

NEWS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

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INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT CHARTREUSE

Do you know about Chartreuse? I first ran into or drank Chartreuse when I was a baby lawyer. I remember times when I was so worried about what the jury was going to do in my trial that I developed a ritual. I would put on the turntable (no Spotify in those days) a dark opera about death, light one of those Mexican religious candles - I always choose the one that said “Pray for your Lawyer”- and drink a shot of Chartreuse. Somehow, I thought Chartreuse was so weird and other worldly, it might join force with the candle and send winning vibes to the jury and my trial.

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Fast forward to 2020 and I no longer try cases or have the need for that ritual but I was intrigued when I saw a recent article about Chartreuse in the New York Times by Marion Renault titled, “Where Life, And an Elixir, are Timeless.”



Chartreuse has a very interesting history. In 1084 seven men in search of isolation and solitude took refuge in southeastern France’s Chartreuse Mountains. They started the Chartreux monastery also known as Carthusians and it still continues 900 years later. The monks spend their days alone, praying for humanity and only interact for church services where no musical instruments are allowed. They eat

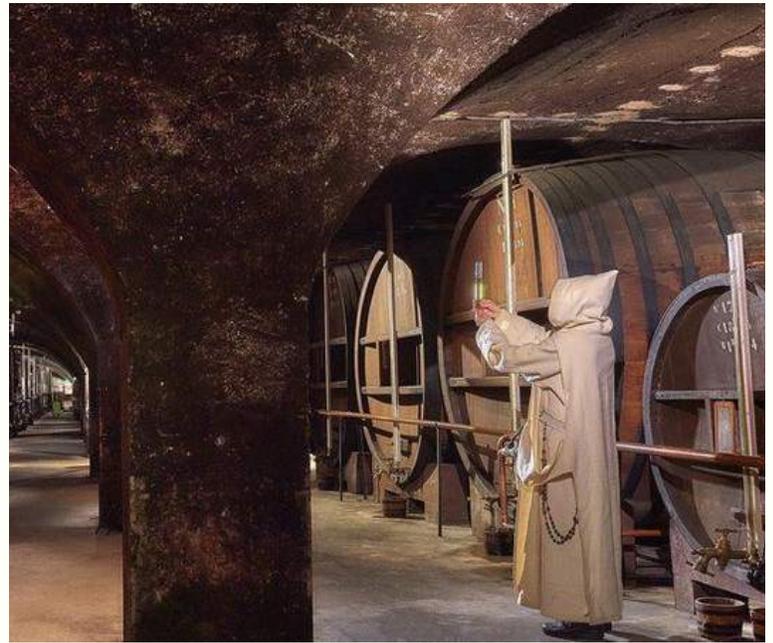
frugal meals which are taken in their private cell-like rooms. This lifestyle has continued, so the COVID isolation has made zero difference to them.

The Carthusian monks sustain this isolated lifestyle through the production and sale of Chartreuse. According to the legend, in 1605 the monks received an alchemist’s ancient manuscript for a perfectly concocted medicinal tonic of about 130 herbs and plants and it was called the “Elixir of Long Life.”



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The monks slowly refined the recipe until 1764 when they had a potent elixir which only one monk had the recipe for. As the years went by, the monks perfected two versions, one is neon green which is 55% proof and a sweeter 40% proof yellow version. These are popular in cocktails and are also still sold medicinally for indigestion, sore throat and nausea.



MONK IN THE CHARTREUSE CELLARS (PHOTO BY GRENOBLE-CONGRES)



Weirdly or maybe remarkably so, only two monks know the 130-ingredient recipe. This fact is a marketer’s nightmare. A Chartreuse Diffusion president told the New Yorker in 1984 he had no idea what it is he sells. “I am very scared always. Only three of the brothers know how to make it—nobody else knows the recipe. And each morning they drive together to the distillery. And they drive a very old car. And they drive it very badly.” Beyond the three monks who know the recipe, all the others—Carthusian or not—involved in the production of Chartreuse know only fragments of the recipe.



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The monks measure and sort 130 unlabeled plants and herbs which are put in sacks and taken to the distillery. At the distillery, five non-Carthusian employees work alongside two monks to distill, blend and age the liqueur.

A computerized system allows the monks to virtually monitor the distilling process from the monastery. Back at the distillery, the two monks that oversee the process are also the ones who taste and decide what is ready to bottle and sell. “They are the quality control,” said Emmanuel Delafon, the current C.E.O. of Chartreuse Diffusion. The monastery owns the diffusion company but the secular employees carry out the business functions the monks’ isolated life prevents them from doing. “It’s their product, and we’re at their service,” Mr. Delafon said, “They need it to maintain their financial independence. They trust us to make the link between monastic life and everything else.”

What does it taste like? One bartender described it as Christmas in a glass or grassy herbal hit with a warm almost minty finish. Allegedly Queen Elizabeth likes a splash of it in her champagne. Bartenders will add it to a martini such as the Bijou Cocktail.



Bijou Cocktail

- 1.5 oz. gin 2 dashes orange bitters
- ¾ oz. green chartreuse Stir ingredients with ice and
- 1 oz. sweet vermouth strain into a chilled martini glass.

Cheers!



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GRIBE OF THE MONTH

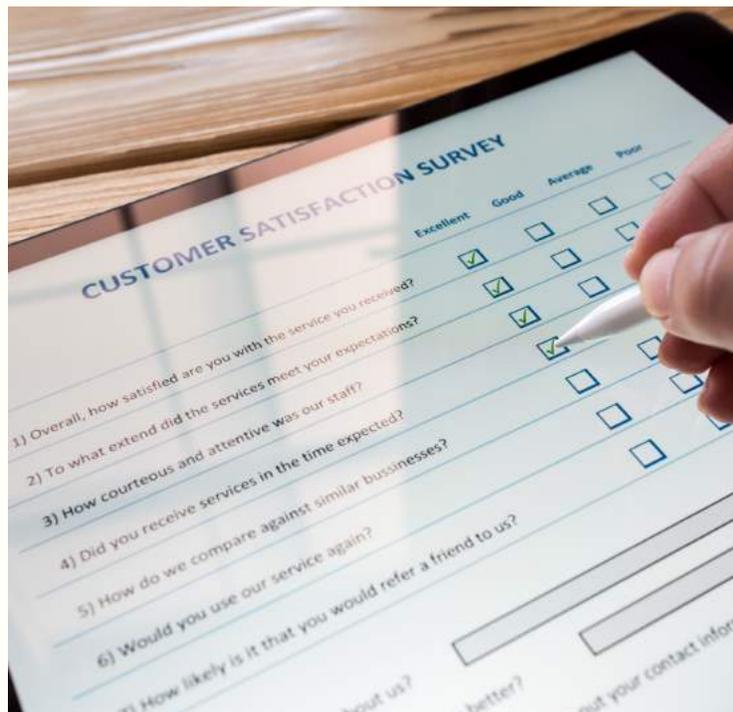
Sometimes a good idea gets stale or even annoying. And one of these ideas is the annoying habit of surveys. You cannot do anything anymore without getting bombarded with emails and texts to give a survey on the experience.

Here comes the email, many times you get two or more. They go like this:

“Would you be interested in giving a short survey on your experience?” I want to say, “My experience was fine

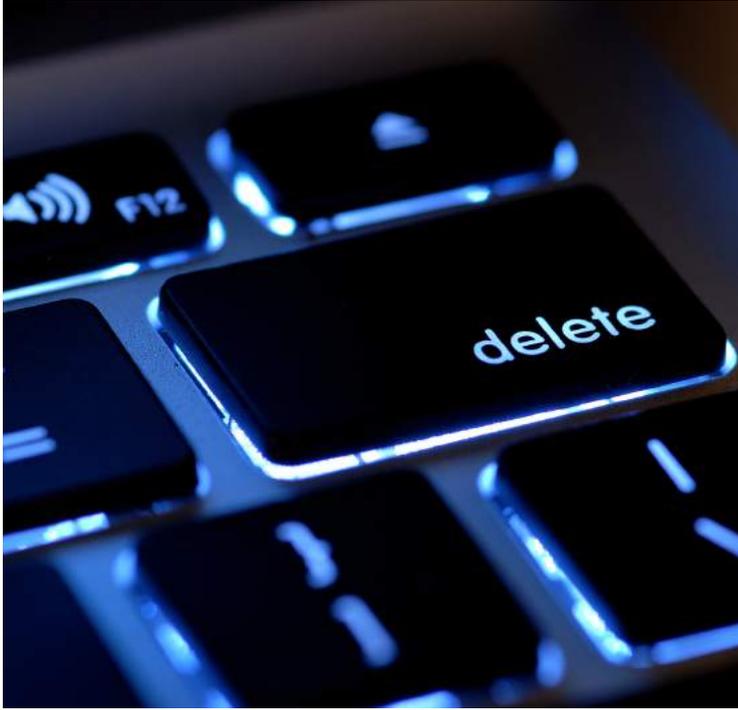
but you nagging me about giving a survey has caused me to have a bad experience? Do these surveys really make any difference? I wonder if the survey harassment is to just make you think they care about your experience.

David Sedaris, the humorist and novelist, had a recent discussion on CBS Sunday Morning about his idea of a citizen’s dismissal. Sedaris said when you are in a store line and the person behind the counter is checking their social media on their phone rather than taking your order or the shop assistant that is obviously ignoring your attempts to get help, that in those situations you should be able to make a citizens’ dismissal. Which in Sedaris’ world would be “I am making a



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citizens' dismissal." In other words, you are fired! Actually with the way everyone is so pissed off today with the election and COVID that idea would probably result in you being killed, so not a good idea but the concept makes sense. However, I am not going to try it.



Instead I will continue to hit the delete button when asked to do a survey or to comment on “How was your experience?” and I will never agree to stay on the line to conduct a survey on the phone experience. I have noticed that the concept of a consumer survey after a phone experience has caused phone people to be very nice but as usual the pendulum has swung too far the other way.

Now when you are on the phone with a service provider –after being on hold forever—the employee is saccharin sweet. They want to ask about your day and how you are doing and especially your name. I think someone told them if you use people’s name they will respond better. Maybe but not really if I have been on hold forever listening to the same recording over and over, “Thank you for holding—We appreciate your business.”



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That might have been nice if I heard it once but 20 times, not so much! Now because the employee knows he/she could be reviewed by that blasted survey, they are on hyper alert to be extra nice.



The problem is once you get your answer, they don't want to let you off the phone. "Anything else you need? Have you had a good experience? I hope you have a fabulous day." Stop, I don't know you. You were polite and I want to be polite but what I really want is to get off the phone with you.

So with all of that griping I do feel better. Thank you!



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WACO AND THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

You may be wondering why I am writing about this. It all started when Tom and I watched the mini-series Waco on Netflix, which by the way I highly recommend. The series is based on two biographies: A Place Called Waco by Branch Davidian survivor, David Thibodeau and Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator by FBI's special agent in charge of negotiations, Gary Noesner.



In 1993 for 51 days, federal agents camped outside the Branch Davidian's compound in Waco trying to get the leader, David Koresh and his followers inside to come out. Koresh refused and his followers also declined and, in the end, it resulted in a firefight where 76 people including 25 children and Koresh himself died.

What led up to this and why didn't the Koresh followers leave the compound? It sounds like the story of Jim Jones' cult called the Peoples Temple where 1000 people drank cyanide laced grape flavored Kool-Aid and died. But back to Koresh and the Branch Davidians.



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The Branch Davidians didn't start with David Koresh it began as an offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventists. Koresh, whose real name was Vernon Howell, came into power in 1981 at age 22. Koresh claimed to have memorized the Bible by age 12 and for nine years drilled his followers to prepare for Armageddon.



MOUNT CARMEL (PHOTO BY ABC NEWS)

Although there were allegations of sexual misconduct none were ever proven. It is true, according to Thibodeau, Koresh decreed that the Branch Davidian men could no longer have sex with their wives and this was now the private domain of Koresh. Why would sane men and women allow this? Why would sane adults want to move into a compound, called Mount Carmel, which had no running water, or heat. Koresh stockpiled food but limited the amount of food the followers could eat.

Koresh preached a holy war and instructed his followers to stockpile guns and ammunition. This was what prompted the McLennon County Sheriff's Department to ask ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) to investigate possible federal gun violations. It is disputed who shot first but when the ATF attempted to serve a search warrant, an intense gunfight erupted, resulting in the deaths of



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four government agents and six Branch Davidians. What followed is the longest siege (51 days) between the government and citizens in American history.



The FBI was brought in with Noesner as the lead negotiator in an attempt to get Koresh to come out. At first the FBI believed they had made a breakthrough when they negotiated with Koresh an agreement that the Branch Davidians would peacefully leave if Koresh could deliver a message broadcast on national radio. Even though the broadcast was made, mainly of Koresh's rantings, he refused to come out. The negotiators did manage to get him to release 19 children.

As the days went by, the FBI became more and more frustrated. They used increasingly aggressive techniques to try to force them out such as sleep deprivation by broadcasting all night loud recordings of jet planes, pop music, chanting and the screams of rabbits being slaughtered. The FBI began patrolling the compound with tanks and using the tanks to destroy perimeter fencing and crush cars belonging to the Branch Davidians.



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Finally the FBI cut all power and destroyed the three water storage tanks the Branch Davidians had on the roof.

Newly appointed U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno finally approved recommendations to mount an assault after being told children were being abused, which turned out not to be true. The FBI used Combat Engineering Vehicles (CEV) with explosives to punch holes in the walls of the compound walls and pumped in tear gas. However, after more than six hours, no Branch Davidians had left the building instead sheltering in an underground concrete bunker. Thereafter, three fires broke out in different parts of the building. Only nine people left the building, Thibodeau being one, during the fire. The remaining died.

The controversy continues with many arguing the tear gas killed those inside or others believing Koresh ordered the fires started.

All of this makes me wonder about cults and mind control. There are estimated 2,500 to 3,000 cults in the United States. The number of cult members nationally is estimated at 300,000 to 3,000,000. Dr. Stanley Cath, a psychoanalyst and associate professor of psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine has treated and studied 60 former cult members over the last decade.

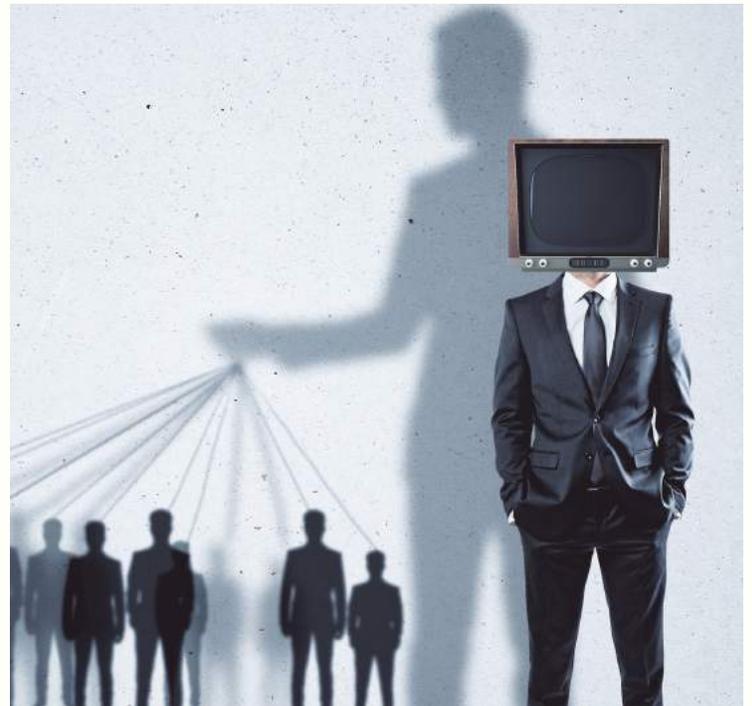


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Dr. Cath defines a cult as a group of people joined together by a common ideological system fostered by a charismatic leader where the expectation is that they can transcend the imperfections and finitude of life. Cult leaders set up a we-they philosophy. We have the truth and they don't.

Cults often use behavior modification on their followers. Members are taught to stop doubts from entering their consciousness about the cult, often with a key phrase or as Koresh did with three times a day Bible study. Another way to get mind control is to make people afraid and to play off a person's irrational fears, with threats that the person will go to hell or some other horrible result if they leave or question the group.

A destructive cult is an authoritarian regime which uses deception to make a person dependent and obedient such as limiting food like Koresh did. People join cults because they are looking for love and acceptance and they want answers to their personal problems. Charismatic cult leaders like Koresh sense people's weaknesses and neediness and know what to say to draw people into the fold.



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Many cult followers are emotionally scarred and willing to go beyond the bounds of normalcy in order to sooth their deeply felt needs. To them their cult life seems perfectly normal and right no matter how pathological it appears to outsiders.

Cult members are willing to die for their leaders because they have come to believe that their own redemption is tied to the group and the leader. The same is true for the mind-boggling willingness to give one's spouse over to the sexual desires of the leader. For the Branch Davidians it was their religious desire that Koresh was able to manipulate.

Cult and mind control was present in the WWI Japanese Kamikaze fighter pilots (Kamikaze means divine wind or spirit wind) who knew by flying into plane they were committing suicide. Currently Al-Qaeda suicide bombers believe their actions and suicide achieve awards in heaven. As long as there are humans with their failings, emotional wounds and hurts, and controlling cult leaders to take advantage, destructive cults will continue to exist. If only there was another way, but who said being a human was easy.



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YOUR MOOD IS IN YOUR HANDS AND A PERSONAL CONFESSION



I am going to tell on myself. Years ago as a dare devil and a stupid teenager I had a massive water ski injury. Have you heard the joke about the Aggie that skied into a pier? Well the Aggie joke was me.

Anyway, I had a big mess on my hands with a shattered leg and I was feeling sorry for myself. My Mother, trying to help, says to me, “Why Carla just think about the people that don’t have any feet,” I sullenly replied, “I don’t care about those people. I care about myself” Feeling sorry for myself was what I wanted to do.

Flash forward 40 years and my bum leg started to cause issues and so I was back on the journey of rehab. And once again I tried to be more “grown up” and stay positive but frankly as my patient boyfriend can confirm, I liked to complain about it.

Recently I had a young lawyer in my mediation that has been with me before. Every time he comes it is so uplifting because of his positive attitude.



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What is even more amazing, other than being one of the most positive people I have ever met, is the fact he is paraplegic and in a wheelchair.

I asked A how he stayed so positive. I told him he puts out so much positive energy it was uplifting to be around him. He said this: “Carla it is all self-preservation. You can be either positive or negative. If you are negative you get depressed and I refuse to get depressed. So you see it is all about helping myself.”

“Wow” I said. And to myself I said, “Holy Shit!” “A is a saint on earth and Carla you need to take your hand and slap the side of your face and say, Wake up you fool, no feeling sorry for yourself.”

A announced he has a girlfriend. “Wow” I said again. “That is so good.” He replied, “Yes, especially with my situation. No one wants to date someone in a wheelchair.” Again very matter of fact with zero self-pity, A went on to explain there is one problem. “What’s that I asked?” He replied, “Well she is a Muslim and I am a Hindu and our parents are not very keen on that.” He said his parents had moved past it because she was so good to him but her parents were having issues with it. Then A said something that again blew my mind at his goodness. He said, “I told her that I did not want to be responsible for her having issues with her parents. That if she needed to break up with me I would be very sad, but I would not be bitter. I would understand.”



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Hearing this I felt smaller and smaller. How can one person be so selfless but he is. He is genuine and his presence is like being in a goodness capsule, a capsule of someone very loving and giving. Someone who, unlike how I get sometimes, is thinking of others, rather than himself.

It is really simple, simple to say but hard to do. Your mood is in your hands. You choose how to use it. Do you want to feel bad, then feel sorry for yourself. If not, get over your pitiful self and open yourself up to feel good and then not telling what life will bring you. So this is my mantra for myself. I hope it helps if you are letting this strange times get you down.



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