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Country Editor

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A summer treat that lasts the year

by Daniel Baldwin

The holiday season has arrived, and many people are baking and eating holiday treats (apple pie, Christmas cookies, and gingerbread houses) once again. During the cold season, most people prefer eating sweets that just came out of the oven, but there are a few people who prefer eating one special and cold treat that is usually served during the summer time.

No matter how cold it is outside, people still scream for ice cream.

"Ice cream is always good no matter what time of the year it is," Syracuse resident Alex Dawley said. "Ice cream doesn't go out of style."

Ice cream, no matter soft or hard, has its advantages when eaten out in the cold. Because of the cold temperatures, people do not have to worry about it melting off the cone. It is even a good topping for a warm apple pie.

While some people enjoy eating ice cream during this time of year, there are other people who do not like eating it in an ice cream parlor or outside in the cold. Dawley said that he prefers

getting this dairy treat at a grocery store and eating it at his own house.

"I would probably not go to an ice cream shop on a cold day," Dawley said. "I always have ice cream in the freezer at home."

But it is difficult to get a soft-served ice cream cone and frozen yogurt because a majority of the ice cream parlors have shut down during the winter. But not all the ice cream shops, around Central New York, are closed during the holiday season.

The Knight Spot, in Frankfort, is one of these places that serve soft and hard ice cream to its customers all year long.

"I've been doing it since 1983," restaurant owner Alex Palumbo said. "The restaurant is opened (during the winter) anyways, so we (restaurant employees) said why don't we serve it. We have all the ice cream equipment. It's not as busy as it is in the summer, but people still come and get it (during the winter)."

At the start of the fall season, the Knight Spot serves unique ice cream flavors that you would not normally get in the

summer.

"We do not have any special ice cream flavors during the holidays, but in the fall we have pumpkin (flavored ice cream)," Palumbo said. "We have apple pie ice cream, which tastes exactly like apple pie. It's delicious."

Hoopla serves a wide variety of frozen yogurt flavors. This shop is also open during the winter season, and according to Morgan Money, manager for the Hoopla parlor in Utica, this store alone has had a good amount of customers during the winter months.

"The winter is busier than our summer season," Money said. "One day I came here and it was the middle of the winter. It was -3 degrees outside, and that was one of the busiest days I've had because people just love yogurt."

Money said the self-served yogurt bar and customer support are the main reasons why people keep coming here after the summer.

The summer fun may be over, but that does not mean that people should stop eating the classic summer treats like ice cream.

To Your Good Health

by Keith Roach, M.D.

Which diet is the right diet?

Dear Dr. Roach: I am taking Zetia and niacin for extremely high cholesterol and triglycerides. Exactly what type of diet should I be on to lower my cholesterol and triglycerides? Many of the processed (cheese, ice cream, cookies, etc.) fat-free, cholesterol-free foods are high in sugar. Should I be on the South Beach Diet or a strictly vegetarian diet? How many calories, carbohydrates and fat grams should I consume daily to lose weight? I am a 5-foot-4-inch-tall female who weighs 160 pounds. When I was on the Atkins diet for more than 20 years, I was always slim and had no health problems. Thank you. — J.D.

Answer: You are asking how to lower cholesterol, but I think what you really want to know is what diet reduces risk of heart disease. The right question is: What diet should you be on that will help you be healthier in the long term? All of the diets you mention have their strengths and weaknesses. Almost everyone agrees that avoiding sugar and processed grains is a key

factor in reducing heart disease risk, but, despite decades of research and controversy, there isn't agreement on the best diet for overall health.

I think it's possible to take some wisdom from all the diets you mention, and to avoid some of their potential pitfalls. Both the Atkins and South Beach plans avoid simple sugars and excess carbohydrates, and I would emphasize that red meat and saturated fats should be kept at reasonable levels. A vegetarian diet emphasizes vegetables and fruits, but some people will gain weight on this diet, especially if they aren't careful to choose good sources of protein and healthy fat, or choose refined carbohydrate sources like the cookies you mention.

I have often recommended the Mediterranean diet, since there is high-quality evidence that it reduces heart disease risk. This diet calls for lots of vegetables and fruits, lean proteins such as fish, healthy fat such as from olive oil and nuts, and whole grains.

The medications you are taking, ezetimibe (Zetia) and niacin, do lower

cholesterol, but it isn't certain whether either of them really reduces risk of heart disease. The statin class of drugs is best shown to reduce heart disease risk in people of above-average risk.

Dear Dr. Roach: I have a difference of opinion with a friend. One of us contends that taking tablets one at a time with a short period in between allows the full strength to get into your system. The other contends that it doesn't matter, and swallowing everything together is just as effective. Your comment? — C.G.

Answer: With only a few exceptions, I agree with person No. 2. The body is very good at absorbing medications, whether you take them a few seconds, minutes or hours apart. The exceptions are when one medicine blocks the absorption of another; for example, calcium prevents absorption of tetracycline antibiotics. Some antacids block absorption of many medications. Your pharmacist can tell you whether you should take medications spaced widely from one another.

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Christmas tree varieties and care

An evergreen tree decked out in lights and ornaments is one of the universal symbols of the holiday season. The Christmas tree tradition is believed to have originated in Germany in the 15th or 16th centuries, when trees were decorated with edibles, such as nuts and fruits. They were later decorated with candles and eventually lights.

Through the centuries, people have trekked to

The eastern redcedar is not a true cedar tree, but a member of the juniper family. This tree can make a great cut tree with a homespun look and a pungent fragrance.

- **Leyland Cypress:** This cypress is one of the more popular Christmas trees in the southeastern United States. The tree will be very dark green to almost gray in color. It has little aroma. Some people choose the Ley-

Scotch pines also are quite prevalent thanks to the tree's adaptability to a wide range of climates.

- **Eastern White Pine:** A delicate green color and long needles are found on this tree. Another popular pine, the rich fragrance of the white pine may make it preferable to those who like their homes to smell of evergreen.

- **Douglas Fir:** The Douglas fir is one of the foremost Christmas tree

species in the United States. It has soft needles that are dark green in color. Those needles radiate in all directions from the branches to give the tree a full look. The needles, when crushed, have a sweet fragrance. Douglas firs tend to live long when cut.

- **Fraser Fir:** Another popular fir for Christmas is the Fraser fir. The needles are bicolored, with dark green on top and

silver on the bottom. More fragrant than its cousin, the Douglas, the Fraser also boasts a slender profile, which makes it suitable for smaller rooms.

Christmas tree maintenance

Nothing can guarantee the health and appearance of a tree after it is brought into a home. But choosing a recently cut tree that has good needle retention can help. Here are other tips for a long-lasting tree.

- Use a sharp saw to

cut an inch off of the trunk base to remove the sappy covering that forms from cutting. This will improve water intake.

- Fill a tree stand reservoir with warm water. Expect the tree to drink heavily in the beginning.

- Keep the reservoir filled every day and check to see how much water the tree is using.

- Place the tree far from heaters or other drying sources.



Through the centuries, people have trekked to forests, Christmas tree farms and commercial lots to pick the perfect trees for their holiday displays.

forests, Christmas tree farms and commercial lots to pick the perfect trees for their holiday displays. The National Christmas Tree Association says more than 33 million real trees are purchased each year, making the tree business a billion-dollar industry. While there are scores of evergreen varieties, certain tree types are more popular than others and thus more available for purchase. The following are some of the more popular trees come Christmastime.

- **Eastern Redcedar:** Branches of the tree are compact and form a pyramid-shaped crown. The trees should be a dark, shiny green color.

land because it does not produce sap, which is great for those with sap allergies.

- **Colorado Blue Spruce:** An attractive blue-green foliage and a good symmetrical form is what attracts many people to the blue spruce. The Colorado Blue Spruce has an excellent natural shape and requires little pruning to look like the perfect Christmas tree. It's not very fragrant, but the tree needles may give off an unpleasant odor when crushed.

- **Scotch Pine:** A classic conical shape and very good needle retention help make the Scotch pine a popular tree to cut for the holidays.

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Tips for visiting a store Santa

Christmastime is filled with many different traditions. Many people decorate their homes with Christmas trees, and songs are sung with family members who come from near and far to share gifts and companionship.

Families with young children often make visiting Santa Claus a part of their annual traditions. During the holiday season, Santa can be found taking up residence in department stores and malls across the country. Thousands of children and their parents will wait in line to get some face time with jolly old St. Nick. The following are a handful of ways to make kids' visits with Santa even more pleasant.

- Do a test run. If your child has not taken a photo with Santa before, he or she may be frightened and the result will be a poor photograph. The beard and the red coat coupled with the fact that kids are sitting on a stranger's lap can be terrifying for youngsters. Acclimate your child to the experience by visiting the mall to see Santa and become familiar with what he looks like and how he acts. It may take a couple of visits before your child is ready to wait in line for the real visit.

- Go off-peak. Visit Santa when the store just opens or when lines are not as long, such as during school hours or dinner time. This should cut down on the wait and create a less tense experience. Confirm visiting hours so you don't arrive only to find he's out to lunch or feeding his reindeer. Do not schedule anything after the Santa visit, so you don't feel rushed.

- Dress comfortably. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing so neither you nor the kids will be uncomfortable. The goal is to look nice for the photo, but not at the expense of the children's comfort level. And while you should be comfortable as well, be sure to look presentable, in the event you have to hop into the photo if that's the only way your son or daughter will tolerate the experience.

- Pack some supplies. Bring snacks and drinks for the kids so hunger does not make them antsy. Bring along a change of clothes in case someone spills food or spits up before your turn.

- Get Santa recommendations. Ask friends and neighbors which Santas they visit. Many stores will have a Santa on hand, but not every Santa is as adept at handling children. You want someone who is used to making children feel welcome and comfortable.

Above all, try to have a good time and don't expect perfection. Sometimes the best Santa-visit moments are the ones that are unrehearsed.



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by Healthy Exchanges
Holiday Bars

If ever there was a time of the year when plates of cookies are a "must," it's during the holiday season. Those cookies keep all the boys and girls (and their elders) on their best behavior so their wish list from Santa just might be fulfilled.

1 (8-ounce) can reduced-fat crescent rolls

1 (8-ounce) package fat-free cream cheese

1 egg or equivalent in egg substitute

Sugar substitute to equal 1/3 cup sugar, suitable for baking

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

2 tablespoons mini chocolate chips

1. Heat oven to 350 F. Spray a 9-by-9-inch cake pan with butter-flavored cooking spray. Unroll and pat half of the crescent rolls into prepared cake pan.

2. In a medium bowl, stir cream cheese with a spoon until soft. Add egg, sugar substitute and vanilla extract. Mix well to combine. Stir in walnuts. Pour mixture evenly into cake pan.

3. Pat remaining crescent rolls flat, being sure to seal perforations and carefully arrange over top of filling. Bake for 25 minutes. Evenly sprinkle chocolate chips over top and continue baking for 5 minutes.

4. Place cake pan on a wire rack and allow to cool completely. Cut into 16 bars. Makes 8 (2 bars each) servings.

* Each serving equals: 160 calories, 8g fat, 7g protein, 15g carb., 41mg sodium, 0g Fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 Starch, 1 Meat, 1 Fat.

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Workplace Emergency Plans for the Individual

Emergency planning extends beyond the arrangements that you make to keep your family safe and healthy at home. "In your family's general emergency plan, include an emergency workplace plan. Include instructions on how you will handle your health concerns and how you will contact your family or care for your children when you are at work and an emergency occurs," said Diane Ward, RN of Herkimer County Public Health.

"Because many people spend most of their time each day at their job, it makes sense to be prepared and have a workplace emergency plan that deals with your needs," she said. Ms. Ward said nearly all workplaces have emergency plans for their employees.

"It's important to know what the plan is and how it affects you. Be familiar with that plan by participating in emergency drills and evacuations. That way, you will know what to do if a real emergency occurs. Also, let your employer know if you need special accommodations or assistance, such as walking down the stairwell during a building evacuation. These procedures can also be practiced during the drill," she said.

Your emergency workplace plan should work in conjunction with your employer's plan. Your plan should include information on your health concerns, how you communicate with or locate your family if you become separated, and what provisions you need to make.

Consider the following checklist as you develop your personal workplace plan.

- Evaluate your workplace: Know where there are safe places (e.g., in the stairwells, under heavy tables or desks, and corners of rooms away from windows) and dangerous places (e.g., near windows, and heavy furniture and equipment that may get knocked over) around your work area.
- Know the locations of fire extinguishers, first aid equipment, and fire

- alarms in your office, as well as any shared spaces.
- Post all emergency numbers in a location that is visible and accessible.
- Be familiar with your internal emergency broadcasting system. Be familiar with the name of the person and/or department who will give official instructions. Notify them if you have a disability that prevents you from seeing, hearing or understanding that emergency communication system.
- Know who are the floor

- wardens and other first aid attendants. If you will need assistance of any kind, let them know now, before an emergency occurs.
- Know the safe evacuation routes from your work area. Contact your floor warden or security staff if you don't know; if routes have not been established, or if you need assistance using these routes.
- Be aware of co-workers and your customers with special needs that might need your help.

- If you have a disability or will need assistance, know who can help you and plan ahead. Ask a person, or a group of people who you can rely on and trust, if they will be able to help you during an emergency.
- Make Personal Provisions: Arrange with your family to have an out-of-area telephone contact to help coordinate your family's whereabouts.
- Familiarize yourself with your children's day-care and/or school

- emergency plan and policies. Plan how your children will be cared for if your family is separated.
- Have emergency supplies available. Remember that power could be disrupted, water could be contaminated and phone lines could be damaged. Your emergency kit should be able to sustain you for at least 72 hours.
- Assemble a workplace emergency kit. Consider including: comfortable walking shoes; high-energy food bar; warm

- jacket; foil water pouches or bottled water; first aid supplies; medications; personal medical information; back-up durable equipment and spare eyeglasses; flashlight with fresh batteries, and a working AM/FM portable radio. Keep this kit in an easily accessible place.
- For more information on workplace emergency plans, call Herkimer County Public Health at 315-867-1610.

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UPS	Dec. 16	Ship 2-Day Air by Dec. 22 or Next-Day Air as late as Dec. 23 for delivery by Dec. 24.	UPS Stores nationwide. Go to ups.com or call 800-789-4623 to find a location or schedule pickup.	www.ups.com; 1-800-PICK-UPS
Fed Ex	Dec. 18 for all FedEx Ground packages.	Overnight by Dec. 23; 2-Day Air by Dec. 22 for delivery Dec. 24; big spenders can get same-day Christmas Day delivery in some areas.	Any FedEx Office location or FedEx authorized shipper.	www.fedex.com; 1-800-GO-FEDEX

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December 18, 2015

Hello Again,

The year was 1941, the day December 7. America the idealistic land of the free, home of the brave met its first attacking foreign enemy, only the lack of a national security force was missing. The innocence of our great American Dream was invaded.

The little bitty island nation of Japan sent a fleet of aircraft carriers loaded with bomb-carrying airplane fighters several thousands of Pacific Ocean miles with a singular aim — bomb and attack Pearl Harbor.

We were not prepared. Our military and federal government did not have any fore warning of the Giant Japanese fleet until it was too late. The Japanese planes attacked like a skein of killer bees, sunk or damaged eight U.S. battleships and another 12 ships, including destroyers and cruisers. The number of aircraft that were completely destroyed or seriously damaged during the Japanese attack accounted to over 300. Nearly 3,000 Americans were, killed, rather murdered.

The U.S. had to wake up. Our Pearl Harbor, had been attacked and most of our Navy Ships and aircraft had been destroyed and Americans were killed. In all probability the only reason the mainland remained safe was that our country was thousands of miles away from Japan.

Why are we taking time out of our busy lives to rehash the bombing of Pearl Harbor? It is a fact that in the year 2015 — 74 years later we are facing a similar situation. The U.S. has been attacked again.

In 1941, we had a president. Franklin Delano Roosevelt — a constitution with Bill of Rights, 48 states, and a Federal Government including a Supreme Court, Senate and House of Representatives with a paired down military. We were not expecting or prepared for an invasion.

I find it impossible to believe that the

huge Japanese fleet traveled all of those thousands of miles and our military or president did not know about it.

Prior to the attack what did Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our president, know or choose not to do, we will never know. We do know as Commander in Chief he was not prepared to meet an enemy.

Now let's chat about today. It seems we have received plenty of advance warning. The new world ISIS has shown their hand and are we basically ignoring the danger again?

The United States is the most powerful nation the world has ever known. Already we should have taken the lead to harness all of the countries in a plan to smash ISIS. Nothing less than proper timely leadership will work. It appears Mr. Obama supported by Hillary Clinton is willing to wait and see.



Both President Obama and Hillary Clinton are masters at switching the important "today topic" over to a futuristic "no solution problem." In this case they are advocating or even suggesting that we Americans are abusing or at least treating all Muslims as our enemy. This is not the truth.

A growing enemy known as ISIS or ISIL using our ignorance concerning the Muslim faith are attempting to stir up a very serious problem between worldwide Muslims and all of the remainder of the world. Most of the members of ISIS or ISIL are of the Muslim faith. But — with a big but — most of the worldwide Muslims are not part of or supporting the ISIS mad men.

If these mad members of ISIS can convince the millions of Muslims to join their effort to control the remainder of the world, ISIS in fact will control the entire world. Now all they have to do is convince a large contingent of countries to run against the true Muslim Faith. Our enemy is in fact ISIS, not the Muslim faith.

Back in the Hill Country, the local farm families were so penny conscious, that they would squeeze each nickel until the buffalo grunted.

Home cures for popular ailments such as hang nail, He bee Gee bees, loose dental plates, fallen arches and most others were in for a dose of honey and vinegar, water saturate with baking soda or a mustard plaster. Some used their favorite ailment as an excuse to sip from a bottle of moonshine. They claimed that moonshine was best. It didn't really cure anything but after a few sips you didn't mind what you were suffering from.

Hard fermented cider was a good substitute for the hard stuff. Some used it daily just in case they might be coming down with some ailment or other.

Lately we have chatted about our enemy called ISIS — it is possible that tucked away up here in northern New



York we will never encounter one of those mad crazy dog killers. However, hundreds if not thousands now live with a mad dog killer, one you cannot even shoot to get rid of. It's called a cigarette. This date is Dec. 8, 2015; on Dec. 8, 2014 my only son surrendered his life to cancer caused by smoking cigarettes. He was only 53 years old. Please, I do not have any desire to stick my nose in your business. I just plain do not want to hear of you going through the terrible life-robbing pain caused by cancer. The people you will leave behind will never stop hurting. Quit smoking now while you can.

Every Sunday you miss attending church you miss a grand opportunity to enjoy and meet new friends. The message you hear based on the Bible will give you strength and add to your happiness.

Draw a line through the expression Happy Season and add a true meaning — Merry Christmas!

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Make holiday decorating easier this year

It is not the holiday season until homes, stores and town centers are decorated in lights and tinsel. When entire neighborhoods are enhanced by bows and animated figurines, the celebratory tone is set and decorations can trigger happy feelings associated with holiday gatherings.

Some people find holiday decorating enjoyable and eagerly anticipate taking out storage containers and sorting through all of their memory-laden trinkets, while others are less enthusiastic about readying their homes for the season. No matter which group you fall into, the following are some simple tips to make holiday decorating easier.

- Plan to decorate on a day when you do not have any other responsibilities. Choose to decorate on a day when you can devote your full attention to decorating, avoiding a day when you might be distracted by other things. If you prefer to decorate alone, ask a friend to watch the kids or have a spouse take them out of the house for a few hours. If decorating is a family event, find a day when everyone's schedules are clear.

- Take out the decorations the day prior. Hauling boxes and containers from the attic or basement can take a while.

Take some time to move all of the decorating items to a main floor of the house the day or night before your decorating marathon. This way you won't get discouraged or tired by the task even before the real decorating has begun.

- Put the tree up first. The Christmas tree is the a focal point of holiday decorations, so set up the tree and decorate it before you get started on decorating the rest of the house. If you do not get to all of your other decorating, at least the tree will be ready and your home will still have some holiday appeal. Once the lights are on, decorating the tree is a great activity for keeping the kids busy while you handle other jobs.

- Divide and conquer. Nothing makes holiday decorating go faster than delegating decorating tasks. Assign specific tasks to your helpers. Put one person in charge of decorating the living room while another handles the outside lights, wreaths and inflatable items.

- Turn on the tunes. Working to music frequently takes your mind off of the work and will help pass the time more quickly. Have your favorite holiday playlist at the ready and turn up the volume. Sing along to the carols or contemporary

songs while you are elbow-deep in decorations.

- Take some breaks. Working hungry or tired may lead to sloppy work or frustration. There's little chance of untangling a knot in the lights with your patience in tact if you haven't eaten for hours. Plan some time for

lunch while you sit and rest. Survey the work you've done and make a list of the next steps.

After the hard work of decorating, you'll likely have a sense of accomplishment. Now it's time to enjoy the holiday scene and prepare for the excitement of the weeks ahead.

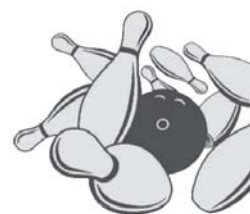


Follow a few strategies to make easy work of holiday decorating.



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Whatchamacallits

This week's item is a combined ladle and mold for creating lead hammers.

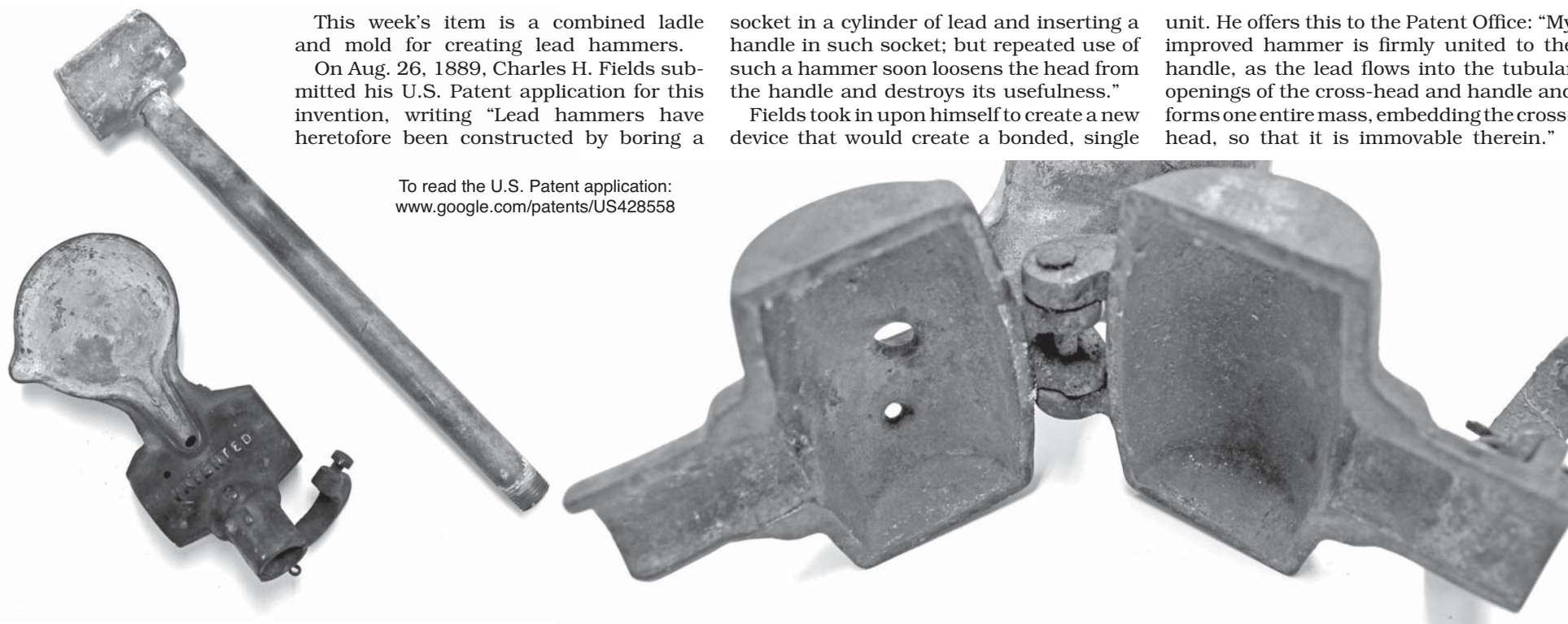
On Aug. 26, 1889, Charles H. Fields submitted his U.S. Patent application for this invention, writing "Lead hammers have heretofore been constructed by boring a

socket in a cylinder of lead and inserting a handle in such socket; but repeated use of such a hammer soon loosens the head from the handle and destroys its usefulness."

Fields took in upon himself to create a new device that would create a bonded, single

unit. He offers this to the Patent Office: "My improved hammer is firmly united to the handle, as the lead flows into the tubular openings of the cross-head and handle and forms one entire mass, embedding the cross-head, so that it is immovable therein."

To read the U.S. Patent application:
www.google.com/patents/US428558



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Paw's Corner

by Sam Mazzotta

Pet Insurance Checklist

Dear Paw's Corner: My veterinarian recommended

that I buy pet insurance for my puppy, "Max." Should I purchase the insurance that the vet recommends, or can I choose my own policy? -- New Owner in Nashville

Dear New Owner: Pet owners should always compare pet insurance policies to see what will work best for their budget and breed of dog (or cat, or other pet). There are a number of questions you should ask. Each insurance provider will have a slightly different answer, price and type of coverage.

Here are a few things to look for when considering a policy, courtesy of DVM360:

- * Does your pet's veterinarian accept the type of insurance coverage you're considering?
- * Is the insurance company licensed in your state?
- * Does the policy cover "wellness" or "preventive

care" such as annual checkups and shots?

- * What are the minimum and maximum pet ages for enrollment?
- * What is the policy's deductible? Can you change that deductible from year to year?
- * What kind of health conditions or care are not included?
- * What are the annual and lifetime care limits, if any?
- * What if your pet has a pre-existing condition?
- * Are there any extra fees that could be charged? Are any discounts available?
- * How much will you pay per month for the policy? Will those rates increase?

These are just some of the important questions you should ask of a pet policy provider. You'll want to find a balance between the cost of the policy and the amount of coverage it provides for different health situations. Ideally, Max won't suffer a serious illness or accident, but a policy can help defray the costs should something happen.

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The history behind some beloved Christmas songs

Holiday traditions vary from family to family, but one component of the holidays that seems to be universally enjoyed is a good Christmas song. Music is piped throughout malls and stores to entertain shoppers, and favorite tunes may be on the radio or streamed through a digital music service as families decorate their homes.

Many people may love Christmas songs and carols, but not everyone shares the same favorites. Thankfully, there's no shortage of material when it comes to Christmas songs, ensuring there's something for everyone.

In 2014, Time magazine researched records at the U.S. Copyright Office to determine the most popular and most recorded Christmas songs since 1978 when copyright registrations were digitized. The following are some of the more beloved holiday tunes and a bit of history about each song.

• "Silent Night": One of the most rerecorded songs in history (733 versions since 1978), "Silent Night," was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber and put to

lyrics by Joseph Mohr. It was first performed on Christmas Eve at St. Nicholas parish church in Oberndorf, a village in Austria. Today's version is a slow lullaby, but it's believed the original was a dance-like tune in 6/8 time.

• "O Holy Night": This popular song was composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847 to a French poem titled, "Minuit, chrétiens (Midnight, Christians)." Many notable performers, including Perry Como, Céline Dion, Josh Groban, Michael Crawford, and Lea Michele, have performed "O Holy Night."

• "Silver Bells": Now a Christmas classic, "Silver Bells" originally was written for the Bob Hope film, "The Lemon Drop Kid." Songwriter Jay Livingston wanted to title the song "Tinkle Bell," but his wife dissuaded him from using the word "tinkle."

• "White Christmas": Irving Berlin believed his song "White Christmas" would be an instant hit. His prediction was correct, especially after singer Bing Crosby recorded it.

• "Jingle Bells": Although it has become one of the more popular Christmas songs, "Jingle Bells" really was written for Thanksgiving. It's also one of the oldest holiday songs of American origin. James Lord Pierpont, the song's author, was inspired by the famous sleigh races of Medford, MA.



Christmas songs continue to endure and attract new fans.

• "Do You Hear What I Hear": Noel Regney wrote this song as a call to peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The original context has long been forgotten, and "Do You Hear What I Hear" is now a staple of holiday celebrations.

• "Santa Claus is Coming to Town": James Gillespie wrote this tune while riding a subway and reminiscing about his childhood with his brother. It became a hit after being performed at the famed Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

• "The Christmas Song": This classic Christmas song was written in 1944 by Bob Wells and Mel Tormé. It's usually subtitled "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire." The song was written during a heat wave as a way to think cool thoughts. It only took 40 minutes to write the music and some of the lyrics. Nat King Cole's rendition of the song is among the more popular versions.

Christmas songs are enjoyed and performed year after year. Popular songs continue to endure and attract new fans.

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The story of the birth of Jesus

Christmas traditions focus on several different aspects of family and spiritual life. While many stories are shared around Christmastime, perhaps none bears more significance than the origin of the Christmas celebration. Sharing the Christmas story is an integral part of holiday gatherings, reminding families that faith is foremost during this festive time of year.

The Conception of Jesus

Mary was a woman living in the Galilee area of Nazareth. She was engaged to a Jewish carpenter named Joseph. An angel visited the Virgin Mary and told her that she would conceive a child — a son — by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the son was born, she would name him Jesus. Mary questioned the angel, who reassured her that anything was possible by God and that Jesus would be God's own son.

Joseph was troubled when he found out Mary was with child and even considered breaking their

engagement, which was allowed under Jewish law. But God soon sent another angel, this time to Joseph, in a dream. The angel reassured Joseph that his marriage to Mary and the birth of this child were His will. Joseph awoke from his dream and took Mary as his wife soon after, ready and willing to raise the child despite the public humiliation he may experience.

The Census

During this time the Romans had control over many parts of the world, including where Joseph and Mary resided. Ruler Caesar Augustus decreed that every person living under Roman rule had to return to his town of origin to participate in a census so everyone could be taxed accordingly. Joseph, hailing from Bethlehem, had to return to this town with his very pregnant bride.

They traveled for many days and, upon arriving in Bethlehem, found that the inns were full and there was no available lodging. Mary and Joseph



Sharing the Christmas story is an integral part of holiday gatherings, reminding families that faith is foremost during this festive time of year.

took shelter in a stable and prepared to welcome their son.

Jesus' Arrival

According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, while in the stable. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on

whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

- Luke Chapter 2

Many people visited the baby Jesus, including three wise men from the East who traveled by following a guiding star to bestow gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh on the baby king.

When Joseph and Mary had performed all the things necessary according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth with Jesus, who was growing strong in spirit and filled with wisdom and the grace of God.

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DEC 20

Valley Voices for Christ
"Breath of Heaven"
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Methodist Church. 6:30
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DEC 24

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JAN 2

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Payment Method: ☐ Check/Money Order ☐ American Express ☐ Discover ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____ **Exp. Date** _____ (MM/YY)

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Name On Credit Card:(Print) _____

Signature: _____ **Todays Date:** _____ (for credit card payment only) (MM/YY)

		15
		1 Week \$9.80 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$8.80 per zone per week
16	17	18
1 Week \$10.10 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$9.10 per zone per week	1 Week \$10.40 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$9.40 per zone per week	1 Week \$10.70 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$9.70 per zone per week
19	20	21
1 Week \$11.00 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$10.00 per zone per week	1 Week \$11.30 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$10.30 per zone per week	1 Week \$11.60 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$10.60 per zone per week
22	23	24
1 Week \$11.90 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$10.90 per zone per week	1 Week \$12.20 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$11.20 per zone per week	1 Week \$12.50 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$11.50 per zone per week
25	26	27
1 Week \$12.80 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$11.80 per zone per week	1 Week \$13.10 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$12.10 per zone per week	1 Week \$13.40 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$12.40 per zone per week
28	29	30
1 Week \$13.70 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$12.70 per zone per week	1 Week \$14.00 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$13.00 per zone per week	1 Week \$14.30 per zone / 2+ Weeks \$13.30 per zone per week

The advantages of last-minute holiday shopping

Tackling tasks well in advance has many advantages, and often it is in one's best interest to be ahead of the game, including when the game at hand is holiday shopping.

But men and women who simply can't get a head start on their holiday shopping need not fear, as waiting until the eleventh hour to do the bulk of your shopping can have some distinct advantages, too.

Consumer Reports' 2012 Holiday Poll found 9

gives shoppers one last chance to find the perfect presents. In addition to having more time to decide on gifts, here are some other benefits to shopping later in the season.

- **Smaller crowds:** As the holiday season winds down, many shoppers have already completed their shopping. Fewer people tend to be in stores in the final days before Christmas, as they are readying their homes for company or making

stores may discount merchandise even further for fast sale. Shoppers anxious to save a little bit more or come in under budget may find waiting to shop is to their financial advantage.

- **Lower chance of discovery:** One difficulty of shopping early is keeping all of the gifts hidden for the duration of the month. Waiting until later to shop means only having to camouflage gifts for a few days. When you wait, curious kids are

free shipping. Just be sure to balance the benefits of the discount against the shipping price. If it means having to pay a premium for overnight shipping, it may not be worth the investment.

- **More time to plan:** By the end of the holiday season you may have a better idea of what you need to purchase. You also may have polled others regarding what they are giving, reducing the chances of giving dupli-

gory, waiting to buy the cards won't be an issue so long as you make it to the stores before they close.

Last-minute shopping has its advantages. If time is ticking away, there are still deals to be had.



Shopping late in the season may be advantageous for some people.

percent of shoppers — an estimated 17 million people — planned to shop in stores on Christmas Eve in 2012. Many stores are still open on Christmas Eve, even if the doors are only unlocked for a limited number of hours. That

travel plans. This can be a prime time for shopping and getting through malls or other retailers in less time.

- **Discounted prices:** Anxious to reduce inventory and make the most of end-of-the-year profits,

less likely to find their gifts before the big day.

- **Last-minute specials:** Some online retailers offer "doorbuster" sales at various times during the holiday shopping season. These sales may offer additional discounts or even

cate gifts.

- **Gift cards galore:** Some people prefer to give gift cards, which are available all season long. Consumer Reports says 62 percent of last-minute shoppers grab gift cards. If you fall into that cate-

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