

Winter 2020

Vol. 6, Iss. 4

# Pittverse

Quarterly Magazine



This Edition:

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Pittverse

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A MAGAZINE WRITTEN EXCLUSIVELY BY ADULTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM



## 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

Our very own Michael Kurland garners credit for the fantastic idea of having the Peanuts grace our cover in a very seasonally appropriate way.

The colorful joy that adorns the cover is reflected in some of our content in this issue. Despite the seasonal celebratory tone, many of our writers have also submitted contemplative work that explores and comments on current events. Sit back and enjoy the Winter 2020 issue of *Pittverse*!~

### Letter from the Editor

The common theme going forward from this issue, other than exploration of holiday tradition, is an overwhelming sense of relief. After an arduous, stressful, and emotional 2020, we have finally turned the page to begin a new year, with hopeful promise...and busy pens!

The Winter Issue effectively closes the book on 2020. While I am relieved that we have endured a year of seemingly endless change and unexpected (and constant) adversity, we are ready to begin a new, hopeful chapter in 2021. I'm very proud of you and your ability to adapt to the many changes and challenges that we have encountered together over the past 11 months.

Keep creating—here's hoping for a better 2021!

*Jennifer Pizzuto*



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SAELTON

ICER

BY JORDAN WATSON



# Mæltan Micer & E'Olh (Pt. 1)

By Jordan Watson

**T**he gelid air fills the suburban landscape of Washington, D.C.. Snowfall trickles in a bi-polar fashion, as the visage of sullen clouds uncovers the city's corporal view. Beyond it lies Imperiul High School. A landmark filled with the aggregate of its impending scholarly, yet dismal hive-minded academia. The students bustle through their 8<sup>th</sup> period regiment. A small group of teenagers sit out near the front entrance of the main grounds, laden in their winter attire to match with their complacent demeanor.

We are introduced to a small clique of students, beginning with the team captain of Imperiul's football team, Brock Sutherlin. A jock who puts impeccable performance in his team, The Margays, yet puts far too much emphasis to his own physique and vanity. Adjacent to his left side, is Martin Foley. A short, stout boy, simply put as the bread and circus of his peers. He copes with small doses of marijuana. Within the center of attention to this gang, is their poised popular girl, Charlotte Siri. The leader of Imperiul's cheer squad, and princess of her personal squad. She uses her stature and beauty to reign above all the student body, with her rose colored hair, fair body, and moderate makeup. To her left, is a queerly dressed girl, Amelia S. Sallow. A quiet, reserved artist with curled hair, problem glasses, and average body. She puts her gaze within her moleskin sketchbook, drawing out the cityscape before her. A short distance to her right, leaning beside the stairs of the doorway, is the enigmatic Sigurd O. Loyce. Dressed in an open dark hoodie, with the Norse symbol of Yggdrasil as his undershirt, numerous ear piercings, and a long chin beard to match with his persona. As the passerby of the variegated students all begin to head home for the late afternoon, they remain to banter of their latest gossip.

"Uuugh, the holidays are gonna be sooo boring to deal with!" groans Charlotte, as she manicures her nails, while Martin braids her back hair.

"What do *you* got to worry about? You have it good with your big mansion, and your family helping bring in the town to mingle with and get more money." Brock comfortably berates her while flexing his hand grip.

Charlotte is quick to playfully snap at her friend. "You asking for an invitation?"

"Maaaybe I do. I wouldn't mind getting in good with their daughter on the matter." Brock winks in her direction.

Martin lights up a small blunt. He then asks the group of any plans before the holiday season approaches, starting with Charlotte by referring to her by a personal nickname.

"Hey Uwu, we gonna crash any more parties before we all do our own thing come Xmas?"

"Hmmm....I mean, we did crash that one kid's party, Holfield?"

"That was two months ago, Charlotte. Martin means as of recently." As Amelia chimes in, in a coy and loving manner.

"Oh wait! You mean Collin? Yeah, gotta admit, I didn't think we'd be able to pull it off, considering he's in crutches now!"

In ill unison, Brock, Charlotte & Martin laugh, while Amelia only chuckles slightly, as she goes back to her sketches of the scenery in front of her.

Sigurd places his hand on Amelia's shoulder, as he makes his way around her. She looks to him with a hazy, doe-eyed disposition.

"I'm gonna go ahead and head back home early. Will you need a ride back home, my dear?"

"Sure! I'd really appreciate it, honey bunny. Daddy was supposed to come to pick me up later, but he hasn't answered his phone."

"He must be busy with a meeting at his office. Let's head off."

Brock scoffs at his response with his own retort.

"You gonna be her foot stool while you're at it, you simp?"

"You're technically a simp for Charlotte too, dude." As Martin rebukes.

Brock aggressively picks him up by his hoodie collar, while his hand is stuck yanking on Charlotte's half-braided hair.

"A better one than your stoolie ass can keep lapping up her stains!"

As tensions seem to teeter, Sigured pulls up a short distance away from Amelia. As they both head off, Amelia faintly looks back before putting her attention to her swift transportation back home.



As the winter evening blankets Ezel Street in its white flurries, Sigurd pulls up near Amelia's residence. He parks himself near the front door of the suburban home.

"So, what plans do you have during the holiday week?"

Amelia stops drawing the remainder of her sketch to veer her attention to her friend.

"Mmm, not sure. We might just have a family dinner gathering for both Christmas Eve & Day, nothing too special. I just hope I can get this image done for Daddy's sake."

"I know you work absolutely quick, honey. He'll love it no matter what."

As Sigurd tries to reach in for an intimate kiss, she shies away, squirming a bit at his sudden reaction. He stares back out front of the road out of Ezel Street, with discouragement trickling down his face. Amelia's brief silence deafens the car's interior, ending it with a shaky diminuendo.

"...You know he hasn't gotten comfortable with the idea of us being together yet...N-Not Daddy. You know who....I'll see you before the holidays?"

"...Yeah."

Amelia slowly opens his front car door, calmly walking through the winding walkway to her front door. Sigurd turns the key and starts the car engine to head home. Upon reaching for the front door of her home, she notices the door's cracked ajar, sans her father's car missing from the scenario. Dread begins to fill her core, giving the belief someone may have intruded to burgle her home. To her surprise, no signs of evidence had been left for her to witness. No traces of snow covered footprints, nor any ransacking of her family's personal belongings. Concerned for her own well-being, she keeps silent to make her presence unknown. Before tiptoeing through the main living room area, the door behind her loudly shuts on its own throughout the abode. Jolted and scared, she raises her bag upwards as her only means of defense. After a brief moment, she lets her guard down. As she approaches the kitchen, she immediately notices a note on the refrigerator door.

*"Dearest Amelia,*

*We will be out for a work related social dinner, so we've prepared you a dish of Beef Stroganoff in the fridge. We'll be back home soon!*

*Love, Dad"*

After a few hours pass, she heads upstairs to relax in her room, ever so cautious in the hopes that she is the only one within the household. Upon reaching the door, she begins to feel a wave of fatigue overwhelm her in a matter of seconds. As she wearily opens the door, her smartphone begins to ring. She staggers to where her bed is, struggling to get a clear vision of her surroundings. Within the artsy aesthetic of her room, filled with Faye wild and druid culture, she cannot make out the dark sheet where her bed would be positioned. The moment paralysis hits her, before she loses complete consciousness, she sees around her flickering orbs of light, akin to fireflies. She then falls to her bed, as complete darkness overtakes her.

A new vision begins to take form. Amelia awakens from her abrupt slumber. She sees before her a surreal room of Escher stairways riddled above the ceiling. Columns of melded corpses amalgamating as free-flowing bodies. The floors bedded with vines, interwoven in rib-caged patterns, and moist pores, filling the ground beneath her. Within the room itself, is her friends, lined in a four-star point. They're bound by their necks and hands, amid thorned chains, connected to the living dead columns. Within the middle, is a relatively large man with a black bag over his head. Amelia strains to get herself to full consciousness and begins to scream to the top of her lungs.

"Oh God, guys! GUYS! WAKE UUUP! CHRIST, WAKE UUUP!"

Her shrill cries rouse her peers from their deep slumber, entangled within the same strange shackles. Charlotte begins to yell profusely in distress.

"A-Amelia? Amelia, where are we?!"

Martin begins to shake in his clothes in a sheer panic.

"W-w-w-What is this place?! OH DEAR GOD, THIS IS HELL, ISN'T IT?!"

As the others carry on, a booming voice jeers from the speakers on the living column corners, deafening their cries.

"Faaar from it kids! Your fear is of no coincidence! I welcome you to this realm, so kill your cognitive dissonance!"

All goes quiet. The sounds of a rumbling procession, marching from all directions, is all that fills this world...

~~



# Allure Dress Shop in Bloomfield

By Maggie Jones

Allure Dress Shop is a wonderful shop in Pittsburgh's Bloomfield neighborhood. It sits on Liberty Avenue and Cederville Street intersection and it has many fashionable women's clothing, jewelry, accessories and artwork. The owner, Miss. Ellen, runs the shop five days a week from Monday thru Friday. I would always stop in and say hi to her in her store. She has been in business for around 30 years. She is my best friend that I've known for years now.



She has a unique taste for different styles of clothes that she puts on display in the windows of Allure Dress Shop. Even the prices are decent. This is the best shop in Bloomfield and on Liberty Avenue, in my book. Hope that this store will make you feel welcome to come in.~~

## The Allegheny County Belt System

By Amelia Krzton

Living in the City of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny County in general, can be very difficult and confusing for residents. This was when the Allegheny County Belt System came to fruition. The Red Belt traverses from west to east across the northern portion of Allegheny County from Leetsdale to Tarentum and is even on the edge of Beaver County briefly. The Orange Belt begins at Bethel Park and goes northwest to Moon Township and Sewickley, crossing the Ohio River, and then going east through Franklin Park, McCandless, Richland Township, and West Deer prior to heading across the Allegheny River across the New Kensington Bridge into Westmoreland County for a moment, then heading back into Allegheny County through Plum and Monroeville, coinciding with Route 48 for the majority of the route before making its southeast terminus at Elizabeth Township. The Yellow Belt was what I just saw a video on recently and the Yellow and Blue Belts are the only belts that make a complete circle around the county. Some new townships that the Yellow Belt goes through include Hampton Township, Indiana Township, Harmar, Oakmont, Penn Hills, Wilkins Township, Turtle Creek, and McKeesport. It also crosses all three of Allegheny County's main rivers: the Allegheny River, the Monongahela River, and the Ohio River. The Green Belt goes through Emsworth, Ross Township, Fox Chapel, the Highland Park Bridge, Allegheny River Boulevard, Sandy Creek Road, Verona Road, Swissvale Avenue, and across the Rankin Bridge to Whitaker. My personal favorite attractions on the Green Belt are Kennywood Park and the Pittsburgh Zoo. The Blue Belt skirts the city at times going over the Ohio River on the McKees Rocks Bridge, the Allegheny River on the Highland Park Bridge, and the Monongahela River on the Homestead Grays Bridge. The final belt, the Purple Belt, was not added until 1995, and it is completely in the city of Pittsburgh. Perfect to navigate your way around Allegheny County!~~



# The Scourge of the Christmas Car Commercial

By Megan Cunningham

As Christmas is a gift-giving holiday, American corporations anticipate big payouts. And even though we've lived through 2020 amid a worldwide pandemic our federal government has been completely mismanaged, this year is no exception. Especially if we're talking about online sales, which will certainly hit record levels and put Jeff Bezos one step closer to becoming the world's first trillionaire.



Anyway, one commercial you particularly see in November and December is the Christmas car commercial. Whether it's Toyotathon, Hondadays, the Lexus "December to Remember," or what gives you, we will see a lot of them. A family gets up in the morning and goes outside to find a brand-new sedan with a big red bow sitting in their driveway to their rapturous glee. A man leads his wife out of their unrealistically modernist home and surprises her with shiny new Lexus on their snow-covered driveway, which also has an enormous bright red bow on its hood. A woman surprises her husband by giving him the luxury car he always dreamed of since childhood. Happiness all around. Or the one where the husband surprises his wife with matching GMC trucks as she takes the one he had in mind for himself.

Now during the Christmas season, there are things people might want but don't make great gift ideas. Take for instance, all the public service announcement ads against getting a puppy or kitten during this time of year. After all, having a pet aside from a goldfish is at least a decade long responsibility. And sadly, a lot of these Christmas pets are abandoned once the holidays are over. But there is another kind of gift people might want that's a terrible idea, which is anything bought with financing like a car or a house. For one, as with pets, buying anything with financing should be a family decision, or at least between the parents. And that buying with financing requires you to make a series of regular payments of a few hundred dollars as with a house or a car. Given that nearly half of all US jobs are low-income, most American workers living paycheck to paycheck, rampant income inequality, and the scourge of Coronavirus tanking the economy, these car commercials seem more like an impossible fantasy that's so out of touch with our reality, especially with car buying.

Look, I get that people in commercials live at a much higher standard of living than me. After all, selling a somewhat attainable fantasy is the whole point of advertising. And besides, in TV world, you can work as a waitress in California and still rent a spacious apartment across the hall from two man-child professors in their thirties. Or how a real estate agent in California can afford a million-dollar home for his wife and three teenagers, all on a single income. I understand car companies want to make money we often see multiple car commercials every day, holiday season or not. Not to mention, car dealerships and law firms usually make a large chunk of local commercial airtime. And the holiday season is a great time to do that as a lot of people do buy new cars and trucks during that time, especially given the heavy discounts. Especially after Christmas. Besides, my parents bought a Tercel during the holidays back in 1993 and they always hunt for bargains.

Yet, why should we treat cars as a quality Christmas gift akin to jewelry or small appliances? Buying a car isn't like buying any other product. You buy it by signing a lease with a down payment and spend the next several months making other payments. And like pets, they're also a big responsibility requiring car insurance, yearly inspections, regular maintenance, and the occasional body shop repair. Thus, it's a major financial decision. And if you're married, you shouldn't buy a car without dis-



cussing it with your spouse, Christmas or not. Sometimes when I see these commercials, I can't help but wonder what the adults do for a living to afford their car or their ridiculously expensive house. Or how someone can buy a car without discussing it with their spouse and leave the driveway with their marriage somehow spiraling into disaster. Is the dad an executive of a Fortune 500 company? Does the mom work for a high-powered law firm? Do they have rich parents helping them pay their bills? Are they on their rich parents' payroll? Do they stay in the office after hours so they get the big promotion? Are they always working in order to retain their lifestyle? Do they spend any time with their kids? Is the husband or wife really sincere in their appreciation? Because I don't get how these parents can afford their upscale life and still successfully retain a work-life balance without benefitting from some federal programs. Or how someone can be totally okay with their spouse making a major financial decision without consulting them. But I grew up as lower middle-class, receive healthcare through Medicaid, and have struggled looking for a job since I've graduated from college in 2012. And I've never been in a serious relationship. So, what would I know about relationships and buying stuff?

It's even more baffling if the cars featured are luxury models. Say what you want about Fords, Chevys, Toyotas, Huyndais, Hondas, Nissans, and other sedans, but at least they're reliable and not terribly expensive. But somehow the endless rounds of holiday car commercials try to convince viewers that buying an expensive luxury car for your spouse as a Christmas gift is a normal thing to do and a good idea, especially as a surprise for your spouse who'll absolutely love it. As if these luxury car brands think most Americans are millionaires who can easily afford a Lexus SUV if they or their spouse wanted one. Despite that it costs 50% more than what the average American family makes in a year. But we know none of that's true. Besides, most people typically don't buy luxury cars for their loved ones out of complete selflessness. They buy luxury cars as gifts because, they secretly want one for themselves, they want to show off their affluent status to their trophy spouse, or they want to keep their trophy spouse from leaving them. Buying a luxury car isn't a good idea at any time of year, let alone Christmas. Especially if you're not rich to afford the payments or have any idea how to take care of it. In addition, I often see them as outrageously expensive adult toys for rich people, midlife crisis guys, selfish jerks, and the financially irresponsible.

So, if you want to buy something for your spouse this Christmas, don't jump into buying a car without discussing it with them first. Sure, it may not be a surprise since they'll know about it ahead of time, but at least the purchase won't land you in marriage counseling or divorce court. And stay away from the luxury cars if you don't have an excess of disposable income. Yet, if you want your spouse with something pricey, buy them something else like jewelry, appliances, designer clothes, or anything else without financing. Heck, buy them a Peloton if you want. They're only a few thousand bucks. Just don't buy them a car. No matter what the Lexus commercials tell you otherwise.

**Picture courtesy of *Car and Driver*.**



# Pittsburgh Winters in the 70s

By Daniel H. Ashkin

During the last 50 years, the Pittsburgh climate has become increasingly warmer. In this story, I am going to explain how the Pittsburgh winters in the 70s were colder than they are now.

When I was a child, the snow began to accumulate in the month of November on before the holiday of Thanksgiving. After the holiday of Thanksgiving, Pittsburgh would likely experience snowstorms over 12" in the month of December. The snow depth had reached as high as the fire hydrants on my street. When I walked onto the grass surfaces, the depth reached as high as my knees. After it snowed piled on the driveway and the steps, I shoveled the driveway for my parents. After Ken and I have shoveled the driveway, we have fun in the snow. I would put a cold snowball behind my brother's coat shirt as a joke.

Before I moved to Old Suffolk Drive in Monroeville, I would slide my red sled down Old Corkwood Drive Street after he plowed the snow. When I moved to Old Suffolk Drive in Monroeville, I would slide down my sled down the hill of the sidewalk of icy sidewalk with my sled. When the sled went down the hill, it accelerated at a speed of thirty miles per hour down the drop.

When nightfall came during the month of December, my family viewed the beautiful Christmas lights on Old Suffolk Drive and Foxwood area in Monroeville. The dazzling lights covered the houses, railings, and the bushes. When the Christmas lights glitter onto the powder snow, the lights caused many different colors of reflections to shine onto the houses. The colors were blue, red, yellow, and violet shining onto the white puffy powder snow on the ground and the trees.

Because of COVID-19, all of the social events have been canceled this year. I wish that the writing group at *Pittverse Magazine* could observe the beautiful Christmas lights this year in a van. After we have observed the Christmas lights, the writers' group could likely gobble apple pie and a hot chocolate at a local restaurant.

When the month of January came to the city of Pittsburgh, my family experienced numerous days in which the temperature fell below zero. The wind chill factor occasional reached minus 40 to 50 degrees below zero in the Pittsburgh area. Nearly all the Pittsburgh schools were closed on very bitter, glacial wintry days. When the snow began to thaw after the month of January, I built a snowman out of wet snow. I rolled three balls of snow. After I rolled the three balls of snow to build the snowman, I placed the rocks onto the snowman's stomach for its buttons. After I placed the rocks on the stomach of snowman, I positioned a red scarf around his neck. Finally, I placed rocks for its eyes and the ears.

## *Why were the Winters Colder in the 70s?*

When you compare pictures of the polar ice caps from the 70s, scientist will notice that they are shrinking in size every year. Because the ice cap is shrinking in size, less Arctic Air can penetrate down through the United State during the winter time.

In summary, winter have started early in the Pittsburgh area during the 70s. In the township of Monroeville, began snowing before Thanksgiving. When the month of December came to the Pittsburgh area, I had to shovel my family's driveway. After shoveling the heavy snow off the driveway, I slid my sled down the sidewalk of Old Suffolk Drive. When evening came, my family observed the beautiful Christmas lights. When the month of January arrived, Pittsburgh was experiencing many freezing days below zero. Today, the city of Pittsburgh is receiving milder winters because most of the polar ice caps are decreasing in size.~~





# I Don't Do Christmas

By Alicia Marie Farina

I can't do it. I just can't do Christmas anymore. Even when somebody mentions the holiday, I cringe all up inside. And I'm sick of it.

I'm sick of wanting to get the best presents for the ones I love, I'm sick of spending money I don't have, I'm sick of seeing people pretending to be nice to each other because it's Christmas, and I'm sick of people showing off their decorations, lights, and inflatable puppets strung all across their yards and inside their homes to show others that they're better than everyone else. And, most importantly, I'm sick of everyone forgetting the true reason why people celebrate Christmas in the first place.

It seemed so simple back then. There were no diseases, no fighting, no politics, no sides to choose, no problems. But now, it's just a big mess left for us to clean up. The holiday isn't about Jesus anymore. It's about how many presents you can buy for a person and how to impress others, even if it meant destroying yourself during the process. The "magic" of Christmas isn't what it used to be anymore, especially when you don't make a lot of money or if you're not even crafty enough to make homemade gifts. Now, people believe that when you give, you're supposed to receive something in return. But it shouldn't be that way at all. It should all be about giving, and nothing else.

When Halloween is over and done with, the day after that, you don't even get to take a breather. This is because the stores will already be stocked with Christmas themed items and sales. Forget Thanksgiving, let's get into Christmas already! That alone should be an absolute insult.

Then, there are the shoppers. When the holidays come by, all hell starts to break loose. Especially on Black Friday. People show their true ugliness when they cut lines, snatch products out of others' hands, and conduct physical violence against each other. That alone can take the love out of Christmas for certain. Television, internet, radio, billboards, and magazines are overrun with advertisements, ads, and articles that pressure you into buying cars, toys, jewelry, phones, and more. It's a lot of pressure along with stress. It's also a sad situation. People have lost loved ones in the past that aren't there to celebrate with them anymore. People live far away and cannot make their way home for the holidays. It's even worse because we're still dealing with COVID-19 this winter. And it doesn't look like it will lift anytime soon. I've watched those who had to be careful with their wallets, health, and self-esteem; they didn't seem to be enjoying the position they were in at all.

Christmas isn't Christmas anymore. It's just another holiday to excuse yourself to buy Things without end. I didn't want to take any part in it. I wanted MY Christmas back. I want my family and friends back. I want the togetherness back. I want the simple and easy life back. I want nothing but love, not stress and doubt. People have truly forgotten what Christmas is supposed to be about. It has nothing to do with gifts. It's bigger and better than that. And until everybody learns and understands this valuable lesson, I'm not going to celebrate Christmas. Not like this.~

## True Meaning of Christmas

By Michael Kurland

When working on *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, creator Charles Schulz felt that the holiday had become too commercialized. In the special, Charlie Brown felt the same way, but he didn't know what its true meaning was about. Schulz took a huge risk by insisting that Linus deliver the Biblical version of the True Meaning of Christmas. This would be the first time that religion and entertainment would be blended together on network television. And for me, 55 years after its initial airing, whenever I hear the Gospel reading in church, I can always hear Linus' voice at the end saying, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown." Now, it's your chance to hear what Linus recited 55 years ago. Thanks to Lee Mendelson, Bill Melendez & Charles Schulz.

[Charlie Brown Learns the True Meaning of Christmas](#)

\*\*if the above link does not work, please copy the following into your browser: <https://youtu.be/7pJGMhRiLWA>



# Winter and the Wonders it Holds for Me

By Dmitry Harmon

Since coming to America I have found winter to be one of the most wondrous times of the year. The color of the snow and how it reflects light from the sun to create a utopia that some people in hot climates of the world might call a fantasy land. In America we get snow in some parts of the country and it looks glorious. The trees and neighborhoods look incredibly inviting, the holiday season looks even more special than advertised on television and radio, and all the stores have all sorts of things to buy when it comes to the winter season.

However, a lot of people suffer from seasonal depression and can have a hard time with the winter. It can be associated with cold weather, not wanting to go out, and sometimes just feeling more lonely than usual because people generally do not want to go out in the cold.

For me, winter does not create a ton of these problems. Perhaps the one that I can relate to is people not wanting to go out, thus causing a sense of loneliness and such. However, the snow definitely brings out the fun side of winter such as football in the snow, ice skating and snowball fights if you still like having freezing balls of ice getting thrown at your face. A lot of people associate the temperatures and snow with hot food and drinks. The idea of getting on the couch with a blanket and a hot cup of hot cocoa, especially on a Saturday morning and watching a show on the TV. One of my favorite things to do was going to my grandparents' house for dinner and my grandfather made really good soup. At times there are moments where the snow can become irritating like when driving. However, the snow does create a sense of relaxation.

One of the things about winter and when it snows is you can see it and feel it but there is virtually no sound except for when you hear it set down on the ground. As opposed to rain when you know it's raining because it is very distinctive. Some people like the rain. However, there is something almost supernatural about it. In some cases it's almost like one could compose a tune for the snow, which may be why winter songs or Christmas songs have such a unique quality to them. When it comes to winter, there is nothing more exciting for me than walking around the neighborhood while it is snowing. Because it is so quiet and relaxing. I am better able to process my thoughts and feelings. After a nice hard walk in the cold snow it is always nice to sit down and relax with a nice beer or hot beverage as I mentioned before. Since I live in the city it's harder for me to see areas that are absolutely astonishing to look at. In this situation, I do something different.

Video games have come a long way with graphics and game engines. One of my favorite adventure games to play is Horizon Zero Dawn. This game takes place in the future but at times looks like it takes place in ancient times. The mysterious side of this game is the animals that are now machines. In fact, very few animals live in the world. It is a vast world map, and I would say at least fifty percent of it is snowy. Especially the expansion pack that came out that is nothing but snow. It has a glorious feel to it and the fantasy level of the snow in the game is unreal...just absolutely breathtaking. Sometimes when it is summer, and I want to feel like it's winter or look at winter, I will play this game. Overall, the game landscape is stunning. The game tries to cover different aspects of the world such as desert, jungle and prairies or plains. It is a get away from real life and always fun to explore.

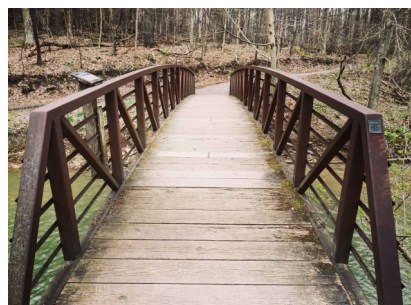
I also will watch films that have a lot of snow in them. I have found most films that are all CGI have the best look for the winter wonderland feature. One of my favorite films to watch that includes snow is *A Christmas Carol* featuring Jim Carrey. The atmosphere is all about holiday joy and the struggles of an individual with the community due to his personal nature. One of the reasons I like watching the film and the winter weather in the snow because of how it compares with what's going on in the film. Whenever they are focusing on Ebenezer Scrooge the snow looks icy and cold like his personality. However, whenever they focus on the townspeople or the gentleman who works for Scrooge, it almost has an inviting way of looking at Christmas and bringing joy to the family.

Winter has a lot of great qualities that people sometimes forget. For me, it is a wonderful chance to utilize coping skills whenever I am going through a tough time or just feeling overwhelmed. Not everything about winter is bad. I know that people can tire from it, as do I in certain times. A prime example is when it is single digits for a week or more straight. However, that happens maybe once a season. I would take that over a series of weeks where it is in the ninety-degree temperatures for several weeks. Summer also has its chances to do fun things, but for me winter has a unique sort of glamour to it that is hard to beat.~~





# MY FIRST YEAR LIVING THE MONROEVILLE LIFE



Story and Photos by Robert Hester

If you would have told me five years ago that I would move from the only house and neighborhood I ever lived in Braddock, one of the most poor and un-glamorous—yet one of the most proud and legendary—neighborhoods in the greater Pittsburgh area, to live on my own in an apartment in Monroeville, one of the top shopping, dining, entertainment, and housing suburbs of the greater Pittsburgh area, I wouldn't have believed you. If you would have told me five years ago I would move from Braddock to Monroeville to be closer to one of my two jobs that are part of a fast-growing employment network for people on the Autism Spectrum in the greater Pittsburgh area, I wouldn't have believed you. And if you would have told me five years ago I would move from Braddock to Monroeville before a major pandemic, not only I wouldn't have believed you, I would've told you that this conversation is over!

Like most of your lives because of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 has been one unbelievable, unexpected, and at times, unforgettable year for the life this writer. For it has been a year that has been such a roller coaster ride that not even a new ride engineer at Kennywood would have ever thought of. Working multiple jobs as part of Progress City's Autism Employment Network: producing softball and baseball tube kits for Diamond Kinetics inside the same warehouse in Penn Hills that makes the fudge for Park Street Treats, the same fudge that's sold at my main job as a server/team member for SpectroDolce Confectionary in the neck of the woods that's been a part of my new normal life as a resident of Monroeville.

Another interesting activity that's been a part of my "new normal" is taking occasional, healthy walks through three places to do so. The first place is Monroeville Mall. Yes, THAT place! The second place is Monroeville Community Park West. Monroeville is such a huge municipality, unlike Monroeville Mall, which is a very short walk from where I live; I (literally) have to get somebody to drive me there from where I live, or board an Uber or Lyft rideshare so I can get to walk there! But it's a much worth the drive to get to the park as it is to walk when you're at the park. For it has a trail that starts at the multiple soccer fields, and extends through the Tall Trees Amphitheater, the picnic areas, the basketball and tennis courts, the baseball/softball fields, and the bigger soccer field at the end of the park—the trail is about two miles long! The other place I love walking through is the Westmoreland Heritage Trail. Like the community park, the trail is located a good driving distance away near where I live in Monroeville. The trail is a walking/hiking and bicycling trail that's a part of an old railroad line that went from Saltsburg, PA., to Trafford. I usually walk the trail to Trafford from the Saunders Station stop of the trail in Monroeville, but when I need a good "workout", sometimes, I walk the trail from the Saunders Station stop of the trail in Monroeville to

Trafford, and back! And if I really, really want an intense workout, I'd board an aforementioned Uber or Lyft rideshare to the Trafford stop of the trail, and walk all the way to where the Western PA offices of FOCUS Behavioral Health are located... the Roberts Trail Access stop of the trail in Murrysville! Or, just settle for the slightly-healthy route and walk from Monroeville to Murrysville, and back! Either way the trail lengths between Murrysville and Monroeville, and Monroeville and Trafford is about four miles in both directions, and they're worth the hike for that sake of having a very healthy workout in the great outdoors, and taking-in some of the breathtaking sights the great outdoors that Western PA has to offer.

Although my first year as a resident of Monroeville, PA hasn't lived up to all—or at least most—of my expectations thanks to the pandemic, I wouldn't trade it for anything. Because after all, in spite of what's taken place since I moved to my new home, Monroeville, it's a much, much better place I've been blessed to call home over the course of this past year. Don't get me wrong, there have been many times over this past year that I miss being a resident of Braddock. But there have been much more times where I've taken pride in the proud fact that I'm now a resident of Monroeville. And I'm going to use that narrative as inspiration to look forward to even more opportunities to come my way throughout my second year Monroeville resident. And who knows, the opportunities that will come my way in 2021 may be the opportunities that I missed out on in 2020. Only time will help write the story on how my second year in Monroeville will end. But for the time being, I'm more looking forward to 2021 being the year that I live my second year in my life as a Monroeville resident contrary to most of my first year; like all of you, regardless of where you live, I'm looking forward to 2021 being the year we go back to the lives we lived between the period that 2019 ended and 2020 started... If you know what I mean!~~





O the spectacle that is so wondrous.

That one day of great tidings,

with warm wishes and happy holidays abound.

May we always remember,

family, friends, and loved ones,

and come together,

united,

by love, peace and tranquility abundant.

Truly a remarkable moment,

When light and life come together in a perfect harmonious rhythm.

O how the stars shine bright.

Ever so bright.

Shining in the dark.

That one special day,

that is,

Christmas.

Poem and artwork by Paul

Lechevalier





# Personal Reflection of 2020

By Nathaniel Geyer

In 2019, I finished up all but one lecture course and was working on several projects with three rejections from three journals, since only publishing four prior articles. I also had to drive 30 minutes to work each day and was begging people for work in order to be productive. This year was like my previous nine years at my full-time work at Penn State Health as a Research Support Technologist, and two years and seven months as a part time employee. I also was an active participant in community service groups and was out of touch with family. I had no way of knowing how much COVID-19 changed my life for the better when the world was been quarantining and productivity had decreased.

Now in 2020, I finished my Masters of Geographical Information Systems and web programming certificate with a high GPA. To make things better, my capstone and one of my course projects were accepted as publications at two journals, and two others as a secondary author. In one was my capstone project on a usability assessment a cancer web mapping tool that is planned for release this month. I also published a spatial analysis on colorectal cancer mortality using a geospatial software. The two other manuscripts were also in the cancer field. I also have two other that are still under review currently. In April 2020, I reached ten years as a full-time staff member at Penn State Health and will be getting a reward in January 2021. I also appear to have a clearer prospective of how I can use my work to change the world. I also have a stronger bond with my family who has leaned on me since the beginning of the outbreak. I also was able to attend a Pittverse meeting for the first time due to the Zoom meetings, which has been exciting.

I learned through all of this to expect the unexpected and although the future is unknown, the present can still be as well as you can make it. I never knew that my article that got accepted by a fourth journal after nine months of review and that I could publish my second master's capstone at the same time. I also never expected making it for 10 years as a staff member when others are suffering to hold a job. Although the research field is unpredictable, the drive to succeed is part of the reason why I am productive in my job. I also learned that family is important, and I can strive to be a better uncle, son, brother, grandson, and person, without worrying about not being a father or husband. I am glad to be single and although I hope to be a father or husband someday, it is not necessary for me to be a better person. I hope that 2021 can be as successful as 2020. I wish you a Happy Holidays and a great 2021.~~

## 2020 Year in Review

By Amelia Krzton

2020 was a year that people will remember both in good ways and in bad ways. The pros of 2020 are that it was a continuation of 2019's memorable events. I got my very first slumber party internship with Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties this year and the company wants to bring me back for an internship in the calendar year of 2021. (See another article of mine in this issue about who will host each monthly party and where it will be hosted!) I also got to have more quality time with Mom, as she often was willing to give me rides around the community. This year also gave us terrific winter and summer weather typical of a 4th year in a stage, similar to 2019. Now, for the cons of this year, not every month was like how I predicted. Unfortunately, the second part of spring did not turn out as warm as I thought, and a strong southeast ridge prevented my cooler October and November predictions from happening. But, since we got our first significant snow to kick off the month of December, there may be hope for the 2020-2021 winter season. After all, the past two Novembers were colder than normal, but we all knew what happened during the heart of winter! The biggest thing that will be memorable about the year of 2020 is the coronavirus pandemic. It changed people's lives forever, as people had to practice hand washing, social distancing, and wearing face coverings. If that were not sad enough, many events in Pittsburgh had to be cancelled, such as the Pittsburgh Marathon, which went virtual, and Highmark First Night 2020 took place virtually, as well. I have been dealing with the pandemic very well with this Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties internship and the job which is like no other job that I have had. Of course, our job follows social distancing guidelines, as well. The good news is that the government is currently working on a vaccine to vaccinate millions of people all over the world, so it will be over sooner rather than later. Of course, Sandcastle and Kennywood's season got cut short, and no public pools were allowed to open this year due to the pandemic. Hope that all of you guys are staying safe and healthy out there!~~



# Mæltan Micer & E'Olh (Pt. 2)

By Jordan Watson

Beside the captive teenagers, the gated doors melt in porous bubbles, as creatures of a decrepit nature begin to march outwards from its gaping cavities. They all sing in unison a chant of the kids' disturbing predicament, with their surroundings morphing around them.

♪ *Hellu-A'ly, Hallu-E'ly (x8)!*

*Here in this nightmare,*

*chosen from folly,*

*You'll endure phantasms*

*horrors by proxy!*

*Come and nestle in the bosom of your punished lies*

*Paddle in the great E'Olh, or drown in padded cries!*

*Weelcooome, to our realm of de-ci-mation,*

*We are keen to slash your spleen, pain by congregation*

*Weeee shall entertain your evis-cer-ation,*

*And now our lord and master shall bequeath your decimation! ♪*

Veiled tendrils begin to seep from not just the grotesque ceilings' gaping holes, but from thin, musky air around them. It forms a ball above the captive man in the center of the large, eerie room. Moist, spiraled glass bellows smoke from beside all four of the chained whelps. The imp-like creatures continue to chant their cretinous jamboree, while a well-dressed, yet abhorrent deity takes form from above. His black pinstripe suit, weaved with wide eye linings. His long hair drips and dances with a mind of its own. He wields a living cane of bodily thorns, gaping teeth from its head, and a big cyclopean eye in the center.

♪ *Hellu-A'ly, Hallu-E'ly (x8)!* ♪

“Salutations to you all, 'Tis a pleasure 'mist your fall, That I bring you to the world of viced exciser

I am ripper of all flesh, The pain that cannot fully thresh, Sire me Mæltan L. Micer!

Through your fettered struggles, see your man of total vain

Pay for his attrition, through gain and PAIN!”

He unveils the black tarp from the kneeling man in the middle. Brock Sutherlin's features perspire of sheer terror, as he witnesses the gnarly surroundings before him. The ghoulish creatures close in on the anxious sham of a man, swiftly muddling the sharp cries of his supposed compatriots. Conjured from the dense air of their reality, pulsating tubes weave into intestinal shape, mouths opening and closing like enthusiastic leeches. Try as he may, Brock strains to lash off the impish creatures around him. Their numbers outmatch his resistance, piling over him as botflies would slowly devour their prey. Weighting him down further, he sneers in great disdain to Mæltan, as the force grins his ferocious yellow smile. The tubes float above him with the slimy feelers, eager to clamp into his skin. One by one, they latch into him, limb by limb, as he wails in absolute spasms. The creeps undo his restraints and watch as his body mass is gradually siphoned of its life. Charlotte and the rest of the gang squirm and howl at their friend's predicament.

Yet...after what feels like minutes...it stops. Malnourished as Brock appears, he is able to have consciousness. The snickering of the imps audibly fill the room. The others look within utter confusion. Within seconds, the tubes begin pumping inwards to fill Brock of his stolen muscle. The torment goes from brief, to agonizingly audacious. As the tendrils spread him out to hover above the ground, He shifts from gaunt, to ballooning corpulence. The consistent deflation to inflation speeds up with every pump. The mixture of inhuman cries from the teens, topped off with the cackles of the imps, shouting a singular phrase.

“DUMP & PUMP! DUMP & PUMP! DUMP & PUMP!”

Gashes open all over Brock with every injection. Mæltan twirls his carnivorous cane and offers him one final dialogue of somber solace.

“Vanity can blind the skinny and punish the overly fat. A mirror shan't suffice your gross appeal, so this pump shall be your last.”

In his retort, he grows a sharpened claw from his index finger, and pokes him directly in the nose. What follows, is a resounding, splattering explosion. Chunks of Sutherlin shower over the others like a roaring monsoon.

The wailing whimpers of the others fill the horrific chamber, while the gremlins grift what pieces of Brock remain. Mæltan floats above the intestinal infested disarray, pantomiming his best swing dance, before seating himself over thin air. He hovers to concoct a monstrous throne, verbally making himself known.



“Ooooooh, such mourning befits your position, yet it fuels the need for your decomposition.”

Charlotte screams in his general direction.

“Where is E'Olh?! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO US?!”

An audible snapping of his neck perforates the chambers, as it turns all the way around him, swinging his whole body to give her his undivided attention, using teleportation straight to her face.

“Myyyy darling little dolt, I've made myself quite clear. Mælton L. Micer is whom I am sired, I shall bestow upon you why you're here.”

With a swift snap of his finger, the room dissolves, remolds, and reforms. Mælton places the bound Charlotte, Amelia, and Sigurd behind a pseudo cracked/reinforced glass door. Within the room, they see Martin freed of his restraints. Befuddled by his current situation, he cautiously surveys his surroundings. Behind him are ventilated mouth holes with toothy grating, lined above the ribbed walls of his boxed cell. Mælton speaks from behind the scared, grown children.

“I have plucked you all from your human soil, to show each of you this torturous convention. Shall you all perish with your mortal coil, or will you each seek out your redemption?”

Despite his inconvenient bounding, Sigurd stomps over to Mælton in a heated huff.

“You think you can just snatch us up without even giving us a reason why?! You *won't* get away with this, you monstrous bastard!”

“Hehehehe, such an emboldened claim you make, yet so naive of your stakes. I am well aware of your weaknesses, so those shall decide your fates.”

“W-What is that supposed to me—“

“You are in *my* domain, E'Olh needs not explain the depths of your minds. Even my subjects, the G'Imples, sang of this world's cosmos, truly one of a kind.”

With Martin distracted to figure out what everyone is talking about behind the glass, A few several G'Imples seep from the live ceilings, snickering with malicious intent. They rub the lips of the ventilated maws, as they open with rather resounding, feminine moans. They exhale forth fuchsia smog. Martin's reaction suddenly flips to complete flight, as he sprints towards the glass in a massive panic! Slamming onto the glass, they show very little sign in breaking.

“OH GOD, UWU! AMELIA, SIGURD, DEAR CHRIST, HELP ME! GET ME OUT OF HERE, PLEASE!!”

As the fragments break apart, they burst from his hands. As they spawn new shards, he lavishly bleeds from his bare palms. The warm colored smog begins to nearly fill the room. Martin starts to profusely cough, with nary a break between agitated breaths. The harrowed yells from his peers encase the room in front of him. Mælton can only bear a vivacious smirk, before outstretching his arms in unnatural lengths to huddle the shaken mortals.

“A vice so tantalizing, it can catch you off breath...”

Exasperated by his coughing fits, Martin drops on his large buttock, realizing the ground has smoothed to a moist/velvety texture. Confounded, he quickly hops up, hopelessly trying to ignore the sharp pain from his fall. His vision is dreary from the endless smoke.

“\*COUGH COU-COUGH COUGH\* GUYS! Please help me! I ca-\*COUGH COUGH\* can't breathe very well! Oh God, my anxiety!! I-IT'S PEAKING! HE-\*COUGH\*HELP!”

Between his violent coughs, faint, playful laughter can be heard from all around him.

“\*C-CO-COUGH COUGH\* W-Who's there?!”

The laughter gets closer. The scent of the air drastically shifts from a noxious nature, to a sweet angel's trumpet. Feminine shadows of a flirtatious, yet persuasive nature, emerge from the smog, to approach Martin. In a near instant, his whooping fits are all but a distant memory. A redheaded, yellow eyed beauty, dressed in an articulate, European jeweled top, and a chained skirt, comes from his left. To his right, a tanned, dark haired goddess, veiled in a prayer beaded toga of ancient Zoroastrian descent. Their elegance is all he sees. The others quickly begin to lose sight of their friend as the fog thickens within his confines. It is now between the newly met concubines, and himself. They breath into his ears. His senses are filled with an endless garden of bouquet. Bewitched by their visages, the beautiful duo lay him down on a chair of jointed cartilage, proceeding to massage his upper body. His comfort is all but brief. The fleeting seers of his chest begin to make itself fondly known. However, his entrancement is deep. They rub him down all over, letting his skin melt from his muscle, straight down to his bone. His bliss, forever perpetual, ignoring his vessel as it condenses the damp fog from within. The hideous dulcet tone soon emanates from Mælton's mouth.

“Take in as much of the smoke, welcome the sweet embrace of death.”~



# Interview with a descendant of Regulators

By Nils Skudra

On August 27<sup>th</sup> of last year, I had the opportunity to interview John Merrell, who works as a volunteer for NC AARP, in Greensboro. AARP is divided into five regions, with the Piedmont region comprising 16 counties. John's precise title is advocacy coordinator of AARP, which he described as the political side of the organization. Most of his career was spent in city planning for about a half-dozen cities nationwide, as well as working in the area of census information. John also served in the army and had three stateside tours of duty in three different units, including a headquarters unit of an artillery battery, at three different military bases, namely Fort Knox, Fort Sill, and Fort Bragg.

John's paternal third-great grandfather Alexander Merrell and second-great grandfather John Alexander Merrell (father and son) both served together in the Union Army during the Civil War in western North Carolina and east Tennessee. I was particularly intrigued by this since I have encountered so many individuals here in North Carolina whose ancestors were either on the Confederate side or on both sides in the conflict, so it was fascinating to meet someone with ancestors on the Union side who were native North Carolinians. This was all the more pertinent since I have a strong interest in North Carolina Unionism during the Civil War and made that topic the focus of my thesis equivalent for the Master's in History program at UNCG.

John told me that his knowledge about his Unionist ancestors came from a letter given to him by the National Archives which was written by his third-great grandmother with regard to their service in the Union Army. According to her statement, Alexander Merrell and his son John Alexander were millers from Henderson County, North Carolina, whose occupations enabled their exemption from Confederate service early in the war. However, as the conflict progressed, the Confederates needed every man they could get, so the Home Guard came to Henderson County and conscripted both father and son into service. They were sent to basic training in Salisbury but escaped and somehow managed to make it across the Piedmont back to the mountains. The Merrells subsequently crossed into east Tennessee and joined a Union cavalry regiment commanded by George W. Kirk, notable for his periodic war-time raids into western North Carolina and later commanding the state militia called upon to suppress the Klan during Reconstruction.

Following the war's end, Alexander Merrell and John Alexander Merrell were transferred to either Fort Leavenworth or Fort Riley, Kansas, where they were mustered out from service and made the long journey back to North Carolina. Under the Reconstruction government, the elder Merrell became justice of the peace in Henderson County, a position which he held until his death in 1869. Given that Alexander Merrell was only in his forties at the time of his death, John said he feels that his ancestor was probably murdered by an ex-Confederate due to resentment in the community toward Merrell for his service in the Union Army and for being part of the Reconstruction regime. Merrell's son John Alexander lived until 1912 – according to a letter from John's paternal grandmother, John Alexander spent his postwar life working as a "country doctor," a position that did not necessarily entail having a medical license but rather the basic skills expected of a physician. When asked as to whether his ancestors owned any slaves, John stated that his third-great grandfather's will mentioned two or three enslaved African Americans, but this might have been anecdotal evidence. John's Civil War ancestors are buried in Hendersonville today.

In addition to his Civil War background, John also told me that he had ancestors in the Regulator movement and the American Revolution. His paternal sixth-great uncle Benjamin Merrell was one of the Regulators hanged by Governor Tryon in Hillsborough after the Battle of Alamance, and his brother William – John's sixth-great grandfather – was part of a group of 300 men on their way to join the Regulators at Alamance but did not make it in time. John said he believes that if these reinforcements had arrived in time, the Regulators would have won the battle. William was later murdered when the British raided his home outside present-day Lexington, North Carolina. John said that this detachment was probably led by the infamous Banastre Tarleton who may have been aided by local Tories, and according to written evidence they split the tongue of William's wife after she sassed them. William



himself was taken out into the woods and was never heard from again. His son John Merrell (John's fifth-great grandfather) served two hitches in the North Carolina militia during the war, losing an eye in one battle, possibly Guilford Courthouse. Although he does not appear on the list of battle participants at the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park visitor center, John stated that he found anecdotal evidence that his ancestor was at that battle.

John told me that he is one of the few direct descendants of the Regulators today and that on June 19th he attended a memorial service for the hanged men at the actual spot of the execution in Hillsborough. John also shared with me many intriguing insights about his personal life. He is a Quaker who fervently believes in its principles of pacifism, so I was very curious as to how he reconciles these beliefs with his military service. John explained that when he graduated from college, the Vietnam War was still being waged, and young American men had four choices: They could be drafted, attempt to get a conscientious objector deferment (which he would have qualified for), flee to Canada or be thrown in jail for draft evasion. Because of this, John voluntarily enlisted in the military and received three honorable discharges following his three tours of duty. He said he has been told by Quaker leaders that he may be the only Quaker that received three honorable discharges from the military, an insight that was both fascinating and amusing!

When asked whether he feels any regret for having served in the military as a Quaker, John replied that he doesn't feel it's a "regret situation" since he knows that he served well. However, although he doesn't have PTSD, John stated that he feels he has "a moral injury" as a Quaker in the military. He explained that although he never served in combat, he was trained in the use of artillery weapons, as well as approximately five different machine guns – all of which are designed for the purpose of killing which is anathema to Quaker beliefs. Because of this, John told me that he does not own any guns, and he feels he has a unique solution to the issue of gun control. He said that he is in favor of gun control, not only as a Quaker but as a citizen, elaborating: "We have such a proliferation of weapons and a paranoid mentality among people who own guns."

In outlining his envisioned solution to the issue of gun control, John explained that he has not been in favor of drug and alcohol testing, but he feels it should be applied to gun owners and that they should pay for it. For instance, he proposed, this could be applied to candidates seeking white-collar employment: "If we can drug-test people who want to work as a secretary, little by little it will reduce the number of guns." Although John acknowledged that there are still going to be people who obtain guns without the knowledge of authorities, he believes that these illegally acquired firearms should be destroyed when the culprits are caught. With respect to the arguments of gun proponents for having guns in public schools, John said he feels that "what they're really doing is trying to set up a system where kids will grow up thinking guns are normal." Furthermore, he believes that while the current political climate is like "gasoline on the spiral," the underlying problem is that gun culture is so ingrained in the psyche of this nation that it doesn't matter who is in the White House, noting, for example, that there have already been abuses of the Stand Your Ground laws in both Texas and Florida.

John has very profound insights on many of the issues that we are struggling with as a society. Although some people may not agree with his positions on certain issues (such as gun control), I believe John's perspective offers important points that we can draw upon in determining how to approach these issues. It is my fervent hope to continue my correspondence with Mr. Merrell so that I may share my perspective with him about the Civil War and continue to learn more about his family history.~~



# Living With a Speech Impairment

By Julia Fieldhammer

Talking is something most people take for granted, but when you're like me, talking can be a challenge. I have Cerebral Palsy, and for those of you who don't know what Cerebral Palsy is, it's a brain injury. Basically, when I was born I lost some oxygen, so as a result, the part of my brain that tells my body what to do is damaged. I use a wheelchair full time and I have trouble talking, too.

To help me talk, I use a device called a dynavox. I am able to talk with my voice but I have limited movement of my tongue, so it can be really hard to understand me, especially if you aren't used to hearing me talk. My dynavox is a tool that helps me communicate better. It's a device that can talk for you, and it comes with preprogrammed phrases and words, or you can type on a keyboard to say what you want. You also have the option to program your own phrases into your dynavox so they're always available.

I've used a dynavox for most of my life. When I was little I had the actual tablet-like device, but when I came to City Connections, I got the app version on my iPad. Everyone thought it was a great idea since I always use my iPad anyway. I have to say it's been nice not having to have a whole other device just for my communication. While the dynavox was working ok, there were a lot of steps I had to take with the program for me to be able to communicate efficiently. I always had to flip back and forth between different pages within the app, which made it tedious and slow for me to use. When I got a new speech teacher at school this year, she recommended that I try this new communication app. At first I was a little hesitant because I had been using the dynavox for such a long time and given that this is my last year of school, I was a little nervous to get a whole new program. But now I think it's totally worth it! I feel like my new app, called Speech Assistant, is a more straightforward program that meets my needs better than the dynavox. My goal is to be able to communicate as simply as I can, and I feel I can do that now with this new app.

I use a variety of techniques to help me communicate. I like to type full sentences a lot, which isn't always the fastest but it's how I like to communicate most of the time. My speech app, like my dynavox did, has preprogrammed phrases that are in different categories in the app. But most of the time I either type or use my own phrases. I like communicating in my own words.

I know I need to use my communication device, especially in these days of COVID. Having to wear a mask has made it even harder than usual for people to understand me. I think wearing a mask is hard for everyone but it's especially hard for people with speech impairments like me. I'm more aware of my speech and have to work harder to be understood. This can be frustrating and tiring.

One of the reasons I started to write was to get my thoughts out into the world since my speech isn't that great. Writing has helped me express myself. I'm really glad I can share my thoughts with the world through writing. It has definitely improved my quality of life and given me a purpose.

I wanted to tell you some suggestions of "Dos and Don'ts" for communicating with a



person with a speech impairment.

**Don't:** Don't just assume that if you talking to someone who has a speech impairment that you need to talk slower or louder. Just because the person's speech is effected, it doesn't necessarily mean that their hearing is. If the person needs you to speak slower or louder, they will let you know.

**Do:** Do have patience. I think this is so important for both the talker and the listener. Whether the talker is using their voice or their communication device it's so important to stay patient and wait until they are done. I know I personally feel pressure to type as fast as I can when using a communication device, and I'm sure others do as well. I feel like if I try and type fast, I'm more likely to make mistakes. I also try to be as clear as I can be when I'm talking, but it takes time for me to concentrate and enunciate certain words.

**Don't:** Don't try to guess what the person is typing before they are done typing it. This totally annoys me!! I get that they're trying to save me time and energy but I'd rather finish typing than be interrupted. I like to say things in my own time.

**Do:** Do ask the person to repeat or clarify if you don't understand them. I've had experiences where I say something to someone and I can totally tell they didn't understand me by their response, but they didn't say that. There are some typical responses where I can tell that the person didn't understand. "Oh, okay" and "Yeah" are the most common. I think they believe they're going to hurt my feelings if they say they don't understand me. This is not true at all! Yes, I like to use my voice as much as I can, but I know there are going to be times where I need to use my communication device in order to be heard and understood.

Although there are other people living with speech impairments who may have different experiences or preferences when communicating with others, I wanted to shed some light on what it can be like, living with a speech impairment.~~





# MY JOURNEY WITH AUTISM

By: Candice Brooks

I have Autism Spectrum Disorder. It was pretty obvious from a young age that I was different from other people, but it took 18 years for others to realize that I was different because I had Autism. I grew up in a very small town where information about autism was scarce and because I was diagnosed with severe ADHD at 6 years old everything I did was attributed to ADHD even though most of my symptoms did not fit the diagnosis of ADHD.

When you look back to my childhood, I displayed so many symptoms of autism that its surprising I wasn't diagnosed before 18. One of my first memories of my childhood is when I used to come home from school after a long day and go straight to my room and lay on my bed and repeat all kinds of words over and over for hours. I remember one specific thing I would say over and over was, "You know what they say". I have no clue why I would say this over and over but all I know is that it was comforting and is considered "verbal stimming." Another thing that I remember about myself from when I was younger is the way I played with toys. I was interested in things that other young girls were interested in but I didn't play with them in the same way. I was interested in Beanie Babies for a really long period of time and my way of playing with them was to line them all up from my room all the way out to the living room and I'd just reorganize them into different groups. Typically developing children usually engage in pretend play where they play out different stories about the toys but I was just interested in the way I could line them up.

My communication and the way that I used language with others was also different. I used a lot of scripting and would talk about the same things during every conversation I had. I remember in middle school I had a friend who also loved SpongeBob and who I think also was autistic and we would spend all day just quoting things from SpongeBob that we thought were funny. And for many years, whenever someone asked me, "How are you?," my reply was the same every single time, which was, "I'm splendid." I also had a very poor understanding of social rules and I was socially immature. One thing that stands out for example is whenever I would see someone I knew I'd run up to them and give them a bear hug and kiss them and I continued to do this until the year I was diagnosed with autism at the age of 18! I don't understand how people did not pick up on the fact that this was more than ADHD and being impulsive. It wasn't just a phase; I did this for 18 years and no one thought, "maybe this is more of a social problem than an impulse control problem?" Once people realized that it was in fact more of a social problem and not just an impulse control problem you'd think things would get easier for me, but they didn't.

By the time I was diagnosed, I was nearly ready to graduate high-school and everyone's expectations were set so high for me since I was able to survive 18 years without a diagnosis. A few months after I graduated HS, I attended a community college in my hometown and I was very successful because I was finally able to receive some support for my autism. In 2012, I graduated from community college and decided to attend the University of Pittsburgh. It was during that first year of living in Pittsburgh alone that everyone realized just how much autism affected me socially. I had absolutely no social awareness of even the most basic things. On the first day of class, I was talking to my mom on the phone in the middle of class while the professor was teaching. Another time I was visiting my friend at her dorm and threw a taco out the window because I was done with it and she didn't have a trash can. It landed on a student and someone saw me do it and called the police. Another time I was kicked out of a movie theater because I kept standing up to stretch my legs and I didn't realize that it was rude to the people behind me who couldn't see the screen because I was standing.

Because my social skills were so weak, I started attending a social skills group for adults with autism and it really helped me to learn about social interaction, how to be a good friend, etc. I was still really struggling with learning how to cope with changes in routine, knowing what to do in a crisis, and learning how to cope with difficult emotions, which are all things that can be difficult when you have autism. All of these things were becoming more and more difficult. All of the pressures of going to college, graduating and becoming a successful functioning adult was too much to handle for me because I just wasn't getting enough support. Everyone around me was telling me what I should do but not how to do it and some of the things people expected of me were things I simply couldn't do and finally one day I hit rock bottom and decided to attempt to take my own life. I wasn't successful in my attempt, but everything changed after that. The girl who was once able to attend college, live independently, drive a car, and go anywhere she wanted was no longer able to function. I was now spending the majority of my days in psych wards doped up on so many medications that I was no longer myself. I was self-harming and drinking my pain away with alcohol every chance I got.

But then in 2017, things started to get a little better with the help of Focus Behavioral Health which is an organization through the Adult Autism Waiver. I have a Behavior Specialist, a few community support workers and a skill building specialist. They all help me be able to live more successfully with ASD. Even though at one point I needed to live in a group home because Focus services just wasn't enough, I have gotten so much better with the help of Focus that I'm now living in my own apartment again! If I could say one thing about my journey with autism it would be that it is okay to need help and that I'm not a weak or less of a person because I need more help than others. My journey with autism has been long and hard but I have a lot of strength now and I'm so thankful I was able to survive my struggles to be here to write about this amazing autism journey.



# Bill for Autism Rights

By Andrew Olsavicky

In the world today there are laws that grant rights to those who are “Disabled” such as the “Americans with Disabilities Act.”. Through this law people with disabilities such as Autism, OCD, and other psychological issues have been granted rights that have made life more tolerable for those who have them, the laws in play cannot make individuals and or groups with these issues change who they are and therefore do not help as well as they should. Furthermore I as an individual with mild cases of both “Asperger's Syndrome” and “OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” do not see myself as an individual with a disability, to me such things are more or less “Personality Issues” that can be medically diagnosed. This however does not mean that there are no problems involving people who also have such issues, it does however, seem to indicate that more specific actions need to be taken on a scale of law to help such people live and function in society, especially without fear and maltreatment by others because of who and or what they are. Therefore, drawing on the inspiration of laws such as “The Americans with Disabilities Act” and “The Civil Rights Act” I have begun to draft my own ideas for a legal bill that would grant rights and privileges to people with Autism specifically and in time people with similar issues if passed into law. The idea being that as I mentioned more people with issues involving Autism would not need to fear telling others that they have such issues and in turn create a society or at least laws within our current society that would make the world around them more in tune with them as opposed to them having to painfully change who and what they really are. In line with the previously mentioned “Civil Rights Act” which as I understand it gave similar rights to the “Black Community” of America, this bill if passed would give similar rights to the “Autism Community”, a community which in terms of recognition has been around shorter but in terms of existence meaning the issues that if looked at in retrospect of what we know now, have essentially been around for a much longer period of time, and has unofficially become a minority and an unspoken minority in terms of being a minority for that matter. Ideas for what would be in The Bill include the following:

- Employers of Autistic Individuals/Groups must give full and detailed reasons for disciplinary action including dismissal, and if reasons for said actions are unfair because of the Individuals Autism or related issues it can be fought in the legal system
- People with Autism Can no longer be Banned from any location or from seeing anyone without reasons given beyond their Autism and if Autism is a factor it protects them from such actions, plus any such banning if done can only be for a set amount of time and not be continued indefinitely, plus the time can be reduced if fought in court
- An Autistic Individual/Group has the right to sight out any other individual, place, and/or object/thing in the way they want to regardless of why, and cannot be persecuted, detained and/or punished including actions similar to those previously mentioned taken against them and defiantly not permanent manner
- Autistic Individuals or groups cannot be thrown out of any public place including restaurants and/or gathering places of any kind among other such places for behaviors typical of Autistic Individuals/Groups
- Autistic Individuals/Groups have the right to criticize people, places, objects/things including Media freely, and have a more than fair opportunity to fight for a change to the previously mentioned things especially if the thing/issue is something that the majority of Autistic Individuals/Group affect their community (Community in this case meaning Individual/group of people with Autism)
- all the above reasons/actions must apply to past issues related to the Autistic Individual/group especially if involving employment
- These rights and actions must be valid in all USA States including those that do not presently have equal employment rights as well or any other related rights
- What an Autistic Individual/group says they would like to happen/see happen or how they feel even if unlawful/unjust/ threatening cannot be used against them unless they actually act on the actual act stated at any point and cannot be used for grounds of dismissal of work or being prosecuted
- Autism Cannot/Will-Not be considered, generalized, and or designated a form of insanity
- Tax Services/Assistance will be given to all Autistic Individuals/Groups for free for all types/forms of taxes including State, Federal, and/or Local as well as any not previously mentioned
- All Autistic Individuals/Groups will be given appropriate funding from Federal, State, and Local government to meet needs



based on the needs of the Individuals/Groups

-Autistic Individuals/Groups will have government funded insurance in any needed forms of insurance that can be used in any US State and may be extended to include insurance needs that exist, have existed, and will exist both inside and outside the US

-All Internal and External Groups/Individuals that support Autism will be given tax write offs/extensions for shown support in any way for Autism, further, any group formed Previously, Presently, and in the future will be given government funding to help with any services that have, do, and will help Autistic Groups/Individuals  
Granted I think that this idea could be applied to Individuals/Groups with other "Mental Disabilities" beyond what is currently in the previously mentioned "Americans with Disabilities Act". With this in mind I intend to find people I can discuss this idea with and hopefully turn my idea into an actual bill and with any luck have it pass into law, and a law that is a "Federal Law" making such rights available in all states of the "United States of America" regardless of state and or local laws. With that in mind I encourage people who read this article to contact the editors of this magazine and have them give you my contact information so you may give me your input and I can share my input with you, especially if anyone reading this article can help me write the actual bill and or find someone or some group who can help us get the process of getting the laws passed in what I feel is a necessity for individuals and or groups who deal with these issues involving Autism and other related issues on a daily basis.~~

## Employment Story 2007-2020

By Nathaniel Geyer

I recently read an article online about a family's struggle to find employment for young adults with autism. Over ten years ago, in Fall 2007, my family was in a similar situation, with declining finances. I was 25 and was completing my first Master's in Health Evaluation Sciences (now Clinical Research), with a concentration in epidemiology at Penn State Department of Public Health Sciences, my sister was going to my Alma Mater, Lebanon Valley College, but did not have a scholarship. In order to finance my second year, I had to apply for a part-time job. I went to Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) services and found a job coach who was unable to find a job for my bachelor's degree in Biology. One day my mom went to a supermarket who was hiring for positions. At first, the manager thought I was overqualified but through my parents and job coach's persistence I got a part-time job doing the layout in the bakery at that supermarket. During my time the bakery was struggling but due to my work the bakery became one of the highest earners in the chain. I also graduated with my first master's degree and was looking for a more permanent job in May 2008. In June 2008, I found out that my supervisor and staff were moving to another store in that October, so I went back to OVR and found a highly recommended job coach, who met me at the library to practice job interview skills. One day she called a medical clinic who referred me to a state employee, who was looking for a master's level epidemiologist, and when he heard my story about me working at a supermarket and become my mentor. He decided to get me an interview with the chair of public health sciences and himself. The chair asked me how did I find this job, I told him my story and both of them were willing to fund me part-time for 3 months, up to 40 hours, but no benefits, starting October 1, 2008. In December 2008, I found out that my job was being extended until end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2009. In 2010, the role became too much for me to handle, so they were looking to hire more employee I asked if my role could have benefits. Months later April 5, 2010, I succeeded and applied for a new position, doing similar tasks, but with full-time benefits. In February 2016, my mentor resigned his position, but was smart enough to extend my position until June 30, 2017, during that time I earned my Doctor of Public Health at Walden University. In My 2017, I talked to the chair about work and he found another faculty member who was able to find work for me. Around this time, I applied for post-doctorates and faculty positions, without successes, so I decided to stay at my job. I also decided to finish my Master of Geographical Information Systems degree that I started in 2010, which I finished in July 2020. My story shows that although OVR and family can start and aid the process of finding and maintaining a job, the adult with autism needs to have an inner drive to succeed and develop a sense of being able to adapt to changing situations. As autism advocates and self-advocates, I stress that promoting a drive to succeed and adapt is a must in order to find and maintain a job for the short- and long-term successes. I also learned to use failure and trial and error as the tools to help build up my drive for success.~~

# My Changed Life

By Ginger Reynolds

I used to be a very defiant person. Having Autism made me step back and realize that people are just trying to do their best in life. Once upon a time, my behaviors were out of control. For example: I would hit, kick, bite, throw items, dent cars, damage personal property, and just be extremely troubled. I no longer act that way because I realize no matter what, if you have Autism or not, you're still human. You still experience emotions and pain. Autism doesn't stop that.

Having something that makes you so different from the world, like Autism teaches me to stay strong even in the most challenging situations. Having Autism also teaches me how to handle certain situations such as getting bullied or even having meltdowns. I would say that having Autism has definitely changed my life for the better and I'm proud to have Autism. I wasn't always proud to have Autism. But having Autism is like having a superpower.

I look at having Autism as a superpower, because having Autism makes me stronger than I thought I was. Having Autism makes me feel brave. Having Autism makes me realize that no matter what you're going through, there's always a chance to make it a more positive situation. I never thought of being different as having a unique way of dealing with things, people, and places. My thoughts and view of the world changed when I joined support groups online.

At first, I thought that joining an online support group wouldn't help. Then I started reading about how others were in similar situations. Reading about others dealing with similar situations helped me realize that I'm not alone. I got out of my comfort zone and started giving others advice. I found that helping others helps me. I love writing, but I was unaware that my writing could help anyone, let alone myself. I still have meltdowns and I still have those days which become extremely challenging. Life is less challenging with supportive people around. My mom is my biggest support person and a year ago, I would have never thought of my mom as supportive. A lot has changed in my life, for the better, especially after finding out I have Autism.

Having an Autism diagnosis tells me I'm different from the world, but that's all the diagnosis tells me. My mind tells me no one will help me because I have too many problems. My heart tells me I can do or be anything I desire. I listen to my heart because my mind is usually in a dark place. My heart is big and lives on my sleeve (not literally).

Since I have trouble coming up with the words that make sense to other people, I write. Writing doesn't make me have to stop to figure out the words that make sense. When I write, it's like I'm a river because my words just flow out. To me writing is my outlet just like rapping or sports would be an outlet to someone else.

Having Autism makes life harder than the "normal" person's life would be. When I have a meltdown in a store or on the street, people stare. Autism has taught me how to take other people's bullying better than I would handle it if I didn't have Autism. There's no treatment for Autism. It hurts when other people tell me I don't look like I have Autism. Nobody can look like they have Autism because anyone can have Autism. Even though I'm proud to have Autism, being proud doesn't make having Autism easy to deal with. Autism is one of the hardest things to handle, especially if you are not aware of everything that goes on. Some of the problems I have with Autism are as followed: communication, special interests, and meltdowns.

I don't always know how to communicate the correct way. I repeat sentences or words. I can't just say that I feel a certain way, need something, or want something. When I'm frustrated, I yell and scream. Sometimes I growl when I'm mad, but that's just one of the ways I know how to tell people how I feel. When I'm in the store or restaurant with people I know, I can't just say I need to use the bathroom. I just walk away. I have special interests that other people my age wouldn't like. My special interests are: cartoons such as Paw Patrol and P.J Masks, Hot Wheels, and toy stores. When I go on a walk, it's hard to wear a Paw Patrol kid's backpack and not get strange looks or laughed at. I've been bullied multiple times just for being myself. It's hard.

Autism meltdowns are one of the hardest things I've ever had to deal with. Autism meltdowns are caused by sensory overload. Sensory overload meltdowns are easier to handle if you know what your sensory triggers are and if you know how to reduce the reaction you have from the triggers. It's not easy to figure out what your sensory triggers are, but it is possible. Once you figure out what your triggers are, you can then figure out how to handle them.~~



# Life In the COVID Unit

By Zach Grabowski



I had decided to interview Megan Haggerty-Murphy, RN nurse at the VA Hospital in Pittsburgh, (known as the “Veterans Administration”). The VA serves veterans. I was interested to learn how a nurse deals with patients who are hospitalized with the Corona Virus. Megan has been an ICU (intensive care unit)

nurse for four years. When the Corona Virus first hit in March of 2020, Megan worked strictly with patients on the COVID unit. She explained that it was very scary because the virus was new and no one had much knowledge about it. She worked on the COVID unit exclusively from March through May. Since May all of the nurses rotate working on the COVID unit.

As a nurse on the COVID unit, Megan was only able to take care of a limited number of patients at one time. The most patients Megan has worked with during one shift was three. The patients cannot have visitors. The hospital has iPads where the patients can FaceTime with their families. As their nurse, Megan is able to be in the room with the patients holding their hands. It is very humbling to be able to be there.

Megan has great co-workers and trusts that while she is dealing with one patient her co-workers are taking care of the others. Megan has to wear a PPE suit at work (personal protective equipment) when she enters a patient’s room. It looks like a space suit but it keeps her safe from contracting the virus. The VA Hospital has built walls on the COVID unit and put up equipment to make the entire ward negative flow. That means there is constantly flow that blows air in and out. Each room has filtered air as well.

I had asked Megan to explain what it is like dealing with death at work. She explained that a small percentage of the patients who became very sick were the sickest she has ever seen anyone. She said it is very sad, especially when the deaths are tragic. She explained that the tragic deaths are the types of deaths that stick with you. COVID deaths are tragic. The good news is that 90% of the patients do get better.

Megan did not live at home with her family when working on the COVID unit. She explained that it wasn’t a requirement, but she made that decision because she has a husband and an older son who are at higher risk with asthma and she also has a baby. The virus is so contagious, that she wanted them to stay safe. She would visit with them through the window and with a mask on. It was very rough, but it was safest for her and her family. That was one of her saddest memories.

I asked Megan what she can do to prevent from taking the virus home to her family. She said that it depends on what unit she is working on. If she is working on the COVID unit she will leave her scrubs and work shoes on the COVID unit when leaving work. If she is working a regular shift and not on the COVID unit she will wear her hospital scrubs and work shoes home but will leave her work shoes on the front porch and change out of her hospital scrubs as soon as she gets in the house.

I asked Megan to explain what COVID is like in real life compared to the media. She explained that the mid-west, the west coast, and the south are really getting hit hard with COVID. The hospital beds and ICU units are all full. In reality, COVID is very bad, it is very real, it is very contagious, and it is very dangerous. Megan's biggest fear working with COVID patients is taking the virus home to her family.

I asked Megan if it is difficult to detach from work when at home. She explained that typically it is not. She has a good support system at home. She can go home and talk with her family about her day if she needs to. She did explain that when she is working on the COVID unit, she needs time just to decompress and stare at the walls to regroup from it all before going on with her day.

I asked Megan what the most frustrating thing is when dealing with COVID patients. She explained hearing the way some patients contracted the virus. She had a patient who traveled the east coast feeling sick and exposed everyone around him. They had to contract trace where the patient had been and alert those around him that they may have been exposed to the virus.

People are becoming complacent, everyone is frustrated, everyone is stir-crazy, and everyone misses social events. Megan explained that if everyone continues to social distance and follow safety guidelines this should be over sooner rather than later. The vaccine will be coming out soon. Megan explained that the vaccine is amazing and will revolutionize the way vaccines will be made in the future. Unlike other vaccines, the COVID vaccine does not inject the virus into your body and will work faster than other vaccines. She believes that if the vaccine is given to everyone we may be "back to normal" by Christmas, 2021.

I asked Megan what she would say to someone who is afraid of getting vaccinated. She explained that a person should educate themselves by talking with their physician and reading the science from a reputable source - articles that are ".edu", ".org" or ".gov", and medical journals are reputable sources. Listen to Dr Fauci. It's a personal decision to vaccinate or not. Take all the information and make a determination on whether it is right for them or not. There's a lot of false information and conspiracy theories out there. Science is based on facts. When I asked Megan if she is fearful of any shortages of medicine or equipment, she explained that that is not an issue. She did explain that the hospital where she works is running low on protective gowns. She works for the National Government, and if they do run out of supply, they are able to acquire it from the National Stock. Her biggest fear is her friends who work at other hospitals. They don't have access to the supplies that the VA does.

When I asked Megan what people can do to boost their immune systems when at home, she explained that taking vitamin D can lower the mortality rate. Vitamin C helps boost your immune system. Staying active is best for your physical health and boosts your immune system too. Since it is getting cold outside people are not getting outside as much, but she explained that any type of movement is great; for instance, walking up and down steps. If you want to go out or need to go out, wash your hands, wear your mask, social distance, and try to cluster your grocery shopping – buying about a week's worth of groceries at a time. This will cut down on being exposed.~~



# True Heroes During COVID-19

By Maggie Jones

This is a deadly disease that has killed over 400,000 plus people in the U.S. because of people who don't care about doing the right things, "they just want it their way." And that's that. That is not the answer to this pandemic problem that we must face together.

The heroes that work day in and day out in hospitals put their lives on the line every day since the pandemic started to make sure that every person is helped with in this time of COVID -19. Some can't even say goodbye to their loved ones if they're dying in a hospital bed from COVID -19.

The heroes work hard to keep stores safe. And the doctors and nurses help the sick dealing with the coronavirus. Hospitals can't even fit another or turn away a patient because they are full capacity and can't make enough room. Think of how hard it is for those heroes in the hospitals how they see people dying without saying goodbye. The heroes who are doctors and nurses, how they have to mentally deal with telling their families of loved one who died from COVID-19.

We have to come together a help those who are vulnerable; even people that are healthy get sick and die from the virus. We have to do our part to save lives by doing what we know is the right thing to do, from scientist to doctors to nurses. Listen to the scientists. They are also heroes finding a vaccine for COVID-19. It may take until mid-next year, but listen to them, they mean well to save lives.

This is a tribute to all the hospitals in Pittsburgh and abroad. To all the dedicated workers in grocery stores. Keeping the store clean and safe to go and shop. To the doctors and nurses, the hospital workers, to the janitors. To the scientists, especially at PITT and around the world. And people who listen to what they need to do to stop the spread of COVID-19.

What we know about COVID-19, that it is something we must take seriously. Not just say" it goes away like the flu, or miraculously goes away. " It's something that we all have to care about, or else we get the most vulnerable people sick. If we try not to wear masks, gather carelessly in large crowds without a mask, not following CDC guidelines, and they die from this disease if you like it or not, it's the truth about COVID-19. We have to do the right thing and care for our neighbors by wearing masks, not gather in large groups, stay six feet apart, and wash your hands when you come home to your family.~~

# Spanish Language

By Joshua Walburn

*“¡Buenos Dias, Pedro!”*

*“¡Buenos Dias, Josue!”*

*“Cómo has estado esta mañana?”*

*“He estado excelente pero con un poco de sueño.”*

*“Esta bien. Te despertaré con café y desayuno.”*

That's the sound of the Spanish Language, a group of Latin foreign languages that originate in the Iberian peninsula region holding modern-day countries: Spain and Portugal. It falls under the Indo-European linguistic classification, associated with rhythmic patterns that associate with words that sounds similar to the ones in English, Arabic and Portuguese.

“Yo no hablo Portugués” is how to say “I don't speak Portuguese” en Español. For Spanish words like: ‘camisa, azúcar, pantalones, guitarra and or y hasta,’ the words sound similar in the Arabic language too. That's because in AD 711, the Moors were nomadic groups of people from Northern Africa who took their culture and religious faith during the Invasion of Spain. They didn't establish a stable government in the southern regions of the country, in which led to the collapse of the caliphate in the 11th century. The Almoravids captured Moorish Spain in 1174.

Depending on all Spanish-speaking countries, each one's dialects are different. In Mexican Spanish, limes are called ‘limones’ meaning ‘lemons’ and lemons are called ‘limas’ meaning ‘limes.’ The one that's spoken in Argentina, it describes things like mountains in means like ‘her mountains’ as of saying ‘ella montañas.’ Argentinians refer their Spanish language as ‘Castellano’ because it's derived by the dialects that are originally spoken in Spain or from the Castilla territory.

In Venezuelan slang, different ways to order coffee can be said in an example such as: ‘con leche’ meaning approximately, 25% coffee + 75% milk or ‘marrón’ referring to as 50% coffee + 50% milk. ‘Estar en la oalla...’ means ‘To be in a bad situation...’ in Colombian slang. The translated phrase is based in an American English dialect.

As of learning Spanish towards being more bilingual, a free mobile app known as ‘Duolingo’ is a useful tool in learning 30+ foreign languages with race against time. When missing a challenge or noticing correct answers, they'll show how users improve. A study shows that 34 hours of Duolingo is equivalent to 1 university semester of foreign language classes. Exercises are tailored to help users learn and view vocabulary effectively.~~



# Our Lady in Harrisburg

By Megan Cunningham

Now even when I talk about the latest issues that are on my mind, I try to refrain from exposing my politics at least to a certain extent. But for the first time at *Pittverse*, I must cast that aside for this article because something of great significance happened in the 2020 election that we must celebrate. And no, I'm not talking about the presidential race either. Although I feel really great about that.

On Saturday, November 7, 2020, Democratic state representative nominee Jessica Benham sealed a historic win in her election to Pennsylvania's House of Representatives, making her the state's first openly LGBTQ+ woman and the nation's first openly Autistic female state legislator. As a legislator for PA House District 36, she will represent most of Pittsburgh southern neighborhoods along with the boroughs of Baldwin and Brentwood.

A graduate and current doctoral communications student at the University of Pittsburgh, Benham's primary interest is investigating the rhetorical and ethical constructions of disability in society. Her thesis, "Proud to be Autistic: Metaphorical Construction and Salience of Cultural and Personal Identity in #StopCombatingMe," depicts research on Autistic self-advocacy through a neurodiversity perspective. In addition to her academic and advocacy work, she's also an active member of the Zone 3 Public Safety Council and has served as Judge of Elections in 2018. In her personal life, Benham lives in the Southside Slopes with her husband Karl, their dog Winston, and two cats, Ravi and Neal.

As an autistic advocate and community organizer, Benham is a firm believer in Autistic culture's value. She also advocates for Autistic rights with interests in creating sensory friendly spaces in education settings, increasing access to IEPs for Autistic students in public schools, helping teachers, parents, and healthcare professionals better understand Autistic people, and reducing employment barriers for Autistic adults. Benham is also the co-founder and Director of Public Policy for the Pittsburgh Center of Autistic Advocacy, a nonprofit run by autistic people and the only LGBTQ+ autistic advocacy group in our region. She also serves on the board of Autistic Connection of PA and works in an advisory capacity with a number of Pittsburgh area and nationally. In 2016, Benham received an Autistic Scholars Fellow by the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network. One of Benham's successful projects included helping to create a sensory space at the Pittsburgh International Airport, serving on the advisory board that helped brainstorm what the space should include like separate rooms where families could adjust light and sound levels to each traveler. Another was a measure to create an Autism designation on state driver's licenses and license plates. She also strongly advocated for Paul's Law, outlawing discrimination against people with disabilities in regards to organ transplants that Governor Wolf signed into law in 2018.

Benham began her campaign in September 2019 for the seat of retiring conservative Democratic state Representative Harry Crenshaw of Carrick. Her progressive platform focused on a single payer healthcare system, ensuring access to reproductive health services, protecting workers' rights, improving the environment, fighting for a higher minimum wage, and increasing her district's infrastructure funding, especially concerning flood mitigation on Route 51. She also supported Act 79, a measure requiring Pennsylvanians convicted of domestic violence or subject to final restraining orders to give up their guns and ammo. Yet, she also wanted to demonstrate that Autistic people can be lead-



ers in their communities and not just on disability issues as well as that Autistic people can represent not only themselves but that “our experiences can be generalizable and relatable for anyone.” She told *The Hill*, “Disabled people make up approximately 20 percent of the population in the United States, but emerging research confirms what we’ve known on the ground — we don’t have equitable representation in government. I want to use my perspective to ensure that disabled people have the same access and opportunities as everyone else in our district.”

During her primary campaign, Benham received funding from Women for the Future of Pittsburgh (WTF) and UNITE PAC as well as endorsements from State Senator Lindsey Williams, Pittsburgh City Council Presidents Theresa Kail Smith and Bruce Kraus, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, Allegheny County Councilwoman Bethany Hallam, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, the Allegheny-Fayette Labor Council, Operating Engineers Local 66, Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, and Conservation Voters of PA. However, as progressive candidate in a heavily Democratic district, she was unable to secure a critical endorsement from the Allegheny County Democratic Committee, who scandalously voted to back Heather Kass 49 to 19. Despite that Kass had inflammatory social media posts revealing her as an anti-trans Trump supporter who. Benham seized on these posts and attacked Kass, saying in an interview with *LGBTQ Nation*, “I do take it personally as someone with a preexisting condition that the endorsement goes to someone who calls themselves a Democrat and rails against the Affordable Care Act, something that allows me to have health insurance. She knocks people who aren’t straight, mocks people who believe in common-sense gun laws and supports Donald Trump. So, yes, I take what happened today very personally.” Kass claimed the posts were an out of character mistake and that she didn’t support anyone in 2016, but no one seemed to buy it. On June 2, 2020, Benham won her Democratic primary against three other candidates with almost 42% of the vote. Nonetheless, the fact a Democratic Party chapter decided to endorse an anti-trans Trumper DINO over a bisexual progressive woman with Autism but who actually supports Democratic ideas reveals a very disturbing truth about our society.

During the general election, Benham faced Republican Brentwood Council member AJ Doyle. According to the Progressive Voter’s Guide, supported Republican state legislators in their near unanimous vote against providing protective gear, testing, hazard pay, family leave, and preserving disaster protections in place. While he cheered anti-maskers on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic, despite experts repeatedly calling for their universal use to prevent needless sickness and death. In October, Benham penned a scathing op-ed for the *Pittsburgh Current* criticizing the Trump administration for its fight to repeal the Affordable Care Act during the pandemic that has cost a quarter of a million lives. She wrote, “I have a pre-existing condition. [...] In many ways, my life is on the ballot this fall. Following the lead of President Trump, many Republicans in the Pennsylvania State House have refused to wear masks and blame pre-existing conditions, rather than COVID, for the deaths of people like me. I’m sorry, if I get hit and killed by a bus, it wasn’t the pre-existing condition that killed me, it was the bus. People like me are dying, and many people, including our president and many of my potential future colleagues in the PA house, don’t seem to care.”

As PA HD 36’s new state representative, Benham will be “fighting for healthcare, workers’ rights, & a clean environment.” And I’m sure she’ll prove that Autistic people can be fine leaders in our community that could make us proud.

Picture courtesy of the Victory Fund.~~



# A West Coaster's Experience of Confederate Memorial Day

By Nils Skudra

On May 10th, 2018, I had the opportunity to attend the annual Confederate Memorial Day ceremony at Green Hill Cemetery in Greensboro, North Carolina. I had recently graduated with my Master's Degree in History from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with specialization in the Civil War/Reconstruction period, and this event therefore appealed to me because of its relevance to my topic of interest. In addition, as a native Californian reared in the San Francisco Bay Area, I had never attended a Confederate Memorial Day service prior to this occasion and I was very eager to have this experience. My mother and I had contemplated not going to the service due to the thunderstorms that were taking place and a serious problem that was affecting our car – at one point it would not start at all for a few minutes before it finally worked. Fortunately, I had two Civil War reenactor friends who make independent Civil War-themed movies and also had their sights set on the event, so they were willing to pick us up and take us to the ceremony. The thunderstorms abruptly stopped, though the sky remained overcast, and we began our journey to the Cemetery under essentially good weather conditions.

Upon arriving at the ceremony, we found a unit of Confederate artillery reenactors, outfitted in the proper attire of a Confederate artillery crew and manning a reproduction Civil War cannon, standing at readiness in preparation for the salvos that they would be firing in commemoration of Confederate dead. As we strode up to the Confederate soldier statue where the memorial service was taking place, we passed graves that sported small Confederate battle flags, definitively marking these as the graves of Confederate soldiers. When we arrived at the monument, we found a crowd of people in attendance along with a unit of Confederate infantry. Also in attendance were several speakers from the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, each seated in front of the statue, featuring the U.S. flag, the Confederacy's third national flag and the state flag of North Carolina as well as the Stars and Bars (the first Confederate national flag) on a flag pole to the rear right. The infantry reenactors were dressed in the gray and butternut uniforms that Confederate infantrymen would have worn during the Civil War, and they would later perform the service of firing a three-volley salute in honor of their forebears. While I had previously attended many Civil War reenactments in California in which the soldiers of both sides would fire salutary volleys in the air following a battle, this was my first occasion attending a memorial service in which salutary gunfire was given exclusively for Confederate dead by an exclusively Confederate group of reenactors.

Among the first speeches of the ceremony was that delivered by Ann Nolan, vice president of the Guilford chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who elaborated upon the history of Confederate Memorial Day which originated in Columbus, Georgia in the aftermath of the war when the white women of that city organized a Ladies Memorial Association in order to reinter and commemorate Confederate dead. She maintained that Columbus was the site of the last major battle of the Civil War, although I must add parenthetically that this claim was disputed by one of my reenactor friends since he pointed to two different sites which vie for the status of last Civil War battle site, including a certain location in western North Carolina and Palmito Ranch, Texas. Upon looking up the Battle of Columbus online, I learned that it was in fact the last major engagement of the 1865 Alabama-Georgia campaign during the war, but given that several remaining engagements took place elsewhere in the aftermath of this battle, I would concur with my friend that presenting the Battle of Columbus as the last major engagement of the war itself constituted stretching the facts to a certain extent. Nonetheless, the information that Ms. Nolan revealed about the origins of Confederate Memorial Day, which was first referenced by name in a newspaper article that covered the activities of Southern Ladies Memorial Associations, was very intriguing.

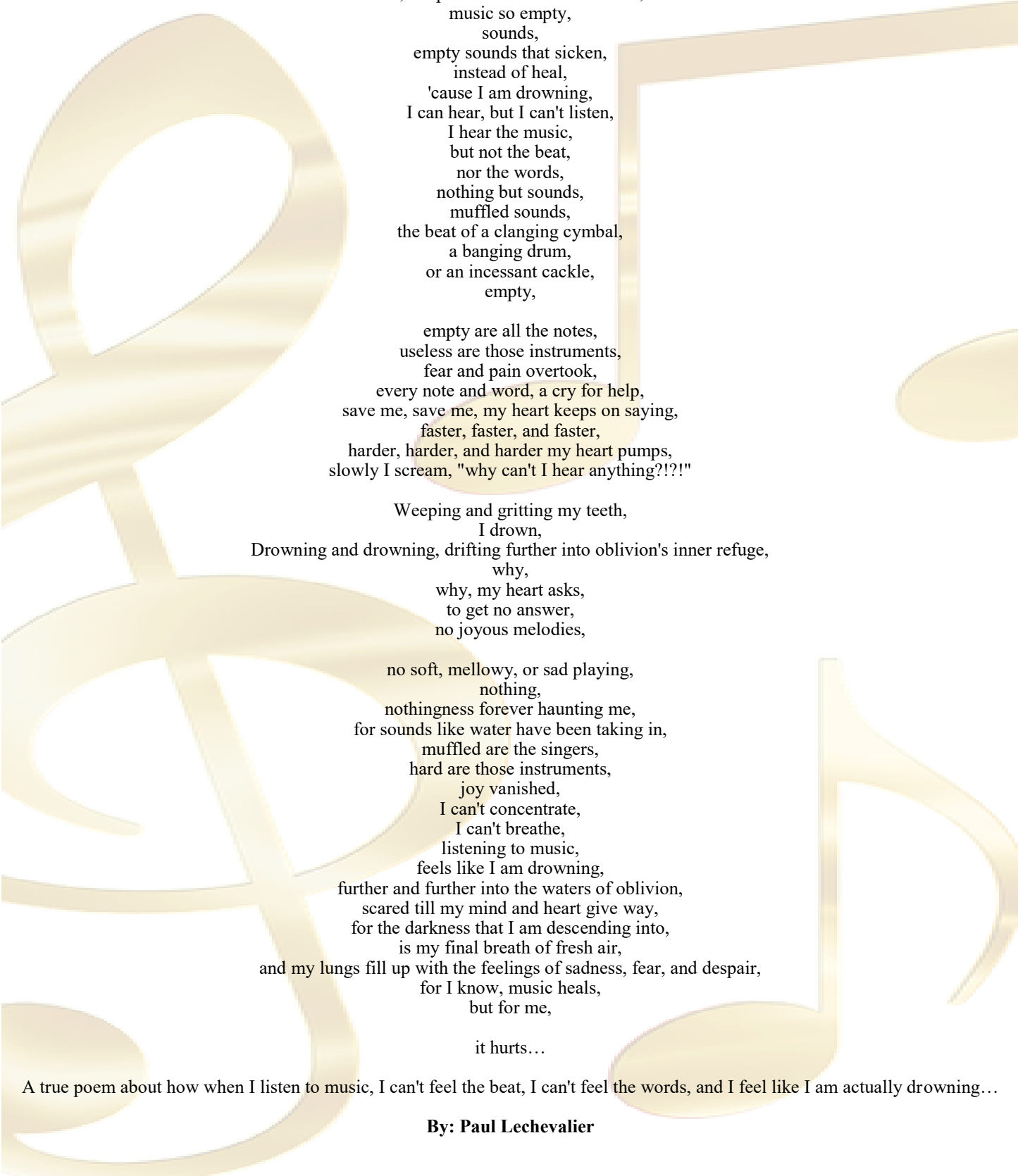
Among the highlights of the ceremony were the pledges of allegiance made to the different flags by the SCV and UDC representatives and the audience. After swearing a pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag, they proceeded to make one to the Confederate national flag, which included a reference to the cause it represents. This was both fascinating and disturbing since the people in attendance were proclaiming their fealty to two American national flags, in contrast to the customary pledge of sole allegiance to the U.S. flag which is made in classrooms throughout the nation, but at the same time the wording of the Confederate pledge made no explicit indication of

the nature of the cause that the Confederate flag represents. For much of the American public today, the cause represented by the Confederate battle flag is identified with slavery and white supremacy, which is solidly supported by the antebellum and wartime rhetoric of Confederate leaders themselves who emphasized these themes as the foundation of the Confederacy's existence. In addition, the ardent Confederate journalist William Tappan Thompson explicitly identified this cause with the meaning of the Confederacy's second national flag (referred to as the "Stainless Banner") in his wartime newspaper editorials, asserting that its white field represented the cause of white civilization and that the new banner would take its place among the emblems of the world as the "white man's flag." However, the omission of these issues from the Confederate pledge's reference to the cause for which the flag stands reflected what I considered to be a lack of sensitivity toward other people's beliefs about what that cause represented.

The final speaker for the event was Ronnie Roach, the Department Commander of the SCV chapter of the Army of Northern Virginia. He delivered a speech that harkened to the Biblical story of King David's civil war against his son Absalom as a parallel to the American Civil War, pointing out that although the previously accepted death toll stood at 620,000, more recent estimates have placed it at an even higher rate of 750,000. As a testament to the measure of sacrifice that this enormity encompassed, he cited the examples of several Confederate regiments that sustained particularly substantial casualty rates in significant Civil War battles, including the 26th North Carolina Infantry which was completely decimated over the course of the Battle of Gettysburg, with a total of approximately 90% killed, wounded or missing out of 800 men it fielded. He effectively placed the soldiers of the Confederacy on a par with those of the American Revolution; the GI's who stormed the beaches of Normandy; and American servicemen who have served throughout this nation's subsequent conflicts. In conclusion, he pointedly emphasized this legacy as the heritage of Southerners and urged the audience to continue passing it on to subsequent generations. While this emotional appeal was very poignant, I felt that the tens of thousands of Southerners who served in the Union Army or engaged in anti-Confederate activity on the home front also merited attention, as they, too, form a part of North Carolinian and Southern heritage more broadly.

The final services for the ceremony included a three-volley salute by the Confederate infantry and three cannon shots by the artillery unit, followed by the singing of "Dixie," the South's treasured regional anthem. As a transplanted Californian, my attendance at Confederate Memorial Day for the first time was a very intriguing experience for me, as it provided a powerful and striking reminder of how strongly Civil War heritage is felt by Southerners and the pride that so many of them take in honoring their Confederate ancestors. At the same time, the event also testified to the persistent strength of the Lost Cause narrative in the mindset of a substantial segment of Southern society since the issues of slavery, race, and Southern Unionists were completely omitted from the ceremony, a testament, in my view, to the degree to which this more multifaceted history is still not grasped by many Southerners in the present time. In light of the ongoing controversy surrounding Confederate monuments – the Confederate statue at Green Hill Cemetery is now among the monuments that have been taken down – I firmly believe that it is vital for today's generation in the South to take a more in-depth look into these aspects of their Civil War history in order that they may attain a greater understanding of the various nuances that characterize their region's experience of the conflict.





Oh, the pain and sadness that I feel,  
music so empty,  
sounds,  
empty sounds that sicken,  
instead of heal,  
'cause I am drowning,  
I can hear, but I can't listen,  
I hear the music,  
but not the beat,  
nor the words,  
nothing but sounds,  
muffled sounds,  
the beat of a clanging cymbal,  
a banging drum,  
or an incessant cackle,  
empty,

empty are all the notes,  
useless are those instruments,  
fear and pain overtook,  
every note and word, a cry for help,  
save me, save me, my heart keeps on saying,  
faster, faster, and faster,  
harder, harder, and harder my heart pumps,  
slowly I scream, "why can't I hear anything?!?"

Weeping and gritting my teeth,  
I drown,  
Drowning and drowning, drifting further into oblivion's inner refuge,  
why,  
why, my heart asks,  
to get no answer,  
no joyous melodies,

no soft, mellow, or sad playing,  
nothing,  
nothingness forever haunting me,  
for sounds like water have been taking in,  
muffled are the singers,  
hard are those instruments,  
joy vanished,  
I can't concentrate,  
I can't breathe,  
listening to music,  
feels like I am drowning,  
further and further into the waters of oblivion,  
scared till my mind and heart give way,  
for the darkness that I am descending into,  
is my final breath of fresh air,  
and my lungs fill up with the feelings of sadness, fear, and despair,  
for I know, music heals,  
but for me,

it hurts...

A true poem about how when I listen to music, I can't feel the beat, I can't feel the words, and I feel like I am actually drowning...

**By: Paul Lechevalier**

# My Vacation at Walt Disney World

By: Mark Sulkin

I was thinking about my vacation at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. I went there when I was 12 years old. It would be the first time I ever flew to in an airplane. I was so excited when the plane took off. As we flew through the sky, I looked out the window and saw how little everything was. I felt like I was a giant. While I looked out of the window the flight attendants came by and served me a snack. I said thank you to them because they were so nice. When we arrived in Orlando, the plane landed, and we all got out.

We stepped outside and waited for a bus to take us to our hotel. It was called Pop Culture. I couldn't wait to start going to the parks. One of the parks we went to was Disney Springs, aka Downtown Disney. It had statues of Mickey, Goofy and Pluto at Christmastime. It also had statues of Winnie the Pooh and some of his friends like Piglet, Tigger and Eeyore. It even had an enormous Lego dragon model. I also met my two cousins, Julie and Melissa, there.

Another theme park we went to was Magic Kingdom. It was more unbelievable than I thought it would be. It was one of the theme parks where we got autographs from characters. The first characters I got autographs from were Pinocchio and his father Geppetto. I even had my picture taken with them. Then, I went on a ride called the Magic Carpet Ride, based on the movie *Aladdin*. After the Magic Carpet Ride, I saw other characters such as Chip and Dale, the two chipmunks, Captain Hook from *Peter Pan*, and Baloo the Bear from *The Jungle Book*. I got their autographs and had my picture taken with all of them. In the Magic Kingdom, I went on a ride called Splash Mountain. It helped cool me down when I was hot. After that, I went on another ride called The Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. It's a rollercoaster with a train engine up front. While at the Magic Kingdom, I saw Mickey Mouse, Pluto, Goofy, Donald Duck, and Minnie Mouse which was my favorite character. I was so happy when I got their autographs and had my picture taken with them.

One of my favorite rides was It's a Small World. This ride is based on the song of the same name. Then, I went on a rollercoaster that was out of this world. It was called Space Mountain and it was awesome. I also saw characters from *Alice in Wonderland*. I saw the Queen of Hearts, the White Rabbit, and Tweedledee and Tweedledum. I got their autographs and had my picture taken with them.

One of my favorite memories of the Magic Kingdom was when I met four of the favorite characters from Winnie the Pooh. They were, Pooh, Eeyore, Tigger, and Piglet, and we marched all around the restaurant. I also got autographs from them and had my picture taken with them.

On the second day of my vacation, I went to a park called Epcot Center. Some more characters I saw were Timon and Rafiki from *The Lion King* and Stitch from *Lilo and Stitch*. Epcot is famous for its international showcases. When I went there, I felt like I was visiting countries from all over the world. I visited showcases from Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Morocco, Japan, Italy, Germany, China, Norway, and Mexico. While I was at Epcot center, I saw Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* and Jasmine from *Aladdin*. My dad and I got our picture taken with both princesses.

On my third day of my vacation, I went to Disney's Hollywood Studios. It had this fun ride from *Star Wars* called Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser. Disney's Hollywood Studios also had a playground based on the movie *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. Later in the day, I went to a live show with four different Playhouse Disney shows: *Bear in the Big Blue House*, *Rolie Polie Olie*, *Stanley*, and *The Book of Pooh*. The next day, I went to Universal Studios Florida. I saw Shrek from all four of his movies and had my picture taken with him. But instead of an autograph, I got a stamp. Other characters I saw include Dora from *Dora the Explorer*, Curious George, Shaggy and Scooby Doo.

Later that day, I saw a live show of Barney the Dinosaur. It was called "A Day in the Park with Barney." I saw Barney with his two best friends Baby Bop and her big brother B.J. We sang lots of different songs with them. After the show, I got my picture taken with Barney and got a stamp of his footprint. The last theme park I went to was Disney's Animal Kingdom. There, I saw Robin Hood from his film. I also saw the Tree of Life from the movie *A Bug's Life*. At DinoLand U.S.A., I saw dinosaurs and had my picture taken with them. While at Disney's Animal Kingdom, I went on a ride from prehistoric times. One evening, I took the Monorail to a place called Chef Mickey's and there was a lot more than dinner. Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy, Chip, and Dale were parading around the restaurant. I had a great time at Walt Disney World and hope to go back there again one day.~~



# Mæltan Micer & E'Olh (Pt. 3)

By Jordan Watson

The thick clouds of smoke slowly dissipate from within the chamber. The feminine entities breath in the ripe, red droplets of Martin's finite husk like candied spores. Charlotte's cries reverberate from behind the shard-like glass, while the women from behind the glass cackle profusely. The G'Imples join in morose unison. Charlotte knows in her mind, her loyal slave would never be replaced. In her fibrillated, fettered sobs, Mæltan grins, even without the other's perceptions. Sigurd can only look to him in growing enmity. Amelia, utterly panicked by all she has borne witness to, huddles herself in the odd corner of the room. The spruced deity chuckles under his breath, bending downwards to Charlotte's right side, offering his shallow condolences.

"Hehehehehe, an ironic precedent, considering that his whim was under your knee. Even through his servitude from your 'friendship,' you should consider this...setting him free."

Charlotte's patience has worn thin with his smug, dulcet tone, trying to ram herself straight into him. Predicting her behavior, Mæltan shifts into a cloud of inky black smoke, as she bashes herself near the corner, where a shrunken Amelia resides. In yet another sickening, bone snapping fashion, he reforms from his mist, unnaturally turning his body to face Charlotte's daze. Placing his hand underneath her chin, he viciously squeezes her cheek bones, bringing her towards his face.

"Well now Charlotte dear, you wish to volunteer. Perhaps you'll show promise, in your newfound avarice, that you are not bound by this fear."

Muffled by the pressure, she tries to speak.

"You want to play this game?! I'll beat yer challenge, under the condition you let us all go! I won't let you hurt these two, period! You got that?!"

Despite the scissoring sound of his fingered blades, Mæltan complies to her curt request, where Amelia quickly puts herself in a scare to head over to her.

"Charlotte, you're insane! Whatever you're planning, don't try it with him!"

Masses of G'Imples from outside the glass scoff, laughing at her sudden remark to their God.

"'Tis a deal, fine harlot, we shall put you to the test. Can you redeem your friends' deaths, prove me wrong in being the best?"

"Believe it."

Another grandiose snap of his fingers, he shapes the surroundings at his command. The room now resembles an auditorium, filled with double decker seating arrangements to its left and right. Strung tendons make up the seats, supported with boned mandibles. No walls support the structure. Only the deep chasms it erects itself upon via a singular pillar, swimming in a vast ocean of decrepit tendrils. The spotlights shine amid the ghastly scenery. The fixtures filled to the brim from top to bottom with moving anemone. The nearly barren left sides of the seating had been crafted and reserved only for the perturbed Sigurd and Amelia. While the right teems with numerous frothing G'Imples, thundering their cheers. Atop the platform in the center, spins Mæltan in a newly feathered suit to fit for the occasion. A floating orb that takes form of a microphone, splashes from thin air to take solace in his voice.

"Lilladies and gentlemen, from old flesh and new, the entertainment of your desires shall commence anew! From the capital of Washington, cheer captain of her iron clad, give your attention to Charlotte Siri, to give the best show we've ever had!"

The G'Imples boo disdainfully. Charlotte is now dressed in her familiar bright yellow/gray pattern cheerleader uniform, matched with her revealing midriff, flowing skirt and pom poms.

"Aaand representing E'Olh, our feisty meister of tango and prance, give it up for our guest entity, Kanalog, LORD OF THE DAMNDABLE DAAAAANCE!"

From the sky, a large pod emerges. It gives birth to a gnarled, amorphous blob of breathable holes. Large eyes float outwards, and set its sights onto Charlotte, disgusted by his appearance. It cannot help but smile inhumanly. Mæltan lowers the orbital flesh microphone pod to his lips.

"The rules are transparent, like Kanalog's dance, remember his sequence well! Misjudge it by one move, and demise shall befall you. Or will it? Only time will tell!"

Charlotte sharpens her gaze to the egotistical entity like a barbed knife.

"So it's a game of memory. Fine. Just you wait. They don't call me Cheer Captain of Imperiul High for nothing. I'm going to rip E'Olh a new one once it's done."

She gives a slight nod to Sigurd and Amelia, as they cheer her on.

"Theen waste no time, get the show rolling, lest it begins to crumble! On with the act, start it up fast, and LLLLET'S GET READY TO RUMBLLLLLLE!"

Kanalog audibly sounds off for joy, as the music from the void chimes in full force. He starts by waving his semi-gelatinous body to the left. Charlotte mimics the same. Kanalog bounces to the right. Charlotte follows in unison. Kanalog goes in reverse order. Charlotte imprints. Kanalog then wiggles downward, arms outstretched, motioning his hands in circles, while happily jumping upwards. Charlotte vivaciously dittos. Kanalog's excitement seems to rise in his bounces. He copies the 5-step sequence, testing Charlotte's mental capacity. To their surprise, she manages to outdo it by making it in animated style. Kanalog's enthusiasm shows as his eyes spiral cool colors, bulging outwards as he giggles madly. The crowd of the G'Imples' boos befit that of Gregorian monks. Charlotte turns her attention to give her friends a thumbs up as they cheer her on.

Kanalog picks up speed with a new sequence of dances, as the music follows tempo. He slides forward. She carbons. He slides backward, as does she. He wiggles left and right, she goes along with it. He spins around and jumps his slimy legs outwards. As the motions continue, Kanalog backtracks to demonstrate *the first segment* again, within the same quickened pace, followed by the second. Charlotte begins to sweat by repeating it all within its larger sequence, barely managing it all. Even Kanalog cannot contain his elation for what's in store next.

The music sets a different tone, reaching a much faster pace. Kanalog begins to wiggle up and down while bobbing back and forth. Charlotte breaths heavily, but definitely makes the grade. He serpentine and slides forward, and backward. Charlotte feels the pressure but keeps on going with the process. He finishes it with a few back flips, and lands straight onto the ground. Charlotte's face flushes with fluster, as she finishes the sequence, preparing for the rest to come full circle. As the formula speeds through, she pantomimes it all, like a starving gymnast going for the gold, pushing through all her boundaries. She finishes within the best of her opponent's parameters.

And yet, something feels off. Kanalog nary moves from his position. In her mind, she felt it was near perfect synchronization. The beast dramatically shakes. Spikes emerge from his open holes. His face morphs in a vicious presence, as his once sunny smile, turns to a snaggle-toothed frothing abomination.

\*SLASH\*

"AAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaah!"

His arms, turned spiked whips, nearly lacerate Charlotte's right arm.

"Ooooh, I'm sorry, dear Charlotte, your footing was off on that last landing. Keep on trying, resist the urge of dying, lest your consequences be damning!"

Mæltan's peons grow in a storming applause. Amelia screams in complete horror.

"CHARLOTTE, NOOO!!!"

She inhales deeply, feeling shortness of breath catching up from the sudden sting from her newly gashed arm. Kanalog abruptly changes back to his jubilant state. Repeating his prior dance right after Charlotte's mishap, she does her best to fight through the painstaking torment. Realizing the situation, adrenaline surges through her, as she goes through the motions once more, risking her footing.

Flurried boos are met with the G'Imples throwing their condiments directly in Charlotte's vicinity. But Kanalog's exuberance rises to full throttle. The music escalates further in tempo, and the creature begins his dance anew. He sways both arms to the left with his right foot down, vice versa the opposite three times. The searing pain shoots itself all over Charlotte's arm, but she tries her damndest to sustain her pain. Kanalog snaps once more. He strikes at her left arm, severing it completely from its tendons. She can no longer contain her anguish, as she falls to her knees. Between the audacious screeches of victory from the demons, to the deafening cries of her friends, she stares atop of her newly claimed victor.

"Pride is but a fool's errand, as it has led you to a deep blunder..."

Kanalog uncontrollably drools to try and keep his delight surfaced while dancing once more. Charlotte muffles through the copious screams,

"CREEP!" She spits in his face.

"Now feel the lashing of 400 cuts, as your being becomes ripped asunder."

The last thing that can be heard is Kanalog's ferocious roar and the many bone-crunching cracks of his thorned whips, accompanied with bloody piercing screams...~~



# My Mermaid Life

By Rachel Williamson

In early 2016, while I swam in the Uniontown YMCA, I was becoming bored, I never before thought of owning a monofin in my entire life, until I saw a professional mermaid named mermaid Melissa; she inspired me so much that I started to watch many mermaid videos and mermaid movies. I dreamt of becoming one, I had dreams of breathing under water ( of course I would, it's natural because I want to become one!!) so every time I went to the YMCA, I exercised the best I could. I will be natural with the monofin, if I get it. Then Christmas came, I had gotten a square package, and a note from Santa and it said something like this, " **I hope you'll have fun with this gift , Santa Claus.**" I felt it; at first it was soft, I almost got disappointed, but when I opened it, it was really my very first monofin!!

I was excited, I wanted to try it on. I did, it felt sooo cool!!! I couldn't wait to swim with it, after Christmas, the first of the week, I got to try it out, I had to fit it out for at least 15 minutes till I had the best fit; then I got in with the monofin, at first I wasn't a professional, I tried to use a small ball to straighten my body up to the right position (dolphin kick) (at first I kept my goggles and nose piece on) after a while I got good, what I learned at the time, was holding my breath, practicing breath holding, and trying to go distance as far as the pool length, and some diving to the bottom of the pool and back up. I went online on fantasy name generator to choose my mermaid name, and found a good one called "silver tail"



And went with it, so I told everyone that my mermaid name was silver tail. I met a lot of new friends at the pool, they wanted to see me do tricks, so I showed them tricks, they loved them, I also found out lots of ways to enter the pool mermaid style, from the video series called 'aquamermaid' I watched a lot of those videos, sooo much lush info on mermaiding and other stuff.

My favorite way to get out of the pool is the sea lion breach way, my hardest way I'm practicing on is pulling up onto the side of the pool and sitting on the edge of the side of the pool, having a little hard time, but rarely got it, the original way I get in is the spy way. One year went passed, and then it happened, my monofin broke, I was upset. I didn't know what I'll do without one, so, mom immediately went online and started looking for a new monofin. I found one I really liked, it was called a lunafin. it came in four days. The day of arrival, I was excited to try it on. It felt better than the last monofin, no blisters at all!! What a relief!!

I couldn't wait to try it in the pool. That time I did, it felt sooo better than the other monofin, more feel free, and mermaid tail felt. I was happy again.~~



# The History of Sesame Workshop

By John Kruse

In the mid 1960's, Joan Ganz Cooney (along with Lloyd Morresett) decided to create a TV program for children to prepare them for school. A young puppeteer named Jim Henson thought the show would be a great idea and soon joined the Workshop. The Children's Television Workshop (as it was called at the time) was created and would use \$8,000,000 provided from grants from TV advisors, school teachers, child psychologists/sociologists, and National Educational Television. Markle Foundation would donate \$72,000 to the Harvard School of Education. Gerald S. Lesser (who went to Harvard) would be on the board of directors of research for the show. The first submission to the Workshop was a cartoon for the new series teaching the letter "J" called "Joe and The Junebug." It was tested with children and they were impressed it taught them (as well as entertained). At least five different test shows of the new series were shown and just maybe with Jim Henson's brilliant mind when it came to creating puppets the new show would begin.

Two puppets (who were rumored to have been named for the cab driver and police officer in the film "It's a Wonderful Life") named Bert and Ernie scored big and got the children's attention. When they weren't on camera the children's minds wandered and got bored. They told Jim Henson, "If you create more puppets like Ernie and Bert. We'd have a hit show." Caroll Spinney was doing a puppet show in his hometown and everything wasn't going the way he'd hoped. Jim Henson saw the struggling puppeteer and met him afterwards and told him, "I loved what you were trying to do." He then told him about two characters he created and if he'd be interested in playing them for television. And soon Oscar The Grouch (who was Orange colored when the show debuted) and Big Bird made their first appearance. Caroll was getting into a cab and was thinking to himself, "How should the grouch character sound?" The cabbie asked, "Where to mac?!" He had the voice down. He repeated the cabbie's words all the way to the filming. Jim who was nearby knocked on the lid of the trashcan. "Get away from my can!" Oscar shouted. Jim said, "That'll do fine."

Jim Henson rarely ever was mad. If something didn't go well he'd say, "Could've done better." And if something he liked happened he'd say, "Lovely." With a full staff in place, and people like Jeff Moss, Joe Raposo, and Chris Cerf (related to Bennett Cerf who was on the panel of What's My Line?) writing music, on November 10th 1969 *Sesame Street* would debut on TV. They thought it'd last a few years at least but no one would have predicted that it'd last for 50 Years!

After the instant success of *Sesame Street* came a show teaching basic reading and grammar skills called "The Electric Company" in 1971. It was a half hour show and featured people who would become big stars such as Morgan Freeman (Easy Reader and DJ Mel Mounds), Rita Moreno (Millie The Helper, Otto the Film Director, Pandora.), and Bill Cosby (random characters). People like Skip Hinnant and Judy Graubart joined the cast as well.

A young Asian American girl named June Angela auditioned for Joe Raposo and played the only Short Circus member from the first episode (as well as a pilot) to the finale (ages 11 to 16)

She named her character Julie after the great Julie Andrews. She was the girl in the band that played the tambourine. In 1986 she would appear on *Sesame Street* as a nurse in the eye doctor's office in a story where Luis went to get his eyes checked. It would be her first role outside *Electric Company* as an adult. She has her own website and is in her 60's now but has fond memories of working on the show. She also played Pat Morita's daughter on Mr. T. & Tina and did voiceover work in various cartoons including the Japanese dub of "Kiki's Delivery Service"

By the early 80's the workshop had a problem. Will Lee (who played shop owner Mr. Hooper) died suddenly over the weekend. They handled it well. They didn't say he moved or would be replaced by another actor. The show decided to air a story (which aired over Thanksgiving 1983 by writer Norman Stiles) where Big Bird drew pictures of all the adults on the show. He gets to Mr. Hooper's and is told by Maria that he died. "Well... I'll give it to him when he decides to come back then..." Susan explained to Big Bird and was told by Luis that when people die they can't come back. Bob says "It will never be the same without him. But, we can be happy we had a chance to be with him... and to know him... and to LOVE him a lot when he WAS still here." The scene ended with Big Bird looking at the drawing and saying... "I'm going to miss Mr. Hooper." Maria with tears in her eyes corrected him. "HOOPER. Big Bird. Hooper." The scene was adapted into a storybook that came out one year after the episode was made.



*Sesame Street* now has a character with Autism! Her name is Julia and she officially made her debut in 2017. She is sensitive to loud noise and loves carrying her stuffed rabbit Fluffster around. She is good friends with Elmo.

- Besides Will Lee, people involved in *Sesame Street*'s success have passed away/retired.
- Northern Calloway - David (due to congestive health/mental health problems and was written off the show before he died)
- Jon Stone - Directed many stories including the Emmy Winning "Christmas Eve on *Sesame Street*"
- Sonia Manzano - "Maria" from *Sesame Street*'s third season to 2014.
- Jim Henson - died suddenly early on May 16th 1990 due to Class A. streptococcus
- Carroll Spinney - retired before the show's 50th Anniversary, but prerecorded the Big Bird voice for one final show. He passed away in December of last year.

Kevin Clash who had done Elmo for many years (and did his own puppets on "Captain Kangaroo") admitted he had a "gay" friend and got made fun at so much of his characters (including Elmo) so much he had to resign from the show.

CTW was soon recognized worldwide as a global institution! Many specials were seen on most (if not all) the major TV networks and many video games were made based on their shows. And were seen on late night television. A theme park opened in 1980 in Pennsylvania called "Sesame Place". In 2019 the *Sesame Street* characters appeared in the opening to *The Late Late Show* with James Corden. Highlights included Cookie Monster thinking the wheel from *Price is Right* was a cookie and Count Von Count getting the "Loser's Fanfare" when he was trying to bid on a banjo.

In 1999 a channel for adults and kids (created by the Workshop and Nickelodeon) called Noggin launched on February 2nd. It was a mix of Nickelodeon and CTW archived shows. The classic *Sesame Street* (highlights from the first 20 years of shows and ending with Maria giving birth to Gabby) aired as part of *Sesame Street Unpaved*. Sadly, Nickelodeon owns all rights to the Noggin brand now and is now a learning app for preschoolers. In the year 2000 they changed their name from Children's Television Workshop to Sesame Workshop (focusing more on the *Sesame Street* franchise).

The Workshop in my honest opinion has influenced a lot of people and is certainly recognized. I hope they continue to make more great innovative programs for children in the years to come. I couldn't imagine life without it.~

## Autism Song

**By Ginger Reynolds**

Please check out this performance about the experience of having autism by our very own Ginger Reynolds!

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ImELGHb8Imk>

# Animated vs. Live-Action Disney Movies

By Amelia Krzton

## Cast of 1991 *Beauty and the Beast* vs. 2017 *Beauty and the Beast*:

Belle- Paige O'Hara	Belle- Emma Watson
Beast- Robby Benson	Beast- Dan Stevens
Gaston- Richard White	Gaston- Luke Evans
Lumiere- Jerry Orbach	Lumiere- Ewan McGregor
Cogsworth- David Ogden Stiers	Cogsworth- Ian McKellen
Mrs. Potts- Angela Lansbury	Mrs. Potts- Emma Thompson
Chip- Bradley Pierce	Chip- Nathan Mack
Maurice- Rex Everhart	Maurice- Kevin Kline
Lefou- Jesse Corti	Lefou- Josh Gad

## Cast of 1992 *Aladdin* vs. 2019 *Aladdin*:

Aladdin- Scott Weinger	Aladdin- Mena Massoud
Genie- Robin Williams	Genie- Will Smith
Jasmine- Linda Larkin	Jasmine- Naomi Scott
Jafar- Jonathan Freeman	Jafar- Marwan Kenzari
Abu- Frank Welker	Abu- Frank Welker
Iago- Gilbert Gottfried	Iago- Alan Tudyk
Sultan- Douglas Seale	Sultan- Navid Negahban

## Cast of 1994 *Lion King* vs. 2019 *Lion King*:

Young Simba- Jonathan Taylor Thomas	Young Simba- JD McCrary
Adult Simba- Matthew Broderick	Adult Simba- Donald Glover
Scar- Jeremy Irons	Scar- Chiwetel Ejiofor
Mufasa- James Earl Jones	Mufasa- James Earl Jones
Young Nala- Niketa Calame	Young Nala- Shahadi Wright Joseph
Adult Nala- Moira Kelly	Adult Nala- Beyonce Knowles-Carter
Timon- Nathan Lane	Timon- Billy Eichner
Pumbaa- Ernie Sabella	Pumbaa- Seth Rogen
Rafiki- Robert Guillaume	Rafiki- John Kani
Zazu- Rowan Atkinson	Zazu- John Oliver
Sarabi- Madge Sinclair	Sarabi- Alfre Woodard
Hyenas- Whoopi Goldberg	Hyenas- Florence Kasumba
Cheech Marin	Keegan-Michael Key
Jim Cummings	Eric Andre

The casts on the left are featured in the original animated classic, while the casts on the right are featured in the live-action remake. While the live-action films are good, nothing will ever beat the original animated movies. Thumbs up if you agree with me!

Vanessa Peters is a first-year graduate student who would like to host a Traditional Sleepover on January 23. (Oakmont, PA)

Zoe Meanor is a 7th grader at Shady Side Academy Middle School who would like to host a Spa Party Sleepover on February 20. (Oakmont, PA)

Riley Benson is a 9th grader at Gateway High School who would like to host a Fashion Fun Sleepover on March 20. (Monroeville, PA)

Sarah Ching is an 11th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Rock Star Sleepover on April 17. (Monroeville, PA)

Grace Luster is a 7th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Super Fan Sleepover on May 22. (Cheswick, PA)

Lauren Bennett is a 6th grader at Shady Side Academy Middle School who would like to host a Food Fest Sleepover on June 19. (Cheswick, PA)

Rebecca Chase is a junior at Community College of Allegheny County Boyce Campus who would like to host a Totally '80s Sleepover on July 24. (Springdale, PA) Madison Dayley is a 9th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Hollywood Glitz and Glam Sleepover on August 21. (Springdale, PA)

Lindsay Hutchison is a 10th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Sugar Rush Sleepover on September 18. (Fox Chapel, PA)

Hannah Mifflin is a 9th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Fear Factor Fun Sleepover on October 23. (Fox Chapel, PA)

Shannon Kearns is an 11th grader at Penn Hills High School who would like to host a Glow-in-the-Dark Sleepover on November 20. (Penn Hills, PA)

Brooke Leesaw is a first-year graduate student who would like to host an All About Me Sleepover on December 18. (Penn Hills, PA)~~



# Disney Trivia, Part 2

How well do you know your Disney Animal Friends?

By Sara Brooks

Jafar from Aladdin has a pet named Yago. Yago is a:

Squirrel

Bird

Snake

Frog

Rapunzel from Tangled has Pascal. He is a:

Chameleon

Grasshopper

Butterfly

Bird

Jasmine from Aladdin has Raja. Raja is a:

Leopard

Cheetah

Lion

Tiger

Cinderella has Gus and Jaques. They are

Kittens

Puppies

Mice

Bats

In Pinocchio, Pinocchio's special animal, Jimminy, was a

Butterfly

Cricket

Whale

Ant

**In Mulan, Mulan's pet Khan was a:**

- Dog**
- Goat**
- Horse**
- Dragon**



**Moana's pet HeiHei was a:**

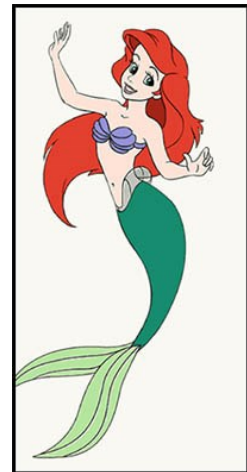
- Rooster**
- Parrot**
- Duck**
- Goose**

**In the Little Mermaid, Ursula has Flotsam and Jetsam They are**

- crabs**
- guppies**
- eels**
- sharks**

**In The Little Mermaid, Ariel has a best friend Flounder who is-**

- Seagull**
- Fish**
- Crab**
- Eel**



**In the movie Aladdin, Aladdin has a special friend named Abu, he is a**

- Monkey**
- Lizard**
- Pig**
- Parrot**



**Google your answers  
to see how many  
questions you an-  
swered correctly!**



## My Interview with Bill Peduto

By Maggie Jones

The idea came to me when I thought of an interview with the mayor of Pittsburgh, Mr. Bill Peduto, in August of 2020. I made a call, asking to interview the Mayor of Pittsburgh. I talked to the assistant to the mayor and told her I was from *Pittverse Magazine*. She was very nice and helped me out. We set a time and date for him to call me. I did the interview on Monday, October 5th 2020, by phone call, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Peduto loves to go to city parks in the city of Pittsburgh in his spare time. He is also planning to restore Arsenal Park in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville Neighborhood, between 39th and 40th streets. I think it's a very good idea.

The job as mayor varies in different degrees, from high school, to college degrees and beyond.

I believed the mayor when he told me about how important it is to have love for the people and the city of Pittsburgh. It takes hard decision making to be mayor, and courage to lead this great city. And the decisions are very hard to make too. But it has to be done.

Also, he told me some of the site's for job training and jobs especially made for people on the autism spectrum disorder. Goodwill in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville neighborhood on 52nd street down past Butler Street. And he also has some people that work for the mayor and the city that have autism. There are lots of places for people to work for people with Autism. Even Giant Eagle offers a program for people with special needs like autism to find work opportunities.

I researched the restoration of Arsenal Park in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville Neighborhood. In my opinion is a great way to bring people back together.

They are still waiting on Washington DC to help financially to get jobs back to the way it was before COVID-19. If there is no response, they will do the best they can with the resources they do have to help the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. So people can get back to living, like it was before the pandemic hit.

I also asked him how applying for a job at Giant Eagle, or a similar business, helps people with autism spectrum disorder. Mayor Peduto says there are special programs for special needs adults to work at Giant Eagle. He also went to talk about the people who work for him, he says some of the people have autism and some autistic people work in the city of Pittsburgh.

There is a lot of autistic people that contribute to the city of Pittsburgh.

I do believe that the Mayor of the city of Pittsburgh is someone that truly cares about the city and what the people of this great city has to offer to each other.

I also believe that we as a city can get through the pandemic when we do take the time and listen to what the CDC guidelines are, social distancing and wearing a face mask.

When you wear a face mask you are not only protecting yourself but others from getting sick from COVID-19. We as a city take our jobs in our lives seriously but, we are all not perfect.

We make mistakes of our own that we need to fix. The telephone meeting with the mayor of Pittsburgh took about a half an hour approximately. He is a person that is very kind person to talk too.~~

# Internal Mind Dialogue

By Joseph Cepek

An anonymous individual's brain is waging an unending civil war inside of itself. This obsessive-compulsive brain is constantly telling itself contradictory messages. The one side is saying that the individual should continue to read something interesting, watch a favorite movie, or work on an iPad WITHOUT taking into proper consideration that there are time limits to any activity. This is always true when it comes to other more urgent responsibilities such as eating meals at a good time, taking any necessary prescription medications on time, getting to an outpatient medical appointment on time, or arriving at a paid job site on time in order to start a work shift. The other brain part is reminding the person to carefully pay close attention to these important reminders on a daily basis.

Here is a brief example of the two brain sides arguing inside of a troubled person's daily thinking pattern. The disordered brain side is named Confusion. The healthy one is aptly named Order.

The Actual Internal Brain Dialogue

Order: I want you to stop lying to this person about there being no such thing as time limits and transition periods from one activity to another.

Confusion: Please, mind your own business.

Order: Well, FYI, you are making this person's life more complicated than it should be. So, it certainly is my business.

Confusion: Why is it wrong to allow this person to enjoy what she likes doing?

Order: It is not wrong that she likes to work on her iPad but working on it for five straight hours without a break for adequate nutrition and other necessities like her getting to her outpatient medical encounters on time is a big concern for everyone around her. Plus, she works on it until around 3 o'clock the following morning of each passing day.

Confusion: How is it more specifically bothering her lifestyle in a negative fashion?

Order: Well, her not feeding her body with good food, not getting enough restful sleep, and hardly if at all interacting with those around her is hurting her physically, emotionally, psychologically, as well as in numerous other untold ways. Additionally, she is showing that her electronic device is more important than the limited time of the nurses, office receptionists, and doctors who are tasked to work with her as an outpatient. If she ever tried to get a job, she might not be hired if she is unable to concentrate on her potential job interview. Also, if she would ever be successful in getting hired anywhere, she could very well be dismissed from her work shift if she is unable to perform her required job tasks in an orderly manner. This is because she is too awfully concerned with reading non-job-related articles online as well as looking at personally interesting images, which are also not part of her job position, on her personal iPad. This could be done by her instead of her doing her necessary job functions. If this troubling situation occurred, it would obviously show that she apparently disregards the employer of whom she would work for and the valuable time of her boss(es) and co-worker(s) who would possibly be around her in a possible future workplace environment. Plus, it would demonstrate that she does not take her potential job seriously.

Confusion: How do you know that this stuff could happen to her?

Order: There are unavoidable consequences by not following certain established rules and time restraints. This is true anywhere in life.

Confusion: I do not believe what you are saying is true.

Order: I do not care! What I am saying is absolutely true!

Confusion: I still am going to ignore everything you have just told me.

Order: Go right ahead if that is what you want to do. There is no possibility of having an intelligent conversation with you. Just remember, you are going to continue harming this poor woman of whom we reside inside of unless you come to your senses and begin cooperating with me. If you ever start working with me instead of against me, we could help her to have better daily mental health.

A reminder to any reader:

This is a fictional yet a possibly real life dilemma one could easily find oneself in if a person suffers with daily obsessive-compulsive tendencies.

The fictional person's name is Adelaide Smith. However, this also could be a real person's name. A real person being troubled by obsessive-compulsive problems could have this particular name.~~



# My Trip to Meadowcroft

By Megan Cunningham

In a town of Avella in Washington County is a historical site that dates thousands of years ago. The place includes a replica of a Native American Algonquin village, a frontier trading post, and a village from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the native village, you can go inside a wigwam, inspect prehistoric artifacts, and learn about American Indian culture. While the Three Sisters Garden was empty when I visited with my parents in August due to COVID-19, there was a hunting camp filled with furs, hunting tools, and fishing equipment. You can even try out an ancient spear thrower called an atlatl toward a fake elk, though my dad was the only one in our group to actually hit it on his first try.



The frontier trading post display is derived from what rural Southwestern Pennsylvania would've looked like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century aside from all the French and Indian War stuff along with the forts and small towns. We often see the frontier as a violent clash between Europeans and Indians, which it undeniably was given the wars, genocide, and displacement. And yes, Africans were there, too, but they're most likely slaves. But as seen in *The Revenant* with the Dakota Territory, it was also a cultural mixing ground where Native Americans traded their

furs and deerskins for a wide variety of European goods. In turn, backcountry settlers adopted native food crops, clothing articles, and forest survival skills that probably served Hugh Glass well after that near-fatal bear attack. And despite their cultural differences, Indians and Europeans shared a common, vital need for land and natural resources. Some even took natives wives like French Canadian fur trader Toussaint Charboneau also known as, "Mr. Sacagawea."

The 19<sup>th</sup> century village is mainly a restoration on land heavily altered by a coal mining operation. During the 1940s and 1950s, Albert and Devlin Miller's farm drastically changed as they sought to reclaim their land and restore it so youth groups could camp as well as learn about history and the natural environment. The Millers began collecting examples of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural architecture such as Greene County's Pine Covered Bridge, a barn on state game lands slated for demolition, and a log house their great-grandfather constructed in 1800. This historic village would open its doors in 1969. Today, you can tour through the recreated Upper Ohio Valley Village with various reenactors and enjoy living history demonstrations to see how Southwestern Pennsylvanians once lived. Exhibits include a one-room schoolhouse, an 1870s log church, and watching a blacksmith forge a red hot-iron. Though I didn't see the third one.

Nonetheless, since the 1970s, Meadowcroft has become so significant as National Historic Landmark, a Pennsylvania Commonwealth Treasure, and a Save American Treasures project. While the other exhibits also provide valuable insight, none of that would've been there if it weren't for what was in the Rockshelter. Though Native Americans left the site during the American Revolution, it wasn't rediscovered until 1955, when Albert Miller stumbled upon a prehistoric tool in a groundhog hole on his family farm. Although he decided to cover the hole, he also began a nearly 20-year search for a professional archaeologist to assess the site's histor-



ical significance. In 1973, Miller finally connected with University of Pittsburgh anthropology professor Dr. James Adovasio of the Cultural Resource Management Program who visited the farm and looked at the prehistoric flint knife Miller found in the ground-hog hole.

Astonished by the find, Adovasio assembled a team of archaeology, anthropology, and geology students to study the area as part of a curriculum. For the next six years, the field school's site excavation yielded nearly 2 million artifacts and ecofacts, including stone tools, pottery fragments, and evidence of Ice

Age fire pits. With its nearby fresh water springs, abundant plant and animal sources, and lack of significant human remains other than the occasional lost digit, experts determined the rock hedge overhang served as a campsite for prehistoric hunter-gatherers. More like a pre-Columbian rest stop if you will and possibly much larger thousands of years ago and perhaps the longest continuously used one in all of North America. Remains include fluted points from the Paleoindian period that date to the Ice Age. Flint remains from Ohio, jasper from Eastern Pennsylvania, and marine shells from the Atlantic Coast suggest mobile inhabitants involved in long-distance trade. While there was at least one basin-shaped hearth reused over time. Furthermore, Meadowcroft has yielded the largest collection of flora and fauna remains ever recovered in Eastern North America due to the Rockshelter's dry environment providing the necessary and rare conditions permitting excellent botanical preservation.

Yet, what put Meadowcroft in the national, were artifacts that Adovasio's team found as deep as 11.5 feet underground. Now conventional narrative established that the first Native Americans came to North America via the Bering Strait Land Bridge about 13,500 years ago and spread throughout the continent as the Clovis people. And it's one that's still taught in American schools to this day since there's no contest this crossing happened. However, Adovasio had the deer remains and campfire residue found in the Rockshelter carbon dated but was shocked to discover them dating to 16,000 years. This was 3,000 years before the Bering Land Bridge crossing, proving that it wasn't the first human migration into North America. As expected, Adovasio's discovery was so contrary to the Clovis narrative that it was widely disregarded upon release. Though it has gained more acceptance as more archaeologists uncovered more pre-Clovis sites. While Adovasio would conduct more excavations as head of the CRMP at Pitt up till 1989 and as head of the Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute during the 1990s.

You can tour the Rockshelter site and see some of the places where Adovasio's team found the artifacts. However, due to preservation concerns, you can't see the artifacts in their museum as the Heinz History Center has them stored in a vault. And let's just say, though I usually recommend visiting the museum for most historic sites, the one for Meadowcroft is rather disappointing since they don't feature not even Indian artifact replicas. Seriously, when I was in there, the only displays pertained to barn design and harness racing.

*All pictures courtesy of the Heinz History Center.~~*



# Judith Marjorie Collins

By Daniel H. Ashkin

I am going to write an essay about Judy's Collins career as a folk singer. She has written many beautiful songs during her career. The songs were "Open the Door," "My Father", "Fortune of Soldier", and "The Blizzard." In addition, she has written 'Both Side Now.' Before I go into Judy's Collins personal life, I am going to examine her life as a child. Judy was born on May 1<sup>st</sup> in Seattle, Washington. She has spent the first ten years of her life in Washington State. Judy's father has worked as a blind radio host and a singer. After ten years of working in Washington State, the family moved to Denver Colorado. When Judy Collins was growing up to become a young lady, she studied classical music under close eye of Antonia Louisa Brico. Antonia Louisa Brico was a famous first women conductor who directed an orchestra. When Judy was only 13 years old, she was playing Mozart classical music. During the early 60's, she was introduced to folk music by Woody Gather and Pete Seeger.



When Judy Collins was 18 years old, she attended University of Boulder in Colorado. The liberal art college emphasize on making the world a better place to live. In addition, the college stresses the welfare of humanity through the charity of humans. She got her masters at MacMurray College in Jackson IL. Learning about humanity of cultures played a major role in preparing her to become a folk singer.

In Judy Collins Biography, she has accomplished many wonderful contributions throughout her career. She has recorded 55 albums. She has collected money through the UNICEF organization for poverty around the world. Judy's Collins is a brilliant pianist and a singer. Judy Collins was the director of a movie called *Portrait of a Woman*. The documentary was about Antonia Brico who was a famous conductor in her documentary movie. She was one of the first women to conduct a major orchestra. The film was nominated for best documentary in 1974. I highly recommend that the writer's group buy Judy's Collins' film on Amazon. Today, she is the key speaker on the prevention of suicide and ways to overcome depression.

## JUDY COLLINS - Interview about overcoming alcoholism and depression

The YouTube interview is called Interview about "Overcoming Depression and Alcoholism." She has drunk alcohol for 23 years. The interviewer in the video clip asked her how did you over depression and alcoholism? According to Judy Collins, she recommended that treatment can become the best decision for the disease. In addition, depression can become overcome through eight hours of sleep, exercise, laughter, reading, and going out with nice friends. She believes in optimism plays a major role in waking up happy every day in life.

In another interview, she was asked about her son, Clark's, death. She said that she "felt demolish." Judy said, "Suicide is a disease likes cancer. The church makes you feel guilty and asked what I could have done differently." To this, Judy responded that "this is a fallacy in your mind."

In order to go forward into the future, you must learn not to blame yourself for all the

past tragedies in life. I feel this is very important message in proceeding ahead in your life's goals.

After Clark's death, Joan Rivers, who was Judy Collins best friend, encouraged her to start working as a method to relieve the pain and depression. She had to learn to overcome her depression of her son's death through the process of laughter, and listening to wonderful music. She believes that resting and meditation work to empty the mind of stressful thoughts and anxiety. According to Judy Collins, a great tune can likely decrease stressful emotions. After she was able to relax, she wrote beautiful songs in her head. After Judy Collins relaxed from the funeral in bed, she wrote "Wings of Angels" to dedicate her son's happiness before his suicide.

In summary, Judy Collin's life was full of many ups and downs like a Ferris wheel spinning in an amusement park, as her song "Both Sides Now." When a person travels through life experiences, he or she must understand that winning and losing are part of humanity. When a tragedy occurs in her life, an undesirable experience can often assist persons who may likely share a similar problem as you. Similarly, when I suffer a physical problem, I can likely assist others people through my personal experiences. ~~

## **WINGS OF ANGELS**

### ***Words and Music by Judy Collins***

Wings of angels tears of saints  
Prayers and promises won't bring you back  
Come to me in dreams again  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
I lost you on a winter's day  
In that cold city far away  
A city by a river deep  
With promises you could not keep  
A place where you had gone to try  
A place where you had longed to fly  
A city smiling when you cried  
A city sleeping when you died  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
Prayers and promises won't bring you back  
Come to me in dreams again  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
In that cathedral by the hill  
We stood and smiled in happier days  
The fields along the river's edge  
You fished and traveled hungrily  
Your light burned in that sunny sky  
Your voice above the water rang  
I'd give it up give all I have  
For one more chance to hear you sing

Wings of angels tears of saints  
Prayers and promises won't bring you back  
Come to me in dreams again  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
Child of thunder in the dark child whose voice was like  
a lark  
Child whose spirits lifted hearts child of many beauties  
When the birds flock to the south  
When the wind calls to the north  
You are in the falling snow  
You are beauty going forth  
You are heat and you are light  
Sun above the mountain's peak  
I would give the sun and moon  
Once more just to hear you speak  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
Prayers and promises won't bring you back  
Come to me in dreams again  
Wings of angels tears of saints  
Prayers and Promises





# Jake's Jokes

**By Jake Ziesche**

How do fireflies start a race?  
They say, "Ready, set – glow!"

What do you call an ancient city full of female horses?  
Mare-chu Picchu.

What kind of horses can be found at the end of the rainbow?  
Lepre-colts.

What's a skunk's favorite romance movie?  
Eat Spray Love.

What do you call a cephalopod that goes into space?  
An astro-nautilus.

What do birds say at weddings?  
"Till death do us partridge."



## *Hartford, Connecticut*

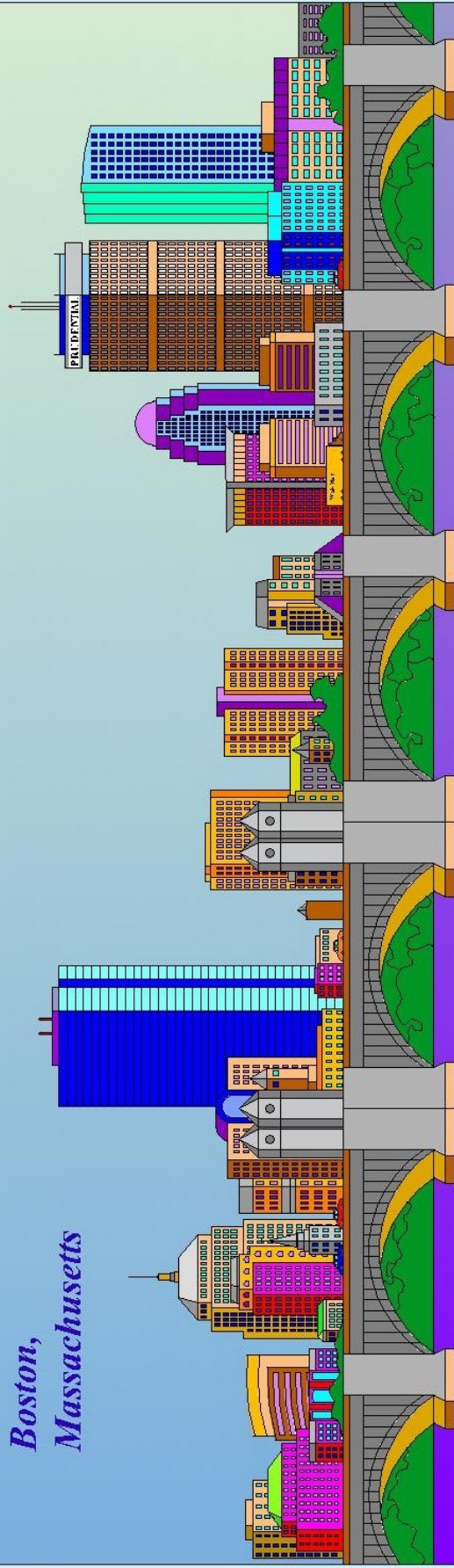


### Interesting facts about Hartford

1. The city was settled in 1636, and is named after the town of Hertford, England.
2. Writer Mark Twain lived here from 1874-1891.
3. Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to drive a car. He drove it through the streets of Hartford.
4. The city's Travelers Tower was New England's tallest building from 1919 to 1963.
5. Many insurance companies have their headquarters downtown. It is the insurance capital of the country.

*By: Mark D. Ligotte*

## *Boston, Massachusetts*



### Interesting facts about Boston

1. Boston Common, established in 1634, is the oldest public park in the country.
2. The country's first subway opened in Boston in 1897.
3. The Longfellow Bridge ( in foreground of picture ) was completed in 1906.
4. Fenway Park opened in 1912. It is the oldest Major League baseball stadium still in use.
5. The 200 Clarendon Street Tower ( formerly John Hancock Tower ) has been New England's tallest building since 1976.

*By: Mark D. Lizotte*



# Civil War General's Birthplace

By: Nils Skudra

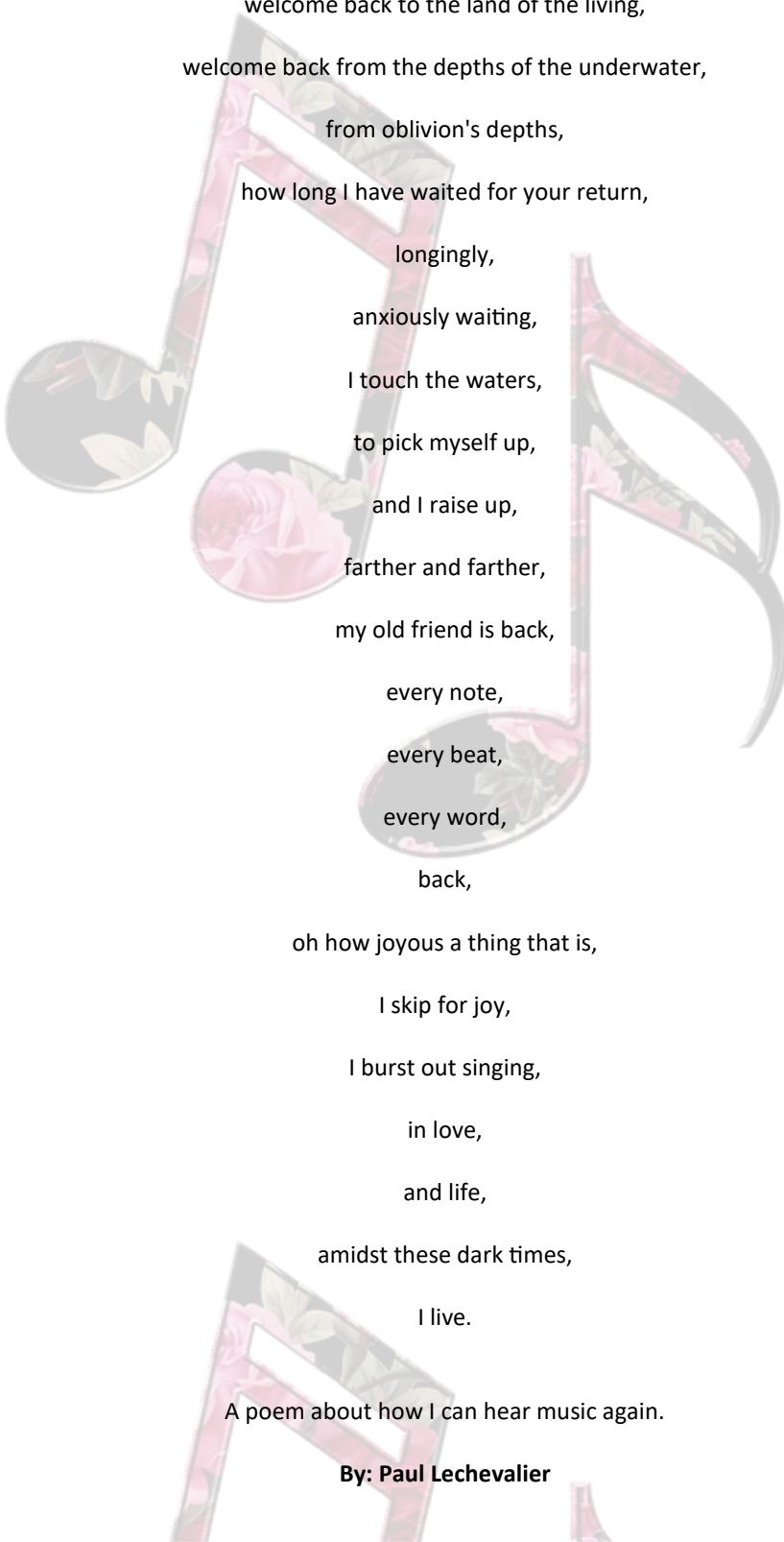
Of all the trips I made during the summer of 2017, my visit to Pilot Mountain, Mount Airy and the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace Preservation site stood out particularly as the trip which marked the end of my summer vacation. On August 4<sup>th</sup> of that year, I traveled all the way from Greensboro to Ararat, Virginia upon learning that the birthplace of J.E.B. Stuart, Robert E. Lee's most trusted cavalry commander, was located there. On the way to Virginia, my family and I stopped at Pilot Mountain State Park, a famous attraction in North Carolina, and explored its visitor center and drove all the way to the top for a gorgeous view of the surrounding area. Home to Native Americans in pre-colonial days, Pilot Mountain was subsequently populated by frontier settlers during the 1750's who came to North Carolina's Yadkin Valley via the Great Wagon Road. Some of the tourists at the site were engaged in mountain-climbing, a daring feat considering that Pilot Mountain has an elevation of 2,420 feet.

Upon resuming our drive to Virginia, we drove through Mount Airy, home to the actor Andy Griffith who starred in the Mayberry show. Because of its connection to this famous star, the people of Mount Airy proudly refer to their town as Mayberry. I was filled with excitement upon entering Virginia since it was my first time really visiting another Southern state and one that occupied such a central role in the American Revolution and the Civil War. Exploring the site of the famed Confederate cavalry general's birth filled me with amazement since he was such an important Civil War figure whom I had read about and seen depicted in Civil War films and documentaries.

I was very intrigued to walk upon the grounds of the house in which he was born; view the Stuart family cemetery; and read the historical information about his military career and his marriage to Flora Cooke, whose father Philip St. George Cooke served as a cavalry general in the Union Army during the Civil War. Although Stuart was very much a product of his society (as the son of an aristocratic slaveholding family) and fought in defense of what I consider to be the wrong cause, it was nonetheless highly profound for me to explore the birthplace of a figure who played a critical role in some of Lee's most significant victories and a controversial role in the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, as his absence left Lee without adequate information about the Union Army's strength or the terrain at Gettysburg, and Stuart's belated arrival on July 2<sup>nd</sup> brought him a severe dressing down by his commander (immortalized in a scene from the 1993 film "Gettysburg" in which Lee yells "There is no time for that! There is no time!" when Stuart attempts to offer his resignation). While Pickett's Charge is the decisive action most commonly associated with the final day of fighting on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Stuart played an important role on that day as well since his cavalry had worked its way around the Union army's flank and would have attacked from the rear (which might have altered the outcome of the battle) had it not been for the intervention of Union cavalry under George Armstrong Custer, most famously associated with the Battle of Little Bighorn. While Custer would later occupy a role of both legend and infamy for his service in the Indian Wars, his actions on July 3<sup>rd</sup> saved the Union Army from a flanking attack by Stuart's cavalry.

Stuart ultimately met his demise at the Battle of Yellow Tavern on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1864 during Ulysses S. Grant's Overland Campaign. Pitted against Union cavalry under Philip Sheridan, Stuart was mortally wounded by a pistol shot while attempting to rally his men, dying the next day in Richmond where he was subsequently buried.

This trip proved to be an amazing one since I had the opportunity to visit the birthplace of a renowned Civil War cavalry general whose tactics are still studied in military academies today, as well as two famed North Carolina attractions. While I was not able to explore more of Mount Airy due to time constraints, I took the opportunity to visit there again in the subsequent months. With my second year of graduate school beginning the following week, this trip to the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace brought a fine close to my summer vacation and my first year of living in the South.~~



Welcome,  
welcome back to the land of the living,  
welcome back from the depths of the underwater,  
from oblivion's depths,  
how long I have waited for your return,  
longingly,  
anxiously waiting,  
I touch the waters,  
to pick myself up,  
and I raise up,  
farther and farther,  
my old friend is back,  
every note,  
every beat,  
every word,  
back,  
oh how joyous a thing that is,  
I skip for joy,  
I burst out singing,  
in love,  
and life,  
amidst these dark times,  
I live.

A poem about how I can hear music again.

**By: Paul Lechevalier**



# BUZZR

By John Kruse

BUZZR (yes it's spelled without an 'E') is a game show channel owned and created by Fremantle Media (simply Fremantle now) where fans can access thousands of hours of game shows archived by the company such as *Press Your Luck*, *Card Sharks*, *Price is Right* (so far only the Bill Cullen episodes were seen), and every incarnation of the 70's cult comedy favorite *Match Game*! It's a mix of old and new favorites for the young, old, or just simply finding out about the show for the first time. It launched on June 1st 2015 and instantly it was a huge success! From Facebook to Twitter and even on YouTube, familiar fans who use social media can chat with fans all across the United States.

Special programs and rare shows were seen on occasions such as Super Bowl Sunday or Christmas. In 2017, a documentary aired on the channel called "Game Changers" and featured *Jeopardy* host Alex Trebek. It featured him exploring the roots of game show history and finding out what makes them a cult favorite. It showed clips of non-channel owned shows such as *Newlywed Game* (from Sony/Chuck Barris library) and *Hollywood Squares* (Haiter-Quigley). It had interviews with Howie Mandell, the late Monty Hall, and current *Price is Right* host Drew Carey. Streaming sites include Nousey, Amazon Prime Video, STIRR, LocalBTV, Pluto TV, even on their own website. Ludia (a Canadian owned company) even made a Casino App where you can play along and earn coins playing classics and newer shows like *Match Game* and *Celebrity Name Game*.

I have said that the channel has special shows and marathons for special occasions. Here is a list of special marathons and shows aired on BUZZR.

## CARD SHARKS LIVE ON FACEBOOK

Former Big Brother contestant Nick Uhas was the host and for guessing whether the cards would be higher or lower (via Facebook post prediction) people would win prizes.

## BUZZR BINGO

For completing a bingo card (by marking off moments from a show such as Bert Convy giving away Magic Toaster money) including the free space they would send you prizes.

## GAME DAY 10

For entering a secret word mentioned on the tenth day of the month viewers could win prizes.

## LOST AND FOUND

A collection of rare vintage game shows and pilots (such as Double Dare 1976).

## PICK AND PLAY

Viewers could choose which shows would be featured that night (such as Beat The Clock 1979)

## BETTY WHITE CHRISTMAS

As the block suggests the best of Betty White during Christmas!

## BUZZR BOWL

Football teams playing (on shows such as Family Feud) Super Bowl Sunday!

#### The Michael Larson Game of Press Your Luck

July 31st 2016. The AMAZING game of Press Your Luck (broken down in two separate episodes) featuring Michael Larson who spent weeks reviewing tapes and studying the bouncing light patterns and won over One Hundred Grand in prizes. Before the channel existed it was seen in Game Show Network's Big Bucks Scandal Documentary and 50 Greatest Games Countdown!

#### Match Game/Hollywood Squares

Not seen in 35 years on TV due to joint ownership of the names Match Game (Fremantle) and Hollywood Squares (MGM). BUZZR acquired reruns on February 17th 2019.

#### Women's Day

All day marathon. Included the Rosa Parks episode of To Tell The Truth 1980!

#### National Pride Month

A marathon featuring people who are near and dear to the LGBTQ such as Charles Nelson Riley of Match Game..

#### Black Friday Frenzy

November 29, 2019. Sale of The Century, Temptation (short lived version of SoTC), and Supermarket Sweep (David Ruprecht) were featured.

#### Valentine's Day 2020

Marathon with new additions to the channel included "BZZ!" with Annie Wood and two episodes of the Nighttime Tattletales as seen in syndication.

#### Orson Bean Tribute

February 16, 2020. A tribute with episodes of appearances on Super Password and Match Game.

#### St. Patrick's Day Lucky Wins 2020!

Featured Norma Brown winning over \$28,000 on Card Sharks and Carolyn Haisner on Match Game who won \$32,000 and set a new winnings record. Sadly CBS cancelled Match Game before her run could be aired.

#### BUZZR (as a YouTube channel)

Launched on May 1st, 2014. YouTube celebrities as well as contestants could play games such as Celebrity Name Game and Family Feud. This resulted in a lawsuit on February 23rd, 2016 as New York development firm "Codename Enterprises" also did work since 2009 under the name "BUZZR". They also argued that Fremantle use of the name associated it with objectionable content and used the YouTube channel to point towards it.

Some programs currently on BUZZR have aired on Game Show Network in the past. Examples include: *Beat The Clock* (Bud Collyer and Monty Hall) and *Blockbusters* (Bill Cullen).~~



# Cookie Exchange

By Andrew Olsavicky

During the winter, most folks tend to put on weight. This is usually due to the amount of sweets consumed during a time of year when there is no good place for physical activity. Another compounding factor is that during the wintertime on activity that can be done usually around the holidays is baking. Since the primary thing to bake is sweets, a great item to make is "Saucer Cookies." Granted there are various versions of this recipe; however, my favorite is the one with chocolate chips. Of course, you could just make chocolate chip cookies but in my mind those tend to go stale or at least get too hard too quickly, whereas "Saucer Cookies" tend to stay softer longer. The reason they stay softer longer is generally due to the additional and or alternate ingredients in the recipe, the two big ones in my recipe being the addition of wheat germ and coconut which help keep in moisture.

I will admit that this recipe can be made at any time of the year; my family generally does so during the holiday season when making cookies is something of a routine activity for us. One of the best activities my mother used to do when we lived in Clifton Park, NY was to go to our neighbors cookie exchange, where all the neighbors who attended would give each other a different type of cookie they made. This would allow for everyone to have a variety of desserts to have at home in addition to whatever deserts the family had already made.

Unfortunately, while my Mom has brought this idea to our current neighborhood in Cranberry Township, PA, this year we cannot do this activity because of the situation involving Covid-19. Granted, my Mom will do whatever she can to keep things in the community going, with the best possible precautions to prevent the virus spreading; it seems that normal holiday traditions even involving food will have to be altered this year. Hopefully, people will still have a good holiday season and will have a great deal of various foods to have at home, and in turn recipes, to share with their families in one way or another. On that note, I'd like to conclude by stating that the reason for most of the Foodie articles this magazine has been putting out have been about recipes and dishes rather than places to eat is due to the current virus situation; however, I'm sure that once things have hopefully gotten better we will be able to visit and give opinions on our favorite places to eat, and if we do mention restaurants it may be based on the kind of takeout available there. So to the various restaurants of the greater Pittsburgh area who in turn read this article, please be sure to keep good things on your takeout menu, even if they are complicated recipes so we may give our opinions on those.~~

# Sleepover Schedule

By Amelia Krzton

- Zoe Meanor is a 7th grader at Shady Side Academy Middle School who would like to host a Spa Party Sleepover on February 20. (Oakmont, PA)
- Riley Benson is a 9th grader at Gateway High School who would like to host a Fashion Fun Sleepover on March 20. (Monroeville, PA)
- Sarah Ching is an 11th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Rock Star Sleepover on April 17. (Monroeville, PA)
- Grace Luster is a 7th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Super Fan Sleepover on May 22. (Cheswick, PA)
- Lauren Bennett is a 6th grader at Shady Side Academy Middle School who would like to host a Food Fest Sleepover on June 19. (Cheswick, PA)
- Rebecca Chase is a junior at Community College of Allegheny County Boyce Campus who would like to host a Totally '80s Sleepover on July 24. (Springdale, PA) Madison Dayley is a 9th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Hollywood Glitz and Glam Sleepover on August 21. (Springdale, PA)
- Lindsay Hutchison is a 10th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Sugar Rush Sleepover on September 18. (Fox Chapel, PA)
- Hannah Mifflin is a 9th grader at Shady Side Academy who would like to host a Fear Factor Fun Sleepover on October 23. (Fox Chapel, PA)
- Shannon Kearns is an 11th grader at Penn Hills High School who would like to host a Glow-in-the-Dark Sleepover on November 20. (Penn Hills, PA)
- Brooke Leesaw is a first-year graduate student who would like to host an All About Me Sleepover on December 18. (Penn Hills, PA)~~

# Centipede AR Park

By Rachel Williamson

- 3d glasses
- light blasters guns

The game starts out like in the movie " pixels." you have a choice of gun type, design, and glasses to see the hits you'll make. you'll be escorted into a dark room. when the main door closes, you'll have 5 seconds to prep. then laser smoke will enter the room, (non-harmful) and then the lasers will display mushrooms randomly in the room above you. the glasses will indicate the hits of the mushrooms, the game progresses until all lives are eliminated.~~



*Photo by Maggie Jones*



*Photo by Daniel Ashkin*



*Photo by Maggie Jones*



# Musical Mystery Tour Chapter 1

By Jake Ziesche

In a world where mythical creatures and people coexist, two best friends were hanging out in a park. One was a lavender werecat dressed from head to toe in tie-dye. The other was a genie sporting a Disney Princess shirt, Jersey lily print bell-bottoms and a sapphire bow in her long brown hair. It was the first day of summer and they were both completely bored.

"Nikki, I think we have our own version of the 'Summertime Blues,'" the werecat said to the genie.

"Well Melody, I do believe I have a cure." Nikki reached into her handbag and pulled out a piece of an old map. "I found this in my attic and thought you might like to see it. It could lead to a lost treasure. What do you think?"

"I admit, I am intrigued," Melody answered. "And I bet our boyfriends would want to see it, too." Melody quickly rummaged in her own purse and fished out her cellphone.

"Alfredo and I may be seeing each other, but we aren't an official couple," Nikki countered.

"You never know when love will bloom." Melody texted her boyfriend Valentine about the map fragment and asked if he and the guys wanted to see it. After a few seconds, she got a response. "The boys will be here shortly."

As soon as she said that three beings magically appeared. One was a human-sized fairy with pink heart-shaped wings, a red sweater, and khaki shorts. This was Melody's special someone. On his left was an aquamarine griffin sporting a leather jacket and head feathers styled into a pompadour. On the fairy's right was a handsome five-foot troll with big purple hair and a zebra print tracksuit.

As soon as Valentine saw Melody, he broke into a grin. "Howdy-do Mew Mew," Valentine called out as he fluttered over.

"Howdy-do yourself, Sugarplum," Melody responded, giving her lover a kiss on the cheek.

The griffin quickly swaggered up to Nikki and said with an Australian accent, "Hello, Dolly. Did you just come from Broadway?"

"Salutations, Alfredo," replied Nikki. "It's nice to see you too, Peanut," Nikki called to the troll.

"I'm always happy to see my friends," Peanut responded as he walked over to join the others. "I hear you girls have an interesting item you wanted to show us. Let's have a look-see."

The boys and girls gathered round and examined the section of map that Nikki had uncovered.

After a brief inspection, Alfredo spoke up. "This looks kind of familiar. When I was visiting Chichen Itza with my friend Waffle last month, he found what looked like a portion of a map. Maybe this chunk goes with it."

Melody was rather skeptical. "Alfredo, you've mentioned this 'friend' of yours before. However, we have never seen him. How do we know he even exists and that he can help us?"

"Waffle is most certainly real," Alfredo retorted. "In fact, he runs a shop on Kiwi Street. Why don't we go see him right now?"

Everyone agreed that the possible lead was worth checking out. So, the group set off on their merry way. The first adventure of summer was underway.~~





**ELMO: Sesame Street**



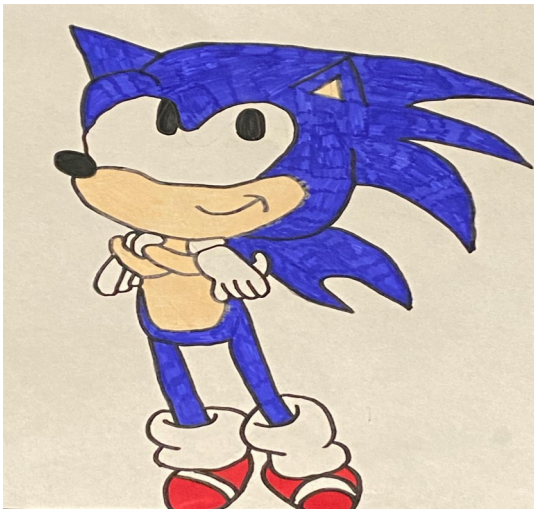
**Fluttershy: MLP:FIM**



**Mandela**



**Mikey: TMNT**



**Sonic the Hedgehog**



**Sesame Street Characters**

**ARTWORK BY CANDICE BROOKS**



# The Power of Prayer in Lindley Park

By Renee Skudra

As a Civil War enthusiast, I knew a thing or two about John Van Lindley after whom Lindley Park (where I live) was named. On many a dusky evening, redolent with innumerable scents I cannot even begin to disambiguate and the unrelenting cacophony of sound issuing from cicadas and their brethren, I have wandered to this place, found my usual seat under a tree laboring with an unduly large canopy of foliage, and begun my prayers. In this grassy area which commemorates his name and containing a goodly 107 acres, I so often think of the bespectacled Quaker, who humble and pious, did so much for the community I call my own. When I moved from northern California into this neighborhood, I set out to learn about him, found information about his origins, family and livelihood that, while interesting, are not what truly drew me to my research. Instead my mind was taken up, immediately and inexorably, to this man, although a Quaker, and by that title an absolute pacifist, who joined the Union Army and served for three years as a private with the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Missouri State Militia Cavalry. In my readings I have come across the Quaker “Declaration of Pacifism, formulated in 1660 and presented to King Charles II which averred “ ... We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fighting with outward weapons... the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man...” I wonder how Van Lindley reconciled his belief system with the act of going off to war but I have learned that the Quaker belief of pacifism was in fact not universally adopted in practice.

It turns out that according to one commentator (Joseph C. Carlin) that several of Van Lindley’s Quaker relatives had in fact been involved in armed conflicts during the Revolutionary War period. In Van Lindley’s background was numbered one such man of whom he was the great-great grandson: Thomas Lindley, Sr. on whose land The Battle of Lindley’s Mill (also known as the Battle of Cane Creek) was fought in Orange County, North Carolina on September 13, 1781 during the American Revolutionary War. The story for me thus became more interesting. J. Van Lindley would make the decision to become a soldier although Carlin mentions that not much was known about the intellectual underpinnings of his choice to do so. We do know that he moved to Missouri, joining his older brother Albert there in working on the farm of a Quaker from Pennsylvania. On April 1, 1862 both brothers chose to espouse the Northern cause, enlisting in the Missouri State Militia and formally being mustered in on April 3, 1865.

Our historian tells us that there was scant information extant about J. Van Lindley’s direct participation in the War Between the States although there is quite a bit known about the Missouri State Militia and how Missouri figured in the Civil War conflict. It appears that J. Van Lindley was assigned to “Company D” where he worked as a buffalo hunter and saddler and Albert assumed the post of a Sergeant. Unfortunately there are no apparent references to Company D having served in specific conflicts but records show that the Missouri State Militia was involved in most of the significant engagements in that State from the period of 1862-1864. For a period of three years, J. Van and Albert served together in an effort to protect Missouri as their unit ultimately and successfully established Federal control of that State throughout the remainder of that conflict.

After the Civil War, over \$5,000 in debt, John Van Lindley returned to North Carolina, choosing a life of peace which clearly resonated much better with Quaker faith. Back again on his native soil, he earned his due as a horticulturist, nurseryman, and eventually an industrialist. At the forefront of his imagination however was always the idea of philanthropy and how to translate that into being a man of service. Modest and self-effacing by temperament he eventually quietly bequeathed vast sums of money to Greensboro for public libraries and parks. When I am in Lindley Park, I think of him and what



must have been his enormous battles between making a choice of pacifism and that of going to war and wonder how that emotional geography played out in arriving at a final decision in how to wrestle with his core beliefs. When I look around me, I am awed by the quiet beauty of this place, its verdant gardens, abundant wildlife and the larger narrative it embodies of a silent peace in the midst of a sometimes crazed and busy urbanity. I am grateful for being the beneficiary of those gifts and send up a silent prayer that he was moved to provide for the common good and did so with equanimity and grace and make a mental note to pay it forward to those I know or may not know. It is the compact that I make with Van Lindley each time I end my evening constitutional with my trusty service dog, Jackson, a Bichon Frise, in the site that bears his name.

There are other things that occupy me in this space that has become sacred. I look closely at things, large and small, note the color of the sky as it moves towards nightfall, study the lightning bugs hovering around me like quick flashes of inspiration, ephemeral, gone before I can really give them the full force of my examination. I pray for the health of those around me, for the security and contentment of the world and a safe and careful stewardship of our planet's environments and resources, for my son's gainful employment appropriate to his newly-received Master's Degree in American History, for the chance that I will find love in an increasingly beleaguered and set-upon world, for the kindness and regard of people I care about and those I will encounter. Sitting here in Lindley Park, a scant three minutes from my home, is a simple act, the only artifacts that accompany me a worn plaid blanket purchased at a Statesville yard sale, a dog-eared book I am currently reading, and a water bottle to stave off thirst. The instruments of noise (cell phone, desktop computer, television, air conditioning system) are safely confined to my house, unable to levy demands upon my time and attention. In God's little acre of nature where I pray, for these small moments I choose to brook no interference in my own celestial scheme of things nor allow any interferences to abate my intellectual peregrinations whether they touch on sacred or profane matters. There are so many things I need to talk to God about and I need absolute and uncompromised silence to do so.

In northern California where I hail from it seems that God is often an afterthought, if anything at all, a private reverie. The academic society I have been a part of for so long at UC Berkeley is highly secularized and religion does not seem to occupy its inhabitants. People do not talk about it or at least I have rarely heard that done there or in the larger reaches of the SF Bay Area. In Greensboro, and, specifically Lindley Park, however, the life of the spirit is a living, pulsing and animated thing. I might say that God is a given. From my point of view, in nature the footprint of the Creator is indisputable and everywhere. When I move ever so slightly I feel the power of the eternal in the simple act of motion. I understand in a way I never did on the West Coast the words of a Scottish missionary, Eric Liddell, in "Chariots of Fire" – "I run for the glory of God" as I take a moment to sprint through Lindley Park even though I am no athlete and my running commands no notice of admiration. The atmosphere is invested with the signature of the divine and in this natural preserve it is omnipresent and informs how I will greet the world and shape an attitude of reverence for all life, here beyond the green boundaries of a place which is a spiritual refuge. For me Lindley Park holds the divine architecture wherein I choose to conduct my prayers and my canine companion, quietly lying close to my side, allows me the opportunity uninterruptedly to do so. He too seems to understand that this space is sacred.~~



# The Strange Story of Bernie

By Megan Cunningham

The 2012 *Bernie* is a dark comedy by *Boyhood* director Richard Linklater that puts a quirky spin on true crime that takes some unexpected turns. Yet, what's more unbelievable is that it's based on a 1998 *Texas Monthly* article by Skip Holandsworth called "Midnight in the Garden of East Texas," chronicling the murder of 80-year-old millionaire dowager Marjorie Nugent in Carthage, Texas by her 39-year-old companion Bernhardt "Bernie" Tiede. Now how could an old lady's murder have a comic element? Well, read on and find out.



Set in a small town in East Texas and told in a mockumentary style, the film centers on a local mortician who becomes a beloved member of the community and a real nice guy played by Jack Black in perhaps his best performance to date. He befriends the recently widowed Marjorie Nugent played by Shirley MacLaine, who's widely seen as the town bitch who almost everyone hates. In fact, she's even estranged from her own son and her grandchildren. Later, the two become inseparable, frequently traveling and lunching together. However, Marjorie's need for Bernie's attention becomes constant and sometimes abusive that the latter's social life suffers. While the ever-sweet Bernie seems all too reluctant to stand up for himself and set boundaries with her. Seriously, it gets to the point where he's cutting her toenails. Yet, soon her possessiveness, persistent nagging, and non-stop putdowns soon take a toll that Bernie suddenly snaps and murders her with her armadillo gun in her garage.

For the next nine months, Bernie takes advantage of Marjorie's poor reputation to excuse her absence with few questions while using her money to support his neighbors and local businesses. At first nobody suspects anything or cares, save her stockbroker. Eventually he uses Bernie's neglect of previously agreed-upon payments to enlist Marjorie's estranged family, resulting in an authorized police search in her house where they discover her corpse in the freezer chest.

Long suspicious of Bernie's activities, Matthew McConaughey-portrayed district attorney Danny "Buck" Davidson charges Bernie with first-degree murder, which doesn't fit the crime. Bernie killed Marjorie out of intense anger for her pushing him around for far too long, fitting more along the lines of manslaughter. But given that he had been spending her money after she went missing, you can totally see what Davidson's getting at. Anyway, Bernie's arrested and confesses to killing Marjorie claiming her emotional abuse as a mitigating circumstance. But despite admitting to the crime, many Carthage's citizens still rally to Bernie's defense, some even assert that Marjorie had it coming. Frustrated, Davidson successfully requests a change of venue to a town of San Augustine, 50 miles away to avoid a biased jury selection. Despite any absence of premeditation, he's found guilty as charged and imprisoned for life. The film concludes with pictures depicting the real Bernie Tiede with Marjorie Nugent and footage of him meeting Jack Black in prison, somewhat bewildered by what he's heard.

While the movie certainly focuses on very dark subjects and ends tragically, it's enjoyable all the way through that I'd recommend you watch through the credits. Mostly because the townspeople act as a not-so-neutral Greek chorus whose comic insights supply much of the film's humor. One highlight is a man describing how Texas can easily be five states in one but he names seven regions. Jack Black is at the top of his game showing his talents for comedy, drama, and singing. And not just songs you'd hear in *School of Rock* or Tenacious D either but Christian hymns and show tunes. Matthew McConaughey is at his most Texan but stands out as the voice of reason. But even he has his moments though you can understand where he's coming from. In all, if you're in the mood for a dark comedy, I'd highly recommend this.~~



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
30 YEARS OF SERVICE AT WPXI,  
PEGGY FINNEGAN!**

**Pittverse**

**Photos and Page Design by Robert Hester**



# Mæltan Micer & E'Olh (Finale)

By Jordan Watson

Thunderous clamors overflow the abyssal auditorium. After the blood has drenched the G'Imples, accompanied with the flinching Sigurd and Amelia, Kanalog roars in his cheerful poise. He devours himself into a shifting blob, shooting himself back up to the auburn skies. The utter silence from Amelia consumes her, as she looks down to her knees, unknowingly pouring tears from her ducts. Sigurd attempts to comfort her by rubbing her shoulder. She quickly turns away from him.

"Amelia....I know this has to be one of the hardest things to swallow...but the realization is this...we have to fight our way through this...I know it hurts...but Charlotte chose this...She wanted to keep us safe...But, if we take him on, we can beat him at his own game. Whatever he has up his sleeve, I'll have a plan. But...I need you to be ready for it, and be on my side...okay?"

Amelia is overcome with chuckling. Sigurd raises his concern that she may have finally snapped. However, she soon makes her case.

"\*Sniff\* \*Sniiiff\* Y-You know...It never truly hit me...b-b-but we may very well die within this absolute nightmare..."

"Amelia, look at me!"

Sigurd takes her shoulders, gently veering her to his direction in a calm, collected voice.

"It's that kind of attitude that's going to trap us here. I will say this. We can either fend for ourselves and take on his next game of torture separately. Or, we can both take it on, and work through the trial together. Mark my words...we will get home."

"...There's...there's something I should've mentioned to you...I consider you a good friend...b-bu-but my b--

Before she can look him in the eye and give her honest thought, Mæltan gleefully interjects, without the use of his flesh pod microphone.

"Did my ears deceive me? You both volunteer for our entertainment? Perhaps I can supply your delusions, and help fulfill your ailment..."

Sigurd's intense glare ignites a resounding laugh from his very core.

"Yeeeees, the look of determination, how it sustains my bottomless soul. We shall stride straight to the point, so you can pay your toll."

With a trepidation snap, the auditorium evolves, and shape shifts the stage for the remaining teenagers. The bleachers transform into living seats by the hundreds to thousands. The pillar beneath the monstrous alumni tectonics to form an enveloped colosseum. The gates surrounding Amelia and Sigurd resemble a sternum with feelers directly in the middle. The stands hold kneeling human carcasses clasping their seating, while the G'Imples run amok in feral rapport. The flags bear meaty, stringed poles with meshed fingers. The lights seep unnatural eyeballs to shine upon the center of the open, flesh-filled pit. Before the two lies crude, indented grooves within the field. Mæltan shows himself within a convenient senator's stand to make himself known.

"Gladiator, and entertainer alike! Your goal is treacherous, so be sly! Go through the labyrinth, and grab the C'etanra, and either state your demands, or prepare to die!"

The earthquakes rumble as the gates open with unnerving centipede legs.

"Heed my warning, and keep on the move, for the elements are a harrowing pew. Avoid the Ornut, and be wary of traps, lest he be the one to collect you."

"Ornut?!"

Sigurd's tone dramatically alters to a bone chilling realization. Amelia's anxiety raises at an alarming rate. It's not possible. A tale he had only considered as a mythical children's nightmare, told from his father before him. When one is guilty of committing sin at a young age, the Ornut will creep in the dead of night. Its body is infused with the Hexagon of Premonition, for when one's gaze meets it, shall reveal to its victim their creeping, or sudden death. The bells around its neck will only toll if it senses you, if it's close to you, or...if it's atop of you.

\*Jong Jong Jong\*

"Amelia, stay with me, and MOVE!"

Sigurd's switch flips on his flight response, and guns it through the entrance of the labyrinth, yanking Amelia's right wrist to run! They run to the left and find two pathways. Sigurd goes right, with Amelia barely keeping pace. An opening to the right, and three divergent paths before them. Sigurd instinctively goes straight, as Amelia follows. She immediately notices holes under the ground of their path.

"Sig, LOOK OUT!"

As he sees before him by stepping onto some plates, lances shoot upwards. He spins to the right, narrowly dodging the next one. He cartwheels over the next few to the right, hopping over the next few, barely receiving cuts from both his hands and left upper ribs. This allows for a path to be made for Amelia as she bounces through the remainder. Two new forked paths open before them.

"Amelia, listen...we have to split up. We'll cover better ground this way, and at least one of us will make it

out if need be.”

“No, NO! Sigurd please!”

\*JOOONG, JOOONG\*

“There's no time, just head off right, I'll go left!”

Emerging from out the walls, comes a burly, fur-patched arm, closing the two off. The primordial, aurochs-esque face of Sigurd's nightmare begins to meld out of the exterior.

“AMELIA, RUN!”

Without any hesitation, she complies with Sigurd's wish. From here, she picks numerous intertwined paths through dire impulse. Wormed tubes shoot forth acidic liquids that combust into explosive lights. More paths open while others close behind her. Walls that lead to dead ends morph to creatures of pure foliage. Backtracking to leap through closing paths. Throughout all this, she can hear the ominous bells tolling ever closer. In what seems like an endless, twisted imbroglio after milliseconds upon minutes, Amelia finally reaches the epicenter. Before her is a blue floating, shuffling orb. The C'etanra! With moderate reluctance in her mind, she approaches it, until she hears Sigurd's voice yell out to her.

“AMELIAAAA! I'm comiiiiing!!”

It felt like slow motion. Sigurd is badly maimed, claspings his right leg from overly bleeding. As the adrenaline hits its maximum, he sprints towards her. Rumbling behind him, is the monstrous Ornut, with homicidal temptation in his eyes. The blood soars, as he cleaves both Sigurd's legs, and looms over his gimped body. He crouches down to his newly fallen prey to pry his eyes open. He makes him stare directly into the Hexagon of Premonition. Sigurd's screams fall silent. His demeanor, completely docile. He knows what's to come. Ornut takes the spiked end of his staff over Sigurd's head.

“Live for me, **ᚱᚰᚱᚱ.**”

He lunges into the fleshy soil, committing an earsplitting crunch.

There it goes. The epiphany. The recognition sets in. Amelia holds her fate in her hands. Everyone looks in anticipation what she does. She looks directly up to where Maelton comfortably seats himself.

“I realize now why we're here. The true meaning of this world. This realm...it's karma incarnate. We...We deserve this.....I've made my decision.”

She raises her arms up high, and lets the orb shine bright.

Winter is in full effect. The flurries cascade the cozy, rural cul-de-sac of Arizona St.'s festive Christmas jubilee. In the middle of it all, a 2000 Chrysler Concorde pulls up to the snow covered drive way. Out comes a sweet old lady in a green parka. She has in her hands a stack of large, multicolored holiday wrapped boxes. Struggling to bring them into the house, her loving husband comes to help get the door abroad, as he works frivolously in the kitchen to ready the family feast. Within the dining room, are two boys across from one another, one with baggy hair, and a purple hoodie, and the other a relatively hefty one with glasses, and a pair of crutches. The grandmother comes by the latter boy and lays down his gift in front of him.

“There you go, Collin! Merry Christmas to you and Jamie!”

The grandfather takes a small glance over.

“Oohohoh, Santa's been good to you two this year! Those look huge!”

“Wow grandma! Thank you so much!” Utters both Collin and Jamie in their ecstatic mood.

As they rip up their prizes in hope, they unveil the lids of their boxes, and come to find moderately sized knitted puppets on strings.

“Wooooow! THIS IS NEAT, Grandma! Thank you!”

“Let's go test them out, Collin!” Jamie joins in unmitigated joy.

As they head to the family room near the Christmas tree, their grandmother heads over to her husband, as she holds his hand, claspings a runed necklace around her neck.

“They'll truly be happy now, Gerald.”

“Yes, Ginger. Friends they can have until the end of days.”

As they play along with their newfound toys, they resemble one large one in a varsity jacket, one round one in a baseball cap and hoodie, one in a cheerleader outfit, and the other two in weird, artistic clothing.

“So remember my mortals, you either swim or sink, in the hells of E'Olh's blight. This master of his realm, Maelton T. Micer, bids you all a very, merry night.”

**The End~~**



# The Surprise Tornado Threat

By Rachel Williamson

Unlike every Monday morning, I got up checked the weather, and today's weather looked like stormy, but i thought "ehhh not at all bad." I got dressed and had a bite to eat, then we went to therapy. On the way to care center, I saw dark clouds. They kinda scared me. When I got in, one of the staff came in and said that they've issued a tornado warning for Greene County. My heart dropped and it felt like my blood turned into ice. I was speechless. I thought about my pets, I wanted my mom, they brought her in, the staff said the storm would hit at 12:30pm. We were going home. I prayed and prayed all the way home. When we got home, we waited for signs, like Duke to get upset. No signs, for a half an hour, we waited. We had to go to Walmart, then 45 minutes past after the half an hour been past, no sign, the storm dissipated completely and the sun came peaking out of the clouds. What a relief!!!~~



*By Andrew Olsavicky*





*Drawing by Paul Lechevalier*



## Five Facts about Spyro the Dragon

By: Rachel Williamson

1. His original name was Pete. History is littered with great Petes; nevertheless you got to admit that Spyro suits our charismatic hero much better.
2. He was originally supposed to be green. The idea was a bad idea because the dragon would blend in with the grass so purple would be better.
3. Spyro's glide is literally rocket science. Spyro had the unlimited ability to glide around the whole game map which was unprecedented at the time. To ensure Spyro had an authentic glide, the team hired a NASA rocket science who used his training in flight control to inspire the glide!
4. Spyro's levels are inspired by movies. Each level in Spyro was given a theme as a production team wanted them to feel different from each other but did you know they took inspiration from movies? The beast makers hub was inspired by apocalypse now; cliff town was inspired by Star Wars and numerous others paid homage to the Indiana Jones series.
5. The enemy design was ahead of its time. At the time of the original release most enemies were designed to perform simple functions however, in Spyro they were designed to specifically target the player either to damage or taunt the player, this design was in response to insomniac games desire a 3D character that interacted with its world.

## Top 10 Thanksgiving List

By Joe Cepek

1. Being physically alive.
2. Being loved by others (pets, also).
3. Giving love to others (pets, too).
4. Having shelter.
5. Having clean clothes.
6. Having good food and beverages.
7. Having clean and sanitized water.
8. Having the ability to speak in coherent words.
9. Having the ability to read and write.
10. Having the ability to feed, bathe, and dress oneself.

Bonus: Being able to walk, see, hear, taste, touch, and dream.

# Top 10 Songs

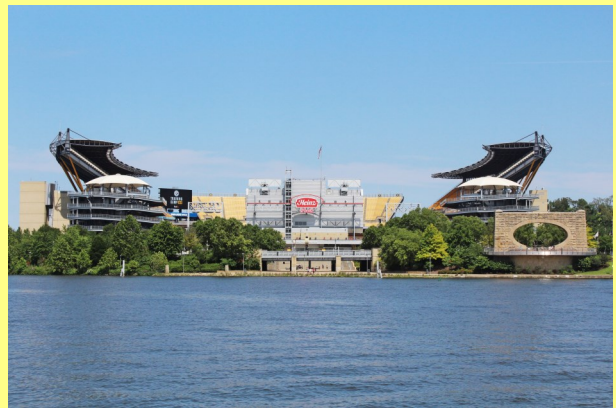
**By Michael Perret**

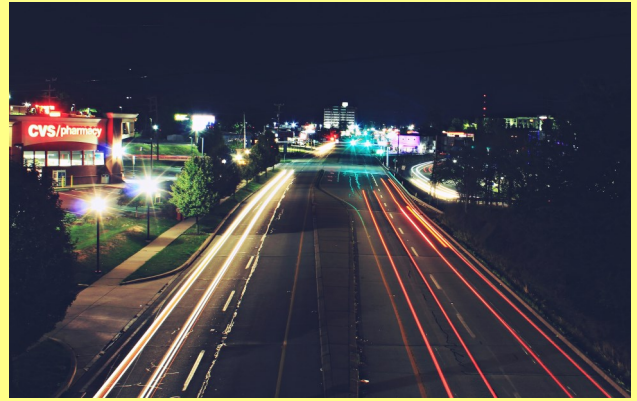
- 1.) Open Arms - Journey
- 2.) Low - Flo Rida ft. T-Pain
- 3.) International Love - Pitbull ft. Chris Brown
- 4.) Topsy - J-Kwon
- 5.) Get Low - Lil Jon & The East Side Boyz
- 6.) Air Force One - Nelly
- 7.) Amazed- Lonestar
- 8.) Eye of the Tiger - Survivor
- 9.) Please Forgive Me - Bryan Adams
- 10.) In my Head - Jason Derulo





# Robert Hester's Top 10 Photos of 2020









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## Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) currently has programs in 23 states and serves 25 major US cities as well as dozens of other urban, suburban, and rural communities. By tapping into the strengths and capabilities of the 19,000 families we serve each year, our 2,000+ YAP staff members, and the capacity of communities, YAP affects positive change.

YAP has developed unique service delivery principles that guide our work with youth and families involved in the Juvenile Justice, Child Welfare, Behavioral Health, and Education Systems. Our staff, who reside in or near the neighborhoods they serve, work non-traditional, flexible hours and are accessible 24/7. Our demonstrated ability to recruit and energize indigenous resident leaders within neighborhoods is another unique element of our success.

External evaluations of YAP confirm the validity of our approach. Our model has also been cited by several external bodies, including Annie E. Casey Foundation, as a "promising practice" in providing effective alternatives to institutional care.

Since our agency opened, YAP has experienced rapid growth. We have broadened our scope of services and increased our capacity to service more children, youth, families, and adults – including those who have not succeeded with traditional services. We continue to explore new opportunities to demonstrate our unique and effective community-based alternatives to out-of-home placements.

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**Get Involved!**

*Pittverse* is open to submissions from writers, illustrators, photographers, poets, etc., on the Autism Spectrum.

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