

## #BANG ON

### Ancient Pregnancy Test

The Wheat and Barley Urine Experiment



Long before modern medical tests and pregnancy kits existed, people around the world used natural and observational methods to detect pregnancy. One of the most fascinating ancient techniques involved the use of wheat and barley seeds and a woman's urine, a simple, natural test that has intrigued historians and scientists alike.

#### The Origins of the Test

This method is believed to have originated in ancient Egypt around 1350 BCE and was described in papyrus such as the Ebers Papyrus, one of the oldest known medical texts. The test involved having a woman urinate on grains of wheat and barley and then observing how the seeds sprouted. Over time, this technique also found mention in other ancient cultures, reflecting an early human attempt to understand fertility and pregnancy using agricultural metaphors.

#### How the Test Was Performed

In this test, a woman suspected of being pregnant would urinate over a set amount of barley seeds and wheat seeds placed separately in small containers or on soil. The containers would then be kept in a warm place and observed for several days.

- If the wheat sprouted first, it was believed to indicate that the woman was pregnant with a girl.
- If the barley sprouted first, it suggested she was carrying a boy.
- If neither seed sprouted, it was taken as a sign that the woman was not pregnant.

The idea was that the woman's urine would contain hormones or substances that affected the germination of



# How To Acquire Neighbours



Dr. Goutam Sen  
CTVS Surgeon  
Traveller  
Storyteller

I was born in my ancestral home, Sansar Villa. I was delivered by my father in the office located in the outhouse. We lived in this huge building built by my great grandfather Sansar Chandra Sen. He was then the Dewan of Jaipur State. The building was in the centre of a huge walled compound which is now a commercial block. Abhinash Chandra Sen was the eldest child and he was the next resident of the house along with his numerous siblings. As was the custom then, the younger brothers moved out soon and the sisters got married. So, by the time I was born, the family of my grandfather were the only residents.

Each brother was allotted a bedroom while the family rooms and the kitchen were common. We were, in the true sense, a joint family. My father's salary came in a red cotton draw string bag and was handed over to Siddhi Narainji, the Munshiji. Out of that, some portion was handed over for personal expenses. We, the next generation children, lived and played together. They were the constant companions. We did not have much to do with the neighbours. In fact, I cannot remember even one occasion when we played with the neighbour's children.

As time passed and we grew older and more space was required, the brothers decided that they would move out to separate residences. My father was the First Surgeon at Lady Willingdon Hospital (Now SMS Hospital). A few

bungalows had been constructed on the Hospital road in front of the hospital. We moved into Bungalow No.2 and vividly remember celebrating our first Independence day by hoisting a Khadi national flag. That is the first time we understood what neighbours meant. Dr. K. L. Verma, Principal of the Maharaja College, occupied Bungalow No. 1. His children, Ramesh and Mahesh, were much older than us. Even then, on occasions, my brother and I would jump the fence and watch them play badminton in the rear of the compound. They were our first neighbours!

A few years later, the Zamindari system was abolished and the government offered to my uncle and his brothers an opportunity to get a long lease of the portions of the compound of Sansar Villa. My father acquired a large plot and decided to build a house there. It was painted green in colour and called Green Villa. Two of my uncles too decided to build houses in the adjoining portions and soon moved in with their families. There were no compound walls; the back doors of the houses remained open all day long. It was quite common for members of the families to drop in unannounced. Now, for the first time, we had relatives who were also neighbours. Some of the plots were sold subsequently to unrelated buyers, and then, the fences came up. Now, we had neighbours who were strangers.

You must be wondering why I am making such a long rigmarole about neighbours. It all started because I had applied for the renewal of our passports. As a part of the requirements, we had to go through a process of police verification. One morning, two constables rang our call bell. They had come with some forms which we had to complete. One form required the signature and statement of two unrelated neighbours who would have to vouch that they knew us and we

were the occupants of the address we had declared for a long period of time. There were a few neighbours across the road, The Bardar and Peter families. So, we got ourselves verified by them.

Now, The Bardars have moved away, and a huge commercial complex has come up there. Similar changes have taken place within the compound too. We have now got no residential buildings in our vicinity. We have no neighbours to speak of. Another renewal of our passports is due soon. I am now wondering which 'Neighbour' will verify us!

It is a poignant irony of modern life. We are more connected to people across the globe than we are to the person living fifty feet away. This situation highlights a shift from the 'Village Neighbour' (who knows your lineage) to the 'Functional Neighbour' (the person who happens to occupy the adjacent geographic coordinate).

In the eyes of the law or a police verification officer, a 'neighbour' is a witness to your character and residency. In the eyes of sociology, a neighbour is a pillar of your 'third place', the social surroundings separate from the two usual environments of home and workplace.

## #IDENTITY



and more like a 'network.' We are seeing a rise in 'co-housing' and 'vertical villages' in Intentional Communities: where communal spaces (roof gardens, shared kitchens) are designed to force social collisions.

The government has also realised our predicament. Sadly for things like passport, the human 'witness' is being slowly replaced by digital footprints (utility bills, GPS history, biometric data). While efficient, this removes the last practical reason many people have to talk to their neighbours.

We will see more services designed to bridge this gap, apps that facilitate local tool-sharing or neighbourhood 'office hours' to combat the isolation of remote work.

Now 'neighbours' don't necessarily have to be friends. They just need to be witnesses. The manager of the shop next door or a long-term staff member at the mall counts as a neighbour in the legal sense!

Since these business owners or shop managers don't know you personally, the goal is to bridge the gap between 'stranger' and 'resident' without coming across as intrusive. One needs to be proactive to establish residency and character.

Here are three ways to approach this, depending on the comfort level:

- **The 'Open Conversation' Approach:** Best for a shop or cafe you might actually walk past daily. It's casual and places you as a permanent fixture of the street.

"Hi there, I'm [Your Name]. I actually live in the bungalow just behind/next to your shop. I've lived here for [Number] years, but since the neighbourhood has changed so much recently, I realised I haven't introduced myself to my new 'neighbours'! I'm going through a passport renewal soon, so I just wanted to say hello and make sure

you knew I was the resident next door."

If you find it awkward to strike up a conversation out of the blue or if the manager is always busy, leaving a short note, a 'Letter of Introduction' (The Paper Trail) with a small gesture (like a box of tea or sweets), works wonders.

"Dear neighbour at [Shop Name],

My name is [Your Name] and I live in the bungalow at [Your Address]. As the neighbourhood has transitioned into a vibrant commercial hub, I realised I haven't had the chance to meet the people working right next to me!

I've been a resident here since [Year]. I'll stop by in a few days just to say a quick hello in person.

Best regards,  
[Your Name/Phone Number]"

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the 'two-neighbour witness' rule was technically relaxed to simplify the process. However, local police often still require them to ensure you aren't a 'ghost resident.' In our specific case, an isolated bungalow surrounded by commerce here is the legal reality and how to handle it.

So, who counts as a 'Neighbour' in a Commercial Zone?

The law does not define a neighbour strictly as someone living in a residential bedroom next door. A neighbour is any credible person who has a 'business or residential presence' in your immediate vicinity.

The Shopkeeper/Manager is legally the owner of the shop next to your bungalow and is your neighbour. They are stationary; they have a trade license for that address and they see you daily.

A security guard or managers are the long-term staff at the mall who have been there for more than a year and are an excellent witness.

If any of your old neighbours moved nearby (even a few blocks away), they can still vouch for the fact that you have lived in that bungalow for years. He is the 'Previous' neighbour and is the legal fallback.

If the police officer is being rigid, you have these formal options.

Finally, the 'Post-Police Verification' Route. If you have an updated Aadhaar, PAN, and Voter ID, you can often get your passport issued first, with the police verification happening afterward. This shifts the burden of proof.

Thus, the definition of neighbour has been redefined. It is not necessarily one whom you know well. He has just become a person who can declare that you have been seen to live in a certain building or apartment. For better or worse, you have to accept this position in the present circumstances.

Hi Neighbour!

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



## #MASTERPIECES

# Ancient Greek Gold Earrings

Symbols of Artistry and Power



Among the treasures of antiquity preserved in modern museums, a remarkable pair of earrings from ancient Greece captures the elegance, symbolism, and craftsmanship of an era that continues to inspire the world today. Made over 2,400 years ago, these earrings are masterpieces of goldsmithing, combining technical precision with cultural meaning. They are now housed at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, United States, where they remain a highlight of the collection.

#### Exquisite Craftsmanship

The earrings are fashioned from gold, a metal that in the ancient world symbolized both wealth and the divine. Each piece features repoussé cow heads, an advanced technique in which gold is hammered from the reverse side to create raised designs. The cow heads are further enhanced with engraved and chased details, giving them depth and realism. Suspended from these motifs are biconical beads, intricately decorated with fine granulation, a technique involving the application of tiny gold spheres to create texture and patterns.

Each earring measures approximately 3.8 cm (1 1/2 in) in diameter. Though modest in size, the level of detail demonstrates the extraordinary skill of Greek goldsmiths, who were renowned for blending utility with artistry.

The choice of cow heads as the central motif adds rich layers of meaning. In ancient Greece, cows were symbols of fertility, nourishment, and sacrifice. They were often associated with deities such as Hera, queen of the gods, and with agricultural



#### A Journey Through Time

The survival of such delicate ornaments across more than two millennia is a testament to both the durability of gold and the care with which these artifacts were preserved. Their journey to the Walters Art Museum reflects another chapter in their history. The pair was acquired by Henry Walters, a philanthropist and collector whose bequest in 1931 laid the foundation for one of the most comprehensive art museums in the United States.

Since then, the earrings have offered visitors a direct connection to the cultural and artistic achievements of ancient Greece. Displayed alongside other treasures, they provide insight into how everyday objects in antiquity were elevated into symbols of beauty, faith, and identity.

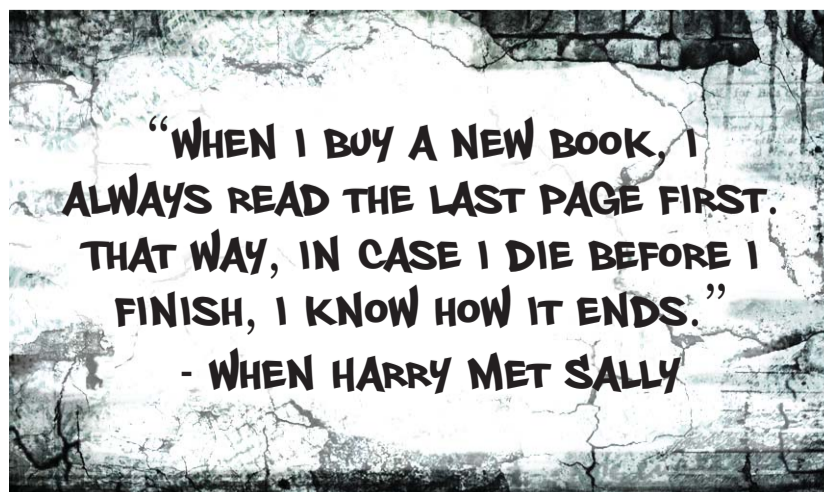
#### Enduring Legacy

More than just ornamental jewelry, these earrings embody the ingenuity and values of a civilization that shaped Western art and culture. Their repoussé cow heads and finely detailed granulation remind us of a time when craftsmanship was both an artistic pursuit and a spiritual expression.

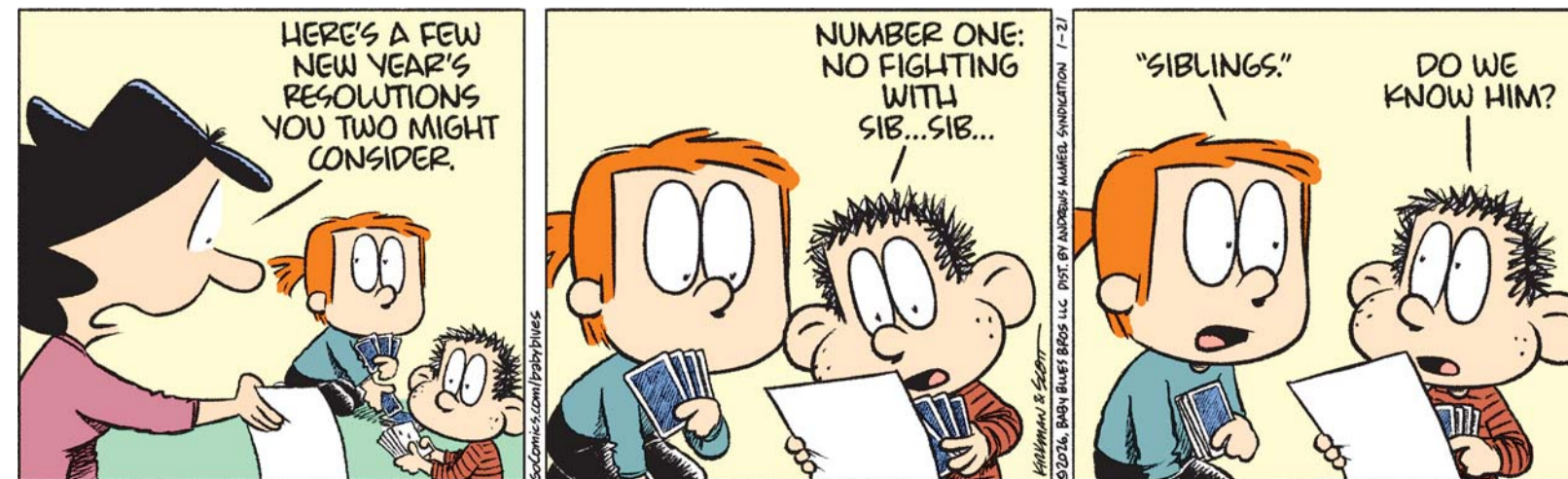
Today, as they rest in the Walters Art Museum, these 2,400-year-old earrings continue to captivate audiences. They stand as a bridge across centuries, telling stories of beauty, symbolism, and the human desire to create lasting expressions of identity and belief.



## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman