The only local voice for news, arts, and culture

ERIE READER

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MAKING THE JUMP

& LANDING ERIE SAFELY

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The only local voice for news, arts, and culture.

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From the Editors

On hard copies and softening hard landings

It was on Sept. 8, 1974 that daredevil Evel Knievel attempted his infamous Snake River Canyon Jump, an absolutely absurd leap across a mile-wide chasm on a rocket-powered motorcycle that would have ended in tragedy, if not for the serendipitous early deployment of the stuntman's escape chute.

In other words, he got lucky. Not all death-defying feats ultimately succeed in defying death — "Mad" Mike Hughes, Guinness World Record holder for longest jump in a stretch limousine (103 feet), perished in California this past winter when the landing parachute on his rocket detached too early. Although tightrope walker extraordinaire Nik Wallenda was successfully able to cross Niagara Falls in 2012 (and Nicaragua's Masaya Volcano this March), his great-grandfather Karl tumbled to his doom when a wind gust knocked him off balance during a 1978 highwire walk between two hotel towers in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In 1974, Frenchman Philippe Petit could be seen as a man on wire 110 stories above New York City, on a rope strung between the freshly constructed World Trade Towers. Similar stunts, vastly different results.

Now, in May 2020, the entire world finds itself suspended in mid-air, calculating a perilous landing. Despite what the conspiracy theorists would have you believe, the COVID-19 global pandemic is no publicity stunt. Nonetheless, it's sent us hurtling up a curve of disturbing numbers, involuntarily, into a terrifying unknown. Where do we come down, and when? How much of ourselves will remain intact, and how long it will it take to mend the bumps, breaks, and bruises?

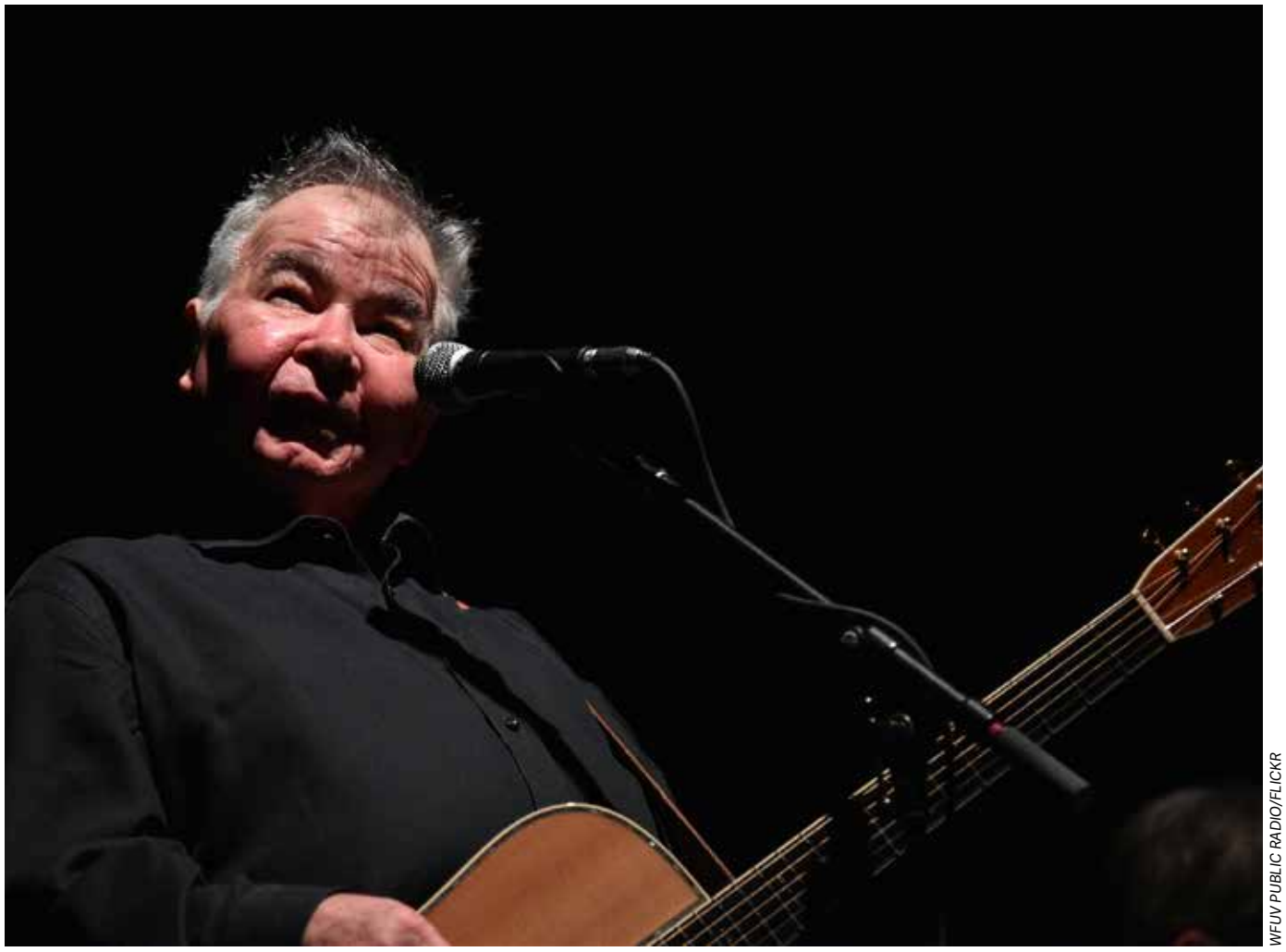
Our economies, our livelihoods, our psyches are not likely to stick this landing — it's going to hurt. We've already seen the fractures and divides. If we are to survive at all, however, *community* will need to be our parachute, with well-intended, well-researched, and well-executed measures taken by our leadership to ensure it has what it needs to function properly. Electing any government official is a bit of a trust fall — electing one in 2020 even more so. In this issue, we interview a candidate who hopes to catch your vote in November in incumbent State Senator Dan Laughlin, and one that is helping brace us for change already in County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper.

By the way, we can't begin to express how happy we are to reprise the prepositional phrase "in the issue." After a run of 240 print editions released weekly or bi-weekly over a span of nine years, the Erie Reader was forced to temporarily suspend print operations with the governor's lockdown order in March. Like most businesses in our city and across the nation, we've been forced to improvise and adapt to survive, most notably leveraging and vastly expanding our online platform to line ourselves up for a cleaner landing (check in at eriereader.com daily, and sign up for the new weekly email newsletter).

Admittedly it's a little strange to exist as *the* local voice for news, arts, and culture without the wonderful events to physically observe the arts and culture in action. But the people behind everything that makes this city what it is are still here, still doing things worth spotlighting and celebrating. And as long as that's the case, the Erie Reader will continue to put itself behind them — *you* — our community.

Erie at Large: John Prine Died Alone

The sad truths hidden in COVID-19 hospital rooms and the rhetorical push-and-pull beyond



WFUV PUBLIC RADIO/FLICKR

Country folk singer-songwriter John Prine, known for his witty and honest lyricism, had recently received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award before passing away on April 7 in Nashville, Tenn. as a result of COVID-19.

By: Jim Wertz

John Prine died alone.

Unlike many others who battled COVID-19, the celebrated country folk artist had his wife by his side, for a time, because she was also hospitalized with the virus. She improved and was sent home. He was placed on a ventilator and never recovered.

Prine's story seemed to be a common refrain in the American song earlier this year as we watched New York City come to a standstill, as the death toll rose by nearly a thousand per day at the peak of the now infamous COVID curve.

Images of active duty military and National Guardsmen transferring the dead from hospitals to makeshift morgues in refrigerated trailers lining the once-bustling streets of Gotham, and finally to the mass-grave burials on Hart Island, leaves an indelible mark of this moment on history.

Unfortunately, that mark is not designed to leave us only thinking of the dead. Once the ill enter those halls, their only interactions are with the ones who Fred Rogers referred to as "the helpers" — the doctors, nurses, and medical staff who put in long shifts wearing layered synthetic suits with filtering masks, faceguards, and anything that might protect them while they help the helpless.

Today, at the Cleveland Clinic, nurses write messages to, and goals for, patients on the windows of their rooms so that the patients understand what is happening around them. Stories from across the country abound of simple gestures like sitting bedside for a few minutes to hold someone's hand or calling a patient's loved one on a personal cell phone when the patient is too weak to do it for themselves.

Daniel Akinyemi, an ICU nurse in Montclair, N.J., told The New York Times about one of the hundreds of calls that have come from people checking on the status of their loved ones. Akinyemi asked a husband if his wife had a favorite song. She did, the husband replied. "Blue Bayou," which she sang while she did laundry and fixed her hair. Akinyemi returned to the woman's room, where she had been placed on a ventilator, played the song on his iPhone, which he kept stored in a plastic sandwich bag to keep it from being exposed to the virus, and sang to her, later reading her a favorite Bible verse.

Goodwill comes in small, but profound, acts.

You've seen the pictures of their bruised faces, their battered spirits, and their heroic resolve to see the hardest hit regions of the country through to the other side of this global pandemic. As it is for those who must overcome COVID-19, we have yet to know the long-term effect of this experience on this population of medical professionals. Some simply surrender.

When someone inflicted with COVID-19 walks or is ushered through the doors of a hospital for treatment, they enter alone. Families are turned away at the door, asked to wait at home until further notice can be given regarding the fate of their loved one. The intensive care unit becomes a solitary confinement where the only interaction is between the patient and those trying to help.

If the patient survives, as many have, the path to full recovery can be long. NPR reported the story of David Williams, a Marine veteran, who spent eight days on a ventilator. In recovery, he's experiencing something called post-intensive-care-unit syndrome, which results from the muscle loss and brain damage caused by the invasive treatments required for some COVID-19 patients. When Williams woke from his medically induced coma, necessary to give the ventilator control of his lungs, he couldn't move his arms or legs, and he had trouble forming complete sentences.

"It takes me awhile to think about the words I need to say," Williams told NPR.

Weeks later, he remained on oxygen and used a walker to help regain full mobility. And Williams was one of the lucky ones. He survived.

As of May 17, more than 90,000 Americans have died from COVID-19. That's nearly a third of all COVID-related deaths worldwide and three times more deaths than the United Kingdom, Italy, and France — the hardest-hit countries behind the U.S., according to Johns Hopkins University, which is tracking the virus through its Coronavirus Resource Center.

New York State has experienced the most deaths, attributing nearly 28,000 to COVID-19 since March.

Nearly all of those hospitalized with COVID-19 suffer from a chronic health issue, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, or obesity. According to a study of New York hospitals published in April by the American Medical Association, 94 percent of those hospitalized had some underlying health con-

dition and nearly 90 percent of those hospitalized had at least two preexisting conditions.

But because the mass casualties have been largely confined to major metropolitan areas, the effects of this virus feel distant to many people. It's — apparently — too easy to dismiss the suffering associated with contracting COVID-19 and the reality that is the experience of those who enter a hospital with few prospects of leaving healthy.

For them, the truth is dire. They die alone.

It's a cruel and fundamental reality of COVID-19 that gets buried amidst the anti-fact protests calling for a return to comfortable pre-pandemic poverty and the political clown car that is the White House press room.

A dysfunctional minority has abandoned empathy in favor of self-interest.

The misguided conservative freedom corps' crusade to re-open the American economy despite the consequences continues to come up short. As far as scientists can tell, the virus most damns those who are already vulnerable and discriminates most against those who already suffer.

But those who care only for a cheeseburger or an hour at the salon, screaming about their superficial so-called freedoms, will be the itinerant carriers for the next wave of this unforgiving threat. While they themselves may not succumb to the virus' symptoms, they may still transfer the virus to others, some of whom may suffer from something that makes them more susceptible to virus' wrath. Do their freedoms come at the expense of others? Does it give them the right to unwittingly serve as the vehicle through which the virus may ride up the crest of a second wave?

They are led by a president who measures his success by the ratings of his daily press conference rather than in lives saved. He refuses to wear a mask (even when touring a mask-producing facility) because it would undermine his unfounded arguments against their effectiveness. And because he leads, the federal response to COVID-19 is a hopeless farce.

Our faith and our fortunes lay only in the hands of governors and legislators, who are now besieged by the same conservative activists who clamor for states' rights and local control when federalism provides a shelter for racism and subjugation.

If science and reason are to be set aside because such facts contradict the cowardice cries of the misinformed, then, as Shakespeare reminded us, our fault is in ourselves.

Yet there is time to correct our course, and to act on behalf of the many in spite of a few.

As we approach November, we have an opportunity to restore order to an orderless and chaotic moment in American history. The unscrupulous and inadequate leadership of a president who speaks and acts from a place of little knowledge, and the congressmen who blindly support him in favor of power over people, can be recalled with the power of your vote.

"Our faith and our fortunes lay only in the hands of governors and legislators, who are now besieged by the same conservative activists who clamor for states' rights and local control when federalism provides a shelter for racism and subjugation."

It will take a leader who understands consequences and who respects that they are making decisions on behalf of honest Americans to lead us toward a better tomorrow and a stronger America.

Yes, businesses are closed, some temporarily, others forever. Yes, people are without work, some for now, others for longer. Yes, it will take time to rebuild economically, just as it will take time to pursue a cure and treatment driven by the scientific method.

But one cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy population to run it and consume from it.

We can't sacrifice public health at the altar of the Almighty Dollar. Otherwise, John Prine had it right when he sang, "Jesus Christ died for nothin', I suppose."

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

Leading Through the Times of COVID-19

A conversation with Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper

LARRY WHEATON

Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper's daily press briefings from WQLN Public Studio have become a familiar sight to many during the COVID-19 pandemic, with updates on the latest numbers, guidance, and advice.

By: Ben Speggen

At the end of a recent phone interview, Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper says she wants to thank the people of Erie County.

"I just want to say that to people: Thank you very much for caring about your fellow citizens, thank you for caring about a community. And we will get through this together."

She also says she is grateful.

"I will tell you, Ben, I am just really grateful that I'm in the position I'm in right now because I don't know that I've ever in my life felt that I have made more of a difference in terms of my community and the welfare of the people here than I am right now," she says. "I know that collectively, we have saved lives. And our community, collectively, we have kept a lot of people from getting very sick. And that's huge. And so I am just grateful that I am in the position I'm in right now. And I am grateful to all the people who are really taking this seriously and helping us because it is a community effort. I can't do this alone; my team can't do this alone."

The *this* is a public health and economic crisis. Either alone would be a critical challenge for any leader, but COVID-19 has brought about both globally, including at the doorstep of Erie County.

Its toll for some has been the loss of jobs. For others, lives.

From the pandemic's dawn to its darker hours, Dahlkemper has been at the forefront of the local response, one that has seen far fewer positive cases and deaths than other counties in Pennsylvania. In her own words, she discusses the response of the county's health department, her routine press briefings, her role in the proverbial air traffic control tower, what she most fears as we march towards summer, and what she's most optimistic about.

Ben Speggen: Early on, you began hosting a daily press briefing. Why was it important to make that a part of what I presume is already a jam-packed day for you?

Kathy Dahlkemper: For me, it was important to reach out to the citizens of this community and give them the best information that I have at the moment I have it. It also is a chance for me to be able to connect with our media in a safe way. A huge thank you to WQLN Public Media for setting up the studio in such a way that any media that wants to join can get a live feed, can ask questions directly to me, and get those answers. It's been a win for the media who wants access, and it's been a win for the citizens who want the information.

BS: This is presumably the most people have seen local government in action on a regular basis. How do you think the crisis has affected the public's perception of local government?

KD: It's been a huge positive — that people see where their county dollars have gone, where they are going, and why it's so needed, that we have this part of our government structure. I'm getting a lot of very positive notes. People are just saying they are so glad that they have a local figure who's out there speaking every day.

They can watch the national [coverage] and they can watch the state, but they want to know what's going on in their own community. Having me out there speaking to it gives them some sense of reassurance that somebody is watching over this, working, doing the job that needs to be done.

And, of course, it's not just me; it's the whole team of people that I'm out there representing when I am speaking. And I've tried to make sure I highlight just the amount of work happening from this whole team.

BS: Some might have been surprised to find that not every county in the commonwealth has a health department and that Erie is one of 10 out of 67 counties or municipalities that have a health department. Are you seeing enough resources allocated to local health departments, like ours, to work on something like this? What might we learn from COVID-19 moving forward of the role of health departments in local communities like ours?

KD: What we knew even prior to COVID-19 was that the state of Pennsylvania had not invested in public health the way that it should have. And I think what we've learned also is our federal government, and even our local government, has not invested in public health the way it should have in order to really be able to react quickly to something of this nature.

My leader of the health department, Melissa Lyon, has been saying for a while, something is going to happen, and we are not ready. And that something was COVID-19.

Contact tracers — the people who are actually talking to those who are positive with COVID-19, getting them isolated, giving them the instructions they need, and then finding out who their close contacts were, and then getting those people to quarantine — those people were already on the job because they do that kind of work every day around things such as tuberculosis or sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. They know what they're doing, they're very skilled at it, and they could easily jump from that work to working pretty much solely on COVID-19. And the same on our environmental side.

As the governor shut down our businesses, they went into more of an enforcement mode. And we were right on top of that, with monitoring the businesses that were open to make sure they were following guidelines and the businesses that needed to be closed.

From the beginning we said, "We're not the hammer; we're actually the hand out." So we were trying to reach our hand out to businesses and say, "How can we help you? This is what you need to do. We want to be your partner in this." And that has been very successful.

BS: Could you go to the bookshelf and pull out a plan and say, "Here's how to

deal with a pandemic," or is this a real-time response to pivot these people quickly?

KD: It was both. We had a pandemic plan that was actually being reworked as all of this sort of came about, and both the Department of Health and Office of Public Safety have emergency management pieces, and they had been collectively working on redoing our pandemic plan. They were waiting on the state, because the state was doing their pandemic plan. We hadn't finalized ours, because we didn't want to have anything that would conflict with the state plan.

Those first couple weeks were extremely hectic, and we often said "We're building this plane as we fly it," figuring out first our Incident Command System, which is agile. You can move fast when you need to, and the structure can build out and can contract in as needed in the pandemic.

It took us a bit to get there, because this is something none of us have ever experienced before. The last time this happened was over 100 years ago in our country. You can practice all you want on these things, but, you know, you learn a lot in the moment when no one's ever experienced it before.

BS: I like your phrasing of "building the plane as we fly it," and I can't help but see your role as potentially the pilot — or, maybe in the air traffic control towers? How is this crisis redefining the role of county executive for you?

KD: It's important to let you all know that the Incident Commander for this whole thing is Melissa Lyon. She is someone who has expertise. So she, I guess, would be the pilot. And I probably would be the person in air traffic control, and I'm overseeing the whole incident command with her leading it.

I also have to think about all of the other pieces out there, so I have to have that 360 view of everything else going on in the community as a whole so that I can bring things into the discussions we're having from the outside that need to be brought in — issues that might be happening on the outside the that command structure needs to know about. I like your analogy, but I think that's really what it was. She's the pilot, flying the plane; I'm out there with a big view up in the tower talking to her and the whole team, keeping that bigger view of what's going on on the outside.

BS: Erie County hasn't been immune to the economic impact of COVID-19. Yet it was one of the first 24 counties to be transitioned to Yellow from Red. Where do you assign credit when it comes to the public health response to the crisis if you really had to point to three key things that we did right from the get-go to get us to where we are today?

KD: We started contact tracing on the first positive, and we have not stopped. Our epidemiologist, he actually said in the beginning, "I don't think we can continue to do this, and I'm not sure if all this is going to make a difference." And he became a believer. He said, "What we are doing is right." And we have to find a way to continue to do this because this is what's making the difference. So that's the first thing.

I think the second thing was our early stay-at-home order. I was watching the rest of the state, and the governor put a stay-at-home order on Montgomery County and in those counties around the Philadelphia area, and then I saw some other numbers starting to pop up, and I actually said, "I'm going to put a stay-at-home order in place."

Because we have a Home Rule Charter here, I was able to do that; I didn't have to wait for the state, but I did call down to the governor. We talked about this with his staff, and I said, "I would love to have the governor's support on this," because we had four cases at the time and all those other counties had 40 or more. The governor agreed, and he backed me up on it. I remember listening to one of his press conferences when the press asked him, "Why did you put Erie County under stay-at-home order when they have so few cases?" He said because they had conversations with leadership there, and we agreed that it was the right thing to do. That was huge for our areas to put that in place so early.

And then third, I'm gonna go back to this enforcement piece. Our education-enforcement team would go out to these businesses, and if they weren't allowed to be open, they would say you need to close.

They had just maybe one or two businesses that were difficult to deal with, but they finally came around. And now, as we are opening back up in the Yellow Phase, this is the team that went out the other day up to the Millcreek Mall area and spoke to the businesses and helped them figure out what they needed to do. They've been educating, educating, educating throughout this.

Let me say also on that enforcement-education team, that's the team that also would go out if there was an issue with one of our isolation or quarantine individuals. As you know, we had one person who unfortunately spent a night in jail. But it's a serious thing when you're under isolation and quarantine; it's what's going to help make our community safe.

We've had well over 500 people under quarantine, over this time, and I want to thank every one of those people who spent 14 days sitting in their home, often never getting any symptoms. But there are some who did get symptomatic and they helped to truly stop the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

BS: What would you say is the one thing that you are most optimistic about as we head into summer, and conversely, what would you say is your biggest fear as we head into summer?

KD: Oh, gosh, my biggest fear is that people will get careless about the guidelines — about the social distancing, the physical distancing — that they need to practice; about wearing a mask when they're out around other people that they don't live with; about washing their hands frequently and using their sanitizer. Because those are the only tools we have right now. We really are dependent upon the people of Erie County to do those things and to do them well.

What I am optimistic about is that we know when you're outside, the spread of COVID-19 is less likely than when you're inside of a building. There are just not as many surfaces for it to get on, the breeze kind of blows the virus, you know, maybe away from you. And so hopefully we can all be outside more, enjoying our beautiful county. And obviously getting some better mental attitudes because the weather's better. And we all seem to have a better state of mental health when the weather's better. But I do feel that the summer could see a lower transmission of the virus if everyone follows the guidelines, and we spend more time outside with our friends and family than we do inside.

Follow Dahlkemper's live streams at WQLN's Facebook page, facebook.com/WQLNPublicMedia. The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity, find the longer transcript, go to ErieReader.com

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From Erie to Selma in 1965

Hammermill Paper's new plant drawn up amidst the historic Civil Rights marches

AP PHOTO

Dr. Reverend Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference stands before Selma, Ala. Sheriff Jim Clark after a protest march in 1965. Clark and Alabama State Police were condemned for their "Gestapo-like" approach to suppressing the activists.

By: Jonathan Burdick

In 2015, U.S. Representative John Lewis spoke to the graduating class of Lawrence University.

"You have a moral obligation, a mission and a mandate, to speak up, speak out, and get in good trouble," Lewis told them.

Good trouble. *Necessary* trouble. Lewis, of course, knew a thing or two about that. As chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (known as SNCC and pronounced "snick") during the Civil Rights Movement, he helped organize the Freedom Summer in Mississippi, participated in sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, planned countless boycotts, and spoke at the 1963 March on Washington.

Lewis, like many civil rights activists, believed that sometimes good trouble was necessary in order to enact change.

Pulp Nonfiction

In May of 1964, an unlikely city found itself in the middle of a Civil Rights Movement struggle: Erie, Pennsylvania. On May 8, The Selma Times-Journal first reported that Hammermill Paper Company, headquartered in Erie, was interested in constructing a pulp mill outside of Selma, Alabama. They had commissioned a feasibility study with the assistance of Alabama Governor George Wallace, who offered lucrative promises of tax exemptions and subsidies.

"Hammermill, a company with a top reputation in every phase of the paper industry, was just the type of industry Selma needs and wants," the paper reported two days later.

Selma hadn't yet received much national attention on the emerging civil rights activism there, but the city was increasingly attracting nonviolent civil disobedience by activists. A year earlier in 1963, SNCC field staff had arrived to help the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) and Selma's NAACP organize direct action in protest of discriminatory practices in voter registration.

Selma was the seat of Dallas County. Despite a population that was 57 percent black, less than one percent of black citizens were registered to vote compared to nearly 70 percent of the white population.

On Sept. 15, 1963, Ku Klux Klan terrorists planted dynamite at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, killing four young black girls. On the day of the funeral, hundreds of Klansmen and other racists gathered nearby. A preacher who spoke at the rally said that the girls were "old enough to have venereal diseases" and "were no more human or innocent than rattlesnakes." This was what activists were up against.

When SNCC arrived in Selma, led by 23-year-old chairman John Lewis, they began their campaign with sit-ins. They were immediately met with violence and arrests. On Oct. 7, 1963, they organized "Freedom Day" in the city. Hundreds of black activists, including writer James Baldwin and well-known comedian Dick Gregory (whose wife had been previously arrested in Selma) participated.

Gregory, in a fiery yet still darkly comical speech two days earlier, told his audience that southern whites had no identity except for their segregated toilets and their ability to use the n-word. He joked that he wished all black people would disappear overnight, as then white people would realize how much the southern economy relied on their labor.

"They would go crazy looking for us," Gregory quipped to roaring laughs and applause. He then continued seriously: "But it looks like we got to do it the hard way and stay down here and educate them."

The nearly 300 demonstrators who showed up that day were met by Sheriff Jim Clark and his posse. Clark's men harassed and arrested many of them.

The News Adjacent to History

Even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act that following July, little changed in Selma. That same week, John Lewis marched dozens of black residents to the courthouse to register. Once again, they were met by Sheriff Clark. He arrested them all. A judge issued an injunction to stop their gatherings.

By early-1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) were involved. On Feb. 1, 1965, only a month after accepting his Nobel Peace Prize award, King was arrested for the first time in Selma after leading hundreds to the courthouse.

As King sat in his jail cell the following day, hundreds more were arrested. According to the Feb. 3 issue of The Selma Times-Journal, over 1,600 total activists had been arrested by that point as demonstrations continued. Adjacent to this article on the very same page of the same issue, the newspaper reported on another happening that same day in Alabama.

"[Hammermill Paper Company] announced today its plans to start immediate construction on a $25-$30 million pulp mill in Dallas County which will employ more than 250 persons," the article read. The plant, planned just outside of Selma, would have a daily output of 400 tons of bleach kraft pulp used in Hammermill's papermaking plants.

Hammermill President John H. DeVitt, Vice President M.E. Graham, and CEO Donald Leslie Sr. were all in Montgomery for the press conference. Alongside them was Gov. George Wallace.

"We are looking forward to more expansion in this fine community. We appreciate the great job you are doing for your state," Leslie complimented Wallace, also noting the "character of the community and its people."

Wallace had been elected governor as a steadfast segregationist, famously declaring, "I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." That June, he'd stood in front of doors at the University of Alabama to prevent two black teenagers from entering, resulting in President John F. Kennedy's federal intervention. King referred to Wallace as the "most dangerous racist in America today."

By early 1965, the Selma campaign was accelerating quickly. On Feb. 18, a night march was led by prominent SCLC leader and close friend of King's: Dr. Reverend Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian. Police attacked the marchers and murdered 26-year-old activist Jimmie Lee Jackson.

On March 7, the first of the Selma to Montgomery marches, later remembered as Bloody Sunday, took place. Nearly 600 marchers were stopped and then brutally attacked by state troopers along with Sheriff Clark and his police force.

The following day, the NAACP released a statement referring to the state police as "Gestapo-like." They condemned Gov. Wallace and his "storm

THIRTY MILLION DOLLAR HANDSHAKE—The chairman of the board of Hammermill Paper Co., of Erie, Pa., Donald S. Leslie, Sr. (left) looks on while Jerry Siegel, Selma (center), and John DeVitt (right), president of Hammermill, shake hands on Hammermill's announcement that it will build a $25-$30 million paper pulp plant near Selma. The officials of the leading producer of fine papers for business and printing were in Selma for a luncheon today at which the Committee of 100-plus was host. Siegel is chairman of the committee's industrial prospect committee.

CORPORATE EXECUTIVES and local officers of Hammermill Paper Company gathered Friday evening for their first social "get-to-gether" since employment started to staff the company's first group of employees as a nucleous for personell to be employed for the Riverdale Plant now under construction near Selma. Pictured here, just prior to the Hammermill's Riverdale plant; Dr. Donald Jackson, Vice President of Production and Development, Erie, Pa.; John DeVitt, President of Hammermill Paper Company, Erie, Pa.; Gary Heinemann, Manager of the Woodland Division, now a resident of Selma; and Fred Bahrenburg, Vice President in charge of Mills, Hammermill Paper Company, Erie, Pa.

SELMA TIMES – JOURNAL

These archival photos from the Selma Times-Journal show Hammermill President John DeVitt and other corporate executives of the Erie-based paper company at a social get-together after agreeing to construct a $30 million pulp mill outside of Selma, Ala. — a move met with resistance due to Alabama Governor George Wallace's openly racist policies.

troopers" as well as the federal government for inaction.

The second attempted march took place two days later. That evening, James Reeb, a white minister and activist from Boston, was badly beaten, resulting in his death.

These two violent events were international news, escalating the situation and making it impossible to ignore in northern cities. In Erie, hundreds of citizens marched downtown in solidarity with the Selma campaign.

Hammermill remained silent. In a scathing March 17 editorial, nationally-syndicated columnist Drew Pearson wrote that the fast-talking, back-slapping Wallace had charmed the foolish Hammermill executives and was clearly using them to gear-up for a presidential campaign. Pearson ripped into them for staging the February "celebration" with Wallace.

"If they are trying to bankrupt us, they're doing a damn good job," Sheriff Clark told reporters about the noise surrounding Hammermill.

As for Wallace, he watched the two Selma marches unfold from Montgomery and continued to refuse protection. Finally, President Lyndon B. Johnson intervened and the third march, which followed a 54-mile stretch of highway between Selma and Montgomery, took place between March 21 through March 25.

Lewis Calls for Boycott

One day later, John Lewis called for a national boycott of Hammermill products. He declared that Hammermill's decision to open a plant in Selma was "a direct support to the racist policies of the state and its peoples."

Some Hammermill clients applied pressure. *Jet Magazine* reported that many black-owned businesses were cutting ties.

GPA PHOTO ARCHIVE/FLICKR

Alabama state troopers move to stop one of several civil rights marches from Selma to Montgomery in the mid-1960s.

"This is a mammoth organization which student civil rights workers and Dr. Martin Luther King are taking on," Pearson warned.

"Hammermill is now deeply involved in the civil rights controversy, whether it likes it or not," another columnist wrote. "Hammermill is a marked firm."

A short drive away from Erie at Ohio's Oberlin College, Oberlin Action for Civil Rights members Joe Gross and Jerry Von Korff, already active in the movement, were planning a demonstration at Hammermill's headquarters.

"We got in touch with SCLC," Von Korff, now an attorney in Minnesota, remembers of the Hammermill demonstrations today. "We arranged to rent some buses and we posted the project around campus."

SNCC, SCLC, and the NAACP all began recruiting students. The Penn State chapter of the Student Union for Racial Equality (SURE) planned to join the demonstration led by student Curry First. At Oberlin, Gross and Von Korff pulled together two busloads of students to bring to Erie.

Erie's Own Marches

On May 11, 1965, the first day of these demonstrations (described in media reports as a "siege") began. It commenced with local activist Reverend Jesse MacFarland leading multiple groups of 25 in a march from Downtown Erie to the Hammermill headquarters on the shores of Lake Erie. Not coincidentally, this was during Hammermill's annual meeting of stockholders and directors.

"One group blocked the main gate where employees entered," explains Von Korff. "We passed out literature explaining that Hammermill was moving to the labor unfriendly south in order to pay lower wages and exploit their black workers. I took a group of students and staged a sit-in on the railroad tracks to prevent trains from supplying or leaving the plant."

The police stood by idly. "We are going to let them sit there until they get discouraged," one Erie officer told the press.

Media reports estimated that there were as many as 200 demonstrators, including Dr. C.T. Vivian.

Vivian, who King called "the greatest preacher who ever lived," had first arrived in Selma in December 1964. He was the representative who first informed the DCVL and SNCC that King would bring the SCLC if they wanted him. After they joined, Vivian had marched with 70 black citizens to register, resulting in a heated confrontation with Sheriff Clark that ended with Vivian being punched in the face.

Despite the public pressure and Dr. Vivian's presence, Hammermill executives defended the company. Yet, very aware of the escalating situation, they agreed to meet with a committee of activists from each organization.

The next day, Gross and Van Korff joined Dr. Vivian and others at Hammermill's headquarters. They met with DeVitt and other executives, who were adamant that it was impossible for Hammermill to pull out of Selma at that point. A compromise was needed.

A Restless Resolution

"They served us sandwiches and we negotiated, C.T. taking the lead," Van Korff recalls.

Outside, a second day of demonstrations resumed with over 250 activists. Meanwhile, Hammermill's attorneys were in court petitioning Erie County Judge Samuel Rossiter. He granted an injunction against the protesters. Fifty police officers arrived and 65 were booked for obstruction of an officer.

On May 12, the New York Times reported that negotiations had lasted four hours and the activists had withdrawn some demands. On May 13, they reported that Hammermill signed a negotiated agreement, publicly committing Hammermill to hiring black workers and advocating for their voting rights.

"The agreement required Hammermill to support school integration and to provide equal compensation to their black and white workers," Van Korff adds.

DeVitt announced he was already planning to hire a black student from Gannon College, a senior and standout basketball player originally from Selma, for employment at their new plant.

DeVitt also stated that building the mill in Selma "does not in any way indicate support for or approval of those who are opposed to civil rights or who accept the brutality and violence which has permeated the area." He still defended their decision though, noting that "refusal to locate near Selma wouldn't remove civil rights problems there or advance civil liberties." He would personally speak with Sheriff Jim Clark and Selma's mayor, he said.

Activists wanted more assurance.

DeVitt was clearly frustrated. Richard Phalon reported in The New York Times how when one visitor on a tour of the Hammermill plant mentioned Selma, DeVitt told him "to drop a quarter in the 'swear box.'"

One senior at Penn State, an Erie native, defended Hammermill in Penn State's The Daily Collegian.

"Hammermill's integrity cannot be questioned," he wrote. "I have discussed Hammermill with many Erieites over the past few months and all speak favorably of the company. Hammermill should not be picketed."

Curry First, a senior and leader of SURE who had been arrested during the Erie demonstrations, spoke on campus, clarifying that the demonstrations were about solidarity with King.

Sophomore Nancy Avery criticized SURE, writing that Hammermill was known for equal opportunity policies. "SURE would do well to study the 'Hammermill image' in the world market and in particular, in the Erie area. Does SURE realize that the Behrend Campus ... is one result of this interest in non-industrial endeavors? ... Or that the Behrends' son willingly destroyed his own life by driving his car off the highway to avoid hitting a school bus full of children?"

Curry First shot back. He didn't dispute President DeVitt's commitment to equal rights. He also didn't want or expect Hammermill to relocate. It was about Hammermill's corporate morality and using their economic leverage to enact change.

"The action was justified on the belief that business has an important responsibility to society, to the community it serves and supports ... and from which it derives financial gain," First explained.

For civil rights activists, the Selma campaign was a success. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law on Aug. 6, 1965, banning the use of literacy tests and other tactics meant to disenfranchise.

Construction began on the Selma plant that year — and while the Erie plant shut down in 2002, the Selma plant is still in operation.

Were the demonstrations in Erie a success or a failure then? As Curry First said, Hammermill executives hadn't made any commitment before their demonstrations. The executives had initially "shown a lack of regard for human suffering" and their "initial inaction was a choice," which could only be interpreted as "support for the Wallace storm-trooper kind of government."

In that regard, Hammermill was subject to public scrutiny and, as a result, public accountability. In other words, during those two days during the spring of 1965, they had been up to *good* trouble in Erie, Pennsylvania.

And as John Lewis says, good trouble is *necessary* trouble.

This article has been edited for length; to read the full-length article, visit eriereader.com

Jonathan Burdick runs the historical blog Rust & Dirt. Follow them on Twitter @RustDirt, and on Instagram @Rustanddirt.

Laughlin Seeks Senatorial Second Act

Big issues remain, incumbent hopes to do the same

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pennsylvania State Senator Dan Laughlin weighs in at a recent budget hearing in Harrisburg. He will seek his second term representing Pa.'s 46th senatorial district (which includes the majority of Erie County) as the lone Republican on the ballot, competing against the winner of next month's Democratic primary, Julie Slomski or Andre Horton.

By: Matt Swanseger

Education, employment, environment, healthcare, economy, infrastructure, crime, social equality — at any level of government, these issues ensure that lawmakers will always have their hands full. For Pennsylvania's state senators, the past four years have been challenging; the next four, on the other side of a global pandemic, will be trying. Senator Dan Laughlin, representing the state's 49th Senatorial District (which includes a sizable majority of Erie County), has been in the mix in Harrisburg since 2016 and seeks to continue his work there through 2024. The incumbent will run on the Republican ticket unopposed this November, facing off against the winner of next month's Democratic primary, either Andre Horton or Julie Slomski.

Big issues don't have easy solutions, but Sen. Laughlin was able to touch on some of the immediate tasks at hand during a recent phone interview.

Matt Swanseger: I first want to discuss whether you agree or disagree with the governor's approach for reopening the economy. And if not, do you think there's a better way to go about it, wherein we can balance public health and safety with the need to get things back up and running?

Dan Laughlin: I'll try and be as brief as possible. I was very supportive of the governor's initial shutdown order for flattening the curve. And I think it was fairly successful actually — the fact that we have fairly low numbers in Erie County is indicative of that.

Having said that, I do have some disagreements with the governor as far as some of the things that he shut down. And one of the areas where I did disagree with the governor initially was the shutdown of all construction in Pennsylvania. We were the only state to do that. And that added almost a third of our unemployment numbers. And I say that was probably my single biggest disagreement with the governor as far as the shutdown orders.

MS: You're philosophically opposed to big government spending. But there are a lot of folks out there who are either financially struggling right now, or will be soon. Is there any alternative to major government intervention in situations such as this?

DL: We do know that the government plays a role in a crisis like this. I think the stimulus checks approach was appropriate. And I think it will help our economy in many ways. Now, the one thing that I will also clarify is that when the initial CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act was being discussed, I wrote a letter to Senator Toomey and Senator Casey indicating that I felt that our unemployment should have been capped at 90 percent of full pay, because that would have been virtually the same as true take-home pay. And I think that was an appropriate amount. The $600 extra is starting to become a problem where employees are making more money. They don't want to return to work.

MS: Once this blows over, how much will the pandemic have disrupted some of the initiatives to fund startups, stimulate growth in our job market, and keep young people here? Do you think Erie will be able to pick up where it left off in terms of the progress it'd been making?

DL: First off, our entire economy has been greatly disrupted by this pandemic. And I think I think that our workforce will have probably changed forever. As we emerge from this, I think there's gonna be a lot of folks that realize that they can safely and efficiently work from home and maybe won't ever return to a more traditional workplace setting. On some level, I think our growing tech industry has probably fared a little bit better than some of the more traditional types of employment because with a lot of tech jobs, you can work from home.

So I think that's a really good thing to have — more of a diverse workforce in Erie then perhaps we had years ago with the reliance on heavy manufacturing. But as we come out of this, I think a lot of people —myself included — and other government officials will have to adapt and adjust to see where the need is greatest and apply whatever stimulus tools we have to try and bring industries back and help businesses survive.

MS: I want to touch on education next. Public schools are bracing for some tough times ahead, in addition to the adversity they've faced for quite some time now. Erie School District Superintendent Brian Polito recently froze his own pay in anticipation of more budget shortfalls. What is being done at the state level to preserve public education and if in-person classes are not permitted to resume in August or September, how can we support distance learning without sacrificing quality?

DL: I would say that the lack of broadband Internet to vast areas of Pennsylvania is something that the legislature had been working on already before the pandemic, but I think it really brought into focus just how badly it's needed. And it's going to be extremely difficult to provide a fair standard of education for all the public school kids across the state when there is such a disparity in both funding and Internet access. I'm extremely hopeful that we'll have returned to class in the fall, but if not, we at least have some number of months here to try and prepare.

MS: Environmentally. Erie has some major concerns right now in terms of the high water levels and erosion. And as we know that has huge implications on recreation, tourism and overall economy. Has there been any motion on mitigating these issues?

DL: I'm actually glad you brought that up. As some of your readers will probably remember, I've been working on trying to do something with the breakwaters at Presque Isle. I find them to be basically eyesores and I don't believe that they're working very efficiently ... My office is currently researching the famous Plan 2014, part of the Great Lakes Compact. And I believe that actually has a little bit more to do with the high water levels in Lake Erie right now than anything else. We're trying to get to the bottom of that because we can't just let Presque Isle get destroyed. It's a vital part of our economy and a natural treasure.

MS: Absolutely. What other alternatives to breakwaters have you explored to limit the erosion?

DL: I'm glad you brought that up as well. There is an alternate method of doing breakwaters known as an artificial reef. I discussed it with the Army Corps of Engineers a couple of years ago. I'm trying to get the state and/or federal government to pay for a fresh study that would study that type of a breakwater system. The beauty of that from what I understand is that will provide a more natural looking shoreline rather than that scallop that we have now.

MS: Are there any other proposals or bills in consideration right now that you're really passionate about, that you're really pushing for and putting your weight behind? Explain why they mean so much for you and how they could mean a lot to your constituency.

DL: I think one of the most impactful bills that I'm working on right now

hasn't gotten that much press yet. It's a bipartisan bill that (Philadelphia Democrat) Sen. Sharif Street and I have been collaborating on. He came on in 2016 when I did, and even though he's vice chair of the Democratic Party, if I'm not mistaken, and it's kind of his job to get rid of me, we've become pretty good friends.

We work together pretty well on a lot of items and we are working on a pharmaceutical transparency bill that would lower prescription drug costs for most Pennsylvanians that are struggling with the cost of pharmacy. It's gonna take a lot of work to try and get it passed, but I feel confident that between Sen. Street and I, we can get the traction that we need.

MS: Sounds good to me. Is there any other message you'd like to leave our readers with before I let you go?

DL: I think there's one thing that a lot of your readers might be surprised to find out that I'm a huge fan of solar energy. I think that solar is probably going to be what replaces our fossil fuel energy industry. I mean, we have a ways to go. But I see it as the cleanest, most environmentally and economically friendly source of energy that we have. And I think that we should be putting a lot more effort towards that. And I introduced a bill concerning that a few weeks ago.

MS: Excellent. Thank you Senator for your time.

Matt Swanseger can be reached at mswanseger@eriereader.com

How One Former New Yorker Returned to Erie to Write

Local native and former creative director of TED advises on how to get those creative juices flowing

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Author Doug Chilcott, former associate creative services director for *The New Yorker* and creative director of TED Conferences, moved back home to Lawrence Park in January 2019 to take a "self-funded creative sabbatical." Once limited to writing 2,000 words a week, he now produces the same output on a daily basis, with two novels and several short stories in the works.

By: Liz Allen

Someone on Twitter challenged his or her followers to write the first sentence of "your great pandemic novel" — the book you've finally gotten around to writing because you now have oodles of time on your hands.

This was my tweet, for a book that would be more memoir than fiction: "The twice-widowed bride and the divorced groom got married 37 years after their first date."

Then I got stuck, so I asked my husband, the divorced groom who married me, the widowed bride, to pitch in. I'd write one sentence, he'd write the next line, until we had completed our masterpiece.

At least Eric, my husband, has a couple of books under his belt, including *Baseball Stats*, written for Scholastic and co-authored with Jeff Shermack.

But who was I kidding? I haven't even been able to finish a single book during the pandemic, let alone write one, even though in early March I checked out a stack of enticing library books, including *The Library Book*, Susan Orlean's nonfiction narrative about a fire that torched the Los Angeles Public Library in 1986.

And instead of diving into *Summer of '69*, a guilty-pleasure beach read by Elin Hilderbrand, I've frittered away time reliving the summer of '68 by playing *Hair*, the "American tribal love-rock musical," on my retro turntable. I want to psych myself up for the day when we'll all have hair "shoulder length or longer."

I decided to unjam my brain from reader's block by catching up with author Doug Chilcott, who moved away from Erie after college, enjoyed an amazing career in creative enterprises involving writing and marketing, then returned to Lawrence Park in January 2019 to work on two novels.

Now 56, Chilcott has also been inspired to write a collection of short stories, based on his "radical change" of leaving New York City to move home, invest in a house, and buy his first car.

Chilcott moved back to Lawrence Park because he was ready to take "a self-funded creative sabbatical." He has worked as vice president/associate producer for *Pop-Up Magazine*, as creative director for TED Conferences, and as associate creative services director for *The New Yorker*.

I met Chilcott through Diane Chido, president of DC Analytics. In January 2019, about the same time that Chilcott moved here, Chido asked me to participate in her five-part lecture series at the Jefferson Educational Society. Her idea was to encourage local leaders to apply lessons from international peacekeeping and nation-building strategies to solve regional problems in Erie.

Months later, when I ran into Chido at the grocery store, she spotted my TEDxErie T-shirt and invited me to hear Chilcott speak to the Rotary Club of Erie on Sept. 11. As the Rotary's program chair, Chido seeks out programming that examines "Erie's renaissance and the importance of inclusivity as an integral part of the process, not something we slap on later," she said.

Chilcott spoke at the Rotary about how the Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) Conferences grew into a global phenomenon, but I knew I'd like the guy when I queued up in the local Sheraton buffet line. That's where I met his mom, Rosemarie Chilcott. She introduced herself by saying that one of her daughter's best friends is the sister of my friend, Mary Solberg. It was such a delightfully Erie way of making connections.

I'm also always interested in meeting people who have boomeranged back to Erie. Some, like Chilcott, bring their talents and energy back temporarily. Others, including Chido, make a longer-term commitment. She has lived in Erie, her hometown, since 2003, but she uprooted herself in 2015 to join the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., working at the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute.

"I went to Carlisle on a one-year contract, sold my house, took the leap, and stayed for three years," she said. In addition to her consulting work, she is an adjunct teacher at Gannon University.

The Army War College has several Erie connections. Jim Breckenridge, former dean of Mercyhurst University's Ridge College of Intelligence Studies and Applied Sciences, is the War College provost. Kris Wheaton, a former intelligence studies professor at Mercyhurst, is a professor of strategic futures at the War College.

Chido considers Wheaton as one of her most influential mentors, and his wife, Judy Wheaton, has become her dear friend. When the Wheatons were preparing to downsize to move to Carlisle, they advertised their baby grand on Facebook. Chilcott bought the piano for his new house in Lawrence Park.

Judy Wheaton was tickled that her family's piano would be in good hands. "This guy is such a treasure," she said. "He values relationships, music, and art."

Wheaton knows what it's like to relocate to a new place. A military brat who married a man in the military, she's moved 16 times in her life, she said.

"She was so upset that she had found such an interesting person just as she was leaving, so she handed him over to me," said Chido. Wheaton had a wine-tasting party to introduce Chilcott to some Erie people, including Chido, whom she describes as a great writer with deep community connections in Erie.

Chido said it can be a challenge to relocate, "especially in a place like Erie, which is so tribal."

I wrote a column long ago about someone who was charmed by Erie's "Mayberry RFD" values, and I once screened a job candidate for the

newspaper who said that Erie reminded him of Beverly, the Irish-Catholic neighborhood in Chicago immortalized by the Rev. Andrew Greeley in his Blackie Ryan novels. I view Erie as an amalgam of small-town values and big-city culture. Chilcott is at home in both settings.

The youngest of six children, he grew up in Lake Cliff in Lawrence Park. A voracious reader, he was also immersed in theater, band, and music in high school. His late father, Richard, was a "big storyteller" who also loved to change the rules when they were playing cards or board games. "In many ways, that's what creativity is. You are constantly adding something," he said. But in writing or other arts, you shouldn't become so obsessive with tweaking that it cripples you, he said.

Following graduation from Wooster College in Ohio, Chilcott spent that summer in London, bartending with his college roommate at a seedy pub that he suspected catered to prostitutes. His first novel is based on that experience. "In the book, (the pub) actually is a brothel. It connects all the characters in the pub ... it's a fun social romp about two American kids," he said.

Living in New York, Chilcott would set aside Fridays to write about 2,000 words for his novels. Confident that he had some "momentum" with both works, he decided to take advantage of Erie's lower cost of living to move home and finish them. Working three to four hours a day, he's upped his output to 2,000 words a day, and now the novels and his short stories are about 75 percent complete.

Of course, he misses New York. He visited there in mid-March, just as the full impact of COVID-19 was being unleashed. "New York is just the best city in the world. To see it struggling is challenging," he said.

Still, the skills he honed as a New Yorker in "being wildly over-observant" serve him well here as a writer. He recognizes that stories pop up everywhere. One of my favorites about Chilcott is the anecdote about how he announced his homecoming to his mom.

During the summer of 2018, he found a house near Elbow Park in Lawrence Park that interested him. Later, he asked his sister, Karen Barringer, and his best friend, David Anthony, to walk through the house with the real estate agent. "I bought the house without being inside of it," he said.

Chilcott, an "urban planning junkie," likes the fact that Lawrence Park is a planned community, designed by pioneering urban planner John Nolen for General Electric Co. workers. "As a New Yorker, I needed to have a little bit of urban density," he said. He likes the fact that he can walk to the Lawrence Park Dinor, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, along with most of Lawrence Park Township.

His sister used a ruse to get their mother to Chilcott's new house, telling her that a friend was thinking of buying it. Chilcott greeted his family at the door. His mother was surprised to see her son in town. Then as a recording of Chilcott playing cello came from a little speaker in the dining room, Chilcott announced to his mom: "Welcome to my house," he recalled.

"It's a nice chapter of my life to be back here," he said

I asked Chilcott for advice for aspiring authors.

"There are stories all over the place, if you just look close enough," he said. When he observes people, he also sees their story — or a potential story — hanging over their heads, like a thought bubble.

Chilcott reassured me that it's OK to think small and to be "really efficient" in your writing. Tell a story in three paragraphs, he suggested. Or write your story as a screenplay, in three parts.

Chilcott already has one book to his name. "Alas. In the 1990s, I ghostwrote a book for Kermit the Frog, *Kermit's 501 Fun Facts for Kids*," he said. "I got to visit the Henson headquarters and see some of the Muppets in their natural habitat (which was a gorgeous townhouse off Park Avenue!)."

Now I'm really envious. In college, I liked to sing Kermit's poignant and perceptive signature number, "It's Not Easy Being Green." I had learned it by watching *Sesame Street* with my four-year-old brother. I liked the music so much that my future third husband bought me the first *Sesame Street* album as a Christmas present in 1970. I pulled that out of the cupboard when I excavated *Hair*.

Liz Allen and her husband, Eric Compton, have only written 280 words and eight paragraphs in their great pandemic novel. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com.

A Summertime Festival Drought

As large group events are pushed aside this summer, fans and organizers alike are left questioning

NICK WARREN

With iconic summer festivals such as the Blues & Jazz Festival [left] and CelebrateErie bottom] canceled due to the COVID-19-induced moratorium on large gatherings, 2020 promises to be much quieter than usual. Nonetheless, organizers continue to seek alternatives that would allow the community to connect from individual locations.

By: Symoné Crockett and Nick Warren

Summer is a time when we all look forward to getting out of our houses to enjoy the fresh air and hot sun. One of our favorite things to do, especially among Erieites, is to enjoy the plentiful events and festivals held near and far. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has all changed, though event organizers have been eager to adapt.

For any avid festival-goer, there's a list you keep — either mentally or literally — of the events you want to attend. As bars and music venues shuttered their doors in March, some people held out hope, clinging to the prospect that they might be able to get their fix in a few months.

Locally, this would not prove to be the case. As the stay-at-home order gave way to Pennsylvania's Yellow Phase of reopening, social distancing practices became the norm. Statewide regulations calling for a six-foot distance between people, combined with a 25-person limit for gatherings, have essentially canceled the festival season for the summer of 2020.

One by one, those events became checked off. Canceled. Postponed. Rescheduled indefinitely. Though wordings changed from event to event, the message was similar: We can't do it this year.

Though not everyone has made it official yet, hopes look dim that there will be literally any viable festival options, at least not like the ones we were used to.

John Vanco, who for over 28 years has helped oversee Erie's Blues and Jazz festival remarked that "it's no secret that we live in the same world as everybody else. We're not going to have thousands of people in Frontier Park this year." Erie's Blues and Jazz Festival have made no formal announcement at this time, as they, like many others, are deciding what to do next.

From early on, some could see it coming. "I sat down in February to look at what was going on and it's been consistent," Vanco noted, saying that the experts and the epidemiologists had generally hit the mark regarding what was to come. And there's nobody who has — with any scientific approach — predicted that this is going to be over anytime soon."

"There's no question that we're not going to have this," Vanco stated. "It's going to be an event-less summer in Erie in terms of people getting together in the same place."

"What we are working towards is what we do instead," he said. This seemed to be a common theme among event organizers. "What do we do now?"

One announcement of a major postponement came from the City of Erie itself. Celebrate Erie, a free multi-day event that temporarily takes over downtown, will not be happening in 2020.

Mayor Joe Schember noted that "the decision to postpone [Celebrate Erie] comes after six weeks of careful research and continued discussions with the Erie County Department of Health, city officials, and the Celebrate Erie planning team, and local event organizers. We want to ensure the safety of attendees, staff, and the community-at-large," Schember explained.

"This was not an easy decision, but I believe it's the right decision," the mayor continued, echoing the statements that other festival followers have seen cropping up lately.

When their public announcement came on Thursday, May 14, they also included a tease of something small in place of the sprawling festival called 814 Day, occurring on Friday, Aug. 14 (08/14/2020).

Aaron Loncki, president of Celebrate Erie (and marketing strategist with Office of the Mayor) explained that "With the 814 Day concept, our goal is to explore some options that we can do either virtually, or get people out of their house and do activities that wouldn't congregate a group of people together, but that people can do at their own leisure." Though the full details of the event are yet to be determined, he hinted that it may involve Erieites "exploring different restaurants and making sure they can get takeout from different folks, and having a contest there or a reinvented ChalkWalk, in a way where it's throughout town instead of all in one area."

It's not just weekend-long celebrations affected, of course, as events like 8 Great Tuesdays and the Erie Food Truck Festival fall by the wayside as well. Kate Philips, chairperson of the Erie Food Truck Festival (and co-owner of the Erie consulting firm Parker Philips) shared that they would be adapting as well, as the Front Porch Festival on June 6. "We've booked six bands," Philips explained. "We're going to be streaming live and we think it's going to be a really cool day for people to gather on their front porch and listen to local Erie artists." The festival will also serve as a day to donate to local food truck operators, as "small business owners who own food trucks are among some of the hardest hit in the pandemic and we are worried that many of them are at risk of having to park their food trucks permanently."

Brenda Sandberg, executive director of the Erie Port Authority, explained that "the county executive made an announcement [May 14] that they will not be issuing permits for large public gathering events. So 8 Great Tuesdays as we've known them and come to love them over the past 20 years will not exist this year in the traditional sense."

"We're still working through a laundry list of ideas that we have on how we could potentially have a musical celebration or celebrations on Tuesday evenings throughout the summer," Sandberg stated, hinting at a similar pivot on a safer scale. "Even though it may not be in person, individuals can participate in seeing their favorite bands — or whatever it may turn out to be — that they aren't able to see whether it be at a venue, or a bar or the Highmark Amphitheater or at Presque Isle."

Outside of Erie, The Great Blue Heron Music Festival is a local festival that takes place in Sherman, N.Y., consisting of three nights and a multitude of bands playing on three stages. In addition to the Heron Green Growers farm, featuring organic chicken, grass-fed beef, and a grove of shiitake mushrooms, the festival has a built-in permanent infrastructure including stages, sculptures, and

NICK WARREN

water pumps. There's a cafe for all essential eats and drinks, and a lit-up night walk that's unforgettable for guests. Like innumerable others, this event has been postponed until July of next year due to COVID-19. "What we do here has made such a difference to our community, and our fans, and our Heron family," property co-owner Julie Rockcastle explained.

As she and fellow property owner David Tidquist deal with the emotional loss of not being able to hold the festival after 28 consecutive years, they are "reinventing themselves," she says. They have opened their grounds for camping, where you can find booking information on hipcamp.com as well as Airbnb. This will allow up to about 100 people to have the opportunity to set up camp or rent out a cabin within the cafe and enjoy light music, takeout burgers from Shiitake Steve, and of course walk the beautifully lit-up trails.

Rockcastle and Tidquist have also been earning income from their farm store on-site that has recently sold out of all meat in stock. With their creative minds and the help of their friends, family, and volunteers they are keeping their hopes high, taking things one step at a time and are excited to see what this quiet yet exciting summer will hold for the Heron.

Though fans and attendees are a huge and necessary part of any festival, there's a densely-linked web of technicians, vendors, and volunteers that keep every event running. Loncki noted that "in any event, you look at the items that go into it and the average concert-goer is going to see. 'I showed up, I went to a show, bought food, I had a good time with my friends, we got some beers, and I went home.' What we have to deal with on the back end is: We need money from the sponsors who can make the show happen. We need to make sure all the resources and production are there, from the stage to the audio; we need to make sure that there are enough porta-potties; we need to make sure that the utilities are hooked up; we have to make sure that everybody's where they're supposed to be," he continued.

The Erie Food Truck Festival took one of these parts, and made it the primary focus of the event itself. "I think that food trucks have become part of the local personality of Erie County's festivals, " expressed Philips. At an 8 Great Tuesday-style event where they just become a permanent part of that scene to downtown events or at local wineries, you're seeing and getting to know these food truck operators, as again, like a part of the personality of the event."

One of those personalities affected by this is Kaitlyn Page, a local artist — and winner of 2019's Best of Erie award for Best Fine Artist. Page elaborated on how crushing it is for a vendor to miss out on being able to both sell her work as well as gain more attention and fans from it. Though a relative newcomer to the festival circuit, last year she had bookings at regular festival venues such as Dark Star Jubilee at Legend Valley in Thornville, Ohio, Pyro Music and Arts Festival at Nelson Ledges Quarry Park in Garrettsville, Ohio, The Great Blue Heron, and Resonance Festival at Cooper's Lake Event Venue and Campground in Slippery Rock, Pa.

As of this writing, all of these 2020 events have been either canceled or postponed.

"Vending is something I've been looking to do since I graduated high school, and here I am, waiting again until I can start my life," says Page. This time, too, has taken a toll on her emotionally, affecting her mental health in more ways than one. Like many, it has moved her backward, having lessened hope for the future. But to counteract this, she has been pushing online sales and marketing (find her at kaitlynpage.storenvy.com). After doing this, she noticed a dramatic increase in sales on her online storefront as well as obtaining new followers through the use of Facebook groups, including the pages of events she was scheduled to sell at. She has also been slowly releasing new material that she was going to sell at festivals, making it available for the general public. Even through the bad times, she keeps her chin high anticipating the return of local art shows, festivals, and waiting for the day we can "live life to the fullest with live music galore, days spent outdoors in beautiful places, and remaining active in the community growing my business."

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Bars and Restaurants Find Uncertainty On Tap

Amidst fluid COVID-19 regulations, local establishments face mounting difficulties and slashed profits

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The concourse at the Brewerie at Union Station — like many dining areas throughout Erie and across the country — sits empty. Restaurant owners will face a huge dilemma when they get the go-ahead to reopen for dine-in service — will they implement new measures to enforce social distancing, or wait until they can provide the experience their patrons are used to?

By: Rebecca Styn

Ten days after the onset of the pandemic, three percent of restaurant operators had already permanently closed their restaurants, 44 percent temporarily, and 11 percent said they anticipated permanent closure within the next 30 days, according to the National Restaurant Association. Earlier this week on a call with the Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association, initial estimates were reviewed that upwards of 30 percent of restaurants would not survive. Some speculated whether that number would be on the low end.

Recently, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) published data showing the job loss to the hospitality and leisure industry as the hardest hit, losing more than 47 percent of total positions nationwide. And in Pennsylvania (like many other states), restaurants and bars are still not open for business. In addition to the human toll, the economic effects of a crisis of this size can be catastrophic. And certain industries like these will bear the brunt of the damage.

Restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues thrive upon the experience they create for others. Whether through food, drink, music, dancing, or any given social occasion from happy hours to weddings — each of these are intended to be definingly intimate. As a restaurant owner, I can personally attest to this.

And as social distancing, masks, gloves, and other personal protective gear engulf the consumer landscape, restaurants and bars still do not know what to make of this "new normal" — as these types of upcoming regulations will undoubtedly alter the patron's experience.

However, even with all of this uncertainty, many local restaurant and bar owners are cautiously optimistic.

Chris Sirianni, owner of The Brewerie of Union Station tells me, "It's the people that drive us. Between getting our brewery family back and our regular and new patrons, we are looking forward to serving people within these walls the most."

Given health regulations, bars and restaurants already follow a strict protocol in sanitation efforts, but the concept of limiting capacity is alarming for many, as even at full capacity, these businesses are just paying the bills as restaurants run on really tight margins.

"Twenty-five percent capacity is popping out to any restaurateur. It's hard to run at 50 percent and be profitable. The numbers really don't add up," explains Sirianni.

In addition, most are looking at added expenditures — whether it's booth dividers or disposable menus, or rising costs in food due to shortages.

"Our concerns are peoples' willingness to go out and have a total dining experience. And the ability to build trust in a relationship with the public and prove that we are doing everything possible to make that experience safe and comfortable."

Annē Lewis (pronounced Annie) is the Director of Marketing of Red Letter Hospitality, owner and operator of three local establishments — The Cork, Molly Brannigan's, and The Skunk & Goat. The group opted to close their doors to the public shortly before Governor Wolf mandated it. They are taking it day by day, but looking forward to reopening.

"We are most excited to provide the experiences our guests want and have been wishing for. It just isn't the same as Michael [one of their team] making a drink for our guests, seeing familiar faces, and getting back to a little bit of normality." The community has also been extremely encouraging. "We have received support where we have never seen before. Most are rallying and supporting us and others they believe in."

Lewis still recognizes they are living in the unknown — but believes the beginning will bring a great response. "I think people are excited to come out to restaurants. And when we first open up, I think we will be overwhelmed. But long-term — will people want curbside? It's a different game now. We will still provide the experience — but now with all the regulations."

Restaurants in other states [that have been allowed to be open] have already begun to redefine their model. In some places regulations include: only small gatherings allowed (10 or under), a minimum of six feet between groups, additional hand-washing methods, access to sanitizing products in high-contact areas; fewer things on the table such as condiments, table tents, etc., a six-foot distance between bar stools, six feet between employees, facial coverings, daily temperature checks and additional training. I can attest this all feels overwhelming — especially knowing it's all fluid. Plus, it makes planning for an uncertain future challenging at best.

Matt Orton, owner of McCoy's Barrelhouse & Grill, 1013 State St, has been closed since March 14 — and given the nature of his business, has not been able to provide any takeout or delivery options. "I think our biggest challenge is going to be getting caught back up on bills once we are allowed to open. I'm looking forward to seeing people come out and enjoy themselves again without panic and fear. It will happen. I'm just not sure when."

At this point, none of us are.

Rebecca Styn is the proprietor of Room 33 Speakeasy. She is also VP of Ventures at Erie Innovation District and recently completed her Ph.D. in Leadership and Organizational Learning from Gannon University. Follow Room 33 on Facebook @room33speakeasy, and follow Rebecca on Twitter at @rstyn.

Internet Trolls: What Will the Pandemic do to the Future of Movie Theaters?

DREAMWORKS ANIMATION LLC

The unexpected success of Universal's *Trolls: World Tour* via video-on-demand has the studio reevaluating its release model — and movie theater chains nervous or even indignant. Will the COVID-19 pandemic change the way we experience new releases for good?

By: Forest Taylor

On April 10, Universal released the animated sequel *Trolls: World Tour* exclusively on Video On Demand. Unexpectedly, it went on to make over $100 million in a single weekend. As a result, NBC Universal Chairman Jeff Shell announced that his company will keep VOD as a first-run option even after theaters reopen, stating that "we expect to release movies on both formats." Upon this news, CEO of AMC Theaters Adam Aron enacted a scorched-earth strategy on the studios, announcing "effective immediately, we will no longer play any Universal movies in any of our theaters." Of course, this could all get resolved in the end, but when the biggest movie distributor in the world tells one of the major studios (responsible for 20 percent of films produced per year) that they will no longer be doing business, it sends a message. That message is that the way we watch films could be very different in the near future.

For the moment, other studios are standing behind theatrical releases, but as VOD becomes more profitable during this pandemic, that could change very fast. As theaters remain closed and big-budget franchises like James Bond and *The Fast and the Furious* get pushed further and further back, the allure of distributing a film on a streaming platform has never been more tempting.

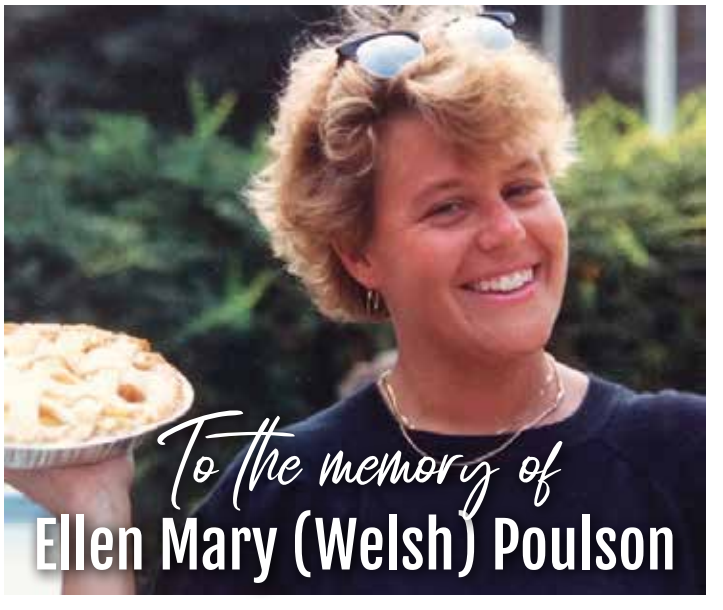
The situation here isn't entirely unprecedented. In the 1930s and '40s, film studios were vertically integrated monopolies, owning both the studios and the theaters that show their films. Now that studios like Universal and Disney own their own streaming sites, that same structure could threaten to overtake the movie industry yet again.

As usual, it's the independent films that will suffer the most from this situation. As studios and theater chains debate where to go in the future, smaller films have either had their theatrical release cut short (*The Assistant*), have been sent to VOD without notice (*Never Rarely Sometimes Always*), or have just vanished entirely (*First Cow*). If theaters remain shuttered for a significant amount of time, independent distributors like Neon, Bleecker Street, and A24 may suddenly find themselves with a whole lot of films with nowhere to go.

Meanwhile, as all the big films push back their release dates, Christopher Nolan stands alone. His new film *Tenet* is still set for release on July 17, assuming theaters are open. It's a big risk but Nolan, a passionate supporter of the theatrical experience, has the kind of clout in the industry to take such a risk. If this strategy is successful, he may prove that movie theaters still have a place in this brave new world.

Nobody knows for sure what the film world will look like when all this is over. Whether theaters remain on top, VOD takes over, or it becomes some combination of the two, one thing is certain: an animated film about musical trolls may have changed the way we watch movies forever.

Forest Taylor watches a lot of movies. He can be reached at forest@eriereader.com



Ellen Mary was born November 28, 1960 and taken from us too soon on May 1, 2020. We miss her with broken hearts. Ellen was a light to all who knew her. She was a devoted mother and a loving sister and daughter. We loved her wonderfully engaging smile and wry sense of humor. Her sisters and brothers thank the dedicated staff of Twinbrook Nursing Home for the care they provided.

Ellen will forever be in our thoughts.

THE WELSH, BLAKE, HANNA, BEYER, AND KUEHNLING FAMILIES

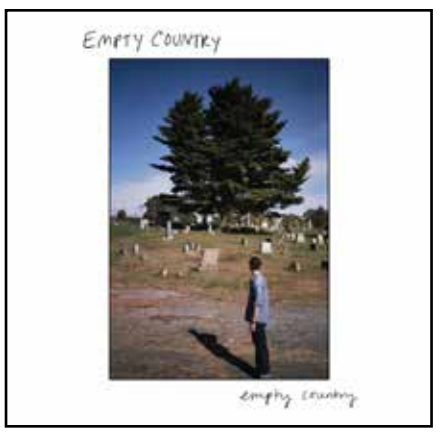
Five Albums To Listen to in Quarantine

Our top picks amongst recent records you may have missed

Fiona Apple // *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*

This universally acclaimed album is the quintessential quarantined listening experience. In (so far) what will no doubt be dubbed 2020's "album of the year," *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* not only received a perfect 10.0 from Pitchfork, but is the best-reviewed album *of all time* on Metacritic. The recording of Apple's fifth studio album began in 2015, and the release of it could not have been more fitting. Though originally slated for an October 2020 rollout (basically Oscar season for albums), Apple helped to release it on April 17, when many Americans were psychologically struggling with stay-at-home orders. While the "new normal" hasn't fully set in, of course, Apple's use of non-traditional instrumentation and percussive found objects struck a chord more than any traditional studio album could. It was like we were making the album ourselves if we happened to be a musical genius. Apple spoke that lyrically, the album is "about breaking out of whatever prison you've allowed yourself to live in." *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* is the perfect spending of Apple's creative capital, a union of chamber pop and experimentation that so many people needed. — NW

Empty Country // *Empty Country*



The history behind Empty Country's self-titled debut is harrowing, but fortunately, it arrives with a somewhat happy ending. The first solo release from Cymbals Eat Guitars singer Joseph D'Agostino, *Empty Country* takes the frontman's distinct songwriting and somehow manages to filter it through fuzz and an Americana lens. Bizarrely, D'Agostino's old manager and booking agent dropped him after hearing the project, and he was never able to tour the album between the death of mentor David Berman and the current public health crisis. But *Empty Country* remains an absolute pleasure to explore, blending D'Agostino's familiar songwriting with unique imagery and storytelling that recall Sun Kil Moon's *Ghosts of the Great Highway*. — AM

Porches // *Ricky Music*

Porches' 2017 LP, *The House*, was all about working through a depressive episode and staying indoors. Ironically, with a release date nearly coinciding with lockdown protocols, Aaron Maine's new album, *Ricky Music*, may be his most ambitious and outwardly expressionistic yet. *Ricky Music* is a bi-

zarre listen, filled with '80s synth-pop hooks, slap bass, and disorienting key changes in equal measure; it's also short, clocking in at just 27 minutes. But this diversity and runtime are the album's strongest assets. Even when *Ricky Music* fails, it does so in a way that is undeniably fascinating, lending to the album's strong replay value. Stick around for song of the year contender "range rover," the album's lead single which was strangely relegated to a bonus track upon official release. — AM

Waxahatchee // *Saint Cloud*

Katie Crutchfield's fifth album under the moniker Waxahatchee lives up to the quality of her amazing discography. Since the days of P.S. Eliot, the band she co-fronted with her twin sister Allison (of Swearin' and her own eponymous solo efforts), Katie has established herself as one of this generation's preeminent indie voices. Thankfully, this album makes you feel good. Its light tones and trebly acoustic guitar licks pair beautifully with Crutchfield's cooing melodies. It's balanced too, with plenty of emotional moments on display here, with standout tracks like "Fire" paring those sentiments with a heart-thumping chorus you'll want to repeat again and again. Songs like "Hell" and "Witches" stand as oxymoronically playful, filled with swaying vocal hooks and bright backups. *Saint Cloud* is a perfect synthesis of the alt-county Crutchfield has been chasing and the punk and indie rock sensibilities that got her to this point. — NW

Caroline Rose // *Superstar*

Put simply, *Superstar* is a neon-soaked piece of escapism for the current climate. Caroline Rose's sophomore LP takes the thing she does best -- hooks (showcased on 2017's *Loner*) — and inflates them to stadium sizes on a concept album that follows Rose's character on her journey to attempted stardom in L.A. Rose has always been a unique storyteller, rooting her music in a quirky sense of humor and personal catharsis, and despite the new narrative here, not much has actually changed in terms of songwriting. This time around, Rose simply opts for synthesizers in place of her guitars and brushes everything with an extra coat of glittery new-wave sheen. These are the kinds of songs we're going to need to get through the indoor summer of 2020. — AM

TELEVISION

On the Spot and in the Spotlight with *Middleditch & Schwartz*

Comedic duo's improvisational genius on full display

NETFLIX

Thomas Middleditch and Ben Schwartz have had many roles in both television and film, collaborating closely with writers to bring viewers memorable characters like Jean-Ralphio in *Parks and Recreation* and Richard Hendricks in *Silicon Valley*. Part of what makes them both so talented is their gift for improvisation, their ability to think on the spot and add their own flair to the personalities they play. This back-pocket skill is featured front and center in the duo's new series of Netflix improv specials, *Middleditch & Schwartz*. In each of the three episodes, the men take a prompt from an audience member about an event that they are either looking forward to or dreading. Once they get a few details about that individual's situation, the result is hysterical 45-minute one-act segments, complete with defined characters and a developed plot made up on the fly.

Long-form improv has been notoriously difficult to film throughout its history, from Del Close to the Upright Citizens Brigade (UCB) Theatres, and has rarely translated aside from a few televised specials of UCB's long-running show *ASSSCAT*. Part of what makes this format work (and these specials oh so hilarious), is Middleditch and Schwartz' focus on different details in telling the story, making them a dynamite improv team. Middleditch is a chameleon who can create a number of characters, each with their own voice, motivation, and mannerisms. Schwartz is adept at setting a scene down to the most minute details and moving the plot forward. This combined with their impeccable timing make for a laugh riot in each scenario; a wedding officiated by a ghost, a class of law students surrounded by secret doors, and a coming-of-age story about two wannabe comedic photographers. *Middleditch & Schwartz* is a side-splitting piece of theatrical genius, and well worth several watches. — Claudia Rose

Currently streaming on Netflix // Created by and starring: Thomas Middleditch and Ben Schwartz // Adult language // Three episodes // middleditchandschwartz.com

The Deep Challenging Psychedelia of *The Midnight Gospel*

Duncan Trussell and Pendleton Ward team up for cathartic cosmos-tripping series

NETFLIX

Genre tags like "Adult Animation," "Surreal Animation," and "Dark Comedy" don't come close to nailing down what *The Midnight Gospel* — the beautiful, glorious mindf**k released on 4/20 by Netflix — is all about.

Direct from the uber-expanded minds of *Adventure Time* creator Pendleton Ward and comedian/podcaster/psychonaut-extraordinaire Duncan Trussell, the eight-episode series has its main character, an Earthling-abroad "spacecaster" named Clancy (that's Trussell) diving head-first into his not-always-trusty universe simulator and traversing beyond-trippy worlds in which he and those he meets explore matters and manners of living, dying, and all the existential rips and ripples in between.

Set in Pendleton's disturbing and beautiful psychedelic dreamscapes and adapting conversations directly from Trussell's deep-diving *Duncan Trussell Family Hour* podcast, the show features Clancy's (that's Trussel's) conversations with a revolving and evolving cast of thinkers, writers, talkers, and doers: Dr. Drew Pinsky, for example, as a little president on drugs, writer Anne Lamott as a wisdom-rich deer-dog, guru Ram Dass as guru Ram Dass, Buddhist teacher/musician David Nichtern as God's scientist, and — in a final episode that left both my wife and me in free-flowing tears — Trussell's dying mom as Clancy's dying mom.

With its toes dipping (usually at the very same time) in both calm and cataclysm, *The Midnight Gospel* is deep and challenging and fantastic and fun, much like the psychedelic experience itself — and, we found, just what these precarious times call for.

Sitting in the dark of our living room late at night, with a scary and getting-scarier world just outside our door, it was one binge-watch that really did serve us as good medicine.

We humbly thank Ward, Trussell, and everyone else involved for that — and we really hope there are more adventures to come. — Ryan Smith

Currently streaming on Netflix // Created by: Duncan Trussell, Pendleton Ward // Starring: Phil Hendrie, Duncan Trussell, Joey Diaz // Adult situations and themes // Eight episodes

Solar Opposites Moves From Portal Guns to Pupas

Rick & Morty co-creator lands new animated series that finds a family of aliens earthbound

By now, most everyone is at least aware of the nihilistic animated sci-fi series *Rick & Morty*, but not everyone is enamored with it. Perhaps it's because of offhand references that lead fans to do crazy things like riot over discontinued dipping sauces (specifically McDonald's Mulan Szechuan McNugget sauce), or how a single episode alternates between bathroom humor and questions of existential dread. *Rick & Morty* co-creator Justin Roiland's new Hulu series *Solar Opposites*, however, might have a little something for everyone.

Solar Opposites tells the story of a quartet of aliens and their pupa (which can either be a pet or an infant from the look of it) who have crash-landed on earth after their planet was hit by an asteroid. The leader is a genius curmudgeon named Korvo (Roiland) who is obsessed with manuals and repairing their spacecraft. He is often driven up the wall by his overly positive companion Terry (Thomas Middleditch) who absolutely loves the traditions of Earth and wears a different nerdy t-shirt every episode. The younger characters are troublemakers Jesse and Yumyulack, who have shrunk down so many people and put them on display in their bedroom wall that it becomes its own post-apocalyptic subplot.

While the show shares some similarities to *Rick & Morty* such as animation style, it can very much stand on its own, and should not be considered any sort of follow-up, spin-off, or sequel. It takes the mix of subtle and in-your-face adult humor that *Rick & Morty* fans like and puts it in the setting of a more traditional American sitcom. Roiland took his version of a family unit like *Full House*, stranded it in an unfamiliar place like *Gilligan's Island*, and gave it the sci-fi silliness of *Alf*. — Claudia Rose

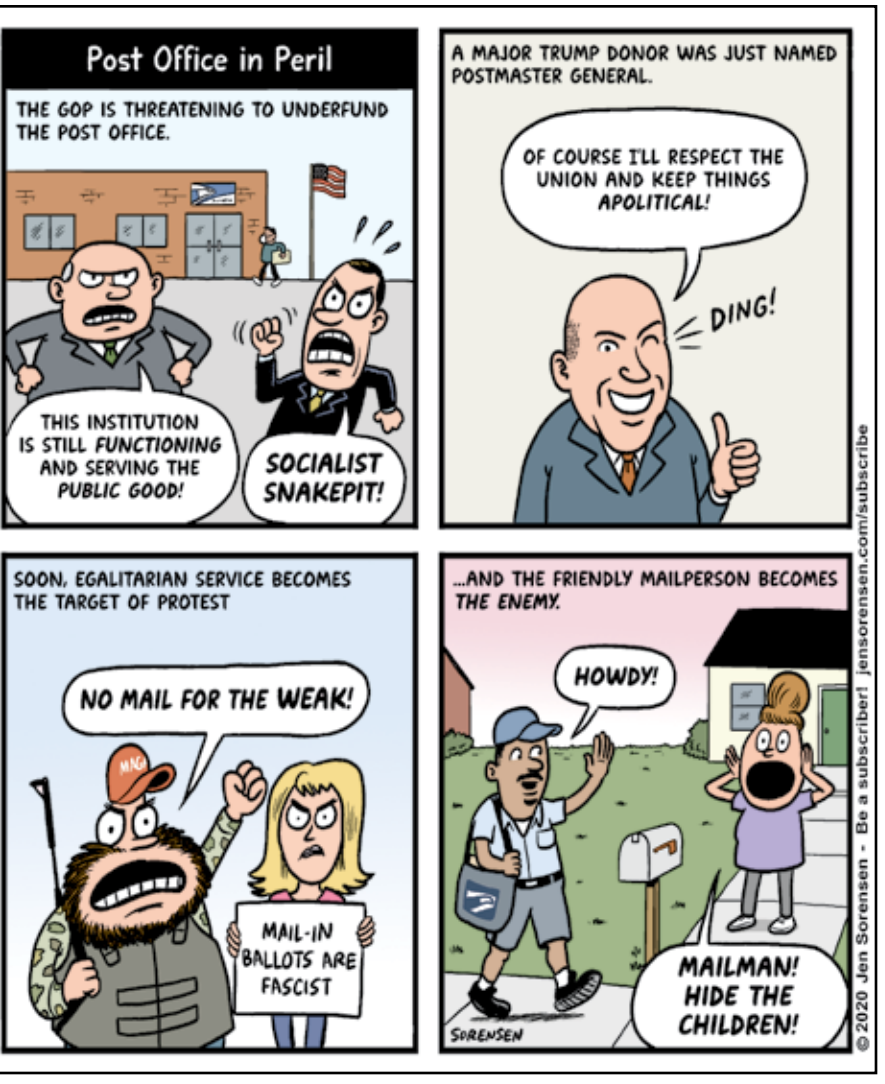
Season One currently streaming on Hulu // Created by: Justin Roiland and Mike McMahan // Starring: Justin Roiland, Thomas Middleditch, Sean Giambrone, and Mary Mack // Adult situations and themes // Eight episodes

HULU

JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY

RECIPE FOR DISASTER BY BRAD PATTULLO

YELLOW MEANS GO... OR NOT



ALBUM REVIEWS

King Krule
Man Alive!
Matador Records

★★★★

Despite largely breezy beginnings on 2013's *6 Feet Beneath the Moon*, the young, genre-bending U.K. prodigy known as King Krule (or Archy Marshall) has moved progressively further away from anything resembling "easy listening," culminating in his expansive 2017 opus, *The OOZ*. *Man Alive!* is nowhere near as long as *The OOZ*, nor is it as inventive. But the album does have staying power. They say the songs you grow to like never stick at first, and when the album does finally click, it feels abundantly clear why they call Marshall a king. Where *The OOZ* felt dreamlike, *Man Alive*! sounds downright nightmarish for most of its duration. Marshall traverses post-punk (opening track "Cellular"), trip-hop ("Stoned Again"), and jazzy indie rock ("Alone, Omen 3") all within the span of 43 minutes. But something happened halfway through the recording process; Marshall's partner, photographer Charlotte Patmore, gave birth to the couple's first child. And there is a distinct shift right around the halfway point of the album where some optimism begins to seep through, seemingly pulling Marshall from whatever waters were overtaking him for so long. Fortunately for us, this shift in perspective makes for an incredibly personal and fascinating listen.
— Aaron Mook

Drake
Dark Lane Demo Tapes
OVO Records

★★★½

It's been a downward spiral for Toronto's biggest pop star and rapper since 2016. He's still wildly successful (despite this mixtape ending a longtime number one streak), consistently riling up legions of devoted fans, but somewhere between the cool disappointment of 2016's *Views* and his loss to Pusha-T in one of the greatest modern rap beefs of all time, Drake never seemed to recover. And while *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* continues a slight return to form that started with 2018's *Scorpion*, it's debatable whether it will be enough to draw back fans of classics like *Take Care* and *Nothing Was the Same*. Much of *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* is filled with above-average bars from a post-2015 Drake. There are some easy standouts, such as the woozy, Playboi Carti-assisted "Pain 1993." But it seems like for every throwback beat or grin-inducing Drake-ism, there's a track like "Toosie Slide," a half-hearted piece of TikTok bait that finds the rapper comparing his dance moves to Michael Jackson's. Much like *Scorpion*, *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* feels like a project destined to change nobody's mind; Drake fans and casual listeners will find plenty to enjoy here, but for detractors, it's more material that fails to reach the rapper's previous high marks.
— Aaron Mook

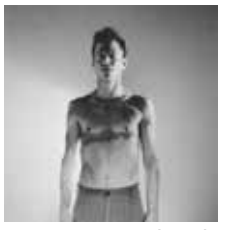
Human Animal
False Realities
Surprise Attack Records

★★★★½

False Realities culminates the Erie band's experience over their "first four winters" — not to mention the decades of Erie hardcore history their members have under their belts — with the longer track listing allowing room for experimentation. The opening song, "Perfect Person," cuts right to the chase, skipping a gratuitous mosh intro riff and getting straight to the meat of their metallic hardcore sound. A few tracks in, the band starts to show their more melodic tendencies on the tracks "Flowers in the Graveyard" and "Hellfire," with the latter showing some hard rock influence with the ending guitar solo. From there the songs pick up the pace again, full of two-step mosh parts and singalongs, highlighted by the high-energy, Suicidal Tendencies-esque single "The Pact". The penultimate song "Bastards of the North" brings back some of the hard rock inspiration heard earlier in the album, an ode by singer EMS to the early days of playing shows between Erie and Cleveland, with a similar vibe to the hardcore classic "Warriors" by Judge. Arguably the heaviest song on the album is saved for last with the track "F.E.A.R.," and the band completes a new chapter in a long history of Lake Effect hardcore.
— Tommy Shannon

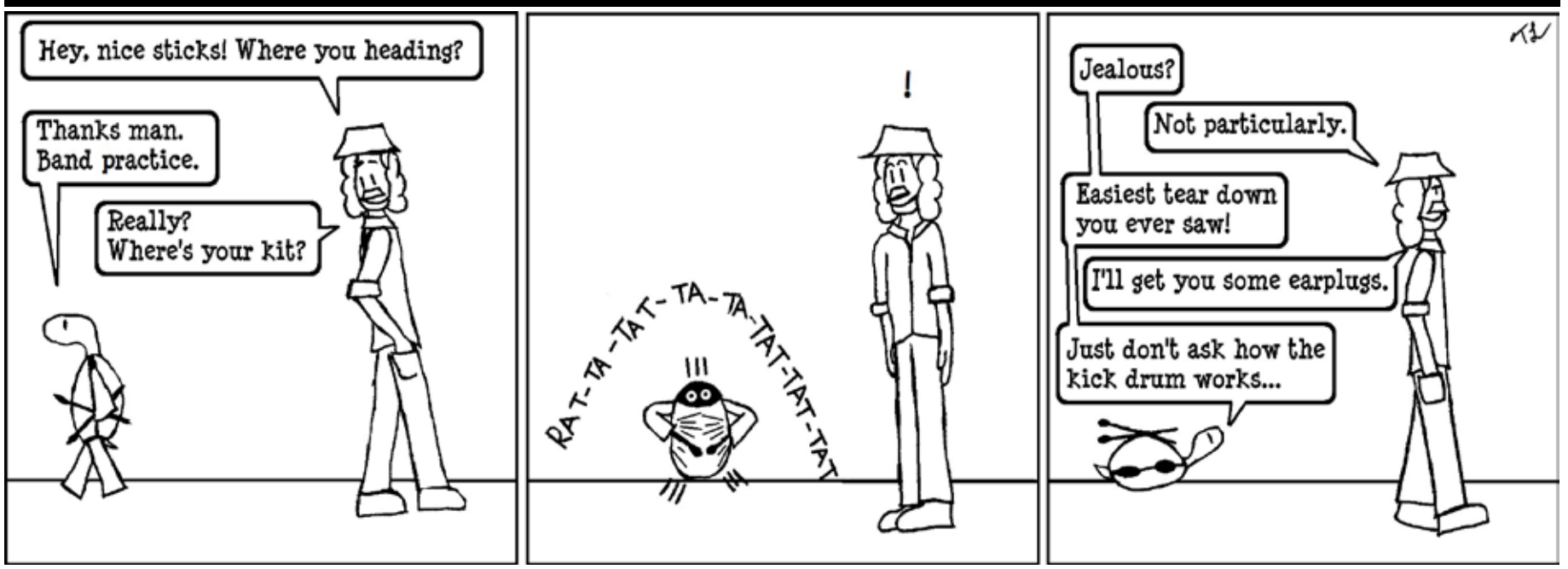
Perfume Genius
Set My Heart On Fire Immediately
Matador Records

★★★★½

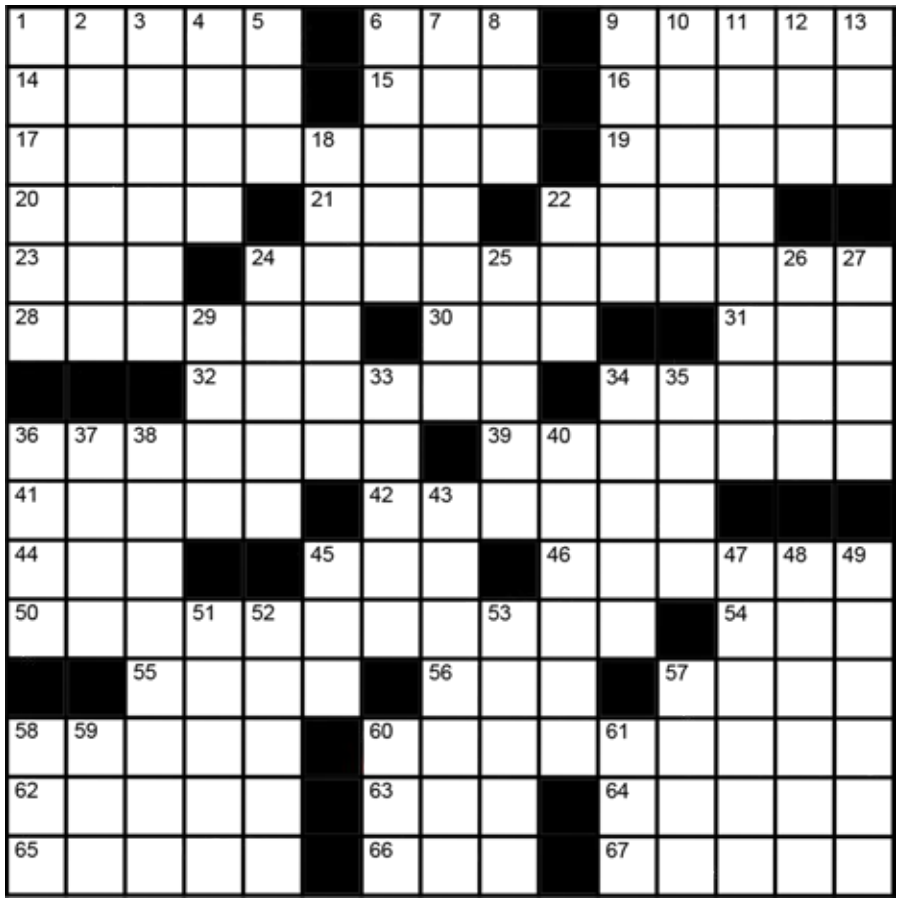


Though Fiona Apple's latest magnum opus will most likely be number one on many year-end lists, Perfume Genius' *Set My Heart On Fire Immediately* can — despite its lengthy title — and should easily be mentioned in the same breath. Fitting, as he's a self-confessed fan, with both artists sharing connections with producer and musician Blake Mills. *My Heart*, the 38-year-old Mike Hadreas' fifth studio release under the moniker Perfume Genius, is a rapturous, emotionally captivating album from start to finish. Hadreas is able to channel everything noble and listenable about modern indie pop and focus it with laser-precision. *My Heart* is possibly his best work to date, a significant statement for all who remember works like 2017's *No Shape* and 2014's *Too Bright*. From the upbeat synth grooves of "On the Floor" to the almost minimalist whispers of "Borrowed Light," Hadreas is able to sculpt a tonal feeling that would put Hans Zimmer to shame. Adapting his versatile baritone, he crafts sounds reminiscent of older artists like Nick Cave, Joy Division, and The Jesus and Mary Chain, with moments that sound like Air, Radiohead, and Future Islands. It's all Perfume Genius though, and *My Heart* will go on to be one of best albums in recent memory.
— Nick Warren

TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

1. Most common U.S. surname
6. "All the way with ____" ('64 slogan)
9. Cheeky
14. Words before may or might, in verse
15. Yell with an accent
16. Skipjack and yellowfin
17. Word that describes 67-Across
19. Wide receiver ____ Beckham Jr.
20. Muppets watchers
21. Texter's "Oh, and ..."
22. Raced
23. Hit CBS series with multiple spinoffs
24. Word that describes 67-Across
28. Chinese restaurant offering
30. "Mangia!"
31. Letter holder: Abbr.
32. "Fiddlesticks!"
34. Novelist Charles with an appropriate surname
36. Word that describes 67-Across
39. Word that describes 67-Across
41. "Family Ties" mom
42. Hugs and kisses, perhaps
44. Gas pump spec.
45. Election day: Abbr.
46. Daughter of Muhammad
50. Word that describes 67-Across
54. Rapper Lil ____ X
55. Julia Louis-Dreyfus HBO series
56. "Wheels"
57. Mrs. Krabappel of "The Simpsons"
58. Nice thing after getting the cold shoulder?
60. Work published by 67-Across in 1852
62. Well-hidden fellow of children's books
63. Complex trap
64. Fuming
65. John who's the subject of 2019's "Rocketman"
66. Fuss
67. Man of many words?

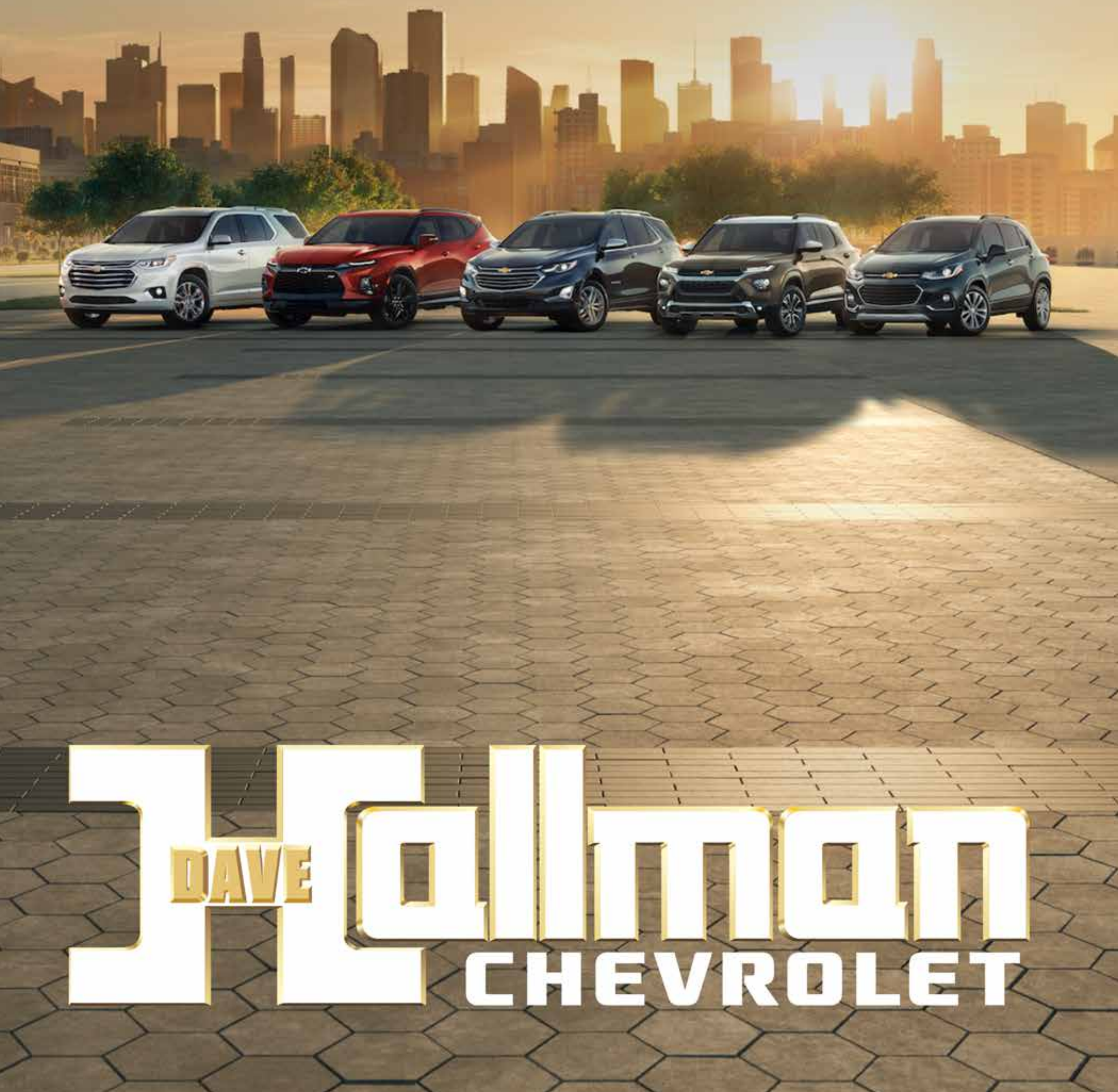
Down

1. On/Off ____
2. Baseball All-Star Minnie nicknamed "The Cuban Comet"
3. "Don't you agree?"
4. Heyward, Stone or Nelson, as each signed the Declaration of Independence
5. "____ changed my life, but it doesn't keep me from living": Magic Johnson
6. Buncha
7. More blustery
8. "Seinfeld" nickname
9. It can have three or four legs
10. McDonald who is the only person to win Tonys in all four acting categories
11. Make light of
12. Actor Mineo
13. Monogram on L'Homme products
18. Wear away
22. Hashtag next to a celeb's baby picture, perhaps
24. Little giggle
25. Cavalry weapon
26. Prefix meaning "within"
27. KOA customer
29. Plenty
33. Squabble
34. Surface again, as a road
35. Marco Polo's heading
36. Cheeky
37. Robert of "The Sopranos"
38. Kvetch's phrase
40. Alludes (to)
43. Reacted violently, in a way
45. Baking soda amt.
47. Wearing clothes fit for a queen?
48. 7'7" center ____ Bol
49. How bedroom furniture is often sold
51. Makeover result
52. French actor Alain
53. Cardio program popularized in the 1990s
57. French bread?
58. Where "crossword" is "korsord": Abbr.
59. Computer that said "Affirmative, Dave. I read you."
60. Carrier from 1930 to 2001
61. Bike tire filler

Answers to last puzzle

H	A	R	D	G	■	S	P	A	R	S	■	E	E	L
A	R	E	A	R	■	T	A	P	E	S	■	A	X	E
R	E	S	T	A	T	E	C	R	O	W	■	S	P	A
E	N	O	■	M	O	R	E	■	■	■	A	T	O	P
■	A	D	A	M	A	N	D	E	V	E	R	E	S	T
■	■	■	S	Y	D	■	■	W	A	T	E	R	■	■
T	I	S	H	■	■	E	L	E	N	A	■	E	P	A
S	O	H	E	L	P	M	E	R	E	S	T	G	O	D
A	N	A	■	V	I	B	E	S	■	■	O	G	R	E
■	■	R	H	I	N	E	■	■	S	A	G	■	■	■
M	A	K	E	I	T	R	E	S	T	R	A	I	N	■
S	E	N	D	■	■	■	K	W	A	I	■	R	E	N
N	R	A	■	G	I	V	E	I	T	A	R	E	S	T
B	I	D	■	A	R	A	B	S	■	N	I	N	T	H
C	E	O	■	M	A	C	Y	S	■	A	M	E	S	S

BETTER DAYS ARE SHINING THROUGH



DAVE Coleman CHEVROLET