

THE LONG JOURNEY HOME

Honoring Those Who Served and Their Sacrifices

Memorial Day is a time to honor those who gave everything, but for me, it's also about remembering the ones who came back — changed but unbroken. I come from a long line of military men, and while I never served, their stories shaped who I am. Their sacrifices, big and small, deserve to be remembered.

My grandfather served in World War I along the Maginot Line, where he was exposed to mustard gas. It scarred his lungs for life, but quitting wasn't in his vocabulary. He came home, worked hard, and even opened an auto dealership. My dad was always proud of him, telling stories about the kind of man he was. We still have the postcards he sent home — over a century old now. He also kept a diary, but since he wrote it in pencil, the words have faded with time, a whisper of history tucked away in our family keepsakes.

My dad took a different path, serving in the Navy Medical Corps during World War II. He had some wild stories about old-school medical practices (*like smacking someone on the rear before giving them a shot so they wouldn't feel the needle*). He was transferred to the Navy Seabees, a construction unit that built bridges and bases, but the war ended before he could make the move. Then, there was my father-in-law, a tank operator in Korea. He served under legendary generals, but the deafening blasts inside the tank stole his hearing later in life. Like so many veterans, he never complained — just adapted.

One of my brothers, Allen, joined the Marines during the early days of Vietnam. He trained in San Diego, where they called them "Hollywood Marines" because they were on the West Coast. I've got black-and-white photos of him from back then, standing tall in his uniform. He served before the war escalated and later drove for UPS and semi-trucks with my brother Bryce. Growing up, I admired him and always thought the Marines would

be the way to go if I were to serve. I always thought the Marines were the toughest of the tough, the best of the best.

So, right out of high school, I met with a Marine recruiter. The guy was intense, fired up, and, frankly, *a little nuts*. His little finger was mangled from boot camp, and he grinned like it was a badge of honor. I remember thinking, "No way!" and decided the Marines weren't for me.

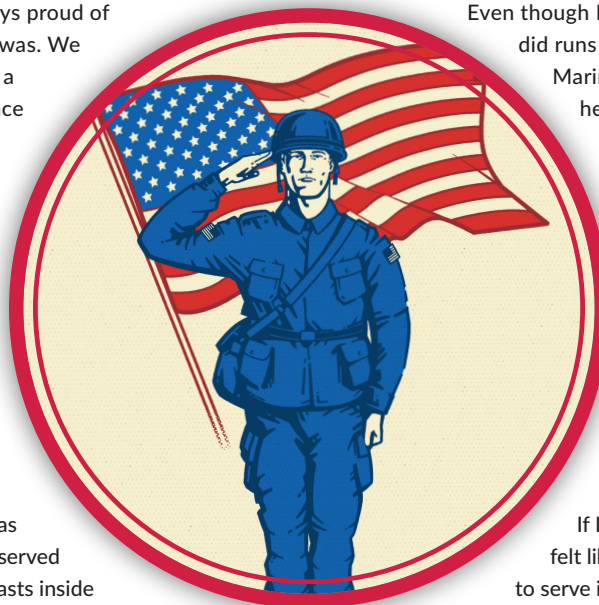
Even though I never served, my respect for those who did runs deep. My own son would go on to join the Marines after high school after so many years of hearing stories of my brother. As a parent, I wasn't exactly excited, and I felt the fragility of his life for the first time. He said his goodbyes, and fortunately, he came back.

When he returned, my once-messy kid had the cleanest room in the house. Turns out, a Marine knows his way around a Swiffer mop! He served six years, became a sergeant, then earned an engineering degree. Now, he works for the government in Virginia, and I couldn't be prouder.

If I have one regret, it's that I never served. I always felt like I owed it to my country. Instead, I've tried to serve in my own way as a workers' compensation attorney, helping those injured on the job. It's certainly not the same as wearing a uniform, but I like to think it's my way of giving back.

Memorial Day reminds us not to take our service members' sacrifices for granted. While I never served in uniform, I hope I've served my community in other ways. And for that, I am grateful.

-Jim Monast



BUDGET SMARTER, NOT HARDER

THE BEST BUDGET APPS TO KEEP YOUR FINANCES IN CHECK



Budgeting isn't the most exciting thing in the world, but it's vital if you want to reach your financial goals. Whether trying to break free from the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle, saving for a dream vacation, or keeping yourself from impulse-buying, the right app can make all the difference. Thankfully, budgeting apps have come a long way, and in 2025, these top picks will help you take control of your money.

YNAB: FOR SERIOUS BUDGETERS

YNAB (You Need a Budget) is ideal for those who want complete control over their finances. Using a zero-based budgeting system — income minus spending and savings should equal zero every month — this app ensures every dollar has a purpose before you spend it. Unlike traditional apps that focus on past transactions, YNAB helps users break the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle by planning ahead. You can sync bank accounts, credit cards, and loans and access the app across multiple devices.

HONEYDUE: FOR COUPLES

Honeydue is for couples looking to manage their finances together. Partners can link their bank accounts, credit cards, loans, and investments while choosing how much financial information to share. The app automatically categorizes expenses, sets spending limits, and sends alerts

when nearing a budget cap. It even includes a chat feature for discussing transactions. Best of all, it's completely free.

POCKETGUARD: FOR OVERSPENDERS

If you tend to overspend, PocketGuard is an excellent solution. The app tracks your bills, savings goals, and spending habits to show how much money you have left for daily expenses. The "In My Pocket" feature helps prevent overspending by giving you a real-time look at available funds. Alerts notify you when you're approaching or exceeding your limits.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES

Whether you need a structured system like YNAB or an app to rein in spending like PocketGuard, there's an option for everyone. Choose the app that fits your needs and start making smarter financial decisions today.

Protect Yourself This Construction Season

WORK ZONE DANGERS YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE

As the sun stays out longer and the weather warms up, construction projects also ramp up. But with the hustle comes heightened risks. Work zones are some of the most dangerous places to be, with thousands of accidents reported each year. **In 2022, 96,000 work zone accidents led to 37,000 injuries and 891 fatalities.** Many of those lost were construction workers just trying to do their jobs.

The dangers go far beyond speeding vehicles. A construction site is a maze of hazards with falling objects, unstable surfaces, heavy machinery, and electrical risks. One wrong step, one moment of distraction, and the consequences can be life-altering.

THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF A WORK ZONE

Construction sites are unpredictable. Even the most experienced workers face serious threats, including:

- **Falling Debris:** Hard hats are lifesavers for a reason. Debris, tools, and materials can drop from above, causing head injuries or fractures.
- **Slip-and-Fall Accidents:** Loose gravel and slick surfaces make for dangerous footing.
- **Heavy Machinery:** Getting trapped between moving vehicles or heavy materials can be catastrophic.
- **Electrocution Injuries:** One exposed wire, a malfunctioning tool, or contact with a power line can mean severe burns or worse.

Knowing the risks is only half the battle. Protecting yourself is the key.

GEAR UP WITH YOUR PPE

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) isn't just about compliance. It's about survival, and each piece plays a critical role.

- **Helmets:** Your first defense against falling debris.
- **Work Boots:** Protect your feet from falling objects and prevent slips.
- **High-Visibility Clothing:** Ensure drivers and machine operators see you before it's too late.
- **Eye Protection:** Flying debris can cause permanent damage in a split second.

Every piece of PPE works together to create a safety shield. But gear alone isn't enough; vigilance and smart decision-making are just as necessary.

INJURED? YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

If you've been injured on a construction site, you don't have to navigate the legal process alone. Our workers' compensation team is here to fight for your rights and get you the support you deserve. **Contact us today — we've got your back.**

9 LIVES, NO LIMITS

FORGET LASER POINTERS — THIS CAT PREFERS PARACHUTES!

If you thought cats were content lounging in sunbeams and knocking things off tables, let us introduce you to Thoth: the daredevil Bengal-mix redefining feline adventure. While most kitties

are busy chasing laser pointers, Thoth is soaring through the skies, strapped to his human, Ivan Kuznetsov, for high-flying, parachute-skiing escapades. Yes, you read that right.

Thoth's daredevil streak started early. As a kitten, he ditched the comfort of a backpack mid-bike ride, opting instead to perch on Ivan's shoulder. That was when Ivan knew he had a fellow adrenaline seeker on his hands.



Thoth and Ivan aren't your typical skier-and-cat duo (as if that's a thing). After tackling regular downhill skiing in December, they decided to up the ante! Secured snugly to Ivan's harness, Thoth suited up in his own down jacket, braving the icy winds of Gribanovka Ski Resort like a seasoned pro. He even sported a tiny helmet because safety first, even for feline thrill-seekers.

According to Ivan, an alpine ski instructor and skydiver, Thoth is the perfect co-pilot. "During the flight, he looked around with curiosity and was totally calm," said Ivan. "The only thing that scared him was the noise of the cable car, so we started landing farther away from it." It's a small price to pay for being a sky-high sensation.

Now at 7 months old, Thoth embraces every challenge Ivan throws his way. "As soon as I put on his jacket and harness, he runs to the door purring. He enjoys walking in the park, cycling, skiing, snowboarding, and even swimming."

The dynamic duo isn't stopping anytime soon. Next on their list? Rafting, tandem rock climbing, and eventually, a parachute jump. But don't worry, Thoth will have a specially designed fabric container to keep him safe as he takes on the skies again.

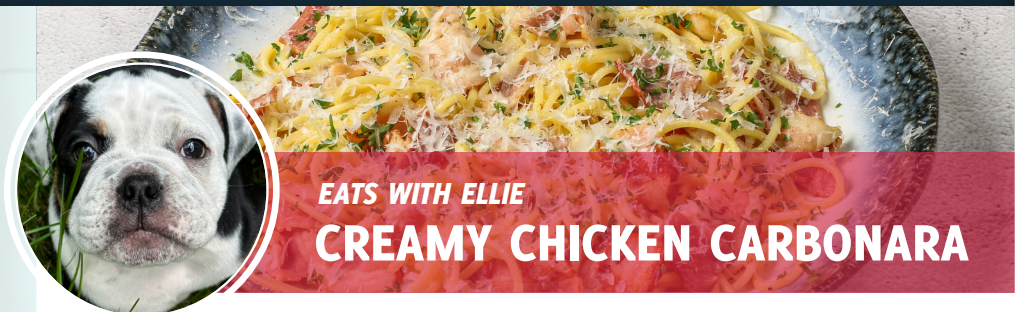
One thing is certain: While most cats spend their days napping, Thoth is out here living nine lives to the absolute fullest.

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ANSWER



EATS WITH ELLIE CREAMY CHICKEN CARBONARA

With tender chicken, crispy pancetta, and a velvety egg-based sauce, this is a rich, satisfying take on classic carbonara — and it comes together in about 30 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

- 12 oz spaghetti or linguine
- 1 boneless, skinless chicken breast, sliced (8 oz)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 large eggs
- 3 oz Parmesan cheese
- 4 oz pancetta or bacon, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup pasta water
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley, optional

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta in boiling water until al dente. Save 1/2 cup of pasta water, then drain.
2. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil in a pan over medium heat, and cook chicken until golden and fully cooked. Remove chicken.
3. In a bowl, mix eggs and Parmesan cheese until smooth.
4. Add pancetta to chicken pan, cook until crispy, then stir in garlic and cook for 30 seconds.
5. Toss pasta with pancetta, then remove from heat. Stir in egg mixture, adding reserved pasta water gradually until creamy.
6. Mix in chicken and garnish with parsley before serving.

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MIND-BENDING MAMA

GUINNESS NAMES WORLD'S MOST PRODUCTIVE MOTHER

You may have heard of Octomom, the California mother of 14 who gave birth to octuplets, or the woman in Morocco who gave birth to nonuplets in 2021, all nine of whom are alive and well.

These record-breaking moms have nothing on Mrs. Feodor Vassilyev. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the 18th-century Russian woman gave birth to 69 children — including 16 pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets, and four sets of quadruplets!

Even the Guinness editors admit the story seems unlikely, but they cite “numerous

contemporaneous sources” to back the story. The first was a monastery in the town of Nikolsk, northeast of Moscow, where monks recorded and reported the births to Moscow officials in 1782.

The Lancet, a respected medical journal, recounted in 1878 an account by French researchers from the “Statistical Works of Russia,” showing that Mrs. Vassilyev’s husband had spawned 87 children by two wives. Separately, The Gentleman’s Magazine, an 18th and 19th-century English periodical, published a report by a writer claiming to have an original letter,

dated 1782, saying that O.S. Feodor Wassilief (sic), age 75, had 69 children via 27 births by his first wife and 18 children via eight births by his second wife, for a total of 87 offspring! Citing information from an English merchant in St. Petersburg, the writer said 84 of the children had survived, and the father had been invited to meet the empress, Catherine the Great.

The first Mrs. Vassilyev’s remarkable record suggests that she was pregnant for 243 months, or more than 20 years, of her life — more than half the average life expectancy of Russian women in that era!

