

SPRING 2020

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Pittverse

Quarterly Magazine

This Edition:

What's Inside

Pittverse



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About Pittverse Magazine

Pittverse Magazine is a quarterly publication that proudly represents the introspection and creativity of adults on the autism spectrum. Its goal is to educate and entertain the public while providing its writers, who are all adults on the autism spectrum, with skills applicable to future employment.

Pittverse is produced by Youth Advocate Programs (YAP), a national non-profit agency that comprises a multitude of services for families with not only individuals on the autism spectrum but also other at-risk youth and adults. Brian Kluchurosky, the director of YAP's

PA Allegheny County Adults with Autism Program, founded *Pittverse* in 2013. It began as a newsletter written by four of the adults in Kluchurosky's program.

This year, with generous funding from Edith Trees Foundation, *Pittverse* has grown from a newsletter into a magazine that commissions more than 40 adults with autism.

In each seasonal issue, readers can peruse a variety of topics through the unique perspective of its writers. Topics range from sports to restaurant reviews to local history.

On the Cover

Credit for the cover of the first issue of 2020 goes to Delaine Swearman, who captured this intriguing photo that perfectly epitomizes all of the beauty and twists and turns that are found in these pages. We are looking forward to your enjoyment of our hard work, our art, and our creative originality.

Grab a glass of iced coffee and prepare to experience springtime *Pittverse*!

Letter from the Editor

What can we say about 2020 so far? It's definitely been a year of change, though it's *probably* not the change for which we had been hoping. That's ok. Despite the challenges that this year has presented so far, *Pittverse* has been able to reinvent itself and devise creative ways to stay together and to keep writing.

I know life is uncertain right now and it's lonely. It's frustrating because we don't know when we will all see each in person again...but I want you to know that the way life is right now is not the way that it will always be. We will get to the other side. In the meantime, keep creating. Keep writing. Keep drawing and dreaming. The darkest nights lead to the brightest days and the most beautiful creations. Stay hopeful...we'll all see each other again soon!

Jennifer Pizzuto

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Do Healing Crystals Actually Work?

By: Alicia M. Bonus

Healing crystals are stones that are believed to help the body and mind of an individual person. These otherworldly rocks connect us to Earth, because they are physical forms that supposedly have powerful vibrations. Crystal energy helps you on your spiritual journey because it works to hold your intention and remind you of your connection to the Earth and everything around you. The energy continues to connect with you when you wear these crystals close to the skin or place them in your surrounding environment. With every thought and intention, these crystals pick up on your unique vibrational energy and add on positive vibes that you're cultivating. Crystal healing is an alternative medical technique in which crystals and other stones are used to cure ailments, protect against diseases, and ward away evil. People believe that crystals act as primary instruments for healing, allowing positive, healing energy to flow into the body as negative, disease-causing energy flows out.

For several months now, I've been suffering from constant depression and anxiety, attempting to look past negative thinking and instead, try and concentrate on having positive thoughts. I received interesting gifts from a loved one who cared about my well-being. She gave me two bracelets made out of pure crystals. One of them was made out of amethyst and the other was made out of tiger's eye. *Amethyst* is a crystal that strengthens a person's psychic abilities with a calm and peaceful energy. It eases stress and makes a person calm while enhancing their intuition. *Tiger's Eye* is a crystal that enhances a person's clarity, good judgement, clear insight, good decision making, and wealth. It brings personal power like confidence, strength, courage, protection, and luck. She went to a store that sold healing crystals and said that these bracelets would help my anxiety and depression along with a good night's sleep. I wore these bracelets for a full week. Then, everything seemed to change overnight. Instead of having good dreams, I had nightmares every night. I developed red blotches covering my chin and cheeks. Ever since I received those bracelets, I've felt nothing. No vibrations, no interesting dreams, and no change. I was at the point where I believed that these crystals were bad luck that I had to return these to my friend. After a week I didn't have problems. After my bad week was over, I wanted to know more. Why didn't these crystals work for me? Were they the wrong type of crystals chosen for me? Did I do something wrong? Or, are these crystals nothing but plain rocks?

Ancient civilizations have used crystals as protective talismans, peace offerings, jewelry, and beauty care products. People of the practice and crystal sellers say that the ancient Egyptians believed that these gems had the power to restore a person's health; they even buried them with deceased family members. An IBM scientist, Marcel Vogel, watched crystals grow under a microscope and noticed that their shape took the form of whatever he was thinking about. He hypothesized that these vibrations are the result of assembling and disassembling of bonds between molecules. He also tested the metaphysical power of crystals and believed that rocks can store thoughts similarly to how tapes use magnetic energy to record sound. Even Albert Einstein said everything in life has a vibration.

I decided to go to the shop where my friend bought the crystals. There were crystals and salts made out of bracelets, necklaces, candles, soaps, and rock carvings shaped like animals. The lady from the counter was very knowledgeable about her crystals that she helped choose some for me to wear. She took out her pendulum and hovered it over my palm, asking it questions to see why the two bracelets didn't work out for me. The pendulum reacted, swinging back and forth harshly. It seemed that those specific bracelets made out of tiger's eye and amethyst didn't want anything to do with me. Again, she asked the pendulum which crystal/s would suite me best for what I need. She called out names of different gems and ended up with three crystal bracelets, which were rose quartz, smokey quartz, and green aventurine.

Crystal experts say that you don't choose the crystal, but instead, the crystal chooses you. Hold a stone in your hand and quietly think of your intention. If you feel good when you hold the crystal in your hand or have it touching your skin, you'll be able to work with the crystal. Once you have your crystal, you have to give it a purpose. Crystals want to work with you, but you have to tell them what to do. When cleansing your crystal, choose your preferred method of cleaning. You can immerse your crystal in smoke with a sage stick, bury it and allow it to recharge with Earth energy, or you can place it with other crystals. Your highest vibration may be associated with a religious or spiritual belief, God, or simply a divine power that's greater than you.

After I bought my crystal bracelets, everything began to change drastically. And again, bad things started coming my way. I had another several flareups on my face, I had lost a huge amount of weight that left me unhealthy, and I was even more depressed and anxious. I was frustrated with myself for believing in such a therapy by playing with rocks. I hoped that these crystals would work out for me, but it was just another waste of time and money. Then, I discovered why people were so obsessed with these rocks.

Can healing crystals really heal? It depends. It's said that crystals carry certain energies, and when they interact with your individual energy fields, or chakras, they can have a positive impact on you. Despite this, scientific investigations have no stable claims that chakras or energy grids actually exist, nor is there any evidence that crystal healing has any effect upon the body than any other placebo. For these reasons, it is a pseudoscience. A placebo is anything that seems to be a "real" medical treatment, but it isn't. The placebo effect is focused on the relationship of the mind and body, and it also is due to a person's expectations. All these expecta-

tions made this crystal experience even more disappointing. When I held the crystal bracelets in my hands, I didn't feel any heat or buzzing, even though my friend felt something entirely. And yet, nothing seemed to have triggered me in a positive way.

People are seeking any natural means of restoring and replenishing their energy, to help relieve unwanted stress, pain, or tension through their body. Crystals may function as a coping mechanism for those who need help finding peace in a stressful day-to-day life. People who seek crystal healing have a desire for something more than their everyday work lives and personal obligations. Healing crystals are not medicine. I know this for certain. They won't improve a medical diagnosis. Crystals work with the core mental, emotional, and spiritual discord that is causing illness in the body and not the physical illness itself. Healing crystals may help you mentally feel more mindful and resilient...but they can't fix everything. Healing crystals remain popular at health spas and health clinics. And, sometimes they're incorporated into related practices of massage and reiki. The use of crystals in such environments may help induce relaxation, though this effect isn't proven by scientific evidence.~~

Crystal Meanings

Agate helps tone the mind and body. It stabilizes emotions and physical energy. It also helps a person accept the truth and eliminates negative energy, soothes and calms the mind, body, and spirit. It provides strength and courage.

Amethyst helps strengthen psychic abilities with calm, peaceful energy. The stone eases stress in organs. It increases calm and enhances intuition.

Black Tourmaline helps neutralize and balance stress. It also helps protect from any harmful energy.

Citrine is a powerful cleansing stone that detoxifies the body and aids in healing, physically and emotionally. It enhances happiness, hope, courage, warmth, self-esteem, self-expression, and creativity.

Clear Quartz is known to heal the immune system as well as balance emotions. It's an energizing stone that removes negativity.

Epidote helps to lift negative emotions and dissolves any type of sadness. It aids recovery from illnesses.

Flourite helps protect the body from illness and aids cognitive focus.

Green Aventurine helps balance the body and protects it against anything negative and inflamed. It brings tranquility and positivity.

Green Jade is believed to bring luck. It removes negative energy and brings balance, positivity, and peace.

Hematite helps increase blood and energy. It energizes and vitalizes the physical body and promotes optimism, determination, courage, self-esteem, and willpower.

Moonstone helps balance emotions and relieves anxiety and stress. It promotes a new beginning and connects to intuition, energy, psychic abilities, and self-analysis.

Peridot is a stone that relieves stress, anger, and jealousy. It promotes inner harmony, compassion, abundance, and prosperity.

Rose Quartz strengthens the heart and emotions. The stone brings unconditional love, peace, compassion, and purifies.

Selenite can soothe nerves and enhance willpower. The stone helps clarify the mind for enhancing concentration and expands awareness of self.

Smoky Quartz helps to relax and alleviate depression. The stone clears away blocked energy and negativity.

Tigers Eye helps to enhance clarity, good judgement, clear insight, good decision making, and wealth. It brings personal power like confidence, strength, courage, protection, and luck.

Sodalite brings emotional balance in times of stress and panic. It enables self-truth in uniting logical information to the mind.~~

The Low-Income Economy

By: Megan Cunningham

While we keep receiving reports on the economy's good and increased job creation, it's very clear to the person on the street that the economy isn't really getting better. Sure, there are more jobs out there. But the cost of living has risen in all parts of life, that more people can't adequately support themselves without some kind of government aid. Millions of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. Many can't save \$400 for emergencies. And many workers have no retirement savings. Income inequality has increased with the wealthy getting all the gains and everyone else getting nothing.

Today more families than ever rely on at least one low wage job to make ends meet. Great Recession job losses have hit higher wage sectors like manufacturing, construction, and finance hard. A 2012 National Employment Law Project report 58% of all post-recession job growth were low wage occupations. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that out of their top ten job growth occupations are low wage, such as home health aides, customer service representatives, food preparation and service workers, personal and home care aides, retail salespersons, and office clerks. In 2019, the Brookings Institute found 53 million Americans between 18-64 qualify as "low wage," which consists of about 44% of the workforce. Their median hourly wages are \$10.22 and median hourly earnings are \$18,000. While many Americans believe that working hard is fundamental to a stable life and achieving the American Dream, low wage jobs don't accomplish this.

We're often taught that low-income workers are expendable nobodies who work in jobs that don't take much skill, don't require a lot of responsibility, and don't have much social value. They often say that low-wage work doesn't pose any safety hazards. After all, teenagers work in these jobs part-time and live with their parents. Now get that image out of your head because that's not what low wage work looks like in America.

In reality, most low wage workers aren't teens nor expendable nobodies. In fact, they're probably some of the most underappreciated people in the workforce with stressful days with tons of responsibilities, unpredictable schedules, insufficient benefits or advancement opportunities, unpleasant and potentially dangerous environments, and absolutely no job security. Most are adults with many working full-time in jobs that don't hire teens at all. Some work multiple jobs. Most are pressured to show up on time even if they or a family member are sick or injured or in inclement weather conditions that even firefighters would experience difficulties in. Much of low wage work requires constant interaction, time management, and multitasking. Many low wage jobs contain a long list of responsibilities and require skills like patience, knowledge, care, and communication. Many low wage caregiving jobs have educational requirements like childcare workers and home healthcare aides. Hairdressers and manicurists have to go through cosmetology school. While some low wage jobs might require at least an associate's degree or even bachelor's degrees and be considered full-fledged careers. Jobs like building services and janitor might call for special skills like indoor cleaning, maintenance, security, and yard work.

Nor do these jobs lack any social value. In fact, a low-income job's poor pay has little to do with its value in society. Or if it does, it might be why the job pays poorly in the first place. When you go out in society, you'll find plenty of low wage jobs all around us. These include security guards, nurse's aides and home healthcare aides, child-care workers, educational assistants, maids and porters, janitors, call center workers, bank tellers, data entry keyers, food preparation workers, waiters and waitresses, cooks, pharmacy assistants, hairdressers, manicurists, fish and meat processors, sewing machine operators, laundry and dry cleaning operators, ambulance drivers, parking lot attendants, and farm workers. These aren't people who don't make any contributions to society. Rather their jobs are essential to keeping society going that it's no wonder that so many workplaces and corporations in the service industry hire union-busting firms to prevent their low wage employees from organizing. For if all low wage workers walked off their jobs en masse, the entire US economy would collapse and our society would be at a standstill. Because while politicians often call small businesses "the backbone of the US economy," it's really the low wage workers who keep our society functioning while receiving little compensation and respect than they truly deserve.

Most low wage workers are adults who typically earn nearly to more than half of their family's total income, especially if they're parents. Sometimes they could be the chief breadwinner, especially if they're a single parent. Women, people of color, immigrants, and those with low levels of education are the most likely to stay in low wage jobs. 53% of African American workers and 60% of Hispanic workers have a low wage job compared to 38% of white workers who make the slight majority of low wage employees. The numbers are even more dramatic for black and Hispanic women. While women dominate low wage occupations. And according to Brookings, over half of low wage workers have education levels suggesting they will stay low wage workers.

Unfortunately, as low wage workers increasingly struggle to support themselves and their families, stagnant minimum wages and abusive employers prevent many workers from earning a living wage. Wage theft is rampant. For all too often, employers violate labor and employment laws by failing to pay minimum wage for all hours worked, refusing to pay overtime, stealing tips, or classifying employees as independent contractors to avoid worker protection laws. Further, many workers are excluded from protections afforded by labor and employment law, including health and safety standards and freedom from discrimination. Volatile schedules are tied to unpredictable monthly incomes, difficulty meeting life obligations, and adverse health outcomes. Most low wage workers in the private sector don't have earned sick time. Not to mention, sexual harassment and violence are often rife in many low-income workplaces, especially in the service industry. And if they're undocumented, they're particularly exploited by their employers, especially if they're paid below minimum wage.

Furthermore, aside from a lack of compensation and benefits that barely keep them and their families afloat, low wage workers don't have any way to address grievances or improve their lives in their workplace. Thus, they're often prone to suffering egregious abuse by their managers and employers who will mostly never be held accountable for their actions. Why? Because bosses employing low-wage workers often remind them that they're expendable to keep them in line. Asking for a raise, filing a complaint, or organizing to improve working conditions often carries significant risks of employer backlash. Should a low wage worker assert their rights or change their situation at work, they can be either subject to discipline or outright fired. When a low wage worker loses their job, they can be in serious financial trouble. And if they live in a state with work requirements, they can lose their public assistance, which can be devastating. If they're undocumented, they're often threatened with deportation. Thus, the reason why low wage workers live hand to mouth in desperation is because their bosses keep them in line through fear. The employers have all the power.

Fortunately, there are a few solutions to ease the burden of low wage workers reverse the appalling income inequality ravaging the nation. First, we must raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and index it so it can rise automatically with inflation. After all, Americans overwhelmingly support this measure from ordinary citizens to economists. Second, we must restore labor rights and crack down on union busting so low wage workers need not be afraid to ask for better working conditions or compensation. Nor should they be discouraged from organizing. As low wage work becomes more common in our society, we must protect these worker's rights and give them the respect and appreciation they deserve.~~

Life Lessons from the Heart

By: Maggie K. Jones

For once in my life, I can tell you, in your heart you have to cherish it. Every moment is worth living for now, instead of later, you will not enjoy life unless you live for now and today. It's your life, take charge of it and accept the things you cannot change, and do the best you can with what you got in you.

You only live one life here on earth, enjoy it and do the best you can with what you have in your life.

Try new things, you never know unless you're willing to try. There are so many things to do in your life, for me, it wasn't easy, I always had panic attacks and depression so bad, I cried. I now know I have to move on doing the next right thing. Whether it's being a helping hand or joining an organization of your choice. Being positive is a must and keeping your head up high and saying "yes, I can do this...I know how it might take baby steps but I don't quit until I get the job done. Then, I can look back and say I did this on my own, I tried my best and that's all God wanted from me.

Over time, I learned when you fall, you get back up and don't give up. Your family and friends never want you to give up. They want you to keep trying your best like I said before. I've seen dark before, but not like this, it is cold, it is empty, it is numb. The life I knew is over, the lights are out...hello, darkness I'm ready to succumb. But a tiny voice whispers in my mind, "You are lost, hope is gone, but you must go on, and do the next right thing." Can there be a day, beyond this night? I don't know what is true. I can't find my direction I'm all alone, the only star that guided me was you. How to rise from the floor, when it's not you I'm rising for, just do the next right thing. Take a step, a step again, this is all that I have to do the next right thing. I won't look too far ahead, it's too hard for me to take, but, break it down to this next step, this next breath, this next choice, is all that I can make, as I walk through this night, walking toward the light and do the next right thing. The dawn is clear that everything will never be the same again, Then I will make the choice and hear that voice and do the next right thing.

I heard this song over and over and reminded myself I wasn't alone and to go on to do the next right thing. When my Grandmother passed in 2008, and she passed this song down to me:

When Irish eyes are smiling, sure 'tis like a morning spring, in a lit of Irish laughter you can hear the angel's sing o, when Irish hearts are happy, and the world seems bright and gay, o when Irish eyes are smiling, sure will steal your heart away.

They told me never to give up ever on what I do in life, even if it's volunteering at the library, or working on an article for *Pittverse Magazine*. I just listen to my grandmother, Marie Stehle, up in heaven. I will always remember her. And listen to my mom.

When you look down and say you can't, think again, you say yes you can.~~

The Spring 2020 Semester at Evolve Group

By: Amelia Krzton

This has been a rather interesting spring semester with Evolve Group! Instead of the usual discussion groups, we have been working on a form of acting called Improv during our weekly sessions with guest Luke Laskey. The exercises we performed were very fun. Not to mention, the warm-up games are very creative. These games include things like "The Crazy Eights Game" and "The Books Game". One week, we had to make objects out of our bodies and act as them. I acted as a city bus. That same day, we had to act like we were hiding behind something and nobody could find us. I did a very good job at hiding, as nobody could find me. This exercise was mentioned the next day when I was waiting for the bus to work in Harmarville. A week later, we went to see a hilarious Improv show at the Arcade Comedy Theater on Liberty Avenue in Downtown Pittsburgh, and there were hilarious plays about going to war and in the coffee shop. This past week, we did the previously mentioned warm-up games and then we made up some new games, such as "Ten Percent More," the "Yes... and" Game, and the Storytelling Game. These were all very creative exercises to put our minds at ease. I can't wait to see what we learn about next week with Improv! We have to meet on Thursdays, however, instead of Mondays, since Luke is unavailable on Mondays. I know that this has nothing to do with Improv, but I was joking with Kristen last semester about just watching *Stranger Things* and volunteering at Creative Citizens Studio, since we have been doing nothing but discussion groups. Overall, Improv has been a nice change of pace from the usual discussion groups that we have had in the past.~~

What are the Symptoms of Attention Deficit?

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

In this report, I am going to discuss the symptoms of attention deficit in children and adults. After reviewing the traits of attention deficit disorder, I will explain what parts of the brain may likely produce the disease. Artificial food will be explained next in the report. Before taking a stimulant to correct your child's problem, it is very imperative that parents tell the doctor about the antidepressant drugs that child is taking at home.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, attention deficit may likely be produced by the following items: the child's mother may likely suffer a premature delivery from smoking during pregnancy. After the baby is born, he or she may likely suffer low birth weight from a premature from mother's pregnancy.

When the child reaches school, he or she will likely experience hyperactivity if the mother suffered difficulty during pregnancy. The boy or girl will become restless. The restless child will be unable to sit still for a period. The child is unable to focus on one chore at a time. When you observe hyperactive children, the head and the body are always moving around in many types of directions. When a girl is diagnosed as having ADHD, she is always talking all day long without concentrating on a chore. Another common trait of attention deficit disorder is an inability to concentrate on a boring task. For an example, listening to the English Professor may likely become difficult for them. In addition, sitting in a temple or church for an hour will likely cause them to become restless. However, they may concentrate well playing a video game.

Next, I am going to explain the possible causes of attention deficit in the brain. When a person suffers from attention deficit, he or she lacks neurotransmitters in the brain. When a person has the proper amount of neurotransmitters in their brain, they are able to solve problems, speak well, and make rational judgments. The Limbic System of the brain and the Amygdala play a crucial role in controlling our anger, fear, and our anxiety. Unless a psychiatrist medicates a hyperactive child or teenager, the person will likely experience frequent outbursts of aggression of behavior? Unless a hyperactive child is child does not control his aggression, he may likely get into serious trouble with the law. Unless the brain receives the proper dose of neurotransmitters between the nerve synapses, it will likely affect the Reticular System. The Reticular System plays a major role in our ability to concentrate on one task of time. For an example, when I skip my medication from my psychiatrist, I am unable to focus on a particular task.

Dr. Justin Lauber, who specializes in child pediatrics, wants hyperactive children to stay away from artificial dyes. Food manufactures use artificial dyes from petroleum products. For an example, red dye comes from coal dyes in the ground mix with benzene and toluene. When mom is going to the supermarket, she must read all the labels of the products. Mom or dad should not purchase foods with artificial colors. They include yellow cakes mixes, preservatives, chemicals, and artificial color frosting. In addition, parent should never give their children candy as a reward for good behavior. Eating these types of foods may likely cause their child to experience more hyperactivity and aggressive behavior. Many types of energy drinks consist of artificial colors and caffeine. Adults or kids who experience anxiety should stay away from many energy drinks.

Before parents go to a psychiatrist, it is extremely important that to go over every type of medication that the child is taking now. Ritalin and Adderall cause many cause severe side effects, according to a Texas researcher. These stimulants may likely increase heart rate, loss of appetite, and disturb sleep patterns. For an example, when Ritalin wore off at night, I felt very depressed. Ritalin would always block all my happy emotions for me. I would sometime feel suicidal if I did not take the medication.

If you are taking antidepressant pill for anxiety, stimulant medication can likely cause serious side effects according to *Medical News Today*. Before taking a stimulant, parents, teenagers, and adults need to read all the side effects. Mixing a stimulant can likely cause the following side effects, including rapid heart, restless, disorientation and others.

In summary, the article summarizes several important points about attention deficit. Difficulty in labor could likely cause a child to develop hyperactivity after birth. Before a boss yells at an attention deficit person, he or she needs to speak to them calmly. If he or she is not taking the medication, the boss needs to refer them to a medical doctor for assistance to perform the work correctly.~~

Waiting for the Hurricane

By: Nils Skudra

The weekend of August 30th started out okay, the usual head-in-my (graduate-books) routine after a working stint at the best French restaurant in central North Carolina. Nothing unusually memorable... that is until I turned on the news and saw Governor Roy Cooper animatedly declaring a state of emergency and issuing evacuation orders for several cities (although not yet for Greensboro, my own). The news reporter, speech crackling like a live wire, was exhorting all of us in a frenzied staccato beat to "brace for possible weather impacts from Hurricane Dorian, a Category 4 storm which will make landfall anywhere from Florida to the Carolinas." My experience of hurricanes is admittedly limited to book-learning. With respect to the topic of climate disturbances, I can talk to you knowledgeably about earthquakes having been through a number of those scare-the-life-out-of-you-experiences myself but this hurricane matter is admittedly a bird-of-a-different-(weather)-feather. My mom who was washing dishes in the kitchen ran into the living room, looking apoplectic, eyes popping, waving her arms wildly, an incontrovertible example of sheer and unbridled panic screaming "oh my God, what are we going to do???" I managed to calm her down momentarily with a "let's hear what Spectrum News has to say about this."

Turns out they had a LOT to say. Hurricane Dorian had recently just made landfall in the Bahamas as a Category 5 hurricane, a deadly tempest that killed people and thousands of animals, leveled virtually all structures, crushing cars and boats in its unstoppable wake. The tremendous devastation wreaked by Dorian resulted in at least 61 human deaths, 70,000 people homeless and untold numbers missing. A single image caught by a television camera showed a portico of a house destroyed by Dorian – the only thing left standing of the entire structure in what looked like a background of apocalyptic horror. I sent up a multitude of prayers for the affected, at the same time asking God to show grace North Carolina and spare us a similar outcome.

The battery of discouraging information continued to grow and I had the sense that we were actors inhabiting a bad movie script. The eye of the storm hit Cape Hatteras on that Friday, bringing with it incalculable devastation to the beautiful Outer Banks and Ocracoke Island. Some areas experienced wind gusts over 100 mph and flooding was pandemic, people were trapped wherever they happened to be and pandemonium reigned supreme. Governor Cooper was yelling "now is the time to prepare" and assuring anyone who would listen that state emergency officials were coordinating with FEMA, surrounding states and local governments so that personnel and equipment were at the ready to respond. Wrightsville Beach and other communities were ordered to evacuate. *In 2018 alone North Carolina had experienced Hurricane Florence, Michael, 20 tornado touchdowns, 184 flood incidents, 137 severe thunderstorms, landslides and snowstorms.* The San Francisco Bay Area and its occasional earthquakes by comparison were beginning to look good.

Neither my mom nor I were folks who had any mind to dispute the wisdom of Governor Cooper. We were ready to match wits with the inestimable fury of Hurricane Dorian and heed the call to arms for preparation. We had small and precious time to get our emergency house in order. In the meanwhile, we had attached ourselves to the news station, hearing how Dorian on September 6th was howling over the Outer Banks though a much weaker version of its former self which had turned the Bahamas on its head. We were grateful for small mercies. Dorian merely grazed the Wilmington area, with a stroke of divine luck that its highest winds remained just offshore. Some cities were relatively fortunate, sustaining only very minor impacts. Nevertheless, everyone in Greensboro was talking non-stop about THE HURRICANE and it was impossible to get a reprieve from this type of conversation. People we didn't even know called us on the cell phone to say "be prepared!"

They didn't need to concern themselves about our being slackers: the next morning after Governor Cooper's telecast my increasingly agitated parent was extemporizing about how we needed to get this and that – RIGHT AWAY! Things were starting to get crazy in our home. The family was on fever pitch. "We need to get emergency food and milk and bread, that's what EVERYONE is doing! We need to get to the Harris Teeter before they run out of everything! What about flashlights? None of the ones in the housework! We need those too! And the news people mentioned generators. Let's get those as well... What are they anyway?" Off we ran to the local supermarket, part of a rapidly surging public which was buying up everything in sight. There were no more Wonder Breads on the shelf. All the bottled water was gone.

Hurricane Dorian had suddenly become a PROJECT. One friend came over and told us to place valuables in high places and to designate a safe zone as a meet-up location. Hurricane Dorian was now all encompassing, not just a weather event but a pandemic force that could destroy entire worlds and everything in its path. I began thinking about my beloved Kimball upright piano and thinking how IT was going to get through the hurricane. That wasn't an object that could simply be placed in some elevated station up in the air yet I couldn't bear the thought of it being damaged especially when I didn't have the necessary funds to repair it. There was also the problem of money and Dorian was becoming expensive.

But this is the deal: while the North Carolina coast experienced heavy rains, tornadoes and extremely high winds, the storm ultimately caused little impact in central North Carolina. That reality was admittedly a "consummation devoutly to be wish'd" as the Bard would have it. It was raining a bit and ever-so-slightly windy but all the Sturm and Drang hadn't even reached the Greensboro shores. The storm, now downgraded to a Category 1 event, hadn't even brought a lot of rain and wind. I hadn't heard of any trees becoming uprooting and falling down and the much-discussed power outages had seemingly not occurred. What had happened to the impacts that were supposed to happen to the Triangle and the Triad areas that we had been warned about? Nature's drama seemingly had pulled up short and granted our city the grace everyone in churches and synagogues were praying for. Not even the garbage cans in front of our home had fallen over. Meanwhile the pile of storm supplies in our living room was getting ever larger, with tarps and batteries having been added to the mix because "everyone is buying these, we should too" mentality of my mother.

As difficult as this is to admit in the end, I somehow felt profoundly disappointed that Hurricane Dorian didn't arrive. I spent a lot of time ruminating about it and my family spent even more energy and money buying supplies and preparing for the imminent disaster. After all the hoopla, Greensboro got nothing more than a very sort and scant rain and wind. All the relatives in California who were calling frantically and asking "are you guys okay? This massive hurricane is headed your way! Go to a shelter – now!" were also probably deeply disappointed when I ultimately told them that Dorian never really happened here despite the hype.~~

TOMB RAIDER 2013: NOT ALONE

By: Aaron Dumas Burke

Prologue

Owen Taylor scanned through the bookshelf till he found what he was looking for. A book on tigers. In his arms were other books about animals, dinosaurs and archeology.

Archeology had always been a passion of his, next to animals.

After a year at UCL, he was learning everything he needed. But even learning extra can help, which was why he was currently at the library.

As he walked out of the aisle of books, he nearly dropped his things when he spotted someone.

It was a girl, around his age. She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever laid his eyes on.

"Whoa...!" he whispered in awe.

She had elegant facial features, light peach skin complexion and deep brown eyes. She had thick, dark brown hair tied up in a ponytail, though she kept the front in a layered and choppy style. She had a slender and toned physique.

She was wearing a green tank top that showed a bit of her decent sized cleavage, and dark blue jeans. She had a jade pendant tied to a braided leather lanyard in a double-loop style around her neck, and two small, silver hoop earrings in her right ear. She also had a digital watch on her right wrist.

She currently had an open book on her right as she typed something in her laptop.

"I see you're checking out the new girl."

Owen looked up to see his best friend, Tommy Louis. A young African American man of average height with black hair and hazel eyes, as well as a blue shirt with the college logo embroidered in it, and a pair of khakis.

"Who is she, anyway?" asked Owen.

"Her name's Lara Croft," said Tommy. "They say her dad's some big-time archaeologist."

"You mean Richard Croft?" Owen asked. "Every professional archeologist thinks his theories were crap."

"Why don't you go and talk to her?" asked Tommy.

"Dude, look at her," Owen said. "She's totally out of my league."

"You don't know that for sure," said Tommy. "Go on! Say something! Break the ice!"

Owen gulped and walked over to her table.

"Uh...hi..."

Lara glanced at him for a second before she went back to reading.

"Hello," she said.

'*She's British?*' Owen thought. '*Wow...*'

"Mind if I sit here?" he asked.

"Go ahead," Lara answered without even looking at him.

Owen soon sat down across from her.

"You're...really into that, huh?" he asked.

"Yes," Lara answered quickly, then typed something on her laptop.

'*Now what?*' thought Owen.

Being quick, he checked the front cover of the open book then set it back down.

"You know, it's said that if you wanna be a good archeologist; you gotta get out of the library."

Lara paused in her typing, looked Owen square in the eye, with her eyebrow raised,

"Who says?"

"Harrison Ford, Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," Owen answered.

Lara remained stone-faced for a bit, before she grinned and tried to hold back her laughter.

"You...you really thought that was funny?" asked Owen.

"Sorry," Lara giggled a bit. "Indiana Jones is one of my favorites."

"Mine too," Owen said. "Next to Jurassic Park, despite the people in those movies being complete dumbasses."

Lara noticed his stack of books, "Your book selection definitely supports that."

Owen pulled out a pendant from inside his shirt. It was a brown tooth tied to a braided leather lanyard,



"This here; a genuine T-Rex tooth."

Lara gasped and leaned across the table to get a closer look,

"Incredible...! The clear signs of cracks and chips from millions of years of fossilization!"

"Like it?" Owen asked. "It was a birthday gift. Had it since I was 10."

He tried to keep his eyes from staring at her cleavage, which was showing more since she was leaning over.

She didn't notice, thankfully, "It is impressive." She twirled the jade trinket on her neck. "This was my very first ancient finding. I found it in my yard when I was five."

"Well, look at you, Little Miss Archaeologist," Owen smiled.

"When did you decide to take up archaeology?" asked Lara.

"Well, my Mom was a paleontologist," said Owen. "She inspired me...always told me to never give up finding what I'm looking for." He then frowned. "...I...I actually haven't spoken to her in a while."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I would give almost anything to see my mother again," Lara looked down, but then tried to lighten the mood. "Sorry, I forget myself sometimes." She held out her hand. "Lara Croft."

Owen shook her hand, "Owen Taylor."

"So Owen, how long have you been here?" Lara asked.

"Well, I sat here about a minute ago, but I came into the library twenty minutes ago," Owen joked.

Lara laughed, "Smartass! I meant, how long have you been here in London?"

"Oh, about a year," Owen answered. "I'm originally from San Francisco, born and raised."

"Oh, how interesting," said Lara. "And what inspired you to be an archeologist?"

"Just...don't laugh," Owen asked. "...Indiana Jones was my inspiration."

Of course, Lara couldn't hold back her laughter.

Owen couldn't help laughing, too.

"Yeah, I'll admit; I'm a bit of a nerd!"

"It's fine," Lara laughed. "It's actually cute!"

"Y...you think so?" Owen asked in surprise.

"Absolutely," Lara said.

"Well, I prefer 'good looking'," Owen responded. "Still, it's nice to receive praise from such a beautiful girl."

"Oh, you're sweet," Lara said. "I'm sure you say that to lots of girls, though."

"No...just you," Owen grinned, which caused Lara to smile back at him.

"...You know, I was just about to get lunch," said Lara. "Would you like to join me?"

Owen raised his eyebrow, "Is that an invitation to a date, Miss Lara Croft?"

"Maybe," Lara smiled as she put a bookmark in her book.

She also saved her work on her laptop before she closed it.

"Alright, I just need to check these out, first," Owen said, patting his stack of books.

"We can go after that, then," said Lara.

She gathered her things and he did the same.

At the same time, he glanced in Tommy's direction, who was grinning like a fool and giving him thumbs up!

He then mouthed, "She is fine!"

"I know!" Owen mouthed back.

And thus, Owen and Lara began to hang out, almost every day. Things seemed casual at first. It seemed like they had a friendly relationship...but as the days turned to weeks and the weeks turned to months, things got a little more than friendly between them.

Many months later...in fact, it was a few weeks before graduation, Tommy went out to go look for Owen. It was about 30 minutes before the next lecture and Owen wasn't usually late.

He practically looked all over campus when someone told him they saw Owen up on the roof with Lara.

And they were kissing!

Lara's friend, Sam Nishimura, had also been looking around for them. After hearing Lara talk about Owen almost all the time, Sam practically demanded to meet him. And they hit off.

Seeing the event she knew would happen, she took several pictures of it!

"This is awesome...!" she whispered.

After graduation, Owen made a brief visit back to San Francisco to introduce Lara to his parents.

Needless to say, they loved her instantly.

Owen had also met Lara's guardian, Conrad Roth, who took a while to warm up to him. But after getting to know each other, and insistence from Lara; Roth accepted him. Course, he still gave him the threat a father would give to the guy who dated his daughter.~~

The Belle Sitter (Pt. 1)

By: Jordan Watson

It's like someone turned off the lights. I can't see nothin'. But...I do smell something.

Something's burnin'. It takes a really long time, but I start seeing it. It's foggy, but it's coming up more clearly each time. There's a car. It looks like it's on fire. The flames. They seem so hypnotic. It feels like I'm being drawn towards it. I just move on my own. Every time I get closer, I don't feel any hotter, but...I do start to hear something else with the flames. It's real hard to hear, but...it almost sounds like...a scream. As soon as I'm at my closest to the car...everything gets quiet. Even the fire. I keep staring for a good, long time.

A hand slaps and breaks the front window, grabbin' at me, and pullin' me in! It sounds like...

I wake up in my bed, gasping for air. A bad dream. It's Saturday morning. I'm in my room, near my bed full of dinosaurs. Oh yeah, I should probably tell you who I am. My name's Jeremy. I'm 10 years old. I wanna be a paleontologist one day. The dinosaur theme in my room should tell you the reason why. Anyway, Dad manages to knock on my door, surprising me.

"Hey little man, you ready for breakfast? I got you some smiley eggs, and those dinosaur shaped hash browns you like! C'mon down and eat 'em up!"

He's real happy today. I always love my Dad's cookin'! To the point where I'm runnin' on down in my jammies.

"There he is! You happy about today?"

I start eating my smiley eggs, taking a minute to talk with him.

"Yeah! You got that promotion you wanted for work yet, Dad?"

"Heheh, well, not quite yet, it's something better."

He goes over to make his coffee, and turns on the TV before tellin' me the big news.

"You get to have the house to yourself today!"

"Wait, really?! I can stay up as long as I want?! See as much giant monster movies?! Even play as much games?!"

He chuckles before telling me about it.

"Not past 11PM though. I know it's the weekend, but you gotta be ready for your test coming up this Monday."

"Dangit. Alriiiight Dad, I promise I won't be up past that."

"Good man. Now, the real reason I'm giving you this chance, is because your big man here has a date tonight."

I suddenly go silent. The door bell rings.

"Ah, that must be her right now."

He goes over to the front door, and I hear another voice on the side. Sounds just like the girl he mentioned. They get all cutesy with one another, talkin' 'bout how they're somebody's cinnamon pie, or berry muffin, or somethin'. Man, it's gross!

He brings her over to the living room, as she's all dressed up in a poofy dress.

"Little man, this is Lilian."

"Hey there, handsome! Your daddy told me you wanted to be an paleontologist one day! That's reeeally awesome! What's your favorite dinosaur?"

I nervously wave in her direction, looking down on my food. But I respond quickly, just to help make my Dad feel better.

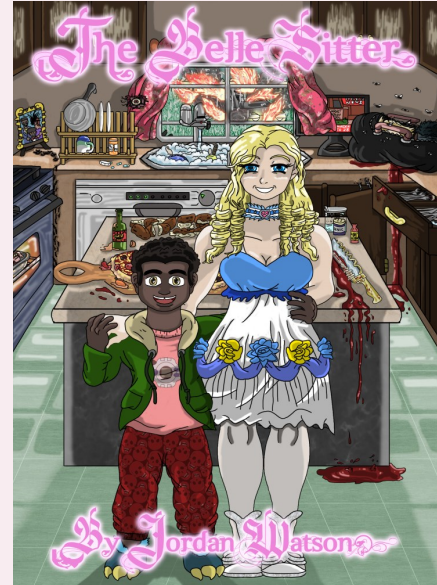
"I like the Triceratops."

"Oh wow! That's nice! I hope you can grow up to be big and strong, and use your horns to bowl through anything in life!"

Dad then chimes in. "He sure will! He's the smartest son I know!"

He comes over to kneel in front of me, whispering to me to help reassure me.

"Hey little man. I do appreciate you trying to help us move past our troubles. I know she isn't Mom, but



I'm sure if you gave Lilian a chance, you two would get along great.”

I take a few seconds to respond back, as I look up to him.

“Sure thing, Dad. Just...promise me you won't be gone too long?”

“You got it, little man. Or, should I say, big man now. That's why I'm giving you this opportunity to be on your own for awhile, help let you have some fun on your own. At least until things get better. And if it doesn't work out, I'll make it up to you, and we'll go to Cedar Point next weekend.”

I give a slight smile.

“Sounds real good, Dad.”

“Thank you, buddy.”

Before he gets back up, the TV goes to a news broadcast, and they start talking about a breaking story, bringing with it our attention.

“We continue our top story tonight within the Louisiana area, that a *serial murderer* has been scouring the state with an unprecedented body count. Police have claimed that the investigation for what they have aptly called, “The Belle Eviscerator” has been ongoing for almost two years now. They state that the mysterious killer's motives are still unknown. Experts have narrowed down to the three areas where the activity has taken place. Hickory, Evergreen, and Cottonport. These spots are what police have considered to be the areas linked in the child abduction cases, which had started a year before the killings had commenced. Police will continue to help report to us on the ongoing case, as we bring you further updates throughout the day.”

“Good Lord, those poor children!” gasped Lilian, while my Dad looks like he's staring down a long winding road to nowhere.

“Yeah. I pray to God they're not dead. I can't imagine what their parents must be going through.”

I feel like something hits my stomach. It's got me a bit shook, because that's near my school.

Dad, quick to keep our minds off the problem, stands back up, and puts his arm around Lilian. He then drops off some money near the kitchen counter.

“This'll be for in case you want some pizza. Remember, no staying up past 11PM, okay? And make sure you keep the doors locked.”

“Gotcha, Dad. Have fun. And it was nice to meet you, Lilian.”

She then quickly turns her attention to me, giving a big smile back at the compliment. “Aaaw, handsome, and sweet! You'll make a pretty girl very happy, one day, Jeremy!”

“Speaking of happy, shall we head to our night at the opera, dear?”

“Oh yes, to our night at the gala, post-haste!”

They both head on out of the house, leaving me to finish up my breakfast. Just as I'm about to head to the family room, I hear another ring at the door. I wonder if Dad forgot his keys? I go towards it, and look through the peephole to see if it's him. It's...it's Mary!

I quickly open up the door, more excited than that one time my Dad bought me that big T-Rex suit!

“Hi Jeremy! I noticed your Dad's car was pulling out the driveway, and I thought maybe you'd want some company.!”

“You're darn right, Mary! I'm glad you're here, actually. Dad's going on a date with some girl named Lilian, and I got the house to myself.”

“Oooh, sounds like we can have a partyyy!”

Mary has been my babysitter since I was 6. She's a very pretty girl. Yellow eyes like the sun. Bright, blonde hair like those girl Vikings. And to add to all that, she has the voice of an angel. Very silky, like Mom's blankets whenever we would watch giant monster movies together. Truth is, she's been like a big sister to me ever since I've met her. She would always pick me up from kindergarten, to even now, as a fourth grader. We would always do a lot of fun things together, like go to amusement parks once every five months to see the animatronic dinosaurs, even try to sneak into some roller coaster rides. We'd even see some scary movies together, whenever Dad wouldn't let me. Even got to go on long road trips together. Best thing about her, is whenever I would get bullied by other kids at school, because I was a dork for liking old things, she would always come to my rescue. She'd tower over them like the Megazord would in Power Rangers, before it'd beat down another giant monster! I always look up to her and hope I can be just as brave as her one day.

“Well, what say we get our own party started?”

“Heck yeah! How 'bout we go out and hit up the arcades?!”

“Oh! Or what about that new museum exhibit to show off the new dinosaur species?!”

“How about we go bumper car rac—”

Before we can finish each other's sentences, we both hear thunder from outside. Seconds later, we get hit with a big gush of rain. The excitement absolutely dies down.

Mary then chimes in with a slightly happy tone.

“Ooor, we can find something to do here.”

“Yeaah. Still, things will be better now that you're here.”

To be continued... ~ ~

Live and Let Spy

By: Jake Ziesche

How I get myself into these messes is beyond me. I had opened a can of worms and things were out of control. This whole predicament started when a mysterious figure mistook me for a secret agent. I started to nip the mix-up in the bud but thought it would be thrilling to be a spy for a day. I learned that I needed to locate an associate, code name Mr. Mystery, and transfer a top-secret suitcase to him, a classic scenario. Only after accepting, did I learn I was required to keep it safe from a villain known as Dr. Homewrecker. I learned that he was infamous for driving wedges between people who were dating, especially those in the spy circuit and even for friends outside the organization. It was up to me to make sure the evildoer didn't get whatever was in the suitcase. To make matters worse, my friends showed up and I passed them off as my entourage to stop the truth from getting out. As a result, they ended up joining me on this covert operation.

Now, here we were outside the mansion that served as the drop off point for our mission. The place looked like a castle right out of a fairy tale. Given what was happening, the abode seemed apropos. The recipient was throwing a pop culture masquerade ball and we were required to go incognito. Guido was dressed as Mickey Mouse. Violet was Queen Elsa from *Frozen* and *Frozen II*. Thomas went as Barney, and I was going as Jem. This whole rigmarole produced mixed feelings from my compadres.

"Good grief, Barbie!" Thomas exclaimed. "I can't believe we got shanghaied into this calamity. We know little to nothing about the world of espionage." He made a solid point, but I felt confident.

"We do have some information," Violet added. "In addition to the code name, the code phrase is 'Holy underpants!' If someone responds to it, then we will know who our unidentified person is. On top of that, we will know the malefactor if he reacts horrified hearing 'I'll Never Find a Love'."

"Shall we get this over with?" Guido asked. "I don't want anyone we know to see us dressed in these costumes." Guido was rather embarrassed at the ensembles we were required to wear.

"I know the options were rather arbitrary, but I'm sure we'll get used to them," I told him. "Well, here goes nothing," I said as I opened the door. We entered a spacious room full of people. "Let's split up to cover more ground. That way, we'll have more luck finding our target."

We dispersed and started interrogating the partygoers to see if we could locate the suitcase's owner and learn if there was a doctor in the house. I knew we had to be careful in our search. Anyone could be the target, but there was a chance Dr. Homewrecker was on the premises. He would do anything to get his hands on the goods. I needed to keep up this charade until we were in the clear.

After a while, we regrouped and shared what we had learned. Since we were not on a first name basis with the guests, we identified them by the costumes they wore. There was quite the eclectic variety of revelers present. We could hardly believe what some people were wearing.

"Well, Sonny and Cher are innocent," reported Violet. "I also had zero luck with The Monkees. In fact, they wanted to know if they could be my kings." Violet rolled her eyes at their idea of flirting. "Luckily, Davy Jones spotted the Queen of Hearts and Princess Leia and the group sashayed over to them. Josie and the Pussycats promised to look out for anything suspicious. How was your search, Guido?"

"Bugs Bunny didn't know what was up with any docs," Guido joked. "Mulan had no information, Shrek just thought I should do stand up and Scarlett O'Hara thought it was nonsense. On another note, Minnie Mouse asked me out and I said yes. I'll be seeing her next week. Any luck in your investigation, Thomas?"

"Danny and Sandy asked if I did kids' parties," Thomas griped. "Guido was right about prancing around in ridiculous outfits. Not only that, I think Fred and Wilma took photos. On the other hand, Princess Twilight Sparkle and The Cat in the Hat asked for hugs and I found it enjoyable. Not only that, Sia gave me her number. Did anything unusual happen with you, Barbie?"

"You won't believe what I went through," I informed my friends. "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs roped me into doing karaoke for some guests. Although, I did have fun singing 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun.' It looked like Luke Skywalker and Scrooge McDuck started to swoon. They wanted two encores so I sang 'Copacabana' and 'Respect.' I swear The Beatles and the Cheshire cat were giving me the eye. Sadly, the top-secret package still has yet to be delivered."

To be continued...~~

Fifteen Years Strong

By: Nathaniel Geyer

I just received word that a friend from an adults with autism support group was recently hospitalized for undisclosed reasons. As somebody who has been thorough my share of hospitals as a patient, supporter, and co-worker, I know firsthand the struggles that take place while at a hospital. Very often these issues are not disclosed until it is too late to make a difference. That was the case for a traumatic experience that I went through 15 years ago, which I told myself will not happen again.

Fifteen years ago, I was having a hard time after graduating with a B.S in Biology. My peers at school were going on for graduate degrees at prestigious universities. At the time I had no goals on how to lead my life and I stopped taking my medications and was bored. As somebody who has considered himself to be a workaholic, being bored was not productive and was leading me into a state of depression. This eventually led my folks to send me on a two-week stay at a hospital, which started as involuntary stay, to voluntary stay after I wanted to regain my focus on life. I decided after my stay to “start small, think big.” I started to take courses at a local community college in computer programming and next fall into a part-time Master’s in Health Evaluation Sciences (now Clinical Research).

Now 15 years later, I look back and see how a two-week stay at a hospital is sometimes needed in order to get a better prospective on life. That is why in other states you have a ten-year time period to clear your record. However, in Pennsylvania, which lacks a ten-year time period, some of my rights are still being denied due to the Mental Health Procedures Act of 1976, which was recently litigated in the United States District Court. This case illustrated that laws written in the 1970s are still denying rights to people with disabilities, who had ever been in an involuntary stay. Therefore, it is important to stay strong and contact your state legislator to restore rights that have been lost to involuntary stays, which happened more than ten years ago.~~

Let’s Go, Pokémon Go!

By: Maggie K. Jones

Pokemon GO is a app on your cell phone that is purchased through Apple store or the Goggle app store. When you first go into the game on you phone, you have to choose a team. The three teams are: red for Valor, blue for Mystic, and yellow for Instinct. Then...you start catching Pokémon. There are 40 levels in Pokémon Go. By going up each level, you gain XP, which is experience points to level up. You can also collect star-dust when you catch Pokémon, too.

A lot of walking is a part of Pokémon Go to hatch mystery eggs. You may catch a shiny Pokemon, which is rare to find anywhere. You can find pokestops along the way while you are walking outside, and Pokemon gyms are the places for battling in Pokemon raids and battling team against team. You can leave Pokémon in colored gyms to defend the team color: red, blue, or yellow. There are tier raids and special raids to catch new and exciting Pokemon. They are one through five tier raids. Easy to very hard raids that require a high number of people to join. Who knows, if you are lucky, you get a shiny Pokemon like I said, it is rare to find.

There are tasks to complete that Professor Willow assigns. If the tasks are completed, you get rewarded with items, or even the chance to catch a mystery Pokémon.

Pokémon Community days are fun, you get to catch the same Pokemon to evolve in three evolution Pokémon. They take place in community parks in your local area. And it only occurs monthly.

So, what are you waiting for, let’s go, Pokémon GO!~~

1987 Vision Pro Skate Escape

September 18th - 20th, 1987
Bren Events Center
Irvine, California

Head to Head Competition

**1st Place - Christian Hosoi
456 Points**

**2nd Place - Tony Hawk
455 Points**

3rd Tony Magnusson
4th Micke Alba
5th Chris Miller
6th Mike McGill
7th Gator Rogowski
8th Steve Caballero

Best Amateur

Reese Simpson

Vertical Height Winner

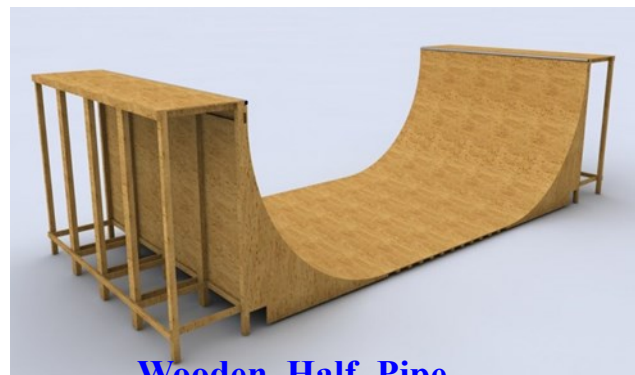
Christian Hosoi



Vertical Skaters



Vertical Skater



Wooden Half Pipe

Bones Brigade

By: Mark D. Lizotte

A group of skateboarders, known as the “Bones Brigade”, emerged in skateboarding in the 1980s. The group was led by a teenager named Tony Hawk. It also featured four other skaters named Steve Caballero, Mike Mc Gill, Lance Mountain, and Tommy Guerrero. Together, they were five of the decade’s top half pipe skateboarders. I often refer to them as the “Rad Pack.”

A half pipe is a large wooden ramp used for vertical skateboarding. In 1984, Mike Mc Gill was the first skater to land a complex trick which would later be called the “Mc Twist.” It is a front flip combined with a 540 – degree rotation. Only a small number of professionals could even complete the trick. It was used as a secret weapon at competitions during that era of skateboarding.

The Bones Brigade dominated skateboarding competitions during the 1980s. The biggest rivalry of that time was between Tony Hawk and another skater named Christian Hosoi. The rivalry hit its peak in September of 1987, at the Vision Pro Skate Championship.

In the head to head competition, Tony and Christian were the final two skaters left after several elimination rounds. At the end of the competition, Christian had a total of 456 points, and Tony had a total of 455 points. The contest couldn’t have been any closer!

The Bones Brigade appeared in several movies in the 1980s, including *The Search for Animal Chin* and *Police Academy Four*. In *Police Academy Four*, an 18 year old Tony Hawk is David Spade’s stunt double in the skateboarding scenes.

After the 1980s, street skating became more popular, and vertical skateboarding declined. However, I still have that 1987 vertical contest between Tony Hawk and Christian Hosoi on a VHS tape. It is still my favorite competition.

My brother, Scott, and I received Vision Skateboards for Christmas in 1986. I was 10 years old at the time (pictured left), and my brother was almost 12 years old (pictured right).~



Arcade Matt

By: Zach Grabowski

I had the pleasure of interviewing Matt Magnone, who has a YouTube channel based on arcade games. Matt started his channel on January 4th, 2006. He was looking for a way to upload his videos, and a buddy of his from high school suggested that he create his own channel and that was how he got started. When he made his first video in 2006, YouTube was not very popular, so he posted his very first video on Google. When he first started making videos it was a hobby before it became a career. His original post is still available.



He has had his YouTube channel for 14 years. He has more than 1.6 million subscribers on YouTube, about 200,000 followers on Facebook, and about 20-30,000 followers on Instagram and Twitter! Interaction with your audience is key and grows your business.

When I asked Matt how he got started in the arcade business, he explained that he has always had an obsession for "claw machines." He would always play the "claw games" everywhere he went where there was an arcade, whether it was at the mall or at his friend's campground. YouTube is Matt's main source of income. He also uploads his videos on Facebook.

Matt made YouTube a career by first applying for their partner programming in 2011. In 2012 he became full-time with YouTube. He started by uploading random videos. When he uploaded a "tips and tricks on how to win at the claw machine" video, he received positive feedback and decided to include tips and tricks on how to win at other arcade games.

Matt worked a variety of jobs before joining YouTube. His very first job was working as a cashier at the CVS Pharmacy in Ambridge, PA. He was terrified of working in customer service. Even though he didn't like his job there, it helped him get out of his comfort zone by talking to people. Looking back, he was grateful for the job because it broke his shyness.

Matt held a computer job when he attended Community College in Beaver County and worked at the Aldi's Grocery Store in Beaver County. He explained that he didn't like his job at Aldi's so much either because it involved a lot of hustle and bustle, but he picked up some tips from working there which got him interested in being an entrepreneur.

The best job of all, Matt states, is working for himself. He explained that "It's a challenge, but it's not for everybody. You have to be self-disciplined. There are days when you don't feel like doing anything, but you have to keep going - making and editing videos." He works hard for every dollar he earns and knowing that he did it himself is what propelled him into working for himself.

Matt enjoys a variety of other activities. He loves to ski and hang out with his friends. He really enjoys competing with others on group game night at the "Kickback Pinball Cafe" in Lawrenceville.

I asked Matt what his family thought of his career choice. They were stunned but are very happy and supportive. His mom was nervous that he would never be able to pay his bills if he followed this dream, but she has been pleasantly surprised.

Matt sees himself making YouTube videos "as long as people keep watching." He stated, "Arcade games are appealing to everybody." He has a very large audience ranging from young children up to retirement age. Matt's best advice that he could give somebody is "find something you're good at and make videos of it."

The positive aspects of Matt's job are that since he works for himself, he can set his own hours. Playing games and sharing his passion with his audience is something he really enjoys which he never thought he would've been able to do because of his shyness. The only negative aspect of the job is that he can get burnt out doing all of the work himself. It can get overwhelming at times, but he takes a step back, regroup, and keeps going.

Matt uploads, edits, and manages the channel himself. He has two camera guys, Joe and Dan, that will take the video, but he will video himself while playing the arcade games if no one is available. Matt keeps his viewers coming back by engaging with his audience. He integrates a question in his videos. For example, if he is playing a game with minions, he may say something like "comment on your favorite minion" or "comment on your favorite cartoon movie."

Matt sells some small merchandise, such as custom-made key chains and shirts. When he wins prizes playing arcade games, he donates some of his winnings to Goodwill or to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. He also sells some of his prizes on his website: "www.arcadematt.com" and the money he makes selling the winnings go toward making more videos. He does a lot of "meet and greets" at different arcades and will do "giveaways" there as well.

Matt's favorite prize to win when playing games is "food theme type items," like doughnuts. To Matt, winning doughnuts are really cool. The food that he wins is not real food, it is fake food. He's also won several big prizes: an iPad, a Nintendo Switch, and several different types of video games. He does "giveaways" on his channel with the items he's won. He recently won a hover board and cannot wait to ride it in the spring.

Matt has gone to other states to check out different arcades. One arcade he has gone to was at Great Wolf Lodge, which is an indoor water park in California. He won a drone there. He has also visited an arcade in Orlando Florida, which was upstairs of one of the largest McDonald's in the world!

I had asked Matt if he had a vision to play at an arcade in every state. He said that was a goal and he would love to do that if he had a full-time camera person to travel with him. Both camera guys that he works with have full-time jobs and are not able to travel with him.

My interview with Matt was inspirational. This guy turned his passion for playing games into his dream job.~~

A Jeans Recollection

By: Joseph Cepek

The legendary horse-head logo and the household name Jordache has existed for over the past four decades. I first remember hearing about this interesting and popular clothing industry brand when I was around ten years old. I also heard a familiar tune around this time, which has always been linked to the company since the late 1970's throughout America.

The catchy song lyrics referring to Jordache Jeans are as follows:

"You've got the look I want to know better. You've got the look that's all together. Working, playing, day, or night Jordache has the fit (the look) that's right. The Jordache look." A man by the name of Leigh Crizoe was hired by the company founders to write the lyrics to this memorable tune.

Many who are aged 35 years and older probably can remember these seminal jingle (a small product promotion song) words. I cannot remember if I had a pair growing up or not.

Jordache is a well-known brand of fashion merchandise for over the past half century (fifty years). The company name comes from three of the four Naccache brothers named Joseph (nicknamed, "Joe"), Abraham (nicknamed, "Avi"), and Raphael (nicknamed, "Ralph"), who began the business in 1969. In addition, brother David (nicknamed, "Dave") joined his brothers to head the firm and whose name is included in the name Jordache. Jordache Enterprises, Incorporated started in 1978. They later changed their family surname's (last name's) spelling to Nakash.

Joe, Ralph, and Avi opened the first of a quartet of stores in New York City, New York in 1969. Their signature clothing item were premium (designer-style) five-pocket style jeans, which were made to intentionally fit the wearers in a snug and figure-flattering manner. In 1977, the store was robbed and burned down. Fortunately, though, they were able to rebuild their company when they took about \$120,000 from their family life insurance policy to begin making jeans once again. They were patterned after European styles of the time period, such as Seruchi (for both genders) and Chardon (for both genders). These jeans were more body revealing (conscious) than the more traditional and long-established American brands like Wrangler, Lee, and Levi's. Designer jeans are typically made with stretchy spandex raw cotton cloth material that is intended to be tightly shaped onto the lower half of the human body. The brand name logo is usually stitched on one of the back pockets of the pants and/or on the right-hand side coin pocket. They traditionally have been made for both men and women, but they tend to be produced in a more visible, that is figure-enhancing manner, for women throughout the years.

Like European tastes in the late 1970's and the early 1980's, American tastes for a variation alternative in jeans were also searching for a product the brothers were developing in their manufacturing plans. At first, their company's jeans looked similar to other popular tight-fitting 5-pocket designer jeans at the time. American denim Chic Jeans (for females only) also debuted in the designer jeans clothing fad as the 1970's turned into the 1980's.

American fashion designers such as Calvin Klein and Gloria Vanderbilt designed and successfully created their seminal line of figure-hugging 5-pocket style jeans with their monikers stitched to one of the back pockets of each pair of jeans. Klein's jeans were (and still are) made for both genders, as is true of Jordache Jeans. Vanderbilt's jeans were (and still are) always intended for women only.

Also like Klein and Vanderbilt, the Nakash brothers started their own business savvy campaign for their jeans product in 1979. They invested \$300,000 of their own personal finances and borrowed \$250,000 from a bank loan to create a televised commercial series of largely unknown models (mostly female at the time) to represent their denim product. This was approximately one-quarter (1/4) of their total sales volume during this period.

One television (TV) commercial featured an apparently topless woman model named Finele Carpenter clad in tight Jordache Jeans riding on a horse near an ocean shoreline. This caused the three major TV networks (CBS, ABC, and NBC) to ban the commercial's airing due to censorship reasons. However, independent and smaller

New York TV stations did air the commercial and thus the jeans brand's popularity began to take off. Also, the brothers invested around \$1 million dollars to advertise their jeans in magazines around the United States. This also spread the jeans brand's notoriety even more rapidly.

As the 1980's wore on, the brothers began expanding their company to begin making other licensed merchandise like tee-shirts, jewelry, liquid aftershave deodorant, umbrellas, children's socks, women's dresses, including 5-pocket jeans skirts, 5-pocket jeans shorts, women's purses, luggage, footwear, hats, and other related items, which brought over \$3 million dollars into the organization's earnings with each fiscal (business) year in the decade.

In the 1990's, the company began mass producing its line of products, including its jeans, in lower-scale retail store chains such as Target, Walmart, and Kmart, among others. Baby diapers bearing the horse-head company logo were introduced in 1994. At the start of the new century, the company became more privatized and more of a licensing source (a conglomerate) for international-based branch clothing and other merchandise brand product businesses such as Fubu Ladies, Earl Jeans, Gasoline Jeans, Airport, Blue Star, U.S. Polo Assn., and Maurice Sassoon. Jordache Enterprises, Inc., also started manufacturing jeans for numerous fashion chains around the globe.

Brand new Jordache Jeans are still sold at Barney's and Kith Department stores in the New York City region as of November 2018. They can also be purchased online through stores such as Poshmark, eBay, Amazon, Etsy, and other online retailers.

I have only seen used pairs of Jordache Jeans in local stores for over the past few years such as Red, White, and Blue, Goodwill, and Salvation Army outlets. The pairs, which I did see were for girls and women. I have yet to see any for boys and men in any such places. As for Target and Walmart stores, in the local area, in addition to Macy's, Nordstrom, and JC Penney local department stores in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania region, for example, I also have yet to see any Jordache Jeans products for either gender.

I can correctly assume many individuals 35 years old and older, even locally, can fondly remember having at least one pair of Jordache Jeans in their childhoods and even young adult years. As of 2016, the most recent year, of which I could find online through Wikipedia Encyclopedia, the brothers' total earnings are estimated to be around \$413 million dollars. They have strong monetary investment holdings primarily in the United States and in their native Israel. Their income is obviously more as of now (in 2020). The organization celebrated its golden (50th) anniversary in 2019.

This magazine article is focusing on the classic jeans product of the Nakash brothers. I want to highlight this product, which launched their company into international fame and fortune for both children and adults alike. I also desire to continue to emphasize jeans as the main subject of this writing piece as well. This was the case in preceding magazine writing projects. This is another look at a famous jeans wear item. In addition, this is a written trip down memory lane for many.~~

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What are designer jeans?



The Revelation

By; Delaine Swearman

The revelation occurred when I was 30 years old. Before that, I was an ugly duckling, never quite fitting in, never good enough, struggling to keep up, and I didn't like who I was. But by receiving an autism diagnosis, I suddenly saw myself in a whole new way. I was suddenly, not a failed duckling, but a swan seeing my reflection in the water for the first time. Dr. Robin Sonthouse, my psychologist, first suggested the possibility of autism or Aspergers as a cause for my distress and asked what I knew about it. "Not much," I admitted. My initial thought went to a little boy sitting and rocking in a corner. But then I started researching online. And research is a strong suite of mine. At first, the symptoms only sort-of fit, but then I stumbled upon a website specifically geared towards Aspergers traits in women: Help4aspergers.com It suddenly all clicked.

Sitting on my bed in front of my computer screen, I had the REVELATION. This sudden knowledge would alter the way I looked at everything in my life... forever. It would cause me to review my past and see my "failures" through a different lens. I reported back to Dr. Sonthouse, that yes, I agreed, I did have Aspergers. A few years later the "Aspergers" term was retired from use, and now I just say, I'm autistic.

With the revelation of autism, I gained a new identity. I suddenly belonged somewhere, I wasn't just an ugly duckling. I realized that I am swan, and there are other swans just like me. Being different is now okay. I might have an unusual way of thinking and experiencing the world, but it makes perfect sense to me, and other autistic people understand it, too!

When one first learns they are autistic as an adult, it's not something they automatically accept and then share with the world. There is a process of acceptance. It was a journey for me. My journey first explored the academics of autism and I questioned what traits of mine might be related to autism. My journey reflected on my past and brought up feelings of anger and frustration over misunderstandings and mistakes that might have been avoided if "I had only known" I was autistic. On my journey, I agonized over whether or not to disclose to an employer due to concerns about stigma versus potential need for accommodation. I initially joined autistic social groups and only really



felt comfortable disclosing my autism diagnosis to peers. But over time my journey has taken me on to more public roles. I've been able to consult on sensory friendly venues. I'm now an advocate, writer, and public speaker in the autism community.

It has been 10 years since my diagnosis. And now I can only dream, where could my journey take me next?~~

Too Many Synapses

By: Joshua Walburn

As of the understanding in autism, my mind contributes to the following studies in research advances. I use observational skills to study the brain and can categorize connectivity level by speed. I researched those topics by reading articles on the Autism Speaks website.

On August 24, 2014 a newly published brain tissue study confirms that people affected by autism have an extra number of synapses or connections between nerve cells. They're the junctions that consist of electric gaps in which impulses are passed by a neurotransmitter. This excess is due to a decreased speed of pruning process that occurs during brain development. During synaptic pruning, the brain eliminates the surplus of these brain structures.

The same research team of neuroscientists at Columbia University Medical Center also found that a medication known as rapamycin both does the job on accelerating synaptic pruning towards its normal speed and reducing autistic like behaviors in mice. They've proposed that someday, a medication containing similar chemicals in that hypothesis will be used to treat autism after a child or adult has been diagnosed.

Autism Speaks began funding several studies on rapamycin. It's also been supporting a treatment study by using a medication with a much similar action for treating autism associated with Tuberous Sclerosis Complex. This rare disorder doesn't always involve autism. The laboratory mice used in the study were engineered as a rodent model of TSC.

"There are many unknowns in translating research between mice and humans," commented Paul Wang, Autism Speaks' senior Vice President and head of medical research. "But the data from mice suggests that such medicines could have a positive effect on behavior and cognition in patients with a TSC. The findings of this new study might also be relevant to a subset of other patients with autism." Dr. Wang wasn't involved in that Columbia University study. He also adds that the insights also underscore the vital importance of post-mortem brain donations in advancing autism research.

During neurotypical brain development, a burst of synaptic formation occurs during infancy. It's particularly pronounced in the cortex in which is central thought and sensory information processing. By late adolescence, pruning eliminates about half of these cortical synapses. Many genes linked to autism are known to affect development or function of synapses. The idea is that individuals with autism have excess synapses has been proposed once or more.

To test this hypothesis, Columbia University researcher Guomei Tang analyzed brain tissue from twenty-six children and young adults affected by autism. Thirteen of the children ages two and nine when they passed away. The other half of the same number out of the whole fraction of twenty-six were between thirteen and twenty. For scientific comparison, she also donated postmortem brain tissue from twenty-two children and teens who didn't have autism.

When using mouse models of autism, the researchers traced the pruning defect to a protein called mTOR. When it's overactive, they found that brain cells lose much of their self-pruning ability. As a result, neuron circuits show an overabundance of synapses.

The researchers restored normal synaptic pruning in the mice by administering rapamycin. This drug inhibits mTOR. Treatment eliminated the mice's autistic like behaviors. The treatment remains effective even when administered to older mice that had fully developed autism like characteristics.

Neuroscientists hope that similar treatments will be used after autism symptoms fully emerge. Further evidence states that researchers found larger numbers of overactive mTOR in the postmortem brain tissue in autism.~~

The Tale of the Poe Toaster

By: Megan Cunningham

In the early hours of January 19, a black-clad shadowy figure wearing a wide-brimmed hat and white scarf and carrying a silver-tipped cane enters Westminster Hall and Burial Ground in Baltimore. He approaches the site of the original grave of legendary American author and cultural icon Edgar Allan Poe, which is marked with a commemorative stone. There, he pours himself a glass of Martell cognac and raises a toast to Poe's memory before vanishing into the night. He leaves 3 red roses in a distinctive configuration and the unfinished cognac bottle. It is believed the 3 roses represent Poe, his 13-year-old cousin wife Virginia, who died of TB at 24 (and why there won't be a Poe biopic), and his mother-in-law and aunt Maria Clemm, all whom were originally interred at the site. Sometimes he may even leave a note. But the cognac's significance is uncertain. Since a more appropriate choice would be amontillado since at least that drink was featured in Poe's works. Whereas no Poe work contains a reference to cognac. Though note left at the 2004 visitation suggests that the cognac might've represented the original Toaster's family than Poe's. And each January 19, onlookers gather in hopes of glimpsing this Poe Toaster, who doesn't seek publicity and is rarely seen or photographed.



Edgar Allan Poe died under mysterious circumstances on October 16, 1849 at 40. Wandering the Baltimore streets, he was found delirious and wearing shabby, mismatched clothes that weren't his. He passed away a few days later, but not before crying out the name, "Reynolds" several times. Since then, Baltimore's Westminster Cemetery has served as Poe's final resting place. Until Baltimoreans decided to upgrade the memorial of one of their city's most famous residents in 1875. But unlike his short, turbulent life, the tragic writer has rested in relative peace.

According to witnesses, the Poe Toaster tradition may have begun as early as the 1930s and continued annually until 2009. Though no report appeared of him until 1949. But why January 19? Well, it's Poe's birthday. Anyway, we don't much about the original Poe Toaster except that he was a man with at least a son and that he died in 1998. While the post-1998-2009 Poe Toaster appeared to be two younger individuals, according to eye-witnesses. Yet, a group of varying size of reporters and Poe enthusiasts observed the event each year. And in 1990, *Life Magazine* published a photo that was reputedly of the Toaster. And aside from a 2006 incident where onlookers unsuccessfully tried to detain the Poe Toaster during his departure from the Burial Ground, spectators never interfered with his entry, tribute ritual, or departure. Nor has there been any concerted effort to identify the guy. Though Baltimore's Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum has kept several of the cognac bottles.



Occasionally, the Poe Toaster would leave a note. Some were expressions of devotion like, "Edgar, I haven't forgotten you." In 1993 a cryptic message read, "The torch will be passed." In 1999, a note announced that the original Toaster had died the previous year and had passed the tradition to "a son." A note left at the 2001 visitation, spurred controversy in Baltimore shortly before the Super Bowl since it was a play on the last line in "The Masque of Red Death." This read: "The New York Giants. Darkness and decay and the big blue hold dominion overall. The Baltimore Ravens. A thousand injuries they will suffer. Edgar Allan Poe evermore." Nonetheless, this prophecy didn't come



true. While a 2004 note read: "The sacred memory of Poe and his final resting place is no place for French cognac. With great reluctance but for [sic] respect for family tradition the cognac is placed. The memory of Poe shall live evermore!" Some took this as critical of France's opposition to the Iraq War. But former Poe House and Museum curator (as well as onetime Poe Toaster suspect) Jeff Jerome has suggested that the 2001 and 2004 notes might've reflected the son's (or sons') unwillingness to take the tradition as seriously as his dad. While a final note left between 2005 and 2008, was so dismaying that Jerome decided to public deny any note had been left

and declined to reveal its contents other than a hint that the tradition's end was imminent. The Toaster made his last appearance in 2009 for Poe's bicentenary, with a crowd smaller than in previous years, particularly the one with 150 in 2008.

In 2010, the Poe Toaster failed to appear with no explanation. Jerome, who had witnessed every appearance from 1976 on, believed that if the Toaster intended to end the tradition, the 2009 bicentennial of Poe's birth would mark a logical ending point. The 2011 anniversary saw only the appearance of 4 imposters called "faux Toasters" since they walked in clear sight of waiting observers that went contrary to the real Toasters secretive nature. None gave the secret signal that only Jerome knows, which the Toaster made each year at the grave. And none arranged the roses in the unique pattern the Toaster established. These faux Toasters' appearance sparked controversy. Though some preferred that the tradition die a "dignified death," others urged that it be carried on, by imitators if necessary. In 2012, there was no appearance by anyone identifiable as the "original" Toaster. Thus, Jerome proclaimed the tradition, "over with" saying, "I would have thought they would leave a note for me saying it was over. That does annoy me a little bit, but they are under no obligation to [do so]."

So in 2015, the Maryland Historical Society organized a competition to select a new individual to resurrect the annual tribute in a modified, tourist-friendly form. Competitors were required to give a live performance that could include "anything within the bounds of imagination" (just as long as it was Poe-related). The new Toaster will also remain anonymous. So forget about finding him on social media. Anyway, this guy made his debut during the daylight hours of January 16, 2016 (a Saturday, 3 days before Poe's birthday) at Poe's current resting place, wearing the traditional garb and playing Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre* on a violin to a crowd of 100. After raising the traditional cognac toast and placing the roses, he declared, "Cineri gloria sera venit" ("Glory paid to one's ashes comes too late", from an epigram by the Roman poet Martial), and left.~



Title image courtesy of the City Caw.

First photo courtesy of Bill Ballenberg who took the only known photo of the original Poe Toaster in 1990.

Faux Toaster remnant photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

Current Poe Toaster photo courtesy of The Baltimore Sun.

LIONEL 2034 Postwar Locomotive, Restoration (Part 1)

By: Max Chaney

Dear Readers, at the previous Greensburg Train Show I picked up this little guy for \$20, she's a Lionel 2034 Scout in need of Dire Restoration: I hope you will enjoy!!



Disclaimer: adult supervision will be required to rebuild this model. We soldered in NEW wire and some stuff had to be replaced and the enamel spray paint cans are TOXIC, be careful... take your time and enjoy the hobby! I'm not responsible for any Damaged Trains! These Vintage Trains can catch on fire due to finicky wiring so be careful, they are not toys



but collectable items. I am not responsible for damages to body parts or yourself! Please modify at YOUR OWN RISK! YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING to replicate what I'm going to share with you (no offense, just for your own safety). I started off the project by disassembling the locomotive; the motor armature needed a good clean, it was very grimy, so I used a little 91% Rubbing Alcohol (THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF IPA YOU DRINK! It's mainly for cleaning and maintaining electronics, don't use it on TV, Computer Screens or I Phone Screens, or video game electronics). They have specially designed cloths to rub off electronic screens. I am not responsible for any Damages of ANY KIND TO YOU'RE PERSONAL BELONGINGS.

The old wiring had to go; it was clipped off the locomotive. We rebuilt it in such a way that we could use a bit of the original wire from the magnet that was originally soldered onto the bottom brush, the Pickup wire was soldered to the top brush appropriately, we redesigned it so it can run without worry to clean it too much, we bypassed the E unit which is healed in with a screw and rewired it with brand new wire in such a way that was better than Lionel's questionable electrical system.



We stripped off the paint using the Dremel ,which worked well. I did not prime this model; LIONEL never primed their engines, as the paint works just as good if not better. I gave the model two coats of black paint which didn't dry properly. I eventually went over it with a little black acrylic paint (Not the poster paint or cheap 79 acrylic cent paint you get at the arts and crafts store, you need to buy good hobby paints and thin them down with water of appropriate thinners that work), something like Testers Hobby paints works well, which is what I used to touch up the locomotive.



The smokebox, smokebox door +headlight, smokestack and firebox were painted in silver and eventually with a semi-gloss varnish (not shown) However, the motor needs redoing (again!) I'll keep you posted.

The reason why I put in the disclaimer is for LEAGAL reasons and to avoid injury or potential loss of a loved one if one does attempt my projects, as mistakes happen. To quote Sir Ringo Starr (Beatles member and the original narrator from *Thomas the Tank Engine* /Mr. Conductor from 1984/1989): Peace and Love, Peace and Love.

Next article very, very coming soon! ~~

Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties

By: Amelia Krzton

Since Spectrodolce opened, I have invented a sister company entitled Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties, also on William Penn Highway in Monroeville. It is an apartment building located on the southern end of William Penn Highway near Northern Pike. The company gives help with all kinds of parties, from children's parties to teenage parties to adult parties. A very important project was given to the top employees of the company. They were assigned to help with the Slumber Party Intern every weekend. The most recent slumber party that happened was Hailey Thomson's Traditional Sleepover Party on January 25, 2020. Hailey Thomson is a 12-year-old girl who attends sixth grade at Shady Side Academy Middle School. The decorations involved were a banner with all the girls' names, a collage of their childhood days together, popular music in the background, and the dining table decorated to look like a "bed." Refreshments included fruit kebabs, mix and match snacks, tie-dye cupcakes, and of course, rainbow pancakes for breakfast. Games included Taste the Rainbow Race, No-Peek Obstacle Course, and Guess Whose Secret. Activities included building a tent to sleep in, doing makeovers, and watching a movie of the girls' choice, which was *The Princess Diaries* and *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*. Other upcoming slumber parties this spring include Isabella Black's Spa Night Sleepover on February 29, Alex Bullyun's Fashion Friends Fest on March 28, and Breanna Mazur's Rock Star Sleepover on April 25. In the meantime, we will also help out with the Moser-Mifflin girls' slumber parties, hosted on the second Monday of every month, which is generally the same day as the Focus Support Groups held at Puzzler's in McKeesport.~~

Life Balance and Autism

By: Nathaniel Geyer

As an adult on the Autism Spectrum, I find it important to have balance in my life. Too often, autistic people tend to prioritize one task over another. For example, the last two months I have been a teacher's assistant for a graduate course online. I have been deprioritizing my health and wellbeing, driving, social life, and family for this course. Unfortunately, my TA got temporarily revoked so that the teacher can get control of this class. So I was forced to reevaluate my life and found that my sleep patterns and health suffered. I took charge of my life by taking two sick days, where one day I met with my counselor, who I have not seen in six months. The next day I went to the local fitness center, where I have not been for a year. I also look back and see that during that time during my struggles to find balance, there were about ten warning signs that were missed to cause me to lose focus. My lesson to readers is to sometimes take a step back and reevaluate your lives to make sure that you are achieving all that you want to do. It does no good to go to work and not get anything out of it. In the future, I plan to use more personal health days, which I accumulated over three months to reevaluate my life in order to improve its quality. I strongly recommend that as a reader with autism or related conditions, to take a break and stop and think to see if you missed warning signs or stressors that cause you to lose focus. I did and my life is evaluated day by day, with reevaluation of both long-term and short-term goals to improve myself and hopefully humanity as a whole. It is okay to be open and communicate my needs to others and make it mutually beneficial for all parties, but first sometimes you have to step back and reevaluate your life to make sure it is balanced and open to positive growth.~~

Concert Adventures

By: Julia Fieldhammer

People like many different types of entertainment, some people like to watch shows whether they are on tv or a streaming platform such as Netflix or Hulu. Other people like to get out and do activities. But almost all people share the enjoyment of music. Music is one of my favorite things. I love to listen to music in my room or when I'm in the car. Along with listening to music, in my free time, I also like to go see some of my favorite artists live.

I've been to several concerts. I normally go with my family or friends. I've been to Selena Gomez, One Direction, Shawn Mendes and most recently, the Jones Brothers. Selena Gomez was my first big concert I went to, so I was really excited. I went with my mom, dad, and sister. We all sat in the handicapped seats. The opening act was a band called Emblem3. The band was made up of two brothers and their friend. I knew some of their songs before; my sister had introduced me to the band and I started listening to them a little while before the concert. I really enjoyed seeing them live. When Selena Gomez came on, I could feel myself getting giddy. They played an introduction video that was kind of based off the TV show, *Wizards of Waverly Place*. Selena Gomez was the lead role in that show. After the video was done playing, Selena appeared on stage. She had on a long silver dress and started singing one of her biggest hits called "Who Says." Everyone was enjoying the music, except for my dad. I think he was a little bored. Overall, I really enjoyed my first concert and I'm glad I got to see Selena Gomez.

Everyone has a favorite band that they fan girl over, my favorite band was called One Direction. The band consisted of five members, all from the UK. The band was formed on the British *X Factor* show, where a judge put them all into a group and they started calling themselves One Direction. The members names are Harry Styles, Louis Tomlinson, Liam Payne, Zayn Malik and my favorite, Niall Horan. The band got really popular super fast. Even though after a couple years of being together one of the members, Zayn Malik quit. I still wanted to see them. When I heard they were coming to Pittsburgh I was really pumped and I asked my mom if we could go. The night of the concert I was so excited. My dad drove me, my mom, my sister and her friend down to Heinz Field where the concert was taking place. There was a ton of people going to the concert. I had to be very careful driving my wheelchair around, sometimes when there's a lot of people it can be hard for me to get around, but with my mom's help, I managed. Some of my friends went to the same concert. We were supposed to take a picture together, but I lost them in the crowd. I was really bummed that I didn't get a pic with them. Me and my mom found our seats which were pretty good. My sister and her friend took some pictures with me before the concert started. When One Direction was about to come on stage I got really excited and started screaming. In the introduction video, all the members of the group were singing in different countries around the world. They all came out on stage at the same time. The band sang some of their hit songs, all of which I pretty much knew, so I sang along as best I could. My mom and me were dancing throughout the whole concert. I really enjoyed watching the boys preform the concert, I also thought the boys looked really cute. I was super tired after the concert and wanted to go straight to bed when we got home. This concert was a blast, I'm so glad I got the opportunity to see my favorite boy band.



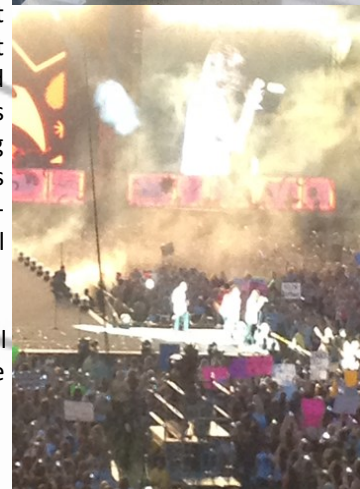
Another type of music I like is Christian music. I've been to one Christian concert. A couple of years ago I went to see two Christian artists called TobyMac, and Mandisa. I went to the concert with my parents and my aunt. The concert was at Peterson Event center. I was there one time before, so I was somewhat

familiar with the place. My parents and I found our seats. TobyMac was the first one out on stage. He sang a song I really liked. After he performed Mandisa came out on stage. She was a fantastic singer. My parents, my aunt and me all really enjoyed the music and were dancing. Mandisa sang this one song that I really like called "Overcomer." The song was about someone who has to overcome a lot of obstacles in their life. I like to listen to it now because it reminds me that everyone has their own obstacles that they have to overcome. It also makes me feel empowered, like I won't ever let Cerebral Palsy win. I enjoyed this concert and spending time with my family.

One of my favorite artists is named Shawn Mendes and he is from Canada. When I heard that he was coming to Pittsburgh, I was really thrilled. My two girlfriends and I all love his music, so we decided to go together. The night of the concert both my friends and my one friend's mom came to my house to drive to the concert all together. When we got there we all went to find our seats. The seats were pretty good, they were the first section in the handicap section. Charlie Puth was the opening act, I know some of his songs also. When Shawn Mendes came out everyone was screaming with excitement. Shawn sang a lot of his hits. My friends and I were dancing with each other. The moms were dancing too, but not as much as we were. When the concert was over the gang all drove back to my house. My two girlfriends spent the night. The Shawn Mendes concert was an amazing experience and I'm glad I got to make a memory with my two friends.

The most recent concert I went to was the Jonas Brothers. The Jonas Brothers are a group of three brothers that write songs and perform together. They were really big in 2008 till 2013 when they took a break. Everyone was freaking out when they announced that the band was getting back together. When I heard they were making a tour stop in Pittsburgh I was really excited. So my mom, sisters and I decided to go. The concert was on a Tuesday night so as soon as I got home from school, I had a quick dinner and changed my clothes. My family and I drove down to the venue, my sister put on the Jonas Brothers in the car so we were listening all the way down to get pumped up. When we got downtown, we ran into a lot of traffic because of the concert. My mom was able to find a handicapped parking place in the garage, but it was really expensive. I saw lots of people walking to the concert, they were mostly young girls. When we got into the concert, we had a little scare. Two of our tickets came up as unavailable, so we went to the ticket counter to check it out. I was a little worried that something big would happen and we wouldn't be able to attend the show. As it turned out our tickets were getting denied because they put a camera in the section we were supposed to sit in. The people at the ticket counter gave us all new tickets and the seats were even better than the ones we originally had. I was relieved. My family and I headed to our seats and my fear turned back into excitement. A girl we knew saw us at our seats and came up to us and started talking. I was a little annoyed because I just wanted to enjoy our girls night out with my mom and sisters. The opening act came on, which was Bebe Rexha. I knew some of her songs and was dancing and singing along. Finally, the Jonas brothers came on and the whole arena was screaming and going wild. My mom, sisters and I were all dancing and enjoying the show. They sang a mix of their old and new songs. When the concert was over we headed to our car, it took us a little while to get through the crowd, especially with my wheelchair, but we made it. I really had a blast and I'm grateful that I had the opportunity to see the Jonas Brothers, especially with my sisters.

Music is a big part of my life and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to go to all these concerts. I hope to go to many more concerts and experience more live music in the future.~~



The Belle Sitter, Part Two

By: Jordan Watson

Since the rain wasn't letting up any time soon, we ended up staying in most of the day. Then again, no matter where we are, or what we do, Mary has always helped make my day *sooo* much more cool! We ended up playing a game of Donkey Kong Country together after we went through as many of the board games we had. I played Diddy, while she was DK. While going through the first water level, Coral Capers, something popped up in my head. I felt the need to tell her.

"Hey Mary?"

"What's up, banana buddy?"

"I've known you since I was 6, right?"

"Well I'd certainly hope so!"

"You ever think that Dad...well, hired you to watch over me after...um...you know..."

"After what?"

As I get hit by a Croctopus, she switches over to DK.

"After Mom went away..."

She pauses the game, and sets down the controller, looking at me in a genuinely concerned way.

"What made this come to mind, darlin'?"

"Dad was always pretty secretive about what happened to her. She went on a trip somewhere, and never came back..."

I let the music play on the TV, while looking down on the carpet floor. I suddenly felt really sad about the whole thing. I couldn't say why though.

"I just don't get whether if she's gone, or...if she's *really* gone. All I ever wanted was for her to come back..."

I start to feel tears swelling out of my eyes and couldn't keep that sadness in me anymore.

"Mary...you're like the big sister I never had. You always cared about me, no matter what dorky things I like. And you've always looked out for me even when I get bullied at school for those things, and" I sniffled, "Mom leavin'..."

She pulls me in and hugs me tight. She has this nickname for me, because I was a big fan of Jurassic Park, and called me this.

"Aaaw, my little Grant. You're so right. Your dad wanted me to help take care of you when your mom couldn't. Because you needed someone more than ever, I was happy to watch over you, and keep you under my wing."

"Please..please promise me you won't leave me..."

"Ssssh, ssssh, sssssh..."

She starts singing a song to me. She calls it "I Found A Reason." This song helps sooth me whenever I'm feeling down about anything. It's as if she knows how to make all my troubles gone.

♪ Oooh I, do, believe...In aall the thiiings you see...What coomes is better, than whaaat caaame be-foooooore...You bet-teer, come come, come coome to me, bet-teer, come, come, coome come, coome to me, Better ruuun, run ruuun, run ruuun, to me, better come...♪"

Like I said. The voice of an angel. The singing of a heavenly choir. She brushes my cotton hair, as I looked up to her in a comfy daze.

"Why don't we go ahead and get some dinner ready?"

I snap back into the real world again, surprised in my response.

"Oh yeah! Dad actually left us some money for pizza! You wanna order from Pap—"

"How about we have some of my cooking tonight?" As she happily interrupts me.

"O-oh! Yeah, that sounds nice! I've never had any of your cooking before!"

"Consider it a token of our everlasting friendship, honey! I can make us some of my freshest Cajun Pizza 'n Potatoes!"

Wow. It's been so long since I had good home cookin'! Dad barely ever cooked himself, and when he did, it was a hot mess.

"Niiice! Oh! Oh! There's a big monster marathon on tonight around 8PM! We can see it until I gotta go to bed."

Mary heads over to the kitchen to nab the supplies to get things started. She brings with her a big black bag to pop down on the counter near the stove, unzipping it to grab everything she has inside it.



"You'll absolutely love it!"

"Alright, Imma get in my PJ's, and get the TV on while you're working in there!"

Before I have a chance to sprint up to my bedroom, she stops me for a moment.

"Oh, make sure you take your pill before we're about ready to hanker down on some ex-qui-site delicacies!"

Oh yeah. I forgot to mention. I sometimes have blackouts. This didn't really start until after Mom left though. Dad noticed it right away. Every night before dinner, he has me take medicine. It's one of those medications that requires you to have an empty stomach, or something. After taking it like the bottle says I should do, I hop straight into my PJ's. As I come on downstairs, Mary went ahead and turned on the TV for me while she starts work in the kitchen. I slide on over to the array of food she's got from the fridge. She then pulls out some of her own kitchen utensils. A cutting board, some spices she had stored away, and...a strange utensil.

"Wow...Mary, whatcha have there?"

"Oh, this? This is a special knife that my daddy gave to me! Neat, huh? It acts like a butcher's knife, a food peeler, *and* a corkscrew. An all-in-one invention! I call him Lagumadiel."

"Dang, it's nifty! Makes me want your Cajun Pizza 'n Potatoes that much more! Oh! Can you make it real spicy?"

"Anything you want, sweetheart. I'll take to fixin' you the best you've had!" As a smile beams from her very pretty face.

I find something odd though. There's...a strange smell coming from the bag itself. It's probably the spices that were in the bag. I plop myself near the TV, eagerly awaiting the marathon in about 40 minutes.

However, what I end up getting is this.

"We interrupt this broadcast to bring to you a breaking news update on The Belle Eviscerator case. Police have just released the numbers of missing children within the Louisiana area. An estimated 29 *children* have gone missing within the general vicinity. Authorities have pinpointed their search within the Cottonport district. On scene is Peter Gentson. Pete, can you tell us any details about what the police have gathered so far?"

"Jim, I'm traveling with a few members from the K9 units, to which they heavily covered the next 5-6 mile radius to track down the leads to any and all missing children. Based on what investigators' sources can entail, they believe the kidnappings could be linked to Cottonport Elementary School, where at most, 10 of the 29 children, are possible victims."

A real sick feeling starts to overwhelm me. It...it wasn't just near my school. It's *at* my school. But why? What could this sick guy want with them? Mary...she isn't paying any attention to this. Too busy chopping up the food. Should I tell her? Before I can get a word out, barking dogs on the TV interrupt my train of thought.

"Wait! Jim, it looks like they're making a run for the school!"

The cameras blurs in an out, trying to keep focus with the men running. I feel nauseous. They're going around my school. They're heading for what looks like the back of the courtyards, outside the gym. The dumpsters. They're heading straight for them. They go through them, flashlights and all. This is really bad. They pull out some dirty clothes.

"Jim...I-it looks like...it looks like some of the children's clothing! Police are getting a closer look.....I-it...it seems like...Oh God...it seems like there's traces of blood still attached to the clothing! Jim, we may very well have stumbled upon not just a kidnapping case, but it's likely to have become a murder case! Forensics are asking us to move!"

It's become quiet in the room. That shirt...that was Shawn's. He was a school bully to a lot of kids, especially me. He didn't like I was smarter than him. How I ended up making him look bad in front of his friends. Fifteen minutes go by. Now they come back on the air.

"Jim, we've been updated by the forensics team! Based on the fingerprint analysis, and the hair strands attached, we've confirmed that the suspect is likely—"

The TV shorts for a moment. "*CRRRT* A Caucasian female with blonde hair. Please be advised to contact your local authorities; the suspect still at large! We'll update you further as the investigation continues! Back to you Jim!"

Now it's *really* quiet. I normally hear chopping from Mary's thingamabob in the kitchen. But it stopped.

"...M-M-Mary?"

It starts faint...Then it grows. She goes from humming, to singing a familiar song.

"♪ And you bet-teer, Run ruuun, run ruuun to me, Beet-ter run, run ruuun, run ru-uun, to me, Better come, come co-ooome, come cooome to me, Be-et-ter run...♪"

To be continued... ~

My SARTAC project; "My Safety, My Rights"

By Michelle Middlemiss



I have completed my project "My Safety, My Rights." I was privileged to be chosen as one of the six to receive a national fellowship from SARTAC (Self Advocacy Resource Technical Assistance Center) as a self advocate for Autism. I worked with my community and local Police Officers and will present my project at the SABA convention in Colorado next Fall.



Jeff Johnson
Missouri



John McCarty
Georgia



Michelle Middlemiss
Pennsylvania



Christinne Rudd
Florida

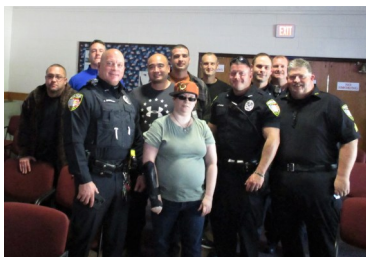


Melissa Southall
West Virginia



Julian Wang
Colorado

The photos below are from the Autism Police Training I did for the Wilkins Township Police in October. The Police completed surveys before and after the training which demonstrated the importance of Autism awareness and training.



This will be the last question in the year long forum which was open to readers for questions about Autism that Officer Bailey answered for you. He has two sons on the Spectrum. I thank him for the time and concern he put into this column with me. I wanted to have Officer Bailey's opinions, as a Police Officer separate from my local Police.

Officer Bailey,

How was your experience with your kids in school and did they go to a private school or public school? (Megan Shorthouse)

Megan,

Thank you for this asking a very important question that parents and care givers think about all the time. It really all depends on the student and the school support and most important is the home support. Both of my boys went to public school. My oldest son did have some difficult times, with being singled out and bullied. Some of his classes were too hard, and some he was good at. But with the right support, a teacher(s) that thrives to educate and a great foundation; anything can be achieved. Staying up to date and being involved with their IEP's is very important. Make positive changes in their IEP's for the greater good, not for convenience.

Our youngest son did go to public school, but things got way too difficult at a certain grade. So, together with the school we were all on the same page and came up with the best possible solution for him. He finished his years at a specialized school, which was perfect for him. Smaller classes, more time for studies, less homework for him to handle. There were also trusted adults for him to talk to if things were stressing him out. There were many groups for him and others to attend to their needs. So our family was unique in have two different experiences with public and specialized schools. What may work for one may not work for another.

Michelle:

Officer Bailey, thank you for the detailed answer to Megan's question. I don't feel that I need to comment on it because you explained what your boys experienced. They were very lucky!~~





Potato Kugel Recipe

Foodie Call

By: Daniel Ashkin

During Passover, I like to eat potato kugel during the Seder. Potatoes, matzah, onions, and olive oils are mixed into a pan to form fluffy golden fried potato kugel. Tori's Avey Kitchen has an excellent recipe on how to make fluffy golden kugel mixed for Passover. The recipe was updated on October 18, 2019. Before you make this delicious dish, you need to buy the following items at the supermarket. First, you need to purchase 5lbs of Russet Potatoes. Next, you need to buy two large onions at the market and one-half black pepper. The cook needs to chop six large eggs into a mixing bowl with dice potatoes. Furthermore, the cook needs to pour 6 tablespoons of table starch into the mixing of dice potatoes. If you do not have table starch, you can use cornstarch instead. Finally, you must add ¼ cup of schmaltz or extra virgin olive oil. Schmaltz is a sweet sugar sweeter solution that gives kugel an extra flavor.

I am going to give the reader the nine steps on how to make potato kugel. Please follow the directions very carefully. She recommends a 9 x 13 baking pan to serve 15 guests at the Passover Seder. First, you need to preheat the oven to 400 degrees for 20 minutes. Next, the cook needs to peel the potatoes into the food processor. After the cook peels the potatoes into the food processor, he or she wants to shred the potatoes into a mixing bowl with cold water for a few minutes. While the potatoes are into the mixing bowl, the sous-chef should shred two large onions into a food- processor. After you shred two large onions, pour the onions, eggs, salt, and the peppers until the solution becomes completely mix. Shred the juice out of the potatoes mixture with a metal strainer.

After you shred the juice out of the potatoes mixture with the metal strainer, pour the potatoes mixture into a mixing bowl. Next, the chef needs to spread olive oil or 3 tbsp. schmaltz around the baking pan. The oil will give the kugel a crispy crust. Finally, the cook empties the mixtures onto the pan. Finally, he or she needs to bake it for 60 – 70 minutes at 400 degrees. ~~



Grated potatoes
in a large bowl.



Pour in 3 tbsp.
schmaltz



Spread the potato mixture
into an even layer spread
the potato mixture into an
even layer mixture



Bake uncovered
at 400 degrees
for 60-70
minutes





The Great Harvest Bread Company

By: Zach Grabowski

There's an eatery in East Liberty, where I love going for breakfast called "The Great Harvest Bread Company," located at 6401 Penn Avenue. They serve a variety of sandwiches, salads, and pastries. My favorite is their breakfast sandwich with egg, bacon, pepper jack cheese, and tomato on a cheddar biscuit. I always get the same thing every time I go there. It is really good. You can get the sandwich with bacon, sausage, or no meat, as well as different kinds of cheeses. If you are ever looking for a good breakfast sandwich I would highly recommend heading to The Great Harvest Bread Company. It's clean, has great service and the food is delish!~~



Springtime Desserts

By: Amelia Krzton

Since the springtime is here, I wanted to write about some fabulous desserts. My birthday is in the springtime, and we were just celebrating the oldest Mifflin daughter, Abigail's birthday at Drew's Family Restaurant with her friends. My all-time favorite dessert is ice cream, especially those Neapolitan ice cream sandwiches that I like to eat every night. I think that my cat, Mattie, is partially like an ice cream sandwich, as well as a chicken tender, and also a good feline friend. Here are some of the other desserts that I enjoy eating.

#1: Cake (Abigail's Dessert)

Appropriately enough, this is the top dessert! Birthday cakes are definitely the best way to celebrate a birthday, in my opinion. Other forms of cake that are my favorites to eat are cupcakes that can be both chocolate and vanilla. As a kid, I always had ice cream cake from Dairy Queen for my birthday with various characters on the top (but not *South Park* characters, of course)!

#2: Cookies (Nicole's Dessert)

Who doesn't love cookies? I especially love chocolate chip cookies, as well as oatmeal and oatmeal raisin. The lip gloss that I put on this morning smelled like oatmeal cookie. The other type of cookie that I enjoy eating is Oreo cookies. I often sneak those as a guilty pleasure when I shop for necessities.

#3: Pies (Jessica's Dessert)

When I was in marching band, I participated in "Pie Night" every year in August. I enjoy pumpkin pie every year at Thanksgiving, but apple pie and other fruit pies taste great, as well.

#4: Doughnuts (Victoria's Dessert)

Doughnuts are a special treat for me to eat at breakfast, especially sprinkle doughnuts and glazed doughnuts.

#5: Pastries (Emma's Dessert)

Pastries are an occasional guilty pleasure of mine. I have occasionally tried a Danish every once in a while.

Abigail's friends are Nicole Ellis, Jessica Linden, Victoria Spurnick, and Emma Wallace. They all graduated from Shady Side Academy last year in 2019. They were also Abigail's guests at the Sleepaway Glamp last April, the Paint Party last May, and the Bookworm Blast last September.~~



Foodie Call: Pierogi Recipe

By: Joshua Walburn

History

Pierogi were originally from peasant fare native to Central and Eastern Europe; we find mention of Pierogis in Polish documents early as the 17th century. But these savory dumplings have overcome class boundaries and became popular among those in all walks of life. They're served in many festivals and family gatherings just have to have pierogi to be complete. At the 2007 Pierogi Festival in Krakow, 30,000 pierogis were consumed daily. Homemade pierogi are also important in part of Christmas Eve celebrations in many homes, but aren't limited to the holidays; many enjoy them all year long.

While the steel mills are working alongside of the valleys, Pittsburgh was introduced to pierogis by immigrants who came to the region seeking industrial work and a better life. Many Central and European nationalities enjoy pierogis. These filled dumplings are considered the national dish of Poland and are popular in other Slavic countries such as Ukraine, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Russia. Sometimes, they're known as pirohy or pirogi and it's believed the word derives from the Slavic word for pie. Essentially, pierogis are made from an unleavened dough similar to noodle dough, which is rolled out. Small circles are cut from the dough and stuffed with a variety of fillings. The dough is then folded in half over the filling and the ends are pinched together to seal them. Then they're boiled in water until they float before they are ready to be cooked in a frying pan.

Pierogis are very flexible and can be stuffed with a number of savory or sweet fillings, including potato and cheese, jalapeño, sauerkraut, cabbage, spiced meats, and fruits. Because pierogis can freeze, they can make a quick, satisfying last-minute meal. There are as many versions of pierogis as there are cooks who love them and take on this Eastern European treat.

Ingredients

Dough:

2 cups (241g) All-Purpose Flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 egg
1/2 cup (113g) sour cream
1/4 cup (4 tbsp, 57g) butter, room temperature

Filling:

1 cup (227g) warm mashed potatoes
1 cup (113g) sharp cheddar cheese, shredded



Instructions

To make the dough: Mix together the flour and salt. Add the egg to the flour and combine. The dough will be quite clumpy at this stage.

Work in the sour cream and soft butter until the dough comes together in a slightly rough, slightly sticky ball.

Using just your fingertips, knead and fold the dough without adding additional flour until the dough becomes less sticky but still quite moist.

Wrap the dough well in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 to 60 minutes or up to 48 hours.~~



Top Five Coffee and Tea Shops in Pittsburgh

By: Maggie K. Jones

I reviewed and tasted a lot of coffee and tea that the city of Pittsburgh has to offer. These are my top five Coffee and tea shops in Pittsburgh:

Crazy Mocha: Located in Pittsburgh's Bloomfield neighborhood (in addition to other locations throughout the area), they have good tasting coffee with a down to earth atmosphere. A perfect destination to gain rewards on your phone, like Starbucks. 150 stars will get you a free handcrafted drink of your choice. Then Wifi is perfect here to do some office work, or just doing artwork sketching, on just to hang out. This is the place. Prices are ok, and some of the pastries are taste great. I give this place an A+.

Gryphons' Teahouse: If you are looking ways to relax with a cup of tea, then, head to Gryphon's Teahouse. Not only do they have a whole selection of teas to choose from around the world but, they have teapots, fancy teacups, teaware and saucers. They also sell matcha tea. They don't cost a lot, and they sell \$2.50 per cup of tea or by an ounce of tealeaves of your choice. The tea helps me clam down with a friendly atmosphere. I will give this place an A+ also. Its located in Pittsburgh's Bloomfield neighborhood as well. VERY GOOD TEA!

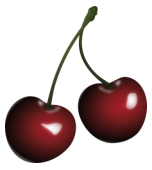
The 61C Cafe: It's located in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood. They have friendly servers and the Wi-Fi is good, too. A little bit of room for seating, it still has the best cappuccinos and pastries and it is not that expensive. I give this coffeehouse an A.

Café Carnegie: Located inside the Carnegie Museum of Art on Forbes Avenue in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood. It's classy with an alright atmosphere; they have a restaurant in the café, also. The coffee is okay with expensive pricing. I recommend it for people over the age of 21 because they serve different kinds wine there, too. For classy taste and very expensive atmosphere, I give this a B+.

The 4121 Main Coffeeshop: Located on Main Street, between the Bloomfield and Lawrenceville neighborhoods on Main street. It has a lot of beautiful plants in the shop and the atmosphere is kind of friendly. They don't do refills. And expensive too. Tastes good, but small seating space. I give this place a B.

I hope you give some of my five coffee and teashop ideas a try.~~





Foodie Call

By: Deliane Swearman

After a productive *Pittverse* meeting in Squirrel Hill, Jen, Amelia and I ventured across the street to Kai Mei, a local Asian Restaurant. This dinner outing had been planned at a previous meeting after a discussion of the recent coronavirus outbreak.

The President of the Organization of Chinese Americans of Pittsburgh has reported that these are trying times for Asian and Asian Americans, even locally, as they are experiencing racist attitudes from the public. In addition, Asian restaurants are not doing as well as to be expected this time of year. By patronizing an Asian restaurant, we could show our solidarity with the Asian community in at least a small way.

Kai Mei proved to be an excellent choice, with a quiet atmosphere, wide range of menu items, attentive staff, and delicious food. The restaurant is located at 2209 Murray Ave, Pittsburgh PA 15217 which is also easily accessible by bus.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Asian community and others who are affected by the coronavirus.~~



Maroon 5 and Hamilton: What do you get when you cross them together?

By: Amelia Krzton

We all know how much I have been interested in the musical *Hamilton* lately since it is based on American history, which is a school subject of my liking. But there is another thing that I used to be passionate about in the past that you guys may not know about.

If you are familiar with the band Maroon 5, you probably know about all of their latest hits, including "What Lovers Do," "Wait," "Girls Like You," and most recently, "Memories" featuring Adam Levine with a mustache on his face. But, in my opinion, the classic Maroon 5 was from the first decade of the 21st century, aka Pop2K played in my Systematic Skill Builder, Shelby's car. In the 2000s, there were *Songs about Jane* and *It Won't Be Soon Before Long*. I believe that the latter album would fit more with the energetic music of *Hamilton*. If you think about it, the songs from the album sound almost exactly like the musical. For example, "Makes Me Wonder" sounds a bit like the title track to start the musical, and "Wake Up Call" sounds a bit like "My Shot". Let's not forget about "Guns and Ships" and "The World Turned Upside Down" based on the battle of Yorktown in 1781. The band wouldn't just cover these types of songs anywhere, but they would be performed at Target in Harmarville just off of Route 28. You would probably think that a lot of these CDs are sold at Target. If there was a real live performance there, everybody would be really excited to see that. One time, I saw a real life calendar of *Hamilton* and was a huge fan of Maroon 5 during part of my high school career. I mean, who wouldn't be fans of these bands and musicals?

Nerdvana

By: Elise Mote

One of my favorite projects when I was in school was to write about, "If I was to own my own business what would it be?" My idea now is much simpler than it was then. My idea is the nerdier version of Dave and Busters. It would be a restaurant with classic and newer games, and my own version of Mario Karts and Friday night-themed Trivia Night. Some of the games would be vintage and newer pinball arcades, cabinet games like Galaga, Pac Man, and Fix-It Felix. A party room would also be available.

Menu

Food

1. Pumpkin Soup (Zelda)
2. Braised Cucco (Chicken) (Zelda)
3. Tato Soup: Tomato Soup (Fallout)
4. BlamCo and Mirelurk (Fallout): Crab Mac
5. Mirelurk Cakes (Fallout)
6. 1-up Mushroom Burger (Mario)

Pizza: (1) Goomba (mushroom) (2) Pac Man (peperone) (3) Phone Guy (Toco) (4) Freddy (Garlic and ranch) (5) Buffalo Cucco (Buffalo Chicken)

Dessert

1. Portal Cake (Chocolate cake topped with strawberries)
 2. Tribble Macaroons: (1) Plane (2) Chocolate (3) Brown sugar & Caramel
 3. Butterbeer Float
 4. Nightmare Cupcake (Strawberry)
- Saber Pretzels (Chocolate covered pretzels)

Drinks

1. Peach's Lemonade (with peach rings)
- Kylo Ren: Rockstar Punched, vodka, and a splash of cinnamon Schnapps
Designed to be viewed under a black light
2. Creeper Punch: Sprite, lime sherbet, and lemon-lime Kool-Aid
 3. Butterbeer
- Sonic the Hedgehog: Grenadine, Mentholmint Schnapps, and Blue Curacao~~

The Bichon Frise and the Bad Hair Day

By: Nils Skudra

On a blazing hot day in July, 2017 I decided that I needed an emotional support animal. The 2002 Toyota Corolla was working that day and 20 minutes later we were at the Guilford County Animal Shelter and looking at dogs, many of which were in clear emotional disarray, howling or pacing their cages, obviously unhappy with their current happenstance. When I advised the staff there that I had “dog allergies,” one employee brightly chirped up that a Bichon Frise who had been wandering around a local park (without tags or microchip identification) was available for adoption and was in fact hypo-allergenic. As soon as I saw him, I was smitten: a leaping, furious white snowball of energy, fluffy hair spouting from his head and body as if set off by a sudden electric charge. He did not care that I had Asperger’s Syndrome: only that I might hug him endlessly and endow affection on his super-hairy body and blithe spirit. It did not even matter that as I was signing the final papers to bring him home, he urinated on my brand new Nike sneakers or, when we arrived in our house, that he grabbed a favorite history book on Stonewall Jackson and tore up its dust cover. Perhaps as an apologetic gesture to the good general who was renowned for being quirky and eccentric, I named this funny, ebullient, high energy canine “Jackson”. The name stuck and so did he – two and a half years later he still inhabits our living quarters, enlivening them with his unmistakable brand of doggie humor and comportment, oddly looking as he is always laughing (and perhaps is) and providing me with an inexhaustible fund of on-tap love and diversion.

As soon as Jackson became my bestest friend, I began reading about the breed. I discovered that the Bichon Frise arrived in the United States in 1955. According to Wikipedia and other sources I consulted, their history actually began before the 15th century. Noted as being good traveling companions who made deep bonds with their owners, originally used by Spanish sailors as ship dogs they rode a crest of popularity, later being adopted by their Italian equivalents who took them on long perilous voyages across the sea. They traveled so much by boat that they consequently expanded from Spain to other areas of Europe where they not only continued to breed but to grow in popular esteem. The Bichon Frise became in effect associated with travel, particularly with sailing. Their sunny personality, smart, loving, funny and sweet-natured was constantly remarked on. Popular with the Italian nobility, images of them showed up in many works of art including the paintings of Goya. A French king wore a basket of them around his neck, unwilling to be parted from his beloved charges for a moment. Although sometime in the 19th century, they fell out of popular favor they regained their former glory when street performers or members of a circus showcased them for their ability to do tricks and easily learn protocols which endeared them to audiences. Ultimately the breed emerged triumphant and is currently 40th in popularity in the U.S. A Bichon Frise has twice won “Best in Show” at Westminster: in 2001 J.R. took the title, followed in 2018 by Flynn. I’ve heard that all Bichon Frise owners rejoiced (including me) to see this clever and beautiful dog with big hair take the honors which hundreds of people quickly lining up for breeding rights.



Since Jackson was found by a kindly stranger in a place called The Bog Garden (one of Greensboro’s most lovely parks), I will never actually know anything about his recent origins, from whence he came, what family may have owned him. Nevertheless, he is one of the breed’s best representatives: possessing one of the breed’s most distinctive features – the white coat, thick, dense and curly, the black-rimmed almond eyes and of course the temperament which is indisputably among the most-liked and the very best in the canine fancier’s world. One of their fans, Kayleigh Langdon, a Bichon Frise owner in Torrington, Devon, England said it correctly for the record: “Bichons are big characters. They love to be the centre of attention. They are definitely the clowns of the dog world and born entertainers.” Lying next to me on my bed at night when I enter the realm of sleep, Jackson keeps me warm and assured of being uncon-



ditionally there in an ordinary day or one fraught with emergencies.

All of the foregoing makes for a rosy picture but like any story it contains an occasional bump in the proverbial road. I call this occurrence “the bad hair day.” This has its counterpart in human experience as well. The definition in the Cambridge English dictionary avers that this is “a day when you feel that you do not look attractive, especially because of your hair, and everything seems to go wrong.” In Jackson’s case this occurs when we miss his regular and necessary grooming session. A Bichon Frise requires constant bathing and grooming to reduce the risk of fur matting. A friend remarked that Jackson gets more baths than many of his friends (I don’t want to speculate on the essential propriety of this and will just leave facts as facts) but as a person on the spectrum who has anxiety issues, getting Jackson to the groomer four times a month is sometimes trying. In Jackson’s case, hair is NOT an existential choice – it needs to be dealt with all the time to maintain that poufy, wide-ranging and pristine white look.

In the beginning (we are not talking biblically here) there was a lot of commotion about buying the proper combs and brushes to keep Jackson looking like the breed standard. Unfortunately The Bad Hair Day was always an accompaniment of that process. Jackson did not enjoy being groomed, would not stay still for his intended beautification – leaping out of the “styling chair” he flew, importunate down the stairs, desperately seeking any sanctuary that would put him out of reach of the barber session. Even when the few attempts begat a slight bit of hair-redress the results were undeniably discouraging – he looked like one besotted mess, hair poking out here and there in unregulated tufts, matts in his coats still unruly and unrelenting. Then “The Big Decision” was ultimately made: Jackson’s appearance would have to be PROFESSIONALLY maintained to the usual tune of \$85.00 a session per groomer. To put this in immediately comprehensible terms, one can think of what Aretha Franklin once said: “I’m a big woman. I need big hair.” The Bichon Frise, even if he is only the usual 10-16 pounds, is personality-wise-speaking a “big dog.” He loves having “a big fro with mad curls” (a words of thanks to Grace Gealey here!). To strip him of this delight could possibly render him emotionally unaccommodating and surly.

Consequently, one of my personal promises to my canine companion is to ensure that he is always in his physical glory. I have seldom failed in this regard but will admit to one occasion this week where Jackson suffered the worst “Bad Hair Day” of his Bichon Frise life. A new groomer, unfamiliar with how to properly groom the breed, returned him to us shaved to the bone. According to her, he was “a little matted” and she wanted to “start from ground zero.” I picked up my naked dog who was highly agitated and trembling and unleashed all my fury on this woman who was already replete with watery eyes, hacking cough and a runny nose and full of unconvincing apologies. I loudly read her the riot act on how she had violated the canons of Bichon Frise beauty and appearance protocols. I have included a photo of Jackson so the reader can share the misery that both myself and my fur baby felt. When she said “well, the hair will grow back and we’ll start over again.” Not on your life, baby! I said and marched out of the salon, ranting and raving accompanied by my dog shrieking in exact time with my x-rated words. Nothing went right for me either on Jackson’s bad hair day – the water was turned off at our house due to an accidental oversight of failing to pay the bill, a scheduled bus which was to take me to my university campus never made it to my door. A school assignment was due much earlier than I realized and a medical appointment I made cancelled due to an “emergency” at the office.

In short, both Jackson and I are still recovering from this recent grooming debacle. I am (very) anxiously awaiting the return of his former fluffy coat and the beginning of a new “Good Hair Day.”~~



A Day at the Zoo

By: Mark Sulkin

One morning, Aaron woke up all excited. Today, his family was going to the zoo to see the animals. Aaron got dressed and ate waffles for breakfast.

After breakfast, it was time to go to the zoo. Aaron climbed into the car and buckled his seatbelt. The car pulled out of the driveway and they were off to the zoo. When they got to the zoo, Aaron climbed out of the car and held his parents' hands.

At the entrance, Aaron saw his best friend, Joey. Joey was with his parents. He was excited to see the animals at the zoo, too. Aaron and Joey had to stay with their parents so that they wouldn't get lost at the zoo.

The first animal they saw was elephants. "Did you know, Aaron, that elephants use their trunks to give each other a bath?" "No, Joey. I didn't. What I know about elephants is that they're afraid of mice." Joey didn't know that elephants are afraid of mice.

Next, Joey and Aaron saw giraffes. "Joey, I heard that giraffes can see things far away because of their long necks." "Wow, that's wonderful, Aaron. I heard giraffes are the tallest animals in the world." They watched the giraffes eat the leaves from the trees.

After the giraffes, Aaron and Joey saw tigers. Joey and Aaron found that tigers are a member of the cat family. Joey said, "A tiger's stripes help it blend in with the things that are around them." Aaron and Joey watched the tigers walk around their exhibit.

Aaron and Joey saw many other members of the cat family at the zoo. They saw lions and learned that the female lion is called a lioness. They also learn that the male lion has a mane around his head. And they learned why baby lions are called cubs. Then they saw cheetahs and learned that they are the fastest animals in the world. They even saw leopards and jaguars.

Then, Aaron and Joey saw zebras and learned that they are part of the horse family. Aaron really liked the zebras. They were his favorite animal. Then Aaron and Joey took a ride on a train and saw more animals. They saw peacocks, rhinos, hippos, gazelles, red pandas, and Komodo dragons.

Soon, it was time for lunch. Joey and Aaron went with their parents to get something to eat. They had hot dogs, French fries, and brownies for dessert. After lunch, Joey and Aaron saw African jungle animals. They saw an okapi. "Joey, look, the okapi has stripes on its legs just like the zebras we saw." "You're right, Aaron." Then, Aaron and Joey went to the monkey exhibit. They saw howler monkeys, squirrel monkeys, capuchin monkeys, pygmy marmosets, and other kinds of monkeys. They even saw orangutans and learned that they are a part of the primate family like monkeys. And they saw gorillas, which are also primates like monkeys and orangutans. Joey and Aaron watched as the gorillas climbed the trees and played off the branches.

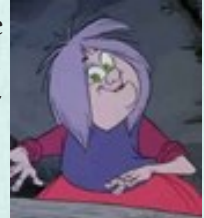
By the end of the afternoon, Joey and Aaron got tired. So they say goodbye to each other and went home with their families. As they drove home, Aaron asked his mom and dad if they can go to the zoo again real soon. His parents said, "Sure Aaron. We're glad you had so much fun."
THE END!



Disney Villains Part 2

By: Sara Brooks

Madame Mim is in the movie *Sword in the Stone*. She is a wicked witch. She can turn into a pig. She can be a dragon. She can fly on a broom. She is mean. She kills children. She wants to kill Merlin. She lives in the woods. She uses trickery instead of magic. She turns into a dragon.



Shan Yu is a Hun in *Mulan*. He is the leader of the Huns. He tried to take over China. He is not nice. He kills his enemies. He has super strength. Mulan defeats Shan Yu. He is evil and cunning. He died from fireworks. In the movie, Miguel Ferrer and Corey Burton did the voice of Shan Yu. He is a ruthless villain. He has long dark hair and yellow eyes. He has a bird. He is going to be in the new movie.

Prince Hans of the Southern Isles is the villain in *Frozen*. He is the prince of the Southern Isle. He wants to be a king but he cannot be the king of the Southern Isles. He wants to marry Anna so he can steal the kingdom of Arendelle. He is sneaky. Anna punches Hans. He falls off the ship. He is sent to his brothers to kill him. His voice is Santino Fontana.



King Runeard likes to drink tea. He is cunning. He is from *Frozen 2*. One of his goals is he wants to stay in power at all costs. Another goal is he wants to prevent the truth about his crimes from being revealed. He is cute and has a mustache. He died by falling off a cliff. He is the king of Arendelle. He is great and noble. He is mean but his people don't know that he is mean. Jeremy Sisto is the voice of king Runeard. He is a grandfather to Anna And Elsa.~~

#SocialPitt: Pittsburgh History Uncorked: '80s Night

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

On the evening of February 21st, 2020, partygoers were encouraged in advance to bring their legwarmers while jamming out to their favorite mixtapes as the theme of the 22nd annual History Uncorked presented by BNY Mellon was, you guessed it, 1980's Night! As Pittsburgh's #1 party for young professionals, History Uncorked: '80s Night lived up to its "hype" as an evening of fun and discovery. The '80s-themed event featured delicious food and drinks from some of Pittsburgh's top eateries, dancing, live performances by local bands, DJs, live auction-bidding, and to coin a term made famous in the '80s, "gnarly" activities throughout the museum's six floors of award-winning exhibitions. This year's History Uncorked! '80s Night included:

- A live performance by Ridgemont High: Ultimate '80s Band
- A throwback arcade from Replay FX featuring the most popular pinball and arcade games of the '80s
- A dance party hosted by DJ Bamboo on the fifth floor of the Heinz History Center
- The opportunity to "strike a pose (or two)" in Mad Maxx's '80s photobooth
- Life-sized games courtesy of Pgh Downtown Partnership
- Snap "totally rad" selfies with the Steel City Ghostbusters

Partygoers also had the opportunity to bid on prizes in—to coin yet another term made famous in the '80s—a "totally awesome" Silent Auction (online and on-site) from Hotel Monaco - Pittsburgh, P3R Pittsburgh Marathon, the Skin Center, The Fairmont Pittsburgh, AMPD, Village Realty, and other "totally awesome" Pittsburgh businesses! The History Uncorked Committee was co-chaired by popular Pittsburgh radio hosts Abby Krizner of 105.9 The X, and Tall Cathy of 96.1 KISS-FM.

Among the event's notable partygoers were Natalie Bencivenga of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Meghan Schiller of KDKA-TV News, Jordan Feucht McGovern of @PolkaDotPlanes on Instagram and Pinterest, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, Chancellor Humphrey, Photographer of Keep Pittsburgh Dope and radio DJ on 100.7 STAR, Syma Hajian of Pittsburgh Winery, Natalie Shugars of N'AT Around Town and a weekly radio guest on Q92.9-FM, and Gina Rendina, and Pittsburgh-based singer and cruise travel agent for Cruise Planners, an American Express Travel Representative.~~



Letter to Mara Corday

Hi Mara (Marilyn),

My name is David O'Rorey. I am a big fan of classic film, vintage actresses (or models), and collector of photos/magazines, including vintage Pin-Ups.

I have been a big fan of yours since I saw a copy of the movie *Tarantula* (1955) while a teenager in the late 90's. Working with a great cast, including John Agar (a favorite actor of mine) and great director, Jack Arnold, the movie was better than I thought it would be. It has become one of my favorite sci-fi films since. After I saw the film, I got *The Black Scorpion* (1957) on VHS for Christmas from my Grandma. It became another favorite of mine...you were amazing in it, too! *The Black Scorpion* was groundbreaking with stop-motion special effects, supervised by the great Willis H. O'Brien "O'Bie" and completed by Pete Peterson, who had multiple sclerosis while working on the film.



I eventually got a copy of *The Giant Claw* (1957). I heard you laughed after it premiered, and you saw the effects which not as good as the other two sci-fi movies you did. You did well in it though and it has since become a cult classic. I like you as a heroine character in your movies, you can shoot well and ride horses.



I also have a collection of your other movies on DVD/ Blu-Ray, including: *Dawn at Socorro* (1954), *Foxfire* (1955), *Girls on the Loose* (1958), and *Undersea Girl* (1957). In particular, *Foxfire* was great as the film was in-color and you were the supporting actress alongside Jane Russell.

I am interested in writing a future article about you for a publication called *Pittverse Magazine*. The magazine is written exclusively by adult writers on the autism spectrum, of which I am. I have many fond memories of you growing up; you are beautiful from head to toe. I started collecting magazines and photos you posed in later down the road after I graduated high school. One particular favorite in my collection is a pocket magazine that has all you in it. You may remember it being printed and called "66 PHOTOGRAPHS OF Mara Corday."

I am going to send a print-out from a photo of me with a color pin-up photo poster you posed for back in the 50's. Also mailing a 2008 photo of myself with my cat Muffin and a 2010 Photo of Rosey (Chilean Rose Hair Tarantula). Rosey was special to me; she passed away in October 2014 after she had a bald molt summer and it crippled her. I was upset and cried.

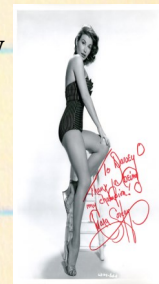
One final note: of the four photos I choose, could you autograph two and then autographed and personalize the others? For the personalization, could you write: "To David O'Rorey, one of my biggest fans best wishes & lots of love!" in the upper right or left corner your choice for Pin-Up #7 and #8. As for the rest Headshot #1 I wanted just the autograph in the upper left-hand corner. Pin-Up #7 I would like just the autograph same in the upper left-hand corner. Thanks so much.

I enjoy glamour and pin-ups better than most of the stuff today. You're my #1 favorite though...forget Marilyn Monroe; you are the best Marilyn! :)

In admiration,

Dave O'Rorey

If you wanted to write me back, that would be great. ~~



Hen Fashion Glory and Bonding

By: Joseph Cepek

This is a cute fictional short tale of hens (female chickens) creating a wonderful clothing and sisterly organization on an equally fictional farm. They take on anthropomorphic (human-like) abilities and personalities in the process.

Ellen the Hen hatched a dream to look differently from everyone else in her coop. She ordered by the house hen telephone a nice pair of dark wash blue designer jeans on a local farm land store known as Hen's Fashion Central, Incorporated (HFC, Inc., in the abbreviated version).

She additionally ordered a stylish pink turtleneck sweater with a matching pink belt to hold up her dark blue Hen's Love-brand five pocket style jeans. Ellen saw the stitched logo on the right back stitch pocket of the featured pants, of which she desired to purchase. Ellen ordered her personal apparel choices at Hen's Fashion Central, Incorporated, which is the only farm store for excellent clothes for the classy hen.

Three days later, Ellen received a shipped package at the entrance of the 3 Hen House Estate. Ellen opened up the package and quickly proceeded to slip on her new designer jeans with all of their shiny brass rivets, the pink turtleneck sweater, and the matching pink belt through the jeans' belt loops.

Ellen was seen by the other two hens at 3 Hen House named Allyson and Sianna as a pioneer in hen fashion in high esteem. Allyson and Sianna, like Ellen, were seasoned and laborious egg layers on the farm land of Farmer Helen. So then, Ellen decided to order additional outfits for them.

Once again, three days later, Allyson and Sianna's matching outfit sets (similar to Ellen's) came into the 3 Hen House. When Allyson and Sianna put on their clothes, they cackled and clucked to their hearts' delight. They celebrated with the other farm hens as the classiest 3 hen gals on the entire farm. This was especially after they saw how their new designer jeans made their chicken legs and feathered bottoms look beautiful. They began to positively see themselves as vivacious hens.

The other hens on the farm unanimously voted to make Ellen, Allyson, and Sianna as their respective President, Vice President, and the Speaker of the Hen House of Feathered Sisters (HHFS) of their newly formed United Hen House Party (UHHP). Ellen then ordered matching outfits for the farm's other hens and eventually all of the hens basked in fashion ecstasy. Now all of the farm hens equally could show off their vibrant femininity in a strong show of feathered girl unity. 3 Hen House was then made thereafter the main epicenter for all future hen house parties, fashion shows, and overnight sleepovers.

Hooray always for the UHHP!

Thanks to Ellen, Allyson, and Sianna the Hens!~~



Illustration by Chas

Carpe Diem

By: Jake Ziesche

*I traveled each and every highway
And more, much more than this
I did it my way
-My Way
Frank Sinatra**

I can feel the clock ticking away
The time I have left is a mystery
I can almost hear swans singing a melody,
One of sorrow and anguish
In a cemetery in the dead of night
Thankfully I don't hear
The wailing of a banshee

Sometimes I wish I could go back in time
Then I could undo past regrets
Including attending the college where high school sweetheart went
And attending the senior prom
Then I wouldn't have to wonder what might have been
Alas, that is impossible and I must live with the guilt

It feels strange when someone, famous or not, leaves forever
After going through any number of things,
Such as getting to star in movies, or making a difference
They go off to a new world
Even if some things are unfinished
Such as making amends with old friends

It has bothered me in the past,
Now I know what to do for the future
I have found love again and I'm on good terms with my first love
I plan to continue my career in the performing arts
Then, I hope to make it on Broadway someday,
Before my time runs out.~~

What We Must Know About Sanctuary Cities

OPINION

By: Megan Cunningham

Given that it's an election season, you're going to hear a lot about immigration, particularly the undocumented kind. After all, Donald Trump promised to build a wall to curb these people from crossing the US-Mexican border where the ICE is currently committing egregious human rights abuses like separating families and putting kids in cages. Yet, one controversial aspect that you will hear about once the general election

rolls around are sanctuary cities, which Republicans have consistently portrayed as criminal hellholes that must be defunded in order to comply with federal authorities. Yet, despite the Trump administration's hostility to these cities, they're on the rise despite Republican congressmen and state government introduced and sometimes passed legislation banning them.

Whether through a local ordinance or an impromptu don't ask don't tell policy, a sanctuary city is an entity that's adopted local policy that doesn't prosecute undocumented immigrants for simply living in the country illegally. Nor do they use municipal funds to enforce national immigration laws and usually forbid police and municipal employees from disclosing a person's immigration status. Federal immigration officials often rely on local law enforcement to identify those possibly violating immigration laws. But sanctuary jurisdictions are local areas refuse to turn over suspected undocumented immigrants to ICE. When police arrest someone whom they suspect is an undocumented immigrant, the process is quite similar to any other arrest. Except that the perp's fingerprints are shared with ICE who may ask to hold individuals if they're violating immigrant laws while they obtain a warrant. Instead of complying with federal authorities, a sanctuary jurisdiction would just release them.

According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, sanctuary policies limiting how much local police can cooperate with requests from federal authorities to hold immigrants in detention are present in 4 states, 39 cities, and 364 counties. These include almost every county in Colorado, Oregon, and New York as well as most of Florida as well as California, Vermont, Rhode Island and Connecticut, and several major cities on the East Coast. And they're not just limited to liberal and urban enclaves either, nor do sanctuary jurisdictions have identical policies. Most sanctuary localities will not detain a suspected undocumented immigrant unless there's an outstanding warrant, court order, or if the inmate has prior felony convictions, gang membership, or is on a terrorist watchlist. Some may call ICE on a suspected undocumented immigrant, but they won't detain them during the investigation, which my home of Westmoreland County does. Nor do sanctuary jurisdictions necessarily protect undocumented immigrants from deportation either.

Nonetheless, despite that sanctuary jurisdictions have been around since Los Angeles implemented one in 1979, they haven't become a prominent issue in national politics until 2008. But why do they even exist? Well, during the height of America's undocumented immigration challenge before the recession, a federal program called Secure Communities which sent booking information from local jails to a joint database shared by ICE and the FBI. While it was supposed to encourage local, state, and federal cooperation with jailing and deporting undocumented criminals, it was riddled with problems, had unclear constitutionality, and resulted in incidents of abuse. Critics often cite that the program's many inherent flaws such as lack of civil rights recognition and due process along with lack of transparency and oversight. Studies showed that most of the deported arrestees didn't have any serious criminal record to speak of. Furthermore, immigration advocates said it deeply damaged already limited police trust in immigrant communities, making people afraid to call the cops or provide information, which these advocates saw as a threat to public safety, thus making these places harder to police. Also, ICE could issue a detainer request on someone based on mere suspicion. By 2011, the Secure Communities program had been deporting more than 400,000 people per year and had over 1,210 jurisdictions participating.

Then there's the matter of a part-time construction worker named Ernesto Galarza. In November 2008, Allentown police arrested him in a drug bust on his workplace on a drug offense, for which he was found innocent. Yet, despite having his state driver's license and Social Security card on him and telling local officials he was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, the arresting officer was still apparently unsure about Galarza's citizenship and called ICE, despite that he made his US citizenship blatantly obvious to law enforcement. ICE issued a detainer asking prison officials to hold Galarza while they investigated his citizenship and immigration status. As a result, authorities held Galarza in the Lehigh County prison

for 3 days past when he should've been released with no warrant, no court order, and no explanation. Oh, and he lost his job, too. All because of racial profiling among local law enforcement as well as ICE agents' baseless assertion that he might be an undocumented immigrant from the Dominican Republic they were looking for. Unsurprisingly, Galarza sued. In March 2014, the US Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia that local governments didn't have to honor ICE detainer requests. But if they did, they'd have to face the consequences if they find themselves detaining the wrong people. So because Lehigh chose to honor the ICE detainer, they had to pay Galarza \$95,000 in damages and attorney fees for wrongful imprisonment. Shortly afterwards, Lehigh County commissioners unanimously voted not to imprison people solely on ICE detainers against them. Other Pennsylvania counties followed suit, including Westmoreland.

But what about crime? Contrary to what Republican campaign ads state, most studies state that sanctuary policies either significantly lower it or have no effect at all. In fact, many local law enforcement favor sanctuary policies and said they don't want to enforce federal immigration laws. They even admit to relying on immigrants in their communities to come forward to report crimes. Additionally, due to their precarious legal status, undocumented immigrants are more likely to be crime victims because they're less likely to report crimes to the police. In non-sanctuary jurisdictions, deportation fears frequently discourage undocumented immigrants from coming forward, which can limit law enforcement access to potential victims, witnesses, informants, and neighborhood advocates. Furthermore, when it comes to catching criminals, many police don't necessarily care whether a suspect, victim, or witness is illegally on US soil. While cracking down on undocumented residents can disrupt community relations and make it more difficult for cops to do their jobs.

Still, even if Republicans make laws threatening to defund sanctuary communities will not convince them into compliance with federal immigration authorities. Since they have bigger priorities and too few resources to handle immigration enforcement. In fact, the rise of sanctuary communities in Pennsylvania has less to do with favoring undocumented immigration and more to do with avoiding expensive litigation, having limited jail space, not getting paid honoring ICE detainees, and others. And thanks to the Galarza case, these areas don't really see the need to honor those requests. In Pennsylvania and other states, jurisdictions may go sanctuary due to enduring a lot of bad experiences when they did cooperate with ICE, particularly during the Secure Communities program. Furthermore, places with large Latino populations like California often rely on undocumented immigrants in their economies and societies.

Nonetheless, while the legal issues regarding sanctuary communities can be legitimately debated, the moral question may not be the case. Most undocumented immigrants come to the US illegally because the US immigration system is so screwed up that no viable legal options were available. And they stay illegal because they have no good way to gain legal status or citizenship. The fact federal immigration policy subjects their very presence as grounds for deportation has resulted in communities wary of law enforcement, thousands of broken families, and hundreds of kids in foster homes. Ignoring an unjust federal immigration policy by providing a safe haven for these people may not be legal, but it's probably the best moral solution available. And as long as Donald Trump is president, comprehensive immigration reform is off the table. Furthermore, the Galarza case demonstrates that local cooperation with ICE may not always be a good idea if that detainer isn't backed by a warrant or court order. Nor be in the community's best interests if it means using their already limited resources and frightening key witnesses, especially if there are more pressing concerns. If the Trump administration wants to deter sanctuary jurisdictions, it should support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and require ICE detainees be issued with warrants and court orders. For until we fix our long broken and neglected immigration system, expect more communities enact sanctuary policies.~~



#SocialPitt: THE 31ST ANNUAL PITTSBURGH HEART BALL – ROARING 20’S

Photo and Story by Robert Hester

On the evening of February 29th, 2020, attendees celebrated the Roaring 1920's - an era that was filled with hope, innovation and progress at the 31st Annual Pittsburgh Metro Chapter of the American Heart Association's Heart Ball at the Wyndham Grand Hotel in Downtown Pittsburgh.

As one of Pittsburgh's premier social and fundraising events, the 31st Annual Pittsburgh Heart Ball is the American Heart Association - Pittsburgh Metro Chapter's largest fundraising event. 75% of contributions support research, school-site programs and public and professional education programs in this region.

The event, like the whole evening, was a celebration of the advancements made by the American Heart Association since its inception in 1924. With most of them wearing their best 1920's attire in attendance, guests of the Pittsburgh Heart Ball enjoyed a cocktail reception featuring a specially-themed 1920's drink, a dinner, an awards ceremony honoring the event's guests of honor, dancing while being serenaded by live music from the Bachelor Boys Band, and a live auction.

The co-emcees of the Pittsburgh Heart Ball were Bob Pompeani of KDKA-TV Sports, and his daughter Celina Pompeani of KDKA-TV News and the Pittsburgh Penguins. Among the notable attendees of the Pittsburgh Heart Ball were Susan Koeppen of KDKA-TV, Lisa Pompeani, Chelsea Pompeani Craig, Brandon Craig, Mac Mathison, Dr. William Neches, Christina O'Toole, Dr. Joon Lee and Grace Lee, Deb Frick Banks, Leslie C. Davis, Kim and Curt Fleming, Jennifer and Michael Annichine, Carolyn Sanford, Beth Condit and Dr. William Neches.

All proceeds from the event benefited the American Heart Association - Pittsburgh Metro Chapter's mission to support a new era of longer, healthier lives.~~





Tribute to Bernie Sanders

By: **Kenneth Miller**

I was going to write a Valentine for Bernie Sanders, but this is what I came up with: It might take a British Invasion to Defeat Donald Trump -Mick Jagger at Heinz Field in June 23, 2020.

If I hear a Rolling Stones anthem played one more time at a Donald Trump rally I am going to puke. Oh, the bars filled with white men playing “You Can't Always Get What You Want” on the jukebox over and over again. Like they are in love. Like they are groovy. Nothing about the Rolling Stones should be identified with Donald Trump. He is a thief, too.

A lot of kids today only recognize the Stones from the Donald Trump rallies; many of them think the Rolling Stones are an American band. Really. Try asking, “Where are the Rolling Stones from?” They have no idea. This is the only year for the Rolling Stones to go all out to defeat Donald Trump. I sure hope they do. If I had confidence that this was going to happen, I would buy three tickets right now. But if he's not going to go after Trump, if the Stones are not going to turn every show into a Bernie Sanders rally...if the Stones are not going to empower Bernie with their music...maybe not...that would be so sad. It would be like the Rolling Stones were not on tour at all. That they were sitting this American election out when we need them most. The Rolling Stones 2020 would be nothing more than an oldies show.

There are a lot of old artists that are going to die without me every seeing them. For god's sake, I missed Huge Masakala's 80th birthday tour. That show was as close to my house as Heinz Field. All those shows. All that missed music hurts. While I feel like I saw the Grateful Dead on the Nile, Queen in Budapest, Jethro Tull in Tel Aviv... and what the hell, Hendrix in London and Sting in Paris... I did not.

The entertainment budget is already stretched. I really think I am traveling to Lima Peru for 5 days in March. I could see some contemporary music there! I went out to see the North Side Leadership Conference's Mardi Gras kick off show at Max's Allegheny Tavern the other day. The music, Mardi Gras Music, was fun as hell. There was a song about fish sandwiches and a piano player possessed. Really, there was a lot to learn about Mardi Gras music...but pitchers of Straub were \$20. \$20 for a pitcher of Staub? What day is it? Where am I? What is going on here?

I've got lots of nice feelings for Mic Jagger. Every year at Christmas time he releases some photo that shows up in all the newspapers, that shows what a well-rounded, reasonable life he has led. You can depend on Mic Jagger to release some nice photos at Christmas time, just like you can expect the butter sculpture at the PA Farm Show the first week of January. He is getting old gracefully. The tour of South America two years ago is a Netflix documentary. I like women with Rolling Stones tattoos. Sexy. It would be really nice if Mick Jagger could continue his career during a Bernie Sanders Presidency. Begin by reclaiming your music from Donald Trump.

There are a lot of other musical options to consider. These musicians that are coming out for Bernie...they have something to sing about. They know what they are doing. The Strokes played the night of the Bernie won the New Hampshire primary. The Strokes! I know almost nothing about the Stokes, but they are going to be touring for Bernie this summer. It is the moment for a Stokes' Spotify station. And I guess I still need to listen to another White Stripe album. The list of musicians coming out for Bernie is already huge and it's going to explode.

These Stones tickets are about to sell out. If I want to go, I should be thee tickets right now... about \$360... and then I'll invite... two someones that can each come up with \$120 to go with me. \$360, right now? This show is going to sell out. It is decision time. All those Trumpers at Heinz Field hoping for their Trump anthem. Mick Jagger is going to tell them to jump in the river. That will be fun to watch. ~~



Civil War in Rowan County, North Carolina

By: Nils Skudra

On January 30th, I had the opportunity to interview Aaron Kepley, Executive Director of the Rowan Museum in Salisbury, NC. I first made contact with him through the museum's Facebook page when I expressed interest in learning more about Salisbury's Civil War experience. During our initial correspondence, he indicated that Rowan County's experience was more multifaceted than many people realize, as it pitted diehard Confederates against local Unionists and dissidents calling for an end to the war. I previously visited Salisbury three years ago, and I was eager to come down again to meet Mr. Kepley and listen to his insights.

When I met with Mr. Kepley at the museum, he began by briefly sharing background information on Salisbury's role in the Revolution. The town was the original site where American general Nathanael Greene intended to make his stand against Lord Cornwallis' British forces and had made his headquarters in the home of local resident Elizabeth M. Steele. However, because of the defeat that Greene's militia had suffered at Cowan's Ford, he retreated further into Virginia but subsequently returned to fight Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse.

We then began our discussion of the Civil War in Rowan County. "Salisbury is interesting because you have a lot of reluctance to secede," Mr. Kepley said. During the secession crisis in the winter of 1860-61, *The Carolina Watchman* – Salisbury's local newspaper – spoke vociferously against secession since many North Carolinians did not feel that Lincoln's election was sufficient grounds for leaving the Union. However, by the time of Fort Sumter, the situation was changing, with the *Watchman* stating that North Carolina should not secede unless Lincoln tried to invade South Carolina. As soon as Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops, the newspaper declared its support for secession.

In elaborating upon Salisbury and Rowan County, Mr. Kepley told me that the city and county have always been at odds politically since the city has traditionally been liberal while the county has traditionally been conservative. "Back then," he maintained, "liberal and conservative were different – the conservatives favored secession while the liberals were against it." This political dynamic was reflected in Rowan County's stance during the 1860 presidential election since it strongly favored President Buchanan and the Constitutional Unionist Party which favored compromise for the sake of preserving the Union. Mr. Kepley pointed out that the eastern half of the county was strongly anti-secession, as there were some anti-slavery elements there. Prominent examples included Hinton Rowan Helper, author of the antislavery tract *The Impending Crisis*, and Prof. Benjamin Hedrick of UNC Chapel Hill who was fired because of his views and narrowly escaped being lynched.

Mr. Kepley further elaborated that eastern Rowan County was populated by descendants of German immigrants who were strongly pro-Union and anti-slavery. A notable example was a minister who preached at the Grace Lower Stone Reformed Church from the 1850's through 1868 – the key theme of his sermons was "Union, peace and the Bible." Mr. Kepley said that he finds this history interesting since he attended this church during his childhood and since the information about enlistments from each end of Rowan County "opened up so many avenues for research." In studying these enlistment records, he found two companies that were raised as volunteers in western Rowan County, including the Scots-Irish Grays, during the first year of the war, but he stated that "nobody else volunteered in the rest of Rowan County." After 1861 had passed, more men from Rowan County were enrolled in the Confederate Army through the Confederate Conscription Act of March-April 1862, which encountered heavy local resistance.

In discussing Rowan County's wartime dissidence, Mr. Kepley pointed to the burning of railroad cars carrying cotton. Curiously, however, the newspaper editorials did not ascribe any motive to this activity. Nonetheless, "there was something of an antiwar movement" in Rowan County, manifested in evasion of the Confederate draft. Also, the Heroes of America, a secret Unionist organization, was active in present-day China Grove, and at one point "there was a big meeting across the river in Davidson County against the war."

Local response to Unionist and dissident activity was manifested in the *Watchman's* editorials which decried the Red Strings (a reference to the Heroes of America) for sedition and accused numerous people of membership in the organization, which prompted the said individuals to come to the authorities and recant their alleged involvement. A famous example of dissident activity was the Salisbury food riot of March 1863, in which a group of 150 local women raided food stores in response to inflation of food prices. Mr. Kepley noted that these riots first began in Richmond and then spread throughout the Confederacy. "These women were portrayed in the press as gaunt and savage, with little slave children running around them," he stated. In fact, however, the ladies involved in the riot were very articulate, as they wrote to North Carolina's governor Vance to protest



their portrayal in the press. In the end, their campaign was effective since it resulted in the introduction of some price controls, after which the state tried to look out more for women whose men were away fighting or had died.

Mr. Kepley also shed light on his own ancestral ties to the conflict. His ancestor Paul Holshouser, a married man with a family, was conscripted in July 1863 in the 46th or 48th North Carolina Infantry, while continuing his prewar trade as a blacksmith. “Given his location and time of conscription,” Mr. Kepley noted, “you can’t say that he was excited to go. After First Manassas, you have the people who primarily get drafted and went and fought because that was the duty that they were called to do.” Furthermore, Holshouser had

attended a church that preached Union, so it is likely that he wasn’t strongly pro-Confederate. He served with Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia until Appomattox, then returned home and remarried, as his first wife had died while he was away.

We then discussed Salisbury Prison, a Confederate POW camp which is now home to Salisbury National Cemetery. Mr. Kepley indicated that some members of the 54th Massachusetts, the first all-black Union regiment from the North, are buried there, and pointed out that the U.S. Colored Troops suffered a much higher death rate at Salisbury than other prisoners, which I was unaware of. “You have a pecking order,” he explained, “among the prisoners: the officers, NCO’s, enlisted men, and then the Colored Troops. The guards didn’t care for them, and then they have the other prisoners to deal with.” In elaborating upon the causes of the death rate at Salisbury, Mr. Kepley stated that the deaths began after the Emancipation Proclamation and the Union’s organization of U.S. Colored Troops, who were not recognized as soldiers by the Confederate government. This contributed to the breakdown of the Dix-Hill Cartel, the system that had been in place for prisoner exchange, but Mr. Kepley enlightened me on another factor: “A reason many historians overlook...is that Confederates saw it as beneath them to be traded as a man for an African-American.”

Following the breakdown of the Dix-Hill Cartel, Salisbury Prison’s population went from 1,000 to over 10,000 in a space meant for 2,500. Due to overcrowding, Mr. Kepley stated, “typhoid and typhus really kill the most prisoners, and there was a big concern that the outbreak would spread to town.” Nonetheless, several prisoners managed to escape through various means, including the aid of certain local residents. A notable example was Luke Blackmer, a Northerner living in Salisbury who instructed Union prisoners on how to get to North Wilkesboro – they would only talk to slaves who guided them to North Wilkesboro by night, and from there they made their own way to Tennessee. Mr. Kepley told me that Salisbury’s commandant Major Gee and Henry Wirz, commandant of the infamous Andersonville camp, were the only two prison camp commandants to face trial for war crimes, but while Wirz was convicted and hanged, Major Gee was acquitted. He explained that while Henry Wirz “had some weight to throw around,” Major Gee’s requests for additional food supplies were repeatedly ignored, and consequently he was unable to provide for the prisoners despite the fact that he tried fairly desperately to do so. In fact, Mr. Kepley noted, “there’s a Confederate report that places the blame on the Quartermaster Department for the suffering of the prisoners.”

Overall, I found our discussion very enlightening, and Mr. Kepley was very knowledgeable and engaging. Since Civil War memory is a contentious issue in today’s society, his elaboration on Rowan County’s wartime experience demonstrates how critical it is to engage with that history and explore its various nuances. In doing so, we will not only add context to our discussion, but we can achieve a deeper appreciation for the war’s multifaceted nature as a conflict that played out within local communities as well as between the armies.

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Death Comes Ripping

By: Dima Harmon

Chapter 1

Officer Stevens pulled out of his patrol car after a long and vigorous shift. He took a minute to admire the police cruiser and was thankful for the grant that allowed the new cars to be issued citywide by the county's city hall. It had been a five-year struggle to justify the need for new and reliable police cruisers due to "lack of finance and unnecessary expense," as they said many times. Officer Stevens was with the Minneapolis city police for the state of Minnesota. Today was January 3rd and the temperature was horrendously freezing.

The struggle for new police cruisers ultimately came down to an unfortunate incident where the bank was robbed by a junkie. It was an ordinary day at the bank when the junkie came. His eyes were twitching and his hands were shaking...overall, just a hot mess. He forced the teller to give money but not before the silent alarm was tripped. As soon as he got some cash, he shot the teller, manager of the bank, and the security guard and fled.

This event brought forth a series of inquiries and investigations by the state as to why the cruisers were unreliable and incited questions about public safety and all emergency personnel. It also caused a massive investigation as to where the city's money was going and why it was not being used fairly for all departments when in need. Ultimately some senior counsel men and women resigned due to the investigations and a special election took place.

Officer Stevens fumbled around with some of the things he was carrying: a litre of Coca-Cola, a foot-long hoagie from a deli restaurant, and a small stack of paperwork. He was juggling things for several seconds when the Coke bottle fell through his grasp and dropped to the ground. *Damnit*, he thought. That was pretty much how his whole day went. Just a ton of "damnits."

Officer Stevens was twenty-three years old and had only graduated from the Academy the year before. He was six foot and weighed about two hundred and thirty pounds. He was built with a solid frame of muscle because he had played high school and some college football; an injury effectively ended any dream of a professional football career. He had hazel eyes and rather nice blond hair that was crew cut in a way so he could spike it up with gel when he wanted. He grabbed the Coke bottle from the ground and walked into the police station to fill out his reports for the day.

The day had been pretty frustrating. He had to deal with people arguing about a traffic ticket. Some woman yelled at him about it. *"It's because of you that my Social Security and child support are lower than they should be, pig. Taking money out of what's rightfully mine so you can get your bum paycheck."* She called him every name in the book and reassured him that she would be disputing the ticket to the fullest extent possible and that he should probably resign now before she got him fired. The only thing that kept him from losing his cool was the fact that he had been right behind her when she deliberately ran a red light fifteen miles faster than the speed limit and his cruiser camera taped it.

There were a series of alleged domestic calls and neighbor complaints. As soon as he arrived, the yelling and arguing started happening. He must have said "If I have to come back here today, both of you are coming to the station with me" at least five times. One of the couples immediately started to make out in front of him after a series of what seemed like very insincere apologies after spending twenty minutes screaming at each other while sounding extremely unintelligent. Then when they started to make out the woman yelled, "GET OUTTA HERE. GIVE US PRIVACY."

He was answered a call about an alleged break-in that resulted in a TV, video game console and a surround sound system being stolen. He had to take the report but had a very strong suspicion that the break-in was staged for possible insurance fraud simply because the woman making the report was more focused on the money rather than someone who was concerned about their own safety. They weren't going to see the money, anyway, due to the low value of the items. The most frustrating were the calls to elderly households. More times than not they

would claim they heard someone in their house or on their property. It was hard to keep composure and Officer Stevens had to remind himself they were some of the most vulnerable and got startled very easily.

One lady took twenty minutes of repeating the same things several times due to hearing loss and confusion and constant reassurance that everything was fine. The only call he did have to make that seemed legitimate was the theft of Christmas decorations. This has been an ongoing problem throughout the city since after Thanksgiving.

The police department was having trouble with the case mainly because it was Christmas decorations that were being stolen and there did not seem to be any pattern other than the fact it happened in the middle of the night. The other thing they were sure of was the perpetrator drove a vehicle and most likely had a driver's license. The thefts included all kinds of decorations, from lights to blow up items that would require a motor pump. But when lights were stolen, the thief would steal *all* of them.

Officer Stevens sat at the table in the breakroom as he ate his dinner and thought about the perp that was stealing the Christmas decorations. He pictured a wacky dressed teenager or young adult with baggy pants and a shirt that went down past his waist due to being perhaps two sizes too big with a ball cap where the brim was designed to the side; a runt kid who had the ghetto tough appearance. Probably listened to horrid mumble rap music and maybe had the IQ of slightly below average.

Shortly before he was done with his dinner, he noticed a box. As he got up to look at it, a slick voice called out to him.

"Cadet Stevens! What are you doing?" It was one of the sergeants. This man happened to be Sergeant Boyle. Sergeant Boyle was five foot ten inches. He wore a cowboy hat even though it was against regulations. He had a very decorated career and that is probably why people looked the other way when it came to the dress code. He had a belly where one could easily crack a joke about him drinking too much coffee and eating too many doughnuts.

Sergeant Boyle was very well respected due to a case where he took on a billionaire businessman on charges of harassment in the workplace and racketeering. Oftentimes it involved women. When he won the case there was a memorable picture of him leading the perpetrator in cuffs down the court building steps with the words in big bold letters. **A True Predator!!! Guilty!!!**

That man was in his fifties and several months after that picture was taken a judge handed down a swift sentence of 75 years in jail with the possibility of parole after 35 years. His lawyers avoided additional lawsuits by paying the victims each ten million dollars in total. It came out to about four hundred and fifty million dollars and some change for fees for lawyers of the victims. At the end of the day Sergeant Boyle was highly regarded, even across state lines.

"Cadet Stevens, I asked what you are doing?" He repeated when Officer Stevens did not reply.

"Oh, I was just seeing what the box was."

"Does it have your name, Cadet?" He hated being called "Cadet". Those days ended a little over a year ago.

"No, sir."

"Well then don't touch it."

"Who's it for?"

"Should that be a concern of yours?"

"I suppose not. But still intriguing."

"Well. If it does not have your name it is not for you nor should it be any concern to you."

"Is it a case?"

"Yes, it is. I know what's inside and I am telling you from experience: you do not want to know what is involved. If we need more help in the future, you'll informed of the contents." And with that Sergeant Boyle took the box and moved it to a different part of the station. Office Stevens finished his dinner and then got into his beat-up hunk of junk Volvo and drove home.~

Into the Theater: A Cirque du Soleil Story

By: Alicia Marie Bonus

Relieved and excited, I was finally permitted inside the bronze and golden doors without further questioning. My ticket was ready and waiting at the podium near the entrance. And, whatever was ready for me inside was waiting for me as well.

At first, I believed I was going to the circus, not the movies or a play, even though the hollow structure looked strikingly familiar to what I would have expected was the cinemas or a playhouse. The theater belonged to the performers of Cirque du Soleil.

So, where were the clowns?

After the yellow lights dimmed, droplets of water echoed from wall to wall.

Plop! Plop!

Two floppy sailors, wearing depressing painted masks, carried an oversized, inflatable lifesaver and a shredded umbrella not stable enough to catch the heaviest of raindrops. People were still flooding in like a high tide on a moonlit evening while desperately looking for their assigned seats. I was one of those desperate people who was in need of finding a soft, cushioned refugee. Thankfully, an elderly usher in a long tuxedo of a deep burgundy assisted me into a nearby, empty, carpeted seat.

While others settled down comfortably, the sailors continued to slowly make their way clumsily down the steep stairwell. Shades of cobalt blue shimmered from the ceiling above while a cool, synthetic, ocean breeze brushed my bare shoulders. I searched the aquatic heavens above to spot where the refreshing air was coming from. Instead, I found droplets of water falling gracefully downward onto the heads of passers-by.

Plop! Plop! Plop!

One of the sailors grasped the damaged umbrella and turned the contraption upside down, attempting to capture some of the drips, but to no avail. Due to the umbrella's moth-eaten stitches, hardly any drops were recovered. When all the seats were now occupied, the sailors scurried off to the right of the auditorium where a secret door, illuminated in emerald green, emerged from a bright light. With a bow and a wave, the sailors entered the door, and the light faded deep into the shadows.

The crowd hushed and attention filled the atmosphere as a tall and strangely crooked figure emerged from the blood red curtains while he observed his surroundings. His name was Le Vieux, a mime dressed in a formal tuxedo, so tight that the sleeves on his wrists were the only pieces of clothing hanging off his thin body. His white cotton gloves and jet-black shoes stood out of place along with his wild and unkempt light blonde hair. His face was painted white with black curved eyebrows, dark eyeliner, and thin red lips, which formed a pouting frown. His expression was unchangeable.

Le Vieux suspiciously looked up at the deep sea-filled sky. A device came down with a lady of the aurora inside a veil of twisting metals. Everyone was in awe, mesmerized by the beauty of the fallen angel. The maiden was lowered slowly and steadily while toying with a ruby red handkerchief in her right hand.

Crack! Crack!

Spotlight shined upon a man, wearing nothing but a pale, lime green corset with matching skirts and wielding a leather-braided whip.

Crack!

The man in the twirling dress was accompanied by a perfectly built strongman in brown overalls and a prancing ballerina covered in golden flowers layered with petticoats of white fluff. Without warning, the strongman snatched a random audience member from his seat. The volunteer in denim blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and a red baseball cap was forced to stand under the spiral bubble with the girl still inside all dressed in pink lace and blonde curls. She continued

to fiddle with the handkerchief for too long causing it to fall and drop into the hands of the lucky contestant.

The young man was led down the steep steps and onto the stage alone. Le Vieux waited patiently behind the waterfall of curtains, but only his one free arm and hand revealed themselves, beckoning the volunteer to come hither. Anxiously, the young man took a courageous step forward. Noticing the handkerchief was still in his hand, the volunteer presented the cloth to Le Vieux, pondering that maybe he wanted it.

Alas, his attempt was futile when the hand purposely slapped the fabric away from him. The young man tightened the cap on his head and journeyed further into the unknown territory of Le Vieux. Suddenly, the audience member was yanked behind the drapes, taken prisoner within the boundaries of the world on the other side. From behind the curtain, struggling occurred for no more than a minute before Le Vieux reappeared on stage, holding both a white piece of paper and a black onyx microphone. He led the capped man beside him, graciously accepting the paper and reading it aloud into the microphone, so that all could hear.

The volunteer began to talk. His lips were moving, but no words were coming out of his mouth. Le Vieux took a good look at the microphone, realizing that he was holding it completely upside down the entire time. The audience laughs. The young man tried again; however, the microphone still wouldn't function properly. Le Vieux blew on the microphone and hit it over the head of the flustered man next to him. The audience laughed a second time. At last, the microphone cooperated, and the young man with his hat now dented could read aloud the following announcement.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. During this performance, smoke effects will be used, but they are harmless to your health. On the other hand, you cannot smoke. It is also strictly forbidden to use video recordings, cameras, and other flash photography, due to the danger it poses to the artists. Also, we kindly ask that you turn off all pagers and cellular phones...”

Le Vieux waves a finger out to the crowd, reassuring them to follow the rules and procedures without further complications. Unexpectedly, a booming voice echoed throughout the theater.

“And now...sit back...relax...ENJOY!”

To my horror and everyone else's, the random audience member was whisked away, lifted swiftly up into the air and disappeared behind the curtain for the remainder of the show. All that remained behind was the paper, which Le Vieux quickly stashed inside his vest pocket along with the microphone. With a sly grin (the first time I ever saw him smile) he turned away sharply and stretched his long arms as if to lash out to the heavens.

The curtains began to pull themselves apart while Le Vieux conducted and commanded the fabrics to do his bidding. The theater had a mind of its own, consuming and devouring the silks into the dark and unseen corners of the stage. After every bit of cloth was out of sight, the persuasive mime gestured a “tah-dah” and skipped across the floor, followed by a psychotic laughter that traveled across the still auditorium and into my fear-stricken heart.

Inside the stage, vines of thick, green ivy covered the walls. Fog developed from the corners of the floor. The ground started to break, revealing underneath a bubbling, foamy lake. Zebra creatures frolicked along the lake, playing idly, never minding that hundreds of people watching their every move.

In one of the darkest corners of the theater, Le Vieux carefully examined the water, dipping one gloved hand into the wet substance, scooping it up and allowing the clear liquid to flow like diamonds through his soggy fingers. He tightened his thin lips, facing the audience. He was looking at me as if to say, “This isn't over. The show has just begun.”~~

Pressures of Living with Attention Deficit and Autism

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

In this essay, I am going to discuss attention deficit and autism. How does an attention deficit problem does affect me in school? When you are diagnosing with a learning disability in the workplace, many employers expect you to perform like everyone else on the job. I will discuss the obstacles of attention deficit. First, after employees often picked on me, what was my response to the criticism? What types of comments did the boss say to me to cause me to become more competitive on the job...? After the boss made the comments, how did the remarks made me feel about my self-esteem...? Does a competitive environment make it difficult to accept my disability...?

After high school graduation, it was an extremely a challenging time for me. Many of my friends were going to college for a career to earn a living. Some of my friends were going to a vocation school to learn a trade. Because I struggled with perception problems, hearing about my friends bragging about talking about college often cause me to feel unsure about the future.

After graduation high school, I could feel a tremendous sense of insecurity about myself. How could I live on \$3.35 an hour? Pittsburgh had no factory jobs in the 1980s. Skill employment requires excellent perception and great listening skills. Multitasking jobs would likely cause more anxiety on me.

The superior does not understand that I suffer from an auditory problem. When a boss or a person speaks in a fragmented sentence, I have difficultly processing the directions. I am able to process directions in a complete sentence. When a career counselor from OVR evaluates you, speed, accuracy, and the ability to follow directions play a major role in a career. College skills and vocation skills are worthless unless a learning-disabled person can compete at efficient level at the job market.

When I perform a job slowly, the manager would likely threaten to fire me. Because I suffered mild case of autism, I became very anxious all day about myself. Speeding up on the job caused me to feel very anxious, tense, and agitated towards myself. Because of excess worry, I began to experience headaches, neck pains, and tight muscles all day. Does living with autism cause you to experience too much worry and anxiety...?

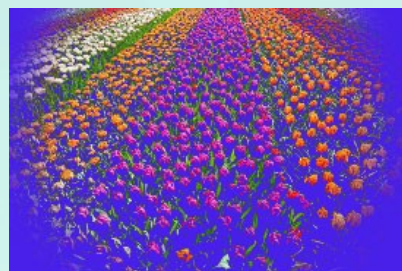
In summary, attention deficit has caused me many problems with my anxiety and outbursts on the job. I often blame myself for not listening to directions on a job. Because I have to meet a certain standard on the job, attention deficit has caused me to become extremely tough on myself. Headaches, neck pain and tight muscles were the result. How many of you suffer the same experiences as me in growing up in life...?

I feel it is essential to spend time talking to a learning disability adult about his or her problems.~~

Daniel Ashkin Photo Collection



PASSOVER DESERTS



Preparing for Natural Disasters

By: Maggie K. Jones

When you find yourself in a mess of hectic weather events taking place outside, and you plan to go out, what do you do? Well, here are some good tips to follow when bad weather strikes.

1. Floods:

When there are flooded streets, do you cross or go through it? And that answer is NO. As they say, you turn around, don't drown and find a safer route to follow. When you are stranded in high water, the best thing is to not panic, as panicking can lead to mistakes to you don't even intend. The best thing is to act calmly and follow the safety procedure guide-lines.

First thing after that, is to break the windows and climb on top of the car. Call 911 for help. If you're stuck in the house, get to the highest level and call for help. If you are walking, get to higher ground until water recedes.

2. Tornadoes:

When you find yourself outside and see there is a tornado warning in your area, what do you do? If you're in a car, NEVER TRY TO OUTFIGHT A TORNADO! There is a chance that the tornado is changing direction in wind shear and speed. You may not have time to react and that could lead to deadly consequences. Like I said before, DON'T PANIC; if you still have time, get to an interior space of your house without windows surrounding you, like a closet. Stay there and lock the door tightly. And wait it out in that interior space until the storm with the tornado has passed. When you are outside run to shelter in a sturdy building away from windows. If you are in a mobile home, if you still have time, get out and go to a sturdy building. If out walking, find a ditch, if you're stranded in the woods or in the middle of nowhere, cover your head to protect from debris.

3. Lightning:

If you are outside, stay away from trees during a thunderstorm. And stay away from open water like rivers, creeks, and streams. Water can conduct a lot of electricity into the ground; when you hear thunder roaring, go indoors. Stay away from sinks and tubs. And avoid telephones. Unplug anything that can blow a fuse during a lightning storm.

4. Blizzards:

If you can stay home, stay home. Driving can be dangerous and walking in it can be dangerous, too. Make sure you have everything you need for you and your family in case the power goes out. Make sure you have a first aid kit, batteries, a flashlight, canned nonperishable foods, bottled water, extra blankets and proper notification with you at all times. Keep medication with you in your disaster kit.

Being prepared for severe weather events such as the examples above. This will keep you safe all year long.~~

The Belle Sitter, Part 3



By: Jordan Watson

The dinner table. I don't remember it looking that messy. The potatoes aren't peeled right. The pizza toppings are all over the place. The spice rack nearly totaled. That smell...it's gotten stronger...it *really* stinks! Are those...flies hovering around Mary's cooking bag? Something's...leaking from it. Oh God...is that...what I think it is?! She keeps humming that song all while I'm tryin' to figure out what's going on. I then look towards her. Her eyes...the pupils have gotten smaller. She's starting to look...creepy. She's wiping off...whatever that is...on her little cooking device. She then opens her mouth, saying these terrifying words, in a rather sultry, angelic tone.

“What's wrong, my little Grant? Have we lost our appetite?”

She turns to face the dripping bag, then back to me, in my now fear-ridden face.

“Oooh...I do believe the surprise has been...spoiled.”

The thunder crackles from outside. The rain comes down so hard, it's heard near the windowsill behind her. That...thing she's holding, it's dripping a lot. Skin's hanging from the peeler part, and the rest going off the corkscrew portion. She twitches her hand.

No time to think! Just act! I start to run upstairs. Where do I go?! Why do I feel like she's...Mary's gonna do something awful to me? Just like what was in that bag?! I'm up top of the next floor. Do I go to my bedroom?! No! Too obvious! She'll corner me there. In Dad's room? No. Too small, and the window inside it that leads to the backyard, the fall could break my legs! I can hear her begin to walk up, strangely louder than before. No choice! Head to the bathroom! I run toward my right, going down the long hallway, where it leads to three doors. The closest, the storage room, and the bathroom. I go to the bathroom, realizing it's locked! NO! I'm starting to panic! Go through the closet, try to see if Dad left the keys there. I frantically search through towel after blanket, and many cleaning products. It's not there where it should be hung! Last place to look is in the storage room! I open the door and go in, trying to lock the door behind me. No good! I try to barricade it with as many chairs and boxes that are around me. I start looking through the drawers from within the spare tables Dad used for his office.

BAM BAM *BAM*

Oh God, She's here! I have to look through a few more drawers next to the filing cabinets! The banging against the door is getting louder! One last drawer! I look from the bottom doors, find nothing. The last drawer on the top left. C'MON! Found the keys! Wait! There's something else with it...

CRASH

Mary's kicked down some of the door, reaching to open the knob from the side! She sees me with the keys in my hand. Her figure in the dark scares me even more. I want to act, but I'm frozen in place. She says to me, “Why run from me, darlin'? They aren't gonna hurt you anymore.”

Flight kicks in! I run towards the opening. She tries to take a downward swing at me, but I push her to the side while getting the bathroom door open! I try to shut it behind me, but she uses her creepy knife to block the door from shutting all the way. *Think, Jeremy, think!* I see my Dad's back scrubber on the ground when I ran inside. Next to the sink at the wall, is our laundry shoot. I reach for it while holding the door in place. I nab it by the string, pick it up, and jab at her feet with it. She loses grip of the door. I dash toward the laundry shoot and jump down it.

BAM-POOMF

The wad of clothes breaks my fall. I try to get up, but my back suddenly feels like someone poured hot glue all over it. It *really* hurts. Around me is the laundry room. Two washers and driers to the left-hand corner. The stairs to my right. There's a big supply closet to the middle where the stairs join. On top of the washers is a big window. I have to think fast. I hear her footsteps from above. She's coming for me. The door gently, yet loudly creaks open from upstairs. She starts making her way down. While I once found her humming to be comforting, it's now become a warning. She makes her

way to the room, casually making small talk.

“You know, I always cared about you, Jeremy. I can't imagine what life would be like if your Momma didn't go away.”

She twirls around her weird knife, while making her way to the supply closet to open it up. Nothing but cleaning products. She slams it shut and continues to make her way around the room.

“It felt like a gift from Heaven, to tend and care for someone as honey-sweet as you. So much that it made me feel ill-will toward others...others that would treat you with malicious intent.”

One by one, she opens the washers and dryers, finding nothing inside them.

“But secretly, you wanted to relinquish those hooligans, didn't you? Nobody else would stick up for you. Not even your own friends? See...I reckoned to beset them...or rather, you *wanted me* to. Don't you remember? Well...with as anxious as you can be, I'd plumb forget the events myself.”

She takes a glance at the clothing pile where I once laid. Her voice remains as candied as ever.

“Well I did what you wanted me to. Without you having to utter a word to me! Lagumadiel helped open them right up, and SET. THEM. FREE!”

She slashes at the clothing pile, tearing away at the chunks of fabric. Nothing.

I overhear the whole thing from hiding outside the laundry room window. She then notices the window is open, while the shutter clangs from the wind and rain pouring outside, like pure cats and dogs. I don't stick around my house long enough to know if she's ferociously digging out of the window to the backyard. I run towards my Dad's spare car, seeing if I can hide inside there.

The pounding of the rain beats down on the streets of my neighborhood. The lightning becoming the one source of light, save for the flickering streetlamps. Mary emerges from the back of the house, slowly making her way to the front. She firmly grips Lagumadiel in her hand, as the blood meshes with the downpour. She looks around the house one last time. As I hide underneath the car, something drips onto my face. It smells like metal, slightly burning my cheek. I squeeze myself out from the bottom, trying to find the nearest spot to hide. She hears the rustling near the car, and slowly approaches towards it. A screeching sound combines with the pattering of the rain, she uses that creepy knife to scrape at the doors of the car.

“Jeremy...I did this for you. But if you're not grateful...then I have to clean you right up too.”

She speedily opens the back door, looking for any sign of me. She didn't count on what came next. I ram her into the car, slamming the door from outside. She hears the child lock from within. I show her the car keys that I nabbed when I was looking for the bathroom key. She looks up to me, not in anger, but...instead...she just smiles, seeing me continuously getting drenched in rainwater.

“Heh.....That was fun, hun. But...you might want to dry yourself soon. You'll catch a case of the sniffles.”

What felt like a flash, a beam of light comes between me and the car.

When I wake up, I see it on fire. Mary's still inside it. She takes one last look at me, and smiles.

“You've grown up strong, Jeremy. You're your own guardian angel now. I love you. Forever.”

She slowly burns away like paper. I can't help but scream. It's just like my nightmare! The fire-trucks start rolling on in, as does the police. Dad tows in behind them with Lilian next to him. They rush over to hug me, nearly crying while I cry with them. Suddenly, the nurses come to me, and take me into their truck to wrap me in blankets. The police start to surround my dad, asking him some questions. It's hard to hear, but I swear, I hear them talking.

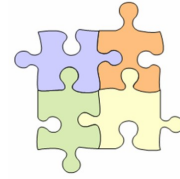
Something about me. Me being a prime suspect of the murder case. Dad looks worried. His hand's over his mouth. Some of the nurses ask him about any medical or psychological history. He's crying. The police look in the extinguished car. Mary wasn't there. Was she ever there?

All I'm thinking now is what Dad said before...Momma's always with you.

~The End~

Finding the Next Piece

By: Joshua Walburn



There is a need to be hired before becoming a valuable worker. For my talent pool, it can sometimes present a unique challenge. I applied for three employers with guidance by staff at an 18-21 program. Two thirds of them never responded because for some reason, they were too busy with other things in these businesses. I've had successes on the way there such as accomplishing a steel challenge race during last year's Pittsburgh Half-Marathon in which distance running still helps me with finding and maintaining employment.

For most of the autistic community, fractional estimates shows evidence that 85% of adults with autism who are mostly four year college graduates are unemployed, despite many whom have above average IQs (Intelligent Quotients). Seventy-nine percent of young adults on the spectrum work part-time, averaging \$9.11 per hour in which also involves critical mindsets. My strong attention to detail, repetitive tasks, soft skills, and novel approaches are some of the strengths of mine which I hopefully can present to some perspective employers. I can concentrate on a given task without getting distracted easily by the big picture around me. My way of processing details is at a fine level.

I was hired to secure a part-time job at a mailing service company. How did I get there? Through a pilot program, a job coach got me a private tour of the facility with another colleague who is also on the autistic spectrum. He'll be working with me throughout the time I conduct some projects in working with information, providing me guidance I need to perform. I will never emphasize enough the importance of a job coach.

The job interview is a non-traditional one where it involves a tour of the mailing facility where it reduces barriers by removing anxiety of work expectations, such as lectures on how mailing machines work. I said to the guide that when I work, I'll be handling the dispensers. The facility is like working in a steel mill, but it's a lot quieter in a calming environment.

Applying for a job can be difficult. Several local companies are hiring for part-time positions. Make sure you get and write an application and please develop your own resume when obtaining those jobs. There are a variety of part-time job titles you can apply for. Then submit your application or resume to one of these employers; it usually takes several days for them to call. They'll contact you first to see if hours submitted are good. If you didn't hear back from one of these employers, keep applying for many others. Do not give up. Whatever you do, keep moving forward. Aim higher and do your best to launch into outer space and explore the stars. Also, please register or contact the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). They provide vocational services to help persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. ~

Rock Article

By: Philip Wilsher

Simon and Garfunkel, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, Elton John, the Beach Boys, Pat Benatar, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Randy Newman, Motley Crue, Deborah Harry, Pearl Jam, Stone Temple Pilots, Herbie Hancock, the Who, Michael Jackson, Prince, Soundgarden, Tonic, the Bee Gees, Tupac Shakur, Billy Joel, Queens of the Stone Age, Justin Timberlake, and Bob Marley have all been named kings and queens of rock and roll for all of the things they've accomplished in rock music history because without them we wouldn't be here if they weren't here to listen to. I love rock and roll music and I am inspired by it each and every day by all of the people and all the people who were involved it right from the jump I told you guys that. I admire anyone and everyone who listens to it and I love every person who has as much respect each and every day to put through the Bill Withers and Al Green type of soul that influenced pop rock band Maroon 5 into what they are today even before they were Kara's Flowers. I love music and I love listening to it each and every day. This is my prayer and my dream to anyone who loves music whoever plays it.~~

Ode to Obie, my Chosen Great-Godfather

By: Nils Skudra

This poem is dedicated to Obie Nash, a very close friend of mine in California who served in World War II and brought home a German war bride. I have since lost contact with him but deeply cherish the time spent with him, listening to his war stories and his insights. I feel honored to have chosen him as my great godfather.

I see the photograph: you -- black, beaming, full of bravado
off to fight a war on German soil, not of your own making
the light is incandescent, against the barracks in the company
of others, rifles poised against their chests, brazen, facing
down the camera's eye which takes with it
a piece of the soul in every moment (indiscriminate).
Far from Alabama and the soft rhythms of its speech
and a land where pigment (which should be the color of water)
is everything and segregation is still the common rant
and being African American is termed inexpedient.
You do abide and have come to make your mark for humanity
though perhaps your own country scorns and derogates you.
What is color anyway: just a five-letter word of no signal importance...
what is the hue of thunder, of water breaking on the shore, or the
howl of a lone coyote on the plain, of a mother's love when her son
is lost at sea, an infinite night punctuated by a gallery of stars.
But I digress: because what you did over there, in Europe, with your
American brothers, intent on exterminating the Nazi threat,
had nothing at all to do with color but only to do
with gallantry and ethics and saving the Jews and other so-called
undesirables from the mass slaughter that had been fashioned for
them. In the intemperate heat of battle your blackness
fell off you like the mantle of night to the sunrise
where, far from your family, on foreign soil, there were no
black-and-white bathrooms or indices of different/not equal.
At the Nuremburg trials you witnessed men, white-skinned, monstrous
in their sins, multifarious and understood that bigotry was not only a dis-
crimination practiced in America... you cried for the Jews whose ashes lay
around you, piled in heaps of bones, "schrecklich", the German word for
"dreadful" which in your eighties, you still remember.
And you were changed from the experience, beyond the measure of
any calculus that can define the architecture of a life.
Coming back from the genocide, still the soldier, you carried the brace
of what you had seen in Europe, and vowed: this is where it ends --
I am a man, like any other, who is defined by my heart and mind
and soul and nothing so inconsequential as color
where courage has no shade and love, a guiding beacon,
is the force which is irrefutable in my life, and the seed which I sow,
colorless and enduring, in a place where no longer
can I suffer the diminishings of liberty.
I am just a white boy, only twenty in my years, who has never been
to battle but all the same has been
transmogrified by the epic fights that you have waged.
For me: you are simply my great-godfather, color-less,
the color of water, the wind thunderous against the sky,
moon pendulous and permanent, as rain which again and
again, variable in tone, will soon arrive.
The sound of the whippoorwill and egret is you, sounds which
have no color, the movement of a wild appaloosa on the plain
this poem is my Liebeslied (love song) to you.~~



A Would-Be World

By: Joe Cepek

If no evil had entered into the world, no death, cemeteries, funerals, wars, disease epidemics, poverty, homelessness, and any other cursed scourge would have never existed. Mankind's deliberate rebellion (sin), which was coupled by angelic rebellion in Heaven, resulted in sin (an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law), Jesus would not have to have died a horrible crucifixion death in order to atone (pay for) for all of humanity's transgressions with His Sinless Blood. However, it did not have to be this awful way.

The Bible tells us exactly what happened long ago, which is still plaguing the globe to the present time. The following Scripture passages describe what happened that lead to the way things have unfortunately gone down until the present time.

"So when the woman (Eve) saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant (literally a desirable thing) to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (girding coverings). And they heard the sound (or the voice of) of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool (the wind or the breeze) of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden",

Genesis 3:6-8

NKJV (New King James Version)

"How you are fallen from Heaven, O' Lucifer (literally meaning, "Day star"), son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High (the Creator)'",

Isaiah 14:12-14

NKJV

These Old Testament Scripture passages describe the fall of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) and Satan (formerly known as Lucifer). If these events had not occurred, then there would never have been a hell and a divine judgment. Everyone and everything would be living in perfect harmony in an immortal relationship. No bloody battle of Gettysburg would have taken place, for example. Plus, everyone would automatically have a doctor's level of knowledge without ever attending one day of formal schooling. Thus, no books, libraries, and schools would be needed. All human, animal, and plant life would co-exist with one another in spotless peace. All, man and beast alike, would be plant-eaters.

Anybody with a sane mind would want such a society to reside in. The Bible's before-mentioned Old Testament verses reveal what Satan, Adam, and Eve could have done to avoid all of the calamities (in addition to the previously mentioned ones). Adam and Eve should not have eaten from the forbidden tree's fruit. Lucifer (and the other now-fallen angels) should have remained in total submission to the Creator. Angels are spiritual beings who are specifically tasked as attendants, agents, and/or messengers of God, which have traditionally been represented in human form along with wings and/or haloes.

This article is looking back ages after these preceding events happened. The awful and unavoidable consequences, of which resulted from these unfortunate events of antiquity are still present in the world today, sadly. Again, it should (and did not) have to be this way, at all! ~~

A Farewell to Monty Python's Terry Jones

By: Megan Cunningham

On Tuesday, January 21, 2020, legendary Monty Python comedian, screenwriter, film director, and historian Terry Jones ceased to be, expired and went to meet his maker, kicked the bucket, shuffled off his mortal coil, and run down the curtain and joined the bleeding choir invisible. He was seventy-seven years old who had been in a “long, extremely brave, but always good humoured battle” with a rare form dementia that affected his speech. Jones was a major creative force behind the six-man troupe’s pioneering works that cemented them as one of the most influential acts in British cultural canon.

Born in Wales, Jones grew up in England before eventually landing in Oxford, where he studied English, but “strayed into history.” As part of his English degree, he became interested in the medieval period through reading Chaucer. Of course, this fascination would serve him well later in life. Given that he’d co-direct *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, write a couple books on Chaucer, and present a documentary series on medieval lives that challenged long-held medieval conventions, which would receive an Emmy nomination in 2004. During the 1990s, he also co-created a cartoon series *Blazing Dragons*.

Yet, also during his Oxford days, Jones met then underclassman and future Python collaborator Michael Palin, with whom he wrote and performed comedy sketches. Palin later stated, “The first thing that struck me was what a nice bloke he was. He had no airs and graces. We had a similar idea of what humour could do and where it should go, mainly because we both liked characters; we both appreciated that comedy wasn’t just jokes.” Originally, they wrote face-to-face. But they later found it more productive to write apart and come together to review what the other had written. Therefore, their sketches often focused on taking one bizarre situation, sticking to it, and building on it. Aside from Monty Python, the two would later write a comedy adventure anthology series called *Ripping Yarns*, which parodied pre-World War II literature aimed at schoolboys.

In 1969, Jones and Palin teamed up with Cambridge alumnae Graham Chapman, John Cleese, and Eric Idle along with American expatriate animator Terry Gilliam to create a show that eventually became known as *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. Famous acts include naked organists, middle-aged battle ax housewives who’d dress like your grandmother, reserved upper classmen (his straight man mode), and incompetent authority figures. On-screen, he’d generally defer to others unless he appeared naked or in drag. Off-screen, he was Palin’s writing partner and a major force behind the scenes, where he’d eventually end up pulling most of the strings. This is very apparent in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, given that Jones was an amateur medieval historian and the movie satirizes King Arthur and his knights along with aspects of medieval life. Thus, other Pythons described him as the “heart” of the operation and had a major role in maintaining the group’s unity and independence while his importance was often underrated. While mostly characterized by his irrepressible, good-natured enthusiasm, Jones’ passion often led to prolonged arguments with other group members, notably Cleese.

In Monty Python’s films, Terry Jones would be just as influential in front of the camera as behind it. As per course in their films, Jones would direct it, Terry Gilliam would do something weird at some point, Graham Chapman would play lead, and they’d all write and play multiple roles. In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, he’s Sir Bedevere the Wise whose brilliance revolve around absurd theories like the earth being banana-shaped and witches burning and floating on water because they’re made of wood. In the French taunter sequence, he devises a Trojan Rabbit scheme to get inside the French castle but overlooks a crucial detail of Arthur and the knights actually being inside it. In the same film, he also played the effeminate Prince Herbert who pleads for his rescue because his dad is forcing him to marry against his will. In *Life of Brian*, Jones plays the Virgin Mandy, Brian’s embarrassing mother who tells a crowd, “He’s not the Messiah, he’s a very naughty boy!”

Aside from Python, ancient and medieval history, and his long-time collaboration with Michael Palin, Jones did a variety of projects. He wrote a variety of children’s books including *Fantastic Stories*, *The Beast with a Thousand Teeth*, and a comic poetry volume called *The Curse of the Vampire’s Socks*. He wrote an early draft of *Labyrinth* though little of his work remained in the final cut. Other movies he’s directed were *Erik the Viking* (1989) and *The Wind in the Willows* (1996) and I’ve actually seen them both. He’s also appeared in *Poetry Review*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Observer*. Hell, he’s even had an asteroid named after him in his armor. Indeed, Terry Jones was a man of many interests and talents that his biographer once said, “[you] speak to him on subjects as diverse as fossil fuels, or Rupert Bear, or mercenaries in the Middle Ages or Modern China ... in a moment you will find yourself hopelessly out of your depth, floored by his knowledge.” Of course, Jones was certainly no Messiah. But he was definitely a very naughty boy.~~



Photo courtesy of Den of Geek

In Memoriam

NEIL PEART: Farewell to the New World Man

By: Thomas R. Skidmore

On Friday, January 10, 2020, the world was dealt a devastatingly painful loss when the news announced the sudden passing of Neil Peart, drummer and lyricist of the seminal Canadian progressive rock band Rush. He died of brain cancer on Tuesday, January 8, at his home in Santa Monica, California at the age of 67. The news of his diagnosis was kept away from news media at the request of his family, which fitted Neil's rather reserved mindset.

Born on September 12, 1952, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Neil took up drums at age 13 to cope with the effects of being bullied at school. In addition to his drumming, he also spent lots of time reading; his favorite literature was chiefly science fiction and fantasy, and in his much later years, Neil gleefully admitted being a devotee of comic books. Among his drumming influences, Peart listed Keith Moon, John Bonham, Gene Krupa, and Buddy Rich as inspiring masters.

At age 19, Neil joined his first band, a regional hard rock group called J.R. Flood, which never achieved massive popularity. Soon after they broke up, he sojourned briefly to England before returning home to Ontario, where he worked at various odd jobs, all while keeping his drumming skills sharpened.

His destiny arrived in 1974, when he auditioned to be the replacement drummer for the rising young band Rush, who had already released their debut album with original drummer John Rutsey. John left primarily for health reasons (suffering from juvenile diabetes), and Neil stepped in just in time. Although he was unhappy with his playing, Neil was accepted into Rush as their first major concert tour was starting. His major stage debut on a bill with Uriah Heep and Manfred Mann's Earth Band at Pittsburgh's Civic Arena, and after the tour he began writing lyrics for the band's second album *Fly By Night*.

From there his writing took on epic proportions, culminating in their breakout album *2112*. Throughout the late 70s, Neil focused on his love of science fiction and fantasy which made Rush into a "cult band." But by 1980, the sf lyrics gave way to more realism as Neil shifted towards everyday people's lives and topical themes such as the Cold War, the Holocaust, materialism and greed, and mortality.

The 1990s were rough on Neil: his daughter was killed in a car accident and his first wife died from cancer. This caused him to step away from music and do extensive travelling (which he later wrote about in his nonfiction books such as *Ghost Rider*) but in 2002, Rush came back with *Vapor Trails*. Rush and Neil were unstoppable, and for their final album *Clockwork Angels* Neil returned to science fiction concepts. Such was the joy of CA that Neil even teamed with SF author Kevin J. Anderson on the novel and comic book version of the album.

But it was family that meant the most to Neil. After settling in California (during which he achieved US citizenship), he remarried and became a new dad with the arrival of his little daughter, Olivia. A very private guy, Neil shunned the limelight at every turn yet had a good-natured humor about himself; he even called his band "The Three Stooges."

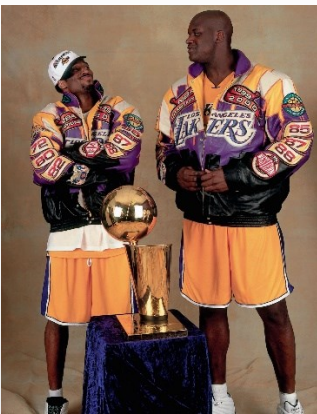
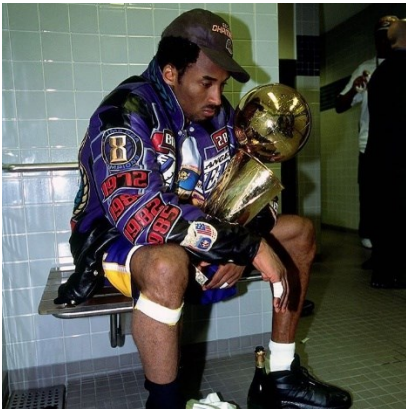
In 2015, he announced his retirement from the band and music in general, mostly for health reasons but also to stay with his young family. During the course of recent years, he developed the brain cancer that would ultimately take his life but not his spirit and legacy.

To quote his song "Spirit of Radio," Neil Peart gave us all "a gift beyond price, almost free" which he gladly shared with his bandmate friends, his family, and those in the world who can understand and appreciate the epic message of humanity he delivered with panache, and love.

Farewell, New World Man . . . ~

KOBE BRYANT

A Pictorial Tribute – By Robert Hester



#MAMBAFOREVER

RMU: NEC 2020 Men's Basketball Champions!

Photos By Robert Hester



Let IT Be
Songs for Difficult Times
Dedicated to those dealing with the COVID-19 Virus
Compiled by Michael Kurland

- "Let It Be" (The Beatles)
- "I Believe I Can Fly" (R. Kelly)
- "A Whole New World" (Brad Kane & Lea Salonga)
- "Tutti Frutti" (Little Richard [RIP])
- "The Rising" (Bruce Springsteen)
- "Shall We Dance?" (Marni Nixon & Yul Brynner)
- "Comfortably Numb" (Pink Floyd)
- "Getting Better" (Smash Mouth)
- "Lean on Me" (Bill Withers [RIP])
- "Come Together" (Gary Clark, Jr.)
- "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night" (John Lennon & Elton John)
- "We Are The World" (Michael Jackson [RIP])
- "Rainbow Connection" (Kermit The Frog [Jim Henson])
- "Hopes and Dreams" (Dima Harmon)

**Compilation Released by Pittverse Magazine/
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Executive Music Director: Dima Harmon

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Get Involved!

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