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ERIE READER

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Best of Erie 2020

This year's winners and finalists

The Comeback City

Undercover Billionaire returns

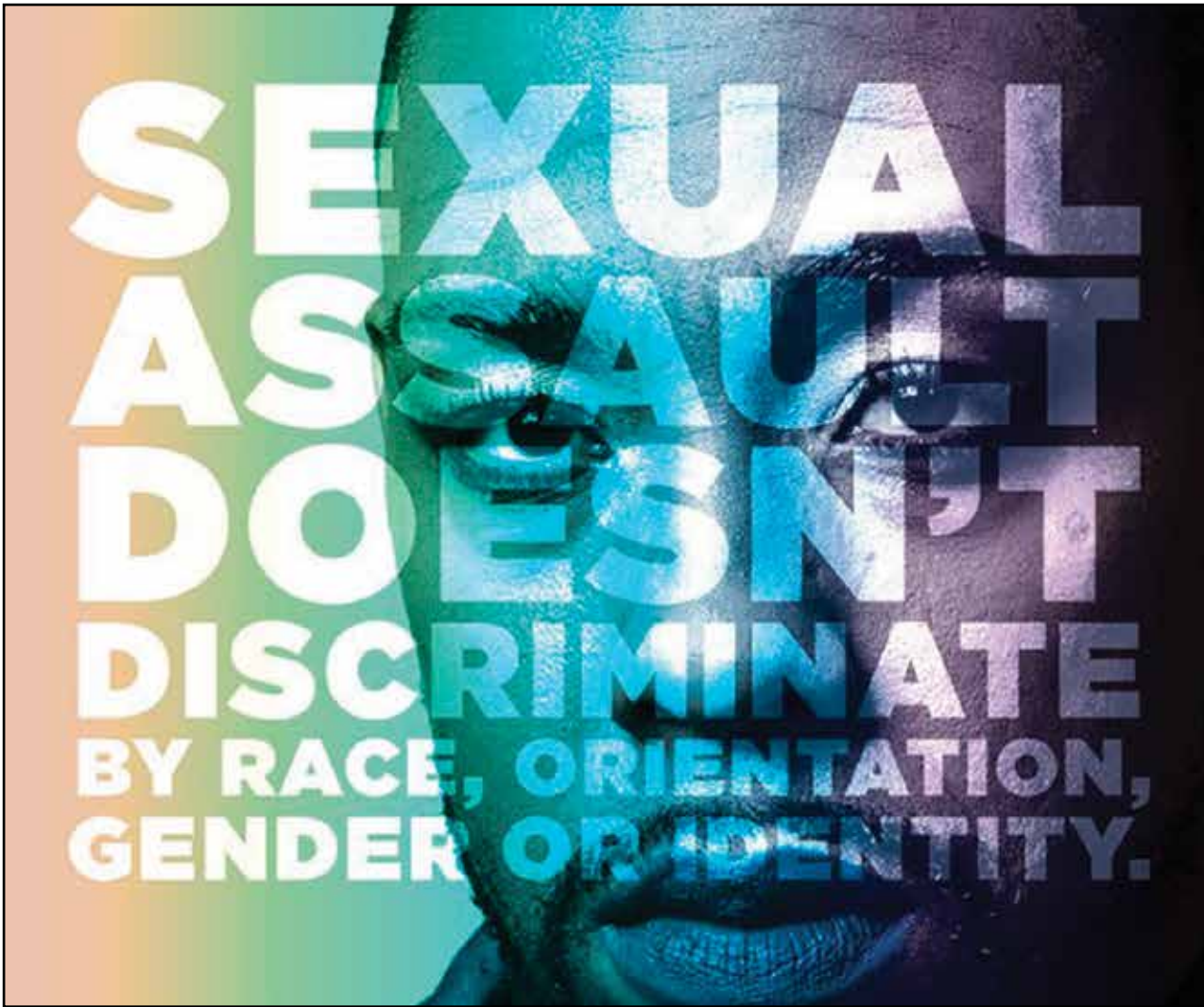
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From the Editors

2020 was the year of the woman. We celebrated 100 years since the passage of the 19th Amendment and the constitutional guarantee of women's suffrage and with that power we finally elected the first female vice president in a contest largely settled by the tremendous political power of women voters.

In Erie, even in the face of the pandemic we celebrated the centennial of women's suffrage with community events, murals, and educational initiatives to help uplift and showcase the contributions of women in American society and throughout Erie's history.

That celebration and the lessons learned came to a screeching halt in early January as four men on Erie City Council joined together to promote Ed Brzezinski to council president over Councilwoman Liz Allen, whom Brzezinski had publicly called a "nut" and a "broad" just weeks before. Brzezinski offered a half-hearted apology at the following council meeting noting that, "the broad comment was a terrible comment and I thought my mic was off..."

We're glad it wasn't. Brzezinski speaks to and for Erie's past. His words represent an era when women were expected to be seen and not heard. It appears that Brzezinski and his cronies on council would prefer that Councilwoman Allen do just that.

Allen, a retired journalist and a frequent contributor to the Erie Reader, has no shortage of questions regarding the lack of process, protocol, and leadership that she's seen during her first term on Erie's City Council. In short, she's made sure she is both seen and heard.

The lack of process, protocol, and leadership on Erie City Council is the reason she wanted to serve as council's next president, it's the reason we believe she would have been the right choice to hold this council accountable, and it's the reason her status quo colleagues conspired to keep her from holding the gavel.

Perhaps most disheartening about the Brzezinski blockade is that Councilman Mike Keys, who was elected largely with the support of Black and progressive women, served as the fourth male vote to block Allen's opportunity to serve as council president despite having heard public outrage over Brzezinski's comments. So much for representative government.

It's also been 32 years since the Erie Times-News declared 1989 "the year of the women." Thirty-two years.

That's when Judy Lynch was county executive and Joyce Savocchio, rather than seek re-election on City Council, sought the mayor's office. And won. Erie's two highest offices were held by women. Both of whom broke their glass ceilings. Twenty-ish years since they left office, only one other woman has been elected to one of those seats.

And here we are, 32 years later, only to find women still being called "broads" and "nuts" and that behavior is being excused with the notion that somehow this situation would've been improved if a mic wasn't live.

It shouldn't need to be said, but we will: If this is what Brzezinski says when he *thinks* the mic's off, what does he say when he *knows* it's not on? Either way, this says a lot about Erie and its politics and we'd be fools not to be listening.

This year Erie voters will have a chance to address the wrongs of this council when they head to the polls and elect four (possibly new) members of City Council. Councilman Jim Winarski is term limited and Councilwoman Kathy Schaaf has said she will not seek re-election. Neither Liz Allen or David Brennan, who was appointed to serve out the term of now-State Representative Bob Merski, have signaled their intent to run for re-election, although it is likely they will pursue another term.

Not long ago, it seemed our city had made progress. But now after a year of protests, pandemic, and the political status quo, it seems we may have taken a few steps back. We hope there are candidates we can support who have the vision and the strength to help the city move forward. Again.

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Our Nation's Dark Day

And those who stand accountable



Outraged by the results of a general election that had been certified in favor of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris several times over, Trump supporters laid siege to the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, Jan. 6. It's likely that the aftershocks of the insurrection will shake American democracy for years to come.

As we saw when Congress reconvened late on the evening of Jan. 6 after the Capitol had been cleared of those who laid siege, long-term allies of Trump began to distance themselves within hours of the attack. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), one of Trump's most deplorable lieutenants, took to the Senate floor to say "Trump and I have had a hell of a journey, but enough is enough." Most Republican senators — even Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA), whose bid for re-election had failed less than 24 hours before — followed Graham's example. Notably Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA), who long defended Trump's unorthodoxy but who defended Pennsylvania and its electoral processes on Jan. 6, has joined the chorus calling for Trump to resign.

The Republican members of the House of Representatives lacked such self-awareness. As Vice President Pence continued to read into the Congressional record the certified vote counts of each state's electors, Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA) rose to object to Pennsylvania's electoral college results. Unlike the previous objections to other states' electors raised by members of the House after reconvening, none of which had the required support of a member of the Senate, the objection to Pennsylvania's electors retained the signature of Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) which meant that the objection would have to be debated for up to two hours in each chamber and voted on by both the House and the Senate.

Senators left the joint session at 12:22 a.m., and in less than 10 minutes, they closed debate and voted 92-7 to reject the challenge to Pennsylvania's electors.

Debate in the House continued for the full two hours. House Republicans, led by the Pennsylvania Republican delegation including Mike Kelly, who represents the 16th Congressional District including Erie County, refused to abandon the lie that Pennsylvania's election results are invalid despite that

By: Jim Wertz

The attack on the United States Capitol was the most heinous act in modern America. It's been compared to the War of 1812, but that was carried out by the British. It's been compared to the Civil War, but that was caused by the official acts of secession carried out by 11 Southern slave-holding states. The insurrection of Jan. 6, 2021 was different because it was waged by a ragtag collection of so-called patriots composed of working-class whites, members of law enforcement (retired and active), former members of the military, wannabe pundits, and even some elected officials. But on that day, they acted in no official capacity, with no legitimate grievance against the government they tried to depose. The mob that stormed the Capitol was little more than petulant children acting out because they didn't get their way.

In the weeks and months to come, there will be much to unpack as We, the People reconcile what we saw and the reasons it took place. To date, most Americans — even those who previ-

ously challenged the outcome of the 2020 presidential election with baseless legal claims — recognize that the insurrection was, in fact, the culmination of more than four years of hostile rhetoric by Donald Trump and his enablers in both government and the private sector. Trump's base, having been bound together by falsehoods and false hope, seethed over the idea that any outcome other than his re-election could be viewed as legitimate.

It is unlikely that the country will find redress of the grievances against it before the transition of power and the inauguration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris takes place on Jan. 20. The vice president, Mike Pence, now appears to lack the political will to carry through with the process prescribed in the 25th Amendment to remove a president who is unfit for duty. The Congress has only impeachment to remedy the same situation. And with that process — even expedited — unlikely to be completed prior to Jan. 20 when Trump leaves office and President-Elect Biden continues to call for unity and focus on the business that lies ahead, it seems

that impeachment will end in a political quagmire.

What's truly lost by allowing Trump to remain in office is that, without such an official action, there is no way to legally prohibit him from running for federal office again. While many expect that Trump will preemptively pardon himself and his family and friends — although there is no legal precedent for the legitimacy of such pardons — others suggest that he is also likely to pardon those charged in the assault on the Capitol on the way out of office. Either would be impeachable and treasonous.

But without official recourse, Trump's future and that of his minions lay in the hands of the American people — the ones who had cautioned all along that Trump's rhetoric and moral turpitude would lead to a moment similar to Jan. 6 and those from either party who moved away from Trump during the course of his tenure in office because they saw how the rancor, lies, and divisiveness were polarizing a people who once stood together, if for nothing else, the idea of America, different as those visions may have been.

same election's result returning him to the halls of congress for his sixth two-year term.

When Allegheny County Democrat Conor Lamb rose to speak in defense of Pennsylvania's election results, the election officials who carried out the election, and the Republican legislation that defined the election processes that went into effect in 2020, House Republicans interrupted him continuously with shouts and insults. At one point, Lamb's Democratic colleagues rushed from their seats behind him as if to stop the Republican mob from encroaching on the Democratic lectern in an attempt to silence the young congressman. It seems that such behavior — the petulance, the impatience, and the aggression — have become model Republicanism, particularly for those in elected office.

Similar scenes have become common in state houses across the country as well as here in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Last year in the Pennsylvania Senate, then-President Pro-Tempore, Republican Joe Scarnatti, seized the gavel from Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, the Senate's presiding officer, during a heated budget debate as if he were playing capture the flag because Fetterman refused to acknowledge a Republican senator who was attempting to shout over Democrat Katie Muth.

In similar fashion, just days before the attack on the U.S. Capitol, what should have been a day of celebration on the floor of the Pa. Senate turned into a melee as the Republican majority voted to remove Lt. Gov. Fetterman from his post so they could refuse to seat Democrat Scott Brewster from Allegheny County who won re-election by just 69 votes over his Republican challenger Nicole Ziccarelli. Both of Erie's senators, Republicans Dan Laughlin and Michelle Brooks, voted against seating Brewster despite having been credentialed to rejoin the Pennsylvania Senate by the Pennsylvania Department of State.

But in a pattern consistent with Republican defiance at the federal level, Pennsylvania Republicans have challenged votes in Allegheny County, which would overturn Brewster's victory and award the seat to Ziccarelli. That decision now rests with a federal judge after a lower court affirmed Brewster's re-election. As Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa noted, Senate Republicans continue to "demonstrate a pattern of undemocratic behavior."

"The suggestion that (Senate President Pro Tempore Jake Corman) would defy yet another court order in his quest to steal the 45th District from Sen. Brewster is chilling, and takes clear cues from his role model, Donald Trump," Costa told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Loyalty to Trump has become a common and consistent theme in the Pennsylvania Senate. In addition to Corman's disregard for that with which he disagrees, Senate Republicans perpetuated the claims made by Trump in his attempt to discredit the results of the presidential election in Pennsylvania.

As recently as Jan. 4, just 48 hours before the attack on the Capitol that was intended to halt the certification of the

involved in the appeal may not be able to offer. So while not directly addressing the question raised by Texas, the intent is to influence the decision of the Court.

Fortunately for Pennsylvania voters, the Court rejected the case outright. To date Pennsylvania and federal courts have rejected 13 attempts to overturn election results in the commonwealth.

PA-16's Rep. Kelly has remained the central figure in most of the challenges attempting to disenfranchise nearly three million voters and overturn the 2020 election results in Pennsylvania. Kelly has long been a general in Trump's Army, trafficking in lies and perpetuating conspiracies on behalf of the 45th President.

Loyalty to Trump has become a common and consistent theme in the Pennsylvania Senate. In addition to [Senate President Pro Tempore Jake] Corman's disregard for that with which he disagrees, Senate Republicans perpetuated the claims made by Trump in his attempt to discredit the results of the presidential election in Pennsylvania.

Electoral College results, Republican members of the Pennsylvania Senate, including Brooks, whose district includes parts of southern Erie County, sent a letter to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Kevin McCarthy, the minority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, outlining what they called "inconsistencies" in the 2020 election in an attempt to influence and encourage objections to Pennsylvania's electors during the joint session on Jan. 6.

Previously Sen. Laughlin, who represents the remainder of Erie County, was party to an *Amicus Curiae* brief filed by Pennsylvania Senate Republicans when Texas sued Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Georgia in a direct appeal to the Supreme Court. Laughlin claimed online and in the local press that Pennsylvania Republicans were not trying to disenfranchise Pennsylvania voters or overturn the results of the 2020 election, but that was the intent of the Texas suit. *Amicus* briefs, by definition, are intended to offer the Court additional information or perspective that the parties directly

Kelly claimed in 2017 that former President Barack Obama was running a shadow government because the Obamas, who had school-aged daughters at that time, had not left Washington after they left the White House. Last October, when the House voted 371-18 to condemn the conspiracy group QAnon, which has become a powerful force in Trump's online propaganda machine, Kelly was one of the 18 Republicans to support QAnon by voting against the majority. Since election night, Kelly has repeatedly said publicly and in court filings that Pennsylvania's election was rigged against Donald Trump despite the fact that Republicans down the ballot outperformed Trump and even won two of three statewide races. Even after the objection to Pennsylvania's electors was defeated in both the House and Senate in the early hours of Jan. 7 — the process continued until after 3 a.m. before recessing until later Thursday morning — Kelly has continued his campaign to throw millions of Pennsylvanian votes, mostly Democratically heavy mail-in ballots,

in the trash.

Kelly argues that the legislative process by which the Republican-controlled Pennsylvania legislature designed and implemented the election changes enacted in 2020 actually requires an amendment to the state constitution. Kelly took this argument to the State Supreme Court on Nov. 28 and lost because, the Court said, he should have made this case prior to any election utilizing the new voting procedures. Kelly filed an emergency appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court and was denied.

The fact that Kelly continues this fight even after the Keystone State certified its election results, after the commonwealth's electors met to cast their ballots for the Electoral College, after the joint session of Congress certified the results of the Electoral College, and since the Trump campaign has lost more than 50 challenges to the results of the 2020 election, it only serves to underscore that our representative in Congress is little different than his Republican colleagues across Pennsylvania and in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a petulant child in the body of a 72-year-old man who will continue to whine and wail to try and get his way, Trump's way. But that's not the worst of him.

Kelly has been one of Trump's staunchest defenders and one of his most steadfast enablers. He believes in Trump's America. He believes in the perpetuation of lies and conspiracies, and he appears unfazed by and unwilling to acknowledge the fact that his rhetoric since 2017 and throughout this election cycle, has stoked and provoked the unfounded anger and the manufactured contempt of the masses who stormed the Capitol.

It was a dark day for our nation. The people who participated must be held accountable. Some have already been brought to justice.

Like them, the elected officials who challenged the very election that retained them in office, fanning the treasonous flames of insurrection and perverting the constitution, must also be held accountable. Their justice, if not brought by the courts, must soon be resolved by the ballot.

Jim Wertz is a contributing editor and Chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party. He can be reached at jWertz@ErieDems.com and you can follow him on Twitter @jim_wertz.

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Open Up Your World

How to weather our COVID-19 winter



(top left) *The Queen's Gambit* on Netflix has sparked interest in playing chess (top right) In the quiet of winter, you can enjoy the beauty of an icy-covered creek at Headwaters Park. Or try to spot animal tracks in the mud or the snow. (middle right) Lydia Laythe won her first campaign for public office when she was elected to the Washington Township Board of Supervisors in November 2019. (bottom right) The Erie County Library has a wealth of resources to learn or have fun at its "e-Databases" link on its website, erielibrary.org. (bottom left) Have books to share? Consider donating to one of the Little Free Libraries in Erie County. This Little Free Library is in front of the United Way of Erie County, 420 W. Sixth St.

LIZ ALLEN

By: Liz Allen

Tired of being tethered to Zoom? I am, too.

But thanks in part to suggestions from Zoom friends and other sources, I've cobbled together five ideas to help you beat the COVID winter blues.

Your Move

On my Monday Zooms with friends from the Villa class of '69, we vent about Trumpian politics and help each other cope with the anger, fear, and frustration about our country's descent into chaos.

We also reminisce, including about the time when two enterprising classmates started a Villa chess club. I joined but was never a stellar player. Still, given the raves for the Netflix blockbuster *The Queen's Gambit*, I thought maybe I should try chess again, so I called Craig Schneider, 63, former Erie Chess Club president who now lives in Arizona with his wife, Diane, to get some encouragement.

Schneider's dad, the late George Schneider, taught him to play at age 10, and neighbor Jim Walczak, who became a well-known Erie lawyer, helped him hone his skills.

When he was young, Schneider played "postal chess" with competitors around the world. He'd make a move, mark it on a postcard, mail it, then wait for his opponent to respond. Now, chess has "really exploded" online, and playing Internet games has helped to create a sense of

community during the pandemic. "You can talk to people from South Africa or Arab countries," he said, adding that he introduces himself by saying "Yes, I'm an American, and Trump is an idiot."

There are lots of takeaways from *The Queen's Gambit*, a seven-part mini-series, he said, but one is that the fictional main character, Beth Harmon (Anya Taylor-Joy), learns early on that she must be a good sport when she loses. "Don't keep dragging it on like he who cannot be named," Schneider jabbed.

To learn or to brush up on chess, Schneider recommends lichess.org, which offers free games and lessons. To learn more about the Erie chess scene, including an online tournament starting Jan. 24, check out the Erie Chess Club on Facebook, where you can read many interesting posts about the benefits of playing chess.

As Schneider described the intrinsic joy and the intellectual challenges of the game, he stressed that chess teaches strategic planning, individual decision-making, and adaptability — proficiencies we all need to master as we wait for life to return to normal.

Make Tracks to a Park

Solitary and socially-distanced walks were my salvation through spring, summer, and fall, and since I'm leery about going back to the gym, I asked Kristen Currier, environmental educator for the Erie County Conservation District, for some places to explore to keep fit in winter.

In addition to Frontier Park and Presque Isle State Park, she suggested Headwaters Park, 1927 Wager Road, on the Conservation District's grounds; McClelland Park, in the City of Erie; Lake Erie Community Park, in Lake City; Bull's Dam, also known as Howard Eaton Reservoir, in Greenfield Township; Corry Junction Greenway Trail; and Oil Creek State Park in Venango County.

These parks are also good places to take dogs, but make sure they are managed with a leash or a remote collar.

Lake Erie Community Park "is going to be a little more work," she said, because unlike some of the other parks she recommends, it doesn't have paved trails. But if you like to hike or snowshoe, you will be rewarded with "phenomenal" views of Lake Erie over the bluffs.

Bull's Dam/Eaton Reservoir is accessible from Pennsylvania or New York State (sitting just west of the state line) and also provides "gorgeous" views, she said. The three-mile trail is not paved but it's great for a fat-tire bike ride.

One upside to exploring parks in the stillness of winter is that you can listen for the birds that are here year-round. "Now you can hear the chickadee or the cardinal or the blue jay," she said. "During the summer you can build on that repertoire of what you learned."

Look in the mud or snow and you might see the imprint of a muskrat or "tracks as light as a field mouse," she said. "You can even piece together an entire story," she said. Learn to distinguish the prints of cats, dogs, and coyotes. "Were they running? Were they walking?" she added. "I like to solve a mystery. What were they doing when they were out here?" She's even detected a wing print in the snow from a bird of prey.

Check out the Headwaters Park Facebook page for more ideas on park scavenger hunts and information about the GooseChase app, which Penn State Behrend is using for a lot of family-friendly activities. I also recommend erieconservation.com; before you know it, it will be spring and time for its annual seedling sale!

Expand Your Mind

Of course, I don't always relish dealing with the outdoor elements. That's when I daydream about visiting Italy's Tuscany region in some future summer. After recently connecting with a distant cousin there, I fantasize about learning Italian before my fantasy trip. What better place to start that adventure than through the "Transparent Language" course, one of many digital services offered on the Erie County Library's website, erielibrary.org?

With the help of Sheryl Thomas, assistant library director, I found information that is both fun and functional by clicking on e-databases on the website's "services" tab.

On "AtoZ databases" under "Business & Finance," you can search for jobs, create mailing lists and do market research, among many other functions.

"Test prep" can get you ready for undergraduate and graduate school exams, for the military aptitude tests and the U.S. Citizenship test, to name a few.

Other tabs will take you to Consumer Reports magazine, where you can check out ratings and recommendations for a slew of products. Try "Cars & Engines" for schematics to repair automobiles and other motorized equipment, including snowblowers.

For some genealogy resources, you have to physically use the library, but Blasco and the branches are only offering curbside service right now. However, Thomas said that the Fold3 site, with military documents, photos, and personal stories dating back to the Revolutionary War, is available online. "History comes alive in someone's handwriting," she said. "It's beautiful."

If you are wondering what to tackle next after finishing a good book, go to the "Books & Authors" tab, which has a wealth of resources for "read-alike" books similar to those you've already enjoyed. This is also where you will find OverDrive, to download e-books and

audiobooks, and hoopla, which offers books, music, movies, comics, TV shows, and other materials for download.

And if you're stuck with a question or need more help, you can always call the reference desk at 814-451-6927.

Give Back

Erie's reputation for generosity remains intact, even during a pandemic. This was demonstrated during the 2020 Erie Gives Day, when \$6,358,146 was raised for nonprofits. According to the Erie Community Foundation, that set a record for Erie Gives, which marked its 10-year anniversary.

Erie people also like to volunteer to help those in need, but that's been a little more difficult during COVID-19, according to Joelyn Bush, director of marketing and communications for United Way of Erie County. For example, even if you'd like to offer virtual help for United Way's Community Schools initiative, you need a TB test, which is not easy to get during the pandemic.

Nevertheless, there are usually anywhere between 300 and 400 active volunteer opportunities at United Way's GetConnectedErie.org resource. If you register, you can get alerts as volunteer openings arise. Bush also urged nonprofits to register on the site to let volunteers know about their needs. "We're only as good as the database," she said.

One practical way to help out now, especially if you are doing some house-keeping, is to help restock the Little Free Libraries scattered at various places in our community. Find a list of locations at unitedwayerie.org/little-free-libraries. When you add books to the libraries, you can also note if the library boxes, which are unique and creative, need repairs, Bush said.

If you are looking to donate clothing, you can also visit PA211NW.org or call 211. This is a helpline for those who need social services but "it works both ways," if you want to assist those in need.

And please remember those who are experiencing homelessness. The Erie United Methodist Alliance is looking for volunteers for overflow shelters through the Our Neighbors' Place program. "EUMA provides masks, face shields, gloves for all guests and volunteers and requires COVID-19 screening for all guests, staff, and volunteers," said Kurt Crays, EUMA executive director.

To learn more, visit EUMA-Erie.org and click on "Get Involved," then "Volunteer."

Run, Run, Run

You might be fed up with politics, but the municipal primary looms on May 18,

and if you want to make change at the local level, this is your chance.

"I think everyone should run for office. It makes for better government," said Lydia Laythe, 27, who won her race for Washington Township supervisor in November 2019. Two of the three board seats were open due to retirements.

Running for elected office was a new venture for Laythe, who served on Student Council at Mercyhurst Prep but in college, had "taken on a different role of speaking truth to power" as a student journalist.

To prepare, she took part in Emerge Pennsylvania, which trains Democratic Party women to run for office. Don't be scared off by tuition costs for candidate training programs, she said. Some provide scholarships or allow you to raise funds for the organization to help cover costs.

Outreach was a key part of her success. She attended community events, knocked on doors, and reached out to local businesses to find out about their needs. In-person grassroots efforts will be more daunting because of the pandemic, but Laythe advised potential candidates to think about the many ways to connect these days, including through social media and virtual events.

In addition, she said, don't be scared off by the process or the position. To prepare for her run, she met with the township supervisors to learn about their jobs. "Demystify the position," she said. "Talk to people who have done it before."

You don't have to have all the answers, either, but it's vital to listen to different perspectives and to understand that every elected official brings something to the table.

At its heart, "government is just taking care of the needs of the people," she said.

You can learn more about Laythe, who works for the U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, on the "Our Erie" podcast that she, Davona Pacley, and Marty Nwachukwu host.

The first day to circulate nominating petitions for the 2021 Municipal Primary is Feb. 16. To learn more about deadlines, financial forms, and other requirements to run, visit eriecountypa.gov; click on "departments," then "elections and voting."

Liz Allen strongly urges readers to support journalism, including the Erie Reader, during this winter when freedom of the press faces serious threats. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com

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Questions Surround the Plasticity of Our City

IRG sorting facility brings unaddressed public health, environmental concerns



ROMAN MILLERT

Once operational, International Recycling Group's proposed "mega-sized" plastic sorting facility would receive up to 50 truckloads of plastic a day within a 750-mile radius of Erie. The majority of this would likely be sent across Lake Erie to a steel company in Nanticoke, Ontario, where it would be burned up in the steelmaking process.

By: Sarah Bennett

In August 2020, International Recycling Group (IRG) announced plans to open a "mega-sized" plastic sorting facility in Erie. Since then, IRG founder and chairman Mitch Hecht has publicly touted the supposed benefits of the plant without addressing significant public health and environmental concerns. Erie should welcome new businesses warmly and encourage innovation as it revitalizes its economy. However, Erie should also enter into new relationships with healthy skepticism and eyes wide open.

IRG proposes to build a facility that requires a minimum of 20 acres of land in one of Erie's Opportunity Zones. The facility would receive plastic from up to a 750-mile radius with an expected volume of 50 trucks per day. Once the plastic is received at the facility, marketable plastic will be separated for recycling, but non-marketable plastic will be shredded and shipped by barge across Lake Erie and sold to a steel company in Nanticoke, Ontario. The plastic will then be used in blast furnaces as part of the steelmaking process.

There are numerous environmental concerns throughout this process and much more information is required to understand the full impacts of IRG's largely untested plastic disposal methods. First, truck transportation to and from the facility will generate abundant air pollution and greenhouse gases. Localized air pollution will disproportionately affect those dwelling in

what the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection recognizes as Environmental Justice Areas, particularly people of color and those living below the poverty line. Increased truck traffic will also increase wear and tear on Erie's roads.

The proposal to ship these plastics by barge across Lake Erie provides ample opportunity for flakes to escape. Erie already has a problem with plastics in the form of litter and plastic pellets or nurdles. These pellets escape during transport into Erie County and are transported by wind and rain into our streams and out to Lake Erie. We know they are finding their way onto our beaches as well. Flaked plastic, due to its shape and near weightlessness, will be spread in our environment even more readily than these pellets. Once in the water, plastic is known to attract toxins and bacteria and then be eaten by fish and birds. Many of the toxins accumulate in animal tissues and increase in concentration at higher levels of the food chain, leading to fish consumption advisories that are all too familiar in our region. IRG proposes to use closed containers to ship these flakes, but much more detail is needed to determine whether that is enough to contain these pesky pollutants.

The majority of plastic received by the plant will likely be sent across Lake Erie, destined for a blast furnace, because lucrative markets do not exist for most types of recycled plastics. The realities of plastic recycling are that actual recycling is messy, not very

profitable, and energy-intensive. Recycling has never been the answer to our plastic problem, and non-solutions like "advanced" or "chemical" recycling only threaten to make a bad problem worse. Developing new end uses for plastic is not a solution to the plastic problem. We simply have too much plastic and the only sustainable solution to that problem is to reduce the amount we use and produce. In fact, if burning plastic is lucrative, more plastic will be produced, not less. This could also lead to more extraction of oil and fracked gas for plastic production.

Injecting plastic into blast furnaces with coke will produce toxic byproducts. Heavy metals such as mercury and cadmium will be released into the air and the solid waste generated by this process is poorly studied. Erie residents may take comfort in the fact that the plastic is not being burned here, but that would be a false comfort. Nanticoke, Ontario is located just 40 miles across the lake from Erie. Even if wind patterns don't allow that air pollution to reach us, the pollutants emitted will deposit into the water and spread throughout the lake we share. Mercury and cadmium accumulate in the bodies of living organisms in Lake Erie and can be distributed that way as well.

It is critical that we have all of the facts before we decide whether this potential plastic sorting facility is a good fit for the region. Protection of human health and our water resources should weigh heavily in this decision. Erie residents and decision-makers need to hear specific plans from IRG addressing the serious environmental and public health concerns, and a public hearing should be held where residents can weigh in on whether or not this facility is right for Erie.

Sarah Bennett is the campaign manager for Clean Water Advocacy at PennFuture and a member of the 2020 class of Erie's 40 Under 40.

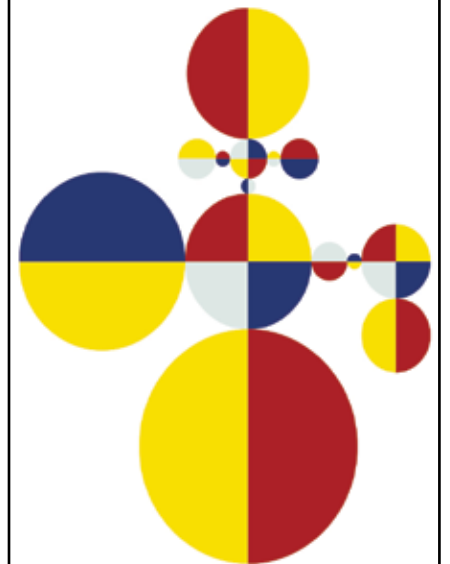
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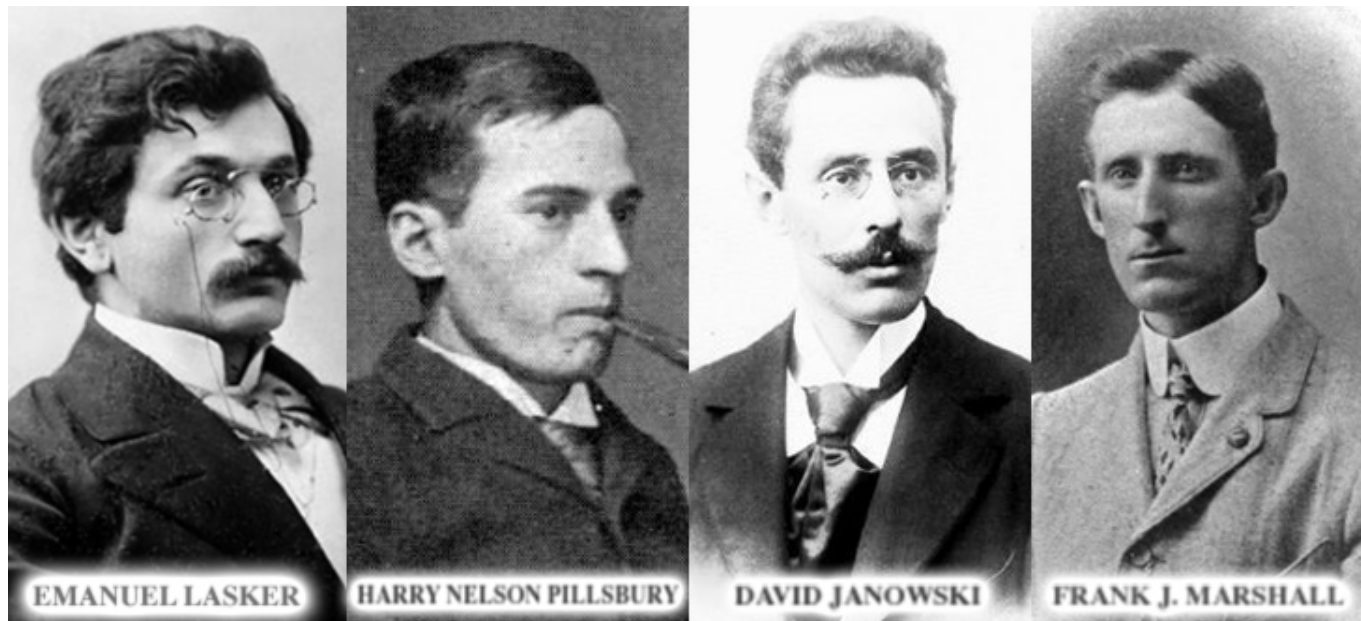
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Art Credit: Gabriel Orozco, Light Signs #3 (Korea) (1995), Medium: light box, plastic sheet, vinyl decals. Dimensions" 39-3/8 x 39-3/8 x 7-3/4 inches. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1996.

Personalities at Play in 1904 Cambridge Springs Chess Tournament

The story of four top players and who prevailed



The 1904 Cambridge Springs International Chess Congress gathered some of the time's greatest talents — and most disparate personalities. Among them were the calculating German mathematician and reigning world champion Dr. Emanuel Lasker, who had recently recovered from a nearly fatal bout with typhoid fever; the modest and “agreeable” Harry Nelson Pillsbury, who could play blindfolded; the stubborn and determined David Janowski, noted as “a sharp tactician;” and the young and erratic Frank James Marshall, who won the tournament with his unconventional and unpredictable style.

By: Jonathan Burdick

In 1983, Walter Tevis published his second-to-last novel, *The Queen's Gambit*, about a fictional chess prodigy named Beth Harmon and her journey into the male-dominated world of professional chess. As with *The Hustler*, his 1959 classic novel about a troubled pool shark, Tevis had a lot to say with his book, using the game as a plot mechanism for exploring complex characters and deeper themes, which are also at the forefront of the critically-acclaimed Netflix adaptation.

According to Chess.com, due to the popularity of *The Queen's Gambit* mini-series (and, of course, with some having more time at home amidst the pandemic), there is currently a chess resurgence that hasn't been seen in 50 years. Daily online players have tripled over the past year while Goliath Games reported that their chess sales have increased by over 1,000 percent.

Perhaps this shouldn't be surprising. Chess is a timeless game, the origins of which can be traced back 1,500 years across multiple continents. It is a game that requires no spoken word and crosses cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. In Benjamin Franklin's 1779 essay “The Morals of Chess,” he described what one learns from the game: foresight and consideration of consequences, circumspection and big picture thinking, caution and the dangers of being impulsive, and resiliency and the need to persevere

through discouragement.

These were skills possessed by those who competed in the Cambridge Springs International Chess Congress in 1904. The event is a story of memorable chess matches (a variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined chess opening used at the event is even now called the Cambridge Springs Defense), but it is also a story of fascinating people. This included Frank James Marshall, a young and erratic chess player who was still in his twenties when he arrived in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

“He is a whirlwind player of daring skill, genial demeanor, and a highly dangerous competitor,” reported the Erie Daily Times.

It was the first major international chess tournament held in the United States in the new century. Financed by renowned investor Isaac Leopold Rice, the Erie Railroad Company, and William D. Rider Jr., the event was held in the theater of the breathtaking seven-floor, 500-room Hotel Rider. The world-class hotel had only opened in 1897, the same year that the small resort town renamed itself from Cambridgeboro to capitalize on its mineral springs.

The cozy town of 1,500 people was where Marshall was determined to solidify his stature as one of the world's greats. His style at the table was unconventional and unpredictable. One biographer noted that he was “capable of defeating the strongest opponent and losing to the weakest.” To his doubters, he simply

wasn't a “chess tactician” and many believed that he lacked the “steadiness” of the world's best chess players whom he would soon be competing against: U.S. champion Harry Nelson Pillsbury, world champion Dr. Emanuel Lasker, and long-time rival David Janowski.

“Some of [Marshall's] moves, made in the face of all recognized principles, are so utterly audacious, though ingenious withal, that his fellow masters refer to them as ‘Marshall's swindles,’” penned his hometown paper, the Brooklyn Eagle.

Marshall was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1877. He had learned chess from his father at an early age, but only began playing seriously after his family relocated to Montreal, Canada when he was 10. By 15, he won his first Montreal Chess Club Championship and when his family moved back to Brooklyn a few years later, he entered and won the New York State Chess Association's Junior Championship. By 1899, at age 22 and alongside rival and friend Harry Nelson Pillsbury (whom he first met and played in Montreal when he was 16), he began competing in the prestigious cable chess matches, in which American and British players competed using the transatlantic telegraph cable to communicate moves.

Pillsbury was five years older than Marshall and also a much different player. He had studied commerce as a teenager in Massachusetts, but by the age of 18, his knowledge of chess was so expansive that he decided to abandon a traditional career. Soon, Pillsbury made

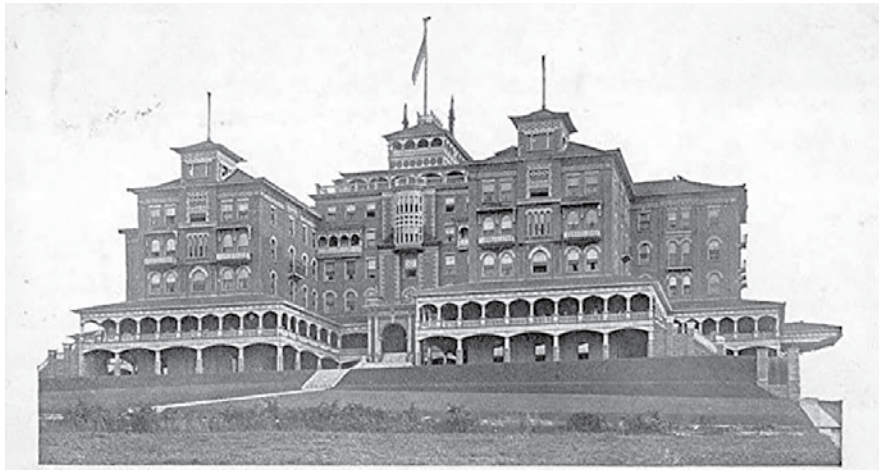
a name for himself as a focused, knowledgeable, modest, and well-liked player, never finishing below third place in a tournament. He could play blindfolded. He could play games simultaneously. Sometimes he played games simultaneously *while blindfolded*, taking only seconds to make a move. In 1900, he did just that against 20 people at once. Over the course of nearly seven hours, he won 14, drew five, and lost only one.

Leading up to the 1904 tournament, the Erie Daily Times described him as an “agreeable personality” who “endeared himself to the whole chess world.”

“It is probable that no greater student of the game ever lived and to play him is to meet the whole army of chess books at once,” the Times reported.

Earlier in his chess career, Pillsbury had traveled as a relative unknown to England for the Hastings Congress of 1895, an unprecedented international tournament that included all of the world's top chess players. Pillsbury won it in a surprise upset, even defeating the German mathematician and reigning world champion Dr. Emanuel Lasker head-to-head — who, in his defense, was recovering from a nearly fatal bout of typhoid fever.

Dr. Lasker still retained the title of world champion entering the Cambridge Springs tournament. Born in 1868 to a Jewish family in Prussia, Lasker had been sent to school in Berlin when he was 11, where he learned to play chess from his older brother who was in the city for medical school. Lasker was consumed by the game. When he transferred to a new school, the schoolmaster and his mathematics teacher were well-known in Berlin's chess clubs and took him on as a protégé. While still continuing his studies of mathematics, he



CAMBRIDGE SPRINGS COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

worked his way up in the ranks and in the early 1890s began defeating champions throughout England and the United States. By 1904, he was perhaps the most respected chess player, with one contemporary noting his legendary status and the admiration that other players had for him.

Despite the dominance of Dr. Lasker and Pillsbury, Marshall told close friends that he wasn't afraid of either. He had defeated both head-to-head before. In fact, even though he hadn't beat either in overall rankings, he had been Lasker's only defeat when he was crowned world champion. Lasker was also rusty, having not played in a tournament in four years. Marshall was confident that he would win the Cambridge Springs tournament. Only David Janowski worried him.

Janowski, who was the same age as Lasker, grew up in the Russian Empire and was of Jewish-Polish descent. He had lived in Paris for years and had won France's championship, dominating chess circuits throughout Europe afterward. Some noted his weak endgame, but Janowski was otherwise known as a "sharp tactician" who expertly utilized his bishops and, according to one contemporary, when his game was sharp, was "one of the most feared opponents who can exist." He had also beaten Marshall handily head-to-head in 1899 and had been playing well heading into Cambridge Springs. Reports described him as "a generous candidate for first prize" who was "fiercely competitive."

"Besides his brilliant genius for the game, he has other qualifications to fame, such as infinite disrelish for losing," the Erie Daily Times reported. "Janowski never scruples to call a spade a spade, nor a duffer a duffer."

As the 16 competitors arrived by rail in Cambridge Springs in late April — along with countless reporters — excitement brewed in the town. A parade was held.

The breathtaking seven-floor, 500-room Hotel Rider, opened in 1897, was the site of the 1904 Cambridge Springs International Chess Congress won by Frank James Marshall.

People decorated their homes. Crowds gathered to catch glimpses of the international celebrities, some who had met with President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House only days earlier.

The tournament commenced on April 25. It was round-robin format, so each player would play 15 total games over the following weeks, facing each competitor exactly once. A win earned one point, a draw earned a half-point, and a loss earned zero. The first prize of \$1,000 (over \$25,000 adjusted for inflation) would be awarded to whoever earned the most of 15 possible points.

After the first three rounds, Janowski had an early lead with three points. Marshall and Lasker were a half-game behind and Pillsbury was down a point-and-a-half, having lost to Marshall in 23 moves. Unknown to many beforehand, but now quite apparent, Pillsbury was not in good health. He was suffering from headaches and insomnia and it was clearly taking a toll on his game.

By the sixth round, Janowski held onto his lead, but now only by a half-point over Marshall and Lasker. Pillsbury had experienced another unexpected loss, but in a much anticipated sixth-round matchup, he outmaneuvered Lasker in a thrilling 30-move match.

The seventh round saw close play in nearly every match with Janowski and Marshall scoring wins, but Pillsbury, fresh off his win against Lasker, made an oversight that cost him another game. The eighth round saw wins by Marshall and Lasker but draws by both Pillsbury and Janowski — meaning Marshall and Janowski were now tied for first place.

During the following round, Janowski defeated another competitor with "brilliant play," remaining tied with

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Marshall, who scored another win, while Lasker held on just behind. Pillsbury meanwhile continued his decline down the ranks with another draw.

In the 10th round, Pillsbury and another competitor both stubbornly refused a draw until after a grueling 146 moves. Marshall defeated Jackson “The Kentucky Lion” Showalter, a previous U.S. champion. Then, in a dramatic match of 65 moves, Janowski lost to the Boston-born Albert Fox. This gave Marshall the lead.

“There was much rejoicing at the Hotel Rider this evening because the American player, Marshall, was leading in the international chess masters’ tournament at the conclusion of the tenth round played to-day,” the New York Times reported.

The 11th round finally saw the blockbuster meeting of Marshall and Janowski. The first day of the game lasted seven hours before both finally agreed to finish it at a later date. Marshall ultimately won after 76 moves, making him the clear favorite to win the tournament.

In the 12th round, Janowski almost lost his third in a row to Pillsbury, making a mistake early in the game, but Pillsbury didn’t notice. Janowski won.

“[The game] really ought to have been won by Pillsbury almost at the start,” the Erie Daily Times reported. Many of the players had caught on that Pillsbury’s health was deteriorating, with one later describing it as “wretched.”

With the tournament’s end, Janowski and Lasker tied for second place with 11 points, each earning \$450. Marshall placed first with 13 points winning the \$1,000 and proving himself to the world. He hadn’t lost a single game.

Marshall’s win, according to British Chess Magazine, wasn’t due to “any superior knowledge of openings or end-games” but by “remarkable chess genius” and “original ideas of attack and defence” as well as an “intuition as to when a sacrifice can be ventured and when it can not.”

“Mr. Marshall is no ordinary strong player,” they added. “[H]e is a man of clever original ideas, and does not fear to carry them into practice even with the most formidable opponents.”

His hometown Brooklyn Eagle described his play as “perhaps not of the soundest” but which “taxes the nerves of the most experienced of the masters.”

As for Pillsbury, he placed ninth. Later

that fall when Marshall was proclaimed the U.S. champion, he refused the title, arguing that Pillsbury was still the champion until the two could meet again to play. Unfortunately, that never happened.

Pillsbury had moved to Atlantic City shortly after the Cambridge Springs tournament with hopes that the sea air would improve his health. One newspaper claimed that he might be cured by September. Instead, his condition, which turned out to be an advanced stage of syphilis, continued to deteriorate. In 1905, after an operation in Philadelphia, he broke the window of his fourth floor hospital room and had to be wrestled away by nurses and doctors before he could jump, in what was described as a “fit of temporary insanity.”

He continued to play chess as his condition worsened, but never again in a tournament. He died on June 17, 1906. He was 33 years old.

Following Pillsbury’s death, Marshall continued to refuse the title of U.S. champion. He finally accepted it after a tournament in 1909 and would hold it for 27 years. The Marshall Chess Club, which he founded in 1915, still exists today.

Dr. Lasker continued his reign as World

Chess Champion until 1921, staying in the United States while publishing numerous books and magazines about the game. According to Chessmetrics, a modern system for rating chess players designed by statistical chess analyst Jeff Sonas, Lasker ranks in the top five most dominant chess players of all-time by numerous metrics.

For all but Pillsbury, the paths of these men would cross many more times over the following years. While the matches were always interesting and often dramatic, it is each of their own personal journeys that make the overarching story captivating and, like the game itself, timeless.

“Life is a kind of chess,” mused Benjamin Franklin. “[W]e have points to gain, and competitors or adversaries to contend with, and ... there is a variety of good and ill events, that are, in some degree, the effects of prudence or the want of it.”

For a deeper dive into the individual matches, visit <http://www.cs1904.com>.

Jonathan Burdick runs the historical blog Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com

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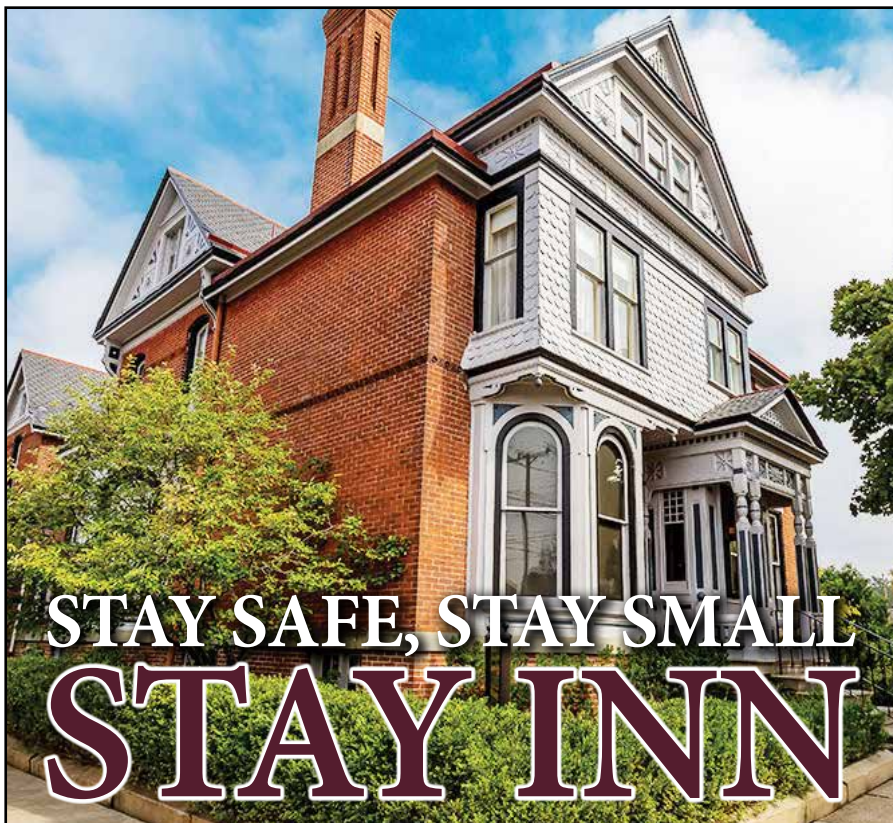
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From Surviving to Thriving

Glenn Stearns returns in *Undercover Billionaire: Comeback City*



Original “undercover billionaire” Glenn Stearns shares advice with Tippy Bean owner Gisele Littrell on the pilot episode of the new Discovery Channel spin-off series *Undercover Billionaire: Comeback City*.

DISCOVERY CHANNEL

By: Matt Swanseger

Who wants to meet a billionaire? That’s the premise of the new Discovery Channel spin-off series *Undercover Billionaire: Comeback City*, which sets up six struggling Erie small businesses with no-longer-incognito entrepreneur Glenn Stearns for a little tough love.

Stearns, of course, was the titular “undercover billionaire” of the original series’ debut season (a second season is airing now). He abandoned his identity and all his resources and connections to come to Erie under the guise of “Glenn Bryant,” tasked with building a million-dollar business in 90 days — with a measly \$100 in his pocket. The result was the West Lake Road restaurant Underdog BBQ (valued at \$750,000) and a name and reputation in the Gem City that now precedes him.

Discovery slyly used that brand recognition to drive the casting call for *Comeback City*, which itself was cloaked as a “business mentorship program.” Many businesses applied, six were chosen based on human interest and the unique challenge of their situations. They include the Tippy Bean (Gisele Littrell), Michael Making Lives Better (Michael

Hooks), Dominick’s Diner (Tina and Tony Ferraro), TKO Erie (Brian Arrington), Lake Erie Rubber (Jon Meighan), and Stearns’ very own Underdog BBQ.

None of the owners are totally surprised to meet Stearns or see cameras — although Littrell says she “screamed like a little girl” when he first approached her cafe in mid-June. What they did not initially know, however, is that they would each be the dedicated subject of a 45-minute episode of a brand new series. “I didn’t even know what they were going to do [with the footage] mid-August.”

This time around, Stearns fully leverages his name and contacts to help these businesses accomplish a formidable feat — go from barely surviving to thriving in just 27 days. That number reflects how many days worth of cash reserves the average small business has at its disposal, although the cushions these enterprising Erieites are working with here are often much smaller — sometimes less than two weeks.

The stuff of desperation has always been the stuff of reality TV, dating back to *Survivor* (fittingly) and beyond. Again, it’s rich material here, even if you were to not even be aware of Erie’s existence. As Stearns says in a discussion with the

Film Grain podcast’s Erica Berlin and John C. Lyons, “Really it’s a roadmap for any business in the country. When you take a look at it, Erie is a microcosm of what’s going on *everywhere* ... I hope it gives everybody wide eyes so that they can go ‘Man, maybe I should be doing things a little differently at my business.’”

At the start of each installment, Stearns plays the role of observer, taking the time to learn each owner’s backstory and passion, get a feel for their thought processes, and see their current operations in real-time. Other than some instances of repeating a line or action for the camera, the owners say it all unfolded very organically and very quickly.

Littrell recalls: “Glenn kind of right off the bat said, ‘Hey, I’m ready to just get to work. We’re going to dive into this. We’re not wasting any time.’ He literally rolled up his sleeves and we went into the kitchen. He’s like ‘Show me what you do.’”

Between the time crunch and foreboding bottom-line numbers flashing across the screen, each episode *should be* ripe with drama. As a local viewer, there’s a good chance you might recognize or even be personally acquainted with these business owners, which *should*

theoretically intensify that feeling. However, because of Stearns’ sway and the simple fact that everyone loves a happy ending, none of the comebacks were ever in doubt. Would an Erie institution like Dominick’s really be allowed to meet a tragic end under the watchful eye of Glenn Stearns, the proverbial self-made man? Not a chance!

It’s clear that the featured businesses will be rescued, but with the caveat that you’re witnessing a *guided* rescue. As Stearns repeats throughout the series, “It’s a hand-up, not a handout.” He distinguishes *Comeback City* as “a teaching show.” After gathering intel, Stearns sagely outlines a plan of attack and it’s up to the business owners to cast aside egos and preconceived notions and get on board. Along the way, he recruits relevant industry experts from his vast Rolodex (who scout the business undercover) to ensure it comes to fruition.

“Overall, Glen is very experienced, very knowledgeable, and he’s able to relate on anyone’s level because he is self-made,” says Littrell. Stearns, who grew up in a low-income apartment complex outside of Washington, D.C., failed fourth grade, and fathered his first child at age 14, founded Stearns Lending in 1989 at the age of 25. At its peak in 2013 (shortly after Stearns abdicated his role as CEO), Stearns Lending was the fifth-largest privately held mortgage lender in the United States. Over the years, Stearns has diversified his entrepreneurial dealings under the umbrella of Stearns Holdings, LLC.

All that adds up to a fairly unique perspective and down-to-earth persona that seems

to resonate with everyone on this show, despite the wildly different personalities involved (compare the bubbly, exuberant demeanor of Littrell with the gruffness of Hooks or circumspection of Arrington). No matter who you are, the lessons are applicable: Be brutally honest with yourself (or find someone else who can be). Determine what’s working and what isn’t — double down on your money-makers and “kill your darlings.” Be opportunistic and identify new markets (#social-media). Associate with the successful people. Delegate and get yourself out of the weeds so you can think bigger.

The main takeaway from *Comeback City* is that there may secretly be an “undercover billionaire” hiding within any small business owner and entrepreneur. The paths to success vary, but the mindset and practice is remarkably similar between successful people. Even though you know a positive outcome is guaranteed with each business (because TV), it’s still incredibly gratifying to see the very authentic gratitude and emotion on these people’s faces when their new valuation comes back, often much better than expected. Not to mention that summer looks *great* on Erie, with some of the aerial shots of downtown and the shoreline portraying Erie in a more flattering light than you may be used to in mainstream media.

The undercover softie in me may or may not have shed a happy tear or two on behalf of the hard-working, well-intentioned individuals living amongst us in our community. I have a sneaking suspicion — a clandestine hunch — that you may too.

Matt Swanseger (mmswanseger@eriereader.com), a lifelong Cleveland Browns fan, is not accustomed to being on the right side of comebacks but remains simultaneously jaded and hopeful.



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2020 Best of Erie Winners and Finalists

Your favorite people, places, and things in the Erie area



JESSICA HUNTER

Given the historic challenge of 2020, few could be blamed for not being at their best. In the context of COVID-19, sometimes “doing your best” was just hanging in there. But to transcend all that, to continue to be a superlative asset to this city and this community despite all those trials and tribulations? That deserves recognition and celebration — sometimes in ways previously unthought

Your 2020 Best of Erie winners reflect this. With categories such as Culture & Night-life and Food & Drink disproportionately affected by the pandemic, new subcategories were created while others have gone on temporary hiatus. Before 2020 could you have imagined voting for Erie’s Best Alcoholic Slushie (Altered State Distillery) while live-streaming an award-winning Erie Playhouse production? Perhaps you worked off some angst on Erie’s Best Hiking Trails (Wintergreen Gorge) or with its Best Outdoor Adventure Activity (Peek’n Peak Adventure Course).

In total, 345,132 votes were cast across 105 subcategories. The more some things changed, the more others stayed the same — we’re clearly looking forward to meeting one another again at the Plymouth Tavern and will forever idolize Smith’s hot dogs, Mighty Fine Donuts, and Romolo Chocolates. Old or new, it’s important that we passionately support our present to ensure a future where there’s even *more* of the best to debate (maybe at a lounge or nightclub?) — and love.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Chrysler Jeep Dodge & Ram

Best Local Business

Winner: Waldameer & Water World

Runners up: Erie Apparel, Erie Insurance

Best Bank

Winner: Erie Federal Credit Union

Runners up: PNC Bank, Northwest Bank

Best New Business (Within Last Two Years)

Winner: The Cork 1794

Runners up: Altered State Distillery, Underdog BBQ

Best Antique Shop

Winner: Oregon Antiques

Runners up: Pointe Fouré Vintage Boutique, The Green Eyed Lady

Best Locally Made Product

Winner: Smith’s Hot Dogs

Runners up: Romolo Chocolates, Mighty Fine Donuts

Best Boutique

Winner: Grasshopper

Runners up: A La Carte Gift Shop, Pointe Fouré Vintage Boutique

Best Car Dealership

Winner: Bianchi Honda

Runners up: New Motors, Humes

Best Consignment Shop

Winner: The Sassy Peacock

Runners up: Claudine’s Consignment, Cobb’s Second Time Around Thrift Shop

In a year when indoor entertainment options were severely limited, we found even more reasons to appreciate outdoor oases like Presque Isle State Park, winner of the Best Place for a First Date, Best Place to Take Your Dog, and Best Park.

Best Jewelry Store

Winner: Dahlkemper’s

Jewelry Connection

Runners up: Breakiron Jewelers, Sacred Piercing

Best Furniture Store

Winner: John V. Schultz

Runners up: Arthur F. Schultz, Furniture Row

Best Local Book Store

Winner: Pressed

Runners up: Books Galore, Werner Books

Best Health Food Store

Winner: Whole Foods Co-op

Runners up: The Juice Jar, Zero Gravity

Best Barbershop

Winner: Ruiz Barber Shop

Runners up: Joe’s Barber Shop, Colony Barber Shop

Best Spa

Winner: Coventina Day Spa

Runners up: Panache Salon and Spa, SandCille Spa

Best Beauty Salon

Winner: Panache Salon and Spa

Runners up: Moxi Hair Salon, Ambridge Rose Spa & Salon

Best Dog Groomer

Winner: Paws ‘n Claws

Runners up: Erie Humane Society, Mud Puppies Self Serve Dog Wash

Best Place to Adopt a Pet

Winner: The ANNA Shelter

Runners up: Erie Humane Society, Because You Care, Inc.

Best Bike Shop

Winner: John Adams Cycling & Fitness

Runners up: Competitive Gear, Lake Country Bike

Best Auto Repair Shop

Winner: Bonnell’s Collision Center

Runners up: Bianchi Honda, Bates Collision

Best Web Developer

Winner: Epic Web Studios

Runners up: ErieMultimedia, Snowberry Media

Best Graphic Designer

Winner: Megan Callaghan

Runners up: Ashley Tittle, Alice DeGeorge

Best Advertising Agency

Winner: ErieMultimedia

Runners up: RFrank Media, Epic Web Studios

Best Law Firm

Winner: MacDonald, Illig,

Jones, & Britton LLP

Runners up: Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.; Quinn, Buseck, Leemhuis, Toohey & Kroto, Inc.

Best Real Estate Agency

Winner: Howard Hanna

Runners up: Marsha Marsh, Agresti Real Estate

Best Bed and Breakfast

Winner: Victoria Inn Bed and Breakfast

Runners up: Spencer House Bed & Breakfast, Grape Arbor Bed and Breakfast

Best Place to Get a Six Pack

Winner: U Pick Six

Runners up: Wegmans, 1000 Beers

Best Smoke/Vapor Shop

Winner: Vapor Cabana

Runners up: Smoker Friendly, Hippie and the Hound Vapor Store and Lounge

Best Tattoo Parlor

Winner: Ink Assassins

Runners up: Wayward Tattoo Studio, Mid-Town Tattoo

Best Florist

Winner: Potratz Floral

Shop & Greenhouse

Runners up: Allburn Florist, Gerlach’s Garden and Floral

Best Greenhouse

Winner: Stan’s Garden Center

Runners up: Potratz Floral Shop & Greenhouse, Gerlach’s Garden and Floral

Best Place to Camp

Winner: Sparrow Pond

Family Campground

Runners up: Camp Sherwin (YMCA of

BEST OF ERIE



JESSICA HUNTER

Greater Erie), Sara Coyne Campground

Best Neighborhood Grocer

Winner: Whole Foods Co-op
Runners up: Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meat, Erie County Farms

CULTURE & NIGHTLIFE

Best Museum

Winner: Erie Art Museum
Runners up: ExpERIEnce Children's Museum, Tom Ridge Environmental Center

Best Art Gallery

Winner: Sparrow Gallery
Runners up: Artlore Studio, PACA

Best Community Theater

Winner: Erie Playhouse
Runners up: PACA, Mercyhurst University Theater Program

Best Dance School

Winner: Long's School of Dance
Runners up: Little Dance Studio, Marguerite's Academy of Dance

Best Photographer

Winner: Katie Mihalak
Runners up: Rob Frank, Sarah Peach

Best Fine Artist

Winner: Kaitlyn Page
Runners up: Helen Tullio, Rachel Berlin

Best Band (Original)

Winner: Eric Brewer & Friends

It wasn't just the margaritas talking — El Canelo garnered 1,037 (38.41 percent) of your votes for Best Mexican Restaurant.

Runners up: First to Eleven, Six Year Stretch

Best New Band/Musician (Last Two Years)

Winner: Phunkademic
Runners up: LUCiD, Aria and the Voiceless

Best Cover Band

Winner: The Geek Army
Runners up: The Groove, Abbey Road

Best Vocalist

Winner: Lindsay Vendetti
Runners up: Audra Miller, Mckenzie Sprague

Best MC

Winner: Charles Brown
Runners up: Brandi "FRESCO" Carlini, Jonny Evans

Best Instrumentalist

Winner: Eric Brewer
Runners up: Stephen Trohoske, Zack Orr

Best DJ

Winner: Millennium Sound
Runners up: DJ Bill Page, DJ Johnny B

Best Outdoor Music

Winner: Coconut Joe's
Runners up: Altered State Distillery, Sunset Grille

Winner
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BEST OF ERIE



JESSICA HUNTER

Best College Bar

Winner: Plymouth Tavern

Runners up: Cornerstone Bar & Grill, The Edinboro Hotel

Best Happy Hour

Winner: U Pick 6 Taphouse

Runners up: U Pix Six Public House, Cloud 9 Wine Bar

Best Irish Pub

Winner: Molly Brannigan's Irish Pub

Runners up: McGarrey's Oakwood Cafe,

Lavery Brewing Company

Best Patio

Winner: Sloppy Duck

Runners up: Altered State Distillery, Shickalay's on the Bay

FOOD & DRINK

Best Restaurant

Winner: Federal Hill Smokehouse

Runners up: Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro, The Cork 1794

Be still and recognize the headway Altered State Distillery has made in our hearts in little more than a year — **Best Distillery, Best Alcoholic Slushie, and runner up for Best Outdoor Music.**

Best New Restaurant (Within Last Two Years)

Winner: Underdog BBQ

Runners up: Gem City Dinor, F & F Poke Bowl

Best Chef

Winner: Jean Paul (Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro)

Runners up: Mike Karle (The Cork 1794), Dan Kern (Noosa/1201 Kitchen)

Best Bakery

Winner: Art's Bakery

Runners up: Icing On the Lake, Ye Ole Sweet Shoppe

Best Coffee Shop

Winner: Ember + Forge

Runners up: Brew Ha Ha, Topsy Bean

Best Ice Cream Shop

Winner: Sara's

Runners up: Creamland, Whippy Dip

Best Dessert

Winner: Romolo Chocolates

Runners up: Icing on the Lake, Ye Ole Sweet Shoppe

Best Chocolates or Candy

Winner: Romolo Chocolates

Runners up: Stefanelli's Candies, Pulakos Chocolates

Best Donut Shop

Winner: Mighty Fine Donuts

Runners up: H & K, Jack Frost

Best Diner

Winner: Flip Cafe

Runners up: The Breakfast Place, Gem City Dinor

Best Brunch

Winner: Flip Cafe

Runners up: Peek'n Peak, The Cork 1794

Best Brewery

Winner: Voodoo Brewery Erie

Runners up: Erie Brewing Company, Lavery Brewing Company

Best Locally Made Beer

Winner: Railbender (Erie)

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BEST OF ERIE



JESSICA HUNTER

Brewing Company)

Runners up: Good Vibes (Voodoo), Dulachan (Lavery Brewing Company)

Best Winery

Winner: Arundel Cellars & Brewing Co

Runners up: Mazza Vineyards, 6 Mile Cellars

Best Distillery

Winner: Altered State Distillery

Runners up: Erie Distillery, Luminary Distilling

Best Cocktail

Winner: Plymouth Tavern

Runners up: Room 33, The Cork 1794

Best Bar Food

Winner: Odis 12 Sports Bar & Grille

Runners up: Plymouth Tavern, Calamari's Squid Row

Best Sandwich Shop

Winner: Picasso's

Runners up: Teresa's Italian Deli, Lucky Louie's Beer and Wieners

Best Deli

Winner: Teresa's Italian Deli

Runners up: Urbaniak Brothers Quality Meat, Tickle's Deli

Best Burger

Winner: Odis 12 Sports Bar & Grille

Runners up: Avonia Tavern, The Brewerrie at Union Station

[above] Hannah Kirby, Best Local Entrepreneur, just so happens to be the owner of Erie's Best Coffee Shop, Ember + Forge. [bottom right] Whether you're stopping in or just stopping by, U Pick 6 locations remain popular with Erieites, picking up wins in the Best Happy Hour and Best Place to Get a Six Pack categories.

Best Pizza

Winner: John's Wildwood Pizza

Runners up: Virgil's Plate, Valerio's

Best Wings

Winner: Odis 12 Sports Bar & Grille

Runners up: John's Wildwood Pizza, One Way Inn

Best Sushi

Winner: Samurai Kitchen + Sushi

Runners up: Chopstix, 1201 Kitchen



JESSICA HUNTER



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Best Food Truck
Winner: The Que Abides
Runners up: The Big Cheese, The Atacolyse

The Cork 1794, winner of Erie's Best New Business (Within Last Two Years), is sipping on a lot of potential — it was also a runner up for Best Cocktail, Best Restaurant, Best Brunch, and Best Place for a First Date.

Best Place for Vegan or Vegetarian Food
Winner: Whole Foods Co-op
Runners up: The Juice Jar, Like My Thai

Runners up: Country Fair, Sloppy Duck

PEOPLE & PLACES

Best Barbecue Restaurant
Winner: Federal Hill Smokehouse
Runners up: Underdog BBQ, Three B Saloon

Best Place to Work
Winner: Wegmans
Runners up: Erie Insurance, UPMC Hamot

Best Seafood Restaurant
Winner: Pineapple Eddie Southern Bistro
Runners up: Smugglers' Wharf, 1201 Kitchen

Best Place for a First Date
Winner: Presque Isle State Park
Runners up: The Cork 1794, Erie Zoo

Best Place to Take Your Dog
Winner: Presque Isle State Park
Runners up: Asbury Woods, Frontier Park

Best Asian Restaurant
Winner: Chopstix
Runners up: Golden Wok, Like My Thai

Best Radio Station
Winner: HAPPI 927
Runners up: Star 104, The Wolf 93.9

Best Italian Restaurant
Winner: Serafini's
Runners up: Mi Scuzi, Valerio's

Best Radio Personality (or Radio Team)
Winner: Jessica Curry and Ted Hallowell
Runners up: Sammy Stone, Captain Dan

Best Mexican Restaurant
Winner: El Canelo
Runners up: Torero's, El Amigo

Best TV Personality
Winner: Sean Lafferty
Runners up: David Belmondo, Kara Coleman

Best Thai Restaurant
Winner: Like My Thai
Runners up: Khao Thai, Thai Eatery

Best Filmmaker
Winner: John C. Lyons
Runners up: MenajErie Studio, Len Kabasinski

Best Mediterranean or Middle Eastern Restaurant
Winner: Casablanca Grill
Runners up: Habibi, Alkeme

Best Alcoholic Slushie
Winner: Altered State Distillery

Best Yoga Space
Winner: yogaErie
Runners up: Rise Up Erie, YMCA

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JESSICA HUNTER

Edinboro's much beloved Flip Cafe finally awoke a Best Of winner this year in two categories — Best Dinor and Best Brunch.

Best Local Actress
Winner: Adele Crotty
 Runners up: Kate Neubert-Lechner, Amanda Hurd

Best Nonprofit
Winner: ANNA Shelter
 Runners up: Shriners Hospitals for Children Erie, Emma's Footprints

Best Bartender
Winner: Caitlin Smith (Coconut Joe's/Big Bar)
 Runners up: Kristin Walker (The Cork 1794), Shawn McCall (Room 33)

Best University
Winner: Penn State Behrend
 Runners up: Edinboro University, Gannon University

Best Fitness Club
Winner: Planet Fitness
 Runners up: YMCA, Iron Oxygen Fitness

Best Bowling Alley
Winner: Greengarden Lanes
 Runners up: Eastway Lanes, Rolling Meadow Lanes

Best Team to Root for
Winner: Erie Otters
 Runners up: Erie SeaWolves, Eerie Roller Girls

Best Lawyer
Winner: John Knox
 Runners up: Rebeka Seelinger, Adam Williams

Best Dentist
Winner: David Demarco
 Runners up: Maria Orlando and Carla Orlando, Kenneth A. Doleski and Marian S. Wolford

Best Golf Course
Winner: Whispering Woods Golf Club
 Runners up: Peek'n Peak, Kahkwa Club

Best Real Estate Agent
Winner: Levi A. Marsh
 Runners up: Sarah Parsons O'Neill, Nancy Placidi

Best Local Entrepreneur(s)
Winner: Hannah Kirby (Ember + Forge)
 Runners up: R.J. Messenger

(Underdog BBQ, Iron Empire), Jason and Nicole Lavery (Lavery Brewing Company)

Best Podcast
Winner: Idiotville – Erie PA's Favorite Podcast
 Runners up: Lake Erie Gumbo, Barber Beast on the Block

Best Hiking Trails
Winner: Wintergreen Gorge
 Runners up: Asbury Woods, Erie Bluffs State Park

Best Park
Winner: Presque Isle State Park
 Runners up: Frontier Park, Asbury Woods

Best Local Streaming
Winner: Erie Playhouse
 Runners up: Gannon University's Schuster Theatre, PACA

Best Outdoor Adventure Activity
Winner: Peek'n Peak Adventure Course
 Runners up: Scallywags Pirate Adventures, Victorian Princess

Best Tattoo Artist
Winner: "Gentle" Josh Makowski
 Runners up: Rachel Travis, Jennifer Christina

Best Local Actor
Winner: Shawn Clerkin
 Runners up: Chris Bucci, Luke Bongiorno



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

James Baldwin's Prescient Words Face Modern Truth

Juxtaposing the author's 1963 work with Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*



Renowned Civil Rights-era author and thinker James Baldwin stands in front of the Albert Memorial in London, which features prolific 16th century poet and playwright William Shakespeare.

ALLAN WARREN

By: **Abdullah Washington**

James Baldwin, author and intellectual icon of the Civil Rights era, is the subject of "Paperclips #2," an Erie Arts and Culture presentation featuring the 2016 documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* by filmmaker Raoul Peck (based on an unfinished autobiography by Baldwin) as well as Baldwin's classic work *The Fire Next Time*.

"Obscenity" is the first word I think of when I consider the title *I Am Not Your Negro*.

To anyone who knows the speech its title comes from, "Negro" is not the word James Baldwin uses. As if to underscore this fact, Samuel L. Jackson delivers voiceovers written by Baldwin himself in the unfinished text, "Remember This House," that serves as the departure point for the film.

Peck has said he chose the word "Negro" to avoid using a more inflammatory term that would overtake the message of the film. The whole work is a delicate dance between contrasting elements.

The film juxtaposes black and white footage from 1950s and '60s America with images from today's Black Lives Matter era. Splashes of color don't so much reward us as they underscore the timelessness and urgency of racism in America.

In fact, "Remember This House" was conceived by Baldwin in 1979 around the lives and deaths of three titans he had come to know as his friends: Medgar Evers (assassinated in 1963), Malcolm X (killed in 1965), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (murdered in 1968). However, Baldwin

never got more than 30 pages into this story because, according to Peck, it was too painful to finish telling.

Obscenity indeed.

A Black gay author and human rights advocate with roots firmly in the Black church, James Baldwin (1924-1987) spent much of the 1950s in European exile. His decision in 1957 — that he could no longer stand on the sidelines of the Civil Rights movement — motivated his return to America and gave him a clear sense of purpose. His contributions to the cause earned him one of the largest FBI files collected by J. Edgar Hoover (no stranger to personal secrets himself).

Few other works in modern history can be deemed as prophetic as the 1963 collection of Baldwin's essays known as *The Fire Next Time*. Baldwin predicts the destructive shape and character of the 1960s, Nostradamus be damned.

Obscenity.

The Fire Next Time begins with a sermon on survival. It is ultimately a eulogy to the oppressed state of mind along with a baptism into the thinking of a Nation of a people seeking liberation. The work is confessional in a way no demagogue could ever risk. Speaking to both God and Humanity, it owes nothing to Nietzsche. Beyond asserting the dignity of African Americans, it presupposes that dignity.

Filmmaker Raoul Peck recalls that upon reading this collection at the age of 18, the book gave him the first sense that there was "a larger world and that he himself was first and foremost a human being."

Black Lives Matter.

It seems as if every 50 years or so, white America experiences an existential crisis and decides to exorcise its demons on Black America. From the Civil War and the formation of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1860s, we advanced to the film *Birth of a Nation* and the second Ku Klux Klan in 1915 with its "America First" movement. In the 1950s and '60s as a reaction to the Civil Rights movement, the Ku Klux Klan took on new forms to keep Blacks "in their place".

As Black men were forced onto the front lines of the Vietnam War, there were riots in hundreds of American municipalities. Over 110 cities burned in America on the day Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

We are again in such a sour spot now.

President-Elect Joe Biden beat President Trump by 7 million votes, yet Trump's base seems to clamor for civil war, the destruction of democracy, and the installment of a standing dictatorship.

Trumpian leaders have co-opted the language of the oppressed to keep rage pointed away from creating real change. Blame the Blacks, Jews, Mexicans, the indigenous, immigrants, the Saracens, the gays, and women. It's almost disappointing they couldn't just invent some new form of hate.

What does James Baldwin say to these times?

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

I don't know what you find obscene, but for me it is hate. I consider this a vaccination against hate. I find the book and film to be beautiful works and hope *The Fire Next Time* can be inside our hearts and minds with love and justice proving hate has no home here.

Please join Hayes Moses and myself for "Paperclips #2" by registering online at Erie Arts and Culture's website (erieartsandculture.org). The Zoom meeting is free and will be held Friday evenings from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 22 and 29, and Feb. 5 and 12. We will have special guests and are looking to have as broad a conversation as possible.

The Future of Our Music Venues

COVID-19's devastation of the live music industry and the narrow path forward



Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th Street, is one of the last bastions of the Erie live music scene. During the prolonged COVID-19 shutdown, lighting engineer Sam Edwards tests out his displays, as the venue undertakes renovations like constructing a modular sound booth.

NICK WARREN

By: Ryan Bartosek

Over the past 10 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on people and businesses all over the world. One of the hardest-hit sectors has been the live music industry, including our local and regional music scene here in the Erie County area.

With heavy restrictions on traditional live concerts over the past 10 months, some artists have been hosting virtual performances with mixed results. Some more well-known artists and promoters have been having moderate success hosting reduced capacity, socially distanced drive-in concerts. However, for these events to prove financially viable, concert-goers have been asked to pay \$50 or more per person to see the same band they had paid \$20 or less to see before the pandemic. All this comes in a setting that features less than adequate sound and sight lines, with restrictions preventing fans from interacting with other crowd members not in their immediate viewing space.

While this has somewhat appeased music starved fans, it's also proved to be less than ideal and has left fans eagerly waiting for indoor and outdoor venues to reopen at full capacity. However, while artists everywhere are struggling, music venues are being hit just as hard, if not harder.

Bars and venues throughout Western Pennsylvania have had their doors shuttered since spring, some permanently

such as The Rex Theater in Pittsburgh, one of the region's most well-known concert venues. Here in Erie, Scotty's Cigar & Martini Lounge was one of the last remaining performing spots for local artists still building a draw. The pandemic proved to be the nail in their coffin, as they've since shut their doors and sold their liquor license and bar equipment. Newer venues, such as the **10/20 Collective** (formerly the Ballet Haus) chose to pivot, showcasing local art and finding new life as a gallery. The **Kings Rook Club**, one half of the driving force behind the current local music scene, was forced to cancel all shows booked for spring 2020 and has sat closed for most of the pandemic. Basement Transmissions, the local music scene's other half, has also been unable to open since spring. And there's no sign of the situation getting better anytime soon.

Many artists, promoters, and fans are holding onto the belief that outdoor amphitheatres and festivals will make their return in spring and summer 2021. Some even believe that normal touring will resume in 2021. However, if you listen to the opinions of scientists and medical experts, then you've likely come to terms that these timelines aren't realistic given the public's track record fighting COVID-19 so far.

In an article published in *Rolling Stone* on Dec. 22, 2020, Dr. Dean Winslow, an infectious disease expert at Stanford is quoted saying: "A vaccine is a huge component of getting us through this. I don't

see us filling concert halls or theaters until maybe early 2022 before people can feel safe indoors."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top epidemiologist in the country has gone on record saying that the U.S. needs 60 to 70 percent of its 328 million person population vaccinated before cases begin to decrease significantly and it would be several months afterward before we stop seeing new cases. Fauci gives a broad timeline of late spring to late fall 2021 before herd immunity will even begin being achieved, provided the public gets vaccinated and in the meantime maintains proper social distancing and hygiene practices and wears masks in public.

This is devastating news for our local music scene. How will a venue that makes 100 percent of their profits from alcohol sales or paid attendance survive after having been closed for what experts believe will be at least two years, without federal or state aid?

Unfortunately this is a question that doesn't seem to have an answer yet. This is a devastating notion that has potential to hurt and drastically change the landscape of our local music scene. Erie already had a shortage of small clubs where artists still cutting their teeth could perform. The more of these we lose, the fewer places artists will have to play. Of the bars that survive, many will surely step up to the plate and adopt live music, but will have to be selective of whom they book. After two years of little to no business, there couldn't be

too many nights of hits taken on artist payouts or attendance dropping after asking patrons to pay a cover charge, before the establishment's budget would see red and management would opt for automated DJ software and Spotify playlists instead.

Larger venues in the region also face challenges. In some rooms, even if a show is at 80 percent capacity, it still isn't enough to be profitable. A 25 percent indoor capacity restriction placed on a room that holds 500-600 is impossible for success, unless an inflated rate is charged for tickets. Luckily Erie is blessed with two venues that have alternate sources of income and believe that they're prepared to continue to weather the storm and come out on the other side.

PACA, located at 1505 State St. in Erie, is showing confidence that they will be ready for reopening as soon as possible. "We are fortunate to have 31 art studios which produce some income... we are not solely reliant on ticket sales to remain afloat," says executive director Mark Tanenbaum. But the venue still has no plans on reopening until experts say it's safe to do so. "Safety is our focus," says Tanenbaum, "not financial gain. I really don't want to do anything that is unsafe, unhealthy, or that looks bad in the eyes of the community."

Basement Transmissions, located at 145 W. 11th St. in Erie, is in a similar boat. According to owner Robert Jensen: "Our income has been down at least 50 percent each month. Luckily we have a base income from our studio rentals." However, Jensen knows that this extra income isn't guaranteed. "If times get tougher, artists could decide that it's cheaper to just create at home," he says. "But if things stay exactly the same as they are now, then I think Basement Transmissions is safe to make it to the other side of the pandemic."

But Jensen doesn't see the other side being free of concern. What he and other promoters nationwide see is an influx of acts fighting for the same gigs and a scramble to make money. This has po-



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



NICK WARREN

tential to increase guarantees for top drawing acts and there's only one way to make up those expenses: "I'd like to continue to provide affordable entertainment to young show-goers," says Jensen. "But we have to keep the doors open, so I'd say it's safe to say that ticket prices throughout the country will be forced to go up, however, I think over time they will go back down." This glut of artists looking for work is also likely to have a negative effect on artists still working on building a draw. Playing out and securing support spots for larger bands is the easiest way to do that, yet with businesses shutting doors, these bands will be left with even fewer places to perform and will likely lose out on those coveted support spots to more established bands that guarantee attendance.

Venues aren't the only part of the live music industry suffering or at risk of going out of business. Larger local events such as the Sunset Music Series, Celebrate Erie, and 8 Great Tuesdays who have astronomical budgets consisting of state grants, public donations, and taxpayer dollars and a history of being able to overspend, will likely bounce back relatively unscathed. But what about smaller, independent events that rely on ticket sales to exist?

One example is local festival **Gathering At Chaffee's**, known for hosting roughly 900 people and a mix of local, regional and national artists. While other regional festivals such as **Great Blue Heron** decided to postpone their events, Gathering At Chaffee's moved forward with its 40th annual installment in July 2020, despite attendance restrictions and nearly all of the musical acts backing out. The event received accolades from the Erie County Department of Public Health and the Erie County Executive's Office for hosting a large gathering that followed all recommended guide-

Basement Transmissions owner Robert Jensen anticipates artists will scramble for the privilege to look out into a paying crowd once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Higher ticket prices and fewer opportunities for up-and-coming acts are potential consequences.

lines. However, in doing so, the festival seemingly divided its supporters into two groups: those happy a festival was happening in 2020 and those who felt it irresponsible for a festival to be held during a pandemic. Even with the entertainment expense being nearly erased, the event's added expense of meeting CDC guidelines without the aid of an extra 700 tickets sold depleted most of the budget for future events. Time will tell what the long-term effects will be after taking hits in 2020 and possibly not being able to have a full capacity event in 2021.

Given the lack of clarity and knowledge of the future, it's impossible to know exactly when the COVID-19 pandemic will be over and musicians, bars, music venues, and festivals will be able to operate at full force again. What is clear is that it doesn't appear as though things are changing or ending any time soon. All that we can do in the meantime is work together by following all CDC safety and social distancing recommendations, stay home as often as possible, refrain from gathering in groups, wear a mask when within six feet of other people and get vaccinated as soon as possible. The speed of which we get our live music back and the ability to save our stages lies heavily on us as a community and society and as it is now, we're failing.

Ryan Bartosek has been the talent-buyer for the King's Rook Club, and has booked numerous shows there, at Basement Transmissions and the Crooked i, also working with the Sunset Music Series and The Gathering at Chaffee's. He can be reached at ryan.bartosek@gmail.com

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Our Podcast Picks of the Month

Enthralling audio we've been binging lately

This Podcast Will Kill You

Hosted by: Erin Welsh & Erin Allmann Updyke
Exactly Right Media // Medical History, Medical Mystery

Okay, so this podcast won't *actually* kill you, but the topics discussed certainly can. Hosts Erin Welsh, Ph.D. and Erin Allmann Updyke, Ph.D. (The Erins) met during graduate school while studying disease ecology. *This Podcast Will Kill You*



was born from a mutual fascination with epidemics and medical mysteries and a desire to share this (often disgusting, but always interesting) knowledge with a world wider than their colleagues. With topics ranging from smallpox to MRSA to Lyme disease and everything in between, The Erins never shy away from the gruesome and grotesque aspects of the diseases they cover. This isn't your run-of-the-mill medical discussion, though. Welsh is a disease ecologist and epidemiologist studying tick-borne disease transmission, while Allmann Updyke is an epidemiologist and disease ecologist working through medical school. Basically, they really know their stuff. Each episode is filled with intriguing insight into diseases and their origins, and The Erins often kick back and enjoy a drink during their show — such as a “Placeborita” or, more recently, a “Quarantini.” For those interested in current events, *This Podcast Will Kill You* has taken an extensive look at COVID-19, amassing 14 chapters in the series at the time of publication. With the pandemic continuing to ravage the globe and, more specifically, the United States, it is very likely that this series will continue well into the year. So sit back, relax, and pour yourself a drink — just don't forget to wash your hands!
— Ally Kutz

The Trip

Hosted by: Nathan Thornburgh
RoadsandKingdoms.com // Travel, Culture, Interview

This is probably the closest a podcast can get to Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*. Perhaps it is no surprise then that Bourdain was a partner, editor-at-large, and the sole investor in the independent online publication



Roads & Kingdoms, which produces the podcast. Co-founded by host Nathan Thornburgh, who spent a decade as a foreign correspondent for TIME Magazine, and Matt Goulding, a James Beard Award-winning food writer, their podcast uses “deep storytelling ... to inform and inspire about destinations around the globe.” Thornburgh uses the platform to explore all parts of the world through in-depth conversations, and while the episodes sometimes focus on food and drink, more often the emphasis is on people's everyday lives and experiences. Recent episodes include conversations with Ahmed Najm whose life changed after his brother was kidnapped by ISIS in Iraq, iconic Cuban hip-hop artist Tellymar Díaz who learned to use the microphone as an “instrument of power,” and writer and stand-up comic Jennifer Neal who talks about being a Black woman living in United States, Japan, Australia, and Germany. Especially now, when travel is limited, this is the perfect podcast to take a trip with one's earbuds to learn more about other places and people and our shared humanity.
— Jonathan Burdick

Yo, Is This Racist?

Hosted by: Andrew Ti and Tawny Newsome
Sub-Optimal Podcasts // Comedy, Social Issues

In the gift that keeps on giving — far more than anyone would prefer — this podcast seeks to tongue-in-cheekily answer the question: “Yo, Is This Racist?” Hosts Andrew Ti and Tawny Newsome navigate the extremely



murky waters of racism with just the amount of biting comedy you want. A year after starting the eponymous blog in 2011, writer Andrew Ti introduced the podcast. The show takes often-awkward listener calls about racism and answers them, or at least *tries* to. After years of a daily format, the show switched to the more traditional weekly, longer format, and added co-host Tawny Newsome in 2018. Newsome (*Space Force*, *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, and vocalist in Jon Langford's *Four Lost Souls*) added an important energy to the show, enlivening it along with an overall rebranding. This December, the show amicably split from Earwolf to venture out on their own at Sub-Optimal Podcasts. There are already familiar guests aboard, including two of the show's former producers, Cody Zigar and Matt Apodaca. While it should be obvious, it's important to know that this show doesn't take itself too seriously. The hosts are comedians at heart, though grateful to no longer feel like they're “trying to be the wokest show on a comedy network.” Its real secret weapon since day one has been its emotional vent. It's a lovable way to laugh at the things that really hurt.
— Nick Warren

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A 'Bridge' Too Far?

Racy Netflix series *Bridgerton* provocative in more ways than one



The sultry Netflix romance series *Bridgerton* reimagines Regency-era (1795-1837) London as ethnically diverse and socially equal without necessarily addressing the racial complexities of such a society.

familiarly modern and loving eight-sibling family, is launched upon London's marriage market. But she soon strikes a deal with newly returned Simon Basset, the reluctant yet dashing Duke of Hastings. They will pretend to court, despite their initial antagonism of each other, while knowing their union to be nothing more than a ruse to buy themselves room to breathe. Of course, they fall for each other, and of course, fate unites them in matrimony.

All of this is watched over and narrated by the new resident gossip girl (Drama dame? Libel lady?), an anonymous pamphleteer who writes under the pen name Lady Whistledown, gloriously voiced by living icon

Julie Andrews. Whistledown is not only privy to some startlingly intimate details, she names them.

Much is changed from the book, particularly the inclusion of multiple subplots, most prominently what's going on with the rival family next door, the Featheringtons, and what dissolute rake and eldest Bridgerton son Anthony is up to.

There is also the inclusion of race: this fantasy London is fully integrated, with a Black queen on the throne and an ethnically diverse — and socially equal — population. Some rather obvious dialogue addresses the why and how, but the implication that it wasn't always this way until recently in *Bridgerton* London, without then addressing the racial complexities of such a society, is problematic.

For example, Male Lead, secretly in love with Female Lead, is Black, which makes a much-discussed sexual assault scene all the more trou-

blesome. The story bends over backward trying to justify the sexual assault of a man by a woman — bad enough (indeed, written worse) in the book.

But the show is then depicting the assault of a Black man by a white woman — and as in the book, without any discussion or real consequence after. This might be enough for some to boycott the series outright, but hopefully, it leads viewers to an open conversation — and *Bridgerton* creators to do better.

For all of its shortcomings, though, *Bridgerton* is witty, escapist fun, taking a simple conceit to unexpected depths. — Cara J. Suppa

*Season One currently streaming on Netflix // Created by Chris van Dusen // Produced by Shonda Rhimes/Shondaland // Based on the novel *The Duke and I* by Julia Quinn // Starring: Phoebe Dynevor, Regé-Jean Page, Ruth Gemmell, Polly Walker, Golda Rosheuvel, Adjoa Andoh and Julie Andrews // Eight episodes*

The hilarious and brilliant Book-A-Minute website characterizes the collected works of Jane Austen thusly:

Female Lead: *I secretly love Male Lead. He must never know.*

Male Lead: *I secretly love Female Lead. She must never know.*

(They find out.)

THE END

This is the exact same formula for most romance novels, and it is indeed the driving plotline

behind *Bridgerton*, the racy new Regency series on Netflix, produced by showrunner Shonda Rhimes, she of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal* fame.

The eight-episode season (one must surely imagine it's the first season) has been adapted from the introductory book in the *Bridgerton* series of romance novels, entitled *The Duke and I*, by Julia Quinn.

Daphne Bridgerton, from a prolific and aristocratic yet

Letterkenny's New Season is Fun to Watch and Over Too Soon

Plenty of laughs to be had ferda boys and girls

Back in 2016, Jared Keeso and Jacob Tierney turned the YouTube series "Letterkenny Problems" into a television show, depicting the happenings of the small rural community in Canada. Now into their ninth season, the series continues to keep viewers interested with their dry humor primarily consisting of rapid fire wordplay. The seven episodes are so easy to watch, one is left eager to find out what happens next.

The storylines for this season feel less intense than those that came before it; there are fewer fistfights, less emphasis placed on relationships, and very little hockey. That being said, the episodes are every bit as entertaining. It appears Keeso (who plays Wayne, known as the toughest guy in Letterkenny) wanted to dedicate equal screen time to each and every character. As a result, we get to see the chemistry between Wayne and his sweetie, Rosie (played by Clark

Backo), many gatherings held at Mode-an's 3, the local bar, and even get to meet Squirrely Dan's girlfriend, who up until this point had just been mentioned in several awkward bouts of oversharing throughout the series.

This season has many more side plots to offer, and though every season has had the same number of episodes, this one feels like the shortest. While well-written and engaging, following so many characters all at once feels the slightest bit like stalling. All the same, once the next season hits, the audience will be quoting the show on the couch like always, exclaiming "Pitter patter, let's get at 'er!" — Claudia Rose

Season Nine currently streaming on Hulu // Created by: Jared Keeso // Starring: Jared Keeso, Nathan Dales, Michelle Mylett, K. Trevor Wilson, Dylan Playfair, Andrew Herr, Tyler Johnston, and Evan Stern // Seven episodes (61 total)



Hicks Squirrely Dan (K. Trevor Wilson), Wayne (Jared Keeso), and Darry (Nathan Dales) return for another round of hijinks in fictional Letterkenny, Ontario.

The Crown's Fourth Season Its Most Enthralling Look at Royal Turmoil

Serializing the British scandals of the '80s provides best plotlines in Netflix series



Joshua O'Connor and Emma Corrin portray Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in the fourth season of the Netflix historical drama *The Crown*.

gan's Netflix series *The Crown* comes into play.

With its first season released in 2016, the show drew millions of Netflix binge-watchers globally through its three seasons. Its fourth season, released in November, garnered a whopping 29 million views in one week — more than the number of Brits who tuned in for the actual wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1981.

Season Four of *The Crown* is undoubtedly the most enthralling, emotional, and personal season of the series thus far. At the start, we meet two new figures: Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Gillian Anderson) and Lady Diana Spencer (Emma Corrin). With the introduction of the UK's first female prime minister and the heir to the crown's future wife, it is clear that the royal family and the country is in a transitional state, and

that viewers will be watching this unfold throughout the season.

The end of the season is a culmination of the turmoil that has ensued since the first episode. Thatcher is basically thrown out of office by her cabinet, breaking down emotionally under the stress of it all. At the world's most uncomfortable Christmas party, Diana realizes she wants out of the royal family after a run-in with Prince Phillip (Tobias Menzies) that appears to have a threatening theme to it, marking the beginning of the end of her marriage to Prince Charles.

The fourth season of *The Crown* is a perfect "fictional" portrayal of life inside the royal family. The question still remains, though, of exactly how fictional the series really is. — Madeline Bruce

Season Four currently streaming on Netflix // Created by: Peter Morgan // Starring: Olivia Colman, Tobias Menzies, Helena Bonham Carter, Gillian Anderson, Josh O'Connor, Charles Dance, and Emma Corrin // 10 episodes (40 total)

The lives of the British royal family have always been mysterious. To the public, there is a front of perfection and propriety that is expected of its mem-

bers, rendering it virtually impossible for everyday citizens to know what goes on behind closed doors. That's exactly where British screenwriter Peter Mor-

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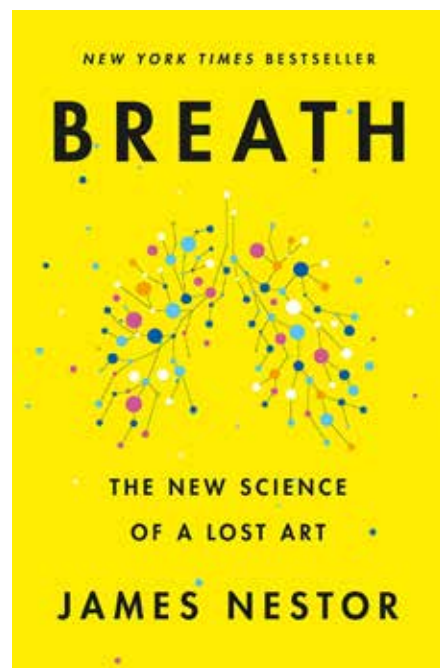
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Book Review: *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*

James Nestor takes deep dive into life's most fundamental process



With 2020 officially in the past, it feels as though the world is sighing with relief and, maybe, actually breathing a bit better since the publication of James Nestor's *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*.

Nestor's investigation into the most critical and inconspicuous act of life attempts to leave a mark on readers in the way that many self-help books do — by providing ideas, statements, and claims (supported by more than a decade of personal and professional research) — so they are left perceiving their daily actions differently after closing the back cover.

Unlike most personal development or health-based reads, however, Nestor strays from the cliché of blaming readers for their faults. Instead, he assists them in acknowledging the issues, provides background for things beyond their con-

trol (such as the rise in processed food — go figure!), and offers remedies to help each and every book lover breathe better, without judgment.

The 304-page health guide/report/pro-slow-breathing manifesto is as compact and powerful as the human body.

Beginning with a personal anecdote, Nestor quickly diverges into a history of breath around the world, the causes of bad breathing, and how to fix them with the gusto of someone who has spent the last 10 years breathing consciously.

By offering actual solutions, *Breath* succeeds where many (or more honestly, most) health regimens fail — with actionable advice to quickly transform a reader's perception of physical, mental, and spiritual health.

The book manages to harness the human desire for mystery and knowledge

while satisfying our annual craving to regain control of our health and our lives.

Readers learn of the individuals who cured emphysema, monks who have the power to melt a ring of snow around their motionless bodies, deep sea divers who plunge to unimaginable depths with zero safety equipment, and everyday people who have dramatically improved their health — all with the power of breathing.

Who would have known an involuntary process could be so fascinating?

Bonus: For those that prefer to listen to books rather than read, Audible has an audiobook version of *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*, which includes ten minutes of guided breathing exercises at the conclusion of the book. — Hannah McDonald

Riverhead Books // 304 pages // Health and Fitness, Self-Help

Book Review: *Ready Player Two*

Ernest Cline's latest tries and fails to level up



by the late James Halliday. In the OASIS, our heroes attempt to solve an Easter egg hunt that relies solely on knowledge of 1980s pop culture to win and gain control of this simulation. Imagine Willy Wonka's golden ticket contest drowned in pop culture references and set in an idealized version of *The Matrix*. The story caught the attention of director Steven Spielberg (whose films are referenced in the text), and it was quickly adapted to screen in 2018. Both the book and film received a fair amount of criticism for their writing, overreliance on allusions, and heavy-handed attempts at diversity.

In late November 2020, Ernest Cline released a sequel novel, *Ready Player Two* which contains a similar contest to the first, only this time, takes place in an even more dangerously immersive VR experience that has potential to kill its users. This book also seems to be Cline's attempt to respond to the criticism *Ready Player One* received. Where Wade originally worshiped James Halliday for creating a safe haven for nerds and those who wished to forget the dystopian future they lived in, this book has Wade realize how socially inept, disturbed, and obsessive the man was. Where characters of different races,

genders, and sexualities felt like shallow tokens and offensive stereotypes before, these characters are given more to do, and our protagonist relies on their ability and knowledge to help him win the contest.

Unfortunately, *Ready Player Two* still suffers from one very big flaw — at the end of the day, it's all about [protagonist] Wade. Cline ... has no clue how to handle the other now more fleshed-out, diverse characters. So as a result, he either kills them off or they conveniently has them leave the picture to do something else.

Unfortunately, *Ready Player Two* still suffers from one very big flaw — at the end of the day, it's all about Wade. Cline is so wrapped up in trying to convince readers that his characters are redeemable, and that he as an author is self-aware enough to reflect that, that the stakes feel low as the clock is *literally* ticking.

Furthermore, he has no clue how to

handle the other now more fleshed-out, diverse characters. So as a result, he either kills them off or conveniently has them leave the picture to do something else. Also, their lives and what makes them different are all described and commented on in relation to how it affects the protagonist. Lastly, the references to movies, video games, and music are more of the focus than the actual story. Paragraphs upon paragraphs are dedicated to every minute detail of the world, and the actual tasks the characters have to accomplish take up a sentence, maybe two. Cline definitely *cared* what people had to say about his writing, but he hadn't the foggiest idea how to fix it.

It's a shame, because the concept of a book being told through nerdy pop culture references resonates with many individuals, and there are some undeniably entertaining parts of the book like an entire quest on a planet dedicated to the work of John Hughes. However, *Ready Player Two* is physical proof of what many have said, "execution matters more than the idea." — Claudia Rose

Ballantine Books // 384 pages // Science-fiction

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MOVIE REVIEWS

"Don't Give Up the Fight"

Small Axe is both insightful and endlessly watchable



Steve McQueen never could have predicted how relevant his anthology series *Small Axe* would become as 2020 moved forward, but that makes the series of films all the more fascinating. These five films about the lives and struggles of Afro-Caribbean people in Britain in the late 1960s to the early 1980s are both refreshingly and depressingly more modern than any other period film made last year.

His five tales are connected more in theme than through characters or story and it starts off strong with *Mangrove*, based on the true story of the "Mangrove Nine" who were put on trial after clashing with the police in 1970. McQueen takes his time introducing us to the characters and the conflict before settling on the drama of the trial itself. This makes it a powerful and poignant introduction to the series.

The next film, *Lovers Rock*, the best of the series, doesn't initially seem so politically-minded, but it ends up being just as radical. Ostensibly following the patrons of a house party during an evening in 1980, the film is actually about the importance of community and cultural identity in a country that is openly disenfranchising its people (Black people were openly barred from white nightclubs at the time). This is one that doesn't quite reveal its power until it's over.

The third film, *Red, White and Blue*, has no room for such subtleties and is easily the angriest of all the films. This is the true story of Leroy Logan (John Boyega) who, after witnessing his father being assaulted by the police, decides to join the police force as a way to change their racist attitudes from within. This proves extremely difficult when every facet of the force (including his "partners" in uniform) is working against him. During its short runtime, McQueen masterfully displays the systemic rot in such institutions that make meaningful reform all but impossible.

The fourth film, *Alex Wheatle*, is the weakest of them,

John Boyega stars in *Red, White and Blue*, the third film of Steve McQueen's *Small Axe* anthology series.

but it still contains some unexpected pleasures. Sheyi Cole plays Alex Wheatle, a young man who spent most of his childhood in white institutional care homes. After discovering a community through his passion for music, Alex gets caught in the Brixton Uprising of 1981 and arrested. While in jail though he finds a path to heal and eventually becomes an award-winning author. At just 66 minutes, it flies through Alex's life without really giving us a chance to know him, but Cole gives an impressive performance.

Capping off the series is *Education*, another tale of a young man let down by the system. Following 12-year-old Kingsley (Kenyah Sandy) who is sent to a "special needs" school due behavioral problems and difficulty reading. His overworked parents don't question this, but a group of West Indian women work to reveal that these schools are just ways to prevent Black children from getting a proper education. This one feels the most personal (McQueen suffered from dyslexia as a child) and the pain, anger and empathy can be felt in every scene.

For McQueen, born to Caribbean parents in 1969, these all clearly come from a place of personal and cultural nostalgia, but the stories of *Small Axe* are so alive, energetic and earnest, that their impact can be felt by any person of any time. — Forest Taylor

Currently streaming on Amazon Prime // Directed by: Steve McQueen // Written by: McQueen, Alastair Siddons, Courttia Newland // Starring: Shaun Parkes, Letitia Wright, Malachi Kirby, Amarah-Jae St. Aubyn, Micheal Ward, Shaniqua Okwok, John Boyega, Steve Toussaint, Joy Richardson, Sheyi Cole, Robbie Gee, Jonathan Jules, Kenyah Sandy, Sharlene Whyte, Tamara Lawrance // Rated TV-MA

ai TUNES BY BRAD PATTULLO

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DON'T LET GO ... WHILE I'M HANGING ON... 'CAUSE I'VE BEEN HANGING ON SO LONG...



OUR LOVE'S IN JEOPARDY... BAY-BEE ... OO-OO-OOH



SONGS I CAN'T LISTEN TO WITHOUT THINKING OF THE "WEIRD AL" VERSION:

- THE KNACK - "MY SHARONA"
- THE KINKS - "LOLA"
- MILY CYRUS - "PARTY IN THE USA"
- MADONNA - "LIKE A VIRGIN"
- BARENAKED LADIES - "ONE WEEK"
- GREG KINN BAND - "JEOPARDY"



TRUMP

Pleased to meet you. I hope you guessed my name.



JUST TOYIN' WITCHA - BY B. TOY

ONWARD! TO VICTORY!



OMNIPOTENT

MSHIMEK2021

BUT MY MIND KEPT DRIFTING. I REALIZED IT'S NOT POSSIBLE TO PRETEND WE ARE ALL DOING OK, DOING OUR USUAL THINGS THE WAY WE ALWAYS DO THEM DAY TO DAY.

I WAS WORKING ON A COMIC ABOUT GOD ALWAYS WINNING AT A SHELL GAME,



IT'S OK TO FEEL THE WAY YOU DO RIGHT NOW. THINGS ARE REALLY MESSED UP WITH THE VIRUS & POLITICS. JUST STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO BE STILL FOR A MOMENT OR TWO. DO IT AGAIN LATER. AND THEN AGAIN TOMORROW. ALSO THE NEXT DAY. I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT NORMAL IS, BUT THIS ISN'T IT. PLEASE BE GENTLE & KIND WITH YOURSELF AND EACH OTHER. QUIETLY LISTEN TO THE MYSTERY OF IT ALL.

ALBUM REVIEWS

Viagra Boys

Welfare Jazz

Year 0001



If you happen to be the music supervisor of a television series right now, this album must feel like a complete godsend. Out of these 13 tracks, there are more than a handful of raucous cuts bursting with snarky humor and genre-melding garage rock chaos. This is the second full-length album from the quintet out of Stockholm, Sweden. Comparing *Welfare Jazz* to their 2018 debut, *Street Worms*, listeners will find the same blasting basslines and outsider saxophone work, with a much wider palette of characterization the band is eager to utilize. On this record, they're less like Idles and Fontaines D.C. and more like a funnier version of the Black Keys or the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. There's a fun game you can play with this record. Listen to it track by track and picture what TV show's end credits it would go best with. There's the literal ones ("Ain't Nice" for *Good Girls* and "Creatures" for *What We Do in the Shadows*) and the more tonal ones ("Toad" in *The Righteous Gemstones* and "To the Country" in *Better Call Saul*), going to show how wildly illustrative this album happens to be.

— Nick Warren



Jazmine Sullivan

Heaux Tales

RCA



For her first release in six years, R&B powerhouse songwriter Jazmine Sullivan brings us a clearly structured concept album. Thankfully, there's still plenty of her voice to go around on this one. The other voices, however, are the true unifying threads stitching this record together. Following a 75-pound weight loss this year, this release finds Sullivan at her most sexually liberated, and at 14 tracks and over 32 minutes, this is technically categorized as an EP. There are seven proper songs here, as well as an intro and six different audio vignettes from different women describing what they want out of sex and relationships, ergo the tongue-in-cheek title *Heaux Tales*. Acting almost like theatrical prompts, each of these is an ideation of the song it precedes. The album flows exceedingly well, and if you're not reading each of the song titles one-by-one, the concept may even go unnoticed upon first listen. There are some high profile guests like H.E.R., Ari Lennox, and the magnificent Anderson .Paak. Sullivan's soaring, passionate vocals make each song her own, although the album's production doesn't mine the creative fields that 2015's *Reality Show* does.

— Nick Warren



Teddy Rankin

Is Enough

Self-released



Teddy Rankin is many things, and it's quite the understatement to say that the exceptionally talented Erie songwriter is enough. That's just what Rankin's fifth solo album is called though. At home with the artist's humble nature, the title lightly underscores battles with self-worth and confidence that have run through his albums since the beginning. Rankin's gorgeous tenor voice and wise-beyond-his-years lyricism are as present as they ever were. The most significant departure on this album is its rich tonal explorations. Synthesizer lines and layered guitar effects make this the fullest-sounding solo album Rankin has made to date. It's a sound that he all but abandoned on his stripped-down albums *Who the Heck Is* and *Omitting the Middle*, and he's come back to it in full force, never being bogged down by too many elements happening at once. Rankin and company gave this album the rollout it deserved in late 2020, complete with music videos for three songs: "Eyes," "Out of Love" (both directed by Nick Humes) and "Tropical Depression" (directed by Morgan McCall and Ruth Zapico Mancebo). If you haven't explored Rankin's rich catalog yet, now's it's time enough at last.

— Nick Warren



Tyler Smilo

The Profound Ramblings'

Self-released

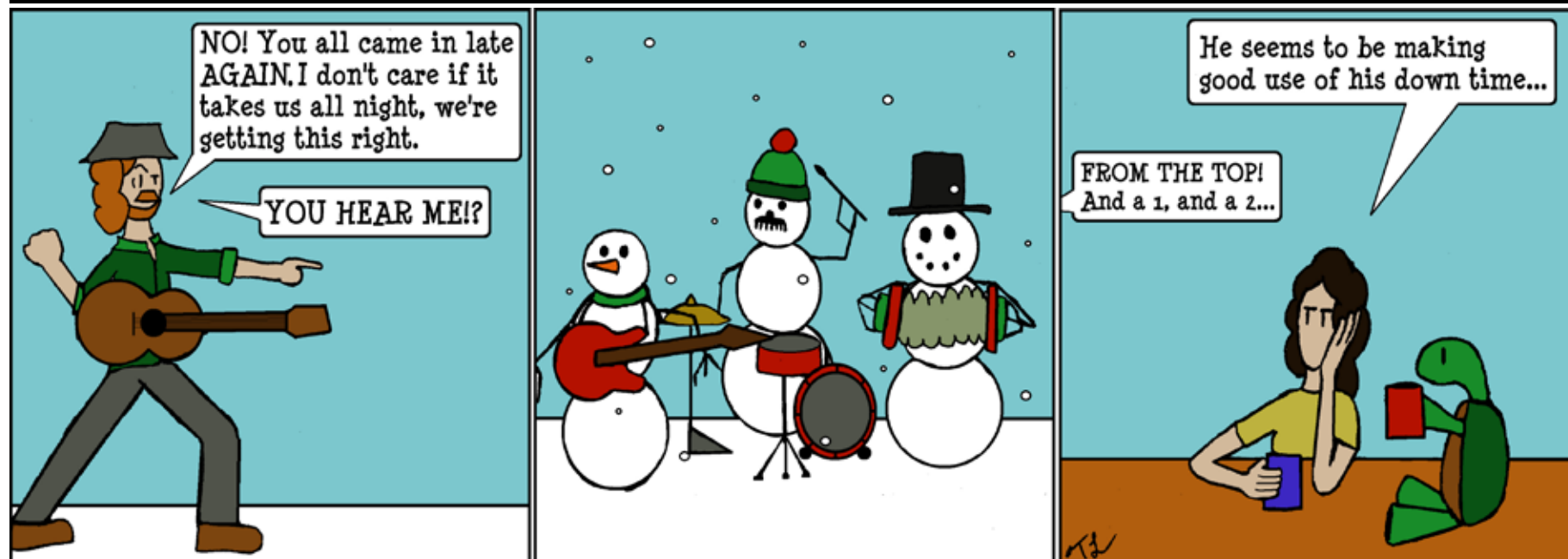


Tyler Smilo isn't afraid to try something bold, and you know what's pretty damn bold? Releasing an entirely improvised folk album. That's precisely what he did here with *The Profound Ramblings'*. Maybe it's the fact that these 10 tracks feel so successfully fleshed out that makes it a bold rather than foolhardy errand. Let's not put the gimmick ahead of the actual product, however — she's a humdinger. Smilo has put in his 10,000 hours of songwriting, and this record shows it. There are cuts that have the searing flavor of Damien Rice like "Far From the Ocean Blue," "Picture Show," and the moving closer "Wilson." As the opening track hints at, there are others with the humorous spontaneity of Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Free" like "Heart Like a Banjo" and the penultimate "Ramblin' Hell." Some of the most memorable moments come from the more anthemic songs like "Morning Coffee" (including its well-earned hold-for-laugh moment), and "On Our Own." In his life post-recovery, Smilo is still at the top of his songwriting prowess. In his own words "Sometimes the most profound stuff is right off the tip of the tongue."

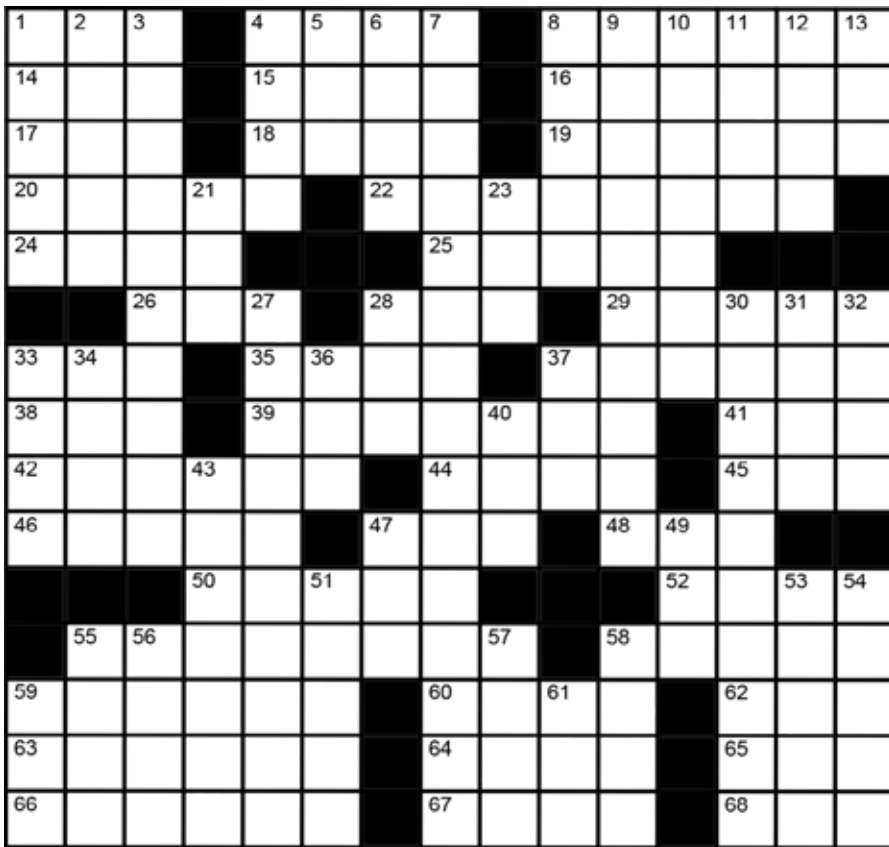
— Nick Warren



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

1. USO show attendees
4. It's full of holes
8. Breakfast cereal pioneer
14. Scarfed down
15. Scent
16. TV's Greene and Michaels
17. The Bulldogs' sch.
18. Singer born Paul David Hewson
19. Words that begin the line before "Deny thy father and refuse thy name"
20. Kids' character Eddie Murphy spoofed on "SNL" in the early '80s and again in 2019

Down

1. Assess
2. He might provide assistance after a crash
3. Tool for undoing stitches
4. Scuba tank filler
5. A single Time?
6. Abbr. in many company names
7. Called up
8. "___ Sings Dylan" (1965 folk album)
9. Snake in "Raiders of the Lost Ark"
10. Brainiac
11. T or F, frequently: Abbr.
12. Something to pass at a fund-raiser
13. Lug
14. After-tax amount
15. Not halal, in Arab cuisine
16. "___ all a blur"
17. Doze (off)
18. Top-quality
19. Beach hill
20. Ugandan leader?
21. Lukewarm
22. ___ van
23. Very light brown
24. 1011, in old Rome
25. Monty Python co-founder John
26. Botch
27. Waste away
28. It may be hard to keep
29. "Ciao!"
30. ___ and outs

Down

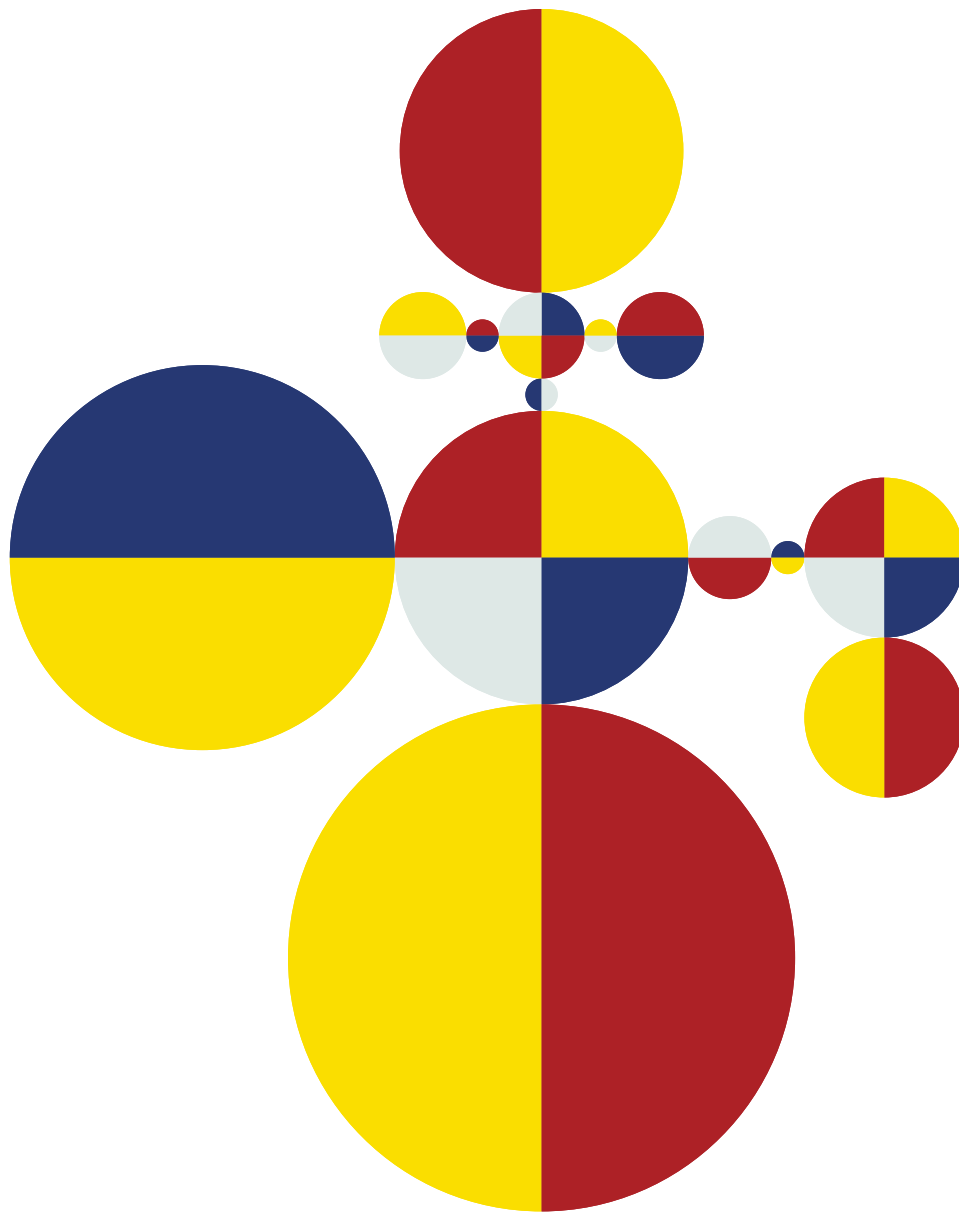
1. Assess
2. He might provide assistance after a crash
3. Tool for undoing stitches
4. Elapse
5. Prefix with meter
6. Anderson of "WKRP in Cincinnati"
7. How Arabic and Hebrew are written
8. Influence
9. Like some bad apples
10. Ask for a hand?
11. "My treat!"
12. One in a gardener's handful
13. General on Chinese menus

21. Jerry's partner in ice cream
23. ___ capita
27. Conditioner's cousin
28. "Life of Pi" director Lee
30. Med. scan that allows the body's organs to be seen in their normal functioning position ... or what can be seen in 3-, 7-, 9- and 27-Down
31. ___ Reader, quarterly magazine that uses the slogan "Cure ignorance"
32. Right direction?
33. Trig or calc
34. Fed. workplace monitor
36. Actor's representative: Abbr.
37. Breakfast grain
40. Canon SLR
43. Not so gloomy
47. "___ little teapot ..."
49. Praiseful poem
51. "Does ___ any better than this?"
53. Resignee of 1974
54. Finds the right words, say
55. ___ slaw
56. Sans opposite
57. 11-time NCAA basketball champs
58. Low brass instrument
59. Variety show hosts, briefly
61. Daily grind



Answers to last puzzle





KEN BURNS PRESENTS
THE GENE
AN INTIMATE HISTORY

Online Screening
FEBRUARY 3 AT 7PM
Register at WQLN.org/gene

The Gene: An Intimate History
FEBRUARY 4 & 11 AT 8PM
on WQLN PBS 54.1



Production funding for KEN BURNS PRESENTS THE GENE: AN INTIMATE HISTORY has been provided by Genentech, 23andMe, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Gray Foundation, American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) & Conquer Cancer Foundation, Judy and Peter Blum Kovler Foundation, Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Outreach and Education Partner is National Institutes of Health, National Human Genome Research Institute. Outreach support is provided by Foundation Medicine.

Art Credit: Gabriel Orozco, Light Signs #3 (Korea) (1995), Medium: light box, plastic sheet, vinyl decals. Dimensions" 39-3/8 x 39-3/8 x 7-3/4 inches. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1996.