

# The PACKARD PRESS

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

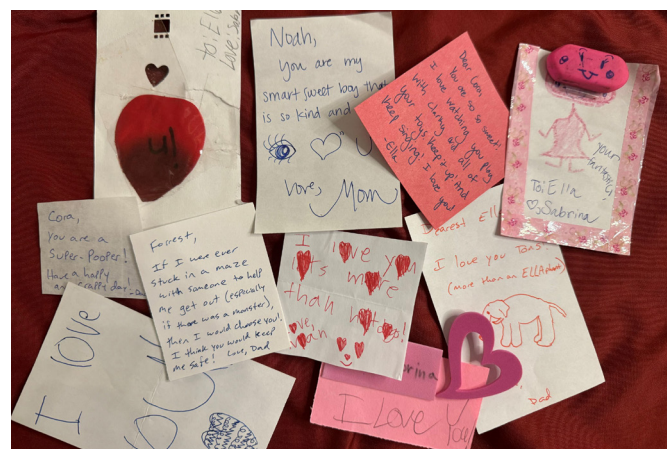
## VALENTINE'S DAY, PACKARD STYLE

### Our Family's Annual Celebration of Love and Togetherness

For most people, February brings the chill of winter. (In Texas, you never know what the weather will bring!) But for many, it also brings a celebration of love and friendship with Valentine's Day! This year, the holiday is extra special for my family as my wife and I mark our 20th wedding anniversary. Since we got married on February 14, 2004, we celebrate Valentine's Day with not only romantic love, but with the love we have for our family. We like to call this family birthday party our "Valenersary!" It's a special time where we celebrate each other and the day our family officially started.

Our kids, who range from age 6 to 18, get all dressed up for this party. (The boys even have to tuck in their shirts.) Then, we come together for a fancy dinner with fancy drinks. Even the little ones get to use (plastic) wine glasses. As we eat, we share reasons why we're thankful for our family and what it means to each of us to be a Packard.

After dinner, we tell our love story. Amy shows photos and journal entries to the kids



from back when we were dating, and I pull up the video that played at our wedding reception. It's a family tradition filled with love, laughter, and reminiscence. The songs from that video have since become family love songs: "She's Got a Way" by Billy Joel, "When You Say You Love Me" by Josh Groban, "At Last" by Etta James, and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by Izzy Kamakawiwo'ole.

We have our family birthday party on Valentine's Day, but we spread love all February long! We have little Valentine's themed mailboxes lined up; one for each person. We keep supplies nearby so we can write quick little notes that express feelings of love and gratitude. We all love opening our mailbox to find little handwritten messages from each other. They are usually short and sweet, sometimes just a drawing.

But we don't stop with our mailboxes, we decorate our entire house for Valentine's Day. Pink hearts, streamers, and other love-themed items are everywhere. Imagine decorating for Christmas, but instead

of Santa and snowmen, it's Cupid and hearts. Instead of red and green, it's red and pink. We even hang a Valentine's wreath on the door.

Now, my wife and I don't forget that we are each other's Valentine. We try to sneak an overnight stay sometime in February. It's usually somewhere nearby, and we do something that we think the other



will enjoy. One year, we watched ballet and boxing on the same day! For our special 20th anniversary this year, the two of us ventured to Mexico for a week. It was a departure from how we usually travel (we usually vacation with friends and family), and it was a great way to celebrate our two decades together.

So, for Valentine's this year, I want to encourage everyone to take some time this month to show a little love and appreciation to the special people in their lives. I recommend handwritten notes (even small ones). A handwritten note is a timeless way to express affection and appreciation. Plus, whoever gets one can save it for whenever a "pick me up" is needed! You never know how much of a difference just a few words can make.

—Michael Packard

# Teach Kids to Navigate Conflict

## A Parent's Guide to Peace

When you hear the word “conflict” in the context of kids, you might think of schoolyard bullies or having to ground your kid. However, children have their own disputes, ranging from toddler tussles over toys to digital duels between pre-teens. While they are undeniably challenging, conflicts provide kids the chance to learn life lessons. They encourage young minds to put on their detective hats, explore new perspectives, reevaluate old ideas, and even cement the bonds of friendship. Use the following strategies to equip your child with the superpower of conflict resolution.

### Empower Peacemakers

Conflict resolution skills are the compass that guides kids through the maze of life's disputes. Here's a map to help your child navigate these tricky waters:

- **Pause and Reflect:** Teach your child the art of taking a deep breath and calming the storm within. Reacting in a frenzy of anger is like tossing gasoline on a fire.
- **Speak Your Truth:** Encourage your child to explain their side of the story in clear and simple words. Understanding each other's viewpoints is key to conflict resolution.
- **Get Creative:** Foster their inner Picasso of problem-solving. Encourage them to brainstorm solutions that cater to everyone's wishes, like a culinary mastermind crafting the perfect dish.
- **Choose Respect:** Teach your child the importance of treating others kindly, even when disagreements threaten to capsize the boat.

These steps help kids patch up the current squabbles and cultivate emotional intelligence — a shield against future conflicts and a bridge to tolerance.

### Foster 'fun' conflict-resolution experiences in the home.

Parents wield the magic wand in conflict resolution play. Organize family activities that mimic real-life conflict scenarios, like board games with rules that spark disagreements. These friendly bouts teach your child the art of keeping their cool under pressure. And don't forget about the power of make-believe! Encourage your child to stage a conflict resolution drama. It's not just fun; it's a crash course in diplomacy.

Remember, every successful conflict your child conquers will give them confidence. By imparting these skills early on, you gift them tools for a lifetime of harmonious interactions, both personally and professionally. So, let's embark on this valuable conflict resolution journey together — the world will be a better place.



# GROUNDHOG DAY REVELATIONS



## How a Movie Inspires Daily Self-Reflection

I've always been fond of *Groundhog Day*, and it's not just about a rodent predicting the weather. The reason behind my affection is all due to the timeless movie, “*Groundhog Day*.” This film holds a unique place in my heart because of its profound lessons about life and personal growth.

The protagonist in the movie is Phil, who is trapped in a time loop, reliving the same day repeatedly. At first, the repetition seems like a curse, but as he navigates through the seemingly endless cycle, he discovers the power of growth and self-improvement. Much like our own journeys, he seizes the opportunity to evolve, learn from mistakes, and become a better version of himself.

This movie does a great job of showing our ability to change as people, but we don't need a *Groundhog Day* scenario to grow. Every day presents us with opportunities to be better than we were yesterday. With just a little introspection, learning from experiences, and making positive changes, we can lead more fulfilling lives.

So, in honor of *Groundhog Day*, let's focus less on predicting the weather and more on our own growth. Let's embrace the idea that each day is a chance to move forward, learn, and become the best version of ourselves. Just like Phil, we can accept the aspects of life that can't be changed and channel our energy into transforming what we can.

If this sounds easier said than done, here are a few things you can do daily to improve over time.

- **Reflect Daily:** Spend a few moments every day to think about what you have been through. Look for things that you can do better and set yourself some easy-to-reach goals.
- **Learn From Mistakes:** Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Instead, view them as opportunities to learn and grow. Take some time to think about what you can learn from the experience.
- **Set Positive Intentions:** Begin each day with a positive attitude and a clear plan for your goals. Think about what you can do to improve yourself and work towards your goals.
- **Express Gratitude:** Take a moment to appreciate the positive aspects of your life. Expressing gratitude can shift your perspective and foster a more optimistic outlook.

# MAKE EVERY DAY BRIGHTER

## The Transformative Impact of Random Acts of Kindness

February 17th is a little holiday dedicated to random acts of kindness. I think about the simple yet powerful impact of doing good without expecting anything in return. It's not just a day on the calendar; it's an opportunity to embrace the spirit of kindness for the sheer joy of making someone's day brighter.

What I find most powerful about the spirit of kindness is how much a small act can affect someone. To illustrate this, I'll use an example from "Les Misérables." Throughout the story, we follow the main character, recently released from prison after two decades. Initially tempted to steal from a priest, his life takes a turn when the priest responds with unexpected kindness, giving him two silver candlesticks instead of condemning him. This simple act inspires him to become a force for good.

In our daily lives, opportunities for random acts of kindness are all around us. It could be holding the door open for someone, helping a parent with kids at the grocery store, or going the extra mile to

assist someone in moving. These acts may seem small, but their effects can be immeasurable.

And random acts of kindness don't need to be grand or planned. They're about seizing the moment to make a positive impact, no matter how small. Sometimes, even the spontaneity and genuine nature of these acts make them truly special.

So, this month, I encourage you to find a way to celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Day and contribute to this collective wave of goodwill. Whether it's a simple gesture or a more significant effort, do it just because. Embrace the spirit of kindness without expecting anything in return.

If you don't know where to start, here are a few ideas:

- Write a heartfelt note and leave it for a stranger to find.
- Offer to take a photo for someone who's struggling with a selfie.
- Leave uplifting messages on sticky notes in public places for others to discover.
- Volunteer your time to a local charity or community organization.
- Compliment a stranger sincerely and see their day light up.

—*Michael Packard*

## TAKE A BREAK

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| Cupid     | Chocolate    | Valentine  |
| Groundhog | Pennsylvania | Winter     |



## Puff Pastry Berry Hearts

Inspired by [Weelicious.com](http://Weelicious.com)

Valentine's Day means heart-shaped everything, even desserts! Bake these puff pastry berry hearts for Valentine's Day or any other day.

### Ingredients

- 1 package frozen puff pastry, defrosted
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries (or berries of your choice)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Unfold the puff pastry and use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut into heart shapes.
2. On a baking sheet, place puff pastry hearts and bake for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown.
3. In a standing mixer, whip the cream on medium-high speed for 2-3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and beat on high for 30 more seconds or until thick and fluffy.
4. Remove hearts from the oven and allow to cool completely. Slice each heart in half between pastry layers to create 2 hearts. Top the bottom half with whipped cream and berries, and place the other half on top to form a sandwich.

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3. A Call to Celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Day This Month  
Puff Pastry Berry Hearts
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## UNLOCK HISTORY'S STRANGEST SECRETS

### *Our Ancestors Were Weird!*

History is more than just a chronicle of battles and treaties; it's a rich tapestry woven with odd and almost unbelievable events that can mystify us now. A dive into the quirky corners of the past can reveal historical anomalies, including ancient beverages and victories from beyond the grave. Besides entertaining us, our history shows our ancestors as multifaceted, creative, and peculiar as we are today.

#### **The First Beer**

In ancient Sumeria, people were not just trailblazers in writing and architecture but also avid brewers. Archaeologists unearthed a 5,000-year-old Sumerian tablet depicting individuals consuming a beer-like substance through reed straws from a shared bowl. This ancient concoction, possibly the earliest known beer recipe, underscores the longstanding human passion for alcohol and communal gatherings.

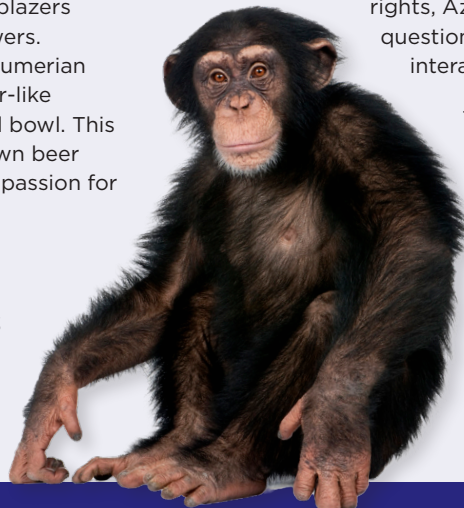
#### **Racing to the Grave**

One of the most astonishing stories in sports history involves jockey Frank Hayes. In a 1923 horse race at Belmont Park, New York, Hayes achieved victory from beyond the grave. Suffering a fatal heart attack mid-race, he miraculously remained in the saddle, and

his horse, Sweet Kiss, crossed the finish line in first place. This extraordinary event remains the sole known instance in sports where a participant posthumously claimed the gold medal.

#### **A Smoking Monkey**

Looking to the East, North Korea's Pyongyang Zoo featured another oddity in 2016: Azalea, a smoking chimpanzee. Trained to ignite and puff on cigarettes, this chimpanzee was a peculiar draw for visitors. In sparking controversy over animal rights, Azalea illustrates the bizarre and often questionable ways humans have historically interacted with animals.



These stories demonstrate that the annals of history are not just repositories of conventional wisdom and significant events but also a collection of the bizarre, the unusual, and the extraordinary. These peculiar tales help us gain a more nuanced and colorful understanding of our collective past, shedding light on the complexity and eccentricity of our history.