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December 23, 2020-January 6, 2021



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An untraditional year

BY DREW WHITLEY

As the holiday season drew nearer this year, I saw my mom lamenting that she would not be able to decorate as usual. This year, my cat, Wriggs, is living with my parents while my wife and I await the house we are planning on purchasing to be remodeled and we live with my in-laws. Very 2020. Wriggs is a great cat, but he is also a hell-raiser, to put things lightly. He loves to knock over picture frames, tip cups of water, and shred the bottom lining of chairs, but only when he has an audience. Knowing this about him, my mom knew that a lot of the normal Christmas accoutrements were simply out of the question because they would soon become targets, victims of Wriggs. No more eight foot tree loaded with all of our precious family ornaments. Too tippable. No more porcelain nativity scene on the front hutch. Too breakable. No more Christmas caroler figurines lining the coffee and end tables. Too precious. (Don't worry: there are still plenty of carolers placed out of Wriggs' reach.)

This is an untraditional year, to say the least. I truly do not think that that sentiment needs explaining or expounding. I find the present issue to be that, despite this painfully untraditional year, we still want to hold onto our normal holiday traditions. We still want the same meals with the same people. We still want the same holiday parties with the same punch and gift exchanges. We still want the same decorations hung in their locations. What we are failing to see is that we are working to fit a square peg into a round hole. Or perhaps we see this and we are continuing to push anyway because, darn it, we need a little normalcy! I propose something different. Why not let this year be the one that is untraditional? Surely, we have become accustomed to doing things a new and different way over the past nine months. This holiday season, let's extend that same innovation, that same sense of adventure and "Oh, well, it's just got to be different" to our December celebrations.

Despite lamenting the difference of this year at first, my mom has really done great with the



change. She opted for a shorter, pencil-thin tree and decorated it with Christmas lights and snowman ornaments; untraditional, but really festive. As noted, she moved the caroler figurines out of Wriggs' reach (he's still managed to get to a few) and arranged them in new ways; untraditional, but clever. She went for a more simplistic display on our kitchen table, finding a vintage-style, battery-powered ceramic tree; untraditional, but very warm and homey.

In changing all of these traditional decorating patterns, I really do believe that my mom has found some things that she will now keep around in years to come. I think that's what I'm really trying to emphasize when I urge all of us to accept and embrace the untraditional. All of our honored and treasured holiday traditions started at some point and had a first

time. Unknowingly, you can start some of those traditions this year. Yes, we will certainly go back to our large parties and big family get-togethers next year (God willing!), but won't it be wonderful if we also find that we love a Christmas Eve with just a few of us reading from a book and drinking hot chocolate? Won't it be really special when next year everyone decorates the house together because you had to this year (you were all stuck with each other) and you really loved that. Won't it be so nice not rush out at 5:00 on Thanksgiving evening because Black Friday has been abolished and instead you can sit around and enjoy the company of those around you? This is an untraditional year, but if it has shown us anything, it has shown us our potential to embrace the new. Let's embrace the new this year and add it to the old in the years to come.

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WAYNE JOHNSON NAMED RESERVE POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR 2020

The Reserve Police Officer of the Year award is given for outstanding achievement by a Reserve Police Officer that brings credit to the City of Anderson Police Department and which involves performance well above and beyond that which is required by a Reserve Police Officer's basic assignments and duties. This officer has selflessly dedicated his time to serve and volunteered his time without complaint in assisting patrol and all aspects of special events when needed at the police department. The selfless acts of this officer's personal time volunteering to help the City of Anderson's way of life is appreciated by all you serve and protect.

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I'm sorry, but I'm done

Dear 2020,

I don't know how to say this, but I'm leaving you. I was patient, but we aren't working out. I've given you could have been one of the best years of my life, and I just can't give you any more.

You can't possibly be surprised as I've noticed you growing darker and colder in the last couple of months. And as much as I'd like to say, "Oh, it's nothing you've done," that would be a lie. It's ALL about what you've done.

When we were first together, though, it was like magic. Remember when you took me to Chicago back in January? I was afraid that this South Carolina girl would freeze to death, but somehow, you arranged for perfect weather to roam the Magnificent Mile, see the incredible architecture, and laugh out loud at the Second City Comedy Club. Did you say anything when I ate my weight in Ann Sather's cinnamon rolls? Of course you didn't; there was just more of me to love. 2020, you actually seemed too good to be true. And that should have tipped me off.

By the end of winter, we stopped going out to movies and restaurants, and you stopped going to the gym. Lack of exercise must have really gotten to you because in the spring, you gave up toilet paper for murder hornets, and



Kim von Keller

by summer, you were mailing seeds nobody wanted to people you don't know. Fall arrived, and you wouldn't let me go to the State Fair or the Clemson-Carolina game. And if you didn't want to see "The Music Man" in New York, you could have just told me and I would have gone alone. You didn't have to close the whole show. And all of Broadway.

And these were just the little things. I could forgive your curious obsession with "Tiger King," but you made a lot of people very sick -- and worse -- and pushed hospital workers to the brink. You closed a lot of businesses. You caused a lot of people to lose their jobs. Wherever you went, you left anger and sadness and fear in your wake. You kept me from seeing my friends, and, more importantly, you also kept me from seeing my mother. Nobody -- I mean NOBODY -- messes with me and my mom.

So I'm sorry, but I'm done. We're through. Don't write, don't call, don't text, don't email, and don't DM. I'll never get back the twelve months we spent together, and I'm burning my calendar so there's no reminder that you ever existed. As bad as you were, though, I won't give you the satisfaction of being bitter. As a matter of fact, I've already got a date for New Year's Eve, and we'll have our first kiss at 12:00 a.m. on January the 1st. I hate to rub it in, but I think he's your cousin.

Regrettably,
Kim
P.S. Thanks for the cinnamon rolls.
P.P.S. My friends never liked you.

Remembering the Christmas coat

BY ANN BAILES

I saw a fleeting glimpse on TV of a little girl, swinging, wearing a dark green coat with faux fur collar and cuffs. It brought back such a great Christmas memory that it's worth skipping a bird article this time and writing this story instead. Everyone has special personal Christmas stories, but I hope at this joyous time you'll enjoy mine.

As we got into the colder days of December, our four year old daughter, Mary Lee (now grown), needed a new winter coat. I wanted to get her something that was nice enough to wear to church, but not so nice and formal that she couldn't wear it to school sometimes as well. I didn't want a casual jacket for her - I wanted an actual coat. After searching through rack after rack, I was beginning to despair of finding the right one.

Then, in Penney's, the last store of the trip, I spotted it. You guessed it. It was dark green with faux fur collar and cuffs. Large enough that it would last several years. Long enough that it was a coat, not a jacket. And just beautiful for a little girl.

Then I looked at the price tag. \$80. With two young children at home, and many expenses taking up our December paychecks, that was too much to spend on a coat for a four-year-old. Even though it was perfect, I couldn't justify spending that much at that time. I reluctantly put the coat back on the rack and headed home empty-handed.

After feeding the family and doing the usual evening routine chores, I settled down to glance over the newspaper. About halfway through - I spotted it. A coupon. For Penney's. For 50% off of any one non-sale item in the store.

\$40 I could justify! I told Mike I was headed back to the mall and would he please put the children to bed! I hurriedly made the 20-minute trip back to town, hoping no one else had seen and bought that coat before I could get back.

On Christmas morning, Mary Lee opened a large box containing a dark green coat with faux fur collar and cuffs. She was as pleased as I was. She wore that coat for three years - the year it was a little big, the year it fit perfectly, and the year it would do even if a little bit snug. She looked adorable in it and it was perfect for South Carolina winters.

After she outgrew it, I kept it, waiting for the perfect opportunity to pass it along. After a couple of years we met some missionaries that came through Anderson, who had a need for warm coats for the children at their orphanage in Russia. So that's where it ended up. I trust some little girl in Russia--maybe more than one--has been kept as warm and has enjoyed that dark green coat as much as both Mary Lee and her mother did those twenty-something years ago.

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CPL. VIVIAN MCCORQUODALE WINS DETENTION OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The Detention Officer of the Year is given for outstanding achievement by a Detention Officer that brings credit to the City of Anderson Police Department Detention Center and which involves performance well above and beyond that which is required by a Detention Officer's basic assignments and duties. The awardee takes each day as a new opportunity, is spoken well of by her peers, carries out directives and never complains of work required. She is a team player never wanting to leave the administrative team short and has the initiative to get tasks accomplished before being asked because of her attention to detail.

THE GARDEN SHOP

Planting for decorations



**SUSAN
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gardener

When fellow ECNews writer Kim von Keller asked us what we are thankful for in her Thanksgiving article, she wanted our thoughts on things beyond the obvious like our families, good health, etc. I quickly answered "I am thankful God gave me my land. It changed my life." I was a gardener when I lived in town but nowhere near like now. Mostly because with a ten acre or so pasture, there's room to plant anything. My little piece of heaven is 24 acres total. Again being blessed to add 3.5 acres a little over a year ago. Living in town, I could hear my neighbor vacuuming if our windows were open. Now I can wander in the woods, slop through the swamp, and splash in the creek.

These blessings were on my mind as I was decorating for Christmas. When living in

town, I had a cedar tree, holly bush, and a nandina to pick for decorations. Some early plantings on the land where evergreens, particularly to pick for Christmas. As I pondered ways to put these thoughts into a Garden Shop article, it occurred to me there are plants most anyone can add to their yard for Christmas decorations, even if the yard is small.

Dwarf burford holly (*Ilex cornuta*) is a great choice for sun. It will even do well in a fair amount of shade. It does not need a pollinator to have prolific bright red berries. Tags will say four to six feet tall and wide. It will get bigger than that but will take 20 years or more. I'm not one for planting something too big for the space thinking I can keep it pruned. But if you're going to use it for decorations, then pruning is done when cutting for decorations. A cedar tree (*Juniperus virginiana*) may be tricky to fit into some landscapes but it could be put at a back corner instead of typical evergreens. This native is great for birds, giving shelter and food, grows rather fast, and tolerates most any conditions. In a shady garden, they will grow sparse. At least six hours of sun

is best. Cedar trees will grow large. Limbing them up will help with small spaces. Again, decorating and pruning at one time. And that smell! Any garden has room for a boxwood. These used to be on my list of wouldn't plant if someone gave it to me but I've changed my mind. English boxwoods are the ones that do not smell good and they are prone to blight and a few other diseases. Japanese boxwoods (*Buxus microphylla*) will grow about four to six feet tall and wide but it will take many years. They bronze some in winter but that color may fit in with gold colors of Christmas decorations. American boxwoods (*Buxus sempervirens*) are another option. They will eventually grow large and grow faster than the other varieties. They will also grow more draping and less formal if left to grow naturally and will tolerate some shade.

In the picture, berries are burford holly. Greenery is cedar and pine. Gold is Japanese boxwood bronzed from cold weather. Bright yellow is Whoa Nellie holly. Spikes are dried okra pods painted gold. Plant some of these this winter and you'll have greenery for next year.



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Delinquents

BY RICH OTTER
Pillars of the community? Just consider a few of the devious and mischievous doings those icons of the community were up to in their younger years.
Even Christmas did not escape misdeeds. Bob Hill described a youthful indiscretion committed innocently after a request from the First Baptist Church for him to fetch a Christmas tree. He obediently drove to a heavily wooded area bisected by a dirt path known as Kings Road where he spotted the perfect specimen, cut the beauty down and strapped it to his car's fender. His activity had not gone unnoticed. Suddenly there was the roar of a shotgun blast from up on the hill. He had been spotted by the King boys.
He leaped in his car and off he went, the King boys in hot pursuit in their A model Ford. With tactics reminiscent of white lightning runners he eluded his pursuers. But

conscience reigned. He confessed his foul deed to his mother who happened to know the King boys' mother. As had occurred with his narrow escape, he stayed just one step ahead of the law when Mrs. King graciously pardoned him and the church was granted the tree as a gift. (Replanting it had not appeared a practical alternative.)
A similar tale is told of an act by an individual who also surreptitiously harvested a tree for Christmas. He failed to notice he was followed home. The next morning he discovered a tree had been severed in his front yard. Biblical retribution - a tree for a tree.
It has been rumored such Christmas occurrences may have given birth to the Crime Watch program.
Speaking of trees, there was the gumdrop tree the principal at North Fant Street School, Miss Ettie Davis, made from a plant with leaves removed that had little



stickers decorated with gumdrops. One day after school Robert Gallant happened to be sitting beside the tree when Miss Ettie left the room. Certainly a couple of missing gumdrops wouldn't matter. But she went out a second time and Robert again succumbed to temptation. "I kept on eating those gumdrops," he confessed, "until finally the tree was

almost bare." He was invited to remain after school every day for about a week, but not near the gumdrop tree.
Arthur Klugh and other kids would go up in the then North Anderson woods with liquor bottles they collected as targets for their .22 rifles. Many bottles had a little liquid remaining in the bottom and they consolidated it. They knew better than to drink the concoction (Arthur claimed) and poured it into a duck and chicken watering area behind Dr. Harris' home. "The ducks and chickens evidently liked it. They were falling all over the place." Dr. Harris arrived home and exclaimed, "What the hell is going on with all my ducks and chickens?"
Those who weren't delinquents sometimes just weren't very wise. Jimmy Young (later Dr.) was raking leaves with some of his pals at his home. He was about 10 and was

captivated by stories of Peter Pan and even then wanted to be a pilot. The leaves were piled near their barn. The kids went up on the barn roof and he suggested they jump off into the leaves. The others declined but Young threw caution and himself to the wind. He later claimed he would have made it except there was a little ice on the edge of the roof which "spoiled my take off." He broke his right elbow. One of the boys went to Young's mother in the house and inquired if he could borrow the car. She asked why and was told to take her son to the hospital.
Bill Prevost spoke of his grandmother's 1929 Chevrolet. When she learned to drive and wanted to stop she would pull back on the steering wheel and whisper "Whoa." Since she obviously preferred four footed transportation, Bill and Johnny Holman were allowed use of the car. They strapped a chair on the front bumper and created "our famous death ride. You'd get into the chair and put one arm around each headlight and take off." As his grandmother would say, "He's just going over Fool's Hill, and it's a long way down the far side."
Imagine, those people all became community leaders. Good grief!



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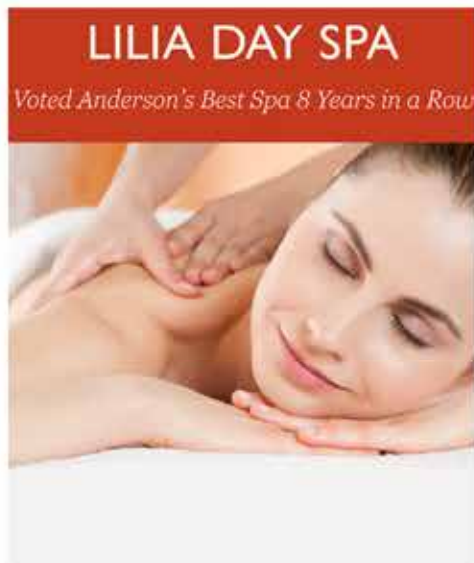
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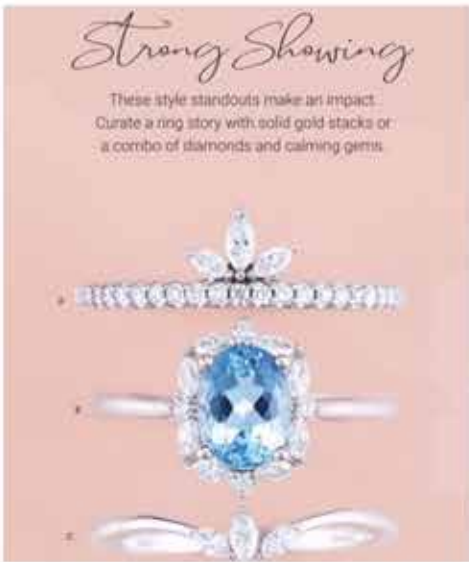
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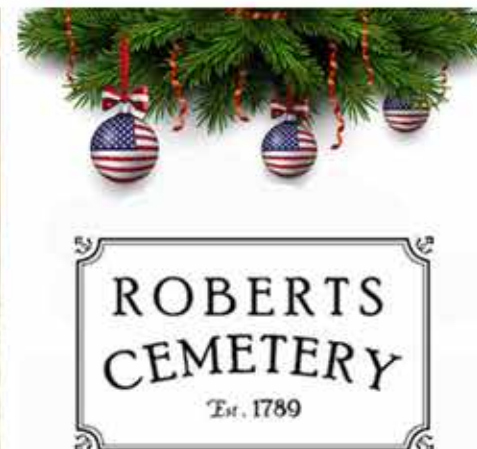
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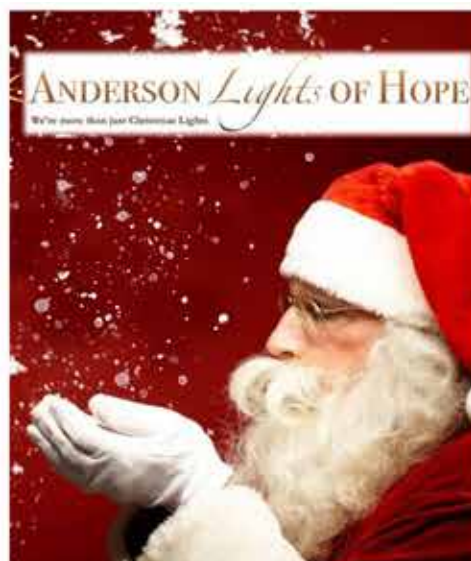
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A CHRISTMAS STORY

This is the fifth Christmas I have spent with y'all through The Electric City News. Not once have I waxed mushy or cheesy. With that in mind and owning to the fact that we are citizens of a Judeo-Christian nation, the birth of the Christ child is truly the reason for the season. So here is the first mushy Christmas article.

Little Joey is my main player with Sport and, of course, the Christ Child who makes it all possible. I have never understood the dog names of my boyhood. Bingo, Buckshot, Spot, Rover, etc. My grandchildren's dogs are named Miles, Hunter, and Morrison. There is a dog named Marley next door and a Dachshund named Albert who often walks by my house. So we go back to my childhood and I give you Sport, because everyone wants to be a sport.

Sport was Joey's dog. We will call him Joey because a boy who loses his dog at Christmas could not be named anything else. As fate

would have it Sport absconded from Joey's house at the corner of Oak and Elm just before Christmas. So, Joey faces a bleak bleak Christmas.



Jim Fraser

After frantically searching all the streets of Mt. Utopia on his 1936 Schwinn bicycle, Joey discovered Sport at, of all places, Cyrus Skinflints pet shop.

Sport, on display in the front window, looked sad and morose.

"Thank you for finding my dog," Joey said.

Mr. Skinflint replied, "If you are talking about that mutt kid, it will cost you \$8.50."

Everyone knows 'ol Skinflint had cobwebs in his brain, bilge water in his veins, and a sole devoid of compassion. But \$8.50? C'mon man!

"But Mr. Skinflint?" Joey protested. "Sport is my dog, I bought him once."

Mr. Skinflint replied, "\$8.50 kid, and you are beginning to annoy me so let's make it \$9.00!"

Completely dejected and subdued Joey leaves the pet shop.

"Where will I get \$9.00?" Joey opines.

Now this is where "writer's license" comes into play. I do not have to belabor with the various and sundry ways that Joey got the \$9.00. All I have to say is Joey got the money, returned, and repurchased Sport.

He pays 'ol Skinflint and as he leaves the pet shop, holding Sport in his arms, he said, "I know you are mine now little fella. I have now purchased you twice."

So that is the basis for Christmas. Any Western Christian Civilization country believes in the birth of the Christ child because he bought us twice. All the theology

and dogma revolves around the that central truth. We are made in God's image and were blessed beyond belief. But because we were unloving, unforgiving, and unrepentant, God had to buy us again, this time with a ghastly death.

The Christ Child reminds us at this time of year of this fact. You know the story. The teenagers Mary and Joseph traveled the 90 miles, he walking and she riding side saddle on a lowly donkey, to consummate the world's first and only immaculate conception. Thirty years later this Christ Child would purchase us again making all who believe, like Joey and Sport, we were bought twice. Have a Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas.

Jim Fraser was the athletic director and head football coach at T.L. Hanna High School from 1968-1985. He was also a full time member of the faculty who taught U.S. History.



Secret Santa

Christmas Eve. I had just come from Sears on Main Street with my grandparents where I had been next in line to talk to Santa, but chickened



Neal Parnell

out at the last second. They understood my fear and told me that Santa knew what I wanted for Christmas, and not to worry about being afraid to sit on his lap.

Light snow and sleet started falling on the way home, and I was worried about Santa not knowing what I wanted for Christmas. My Grandparents house was less than a quarter mile behind the Grants store in Watson Village, and I knew Santa was there too. There was a path that led to the back of Grants I had travelled many times. I mustered up my 'talking to Santa courage', and off I went. It was cold, and the snow was coming down harder, and I couldn't believe what I was seeing on the loading dock behind Grants.

It was Santa and one of his elves smoking cigarettes and passing a bottle between them. "Hey Santa!, what-cha doin' back here!?" The cigarettes dropped and the bottle disappeared as

he said, "HO!, (cough), HO! HO!, I'm waiting for my reindeer".

"What's that you were drinking Santa?"

"Oh that's just some Jolly Juice my friend Elfie #1 brought me from the North Pole, and what are you doing back here sonny?"

"I came to tell you what I wanted for Christmas." I then saw a twinkle in those red eyes and he said, "Well, come on up and let's hear." Elfie #1 pulled up an old crate and Santa sat on it and patted his lap to motion me up. Santa's breath smelled like peppermint candy and tobacco as he asked my name and what I wanted for Christmas. I said, "My name is Neal and I want a Stingray bike with a banana seat and a sissy-bar".

"HO! HO! (cough) HO!, and where do you live Neal?"

I said, "I thought you knew," but remembered I'd be at my grandparents this year, and pointed to the roof that could just be seen from there. Then Santa said, "Can you keep a secret Neal?"

I said, "I think I can, why?"

He says, "I'm not supposed to be seeing kids back here, so let's not tell anyone what you've seen either, ok?"

I said, "Sure Santa", and was on my way back down the frosty path.

I was up early that white Christmas



morning, but there was no bike in the living room, and I thought about that secret. But then, I looked out the window, and there covered in snow, was a Stingray Bike. Everyone in the room said, "Bike?" And I heard whispers about who had bought a bike for me. I put on my shoes and coat and stepped outside to see and ride it. I brushed the ice and snow off the seat but it was too frozen to ride. I took it into the covered porch to thaw, and everyone was still looking like they'd seen the ghost from Christmas past. There was a card hanging from a string on the handlebars. I opened it and read only one word, SANTA.

All the adults thought the other had bought it, but no one would claim the purchase. "I've kept your secret for as long as I can, SANTA."

Find the magic

"City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style, in the air there's a feeling of Christmas..." —Silver Bells

It's important that we continue to find the magic of Christmas, even during



Katie Laughridge

these different times we are in. In my previous article, I wrote about traditions you and your family could take part of in your homes. Below I have listed some things you can do in our very own community! Personally, I am looking forward to spending some time with my little family during the winter holidays embarking on some of these adventures. Maybe I'll see you there!

In your community:
♦ Visit "Holiday Ice" at

Wren Park to go ice-skating together as a family.

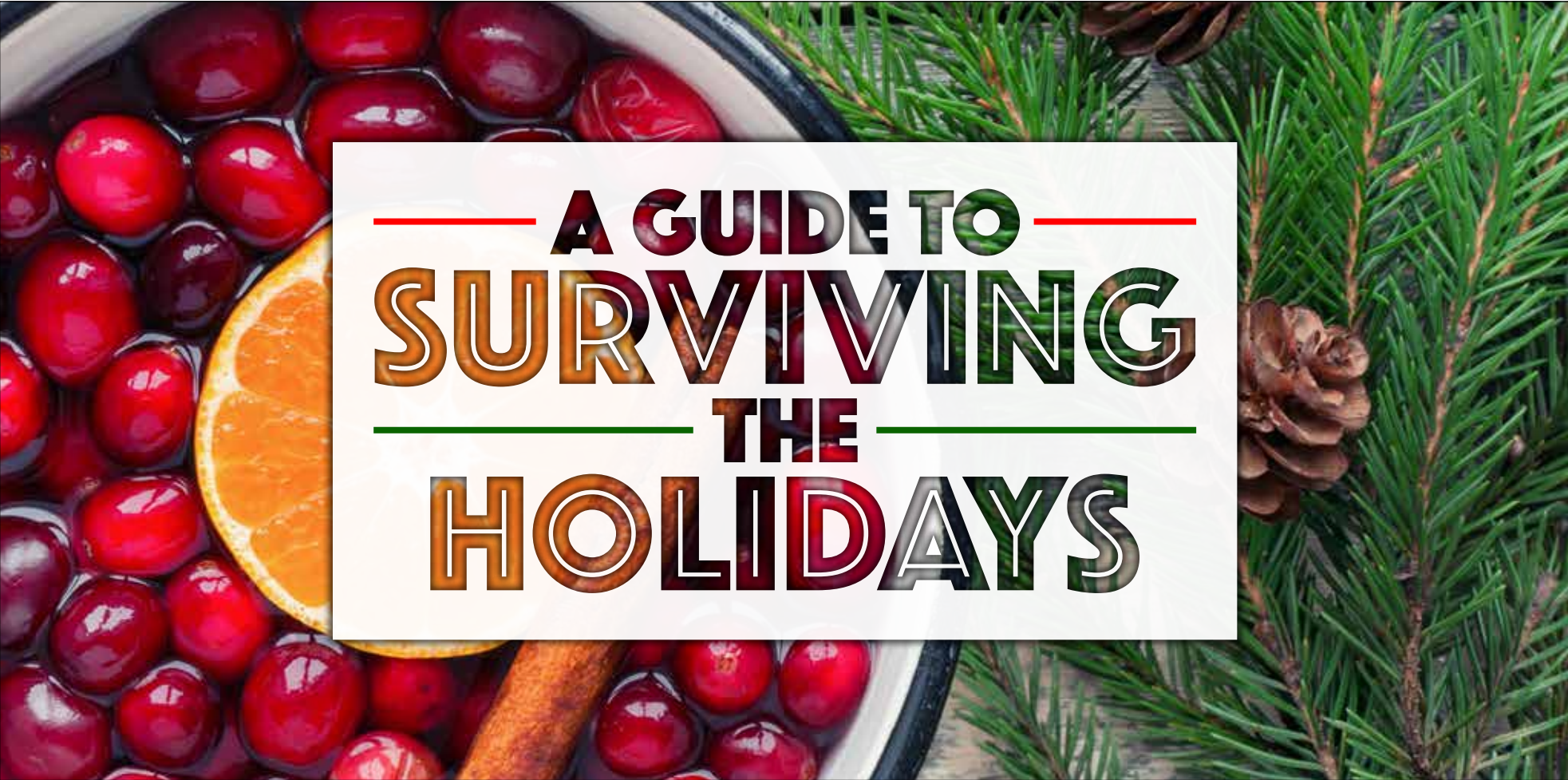
♦ Get hot chocolate at Figgs Beanery and Creamery and walk around downtown Anderson while you look at Christmas lights or check out The Market Theatre's production of the Storefront Storybook. Pages of the book are posted in windows along Main Street, and the book comes to life in a read-along podcast.

♦ Have your whole family put on pajamas, go by Dunkin Donuts to grab some munchkins, then drive around Lights of Hope and neighborhoods in our area looking at Christmas lights! You could even leave a note in mailbox at your favorite lights display telling them how much you enjoyed theirs!

♦ Go to the Anderson County Library and check out some Christmas books to read together.

♦ Stop by Michaels and pick up some "do-it-yourself" ornaments.

I hope you will enjoy the holiday season with your loved ones!



Here are 10 tips on how to survive the holidays.

BY PAMELA BROWNSTEIN

10. Use social distancing to your advantage. Just like the office Christmas party, avoiding large gatherings could work to your favor during the holidays, especially when it comes to seeing your in-laws or enduring obligatory Christmas dinners with family members you'd rather not be reminded you're related to. Using the coronavirus as an excuse not to get together — is anyone really going to argue with you about that? (If they do, then you know you're making the right decision to stay away!)

9. Let it go. Elsa's epic song still rings true, especially when it comes to letting go of extra clutter and stuff in your house. While you are likely getting new gifts for your home (either clothes or appliances or outdoor gear), this is the best time of the year for cleaning out closets and garages and purging stuff you don't need or use anymore.

8. Don't talk politics. This guideline applies especially if you know you lie on opposite sides of the political spectrum from your family members. Nothing you say

will change the other person's mind about their political affiliations and long-held beliefs, so it's best to avoid the topic all together. Does this mean you should stop paying attention to local politics or ignore national news that will impact the lives of so many Americans? Of course not. You can still stay informed about the political process without having to argue with your drunk uncle about the results of the latest election.

7. Offer to help. It's easy to feel helpless when there are so many in need throughout your city and state. Where do you even start to help those who have lost their jobs or homes due to COVID-19 shutdowns? You can only give what you are able, but that doesn't mean donating thousands to a national charity. You can make a difference in small ways, like taking in your neighbor's trash cans or writing a letter to an old friend and thanking them for always being there for you during the hard times of your life. Offering your time to assist underprivileged kids or giving financial resources to a struggling nonprofit, this is the season to look beyond yourself and lift up those around you, in whatever way you are able.

6. Relish your time. If this year has taught us anything it's that we



Connect with kids and family and make the most of your time together.

shouldn't take things for granted, especially our health and our freedoms. If you are fortunate to find all your friends and family faring well, that is much to be grateful for in this season that has impacted so many lives amidst a global pandemic. Make the most of your time to connect with loved ones, and be sure to take time for yourself, to find what makes you happy and allows you to decompress and re-center in order to be your best self for those

you love most and rely on you for warmth and security.

5. Try something new. We're not talking about anything life-altering here. It could just be a new recipe for a festive cocktail, at least you can say you ventured out of your comfort zone and embraced a new experience (even if it is Peppermint-flavored vodka instead of regular vodka). Listen to a new band or read a non-fiction book instead of a fiction



Cleaning and decluttering your home is one way to survive the holidays.



Practice self-care and don't get too stressed out during the holidays.

book. Or if you're feeling adventurous, sign up for an online class or plan a trip to a place you've never been. Learning new skills and expanding your perspectives are traits that never grow old.

4. Get back to basics. Technology has helped so many people survive the shut-down and stay connected with others and be engaged during remote learning. But with no school during the holidays and more time off for many parents and adults, now is an ideal time to take a break from technology and commit to spending time face to face. It's not easy! Parents are just as guilty of spending too

much time on social media as teenage boys who spend the whole day gaming on Xbox. There's bound to be pushback against technology-free time, but have a plan for what to do to get back to basics that everyone in your family will agree to. Whether it's board games (like Sequence or Trivial Pursuit) or outdoor activities (such as tennis or fishing) or making a difference (donating to a food pantry or organizing a coat drive), the memories and genuine interactions will be worth it.

3. Take a hike. Literally. As cliché as it sounds, getting out and enjoying the outdoors

is a great mood booster and such an easy way to re-set and refocus. Whether walking your dog around your familiar neighborhood route or exploring marked trails through Sadlers Creek State Park, there are ample opportunities to reap the benefits of fresh air and the beauty of nature. Bonus points for being basically free and the original method of social distancing. If you start to feel confined or limited by being inside with the same people during the holidays, discover a refreshing change of scenery right outside your front door.



Get out and enjoy the fresh outdoors this holiday season.

2. Don't go overboard. The holidays are a time for honoring traditions and spending time with family and friends. But between decorating your house inside and out; finding the right gifts for everyone on your list — including teachers, bosses, mail deliverers and bus drivers; writing cards; making cookies; planning the perfect Christmas dinner; attending holiday events; not to mention working, cooking, cleaning, and all the other daily tasks it takes to keep a household afloat — it's no wonder people are stressed out this time of year. Focus on what matters and be realistic about your time. You might want to make a homemade wreath out of magnolia leaves and fresh greenery from your tree, but will you really have time to get this done in addition to all the other chores and jobs you need to do before the Big Day? (In my case, the answer was no. I collected all the material, but it's still all sitting on my back porch. So much for my festive DIY determination!) All the Pinterest ideas in the world won't matter if you are stretched thin and don't have time to enjoy what really mat-

ters — like seeing your kids' faces light up on Christmas morning.

1. Ring in the new year like never before. If ever there was a year that we are happy to put behind us, watching 2020 dissolve into the past should be celebrated like nobody's business. That doesn't mean throwing a giant New Year's Eve bash as in days of yore! Instead, it means blowing noisemakers in your living room or banging pots and pans in your front yard or counting down the ball dropping at midnight at the top of your lungs. As individuals and families and communities, we need to loudly declare the end of this crappy year and look to the future together with the hope and promise of a new and better year.



Let's ring in the new year and say good riddance to 2020.



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NIBBLE & SIP

On NYE, there's a whole lotta shakin' goin' on

Which holidays went off normally this year? Well, there was New Year's Day. Valentine's Day was good. Yep, that's the whole list.



Kim von Keller

Ever since March 1st, we've had to figure out new ways of celebrating. St. Patrick's Day was a six pack of beer and a corned beef sandwich. Easter baskets were filled with colorful new facemasks. We grilled with our neighbors on the 4th of July... staying in our own yards and waving over the fence. Whose kids wore Haz-Mat suits as Halloween costumes? Everybody's! Thanksgiving guests were so few that the leftovers were still around at Christmas.

But to paraphrase Scottish warrior William Wallace, you can tell 2020 that it may take my Arbor Day, but it will never take my New Year's Eve!

That's because on December 31st at my house, I'm gonna have a whole lotta shakin' goin' on.

I don't mean dancing; one trip to an emergency room during the pandemic was enough. Instead, I'm going to be shaking up some cocktails. I love the sound of a champagne corks

as it pops out of a bottle, but other than sleigh bells, there's no more festive sound than that of ice as it rattles and crashes in a cocktail shaker. And the cocktail that involves the most shaking is that New Orleans icon, the Ramos Gin Fizz.

The Ramos Gin Fizz was created in the Big Easy in the late 19th century. The story is that once the ingredients were assembled, a series of boys took turns shaking them, each passing the shaker to the next when his arms grew tired. And while that would violate 21st century child labor laws, the proper ingredients and some intentional shaking produce a delicately flavored drink with a beautifully creamy foam.

To go with our fizzes, I'll be whipping up Crab Spread NOLA. It is true to the origin of the drink, and crab always seems like a celebration, even if the celebrants are wearing pajamas and watching TV. But however you choose to celebrate, I'd like to wish you a safe, healthy, and Happy New Year!

Ramos Gin Fizz

1 ½ oz. gin

½ oz. lemon juice

½ oz. lime juice

1 oz. simple syrup

2 oz. milk (yes, milk)

2 drops orange flower water (available on Amazon)

1 egg white

3 oz. chilled club soda

Put a highball glass in the freezer to chill.

Combine gin, lemon juice, lime juice, simple syrup, milk, egg white, and orange flower water in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Secure the lid and shake for as long as you can; the more you shake, the more foam you create. Strain into the prepared highball glass and top with chilled club soda. Serves 1.

Note: If you are allergic to eggs or doubt the safety of raw egg white, you may omit the egg white, but your fizz will lack the foam.

Crab Meat NOLA

½ c. mayonnaise

1 T. minced parsley

1 T. capers, drained, rinsed, and chopped

1 ½ t. dry mustard

1 ½ t. prepared horseradish

1 T. chopped pimento

½ hard-boiled egg, finely chopped

¼ t. lemon juice

1 c. lump crab meat

crackers, to serve

In a small serving bowl, thoroughly mix the mayonnaise, parsley, capers, mustard, horseradish, pimento, egg, and lemon juice. Gently stir in the crabmeat, and chill, covered, for an hour. Serve with crackers.

2021 fashion

We can all agree that 2020 has been a downright bizarre year. I personally can't wait to see the clock strike midnight. I know we'll still have trials and tribulations no matter what year it is, but this one needs to go.



Kristine March

So for now, what are we going to wear for New Year's Eve? If

you're having a small gathering of six or just your family on the sofa you can still look the part. Any excuse to dress up is fine with me because I literally have gone to the bank and grocery store this year. That's it. Oh, and the dry cleaners. Sorry, how could I forget that exciting venture?

Anyways, add some glimmer to the den and pop some champagne. If you want to go comfortable or shabby chic add some chunky jewelry to a sweater and big earrings. Do your hair half up half down and curl it. I have also discovered something extremely amazing during 2020. A manicure at-home. Kiss nails have become my thing this

year. They're so easy to apply, affordable and much safer than going to the nail salon. My sister got me hooked on this product. They're right at ten dollars with tax and they even have a pedicure you can apply as well. You can get them at your local CVS or Walgreens. They last about a week and look so gorgeous. All shapes and all styles.

If you want to accessorize for NYE but are on a budget like me, Target has really lovely dresses and amazing coats. They also have blouses that look straight off the runway. If you want to splurge, Karl Lagerfeld has designed some ultra fabulous handbags and you can get those at Dillards. He has a rose gold one that is stunning and I may treat myself. Who knows.

If you don't feel like dressing up, you can always do your makeup for the occasion. Add some glitter or shimmer to your eyes. I'm addicted to Stila glitter and glow liquid eyeshadow in the color Kitten Karma. It's lightweight and so effortless to apply. You will be shiny and shimmery and feel beautiful.

Dance the night away and make the hallway your runway. Have a great New Year's Eve and always remember that kindness matters. Happy 2021 y'all.



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