

One-Fingered Syne

Did you know that "Auld Lang Syne," from the Scots language in which it was written back in 1788, literally translates in English to "old long since," not so literally to "long long ago"?

Do you care?

I can bore you even more about why it was associated with New Year's, but I won't, except to mention that it was famously performed at the stroke of midnight by society orchestra Guy Lombardo and the Royal Canadians. They really played cheesy music, sort of like Lawrence Welk but not as hip. The Lombardo band's arrangement is still played in Times Square while television network anchors make fools of themselves. Actually, while the ball is still being lowered, most of the traditional crowd is being kept away because of you know what.

Which gets us to Donald Trump, who is still president of the United States. He is using his last days in office to destroy as much of the country as he can by focusing on anything but the COVID pandemic, which is raging out of control. But he's ignoring it, except when he grudgingly signs legislation that keeps Americans from drowning in the coronavirus.

And he continues to be oblivious at Mar-a-Lago as he wields his enormous powers in the few days remaining of his term before he petulantly hands the White House keys over to Joe Biden. That assumes he doesn't try out a full-blown coup d'etat.

His last acts in office may not be literally earth-shattering, but devastating nonetheless if he vindictively finds other ways to damage the citizens under his care and sabotages the economy even more than it is already. He waited till the last minute to accept the rescue of millions of Americans who faced hunger and homelessness before signing a pittance package, \$900 billion worth. Congress and his administration negotiated it for months while he stayed on the sidelines.

He has a point -- it is grossly inadequate. But his motives were suspect, not only because he kept everyone in suspense until the last instant before he ended his tantrum, but because it was attached to the funding of the entire federal government. It's also as if he was saying, "OK, if you won't let me head the government, I won't leave behind a government."

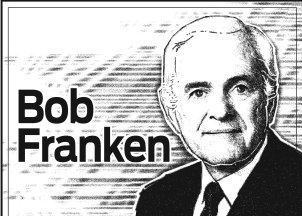
Of course, he doesn't publicly acknowledge that he's up to legal trickery, or that he's going to pull a fast one and take the nation to the edge of the precipice. He's been tweeting like crazy, I mean really tweeting like a crazy man. His proclamations would be considered rants if they weren't on Twitter, and if the author wasn't the leader of the free world.

Take Christmas Eve, for instance, when, usually, it's reserved for goodwill. Donald Trump was continuing his own tradition ... Yuletide badwill. This is a Christmas Eve sample: "I saved at least 8 Republican Senators, including Mitch, from losing in the last Rigged (for President) Election. Now they (almost all) sit back and watch me fight against a crooked and vicious foe, the Radical Left Democrats. I will NEVER FORGET!"

Just add it to his massive list of grievances. Festivus is made for Donald Trump. He already is changing the lyrics of the traditional New Year's song:

Should auld acquaintances be forgot
Oh no they never will
The grudges will last a lifetime here
That's what I mean when I sing about my bitter Auld Lang Syne.

Bob Franken is an Emmy Award-winning reporter who covered Washington for more than 20 years with CNN.
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Behold, the Delivery Revolution

It's been a terrible year for the American worker, with a notable bright spot courtesy of one of the tech firms in the crosshairs of regulators and lawmakers.

If someone had said early in 2020, "A company is going to hire hundreds of thousands of non-college-educated workers during the pandemic at well above the minimum wage," you'd think there'd be huzzahs all around.

That's what the online retailer Amazon has done, but it still gets brickbats for how it pays and treats its workers. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said the other day that Amazon jobs are a "scam."

If so, a swath of the American workforce is falling for the grift. Since July, the online retailer has hired 350,000 workers, and now employs 1.2 million people globally. This is a historic hiring binge. According to The New York Times, "the closest comparisons are the hiring that entire industries carried out in wartime, such as shipbuilding during the early years of World War II."

On top of this, the company provides work for roughly half a million truck drivers.

It overwhelmingly hires high school graduates. It doesn't ask for a resume, gives its workers about a day of training, and then puts them on the job in its fulfillment centers.

The difficulty of the work shouldn't be underestimated -- it is taxing, repetitive and highly regimented. Yet, we've long complained about losing assembly line jobs for non-college-educated workers. Amazon is hiring people for what is the 21st-century equivalent of such jobs.

Amazon began paying its workers \$15 an hour in 2018. If that rate rings a bell, it's the number for the federal minimum wage that Sen. Bernie Sanders and AOC have long been lobbying for, to little effect (it remains \$7.25 an hour).

It's hard to review what Amazon has done over the last year and consider it the work of a corporate monster. The company had an unlimited unpaid time off policy for its workers when the pandemic began.

It hired temporary workers to replace them and deal with the surge of business, then kept most of them on and began hiring on top of that.

It's been offering signing bonuses of up to \$3,000, and hiring in places in the country where no one else is.

According to the research of Michael Mandel at the center-left Progressive Policy Institute, Amazon fulfillment center jobs pay 31% more than retail jobs at brick-and-mortar stores, where pay has basically been stagnant for three decades.

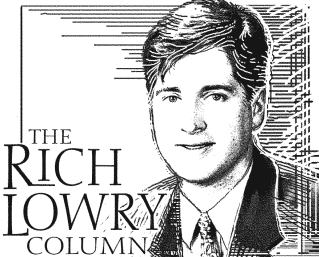
Mandel points out that it's wrong to simplistically think of Amazon and other e-commerce outfits as replacing brick-and-mortar stores.

What they are really replacing is the labor that consumers undertake on their own to shop for goods -- driving to a store, walking up and down the aisles, making the selection, loading it, and taking it home. Someone making a purchase through Amazon essentially hires a network of workers to do all of that for him.

What Amazon, and e-commerce more broadly, is doing is selling goods to consumers at low prices, while giving them more convenience than ever before (rapid delivery to their doorsteps, with the possibility of easy returns) and creating new jobs in the process.

By all means, jawbone the company to treat workers better, but don't lose sight of the scale of its achievement -- and how many Americans are employed because of it.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.
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Raynaud's Patient: Can Viagra Help Cold Fingers

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have scleroderma with Raynaud's phenomenon, and friends and family members have told me that I might get help from Viagra.

Frankly, I hadn't read or heard that from either my rheumatologists or dermatologists. I already tried a short course of nifedipine over a decade ago (it just gave me a headache), so I just stick with mechanical means to keep my hands warm in winter and, maybe surprisingly to some, in summer. Believe me, air-conditioned grocery stores are torture from April to October. -- M.A.P.

ANSWER: Raynaud's phenomenon is an excessive response of the blood vessels in the skin to changes in temperature, and sometimes to emotional stress. While most people will get cold hands and feet when it is cold, a person with Raynaud's can get a drastic response, even to air conditioning or freezer sections of grocery stores. The skin will turn white and then blue, then quite red on being rewarmed. Not everybody goes through all three colors, however.

Raynaud's can exist by itself, but is often seen in the presence of autoimmune conditions, such as the systemic sclerosis (scleroderma) you have. Treatment for Raynaud's is generally the same with or without other conditions. Everybody with Raynaud's should quit smoking and avoid medications that can trigger an attack (over-the-counter cold and flu remedies are the most common).

The mainstay of treatment is avoiding the temperature changes wherever possible, but as you point out clearly, it's almost impossible to do so completely. Putting your hand in a refrigerator or holding a cold drink can trigger an attack. Many people with Raynaud's learn to keep gloves with them all the time and dress their entire body warmly. An attack can sometimes be aborted by rubbing hands in warm water or getting them into a warm place.

When medication treatment is necessary, a calcium channel blocker like nifedipine is often the first choice. Headache and dizziness can limit effectiveness of this treatment. Studies have shown these medications can cut the attacks by about 50%.

Sildenafil (Viagra) has been used in people with Raynaud's, and is about as effective as calcium channel blockers. However, for people with scleroderma, ulcers and Raynaud's, sildenafil has been shown in small trials to be very effective.

DEAR DR. ROACH: My wife has many allergies and asthma, as well as frequent migraines, about two or three a month. A family friend has been using Aimovig for the past six months with no migraine symptoms. What can you tell me about this relatively new drug? We're concerned that the side effects may interfere with her asthma, or any other negative drug interactions. -- M.S.

ANSWER: Erenumab (Aimovig) has been recently approved for migraine. In the initial study, it reduced the number of migraine days from 8.3 to 4.6 per month. As an injection, it may cause pain and swelling at the injection site, and has also caused some people constipation and muscle cramps. There are very few drug interactions, and I found no indication that it should make asthma worse.

Your family friend has had a much better result than most of the people in the study, and there is no guarantee your wife will do as well. I am awaiting further long-term studies before recommending this class of migraine treatments.

It is given once per month, and costs about \$600 at goodrx.com.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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MLK Legacy: LWB Pledges to Overcome Again

Martin Luther King Day events are being planned this year with determination to continue promoting the mission of Dr. King while keeping public safety concerns firmly in mind. "Once Again, We Shall Overcome," will be the theme of the 27th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day commemoration in Lake Worth Beach. Due to covid-19, a curtailed slate of activities is planned to honor Dr. King's message of justice for all and reflect upon the work that still needed to be done to more fully realize his dream. All events are free and open to the public.

An extraordinary musical theater event by national-touring company Core Ensemble will showcase A Celebration of Great African American Artists of the 20th Century commemorating a little-known perspective on

Black History. When? Sunday, January 17 at 4 p.m. The performance can be experienced in two ways. For online access use Zoom Meeting ID: 842 4053 9682 Passcode: 972552. or for those with limited computer access New Hope Missionary Baptist Church (819 Washington Ave.) will open its doors for group viewing. Masks Required. Social distancing will be observed. There will also be an opportunity to contribute to the MLK Scholarship Fund, administrated by Dollars for Scholars.

The MLK Committee has decided to move the annual MLK Interfaith Breakfast to an outdoor venue at the Bryant Park Band Shell. When? Monday, January 18 at 11 a.m. The program will include music and sing-along by Mel & Vinnie featuring vintage Civil Rights Era

songs as well as an ever-joyous presentation by For The Children pre-school. Inspirational remarks from Catholic and Protestant, Jewish and Gentile leaders will foster the legacy of Dr. King. New this year will be announcements and instructions for 28-Days of Anti-Racism, a project of the Lake Worth Interfaith Network in cooperation with area synagogues and churches.

Later that afternoon, at 4:30 p.m., the public will gather near the steps of City Hall for the highlight of the day, the 27th annual Candlelight March through downtown Lake Worth. Please wear masks and practice social distancing before and during the March. The procession will terminate at the MLK "Ball" Memorial in the Cultural Plaza, M Street and Lake Ave. A brief com-

memorative program will be held there recognizing the accomplishments and unfinished business of Dr. King's legacy.

The customary MLK Fellowship Dinner will not be held this year.

Further information and photos of past years' events can be found on Facebook at the MLK Beloved Community of Lake Worth page.

Dr. King's legacy encompasses the hopes and dreams of all Americans. Members of every racial, religious, and ethnic group in Palm Beach County are invited to join Lake Worth Beach residents in their celebration of the diversity of our communities. All events are free of charge to the public, sponsored by the City of Lake Worth Beach, Lake Worth Interfaith Network, Kiwanis Club and the Lake Worth MLK Committee.

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