

## Sharon Randall

They cherish their men, but the company of other women is good for women.

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# STYLE

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

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MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2018

## Pluralia tantum, anyone?

The English language has “oodles” of words that are in the plural form, with an “s” on the end. “Odds” are, you know a few.

It was “news” to me that these are called “pluralia tantum,” a Latin phrase meaning “plural only.”

This is not to say that a form of the word doesn’t exist in the singular. But for these particular meanings, we use the plural form.

### WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!



BERNADETTE KINLAW

Your child gets the “mumps.”

Maybe when you get an infected tooth, you look like you have a mump, but you don’t. “Measles” is another word that’s only plural.

Soapy water has “suds.” No sud stands alone.

When you are sorry for doing something to someone, you may take “pains” to make “amends.”

To learn about the nation’s past, you may search historical “annals.”

Some of the less-pleasant-to-think-about body parts come in plurals: bowels, entrails, guts. “Guts,” though, can mean a good thing: courage. And having “brains” means intelligence. It doesn’t mean you have two portions of a brain.

In the military domain, we have “troops” and “arms.” One soldier isn’t a troop. One rifle is not an arm.

Many money terms are used only in plural form: earnings, funds, riches, wages, goods, valuables. Sometimes when you return from another country and you’ve gone “nuts” on a shopping spree, you have to pay “customs.”

“Alms” is an archaic term for charity.

“Fireworks” is always plural. Just one firework would not be likely to draw an “Ahhhhhh!” July 4.

You may scatter your grandfather’s “ashes” at sea. Or you may keep the “remains” on your mantel.

You may feel “down in the dumps” or “in the doldrums.” You may have “the blues.”

Many items of clothing — also called “clothes” — are in the plural form: pants, jeans, dungarees, tights, shorts, briefs. But the “outskirts” of town are its outlying areas, not its visible skirts.

Lots of tools and work-related items are in plural form: pliers, scissors, shears, forceps, tongs, bellows, goggles.

A few academic fields that are plural are mathematics, physics and forensics.

If you’re behind on, say, your car payments, you’re in “arrears.”

“Dregs” are the remnants left at the bottom, for example, of a coffee pot that an inconsiderate person left behind instead of making a new pot.

Both “dreg” and “arrear” are words, too, but they’re rarely used in the singular form.

I hope these words don’t give anyone the “willies.”

### BLUE LAWS

State legislatures sometimes tackle a “blue law” or two. Blue laws are those regulating some kind of behavior, often restricting

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Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CARY JENKINS

Michael Schwarz gets a shot of a tree that is making its way indoors through a broken window. Schwarz started Abandoned Arkansas in 2012.

# WILD ABANDON

## A curious group of explorers armed with cameras are documenting Abandoned Arkansas

SEAN CLANCY ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE  
**A**LEXANDER — There are those among us who just can’t pass up the chance to peek inside an empty building, to enter an uninhabited place, sift through what was left behind and discern the stories that linger.

There are four of them here, gathered on this chilly day in late December outside what was once called the Alexander Human Development Center. They are members of Abandoned Arkansas, a group of urban explorers who spend their spare time investigating and photographing abandoned buildings scattered across the Natural State. They

chronicle their finds at [abandonedark.com](http://abandonedark.com), a fascinating, rabbit hole of a resource with dozens of well-curated galleries of eerie, empty structures that often include in-depth histories of the locations.

Visitors to the site can see the gutted insides of the Conway Roller Rink, complete with lonely old skates, unused tickets, fliers for a Back to School All Night Skate! and assorted detritus. There are also pictures of the old Paragould Power plant, its arched windows shattered and its interior decaying, and pre-restoration images from

See **ABANDON** on Page 6D



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CARY JENKINS

Abandoned Arkansas photographers and explorers James Kirkendall (from left), Michael Schwarz, Ginger Beck and Eddy Sisson pose in front of graffiti at the former site of the Alexander Human Development Center.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CARY JENKINS

The Alexander Human Development Center has been abandoned since 2011.

## If fish looks sad, it probably is

HEATHER MURPHY THE NEW YORK TIMES

Can a fish be depressed? This question has been floating around my head ever since I spent a night in a hotel across from an excruciatingly sad-looking Siamese fighting fish. His name was Bruce Lee, according to a sign beneath his little bowl.

There we were, trying to enjoy a free bloody Mary on the last day of our honeymoon, and there was Bruce Lee, totally still, his lower fin grazing the clear faux rocks on the bottom of his home. When he did finally move, just slightly, I got the sense that he would have preferred to be dead.

The pleasant woman at the front desk assured me that he was well taken care of. Was I simply anthropomorphizing Bruce Lee, incorrectly assuming his lethargy was a sign of mental distress?

When I sought answers from scientists, I assumed that they would find the question preposterous. But they did not. Not at all.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CELIA STOREY

It turns out that not only can our gilled friends become depressed, but some scientists consider fish to be a promising animal model for developing antidepressants.

New research, I would learn, has been radically shifting the way

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### OLD NEWS

## Wet, cold, sick and no booties to pawn

CELIA STOREY ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Maybe Arkansans are such famously friendly people because our weather’s so stupid.

Last week’s meteorological midweek teeter-totter (43 degrees to 64 to 23? Really?) is the sort of miserable nonsense that affronts Arkansans of every education and income level, uniting us in a shared desire to complain about it, to somebody, anybody.

Something similar was happening a century ago today during the harsh winter of 1917/18 (the weather ups and downs, I mean, although we can assume the complaining as well). Under the headline “From Snowbound to Water-

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The Royal theater in Little Rock showed *For the Freedom of the World* in January 1918.

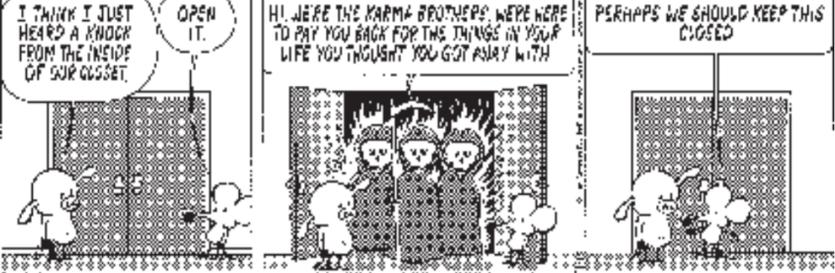
Baby Blues

Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



Pearls Before Swine

Stephan Pastis



Dustin

Steve Kelley & Jeff Parker



Old News

Continued from Page 1D  
 logged," a front-page story in the Jan. 15, 1918, *Arkansas Gazette* ticked off the day's complaints:  
 Item, no street car service, and no one knowing when it will be resumed.  
 Item, no rubber boots or overshoes to be had at any price.  
 Item, streets turned into rivers that flowed between banks of slush and snow.  
 Item, shortage of fuel.  
 Item, more snow and sleet.  
 These were some of the things that helped to make things cheerful in Little Rock yesterday.

Patriotism was the come-on for many ad campaigns in 1918, witness this ad from the Jan. 16, 1918, *Arkansas Democrat*.

discharge on account of dependent relatives was pending when he was taken to the base hospital, ill of pneumonia, and his brother, G.T. Patterson, had come from Fabius to assist in looking after the detail. Mr. Patterson received the discharge to be handed to his brother at 11:30 yesterday morning, and immediately made arrangements to have the discharged soldier transferred to a local civil hospital, as the soldier seemed strong enough to be moved. After completing arrangements, Mr. Patterson started to the base hospital with the discharge, but before he could reach here his brother died. The body will be taken to Fabius for burial today.

As we noticed last week, in early January, Little Rock newspapers were publishing four to eight obits out of Camp Pike every day. The numbers dropped a bit in the second half of the month, but reports of local men dying in other states crept in. Many soldiers did volunteer, but most participated via the Selective Service draft. Parents and families back home were horrified by the thought their loved ones were headed, eventually, to the battlefronts in Europe, and that was bad enough. Fear that men would die before they even got there, that the training camps might be mires of contagion, could

have inspired even more draft evasion than there was. And so, as we read through the early papers of 1918, we see little items like this, from the Jan. 15 *Gazette*:

**Reports Misleading Trifling Ailments Figure in Report of Men Sick**  
 That reports concerning the sick in army camps are likely to be misleading to the general public, is the opinion of army medical officers. At sick call every day all men in each organization requiring medical attention report to the regimental infirmaries and these make daily reports. Frequently the patients are suffering with such minor ills as a cut finger, headache, slight biliousness and the like, but reports are made on these also. A report carried in a recent communication from Charles [Stewart] Davidson, member of the Executive Committee of the American Defense Society, shows the deaths from all causes for the week ending December 7 to be 264. During this period there were 174 deaths from pneumonia in the National Guard and 47 in the Army. The figures are based on reports from 30 divisions now in camp, representing an aggregate of 600,000 men, a death rate of less than one man in 2,500.

**BRINGING THE HEAT**  
 Movie theaters offered

self, and the reason for the "blue" is unknown. Now I am disillusioned.  
**ALIKE BUT NOT ALIKE**  
 Here are a few lines on homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings.  
**■ Forgo, forego**  
 To "forgo" is to go without something.  
 I'll forgo the Brussels sprouts so I will be certain to have room for a slice of that bittersweet chocolate tart.  
 To "forego" means to go before. I had trouble thinking of a sentence for this one, because the word is more com-

monly used as "foregone." A "foregone conclusion" is when the outcome of something is certain.  
 Trust me when I say the game of blackjack has no foregone conclusions.  
**■ Discreet, discreet**  
 "Discreet" means something distinct or separate.  
 The twins looked alike but still had discrete personalities and tastes.  
 "Discreet" means subtle or unobtrusive.  
 Comedian Sarah Silverman would not be called a discreet performer.  
**■ Compliment, complement**  
 A "compliment" is some-

HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY



HOLIDAY MATHIS

**Happy birthday.** You care about your own happiness, but there's so much you'll put first this year.  
**ARIES** (March 21-April 19): Give them something to take and they'll take it. Give them something to believe in and they'll give you loyalty.  
**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): You know how to help the people around you because you've taken the time to understand their unique needs. Can you apply it to another area of your life?  
**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21): What you're attracted to isn't always the best choice. Wishing to be a bright light, you keep asking what would yield the highest good for the greatest number of people.  
**CANCER** (June 22-July 22): Similarities bring people together. You don't have to agree on everything, but early in a relationship is the best time to assess commonalities.  
**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): You'll be tempted to get close to people at work, but it will be very important to maintain a logical approach and a professional distance.  
**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You'll ask around and get a vari-

ety of answers to the same question. Which is right? The truest answer of all: You are asking the wrong question!  
**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): It's natural to seek options that make you feel better about yourself, though today's right choice could be decidedly less appealing.  
**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): Some say closure is a rhetorical concept and to think of it as a necessity is to believe in a myth. Whether or not that's true, it feels good to complete a cycle and put an ending on it.  
**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You've been trying to get rid of an uncomfortable feeling. What if you try instead to integrate the feeling into your life moving forward?  
**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Progress is real. The cynics say that things are the same even when they are different — that we just trade old problems for new ones. Nope. It bears repeating: Progress is real.  
**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The pressure is something you are putting on yourself. So when you decide you can't take the pressure, don't apply it.  
**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20): You don't want yes people around you. You want people around you whom you can learn something from. You'll find them today.

SLIM PICKINGS



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/JENNIFER CHRISTMAN

**WHAT:** Realgood Pizza Co. frozen pizzas with chicken crust  
**STATS:** One serving of the Uncured Pepperoni version (half a personal pizza) contains 260 calories and 16 fat, 4 carbohydrate, zero fiber, 2 sugar and 25 protein grams. We were sent press samples. Visit [realgoodfoods.com](http://realgoodfoods.com) for complete nutritional and store locator information.  
**THE SKINNY:** We know thin crust, thick crust and stuffed crust. But chicken crust? Realgood Pizza Co.'s frozen pizzas (available in Uncured Pepperoni, Three Cheese and The Supreme) come not on discs of flour dough, but rather circles of chicken breast and parmesan. The gluten-free result is considerably lower in carbohydrates and surprisingly tasty. Sure, the chicken doesn't quite crisp

up like a traditional crust, but covered in toppings like tomato sauce and mozzarella and then oven-baked or microwaved, the final product is perfectly pizza-esque.  
 Realgood also makes breakfast versions (Bacon, Pepperoni and Sausage) of its pizzas featuring scrambled eggs. And it also sells frozen enchiladas, with you guessed it, thin chicken tortillas.  
 We were a bit skeptical, but Realgood's Beef Enchiladas (two contain 190 calories and 10 fat, 4 carbohydrate, 2 fiber, 2 sugar and 20 protein grams; also available in Cheese, Chicken and Pork versions) were, in fact, really good.  
 — Jennifer Christman  
*Slim Pickings is a weekly review of light foods.*  
[jchristman@arkansasonline.com](mailto:jchristman@arkansasonline.com)

SHARON RANDALL

Company of women a crucial something

Once I heard my grandmother say something odd. Odder than her usual. We'd had Sunday dinner at her house. Most of her nine daughters were there with their husbands and children. The men sat on the porch smoking and joking. The children ran wild in the yard. And the women huddled in the kitchen, cooking, gossiping, stirring pots and baring souls.  
 After we ate, the men went back to the porch, the children went back to running and the women cleaned up the mess.  
 When it was time to go, my mother said I could stay the night. So my grandmother and I waved as the cars drove away, until they were all gone.  
 That's when she said it. "There's something important about the company of women."  
 She wiped her eyes with her apron, then looked at me. "Know what I mean?"  
 "No, ma'am, I don't."  
 "You will someday."  
 She was right. In my first year of college, I was sitting one night with friends on the stairs in our dorm, sharing stories and hopes and dreams and fears.  
 We came from different places and backgrounds, but when we spoke from our hearts and listened with true caring, we seemed so much alike. Soon we'd be looking for jobs and places to live. Most of us would marry and raise children.  
 Sitting there, I realized how talking with one another helped us to see who we were, and who we wanted to become and how we hoped to live our lives.  
 Suddenly, I knew what my grandmother tried to tell me: I needed to share the company of like-minded, good-hearted, soul-searching women. It was important. It always would be.  
 Let me be clear. I love men. Just ask my husband and my boys and my grand-boys. I can't imagine my life without them and the conversations we share.  
 But I'm a woman. Women understand women just as men understand men. It's a product of biology and experience and years of walking in the same kinds of shoes. It has been that way a very long time. And I, for one, have been blessed by both.  
 Over the years, I've been part of countless groups of women. It doesn't take much effort. Given half a chance, most of us will gladly open our hearts to one another. In a kitchen. A church. A book club. A bathroom. In

the stands at a Little League game. Ask a few questions, see what happens. It starts with two women, but others will join in.  
 For years, I met weekly with five friends. We shared coffee, prayer requests, laughter and tears.  
 They stood by me through my first husband's illness and death. We now live far apart, but we will always be close.  
 Today, I went to a party at the house of a fairly new neighbor. She invited all the women who live on our block, plus all the women from her former block nearby. Some knew one another well. Others not at all.  
 I wish you could've heard us. We sounded like long-lost friends. We live in a 55-and-older community. Most are retired. We've seen a bit of the world, lost our share of loved ones, have great stories to tell and a lot of life yet to live.  
 We talked about places we've been, jobs we've held, men we've loved, present and past. We compared notes on aging, exercise, vitamin supplements, health care providers, travel tours, bakeries, grandchildren, volunteering and taxes.  
 As we were leaving, a neighbor who lost her husband, God bless her, a year ago, told me this: Shortly after her husband died, a young man, a Marine, showed up at her door. She'd not seen or been able to contact him since his parents divorced when he was 10, but she recognized her grandson right away.  
 "He said [that] something told him he had to find me. And he did!"  
 Loss never comes empty-handed. It always brings gifts.  
 I'm glad I went to that party.  
 There's something important about the company of women.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/KIRK MONTGOMERY

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Language

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 actions on Sundays.  
 When I was a teenager in New York, one couldn't buy beer on Sundays before noon.  
 But why are they called blue laws?  
 I've read that in 17th-century Connecticut, the Puritans would print such laws on blue paper, and that name stuck through the centuries.  
 Snopes.com, the website that tracks down the truth of claims, reports that this is nonsense. Snopes maintains that a Connecticut reverend came up with the term him-

self, and the reason for the "blue" is unknown. Now I am disillusioned.  
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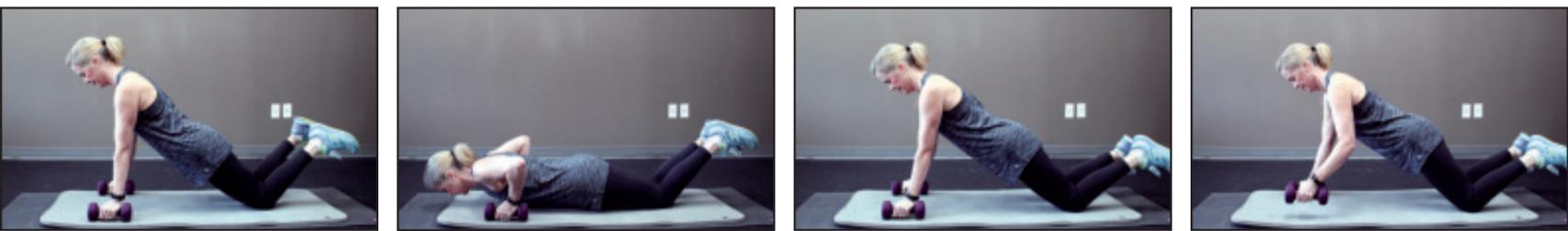
thing nice you say about someone. I remember the "i" in the middle by remembering that the word "kind" has an "i."  
 Let me compliment you on your knitting skills.  
 A "complement" is something that helps to complete something.  
 A pale ale is the perfect complement to this coffeecake.  
 Sources: *Oxford Pocket Fowler's Modern English Usage, [englishgrammar.org](http://englishgrammar.org), [snopes.com](http://snopes.com), [mentalfloss.com](http://mentalfloss.com), *Oxford Dictionaries, about.com, Merriam-Webster.*  
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the women who live on our block, plus all the women from her former block nearby. Some knew one another well. Others not at all.  
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MASTER CLASS



Democrat-Gazette file photo/CELIA STOREY

With a simple modification, Sheffield Duke can convert the Ranger Pushup Hold from an exercise that emphasizes strength and endurance to one that builds power.

# Building upper body power, 'explosion' strength

**MATT PARROTT**  
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

In my view, all strength training exercises fall along a "power continuum" that ranges from delicate to explosive. Exercises on the delicate end of the spectrum require precision, patience and coordination. Conversely, exercises such as the Barbell Clean require speed, power and brute strength.

In this week's column, we explore ways to modify traditional movements to change where they fall on the power continuum and thus alter the benefits received.

In my experience, most strength trainers perform all of their exercises at the

same speed. Whether they are doing a bench press or a squat, people tend to develop a cadence that makes them comfortable.

Curiously, I often notice that repetition speed matches how the individual moves in general. If a client saunters along, his repetition speed will be slower than that of a fidgety client. The point is that it's important to examine repetition speed alteration as a means of improving workout performance.

Nearly any exercise can be modified to become more or less explosive. The key is to understand when, why and how to effectively change repetition speed to

get the results desired.

This week's featured exercise, the Ranger Pushup Hold, gives us a perfect example to work with. You might recognize it, because I've written about it in the past. In that column, my prescription included a "hold" in between pushup repetitions — which were assigned to be performed at a "controlled" speed.

The reason I prescribed a controlled speed was to ensure consistent muscular tension throughout the repetition. This is perfect for someone looking to build upper body strength and endurance.

But today, let's assume the individual's goal is to build upper body power and "ex-

plosion" strength. Football players, tennis players and other types of athletes often have this goal. To adapt the Ranger Pushup Hold to the different goal, we can keep the hold in between repetitions, but do the repetitions faster — in less than one second.

Here's a slightly altered description of the Ranger Pushup Hold that includes a more explosive movement pattern.

1. Select a pair of dumbbells. Position the dumbbells at shoulder width and place one hand on each of them. Get your body in the "up" phase of a pushup.
2. Quickly lower your body by bending the elbows and shoulders until the chest is

below the level of the dumbbells.

3. Quickly press back up until your arms are at full extension. The entire repetition should take approximately one second (or less).
4. As you reach this point, lift the left dumbbell about 3 inches off the floor and hold for 2 seconds.
5. Place it back down and move right into the next pushup.
6. Continue this pattern while alternating dumbbell lifts with each repetition.
7. Perform two sets of 20.

As repetition speed increases, the time under contraction decreases, and so the exercise might feel easier

and less strenuous. And that might make you sad. If that happens, simply increase the number of repetitions — unless you've already switched to a heavier dumbbell to increase the resistance.

Assuming resistance stayed the same, you'll want to add a few more repetitions to get the proper fatigue.

So today, I've increased the repetition count from 12 to 20 — for a little extra fun. Enjoy!

*Matt Parrott has a doctorate in education (sport studies) and a master's in kinesiology and is certified by the American College of Sports Medicine.*  
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## Abandon

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the old *Arkansas Democrat* Building in downtown Little Rock, which is now home to lofts and a restaurant.

In 2014, the group also documented a school in Winslow that has since been partially renovated.

"I think what they are doing is good work," says Rachel Patton, executive director of Preserve Arkansas, the North Little Rock-based nonprofit that focuses on protecting the state's architectural and cultural resources. "Anything we can do to raise awareness of these historic buildings that are in need of preservation is good."

It's not unusual, Patton says, for Abandoned Arkansas explorers to reach out to Preserve Arkansas for advice or information concerning a property.

"Almost everything that they put up [online], they try to get at least a little bit of history on the property to include on the website to put it into context and explain why that property is important."

### THE CREW

Abandoned Arkansas was actually started by an Oklahoman.

Michael Schwarz of Oklahoma City was a 19-year-old student at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway who, bored one weekend in 2012, went exploring in empty buildings and posted what he found to Facebook. He was part of Abandoned Oklahoma and decided to start something similar here.

"I've always loved abandoned buildings," says Schwarz, now 24 and living in Anaheim, Calif., where he works as a videographer and video editor at MotionLit, a company that specializes in documentary video production for the legal industry.

Joining Schwarz for this outing in Alexander are James Kirkendall of Fort Smith, Ginger Beck of Little Rock and Eddy Sisson of Vilonia, each bringing particular obsessions and expertise to the Abandoned Arkansas fold.

Kirkendall, 30, his blond hair hanging from beneath a cap, began as a ghost hunter, but the buildings in which he was searching for shadowy haints began to capture his attention even more.

And he has a soft spot for abandoned hospitals.

"One of my favorites is the Verser Clinic in Harrisburg," he says. "It was a location I came to on accident. I was actually going to another location and found it on the way. It's chocked full of history."

Kirkendall, who works at Wight Office Machines in Fort Smith, is also often the de facto permission-getter for the Abandoned bunch, who stress that they always secure an OK from landowners or other relevant sources before traipsing across a property, cameras in hand.

"It's just talking to the right people," he says. "Sometimes you talk to the owner and get right in, but for some places you have to talk to the city, the Chamber of Commerce or a real estate agent."

It took him more than a year, he says, to gain access to the Logan County Memorial Hospital in Guthrie, Okla., featured hauntingly on the Outside Arkansas section of *abandonedar.com*.

Sisson, 41, is a master control engineer at KARK in Little Rock and the group's expert on Arkansas' most famous abandoned theme park, Dogpatch USA near Harrison, which closed in 1993 and was recently bought by Heritage USA.

"I saw photos of the water slide and just fell in love with it and had to go up there and start trying to preserve it" in images, Sisson says. His Facebook page dedicated to Dogpatch has more than 37,000 followers.

Beck, 38, is a teacher at W.D. Hamilton Learning Academy in Little Rock and a pink-haired tattoo artist who has been a part of Abandoned Arkansas since October. She is the group's social media manager.

"I posted on Facebook that I wanted to explore some buildings," she says. A friend of a friend told her about Schwarz and put them in touch. "It was on from there."

She's a fan of abandoned swimming pools and staircases. One of her favorite sites is an old house in southeastern Arkansas near the Louisiana line. "It's in the middle of nowhere. It's got an indoor pool and is huge and dilapidated."

Schwarz is fond of the Majestic Hotel in Hot Springs, which was demolished in 2016 and about which he's making a documentary.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CARY JENKINS

James Kirkendall's interest in paranormal activity grew into a passion for exploring abandoned buildings.

**More information on the Web**

<http://www.arkansasonline.com/abandonedar>

### GOING IN

The four are eager to enter the sprawling, four-story former human development center to have a looky-look at what's inside.

It's a return trip for Schwarz and Beck.

Schwarz found out about the site in 2012 from a college friend who grew up nearby.

"He was like, 'Dude, you like abandoned buildings. You need to check this place out.'"

Opened in 1936 as the Thomas C. McRae Memorial Sanatorium, the site was the first in Arkansas to treat black patients with tuberculosis. In 1968, after the integration of the state's sanatoriums, it became the human development center, providing long-term care to the mentally ill and those with intellectual disabilities. It has been vacant since 2011 and today looks like a perfect spot to make a horror film.

Entering through an opening at a loading dock on the backside of the building, the crew is met with the first of many scrawlings of profane graffiti, which elicits more

than a few chuckles.

Beck's first trip to the center was a solo visit that she streamed live on Facebook.

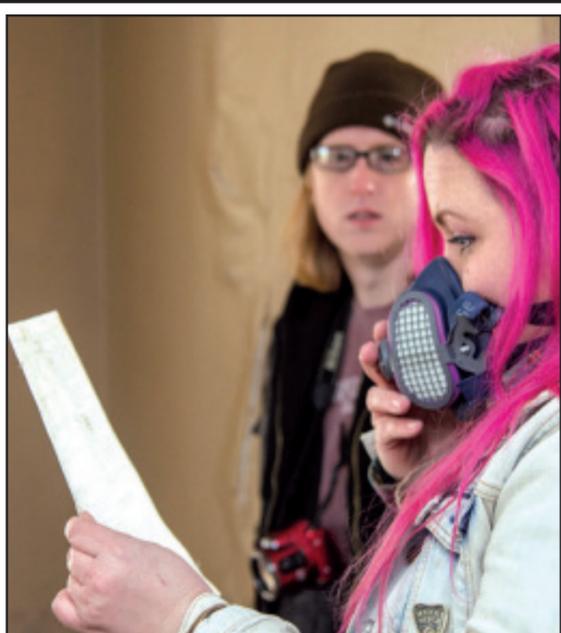
"People ask if I ever get any weird vibes," says Beck, who is carrying a knife in one of her boots and wears a ventilated mask to ward off mold. "But the only thing I feel when I'm walking through here is 15- and 16-year-olds having a good time. Because of all the graffiti, I don't feel creeped out. It makes me laugh."

### THE STUFF LEFT BEHIND

It's surprising how much deterioration has occurred in just six years of vacancy. Tiles from drop ceilings have fallen to the floor, most windows are shattered, paint peels from the walls in the curled shape of tortilla chips.

In the original entryway, the remnants of a chandelier hang like a rusty vine. Many of the small rooms are empty and bare, and what furniture remains is mostly broken and dirty. Board games rot in a bright sunroom. Long, empty hallways are lighted by the afternoon sun streaming through broken windows in rooms where patients once lived.

Beck points out the handwritten labels in the tiny closets of the center's rooms that say "socks," "shirts" and "underwear." On the floor of one room she finds scattered



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/CARY JENKINS

Ginger Beck reads from notes about a former patient at the old Alexander Human Development Center.

papers with descriptions of patients' information and needs, one of which says, "My inappropriate behavior has improved, to a point ..."

Schwarz makes his way around the scattered debris with a camera on a tripod. Strangely, the photographic possibilities of dilapidation aren't really what motivate him.

"I like taking pictures, but I like just being there more," Schwarz says as he makes his way down a hall. "I really like finding the little stuff that was left behind. Even if you're in a small community church, finding the paper on the ground from the last day it was open. And I love finding handwritten stuff, like when people write little notes and leave them on their desks."

In these unpeopled places, architectural and cultural history can be divined, though sometimes questionable remodeling jobs have hidden the really cool things.

"My favorite example is the Majestic," Schwarz says. "It went through renovations in the '60s that covered up one of the columns in the veranda room with mirrors. The mirrors got broken and you could see the original 1926 column. You see the layers. It's quite appealing."

"A peeling," Beck says, noting the peeling paint around them. They both laugh.

There are buildings like

the Alexander center that are slowly falling apart, and then there are the places that just look, well, abandoned.

"The Cherokee Village Hospital," Sisson says when asked about a memorable exploration. "Everything was in there. The MRI machine, a bunch of '90s equipment. Post-it notes were still on the computers. They just shut it down."

The extensive gallery of photos by Sisson, Schwarz and Kirkendall look like a set from *The Walking Dead*, minus the zombies, of course.

### THE MISSION

These explorations are more than tongue-clucking excursions into sad ruins, Schwarz says.

"It's not about saying, 'Look at this really ratchet, terrible building.' It's about preserving what it once was, or what it is, because no building will live forever. People have a history here and that's our mission, to preserve that history. That's what got me into it."

Sisson concurs.

"We're about more than just taking pictures. We're trying to benefit these places. When people hear the word 'abandoned,' they think we're just there to do whatever, but we want to assess the situation and see what we can do to help whoever owns it."

## Fish

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that scientists think about fish cognition, building a case that pet and owner are not nearly as different as many assume.

"The neurochemistry is so similar that it's scary," said Julian Pittman, a professor at the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Troy University in Alabama, where he is working to develop new medications to treat depression, with the help of tiny zebrafish. We tend to think of them as simple organisms, "but there is a lot we don't give fish credit for."

Pittman likes working with fish, in part, because they are so obvious about their depression. He can reliably test the effectiveness of antidepressants

sants with something called the "novel tank test." A zebrafish is dropped into a new tank. If after five minutes it is hanging out in the lower half, it's depressed. If it's swimming up top — its usual inclination when exploring a new environment — then it's not.

The severity of the depression, he says, can be measured by quantity of time at the top vs. the bottom, all of which seemed to confirm my suspicions about Bruce Lee.

**WRONG WORD?**

This, of course, may sound wrong to any of the one in six people who has experienced clinical depression. How could a striped minnow relate to what you've been through? Is "depression" the right word?

While scientists have used animals, such as mice, to study

emotional problems for decades, the relevance of those models to human experience is sketchy at best.

There's the obvious issue that "we cannot ask animals how they feel," said Diego A. Pizzagalli, director of the Center for Depression, Anxiety and Stress Research at Harvard Medical School. Though researchers may find parallels in serotonin and dopamine fluctuations, neither fish nor rat can "capture the entire spectrum of depression as we know it," Pizzagalli said.

There is a heated debate in the fish research community about whether "anxious" or "depressed" is a more appropriate term.

But what has convinced Pittman, and others, over the past 10 years is watching the way the zebrafish lose interest

in just about everything: food, toys, exploration — as do clinically depressed people.

"You can tell," said Culum Brown, a behavioral biologist at Macquarie University in Sydney who has published more than 100 papers on fish cognition. "Depressed people are withdrawn. The same is true of fish."

**NOTHING TO DO**

The trigger for most domestic fish depression is probably lack of stimulation, said Victoria Braithwaite, a professor of fisheries and biology at Penn State University, who studies fish intelligence and fish preferences.

Study after study show how fish are defying aquatic stereotypes: Some fish use tools, others can recognize individual faces.

Research has found that fish are naturally curious and seek out novel things, Braithwaite said. In other words, your goldfish is probably bored. To help ward off depression, she urges introducing new objects to the tank or switching up the location of items.

Brown agrees, pointing to an experiment he conducted, that showed that if you leave a fish in an enriched, physically complex environment — meaning a lot of plants to nibble and cages to swim through — it decreases stress and increases brain growth.

The problem with small tanks is not just the lack of space for exploration, said Brown, but also the water quality tends to be unstable and there may not be sufficient oxygen.

"A goldfish bowl, for example, is the worst possible situation," he said.

If you own fish, you could consider where Brown keeps his: an extensively landscaped 6-foot tank. He recommends a "2-foot tank with lots of plants and stuff" for your average betta.

The last time a guest posted Bruce Lee to Instagram, he was looking good and lively. Perhaps that new green leaf in his bowl had provided the enrichment he craved.

But then, my heart sank. The internet produced photos of other Bruce Lees from the same hotel in several colors — red, blue and purplish. I wondered whether the monotony would eventually drive this replacement Bruce to hover, immobile, near his transparent rocks.