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POCKET-SIZE PREHISTORY THE REAL-LIFE HOBBITS OF FLORES

Long before Frodo was having second breakfast in the Shire, real-life "hobbits" were leaving footprints on human history. *Homo floresiensis* was one of the last surviving humans, alongside our own species, *Homo sapiens*. Standing a little over 3 feet tall, these petite people got by on their home island by hunting and gathering with advanced tools. Their small skeletons were discovered in 2003 in a remote cave, but much of their story remains a mystery.

ASTUNNING SURPRISE

When an Indonesian-Australian research team explored the Liang Bua cave on the island of Flores, Indonesia, they discovered the remains of a miniature human-like creature. At first, they estimated these beings lived out their lives 12,000–74,000 years ago. As scientists have learned more about them, it is clear that the remains are older, dating back between 60,000 and 100,000 years. In total, they have found the partial skeleton of a female and fragments of at least 13 other hobbits.

SMALL SURVIVORS

Along with their height, *Homo floresiensis* had particularly short legs compared to their longer arms and large feet. Tools found with their fossils suggest they hunted Komodo dragons, giant rats, and other small mammals. Due to the wear

on their teeth, researchers think they ate plenty of nutritious plants that required a lot of chewing. Without any signs of burials or other ceremonies, it's difficult to say what their culture was like.

MINI MYSTERIES

So, where exactly did this teeny tribe come from? It's still a mini mystery! Early theories speculated that they evolved from another ancient human species that shrank over time after arriving on Flores due to island dwarfism. With limited resources, their bodies grew smaller. In 2016, the theory that they were from another human species gained traction.

Jaw bones discovered just outside the cave are even smaller and older. They likely traveled from Africa to the island, a long journey they couldn't have swum, so it's possible they were swept up in a tsunami before settling on the island.

While they may have been small in stature, the hobbit people left behind oversized questions about our past. Unlike the characters many of us imagine in a fictional world, these tiny humans are grounded in science, not Middle-earth.



Workers' COMPanion

SEPTEMBER 2026

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REMEMBER WHEN EVERYONE KNEW THEIR NEIGHBORS?

*The Unexpected Gift of Living in the
Same Neighborhood for 35 Years*



There are some things you don't realize you'll miss until they start disappearing. Kids riding their bikes until the streetlights come on. Neighbors chatting from their front porches. Walking the dog and somehow turning a 10-minute stroll into an hour because you've stopped to catch up with half the people on the block.

It almost sounds like something out of an old TV show, doesn't it? The funny thing is, that's still everyday life in our neighborhood.

With National Neighborhood Day on Sept. 28, I've found myself reflecting on how grateful I am for the community my wife and I have been blessed to call home for more than 35 years. The houses have changed, families have come and gone, and plenty of us have accumulated a few more gray hairs along the way. But one thing hasn't changed: People genuinely care about one another.

Over the years, we've welcomed young families, said goodbye to longtime neighbors, celebrated new babies, and mourned dear friends we've lost. Today, our neighborhood is a wonderful mix of generations and backgrounds. We have retirees, young professionals, growing families, and children riding scooters up and down the street. Somehow, all those different seasons of life have made the neighborhood stronger.

One of my favorite examples is a young family who lived across the street for several years. We watched their little girls grow up from the day they were born, and before long, they were calling my wife and me "Mimi and Pop Pop." Even though they've since moved away, we're still invited to birthday parties and stay in touch like family. That's not something you expect when someone buys the house across the street, but it's one of life's sweetest surprises.

The older I get, the more I appreciate how important those intergenerational friendships really are. Young parents sometimes need someone who's already been through those sleepless nights and school years. Those of us who've

raised children enjoy seeing life through young eyes again. It's a blessing that goes both ways.

One thing I've noticed is that neighbors don't have to be best friends to be there for each other. When someone has knee replacement surgery, meals start showing up. When a spouse passes away, people quietly check in. A few years ago, one family's home caught fire in the middle of the night. They were displaced for well over a year while it was rebuilt, but they were never forgotten. The neighborhood rallied around them, offering support, encouragement, and whatever help they needed. That's what community looks like.

Even the little things matter. One neighbor always keeps Milk-Bones in his truck for every dog he passes. Another elderly neighbor takes her daily walk, and everyone makes a point of waving and asking how she's doing. The children write cheerful little notes for neighbors just because they want to brighten someone's day. None of these moments make the evening news, but they're the kinds of things that make a neighborhood feel like home.

One thing I've learned is that people aren't meant to carry life's burdens alone. Sometimes the greatest source of comfort is simply knowing someone nearby cares enough to knock on your door, bring over dinner, or ask, "How are you doing?"

If your neighborhood isn't quite like this yet, don't assume it never can be. Every close-knit community starts with someone making the first move. Wave to the neighbor you've never met. Stop and chat instead of hurrying inside. Drop off a plate of cookies or a simple note just to say hello.

You may discover that your neighbors have been hoping for that same connection all along.

-Jim Monast

YOUR BUDGET ISN'T BROKEN, IT'S LEAKING

STOP LETTING SMALL PURCHASES WIN

All of us have been there. After a long day, you realize there's nothing planned for dinner. A quick stop at the grocery store turns into a larger purchase because you can't quite remember what's already at home. Later that evening, you're relaxing on the couch when an online deal catches your attention. It seems inexpensive enough, so you click "buy now" without giving it much thought.

That's what makes everyday spending so tough to manage. The decision shows up when you are least interested in being disciplined. You aren't thinking about your monthly budget; you're thinking about getting through the next hour with a little less hassle. The good news is that getting this type of spending under control is manageable with a little planning.

NOTICE THE MOMENTS THAT COST YOU

Wrangling your excess spending doesn't require a detailed spreadsheet listing every purchase.

Often, it just requires paying attention. Start by noticing when you spend money without much thought. For a lot of us, it's all tied to timing.



Maybe takeout becomes the go-to dinner option after long workdays or grocery trips get much more expensive when you shop without a list. Maybe online shopping is the problem. Once you identify the pattern, you can do a few things to make it harder to repeat.

TURN AWARENESS INTO BETTER CHOICES

The best fixes are usually simple. If shopping without a list keeps costing you, try keeping a running list on your phone. If online purchases are the issue, delete the app or let items sit in the cart for a few days before checking out. A little distance can make something feel less urgent.

It also helps to change how you look at the price. A \$100 purchase may feel different when you think about how many hours you had to work to pay for it. For flexible spending, cash or a weekly limit can create a clear stopping point. Once the money set aside for that category is gone, you're done until the following week.

Getting your spending under control doesn't mean removing every treat from your life. That usually makes it more challenging to stick to your plan. A better approach is to give yourself some room for fun spending while making the unplanned purchases a little harder to justify.

WRINKLES, WADDLES, AND WAGGING TAILS

MEET PABLO AND DIEGO: TIKTOK'S FAVORITE GRUMPY BULLDOG AND HIS MISCHIEVOUS SIDEKICK!

If you've been around our office for any length of time, you've probably noticed that we're big fans of English bulldogs. Their wrinkly faces, goofy personalities, and unwavering determination have a way of brightening even the busiest day. That's why we couldn't resist introducing you to one of our favorite social media accounts: **BulldogPabs**.

If you haven't met Pablo and Diego yet, you're in for a treat. These two English bulldogs from the United Kingdom have captured the hearts of more than a million followers with their hilarious videos and unforgettable personalities.

Pablo, the older bulldog, is the lovable grump of the duo. He's full of classic bulldog stubbornness, dramatic expressions, and the kind of attitude that somehow makes you laugh every single time. Diego is his complete opposite: a younger, energetic whirlwind who's always ready for fun.

While their videos are guaranteed to make you smile, what makes their story even more special is what happened after their online success.

Their owner turned that incredible community of followers into something truly meaningful by creating **Pabs & Pals Rescue**, an organization dedicated to giving dogs a second chance. Since launching the rescue, they've already helped more than 70 dogs find loving forever homes, and they're just getting started.

What we especially admire is the care that goes into every adoption. Dogs aren't just placed with the first available family. They're given veterinary care, professional training, behavioral assessments, and plenty of time to build confidence before they're matched with the home that's right for them.

As dog lovers, it's hard not to appreciate a mission like that. We know firsthand how much joy, comfort, and unconditional love our four-legged companions bring into our lives, so seeing that same love extended to rescue dogs is something we can all get behind.

So, if your social media feed could use a little more laughter, a few adorable bulldog faces, and a healthy dose of heartwarming stories, we highly recommend checking out BulldogPabs. You'll come for Pablo's grumpy charm and Diego's endless energy, but you'll stay because of the incredible work being done through Pabs & Pals Rescue.

CHECK OUT:

Instagram: [Instagram.com/bulldogpabs](https://www.instagram.com/bulldogpabs)

TikTok: [TikTok.com/bulldogpabs](https://www.tiktok.com/bulldogpabs)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/BulldogPabs](https://www.facebook.com/BulldogPabs)

Official Website: PabsAndPalsRescue.co.uk

Who Really Caused the Accident?

HOW 1 WORKPLACE INJURY COULD LEAD TO 2 SOURCES OF COMPENSATION

Most workers know they can file for workers' compensation after a workplace injury. But here's something many people don't realize: If someone other than your employer caused the accident, you may have another claim, too.

1 ACCIDENT, 2 POSSIBLE CLAIMS

Workers' compensation is there to help cover your medical treatment and replace part of your lost wages after a work injury. But it has limits. If another person or company was responsible for what happened, you may also have the right to file a personal injury claim.

Unlike workers' compensation, a third-party claim can compensate you for things like pain and suffering, emotional distress, and how the injury has affected your everyday life. For many injured workers, that can make a meaningful difference while trying to rebuild after a serious accident.

MORE OFTEN THAN YOU THINK

Third-party claims come up in all kinds of jobs. Examples include:

- A delivery driver injured in a crash caused by another motorist
- A construction worker hurt by equipment manufactured with a dangerous defect
- A contractor injured because a property owner failed to maintain safe premises

- An outside vendor or subcontractor whose negligence causes an accident on the job
- A worker attacked by a dog while making deliveries or performing service calls

In each of those situations, you could have both a workers' compensation claim and a personal injury claim against the person or company that caused the accident.

DON'T GO ALONE

These cases can get complicated quickly. Workers' compensation insurance may want to be reimbursed from any settlement you receive from the third party because it paid for your medical care and wage benefits. On top of that, the deadlines are different. While a workers' compensation claim may stay open for years, a personal injury lawsuit usually has a much shorter time limit. Miss that deadline, and you could lose valuable rights. That's why it's important to understand all of your options before accepting a settlement or assuming workers' compensation is your only path forward.

THE VALUE OF YOUR CASE

Our firm can help you determine whether you have a third-party claim, protect your rights throughout both cases, and fight to recover every dollar you're entitled to. After all, when you're already dealing with an injury, you shouldn't have to navigate two legal systems on your own.

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ANSWER



EATS WITH ELLIE

SLOW COOKER CHILI

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs lean ground beef
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 1/2 tsp fine sea salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 15-oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-oz can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 30-oz can diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1 10-oz can diced tomatoes and green chilis, with juice
- 1 15-oz can tomato sauce

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, sauté beef until it releases fat (4–5 minutes), breaking it up with a spatula.
2. Add onion and sauté until tender (4–5 minutes).
3. Add minced garlic and seasonings.
4. Cook another 30 seconds, stirring constantly.
5. Transfer to a 6-qt slow cooker, and add remaining ingredients.
6. Stir to combine and cook on high for 3–4 hours or on low for 6–8 hours.
7. Season to taste if desired and serve warm.