



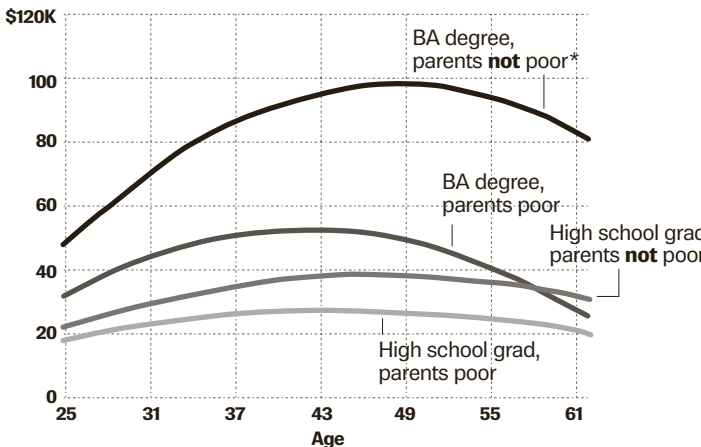
Perspective

A Little Perspective

Still think America is the ‘land of opportunity’? Look at this chart.

College is worth less if you are raised poor

Annual earnings, by education and parents’ income



* “Poor” is defined as families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level, the threshold for qualifying for the federal assisted lunch program.

Source: Brookings Institution calculations from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics

Washington Post

The American Dream — that anyone can achieve success through hard work, grit and determination — has always had a complicated relationship with the American Reality. Children born at the bottom of the income distribution are more likely than not to stay there. Policymakers on the left and right often tout education as the bridge to help poor kids — people with more education make more money. But striking new research from the Brookings Institution shows a college degree is worth a lot less, earnings-wise, to poor kids than to rich ones. Brookings’ Brad Hershbein analyzed data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, a massive study that’s tracked the economic progress of 18,000 individuals in 5,000 families since 1968. Because the study tracks the same families over close to 50 years, researchers can see things like how the family environment a person grows up in affects earnings decades later. Hershbein found that, as you’d expect, a college degree does make a difference in poor students’ future earnings — poor kids who went to college earned, on average, 91 percent more money over their careers than poor kids who only got a high school degree. But the earnings bump for middle- and upper-class kids was much larger. In that group, kids who

got a bachelor’s degree earned 162 percent more than their peers who only earned a high school degree. Yet, the earnings gap between poor and rich college-educated kids is huge, and it grows over the course of a career. Right after college, poor kids earn about two-thirds as much as rich kids, on average. But by midcareer, the typical college grad from a rich family is earning close to \$100,000, while the grad from a poor family is making around \$50,000. Hershbein and his colleagues are investigating everything “from family resources during childhood and the place where one grew up, to the colleges that low-income students attend” in search of the driving factors. Here’s the bottom line: A college education is not necessarily the great equalizer. This doesn’t mean that talented poor kids shouldn’t get a four-year degree — after all, that degree would nearly double their lifetime earnings. But Hershbein’s research suggests our society isn’t as meritocratic as it’s cracked up to be.

Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post

The happiest places really take care of their teeth

The Americans most satisfied by life have a lot in common. In places where people report a strong sense of well-being, residents tend to like what they do. They find their surroundings intellectually stimulating and safe. And they have low rates of obesity and high rates of healthy eating and exercise. But they share at least one unintuitive characteristic: Good dental hygiene.

“In high well-being places, people go to the dentist; that’s a very common feature,” said Dan Witters, research director for the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, which ranks 190 metropolitan areas by the well-being of their residents based on a survey of more than a quarter-million Americans. A visit to the dentist will, of course, not fix all of your problems, but places where people have good dental health also

tend to be places where they report being generally fulfilled. “It’s a surrogate for it,” Witters said. “People who take good care of their teeth generally think they have higher well-being lives.”

The people who reported the highest well-being ratings live in and around Naples, Fla., according to the Well-Being Index, which was released last week. The rankings are based on how strongly residents rate their sense of purpose, social fulfillment, financial security, sense of community and physical health — five elements that Gallup felt “matter most to a life well-lived,” Witters said. As it turns out, life is actually pretty grand along a stretch of Florida’s Gulf Coast. The Sarasota metropolitan area placed third in the ranking.

Niraj Chokshi, Washington Post



JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

On the road again, wasting a week while commuting

The American commute is getting longer. It now takes the average worker 26 minutes to travel to work, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That’s the longest it’s been since the Census began tracking this data in 1980 — it’s gotten nearly 20 percent longer since then. And American drivers put a record number of miles on their vehicles last year — roughly 3.15 trillion miles, or enough to make roughly 337 round trips to Pluto. Last year was a big year for driving. And the reason why can be summed up in two simple words: cheap gas. If it’s cheap to drive, people are going to drive.

More driving means more congested roads, and more wear and tear on those roads, too. But as usual, infrastructure spending remains the forgotten stepchild of congressional budget battles.

Total public spending on transportation and water infrastructure declined from 3 percent in 1959 to 2.4 percent of GDP in 2014, according to the Congressional Budget Office. At the federal level, the decline in infrastructure spending has been sharper, falling from close to 6 percent of all federal spending in the 1960s to less than 3 percent in 2014. And this failure to fund infrastructure directly affects you on a daily basis. Consider that the typical urban commuter spends 42 hours a year stuck in traffic jams, according to a report from the Texas Transportation Institute. That’s more than a full work week. Think about how much you’d pay to get a full week of your life back each year.

Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post

Let’s be just a little skeptical of that, shall we?

We live in a skeptical age. This is more problematic than it might sound because we’re not all skeptical about the same things: climate change, the existence of God, GMO foods, what the Founding Fathers meant, whether that dress on Tumblr last year was really blue and black.

Michael Shermer is skeptical of everything — as founder of the Skeptics Society and editor of its magazine, *Skeptical*. In the monthly column Shermer has written since 2001 for *Scientific American*, he often comes across as more of a questioner who is willing to come to a conclusion: One column asked: “Are Paleo diets more natural than GMOs?” (Answer: No.) Another recorded his dismay at going to a criminal justice conference and discover-

ing “how the many fields in the forensic sciences that I assumed were reliable (DNA, fingerprints and so on) in fact employ unreliable or untested techniques.” Seventy-five columns have been collected in *Skeptical: Viewing the World With a Rational Eye*. They take on a wide variety of subjects — why conspiracy theorists think we never landed on the moon; why some people see the face of the Virgin Mary on a grilled-cheese sandwich. Shermer reports that MRI scans demonstrate that most people choose their political candidates without ever using the part of the brain where actual reasoning takes place. (All the activity was in areas dealing with emotions, moral judgments and seeking comfort.) He introduces you to a scientist who believes it’s easier to do a crossword puzzle in the evening than in the morning because “the collective wisdom of the morning successes resonates throughout the cultural morphic field.” And so on.

Washington Post

Crossword | Awesome!, No. 0221

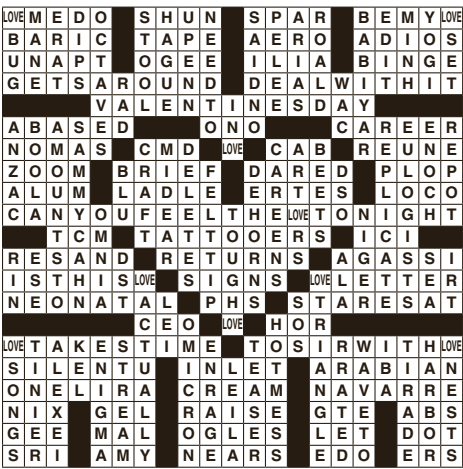
BY PATRICK BERRY

Across

- 1 Harmful aspects
- 6 Go long
- 13 Surveillance equipment
- 20 Balloon
- 21 Shakespeare character who says, “Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night!”
- 22 “Wet look” product
- 23 Burlesque theater?
- 25 Make amends for
- 26 Bathed in the sun
- 27 Toothy turner
- 29 Exceeded a limit
- 30 Group engagement
- 31 Moviegoers who can’t afford concession-stand snacks?
- 37 Killers at sea
- 40 Prepared for takeoff
- 41 Class with derivatives, briefly
- 42 Bad kid’s Christmas tree?
- 44 Loses
- 49 Old Testament prophet
- 50 Page views?
- 51 “Eldorado” poet
- 52 Political opponent of Ike
- 53 Guy Fawkes Day mo.
- 54 Brother, in Brittany
- 55 Like many food-drive offerings
- 58 Showing signs of age

AN ONLINE PUZZLE

Take the Web crossword challenge. Look for our daily interactive puzzle on the Tampa Bay Times website at tampabay.com/games.



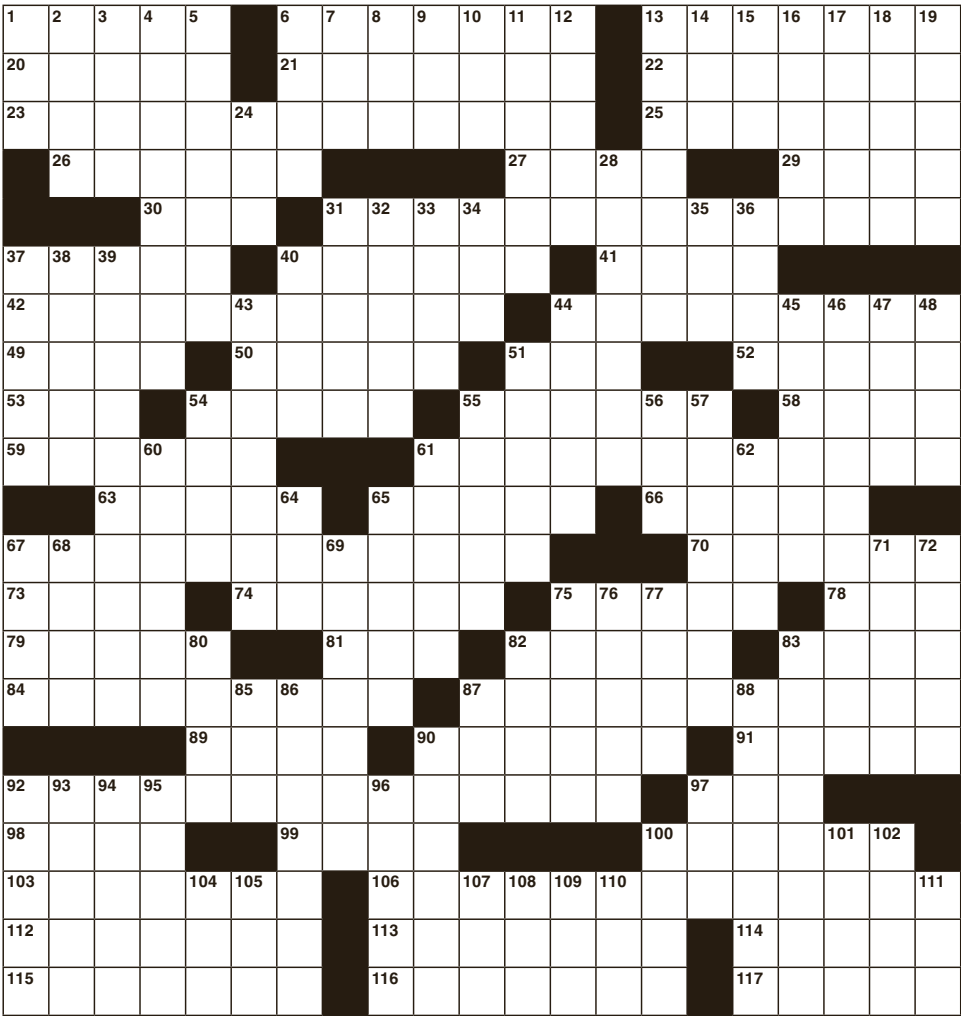
Solution to Feb. 21 puzzle, All You Need, No. 0214

- 59 Utilized
- 61 Sealant used by NASA?
- 63 Viscount’s inferior
- 65 “Quit talking!”
- 66 Centurian weapon
- 67 B-roll from “Splendor in the Grass”?
- 70 Formal
- 73 It’s divided into nine circles
- 74 Shutterbugs’ settings
- 75 2014 Cooperstown inductee Joe
- 78 Certain H&R Block worker
- 79 DuPont creation of 1941
- 81 Creator of plot holes?
- 82 Ardent lover
- 83 Can of worms?
- 84 Broke up
- 87 Owners of large enthusiastic dogs?
- 89 Cooler unit
- 90 Kicks off
- 91 Sustains
- 92 Writing implement from Planters?
- 97 ____-repeated
- 98 Lover of Radames, in opera
- 99 Feature of the Tokyo Imperial Palace
- 100 Greenland natives
- 103 Carol Brady on “The Brady Bunch,” e.g.

- 106 Supporting actors in a Bea Arthur sitcom?
- 112 Up on deck
- 113 Legendary lover of Abelard
- 114 Blake who composed “I’m Just Wild About Harry”
- 115 Crossed the sill
- 116 Border disputer with Ethiopia
- 117 Works as a trader

Down

- 1 Regression
- 2 Wallachian prince who inspired “Dracula”
- 3 “The Bridges of Madison County” setting
- 4 Her fans are called Little Monsters
- 5 Smart
- 6 Drubbing
- 7 Longtime employer of Helen Thomas, in brief
- 8 Rangers’ org.
- 9 Was in charge
- 10 Fight of the Century loser
- 11 Egocentric tyrant
- 12 Fired up
- 13 Ones helping people up?
- 14 “____ vobiscum” (Mass salutation)
- 15 Toy dog’s bark
- 16 Like iceberg lettuce
- 17 Visibly amazed
- 18 Word with parking or postage
- 19 What the Olympic sport of skeleton involves
- 24 Highly successful
- 28 Like the Mesopotamian people
- 31 Writing assignment
- 32 Ethylene ____
- 33 Tailor’s supply
- 34 Community leader?
- 35 Bernina, for one
- 36 One of the so-called “Public Ivies”
- 37 Nonstop
- 38 Shower accessory
- 39 Trick questions, e.g.
- 40 Do data entry
- 43 Roughly removed
- 44 Common pay period
- 45 Program with plugs
- 46 Heavenly painting?
- 47 Viscount’s superior
- 48 Deteriorate
- 51 Comma, to an orator
- 54 Food sticker
- 55 Finishes all at once, in a way
- 56 Some people movers
- 57 One on the web at daybreak?
- 60 Strong punch
- 61 Figure
- 62 Geological sample
- 64 Inclusions in safer passwords: Abbr.
- 65 Rose
- 67 Like Derby entrants
- 68 Garr of “Tootsie”
- 69 Game with a 64-square board
- 71 Tanker mishap



- 72 Eastwood’s role on “Rawhide”
- 75 Specifically
- 76 Aural observations
- 77 Johnny Bench’s team
- 80 Guitar part
- 82 Classico competitor
- 83 Posh shop
- 85 Flag thrower
- 86 Hung out with the riffraff
- 87 Gift that may be gold-plated
- 88 Gave off
- 90 Rub the wrong way
- 92 Social stratum
- 93 Make advances toward
- 94 No slouch
- 95 Instance of forgetfulness
- 96 Pool-cue-maker’s tool
- 97 Vowel’s value in Scrabble
- 100 Impression
- 101 Bass instrument
- 102 Set ____ (embark)
- 104 I.S.S. forerunner
- 105 Pindaric composition
- 107 New Haven student
- 108 Vocabulaire entry
- 109 Intangible quality
- 110 Expend
- 111 ____ Peres (St. Louis suburb)