

The PACKARD PRESS

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

A Message for Dustin: 'You Were Loved'

*Remembering a Remarkable Friend, Attorney,
Teacher, and Mentor*

After sending last month's newsletter about a tragic police shooting, I wish I could bring you a happier story this month. Unfortunately, I can't do that because our whole firm is grieving. This summer, we lost one of the finest attorneys on our team far too soon: My brother-in-law, Dustin Draper, passed away on July 30.

It's still hard to believe he's gone. Dustin was married to my baby sister, Sabrina, for 15 years, so he was a big part of the Packard family. When he passed, he left her behind, along with their four beautiful children. I know he cherished all of them beyond words.

After Dustin's death, I was one of the people tasked with going through his things. While sorting through paperwork and other mementos in his office, I came across a big pile of cards, and I couldn't resist flipping through them. The more I did, the heavier my heart felt.

There were thank-you cards, birthday cards, boss's day cards, and handwritten thank-you notes on little pieces of paper. Some were from Dustin's clients, and others were from his friends, family, and coworkers. Near the bottom of the pile, I even found cards from his time working as a teacher in inner-city Houston! He did that years ago, before becoming a lawyer, but he still kept those notes from students and parents. Each one talked about the positive impact he had on their lives and how much they appreciated him. Scanning the cards, I thought, "My goodness — what a good man."

Those wonderful cards truly reflected Dustin's life: It was a gift. His brilliance was matched only by his kindness and humility. As a dedicated professional, he was a true advocate for his clients. He was also a great partner, father, and friend. His memory will forever live on in my heart and in the hearts of our whole Packard family.

Dustin made everyone feel loved and special. His funeral on Aug. 5 was packed with judges, coworkers, other lawyers, friends from the neighborhood, folks from church, and other people in the community. Scanning the crowd, I spotted a surprising face: It was Jimmy, the security guard from the courthouse! After a moment of astonishment, I realized that seeing Jimmy felt right. Of course, he'd come out to see Dustin — even though Jimmy is "just" a security guard, I'm sure Dustin said hello to him before every trial and knew the names of his wife and kids.

When our firm shared the news of Dustin's passing on Facebook, almost 100 people commented with condolences and stories. Here are a few that touched me.

"Thank you, Dustin, for believing in me, for your mentorship, and your confidence in me. Always very gentle and kind. You will always be remembered."

—Jancel

"Dustin helped me in recent months more than I think he knew. He was always upbeat when we spoke and truly interested in and understanding of whatever you had to say or were going through."

—Jared

"Thank you, Dustin. For your kindness, your mentorship, your trust, and your friendship. I'll never forget."

—Emanuel

"I'm grateful for Dustin. He demonstrated such kindness and professionalism throughout my case. He helped me through a deeply challenging time in my life, and I don't know if he knew how much that meant to me."

—Andrea

"Dustin had the best spirit about him. His energy, enthusiasm, and fun-loving spirit made you feel welcomed in his presence."

—Estacy

"One of my biggest inspirations growing up, one of my favorite teachers. Praying for his family. May he rest in the heavenly kingdom."

—Luis

If I could speak to Dustin one more time, I would tell him, "You were loved, appreciated, and valued." I think he'd like to hear that.

Rest in peace, dear friend. You are deeply missed.

—Michael Packard

3 Reasons 536 Was the Worst Year in Human History

When Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, it poured so much dust into the sky that the sun over Eastern Washington went dark. Ash drifted overhead, traveling into neighboring Idaho and forcing temperatures down by as much as 15 degrees F.

Locals spent a few weeks scared and shivering under dull skies. They had no way of knowing it, but they were experiencing a tiny fraction of the horror humans felt back in 536 — a time that Harvard University historian Michael McCormick once called “the worst year to be alive.”

For decades, the year 536 was a historical mystery. Records showed that it was a terrible time, stricken by the triple threat of:

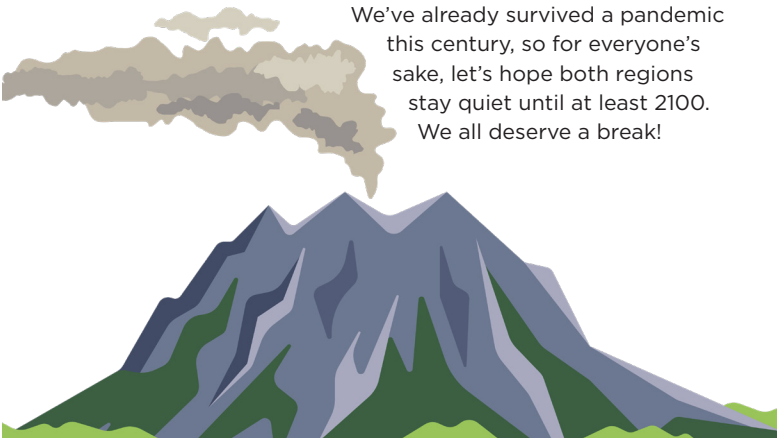
1. Unexplained, unending darkness
2. Unseasonably frigid weather
3. Crop failures and famines

Those horrors and the economic and political instability they brought ravaged the globe from Ireland to China. Although 536 was arguably the worst year, things didn't get better for more than a decade. In fact, they got worse in some areas! In 541, the Plague of Justinian — the first bubonic plague pandemic — appeared in Egypt and spread through Europe, killing roughly one-third of the continent's population.

For decades, archaeologists and historians have puzzled over the tipping point in 536. “What went wrong,” they wondered, “to make the sun go dark and trigger snow in summer?” It was a head-scratcher until 2018. That year, researchers finally solved the mystery with help from, of all things, a Swiss glacier! The glacial ice was riddled with volcanic glass. Further study revealed enormous volcanic eruptions in 536, 540, and 547 likely caused “The Dark Ages.” It wasn't just metaphorically dark — it was literally dark thanks to ash blotting out the sun and coating people's homes, skin, and clothing.

Scientists have traced the 540 eruption to Ilopango, a volcano in El Salvador that's currently inactive, but they're still hunting for the source of the 536 eruption. As we write this, volcanoes in Iceland and Alaska are the most likely candidates.

We've already survived a pandemic this century, so for everyone's sake, let's hope both regions stay quiet until at least 2100. We all deserve a break!



THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE TURKEY!

Get a Jumpstart to Win Our Annual Thanksgiving Giveaway

It's that time of year again: Our Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway is back!

As is tradition, we're giving away THREE free turkeys to families like yours this season. Hopefully, a free bird will make hosting Thanksgiving a little easier and cheaper. This year, we're also doing something new: We're opening our contest early so you have a chance to send in your winning entry before the holiday craziness starts!

To enter, we ask that you share **three things you're grateful for this year**, one for each turkey in the giveaway. You can put your name in the hat by **texting your thankful list to 210-756-5399 or scanning the QR code on this page**. Just make sure you do it before **Sunday, Nov. 19** (the earlier, the better)! You can also invite your friends and family to enter by sharing this newsletter with them. Everyone is welcome.

Once you send in your entry, keep an eye on your phone, your email, and our Facebook page for an announcement of the winners. We'll draw names on Monday, Nov. 20, and work with you to ensure you get your turkey by Thanksgiving.

You can find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/ThePackardLawFirm](https://www.facebook.com/ThePackardLawFirm).

We've hosted this Thanksgiving contest in our newsletter for two years now, and it's one of our favorite annual traditions. Nothing makes us happier than scrolling through our texts and emails to read the things you're grateful for. When you send in your message, feel free to be as traditional or creative as you want. Whether you're thankful for your cat or relieved your daughter has grown out of her terrible twos, we'd love to hear about it!

Remember, when you're ready to enter, text your gratitude list to 210-756-5399 or scan the QR code on this page. Our whole firm could use a pick-me-up right now, so we can't wait to hear from you.

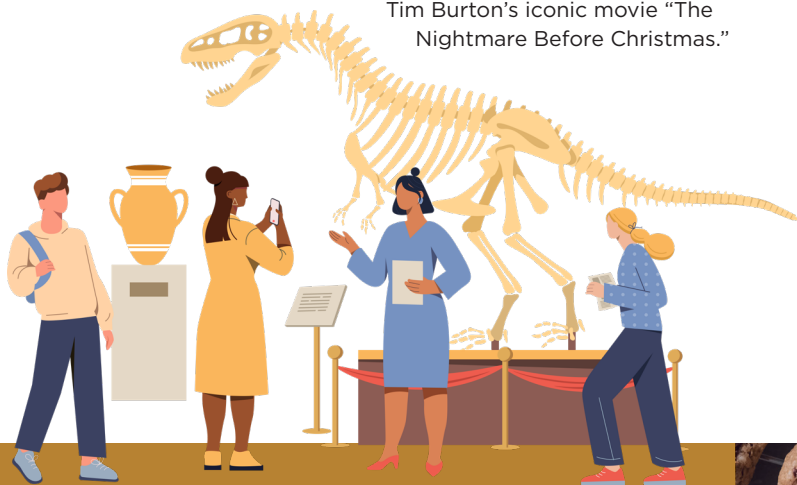


Enjoy Local Museums Without Breaking the Bank

EXPLORE THESE 4 FREE OF CHARGE!

Want to escape your day-to-day grind for a while? You're in luck! The San Antonio area is full of museums and galleries where you can immerse yourself in other times, cultures, and experiences. Even better, many of them regularly offer free admission — including the ones we've listed here! Plan a visit in October to celebrate National Museums and Galleries Month.

McNay Art Museum (McNayArt.org) - Art lovers, this one's for you! The McNay Art Museum was Texas's first modern art museum, and it's housed in a gorgeous Spanish colonial revival house. You can wander through galleries filled with paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, art glass, miniature stage sets, and more. Visit now to see the "Dreamland" exhibit based on Tim Burton's iconic movie "The Nightmare Before Christmas."



McNay offers free general admission (not including special exhibitions) every Thursday from 4-9 p.m. and the first Sunday of the month from noon-5 p.m. Recipients of SNAP, WIC, and MAP can always explore free with proof of assistance and identification.

The DoSeum (TheDoSeum.org) - This is the perfect museum to visit with your kids or grandkids. It's packed with hands-on exhibits that will encourage them to experiment, play, and create in a safe environment. They can explore light, sound, force, and motion or build their own city! To access The DoSeum for free, visit TheDoSeum.org/free-family-nights and register for one of their Free Family Nights on the first Monday of each month.

Area 21 (SAMSAT.org/area21) - Are you intrigued by outer space, robots, and virtual reality? If so, you should head to Area 21 for an always-free self-guided museum experience. Area 21 is located at the Boeing Center at Tech Port at Port San Antonio, and it's extremely underrated. Bring your family to drive a robot through a maze, experiment with augmented reality hands, and learn about aerospace development, coding, and more.

The Witte Museum (WitteMuseum.org) - This list wouldn't be complete without a nod to our city's most popular museum. The Witte is a family-friendly spot that teaches kids and adults alike about the wonders of nature, science, and other cultures. Visit on a Tuesday between 3-7 p.m. to explore dinosaurs, Texas history, and human anatomy for free.

TAKE A BREAK



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| Candy | Haunted | Vampire |
| Costume | Moon | Werewolf |
| Gourds | Raven | Witch |
| Halloween | Tricks | Zombie |



The Best Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups (12-oz package) semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. In a small bowl, combine flour, baking soda, and salt.
3. In a large bowl, beat butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla extract until creamy.
4. To creamed mixture, add eggs one at a time, beating until blended.
5. Gradually beat in flour mixture.
6. Stir in chocolate chips.
7. Arrange dough in rounded teaspoonfuls on ungreased baking sheets.
8. Bake 8-10 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on baking sheets for 2 minutes; move to wire racks to cool completely.

1. Michael's Heartfelt Tribute to Dustin
2. Step Into 536: 'The Worst Year to Be Alive'

The PLF Turkey Giveaway Is Back!
3. 4 Local Museums You Can Visit for Free

The Best Chocolate Chip Cookies
4. The Troubling Saga of Sherri Papini's Disappearance

The Packard Family Is Here to Help Your Family! *Personal Injury | Social Security Disability | Car Accidents | Special Needs Planning*

The Shocking Truth Behind Sherri's Kidnapping Revealed

Sherri Papini vanished out of thin air in November 2016. The day she went missing, her husband, Keith Papini, came home expecting to see his wife and kids but found the residence eerily empty. Keith called the children's day care to ask when his wife picked them up, but they informed him she never did. While the kids were safe, Sherri was missing.

Three weeks passed before Sherri was finally found alone on a freeway nearly 146 miles from her home on Thanksgiving Day. She was cut and bruised, her long hair chopped short, and her back branded with a Bible verse.

When the police questioned Sherri, she was hesitant and frightened. She claimed two Hispanic women abducted her, took her to an unknown location, chained her up, and tortured her before planning to traffic her. The story horrified the community and made many Hispanic women fear wrongful persecution.

At the time, male DNA was found on Sherri's clothing, despite her insistence no men were involved in her kidnapping. Years later, in 2020,

the authorities used genetic DNA technology to track down the man, Sherri's ex-boyfriend, James Reyes. This was when Sherri's tale began to fall apart. Reyes was questioned by police, who exposed the truth about Sherri's vanishing act.

He revealed that Sherri told him her husband, Keith, was abusing her, and she needed his help to escape. She convinced him to brand her, but all her other injuries were self-inflicted. Reyes had no idea about Sherri's fabricated story involving two Hispanic kidnapers. At first, Sherri stuck with her story when questioned again but eventually admitted it was all a hoax.

In 2023, Sherri Papini was charged with false statements and mail fraud and sentenced to 18 months in prison for her long-winded lies that wasted police resources and federal financial assistance. Her story resulted in numerous innocent Hispanic women being wrongly questioned by authorities. But now, these women can rest easy knowing the case is finally closed.

