

REGAINING THE UNITY WE'VE LOST

MY HOPE FOR THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY

In past July newsletters, I've written about a lot of topics related to the Fourth of July, our family's traditions, and some of my favorite memories — like when my brother, fresh out of the Marine Corps, put an M80 under a tin can and it exploded, sending shrapnel through his hand. I remember him hollering when our mom pulled it out and poured iodine into the wound ... ah, good times!

Going into this Fourth of July, though, I guess more than anything I feel a sense of loss. "E Pluribus Unum" may still be our nation's motto, but it doesn't much feel like it these days.

When I was growing up in southwest Missouri, I played basketball at a YMCA that served my town and a bunch of others around it. I played Optimist baseball sponsored by Beltone hearing aids, and football through the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. I played with my friends who were Black, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Native American. Most of us were kind of poor, although some were closing in on middle class (we thought one friend's dad was rich because he owned a furniture store). But that didn't matter to us. Our dads coached us and we were all playing for the same teams. We cared about each other; we weren't distracted by our differences.

I don't pretend there weren't any problems back then. After all, it was the 1960s — people were protesting for equal rights and against the Vietnam War. But I remember how proud we all were when we landed on the moon at the end of the decade. And, from what I remember, the

Fourth of July was always somewhat sacred. It seemed like even when we disagreed every other day, the anniversary of our country's independence was still a day of unity — a day when we were all Americans. We were free to disagree but stay together. We showed respect for the differences of opinion essential in our republic. It feels like that's not the case this year.

Our country seems more polarized than ever, and has for some time now. The last time I really remember people from all parts of the political spectrum coming together was on 9/11, and that was almost 20 years ago! These days, politicians and everyday citizens seem more interested in trading barbs to gain political points rather than working toward the common good. And if you're not walking in lockstep with one of the main political parties? Well, you can forget about your voice being heard. You just ain't woke ... or you're too woke!! But where's the common ground? Can we no longer exhibit forgiveness and grace to each other?

Mainstream media and social media both feed the polarization we're experiencing today. Too many people have become accustomed to airing their unfiltered (sometimes harmful) opinions on the web without fear of consequence or hurting someone else. When you can hide behind a wall of anonymity, you'll say things to someone you would never say to their face. Anytime I think negatively about our country and our world, I know it's time to stop looking at social media for a while. I have to take a breath and remember there's good in the world, too. (I admit, I choked



up watching the video of the Tempe Police Department presenting Gerald Philbrook with his new "Gator," the story on Page 3).

At my law firm, we represent people regardless of their faith, race, sexual orientation, political party, or any other identity marker they might claim. We're all children of God. We are all Americans and we live in the best country on Earth. We all make mistakes. We all drop the ball sometimes. If someone is hurting, we come together and do what we can to help them. Simple as that. When we do, we are our best selves.

It's my hope this would be everyone's goal as we celebrate the Fourth of July: to come together and celebrate our nation. I hope that in celebrating, we can regain some of the unity we've lost.

I hope you'll have a fun, safe time celebrating our country's independence this year. Happy Fourth of July!

- Jim Monast

KEEP YOUR HOME'S AIR CLEAN ON THE CHEAP

With a DIY Box Fan Filter!

As we write this, fire season is in full swing across the United States. Smoke from those wildfires drifts through thousands of cities and millions of homes each summer, aggravating asthma and causing coughing fits. If your house is in an affected area — or you'd just like to ensure that your family is breathing the cleanest, healthiest air possible — this cheap, easy, DIY air filter has your back.

WHAT YOU NEED

Making a DIY air filter is incredibly simple. All you need is a box fan, a HEPA filter (cheap pleated filters from Winix or FilterBuy work perfectly), and something to attach the filter to the fan, like duct tape, canvas straps, sturdy ribbon, zip ties, or clamps. Use whatever attachment material you have on hand! A screwdriver and four screws are optional. You should be able to find all of the necessary materials at your local hardware store for \$25–\$50.

BUILD YOUR BOX FAN FILTER

You've probably guessed how this project will come together! First, lay your fan intake side up and cover the front grate with the HEPA filter. Then, use your canvas straps, clamps, or duct tape to attach the filter to the fan! If you have a screwdriver handy, unscrew the front grating before adding the filter, then replace it with the HEPA filter and strap the two together. For a super-sturdy method, screw the filter in place with or without removing the grid. There you have it! You've created a filter that will remove dust, smoke, lint, pet dander, and pollen from your home.

TIPS AND TRICKS

If you're a visual learner, YouTube is a great resource for this hack! Just search "DIY Air Filter," and you'll get dozens of results. One video, "DIY Air Filter | Box Fan Modification | Cleaner Air for Your Home!" even reveals how to use J-channel to make it easy to change out the HEPA filter over time.

This DIY box fan filter isn't as sturdy or effective as a fancy purifier, but it's a great option if you're on a budget.



Client Success Story

ERICA PETROFF

"Keep calm and stop pressing the call button!"

Our client, Erica Petroff, is a flight attendant for a regional airline based in the Port Columbus airport. She is a bundle of energy, chipper and irrepressible. It's obvious she's in a job she loves and it's a great fit for her!

She needed help with her claim, as her employer has been fighting it tooth and nail. It's not that they dispute she got hurt but ... well, let me explain.

I learned a lot about airlines working with Erica on her case. For example, flight crews operate by report times and release times. A "report" time is the time the company tells them to be at the airport to report for duty on airport property. This is the start of their trip, or "pairing." The trip or "release" time ends upon the arrival to the originating base airport. Columbus is Erica's home base airport. Between report and release time, she and the crew are considered "on the clock."

Crew members are paid during flight time but also receive a per diem of \$2 per hour continually from report time to release time of a trip. This includes trips

where they must stay overnight and fly out again the next morning. The airline designates, books, and pays for their lodging. Crew members don't choose where they stay and must move together as a unit. At any time, an individual crew member can be reassigned to another "pairing" if a need arises elsewhere in the country.

Erica was awakened during one of her overnights by the bright light of a bedside alarm clock. She fell when she tried adjusting it, cracked her head on the nightstand, and got knocked out. The airline didn't dispute she suffered a concussion and other injuries (likely a herniated disc, too) but didn't think they should have to cover her claim.

In Ohio, if someone is designated a "traveling employee," they are covered by workers' compensation for the entire time they are pursuing the employer's business, unless they are on a "personal errand" (such as heading out to a bar across town). The airline argued Erica should be treated like a truck driver. Because truckers have to take a rest period mandated by the Department of Transportation, their employers can't pull them from their layovers to work. Courts distinguish a trucker's "slip and fall" during such times from injuries to traveling employees such as salespeople and, well, Erica!

We've won her hearings administratively and gotten her claim allowed, but, as many of you know, the process has delayed her treatment and testing. And she just wants to get back to work. As Erica says, "I am always asked what I love most about my job. Most think it's people or the travel benefits. Actually, I love the unpredictability! Nothing is ever the same! Weather delays, maintenance, crew changes, reassignment, etc. I love that my job is never the same, day to day. I love that I can be independent and use my charismatic personality to engage the public. I love that in 90 seconds, I can evacuate a whole plane to safety.

"I miss my job and I cannot wait to return to what I love. When the skies are calling, you can never stay grounded!"

4-YEAR-OLD GETS HIS STOLEN FAVORITE TOY REPLACED

THANKS TO SOME COMPASSIONATE POLICE OFFICERS

Police officers across the country swear to protect and serve their communities when they put on their uniforms. And sometimes, serving the community can take a turn that's both unexpected and heartwarming.

When Tempe, Arizona, resident Peter Philbrook discovered one day that his son Gerald's most treasured toy, a replica John Deere tractor known as a Gator, was stolen, he posted about the incident on his Facebook page, hoping to somehow get it back. In the post, he wrote about how he and Gerald had bonded over finding and repairing the tractor. It wasn't just a favorite toy — it was a possession that held immense sentimental value.

One person who saw Peter's Facebook post was Tempe Patrol Sergeant Andrew Brooks, who took it upon himself to find the tractor for Gerald. Unfortunately, however, his search efforts proved fruitless, but he didn't quit there.

With some assistance from a local Walmart and the Tempe Officers Association, he bought Gerald a brand-new John

Deere tractor toy. After making the purchase, they brought the tractor to Gerald's home to give it to him in person.

In an sweet video posted to the Tempe Police Twitter page, officers can be seen lining up in front of the tractor, obscuring it from Gerald's view as the 4-year-old makes his way down stairs onto the lawn. Then, the officers part to reveal the brand-new tractor they had bought for him. Sergeant Brooks was so overcome with emotion from the whole event he had to compose himself before Gerald saw the tractor.

"This is actually cooler than the other one!" Gerald reportedly exclaimed when he finally saw it.

Along with the tractor, Sergeant Brooks presented Gerald with some customized



license plates and a peace sign bumper sticker. Now, not only can the 4-year-old ride on his tractor again, but he can ride around in style — and it's all thanks to the thoughtfulness of their local police department. Lead on, Tempe Police!

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ANSWER

NIBBLES WITH NUG

THE BEST TEXAS-STYLE SMOKED BRISKET

Inspired by AllRecipes.com

INGREDIENTS

- Wood chips
- 1/4 cup paprika
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup ground cumin
- 1/4 cup cayenne pepper
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup chili powder
- 1/4 cup garlic powder
- 1/4 cup onion powder
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1/4 cup pepper
- 10 lbs brisket

DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, soak wood chips in water overnight.
2. In a large bowl, mix paprika, white sugar, cumin, cayenne pepper, brown sugar, chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper.
3. Rub spice mixture on the brisket and refrigerate for 24 hours.
4. Preheat smoker to 230 F. Drain wood chips and place them in the smoker.
5. Smoke brisket until it has an internal temperature of 165 F.
6. Remove brisket and wrap it in aluminum foil.
7. Smoke brisket further until it reaches an internal temperature of 185 F.

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THE MEOW AT 10,000 FEET

High on the slopes of Bristen, a mountain in the Glarus Alps in central Switzerland, a pair of skiers discovered something unexpected. At 4:30 a.m., the skiers climbed toward the summit of Bristen when they realized they weren't alone. They were being followed by a cat — not a lynx or a wildcat, but a little mewling house cat.

How does a house cat end up on the slopes of a snow-covered, 10,000-foot mountain? This was an answer the skiers wouldn't get. They weren't even sure what to do with a cat in general. It's likely that it simply wandered away from one of the nearby towns or villages near the base of the mountain, but even for a human, that's a major undertaking.

Lost, the cat followed the only sign of civilization it could find: the skiers, Cyril and Erik Rohrer. "She started to shiver, and her paws began to bleed from the hard snow," Cyril noted. "We picked her up and carried her when she was too exhausted to walk uphill anymore. We were definitely confused. I felt really sorry for the cat. She was really exhausted on the ridge underneath the summit."

The cat stayed with them for some time before they met up with another group of hikers who were headed down the mountain. The cat joined them for what would hopefully be a journey back home. And it was! Remarkably, the cat's owners were found. They revealed that their cat had vanished four days earlier and apparently followed yet another group of hikers

up Bristen. "Animals do weird things. And they are way tougher than humans. They'll never give up. Even though they are hurting really, really bad," Cyril said of his feline hiking companion. Hopefully, that will be the little feline's last trip up for some time.

