

PARENTS TALK BACK

Love wins when we treasure our happiest memories

Editor's note: Aisha Sultan is away this week. This column originally ran in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Feb. 14.

So much of the background noise in our lives reminds me of worst-case scenarios, chaos and decline.

It's the low-level hum: at work, on the television, in the paper and especially on the Internet. The world we are shown is largely one of conflict and controversy.

There is a chronic undercurrent of something bad happening; an impending sense of potential disaster. Things fall apart, people leave us when we need them to stay, and too many people suffer random tragedies and violence.

In this background gray, which sometimes darkens, sometimes lightens, we have to remind ourselves of the other force that turns this great big sphere on its axis.

In this moment, as you read this, so many things are happening outside the gray. In this very second, these moments are unfolding:

Parents whose hearts longed to have a baby are holding their newborn for the first time.

A man who aimed too far out of his league is gazing at his bride and promising to love her forever.

A daughter is telling her mother she's going to become a grandmother.

A father is hugging his grown son and saying that he's proud of him.

A cancer patient is hearing a doctor say the word "remission."

A teenager has the keys to the car for the very first time.

The ground is shaking for someone getting kissed.

A baby, a spinal-cord injury patient and an amputee are all taking their first steps.

A brand-new business owner is making her first sale.

Someone, who no one believed ever would, is crossing a stage and accepting a diploma.

Someone is sounding out a word and beginning to read.

A writer is finishing a book.

An artist is being struck by inspiration.

A runner is crossing a finish line.

Someone is falling in love.

A stranger is saving another human being's life.

A boss is offering a nervous young adult his first job.

An unemployed breadwinner with a family to support is accepting a new job offer.

A soldier is greeting her family after a long absence, picking up a child and holding her so tightly.

An unlikely 10-year-old is scoring a game-winning goal.

An abandoned puppy is being chosen by a new family.

Someone is being surprised with a cake and a birthday song.

Someone is proposing. Someone is saying yes.

People are dancing — in streets, at parties, in clubs and in their bedrooms.

A child is showing his parents his best-ever report card.

All of that is happening.

Somewhere in this big, wide world, in the time it took to read that. All that elusive, random, commonplace, extraordinary happiness is taking place — changing people's lives or just filling them with gratitude.

I want to pause and consider each of those scenes unfolding. I want to let myself remember those moments from my own life and appreciate what so many millions of people the world over are experiencing.

We carry memories of our best times close to our hearts, but how often do we take a minute to pull out those pictures from our mind and allow ourselves the gift of reliving them? Of remembering the sights, sounds and smells as vividly as we can?

It doesn't cost anything. And science has shown us that dwelling in the good — past or present — makes us happier. The act of recalling, the process of committing to memory these moments, serves us well when the world seems dark.

It's a reminder today, of all days. Sometimes, love wins.

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: @Aisha.S.



AISHA SULTAN
Parents talk back

BABIES BEHIND BARS

Should moms do time with their newborns?

BEDFORD HILLS, N.Y. (AP) — Jennifer Dumas sits on a sofa, her smiling 6-month-old girl on her lap. The room is full of bright toys and children's books. A rainbow-colored activity mat is on the floor, and Winnie the Pooh is painted on the walls.

It looks like any other nursery, except that there are bars on the windows and barbed-wire fences outside the austere brick building.

New York's maximum-security Bedford Hills Correctional Facility is one of the very few prisons in the U.S. that allow inmates and their babies to live together, a century-old approach that not all corrections experts agree is the best way to deal with women locked up while pregnant.

Mothers who get such a chance say it's better than the alternative: In most prisons, babies born behind bars must be given up within a day to a relative or foster care.

"Before I came here, I thought it was a terrible idea. A baby in prison? No, thank you," the 24-year-old Dumas said as her daughter, Codylynn, gleefully rocked in a bouncy seat. "But it's actually wonderful to be able to spend this much time with my little girl. ... I'm blessed to be able to go through this."

Nobody thinks raising babies behind bars is ideal, and some worry that the children could be scarred by the experience. But some advocates say that the practice allows mother and child to develop a vital psychological attachment, and that the parenting classes and other practical instruction help the moms stay out of trouble when they get out.

About 112,000 women are in state and federal prisons, mostly for drug or property crimes. And an estimated 1 in 25 are pregnant when they enter, according to the nonprofit Sentencing Project. But there are no national statistics on the number of babies born to inmates.

Of the more than 100 women's prisons in the U.S., there are eight nurseries. While nearly 100 countries, including South Sudan and France, have national laws that allow for incarcerated mothers to stay with their babies, the U.S. is not among them.

Dumas was three weeks pregnant when she was arrested last year, along with her boyfriend, on charges they tried to steal a safe packed with \$32,000 in cash and jewelry. Her baby was born just days after she took a plea bargain on attempted burglary charges that sent her to Bedford Hills, about an hour north of New York City, for up to two years.

She is now among 15 carefully



In this April 12 photo, Jennifer Dumas looks out the window with her daughter, Codylynn, inside her room at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, in Bedford Hills, N.Y. Bedford Hills has one of only eight working prison nurseries where women live with their babies, out of more than 100 women's prisons around the country.

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— Jennifer Dumas, mother at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

screened new mothers allowed to serve up to 18 months of their sentences in a nursery unit that includes a communal playroom stocked with toys and mother-and-child rooms equipped with a single bed and a crib. The walls are painted with rainbows, fluffy clouds and jungle and barnyard scenes. The nursery currently has 16 babies, including a set of twins.

During workday hours, the babies are taken across the street to a day care center, where they are watched by staff and other inmates while the moms go to school or vocational programs.

But there are constant reminders it is a prison. Armed officers patrol the unit. And the moms know their babies can be taken away for such infractions as fighting or even leaving a toy in a crib while the baby sleeps.

"It's still scary," Dumas said. "At any given point if you do what you're not supposed to your baby could get sent home."

Some women have been dropped from the program from time to time for breaking the rules, but corrections officials and advocates said they could not recall any instances in recent years in which a baby was

harm.

Still, some argue that prison should be reserved for punishment and that women should instead consider putting their children up for adoption.

"The focus should be on what's best for the baby," said James Dwyer, a law professor at the College of William & Mary who has written a paper on the topic. "There is skepticism about these women being adequate parents."

Columbia University researcher Mary Byrne, who spent years studying mothers and children who started life in Bedford Hills, said that the youngsters formed critical attachments to their mothers and that a second study after they were released found they were no different from children raised entirely on the outside.

"Many people would assume any exposure to prison would cause problems ... they'll be exposed to violence and horrible people, it will scar them," she said. "But that's not what we found."

Sister Teresa Fitzgerald, the Roman Catholic nun who runs Hour Children, the nonprofit organization that operates

Bedford Hills' nursery, put it more bluntly: "Babies belong with their mother. In a palace or a prison, they don't know and don't care as long as they feel loved and supported."

The nursery is operated under an annual contract with the state of about \$170,000, the correction department said. It would cost \$480,000 a year to put 16 babies in foster care, according to state figures.

Bedford Hills' recidivism rate for women in the nursery program is fairly typical of such programs, at 13 percent versus 26 percent for all female inmates at the prison, according to a report by the Women's Prison Association, an advocacy group.

Bedford Hills has the oldest continuously operating prison nursery in the country, opened in 1901. There were many nurseries years ago, according to Elaine Lord, the former superintendent. But they fell out of favor amid a huge influx of prisoners in the 1980s and a shift in thinking that said the privilege of living with your baby was inconsistent with the concept of punishment.

Most of the nation's prison nurseries have cropped up in the past 20 years.

The nursery at the Indiana Women's Prison houses up to 10 mother-infant pairs for up to 18 months. In South Dakota, a child can stay only 30 days. In Washington state, it's three years. The Decatur Correctional Center in Illinois opened a nursery in 2007, and 73 moms have participated.

OUT OF THE VAULT

Nude man terrorizes Pendleton

It seems nude men running amok in Pendleton is something that has happened before.

In the June 8, 1942 edition of the *East Oregonian*, Pendleton police revealed a man had been stalking the streets at night, completely nude except for a sack over his head. The man had appeared at least two or three times in the previous month, and on one of those occasions attempted to attack a young woman. Police had kept the man's antics on the down-low while they attempted to trap him, but the "Nude Terror," as he was soon called, had up to then eluded them and they were turning to the citizens of Pendleton for their help.

The man was first reported on May 10 in the vicinity of Southwest Court Avenue and Tenth Street, and then again May 25 in the vicinity of the First Christian Church on the North Hill. On the night of May 30 he chased a young woman down Northwest Bailey Avenue to Main Street, then ducked back into the darkness between houses and escaped. During the first week of June a resident of Southeast Court Place called police when she saw a man exposing himself and throwing rocks at her window. Police were unable to locate the man in any of the sightings, and several people arrested for indecent exposure around the same time of the Nude Terror's night-time excursions were eliminated from suspicion for various reasons.

During a final sighting, a man living on Southeast Sixth Street and Byers Avenue returned home at 2 a.m. June 11 to find a man wearing only trunks and shoes sitting on his front porch. The man fled into the darkness when illuminated by the car's headlights, but as the homeowner approached his front door he said the man returned and brushed



RENEE STRUTHERS
Out of the vault

against him before disappearing again into the night.

Almost three weeks after their initial plea in the newspaper, police finally caught up with the man. Lloyd Vernon Scott, 31, was arrested by officers L.A. Bacon and Raymond Bannister at 11:30 p.m. on June 20 in the stairway on the south side of the Christian church. The officers were driving by the church and recalled that their quarry was

often spotted near there. They shined the headlights of the patrol car on the stairway and discovered Scott, who was wearing nothing but a pair of socks. He surrendered without a struggle, which was a good thing — Police Chief Charles Lemons had instructed his officers to shoot the suspect if he was spotted and refused to surrender.

Scott was registered at a Pendleton hotel, and in his room police found a copy of the June 8 *East Oregonian* containing the original story about the Nude Terror. Allegedly a baker by trade, Scott said he had been traveling through the area during the past few months and had a wife in Spokane. Military records show he was discharged from the U.S. Army in 1939 for desertion. It was discovered he also had been arrested in Walla Walla for indecent exposure the previous month, and had skipped bail.

Scott later signed a confession to indecent exposure. In it, he said "I don't know why I do this," and admitted to an urge to expose himself — though he professed he had no memory of any of the incidents with which he was charged and claimed he was probably insane at the time.

Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the *East Oregonian*. See the complete collection of *Out of the Vault* columns at eovault.blogspot.com

ODDS & ENDS

Norway subjects viewers to 2-day stream of app terms of use

HELSINKI (AP) — A Norwegian consumers' group took inspiration from "slow television" to produce a marathon webcast of a team of readers going through the fine print of terms and conditions of downloadable apps.

Finn Myrstad from the Norwegian Consumer Council says the idea was to point out the "absurdity" and even illegality of some of the conditions. The Runkeeper apologized to its 45 million users after the council revealed that it was tracking and sending user information to a third party even when not in use.

Myrstad said the team decided to read and analyze the small print of some 20 apps over six months, discovering that many of them broke the law.

"We got the idea from slow TV, and we wanted to expose the absurdity of the terms and conditions of when you download an app," he told the AP. "You usually don't read them because either too long or complicated, and many of them breach consumer law and data protection laws."

The show began on Tuesday morning, with the team reading through the terms of around 30 popular apps. It ended 32 hours later. The council later tweeted a 12-second recap of the broadcast.

Norway has popularized "slow television," putting five hours of knitting, a fire burning itself out and minute-by-minute salmon fishing live on TV.

A pup named Potato? 15 were registered in NYC last year

NEW YORK (AP) — Bella and Max are top dogs in New York City.

The city Health Department announced Wednesday that it registered 1,127 dogs named Bella and 1,073 named Max in 2015.

Bella has been the city's most popular dog name since 2008. That's when the last of Stephenie Meyer's vampire-themed "Twilight" novels featuring heroine Bella Swan was published.

But some dog owners took their inspiration from the pantry and the garden.

The Health Department says it licensed 27 dogs named Bean, 17 dogs named Raisin and 15 dogs named Potato last year.

Names that were popular with certain breeds included Snoopy for beagles and Tyson for boxers.