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Cases We Handle:

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- Car Wreck
- Wrongful Death
- Truck Wreck

Not Just a Corn Cob Pipe and Button Nose

THE SURPRISING HISTORY OF THE SNOWMAN

Building a snowman is one of the most picturesque winter activities, which is why snowmen have become a wintertime cultural icon. A snowman appeared on the very first postcards, was the subject of some of the earliest photos, and even starred in silent movies. Frosty may be a happy snowman now, but his ancestors have a much more varied — and sometimes dark — history.

The Middle Ages

Snowmen were a phenomenon in the Middle Ages. They were constructed with deep thought and great skill because, during a time of limited means of expression, snow was a free art supply that literally fell from the sky. These artistic feats were popular winter attractions for well-to-do couples who wanted to get their fix of temporary art. Snowmen were often created by famous artists, including 19-year-old Michelangelo who, in 1494, was commissioned by the ruler of Florence to sculpt a snowman in his mansion's courtyard.

The Miracle of 1511

In Brussels in 1511, during six weeks of subzero temperatures called the Winter of Death, the city was miraculously adorned with hundreds of



snowmen. The spectacle told stories on every street corner — some political and some demonstrating anger with the church, many too risqué to speak of. For the people of Brussels, this Miracle of 1511 was a defining moment of artistic freedom. But when spring came and the snow thawed, the Belgians were left with damaging floods.

The Schenectady Massacre

Not all snowmen have an innocent history. In 1690, former Fort Schenectady in upstate New York was home to a remote Dutch settlement, which was under the constant threat of attack. Soldiers guarded the gates at all times because they were frozen open, but during a blizzard, they left a pair of snowmen to protect the gates while they sought shelter. That's when 200 French Canadian soldiers and Native Americans approached. Naturally, they were unfazed by the snowmen and ruthlessly invaded the settlement.

Building a snowman seems like a simple and charming activity, but after learning about its surprising history, you might find those piles of snow seem a little more complicated and a lot more meaningful than before.



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The Season of Giving Back and Counting Blessings



I love this time of the year because it's a good time to both plan for the future and to reflect on the past — and there is certainly a lot to reflect on this year. Traditionally, this has also been a special time of year for me as I look forward to the many parties and gatherings with family and friends.

However, some of those gatherings are being put on the back burner due to COVID-19, and the celebrations that do happen will look different. I still plan on going to as many gatherings as possible, as long as I can do so safely.

As I reflect on the year, I can see how abundantly blessed we are. Because of this, we want to do what we can this holiday season for those folks who aren't quite as fortunate. Many of us have been there at one point or another in our lives. Maybe you had a job that suddenly ended just weeks before the holidays, or unexpected expenses meant there wasn't anything left for Christmas. Maybe you even

remember a time when you had to tell your kids there wouldn't be much of a Christmas this year — or maybe you were that kid. This year has been difficult for a lot of people, and in many ways, giving back this year means even more.

Alison and I, along with the entire team at the office, enjoy getting together to volunteer at Mission Arlington, especially around the holidays. Mission Arlington does so much to help folks in our community who may be passing through a rough season in their life. It's remarkable how far a little help can go, whether it's a hot meal, a warm place to sleep, or a toy for a child.

One of the really great things about Mission Arlington is the Christmas Store, where parents can choose free gifts for their children. It started 35 years ago but has grown to be a large endeavor to provide Christmas gifts for families in need. Last year, 32,888 children received toys, trees, gifts, and even bicycles through the organization.

We know the need will be great this year, too, and we look forward to helping in our small way. While there are many ways to give back — donating to food banks and other nonprofits or volunteering where you can — you are also more than welcome to drop off a toy at our office. We will make sure it gets to Mission Arlington and gets into the hands of a deserving child who might not otherwise get a gift on Christmas morning.

You can call ahead or swing by with a toy. All Mission Arlington asks is that the toy is unwrapped. You can see all the details at their Christmas Store website at [MissionArlington.org/christmas-2](https://www.missionarlington.org/christmas-2).

With that, I pray that you and your family enjoy a wonderful holiday season!

-Matt Aulsbrook

3 Gift-Giving Tips

THAT WON'T KILL YOUR SAVINGS

Ah, the holidays. It's a time of sweet treats, family, and giving back — and sometimes giving a little too much. When it comes to the perfect holiday gift, many people spend too much money. The average American spends nearly \$1,000 on gifts during the December holidays alone!

It's possible to cut back and make it to January without major debt. Here's how.

CHECK YOUR LIST — TWICE!

The list is going to be your secret weapon to tackling the holidays with your savings still intact. Start by writing down the name of every person you'd like to get a gift for. Now, with the exception of your immediate family members, narrow the names down to your top five — top 10 if you're really popular. Now, place the names of the people who didn't make the cut into a second list. If you still feel the need to do something for them, send homemade cookies or a handwritten note instead of purchasing something. This limits how much you actually have to spend!

THINK BEYOND STORE-BOUGHT OR EXPENSIVE ITEMS.

Sure, everyone wants this holiday season's "it" item, but sometimes the best gifts don't even come wrapped under the tree. Instead, look to your own talents as a clue to what you should give. If you're a great crafter, create something unique for the people on your list. If you can offer the gift of time, provide a free night of babysitting for your friends with kids or an experience at the local theater. These gifts have a bonus factor: Recipients love the gift when they open it, and they love it when they get to use it!

SET A BUDGET — AND STICK TO IT.

Setting a holiday budget ensures you only spend what you can afford. It also narrows down your search. If you choose to buy your neighbor something, but they aren't your top priority, set their budget at a lower level, like \$25-\$50. If you have a sibling who has had a rough year and you'd like to make their holidays a little brighter, bump their budget up. This narrows the focus of what you're looking for so you don't stumble into something you can't afford.

Ultimately, it's the spirit of giving during the holidays that makes them so rewarding. With a little ingenuity, you can be generous and avoid the stress of excess debt come January.

A DRIVING HABIT THAT SAVES LIVES

LEARN ABOUT THE 'DUTCH REACH'

How do you get out of your car? If you're like most drivers in America, you reach for the door handle with your left hand. It's a very simple action most of us put little thought into. We get out of our vehicle and go on with our day.

However, what many drivers fail to do is check for oncoming traffic, which could include cars, motorcycles, or bicycles. Failing to do this increases the chance of a "dooring," a type of accident that occurs when a cyclist or driver collides with a car door. In the instance of a bike collision, the cyclist often sustains serious injury, or worse.

While larger vehicles, such as cars and trucks, are easier to spot from behind with a glance, motorcycles and bicycles are harder to spot and may not show up in our peripheral vision. Unless drivers are specifically looking for them, they can be easily missed.

In the Netherlands, where bicycles are a major part of the country's transportation system, drivers receive comprehensive bike awareness training that gives them the tools they need to successfully navigate streets full of bikes and other small vehicles, like scooters, e-bikes, and motorcycles.

One piece of the Dutch driver education program we can all take advantage of is their technique of exiting a vehicle. Dutch drivers are taught to reach for the door handle with their **right** hand. Drivers who reach with their right hand (or passengers who reach with their left hand) are forced to twist their body in such a way that it gives them a better view of the area outside their vehicle.

In practice, this helps create greater awareness of vehicles or cyclists that might otherwise be missed. The simple action has become known as the "Dutch reach," and it is credited with saving the lives of many drivers exiting their vehicles as well as cyclists and other road users. It's a simple habit we can all adopt that takes no extra time yet comes with a very important benefit.

4 MORE DASHBOARD DIAGNOSTICS

Your car or truck dashboard is home to several different kinds of warning lights and indicators. When a light turns on, it tells you that something on or in your vehicle needs your attention, but each symbol's meaning isn't always clear. Last month, we took a look at four different warning lights — the oil pressure, engine temperature, tire pressure, and check engine warnings. This month, we're taking a look at four more dashboard warning symbols.

ABS WARNING

This is a straightforward light that says "ABS" and is usually inside a circle. When it comes on, it's indicating that something has malfunctioned with the anti-lock braking system. When this light is on, if you happen to brake too hard or too fast, your brakes may lock up. This can prevent your vehicle from braking properly, which puts you at greater risk of an accident.

AIR BAG WARNING

The symbol looks like a person sitting down with a circular air bag deployed directly in front of them. It's also a warning that can be difficult to self-diagnose, as it can indicate that virtually any part of the air bag system has malfunctioned. It could be anything from the crash detection sensors to the deployment system. If you see this light, take your vehicle to an auto professional.

BATTERY WARNING

This is another straightforward light. It looks like a battery with plus and minus signs, and when it comes on, it's often to signal that your car battery is draining. If left unaddressed, the battery will drain and you may need to jump-start your vehicle in order to get it running. Should this light come on while the engine is **on**, it may indicate something is wrong with the battery or the charging system.

BRAKE SYSTEM WARNING

This very important symbol is an exclamation mark with a circle around it. If this lights up, the brake system is malfunctioning. It can mean any part of the braking system has failed, which makes it difficult to self-diagnose. It can also mean the braking system is just low on hydraulic fluid. Regardless, if this light comes on, it's important to stop driving, pull over, and call for assistance.



Texas-Sized LAUGHS



HOME COOKIN'

NOT YOUR GRANDMA'S FRUITCAKE

Fruitcake gets a bad rap, but when made correctly, it's delicious! Try this recipe to upend your preconceived dessert notions.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 1/2 cups mixed dried fruit of your choice, chopped
- 1 cup nuts of your choice, chopped
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg, room temperature
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 tsp salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Line a 9x5-inch loaf pan with greased baking paper. Ensure the piece running the length of the pan stands 1 inch above each side to form "handles."
2. In a small bowl, mix baking soda and sour cream.
3. In a second bowl, combine fruit, nuts, and 1/4 cup flour.
4. In a third bowl, beat butter and sugar until fluffy. Add egg, zest, and sour cream mixture. Then, add remaining flour and salt. Mix, then add fruit mixture.
5. Pour batter into lined pan. Fill up a separate loaf pan halfway with water. Bake both pans in oven for 1 1/2-2 hours or until a skewer leaves the cake clean.
6. Use "handles" to remove cake from pan and cool completely on a rack before serving.

Inspired by SimplyRecipes.com