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Monthly

Wichita Falls Welcomes Seniors on Electric Bicycles

Read story on page 2

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Wichita Falls Welcomes Seniors on E-bikes

Story and photo by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

August's cycling mega event, Hotter'N Hell Hundred (HHH), named the nation's best road cycling event in America last year, allows seniors to explore their new Electric bicycles' capacity for extended fun. Wichita Falls event organizers are happy to provide them equal access, only asking them to be careful.

Long-time HHH organizer Chip Filer says they do not mention e-bikes in their extensive documentation of the ride. The event invites their owners to participate with the caution that he expects those riders to be careful at the start and around the rest stops. He warns seniors not to let their powerful e-bikes slip out of control.

"With our aging population we are open here at Hotter'N Hell to accommodating cyclists who are switching over to e-bikes," Filer said in a phone interview. "Again, we just need them to realize those e-bikes can present control problems if the riders are not vigilant."

Since the Southwest has experienced hotter-than-usual temperatures in June, the Hotter 'N Hell 100 on August 23 in Wichita Falls, Texas, may see temperatures exceed its namesake. The main event sees more than 10,000 riders that Saturday, while the inspiring and challenging bicycle events

span four days from August 21st to the 24th. Named the USA Today Readers' Choice for Best Road Cycling Event for 2024, this year the 44th-anniversary HHH was only second in the voting.

For the e-bike crowd, the event offers the most robust set of offerings in America. Most importantly, the four-day extravaganza of cycling is just a two-and-a-half-hour drive from OKC. The driving distance to Wichita Falls is 140 miles using I-44 through Lawton.

Many seniors have found that the surging-in-demand e-bikes are great for allowing them to ride more and farther than they usually do. "Bicycling Magazine" rates 16 of them for their performance, value and ride quality in their June issue. Readers can observe how seniors are turning to cycling more with the help of a little electricity and a significant amount of money.

As the largest mid-summer century ride in the nation, the HHH is not just a ride; it's a unique spectacle that fosters a strong sense of cycling camaraderie. Participants, united by their love for cycling, brave the August heat in one of the best-supported bicycle rides, attracting over 13,000 riders and sometimes even more for the full four-day extravaganza.

Electric pedal-assist motors reduce the physical effort required to ride and are surging in popularity, making the sport less physically demanding while still offering fresh air and fun for the careful rider.

With e-bikes now more accessible than ever, riders of all fitness levels can enjoy the freedom, confidence, and pure joy of cycling. They offer a way to celebrate a shared passion for cycling as a testament to the strength of the cycling community.

Seniors are buying high-end and fully enclosed gearbox units—like internally geared hubs except mounted at the bottom bracket. This means the bikes do not initially appear to be e-bikes.

The four-day HHH event is a vibrant hub of activity, with more than 100 committee members and over a thousand volunteers working tirelessly to ensure a seniors' experience is unforgettable. From the largest bicycle consumer show, featuring 50 booths showcasing the latest innovations and major manufacturers, to the myriad of other attractions, including a spaghetti dinner and a pre-ride breakfast buffet, there's something for everyone.

The HHH website Hotter'N Hell offers plenty of info to help riders plan their adventure and make the most of their time at the event. The HHH stands out for its unwavering commitment to safety and support, making it our country's most robust century ride. They execute a comprehensive safety plan, including medical support and Support and Gear (SAG) assistance throughout the courses.

The 32-page Official HHH guide, available on the website, shares information that allows riders to focus on the ride and the fun, knowing they are well taken care of in any emergency. The event also offers shorter-mile courses with spacious rest stops for safety and comfort.

Don't let the 100 miles in the event name intimidate you. Several Oklahoma City seniors have done the 100 K ride on their E bikes and found it so much fun that they are planning on doing the same this year.

The ride is designed to be inclusive, offering shorter-mileage courses with spacious rest stops for safety and comfort. You will be welcomed with open arms, regardless of your experience level or age.



This group of riders training for the HHH on June 25th includes a senior in an all-red jersey at the front-center, who will be doing his second straight 100K this year at the event on his e-bike.

See RIDE Page 4

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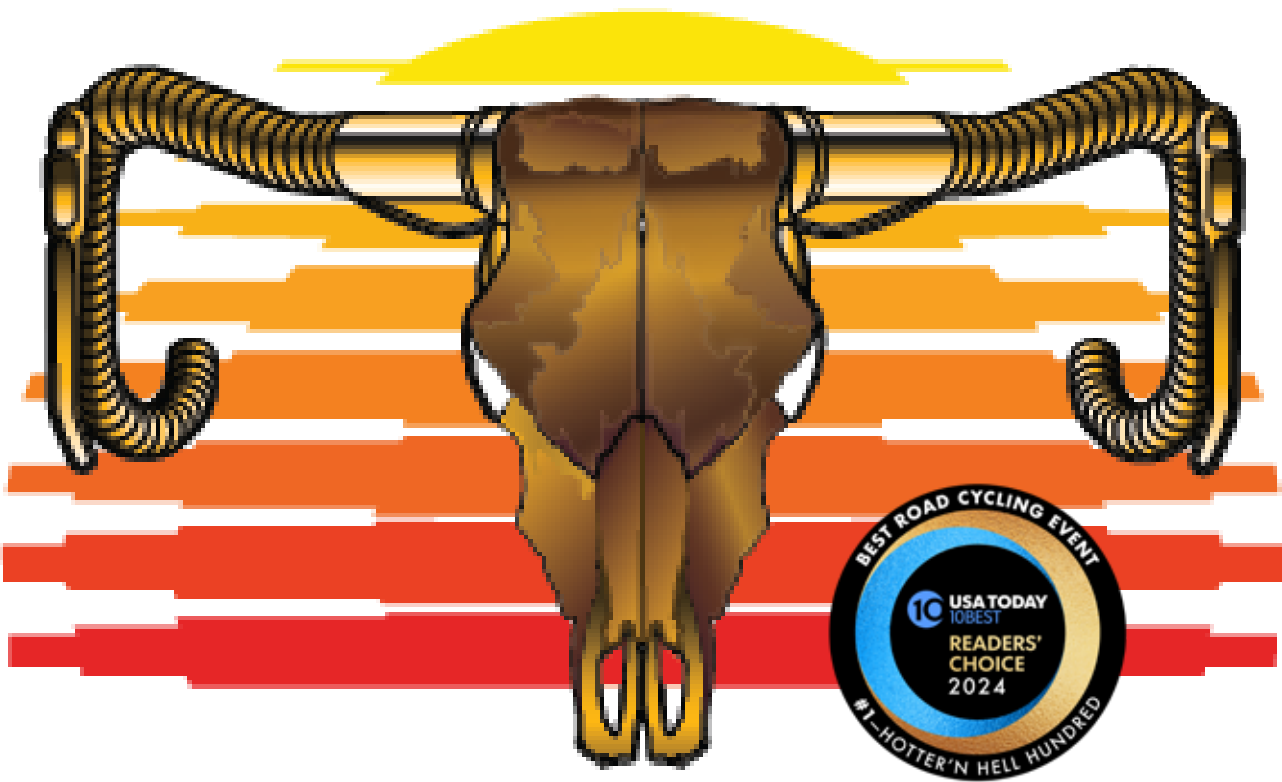
RIDE Continued from page 2

The event provides tent camping nearby, where riders stay in tents the Friday night beforehand. The Kay Yeager Coliseum has showers near the start/finish area for riders to use before heading home. This convenient option helps riders feel fully immersed in the experience, thanks to well-maintained facilities.

Whether they are a seasoned pro or a young enthusiast, there's a distance for everyone — from the challenging 100-mile route to the 10 K and 25-mile options for younger riders. This is not just a ride; it's a journey of personal achievement and camaraderie, where riders can push their limits and discover new strengths, earning a profound sense of empowerment and accomplishment.

Beginning Saturday at 7 a.m., cyclists of all ages and experience levels can embark on the classic HHH endurance ride of many distances.

The start of the ride is a highly anticipated event, staged with those riding the longest distances at the front. For some people, the start is a party where they line up and meet with friends, beginning as early as 5 a.m. for the 7 a.m. start. This early start time allows participants to beat the heat and enjoy the ride at their own pace.



The start is lively and exciting, with the National Anthem, a U.S. Air Force Fly Over, and a cannon blast marking the riders' beginning on journeys of 10K – 25-mile – 50-mile – 100K – 75-mile and 100-mile rides.

For those riding the middle distances, the start is just as exciting. Many say to

experience the excitement of starting a major organized ride, the best place to see it is at the HHH.

No matter how far seniors ride, it is about the camaraderie of riding along with thousands of other bicyclists who enjoy their lifelong sport. Cycling offers a tremendous health benefit without the overuse injuries associated with many other endurance sports.

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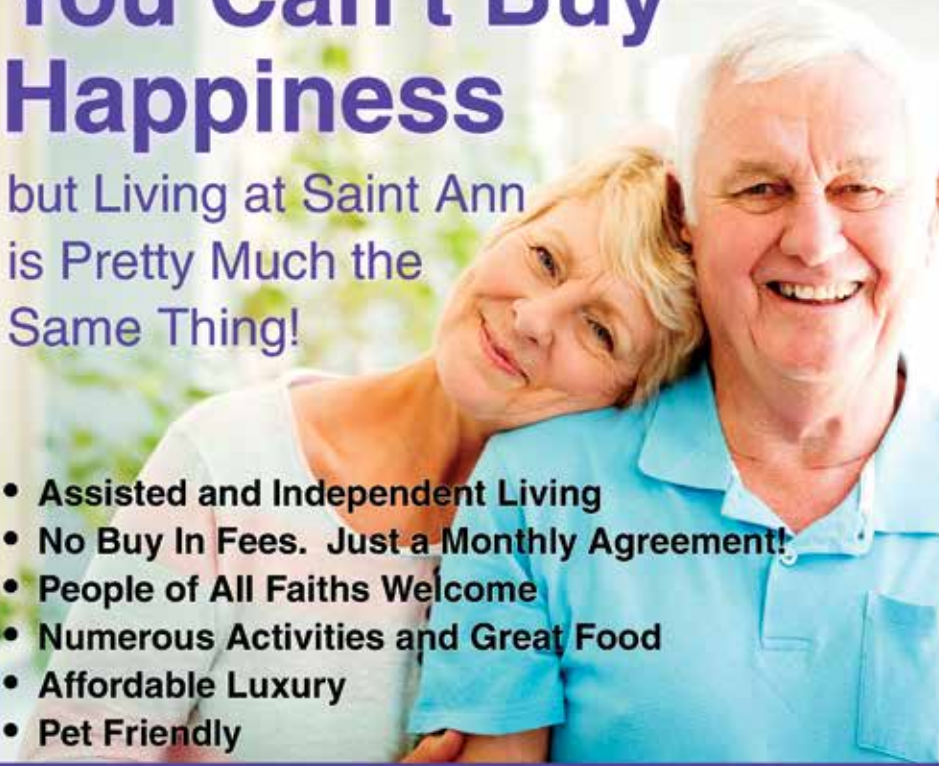
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Adventurous Life Reviewed in Books

by Van Mitchell, staff writer

Richard T. Russ has lived an adventurous life from being an airline pilot to aerospace engineer to entrepreneur and author.

Russ is the author of three books and 41 magazine articles.

His latest book "Life's Adventures," is about a young person that was an underachiever in high school that matured into a rocket system engineer in the launching of the historical Saturn V rocket that took Apollo 8 thru Apollo 11 astronauts into outer space and enabled Apollo 11 astronauts to land on the moon.

Russ said his novel provides readers with continuing episodes that scholastically that some may have considered him as being a non-achiever to his careers that offered him the opportunity of becoming a history making engineer and entrepreneur.

"To be honest with you, every day's been exciting because there's always something going on," Russ said, who lives in Oklahoma City.

Russ graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1962.

"In 1962, my goal was to fly for the airlines, and I had an offer to work in 1963 for Continental in Los Angeles as a flight engineer, and went to work for them," he said.

Russ later took a job with North American Aviation Space and Information Systems Division, a NASA program.

"It was exciting because my job specifically was the stage pressurization and ground pneumatics, and I provided all of the pressurization for the Saturn and then, of course, the ground pneumatics to operate all the pneumatic systems," he said.

Russ later received an opportunity to return to Oklahoma to work as a project engineer for Aero Commander in Oklahoma City.

"I talked to my wife and she, being from Oklahoma, she would like to come back, so we came back to Oklahoma," he said. "I came here, and it was a great job here as a project engineer for Aero Commander."

He later went back to California to work for North America Rockwell and later finished his aerospace career as the Senior Engineer on the Space Shuttle Enterprise Approach and Landing Test to later become a successful entrepreneur.

"We had a small aircraft company here at Wiley Post Airport," he said. "I designed a door seal for general aviation and got that patented. We shut down the company after Covid, and then I started marketing that door seal. We had 140 different models that we certified with the FFA. At that point, a company came along out of Houston and said, 'We want to buy your company.' It was an offer that we could not turn down, and we could take care of ourselves for retirement, and so we sold the company."

Russ then got into restoring older Jaguar vehicles, and his restoration work won several national judging contest awards.

His success with that caught the eye of Jaguar officials.

"My first book was at the request of Jaguar to write a book on the Series Three Jaguar E type," Russ said. "They asked me if I would write a judge's guide for them for competition, and so I said, 'I'll be glad to, and I did.'"

Russ's inaugural publication, titled "Jaguar V12 E Type: A Guide to Authenticity," aims to assist Jaguar E-Type sports car owners in restoring their vehicles to the prestigious standard of 100-point Concours d'Elegance winners.

Russ then followed up with his second book titled "They Call Me Tammie," which is about the life of a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel to be enjoyed by both young and old.

"I wrote a small children's book based on the day in the life of

our dog Tammie through her eyes," he said.

Russ said he does not have plans to write a third book.

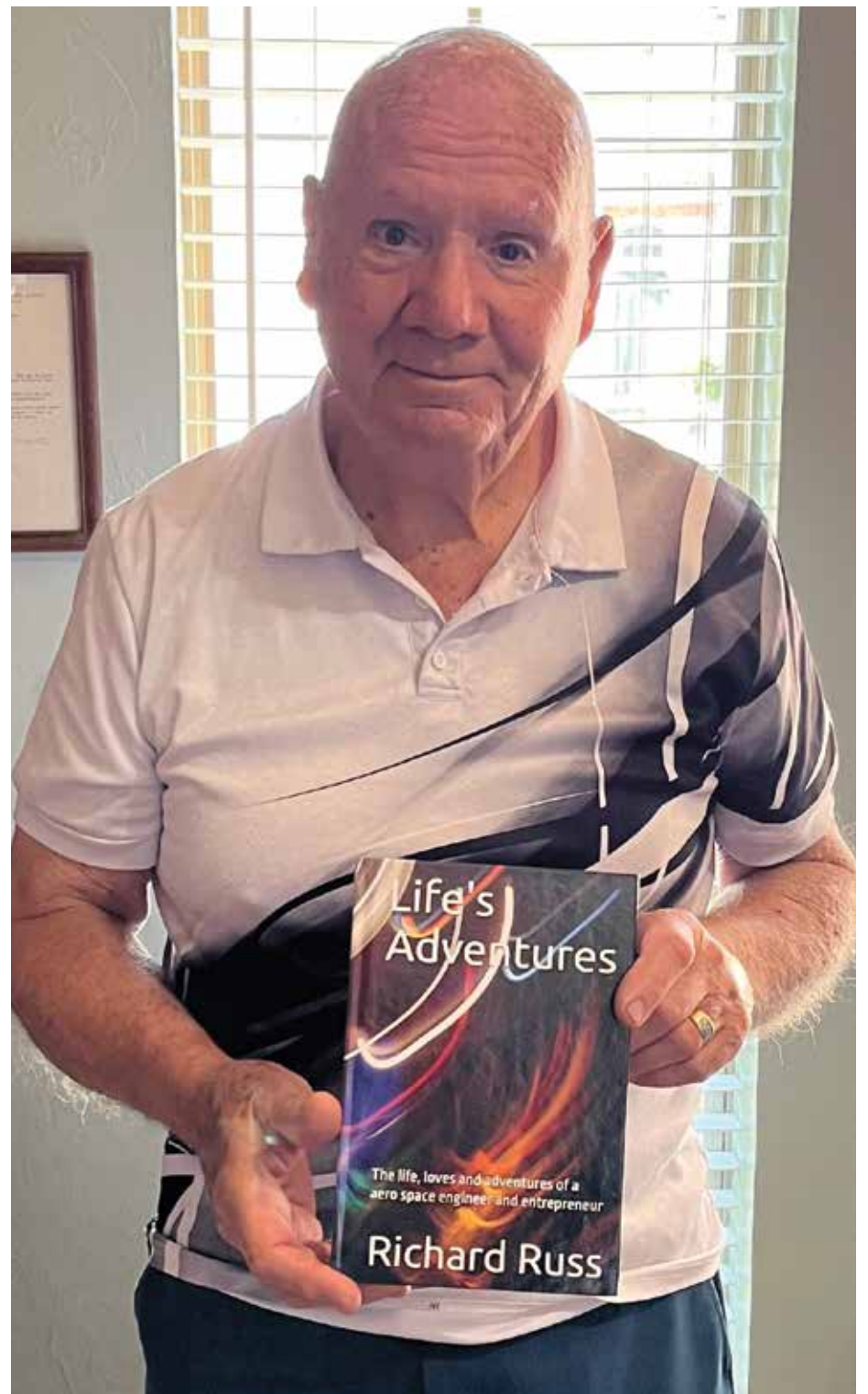
"My wife has asked me not to. She said because it is so time-consuming when I was writing and she didn't want that (again)," he said.

Russ is still busy with a variety of projects including helping design/fix model airplanes.

"There's a model airplane with which I am helping. I got in my model airplane to shop over here (in house)," Russ said. "I'm so busy doing things and my days are always involved."

Russ mentioned that he was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time when opportunities presented themselves.

"I've just been in the right places at the right time and doing things I wanted to do," he said. "There are some things a lot of people just dream about doing and I've gotten to do them in my life."



For more information about Russ's books visit www.amazon.com.



Higher Ground

By Jim Morrison

How to Catch a Monkey

Monkeys are nimble, quick, very alert to motion, and most sensitive to smells. They are excellent climbers and can swing from limb to limb with the greatest of ease. This makes them hard to catch by normal means. But sources tell me there is a simple way that will work most of the time. First you find a jar with an opening just wide enough to allow a monkey to get his open hand through. Then place a banana in the jar. Bury the jar and with the opening just level with the ground. The monkey with his keen sense of smell will find the jar and with delight will place his hand inside the jar, holding the banana in his clenched fist. But alas! He cannot get his fist out of the jar without releasing his prize. So he clings to the banana and is so entrapped that he is easily secured. So, you might try that the next time you try to catch a monkey.

The prophet Isaiah, preaching to the people of Judah, warned them of God's judgment if they did not release their hold on their idols and godless lifestyle. "Woe to the obstinate people, declares the Lord, to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my spirit, heaping sin upon sin." Isaiah 30:1

I have paraphrased and personalized this verse as follows: (God says) hard times and shame will come to those who are stubborn, hard-headed, and strong willed. If you reject my plans, doing what you want to do, thinking you have a better idea, you are headed for trouble. If you reject my counsel, thinking, "I don't need God," and join with those who think like that, you just heap up a mountain of sin which will only bring shame to your name. Then I reflect on this in prayer; "Lord, there are times when I don't listen to you, when I want to do my thing. Please forgive me and teach me that my greatest joy and satisfaction in life comes when I recognize your Lordship and seek to follow your counsel. Help me to always remember that to fear You is the beginning of wisdom. Amen."

I'm afraid there are times when I am like that monkey, refusing to turn loose of that which I prize and Satan captures me. It may be something as simple as an attitude. "I have a right to _____. {You fill in the blank.}" "I want to win," be it an argument, a game, the applause of man, building an empire, etc. It may be anything that keeps you from a life goal of knowing God in all His fullness. It can be lonely. Ann Graham Lotz describes it this way. "The journey of obedient faith has for me at times been a long walk in the same direction with nobody." But Michael Card says, "It's hard to imagine the freedom we find from the things we leave behind."

Isaiah had hard things to say to his people in warning them of judgment to come. Yet he could not leave them without hope. In Isa.30:30 he says, "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!"

May we all learn to trust Him, turn loose of that which traps us, and run with patience the race set before us. Jnm77@att.net

Jim served as Director of the Baptist Student Union at Southwestern Oklahoma State for 37 years. After retiring he served as chaplain of the Custer County Jail for twenty years, and a local truck stop as well. He writes a religious column for two local newspapers. He currently lives in Weatherford.

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Artists Interpret Vintage Antiques into Original Art

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor



Booths and items at 3 Strands Vintage Antique Mall in OKC.

Oklahoma's most-viewed artist, legendary muralist and former University of Central Oklahoma art professor Bob Palmer, 74, is offering a one-of-a-kind opportunity for artists. This innovative event will not only provide a competitive platform for artists to showcase their work but also increase their visibility in the art world. It's a chance for seniors to see the talents of Oklahoma's artists in a whole new light.

On Friday, July 11, 10 artists will gather at 3 Strands Vintage Antique Mall, a 35,000-square-foot complex located at 4848 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. Their mission is to create top-voted art using items available in the mall as the event runs from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on July 11 and 12.

"It is not every day seniors get to witness artists creating, so this should be a special two days," Palmer said. "The best part, aside from witnessing artistry in person, is that each voter can provide feedback on the brilliance being created in front of them by voting on the top three new pieces."

These 10 artists will have the rare privilege of competing as they create new artworks using items selected from a vast array of unique and timeless treasures thoughtfully displayed across the vendors' booths in the well-curated complex.

"Here at 3 Strands Vintage (Antique Mall), we are so excited to host this event," said Cindy Gardner, mall owner. "All of our vendors spend so much time curating their inventory and can't wait to see it come to life." The mall is one of the largest of its kind in Oklahoma. Its massive size has drawn vintage enthusiasts and collectors alike. Mall management assures the competing artist that there will be plenty of objects they can interpret into their art pieces, well within the price range of the sponsorships outlined in the contest.

"It is novel and new that Oklahoma artists and sponsors are invited to apply to participate in a new form of art competition event," Palmer

said. "The artist's mission is to reinterpret classic items of existing craftsmanship and artistry into new works of art. Mixed-media seen with new eyes as a novel assemblage can create stunning pieces, telling a story while providing new texture, dimension, color, and patina."

The objects the artists will interpret will be available from the mall's stock to spark the creativity. This opportunity to compete in the event is open to beginners and advanced mixed-media artists. Regardless of their age, skill level, or preferred medium, they will find exciting opportunities to increase their visibility in the art world. This event is designed to be inclusive, welcoming all artists and art enthusiasts to participate and enjoy the creative process.

Seniors are invited to watch the artists and vote on the top three creations. They can also take advantage of food trucks in the parking lot. Live music will be offered throughout each day, creating a vibrant atmosphere that ensures everyone feels engaged and part of the artistic process. This event is not just a showcase of art, but an interactive experience that encourages everyone to participate and engage with the artists and their work.

One of the local television network's affiliates has already promised to attend both days to capture the artistry for segments to air later that evening on their broadcasts.

The artists will have two days to create their interpretation of what "art" means to them using the vast variety of items available in the trendy booths of the well-curated mall. Depending on the size and medium, some artists will work inside, while others may create in the parking lot. Artists may bring mobile workshops if they plan to create art from their items in the parking lot.

Each artist will solicit sponsorship from an individual or team of their choice. Seven of the artists who have applied to compete have

See ART Page10

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ART Continued from page 8

already secured sponsorship. Those sponsors will have the first right of refusal to purchase the artist's creations, but the artist will set the price of each item.

If the artist determines that their creation is of more value than the sponsorship and the sponsor declines the first right of purchase, it will be available for sale to the public.

Sponsorships will range from \$500 to \$1000. Half of that amount will go to the artist, while the sponsor is rewarded with the work that the artist creates. The other half will be used to purchase items needed for the new artwork from vendor booths and a designated charity. This is a unique opportunity for sponsors to support local artists and receive a one-of-a-kind piece of art in return.

While watching the artists create art from objects that might have been considered single-purpose for decades, the voting process will be simple and accessible, encouraging everyone to participate.

Each visitor will receive a ballot upon entry, and they can cast their vote for their favorite artwork at any time during the event. The ballots will be tallied on Saturday, the 12th, to determine the winners.

Additionally, some of the funds will support the artists who receive the most votes from the public. The ballots tallied on Saturday, the 12th, will determine the winners, with the first-place artist earning \$300, the second-place artist \$200, and the third-place artist \$100.

The creative energy and excitement in this interpretive showdown should be palpable! All this artistic activity will likely inspire the public with countless ideas on how to create art from repurposed items

of great sentimental value to previous generations themselves.

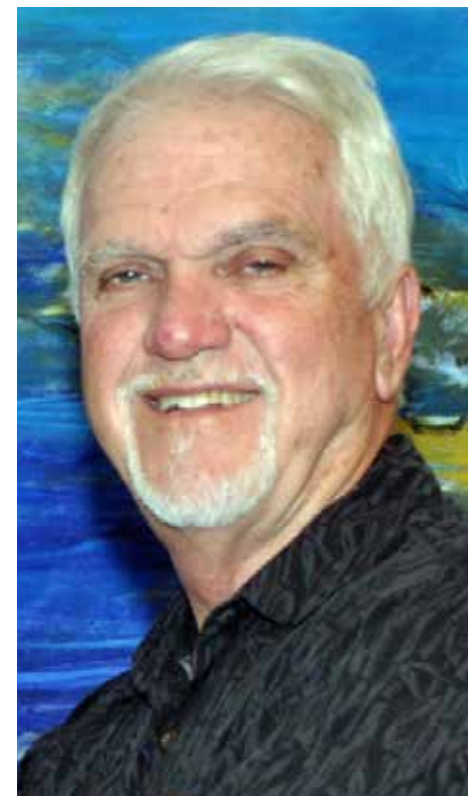
Seniors will be free to interact with each artist throughout the two days. They can ask questions about inspiration, form, function, design, and color. This unique opportunity may inspire budding artists to try this mixed-media art form for themselves.

"This new type of competition is aimed at celebrating not just the artists' talents but also the vibrant arts culture within Oklahoma, encouraging everyone to partake in the joy of creativity and innovation," Palmer said.

Local YouTube videographer Lawrence Ross will capture a YouTube treatment of the artistic process as it progresses.

Again, seven state artists have already secured their sponsors and signed up, so those seeking those last three opportunities need to contact Palmer through his website: MURALS BY PALMER - Mural Artist Dr. Bob Palmer.

His hardback coffee table book "Painting Oklahoma and Beyond," with 500 photos of his murals, is found at: Available Illustrated Books - Oklahoma Books Online



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OPINION



Dear Savvy Senior

Who's Eligible for Social Security Disability Benefits?

What do I need to do to get disability benefits from Social Security? I'm 60 years old and have a medical condition that doesn't allow me to work at my job anymore, but I've read that getting disability benefits is very difficult.

Need Help

Dear Need,

Getting Social Security Disability Insurance benefits (SSDI) when you're unable to work can indeed be challenging. Each year, approximately 2 million people apply for SSDI, but around two-thirds of them are denied, because most applicants fail to prove that they're disabled and can't work. Here are some steps you can take that can help improve your odds.

Are You Disabled?

The first thing you need to find out is if your health condition qualifies you for Social Security disability benefits.

You generally will be eligible only if you have a physical or mental impairment severe enough that it prevents you from working in your current, or past line of work, for at least a year.

There is no such thing as a partial disability benefit. If you're fit enough to work part-time, and you're earning more than \$1,620 (\$2,700 if you're blind) a month on average in 2025, your application will be denied. But, if you're not working or are working but earning below those limits, your application may be considered.

Your skills, education and work experience are factors too. Your application will be denied if your work history suggests that you could perform a less physically demanding job that your disability does not prevent you from doing.

To help you determine if you're eligible, use the SSA Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool at SSAbest.benefits.gov.

How to Apply

If you believe you have a claim, your next step is to gather up your personal, financial and medical information so you can be prepared and organized for the application process.

You can apply either online at SSA.gov/disability or call 800-772-1213 to make an appointment to apply at your local Social Security office, or to set up an appointment for someone to take your claim over the phone.

The whole process lasts about an hour. If you schedule an appointment, a "Disability Starter Kit" that will help you get ready for your interview will be mailed to you. If you apply online, the kit is available at SSA.gov/disability/disability_starter_kits.htm.

It currently takes six to eight months from the initial application to receive either an award or denial of benefits. The only exception is if you have

a chronic illness that qualifies you for a "compassionate allowance" (see SSA.gov/compassionateallowances), which fast tracks cases within weeks.

If Social Security denies your initial application, you can appeal the decision, and you'll be happy to know that roughly half of all cases that go through a round or two of appeals end with benefits being awarded. But the bad news is, with a huge backlog of people waiting, it can take another eight to 10 months or longer to appeal the decision, and another 15 months to get a hearing if reconsideration is denied.

Get Help

You can hire a representative to help you with your Social Security disability claim. By law, representatives can charge only 25 percent of past-due benefits up to a maximum of \$9,200 if they win your case.

It's probably worth hiring someone at the start of the application process if your disability is something difficult to prove such as chronic pain. If, however, your disability is obvious, it might be worth initially working without a representative to avoid paying the fee. You can always hire a representative later if your initial application and first appeal are denied.

To find a representative, check with the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (nossr.org) or National Association of Disability Representatives (nadr.org). Or, if you're low-income, contact the Legal Services Corporation (lsc.gov/find-legal-aid) for free assistance.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

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AARP Oklahoma Applauds Passage of Anti-Fraud Law to Protect Against Rampant Cryptocurrency ATM Scams

A new law to curb the growing threat of cryptocurrency ATM fraud is now law in Oklahoma. Authored by Sen. Darrell Weaver, R - Moore, and Rep. Mark Lepak, R - Claremore, Senate bill 1083 introduces vital consumer protections to help prevent Oklahomans, especially older adults, from falling victim to cryptocurrency ATM-related scams, also known as digital asset or bitcoin kiosks.

Cryptocurrency ATMs look like bank ATMs and allow people to conduct legitimate cryptocurrency transactions. However, they can also be used to carry out fraudulent activity. Scams involving cryptocurrency ATMs are on the rise. In 2024, the FBI logged more than 10,956 complaints nationwide about these kiosks, with \$246.7 million stolen. Oklahomans alone lost \$37.7 million to cryptocurrency-related scams, including scams related to cryptocurrency ATMs.

“Older Oklahomans should not have to worry about criminals stealing the savings they worked so hard to accumulate for retirement,” said AARP Oklahoma Volunteer State President Charlie Swinton. “This legislation provides common-sense protections that will help prevent criminals from using cryptocurrency ATMs to steal from unsuspecting residents, especially older Oklahomans who are often targeted.”

Senate Bill 1083 provides numerous safeguards to prevent criminals from using cryptocurrency ATMs to steal, including:

- Imposing daily transaction limits to avoid potential risks associated with higher transactions.
- Posting fraud warning notices that are visible and identifying steps people should take if they suspect fraudulent activity.

- Clearly displaying terms and conditions before a transaction, including any fees and the exchange rate.
- Giving receipts with relevant transactional information, which allows law enforcement to investigate immediately.
- Providing a refund for new customers who are victims of fraud if they report it within 14 days of the transaction to the police and kiosk operator.
- Requiring digital asset kiosk operators to refund kiosk fees for fraudulent transactions related to fraud.

Authorizing the Oklahoma Banking Department to require licensure in the state of Oklahoma; oversight of complaint activity and revocation of operator licensure if operators are subject to two or more consumer complaints related to fraudulent transfers that are not reimbursed.

“This bill is an important step in safeguarding our residents and ensuring that digital assets empower, rather than endanger, our citizens,” said AARP Oklahoma Advocacy Director Joy McGill. “AARP applauds our Oklahoma legislature for taking bold action and standing up for consumer safety.”

AARP Oklahoma partnered with the Oklahoma Bankers Association and had the endorsement of the Oklahoma County Sheriff Tommie Johnson and the Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Department to gain passage of Senate Bill 1083. The bill will go into effect Nov. 1, 2025.

Melanie A. Henry, 918.402.6666, mhenry@aarp.org

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Virginia Buel

(Right) Virginia Buel turned 100 on July 17th! In her century, Virginia has lived through many memorable changes such as electricity coming out to the farm where she grew up and the moon landing. Her words of wisdom that she shares with us today are: This, too, Shall Pass and Take it One Day At a Time and Don't Give Up. Welcome Virginia to the Centenarians of Oklahoma Hall of Fame!



Arvella Wilson

(Right) Arvella Wilson recently turned 102. She is a WWII veteran and served in the Army Nurse Corps as a Second Lieutenant stateside. She is a member of the Centenarians of Oklahoma. Arvella is in a nursing home in Purcell and her son says she's doing pretty well. Happy birthday, Arvella, and thank you for your service



June Hall

(Left) June Hall of Perkins, recently celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. Surely the party was as awesome as her previous celebrations. For her 90th birthday, June asked for a new push lawnmower. She rode a wave-runner in Florida at the age of 91. Her favorite food is chicken and favorite song is What a Friend We Have in Jesus. June's words of wisdom for us today are: Try to Be a Good Example for your Children in All That You Do.



Alta Piearcy

(Left) Happy birthday to Ms. Alta Piearcy, the oldest resident in Warner, who recently turned 103. Thank you to Warner High School (Mr. Hummingbird) for honoring Ms. Alta. She is an inspiration, walking her lil dogs daily, regardless of the weather. Her life experiences are truly remarkable.

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3 Kansas Bike Trails

By Marise Boehs

Last month I had the chance to visit a couple of my happy places.

I left Norman shortly after lunch on a Thursday and drove to Wichita - a relatively quick and easy drive. The sun was still high in the sky and I was checked in to my favorite riverfront hotel. Rolling my bike down to the Arkansas River Trail, I pedaled away down the trail.

I always ride first towards “The Keeper of the Plains” monument because it makes me happy and the sight never gets old.

Friday morning, I was on up the Interstate to Ottawa. This town in the Flint Hills is a perfect spot to stay for a couple of days of bike riding as it is in the middle of the Flint Hills Nature Trail and a trailhead for the Hall of Fame Rail Trail, Prairie Spirit Trail.

Flint Hills Nature Trail and Prairie Spirit Trail are both dirt trails through trees and prairie and farmland with an abundance of peaceful nature and tranquility.



The trail is paved and probably 6’ wide. Bikers and runners and families with baby carriages all share the trail with the geese that live along the path. This time I was fortunate to see many families of young geese. They were very comfortable with being on the trail and some had an attitude as well, not really wanting to yield the path and daring me to mess with their babies.



I spent 3 days in Ottawa and rode Flint Hills twice and Prairie Spirit on Sunday morning.

Monday morning it was back to reality and I35 South. I have since been to Colorado to ride a couple trails there but am counting the days until I can get back to Kansas and these special places.



A B&B Treasure in the Heart of Medicine Park

by Vickie Jenkins, Staff Writer

Tucked into the scenic Wichita Mountains, Medicine Park is a hidden gem in Comanche County, just minutes from Lawton. This historic resort town offers a rare blend of natural beauty and vintage charm. Known as the gateway to the 60,000-acre Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge, it's the perfect place to relax, explore and reconnect with nature. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a returning guest, Medicine Park invites you to step back in time and experience the slower pace of life surrounded by natural wonder.

Medicine Park is famous for its distinctive red granite cobblestones, naturally formed stones found only in the Wichita Mountains. These cobblestones give the town its unmistakable look and feel, a sense of history and character that's hard to find anywhere else. Many of the original buildings, quaint shops, cozy cottages, and local cafes, are constructed from this unique stone. As you wander the winding streets, you'll find yourself captivated by the charm, friendliness and authenticity that defines the town. Wildlife sightings are common, and the birdsong and rustling leaves only adds to the magic.

Nestled in the heart of this charming town is the Blue-Eyed Coyote Guesthouse, a peaceful escape where history meets hospitality. Purchased in 2007 and lovingly remodeled, this turn-of-the-century Victorian home is Medicine Park's 'only' bed and breakfast. With its original 1907 Cobblestone structure, restored woodwork, and sweeping front veranda, it offers a one-of-a-kind stay full of character, warmth and comfort.

Inside, the home features three uniquely thoughtfully designed suites, each decorated with care to reflect a unique design ranging from vintage elegance to cozy simplicity, or artistic flair. One of the suites even includes a private Jacuzzi, offering guests an extra touch of luxury and relaxation during the stay. Soft linens, handcrafted touches and artistic details make each suite feel personal, inviting, and truly relaxing.

One of the most beloved features of the home is its stunning 125-foot covered wraparound veranda. This spacious outdoor haven offers guests the perfect place to unwind, sip coffee and take in the fresh mountain air. Each morning, breakfast is served on the veranda at several cozy tables, where guests enjoy delicious homemade dishes surrounded by birdsong, sunshine and friendly conversation.

At the heart of the Blue Eyed Coyote is its owner and hostess, Colleen Meridon, a retired nurse with a deep love for people, community and joyful living. She has lived in the home since 1980 and brings decades of care and dedication to every guest. Colleen has created a warm haven where guests feel truly at home. From the moment you arrive, you're greeted with heartfelt conversation and helpful insights about the area. Guests often gather at the tables on the home's charming wraparound porch, where breakfast is served outdoors. Surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature they enjoy not only the delicious homemade dishes but also the laughter and stories shared in the fresh morning air.

Beyond her talents in the kitchen, Colleen is a local treasure. She shares fascinating tales about the house's long history, local legends, and the best hidden hiking trails. Her guests often say the stories are as memorable as the meals. Her passion for Medicine Park is genuine and contagious, making her both a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide.



In addition to running the guesthouse Colleen teaches pottery in her on-site studio, where she guides others with encouragement and patience. Her days are joyfully full, raising chickens, tending her garden, antiquing, and working out regularly to stay energized and strong. She also hosts a variety of events in her home, from tea parties and birthday gatherings to bridal and baby showers and even small wedding receptions.

Colleen truly lives to make others happy, and her vibrant personality, unwavering positivity and heartfelt hospitality have made the Blue Eyes Coyote Guesthouse not just a place to stay, but an experience to remember. She is more than a hostess, she's the heart of Medicine Park's most welcoming retreat, where every guest arrives as a visitor and leaves feeling like family.

Adding even more charm to the experience is Duke, Colleen's loyal companion. At 11 years old, this loveable mix of Akita and Samoyed has become a favorite among guests. With his gentle nature and fully white coat, Duke is often seen lounging on the veranda or greeting visitors with a wag of his tail, adding to the warm welcoming spirit of the Blue Eyed Coyote Guesthouse.



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SNL TINSEL TOWN TALKS

John Doucette – one of classic film’s great character actors

By Nick Thomas

Released 60 years ago this year, “The Sons of Katie Elder” is often cited as a favorite amongst John Wayne fans. In addition to the delightful screen chemistry between Wayne and co-star Dean Martin as lead actors, the cast is littered with beloved classic film character actors including Paul Fix, James Gregory, Strother Martin, Rhys Williams, and John Qualen.

And John Doucette. With his deep, rich, distinctive voice and rugged features, Doucette was a prolific supporting actor in over 140 movies and even more television roles from the 1950s to the 1980s. Though he played a good-natured character in “Katie Elder” and his commanding screen presence made him a natural fit for roles like the town sheriff, a military man, or cop, he was also frequently cast in menacing henchman roles.

“He was kind of an intense guy, but sure was a neat dad,” said his oldest son, also named John Doucette, from his home in Los Angeles. “He could be very strict at home when it came to things like schoolwork, but he also had a wonderful sense of humor – having 8 children you’d have to! There was always something going on at home, a lot of socialization with people in and out, so growing up was quite an adventure.”

While the demands of his profession sometimes kept him busy at the studio for long hours or on location for weeks, John says his dad was a genuine family man.

“He was always right there with his video camera recording every event, whether it was my boy scouting, my younger brother’s football games, or my sister’s or daughter’s softball games,” said John. “When he was in Italy for several months filming ‘Cleopatra’ in the 60s, my mom and oldest sister – who attended school while there in Rome – went over to live with him. I have stills that the set photographer gave to my father while filming.”

But when in Hollywood, Doucette would hurry home, occasionally still in makeup. “I remember after shooting an episode of ‘Wagon Train’ where his character was whipped, he came home with all the makeup marks for the lashes still on his back.”

Unlike major box office stars who always commanded huge salaries, supporting actors made far less money. They made up for it, at least partially, by accepting numerous roles. In 1958, for example, Wayne appeared in just 3 films whereas Doucette is listed in over a dozen as well as more than 15 television appearances.

“That was fine by him, whatever came his way,” said John. “He was a true perfectionist and I remember going over lines with him because he would study diligently for every part, no matter how large or small the role. Supporting players are just as important as the main star because without them you don’t have a story. He really brought a lot to a scene, but then I’m a little biased! He was my dad and I loved him dearly.”



A still of John Doucette in Cleopatra from son’s collection.

Photo provided by John Doucette

The Doucette family still receives residuals from their father’s film and television work.

“It’s not a lot, but every month there are checks coming in and for Christmas it has always been distributed amongst the 8 children,” says John who is a trustee of that account. “He died in 1994 but to this day he’s still getting paid for all his hard work!”



John Doucette and toddler Johnny.

Photo provided by John Doucette

John Doucette and son John in 1976.

Photo provided by John Doucette



Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and has written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. His book, “Raised by the Stars: Interviews with 29 Children of Hollywood Actors,” featured a lengthy interview with June Lockhart talking about her father. See www.getnickt.org.

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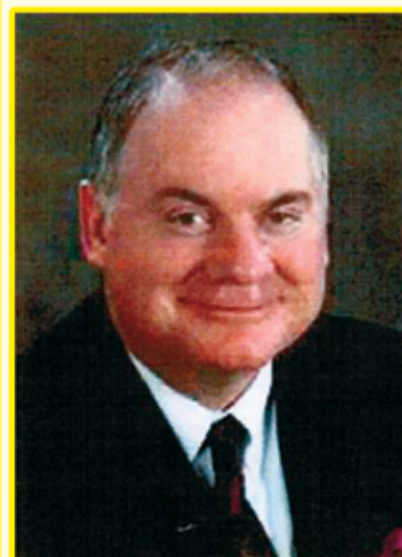


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SENIOR NEWS & LIVING

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"It was no way to live," she declares, "I was young and should've been living a bright, vibrant life. Instead, I was hopeless and felt like nothing would help me. Then I found acupuncture, and everything changed."

Soon after her incredible experience with the acupuncture, she made the life changing decision to abandon the family business and pursue her doctorate in acupuncture. "Acupuncture quite literally saved my life and I wanted to share that with the world," she proclaims. "This is why I often refer to my practice as 'The Last Resort With The Best Results.' You've been everywhere else and been given the same disheartening prognosis, prescribed the same medications and told, 'you're getting older' and 'this is just something you're going to have to live with.'" That has never sat well with me so I wanted to



offer people a real option for treatment and care."

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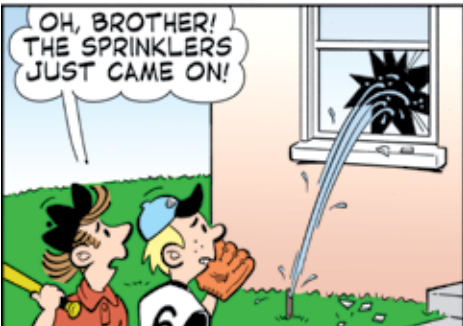
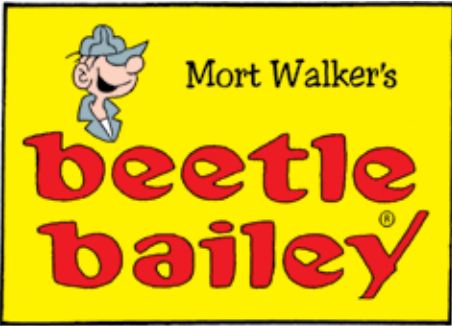
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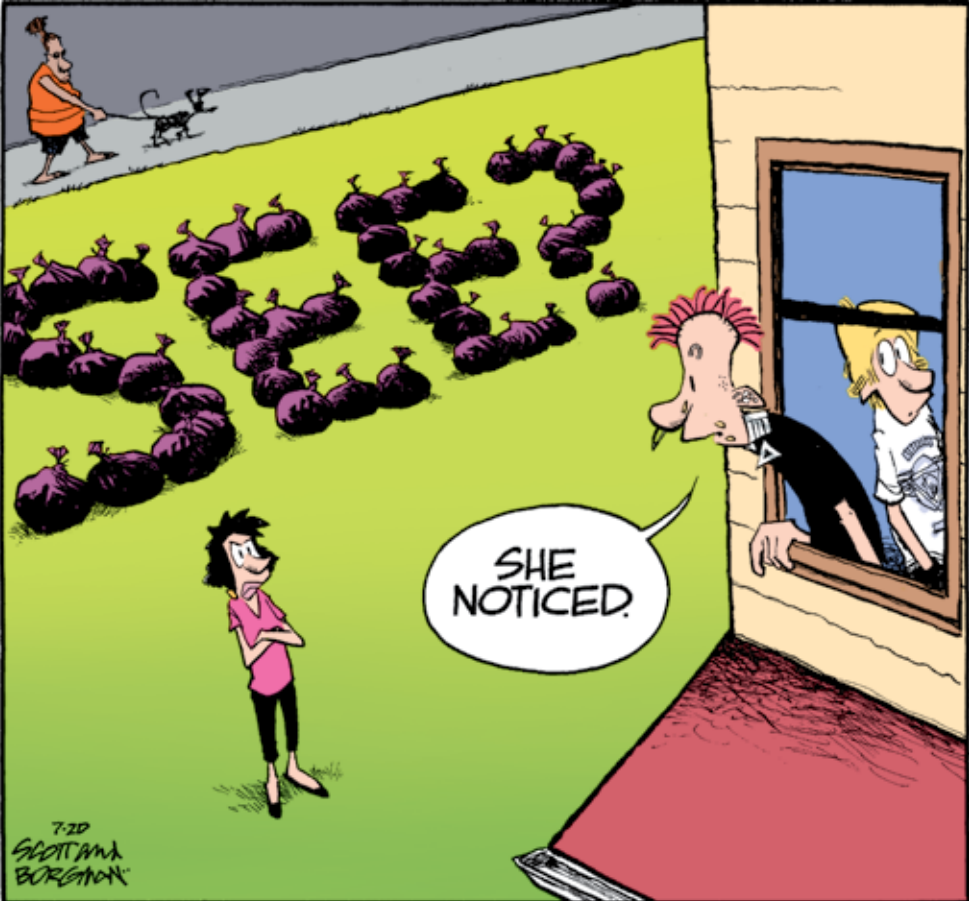
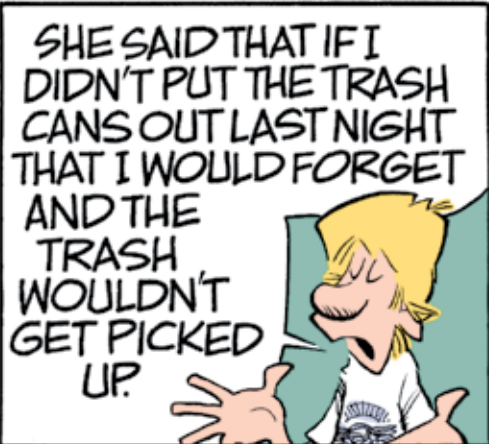
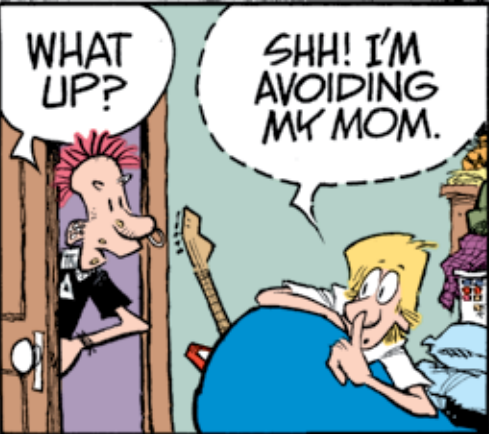
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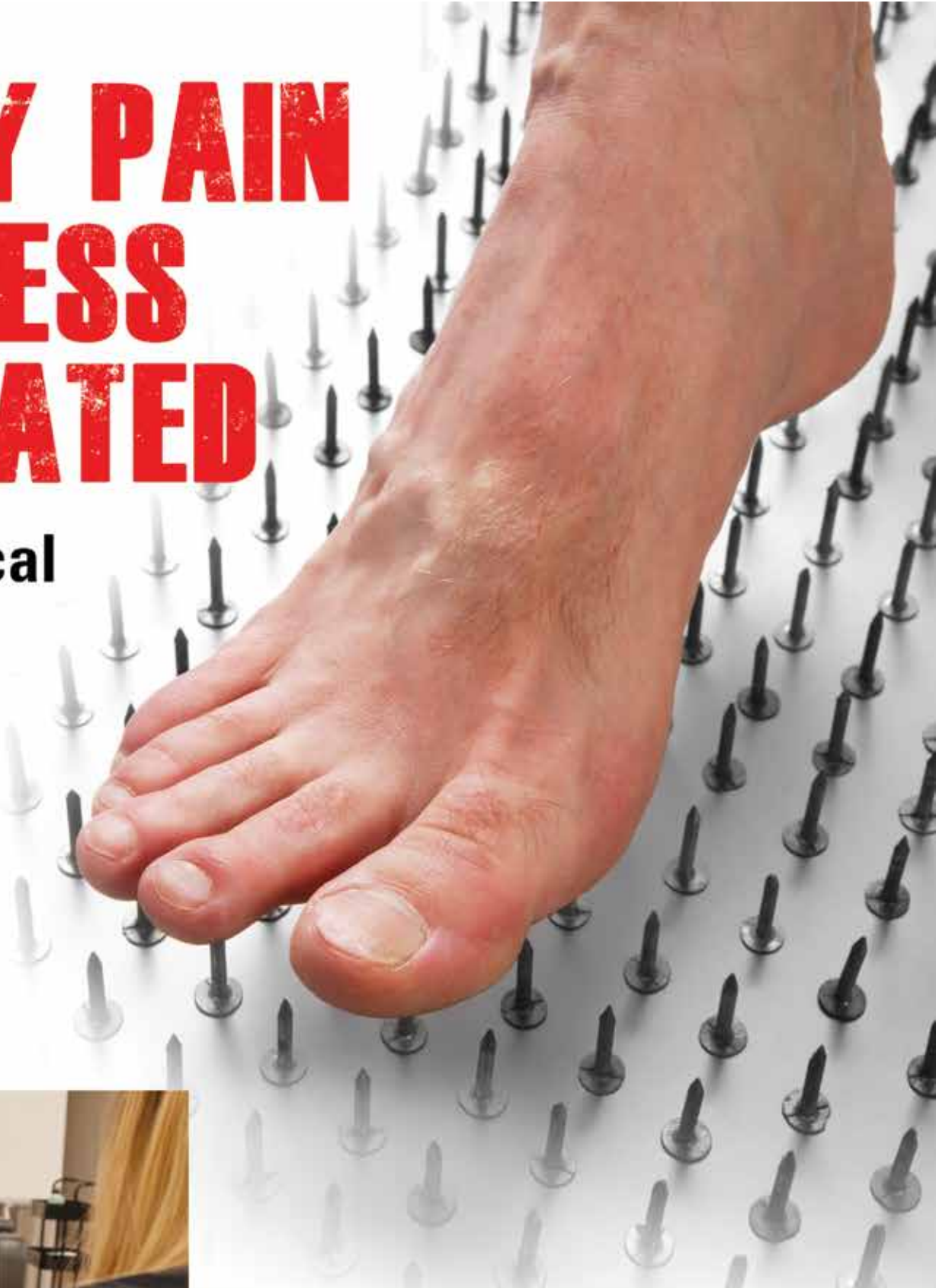
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