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## FROM COMIC BOOKS TO CHESS

### THE HOBBIES THAT HAVE PERVADED O'CONNOR CHILDHOODS

Growing up with four brothers, I had built-in friendships from the day I was born. I was closest with my brother Michael who was two years older than me. When I was around 10, we pooled our resources to get the kinds of goodies young boys crave — comic books and baseball cards.

We'd head down to the Outer Limits comic book store off Utica Avenue about twice a month and usually gravitated toward the used comic section. The previously owned comics were only a quarter apiece, so we could get 10 for \$2.50. The new ones were 60 cents, which was pretty pricey for kids our age then (The average price of a comic book today is \$5.00).

Our interests started to diverge after a couple of years; I preferred baseball, and my brother liked comics. So, we split our collection along those lines and did our own thing. I realize now that I got the short end of the stick financially, but the value wasn't at the top of my mind then. I quit collecting baseball cards before long, but my brother never stopped with his comics.

He's 53 now, and I'd guess his collection sits at around 5,000 comics. When my family visited him in North Carolina a few years ago, I went to the comic book store with him and the kids. "Hello, Mr. O'Connor," the employee behind the desk greeted him. "We have your monthly stack ready." It was at

least 20 comic books high, and the staff treated him like a king. I wouldn't want to lose his business, either!

I don't have many hobbies outside of watching baseball these days — unless you count reading business books. But seeing my boys develop their interests over the years has been an absolute joy. My two older boys, Owen and Sean, are primarily into playing sports. I love watching them and am a typical proud dad in the stands.

Sports are more than just a way to keep them busy; their participation is helping them turn into fine young men. Team sports teach you countless life skills like communication, leadership, and discipline. Hobbies should be fun, but they also help us take time for ourselves, learn new things, and grow as people.

My youngest son, Finn, takes after his uncle and passionately attacks his interests. He loves video games, which often get a bad rap. But I've seen the games teach him problem-solving and creativity. So does his LEGO hobby, which grew after taking a class with a so-called LEGO Master.

Finn loves his "Star Wars" LEGOs, and some sets have over 1,000 pieces and are labeled as being for ages 18 and up. I'm not sure if that's a marketing ploy or if the sets really are that advanced, but I'm nevertheless impressed with how he builds big, complex creations with tiny



little pieces. It's a hobby that keeps his brain working.

It's the same with his latest obsession: chess. Owen and Sean couldn't care less, but Finn loves the game. I'd never played, so we decided to learn together. He has beaten me a few times and constantly asks me to play. It's one of the things he seems to have a knack for, and I'm proud of him.

You could say my hobby is watching my kids enjoy theirs. I genuinely love to see them passionate about something and catch the spark in their eyes when they learn something new. Whether you're a hardcore collector or casual gamer, engaging in hobbies fosters creativity, helps us acquire new skills and interests, and enhances overall happiness and mental well-being. Hobbies help make us who we are, and it's beautiful to see who my boys are becoming.

*-Brian O'Connor*

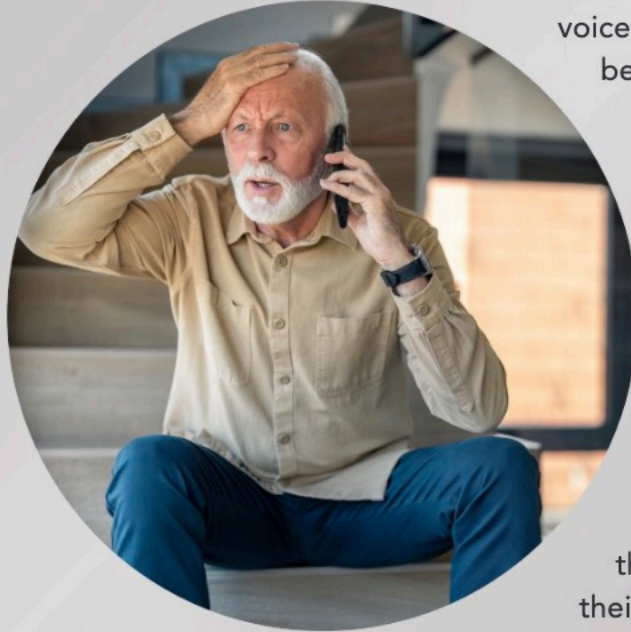




# AI Scams: VOICE CLONING COULD DRAIN YOUR BANK ACCOUNT!

With AI capabilities growing daily, you need to be even more vigilant against potential scammers.

We've already heard about AI's power to create written content and, more recently, use musicians' voices to sing different songs. So, how does this relate to scammers? Well, TikTok users and other online users have shared a new scam that utilizes AI to drain the bank accounts of their family members called voice cloning.



Scammers looking to steal thousands of dollars will use AI to replicate the voices of people who've posted their voices online via videos like TikTok. They'll clone a person's voice and then use it to call their relatives and pretend to be their children or grandchildren who need money as soon as possible. The person on the phone is a scammer, not your family member, even though they sound just like them.

Never send money without first verifying whether it is or isn't your relative. Some online users advise creating secret code words to exchange over the phone to confirm their family member is requesting the money. Always contact your relative and ask if they actually made the call.

Remember, anyone who has posted a short clip of their voice can find it cloned with AI and used to scam their families. Stay safe!

## ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

collide with their steering wheel, leading to severe injuries to their upper body.

Airbags and steering wheel aside, when a driver is sitting too close to the wheel, they run the risk of windshield glass severely cutting them during a crash. These drivers can also find themselves trapped between the seat and steering wheel after a collision crushes their vehicle. Clearly, there are numerous reasons why sitting too close to the steering wheel is dangerous. Conversely, what is a safe distance between the driver and the wheel?

### Simple changes can save your life!

Both the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have confirmed that there should be **10 or more inches** between the driver and the steering wheel. To be even safer, you should recline the upper part of your seat to add maximum distance while still being able to reach the pedals. Scoot the entire seat back as far as you reasonably can!

Another simple step that can save your life is lowering the placement of your steering wheel so that it's tilted below your face and chest. This will also minimize the impact

to the face and chest, which, when injured, can be severe or even fatal.

Finally, for those who are shorter and frustrated by the increased distance, you can contact a professional to adjust your pedals. You can have your pedals modified or new ones installed to ensure your feet reach them while still maintaining a safe distance from the wheel. Just these few easy steps can change the outcome of a potentially fatal car crash. Change the way you sit in the driver's seat today!





# TAKE A **BREAK**

P I H S N E Z I T I C V A D V  
Y K I I T M M Y H I L I J L Q  
R D S I Y N K O M Y B Y C I K  
R O E Q Y M E J O L D K D S S  
G H S T O Y D R U N K N C L P  
L E A V E S O E A K S H I Y X  
D R G P I V B K C P O T A W O  
I S Y W P E M R W O D T O R D  
G B I D R X W O L Z G N U N Z  
T B X R E X I W S C Q E A R E  
U Z I D P A O E W O B Z O R U  
Q E A X A S H M C Z K B Z T G  
S Z L G R T Y O K G A G P N P  
L V F I E E Y H N L O G R I V  
I T V R U R T B U Z H N T Y I

Aster  
Blueberries  
Citizenship  
Grandparents  
Homework  
Labor  
Leaves  
Moonstone  
Prepare  
School  
Virgo  
Windy

## COZY FRENCH ONION SOUP

Inspired by [TasteOfHome.com](https://www.tasteofhome.com)

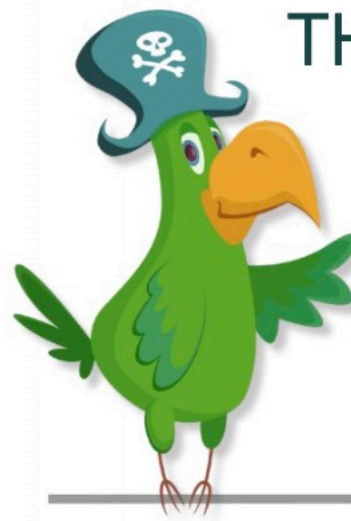
### INGREDIENTS

- 5 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 tbsp butter
- 8 cups sliced onions
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup port wine
- 2 32-oz cartons beef broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 24 slices baguette (1/2-inch thick)
- 3/4 cup shredded Gruyere cheese

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a Dutch oven, heat 2 tbsp oil and butter over medium heat. Add onions and cook until softened, then reduce heat. Occasionally stir until brown (around 30 minutes). Add garlic and cook for 2 more minutes.
2. Stir in wine and bring to a boil. When liquid has reduced by half, add broth, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 1 hour.
3. Preheat oven to 400 F. On a baking sheet, brush baguette slices with remaining oil. Bake until golden (3–5 minutes each side).
4. In 12 broiler-safe 8-oz bowls, place 2 toast slices and pour soup into each. Top with cheese and broil until melted.

## THE GREATEST HEIST IN HISTORY



### HOW PIRATE KING HENRY EVERY VANISHED

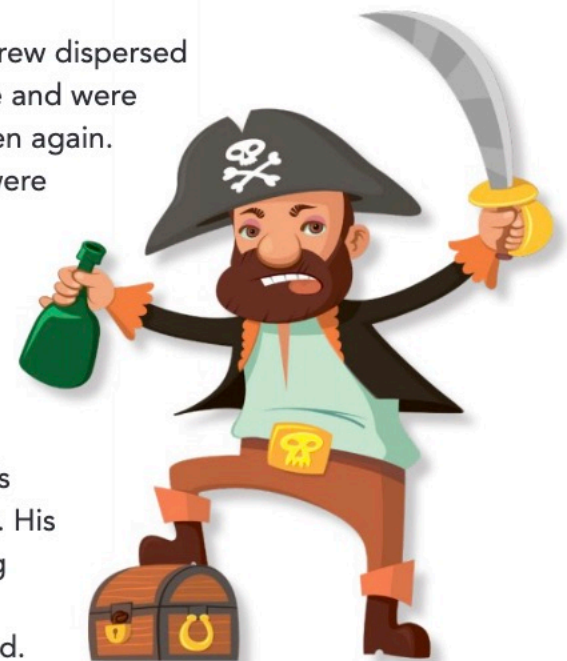
The history of pirates is rich with countless stories of lawless thieves and fearless captains. Yet the accounts of what exactly happened to the “King of Pirates” after he led the largest pirate heist in history are still muddled.

Henry Every isn’t a household name compared to other famous pirates. However, what makes Every exceptional is that, unlike his counterparts, he was never captured. The first reports of Every were of his service in the British Navy before boarding the warship Charles II as a first mate to battle French ships for their freight. However, after the captain delayed the mission and payment was stalled, Every conspired with the angry crew to mutiny.

Renaming the ship the Fancy, Every and his team sailed the coastline of Africa to steal riches. Their final heist against a Mughal Empire fleet returning to India led to the treasure of a lifetime. After accruing more and more crewmates, Every and his gang overtook the various ships and all the gold and jewels they carried. The loot is estimated to be tens of millions of modern-day dollars.

Every and his crew dispersed with their share and were never to be seen again.

Some pirates were believed to have found refuge in the U.S., but Every was never located despite Britain’s fierce manhunt. His title as the King of Pirates was rightfully earned.







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Could Your Steering Wheel Position Be  
Putting You at Risk?

## COULD YOUR STEERING WHEEL POSITION BE PUTTING YOU AT RISK?

When you get into the driver's seat, you may check all your mirrors or settings, but are you adjusting your steering wheel? This one factor can prevent a car accident from becoming fatal. The proximity and placement of your steering wheel are significant factors in an accident because of the sheer force of the vehicle's airbags.

Unfortunately, shorter individuals will naturally bring their seats incredibly close to the steering wheel due to the distance between their feet and the pedals. Specifically, women and older people under 5 feet, 5 inches tall will scoot their seats dangerously close. However, there are ways to keep yourself safe while driving.

### **How is sitting too close to the wheel dangerous?**

When airbags activate during a collision, they can create nearly 2,000 pounds of force and expand at almost 200 mph!



That's a lot of pressure and speed aimed directly at your chest. This impact can lead to severe injury or even death for smaller individuals. Whiplash, neck injuries, fractures, and spinal damage are all possibilities when an airbag impacts your chest or neck.

Airbags save countless lives, but if a driver is sitting too close to the wheel, it can do the opposite. Even faulty airbags that don't deploy can cause an up-close driver to dangerously

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ...**

