

Spring 2019

Vol. 5, Issue 1

Pittverse

Quarterly Magazine

This Edition:

What's Inside

Pittverse



GAME OF THRONES BY
MEGAN CUNNINGHAM



MAYIM BIALIK
BY ROBERT HESTER



FRANK DURANTI
BY MICHAEL KURLAND



OAKMONT BAKERY BY
AMELIA KRZTON

About Pittverse Magazine

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

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

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

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

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

On the Cover

Delaine Swearman added a fuzzy touch to our Spring issue with her flower/bee picture! After an intense and competitive staff vote, Delaine's photo was selected by her peers to adorn the cover and represent all of the hard work that has gone into this issue. Bravo, Delaine, and kudos to all of our *Pittverse* Spring contributors!

Letter from the Editor

In the Winter issue, I had called upon our *Pittverse* contributors to step up and diversify your writing. I asked you all to take chances and be brave in your work...and you didn't let me down!

I was delighted to see our writers try new styles, to step away from their norms and discover new genres. I'm thrilled to see you experimenting with poetry, fiction, and personal essays. I'm so excited to see a truly diverse collection of work, on which you have all worked so diligently; you should be very proud.

It's now time to *really* focus on your craft by learning about techniques that will improve your writing. To that end, I am continuing my "coffeeshop tour," in which I will invite all of you to meet me at various locations and participate in writing workshops. We'll review your work individually, as well as study general writing styles and grammar. I hope that you'll all attend and commit to taking your work to the next level!

Jennifer Pizzuto

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SESTINA

This is a poem of consisting of six stanzas that are six lines each followed by a three line envoi. Each stanza repeats the end words of the lines of the first stanza but in a different order, and the envoi uses the same end words again. The end words are rotated in a set pattern.~~

THE SESTINA

Step 1: Choose 6 words.

Step 2: Follow pattern below:

<i>Stanza #1:</i>	<i>Stanza #2:</i>	<i>Stanza #3:</i>	<i>Stanza #4:</i>
A	F	C	E
B	A	F	C
C	E	D	B
D	B	A	F
E	D	B	A
F	C	E	D

<i>Stanza #5:</i>	<i>Stanza #6:</i>
D	B
E	D
A	F
C	E
F	C
B	A

Envoi:
ECA or ACE
+use words
BDF in the
course of the
last three lines.

floodmark

A Sestina of My Life

by Delaine Swearman

Emma, my cat, is a loyal friend
My companion for the last thirteen years
She's stuck with me through thick and thin
At my side when I am sad
Never judging me
She brings joy to my life

Sometimes I feel alone in life
I'm missing a human friend
I've lost the people who I thought were there for me
Been misled throughout the years
It makes me terribly sad
My trust in humanity is wearing thin

As a kid, I was awkward, too smart, not thin
I felt out-of-place in life
Didn't understand why I was sad
I tried desperately to make a friend
I imitated others and faked a smile for years
It didn't always work out for me

Starting a career was the next challenge for me
Then I focused my attention on getting thin
I awakened an eating disorder that would last for years
Food and exercise took over my life
A mental illness was my only friend
Life was very, very sad

I wanted to die. I felt that sad
I lost my job, and shame almost destroyed me
Then a diagnosis of autism explained it all, going back to my childhood lack of a friend
My focus turned towards things besides being thin
Becoming an aunt gave purpose to my life
Coming out of darkness has taken many years

I've grown to know myself in these years
Learned ways to connect with others who are sad
I do believe in God and that I have a purpose in this life
But I still struggle with a feeling of loneliness inside me
I meet people and then gradually their dedication wears thin
I may never have a committed human friend

But Emma has spent thirteen years entirely with me
Never caring whether I was happy, sad, fat or thin
For the rest of her life, Emma, my cat will always be my loyal friend~~

CURRENT PITTSBURGH STADIUMS

By Mark D. Lizotte

Illustrated on AutoCAD

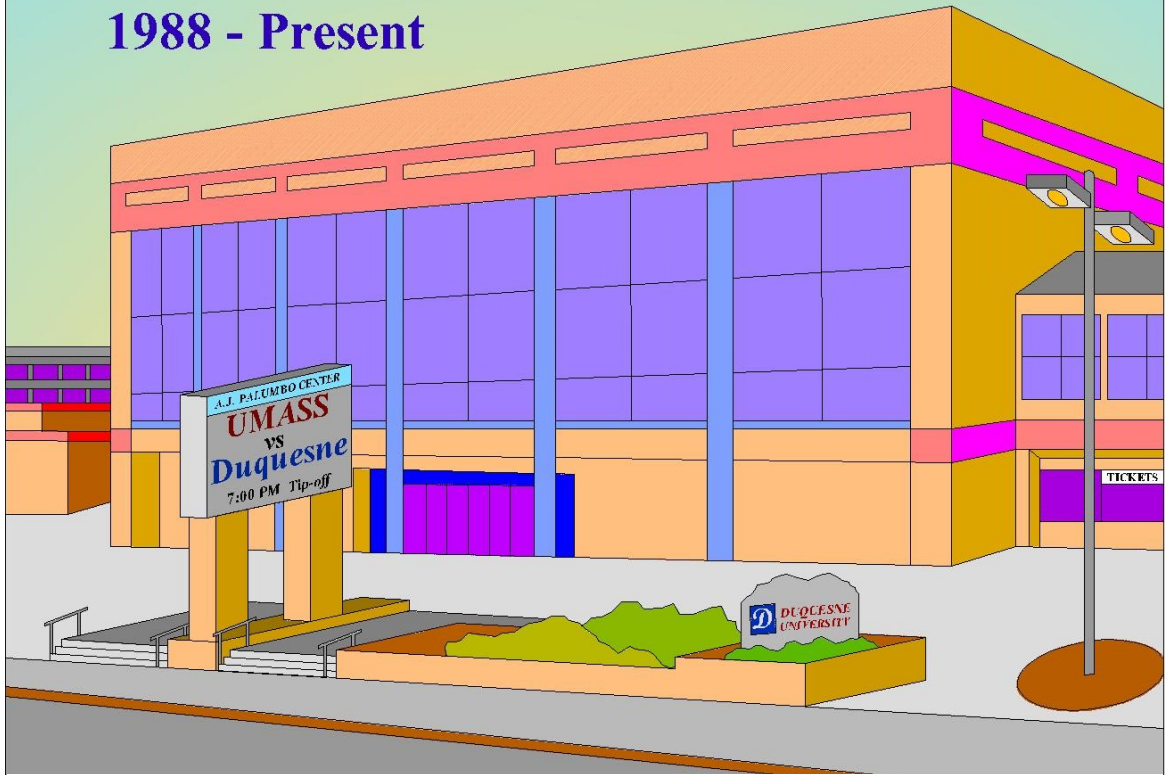
A.J. PALUMBO CENTER (1988-Present) This is a multi-purpose arena located at Duquesne University. In basketball, the annual “City Game” between Duquesne and Pitt is sometimes played here. The arena was also the home of the Pittsburgh Piranhas of the Continental Basketball Association. The team only lasted one year in Pittsburgh, but they made it to the 1995 CBA finals. The arena is also used for volleyball, wrestling, concerts, and other events. The arena has a capacity of 4,400 people.

PNC Park (2001-Present) This is the fifth home of the Pittsburgh Pirates. The 77th MLB All Star Game was played here in 2006. The Pirates won a wild card playoff game here in 2013 over the Cincinnati Reds. It was their first postseason victory since 1992. The Rolling Stones, Billy Joel, and Bruce Springsteen have all held concerts here. The stadium has a great view of the city. The stadium’s capacity is 38,000 people.

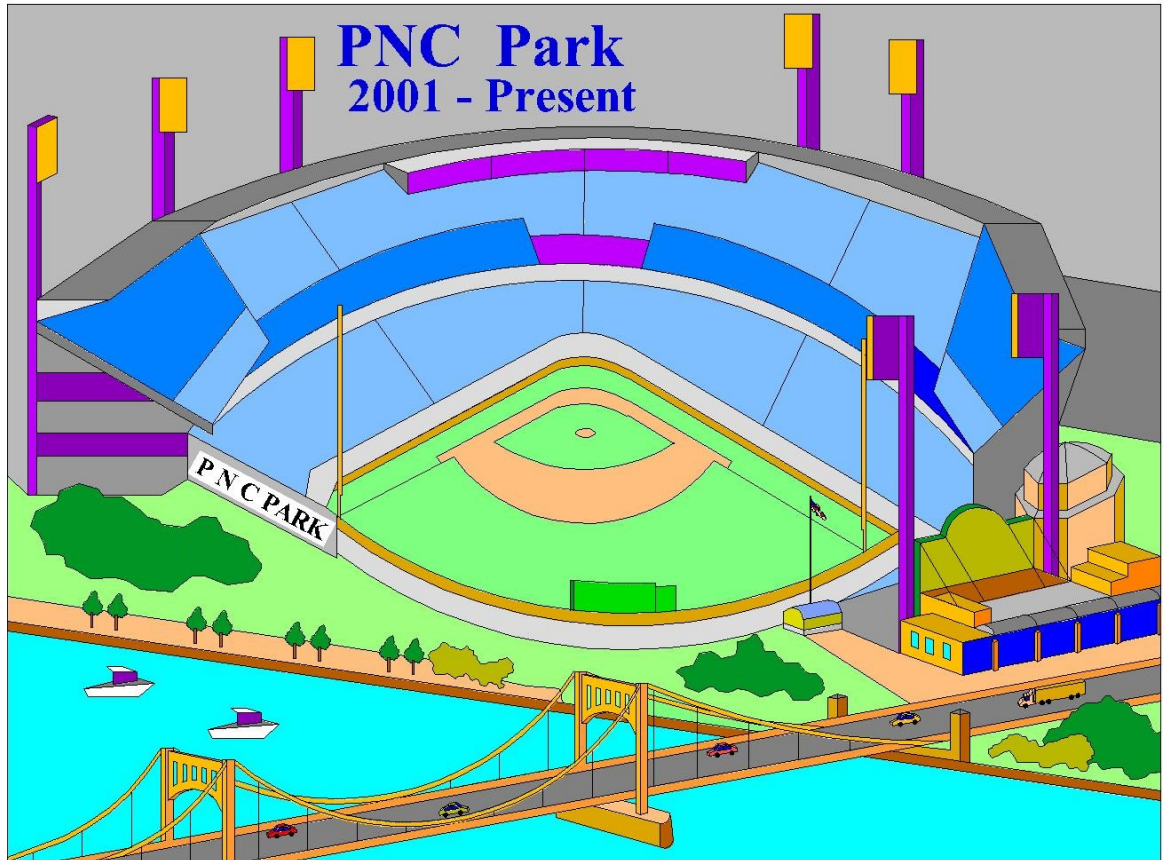
Heinz Field (2001–Present) This is the current home of the Pittsburgh Steelers and Pitt Panthers football. The 2011 NHL Winter Classic was played here between the Pittsburgh Penguins and the Washington Capitals. There was also a 2017 NHL Stadium Series game between the Penguins and Philadelphia Flyers. The 2012 film *The Dark Knight Rises* also shows Heinz Field. The current stadium capacity is 68,400.

Petersen Events Center (2002-Present) The Pitt Panthers men’s and women’s basketball teams play here. The stadium is named after John Petersen, who was a former Pitt student. He is also a retired president of Erie Insurance Group. The first event held here was a Counting Crows concert in 2002. In basketball, Pitt and Duquesne sometimes play here in the annual “City Game” between the two schools. Pitt’s student section is referred to as the Oakland Zoo. This is one of the loudest stadiums in college basketball. The stadium’s capacity is 12,500 people.~

A.J. Palumbo Center 1988 - Present

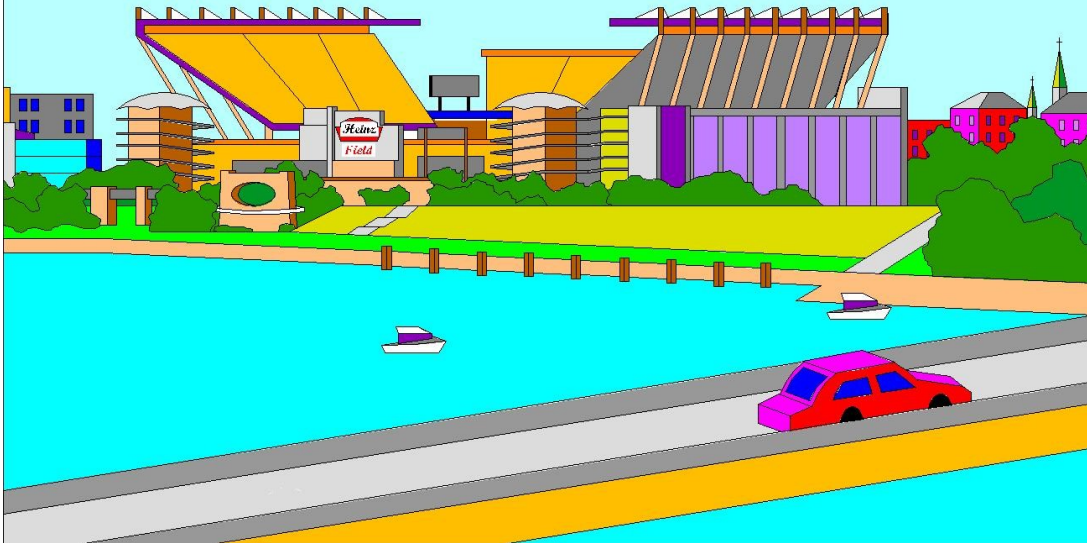


PNC Park 2001 - Present



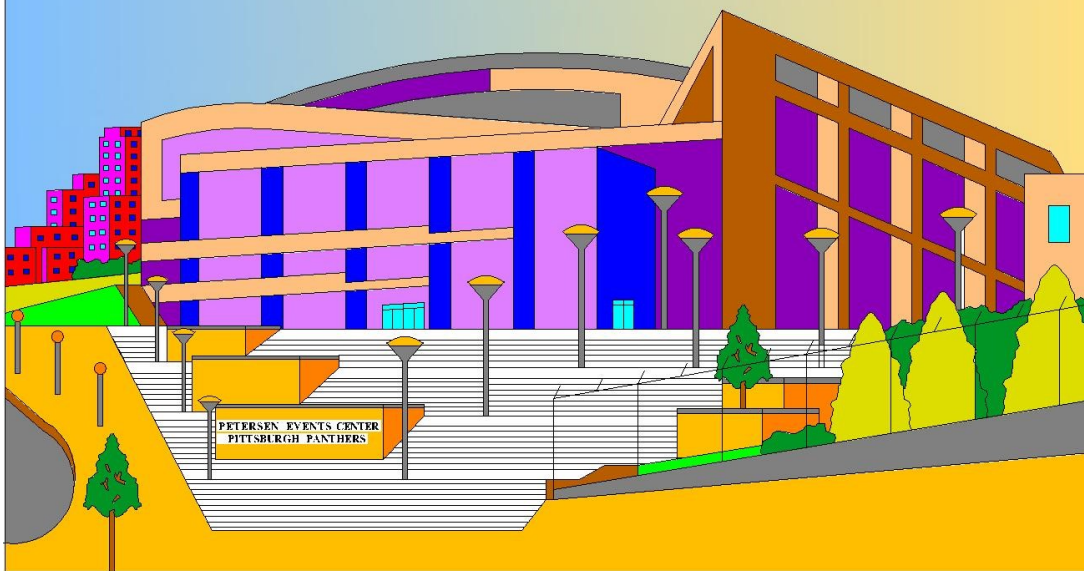
Heinz Field

2001 - Present



Petersen Events Center

2002 - Present





Making Maple Syrup By Daniel H. Ashkin

When I was a boy, my family drove me to the state of New Hampshire for plastic ear operations. While I was near the town of Hanover, my family loved to buy me maple syrup. After my family brought me delicious homemade syrup, I would pour it on my pancakes and waffles for breakfast in the morning. Homemade syrup is the best in the world. It has a sweet taste.

In this article, I will speak about how the maple farmers prepare the syrup from collecting the sap. What are the right weather conditions needed for the manufacturing of this special treat? What are types of trees do the farmers consider for the tapping and the producing the syrup. Further, I will explain how the manufacturers boil the sap to make one gallon of syrup. Next, I will explain the packaging procedures in making maple syrup. Finally, I will talk about several exciting places that a tourist can stay during the time that the syrup is gathered during the festival time.

During the month of February, the farmers need freezing nights and warm, sunny days for a period of 6-8 weeks. The farmer or the manufacture begins to drill a hole into the tree to gather the sap. Several types of trees are excellent for collecting syrup. They include Acer saccharin, black maple, and red maple (*A. rubrum*). On the modern scale, the sap is gathering through a network of spider electronic tubing from tree to tree. When the tree buds begin to blossom, the production of maple syrup is finished.

After the boiling sugar is drawn out of the tree, it must be boiling at a temperature above 212 degrees. Next, the production crew evaporates the steamy water into sugar. After the sugar is filtered into the syrup, the factory packages it for the markets. The farmers need 25 to 75 gallons of water to produce one gallon of syrup. The state has been tapping syrup for more than 300 hundred years. Farmers collect the syrup through the bucket method or the modern spider method.

The Remick Museum is a favorite attraction for learning how to make maple syrup. A tourist can call Maple Hotline, 603-225-3757, to get details. The museum tour guides teach the public about the history of making maple syrup. Outside the museum, the tour directors take the visitors to the different types of trees that produce maple syrup.

Guests can visit Christian Maple Farm in Lancaster New Hampshire. Syrup is produced from mid-February through the beginning of April. Travelers can call the farm at (603) 267-8217. They can sample the different grades of syrup at the bar. For an example, grade A is pale and delicate. The two grades of B are dark, stronger and sweeter.

Vacationers can indulge their sweet tooth by visiting Stuart and John's Sugar House in New Hampshire. They can put yummy syrup on waffles, pancakes, candy, and ice cream. Sightseers can gather more information by calling (603) 399-4486 to satisfy their sugary indulgence. You can obtain more information by going to their address and E-Mail address

A pancake breakfast.

244 Kearsarge Valley Rd, Wilmot, NH, United States

603-748-9787

5saplingsnh@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/5-Saplings-Sugarhouse-..~~>



Working with Decoden

By Alicia M. Bonus



Recently, I've been involved with several art projects ever since I created *The Pretty Guardian* on Facebook. So far, I've knitted hats and scarves, painted, cut, and glued on scrapbook paper and canvas, and made jewelry out of UV resin. Lately, I've been working with a new style of art that has taken off for me. I've discovered decoden that has helped improve the quality of my artwork. And, the results were awe inspiring and fun.

Decoden is a term from the Japanese language that means, "to decorate a mobile case." The word itself basically means, in short, "to decorate". Today, decoden has evolved to include different types of designs and materials when creating art pieces, such as using crystals, beads, rhinestones, polymer clay, or fake whipped cream and sprinkles. It's very popular in Japan, especially when it comes to decoding cell phone cases, trinket boxes, or squishies.

When working with decoden, I began to use different deco cream clays from my favorite cabochon and jewelry decorating websites. The deco creams are made out of a light cream-based clay that portrays itself as whip cream. It's merely "fake" whipped cream and is not for eating, but for decorating purposes only. They are also an air-dry clay so that the whip cream will harden by itself without the use of an actual oven. My favorite workable decoden whips to use are white faux icing, which gives the look of real whipped icing, and jelly glitter cream, which gives the look of colored icing with a hint of sparkle. In addition to decorating with deco cream, I also like to decorate my finishing pieces with fake cupcake sprinkles and deco chocolate sauce. These sprinkles are made out of dried polymer clay and the sauce is made out of a runny melted plastic and wax substance. Both are also not for eating, but for decorating purposes only. Sometimes, when I want to save money, I take the opportunity to create my own homemade decoden whipped cream from scratch. When doing this, I use either DAP or GE clear or white 100% silicone.

When I feel like working with my own decoden, I take a recycled Dixie cup and squeeze the right amount of silicone inside. I choose one of my chalk pastel pigments to use as my color of icing and mix it in with the silicone using a popsicle stick or plastic spoon. While doing this, I wear a protective mask and gloves due to the strong fumes of the silicone. I then take a piping bag and place it inside another Dixie cup in order to transfer my silicone whip into there. When the bag is filled, I squeeze the material down a little bit to fill up the bag and cut off the tip of it. I place the icing piping tip of my choice at the end of the bag and tape it tightly with washi tape or duct tape. After the bag is secured, I can now start decorating on my plain squishy cupcake charms. Before my decoden whipped cream dries completely, I like to add fake cupcake sprinkles and other embellishments onto my cupcakes. When everything is finished, it looks like I've created a real dessert.

All of these and more handmade artwork have recently been showcased on my Facebook page, *The Pretty Guardian*. I'll also be looking around for upcoming vendor art shows this spring and summer. If you're interested in wanting to start a hobby and want to know where to get materials, I suggest my

two favorite websites:

MiniatureSweet.com and

Sophie&Toffee.com~



Neural Networks and the Brain

By Joshua Walburn

Neural Networks are systems of data structures and programs that approximates the functions and the works of the human brain, holding up to trillions of neurons that enable them to communicate with each other.

Mathematically, neural networks are divided between input, hidden, and output layers. Constant 'x' for example counts the numbers of data that's stored into each brain cell, which can calculate in a full summation sequence by counting. It's difficult to find the number of signals that transmits into the brain, because there are many. Constant 'w' resembles synaptic weights.

Neural Networks are the computer operating systems of the brain; it doesn't matter each neuro-type. In autism, the neural connections are organized differently with less brain cell activity. It impairs communication, social interaction, and controllable behavior. Scientific theories show that this happens because of higher buildups of white matter than grey matter. These are two biochemical substances that help the brain to develop, especially during the critical childhood period.

While the brain processes data, the information signals are stored in various brain regions. Scientists can research the brain through functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, or fMRI. The term for that is called "neuroimaging." Researchers can observe various brain regions by telling how they function throughout the process of everyday living. They can examine this by comparing autistic and neuro-typical brains. There is a lot to learn about from neuroimaging and how different brains work in all different types of brains.~~

Driving for 20 years and Real ID Challenges

By Nathaniel Geyer

March 2019 marked twenty years since I received my learner's permit, and later, my driver's license. During the last two decades, I have been driving both SUV and sedans, preferring the latter type. I found that driving is a necessity in an area where mass transit is inadequate. In recent years, with the keyless ignition, rearview camera, and the technical package, which sounds whenever I drift or drive too close to another object, driving has become decidedly safer. It is still a necessity for a higher quality of life. Unfortunately, due to fear of the unknown, many adults on the autism spectrum are unwilling to get a driver's license and thus are dependent on others for support. I found that driving should be avoided for adults on the spectrum unless you live in a rural or suburban area with limited transportation options. I do think that the option to drive should be made by the autistic and not the parents. With the passage of the Real ID it is also critical to adults on the spectrum to know about the challenges and benefits of driving with a Real ID.

A Real ID was an act of Congress, passed in 2005, that modified United States law pertaining to issuance of sources of identification, like driver's licenses. Pennsylvania was provided an extension for Federal agencies to accept current identification cards at Federal facilities and commercial aircrafts until 2020. However, unlike other states, getting a Real ID is optional and costs about \$60. On the other hand, a standard ID in Pennsylvania, which looks identical to a Real ID minus a star, will only be valid for driving and general identification purposes. Despite the higher cost to receive a Real ID, I recommend paying the higher fees to enter Federal agencies and aircrafts without always bringing a passport for domestic usage.~~

Safety Column with Officer Bailey

By Michelle Middlemiss

This is an open forum for questions from readers that I will ask Officer Bailey; related in any way to Autism. Please email me questions that I will ask him at: mycatthalia@yahoo.com

1.

“Officer Bailey; What do you think about autistic people driving cars?” (K Wilson)

K,

Thank you for this interesting topic. I believe that ANY individual, not just a person who has ASD that can pass the set guidelines set forth by Penn Dot should have the opportunity to drive. Driving in the state of Pennsylvania is a privilege, not a right. Drivers should respect the laws along with other drivers and pedestrians and people riding bicycles. However, when encountering with police or any emergency vehicle, the driver should know what to do and know how to act. I really think there should be a class on how to interact with police and emergency vehicles for ALL drivers, not just persons with ASD.

Michelle: If you pass the written part of the test but have trouble with the actual driving, please consider whether you are really prepared to get a license. Emergency situations can be overwhelming and confusing.

2. “Officer Bailey; One thing that ASERT has been digging into and thinking about is active shooter situations. There are general curricula out there that would benefit from modifications for training people with autism. What are your thoughts?” (Stacy Nonnemacher)

Stacy,

I don’t think having any modification training for people with autism during an active shooting would be beneficial. When a real active shooting incident occurs, ALL persons need to be prepared. It’s very important to stay safe and follow directions set forth by employment, schools, etc. The explanation of the drill may have to be more in depth, but during a real incident, people with ASD would have to stay safe just like everyone else. Extra steps or modifications can or should be taken when a police officer is on scene and directions/ commands are given for everyone so the person(s) with ASD would know what to do; I.E. walk in a straight line, hands up, no sudden movements. I certainly would like to be involved in developing a training class for persons with ASD for an active shooting incident.

Michelle: A police officer needs to be attuned to the fact that we might know these things but when we’re under a stressful situation, a lot of the directions and commands may go over our heads. We might still act on instinct. The cognitive mind tends to be dulled. I do agree classes are a good idea so we know what to do.

3. “Officer Bailey; I want to congratulate both you and Michelle for looking at these issues. Is there anything being done on a national level or in Congress? This issue is not just of value on a local level!” (Harold Wilson)

Harold,

What I have found on a national level is bills for extending educational and health services and missing persons. Much more needs to be done, but it seems that the Democrats and the Republicans all just want to blame each other for how messed up our country can be. Instead of working together, they would argue with each other. You can also look at our state senators and state representatives for bills that are being introduced.

Michelle: I believe both parties are more likely to bow down to corporate interest rather than personal interest and personal belief.

4. “Officer Bailey; What type of resources can you recommend for those individuals with ASD who are nonverbal (besides an ID bracelet)? For example, one who is capable of dialing 911 but may not be able to verbalize an emergency on the phone? Are there any means/devices that the police force has experience using to help these individuals?” (Alanna Nazinitsky)

Alanna,

I am looking once again to have a bill introduced in the PA House and Senate. This Autism Bill would allow a special marking or have the letters “ASD” on their Pennsylvania drivers / identification cards. This would be voluntary and can help police and first responders during an emergency. Communication is a key component and I wish Penn Dot would understand this. Also in some 911 centers, you can text 911, but make sure that the cell phone has the location and the Wi-Fi settings on to get a better accurate location. Then there is the TTY, which has been around for a long time. It’s important to let the dispatcher know that you have ASD and or nonverbal, this way the dispatch can let the Police, EMS or Fire Department know. Again communication is key. In Allegheny County, you can register your residents with a premise hazard alert. This will alert the dispatcher of a special needs person within the house or apartment. I have helped to implement alert packets and I created alert stickers to place on a vehicle rear window and the front door of the residents. Anyone can pick this up at your local Police Department with in Allegheny County.

Michelle: I actually just received a national fellowship for my self-advocacy project from SARTAC with funds to work on something along this line. I cannot go into detail at this time but am excited to start. ~~



THRIFTIQUE: a Fancy Store with Exciting Merchandise

By Kenneth Miller

Bryan Lippert has a new job at the Goodwill THRIFTIQUE on 51st Street in Lawrenceville. It is fancy. They have all kinds of nice stuff, like a Marshall's and Bed Bath and Beyond combined. When I picked him up from work, I spent some time shopping there. They had a whole Christmas table filled with holiday items. They have a big display of stylish women's boots in the front of the store.

There are truly great finds to be made at Thriftique. If you take time and you look hard, you'll find something you really need. Shopping is unpleasant for me (I don't like making choices or spending money) and I am usually unhappy with my purchases...but by going to Thriftique with a friend and taking my time, I think I'll likely have a rewarding shopping experience.

Bryan walked me around the store and showed me what he did in each of the departments. He seems to get along very well with his co-workers. Sometimes he goes out in the truck as part of a donation collection team.

One of Bryan's favorite coworkers, Ms. Liz, has been working there for 12 years. She'll be retiring in May, 2019. Bryan's job is a temporary job through the Sally and Howard Levin Clubhouse. He told me that he wanted to work more hours. He'll be finishing up in May, so he is definitely looking for new employment opportunities now.

After visiting Thriftique, Bryan and I ate at LOT 17 in Bloomfield. The wings were delicious, but too expensive. I was reminded that I don't really like oatmeal stout beer, even when it is on special. The service was good. Bryan ordered a Mahi Mahi fish sandwich with sweet potato fries. He seemed to be very happy with his choice. We had a better time at Mad Mex in Aspinwall a few weeks later. Their wing happy hour special is 12 for \$7. ~~



Focus Behavioral Health

By Michael Perret

I interviewed Systematic Skill Building Staff Angela from Focus Behavioral Health. Angela has a Bachelor of Science degree from Point Park University that she obtained in 2009. Angela was inspired to work for Focus because she likes helping people and making a difference. When Angela goes home, she feels like helped someone that day. Angela first started working as a Community Support Staff and then got promoted to Systematic Skill Builder. Angela has been working for Focus Behavioral Health for eight months and has been working as a Systematic Skill Builder Staff for three months. Angela likes her job because she helps other people accomplish their goals. Angela likes helping me become more independent. Angela now helps people accomplish their goals, monitor their progress, and is now responsible for advocating and integrating others out in the community. Before Angela started working with adults, she worked several years with children as a Therapeutic Support Staff for different agencies.

Focus Behavioral Health, or Focus, is an outstanding provider under the Intellectual Developmental Disorder Waiver in the state of Pennsylvania. Focus presents a mixture of distinct services to assist and guide families as well as individuals affected by Intellectual Developmental Disorders. Some of these services include the following:

- Home & Community habilitation
- Respite
- Transitional Work
- Behavioral Support

I enjoy working with Angela because she gives me advice on how to save money, cook healthy meals, and work on communication skills. I also like working with Angela because she takes me out into the community so that I can meet new friends, do fun activities, and talk about what I like and don't like to do. Angela helps me budget my money. She also gives me advice on how to properly prepare healthy meals for myself. Angela also gives me advice on how to make eye contact with other people while they are talking to me, staying on the topic of conversations, and not interrupting others while they are talking. I also like working with Angela because she is trying her best to help me save my money so that I'll be ready to live out in the community on my own. ~~

Volunteering at the Rosedale Food Pantry

By Zach Grabowski

Every Wednesday I volunteer at the Rosedale Food Pantry, located at Rosedale United Methodist Church in Verona, PA. I help box food and products for distribution. We box a wide variety of meats, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, pastas, cereals, cakes, cookies, doughnuts, pies, juices, milk, paper products, and anything non-perishable.

The Rosedale Food Pantry serves 500 families per week in Verona, Penn Hills, Oakmont, Plum, and Blawnox. It is an honor to help serve those in need!

Like me, there are also other loyal volunteers who are at the food bank every Wednesday. I have been volunteering there for a year and a half and have met a lot of nice people. I enjoy working with the other volunteers. I found out about their food bank through Focus Behavioral Health, and I'm so glad I did.~~



Mitci and Me

By Maggie K. Jones

It all began with a phone call in late February, 2008, from my aunt. She wanted to know if we wanted to adopt another dog. She said that her best friend wanted to ask you about adopting another dog. Her father is elderly and can't take care of his dog anymore. She asked me if you wanted to take care of this dog named Mitci." She went on to say that Mitci was living by herself in a empty house, and people were taking her for walks almost every day, but they don't have room for her in their own homes. They also could not afford to keep her any longer. She was in Greenfield, PA. She asked my mom to adopt Mitci. My Mom thought about it, and then said with a smile, "yes, we'll get her." We where happy to have another dog alongside Buddy, our first dog. So, we went to get Mitci on March 3, 2008.

She was scared at first when we brought her home, but I thought, maybe if I calm her down, maybe, she could let me gain her trust as a true best friend. Then, I went in my father's room where Mitci was sleeping. She was still afraid, and then a magical moment happened. I said, "Hi Mitci, you are safe with us including me, you are my dog, and my best friend. And I will take the best care of you, too." And, at that moment, she was wagging her nubby little tail faster then a lighting rod. And she lit up her eyes, too. She was my best friend at that moment.

For eight long years, we were the best of friends. I'd pretend to train for the circus by jumping a small fence in the backyard. We ate ice cream together. We had our moments that were very sad. My grandmother passed away at age 89 on Sunday, April.13, 2008. Mitci was there to comfort me and my sister, Stephanie. We had lots of memories. When my first dog, Buddy passed away in 2015, Mitci was sad. The next year, on the day before I was to volunteer for the first time at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, I got the most horrific news of my life: Mitci had died of heart and kidney failure. My mom told me that she had been put to sleep my mom. My dad and sister were too sad to talk. Then my third dog, Brooke, passed of kidney failure in 2017.

Mitci was a friend to me. I cried ever since her death. For many nights. Even now, I still can't get over that she is gone like the other dogs I had. And my grandmother, too. I would cry. But, I believed that they are still with me always and would not want me to cry. She would want me to do the right things in my life without them by myside. And always kept them in my memory, and always remember that we where the best of friends. And I have another dog who needs me: Suri. She is currently four years old. We are best friends, just like Mitci. And we are getting another dog in the summer of 2019! I'm so excited to spend the next chapter of my life with a new dog to play with Suri.

God bless my dog, Mitci (2008 –2016). And all furry friends of mine. May the Irish eyes stay with me forever more, in honor of my grandmother, Marie E. Stehle (1918-2008).~~

Around the World on Wheels

By Julia Fieldhammer

This world is huge place and full of different experiences. I enjoy seeking them out. Everyone has a different way of looking at the life which affects their way of living. My personal experiences are different than everyone else's because I have a physical disability and am in a wheelchair. Some of the things I do have to be adapted, or if I go somewhere, we have to make sure it's handicap-accessible. Despite this, I love to go to new places and experience new things.



I've been a lot of places, mostly in the United States. Of course, I've been to the beach. It's the best feeling, sitting at the end of ocean in the waves while they crash over you. My parents always look for a place with beach access so it's easy for us to get on the beach and down by the water with my wheelchair. Another place I've been is Nashville, Tennessee. It's a very different type of city. People call it "Music City." My family and I got to see Little Big Town. It was awesome and we had fantastic seats. The only bad thing was everyone was standing up and I couldn't see if I stayed sitting down. My sisters held me up and that was tiring for both me and them. Nashville is a very lively place; I'd love to go back and explore more of the city. After we went there, my family and I went to another cool city: New Orleans. My family and I drove from Nashville to New Orleans. We went there twice because my sister was doing an internship there. The city really has its own culture and it's a really cool place. We walked around some of the neighborhoods and saw some of the houses. Most of the houses are old Victorian style and they look very captivating.

Some people don't travel at all—they just stay in one place all their lives, but that's not the kind of life I want to live. Someday, I'd like to go to Europe. One of my top places is Paris. I want to see the Eiffel Tower, but I hope there's an elevator so it's easy for people like me to get to the top. This spring, I am going to San Antonio, Texas. I'm grateful to have had many opportunities already and hope to have more experiences and see more of the world.~

Live the Life You Love

By Ginger Reynolds

In order to live the life you love, you have to figure out what you love doing. For example: if you love to help people, you can become a peer specialist or a therapist. If you love helping animals, you could be a veterinarian or an animal foster parent. Those are just some examples. Before you figure out what you love doing, you have to figure out how to love yourself. But how do we learn how to love ourselves? You need to find things that you love doing that make you feel better about yourself.

If you love to listen to music, increase your collection. In order to love yourself, you have to take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself means completing your hygiene two times daily. It also means being safe and going to the doctor when you need to.

Taking care of yourself not only means doing things to keep

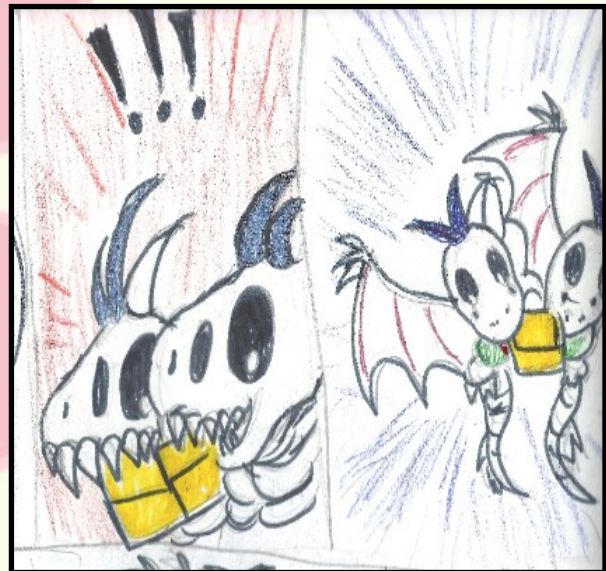
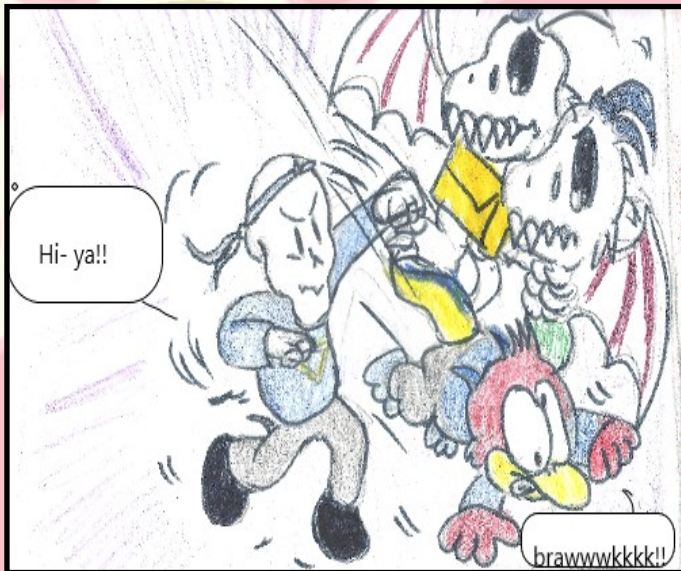
yourself healthy, but also doing things that keep you stable. For example: engaging in social activities, eating healthy, and using your coping skills. Coping skills are safe things you can do to help de-stress and calm yourself down when you are angry, depressed, manic, or even just having a hard time. For example: coping skills cannot be using drugs, alcohol, or engaging in self-harming activities.

Some coping skills could be writing, listening to positive music, sports, typing, art, math, science, or even positive video games. They all get the frustration out while at the same time, they are all healthy and positive. Eating cannot be a coping skill, because it can be overused. Eating too much can cause weight gain and bulimia. Weight gain and bulimia can cause a lot of stress. Some other coping skills can be exercising, decorating, weight lifting, cleaning, baby-sitting, organizing, or even playing

with a sibling/pet. Any activity that is safe, healthy, and positive is a coping skill. Even cooking and friendly get togethers could be coping skills. MY favorite coping skills are: taking a hot shower, reading, texting, writing, typing, drawing, and teaching. Hot showers make me feel clean and I have OCD, so that is a big thing for me. Reading is good for me as well, because I like to read self-help books and comedies. When I write or type, I'm teaching others about a life lesson that I had to go through. I like to write and type, because it lets out what I can't find the words to say.

So, I guess what I'm trying to say is: find who you are and try not to be someone you're not. I tried being someone else just so I could make friends that would never leave me. I realized I was going about it incorrectly. If I would've just been myself, maybe things would have turned out differently.~

Brave Knights by Melissa Mozurak



Peter Tork: Tribute to a Musical Hero

By Thomas R. Skidmore

On Thursday, February 21, 2019, the world lost a music talent and I lost another hero when legendary '60s musician Peter Tork, best known as the bassist/guitarist for the popular rock band, The Monkees, died at his home in Los Angeles. He was 77 years old and had battled cancer off and on since 2009.

Born as Peter Halsten Thorkelson on February 13, 1942, he began studying music at the age of nine and had already showed off his musical prowess, playing multiple instruments such as the banjo, piano, acoustic and electric guitars (all of which would serve him well on many Monkees songs and albums).

After leaving college, Peter joined the burgeoning folk scene in Greenwich Village from 1962 till 1965. It was here that Tork became friends with fellow '60s icon Stephen Stills, and it was Stills who told Peter about auditions for a radical new television series about a struggling rock band. Stills himself had auditioned, but was not accepted, as the show's producers said Stills wasn't photogenic enough. However, Stills personally recommended his long-time friend Peter, and soon Tork flew to Los Angeles to audition for a part on the new show.

He was accepted alongside fellow musician Michael Nesmith and actors Micky Dolenz and Davy Jones. Peter was cast as the lovable, yet gullible, "Pete," yet this was not who he was in real life. For the first two Monkees albums, Tork was only allowed to sing (but did provide scant instruments on songs produced by Nesmith). Soon he proved his total musical genius on the band's later albums, notably their 1967 LP *Headquarters*. Here he played piano, banjo, bass guitar, acoustic guitar, and even co-sang lead vocals with Davy Jones on their melancholic song, "Shades of Grey." He also wrote the song "For Pete's Sake," which was later used for the closing song of the second season for their TV series.

After *Headquarters*, Peter's interest in the Monkees waned rapidly. He managed to play some instruments on *Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn, & Jones, Ltd.* (including a few acoustic guitar riffs) but on 1968's *The Birds, The Bees, and the Monkees*, he was limited to playing the iconic piano on "Daydream Believer." When the band's 1968 anti-film *Head* bombed at the box office, Peter took his leave from the Monkees.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Peter had a few setbacks but by 1986, he was back on form. Starting with the epic 1986 reunion of the Monkees, Tork re-established himself both as a musician and much later, a respected character actor. His easy-going charm earned him guest spots on such popular TV shows such as *Boy Meets World*, *Seventh Heaven*, and *The King of Queens*. Also, he formed a successful side-project band called Shoe Suede Blues, playing large clubs and small theaters to great acclaim.

From 2009 onward Peter battled cancer, for which his treatment proved successful enough to rejoin the Monkees (minus the late Davy Jones) for their 2016 album *Good Times*. He contributed his voice and guitar on the very poignant track "I Wasn't Born to Follow." The last Monkee song Peter sang and played on was called "A Better World."



And Peter Tork's magic did indeed help create a better musical and spiritual world.

Thanks for the "good times," Peter old buddy.--

Photos courtesy of Bing Free Images

Storm Chasing Basics



By Jordan Plumbo

Storm chasing is what people do when they go storm spotting and give reports in to the local authorities and observations that can be studied to monitor and predict severe weather.

The reason why I want to write and talk about the weather and storm chasing is because it is required for scientific research and it saves lives. This requires photographic and video evidence for it to be studied by scientists with weather and climate backgrounds. I have been interested in weather and severe weather for years, since I was a little kid. The experience of storms that triggered my interest happened when I was a kid, on June 21st, 2003. A storm formed southwest of Pittsburgh and moved northeast over the Allegheny River Valley. It produced a funnel cloud with a tornado occasionally dropping from it every so often. What I remember clearly was a large black and dusty 1/2 mile wide wall cloud and circulation coming up through the hills toward my house with multiple vortex funnels and numerous little small tornadoes spinning around the parent storm cell. It went directly over my home and touched the ground again in the woods behind my

house. This event sparked my interest in the weather and in severe weather seasons and trends. Storm chasing has since become a passion for me. There have been major extreme severe weather events since 2003 to 2019 and I have lived through many, including tropical systems, tornadoes, hail storms, windstorms, blizzards, and so on.

The phenomena I would like to share with you is fairly common around here but highly unreported, and it doesn't make the press often. Fair weather tornado phenomena, also known as dust devils, land spouts, waterspouts, and snow devils, are common weak tornadoes that occur anytime of the year in the Pittsburgh Metro region. Most of the time they are just a nuisance with little or no damage reported because winds are generally near 40mph to 50mph. Occasionally you will get a stronger one with winds from 70mph to 140mph in the area but these are very rare; they make up about 1% of all local tornadoes locally. Most of the time tornadoes around here spin up from a parent thunderstorm or a circulation within the main severe thunderstorm, but sometimes we will get occasional land spouts that form from wind convergence on the Western slopes of the Appalachian Mountains. The strongest in recent memory was on January 23rd, 2019. An unreported and not ranked tornado by the National Weather Service hit my town of Creighton, near New Kensington, during the afternoon. It was a large waterspout that hit the local park and caused significant damage to the trees and had damage constant with an EF1 or EF2 (90 to 130mph winds) tornado. The tornado was shallow (only 1,000 feet off the ground), so it wasn't detected by radar.

What do you do if you see one of these tornadoes? The best thing to do is try to get below ground or somewhere where there is sturdy shelter. If not just try to get away from it as quickly as possible.~~

Story of Passover

By Mark Sulkin

My article is about Passover. It's an important Jewish holiday that occurs in the spring. Jews celebrate it as a commemoration of their liberation by God, and under the leadership of Moses, from slavery in ancient Egypt as a nation.

Every year for Passover, we go over to my grandmother's house for Seder, in Hebrew, Sedar is סדר. Seder means order. We call the meal that because everything needs to be eaten in a special order.

When we arrive at my grandmother's house, we all sit at a big table. Men wear hats called kipot or yarmulkes and we read a book called the Haggadah. It tells the story of Passover. There are four questions in the Haggadah. We read them in both English and Hebrew.

One of the foods we eat on Passover is matzoh, which is like a giant cracker. In Hebrew, Matzoh is מצה. Matzoh is a kind of bread that is made without any yeast. It's flat because it represents the bread the Israelites took with them when they fled Egypt. They had to leave in a hurry so the bread didn't have a chance to rise.

The table features a large platter called the Seder plate. On the Seder plate are the main symbols of Passover. They are greens in salt water (spring and the tears of slavery), egg (spring) and charoses (a mixture of apples, nuts, wine and sugar). It represents the mortar and used to make the buildings the Israelites built. The Seder plate also includes bitter herbs such as horseradish to show the bitterness of slavery and a roasted shankbone. This represents the lamb whose blood marked the Israelite homes so the plagues wouldn't visit them.

Also, during Passover, we get to go on a search for the afikoman. The afikoman is the piece of matzoh we eat for dessert at Seder. When we find it, we get money. Another thing we eat on Passover is matzo ball soup. When it's time for dinner, we eat chicken and matzah bagels. Later that same night, we have dessert. Some desserts we eat at Passover are special cakes and fruits. We retell the story of Passover to remind us of freedom and how special it is.~~

Track and Field

By Daniel H. Ashkin

When I was a young boy, I loved to run as fast as I could down through a grassy field. When the wind blew very hard, I could hear the wind pounding hard against my face.

In this article, I will talk about my personal experiences in track and field as a child. Secondly, I will cover some of the main track and field events in competition. Next, I will review some of the fastest male and female runners in the world today.

When I was in the ninth grade, I began to run track after school. I once ran around the track in 66 seconds and participated in the long jump. I was able to jump over 14 feet. Before I reached the finish line, my heart was pounding like a cannon drum. Catching my breath seemed very agonizing.

After the tenth grade, I ran track and field at a prep school in New England. I was able to jump 17' 3" in the long jump. One day, I ran a distance of a half mile in two minutes and 31 seconds. Latter, I was able to jump a distance a 33' 3" in the triple jump.

When children have excellent flexibility at a young age, they could start completing in races. When they are able to reach tremendous zip at young age, I feel that at the internet is valuable waste of time for them. When you become an adult, your running speed starts to slow down due to arthritis in the knees. I began to feel suffer this disease in my late forties and the early fifties. When I heard the news from the doctor, I felt infuriated that I could not run as fast as I used to anymore.

The two categories of track and field include the running and the field events. The running events include the 100-meter dash, quarter mile, and the half mile. The field events include the long jump, triple jump, pole vault, and the shot put.

Overall, track and field are made up of running events and field actions. Giving a summary of my track and field experience will likely encourage more children and young adults to try the sport. Because children's muscles are very flexible, track and field can likely build their self-confidence. I will likely go more in depth about the technical aspects of sprinting and the field events later this year.~~



RUNNING EVENTS		
	50 yds.	50 meters
	100 yds.	100 meters
½ of track	220 yds.	200 meters
¼ of mile	440 yds.	400 meters
½ of mile	880 yds.	800 meters
1 mile	1760 yds.	1617.574
400 meter relay	4 X 100 yd.	4 X100 m
men hurdles	36"	100 meters and 400 meters
women hurdles	30"	100 meters and 400 meters

FIELD EVENTS	
Long Jump	one jump into a sandpit
Triple Jump	three jumps into the sandbox
High Jump	one jump over a high pole onto a mat
The pole vault	An athlete attempt to pole vault over a high bar on a mat
The javelin	81/2 feet long pole for a men and 7 feet pole for a women
The shot Put	16 lbs. ball for a men and 8 lb. for women
Hammer Throw	16 lbs. for a men and 8.82 lb. for women
Win by	throwing the hammer the farthest

Why Black Face is Racist

By Megan Cunningham

Given that I am a white woman who's benefitted from white privilege my whole life, I do not consider myself an authority on considering what's racist and what's not. However, there are times when the racism is so glaring that you must wonder why people are so clueless. Recently, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam got embroiled in a scandal after photos from his 1984 medical school yearbook were leaked, showing one person in blackface and one in Klu Klux Klan robes. Then Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring admitted to appearing in blackface at a 1980s college party. Next, it was revealed that Virginia's State Senate Majority Leader Tommy Norment was a managing editor of a 1968 yearbook that included pictures of students in blackface, mentions of racial slurs, and people with Confederate flags. Add to that a sexual assault scandal surrounding Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax and Virginia has a full-blown leadership crisis. Shortly after that, the Italian luxury brand Gucci had to formally apologize after a backlash ensued over a black turtleneck sweater that pulls over the face with a cutout and exaggerated lips around the mouth. And yes, it looks like blackface.

For those who aren't familiar with the term, "blackface" is when a non-black person darkens their skin with makeup or other products to imitate a black person. Though it has been an ancient theatrical device, it wasn't much of a racial signifier as color symbolism. White meant light, daytime, good, and safety. Black meant night, darkness, bad, and danger. Dressing like demons and devils in black was the old European way of saying they were creatures of the night. Blackface as we know was used to dehumanize black people emerged in the 1820s in minstrel shows. These were comic variety acts depicting people of African descent. In these shows, white actors would put paint their faces black and perform exaggerated and highly caricatured images of black people to white audiences. In antebellum America, one's skin color was of paramount importance to social standing and quality of life. At first these shows were performed by poor whites (often Irish) in the North who lived alongside free blacks. For the Irish and later generations of immigrants during the 19th century, putting on blackface and performing was often a way of signifying to other white people that they were white just like them. And therefore, superior to blacks in a way that justified slavery. But there's more these blackface performances, which were often comprised of admiration and hate for black culture as if mocking and praising it simultaneously. That doesn't negate the fact it was racist since it showed a reticence to engage with real black people and a preference to engage with *white* people dressed as black people instead.

Nonetheless, as blackface became more mainstream and commercialized in the 1840s, it became much crueler, much more about mockery. This was especially true after the American Civil War, when there was great turmoil and upheaval about race in America. This was due to a series of constitutional amendments that abolished slavery and gave blacks the rights of citizens, including the right to vote for black men. As a result, blackface minstrelsy became part of the onslaught of racial stereotyping occurring at the time. In the late 19th century, hideous images of racist stereotypes appeared everywhere from advertising, literature, onstage, and in songs. During the 20th century, the practice of blackface even appeared in film, TV, radio, and at public events, particularly on predominantly white college campuses, schools, federal agencies, and even the military. With these dehumanized images of African Americans led to blacks being disenfranchised and denied basic rights under the caste of Jim Crow laws. These portrayals were part of a system painting African Americans as deviant and deserving of subpar treatment. And these same attitudes rationalizing blackface minstrelsy rationalized poll taxes, lynchings, and segregation, which have shaped life in black America to this day.

Nevertheless, while blackface may have a complex history that's still associated with racism, the practice today is unambiguously racist. In fact, black Americans even considered blackface to be racist before it was no longer acceptable in America. As far back as 1848, Frederick Douglass decried that blackface minstrel performers "have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow-citizens." Yet, it wasn't until the Civil Rights Movement after World War II that they managed to shame white Americans into not doing blackface anymore. By the 1960s, blackface had become one of the few absolute taboos in American culture.

Theoretically, blackface's history and clearly visual nature should make it more of a taboo than it is. But despite its clearly racist origins, a deeply disturbing large number of people don't see a problem with it. A recent *Washington Post* poll found that just 58% of Americans think blackface is wrong. By race, 73% of blacks disapprove but only 57% of whites said the same. But the biggest divide came on political lines with 81% of Democrats disapproving of blackface, compared to 50% of Independents and 44% of Republicans. Though these gaps are large, they fill into a larger discussion on racism and intent. In America, racist actions are so often defined as highly visible acts committed maliciously by "bad" people. But that isn't true most of the time since most racist actions aren't usually visible in American life. (Or at least visible to the people aren't affected by them.) Those who don't see blackface as a problem don't fall into this category because people in blackface don't mean to be offensive despite the practice long being used for dehumanizing black people and position them as inferior to whites. Indeed, white Americans like myself have relied on definitions of racism focusing on things that can be clearly seen or heard, over entrenched systems that affected people of color's daily lives. But blackface is also rooted in a deeply racist history that shouldn't be used for the enjoyment of college students, partygoers, or TV audiences. The fact that public opinion can't agree that blackface is racist highlights a deeper problem with how these exaggerated acts can be quickly explained away and defined out of existence.

Even after blackface has become taboo thanks to the Civil Rights Movement and its practitioners have deservedly faced heightened scrutiny in recent decades, it still reels its ugly head in American culture. Blackface still appears in movies and on television whether on sitcoms, sketch comedy, or even the Oscars. Every year, new blackface controversies still occur, whether they be celebrity Halloween costumes, college party photos, videos on snapchat, etc. The list goes on. Nonetheless, while many might see blackface as a relic of an old, more racist America, these recent scandals highlight that it's very much alive. And it serves as a highly visible representation of a much deeper injustice, proving how deeply racism is still embedded in American culture.--

Restoring A Randolph County Landmark

By Nils Skudra

On December 28th of this past year, I had the good fortune to meet Dwain Roberts, the local Commander of Camp #1966 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Randolph County. My family and I had ventured to Asheboro to view the historic flag of the Randolph Hornets, a local company which served in the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War, at the public library. We encountered Mr. Roberts upon venturing into the history room where he was in conversation with local historian Mac Whatley. When told of my interest in the Civil War, Dwain eagerly told me about his Confederate ancestors, all of whom were on the maternal side of his family, numbering about 30.

Among Dwain's Confederate ancestors were the Presnell brothers – Henry Calvin Presnell (Dwain's great-great grandfather), John Presnell (who enlisted for one year but served for all four years of the war as a private in Company F of the 2nd North Carolina Infantry Battalion), and Stanton Presnell. Henry Calvin served as a noncommissioned officer in Company K of the 52nd North Carolina (for which he later received a Confederate pension) while Stanton served in Company B of the same regiment. Stanton was wounded in the right hand and right knee at Gettysburg, where he was captured on July 3, 1863, and spent approximately six months as a POW at the Union prison camp of Point Lookout, Maryland before he was paroled on April 27, 1864. Shortly after he was received for exchange at City Point, Virginia on April 30, he was hospitalized in Richmond on May 1 for chronic rheumatism, after which he received a thirty-day furlough on May 5. He was subsequently dropped from the company rolls on July 1, 1864, with the reason not being reported, although Dwain speculated that it was most likely because of Stanton's injuries at

Gettysburg. Other ancestors included Randal Presnell, a distant cousin who served in the 3rd Mississippi Junior Reserve Battalion in the Army of Tennessee, and Uriah Presnell (believed to be a cousin to Henry Calvin Presnell) who joined the 63rd Militia Home Guard as a lieutenant before being promoted to captain. In the postwar period, Uriah would donate \$20 to the erecting of the Randolph County Confederate monument in Asheboro. In an issue of *The Courier* from April 22, 1909, Uriah's name appeared under that of Alexander C. McAlister, a lieutenant colonel in the 46th North Carolina Infantry who is buried in the Asheboro City Cemetery. While McAlister was not a relative, Dwain believes that he was the highest ranking Confederate officer from Randolph County in the war. In addition, the Kennedys – the family of Dwain's maternal grandmother – from the town of Mechanic's Hill (present-day Robbins, North Carolina) were a family of blacksmiths, and in that capacity, they contributed swords and muskets for the Confederacy.

Since I am a fervent Civil War enthusiast, I was very intrigued to learn about Dwain's amazing Civil War background, and I eagerly engaged in conversation with him about this topic. He told me that there is an unmarked cemetery on the outskirts of Asheboro which he is currently seeking to have officially recognized as a Randolph County historic landmark, and he offered to take us to its location. We subsequently followed him by car all the way to Caraway Mountain Road, where he led us to a small gravestone marked by a Confederate flag (together with another marker that bore the initials of the deceased individual) in a patch of woods between two neighboring houses. The grave belonged to Confederate soldier George M. Foust, who was born on December 2, 1827 and died on January 4, 1910. The records for Company C of the 2nd Battalion of North Carolina Local Defense Troops indicated that Foust enlisted as a pri-

vate in Cumberland County on October 7, 1863 at the age of 37, but was discharged only three months later, on December 11, 1863. Dwain elaborated that this location had formerly been the Old County Home, where impoverished residents of Asheboro were buried in unmarked graves, and he went so far as to indicate some of the very spaces that were known to be graves. Thus far only two other individuals in the cemetery have been identified, but Dwain is determined that all the inhabitants of this cemetery receive official recognition.

It is my hope that publicizing Mr. Robert's restoration campaign will help to ensure the success of his endeavors in having the Old County Home officially recognized as a Randolph County historic landmark. As an aspiring Civil War historian, I firmly believe in the importance of keeping history preserved for the benefit of future generations. This is especially pertinent today in light of the Civil War's unpopularity as a topic. While the debate over Confederate monuments has raised strong and often virulent arguments from both sides, I take the view of compromise in that we should learn from our history, including its dark and controversial aspects, and utilize it in the hopes of a more constructive future. Furthermore, recognizing this unmarked cemetery as a historic landmark will help to instill greater appreciation among Randolph County residents for aspects of their local history, which may remain unnoticed; successful implementation of Mr. Roberts' endeavor will achieve that purpose.~~



“OUT OF THE FRYING PAN, INTO THE FIRE – AND BACK”

Tales of Firefighting and Fine Food, from Frank Duranti
Interview Conducted by Michael Kurland
Additional Comments/Editing by Stuart M. Kurland

The cameras were rolling, the ribs were sizzling – everything was in place for an episode of *Firehouse Cooks*. Then, the alarm went off and cooks, crew and videographers were speeding away, lights and sirens blaring. This merger of cooking and firefighting is the story of Frank Duranti’s life and career.

For Frank, the first chapter began in the kitchen long before he first held a fire hose nozzle. He came from a whole family of restaurateurs. “The first one that I remember was Roger’s Dairy on Wood St. in Wilkinsburg. It had a long counter with 13 or 14 stools. And tables that probably sat 30 or 40 people.”

It was quite easy for Frank to be drawn into the business by more than just the smell of good food. There was also the service, the same friendly faces that seemed like an extension of his real family, and how close his school was to the restaurant, so they “would walk up to Roger’s Dairy for lunch. Grilled cheese. It was pretty good. I would also run errands, too. I would run up to the bank. My father had no problems giving a primary school kid the deposits for the day. But everybody on the street knew us, and we knew everybody.”

Growing up in a restaurant family, Frank liked to experiment with different food combos. Some were simple. Others were more complicated. One of the easiest was a combination: “I would grill some diced ham, grilled onions, cheese, and scramble an egg into it. They also called me ‘The Mixer’ because we always mixed everything together. That was the way we ate.”

Part of what the restaurant business did was catering. In those days, fire halls were often used for catered events. “Back then, you could go anywhere to cater. You went to the place, and almost all the fire departments had halls. That’s how they got their revenue. You know, they held bingo and fund-raisers and weddings and they hired a caterer. Now they all do their own. You can’t go to a fire hall now and bring your own caterer. You have to use theirs. Most halls are like that. But I was in every fire hall in Allegheny County four, five, or six times probably. Once we were all set up and the people were eating, there wasn’t a whole lot to do, so I hung out with the fire guys and the fire trucks. That’s how I got interested. I joined the [Edgewood] fire department on my 18th birthday.”

While he was training to be a firefighter/apparatus driver-operator, he was simultaneously building a successful series of restaurants starting with his dad’s place in Wilkinsburg. “Then the next place we went to was called the Arlington, near Shadyside Hospital. We were there six years. Well, we left Wilkinsburg because our family was growing and it was a smaller place. I don’t know if it was quite large enough to support an entire family, and of course Wilkinsburg started to decline a little bit too, so we moved to the place in Shadyside. We were there six years and then they decided not to renew our lease because the owners had 4 or 5 different properties, and they had a couple of major buyers for other buildings and they didn’t want the restaurant nearby.” The success streak culminated with Duranti’s Park Plaza in Oakland. Shortly after it opened, Frank and his wife, Julie, moved to Mt. Lebanon, where Julie had grown up. There, he joined the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department, serving as volunteer, operator, secretary for the Department and Treasurer for the Relief Association. Frank is proud that his son has chosen to follow in his footsteps. Anthony Duranti is a chef at one of NYC’s 1-star Michelin restaurants.

As someone who spent his career in what seems like two very different occupations, Frank emphasizes the similarities. Running a restaurant and responding to fire calls both involve serving other people, working as a team, thinking creatively, and doing the best job possible. Frank had some advice to offer both our readers and staff. He said, “First, in general, just continue to do your best, always continue to learn, always continue to grow, always continue to study. We took classes, even at the restaurant, and we were always trying to take new classes. I took several classes in decorating. We had to keep up with our health and sanitation classes. We took a lot of classes, like management and things, even after college, like our chef certifications and things. I’m probably twice the cook or chef now than I was when I was in business. Just be willing to try new things.”

While the customers ate their fill, Frank was feeling the heat in a whole different way but recognized the similarities. “They’re both service-oriented. Our previous Chief, [Steve] Darcangelo, thought the biggest thing was our customers. ‘They’re calling us for service, basically for a problem, but they’re our customers and we needed to treat them as such.’ Customer service was a big thing with him. So, in that respect, it helped us become the professional department that we are. But I think both of them require a lot of training, a lot of skill, a lot of organization, and a lot of improvising. I mean we improvise all the time. No two fire calls are the same, and no two banquets are the same. I mean there’s always something that can go wrong that you have to overcome.”

Sadly, Frank Duranti died on January 6, 2019, not long after the interview following a long battle with cancer. This article is hereby dedicated to him and his entire family.~

Recipes by Frank Duranti

RECIPES

“MISH-MOSH” SPAGHETTI

*Bring 6 quarts of water and 1 tablespoon of salt to a boil in a large pot
Add 1 package of spaghetti and cook according to package directions*

While spaghetti is cooking, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium high heat and add

1 onion, diced

½ red pepper, diced

½ green pepper, diced

fresh broccoli florets

fresh zucchini, diced

other favorite vegetables, diced

and cook until vegetables become slightly soft and lightly browned

In a separate skillet, cook 1 lb cubed chicken breasts in 1 tablespoon olive oil, adding salt and pepper as desired.

Drain the cooked spaghetti. Combine chicken and vegetables in one skillet and add teryaki sauce. Stir fry lightly to combine ingredients. Serve over spaghetti.

BREAKFAST CONCOCTION

1 4-oz package of diced ham

1 onion, sliced thin

½ -3/4 cup shredded cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, whatever you like)

2 large beaten eggs

Melt 1 teaspoon butter or margarine in a frying pan and add onion slices. Cook until soft and slightly caramelized (brown, but not crisp). Add ham and cheese, followed by beaten egg. Scramble all ingredients together until eggs are firm.



Unfortunate Happenings

By Joseph Cepek

One day in the spring of 2017, I was in the community with a community inclusion case worker. I saw a woman walking a dog with a matching pink collar and leash. The dog resembled a Pit Bull Terrier mix breed. The dog looked overweight. The dog was more than likely a female, due to her pink collar and walking leash. The CI (Community Inclusion) worker commented to me that that was a “fat dog” when I pointed out dog to her. I expected to have her say something like, “That’s a cute dog!” or “That’s a pretty dog!” Instead, she targeted the poor dog’s undeserved weight problem. I was angry at her and offended that she could cruelly mock an innocent animal’s weight issue, which was not the dog’s fault. The CI did NOT seem like she was sorry at all for what she said about a helpless animal companion.

I also used to do volunteer and sometimes part-time paid work at a nearby dog grooming salon. One day, I was there with the same wise-cracking CI while a well-behaved black Pug was being groomed. The employee grooming him, as well as some of the other workers, commented on his obese condition, with the same rude CI joining in on the inappropriate conversation. I once again became so furious that they would maliciously make fun out of a largely defenseless animal’s physical body stature, which was not his fault any more than the before-mentioned dog’s weight battle.

Duke, my immediate family’s first canine family member, was a rescue dog. Duke was an American Chocolate Labrador Retriever. The poor dog had a hypothyroid condition, which caused him to struggle with burning consumed food calories, on a normal basis. My parents and I also made bad choices of feeding him pizza crust ends. It was an uphill struggle to help him lose weight. Eventually, we were able to help him lose excessive weight with a proper dry kibble dog food feeding regimen. There were rude customers in the pet supplies store, where my mom and I took Duke. These incidents also occurred at local dog parks. They would make rude comments about Duke, such as, “I guess he’s getting fed well” or “It looks like he doesn’t miss any meals”, to which my mom become infuriated to the point, in which she would reply back to them, with responses like, “Well, you aren’t (not) paying his veterinary care bills and buying his dog food needs, so keep your comments to yourself.” I also couldn’t believe my ears, as to hearing how callous some people can be, when taking cheap shots, which were insulting and mean-spirited, towards Duke. How would those same people like it if we made similar nasty comments about their animal companions, such as the rude CI’s cat companion, who may have been battling obesity issues?

Well, they would have been offended also, more than likely.

Sometimes, even some veterinarians would make unkind comments about Duke’s physical health dilemma, which my mom and I also viewed as unprofessional and inappropriate. This was also true about Hershey, who was our second canine family member. Hershey was an English Chocolate Labrador Retriever. Hershey and Duke are in Heaven now and we hope to see them again someday with April, as we collectively believe, along with my dad. However, Hershey’s weight battle was not as severe as Duke’s, because Hershey did not have canine hypothyroid disorder problems, which enabled him to lose weight more easily.

April, who is our current and third canine family member, is also a rescue dog like Duke. Her weight issues are there, but they are not as bad as Duke’s either, because like Hershey, April does not have dog-related thyroid health issues either. Yet, some veterinarians have also made hurtful comments about her weight issues.

I myself have battled a weight problem for most of my life. I am eating food more moderately now. I am eating fewer junk food, such as pizza, fast food hamburgers, French fries, and onion rings. I find myself eating more fruits and vegetables, as well as salads. Balsamic vinaigrette is one of my favorite dressings, which I use moderately. The more calorie-laden Thousand Island and Ranch cream dressings are used by me as according to the nutrition label directions, which are printed on the bottles, as is true of the Balsamic vinaigrette salad dressing bottles. This is for both breakfast, lunch and/or dinner meals. Graham crackers, creamy and crunchy peanut butter, apple butter, and whole wheat bread, even in toast form, is also good for me to eat. This is in addition to energy bars, with oats and raisins.

Unlike humans, beloved animal companions cannot be responsible for their weight issues. Humans, however, are responsible for both their own and their innocent pet companion animal’s overall health, which includes possible obesity struggles. Despite this, other people intentionally or even unintentionally making hurtful comments about innocent’s animal’s obesity problems is not only rude but emotionally and psychologically damaging to the self-esteem of others, as in regards to their own and/or their beloved animal buddies’ obesity battles.-

Dear Paul Simon,

Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. I'll explain why in a bit.

First of all, I hope this letter finds you well. It must be tough being an aging songwriter. You're much wiser than you were 50 years ago — and certainly a more profound wordsmith — but most folks aren't interested in anything you've penned since Watergate.

They're stuck in yesteryear on tunes such as "Sounds of Silence," "Bridge Over Troubled Water" and the masterful "Bookends" that was one of the first pop albums to include lyrics to all the tunes. It's the latter that's the subject of this missive.

I wasn't much to behold, Mr. Simon, when I went to college in 1967. Hopelessly shy. Socially inept. Supremely unconfident. No girlfriend. Only been kissed once.

I was swallowed whole by the bustling campus and its 10,000 students. I barely knew where I was, much less who was the individual inhabiting my brain. Everyone else seemed so happy-go-lucky, so purposeful. I couldn't make a friend, male or female. An "evening out" consisted of getting a to-go order at the burger joint, buying a copy of the Roanoke, Va., newspaper, scurrying back to the dorm room, closing the door and feasting on the fries and Major League baseball scores.

I possessed no stereo and no albums. Not that I didn't enjoy music. I loved listening to the radio in the den, but I was low-priority and could only turn it on when my parents weren't watching television. While I didn't have much money. I'm sure I could have worked out a loan with my father so I could play tunes. But that would have required initiative. So I did what I usually did — nothing. The guy across the hall was in one of my classes. One night I knocked on David's door with a question about a homework assignment. "America" off *Bookends* was playing in the background.

I was transfixed by the lyrics. *'Cathy, I'm lost, I said though I knew she was sleeping. And I'm empty and aching and I don't know why. Counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike. They've all come to look for America.*

I asked David if I could play the song again. He had an errand to run, so he left me alone with his stereo. It was the start of something. I came over most nights and asked if I could listen to his records. Temptations. Early Stones. *Revolver* by the Beatles. The soundtrack to the cowboy movie, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

But mostly it was *Bookends*. I wore it out, Mr. Simon.

It was the first time in my life that I felt someone was speaking person-to-person with me. I was lonely. You were lonely. I felt overwhelmed. You felt overwhelmed. What a conversation we could have, I thought, except for the fact you're famous and I'm not.

In "America," your traveling companion was a girl named Cathy. That was the name of the only female of my acquaintance who could stand to be around me. I wished we could travel the country, Mr. Simon, as you did with your Cathy. But mine was only good for the short walk to the student union and back.

I've risen from the depths of freshman year in college. Wrote a shit-load of columns. Some books. Some plays. Not great, but decent. Landed a wife. And children. And grandchildren. You helped me get through 1967, Mr. Simon, and I'm forever grateful. You put on paper about being not much to behold and I caught your drift. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

It took courage to write about feeling alienated. You were the voice I didn't have.

I'll never forget.
Again, thanks.

Garret Mathews~

WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS, BABY!

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

Early last fall, I was stunned and excited to find out that me and my mom, who informed me about this, I were to travel to the city that has been declared as the most “fabulous” city in America, Las Vegas, Nevada.

When I first arrived at McCarron International Airport in Las Vegas, I noticed the myth of the airport having slot machines wasn't a myth at all. I was surrounded by nothing but slot machines from the time I first stepped off my plane to the moment I picked up my luggage at the baggage claim section of the airport! Speaking of slot machines, I can shamelessly say that thanks to trying my luck on some of the nearly-millions of different slots Vegas has to offer, I managed to leave Vegas a little bit richer than I'd arrived! I played the slot machines at numerous Vegas resorts, including the Stratosphere Hotel and Tower, the tallest hotel/building in Las Vegas and Bally's Hotel and Casino, the hotel I stayed in during my fabulous time in Fabulous Las Vegas!

And out of the countless slot machines I played in Vegas, my personal favorite is an Asian-themed slot machine called Fu-Dao-Le. Fu-Dao-Le, which means “Fortune Has Arrived” in Chinese. It is a five reel slot with three rows and 243 ways to win.

Like the slot machines, and all the other gaming-related activities in its resorts, Las Vegas is world-renowned for its live entertainment in its resorts. Sadly, I didn't attend any shows during my short stay there, but I did see one reminder after another as to why Vegas is as known around the world for its entertainment as it is for its gaming. I saw advertisements on billboards, and even on the sides of the resorts where these events took place, promoting the likes of these celebrity residents of Las Vegas, such as Barry Manilow at the Westgate Resort, Donnie and Marie Osmond at the Flamingo Hotel, The Righteous Brothers at Harrah's Las Vegas, David Copperfield at the MGM Grand, Lady Gaga at the nearby Park Theater at MGM Grand, and soon-to-be Las Vegas resident, and Wexford, PA native, Christian Aguilera, who will be performing at the Zappos Theater at the Planet Hollywood resort between May 31st, 2019, until October of 2019.

Aside from gaming and entertainment, another fabulous attraction the fabulous Las Vegas is known for are the places to eat, and in particular, their buffets. These buffets are so delicious, they make anyone who's on a diet dig in to the tasty food choices. While on my Vegas Vacation, I dined at—and dove into—the buffets at the Stratosphere Hotel and Tower, and the Paris Las Vegas Hotel and Casino. The food selections at both buffets consisted of crab legs, fried and grilled chicken, prime rib with au jus sauce, Asian fried rice, taco meat, with tortilla shells and taco toppings (sour cream, vegetables and salsa), and a selection of fruits and vegetables. Like the appetizer and main course choices, both buffets also had delicious dessert choices to choose from like cakes, cookies, and even donuts—a sight Homer Simpson would be delighted to see!

The main highlight of my Vegas Vacation was taking an up-close gander at the famous and fabulous “Welcome To Fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada” sign on South Las Vegas, Boulevard, A.K.A. the entrance to the heart of Vegas, the Vegas Strip. Before I got there, I knew the sign was larger than life, a must-see landmark when visiting Las Vegas. And when I first laid eyes on the sign, it was beyond large, symbolizing everything Vegas is—a town that is truly America's “playground.” There's so much to see and do in Las Vegas that, because I was there for only three full days, I didn't have enough time to take in nearly half of the other sights, sounds, people, places and things that has made Vegas, Vegas over the years. However, as part of the saying on the other side of the “Welcome To Fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada” says, I will “Come Back Soon.”

Because whether you have yet make a visit there or you have visited, like me, you'll always be welcomed in *Fabulous Las Vegas, Baby!*~



Evolve Group is Back in Action

By Amelia Krzton

Being autistic can have many benefits. One of these benefits includes being involved in special groups for young adults with autism. I am involved in one such group sponsored by Evolve Coaching. I call it the Evolve Social Group. I have been involved in this group ever since the summer of 2014. It takes place every Monday evening at the Evolve Coaching office in the Brew House on the South Side. The group is led by 3 coaches: Kristen Horn, Heather Conroy, and Joe Farrell. I have made a lot of friends at this group, like Shane, Elana, Claire, and Joe. Normally, my Community Support staff member from Focus, Liz, takes me to the Evolve Group. During the fall and spring semesters, we talk about different things that we need to work on as autistic young adults. This semester, we have been talking about communication, employment soft skills, and living independently. Last week, we talked about how and how not to meet new people, and I have just studied how to make and cancel plans for this coming Monday's session. I make it a habit to practice and study for Monday Night Evolve Group at any time during the day on the Saturday beforehand. We will also be volunteering at Creative Citizens Studio in Highland Park once a month, where I took art classes during the group's hiatus. During the summer, however, Evolve Group goes on fun outings, such as the Three Rivers Arts Festival at Point State Park, disc golf at Schenley Park, a Pirates game at PNC Park, and riding down the Incline in Mt. Washington. I have written songs about all the outings we were doing last summer as well as a few dances and put them all in a compilation album. Overall, I am glad to be a part of the Evolve Social Group.~~

Overcoming Autism

By Maggie Jones

I've been thankful to have a family that cares about my well-being with autism. It takes a lot of courage to have been through a lot of special education since I was two years old. It benefited me a lot in my school years. I now have high functioning autism. I believed that I have overcome a lot to get to where I am now. I tried to do my best with what I have, a God-given potential to do about almost anything I put a my mind to.

I received the Presidential Award of Academic Achievement in 2005 in eighth grade graduation.

I also got the best graduation project in Pittsburgh Public Schools for 2010. I graduated from high school in 2011. I was nominated for the Advocate of the Year Award for two years in a row from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Now I work at *Pittverse* magazine. I had to work with the abilities I had to overcome Autism. I kept going with something had to hold on to in my life, believing that one day things would get better with hope, and love. I feel that it will be even better if I work at my own pace and never give up.

I have suffered a great deal of depression and anxiety. And I understand what it took to overcome the symptoms of autism. When my grandmother passed in 2008, I was devastated. Every year for the past three years, one of my beloved pets passed away. This took a toll on me, but I never ever let it get the best of me. I kept all of them in my heart and the back of my mind. I will live my life and overcome more of my sorrows and more of my autism. I'll show the world I'm here and willing to give back and work hard to achieve my goals. I've had a lot of therapy appointments sessions and medicine appointments to help me see I was not alone There are

no boundaries or limits of how you go along in life. Just be you.

I walk or take public transportation to go almost anywhere, really. I pay attention to bus stops and am aware of where I'm going. Autism does not stop me from going places that I want to go. I know I have responsibilities at home, volunteering, and at work at *Pittverse* too. I sweep carpets mop floors, clean my room, look after my dog, Suri, when no one is home. I take care of myself mentally and physically by going to the doctors or dentist. I can explain what wrong with my conditions at the doctors. And I do laundry for my mother, too.

My volunteer job is at the library is in the Children's Department at the Carnegie library of Pittsburgh. I clean books. I return damaged books to the person in charge of repairing them. I count books into the computer. I clean toys for young children, both at main site and at Larwenceville site. I have 295 volunteer hours so far and am moving toward 500 hours. Not giving up yet.

I'm working on my fourth *Pittverse* issue, I'm proud to say. It's fun, but a lot of work and effort to get out of your comfort zone to connect to others through interviews. I am thankful for my teachers, staff at the library, friends, and my family, especially my parents. My mother is very proud of me and she helped me to understand hard work, effort, and never giving up. I love her and my sister, Stephanie, for helping me, believing in me, and giving me hugs.

I am a positive grown woman that does her best at overcoming anything I put my mind to. I just have to believe and try my best to succeed.~~

Lost Soul by Paul Lechevalier

To my lost soul may thou sleep.
With peace in rest thou shalt be.
Though my pain is too much.
May thy dreams say more than enough.
No matter how forward a situation.
My wish to which thou hast hearkened.
My wish to thee is this.
May thou lost soul rest in peace.

Semi Shakespearean English with bits of Modern English.

To my lost soul may you sleep.
(May my lost soul find rest.)
With peace in rest you shall be.
(May you find true answers and peace in your quelling.)
Though my pain is too much.
No matter how difficult a situation.
My wish to which you have heard.
(My desire which you have heard.)
My wish to you is this.
(My desire for you is this.)
May my soul rest in peace.
(May my decision help my soul find peace.)

Modern English.

The point of this poem is that I felt like I was lost in decisions and it stressed me out, and that I needed answers to my questions. As I was in the worst of pain, I felt like I need solace and peace in these times, and this poem helped me express that.

My MCU Fantastic Four Trailer

By Sarah Lehman

(Marvel logo comes up. We see Reed, Sue, and Ben sitting at a table.)

Ben: So, Thursday it is then.

(Clips of preparations being made. Cut to Johnny waiting on a street corner, shivering. A car pulls up, and the window lowers to reveal Ben and Reed.)

Reed: Johnny? I'm Reed, and that's Ben.

Johnny: It's freezing. You're late.

Ben: Whaddya expect, kid? It's November.

(Shot of the four suiting up. Cut to a slow-motion shot of the four walking towards Reed's shuttle, as "The Final Countdown" begins to play. Shot of the shuttle entering space. Cut to Reed looking alarmed.)

Reed: Something's wrong.

(Shot of the ship being dragged into a wormhole, followed by a shot of a crash-landing on Hala. Clip of the four discovering their changes. Cut to Captain Mar-Vell's base, where he and his soldiers are observing a Skrull platoon.)

Kree Soldier: Captain, it appears they've targeted Terra.

(Clip of Reed, Sue, Johnny, and Ben using their new powers to fend off Kree soldiers. Mar-Vell appears to break up the fight.)

Mar-Vell: If they really are Terran, then they may be able to help.

(Shot of the Skrull fleet arriving on Earth. Shot of Mar-Vell's ship approaching Earth.)

Sue: Let's do this.

(The four put their hands together. Clip of the four, along with Mar-Vell and his men, engaging in battle with the Skrulls.)

Ben: It's clobberin' time!

(The FF emblem appears on screen. Cut to Johnny grinning as Skrull soldiers approach.)

Johnny: Flame on!

(He ignites, knocking the soldiers back as he shoots into the air.)~~

Pokémon League Helps Me

By Michelle Middlemiss

The Pokémon League meets Friday evenings at 6:00-9:00 pm at *Mr. Nice Guy Games* in Monroeville. Pokémon players come there to battle with cards in casual play.

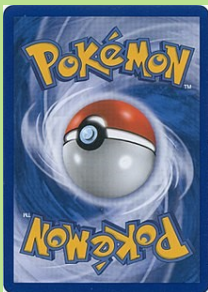
How has my involvement in the Pokémon League helped me? I'm meeting new people, even though there are crowds and lots of people in a tight space, which I normally could not deal with. I'm now counting better and working on my budget at home and seeing numbers. Strategy is part of the game. When "seeing numbers" or "counting" is questionable because of my dyslexia, my opponents always help me out! The people who work there besides the owner Ron, are Bobby, Michael, Misha, and Christy. Some of the workers in the store also act as professors and judges, according to their training. They help people decide which cards to buy that are most playable. On the first day that I joined the league, Bobby helped me choose cards to add to my deck so it would be playable. Then he walked me over and introduced me to Jake, who took over in my training to be a player.

Jake and Steve are actually judges who act as mentors for the league and train brand new players. They coach on an expert level with deck building and evaluating card trades. Jake explained how when he first came to *Mr. Nice Guy Games* it was a small group who were very competitive and not yet a community for Pokémon. So he went to Toys "R" Us during Pokémon events and asked if anyone would like to join a Pokémon league and play their cards instead of just collecting. He said, "Some kids can't read or do math, and those skills are needed in game play. So players would need to get better at these skills in order to play. The Pokémon players are all very friendly, play fair, and seem to solve problems without arguing." Jake likes how "The league helps give a fun place to players with whatever differences or disabilities they have, those being bullied, or with problems at home. They feel welcome and can make friends here."

When I go to my Pokémon league, I'm functioning without a C.I. or my parents and taking the initiative to ask others to play. Being there brings me out of my comfort shell. I'm discussing other topics with the players besides Pokémon and carrying on socialization back and forth in actual conversation!

While it's helping me with conversation and being social, it's also making a difference in other environments. I'm spending more time at home in the family room socializing and conversing with my parents without the TV on. We're speaking about many different subjects. I'm more interested in what they are doing and asking questions along with our conversation. The cross talk is not bothering me as much.

In going to the league I'm not carrying my weighted book bag which is usually on my back; I'm just taking along a cloth bag with my Pokémon cards. People have noticed decoration and add-ons on my hats. I'm wearing Pokémon pins and wearing jewelry to social events. I'm letting others sit next to me. I seem to be supporting others ideas and interests, not just my own. More often I'm going out with my family and eating meals together with them at home. After joining the league in January, I'm feeling better about myself and more confident in handling social situations. I'm having a lot of fun! ~~



Players from left to right:
Michelle, Brandon, Adam, Steven, Jake and Jackson
(player at back table) Shane



Toby Tyler Interview



By Max Chaney

Hello, and welcome back to "Interviews with Max." Today I will review one* of my two favorite hobby shop owners, one of whom owns Toby Tyler's Hobby center!

How long have you been working at this location?

- 34 years

Have you been at any other locations before this one?

- I have had two other locations, I had Toby Tyler's one (the original) in pleasant hills and Peters Township was the second location, the third location is what you see here...

Did you have an acquaintance that helped build the business???

- Nope just myself, it is something I always wanted to do.

Do you have anything from here that you have at home that was too good to pass up for yourself?

- I collect old Tinsplate toys, Such as Marx, Bing etc.

Do you ever plan to expand the shop into other locations or have multiple businesses?

- No, I plan on retiring soon

Have you had European exports?

-No.

What do you plan to do in the future?

-At my age, I am day to day

Do you ever plan to sell the business or does a family member plan to inherit it?

-I haven't decided on it yet, but I plan to have an auction and stay home the next day.

Thank you, Toby, for the interview, I hope you have a wonderful day!

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

By Amelia Krzton

2019 is shaping up to be a great year for me due to all of my special interests. One of them is an American Girl book that I bought last year at the bookstore which is entitled *A Year of Slumber Parties*. It has a different theme party for every month of the year. I will discuss the first four monthly parties in this article that were hosted by some of my imaginary friends from the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Point Breeze: Jill, Hannah, Samantha, and Abigail.

The first party that was held in January was an Up-All-Night Neon Party, hosted by Jill. The invitations were written on black card stock with neon markers. The decorations included Bright Balloons, Popping Places, and a Garland Glow. The food and drink included Glow Gelatin, Glow Punch, and Neon Bark. The games were Ring Toss and Bowling. The activity was a Neon Dance Party. The favor was Light-Up Lanterns, and the next morning, there were neon-colored pancakes to eat for breakfast. The next party that is going to be held in February will be a Sweet Swap, hosted by Hannah. The invitations were made out of clear acrylic fillable ball ornaments, gumballs, paper cups, and strips of paper. Decorations will include Guess the Gumballs and Candy Balloons. The drink will be Sweet Sippers. The craft will be Sprinkle Treats, which will also be our dessert. The game will be Grab and Give. The favor will be Goodies to Go, and the next morning, we will have a Pan-Cake, which is a layer cake composed of flapjacks. Other upcoming parties include the Luck and Charms Party hosted by Samantha on March 9 and the Sleepaway Glamp hosted by Abigail on April 13. Stay tuned for details on these upcoming parties!~~

What's Next?

By Alicia M. Bonus

There would be so many times throughout my twenties when I began to think about what the future would bring to me. And, even to this day, I still haven't figured everything out yet. So far, I went to college and got my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Creative Writing, I have a small part-time job, I can drive, pay my phone bills and insurance, purchase my own food, clothing, and toiletries, and I even go to my doctor and dentist appointments. But, there's still so much I need to know in order to fully take care of myself.

But, seriously. What will really happen to me if both of my parents unexpectedly pass away without warning? Of course, I would be heartbroken. But what would happen after the mourning process? Legally, what must I do? While living at home with my parents, even after college and a job, I still met the qualifications of being an independent adult. To earn my keep, I would take turns making dinner, do laundry, sweep, dust, and do the dishes. And sometimes, we would do our own things like go to work, pay the bills, wash and put gas in the car, and have dinner with friends and family. But even then, there would be times when I would receive statements from my doctors and have to ask my parents what they mean. Or, I would go out and have my oil changed, but don't know how I would change a car filter or charge up a battery. And most importantly, how will I manage to pay other sideline insurances like vision or dental?

Even though I only have Asperger's Syndrome and am capable of living on my own, taking care of myself physically and emotionally, there's still so much more I'd like to know. So far, here's what I know. I have Social Security to talk to anytime I want with appropriate hours of the day except on weekends. I'm already set with SSI (Social Security Income) due to how much I make in a year and if I'm capable of working, and if so, how many hours I can or am allowed to work? If I were to be homeless, I already have been offered a place to stay and have been offered various times if anything should change or happen in my current living state. I have records and files of my disabilities (including my Crohn's Disease) signed by my doctors proving my conditions to be able to receive assistance. And, Medicare was already provided for me by the state of Pennsylvania, due to my chronic illness and my Autism. For almost everything, if I wanted to know more about my living arrangements, insurances, and money managements, I would refer to Social Security as a primary. I would also ask my family while they are still here and get facts and opinions on certain materials that I may have trouble understanding.

And, all the while going through these steps, I do feel a little bit better and a little bit more confident about my situation, especially when you have friends and family to give you support. However, there are others who are not as fortunate as me. Many adults with autism can't live alone and have to be placed in homes or institutionalized, where they're watched over if anything should happen to their parents or loved ones. The only concern that I have about this is if they're being treated well. Will they be happy? Will they be safe? Fed? Entertained? Loved? I believe, my biggest worry out of all of this, is what if I was one of the unlucky ones? What would've happened if I couldn't adjust to living on my own? What would've happened if I couldn't have done any of the things that I'd mastered in doing over the past years? What would've happened to me if I didn't have parents, siblings, or relatives to help support me? If anything like that would've occurred, a social worker with the state would have to step in and make the arrangements of putting something together for the adult or child with autism. They would possibly be placed in a foster home or group home of that sort if it ever got to that point. But then, we jump back at the same question that even parents want to know to this day. Will my child *really* be okay?

I'm in my thirties, and I still have no idea where I see myself in the years to come. But then, I remind myself that I'm not alone. Even people who don't have a disability or autism still have problems trying to figure out what the next step is when living on your own. And, nobody's perfect. And sometimes, I always end up doing is either ask a few more questions, surf the internet, or just go along with it until I find the answers that are right for me. ~~

Getting Along with Authority Figures

By Ginger Reynolds

I had to learn this the hard way that when you're living with authority figures, you have to abide to their rules. Try to find some common ground that you can both agree on. For example: if you are living with your parents and they want you to attend religious services, but you aren't religious, bring something you can work on quietly so that you do not disturb others and you still get to do what you want.

If you are staying in a hospital, ask what items you can bring with you. For example: a stuffed animal, a journal, a handheld videogame, earbuds or headphones, a discman, a coloring book, and so on. Also ask if you can bring snacks or have snacks brought in to you such as animal crackers, gummy snacks, and/or cookies. Sometimes, depending on what kind of hospital you are staying at, some of the items I listed are not allowed in the facility. If you choose to be on a different diet and you are staying with friends, my advice to you is to write down a list of foods you can and cannot eat. Also write down what you can substitute the foods you cannot eat. For example: if you are a vegetarian and your friends are carnivores, instead of eating a hamburger, you could eat a garden burger.

If you are staying in a group home, I would strongly advise you to follow their rules and curfews. Some of their rules might be to complete daily hygiene, take your medications as prescribed, go to groups, go to your appointments, and help with the chores around the facility. The staff at the group home will strongly suggest that you complete your hygiene and take your medications before a certain time. Going to groups and helping out around the facility will get you into a routine. Going to all your appointments is important in order to stay healthy.

There are authority figures everywhere, even at appointments. Doctors, nurses, clinicians, secretaries, and security officers are authority figures. Anyone who is 18 years old and above who is eligible to make the right decisions for minors could be considered as an authority figure. Even older siblings can be authority figures. Principals, teachers, teacher's aids, social workers, psychiatrists, therapists, service coordinators, and behavior specialists are all considered authority figures.

Taking care of yourself also means having a stable life. It means having a job, cleaning up after you make messes, using your coping skills, avoiding dangerous places and situations, and not getting into trouble with the law. In order to do all these things, you have to ask yourself a question and be honest when you answer: Am I ready to move on with my life and start accepting the help I know I need? If you answer honestly, you should answer without hesitation and say, "Yes." But if you say, "No," then there may be things you still need to learn. I am telling you all of this because I had to ask myself the same question. For a while, I didn't think I was worthy for help. So, when my loved ones asked if I was ready to get help, I always said, "no." And left it at that. But now that I have had a few life experiences, I can honestly answer that question with a "Yes."

So, here I am starting my journey. I have a part-time job that pays every season. I have a cellphone that I use to contact the people that once asked me that question themselves. I have my beliefs, my faith, and my family. I have friends, a laptop to do my work on, and I have more intelligence than I ever did before. I don't have the same beliefs I once had. My beliefs changed, because I changed. I have everything I have always wished for. I hope, for the future, that I can show not only my loved ones and those who care about me what I have learned, but also myself. ~~

Creed, Chapter 6

By Dmitry Harmon

It was precisely 1:20 in the afternoon. Frederick had been making his wine deliveries to various stores and restaurants. It was important that he got his wine deliveries to the restaurants by three o'clock every day for dinner service, as most restaurants started serving dinner at four o'clock. Today he had managed to make all of his deliveries by 1:15 and had a good hour and a half before he would go home and have his dinner and ultimately go to bed.

Frederick had a unique schedule. He had to be up by four-thirty in the morning to take the various selections of wines that were in barrels that he made. He never made more than five barrels at one time. He would spend three months of hard labor, picking the grapes, crushing them into juice, and adding the necessary things that gave each name of the wine its flavor and let it age in barrels. But on days like today, he would spend five to six hours filling and preparing the bottles by applying labels, punching in corks, and sealing the wine bottles. Then he had to make the deliveries for the day. He would often deliver to restaurants and individual clients. Other times he would make deliveries for parties.

Frederick was in a particularly good mood, which is not to say that he was a grumpy individual; he was just very happy that all of his deliveries were completed as early as they were. Due to his accomplishment, he decided to treat himself to something special and delicious. Today he had enough money for a hot chocolate and two pastries. There was a new bakery and coffee shop that he was really looking forward to trying out. He made his way down several roads that eventually led to Chester Avenue. He started to walk a little quicker. All he had to do was walk down the Chester Avenue and hook a right onto a road called Gilbert Road and walk down five blocks. In this case Chester Avenue was very pleasant to look at whereas perhaps a different direction was a bit dirtier and shady-looking. It also had the presence of the buildings looming since they were stacked in a tighter space with smaller roads.

He had been walking for maybe five minutes down the road when he collided with someone coming out of a building. "Oh, my apologies ma'am. Oh...Ms. König!" Frederick had just realized that he walked right into Lilith.

"It's quite alright," she replied. "I am sorry...who are you again?" The gentleman looked familiar although she could not quite place where she met him or how.

"It is Fredrick. I regrettably knocked you over about a month ago and assisted you in a ride in my horse buggy to get you to a funeral and then I--"

"--Chaperoned me to the Faulk Residence for the post receiving line. How are you, Frederick?" She said this with a small hint of a smile. One might say it was polite smile but most likely, not a sincere smile.

"That's right. I hope I find you well? May I ask why you are in town?"

"I am doing well. Still struggling with some personal things. I saw a doctor today to relieve some tension."

"Oh well, I hope you are feeling better."

"It is going to be a process. But I am confident I will be able to heal in an appropriate time. How about yourself?"

"Things are going fairly well. Business is good. I hope to expand someday. I have to work an awful lot to make ends meet."

"Well, that is a wonderful ambition to have. Where are you headed to right now?"

"I am on my way to a bakery shop to treat myself to something delicious."

"Oh, that sounds nice. I do hope you enjoy your..." At that moment she broke off and saw from a distance someone she was not particularly in the mood to have a conversation with. The man walking over was a man of perhaps five foot eight and he had a bit of a belly that clearly defined him as a heavyweight. He had on a very nice tan suit, a bow tie, and was holding his hat in one hand. He had blonde hair that was pushed to his right and had a moustache that started to dip and was waxed in curves for their respective sides. In addition, he had a little bit of a double chin due to his weight. This man's name was Oliver Hammersham.

"Quick, Frederick, give me your arm! There is an individual coming who is going to want to have a chat with me and I am not necessarily in the best mood to have a long chat with him." Mr. Hammersham was a polite man; however, Lilith felt that his ego got the better of him of lately. Recently he had been strongly suggesting that he would make a great husband. It was no secret to her that he was extremely fond of her. It was definitely one of the downsides when it came to the family business; having been the son of a very good friend of Lilith's father, on paper, it would seem like a reasonable match and most women would most likely do as their father instructed when it came to pre-arranged marriage. However, Lilith was not one of those young girls that just did what her father told her.

Lilith had the more recent conflict of having to be polite and courteous to Mr. Hammersham rather than be short or blunt about things due to him never really saying anything deeply inappropriate. However, she felt tiresome with the constant suggestion of marriage.

"I am not sure how much help I can be," replied Frederick.

"Well..." She hesitated. This might be a lot to ask of Frederick. "I was hoping you could make it seem like you are in deep conversation with me. Only if you are comfortable and hopefully, he will leave fairly quickly."

"I suppose I could play along. Can I ask why we are doing this?"



"You will see based on how I answer him."

"Ok, I suppose so." At this point, Mr. Hammersham had already spotted Lilith and was hurrying over in a struggled, breathless trot. Lilith turned to Frederick.

"So Frederick, let us talk about how much each case of wine will cost me in a week or so for the dinner I am hoping to--"

"Ms. Lilith König! Fancy seeing you here!" Mr. Hammersham bellowed. He was huffing and puffing even though his little trot was only across the street. Lilith turned and put on her best theater smile.

"Mr. Hammersham, how nice to see you again. I do hope I find you well."

"Of course, of course, I am always doing well. Life is going quite well, never a dull moment. I must say you look impeccable today."

"Why, thank you for those kind words." Lilith took small dip down and up with her knees while nodding her head down and back up once.

"The family business is still going well I dare ask?"

"Yes, things are well. Mr. Hammersham, allow me to introduce to you this fine gentleman. His name is Frederick." Mr. Hammersham looked at Frederick, put his hand out, shook it briefly and spoke in a voice that was noticeably lower than his normal volume.

"How do you do, good sir?"

"Very well, thank you. Pleased to meet you, sir."

"Thank you, Thank you." He then quickly shifted back to Lilith. "Lilith, I must ask you, when do you plan to marry? I feel like our community is extremely anxious to hear of the grand news of your courtship turning into marriage." Lilith was taken aback by this. Mr. Hammersham never so blunt. The conversation was always about being her being provided for and that he would be perfect for the role.

"Well I haven't given much thought to it as of late. I feel when the time is--"

"Nonsense. Nonsense...you need to find someone who can provide for you." Lilith started to realize what was being said and thought to herself, *Here we go...* Mr. Hammersham was not making eye contact and Lilith took this opportunity to look at Frederick. She dropped the smile and rolled her eyes in frustration as Mr. Hammersham continued.

"You know, I think you and I would make a great married couple. After all, my father knew your father quite well. I would definitely be a great provider for you, both financially and...otherwise. We can then work on both of our legacies. Well, in this case it would be mine that would survive since you would acquire my last name." Lilith was now feeling very uncomfortable. She had no desire to court Mr. Hammersham and she definitely did not want to bear his children. However, she put on her smile again.

"Well, Mr. Hammersham, in due time I hope to find *true love* and happiness with someone."

"I hope so. You know, if you are not busy, you are more than welcome to walk with me today." Lilith was now very embarrassed and quite frustrated. She dropped the smile and responded to Mr. Hammersham with slightly clenched teeth.

"Mr. Hammersham, I just told you I am with Frederick at the moment. I regret to say this but you are starting to embarrass me." She retook Frederick's arm with her hands. Frederick was finding Mr. Hammersham both very intriguing and annoying. The man barely introduced himself and acted like he was a lamp post on the sidewalk. Clearly the man was in love with Lilith and from what it seemed, she viewed it as a business relationship. For some reason, the man was failing to grasp that.

"Oh. Well, I do apologize. I hope to see you again, Ms. König. Have a blessed day. Frederick. Good day." And with that, he walked away and Frederick spoke to Lilith.

"I am sorry I was not much help. I was very taken aback."

"Oh, please, do not apologize to me. I was the one who asked for help. I should have realized that his personality might make it difficult for someone who just met him to find space to talk. Now you know why I wanted help. But to be fair, he is a valuable asset to the family business."

"Well I am glad I was able to assist you the best I can."

"Of course. Now to resume talking about buying wine from you."

"What! I thought that was just part of the ploy," replied Frederick. Lilith was not smiling but now looked very businesslike.

"Oh no, the wine you gave me at the house for the visitation was delicious. I had some myself. When I like something, I make an effort to acquire it for my own personal use. I would like to do business with you. What is your full name and business name?" She took out a piece of paper and a pencil and jotted down Frederick's information. "Go to The Dove on Main street. Tell them your name and that I sent you. It's a thank you for helping me. I have to move along now so I can take care of a couple of things before I go back to my hometown. It was really good running into you again, Frederick."

"The pleasure was all mine." he replied. Lilith turned on her heel and briskly walked down the street. Frederick resumed his trip to the bakery to buy the pastry that he had been eagerly anticipating. --

Michael and the Three Sharks

By Ginger Reynolds

Hello, my name is Michael and I'm a gray tabby cat. My owner's name is Alex. Today he took me to the beach thinking that I wouldn't wonder off. But he was wrong. Right after Alex went into the water, a blue and green butterfly flew past my head. I thought if I could catch the beautiful butterfly, Alex would have someone to play with. So, after Alex went into the water, I followed Andrew. Andrew was the name I gave to the butterfly. Andrew flew all the way to the other side of the beach. According to legend, nobody ever set foot, or paw on that side of the beach. Three killer sharks lived in the water. The three sharks' names were Matthew, Bryan, and Paul. Matthew was a Great White, Bryan was a Hammerhead, and Paul was a Bull Shark.

I thought this mission was more important than to believe in something that may or may not be true. After I followed Andrew to what humans called Shark Island, I was so tired and hot that I climbed a lonely redwood tree that sat right next to a cavern. The cavern had water that led to where the sharks lived. I heard a sound that was almost too soft to hear. I looked around Shark Island and I saw nothing, except lots of sand and bones from other creatures who had tried to step foot/paw on this side of the beach. I realized that the sound I was hearing was coming from out in the water. I saw a huge fin circling a rainbow trout. The trout was trying to escape, but since the huge fin was circling it, the rainbow trout was trapped. I was the only one who could save it.

I decided to swim out to where the huge fin was circling the rainbow trout and try my best to save it. Finding Alex a playmate was important, but I couldn't just let this huge creature drag down this innocent fish. I was swimming as fast as I possibly could when suddenly Bryan, the hammerhead shark spotted me. I tried to swim away, but Bryan was way too fast. Bryan caught me and the next thing I knew, I was at the bottom of the ocean getting stared down by not only Bryan, but by Paul and Matthew. At first, I was scared. Then, I got the courage to ask why I was brought down to the bottom of the ocean, when all I was trying to do was save a rainbow trout from being eaten. Paul started to answer my question, but Matthew cleared his throat and said, very gently, "We don't get many visitors over on this side of the beach. I thought you wanted to play."

Then, Bryan said, "My name is Bryan and these are my two brothers: Paul and Matthew. We need your help to clear up the legend and possibly become our best friend. See, our father was hunted by humans, after he ate a goat that swam out to cool off. Our father didn't know that he was being dangerous and teaching us how to be man-eating-machines. After our father's passing, we all agreed to become vegetarians so that if another situation like that arises, we will know how to handle it. I wasn't circling the rainbow trout to eat it, he's a buddy of Paul's that was part of a plan to get you out here to help us. We have been alone for 300 years and we're desperate. So, will you help us and in return we will do a favor for you? Oh, and did I mention that we were left with some magic that our father left us? He was a magician and worked at a circus."

I thought about it for a bit and I told them that I will help them as long as they turn me into a human, so I could be Alex's best friend forever. They agreed. I asked Matthew what exactly I needed to do in order to clear the legend and get Shark Island back to what it was 300 years ago. He said, "First off, we need to clear the bones off the beach, then we need to dig up the redwood tree, plant some flowers, and finally we need to get the word out that whoever said the legend was true, lied to everyone."

I began to swim back to the shore and started working on clearing the bones from the beach. Next, I dug up the redwood tree and planted three roses, three daisies, and three sunflowers. Finally, I swam all over the ocean just to find out who said the legend was true. I found out that none of the three sharks' enemies said the legend was true, but only one underwater creature said it was true. It was getting dark and I knew Alex would be crying if he didn't get his tabby cat back. Alex was only five and a half years old. But I gave Matthew, Bryan, and Paul my word that I would help them and be their friend. A promise is a promise. That's when I swam up to a deep, dark, cave where I knew the only underwater creature said the legend was true. The underwater creature was eating what was left of a human leg. There was an eerie feeling to this cave. After being in the cave for a while, I figured out why. It was the cave that Bryan told me about when he was explaining what happened to their father. This cave belonged to their mother.

I tried to go in the cave without making a sound, but there were so many human bones that the flesh has been sucked off of that it was impossible to be silent going in. I tried to swim over the bones, but one got caught in my fur. I shook it off and it flew at the three sharks' mother's gills. I tried not to shiver with fear, but I was a cat and she was a giant shark. She spotted me and I swam as fast as possible. It was no use.

I suddenly stopped at the reef. The reef was a green area where her cave started. She didn't look like she was going to stop any time soon, but when she got all the way out of her cave, she didn't look dangerous at all. I stopped shivering. I yelled, "Stop! I am here on a mission from your sons. They need you to tell all the underwater creatures that Shark Island is no longer just for sharks and that the legend is not true. They need you in their lives and they apologize for all the trouble they caused. They want you to come back home."

So, their mother went back home to where her sons were living. They lived happily ever after. Bryan asked me if I still wanted to change into a human. I told him no, because Alex is only five and a half and he loves me just the way I am. I said my goodbyes and headed back to the other side of the beach. Alex saw me as I was running back toward him. Alex took me home. I played with my yarn ball and we lived happily ever after.~

Adventures of Nicholas

By Zach Grabowski

Once upon a time, there lived a boy named Nicholas. One day, Nicholas disappeared from home on his bike without letting his family know where he was going. His mother, father, and his sister, Beatrice, became really worried when it began to grow dark and Nicholas wasn't home yet. His mom, dad, and Beatrice got in the car and they drove up hills, down hills, and across bridges, but Nicholas was nowhere to be found. They decided to head home and they were going to contact the police, but when they got home, Nicholas was there! He had found his way home on his bike. His family hugged him and held onto him as tightly as they could.

"Nicholas, what happened? Where did you go?" they asked.

"I was just exploring the whole City of Pittsburgh," Nicholas said. "I went to Highland Park and stopped by the zoo and saw all the animals. They were really cool."

"After the zoo, I went into Lawrenceville and got a hotdog at a place called Franktuary. It was really good."

"Next I headed into the Stripped District. I saw some really cool sports merchandise."

"Then, I rode downtown to see the fountain. It was really neat".

"After all that, I was tired, and it was starting to get dark so I headed home. I'm sorry if I worried everyone."

"We are so glad that you are okay and that you are safe," Nicholas's family said to him. "We were so worried and we drove around everywhere looking for you. We almost called the police if you wouldn't have been home when we got back from looking for you," they told him.

The end.~~

O 'tis the day of joyous companionship,
Filled to the brim of laughter,
jokes,
and jovial smiles aplenty.

For how does one falter,
when love casts its ecstatic blessings,
on people everywhere,
and turns them to wisps,
waltzing the heavens melodiously,
within those lighthearted harmonious moments abound.

All those moments,
those glorious moments,
when light is felt,
and darkness is cast aside.

Those warm and tender moments,
which we oh so long and yearn for.
Will we ever see our labors come to fruition?
Or will they lay asleep,
forever.

Some people may doubt.
Some people may turn,
from those kindred spirits.
But those steadfast roots shall grow,
nice and strong,
into warriors of light and life,
forever and always.

by Paul Lechevalier

Blood Ties, Chapter Four

By Jordan Watson

The muddled silence follows suit with the screeches of nearly a dozen flash grenades. Even Azure Angels couldn't replicate the kind of sound speed this man could achieve. With the discernible ringing amplified by two-fold in his mask, Zhou fails to notice the revving of the rail guns from the other two vehicles between the main truck. He quickly drifts his body upward to avoid the hailing crossfire of lead. The band of perps open up the sun rooves of their trucks, continuing their barrage of bullets over Zhou's flight patterns. While it seems he has a handle on the situation, the men have come well-equipped to deal with him. Loading what appears to be rocket launchers, they point up from the sun rooves towards Zhou's general flight path, firing away at the masked magician! Trying to divert away from the missiles' course, he finds that instead of meeting with mere explosive rounds, they pop with numerous blinding lights. Zhou, now dazed from the visual impact, escalates towards the ground level of the road. Thankfully, he manages to concentrate just enough to stop seconds from skidding across the highway like fresh roadkill. With blurred vision, and a resounding hum in his ears, Zhou struggles to focus towards his assailants, as they quickly reload their weapons, and ready their sights.



Out of nowhere, a red van crashes into the rear of the left black caravan, jamming the turret into the hood, and rendering its users unconscious! Lucien comes flying out the driver's seat, as he cross chops both the passenger and the driver, preventing them from taking out their sidearms to hammer away the spry martial artist. Lucien quickly strafes the vehicle into inbound traffic to ram the center van from its formation. Though its passengers catch onto his strategy, as they begin to pelt the oncoming automobile with bullet after bullet. As the van skids from the momentum, he quickly boots down the side door, breaking off its hinges to jump on top of the truck, swiftly hopping onto the next car, keeping his balance from the hap-hazardous traffic. The men then veer into the next lane to escape from Lucien. To his surprise, Zhou lifts him up to glide towards their wicked transgressors. He begins to yell down to his ally in his masked tone.

"I'll let you get the drop on the big guys! I'll take out the help!"

"Read my mind there, didn't ya?"

"Trust me, I got quite a score to settle with them, too! Watch yourself!"

Zhou then swoops towards the main van, dropping Lucien atop of it, leaving a noisy impact. Meeting with a rain of bullets, he quickly rolls backwards, and hastily grabs the open back doors to swing his whole body, drop kicking the gunner to his left. He ceaselessly blocks the butt end of a rifle from the one to his right, punching his stomach, and striking his right rib cage in, knocking the wind right out of him. He looks to his left once more, kicks his left leg out to disarm one of the others' handguns, swiftly wrapping his left arm around the guy's right arm, dislocating it in two places and palming him with his right hand straight onto the forehead. While the other to his right tries to frantically reload his gun, Lucien throws the gun of his stunned cohort, followed by elbowing the man's face to the back of the window, cracking it in to knock him out cold. After witnessing what had occurred in front of him, the driver bails from the van. To Lucien's surprise, he rapidly tries to keep the van from clattering into the highway, as it spins across the center of the road. Before it collides into three other cars, Lucien jumps out of the sun roof, taking a leap of faith onto the car speeding to his left, barely making contact on the roof.

Before he can catch his breath, Mach flies in at his namesake speed, knocking Lucien square in his face, causing him to spin off the car. He manages to grip himself to the hood, despite the driver's sudden shock and swerving on the highway. The conniving vulture of a man grins a malicious smile before changing his trajectory back towards him.

"You can take a sockin', I'll give you that! How 'bout dodging these?!"

Mach activates the intricate turrets attached to the mechanical wings, and fires away as he closes in on the punch-drunk hero. With nearly dodging his silver fire, Lucien continues to hop from car to car, playing high speed hop-scotch with the flying maniac, mowing any and all drivers in a haze of collisions and explosions. Struggling to balance his landings, Lucien continues to weave and side-step from the oncoming mach speed punches.

Barely making out the screeching tires, and the audible horns of the now abrupt road block, Lucien works to get himself back up, covered deep in bruises, coughing up blood. He can hear the cackling of Mach's taunting in the distance across the bridge.

"Hahahahaha, THIS is the threat I was paid to take down? Aaaw, this'll be an *easy* 50 grand!"

Lucien breaths hard and heavy, standing his ground to face his foe, putting himself in a dragon stance. Mach finds himself pleased by the sight of his tenacity.

"Heh! I hope ya like the sandwich yer standin' on bub, because Imma 'bout ta make JELLY OUTTA YER CORPSE!"

He prepares for what awaits him, as the chortling madman boosts his way over to the waning hero...

Out of nowhere, Mach is met on impact with Zhou's feverous air tackle! He rockets straight up to the atmosphere, as the two trade blows with one another before bucking themselves off each other, staring each other down with a vicious intensity. Mach wipes the blood from his jawline, readying himself at his new-found enemy.

"Heh *spits* I knew this felt too easy. Good use of flankin. You wanna g--"

"I'm going to give you one chance to talk. Where were they heading?"

"*Snickers* HAHAHA! How 'bout ya ask that again, but next time, IN HELL!"

Sticking to his plan, Mach starts barrel-rolling towards the masked magician, firing away guns blazing from his wings. Zhou reverses his rolls to sneak in from below. Mach barrel rolls from the hit, and jettisons away from a distance to come roaring towards his direction. He keeps dashing and throwing punches towards the uncanny sorcerer. But Zhou dodges the hits in a rather unconventional manner. Instead of moving/side flying away from the offensive, he flips over and slaps his hand onto not just the winged portions of Mach's invention, but also the jetpack attached to the wings. Now beginning to go on the offensive, he flips up into the air, and attempts to dive kick on top of Mach. However, with Mach's reflexes, he grabs onto the sole of his shoe, bringing a smile of spiteful glee to the airborne fiend.

"Ya caught yer'self in the no-fly zone! Big mistake!"

The wings unfurl to point their miniature turrets below the magician's airspace.

BRATATATATATATATATATATATA-

A thick cloud of fire and smoke engulfs the masked hero. As the maniacal pilot smirks and snickers under his breath, he waits for the cloud to dissipate, seeing if a body falls from its altitude. To his surprise, he feels a presence behind him.

"Heh...Well, ain't you fast?"

He turns his attention to the disguised enchanter, riddled with bullet holes, his garments nearly torn asunder.

"Why don't we just finish this, huh? Ya kept on the dramatics long enough!"

The two take no hesitation to make a final aerial charge. Zhou accelerates, raising his right fist outward, clanging onto nothing but metal. Mach improvised his wings to become a hardened shield from the mage's contact.

"That was a weak punchline, kid. Try again next time."

He then cold cocks him into the bridge's vicinity, with an emphatic crash. Taking in a few good minutes to catch his breath, he looks down upon the havoc he wreaked upon the West End Bridge.

"Well, that was entertainin' while it lasted."

His sensors begin to go off on his flying gadget.

"Damn. Better hurry and take out the rich pretty boy. Fuel and ammo's beginning to run o--"

BLAM BLAM BANG!

His wings begin to short out, and explode right before him, and his engine fuel begins to take a drastic drop! Panic begins to set in for Mach, as he tries to perform impromptu repairs while in midair. In his shock, he hears a familiar, bellowing voice behind him...

"Sorry. You caught yourself in the no-fly zone."

The last thing he sees, is Zhou's looming figure, with his fist consumed in a bright, jade light. The last thing he hears, is an echoing pop, as he rapidly falls towards the bridge...

To be continued...~

The Dragon and the Fly

By Ginger Reynolds

Once there was a dragon named Furious and a fly named Monica. Furious had black, scaly skin, yellow, sharp teeth, and sharp claws. Monica looked weak and flimsy, but actually, Monica was just the opposite and Furious was as gentle as teddy bear. But, because of their appearance, the other creatures made fun of Monica and ran away from Furious. Furious and Monica felt very hurt, so they ran away. Monica flew east and Furious flew west. Neither of them was paying attention to where they were flying, so they flew into each other.

After they hit each other, Monica picked herself up off the grass. Then she did what no other creature would do: she flew over to Furious and helped him up. Furious was flattered, but surprised. No creature had ever tried to help him before. He was in shock. Monica asked if he was okay and introduced herself. She started to explain why she was flying so fast, but she was interrupted. Furious was crying tears of joy. Monica asked Furious why he was crying. Furious choked out, "Because you helped me when no other creature would. I wasn't crying, because I was sad. I was crying tears of joy."

Furious stood up with pride and asked Monica, very politely, if she would like to be his friend. Monica wasted no time and without hesitation, she blurted out, "Yes! Of course, I'll be your friend!" Monica and Furious agreed to be friends as long as they didn't make fun of, run away from, or fight with each other. Monica told Furious about this wonderful place that she knew about and Furious was wondering where it was.

Before Monica had the chance to tell Furious where the wonderful spot was located, Furious was so excited that he blurted out, "Where is this special place?!" Monica was a bit frightened, because Furious was a huge, black-skinned, yellow-toothed dragon that just yelled at her. Furious could tell that he frightened Monica. Then, Furious caught up to Monica and apologized to her for yelling when he should have been patient. Monica forgave Furious for yelling at her. Monica told Furious that the wonderful place was called Where Rainbows Let Out Chocolate. Furious was confused. Monica explained it to Furious that at the wonderful place, there were lots of rainbows that instead of letting out a pot of gold at the end, it rained chocolate.

Monica led Furious towards Where Rainbows Let Out Chocolate and explained on the way there that whenever anyone ate the chocolate, they became sweet and all the evil went away. Suddenly, they reached the wonderful land of where rainbows let out chocolate. After being there for three days, Furious and Monica realized that no matter what anyone ever says or does, you're only in control of you. So, they both agreed to go back to where they came from.

When they reached their old land, the other creatures tried to bully them again. But now, since Monica and Furious came to the realization that they can only change themselves, none of what the bullies said or did to them mattered anymore. Monica and Furious were finally happy, because they found themselves. After the other creatures found out the words and actions no longer bothered Furious and Monica, they stopped and became friends with them. ~ ~

Crazy Rich Asians

PG-13 2018 Ⓜ Drama/Comedy Ⓜ 2h 1m

2 76th Golden Globe Awards Nominations

Producers Guild of America Awards 2018 Nominee: Best Film

24th Critics' Choice Awards · Won Best Comedy • 3 nominations

My Rating: 3.5/5

By Elise Mote

The cast includes the following. Constance Wu (Rachel Chu), Henry Golding (Nick Young), Michelle Yeoh (Eleanor Young), Gemma Chan (Astrid Young Teo), Lisa Lu (Ah Ma), Awkwafina (Peik Lin Goh), and Harry Shum Jr. (Charlie Wu).

This movie follows the story of Rachel Chu (Constance Wu) and her boyfriend Nick Young (Henry Golding). Nick's best friend is having a wedding and invites Rachel to go with him and meet his family. Before arriving, she finds out his family is extremely wealthy and that creates many problems as she tries to navigate his family's lifestyle as well as friends while Nick supports his best friend and figures out his future with Rachel. ~

Deadpool 2: Once Upon A Deadpool
2018 📺 Fantasy/Science Fiction 📺 2h 14m
My Rating: 5/5
By Elise Mote

The cast includes the following. Ryan Reynolds (Wade/Deadpool/Juggernaut), Josh Brolin (Cable), Morena Baccarin (Vanessa), Julian Dennison (Russell/Firefist), Zazie Beetz (Dominos), T.J. Miller (Weasel), Brianna Hildebrand (Negasonic Teenage Warhead), Stefan Kapičić (Colossus), and Fred Savage (Self).

Once Upon A Deadpool was a family friendly version of the original *Deadpool 2*. Surprisingly with out ruining the original this version makes up the normal R rating by replacing it with a different kind of comic relief. Fred Savage and the setting of Princess Bride replaced the foul language and violence that was in the original film. If you don't like the typical things that come with an R rated movie or you want something you can enjoy with a younger crowd I definitely recommend this version. ~

Thomas Skidmore's SF Spotlight

The Obscure Masters, part three: RAY CUMMINGS, the Master of the Golden Atom

Ray Cummings (August 30, 1887--January 23, 1957) was an author of popular pulp science fiction stories as well as being one of the earliest writers for Timely Publications (now known as Marvel Comics). Before setting off on his writing career, he spent time as an assistant to noted inventor Thomas Alva Edison.

Feeling unsatisfied working with the temperamental Edison, Cummings left his job in 1919 and started off on his own journey. That year he wrote his first major story, *The Girl in the Golden Atom*, serialized in *All-Story Magazine* from March 15, 1919 to April 26, 1919. He then wrote the sequel titled *The People of the Golden Atom* in 1920.

In his *Golden Atom* novels, Cummings explored the possibility of "inner space," which he theorized was populated by planets and peoples not unlike our own Universe. It can be thus speculated that Ray pioneered the concept of the "Multiverse" (though the actual word wasn't coined until after his death in 1957). Combining ideas from H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and obscure SF novelist Fitz James O'Brien, Ray morphed these concepts into a riveting story of good and evil, love, and heroism in the mold of SF stalwart Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Between 1923 and 1942, he wrote many more stories in the science fiction genre, as well as a few jungle tales somewhat derivative of Burroughs' enduring hero, Tarzan. But after 1942, his novel-writing career took a gradual nosedive until he found himself writing anonymous scripts for Timely/Marvel. For a two-part Captain America story, he literally recycled *The Girl in the Golden Atom* into the adventure, "Princess of the Atom." Further comic book stories included adventures of the "Human Torch and Sub-Mariner," where he worked with his daughter, Betty (then a staff writer for Timely/Marvel).

His career headed for quick obscurity, Ray lived quietly with his family until he died of a cerebral hemorrhage on January 22, 1957. He was only 69 years old.

Though many of his stories were later reprinted in the 1950s (often in digests with very lurid cover artwork), from the 1960s onward, Cummings was largely forgotten and even dismissed as a writer with no style. His contributions to both science fiction and especially to the burgeoning comic book field must not be overlooked.

Perhaps, with a God-given miracle, we can all journey back into the Golden Atom . . . ~~

The Completion Backward Principle

By David O'Rorey

The Completion Backward Principle is a classic rock album created and performed by The Tubes and was released in April 1981. During this article I will be discussing some of the important songs and different tours. I hope you learn to enjoy this album as much as I do. This album is considered a concept album and got its name from an old time sales technique. This album is the first time The Tubes worked with David Foster and Capitol Records. Their first album to get major radio play with two hit singles on the record "Talk To Ya Later" and "Don't Want To Wait Anymore." This album is considered to be the Tubes' most popular.

The singer John "Fee" Waldo Waybill stated that this was his favorite album with The Tubes. Many other fans, including myself, site it as the best album they ever created. In 2011 Iconoclassic re-issued the album on CD which included "4 bonus tracks and new liner notes with fresh interviews with Fee Waybill and Roger Steen" (Tubes-"The Completion Backwards Principle" CD). Roger Steen is one of the original lead guitar players that still plays with the band to this day.

The first track of this album is "Talk to Ya Later." This song reached #6 on The Mainstream Rock Charts in 1981. The song is about "a one-night-stand that goes horribly wrong when the girl won't leave" (<https://www.songfacts.com/facts/the-tubes/talk-to-ya-later>). This song is one of my favorites.

The second track is called, "Sushi Girl." This song was dedicated to the female Japanese fans who mobbed the stage during the "Remote Control '79 World Tour." Fee talked about how he liked the fans coming up on the stage but the security guards did not want the fans to be too close to the band.

"Mr. Hate" is my favorite track that was not a hit from The Tubes. The song was inspired by a man that was convicted of killing his mother and sister. The Tubes thought he was innocent. Years later, evidence was discovered that found the man to be guilty.

"Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman" is the fifth track of the album. This track was inspired by the 1958 *Attack of the 50ft Woman* which was produced by Allied Artists. The Tubes could not get the rights for this low budget sci-fi classic and needed to change the name and the lyrics to avoid copyright infringement.

"Don't Want to Wait Anymore" is a love ballad by Bill "Sputnik" Spooner, and written by Vince Welnick, who is now deceased, and singer Fee. This song peaked at #35 on The Billboard Hot 100 in 1981. The singer, Fee, talked about how the recording of this song happened. Bill came in one night drunk and high on drugs and stated that he wanted to sing "Don't Want to Wait Anymore." David Foster stepped aside and allowed Bill his time in front of the microphone. Bill is said to have sung the song "...like his heart was gonna explode." David stated and continued with, "[your singing] blew me off the... table. We gotta use this version." And history was made with one of the lead guitarists singing one of the songs on the album.

The tour started on April 24th, 1981 in a television studio in Germany and ended on December 31st, 1981 in San Jose, CA. My personal favorite soundboard recording, which is an official recording unreleased, show was in Cleveland, Ohio at the Richfield Coliseum on July 18th, 1981. My favorite audience recording was the one in Torino, Italy at Parco Ruffini Motovelodromo on June 11, 1981. This show had to be cut short (from 90 minutes to 70 minutes) due to a power outage.

As you are reading this article, at the point of this magazine's release, there is, currently, a classic tour of the rock album "The Completion Backward Principle." This tour started in February 2019. The Tubes are performing the original album in its running order which is not how they did the tour I previously talked about. You have limited time to see this tour if you want to attend. If you want to go to one of the last shows for this revived tour you can go to Peekskill, NY on Thursday, May 16th; Roslyn, NY on Friday, May 17th; and/or North Tonawanda, NY on Saturday, May 18th. I hope that you can make it and that this article has convinced you to at least give the album a try.



The Completion Backward Principle (1981) (2011 CD Re-Issue)

1. Talk To Ya Later (Single)
2. Sushi Girl
3. Amnesia
4. Mr. Hate
5. Attack Of The Fifty Foot Woman
6. Think About Me
7. A Matter Of Pride
8. Don't Want To Wait Anymore (Single)
9. Power Tools
10. Let's Make Some Noise
11. Tubes Talk (2011 CD bonus track)
12. What's Wrong With Me (2011 CD bonus track)
13. Gonna Get It Next Time (Song from Soundtrack for the motion picture *Modern Problems* from 1981 - 2011 CD bonus track)
14. Sports Fans (2011 CD bonus track)~~

Hamilton: Musical vs. History

By Amelia Krzton

Hamilton is a musical that first premiered on Broadway in early 2015. It tells the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of our country, and the many ways that he played a role in the American Revolution-through song and dance, of course! The 2004 biography *Alexander Hamilton* inspired Lin Manuel-Miranda to write *Hamilton*. Now, the musical is not all historically accurate. This article regards who lives, dies, and tells Hamilton's story accurately.

Most of these differences include how Hamilton got along with other characters, such as Aaron Burr and Angelica Schuyler. In *Hamilton*, not only are Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr rivals, but they are complete opposites. Hamilton is a poor immigrant from the West Indies who is brash, bold, poetic, and all about making a difference immediately. Burr, on the other hand, is a son of privilege who is cool, calm, concise, and cautious. In real life, however, Hamilton and Burr lead parallel lives. Hamilton was loquacious and charming, while he also admired the way Burr practiced law. In *Hamilton*, Angelica Schuyler claims that her father has no sons and would like to marry Alexander Hamilton someday. In real life, Angelica was already married to a British businessman named John Barker Church, and Angelica had 12 other siblings- and yes, some of them were sons. Another major difference is regarding the Ten Duel Commandments. However, in a real-life PBS American documentary entitled PBS' American Experience, there were more than 10 commandments- there were 25 commandments. The Reynolds Pamphlet is also very different from real life. In the musical, Alexander Hamilton pursues a torrid affair with Maria Reynolds and doesn't say no. He eventually gets blackmailed into paying for his silence about the relationship. In real life, Hamilton really had an affair with Maria Reynolds and it became the nation's first political sex scandal. Hamilton was also blackmailed about this affair in real life. This leads up to Eliza's lack of letters, in which she burned in both the musical and real life. Once Hamilton dies, Eliza maintains his legacy and establishes her own legacy, both in the musical and real life.

These are some of the major similarities and differences between *Hamilton: the Musical* and real American history. I also found out that *Hamilton* had quotes from other musicals, as well, such as *Les Miserables*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Sound of Music*, and *West Side Story* when I learned about the differences between this musical at the Heinz History Center. If you cannot get tickets to see the musical, listen to the soundtrack online and do some research on how this compares and contrasts with typical American history.--

Bad Times at the El Royale

R 2018 📺 Drama/Thriller 🕒 2h 22m

My Rating: 4.5/5

By Elise Mote

The cast includes the following. Jeff Bridges (Father Daniel Flynn / Dock O'Kelly), Cynthia Erivo (Darlene Sweet), Dakota Johnson (Emily Summerspring), Jon Hamm (Laramie Seymour Sullivan / Dwight Broadbeck), Chris Hemsworth (Billy Lee), Cailee Spaen (Rose Summerspring), and Lewis Pullman (Miles Miller).

The El Royale was a booming hotel until its gambling license was taken away. Now it's a home for criminal activity and hidden secrets. When a traveling salesman, a singer, a clergy, two sisters, a hotel manager, and a man named Billy Lee get wrapped up in the hotel's mystery and mayhem.

The reason I gave it such a high rating was because the acting was very well done and the writers put a lot of thought into the characters and gave the viewers some background on each character. Even though it did leave some questions unanswered. ~~~

The Phenomenon of *Game of Thrones*

By: Megan Cunningham

Based on the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series by George R.R. Martin, *Game of Thrones* has taken the world by storm. Since its debut in 2010, the HBO fantasy series has attracted record viewership on its channel along with a broad, active, international fan base. Critics have acclaimed it for its acting, complex characters, story, scope, and production values, although its frequent use of sex and violence has been subject to criticism. On April 14, 2019, the show will air its long-anticipated eighth and final season, ushering an end to an era.

For those not familiar with *Game of Thrones*, here's a quick rundown. A fantasy series set on the continents of Westeros and Essos, the show has a large ensemble cast and several plots. But it follows three story arcs. The first focuses on the Iron Throne of the Seven Kingdoms and follows a web of alliances among noble dynasties either vying for the throne or fighting for independence from it. The second arc centers on Daenerys Targaryen, the last descendant of the realm's deposed ruling dynasty, exiled and plotting to return to the throne. Finally, the third arc revolves around The Night's Watch, a longstanding brotherhood charged with defending the realm against the ancient threats of the Wildling tribes and fierce creatures lying far north and an impending winter threatening the realm.

Most of the HBO series mainly centers around Lord of Winterfell's Eddard Stark and his family. At the start, Lord Ned is happily married to the former Lady Catelyn Tully, with whom he has five children: Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran, and Rickon. In addition to them, Ned "officially" has a bastard son named Jon Snow who serves in the Night's Watch alongside his Uncle Benjen and friend Samwell Tarly under Lord Commander Jeor Mormont. Wildlings living north of the Wall include Gilly, Tormund Giantsbane, and Ygritte. Others associated with House Stark comprise of Ned's ward, Theon Greyjoy, his unruly vassal Roose Bolton, and Bolton's illegitimate son Ramsay. Later, Robb falls in love with healer Talisa Maegyr. Arya befriends a blacksmith's apprentice Gendry and the assassin Jaqen H'ghar. The tall lady in shining armor Brienne of Tarth serves Catelyn and later Sansa.

At the capital of King's Landing, Ned's friend, King Robert Baratheon shares a loveless marriage with Queen Cersei Lannister. Cersei's having an incestuous affair with her brother Ser Jamie, who's in the Kingsguard and most likely fathered her children Joffrey, Myrcella, and Tommen. While she loathes her younger dwarf brother, Tyrion, who's attended by his mistress Shae and his sellsword Bronn. Sandor "The Hound" Clegane guards Joffrey. Featured among the King's Small Council of advisors are the crafty Master of Coin Lord Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish and eunuch spymaster Lord Varys. Robert's brother Stannis is advised by a foreign priestess Melisandre and former smuggler Davos Seaworth. Margery Tyrell represents her wealthy family at court and marries three different men over the course of the series. In the southern principality of Dorne, Ellaria Sand seeks vengeance against the Lannisters and she's hardly the only one.

Across the Narrow Sea, the siblings Viscerys and Daenerys are the exiled children of the last Targaryen ruler who Robert Baratheon overthrew. When the series begins, they're running their lives and trying to win back the Iron Throne. Daenerys marries nomadic Dothraki leader Khal Drogo while her retinue includes exiled knight Ser Jorah Mormont, her aide Missandei, and the sellsword Daario Naharis.

What makes the show so compelling is its focus on medieval realism where the fantastical

elements on magic and sorcery take a backseat to battles, political intrigue, and the characters. George R. R. Martin believes in a moderate magic use in the epic fantasy genre. While a common theme in fantasy is the battle between good and evil, this isn't the case in *Game of Thrones*. Given people's capacity for good and evil in real life, the show explores the questions of redemption and character change by having the audience view different characters from their perspective. This allows the supposed villains can provide their side of the story.

There's no lack of controversy with this series. Despite an enthusiastic reception, critics have bashed *Game of Thrones* for depicting a generous amount of violence, female nudity, and sexual violence (especially against women). Many have called such depictions as the adaptation's defining weakness. George R. R. Martin has responded that he feels obligated to be honest about history and human nature since war is replete with rape and sexual violence. And that omitting all that from the narrative would be dishonest and undermine the story's themes and historical realism. To be fair, the show wasn't based on a series of young adult fantasy books like *Harry Potter*. And many of the controversial sex scenes do happen in the novels as well, but sometimes they've deviate from the source material. For instance, two sex scenes described as consensual in the novels were depicted as rape in the series. Another rape in the fifth season caused widespread outrage.

Another caveat is that *Game of Thrones* has a notorious reputation for killing off its characters. Of course, when you play the game of thrones, "you win or you die." The series is violent, vicious, and not for the faint of heart. After all, this show revolves around battle scenes and palace intrigue. Warriors die senselessly in battle and without dignity and glory. While rising political leaders in Westeros get routinely bumped off to make room for hungrier competitors (or just for revenge). And given that the first season saw the main character get beheaded in the penultimate episode, no one is safe. We can't get attached to the people we love on the show since they could be toast. Over the years, some deaths have left us cheering for the killer since the victim really had it coming. But there are other deaths that broke fans' hearts, especially if they came right out of nowhere. The more important the character is, the more important and game-changing their demise is sure to be. Since as they say, all men must die.~



Emilia Clarke (Daenerys Targaryen) and Kit Harrington (Jon Snow). Photo from ing.com

Conclusion of *Thirteen Reasons Why*

By Michelle Middlemiss

My interpretation of the book/movie and how they compare to each other:

- The movie kept the true theme of the book.
- The book involves one night of listening to the tapes.
- The movie takes place in weeks/months.
- The books' character interactions seem forced;
- The movie- developed characters.

My hope for season 3 is to see more growth for the characters but sticking true to themselves. The tapes were not a blame game; more instructional- take a look at the things you did. The tapes were a wake-up call.

- In the book the tapes were not leaked.
- In the movie they were leaked.
- In the book there are more characters stalking Clay.
- In the movie, the reasons why are understood. It doesn't glorify suicide like critics say, but the reasons are developed through movie. Shows Hannah really had no way out.
- The stop sign scene- felt responsible for getting into the car. Didn't tell who knocked down the sign- Hannah was remorseful.
- If the guidance counselor was more of a counselor he may have caught on sooner.
- The book didn't know the kid in the accident. In the movie he had a name, face; Clay tutored him and they were kind of friends.
- The last tape in both was the first tape she made and then worked backwards from that.
- Society sees suicide as a person's fault but the book and movie point out that isn't the case- and the victim truly feels there's no way out.
- Book shows mental health is an issue. Author mentioned it was written for sister who survived a suicide attempt.
- Adding principal, Hannah's parents, Clay's mom to the movie made more realistic- not shaming people on tapes; not shaming Hannah- brought Hannah's hopelessness "to life."
- In the book Justin and Jessica never were in a relationship; he didn't even know Jessica.
- In the movie it showed more emotion, able to see "wake up" calls in characters.
- The book was more "unknowns" and "no names"- disconnect- plot device driven- tapes save the book.
- In the movie, Hanna was only one year in town. In the book, three years in that town.
- The snowball effect- building until she couldn't take anymore but then took on other characters and their doing.
- Book "My Valentine Section" vs movie scene.
- Book- payoffs to turn other cheek- not see anything- that was left out of the movie.
- Not good at pacing/ plot convenience.
- Book- Blue light clerk growls; threatens to call cops.
- Movie- no carding/ was okay to be there.
- Communications class- in book shows more got questioned as in "should we keep the class or not?"
- In movie it's not questionable; it's plain the school needs this class
- Movie updated from book/ cyber bullying and anonymous texts/emails.
- The movie shows signs of suicide to look for-not glorifying it.
- School didn't have enough resources. ~

Tarantula (1955) (*Warning: contains some spoilers*)

Best Science Fiction giant spider film!

By David O'Rorey

Tarantula is an absolute 50's Sci-Fi Classic! Well directed by Jack Arnold who also gave us 50s Sci-Fi classic like, *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), *Creature From The Black Lagoon* (1954), *This Island Earth* (1955), *Revenge Of The Creature* (1955), *The Incredible Shrinking* (1957), *Monster On The Campus* (1958). *Tarantula* is about a Professor named Gerald Deemer (Leo G. Carroll) who is working on a nutrient that causes animals to grow large. A radioactive isotope is what holds the nutrient together and triggers it. Among the giant hamsters, rabbits & rats there is a giant tarantula about as big as a dog that escapes after the professor has a fight with one of his assistants that was injected with the nutrient and becomes deformed. This tarantula grows bigger and bigger from the injections which included the radioactive isotope which is what makes the tarantula so big. It ends up getting 100 Feet tall and terrorizes the Arizona countryside. Dr. Matt Hastings (John Agar) famous for 50s & 60s B Sci-Fi films like *Revenge Of The Creature '55*, *The Mole People '56*, *Daughter Of Dr. Jekyll '57*, *The Brain From Planet Arous '57* eventually finds out about the tarantula having visiting local farmers with Sheriff Jack Andrews (Nestor Paiva) with cattle stripped down to the bone & puddles of white liquid which is the tarantula's venom. Stephanie Clayton (Mara Corday) also famous for 50's Sci-Fi also was a Playboy Playmate in Oct. 1958 Issue of Playboy also was a famous 50's Pin-Up Model. She helps Deemer with his experiments & meets Agar's character of course they have a likeness for each other. I am not gonna say what happens to the tarantula. Seeing it is a must for 50's Sci-Fi Giant Creature Feature fans! ~~

The Crater Lake Monster (1977) Movie Review

By David O'Rorey

This movie is a great Drive-In 70's Sci-Fi / Thriller. I know most people give it negative comments, since it was supposed to take place at Crater Lake, but because of the low budget limitation, it was filmed in California at some land formed lake up there. Anyway the lake is dark, murky and a good bit of it leaves behind that creepiness image & feel that Loch Ness gives you. Not the greatest acting but good enough for this type of B-Drive In Sci-Fi Film. What makes this movie so great, you ask? Any fan of Stop-Motion Animation knows of the great David Allen who followed in the footsteps of the stop-motion legends Willis O'Brien & Ray Harryhausen. He was inspired by them in the early 1950's as a young boy he saw some of their films on television. The Plesiosaurus which is a prehistoric water reptile from the dinosaur ages that has a long neck razor sharp teeth and four flippers with a tail. It can walk on land as well. The attack scenes depicted in this film handled by Dave Allen using Stop-Motion Animation. Then some scenes in the water had a fabricated head made for some of the close up water attack shots and a few other shots in the film.

The Loch Ness Horror (1982) also has a Plesiosaurus in it which is supposed to be what Nessie is the nickname of The Legendary Loch Ness Monster of Scotland. Same with the lake monster that's in Lake Champlain in Upstate New York. Champ is the nickname; that is America's Loch Ness Monster. Back to Crater The Stop-Motion Animation in this film is some of the best Animation I have ever seen. This is one of his early efforts not to mention also. *Equinox* from 1970 was his first big break & that film earned a huge Cult following by Sci-Fi, Horror & Fantasy Film Buffs like myself.

Crater Lake Dave was assisted by Jim Danforth & Randall William Cook two other great Stop-Motion Animators Danforth that was focusing on more matte painting on films at that time since Stop-Motion was becoming obsolete. His last film he did in which he did all the animation on was *When Dinosaurs Ruled The Earth* (1970). He earned an Oscar for Best Visual Effects in America and that is a British-made film. He started matte painting on that film as well while still doing Stop-Motion also. But in *Equinox* he only does Matte Painting & most of the films after *Equinox* too. He does some assistant animation occasionally & other animation though. Jim Danforth loves animation he thinks it gives a feel and look that CGI doesn't give because it is too real; the same was said by Ray Harryhausen. I agree with them both, as I prefer Stop-Motion Animation over CGI myself. Dave Allen's Animation in *Crater* steals the show--it is what makes the film worth watching. If you are a huge Stop-Motion Fan like me then you will really enjoy this movie.~~

Review of *Shine*

By Nils Skudra

I recently set aside time to watch the 1996 film *Shine*, a beautiful biographical drama. *Shine* depicts the life of Australian pianist David Helfgott from his formative years as a gifted child prodigy through his struggle with mental illness and ultimate comeback to the music scene. I felt it would be worthwhile to see the film, particularly with a focus on determining whether Helfgott's particular behaviors fall within the range of the autism spectrum and whether *Shine* adequately captures that diagnosis for the audience's enlightenment.

At the film's opening, the middle-aged David (portrayed by Geoffrey Rush in an Oscar-winning performance) is featured making rambling statements marked by repetitive patterns, such as the phrase "It's a mystery, it's a mystery." Lost in the rain, he comes upon a diner which is about to close and repeatedly knocks on the window for assistance. When an employee finally lets him inside, David displays a lack of inhibition with regard to touching other people, eagerly hugging them without asking permission, although he is rebuffed by the grouchy owner. When asked about his predicament, David talks manically and without much apparent sense, trying to convey that he is lost, throwing in statements like "If you misbehave, you're going to be punished for the rest of your life." While being driven back home by the kindly staff member Sylvia, David explains the meaning of his surname, which means "Help of God" in Yiddish, stating that his grandfather was "very religious, but he got exterminated, so God didn't help him" and then laughs uproariously and nervously although this is clearly not an appropriate subject for one's sense of humor.

We subsequently see David's formative years depicted through flashbacks beginning with his childhood. The young David (portrayed by Alex Rafalowicz) is first seen walking towards the stage at a school piano competition, repeating "I'm going to win" to himself. When David is asked what he shall play, his father Peter Helfgott (portrayed by Armin Mueller-Stahl) stands up in the audience and shouts "Chopin, the *Polonaise*!" David then proceeds to play the piece and, to the astonishment of the concert judges, displays a remarkable mastery of Chopin despite his tender age. When Peter notices the piano rolling backward, he runs toward the stage in panic but is stopped by one of the judges who praises David's unique genius, to which Peter quietly but proudly replies, "He is my son."

When David and Peter return home from the competition, we learn that Peter has taught David to play the piano but is very demanding that his son fulfill the dream that he himself did not achieve, emphatically stating, "Always *win*." He then puts on a record of the Rachmaninoff No.3 but is interrupted by the arrival of competition judge Ben Rosen who presents a prize to David, remarking that very few people summon the courage to tackle the *Polonaise*. Mr. Rosen offers to give David piano lessons but is rejected by Peter, who puts the prize in his pocket and insists that only *he* teach David. But after overhearing David playing a portion of the Rach No.3, Peter becomes convinced that Mr. Rosen is the right person after all to teach David this extremely difficult concerto. He takes him to Rosen's house the next day and the piano teacher agrees to accept David as his student.

The film then proceeds to David's adolescent years (portrayed by Noah Taylor). Having just won another competition after years of training with Mr. Rosen, David is offered an opportunity to study music in the United States, which his parents, however, are deeply ambivalent about. Although Peter initially encourages David to be strong in order to survive in America, he is troubled by the impression that others are seeking to take his son away from him. During a conversation with his wife Rachel, it is revealed that they are survivors of the Holocaust, which has left an indelible mark on Peter in particular. This experience uncovers a deeper reason at the heart of Peter's reluctance to let David go to America: He fears that his family's destruction will repeat itself through David's departure. Consequently, he becomes increasingly domineering and obstructive of David's opportunities to live and study abroad.

A new and important person enters David's life in the form of Katherine Prichard (portrayed by Googie Withers), a prominent author he meets at a local fundraiser. When David reveals that he has been given a scholarship to attend the Royal College of Music in London, Katherine encourages him to pursue his dream in spite of Peter's objections. Upon returning home that evening, David is confronted by his father who subsequently beats

him for his seeming ungrateful. When David insists, "I'm old enough to make up my own mind," Peter desperately tells him: "If you walk out that door, you will never be welcomed back into this house. You will never be anybody's son. The girls will lose a brother. If you go, you will be *punished*... for the rest of your life." Despite his father's warning, David leaves for London, resulting in his disownment from the family.

As a student at the Royal College of Music, David comes under the tutelage of Prof. Cecil Parks (portrayed by John Gielgud), who constantly exhorts him to practice the Rach No.3 in preparation for an upcoming school concert. David begins exhibiting peculiar neurotic behaviors, speaking in rambling sentences, eating cat food and at one point walking up the stairs without any pants on. While these early signs of mental illness are identified online as schizoaffective disorder, the case could be made that they also fall within the range of autism since many autistic individuals have difficulty understanding social cues, make repetitive statements and tend to engage in habits that deviate from neuro-typical behavior. David's mental decline reaches the breaking point just after delivering a masterful rendition of the Rach No.3 at the concert when, overwhelmed by the pressure, he collapses onstage, resulting in his subsequent hospitalization and electroshock treatment.

The film then shifts to the middle-aged David's period of living in a psychiatric hospital and a subsequent triumphant comeback. At the institution, the film highlights more of his behavioral traits which may be considered autistic as well as schizoaffective proclivities. When he is visited by his sister Susie, he not only has difficulty remembering her but fails to make eye contact as he rambles on and on. Nonetheless, David still exhibits his astounding mastery of the piano, practicing loudly, oblivious to his irritated neighbors. Returning to a familiar diner, he meanders over to the piano and delivers an amazing performance of *Flight of the Bumblebee* and reclaims what might have been a lost career. Eventually he finds a romantic partner, astrologer Gillian Murray (portrayed by Lynn Redgrave), and marries her. While Rush delivers a phenomenal performance in the lead role, *Shine* is definitely not without significant flaws. Not only has the film been criticized for its portrayal of Peter Helfgott as a domineering tyrant – David's sister Margaret insisted that their father was actually a loving and affectionate parent whose objection to David's departure was based on a concern about his son's ability to live independently – but it also fails to expressly identify the specific diagnosis for David's neurotic symptoms. In an interview director Scott Hicks stated that he chose quite deliberately not to delve into the clinical details of David's condition since he did not want *Shine* to be a film about mental illness but rather one about acceptance and the ability of a severely challenged individual to triumph in the face of adversity. Nonetheless I would argue that this is a major failing – the lack of a specific psychiatric identification leaves audiences wondering about the nature of David's diagnosis. In real life Helfgott is highly medicated, under the total care of his wife, who has openly referred to his having Asperger's Syndrome as well as other neurological conditions.

In summation, *Shine* projects a beautifully moving but deeply flawed portrayal of David Helfgott's lapse into mental illness and his triumphant return to stardom. The film's failure to delve into the precise clinical specifics of his condition is a significant drawback which may lead viewers who are unfamiliar with autism or schizophrenia to think "He's just mentally ill" without the benefit of an informed neurological insight. Consequently, *Shine* presents an inadequate depiction of what might reasonably be considered to fall within the range of the autism spectrum. Nonetheless, Helfgott's passionate pursuit and achievement of success as a pianist in spite of his severe mental challenges sends an uplifting message that continues to resonate among people on the autism spectrum. Finally, the conclusions which some viewers might draw – that David is both autistic and schizophrenic – could potentially inspire further professional investigation into the likelihood of individuals on the spectrum having more than one neurological condition, how they cope with that multiplicity, and the different ways in which they achieve academic and/or professional success. ~~



The Giant Behemoth

By David O'Rorey

(Warning: contains spoilers)

The Giant Behemoth is an awesome 50s Sci-Fi film with the best stop-motion effects one can get for this type of film from Willis O'Brien and his assistant, Pete Peterson. I originally saw this film in eighth grade on AMC. I thought it was good, but didn't think much of the film itself because it was actually a British version or British spin-off of the Warner Bros. fifties sci-fi blockbuster, *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*. It featured Ray Harryhausen doing the stop-motion with his first major film with no help; he was first animator in *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) with Pete Peterson doing about 15% of the animation toward the end.

The Giant Behemoth is one of the best dinosaur flicks. It is about atomic waste in the Atlantic Ocean in England that makes a 200-foot paleosaur radioactive. It eventually goes on a rampage in the streets of London, letting out lethal radiation, horribly burning whatever humans get in its way during the rampage. I don't want to say much more; any fans of fifties sci-fi & stop-motion should really check this one out. *The Giant Behemoth* is known as *Behemoth*, *The Sea Monster* in England. I hope to see a DVD soon with some nice extras and more than one version of the film. It also has audio commentary by Ray Harryhausen and Ken Ralston. They previously did one on *King Kong*, another Willis O'Brien classic!

The Giant Behemoth (1959) is finally due out on DVD from Warner Home Video. It came out on June 26, 2007 in Widescreen 1.78:1. Willis O'Brien & Peterson did a great job on that film. It is one of my favorite dinosaur films. Sadly, it is sold in a 3-DVD box set called *Camp Cult Classics Volume 1*. It is also sold in the set with *Attack Of The 50 Foot Woman* (1958) and *Queen Of Outer Space* (1958). It is a sci-fi cult classic, with Dennis Muren & Phil Tippett, which is really terrible because it seems that fans know more about the movie from reading *Famous Monsters Of Filmland Magazine*. Whole 79 minutes intact, although the back of the case has some errors. It also has 1958 for the release year, when it actually was not released until 1959. I have heard that the print is clean and looks great sharper than the laserdisc. I didn't get mine yet so I can't say personally. Anyway, 8 out of 10 for this.~~

Work is a Bridge to Life

By Cameron Irvin

There aren't many things as memorable as your first job. And by that, I mean your first professional job, not random chores around the house or projects you work on with your parents. Those are completed in the comfort of your own home, made easier by the support of those closest to you, so you aren't risking quite as much. A real job, though, one where you commute to and from a location and spend your days in the company of people brought together solely by said job—that tests you. It most certainly did in my case.

My job, the first one that I ever had, doesn't seem like much to boast about. Basically, I work at a grocery store where my duties consist of helping to load and occasionally unload groceries, sorting and organizing shopping carts, sweeping the storefront clean, and providing general assistance when it comes to aisle cleanups, garbage or bathroom duty. On paper, it doesn't seem very glamorous or exciting. In fact, it seems like a job that you can hardly wait to escape from, dreaming of when your "big break" will come. But, while I won't deny that there have been moments when my work has felt deady dull, it has also been greatly enriching and full of lessons on how to navigate through this forbidding world.

The first lesson, oddly enough, I discovered in the most negative aspects of my work. And no, it wasn't that hackneyed line about how suffering "builds character." Rather, I learned that suffering builds bridges. Bridges with other people, that is. In the first few weeks of my job I went through a great deal of stress and strain trying to stay on top of my schedule or just trying to make it to and from work on time. Crisis after crisis would rear its ugly head and I would have to adapt accordingly. Whether it was something as dramatic as trying to make it to work on time while stuck behind a Memorial Day parade, or just trying to maintain my energy during a shift that seemed to stretch on endlessly, I have had my fair share of difficulties. But I soon realized that, however trying such problems were, they also contained an unexpected benefit—the sympathy and understanding of my fellow employees. I must emphasize that last part, *understanding*. Whenever I voiced my fears and concerns about the day's work, or whenever I allowed myself to indulge in a little griping, my co-workers lent a ready ear and gave me sympathy. But honestly, it wasn't the sympathy that I appreciated most. It was the fact that we were having a real conversation, with real give and take. For the first time in my life, I was talking to people other than my family and close friends, and finding common ground with them. It was like finding a common language. Maybe my love for movies, fantasy fiction, and history wouldn't be shared by most of my co-workers, but exasperation over work was something we could share. We were all on the same page when it came to wanting to go home.

My second lesson came about when, a week or so into my job, I unintentionally offended a customer by intruding into her personal space without warning to assist her with her groceries. Although her abrasive tone and hurtful comments made me feel embarrassed and ill-used, I later had to admit that I had kind of walked into that situation myself. I had not taken into consideration how this customer would feel about me suddenly showing up and *insisting* on helping her. Even though I had meant it kindly, even though I had just gotten carried away by my eagerness to help every single customer in sight, I had given the wrong impression, and the result had been humiliation. From that day on, I learned not to presume that all customers liked being treated in the same way. I learned to always ask politely if they needed assistance with their groceries. And I learned to make quality (i.e., appropriate interaction with people) as much a part of my work as efficiency.

This leads into the third lesson that I learned from my job. That there is some truth to that old saying about how "life is what you make of it." I used to think that people used that line whenever they wanted to say something that sounded smart and encouraging but couldn't think of anything cleverer than that. Now, however, I've changed my tune. Because I've seen for myself how a positive attitude and a willingness to ease the burdens of others can help brighten what might otherwise be a very depressing job. My mom explained to me, after that unfortunate incident with the gruff lady, that shopping is a source of daily stress in everyone's life and that the customers are no happier about being at the store than we employees are. She urged me to keep that in mind whenever I dealt people who were impolite or snappy, and I took her words to heart. In fact, I decided to go one further. From then on, whenever I had to deal with people, which half my job entails, I would put on my best self. I would be like a footman or a lobby boy at a fancy hotel and give them the five-star treatment, doing all that I could to ensure that they left the store with smiles on their faces. I tried this method and found, to my delight, that it actually worked. With an extra dose of courtesy and helpfulness, I began to add to my customers' lives. They started taking time out of their busy schedules to respond to my friendliness. I felt like I was making an impression on them even after they went home. At first I worried that this was because I was putting on an act for them, but then I realized something—this persona of mine wasn't really an act. I was just going all-out in my desire to make the best of my work that I possibly could. My enthusiasm was genuine because they responded to it. And then I realized something else. People were enjoying my company, and not because I was performing for them.

You see, in the past, whenever I wanted to be part of a group or get people to notice me, I would revert to quoting lines from movies and comic books, with voices and sounds effects included, to wow them into admiration. And as fun as it was to see the shocked expressions on their faces when I acted out an entire scene from a movie, I began to wonder whether I'd have to keep doing this kind of thing for the rest of my life. But now I was simply being my most genuine self with them and they liked that about me. They appreciated my effort and told me so on multiple occasions. They began to add to my life just as I had added to theirs. With every passing day I found it a little easier to go the extra mile in helping a customer. From encouraging a young immigrant mom nervous about driving home by herself for the first time, to guiding an elderly lady with bad cataracts to her car, to lifting a little kid out of the car she'd been stuck in, I am learning to take pride in serving others. I am starting to truly care how their day goes. And when they reward me with a friendly smile or a chat, it feels like a treat.

This encompasses what my job has taught me thus far. My work has had its share of ups and downs, but no more so than everyone around me, and in that way I can relate to and connect with them. My work may seem monotonous and repetitious, but every person I deal with is singularly unique and deserving of courtesy and insightfulness on my part. And my work may gruel at times, but my customers and fellow employees are having just as bad a time of it as me, and empathizing with them and trying to lift their spirits can make all the difference. In the words of the ever-delightful Hugh Laurie in *Jeeves and Wooster*: "Life can be delish with a sunny disposish!"~~

Heather Gray Sweatpants Connection

By Joe Cepek

Many people have a special type of clothing. My favorite clothing article is heather gray sweatpants. This is both the light, medium and dark colored shades of heather gray. I also like the same color shade in the form of tee shirts, regular sweat-shirts, hooded sweatshirts and shorts. I like the intricate color pattern, with combination of white, light gray and dark (charcoal) gray being artistically intertwined together in the same garment. Most of the sweatpants that I have had over the years to the present are made out of partially both cotton and polyester.

They are comfortable and soft on the lower half of the body. They usually if not always have elastic waists. All of the sweatpants I have ever worn have had and still have elastic waists. Jeans with elastic waists are fine with me also. However, sweatpants are the main clothing piece, which is being focused on in this article. This is intended as a personal clothing piece preference. I believe many other people like any color shade, a.k.a. hue, of heather gray sweatpants as is probably true of the other before-mentioned clothing articles.

The sweatpants, which have two side and one or two back pockets are nice, because one can put personal belongings, such as wallets, library cards, loose change, a folded U.S. paper dollar bill, a coin purse, a few clean facial tissues and other small inanimate objects.

This is similar to dress slacks, work pants, jeans, jeans shorts, skirts, including denim ones, and overalls. I also like the cargo-style sweatpants, which are similar in appearance, to cotton pants, including the denim type, even in short pant form, with multiple deep pockets, which may including safety Velcro or zippers, in order to keep valuables from falling out and possibly being lost by the pants, skirts or the shorts wearer.

It is okay to wear sweatpants, similar to regular work pants and jeans, on some jobs, such as being a volunteer or a paid library aide and a librarian. Shorts are even allowed in some public libraries. This depends on the dress code policy, which is different from one workplace and another one. This is also true of schools and places of religious worship.

Sweatpants are also known as athletic fleece pants, jogging pants, athletic pants, workout pants, exercise pants, and among many other adjective and noun descriptions. Heather gray appears to me as a beautiful color maze of white and usually two gray color shades joining up to create a bi-color paint brush physical presence. I really cannot explain why I am visually attracted to this visual color pattern. I can only state that I am triggered by its role in leisure clothing accompaniment. Again, I believe many people would agree with me, on this fashion aspect.

Dollar General "Jerzees Nublend" brand, Joe Boxer Kmart brand, Britannia brand, Riddell brand, Hanes brand, Fruit of the Loom brand, Basic Editions brand, and Old Navy brand are among the various kinds of fleece pants, hooded sweat-shirts, regular sweatshirts, shorts, and tee shirts that I have worn over the years to the current time.~~

O the bonds,
our eternal flame,
may it flicker,
and be a continuous supernova of ecstasy,
when two become one,
may we never forget,
the day we met,
for when we're waltzing towards the stars and beyond,
till heavens coming,

So too may we orchestrate our love,
and bond together like a radiant rainbow swirling across the galaxies,
full of diverse colors,
some the likes no one has ever seen,
matching perfectly with the stars glimmering lights,
continuously glowing radiant flashes of beauty and adornment,
where no black hole can reach,

so too can our love never be separated,
for how vast the universe may be,
may our harmonious rhythm of love blast throughout heaven's glorious light,
like a trumpet calling for the symphonies beginning,
may the joys of our love,
kindred spirits,
and intertwining hands,
never end with a tear shed,
but instead with the joy of reunion,
for what is love but an everlasting light.

For: The one who has taken me

by Paul Lechevalier



Selling the Big Front Seats: Price and Size Matter

By Kenneth Miller

On October 22, 2018 I started a new job as a Customer Service Agent in training at Spirit Airlines at Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT). Most days, I start work at 0400 at the ticket counter bag drop station. Other days I go over to the airside terminal and help board passengers bound for LAX, FLL, and MCO. The more I go to work and try new things, the more I learn about how airlines work. It has been darn rewarding. I cannot say enough about the diversity, intelligence, and over all good-naturedness of my coworkers and supervisors.

It's a customer service job. When people show up at the airport, they want to see that everything is working smoothly. They want to get on that airplane on time, with their families, fed and with their luggage. They want reassurance that everything is in order and to be on their way.

Spirit is an ultra low-cost carrier. Sometimes you can find one cent fares from PIT to FLL. It is not uncommon for someone to book a round trip flight, including taxes, for less than \$100.

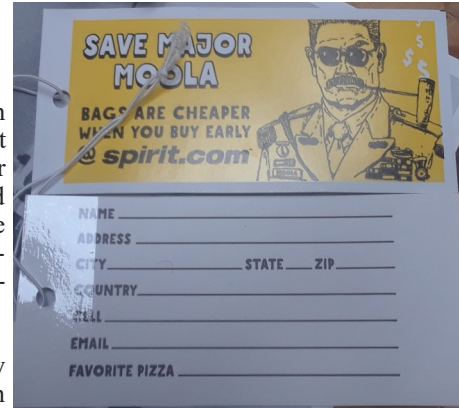
How can Spirit offer such competitive prices? We encourage passengers to book online and pay for their luggage 24 hours in advance by using the website. Our slogan is "SAVE MAJOR MOOLA" by using www.SPIRIT.com. We also offer seats in the front of the plane, our Big Front Seats, and seats in the emergency exit row that have more leg room, for an additional fee.

My employer is not Spirit airlines, but an airport services contractor named Trego-Dugan Aviation. Trego-Dugan started in 1970 providing charter flights. They still do charter flights, but now the largest and fastest growing part of their business is airport services. Every time a new airline comes to Pittsburgh, Trego-Dugan bids to provide airport services like ticketing, gate agents, ramp workers, luggage handlers and more.

It is Spirit that oversees my training. This month I will go to Florida for the two-week Customer Service Agent training. I will have to learn even more about the many different computer interfaces involved with reserving airline tickets, managing luggage and boarding our fleet of Airbus airplanes.

Is additional leg room worth the price? That depends on if you can afford it and how long your flight is. And it depends on how big you are. Big people will be more comfortable in bigger seats. The seat you want might not be available, which is why you should reserve your seat on www.SPIRIT.com or our phone app right after you buy your ticket... but most days we can sell big seats at the ticket counter and at the gate.

Yesterday, the Allegheny County Airport Authority hosted a press conference welcoming a new airline to PIT. Via, the new airline, will be offering daily flights to some mid-size cities starting in June. Their planes are a little smaller than those flown by Spirit.



At the time of this writing we are in the middle of the longest government shut down in American history. President Trump is holding the Federal Government hostage to get five billion dollars from the Democratic majority in congress to build a boarder wall, a concrete wall or one made of iron slats. Today, the Transportation Security Administration workers are not getting pay checks.

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NOTES: The naming problem. Great last names you want to use. Nicknames that arrive by epiphany, like Cyrano de Berge-rac. Two people that share the same name. Unique spelling. A little girl her parents named Lennon applies John Lennon US postage stamps to holiday cards. Passengers, especially at the txt counter, like to hear their own names.~~

Librarian Susan McClellan

By Joseph Cepek

I am interviewing the head librarian at the Millvale Community Library. Her name is Susan McClellan. I want to ask her some interesting questions concerning her job and what goes on at the library. I honestly must say I have never interviewed a librarian before. This is a nice and a new interview format for me. This is for others who may not be aware of the library's existence and its role in the Millvale community.

Questions:

What education level do you need to be a librarian? **A Master's Degree in Library Science.**

What education level do you need to be a paid library aide? **Some high school.**

What education level do you need to be a volunteer library aide? **Some high school.**

Do you have family members who never attended college? **Yes.**

Are (Were) they avid learners? **No.**

The reason I ask the two (2) previous questions is because I believe it does not matter how much one's formal education level may be, he or she can still be a constant learner. Do you believe this also? **Yes.**

The library scene has traditionally been a center of ongoing lifelong learning for all people. Do you believe a college degree, a college certificate, or a technical school degree or a technical school certificate, regardless of the major, is always necessary for all people to be important living components in their community? **I believe it isn't necessary for all individuals.**

What are the basic responsibilities of a librarian?

Manage the library on a day to day basis, collection development, work with the library to maintain the library budget, draft policies for the library board, work with the library board on strategic planning, develop creative and innovative programming, provide technical services, public relations, outreach, and prepare reports for the board, state, county and various entities.

What are the basic responsibilities of a paid library aide? **Assist patrons, provide excellent customer service, provide technical service.**

What are the basic responsibilities of a volunteer library aide? **Assist with organizing, shelving books, and shelving magazines (audiovisual materials, too).**

Is there a library employee dress code here? **Yes.**

What are the regular activities at the library? **Programs (reading, board games, card games, writing, etc.), community outreach services.**

When did the library open? **2013.**

Who founded the library? **Brian Wolovich.**

Does the library have a safety security system? **Yes.**

When did you start working for the library? **October 2017.**

What is the library's address? **213 Grant Avenue.**

What was here before the library? **An electric appliance shop.**

Do you have a self-check-out depot? **Yes.**

How long can you check out a library item here? **3 weeks.**

Can you order an item from another Allegheny County library here? **Yes.**

How long can you keep the item? **3 weeks.**

Can you order a library item here from a library, which is located in another Pennsylvania County? **Yes.**

Can you order a library item, from another U.S. State library? **Yes.**

Were you ever a Millvale resident? **Yes.**

When was Millvale incorporated as a borough? **1868.**

Who was Grant Avenue named after? **Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), the Eighteenth U.S. President.**

What school district is Millvale part of? **Shaler Area School District.**

Do you know of anyone who has the time to read all of the books here? **No.**

Do you intend to work at the library for a long time? **Yes.**

What dog breed is represented at the library's front entrance? **A Giant Schnauzer named Pages.**

Who created the neat book door handles going into the building from Grant Avenue? **James Simon.**

Who pays for the library computers? **Allegheny County Library Association.**

Are library patrons and/or employees allowed in the upstairs part of the building? **No.**

Thank you very much, for your participation time, Susan!

Have a great day!

This is an interview production for *Pittverse Magazine*. ~~



Photos by Masha Gregory



Sober Truth

By Joe Cepek

"4 Then I (King Solomon) returned and considered all of the oppression that is done under the sun:
And look! The tears of the oppressed,
But they have no comforter-
On the side of their oppressors there is power,
But they have no comforter.¹
Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead,
More than the living who are still alive.²
Yet, better than both is he (or she) who has never existed,
Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.³"
Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 NKJV (New King James Version Translation)

These Old Testament Bible Scripture verses are certainly not the most pleasant ones to read, yet they were written by the most powerful man in the world about three thousand years ago. This was none other than King Solomon, through Divine Intervention Inspiration, in my personal opinion, yes, literally.

Now if the most wealthy person in the world was writing about his perceptions, with Divine Help, about the gross unfairness and tragedy of this sin-sickened world, of which is still dealing with the same society ills, such as racism, ethnic genocide, gender inequality, religious bigotry, war, poverty, suicide, murder and now the ongoing threat of global nuclear annihilation, then I can see why it would probably have been a good thing had I never been exposed to all of this planet's ugly realities, just like many others.

However, the Lord apparently wanted me here, so I do not have any legitimate right to stop the ongoing process of physical living, for me. I cannot heal anyone, that is, of his or her physical, emotional, psychological and financial problems as well as other ailments. I am not a miracle worker.

For example, I cannot stand to see my dad living in physical pain, with an arthritis problem he has been struggling with for the past few years now, in his knees, which has hampered (limited) his mobility and my mom with her eye issues. I daily read from a rental library Bible, in the New King James Translation and pray one or two of the Psalms out loud, yet this is no guarantee, like anything else in life, that my deepening faith will automatically heal both of my parents of their health issues, plus their chronic (ongoing) financial battles.

I wish our family dog would also be healed of her skittishness toward other dogs as a result of her being attacked by our next door neighborhood dog on August 20, 2017. Again, I am not sure if she will ever psychologically recover from her trauma. Only the Lord knows ALL of these answers, which I also may never fully understand on this side of eternity.

Out of due respect for them, who would, meaning what son or daughter would callously not feel bad about the daily troubles of his or her parents and would not want to genuinely attempt anything logical in at least reducing their suffering in some way, shape or form? This is despite whatever wrongs one's parents may have done and/or said to a grown son or daughter, when he or she was a child. This includes my current canine step-sister.

"6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.¹ "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."³

Ephesians 6:1-3 NKJV (New King James Version Translation)

These New Testament Scripture verses also speak to me in the ever relevant context that those who physically brought us into this imperfect world need to be respected. However, Paul the Apostle of Christ, also writing, in my personal opinion, under Divine Intervention Inspiration, yes, literally, is not guaranteeing that all of us will live long lives (into our seventies, eighties, nineties, one hundred years old or older) just because we honor and respect our parents.

I believe not everybody is going to agree with what I am writing about here, because I can expect the undeniable fact that there will always be somebody who will disagree with anything anyone else writes about, speaks about and does. Everyone is never going to be satisfied with everything all of the time.

The true reality that this is an opinionated article piece, which is similar to the letters to the editor in a newspaper, such as the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette or the Pittsburgh Tribune Review, makes it possible for someone like me to honestly express my personal views, via the First Amendment, in regards to trying to interpret Bible passages and how they possibly relate to me and others around me, whether they disagree with them or not. We have the right to print materials, of a religious viewpoint and inspection, along with following and maintaining a constant belief in any organized theological doctrine of our choice.

This is as long as it does not pose a significant threat to the well-being of those around us.

I wish all of society's woes could be eradicated through faith, prayer and reading religious texts, yet this does not guarantee that this will come to pass, at least not right away.

None of us knows what the future holds for any one of us living at the present time. Although this is a real reality, we do not have to allow life and all of its troubles and unfairness to cause us to feel defeated.~~



Ponderosa Steakhouse

Story by Robert Hester III

Foodie Call

The greater Pittsburgh area is blessed to have so many places to dine, it truly defines the famous line from the movie *Gone with the Wind*. To paraphrase one of the greatest lines ever in motion picture history, as God as my witness, you'll never go hungry in this part of this country!

However, there's one in particular place to dine here in this region where you'll truly never go hungry, and it's been here ever since its grand opening in the mid-1960s. Ponderosa Steakhouse, a national and international steakhouse chain, was founded in 1965 in Kokomo, Indiana. By the 25th anniversary of the franchise's founding in 1990 Ponderosa, whose restaurant's namesake was derived from the name of the ranch from the classic TV 1960's series *Bonanza*—a restaurant in which their namesake is owned by the same company that owns Ponderosa, the Plano, Texas-based Homestyle Dining LLC—had over 600 locations in the United States. And out of their 600-plus locations during the heyday of Ponderosa's success, a significant fraction of their locations were located in the greater Pittsburgh area: Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio, and the West Virginia panhandle.

As a kid, I grew up (and dined at) three Ponderosa locations in Western PA within a 15-mile radius of my house in Brad-dock, PA; Monroeville at Miracle Mile, North Versailles on Route 30, and across the street from Kennywood's parking lot in Duquesne. But I was a little discouraged after the 2000s started, not just because Ponderosa's nationwide location count significantly shrunk to its current number, 88, but because the aforementioned locations that were within a short driving distance—like 512 of its 600 locations nationwide—suddenly closed for good. But, thankfully, not all the Ponderosa locations in Western PA closed permanently. In fact, there are a few Ponderosa Steakhouses in this region that are part of the 88 Ponderosa Steakhouses left on earth; Near Clearview Mall in Butler, an hour north or Downtown Pittsburgh, than 45 minutes west of Downtown.

If you had \$4.99 back in the 1990s, it could buy you the right to enjoy their famous Grand Buffet. Their Grand Buffet was filled with hearty items consisting of meat loaf, fried chicken, nachos with taco shells, tortilla chips, meat loaf, and a wide array of different soups and salads. It also bought you the right to enjoy sweet treats from their dessert bar, and it was filled with a wide array of sweet tooth-satisfying items from slices of different cakes and pies, to ice cream, to toppings for your ice cream, and cakes!

Late last year, I decided to get my youth back by paying a visit to the Chippewa Township location. When I arrived at the Chippewa Ponderosa, I realized it was Tuesday, and on Tuesdays they have a weekly special called "Tips Tuesday." Tips Tuesday is a weekly meal special that consists of a plate of sirloin tips—small cubes of sirloin steak, surrounded by sautéed onions and mushrooms—and a baked potato for just \$.99 with the purchase of their Grand Buffet. The meal is also a throwback to Ponderosa's glory days when practically everything on the menu was affordable, like their steaks, fired and grilled chicken, seafood items, and their aforementioned famous Grand Buffet. Despite the fact that I don't live in the '90s anymore, I purchased their Tips Tuesday deal.

The price of my meal that I enjoyed late last year was almost \$10 more than the price of the Grand Buffet (without purchasing an entrée), but as the old saying goes, it was worth every single penny I spent. The food, the atmosphere, and all other the ways Ponderosa did business back when I was a young kid they, like the Western PA locations that are still in operation in Chippewa and Butler, and 86 different other locations worldwide, are still around now that I'm grown man.

So, in the spirit of their famous ad campaigns, if you still want a "Square Meal for a Square Deal", my advice is simple; "Come and get it" at Ponderosa!~~



Oakmont Bakery



By Amelia Krzton

Foodie Call

For this issue's foodie call, I decided to review the Oakmont Bakery because it is getting close to Valentine's Day and Valentine's Day is a popular holiday for sweets and goodies such as cakes and cookies. Located on Allegheny Avenue in the borough of Oakmont, it has both a regular bakery and a cafe. Inside the bakery, there are all sorts of different baked goods, such as bread, bagels, muffins, croissants, tortes, cakes, cookies, and cupcakes. Inside the cafe, there are typical breakfast and lunch foods, such as sandwiches and salads. Today, they had a wedding cake sampling event. Unfortunately, you had to have an appointment made to taste the wedding cake. I tried some other tasty and unique treats at the Oakmont Bakery today, though. First, I tried a Cakesicle, which was one of the Oakmont Bakery's newest treats. The Cakesicle consists of either yellow or chocolate cake covered in milk chocolate on a stick. I must admit that that treat was rather delicious for trying it for the first time. The other treat I ate at the Oakmont Bakery today was a mini cake due to being unable to sample the wedding cake. Of course, I ordered the yellow kind since that is what I like best. Just like many other bakeries, the Oakmont Bakery also sells cupcakes and cookies by the dozen, and even cookie platters for parties. So, if you are looking for a bakery that sells all of your favorite treats that is outside of the city of Pittsburgh, check out the Oakmont Bakery if you have the chance!~~



Paddy Cake Bakery Delights

By Maggie Jones

As soon as you walk into the Paddy Cake Bakery, you will smell and taste the best pastries, cookies, and specialty cakes in not just the neighborhood of Bloomfield, but in all of Pittsburgh, which you have to order ahead of time. My best friend who works at the bakery, Miss Susie, takes orders and writes them down on order sheets and then gives them to the decorator. The staff at the bakery are super friendly and are willing to assist you with your order of cookies, cakes, doughnuts, pastries, and cups of coffee for \$1.50.

Mr. Patrick is busy at work keeping the business in tip top shape. The bakery is a crowd favorite in Bloomfield, where it is located. Their most popular pastries are the cannoli and the cookies.

My personal favorite is lady locks. My family's favorite cake is the almond torte cake.

It is a little expensive, but 100% worth going in if you have a sweet tooth.

I dedicate this article to the owner, Mr. Patrick, and my dearest best friend, Miss Susie, and the Paddy Cake Bakery staff.

Enjoy the sweets!~~



Foodie Call

For this issue, Pittverse writers have decided to review Asian food! Our staff embarked upon a special outing to enjoy a sampling of Pittsburgh's finest Asian dining. We chose to visit the Mandarin Gourmet on Wood Street in Downtown Pittsburgh...but that was just the beginning! Check out our extensive reporting and recommendations in the Spring 2019 edition of Foodie Call!

By Zach Grabowski

For the spring issue's foodie call I went to lunch with some of my fellow Pittverse writers to an Asian Restaurant in Downtown Pittsburgh called Mandarin Gourmet. Not only do they serve Asian food, they also serve Chinese food, as well as Japanese food. I decided to go with Chinese. I started with a vegetable spring roll for an appetizer, and then for my meal I had General Tso's chicken over steamed rice. Everything was so good! The food was served hot. I think that Mandarin Gourmet's General Tso's chicken tasted much better than the General Tso's they serve at Ross Park Mall's Food Court. It was also spicier than Ross Park's. My fellow writers described the restaurant as clean and I thought the food was decently priced. If you're looking for some great Asian Food, I would definitely recommend trying Mandarin Gourmet.~~

By Robert Hester

Other than tea and water with some lemons, a sushi avocado roll from Jen (our *Pittverse* Editor), and a traditional post-meal fortune cookie, my choices from Mandarin Gourmet's menu simply came from their lunch special. I, along with everyone who was a part of this outing, arrived at this great Asian restaurant with under an hour left in their four-hour lunch special window. My simple lunch hour special meal choice was General Tso's Chicken with fried rice and a shrimp egg roll.

Whether you're here for lunch, or dinner, the food's good, the prices are good, and you'll definitely have the time of your life because this Asian restaurant is worth it, food-wise, price-wise, and "Delish"-wise. It's definitely a place I'd recommend no matter what your budget is!~~

Mandarin Gourmet

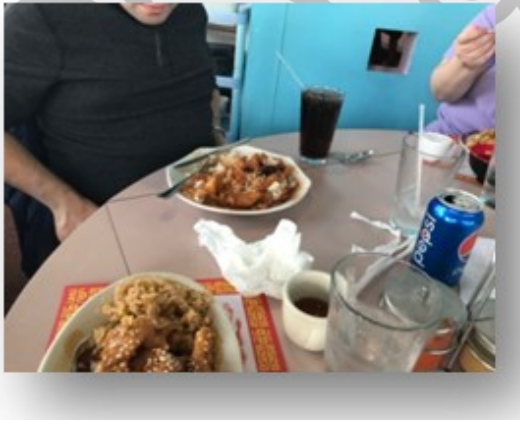


Photo by Zach Grabowski

Photo by Jen Pizzuto



By Maggie Jones

As you walk through the doors, there is an aroma of the distinctive smells of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean dishes to eat. There is a cup waiting for you at the table of your choice to sit and have the greatest oolong tea with jasmine in it. Then you order what you want like from the menu, with three countries to try from. They have sushi and sweet and sour chicken, which was very colorful from the variety of vegetables in it, and it was very good to eat with chicken fried rice and the egg roll.

It was a little expensive but defiantly worth coming and trying what they have to offer. At the end of the meal, you even get a fortune cookie.

The waiters are friendly, and the atmosphere felt like you wanted to try some more and was very Asian.

It is located near Point Park University on Wood Street, on the corner.

I recommend coming here with my friends, because it's one of the best restaurants in Pittsburgh. Come and enjoy the Orient with taste of Asian gourmet cuisine. Enjoy!~

Fortune Star Buffet: Shining Above the Others

By Thomas R. Skidmore

Just off Route 51 in Pleasant Hills is a popular all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet, where the diners get their money's worth. Located just between Five Below and Massage Envy in the Southland Shopping Center, Fortune Star Buffet has proven itself as one of the best attended Asian buffet restaurants in Pittsburgh.

Opened in late 2016 on the site of the former Old Country Buffet, Fortune Star Buffet instantly grew in taste and influence, with many diners taking full advantage of the affordably priced lunch buffet (\$8.95 Monday through Saturday, 11 am to 4 pm; \$11.95 for dinner from 4 to 9 pm). The staff is always very cordial and gracious, and the actual dishes are of an endless variety.

All the entrees are made fresh, in keeping with the Chinese tradition of bringing the eaters closer together. For example, the steamed vegetables are never overcooked or soggy but have a slight al dente feel in the diner's palate. These veggies include broccoli, string beans, baby corn, mushrooms, and peppers. Also, there's a salad bar with all the elements.

In the meat areas, one can find sweet and sour chicken, spicy beef, General Tso's chicken, steamed clams, and even some American dishes like sausage and ham. Along with the items mentioned, among my personal favorites are the rice noodles (also known as glass noodles), lo-mien noodles, chicken egg rolls, and bacon-rolled crab.

Upon entering the spacious dining area, the patrons take in soothing authentic Chinese music and the decorative visual decor like ancient-inspired carved sculptures and whimsical paintings. Overall the atmosphere is very relaxed, which helps in both dining and human contact.

An added incentive (for me personally) is to make the staff feel comfortable and at home, as most of them are emigres from China. Whenever I want to thank the staff, I used the Chinese phrase zhen-zhen. This puts a warming smile on their faces, and also allows the diner to partake in a peaceful cultural bond.

I've eaten at many Chinese buffets but for my money, Fortune Star Buffets shines indeed.~~

My Top 5 Best Chinese Restaurants

By Amelia Krzton

Everybody loves all different kinds of food from all over the world. One of the best kinds of food that a lot of people love to eat is Chinese food. As we all know, Pittsburgh has a lot of delicious Chinese restaurants. Without further ado, I will count down my top 5 Chinese restaurants.

#5: Lulu's Noodles

Located on South Craig Street in North Oakland

I have not come to this restaurant recently, but they have amazing noodle dishes. My favorite dish to get is the beef lo mein dish. I have also loved getting their smoothies. My favorite kind of smoothie to get is the strawberry smoothie. I put Lulu's Noodles dead last since I have not come to this restaurant recently.

#4: Golden Palace Buffet

Located on Forbes Avenue in Central Oakland

I just went here. This buffet-style restaurant has a lot of typical Chinese food ranging from my personal favorite types of Chinese food, including chicken and broccoli, white and fried rice, and lo mein noodles to other kinds of dishes like General Tso's chicken, sweet and sour chicken, chicken wings, and stir-fried vegetables. It is not a very expensive restaurant if you decide to order their take-out. If anyone is looking for inexpensive Chinese food, check out the Golden Palace Buffet!

#3: Sesame Inn

Located on Browns Lane in the North Hills

I have been to this Chinese restaurant a few times with the Meetup group that I am involved in. This is known as a gourmet Chinese restaurant. They have specialty appetizers, as well as Chinese entrees. Like Lulu's Noodles, my favorite entree to get is the beef lo mein.

#2: How Lee

Located on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill North

I came to this restaurant after the February discussion group with the Meetup group since it is just down the road. My mom even loves this restaurant, too. Everybody's favorite Chinese foods are served at this restaurant. My favorite entree to get is the beef lo mein.

#1: China Buffet

Located on Penn Avenue in East Liberty

I went out to dinner with Mom to this restaurant since it is one of the few restaurants that is actually open on Christmas, as the Chinese don't celebrate Christmas. Check out the movie *A Christmas Story* and you will see what I mean! This restaurant does not just serve Chinese food, but other foods like chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese. Therefore, this is my number-one favorite Chinese restaurant of all time!~

Asian Food Ratings

By Elise Mote

After trying five different drinks and snacks I listed what I liked in order of my favorite to least favorite. My parents helped me with trying the different snacks listed. The information section has where it was bought with the price, what country it was from, and some even have facts about it. I had fun finding and trying the different foods and drinks. I hope that it inspires you to explore the different country's unique foods and drinks that you normally wouldn't, and maybe even trying it with friends and family.~~

Name	Information	Like	Dislike
Botan Rice Candy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japan 2. 5 Below (\$1.49) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Stickers inside of packaging 4. Fruity flavors is sweet but not too sweet 5. Boxed for individual serving size 6. Directions on box lets you know you can eat the rice paper wrapper 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Contains red dye #40
Caplico Sticks (Assorted flavors)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japan 2. 5 Below (\$3.99) 3. Same makers of Pocky 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Easy to hold 5. Looks like an ice cream cone 6. Individual serving pouches 7. Wafer is tasty and melts in your mouth 8. Really good chocolate on the bottom of cone 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Vanilla flavor was too bland
Creamy Candy White Rabbit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China 2. WFH Oriental Market (\$2.39) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Packaging was appealing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Hard as a rock 5. No flavor 6. Wrapping sticks to candy 7. Funny milk after-taste
Nestle KitKat Strawberry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japan 2. WFH Oriental Market (\$4.99) 3. One of over 200 flavors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Packaging is eye catching 5. Color of candy is attractive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Sandy texture 7. Artificial flavor 8. Surprisingly very different from the American counterpart 9. Couldn't eat
Milkita Chocolate Shake Candy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indonesia 2. WFH Oriental Market (\$2.39) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Packaging is appealing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Artificial flavor 5. Too hard 6. Sour milk aftertaste 7. Couldn't eat

Asian Food Ratings, cont.

By: Elise Mote

Name	Information	Like	Dislike
Binggrae Banana Milk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Korea 2. WFH Oriental Market 6 pk (\$6.99) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Had a real banana flavor 4. Tastes like a banana milkshake 5. Kids would love this in their lunch box 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Don't have any
Chai Latte Description: Black tea infused with cinnamon, clove, and other spices blended in steamed milk topped with foam.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. India 2. Starbucks 16oz. (\$4.55) I like mine with vanilla 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The perfect replacement if you don't like coffee 2. The perfect comfort drink 3. Easy to get at most coffee shops 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The price
Shirakiku Ramune Drink	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japan 2. Introduced in 1872 3. Ramune means Lemonade 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Bottle is appealing and easy to hold 5. Tastes better than some American sodas 6. More refreshing and thirst quenching 7. Less carbonated than American sodas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. If you don't like very sweet things it wouldn't be recommended 9. Red dye #40 10. Packaging is difficult to open
Oolong tea latte With strawberry boba	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cha Time (\$4.25) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Boba tasted good 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The oolong overpowered the boba flavor 4. The straw was way too thin and the boba would pop before it could go up the straw
Thai Iced Tea (Cha Yen) Description: Tea, milk and sugar sometimes served over or warmed. It can also have orange blossom water, star anise, or red and yellow food coloring to give it its recognizable orange color.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thailand 2. Nicky's Thai Kitchen (\$2.50) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Fun color 4. Price 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. very sweet 6. Strong tea flavor

Jessica Lee, Jazz Diva

By: Richard Campbell

I FIRST GOT TO KNOW THE GREAT JESSICA LEE, THANKS TO A FRIEND OF MINE WHO LOVES HER MUSIC. AND WHEN WE MET FOR THE FIRST TIME ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT IN LATE-OCTOBER, 2018, I BECAME A BELIEVER IN HER MUSIC. AND A FAN OF HER MUSIC, TOO. FOR INSTANCE, JESSICA LEE, A FRANKLIN, PA., NATIVE, AND ALUMNUS OF THE PRESTIGIOUS UNITED METHODIST DUKE UNIVERSITY, ALSO ATTENDED CARNEGIE-MELLON AND DUQUESNE UNIVERSITIES HERE IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH, PA.

FROM THE LATTER, SHE RECEIVED A DEGREE IN LAW, AND ALSO MAJORED IN MUSIC AND VOICE AT DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY. THERE, SHE LEARNED FROM ALL THE GREAT MASTERS OF FEMALE VOCALS: JUNE CHRISTY, BILLIE HOLLIDAY, CHRIS CONNER, ELLA FITZGERALD, ANITA O'DAY, BESSIE SMITH, DIANA KRALL, ETC., AS WELL AS PITTSBURGH'S LEADING LADIES OF VOCAL JAZZ. AMONG THEM: DAKOTA STATON, DINAH WASHINGTON, SARAH VAUGHN, ETTA COX, SANDY DOWE (WHO SINGS WITH, AND IS THE DAUGHTER OF, TROMBONIST EXTRAORDINAIRE, AL DOWE), MICHELE BENSON, JOYCE BREACH, THE LATE GREAT JEAN SMITH-MARRACINO, AND NEUMEROUS OTHERS.

BUT TO ME, JESSICA LEE IS BY FAR, THE GREAT 70'S DIVA OF "I AM WOMAN"/"YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD" FAME. I DO LOVE HELEN REDDY'S 1974 *LOVE SONG FOR JEFFREY* ALBUM. THE TITLE TRACK ESPECIALLY. AND, I'LL BET JESSICA LEE LOVES HELEN REDDY'S TORCH SONG, "YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD" OF 1974, TOO. I LOVE IT VERY MUCH. AND "YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD" AND "LOVE SONG FOR JEFFREY" ARE MY FAVORITE HELEN REDDY SONG AND ALBUM. IN FACT, "KEEP ON SINGING" AND THE TITLE SONG, "LOVE SONG FOR JEFFREY" (CO-WRITTEN BY HELEN REDDY AND FELLOW AUSTRALIAN, PETER ALLEN), IS TO ME "ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LOVE SONGS I'VE EVER HEARD.

AND I'VE GOTTEN AN INVITATION TO SEE JESSICA LEE AGAIN ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 8TH, 2019, JUST BEFORE MY 66TH BIRTHDAY AT THE RIVERS CLUB!!! AND, IT'S GOING TO BE A SUPER-SIZED-PARTY!!! UP TO TEN ARE COMING THIS TIME FOR A GREAT ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT-BUFFET-DINNER-AND, AN EVENING OF GREAT JAZZ, PITTSBURGH-STYLE!! AND, HERE'S THE SURPRISE... JESSICA LEE IS GOING TO DO HER VERY BEST AND WILL IF ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN, TROMBONIST, DR. NELSON HARRISON, WILL BE SPECIAL GUEST WITH JESSICA LEE AND FRIENDS!!! I KNOW AND HAVE SEEN AND HEARD DR. NELSON HARRISON. HE'S A FABULOUS TROMBONIST!!! AND JESSICA LEE HAS PERFORMED WITH HIM BEFORE. I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE TWO PERFORM AGAIN. JUST BEFORE MY 66TH BIRTHDAY. ~



Practicing Performance through the Lens of Autism

By Nils Skudra

As an individual with Asperger's Syndrome (which is currently referred to as high-functioning autism), throughout my life I have had to learn the art of performance in both social skills groups and theater classes in order to improve my skills in social interaction. Through my participation in these programs, I have gained an increased self-confidence in my ability to engage in small talk with my peers and to speak up in front of audiences. Nonetheless, in spite of the significant advances that I have made, social intercourse can still be challenging for me since there are occasions when I do not show an inclination to participate in group activities due to my particular mood in those moments. However, by taking part in the Honors College team as a Research Assistant, I feel that I have come to appreciate the value of the notion that life is a continuing performance, and this is particularly true of my own experience with being on the autism spectrum due to the constant adaptation which I must practice in order to succeed in social situations, both on a personal and professional level.

Being on the autism spectrum entails having a unique set of intellectual skillsets not commonly found among many neurotypical individuals. Among these are an intensive concentration and specialization in a particular area of focus, an eidetic memory, and an extremely diligent work ethic. For me this has been manifested in my passionate interest in the American Civil War, which has been the object of my fascination since childhood; my ability to memorize and recite verbatim lines from many different films that I have watched; and the experience of having had to work twice as hard as the average student in order to succeed academically. However, the diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome also confers significant challenges that include a tendency to miss social cues such as eye contact; difficulties with understanding jokes or sarcasm due to a very literal mindset; and a failure to empathize with other people or to make appropriate statements in a particular social situation. This final characteristic owes itself to the tendency of autistic individuals to be very direct in articulating what is on their mind, which can often come at the expense of alienating others.

My experience of working with these particular challenges as an individual on the spectrum has led me to adopt a performative approach to social situations that arise in both my personal and professional life. On the personal level, I try to give the best impression possible in my social interactions, engaging in friendly small talk and searching for subjects of mutual interest while at the same time asking about the other person's particular interests and hobbies. The way that this plays out with in-person conversations can differ in the realm of social media – as a regular Facebook user, I tend to post movie quotes or online links to articles about particular issues that are highly controversial (such as the debate over Confederate monuments), together with my opinions about those issues. Since some of my Facebook friends hold different views from mine on these topics (a few have even been quite belligerent in expressing their opinions), I endeavor to avoid conflict with them by focusing on areas of mutual interest (such as the Civil War and their ancestors who fought in it) or by offering my thoughts on a compromise solution to these controversial issues.

On the professional level, I have learned to practice performance in the workspace by regularly attending staff ensemble meetings at the Honors College, taking notes on their discussions and participating in their activities. In conducting interviews with different faculty and staff as a Research Assistant, I always maintain a professional demeanor and behave courteously in my interaction with them, making appointments for a meeting, showing up in a timely manner, and paying keen attention to them when recording their answers. Since social interaction has been and can still be a significant challenge for me, I find that practicing performance in these capacities is proving to be highly beneficial for my comfort level and self-confidence, which will hopefully continue to grow as I gain further experience.

I have also found a venue for performance in autism advocacy. During my first semester of the History MA program, Prof. Ali and I co-founded Spectrum at UNCG for students with autism, and throughout the course of my graduate History studies I served as the group's president. In this capacity I would host regular group meetings, conduct tabling in which I would pass out flyers and encourage passerby to sign up for Spectrum, and facilitate panel discussions in which fellow group members and I would relate our experiences of living on the autism spectrum to classes of students. Outside of the organization I have also conducted public speaking at the Arc of North Carolina's Autism Advocacy Conference and regularly write reviews of autism-themed films for the Art of Autism blog and *Pittverse Magazine*. In both realms, I have discovered that I can apply the art of performance by assuming the role of a spokesperson who can draw upon a combination of observations and personal experiences, and I feel that this has proven very effective in raising autism awareness and in furthering the development of my professional skills.

In summation, living on the autism spectrum has in many ways constituted a continual performance for me since it has required constant learning and adaptation in order to work with and grow from the particular challenges that are characteristic of my diagnosis. Through my professional involvement with the Honors College, I have come to realize how the concept of performance relates to my experiences as an individual with Asperger's Syndrome, and consequently I readily apply this notion to my everyday pursuits in both the professional and personal worlds. By practicing performance in these respective realms on a recurring basis, I continue to thrive in building my social interaction skills and professional demeanor, and it is my fervent hope that this will eventually land me the full-time career in the historical field that I have worked toward throughout my academic life.~

Hidden Crisis in American Education

By Megan Cunningham

When we describe the state of American education, we tend to focus on subjects regarding reading, writing, and arithmetic or those focused on potential career development like science or a foreign language. Or even topics they'd need to know about like health and sex education. After all, we want our children to do well in school, go to college, and have fulfilling careers. Or at least have the skills to get on in the world.

But one school subject that's been seriously ignored in recent years is social studies, in particularly American history. While taught in schools all over the country, schools don't typically do the subject justice. Since part of preparing students for the world is teaching them how to be good citizens, make informed political decisions, and function harmoniously with others in our society. Learning our nation's history is an essential component of that, because our history is part of who we are as a country. Those who fail to learn history are doomed to repeat it.

First, American history is a very difficult subject to teach. Even though our country's history is comparatively short compared to the nations of Europe and Asia, there's still so much to cover. There are always more necessary perspectives, more questions, and more things to learn. This doesn't mean everything is up for grabs because it's not. But time constraints often lead to many aspects of American history to be either summarized or simply glossed over. In the process, many of these perspectives get ignored, particularly if they don't pertain to rich WASP men. And unless you're a history buff or a person of color, you won't get an adequate picture. Nonetheless, the reasons why history unfolded the way it did are extremely complicated and have to do with geography, and all sorts of factors that aren't captured in an oversimplified narrative.

Second, American history is controversial. Though it's always best advised not to bring politics into the classroom; it's impossible to discuss history without bringing up politics. What history gets taught in American classrooms is usually determined by

who's in power. Most often it has been rich white people, particularly the Texas State Board of Education since textbook companies seem to cater to the Lone Star State. Now given that Texas is a conservative hotbed, a lot of their recommendation take a Christian nationalist or Lost Cause narrative that doesn't conform to the facts. Instead, they'd rather have kids see the US as having a glorious past where they're always the good guy as the champion for freedom and moral values throughout the world. Indeed, most schools do mention slavery, atrocities against Native Americans, the Civil War, colonialism, Japanese internment, and segregation. Yet, these topics don't really get the in-depth attention they should. Because if American students don't learn their history, then they will be unable to deal with the uncomfortable truths about our present.

Third, high school teachers are often unqualified. Across the United States, many high school history teachers aren't historians and haven't taken a single college course in US history. It shouldn't surprise us that they use the textbook as a crutch, unable to discern between what's fact and what's fiction. Essentially, they're teaching the book, not history using the book. Yet, the fact school districts are willing to give the job of history teacher to a coach shows seriously they take the subject. As a result, a lack of interest in American history from the teacher and school administration is guaranteed to lead to less engaged students.

Fourth, we're taught that some aspects of American history don't affect us in the present. In the classroom, we're taught that the American history narrative is one of progress. Yet, we don't learn that achieving progress isn't easy and that gains can be erased through backlash. Nor does progress alleviate the underlying problem. For instance, despite that our country has made tremendous progress in race relations and it's perfectly fine to celebrate that, institutional racism and racial disparities still exist. We may not live at a time of slavery, Indian removal,

internment camps, or segregation, our nation's sins still manifest in policies relating to mass incarceration, voter suppression, Trumpism, undocumented immigration, discrimination, anti-welfare rhetoric, Standing Rock protest crackdowns, white supremacists, Fox News, wealth inequities, police violence, and so much more. However, we're often taught in our history class that racism ceased being a problem during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s with Martin Luther King Jr. Making his "I Have a Dream" speech. It's really not the case, since the legacy of slavery that gave rise to racism still reverberates throughout public policy today. Even American adults have no idea how widely King was hated for his efforts to achieve racial equality by the white community even outside the South. The US government spied on him while police in the South arrested him several times for his demonstrations. The KKK even burned a cross outside his house. Nobody should be surprised that a racist white man killed him. Nonetheless, the idea of revering King as an American icon and saint while denigrating Colin Kaepernick for taking a knee during the national anthem is absurd.

Essentially, we must assess the consequences of failing to adequately teach our students American history, which has resulted in an ignorant American public willing to take much of what pop culture and political rhetoric as historic fact. While many schools may view history as a major subject worth a lot of attention, we need to keep in mind that today's students will be tomorrow's voters who'll make decisions that will influence our lives. Thus, they should be well-informed and know how to weigh contending candidates' claims, especially if their arguments rest on historical precedent. And as Americans, children need to learn the idea we should try to achieve things that won't happen without our efforts. For if we teach causation, we remove any reason for citizens to be citizens. --

A PITTVVERSE EXCLUSIVE: AN EVENING IN PITTSBURGH WITH MAYIM BIALIK

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

“Upon hearing the news, I felt like getting on a plane to Pittsburgh to come lend my support. I felt helpless. I felt scared. I felt let down by America.” Those were the words written by actress, blogger, and Jewish activist, Mayim Bialik. She wrote these words as part of a blog for a website/social media community she founded called Grok Nation (groknation.com) in the aftermath of the tragic events that unfolded involving 11 Jewish congregates of the Tree of Life Synagogue in the large Jewish Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill on October 27th, 2018. Nearly 3½ months after the tragedy in Squirrel Hill, a tragedy that Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto declared as the city’s “darkest hour,” and after Ms. Bialik waited until the end of the traditional three-month mourning process (because Jewish grieving is very specific and even very strict) she did what she wanted to do three-months earlier and got on a plane to Pittsburgh. She lent her support to the Pittsburgh Jewish community, a community still coming to



grips with the unexplainable, unbelievable and unexpected tragedy that occurred in at Squirrel Hill’s Tree of Life Synagogue 3 ½ months earlier.

As an entertainer, Mayim has been a mainstay since the late 1980’s when she first captured our hearts in the 1988 movie “Beaches” as the younger version of Bette Midler’s character C.C. Bloom. She became one of TV’s most popular faces of the 1990’s when she spent five seasons as lead actress Blossom Russo on the hit NBC-TV series “Blossom”. Since then, this actress has used her real-life Bachelor of Science degree and Ph.D. in neuroscience from UCLA—let alone her veteran acting talents—wisely as the fictional neuroscientist Dr. Amy Farrah Fowler on the hit CBS-TV series *The Big Bang Theory*.

When she’s not working, Ms. Bialik is an activist for the Jewish faith. If you’ve followed her on social media, you’re already aware that Ms. Bialik, a granddaughter of Jewish immigrants who lived in New York City’s Bronx Borough, is very proud and passionate about her Jewish heritage and faith. And on the evening of February 9th, 2018, she shared part of her proud Jewish heritage and faith with her fellow Jewish brethren of Pittsburgh.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh-organized “An Evening with Mayim Bialik,” created by the hostess of the event, Ms. Bialik, praising the Jewish community of Pittsburgh as “The most integrated Jewish community I’ve ever experienced.” She also shared more of her feelings about how she came to grips with the Tree of Life Synagogue tragedy to those in attendance who, painfully, followed the events as they happened in their hometown. She said that her experience following the Tree of Life events “...pale[d] in comparison those of you who live here.” What was even more painful for Mayim was explaining what happened at the

Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill to her two sons in her home in LA. “A terrible tragedy occurred at a Shul on Shabbos [Jewish meaning for Worship at the Tree of Life Synagogue],” she explained to her children that day. She then mentioned to everyone in attendance in Pittsburgh that she read the biographies of the 11 victims of the tragedy in Squirrel Hill with her sons, and also acknowledged the many law enforcers who helped further protect the Squirrel Hill neighborhood during the tragedy at Tree of Life. “It’s the job of law enforcement to protect people,” she said to her sons after the tragedy. She also said to her sons that those law enforcers did some “very brave acts” to help further protect more hurt, harm and danger in Squirrel Hill on that day.

Among the topics not related to the Tree of Life Synagogue tragedy that Mayim talked about during her event at This Is Red, was living a healthy-eating lifestyle as a vegan. She also described life playing Dr. Amy Farrah Fowler on *The Big Bang Theory* (the show that will end its 12-season run this spring), and the incredible people she met from all walks of life during her brief stay in Pittsburgh.

When she arrived in Pittsburgh, Mayim, who graduated with minors in Hebrew and Jewish studies at UCLA, participated in a prayer service at the Hillel Jewish University Center of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood, which also hosted “Ignite Shabbat with Mayim Bialik.” When the services concluded, 260 undergraduate students joined Ms. Bialik for a private Shabbat dinner in the ballroom of the Rodef Shalom Congregation in the nearby Shadyside neighborhood.

“Pittsburgh is my favorite city because I’m considered a young adult here, apparently,” the 43-year-old Ms. Bialik said, adding, “that’s really wonderful!”



After the event at This Is Red ended, Mayim congregated with some of the attendees by shaking their hands and even posing for some cell phone selfies. As she left the This Is Red event space, I waved to Ms. Bialik, and she waved back. I then said to her, “This was your first time here, and this won’t be your last!” She laughed and smiled as she went off into the Pittsburgh night.

Before she left the ‘Burgh to go back to LA to continue work on the final episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*, and to be reunited with her two sons, she posted some pictures of her experience in the Steel City on her Instagram (@missmayim). She added this caption, and here’s part of it, “Pittsburgh, you are the strongest.” Other she added two hashtags: #PittsburghStrong, and one that gained my attention, #IWantToMoveHere. You know, I have to agree with her, she SHOULD move here! Because if this trend of legendary Hollywood actors who embrace Pittsburgh as their home can work for Tom Hanks, work-wise, it can surely work for Mayim Bialik, living-wise!~~

Mr. Nice Guy Games

By Michelle Middlemiss

I first met Bobby Fello when my dad took me to look for Pokémon cards before a movie at Monroeville Mall. I was upset because I couldn't find the card packs at any store. Someone at GameStop told me about Mr. Nice Guy Games. My dad and I walked into the store and I felt at home, drooling over all the Pokémon cards in the cases.

Bobby, how long ago did this store open?

Mr. Nice Guy Games has been in Monroeville for 5 years. We were in Oakmont for 10 years prior to that. There's no longer a store in Oakmont; we were a very small store on Allegheny River Boulevard. We wanted to have more space for our players and expand on all our products so we came to Monroeville.

How did the Pokémon League start in this Monroeville store?

In Oakmont there was a lot of Magic/The Gathering and Yu-Gi-Oh games. But not really a community for Pokémon. With myself and a lot of help from my coworker, Mike, we got all the Pokémon organized and made cases here in the store. We filled them up with cards and were just trying to figure a way to get the players in and start playing. We noticed with "Magic," the league does better in a more casual game play. So we wanted to implement a monthly league that people can sign up for and get booster packs to expand their collections. They could play with other members and it's been working out. We also offer tournaments that can be played, but we always said that we don't want to make money off the leagues. That's why members pay the entry fee and get their booster packs to play with. At the end of the month whatever money we have left over we give away in prizes to all the members. We want them to have a really good experience and get some cool stuff for their collections.

How do you become a Pokémon Professor?

There's a test that we have to take and we have to score well enough to receive the Professor Authentication. The Pokémon Company wants us to know the general rules and how to handle a situation if anything were to go funky, like if somebody plays a card wrong.

I brought some of my Pokémon cards with me and as a Professor, can you explain what to do with the cards to make a stronger playing deck?

Yes. I remember working on this Leafeon/Glaceon deck with you. When we build decks we have to make sure that you have the right distributions of different cards. What I've noticed is when people build decks for the first time there's going to be a lot more Pokémon in the deck then there needs to be. So what I first do is look through the cards to make sure that we have the appropriate amount of Pokémon; normally 12 to 16 in your deck for the attacks. Then figure out which energies they need.

Could you explain what the different cards are and how the players use them?

The Pokémon are going to be the things that attack the opponent's Pokémon, do damage and try to knock them out to get prize cards. The energy cards are the resource that you're going to be attaching to the Pokémon in the attacks. The Pokémon Fan Club card helps you search your deck for two basic Pokémon so that you can get the Pokémon out and start attaching energy to them. Evosoda will allow you to take an evolution card from your hand so if you have an Eevee and you want to evolve it into your Glaceon...

...It will give me the ability right away!

Precisely. The trainer cards are going to help you achieve the best percentages of success for the deck. The Zoroark card is one of the more popular cards that are played right now because people don't really use it for its attack. You can put energy on it because it's colorless. Its ability is what really makes the card playable. Once during your turn you can discard a card and draw two cards so this is going to get rid of cards that you don't need and maybe give you better cards.

Who owns this Mr. Nice Guy Games store?

The owner of the store is Ron. He's the one that started doing this professionally when Magic the Gathering started back in 1993, for over 25 years now. He was the one who ran the shop in Oakmont by himself. Moving here he picked up some employees. I got the job here because I was a regular at the old store. I started playing Magic there because it was the best store around that had everything. It was really cool meeting friends, playing the games, and getting better. I wasn't that good when I started but I didn't let it discourage me or anything. I wanted to get better so I kept playing. They moved here and I helped them move all the stuff. There was a huge convention called Gen Con that happens in Indianapolis; it's the largest tabletop gaming in the country in August. I wanted to go just to hang out so I said "could I come and room with you guys and pay you for

sleeping there?" I ended up helping them a lot through the convention, sorting and pricing cards, helping them at the booth to sell cards and buy cards. That's when they saw how well I worked with people in high-stress situations. They were impressed with my knowledge and how I conducted things and said that if I would ever be interested in a job, we can talk about it. So here we are four years later.

How long can a league run in its lifetime?

We will do the league for as long as we get people that are coming to it. The Pokémon League started about two and a half years ago and at one point there was actually 100 people signed up for our league. That's when "Pokémon Go" came out with a surge of popularity. Kids and their parents are all playing together. I grew up playing it, did you?

We had no store around here until this store moved here. This literally is my first year to ever play this game, so unlike a lot of other people I don't have any vintage cards at all.

Did you play video games, Michelle?

My first game was *Pokémon Yellow*, what about you?

Crystal was my first game, then *Ruby*. *Yellow* was awesome... that was arguably one of the best ones from the Vintage field. Pokémon has become this thing where people who grew up with it are now having kids that are interested. So it becomes a cross-generation thing. I was very passionate about it as a kid and trading cards with my friends. The fact that I get to work here, run the Pokémon leagues and make sure everyone is having a good time is very rewarding for me because it doesn't feel like a job when you're having fun.

This place seems to be more like a community, as I've heard players mention.

Absolutely. We tried to stay true to our name Mr. Nice Guy Games. It can be very intimidating sometimes, coming into a large place with people that you don't know and playing a game. Some people are very competitive by nature. Very cut throat. But here, you know playing and winning is fun and that's why you play games. But it's more about the experience and growing the community. We really try to encourage a good atmosphere. If there is something that may make someone uncomfortable we always address it.

Thank you Bobby, and maybe with this interview we'll get some more players involved!~



Michelle and Bobby Fello

NON-ACC CONFERENCE PITT MEN'S BASKETBALL: A WHOLE #ZooEra

Story and Photos by Robert Hester

Pitt Men's Basketball is led by new head coach Jeff Capel, a man who spent seven years (2011-2018) as the assistant coach and associate coach of Duke University—the same school he played between 1993-1997 as a point guard.

During those years he was at Duke as a point guard as a player and as a coach, his was lead by legendary head coach, Mike Kryzewski. Coach Capel was hired on March 28th, 2018 to take over as Pitt's new coach after Kevin Stallings was fired from that same position after only two miserable seasons as the coach who replaced Pitt's head coach before him, Jamie Dixon.

The season began on November 6th with a 69-53 victory over Youngstown State at the Petersen Events Center. The win helped Pitt improve to 78-34 in its men's basketball season openers all-time, not to mention help end the Panther's program-worst 19-game losing streak overall and a 10-game losing streak at the Pete. The game/win also help welcome the likes of freshmen Xavier Johnson, Trey McGowens and Au'Diese Toney to the program, the trio of freshmen combined to score 45 points of Pitt's 69 points against Youngstown State in their season-opening win. The trio also became, respectfully, the 19th, 20th and 21st freshmen in program history to start the opener, and were the first trio of freshmen starters to start a season opener in Pitt's storied Men's Basketball history.

But the most important first-year starter who was a part of Pitt's roster in its first game that night was the aforementioned head coach Jeff Capel, who improved to 8-2 in season openers with the win o his first night on the job. "We have a lot to work on but we have some things we can build on as we move forward," Coach Capel said after the season opener. Yes, offensively and defensively, Pitt indeed worked on a lot of things after the opener, which resulted in the following wins—all at the Petersen Events Center:



VMI (94-55)
TROY (84-75)
Central Arkansas (97-71)
North Alabama (71-66)
The City Game vs. Duquesne (74-53)
Maryland-Eastern Shore (78-43)
New Orleans (99-57)
Colgate (68-54)



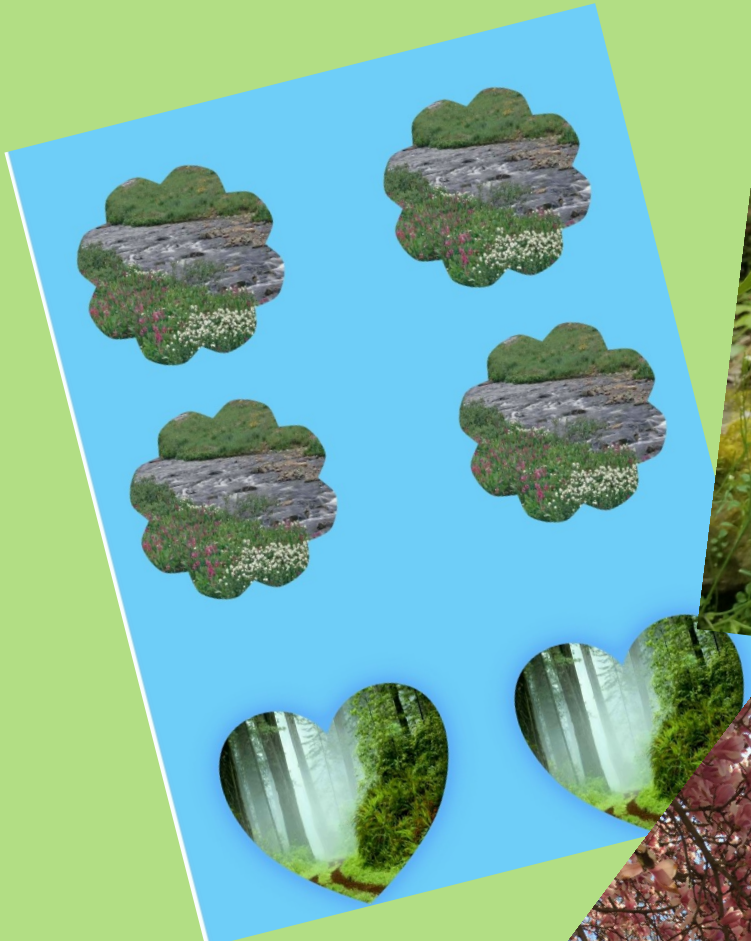
During non-ACC conference play, the Panthers' three losses came at the hands of Iowa on the road by one point, 69-68, in the Big Ten-ACC Challenge— Iowa is part of the Big Ten, Niagara at the Pete by one, 71-70, and by ten points to their rivals down I-79, West Virginia, in the annual Backyard (or, since it's College Basketball, Backcourt) Brawl.

Unfortunately, this writer/photographer was only credentialed to cover its non-ACC games at the Pete this season, and not any of Pitt's ACC Conference games, so that's where this story ends. However, that doesn't mean I can't tell you that under coach Capel's leadership on the sidelines, this team has a bright future ahead of them, and all they need to do is fight against the grueling monster that is their opponents in the ACC: Duke, Miami, North Carolina, Boston College, Clemson, Wake Forest, Florida State, Syracuse, NC State, Virginia, Virginia Tech, Louisville and Notre Dame. The task is not easy, but so-to is the life as a player, coach and even a fan of a team in the NCAA—let alone the ACC. But as the motto of the football team from my high school alma mater, the Wolverines of Woodland Hills goes: To achieve, you must endure. And I, the Oakland Zoo, and every Pitt fan agrees that someday, the Pitt Panther Men's Basketball team will have what it takes to endure all the things basketball life in the ACC has to offer and end up achieving all the rewarding things the ACC, and even the NCAA, have to offer. So let the #ZooEra of Pitt Panther Men's Basketball continue! HAIL TO PITT!~~

Spring Photo Collection



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Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) currently has programs in 17 states and serves 25 major US cities as well as dozens of other urban, suburban, and rural communities. By tapping into the strengths and capabilities of the 10,000 families we serve each year, our 2,000+ YAP staff members, and the capacity of communities, YAP affects positive change.

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

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

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

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