

## Buzz Worthy

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### Life Lessons

*Ellen C. Wells*



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The value of something learned—whether it's a lesson or a skill or just plain facts—often isn't realized until much later. Take this example from my childhood: My grandmother arrived mid-morning for one of her routine Sunday visits and saw that I hadn't yet made my bed. She proceeded to make my bed for me, explaining her bed-making process as she went along. I knew enough to feel a small bit each of guilt and embarrassment. And I never again gave her reason to make my bed. Fast forward multiple decades and the importance of making one's bed is the topic of Admiral William McRaven's commencement speech at the University of Texas at Austin. He explains to the graduates that "if you want to change the world, start by making your bed." If you haven't heard the speech I suggest you Google it and listen. In a nutshell, McRaven says that arranging the sheets and such at the start of each day ensures you've accomplished at

least one thing at the end of the day. And if your day turns out to be disappointing, at least you have a nice bed to come home to. My grandmother may not have put the importance of bed-making as eloquently as the Admiral, but I learned the lesson nonetheless.

I am not done with my lesson learning, not by a long shot. Every day presents new opportunities to gather life lessons, skills, facts and figures that I can pull out of my back pocket when needed. Here are a few that I've picked up along the way:

- U.S. paper currency is 6-in. long. Really. Need to measure something? Find yourself a dollar bill.
- Learn to drive a vehicle with a manual transmission. Why? Because a stick shift might be the only vehicle available to you if you have to drive someone to the hospital. Not that I've had to do that, but I'm able if and when the situation arises.
- Wear sensible shoes. I learned this lesson from the accounts of women who had to run down the stairs as the World Trade Center Towers were crumbling. Your life could depend on how well you're able to run away.
- "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes." It's a Scandinavian saying that, as a New Englander, I can relate to. And I remind myself of it each time I'm caught somewhere without my raincoat.
- If you need to stifle a sneeze—and believe me, there are those times—just tickle the roof of your mouth with your tongue. It moves the sensation of the sneeze down from the nose to the mouth, preventing you from a potentially

embarrassing or dangerous moment.

- On the topic of sneezes, a human body is physically incapable of keeping the eyes open while simultaneously sneezing. So, when I mentioned “dangerous moment” above, I was referring to sneezing while driving. Sneezing while using a chainsaw is probably just as dangerous.
- Write thank you notes. The paper kind that travel through the mail and the kind you write to tell someone you simply appreciate them for who they are. The recipient smiles. You smile. It’s a win-win.
- Know a lot about one topic and a little something about a wide range of topics. This will aid you in getting through social events where you know no one.
- “Do one thing each day that scares you.” Eleanor Roosevelt wasn’t talking about the big scary things like working a chainsaw while sneezing. She meant the small, everyday scary things such as having confidence enough to take a step toward a dream, or being brave enough to confront a bully or believing in something enough to stand up for it. Those aren’t so small, after all.

As we sit at the top of a new year, now’s the time to note your daily lessons. Let’s meet back here a year from now and share a little of what we’ve learned. **GP**