

The Columbian Life

Section D

Today's weather picture by Kevin Lee McDaniel, 9, Ridgefield, Union Ridge Elementary School



THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2008

A banana a day might lead to a boy

By LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press writer

Snips and snails and puppy-dog tails ... and cereal and bananas? That could be what little boys are made of, according to surprising new research suggesting that what a woman eats before pregnancy influences the gender of her baby. Having a hearty appetite, eating potassium-rich foods including bananas, and not skipping breakfast all seemed to raise the odds of having a boy.

The British research is billed as the first in humans to show a link between a woman's diet and whether she has a boy or girl.

It is not proof, but it fits with evidence from test tube fertilization that male embryos thrive best with longer exposure to nutrient-rich lab cultures, said Dr. Tarun Jain. He is a fertility specialist at University of Illinois at Chicago who wasn't involved in the study.

It just might be that it takes more nutrients to build boys than girls, he said.

University of Exeter researcher Fiona Mathews, the study's lead author, said the findings also fit with fertility research showing that male embryos aren't likely to survive in lab cultures with low sugar levels. Skipping meals can result in low blood sugar levels.

Jain said he was skeptical when he first heard about the research. But he said the study was well done and merits follow-up study to see if the theory proves true.

It's not necessarily as far-fetched as it sounds. While men's sperm determine a baby's gender, it could be that certain nutrients or eating patterns make women's bodies more hospitable to sperm carrying the male chromosome, Jain said.

"It's an interesting question. I'm not aware of anyone else looking at it in this manner," he said.

The study was published last month in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B, a British medical journal.

The research involved about 700 first-time pregnant women in the United Kingdom who didn't know the sex of their fetuses. They were asked about their eating habits in the year before getting pregnant.

Among women with the highest calorie intake before pregnancy (but still within a normal, healthy range), 56 percent had boys, versus 45 percent of the women with the lowest calorie intake.

Women who ate at least one bowl of breakfast cereal daily were 87 percent more likely to have boys than those who ate no more than one bowlful per week. Cereal is a typical breakfast in Britain and in the study, eating very little cereal was considered a possible sign of skipping breakfast, Mathews said.

Compared with the women who had girls, those who had boys ate an additional 300 milligrams of potassium daily on average, "which links quite nicely with the old wives' tale that if you eat bananas you'll have a boy," Mathews said.

Women who had boys also ate about 400 calories more daily than those who had girls, on average, she said.

Still, no one's recommending pigging out if you really want a boy or starving yourself if you'd prefer a girl.

A spot where cars roll uphill? It's true, and it is among the strange and off-beat locations and stories a Vancouver author has recorded in his tabletop book about the Evergreen State's legends and secrets

weird Washington



By BRETT OPPEGAARD
for The Columbian

He started by self-publishing spooky stories that he thought might be true, a series of books he calls "Ghosts, Critters and Sacred Places of Washington and Oregon."

From that, Vancouver's Jeff Davis developed a reputation as a regional researcher of the strange. On a whim, he pitched a couple of his pieces to a New Jersey publishing duo, Sterling Publishing and Weird U.S. Inc., working on a book called "Weird Hauntings."

The publishers liked his work and his writing style, and when they began expanding their "Weird" series to different states, they asked Davis to do his first commercial project: a tabletop tome entitled "Weird Washington," available in major bookstores around the Northwest.

The recently released 256-page book, co-authored by Al Eufrazio, identifies locales and events that help make this

BOOK HIGHLIGHTS STATE'S SPOOKY SPOTS

■ **What:** "Weird Washington," a new travel guide to the state's local legends and best-kept secrets, written by Al Eufrazio and Vancouver resident Jeff Davis.

■ **Cost:** \$19.95.

■ **On the Web:** ghostsandcritters.com and www.weirdus.com.

state uniquely odd. Davis, 45, spent nine months on the project and drove about 5,000 miles in search of the stories. He juggled the project with his duties as a historian for the U.S. Army. Davis already has plunged into his next project, "Weird Oregon."

WEIRD, Page D4

5 MORE UNIQUE PLACES TO VISIT AROUND WASHINGTON

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
for The Columbian

As a footnote, I spent a week in 1995 traversing the state with photographer Tom Boyd, an experience we turned into the book "Washington's Outer Limits." Similar to "Weird Washington," our goal was to find interesting aspects of this area not covered in ordinary tour guides. This out-of-print work overlaps with "Weird Washington," but it also follows its own distinct path.

So in addition to the many interesting places you can discover through "Weird Washington," here are five suggestions culled from the "Outer Limits" collection to help inspire further exploration of our quirky state:

■ **"Thundering Hooves"** — Look carefully at the plateaus east of Vantage, on Interstate 90 in the middle of the state, and spot the 15 life-sized sculptures of wild ponies appearing to run across the open space. They commemorate the Great Spirit's gift of horses to this planet.

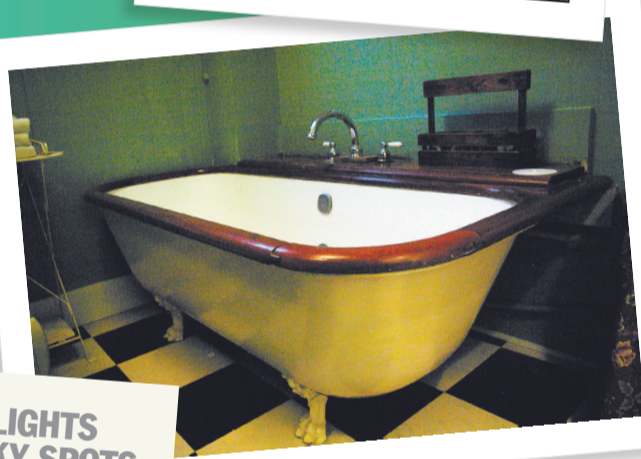
■ **Maryhill Museum of Art** — Builder Sam Hill's vision of a Quaker community near Goldendale failed, but the remnants of that effort include this stunning structure overlooking the Columbia River, once dubbed "the loneliest museum in the world." Its collection includes sculptures by Auguste Rodin, more than 100 antique chess sets and more than 4,000 American Indian artifacts, maryhillmuseum.org.

■ **Toppenish's murals** — This city, about 25 miles southeast of Yakima, claims to have the country's largest collection of outdoor murals, with nearly 70 to date. The murals depict scenes from 1850 to 1920. Some of the titles: "When Hops Were Picked by Hand," "Pow Wow, Ferris Wheel and Cotton Candy" and "Fifteen Miles and a Change of Horses," toppenish.net.

■ **Chief Joseph's grave** — One of the most renowned American Indian leaders, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, is buried in relative obscurity in the northeastern corner of the state on the Colville

Indian Reservation near Nespelem. Joseph outsmarted O.O. Howard and his cavalry for more than 1,000 miles before being caught. His famous last words: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

■ **"Crosbyana"** — That's what Spokane's Gonzaga University has dubbed its special room on campus that displays Bing Crosby memorabilia. Crosby, who moved from Tacoma to Spokane when he was 3, later became one of the most popular entertainers of the 20th century. Crosbyana contains accolades, such as his best actor Oscar for "Going My Way" and many gold and platinum records, as well as curiosities, such as the "Call Me Lucky" board game and a piece of exercise equipment he endorsed called "Stretch to Health."



Photos by JEFF DAVIS

Top: To help illustrate a story he wrote on firewalking for "Weird Washington," Jeff Davis of Vancouver created his own pit of hot coals, across which he strolled. After enduring the intense heat, he suffered the burn of the piece being cut from the book.

Above: Another story that didn't make the book was about how Davis ended up in John Wayne's bathtub.

Looking for hot accessories? The eyeglasses have it

By JOSEPH V. AMODIO
Newsday

MELVILLE, N.Y. — Philip Meltzer is an optometrist. Some days, he's also a marriage counselor.

Occasionally, customers return glasses because their husbands or wives hate them, says Meltzer, owner of Spectacles in Great Neck, N.J. He'll usually take them back, suggesting the client return with spouse in tow. If they get the choice down to two, Meltzer advises they go with the spouse's pick — since that's who has to look at them the most.

Buying glasses can be prickly business for the nearly 171 million American adults who, according to the Vision Council of America, wear some form of

corrective lenses — eyeglasses, contacts or reading glasses. The good news: There are more choices than ever before. Eyewear, in fact, has become the hot new accessory.

On Page D3

■ The buzz on bug-eye sunglasses.

lines (including Cole-Haan, Carmen Marc Valvo, Jimmy Choo, Tiffany and Pucci), and designers (like Valvo and Michael Kors) dressing models in frames in recent runway shows.

Stars, too — Chloe Sevigny, Jennifer Garner, Johnny Depp, even "Speed Racer's" Emile Hirsch — are popping

up bespectacled in the pages of magazines and gossip columns. "Saturday Night Live" alum Tina Fey became a smart-girl sex symbol with her specs. And "American Idol" judge Randy Jackson is so identified with his angular frames he launched his own line this spring.

"My eyewear is a part of my look and personality," says Jackson. "Eyeglasses aren't only for seeing, but for looking good. The days of being called 'four eyes' are out."



Photos from Newsday



Randy Jackson



Tina Fey

Music producer and "American Idol" judge Randy Jackson, left, has launched his own line of frames. Tina Fey's helped make glasses fashionable again. In her film "Baby Mama," she wore these Lunor frames, \$475.

FRAMES, Page D4

your Guide:



Fashion:
An ode to the tankini /D3



Innovative solutions for looking good in the workplace /D4

Television: "Farmer Wants a Wife" brings country life to hip CW /D7

Why "Lost" is anything but what its name implies /D7

Coming Friday:

Liberating yourself from the grocery store /D1



JEFF DAVIS

There's a hill near Prosser rumored to defy gravity. Vancouver's Jeff Davis tried it, and the strange experience became a highlight in his book "Weird Washington."

Weird:

From Page D1

He talked to The Columbian recently about his new book. These excerpts from the interview have been edited for clarity and context:

Your bio says you enjoy taking baths in John Wayne's tub. What's that about?

The ladies' restroom in the Hotel De Haro in Roche Harbor on the San Juan Islands has a huge Victorian bathtub. Wayne used to moor his ship on the pier and come into the hotel to take baths. He apparently had a cramped tub on the boat. So he had an arrangement with the hotel owners that he would lock himself in the bathroom and take baths.

Normally, I don't hang out in ladies' restrooms, but when I talked to the people at the front desk, they told me the story and that I was the only guest that night. I took a bath in it.

How was it?

It took awhile to fill up. I was told that there is a family from Texas that comes every year or every other year, and they all take baths in that tub. I guess it's a mecca for fans.

Is that the same place that Teddy Roosevelt was rumored to have stayed in the early 1900s?

I talked with a reporter (at the Journal of the San Juan Islands) who checked on this and contacted (Roosevelt) historians, and he firmly doesn't believe it happened. Yet I still wonder.

A lot of the book is about unexplained phenomena. Have you ever witnessed a ghost?

I have not seen an apparition, but I have had strange stuff appear on audio recordings. I've taken thousands of

photos, from which I did get three or four anomalies that I have taken to reporters and photographers, and I'm still waiting for an explanation.

Did anything not make the final cut on the project?

The hottest recorded firewalk in the Guinness Book of World Records, over 1,800 degrees, took place in Washington. I did an article on that, but I couldn't find any people doing firewalks for pictures. My editors kept asking, 'Where are the photos?' So I built a huge fire on my property, raked out about a 12-foot-long bed and did it myself, with a friend taking pictures and my family as witnesses.

How did that go?

I must have built it on top of a gopher hole, because on my first step, I sank down to about my ankle. It's not a natural act (to walk on fire). Whether you have faith in physics, or you believe it's a matter of mind control, I was mentally prepared for the bottom of my feet hurting. In that fraction of a second, though, I thought this isn't right. I just kept walking at a slow but normal pace.

It was a personal journey for me, which I guess was just as good as getting it published.

What was the most memorable place you found?

Gravity Hill, near Prosser (Benton County). There's an area up there, in a government checkerboard of roads, where your car will roll uphill.

Somebody painted a starting line on the road. You park your car there, put it in neutral, and it worked. You always hear about these sorts of things in urban legends. A lot of those are optical illusions.

I really tried to eye that. I'd like to go back there with surveyor's equipment.

How to dress well for workplace

Use this advice to look your best while being yourself

By SUZANNE D'AMATO
The Washington Post

Dressing for work can be a lot of, well, work. If clothing and grooming speak volumes about who you are, the office

is one place where you want those messages to be carefully calibrated.

Still, there is such a thing as being too careful. Anyone who buys all of her work clothes at Ann Taylor is most certainly in a fashion rut.

And though wearing a cotton tank top and rubber flip-flops may not get you reprimanded in today's business-casual culture, you

probably won't be looking at the corner office anytime soon, either.

With this guide to office style, we're here to help. We have tips on finding work-appropriate pieces, but we decided to skip such obvious spots as Nordstrom and the Gap in favor of less likely retailers, including Up Against the Wall and (no joke) Bebe. Chic work clothes are every-

where, even at chains better known for hip-hop tees and tube dresses.

We also reviewed a gaggle of products designed to save the day, should you discover that you have a fallen hem or scuffed shoes five minutes before a big meeting. Last, we have tips from a personal shopper whose stock in trade is helping working moms look their best.

FIVE UNEXPECTED SOURCES OF OFFICE ATTIRE

The Washington Post

Who says a work wardrobe can be found only at conservative stores? I saw surprisingly appropriate (and chic) pieces at these five chains.

BEBE

Miniskirts trimmed in flamenco ruffles and hoop earrings you could stick your hand through are not part of my fashion lexicon. But if they are part of yours, this racy retailer will not disappoint. The store is rife with chiffon bustiers, Herve Leger-inspired tube dresses and other Vegas showgirl staples. Still, the chain does stock a few styles that don't scream sex-ay: I particularly like one trench coat (\$129) whose trim cut and girlish ruffle sleeves wouldn't look out of place on Lela Rose's runway. A curvy suit (\$257) toned down in sweet seersucker is another attractive office option. www.bebe.com.

FOREVER 21

Personally, there are few years I want to revisit less than the time I was 21. But if you want to relive that age, this store is the place. It is filled with adorably tiny things befitting youthful bodies: skimpy skirts, teensy T-shirts and the greatest number of slinky jersey dresses I've ever seen in a single space. Look past such cutesy pieces, though, and you'll find many work-worthy staples with right-off-the-runway details. I love several Marni-inspired tops. The few skirts that are longer than mid-thigh (including the A-line version, \$23) easily could have legs at the office. The shoes are a miss, but other accessories feel chic and grown-up: Chunky bangle bracelets look more like boutique finds, and one orange vinyl satchel (\$25) is posh enough to pass for patent. www.forever21.com.

UP AGAINST THE WALL

At first glance, this is one of the least work-friendly shops I've visited, unless you can get away with wearing a cropped bomber jacket, day-glo skinny jeans and a velour purse by Juicy Couture to the office. The chain's office-friendly finds may be few, but the little that's there is quite cool. Up Against the Wall is an unexpectedly great resource for pretty blouses — the kind that can make all the difference when you're wearing a staid suit or a same-old cardigan. A fluttery sleeveless shirtdress (\$48) is beautifully made for the price. And the jewelry looks more sophisticated than you'd expect: One earthy wood and gold-tone pendant (\$10) is nicely in keeping with spring's tribal trend. www.upagainstthewall.com.

URBAN OUTFITTERS

If Sienna, Kate or Mary-Kate has worn something in the past six

Consultant offers tips on stylish office looks

The Washington Post

Joyce Neave is That Mom. She's the mother of three who always shows up perfectly coiffed, stylishly dressed.

But she's also That Mom: The Brand (www.bethatmom.com). The 41-year-old Bethesda, Md., resident parlayed a lifelong passion for fashion into a career as a wardrobe consultant. She specializes in helping women, particularly mothers, rework their closets and their style identities. Style tip Nos. 1 and 2? "Wear clothes that fit well, and dress age-appropriately," she says.

Neave puts walking shoes, dark hosiery and bulky sweaters at the top of her Don'ts List. Instead, she says, try a shoe made for comfort; swap dated pantyhose for a glowy self-tanner; and try a trim lightweight sweater with a waist-defining tie belt.

Neave adds one crucial caveat: "Fashion is not everything," she says. "It's about being yourself and feeling confident."

Here are a few of Neave's suggestions:

■ **Laura Mercier Clementine Body But-**

Tevrow & Chase

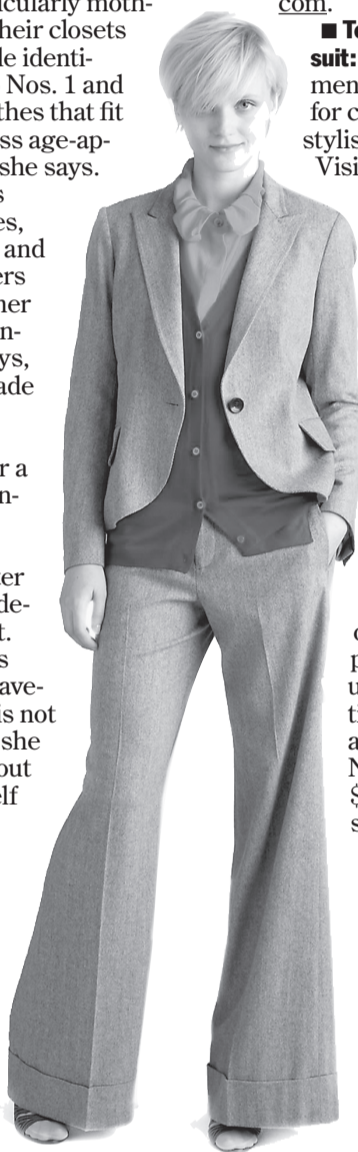
ter: Neave suggests using a scented body lotion instead of a perfume at the office. \$40 at www.sephora.com.

■ **Taryn Rose "Carmela" pump:** These colorblocked peep-toe pumps from orthopedic surgeon-turned-shoe-designer Taryn Rose give you fashion and comfort: a 3.5-inch heel, with NASA-created memory-foam padding for loads of comfort. \$525 at www.piperlime.com.

■ **Tevrow & Chase suit:** Neave recommends this line for classic but stylish work wear. Visit www.tevrow-chase.com.

■ **"The Lucky Shopping Manual" by Kim France and Andrea Linett:** The hands-on approach of this style advice book (Gotham Books, 2003) by the editors of Lucky is particularly useful for its tips on mixing and matching, Neave says. \$30 at bookstores.

■ **Wardrobe consultant Joyce Neave recommends the Tevrow & Chase line for classic but stylish work wear.**



WORKPLACE APPEARANCE SOLUTIONS

The Washington Post

Four problems, eight quick fixes: From fancy to basic, which product is best to stash in your desk drawer?

BREAKOUTS

■ **Fancy fix:** Benefit's Galactic Shield blemish concealer (\$15 at www.benefitcosmetics.com).

■ **Emergency fix:** Visine is rumored to have zit-zapping powers, mostly because the ingredients that shrink blood vessels in your eyes supposedly reduce redness around a blemish.

■ **Which is better?** Benefit's fix, hands down. The concealer goes on smoothly and covers blemishes, plus it seems to speed healing.

FALLEN HEM

■ **Fancy fix:** Her Look Matchsticks (\$10 at www.doublesticktricks.com). The double-sided tape strips, which resemble skinny Band-Aids, offer relief for wardrobe malfunctions from a sagging hemline to a gaping wrap dress.

■ **Emergency fix:** In a pinch, plain old packing tape is a fast, MacGyveresque solution for a drooping hem.

■ **Which is better?** In highly scientific road tests, the new-fangled Matchsticks didn't perform much better than my old friend, packing tape.

PANTYHOSE RUN

■ **Fancy fix:** Sally Hansen's Airbrush Legs (\$10-\$13 at drugstores and mass retailers). The leg makeup comes in four shades that you can match to your skin tone or, if you prefer, use to get a tan tint.

■ **Emergency fix:** My mom's time-tested standby: Brush a bit of clear nail polish at the tip of the rip to keep the run from extending.

■ **Which is better?** Not to knock nail polish (which is so multipurpose it would make Heloise's head spin), but I hate having a smelly, tacky dab on my leg. This spray, on the other hand? Love it. It can be applied at home before dressing or at work. It dries quickly, hides imperfections and doesn't rub off on clothes.

SCUFFED SHOES

■ **Fancy fix:** Foot Petals shoe polish pen (\$13 at www.target.com). This small, convenient tube of carnauba wax polish brushes on easily without the mess of a standard polishing kit.

■ **Emergency fix:** Crayola markers. The black marker covers scuffs beautifully. But when I try to hide a scuff on a brown sandal, it looks, not surprisingly, as if I've written on my shoe.

■ **Which is better?** The Foot Petals pen works much better than the Crayola; it leaves both black and brown shoes — even in tough-to-cover patent leather — scuff-free.

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Frames:

From Page D1

"I attribute it to the political atmosphere today," says Robert Marc, a designer of sleek, upscale frames. "With the upcoming elections and debates about the economy, the environment and the war, everyone wants to look cerebral and 'in the know.'"

Glasses can also express one's style and creativity. "Eyewear is the new scarf, the new tie," notes trend consultant Tom Julian, of the Tom Julian Group in Manhattan. "Think left brain/right brain — if a purse or watch used to do the creative thing."

Technology, too, he adds, "has helped spur interest in

frames." Advances in laminates allow for saturated, bold colors; lasers cut out or etch intricate designs on temples; and jewels and crystals offer bling.

And that's just frames. Lens technology also continues to improve.

Today's lenses, explains Kevin Palmer, owner of Main Street Optics in Southampton, are ultra thin, offering consumers more choice in the kinds of frames they can wear. So, which do you choose? Rectangles remain strong, say opticians. Bold colors and shapes are hot, and a retro look is on the rise.

"Nostalgic baby boomers," says Marc, are driving sales of old-school glasses — thick, round and square frames reminiscent of the 1950s and '60s.

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