. My mother struggles with some memory loss and my father has COPD, which limits his ability to care for his wife. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, my parents have chosen to stay home. At first, my siblings pitched in to help deliver groceries and called them frequently so they didn’t feel isolated. Months later, my siblings seemed to have forgotten that I am the one shoulder the bulk of care responsibilities. They rarely make an effort to check in with our parents and haven’t asked me how they can help. I feel like I cannot continue to do everything for our parents, while also balancing my own family and work responsibilities. How can I cope?

A I want to start by saying that I wish I could give you a big hug. It is not easy caring for an aging family member, especially when it’s your parents. While it is an honor to reciprocate the care they once gave to you, it is no easy feat. You are among the 40.4 million unpaid caregivers to adults over the age of 65. I want to reassure you; you are not alone. In fact, November is National Family Caregivers Month. Its purpose is to address the new realities many family caregivers are facing in light of these uncertain times.

If you are not already part of a family caregiver support group, I highly encourage you to join one this month. Whether it’s through a local church, senior care community, or social media; participating in a support group will give you the resources and encouragement you need on a regular basis.

Next, it’s time you have an open and honest conversation with your siblings. Share how you’ve been feeling. Remind them about how appreciative you were to have their help at the start of the pandemic. Then, give specific examples of how they can help you now. Do you need them to take one chore off your list permanently? Would it help you to have one day off a week or one weekend off a month (or both)? Work with your siblings to create a plan moving forward. Your parents’ care needs are only going to increase with the years, especially if your mom has dementia.

Know there are other resources available to help you shoulder the burden of caregiving. As your parents’ care needs increase, you might want to consider a senior home care company to help support both them and you. This would give you guilt-free time away so you can recharge. Many senior home care companies offer respite care as well. If you need a temporary break, or just want to try home care before committing to weekly visits, this is a great option. It’s also a great option to help prevent caregiver burnout. Asking for help is never selfish, it’s smart.

Have a question for our angel correspondent? You can send our angel an email to apetersen@visitingangels.com, or send your question via mail to Ask An Angel, 65 Woodbury St., South Elgin, IL 60177.

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Vintage Voices
The Theatre Company of Sun City presents classic radio plays on Vintage Voices. The shows air on 101.5 FM on Sundays at 11 a.m. and on Tuesdays at 11:30 a.m. Visit https://huntley-radio.com/hcr/vintage-voices/ to hear over 40 past shows on demand.

SURVIVING DIVORCE PROGRAM
This is a program for those going through marital separation and divorce and is designed to restore hope and to help bring about authentic healing. This program is a facilitated small group with a DVD component featuring divorce survival experts and personal testimonies. Going through a divorce is a heartbreaking experience, but healing is possible!
There are several holiday foods that people either love or hate. The first one that comes to mind is eggnog. This is a slightly slimy mixture of raw eggs and milk laced with enough bourbon to kill the salmonella in the raw eggs. I’m referring to fresh eggnog, not the non-refrigerated chemical concoctions that you can buy at the store with a shelf life of two generations. Nancy just loves her 4th of July eggnog.

The second is a Jello mold. This translucent blob with various food items magically suspended in it, sits on a platter at your table, eerily quivering.

Last, but not least, is the venerable fruitcake. This luscious brick of fruits and nuts, weighing more than a Volkswagen, is the king of holiday treats.

The subject matter of this article was suggested by our son who is pro fruitcake. He shipped two of our reviewed selections from Florida via FedEx. We’re not sure if he had to pay by the pound, or if there was an extra charge to transport hazardous materials.

Here is a short history of fruitcake that we know has been weighing on your mind lately. Fruitcake goes all the way back to ancient Rome where they made it with pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, and raisins in a cake made out of barley mash, yum. As time went on, the recipe evolved to the culinary masterpiece we know and love today. From the 19th century on, fruitcake became a traditional wedding cake in England. In the Caribbean, fruitcake is soaked in rum for months. Since alcohol kills bacteria, some fruitcakes have a shelf life of 25 years!!! The oldest fruitcake on record has been held by a family for over 130 years. It is a family heirloom so no one is looking to eat it, because it is used as their doorstop.

To guide you through the daunting task of which fruitcake to buy, we will review four of them for you. We will also feature guest reviews by the up and coming Eggers’ food critics, 5-1/2 year old twins Ana and Greta with their 8 year old brother Henrik. They will comment on two fruitcakes that were imported from the fruitcake capital of the world, the great state of Florida.

#4 CRACKER BARREL (Imported from Florida)

This fruitcake was lighter in color and crumbled to the touch. Could it have been leftover from the last millennium? The specks of fruits and nuts highlighted the strange chemical taste. Thumbs down from Ana and Greta. Henrik ran from the room screaming. On the plus side, it made a great fire starter for our fireplace. The candied fruit gave off pretty red and green flames.

#3 TOM’S FARM MARKET

A dark-colored brick of delight containing more nuts and cake than candied fruits. Nancy didn’t like the overwhelming taste of molasses and felt it needed more fruit. I thought it needed some sweetness and gooeyness.

#2 PUBLIX SUPER MARKET (Imported from Florida)

This yule log had big chunks of fruits and nuts and was much tastier than the last two fruitcakes. It received a thumbs-up from Ana, thumbs down from Greta. Henrik, again, ran screaming from the room.

We know you are all on the edge of your seats wondering which is the king of all fruitcakes, the queen of candied fruit, and the gooey prince of nuts. You shall wait no longer. The “BEST AND TASTIEST” fruitcake (is that an oxymoron?) is:

#1 COSTCO WHOLESALE

This giant ring of large pieces of fruits and nuts contained just enough cake and goo to hold this monstrosity together. I actually loved it. Jim even said it almost resembled an edible food product.

DINING DUO TIP: Pick one up when you go to Costco to get your hearing aids cleaned for the holidays!

As you can tell, our opinion varies greatly on the pros and cons of fruitcake. Here’s some more stuff that you can try and digest. If you enjoy this holiday staple, mark your calendars for December 27, which is National Fruitcake Day. If you despise fruitcake like Jim does, then mark your calendars for January 7, which is National Fruitcake Toss Day. Every year in Manitou Springs, Colorado, they hold a contest to see who can throw their fruitcakes the farthest and with the greatest accuracy.

Remember, fruitcake is a gift that keeps on giving, year after year after year...
December is here; a chill in the air. And that means only one thing: the holidays are here. But between the hanging of ornaments and bustle of gift shopping (completely altered this year), our media also needs to reflect this change in season. I am sure most of you have already heard Mariah Carey and Michael Bublé while switching the radio dial lately. Freeform and Hallmark have been the go-to channels for classic and new Christmas viewing. But to paraphrase Jane Austen, a person with time and a sizable streaming output is always in need of a different seasonal movie to consume.

Let’s start from the worst to the best. Unfortunately, this means I must talk about Hulu. This streamer has been on a race to the bottom in terms of content in this area. If you like Hallmark, then this may be for you. Their latest original “Happiest Season” has portended to being groundbreaking for being a Christmas rom-com with a lesbian couple at its center. Even within the first twenty minutes, my disappointment was palpable. Poor sense of pace, humor so flat, characters with the depth of paper; very little redeeming quality. Aside from the (wasted) cast and the production values, not much to write home about. When you get to the climactic Christmas Eve soiree, you will want to drink more spiked alcoholic drinks than Kristin Stewart and Aubrey Plaza do to get through it.

Another trend I have noticed is the covert holiday movie taking hold. Disney+ has the Lego Star Wars Holiday Special, a cute little bauble, but not a Christmas movie. Yes, there are droid ugly Christmas sweaters and tree trimming. However, the celebration in question is Life Day, a reference to a previous entry in the Star Wars universe. In fact, this is mostly a deep dive into the lore of a galaxy far, far away…

Over on Netflix, you have Holidate. I thought this was about the winter season. In practice, a woman is tired of being hassled about not having a date for all the year’s festivities. So she has a designated plutonic partner set up to get past this. Hijinks ensue!

Sequels are always a hard bargain. The novelty of the original may bring you back, but there has to be more to the story to entice you in. Netflix’s The Christmas Chronicles 2 brings back Kurt Russell as Santa to help the young daughter from the first film. We were introduced to Goldie Hawn as Mrs. Claus in a tease at the end of the first. She and Russell are the biggest draw here, completely adorable. With good incorporation of elements of the first film, once you get past the first ten minutes the movie hits its stride and it is smooth sailing.

Jingle Jangle, also streaming there, is a perfectly good choice for a quiet evening. An original musical, Forest Whitaker stars as Jangle, a toymaker/inventor who has seen his glory days leave him. Keenan Michael Key (in an unusual sinister turn) plays a former protégé, a thief of Jangle’s secret inventions. His granddaughter comes to meet with him and her presence brings him back to life. The details in the sets and costumes are a feast for the eyes, never a dull moment. The quality of the music and the singing talent on hand, even from Whitaker, make for delightful entertainment.

All in all, my final pick hopefully will become a classic. Klaus, from 2019, is an animated reimaging of the Saint Nicholas tale. A young postman is sent to a remote town where a feud between families has been raging. In a turn of events, he meets a reclusive woodsmen who builds toys. Reluctantly they help each other in their struggles which brings about a great change in the town. A beautiful must-see from Netflix. Happy Holiday viewing!
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FOR SALE

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