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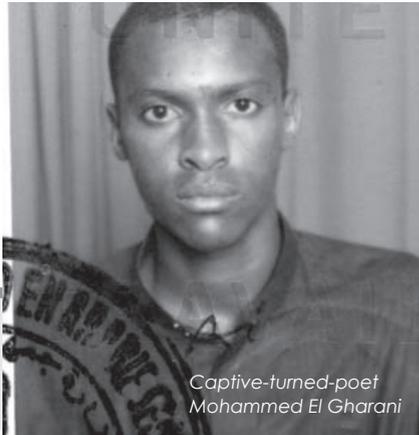


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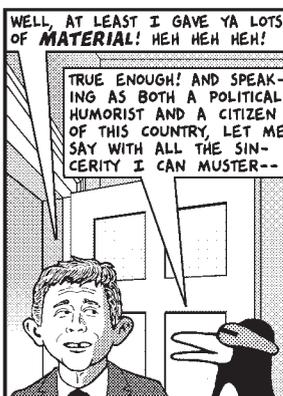
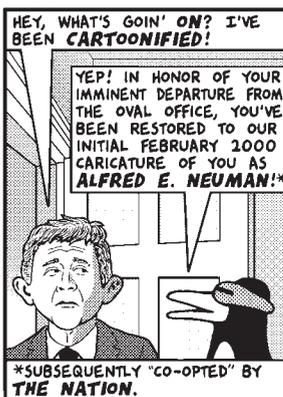
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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Get Moving

Little Village is making a New Year's resolution to get fit. You can too.

A lot of New Year's resolutions start out as good intentions, but by the time February rolls around they are forgotten and the "I'm going to lose weight this year" turns into a "I need to start working out," which always inevitably becomes "I just don't have time."

It's a problem that thousands of people face. Unfortunately for some, avoiding exercise becomes a bigger problem. Thirty-seven percent of the population of Iowa is considered to be overweight and 28 percent of Iowans are obese, according to the 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey.

Approximately 64 percent of Iowans have a higher risk of having or getting health problems like hypertension and heart disease.



Tetherball is great exercise. Gosh!

This means approximately 64 percent of Iowans have a higher risk of having or getting health problems like hypertension and heart disease. The good news is that these problems aren't all genetic. Making changes in lifestyle can greatly enhance quality of life and ward off health complications.

Everyone knows that a proper diet and exercise is the magic recipe for losing weight, feeling better, increasing the healthy years of life and all those wonderful things. However, everyone also knows that it's a lot harder to

put that theory into practice.

The State of Iowa through support of the Iowa Sports Foundation, the Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa State University Extension has developed a 100-day program called Live Healthy Iowa. This year the program runs from January 14 through April 23.

This program was launched in 2000 as Lighten Up Iowa to try to combat the growing obesity trends, and it has since spread into a national movement. This is the first year under the new moniker, which hopes to increase the reach of the program.

"We wanted to encompass a whole lifestyle change incorporating overall wellness instead of just weight loss and physical activity," Nicole Bruce said. Bruce is the Health Initiative Coordinator for Live Healthy Iowa.

For a fee of \$18, a participant in the program joins a team that can participate in either the weight loss division or the accumulated minutes of activity division, with the option of entering both divisions.

The entry fee provides access to an online program to track progress, and weekly emails with tips, recipes and tons of resources for activity and nutrition help. Registration also earns a year-long subscription to a lifestyle magazine and a spiffy new T-shirt.

"We're hoping that providing people with information will help people change their choices and in turn help them change their lives in

the long run," Bruce said.

So instead of giving people resolutions to break, this program can really get people motivated to get active and make positive changes in their lives. It is a lot easier to reach a goal when there is a team working toward that goal as well, so Little Village is forming a team now.

Team Little Village will participate in the division of Accumulated Minutes of Physical Activity, and we'll sponsor at least one event each month where we can have fun the old-fashioned physical way—might be playing tetherball in Napoleon Dynamite wigs one month and synchronized knit-robics the next. To join

Fast Facts

- The 100-Day Challenge starts January 14 and ends April 23
- Teams are from 2 to 10 people; larger groups can break into multiple teams
- The \$18 entry fee includes:
 - Training T-shirt
 - Weekly emailed wellness tips
 - One-year subscription to lifestyle magazine like Fitness, Heart Healthy Living or Men's Journal
 - Personalized meal plans
 - Personal achievement tracking page online
- Registrations are accepted throughout the program; to learn more about registering, visit www.livehealthyiowa.org.

the team officially or just take part in our ab-tastic events, email me at Kelly.Ostrem@littlevillagemag.com. We'll be posting these events on the blog as we get them organized, so keep a lookout.

Along the way, check the website at LittleVillageMag.com for updates on the team's achievements in the challenge. I'll be updating the blog, sharing healthy ideas and suggestions I learn along the way. This is no competition for us. We just want to get moving. So take this as an opportunity, a more doable resolution, because we'll all be in it together and motivating each other.

Don't let skepticism stand in your way. Have some fun and do something this year that is sure to get you moving toward being a healthier person. Go Team Little Village! **lv**

Kelly Ostrem is Little Village's editorial intern and team captain. Her biggest 100-day challenge will be to prevent Little Village's lethargy-loving managing editor, Melody Dworak, from staying home and watching Hulu.

SPOILS FROM THE SOIL

*Now I am terrified at the Earth,
it is that calm and patient, It
grows such sweet things out
of such corruptions, It turns
harmless and stainless on
its axis, with such endless
successions of diseas'd
corpses, It distills such
exquisite winds out of such
infused fetor, It renews with
such unwitting looks its
prodigal, annual, sumptuous
crops, It gives such divine
materials to men, and accepts
such leavings from them at last.*

—Walt Whitman,
from "This Compost"



Most all food comes from the soil. The very foundation of a successful garden is, almost by definition, its soil. It is the secret to healthy plants, weed control and a prolific harvest. Funny thing is: it's no secret at all. It is all around us. As the great organic guru Eliot Coleman teaches, "compost wants to happen."

The miraculous mix of microorganisms, organic matter, air, moisture and time that creates compost is one of life's truly teachable moments. It is here that one can recognize the completion of a full circle of life, death and birth happening simultaneously as the microbes feed themselves and leave behind nutrients that will eventually feed plants, and by extension, us.

COMPOST CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 >>

Compost is what's left following the decomposition or organic matter; and here I mean "organic" in the way that you learned it back in chemistry class, that is, carbon-based life forms. Everything that lives eventually rots, some things much faster than others, and some things are better for your garden's compost than others.

The more varied the ingredients of your compost, the better the result. The most common items composted by the home gardener (as differentiated from the farmer), are common kitchen scraps, vegetable trimmings of all sorts, coffee grounds and eggshells. It is not a good idea to compost any meat products though, unless your compost is going to be very actively managed. Meat takes longer to decompose, smells bad, and attracts all sorts of vermin

Despite the cold temperatures, February is a time when your compost pile is busy.

COMPOST CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 >>

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Hope Localized

January 20 is approaching. The “hope-mongers,” as Barack Obama jokingly called himself at a Northwest Junior High campaign rally in December 2007, cling to visions of revolutionary social transformation. The hardcore liberals are shaking their heads at the President-Elect’s centrist and hawkish Cabinet appointments.

To tell you the truth, I’m a little bit of both: a bit Pollyannaish, a bit cynical. I was on board the Obama train since the 2004 Democratic convention keynote. I caucused last January for Obama and wholeheartedly supported him in November. But I always knew he was ultimately a centrist and, in many ways, a conventional politician. From the beginning, I could tell he was a pragmatist. What I loved in him was his ability to inspire, his intelligence, and my own faith that he would be able to forge consensus better than anyone else I had seen. That’s why I thought he should be president—not because he would bring about utopia, or even a (traditional) liberal renaissance. I don’t know that any president can.

Today, we are still seeing headlines about mortgage crises, automaker bailouts and recession. I do have faith that Obama is the person to right the national ship as best as anyone can. But he’s not going to bring about the revolution we need. Obama will bring much-needed good to our country and our world. If any mainstream president will bring about better international relations, diplomacy before war, and movement toward green energy, it’s Obama. But his economic plans, and to a large extent his social vision (with perhaps some modification around the edges), will still be grounded in the status quo: the global economy, the primacy of multinational corporations, and “free trade” in the modern sense (NAFTA, GATT, etc.).

I’m no economist, so I may simply be talking out of my hat. But I think the headlines for the past several months bear me out: The global economy is collapsing. From a historical standpoint, this is not surprising. All social and economic systems eventually collapse. The bigger ones collapse more dramatically

and often more quickly. What military empire ever lasted? What centralized economy ever sustained itself forever? Why should we be surprised that what we have been living for the past 60 or 150 years (depending on where you pin the beginning of the modern economy) is ending?

So if Obama can’t really save us, who can? Well, as Dorothy said at the end of the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*, “If I ever go looking for my heart’s desire again, I won’t look any further than my own backyard.” Indeed, we have to be our own saviors.

Some interesting books have been published in recent years focusing on the possibility of a truly new human age aborning. David Korten, co-founder of the Positive Futures

structures embedded in ecological realities. As he says, “The health of a community depends in substantial measure on its ability to set its own economic priorities and control its own economic resources. Strong communities and material sufficiency are the true foundation of economic prosperity and security and an essential source of meaning.”

Paul Hawken, one of the earliest voices calling for a green economy through such works as *The Ecology of Commerce* and *Natural Capitalism*, makes a similar point in his new book, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. Hawken’s “blessed unrest” is the tens of millions of locally oriented people and organizations across the globe working toward positive change in the interrelated (or, as he says, “intertwining”) areas of social justice, environmental activism, and indigenous cultures’ resistance to globalization.

As does Korten, Hawken notes the collapse of mass ideologies and corporate-controlled global economies and the actually in-process movement back toward local orientation. And, as do many who think like him, he says all of this is eminently realistic and practical: “A broad nonideological movement has come into being that does not invoke the masses’ fantasized will but rather engages citizens’ localized needs. The movement’s key contribution is the rejection of one big idea in order to offer in its place thousands of practical and useful ones. Instead of isms it offers processes, concerns, and compassion.”

One of the best—and most popular—books on this subject is Bill McKibben’s *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. Clear-eyed about today’s dangers yet engagingly optimistic—and practical—McKibben also advocates for rebuilding our local economies. As do Hawken and Korten, McKibben does not call for a new ideology per se. Rather, he calls for a return to ways of life that have worked for humans for thousands of years. McKibben illustrates the impracticality of the current global economy by citing the obvious (environmental collapse) as well as the often ignored (that 95 percent

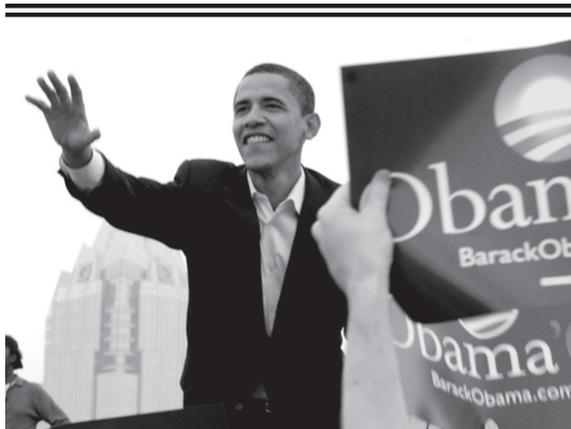


Photo courtesy of Roxanne Jo Mitchell

I always knew Obama was ultimately a centrist and, in many ways, a conventional politician.

Network and author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, posits in his recent book *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* that 5,000 years of the dominator hierarchy, which has led not only to military empire but corporate global hegemony, is ending, largely because human societies and the natural environment can no longer tolerate its stresses. What he sees happening across the globe is a return to community, a fellowship of locally oriented economies and social

of people's wealth has stagnated or declined in the global economy of recent decades) and the little known or considered (human happiness and satisfaction have measurably declined with the rise of the globalized economy). McKibben does not undermine basic economic precepts. He says we need markets. And he says wealth does make people happier. But only up to a point. Today, only the few in control of the global economy actually are increasing their wealth (and they're going south now, too). And wealth raises happiness fairly quickly, but a point of diminishing returns soon sets in.

You will not hear Barack Obama talk about relocalization of our economies. So it's up to us.

All three of these visionary—but oh so practical—thinkers go into much more specific detail about how the relocalization of economies would actually work, detail that I cannot adequately address in this short space. If you're skeptical, McKibben especially can show you how and why relocalization is not only necessary but eminently doable (yet not without problems and challenges, admittedly). And as all three of the authors I've cited point out, relocalization is already happening—and happening at accelerating rates.

You will not hear Barack Obama talk about relocalization of our economies as he fashions his own federal policies to help "Joe the Plumber." So it's up to us—to shop at our local merchants, to patronize the farmers market, to produce (and conserve) energy to the extent we can close to home, to care for our local fields and woodlands and streams, to create and share our own stories and songs and artworks. As we relocalize, we turn our attention to supporting each other in community directly. We share our treasure more willingly and equitably. We help ensure social justice much more readily. We produce and enjoy much higher-quality goods and services. And we build a happier, more resilient, and more abundant society. Indeed, being together in this place is our most promising field of hope. **lv**

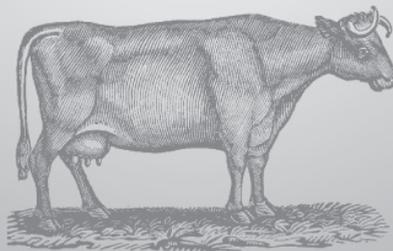
Thomas Dean teaches *Introduction to Place Studies and The Good Society through The University of Iowa Division of Interdisciplinary Programs.*

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UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

Is the Answer Blowin' in the Wind?

On the campaign trail President-Elect Barack Obama made a commitment to revitalize the economy with green-collar jobs as part of his overall energy initiative. After he takes office on January 20, the nation will be watching to see which components of his energy initiative actually make it into legislation. And many states will be anxiously calculating how many new jobs these changes will bring to their struggling local economies.

Along with accelerating the production of plug-in hybrid vehicles and low-emission coal plants, some key elements of the proposed Obama-Biden green job investments may have a significant impact in the state of Iowa. With the state's recent track record on clean energy research, development and manufacturing, Iowa may have a head start when it comes to utilizing any earmarked federal funds.

One component of the Obama-Biden plan is energy efficiency. (Remember his accurate, but much-criticized comment about tire pressure during the campaign?) In 2008, Iowa created the Green Iowa AmeriCorps, a separate unit of our state's AmeriCorps dedicated to helping people conserve energy in their homes. Two leading energy suppliers, MidAmerican Energy and Alliant Energy, also offer free home energy audits to their customers throughout Iowa.

Another important step of the new administration's plan is to accelerate the next generation of biofuels. Our state is currently first in ethanol production (providing 30 percent of the nation's supply). We're second in the production of biodiesel (providing 25 percent

of the nation's supply). However, these fuels aren't perfect, so Iowa is also supporting the research and development of future biofuels, such as cellulosic ethanol, which uses corn fiber and cobs instead of the grain and would therefore have less effect on the price of corn.

Blowing in the Wind

While Iowa's innovation in biofuels is certainly something to be proud of, Iowa's commitment to wind power as a viable energy source may be where the real excitement is.

As Governor Chet Culver put it in his keynote address at the first-ever Iowa Wind Energy Association Conference in March of 2008, "We are truly beginning the process of making our entire state a laboratory, so we remain on the cutting edge in all forms of renewable energy," said Governor Culver. "We hope to build the 'Silicon Valley of the Midwest' by developing the next generation of renewable energy and technology—and it starts here, with wind."

Those traveling across the state over the holidays will likely noticed more and more wind turbines scattered along the interstate. They also may even see a massive 50-yard blade on the road next to them being hauled by a massive semi-truck. In fact, a few months ago one of these blades actually tipped off a trailer while the driver was negotiating the sharp I-80 on-ramp west of Iowa City, tying up traffic for hours.

It's no surprise Iowa is currently third in the nation when it comes to wind power and one of only two states to manufacture all of the components of windmills (towers, turbines

and blades). This manufacturing capacity has certainly helped us establish a reputation in the growing U.S. wind industry, which increased the country's new wind capacity by 50 percent in 2008.

Obama hopes to promote commercial scale development of renewable energy by passing a 10 percent federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which would require 10 percent of the electricity consumed in the United States be clean, renewable energy by 2012.

- Iowa was the first state in the nation to establish a state-wide RPS back in 1990. Our RPS is currently at two percent, yet as much as 8.4 percent of the electricity consumed in Iowa is from renewable sources—well on the way to achieving the 10 percent goal of the new administration.
- The state of Iowa is also supporting a project called the Iowa Stored Energy Park, a facility designed to store wind energy from

"We are truly beginning the process of making our entire state a laboratory, so we remain on the cutting edge in all forms of renewable energy" Culver said, "and it starts here, with wind."

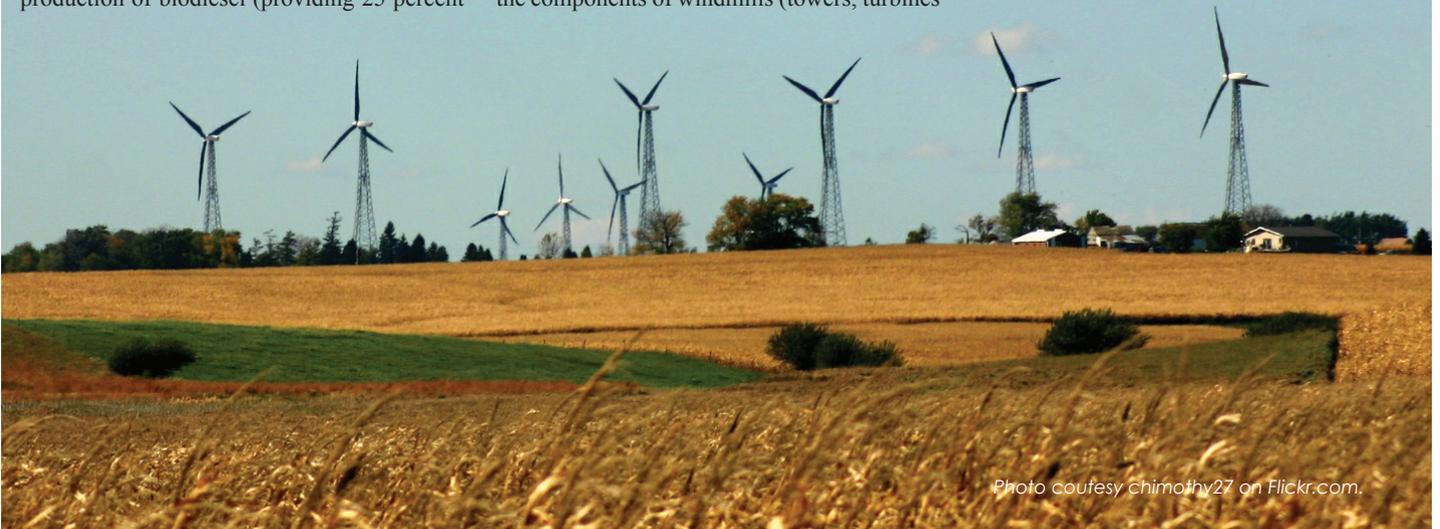


Photo courtesy chimothy27 on Flickr.com.

a large wind farm and release it to power companies during peak power demands. A joint venture with Iowa municipal utilities and several nearby states. Current plans call for the facility to be up and running by 2011, making wind power in Iowa a more stable energy source.

Converting manufacturing centers into clean technology leaders is also an important aspect of Obama's plan. Iowa has already begun the practice of refurbishing old manufacturing plants for the clean energy economy. In West Branch, Iowa, workers are building Acciona wind turbines in a former hydraulic pump factory. In Newton, TPI Composites is filling the void made when the Maytag plant closed. Now the town is turning out wind turbine blades to supply GE Energy.

Of the six companies currently investing in Iowa's wind power industry, only three are U.S. companies, and a cursory glance at their websites shows that they are the smallest, youngest companies in the bunch. American innovation is not a fixture in the global history of wind power. Instead, it is dominated by countries such as Spain, Denmark and Germany. However, Iowa is reaching out and

The wind industry may face a slowdown in the next couple years but its long-term potential for growth remains strong.

making alliances, gathering new technology, and making a case for being a national center for wind power in the years ahead.

Are Iowans crazy to be this optimistic in the midst of a stunning national recession? Yes, the recession is starting to hit Iowa. Iowa Workforce Development tells us that October 2008 brought our second consecutive month of job losses. And news of area layoffs at Rockwell Collins, Yellow Pages, Paetec, Buckle Down Publishing and even the Press Citizen seem to dominate the weekly headlines.

However, while experts tend to agree that the wind industry may face a slowdown in the next couple years, its long-term potential for growth remains strong. If Congress passes even half of the programs suggested in the Obama-Biden Energy Initiative, components

like a federal RPS and a Wind Production Tax Credit seem likely to stabilize this industry and help create new jobs in Iowa.

Even the City of Iowa City is starting to factor in the wind industry. The City is in the process of annexing a tract of land southwest of town, formerly the Bonnie Prybil estate. Once annexed, the City plans to rezone the property for industrial use and extend utility infrastructure to the area.

What does this have to do with wind energy? While working to attract a manufacturing company to the site, the Iowa City Area Development Group (ICAD) has placed notices in wind energy trade publications. It's still too early to speculate on possible offers, you have to applaud ICAD for their initiative in recognizing the site's potential and communicating it to an exciting new audience. **IV**

Sara Pralle is a Midwest farmer's daughter from a beautiful spot in the-middle-of-nowhere Kansas. She now lives in Iowa City and works as a full-time writer for The Whetstone Group, Inc., a growth planning marketing firm in Marion. Her interests include the KC Chiefs, yoga and knitting.



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3rd, for example, Obama's channel attracted nearly 1.5 million views to McCain's 163,940.

Along with its saturation presence on sites like Myspace, the campaign created My.BarackObama.com (or MyBo), a social networking tool with over one million users. MyBo, like much of Obama's web presence, was a conduit to spark more traditional forms of political activism—making phone calls, hosting and promoting events, donating money. In a shrewd move, the campaign tapped Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes to manage the site.

Jennifer Stromer-Galley, assistant professor of communication at the University of Albany, attributed Obama's online success to MyBo's

helped individual voters find their polling location.

Obama's campaign, unlike Howard Dean and Wesley Clark's presidential efforts in 2003, harnessed the internet's grassroots capacity with a strong emphasis on traditional field organizing. Obama's communication and outreach efforts were ubiquitous online, certainly, but the campaign also incorporated new media technologies into its daily outfit like Google Maps, which drastically shortened the time reserved for "cutting turf," or mapping canvass routes. This meant canvassers could receive the tightest cluster of doors possible—thus increasing their overall efficiency—within just minutes or even seconds behind a computer.

decided which blocks you were going to walk today," Wilcox said. "That's not technically on the new media side, but it wouldn't have happened without the technology. The technology made it cost effective."

Wilcox, who worked as online communications director for Mark Warner's presidential PAC in 2006, defended America's turn toward new media by citing its democratizing traits, particularly in comparison to television. Where the internet supports an active-user model with "a heartbeat behind every keyboard," Wilcox said, television provides a "more disembodied" mediated experience, one in which users remain largely passive.

Media scholars have, for decades, viewed the internet as a potentially democratic force,



high level of interactivity. Rather than foster internet insularity, she argued, the site channeled online enthusiasm into actual offline engagement. In her study of the 1996 presidential and 1998 mid-term elections, Stromer-Galley found that political candidates tended to avoid interactivity on their websites, fearing that supporters would steer candidates off message.

"The Obama campaign has finally figured out how to use the internet and its capabilities to organize and to mobilize," Stromer-Galley said. "The features and functions on a candidate's website act as a symbol of the candidate [...] so [MyBo] squared very strongly with his message that he was open to and encouraging of average people getting back into the political process."

In Iowa and across the country, campaign staffers and volunteers used the internet to organize debate watching parties, recruit volunteers for canvassing and phone-banking efforts, and alert supporters about upcoming events and surrogate appearances. Along with these organizational efforts, the campaign also launched VoteForChange.com, a website that

"We never would have had Abraham Lincoln if the networks were there cutting down his speeches to two or three lines."

- Nate Wilcox
author of *Netroots Rising*

Google Maps and other simple new media tools helped spawn a different sort of political campaign, one in which volunteers held greater responsibility than ever before. Nate Wilcox, political consultant and co-author of *Netroots Rising*, cited this as the major new media "paradigm shift" of the 2008 election season. ?

"If you were a volunteer coordinator in your area, you picked who your deputies were; you

one in opposition to television's hegemonic corporatism. As connection speeds have grown faster and technology has evolved, however, the internet has begun to assume television's penchant for visual spectacle through streaming video. Net advocates like Wilcox see a fundamental difference between the ad-based fodder on television and the content offered online. For him, Obama's March 2008 speech "A More Perfect Union" was a striking example of what internet video can provide. In an era of sound bites, Obama's speech was a long-player, a 37-minute treatise on race relations that has attracted over five million views on Obama's YouTube channel as of December 2008. Contrast that, Wilcox suggested, with Bill Clinton's 1996 Democratic National Convention address, in which the President used a variation of the phrase "Bridge to the 21st century" over 20 times to hammer his central message and craft as many sound bites as possible.

MEDIA CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

>> MEDIA FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

“[Internet video] gives a politician the opportunity to say something nuanced and in context,” Wilcox said. “We never would have had Abraham Lincoln if the networks were there cutting down his speeches to two or three lines.”

If “A More Perfect Union” represents one extreme in internet video politics, former Senator George Allen’s “Macaca moment” surely embodies the other. The infamous Macaca clip—in which the Virginia senator calls an Indian American man “Macaca” and ominously welcomes him “to the real world of Virginia”—sparked such a hyped-up frenzy on progressive blogs that mainstream media outlets eventually picked up the story. The video forced Allen into damage-control mode, and he went on to lose his senate seat by less than 10,000 votes to Democrat Jim Webb in 2006.

Lowell Feld, co-author of *Netroots Rising*, served as Webb’s netroots coordinator during the battle against Allen. According to him, the future of political journalism lies no longer in the hands of a few trained professionals, but in the hands of countless bloggers armed with video cameras and laptops. Politicians, in this new era of citizen surveillance, must learn to perform in a state of hyper-alert.

“If you’re a politician at an event—hell, if you’re out in public—you have to watch every word you say and you have to make sure it’s not different from something you said the

I sat on the clip—the only known video of Sebelius’s divisive remark—and the story went nowhere.

day before,” Feld said. “This is good and bad. It hurts the spontaneity of someone like John McCain, but it allows the public to see these people who’re running for office, to see what they’re saying and doing.”

Allen’s YouTube meltdown, we’d soon learn, signaled a new direction in Internet politics. Since then, politicians have appeared in perpetual fear of “Macaca moments,” and they’ve responded with stricter message-control. Throughout my new media tenure with Obama’s campaign, my boss routinely



praised videos as “on message,” to the point where “good” and “on message” became synonymous. During a September 16 surrogate speech at the Iowa City Public Library, for example, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius made an “off message” aside about Obama’s race, which The Drudge Report developed as a race-card move from Camp Obama. The next day, amid the editing process for a YouTube short on Sebelius, my boss advised me to use only “on message” comments, and explicitly warned me against using or sharing the mini-gaffe on race. I sat on the clip—the only known video of Sebelius’s divisive remark—and the story went nowhere.

With the online and cable news Gaffe Patrols dictating news cycles, it’s perhaps no wonder that a reserved, media-savvy candidate like Obama out-shined a self-proclaimed team of mavericks.

According to Douglas Kellner, chair of the Philosophy of Education department at UCLA and author of *Media Spectacle* and *The Postmodern Adventure*, Obama’s message/image control talents stem from his skills as a television performer. Kellner likened Obama to John F. Kennedy, another visual artist who could out-cool and out-youth his rivals on the TV screen. What Kennedy didn’t have, however, was the internet, itself a cultural signifier of youth, change and the new.

“I see the campaign as having a very strong internet component, but I would say equally, if not more so with Obama himself, it was a television campaign,” Kellner said. “Everyday he looked great on TV He looked great in the

debates. He was cool, calm and collected during all the fights with Hillary, and then during the campaign with McCain and the global economic crisis [...] He’s clearly a TV guy.”

Kellner’s emphasis on image triggers a visceral unease in the gut. His words recall historian Daniel Boorstin and his writings on pseudo-events in American culture. According to Boorstin’s 1961 book *The Image*, news and political coverage in the United States has devolved into PR, image-making and superficiality. Boorstin singled out the 1960 presidential debate between Kennedy and Richard Nixon as a penultimate pseudo-event. Troubled by the praise Kennedy received for his cool, camera-friendly presence, Boorstin wrote “Pseudo-events thus lead to emphasis on pseudo-qualifications. Again the self-fulfilling prophecy. If we test presidential candidates by their talents on TV quiz performances, we will, of course, choose presidents for precisely these qualifications.”

Boorstin suggested Kennedy won the 1960 election by a televised image, by exploiting a new medium to his advantage. In other words, not on the issues. One can’t help but think maybe Obama bested a wrinkly John McCain on the same principles—only this time on computer monitors and television screens.

Mindlessly spamming MySpace walls, one has a lot of time to think. **IV**

Soheil Rezayazdi is a master’s student in journalism and mass communication at The University of Iowa. You can reach him, if you are so bold, at soheil.rezayazdi@gmail.com.

KICKING THE HABIT

Confessions of a Pre-Election Media Junkie

Obama keeps sending me emails. It's been two months since the campaign breakup, and while I appreciate that he still relies on me, talks to me, thanks me—it's just time for me to move on. He's getting desperate, I know—even getting his Davids to approach me (the Plouffe, the Axe), asking for help in exchange for... raffle tickets! Bumper stickers! A special edition winter hat! But I've had enough.

Forgive me, Prez-O. We had a heck of a time together, defeated the throes of Clintons and Ayers alike, came together in a historic something or other. I need some me-time now, I need...

Okay, I'll deflate this already-tired device. As the year anniversary of Iowa-caucus-mega-success approaches us, however, I feel the need to the dark side of our excitement's shiny coin: exhaustion. Nay, detox. America is awaking from a year-long media bender only to find that Chris Matthews is still in our bed and Sarah Palin's clothes are sprawled across the floor. All three million dollars worth (or whatever it was).

Ugh. Can you believe we cared that much about what amounts to low-grade D.C. gossip? Remember the fear struck by the mythical "whitey" video? Our shaken fists at Hil's RFK gaffe? The repeated viewings of Romney letting the dogs out? (Okay, no shame there). The day before the election, Arianna Huffington declared the race for... the internet! YouTube brought us a debate this year (and Mike Gravel's "Obama Girl" music video. Hm.); reactionary blogger Andrew Sullivan was allowed on television. Seemingly docile outlets finally spouted claws (I'm looking at you, Real Clear Politics)—Election '08 kept us all up eating after midnight, and oh the gremlins it did spawn.

It was new media's time. No doubt. Newspapers got a one-hit high in sales on Obama's V-day, but otherwise the word was fail, fail, fail. When we look back, though, remember that unleashing the election to the forces of the web introduced it to its soulless flaws as well as its supreme grassroots advantage. For every fundraising record shattered by Obama, a million little blog posts emerged



about that never-do-well middle name, the "secret Muslim" farce, and Palin's teen comedy faking-it pregnancy. Yes, 2000 had whispers about McCain's adopted child, 2004 had swiftboating—and however devastating, these were Big Things dispersed by Important People (hack operatives, mostly).

We owned the internet rumor mill, though—the UrISA—and never before did we have such a stake in the conversation. We let ourselves fall under a techno spell, thinking McCain's green screen faux-paus were worthy of disdain because he might become the leader of the free world (whatever part we own, anyway). I can't count the hours I spent scrolling through Google Reader, my RSS feed home, to find the next update on Troopergate, Revve Wright, the wonderful world of electoral math. For those of you unfamiliar with the process, an RSS feed is like a magical internet box that collects new posts from all the sites you crave—from the tower of the Times edito-

rial page to your buddy's drunken musings on how Palin somehow made Tina Fey less hot. From there, you share: links to blot out like-minded friends' Facebook profiles, conversation starters, sweaty after-hours obsessions (just like Bill Kristol's sweet spot for his Sarah).

**Forgive me,
Prez-O.
I need some
me-time now.**

I'd recommend it, but soon enough you end up in *Requiem for a Dream* territory, tricked into thinking Jared Leto can act and realizing that Ellen Burstyn is a terrifying old woman. Post-election, that eventually creeps in. And after the horror of time-lost—the crippling boredom of an old addict. Save for a wondrous tech-free vacation to Europeland, I still check my feeds every day, settle on "Countdown" while grabbing dinner, talk transition with old Obama staffers.

It's an old habit now, an unaware biting of nails, and even when IMPORTANT THINGS happen (the economy might be a Terminator), it's hard to re-spark the fire.

So what now? "Lost" starts again soon, libraries are loaning Wii consoles. I hear there's a new fad in town called human companionship. Though if all else fails, rumor has it that a shipment of Midterm Electro-Crack is set to hit stateside in a year or so, just in time for 2010. **lv**

Paul Sorenson thinks graduating from college is a bad idea. Stay in school, kids—much longer than you have to. Real life means wading through a recession and working three jobs just to pay for your internet and music addiction (maybe rent, too) and finding a way to get back into academia.

Gitmo in Verse

Imagine being 14 years old when you arrive in Pakistan to learn English and study information technology. Then imagine being arrested, tortured and taken to Guantánamo Bay as an “enemy combatant.”

This is what happened to Mohammed El Gharani, a Saudi-born Chadian national. In January 2002, he became one of the first men imprisoned by the United States at Guantánamo Bay. In “First Poem of My Life,” one of 22 poems by detainees featured in this volume, he writes:

*They said to us, “Come out peacefully,
And don’t utter a single word.”
Into a transport truck they lifted us,
And in shackles of injustice they bound us.*

Edited by Marc Falkoff, a law professor at Northern Illinois University and an attorney representing 17 detainees, this is no ordinary book of poetry. Along with the poems, stories of the men and the treatment they endure give heart-breaking context to their verse.

The Saudi national Abdullah Thani Faris Al Anazi was a humanitarian worker in Afghanistan when he lost both of his legs in a U.S. bombing campaign. In “To My Father” he writes:

*Oh Father, this is a prison of injustice.
Its iniquity makes the mountains weep.
I have committed no crime and am guilty of
no offense.
Curved claws have I,
But I have been sold like a fattened sheep.*

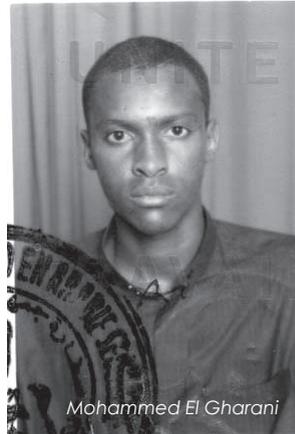
In his introduction, Falkoff, who holds a Ph.D. in literature, describes what he found during his first visit to the prison camp. “They were broken down and psychologically tyrannized, kept in extreme isolation, threatened with rendition, interrogated at gunpoint, and told that their families would be harmed if they refused to talk.” In an appearance at Prairie Lights Bookstore in Iowa City, Falkoff said that he would prefer to tell his clients’ stories in a court of law, where they should be heard.

This is not an easy book to read, not because the poems are complex, but because they reveal truths that are painful to hear. And these are only the ones that have passed

through the censorship process of the U.S. Department of Defense. The poems were rendered in English from the original Arabic by FBI-approved translators and each line needed approval from the Pentagon’s Privilege Review Team before its publication was allowed. Some of the poems were originally written in toothpaste or carved with a pebble into a styrofoam cup, with little hope that they would ever be seen by another person’s eyes.

After University of Iowa Press Acquisitions Editor Joseph Parsons read some of the poems in Book Forum, he consulted with Holly Carver, director of the University of Iowa Press. They both agreed that the experience of reading them is both “humbling and fascinating.” That same day Parsons called Marc Falkoff to see about putting the poems into a book.

Writers and poets they contacted during its production were universally eager to help. Gore Vidal supplied the quote that appears on the cover; Flag Miller, a linguistic scholar wrote the preface, and poet Ariel Dorfman wrote the afterword.



Published by the University of Iowa Press in August 2007, 5,000 copies sold in the first six weeks. Response to the book, which entered its second printing in September and is now in its third, has been “exceptional,” says Parsons.

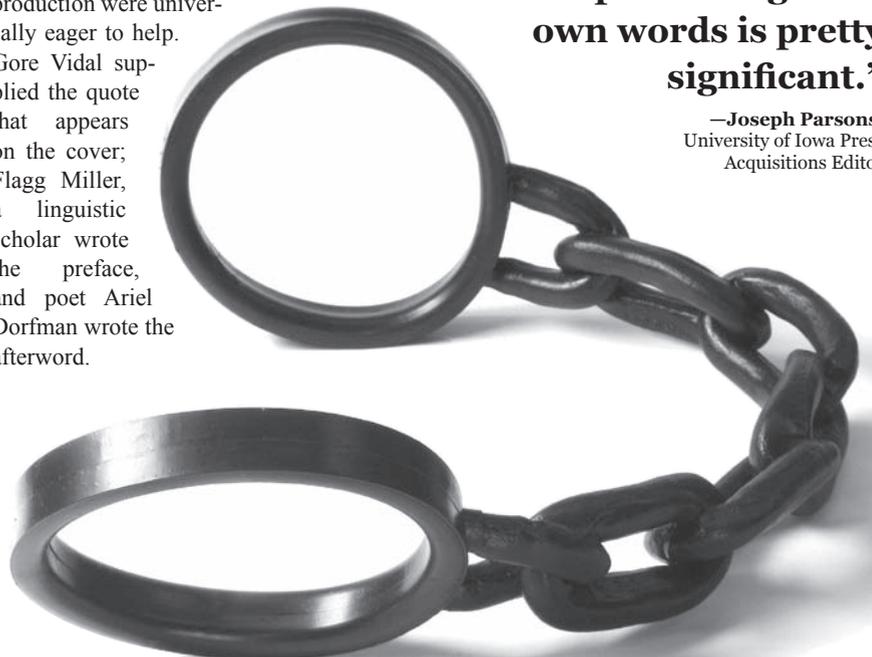
“Of course the subject matter is extraordinary,” he says. “So little is known about the detainees that a book presenting their own words is pretty significant.”

The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Boston Globe, National Review, and Harpers magazine have all reviewed the book. Parsons reports that articles have also appeared in German, French, Spanish, Turkish, Portuguese and Pashti, and the University Press has received numerous requests for foreign language editions of the book.

Though it has not been banned, bookstores in Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Portland, Los

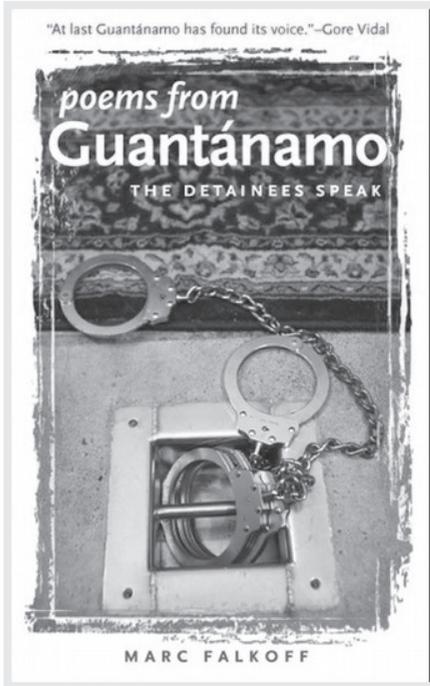
**“So little is known
about the detainees
that a book
presenting their
own words is pretty
significant.”**

—Joseph Parsons,
University of Iowa Press
Acquisitions Editor



Angeles and elsewhere held readings from this slim collection during Banned Books Week last fall.

Dorman writes in the afterword, "Think that we have a chance to help them complete the journey that started in a cage inside a concentration camp, merely by something as simple



as reading these poems...If we are troubled enough, it will not be just the verses that are set free to roam the world, but the hands and lips and lungs that composed them."

Even using the Pentagon's own dubious documents, a 2006 Seton Hall study reported only eight percent of the men held at Guantánamo are alleged to be "fighters." Eighty-six percent were captured in Pakistan or by the Afghan Northern Alliance and sold to the United States. for a hefty bounty, thanks to U.S. flyers enticing, "Get wealth and power beyond your dreams." All of the kidnapped and caged have been denied the most basic due process, civil liberties and human rights protections.

At the end of May, 35 Americans brought names of some of the men held in Guantánamo into a municipal courtroom in Washington, D.C., and four Iowans were among them. Originally 81 people were arrested at the action at the U.S. Supreme Court January 11, the day that marked the sixth anniversary since the opening of the Guantánamo facility.

As the defendants made their statements at their sentencing, each spoke the name of a prisoner held at Guantánamo, effectively getting the men's names into the official judicial record. The trial ended May 30. After the three

Iowans served their sentences, they arrived back in Iowa Sunday, June 8.

Just four days later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of habeas corpus for the detainees at Guantánamo.

"I'm just thrilled to see that the Supreme Court agrees with us that the right of habeas corpus belongs to everyone," says Christine Gaunt, an Iowa farmer from Grinnell who was one of the three Iowans arrested at the Supreme Court action January 11. "But you can't undo the damage that was done in the meantime."

Indeed, the decision comes too late for Abdul Razzaq Hekmati, the detainee she represented. The New York Times reported in February that Hekmati, who was regarded as a war hero in Afghanistan for fighting against the Soviets and the Taliban, died in Guantánamo December 30, 2007.

Poems from Guantánamo The Detainees Speak

Edited by Marc Falkoff
 Preface by Flagg Miller
 Afterword by Ariel Dorfman

Published by University of Iowa Press

Amnesty International cited the United States for violating human rights in their annual report released May 28, and urged the U.S. to shut down the Guantánamo detention camp and other "secret detention centers." It also said the United States should "prosecute the detainees under fair trial standards or release them and unequivocally reject the use of torture and ill-treatment."

Abdullah Thani Faris Al Anazi was released last September; Mohammed El Gharani and more than 270 others are still interned at the U.S. prison camp on Cuba. Royalties from the book will help pay for translators and transportation for the Center for Constitutional Rights' legal advocates.

While President-Elect Barack Obama vowed to close Guantánamo after he takes office, Witness Against Torture is inviting people to join in a silent procession to the White House with people wearing orange jumpsuits and black masks on January 11. They will then begin a liquid-only fast until Obama is inaugurated on January 20. **lv**

Gloria Williams just received her master's in journalism from The University of Iowa. She lives in Iowa City, is a member of the War Resisters League and believes shoe-throwing is an understatement.

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Laughing Matters

A barstool and microphone left on a small stage isn't just a scene from New York City, Los Angeles or Chicago. Iowa has its comedy clubs too. Though few in number, a visit to any of these comedy havens rewards the audience with just as much laughter and talent as you'd find in the entertainment capitals of the big cities.

Iowa is home to several comedy-only clubs including Funny Bone Comedy Club in Des Moines, Jokers Comedy Club in Cedar Falls and Penguin's Comedy Club, located in both Cedar Rapids and Davenport just to name a few. Many of these clubs, especially the Penguin's franchise, brings in anyone from "Saturday Night Live" and Comedy Central celebrities to local and Midwest-favorite feature acts.

Life lessons in the Midwest

Jay Rhymer of Sioux City has been doing stand-up purely for the love of comedy. Friends and family recognized his quick wit and encouraged him to give stand-up a try.

"Being from Iowa was different in a major way. Iowa isn't exactly the world headquarters of stand-up comedy," Rhymer said. "So it's harder to get stage time, to get advice and to get noticed."

But one thing's for certain, Rhymer said, and that's the work you can get touring the Midwest. Rhymer finds the Midwest audience a fun-loving crowd to entertain because



Richie Holiday performs at the relocated Penguin's Comedy Club in Cedar Rapids.

small-towns are often limited for other genres of entertainment.

"Also, big cities get big-name comics regularly. In smaller towns it is more of an even when you [a comic] come to town," he said. "Often times the comedy show is the only live entertainment in town that night. Those people tend to really appreciate you driving to their town and entertaining them. In turn, it's a great way to cut your teeth as a comic."

Danny Franks worked as a stand-up comic

for several years, followed by a string of odd jobs before settling in as the manager and emcee at the relocated and remodeled Penguin's Comedy Club in the Cedar Rapids Clarion Hotel and Convention Center. Franks said Iowa and the Midwest is a great place to get a feel for diverse audiences.

"Chicago is more into sketch comedy and improv, and big cities like L.A. are more diverse and in-your-face," he said. "Some comedians use small clubs in the Midwest as a place to knock out upcoming TV specials as a test-run. They can see the audience up-close

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and get their reactions.”

MTV's *Road Rules* reality star and Louisiana native Theo Von has been on the comedy circuit since 2002, and loves the opportunity to tour through the Midwest, especially in Iowa and Illinois where he has childhood links. His mother attended Coe College in Cedar Rapids and his grandparents lived in Kewanee, Illinois.

“I like the Midwest because it's like a museum. Every time I come to places like Iowa and small-city Illinois, I'm reminded of where good people come from and how important family is,” Von said. “They are different in that you can be more real with the audience. They are more patient, and they understand that you are a person as well, not just a jester.”

“The biggest differences between Iowa and big cities anywhere can be summed up as access and attitude,” veteran comedian and Midwest native Mike Mercury said. “Plus—and this is certainly a generalization—people in big cities definitely have a sort of crust to them. They seem to have more self-defense mechanisms on display, tend to be more jaded and cynical, they're a bit world-weary.”

Not all it's cracked up to be

Comedian and entertainer Chris Gummert has a different perception of Midwest and Iowa crowds and describes his experience of stand-up in Iowa as a bit of a challenge.

Gummert, a Grundy Center, Iowa native, started out with open-mic nights at Funny Bone Comedy Club in Des Moines and won the Funny Bone Funniest Person in Iowa contest in 1998. His gigs ranged from banquet halls to living rooms.

“It was actually a very humbling experience,” he said.

Humbling is one way to put it. Gummert said some of the hardest audiences he's performed for have been Iowans—and dealing with hecklers and short attention spans are a needed skill in the stand-up industry.

“My experiences with Iowa audiences have not always been the best,” he said, noting one performance where the big-screen TVs received more attention than his act.

“I was 20, talking about dating and psychology, and I was performing for people

who were usually in their 50s and wanted fart jokes,” Rhymmer said. “I don't care how funny you are, no one can compete with ribeye and a baked potato, either.”

In comparison to other comics, Gummert said he actually preferred the big-city audiences who were more open to his material than the narrow-mindedness of the Iowa crowd.

“I find that Iowa crowds break into one of two directions: either polite to a fault or drunk and disorderly.”

In November, Richie Holiday and Mike Mercury got to see that disorderly, overactive audience, where interruptions and crude reactions were posing distractions throughout their sets. Mercury said after 20 years in the business, he can handle the audience. For Holiday, it was not so pleasing.

“I can't stand it. I just want to go up there and do my act. I think the Midwest crowd is so uptight, receptive but uptight. The worst place is Minnesota, they are stoic,” Holiday said, with a nod from Mercury in agreement. “They won't make a move or a smile, and after the show they'll tell you they loved it. It's bizarre.”

“I don't care how funny you are, no one can compete with ribeye and a baked potato.”

—Comedian Jay Rhymmer

“It was an angry holiday crowd tonight,” Mercury said with a laugh. “And I joked about it but, you know, they were really hostile.”

And it's not just on-stage where the burdens can weigh the business down. Jeff Johnson, owner of the Penguin's franchise, said behind-the-scene troubles come just as easily. Some shows may be a gamble with success and hosting amateurs may bring a few problems with poorly arranged acts.

“The downside of amateur night is you get people that aren't really funny, that just want to try it,” Johnson said. “They think by watching other shows and comics they can go up on stage and steal other comic's materials.”

Johnson said one amateur in Cedar Rapids has been stealing jokes and getting in trouble



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COMEDY CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 >>

With a Bachelor's & a Backpack

My Grandfather had a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering. He taught classes, was involved in the state legislature and founded a business. My Dad has an M.B.A. I always felt my parents had great expectations for me. At times, my dreams were greater than their expectations. But, throughout most of my adult life they would probably just have liked to see me straighten up and fly right. I have hit rock bottom several times in my life, and over time my family has learned to quit catching me.

The first time I had a taste of a homeless shelter was when I was 18. I got an apartment with a buddy of mine from the Our Primary Purpose treatment center in Des Moines. Because of the energy of the place being a happening, the poorly structured apartment began to buckle. After the heater, the stove and the window in the apartment broke, I ended up at the Door of Faith. The Door of Faith was only seven dollars a week and I couldn't afford that

Since I was all happy because of the antidepressants, the first thing I did after I got out of the MHI was buy some psychedelic mushrooms from someone at the dorms on the campus of University of Northern Iowa. I was out of it for a couple weeks and needed to be committed. I then spent two years in either state mental hospitals or the Muscatine County home.

After a tedious process of having my release date pushed farther into the future because of some infraction of the rules, I was released from the county home. I didn't want to go to college at first, but it seemed like the thing to do. Everyone else was working on a degree in something. I started out in journalism but ended up and taking my time getting my Bachelor's degree in English from The University of Iowa. Part of the time I was living rent-free in my grandfather's 3,000 square-foot home by myself and working for my dad.

I planned to settle down, get married and work for my dad for the rest of my life. Like

the best laid plans of mice and men, things didn't go that way.

I planned to settle down & get married

at the time. From there I went to the Bethel Mission, a less desirable shelter that reeked of urine and vomit. I spent a week in jail on purpose to avoid being in the cold. After that, mom and dad took me in.

My parents gave me six days to get out of the house after me and my buddy hitchhiked to Chicago to see the Grateful Dead. This was around 1985. I ended up in a halfway house in Waterloo. I was massively depressed and they didn't know what to do with me so they suggested I go to the Mental Health Institute (MHI) in Independence, a mental hospital run by the Iowa Department of Human Services. I was put on strong antidepressants.

I ended up crazy and then drunk all the time. Dad said, "You've got to go," and I ended up in the Miriam House in Davenport. There were two parts to that shelter. Some guys slept on the floor on mats. If you were in the shelter's program, a set of rules and weekly meetings, you got to sleep upstairs in a room with about six guys on bunk beds. I chose the latter.

I was full of self pity. I thought my life was really over at 30. I was obsessed over the events that happened with some women in Muscatine because no one would believe my story. I started writing them all down. I had been not writing for a long time and I had a very romantic notion about writing a novel in a homeless shelter. I would get all obsessed with my past and how important it was to

me but didn't think anyone would care. I got bogged down in the writing process because it wasn't really creative per se. So I would go out and get drunk. I would try to pick up where I left off but it was useless.

I met Alice when I downed a fifth of vodka in two hours and ended up in jail. We were both waiting to talk to a counselor. She invited me out for coffee. It wasn't long before we were reading *The Brothers Karamozov* together. She was like a guiding light to me. We read books and discussed life and literature. I got a job at Palmer College of Chiropractic doing janitorial work and was able to move out of the shelter. Then I got my first article published.

I managed to keep jobs and stay in rooming houses. Back in 1997, you could get a room for \$250 a month and share a kitchen and bathroom with six other people. Alice became a mentor and a friend. If the possibility of a romantic relationship was not so awkward, I wouldn't have bothered to pursue other women. I always kept my eye on my writing career but got in the most trouble when I pursued women.

Soon I began to have problems with women on a grand scale. So I decided to pursue the one who got me to come out of the house in the first place, an assistant defense attorney. I sent three letters to the courthouse and they sent the feds to my work place. My experiences with law enforcement personnel were bizarre and incomprehensible. There was no restraining order, as my letters were non-threatening. I thought all kinds of paranoid things were happening—no one would believe them—and was just waiting for the white van to show up and take me away. So I checked into the hospital for a break. When I got honest about my story, they thought there was more wrong with me.

I pretty much gave up on women and decided to pursue my writing career. I got a job at a newspaper. It was in some small town in Iowa where I didn't know a soul. It was painful and it only lasted six months. I went out to Utah for a couple months to work in Zion National Park. It's was a nice vacation and I wrote a few articles for a small paper in Utah. Then I went back to mom and dad's.

Alice became a mentor and a friend.

There I was, 38, living at my parent's house and delivering pizza for Domino's Pizza. I was depressed out of my mind and I couldn't deal with my parents. One night I made \$50 dollars in tips, got a cheap hotel room and a bottle. Once I started drinking and using drugs, who knows when it would have ended. I knew it wouldn't be long till my folks would say hit the road jack. I figured if I were going down, I might as well max out a credit card on crack. I stayed at a friend's house while I was doing this. I went through \$10,000 in about three weeks.

When I hit the shelter in Muscatine, they were pushing disability. There were a lot of guys in their late thirties there who had worked most of their lives with a mental illness and found they couldn't work. I refused to believe it even though I filled out the paper work. At the time I was facing at least two years to convince the government that I was too loony to hold a job.

I got a job at the *Lone Tree Reporter* and eventually became the editor. I was overworked and burnt out quickly. Then I met the guys that had the funds and I still had my car. We were driving back and forth to Davenport, buying crack. I would get clean for a while and I would try to stay away from those guys but I kept coming back.

In the Muscatine Center for Social Action shelter, I've lived in the gym on a mat and I've lived upstairs but they won't let me stay upstairs anymore. I've left to stay with friends and I've been asked to leave. I stayed at the John Lewis shelter in Davenport for a while, but they kept letting me come back to the shelter in Muscatine.

After spending three years in the shelter with no confidence in my ability to hold a job and no real hope of getting disability, I tried to swallow a bunch of pills even though I knew they wouldn't kill me. Then a rumor about the woman that got me in trouble eight years ago started circulating and I thought it was over and done with. I had to move around. I hitchhiked to Iowa City and it was so easy that I was going to take off to Berkeley. But I decided to stick around.

Like a friend of mine said, I wasn't homeless, I was camping. I slept wherever I thought I could get away with it. One night in the middle of the summer, I was going

to sleep naked on a roof by the gay bar. I didn't know it was a gay bar, and unfortunately some girl talking on her cell phone saw me and I had to go somewhere else. Sometimes the mosquitoes would be so bad I couldn't sleep.

I started out with just the clothes on my back and a food stamp card. When my clothes got too funky, I changed at either the local thrift store or the Salvation Army. I tried to avoid the crowds at the free lunches at Wesley House and the Salvation Army in Iowa City. But I figured out if I got there early enough I could beat the lines. Gradually I got a backpack and some clothes. I got soap, shampoo, toothpaste and a toothbrush from the Johnson County Shelter House. I took my showers at the Rec Center.

Then a guy turned me on to a porch where a bunch of guys sleep. It was okay for a while and then it got a little too rowdy. My bag was stolen and it had my medication in it. I decided with no meds and winter coming on I should head back to Muscatine.

Somewhere along the line I had taken to prayer because I really had nothing better to do; this was when I was

HOMELESS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 >>

I had been there.

I met a lot of people that wouldn't have

Everyone else was working on a degree in something.

a trip through the wilderness

I started out with just the clothes on my back and a food stamp card.

six days to get out of the house

Brian Schmarje's story gives a voice to what many witness with blind eyes. This is only his story--no one else's--and whatever similarities to the statistics of substance abuse and mental health issues that pervade Iowa's homeless community are examples and not prerequisites. To read the previous stories in this series, visit LittleVillageMag.com.

The Johnson County Shelter House is currently located at 331 N. Gilbert Street. If you are interested and able to help your homeless neighbors, contact the Shelter House at 319-351-0326 or ShelterHouseIowa.org.

I was full of myself. I thought life was really over. I was 38, living in my parent's house. I had been there. I met a lot of people that wouldn't have a trip through the wilderness. I started out with just the clothes on my back and a food stamp card.

>> COMEDY FROM PAGE 17

with comics “all over the place.”

“People fall for that, which is too bad. [But] In general it’s a nice outlet for people to give it a shot. Every single comic started out that way.”

Outside of the club, there can be just as many misconceptions. Friends, family and acquaintances often ask Johnson about what “good acts” will be stopping in the club.

“Every comic we have is funny,” Johnson said. “People don’t get that. They think they’re all local people, or they’re all dirty, because they went to a show that was dirty 10 years ago.”

Johnson said there’s a stereotype that “only certain people are funny” or that good, clean fun is hard to come by—both of which are false.

The Iowa River flooding in June had devoured Penguin’s Comedy Club in downtown Cedar Rapids.

“I book based on what the audience finds funny. I don’t book any shows that aren’t funny. That’s probably the one downfall [of owning a club]—people have a thought in their head that if they’re not big, they’re not good.”

Running the show

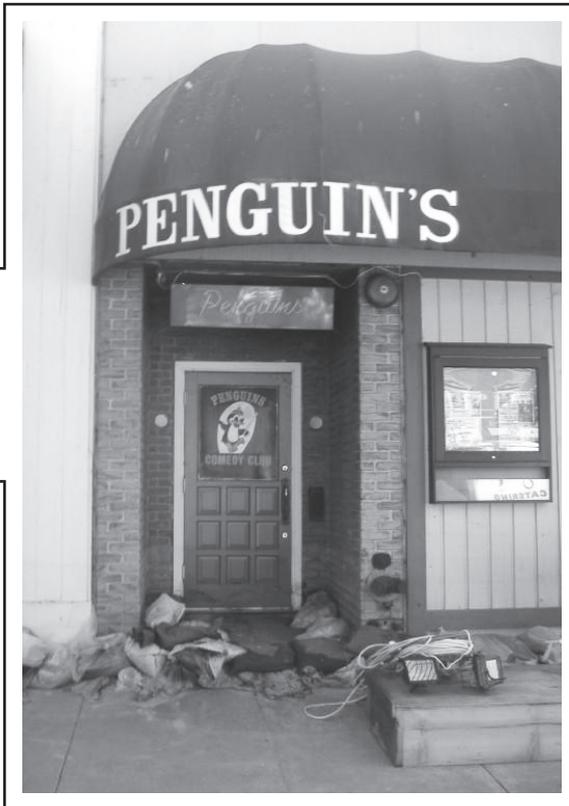
Cedar Rapids native Jeff Johnson returned to the area after spending some time in Chicago where the comedy club business was an expensive operation. He found a dying downtown club in Cedar Rapids and decided to knock the dust off, opening Penguin’s Comedy Club, which has now been a city staple for almost 20 years.

Doing all the booking himself, Johnson brings in both big-names and no-names—a mix of Midwest comics and national acts—and squeezes in one night a month of amateur and open-mic night. Some amateurs-turned-full-time comics like Tim Sullivan, Chris Schlichting, and Mike Brody all got their starts at Penguin’s Comedy Club. “Last Comic Standing” star Tammy Pescatelli also began her career in small clubs and made frequent visits to Penguin’s.

“The best parts [of the business] for me are seeing the amateurs succeed, that’s cool. The

second, to be honest, is being able to entertain people,” Johnson said. “I can’t remember the tens of thousands that have seen comedy in Cedar Rapids or the Quad-Cities because of people I’ve booked.”

While comedy clubs work in larger metro areas like Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, college towns are harder to please. Johnson said he opened a comedy club in the Iowa City pedestrian mall several years ago, but saw little benefit from its location and audience.



“College students don’t want to pay 10 bucks,” Johnson said. “Even if they pay six or seven to get in, they want to buy drinks for a dollar.”

His Iowa City attempt only stayed open for about six months and Johnson returned to focusing his attention on Cedar Rapids and starting a second Penguins Comedy Club in the Quad City Freight House in Davenport seven years ago.

For Iowa City business manager Alan Eckhardt, the comedy has not stopped at the borders of Iowa City. One of Eckhardt’s businesses, The Summit, is a popular social spot for weekend gatherings and college students, but Wednesday night is devoted to stand-up comedy. Eckhardt said his devotion to the Wednesday night comedy shows comes from the hope to allow another option for students besides getting drunk.

“We do it on Wednesdays for the college

kids. It’s hard to get locals to come downtown on a regular basis,” he said. “It’s a way to be out with people, and yeah, you can drink but you’re not so much going for that. There’s something to do, more than getting smashed. There’s not too many options for college students to do anything but drink.”

Eckhardt is a fan of stand-up comedy himself, and enjoys the chance to bring acts, no matter what size, to downtown establishments. But catering to chatty college students is easier said than done. Some come to see the show, he said, but for others it’s just background noise.

“It’s hard to get people to really want to see a show. We battle with that. People come down in the summer when the kids are gone. You get people that actually wanna see it.”

Let the good times roll

In the hopes of a fun night in Cedar Rapids, Rossilyn Babington and Chad Gloede found themselves at Penguin’s Comedy Club for the Richie Holiday and Mike Mercury show.

“This is the first time I’ve been to the new location,” said Babington, who had seen several shows at the flooded-out downtown location. “I liked the show; I had a lot of fun.” Gloede, who hasn’t frequented many comedy shows, said he’d come back for more.

For comedians venturing through the Midwest’s changing seasons and passing visitors, that’s all they want to hear.

“Comedy is a tough business, and comics should stick together. What’s good for one is good for all,” Rhymer said. “More comics should think that way. The more comedy shows there are the more work for everyone.”

Mercury enjoys his experience at Penguin’s, despite the late November show’s rambunctious audience.

“Not only are the audiences always great but Jeff Johnson and his staff always treat the comedians with respect and not-so-common courtesy,” Mercury said. “When your performers are happy and feeling appreciated, the audience benefits. We’re pros so we can work through less than ideal circumstances.”

Through it all, those involved in Iowa and Midwest comedy continue to come back for the genuine audience, the great clubs and the fun of the job.

“People in Iowa tend to be a little warmer. Friendlier. Receptive. Appreciative. Even the chicks dig me in Iowa,” Mercury said with a laugh.

Cedar Rapids breathes new life

For Franks, laughs are coming a little easier, now that his Penguin's Comedy Club has found a new, dry home.

The Iowa River flooding in June had de-voured Penguin's Comedy Club in downtown Cedar Rapids, leaving only a computer, a few signed headshots and some memorabilia un-damaged. The rest was history.

“The best parts for me are seeing the amateurs succeed, that’s cool.”

—Penguins owner Jeff Johnson

“We lost all our files, our whole file cabinet that had resumes and CDs or DVDs of comedians that we were thinking about bringing to the club,” Franks said. “We’re still in the re-building process.”

Franks said Penguins’ business is better than ever. Visiting sports teams and their families and fans often stay at the Clarion Hotel and visit the club, along with other guests looking for fun without leaving the hotel. The freshly painted purple walls and penguin decor have made the new location feel even better than the last.

“The downtown club was dark and dingy, it’s great to be somewhere new,” Franks said. He hopes to see plans for expansion in the next year, taking seating from 120 to over 200.

Comedians took note of the damage done to the small-town comedy club, and came out of the woodwork to help. More than 10 comics helped perform a sold-out benefit show that raised money for the relocation and construction costs. “They helped out a lot,” he said. “And they did it all for free.”

It’s not like there was little business before the flood. Both Penguin’s locations have always had great traffic from comedy lovers and big names like Louis C.K., Andy Kindler and Dave Attell have made frequent stops in the humble corn state.

Franks said the fans that come to Penguin’s in Cedar Rapids are genuine, and while some are fans of the headliners performing, many just come out for a good time.

“It’s like the movies or theater, it’s entertainment,” Franks said. “It’s a chance to forget all the bad stuff from the day and unwind with a few laughs.” **IV**

Erin Tiesman is a graduate student at the University of Iowa School of Journalism & Mass Communication. Her interests in writing include women’s issues, religion and community.

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at the Jesus Mission in Muscatine. Some of the strangest things started happening. Some of those scary drunks that could hardly talk and would come in all beat up, started talking to me because they knew I had been there.

My experiences of living in shelters and working some 20 jobs in 17 years have been like a trip through the wilderness. Before, my life was either drugs or books and lots of isolation. I hardly ever talked to anyone. Now I will say “Hi” to most anyone. I see all these college students with cell phones, iPods, laptops, and I can’t even afford a pack of cigarettes. Of course I should probably quit before I’m carrying around an oxygen tank. I’ve been smoking for longer than a lot of these kids have been alive.

I headed back to Muscatine for the winter. I wonder what those people sleeping down on the ped mall are going to do in this cold. I know I used to fight the system at the shelter in Muscatine because I was so much smarter and their rules were stupid. But, now they even let me pass the time in Iowa City for a week.

It’s kind of a trade off. In a way, I wish I would have got the girl and settled down with the family business. But I would have missed a lot of lessons in life. I never would have gotten my first article published. I wouldn’t have pursued writing as passionately as I have. Being

I was so much smarter and their rules were stupid.

in a relationship would have tied me down and I never would have met Alice, who is a genuinely special person.

If there is any truth to the rumor I may still get the girl or maybe not. A relationship is not as important to me now. I feel, at 42, I am just coming into form with my writing and who knows where it will lead me.

I can say that I have met a lot of people that I wouldn’t have met if my life had turned out differently. I used to look down on some of those people. I’ve met some unexpectedly weird people who are just being themselves. They have brought to me expressions of personality that I wouldn’t have found in the academic or business world. My life is much richer for having met them. **IV**

Brian Schmarje is a freelance writer. This is his third article published by Little Village. If you are interested in reading unedited writing on his blog, visit www.xanga.com/arthur_spi-derface, which also features his work for Little Village, posted with permission.

>> COMPOST FROM PAGE 5

—both animal and insect.

In addition, various forms of yard waste are good for compost, such as grass clippings and leaves, all mulched if possible (it speeds the process). Sticks and wood chips take a long time to decompose and should be piled separately, if at all.

To build an effective compost heap, choose a location close to your garden so that it is readily at hand. If possible it should be uphill from the garden to make hauling it in a wheelbarrow easier. Ideally it would be under a deciduous tree, which would shelter it from excessive heat in the summer and allow sunshine in the early spring.

Next, layer your ingredients, adding a thin layer of soil between each layer of alternating types. For example, a layer of grass clippings (three to six inches), then about an inch of soil, followed by three inches of straw, then more soil and a couple inches of food scrap, and so on. This layering helps mix the microorganisms (from the soil) with the compostable ma-

**VARIED
VARIED
VARIED** **The more varied the ingredients of your compost, the better the result.**

terials. It also allows for aeration, which is important to reduce mold growth. You can also aerate by turning regularly (a must), and by introducing perforated PVC pipe (an option).

February is a time when your compost pile is busy. Despite the cold temperatures outside if you were to go and dig into your heap this time of year, deep down you would find it quite warm, even hot. If you used PVC pipes, you might even see steam coming out of them. That’s a good sign. It means last season you did it right!

Work your fresh compost into your garden each spring, and any time you plant. Your plants will be happier, and so will you come harvest time. **IV**

It’s About the Food is a monthly feature of Little Village. Chef Kurt Michael Friese is co-owner, with his wife Kim, of the Iowa City restaurant Devotay and serves on the Slow Food USA Board of Directors. Comments may be directed to devotay@mchsi.com.

The Best Movies of 2008

(Most of which I didn't actually see)

Sydney Smith once observed, "I never read a book before reviewing it; it prejudices one so." As a rule, I do watch the movies before reviewing them; though when it comes to the big Hollywood productions anymore, I wonder how necessary my principle is. So many of them have been made to order according to market-tested formulas, that seeing who's in them, knowing their genre, and having watched their trailer are sufficient conditions for passing a pretty accurate judgment. Add to that having read a review of the movie by a critic whose taste you consistently agree or disagree with, and actually spending two hours in the movie theater has been rendered superfluous—unless you enjoy that kind of thing.

Naturally, I couldn't have predicted the fine excesses of my favorite movies of this year. For instance, Isabel Coixet's *Elegy* has a scene in which Penelope Cruz appears in an alluring pose completely naked. But it stirred no lust in me because her character had been so deeply humanized by that point. Earlier in the movie, a poet played by Dennis Hopper declares that beautiful women are invisible to men, for desire blurs who they really are. But for a few precious moments, the fog of Eros had been dispelled, and I saw, through tears, Penelope Cruz's character as an irreplaceable soul fastened, as we all are, to a dying animal. Even if seven trusted friends had told me in advance that I was going to weep anything but tears of joy for her naked flesh, I wouldn't have believed them.

Likewise, I would have called you crazy had you told me the most beautifully human movie of the year was going to be a computer-animated tale of a lonely trash compactor. But I was entranced by the opening half-hour of Andrew Stanton's *Wall-E*, in which a robot, whom the last humans on earth forgot to turn off, sifts through the detritus of a wasted civilization, handling things like plastic spoons



This is still more of *Elegy* than you could've seen in local theaters this year.

with loving care and thrilling to an old tape of *Hello, Dolly!* As you surely already know, *Wall-E* falls for an Apple product named Eve, and their love restores the human adventure on Earth.

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**Iowa City is still one of Earth's beautiful places for any number of reasons: one of them isn't its movie scene.**

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Iowa City is still one of Earth's beautiful places for any number of reasons: one of them isn't its movie scene. Though the memory is a shifty faculty prone to the invention of golden ages, I vividly remember one night in the late eighties when I looked down East Washington Street and saw the gorgeous, glowing marquis of the Astro advertising *Enemies: A Love Story* right across from the gorgeous, glowing marquis of the Englert playing *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. If I had turned around, I might have been able to tell you what was playing at the Campus Theaters in the Old Capitol Mall. But last year's snows have melted. We live under a new dispensation run by someone or something named Marcus. We still, thankfully, have the Bijou, where on a medium-sized screen we can see good movies nine months after every other movie-lover in the country

has had their way with them. Other than that, the role of art-house has fallen to the Sycamore Cinema 12.

As we reflect on the past year, let's bear witness to the best movies we haven't seen. Rather than review them without prejudice, I'll follow the practice of the ancients, who, as Ezra Pound reports, left blanks in their writings for the things they didn't know. Mike Leigh's *Happy-Go-Lucky*:

a superb, depressing moviemaker has made a happy movie, which hasn't lit up our screens. Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*: only about every fifth Woody Allen comes here anymore. Jonathan Demme's *Rachel Getting Married*: hardly an obscure movie; surely this must be coming. Jia Zhangke's *24 City*: I've heard respectable people claim he's the most exciting director currently working; I wouldn't know. Alex Holdridge's *In Search of a Midnight Kiss*: technically this came out in 2007, but only at a few festivals; it got so popular it played all over the country—except here. Ari Forman's *Waltz with Bashir*: an animated documentary about the 1982 Lebanese War: what can you predict about this movie? Jeff Nichols's *Shotgun Stories*, a well-regarded independent film we'll probably see at the Bijou in nine months. Laurent Cantet's *The Class*. Ramin Bharani's *Chop Shop*. Tarsem's *The Fall*.

I have high hopes we will eventually get Sam Mendes's *Revolutionary Road*, which features the obscure talents of Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslett, and Kathy Bates. Oh, I'd better bring this dispiriting list to a close (the holidays can bring out the worst in people). In case you're wondering, *Elegy* never came here either. I saw it in Chicago. **lv**

Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College. He is also sometimes a moderator on KCRG's "Ethical Perspectives on the News" and sometimes a cook at Simone's Plain and Simple, the French restaurant in the middle of nowhere.

Prepare to be Judged

January is the month of perpetual hangovers, and if December was any indication, the whole damn town might be frozen over. So I'm going to partake in the long tradition of using the New Year to pass judgment and make changes—though, not on myself (fine, more vegetables), but on the local venues (Mill: more vegetables!). I spend a lot of time in these haunts, and I like them, and while I think that some of these changes could add to the overall health of small city's active scene, I also think some of these changes would just make my life easier. Therefore, in alphabetical order:

The Industry

As a newcomer in the local music scene, the Industry had an uphill road ahead in terms of establishing itself in the local rock scene. Even generally skeptical me was seduced by the promise of this place—almost double the capacity of The Picador, pro lights and sound, two stages—so perhaps some degree of collective letdown is understandable. From a programming perspective, I think we can give them a passing grade for a mix of local favorites (Euforquestra, the Poison Control Center) and interesting national indie rock (Pale Young Gentlemen). It's always been

my belief that great events are the first step for great venues, but for a place to really work, you have to actually want to walk in the door. As of now I would have to issue a resounding "fail." Certain things are inexcusable: I watched a friend get charged a dollar for a glass of tap water. Seriously? As inane as this is, the larger problem is the space itself. Massive, industrial and bare, the Industry lives up to its name too well. No one likes walking into an empty warehouse. Why not utilize the upstairs more often, which has a wooden vibe not unlike The Mill, a smaller stage with closer crowd interaction, and colorfully (if lamely) decorated walls. It feels like a place I would like to hang with my friends. And really, does the door guy (or guys) really have to sit outside? This isn't Los Angeles.

The Mill

With this semester seeing the official departure of local legend, booker and sound man Trevor Hopkins, the Mill has stayed strong with a mix of bluegrass, Americana, folk, rock and more experimental shows under new leadership. However, there is one small thing when it comes to live music, and that's how it sounds. Taste is subjective, especially when it comes to sound quality, but to my ears no

No amount of magic-working behind the board can make the place sound awesome for rock and roll.

amount of magic-working behind the board can make that place sound awesome for rock and roll. Look, this isn't a dig on the sound guys—who I count among my friends—but the room itself is weird. The ridiculously wide-set speakers and the two that point sideways at the audience are often used by the sound guys to interesting effect, but nothing can hit you in chest as hard as the sound systems at the Picador and the Industry (oh, that's one good thing about the Industry). I've heard rumor that the problem is the mixing board, I've heard rumor that the problem is the generally slow service by the kitchen/waitstaff (I'm really grumpy when I get hungry).

The Picador

The Picador set the bar ridiculously high this semester with some of the hottest names in indie rock (Sunset Rubdown), metal (Boris), and out music (Lau Nau), while also paying tribute to some classic genre-defining musicians (Jonathan Richman, Stephen Malkmus). Keeping that level of talent up is probably the biggest challenge for the Pic heading into the New Year. But speaking of high bars, would it be too much to ask for the downstairs bar specials to be honored up top?

level of talent up is probably the biggest challenge for the Pic heading into the New Year. But speaking of high bars, would it be too much to ask for the downstairs bar specials to be honored by the upstairs bar? Perhaps this has to do with creative bookkeeping, or perhaps it has to do with the Pic's commitment to the

overall ill-health of its clientele. But I mean, we already have to go outside to smoke—isn't that enough walking?

Public Space One

I book this venue. That's probably the first problem.

The Yacht Club

I'll be honest with you: there's been some internal concern against a perceived bias I have against the Yacht Club. But I've said it before and I'll say it again: The Yacht Club is my favorite place to see live music in Iowa City. The problem is, I just rarely want to see what they have there. It's clear that what the Yacht Club does the Yacht Club does extremely well, like jam bands, cover bands, local rock, battles of the bands, Dead/jam night, Bob Marley's birthday night. Oh, and there is one other thing: the Tuesday night School of Flyentology dance party, which I've long celebrated in these

pages. And even though the Industry might have a hard time gauging the market, there are still gaps in the Iowa City scene that desperately need filled, namely, electronic music and touring deejays. Why not build on the success of Tuesday nights to book larger names in the dance music scene? This isn't a far stretch for the Yacht Club—I don't want them to change who they are, promise!—because in the last 10 years the gap between jam bands and electronic music has closed significantly thanks to Sound Tribe Sector Nine, Disco Biscuits, and DJ Logic. The truth is, the deejays at Studio 13 are also pretty good on the weekends. Add the Yacht Club to that mix and we've got ourselves a clubbing district! (May I suggest calling it NorBank [north of US Bank]?) Maybe then the Industry will make more sense.

Happy New Year everyone, and I'll see you at the shows. **IV**

Craig Eley is a music writer, promoter and American studies grad student, usually in that order. Got news on the music scene? Write to him at craig@missionfreak.com.



Pieta Brown

Flight Time

www.pietabrown.com

Pieta Brown's latest EP *Flight Time* is written in a world occupied by Cadillacs and runaway lovers, and in which a gallon of gas still cost 36 cents, somewhere just down the road from Tom Waits' "Burma Shave." However, this isn't some sort of forced nostalgia. When she sings about "corn dancin' on a soft, dirt floor," on album opener "Sunrise, Highway 44" it's not dust bowl imagery cribbed from a Woody Guthrie lyric sheet, Brown places you in this world from word one.

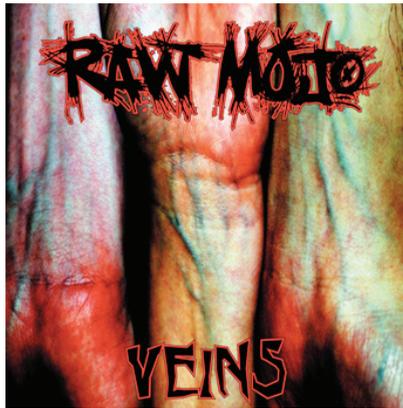
"Silos and smokestacks / dirty, odd trees / halos in junkyards / and dogs runnin' free," this is picture of isolation Brown paints on "Sunrise, Highway 44" But when she sings of "blue jeans and dresses on an unmade bed / unmade confessions, flowers all red" this large unmanageable landscape gains a personal focus that even city dwellers can relate to.

Brown also shows a gift for nuance. In her hands the bite of "Bad News" isn't just petty bitterness, despite the song's bluesy bar room shuffle that would fit anger like an old T-shirt. "Bad News" is all about the regret that the signs of a small-town romance are always present because there's no where escape them.

And, as if to prove she's not just an exceptional lyricist and vocalist, Brown includes the lavish, dust blown instrumental "I Thought I Heard You Call My Name," which puts the focus on the long, wistful breezes of slide guitar that blow casually across the rest of the EP's landscape. "I Thought I Heard" paints the same pictures with sustained piano structures, nimble finger-picked guitar, and that slide guitar that she sprinkles lyrically throughout the other six tracks on *Flight Time*. In seven tracks Brown has delivered a full picture of life in rural Iowa, one that's palatable for more than

just small-town kids.

John Schlotfeld is a University of Iowa graduate and staff writer for missionfreak.com.



Raw Mojo

Veins

www.rawmojo.net

Raw Mojo is a three-piece rock band you may have seen at shows around Iowa City. Their M.O. is to deliver short, concise stabs of pure rock and roll, without frills, pretension or irony. They deliver 10 songs in less than a half-hour, and each song comprises the same ingredients—raw-throated singing, overdriven guitar, bass, and heavy drumming. Skipping around between songs in iTunes I notice that nearly the same guitar tone is used on every song. And yet the songs don't all run together—perhaps relentless brevity pays off. And besides, Angus Young of AC/DC has never done anything but plug a Gibson SG into a Marshall Stack, so there's a strong precedent for Raw Mojo's willingness to pick a formula and stick to it.

As for the songwriting, well here's the curious thing. I like the songs fine, but there's nothing stellar about them in and of themselves. The personality, attitude, and execution is the thing with Raw Mojo; it's as though they don't want to waste time on song-writing that could be spent on rocking. And on the whole it works. On songs like "Punk," Raw Mojo riff like their lives depend on it. The song winds up being catchy, even with the hook of the chorus being nothing more than a telegraphed pentatonic bleating. The album closer "Take Her Away" has bassist 'Miss Nikki' getting her Joan Jett on to good effect in the CD's only ballad. Nikki fully commits to the persona of Rock&Roll Mama, and has the pipes to back it up.

I've only got MP3s of the album so it's hard to comment definitively on the production, but the choices Raw Mojo made during recording seems to be stripped down and, err, raw. I can hear Miss Nikki's bass and the kick drum, but

the sound is almost all midrange, which emphasizes the sharp edges of their live sound. There's so little studio trickery on this CD that the few songs on which the vocals get treated with a wet reverb it stands out as a surprising texture. What comes through most of all is how tight the band is, as though they've been practicing these songs in their basement forever. And that's Raw Mojo's secret: They've focused on the pure joy of playing rock music so completely that virtuosity or "originality" or sophisticated song writing would be an unnecessary distraction.

Kent Williams is the arts editor at Little Village. From Charlie Parker he learned, "If you don't live it, it won't come out your horn."



The Lonelyhearts

Disaster Footage at Night

Scenester Credentials

www.thelonelyhearts.net

Lonelyheart John Lindenbaum lives in Oakland, California while Andre Perry lives in Iowa City; so the band is not quite bi-coastal—maybe sesqui- or hemi-coastal? It doesn't really matter, what with the internet turning us all into quivering monads afloat in a dimensionless sea. The songs on *Disaster Footage At Night* might have been constructed via the Internet Cloud, but they sound no less coherent for it. Each of these songs finds either John or Andre inhabiting different characters and presenting their wordy first-person narratives. Given that Perry came to Iowa City for an MFA in nonfiction, story songs should come as no surprise.

But calling them 'wordy' isn't meant as a negative. Direct and oblique in turns, these songs at least try and get at something complicated and nuanced. In "Overpass," a song about a romance with a girl from sketchy circumstances, Lindenbaum sings "I called you baby, you called me a tourist" offhandedly captures uneasiness and uncertainty, and the mournful tone of the song, and the ornamented

melody of the chorus have a sort of magnificent miserableness. “Concrete and Chrome,” sung in the character of a soldier returning home, hits a few narrative notes that are a trifle obvious —“Where’s my parade? Where’s my welcome home?” but redeems itself in the end, with the repeated line “I should have stayed” accompanied by a devastating crescendo. It starts out with organ and synths that recall the portentousness of Sigur Ros, but it peaks in a wave of abrasive white noise.

The lyrics wouldn’t matter if the music didn’t come correct, and it does. The percussive strumming of the guitar and the sustained drones of the keyboard coalesce into a single warm sound. Their songs have enough harmonic variation to avoid being generic, while remaining infectiously accessible. Lindenbaum’s voice can (and has) been compared to Neil Young, and Perry brings Tom Petty to mind, but the full flowering of the music comes in the swelling codas to the songs, where they sing together in octave unison. Even though it becomes clear after a few listens whose songs are whose, the playing and arrangements are fully collaborative. With nearly every song on the album being a mid-tempo ballad, they can run together at first, but they reward repeat listening.

Their MySpace page lists Tom Petty first in their list of influences, and you can hear echoes of both the Heartbreakers’ ensemble sound and their band name in the Lonelyhearts. The lush integration of keyboard sounds owes a lot to Petty’s organist Benmont Tench; even when the organs and synths dominate the mix they rarely demand special attention, existing solely to support the song. The stories told in the lyrics reach for a particular narrator’s voice and may miss the mark. “Black Blue Devil” in particular, which describes the Duke Lacrosse team scandal of a few years back. It takes the point of view of the father of the team’s only black player and feels forced. It puts words in the mouth of a real person, who can presum-

ably speak for himself. And trying to take race, prejudice, sexism and violence against women, using an event so murky and unresolved, is ambitious beyond all chance of success. At the same time the musical setting supporting the narrative is almost perfect in capturing the mood the lyrics evoke. Which may be the perfect exemplar of what the Lonelyhearts are about—their songwriting is fearless in its ambition, and if they don’t always hit their target perfectly, I’m not sure anyone else could come as close.

Kent Williams



The Sullivan Gang

The Sullivan Gang

I’m not sure I’ve ever heard a CD in recent years that more overtly identifies itself as roots music. From Michelle Wiegand’s acoustic cover of country music classic “Abilene,” to the ass-kicking stomp of “The Colorado Mines Song,” there’s nothing on this CD that couldn’t have been recorded 40 years ago. It’s as though Matt Wiegand put together a musical persona from his dad’s record collection—The Sullivan Gang’s music strongly recalls bands like Mother Blues, Mason Proffitt, Quicksilver Messenger Service and the rootsier side of the Grateful Dead.

This is a little unsettling for me to listen to,

since I actually saw all those bands play in their heyday. The Sullivan Gang writes and plays their music as though the last 40 years never happened. That’s a great trick, and they mostly pull it off. But filtered through everything I’ve heard since I was at McKinley Junior High, there are things about the Sullivan Gang that vex my ears: the noodly lead guitar that never seems to shut up in the up tempo rockers, the quavery vocal on “Love Is a Killing Thing,” and the faint whiff of patchouli that seems to lurk always in the background.

But what the hell, if the idea of a CD of songs from the Hippie Land That Time Forgot sounds good, I think this CD would be just about perfect for you. That sounds dismissive, and to a certain extent I guess it is. But at the same time, there’s absolutely nothing ironic about the Sullivan Gang, and that’s refreshing. These songs are successfully written and performed within their own peculiar context. For me personally, they reflect a world where the Sex Pistols, Joy Division and Kraftwerk never happened, which is a place I can only visit, and wouldn’t want to live. But there’s no denying the charm and sincerity they bring to this music. And hey, they’re still young—normally to hear this sort of thing, you’re listening to scratchy LPs recorded by dead people, or seeing it performed by pudgy balding guys with unfortunate ponytails.

I should mention one performance that comes out of left field: an acoustic version of “Brother Can You Spare A Dime.” The vocalists aren’t individually credited, and the woman who sings this—I think—appears nowhere else on the CD. The performance of this song — one of the greatest in the 20th century pop canon—is elegantly spare and plain, all the better to bring out the despair of the lyric. It’s my favorite song on the CD, despite seeming unrelated to anything else on it, other than “Abilene.”

Kent Williams

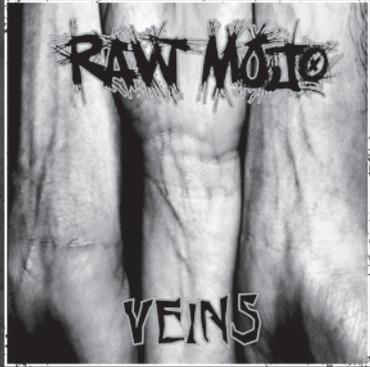


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ART/EXHIBITS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org

Check website for locations

Marin Luther King Day Celebration, free, Jan. 19

AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City

www.akardesign.com

Recent Ceramics: Margaret Bohls, through Feb. 13

Arts Iowa City Gallery

103 E College St., Iowa City

BookEnviron: Iowa City by Meda and Veda Rives

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids

www.crma.org

Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, Guided tours of Grant Wood's home and studio, Saturdays & Sundays, hourly 12-4pm

Mary GrandPré: Harry Potter and Beyond, through Feb. 1 • The Year of the River: Flood Photography from The Gazette, through Feb. 22 • Wingardium Extravaganza-A Night of Magic and Illusion, Jan. 24, 6:30pm

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Art 365, ongoing

The Chait Galleries Downtown

218 E Washington St., Iowa City

www.thegalleriesdowntown.com

Magnificence of Metals, through Jan. 16

Douglas & Linda Paul Gallery

Englert Theatre, Iowa City

www.englert.org

Ad Bites By Rachael Ayers, through Jan. 31

Falconer Gallery/Bucksbaum Center for the Arts

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell

www.grinnell.edu/falconergallery

still/LIFE by Tracy Hicks, through May

Hudson River Gallery

538 S. Gilbert St.

www.hudsonrivergallery.com

Gary Kelley, through Jan. 31

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place, Members Show Jan. 8-Feb. 15

Iowa City Public Library

Ped Mall, Iowa City

www.icpl.org

Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made in America, through Jan. 8

Johnson County Historical Society / Antique Car Museum of Iowa

860 Quarry Road, Coralville

www.jchsiowa.org

Winterfest, Jan. 25, 1pm • The Ride of the Abernathy Boys, ongoing

Modela/Decorum

323 E Market St., Iowa City

Vintage Wallpaper: Collaged and Camouflaged from Nancy Lincoln, through Jan.

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place, Jan. 6-31

Terrapin Coffee

Oakdale and 12th, Coralville

www.terrapincoffee.com

New York City Series by Julie Staub, ongoing

UI Museum of Art

Temporary location: Old Capitol Museum,

Pentacrest, UI Campus, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/uima

Eye Witness: Daniel Heyman's Portraits of Iraqi Torture Victims, through Jan. 18

UI School of Art & Art History

www.art.uiowa.edu

Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place, College Book Art Association Conference, For more information, call 319-335-0447, Jan. 8-10

MUSIC

Cedar Rapids Symphony

www.crsymphony.org

Check website for locations

Masterworks IV: A Clarion Call, Jan. 24, 8pm & Jan. 25, 2pm

Chamber Singers of Iowa City

First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

www.icchambersingers.org

Brahms' Alto Rhapsody, Jan. 25, 3pm

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Catie Curtis, Jan. 24, 8pm • Curumin, Jan. 26, 8pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Kurt Elling (produced by Hancher), Jan. 24, 7:30pm • Menopause The Musical, Jan. 29, 7:30pm

The Industry

211 Iowa Ave., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/theindustryic

All shows at 8pm unless noted

Blue Island Tribe, Jan. 2 • Raw Mojo CD Release, Jan. 10 • Max Allan Band 2/ Dead Larry, Jan. 17 • Animate Objects with B-Tho, Jan. 24 • Beaker Brothers, Jan. 30 • Minus Six, Jan. 31

Java House

211 1/2 East Washington Street, Iowa City

www.javahouse.com

Java Blend programs Friday at noon

Anna Laube, Jan. 2 • Rachael Davis, Jan. 9 • The Recliners, Jan. 16

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Sunday Night Pub Quiz, Sundays, 9pm • Open Mic with J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up • Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays

The Recliners, Jan. 2, 7:30pm • Sullivan Gang CD Release Party, Jan. 3 • Wax Cannon, Netherfriends, Pacific Proving Ground, Jan. 6 • New Monarchs, I Colossus, Gilbe, Daylight Savings Account, Jan. 7 • Bottom's Heavy, Jan. 8 • Yuppies, Dadkids, Supersonic P*ss, Jan. 9 • Wylde Nept, Jan. 10 • The Oliver Twists, Santa, Harlan Muir, Jan. 13 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Jan. 14, 7pm • Kent Burnside & The New Generation w/ Nate Basinger and Dustin Busch, Jan. 15 • Crisis Center Benefit, Jan. 16 • Catfish Keith, Jan. 17, 8pm • Light Pollution, Jan. 20 • School of Flyentology, Porno Galactica, Cuticle, Single Indian Tear, Jan. 23 • Willy Porter, Jan. 25, 7:30pm • Keepers of the Carpet, Wolves in the Attic, Jan. 27 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Jan. 28, 7pm • Amy & Adams, Jan. 28, 8pm • Shame Train w/ Noah Earle, Jan. 30 • Damon Dotson Band w/ Unknown Component, Jan. 31

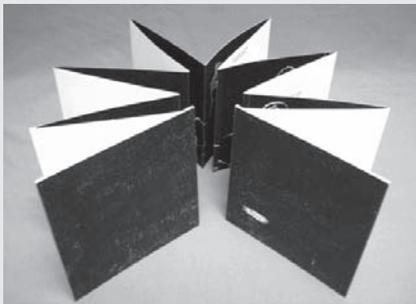
The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.thepicador.com

Shows are 19+ with doors at 9pm unless noted; 6pm shows are all ages

Church Burner, Cranial Decay, Awaiting Punishment, Scat, Jan. 3 • 12th Annual Elvis Tribute and Benefit with Matthew Grimm & The Red Smear, The Black Slacks, Burning Halos, Sam Knutson, Jan. 9 • d'bariwith Head Held High, The Blissters, Jan. 10 • Uearth, Emmure, Born Of Osiris, Impending Doom, all ages, Jan. 11 • One For The Team, Dadkids, all ages, Jan. 15 • Raw Mojo CD Release show with Now, Now Every Children, Jan. 16, 5pm • Liberty Leg, Girls of Gravitron, Jan. 16, 9:30pm • Picador Cover Up Showcase!, Jan. 17 • His Own



A book by Iowa City artist Jessica White.

Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place

Free | beginning January 8

Sponsored by UI School of Art and Art History for the complete list of event exhibits go to uicb.grad.uiowa.edu/uicb-cbaa-conference/exhibits

Art, Fact, and Artifact is the first biennial conference of the College Book Art Association. Sounds like a blast, right? Bibliophiles may think so, but there's plenty for everyone to enjoy outside the conference room (and without paying the registration fee). Namely, the headline exhibit at the Iowa Artisans Gallery in downtown Iowa City. The juried show of CBAA members will feature stunning examples of fine press editions and hand-printed broadsides to one-of-a-kind book objects. All devoted to the celebration of book as art.

"The selections nicely illustrate the conference theme of books being both witnesses from the past and living presences with an aesthetic power," explains Matt Brown, director of the UI Center for the Book.

"The members' exhibition...could prove to be one of the most significant exhibitions for book arts in this decade," adds juror Chip Schilling, himself a book artist. "The quality of the work submitted was outstanding, as it should be."

The concept of book as art isn't new, but recent years have seen increased attention towards conserving, broadening and promoting fine bookmaking. As important as this conference may be for academia, it's important, too, to get the bookworks into the public eye. After all, art requires an audience, and book artists are finally getting theirs.

In addition to the main event, the UI Main Library will host three exhibits, with gallery talks on January 8. Arts Iowa City hosts BookEnviron: Iowa City. The Old Capitol opens up a special collection of Artists Books with opening reception Friday, January 9.

Demise, A Hill to Die Upon, Orson Welles, Jan. 21 • Big Zay, all ages, Jan. 29 • The Life and Times, The Story of the Sea, Jan. 29, 9:30pm

Public Space One

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

Shows at 8pm

Samantha Cathcart, Anna Vogelzang, Moon + Stars, Alexis Stevens, Jan. 19, 9pm • The Box Flower, Jan. 23, 8pm

Quinton's

215 E. Washington St., Iowa City
Reggae Night every Sunday

Redstone Room

129 Main St., Davenport
www.redstoneroom.com

Ragaman, Jan. 1, 9pm • Through Terror, From Citizen Soldier, With Guns Blazing, Smash Moody, Jan. 3, 9pm • Sons of Apollo, Jan. 9, 6pm • The Horde, Jan. 10, 9pm • Harry Bailey's Transport, Jan. 16 9pm • Wine Tasting Event with Goran Ivanovic, Jan. 17, 6pm • BeauSoliel, Jan. 30, 8pm • Avey Brothers, Jan. 31, 9pm

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
America, Jan. 16, 8pm

Roadies

720 Pacha Parkway, North Liberty
Mike McAbee, Jan. 9, 9pm

University of Iowa

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Check website for locations
UI Jazz Faculty, Jan. 25, 4pm • Katherine Eberle and Gregory Hand, Jan. 25, 8pm

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.uptownbills.org
Open Mic, Fridays, 8pm; Sign-up, 7:30pm

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.uscellularcenter.com
Chris Tomlin, Israel Houghton & New Breed, Jan. 30, 7pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City
www.iowacityyachtclub.org
Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
Mondays Blues Jam • Tuesdays Dance Party • Wednesdays The Jam
Poppa Neptune, Jan. 2 • Dennis MsMurrin & The Demolition Band, Jan. 3 • River & The Tributaries, Jan. 10 • Samba Nosso, BJ Jagers & The Bennies, Jan. 16 • Mannix!, Lipstick Homicide, Happy Chromosomes, Victorian Halls, Jan. 17, 7pm • IC

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE
w/ DJ JOSH BOY
EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT 10 AND OVER

Fri. Jan 2 --

Double Feature Night!
Bad Boys 2 and Stick it!

Sat. Jan 3 --

Church Burner
with Cranial Decay, Awaiting Punishment, Scat

Fri. Jan 9 --
12th Annual

Elvis Tribute & Benefit
with Matthew Grimm & The Red Smear, The Black Slacks, Burning Halos, Sam Knutson, more TBA

Sat. Jan 10 --

d'bari
with Head Held High, The Blissters

Sun. Jan 11 --

ALL AGES 6PM

Unearth
with Emmure, Born Of Osiris, Impending Doom

Thurs. Jan 15 --

ALL AGES 6PM

One For The Team
with Dadkids and another act TBA

Fri. Jan 16 --

ALL AGES 5PM

Raw Mojo
CD Release show with Now, Now Every Children

Fri. Jan 16 --

Liberty Leg
with Girls of Gravitron, and another act TBA

Sat. Jan 17 --

Cover Up Showcase!
with The Young Palpatitions, The Gilded Bats, Supersonic Piss, Lwa...more bands TBA!

Wed. Jan 21 --

His Own Demise
with A Hill to Die Upon, Orson Welles

Thurs. Jan 29 --

ALL AGES 6PM

Big Zay

Thurs. Jan 29 --

The Life and Times
with The Story of the Sea

Mon. Feb 2 --

Pharaohs of Rhythm
with Dr. Z's Experiment

Wed. Feb 4 --

Yo Majesty
with Natalie "the floacist" Stewart

Fri. Feb 6 --

Schaffer The Dark Lord
with Coolzey, Case The Joint

CHECK OUT OUR NEWLY HEATED
BEER GARDEN!!

THE
PICADOR

330 E. Washington Iowa City, IA
www.thepicador.com

Pride Fundraiser, Jan. 22 • Funky Monks, Jan. 23 • 6th Anniversary Party, Jan. 24 • 56 Hope Road, Rooster McCabe, Jan. 29 • JC Brooks and the Uptown Sound, Jan. 31

THEATER | DANCE | PERFORMANCE

Art Culture Experiment (ACE)

Old Brick, 26 Market St., Iowa City
Inclusive Ballroom every Tuesday, 7-8:30pm

Brucemore

2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids
www.brucemore.com

Check website for showtimes
A Modern Salon at Brucemore, Jan. 15-25

Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre

New Strand Theatre, West Liberty
www.puppetspuppets.com
A Woolly Mammoth Show, Jan. 18, 2pm & 4:30pm

Penguin's Comedy Club

Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguinscomedyclub.com

Check website for showtimes
David Nickerson with Nate Ford, Jan. 2-3 • Sean Morey with Mike Brody, Jan. 9-10 • Chris "Boom Boom" Johnson with Nathan Timmell, Jan. 16-17 • Mike Sweeney with Ken Schultz, Jan. 23-24 • Amateur Night, Jan. 29 • Chinaman with Brian Aldridge, Jan. 30-31

Rage Theatrics

Space Place Theatre, UI Campus
www.ragetheatrics.com

Check website for showtimes
Prisoner of Zenda, Jan. 23-30

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.riversidetheatre.org
Showtimes are Thurs, Fri & Sat, 7:30pm, Sun 2pm
Guys on Ice: An Ice Fishing Musical Comedy, Jan. 23-Feb. 22

Scattergood Friends School

1951 Delta Ave., West Branch
Barn Dance with Roger Alexander and The Gilded Bats, Jan. 16, 8pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City
www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com
Shows start at 9:30pm
Jason Benci, Mike Bobitt, Jan. 21 • Nathan Timmel, Chad Miller, Jan 28

Theatre Cedar Rapids

Grant Wood House, 800 Second Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids
www.theatre.org

Check website for adult education classes and auditions

WORDS

Amana Heritage Museum

4310 220th Trail, Amana
www.amanaheritage.org
Winter Warmth: Stories of Old Amana, Jan. 24, 4:30pm

Barnes & Noble

Coral Ridge Mall, Coralville
The Writers Workshop, Jan. 8 & 22, 7pm • Coffee and Crime Book Group, Jan. 13, 7pm • Scrabble Night, Jan. 14, 6:30pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Talk Art Cabaret: Writer's Workshop Readings, Jan. 28, 10pm

Prairie Lights

15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
www.prairielightsbooks.com
Check website for readings

CINEMA

Bijou Theater

Iowa Memorial Union
www.bijoutheater.org
Check website for 2009 schedule and showtimes

Iowa City Public Library

Ped Mall, Iowa City
www.icpl.org
In the Shadow of the Moon, Jan. 9, 7pm • West Side Story, Jan. 16, 7pm • Sierra Club presents Fighting Goliath, Jan. 18, 3pm • Enchanted, Jan. 23, 7pm

KIDS & FAMILY

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org
Check website for locations
Learning Safari: Eat Your Way Through Africa, Jan. 2, 10:30am • Learning Safari: Welcome, President Obama!, Jan. 7, 10:30am • Learning Safari: Martin's Big Dream, Jan. 8, 10:30am

Barnes & Noble

Coral Ridge Mall, Coralville
All Storytimes begin at 10am unless noted
Oh The Places You'll Go, Jan. 6 • Dora The Explora, Jan. 9 • Make your Dream Come True, Jan. 13 • A to Z Storytime, Jan. 16 • Martin Luther King Jr, Jan. 20 • Measure Your Feet Day, Jan. 23 • The Snow Globe Family, Jan. 27 • Horses!, Jan. 30

Coralville Winterfest

Iowa River Landing District, Coralville
www.coralville.org
Storytelling, arts & crafts, games, music and outdoor activities, Jan. 25, 1-4pm

The Iowa Children's Museum

1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville
www.theicm.org
Cello Concert on the Carpet, Jan. 3, 2pm • Art Adventure, Sock Pals, Jan. 8, 3pm • Art Adventure: Puppet Theatre Art, Jan. 10, 11am • Art Adventure: Crazy Hats, Jan. 15, 3pm • Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, Jan. 19 • Art Adventure: Stuffed Snowman, Jan. 22, 3pm • Art Adventure: A Winter Garden, Jan. 29, 3pm • Art Adventure: Surrealism, Jan. 30, 5pm

Science Station

Lower level, Lindale Mall, 4444 First Avenue NE, Cedar Rapids
www.sciencestation.org
Be the Dinosaur, exhibit, through Jan. 4

MISC

Amana Colonies

4310 220th Trail, Amana
www.amanacolonies.org
Winterfest, Jan. 24, 10am-5pm

Critical Hit Games

89 Second St, Coralville
www.criticalhitgames.net
Check website for daily gaming events

New Pioneer Co-op

1101 2nd Street, Coralville
www.newpi.com
Thai Favorites cooking class, Jan. 27, 6pm • Cooking of Southern India, Jan. 29, 6pm

Red Cedar Chamber Music

Marion City Hall, 1225 6th Ave., Marion
www.redcedar.org
Building Communities through Performing Arts, Jan. 7, 4pm

Curses, Foiled Again

- Luis Lora-Martinez, 29, was charged with using counterfeit money to tip dancers and pay for drinks at a go-go bar in Secaucus, N.J. U.S. Secret Service agent Cindy Wofford said workers at the club quickly realized the five \$20 bills that Lora-Martinez passed were bogus because they were produced on a computer printer using regular quality paper and were of poor quality.
- Police who ran a routine identification check after stopping a car with a loud muffler in Stony Point, N.Y., learned that passenger Jean Etienne, 20, was wanted for skipping a court hearing on misdemeanor charges. After he was arraigned, bail was set at \$200. Etienne paid with two \$100 bills. The officer who took the bills observed they had no watermark or security fibers and that the serial numbers were identical. Etienne was returned to the lockup on felony forgery charges. “The moral of the story,” Sgt. Bernard Cummings said, “is whenever you are posting bail, use legitimate currency.”

Limp Offer

Swedish health officials will provide free penises to transsexual men, but the prosthetic organs won't be able to become erect. The decision to fund fake penises for cosmetic rather than functional purposes was necessary, officials explained, because regulations prohibit the use of taxpayer money for products, like Viagra, that aid sexual performance. Transsexual women are eligible for publicly funded wigs, breast implants and hair-removal operations. “It's easy to think that it's pretty strange to approve prosthetics that can't get erect,” sexologist Cecilia Dhejne told *Ottar* magazine, “because that is, after all, what penises do—get erections.”

Hideouts

- U.S. customs officials in Hidalgo, Texas, discovered a 21-year-old woman trying to smuggle nearly 5.5 pounds of chorizo sausage concealed in diapers she said her baby had soiled.
- After smelling smoke coming from a cell at the Pasco County, Fla., jail, a deputy patted down new inmate Majin Alberto Camareno, 35, and found 20 cigarettes, rolling papers, matches and eight Loritab and Xanax pills in the front of his underpants. An investigation revealed that Camareno had filled two “Happy Birthday!” balloons with the contraband and then hid them inside his rectum to smuggle inside the jail.

Cold Feet

Tatsuhiko Kawata, 39, set fire to the hotel where he was scheduled to get married later the same day. “I thought if I set a fire, I wouldn't have to go through with the wedding,” the *Yomirui* newspaper quoted him as telling police in Yamanashi Prefecture.



Wild Rides

- A sheriff's deputy on his way to the St. Louis Jail spotted a stolen vehicle, but when he tried to pull it over, the driver rammed the patrol car and fired several shots. The deputy wasn't hit but suffered minor injuries and radioed for help. KSDK News reported the two suspects tried to escape by driving the wrong way on Interstate 70. They collided head-on with another car, which also turned out to be stolen. Its four occupants, ages 15 to 18, suffered serious to critical injuries, and the two men in the first stolen car, brothers Anthony Thomas, 23, and Darrell Thomas, 22, died at the scene.
- A man who rammed his pickup truck into a woman's vehicle while going more than 100 mph explained to authorities in San Antonio, Texas, that God told him “she needed to be taken off the road.” The Bexar County Sheriff's Office said Michael E. Schwab, 52, told first responders at the scene that “the other vehicle was not driving like a Christian, and it was Jesus' will for him to punish the car.” Investigators determined the female driver “had done nothing wrong,” and Lt. Kyle Coleman told the *San Antonio Express-News* that God must have been on both drivers' sides “‘cause any other time, the severity of this crash, it would have been a fatal.”

Billable Hours

The Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission suspended DeKalb lawyer Scott Robert Erwin for 15 months because he arranged for a female client to perform nude dances as partial payment for her legal fees. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the client, an exotic dancer at a strip club, said she would go to Erwin's office, remove her clothes and dance for half-hour sessions. She also stated that Erwin came to the club where she worked and paid the admission charge but wouldn't pay her for performing nude dances.

Out of Control

- Heather D. Kelly filed a lawsuit charging a company in Morgantown, W.Va., with negligence because one of its employees masturbated in front of her during a job interview. The suit claims Richard See offered Kelly the job on condition that he could take a picture of her breasts. As she quickly gathered her things to leave, See repeated the request and then asked if he could at least touch one of them. After leaving the building, Kelly said she called See, a former neighbor, to say she was going to report him. He apologized and told her the job was hers if she would return to the office to complete paperwork. She agreed, but, according to the complaint, while filling out the forms, “Plaintiff Kelly realized that he had his penis out of his pants” and “began to masturbate in front of Plaintiff Kelly.”
- Police arrested a man who they said shoplifted a tube of male-enhancement cream from a store in Denton, Texas. A security officer who spotted the theft followed the suspect to the restroom, where he walked into a stall and apparently applied the product. Then, the *Denton Record-Chronic* reported, the security officer observed the suspect walk to the store's toy department and expose himself twice in the Barbie Doll aisle. The security officer called police after the man returned to the restroom to use the cream again.

Mensa Reject of the Week

Police arrested two men in Chipley, Fla., after one tossed a Molotov cocktail at the other, and when it failed to explode, the second man threw it back at the first man's house. A police officer explained the device didn't work properly because Hayes Terrell Robinson III made it out of a plastic bottle instead of glass, so it didn't break when it was thrown.

It's a Dog's Life

Police in Manitowoc, Wis., arrested Torey L. Devaux, 36, after his roommate reported that he urinated on her dog because she refused to have sex with him.

Compiled from the nation's press by Roland Sweet. Submit items, citing date and source, to P.O. Box 8130, Alexandria VA 22306.

Compiled from the nation's press by Roland Sweet. Submit items, citing date and source, to P.O. Box 8130, Alexandria VA 22306.

Hey Baby, What's Your Color?

I came across a piece of information that said that in the first half of the 20th century, pink was a boy's color while blue was a girl's color. But it didn't say why the colors switched. I figured if anyone knew, it would be you, Cecil. Or at least you'd make up a good story and pretend you knew.

—Jay B.

Quiet, churl. I never pretend. I merely put the truth in a daring new light.

Before we take up your question, we need to address one that the average reader is likely to think is more pertinent: You're telling me that, once upon a time, the color for boys was pink?

Let me put it this way—some people sure thought it was.

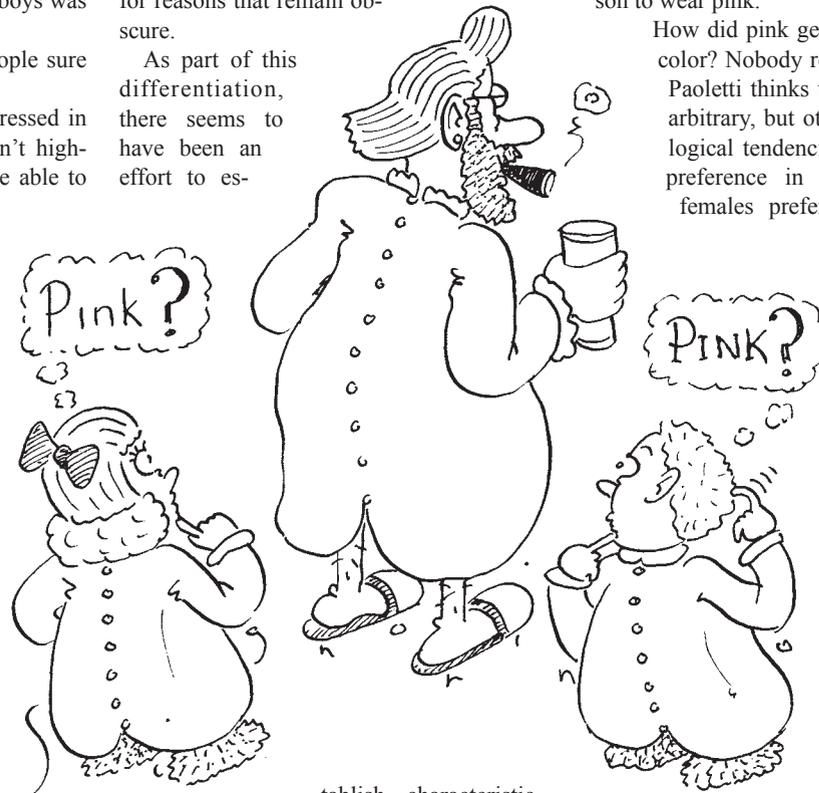
In the 1800s most infants were dressed in white, and gender differences weren't highlighted until well after the kids were able to walk. Both boys and girls wore dresses or short skirts until age five or six. Differences in clothing were subtle: boys' dresses buttoned up the front, for example, while girls' buttoned up the back. Why no attempt to discriminate further? One theory is that distinguishing boys from girls was less important than distinguishing kids from adults. Childhood was a time of innocence, whereas adulthood typically meant grueling physical labor. Perhaps mothers decking out their little boys in dresses thought: They'll get to be manly soon enough.

By midcentury baby clothing in colors other than white had begun to appear, but gender-based distinctions were slow to emerge. In 1855 the *New York Times* reported on a "baby show" put on by P.T. Barnum, exhibiting "one hundred and odd babies" dressed in pinks, blues, and other colors seemingly without regard to gender. In a passage from Louisa May Alcott's 1868-'69 blockbuster *Little Women*, a female twin is distinguished by a pink ribbon and a male twin by a blue one, but this is referred to as "French fashion," suggesting it wasn't the rule over here. A *Times* fashion report

from 1880 has boys and girls dressed alike in white, pink, blue, or violet, and another from 1892 says young girls were wearing a variety of colors that spring, including several shades of blue.

But from the 1890s onward, boys' and girls' clothing styles started to diverge, with boys dressed in trousers or knickers at progressively earlier ages. Jo Paoletti of the University of Maryland, a longtime specialist on the topic, reviewed more than 500 descriptions and images of children's clothing appearing in print between 1890 and 1920 and notes a rapid "masculinization" of boys' wear, for reasons that remain obscure.

As part of this differentiation, there seems to have been an effort to es-



tablish characteristic colors for girls and boys.

But it took decades to develop a consensus on what those colors were. For years one camp claimed pink was the boys' color and blue the girls'. A 1905 *Times* article said so, and *Parents* magazine was still saying it as late as 1939. Why pink for boys? Some argued that pink was a close relative of red, which was seen as a fiery, manly color. Others traced the association of blue with girls to the frequent depiction of the Virgin Mary in blue.

I'm not convinced, however, that there was ever a consensus that pink was for boys and blue was for girls. On the contrary, indications

are the two colors were used interchangeably until World War II. Examples of pink as a mark of the feminine aren't hard to come by, one of the cruder being the use of a pink triangle to identify homosexuals in Nazi prison camps. After the war the tide shifted permanently in favor of blue as a boy's color. In 1948, royal-watchers reported Princess Elizabeth was obviously expecting a boy, since a temporary nursery set up in Buckingham Palace was gaily trimmed with blue satin bows. By 1959 the infantwear buyer for one department store was telling the *Times*, "A mother will allow her girl to wear blue, but daddy will never permit his son to wear pink."

How did pink get ghettoized as a girls' color? Nobody really knows. Professor Paoletti thinks the choice was largely arbitrary, but others credit innate biological tendencies. Research on color preference in monkeys has shown females prefer warmer colors like

pink and red—supposedly an infant primate's pink face brings out its mother's nurturing instincts. A color preference study of Caucasian and Chinese men and women showed both Caucasian and Chinese women strongly preferred red and pink, while Caucasian men strongly preferred blue and green. However, the Chinese men

showed a broader range, with many picking red and pink—possibly because in China red is considered lucky. To me that suggests the biology argument is pretty weak. Sure, my favorite color is blue. But it's entirely possible I say that because I was always told I should.

—CECIL ADAMS

Comments, questions? Take it up with Cecil on the Straight Dope Message Board, straightdope.com, or write him at the Chicago Reader, 11 E. Illinois, Chicago 60611.

ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR JANUARY 2009

FOR EVERYONE—A watershed moment. Many things are moving forward. Many other things are up in the air and will remain there for some time. The powers that be have put a lot of things on hold. And the planets are about to reshuffle the deck, too. No one can offer much in the way of concrete information about future. One thing is certain, though: there will be no going back. The world is about to be permanently reshaped. All that said, January does offer a bit more stability. Also, many people are speculating in exciting and inspiring ways. This often visionary speculation is an important part of the process, now. Study these new visions for our individual and collective futures. Many of them will become realities.

 **ARIES**—Keep the peace. You can now make better, long-term arrangements to handle burdensome family responsibilities. You will have to make a special effort to make it all work. Pressure will be high. If you feel like you are walking on eggshells, it's because you are. Personal diplomacy will count for a lot. Do what you must to help family members keep an even keel while they do what they need to do. Your own personal agenda will have to come second. Events beyond anyone's control will soon make things simpler.

 **TAURUS**—Spread optimism. Everyone is dealing with big changes. Fear of the future is affecting all concerned. People are working hard to make things work, but they are confused about what is coming. You have a clearer and better understanding of where things need to go, of what it will take to make everything work. You are also in harmony with the powers that be. Use this special insight. Explain what is possible. Communicate an upbeat vision of the future. People need and appreciate your guidance much more than you realize.

 **GEMINI**—Consult with close friends and allies. Your own vision of the future is clouded, but you are very clear about the potential for trouble. You also understand that everyone's ability to create the future depends on holding things together. Help friends and associates keep the peace and move things forward. Your closest friends and supporters probably have the best insight into what is happening. Use the insight and inspiration they provide to shape your message. Focus on the benefits of teamwork, not on the potential for conflict. Your luck will soon improve noticeably.

 **CANCER**—Improvise. You find yourself in turbulent waters. The emotional landscape is changing constantly with many conflicting currents. There is no recipe to follow. You have to think ... or feel ... on your feet. But you are probably the only one who can get the emotional thing right, and that is very important right now. Speak up and calm fears. Make sure people use their personal power in the right way. If higher ups are pressured and edgy, don't take it personally. They are dealing with pretty serious family issues. Long-term finances will improve.

 **LEO**—Mixed messages. Discussions with friends might leave you dazed and confused. And you might get drawn into a lot of arguments besides. Those who want change demand your loyalty. Those who don't want change demand your loyalty. Discussions are necessary. Be optimistic, and practical. Take the messages you are getting from inspirational but unrealistic types and hammer them into action statements. Use optimism and good humor to turn bickering factions into effective teams. Use extra caution and diplomacy at work. Problem co-workers could lure you into conflicts with the boss.

 **VIRGO**—Keep it light. Nervous employers are demanding a lot because their higher ups are demanding a lot. And they might be getting ready to mess with your finances. Don't panic. You have a much better understanding of what is going on than you think. You also have more leverage than you might realize. An upbeat, even humorous approach might be just the ticket. A little friendly gamesmanship is appropriate, too. Your work situation is also under supportive and protective influences. Use the insights you are getting from your more intuitive friends.

 **LIBRA**—Stabilization. Your imagination has been liberated. It is now staying ahead of your anxieties, offering positive visions of possibility. These visions are relevant to other people and might help you guide them. Sometimes, visions of possibility are more helpful than explanations of complicated realities. You can also start chipping away at problems in the here and now. Adjustments at home can help ease work-related stresses. Your partner might be weighed down by family concerns and responsibilities of their own. Help them reconcile personal needs and family responsibilities. Look for lucky breaks in romantic and creative areas.

 **SCORPIO**—Community. There is a major new emphasis on community life. Find more ways to participate in community activities. Do so in ways that do not impose undue burdens on yourself. Be idealistic, but be practical. People you depend on for services will require extra patience and understanding. They are struggling with worrisome personal responsibilities. Unexpected events will soon firm up your living situation. Lingering issues will be resolved. Needed adjustments will be easier than in the past. Spiritual and intuitive phenomena will play an increased role in your life. Healing influences pervade your home.

 **Capricorn**
Share the power, carefully. Events move rapidly now. Some sudden changes are due at month's end. And Capricorn is holding the reins. Keep things calm and orderly and realistic. Nobody is on solid footing yet. Whether at home or at work, pay attention to what key people are saying. They might seem unfocused at times, but what they say can be very important. Be especially careful around important people in your own life. Your energy levels are up and you could seem unduly demanding. You are due for a professional or financial boost.

 **SAGITTARIUS**—Waves of change. There is a major new planetary emphasis on your finances. Financial issues will become a daily preoccupation. Re-think your economic strategy across the board. Decisions you make now will affect the rest of your life. Adopt strategies that promise slow, steady and secure gains. You might need to be more understanding with people you meet in casual or romantic situations. They are struggling with serious personal responsibilities. Young people in your life also need more support. Unexpected events will soon reshape family and community relationships for the better.

 **AQUARIUS**—Independence, restraints, and some big surprises. You have an unusual level of control over events now. People are especially interested in what you are thinking. They are mostly interested in your realistic ideas, though, and will tell you so. People and events demand practicality right now. You are due for a dramatic change in lifestyle. People will begin to see you very differently. At the same time, you are beginning a new cycle of growth, expansion and prosperity. Activities that are beginning now will eventually transform your personal and professional future.

 **PISCES**—Expect the unexpected. You will feel increasing pressure to conform and produce something useful. But at the same time, you will find yourself moving in greater harmony with the events of the times. A sudden and dramatic change in the way you experience life is in the works. Many of the overwhelming pressures of recent months are past and doors are finally beginning to open. Despite the hard edge to world events, heartfelt, loving conversations will figure prominently in your life. People you depend on for income are having problems of their own. Optimism is taking over your inner life.



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& HEALTH.**

REACH OUT A HAND TO ONE AND INFLUENCE THE CONDITION OF ALL.

LIVE UNITED



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