

# The PACKARD PRESS

A collection of thoughts and stories to educate, entertain and inspire.

## HAPPY 'VALENEERSARY!'

### Our Family's Toast to Valentine's Day

I know it's February 1 each year when a row of tiny pink, white, and red mailboxes appears on our kitchen counter. I reach over and open the little door on mine to find a love note written in my 6-year-old daughter's round, wobbly handwriting.

*I love you SO much, Dad!*

*Love, Cora*

Sometimes there are other notes, too. (I love you more than Clark loves his pacifier! Love, Forrest.) Every day, the box's contents are different, but each time I look inside, a little burst of love washes over me.

Sometimes I camp out at the counter and write seven love notes all in a row on pink paper — one each for AmyLyn, Ella, Sabrina, Noah, Forrest, Cora, and Clark — and slot them into mailbox after mailbox. Writing about how much I love my wife and kids is easy. The hard part is making sure I don't repeat myself!

Those mailboxes of love letters are just one of our family's many "Valenersary" traditions. Because AmyLyn and I got married on February 14th (it was that or Friday the 13th — which one would you have chosen?), we treat Valentine's Day as not just our anniversary but also our family birthday, and we celebrate it with a "Valenersary" party.

As evening approaches, the kids all disappear into their rooms to get dressed in their Sunday best. AmyLyn pops the corks on the Martinelli's sparkling cider while I queue up video footage of our wedding day on the big-screen TV. When the kids reassemble in the living room and cram together on the couch in their dresses and ties, AmyLyn and I tell our falling in love story.

"Years ago, before all of you were born, Dad's cousin invited him over for Sunday dinner. Dad met his cousin's wife and kids, AND his wife's younger sister, AmyLyn ..."

It's a short story. After we met at my cousin's house, I fell head over heels for AmyLyn. She had the most musical and contagious laugh and I loved how she deployed it every time I told a joke. I loved that she was musical, could sew, and had an uncanny listening ability. She could keep me



talking for hours while making me feel like the most interesting person in the world. Five months after we met, we were married!

After we tell the story to the kids on Valentine's Day, we press play and sit back to watch the 20-minute sideshow of wedding photos and videos. We sip our cider and admire the strings of paper hearts festooning the house. The mellow notes of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"/"What a Wonderful World" by Israel Kamakawiwo play over our living room speakers.

Afterwards, we sit around laughing and telling stories until it's time for bed. Later that week, AmyLyn and I slip out of the house for a date night, just the two of us.

These Valenersary moments are some of my favorite times of the year. They might not be traditional, but every Valentine's Day, I'm surrounded by love and family — and that's really the point, isn't it?

Happy Valenersary!

—*Michael Packard*

# NOT ANOTHER CANDLELIT DINNER

## Get Creative This Valentine's Day

Roses, chocolate, and fancy restaurants are Valentine's Day staples for a reason. They're classic and timeless, but if you've done them year after year, they could also get a little bit boring. To wow your significant other this Feb. 14, think beyond the most famous ways to celebrate. They'll probably appreciate a twist — and the time you spent making their day special.

### CREATE A RELATIONSHIP SCRAPBOOK.

Nothing says "I love you" like a gift you've made with your own hands. By making a scrapbook of your favorite memories with your partner, you'll also amaze them with your sensitivity and dedication. A scrapbook can consist of photographs, restaurant menus, movie tickets, wedding invitations, vacation souvenirs, and some carefully chosen words about why you value the relationship. Don't be afraid to get inventive with your decorations or scour the internet for tips and tricks.

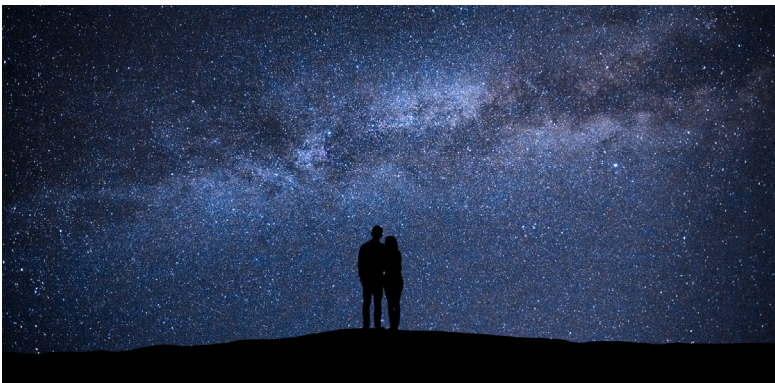
### GO STARGAZING.

What's more romantic than staring up at the stars? Your first step will be to find a local spot that's dark and secluded enough for a good view of the nighttime sky. Once you do, your next course of action will depend on the weather. If it's temperate, get a picnic blanket and enjoy the outdoors. If it's cold, stay in the car, turn off the headlights, and snuggle up. Don't forget to bring wine and a romantic snack. If all goes well, you might end up watching the sunrise.

### SCHEDULE A COUPLES' SPA DAY.

Forget what you think you know: Spa days are for everyone. Your other half will love the opportunity to experience a massage, sauna, and other assorted treatments. Plus, many spas offer romantic couples' packages with champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries. Once you're both sufficiently relaxed and looking your best, you'll likely feel closer than ever. Some spas also offer overnight stays so you can transition seamlessly into a romantic evening.

All of these ideas will take a little bit of planning, so it's time to start dreaming up your big surprise. When you see their reaction, your only concern will be how to top yourself next year.



## 394 MIGRAINES IN 16 MONTHS?!

### How We Helped Dorothy Win Social Security Disability

When Dorothy Villafranca found us, she had a serious problem: In just 16 months, she'd suffered 394 migraines.

"It was bad, really bad," Dorothy remembers. "Just when you think it's easing up, an hour or two later — boom!"

The side effects of her medications didn't help. Dorothy felt weak and had trouble walking. She didn't even have the strength to hold a pen or pick up a clipboard. Unable to work, she took disability leave from the job she'd held for 32 years as a manager at the local H-E-B.

The time didn't help her heal like she'd hoped. Instead, the headaches and blood pressure spikes triggered two minor strokes. Eventually, Dorothy's daughter, Lauren, convinced her that she needed to apply for Social Security Disability (SSD) — and sent her to our team for help.

When we heard how severe Dorothy's illness was, the whole team (especially her case manager, Amanda) jumped into action and alleviated as much of her stress as we could.

"They helped me all along the way with any upcoming appointments, possible meetings I might have, and scheduling with the doctors to get checked. They did their best to make sure I would qualify for SSD." Dorothy says.

Dorothy was nervous about the legal process. She'd never applied for anything like SSD before, but Amanda was there for her to lean on.

"She was really good about calling and checking on me, and following up if I had questions, was nervous or unsure about things, or seemed a little out of sorts because of my illness and stressing out about the process," Dorothy says.

Our hard work paid off! We secured the Social Security Disability benefits Dorothy needed.

"Right now, I am able to live a little bit comfortably with what I'm getting from Social Security Disability," she says, adding, "The individuals that work at Packard are very caring, and that's important to have if you're putting your trust in someone."

If you know someone like Dorothy who needs help with a Social Security Disability case, please send them to our website or pass along our phone number. We're here to help.

# 3 POEMS TO HELP YOU KEEP GOING

Feeling Beaten Down by Life? Read These!



When I was a little kid, my dad used to read poetry to me and my siblings. We'd all gather around and he'd share his wisdom line by line. It was beautiful, and I'll always remember it. One of his go-to poems was "If—" by Rudyard Kipling.

Kipling wrote "If—" for his son, and it's basically a guide to growing up and persevering when things get tough. It's fitting that so many of Dad's poems were about getting back up when you fall down, because he has done that more than anyone else I know. He failed out of law school twice but still became a great lawyer. He lost a daughter in a house fire but continued to be an amazing dad. And after his sweet wife passed away he later found love again. Thanks to

him, I have learned how to get back up when I fall. (I'll share more of Dad's story in next month's newsletter.)

If you're struggling to find your feet after a physical or emotional hit, take a page out of Dad's book and read or listen to the poems below. I promise they'll inspire you — it always works for me.

**'The Race' by Dr. D.H. 'Dee' Groberg** ([HolyJoe.org/poetry/anon3.htm](http://HolyJoe.org/poetry/anon3.htm))

If you read just one of these poems, make it this one! "The Race" tells the story of a little boy trying his best at a track event. He falls over and over but always gets back up. Even though he comes in last, he learns a valuable lesson. Check it out at the website above.

**'If—' by Rudyard Kipling** ([Poets.org/Poem/If](http://Poets.org/Poem/If))

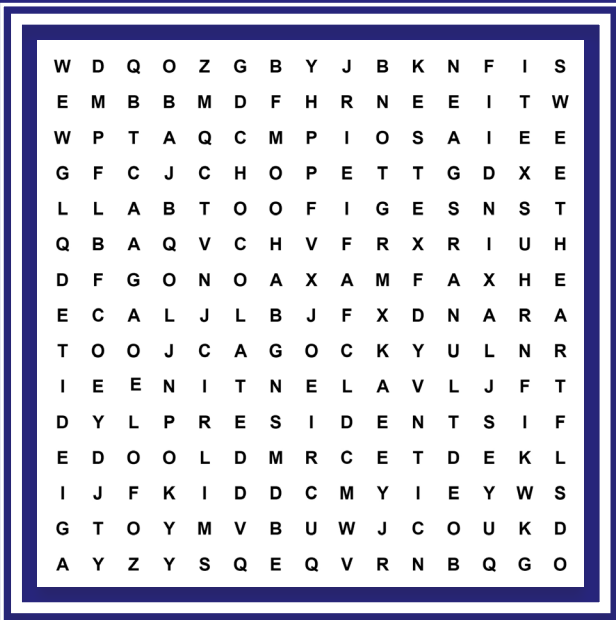
You can read this poem at the website above, but you can also listen to actor Sir Michael Caine recite it on YouTube! Just do a search of "If recited by Sir Michael Caine" on the internet.

**'Invictus' by William Ernest Henley** ([Poets.org/Poem/Invictus](http://Poets.org/Poem/Invictus))

This short poem gave the world the famous lines "I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul." This inspired Nelson Mandela during the years he was imprisoned in South Africa. Visit the website above to read this wonderful poem.

—Michael Packard

## TAKE A BREAK



- |           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Beads     | History    | Sweetheart |
| Chocolate | Lunar      | Tiger      |
| Festival  | Pink       | Valentine  |
| Football  | Presidents | Violet     |

## BAKED FETA PASTA

AKA Viral TikTok Pasta!



Inspired by Delish.com

### Ingredients

- 4 cups cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt, to taste
- Red pepper flakes, to taste
- 3 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1 8-oz block of feta cheese
- 10 oz pasta of choice
- Lemon zest to taste

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. In a large pan, combine tomatoes, shallot, garlic, olive oil, salt, red pepper, and thyme.
3. Place the cheese block in the center of the pan and bake for 40 minutes.
4. Cook pasta according to box instructions. Save 1/2 cup of pasta water before draining the noodles.
5. When the tomato and feta cheese mixture is done, add the cooked pasta, pasta water, and lemon zest, stirring until completely combined.

## The Packard Family Is Here to Help Your Family

Personal Injury  
Social Security Disability  
Car Accidents  
Special Needs Planning

- 1 'Valenersary' With the Packards
- 2 Creative Valentine's Day Ideas  
A Victory Against Chronic Migraines
- 3 The Inspiration You Need to Get Back Up  
Make TikTok Pasta for Your Sweetheart!
- 4 Your Go-To Guide to Combating Mold!



## BREAK OUT OF THE MOLD

### *How to Spot, Prevent, and Treat Mold Growth*

Mold — it's great on blue cheese, but not in our homes.

Mold is a subset of fungus, growing primarily as a spore. It's not an animal, plant, or type of bacteria; instead, mold (and other fungi) is its own species. As scientifically fascinating — and useful in penicillin form — as mold is, it can be very dangerous in your home. Mold growth can cause allergies, skin and eye irritation, lung problems, frequent headaches, immunity issues, and even cystic fibrosis.

If you notice mold growth or want to prevent it, it's imperative that you act. Consider this your go-to guide.

#### **WHERE MOLD GROWS**

Mold is resilient, and to make matters more complex, some experts estimate there may be more than 300,000 different varieties! However, there are common household types that tend to grow in equally common places. For instance, *Alternaria* mold thrives in damp, dark places, like under the sink. Meanwhile, *Penicillium* mold grows around water damage, like where your water heater may have leaked.

The best way to spot mold growth in your home is to regularly examine such places, including your shower or bathtub, under sinks,

and your basement or garage. However, mold can grow anywhere, so watch for the following signs:

- An earthy smell on a substance or in a room
- Rapid discoloration or warping on a wall or item
- A growing stain

#### **HOW TO PREVENT IT**

The best way to attack mold is to create an environment in which it can't grow. Start by eliminating moisture. Fix leaks immediately and never let wet clothing items or towels sit for a long time. Manage the humidity in your home with a properly functioning HVAC system, too. This will circumvent any potential moisture buildup. And when cleaning, utilize products that are designed to target mold growth, which will attack spores before they appear to the naked eye.

*For more details on how to remove and prevent mold growth, consult with a mold specialist.*