

Winter 2019

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Pittverse

Quarterly Magazine



This Edition:

What's Inside
Pittverse



SPECTRODOLCE
BY ZACH GRABOWSKI



DEADSEY'S LEGACY
BY DAVID O'ROREY



DIFFERENT
BY ELIOT HINTON



WINTERTIME
BY JULIA FIELDHAMMER



2019 REVIEW
BY AMELIA KRZTON

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

2019 was full of the unexpected; one of the most fortunate surprises to befall our publication was the emergence of Chas, *Pittverse's* newest artist and illustrator. Chas' stunning talent and ability to illustrate just about *anything* has amazed us endlessly this year. Chas further flexes his creative prowess through his artistic adaptation of the holiday season, which adorns the cover of our Winter issue.

Grab a cup of tea and enjoy wintertime *Pittverse*!

Letter from the Editor

2019 has brought us an array of changes. We've seen successes, just as we've experienced challenges. SpectroDolce has created exciting new opportunities for many of our staff, just as we have had to bid farewell to others. Despite these changes, some exciting and some daunting, one thing has stayed the same: *Pittverse* continues to thrive and expand with each issue that we release.

By virtue of its name alone, 2020 promises us a new vision of what we are able to accomplish. I challenge you all to make your voices heard in the New Year. We're on the precipice of a new decade; a brand new chapter awaits each of us. The future is ours to write and to create...so what will *you* accomplish in 2020?

Jennifer Pizzuto

In this Issue:

- Night of the Toys (Mark Sulkin) - 4
Pittsburgh Steelers (Michael Perret) - 4
Wintertime (Julia Fieldhammer) - 5
Adaptive Skier (Chas) - 5
Dear Sirius Radio (Garret Mathews) - 6
Making & Keeping Friends (Philip Wilsher) - 6
Evolv Group Semester (Amelia Krzton)- 7
Sustaining a Job (Nathaniel Geyer) - 7
Natalie Shugars (Robert Hester) - 8
Winter Driving (Daniel Ashkin) - 9
Greensburg AUTOCAD (Mark Lizotte) - 10
Impeachment (Megan Cunningham) - 12
Fireglow Heart (Paul Lechevalier) - 14
Gettysburg (Thomas Skidmore) - 15
Shawarma Journey (Kenneth Miller) - 15
Journey of the Heart (Nils Skudra) - 16
Reality of the Journey (Jordan Watson) - 17
Life a Public Domain (Cameron Irvin) - 18
Life Lessons (Ginger Reynolds) - 19
Becoming Agnostic (Alicia Bonus) - 20
Lee Jeans (Joe Cepek) - 21
Different (Eliot Hinton) - 21
For Whom the Ghost Tolls (Jake Ziesche) - 22
Artwork by Melissa Mozurek - 24
Disney (Elise Mote) - 25
Private Equity (Megan Cunningham) - 26
Blood Ties, Chap 6, Pt 2 (Jordan Watson) - 28
Social Pltt (Robert Hester) - 30
Madonna (Philip Wilsher) - 31
Creed, Chapter 10 (Dima Harmon) - 32
Pittverse Holiday Party (Zach Grabowski) - 34
Apple Crisp Recipe (Joe Cepek) - 34
Gingybread Man Recipe (Elise Mote) - 35
Hessian Oreos (Amelia Krzton) - 36
Raspberry Thumbprints (Elise Mote) - 36
SpectroDolce (Zach Grabowski) - 37
Wine & Dine (Josh Walburn) - 37
Oakmont Bakery (Zach Grabowski) - 38
Halloween Party (Zach Grabowski) - 39
Blizzards (Daniel Ashkin) - 40
Life's Chapter (Paul Lechevalier) - 41
The Beast (Eliot Hinton) - 42
Sometimes I Wonder (Ginger Reynolds) - 43
Union Organizer (Kenneth Miller) - 44
Slumber Parties Pt. 3 (Amelia Krzton) - 44
E.M. Forster (Tom Skidmore) - 45
Intelligent Lives (Nathaniel Geyer) - 45
Roundball Roundup (Robert Hester) - 46
Sane on the Spectrum (Delaine Swearman) - 48
Frosted (Jordan Watson) - 50
Jane Wants a Boyfriend (Nils Skudra) - 52
Holiday Display (Max Chaney) - 54
Jake's Jokes (Jake Ziesche) - 55
Living with a Disability (Philip Wilsher) - 55
2019 Review (Amelia Krzton) - 56
The Shopper (Delaine Swearman) - 57
Carry-On Bags (Kenneth Miller) - 57
Trip to Charlotte (Megan Cunningham) - 58
Fictional Character (Joe Cepek) - 59
Search for Infinity (Sarah Lehman) - 60
Star Trek VFX (Thomas Skidmore) - 61
Self-Made Heiress (Megan Cunningham) - 62
War & Its Tragedy (Joe Cepek) - 63
Adios at the Meadows (Robert Hester) - 64
When I am Depressed (Ginger Reynolds) - 65
Devil's Advocate (Eliot Hinton) - 66
Romeo & Juliet (Paul Lechevalier) - 68
Holidays Collide (Jake Ziesche) - 68
Weather Impacts Arthritis (Daniel Ashkin) - 69
Female Pants Dilemma (Joe Cepek) - 69
Deadsy's Legacy, Pts 1-4 (David O'Rorey) - 70
Duck Soup & The Great Dictator (Eliot Hinton) - 73
Unchartered Treks (Kurland & Skidmore) - 74
In Trek's Image (Kurland & Skidmore) - 75
Peanut Butter Falcon (Nils Skudra) - 76
Winter Issue Photos—78

Night of the Toys

By: Mark Sulkin

Once upon a time, in London England, there was a huge toy store filled with lots and lots of toys for boys and girls to play with. A lot of children come from all over London to check out the magnificent toy store.

There were stuffed animals, dolls, picture puzzles, action figures, toy soldiers, toy musical instruments, balls, building blocks, and of course books for children to read. All the children love coming to the toy store because they think it's magical.

There's one thing about this toy store; when it closes at night, all the toys come to life and play all around the store. Of course, they'd have to hide when a security guard is coming so that they wouldn't get caught. Also, they'd have to be back at their places by morning so all the children could see them.

One night, when the toy store was closed, all the toys got together for a big meeting. A jack-in-the-box judge said, "We're all free to play and have fun. Watch out for security guards. When you see one coming, hide so you don't get caught. And remember; be back at your places by morning." So all the toys set out to have fun in the store.

In the doll room, all the dolls had so many things to do. Two dolls played patty-cake. Four dolls had a tea party. The rest of the dolls got some exercise by running around the store and playing tag.

In the stuffed animal room, all the stuffed animals had their own special things to do. Geoff the Giraffe put together a jigsaw puzzle. Edwin the Elephant put on a puppet show for all the stuffed animals. Pieter the Polar Bear and Bjorn the Baboon played checkers. Marcus the Monkey and Ajay the Aardvark played leapfrog. All the other stuffed animals did their favorite things.

All the toy soldiers march all around the store singing: "The Grand Old Duke of York, he had 10,000 men. He marched them up to the top of the hill and he marched them down again. And when they were up, they were up. And when they were down, they were down. And when they were only halfway up, they were neither up nor down".

By now, the sun was started to come up. It was time for the toys to go back to their places. All the toys hurried as fast as they could. They all got back to their places just in time. More children came inside and thought they were all wonderful.~~



The Pittsburgh Steelers

By: Michael Perret

The Pittsburgh Steelers are an American Franchise representing the city of Pittsburgh. The Steelers are the seventh oldest club in the National Football League which joined in July 8, 1933. The Pittsburgh Steelers were founded by Arthur J. Rooney, better known as "Art" Rooney. The Rooney family has held a controlling interest in the club for almost its entire history. Since the club's founding, the Pittsburgh Steelers have captured six league Championship and played over 1,000 games. In the year of 2008, the Steelers became the first National Football League's team to win six Super Bowl Titles. As of this day, the Steelers are currently in the fourth spot of the National Football League Champions behind the Green Bay Packers, the Chicago Bears, and the New York Giants. Eighteen Pittsburgh Steelers players, coaches, and administration have been inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame is located in Canton, Ohio.

The Pittsburgh Steelers are my favorite football team to watch on television. I hope that the Steelers can win their seventh Super Bowl Title this year. They are without their star quarterback, Big Ben. The Pittsburgh Steelers are going to have to win the rest of their season games with their backup quarterback.~~

Wintertime

By: Julia Fieldhammer

I want to share with you a few things I like about Winter. First, I really like the holidays. The holidays are a special time of year, family and friends can get together and take a break from their busy schedules. Some families have traditions that they do around the holidays. One of my family tradition's is, every Christmas Eve we go to Mass at our church and after we go to dinner at this Chinese restaurant called Jimmy Wan's. In my opinion, it's the best Chinese food around. I usually get crispy chicken with broccoli, it's delicious. My favorite part of Christmas Eve is coming home after a delicious dinner and seeing my tree all lit up. I love putting my pajamas on and getting in my warm bed under the covers, and then I wake on Christmas morning. My family and I sit in my living room and open presents. My mom makes a special breakfast. She always makes pancakes or a quiche; it's the best breakfast to have on Christmas. Christmas Day, in the afternoon, we always go over to one of my aunt's houses for dinner. I have a huge family; my mom has 13 siblings and they all have kids so there's a lot of people to talk to. I love catching up with everyone. I enjoy hearing what they've been up to and what they got for Christmas. There's lots of tables set up around the house where people can sit down to eat. The adults are at one table and the kids and young adults at another table since there's so many of us. I always sit with my parents because I need assistance to eat. Sometimes my dad and I will stroll around and talk to family members. I really enjoy Christmastime. Every year I look forward to spending it with my family.

My other most favorite part about winter is adapted skiing. Adapted skiing is for people with physical disabilities. Each skier may need multiple volunteers to help them out. The volunteers have to be trained in what to do with the skiers. They have to be good skiers themselves in order to be able to help people with disabilities. There are many different types of adapted skiing. I will talk about the two types I know best. The first is when people use adaptive equipment to assist them to ski standing up. I've never done this before, but I've seen it. The second way of adapted skiing is sit-down skiing, this is the method I use. There is a really cool sled that has sides and a seat that I can fit my whole body into. It sits up high and has a lot of seat belts and even my feet are strapped in. The volunteers and my parents help me transfer from my wheelchair to the ski sled, and everyone helps to buckle me in. The instructor has to make sure the equipment is secure and then it's off to the races. I can always feel the adrenaline going the first time my team and I go on the lift. In order for my sled to fit on the lift, my team needs to take the skis off the bottom and put them back on when we get to the top of the hill. Once I get up to the top of the hill my team puts the skis back on my sled, I'm ready to fly down the hill. There's someone behind me tethering me, which means that there's a rope attached to my sled and the person behind me has the other end and is helping me steer. I must use my whole body to help lean side to side in order to steer. One

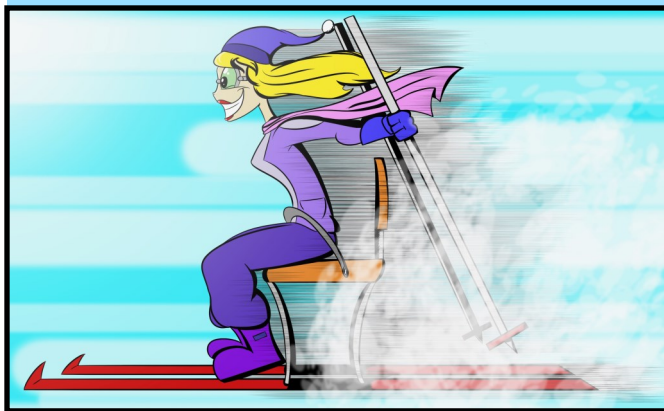


Illustration by Chas

of my favorite things about skiing is the feeling I get when I'm flying down the hill. It feels like I'm on a rollercoaster, I can feel the wind on my face. Even though it takes less than a minute to get to the bottom, I wouldn't trade it for the world. I would definitely recommend adapted skiing for anyone with a disability to try out. It's thrilling and it's good exercise.

Winter is definitely not my favorite season but these are the things I love that make winter fun.~~

Dear Sirius Radio,

First off, thanks. All the 24-hour music channels. No censors. No commercials. No static. It's amazing. As we say deep in the mountains of my native southwest Virginia, I don't know from nothing when it comes to technology. The satellite stuff is way beyond the pale of my aging brain that creaks more than it calculates. And don't even try to explain streaming. All I know is that once upon a time when traveling, I had to turn the radio dial to find stations that play the Stones, the Allmans, the Doors, Dylan, and Led Zeppelin.

Now I don't have to do that anymore. A push of the button takes me to you guys, and away from the local sports talk guy who starts a good game but can't quit yapping about his male-pattern baldness. But I do have one problem, Sirius Radio. Sometimes you don't play the exact record. I need for you to play the exact record.

News flash. I have Asperger's. This means I am programmed to focus only on me. I don't care about you, and I especially don't care that you are growing bald. I embrace habits, rituals, the tried, the true, the same-old, same-old. New is confusing, especially technology. If something is streaming, I'm programmed to believe it's lava.

There's more. On file in my gray matter are album versions of hundreds of rock 'n' roll songs. I know exactly how they sound from the first chord progression to the last. What this means, Sirius Radio, is that I want to hear the version of John Fogerty's "Proud Mary" that he recorded in 1969. I do not want to hear a concert version of the tune, even if it's performed by Creedence Clearwater Revival. I do not want to hear another artist's rendition. You guys recently opened a channel dedicated to the Beatles. Great. What's not great is your habit of playing songs that differ from the ones in my memory banks. I'll use "Get Back" as an example. You play a version that sounds like the musicians are tuning their instruments. Do not do this. You play a version of Paul crooning it as a solo act. Do not do this. Play the exact record.

You guys mess up the most when it comes to the Grateful Dead. You inform me that "Friend of the Devil" is next on the playlist. I let out an "Oh, boy" and crank the volume, only to discover you're giving me a muddled version recorded in 1979 by an audio crew too buzzed to find their gear and who had to borrow at the last minute from the local elementary school. Do not do this. Play the exact record.

The world is already a complex place for Aspies. We get ready to eat lunch at noon and then it's moved back 10 minutes. We get told only Bill and Jack are attending the 3 p.m. production meeting, but come to find out Sally, Stu and Stephen have also been invited.

Don't churn our waters, Sirius Radio. We find peace in the exact record. We find order in the exact record. We count on *Dark Side of the Moon* sounding the same today as it will on the day the music doesn't play because an itchy trigger finger has blown up the world. Just follow one simple rule and I'll be happy. Don't do new.

~~Garret Mathews

Making and Keeping Friends

By: Philip Andrew Wilsher

I learned how to be sociable to people at my day program, Compro. People respect me and I respect them for who they are. I love my program and I love the people who made me who I am inside. My boss, Ray Giles, said that patience is the key to being successful. I am trying my hardest to be successful with friends I make. Friends are people who have things in common with me. I like having friends and doing things with them because they make me feel a warm, smiling feeling inside. I was told friendship is a two-way street and it is always has been for me though nobody's mentioned it to me before I spoke about keeping old friends and having new friends. Friends come and go. I love all my friends and I cherish, adore, and admire and worship all of them.~~

Evolve Group Semester

By: Amelia Krzton

Since September 9, I have been enjoying the new semester at Evolve Group, despite one of my best friends, Claire, not being there due to getting her house fixed. This semester, we have been learning about things like being aware of our surroundings and safety, finding and applying for a job, and gift giving. I suggested finding a job to talk about since the Donation Processing Center at the Goodwill Workforce Development Center in Lawrenceville closed. I ended up getting a job at a Goodwill store in Cheswick, which is about 20-25 minutes northeast of Downtown Pittsburgh. A lot of people wanted to talk about gift giving this semester, since it was getting closer to the holidays. In addition to discussion groups, we have gone on a community outing once a month, like a South Side crawl in September to practice awareness and safety, a Halloween party which was also to celebrate one of my peers, Evan's birthday at the end of October. We will also meet at Target in East Liberty to shop for holiday gifts and then have a Christmas party on the last day of the semester. Overall, it has been a great semester, especially with old and new members both at the fall 2019 Evolve Group semester!~~

Sustaining a Job for Ten Years

By: Nathaniel Geyer

On April 5, 2020, will be ten years that I have been employed in a benefit-eligible position in Hershey, Pennsylvania. During that time, academically I have completed a Certificate in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Doctor of Public Health (DrPH), and finishing a Masters of GIS. Professionally, I have over 20 conference proceedings and 5 peer-reviewed manuscripts. I also have provided feedback to my employer on how to encourage more people with disabilities and ecological studies in the clinical atmosphere. Although I am still a staff member who is on paper underemployed at a Bachelor's degree job, I am still considered a valuable and hard worker who can survive and thrive in different environments. Although I have worked at my job for ten years, I only recently disclosed my disability because I did not want to be perceived as an autistic and get my work done based upon my own merit. I know that I meet all the Medicaid defined criteria except for the income threshold, which I consider to be very harsh and keeps valuable people from working full-time. I also am developing new lessons in the introduction to epidemiology course that teaches some GIS materials, with strong praise by my supervisor.

Based on my 10+ years at my position, with minimal assistance it has had its peaks and valleys, the valleys being the uncertainty that is commonly experienced by people who are grant funded. The take home lesson is that in order to thrive in the workforce there needs to have a strong mentor, which is why I mentor younger autistics. There also has be a way to adapt to the changing environments and exploit the gaps for sustainability. I also thrive on being underestimated and on second chances, and typically disregard first impressions of a project. I also love to be the unsung hero and avoid the office politics. Although I have applied for 20+ jobs after getting my doctoral degree, without success, my heart is still in my current position. I have constantly analyzing my strengths and weaknesses and feel like a faculty or postdoctoral position will only bring out the worse in me and is not suited for my needs at this time. My main philosophy is to start small think big, meaning that I provide an offer that cannot be refused to a faculty member and work hard in getting it completed in a timely manner. Also like to work independently without constant supervision, but open to having meeting for self-improvement. I hope to be a pioneer, who assists others on ways to make their dreams a reality. ~~

Pittsburgh N'AT With Natalie Shugars

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

As much as the greater Pittsburgh area can lay claim to being the birthplace of such prominent championship teams and athletes in the world of sports, it can also lay claim to being the birthplace of such prominent championship actors and musicians in the world of entertainers. One of those prominent entertainers who was born and raised here is a singer, model, actress and entertainment mogul, Natalie Shugars.

Natalie is a native of Latrobe, PA., located less than 35 miles east of the Golden Triangle, Pittsburgh. And like Pittsburgh itself, Latrobe is the birthplace of likes of such prominent sports athletes and entertainers named “Mister” Fred Rogers and Arnold Palmer. Like her fellow native Latrobians, Natalie grew up with the confidence that she was born to entertain. She initially was influenced by the iconic likes of Madonna, Cher, Tina Turner, and Selena. But the likes of Elvis Presley, and the movie *Eddie and the Cruisers* first fueled her influential passion to entertain, as well as her love for the popular 1980s morning cartoon, *Jem*.

A little over a decade ago, when she lived away in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Natalie left a record deal and moved back to Pittsburgh. When she returned home to the ‘Burgh, she enjoyed the historical honor of being the first female ever to write and record a fight song for the Pittsburgh Steelers called “I Love Black ‘n’ Gold,” a Steeler version of Joan Jett’s “I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll.” For a span of a decade from her days as a “Black n’ Gold Girl” when she did *The Jerome Bettis Show* on WPXI, to reuniting with the “Bus” and Super Bowl MVP Antonio Holmes on stage together a few years ago for the Steelers Style Fashion Show. As for the “Immaculate” Franco Harris, that’s because he, like Natalie, is part Italian. And because Franco, Natalie said, “...lived on the same street as me back in the day (AKA, the coolest street ever)!”



Natalie had been working on a project and anthem for our entire city when she met Pittsburgh Emmy-award winning rapper, FRZY. “He had nudged me back into exploring being an original artist, songwriter, and performer again,” Natalie said about her experience with FRZY. “We had spent some time exploring different beats, playing around with different ideas on what sound and vibe I was feeling, since it had been ten years since I had last done anything like this.” Natalie also had encouragement from her dear friend and six-time Grammy-award winning producer Jimmy Hoyson to get back to her songwriting roots. From there, being around the legendary singer Smokey Robinson, as kind and sweet as he is talented, helped “poke the bear” as they say, and inspired Natalie to find herself back in the recording studio working on original music. As someone who loves “High-energy pop/dance tracks the most,” Natalie found that fact to be part of the inspiration behind her single, “Burn It Down.”

“When I heard the beat for it, I knew it was ‘the one,’” Natalie said, “because I was instantly drawn to it from the funky bass lines that reminded me a lot of some of the killer bass players I’ve been privileged to work with in my career. I knew this track was special and that I connected to it.” The night she wrote the lyrics, Natalie had the hook of the song “Stuck” in her head and the concept of wanting to “start and burn down the party” was symbolic of her return to the music scene. Natalie said that the part of the inspiration behind her single, “Burn It Down” came simply from “God putting special people in my life that woke up my musical soul and said, ‘You need to do this.’ And from me saying, ‘Yes! This is who I am and it’s time I got back to it. I’m in!’”

The inspiration for Natalie’s online entertainment show “N’at Around Town” came from the years she spent living in Myrtle Beach. “They had a TV station there called ‘Beach TV,’” Natalie said. “It was fun, informative and a great way to see what was popping up and happening on [Myrtle Beach’s] Grand Strand.” Although the show was created primarily due to the fact that Myrtle Beach is a tourist town, Natalie said that Myrtle Beach’s “locals” also enjoyed and watched Beach TV as a way to tune in and explore in one of the East Coast’s top tourist towns. When she came back home, Natalie was amazed by the incredible changes that were developing in the ‘Burgh. “I knew that I wanted to share this experience with everyone,” Natalie said. It was at that moment that “N’at Around Town” was born. The show has reached thousands of viewers in the Pittsburgh area, and has showcased venues like Kennywood, Little Italy Days, and the ‘Burgh’s top restaurants.

When asked for the plans she has for 2020, Natalie replied, “What aren’t my plans for 2020?!” As part of her plans for this year, she’ll be launching her first studio album, *Veni Vidi Vici*, further growing N’at Around Town, and then launching Pittsburgh’s first rock anthem “The Steel Proud Project.” Like another Latrobian who left a legacy, “Mister” Fred Rogers, Natalie is building her legacy by staying true to the morals, values and love for the roots and city she loves from the bottom of her heart. “I am honored to even be considered in the same category as legends like Fred Rogers. People like that not only emulate the [definition of a] G.O.A.T.,” Natalie said, “But a hero.” To check out Natalie’s latest music releases, visit her website: natalieshugars.com~~



Preparing for Winter Driving

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

In this article, I am going to discuss how to prepare for winter driving. Next, I am going to give you some of valuable tips on how to drive on the snow and ice this winter. Please take these guidelines extremely seriously before the next snowstorm strikes you off guard this winter. The following tips come from A.A.A. and the 11 Tips on Winter Driving from YouTube.

Before the harmful weather wallops this winter, please check that the oil is clean in the engine. When condensation has accumulated in the oil, it can likely break the fuel lines. Triple A recommends that all drivers add antifreeze to their car's engine. Triple A recommends that you add antifreeze to your car. The solution should contain 50% percent water and 50 percent of the product. Before the first snowstorm raids in your area, every motorist needs to check his or her tire treads. Poor tire treads can lead to an accident in snow or heavy rain. Buying snow tires is safer than all- purpose tires according Winter Smart Driving website. After a major snowstorm in Pittsburgh, side streets are last to be plowed.

Winter smart driving highly recommends that windshield fluid washer is refilled before a snowstorm. When you run out of windshield fluid, it is very hazardous to stop to the side of the road to fill it up during a snowstorm. Running out of windshield fluid makes it impossible you to see in of the front of the front window. Running out of windshield fluid will likely cause poor visibility on the highway before a snowstorm; make sure that your windshield wipers are fully working before it starts to snow. If it is going to start snowing at night, please fill your gas tank before it starts snowing. After you wake up in the morning, it is imperative that every driver clears off his or her snow, ice, and the headlights. If you drive with a few inches of snow on top of your car roof, the wind will likely blow chunks of snow onto the other driver and likely cause him or her to experience a serious accident.

Rick Augusta, from Smart Driving web site strongly recommends that every driver have two hands on the steering wheel. When it is snowing outside, please do not eat and listen to the radio in your car. Rapid freezes happen near bridges, roads, near bodies of water and icy intersections. Unfortunately, the City of Pittsburgh has many roads near the rivers. After rapid freezes, intersections become a sheet of ice from the slushy snow. When you are driving on the icy roads, please allow extra following distance between the two cars. Before you come to an icy intersection in the wintertime, please bring your car or truck very slowly to a stop. The driver needs to put his or her car in neutral gear to avoid a hazardous a skidding accident. In addition, please turn your car very slowly on snowy roads to avoid a skidding accident.

If you are driving to a friend's house in the wintertime, keep a safety kit in your car. If you drive on a country road in a snowstorm, it may likely take a few days for help to arrive if your car is stuck in a ditch. Some of the 11 tips include a fully charged cellar phone. You should carry a warm blanket and extra food. In addition, you should always include an extra water gallon for each day that your car is stuck in the ditch. Furthermore, you should carry an extra day of medication in case your car is stranded in the snow. For an example, many drivers have been stuck on the Boston Freeway during a blizzard. How would you react if you forget your insulin medication during a blizzard...? How would you respond if you leave your food at home when a blizzard occurs suddenly on a major expressway...?

In summary, please make a detailed list of the following items from the article. The following suggestions may save your life one day. ~~

Greensburg, Pennsylvania

By: Mark D. Lizotte

(Illustrations done on AutoCAD)

Downtown Greensburg

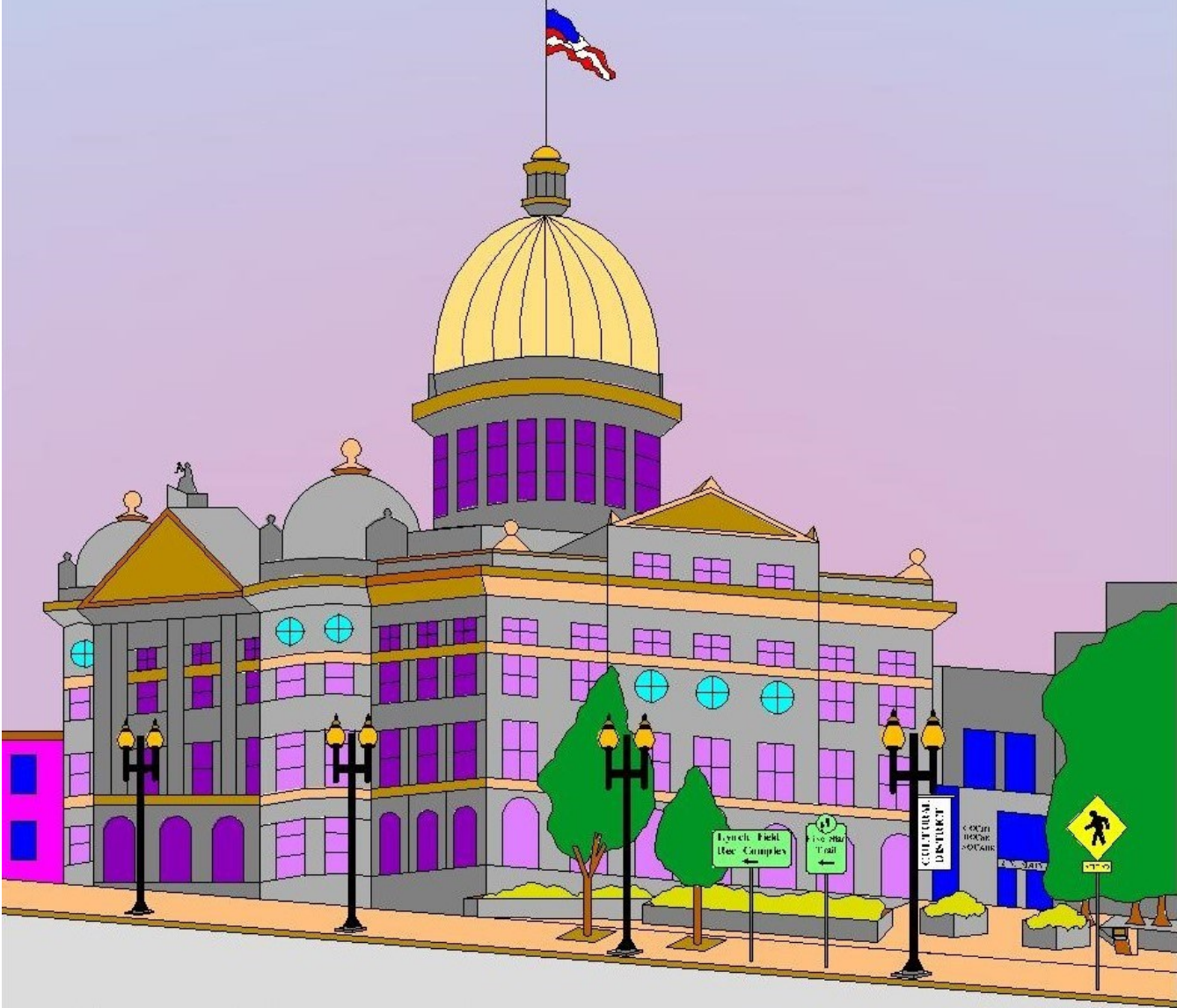
Greensburg, PA, is about 33 miles east of Pittsburgh, PA. It was incorporated as a city in 1799, and has a current population of 14,000 people. The city is named after Nathaniel Greene, who was a General in the Revolutionary War.

Westmoreland County Courthouse

The Westmoreland County Courthouse was completed in 1906. It is actually the city's "fourth" courthouse. The first courthouse was used from 1787 until 1801. The second courthouse was demolished in 1854, and the third was demolished in 1901.~



Westmoreland County Courthouse



By: Mark D. Lizotte

How Impeachment Works

By: Megan Cunningham

In September 2019, a revelation that an intelligence officer had filed a whistleblower complaint to the intelligence community Inspector General alleged President Donald J. Trump of wrongdoing. A CIA agent detailed to the National Security Council that a 2019 phone call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky sent the intelligence community into a tail-spin. They wrote, “In the course of my official duties, I have received information from multiple U.S. Government officials that the President of the United States is using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. Election. This interference includes, among other things, pressuring a foreign country to investigate one of the President’s main domestic political rivals.” Namely, Trump tried to pressure the Ukrainian government to investigate Hunter Biden, whose father is former Vice President Joe Biden, who’s running for Democratic nomination in the upcoming 2020 Election. Failure to investigate Biden, alleges the claim, would result in Trump blocking Ukraine from receiving a much-needed military aid package. Since then, the House of Representatives has opened an impeachment inquiry on Trump, mostly because it looks like he tried to solicit help in an election.

After several weeks of closed-door testimony, the House’s impeachment inquiry has recently started airing public hearings. Given that major news networks, aside from Fox News, have suspended regular programming for this, expect to hear more about it in the news. Nonetheless, Donald Trump has been the fourth president to face an impeachment inquiry. Though it’s difficult to predict Trump will be ultimately impeached, it seems extraordinarily unlikely that he’ll be able to avoid it by this point. Democrats hold a majority in the House and everything in their “impeachment inquiry” has turned up so far apparently confirms the charges that had ignited the process. It’s worth noting what impeachment is how it all goes down...or *supposed to* because impeachment doesn’t have much precedent.

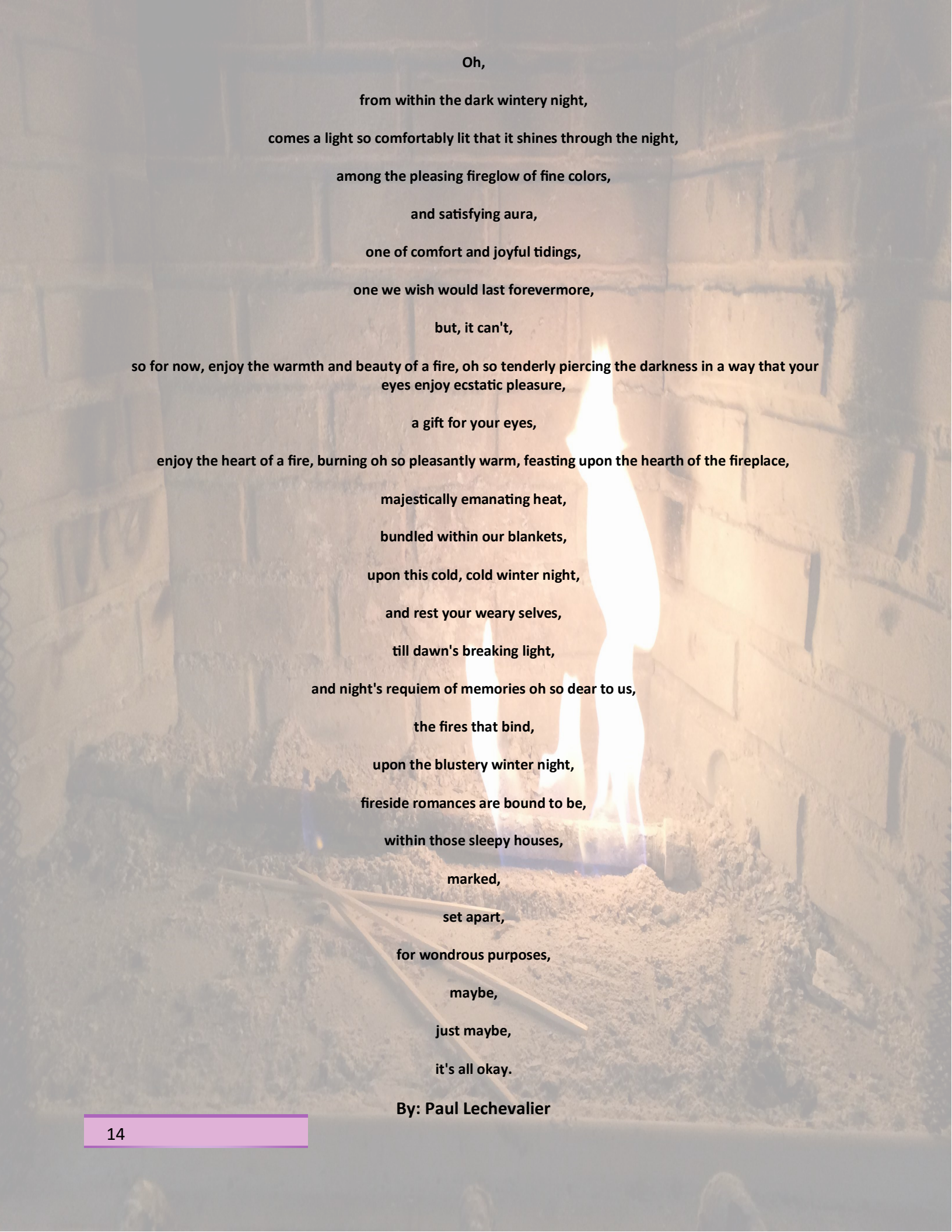
Impeachment is the House of Representatives accusing the President of the United States of high crimes and misdemeanors and the first step of potentially removing the President from office. It’s a grave, and historically rare, declaration by the House that members believe the president has abused his office. Though it’s a political and not a legal process, it’s akin to deciding to “charge” the President, as in kicking the matter to the Senate, which will then hold a trial to determine whether to remove him. Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution details the impeachment power: “The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.” Now what would constitute “high crimes and misdemeanors?” Well, it’s mostly been treated as a sort of catch-all for either criminal activity or what Congress considers egregious abuse of office.

The first presidential impeachment happened in 1868 with Andrew Johnson over firing one of his cabinet secretaries in violation of a law Congress passed and for insulting Congress. Yet, you can say the real reason was that Johnson was a racist Southern Democrat who wouldn’t sup-

port the pro-Reconstruction policies that radical Republican congressmen wanted. Amazingly, the Senate acquitted him by one vote. The second time impeachment came up was in 1974 with Richard Nixon for obstruction of justice and abuse of power related to the Watergate burglary and subsequent cover-up. Nixon was on his way to be impeached but resigned before that could happen. The third time was in 1998 with Bill Clinton who got impeached for perjury and obstruction of justice for his effort to cover up his affair with Monica Lewinsky. Considering that several Republicans involved with the matter had similar sexual indiscretions like Newt Gingrich or tolerated similar behavior by fellow party members, it was politically motivated. Thus, Clinton was acquitted. Still, though it helps, a criminal code violation by the president isn't necessary to impeach him.

So how does the impeachment process work? Again, it's up to the House, whom the Constitution gives "sole power of impeachment," so members can handle it however they want. For the most recent impeachment efforts (like with Nixon and Clinton), the House Judiciary Committee took a leading role, holding hearings and gathering witness testimony, and eventually drafting their formal accusations against the president as "articles of impeachment." The Judiciary Committee voted to approve the articles and send them on to the full chamber. However, it's also possible for other committees to take the lead, or even skip the committee process entirely. For instance, in Donald Trump's case, it's the House Intelligence Committee that's taking a leading role. But the eventual endpoint in the House is a full vote on each article of impeachment. Should a majority approve even one article, the president's impeached. Should the House vote to impeach Donald Trump, nothing will initially happen beyond a simple reprimand since impeachment by the House alone doesn't remove a president from office or do anything particular to him; all that an impeachment House vote does is turn the matter over to the US Senate, who really decides what happens.

Once the House votes to impeach, the Senate holds a trial to assess the House's charges aimed at deciding whether to remove a President from office. During this trial, the House plays the prosecutor and chooses certain "impeachment managers" to argue their case in the Senate. The President's lawyers are the defense team. However, the President doesn't have to appear in person and historically hasn't. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presides and is responsible for making procedural rulings during the trial. But the Senate can vote to overrule his decisions. Now despite this being referred to as a trial, it's a political process, not a legal one. So it doesn't have to follow ordinary rules and practices in a criminal trial. But it's up to the Senate to decide how to structure it. For instance, they can call witnesses to give live testimony as they did for Andrew Johnson or decide not to as they did with Bill Clinton. Nonetheless, this trial ends in a vote on each article on impeachment to either convict or acquit the President. A vote to convict on even one article is enough to remove him. However, it takes a 2/3 Senate vote to convict an impeached president, a far higher threshold than even the typical supermajority requirement. And it's never happened in US history. Though this would've happened in Richard Nixon's case, if he hadn't resigned first. Given that there are only 53 Republican US senators, it's not bound to happen unless there's a larger transformation of American public opinion that 20 of them defect.~~



Oh,
from within the dark wintery night,
comes a light so comfortably lit that it shines through the night,
among the pleasing fireglow of fine colors,
and satisfying aura,
one of comfort and joyful tidings,
one we wish would last forevermore,
but, it can't,
so for now, enjoy the warmth and beauty of a fire, oh so tenderly piercing the darkness in a way that your
eyes enjoy ecstatic pleasure,
a gift for your eyes,
enjoy the heart of a fire, burning oh so pleasantly warm, feasting upon the hearth of the fireplace,
majestically emanating heat,
bundled within our blankets,
upon this cold, cold winter night,
and rest your weary selves,
till dawn's breaking light,
and night's requiem of memories oh so dear to us,
the fires that bind,
upon the blustery winter night,
fireside romances are bound to be,
within those sleepy houses,
marked,
set apart,
for wondrous purposes,
maybe,
just maybe,
it's all okay.

By: Paul Lechevalier

GETTYSBURG: The Worthy Ride to History

By: Thomas R. Skidmore

Recently I took a long drive to the site of the most decisive battle of the Civil War. My friend Erin and I opted and planned out a nice trip to the city of Gettysburg, PA, a nearly four-hour drive east of Pittsburgh. As I hadn't been there before, and being a strong history buff, the prospect excited me greatly.

Once we decided on the ideal date (and taking into account both the time and the weather), it was just a matter of preparing for stops along the way. For close to four hours we drove on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, stopping at a couple of rest areas to stretch our legs. Also, once we were further out of Pittsburgh, the drive took us through two tunnels as our sojourn led us towards the center of the state (where Gettysburg itself is situated).

As we neared our final destination, we stopped inside a specialty candy store called Mister Ed's Elephant Emporium. Inside, there's a small museum dedicated to the noble elephant as well as different types of candy and sweets. Soon we were at the battlefield itself, the sun shining all over the site of the most significant battle of the Civil War.

For several minutes we drove all over the battlefield, taking in all the historical markers that told the story of the brave men who fought to the death to preserve their cause, both Union and Confederate. It was only due to poor judgment by General Robert E. Lee that the Union gained a bloody yet clear-cut victory.

In the Gettysburg National Park Visitor Center, there's a short history of the battle produced by The History Channel and narrated by Morgan Freeman. After the film is done, we were led to the upper floor where a wide cycloramic painting of the last battle was displayed. Using another narrator and a light show, the cycloramic painting comes to life. Truly it was and is an awe-inspiring sight.

Soon we walked around the museum where the entire history of the Civil War was on display, complete with authentic relics and tools used during that formative period in American history. All this proved breath-taking and somewhat overwhelming but very insightful. After we looked around the bookstore, Erin and I left for home but not before finding a place to dine. We settled on a nice restaurant called Gettysburg Eddie's, named for an early 20th Century ballplayer named Eddie Plank of the Philadelphia Athletics (now the Oakland A's). The menu was reasonably priced, and the portions were generous.

Gettysburg's citizens proved very friendly and welcoming, and we thoroughly enjoyed every facet of our sojourn. However, we were relieved to be back home in Pittsburgh once our long drive ended.

Gettysburg calls out to be seen.

Will you answer the summons? ~~

Sandwich with a Destination: Shawarma Journey

By: Kenneth Miller

My Shawarma Journey began about a year ago in Fort Lauderdale. I was staying at the Cambria Hotel for two weeks for a Spirit Airlines Guest Serves training class. People from all over the Spirit footprint were at the training. One guy stood out, a big guy with a booming voice from Egypt. He had worked for other airlines before and he was really in it for the travel benefits.

We found our way to Pita Plus and then to Pita Express and there was a perfect shawarma. He would say "O... M... G..." repeatedly and explain that each country surrounding the Mediterranean had their own style of shawarma. This was the Tel Aviv of South Florida... there was some eggplant saucy dip and an Israeli Salad with tomatoes and cucumbers on this shawarma. He asked me what I was doing at this job, why I wanted to be an airline worker. I told him that in my heart I had always wanted to work in a transportation hub and that airport workers needed a newspaper and I was going to give that my best effort. So began the Shawarma Journey, my big Egyptian friend. I only talked to him once after our visit to Fort Lauderdale. It would be nice to talk to him more, to work with him on a newsletter now. He's got something to say.

I made a stop at the John Glenn International Airport for a couple of days. There was a Somali coworker that loved shawarma and took me out to eat at the local Somali restaurant. It was like a hot sauce volcano. The guys, they were all guys, in the Somali restaurant, were playing dominoes. Banging on the table and yelling at each other. There was news playing on the tv/with the sound turned off. It felt so good.

There is some down time, a few days a week, at the Spirit PIT station, and it seems reasonable to have some kind of a game on hand to pass the time. My coworker is teaching us how to play dominoes and keep score. Everyone seems to have good feelings about dominoes. We can say crazy things to each other when we play dominoes, 'that's a bank overdraft fee! Go to the bank and pay your \$37 OVERDRAFT FEE,' 'That's a write up. Big mistake. You're in trouble!' It's great. Great fun. So the Shawarma Journey goes on and on. Next time you come through PIT, tell me about where you've eaten shawarma recently. I care!!!~~

Review of Journey of the Heart

By: Nils Skudra

On recent occasion I had the opportunity to watch the 1997 television film *Journey of the Heart*, loosely based on the real-life story of Tony DeBlois who is a blind autistic savant and musician. The film revolves around Tony's mother, Janice (portrayed by Cybil Shephard,) who lives with Tony and his brother Ray in a small Texas town and struggles to make ends meet as a bar waitress and housekeeper. Tony is first introduced as a child (portrayed by Jeremy Lelliott) whose blindness and autism is taken advantage of by bullies who trick him into dancing naked in the street under a running water hose, which he takes to be rainwater. This incident results in Tony being picked up by the police and brought home to Janice for indecent exposure in public, which adds to her frustration after dealing with the pressures of work. As a single mother of two, Janice finds it extremely difficult to manage Tony's issues as a blind child with autism, although he enjoys the close emotional support of his brother, Ray.



Things take an important turn for Janice when Tony starts playing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" on the piano in the bar where she works. Although he is blind, he displays a remarkable musical talent and soon becomes a regular sensation at the bar. Janice realizes that Tony should go to a special school for the blind where he can further develop his unique talent and the skills necessary for leading an independent life. Consequently, she decides to move to Boston, Massachusetts in order to enroll Tony in the Perkins School for the Blind, despite the initial opposition from Ray who is averse to the idea of leaving familiar surroundings and somewhat resentful of doing so for his brother's benefit. Upon arriving in Boston, however, they find their new accommodation less than satisfactory, as it is a rundown apartment, and the prospects of Tony's admission to the Perkins School for the Blind are much more difficult than Janice expected.

Janice finds an unexpected ally in the person of Thomas DeBlois (portrayed by Stephen Lang of *Gettysburg* and *Gods and Generals* fame), a music instructor at the Perkins School for the Blind who is impressed by Tony's talent and agrees to work with him as his piano teacher. Through DeBlois' influence, Janice manages to get Tony enrolled in the school, where he makes steady progress over the years in refining his mastery of the piano, while at the same time Janice develops a romantic relationship with Thomas (eventually leading to marriage). As a teenager (portrayed by Chris Demetral), Tony comes to the attention of specialists who take keen notice of his status as a blind autistic piano prodigy. Following a series of consultations with Tony, they inform Janice of their conclusion that he is a savant, explaining that people with Savant syndrome display certain abilities that are far in excess of the average individual. In Tony's case, they insist that he is one of few people with such a unique mastery of the piano at his age, and they propose to take Tony with them to New York for a piano trial period.

The idea of letting Tony go out into the world independently is an immense challenge for Janice. Although she made the sacrifice of moving to Boston and enrolling him in the Perkins School for the Blind in the hope that he would learn to lead an independent life, she cannot bear the prospect of giving up the musical genius she feels he has become through her efforts. Consequently, she declines the proposal and insists that Tony attend the Berklee College of Music so that he can stay in her vicinity. During his time at the college, he is partnered with a female student named Julia (portrayed by Cassidy Rae), who regularly heard his piano music from his apartment window whenever she would walk by, and an attraction develops between them. Janice is less than thrilled by this development, not only because of Tony's increasing assertion of an independent social life but also because of her fears of having his heart broken due to his vulnerability as a person with autism.

The film takes a unique perspective in its examination of autism through portraying a protagonist who is both blind and autistic. Most autism-themed films tend to focus only on protagonists who are on the autism spectrum and do not have any other disability. However, through the depiction of Tony DeBlois, *Journey of the Heart* sheds significant light on the dual challenges that blind individuals on the autism spectrum face. Not only do they struggle with the social and developmental difficulties of autism, but at the same time blindness inhibits their ability to make their way around the world in a physical sense. Consequently, blind autistic individuals must acquire the necessary training and social support fitted to both their visual and developmental challenges so that they can lead successful independent lives.

Well-crafted and featuring sensitive performances from its leading cast members, *Journey of the Heart* offers an intriguing look into the life of a blind autistic musical prodigy and the challenges that he navigates in order to succeed. Furthermore, it gives profound insight into the struggle of his mother to ensure her son's success as a piano student and her subsequent challenge of letting him go so that he may pursue his dreams. Many parents of autistic children find it extremely difficult to make this sacrifice due to concern that autism will inhibit their ability to function independently, and in Janice's case this is complemented by the fact that Tony faces the additional challenge of blindness. But through giving the necessary support and mustering personal willpower, parents can ensure that their sons or daughters on the spectrum will make this transition successfully, and *Journey of the Heart* articulates that message in a powerful and moving manner. Hopefully parents who watch this film will take its message to heart.~

Reality of the Journey

By: Jordan Watson

We all undergo that pivotal point in our lives. The almighty ultimatum of choice. We see there are moments where we see ourselves within, or outside of our security bubbles. In which we all must make the decisions to help us grow as a human society. The barriers of education that choose to either open our minds or bind us. The jobs that choose to either provide us for our hard work, diligence, and dedication, or hinder us, and reward the corrupt, lazy and nonchalant. The people we choose to associate with as loving, empathetic, and strong, or negligent, and weak. Most of the world will follow whom or what they deem worthy and do so out of the goodness of their heart, or out of blind faith of the promise of something to fully benefit their lives. But the truth of the matter is, it is not attained by it being offered on a golden platter, no. Even the analogy of going from rags to riches, is not so easily given from small work alone. It requires so much more.

We all start with the conception of a dream. From what we witness as children, to whom we look up to in showing us a way. Our parents can be the key to supporting our endeavors. Sometimes we will have limitations to who we can be. Whether it's to shape and mold us to who we wish to be, or if we make the decision by our own hands, that is the first key to unlocking the door to the journey. The art & entertainment we witness and see created, could give us meaning to create our own galaxies, even span to universes, and multiverses alike. Some can choose to go through their lives in going onward and upwards. Some can only do so through out of acceptance, from a downward spiral, hitting rock bottom. We may create art out of the process to letting our thoughts be known. We may want to be known, and for others to draw an interpersonal connection with the world we live in. Be it within our own, or the world we live in now. We may be even be despised for what we hold as our own sentient thoughts. Those are what diverge within the road of the next part of our journey.

We all continue with the choice of either being true to who we are or putting on the mask to hide our true selves. The honesty of showing the world for what one sincerely is can open the flood gates to many an opportunity one did not have while in hiding. They could be publicly loved or their grandiose display of charitable acts, or heroism for just causes. However, it can also show the vulnerability in being tracked down easier from the enemies one has created, be it from their own opinions, or of those they associate themselves within. What will help them truly conquer their afflictions, is the aid and defense of their community they've formed from the very beginning, so long as they keep in good standing, and honesty. Though concealing one's self behind a veil may show a precedence of caution while still being able to follow through with providing the entertainment for their audience. It could make for more compelling works to be shown that others would not be able to do by word and image alone. How we choose to go about the consequences, will help us reach the end of our journey.

We then wonder how our legacies will be remembered. What form of sacrifices we had to undertake to get us where we are in the present stages of our lives. If we have left on relative positivity, bittersweet memory, melancholic accusation, or self-destructive oblivion. If we have truly given the memorandum of positivity, then just by the good graces of helping others become better, more intellectual people should be well enough. Whether sustainability is the key factor, as well as lifestyle come into the fray, those should be secondary. Influence above all else, must shine through the darkest valleys, correct the misguided, and inform the misinformed. If we have been given the honor of the bittersweet memory, our words and actions alone can change the mindset of many a strayed person. Through our own experiences, and misdirection, can we hope to teach others not to follow the same dark paths we have crossed time and time again. That our words can build a truly unique, and exclusive mindset to all, to drown out anyone who should tell us what we should feel. If we are woefully accused, fight for what is logical and factual. Due process, above all else, must be the one to help you climb the mountain's top. Show the world you are not what others claim you to be, so long as it rings nothing but truth. And should you fall, do not ever let your mind wander to the growing gloom. Use the support you are given to carry you along the wet, sanded shores to reclamation. If you put yourself on the path to a catastrophic self-destruction, do not let it consume you. Take that negative energy and implant it within your work. Show the world that your profound sadness and unmitigated anger, can be used for something that can be truly be considered a masterpiece. So long as it is not absolutely directed to a specific individual, or a collective group of hive-minds. But do not ever take the alternative, or even consider the attention to the idea. All of the prior ideologies will become for naught. All it leaves in its wake, is infinite sorrow and chaos within the lives of all those you've built trust upon.

There will always be numerous paths within the road of your own journey. How you decide to approach it, depends on the mentality you use as your own guide. But know that there are others that have gone through these experiences on their own merit. Use their words and guidance to help you on the path of your own journey. Without actual teachers, how else would we function in the outside world? But above all else, find a way to truly be remembered. And remember those that have gone through the sacrifices they have to get where their positions are now. Especially to those that have lost everything and have considered the latter differences. I hope to those that read this, that your path leads you to where you want to be, and where you wish to further beyond. The reality of the journey may not be the kindest outlook. But by understanding the examples given here, it shall hopefully bring you closer to the ultimate outcome you seek. All life comes and goes, but your legacy can certainly live on forever.~~

Life as Public Domain, Part 2

By: Cameron Irvin

The only positive thing that seemed to have transpired was the growth of my relationship with Cindy. She was smart, funny, a lover of Bob Dylan, and had a great sense of style. She was also half Korean and pretty. There was no reason for the network to be against her. Initially we were somewhat awkward around each other but then became quite close. They should have left us alone. Audiences love storylines that involve budding romance—and it was a romantic attachment. After spending lots of time with a schmuck and an alcoholic, you appreciate the one person who brings a little sanity to the table. Before it was Terry, but now it was Cindy. With her upbeat personality, maybe we could pull our group back from the brink. Then the network executives told me we needed to break up. When I asked why, stating my reasons for us to stay together, they sat there nodding their heads in agreement. Then one of them explained: “We need to delay the inevitable as long as we can. Look, we realize that you two are perfect for each other, but if you get too comfortable, then your storyline peters out and the ratings take a dive. You need to get together at the end of the series. Two people in their early twenties acting like an old married couple—it’s boring. I’m sorry we just...can’t allow it.”

When I began to tell them in a strained voice that I didn’t give a damn about their ratings or their storyline, one of them got very threatening. She informed me that I had already signed away my control. But just as she started describing in detail all the means they had of bringing me “back into line” the first executive interrupted her, “What my associate *meant* to say,” he said reassuringly, “is that you have no reason to get so worked up about this. We *like* you and Cindy! You guys have great chemistry, we just . . . we wanna save it for later, for the big finale! You don’t have to mean it. All you gotta do is find something to argue about, split, date other people, *almost* get back together, split again, get serious about someone else—*then* come back together during the series wrap-up. You could date Michelle for a while. Get the audience to choose sides. It’d be fool-proof.” When I expressed my disgust at the idea of using Michelle in such a shameless way, they pretended to back off graciously, but I knew this wasn’t over.

I never should have agreed to go along with it. I should have put my foot down, but I was only twenty-two and easily persuaded. I broke up with Cindy in a stupid, dramatic fashion, while telling myself that they couldn’t change the way we *really* felt. But after that, I started to notice things. The network *could* change how we felt. They could do a lot of things that shouldn’t have been possible. They caught us on camera for *every* second of our lives, even our most intimate moments. They could dictate when and where we could go, what we could do, who we could see or not see. (Terry and I—we never hung out again. Terry literally vanished from my life. It’s been three years since I last heard from him.) The network decided what clothes we could wear, what shows we could watch, and what music we could listen to. And now, they could even control how we felt about each other. Their notions of how friends treated other friends differed wildly from my own. They believed that healthy friendships consisted of constant fighting and backstabbing. We were encouraged to lie to each other. We spent our days tearing each other down, calling it “healthy.” Soon we were finding it hard to be in the same room—the network had to provide incentives to get us to do our jobs. For someone who was supposed to be surrounded by friends, I had never felt more alone.

Interestingly, this is what caused me to break ground with Alex. I didn’t have to fake my frustration with Alex. I actually thought he was the reason everything was so messed up. *Everything was perfect before they brought him on board, this was all his fault.* And it seemed like he was the least affected by the constant strain of the show. The network loved him, his ratings were consistently good, and no altering of his personality seemed necessary for the show’s needs. I became so resentful of his flawless record that I even suspected him of being the network’s spy. Then one day he abruptly opened up to me, telling me in a flat, toneless voice that he was having a crisis of conscience. Apparently, he knew he was considered the most irritating member of our group, and the novelty of being edgy had long worn off. Over the last year he had been just as lonely and miserable as I was and had secretly wanted to change things. Finally, he worked up the courage to inform the network that he was thinking of becoming a Christian. The network stomped on that idea without hesitation, stating that audiences wouldn’t go for it. Then they agreed that his character *could* use some rejuvenation. “Perhaps,” they said, “we should try something a bit safer and more relevant to today’s youthful demographic.” They spent several minutes discussing what route they could take with his character—never asking his opinion once. They eventually settled on three possibilities: Alex becoming a new-age Buddhist with a penchant for collecting useless junk, Alex joining a Scientology-like online group that believed in UFOs, or Alex coming out as gay. None of these things reflected how Alex really felt, yet in a matter of weeks one of these possibilities was going to become his reality. His whole life was about to be derailed because a group of suits had decided it would be a great twist for his storyline.

That was it for me. Suddenly the whole picture became clear. Our lives were not our own anymore. Those contracts we had signed may as well have been asking for our souls. The network owned us. They could work us

like puppets and mold us like clay to suit any vision they had. I know I was. Now I could see our world for what it really was: a waking nightmare.

If . . . we just lay down and took it. I certainly wasn't going to anymore. I was filled with so much anger that all my inhibitions left me. I knew exactly what I had to do. I was done waiting for the series finale because I knew it was never going to come, not until they'd drained us of everything we had to give. And I wasn't going to let that happen to my friends. I was going to save them, all of them, Alex included. I got up bright and early the next Sunday and waited in the common area for all the others to assemble. After everyone had arrived and the day's shoot began, I smiled at all my friends and asked them what they wanted for breakfast. Then I spent several minutes making each of them their favorite thing and talking about unimportant stuff like real friends do. Then, when I sensed the execs urging my roommates on their microscopic earpieces to cut the boring banter and start the usual ghastly routine, I made my move. I whipped out the Glock 19 I had stashed in the back of my pants under my shirt, pressed it to my own head, and shouted "Let's see what ratings you get with this! I'm done!" and then pulled the trigger.

I don't know how I bungled the job. It shouldn't have been humanly possible. No one should be able to survive a bullet to the brain. But for some reason, I did. I woke up in a room I didn't recognize, in a bed that wasn't my own, with a man and woman standing over me. "That was amateur hour, my boy. Amateur hour," the man said. He sat down on the edge of my hospital bed and gave me a look of pity and amusement. "Did you really think it would be that simple, that you could break your contract with us so easily? You're our leading man. Without you as the glue, our merry band of players falls apart. Obviously, we took precautions in case a scenario like this occurred. I'm sorry Steve, but I'm afraid we can't just let you bow out so suddenly. And my colleague agrees with me." And then the female exec leaned down next to my ear and said these blood-chilling words: "You're done when we say you're done. Now get well soon, we start shooting again in three weeks."~

Life Lessons

By: Ginger Reynolds

First of all, I have changed my life around so much that I am now proud of my accomplishments. I used to get frustrated with my failures but then I downloaded a game called "I meet Myself." In the game, there's questions about life and it got me thinking about what I really want in my time on Earth. I also started thinking about how to go about achieving the goals I have. One of the questions in the game was what do you value most? The one thing I value most is my life. Before I started playing this game, I was extremely disappointed in the way my life was headed, but after just playing for a half an hour, that disappointment feeling I had turned into hope and motivation.

There's a quote that I live by. The quote is "what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger." I live by that quote, because it's true. I get bullied almost daily, because I am different, and it kills me inside. I shut down when talking to people, because of all the bullying I endure. But with the support I have from the people around me, I don't give up. No way, I keep moving forward. That's the purpose of life. If you fail at something you like, find another way of doing it. That way, you can't say you failed. But in the end, you can say, "I'm proud of myself, because even though the work was hard, I kept my eye on the goal and in the end, I succeeded. "Failing is just another way of saying mistake.

I used to think that I was a mistake, but then I learned h

ow to speak up and stand up for myself. Once you can speak and stand up for yourself, you can achieve anything you desire. Now that I have learned to speak up for myself, my life is heading in the right direction. I used to hate my life, but now I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The light at the end of the tunnel is brighter than ever before and it's all due to changing how I think. I used to think negatively and now I only have positive thoughts. I talk about what is bothering me instead of bottling it up and exploding later. I deal with the problem at hand, so I can feel better and healthier. Anger can cause health problems if you do not deal with it before it starts to take over.

In conclusion, I have learned my lesson by learning how to deal with my emotions when I first feel them. I have developed more positive habits and coping skills by just making a change in my thought pattern. The process of changing your thought pattern is very difficult, but not impossible. If you can find the motivation that you need to complete the thought changing pattern that is current, I believe you will achieve your goal of having positive thoughts instead of having negative thoughts. When I was only having negative thoughts, I had negative emotions as well. The thoughts we all experience are complicated. If a scientist had the ability to provide proof that negative thoughts lead to negative emotions, the scientist would be offered a medal.~~

Becoming Agnostic

By: Alicia M. Bonus

Growing up, my life had its ups and downs, even to this day, it's a regular occurrence, and sometimes I can't handle it. I'm recently engaged to a wonderful man, who's also passionate about writing, I've been more than seven years in remission from my Crohns Disease, and I have a college degree, which can help me get a decent job. Right? But that doesn't mean I'm settled on life. There are flaws. Though I'm in remission, I still get those unwanted stomach aches and breakouts. Me and my fiancé are tirelessly looking to locate someplace close to work while trying to plan a wedding. I can't hold a job when trying to manage my Crohns, because of the frequent cramps that sometimes can leave me bedridden for days. And that's not the least of it. Since our country had developed a hatred for one another for the past four years, people have decided to stop pretending to be nice to one another, especially when it comes to religion.

As I observe people of religion from all around ranging from history books, newspapers, online videos, and in documentaries, I've noticed that a lot of people spend a tremendous amount of time hating each other rather than befriending them. I've also noticed that people who claim to be religious commit the most heinous and unforgivable sins. How is it that people go to church and learn to love, but once they step out of that church, they do the complete opposite in the next five minutes or so? For example, parents disowning their own children because of who they decide to love. Marry your wife or husband only to divorce them for the fourth time. Telling a person who worships a different religion or who doesn't worship a religion at all that they're going to Hell. Telling a person of different skin tone or ethnicity to "go back to their own country." And, worshipping a loving God and telling others that "God hates you." I was brought up as a Presbyterian Christian. Even while growing up, I would constantly feel a spiritual force surround me, like someone was watching me. Maybe it was angels or ghosts. That would've been something special. And, for a while, it was. However, I never saw them, nor did they even come to my rescue when I needed them the most. I then realized later on in life that nobody was coming for me, nor were they wanting to make any contact with me. I found this as an insult, a slap to the face, and above all, I took this as rejection. Out of all the pain, the struggles, and the hardships I had to endure, this was the greatest disappointment of them all. And when I had finally reached my lowest and had finally had the courage to seek out help, nobody was there to hear my plea or gave any consideration on hearing my explanation on what I had to say. It all became too much for me.

I was tired. Tired of attempting to find the truth behind why things had to happen the way they did, whether they were good or bad. Tired of listening to those who kept on telling me, repeating to me over and over again that everything was going to be alright, even though everything wouldn't be alright. Tired of believing in something that I couldn't understand, couldn't see, or couldn't relate to. And, I was tired of trying. I was only lying to myself even more when the subject of people, religion, and life came into the picture. The more I learned, the more I found out that not everything was about fairytales and happy endings. I do believe that there are good everyday lessons to follow when it came to stories that everyone can associate with, but again, not everything is what it seems. And, I deemed myself not to be the Christian that everyone expects of me.

Even though I still believe in a high god, I still had my own ideas and belief of things like ghosts, spirits, etc. I had my own perspective on how things worked, but with facts to back it up. I didn't believe everything that the Bible says, but I do believe some parts where there are life lessons to follow like how to live and treat one another. Religion has always been comforting, but unusual to me. I read the Bible and I followed it. "Okay. I get it. If you don't accept Jesus Christ as your Savior or believe in God, you're going straight to Hell. But, if you do accept Jesus and God, be good, etc., you'll be with them in Heaven for always and eternity. But, wait! I'm already a good person. So, why am I still going to Hell and suffer for the rest of my life?" It didn't make sense to me. You can be perfect (of course, there is no such thing as being perfect) and still get sent straight to Hell. As I've mentioned before, I've had my own perspective on how I see things, and I just can't see this being a "thing" for me. I take an interest in different religions on how they worship and what their beliefs are, especially on how they deal with people from the outside world and how they portray them. I was surprised to find out that there were many religions that were very similar to one another.

In Christianity, "In doing everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

In Judaism, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary."

In Hinduism, "This is the sum of duty; do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you."

In Buddhism, "Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hateful."

In Islam, "Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself."

There are many more religions that follow this rule as well. This rule is known to be called "The Golden Rule", which many people tend to forget over and over again, even the religious ones.

Truth be told, I do accept that there is something out there that is wanting are full and cooperative attention. I just don't know who or what it is. But I want to know. I have a right to know. I'm tired of guessing when I know in the back of my mind that there's an answer lingering close to me. It's right there, but I can't reach it, and it's downright annoying. I'm stuck with uncertainty.~~

Lee Business Advertisement Tactics

By: Joseph Cepek

It is undeniably true that visual images, which are created by professional photographers and image artists for various modalities of advertisements, use usually young models, with physically attractive figures, in order to promote their products.

The directors, of the Lee Jeans Company, which is owned, by the VF Corporation (since 1969), in Merriam, Kansas, of which is the company's current headquarters, also believe such sexually-charged visual aids are excellent advertising gimmicks, in order to lure potential customers to possibly buy their denim pants items. It is meant to trick the inner man or woman into believing he or she will also look good, in the same pair, of 5-pocket style denim pants, for example, just like the featured models, in still print form or in a motion picture television commercial format.

In reality, this may or may not be literally true. As this is the reality, there are no actual guarantees, including whether or not one will look good, in the same pair, of 5-pocket Lee denim jeans, just like a featured male or female model. Nothing can specifically shape and slim one's lower body half like a good pair, of denim jeans, including the five-pocket style ones, especially the slender spandex stretch, curvy fit, boot cut fit and skinny fit pairs, of these denim clothing pieces. This is in my opinion, as is probably shared by many other people I am assuming, from all walks, of life, who have worn any type, of jeans, including Lee jeans, throughout the years to the present time. In other words, visualized sex literally sells products, including Lee blue jeans.

Jeans are increasingly meant to convey a visual sensuality, meaning a stimulating non-verbal message, regardless of the featured models and virtually anyone, in society, on a daily basis, no matter where one travels.~~



Different

By: Eliot Hinton

*His eyes were as blue as his mood would allow
His hair, a perfect blend of blonde and of brown
But while he may seem normal to you
If you ask him, he'd say "That's simply not true"*

*For inside his mind is a beautiful discord
of thoughts and ideas never seen before
by the eyes of the people that he calls his peers
You think it's a blessing? Think again, my dear*

*For him, it's a struggle and pain in the neck
to be surrounded by children with no intellect
They don't see what he sees, or hear what he hears
They don't understand how he thinks or feels*

*So, they shun him and scold him and push him away
and even with all his friends, so alone he will stay
His gentle heart is masked by a rigid facade
While he crumbles inside, he will always stand tall*

*He understands the nature of how humans think
Yet does not understand their jokes and their taunts
One minute, he's as fragile as a child
but the next, he's a raging inferno of hate*

*Yet he truly does care about those he loves
and does his best to maintain their trust
He never hurts or breaks their heart
for if he did, he be so distraught.~~*

For Whom the Ghost Tolls

Part 2

By: Jake Ziesche

Before anyone knew it, the big day had arrived. The quartet met up after dinner and congregated in front of the old house. They were ready to see if the stories were true.

Oswald was delighted that his friends were present. "I'm glad you all made it. Normally, I would be frightened to search the place by myself but having you guys here helps. Now let's see what lurks inside."

Oswald opened the door and the group entered. It was pitch black, but the friends turned on the flashlights they brought. "Let's start looking for any signs of a phantom. If you find anything, let me know. Then I can get it on film." Oswald turned on the video camera he brought to document their escapade and the four of them split up.

After a few minutes, the friends came up empty in their search. Despite that, Iris grew uneasy. "Guys, I have the feeling we're being watched. Maybe we should call this off."

Oswald started to agree but stopped when he noticed something amiss. "Did someone close the door?" Oswald was sure they had left it partially open when they came in.

Annabelle raced to the door and attempted to open it. "We're locked in!" she cried. "What are we going to do?"

Iris tried to think of a logical answer. "This may be someone's idea of a practical joke. What do you think, Kai?" Suddenly, Iris realized Kai was absent. "Where did Kai disappear to?"

"He could be hiding upstairs," suggested Oswald. "I think it's worth checking out. We won't leave until we find our friend."

The trio located a staircase and started their ascent. Once they reached the top, the group trekked down a long hallway looking for their missing friend. They looked for what felt like hours. Even though Oswald got more footage for the video, there was still no sign of Kai.

Oswald started getting anxious. "This can't be happening. We all came in together, and none of us heard any noise, so where could he be?"

"You don't think the ghost got him, do you?" Annabelle asked with trepidation. "Will it come after us, too?"

"That's impossible," countered Iris. "Maybe he bailed on us, or he's waiting to spring a trap. Kai could have planned a secret prank and didn't tell us about it."

Oswald found that hard to believe. "Kai would never do anything so reckless. There must be a more plausible answer."

As the three pondered if they should try to find another exit and get help, a familiar voice called out "What took you so long?" Oswald and the girls turned to find Kai coming toward them.

"Kai, you scared us half to death," Annabelle admonished. "Why did you come up here alone?" Annabelle thought of another crucial tidbit. "Did you lock the front door?"

"Sorry about that," Kai apologized. "I heard a strange noise and came up to investigate. I was about to come get you guys." He paused as realization dawned. "I was up here the whole time. Therefore, I was nowhere near the door."

Iris felt a chill race down her spine. "Well if Kai didn't shut the door, then who did?"

Just then, the group heard the sounds of an organ. The gang grew distressed at the ominous noise.

"Does anyone else hear that music?" Oswald asked apprehensively. The others all acknowledged that they did. "Dare we see who's playing it?"

Once Oswald's friends reluctantly agreed, the four crept toward where the sound was coming from. They wound up at the door at the end of the hall, the one nobody looked in.

“Here goes nothing,” Oswald said, opening the door a crack. “I have a bad feeling about this.” Oswald had his camera at the ready to catch whoever was behind these shenanigans on film.

The party of four peeked inside the room and tiptoed inside to see what lay beyond. They found some dusty old furniture scattered around the room. At the other end, the gang found the organ, which seemed to be playing by itself.

Oswald was the first to speak. “Do you see what I see?” The others all nodded in agreement. Oswald turned to his friends, but kept his camera pointed toward the organ. “Guys, is it possible someone heard our plan and decided to set up fake scares?”

Before anyone could answer, Oswald and the others saw an incorporeal being start to materialize in front of the organ. The resident phantom was a dead ringer for Jack Skellington. Then, the specter turned toward the intrepid sleuths and started advancing upon them until they were face to face.

“Welcome everyone, and Happy Halloween,” the apparition declared. Oswald and the others just stared agape. “You have nothing to fear, despite my ghastly appearance, I’m friendly.”

“Are you the one who locked us in?” Annabelle questioned.

“Sorry about that,” the spook admitted. “It was merely a Halloween joke. I overheard your plans and wanted to help your video. I hope I didn’t frighten anyone.”

“It’s alright,” Oswald said. “You certainly added some excitement to my film.”

“Do you think anyone at school will believe it’s real, or will they think we faked it?” asked Kai.

“Maybe they’ll be bold and enter to see for themselves,” said Iris. “I hope they don’t get scared away.”

“I agree,” the apparition responded. “I love it when people stop by the place.”

Oswald suddenly thought of something. “We were hoping you would let us go. I think we’ve had plenty of scares for one year.”

The wraith broke into a grin. “Of course, you guys can leave. I hope you will come back to visit. I’m throwing a Halloween party next year, and you four are welcome to stop by.”

Oswald and the others looked at each other nervously. Then Kai openly asked, “Who exactly will be at this party?”

“My ghostly family and friends will be in attendance,” the ghost explained. “My ghost friends have thrown parties before, but I never had the courage to do so.”

Oswald could name that tune. “You know, my friends and I were afraid to enter this old house, but we did it. If we can be brave, then so can you.” Oswald saw the others agree with him.

The ghost started beaming. “I think you’re right. I’m going to put on a party my friends won’t forget.”

“That’s great,” responded Iris. “Well, we should get going. It was a pleasure meeting you.”

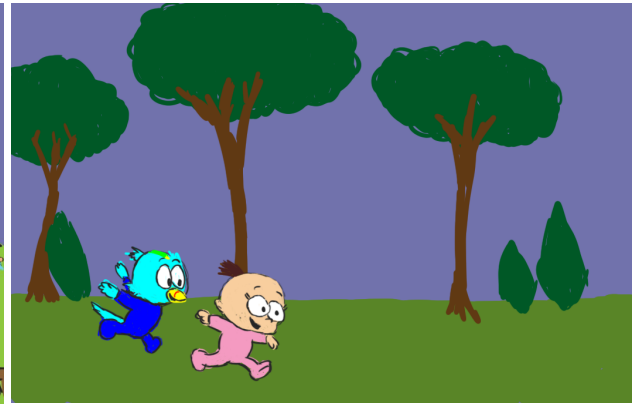
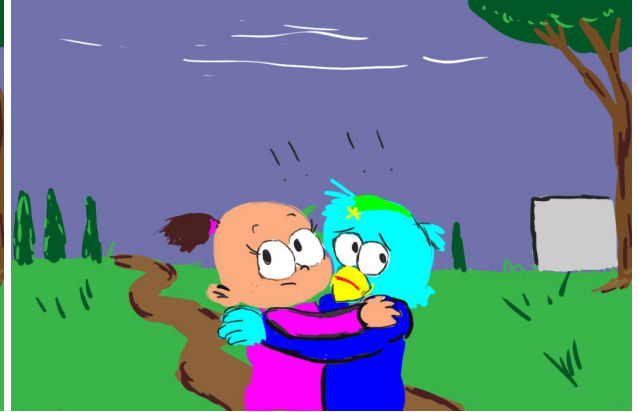
Oswald and his friends said their goodbyes and exited the house. All the way home, they chatted about what next year would be like. They found an answer to the ghost mystery but attending a party of ghosts was another story. Luckily, nobody was worried. Oswald knew that if they could handle one ghost, then they could deal with a whole houseful, too.

“What an adventure!” Kai exclaimed. “It was certainly epic.”

“It sure was thrilling,” Annabelle agreed. “We saw a real ghost.”

“I have to admit, it was astounding,” said Iris. “It was even better than I thought.”

“I can hardly wait for next Halloween,” Oswald proclaimed. “I bet our next encounter will be even more astounding.” Oswald looked and saw that his friends had the same thought on their minds.~



**Melissa
Mozurek**



How Disney Differs from Original Stories

By: Elise Mote

For as far back as we can remember, telling stories has been an important part of our history. Disney has taken some of those stories and has given them a new life. They've lately been making remakes of their most popular films and it's time to shine the light on the original stories. In this article I will be sharing the original story of Aladdin. The first movie was released in 1992 and became a very beloved film. What some people might not know is that Aladdin's story came from *The Arabian Nights* written in 1704 by Antoine Galland and Muhsin Mahdi. Many things were changed. Two of the biggest changes were that Aladdin was originally Chinese and that Jasmine was originally named Princess Buddir al Buddoors. Aladdin was around 15 years old and was extremely lazy and refused to work causing stress to his parents. His mother takes up weaving to help take care of the family and his father (a tailor) ends up dying of shame. One day Aladdin meets an African magician who pretends to be his father's brother and tricks Aladdin into getting the lamp that is in a cave full of traps. The magician gives him his ring that also holds a genie that is described as being gigantic, hideous, and less powerful than the genie of the lamp. Aladdin ends up trapped in the cave and rubs the ring that releases the genie inside. Aladdin is teleported home and tells his mother what happened, and she decides that they should sell the lamp, but before doing so she polishes the lamp releasing the genie inside of it. The most interesting part is that there were no limits to the amount of wishes he could make. Aladdin sees the Sultan's daughter (Badr al-Budurthe) at a bathhouse and spies on her and decides that he's going to marry her. Aladdin tries to convince her father by giving him lavish gifts, but the Sultan has her marry the vizier's son anyway. Aladdin then uses the genie of the lamp to kidnap the princess and her husband on their wedding night. After several nights of him trying to convince her to marry him, the princess (even though she didn't even care who she married) and her husband call off the marriage. Aladdin then tries to buy the Sultan's affections with gifts. In the end Aladdin does end up marrying the princess and has his happily ever after.

Many changes were made and definitely for the better. I definitely think the original Aladdin was much more on the stalker side and I would have loved to have been in the meeting when they chose this story to turn into a children's movie. Disney even made changes once again with the latest release by adding Prince Anders to be the potential husband for Jasmine and Dalia who is Jasmine's handmaiden and best friend. I highly suggest reading the original stories then re-watch the Disney versions.~~



The Scourge of Private Equity

By: Megan Cunningham

Back in a previous issue, I wrote how Hahnemann University Hospital's closure was part of a troubling trend relating to hospital closures across the country thanks to a for-profit healthcare system the United States has that shouldn't exist. Unfortunately, if you're wanting more healthcare rants, I regret to inform you that you won't find it here. And even more unsettling, Hahnemann's closure also reflects another but non-medical problem in our society that really deserves more significant attention since it might affect your job someday. Only this has more to do with its financial problems that led to its closure in the first place. In early 2018, a private equity firm Paladin Healthcare paid \$170 million to Tenet Healthcare to buy Hahnemann and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. Less than 18 months later, the owner placed both hospitals into bankruptcy. Fortunately, as of 2019, the latter was able to secure a \$65 million DIP loan to keep it open long enough to conclude the hospital's sale as a going concern. Of course, I need not mention what happened to Hahnemann.

But Hahnemann's closure brings a much-needed renewed focus on private equity's role in healthcare, two things that go together like a loaded nuclear weapon and a toddler. In 2018 alone, there were a 316 publicly disclosed private equity healthcare acquisitions with a total deal value in excess of \$63 billion, according to Bain & Company. We may never know the consequences resulting in private equity's push into healthcare. But from what we see from the financial troubles pertaining to St. Christopher's and Hahnemann, private equity shouldn't have even been allowed anywhere near an industry that serves the public interest and really shouldn't be a business.

When explaining economic concepts, one should do it in two ways: how it's supposed to work in theory and how it actually works. In the case with private equity, a PE firm's acquisition of a distressed and struggling company can lead to operational and financial improvements to increase performance, preserve jobs, and grow the business to profitability. On paper, this seems like a win-win. However, private equity firms often raise capital to fund an acquisition by causing the bought company to incur debt, potentially making it harder for an already distressed entity to survive. And, even if there's no new debt, a private equity investor's focus may or may not with the hospital's mission. This was certainly the case with Hahnemann since it served Philadelphia's low-income community. While private investors tend to demand high returns in a short time frame, which in healthcare, can pressure physicians to push for more expensive treatments over less profitable ones and pressure hospitals to rely on less-trained medical staff. Another concern in the Hahnemann closure is that many critics believe Paladin might've acquired the hospital for its real estate value due to its Central Philadelphia location near Temple University, making the land valuable for developers. Should Hahnemann's vulture capitalist owner can monetize the land the hospital sits, it might serve as a blueprint for other investors to attempt with struggling hospitals in gentrifying neighborhoods elsewhere in the country.

Nonetheless, healthcare isn't the only industry affected by private equity. As of October 2019, according to Bloomberg, there are over 8,000 PE-backed companies, almost double the number of their publicly listed counterparts. And since the 2008 recession, private equity has thrived with trillions of dollars in assets under its wing. Making billionaires out of many of its founders, their funds have snapped up businesses like pet stores, doctor's offices, and newspapers. While a PE firm can hypothetically turn a company around with outsize investment returns that can fund pensions and universities. But having once operated on the comfortable Wall Street margins, private equity is recently facing tougher questions from politicians, regulators, and activists. Even before the Hahnemann closure, private equity firms have had a rather shady reputations since they've been a major contributor to the "retail apocalypse" that drove stores like Toys "R" Us, Payless, Gymboree, and Sears in to bankruptcy along with hundreds of others.

So if you work for a company that's part of a PE portfolio, what can you expect? Research has shown that companies acquired through leveraged buyouts (LBOs) are more likely to depress worker wages and cut investments as well as pose a higher risk of bankruptcy. Private equity owners benefit through fees and dividends and leave the company to grapple with often debilitating debt that it may not be able to pay back. One of the most famous private equity disasters was what happened to Sears. Today while the old Kmart stores in Belle Vernon and Mt. Pleasant have been adapted into various businesses, the Sears at

Westmoreland Mall remains bare while cars fill its front parking spaces. Once a bastion in America's consumer-driven economy, hedge fund king Eddie Lampert ran this retail chain to the ground. Lampert arranged the Sears-Kmart merger and immediately started shifting revenue to shareholders and spent \$6 billion in stock buybacks to reward investors and raise the share price. More importantly, Lampert personally lent billions to Sears Kmart stores, increasing its corporate debt. As the company's in-store sales lagged, Sears sold off major assets like its Craftsman brand tools and Land's End outdoor equipment to pay for the loans. Lampert also split ownership of 266 Sears and Kmart buildings into a real estate investment firm called Seritage. In 2016, Sears and Kmart stores paid \$200 million in rent on these properties it once owned, eating up its operating revenue. In October 2018, Sears filed for bankruptcy.

Whether LBOs perform poorly because of debt, business strategy, or online competition, research shows they fare worse than their public counterparts. A July paper from California Polytechnic State University examined almost 500 companies taken private from 1980 to 2006, following both the LBOs and a similar number of companies that stayed public for 10 years. They found about 20% of PE-owned companies filed for bankruptcy-10 times the rate of those that remained public. Pile on debt, employees lose, communities lose, and the government loses because it now has to support the employees laid off. So who wins? The funds. Yet, research by the Center for Economic and Policy Research says the problem is too much leverage, pointing to a 2013-issued FDIC guidance stating that debt levels 6 times earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization or Ebitda, "raises concerns for most industries." While a 2019 McKinsey report shows median debt in PE-deals last year was just under 6 times the Ebitda threshold.

In July 2019, Democratic presidential candidate and Massachusetts US Senator Elizabeth Warren likened private equity to vampires. But her view isn't unique. Even among Wall Street companies, PE stands out as a symbol of inequality. Since the 1980s, income gains for the top 1% in the US have been rising at a faster clip than for lower groups. Since then, PE managers have steadily taken up a larger share of the highest income groups, including the richest 400 people. There are more private equity managers making at least an annual \$100 million than investment bankers, top financial executives, and athletes combined. PE firms' very structure is particularly profitable for the top managers since they don't just earn annual management fees, but also receive a cut in the profits. Beyond that, private equity may contribute to inequality in several ways. First, it offers investors higher returns than those available in public stocks and bonds markets. But if you want to enjoy the returns, it helps if you're already rich to begin with. Since private equity funds are open solely to "qualified" (i.e. high-net-worth) individual investors and to institutions like endowments. Only some workers get indirect exposure via pension funds.

Secondly, private equity puts pressure on the lower end of the wealth divide. Companies can be broken up, merged, or generally restructured to increase efficiency and productivity. Inevitably this means job cuts. As a result, PE accelerates job polarization, or job growth at the highest and lowest skill and wage level while the middle erodes. Unless you're working in job requiring a specialized degree, you will be in the lower rung. And when the company experiences some kind of restructuring drama and/or bankruptcy, your job will likely be on the line.

Not to mention the imperative to make highly leveraged deals pay off may encourage more predatory business practices and a more vulnerable economic landscape. As buyout titans have chased bigger and riskier deals, their target companies have been left with a more fragile balance sheet, giving management less room for error. This could set the stage for a rude awakening during the next recession. Loans to companies with especially high debt loads now exceed peaks in 2007 and 2014. And PE-owned companies carry a higher debt load relative to their earnings and offer less transparency on their financial position than other corporate borrowers. It's only a matter of time before the bubble bursts.~~

Blood Ties: Chapter VI, Pt.2

By: Jordan Watson

With everyone surrounding the circular table encompassing the custom-tailored dojo, Lucien supplies his guests with his specialty tea, as well a variety of sushi mixed with freshly cooked Chinese chicken. He allows them time to take their seats and gather their material to present before making his statement.

“Thank you all for coming. As some of you are aware, we went through a helluva lot last night on The West Bound Bridge. Before I get into the heart of the matter, I have to state this: if it weren't for Zhou's help, I would've been Swiss roadkill painted across the open highways.”

He takes a small moment to anxiously quench his thirst with tea, slowly letting the glass back down, before continuing with a newly stern tone.

“You see...my involvement in this case is...personal. As Zhou and Detective Mariska may have heard, I am looking for my quarry. Something that's more important to me than the company or myself. I've been on this case for the past year and a half now. It felt like I was running into a near frozen case. But last night...it became the key to what I was looking for. While the detective kept me from pursuing the matter any further, it took me some time to regain my composure, and think about the next course of action. Hence, why I decided to send you all the invitation to come on your own accord. The fact that you've all gone out of your way just to meet with me, proves that much. I won't lie, that incident on the bridge made me realize that being the lone wolf in a forest full of rabid bears will only get you so far...”

He pauses once more to eat a salmon roll and sip his tea before continuing.

“This is the part where I tell you all the sheer importance of this. I need your help. I *don't* say this lightly to most people. Not even to my own family. Should you decide to help me look for my quarry, I will not stop you. But be advised, we *will* likely be running into many more incidences like last night's. Most of you seem completely capable in being able to handle it. Otherwise, don't put your life in jeopardy, just for my sake.”

Lucien allows his guests time to mull it over. After nearly a minute goes by, Valerie unpacks her suitcase, revealing her notepad, several case files, and her laptop. While waiting for the laptop to boot up, she takes the time to go over her research based on Lucien's predicament.

“Preceding to last night's occurrence on the West Bound Bridge, I'd been investigating within the North Side on a similar case that might be connected to your quarry.”

She then opens up her web browser to show a map of Steelsvania, using the laptop's touch screen integration by circling the key points of the map to where these crimes took place.

“In the past year, there have been numerous young adult kidnappings within both East Germantown, and St. Marian's to the west of rural Steelsvania, with a total of 20 abductions, and counting. The majority of the sightings had been rumored to have started within Jimtown, which most of our SPD forces looked into soon after being given a tip from an anonymous caller. We figured if most of these guys were smart enough, they would've tried to cross Steelsvania lines outside of SPD jurisdiction. That got me thinking. What if the conduits' central hub were ever within, or outside state lines at all? Some holes in that story needed filled.”

She then shows her notes on interviews she had gathered from varying sources.

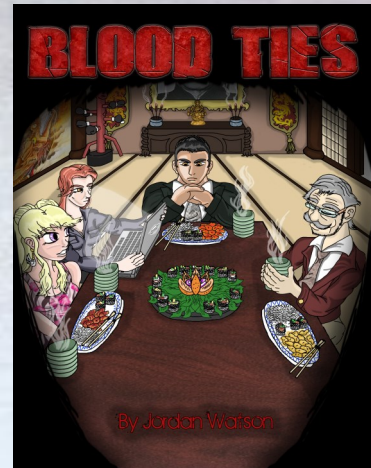
“I was going around downtown questioning those that might've known anyone connected to the kidnappings, including the curators from the annual Fall-estival event last night. Two of which I spoke with had some peculiar stories.”

She then pulls out the case files of the victims, and their family history.

“Amanda Connery, 19 years old. Her mother Susan is part of a farming complex whose agricultural rates were 70% higher than most other farms around Mt. Unity. Some say they're using her for ransom to have her mother comply with sending them half a million for 'research purposes.’”

She then uncovers the next folder.

“Whitney Heart, 21 years old. Her father, Emaurri, is a chemical engineer that apparently owed plenty to some foreign investors, to which the companies have yet to be determined. Same story as Amanda's, but they wanted 2 million for chemical warfare.”



Lucien's pondering pays off.

"It makes sense then. They're using my quarry to get to dad's investments."

"I figured the dots would've connected for you as fast as mine did."

Valerie then types in the web address to Zhou's music company.

"That's not all that I found. Just as I was about to head back to the office, there was another kidnapping that happened right in front of me, near one of the music booths at the Fall-estival. Mr. Stentson, As you are speaking on Zhou's behalf, but that very individual was her partner, wasn't it?"

"Correct, Detective Mariska. I am of the belief these culprits also wish to gain Mr. Zhou's funds in exchange for the life of Ms. Furus."

"Then we're all on the same page. To get to the source, we gotta discreetly hit the points they're using to make their 'deliveries.' Any info you all send my way will help this case greatly, not just for myself, but for all of us affected by these petty clowns."

Lucien manages to let out a breath of relief.

"Hah! And here I thought you were the typical fed with a chip on her shoulder. You do care sometimes"

"When a case *this* big falls on my face, even I'll admit when helping others is important. Though I'm gonna make this clear to you all...as I'm sure this goes without saying for you, Mr. Hartel. If any info leaves this room, to Zhou, 'Iron Diamond--'" She pierces her gaze towards Nina before continuing.

"--And any other party members involved, I not only will hold you personally responsible, but I will cuff you, and throw you in a cell faster than those kidnapers have time to rub one out. Make no misunderstandings about that."

Lucien then shrugs off her statement.

"Definitely goes without saying. Took the words right out of my mouth, minus the brutal remark."

Mr. Stentson lets out a small cough before addressing his concern to the stoic detective.

"If I may add to your aforementioned comment about the information regarding the locations of said operations to these hoodlums?"

"The floor's yours, sir."

"Zhou had taken liberties in reconnaissance shortly after delivering Mr. Hartel safely to his home. To his recollection in questioning certain party members of The Frowning Elk, the three checkpoints consisted of the bonfire community near Bandit Scharm, an abandoned warehouse just south of Homesfield, and Hanz Field itself. The previous two were merely misdirection to throw the trail off any attention from federal investigators. It turns out the row complexes near Bandit Scharm were condemned, with no internal routes to be found. The Homesfield warehouse is currently undergoing new renovations for a large shopping plaza. Construction had just begun two weeks ago, so there would be no reason to keep operations ongoing in such a public spot."

Lucien is shown in a half-somber contemplation.

"He's more thorough than I thought. So that leaves Hanz Field as the only spot left. But that doesn't make sense either. It's a public venue, even for the Steelsman training camps."

Nina then speaks up.

"Um, I don't mean to interrupt, but all this talk on public places, perhaps I can look into some other key areas like junctions near the Cubed Rivers, or even Kaytopia."

"The theme park?" Lucien suddenly perks up.

"It's a long shot, but nobody would suspect these operations to be near something so visible. Really puts things into perspective. Um, plus, I'm on good terms with some of the SPD, so I can cooperate with them--"

Valerie interjects on the matter.

"But you're still considered a vigilante by the rest of the SPD. If you're planning on doing that, stick with me or any of my guys that I can trust. We'll see to it that your reports remain anonymous."

Lucien begins to feel satisfied by the cooperation of his guests and is about to adjourn his meeting.

"This is great. Thank you so much for your help guys, it'll bring us one step cl--"

Lucien suddenly receives a phone call from his business associate above ground. It seems as if there's an issue...Possible leaked footage of them on the West Bound Bridge, from an unknown cameraman...

To be continued...~~

#SocialPitt: The 39TH Annual WPXI Holiday Parade

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

The 39th annual WPXI Holiday Parade was held on Saturday, November 30th, 2019 in Downtown Pittsburgh. The parade was televised live on WPXI-TV and was streamed live on wpxi.com and WPXI Now on streaming apps, and the WPXI Mobile app. Each year, the parade—that’s been a



part of an annual Holiday/Christmas tradition in the greater Pittsburgh area—has featured colorful floats, marching bands, specialty units, balloons, as well as national and local celebrities. Past WPXI Holiday Parade guests have included Usher, the Harlem Globetrotters, Former Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steeler running backs Franco Harris and “The Bus” Jerome Bettis; and Pittsburgh natives Maddie and Mackenzie Ziegler, Mia Zannotti and Chris Jamison, both of *The Voice*, Gabby Barrett of *American Idol*, Jackie Evancho, Daya, Christina Aguilera and Joe Manganiello.



This past year’s parade featured appearances by WPXI-TV Traffic Reporter Trisha Pittman, meteorologist Scott Harbaugh and “Pittsburgh’s Chief Meteorologist” Stephen Cropper; Victoria Piekut, Miss Pennsylvania USA 2020, Kiara Lin, Miss Teen Pennsylvania 2020; Pittsburgh-born actor and one of the stars of the hit NBC series *This Is Us*, Blake Stadnik, WQED-TV’s own Mr. McFeely, “Speedy Delivery” of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* and legendary documentarian, Rick Sebak. Other “famous” Pittsburgh faces that took part in the 39th annual WPXI Holiday Parade were mascots from Robert Morris, Penn State, Point Park University, the Washington Wild Things, Kennywood Park’s own Kenny Kangaroo, the Pittsburgh Penguins’ own Iceburgh, and the Pittsburgh Steelers’ own Steely McBeam. The parade also had performances by the Pittsburgh Steelers’ own Steelie band, the Bishop Canevin High School Marching Crusaders, the Black Berets, nearby West Virginia’s own Wheeling Park High School Chorus and Morgantown High School’s Marching Band, and a very special performance of “Gold in It” by Emmy award-winning recording artist, and Pittsburgh native, Frzy.



And like the 38 annual parades in the past, the headlining guest of the 39th WPXI parade was none other than—who else but—Santa Claus!~~

Madonna Inspired Artists of Today

By: Philip Andrew Wilsher

Grace Jones was famous for her youthful beauty back in the 70s when she appeared in the *James Bond* movies and *Conan the Barbarian* with Arnold Schwarzenegger as she also does make flamboyantly colorful music videos for people like Prince, David Bowie, Debbie Harry, Chrissie Hynde, Madonna, and Lady Gaga. Madonna was indeed a sacrilegiously rebellious female pop star. She paved the way for a lot of iconic pop stars like Britney Spears, Adele, Beyonce, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Nicki Minaj, and Lil Kim to name a few who were rather embracing the pop icon's symbol of being a goddess. I've known a lot of her earlier body of work is rather explicit and racier than some of what Lil Kim has named herself as. She is someone who has gone from each set of work to every pop star's inspiration. They named her as an icon for a reason. They all wished her congratulations to all of the pop icons that are around nowadays because we all had every pop icon embellish what the Queen of Pop lived to be known as. I love how sinfully adjusted Madonna became a rebelliously defiant Queen of Pop she was as actresses and male and female pop stars loved her music. She is the Controversial Queen of Pop.

I fell for her several different various times when she embellished herself as a goddess of pop and what she impressed many people with her major impressive skills in the community of dance-pop and synth-pop. She was intriguingly different as she rose to become inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. We admire and adore her for trying new things, even if she was trying to embellish herself as luridness and salaciousness became her symbol. New women in pop music, even Beyonce and Rihanna, learned from her, as well as Nicki Minaj, Ariana Grande, and Katy Perry. Most definitely Michael Jackson and Janet Jackson, as they were inspired by her, as well. These pop stars watched her jump from topic to topic learning every subject physically possible for the Queen of Pop to become something marvelous. I loved her music. She gives back to her community in Michigan. Music is eye-opening as it sells to every purchaser that wants to become a pop star like people in rock, pop, dance music, and country learned from her. I think she is the highest-selling female that taught others how to love their bodies and increase their confidence.~~



Creed, Chapter 10

By: Dmitry Harmon



Lilith and Annora stared at each other. Lilith was secretly playing the staring contest. In addition she was also playing the “first to speak” contest. She learned the silence contest from her father when it came to business. The first person to actually talk about business lost the contest. In the case of business if the man wanting to do business spoke first about the business it was viewed as much harder to obtain a contract. Whereas if the man who invited someone to discuss a future contract spoke first, it usually meant they were indeed sincerely interested. Such was the game here. If she wanted Annora to like her she would need to let her speak first.

Lilith was very determined to show no signs of weakness despite being quite nervous. After a few minutes of staring Lilith realized Annora was playing the staring game as well. This calmed her nerves significantly. When she was able to figure out they were both playing the same game as the other it told her the other individual was just as nervous. Then all of a sudden Annora gave a sigh and Lilith knew she had won the silence game.

“*Are you a stupid girl?*” asked Annora very sharply. Lilith was extremely taken aback by this question. It did not follow the rules of the game. Beside it being a rather rude question it did not follow the usual, *How do you do?*, or *What is your name?* types of questions. This

was a question that swung the silent game in favor of Annora, since it was very direct and had a confident way about it and Lilith realized that she had actually just lost the game and was back on edge.

“*I do not think so!*” exclaimed Lilith. Who was this girl and what was her problem?

“*Well then we shall see,*” replied Annora with smugness. Lilith had a bad feeling about this start to the conversation. “*If you can answer me these three questions correctly, then I will know you are not stupid.*” Lilith was very offended by this. She felt as if Annora was judging her and could not figure out why she was doing so. However, she remembered what her father had said.

“*Very well. I shall answer your questions. But no tricks.*”

“*I do not trick anyone. It’s up to them if they can figure out the answers. Ready for the first one?*” Lilith nodded.

“*Two men are eating plums. If the first gives the other two they will be equal, but if the second man gives the first man two the first man will have twice as many. How many plums does each have?*” This appeared to be a game. A game that Lilith felt she could win. However she still had to do math in her head. She had to determine how many plums there were in total to do the math.

After several minutes of silence Annora spoke up.

“*Do you give up yet?*” Lilith was staring at the rug trying to think.

“*What is wrong with you? You are staring off at the rug.*” Lilith was snapped back to reality. She was annoyed by this. Because of this comment she lost her train of thought.

“*You have to give me time to think if we are going to play this game,*” protested Lilith.

“*Fine. Very well. But know this: the longer you take the worse you look.*” All of a sudden Lilith figured it out. “*Mind you I am not going to ta--*”

“*I got it. I had to figure out how many plums total. There are twenty four plums total. The first man has fourteen and the second has ten. If the first gives the second two then they each have twelve. If the second gives the first two then the first will have sixteen which is double to eight.*” Lilith said all of this very quickly with a sense of triumph in her voice. Annora stared at her for about thirty seconds before replying.

“*Hmmp! Very good. That was an easy one. Right! Here is your second question. Two fathers and two sons caught three hares. Each got one. How is this possible?*” Lilith had to think about it for several minutes when the logical conclusion came to her.

"All the men are related. There are only three people. The first one to catch the first hare is the father of the second man thus making him his son. The third is the son of the second man who is the son of the first making him the grandson to the first and the son of the second man." Lilith felt that one was easier than math. Of course four people would not have been able to catch three.

"Well then I must say that is impressive," replied Annora. *"Second to last question. The Ducks fly. One ahead and two behind. One behind two ahead and one between two and three in a row. How many ducks total?"* Child's play. This was child's play. It was odd that the easiest one was coming later, Lilith knew the answer because she saw it in a child's book. It was all about the wording.

"Three ducks. One after another." Annora was looking at her both with suspicion and incredulity.

"Well I must say that answer came rather quickly. Last but not least, do you like ponies and ribbons?" Lilith was flabbergasted. What did that have to do with riddles. However, Lilith saw this as an opportunity to swing the tide in her favor.

"What does that have to do with the riddles you asked me?" asked Lilith sharply. Annora's tone changed drastically to a bit of a defensive form of mumbling.

"Nothing. I just want to see if you like the same things I like and hate the same things I hate." At this point, Lilith was pretty much done playing games; she knew she had won the ultimate game. She may have lost the silence game but she now realized that Annora was just as nervous as she was the whole time. But since it was her house Lilith understood the confidence in her voice when asking the riddles. She would have been more confident herself if it had been her house. But nonetheless, Lilith did understand much more now and knew that she was going to like this girl.

"You don't have to ask me if I like something. I like certain things and you may like them or you might not. By the way, I do not care for ponies. I like Horses. Secondly, I neither care for ribbons nor do I hate them. But if my mother tells me to wear a ribbon in my hair I will do so out of respect for her."

"I too like horses! I love ribbons in my hair but I don't wear them much because a boy at church keeps pulling them out of my hair," replied Annora. Lilith felt a sense of relief. She felt a connection about the horses.

"Why did you ask me those riddles?" asked Lilith.

"I wanted to make sure you were not a buffoon. My father says only buffoons do bad business. I never want to do bad business when my father's business is given to me."

"Well, what do you think. Do you think I am a buffoon?"

"Not at all. Hey, do you want to look at my dolls?"

"I love dolls. I have the Italian collection at home. Well almost all of them. I am missing one." Lilith was very excited. Dolls were her favorite toy. Annora's eyes were very big.

"You have most of the Italian collection!. You are so lucky I only have three French dolls."

"Which ones do you have?" replied Lilith. And with that Lilith was brought back to Doctor Wilford's Office. Her emotions were running very high.

"Doctor Wilford. Do you think I can have some English tea?"

"Of course! Of Course!" Doctor Wilford got up and made some tea. Lilith took this opportunity to grab her handkerchief out of her purse, dab her eyes and quietly blow her nose. ~~



Foodie Call

By: Zach Grabowski

The theme for the Pittverse Winter Issue's Foodie Call was "holiday foods." We held our writers Christmas party at SpectroDolce Confectioners in Monroeville. At the party we enjoyed some delicious holiday treats. We had pizza, chocolate-covered strawberries, and raspberry thumb prints. Everything was very tasty. I also got to enjoy the sounds of the season and camaraderie with some of my fellow *Pittverse* writers.~~



Mom's Homemade Apple Crisp Recipe

By: Joseph Cepek

- 3 lg. (large) baking apples (pared and sliced)
- ½ C (cup) of brown sugar
- ½ C of flour
- ¼ C of rolled oats (dried oatmeal)
- ½ teas, (Teaspoon) of nutmeg
- ¼ teas, of cinnamon
- ½ C of butter or margarine

Heat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Place the sliced apples in a greased (with vegetable shortening like the Crisco brand) square pan (8x8x2 inches). Blend the remaining ingredients until the mixture is crumbly. Spread over the apples.

Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until the apples are tender and the topping is golden brown.

Serve warm with whipped cream topping and/or ice cream.

Cool Whip brand whipped cream topping, for example, may be used to make the dessert even tastier.

Vanilla or French vanilla ice cream can be included in this delicious dessert, as well.

The before-mentioned delicacy can actually be enjoyed at any time of the year. ~~



Gingybread Man

By: Elise Mote

Ingredients

- 3 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons Ground Ginger
- 1 teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon Ground Nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon Pure Vanilla Extract

Decorations

- purple gumdrops
- gel food coloring, red and light blue
- Royal icing

Instructions

1. Mix flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg and salt in large bowl.
2. Beat butter and brown sugar in large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy.
3. Add molasses, egg and vanilla; mix well.
4. Slowly add flour mixture on low speed until mixed.
5. Press dough into a thick flat disk. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 4 hours.
6. Preheat oven to 350°F. Roll out dough to 1/4-inch thickness on lightly floured work surface. Cut out gingerbread men. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets.
7. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges of cookies are set and just begin to brown. Cool on baking sheets 1 to 2 minutes. Let cookies cool completely.
8. To decorate mix some of the icing to make it light blue, and red. Use the red for the mouth (make an open mouth smile), the blue for eyebrows, and white icing to add the rest of the design on the arms and legs. Use photo as a reference.

Store cookies in airtight container up to 5 days.~~





Foodie Call

“Hessian” Oreos



By: Amelia Krzton

With the holidays coming up, there is nothing like eating red and green foods, like Christmas cookies and candy canes. While they taste good, they are not necessarily very healthy for me. So, I have introduced a new treat called “Hessian” Oreos.

“Hessian” Oreos were named after the famous German soldiers that fought in the Revolutionary War. There are lots of different Oreos in all kinds of flavors, but sadly no “Hessian” Oreos. Heck, these are not even real Oreos, but instead, made out of healthy fruits like grapes and strawberries! They are my new side dish to my new Thursday lunch, which is ham and provolone cheese with mustard wrapped up in a corn tortilla.~~

Raspberry Almond Thumbprint Cookies

By: Elise Mote

Ingredients

For the cookie dough:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 cup seedless raspberry jam

For the glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2-3 teaspoons water, more or less as needed for drizzling consistency
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract (add more to taste if desired - I've used to up 1 1/2 teaspoons - substitute vanilla if desired)

Instructions

In a small mixing bowl whisk together flour, cornstarch and salt. In a large mixing bowl, combine the butter, granulated sugar and 1/2 teaspoon almond extract. Beat at medium speed until the butter mixture is creamy and light. Reduce speed to low and gradually add the flour mixture. Mix until well blended. Cover and refrigerate the dough for 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Shape dough into 1-inch balls and place 2 inches apart on the prepared pan. Keep remaining cookie dough refrigerated until needed. Make an indentation down the middle about halfway to the bottom with your smallest finger. Fill each one with a well rounded 1/4 teaspoon jam. Bake for 11 to 15 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Let the cookies stand 1 minute before removing to a cooling rack. Cool completely. Combine the glaze ingredients in a small bowl and whisk until smooth. Drizzle over cookies and allow them to set.

****Recipe Notes****

If your dough is dry and crumbly, try adding 1 tablespoon of butter to the cookie dough.
 Make sure the dough is well chilled before making the dough balls.
 Keep dough refrigerated between batches.
 Place dough balls on a cool baking sheet, or parchment paper so the cookies don't spread.~~

SpectroDolce Opens!

By: Zach Grabowski

Have you heard about Pittsburgh's newest place to grab a tasty treat? It's a new confectionery store that just opened on November 1, 2019 called SpectroDolce. This candy store is the first ever business run exclusively by adults on the Autism Spectrum. SpectroDolce is located in Monroeville, PA. You can purchase many different types of delicious mouthwatering candies, chocolates, fudge, and ice cream.

SpectroDolce is so incredibly unique. Who came up with this idea? A candy store that is run by adults with Autism? The answer to both of these questions is a company called Progress City. I had the opportunity to speak with their Executive Vice President, Brian Kluchurosky (*see photo*). Brian shared with me that their main focus is to close the employment gap for adults with Autism. SpectroDolce is part of the Autism Employment Network.

I recently visited SpectroDolce and must tell you, if you haven't tried it yet, you do not know what you are missing! I got a chocolate covered pretzel rod and it was excellent! The aroma alone will make you want to buy everything there!~~



Wine and Dine

By: Joshua Walburn

Saturday, November 2, 2019 began my first day at Walt Disney World in Orlando for their half-marathon, benefiting their Wine and Dine Food Festival in all of the world showcases at Epcot. We had to wake up at least two hours before dawn to catch our Orlando flight on Southwest. When I arrived at Orlando, I had to go to the expo. The event was at the main ESPN sports complex in one of their stadiums. I can often be dependable in regard to planning, schedule, and routine when having busy days.

The day after was the half-marathon race that I competed in. It was designed for slower-paced runners. Along the way are character greetings and runs through Animal Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, and Epcot. Some competitors are in costumes. Mine was in the outfit of Juju Smith-Schuster, an iconic wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

At the finish line, an announcer turned up the speakers, which echoed through the clouds and all over Epcot, and said that the Steelers will lose their next game. That gave me an overflow of endorphins, rushing through my neurons.

Moments after my crossing, I have proved that running helps me to keep my cool better. I've dealt with an anxiety attack of negative thoughts that was going to make me lose control. I immediately had to stop and think about my feelings for my intellectual break. I've thought about my neurological events and is continues to think about other ways I can do to remain as calm as possible, such as counting in random numbers or up to one hundred. I can use my observation of brain cell activity to determine my feelings and emotions, then sequence it by using 1-10 or 1-5 number lines and a spectrum to categorize my emotion control level.

The experiencing of riding some of the rides at three of the Disney parks and the Wine and Dine Food Festival is a celebration of me running half-marathons and by indexed mind. I ran the race to represent the industries of iron and steel. Running the half-marathon for me is a message that guides me to spread awareness and greater understanding of autism in benefits to advocacy, research, and education. My mission statement in running half-marathons is to send a powerful message at the local, state, and national levels that regardless if a person is autistic or not, it's okay because everyone's brain is different.

If anyone is interested in learning about autism, iron and steel industries, or half-marathons, they're welcome to reach out for me to learn about those topics.~~

Oakmont Bakery

By: Zach Grabowski

I had the pleasure of interviewing Sue Serrao, co-owner of Oakmont Bakery. Sue, along with her husband Marc, opened Oakmont Bakery on May 28, 1988. When I asked Sue how they got started in the bakery business, she told me that when Marc was thirteen years old, he worked at the Doughnut Shack in Penn Hills. He started off working in maintenance and then he became interested in the baking business. He worked as a baker in the bakery at the Doughnut Shack. He learned to make doughnuts, cakes, cookies, and other delicious pastries. He discovered he had a natural talent in art and decorating cakes and developed a strong passion for baking. He worked his way up to manager and stayed at the Doughnut Shack for several more years.



After working as a baker and manager at the Doughnut Shack, Marc and Sue had the opportunity to open a bakery in Warner Center in Downtown Pittsburgh. It was a Food Court Bakery that was only open for nine months before they ended up closing it. After the bakery in Warner Center closed, Marc worked as the bakery manager at the Foodland in Churchill.

Marc and Sue were told that Oakmont Bakery was for sale. They had looked at the bakery twice before making the final decision to buy it. The original owner of the Oakmont Bakery only owned it for eleven days before he died.

Oakmont Bakery has been in three different locations. Their first location was at the top of Allegheny River Boulevard in a 1200 square foot space. Their second location was on Allegheny Avenue in Oakmont. Their current location, which is also their biggest location, is located at 1 Sweet Street, Oakmont PA 15139. Marc and Sue enjoy owning the bakery together. Marc works at the bakery seven days a week. His days start as early as 3:30-4 every morning and works until 1 p.m. Usually, he will go home until he returns to the bakery at 4 P.M and works until 6 or 7 P.M. He typically works over 60 hours per week! Sue used to work 20 hours per week for only 2-3 days at their Allegheny Avenue location. Since they've moved to their new location earlier last year, she is working 40 hours per week, 5-6 days a week.

I had asked Sue to describe what life was like a year after Oakmont Bakery opened compared to what it was like this past year. She explained that it was much more stressful for her and Marc a year after the bakery opened because they only had eight employees. It slowly grew over the years and the bakery had just opened its new location on February 5, 2019 and now has 160 employees - all of whom are dedicated and committed! The bakery was overwhelmingly busy for two months at their newest location. The extra room at the new location is much more functional and flows so much better! Sue stated, "It was a blessing to them how busy the bakery was and how many people were excited about the new location!" She also said that people have been coming from all over the country just to visit their bakery.

Because Oakmont Bakery is so popular in Pittsburgh, I joked with Sue by asking if they had a vision or if they just wanted to "take over the world like Amazon." She laughed and explained that their vision is to "create delicious memories."

Oakmont Bakery is truly a family affair! Four out of their five children work at the bakery. Their three daughters, Stephanie, Angela, and Emily, as well as their son Tony and his wife Samantha all work there and their son-in-law is the manager. Their daughter Kristen, who does not work at the bakery, is a Special Ed teacher at Riverview School District. Marc's three sisters work at the bakery also: Marcia, Maria, and Ann. In addition to her family, Sue credits her wonderful and dedicated staff to the business's success!

I asked Sue how they manage to balance a bakery and family time. She explained that because most of their family works at the bakery, they are always together. Being able to work with her family and interacting with customers is her favorite part of the job! She also said that she has four grandchildren and that they always try to get together on Sundays for dinner.

Sue explained that the weekends are the bakery's busiest time of the week, but that is not the only thing in their lives. Marc and Sue belong to Amplify Church in Plum Borough and have been a part of their church for over thirty years. Marc serves as the Vice President and is on the Board of Directors at their church. They also volunteer for the Children's Ministry. In addition, the bakery gives weekly donations to the Rosedale Food Pantry in Verona.

I asked Sue how religion has played a part in their success. They start each day with prayer and pray for wisdom and guidance. They have a strong faith and believe that is the foundation for everything and why they are where they are today! They are very humble and feel blessed to have their business!

The bakery's number one seller during the Christmas season is their cookies. They sell an average of 100,000 baked good items a month, and December is their busiest month and they sell four times that amount. Oakmont Bakery's best seller is a cake called the "Oakmonter" which was invented by Marc six months after the bakery first opened. It is a layer of cheesecake, a layer of chocolate fudge, a layer of chocolate cake with a choc-

olate butter cream icing, drizzled with ganache, chocolate cherries and Hershey bars.

As it gets close to the holidays, Sue highly recommends that customers pre-order online or calling and ordering ahead of time. If you pre-pay for your order you can walk into the bakery and go to their "sweet line" and your order will be ready. It will save you time from having to stand in a long line since the bakery is very busy and crowded. It is also limited to what customers can order around the holidays, and they have to buy certain items they may want whenever they go in the bakery that they cannot order.

Sue loves her desserts and prefers to eat dessert before dinner. Each season, her favorite item changes. My favorite baked good at Oakmont Bakery is the Paczki's. Paczki's are Polish doughnuts that are made at Easter time. They come in a variety of flavors that include white cream, chocolate cream, custard, coconut, cookies and cream, and fruit filling. My all-time favorites are the Pittsburgh Paczki's which are filled with white cream and the Oakmont Paczki's which are filled with chocolate cream. My dad and I go to Oakmont Bakery every year at Easter and we buy their famous Paczki's, the bakery's best seller. If you are ever looking for a good pastry to try, I would highly recommend heading to Oakmont Bakery!~~

Awards

- Best Leadership award in 2009
- Retail Bakery of the Year award in 2010
- Best Bakery in America award in 2013
- Best Bakery and Best Desserts in Pittsburgh award in 2017
- Best Doughnuts in Pittsburgh award in 2019

Pittverse Halloween Party

By: Zach Grabowski

For the *Pittverse* Fall issue's Foodie Call, we had chosen "spooky foods." We had a Halloween party it was a lot of fun. We played some games and enjoyed pizza and some delicious Halloween treats. I made "witches brooms." They are very simple to make. The ingredients are pretzel sticks and mini peanut butter cups. You take a pretzel stick and stick it in the center of the mini peanut butter cups. That's all there is to it. They are really good!~~



How a Blizzard Develops

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

Before I talk about how a blizzard develops, it is very important to become familiar with the basic weather terms. There are two types of cold fronts which cross throughout the United States. Cold fronts that come from the Pacific Ocean are usually mild and wet. Cold fronts, that come from Northern Canada transport bitter cold air into the United States from the Arctic. During the wintertime, the cold fronts usually drive farther southward than the summertime. Cold fronts have a triangle symbol on the weather map. When a cold front approaches your area, clouds rise higher up in the atmosphere than a warm front. Heavy precipitation will fall on your town. On the other hand, when warm front rises over a cold front, long periods of rain and freezing rain may likely develop in your region.



A low-pressure system is air that blows counterclockwise. The air pressure resembles an ice-skater turning around in a circle. Clouds are able to rise to form raindrops and snowflakes. During a low-pressure system, the isobars are closer together than in a high-pressure system. The closer the isobars are together, the heavier rain and snow in your town. However, when the air is unable to expand, clouds are unable to produce in the sky. A high-pressure system will likely bring nice tranquil weather to your town. Before a blizzard strikes in your area, it is necessary that everybody follow these recommendations from the Tragic Website. A family needs to stock up on 3-5 days of non-perishable food before a blizzard comes to your town. A mom needs to buy extra food and diapers before a blizzard arrives to your area. Before a blizzard comes to your town or city, it is very critical that everyone have 5-7 days supplies of prescription on hand. During the winter of 2014-15, the city of Boston received a record snowfall of a107.6 inches from several blizzards.

You need one gallon of water for each day that the power goes out in your neighborhood. In addition, you should insert fresh pair of batteries for every flashlight in your home in case of a power outage. Buying an electric radio is essential to listen for emergencies updates for power interruptions. Buying a propane generator will keep your house warm if the power goes out after a blizzard.



U.C.A.R. Center for Science Education defines the following criteria for a blizzard: One, the winds must gust over 35 miles or greater for least three hours. The visibility must be $\frac{1}{4}$ for public to view outside

Mel Goldstein wrote the Complete Idiots' Guide to Weather. The author of the book has a doctorate degree in the field of meteorology. Rocky Mountain and upper Mid-Western blizzards are the first types of blizzards. Before a Rocky Mountain Blizzards, the temperatures may likely reach over 60 or 70 degrees. Cool Pacific air collides with the polar jet stream. In front of the Arctic Front, warm air meets from the Gulf Stream to form a cyclonic low-pressure system. The isobars are very compact around the low-pressure system. The low-pressure system pulls out of the Rocky Mountain States and moves up towards the Northern plains states as a blizzard. The next day of a blizzard, the temperature will likely plummet below 20 degrees with high winds and low visibility contrast in air temperatures are the main ingredients in developing a blizzard.

Scientists can demonstrate this scientific theory with this experiment. If I pour a boiling of water outside in zero degrees, a large vaporization of steam will likely rise from the ground.

The next type of blizzards that occasional develop are the Northeaster that travel along the East Coast of America. When a strong low-pressure system reaches the Mid-Atlantic coast of America, it will likely explode into a cyclonic low due Warm Ocean from the Atlantic. As a result, the norther high will block the low-pressure system from leaving the coast. The Northeaster will bring 50-60 mile hour winds along the Atlantic Coast. Huge waves will battle the coastline and knock out power. Heavy snow and wind will fall inland. On the backside of the low-pressure system, extremely bitter cold air will drop temperatures to near zero degrees with blowing snow.



Before a blizzard comes to your area, it is essential to buy non-perishable food at the store. It is also crucial to have several days' worth of prescription medications available in case there is a power outage. Knowledge plays a major role in protecting your life and property in a blizzard.~~

This new chapter,
flipped through the pages of life,
the telling of a new story,
given as an inspiration,
to tell others,
about the lessons of life,
pleasure abundant,
a good read,
one of a kind,
a gem,
a storyline of epic proportions,
one that cannot be beat,
your beginning,
your end,
storytelling of unique features,
truth throughout the story,
fans abundant,
series of class,
setting of progress,
words put into pictures,
perspectives on good and bad,
the final decision made,
the end.

By: Paul Lechevalier

The Beast

By: Eliot Hinton

She knew what Hell was, for she had been there all her life.

She did not know her name, where she came from, or where she was. She knew not when she had been dressed in fine, lacy clothes, nor why her hair was always done up in elegant curls. She simply sat and waited in a soft, colorful prison. The room was huge yet felt so suffocatingly small. Its walls were bright, almost glowing with a nauseating magenta hue that made her want to gag. It was always a mess, with junk scattered all over the floor and on the wide floor and massive bed. Others were there too, but none of them could speak. All of them were mute, still, and lifeless, but their big, beady eyes seemed to speak a silent language that only they could understand.

Then there was the beast.

It was a truly frightening thing, with a loud, shrill shriek that seemed to hang in the air for hours at a time. It stomped around and scooped her up in its disgusting, pale arms. It swung her around and smacked her with its slimy lips, only to toss her aside and inflict the same torture on another unfortunate prisoner. She wanted to scream at it, punch it, kill the monster and escape, but there was nothing she could do. She couldn't move, or scream, or fight back. She was completely at its mercy, and she knew that. She was just a toy for the beast's amusement. It seemed that the beast enjoyed tormenting her the most.

Out of all the others, it chose her. It loved stroking her curly hair with its grotesque, sticky fingers and cradling her like the helpless toy that she was. She was its favorite. Perhaps it was because of her beauty, or the way her skin remained pristine and porcelain no matter what it was put through. Nobody could deny that she was beautiful, and the monster knew that very well.

The beast would squeal as it wrapped her body in scratchy, uncomfortable rags and crush her with its weight. Her arms burned in agony as it lifted her up by the hands and spun her around carelessly, threatening to pop her arms out of their sockets. Sometimes, the beast would be joined by another creature similar to itself, and the other would sometimes bring its own thing to abuse along with her. The two monsters would cackle and howl as they attacked her, swung her around, and treated her like nothing more than an object. When the two captives locked eyes, that silent language was nothing more than cries for help. But nobody came.

One day, however, something happened.

The beast was too rough. Its shriek was heavy and distraught. Her arms finally popped out, but it didn't hurt. As she stared the beast in the eyes, she realized that it was no beast. She found that she was staring into the teary eyes of a little girl, mourning over the loss of her favorite doll.~~

Sometimes I Wonder

By: Ginger Reynolds

Sometimes I wonder what life would be like if I was never born. Sometimes I wonder if all promises were made to swarm. Swarm around the hearts that deserve it. Swarm around the lives that deserve it, the ones that want to quit. Sometimes I wonder if life is really worth it. Is life really worth it, or should I just quit? Quitting isn't always easy. You can be hugging someone and suddenly you don't want any more squeezing. Sometimes I wonder if I am really happy or if this is all fake. I smile every day, but every night I cry what feels like a lake.

This just might seem like an ordinary day to some. But to others this might be a cry for help. Like to some people like my mum. Sometimes I wonder is god real? If god is really real, why won't he give the homeless a never-ending meal? Sometimes I wonder if a car is really worth driving. Because at the end of the day, many are left crying. Sometimes I wonder why I wonder so much. Like I wonder about zebras, pickles, and such.

Sometimes I wonder why women are so emotional. Sometimes I wonder if there's something for me out there, or is it really all fictional? There could be another life out there for me and a person I could really be. I wonder if that person is better than me. I wonder if I will ever be that person. Maybe, just maybe there's something else out there. Something else bigger than this life. I wonder if my intelligence could be sharper than a knife. These are the type of things other people don't know that I think about. I wonder if deep down inside of me, there's just a scared girl scout. Sometimes I wonder if I will ever have real friends. If my friends, in the future, will be by my side until the end. Friends that will have my back. Sometimes I wonder if my friends ever ran track. I think about strange topics daily and I wonder why I'm wired differently. Sometimes I wonder if I was "normal" at birth, but somehow changed later. Sometimes I wonder if I could have been a skater. Sometimes I wonder why everyone has to have a hater. Sometimes I wonder if I could look someone in the eyes and say, "see ya later!"

Sometimes I wonder if trying is better. Better than not trying at all. Sometimes I wonder if I could write a letter. The letter would be anonymous. Sometimes I wonder if anyone really listens when I talk. Maybe the people I'm talking to just wonder, in their heads, if I'm ever just going to walk away and never say anything to them as I pass. Sometimes I wonder what it be like if I was a dog. Would I just bark all day? Or would I even be able to think about god? A lot of questions pop up in my head. Like where would I be or who would I go to if I wasn't me?

Sometimes I wonder how the almighty and powerful god made this world. If he only had a picture in his mind, I wonder if he just thought about the sea and it showed up. I wonder if he said out loud that the sea will be blue and it suddenly appeared. Sometimes I wonder why god didn't make things different. I wonder why he didn't make dogs with red antlers, but he put them on deer. Sometimes I wonder why he chose me to be saved. He created this world and everything in it. I wonder why he chose certain things to look a certain way.

Sometimes I wonder why god made snow cold. Why is the sky blue? Why is anything the way it is? Why did he choose his son to save everyone? I guess I won't know everything that I wonder. Maybe I can read about the things I've talked about today and get some of the answers that way. Reading is an excellent source of knowledge. That concludes this article of some things I wonder about and why. Until next time, my name is Ginger Reynolds. Stay tuned for further articles about life and things that interest me.~~

Do We have Time to Meet with a Union Organizer?

By: Kenneth Miller

We're all so busy. What's supposed to happen at those meetings? Have you ever been at a meeting of equals? Where there is no teacher and no boss, no preacher man? Who speaks first? About what?

Maybe there is a cookie cutter solution. Sign a card. Let the legal stuff, it is called the National Labor Relations Board, work itself out. Or we might have to disassemble the whole rotten system with our fingertips.

These assertions that this union or that union is "democratic"- you've never been a part of an organization that was democratic in your life You wouldn't know what democracy looks like if it marched through the concourse.

And our coworkers—they're all in different stages of life. Each person is consumed with struggles that you don't even know about and feeling so alone. Come on, you do recognize yourself in that other person? What we have in common is that we work here for \$13 an hour. Is that all we have in common? Is that enough? There is more, much more that we have in common. We don't even know who pays us. Really we don't. We are told different things each day of the week.

Safety first.

I'll tell you what is most important to me, that with a union we could actually defend one another's free speech at work. Our workplace could become a place where we are empowered to stop wars, or give wings to a political candidate or stop the implementation of some other terrible new technology that is bad for workers and passengers. Or the lowest common denominator would be fine... \$15 an hour. For everyone. We don't have to settle for anything less for any person here. There is no one here that can afford to work for less than \$15.

How long is this meeting going to take? What is it going to be like to have meetings that don't end perfectly? We are going to have to own imperfect solutions. Really, how long is this meeting going to take and what are we going to do between meetings?

Are you serious? People don't do that.~~

American Girl: A Year of Slumber Parties Review: Part Three

By: Amelia Krzton

Here are four more slumber parties for the months of September, October, November, and December that I hope you guys will like. My imaginary friends from the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Point Breeze, Abigail, Samantha, Hannah, and Jill, will host these parties.

The oldest Mifflin sister, Abigail, hosted the first slumber party of the fall session back in September. She hosted the Bookworm Blast. Decorations included a Book Lover Banner and Little Libraries. Food and drink included Bookworm Sandwiches, Alphabet Punch, and a Sweet Search. The craft was an Easy Reading Pillow. The games were Name That Book and Storyteller Ball. The favor was Book Jar Bookends, and the next morning, Abigail and her friends discussed Books for Breakfast. Then, Samantha hosted the Pumpkin Palooza in October. Decorations included a Pom-Pom Garland and Friendly Faces. Food and drink included Pumpkin Pie Smoothies and Pumpkin Fruit Cups. The craft was Pumpkin Painting Stations. The games were Pumpkin Hunt, Pumpkin Playoff, and Pass the Pumpkin. The favor was Pumpkin Marshmallow To-Go Treats, and the next morning, there were Pumpkin Pancake Poppers served for breakfast. Next, Hannah hosted the Forest Friends Fest in November. Decorations included Felt Feathers and Painted Pinecones. Food and drink included Chewy Trail Mix Bars, Acorn Snacks, and Caramel Apple Cider. The craft was a Felt Pinecone Owl. The games were Walk in the Woods and Woodland Animals Photo Booth, which also served as a craft. The favor was Fox Favor Bags, and the next morning, there was Owl Breakfast Toast served for breakfast. Jill will host the final slumber party of the year, the Let-It-Snow Sleepover, on December 7. Stay tuned for details on this upcoming party!~~

Skidmore's SF Spotlight
The Obscure Masters
E.M. FORSTER: The Unassuming Prophet

EDWARD MORGAN FORSTER (January 1, 1879--June 7, 1970) was a British novelist primarily noted for his tales of late Victorian/early Edwardian life, told in such novels as *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, and *A Passage to India*. He also wrote short stories, articles, and poems, mostly set in everyday reality.

But in 1909, Forster unwittingly laid down the foundation for the science fiction genre, in particular the sub-genre known as "futuristic dystopia," as well as the accurate rise in advanced technology. These concepts were encapsulated in his highly acclaimed and influential short story "The Machine Stops."

First published in November 1909, Forster predates such tales as *Brave New World*, *Metropolis*, Logan's Run, and the Rush song 2112, with the story relating how most of humanity has lost the ability and desire to live on the Earth's surface (ostensibly due to either a plague or massive man-made holocaust), retreating to caverns below the surface. All needs are met by a highly advanced computer simply called the Machine.

The story's main protagonists are a mother and son named Vashti and Kuno, who live on opposite ends of the planet. Communication is done through "special screens" provided by the Machine. Here is where Forster makes his eerily accurate technological foresight; the "special screens" are in fact the seeds of instant messaging and video conferencing now common in our own everyday lives, whether for good or ill.

As with most dystopian science fiction, Forster makes a dire warning about humanity's over-reliance on technology. At the end of the tale, the Machine (which had been made into a deity) ceases functioning and causes great distress on the agitated human race, but humanity makes a vow to never make the works of Man into a God.

When E.M. Forster first published the story, readers of his day dismissed the tale as a burst of cheap whimsy and derivative of H.G. Wells. Were his readers of 1909 alive today, none would be laughing . . . and none of us are laughing now, either.

E.M. Forster called this shot all along . . . ~

Intelligent Lives Commentary

By: Nathaniel Geyer

As the President-elect of the Capital Region Civitan Club, I was invited to attend a showing of the documentary *Intelligent Lives* and was provided some questions as a panelist. In the movie, the narrator stated that 49 out of 50 states still uses intelligent testing as one of the tools to determine whether a person with intellectual disability (ID) and/or autism spectrum disorders (ASD) carries the label. After diagnosis only 17% of students with ID are included in regular classrooms. Moreover, just 15% of the 6.5 million United States Citizens with ID and ASD are employed. Clearly, intelligence testing has stigmatized the three individuals to a life of poverty and employment options at higher education are scarce. Statewide, Pennsylvania is doing very little to help and assist these students to obtain their dreams. That being said, the view only sampled three students who volunteered to be reviewed and may not be reflective of the ID and autism community.

I am an adult mentor for people with ID and/or ASD; as somebody who scored in the lower percentile of these tests, I have a strong distain that they are biased against people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. The rationale is that they were only piloted using neurotypical whites and do not account for other populations with the same precision and accuracy. Fortunately, I recognized the biases of these tests and found creative solutions on how to mitigate the limitations. For example, in a standardized test for math in 6th grade I scored low and took remedial math in 7th grade but had a very compassionate teacher who give me 100% in all my homework and tests. By high school I took the advanced math a year beyond and by 12th grade I took statistics and calculus at a local community college and was no longer deficient in math. I now work as a spatial epidemiologist who uses advanced mathematics on a regular basis. The take home lesson for me is that standardized tests are not a life or death sentence and even low scores can do well with reasonable accommodations for the short-term and will achieve self-sufficiency in the long-term. In all my mentees, I stress the person's strengths. I am hopeful that with showings like *Intellectual Lives*, that people have better adaptive empathy for people with ID and/or ASD.~~

PITTSBURGH COLLEGE ROUNDBALL ROUNDUP: PITT AND ROBERT MORRIS



Story and Photos by Robert Hester

Other than football and hockey, the start of November in Western Pennsylvania symbolizes the annual beginning of a beloved sports pastime, College Basketball. Two teams in Western PA that began their seasons with aspirations of joining the “madness” that is March Madness are these NCAA Division 1 Men’s Basketball teams: the Pitt Panthers, and the Robert Morris Colonials.

Pitt, who plays in the ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference), one of the toughest conferences in all of College Basketball, started their season at the Petersen Events Center on November 6th, 2019 with a 63-61 victory over ACC rival, the Florida State Seminoles. Typically and traditionally, NCAA conference play starts after Christmas. But ACC conference play started early this season thanks to the premiere ESPN’s new network ACCN, ACC Television Network. The Pitt-Florida State game aired on ESPN’s ACCN. In their next game, Pitt fell to Nicholls State at home, 75-70, and fell 68-53 to one of their non-ACC arch rivals, the West Virginia Mountaineers, in the 187th edition of the Backyard

Brawl. Pitt hasn’t beat WVU since the two teams were Big East conference rivals on January 30th, 2012—the Panthers defeated the Mountaineers 72-66 that day at the WVU Coliseum in Morgantown, WV. After the loss to WVU, Pitt would go on to win four-straight games—all a part of the Rocket Mortgage Fort Myers Tip-Off Tournament. In the first two games of the tournament, Pitt defeated Monmouth, 63-50; and Arkansas-Pine Bluff, 66-41—both of those games were played at the “Pete”. Pitt then traveled to Fort Myers, Florida and won the tournament by defeating Kansas State, 63-59; and Northwestern, 72-59.

Robert Morris plays in the NEC (Northeast Conference). Unlike the ACC, the NEC is not one of the toughest conferences in all of College Basketball, but it is one of the most competitive. Unlike Pitt, RMU started their season on a very rough note, losing five of their first six games. They started the season taking part in the MABC Invitational on November 7th, 2019 in Huntington, WV with a 67-60 loss to the Marshall Thundering Herd. A couple of days later, they lost by a whopping 97-52 to (not surprisingly) the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame, one of Pitt’s ACC rivals, in South Bend, Indiana. RMU didn’t get their first win of the season until November 15th in Toledo, Ohio when they won 85-65 over the Howard Bison. They next day, they lost 70-56 to the tournament’s hosts, the Toledo Rockets. The next two games would both end in losses on the road; 72-62 to the UIC Flames in Chicago, and 66-62 to the Marquette Golden Eagles in Milwaukee, WI.



So far this season, the only good thing about the Colonials is that they’re playing a new season in a new home. Built on the site that was their old home, the Charles L. Sewall Center, the UPMC Events Center played host to its first-ever basketball contest on November 12th, 2019. The team RMU welcomed to help christen their new \$50 Million-Dollar digs as their opponent was (you guessed them) Pitt. Like WVU has against Pitt over the last few years, Pitt has had their way time, and time again against RMU. In their five previous games against Pitt dating back to 2006, the year they first played against each other, RMU had never defeated Pitt; and not even the opening of their new building couldn’t break that old habit. The Panthers left RMU’s new UPMC Events Center with a 71-57 victory over the Colonials. Two weeks later, Robert Morris finally earned their first-ever win in their new building on November 27th when they defeated Beaver County’s Geneva Golden Tornadoes, 102-62.

Here are some players to look out for on Pitt and Robert Morris this season:

PITT PANTHERS

- JEFF CAPEL: Head Coach
- XAVIER JOHNSON: Guard/Sophomore
- TREY MCGOWENS: Guard/Sophomore
- AU'DIESE TONEY: Guard-Forward/Sophomore
- JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Guard-Forward/Freshman
- CURTIS AIKEN JR: Guard/ Redshirt Freshman
- KENE CHUKWUKA: Forward/Senior
- TERRELL BROWN: Forward-Center/Senior
- ANTHONY STARZYNSKI: Guard/Senior
- SAMSON GEORGE: Forward/Junior
- RYAN MURPHY: Guard/Junior

ROBERT MORRIS COLONIALS

- ANDY TOOLE: Head Coach
- JON WILLIAMS: Guard/Senior
- JOSH WILLIAMS: Guard/Junior
- DANTE TREACY: Guard/Sophomore
- JALEN HAWKINS: Guard/Sophomore
- AJ BRAMAH: Guard/Junior
- TERRELL BROWN: Guard/Freshman
- DESHAWNDRE WASHINGTON: Guard-Forward/Freshman
- CHARLES BAIN: Forward/ Junior
- YANNIS MENDY: Forward/ Senior
- CAMERON WILBON: Guard/Sophomore

Our #PittversePride will talk about RMU's #ColonialPride this season with a story by this reporter on Robert Morris's entire 2019-2020 season for the Spring, 2020 issue. Until then, please check out reporter's/photographer's coverage of Robert Morris's home games at the new UPMC Events Center on Pittverse's Instagram page: @Pittverse. I'm looking forward to seeing how this season for the Colonials turns out in person as an RMU beat writer/photographer for *Pittverse!*~~



Staying Sane on the Spectrum

By: Delaine Swearman

The year was 1987. I was seven years old and had just returned home from school. Earlier in the day I had taken a spelling pretest which would determine whether I needed to study this week's "regular" words, or whether I could study the "challenge" words for the final test later in the week. I had misspelled the word salad, spelling it, S-A-L-E-D. I was devastated. This was the first, and would be the only spelling word, that I missed on a pretest for the entire year...and I still remember my error 32 years later.

Upon arriving home, I discovered my neighbor at the table having tea with my mother. She greeted me warmly and asked how my day was at school. Despite having kept my composure for the entire day thus far, my demeanor immediately changed. "Terrible! I failed my spelling test," I screamed, and I ran out of the room as I burst into tears.

After a good cry in an adjacent room, I was able to calm down, and I overheard my neighbor say to my mother, "Delaine is the most stressed out second grader that I've ever met."

In early 2010, at the age of 30, I found out why I was so stressed out back in second grade. This is when I was formally diagnosed with autism, a factor associated with decades of stress, all of which had taken a huge toll on my mental health. And since my diagnosis, I have gradually come to understand those vulnerabilities related to autism. I have learned important strategies that I can use to take care of myself.

So what are SOME of the vulnerabilities of being autistic that can play a role in mental health?

Let's start with: social isolation, loneliness, feeling disconnected, being ostracized and bullied, misunderstanding one's motives, difficulty getting or maintaining a job, inadequate supports, feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of being "normal," and sensory, emotional, cognitive, or empathy overload.

One also must constantly deal with the anxieties and frustrations related to autistic thinking patterns. For example, handling changes in routine or coping in situations where decisions might not be fair and answers are incorrect.

Some of these vulnerabilities appear earlier in life and others might pop up later. I was not diagnosed as autistic until adulthood, but I definitely felt a sense of isolation and was ostracized even as a young child. Problems with misunderstandings, maintaining a job, and a need for more support did not become apparent until adulthood, and those issues, along with serious mental health struggles, led to my eventual diagnosis.



There are a few specific vulnerabilities that I'd like to address, as well as some helpful suggestions to managing them.

SOCIAL ISOLATION
LONELINESS
FEELING DISCONNECTED
BEING OSTRACIZED

As a child I intuitively knew that I was different. I felt like the "Ugly Duckling." I learned the technique of "camouflaging" or "masking" early on. In public, I put on my mask and was an actress, trying my best to mimic the other kids, to show interest in what they liked, to talk as they talked, in hopes that they would invite me into their group. It worked, somewhat. But it is incredibly tiresome to act all day. When I got home at the end of the school day, I was on the brink of a

meltdown. To fit in with co-workers as an adult, I was constantly trying to maintain my “act” and didn’t have adequate downtime. As a result, my mental health had deteriorated to a point of crisis.

Camouflaging is definitely useful in certain social situations, but it has to be used in small doses. I was not being authentic when I was camouflaging. The goal should be to get comfortable with oneself and with others so that there is no need to camouflage. As I am more comfortable with myself and sharing my autistic identity, I find this becoming easier.

It is also easier to be yourself in a setting that isn’t face-to-face. There is no burden of eye contact, awkward pauses, misheard statements, or expectation of an immediate response. I’ve made connections and feel less isolated and lonely now that I frequently communicate with people online through facebook groups and via email and text.

In addition to my online friends, I have met others locally to participate in activities through Meetup.com by searching topics of interest such as “hiking” and “free events.” Even though I do not have deep relationships with any of the people in these groups, I do feel accepted and less isolated when participating in group activities.

FEELING OVERWHELMED BY THE EXPECTATIONS OF BEING “NORMAL” OVERLOAD OF ALL TYPES

The answer to all of these is to take a break. Autistic people NEED downtime. We need unstructured time with no expectations of social interaction. This time is as vital as food and water. I am not so-called “normal;” I am autistic, and my brain is wired differently than a non-autistic brain. It gets overloaded easily and it needs recovery time to reboot.

I purposely schedule all appointments and activities with at least an hour or two in between, never back-to-back. If I must participate in a conference or holiday event or am otherwise engaged for an extended period of time, I will keep the entire day free to “recover” afterwards. I give myself permission to leave an event when I’ve had enough. Like camouflaging, not having enough downtime, has devastating consequences on mental health, both in the short term and long term.

EVERYDAY ANXIETY AND FRUSTRATION RELATED TO AUTISTIC THINKING

I’ve gradually come to build self-awareness. I am able to tune into my own emotional climate. When I realize that I’m getting increasingly frustrated about a situation or stuck on an issue, I know that it’s time to take a break.

This goes along with managing emotions. Autistic people experience emotions at the extremes. Disappointments are devastating and good news makes me ecstatic. My entire body will vibrate with strong emotions. I manage strong emotions best when given private time and space to process what’s happening. At a time when I am fuming mad, I might scream and get stuck in a spiral that goes nowhere. Alternatively, I could start writing furiously or go for a walk, sorting arguments in my head. When I’m given the time and space to write or walk, my body calms, my thinking slows, and I start processing information so that I can handle the emotion and take the necessary next steps.

It’s also important to educate others and advocate for my own needs. It’s not fair that I should always have to assimilate to a non-autistic “normal”. However, it’s partly my fault if I continue to be miserable if I don’t speak up. If I’m at an event and the music is too loud, I can tell someone that I have sensory issues and that loud music is a problem for me. Likewise, I can educate others about my preferred communication methods and need for regular breaks or advance notice of changes.

Being autistic can definitely be stressful. Before I was first diagnosed at the age of 30, I struggled with managing my mental health more than necessary, simply because I didn’t know that I was autistic. Almost ten years later, I still face many of the same vulnerabilities as before, but I’ve come to understand and accommodate my autistic needs. Hopefully, I’ve shared some useful strategies that others can use as well.~~

Frosted

By: Jordan Watson

The winter winds blow frigid and roaring, all throughout the land of Maine. Where we're shown the spectacle of its town Belfast, and its festivities to reign. They celebrate a holiday unlike any we have ever seen. Where they ski, sled and all, with its history to set the scene. Schetunn is a time where citizens honor their roots, both fictional and local. They sculpt with the snowfall of the land, to commemorate their memory, as is essential. Belfast High is no stranger to the holiday, as they get into their spirit. Three girls shall tell this story, all varying in merit. They walk in stride through their snowy town, shifting in demeanor and looks. One is haughty, the other is caring, and the last is quietly reading her book.

Rebecca cares more about her appearance as cheerleader captain, to impress her man, Carter. She goes on about her latest rally, to show the football team's spirit like a hammer. Jen states she should change the subject and talk about the matter at hand. She suggests they focus their efforts on the school project for Belfast's memorial land. Tiffany walks leisurely behind them, nary paying them any mind. She takes in her surroundings, in between her book, letting her thoughts unwind. Jen states, "Tiff, c'mon! We need you to focus!"

She comes to, saying, "Oh, sorry. We're just about 20 blocks from Snowmens' Row."

"Honestly, this stupid project sucks!" exclaims Rebecca in her disdain.

"Why do I have to do a report on freakin' snowmen?!" Her words fall in vain.

"It's to understand why our town makes them..." as Tiffany replies in an exasperated sigh.

"Besides, aren't you curious as to the reason they do it in such a weird way?" Jen ponders.

Rebecca continues to complain, while they continue to make their trip. After about 40 minutes in, they reach their destination, in what seemed like a hop and a skip. Before them lies a field of snowmen, lined all around the vast, snowy hills. Throughout the snow-filled sculpts midst the frozen tundra, their placement gives Tiffany the chills. All dressed in clothing, and intricate jewelry, they look as if they're practically real. An almost uncanny sensation washes over them, which feels none too ideal. As they continue to walk within the masses, Jen begins to holler and shout.

"Girls! Come see this! It's super weird!" As the others rush to seek it out.

Within their view is a deformed snowman, covered in ice and ancient garbs. With an indented stone necklace, fur hood, and boned gloves, its stare pierces the girls like barbs.

"This thing is f**king creepy!" shouts Rebecca to the top of her lungs.

"Is this supposed to be a snowman?!" Jen stumbles on her own words, feeling high strung.

Tiffany somehow feels drawn to its presence and comes closer to see it in detail.

"Whatever it is, screw it!" Rebecca swiftly kicks its head off, in a violent avail!

"Why did you do that?!" Tiffany yells at Rebecca's sudden act.

"Hey, I did you a favor, that thing was so terrifying!" with Rebecca's rebuttal making contact.

As they go back and forth, like wailing sirens, out comes a small figure from the storm. A small, elderly woman with similar garbs, sees the snowman's damages to it with scorn. She turns her attention to the girls, and chants in indecipherable tongues. She makes hand gestures, and strikes at their heads, as they run screaming down the mountains as the top of their lungs.

The next day the sun rises as Tiffany finds herself in bed. She arises to the discomfort of her sheets, with it half-soaked in sweat, from her body to her head. She looks to see her clock, as it reads 1PM in the afternoon. Unknowingly, she had skipped school to recover, yet it nary feels like a boon. She heads to the bathroom, to see her condition, as it somehow feels wrong. Small, rough bumps and small tears have formed all over her since her slumber, her reflection's stare concerned and long. She receives a call from Jen, as she takes time to pick up her phone.

"Hey Jen. How're you feeling?" Tiffany asks, until she hears a saddened shift in tone.



“*Sniff* T-Tiff...R-R...Rebecca's gone! It happened at the rally!” Jen cries in lament.

Tiffany goes into a panic, and gets her coat on, letting Jen know she'll be down for the event.

The police swarm the scene around Belfast High's stadium, with the school faculty keeping students away from the scene. Tiffany and Jen rush to see the commotion, the police cannot keep them out, as they witness the horror to be seen. Before them both lies a puddle of melted flesh and corroded bone, splayed in the middle of the field. Her fellow cheerleaders all shaking and soaked in blood and chunks, no cries to yield.

Moment later, they both sit on a park bench, feeling the sudden shock. They try desperately to think about the macabre display of their deceased friend, before and even after.

“How could she have just melted like that?!” Jen stumbles on her own words.

Tiffany responds, “...Y-You don't suppose...the old woman did this, do you? Is it that absurd?!”

“I...I don't think it's a coincidence...” Jen continues to ramble in worry.

Tiffany continues, “If we're to figure this out, we have to find her and—“

“No! We would end up just like Becca!” Jen finds the thought ugly.

“Exactly! Do you truly want that, Jen?! Us ending up like...THAT overtime? We should find a way to stop it, or else we'll be another scene of the crime!”

Jen continues to refute, trying to show reason to her best friend's decision. But before Tiffany can finish her sentence, a dizziness befalls her and her condition. She stumbles upon getting up and begins to lose balance. Jen quickly comes to her aid, noticing her precarious appearance. Tiffany's eyes begin to blur, her eyes grow weary. A small figure with numerous others briefly fills her vision bleary.

In between dreary consciousness, and waning sleep, the sound of howling winds blow. As she feels the brisk cold of the blizzard, she feels carried, but suddenly falls into the snow. Before she falls unconscious, another brief vision sets her eyes. The same group of shadows loom over her once more, before her vision dies.

Tiffany wearily awakens, feeling heavier than normal, taking in her surrounding place. A ring of candles, around a floor of ice, and peculiar fur stands around the ring, a rather unusual case. She breathes thickly, struggling to look up to her surroundings to hear chanting, while seeing figures come out of the chilling blue. The same elder from the mountain appears before her, laughing at her, to what may ensue.

“Wha halve yeuh done to ush?! As Tiffany's communication seems to swell. The elder wipes away the snow underneath the icy floor before her, showing her a sight that is severely unwell. Her face has half-melted and continues to drip all around and within the ring of fire. She begins to scream, witnessing the rest of her trickling body, realizing her situation is dire. She then asks, out a sudden despair “Waih, wha hammed nu my mriend Jen?!”

“She fell to the same fate the rest of you have, disappeared halfway the mountain trail's den.”

As the chanting of the circle wains, the elder directs Tiffany's attention to indulge her hysterics.

“I can cure the curse, but a price must be paid...”

“Wih...wih whaa?” cries a deformed Tiffany.

“With our old magicks.”

The elder stands back from her flaming circle, uttering the solemn demand.

“You must sacrifice yourself to replace my ancestor's remains, by our own hand!”

Unable to process the cost of her life, she haplessly mutters under her breath. The idea of ending her suffering, at the expense of her friends' passing, is a fate worse than death.

After reflecting her situation, wishing to seek justice for her friends' demise, she then sullenly accepts the consequences, taking the elder's compromise.

The commune begins to chant ever so loudly, to the point of deafening guttural tones. After much time has passed, Tiffany begins to feel the sensation of ice-cold cyclones. She is transported, now physically normal, within a snowing landscape of pure white silence. Strolling through its never-ending, peaceful setting, she then senses near her a overwhelming presence. Its figure strikes a familiar resemblance to the snowman that fell to Rebecca's harsh score. It then takes Tiffany by her head, with the sound of ice in the blackness, until the sound is no more.

They say that now when one visits Snowmens' Row, you can find a friend midst the snowy crowd. But beware of desecrating their creations, for karma can come in the form of many deformed snowmen, within the wintered clouds. ~~

Review of *Jane Wants a Boyfriend*

By: Nils Skudra

This weekend I had the opportunity to watch *Jane Wants a Boyfriend*, a heartwarming autism-themed film about a young woman with Asperger's Syndrome seeking a romantic relationship. I had learned of this film while browsing the Internet, and I decided to check it out from my local library as my next selection for an autism movie review. Watching the film, I felt that it shed important light on a variety of issues relating to individuals on the autism spectrum.

Jane (portrayed by Louisa Krause) is a 25-year-old woman with Asperger's Syndrome who lives with her parents but follows her own set of specific routines. Chief among these is Jane's hobby of watching classic romance films from the 1940's and 1950's, during which she recites certain lines from the characters and subsequently adopts their mannerisms when answering the phone or at certain points in a conversation. Jane's older sister Bianca (portrayed by Eliza Dushku) is entering a full-time acting career, lives with her fiancée Rob (portrayed by Amir Arison), and has a strongly protective streak toward Jane. Things take an unexpected turn when Bianca and Jane learn that their parents are moving to the New Jersey countryside, with the expectation that Jane will move in with Bianca and Rob. This news comes as an unpleasant shock for Bianca since she feels that Jane's autistic proclivities will be overwhelming to deal with, especially at a time when she is just starting her career and becoming accustomed to living with Rob, and consequently she takes significant chagrin toward the increased responsibility that this development will entail.

Bianca invites Jane to a party at her apartment as part of trying to help her sister improve upon her social issues. Since Jane spends much of her time immersed in movies, this is a challenging prospect, and even though she comes to the party, she does not engage with most of the other guests but leans back against a wall and watches the scene. It is then that she meets Jack (portrayed by Gabriel Ebert), a friend of Rob's and Bianca's who, like Jane herself, feels isolated from the social interactions at the party, albeit for a different reason: Despite having graduated from college, he feels that he is doing nothing constructive with his life since he is still single and works as a sous-chef while others in his age group are having families and pursuing lucrative professional careers. When he notices Jane mimicking his poses, he asks "You looking at me?" in the manner of Robert De Niro's character from *Taxi Driver*, startling Jane and prompting her to run upstairs to the outdoor balcony. When he comes up to apologize to her, they begin a conversation in which they realize a connection between each other, until they are abruptly interrupted by Bianca who insists that Jack must have nothing to do with Jane.

Jane and Bianca subsequently engage in a heated argument during which Jane protests at being constantly shadowed by her sister while Bianca expresses her concern that no one will respect Jane for being different. However, when Jane reveals that what she really wants is a boyfriend, Bianca decides to look into finding a candidate on the autism spectrum since she believes that Jane would be best matched with someone who shares her diagnosis. Although Bianca's actions are well-intended, they exemplify a lack of insight which, to some degree, illustrates the biases of many neurotypical individuals toward people on the spectrum since there is a widespread assumption that they are incapable of having successful romantic relationships with those who are not autistic. According to this perception, neurotypical partners may not understand or respect the social challenges of autistic individuals, who in turn could potentially alienate the neurotypical person with their peculiar behaviors.

Furthermore, Bianca miscalculates the benefits of matching her sister with an autistic man for a date since each person on the spectrum has their own challenges which some may not necessarily relate to simply by virtue of sharing the same diagnosis. This becomes strikingly clear when the prospective candidate, who has Asperger's Syndrome, displays a complete lack of empathy (another social challenge associated with autism) by neglecting to ask Jane anything about herself. The interaction, combined with sensory overload from observing his eating habits and hearing the numerous sounds within the restaurant, prompts Jane to have a meltdown in which she yells in panic, bumping into other customers and holding her hands to her ears until Bianca rushes to intercede. However, this only intensifies Jane's agitation, and in their subsequent argument, she pours out her feelings that Bianca is trying to control her, does not respect her choices as a person, and does not truly want Jane to move in with her, to which Bianca tells her that dating and romances do not always happen the way they appear in movies. Jane's reply "They should!" illustrates the

cognitive discrepancy between how autistic individuals view the world and the way in which the world actually operates. Since Jane's understanding of romance comes chiefly from her routine of watching classic movies, she believes that it works the same way in the real world, but the disastrous first date proves her wrong.

Unbeknownst to Bianca, however, Jack has been given Jane's phone number by Rob, although he does so with great reluctance since he feels that Jack does not fully appreciate the challenges that dating an autistic girl would entail. In spite of this, Jack eagerly contacts Jane and asks her to come out with him to the restaurant where he works. She enjoys their time together, and they subsequently attend the opening performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which Bianca plays the lead role. Seeing Jane and Jack together in the audience makes Bianca uneasy while on-stage, as she is not only pessimistic about their compatibility but has also been under pressure from her obnoxiously insensitive director in the leadup to the show, so she is extremely anxious not to have her opening night become a disaster. Bianca's anxiety only increases when she observes Jane hastily leaving the audience and being followed by Jack after trying to hold hands with her while watching the performance.

Jack's gesture makes Jane uncomfortable since she has issues with physical touch and space as a person on the autism spectrum, which Jack is not fully mindful of despite having done some research on Asperger's Syndrome. He follows Jane up to the theater wings to apologize for his thoughtlessness and suggests that they go back down to the audience, but Jane insists on showing him the costume room instead. It is here that a truly touching exchange takes place, as Jack tells Jane that he likes her and wants to kiss her, to which Jane replies that another boy had told her the same thing but then stopped seeing her after his friends told him about her having Asperger's. When Jack assures her of his sincerity and asks if she would like him to kiss her, Jane replies, "I would really like that very much," after which they share a heartfelt kiss just as the performance concludes.

This scene between Jane and Jack represents a profound development for both characters. Although Jack has previously told Rob that he does not have a problem with Jane being on the autism spectrum, he starts dating Jane without being fully cognizant of her social issues. But it is during his exchange with her in the wings and the costume room that he reveals how he genuinely accepts her for who she is, demonstrating that he will work with her challenges rather than let them be an obstacle to their relationship. Jane, in turn, demonstrates her growth as a character in this scene by stepping out of her normal comfort zone and truly expressing her desire for intimate connection, which entails accepting how romance works in the real world rather than in the movies she watches. When Bianca learns of this development on the part of her sister, it ensures that the film's ending will have a positive outcome in which she will have a closer relationship with Jane while accepting her relationship with Jack.

Jane Wants a Boyfriend features superb and heartfelt performances by its leading cast members, and the story articulates very moving themes about the role of family and romance in the life of an autistic individual. The importance of having a close sibling relationship is conveyed astutely in the interactions between Jane and Bianca, demonstrating that neurotypical individuals should accept the responsibility of coping with their autistic siblings' challenges while at the same time being emotionally supportive and allowing them to pursue their lives rather than trying to micromanage them. Furthermore, the film conveys a very touching message about how acceptance and affection can make a neurotypical-autistic romantic relationship work out, with both partners experiencing significant character growth in the process. In sum, *Jane Wants a Boyfriend* is a sensitive romantic and family-based drama that everyone should see. ~~



Setting Up My Holiday Display Part 1

By: Max Chaney

Dear Readers, Hello and Welcome Back to Max's Model Railway. For the days leading up to December 6th I've been working on a floor layout. It wasn't a very long layout, but it is all there. Next year's layout will be bigger, though, the layout consisted of postwar Lionel Tubular Track—it even used a white fluffy blanket as snow!

Here's how I made it:

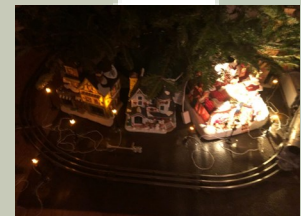
To start off with the build, please be aware that these are no longer "toys," rather heavy duty built well models.

Disclaimer: I am not responsible for any damages to your house, to model trains, or any buildings and scenery. I am not responsible for any deaths; use Postwar Lionel at your own risk.



The first thing I've done was set the Lionel Track on the floor. The track I chose was a readily available second hand "Lionel O-27 Tubular Track;" this stuff is quite cool in how it slots together using pins. The controller I chose was the Lionel 70-watt 1034 Transformer, which is a slight improvement from the controller that I had as a kid in terms of build quality compared to the Chinese one that I had as a kid in 2004. This one is American made but may have a few replica parts for safety reasons. The previous controller I had was an 80 watt, the circuit breaker of the 70 watt unit is built really well and will take Hard Play, albeit the controller itself is Restored, a Restored Example of the controller I mentioned I'd recommend getting, it may be possible to use the older type of fast track for use with the controller before they switched to Bluetooth and Lion Chief. If you are wanting to use the traditional track, 18-gauge wire is recommended, though you need to cut the wire yourself. If you wish to use Lion chief on

the postwar track, remember to switch the unit to track power.



The next few ideas were spur of the moment. I decided to put some buildings down, and then a cobble stone mat which works really well to recreate a street scene. The buildings I chose were Kringles Cottage, by Lemax and Big Ben by Department 56 to name a couple. The connivance of the Kringles cottage is it uses a new system to me in which it plugs in to the back of the building creating a nice display. You have options to turn the sound on and off, something which I discovered rather accidentally.

Next came the streetlights which were taped down in blue peter fashion using a clear self-adhesive tape. The features were turned on in the day for testing and during the night for playing trains.

Stick around to see part two the brand of fluffy cloth, and the 2026 Locomotive completed. For now, I hope you have a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!~~



Jake's Jokes

By: Jake Ziesche

What's a bird's favorite Jack Nicholson movie?
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

Why couldn't the piano get into his house?
He lost his keys!

What do you call a toilet with a wooden shoe in it?
Clogged!

Why couldn't the Brit take the train to Beatlemania?
He didn't have a Ticket to Ride!

What did the purple flower hope a four-leaf clover would bring her?
The luck of the iris.

What did the chickens do to avoid getting vaccinations?
They flu the coop!

What do you get if you cross a dog with an Elvis impersonator?
The King of Rock and Roll Over!

Why did the reporter visit the ice cream shop?
To get a big scoop!~~

Living with a Disability

By: Philip Andrew Wilsher

People have judged me all my life ever since I found out I had Autism and people acknowledge people with disabilities very infrequently. I have learned how to be considerate, courteous, respectful, and caring to all people who do have disabilities. They all have similar likes and dislikes. We all have known people throughout our lives who have disabilities. I worked Goodwill in Lawrenceville in 2011-2013 and then I went to Achieva, which wasn't such a bad idea because the people there were always polite and kind to me. They like me and I like them. We all have our own likes and dislikes. I've met people who have high-functioning Autism and Down Syndrome who make themselves feel happy in their own special and unique ways. I love everybody who has a disability. I worked at a church in Baldwin with my job coaches Lisa Svidron, Laura Caplan, Melanie Babcock, Erin Krewlia, Nicole Lepre D'Amico, Amy Dempsey, Breanna Zurman, Melissa Hall, Cara Alvarez, and Kara Brown, who all have similar likes and dislikes. Then I got a few volunteer experiences at a Meals on Wheels in South Park, Edible Arrangements in Castle Shannon, Pennrose Apartment Complex in Squirrel Hill, Walmart in Bethel Park, Achieva's main office in the South Side, and Duquesne University as a data entry client and Iron City Work America, folding police officers' outfits and uniforms. These people made me feel special and happy when I got a chance to do that and I have never been able to do something that made me feel so extraordinary. A lot of people I have worked with told me how special I am, and I have a lot of great friends; I know that to keep friends, you must be kind and nice and polite to them at all times. With tears I write, "good luck."~~

2019: An Amazing Year in Review

By: Amelia Krzton

As 2019 comes to a close, I wanted to reflect back on the great memories of this wonderful year. So, I hope you enjoy my Top 5 Best Memories of 2019.

#5: Joining Pittverse Magazine

As the new year began and my Community Support worker, Stephanie, was working with me, she encouraged me to write for *Pittverse* so I could spark my special interests and write about whatever I want, including American history, Evolve Group, American Girl, the Ice Cream Intern, and even my experience at Sandcastle and Kennywood. I also loved attending all of the release parties this year.

#4: The Summer Evolve Group Album “Summer Fun”

With a clean, updated groove, my band, Angel Kitty has returned for another successful album. The album also featured my first bilingual song, which was “Los Juegos de Pittsburgh”. It featured Spanish lyrics in all of the songs. 2 of the dances featured were a song to the tune of Pearly Shells called the Seashell Hula and a song to the tune of Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee’s “Despacito” called the Kennywood Bossa Nova.

#3: Not Complaining About the Weather

Nobody can predict the weather well in advance. But this year, I pretty much aced the predictions for analog years 1995 and 2005. My favorite period of 2019 was the July through September period, especially since September was an extension of summer this year. After a cold start to November, the frigid pattern has relaxed for the remainder of the month. I still think that the colder weather could return sometime around the beginning of December.

#2: Season Pass to Sandcastle and Kennywood

The two hot spots for summer fun were my go-to destinations during the summer months, as I had a season pass to both Sandcastle and Kennywood. See the Fall 2019 *Pittverse* Issue for details about the 2 amusement parks!

#1: American Girl: A Year of Slumber Parties

This was basically the highlight of 2019! I wrote about the last four slumber parties in this magazine, if you want to check them out. In the Spring 2019 issue, recall that there was the Up-All-Night Neon Party in January hosted by Jill, the Sweet Swap in February hosted by Hannah, the Luck and Charms Slumber Party in March hosted by Samantha, and the Sleepaway Glamp in April hosted by Abigail. In the Summer 2019 issue, recall that there was the Paint Party in May hosted by Abigail, the Around-the-World Extravaganza in June hosted by Samantha, the Stars and Stripes Carnival in July hosted by Hannah, and the Sea Soiree in August hosted by Jill. Other than the previously mentioned Hula Seashell Dance, the songs “Multiple Masterpieces” for the Paint Party, “States and Wonders” for the Around-the-World Extravaganza, and “Carnival Games” for the Stars and Stripes Carnival were also featured on the Angel Kitty “Summer Fun” album.

So, that was my Top 5 Best Memories of 2019! 2019 was a great year for me, and I am very sad to see it go. Hopefully, I make some more good memories in the new year of 2020!~~



The Shopper

By: Delaine Swearman

I sit down on the pavement. I am tired and I don't care what anyone else thinks. My toes are frozen from the cold, my legs are leaden, and my brain is starting to go numb. It is as if my body is pulling me downward, and so I sit, wrapping my arms around my knees, hugging warmth into my core.

I glanced at my watch. Fifty-eight more minutes to wait now.

I peek behind the legs of the person standing behind me. I can see the line of hopeful shoppers stretching around the corner of the store. There are many more than 50 people, yet only the first 50 customers in line will be given a scratch-off ticket, good for a gift card of mostly likely \$5. One person would win \$100 though. Could it possibly be me?

Why would someone stand outside before dawn, in subfreezing temperatures, for an hour or more, if they are NOT one of the first 50 people in line I wonder? These people are crazy I muse.

I WILL get a gift card. My confidence shakes off some of my cold and fatigue. I am number six in line. I've been waiting for an hour and a half already. Yet, I wonder how long the people in the very front of the line have been waiting? Maybe, just maybe, we are all a little bit crazy???

But come Black Friday, I will join the ranks of these "crazy shoppers" and we will line up again!~~

Collecting fees for carry-on bags in the air side terminal: The Dreaded BAGG

By: Kenneth Miller

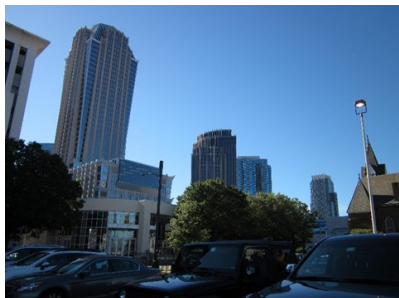
Every Guest Service Agent has challenges, not least of which is collecting carry-on baggage fees at the gate. Every guest is allowed one free personal item. If they have a second bag or their personal item is greater than 18" X 14" X 8" then they have to pay for a carry-on bag. At the gate, that costs \$65. We don't accept cash.

Pillows, blankets or stuffed animals are free, but poster tubes and religious items are not. You can bring a bag of food, but a purse is definitely a second bag. It's pretty clear cut. Spirit Airlines communicates this policy in many ways. If you end up at the gate and you have not paid for a carry-on bag, then you might be unpleasantly surprised to learn about the \$65 fee; hence the task of collecting the Dreaded BAGG.

Are there tips we can give one another to collect BAGGs even more gracefully?
Are there stories about passengers being kind to each other?
Can we further explicate the differences between Spirit Airlines and our competitors?

Maybe it is all just the beginning of a love story that will captivate airline passengers for decades. Who knows? We'll continue to educate Spirit guests about the baggage policies and every day we will collect BAGGs as required. Someday everyone will know the least expensive way to buy baggage and we will be providing even more bare fare flights to everyone. This month Spirit Airlines announced plans to build a \$250,000,000 new headquarters in Myanmar Florida and buy 100 new Airbus 319s, 320s and 321s. This company is telling everyone that we are on track to becoming the best airline in the world. This is an exciting time to be here.~~

My Trip to Charlotte, North Carolina



By: Megan Cunningham

On a weekend in mid to late October, I went with my parents to Charlotte, North Carolina, to visit my sister who's been living there for a little over a year. Called the Queen City, it was named after the wife of King George III who Helen Mirren played in a movie during the 1990s. However, despite having a mint there before the American Civil War, it wasn't considered a major city until years afterwards. Now I was only there from Friday to Monday so I didn't get to see a lot. But even so, the two most notable sites like the Billy Graham Library and NASCAR Hall of Fame, which don't strike my interest. Still, even though I don't know the city that well, there doesn't seem much that could interest me. At least compared to Richmond or Minneapolis.

Mint Museum of Art

Built during the antebellum period following a nearby discovery of gold, this federal style building served as a branch mint until the American Civil War for obvious reasons. Afterwards, it opened as an assay office until 1913. From 1917-1919 it served as headquarters for the Charlotte Women's Club. While it was a Red Cross Station during World War II. When slated for demolition in 1931 to make room for a post office expansion, a group of private citizens acquired the building from the US Treasury Department.



The relocated the structure a few miles south of downtown to a historic Eastover neighborhood on a plot of land donated by E.C. Griffith. In 1936, it was dedicated as the Mint Museum of Art, North Carolina's first art museum. It displays thousands of items, along with all gold coins minted at the Charlotte Mint, ranging from scarce to extremely rare. Collections available for display at the time consisted of the cool Pre-Columbian art, a display of English porcelain, African artifacts, and paintings.

Levine Museum of the New South

This is mostly a history museum whose exhibits focus on life in the North Carolina Piedmont region after the American Civil War. Their permanent exhibit "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: Charlotte and the Carolina Piedmont of the New South" runs like their version of the third floor at the Heinz History Museum. Display includes: a one-room tenant farmer's house, a cotton mill and mill house, an African American hospital, an early Belk department store, and a civil rights era lunch counter. The second floor also has an exhibit on



lynching as part of a collaboration with the Equal Justice Initiative.

The Green

During a walk in the downtown area, we came across this literature themed park. It has mosaic benches and stools under shady trees, stacks of bronze sculptures of books and whimsical direction signs pointing to real places but combined to form the names of well-known authors. Other signposts point to other places named Charlotte around the world. ~~

A Fictional Character and Narrator's Story

By: Joseph Cepek

In the 1884 chromolithograph painting, Louis Kurz (1833-1921), I was created in the lower left corner of the mural. My fake name is Ade Igbolt. My eyes are never open. I am never standing up. I always have a receding hairline. I always have a dark and thick brown mustache. I am always presented as “dead,” not ever as “alive,” because I am a fictional artwork character in the Louis Kurz painting.

I have a blue uniform unlike any other animated human figurine. I have vertical red leg stripes on my fake blue wool pants. Only the left one is presented in the painting. I hate war and this painting is a clear reminder that armed violence must be avoided as much as is possible. Mr. Kurz used multi-colored artwork stones (plates), which was very popular in America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I wish all real human life generations could find a way to resolve their issues without deciding to kill each other.

Mr. Kurz made me visually represent patriotism as I bravely gave my life for the preservation of the United States of America in the American Civil War's largest and deadliest military engagement. Yet, I actually never lived and died. This is because I artistically symbolize a fake human-like artwork image of a slain Union Army artillery officer, who was killed along with many of his artillery battery crew members during the two-hour artillery battle. This occurred before the final Confederate infantry attack on the Union Army's central defensive position on the afternoon of July 3, 1863.

An exploding Confederate artillery shell crashed down on our artillery position located on Cemetery Ridge, which caused the gruesome aftereffects shown in the artwork mural. There are broken cannon pieces lying strewn beside my fake body as well as the fake bodies of both horse and human members of the artillery battalion, which I fictionally commanded, who fell alongside me. The dead and dying fake horses pulled our artillery ammunition and field gun pieces. The war horses in the painting also actually never lived and died.

Mr. Kurz really created a shocking depiction of the final moments of the third and final day of the Gettysburg battle in Pennsylvania. Again, the horses were also illustrated by Mr. Kurz as fictional equine (horse) soldiers who fought and/or sacrificed themselves alongside their human counterparts in the most tragic and deadly armed conflict in the United States of America before or since then. The Union Army of the Potomac's (named after the river) losses were about 23,049 killed, wounded, captured, and missing. The invading Confederate Army of Northern Virginia's losses were about 28,000 killed, wounded, captured, and missing. Of the approximately 88,000 Union soldiers engaged in the three (3)-day battle, over a quarter (1/4), about 26.1 % were casualties. Of the estimated 75,000 Confederate soldiers fighting in the monstrous armed engagement, over a third (1/3), roughly 37.3 % were casualties. Around 7,058 of the combined losses were fatalities. About 3,155 Union and 3,903 Confederate soldiers died during the 3 (three) direct days of vicious fighting in and around Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. About 33,264 were wounded (14,529 Union and 18,735 Confederate, plus about 10,790 (5,365 Union and 5,425 Confederate) were considered missing after the fighting had ended.

Massive trench graves were dug to bury the battle's dead in the days following the awful combat. Many of the Union battle dead were reinterred into the first National Military Cemetery on the battlefield in the months following the battle. President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) helped to dedicate the opening of the cemetery with his immortal “few appropriate remarks”, on November 19, 1863. Many of the Confederate dead (about 3,320) were later reburied in southern cemeteries during the 1870-1873 mass exhumation process. There is believed to be about 100 skeletal remains on the battlefield even today, according to battlefield researchers. In and around the Culp's Hill area of the Gettysburg National Military Park (which was established in 1895) is where these Confederate soldier remains are determined to be buried, according to the National Park Service, which runs the park. The National Military Cemetery is located in the intersection area of Baltimore Street and Taneytown Road in Gettysburg.

Major General George G. Meade (1815-1872) failed to quickly pursue, attack, and destroy the retreating Rebel (Confederate) armed force under the command of Maj. Gen. Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) in the following days after the wicked armed clash at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania had ended.

I believe as well as many modern day historians that had Meade pursued and successfully defeated Lee's remaining armed unit, the internal war in our nation at the time (during the 1860's) would have ended much sooner than it actually did. Countless more soldiers on both sides and civilians would tragically die before the spring of 1865 arrived.

The war would drag on for almost two (2) more terrible years. Robert E. Lee would surrender his army on April 9, 1865, which effectively ended direct military operations in the horrific internal armed struggle, which our nation has never had before or since then. Heaven-forbid-it, yes, literally, ever again, in the future.

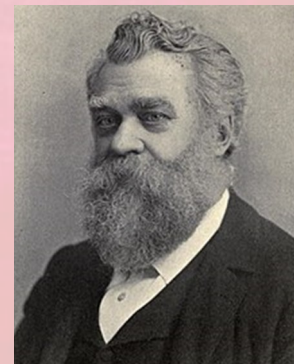
August 20, 1866 marked the official end of internal hostilities. This occurred more than a year after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the last Confederate military units surrendering to Federal armed entities. This was because there had been no stated declaration to reunite the country with the defeated former Confederate states for over a year. Andrew Johnson (1808-1875), of Raleigh, North Carolina, delivered Proclamation 157, which said, “Declaring that Peace, Order, Tranquility [sic], and Civil Authority Now Exists in and Throughout the Whole of the United States of America” – on August 20, 1866. The deadliest armed conflict in U.S. (United States) history was officially over.

I, Ade Igbolt, want to declare here that love and interpersonal understanding is always greater than bloodshed.

Reference Sources:

Battle of Gettysburg Website
Louis Kurz Website
This Day in History Website

This is dedicated for all who died in the worst internal conflict in our nation's history. ~~



Louis Kurz (1833-1921)

The Search For Infinity

A fan movie synopsis by Sarah Lehman

The story opens with an explanation of where the movies and the ‘actual’ MCU diverge: Dr. Strange gave Thanos a fake Time Stone, and as a result, the heroes are able to destroy the Infinity Stones. Not long after, however, they learn that the stones have re-formed in our world, and Thanos is preparing to make another attempt at claiming them. But an unexpected obstacle arises—namely, the fact that most of the heroes have counterparts in our world, and they cannot be in the same universe at the same time. Fortunately, the ghost of Loki agrees to help, in exchange for a return to corporeality. Traveling to our world (as a spirit, he is not restricted by the counterpart rule), he possesses Tom Hiddleston, his dimensional equivalent, and explains the situation to him. Hiddleston agrees to cooperate under a few conditions, all of which Loki accepts. Loki and Dr. Strange then swap the spirits of the original six Avengers, plus Ant-Man and the Wasp, with those of their counterparts—their actors.

Upon arriving in our world, the team is given a quick briefing by Loki, who also provides them with props from the films, which have been enchanted to function like the real deal. As the stones re-formed in different places, the group splits up:

-Tony and Bruce locate the Power Stone in Northern Australia, where Bruce encounters a young man who helps him reconcile with the Hulk.

-Natasha and Steve track down the Time Stone (in Brazil), while musing on the events of Endgame and how they differ from what happened in their universe.

-Clint and Thor travel to Florida, where they find the Mind Stone in the hands of a research team studying children with learning and developmental disorders (the latter are high-functioning). Having accidentally enhanced the children under their care, the researchers gladly give up the stone and agree to keep the whole thing a secret, and Clint gives them some advice on how to help the children with their powers and their disabilities.

-Scott and Hope discover the Space Stone has made its way into the possession of an influential British politician, who’s been secretly engaging in a less than legal relationship. In the process of retrieving the Stone, they expose the affair, resulting in some nasty fallout.

-Loki is able to retrieve the Reality Stone from eastern Africa with little trouble, though he does end up having a long conversation with Hiddleston and what path he’ll take once he’s alive again.

Once the first five stones are retrieved, they track down the Soul Stone, finding it in Afghanistan. While Natasha mentions how Thanos acquired the stone, and what happened in Endgame, they find that it has already accepted a sacrifice, though they are unable to find out who died. As it turns out, they got the last stone not a moment too soon. Thanos and his army have arrived.

Meanwhile, in the heroes’ universe, Doctor Strange gives the actors a quick lowdown. He also reveals his intention to revive not just Loki, but Quicksilver, Vision, and several other heroes. The actors volunteer to travel to the land of the dead in order to retrieve the fallen ones. Heimdall’s spirit greets them at the entrance, warning them that since Hela was slain, the land of the dead is without a ruler, and consequently has fallen into chaos. During their journey, they encounter many dead villains like Obadiah Stane and Darren Cross, who try to claim their souls. Luckily, they also receive aid from the ghosts of friends like T’Chaka and the Ancient One. They also find Balder, who has been Hela’s prisoner since her banishment. After instating Balder as the new ruler of the land of the dead, the actors return to the land of the living with the spirits of Quicksilver, Vision, the Warriors Three, and Gamora in tow, just in time to see a horde of Mindless Ones arriving.

Doctor Strange is surprised by the Mindless Ones’ presence due to his bargain with Dormammu, but after a quick check, he realizes that there is someone else behind their presence, though this being is not currently present nor affiliated with Thanos. Receiving a heads-up from Loki, Strange swaps himself and a number of the other heroes with their counterparts to aid the battle against Thanos. Wong provides said counterparts with a quick breakdown before setting to work on resurrecting the fallen. In the actors’ universe, Loki gets Hiddleston to safety before releasing him and returning to the heroes’ universe. The heroes equip themselves with transformed props (provided by Loki at Strange’s request), before joining in the final battle, which plays out similarly to the final battle of Endgame. But instead of one person using the Infinity Stones to turn Thanos and his army to dust, the original six Avengers work together, splitting the stones’ power amongst them and thus surviving with no permanent damage (although they do need to rest). Once this is over, the heroes take a while to recover before they and their actors (who defeated the Mindless Ones) switch back. The story ends with the heroes in their everyday lives—which includes Bruce as Professor Hulk, Thor and Loki helping Gamora get back to the Guardians, Wanda happily reuniting with Pietro and Vision, and Tony with Pepper and Morgan—before they receive a message: “Avengers, Assemble.”

In a ‘post-credits scene,’ it’s revealed that the actors who were swapped still retain a measure of their counterparts’ abilities and skills. As Tom Hiddleston, Benedict Cumberbatch, Chris Evans, and Robert Downey Jr. discuss this, they also mention evidence that there may be more to their world than they previously knew. RDJ asks what they’re going to do, and Evans gives him a knowing look.~

“VFX from Un-Abel to Double Dazzle” (the challenging journey of Star Trek: The Motion Picture’s special effects)

By: Thomas R. Skidmore

Of the many problems faced by Paramount regarding the now-in-production Star Trek film, none proved more troubling than the special visual effects needed to carry the movie to great financial success. Originally slated as the pilot episode of the much-touted Phase II television series, the Star Trek project was projected to have a modest budget of \$800,000 an episode (over twice the cost of the cancelled British series *Space: 1999*, which ran a tab of \$300,000 per show).

With the look of the new *Enterprise* confirmed and costumes and sets ready to go, it was decided that since this was to be a TV production, a small company would be asked to aid in executing the necessary effects. Paramount opted to contact a production facility in Burbank named Robert Abel and Associates, whose only knowledge of SFX was in highly sophisticated television commercials and promos.

After numerous discussions and eager to branch out to film, Robert Abel and Associates headed to Paramount’s model effects unit to study the new *Enterprise* and other various starships required for the film. A deadline looming on the horizon, Paramount were initially patient but grew increasingly disturbed as Abel and Associates took extremely long amounts of time in pre-production, not in actual filming of the models and space backgrounds.

Once Paramount Pictures chose to turn the Phase II pilot into a feature-length film, they discovered to their collective anger that none of the needed SFX footage was filmed by Abel and Associates. It later emerged that Robert Abel had no training in filming motion pictures and their cameras were designed solely for TV and nothing more.

Growing more desperate and inspired by the success of *Star Wars*, Paramount executives fired Robert Abel and Associates and sought out a new company. Their first choice was the fledgling Industrial Light and Magic (who created the SFX for *Star Wars* and would later become the most famous and respected SFX company in the world, and who would create the FX for the later *Trek* film) but the outfit proved unavailable at the time. Next, they reached out to British SFX wizard Brian Johnson of *Space: 1999* fame. Johnson said he was honored but he was too busy with the special effects for a new film called *Alien*.

Finally, one Paramount executive stated that he was friends with a noted SFX designer.

That designer was the legendary Douglas Trumbull.

Trumbull recently enjoyed a surge of new success thanks to his innovative work on Steven Spielberg’s 1977 science fiction wonder *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. He was also an Oscar winner (earning the award for the SFX on the landmark 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*) and used that as clout to take full charge of the entire effects crew.

With both live-action and SFX filming going on simultaneously to meet the looming December 1979 deadline, Trumbull realized he’d taken on too much work to effectively execute and told Paramount he needed additional money to hire an assistant. He already had one in mind.

The assistant was fellow Oscar winner John Dykstra.

John was one of the founders of Industrial Light and Magic (despite later falling out with George Lucas) and rode his own ride of success. In addition to the Oscar win for *Star Wars*, he was the producer for the Universal/ABC television series *Battlestar Galactica*. Paramount felt slightly assured that between Trumbull and Dykstra, all would roll smooth from therein on (in spite of the fact that by production’s end in late 1979, the studio had to spend an additional \$35 million on Trumbull and Dykstra, with the rule being “quality doesn’t come cheap.”)

Even with the expertise of two Oscar winning SFX magicians in their employ, Paramount’s brief respite didn’t last.

The real human adventure was on the horizon . . . ~~

The Self-Made Heiress

By: Megan Cunningham

Unlike what you see in movies, most con artists aren't loveable rogues or even remotely good people. After all, they charm and trick people into giving them money which they never intend to give back. Many of them could be referred to as "sociopaths" since they often don't have empathy, never learn from their transgressions, live parasitic lifestyles, and have a rather narcissistic view of themselves. After all, there's a reason why the local news warns you about all these scams. Since while we only see idiots falling for such con games, we underestimate our own gullibility. However, while con people are altogether varying degrees of awful, there are some that you really can't help but sort of admire. Anna Sorokin probably belongs in this camp. Unlike Elizabeth Holmes, she didn't put people's lives at risk with a medical breakthrough that was too good to be true. Nor did she leave a bunch of people stranded in the Caribbean by promoting a fake music festival. Rather, her targets were New York City's upper class set and luxury venues as a fake heiress, stealing a whopping \$275,000.



Born in Russia, Anna Sorokin was no German heiress despite what she'd write on her business card. In fact, her dad's a truck driver. She did graduate from a German high school before going to a London art school. After dropping out from that and returning to Germany to work as a PR intern, she moved to Paris to complete an internship for a French fashion magazine called *Purple* and pretty much dropped off the map until 2013. Though it was here Sorokin started calling herself Anna Delvey. In 2013, 22-year-old Anna Sorokin moved to New York City where she told new friends about her nonexistent €60 million trust fund held in an overseas bank account that would cover her lavish hotel stays and lifestyle. However, she wasn't always straight on how her family got the money, which changed multiple times. Depending on which story, her dad could be a diplomat, oil executive, or solar power magnate. As German heiress Anna Delvey, she told her New York friends about her attempts to set up an art foundation set up by her family trust and her plan to lease the historic Church Missions as a multi-story studio and events space. Soon Sorokin became known for staying at trendy hotels and eating at James Beard Award-winning restaurants, and regularly visiting spas and salons.

However, despite her lavish lifestyle in New York, our self-made heiress Anna Sorokin usually didn't pay for her own stuff, usually playing the cool friend who usually borrowed money and promises to pay it back but never does. She'd get her friends and traveling companions to pay large amounts (if not the whole bill) for trips they took together, claiming to check her wallet with her luggage or guilting her friends into covering the cost whenever her credit card got declined. When asked to foot the bill, many others didn't see any red flags as Sorokin often claimed she had difficulty moving her overseas assets and laugh it off as forgetfulness when they'd hound her to pay up. One time she even tried to get \$22 million loans on fraudulent documents. Yet, she managed to snag a \$100,000 by convincing a bank rep to let her overdraft on her account, before going on a shopping spree at Apple and Net-a-Porter.

In her viral *Vanity Fair* tell-all, the magazine's former photo editor, Rachel DeLoache Williams detailed her expensive friendship with our self-made heiress that began at a Manhattan night club. The pair drank in hotel bars, visited a personal trainer, and ate in fancy restaurants, always on Anna Sorokin's dime...or at least, it was supposed to be. But when the two took a trip to Morocco, they stayed at a 5-star resort for \$7,000 and racked up a \$62,000. Sorokin's card got declined so she convinced Williams to put it on hers instead. When the promise to pay her back went unfulfilled, Williams went to the police.

Though Anna Sorokin managed to retain her Anna Delvey ruse for 4 years, she couldn't keep it up forever. For most con artists eventually get discovered as lies and unpaid bills catch up. And Sorokin was no exception. In 2017, she was arrested on six charges of grand larceny for allegedly scamming wealthy New York City business acquaintances and several hotels, all totaling \$275,000. However, she initially faced 3 counts of misdemeanor theft of services due to complaints regarding her stays at the Beekman Hotel and the W Downtown as well as a meal at the Parker Meridien.

After rejecting a plea deal that would've led to a one-year prison sentence in December 2018, Anna Sorokin decided to go to trial. During the proceedings, the prosecutor said our self-made heiress seemed to "revel at the plight of her victims" and that she "showed more concern for her attire than the emotions of those she hurt." To be fair, Sorokin hired a celebrity stylist for the proceedings while her courtroom looks were widely discussed and featured on an Instagram page with over 7,000 followers.

Anna Sorokin's defense attorney tried humanizing her, claiming she'd been buying time to pay all the debt back, and tried portraying her as an entrepreneur. In fact, there was even a ridiculous comparison between her and Frank Sinatra, claiming they both created their opportunities in New York. Except that Sinatra had a phenomenal voice and didn't need to fake his way to the local elite. A jury convicted her in April 2019 of second-degree larceny, theft of services, and one count of first-degree attempted grand theft larceny. Yet, they acquitted her on another charge of grand theft larceny in the first degree for an attempted \$22 million she tried to procure and a charge of theft of a \$60,000 Morocco trip. That May, Sorokin was sentenced to 4-12 years in state prison, fined \$24,000, and ordered to pay back a \$199,000 restitution. She may also face deportation to Germany due to her visa waiver overstay. Though initially incarcerated at Rikers Island, Sorokin currently lingers at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. This June, Shonda Rhimes and Lena Dunham have announced plans on making shows about Anna Sorokin for Netflix and HBO respectively. Meanwhile, poor Rachel DeLoache Williams will make \$300,000 from HBO for the rights and has a similar deal for a book with Simon and Schuster based on her *Vanity Fair* story.

Still, even though Anna Sorokin's fate was well deserved, there does seem to be some injustice relating to her case. After all, she's just another example of women being punished more harshly for white-collar crimes than men. While Bridget Ann Kelley received a far higher sentence for the Fort Lee lane closure scandal than David Wildstein who came up with the bridge closure idea in the first place. Furthermore, the New York City district attorney celebrating her conviction on Twitter also declined to prosecute men for far more serious issues like Harvey Weinstein and Dominique Strauss-Kahn for their legendary sexual misconduct. Also, New York City's home to all the Wall Street bankers responsible for causing the 2008 stock market crash that led to a massive recession and millions of people robbed of jobs and life savings. Most of them are rich white men and have never spent a day in prison. Sorokin's \$275,000 scam is a drop in the bucket compared to the millions these guys stole. (Photo courtesy of *The Times*.)~~

War and Its Tragedy

By: Joe Cepek

I interviewed EMC in 2016 and 2017, when she worked with me as a Community Inclusion case worker through YAP, which is affiliated with the Adult Home and Community-based adult autism waiver program. EMC told me she is “generally not a fan of war,” due to “today's weapons of mass murder.” meaning in a military situation. She also told me she has “no intentions of ever enlisting in the military.” She said she does not believe war is the answer to mankind's problems. It has contributed in worsening them, in terms of ongoing and unresolved racial, political, gender, sociology-economic and relational conflicts, such as in the United States of America in the 150-plus years since the American Civil War's last shots were fired in 1865.

We, as a collective body of living humanity, to the present time, are also not meant to know when the actual defeat of Satan (the devil) will be, as we are told, “Then the devil, who deceived them (the majority of humanity, sadly), was Thrown in the lake of fire (the Literal and Eternal hell and the Second Eternal death) and sulfur, where the beast (the Anti-Christ world dictator) and the false prophet (the Anti-Christ final religious world leader) had already been Thrown; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” and “Whoever did not have his (or her) name Written in the Book of The Living (The Saved or The Christians Through The Sinless Blood of Christ) was Thrown into the lake of fire”, in the Book of Revelation 20:10 and 15. This is also from the Good News Bible + Today's English Version Translation.

Jesus will Make “All Things New”, Some Day, Yes, Literally, as well, but we, meaning humanity, are not meant to know when this will actually Take place, although we are told, “Then The One who Sits on the throne Said, “And now I Make All Things New!” He (Jesus) also Said to me (Saint John), “Write this, because these Words are True and can be Trusted”. “And He (Jesus) Said, “It is Done! I Am the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (the Alpha and the Omega). To anyone who is thirsty, I will Give the right to drink from the spring of the water of life without paying for it”, in the Book of Revelation 21:5+6, which also comes from the Good News Bible + Today's English Version Translation.

Even though she is a former Roman Catholic turned millennial (people who were born between 1981 to 1996) agnostic, EMC is compassionate and saddened about even the artistic interpretation of the death and destruction, of both animal and human life (both civilian and military), which any war brings. This includes the dead horses and the mustache-wearing Union artillery soldier, which were created in the Louis Kurtz and Alexander Allison 1884 painting, which depicts the repulse of Confederate general George Pickett's soldiers at Cemetery Ridge, which was the center of the Union Army's defensive position, under the command of Union general Winfield Hancock, on the afternoon of Friday, July 3, 1863.

EMC feels a sad revulsion (distaste) toward the dead human and equine painted images, yet a concerned compassion and sadness towards them, as if they were real, similar to me.

A Reader's Note:

The Scripture Verse references, in this article, reflect the author's personal theological views and they will not be shared, by all potential readers. This is important to point out, so others believe the author is not biased toward them, who do not share his Christian beliefs. The author wants all potential readers to know that he is not discriminatory towards anyone, who does not accept his Christian faith leanings. The author is simply expressing his views on the topics, which are being discussed, in this article. The author is not expecting that all readers would accept his personal point-of-view on anything brought forth, in the writing, of this literature piece.

This is out of due consideration, from the before-mentioned author.~~

SAYING “HELLO” TO “THE ADIOS” AT THE MEADOWS

Story by Robert Hester

The Delvin Miller Adios Pace for the Orchids at The Meadows Racetrack and Casino in Meadow Lands (North Strabane), PA., which is a less than an hour drive from Downtown Pittsburgh in Washington County, is a Harness (Horse) Race that’s the racetrack’s version of the Kentucky Derby, the Super Bowl, and WrestleMania. Because the Adios is an event that’s a lot like those three sporting events, it’s the one sporting event that takes place annually that earns the most publicity and attention nationwide and worldwide.

The Adios Pace for the Orchids is named after Delvin Miller and a horse named Adios, which were two of the most prominent figures in the sports of Harness Racing who helped make the harness racetrack side of The Meadows Racetrack and Casino become one of Western PA’s must-see destinations. Miller, who was a harness racing driver, trainer, and owner, purchased Adios in 1948. Miller was also the founder of the Meadows racetrack, which opened in June of 1963. During a career that spanned eight decades, Miller won major races in the United States as well as in France.

Adios, a horse that’s considered by many as one of the greatest in harness racing history was a multiple world championship horse during his racing career. He was trained and driven by a harness racing horse driver named Frank Ervin, and for a while, was owned by Harry Warner of Warner Bros. film studio. Despite his racing success, Adios is most famous for his offspring. He sired eight winners—more than any other horse—of another popular harness race that takes place annually, the Little Brown Jug, which is the signature event of the annual Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio. In 1967, less than two years after Adios passed away, the Adios Pace was raced for the first time to honor his memory, and was won that year by a horse named Romulus Hanover, who was driven by Billy Haughton. Thirty years later in 1997, less than a year after Miller passed away, the Adios Pace was officially renamed the Delvin Miller Adios Pace to honor Miller’s memory—the race was won that year by a horse named (in an ironic nod to the memories of Delvin Miller and Adios) Legacy of Power, who was driven by Dan Ross.



Fast-forward to this past July 27th, 2019 when the Adios Pace for the Orchids was raced for the 53rd time. And the winner of the 53rd Adios Pace for the Orchids was Southwind Ozzi, who was driven by Brian Sears. Southwind Ozzi won the 53rd Adios in a final time of 1 minute and 48 seconds (1:48), just a half a second past the all-time record finish time of 1:47 4/5, which was set by a horse named Bolt The Duer—who was driven by Mark MacDonald—in the 2012 Adios. The aforementioned time of 1:47 4/5 is the fastest time in both the history of the Adios, and the Meadows Racetrack—the length of the Meadows’ Racetrack is 5/8 of a mile long. But nonetheless, Sears was pleased he drove Southwind Ozzi the Adios’ winner’s circle at The Meadows. “[Southwind Ozzi] was a pleasure to drive,” Sears said in an interview after the race in the winner’s circle, “and made my job look easy.” And when asked about missing out on the record for the fastest



finish ever in the long and storied history of the Adios, and The Meadows by a half a second, Sears simply replied, “I’m not one for track records; I’m all for wins.”

Along with being presented with a trophy that’s a statue of the horse in which the race is named after, Adios, as well as being presented a bed of Orchids, being “...all for wins” is part of the epitome of what the annual running of the Adios Pace for The Orchids is all about. The other part is celebrating the great sport of harness racing, while celebrating the legacies of the two individuals who helped introduce Western PA to harness racing, Delvin Miller and Adios. It sets the Adios apart from the many Mid-Summer traditions in Western Pennsylvania. It’s not Steelers Training Camp at St. Vincent, it’s not a Pirates game at PNC Park, and it’s not even a Zambelli fireworks display. But the annual running of the Adios Pace for the Orchids at The Meadows is part of the reason this part of the country is such a very special place to live; it’s one annual event worth saying hello to before you can tell summertime, Adios.~~

When I am Depressed

By: Ginger Reynolds

When I am depressed, I write about my future goals and dreams. I do things I usually enjoy, such as my hobbies or going to a movie theatre with friends. I try to engage myself in positive social interactions as I honestly communicate how I'm feelings and the events going on in my life. I try not to get too into the stressful topics while I'm trying to have fun with my friends. While I'm with my friends, I try to be mindful in whatever activity I am engaging in.

I also try not to isolate as much. So, for instance, if I am extremely depressed, I try to stay around family and friends. I try not to be alone so much, because I know if I am alone, that's when I start to worry about everything. I start to think about everything that has been bothering me throughout the last few years and things people have said to me. I also worry about things I have said or done to someone who could have been having a hard time, but with my words or actions, I could have made worse.

I try to get into the holidays, even though the holidays are my biggest trigger. During the holidays, I try to be around family and friends more. I try to help around the house. I try to help decorate, clean, and even stay in the spirit of the holiday. I am usually cranky around the holidays, to the point where nobody wants to be around me. Around the holidays, I try my best to keep a smile on my face. A smile goes a long way. When I am depressed, I attempt to listen to more positive music. I usually listen to metal and rap, but I have noticed that I seem to go on an emotional rollercoaster. But, when I listen to more positive music, such as country or classic rock, my moods seem to be more stable. I haven't noticed it before, but when I listen to music that is more upbeat, my moods are lifted. But when I listen to slow and sappy songs, my moods decrease and stay lower than normal. I'm trying to experiment with my emotions, only a little bit just to see if when I listen to Christmas music or love songs, what my moods do. I have only seen little improvement so far.

I play video games that are less violent when I am more depressed. I have found out that if I play video games that are for everyone ten and under, my mood stabilizes. If I play video games for more mature players, my mood intensifies and stays longer. When I play less violent games, my smile returns and stays longer than if I would play a more gruesome game. So, when I am depressed, I like to play video games for everyone ten and under because I like the way it makes me feel.

Shopping makes me happy. I love the feeling when I try on a new pair of snow boots or jeans and they fit. I love how I have the option to pick out my own clothes. Shopping makes me feel happy and confident. Even if I am shopping for someone and it doesn't even have to be clothes shopping. It can be electronic shopping and that feeling when they open their present that they have been wishing for. The feeling when they open that present and they read the tag that says that you bought it for them is hope and priceless. You feel hopeful that they will love their present/s that you bought them. Hopeful that they will be happy and give you their brightest, biggest smile they have ever had.

The final thing that I go to when I am down in the dumps and nothing else seems to be working is taking a hot shower. I never want to get in the shower, but once I am undressed and I feel the warmth of the water running down my back, I am thankful that I hopped in. I love the feeling of the hot water on a cold winters night and then putting on my soft, warm pajamas right after. I love the smell of the shampoo and body wash when they collide together on my body. Showers are so soothing and relaxing. I don't like taking baths because of the drain, but I absolutely love showers.

In conclusion, whenever I am in a deep depression, I do whatever it takes to shake it off. I realize that isn't so easy as it sounds. But with a lot of practice and a lot more experience, anything is possible. I'm not saying that depression is easy to deal with, because God knows it isn't. I'm just saying that, when you are depressed and you have lost all hope, remember all you have accomplished. Even if you think you have failed in life, everyone has a purpose and you have to find your own path. More of this subject will be talked about in future articles. Until then, try your best.~~

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

By: **Eliot Hinton**

Characters

Alan, a young man in his twenties

Abbadon, late 40s, stereotypical dad look, totally not Satan

Lilith, Abbadon's wife, also in her late 40s

Setting: A typical suburban neighborhood. Birds are chirping in the distance, and a white picket fence sits upstage.

Act I, Scene I

It is a nice Sunday afternoon. The lights are bright and cheerful. Alan walks up to a door and knocks on it.

LILITH

(offstage)
Who's there?

ALAN

Just a person wanting to talk.

The door opens, and Lilith walks out, her hair in pink curlers.

LILITH

Whaddya want, kid? I'm busy.

ALAN

I'm sorry to bother you, ma'am, but I've come to spread the word of the dark lord, Lucifer.

LILITH

(puzzled)
You've come to do the what now?

ALAN

Well, you see,
(takes out a leather-bound book out of a satchel)
There's a lot of people out there trying to spread the good word of God and all, but I've never seen anyone going about talking about what the Devil has to offer. So, I'm here to do just that!

LILITH

(pauses)
I'll be right back.

She closes the door in Alan's face. He stands there, looking defeated, while muffled yelling comes from the other side of the door. A few moments later, Abbadon opens the door, clad in a bathrobe.

ABBADON

So, you're the kid my wife told me about? The one talking about the Devil?

ALAN

(smiles)
Yes, sir, I am! Are you interested?

ABBADON

Eh, I guess I don't got anything better to do. Whatcha got to say?

Alan quickly opens up his book and begins reading it while speaking.

ALAN

Well, you see, Lucifer isn't as bad as everyone makes him out to be. In a way, he's really just a victim of circumstances! Like, for example, he was once an angel of God, but he got cast down because he didn't go along with God's will. Pretty sad, isn't it?

Abbadon nods.

ALAN

So, it's kind of like he was the first one to really think for himself rather than just following God's will blindly. He's really not that bad.

ABBADON

(chuckles)

Well, now I wouldn't say that-

ALAN

Oh, but it's true! I mean, in a way, he kind of made humanity better when he tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. It was like he was just giving humans the same free will that he got when he was an angel, so that we could be free to follow our own paths!

Alan pants, out of breath from talking so much. Abbadon pauses.

ABBADON

I can definitely see where you're coming from, kid.

ALAN

(smiles wider)

You really think so, mister?

ABBADON

I know so. Now, why don't you go spread your teachings with the rest of the town.

ALAN

Thanks! It's been a pleasure talking to you, mister.

Abbadon holds out his hand.

ABBADON

Just call me Abby.

Alan takes his hand and shakes it.

ALAN

Thanks again, mister Abby. Have a good day!

Alan waves and runs off. Abbadon waves back as Lilith approaches him from behind.

LILITH

You coulda just told him, Abbadon.

ABBADON

C'mon now, Lilith. Let's just let him have this little victory.

LILITH

(rolling her eyes)

Yeah, whatever. You're getting soft, y'know that?

ABBADON

You always say that.

They both walk back inside and close the door. The lights fade out.~~

Romeo + Juliet

*O how much I love thee,
ode to the one who has taken me,
how much I hope you love me back,
fate struck like lightning,
and left an aftershock,
an intertwining of souls,
a desire of lustful kisses,
every heated moment,
grows hotter by the second,
a true ballad of passion and love,
our love,*

*like a blanket, it warms me,
like an aura, it envelops me,
like a melody, it satisfies me,
united in love,
bound by matrimony,
for what is love,
when I'm your Romeo,
and you're my Juliet.*

By: Paul Lechevalier

When Holidays Collide

By: Jake Ziesche

*Ponyo, Ponyo, Ponyo, tiny little fish
She's a little fish from the deep blue sea
Ponyo, Ponyo, Ponyo, she's a little girl
She's a little girl with a round tummy*

-Ponyo On the Cliff by the Sea (Noah Cyrus)*

One autumn night I saw her flying past the full moon on her broomstick.
The witchling was dressed in white and thought she could be Glinda the Good's kin
She caught sight of me, in my red and green outfit, and came down daintily I started to swoon
I said I loved her and hoped we could be together, and this gave her a shock
The young one said she had few friends because everyone thought she would hex them
Plus, she thought an elf falling in love with a witch would start some kind of brouhaha
Even though we just met, I could see her true self. My fantasy was a reality
I felt like a daydream believer. I knew that this was true love.
I told her I could see her true self, and she didn't have to hide it
The little witch and I sang a song about it and, at the end, sealed it with a kiss
She asked if I would be her date at the Harvest Festival and I accepted
Then the two of us went for a midnight ride together
I felt like we were holiday Barbie and Ken
I had an inkling that we were going to be a perfect couple.~~

What Type of Weather Affects Arthritis the Most?

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

I will play a misleading ad to the audience. I want the audience to ask questions on why this advertisement may likely be misleading. We will start with an arthritis advertisement. Next, from looking at the data in the graph, is the commercial telling the consumer the truth? Is the commercial credible? Who are the people in the ad representing the truth? First, I am going to illustrate arthritis chart. How many of you would likely suffer severe arthritis on these very frigid cold days?

I want the audience to look very carefully at the first ads about arthritis.

What weather factors would likely influence your arthritis in your knees, face, and your back?

7 days in Pittsburgh dipping below zero at night

An average wind velocity 25 or greater all day all day

Heavy snow showers and winds blowing from the northwest

How might the internet ads misinform the public about the new about arthritis medication?

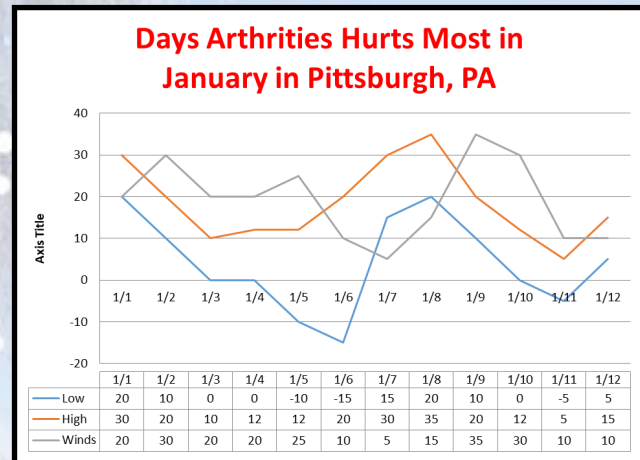
Actors use the medications on warm sunny warm days

The producers fail to gather statistical data from the cold climates in the winter.

They fail to test the product with many participants who deal with pain.

The commercials have no bar charts, line charts, and pie charts.

On whole, please show empathy, compassion to your friends and neighbors to your friends and neighbors' on frigid days who suffer pain this winter. ~~



Female Pants Dilemma

By: Joe Cepek

In the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) of the Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 22:5 (NKJV) says, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God." However, Deuteronomy is an ancient rule book for the Jewish people only. It is intended for the Chosen people of the Lord God. Then again, many modern-day Jewish females do indeed wear pants, as do Jewish males. With this undeniable reality, many theologians and Jewish religious leaders view it to be nothing to be viewed as morally wrong-headed. These officials are working within the Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism. However, many girls and women refuse to wear pants even in the Reform and Conservative sects. These are for both traditional and personal reasons.

Yet, there are still a sizeable number of Jewish rabbis who are very fundamentalist in nature, are the Orthodox Jews. Haredi (Hasidic) Jews are considered the strictest in their religious beliefs (doctrines). They are also known as Ultra-Orthodox Jews. They believe that they must follow the Judaic rules as the Jews of antiquity did so (in Old Testament times). Moses is believed to have written the Deuteronomy book, through Divine Intervention. In ancient days, there were no separate sects (denominations, branches) of Judaism. These Ultra-Orthodox Jews do believe pants are meant for males only. Yet, there are Hasidic females who do wear pants, even if it causes potential alienation within both their immediate family and religious communities, because they believe they have as much right to wear pants as do men and boys. However, there are not many Hasidic girls and women who do this practice. I do not see anything wrong with Jew or Gentile females wearing pants.

I am not Jewish. I am a Gentile. This is a person who is not a Jew by birth or by religious affiliation. We all have a right to express their theological beliefs, as long as we do not impede the rights of others.~~

Deadsy's Legacy on The Current Music of Today (Part 1)

By: David O'Rorey

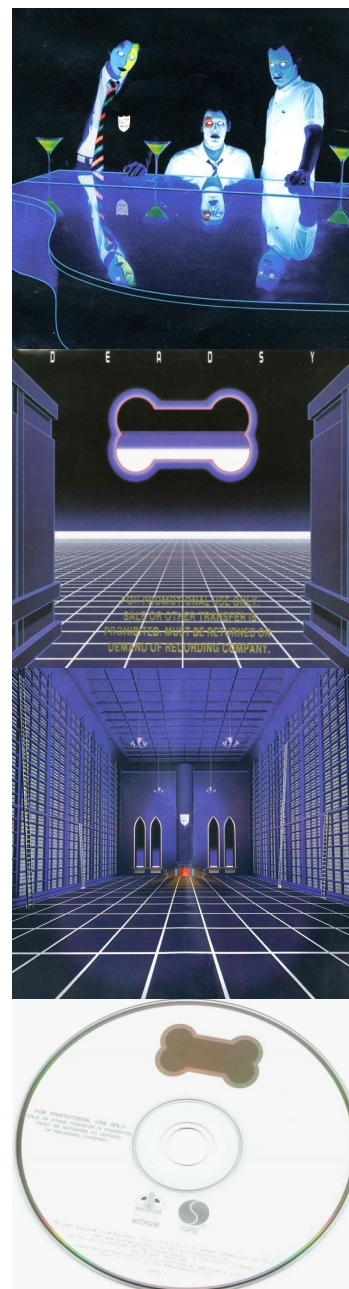
I found out about this band Deadsy in 2001 from someone in high school who played me their cover of Replicas by Gary Numan. It just blew me away and started looking up more by the band online downloads and got hooked since. This band formed around 1995. They met in various locations across the country. The first core member of the band is Phillips Exeter Blue (Elijah Blue Allman) son of Gregg Allman the legendary musician of the Allman Brothers & Cher (the singer & performer).

What prompted Elijah to start playing with a band? It wasn't growing up in a music environment or being exposed to his Dad's Band or his mom Cher being a singer and performer. He found his motivation after he started playing guitar and singing and it grew into a passion.

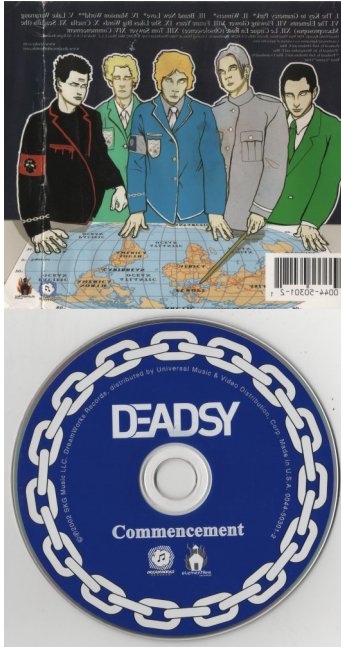
He recorded demos in 1995, playing electric guitar and synths by early 1995 with Drummer & Percussionist Alec Puro (Alec Püre) which he met in California. in college I believe. The earliest demos recorded were "Dear & Texas Never Whispers" (Pavement Cover Song). He met Renn Hawkey in Prep School in Maine and later sent him a Juno 106 Synthesizer as an invitation to join the band. The band's influences and guides for music were the metal of the 90's plus more core elements of very important musicians & bands including the likes of Led Zepelin, Brian Eno, King Crimson and my particular favorite, Gary Numan & his founding band The Tubeway Army. Pieces of Deadsy's music have elements of all this combined; there is no band that sounds like this band. As Elijah stated in an interview, "do we want to play songs and be on the charts? Or play songs people remember 100 years from now?" Also this is an independent band doing it their way and not caring what anyone others think; it was always about the band and their sound.

Other influences Elijah states are Classic, Cult Classic, Cult Sci-Fi & Horror Films of the 1950's and later. One particular movie is "This Island Earth" (1955), a big budget color Sci-Fi Film made by Universal International Pictures (originally Universal but International at the time.) One of my favorite 50's Sci-Fi Films. Part of Elijah's stage name comes from one of the main characters of the film named Exeter, so he is known as Phillips Exeter Blue in the band. The band added Crag Riker (The Beast) on Bass Guitar by the late 90's. They recorded an album in late 1995. It was released on Elektra/Sire Records as a Promo CD issued in 1996 and 1997. Some of the songs on that CD Bass Guitar was played by Orgy's Bass Guitar Player "Jay Gordon". The album is a great album with nine songs. Each song is different with futuristic and or dark sounding synthesizer elements, metal/rock guitar, heavy bass guitar & progressive rock/metal drumming. Track five is darkwave instrumental called "From Beyond;" strangely there is a 1986 Sci-Fi-Horror-Thriller film of the same name which I like. Elijah's vocals are a very good kind of monotone, as he does not scream. Most of those bands just usually have the same guitar riffs plus the same banging the crap out of the drums with the beats. Was never a fan of those death metal scream-o bands very much. Another song on the CD is a cover song by Community FK called Anti-Pop which the original was all right, but Deadsy's Version is well-played and taken up to a way higher level then the original. Track eight is "This Goodnight," which has dark and depressing sounding synthesizers with progressive rock drumming without the metal double bass pedal that Alec uses a lot in Deadsy's songs. The next album is a Z-Tar which is a type of synthesizer guitar. It has a very distinct buzz saw sound which is another Deadsy trademark that no other band has this sound. Elijah's Rock guitaring is dominant throughout the album, too. The last song to close the CD is "Sleepy Hollow" which has some guest vocals by Korn front man Jonathan Davis. later Jon helped Deadsy later secure a record label through him and his band's company Elementree Records. Elijah also sings on this song it is a very dark progressive song and a great way to close the CD.

Deadsy added another band member, Carlton Bost (Known as Megalodon in the band,) close to the end of the millennium. He plays Electric Guitar & Z-Tar depending on the song. Deadsy's first concert with the four members took place on 4-7-97 at Coney Island, in NYC. Three songs were played but by the third song of the show was abandoned. It was a cover song by Gary Numan and his first prominent band Tubeway Army called "Replicas," my favorite Numan track besides "We Are So Fragile" and "Down In The Park". "Replicas" the title track of the album of the same name his first hit album in The U.K. way back in May 1979. The cover was also contributed to a bunch of Numan Cover songs for a 1997 Numan Tribute 2-CD Album called "Random, Vol. 1 - A Gary Numan Tribute". Random is also an Instrumental song by Gary as well. By 2000 or 2001, a new Bass Guitar Player was added Ashburn Miller known as Creature in the band. The band also is known for its visual iconography and signature characteristics assigned to each band member. Each musician is identified by a specific color, stage name, and graphic tied into the band's theatrical nature. Exeter represents International Klein Blue and academia. Alec represents green and leisure. Dr. Nner represents yellow and science. Carlton represents grey and war. Creature represents red and horror. So each band represents something that drives human society. Elijah also described the band as somewhat of an art project movement. The band is very surreal and very esoteric. Touring from 1997 then beyond to promote themselves waiting for the catalyst album to be picked up by a record company to be released. After this release, the band left Sire/Elektra records the follow up full album release was not released. Songs added to the next possible release are also on 1996 & 1997 same Promo CD's I talk about which includes five songs.~~



Deadsy's Legacy on The Current Music of Today (Part 2)



By: David O'Rorey

Commencement was finally released in 2002. Some of the songs from the 1996 and 1997 same Promo CD's ended up on the *Commencement* album, five songs. The CD starts with a nice hook for the market called "The Key To Gramercy Park" which also a music video was made which the song got some MTV and radio airplay. I bought that CD when I was in high school and I have really good memories of playing it. I really enjoy playing this band's music and it has good memories for me. This is a band I grew up with and they are not a lot older now as much with some past artists I discovered on T.V. and or radio such as Devo, Gary Numan, The Tubes, and The Cars. Gary Numan currently music and it's darker and heavier than his older music.

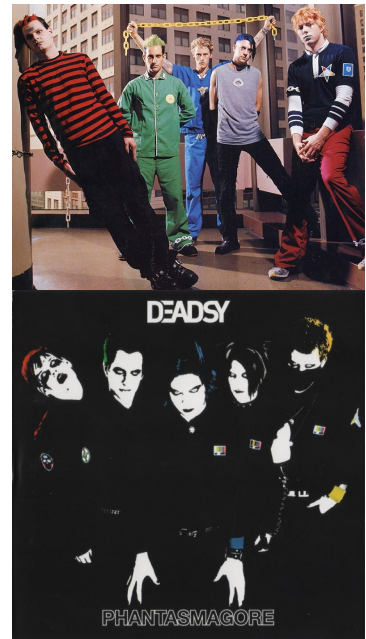
This band is also on the cutting edge and go further with each album released. They make a hybrid of music, while also keeping elements alive of pioneering artists of the 70's-80's. They have a very big sound mixed with some of a commercial sensibility. *Commencement* has 14 songs in it. I like the whole CD; my favorite stand out tracks are though the first track I mentioned plus "Winners" "Lake Waramaug", "The Elements", "Flowing Glower", "Future Years", "Le Cirque En Rose (Obsolescence)." My favorite one they ever made "Le Cirque En Rose (Obsolescence)" a very dark eerie, atmospheric song which uses held in keys mostly with synthesizer pieces influenced by Gary Numan's Classic Darkwave songs of his late 70's and early 80's period of the 3 #1 UK albums and tours he did then. Other Deadsy songs also have this element in them. The song is also progressive rock & changes lots on the instruments as well as metal elements with double bass pedal. The song has very poetic lyrics about life and death not giving up till your time comes. It also has some lyrically well-written songs. This song was written by him and Renn Hawkey the other core member of the band besides the drummer Alec. Lyrics reference "So ground your stroll never through life never quit rain or shine never question what's inside until the last beat & the time!" also another "so go fly away to that special place!" referring to death then crossing over to the spirit realm. This song progresses a lot and gets darker & heavier as the song closes. One reference part I point out is here. Near the end of the track with the instruments and the band rocking it out. On one of the instrumental synth solo parts near the end of the song with drums only on this segment. I hear pieces of what sounds like a death circus part on the synths which very much reminds of the 1962 Independent Cult Classic Horror Movie *Carnival of Souls*. Track 13 is an awesome rocking cover of the song "Tom Sawyer" by Rush.

Covers of albums are also important as well draw the fans in as Elijah stated in an interview. *Commencement's* cover was inspired by a frat fraternity house that was claimed to be a haunted mansion this one of the songs on *Commencement* pays tribute in "Mansion Word." The band is also known since 2001 for playing on The Family Values Tour for about under a half hour each time with other popular bands at large capacity venues. Also in 2002 on The Commencement Supporting Tour they opened tons for the band "Taproot" 2006-2007 Phantasmagore Supporting Tour they opened for The "Deftones." I have a recording from a fan 9-8-02 in Denver, Colorado at The Blue Bird Theater which they played another Kommunity FK Cover Song called "No Fear" to close the nine-song set starting with The Imperial March of classic *Star Wars* Sci-Fi Film Series. The next album released in August 2006 called *Phantasmagore*, which is different than the first album; it's more of a rock album with synths used still but different guitar work sounding more like the likes of "Jesus and Mary Chain."

The Synth sounds were influenced by the 1971 Sci-Fi Classic Film Soundtrack of the movie *A Clockwork Orange* plus some Numan Synth element sounds. The band also goes against the grain of today's music as they dare to go into a sonic real which is very rule defining. Elijah feels that "People walk away with an experience that is unparalleled." This 2006 album has 11 songs and I love it from start to finish. My favorite tracks are "Razor Love," "Better Than You Know," "Book Of Black Dreams" (A song about death not the devil this band is not a satanic band at all.) "Asura" and "Time" originally titled "Sands Of Time" contain elements of Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song." The synthesizer melody is a direct reference to that Zeppelin Song. Track #4 is a nice cover of The Rolling Stones classic "Paint It Black" which they really vamp up. Elijah also states what the last song "Health & Theory" is about in an interview I have. He was reading the book *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and he was also looking at the prints in the book by the famous artist Gustave Dore. The song is about Lucifer being cast out of heaven and his journey from hell to earth. The song is mainly about the story of the Lucifer rebellion &

his plunge into chaos as taken from the book *Paradise Lost*. Deadsy Fans are called "Legions."

The song "Babes in The Abyss" on the *Phantasmagore* album as stated by Elijah is about girls Elijah knew from the neighborhood that he grew up with him seeing how distorted that conscious is and existence is. What will happen in the underworld when their hearts are weighed against the scale about superficial women that he took an Egyptian underworld scenario. Elijah also states that most people follow and don't do what they want to do. We are products of our environment; we are consumers. They distract us as a honey trap while they do their evil things, as Elijah has said.~



Deadsy's Legacy on The Current Music of Today (Part 3)

By: David O'Rorey

Deadsy parted with longtime bass guitarist Ashburn Miller by the end of the 2006 during the *Phantasmagore* Tour. During the 2007 part of the tour, he was replaced by Jens Funke. After 2007 the band went on a hiatus with Elijah working on a solo record; the various other band members doing side projects.

Deadsy's Drummer Alec is one of my all-time favorite drummers. Alec also scores feature films and TV shows, besides being a core member of Deadsy. Deadsy are currently working on a new album due out in the near future, plus hopefully a single release by the end of the year. I also have rare demos, unreleased tracks, album advances and promos all as Mp3 Files. I have seven live recordings of Deadsy between 2001-2006 in Mp3, as this band's live recordings are very hard to find. They are varying in quality audience recordings. I have two concert videos, also with varying audio and video fan shot ones from 2006. I will list what I have of Deadsy. Cher, Elijah's mother, said she loves him and his band and goes to see them in concert when she can. I would like to mention many of the songs that are dark by Deadsy or heavy give me a feeling.

Other followers of Numan like Deadsy are also Project Pitchfork (German Band formed late 80's influenced by Numan and others.) and Solitary Experiments (German band formed in the late 90's they are like a dark version of "Kraftwerk" a pioneering popular electronic band, also from Germany, that mainly used synthesizers formed in the early 70's.) Pitchfork & Solitary also give me this feeling. If the music is heavy at all, I get this even with other non-goth artists I like...especially if it's dark, it happens a lot more. The best description to describe this would be a feeling goes through my body a chilling powerful feeling. I also would say the music of these artists, particularly Numan, with some gothic lyric content, real life events that sometimes the artist experiences and sings about as described with the lyrics. Some similar lyric content with, Deadsy and the other two bands from Germany I mentioned. I would describe all their synthesizer sounds for the most as eerie, dark, atmospheric, cold, uncomfortable like a nightmare and or similar to some horror or sci-fi film scores. Deadsy means so much to me and has been a major part, influence, and drive in my life since 2002. I will be playing some of their songs at a future *Pitverse* launch party so stay tuned and check them out!~



Deadsy's Legacy on The Current Music of Today (Part 4) (Dave's File List)

By: David O'Rorey

1. First Demo (1995) (1995) (Unreleased 7 tracks) (Mp3)
2. Libertine (1995-2005 Unreleased Rarities) (17 tracks) (Mp3)
3. Extended Versions (Unreleased 16 tracks) (Mp3)
4. Deadsy (1997) (Promo CD Remastered 9 tracks Sire Records Inc.) (Flac & Mp3)
5. Commencement (1999) (Unreleased 1st Issue 13 tracks) (Flac & Mp3)
6. Supporting Show (Live, 4-24-01 at The Whiskey A-Go Go, in West Hollywood, California.) (audience A- 9/10 sound very bass heavy sound from Mini Disc Wav Master I believe, but mine is Mp3's at 224 kbps though.)
7. Family Values Tour (Live, 11-10-01 at The Arrowhead Pond, in Anaheim California.) (audience A- 9/10 Possible Mini Disc Master mine is Mp3's at 192 kbps though.)
8. Family Values Tour (Live, 11-17-01 at The Tacoma Dome, in Washington.) (Unreleased Mobile Soundboard to CD-R my copy is Mp3's at 320 kbps)
9. Commencement advance (2002) (Unreleased 2 Second Issue 15 tracks) (Mp3)
10. Commencement (2002) (3rd & Final Issue 14 tracks DreamWorks Records Inc.) (Flac & Mp3)
11. Commencement (2002) [Limited U.S. Retail Edition] (17 tracks DreamWorks Records Inc.) (Mp3)
12. Commencement on Supporting Tour (Live, 9-8-02 at The Blue Bird Theater, in Denver, Colorado.) (audience A- 9/10 sound, sounds heavily compressed Mp3's at 128 kbps)
13. Commencement on Supporting Tour (Live, 11-15-02 at The Trocadero, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.) (audience B+ Tape or 8/10 more distant sound. High quality Flac & Mp3 Files)
14. Phantasmagore (2006) advance (Unreleased 11 tracks) (Mp3)
15. Phantasmagore (2006) (11 tracks Immortal Records Inc.) (Flac & Mp3)
16. Family Values Tour (Live, 7-29-06 at The Starwood Ampitheater, in Nashville, TN.) (audience A- 9/10 sound of a distant from Fan Shot Video some songs have cuts in them & 1 or 2 songs are incomplete.) (I extracted the Mp3 Audio myself plus I have the Mp4 Video File.)
17. Free Rehearsal Party Show 2 Sets (Live, 8-2-06 at The Pantagase Theater, in Atlanta, Georgia.) (audience A- 9/10 & B- 7/10 from Fan Shot Video easily the worst I have starts good then the fan on the camera gets to close to the stage & the sound gets awful. Being a hardcore fan & their live stuff is hard to come by as I stated so I grabbed this still I extracted the Mp3 Audio myself I also have the Mp4 Video File.)

Some of the CD album advances have songs different that progressively changed to the version that ended up on the album. I would like to mention I use tag all my music files by myself but more now through with the help of program called "Media Monkey." I put a lot of work into the music files I have. For Deadsy, have some random music videos, live video clips and a few things in mp3. They are also some other circulating live recordings that I have not been able to get yet from 2001-2007.~



Duck Soup and The Great Dictator

By: Eliot Hinton

The Great Dictator and *Duck Soup* were both hilarious satire movies, and I really loved them both. They each had a very direct sense of humor and criticism as well as a well thought out plot and surprising historical accuracy. While a lot of the comedy was physical, the witty jokes were the highlights of the movie for me. The Marx brothers and Charlie Chaplin were brilliant people.

One thing I noticed throughout both movies was the image of the political figures. They portrayed the government as being foolish and thick skulled. While this theme is more prevalent in *Duck Soup*, *The Great Dictator* also depicts its government leaders as being foolish; numbskulls who only think about themselves and not the good of the people. But, unlike *Duck Soup*, *The Great Dictator* was based on a real person: Adolf Hitler. It used real events to drive the humor forward.

Another common trope was the comedy itself. A lot of it was based on slapstick and physical humor. There was lots of wit and verbal humor, but the physical comedy was much more present. An example of this is during *The Great Dictator* when the barber and Commander Shultz were flying upside down in an airplane and acting very casual about it. In *Duck Soup*, the character Harpo was a very physical type, and most of his jokes were physical.

When it comes to historical satire, it makes much more sense to have a knowledge of the topic beforehand. In *The Great Dictator*, it's important to know about the context in which the film was made, and the events that heavily influenced it. In *Duck Soup*, a general knowledge of American history does make it easier to understand, but it's much more entertaining if you have a more extended knowledge of the topic. The jokes are clever, the visuals are very historically accurate, and almost anyone could enjoy the films.

The target criticism in both films is vastly different from one another. *Duck Soup* focuses on the broad topic of government corruption and mindless politicians, while *The Great Dictator* very directly points fingers at Adolf Hitler and the persecution of the Jewish people. Both films handle these serious topics very well, making the dark subject easier to grasp and funnier than what really happened.~~

Uncharted Treks

By: Thomas R. Skidmore & Michael Kurland

PRELUDE

The late 1970s saw the biggest commercial rise in the science fiction genre. New and technically innovative television shows such as the cult classic British series *Space: 1999* and Saturday morning series like *Shazam*, *The Secrets of Isis*, and *Space Academy* dazzled young audiences with special effects-laden adventures of wonder and hope, and animated shows like *Tarzan*, *Lord of the Jungle* and *The Super-Friends* made comic-book heroes larger than life.

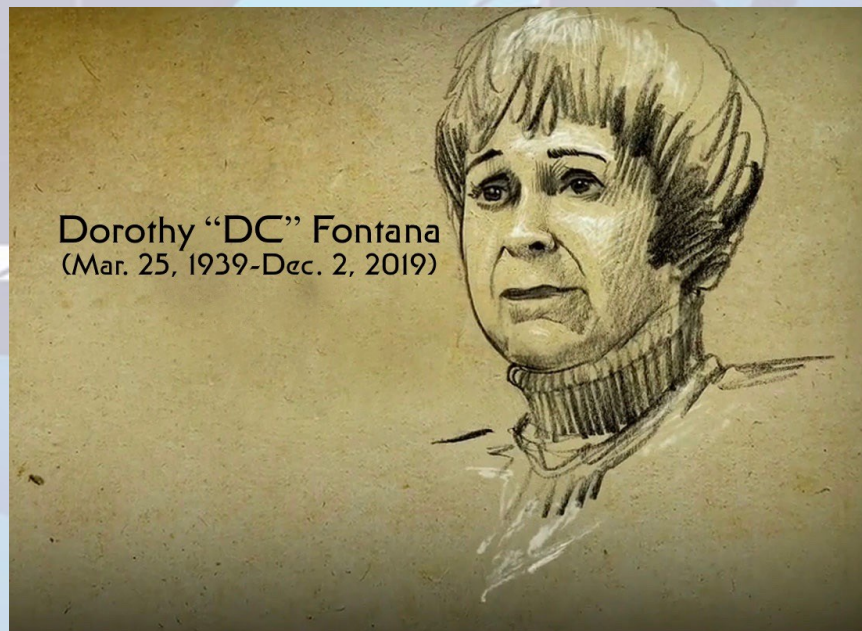
On the publishing front, new and young talented authors emerged onto the SF/fantasy scene. Writers such as Orson Scott Card, Terry Brooks, and Stephen R. Donaldson made an impact on the magazine and novel markets, allowing science fiction books to become New York Times bestsellers.

The world of the movies also experienced a resurgence in science fiction, starting with the technologically pioneering 1976 film *Logan's Run* (which saw the use of laser-generated holograms) and leading up to the one movie that changed everything: *Star Wars*, released in May 1977. This was followed by Steven Spielberg's SF masterpiece *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. And on the horizon, the *Man of Steel* was preparing to shift the wonderment of these films into overdrive.

One noted film and television company, in particular, saw all these events unfold.

They began to formulate a plan to capitalize on the growth and re-emergence of SF.

What they didn't plan on was the voyage their concept would take them on . . . ~~



In Trek's Image

By: Thomas R. Skidmore & Michael Kurland

Between the years of 1969 and 1976, the television series Star Trek grew into a cult phenomenon that quickly became a money-making venture for Paramount Pictures, despite the fact that almost none of the show's primary cast earned no residuals or royalties from the various re-broadcasts of the series, to the endless line of books, toys, comics, and other merchandise.

Starting in late autumn 1975, with science fiction television again on the rise thanks to the British program *Space: 1999* (which would later have a strong connection to Trek, with former ST producer Fred Freiberger taking over the floundering series), Paramount Pictures took a very serious interest in a potential revival of Trek.

There was, however, a list of problems and challenges to overcome.

What kind of stories would be told?

Will the main cast reunite, or do we hire a new crew?

Can we keep up with new special effects technology?

And will this be as a series, TV movie, or feature film?

As the development process went ahead, Paramount began taking story submissions from many writers, including creator Gene Roddenberry and former Trek writer D.C. Fontana. One potential story idea, while proving somewhat controversial, piqued the studio's interest.

Science fiction author Alan Dean Foster, already familiar with Trek via his novelizations of the animated show, submitted a plot wherein the Enterprise sought out a mysterious entity responsible for the demise of several starships. Soon the mission would venture into a religious metaphysical tale about the search for the Supreme Being, namely God. Both Gene Roddenberry and the executives at Paramount liked the story (in spite of the feared controversy that may arise) but let the story sit until the studio decided to go for a new TV series to showcase the new voyages.

In late 1976, the new Trek project began in earnest. For the look of the Enterprise, Paramount hired conceptual artist Andrew Probert to re-design the starship, and for special effects Robert Able and Associates (a noted production company famous for some innovative commercials on TV) was to handle. In the interim, more stories were commissioned.

However, things quickly changed in 1977. A new and dazzling space film called *Star Wars* grew into an instant classic, with its breath-taking special effects and use of computer graphics. The success of George Lucas' epic made Paramount take more serious notice of the innovations. Meanwhile, production on "In Thy Image" continued. Foster's story was further developed by scriptwriter Harold Livingston. It was he who added new crew members for the Enterprise:

Ilia, a beautiful young Deltan; Xon, the replacement Vulcan science officer; Captain Willard Decker, who was to be the new ship's commander.

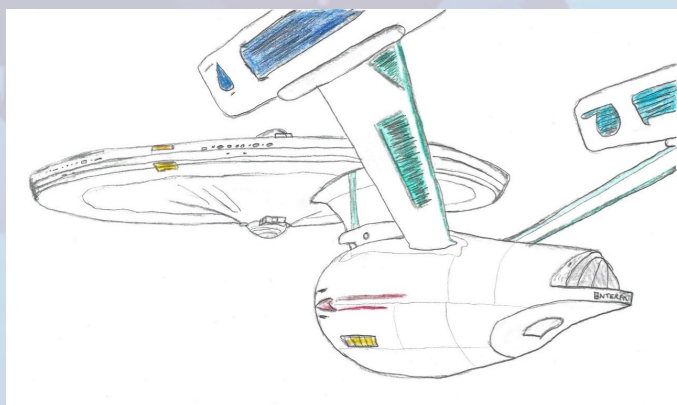
Talks began with TOS stars William Shatner, DeForrest Kelley, and even Leonard Nimoy et al to appear in the new series, albeit on a recurring basis. All were agreeable to the proposal sans Nimoy, who was in the middle of filming his popular TV show *In Search Of...* as well as staging a one-man play on the life of painter Vincent Van Gogh. It looked as though the series was a shoo-in.

In early 1978, Paramount proposed starting a new TV network (a concept that was radical at the time) solely to showcase the new series. "In Thy Image" was to be the pilot for what was to become *Star Trek: Phase II*. But the continuing success of *Star Wars* and the premiere of *Superman* in late 1978 caused Paramount to re-think the Trek story.

It seemed a full-length, special effects-laden movie was inevitable.

And so in February 1979, Paramount opted to drop the new series and focus on the silver screen.

The voyage to that silver screen proved to be turbulent . . . ~



Review of the Peanut Butter Falcon

By: Nils Skudra

Recently I had the opportunity to see the film *The Peanut Butter Falcon* in theaters. While not a production about autism, this film articulates a motivational message for people with disabilities in general who wish to pursue their dreams and will not let their physical or neurological challenges be an obstacle to that achievement. I therefore decided to make *The Peanut Butter Falcon* the topic of this review.

Set in eastern North Carolina, the film revolves around Zak (portrayed by Zack Gottsagen), a 22-year-old man with Down syndrome living in a senior retirement facility after having been left there by his family since they did not want the responsibility of caring for him. Zak spends his time tuning into professional wrestling videos featuring Saltwater Redneck (portrayed by Thomas Haden Church), whom he idolizes and aspires to emulate as a professional wrestler. He makes several unsuccessful attempts to escape but is caught each time and confined to his room with Carl (played by Bruce Dern in a cameo appearance), an elderly resident who respects Zak's love of wrestling and encourages him to pursue his dream of becoming a professional wrestler. One night, Carl finally aids Zak in escaping through the window of their room so that Zak may go off in search of Saltwater Redneck's wrestling school and train with him. This prompts Zak's specialist Eleanor (portrayed by Dakota Johnson), a well-meaning but overly protective caregiver who does not truly understand his aspirations, to pursue him along the North Carolina coast in the hope of finding him and bringing him back to the retirement home.

On the course of his trek, Zak encounters Tyler (portrayed by Shia LaBeouf), a fisherman and thief who is on the run himself after destroying \$12,000 worth of equipment following a confrontation with crabbers whose crabs he had stolen and unsuccessfully tried to sell. Initially, Tyler wants nothing to do with Zak, considering him a hindrance to his own escape plans, and intends to part ways with Zak. However, after witnessing the bullying of Zak by other kids who refer to him as a "retard" and goad him into jumping off a lifeguard tower in spite of Zak's inability to swim, Tyler intervenes and decides to let Zak accompany him. However, Tyler personifies the image of an archetypal redneck in that he initially shows no understanding of or concern for Zak's disability – in a poignant moment of dialogue, Zak assertively tells Tyler, "I am a Down syndrome person," to which Tyler, probably ignorant of what that diagnosis entails, simply responds, "I don't care."

As Zak and Tyler's coastal journey progresses, Tyler gradually begins to develop empathy and compassion for Zak, recognizing his strengths as an individual and the passion with which he pursues his goal. A close friendship develops between them, with Tyler teaching Zak important life skills such as swimming and shooting – the latter begins on a comedic note when Zak is thrown back several feet by the gun blast during his first attempt, but he soon becomes adept at target practice. More importantly, Tyler encourages Zak to become more self-confident, telling him that what's in his heart is what truly matters and not what people say about him as a person with Down syndrome. This represents a profound step in Tyler's character development and in the message of the film since it sets him apart from other neurotypical individuals in Zak's world who see his condition as a permanent obstacle to his ability to successfully lead an independent life in mainstream society. There is a prevalent perception that people with Down syndrome in particular are inhibited from being able to attend college, live independently or work a professional job due to the physical challenges of their disability and the numerous medications that they require, but Zak significantly challenges these assumptions through his development over the course of his travels with Tyler.

The plot takes on the style of a Mark Twain story, reminiscent of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in that Zak and Tyler encounter a variety of eccentric characters on their journey, including a blind religious man who almost shoots them upon first encountering the pair but then baptizes Zak and provides them with a raft, after which they spend their time sailing on the river toward Florida. Zak takes the title of “Peanut Butter Falcon” for himself as a professional wrestler’s stage name, reflecting both his love of peanut butter (the one food item that the pair could afford on their trek) and his new self-confidence. Eleanor eventually catches up with them and tries to convince Zak to return to the retirement home, but after an argument with Tyler (during which Zak throws her car keys in the ocean) she agrees to accompany them to the wrestling school on the condition that Zak return to the home afterward. As they sail on the Outer Banks, Tyler and Eleanor clash over Zak’s new level of independence and the treatment that he requires as an individual with Down syndrome, with Tyler asserting that while Eleanor may never call Zak a “retard,” she makes him feel retarded by giving him medications for physical issues he has learned to deal with on his own and by keeping him in a retirement facility. This dialogue offers a powerful insight into the mindset of individuals with Down syndrome or other neurological diagnoses (including autism) since they can feel inhibited even by well-meaning neurotypical people who treat their disability as something requiring specialized care rather than a condition that they can work with in order to function independently, which Zak has acquired greater confidence in and which Eleanor gradually comes to recognize as the journey progresses to its ultimate conclusion.

The Peanut Butter Falcon features stellar performances by its lead actors and beautiful geographic scenery, and it articulates an uplifting message about the ability of Down syndrome individuals to thrive independently and pursue their dreams, as well as the prospects for changing the outlook of neurotypical individuals who are either ignorant or misguided in their understanding of the condition. The fact that Zack Gottsagen has Down syndrome himself adds even greater power to the themes of this film since it marks an important step in film representation of protagonists with disabilities by enabling actors with disabilities to represent themselves rather than cast neurotypical actors in those roles. Hopefully this will set a precedent for future disability-themed film productions which will provide opportunities for more actors from the disability community to personally represent their community on screen and thereby add greater diversity to film casting.~~~





Photos by Masha
Gregory



Delaine Swearman and Dan Hackett stand with Lu Randall, the Executive Director of the Autism Connection of PA, at their “Awesome Night for Autism” after speaking on behalf of Brian Kluchurosky, the 2019 winner of the Temple Grandin Award.
(Photo courtesy of Delaine Swearman)

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