

Pittverse

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About Pittverse Magazine

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

Brian Kluchurosky founded *Pittverse* in 2013. It began as a newsletter written by four of the adults in Kluchurosky's pro-

gram. 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

Robert Hester earns the credit for capturing the majestic autumn foliage that is delicately drenched in golden sunshine.

Thank you to our readers for supporting our literary explorations. Please enjoy the Fall 2021 issue of *Pittverse*!

~

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Fall 2021 issue! I was pleasantly surprised by the diversity of, and amount of content for, this issue. At an astounding 80 pages, this issue is one of our most expansive endeavors ever!

As we continue to navigate the twists and turns of the current pandemic, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to all of our writers and contributors who have unfailingly made *Pittverse* into the successful publication that it has become...despite all of the changes that have occurred over the past two years.

I wish you a heartfelt *thank you* for all you do. Keep creating!

Jennifer Pizzuto

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N'dlis (Pt. 5)

By: Jordan Watson

“Listen up team! We've been given the go ahead from DC to “provide security” for our investors! We're going to go through the final transaction stage of the deal with Fūxīng Industries! Since we know they're harboring new atomic tech, we need to seize the assets, and lock 'em up in Guantanamo! To get this operation to come to a close, our mission is simple! I need you all to keep our moles secured! After Li Keqiang jots the final line on his signature, and Fong here gives the code word, “Hail the regime”, we get 'em all with their tiny peckers exposed! I'm heavily expecting the fireworks to set off with any of their own security to follow suit! Westie already took care of cracking the security protocols back in Baidu's overall kernel, as well as CyberArk's internal servers to shut down their means of communications!”

“Heeelll yeah! I made sure they couldn't flip the switch on the backups either, so that data's as good as horse feed!”

“Kane's got the comms ready for when the rest of the boys come in and seize these commie shit-stains!”

“They're itching to get their fingers ready whenever we are!”

“Dyson has the charges set whenever we're prepared to blow the whole coupe to Mars! Hilda and Xavier are going to lead the team should these clowns decide to be the one to fire the first bullets! Remember, keep up appearances until Fong gives the word! Until then, keep your bitching down low, and finger twitching at a cautious high! HOO HOO!”

“HOO HOO!”

“Alright guys, we're making contact near the General Office in t-minus 4 minutes! Get in your positions!”

I find myself near the C-5 Super Galaxy's back end, as we begin to make our landing to the Nanyuan Airport. Everyone stands up in position, getting beside Fong from both sides. Dyson stands up from next to me to give me a pat on the back.

“Let's give 'em a reason to celebrate the New Year, Hotshot!”

Positions set, guns by the right shoulder, and on alert as the back end opens with Fong up front.

The scenery abruptly changes to the interior of the General Office of the CCP. Fong goes on to finish the deal with Li Keqiang next to him, as they discuss the transition of Fūxīng and the US into three different categories. One goes to a universal currency that melds the fiat from the central banks, while the other takes the worth from the yuan, and puts it to an arbitrary rate similar to that of pennies, bringing the inflation rate up higher. Through their next phase, they give a fake sense of wealth, disguised as a form of their newest crypto market, ENEN, with the coin labeled under BUG. While we US citizens are given an even more artificial currency, they take the taxation from us hard workers, and funnel the rest to empower their Chinese Army. All while we all collectively chase lesser pennies, and starve. Makes me sick to think this was even allowed to infect the rest of us for all these years. Fong seems to go through the last of the documentations. He finishes his sentence, while we all keep our trigger fingers ready.

“I thank you gentlemen for your time, and expect a prosperous venture between the United States, and the People's Republic of China. Hail the regime.”

Our cue is up. We draw our rifles and point directly at them, while additional infantry and SEALs come from both the roofs and windows. They're surrounded, but not without some of their corrupt lackeys firing off warning shots from the windows beside the building. Not something you ever want to do with our team.

Kane fires from the windows with precision shots, downing 5 of their guys. Hilda and I inform Westie



and Julian to keep the guys around the round table hostage. Dyson and Kane watch the door behind us, while their troops start to pile on the other side, waiting for us to make our move. They slam the door in, throwing smoke bombs in to try and get us to scurry out. Amateurs. We put out own masks on, tell Westie to flip the switch on his EMP detonator, killing the power in the grid completely. We all activate our night specs. Hilda uses the butt of her gun to knock one out from her right, while I quickly use suppressed fire to neutralize the group on the left. The intimidation we cast over these guys was simple enough. If it weren't for the backup on our side, it would've made this fight 20 minutes as opposed to 2 minutes. We take the hostages by gun point, including that Keqiang rat front and center. The scene of seeing our boys keeping these bastards at bay is wonderful. 3 hours later, our team clears out with the rest of them rounded up in the C-5. Dyson gives the send off China deserves, by blowing the whole General Office, including their other hot spots, as he puts it, straight to Mars!

Upon putting them all within the plane, backup seals all the seized nuclear canisters in numerical coded containers of our own. I notice one of the captives to my right is black bagged adjacent from his five allied soldiers. Wearing a finely tailored lapel suit, outta be who I think it is. I notice he jerks and twitches strangely, making me hesitant to even unveil it only for an instant. Hilda comes to my side in a cheerful manner.

"They wanted us to keep it tight lipped until we got on board, but we managed to get *him* as well. Say goodbye to communism forever, dear. We won for good."

Him? Wait....*The* guy? I then turn my gaze towards him, I hear a baby's cry somewhere in the distance, getting closer as I slowly go to unveil the bag..

RAAAAAAAAAAAAA-

I'm jarred awake from the nightmare. Completely shaking and covered in my own sweat. I reach over to check on the alarm next to me. 0425?! It's been that long too?! I've been asleep for three days?! Doesn't matter now. Have to get myself up and be ready to head out of the city for good. I feel the need to cough after getting up so suddenly. Thanks to the ingenuity of the nuclear battery, the encampment has complete access to its electrical grid again. I use this time to hit the showers, and get myself what's left of the food in me before readying my venture outside. I start coughing again. But this time, a bit more harshly. Did I catch something when I was trying to hunt three days ago? Couldn't have been the water from the filtrated bottle either. It's designed to take those chemicals out. No time to dwell on it.

Day 121. 0532. I'm getting the energy from the nuke battery converted to the Humvee in the lot next to the encampment. It's about 90% full so far. Gonna try and wait while it's fully charged before getting the garage doors open up top. Probably will take the time to survey outside the tunnel to see if there's any activity from some of those creeps. I'm barely halfway to the vacant point of the pipelines leading back out the tunnel towards the tunnel outside when the wind's knocked out of me. I begin to cough more profusely. Suddenly starting to feel nauseous, as I lean to my left side on the wall leading out the pathway back outside under some of the leaking drainage pipes. My legs are locked. Something's *definitely* off. I try the old bulimia trick to see if that does the trick. I try to vomit, but nothing comes out. I just end up coughing even further from my shit gag reflex. More so, I'm beginning to cough blood. Dammit. Did I get a bad bottle? Do I have cancer?

I begin to slide down to the floor. My body JERKS back on its own to the wall beside me. I then feel utter, *stabbing* pains in my intestines! The lower half of my abdomen thrusts outward, in numerous arhythmic spasms! I'm being *dragged* back and forth on the floor. I clutch to the ground! The coughing gets worse. I pull my uniform up to look at my bare stomach. *Something* is moving inside me, where my small intestinal track would be. I pinch and grip tightly at that portion! I can already feel it trying to wriggle back upwards. I immediately grab my old man's knife from the front of my uniform. I unsheathe it, take some deep breaths, and jab it directly into the skin! I dig within my innards, puncture the intestinal lining, and let it bleed out. The blood spews like a ruptured dam. The pain lingers. From the corner of my eye, I see that the blood on the floor...begins to move....~~

Laugh More, Perseverate Less

By: Renee Skudra

It occurs to me that I have never in my life needed to laugh more. With at least five national crises currently going on – the Covid-19 pandemic, the military withdrawal and its complications from Iran, the fall-out from Hurricane Ida, the effort by Texas to invalidate Roe v. Wade, the forest fires raging everywhere in my native California – the idea of laughing has been something I probably haven't considered. Since February, 2020 when the world suddenly seemed turned upside on its unprepared head, as a deadly virus raged globally with unremitting fury. I can remember, however, when five years ago I laughed a lot. My son (a born-again Civil War historian) applied to graduate school in North Carolina so he could study in an area where there were battlefields, archives, museums and descendants of those who had connections with that conflict. The idea of moving to the South – a land of epic weather – tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and a heat index in the triple digits – tickled my funny bone while friends reminded me that even so, the South was reverently notable for many things: Elvis, Dolly Parton, pimento cheese, grits and deviled eggs, gas station-fried chicken, slow-talking drawls replete with a wealth of unfathomable words, and the production of blues and jazz. I laughed about all of this that summer of 2016, even though a grueling three-day 3,000 mile drive to Greensboro where we arrived at 3:15 a.m. in pouring rain, 90-plus heat and thunder and lightning crashing all about us. Those were the days when laughter came easily, the pre-pandemic times where amusement came quick like a pop-up storm in an early autumn.

This week I made a new resolution, waist-deep in the gloom and doom commentaries of CNN and Spectrum News – to laugh several times every day – no matter what. An old Dr. Seuss book I had kept from my son's toddler days appeared miraculously in a forgotten box I was going through. As I thumbed through it, awash in fond memories of remembered readings of it to my child, I came upon these words: "From there to here, from here to there, funny things are everywhere." I burst out laughing – all I had to do was think about things that had happened in the preceding week – two broken bathroom sinks which had decided to no longer drain and the visit by the plumber who said "we'll take care of this right now." The very next day the sinks were at it again, clearly unimpressed by the handyman's efforts. This time the non-draining water had a brackish cast and had several fuzzy black forms floating in their pools. A Joanie Mitchell CD I had ordered from Walmart turned out instead to be one featuring music from the 40's and a pint of Whole Foods chocolate chip ice cream had absolutely no chips in it at all! My Bichon Frise, Jackson, descended upon the Duke energy bill like a small canine whirling dervish and tore it to shreds, clearly misdirected prey instinct – and to be honest, an action I had sometimes contemplated myself.

There were other funny things that happened, whose truth I recognized even in my most bleak and grim moments – a phone call from a 65-year-old ex who bemoaned the fact that we had never had a baby together and wondered whether there might still be time to parent a child even though he said "the world is disintegrating." A dearly beloved evangelical friend came by to tell me "the end of days is happening, just like it predicted in the Bible". I felt like laughing but I wasn't altogether sure she and/or the Bible didn't have that right. The right-side passenger door suddenly did a "I'm not opening anymore" and a dozen eggs I grabbed at the supermarket fell from my grip and made an impressive splash on the floor. A customer walked by and said "you just dropped some eggs" while another one ran around screaming "watch out so you don't slip and fall." As I stood there, close to tears, the store manager ran over and took decisive control, throwing a quip at me "better a broken egg than a broken heart."

When I got home from the Trader Joe's, I thought about how the world might be sending me a message for a necessary attitude-adjustment. The Mayo Clinic website was up on my computer screen and I sat down and wrote the words "benefits of laughter" in the search bar. The script was admittedly illuminating and posited that laughter has both short-term and long-term benefits. The short-term benefits were described as including the activation and relief of an individual's stress response as well as the stimulation of one's heart, lungs and muscles. Endorphins which are released by your brain were increased. Long-term effects included the improvement of the immune system, mood and increase of personal satisfaction and, significantly, the substantive relief of pain. Reading about laughter was already putting me in a better mood! I then went on GOOGLE, typing in "quotes about laughter". Moments later I was caught in paroxysms of it, especially by a quote of the esteemed thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson who averred "I dream of a better tomorrow, where chickens can cross the road and not be questioned about their motives."

A comic named Chevy Chase ruminated about laughter as well. "Laughter kills lonesome. It's one of the great things in our lives." The truth is that since this terrible pandemic has been with us, I have felt insuperably alone, cut off by necessity from the social gatherings I had become accustomed to, from friends whose presence comforts me. Each day a new cascade of information about this scourge has catapulted me into a heavy depression, which nothing seems to obviate. My doctors have prescribed anti-anxiety medication and extensive psychotherapy and stern orders not to read the daily papers or watch the evening news. In the midst of cleaning out the brush in the backyard, I have an epiphany: no one has prescribed the idea of laughing and making it a part of life, despite the fact of a world which seems to be in its entirety falling off a precipice and devastating its human and animal populations.

As I walk through my garden, I alight upon a large gold-colored bug, indeterminate in type, on its back, struggling to turn over. I have a funny thought momentarily, that this insect is having a similar predicament to myself – overwhelmed and unable to right its own particular ship of state. I take a nearby leaf, now burnished orange with fall color, and gently reverse his position. A friend who is visiting says "are you going to kill that bug or what?" I shake my head and say quietly, "it has a right to its life, just like you and me." My companion laughs although in this instance I do not. I feel completely sure that what I have said is true although I understand it may produce mirth in others.

In the past few days, I have renewed the making of last week's resolution: to laugh as often as possible and if necessary, to find stories and movies and conduct that will trigger that response. Will I be successful in such an effort? I will laugh in the face of adversity and a mountain of steadily increasing bills. Last night I read a quote somewhere whose wisdom was mighty: "A river cuts through a rock not because of its power, but because of its persistence." Each day there are the challenges of inhabiting this still unfettered and advancing pandemic world but I will bring to that fight my new instrument of daily laughter. I marvel at the grace and kindness of strangers and pray for a return to normalcy. In the meantime I plan to watch "My Cousin Vinny" this evening, one of the funniest movies ever made, and know that it will make me howl with laughter, even if nothing at all out there is right. ~~

Upcoming Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties Slumber Parties

By: Amelia Krzton

The year of 2021 is going by rather quickly, and that means that more slumber parties are in the works! On September 18, Shady Side Academy sophomore Hannah Mifflin hosted a Sugar Rush Sleepover, which is obviously candy-themed. The games and activities included the Biggest Bubble Contest, M&M Mouth, a Candy Scavenger Hunt Relay Race, a Candybar Race, Jelly Bean Mountain, and making candy jewelry. Of course, it's not a Sugar Rush Sleepover without all kinds of tasty treats, and these included a Sundae Bar, Cupcake Station, and S'mores. On October 23, Shady Side Academy junior Lindsay Hutchison hosted a Fear Factor Fun Sleepover, which features all sorts of gross-out games and activities and even gross-out treats to eat. On November 20, Penn Hills Senior High School 12th grader Shannon Kearns hosted a Glow-in-the-Dark Sleepover. On December 18, the previously mentioned 2020 University of Pittsburgh graduate Brooke Leesaw will be hosting an All About Me Sleepover. Only time will tell if we get this internship again in 2022! I would also like to discuss the Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties slumber parties that were hosted over the summer months. Seventh grader Lauren Bennett hosted the Food Fest Sleepover on June 19 at her house in Cheswick featuring all sorts of delicious food, games, and activities. Community College of Allegheny County Boyce Campus senior Rebecca Chase hosted the Totally '80s Sleepover on July 24 at her house in Springdale featuring a trip back in time to the 1980s decade. Shady Side Academy 10th grader Madison Dayley hosted the Hollywood Glitz and Glam Sleepover on August 22 at her house in Springdale featuring all sorts of games and activities dealing with the glamour and glitz of living the celebrity life. On random pop-up days and Saturdays when we weren't performing shifts, we did all sorts of activities like attending the annual Three Rivers Arts Festival in June, having our normal weekly Game Day outside at Schenley Plaza in Oakland, and even a photoshoot in Hartwood Acres Park near the Ross Township office. ~~

JIM JEFFERSON: A WASHINGTON COUNTY MEDIA ICON

Story by Robert Hester

Think about this for a moment. You're someone like me, a kid who is a fan of the sport of harness racing on a warm early summer night at home in Braddock, Pennsylvania, watching cable television during the late 1980's and the early 1990's. And then used the remote control to press the number 32 on your parents' Scientific Atlanta cable box to turn on the Meadows Racing Network on American Cablevision. And there, you get welcomed to an exciting night of live harness racing from the Meadows Racetrack, Casino and Hotel—before it became a racetrack, casino and hotel—in Meadow Lands, PA by MRN in-studio hosts; the legendary harness racing announcer Roger Huston, and race analyst/color commentator Jerry Erenstein. Your summer night was made, as was mine! And if you wanted to know what it was like to be the track, without actually being at the track, your summer night was really made when you looked no further than the MRN's trackside reporter, Jim Jefferson.



For Jefferson, trackside announcing at The Meadows was just his night job. His day job was as a news director for WJPA Radio (95.3 FM, 1450 AM, and wjpa.com) in Washington, PA., a position that he served for 35 years. Jim's voice was, according to a statement from WJPA Radio in an obituary celebrating his life and career in the Washington County (PA) Observer-Reporter, a "...steady voice [that bridged WJPA Radio] listeners and community leaders, elected officials and the news of the day." Jim's path to becoming a media icon in Washington County started as a student at Point Park College—now Point Park University. Point Park is a school in Downtown Pittsburgh that has alumni with familiar faces, and voices in Pittsburgh journalism; voices and faces such as Kelly Sasso of Elena LaQuatra of WTAE-TV, Nicole Paxinos of the Pittsburgh Penguins' PENS-TV, Bob Pompeani of KDKA-TV, and his daughter Celina Pompeani, also of KDKA-TV, the host of the Penguins' PENS-TV, and the new face of the Pittsburgh-Based Armina Stone Countertop Store.

After he became a graduate of Point Park in 1974, Jim would join start his career as a member of the staff of WJPA Radio. He started out at the station as a disc jockey, but he swiftly moved into a role that would be his main role at the station until his retirement in 2017. Anchoring the weekday morning news in his steady, unerring voice. Jefferson's talented vocal skills he as to his role of being an anchor for the weekday morning news would not only help lead to him a much bigger role on radio as WJPA's longtime news director, but a role on television as one of the original hosts of, as previously mentioned, his night job at the Meadows Racing Network at the Meadows Racetrack and Casino. From the mid 1980's until the late 1990's, Jim served as the MRN's trackside reporter. And whether they were based at the Meadows, or other tracks in Harness Racing; he interviewed countless Harness Racing trainers, drivers, and owners, and occasionally, he even snagged a trackside interview at the Meadows with a VIP/celebrity, or two. "[Jim] had that uncanny ability to make you feel comfortable when he interviewed you," said in an interview with the Washington Observer-Reporter by legendary Meadows track announcer Roger Huston, who retired in late 2019, "Like he'd known you his whole life."

After he retired from WJPA in 2017, Jim lived a leisurely lifestyle in Washington County with his wife Debbie, along with their dog and cat, and two horses. When he was asked to look back on his career as a morning news anchor and news director at WJPA in an interview he had with the Observer-Reporter, he jokingly said, “I’ve been getting up at 2 o’clock in morning for 35 or years, [and] that’s enough!” In all seriousness, Jim, in the same interview, “treasured” his relationships with his WJPA radio colleagues, as well as the interactions he made through the interviews he gave—and the stories that went with them—with police officers,



judges, district attorneys, and other elected political officials; and all newsmakers throughout Washington County. He also developed great relationships with other TV, radio and online news sources throughout Washington County, and all of Western PA. Most of all, Jim was “proud” of his on-air, and even both on-air, and off-air relationships he made with his WJPA listeners throughout Western PA, and beyond. Through his radio job at WJPA, and his TV job at The Meadows, you could say that even if “It may just be the weather,” Jim always had a positive knack for, as he put it, “...helping people, [and] letting them know what’s happening” in Washington County.

Sadly, on the morning of December 11, 2020, Jim Jefferson died at 68-years-young. On the day that he passed, and the days that followed after his passing, Jim’s life and career was remembered and celebrated by the many people he interacted with throughout Western PA, mainly, Washington County. Whether they were mayors, commissioners, judges, chiefs of police, harness racing owners, drivers, and trainers, and other co-workers, colleagues and friends. As one of his friends and colleagues best described him as a radio reporter, “In the world of radio, he was Baskin-Robbins vanilla. He did the news straight down the line.” Washington County Commissioner Chair Diana Irey Vaughan said this about Jim in the Observer-Reporter after his passing, “Jim was the best in what the media had to offer.” And in the same tribute in the same paper, Washington Wild Things Vice President Chris Blaine, who worked with Jim at the Meadows, celebrated Jim with these words, “I never saw him upset or in a bad mood. He was personable, pleasant, [and] easy to work with in every situation.”

Even more sadly, this reporter never met Jim in-person, but on the day that he died, I tweeted on my Twitter @hestertainment, that I got to know Jim by watching his trackside reports as the Meadows. And after I tweeted my tribute to Jim, I got a loving response tweet from Jeff Zidek, the track announcer at the Meadows Racetrack, Casino and Hotel who knew Jim as



a colleague of his as part of the original hosts of the Meadows Racing Network. Jeff, who, has been at the Meadows since 1987, tweeted from his Twitter @Meadows_TV, “Jim was a class act, all the way.” Knowing him from my days watching him on the Meadows Racing Network as a kid from Brad-dock, PA., I, along with all of Wash-ington County, and all of Western PA can’t agree with Jeff more. As a Wash-ington County media icon, he WAS a class act. And with that said, this must be said to one last time. Jim, Rest in peaceful class.~~

Common Traits of Autism

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

From the kidhealth.ca website, I am going to explore some of the autism spectrum disorders in kids. Few of these disorders are the need for sameness, overreacting to the five senses, and the unusual emotion reactions and expressions. Also, kids or adults with autism have difficulty adjusting to rapid changes in our society. I will give the reader clear examples on how these disorders affect my everyday life.

The need for sameness is the most common trait of autism that affects my every day. Before I leave the house in the morning, every chore must be done in the apartment in a sequence order. For an example, the dishes in the sink must be washed and clean. I must pick up all the clothes off the floor and put them into the laundry basket. When I often see large amounts of clutter on the floor, I would put them away quickly into the waste basket. Because everything must be done all at once, I often suffer anxiety and dizziness.

Another common trait of autism is the over-stimulating of the five of five senses. When I am hearing a the sound of a fire truck or police car sound making a loud roaring sound, I would of imitate the roaring sound of the police car.

When I am walking into Wal-Mart, I would likely get over-stimulated by the bright lights and the large amount of space in the store. When I leave a large store, I often feel very light headed and dizzy. When I get home, the contrast of going to a light place to a darker place causes me to suffer a migraine. Restaurant lighting often affects my sense of sight, touch, and processing skills. Dim restaurants often have circle lighting on the ceiling which makes it hard for me to sit at a table with other friends.

The third common trait of autism are reactions and expressions to common events. When I am watching my favorite television program, I would likely play the fight scene at the Introduction of the Bat Man Show. When the show introduces the characters at beginning of the show, I would likely repeat their real names and characters. When I am hearing the *Monday Night Football* theme song before the big game, I will get up off the chair quickly and physically express myself as a linebacker or defensemen ready to smash the opposition.

I have a very difficult, tough, and troublesome time adjusting to changes in structure in my life. During the Covid-19 epidemic, I was deeply affected by all the radical changes in my life. Some of adjustments were wearing masks, temperature checks, and watching no fans at sporting events. Switching from physical setting to zoom meetings was painful for me. The new environment has caused me to feel depressed and very anxious during the Covid-19 epidemic. When I am watching the national news on television about the virus, it often affected my sleep.

In summary, routine, five senses, and imitating are the essential elements of autism. Unless life is structured like a notebook, I feel very anxious. According to the Mayo clinic in Minneapolis, MN, there is no cure for this disorder. However, many parents want their kids to become normal when he or she is growing up. Because the child is unable to grow out of autism, he or she often feels frustrated often. ~~

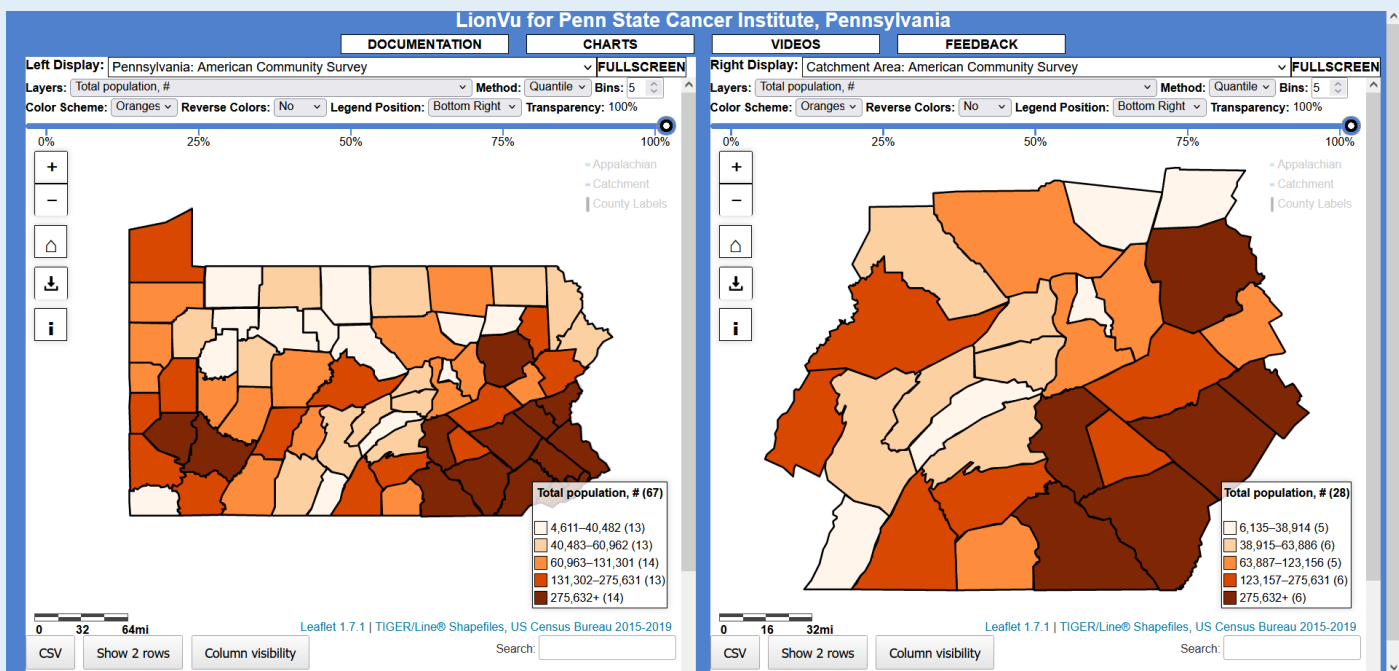
LionVu an Autistic Prospective

By: Nathaniel Geyer

When I was younger my obsession was studying paper maps and navigating my parents when driving. After I got diagnosed with autism, my family wanted me to explore other options, hence my 20-year education after high school. Now after 20 years after high school I have a Doctor of Public Health, Masters in Geographical Information Systems (MGIS), Master of Clinical Research, and Bachelor of Biology. Today, I have found a niche for my obsession with geography in the form of creating a web mapping tool for public health researchers in Pennsylvania, known as LionVu.

LionVu was originally created for internal use for helping cancer researchers find areas of need, The system became out-of-date and was hard to maintain, since it was on a different server. When I got involved, I worked using an in-house server, used more recent publicly available datasets, and figured out a way to update the web site with minimal disruption. As a result, I am now at my fourth revision, since starting with this with my MGIS Capstone project, which was a usability assessment. Even after the fourth revision, I am still fine tuning the website and sometimes I do not know when to stop. Thank goodness I still get feedback from others to keep me focused. Although I am doing most of the web programming, LionVu is still a collaborative effort, and I am glad that I can still incorporate feedback on how to improve the website.

From the perspective of being an Autistic web programmer, I find the work to be very monotone and boring, so I would not continue to do it as a daily basics. However, if I have time after completing my other duties, than I would like to continue programming. My problem is that whenever I do something, I block other things out, so other find that the files I store on the server may not be up to date, leading to frustrations by others, so I have learned to stop programming a day before the files get more to a different server. Despite these issues, the changes that I make to LionVu have been commendable by anybody who uses the website. For example, I have participated in the Online World Congress of Epidemiology Conference and have published in peer-reviewed journal, which has been written up by my employer's newsletter. For somebody who is Autistic, I welcome the praise of my contributions to LionVu's success, but I know that it is short-lived. I am privileged that in my adult life my childhood obsession is part of my career.~~



Battling Neurotic Mind Desires

By: Joseph Cepek

Please let me be blunt, I cannot ever read everything which I see and hear about on a daily basis. There is simply not enough time. I know I should not feel guilty due to my inability to read all things which daily come into my view. It is unnecessary and morally wrong-headed all the way around for me to condemn myself because I cannot get around to reading all that I see or hear about. This includes anything about dogs, cats, the Holy Bible, blue jeans, and American history. Rereading printed nutrition fact data on pet dog food boxes, people food packages, toothpaste tubes, paper napkin containers, plastic dishwashing liquid soap bottles, et cetera., everyday is unnecessary. It is furthermore bizarre and foolish for me to feel abnormally guilty for not giving in to the neurotic mental compulsion to do the self-created ritual actions mentioned above. This is a clear illustration of the potentially horrible nature of having an obsessive-compulsive brain disorder of which I have been at war with since childhood.

This includes impossible self-imposed demands relating to the watching and careful listening of audiovisual materials of any known subject in addition to the reading ones just before-mentioned.

The truth is that I can read only a small amount of material at a time. This is because my concentration is limited due to largely unavoidable audible and visual distractions in my environment. Additionally, my brain can absorb a selected amount of data. If, for example, I see 4,000 words, I probably would remember about 10 or less words. The more I would read the less I would be able to remember. Yet, if I read 400 words, I might remember up to 40 words. I have discovered that my brain can recall more information if I read less than 1,000 words a day compared to 4,000 or more.

When an overload of audible and/or visual stimulation surrounds me, I may see printed words such as on a milk carton or a bread loaf bag, but I have tremendous difficulty in understanding what I am reading. It is as if I am looking at all German words instead of contemporary American English ones. I have to leave such an area, if possible. If I cannot do so, such as in a paid job site, it is imperative that I resist the enticing lure to closely read while on the time clock. Noisy environments, as is true for most people, are no places for me to successfully comprehend what I am reading.

In less noisy locations, I attempt to slowly read out loud one word after another. I even try this helpful activity while speaking into a digital voice recorder which is installed inside of a previously-used LG (Life's Good) device. I play back the audio recording after I am finished with the reading message. In this way, I can better absorb the focused topic in a more efficient manner.

However, as good as this neat strategy is, I can easily be triggered into doing an excessive amount of voice recordings. Afterwards, if I do not get around to doing any on any given day, then troubling guilty feelings begin torturing me. At this stated point, the voice recordings, if performed by me, let us say, for one whole week or longer, are certainly able to create another obsessive-compulsive and self-constructed prison for myself to laboriously dig out of. Moderation is the key emphasis for me to correctly approach this overall constructive endeavor. If I make 1,000 voice recordings, for instance, I would not have enough time to listen to all of them due my busy lifestyle on a day-to-day basis. In addition, I will not be able to earn a diploma, a certificate, or a degree from any existing accredited institution of postsecondary education if I would do an untold amount of voice dictation projects. This is because it is impossible to accomplish this desired reward as a result of reading (in a narrative format) copyrighted material from others. There are numerous laws which enforce this said protection right for any published forms of written literature. Furthermore, accredited schools have established syllabuses which each student has to follow.

This personal observation has occurred in a daily trial and error reading experiments which I have conducted everyday for a few years up until now. I continue to perform such experiments. This also applies to listening to audio books. The more I listen to the narrator(s) on any audio recording the less I can remember a few hours later. I am correctly assuming this brain retention of previously-read and listened-to material is fairly common among most people. As a further explanation, if I read one fairly long (500 words or more) article from a magazine or a section of a book, I would cognitively comprehend only a small amount of what was written.

Thankfully, with the great advice of my clinical psychologist, I practice Exposure-Response and Prevention (ERP) therapy by standing and/or sitting near a reading source such as a cookie box without reading it for up to 10 minutes. If I feel uncomfortable due to unneeded guilt, I need to ignore the guilty feelings as best as I can do so. I need to allow the unwanted guilty thoughts to come into my consciousness similar to ocean waves coming

into a beach shoreline. Afterwards, I must permit these unhealthy ruminations to gradually lay themselves out until they no longer cause me any immobilizing false guilt concerning me not giving into my compulsive tendencies to read material which I do not have time to do so at a certain moment of any given day due to me getting other more important tasks done such as eating meals at a reasonable time, taking prescribed medications on schedule, preparing for adult autism waiver community sessions, arriving at a paid worksite in a timely manner, and going to an outpatient medical appointment at the scheduled start time. If I am successful in not caving into my disordered mind-set's sneaky ploy of sending me unfounded guilt feelings, then the irrational guilt thoughts will slowly but surely go away as is similar to ocean waves going back out into the main body of ocean water. This is my constant goal in dealing with this tough warfare against unreasonable obsessive-compulsive motivations emanating from my brain.

As another positive consequence, this also would demonstrate my personal mastery over a chronic obsessive-compulsive mental illness. I could say that I have control over my mind's disordered thinking process and not the other way around. I must declare that I struggle every moment of my waking hours with these weird and troublesome reading and other media material-relating compulsion drives. I need to focus on limiting what I can read, watch, and/or listen to everyday without compromising with my faulty thoughts of being forced to read, watch, and/or listen to material against my free will.

Nobody is directly telling me to read, watch, and/or listen to an excessive amount of audiovisual and written information. All of these crazy urges are self-imposed in myself. However, I believe I can win the internal civil war between my rational thinking and the disordered thought signals resulting from my obsessive-compulsive anxiety disorder. Through prayer, practicing ERP skills, and tuning out stupid guilt thoughts and feelings as a result of me refusing to concede to my brain's skewed thought process demands, I will become better in defeating the tormenting scourge of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as in regards to impossible-to-achieve reading, film viewing, and listening urges.

The brain in my skull wrongly tells me if I read, watch, and/or listen to enough published literature and audiovisual materials, I can help cure or fully prevent any current or future mental, physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual problems with my immediate family members (including myself) and our beloved dog companion. The disordered side of my brain also repeatedly lies to me by saying that I can prevent any of them (as well as myself) from dying if I read, watch, and listen to enough print and audiovisual materials. In reality, I cannot ever read, watch, and listen to enough data in the form of magazines, movies, television show episodes, books, audio books, signs, brochures, online web pages, and any other existing forms of written, spoken, and filmed information in order to prevent physical death from ever visiting any of my immediate family members or anyone else in the world. In this particular sense, this insane pursuit is a complete exercise in futility. 6,000 years from now (in 8021), will it matter how much material I read, watched, and listened to if I never learned to be a compassionate and loving person? Certainly not! Once again, if I have a degree or a certification title after my name of some sort while having read, watched, and carefully listened to numerous printed literature offerings, will it matter to my Creator 6,000 years from now? No, not at all! He is more interested in how I treated myself and others around me. I believe that He is not the least bit interested in what certificates, diplomas, or degrees which I may or may not have earned, but in how I used the essential resources such as money, time, critical thinking and reasoning skills, et cetera., which He gave me to share with others such as empathy, kindness, generosity, and patience with my fellow humans and innocent animals in my daily surroundings.

Yes, it is nice to have professional titles and good job positions, but the before-mentioned things like empathy, kindness, generosity, patience, compassion, loyalty, trust, and honesty are far more important in His eyes. After all, titles and jobs are only temporary, yet the positive attributes mentioned here have far-reaching value that I believe have eternal consequences of goodness. I wrote this largely autobiographical commentary in order to allow others to be more aware of how rigorously challenging it certainly is to live with OCD and all of the detailed struggles which I battle against with each passing day. Whoever reads this message may very well suffer from the psychological pain as a result of this aggravating anxiety brain disorder or may know of someone who does struggle with similar problems as I do. I just want to say that there are many people who share and understand the frustration of living with a troubling brain condition like OCD every day.

I do not ever want to give up hope even though it is very tempting to give up in the daunting face of an internal mental bully such as potentially overwhelming urges (in the form of unwanted thoughts) of which result because of the mental health scourge of OCD. I want to let others know that they do not have to give up on life either. With hope, things can get better.~~

A Loving Tribute to my Dad

By: Maggie K. Jones

Dad,

My dad is someone you can help you out with any problem. Math problems, history, he knows a lot about World War II when it came to homework from school when we were young, he would help us. If someone needed a helping hand he was there. He was that kind of dad that cares.

When he got older, he got really depressed with what he dealt with in the past when he was growing up. And he had it a lot harder than me or Stephanie, my sister. He loved to tease me and try to make me laugh a lot.

Dad, I just want you to know I love you and accept you for who you are. We all make mistakes in our lives. I care about you and I believe you took the time to care about me and Stephanie. You truly believed that right is right and wrong is wrong. I know how frustrated you get when I try telling you to try understanding me, but now I know you understand me in all I do for you and mom and Stephanie and our pet dogs, Moose and Suri. You did give your all and your love into your work. I accept changing my ways of thinking about you. I know deep down inside, you love me, we get our days, but I will try harder to understand you. And I want to thank you for most importantly, being my dad and helping me see I'm not the only one in the house.

You taught me responsibility and hard work, you gave me chances to change who I once was and I will never let you down on that. I am a young woman now. And how I got there was with some of Mom's help but you helped me the most to see who I need to be. And I am now caring, kind, thoughtful, respectful, and will take one day at a time now on because of you.

I grew to understand things better because of my dad always talking to me about why it's so important to treat others the way you want to be treated. He has a kind personality that is generous. He understands me like a book. He also takes the time to help me understand what he says.

I think he is someone I can't live without, he's my dad. He is the picture-perfect dad that loves me no matter what. Dad, after all these years I feel loved still because I have a mom and a dad and a sister that truly care about me and my wellbeing. I just wanted you to know and the world to know I love you, even if you say "just do it for the heck of it, Maggie."

Geologists Rock

By: Zach Grabowski

I had the pleasure of interviewing Geologist Kaitlin Evans. She works for a company called “Cabot Oil and Gas.” She explained that a geologist is someone who studies the physical components of the Earth - not necessarily plant life, but rocks and how water shapes them.

Kaitlin’s interest in geology started at a young age. She was interested in paleontology and the study of life before humans roamed the Earth. Dinosaurs were and still are her favorite. She would look at rocks and see their different shapes and colors and wanted to understand what made them into those shapes and colors. When Kaitlin was a kid, her favorite rock type was fossils. She has found some small fossils.

Kaitlin’s job essentially is to determine how rocks can break. She explained that rocks are made up of minerals, and when she identifies a rock by its mineral, she can better determine the behavior of the rock and how it will break. When stress is applied to a rock, it breaks after so much pressure. Her job is to determine how the rock will act when the pressure is put on it.

When I asked Kaitlin to explain what procedure she follows to collect and analyze mineral samples, she explained that there are different tests that you can do to identify the minerals. You can identify them by their color, weight, hardness, and their crystal shape. For example, a diamond is very hard, but chalk is very soft.

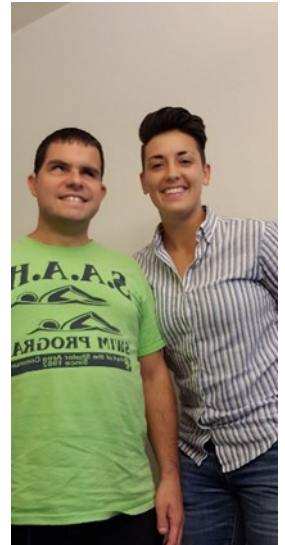
Kaitlin’s favorite type of rock to study is shale. It is very complex and there’s a lot to learn about it when you get into the microscopic levels. Shale has a lot of layers and the rock type within it is different. There can be fractures and it can break any number of ways. Some Shale formation has natural gas within it. Kaitlin shared that her most fascinating part of her job is researching the Earth’s sub-surface. She takes tests or readings of rocks that can be miles deep beneath the surface of the Earth and connects them to piece together what it looks like beneath our feet.

Kaitlin’s greatest accomplishment was completing her Masters’ thesis. She had to gather information, analyze data, and had to come up with a way that would improve the drilling of a well. She reported that it is more complicated than that, but she was able to come up with a better way to “complete a well.”

I asked Kaitlin how climate change affects her work. She told me that with global warming there is a push towards renewable energy. Right now, the world is primarily running on oil and gas. She suspects that eventually the world will run on solar and wind energy. When this happens, she said that she would probably have to look for a different job.

I asked Kaitlin if she could go any place in the world to study rocks, where would she go? She said she likes to go places where rocks are visible – mountainous type places. One place she hopes to visit is New Zealand and check out the rocks there.

One thing Kaitlin does not like about her job is that if she tells people she works in oil and gas, there is sometimes controversy. Burning fossil fuels can be very controversial. This perception may lead to some people to judge her career choice. Even though her job can be contentious, she enjoys her job and hopes to remain there for the foreseeable future. If oil and gas jobs decrease, she may move to another field of geology. If you want to learn more about her company, check out www.cabotog.com.~~



Autism Isn't Bad

By: Ryan Jones

I have a diagnosis of Autism and for the longest time, I thought having Autism was the worst thing in the world. Since I was diagnosed, I took up new hobbies. For example: I love doing research, especially on topics I don't know much about and I love helping others. I have done tons of research on Autism (signs, symptoms, meltdowns, connected diagnosis, coping with meltdowns, resources to help, etc).

In the first few years of being diagnosed with Autism, nothing made sense. I didn't understand what made me so different. I didn't understand why I was unable to have normal conversations without having a panic attack. Autism was not explained to me in a way that was not offensive.

My mother saw multiple differences between my brother and I. I was late with my walking and talking. I rarely wanted to be social or around anyone. I had special interests that would normally be considered as babyish. Even my mother's pregnancy was different from when she had my brother.

As I grew older, I thought life would be easier to handle. I was wrong. It seemed like no matter what I tried, my best was never enough. To this day, I still have trouble finding a way to fit in. Most of the time, I isolate and listen to music. I don't like verbal conversations. I would much rather have visual conversations, so I can understand easier.

Most people only see how I act, not reality. Even though I am more independent than most, I still need help but half of the time I won't say anything. I currently stay in a small, and stressful situation where I have staff around to help me plus a housemate. I have been having more of a hard time attempting to get along with staff than the housemate. That's a really bad sign.

My life has definitely become much more difficult since finding out that I have Autism. I'm not always verbal and it's hard to get anything done, especially when communication is not as independent as the skills I have. The staff I have think that not being able to communicate or understand anything verbal is an attention seeking behavior. I have tried to tell others that not being able to do certain tasks is not a behavior at all.

Not being able to communicate is not a choice. I can understand visual communication, tone, read lips sometimes, and music beats. I have a communication iPad, but when I use my AAC apps, nobody listens. In my current situation, nobody even pays acknowledges my existence. I'm not perfect nor do I try to be, but despite how I function, I am still human.

In conclusion, having Autism is not a bad thing. Humans in today's society is a bad thing. I'm not being negative, just real. I may have Autism, but I am still human. I may be a 33, almost 34-year-old adult, but inside I feel like a toddler. Yes, having something like Autism is harder than others would realize, but having Autism doesn't mean I am not human.

Respect goes a long way and could save someone's life. Respect isn't only the words said or the actions done. Respect is smiling at a stranger, asking a store cashier how they are doing, or even going to the nearest park to pick up trash. Having Autism made me realize how disrespect affects one's life, or mood.~~

Arena

By: David Pearlman

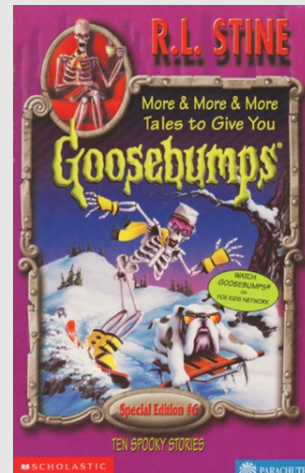
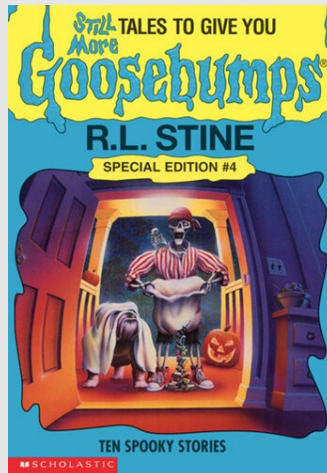
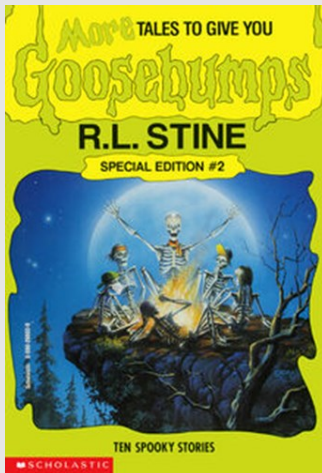
Ever since I was a kid I love going to sporting events in the city of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. One of my favorite things to do was go to the civic arena, watch the Penguins see concerts the Harlem globetrotters, and the occasional magic show. What people many not know there was a anniversary of the arena being torn down. It happened on September 26, 2000 and it was located in downtown Pittsburgh I. It was home to the Pittsburgh Penguins from 1967 to 2010, it was built for the Civic light Opera and it was thought of by Edgar J Kaufmann. It was the first arena to have a retractable roof in the world covering 170,000 square feet with nearly 3,000 tons of Pittsburgh Steel and supported by a long cantilevered arm on the exterior. It was designed as a retractable roof dome the cost and repairs stop that activity as a result the roof was closed after 2001. The arena does have an nice history; it hosted concerts, hockey, basketball, fish tournament weigh ins, progenies, boxing, wrestling, lacrosse and in 1995 Sudden death was film there. So a replacement the PPG paints arena was built right across the street with a larger seating.

In the conclusion the civic arena had a great run even though it cause some problems for some people. The city of Pittsburgh was able to keep the Penguins and they will stay here for a very long time.~~

Jake's Top 10: Tales to Give You Goosebumps: #2, #4 and #6

By: Jake Ziesche

- 10 Suckers! – A trio of kids runs afoul of a strange creature.
- 9 Dr. Horror's House of Video – A horror movie fanatic finds a movie shop where the scares are a little too real.
- 8 The Spirit of the Harvest Moon – A family visits a resort haunted by a ghost that cannot be let inside.
- 7 The Double-Dip Horror – A pair of twin sisters face trouble at a ski lodge.
- 6 The Goblin's Glare – A boy makes a Halloween decoration that comes alive.
- 5 The Ice Vampire – After an ice sculpture contest, two boys are pursued by one of the entries.
- 4 Bats About Bats - A pair of best friends meet a girl who loves bats.
- 3 Why I Hate Jack Frost – During his first Christmas in Arizona, a boy dreams of Jack Frost.
- 2 Please Don't Feed the Bears - A girl and her family visit a cute amusement park with a dark secret.
- 1 A Holly Jolly Holiday – A girl's sister gets an enchanted video of a holiday special.



A Shared Birthday with Grandfather of a Renowned State Supreme Court Chief Justice

By: Nils Skudra

Recently I made a remarkable discovery while looking at the profile of a Confederate soldier on FindaGrave.com. During the five years that I have lived in North Carolina, I have met numerous people whose ancestors fought in the Civil War, and I have made a special point of visiting historic cemeteries during my trips to different cities and towns so that I may find the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers. Viewing this particular Confederate soldier's profile was especially intriguing since I not only discovered that he shared the same birthday with me but that he was the grandfather of Susie Marshall Sharp, North Carolina's renowned State Supreme Court Justice who won recognition as the first woman state Supreme Court Chief Justice in the United States and the first woman Superior Court Judge in North Carolina. This was truly remarkable news to me, and I felt that it merited a story for publication since I have a fervent commitment to documenting people's Civil War ancestry.

The Confederate soldier whom I read about was James Marshall Sharp, born on March 27th, 1844 to James Archer Sharp and Margaret Joyce Sharp of Mayo Township in Rockingham County, North Carolina. The eighth of at least ten children, James grew up in a farming family that owned five slaves, and according to the 1860 census his father had real estate valued at \$5,000 and personal property at \$8,414. In light of this, the Sharp family would have been fairly well-to-do in comparison to the average non-slaveholding farmer in the antebellum South. Following the outbreak of the Civil War and North Carolina's secession from the Union, James enlisted in Company F (formed as the "Dan River Rangers") of the 45th North Carolina Infantry on September 1st, 1862 at the age of 22. Organized near Raleigh at Camp Mangum in April 1862, the 45th served in the Seven Days' Battles (June-July 1862), the Department of North Carolina and Southern Virginia.

James Marshall Sharp was seriously wounded during the first day's fighting at Gettysburg on July 1st, 1863. The 45th North Carolina brought 570 men to the field at Gettysburg and suffered 40% casualties, particularly on July 1st in the assault that drove the Union troops from Seminary Ridge. On July 3rd, the regiment supported General Johnson's division in the struggle for Culp's Hill, where the Confederates were ultimately driven back in the hours before Pickett's Charge took place. Fortunately, however, James recovered sufficiently from his wounds and rejoined his unit by November 30th, 1863. He was wounded again and captured at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, one of the fiercest battles of the Overland Campaign, in May 1864.

Following his parole, James returned to duty and served during the Siege of Petersburg, where he was captured again on March 25th, 1865. For the remainder of the war, he was imprisoned at Point Lookout, Maryland, one of the most notorious Union prisons during the conflict. Some 3,584 Confederate prisoners died there due to disease, exposure to extreme weather conditions, and mistreatment by the Union guards. James managed to survive these terrible conditions and was released from Point Lookout after taking the Oath of Allegiance on June 20th, 1865. In the aftermath of the war, James returned home with rifle balls embedded in his chest and jaw. On November 20th, 1866, he married Eliza Merritt Garrett, and they settled in the community of Intelligence, North Carolina. The community was given this name by their son James Merritt Sharp, who established the Sharp Institute, a co-educational day and boarding school, in 1900. James and Eliza made their living as farmers raising orchids, and together they had at least nine children. Of these children, James Merritt Sharp would lead a distinguished career as an educator, lawyer, judge, state senator, and President of the Reidsville Chamber of Commerce and Rockingham County Farm Bureau.

James Merritt Sharp's first child, Susie Marshall Sharp, was born on July 7, 1907. She was named after her mother's younger sister, Susie, and her paternal grandfather, James Marshall Sharp. After attending the Reidsville public schools, she went to the North Carolina College for Women. After completing her legal studies, Ms. Sharp became licensed to practice law in 1928 and joined her father in the law firm of Sharp & Sharp, where she practiced for twenty years. Since women lawyers were rare and not easily accepted during the 1930s, she primarily did legal research until she was appointed City Attorney of Reidsville in 1939, a position she held for ten years. From 1949-1962 Ms. Sharp served as Special Judge for the Superior Court of North Carolina and was subsequently appointed Associate Justice of the state Supreme Court on March 14, 1962. She was re-elected for another eight-year term, and on November 5, 1974 she was elected Chief Justice, serving until her mandatory retirement on July 31, 1979. Ms. Sharp thus earned the distinction of becoming the first woman state Supreme Court Justice in the U.S. and the first woman Superior Court Judge in North Carolina. As a matter of fact, however, Ms. Sharp was not the first woman Chief Justice of a state Supreme Court in the nation's history – Lorna E. Lockwood had become Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court in 1965 – but she was the first to be popularly elected.

Throughout her 17-year tenure on the North Carolina Supreme Court, Chief Justice Sharp wrote 459 majority opinions, 124 concurring opinions, and 45 dissenting opinions. She notably displayed a fervent interest in prison conditions and their improvement, and Time Magazine referred to her as a "trail blazer" with a "reputation as both a compassionate jurist and an incisive legal scholar." She was recommended by Senator Sam Ervin to President Nixon as a potential appointee to the U.S. Supreme Court, but Nixon declined, and Chief Justice Sharp's potential place on the U.S. Supreme Court would later be filled by Sandra Day O'Connor in 1981.

Learning about Chief Justice Sharp and her Civil War ancestry was truly fascinating for me as a historian. It is amazing to think that I share the birthday of her grandfather who had such a harrowing wartime experience and whose descendant made such a distinguished contribution to North Carolina's legal history. In light of the ongoing debate over the Civil War's legacy and memorialization, I fervently believe that this story should be preserved for posterity so that contemporary viewers may have the opportunity to learn about the lives of Civil War soldiers and the mark that many of their descendants left on state and national history. Given the recognition that Chief Justice Sharp achieved throughout her career, I feel that students of history may benefit greatly from studying her life and legal contributions.~

Kakamora's Big Holiday Celebration

Coconut pirates of the sea

Written by Rachel Williamson



On the sea in the morning, there was air filled with sounds of thundering drums on a Kakamora boat. It was a great holiday today, it was Thanksgiving, and everyone was celebrating the day of thanks, one coconut pirate nodded to the other coconut pirates, and then all the coconut pirates started to bang the drums harder, then a Big Bang on the drums and silence on all the drums, then a silent and heads bowed down and the blessings were passed, and the feast was given out to all of the coconut pirates, Maui of course brought in the turkey, it was a huge turkey, everyone was impressed by Maui's catch, that the coconut pirates, gave Maui a talisman of good luck, in appreciation for the huge turkey he brought, after the meal, everybody was stuffed, and ready for a nap, as they napped Maui drew the coconut pirates as a gift for them because he enjoyed them so much today, and was thankful that they had a great thanksgiving dinner and day,

When the coconut pirates woke up Maui showed the coconut pirates the picture, all was surprised on how good Maui's drawing came out, and they stuck it in a safe spot, then all of the coconut pirates picked up the drum sticks and banged on the drums again and fireworks flew to end a perfect Thanksgiving day.~~

Extreme Male Brains, Testosterone and the Neuroscience of Autism

By: Joshua Walburn

Growing bodies of research are exploring the sex differences of the brain and how they relate or balance to cognition and behavior. Many of those hypotheses are being made and is exploring why boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism compared to girls. Findings from those studies supports the "Extreme Male Brain Theory."

It proves that people with autism perceive the world through what's so called 'male' glasses to take systemization towards male topics for some researchers. The theory was published by Simon Baron-Cohen, a British clinical psychologist and professor of developmental psychopathology at the University of Cambridge. He discovered throughout his theory that hyper-exposure to testosterone in the uterus can help explain the likelihood of developing autism.

From my scientific operations, I've found that the polygenic de novo mutation that causes autism involves testosterone overexposure. In a male fetus, the excess leads to ASD when amniotic fluid exposes the unborn boy with more than 1,000 ng/dL (nanograms per deciliter) of the sex hormone. For female bodies, that's more than 70 ng/dL of testosterone. The biochemical exposures need to be more than those numbers so that they alternate brain function leading to autism, affecting synaptic proteins such as SHANK3 and can over-activate mTORs. The hyper-exposures themselves are the fetal production of testosterone. There is a relationship between those androgens to behavior and development. Some female fetuses are of a surplus of testosterone, while a little of the male ones are in the female range. A large surge of testosterone happens during the first half of the fetal life. From about 2 to 3 months old, there's a smaller increase of the androgen production. No changes happen at birth, but analyzing the number of amniotic testosterone is a way to predict post-natal and early childhood behavior. Its other explanation can say how males and females with autism shows an extreme instinct of a male mind. I start to question if women with autism have a more transgender mind. It just depends on what they feel. The results are is that both males and females with autism are hyper-masculinized because of elevated testosterone in both sexes.

There will be no chance of developing autism in a male fetus if testosterone levels are less than 1,000 ng/dL. For the female ones, that's less than 70 ng/dL. That's because testosterone exposure is more frequent and larger in males than females, explaining the dominance of autism being more prevalent in boys or men. De novo mutations are present in only one family member for the first time as a result of a variant in a sperm or egg cell. We now know that autism is a polygenic disorder because it's caused by more than one gene. Autism runs in families because of a large group of rare protein-disrupting signal nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and copy number variants (CNVs) that are heterogeneously transmissible from parents and relatives to probands. When they mutate all together, it can lead to distant brain connectivity disruption leading to autism. What makes them complicated is that the mutation is done in many ways by the number of linked genes, variants, heredity and their interactions starting at an egg cell before fertilization. Researchers are still tracing the genetic sequences to find the true cause of autism from Whole Genomic Sequencing (WGS) projects. From my theory, it allows the mutation frequency to increase within future generations of a family. Scientists at Northwestern found that mutations of a gene known as 'Usp9x' allows the brain to grow fewer synapses. When mutated, the gene is unable to stabilize the ankyrin-G protein. This is not a link to autism, but it can be observed in dyslexia.

As an excess of androgen being key, diagnosing autism can have a sex related bias. Testosterone directs masculinization as a messenger biochemical. It's a type of androgen. Too much of it leads to deficits in communication, social interaction, awareness to danger and associated with explosive aggressive behavior in which is the main diagnostic criteria and the universal signs of autism. The androgen increases serotonin shortage between the amygdala and frontal cortex. Links to its communication deficits enforces under-myelinated axons in white matter tissue. Testosterone can also direct autistic traits that are more complex such as: distinct information processing in the brain, associative categorization, heightened sensitivity, and objective thoughts throughout an atypical perception of the world. One experimental assessment of the An-

drogen Theory of Autism demonstrated a medical questionnaire that was completed by 54 women with ASD, 74 mothers of autistic children, and 183 mothers of typically developing children to compare each other's testosterone levels. It was used to determine whether mothers of ASD children have an increased rate of testosterone related medical conditions and children with testosterone abnormalities as a part of the 'broader autism phenotype.' Compared to typically developing women, those with autism reported to be bisexual or asexual because of an elevated level of testosterone reported in this group.

Autism Spectrum Quotient questionnaires can be used assess autistic traits because they can also correlate with the ratios of testosterone. AQ tests are indicators to whether a person has to seek an autism diagnosis or not. Borderline scores are between 26 and 31. If an AQ score is 32+ or >31, it says the criteria for having autism in terms of the scores' general population distribution. If one respondent scored 35 on an AQ test, they're said to have high-functioning autism. That's about 1,300 ng/dL of testosterone as a potential biomarker for ASD in males and 85 ng/dL in females. If greater than its given global AQ maximum, that can indicate autism developing. Even in a prenatal test for the disorder.

An autistic level of testosterone can cause deficiency to vasopressin, a hormone known for social behavior. This can lead to an impaired ability to understand thoughts and motivations interpersonally. In early development of an autistic person, reports of a very rapid head growth can occur in some children. This results a larger head circumference than children who don't have autism, known as 'macrocephaly.' It doesn't have anything to do with masculinity and testosterone, but another study found that women with autism have a macrocephalic head size and increased facial masculinity.

Baron-Cohen invented the Autism Spectrum Quotient or AQ test. During his invention, he points out that the mean or average AQ score from a non-clinical population is 17 (CI = 16.4, 17.4) (CI = confidence interval). The confidence interval of the assessment is of one and two points. Higher AQ scores mean greater likelihood of being up to a challenge. They also indicate more neurodivergence. It a new way of measuring autistic traits and quantitatively looks for one part of the spectrum that somebody with autism falls under. A typically total AQ score of people with ASD by its percentile resides at around 50.

Biopsychology examines the biology of cognition and behavior. It's quite something we can understand or obtain a better sense on how things work in the molecular level of science. Psychology at the highest level can divide down into biology, then to chemistry. Prior to that, the experience of having autism myself provides a unique perspective to the scientific community. It gives me a sophisticated understanding of the brain and its ways of directing human behavior.

It's not anything related to a foot in the door approach such as Newton's Laws of Motion, Special Relativity and other scientific branches. In fields like biopsychology and behavioral neuroscience, further studies is still needed to evaluate hormonal abnormalities that leads to autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and other intellectual disabilities to create new screenings, diagnostic procedures and interventions.~~



The Sorry State of Emergency Services

By: Megan Cunningham

On July 7, 2021, New York City held a ticker-tape parade for Hometown Heroes to honor their essential workers' service during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic and relative return to normalcy. Mayor Bill de Blasio said, "The Summer of New York City is underway, and the beating heart of our recovery is the gratitude and respect we all share for the essential workers who brought this city out of a crisis. This celebration will honor all those who fought through adversity and unprecedented challenges to keep New Yorkers safe." The city's off-duty EMS workers, however, refused to attend and saw such parade as hollow gesture at best and a "slap in the face" at worst. Rather, these people were pissed that the city wasn't giving them adequate financial compensation for the work, stress, and sacrifice at a time they needed it most. And unfortunately, New York City wasn't the only place in America where EMS workers feel slighted.

Unless you've spent your life far from the confines of modern civilization, it shouldn't take a global pandemic for anyone to realize the importance of emergency medical services in the community. If you're in a life-threatening situation that doesn't call for police or fire, you hope that a 911 call can get you an ambulance on the spot. Whenever and wherever disaster strikes, EMS will usually be on the frontlines ready to give necessary lifesaving medical treatment to those needing the most urgent care. In the Covid 19 pandemic from 2020 on, EMS have played a vital role in saving countless lives. Many across the United States have fallen ill themselves and died. Still, it shouldn't have to take a deadly virus ravaging the world for anyone to see that EMS is an essential service and that we must value our EMTs.

On an episode of *Last Week Tonight*, John Oliver discussed the myriad of ways the United States inexcusably neglects our emergency services. It's appalling enough that we live under an unconscionable profit-driven healthcare system that a woman has to worry about financial ruin after getting her leg crushed. But it's also equally galling how we treat our ambulance drivers and EMTs. As of August 2021, there currently 19,000 locally run EMS providers with wildly different structures. In Houston, EMS is provided by paramedics or firefighters mutually trained as EMTs. New York's EMS is an independent division under the fire department. While volunteer firefighters provide EMS in rural Wyoming.

Despite that even a child could see EMS as an essential service worthy of its own lead federal agency, 39 states don't recognize it as such. This means that many local governments don't have to provide it to their citizens and have less access to government funding. To make up for losses, many EMS services turn to GoFundMe campaigns to fund themselves, often to upgrade or buy equipment to stay in business, or make up for constant budget shortfalls, especially in rural areas. But more often, they put the costs on the patient's medical bills. In addition, many EMS providers get paid only if they transport people to the hospital, setting a perverse incentive system. Thus, as Oliver put it, "Instead of all of us paying a little bit all the time for ambulances, we have a system where some of us pay an awful lot all at once when we have a terrible emergency." As if being smacked with a \$3,500 for an ambulance ride after giving birth in the family car wasn't bad enough.

Worse, according to the *New York Times*, private firms run a rising 25% of EMS providers. Each have their own policies and insurance mandates. As with hospitals in rural communities, when an EMS provider loses staff or goes bankrupt, they could lose ambulance access. Even worse, the federal government's doing nothing to support EMS workers or to regulate providers to standardize costs. And if they're bought by private equity firms, well, your community could be absolutely screwed. As Oliver noted, "And when private equity firms storm and help keep costs low and profits high to profit from ambulance services, things generally don't get better." One of these greedy executive vulture capitalists is *Diva of Distressed's* self-proclaimed corporate savior Lynn Tilton whom a bankruptcy court ruled responsible for running struggling

private ambulance company TransCare to the ground, laying off scores of EMTs after forcing them to work in decrepit ambulances and urging workers to swipe expensive medical supplies from their local ERs.

The central reason for all the dysfunction with EMS goes all the way back to the Reagan Administration in the 1980s that eliminated all direct federal EMS funding and oversight while shifting responsibility to the states. Reagan also crushed the 1973 EMS Systems Act that created a new grant program to further development of regional EMS systems. And it's these actions that are mainly responsible for why EMS is so inexcusably messed up today. While fire departments have the US Fire administration, there is no federal agency supporting or overseeing EMS. Many providers choose can choose to be out of network, meaning they generally set their rates however they want. No wonder they cost so much. And like rural hospitals, sparse ambulance crews could be lifeline a lot or rural communities have. But as with the closing of Hahnemann, big cities also have EMS services in dire straight. Cue the Chicago dispatcher calling the 911-calling victim, "We're all out of ambulances, we'll let you know."

Despite how deplorably expensive an ambulance ride can be for patients, it's an absolute moral outrage that too many EMS workers are shockingly underpaid. Many aren't even paid a living wage, have health benefits, receive paid sick leave or get hazard pay. The average EMS worker earns \$36,000 a year, well below what police and firefighters earn. Many EMS companies also don't offer their first responders health benefits in a job with an injury rate 3 times the national average. And compared to other jobs, EMS workers also 10 more likely to be suicidal. One EMT told PBS back in April 2020: "We do this because we love it. Everyone knows there's no money in it. But, right now, I'm doing all of this with no health insurance." When asked to elaborate, he added: "The job doesn't offer it. And our affordable marketplaces aren't very affordable. If I get sick and, OK, I go get tested positive, I can't go to the hospital. Literally, life or death is what's going to put me in the hospital." All the clapping, parades, and free pizza to show appreciation can't remedy the lack of what these people actually need. Not to mention, many people blame hardworking EMTs for why an ambulance ride can cost so much, which isn't the case. Especially if most of them end up in the same situation and can't afford the trip themselves. The fact, so many of these hardworking people who are out there saving lives at great cost to themselves every day. In all respects, EMTs are heroes who deserve much more than mere empty gestures of gratitude. This makes the stalling over the Zadroga Act to compensate 9/11 first responders seem mild in comparison. EMS workers are among the country's most dedicated, hardest working, and most selfless heroes. And yet, they're among the most poorly treated.

Of course, some solutions might be controversial to deal with the disparities in EMS services (like Medicare for All), others are blaringly obvious to everyone. For one, as with fire and police departments, we must establish a lead federal agency dedicated to them. Secondly, EMS should be labeled an essential service in every part of the United States because everyone thinks they are. Third, they should have funding at local, state, and federal levels. Not to mention, outlaw sudden charges from out of network ambulance rides. And there's no better time to make these reforms than right now as the absolute hell these first responders went through in 2020 is still fresh in our minds. As for workers, we should at least ensure that anyone who works in an ambulance can make enough to afford one. ~~

Interview with Aaron from Creation Labs

By: Max Chaney

How did you get into 3D Printing?

I started with years of experience with 3d modeling and design with Autodesk Inventor for 21 years. After working in engineering for 10 years, I got my first 3d printer and was instantly hooked. I can now take my design from the computer to the real world very easily.

What inspired you to become an instructor?

My mom. I come from long history teachers. Lots of relatives have had careers as teachers.

How long have you been doing 3D printing?

7 years.

What is your favorite 3D print for a business?

A trade-show model for Harbison Walker. They make refractory brick lining for crucibles for the steel making industry.

What is your favorite 3D print for fun?

Zwolf – the 12-legged, radio-controlled walking machine.

Did you play any war-games before you got into 3D printing?

No- I much prefer machines and devices.

Do you enjoy 3D printing?

Yes, very much. Since I was able to learn 3D modeling many years ago, when I got my first 3D printer, I couldn't think of anything else I wanted to do.

What is Creation Labs?

Describe the memberships and classes. Memberships offer access to lots of high-tech manufacturing tools and software. Ranging from \$50-\$100 per month, they also give you a half off discount on the classes. Classes show the students how to use the specific machines and software to get you started.

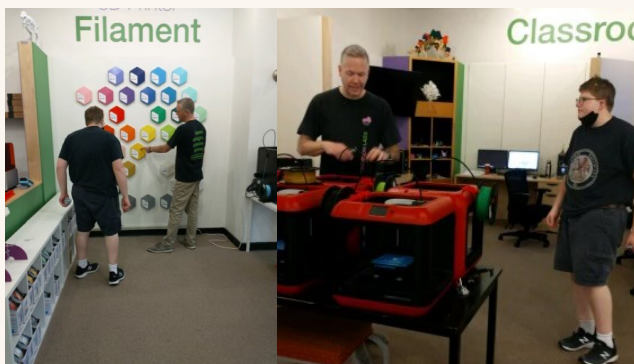
What kind of technology do you have at Creation Labs that can get you started? Mostly 3D printing and also laser cutting, CNC routing, vacuum forming and 3D modeling and design software.

What is the future of advanced manufacturing?

I'm not sure. I know things will get easier, faster and higher quality. For 3D printing, things are still very slow, loud and low quality. In the future, the parts will be better with less human interaction.

What can we expect from Creation Labs in the future?

More machines and classes will be added to the lineup. More members and businesses will be participating in making and creating.~~



Visit to Flight 93 Memorial and Quecreek Mine Rescue Site in Somerset County, PA

By: Nathaniel Geyer

On Friday, September 10, 2021, I went to Flight 93 Memorial and Quecreek Mine Rescue Site. Flight 93 Memorial is off Route 30, in Stoystown in Somerset County, PA, and was extremely crowded, but has the Tower of Voices, Visitors Center, and Memorial Plaza. We started the Tower of Voices, which is wind generated and makes a musical sound when windy at 12-15 MPH. Since the wind was blow it was a faint sound when close to the Tower of Voices. We then went to the visitor's center, which has the flight path and call of the passengers, which was not kid friendly. The Memorial Plaza had a slate pathway which is a distance from the impact area, which has the wall of names and a large rock to mark the final resting site. It was busy preparing for the 20th anniversary but was site a very exciting experience.



About 30 minutes away in Somerset Borough is the Quecreek Mine Rescue Site, a state historical landmark site. At the area of the site was extremely small with an interactive exhibit, but has a very good presentation by the staff, which is prearranged and lasts about an hour. It explains the miracle of nine mine workers who were rescued from July 24-28, 2002. It also remembers the nine forgotten members, who were not rescued but stayed to help the rescue of the nine workers. There are pine trees that were planted to recognize the federal, state, and local people who helped rescue the nine mine workers. Today the family that owns the property of the rescue created a non-profit to preserve the site and celebrate the inspirational story of the Quecreek Mine Rescue. I ranked these two sites to be strongly recommended and encourage others to drive to Somerset County, Pennsylvania to visit these two historic locations at least once in a person's lifetime.~~

My Apple Music Playlist

By: Amelia Krzton

Apple Music is one of the best things to ever exist! You can download all sorts of great music, but especially those from your favorite artists! In case you guys don't know, I downloaded three amazing albums from Apple Music last Christmas, and they are NSYNC's self-titled debut album from 1997, 98 Degrees's album *Revelation* from 2000, and *Ultimate Santana* from 2008. Most recently, I made a playlist of the three tracks that I like best from each of those albums. Fun fact: They are also the opening tracks of the albums! The tracks include "Tearin' Up My Heart" by NSYNC, "Give Me Just One Night (Una Noche)" by 98 Degrees, and "Into the Night" by Santana featuring Chad Kroeger. The playlist is entitled "Dance Anthems 2021". Since Christmas, I have also downloaded the greatest hits of 98 Degrees, as well as their newest hit single "Where Do You Wanna Go?" and the remix album of all of the band's greatest hits. I spend at least one or two days a week dancing to these albums while doing activities for Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties. I even did creative writing articles describing these dance anthems back in the spring. If you guys remember from back in the spring issue, we started a Sunday boy band group during the latter stages of the coronavirus outbreak last winter! Many of these articles discuss either the songs or the members of the groups themselves. We occasionally listen to the Santana album during our Saturday shifts, but most of the time, we still listen to the playlist created at the time we got the job back in the fall of 2019. Speaking of work, I still plan to apply to work at a Goodwill closer to my new condominium in Squirrel Hill and maybe, I can continue to listen to this created playlist then. So, if you do not have an Apple Music account, then I highly recommend signing up for one! The options are endless when it comes to music that you can download. When I sing and dance along to this music, it also reminds me of performing in the marching band and musical productions back in high school, something that I truly miss. My love for music never ends, though!~~

WJAC-TV METEOROLOGIST MADI BAGGETT

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

"I knew from a young age I wanted to choose a career that allowed me to focus on both science and media. In the fourth grade I remember learning about the water cycle and instantly becoming fascinated with how the planet recycles and then reuses water. While I was in college, I leaned towards broadcasting because public speaking was something that always came naturally but water and weather never left my brain." Those

are the words of someone who, literally, was born to have careers as public speaker, and a meteorologist! If you live in the big media market of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the name Madi Baggett may not be a household name; she is the morning meteorologist at WJAC-TV in the Central PA market of Altoona, Johnstown and State College, PA. However, before she landed the gig as a TV meteorologist in Central PA, Madi grew up in the same



Western PA neighborhood she'd graduate from high school in Southwestern PA, Moon Area High School. After receiving a BA in Visual Media at John Carroll University, Madi then went to school at Mississippi State University to take additional classes in meteorology and "Things just started to fall in place," she said, "I feel very fortunate to have found a career that allows me to combine my two passions."

As she mentioned at the first sentence of this story; one of Madi's passions is public speaking. And one of the outlets in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that (pun intended) gave her a voice was, of all places, the Pennsylvania Lottery. "I absolutely loved announcing for the PA Lottery," Madi said about her experience there, "it was such a cool and rare opportunity." She credits her role at the PA Lottery as a place where she learned, "Proper breathing and pacing techniques", it's something Madi still uses to this day. But Madi says that her favorite part of working the

Pennsylvania's favorite game of numbers, the PA Lottery, was being able to work closely with other lottery employees. "Everybody [at the Lottery] was incredibly supportive and made me feel comfortable even when I would stumble."

Like her present tenure as a meteorologist at WJAC-TV, Madi's tenure as an announcer at the PA Lottery wouldn't have been possible if it had not been for her being a radio DJ at a station in Mifflin County, PA. "I honestly don't think I would have had the confidence to even try TV if it wasn't for radio," Madi said, "Radio gave me the freedom I needed to develop my own broadcasting style, which is something that is difficult to teach; being a disc jockey gave the ability to indulge in that hobby for a few years." When she arrived at WJAC-TV, Jessica Guay was starting to make a name for herself as one of the station's top anchors and reporters.

"Working with Jessica was great," Madi said about her time as one of Jessica's colleagues at WJAC-TV. And aside from sharing major stories and updates on-camera, Madi also said this about her experience working at WJAC with Jessica, who now is a Pittsburgh TV reporter at KDKA, "We both share a love for animals and snacks, so we got along well from the start. Jess and I also share a similar sense of humor so working with her in the mornings was a lot of fun. Even though I miss her being a part of the team, I am incredibly excited for her and happy she landed in Pittsburgh!"

When she landed the gig as WJAC's newest meteorologist/on-air personality in late 2019—which was a period at a time before the COVID-19 pandemic—one of Madi's big, and fun duties she tended to on a day-to-day basis as a representative of the first TV station in the Central PA market was going out into the community and connecting with her viewers through various events, mostly events held at school events throughout the Central PA market. "The weather team would also make appearances at schools which was always fun," Madi said about her experiences interacting with Central PA school students. Obviously, the pandemic is the main reason for two things lately; 1. Madi, nor



her WJAC colleagues, aren't able to hold interactive events in-person. 2. Thanks to some advent by the name of social media—Facebook and YouTube: Madi Baggett, Twitter: @madithemet—Madi is still able to make “personal connections” with her viewers/fans.

You know the old saying about having 15 minutes of fame. In the case of Madi, she believes that the biggest, yet frightening accomplishment so far in her young career was going on the air live on WJAC during a tornado warning by herself for, yes, 15 minutes. “I had never done wall-to-wall coverage before,” Madi said about that experience, “[and] I was terrified.” However, in spite of her nerves, Madi did manage to survive that 15 minute-long, live on-air broadcast, and that accomplishment is something Madi considers a personal “win.” When it's safe for her to go on a vacation again, the first place Madi would like to celebrate that victory, and every other victory in her career at the place this reporter would like to celebrate its many victories in their career, “Anywhere with a beach!”~~

Untitled

By: Philip Wilsher

Adam Noah Levine and his group members Jesse Royal Carmichael, James Burgon Valentine, Paul Morton, Jr., Samuel John Farrar, and Matthew Flynn learned from these particular musicians: Prince, Billy Joel, The Beatles, Pearl Jam, The Who, Justin Timberlake, Al Green, Stevie Wonder, Phish, Aaliyah, Bill Withers, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Marvin Gaye, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, The Police, Queens of the Stone Age, Fleetwood Mac, Tupac Shakur, Daryl Hall and John Oates, Paul Simon and Arthur Garfunkel, Nirvana, and Stone Temple Pilots. Maroon 5 currently consists of Adam Levine singing on microphone, playing guitars, his best friend, Jesse Carmichael playing keyboards, synthesizers, and guitars, his other best friend, James Valentine playing lead guitars, Matthew Flynn of Gavin DeGraw playing drums, PJ Morton, doing bass, and Sam Farrar playing bass, keyboards, and synthesizers. Their previous members are as follows: Ryan Dusick and Michael "Mickey" Madden. Matthew Flynn replaced Ryan Dusick because of his wrist and shoulder injuries and he was made their new drummer since Ryan was only a part of the group until 2007. Mickey Madden, their founding member was arrested in the summer of 2020 due to domestic violence. Mickey Madden was also arrested in 2015 due to his vial of cocaine possession with Ivanka Trump's ex-boyfriend, James Gluberman. They said they're devastated he's no longer a part of their group because they know that that news was disappointing because Adam had no other options to decide except to have the choice to fire him from the group. Mickey quit almost 2 years ago. The soft rock/neo soul/pop rock music group continues to tour and make music. They play to audiences of over 7000 as I saw them this August at Star Lake Pavilion.~~

Gelato and Why It Matters

By: Renee Skudra

When I moved to Greensboro, North Carolina from Berkeley, California I was worried about a number of things: making the cultural adjustment to living in the South, finding a good job, interesting friendships, regretting the move from being away from the San Francisco Bay – significant, because I have always lived near water –and all the gelato places in the East Bay. Even on a good day in my native city I couldn't do without a twice-weekly dose of dark or hazelnut gelato and my home was no more than 10 minutes away from indulging in my favorite dessert. Over several months I made my peace with my relocation, secured employment, found people to hang out with and relegated myself with being satisfied to the proximity of several bodies of water (albeit a very small one) – Country Lake and streams flowing through a nearby park.

The problem was: there was no place to purchase a gelato in town and the stuff being marketed in the supermarkets as such (i.e. Talenti and Whole Foods' line of pretenders to the gelato throne) all paled in comparison – they didn't look nor taste like the real deal. For those of you who may not know, here is the scoop (pardon the pun) on this item I simply didn't want to part company with. Gelato is the Italian word for ice cream. As Lindo Poon wrote in her article entitled "The Salt – What's On Your Plate", gelato is "ice cream's Italian cousin." They are both popular frozen desserts but there are important differences. Ice cream is airier and has a higher fat content. Gelato has less cream, is smoother and silkier than ice cream and sports more intense flavors. According to Morgan Morano, author of "The Art of Making Gelato", ice cream and gelato really ARE quite distinct - gelato is made in another manner, churned slower than ice cream. She notes that although both contain milk, cream and sugar, ice cream is heavier on the cream and typically utilizes egg yolks to bind the mixture together. Gelato, on the other hand, has MORE milk than cream and very rarely uses egg yolks.

For those of us who worry about fat content, gelato seems the winner in the ice cream race. Most ice cream tends to be approximately 14-25 percent fat while gelato has about a 4-9 percent fat content. Consequently gelato typically offers fewer calories, less sugar and a lower fat content per serving than ice although to be fair, admittedly it usually costs 30-50 percent MORE than ice cream. Clearly gelato has made huge strides into the international dessert market and ice cream companies have leapt into the fray to compete for sweet-tooth customers although the "gelato" labeled products to my palate at least do not taste remotely like the gelato coming from Italy or classically-trained Italian gelato makers. Still it bears telling that Talenti Gelato is the number three seller of premium ice cream in the United States, only behind Ben & Jerry's and Haagen-Dazs according to Suzanne Raga in her piece "Refreshing Facts About Gelato."

A visit to the Harris-Teeter market in Greensboro today disclosed a slew of gelato wannabees with intriguing flavors – stracciatella (vanilla with chocolate pieces), pistachio, limone (lemon), fico (fig), cocco (coconut) and the traditional flavors of chocolate and vanilla – all of which the normal gelateria carries. I've tried a great many of these and most of the ones marketed by Talenti but they all feel like nothing but glorified ice cream with exotic names on their cartons. The depth of flavors, the density of gelato is not there, rather the overwhelming taste of butterfat and fillers. There are times when I miss enjoying great gelato ice cream so much that I've taken radical measures. In one case, I've driven thirty miles to Winston-Salem which has a small gelato shop whose proprietor (from Switzerland) makes her own gelato on-site. Another time I toiled up in a hugely impressive giant truck with understanding friends to buy gelato at a store called Amaro in downtown Raleigh. Admittedly that was a 1 ½ hour stint to satisfy an urge but the driver allowed that his eye-candy car was fully up to the task. I was told by the store manager that the gelato is shipped daily from France. That drew oohs and aahhs from some of the people waiting in line.

I recently connected with a news reporter at Channel 2 and told him that we really need a gelato store in Greensboro (from my point of view at least so that I don't have to spend hours traveling to get some). Being originally from northern California gelato-land, he heartily agreed that the third largest city in North Carolina was guilty of this glaring omission and promised to circulate my interest around the community. He laughed when I invoked a comment that someone named Betsy Brandt had made: "I believe gelato is meant to be treated as medicine and taken daily as a prescription." He said "what's better than gelato?" As a person who grew up with two beloved Sicilian godfathers (Jack Marino and Dennis Natale) I recall one of their expressions when I asked that self-same question: "gelato con panna" (gelato with whipped cream). The truth is that gelato matters and once you have had the genuine article, far be it from you to not hightail it to the place, however so far, where it is being offered for your adulation and devotion. You'll be in good company – George Bernard Shaw himself said "there is no sincerer love than the love of ice cream."~~

Camp Out at the Beach

By: Mark Sulkin

One morning, Cody woke up so excited. Today, her family was going camping at the beach. She ate pancakes with syrup for breakfast and went upstairs to her room to get ready. She packed all her favorite beach toys and her towel. Then, she changed into her bathing suit and put on her flip-flops. Her parents packed a first-aid kit in case someone got hurt. They packed bandages for hurts or scratches, ointment for nasty cuts or bruises, medicine for upset stomachs, and sunscreen so they wouldn't get sunburn. They even made a picnic lunch and a barbeque dinner to eat at the beach. And they packed stuff to make s'mores.

When it was time to go, Cody got into the van and sat next to her little sister, Rachael. "I'm so excited," said Rachael. "This is going to be the best beach camp out ever."

"I'm excited too," replied Cody. "We're meeting Aunt Samantha, Uncle Christopher, Al, Bo, and Ed. They're camping at the beach with us." And in no time at all, they were off to the beach.

When they arrived, Cody and her family found a nice spot to set up their tents. Then, Cody spotted Uncle Christopher, Aunt Samantha, and her three cousins, Al, Bo, and Ed.

"Hello, everyone," they said. "Are you excited?"

"Yes," said Rachael. "We're going to have lots of fun camping at the beach."

Everyone put on sunscreen to protect their skin from the sun. To start their beach camp out, Cody went with Aunt Samantha and Bo to look for shells. Bo found a conch shell. He held it up to his ear and heard the ocean. Cody found an oyster shell. It had a lot of bumps all over it. Aunt Samantha found a clam shell. It was so beautiful.

"Wow!" said Bo. "There are cool shells everywhere."

Rachael flew a kite with Al and Uncle Christopher. The kite was so colorful. Uncle Christopher held the kite while Rachael ran as fast as she could. Pretty soon, the wind started blowing and the kite flew up into the sky. "Way to go, Rachael," shouted Uncle Christopher. "That's some flying you're doing!"

"Thank you, Uncle Christopher," said Rachael.

Al thought Rachael was doing an excellent job flying the kite too. Rachael and Cody built a sandcastle and some other kids helped them. Some of the kids filled their bucket with water from the ocean and poured it in the moat. Other kids found stuff to decorate the sandcastle like shells and feathers. Finally, the sandcastle was done. Everyone thought it was beautiful.

By then, it was lunch time. So, the family went to set up their picnic lunch. There were sandwiches, fruit salad, crackers, chips, pretzels, and things to drink like water, lemonade and different juices. Everyone ate their picnic lunch and thought it was delicious.

After their picnic lunch was finished, the family went to the ocean to play in the water. Cody and Rachael went swimming and saw lots of different kinds of fish. Ed grabbed his surfboard and went surfing. He rode lots of big waves all afternoon and shouted, "KOWABUNGA!"

That evening, it was time to set up the barbeque dinner. Cody's mother set up the grill. Cody's father got the barbeque food. On the grill, they cooked hotdogs and hamburgers. "I just love a barbeque dinner at the beach," said Al.

"Me too," said Ed. Soon, the barbeque dinner was ready. Everyone thought it was the best barbeque dinner ever. Later that night, everyone sat around the campfire. They made s'mores, told scary stories and sang songs all night long. Soon, it was time to go to bed. Rachael and Cody crawled into their tent. Al, Bo, and Ed crawled into their tent. And the parents crawled into their tent, too. They all went to sleep happily dreaming about how much fun they had at the beach. THE END!~~

"Fear Street, Fear Park, The First Scream"

by Michelle Middlemiss

Chapter One-Eleven

Part One 1935

The first part of the book "The First Scream" in the Fear Park, Fear Street Series by R.L. Stine, is character set-up. You get to know them through what they are seeing. Unlike the Goosebumps Books it's told in third person, not first. So you don't always know how each character might act, if the set-up is not done right.

In a Goosebump Book you can get the feel of the speaker right away, unless the speaker is not reliable in some way. In third person writing you might not see into the speaker's head immediately but you get what the speaker doesn't see, plus added information of the world around them.

Background info also has to be given from the outside even if the character is right there. For example, if a character thinks a person is out of bounds, the action is shown, then a character the reader follows says they feel that way. "Without warning, he bent down and kissed her on the lips. Meghan hated when he did that. It was as if he owned her; as if he could kiss her whether she wanted it or not." (p 7; THE FIRST SCREAM)

Character Set-up

Meghan Fairwood- Her parents bought her an expensive gift and she realized that and didn't want to bring up that the pen leaks because her father was under a lot of stress at work. "I'll have to tell Dad," Meghan thought, returning the pen to the pencil box.

"I hate to bother him about a pen. He's been so busy these days; so wrapped up in his new job. But the pen will have to be returned to the store." (p 4; THE FIRST SCREAM)

She also dates the baseball player Richard Bradley. She sees him as a little conceited and she does not like the way he treats her or others at times. Meghan might feel like she needs more confidence but she is willing to reach out of the group she runs with.

"She didn't really know him. He wasn't part of her crowd. She didn't think he was part of any crowd." (p 5; THE FIRST SCREAM)

Meghan was Prom Queen and Richard had been the King. Part of Meghan really loved that she was dating the Big Man on Campus; but a very big part is starting to not care for him.

"But now, as the school year drew to a close, Meghan didn't like some of his loud, roudy friends. And she wasn't happy about the way he treated her; dropping by her house at all hours without calling first." (p 8; THE FIRST SCREAM)

Meghan and Richard met each other in Fear Woods. She had forgotten that the boy she reached out to Robin was a Fear; so the woods are his backyard. Also that her boyfriend's father is trying to take some of the woods away from the Fears. She finds that Robin is cute and thinking about dropping Richard for Robin even though when growing up she heard and was scared of the stories. This happened six years after the stock market crash of 1929, and the family moved to Fear Street from New Jersey.



"And as soon as Meghan arrived, she began hearing the whispered stories about Simon Fear and his family. How they practiced the dark arts and evil sorcery. How neighbors heard strange cries and howls in the night." (p 33; THE FIRST SCREAM) The fact that she overlooks all the stories tells a lot about her.

With Fear Street the stories are true so this just adds how good of a character Meghan is not to judge Robin. Meghan also finds Richard's father's dead body at the end of the first part.

Richard Bradley is a difficult character to put a finger on because we just see what he does; we don't follow him. The book doesn't even say what he is thinking. We know he is a jock and over protective of Meghan. He doesn't even like her talking to Robin. We even first meet him when he is using Robin's tie to wipe off his hands.

"Richard stepped around Meghan. He reached out a big hand and flipped Robin's necktie out from under his V-neck sweater. He wiped his hands, using the necktie as a towel; grinning at Robin and challenging him to do something about it."

"Stop it Richard," Meghan demanded, pulling his arm away. "You're not funny."

"Sure I am," Richard replied. "Catch you later, Meghan." (p 7; THE FIRST SCREAM)

I could point to other examples, but even if not the same action it has the same reason. Richard doesn't like Meghan talking to Robin. He says he doesn't like Robin because his father will not let the town have part of Fear Woods. Actually he doesn't like him because Meghan likes Robin. Yeah, he finds his dad dead but it just makes me feel bad for his dad.

Jack Bradley is Richard's father; yes the one who dies at the end of Part 1. The reason i'm pointing this out is that he is a lot more likeable than his son; even though he starts the trouble with the Fears. But he does it with a pure heart. The year of 1935 becomes very important. The town of Shadyside is still not fully back from what happened six years ago. The town could get the money it needs from an amusement park. This is the only reason he even goes to Nicholas Fear. And above him, when Nicholas won't give up his land.

He doesn't raise his voice after Nicholas said no; he just left. Yet later he brings a gun when he and his friends start labeling the woods. But even then he says he's sorry when he accidentally points at Nicholas. This makes Jack not a jerk but that he really does just want the land to help. Does he go about it in the wrong way? Yes. But does he deserve the death he gets? No.

Bradley frowned. "Trespassing? I was just surveying this lot since I thought you received word that..."

"I thought I told you clearly," Nicholas interrupted. "I will not have any part of my woods destroyed." (p 27;THE FIRST SCREAM)

Robin Fear is the youngest of the Fear family. Throughout the first part he is one of the watch. Even though he sees a lot of what goes on he is on the outside looking in, and like Meghan, the one able to most likely not slant the events in their favor. This only completes Part 1 of the book.

After he gets back home Robin sees his dad with his eyes closed. Robin thinks he is working on the "Fear ability" to use the black magic that the Fear family is known for.

That's also why the family is feared by others that live in Shadyside. His father has told Robin that he has a gift and that's what makes the family strong, but also very much the outsiders.~~

N'dlis (Pt. 6)

By: Jordan Watson

Fear has stricken me. That bitch of a Gen'rélích somehow found its way inside of my body! It literally must've snuck into the bottle, bypassing the filtration barrier! I immediately can tell once my own blood forms in small cubes, and dissipates to form into the floor, that its the Cubist. Have to snap out of it! I hastily get myself off the floor. I'm met with BURNING. PAIN. I keep the pressure on the left side of my abdomen. I stumble along, trying to keep a fast pace in getting back to the medical facility. I quickly punch the codes in to get through the door.

"Access Denied."

Dammit, gotta try again!

"Access Denied."

F**K! Starting to get woozy. My vision is beginning to spin. Punch it in one last time.

C'mon, third time's the charm, C'MON!

"Access Denied."

Shit! There's no other options now. I stumble to one of the dead soldiers 10 feet away from the med bay entrance, and tear one of his sleeves. I wrap it around my left hand, and lumber to make some swift, straight jabs at the glass on the door. After about 5 hits, the glass finally breaks! I make a run to my right of the researcher's room to get to the freezer containers near the sick pods. One of the key cards dangle atop of the doctor's desk that's near the entrance of the freezer room. I swipe it through, start looking around, right until I find what I need. My vision is getting worse, but I push through it harder to gain access to some specific syringes. Despite the office providing post-it notes next to the door, I struggle to turn the dials in the combination column. But after the second try, I get it to unlock. I take at least three of these syringes, and inject one of them near the flaps on the gaping wound to my abdomen.

The SEARING sensation nearly paralyzes me. Nothing deep breathing and mental exercises from years of injuries from personal life and wars couldn't stop me in my tracks. Looking down upon my wound, it accelerates the healing process, and manages to close. Though not without having the appearance of a corroded scar. I take some safety caps to put over the needle heads, then pocket them in my side satchel while running back out of the sick pod area.

As I sprint through the area to head back outside, I quickly notice the floor from underneath the broken into entrance sifts outward in numerous cubes. It's going to pop out, and I need to stop it from reaching to me any further. Prematurely when I was getting myself ready, I had a few CAGs (Concentrated Area Grenades) put on my left satchel. I reach in and nab one. Just as its about to emerge from the cubic hole, I make a dive out the broken doorway! Through sheer faith, I throw one into the hole before making impact to the ground! Skidding across the pavement outside the med facility, I turn to see the opening where the Cubist would spawn. An explosive cloud bursts outwards! Shielding my eyes from the rubble that spews from it, I intently take a gander.

The flames from the hole begin to dance and transform themselves into larger cubic structures. Sunuva. I knew this thing wouldn't go down easily. As it forms completely in its flame ridden presence, I see it, and recall it well enough. Its crinoline bottom covered in fleshy cog wheels, resembling a living dress of infused mass muscle. Its spiraled top consistently spins in very unnerving ways. Its long barbed hair, crackling brimstone and ember. Its twisted lips. Its holed head that forms the element of its choice when it makes contact with whatever it touches. Then...I begin to hear it. Its back squeezes out spiked apparatuses, shaking vigorously. The sound it makes would make cicadas drop from their trees like houseflies.

I frantically get up to run for the garage! All that I can hear is an ear shattering screech, as it outstretches its branching arms to set the whole med bay aflame! The burst decimates it enough to make the whole tunnel system quake! Doesn't take me long to sprint to the nuke battery to detach it before hopping into the Humvee. I turn the ignition on, and start to pound on the gas to get the hell out of there! Keeping the front flood lights on, I turn at every which way I can to make it to the surface. Before making it between the entrance way, more cubes are sifting beneath the road path. They spit towards the windows of the Humvee, trying to penetrate the glass

and dent the exterior at my every drift! There's daylight up ahead! The Cubist tears open a rift right in the center. Have to think fast! I take a gamble, and intensely veer to the right side! It viciously grows its branch-like arms, and its about to clap!

I duck to narrowly dodge the stone roots from completely tearing my head off! The top part of the Humvee however, wasn't as fortunate. Miraculously, I speed through the end of the tunnel, and begin to drive off towards the highway leading to the east end of Luke Bridge out of Wake City. I have to follow where the river bank was from three days ago. That Fùxīng canister was the key to show me the clue I needed to follow the bread crumbs. I recall from analyzing the emails back at the encampment that L-0 CHAIN was what the traders were using to keep Fùxīng's procedures going through those canisters alone. The question was...Was I hallucinating that whole time I saw it from lack of sleep? Or...is it possible Fùxīng never stopped expanding? Did some commie sympathizers let them use a secret location to continue their operations? But if it was floating from a river bank...that must mean...It's located in Hema Forest! Of course! It's where the main bank connects from there to Wake City!

In my focus on driving to the destination, I came to the realization of something crucial. When the Cubist yells the way it does, what follows is usually backup. Hilda and I went through with that the 2nd month of being stuck in Wake City.....

Oh no....

I feel the highway make a sudden dip! I make a sharp drift to the right to avoid the Humvee collapsing from underneath me! It *did* call for backup! Trencher, Pitfaller, & the Cubist itself are all gunning from behind! Between avoiding the large holes being punched through the highway itself, and the churning shifts in the roads to veer me off completely, they show no signs of stopping! The Cubist is trying to form road cubes to get the Humvee to either tip on its side, or slash out the tires! It's about 3 miles of high-speed hyper concentration to utter panic! Trencher spirals out the roads, trying to get me to spin off of it. Shifting gears every time to land back onto stable pieces somewhat help! It feels like I can make it if I keep my wits about me. Unfortunately, a surprise attack was in waiting for me. The Fogger forms a wall of fog in my general direction! I slam on the brakes to skid to the side of the road! This, is where the trap was set. Pitfaller get lucky. As I land near a fork to the path of Nema Forest, the hole it cracks apart doesn't puncture the foundation underneath the highway. Rather, he carefully places the shot *around* the general spot of the Humvee. Trencher then turns the spiral of the slab of road, shaping it into a spring with the help of the Cubist's pressure cubes. They pull the spring back, and launch the slab with me in the Humvee straight out towards the forest!

Time slows to a crawl. In free fall, I feel deja vu. I can recall the horrific moment where I lose her.

"Quick! We gotta keep running, Xavier!"

We're both running on fumes through The northwest district of Wake City's Ari District, trying to keep away from the Fogger's gaseous clouds closing in on our vicinity.

"Wh-Where do we head, honey?!"

"QUICK! Inside Cense Corps!"

We swerve a sharp left over to the central glass encased building. No other choice. We get inside, just before the gas blankets the whole complex.

We feel a tremor. Starts small. Then it increases.

The shifts force us to jump, as it keeps pounding through. First instinct kicks in as we hang from the chandelier up top! She barely makes it to hold onto my arm. I grab her right wrist, and witness the terror below. The Trencher's humongous tendril filled hole....

I'm losing grip of her. I struggle to keep my balance.

"Honey...remember our talk in Somalia?"

"Hilda, No!"

"...Live...Like you fathers before you...."~~

Review of *Septembers of Shiraz*

By: Nils Skudra

This week I watched *Septembers of Shiraz*, a 2015 film directed by Wayne Blair which portrays an affluent Jewish family in Tehran whose lives are profoundly changed by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Starring Adrien Brody and Salma Hayek-Pinault, the film focuses on Isaac Amin, the family patriarch who is arrested and struggles for survival in a secret prison while his wife Farnaz tries to secure his release and make sense of the revolution's causes. I feel that this film is particularly relevant today in light of the current antagonism between Iran and the U.S., and in some ways, it may resonate with viewers following the recent events in Afghanistan, given that the Taliban has regained power and is committing reprisals against Afghans who worked with the U.S. military presence. Upon seeing this film, viewers may find significant parallels between the depicted history and current events.

The film opens with Isaac (Brody) and Farnaz (Hayek-Pinault) hosting a farewell party for their son Parviz, who is departing for boarding school in the U.S., on the eve of the Iranian Revolution. It is a festive atmosphere, with both Jews and Muslims in attendance, and the Amins seem to have no inkling of the coming upheaval. Six months later, however, Isaac is anxiously following a television broadcast about the political repression under the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalist regime, which has not only imprisoned or executed former members of the deposed Shah's government but also many of the opposition elements who had helped lead the revolution. This prompts an argument between Farnaz and Isaac, who accuses her of turning a blind eye to the events around them and warns that they will eventually be targeted as well. Farnaz, on the other hand, feels that they must retain their sanity and sense of calm by keeping their heads down, particularly for the sake of their children.

Isaac makes an effort to comply with Farnaz's wishes by attending to his gemology business while keeping himself aloof from politics. However, things take a frightening turn when he is arrested by members of the Revolutionary Guards, who will not disclose the charges, and brought to a secret prison for political dissidents. The prison guards conceal their identities by wearing hoods over their faces, and Isaac is interrogated by an officer named Mohsen (Alon Aboutboul), who is mysteriously missing one finger. He questions Isaac about his business ventures and his trips to Israel, which is now an enemy of Iran, but Isaac affirms his innocence, maintaining that he has never been involved in any political activities. Mohsen shows him an article written by Farnaz, stating that it is a piece of propaganda in praise of alcohol (forbidden under Islamic law), but Isaac insists that she only wrote as an occasional freelancer and that neither of them is guilty of any wrongdoing.

When Farnaz learns of Isaac's arrest, she goes with her housekeeper Habibeh (Shohreh Aghdashloo) to the prison to visit him, but Mohsen refuses to disclose Isaac's whereabouts or the charges against him, coldly stating: "The time when people like you could demand things from people like us is over." This vindictiveness is further elaborated upon in Farnaz's subsequent encounter with Habibeh's son Morteza (Navid Navid), Isaac's former employee who has joined the Revolutionary Guards, when he is overseeing the confiscation of diamonds and jewelry from the office. When Farnaz protests against the false allegations that her husband exploited his employees, Morteza pointedly tells her: "This is not just about one man. It's about a whole collection of men. You benefited from a corrupt regime and traveled to places the rest of us never even dreamed of visiting." Together with her encounter with Mohsen, this statement compels Farnaz to gradually come to terms with the fact that she and Isaac lived in luxury while turning a blind eye to the political repression and social inequalities under the Shah's regime, which resulted in the revolution, but nonetheless she continues to defend her husband's innocence.

As Isaac languishes in prison, he reflects upon the state of the country in conversation with his fellow inmates, questioning the revolutionary leaders' claims that they will restore Iran's greatness. He looks back to the time of Cyrus the Great, then emperor of the Persian Empire, when all inhabitants enjoyed freedom of religion and interacted equally as neighbors, to which one prisoner replies: "That was 2,500 years ago. We think we are special because we were once great. Now we are barbarians." This resonates with Isaac due to the unconscionable physical and psychological torment that he and the other prisoners are subjected to, making it clear in his mind that the regime has brought Iran to the level of barbarism. Nonetheless, he finds moments of humanity among his captors, such as a masked guard who provides him with water and fresh bandages for his feet after a whipping and tells him that Mohsen was once imprisoned and tortured by SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, which

resulted in the loss of his finger and possibly his ability to have children, although he remarkably managed to have a son whom he plays with in the office above Isaac's cell. The guard then gives Isaac a copy of the Koran, encouraging him to have hope and faith since these were critical to Mohsen's survival in prison.

Isaac's ordeal nearly drives both him and Farnaz to the breaking point, as Farnaz is forced to relinquish family valuables to the Revolutionary Guards when they search the home. She finally tells Parviz over the phone about his father's predicament but urges him to stay in the U.S., where he is safe, and promises that the family will be reunited once they get out of Iran. Meanwhile, Isaac undergoes one last interrogation with Mohsen, in which he still maintains his innocence but confesses that he was guilty of pursuing material wealth, conceding that it brought him nothing in the end. The subsequent dialogue between the two men is highly meaningful because of what it reveals about Isaac's development:



Mohsen: "I once sat in a chair very similar to the one you're in. Now that the tables have turned, why should I have mercy on you?"

Isaac: "Because I have nothing to do with the people who caused you pain."

Mohsen: "Oh, but you do. You looked the other way."

Isaac: "Yes, you're right about that. I... I was blind. I recognize that now. But, please, brother, if you say that you sat in the same chair as me, then you must know my fear. And more than that, my despair at never seeing my family again."

Mohsen: "I not only know your fear, I can smell it. Afraid I've gotten addicted to it."

Isaac: "Then you are as much a prisoner today as I am. Your mercy may liberate me from these walls, but more than that, it will save you from yourself."

This exchange is truly profound since it demonstrates how Isaac has grown to empathize with his captors, as difficult as that might seem in light of his horrific circumstances. Although he has been deprived of his family and has suffered cruel mistreatment during his incarceration, Isaac has developed a consciousness of the suffering that many of his captors experienced under the Shah's regime, which he was previously oblivious to. Consequently, instead of seeking revenge, he appeals to Mohsen's humanity with the argument that showing mercy will redeem him from his own vindictiveness. This prompts a change in Mohsen's demeanor, as he removes his hood so that they can truly see each other, face-to-face, and asks Isaac what it would take to prove his innocence. Isaac replies that he can donate his entire life savings to the revolutionary cause in exchange for his freedom, which sets in motion a chain of events leading to his family's harrowing escape near the film's climax.

A highly intense and powerful film, *Septembers of Shiraz* delivers a compelling portrayal of the repression that impacted Iranian Jews and other political dissidents in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. Brody delivers a superb performance, perhaps his finest since *The Pianist*, brilliantly capturing Isaac's struggle to survive and retain his humanity under inhumane conditions, and Hayek-Pinault gives a stellar portrayal of Farnaz, who refuses to lose hope in spite of the emotional toll that she suffers from her husband's incarceration. In addition, the film provides a nuanced portrait of the Iranians involved in the revolution, highlighting the grievances that motivate their actions, although it does not condone these actions in any way. Furthermore, the film offers poignant commentary into the causes of Iran's current relationship with the U.S., and its depiction is particularly resonant today in light of the fact that Afghan refugees are desperately trying to escape repression under the reinstated Taliban regime. By taking note of these historical parallels, viewers will hopefully be motivated to lend their hand toward aiding Afghan refugees so that they may avoid the brutal fate that otherwise awaits them.~~

The Life of John Denver

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

Henry John Deutchendorf Jr. was born on October 12, 1942 and died in a small airplane crash on 1997. He was as an American folk and country song writer. He played as an actor in the Muppet Movies and *Oh God*. John Denver was best known as an activist for a humanitarian for the environment.



In the 1960s, John began singing with the group called the Trios. He was the most popular folk artist in the 70s with major hits such as “Rocky Mountain High.” During his lifetime, he produced over 33 albums and sold over 33 million in revenue. The theme of John Denver music was to assist people live life in harmony with nature. Flying played important role in his music. It represented the role of freedom, and of animals to become wild in their habit.

Some of John Denver greatest songs were the following: “Take me home, Country Roads,” “Annie Song” and “Rocky Mountain High.” Other famous songs were “Country Road,” “Thank God I’m a Country Boy” and “Sunshine on Shoulders.” I also enjoy listening to the songs “My Sweet Lady” and “I’m Sorry.”

Besides playing music, John Denver has played a major part in producing documentaries about our environment. John Denver produced a documentary called *Let this be a Voice* (1998) before he died of a small airplane crash. In his documentary, John has traveled with Jacques-Yves Cousteau” boat. to search the unknown depths of the sea for unknown creatures. The explorer searched for unknown sea creature all over the world before he died. After John Denver went skin diving with him, he wrote a beautiful song to honor the famous explorer name. The name of the song was “Calypso.” The famous explorer wanted mankind to take care of our oceans; as John Denver wanted to preserve our wildlife.

John Denver has played a major role in writing the Alaska Land Act in 1980 to save Alaska environment. Before the 1980s, major oil companies were causing some damage to the Alaska’s environment. John Denver wanted to preserve the wildlife, the culture, and the mountains of our 48th state. After President Carter has signed the bill, John Denver gave a speech to the audience on why it is important to save conserve our wild life. The Alaska Land Act Bill has given 100 million acres of wild life for the public lands. Furthermore, the bill has given Alaska dozens of new national parks and wildlife refuges for the public to camp.

From the Learning Tree Project website, children can learn many things through watching movies about wildlife and hiking through the woods. They are learning the following important lessons about life: participating in the environment helps youngsters in many positive ways in their life. For an example, it may likely address the problems of obesity, attention deficit, and childhood hood’s depression. When a group of children are walking through the woods, they are learning new skills in science, technology and mathematics. From observing the wild life, it assists them in solving new ways in critical thinking. Finally, children learn new ways to recycle our natural resources through the use of energy efficiency and water conservation.



In 1997, John Denver died of amateur plane crash off Monterey Bay in his experimental amateur aircraft. Looking at John Denver amazing life, the audience will likely appreciate his amazing talent in music and the environment. John Denver was known as greatest country folk singer of all time during the 1970s. He has played major roles in the Muppet Movies and *Oh God*. John Denver has produced numerous documentaries about our saving our environment. Finally, John Denver has given us new insights on ways to conserve our environment.~~

How to Cope with Hard Times

By: Maggie Jones

I have lived to see my life happy as it is. I didn't understand what death was until I was almost seventeen years old. I felt life was happy at one point, then it went downhill for me.

I was going to see my grandmother at the acute hospital, acute means there is a breathing tube that's in their throat to help them breathe.

And it was April 12, 2008 I went to see my grandmother, she wasn't that awake to see me or my mom. That day I didn't know that it would be the last day I ever saw my grandma here on earth. I sat across from my mother on the other side of my grandmother's bed. The first thing and the only thing I remember asking was "is she going to make it through ok? Is she going to pass?"

Then my mom looked at me saying one word I dreaded hearing about grandma, "No she may not, she might not make it overnight". I looked at my mom and she looked back at me with tears running down my face. My mom and I started to cry. As we left for the final time, I held grandma's hand while mom wasn't looking, and I kissed my almost lifeless grandmother's head and said I love you, God bless you for being my grandma.

The next day, Sunday, April .13, 2008, it was raining at the time but anyways, at 11:45am in the morning. I got a call that changed my life forever. When my dad said "well, Maggie grandma went to see Jesus". I knew at that moment she was gone. I hung up the phone and cried like mad that whole morning and that night I cried.

I felt i was alone most of my life then my dogs buddy Mitci and Brooke passed one year at a time 2015 2016, and 2017. I really felt all alone when Miss Susie passed in March of 2021.

I miss all of them, but would they really want me to cry or get upset a lot.

No, they would want me to do the next right things to keep trying even when it was hard too.

I go to the psychologist and psychiatrist for help. Never not want help, because help IS out there for people suffering from depression, anxiety or any mental illness. If you need help, call a good friend that you know you trust. If it gets worse, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room for help. Just knowing someone is there for you is important, very important. It is never ever too late to get help if you or a loved one needs mental help. Don't ever let it get that bad to the point of harming yourself or something worse. You matter too in this world. We all do.

Know that crying is letting it out and it's okay to let go in hard times, but always know, someone is there for you if you. And you are not alone.

I dealt with depression almost all my life. And so do a lot of people out there.

Just stop, stay in the moment if you are thinking of the past, stop, and drop whatever it was you were thinking of sad in the past. For you can't control what happened in the past or the future.

The right thing is to stay in the present and focus on now.

What can i do now to help others or how can i help myself get better at anything knowing you're not perfect, but trying your best is something not nothing.

We all make mistakes, it's what we do with that mistake, that matters.

Remember,

Let it go, drop it, and stay in the moment, don't give up, take good care of yourself and others in your family, and you will see the light out of the dark hole. Hope is still there when you believe.~~

Creed

Lilith's Dream

By: Dima Harmon

Lilith had had a very long day when she came home. She had to fix a problem with a business model that an individual made several mistakes on. She had to fix the found mistakes and send a detailed letter explaining the issues and formally apologizing for the inconvenience and that **she hoped this would not sour the business deal by offering a discount on the deal**. She was tired and was not exactly looking forward to coming home. Her husband, George, was supposed to take care of some things.



She walked through the front door and sighed at the depressing sight of the house. There was an etched gloom filtered through the house. What should have been a really nice wood and light coming through had the look of overcast grey and darkness that a storm would create. The dinner plate was ready for her and even the silver looked bland and on the verge of tarnishing. She opened the lid of the tray and the chicken and vegetables looked ragged and poorly put together.

Lilith took a couple bites of the bland ragged food and went to find George to see if things were handled. She didn't have to look far, George was slumped in an armchair by the fireplace, however the fireplace looked as miserable as everything else. George had a bottle in one hand and a pipe in the other, and there were a series of bottles on the floor strewn about some with some of the alcoholic contents in the bottle. It looked like George went about drinking and couldn't even remember that he still had some in the bottles before getting a new bottle.

Lilith remembered when she gave marriage a shot. After the opera there were a couple of other situations where they ran into each other and after several talks it seemed like it would be a good idea for marriage. Lilith was also the kind of person who would not oppose marrying someone that she was not sure of. Sometimes things work out, she would always say to herself. In addition from the business side and financial standpoint it seemed to make the most sense.

Lilith was praying to God that at least things got handled before the boozing took place. She woke up George very abruptly.

"GEORGE!" George woke up with a start and looked around trying to see who called his name.

"Oh, Dear home, glad your home. Hope your day went well."

"I see we are already several bottles in?" George looked around and had a look of disappointment on his face. "Oh I hadn't realized how many there were."

"You did promise me you would try to ease up on the bottles?" replied Lilith.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... to... to have this many." Stammered George.

"Did you take our contribution list to the capitol building for the Christmas ball?"

"Oh right I knew I was forgetting some things." Lilith was starting to get beside herself. "*Some things!*" she thought, "*Four things to do! Take the list, go to the bank to get a loan and make a payment on a property, mail the documents at the post office.*"

"So what did you get done then George?"

"I'm sorry I was going to go to get some of the stuff done but got enthralled by a book and started to have beverages." Lilith was having serious doubts about this marriage. It seemed that she was making all the effort in making things work and George was just sitting around getting drunk.

"Are you planning to go see how business is doing tomorrow?" George had a habit of not showing up to their shared business costing them clients and quite a bit of money,

"Sure I do, I'll be sure to be there at a reasonable time."

"How does Eight O'clock sound? So that way you can prepare for the new client that will be

showing up at nine- O'clock."

"Of course, dear...anything for you."

"Of course he says that," thought Lilith. *"That's all he ever says when the bottles start piling up."*

"Why don't we go to bed. So that way you will be up tomorrow." Lilith was getting tired of losing clients. Tired of having a weekly rotation of bland drunk conversations. Empty assurances followed by a slew of apologies and having to smell alcohol breath in bed. Lilith went into the dining room and called the maid. She was famished and was looking forward to having a meal. Within a minute or two the maid was in the dining room.

"Yes Ma'am? How may I help you?"

"Is Supper ready?" Replied Lilith.

"Not quite. Master was late on addressing when it should be made." Lilith was getting angry and agitated but knew this was not the Maids fault nor the cook.

"OK!" She exclaimed. "From now on Supper preparations need to start promptly at Five - O'clock!"

"Yes Ma'am." Replied the maid. Lilith huffed over back to George. Sharply told him to get up.

"Why didn't you tell the maid to inform the cook to start making dinner?"

"Ohhhh.... I'm sorry. I lost track of time."

"This is madness. Madness I say!" Thought Lilith. Every time she had a legitimate concern it was always replied with the phrase "I'm sorry." Or "It won't happen again dear." and of course the worst one when George was drunk was "I lost track of time."

"Of course it is easy to lose track of time when you have been coddling the bottles. Snapped Lilith.

"I'm sorry." slurred George.

"And that is another thing. Stop saying you are sorry all the time. It makes you sound very unintelligent. You sound like a child. You are a man and the man of the house needs to take responsibility and admit when he is wrong. I am a lady. Typically a lady only has to worry about several things around the house. Decor, clothes and what parties we will be attending and such. Not the whole aspect of the house."

George was gazing up at her with a dazed shocked look. Lilith was clearly showing how displeased she was. It seemed like the past six months she was dealing with everything.

"Now George, get out of the chair and let's go sit at the table while we wait for the supper to be made." George did as he was told and got up, wobbled out of the room and into the dining hall and sat at the head of the table. They waited for a half hour while George drank more ale, and Lilith tried to enjoy a glass of red wine. When the food came out they dug in. Lilith was very elegant when she ate, taking very small bites and sipping the glass of wine.

Meanwhile George was fumbling around and was missing his mouth quite a few times. Towards the end George's shirt was looking worse for wear with slopped ale and gravy and a random assortment of crumbs and bits of chewed meat and vegetables. Lilith was not looking forward to getting to sleep. She almost had the idea of making him sleep somewhere else in the house.

"Well then shall we get to bed then dear?" asked George.

"You go ahead, I will be there shortly." Replied Lilith who was making an effort to not show her voice cracking slightly, and a big knot in her throat.

"Ok then." With that George stumbled out of the room and was stomping upstairs completely unaware how loud he was leaving Lilith on the verge of tears due to how difficult this day was.

It was at this point Lilith woke up very suddenly. It had been a dream. She was not married to George. The house she was in was her parents. She double checked the hallways to make sure the walls were a rich shiny mahogany. There was no dry decadent look to the house. In fact whatever house she was dreaming she was in was had no familiarity. She went downstairs, had the Maid of the house fix her muffins and tea and she sat outside in the fall weather to enjoy the breeze and clear her head.~~

How Nickelodeon's Rugrats Captured Our Hearts

By: John Kruike

Rugrats (slang for a toddler) was one of Nickelodeon's top-rated cartoons of which me and my sisters were big fans! It premiered in August of 1991 (along with *Doug and Ren & Stimpy*) and follows the daily lives/adventures involving Tommy, Chuckie, Phil and Lil, Angelica, Susie (introduced in the second season), and arriving in a 1998 film Dylan ("Dill"). In the second movie Kimmi, Kira, Fifi were introduced. A pilot was made (but never aired) called "Tommy Pickles and The Great White Thing" and was included as a bonus feature on VHS and DVD releases of *Rugrats: A Decade in Diapers* in which viewers voted on their favorite episodes from 10 years of the show in 2001. Tammy Hollibrook voiced Tommy in the unaired pilot but would be voiced by E.G. Daly when it became a full series for Nickelodeon. Peter Chung was the storyboard director for the pilot only and wanted the babies to sound "strange" rather than "cute" Mark Mothersbaugh and his brother Bob (founders of 80's band DEVO) would compose music. Klasky Csupo (pronounced Chew PO) tested the pilot and it soon became a big hit for Nickelodeon.

Rugrats had gained a total of 20 awards during its 13-year run, including 4 Daytime Emmys, 6 Kids Choice Awards, and its own star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

I will now tell you about some of the known characters and their voice actors.

Grandpa "Lou" Pickles - From time to time he's been known to sleep but loves spending time with the children. He also likes to fish. Also, the number 15 has been significant with him as he's been known to mention it in any story he tells. His first voice actor was Charlie's Angels star (and occasional Match Game panelist) David Doyle. He voiced the character from 1991 to 1997. When David passed away Joe Alasky took over voicing the character. Lou Pickles was seen in nearly every *Rugrats* episode (the last appearance being in the spinoff *All Grown Up*). David Doyle was also the only voiceover cast member to die during the original run. At the end of the story "Lady Luck" there was a dedication in his memory. In 2020, Michael McCaine became the third voice actor to voice the character.

Lulu Pickles - She became Lou's second wife in the second movie.

Stu Pickles - Father of Tommy and Dill and liked experimenting with toys. He was voiced by Jack Riley who was in a lot of TV shows/commercials back in the day. From voice overs for "Country Crock" butter to *Laugh In* (where he portrayed President Lyndon Johnson) He passed away in 2016, but his acting legacy will live on in reruns.

Christine Cavanaugh - **Chuckie Finster** (voiced by Cavanaugh) was often scared and once declared, "No more adventures for ME!" He then changed his mind to save Tommy from a gardening hose (what the babies thought was a snake) because he could never stay mad at a friend. Cavanaugh left the show for personal reasons and was replaced by Simpsons voiceover actress Nancy Cartwright. I personally liked when she did the voice better than Nancy. She passed away in 2014. Nick Splat aired a marathon of her best moments voicing Chuckie after she died.

Tommy - Brave and a courageous leader of the troop. His best-known quote was and always will be... "A baby's gotta do what a baby's gotta do." Whenever he'd say "Reptar" Didi or Stu would misinterpret it as "riff raff" or "rip roar".

Phil and Lil - The two who were fascinated with eating worms and argued with each other. The two twins (as well as their mother) were voiced by Kath Souce.

Drew Pickles - Brother to Stu and both argued the most during the show's run. Drew and Stu were fighting even since they were "rugrats" themselves, but they once cooperated to find a "working" television so they could watch their favorite show Blocky & Ox Winkle (parody of Rocky & Bullwinkle which Nick was also airing at the time the story first aired) He was also the father of Angelica.

Angelica Pickles - Bossy 3- to 4-year-old who knows more than the babies. Paul Germain felt the show needed a bully. Angelica was based on a bully from Germain's childhood, who was a girl. He decided she should be a spoiled brat. Arlene Klasky didn't like Angelica and she would protest against her actions. For example, when she threw Tommy's ball over a

fence in “Barbeque Story.” Cheryl Chase even had trouble portraying the character’s voice. Steve Viksten, who was a writer, said that Angelica was the J.R. Ewing of the show. When Klasky saw the character and how she acted in the 1998 movie she changed her mind about the character.

From 1995 to 1996 when the series went on hiatus, the only new shows aired were “Passover” and “Hanukkah” It was also seen on Nick Jr. and the normal Nickelodeon block as well as NickMom which was a block seen after Nick Jr. for a brief time. It was also a huge hit in other countries such as Ireland and the UK. The episodes took a year in advance to produce. First, the stories had to get written and then approved. The next phase consisted of voice recording, storyboarding, pre-eliminating animation, overseas production, followed by editing and polishing. All of that had to happen before Klasky Cuspo sent the master tapes to Nick. In 2001 the series celebrated its 10th Anniversary and a special (which would eventually lead to a spinoff) *All Grown Up* aired as well as *Still Babies After All These Years* narrated by Amanda Bynes.

From 1994 to 2012, it was Nickelodeon’s longest-running cartoon. It was surpassed by *Spongebob Squarepants* that year when Squitius/Demolition Doofus aired. The last episode aired in 2004 along with *Hey Arnold!*, *The Wild Thornberrys*, and *Rocket Power*. It was seen in reruns on weekends in the 6 to 6:30 time frame in the USA until April 28th, 2013.

Reception and Controversy

Since it debuted in 1991, *Rugrats* has generally received positive reviews from critics and fans. Steven Spielberg said the show was one of the “best children’s shows at the time.” He also described it as “a modern TV *Peanuts* of our time.” It was also named the 92nd best series by IGN. *Rugrats* was a strong point of Nickelodeon’s rise during the 1990’s. James Charisma (of Paste Magazine) ranked the opening sequence as #11 of “The Best TV Opening Sequences of All Time”

Rugrats was noteworthy among contemporary children’s television for depicting observant, identifiable Jewish families. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious groups gave the show high praise for the special holiday episodes. Nonetheless, at one point the Anti-Defamation League and The Washington Post editorial castigated the series for its depiction Tommy Pickles’ maternal grandparents, accusing their character design of resembling Nazi-era depictions of Jews.

Nineteen video games were made. Here are some of them:

The Rugrats Movie - based on the movie of the same name. It was compatible with the original Game Boy and the Game Boy Color!

Scavenger Hunt - A board game based idea for the N64.

Rugrats in Paris - based on the movie of the same name. For N64 and the GBC.

There were also cereal and Pop Figurines based on the characters from the show. At one time there were real Reptar Bars that actually made your tongue green!

There were home video/DVD releases of their specials/stories as well. Even toys from Burger King.

Revival: On July 16th, 2018, it was announced that the series would be given a 26-episode revival, executive produced by Arlene Klasky, Gabor Cuspo, and Paul Germain. The series (as well as the new *iCarly*) can be seen on Paramount Plus. Paul Germain thought the episodes of *All Grown Up* were “poor” “I thought they lost the spirit of the original.” he said.

Comics

From 1998 to 2003, Nick created a *Rugrats* comic strip, produced by Creator’s Syndicate. It started out in many newspapers, but like many spin-offs slowed down. Two paperback collections were made. “It’s a Jungle Gym Out There!” and “A Baby’s Work is Never Done.” There were all comic magazines including a retelling of the “*Rugrats in Paris*” story. The comic books included short stories (many by Pittarese) and games, as well as reprints from an earlier, UK produced *Rugrats* comic. On October 18th, 2017 “Boom! Comics” made a new comic book series based on the characters.

I might be seeing them now streaming on Pluto (we downgraded a lot of channels on the Dish and are seeing some now as free previews only including the 90’s Nick Block on TeenNick) but some stories captured our hearts and we never forgot that fact. It’s still a pop culture icon. And I’m sure Christine, Jack, and David as well as those involved still here would be proud that we’re still watching to this very day! ~~

TORONTO

By: Mark D. Lizotte

Toronto, Canada



Interesting facts about Toronto

- 1. Toronto is Canada's largest city. It has a population of 2.73 million people.*
- 2. In 1975, Toronto's CN Tower became the world's tallest free-standing structure. Today, it is the world's ninth tallest structure.*
- 3. Between 1914 and 2017, the Toronto Argonauts won the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup 17 times. A Grey Cup Final is similar to a Super Bowl.*
- 4. The Hockey Hall of Fame is in Toronto.*
- 5. Movie stars from this city include Jim Carrey, Mike Myers, and Eugene Levy. John Candy was from suburban Toronto.*

MONTREAL

By: Mark D. Lizotte



Interesting facts about Montreal

- 1. Montreal is the second largest city in Canada. It has a population of 1.78 million people.*
- 2. The city hosted the 1976 Summer Olympics.*
- 3. Mount Royal, located near the downtown area, offers a great view of the city. It is similar to Pittsburgh's Mount Washington.*
- 4. In 1879, the city's Mc Gill University started the world's first organized hockey team.*
- 5. Montreal's Underground City is a group of tunnels connecting shopping malls, museums, hotels, and offices below the ground.*

N'dlis (Pt. 7)

By: Jordan Watson

Seeing her fall, straight into the gaping mouth of tendrils. The realization on her face, wasn't that of fear. But of contempt. It doesn't stop me screaming from every part of my soul. The love of my life. The dream that we'd survive together.....

The sound of flowing water and the ambiance of nature tickles my ears. I struggle to open my eyes to gain clarity of my surroundings. Feeling the earth from between my fingers, it's filled with dead leaves and moist soil. After regaining my vision, I pick myself up from the ground to see that my predicament has landed me within Hema Forest itself. On my feet, I feel astounding aches and tears in my upper muscles. I reach into my right satchel to see if there's any syringes left. Ach, dammit! Cut myself with the broken glass filled within it. There's only one left. I look at it and hesitate on whether it should be needed for this situation. With the luck I've had this whole week, it may be best to preserve it. I dump the broken glass from the satchel, leaving room for the last one. The Humvee crashed about 60 feet away from my vicinity. Most of the stock I had loaded into it scattered across all over the forest. Heading back to the wreckage, I do find my backpack somewhat intact, with my tactical bow lodged into a tree, and two CAGs left beside the punctured right front tires. Some of the MREs in the trunk have busted open. All completely dried and gone to waste. I check my watch for the time. Currently 1640 PM. I have no choice but to hunt for the majority of the day before it gets dark.

1830 PM. I use this time to form a small perimeter to attract any wildlife that passes through. From making a leaf poncho with the raw materials around me, to setting up a net trap in the center with some raw edible vegetation sprawled for any wildlife to nibble upon. The traps are set, and the pheromones that I've dispersed across the center field of the forest can attract rabbits, squirrels, or even deer. I keep myself hidden within the wooded bramble next to a redwood tree, 600 feet away from the setup. About 20 minutes into it, I see a group of four rabbits jump from the shrubbery, including a 12-point buck come and convey the smorgasbord of greenery. The rabbits are quick to munch on the leaves in front of them, while the buck sniffs around the stick that triggers the trap. It takes about 3 minutes before trying to pull on the branch.

SCCCHWIIP!

Hearing the small howls it makes, with the rabbits underneath its giant furry exterior, I walk near the site. I see a couple of the rabbits crushed underneath its weight, while the other two are struggling to wriggle free. I look into the deer's eyes, and caress its face, before doing what needs to be done.

"I'm sorry for this, guys."

1938 PM. As I sit beside the campfire, taking the carcass of the deer off the makeshift spit roast for me to gain sustenance, I lie back and let my mind wander into its own, lonely recesses. The first thing that forms within my memory, is when everyone including myself from O.W.L. were combing through the foods market within the Jiangnan District for any suspicious vendors. During 2025, a lot of the marketplaces that use to sell the unethical cooked animals like dogs, various insects, and yes, even flying mammals altogether were shut down by some of the US consorts in Beijing. Most of the curators were rather relieved but took a while to adjust to the new health system being put into place to our own shadow government. Didn't stop a few stragglers who were in the CCP's pocket to try and keep the markets going underground. As Dyson and Julian were enjoying the actual fresh produce from new-



ly made chicken eggs, Westie, Hilda and myself went through the fish markets as part of the wrap-up to our recon. One of the smaller curators, Daolen, was selling puffer fish, and other exotic sea assortments before he called forth our attention. Luckily, Hilda's bilingual skills came in handy when the elderly man was wishing to talk with us. He told us that the job we had been doing to help liberate his people behind the scenes had not gone unnoticed. He wanted to congratulate us with some complimentary spider crab legs. Though he also recognized Hilda the most since she visited the market frequently. According to her, she had actually been giving him code words on the mission we were undergoing to finalize the sting with Fùxīng. To our surprise, he felt something needed to be told, and soon. He directed us into his tent and turned off the radio and phone near his belongings, since the CCP had been cracking down on whom they could monitor in their activities. They personally wanted to avoid another Hong Kong/Taiwan uprising occur like back in 2022. We helped do the same. He started to clear his throat, to speak broken English as best as he could.

“We as the Chinese people have often been known to not just have the greatest, and oldest known philosophies to mankind, but also the most ancient mythologies as well. There once was a tale my grandfather had been passed down by his ancestors, and next of kin like myself. It was known as “The Child of Ripples”. Long ago, the Gods collectively had wished for the universe to expand into a perpetually infinite empire. In doing so, they used their own natural born traits. Intricacy. Synchronicity. Uncertainty. Revitalization. These principals helped give birth to Peprit, The Child of Ripples. He has the ability to change the ripples of time and space with the four principals his mothers and fathers bestowed upon him. Many believe in traditional tales like Ne Zha, The White Snake, or even Journey to the West. But *this* tale, has been a well-kept secret for centuries. The reason I bring this to your attention, is that Fùxīng may have involved themselves *too much* in using this tale as their guideline. To unleashing something far, *far* more distressing...”

If not for the sudden realization that I had come to from my memories, it was certainly the ill-timed noises that were resounding from within the forest.

Wailing sounds. Dying sounds. Unholy yelps and... demonic reverberations. Like if deer were being eaten alive. Or bears were howling. Even....cats from grave injuries? I turn my night vision on from my visor. Keeping myself alert, I survey the sounds coming closer to the camp site. I take my tactical bow from beside me, loading it with ballistic head rounds. Even keep my CAG satchel at the ready. The sounds are becoming much more haunting. Almost as if they're coming from three different corners of the forest.

Upon my 3 o'clock, A 10-point buck walks out from the darkness in the forest. Then two more fawns from the left and right side. Something didn't seem natural about their movement. They pulsate...Beneath them, bubbled flesh and faces form, melting the leaves from underneath, revealing the disgusting monstrosities that arose. The complete nightmare I'm witnessing. Mounds of deer carcass, bear bodies, and screeching cat ligaments, all melded together, rising from the soil. Smoke emerges from their imprints. From up ahead, the disgusting mob of disproportionate, amorphous blobs pulse forth. I see in the distance what mounts it....

This....abomination...is new. It hasn't been a part of the posse of other Gen'rélích that I know of. From what the night vision can pick up, its head resembles that of a flesh armored knight, with a disturbing triangular, and sharply pointed flesh shoulders. The slits where the eyes would be light up, and its helmet flap reveals gnarly teeth to compensate its intimidating figure. It, alongside its abominable mount, pierces my ears with shrill, otherworldly vibrations! I start dashing away from its vicinity while following the sound of the river path! Cannot afford to look behind me or take any chances what and where the rest of its unholy mount has covered!

Eighteen minutes I'd been sprinting! As I run through the forest, keep my hearing intently listening to the water, portions of the forest make flesh emerging hills, melting away like.... acid?! I look up ahead. Looks like a dead end? No.....an entrance way?! A rusted steel doorway! I hear something fizzy being launched. I look behind me. That...Morpher is slithering towards me at breakneck speed! It spits in my direction! I try to block it with my right arm! It directly lands smack dab on my right wrist! GAAAAH! F**K, IT BURNS LIKE ABSOLUTE HELL! Get to the door and open up the seal! Take out a CAG! Throw it directly at the filthy bastard! One last roar! Gotta shut the door.... ~

This is Me

By: Julia Fieldhammer

This is me
Silent and still
Watching them be free
Drowning in a sea of tears
Feels like I won't see land for years
Fire burning in my chest
Why am I such a mess
I know I have to trust in him
He's going to help me get a win
This girl that I want to be
She's nowhere to be seen
Looking at my reflection
Where am I going and where have I been
I know happiness comes from within
But still I struggle to accept what is
attitude
gratitude
Even though I want to be like everyone else
I appreciate myself
I will find the joy
Oh boy will I soar
This life I've been given
It hasn't been easy
It's been a wild ride
I live it with pride
For I am myself
Joyful courageous funny
Me ~ ~

Father's Retirement

By: Nathaniel Geyer

On Wednesday, August 25, 2021, my adoptive father, Dr. Edward Geyer, DMD, retired from his dental practice in Harrisburg, PA. He started his Practice officially on July 2, 1978, at a location across the street from his former dental practice, in Harrisburg, PA. About 10 months later he married my adoptive mother, in a ceremony in Hershey, PA. Four years later they adopted me, and I have been with them to present day. For 43 years he has work tirelessly at his dental practice, doing general dentistry, but not root canals. I have never met a person who was more than willing to do a task for 43 years like my father. He taught me about having a strong work ethic and being able to know your strengths and weaknesses. He was a good athlete, who used to do all sports, until he hurt his knee in an accident. He still likes to play golf, workout at the gym, and coaching basketball at the high school and middle school level, both girls and boys. He never gives up when things are going the wrong way, which was a surprise when he announced his retirement. Some of the explanations he gives were COVID-19, his friend, and mother's deaths, earlier this year. Although he has stopped working, he will continue to do what he loves to do. Since retiring last month he has convinced me to work-out more often, book tee times at different golf courses, and had lunches together more often, since I am still working remotely from COVID-19, until next year. I have never felt this lucky to be his son, and despite losing my grandmother in February 2021, the bond has only been stronger. For the first time he watched my 5-year-old niece when my mother was sick for the day, and they when to the golf course and played tennis, when she had an Inservice day from first grade. Which made my nieces day, where she was active, but tired out when she went home, which pleased her family. Since his retirement we have walked the golf course at night, where he often shots at around 75 in a par 72 course. On the six-year anniversary of my grandfather's death he shot an ace or hole in one on a par 3 hole overlooking a pond, one night we walked the course, which made our day. Although he is retired, he will still be getting building and practice payment from his former associate and will hopefully be able to polish my families' teeth. However, for the first time I will have to get dental insurance and pay some of the bills, which is a small concession to spending more time with my dad. I am hopeful that as the time after retirement comes that we will continue to have a strong relationship and he will continue to be a great father and grandfather to my sister's and my family, which I am still single. I wish him a happy retirement!~~

TIME FREEZE

By: Joseph Cepek

An Appropriate Warning:

A mind-bending and possibly controversial analysis is about to be explained. Please be as calm as you can be. This is an odd and fictional tale. A supernatural deity has caused this unprecedented event to occur. Suddenly the time on the planet Earth kept playing over and over again. The stated date in examination here is Monday, January 6, 1992 at midnight. This said date inexplicably began once again. As was the case in the 1993 movie Groundhog Day, the same day kept occurring.

However, unlike in the movie, Monday, January 6, 1992 endlessly continues! Tuesday, January 7 1992 never comes!

Instantaneously, all adults cannot go past the eleventh grade. Their educational, vocational, and financial status melts away at once! All are on an equal- social economic status all of a sudden! Eleventh graders fifteen years and older are constantly teaching other high school juniors 366 days inside of the same calendar year! Since 1992 has 366 days, all days fall on January 6! Summer vacations for students and faculty members are eliminated! Breaks in winter and spring still occur. All who are younger than the before-stated minimum age can only hope to one day be juniors in high school in an immortal state. This is because time ceases to exist as it was known at 11:59pm on Sunday, January 5, 1992 and beforehand!

The best part of an otherwise strange ordeal is that by a divine miracle of epic proportions, all aspects of society remain mostly the same, despite the permanent time freeze!

Infrastructure projects such as bridges, river locks and dams, necessary roadway repairs, traffic patterns, food service operations etc. continue on as before!

In terms of everyday life, there is a mixed bag of both positive and negative consequences! The most positive aspect is that all who died before Sunday, January 5, 1992 are brought back to life forever, just like Jesus! The most negative drawback is that no one can be born since this established 24- hour time warp takes effect at midnight on Monday, January 6, 1992!

There is no longer any need for funerals, funeral homes and directors, wills, crypts, mausoleums, morgues, hearses, wakes, pall bearers, morticians, tombs, cremation urns, caskets, grave diggers and cemeteries! Therefore, global over- population, water, poverty, shelter and food deficiencies are taken care of without any human efforts getting in the way as possible negative consequences.

All become sterile, (unable to reproduce) as a direct result of the time blockade. This includes all animal and plant kingdom members.

No new stars or any other space entities can be made. As with all animals, plants, and persons born before the time suspension, all once dead celestial bodies are brought back to life, thus never to physically die again. This is bad news for technology enthusiasts. Technology devices stay the same. Therefore, there are no more smart phones, iPads, podcasts, social media sites, and other advanced telecommunications gadgets and related internet resources are ever invented. These items did not exist in 1992 nor in earlier times.

For those who like autumn and spring weather over the other two seasons, they have to endure either summer or winter weather on a permanent basis. This depends on where they reside. Typically, the southern hemisphere has the opposite season of the northern hemisphere. The same events of 1-6-92 keep playing over and over as all get older, yet they show no inward/outward signs of aging. All minds

are working well despite individual age differences. For example, an eighty-one-year-old has the same mental and physical abilities as a twenty-one-year-old.

A somewhat ideal living situation has come forth in the most unusual manner. Some may embrace the unprecedented event with full acceptance; while others have a mixed reaction to the same reality. If, for example, one wants to be a biological parent, or go past the eleventh grade, he or she cannot do so. This can be very disappointing to these individuals. Why? Well, human free will, which means the ability to make choices, as in regard to pursuing further education and procreation are not present, because of the date stagnation. This is a major downside to the time trap.

As is expected from what was previously reported concerning educational pursuits, postsecondary schools cease to exist. There is no longer need for further educational pursuits past the high school junior year anymore. All college tuition debts are automatically cancelled out. Additionally, all private primary and secondary school tuition costs also are erased due to the time lapse.

Yet the many positives, including the ones just mentioned, are the cessation of wars, homelessness, income inequality, in addition to gender and race relations problems. Divine intervention is in full control. Thus, while making worthwhile improvements on the planet, the aforementioned restrictions on educational and procreative plans reveal that there are unavoidable consequences for previous human disobedience as in relation to a higher power.

In this theological viewpoint, it may be seen by many as extremely austere by limiting the lifestyles of many. This certainly does not sit well with atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, and those who follow their own self-prescribed code of ethics. Even a number of the religious community do not agree with the procreation and educational pursuit bans.

Since everything and everyone now lives forever, those former divisive issues are therefore eradicated by a divine mandate. Fortunately, this said edict is beyond imperfect human influence. This said commentary is born of the basic idea to see things be much better in a more ideal world. However, all of the necessary components, in order to please everyone, cannot be met with complete approval by all. So, as a result, the unexpected time lock is not entirely popular.

This is simply analyzing all the potential advantages and disadvantages which could come to pass if such an Earth-altering scenario took place. In reality, the actual likelihood of it happening is really impossible.

No one can control time from a human perspective. It is an undeniable fact, yes!

Epilogue:

Once again, please be as calm as you can be.

Amazingly, through divine intervention, the time freeze is stopped. However, all of the proceeding data still applies as in regard to life on Earth. The time freeze was divinity's way of getting into better communication with animate creatures and beings residing on the only inhabitable planet in the solar system. Yet not all of humanity accepts the established guidelines brought forth. Although unlike what was previously stated about the date stagnation, Tuesday, January 7, 1992 and all following dates, do come after all.~~

Happy Change, Happy Fall

By: Maria Palmer

Kennywood has been a place to come and make a lot of memories whether it's an event or a picnic or just a regular planned day to ride, eat or anything else but this year is a completely different. Ever since the fall season began Kennywood has found different ways to enjoy the fall season. For the past couple of years, Kennywood Park has incorporated the Halloween theme in their park but now kids are going to be happy and grownups are wanting to get scared again after a year of corona.

However, Kennywood Park has changed its way of celebrating the Halloween season. The pumpkin jack-o-lantern gate is up and that is the sign saying welcome back to our Kennywood Park Halloween season. However it's not the same Halloween fun that you may remember it to be. Kennywood Park gave their Halloween season a different name and it is one name instead of two.

Kennywood park has also extended its fun time for children and has shortened its horror time for adults. When Kennywood Park had phantom fright night it ended at 1am and when they had happy hauntings it ended at 4pm but now everyone will be happy with the name and the time change. For those that can't stay out too late and don't like to get scared too much, this Halloween season Kennywood Park has called it Phantom Fall Fest. During the day time Kennywood Park will bring in the family fun time during the day time at first the family fun used to end at 4pm but since then kids felt that they were left out for much more than what they wanted. Kids now get to enjoy more with an extended two hour window from 12-6pm which will make every child happy. Not only that, most of the employees are happy as well for those that work in the Parkside Café they are happy that it will be open not as a horror maze like it was in the past but now people can come in and enjoy a place to eat and get warmed up at the same time. As for the horror nights which now start at 6 or 6:30 instead of 5 they have shortened their ending time at 11pm instead of 1am but Kennywood is already setting up for their season and spooky fun for all ages during the day and during the night. The entrance that welcomes you with a pumpkin gate to take a photo of you and your family or just the kids with silly pumpkins being stacked on each other with smiles on their pumpkin faces.

The Kenny arcade is being set up at the maze that will scare you during the night when all the kids have left. During the day it's ok for your little one to be in costume but sometimes there are by standards that must be met for you see during the summer they put in a chaperon policy set at 4pm but during Halloween there is an age limit. A limit of costume wearing at the ages of 12 and under kids are allowed to wear costumes during the day activities. 13 and older they are not allowed to wear costumes; I guess you can say that there is a time when we have to stop playing pretend and let reality kick in as for the night I don't know what the age limit is it might be for 13 and older or 16 and older or maybe 18 and older I don't know but I know an age limit must be set for all things especially for Halloween. I am a fan of Halloween, just not of scary stuff unless I want to scare people but only if I wanted to become a scarier for nighttime fun at Kennywood. Deep down in my heart I would rather just be a person to pretend to be a character. My tradition that I try to do every year is to dress up as a friendly character on Halloween as kids are trick or treating because I am the type of person to bring smiles to children's faces.

After having a Halloween experience when I was 5 and 15 years old let's just say when it comes to kids I never want them to go through the same thing as I did. That is why I try to dress up as a friendly character or person that won't scare the kids and won't bring them to tears Halloween might be fun for some but for others it's best to stay friendly as possible for those that are still young and can't handle being scared. I guess that's why it's good to go to a place like this at Kennywood where we can have both I am fine with that. I am happy that I am doing the day time and I can just enjoy farms that we can get pumpkins and so much more fall is right around the corner and to me, I rather enjoy simple Halloween stuff getting candy, picking pumpkins, raking leaves, and so much more. I hope you have a good time at Kennywood Halloween Phantom Fall Fest more time of fun for kids and less time for scare during the night.~~



How to Review

By: Andrew Olsavicky

Over the last few years I have gotten into making reviews on places like “Google Maps” and giving my opinions on things like YouTube Videos. I would like to share with you some of my thoughts as to what makes for a good review in general so that in the future people who also have the opportunity to do so will have an idea about how to proceed. The first thing I do, at least in writing “Google Map” reviews is to start off by giving a general feeling of the place I am reviewing whether it be good or bad basically. I then go into why I feel that what I am reviewing is good or bad sighting the good and bad things individually with as much detail as I can remember and give. If something about what I review is good I usually state the reason why it is so good and if possible why it is most significant to the place under review, and I do the same basic thing if there is something I find bad about the place. One example of this is how I like it when restaurants serve “Pepsi Products” as opposed to “Coca Cola Products” especially if the place is in the city of Pittsburgh, as I consider Pittsburgh to be a “Pepsi Town,” or that it should be at least. With that I often tell places in my reviews that they should switch from Coke to Pepsi and in either case that they should offer caffeine-free soda in addition to the regular stuff. I also make other suggestions about what a place might do to improve on what they are doing so that they continue to improve as time goes on.

I review places that preform services from doctors’ offices and hospitals to automotive shops and TV repair places. Oftentimes in those cases I find it helps to sight out the individuals who are especially helpful in these places. One example of this was how I sighted a man working at an auto repair place for not trying to upsell you on the services that you need for your car, which is a rarity. The only other thing I tend to review for the most part are movies, usually in the category of YouTube Videos, and in some cases I will make videos for YouTube as well. In these instances, I often will start off by explaining that my reviews are those of someone who has both Asperger's Syndrome and OCD as well as saying how I will look at each part of a video piece by piece. Lately the videos I watch that I review are those 10 facts about something videos and I give my opinion in separate comments about each of the 10 things one at a time. I then give a general opinion about what I think of the video and what I’d like to see in the future as well as leave links to various things I have done or started usually petitions that I want to see brought into the light. Granted some of my opinions have been controversial and, in some cases, have made people unhappy but as I have the right to express myself, I see no reason I should not do so. In conclusion, I want to say that doing these reviews gives me two big pleasures: I get to express my opinions and hopefully get them seen or heard, and I get to help people make a decision about whatever it is that I am reviewing. I hope that those of you who read this article will use this knowledge to make reviews of your own and that you will enjoy doing so as much as I do.~~

A Tale of Braveheart Everfaith

Book one: the tales that really matter, Chapter two

By: Maggie K. Jones

Lily Braveheart Everfaith knighted.

Once she got to Rivendell with Frodo, James saw them and was happy to see they were good. She was accompanied with the elven princes of Mirkwood, Legolas, and his son Letheren. Felix son of Gimli, and Gimli.

The meeting took place in Rivendell after a few days after arriving there, after everyone was seated, the king of Mirkwood came to the King of Rivendell's side to ask of a favor of this so called fellowship to make his grandson Letherin to be the ringbearer this time, but Elrond said no. Only the one strongest enough will go. But that isn't right. Thranduil said it's not fair he should take it to Mordor, then shouting from across the room, who is taking the ring to Mordor?

They asked each other, then it turned the dawn of day into night, then, into a bad argument after Roslin said no, I should be crowned royalty after this rubbish event, then it got heated. The elves against the dwarf lords, against the race of men's ideas. Then Lily shouted, "I will take this piece of jewelry to Mordor, and have it made so that if males can do it so can autistic female halfling! And I will!"

Everyone stopped and was puzzled; why this hobbit, that's a little girl that thinks she is better than an excuse! Thranduil was in rage of fury inside. But Elrond said why do you want to risk doing that. Then Thranduil said why would you dare say that? You're just a little girl halfling who thinks she is better than a man he said, also you are not strong enough to an orc blade neither a dragon, besides you're not as capable as any of us, then.....

NONSENSE she is very much capable of so many things. I saw her help out Frodo at Weathertop. STOP said the angry king of Mirkwood. She is defenseless, no..... She is not said with an angrier hesitant voice of Prince Letheren defending Lily's word. I'll go with her, then Felix son of Gimli said I'll go i lend you my axe, then James and Aaron said they would come too. Gandalf and Adam said I will accompany you to the end of all things. Lilly said thank you guys for coming with me to Mordor. Elrond was impressed and said, "let it be known on this day, a dawn of a new fellowship is now here, the fellowship of Braveheart Everfaith."

Frodo smiled at Lilly, letting her know how proud he was of her to stand up to the council of Elrond. And the fact that she saved him was brave enough. He said to Lily, with many thanks for to save my life like this is a brave thing. You remind me of Samwise the brave. Then, Lily smiled back at Frodo and told him he has her trust to come.

Then, Roslen thought of the consequences that his secret master had told him before this. He went back to his own home, other than Mirkwood. He had a fixed crystal black ball that was mended together, he looked into it thinking, master in the dark of shadow, tell me where this fellowship was heading? Why are they listening to a young little brat, she knows nothing the dark shadow said so. And so, he was going to make a plan to destroy middle earth for good and take control of the Valar as the dark lord planned.

The next day they went on their way to Mordor to destroy the ring of power once again. With consequences leading in front of them, including, Lily. Lily saw in her mind of thoughts deep thinking what could be if she didn't return to her home, the shire. After all that happened, she had a bad feeling about that said out loud decision to have a fellowship with her to aid her. They went as usual with guidance and saw Lily Braveheart Everfaith walking in the distance.

She thought to herself too of what her father said back at home of her grandfather's story that he would always tell of, Frodo then told Lily that his best friend Samwise the Brave said something to me that kept me going to the end of all things he said when he was still alive. Then Frodo told lily about the story of the tales that really matter and that what was what we were really fighting for and holding on to.

"It was like in the great stories the tales that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were and sometimes you didn't want to know the end because how can the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad happened? But, in the end it's the only a passing thing even darkness must pass. And when it will shine.

Those are the stories that stay with you that meant something, even when you were too small to understand why. I know now. Folk and those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't because they were holding on to something.

When Lily asked, "what are we holding on to, Mr. Frodo sir?"

Then he turned to Lily and said, "there is some good in this world and it's worth fighting for."

Lily smiled and said, "truly, he was a good friend to you."

This was a tale that really mattered to her too; after all, she was Braveheart Everfaith.

To be continued...

The Life of Paul Shannon

By: Daniel Ashkin

Adventuretime

Today, we are facing many types of social and racial problems in this country. The former resident of the United States often says economic and racial slurs about groups of people. He also blames the media for terrorist attacks in the United States. He fails to trust the FBI and the Central Intelligence Agencies. President Trump deprive disable people of important social programs.

Looking at the past children programs will greatly assist our society to understand a time where children's values were innocence. In order for our country to change in the courteous direction, we need to look at the past values of television programming for the young. By examining the previous children's programs, we will learn about respect and decency for honoring humankind. Most importantly, children programs will greatly assist us in relieving the stress and the anxiety of today's troubles times.

When I grew up in the '60s, Paul Shannon was my favorite icon on television on channel 4. *Adventuretime* was the most popular show in Western Pennsylvania for children to watch after school. The trademark of Paul Shannon was his sweater and his sword. Paul Shannon showed many different types of cartoons on his television show. Bug Bunny, Rocky and Bully Bullwinkle and Kimba the White Lion were the greatest cartoons on *Adventuretime*. Kimbo the White Lion was one of my favorite cartoons of the three.

Kamba the White lion cartoon teaches children how to respect animals and their parent's .Moms or fathers will always try to protect their young children from dangerous persons in the world. This animated film teaches us to become more compassion and gentle to people whom are suffering from afflictions in our society... The theme of the song of Kimbo said this:

When we get in trouble and we are in a fight
Who is the one who just will not turn and run?
Who believes in doing good and doing right?
Kimba the white lion is the one!

Another version of the song:
He's the greatest leader, there's no doubt of it.
He's the one we count on night and day.
When there's danger he can get us out of it--
Kimba the white lion leads the way!

Paul Shannon also showed the Little Rascals and the Three Stooges on *Adventuretime*. Moe Howard said in his letter to Paul, "You, Paul, are our favorite person." *Adventuretime* brought the Three Stooges shows back to life after a period of decline.

Before Paul mail letters to Randy the Rocket to the North Pole, he read the children's letters on the air about their excellent behavior during the year. After Paul read the letters, Paul Shannon sent Randy the Rocket Ship to the North Pole to Santa. .After Santa read the mail from the rocket, he gave the children gifts for Christmas. My mother took me to get his autograph at the Monroe-ville Mall I found him to be a pleasant man. ~~

Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties Concession Stand

By: Amelia Krzton

Just a day after Hannah Mifflin sent out her invitations to her Sugar Rush Sleepover on September 18 and 6 days before we plan to take her shopping for everything that she needs, the company has decided to set up a concession stand at the office in Monroeville. This comes in perfect timing with the fact that it is now football season and many football games, whether they be high school or college, have concession stands. For main courses, there are the traditional favorites like hamburgers, hot dogs, and chicken fingers, and also, different styles of tacos to eat to give the menu a little bit of variety. There are crunchy tacos, soft tacos, and even walking tacos. As for snacks, there are plenty of them. There is the traditional favorite snack known as popcorn with all different sorts of mix-ins like cheese, salt, and spices, trail mix, different flavors of Jell-O, s'mores featuring the oh-so-great trio of graham crackers, chocolate bars, and marshmallows, nacho chips and cheese, soft pretzels with cheese sauce, and finally, the unique trio of strawberries, brownie bites, and marshmallows on a stick better known as strawberry brownie marshmallow kabobs. Even outside of Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties, I have noticed that this is an important fundraiser for many high school marching bands, most notably Highlands School District where I have graduated from! Especially since this is one of the years that they are going on a spring trip probably to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida! So, the main point that I am trying to make is that a lot of fall events feature a concession stand with lots of different snacks and goodies. Oh, and let's not forget about beverages, like soda, hot chocolate, lemonade, and water! People obviously need something to wash down their snacks with. Next time you go to a public event this fall, keep an eye out for the concession stand! Besides concession stands, fall sporting events are also known for having tailgates before the event with many of these previously mentioned snacks up above. Then, there are more traditional favorites, like pizza, chicken wings, and French fries!~~

Two Selected Stories

By: Dr. Nathaniel R Geyer

When I was younger, my goal was to be a doctor to help people, who are facing similar struggles to me. In July 2017, I achieved my goal and earned a Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) degree from Walden University. Now I am focusing on a second, more difficult goal to help people, facing similar struggles to me. To the outside world, I appear to be an autism success story, because of achieving things that I set out to do. However, for every success there is 40 times more failures.

For example, at Walden I had a 4.0 GPA, but struggled with the dissertation. I had gone through three committee chairs and was at the verge of being a drop-out or permanent ABD (all but dissertation) student. I decided to change my major and dissolve my committee. It was a wise decision because I got a new chair and committee that was in concurrence and allowed me to finish in 6 months. Whereas had I stuck with my original dissertation I will still be ABD, which is a fraught state of being for typical graduate students.

This experience shows that life can be unexpected and sometimes the best solution is to press the reset button and move on. Another story that sticks out to me was that I am willing to go outside the box and become an unsung hero, to people who do not have one. When I was at a summer camp for people with disabilities, there was a camper who had a severe heart condition and was told by an administrator that he will never succeed. I befriended him and told the person that life is too short to let others control your life. I suggested to him about using your gifts and make realistic goals. Two years later, when I was a high school graduate, I was his roommate and we talked about ways to better the world and encouraged to go to college. Years later I read his obituary online and his greatest achievement was earning his bachelor's degree.

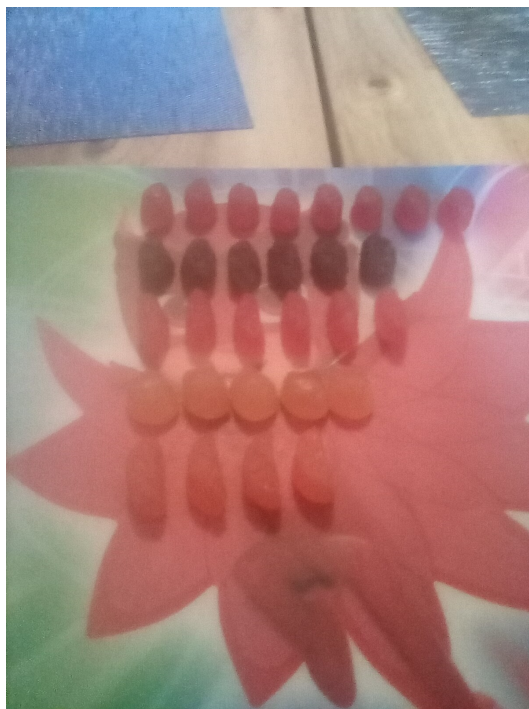
These two stories show that as educators it is important to be open-minded and promote a positive educational environment. As an adult with autism who has been involved in graduate education since 2005, in both brick-and-mortar and online environments, I found that there needs to be a better communication between educators and students with special needs. Too often adults with autism do not have any lifelong goals. I was fortunate to have a strong support network, who encouraged me to come up with goals at a young age.~~

Sensory Areas

By: Ryan Jones

Hello, have you ever wanted to make a sensory area and you didn't know where to start? Well, you are in luck! I have a lot of experience, since I have Autism, and am here today to give you some advice. First, I will go through some information about what the benefits of a sensory areas are. Then, I will tell you some of my sensory overload issues and how I handle my sensory needs in a safe way. Finally, I will show a few examples and how they can help calm one down.

Sensory areas can be beneficial in many ways. For example: when one is having a sensory overload experience, having and going to a sensory area could let off some steam in a safe and positive way. For those who have Autism, have trouble

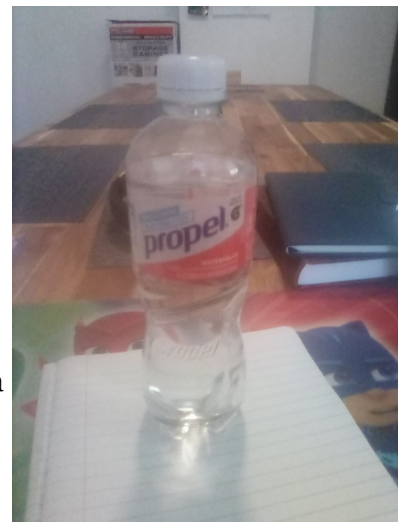
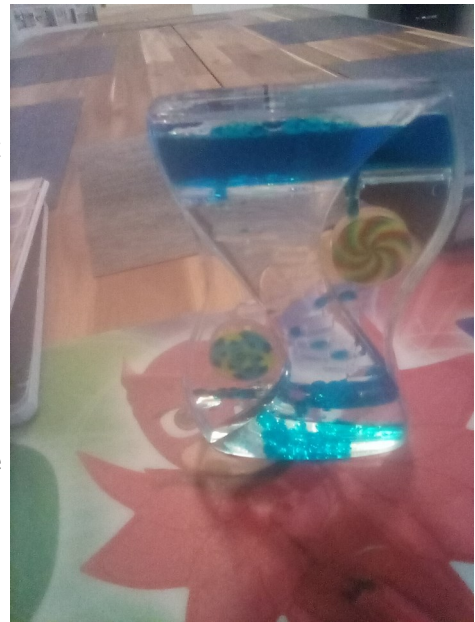


handling their anger, or even when one needs a quiet place to recenter themselves, a sensory area is a great way to do just that. Sensory areas are a great place to relax when one has been experiencing overwhelming anxiety and/or stress. Usually, I would call places like this a Sensory Room, but some are not able to dedicate a whole room. Sometimes a sensory corner or even a sensory box is enough to help ease the overwhelming feeling one might have.

My experience with sensory overload may be different from others, but it might help. Below are some items that help me calm down. First up is a bubble timer, which helps me remain focus. Next up is lining up fruit snacks. Then Finally, a cold drink such as water, Apple juice, or a Slurpee.

Soft flooring and dim lights are a great idea for some. Sensory areas purpose is to relax and calm one down when one is experiencing a overwhelming feeling. Items in sensory areas should be beneficial to the individual which is having a hard time coping. Noise cancellation headphones and weighted blankets help me calm down almost immediately.

If you're interested in any of what I have said, I suggest taking a look on Pinterest, which is a wonderful app/website for all the information one would ever desire.~~



Behind the Critical Race Theory Hysteria

By: Megan Cunningham

One of the big hot button topics now subject to right-wing culture war hysteria is critical race theory. Normally, when the folks at Fox News whine about some culture aspect of our world that they take as a sign that everything's going to Hell, I usually ignore it. Because most of the time, culture war issues pertaining to pop culture wokeness are usually a distraction. Not to mention, they waste precious airtime that could easily be used to talk about bigger problems. Especially since it's 2021 and the Covid-19 pandemic isn't over yet. But I take an exception of critical race theory because like Colin Kaepernick taking a knee and sex ed, it's an issue that actually matters. Mostly because it pertains to how we talk about race, American history, and our education system.

Since the summer following the George Floyd shooting that launched a thousand protests, conservatives have used this once obscure academic catchall category to ban classrooms and workplaces from anti-racist teachings and trainings. Over the past 6 months as of June 2021, Republicans in more than a dozen states have proposed legislation targeting to hamper discussions about race, racism, and systemic oppression in the US with the intent of eliminating these conversations altogether. While most of these state bills don't address critical race theory that most K-12 schools certainly don't teach, the rest on the same foundation on the desire to broadly stop teaching and training on "divisive concepts." Many of these measures focus on public schools. Some target community colleges, public universities, state government entities, contracts, grant receipts, and private schools. A bulk include vague language like bans on what they see as "race and sex stereotyping" or "race or sex scapegoating." Thus, they want to stop instruction that makes "value statements" leading to things like white guys writing apology letters. Some bills want to prevent teaching the New York Times' 1619 Project, a sweeping collection of essays and literary works centering on Black Americans' founding contributions to the US via enslavement. And one that conservatives have endlessly scrutinized since its publication in 2019.

As of June 2021, 10 of these bills have passed state legislatures, 24 are in committees, and several have thankfully died. Despite that many of these GOP-backed bills on critical race theory will likely be shot down on free speech grounds, thanks to Fox News and other right-wing scare outlets, hysteria over "critical race theory" has already caused chaos in local school boards, community colleges, and for American history teachers who want to teach our country's actual history (sorry, football coaches). Despite what many white kids learn in school, racism isn't a bygone problem that ended with the Civil Rights Movement or Barack Obama's presidency. In fact, despite that America's days of slavery and segregation are long over, systemic racism is still alive and well. Conservatives don't want schools to teach kids about systemic racism in our history and in our society because they're not comfortable with it. Even worse, many seriously believe that systemic racism in America no longer exists. And they want our public landscape to reflect their misguided fantasy that we're no longer a racist country.

With origins dating back to the 1970s, critical race theory is a multidisciplinary academic approach to examine how racism is embedded in US laws and institutions. Its ideas are as follows:

- Racism is a social construct for the purpose of oppression. It's not just one-on-one random, intentional interactions like the occasional hate crime. Objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness supports the status quo and doesn't actively work to redress social inequities.
- Racism is a common, ordinary experience for most people of color in the US.
- Every analysis of the law must be grounded in historical context that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage along racial lines, including differences in health, income, imprisonment, education, housing, military service, and political representation. For instance, because black people have historically been excluded from wealth-building measures like homeownership, the typical white family is 10x richer than the average black one.
- Acknowledge, value, and center knowledge of racism on those who live with it every day.

- As interdisciplinary and eclectic, it borrows from feminism, Marxism, and critical legal theory.
- Goal is to eliminate racial oppression as a step to eliminate all oppression. Peoples of color interests require not just adjustments within the establishment, but also challenge the establishment itself.
- Confront America's racist history and provide insight about its implications today. Any racial progress will be met with great resistance.

Of course, critical race theory has its conservative and liberal critics. Liberals think race can't be theorized in relation to law due to its social construct nature. But so is class and that also has legal ramifications. Conservatives think it takes such analysis too far as remedies for problems like segregation turn white people into victims. Nonetheless, until recently, most CRT discussions and criticisms have been relegated to higher education with students being at the college and graduate level. So if you're afraid of CRT being taught in your kid's elementary, middle, and high school, you don't need to worry about it. But what has changed is conservatives' growing fear of schools and educators wanting to reexamine what perspectives American history lessons have traditionally left out. Thus, the hysteria over CRT is really about teaching uncomfortable history of oppression against people of color in American schools.

Even if the hysteria over critical race theory is mostly driven by conservative scare tactics, we must understand that white people can get so wound up on racial matters because race is discussed so little in the public square. In any classroom bans against race discussions, children of color have the most to lose. Mostly because they don't learn about their histories and often don't receive a fundamental understanding of their oppression in school.

However, we must understand that those who don't learn history are doomed to repeat it. Talking about race and systemic racism's effect in American history can be very difficult regardless of one's skin color. But not talking about racism doesn't make it go away. Nor does discussing it as a bygone phenomenon that died down in the 1960s help matters either. Because the US Supreme Court used that very same logic to gut the Voting Rights Act and now the Biden administration's clashing with Southern states trying to enact legislation geared towards voter suppression. When it comes to teaching systemic racism in American history and its effects today, angry white parents and raging right-wing pundits are the last thing to worry about. As I write, there are elected officials in government who don't see systemic racism among today's major problem. Not just at city hall, on the school board, or your local board of supervisors. No, I'm not talking about state houses and the US Capitol. These are people we elect to make laws and pass policies affecting our lives. Hell, the idea of systemic racism not being a problem today and that we shouldn't talk about it is embedded in the GOP's official platform. When anti-racism isn't taught in the classroom, white students will grow up to white adults less willing to discuss racism, less likely to see it as a current and very real problem of today and more resistant to anything pertaining to race and diversity.

Nonetheless, the public hysteria on critical race theory have already captured the media's attention, confused people on what it actually is, and proposed state bans are now having a chilling effect in American education. An Oklahoma community college paused its fully enrolled summer course on race and ethnicity over legal fears. A conservative group in Nevada suggested body cameras on teachers so they won't teach CRT. While a conservative parent group in Loudoun County, Virginia now attempts to recall school board members after the district required teacher training in "systemic racism and implicit bias." And in Texas, the state senate has passed a bill eliminating a requirement that public schools teach that the white supremacist Klu Klux Klan is "morally wrong" and dropped studying Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech as a curriculum requirement. As long as conservatives use CRT as a boogeyman to pass legislation preventing students from learning the painful truth about our nation's past, we must remain deeply concerned.~~

FOODIE CALL/RUN: PENNSYLVANIA'S OWN SHEETZ

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

At around 10:30PM on New Year's Eve, 2019, I did a thing for the first time as a Monroeville, PA resident that I never did once as a Braddock, PA resident. I walked from my new apartment building to make a "run" to a very popular convenience store in Monroeville, and on the East Coast. In fact, this convenience store happens to be so popular in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, nearly-hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians make these kinds of "Run's" every day! What kind of "Run" did I make moments before 2019 gave way to 2020?! I made a Sheetz Run!

The first person in history to make a Sheetz run was its founder Bob Sheetz in 1952. Mr. Sheetz, who founded the convenience store chain as Sheetz Inc., purchased one of his father's five dairy stores in Altoona, PA that same year. Nine years later in 1961,



Mr. Sheetz, naturally, hired his brother Steve to work part-time at his Altoona store. In 1963, a second Sheetz store opened by the name of "Sheetz Kwik Shopper." In 1968, a third Sheetz location opened its doors. And the following year, 1969, Steve joined his brother, Bob, in the Sheetz business as its general manager. The brothers' original plan to expand their business at the rate of one store per year with a target of seven stores by 1972. And in a way like their expectations, by '72, the brothers' expansion plans suddenly (and literally) doubled the size of the company; Sheetz expanded from seven stores to fourteen. There stores got so popular with motorists—with the irony that Sheetz was founded in the state's home to America's first automobile superhighway, the Pennsylvania Turnpike—that Sheetz added gasoline pumps, and then introduced self-serve gasoline to Central PA, both in 1973.

By 1984, 11 years and over a hundred opened stores later, Mr. Bob Sheetz, who founded his-overwhelmingly popular convenience store after purchasing it from his father 32-years earlier, decided to venture off into a well-deserved retirement. Naturally, handed over the leadership of the company to his trusted business partner and brother Steve. In 1995, Stan Sheetz, the son of its founder, Bob, was named president of the company founded by his father; while his uncle, Steve, assumed the position of Chairman of the Board. When Stan took over the company as its president, little did he know that the periods of growth and innovation he would create would take the company to not just new heights; but into the era of Sheetz that "Sheetz Freakz", like yours truly, have come to know and "Love" ever since Steve's innovative leadership.

And it's through Steve's innovative leadership that Sheetz introduced—in stores, and eventually on the Sheetz mobile app—touchscreen ordering for it's famed, world-renowned M.T.O. (Made-To-Order) food and frozen beverage menu's, Sheetz Bros. Coffeez, Made-To-Go already-prepared, healthy food items, and Shweetz Bakery products. All of these pioneering innovations were made while continuing to redefine the concept of getting quality food, beverages, and even legal age-only





items like tobacco and beer at a convenience store. In October 2013, Sheetz maintained its “Family-Owned-and-Operated” status when Joe S. Sheetz, the son of Bob’s brother, Joe, became the company’s president and CEO, while Stan moved on to the role of Chairman of the Board.

Now that I got the skinny of the history of Sheetz out of the way, I’d love to share my favorite items I usually get at the Sheetz’ location #360 in Monroeville, PA. This Sheetz

happens to be a short work from where I live in Monroeville, and an even shorter walk from where I work in Monroeville, SpectroDolce. I’m a wrapz kind of person, so I usually get two of their individual Shnack Wrapz filled with either Hamburger patties, or Grilled Chicken. As far as condiments, regardless of what wrap I get, I always like to have lettuce, pickles, mild pepper rings, Heinz ketchup and Dr. Pepper-flavored sauce inside my wrapz—you can get 2 Shnack Wrapz for \$5. And like any fast food meal, I like to have French Fries, Sheetz’ fries is a little different than fries sold at typical fast food locations—although Sheetz is a fast food, And convenience store chain! At Sheetz you can get fries in a small bag, a mid-sized cup, or a big bucket, usually, I get fries in a small bag because my gut doesn’t need to be bigger than it already is (true story)! I also like to get a Grilled Chicken Sub on a wheat bun with all the aforementioned condiments I like in my Shnack Wrapz. If I have a “Shweet” tooth, I usually get one of their Reese’s Peanut Butter Brownie shakes, topped with whipped cream, sauce made from Reese’s Peanut Butter cups, and brownie pieces. If I’m ever at Sheetz for breakfast, I usually get one of their Breakfast Biscuits (or, Shmiscuts) with sausage, a scrambled egg, and lettuce. For sides, I usually have a hag of three mini/silver-dollar-sized hash browns, and a cup of freshly-brewed Sheetz Bros. Coffee, iced, or hot. As for convenience items, I usually get a gallon or a half a gallon of skim milk and/or orange juice. And only on days that I feel good about buying some, I buy six-pack of beer from Sheetz’ own “Beer Cave”. The Beer Cave is where six packs of bottles and cans of beer, and 12, 24, and 30 cases of cans of beer are located in a cold, walk-through beer refrigerator.

When Bob Sheetz founded his self-named convenience store from in 1952, he would have no idea that his last name would end up being a part of the daily routine/run of millions, and millions of daily customers at locations that would bear his last name in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the great states of Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. If you would’ve told him that aforementioned fact 70 years ago, naturally, he wouldn’t have believed you. But if you would’ve told me at the start of 2019 that I’d not just relocate to Monroeville to work at a confectionary by the name of SpectroDolce in Monroeville at the end of that year; but I’d have my first Sheetz Run in Monroeville take place less than a couple of hours after I officially become a resident of Monroeville, contrary to Bob Sheetz’s belief, I would’ve believed you. However, if you wouldn’t have believed you if you would’ve asked me that with living in an apartment that’s a short walking distance to the nearest Sheetz in Monroeville, you’d have to pay your own bills. The truth is, I DO pay my own bills to maintain my hashtag: #MonroevilleLiving, however, I always make sure, pray that I save enough money to try and make my own occasional Sheetz run...and done!~~



J & J's Family Restaurant

By: Zach Grabowski

I wanted to share a restaurant with you where I like to eat breakfast. It is located on Shiloh Street in Mount Washington called "J & J's Family Restaurant." They make a "taco omelet" that I just discovered I like. It is made with eggs, seasoned ground meat, cheddar jack cheese, sauteed onions, jalapenos, salsa, and sour cream. It is very good and a little on the spicy side. If you like spicy food, I highly recommend trying the taco omelet.



In addition to serving breakfast J & J's also serves lunch. They have a variety of omelets, burritos, French toast, pancakes, sandwiches, burgers, soups, and salads. J&J's is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. They provide great service and great staff. ~~

Cat caught flame

By one of Rachel Williamson's night time dreams.

One fall evening, I went out to get something to eat, so I got McDonald's and brought it back to the house, I walked up onto the hill where my black net swing was and sat down and opened up the McDonald's bag, and said grace and started eating, spooks my cat, was playing with a electronic fall decoration, I wasn't that worried, I thought it was unplugged, for a while I was eating, then I smelled metallic in the air, I looked at spooks, he was running away, and small flames were spreading on the leaves on the ground, my heart froze like ice, I had to do something, no one wasn't close enough to get help because it was spreading too quickly, and I was so afraid to leave the area, I was overwhelmed, so I screamed so loud, FIRE!!, FIRE!!, FIRE!!, FIRE!! Then someone actually heard me! But I should of called 911. They called emergency and the firetrucks came and put out the fire. I picked up spooks and apologized for the fire, they said next time, not to put anything near that animals can get to electrical items and to watch pets while they are near that stuff. They also said that to call 911 myself if I could get to a phone if I'm close to one first.

<<<<So how was this supposed to be handled in such emergency if you had to face this particular situation above?
>>>>

<<<<What is the appropriate thing to do in a fire?>>>>

<<<<What do you do if a fire happens and you are trapped inside the area?>>>>

<<<<What number do you call when there's a fire, or other emergency?>>>>

Untitled

By: David Pearlman

When starting school in the past kids didn't have much to worry about. From middle school on all kids had to do was hopefully focus on their schoolwork and hanging out with their friends. Since 2019 kids and their families have to worry about the virus. It is sad that so many people have died from this disease, and we didn't know where it came from. Once it got bad, we had to shut the county down which means some people couldn't go to work or their kids had to stay home. So now kids have to get back to in-person learning. Here are some suggestions that have been thrown out there. Kids should get the vaccines that are needed to protect themselves from any type of illness. Parents should know the school plan if cases rise. Parents should make sure they have school supplies' and masks that fit well. Other ways parents can help is to teach kids social distancing. Parents should tell their kids that masks are not toys and should be treated with respect.

In conclusion, talk to your kids about how things change and eventually things are going to get back to normal.~

Spring and Summer Memories

By: Amelia Krzton

The spring and summer seasons may be over this year, but the memories of these seasons do not have to be! Here are some excerpts from 3 female Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties clients reflecting on their best activities to do in the spring and summer.

Kayla Jennis is a sophomore at Carnegie Mellon University. In the 4th grade, she enjoyed playing Chopped, Jr. in the borough of Churchill. Chopped, Jr. is named after the famous cooking show on the Food Network. Kayla liked making all different kinds of recipes for her and her best friends to enjoy. 3 months later, during the summer of 2012, she and her friends went to the dollar store in Murrysville on Route 22 to look at some fun supplies to use during their time together.

Brooke Leesaw is a 2020 graduate from the University of Pittsburgh. During her freshman year at Franklin Regional High School, one of her favorite activities was blindfolded makeovers... and she traveled all the way to the Allegheny County borough of Bridgeville to participate in them! Blindfolded makeovers are like regular makeovers except for the fact that you can't exactly see what make-up you are putting on. Shortly after Brooke's freshman year ended, she traveled once again to the Allegheny County borough of McDonald, which is also partially in Washington County, for a Bean Boozled Taste Bud Test.

Rachel Luster is a 6th grader at Shady Side Academy Middle School. This past spring and summer was memorable for her. On April 18, she attended a bonfire in the borough of Bethel Park with her friends. On May 23, she went bowling in the township of Mount Lebanon with her friends at some unknown bowling alley. On August 22 (the same day as Kennywood Day this year), she made a fake snowman in Peters Township, which is part of Washington County. This was also what inspired my miscellaneous travel this year besides the fact that the newest Pittsburgh's Perfect Parties office location opened in Upper Saint Clair this summer!~~

Review: *Come What May*

By: Nils Skudra

I recently watched the 2015 film *Come What May*, directed by French filmmaker Christian Carion. Having previously seen Carion's masterpiece *Joyeux Noel*, a beautiful film about the Christmas Truce of 1914, I was very eager to see this production, which depicts the mass exodus of civilians to the French countryside during the German invasion of France in World War II. Furthermore, it was a story that I could personally relate to since my maternal grandmother and her family, German Jews who had left Nazi Germany in 1939 following Kristallnacht, fled to the French countryside following the German invasion and were hidden by local Catholics until the Allied liberation of France in 1944. In light of this, I felt that the film merited a review.

The film begins in Germany in 1939, on the verge of Hitler's invasion of Poland. We are introduced to the character of Hans (August Diehl), a widower and father who lives with his son Max (Joshio Marlan). Because he is an anti-Nazi activist, Hans is preparing to leave Germany before he is arrested by the Gestapo, which arrives at his apartment shortly after he and Max make their escape. They make their way towards the Belgian border with a truckload of other refugees during the night but are intercepted by German soldiers, who shoot or apprehend all of the fleeing refugees except for Hans and Max, who manage to hide up in a tree. Following this terrifying episode, they make their way across Belgium into northern France, where they find a peaceful life in the village of Lebusquière.

The new life that Hans has built in Lebusquière is suddenly disrupted, however, when he is arrested as an enemy alien following France's declaration of war against Germany, with the revelation that he had lied about his nationality. He is subsequently taken to jail in Arras, leaving Max alone in the care of Suzanne (Alice Isaaz), a young schoolteacher who becomes a surrogate mother to the boy. In May 1940, with the German Army poised to launch an invasion of France, the village mayor Paul (Olivier Gourmet) gathers the inhabitants together and announces that the prefecture has recommended their departure for the coastal city of Dieppe, which would entail traveling across the French countryside. This is a difficult choice for the villagers since it would mean giving up everything and facing an uncertain future, but with the memories of the First World War still painfully present, they decide to migrate on the road toward Dieppe. Max travels in the company of Suzanne and the other schoolchildren but leaves a written message on the classroom board so that his father may know where he has gone.

Meanwhile, the French authorities release Hans and the other prisoners in Arras as it is being bombed by the Germans, but they are subsequently left to their fate amidst the panic, with Hans finding refuge in an underground tunnel. He encounters a group of British soldiers under the command of Percy (Matthew Rhys), a Scottish officer from the British Expeditionary Force who has become separated from the rest of his regiment. As they make their way through the tunnel, the group is fired upon by German machine gunners, and all of the British soldiers are killed except for Percy and Hans, who manage to escape through an exit leading to a farm outside the city. When Hans reveals the reason for his understanding of German, Percy is initially suspicious but agrees to travel with him so that he can make his way back to the BEF at Dunkirk. Hans makes it clear, however, that he is determined to reunite with his son and that they stop at Lebusquière on the way, which Percy grudgingly consents to.

As Percy and Hans make their way to Lebusquière, they come upon a French farm owned by Albert (Laurent Gerra), a local resident who has remained behind to look after his wine cellar. During their meal together, Hans learns of Max's flight with Suzanne and the rest of the villagers, which further strengthens his conviction to travel on the road in search of his son. This scene also brings the tension between Percy and Hans to the forefront since Hans maintains that the war would not have happened if France and Britain had stood up to Hitler from the very beginning, stating, "You English and French have no courage." This accusation enrages Percy, who replies "Don't you dare talk to *me* about courage!" and then talks solemnly about his men who were massacred in the tunnel: "I lost 143 men. Always beaten back, but always with great courage." Nonetheless, Albert serves as a calming influence, giving Percy the bagpipes of a Scottish officer that his family had hidden during the First World War, and Percy proposes a toast "to friends who have disappeared."

While Percy and Hans continue on their journey, the villagers migrate by car, on carts, or on foot across the countryside toward Dieppe, with Suzanne acting as a scout to seek out the least congested route. Paul and his wife Mado (Mathilde Siegnér) try to maintain some semblance of order and normality by leading the group

and playing music in an effort to recreate a sense of the time when friends would come to Paul's coffee shop in Lebucquière. Suzanne develops a close maternal bond with Max, comforting him when he thinks about his father and showing approval for his improvised technique of leaving written messages behind for Max wherever they stop along the way. Nonetheless, the villagers' exodus brings them into direct contact with the horrors of war, as Suzanne discovers a family that has been slaughtered on the road, and the caravan is soon strafed by German planes. During the ensuing panic, Max runs off and is separated from the rest of the group, and Mado barely survives the bombing of her truck but is left in a state of shock before Paul comforts her.

Percy and Hans, in the meantime, manage to commandeer a German motorcycle after killing two German soldiers who discovered their hideout on the farm, thus providing them with greater mobility. However, their journey continues to be fraught with peril, as they encounter a German Army unit and film crew who are shooting a propaganda film to document the German victory in France, using captured black colonial troops from the French Army as extras. Through this scene, we are presented with a striking example of how the Nazis

treated groups that were considered racial inferior as objects for their propaganda, painting them as figures of ridicule and scorn who were unworthy of being treated as prisoners of war. Furthermore, the power of propaganda for manipulating public understanding of the war is elaborated upon by Hans, who states, "They make films like this everywhere they go and pass it off as the truth." This provides Percy with a new insight into the kind of enemy that he is fighting against, which significantly influences his actions toward the climax of the film.

As the villagers of Lebucquière continue their migration, they become increasingly desperate, and Paul essentially allows them to loot a local butcher shop whose owners have been hoarding food in the midst of the chaos. The growing sense of despondency leads him to reflect on whether it is worth returning home, whatever the outcome of the invasion. In a conversation with Mado, he considers the prospect of emigrating to Canada once they reach Dieppe, reasoning that they have both sacrificed enough for France. However, the importance of retaining the villagers' sense of identity convinces Paul that they should return to Lebucquière, which he later emphasizes to Suzanne: "The only way to keep our grip is to return to where we belong. Our home." As it becomes clear that France has fallen, this presents Suzanne with an important decision to make since she has become deeply attached to Max and is now determined to find him, a conviction which will ultimately determine both of their futures.

Beautifully shot and superbly acted, *Come What May* presents a compelling portrait of the mass exodus across the French countryside in May 1940, which uprooted over 8 million French civilians as they sought to escape the German Army. In the special features, Christian Carion relates that he has a personal connection to this history since his parents were part of this migration, and he consciously chose to shoot the film in the area of his birth. This was compelling for me, too, since my maternal grandmother and her family would have been among the refugees fleeing southward before being hidden by the local Catholics who saved their lives. Moreover, the film delivers a poignant message about the enduring power of love in the midst of war and how the shared perils of an arduous journey can create a sense of trust and friendship between people of different backgrounds. *Come What May* is therefore a truly worthwhile film that I would highly recommend. ~~



Do People with Autism Have True Consciousness?

By: Joshua Walburn

New theories are being discovered about how consciousness is interpreted for people with autism. Some intellectual disability experts may question, "Are autism rates increasing because of the brain feeling continually surprised?" I'm autistic and a logical thinker myself. Words, abstract concepts and images are used to form my linear thoughts. Most of this is because I'm goal-oriented. Then I begin to question the consciousness of my thought processes. I can make some statements that objective thinking is conscious because it comes with an open mind and considers facts rather than personal opinions.

When I think about my daily schedules, the thing I notice first is getting up and taking some time to follow my personal needs. I don't overlook them, but I sometimes forget these reminders for personal hygiene unless if there's a reminder that goes from my body, parent, sibling or important items that are left in and on the dresser. On the days I work and have off, I'm able to use my imagination to keep track of the retention rates, talent pools and the number of people with disabilities applying for jobs similar to how the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics collects data. For some of that information, I need to search.

Most convergent thinkers can draw conclusions from a situation to create a complex step-by-step process. Problem solving and discovery of new spaces are among them. Then one can generalize a new concept using abstract perceptions and conceptional information to keep that in mind on how I believe it enhances more critical thinking. Most people who interpret those ways find it easier to say that "B comes after A" or counting by twos, threes and fours. Mice, hamsters and ferrets expresses multiple variations of linear thoughts. The most common instincts of a ferret is that they can differentiate one space from the other by each time to interpret logical statements. After each new spatial discovery, they perceive on what influences them before categorizing such as evaluating the visibility of their surrounding objects before confirming a strategic generalization, even if it's by carrying a ball with their mouths into a random place.

My logical thinking is continually more complex as I know it. During my elementary school age, I started learning how to build random structures out of legos. Later on, I was able to reason by determining the upper bases of each lego brick. From smaller circular ones, categorization by area applies to their length and widths. For a four by two brick, 4 is the length because it's greater than 2. Spatial formats of reasoning shares the same unspoken language as numerical ones. Budson says that sensory thinking is true even though its often times subjective.

Sigmund Freud would have called unconsciousness as the mental dimension that people with autism often think and perceive with. The same things goes along with people who have schizophrenia because they experience disconnection from reality. I'd agree that: delusions, narratives of persecution, paranoia and hallucinations are much more unconscious because they're withdrawn from the understanding of what's real. Those states of unconsciousness can get evenly more intense when it leads to disorganized, abnormal and incongruent behavior. From his theories based on psychoanalysis, the phenomenon increases likelihood of experiencing the 'Id' when a schizophrenic individual demands immediate coping over those extremely complicated barriers. Then they please people with schizophrenia and other related disabilities to progress with experiences of the 'Superego' later. Antipsychotics and musical interventions play many important roles in reducing or getting frequent auditory hallucinations under control.

Brain damage reduces the complexity and behavioral flexibility according to educational theorist David Allen Kolb. They require a brain from many of its regions to associate information. Nancy Minshew and her colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh found that in autism, distant regions of the brain are less functionally interconnected. Does this mean they're less conscious than typically developing brains? If the speed of neurotransmission produces our consciousness, I would have to agree. If not, that'd be up to the philosophers and psychologists.

People with autism, including myself can experience conscious fragments that indicates atypical per-

ception. From my understanding on how much differently I see the world, I'm aware that my brain responds to details in a big picture even if it's with surrounding objects. I imagine myself using Electroencephalography to record how people with autism are instinctively "focused on the trees rather than the whole forest" every time I look at images. Going from the retina to the occipital lobe are the small bumps that's saying, "I picked up some visual data. I'm going to send it so that you can have a look." The huge blip signal that occurs 100 milliseconds after the image onset says, "Hey look! I see something." It starts at one region of the thalamus dubbed 'lateral geniculate nucleus.' Then travels to the primary visual cortex and from there, two event-related potential components known 'P100' and 'N100' is featured in which people differ in terms of its latency. It can be slower or faster. In autism, the P100 ERP is slower in which is why I pick up an acute attention to edges and patterns of an image at the atypical average between 50 - 70 milliseconds longer. The wave bump in autism takes place at the right. People who have this are predicted to be better at 3D drawing and visual search tasks. Another ERP component known as 'N170' occurs about 70 milliseconds of latency after a picture stimulus onset. It's known for processing faces. A meta-analysis study led by Matthew Lerner at Stony Brook University found that people with autism are slower at facial recognition. Other EEG estimates found that people with autism misses the forest at the extent of the trees because of a late somatosensory processing. They have smaller N140 and P100 responses from their amplitudes during visual tasks than with closed or open eyes. I should conclude that those are variations of impaired consciousness.

I can explain how rational thinking can be used to make conscious decisions. Two doors away on the street from where I attended school, a classmate of mine wasn't paying careful attention to the traffic. He wasn't looking both ways before crossing at the California and Falck Avenue intersection and he nearly got run over three times. Both of my teachers and a few other classmates saw the same thing. I immediately can recall from the situation and suggest that he wasn't aware about the simple 'waiting for the bus' rules, remembering to look both ways before crossing a busy street even though he thinks he can pay attention to looking both ways. Two lane traffic continually cruises at around a 25 MPH speed limit. The results were about: the same suggestions, subconscious atypical perception or possibly daydreaming.

In ADHD research, this might be a part of a phenomenon called the 'Positive Illusory Bias.' People with attention deficits rate their skillsets across many domains higher than those without ADHD. Even if it's higher than their peers rate them. It's not just in athletic, academic and cognitive domains where they do poorly at self-control and better at social planning in reality (Example: $\mu = 100$; $SD = 10$. Self-control: $t = 60$. Social functioning: $t = 120$). The math is similar to the statistics that are applied in an IQ assessment, where the mean is 100. The 10th standard deviation indicates scores on how well people function. Typically developing ones score at constantly the average in all domains. Ones with an intellectual disability do better at one area and poorly at the other. This is important because it advances our understanding of individual needs. People with ADHD rate themselves higher in most of the overall areas of functioning. We can imagine this as a kitten looking at itself in the mirror as a lion. Some of these people are aware that they struggle in some of these domains. Many might not necessarily know how to escape from these struggles as a way to bolster their self-esteem. If I ask one person with ADHD, "How well did you find a job?" or "Do you like where you're working?" They'll answer those questions with a higher rate.

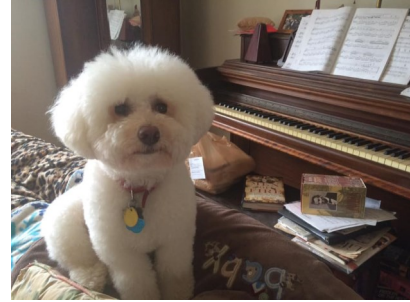
Improved attention span is beneficial to human intelligence. When comparing this to insects, their skill levels are much as what resembles an autistic savant. Not all savants are autistic, some neurotypical individuals can also demonstrate exceptionally gifted talent in several domains such as: art, physics, music and mathematical computation. If it's in many areas, one is likely to express an $IQ \geq 130$. This means giftedness in more than a few domains. If less than seventy, that can indicate presence of a learning disability. The truth is that giftedness has nothing to do with intelligence assessments because they can occur on all IQ scores. Ants have great abilities to use visual images, but most of what they excel doesn't require any problem-solving strategies.

Throughout the branches of psychology, a broad spectrum of phenomena can be examined in an empirical manner. It facilitates a deeper understanding on how consciousness is hypothesized to be an emergent property of matter. It's expressed as a fundamental tool to reality. My way of describing consciousness is to simplify its complexity of definition by saying that it's the quality of awareness. I'm able to make conclusions that consciousness is continuous and that it comes in a broad spectrum of different levels. For Temple Grandin, that implies the flexibility of behavior under novel conditions. Empirical and scientific steps are being taken to solve complex mysteries based on how nature appoints all living organisms to perform the things they're ought to do.~

This Morning's Reflection: When Your Dog Looks Better Than You Do

By: Renee Skudra

It is another introspection-filled pandemic day and I'm sitting at my keyboard thinking about starting an article about a Southern writer named Wiley Cash whose good fortune it is to live on the beautiful North Carolina coast in a history-driven city named Wilmington. Outside my window the leaves of the dogwood tree have begun to turn red and the autumn wind is whistling in a forlorn tone whose sounds punctuate a heretofore quiet landscape. My Bichon Frise, Jackson, is watching me as he reclines comfortably on a velvet blanket that I purchased for a small fortune on the Etsy site. He is a study in canine beauty – all white fluffiness shaped into the breed standard by a careful and all-knowing groomer who reminds me regularly that “he takes at least six hours to make him look right.” If you know anything about the Bichon Frise, you'll know this: he or she is a Diva Dog whose double-coat must be brushed daily. Once you have committed to owning this breed, there is an investiture of time that you must be willing to make, a labor of love that must be undertaken so your pet is a representation not only of his type but of his very best self. A dog like this is a significant investment not only of time but of money too -- there are once or twice-monthly baths, groomings, special diets (don't forget the organic beef bone broth and liver treats!), flea/tick and heart medications as well as the “props” that make Jackson a stand-out dog: faux-diamond collar and leash, trendy pet clothes, toys and accessories which announce that he is royalty in the canine world.



I love this dog beyond all reason and he is my anchor in a never-ending anxiety storm. When the power goes out in my Greensboro home, he is by my side, soft as a cloud must be and yielding to the angst of any moment, supreme in the apparent confidence that this too shall pass. I am the one shedding tears of no-work-related anguish while his amber-colored ones regard me with what can only be characterized as equanimity. A funny thought, spurred by a friend's casual comment, suddenly resurfaces: that “your dog looks better than you do!” It is true that I myself have not been to the beauty salon or had my nails done since February 2020. I wince in the acuity of this observation because while I have gone without, that cannot be said of my Bichon Frise. I have taken virtually no pains with my appearance, happy with simply wearing a pair of jeans purchased many years ago and my trademark black turtleneck sweater, a Target sale item. No one has fussed over my hair, massaging it with specialty shampoos and concoctions and blowing it expertly out. If truth be known, I yearn for someone to fuss over me with inordinate amounts of attention, getting me into a regal and glamorous shape. I'm missing the “perks” of single adult living: no expensive diets, clothes or toys and while my fur baby has pet insurance, I have limited (instead of plenary) insurance myself.

Still, I must admit to enjoying all the compliments about “your beautiful dog” and how passers-by cluster around him during his evening constitutional at our neighborhood park. The bi-monthly visits to the groomer are worth the exhilaration I feel as I look at his geometrically perfect halo of white glistening hair and perfectly white combed out (but still curly) coat. His amber-colored eyes are the same beautiful hue as that precious stone in an antique ring bequeathed me by my Latvian in-laws. I'm proud of my boy who ineluctably elicits audible sounds of visceral pleasure from the onlookers as well as the occasional “is he for sale? I would pay a very good price!” Jackson knows he is beautiful, a centrifugal force of inspiring compliments, walking on the grass just as a show dog might confidently traverse the contest ring, his gait measured and precise, elegant head held high. If you have been around Bichons, you are familiar with their undeniable charm and sense of humor. I wish I had half as much composure. Nothing can sully his day – not a thunderclap or a yapping dog bent on undermining Jackson's poise. He's doggy royalty and he knows it and all the pomp and ceremony is deserved, the daily rituals of combing his hair with a fine-tooth steel comb (which he patiently endures), touch-ups on his groomings so that his impact is calculated to make the awe-inspiring impact that it never fails to make.

As for me, I'm giving some thought (now that I'm fully vaccinated) to getting my own hair done and buying some new clothes. That doesn't mean however that I will forfeit the pricey regimens that my pooch is accustomed to. His groomer is a diva too and any suggestions by her that I am not maintaining my Bichon Frise exactly as he should be supported makes me shake in my purchased-at-a-yard-sale cowboy boots. The two of them are a package deal and she's a critical part of the taking-care-of-the-dog infrastructure. I tolerate her criticisms because she is part and parcel of making him shine just as his breed demands that he does. A bumper sticker that I saw today on an old, dented Honda made me laugh out loud – “My dog is in charge.” How well I know the truth of that sentiment. I can live with the quip that Jackson looks better than I do. As soon as I find another job, I'm hoping to work on that scenario.~~



Musical Mystery Tour Chapter 3

By: Jake Ziesche

At a quarter to five on Wednesday, Melody and her posse gathered at the edge of the Hokey Pokey Swamp. Peanut resided in the middle of this fen. Once everyone arrived with their items for the sleepover, they started their trek through the bog.

Not long after entering, a vile odor assaulted their nostrils. “Mother of mercy!” Alfredo exclaimed. “It’s nasty up in here.”

“You can say that again,” seconded Melody. “I wish we could get to Peanut’s place faster.”

“You got it girlfriend,” Nikki replied. With a snap of her fingers, Nikki instantly transported everyone to a spot deeper in the swamp. As everyone looked around, Nikki spotted a two-story house in front of them. The group quickly made their way to it and Valentine knocked on the door.

A few seconds later, Peanut answered. “Wow, you guys got here fast. I’m surprised you didn’t run into some creature like a—”

“Giant Venus flytrap!” Nikki cried, pointing up. Everyone looked up and gasped. Sure enough, a giant Venus flytrap was standing on the roof of Peanut’s house. The plant was playing “Water Music” on a fiddle it held in its vines. When it was finished, the giant plant came down and left. As it departed, the Venus flytrap waved good-bye while playing “The Moldau” on its instrument.

Once it was gone, Peanut ushered everyone into his home. As the friends followed Peanut inside, Melody was the first one to speak. “What in the world was that creature?”

“Oh, that was just Zelda,” Peanut explained. “She lives with a bunyip in another part of the swamp and they work with a woman who oversees things at the local botanical gardens. She usually practices at home, but her roof is being repaired.”

When Peanut was finished, the heroes found themselves in the living room. Alfredo and Valentine put their stuff down on a pair of armchairs, while Melody and Nikki set their belongings down beside a sofa.

“You have a lovely house Peanut,” Nikki praised. “Shall we get down to business?” Nikki got out the two map pieces they already had. “Do you really have the third piece of the map?” Peanut gave Nikki a signal to wait and quickly left the room. When he returned, the troll held a scrap of paper with a big X on it. This took everyone by surprise.

“I don’t believe it!” declared Melody. “You really did have the missing piece.”

“I told you I wasn’t kidding,” Peanut responded. “Now we need to assemble the map.” Peanut asked Nikki for the other two portions of the map and she handed them to her friend. Then he took a seat on the couch, laid all three pieces out on a coffee table and carefully arranged them. “Okay, we have all the parts. Now we need to put it together.”

“Allow me to do the honors,” volunteered Valentine. The fairy got out his wand and waved it. Suddenly, all three parts combined to form a whole map. “See, a little magic and voilà, we have a map.” Everyone congratulated Valentine on a job well done. Then they got a look at the map.

“Now that we have a completed map, what’s our next move?” questioned Alfredo.

“I think we should start our expedition on Friday and Nikki should hold onto the map until then.” Melody suggested. The others thought that sounded like a great idea. “Well then, let’s get this party started.”

Once Nikki put the map in her purse, the five friends started getting the refreshments prepared. The girls set up a table in the living room. Then they went to the kitchen to help the boys bring in the nosh.

At five-thirty, the friends heard a knock at the door. “Who could that be?” asked Melody.

“Maybe it’s the Gator Ghoul,” Nikki fearfully replied. After receiving skeptical looks from everyone Nikki sheepishly added, “Or maybe I’ve been watching too many cartoons.”

“I’ll go see who it is,” Alfredo and Valentine both volunteered. Once the two boys agreed to look together, they made their way to the front door and opened it. Standing before the two was a woman wearing a trench coat, a tangerine silk scarf wrapped around her head, outrageously large sunglasses and wild strawberry platform boots. A designer handbag hung over one shoulder and she held a pizza box.

“Hi y’all,” the girl said with a Southern accent. “I got a pizza for Peanut.” As soon as Peanut heard his name, he came to join the other guys. “Congratulations! You won the contest and your prize is a free pizza. It’s a Swamp Special.”

Peanut happily accepted his prize. “That’s my favorite kind. Thank you so much.”

“You’re most welcome,” the mystery woman responded. Then she asked, “May I please come in? I need to powder my nose.”

“Sure thing, the bathroom is down the hall to the left,” Peanut instructed. The woman thanked the troll and went off to do her thing while the guys returned to the living room.

Once they rejoined the girls, Alfredo tried to be funny. “Hey, guess what? Chicken butt! ” This earned a laugh from everyone except Nikki, who rolled her eyes. Then Alfredo continued. “You girls won’t believe it, but Peanut won the contest.” Melody and Nikki congratulated Peanut on his win.

No sooner did Peanut set the pizza down on the table with the other snacks, then the delivery woman showed up sans her disguise. Standing before the group was a beautiful woman with long pink hair and emerald-green eyes. A heart-shaped amethyst dangled from a chain around her neck. She wore a silver-and-sunglow argyle sweater and a vivid violet mini skirt. The wild strawberry platform boots and designer handbag were also still on her.

As soon as Peanut saw her, he became crestfallen. “Of all the swamps, in all the world, she had to walk into mine.”

“Do you know her?” Melody queried.

Peanut let out a sigh. “Well, no point in beating around the bush.” Peanut plodded over to the lady in question. “Daria this is Melody, Valentine, Alfredo and Nikki,” Peanut said gesturing to his friends. “Everyone this is Daria. She’s a siren and my . . . ex-girlfriend.~~

America This is You! An article all about 30 years of America's Funniest Home Videos

Written and researched by John Kruse

One day while on vacation in Japan, producer Vin Di Bona saw a segment of a show called "Fun with Kato and Ken!". When the stars weren't doing comedy skits, they'd show a segment of "home viewer" submitted videos, which were funny or unique in some way. He wondered if people at home in America would react the same way. His team shot a pilot/special in 1989 with Full House (and later Fuller House) star Bob Saget as host. The video that won on the pilot/special involved a woman cleaning the dishwasher and couldn't get out of it. Vin's production team were worried that the home viewers wouldn't send many tapes for the \$10,000 weekly prize and later in the season \$100,000 grand prize. Well, sure enough after the pilot/special aired the mail came flooding in with viewer submitted tapes hoping to win the cash prize and became a smash hit for ABC. Bob Saget always closed the shows making sure the viewers "Kept the cameras safely rolling!". Bob did the show for eight wonderful seasons. On his last regular hosted show on a Friday evening in 1997 he surprised everyone by saying the cast of Full House would be on for a mini-reunion (excluding Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen who shared the role of Michelle Tanner). It originally aired as part of a 3-D week of shows (also including Drew Carey Show and Home Improvement) and had the cast holding Bob in front of the camera to get a special 3-D effect.

The show also spawned many merchandise and compilation VHS tapes/DVDs.
Here's a list of some of the merchandise based on the success of the show.

VHS/DVD compilations

The Best of America's Funniest Home Videos (1990 CBS/Fox Home Video)
America's Funniest Pets (CBS/Fox Home Video)
America's Funniest Families (CBS/Fox Home Video)
Nincompoops and Boneheads (Shout! Factory)
Kids and Animals (Shout! Factory)
Guide to Parenting (Shout! Factory)
Sports Spectacular (Shout! Factory)
Home for the Holidays (Shout! Factory)

Board Games

America's Funniest Home Videos Game (Parker Brothers)
You'd watch a clip on your TV with VCR and then stop the tape and you were asked a question about what happens in the clip. The person who made it to the \$100,000 at the end was declared the winner.

International Versions

Australia's Funniest Home Videos
Australia's Naughtiest Home Videos (spinoff which showed sexually explicit content)
Videos de Primera (Spain)
Video Loco (Chile)
Paperissima (Italy)
You've Been Framed! (United Kingdom)
Video Gag (France)
Upps! Die Pannenshow (Germany)
America's Funniest Home Videos (Latin America)

America's Funniest Videos (Brazil)
Litchen om Homevideo's (Netherlands)
De Leukste Thuis (The Family Jester) (Netherlands)
New Zealand's Funniest Home Videos (New Zealand) It would later be called "The Great Kiwi Video Show"
Drôle de vidéo (French-Canadian version seen on Télétoon la nuit)
Süper Matrak (Turkey) A Turkish version which aired on Disney Channel.

Hosts

Bob Saget (1990-1997)
John Fugelsang and Daisy Fuentes (1998-1999)
Tom Bergeron (2001-2015)
Alfonso Riberio (2015-present)

The show in pop culture

The Simpsons - Homer watched a film by Hans Molman entitled "Man Getting Hit By Football" and it hits him in the groin. He laughed hysterically and said, "Give that man \$10,000!" The film host says that this isn't America's Funniest Home Videos. Homer said to run the film again because he thought it was hilarious.

Rugrats - In an episode called "America's Wackiest Home Movies" Lou won the \$10,000 while his boys Stu and Drew were seriously hurt.

South Park - spoofed as "America's Stupidest Home Videos"

CatDog - as Winslow's Home Videos and can be seen on the VHS copy of *The Rugrats Movie*

In 2019 a special aired on ABC called "America This is You: A Look back at 30 Years of America's Funniest Home Videos" It showcased footage of Bob Saget doing voice overs for the tapes on the show and the history behind the show. Tom Bergeron even admitted on his first season with AFV he tried doing Bob's voices, but couldn't do it as great as he did.

Theme Tunes/Music

1989-1997 "The Funny Things You Do" Jill Colluci

1997 "The Funny Things You Do" Peter Hix & Terry Wood

1998-2015 Dan Slider

2015-present Dan Slider (excerpts of 1998-2015 theme and "The Funny Things You Do")

Broadcast format

Beginning with the 21st season premiere on October 3rd 2010, the show began broadcasting in High Definition. Many viewer-submitted videos were shot in standard definition and were stretched horizontally to fit 16:9 screens. Since the 2012-2013 season, videos recorded in 4:3 standard definitions are instead formatted by pillarboxed. This continued to be the case for videos recorded on mobile devices at a vertical angle, which would not entirely fit the 4:3 safe area of many television sets. Since the conversion to HD, the series features advisories for viewers to tilt their mobile devices horizontally in order for clip submissions to fit 16:9 screens without reformatting.

Syndication

All episodes of the series are currently in syndication. Reruns played on TBS from 1995 to 1998, USA Network from 1998 to 2001, and Hallmark Channel from 2001 to 2003. Until 2001 the Saget run was syndicated by 20th Television, who assumed syndication rights from their purchase of MTM Enterprises, which had syndicated the show from 1995 to 1998. ~~

N'dlis (Pt. 8)

By: Jordan Watson

Seconds after the door fortifies itself shut completely, the explosion goes off on a muffled, yet forceful scale. If that monstrosity managed to slide its way through, I would've already been cremated on the spot. The adrenaline takes a backseat when the scalding pain on my right arm starts overtaking my senses. I take the last of my syringes and inject it into my right arm. It struggles to completely heal, due to the bubbling acid fighting against the healing properties of the restructuring factor. Gotta tear off the sleeve on my right arm, and make-shift it to bandages. Suddenly, I catch some glimpses of....a faint, flashing red light from below.

I search within my bag, as it tears open on the spot, to find my shoulder flashlight on the ground. Pointing it directly at the red illumination, it appears to be a spiral metal staircase leading to the source. I head towards it, keeping my wits cautious while traveling down the spiral. Going through the industrialized passageway, I see a larger hole that leads further underground. The litter of charred bodies and numerous corpses is *very* telling of this scene. Holding my breath throughout the trek, I find a large, shielded booth that requires government security clearance to pass. While rummaging through some of the burnt bodies of the patrol guards, I find one of them with a key card necklace stating Level 3 Clearance. After struggling to rip it off the toasted remains, I take the card, and put it through the slot to the security gate. I somehow manage to get it to activate with relative success. But how? There's no power currently on. Unless there's a backup generator running on nuclear batteries I don't know about? I see what looks to be an elevator lift. Going with my gut to use the key card a second time, I let it scan the data incorporated into it. Thank God for it non-biometrics. As the lift shakes, it slowly moves into the murky unknown.

The descent gives me a heavy perception of the things that have occurred in my life. Walking over to the railing, I lean my arms over it, wondering if there's anything visible at the bottom of this pit. Years of fighting, and very rarely do I ever take the time to ponder my own actions. However, a forlorn reminder reveals itself to me, in one ironic stroke.

"Do you remember that starry night in Somalia?"

Very fitting. Staring down into this darkness, her longing presence feels purgative. Humor me dear.

"We shouldn't ever forget the dead, because their memory is immortalized through their stories?"

She puts her arms around my neck, helping look down with me.

"(I'm) Surprised your memory kept that in tact."

I hold her hands close to my chest. She continues to lull me at ease. The light below is faint, but also goes from white light.....to red. Some distant murmurs of a baby's cry is heard.

"Though it goes beyond just their war stories...It's about whom among the victors can determine the truth. The real outcome of our sacrifices."

The light becomes brighter. Closer. Back to white. I breath a strong sigh.

"What goes further than our determination to save our country?"

"...Intricacy."

This response plants a cloud of confusion to me.

"What did you say??"

I turn to see her. Sleek black, short swept hair. Sleek cheekbones. Medium fit build. Smoky purple eyes. Purse lips. The smell of orchids.

"The complexity of a plan. A plan greater than ourselves, even as the most elite foot soldiers, we carry out a duty that's never really questioned."

The lift halts, setting itself firmly into the metal indentation. I see ahead of me an extremely large, burnt, technological facility. The flickering backup lights show to our left are large, irregular pistons that struggle to go up and down to power the whole facility. To our right, a large shaft that has an...intricately built pod, where four nuclear canisters lay inserted, plastered with Fuxing's logo. The whole room looks like an internal genocide. The pod's glass frame in the center was broken loose all over the floor. And....what looked to be a steel engraving where a human body once was tied to...

Hilda walks with me to the center doorway of the complex.

"We were brought into these lands by our own government. To serve, is what we did. But beyond

that..."

Another familiar voice interjects.

"Ya'll really think about what happens *after* the fire works are done exploding in unision?"

The taller build, darker skin tone, and religious sleeved tattoos around his arms, shows it's Dyson.

As our walk continues, the scenery before me shows parts of the explosion of the General Office of the CCP to my mid right.

A gruff southern accent comes from the upper left.

"Sure, we can synchronize smoke bombs to be thrown your way and obscure you..."

Westie has never been one to be wrong, even in its dimmer moments. The scene up ahead falls with dirt and earth billowing out from the center as smoke bombs are tossed. Lights are turning white to muted pink. To my upper right, comes a Scottish voice.

"But you gotta be the one to sort yer sorry ass out, and determine where to go next..."

Kane was a man with few words, but knew the stakes. Now the scene shows the fallout to my left of Wake City, seeing all the panicking populous running out, and seeing the mutants shamle forward. Running from the right to join me in front, was Julian.

"The real routes to the truth, can only be met from the uncertainty of losing your loved ones."

He then gets whipped and gashed horribly, slowly mutating into what we had to put him down for later. Disturbingly, I see that everyone else transforms into their own fallen version of themselves.

Hilda comes to take my left hand and walks with me, as the scenes of utter war and chaos fill the facility, like some shape-shifting fever dream. She bleeds holes from her body, likely a result of falling to her death from the Pitfaller months back. She smiles and the room starts to fade from red to white.

"We all willingly walk to the altar of our own sacrifice. But it becomes an achievement to hold our rightful place in its grace."

I don't show it, but I feel the sense of being on edge. Yet they continue to walk me to the elevator in the center. She gently pushes me in, and hits the button for me to head down further.

The elevator shaft glows a luminescent red. I peer beyond the grated windows. Lots of oscillating, un-earthly worms. They all vibrate harder and scream of the tortured, and dying of the fallen. Through my slow plunge to the bottom, their yells grow more powerful. The deafening outcries nearly split my skull open, its over-bearance puts me to my knees.

Though their shrieking grinds to a halt the moment we make contact with the ground.

Looking ahead of me, the light converts from red, to a warm, dark crimson. The grated door slides out, allowing me vision in the opaque blackness ahead of me. Front and center, is a silhouette of a man in a familiar lapel suit, and black bag over his head. It appears moist from its own prior misfortune. I walk slowly towards its idle position. Upon reaching to him. He utters to me lowly...

"Your service has been rectified. Come. Peprit awaits you."

He moves aside, putting his right hand outward to the opening on my left. The mutters of a baby emanate the room. I slowly make my approach. The concentrated light comes from what looks to be a writhing, worm-like altar. Moving statues loom atop of its sides. Wriggling pillars stand circularly around its morose magnificence. The room is alive. A living bridge forms from beneath my feet where the black gap oversees the center altar. I make my way to it.

Before me, lies a glowing, golden bean of a fetus. This is the truth? What we fight for? What we sacrifice ourselves for? I walk around it. I feel the urge to pick it up. Hold it in my hands. My awe is impeccable. His coos and laughter, albeit strange and unnatural, leave me in a state of warmth.

"Peprit, The Child of Ripples. Given the ability to change the ripples of time and space with the four principals his mothers and fathers bestowed upon him."

I look up in front of me, to see Daolen's jubilant face. Beyond it, emerges from the shadows the other Gen'rélíchs. The Cubist speaks akin to my wife.

~~"You have proven your worth, Xavier. Do you join us? Become us? Do you desire... Revitalization?"~~

I gaze upon them, with hope in my hand. I cannot help but smirk.....~~

The Life of Jim Croce

By: Daniel H. Ashkin

Jim Croce wrote famous song writer such as "I got to Say I love in a Song" ", I got a Name," and his classic song "Time in a Bottle". In addition, he wrote, "I got a name a name." and "You Don't Mess Around with Jim." Before I am going to analyze some of his famous songs, I am going to give a brief summary of his life growing up as a boy into adulthood.

Jim Croce was born on January 10, 1943 in a working section of the city of Philadelphia. The parents were Italian-American Irish from an Italian American background. Before the age of five, he listened to country and ragtime music with his father. At 18 years old, he started to play the acoustic guitar. He attended Villanova University. Villanova University is located northwest of Philadelphia The University is a liberal arts and science college. Jim Croce studied philosophy and psychology at Villanova. However, he spent 90% of his time performing in bands and performing musical solos to support him.

During the mid-60's, he met his Ingrid Jackson. Ingrid Jackson became his wife. Ingrid is a very strong, determine, fluent women. They perform folk music together on stage. Ingrid's personality is full of enthusiasm and determination in her life. On September 28, 1971, Jim Croce's wife has a son name Adrian James "A.J." Croce. However, Jim Croce and his band died in a terrible airplane crash plane in Natchitoches, La. on foggy rainy day.

A.J. Croce plays the piano and guitar like his father. Although A.J. knew little about his father, he gains valuable insight about his father through listening to tapes, and watch home movies of his father.

I view Ingrid as a very enthusiastic person. When Ingrid Jackson spoke at Villanova University about Jim Croce songs, she said that Jim Croce was a great listener and a good student. When he wrote songs, he sat down next to a tape recorder. After the Jim Croce Died, she wrote an autobiography about Jim Croce Life with her new husband. The name of the book is called I Got a Name: The Jim Croce Story.

I am going to analyze how his songs affect me in expressing my thought towards friends and people around me. I enjoy "listening to Time in Bottle by Jim Croce. I always experience trouble expressing my deepest feelings towards friends because of my Asperger. Because Jim Croce was on the road so much, he expresses his love toward his wife through writing music and love letters. One famous quote said in his song "Time in a Bottle" ", Cause Every time I tried to tell you. The words just came out wrong so I'll have to say I love you in a song." When I suffered autism, the words often come out wrong that people would understand me as appropriate. Because of I suffer autism; I have a difficult time in saying what is fitting in the situation.

In the same way as Jim Croce, I often experience the same difficulty of expressing my deep feelings towards people because everyone is talking in a room. Articulating an abstract noun of love is often is a challenge for me because of my Asperger. For an example, saying the words love, wonderful, and nice are very hard for me to pronounce because of my Asperger and speech problems However, I am able to express concrete words like house, chair, and table Letters, poems, and drawing pictures may likely become another technique for me to overcome this problem to a girl. Likewise, Jim Croce expressed his loved toward his wife Ingrid's through songs, letters, and poems.

When I make love with a girl, the words often come out wrong as does Jim Croce trying say "I love you in a Song." I can identify with this song very much in many ways. I often am unable to find the polite words to identify someone character because of my Asperger. The precise words often come out incorrectly as does Jim Croce in this Song.

I'll Have to Say I Love You in a Song

Jim Croce

*Well, I know it's kind of late
I hope I didn't wake you
But what I got to say can't wait
I know you'd understand
Every time I tried to tell you
The words just came out wrong
So I'll have to say I love you in a song
Yeah, I know it's kind of strange
Every time I'm near you
I just run out of things to say
I know you'd understand
Every time I tried to tell you
The words just came out wrong
So I'll have to say I love you in a song
Every time the time was right
All the words just came out wrong
So I'll...*

This is How I Feel

By: Maggie Jones

I can't seem to grasp words or thoughts that other people say to me all the time. Also, I feel left out sometimes because I don't understand what you are saying to me about anything that people say or try to say to me, when that happens, I get "emotional meltdowns".

When everything you thought would come together nicely. And suddenly it goes all wrong, like a list of things to get done, you lose it in a sense that nothing is going to be ok, it's either black or white no gray in between. The sense that you can't see what's going to happen next is scary and you don't know where to go with the rest of your life when you should be thinking more positively about your life with autism like I have. I know what it's like to have those days where you just want to stay in bed and sleep the day away and whatever is bothering you. But it doesn't work like that, and life doesn't have to be this hard either. It's what you make of your life that makes the difference.

I feel that everything has a way of its own. Life is what you make of it , if you choose to be sad and miserable all your life you will never be happy, even if you were rich , money does not make a person happy at all. And it can replace itself, people can't be replaced. Respect and love who you are with and try your best to compromise with the fact that the people that your family loves is the person you are, for being you.

When you feel like you are alone. Don't ever feel alone because you are a piece of a human masterpiece that comes from inside and that I feel beautiful in God's image. There is nothing wrong with me I'm unique and amazing just the way i was born, and i cannot be replaced.

I feel that when we come together to end a pandemic and racial injustice and to end discrimination to anyone or any human being, we can accomplish so much things that we thought we can never accomplished by ourselves. We must work together in challenges that are true that we can't see ourselves.

We need unity in this country, not to be divided with fear. Of course, we make mistakes in judgement, we are human. But we cannot fear over things that were in the past, because we are stronger when we learn together from our mistakes from the past and not dwell on them. When things get hard, I feel life is hard to deal with. When life feels like it's wearing you down you have to think how much worse it could have been and be grateful for your life now.

I feel that when everything pulls me down in life's greatest challenges including the covid 19 pandemic , I felt lost and hopeless, I could not find anything to look forward to. And I felt unhappy with myself because I let everything get the best of me then. It was a horrible mistake to make last year. I still was filled with strength to do the right things though it was hard to do.

I would wear a mask and socially distance, wash my hands when I come home. And help my family and friends by getting a covid 19 vaccine to protect myself and others from covid 19.

These are the things that are what everyone should do because its not only right, think of the lives you are saving by getting the vaccine. Think of the opportunity to help your neighbor in times of hardship and feel good about helping that person. Think of the accomplishments this country will achieve, only if we work together. And i feel we can get things done then too when we do come together in peace. When my best friend, Ms. Susie, passed away in march 2021, I was sad but I got up and did something more positive about my life and moved forward with my life.~~

Elizabeth Keckley (February 1818 – May 1907)

By: Renee Skudra

Elizabeth Keckley's life was a story of immense suffering and remarkable triumph. She was born into slavery but managed to purchase her freedom and went on to lead a successful career as a seamstress, civil rights activist, and confidante to First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, with whom she forged a close working relationship. This friendship was a profound development, considering their widely divergent backgrounds – Keckley was a former slave while Mrs. Lincoln was the daughter of a wealthy slaveholding family. Furthermore, as a civil rights activist, Mrs. Keckley promoted the welfare of newly freed African American refugees in Washington, D.C., organized relief efforts and provided for their education, thus setting a precedent for the development of black autonomy.

Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley was born in February 1818 in Dinwiddie County, Virginia to Agnes (Aggy) Hobbs, an enslaved African American woman, and Colonel Armistead Burwell, her white master. While the circumstances of Aggy's pregnancy and her relationship with Colonel Burwell are unknown, it is considered likely that the pregnancy resulted from rape or a non-consensual encounter, which was a widespread phenomenon in the antebellum South. Keckley was raised by Aggy and her enslaved husband George Pleasant Hobbs, whose last name Aggy gave to her daughter. Since it was a common trend for slaves to take their master's surname, taking her stepfather's name was itself a direct form of autonomy and resistance.

Growing up with other enslaved children, Keckley assisted her mother in working as an enslaved domestic servant. Aggy was highly valued by the Burwell family, which even permitted her to read and write, although educating slaves was typically illegal in the Southern states. Keckley recalled that her first task as an enslaved five-year-old was to take care of Burwell's infant daughter, who was also named Elizabeth. However, this also brought her into contact with the severe punishment that slaves could suffer for any infraction: "I began to rock the cradle most industriously, when lo! out pitched little pet on the floor. I instantly cried out, 'Oh! the baby is on the floor;' and, not knowing what to do, I seized the fire-shovel in my perplexity, and was trying to shovel up my tender charge, when my mistress called to me to let the child alone, and then ordered that I be taken out and lashed for my carelessness."

As Keckley grew up, she was further exposed to slavery's cruelties, including the separation of families. Although her stepfather George Hobbs was allowed to live with Aggy and her daughter for a time, Colonel Burwell soon told the family that George had to leave and join his owner in the West. This was a highly common aspect of slavery, and separations were usually permanent. Although George maintained contact with his wife and stepdaughter, they never saw him again.

At the age of fourteen, Keckley was sent to live with and work for her white half-brother Robert Burwell and his wife Margaret Anna Robertson in Chesterfield County, Virginia. The family moved to Hillsborough, North Carolina, where Robert ran the Burwell School for girls from 1837 to 1857. Keckley was severely whipped by her half-sister-in-law, possibly due to her white ancestry and likely resemblance to Robert and suffered repeated rape by local white store owner Alexander McKenzie Kirkland for four years, beginning in 1838. This resulted in the birth of her only son George, whom she named after George Hobbs.

In 1842, Keckley and her son returned to Virginia, where they were sent to live with her former mistress, Mary Burwell, and her daughter and son-in-law Anne and Hugh A. Garland, who found himself on the verge of bankruptcy in 1845 and subsequently relocated to St. Louis, Missouri in 1846, followed by the rest of his family. In St. Louis, the family initially planned to hire out Keckley's mother, but she confronted Garland and offered to use her skills as a seamstress in order to earn money for them. In this capacity, Keckley became a highly successful businesswoman, taking advantage of the Garlands' connections to white society and making her own connections with the city's large free black community. She worked in St. Louis for twelve years, and it was during this time that she first came to the attention of Mary Todd Lincoln, the future First Lady.

In 1850, Keckley decided to pursue her freedom after meeting James Keckley, a free man of color who had asked for her hand in marriage, since she was determined that any future children of hers would be born free. Although Mr. Garland reluctantly agreed to allow her to purchase freedom for herself and her son, she refused since she knew that she could be returned to slavery under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 unless she legally obtained her freedom. Therefore, Mr. Garland agreed to accept \$1,200 as the price for Elizabeth's and George's freedom. She found this sum very difficult to raise and following the death of Mr. Garland she traveled to New York to raise funds with the aid of vigilance committees, groups of Northerners that provided assistance to African Americans seeking to obtain their freedom. Keckley finally succeeded in raising the

money for her freedom with the help of a Mrs. Le Bourgois and other loyal patrons, securing a certificate of manumission from Mrs. Garland on November 13, 1855.

After separating from her husband in the aftermath of her manumission, Mrs. Keckley continued to operate her seamstress business in St. Louis for several years, raising money to pay back her debts to those who had helped purchase her freedom. She subsequently moved to Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1860, where she was required to obtain a work permit for her business and find a white person who could vouch for her status as a free woman of color. With a limited network in Washington, Keckley reached out to a client who began connecting her with many prominent Southerners, including Varina Davis, the future First Lady of the Confederacy. Although Mrs. Davis invited Keckley to accompany her back to the South in the event of a civil war between North and South, she declined her offer, recalling: "I preferred to cast my lot [sic] among the people of the North."

During the Civil War, Mrs. Keckley entered the employ of President Lincoln and First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, who was deeply impressed by her skills as a seamstress. They developed a close business relationship, as Mrs. Keckley sewed numerous elaborate dresses for the First Lady, and over time they became confidants, bonded by the experience of having both lost their sons – Mrs. Keckley's son George had been killed at the Battle of Wilson's Creek in August 1861, and the Lincolns' son Willie died from illness on February 20, 1862. Willie's death is widely believed to have been the catalyst for Mrs. Lincoln's gradual mental decline, and Mrs. Keckley, due to her close interaction with the presidential couple, provided detailed observations of the First Lady's grief. Her descriptions later helped to shape historical analyses of Mary Todd Lincoln and, therefore, contributed to the widespread perception of the First Lady as a madwoman.

Mrs. Keckley also devoted her energies toward founding the Contraband Relief Association, a relief society that provided humanitarian aid to contraband camps, in the summer of 1862. These camps were home to enslaved refugees who had flooded into Washington after escaping from Confederate territory, but their legal status was ambiguous – as "contrabands of war" they were no longer under the control of their masters, but it was not determined whether they were enslaved or free. Mrs. Keckley enlisted the aid of Mrs. Lincoln in donating to the organization, and through their fundraising efforts the organization was able to purchase clothes, bed covering, and other necessities for the refugees. Given that Mrs. Lincoln had been raised in a slaveholding family, her friendship with Mrs. Keckley and her involvement with raising funds for the relief association were particularly notable since they demonstrated her evolving outlook toward slavery and African Americans.

Mrs. Keckley remained with the Lincolns until the president's assassination on April 14, 1865, only five days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Her closeness with Mrs. Lincoln was further demonstrated in the wake of the assassination, as the First Lady asked to have Mrs. Keckley by her side while in mourning. She subsequently accompanied Mrs. Lincoln to Chicago before returning to Washington to continue her business career.

Over the years, Mrs. Keckley remained in contact with Mrs. Lincoln and did her best to support and publicly defend the former First Lady, but their relationship was strained by Mrs. Keckley's donation of Lincoln relics without Mary's knowledge and the publication of her memoir *Behind the Scenes or Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* in 1868, which detailed Mrs. Keckley's enslavement, her interactions with elite Washingtonians, and her relationship with Mrs. Lincoln. The memoir was sharply criticized for violating social norms of privacy, race, class, and gender, but Mrs. Keckley maintained that she sought to defend Mrs. Lincoln's reputation, stating: "The world have judged Mrs. Lincoln by the facts which float upon the surface, and through her have partially judged me, and the only way to convince them that wrong was not meditated is to explain the motives that actuated us." Nonetheless, the book was not commercially successful, and Mrs. Lincoln felt betrayed by the memoir's revelations, refusing to mention Mrs. Keckley's name again.

In the years following the memoir's publication, Mrs. Keckley continued her sewing career and began training African American seamstresses in order to pass on her knowledge. In 1892, she accepted a position as the head of Wilberforce University's Department of Sewing and Domestic Science Arts and moved to Ohio to teach there, but she subsequently returned to Washington after suffering a possible stroke. Elizabeth Keckley died in 1907 at the age of eighty-nine. Her legacy is a profound testament to the achievements of African American women who established successful careers following their emancipation from slavery and utilized their expertise to provide humanitarian aid and professional training for former slaves, laying the foundations for black autonomy and future generations of civil rights activists.~~

Did Stonewall Jackson Have Asperger's Syndrome?

By: Nils Skudra

As a Civil War historian, I always have a fervent interest in studying how its notable political and military leaders made a significant impact on the course of the war. One of the most iconic figures is Stonewall Jackson, who was renowned for his rapid marches in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862 and his epic assault which shattered the Union right flank at Chancellorsville in May 1863 before he was fatally wounded by friendly fire. However, Jackson was also highly eccentric since he displayed a variety of odd habits, such as routinely sucking lemons and riding into battle with one hand raised in order to balance his blood circulation. Some historians have suggested that Jackson may have had Asperger's Syndrome, and therefore I have decided to make this topic the focus of my article.

Thomas Jonathan Jackson was born in Clarksburg, Virginia (present-day West Virginia) on January 21, 1824. His early childhood was marked by tragedy since he lost both his father, Jonathan Jackson, and sister Elizabeth to typhoid fever, and he did not get along well with his stepfather, Captain Blake B. Woodson. Due to his mother's poor health, Thomas and his other sister Laura Ann were sent to live with their grandmother, who cared for them with the aid of two maiden aunts and several bachelor uncles. As his mother's health declined, he and Laura Ann were sent to live with their half-uncle, Cummins Jackson, who raised them at Jackson's Mill. During this period, Thomas attended school when and where he could, but he largely taught himself through reading borrowed books, at one point making a secret deal with one of his uncle's slaves to provide him with pine knots in exchange for reading lessons, although this was forbidden under Virginia state law.

Jackson entered the military academy at West Point in 1842, where he experienced difficulty with the entrance examinations due to his inadequate formal education. However, Jackson brought an ardent determination to his studies, something which would be a lifelong characteristic, and he thus earned a reputation as one of the hardest working cadets at West Point. This could be considered an Asperger's trait since Asperger's individuals have an extremely diligent work ethic and display a profoundly single-minded focus on accomplishing their tasks. Since these would be distinguishing characteristics throughout Jackson's career, it thus lends some plausibility to the suggestion that he may have had Asperger's Syndrome.

Following his graduation from West Point in 1846, Jackson served with distinction in the Mexican War as an artillery officer, where he notably displayed an independent judgment in the face of what he considered a "bad order" to withdraw his troops during the assault on Chapultepec in September 1847. He explained his rationale by maintaining that withdrawal would be more hazardous than continuing the artillery duel he was engaged in, and this judgment was ultimately proven correct. Asperger's individuals often tend to be very adamant in defending the rightness of their judgment, which can sometimes be a significant social shortcoming since it may alienate other people. This would prove to be an enduring characteristic of Jackson's career since he often clashed with superiors and subordinates over military decisions that he criticized.

Following the Mexican War, Jackson settled in Lexington, Virginia, where he became a professor of artillery tactics at the Virginia Military Institute. It was here that he earned notoriety for his eccentricities, which included a repetitive tendency to recite lessons by the book, give the same explanation to students asking for help, and punish a student for insubordination if they asked a second time. In addition, Jackson was a hypochondriac who would stand for long periods to keep his internal organs in place due to arthritis and sinus problems, and he believed that this activity contributed to good health. These tendencies made Jackson a figure of ridicule among the VMI cadets, who referred to him as "Tom Fool" behind his back. It could be argued that these traits offer further evidence of Jackson possibly having Asperger's since Asperger's individuals often display repetitive manner-



isms, as well as a tendency to hold odd beliefs and fixations which are not shared by most neurotypical individuals.

Another distinguishing trait was Jackson's zealous religiosity. A devout Presbyterian, he firmly believed that everything took place according to God's will, and he would not mail correspondence on a Sunday since he felt that having the mail in transit on Sunday would be in violation of the Sabbath. His faith also influenced his remarkable composure in battle, as his biographer Robert Lewis Dabney suggested that "It was the fear of God which made him so fearless of all else," which Jackson himself confirmed: "My religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed." According to historian Stephen W. Sears, Jackson's religious fanaticism "energized his military thought and character," and theology "was the only subject he genuinely enjoyed discussing." However, Sears also notes that this religiosity had significant shortcomings since it "warped Jackson's judgment of men, leading to poor appointments," giving rise to the belief that he "preferred good Presbyterians to good soldiers."

Jackson's singular fixation on religion provides further support to the notion that he may have been an Asperger's individual since they tend to have an intensive focus on a particular subject of interest. This can be a significant asset since it can lead them to specialize in their area of interest, which in some ways has been true of my experience since my fervent love of history has driven me to excel in that particular field. However, Jackson's example proves that there can also be a downside to such singular focus since it may affect a person's judgment, their social interactions, and their openness to other ideas or subjects. For Jackson, this was also evident in his Sunday schedule which, the late historian James "Bud" Robertson, Jr. wrote, had "no place... for labor, newspapers, or secular conversation."

As a military commander, some of the traits which had earned ridicule in peacetime made Jackson highly effective. These included his extreme diligence, his composure in battle, and his intuition, as he could readily understand Robert E. Lee's sometimes unstated goals or vague orders and decisively act upon them. This intuition can also be a hallmark of Asperger's since Asperger's individuals are often quick to grasp complex information and synthesize it in ways that are more difficult for neurotypical individuals. Consequently, Jackson achieved remarkable successes at First Manassas, where he earned the name "Stonewall" for his resolute stand on Henry House Hill, and in the Shenandoah Valley, where he mastered the art of deception and rapid movement, defeating several Union armies whose combined strength outnumbered his own and thereby preventing them from reinforcing George McClellan's offensive against Richmond. Furthermore, Jackson expected his men to follow the example of his own diligence, marching them hard over long distances and exercising severe discipline, which earned them the nickname of "Jackson's foot cavalry."

A less admirable trait that Jackson displayed as a commander was his lack of empathy in the face of mass carnage. On one occasion, a Confederate officer lamented the deaths of Union soldiers who had fought with remarkable courage at a recent skirmish, to which Jackson coldly replied, "No, shoot them all; I do not wish them to be brave." In Ken Burns' acclaimed documentary, *The Civil War*, Shelby Foote takes note of another occasion during the Battle of Antietam in which Jackson was eating a peach and surveying the corpse-strewn field following the cessation of fighting in his sector he remarked, "God has been very kind to us this day." For Asperger's individuals, empathy can be a significant challenge since they tend to be very self-focused, which could in some ways explain Jackson's interpersonal difficulties with subordinates, and for him to show such a lack of empathy amidst such slaughter is suggestive of the likelihood that he had Asperger's Syndrome, although it was also possibly a consequence of becoming hardened by the experience of war. However, on a personal level Jackson was capable of forming close emotional attachments, as he had a loving relationship with his wife Mary Anna Jackson and with a young girl named Jane Corbin, whom he developed a fatherly affection for and whose death he deeply grieved.

In summation, Stonewall Jackson's eccentricities and unique intellectual abilities make it highly plausible that he may indeed have had Asperger's Syndrome. His story provides a significant example of the numerous ways in which Asperger's traits can have both positive and negative effects on a person's conduct. For Jackson, they contributed substantially to his talents as a military commander but adversely impacted his relations with subordinates, and in some ways his single-minded fixation on achieving total victory may have helped bring about his demise since he insisted on taking a night reconnaissance of the Union lines at Chancellorsville, which went against military prudence. This would ultimately deprive the Confederacy of one of its finest generals.~~

Wall-e my robot toy adventure

In life

By Rachel Williamson

The fire drill story,

One after noon, I had wall-e in my hand I walked by the bell on the wall, the whole building was expecting a drill, i totally forgot about it and walked with wall-e by the bell, brrriiiiiinnngggg!!, wall-e began to freak out, with a chatter sound, my room had escaped the room, as a practice routine. Wall-e was having a meltdown, Eve just laughed, after the drill was over, wall-e never stopped chattering, I turned him off, then at bus time , I turned him back on, he started again, he never stopped, at home, I took his battery's out and put them back in, never worked, still chattered. I left him over-night, the next morning he was like "whew"

That was a doosey. Eve and I laughed. What a day!!!

Kings restaurant

At the restaurant, wall-e and I and mom and dad were there eating, after we were done, dad gave me a quarter, I put it in the gum all machine, wall-e and I watched it work, when the ball didn't come out, wall-e started chattering as if he was laughing,

After leaving the restaurant, he stopped, but when we got into the truck, I said something funny, he started laughing again!!(chattering) kept laughing for 2 minutes, and then sighed

Lunch burps

At green arc, at lunch, I had Eve wall-e and baby furby,

When I got my pop, I sat it down right beside my baby furby , furby automatically burped, then wall-e did a sound and it kinda sounded like he giggled, then baby furby said "me hungry" then, wall-e said derective? what he was programmed to say but really meant it. Eve laughed too, then everyone in the room was giggling~~

An Alien Contact

By: Rachel Williamson

True story....

On Saturday evening, April 23, 2013, after me and my parents Finnish's watching alien's in the attic, we had to go to Morgantown Walmart to get stuff for the church's event after the sermon at the church the next morning, I had this little blue radio I had got from big lots, I was listening to it, trying to get reception.

Then, we got to Walmart in Morgantown, I was walking into the store, all of a sudden, my blue radio picked up clanking and sounds similar like that, I stayed were the sounds were, then my dad came and got me, all of a sudden the clanking stopped and weird music played. Then I said out loud, (hoping, it's something not human) I come in peace!!! I come in peace!!!

Then we left to go home. At home after my shower, I went to my bedroom and messed with my blue radio again, this time, someone or thing started to speak through my blue radio!!! It said r..rachel is that you?? How are you? Then went on with some stuff I couldn't understand, maybe speaking alien or something, I was freaking out like excitedly freaking out, I really liked at what I was hearing from my blue radio!! I immediately told him that I had to get up early for church. I think he understood, then he started to say a bedtime prayer, he prayed " thank you for this day, and thank you for the day you given us, and bless the day you are going to give us, amen"

Then he sounded like he was snoring, I figured he went to sleep.

The next day (Sunday April 24)

I was in Sunday school, my teacher was doing the lesson All of a sudden, (this was no joke he was invisible at the time) one of my classmates screamed and said " something's on my leg!!"

Seconds later, another classmate screamed the same thing.

I realized the alien must have been in the same room as we all were, I was surprised. I thought he did the same thing to me, I caught him trying to do that to me while in the class room, but I didn't see him, at all, he was still invisible, I said in a low voice "no more " he acknowledged, after the sermon the party in the gymnasium was going to be a blast, the alien, of course had made a challenge for a friend on a samurai mat challenge, I had to dress up in a mat like samurai suit, I won twice in a row, wanting a third challenge, but got thirsty, then I went to the blowup slide the alien was still invisible, wanted to race me up the latter to the slide part, and racing down it, I did so, kinda lost my pants but I pulled them up, and then when the party was over, the alien was a little upset, I heard him grown,"oh no!!!" I tried to cheer him up, he said "it was fun, I wish it wouldn't end."~~



Joe Cepek



Maggie Jones



Daniel Ashkin



Ryan Jones



Pittverse Fall Photo Collection



**WAMO Community Day in
Monroeville**

Photos by Robert Hester





Pittverse

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