

PARENTS TALK BACK
Reconsidering organization

For some questions, you don’t really want answers.

Do we really want to know how and when we will meet our demise?

Or what others really think of us? And perhaps most unnerving: Where does all our time go?

We are a nation obsessed with time. We search for ways to maximize our productivity — to sleep more, to accomplish more — while stressing about ways to maximize our leisure — to sleep more, to relax and connect with others more. There are life hacks, parenting hacks and technology hacks, all promising ways to improve our efficiency.

Modern parents are a tribe of shufflers and schedulers, with our color-coded calendars and lists. My God, the lists. The current lifestyle affliction is organexia; you can never be organized enough! You may not feel entirely in control of your life, but you can channel those displaced control issues into hyper-organized systems and Pinterest projects.

Christine Linder, a St. Louis-based co-founder of grantmamas.com, recently co-published an e-book called “Are You Controlling Your Family’s Schedule, Or Is It Controlling You?” (\$4.99). The section on “How is your family spending its time?” begins by asking if you often feel “stressed and scattered, like you’re bouncing from one activity to the next — like a human ball in a pinball machine.”

Why, yes, there have been a few quarters spent in the Sultan arcade.

The manual advises estimating how many hours each member of the family spends at work or at school, commuting, running errands, cooking meals, involved in extracurriculars, you get the picture. There’s a worksheet with line items such as “watching television,” “chores” and “sleep.”

The manual suggests taking this exercise a step further, printing additional copies and asking each family member to complete a form.

“It’s fun to complete them as a family so you can discuss each activity,” the instructions say.

About as fun as a blindfolded sword fight in some homes, I’m sure.

Our perceptions of how we spend our time may be wildly skewed from reality. Linder, whose goal is to help mothers have better-organized lives and schedules so they can be more involved in their children’s schools, filled out her own “time spent” worksheet and shared the results with me. I wasn’t shocked by her findings.

“I spend a lot of time doing activities that I could cut back on or multitask or hand off for someone else in my family to deal with,” she said. In addition to working about 60 hours a week, she and her husband have a 2-year-old daughter.

“I didn’t have a lot of ‘me’ time,” she said. “I don’t have time to read. I found I didn’t have a lot of hobbies ... I didn’t have a ton of downtime. I was constantly filling my time.” She has attempted to change that by delegating a few chores and taking more hikes with her family.

“I’m still trying, let’s be honest,” she said.

Keeping detailed and accurate time logs, which seems to require even more work and honesty than a food journal, is a daunting prospect. But even the guesstimate activity proposed by this worksheet could be useful, if only as a reality check.

If you’re tired and feeling stressed, chances are good you’re doing too much and expecting too much.

There are 168 hours in a week. That sounds so concrete for something so ephemeral. If we can figure how many hours of that are devoted to various activities, it’s tempting to see how the numbers align with what we claim to value. But, there’s also a danger of realizing that the entire foundation of what we expect — time for working, time with our children, time with our partners, time for chores, time for friends and time for our own interests — is not compatible with the reality of how our society runs.

I’d like to try to log all my family’s hours for a week, but I’m scared of what I might discover. What if I discover I’m frittering too many hours aimlessly on the Internet? What if I’m not spending nearly as much time with my children as I think? What if there is an imbalance in the division of labor in this household? Perhaps I really don’t want to deal with the consequences of those answers just yet. Maybe the problem isn’t that we aren’t organized enough, but that the organization is too much.

Ben Westhoff, a writer with 7-month-old and 3-year-old sons, says it could be interesting to get a more specific idea of how he and his wife use their time. But he captured the truth of our fixation with time with his honest ambivalence about the idea.

“I’d like to get a handle on that,” he said initially, then considered it a hot minute longer.

“I mean, not really, but theoretically, yeah.”

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Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age while trying to keep up with her tech-savvy children. Find her on Twitter: @AishaS.



AISHA SULTAN
Parents talk back

Possible deal in Portland, Pabst brouhaha over iconic sign

By STEVEN DUBOIS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Portland has reached a possible settlement in its trademark dispute with the maker of Pabst Blue Ribbon, the beer rejuvenated by the city’s turn-of-the-century hipsters.

The disagreement stemmed from the brewer’s use of an iconic downtown sign to promote a 2014 music festival.

The large neon landmark, which boasts a stag and the words “Portland Oregon,” is considered one of the most recognizable features of the city’s skyline. The deer’s nose lights up red at Christmastime.

The city had denied Pabst permission because it doesn’t allow images of the sign to be used for products not available to people of all ages.

City attorneys say Pabst Brewing Co. then created a “confusingly similar” knockoff. In essence, it replaced the words “Portland Oregon” with “Project Pabst” and swapped out the stag in favor of a unicorn.

The City Council was to vote Wednesday on whether to sue Pabst. But the item was pulled from the agenda because of what Mayor Charlie Hales described as a potential settlement.

A city attorney and a Pabst representative did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

For those familiar with Portland’s storied social scene, the idea of the city suing Pabst is as unthinkable as James Bond ordering a stirred martini.

Pabst Blue Ribbon became



AP Photo/Don Ryan

This Jan. 27 photo shows the “Portland, Oregon” sign in downtown Portland. The city and Pabst are in a dispute over the brewer’s use of the iconic sign to promote a music festival.

synonymous with Portland in the late 1990s and early 21st century as a prominent subculture of young people embraced the working-class brand that had largely fallen out of favor with the previous generation.

The website promoting the 2015 Project Pabst music festival notes the connection: “We may have been established in Milwaukee in 1844, but it was in Portland that Pabst was reborn. Our love letter to Portland has been written in the stars for some time now.”

The sign, meanwhile, was installed around World War II and carried a variety of messages before “Portland Oregon.”

The city bought it in 2010 to thwart a controversial plan to change the slogan to “University of Oregon,” which is more than 100 miles south of Portland.

The city trademarked the image and for several years has charged those who want to use it for commercial purposes.

Maintaining the sign costs more than \$2,000 per month, and the fees defray some of the cost,

said Jen Clodius, spokeswoman for the city’s Bureau of Internal Business Services.

She said nearly 50 entities have paid, including the American Institute of Architects and the television show “Portlandia.”

The city has sent at least three cease-and-desist letters to companies using the image without authorization, including a recent one to ride-hailing company Uber.

Follow Steven DuBois at <http://twitter.com/pdxdub>

OUT OF THE VAULT

Grapefruit — it’s not just for breakfast any more



RENEE STRUTHERS
Out of the vault

What’s a bridge player to do when the latest fashions bare elbows that are discolored and flaky? Play on — with your elbows in grapefruit, of course.

An article in the Jan. 17, 1923 edition of the *East Oregonian* dispelled the notion that putting your elbows on the table was poor

manners, at least while playing bridge. But women despaired of having their bridge partners see their elbows at anything but their best. The humble grapefruit came to the rescue.

Someone discovered that the juice of grapefruit is softening and bleaching when applied to the elbows, and it worked so

well that a new fad started at bridge parties in Los Angeles. Each woman was supplied with a grapefruit, cut in half, in which they placed their elbows during the game. Juggling cards with elbows buried in the teetering fruit was a tricky business, but the fad caught on and many women began bringing their own towels

and goggles to matches.

Who knew that the delicious breakfast staple could double as a beauty product?

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Renee Struthers is the records editor and book reviewer for the *East Oregonian*. Contact her at rstruthers@eastoregonian.com

ODDS & ENDS

Crash on interstate caused by trucker pulling his tooth

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Alabama authorities say a tractor-trailer crashed on Interstate 20 because the driver lost control while he was pulling one of his teeth.

The Alabama Highway Patrol says the truck driver told troopers he had taken his hands off the wheel to pull a loose tooth when he wrecked near Tuscaloosa. The crash report states: “He had the tooth in his shirt pocket as proof.”

The tractor-trailer veered off I-20 into a ditch late Sunday and smashed into a tree. The crash shut down a stretch of interstate for about 11 hours until a single lane reopened Monday morning.

Authorities say the 57-year-old driver wasn’t seriously hurt. Al.com reports the Highway Patrol redacted the driver’s name from its copy of the crash report released to reporters.

Woman dials wrong number, offers detective drugs

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Police say a woman selling drugs made a big mistake that landed her in jail — she mistakenly called an Albuquerque police detective.

KOB-TV reports that 30-year-old Renea Lucero was arrested last week when she called the detective at his department-issued cellphone and made the officer an unexpected offer.

Court documents say the detective knew Lucero from a prior criminal case. But the report says he didn’t think Lucero realized who she had dialed.

The officer then set up a drug bust. The detective says Lucero pulled the heroin out of her bra during a sting.

Lucero was arrested on trafficking charges.

It was not known if she had an attorney.

Suspicious package at bus station filled with 1K condoms

NEW YORK (AP) — Police say a suspicious package left behind a concrete barrier of a New York City bus station didn’t contain any explosives but did have some unexpected contents — 1,000 individually packaged condoms for both men and women.

A spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey police said Saturday that a canine unit was called

Friday evening to the George Washington Bridge Bus Station.

Spokesman Joe Pentangelo says investigators with the help of the dogs checked out a silver messenger-style satchel that was left in the under-construction Manhattan depot. He says they cleared the bag of any explosives then looked inside to find condoms of multiple brands and styles.

He says no one has come forward to claim the bag and its contents.

Not so ‘Good to Go’ when man gets \$18,000 toll bridge bill

POULSBO, Wash. (AP) — A Washington state man says he just paid more than \$18,000 in bridge tolls for his son who crossed the 520 bridge daily for work but never got a Good To Go pass.

KING-TV reports that Tom Rose’s son thought he would be billed for the tolls and that he could pay later.

His son never received a bill. He learned the total of what he owed when he tried to sell his car: more than \$18,000. That’s \$1,360 in tolls and more than \$16,000 in penalties.

The department says they tried to bill Rose but their letters were returned. He will have to pay the tolls, but officials say they will try to work something out concerning the penalties.

KING-TV reports a lawyer has filed a class-action lawsuit against the department concerning its policies.

Monkey removed from home after biting banker

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A diaper-wearing monkey named Louie has been put into quarantine for 30 days after biting a San Antonio banker during an outing with his owner.

Officials with Animal Care Services in San Antonio say the owner faces fines of up to \$2,000 for having the year-old Macaque. San Antonio law bars primates within the city limits.

Agency officials say Louie was removed from a San Antonio home on Thursday. Officials say the exotic monkey was on a leash last week at a bank, but the owner allegedly allowed the animal to interact with the humans before the worker was bitten.

The owner has to pay for Louie’s month of care and testing for rabies.

Further details on the bank employee weren’t immediately available.

Man who lived modestly leaves millions in donations

BRATTLEBORO, Vt. (AP) — A man who sometimes held his coat together with safety pins and had a long-time habit of foraging for firewood also had a knack for picking stocks — a talent that became public after his death when he bequeathed \$6 million to his local library and hospital.

The investments made by Ronald Read, a former gas station employee and janitor who died in June at age 92, “grew substantially” over the years, said his attorney Laurie Rowell.

Read, who was known for his flannel shirt and baseball cap, gave no hint of the size of his fortune.

“He was unbelievably frugal,” Rowell said Wednesday. When Read visited her office, “sometimes he parked so far away so he wouldn’t have to pay the meter.”

The bequest of \$4.8 million to the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and \$1.2 million to the town’s Brooks Memorial Library were the largest each institution has ever received. Read also made a number of smaller bequests.

“It’s pretty incredible. This is not something that happens on a regular basis,” said the hospital’s development director, Gina Pattison.

Besides cash, Read had an antique Edison phonograph with dozens of recording drums that he left to the Dummerston Historical Society, Rowell said.

“It’s really a beautiful machine,” said the society’s president, Muriel Taylor.

Read was born in the small town of Dummerston in 1921. He was the first in his family to graduate from high school, walking and hitchhiking about 4 miles each way from his home to school in Brattleboro. After military service during World War II, he returned to Brattleboro and worked at a service station for 25 years and then 17 years as a janitor at the local J.C. Penney.

In 1960, he married a woman he met at the service station. She died in 1970.

Stepson Phillip Brown, of Somersworth, New Hampshire, told the *Brattleboro Reformer* he visited Read every few months, more often as Read’s health declined. The only indication Brown had of Read’s investments was his regular reading of the *Wall Street Journal*.

“I was tremendously surprised,” Brown said of Read’s hidden wealth. “He was a hard worker, but I don’t think anybody had an idea that he was a multimillionaire.”



Read