

The PACKARD PRESS

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

HAPPY GONDORIAN NEW YEAR!

My First Encounter With Middle-Earth

When I was a little tyke in elementary school, my big sister Priscilla came home from junior high with a thick book called "The Hobbit." It fascinated me immediately. I was an avid 8-year-old reader, but I'd never seen a book that size before! I couldn't resist flipping through the pages and admiring the craggy mountains on the cover.

"What is this?" I asked her, awed.

"The Hobbit," she said, shrugging. "I have to read it for school."

She didn't seem nearly as enthralled by the beautiful book as I was. After a little more wheedling, I discovered Priscilla had all semester to read "The Hobbit." So, I promptly stole it! I curled up in a chair with the book on my lap and immersed myself in the Middle-earth tale of dwarves, dragons, and hobbits.

After years spent enjoying all the Judy Bloom books and choose-your-own-adventure novels I could get my hands on, "The Hobbit" felt like something else entirely. Here was a real adventure! By the time I was finished, my mind was swirling, and Priscilla's paperback was bent-spined and tattered.

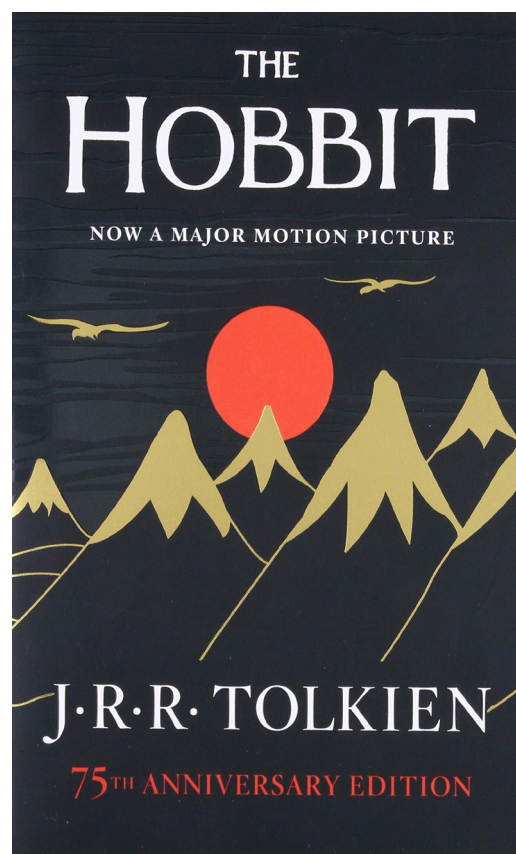
Of course, when it came time for Priscilla to write her book report, she realized she didn't have time to read the book! So, we spent the afternoon working on her assignment together. That became a new, wonderful part of my growing "The Lord of the Rings" memory bank.

I'm sharing this story because, as fellow superfans may know, March 25 is Gondorian New Year! In Middle-earth, the holiday marks the day that the One Ring was destroyed in Mount Doom. Frodo gave the people of Gondor a fresh start, so when Aragorn became the new king of Gondor after Sauron's defeat, it seemed only right that he should adopt the date as a celebration.

"The Hobbit" was my first introduction to Middle-earth, but I've been visiting ever since! When AmyLyn and I were newlyweds, her family gave us as a Christmas gift: all the extended-edition "The Lord of the Rings" movies that had come out by then. We popped them into our DVD player and watched them with friends, pausing every few minutes to talk about the plot and analyze each character's backstory. Sometimes it took us an entire week to watch just one movie! We repeated our ritual every time a new film came out.

I'm still a huge "The Lord of the Rings" fan, so March 25 is a special day in the Packard house. Some years we pull a marathon and watch all the movies to celebrate the occasion, while other years, we watch them around Christmastime. (I've considered the LOTR franchise as Christmas movies for years.) Now, the kids watch Frodo and Samwise alongside AmyLyn and me, keeping the family tradition alive.

I'm glad my little ones have learned to love Middle-earth as much as I do. The books and movies are packed with life lessons as well as adventures. Some of my favorite moments in Lord of the Rings involve Samwise Gamgee. My favorite is from "The Return of the King" when Sam and Frodo are climbing Mount Doom. Frodo collapses, overwhelmed and unable to go any farther, and Sam steps in to help.



"I can't carry it for you," he says, referencing the One Ring, "but I can carry you." It seems silly, but I'm moved to tears every time I watch that part of the movie.

So celebrate Gondorian New Year this March 25th. Maybe you can watch the movies, read one of the books, or even look up a recipe for Lembas Bread and make some.

Or best of all, you can be like Sam to someone who is struggling with a burden that only they can bear, and you help carry them for a while.

—Michael Packard

FEELING THE LUCK OF THE IRISH?

Check Out America's Best St. Patrick's Day Celebrations

As we inch closer to the beginning of spring, nature around us is coming back to life. Soon, the grass and trees will return to their typical green hue if they haven't already. Luckily, you don't need to wait until April to see an abundance of green again. On March 17, we celebrate St. Patrick's Day, and people across the country will dress in green to honor the occasion.

Certain cities in the U.S. go big for St. Patrick's Day. If you've never attended a St. Patrick's Day parade or celebration, maybe this is the year. Here are three cities with St. Patrick's Day celebrations worth checking out.

Chicago, IL

Nobody does St. Patrick's Day quite like Chicago, Illinois. The entire city gets a makeover! This year, on March 11, Chicago will host its St. Patrick's Day parade, which includes dyeing the Chicago River a beautiful shade of emerald green. They'll start tinting the river around 9 a.m., and the color will fade within six hours, so make sure you get there early! Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade is also one of the biggest in the country. You'll see floats, Irish step dancers, and much more.

New Orleans, LA

Once Mardi Gras concludes, all eyes are on St. Patrick's Day in New Orleans, Louisiana. The city hosts a parade on March 11, and it's always quite a spectacle. You'll see the makings of Irish tradition everywhere, including cabbage, onions, and potatoes, so keep your head on a swivel. You can also head to the Irish Channel neighborhood on March 11 to attend an all-day block party. Plenty of green beer will be available at this event, so come ready to celebrate!

New London, WI

Let's say you want to do something slightly toned down but still exciting for St. Patrick's Day. Then, you'll want to check out New London, Wisconsin, for one of the country's most unique St. Paddy's Day celebrations. Leprechauns will change the city signs from New London to New Dublin. The city also puts on an Irish funeral parody in its annual downtown parade.



'I LOVE PACKARD LAW FIRM'

A Retired Bus Driver Shares Her SSD Story

When we first met Devoria Rodriguez, she was a lifelong bus driver proudly working for VIA Metropolitan Transit. But not all was well. Devoria worked the night shift, and she'd recently survived several traumatizing experiences on the job.

She was scared, anxious, and felt sick despite her therapy and medication. Fortunately, it wasn't long before she could retire with her pension. Devoria wanted to get all of her paperwork in order — so she called us. It turned out to be a smart move.

"I worked on Jan. 10, 2022, and on Jan. 11, VIA said I could no longer do the job and had to medically retire!" Devoria recalls. "Thank God for Packard Law Firm, because when I called them, I was expecting to retire in a year or so, and they were like, 'Hey, this is what you can do now. We can do your paperwork, and when you're ready, call us and say you're ready.'"

VIA retired Devoria before she qualified for her pension, so when she called, our team sprang into action to file a Social Security Disability (SSD) claim. Devoria was worried because her friends had struggled to get SSD, but our managing partner, Sam Packard, talked her through the process.

"Sam was so amazing the whole time. He kept in touch with me and kept telling me what I needed to do because I was just freaking out," Devoria says. "I'd never had to apply for disability in my life, so I didn't know what to expect — I was nervous and scared!"

Devoria turned to our library of videos for help. Watching our other clients prepare for their interviews put her at ease. On the day of her interview, Sam told Devoria, "You've got this" — and she did! By December, her first payment was in the bank.

"I called Sam back on Monday and said, 'The money is there!' and he said, 'Merry Christmas!'" Devoria says, laughing.

We were thrilled to give Devoria the best Christmas present ever — and she has been just as generous with us! After we helped her with her claim, Devoria recommended our firm to several of her co-workers.

"I'm so quick to tell everybody about Packard! Go to Packard!" Devoria says. It's the best compliment we can get.

HOW TO SPOT A BRAIN INJURY

Read This if You've Been in a Car Crash!



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), car crashes are one of the leading causes of moderate and severe traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). Our team at Packard Law Firm represents clients with TBIs all the time. These cases are very serious since even a little bit of brain damage is a big deal. Losing just a fraction of your memory, speech, or mental function can change your life forever.

If you or someone you love has been in a car crash recently, you need to learn about TBIs, their symptoms, and what to do if you have one. Here's a quick rundown from our team here.

TBI Symptoms to Watch For

If you pass out during a car crash or can't remember the impact afterward, you may have a TBI. Besides those early warning signs, people with TBIs can also experience dizziness, confusion, headaches, memory loss, difficulty finding the right words while speaking, interrupted speech patterns, personality changes, and memory problems. Any or all of these symptoms might indicate a brain injury.

Why TBIs Often Win Bigger Settlements

TBI cases typically result in bigger settlements because they take into account current and future medical expenses, pain and suffering, and lost wages in addition to punitive damages. Some people are never able to return to their normal level of brain function after a TBI, so the costs can really add up, especially if a commercial vehicle insurance policy or large personal policy is involved. Of course, you need an experienced attorney to get you that settlement.

How to Act on a Potential TBI

If you've been in a car wreck recently and lost consciousness, hit your head, or are experiencing any of the TBI symptoms we outlined, call our office at 210-756-5399. We can look into your case and connect you with medical help! We'll do the same for any of your friends and family in this situation. Call now to protect them from further harm.

—Michael Packard

When one car smashes into another, it shakes up the brains of everyone inside. You can think of your brain like the yolk of an egg sloshing around inside the shell. Any impact will move that yolk — and a really hard hit can cause permanent damage.

TAKE A BREAK



Basketball
Books
Daffodil
Daylight

Guinness
Iditarod
Leprechaun
Popcorn

Rainy
Shamrock
Suffrage
Windy



IRISH PANCAKES

Inspired by TheKitchyKitchen.com

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tbsp white sugar
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, divided

Directions

1. In a bowl, sift the dry ingredients together. Set aside.
2. In a skillet, brown 1 tbsp of butter.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the beaten egg, buttermilk, and browned butter.
4. In a constant stream, add the wet mixture to the dry ingredients while stirring. Do not overbeat!
5. Heat a skillet over medium-low heat. Add 1 tbsp of butter, stir until the skillet is coated, and then add a few large dollops of batter (about 3 inches wide) to the pan. Do not overcrowd.
6. Cook 4-5 minutes a side, until golden brown and cooked through. Serve with butter, jam, and syrup.

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- 3 Brain Injury Red Flags
Irish Pancakes
- 4 Do You Clean Your Washing Machine Filter?

HAVE YOU CLEANED YOUR WASHING MACHINE FILTER?

Most of us may know that after you dry a load of laundry in the dryer, you should clean out the lint filter to ensure everything continues to work properly. But did you know your washing machine has a filter you should clean as well?

What is a washing machine filter, and where is it located?

When you throw your clothes into your washing machine, they can have lint, loose hair strands, and other particles on them that could clog your washing machine. But your filter will catch these items and ensure your washing machine continues to work correctly.

Since all washing machines are different, it's best to consult your owner's manual or search your unit online for more information. Common places where your filter could be located are in front of the unit behind a hatch, at the end of a drainage hose, under the center agitator, or in the drum's lid.

Why and when should you clean it?

If you don't clean your washing machine filter, your appliance won't work as effectively. Your clothes can smell musty, and you may notice detergent or lint residue on your clothes when you take them out. In addition, the filter can develop mildew and mold, which can seep through your clothes.

Professionals recommend cleaning and inspecting your filter every three months. But be sure to consult your owner's manual for more information. However, if you notice your machine is draining water slowly, smell strange odors, and notice lint or detergent residue, it may be time to clean the filter.



How do you clean the filter?

You first want to remove the filter from your unit and wipe away any lint, hair, and debris with a damp washcloth. Then, use the cloth to wipe the inside of the filter housing unit. Next, fill a bowl with hot water, add a teaspoon of dish soap or laundry detergent, and soak the filter for 10 minutes. After soaking, use a soft-bristle toothbrush to scrub the filter and remove additional buildup. Finally, place the filter back in the washing machine and run a short wash cycle.

If you notice your washing machine is still having issues cleaning your clothes, contact your local technician for more assistance. They can do a diagnostic test on your unit and come up with a solution.