**Unexpected Wealth & Success**

**Mathematician Charles Dodgson, 33 -- a.k.a. Lewis Carroll -- published Alice’s Adventures Under Ground in November, 1865. His story, first told to 10-year-old Alice Liddell in 1862, of a girl’s capers with such quirky fellows as a hookah-smoking caterpillar and a mock turtle -- “deliciously absurd conceptions,” said a critic -- was an unexpected success. Today, Alice is the world’s most quoted book after the Bible and Shakespeare’s works. *(Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**For me, AOL (American Online) was a 20-year journey. It was really two chapters: The first 10 years was really more of the pioneering, figuring-out phase; the second 10 years was more the commercialization, scaling phase. While the fame and the fortune came in the second part, I really preferred the first part. I was better at it. I didn’t foresee AOL becoming as dominant as it did. Fifty percent of all Internet traffic went through AOL at one point. *(Steve Case, co-founder of AOL, in Bloomberg Busniessweek magazine, as told to Diane Brady)***

**At first Karl Kissner figured the small cardboard box of baseball cards he found in his late grandfather's attic was just more junk. After all, the Defiance, Ohio, house was stuffed with a century's worth of clutter. But after seeking out an expert, Kissner learned the cards were among the rarest ever discovered -- a long-lost series issued around 1910, in pristine condition, including Hall of Famers Ty Cobb, Cy Young, and Honus Wagner. The 700-card collection is now expected to go for up to $3 million when sold at auction in August. "It's like finding the Mona Lisa in the attic," said Kissner. *(The Week magazine, July 20, 2012)***

**It’s hard to picture Ringo Starr as a retired factory worker, said Cole Moreton in the London Daily Mail. Yet had fate not intervened back in 1962, that might have been his reality today. Starr was working in a factory when he got an offer to play drums for a local band; he was then approached to play a gig with the Beatles. “Within Liverpool I was more known than them,” says Starr, 70. “They were lucky to get me.” At that time, Starr didn’t see a future in music. “We didn’t think it would last. Even Paul thought, ‘Well, I’ll probably end up as a writer.’ So did John. George was going to have a garage. I was an apprentice engineer, which was a big thing in my family. All my uncles and aunties came over to try to tell me that drumming was okay as a hobby.” Half a century later, he and Paul McCartney are the last remaining Beatles. “He likes to think he’s the only one,” says Starr, a bit testily. He still feels that he never got his due: Why hasn’t he been knighted like Sir Paul? “People have tried campaigns, but it never goes anywhere. Maybe you should just start one. That’s why I called my last album Y Not?” (The Week magazine, June 10, 2011)**

**A Michigan man demolishing the stairs behind his house found an unexpected treasure underneath -- 160 bowling balls. David Olson of Muskegon figured when he found the first ball "maybe there were just a couple in there to fill in." But he eventually unearthed a bowling alley's worth. The house dates to 1959, when a Brunswick factory operated nearby, and former employees told him workers often took unstable balls home for construction projects. Olson plans to keep "some of the nicer-looking ones to do some edging," he said. "My wife is really crafty and wants to do some projects." (The Week magazine, July 30, 2021)**

**Charles Darwin thought that the 1,250-copy first run of his book The Origin of Species was too much, but the books sold out the first day of publication. *(Noel Botham, in The World’s Greatest Book of Useless Information, p. 29)***

**The three dots in the Domino’s Pizza logo represent the company’s first three locations. The original concept was that a dot would be added for each new store that opened – a plan that ran out of steam as the design ran out of space. *(David Hoffman, in I Never Knew That!, p. 43)***

**Bob Dylan failed to attend the award ceremony for his Nobel Prize in literature in Sweden last week, but made his presence felt by sending a heartfelt thank-you speech. "I'm sorry I can't be with you in person, but please know that I am most definitely with you in spirit and honored to be receiving such a prestigious prize," the folk-rock icon, 75, said in the speech, which was read aloud inside Stockholm Concert Hall. "Being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature is something I never could have imagined or seen coming." Joining the ranks of Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus, and other giants, Dylan said, left him "truly beyond words." Dylan plans to play several concerts in Sweden next spring. *(The Week magazine, December 23 / December 30, 2016)***

**It all began when Chester Greenwood’s ears got cold. Allergic to the woolen scarves that others tied around their heads, the industrious teenager wanted a better way to warm his ears in Maine’s chilly winter weather. So, using wire, beaver fur, cloth and a pair of pliers, he fashioned the first set of earmuffs in 1873. Only 15 at the time, he hardly could have imagined that, a century later, his hometown would dedicate a day in his honor, complete with a parade, speeches from local dignitaries, and the raising of a Chester Greenwood Flag at the Franklin Country Courthouse. However, that’s exactly what the town of Farmington, Maine, has done each year since 1977 when the state Legislature designated Chester Greenwood Day, celebrated on the first Saturday in December. (Richard Matthews, in American Profile magazine)**

**eBay was launched on Labor Day of 1995 by Pierre Omidyar, a computer programmer who lived and worked in California’s Silicon Valley. Omidyar started the site as a hobby and a chance to practice programming for the Internet. His vision for eBay was to create the “perfect market”: a place where buyers and sellers could connect without pressure and the demand for an item would determine its selling price. At the beginning, Omidyar didn’t even expect his hobby to create enough cash flow for him to quit his day job, but in only four years, eBay’s creator was worth four billion dollars. Today, eBay’s auction sites and other ventures generate billions of dollars each year. *(Karen Barton, in Kids’ Pages)***

**The man credited with inventing the motion picture system never made a dime. Thomas Edison didn’t bother to patent his projection systems because he thought they had no future. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 22)***

**Barbara Bel Geddes, as Miss Ellie Ewing, presided over television’s most dysfunctional family in Dallas, By the late ‘60s, though, she had all but abandoned show business to care for Windsor Lewis, her second husband, who had been stricken with cancer. After his death, she agreed to play Miss Ellie on Dallas “in order to make some money, thinking that the show would run for no more than one season.” But except for the 1984 season, when she underwent heart surgery and was replaced by Donna Reed, she remained in the role for 12 years. (The Week magazine, August 26, 2005)**

**Despite appearances in Going My Way and How Green Was My Valley, a famous actor was unsure movies would ever support him. Barry Fitzgerald kept his British civil servant job for 14 years before he finally decided to stick to movies. Oddly enough, Fitzgerald became famous for playing Catholic priests even though he was a Protestant. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 9)***

**It is no simple matter to decide who are the more fortunate -- those to whom life gives all, or those who have to give all to life. A fulfilled life is not necessarily one constructed strictly in accordance with one's own blueprint; it can be a glorious collage of materials that have come unexpectedly to hand. How wonderful it is that we do not know what tomorrow will bring. *(Aung San Suu Kyi, in a speech)***

**Mr. and Mrs. Michael Wrintmore of Birdbrook, Halstead, Essex, England, bought their thatched-roof cottage in February 1977, for $18,000. Digging up its stone floors 5 months later they found 99 ancient gold sovereigns valued at $40,000. (*Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Weird Inventions and Discoveries, p. 77)***

**A couple in California's Sierra Nevada were in for a major surprise when they stumbled upon an old tin can buried in their backyard. After being cleaned, the dirt-encrusted metal discs inside revealed themselves to be rare 19th-century U.S. gold coins. The couple uncovered seven more cans, for a haul worth an estimated $10 million. They have opted to remain anonymous and are working with a renowned collector to bring the coins to auction in May. "It was very hard to believe," said the man. "I thought any second an old miner with a mule was going to appear." (The Week magazine, March 7, 2014)**

**Even Abraham Lincoln surely believed it when he said in his Gettysburg Address: “The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here. . . .” (Jo Coudert, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Clement C. Moore was a teacher of classical languages. In the course of his career, he published a Hebrew dictionary and was a major benefactor of the General Theological Seminary in New York City. But it is not for the seminary or his dictionary that he is remembered. It is for a set of verses dashed off in 1822 in an hour of yuletide inspiration – verses that he stuffed away as if of no importance. The magic lines begin: “’Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house. . . .” They never brought Moore a penny, but they did bring him immortality. *(Dale Turner, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Oregon's truffle country: We're standing in a cold, dense forest with our dogs, each of us hunting the elusive Oregon truffle, said Ted Katauskas in Sunset. Every year during the last week of January, gourmands descend on Eugene for the Oregon Truffle Festival -- "three days of unrestrained fungal madness" -- to celebrate harvest time in an area now recognized as one of the world's best truffle regions. There'll be time enough later for the seminars, wine tastings, and truffle-centric meals. On this chilly Saturday morning, foraging is the mission. "The air is heavy with the scent of pine" as the dogs get to work. The poodles and the Chihuahua in our cohort prove of little use, but the Lagotto Romagnolos take the lead, following some "programmed instinct" as they begin sniffing in circles until they locate a fir tree worth digging under. Soon enough they come up with their prizes -- "mud-caked balls of earth" that are worth up to $400 a pound. (The Week magazine, February 1, 2013)**

**Because of the unexpected success of Nia Vardalos’ self-written acting vehicle, My Big Fat Greek Wedding (based on her one-woman show of the same name), proves that pop culture can still cough up a surprise or two in an era when movie audiences have been otherwise carpet-bombed into submission by studio marketing campaigns. Because “unexpected” doesn’t do justice to a little $5 million independent that had “late-night-reruns-on-Bravo” written all over it. Because the picture has instead racked up more than $140 million at the box office and became, pound for pound, arguably the year’s biggest hit. Because she didn’t sell her script to the producer who wanted to make My Big Fat Italian Wedding. Because she didn’t change her name to Vardalez – and then lose the part to Jennifer Lopez anyway – for My Big Fat Puerto Rican Wedding. Because she can do more with a reaction shot than any performer since Jack Benny. Because showbiz Cinderella stories are only predictable when they’re in front of the camera. (Vanity Fair magazine, December, 2002)**

**There are no wrong turns, only unexpected paths. (Mark Nepo)**

**A 96-year-old has become the oldest person to hit the Billboard Hot 100, after a touching ode to his departed wife went viral. Fred Stobaugh of Illinois wrote the lyrics to "Oh Sweet Lorraine" a month after his wife's death and sent it in to an amateur music contest. The contest's organizer, Jacob Cogan, was so moved by the words that he set them to music -- and a viral video about the project has helped the song race up the charts. The former truck driver never imagined his poem would touch a nerve with so many. "It just seemed like it fit her," he said. (The Week magazine, September 20, 2013)**

**I have been asked many times if I ever dreamed that Peanuts would become so successful. Obviously, I did not know that Snoopy was going to go to the moon and I did not know that the term “happiness is a warm puppy” would prompt hundreds of other such definitions and I did not know that the term “security blanket” would become part of the American language; but I did have the hope that I would be able to contribute something to a profession that I can now say I have loved all my life. However, I think I always surprise people when I say, “Well, frankly, I guess I did expect Peanuts would be successful, because after all, it was something I had planned for since I was six years old.” *(Charles M. Schulz, in Peanuts: A Golden Celebration)***

**Good week for: Hidden treasures, after a Massachusetts police officer learned that the small rock he found in his seafood stew was actually a rare lavender pearl worth more than $15,000. "It was a good seafood stew," Mike Serino said. "It's even more tasty now." *(The Week magazine, March 6, 2015)***

**Good week for: Chewing slowly, after a Tennessee woman bit into a fried oyster at a restaurant, felt her teeth hit something hard, and spit out 51 baby pearls. "It was her oyster," said restaurant manager Greg Hargest, "so they're her pearls." (The Week magazine (April 17, 2015)**

**All I ever wanted was for somebody to publish Harry Potter so I could go to bookshops and see it. *(J. K. Rowling)***

**As told by Susan Orlean, it began on a World War I battlefield in France, when an American corporal stumbled upon a litter of German shepherd pups in the wreckage of an abandoned German encampment. Lee Duncan made two of the dogs his own pets, though only the one he called Rin Tin Tin survived. Given that he had spent part of his boyhood in an orphanage, “it wasn’t a coincidence that Duncan was the one to rescue the pup who had no one.” But what happened next to the lucky canine certainly couldn’t have been predicted. Within a few years, the puppy that Duncan had named after a popular French doll grew up to be the most famous dog in the world, said Rick Kogan in the Chicago Tribune. Hollywood talent scouts saw a film clip of “Rinty” making a spectacular jump in a dog show and decided to put him in the movies. In more than a dozen silent films, including 1925’s Clash of the Wolves, Rin Tin Tin demonstrated unusual screen presence, thanks largely to what Orlean characterizes as his “immensely expressive” face. When he died, in 1932, the nation mourned. But his progeny kept the Rin Tin Tin brand alive on-screen through the 1950s. *(The Week magazine, October 14, 2011)***

**On December 19, 1918, the sports editor at the Old New York Globe was anxiously calling for the daily cartoon, and sports artist Robert Ripley was desperate for an idea. The day had been dull for sports, and current news had not provided any subject either. After looking at his blank drawing paper for some time, Ripley turned finally to his files and a scrapbook of news clippings he had been putting together for his own amusement. This contained an assortment of sports oddities and records, and he began to draw his cartoon from them. Studying the completed piece of several sports oddities which he had entitled “Champs or Chumps,” Ripley was not at all sure that he had produced a good day’s work. On impulse he scratched out the original heading, wrote in its place “Believe It or Not!”, and put it on the sport editor’s desk. Dismissing the drawing from his mind he then went across the street for a cup of coffee, little realizing that an idea had been conceived that would eventually capture the imagination of millions of readers and make the words “Believe It or Not!” a household phrase the world over. *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. xiv)***

**A hobbyist treasure hunter armed with a metal detector has stumbled upon a hoard of 52,000 ancient Roman coins in an English field, archaeologists reported. Dave Crisp of Wiltshire, England, began digging up the coins himself, but then realized he had found someth8ing truly significant. So he called the authorities. “Leaving it in the ground was a very hard decision,” Crisp said, “but as it had been there for 1,800 years, I thought a few days more would not hurt.” Some of the bronze and silver coins, dating from the third century and said to be worth more than $1 million, will soon be on display in the British Museum. *(The Week magazine, July 23, 2010)***

**Morris Michtom, found of Ideal Toy Corporation, asked a favor of Theodore Roosevelt, who replied: “I doubt my name will mean much in your business, but you may use it if you wish.” And onto the market came the Teddy Bear. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Nearly all the best things that came to me in life have been unexpected, unplanned by me. (Carl Sandburg)**

**When Colonel Sanders set out on the road at age 65 to sell chicken, his goal was to make $1,000 a month. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**NBC had given Seinfeld (originally titled The Seinfeld Chronicles) just a four-episode commitment after airing the pilot the previous summer. “Commitment should be in quotation marks,” chuckles series co-creator Larry David. “I thought we’d do these four shows and that would be it. Even after (NBC ordered 13 episodes), Jerry and I had dinner one night and I said to him, ‘I can’t believe they’re letting us do this!’ It just seemed like we were doing what we wanted and having fun and they were actually putting it on the air. It was a mystery to me how this was occurring.” Though ratings were initially soft, fans came to love this foursome of quirky, self-consumed New Yorkers, and Seinfeld reigned as the top-rated comedy for five straight seasons. It also scored seven consecutive best-comedy Emmy nominations (winning in 1993). *(Dan Snierson, in Entertainment Weekly)***

**Despite Steven Spielberg’s dedication to the picture, he didn’t expect the nearly 3 ½ hour, black-and-white movie to be a hit – or even to break even. So he was astonished when Schindler’s List inspired global acclaim. After years of being stubbed at the Academy Awards, he saw the 1993 film win seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director. (Reader’s Digest)**

**New hope from stem cells: Embryonic stem cells injected into the eyes of two legally blind patients appear to have restored some of their sight – the first direct evidence ever of such therapy helping patients. That largely unexpected success is “a major milestone that will offer tremendous encouragement” to scientists working in the stem-cell field, Harvard Medical School researcher George Daley tells ScienceNow.org. Embryonic stem cells can morph into any type of cell in the body, so in theory they could be used to treat a host of serious ailments, from Alzheimer’s to paralysis, by replacing cells damaged by injury and disease. But scientists hadn’t yet determined whether injecting stem cells into people would stimulate tumors or cause other health problems. This study was an attempt to answer that question. Stem cells were transformed into retinal cells and implanted into the eyes of two women suffering from macular degeneration – a common, untreatable cause of blindness. The new retinal cells caused no harmful effects, and they improved the women’s vision. “One day, I looked down and I could see my watch,” says Sue Freeman, one of the stem-cell recipients. “That was exciting.” (The Week magazine, February 10, 2012)**

**A crew of fisherman from Yemen struck it rich when they reeled in a 280-pound chunk of whale vomit worth $1.5 million. Fishing in the Gulf of Aden, the 35-person crew captured a sperm whale's carcass whose stench suggested the presence of ambergris, a waxy substance produced in the whale's intestines. They found a massive block of the substance, prized by perfumers because it makes fragrances last longer. They split the money equally, buying new homes, cars, and boats. "It was an unimaginable price," said one." We are all poor. We never expected this thing would give us such a huge amount." (The Week magazine, July 2, 2021)**

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