

little village

Iowa City's News & Culture Magazine

Getting Home



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GABES

IOWA CITY

TUES: HIP-HOP OPEN MIC
WEDS: OPEN MIC
THURS: DANCE PARTY

Wed, December 1
Automata
 w/ Pink Shirt Murder

Thurs, December 2
Jen Gloeckner
 w/ The Wandering Bears & Songbird Bethan

Fri, December 3
Van Ghost
 w/ Aktar Aktar and Chasing Shade

Sat, December 4
Salsa Vibe

Sun, December 5
Big Strong Men
 w/ Mumford's & Utopia Park

Fri, December 10
BLACK TIE AFFAIR
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Sat, December 11
Unfound Fear
 w/ 20 Foot Forehead

Sun, December 12
Rock & Roll Chili Cookoff

Thurs, December 16
Weekend FM

Fri, December 17
Goodbyehome +
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PUBLISHER & MANAGING EDITOR |
Matt Steele
Publisher@LittleVillageMag.com

FEATURES EDITOR | Tara Atkinson
Tara@LittleVillageMag.com

COPY EDITOR | Stephanie Catlett
Steph@LittleVillageMag.com

ARTS EDITOR | Kent Williams
Arts@LittleVillageMag.com

DESIGN | Andrew Sherburne
Andrew@LittleVillageMag.com

DESIGN | Becky Nasadowski
Becky@LittleVillageMag.com

WEB EDITOR | Drew Bulman
DrewB@LittleVillageMag.com

ADVERTISING | Kelli Andreson
Ads@LittleVillageMag.com

SR. PHOTOGRAPHER | Dawn Frary
Dawn@LittleVillageMag.com

CONTRIBUTORS | Cecil Adams,
Drew Bulman, Bob Burton,
Stephanie Catlett, Yale Cohn, Rich
Dana, Thomas Dean, Craig Eley,
Mitch Emerson, David Henderson,
David McCartney, Matthew
Mesaros, Michael Roeder, Dr. Star,
Matt Steele, Roland Sweet, Casey
Wagner, John Whiston, Kent
Williams

PHOTOS | Adrienne Behning,
Andrew Sherburne, Ofer Sivan

ILLUSTRATIONS | Becky Nasadowski,
Andrew Sherburne

CONTACT | P.O. Box 736,
Iowa City, IA 52244

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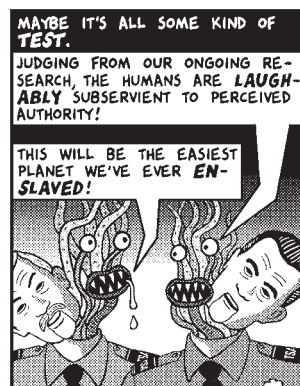
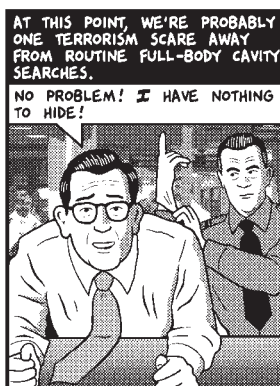
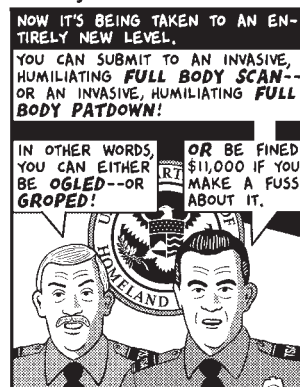
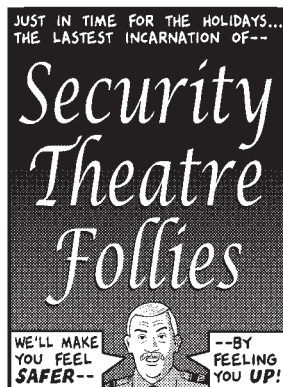
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



C'MON GET HOKEY!

Home for the Holidays.” “I’ll Be Home for Christmas.” It’s that time of year when the return home defines the season for many people. Songs, movies and TV specials during the holiday season relentlessly emphasize homecoming, for both comedic and dramatic effect. And our highways and airports testify to the culture’s real-life enactment of this Yuletide ritual.

Even as many of us make these arrangements for the return home, we scoff at the hokiness of the endless Christmas tunes melting our radios and the sappy made-for-TV movies infesting the airwaves. The crime is nostalgia. Our general understanding of nostalgia is listed as Merriam-Webster’s second definition for the term: “a wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition.” We may yearn, but most of us probably also believe that “you can’t go home again.” We resist nostalgia because we know it’s “excessively sentimental” and, well, childish and stupid.

Maybe being rooted in place is a human ideal we have forgotten.

I would like, however, to advocate for nostalgia. Now, I’m not defending the artistic merits of the latest Hallmark Channel Christmas movie starring Ed Asner or Meredith Baxter, nor am I saying that you should appreciate the folk qualities of Aunt Esther’s favorite Christmas sweater. But I am saying that we should think about taking nostalgia seriously. We should not dismiss the yearning to return home as a childish emotion, but rather respect it—and listen to it—as a genuine life message.

Merriam-Webster’s first definition of “nostalgia” is “the state of being homesick.” In fact, the term’s first use was medical, a rec-

REMEMBER THIS?

Neither do we. But, home cooking sure does sound nice this time of year.



ognized physical malady. Johannes Hofer introduced it in his 1688 dissertation—also using the term *mal du pays*. The term was especially associated with Swiss mercenaries in the European plains and lowlands who longed for the mountains of Switzerland (*mal du Suisse*). Jean-Jacques Rousseau even wrote that these mercenaries were forbidden to sing *Kuhreihen* (traditional songs played by Swiss Alpine herdsmen on their horns) because they might lead to illness, desertion or even death. Some deaths were in fact attributed to nostalgia. Even though the root of the term is the Greek *nostos*, or “return home,” it is also related to Old English *genesan*, to survive.

By the mid-19th century, nostalgia was less a physical ailment but still a form of “melancholia,” in the terms of the psychology of that time, and was considered a predisposition to suicide. Paul Gruchow notes in his essay “Home Is a Place in Time” that the term was used in 19th century Germany “to describe the failure to thrive of the displaced persons, including my own ancestors, who had crowded into that country from the east.” Even as late as World War II, American soldiers were still thought to be subject to a serious condition of

homesickness and the condition was studied in the hopes of reducing desertions and psychological maladies.

I’m not advocating for the return of an obsolete medical term long dismissed, but nos-

We resist nostalgia because we know it’s “excessively sentimental” and, well, childish and stupid.

talgia’s origin reminds us of how profound our connection to home, our roots in place, can—and I say should—be. We live in a time and culture when such connections are often actively discouraged, if not indicative of, as I suggested earlier, childishness. If as adults we wish to stay in our hometown, we are deemed failures. If we don’t move around several times in our lives, we are deemed unambitious, provincial or backward. Nostalgia may not be something to be ashamed of and dismissed, but rather a yearning to be listened to and heeded.

Maybe being rooted in place is a human ideal we have forgotten.

Humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term “topophilia,” “the affective bond between people and place.” He gives legitimacy to the act of feeling in our connection to place, and, in his classic works *Topophilia* (1974) and *Space and Place* (1977), he cites “home” as the center of meaning and care in the world, the center of our sense of attachment and rootedness. Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1994) calls home a “primal space that acts as a first world or first universe

Swiss mercenaries in the European plains were forbidden to sing traditional songs because they might lead to illness, desertion or even death.

that then frames our understanding of all the places outside. The home is an intimate space where experience is particularly intense.” If “home” is our frame of reference on the world, its power is understandable and our yearning for it demands respect.

Granted, home can be a site of negative experience, even oppression. Feminist geographers like Gillian Rose note that homes can be places of “drudgery, abuse and neglect.” And most of us probably do at least have holiday memories of nonsensical arguments, hurt feelings and cutting criticisms lobbed around the dinner table.

I’m not claiming that we’ll always lovingly conspire as we dream by the fire, or that there’ll be much mistletoeing and hearts will be glowing when loved ones are near. There will always be struggle and conflict, even at home. And certainly “home” won’t always be the parental dwelling place. Wherever it is, home is an important anchor in life, and making one should be a priority.

So at this holiday season, if you celebrate, and no matter your religious or cultural background, if nostalgia calls, don’t mock it and don’t ignore it. Embrace the feeling as legitimate. “Home” need not look like a Norman Rockwell painting, but it should be respected as the place to which we devote the time, commitment and affection that makes us truly rooted in this world. **lv**

Thomas Dean hopes that you all will be together, if the Fates allow.

Sweet.

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HAWK BLOCKED

I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to write about it, I don't want to read about it, and I'm fairly certain you don't either.

But what's a Townie Hawk to do? Deadlines loom. There's no getting out of this. The stark white page ever so patiently awaits the halting march of my little word soldiers, lines full of despair, disappointment, sadness and frustration—the constant companions of this season's Hawkeye fan.

And so I dream. I imagine having a little chat with Ken O'Keefe, wherein I gently squeeze him by the... um... hand, and whisper sweet new offensive strategies in his ear. I load him up with wine and very special brownies and implore him to use his *imagination*.

Perhaps we could gather up my sticker collection and some glitter pens and craft a brand new playbook for next season. I've been contemplating a play: the Feather Boa Misdirection.

Speaking of unimaginative, Coach Ferentz has the same line after every game: "That's football." Coach, we all know it's football. What we'd like to know is why isn't it *better* football?

It's on the coaches

When a team as talented as our Hawks falls victim to what appears to be a lack of ingenuity and inspiration, a degree of scrutiny is appropriate and deserved. What I'm hearing from fans is "What is the deal, coaches?" What adjustments are being made on your end? Are you watching the same games we are? Are you even interested in taking a look at what the other guys are doing? Why, for instance, did you take a knee and walk it into the locker room at the half against Ohio State? We had the ball with a full minute on the clock and three time outs to burn, but you weren't even inter-

Coach Ferentz has the same line after every game: "That's football." Coach, we all know it's football. What we'd like to know is why isn't it better football?

ested in letting Ricky test out the ol' two-minute drill? You didn't want to see how their defense would react and, who knows, maybe put a few points on the board? Against Ohio-freaking-State?! Something doesn't feel right here.

Conditioning is on the coaches, as well, and our team was consistently lagging behind the competition



HEY RICKY, YOU SO FINE VS HEY RICKY, TAKE A SEAT

- 1) No denying, he's got the numbers. Ricky Stanzi is a better QB than he was last year. With just four interceptions (vs. 15 last year) and a higher completion percentage, Ricky's made marked improvements that are worthy of respect. In his final bowl game, his senior year, he's our man.
- 2) Sure, when #12 puts the ball in the air you just never know where it's going to land. But, enough times to qualify for a bowl game, the completions were made. Even if it's a crappy bowl game in Nowheresville, Ricky Stanzi earned it. Good effort deserves its rewards.
- 3) He's our leader, on the field and off. Like it or not, Ricky Stanzi inspires the confidence of his teammates, the support of his coaches and an enviable amount of fan adoration. Based on the comeback efforts he led last year alone, he deserves the respect and gratitude of the Hawkeye Nation. And, you know, he's a patriot. *For reals.*
- 1) I don't miss the interceptions, believe me, but this season is over. I'd rather have a Big Ten-ready QB next fall than a vanity win at the Whatever Bowl. Vandenberg, Wienke, Derby—whoever is going to be steering the ship next fall, he needs a dress rehearsal.
- 2) If we were 12-0, which we have the talent to be, then I'd be singing a different tune. But seeing as we're 7-5 (6-6 if Indiana hadn't dropped that touchdown pass), what's the lesson in keeping Stanzi at the helm? What's the message to new recruits? They should know they can't rest on their laurels when they are seniors. And, as underclassmen, they should know they have a chance to win the starting job every week.
- 3) He's not our leader, on the field or off. On the field we've got an offense ranked 49th in the nation. Meanwhile, off the field, we've heard plenty from our luscious-locked hero, from his crazy-town non-voter patriotism to his disdain for ped mall hippies. Rick should know that at the bar I like to frequent, a lot of those so-called "hippies" are rocking jerseys with his number on them. They're his fans. Or at least they used to be.

in this area. Last year we loved to watch our boys come from behind in the second half. But this year, we were looking beat up in the fourth quarter of almost every game. Rather than watching our hard-nosed style grind teams into the ground, we were watching certain All-American defenders sitting on the sideline, huffing and puffing, taking a breather every couple of downs.

And it's on the players

This could be a conditioning problem as well, since fatigue leads to all sorts of mishaps, but even in the first half we were oft-stricken with bad fundamentals on the part of our most senior players: missed tackles on defense, route-running miscues, receivers straight up dropping passes and a quarterback who couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. These are the things I will remember most about 2010.

The Wrap-Up

Since I'm certain the entire coaching staff are regular *Townie Hawk* readers, I'll ask that they please take my ranting with a grain of salt and realize that I'm only telling you this because I care about you. Love hurts. But I will get over it and the positive Hawkeye Nation will rise again. And I still think the Hawks are the greatest team in the world with the most dominating team colors, a superior mascot and the most talented players in all of sport.

As my ISU-grad sister said, "I guess you could say they're still the best team in the state." Yeah, I guess you could say that, but I certainly wouldn't welcome a trip up to the UNI-dome at this point.

I'll see you hippies next year. **lv**

Stephanie Catlett enjoys drinking mango smoothies, jumping into waves, lying in the sun and cheering for the Hawks.

Celebration Ale

BREW OF THE MONTH: DECEMBER

In commemoration of the winter holiday season, many breweries release festive "winter warmers," which feature an extra kick of hops, spice and alcohol. While some are the same year after year, others are carefully crafted, one-time releases with secret recipes. The most famous is Anchor Brewing Company's Christmas Ale, which has featured a unique recipe and label design every year since 1975.

Some winter warmers can be aggressive hop bombs, while others are mild and malty. Though not technically a winter warmer, Sierra Nevada's Celebration Ale falls between the two extremes and, though served cold, is an ideal adult alternative to hot cocoa.

Celebration Ale offers the perfect balance between malts, spice and hops, and provides enough alcohol to thaw beer lovers during December's long and cold nights. It is a clean, clear, light copper color. When poured into a pint glass, an off-white head will dissipate slowly to leave a billowy lacing; trails of foam will also stick to the inside of the glass.

The smell is reminiscent of pale ale. It features invigorating grapefruit citrus, which is often a telltale sign of excessive hoppiness. However, scents of sweet caramel malts, molasses, orange peel and cherry give the aroma a nice balance. Pine spice gives Celebration Ale's nose a nice festive touch. The taste is much toastier and malty than the smell suggests. Grapefruit citrus and a touch of pine spice are supported by a backbone of caramel, molasses and chocolate. A pleasant hoppy bitterness lingers in the aftertaste.



Casey Wagner

BREWER: Sierra Nevada Brewing Company of Chico, California.

STYLE: American IPA.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 6.8 percent ABV.

FOOD PAIRINGS: Peppery cheeses (Monterey/Pepper Jack), sharp cheeses (Blue, Cheddar), pungent cheeses (Gorgonzola, Limburger), poultry and seafood (especially shellfish and salmon).

WHERE TO BUY: John's Grocery, all area Hy-Vee's and the west side Fareway.

PRICE: \$3 per 24-ounce bottles, \$7-8 for six-packs, \$13 for 12-packs.

HONORABLE MENTIONS: Christmas Ale (Breckenridge Brewery), Powder Hound (Big Sky Brewing Company) and Snowstorm 2010 (August Schell).

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NOVEMBER

THE MONTH THAT WAS

Moods swung and curses were muttered throughout downtown as the 21 ordinance stood the test of a public vote. The scene outside the Sports Column—which was to host a victory party for the anti-21 crowd—spoke volumes: people sulked out, a young man got to speak to reporters and the joint was empty by 11.

Previous efforts to allow underage drinking in Iowa City bars were better-funded and more generously conceived. Mike Porter doesn't exactly have money to spare, though, and by focusing on a single argument—safety—the anti-21 contingent opened itself up to demonstrations that it was full of baloney.

In the past, pro-underage-drinking campaigns focused on the changing nature of downtown I.C. and the need to develop a more diverse entertainment profile. This time around, nary a peep of all-for-one economic-development talk. These were kids who wanted to drink in large groups without worrying about staining the furniture, and bar owners who wanted to sell them alcohol. the council didn't much care for that and, more importantly, the voting public didn't care much *about* it.

CAN'T GET HIGH

Iowa City shot high and low and ended up missing out entirely on \$12.2 million in federal transportation-infrastructure grants. \$12 million was to go to replacing the Park Street Bridge and elevating a section of Dubuque Street and the other \$200,000 would have funded a study toward a rail system connecting I.C. and Coralville, with plans to extend all the way to North Liberty. Er, Cedar Rapids; make that Cedar Rapids. Des Moines won a \$10 million

grant for a transit facility and Urbandale received \$2.2 million toward planning a sustainable community. Dubuque Street, meanwhile, remains sullenly unelevated. Plans are still in the works, though, to raise it above the 500-year flood line.

Thanks for making us look prudent, Chet, but your sweaty desperation is no match for the “MasterCard Governor’s” glassy-eyed self-assurance.

GET AROUND (ROUND ROUND) THE ROUND TABLE

If the above has got your blood pumping, here's your chance to make yourself heard: The Johnson County Council of Governments

to Meeting Room A of the Iowa City Public Library on Dec. 6 at 6 p.m.

PRUDENCE UNREWARDED

Iowa City received \$15,781,015 in federal disaster-aversion money to be used on a system of levees. Coralville received \$5 million and Cedar Rapids more than \$27 million. Statewide, Iowa received \$84 million, more than any other state in this round of funding. All because we *invested* more flood-mitigation money in advance, on our own, than any other state. Thanks for making us look prudent, Chet, but your sweaty desperation is no match for the “MasterCard Governor’s” (thanks, Gopher!) glassy-eyed self-assurance.

LOCAL LOSERS

Following up on an item from last month, Tricon General Construction of Dubuque was awarded the contract for Phase 2 of the Terry Trueblood Recreational Area project. Tricon's bid of \$1,192,089.00 was some \$51,000 lower than that of McComas-Lacina of Iowa City; the project will be funded by a \$200,000 REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) grant, and by bond proceeds.

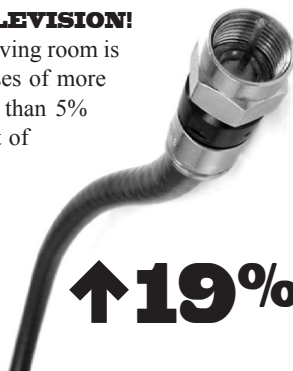
UNDERSERVED (AGAIN)

Towncrest wants tax increment financing for neighborhood improvements. Good for Towncrest. Well, good for *some* of Towncrest, as it's generally considered; the Towncrest Urban Renewal Plan extends north of Muscatine to include Hy-

Vee, Walgreen's, and...you get the picture. Some heavily residential areas of Towncrest aren't included in the plan's estimated \$15 million in city money for “initial anticipated projects,” but several non-Towncrest business

SPEAKING OF TRAIN WRECKS... TELEVISION!

The cost of shovelling visual manure into your living room is about to go up. Mediacom announced rate increases of more than 19% on its leanest cable package and more than 5% on its most lard-infused offerings. “This is all part of our Iowa City Customer Appreciation Event,” a Mediacom spokesman did not say. “As you can see, customers can save an impressive 14% by upgrading their cable subscriptions today. And look for your chance to stop by Mediacom's offices this April and whitewash our fence,” he did not add.



is holding an open meeting to discuss the future of transportation in the region. This is a big deal, part of the JCCOG's development of a Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan that will influence how everyone—pedestrians, bikers, automobilers, truckers—gets from here to there in our region. Bring your ideas, opinions and whacked-out delusions

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>> YOUR TOWN CONTINUED FROM 8

properties are. Which seems an interesting approach to helping a neighborhood described in the city's agenda as having "conditions of slum and blight," a neighborhood for whom serious action is needed "in the interest of the public health, safety or welfare of the residents of the city." You had us at slum and blight, councillors.

Not that Towncrest is a bad little neighborhood at all: I'm there a few times a week, and never the worse for wear. I'd move there myself, gladly, provided my neighbors didn't take the tip, too. But the plan's first seven goals all

Not that Towncrest is a bad little neighborhood at all: I'm there a few times a week, and never the worse for wear.

have to do with economic development, and the eighth feels like a throw-in: "Foster strong community neighborhoods with a mix of housing, churches, schools, recreation facilities, commercial areas, and historic landmarks." Which seems a bit yada-yada. Economic development can be a lynchpin of community cohesion—the southeast side would benefit if folks there were able to buy their kids' shoes from Mary's store down the block rather than having little recourse but to buy them from a chain store on Highway 6, for example—but this looks less like a considered, responsive investment in a particular community than an Iowa-City-inflected pitch for infrastructure improvements geared toward retaining existing corporate entities.

YOUR VILLAGE

Finally, a polite request to get off your duffs and help run our city. As of this writing, the city was looking for folks to serve on the Board of Appeals, the Youth Advisory Board, the Airport Commission, the Public Art Advisory Commission, all sorts of fun boards and commissions and such. The list of opportunities may have changed by the time you read this, but it'd still be a fine idea to hit the city's web site (www.icgov.org) or visit City Hall, where announcements of vacancies are posted in the lobby. Thanks. **lv**

Bob Burton remembers when Iowa City used to be cool. Just like you do.

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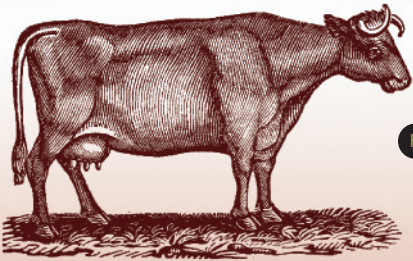
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I read in an article this summer that the Canadian rock band Rush was filing a lawsuit against Kentucky senatorial candidate and Tea Party love-child Rand Paul. The power trio's lawyers alleged that the Paul campaign's use of their song "Spirit of the Radio" constituted copyright infringement.

Like a million Manchurian Candidates, the Randoids have been activated.

"Oh, the irony," I thought, for the band, who have openly promoted libertarian philosophy through their music, had credited Rand Paul's namesake—polemical sci-fi writer Ayn Rand—for the inspiration of several of their records.

Ayn Rand's name has been in the news a lot lately. The Russian-born novelist, founder of "Objectivism" and lover of laissez-faire capitalism is often mentioned as one of the spiritual fore-bearers of the Tea Party movement.

In his Oct. 27, 2010 article in *GQ* entitled "The Bitch is Back," Andrew Corsello lays out a blistering, hilarious and deadly accurate portrayal of the influence Rand has had on America's "I got mine, so fuck you" class. He describes the heroes of Rand's novels

like Howard Roarke (*The Fountainhead*) and John Galt (*Atlas Shrugged*) as "square of jaw and Asperger-ish of mien," and the effect that Rand has on a young reader thus:

"During my own college days, I did observe that a number of the fresh-minted Randoids in my midst became intellectually disciplined to a degree I wouldn't previously have thought possible.

I also admit that a few of them became better questioners of ideas and of themselves—which in turn made them more honest people. But most fell into that hapless group of Rand readers—the ones whose postadolescent insecurity was alchemized upon contact with *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* into a

bizarre unlaughing superiority."

So where does the ageless trio of Torontonian rockers come into

play? Corsello only mentions Rush in passing:

"I cite my junior year of college, during which I frequently experienced precipitations of plaster dust onto my face while lying in bed, thanks to the ARA (Ayn Rand Asshole) who lived above me, and his girlfriend. I could never determine whether it was their Richter-scale copulations that shook the dust loose or the 120 decibel stereo blastings of the Ayn Rand-inspired band Rush that they used to soundtrack and enhance them."

But Rush was and is more than a soundtrack for quasi-libertarian humping. It has been the soundtrack for

quasi-libertarian quasi-intellectual circle-jerks for more than a quarter of a century.

"Anthem," the opening track on Rush's 1975 hard-rock masterpiece *Fly by Night*, is an obvious reference to Rand's 1937 dystopian sci-fi novel of the same name. The band's next outing, the 1976 concept album *2112* credits "the genius of Ayn Rand" in the liner notes. In an era of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin pounding out post-hippie amphetamine crazed blues-inspired fuck-rock, how did Rush settle on libertarianism as their message?

While other rock drummers like Keith Moon or John Bonham have been famous for their bacchanalian lifestyles, Neil Peart, Rush's square-jawed and Asperger-ish drummer, has long been described by his bandmates as quiet, solitary and a voracious reader—AND a major fan of Rand's writing. In his utterly un-ironic essay "Rand, Rush and Rock" (*Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, 2002) Chris Matthew Sciabarra points out:

"In compositions such as 'Red Alert,' 'The Big Money,' 'The Weapon,' and 'Red Barchetta,' Peart engages in a Randian repudiation of the herd mentality and social conformity and an 'exaltation of the individual'—which the authors identify as 'the fundamental assumption of political conservatism' and its 'distaste for Big Government.'"

At night, on a country road in Iowa, we got together, sitting on the hood of a Chevy Nova, listening to Rush's 2112 on the 8-track car stereo.

In the late '70s, I was a square-jawed and Asperger-ish misfit 17-year-old, lying on my bed listening to Rush at top volume (through giant, avocado green headphones, as to not wake up the folks), reading those liner notes. I picked up *Anthem* and read it. All across the country, square-jawed and Asperger-ish misfits were doing the same thing. At night, on a country road in Iowa, we got together, sitting on the hood of a Chevy Nova, listening to *2112* on the 8-track car stereo. Under the stars, we smoked weed and pontificated endlessly about personal freedom. Somewhere, under the same stars on a dirt road in South Texas, I'm guessing that a 17-year-old Rand Paul was probably doing the same thing, with his own square-jawed and Asperger-ish friends.

We were growing up in the '70s. We were a little too young to have been hippies and felt cheated out of our share of free love and good acid. The economy sucked, the Middle-eastern oil-producing nations had us over a barrel and we were at the end of a long and pointless war. We read 1984, *Animal Farm*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Atlas Shrugged*. And we listened to a lot of Rush.

It's a toxic mix of dead-end jobs, shriveled retirement accounts and religious zealotry.

Many of us woke up from our idealistic slumber, moderated our views and joined the mainstream. Some of us turned our backs on Rush and joined the nihilistic ranks of punk-rockerdom. But some, their "...post adolescent insecurity...alchemized upon contact with *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* into a bizarre unlaughing superiority," became the Reagan revolution.

Fast forward to 2010. The economy sucks, the Middle Eastern oil-producing nations have us over a barrel and we are at the end of a long and pointless war. Like a million Manchurian Candidates, the Randoids have been activated, this time dragging behind them a load of middle-aged fear, prudishness and religious zealotry forged by 35 years of dead-end jobs, shriveled retirement accounts and televangelism. It's a toxic mix. The hypocrisy is barely beneath the surface as stories of youthful indiscretion bubble up for Tea Party darlings like Rand Paul and Christine O'Donnell. I'll bet that Rand Paul was listening to *Tom Sawyer* during the "Aqua Buddha" incident.

Like a nation with a collective case of Stockholm Syndrome, these government-haters have cast their lot again with Republicans and their empty promises of a smaller federal government. But, their dark secret is this: they still feel cheated out of their share of free love and good acid...and they still listen to Rush. **lv**

Rich Dana is the editor of OBSOLETE! Magazine, a quarterly underground paper that he describes as "a cross between PUNK Magazine and the Whole Earth Catalog". He loves feral cats, feral people and feral technology. Read more about OBSOLETE! Magazine at obsoletemag.blogspot.com.

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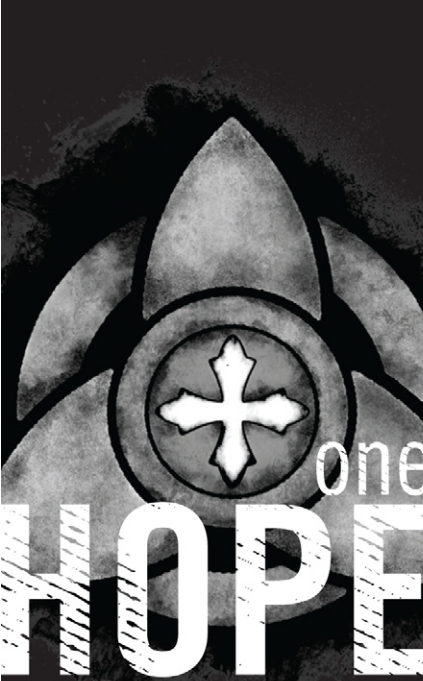
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Lest Ye Be Judged

For the last month, I have been talking with lots of lawyers and judges about the results of the judicial retention election. They are always stunned by the result, a vote of 54/46 to boot Justices Ternus, Streit and Baker. They say they are puzzled by an electorate that would so casually put the judicial system at risk for no good reason. They feel somehow betrayed that voters would ignore the pleadings of the profession not to take such a drastic step.

Granted the lawyers and judges I've talked to are generally from urban centers that voted to retain the justices and not from the infrequent counties in far northwest Iowa. In Sioux County, for instance, 85% voted against retention. My small sample, however, seems representative; everyone has a story

who care deeply about justice. My acquaintances are most perplexed by how their friends and families could disregard dangers that seem so clear.

And all for no good reason. That is, no matter what the result in the retention election, the Iowa Supreme Court would not reverse its decision in Varnum. So it all seems inexplicable until we realize that the motivation of the campaign was not legal but, at its core, visceral.

Many Iowans were predictably upset by a decision which somehow validated same-sex relationships. For honest, deeply-felt religious reasons, they cast about for some way of registering their dissent. Politicians like Bob Vander Plaats and out of state advocacy groups like the National Association for Marriage poured

one small part of a long political battle and were so focused on the end result that they did not much care that there would be collateral damage in their crusade. So, when I talk to my friends in the coming weeks, I will say that our work to preserve the independence of the judiciary will be fruitless until we engage with these anti-retention forces on their central issue—the Varnum decision, in which the Iowa Supreme Court unanimously upheld a ruling that the statute defining marriage only as a union between a man and a woman violated the equal protection clause in the Iowa constitution.

Here, perhaps, is where we made a strategic error in the past six months: In focusing on the judicial system and running a calm,



about talking to a law school friend in Clarinda or Independence who is equally baffled by the result. They really are convinced that the loss of the three justices will result in routine retention battles in the future—conservatives in Des Moines have already announced that they have targeted Justice David Wiggins in the 2012 election—and my friends are afraid that the \$1.5 million spent on this campaign will be dwarfed in those future battles.

The politicization of the judicial system and big money domination of those politics are real threats that grab the attention of people

money and organization onto that amorphous reaction. They offered an enticing story that struck out at immediate and visible symbols. At its heart, the story was retribution, scape-

The politicization of the judicial system and big money domination of those politics are real threats to justice.



goating, spiteful and unwilling to consider the consequences of its actions. It was spray painting the opposing high school after a tough homecoming loss. It was pouring sugar in the gas tank of the unpopular kid.

These anti-retention spokesmen (and likely some of their voters) looked on their cause as

good government, Iowa kind of campaign, we left the field to opponents who were willing to promote the most preposterous legal claims. “The Supreme Court should have sent it to the Legislature.”

“Who gave the court the right to say something is unconstitutional?” “The Governor can issue an executive order stopping Varnum.” Ideas that would get zero credit on an 8th grade Civics test.

It is very surprising how few people have actually read Varnum. It is, quite frankly, a measured and middle of the road opinion. It involves quite routine legal principles about how Iowa's unique equal protection guarantee is to be interpreted. The question the court had to answer was whether excluding

Sounding Off

The vote to remove three Iowa Supreme Court justices elicited many responses, here is one of them:

I would like to tell my LGBT friends something we sometimes forget in emotional moments of backlash; We've been through setbacks before, and we'll get through this one, too.

In 1977, at age 21, I was told that the gay rights movement was over because of the Anita Bryant crusade.

In 1981, we were told our days were numbered because of AIDS.

In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld state sodomy laws with *Bowers v. Hardwick*.

In 1992, Colorado passed anti-gay Amendment 2, barring local governments from enacting anti-discrimination ordinances.

And in 1996, we were told not to marry because of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act.

These setbacks and challenges have not translated into permanent defeat. Instead, they are part of a long, circuitous and often difficult path toward a more just and equal society.

Let us recount the woman suffrage campaign, which is fascinatingly analogous to the present-day campaign for equality based on sexual orientation.

State after state, referendum after referendum, the question of allowing women to vote was defeated at the male-only or male-dominated polls. A failed and, as it turned out, corrupted 1916 Iowa referendum was part of the long string of defeats. Over time, however, public opinion changed in favor of universal voter equality. President Woodrow Wilson became a late convert to the cause, and the road to equal suffrage ended in victory when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified on August 26, 1920.

Despite decades of setbacks, progress ultimately emerged.

To quote the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

—David McCartney, Iowa City

same-sex couples from the institution of civil marriage was justified by an important governmental objective. In an extended opinion, the Supreme Court analyzed all the objectives proposed by the Polk County Recorder, the defendant and by the dozen or so friends of the court that filed briefs in support of the law limiting marriage to one man/one woman. Claims, for instance, that the law protected a traditional marriage, optimized the raising of children and promoted procreation were each examined closely. None, repeat none, held up to scrutiny.

This is not an unusual conclusion. In the past few months, three other courts in California, Massachusetts and Florida have decided important family issues for gay men and lesbians. Most of those judges—like Chief Justice Ternus and Justice Streit—received their first appointments from Republican governors. And most, like Ternus and Streit, are known for cautious, even conservative, decisions. Yet, in each case, those judges independently concluded that the disqualification of gay and lesbian individuals from marrying or adopting had no rational relationship to any legitimate governmental objective.

A real political debate about Varnum, of course, means a discussion about the moral core of this election: the rights of Iowa's LGBT-identified community. And here, again, pro-retention advocates may have made the mistake of overestimating the pragmatism of most Iowans. Only now does it strike me as odd that no local or national gay-rights organization had any significant presence in this election. Perhaps this was a tactical decision that the electorate was not yet ready for the decision to be presented in such stark terms. No matter, we appear to be headed toward a long public debate about the place of LGBT-identified individuals in our state, a debate that will ultimately be determined by the more tolerant attitudes of younger Iowans.

I find much to admire in the young people who worked so hard to retain the justices and who will have to work so much harder in coming years to accomplish their goal of eliminating discrimination against gays and lesbians. At the risk of sounding like a grumpy aging boomer, I want to say that I am not sure that the organizational strengths of the younger generation can compete against the opponents who have performed so successfully in the



Is the Varnum ruling at risk?

Should it be? Tell us at:

www.LittleVillageMag.com/varnum

last few months. These politicians and organizations have shown they are quite capable of effectively organizing to exploit deeply felt religious beliefs and, truth be told, deeply felt prejudice.

Several months ago, Malcolm Gladwell wrote in *The New Yorker* about the limits of internet organizing. "The revolution will not be tweeted," he observed, holding that while networking has its power, it often fails because it lacks direct human contact and formal structure.

Facebook is great for sharing photographs, but not so good for sharing the deeper emotional commitment—what Gladwell calls "strong tie" phenomena—that makes for real change.

Contrast this for a moment with how the retention opponents proceeded. The message according to Vander

Plaats was repeated in Bible study groups, long-time Saturday morning coffee dates and across the back fence. All in person, where the

depth of feeling, especially the feeling of fear, is directly communicated. "Reply All" is just not a reliable alternative to that form of strong tie organizing.

Yes, time and demographics favor the gay rights side but the debate will be emotional and likely full of the distortions used in the campaign against the justices. People who think that equal protection under the law means something will need to develop both a visceral style and a fuller argument.

In reading court decisions during the campaign I came upon one point in particular that I want to close with. One of the strongest arguments put forward by opponents of same-sex marriage is the proposition that children raised by same-sex parents are at risk. I see it regularly in publications from the Catholic Church. It resonates with our concerns for the most vulnerable among us and unfortunately with common prejudgments about the char-

The motivation of the campaign to oust the judges was not legal but, at its core, visceral.



JUDGES CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 >>



Photo by Ofer Silvan

WINDOWS INTO WARTIME

This is a book review, but it's not about a book.

Yes, it is a book insofar as it involves words printed on paper and some pictures and it's bound and has a spine and you can hold it in your hands, but "book" doesn't come close to describing Jesse Albrecht's "Objects for Deployment."

In short passages—sometimes just a paragraph or a single sentence long—Albrecht's book captures the passage of time from his Iowa National Guard unit's initial deployment to Mosul, in northern Iraq, in 2003,

**"I DIDN'T WANT
TO DIE IN A
PORTA-JOHN."**

where they provided medical and logistical support to the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, all the way to his return home to a world that may have recognized him, but which he saw in a very different way after a year spent in combat.

Unless we have military members in our immediate families, all too infrequently are we privy to direct accounts of war and its

aftereffects—be they physical, emotional or psychological—on the soldiers who fight them. While scores of books have been written about every war man has fought since the invention of writing, there are few I have read that are so honest, open, thoughtful and challenging as Albrecht's.

His book is not a polemic. It is neither pro-war nor anti-war. Instead, it's a deeply personal and compellingly honest account of one soldier's remembering, processing and reconciling the fears, frustrations, anger, doubts and tragedies that every soldier deployed into combat must experience.

The book is part memoir, part diary, part photo journal and part scrapbook. In concert, these elements come together to create a fascinating meditation on war and how one soldier's thoughts about it were challenged and changed after having experienced it firsthand.

Early in the book he writes that "Everyone knows you kill people in wars, and you might get killed yourself. But being there, seeing it, living it on a daily basis—it isn't that straightforward." Seldom have I read anything that so vividly captures the randomness, absurdity, tedium and chaos of warfare while also reflecting on its sorrow, horror, frustration and—in spite of it all—occasional moments of beauty and minor triumphs of the soul.



Currently there are 13 soldiers' accounts, including Jesse Albrecht's, available for purchase or download at www.VeteransBookProject.com

Interspersed with his reflections are personal photos taken in Iraq as well as postcards and letters he received from friends and family back home while he was away. They are a poignant reminder that for every soldier deployed abroad there is a group of loved ones back home who, every single day, must steel themselves to the possibility that the worst could happen at any time.

Of these cards Albrecht writes, "These postcards make me think about the war's effect on my family. I remember my girlfriend throwing up in the car because she was so nervous about me leaving. Revisiting the pictures, cards and memories makes me realize I brought my family to war through me, and I am responsible for that."

The book is not without its occasional flashes of humor either:

"A rocket blew up above our company area," he writes, "and the porta-john had a

This is not an experience I am ever likely to have and yet, were I to have it, I would feel exactly the same way.

That Albrecht writes with such honesty about his experiences makes them easily accessible and relatable to any reader even if they've never been in the military. There's a distinct strain of humanism in his book that—when considering it is a reflection on his time in combat, an exercise

designed expressly to end lives—makes it all the more remarkably powerful:

"The chaplain usually drove because he

didn't carry weapons. But he was coached on combat driving, which involved running people over if needed." Had he not written this I'd have never had the chance to ponder the absolute necessity and logic of something so fundamentally contradictory yet obviously vitally important in that specific time and place.

Published through the Veterans Book Project, Jesse Albrecht's *Objects for Deployment* is but one of a growing library of books sharing that name. Currently there are 13 soldiers' accounts available for purchase or download, each authored by a recent veteran of our ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in collaboration with artist Monica Haller as a means to collect, process and take ownership of their experiences in combat.

The wisdom and insight we civilians gain through these firsthand accounts is an ancillary benefit; they are written, of course, first and foremost, for the veterans themselves.

"It helps throw the memories a bone," Albrecht writes, "because they can gnaw away at me if I let them."

Still, that veterans are willing to share their experiences with us in this way is one more act of bravery of which we are the fortunate beneficiaries and for that, and so much else, I can only salute them. **lv**


To see Jesse talk with Yale about his book, his recent art exhibit "UXO" (Unexploded Ordinance) at Public Space One, and what it was like to leave, return to and complete his M.F.A. program at The University of Iowa, go to patv.tv/blog/talking-with-yale-cohn-4/.

Photo by Adrienne Behning



THE BOOK IS PART MEMOIR, PART DIARY, PART PHOTO JOURNAL AND PART SCRAPBOOK.

hole through the back of the seat, right where your head would be if sitting. I didn't want to die in a porta-john."



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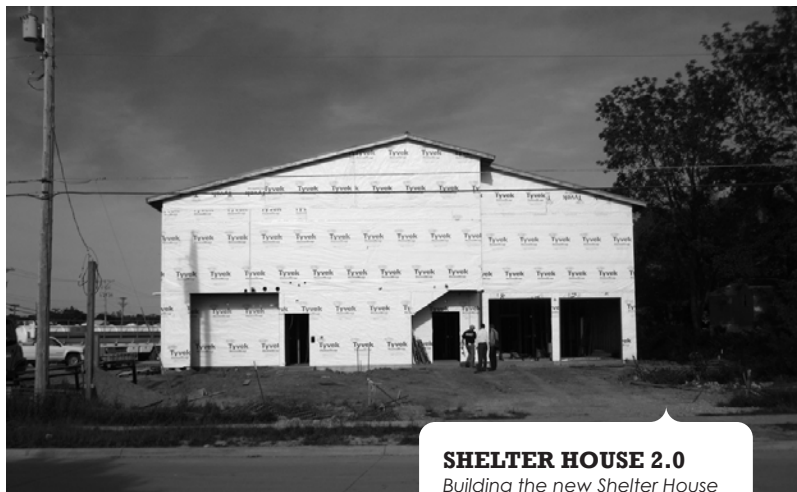


Renovating Lives

The official ribbon cutting was still a few weeks out, but activity swirled around Shelter House Executive Director Chrissi Canganelli on this mid-November morning. We sat at a table in the common area, then made a “walk through” as she enumerated the assets of this new facility on Southgate Avenue.

Staff was busy on the phones. Dollies loaded with boxes were carted in. It was a little hectic, but at least there was room to breathe. The sun’s rays diffused through the peaked skylight above the stairway to the upper level and its dormitory-style wings with bunk beds and separate areas for single men, women and families, and a playroom and study room for children. Of the 70 total beds in the shelter, 14 are in a wing reserved for veterans. Canganelli said she hoped this more structured, healthy living environment, would better enable clients to move forward in their lives.

Somehow the old Shelter House on North Gilbert Street managed to cram in 29 beds for homeless clients but stress, if not claustrophobic mayhem, was a constant. There were no dedicated rooms (unless a closet counts) for counseling or job training, much less a restaurant-style kitchen or classes for clients, all of which are features of the new building whose clean lines and utilitarian construction fit well



SHELTER HOUSE 2.0

Building the new Shelter House

And then there were the people who had rightly secured a bed in the Shelter, who could really use the services, some case management, some counseling, but couldn’t stand the crowding and chaos.

“Say I’m a veteran and I have post-traumatic stress and I’m walking into that,” says Canganelli. “Do I want to continue walking into that? We saw people leaving sooner than we should have, in some instances. People just opting out.”

in the intensive commercial-zoned area a few blocks south of Highway 6 and east of the river.

Overcrowding in that old house often forced the Shelter House to turn away more than a dozen people a night. For the past six years, local churches helped shelter the overflow in their sanctuaries during the winter months, which was a great help, but life for those staying at Shelter House was all too haphazard and provisional.

“You had people who were on top of each other,” said Canganelli. “You had people who were not med compliant [not following medical advice and, especially, correctly using prescribed medication], people who were just trying to maintain their sobriety. You had kids running through. It was a constant challenge, a difficult work and living environment.”

The need for a new Shelter House in Iowa City was intensified by national and statewide demographic and economic trends. The Iowa Institute for Community Alliance’s July 2010 report on homelessness in Iowa accounted for 23,808 homeless men, women and children who sought shelter in 2009, an increase of 38.7% from 2008. According to the report, 15,351 more people were at risk of becoming homeless in 2010.

According to Amy Correia, Johnson County services coordinator, the vast majority of homeless persons in Johnson County can trace their situation to job losses or low-paying jobs, lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, or expensive medical crises.

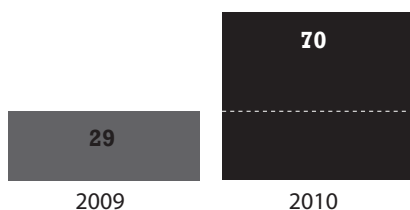


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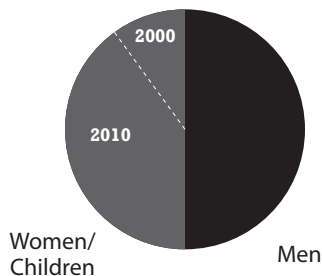
THE CHANGING FACE OF HOMELESSNESS

Numbers can’t tell the whole story of homelessness, but they offer insight into the growing need for services.

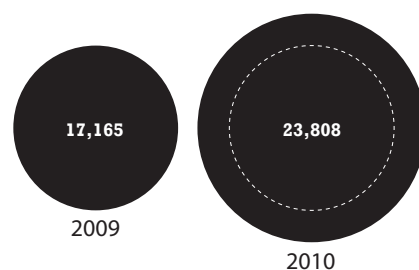
Beds at the Iowa City Shelter House



Makeup of the Shelter House population



Growth in the Iowa homeless population



Correia also says homelessness can be hard to quantify because it includes people who aren't necessarily living on the street: "You have situations where people are doubled up, living with family or friends or living in unsuitable situations, and that's harder to count because those aren't as visible."

Many are one paycheck away from being homeless and a job loss or a big medical expense can push people into homelessness.

"We certainly know from some of the housing data that there are too many people that are spending more than half of their income on their rent and utilities," said Correia. "And that puts them in a precarious situation."

Correia has noticed a trend of more women and families experiencing homelessness over the past 10 years. Canganelli has noticed it as well. When she started working with Shelter House 11 years ago, women and children made up 10 to 15% of their clients. About sev-

Many are one paycheck away from being homeless.

en years ago, more women and children began walking through the doors. Over the past five years, nearly 50% of the clients have been women and children.

The demographic change in the homeless population doesn't have a single explanation. Unemployment near 10% nationally of course doesn't help, but Canganelli cited other factors that have played a role, such as welfare reform legislation and changes in the labor market, with employers scaling back or eliminating employee benefits.

The demolition of Chicago's public housing projects is another factor. There's a nine-year waiting list now for public housing in Chicago; the wait in Iowa City is about two years. It's easy to see the appeal of moving west, and shelters across Iowa are seeing increasing numbers of families from big cities such as Chicago, where people often leave areas with high concentrations of poverty and crime. "Families hear that you can live here without getting shot at," said Canganelli. "Sounds like a better life."

While Iowa City receives an influx of thousands of young people from the affluent Chicagoland suburbs every fall without much anxiety, the arrival of these "Chicago people" has been different, sometimes eliciting less than charitable reactions in some circles (if you doubt this, read the anonymous comments in online news forums) and head-in-the-sand

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>> JUDGES CONTINUED FROM 15

acter of homosexuals. And the proposition is simply false.

The Varnum opinion and the other three cases mentioned above all discuss numerous recent scholarly studies about how children flourish. The unanimous verdict is that children raised by same-sex parents do just as well as those raised by opposite-sex parents. Opponents, even when they have unlimited resources as in California and Florida, have not been able to find a credible expert witness

We appear to be headed toward a long public debate about the place of homosexuals in our state, a debate that will ultimately be determined by the more tolerant attitudes of younger Iowans.



who will repeat the now-discredited prejudice. The prospect of swearing to tell the truth and being cross-examined in court must be just too much. Somehow this news got lost in the last election, but I hope that we will hear much about it in the debates to come.

In the end, I was disappointed by how Iowans treated these three justices, whether the electorate was acting out of spite or political calculation or sincere belief. In years to come, these judges will be recognized as having acted with courage, integrity and grace.

Already, I've seen a T-shirt around the law school that says, "After graduation, I want to go to work for the firm of Ternus, Baker and Streit." I sense a resolution growing within me—and, I think, in my friends and colleagues—that the place of LGBT-identified individuals in our state will not be decided by a one-time event like a court decision or a retention election. Instead, it will be a long, painful process with a lot of hard work by young people, but the ultimate result, full civil rights for our LGBT neighbors, will reflect the honesty, tolerance and good sense of all Iowans. **lv**

John Whiston has been Clinical Professor of Law at the University of Iowa College of Law since 1994 and a lawyer in private practice in Montana for 10 years before that.



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HIGH CRIME

I was checked in by Ann, a redheaded woman in her late 40s or perhaps early 50s. She was amiable enough but was poised to be a bitch if necessary. Ann spent the nine o'clock hour of her Wednesday morning checking the contents of my duffel bag to ensure that I hadn't entered with any contraband.

The Hope House: I hope this is the last time I ever have to live in a place like this.

I was sure that all of my belongings were going to pass inspection because I hadn't brought all that much with me, especially considering the fact that Hope House would be my home for at least the next four months. The Hope House: I hope that I can escape being a target of the staff in this building. I hope that I complete all of my work. I hope I can complete my community service hours with expedience. I hope I graduate through each of the four levels of this halfway house. I hope this is the last time I ever have to live in a place like this.

There's a team building exercise called "deserted island" that people use to gain insight into others' interests. When you play "deserted island" you have to name your five favorite books or CD's that you have, five "must have" items that you would want to have with you if you were stuck, say, on a deserted island.

I had called the halfway house the day before to clarify what exactly I could enter the building with. The list was as follows: 10 pairs of pants/shorts, 10 shirts, 5 pairs of shoes (to include shower shoes, work shoes/boots etc.), 10 pairs of socks, 10 pair of underwear, 2 coats (seasonally appropriate), 5 CDs, 5 cassettes, 5 VHS tapes, 5 DVDs and either a DVD player or VCR with a TV screen not to exceed 13 inches.

Nothing was said of books. I guess it's assumed most felons don't read that much.

I brought the approved clothing items, a travel DVD player and the musical answers to my deserted island questions.

Although I wasn't sure it was allowed, I also brought a copy of Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States." I couldn't think of a better time to learn whatever the hell Bacon's Rebellion was all about.

Ann flipped through the pages of the book while holding it upside down, seeing if anything hidden inside it might fall out. She poked through and unfolded my clothing and was opening and going through every pocket of my duffel bag when she came across some dryer sheets. Ann didn't care for the dryer sheets. Apparently, past Hope House residents had used dryer sheets to smuggle cocaine into the facility. After she gave me an incriminating look I threw them away as she asked me to.

Getting acclimated to Hope House has taken some doing. It's not easy to move from the warmth of your own home to the cold and sterile environment of state rehabilitation. I miss my friends and I miss my freedom. Sometimes I sit for extended periods of time in the bathroom and take longer than needed showers just because it is the only time I can be guaranteed to be alone. I live with about forty other gentlemen and there are typically anywhere from two to four people at the R.O.'s (Resident Officer's) desk.

Every resident has to perform a detail. Most of these jobs are daily and can be completed in about a half an hour. The tasks maintain the cleanliness of the building, the dining room, bathrooms, hallways and kitchen. There is a

list of rotating duties that most work from. I feel fortunate to have a permanent detail: Twice a

THE FOUR LEVELS OF HOPE HOUSE

→ People are admitted to Hope House for a period of one year or until they achieve "Maximum Benefits."

In order to achieve "Maximum Benefits" people must, at each level, work 4 consecutive weeks of 40 hours a week at an outside job while receiving no "reports" during their stay. People may be given reports for breaking Hope House rules or refusing to do the jobs they are assigned inside the facility.

LEVEL FOUR — Work 40 hours a week for four consecutive weeks.

4

LEVEL THREE — Work 40 hours a week for four consecutive weeks while also completing 25 hours of approved community service.

3

LEVEL TWO — Work 40 hours a week for four consecutive weeks while also completing 20 hours of approved community service.

2

LEVEL ONE — Work 40 hours a week for four consecutive weeks while also completing 15 hours of approved community service.

1

week I buff the floors of the dining room. It takes a little over an hour to do and I find it therapeutic.

The men of Hope House share either a two or three-man room. They're tiny rooms. It wasn't too long after coming here that I was offered a two-man room. I felt lucky but that quickly passed. I sleep about eight feet away from someone whose penchant for scratching his testicles offends both my eyes and my ears. Years of being in prison have left this person without shame. It's not uncommon for me to be engaged in a conversation with him while at the same time his hand goes into his pants to aggressively attack whatever demon makes a person itch the way he must. As visually stunning as that is, it doesn't end there. I wish that I was kidding when I say that I've been awakened on multiple occasions by the sound of his incessant scratching. Steven Spielberg should send a recording crew out here to capture it—he could use it in a movie involving alien monsters tearing the skin off of innocent human beings.

It's not easy to move from the warmth of your own home to the cold and sterile environment of state rehabilitation. I miss my friends and I miss my freedom.

Every hour a headcount is taken and the R.O.'s throw the door to my room open to see if I am present. The doors get opened every hour—day and night—which kept me from getting any quality sleep the first few nights that I was here.

The “beds” at the Hope House are single cots that are six feet long. I'm six foot three. I either sleep with my head on the metal bar on one end or with my feet sticking out underneath the metal bar that frames the opposite side of the bed. When I opt for the latter it's not uncommon for my feet to be hit by a swinging door when the R.O.'s are doing their headcount check.

HOPE CONTINUED ON PAGE 31 >>

UPDATE

The kids did not expect us. The kids were not ready to pay their bills.



Yale Cohn cranks out the last chapter of our NaNoWriMo novel

Then he stood there, flexing his bandaged hand, as if we were finished.

“You sit tight,” smiled Stan. “We got some cleaning up to do.”

We took what we could find. Another \$1,800 in cash, some electronic gadgets, that was about all—these kids had some growing up to do. The electric guitar, we left on account of I'd broken its neck. But I got the idea. We paid ourselves here.

—Excerpt from Chapter Five, by Paul Seeman

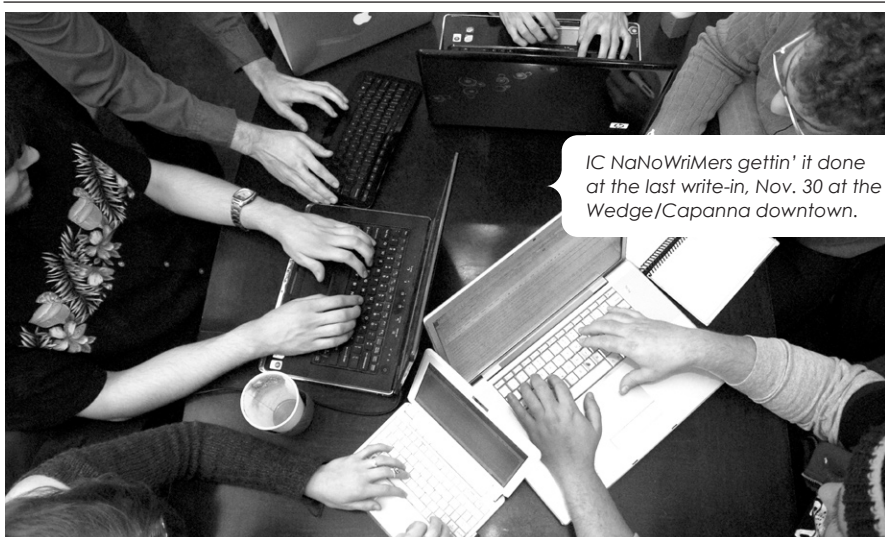
This was at some newly thrown-up apartment building, third floor, music pumping from every other doorway in the carpeted hallway. They barely heard Stan pounding on the door. They were surprised when Stan burst the chain open. They asserted their legal rights. They learned that it hurts to put your hand on a lit stove. They learned that a hammer isn't just for hanging posters. We used what they gave us. We were creative, and we were effective.

And finally, the kids were ready to pay up. The little fuckers actually had the money—the lawyer-looking one who'd been shouting about his rights actually went to his bedroom and returned with a roll of \$50 bills.

Well, we didn't quite reach our goal of 50,000 words in one month—39,930, so close! Okay, not really. Five writers and we still came up shy. But we wrote a fun little story, full of all the inconsistencies that NaNoWriMo is best known for.

Hats off to all of National Novel Writing Month's “winners”—those who completed a full 175-page novel in one month—and a big thanks to the readers that kept us returning to our computers, to try, try, try again.

Read all of Stan and Lenny's Iowa City adventures and see our blog about the process at www.LittleVillageMag.com/nanowrimo **lv**



IC NaNoWriMers gettin' it done at the last write-in, Nov. 30 at the Wedge/Capanna downtown.

Photos by Ofer Sivan

Acting on activism

The Iowa City area seems to be experiencing a renaissance in the area of live theater. In recent years several new organizations have joined the long-running Riverside Theatre and Iowa City Community Theatre in putting on local shows. Working Group Theatre is one such organization and in the last two years they've gained notice for their site-specific productions and presentations of new work by younger playwrights. I spoke with them before a rehearsal for their new production *Atlas Of Mud*.

Artistic Director Sean Lewis and his wife Jennifer Fawcett (associate director of Working Group) are graduates of The University of Iowa who returned to Iowa City after having completed playwriting residencies at theatres in Denver and Philadelphia. With Martin Andrew (Producing Director) and Josh Beadle (Managing Director) they founded Working Group in August of 2009 out of desire to present new work that engaged with social issues affecting Iowa and the Midwest.

"A lot of the issues that are happening in this state right now are things that are at the front of the national debate," says Lewis, "Between Postville, gay marriage being passed before New York state, Burundi and Somali refugees throughout Des Moines. It's amazing to me what's going on."

The Working Group founders see themselves as part of a growing group of artists and professionals who have worked elsewhere in the country and then chose to return to Iowa City. Jennifer Fawcett says "There's been a really interesting artistic migration back to Iowa City. A number of artists we know, people that are in their 30s, they want to live in a different way. It becomes very practical, it's just about time and space. Art can't happen without both of them. I love big cities, but I need time and space to do what I'm going to do."

Fawcett is the author of new work *Atlas of Mud*, which Working Group will be premiering Dec. 3 at Riverside Theatre. She says the play was "originally inspired by flood mythology, before Hurricane Katrina and the Iowa floods. I wasn't personally affected



HER NAME IS MUD

Natalie Kropf in *Atlas of Mud*.

by Hurricane Katrina, but I was definitely affected by the Iowa flood. So that sort of has been swirled into the play."

It is the largest production the company has produced. "*Atlas of Mud* is an epic thing," Fawcett says, "We've basically got a 23-foot boat on stage, six actors plus a small chorus. It starts in what seems to be a recognizable

Working Group produces new theatrical work that engages with social issues affecting Iowa and the Midwest

world but it moves into the land of myth. It's a retelling of the Flood myth. It's very much about how we create hope in the face of disaster."

Working Group put their plays in social context by including panel discussions about each play's subject. The Sunday matinee of *Atlas* will feature local environmentalists, who Producing Director Martin Andrew says will "talk about the threats, what you do to prevent



Extended feature: The Working Group interview. Online now at www.LittleVillageMag.com/wg

pollution, what you can do to prevent runoff," adding that a portion of the proceeds from the Sunday matinee will go to Iowa River Call, a spring event to celebrate the Iowa River and educate schoolchildren about conserving and restoring Iowa's rivers and streams.

By utilizing unconventional staging locations (they've previously performed on a farm and around a back yard pool, for example) and adding supplemental programming to engage all ages in the social issues their plays address, they hope to attract an audience beyond the usual theater-going demographic.

Martin Andrew said "We have these brilliant ideas about how we can make this—from the moment you buy your ticket to after the show, when you're in your drive home...but first we have to build a 23-foot boat on stage."

Atlas Of Mud debuts in the not-so-unconventional (but well-loved nonetheless) Riverside Theatre on Friday, Dec. 3. **lv**

Kent Williams lives, works, writes and hallucinates in Iowa City.

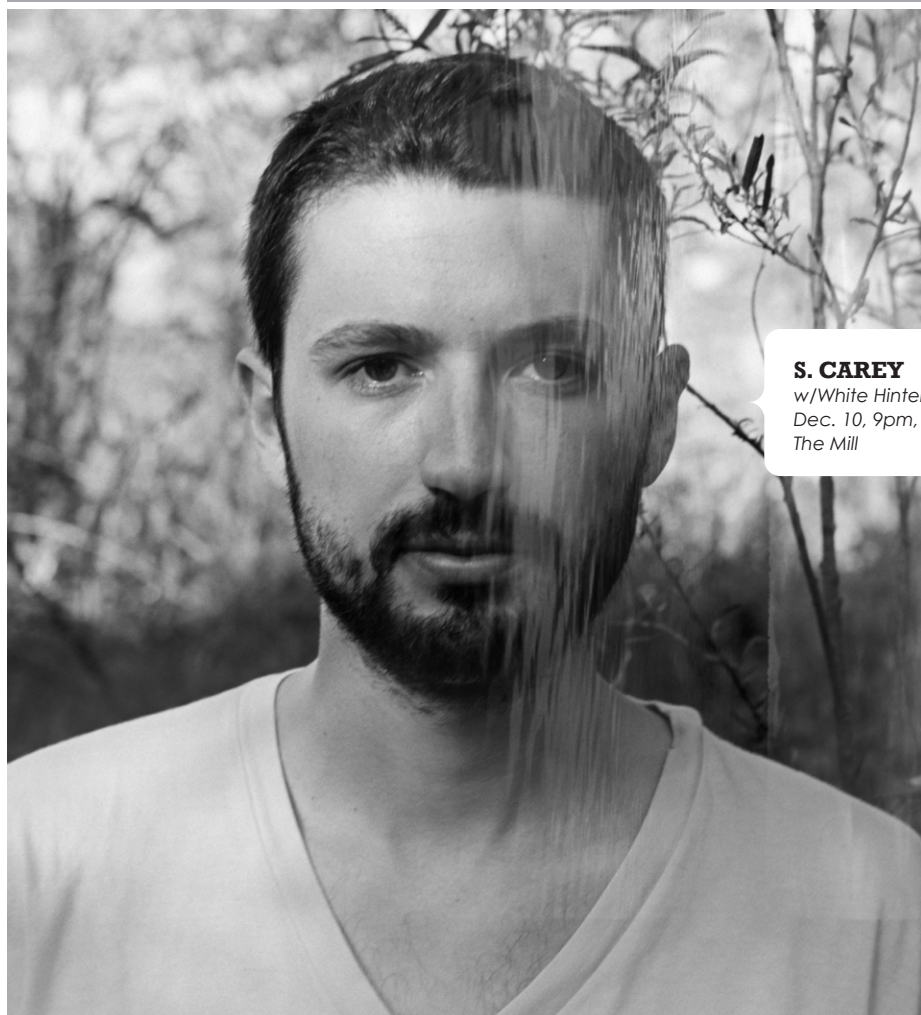


Photo by Cameron Wing

S. CAREY

w/*White Hinterland*
Dec. 10, 9pm, \$8
The Mill

S. CAREY: Pop country is pretty bad. Also, I hear a lot of singer/songwriters that are trying for the whole neo-folk thing but, nine times out ten, it's just really boring. The lyrics are really cliché, and they just have nothing new to say. It's fine to listen to, it's pleasant, but it just reminds me that I really need to try to say something new. I need to listen to a variety of genres and draw from different angles. I need to pay homage to my influences while still having my own voice.

LV: There's a lot of prominent piano ostinato on *All We Grow* that sounds a little like Steve Reich. Is that something you've listened to or is it just what came out in service of the songs?

S. CAREY: I've been a Steve Reich fan since I was in college. I played a couple of his pieces and wrote papers about other ones. He was one of the only composers I studied in school that hit me on a super deep emotional level. "Electric Counterpoint," "Different Trains," "You are Variations" and "Music for 18 Musicians" are among the most influential [compositions].

His songs are melodic and meditative, as inviting as they are sophisticated.

LV: On songs like "In The Dirt" and "Action" the drumming is distinctly not a standard trap set. Are you playing something besides drums?

S. CAREY: Yeah, I basically set up a bass drum flat like a taiko drum and then used some different wood surfaces to get a variety of click sounds. Also there is Cajon, which is an instrument used in Afro-Cuban and South American music, that can be heard in the background.

LV: You played drums with Bon Iver but they're not prominent on this CD. Can you see doing a more 'drummy' album sometime?

S. CAREY: I think that would be really fun... might happen... don't know.

LV: What was your favorite Saturday morning cartoon?

S. CAREY: Ninja Turtles... does that count?

Kent Williams

The Drummer Takes His Turn

S Carey's new album *All We Grow* is not what you'd expect from someone who plays with Bon Iver. If Bon Iver hugs the center line of popular music, S. Carey's car is parked crooked on the shoulder with its blinkers on and he's down in the ditch picking flowers. At the same time S. Carey doesn't poke sharp sticks in your ear—his songs are melodic and meditative, as inviting as they are sophisticated. I got to ask the man a few questions via e-mail:

LV: The songs on your album are elaborately arranged—not overproduced but with an almost symphonic depth and varied instrumentation. How are you presenting that in live performance? Who is playing with you on tour?

S. CAREY: Yeah, there are only four of us so we are doing our best to arrange the songs with more basic instrumentation, but still capture the essence/vibe of the song. We all do our best to create soundscapes using bowed vibes that can be looped, bowed upright bass, delays and reverb on the electric guitar. Zach Hanson plays drums and vibes, Nick Ball plays electric guitar, Jeremy Boettcher plays bass, I play keyboards, guitar and a little percussion and Mike Noyce has been joining us on viola and guitar.

LV: Everyone asks artists what music influenced them, or what music they like currently. What music do you dislike and how is it a counter-example that informs your own music?

HOMETOWN SOUND



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PIETA BROWN

"This Land is Your Music"
Benefit for Friends of Hickory Hill
Park and Iowa Public Radio
w/The Vagabonds
Dec. 4, 8pm, \$10 [all ages]
w/The Alexis Stevens
Dec. 11, 8pm, \$10 [all ages]
The Mill

concept shows are kind of awkwardly named, but the idea behind them is perfect to warm your holiday heart. It's an event that attempts to showcase the relationships between musicians and fans and arts and music and community, and the proceeds from the shows (which will include a visual art component) benefit Friends of Hickory Hill Park and Iowa Public Radio. This year the shows happen on

Dec. 4 and 11. On the first night Pieta will strum with the Vagabonds and on the second night Alexis Stevens will be the opening act.

For the person on your list who

has everything, you'll want to get them tickets to the December edition of I Hear IC, one of the coolest semi-regular live music events in town. I'm sure I've mentioned them before, but these events are curated by Jared Fowler, who likes to pair some of his homies from the UI School of Music with people from the local scene. Best of all, each performer can only play for 10 minutes, so if you don't like it, then something else is next. Typical shows are a little over an hour. This one is on Dec. 15 at 9 p.m. at the Englert and will feature Christine Augspurger playing "Anvil Chorus," a solo percussion piece by Pulitzer-winning UI Alum David Lang, Ex-Action Model, Idris Goodwin and Cassius Goens, and the nature-sound sounding Lwa.

Speaking of ~~music school nerds~~ people who are professionally trained, a man by the name of S. Carey will be playing at the Mill on Dec. 10. He's famous for being a member of Bon Iver. The "Name of Dude (from other band)" association is often more of a red flag than an accolade, but this is a promising show. The classically-trained Carey's new album is an interesting blend of contemporary composition "stuff" (that's the technical term) with rock music aesthetics.

Also, Tim Kasher (of Cursive) is playing the Blue Moose with Minus the Bear on Dec. 13. I guess "Name of Dude (from other band)" is pretty much a sure bet this month!

Finally, as of press time, here's what I could find about New Year's Eve events around town. First off, Iowa native William Elliott Whitmore,

In Everything But The Girl's "25th December" (one of those great non-Christmas Christmas songs that end up on "indie xmas" mix tapes), Ben Watt sings about the quintessential winter feeling: regret. "I'm thirty and I don't know nothing no more," he whines in the way that only British people can whine, thinking about old friends, his father, all of things he never said, etc. Yes it's sentimental, and yes I first heard this song when I was 12, but as I near my own 30th year (407 days, not that I'm counting), the song seems to tap into the overwhelming sadness of December, all unresolved resolutions and vanishing daylight.

December is a time to crawl away in a little hole, which—hey!—that's what bars are! And—double hey!—that's where music is played, and that's where so many of us will end up this season after some obligatory

I've never really experienced such a connection between audience and performer than the last two times William Elliott Whitmore played in town.

familial dining and the tearing of wrapping paper. So, in honor of making lists that we never check twice, here are some brief notes on your musical holiday shopping.

Pieta Brown's "This Land is Your Music"

New Years Eve

Keeping it local to ring in the new year.



WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE

w/ Liberty Leg and The Hexbreakers
\$15/17 | The Blue Moose Tap House



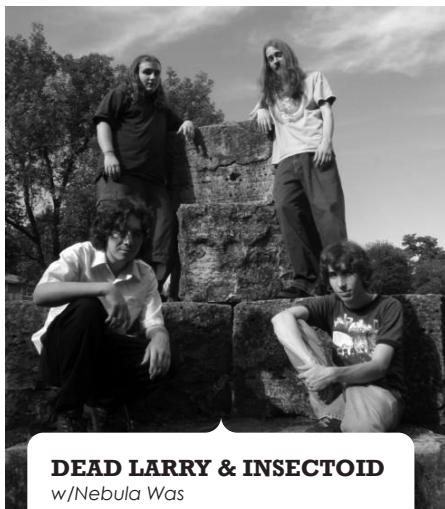
DAVE ZOLLO & THE GGLITCH

\$10/12 | The Mill



PUBLIC PROPERTY

w/ OSG
\$10 | The Yacht Club



DEAD LARRY & INSECTOID

w/Nebula Was
9:30pm [21+ after 10]
\$5 | Gabe's



TIM KASHER

w/Minus The Bear
Dec. 13, 6pm
\$16/18 [all ages]
The Blue Moose
Tap House

whose NYE shows are a bit of an Iowa City tradition, is playing at the Blue Moose. He characteristically tore the roof off of a sold out house the last time he played there. Whitmore is a force as much as he is a musician, and seeing him live in Iowa is essential to understanding the man and his music. I've never really experienced such a connection between audience and performer than the last two times he's played in town.

It looks like the last Public Property show ever is going to be their way to ring in 2011.

At the Mill two local legends are joining forces as Dave Zollo will be playing with the Gglitch. Both bands fall under the category of "musically gifted"—all these guys can play—and if you can't make it out for NYE both bands have shows at the Yacht Club earlier in the month, please check their website for details. Speaking of the Yacht Club, it looks like the last Public Property show EVER is going to be their way to ring in 2011. Need I remind you that this a reggae band who has recorded with Toots? Feel that pressure drop, bitches, and get your tickets early. **lv**

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.

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DEC 10, 8PM **LANGHORNE SLIM**
+ BROOKS STRAUSE
DEC 13, 6PM **MINUS THE BEAR**
+ TIM KASHER AND RAH RAH
DEC 16, 5PM **WINDS OF PLAGUE**
+ AFTER THE BURIAL, WAR OF AGES,
CARNIFEX & UPONA BURNING BODY
DEC 26, 7PM **KELLY PARDEKOOPER**
DEC 31, 9PM **WILLIAM ELLIOTT**
WHITMORE + LIBERTY LEG
& THE HEXBREAKERS!

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HAUSU

Once in a while we come across a piece of art so outlandish that it defies all our categories; something for which we can't summon the generalizations to neatly define our experience—*Hausu* is one such work of art for me, and I suspect I am not alone. If you haven't seen it, it may very well be the most bizarre cinematic experience of your life.

Typically billed as a horror-comedy, *Hausu* barely qualifies as "horror," at least not in the way Western minds conceive it. In 1977, when the "house" was constructed, director Nobuhiko Obayashi was principally a director of bizarre, avant-garde short films and television commercials. Spielberg's *Jaws* had recently met huge success in the West, so producers in Japan naturally sought to emulate its amateur, low-budget appeal to reinvigorate a film industry largely dominated by yakuza (gangster) films. Obayashi was up to the task, and what he produced is a genre-bending, fourth-wall breaching, goofy, psychedelic, fantastical ghost story, one that only resembles horror as we now think of it.

In a film like this, plot is practically irrelevant. We are introduced to the protagonist, a high school girl named Gorgeous, and her six friends (Sweet, Melody, Prof, Fantasy, Mac and Kung Fu) who are anticipating a summer of fun in the sun



Hausu made its way into the Criterion Collection in October 2010



until their camp trip is suddenly canceled. Gorgeous, bereaved by the prospect of her father marrying a much younger woman, proposes that she and her friends travel instead to the countryside to spend their summer with her aunt. When they eventually arrive at the house, the spooky dial is turned up to 10 in short order. One by one the girls meet their demise, each dispatched in a decidedly cruel and ironic way. Melody, for instance, is attacked and devoured by a piano in such a way it defies description and Sweet is pummeled by flying futon mattresses.

Despite its gratuitous blood and oddly gruesome deaths, *Hausu* is a very childlike film. In fact, the entire film can be seen as the perspective of a child. So it's no surprise to learn that the director's 10-year-old

Now Showing

Go see a hokey Japanese treasure, and then check these films out:



Top Secret Rosies

Directed by LeAnn Erickson
Dec. 6, 6:30pm | Seamans Center

Filmmaker Erickson presents her documentary film about a little known group of female mathematicians who did secret research for the U.S. Army during WWII.



Chekhov for Children

Directed by Sasha Waters Freyer
Dec. 12-14 | Bijou Theatre

The Bijou hosts free screenings of this documentary by Iowa City's own Sasha Waters Freyer following a Broadway performance on Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, performed by 5th and 6th graders. Donations benefit Horace Mann PTO.



Black Swan

Directed by Darren Aronofsky
Opens Dec. 13 | Marcus Theaters

Fans of visceral director Aronofsky (*Requiem for a Dream*, *The Wrestler*) have probably already marked their calendars. Anyone who hasn't seen one of his jarring, stylish films, get to the theater for this ballet rival thriller.

daughter is responsible for the scenario (credited as a writer). Obayashi was wise to enlist her help if his goal at the outset was parody. The entire first act feels like a Japanese television sitcom, rife with pop music (like much of the rest of the film) and cheeky humor. Once it takes off in the second act *Hausu* becomes a broad parody of horror films, incorporating various allusions to other movies with their tropes and clichés in tow.

The film quickly descends to melodrama, and returns often, but *Hausu* isn't memorable for its believable acting or witty scripting. It has none of the things we tend to associate with "good" cinema. In fact, the melodrama contributes much to its kitschy allure in the first place. While it features some intentional, chaplinesque humor, it can also be as unintentionally funny as Raimi's *Evil Dead* (1981), a film whose slapstick style, imaginative sets and absurd situations make it most easily comparable to this film. In retrospect, it's hard to imagine Raimi being unfamiliar with *Hausu* prior to conceiving his boomstick trilogy.

Where *Hausu* truly excels is in its remark-



ably inventive use of myriad cinematic devices and techniques. Every conceivable in-camera trick is used, from slow-motion and stop-motion to matte painting, hand-drawn animation, iris-ing and puppetry, as well as numerous editorial devices such as flashbacks, wipes,

💧💧 *To its own ends, Hausu breaks apart and reassembles the elements of many campy, low-budget movies.*

cutaways, dissolves, multiple exposure, blue screen and a number of other techniques I've never seen before or since. There are lessons for film students to be found here, or at the very least *Hausu* is instructive in how not to use these techniques. One memorable scene has us follow the girls down a staircase to a



phone to call for help and then to the front door. This takes two to three minutes. It's an entirely handheld, blurry, time lapsed sequence, like a hazy recollection of a dream or a waking nightmare involving us directly.

No string of adjectives could possibly capture Hausu, so if you're an open-minded filmgoer I can only recommend you experience it for yourself. 💧💧

There is hardly a dull moment in this film. Even outside of the carnage, every scene is dense with multiple exposures, mattes and other techniques occurring with headache-inducing frequency. And even when this trickery is toned down for fleeting moments, single frames exude so much visual information that the viewer is forced to consider what it is they're really experiencing. For all its weirdness,

Hausu is foremost an art film, one that breaks apart and reassembles the elements of so many campy, low-budget movies to its own ends.

After 33 years of relative obscurity, *Hausu* has been brought out into the light, largely due to a stunning new transfer from Janus films, recently packaged as a Criterion release (on Blu-ray no less). For the last year it's been playing all over the United States in various art houses and independent theaters (the director even toured his own print in New York), and it will be making its way to our very own Bijou this month from Dec. 3 - 9. No string of adjectives could possibly capture *Hausu*, so if you're an open-minded filmgoer I can only recommend you experience it for yourself. **lv**

Matthew Mesaros is a freelance writer and the creator of Cinelogue.com, a film essay website for cinephiles.

the **bijou** cinema

Alternative and Independent Films

A non-profit, student-run cinema screening independent, art house, foreign and classic films since 1972.

FRI, DEC 3 - THU, DEC 9

YOU WILL MEET A DARK STRANGER

Directed by Woody Allen | USA

NPR says Woody Allen is in "fine, if unflashy form" with his newest star-studded "un-joke-y comedy" about tangled love affairs.

HOUSE (HAUSU)

Directed by Nobuhiko Obayashi | Japan

A classic of Japanese horror cinema. "Delirious, deranged, gonzo or just gone, baby, gone -- no single adjective or even a pileup does justice to House." - New York Times

SPECIAL EVENTS

Free screenings and events at the Bijou in December

DEC 12-14:

CHEKHOV FOR CHILDREN

Directed by Sasha Waters Freyer | USA

The inspiring story of an ambitious undertaking - the 1979 staging on Broadway of *Unde Vanya* by New York City 5th & 6th graders, directed by the celebrated New York writer Phillip Lopate.

Filmmaker and Iowa professor, Sasha Waters Freyer will conclude each screening with a Q&A session.

Free with optional donation to the Horace Mann PTO.

GANGSTER DECEMBER

DEC 3-4, 11pm

THE GODFATHER

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola | USA

The undisputed masterpiece, free on the Bijou's big screen. It's an offer you can't refuse.

DEC 10-11, 11pm:

GOODFELLAS

Directed by Martin Scorsese | USA

"Brutal, stylish, hypnotic and addictive, *GoodFellas* remains Scorsese's best film." - *Hollywood Reporter*

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>> SHELTER CONTINUED FROM 19

liberal pieties in others. Not content to tap dance around the disadvantages faced by new arrivals, Canganelli discusses them matter-of-factly, saying this population doesn't necessarily come with the experience and the skills that match perfectly with a place like Iowa City.

"They come with histories, they come with backgrounds, they come with problems sometimes," said Canganelli. "Not everyone, but sometimes. Sometimes they don't have the skills necessary to actualize all the changes that they desire for themselves and their children and the improvements that they desire. But that does not diminish their hopes and the validity of their hopes and their dreams for their families and for their kids. It's no different from my wanting something better for my kids."

Canganelli is alarmed by the level of discourse on this issue and worries that the demonization of these new arrivals has led some to assert the right to "limit the mobility of people who are poor."

"I understand where people's hopes and fears come from... well, sometimes I don't," Canganelli continued. "So much is just driven by fear and the challenge is now that we're here, we have to demonstrate that we can take care of this facility and we can truly take advantage of the resources that we've made available to help people move forward in their lives."

One of those resources is the Supportive Training and Access to Resources (or STAR) program, which can help in a number of ways as a gap-filler until employment is secured. So long as clients are working toward goals and objectives set out with their case managers, STAR can help with things like the expense of clothes for a job interview, vouchers for transportation to work or child care.

Canganelli takes issue with criticism that assistance enables irresponsible behavior. There are firm rules that go with staying at Shelter House and consequences for breaking them. Clients must stay sober, and anyone staying for more than a transient visit must line up specific goals to address with a case manager. And anyone who is not severely disabled is expected to be working or working hard to find and maintain employment. (Some clients are already employed but just don't make enough to make ends meet; about a third of homeless families are the "working poor.")

Veterans are allowed to stay up to two years, but for everyone else the limit is 90 days. People who are just passing through are limited to a 30-day stay. The longer, 90-day stay opens up for people who have more barriers or "systemic issues," as Canganelli puts it. But those staying for 90-days must earn the right to do so in two-week increments.

"We don't look at you coming in and say, 'You've got 90 days to hang out,'" said Canganelli. "We'll check in with you on day 79 and see how things went.' It does not work that way at all."

Because they don't have living expenses while staying at Shelter House, clients are also expected to demonstrate that they are saving 75% of their income towards establishing themselves in an apartment. "If you go one Friday night and blow your paycheck," said Canganelli, "you're gone."

But for all the serious consequences facing clients that don't follow Shelter House rules, there is compassion and common sense in how the rules are applied. If someone has a severe

The vast majority of homeless persons in Johnson County can trace their situation to job losses or low-paying jobs, lack of affordable housing, domestic violence, or expensive medical crises.

mental illness or very low cognitive functioning and is in the middle of a breakdown, worrying about an infraction of a particular rule is less important than getting that person help.

"If that same person has schizophrenia and is not on their medication," said Canganelli, "we're not going to look at that person and say, 'In two weeks, we want you to find a job.' No, in two weeks we want to know that you're here and we can find you and we're getting you back on your meds. How do we start connecting the dots? We're trying to take into account the barriers that people are dealing with and still be realistic and more productive than saying 'Thou Shalt Not.' Where does that get anybody?"

By the logic of some incentive structures from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), however, Shelter House may lose out on funding for such an approach. The \$1.5 billion Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)—signed into law by President Obama in February 2009 and endorsed by HUD—measures success as a shorter stay in a shelter (or, better yet, none at all). While avoiding

**IT'S A LONG WINTER
PART 1 OF 2**

Check back in January for the second half of David Henderson's series on homelessness in Johnson County.

homelessness in the first place is optimal, a model that pressures organizations to minimize shelter stays concerns Canganelli, who prefers longer stays if needed so that clients with fundamental challenges in their lives can address them methodically.

"Throwing a whole lot of money at getting people into housing and then walking away and then keeping them in that housing but not addressing any of the systemic issues that caused them to be homeless doesn't work," Canganelli said. "After you pull that back out, all things fall apart even faster than they would have otherwise."

"We know that we have something here that works," Canganelli said. "And it's taken a long time to get to here. You turn around and meet with somebody at HUD who says, 'In the last seven years the world's changed, you need to understand that.' But I turn back and say, 'But the people's needs haven't. Just because you don't find the old way of doing things sexy or interesting anymore, doesn't mean that they

weren't relevant.' And again, I ask, 'Have you addressed the core, root reasons that have brought us to this place?' And I'd say rapid re-housing does not."

Looking forward, Canganelli doesn't like depending on HUD funding and is looking for other "revenue streams" to sustain and grow operations. The gleaming chrome of the new Shelter House's commercial kitchen and the Shelter's nascent culinary training program may be able to help. As clients are trained in food preparation, she hopes they will be able to sell their finished products and skills to area businesses.

Ultimately Canganelli hopes that people see homelessness as a public health issue and that Shelter House is earnest in providing resources and services for the good of all. "The work that we do is improving not just the lives of the individuals that we're working with," Canganelli said, "but the health, safety and well-being of the community at large." **IV**

David Henderson is a graduate of Iowa City public schools, J.C.'s Cafe and the University of Iowa.

>> HOPE CONTINUED FROM 23

I've often heard it said that "happiness comes from within." For the most part I've believed this statement—but only to a point. I've always been a fairly happy person, but the external conditions were always closer to being under my control. I worked as a bartender at Deadwood Tavern before they made me quit due to the proximity of all of those bottles of liquor I am not to touch. This was the best job that I've ever had because it didn't feel like a job. I worked with and served friends of mine. Every night I was paid to help make a party happen. It's all gone now, so I've had to learn to look inward for my happiness. I concentrate on the things that I have rather than dwelling on what I've lost.

I've stopped taking the bus to get to work like I did when I started living here. I ride my bike instead and enjoy the cool wind against my face. It's so much sweeter than the recycled air running its course through the ventilation system at Hope House.

I've been steadily working my way through Hope House without a single report of wrongdoing on my record. I smile and joke with the other residents and even the staff as much as possible just to stay positive.

That being said, the idea that I had to be incarcerated for enjoying something that never led me to hurt anything or anyone in the first place still lends itself to some mental discomfort.

All of the people that live in halfway houses are felons. The Hope House is a halfway house. I am in the Hope House. Therefore I am a felon.

All of the people that live in halfway houses are felons. The Hope House is a halfway house. I am in the Hope House. Therefore I am a felon. This is a syllogism that pains my fingers to write. It's absolutely the truth though; I am living here in some legal netherworld in between freedom and a state prison.

Why am I here? Why am I greatly restricted from seeing my friends and family, playing with my dog and kissing my girlfriend?

Because of a flower. Well, I should be a bit more truthful about it: It's a weed. The weed: Mary Jane, grass, pot, bud, the chronic, dope, etc. The plant so nice we had to name it several thousand times.

Hunter S. Thompson said, "In a closed society where everyone is guilty, the only crime is getting caught, the only crime is stupidity." I possessed the kind of stupidity that could only be described as felonious.

As soon as I've fulfilled my legal obligations, I will leave my home state for one with less draconian marijuana laws.

I met Carl (not his real name) through a friend and had utilized his services a handful of times to procure some of the greenest, stickiest and sweetest smelling ganja that I or any of my friends could find at the time. Of course if I had any idea that Carl was under surveillance by the Iowa City Police Department I would have never crossed the area between the porch and the large room that the front door opened into.

Having just been a smoker and not a grower or seller, I never thought that my marijuana habit would have state prison-level consequences. Any weed that I had was for my exclusive personal use. I've never stolen anything, hurt anybody or vandalized any property while under the influence of marijuana.

It's not that I didn't know that marijuana was illegal (that's why I got it from Carl and not at Walgreen's); what I'm still trying to come to terms with is how the state of Iowa was able to make a felon out of me instead of giving me the misdemeanor charge that most people get when busted with possession of a controlled substance.

The way it was explained to me was that since Carl's house was under surveillance and they had proof that I had purchased the plant in question from him, I helped him commit a felony. My crime was "Solicitation to Commit a Felony," which is itself a Class D Felony punishable by up to five years in prison—what my cohorts in Hope House call a "nickel."

We live in a college town where I've seen news reports of people dying of alcohol poi-



High crime, or just bad luck?
Speak your mind at

www.LittleVillageMag.com/felony

soning, drinking to the point of committing homicides while blackout drunk and passing out in the middle of an Iowa winter, very nearly dying of hypothermia and losing their fingers and toes to frostbite.

There has never been one documented case of someone dying due to a THC overdose (the active ingredient in marijuana). Marijuana is far more frequently associated with laziness than it is with the kind of aggression needed to commit a homicide and I've never known anyone to be too high to not have sense enough to come in out of the cold in the middle of January.

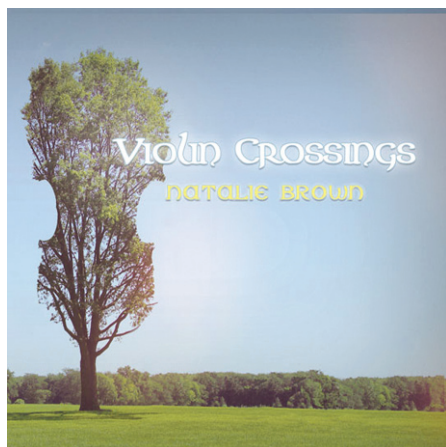
I will forever carry the stigma that comes with having a felony on my record. I will complete my stay at the Hope House, live clean and sober though the period of probation that will follow it and, as soon as I've fulfilled my legal obligations, I will leave my home state for one with less draconian marijuana laws.

There is no doubt that within my lifetime marijuana will be made legal. Fifteen states and Washington D.C. have made medicinal marijuana legal, which opens the door for change. Eventually Iowa will also surrender to reason, but it won't happen easily. As Frederick Douglass wrote, "If there is no struggle there is no progress...power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

As I've said, I plan on taking my leave of this state when I am able. Right now I'm legally bound to stay here in town and while I'm here I plan on doing whatever I can do to affect change. I must plead ignorance as I'm not sure what I can do to advance things besides making a donation to the National Organization for the Reformation of Marijuana Laws. I want to do more; I want to do whatever I can.

If you have suggestions for ways that I can amend things please write to me. My name is Mitch Emerson and because I am a felon I live at Hope House Residential Facility, 2501 Holiday Road Coralville, IA 52241-2781. **lv**

Mitch Emerson



Natalie Brown

Violin Crossings

Self-released

www.nataliebrownvioin.com

Natalie Brown is an Eastern Iowa music staple—playing violin/fiddle in a number of notable bands in the area including The Trollies, with Nikki Lundin, The Mayflies and with local guitar legend Craig Erickson in their latest jamband Planet Pluto. She is classically-trained and holds a degree in violin performance, a master's in music education and is currently the orchestra director at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids.

Violin Crossings is the first solo album by Natalie Brown. Over a decade in the making, she says the album was inspired by—and is a celebration of—the musicians she has worked with over the years, some of whom make an appearance on the record.

Crossings is largely instrumental, save a slight re-wiring of the Charlie Daniels Band hit “The Devil Went Down to Georgia,” featuring members of the Mayflies. The eleven songs

cross a mélange of styles: the newgrass “Chit-Chat”; the bluesy “Dusk”; the fairly faithful rendition of Enya’s new

age hit “Lazy Days”; the Celtic-tinged “The Star”; the spicy Latin of “Tango Por Enrico”; the light jazz-pop of “Jonchets.”

If the central character in this album is the virtuoso bow work by Brown, the supporting role is played by Craig Erickson. *Violin Crossings* was produced with Erickson and

he contributes the majority of the guitar work on the album. Erickson’s progressive and jamband influences are strongly felt, in particular, on my favorite tracks on the album: “Ten Past the Dragon,” “The Wanderer,” and “Planet Pluto Strut.” On the first listen I was reminded of jazz-rock violinist Jean Luc Ponty, who Brown quickly admits is an influence for her.

Violin Crossings is—as its title suggests—a violin-guided journey through the diverse musical styles of which Brown is capable. She calls her first record a celebration and I feel that intention and spirit in each track. *Violin Crossings* is a calling card for what I can only hope will be further visits.

Michael Roeder



The Box Flower

Trophies

Self-released

www.myspace.com/theboxflower

Sometimes I can’t make heads or tails of an album, and it’s a good thing. Those can be the albums that stretch your whole idea of what’s

Everything about it should add up to something, but honestly I don’t know what the hell it really is.

because the CD comes in a woodcut printed sleeve and includes a booklet with the lyrics printed with hand-set type. The packaging itself is a work of art, made in a limited edition of 89 copies.

The music itself is nice enough, with a good

aesthetically satisfying about music. Then there’s *Trophies* by The Box Flower, known to his mom as Daniel Weston Payne. I can tell he’s an artist

contrast between distorted electronic beats and polite pop songs. The lyrics, though, strike an odd note. The most arresting images feel a little unsettling, as on “The Flood,” when he sings “the springtime breeze smells like stolen spit and selfish betrayal.” It’s a breakup song, and it’s perfectly okay to express bitterness or unresolved emotional conflict, but I can’t get any purchase on that simile. Who would steal spit? What would (or could) selfish betrayal smell like?

I do like his whistling, though, especially on “Hide and Seek.” The close harmony, simple melody, and spare lyric hang together and feel emotionally genuine. “Indian Summer” is pretty okay as well, with a driving drum machine beat and an odd (in a good way) use of Autotune.

Maybe I’m just the wrong guy to be listening to this CD, because everything about it should add up to something, and I’m totally missing it. It’s definitely not bad, but honestly I don’t know what the hell it really is.



Strong Like Bear

Seeking Ghosts EP

Sleep on the Floor Records

www.stronglikebearband.com

It’s easy, if you live in Iowa City, to look upon Ames with pity larded with contempt. You’re conditioned to cringe at yellow and red. You hear “Ames” and immediately think “thick-necked Ag majors.” You don’t much like the men of Iowa State either.

Which of course is unfair, and Strong Like Bear’s *Seeking Ghosts EP* proves there’s some good things going on in Ames, at least in the music scene. Despite the whimsy of their name (always say it with a fake Russian accent!) the songs on *Seeking Ghosts* are pretty earnest, or maybe earnestly pretty. An Iowa City band

might be tempted to take these songs and include some screaming, feedback freakouts or theremin solos, but Strong Like Bear seems intent on staying out of the way of the songs.

The arrangements are kept simple but sufficient—guitars, bass, drums and voice.

They sing the chorus in close harmony, so you know they're not amateurs.

The singing is pretty plain as well, but in that late-'80s indie way: write a good lyric, set it to a serviceable melody and then do your best to enunciate and hit the notes. And yet, on the opener "Trust In Me" they sing the chorus in close harmony, so you know they're not amateurs.

The most adventurous arrangement is on "Valley of the 9s," which pairs a sampled tick-tock rhythm with electric piano, before the vocal arrives. I immediately thought of

Radiohead (they even manage a nicely done saxophone freakout at the end of the song) but the song works on its own terms. Without sounding derivative or dated, most of Seeking Ghosts would have fit into the mid-'80s rotation on KRUI with REM, the Replacements, and Throwing Muses, and that's not a bad crowd to be hanging with.

Kent Williams

Be Famous.
(kinda)

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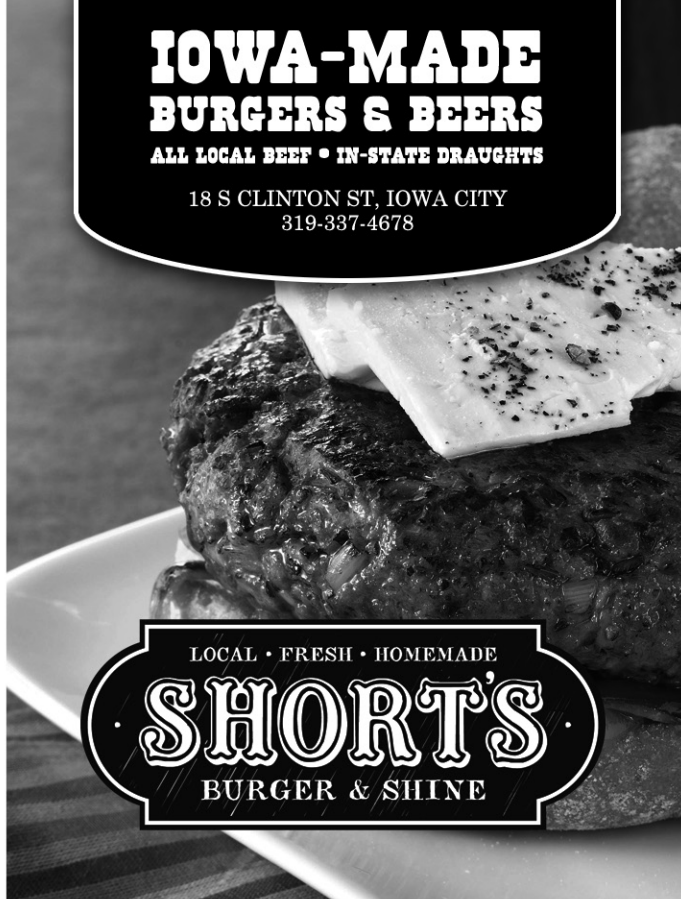
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ART/EXHIBITS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

55 12th Ave SE, Cedar Rapids

www.blackiowa.org

See website for times and locations

LS-Ready, Set, Kwanzaa! , Dec. 17 • Kwanzaa Festival, Dec. 18

AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City

www.akaradesign.com

30x5 Woodfired, thru Dec. 31

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids

www.crma.org

Art Bites "Impressionism, Tonalism, and Grant Wood" with CRMA Curator, Sean Ulmer, Dec. 1, 12:15pm • Finding Contemporary Art in China: Nanjing, Beijing and Shanghai, Dec. 2, 7pm • Exhibition Opening-A Show of Hands: Ceramics from the Collection, Dec. 4 • 10am • Exhibition Closes-Goya's Disasters of War, Dec. 12, 12pm • Creative Connections: Artists in Action with Dai Kui, Dec. 18, 10:30am

Chait Galleries Downtown

218 E. Washington St.

www.thegalleriesdowntown.com

Small Works show, ongoing

Faulconer Gallery

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell

www.grinnell.edu/fulconergallery

Gallery Talk: The Moving Crew (Lee Emma Running/Jeremy Chen), Dec. 3, 4:15 pm

Figge Art Museum

225 West Second Street, Davenport

www.figgeart.org

A Legacy for Iowa: Pollock's 'Mural' and Modern Masterworks from the University of Iowa Museum of Art, Ongoing • Art Salon Opening: The American and French Inspiration, Dec. 4, 10am •

Holiday Thieves' Market

Iowa Memorial Union, Iowa City

Over 100 artists, Dec. 4-5

Hudson River Gallery

538 South Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.hudsonrivergallery.com

Ronald Cohen Opening Reception, Dec. 3, 6pm

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington St.

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Handmade for the Holidays, thru Dec. 31

Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center

28 S Linn Street, Iowa City

Pocket Gadget Workshop, Dec. 3, 10:30pm • Holiday Sweets and Treats Sale, Dec. 5 • 11am-4pm • Holiday Concert, Dec. 14, 2:30pm • "Holidays Around the World" Concert, Dec. 15, 7pm

Johnson County Historical Society

310 5th St., Coralville

www.jchsiowa.org

Check website for times and locations

Christmas at the Morgan's, Dec. 5 • Aisle of Lights Celebration, Dec. 11

M.C. Ginsberg

110 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.mcginberg.com

Bench Art: Work in Progress, thru Dec. 31

Modela

323 E. Market St. Iowa City

www.shopmodela.com

A Jewel of a Show, Dec. 4, 10am-5pm

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

See website for locations

WorldCanvass with host Joan Kjaer, Dec. 3 • Chaos and Creation, ongoing

Public Space One

129 E. Washington St., Iowa City

publicspaceone.wordpress.com/

A One-night only exhibition & performance featuring Brendan Wells, Seashia Vang, & Peter Tomka, Dec. 4, 6pm • Gallery Exhibition featuring Kristi Sword, Dec. 10-31

University School of Art and Art History

www.art.uiowa.edu/

See website for locations

"Fear and Cultural Production," lecture by D, Dec. 1, 7pm • Lecture by Sam Gould of RED76, visiting artist in Intermedia, Dec. 2, 7pm • Exhibition of work by Jeanette VanderMey, BFA student in Jewelry and Metal Arts, Dec. 6, 8am • Exhibition of work by Lisa Johnson, graduate student in Sculpture, Dec. 6, 8am • Exhibition of work by Graduate students in Ceramics, Dec. 6, 8am • Exhibition of work by Natalie Wisco, BFA student in Printmaking, Dec. 6, 8am • Exhibition of work by December 2010 BA graduates, Dec. 13, 8am • Exhibition of work by December 2010 BA graduates, Dec. 13, 8am

US Bank Atrium Gallery

204 E. Washington St.

Mixed Messages Art Gallery, thru Dec. 31

MUSIC

Blue Moose Tap House

211 Iowa Ave, Iowa City

www.bluemooseic.com

Groove Theory with Slip Silo and Koplant No, Dec. 3, 9pm • Jeffree Star with DEV and It Boys, Dec. 8, 5pm • Free Energy, Dec. 9, 5pm • Langhorne Slim with Brooks Strause, Dec. 10, 8pm • Minus the Bear with Tim Kasher (of Cursive and the Good Life) and Rah Rah, Dec. 13, 6pm • The Sword with Mount Carmel, Dec. 14, 8pm • Winds of Plague with After the Burial, Carnifex, War of Ages, Upon a Burning Body, Dec. 16, 5pm • Kelly Pardekoooper & Friends, Dec. 26, 7pm, William Elliott Whitmore with Liberty Leg and The Hexbreakers, Dec. 31, 9pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Esperanza Spalding, Dec. 9, 7:30pm • Baroque Opera Scenes, Dec. 10-11, 8pm • Intimate At The Englert Series: The Lab Coat Collab, Dec. 15, 9pm • Festival Of Carols, Dec. 16, 7pm •

Firewater Saloon

347 South Gilbert St.

Open Mic Night, Tuesdays at 10pm

First Presbyterian Church

2701 Rochester Ave, Iowa City

Musick's Feast, Dec. 4, 7:30pm

Gabe's

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.iowacitygabes.com

Automata with TBA, Dec. 1, 9pm • Jen Gloeckner with The Wandering Bears, Dec. 2, 9:30pm • Van Ghost with Aktar Aktar, Chasing Shade, Dec. 3, 8:30pm • Salsa Vibe, Dec. 4, 10pm • The Big Strong Men with Mumford's and Utopia Park, Dec. 5, 6:30pm • "NuVibe Presents" Black Tie Affair with John Johr, Cory Simpson, Audiomatic and Jethro/DJ Uplift, Dec. 10, TBA • Unfound Fear with 20 Foot Forehead and The Poem, Dec. 11, 9:30pm • Dave Tamkin, Dec. 15, 7pm • Goodbyehome, Danika Holmes and Sheri Martin, Dec. 17, 8:30pm • Dead Larry with Insectoid and Nebula Was, Dec. 31, 9:30pm

Gus' Food & Spirits

2421 Coral Court, Coralville

www.gus-coralville.com

Soul Fusion, Dec. 4 9pm

A-List



Project Holiday

Dec. 16-17

Pepperwood Plaza

www.jccrisiscenter.org
(319) 351-2726

Sure, we hope this holiday season you find your name written on a whole bunch of amazing presents, but that's not the real secret to getting the most out of the holidays. No matter where you are in life you've got something to give, and that's what the holidays are all about.

This is the time to remember that the way we get the most out of living, as a community and as individuals, is by giving the most.

Looking for a place to start? Project Holiday seeks volunteers to help distribute holiday meal baskets on Thursday, Dec. 16 and Friday, Dec. 17 at the former Rent-All retail space, next to Slumberland in the Pepperwood Plaza, 959 Hwy 6 East in Iowa City.

The event is organized by Crisis Center of Johnson County—just one of the many initiatives taken by this organization that feels the love year round, not just in December. The Crisis Center helps people dealing with all sorts of crises and, as such, has volunteer positions waiting for individuals with all sorts of skills. Know how to cook? Know how to fix a computer? Know how to smile? Know how to listen? The good people at the Crisis Center will find the position that best suits your skills and availability. You might be just the person that somebody needs this holiday season.

Calendar

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
Study Hall, the game, Sundays, 9pm-Midnight
Open Mic with J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up

Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays

University of Iowa—Jazz Performances, Dec. 2, 7pm • Pieta Brown with The Vagabonds, Dec. 4, 8pm • Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Dec. 8, 7pm • Jazz After Five, Dec. 10, 5:30pm • S. Carey with White Hinterland, Dec. 10 • Pieta Brown with Alexis Stevens, Dec. 11, 8pm • Todd Barry, Dec. 12 • Jazz After Five Featuring the Eric Thompson Trio, Dec. 17, 5:30pm • High and Lonesome, Dec. 17 • Dave Moore with Gilded Bats and New Broom, Dec. 18, 5pm • Dave Zollo with The G!itched!, Dec. 31

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

See website for locations

Piano Sundays, Showcase I, Dec. 5

Orchestra Iowa

www.orchestraiowa.org

See website for times and locations

Celebration of Carols, Dec. 4-5 • Follidays, Dec. 18-20

Performing Arts at Iowa

performingarts.uiowa.edu

See website for times and locations

University Choir and Orchestra; Timothy Stalter, Conductor, Dec. 1 • Graduate Directors Festival Presents One Act Plays of Tennessee Williams, Dec. 2-4 • Anthony Arnone, cello, Dec. 3 • Iowa Percussion Fall Concert, Dan Moore, director, Dec. 4 • Center for New Music, Composer's Workshop, David Gompper, director, Dec. 4 • UI Chamber and All-University String Orchestras, William LaRue Jones, conductor, Dec. 5 • Center for New Music, David Gompper, director, Dec. 5 • Jazz Repertory Ensemble, Brent Sandy, director, Dec. 6 • Steel Band II and III, Dec. 7 • University and Concert Bands, Mark Heidel, director, Dec. 8 • Combo Jazz Festival, Dec. 10-11 • UI Martha-Ellen Tye Opera Theater, Dec. 10-11 • David Nelson Memorial Concert, Dec. 11 • Iowa Percussion Semi-Annual Last Chance Concert, Dan Moore, director, Dec. 12 • Esh Piano Trio: Hannah Holman, cello; Susanna Klein, violin; Esther Wang, piano, Dec. 12

Public Space One

129 E. Washington St., Iowa City
publicspaceone.wordpress.com/

See website for times and locations

Tyler Luetkehans: 5-D Mindfunk, Dec. 7, 7:30pm

Englert

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The Nutcracker



December 3-5
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& a Live Orchestra



Festival of Carols

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Free Family Event

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Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
 Crystal Gayle, Dec. 10, 8pm

The Wherehouse

www.myspace.com/whitelightningic
 Check website for events TBA

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City
www.iowacityyachtclub.org
 Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
 The Ragbirds with Smokin' Joe Scarpellino & Friends, Dec. 1 • David Zollo & The Body Electric with Shannon McNally and The Hot Sauce, Dec. 3, 7pm • Heatbox with David Bess, Dec. 4 • Spankalicous, Dec. 9, 10pm • Big Funk Guarantee with Adobanga, Dec. 10 • Dead Larry with I Like You and Dustin Thomas, Dec. 11 • Item 9 & The Mad Hatters with Mad Monks, Dec. 16, 10pm • Gglitch'd with Chasing Shade, Dec. 17 • Bermuda Report with Blue Martian Tribe, Dec. 18 • Public Property with OSG, Dec. 31

THEATER/DANCE/PERFORMANCE

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
 The Nutcracker, Dec. 3-5

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu
 See website for temporary locations
 All times at 7:30pm unless otherwise noted
 Fiddler on the Roof, Dec. 1 • Leahy Family Christmas, Dec. 4 • Esperanza Spalding, Dec. 9

Iowa Theater Artists Company

www.iowatheatreartists.org
 4709 220th Trail, Amana
 Playing Doctor, Nov. 12 thru Dec. 5 • Making' Merry...Songs and Stories of the Season, Dec. 10-12 •

Old Capitol City Roller Girls

Coralville Marriott
www.oldcapitolcityrollergirls.com
 Check website for times and locations
 What a Load of Craft Sale, Dec. 11

Penguin's Comedy Club

Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguinscomedyclub.com
 Check website for showtimes and locations
 Gabriel Rutledge, Dec. 3-4 • Henry Phillips, Dec. 9 • Carl LaBove, Dec. 10-11 • Pat Dixon, Dec. 17-18 • Kristi McHugh, Dec. 23 • Dr. Jim Wand, Dec. 31

Performing Arts at Iowa

performingarts.uiowa.edu
 See website for times and locations
 Dance Department Collaborative Performance, Dec. 2-4 • Graduate / Undergraduate Concert, UI Dance Department, Dec. 9-11 • Graduate Directors Festival presents WASP and Alice in Wonderland, Dec. 9-11 • Dance Forum/UI Youth Ballet Winter Concert, Dec. 18

Theatre Cedar Rapids

4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.theatreocr.org
 White Christmas, Nov. 26 thru Dec. 18

WORDS

Eastern Iowa Comic Book Convention

Travelodge
 2216 N. Dodge St., Iowa City
 Comic book convention, Dec. 6, 10am-4pm

Prairie Lights

15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
www.prairielights.com
 Readings are at 7pm unless otherwise noted
 Cole Swensen and Sarah Riggs, Dec. 1 • Rebecca Johns, Dec. 3 • Claudia McGehee, Dec. 4, 12pm • Nora Titone, Dec. 7 • Zachary Michael Jack, Dec. 8

CINEMA

Bijou Theatre

IMU, UI Campus, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~bijou
 Blue, Dec. 1 • Red Red Red, Dec. 1 • You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger, Dec. 3-9 • House, Dec. 3-9 • The Godfather, Dec. 3-4 • Chekhov for Children, Dec. 12-14 • Goodfellas, Dec. 10-11

Figge Art Museum

225 West Second Street, Davenport
www.figgeart.org
 Rock Island Trail, Dec. 2, 7pm

Seamans Center

Capitol Street, Iowa City, IA
 Top Secret Rosies w filmmaker Q&A, Dec. 6, 6:30pm

KIDS

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids
www.crma.org
 See website for location details
 Doodlebugs Preschool Program at the Cedar Rapids Public Library: Czech This Out!, Dec. 3, 10:30am • SmArties, Dec. 4, 1pm • Parents' Night Out, Dec. 16, 4pm • Parents' Day Out, Dec. 18, 12pm

Figge Art Museum

225 West Second Street, Davenport
www.figgeart.org
 Gingerbread House Family Workshop, Dec. 2, 6pm

Iowa City Public Library

123 South Linn St. Iowa City
www.icpl.org
 Storytime at 10:30 Mon-Sat, 2pm Sun

MISC

Amana Heritage Museum

www.amanaheritage.org
 705 44th Ave, Village of Amana
 A Glimpse of Amana's Christmas Past, Dec. 3, 4

Brucemore

2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids
www.brucemore.org
 Check website for times
 Holiday Mansion Tours, Nov. 26 thru Dec. 31 • A Douglas Family Christmas, Dec. 1-2, 8-9, 15-16

Gabe's

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.iowacitygabes.com
 Rock N' Roll Chili Cookoff, Dec. 12, TBA

Green Drinks

See website for location
www.greendrinks.org/IA/IowaCity
 Informal gathering every second Thursday of the month
 Environmental Issues Discussion, Dec. 9, 5:30pm

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
 Taste of Home Cooking School, Dec. 1

What a Load of Craft

Johnson County Fairgrounds, Building C
 4261 Oak Crest Hill Road SE in Iowa City
 Countless Vendors, Craft Death Matches and Music by Pennyhawk, Skye Carrasco, Lipstick Homicide, Awful Purdies, Samuel Locke Ward and Elliott Whitmore

Curses, Foiled Again

- When Walter Allen Jr. bought two Bentleys from a Houston car dealership for \$458,000, he paid by signing over a \$500,000 check issued by the Federal Reserve Bank. Managers at the dealership became suspicious because the Federal Reserve Bank usually uses wire transfers, not checks. They asked Allen to return later to pick up his cars, then alerted police, who confirmed the check was a fake and were waiting for Allen when he returned. (*Houston Chronicle*)
- A man who was robbed at gunpoint outside a Subway store in Homestead, Pa., flagged down police and told them he recognized the suspect as having applied for a job at the Subway right before the robbery. "We checked with Subway, and they did have an application," Homestead Police Chief J.A. DeSimone said. Using information from the form, police arrested Kris Johnson, 18. (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, WTAE-TV)

Slightest Provocation

Massachusetts authorities concluded that Joseph Cummings, 51, killed his pregnant girlfriend, her sister and then himself during an argument over the last name of the baby that the girlfriend, Kimberly Nguyen, 35, was carrying. "She wanted to hyphenate the name," said Steve O'Connell of the Essex district attorney's office, "and he did not." (*Boston Globe*)

Back to Paper-or-Plastic

Officials for Publix, a supermarket chain in the Southeast, said they would ask suppliers of their reusable grocery bags to lower the lead content after The Tampa Tribune found elevated levels of the toxin in bags it tested. The Florida newspaper reported that some of the bags had enough lead that they would be considered hazardous waste if residents put them in their household trash. (*The Tampa Tribune*)

Taking the Plunge

- When a tractor-trailer caught fire after pulling over at a bridge on Interstate 65 in Hoover, Ala., the driver of a vehicle going the other way stopped to check on the truck driver. The good Samaritan jumped over a retaining wall but fell to his death. Police Capt. Jim Coker pointed out that a paramedic died at least 20 years before in the same spot when he leaped over the retaining wall to check on an accident victim and fell to his death. (*The Birmingham News*)
- Sharon R. Glover, 55, was riding in a motor home traveling on Interstate 10 near Defuniak Springs, Fla., when she walked to the rear of the vehicle to use the restroom. She was seri-

ously injured after she opened a door, fell out and slid 100 feet on the paved emergency lane before hitting the grass shoulder, according to the Florida Highway Patrol, which reported, "It is unknown if the passenger opened the wrong door or leaned on the door." (*Northwest Florida Daily News*)

Above Suspicion

The Baltimore City Health Department issued its first environmental citation for repeat violation of the city's trans fat ban. The offender was a restaurant named Healthy Choice. (WBAL-TV)

Right Under Their Noses

Deputies investigating a possible break-in at a museum in Hillsboro, Ore., stumbled on their suspect when a search dog followed the scent from a large hole in the wall of the Rice Northwest Museum of Rocks and Minerals for about half a mile and became "very interested in a particular piece of ground," Washington County sheriff's Sgt. Gregory Thompson said. "The dog then bit the ground that in turn cried out in pain." The dog's handler realized Gregory Liascos, 36, was hiding at his feet, dressed head to toe in a moss-like camouflage outfit, known as a ghillie suit. (*Associated Press*)



Hug Those Trees

Crime occurs less in neighborhoods with big trees and more at homes with small ones, according to a U.S. Forest Service study using crime data from Portland, Ore. Forester Geoffrey Donovan explained that large trees might signal to crooks that a neighborhood is well cared for, making it more likely that criminals will be caught, whereas small trees can provide hiding places for criminals and obstruct their illicit activities. (*Associated Press*)

First Things First

- Miguel Soto III, 25, was leaving a deli in New Haven, Conn., after buying a sandwich, when two men shot him in the leg and groin. The victim told police he went home and ate his

sandwich before asking his father for a ride to the hospital to have his wounds treated. (*The New Haven Register*)

- Detroit police reported that before two men attacked and robbed an 85-year-old woman who hired them to rake her leaves, they first raked the victim's entire front yard, neatly bagged the leaves and put them on the curb. (WDIV-TV)

Fat-Cat Justice

Facing felony charges after striking a bicyclist from behind with his 2010 Mercedes Benz sedan in Eagle, Colo., and then speeding away, Martin Joel Erzinger, 52, had the charges reduced to misdemeanor traffic violations. Court records indicate Erzinger drove some distance after running down the cyclist before stopping at a parking lot, where he called the Mercedes auto assistance service to report damage to his vehicle and request a tow. He did not notify the police about the cyclist, who was seriously injured. Erzinger is a financial manager for "ultra high net worth individuals, their families and foundations," according to his biography, and would have to publicly disclose felony charges. "Felony convictions have some pretty serious job implications for someone in Mr. Erzinger's profession, and that entered into it," District Attorney Mark Hurlbert said of the reduced charges, noting that Erzinger is willing to pay restitution. "When you're talking about restitution, you don't want to take away his ability to pay." (*Vail Daily*)

Queue Clues

The average British adult can tolerate waiting in line only 10 minutes and 42 seconds before becoming upset, according to an online survey by Britain's Payments Council. Respondents over age 55 became impatient more than three minutes before younger people, but those under 35 were more likely to take out their frustrations on those around them. Supermarket lines topped the list of hated waits, followed by post-office lines and airport check-in and security lines. Two-thirds of the respondents said the most irritating part of lines is people in front of them who dawdle. (*Reuters*)

Don't Tread on Me

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmon announced plans to build the world's tallest flagpole. Scheduled for completion in March, the 541-foot pole will be located in Dushanbe, the capital. The current tallest flagpole, 531 feet, is in Azerbaijan. (*Associated Press*)

Compiled from the nation's press by Roland Sweet.
Authentication on demand.

Thermostat Wars

Which scenario uses less energy in home heating, and thus saves more money: (a) before going to bed, turning the thermostat down from 68 degrees Fahrenheit to 60, then turning it up again in the morning, or (b) leaving it at 68 all night? (Assume the outside temperature rises to 45 in the day and drops to 25 at night.) I always believed (a) would use less energy, but people tell me that (b) uses less, because reheating the house to 68 in the morning uses more energy than keeping it at that temperature all night. This doesn't make sense to me, but I defer to your wisdom.

—Bill Morrison, Ladysmith, B.C.

Ah, yes—Ladysmith, B.C., justly famous as the birthplace of Pamela Anderson. Pam left long ago, of course, evidently repelled by her countrymen's inadequate understanding of efficient furnace operation. Thanks to you, Bill, she won't need to stay away much longer. The blue flame of enlightenment is about to ignite.

Lowering your thermostat during times when you need heat less (e.g., when you're asleep or out of the house) is called thermostat setback; the equivalent practice in summertime is thermostat setup. In theory, thermostat setback and setup will almost always save energy, based on the following simple principle of heat transfer: the rate of heat loss (or gain) is primarily a function of the difference in temperature between two objects, such as your house and the surrounding air. In the winter, the colder your house is allowed to get, the slower it loses heat. Although your heater may run for a while during the recovery period when it's bringing the house back up to temperature, you still use less energy than you would keeping the house at a constant temperature around the clock.

A lot of people, not just in Ladysmith, don't get this—in fact they're baffled by the entire subject of thermostats. One researcher estimated in 1986 that as much as half the populace subscribes to what he called “valve theory,” namely the belief that the thermostat functions like a gas pedal: the higher you set

it, the hotter your furnace runs. In reality, most furnaces pump out heat at the same rate regardless of the setting; they just cycle on and off as needed to keep the house at whatever temp the thermostat dictates.

Failing to grasp the subtleties of home heating can be expensive. At one time the U.S. Department of Energy was urging Americans to install programmable thermostats, which can be set to automatically turn the heat down when it's not needed. These devices were thought to generate savings of 10 to 30 percent, and close to half of U.S. homes now have them. In 2006, though, the DOE stopped pushing the thermostats, which aren't cheap, after multiple studies showed the actual savings was zero—not

programmable thermostat in her house, aggressively dialed back the nighttime setting for winter, then tracked her energy use for three years, using data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to correct for outdoor temperature differences before and after installation. Result: she saved about 28 percent on her winter gas bill, enough to recover the thermostat's \$120 cost in three months.

Granted, Una's situation was unusual:

- Her preferred wintertime thermostat setting had long been a toasty 76.
- She set the overnight temperature on the new thermostat all the way down to 50.
- Her house is older, with poor windows and Eisenhower-era insulation, and may fairly be described as an energy sieve.

(Since a well-insulated house loses less heat to start with, any savings due to setting back the thermostat are likely to be modest.)

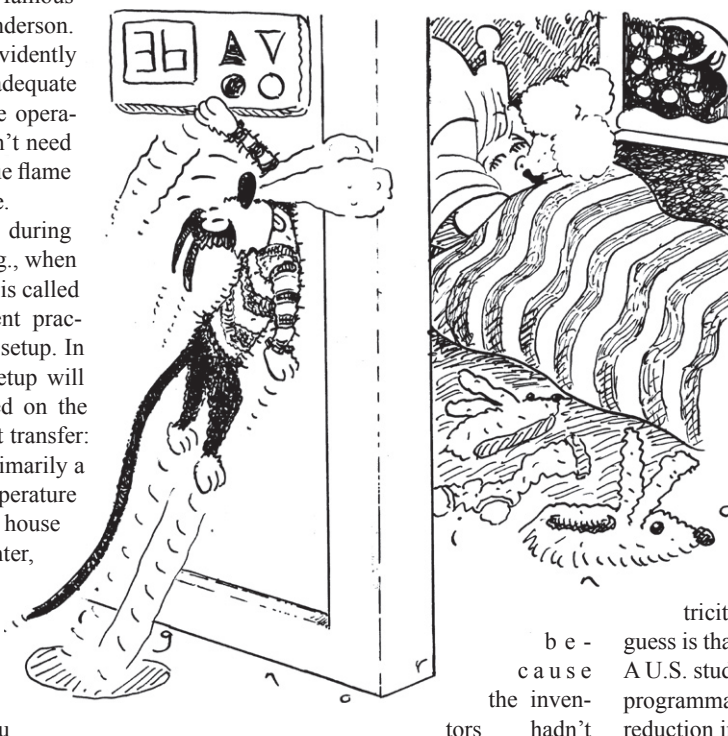
What kind of savings are more typical? Tough call due to wide variation in houses, heating systems, climate, and energy costs. One rule of thumb is that each degree Fahrenheit you set the thermostat back over an eight-hour period translates to a 1 percent savings in heating costs. A study of two identical Canadian test houses showed an 11-degree setback overnight and during work hours generated a 13 percent savings in gas and a 2 percent savings in elec-

tricity (the furnace blower ran less). My guess is that's better than most people will get. A U.S. study of 2,658 gas-heated homes using programmable thermostats found a 6 percent reduction in energy use.

Still, you ought to see some savings. If not, various confounding factors could be in play, one of which may be that you're a knucklehead. You won't know till you try. Good luck.

—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. And now you can subscribe to the Straight Dope podcast—search for “straight dope” in the iTunes Store.



understood the laws of physics, but because consumers didn't use the things right. They couldn't figure out how to program the thermostats, didn't believe they'd work and so didn't bother, set the temperature higher during the day and thereby canceled out the savings from the setback at night, and so on.

Used correctly, however, programmable thermostats indisputably work, and so does setting back the thermostat manually, provided you do it systematically. My indefatigable assistant Una conducted a long-term research project in which she installed a pro-

ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR DECEMBER 2010

FOR EVERYONE—Put your cards on the table. There are major, inevitable, irreversible changes in the works and December brings them closer to reality. However, December will also bring a major, all but irresolvable standoff over these impending changes. At the same time, progress will stall out amidst epic levels of miscommunication and misinformation. We'll go from a traffic jam with everyone sitting quietly in their cars, to a traffic jam with everybody honking their horns and yelling. But we can't safely sit this one out. As nerve-wracking and frustrating as the whole thing is likely to be, the planets want us step up and say our piece. The benefit of participating in this strenuous process, even a little, will be far greater than we might have anticipated.

♈ ARIES—Don't commit. You wanted progress, but not this way. Too many things are trying to happen at once, each with maximum passion and minimum thought behind it. It will be hard to control your involvement because you share the enthusiasm, on the one hand, and everyone seems to want you on their team, on the other. But there are enough loose ends and unresolved issues to cause a train wreck. If in doubt, play for time. Issues will soon become clearer and luck will soon come over to your side.

♉ TAURUS—Ride the brakes. If Taureans are not extremely careful they could find themselves on the fast track to nowhere good. Things could hardly seem rosier or more tempting on the *surface.* But just underneath, just about every situation you see is seething with serious complications and pitfalls. If you decide to pursue an opportunity, choose very, very carefully and proceed with due caution. Your best bet is to move slowly enough for the difficulties to show themselves, no matter how often, or how hard, others push for more speed.

♊ GEMINI—Look deeper. The emphasis in December is on Gemini's work and professional life, including your many work relationships. December's signals are very mixed. There are many exciting rumors and, on the surface at least, the tone is optimistic and friendly. Deeper down, though, there are harsher currents. Some are quite willing to play hard ball. And some stubborn obstacles await further down the road. Keep lines of communication open with all concerned. Long-awaited decisions and unexpected events will clear the road ahead. Luck and coincidence will soon start aiding your cause.

♋ CANCER—Turning point. Significant changes are coming to Cancer's life, finally. You've worked toward many of these changes and half-expected others. Many will contribute to long-term goals you and others are working hard toward. Most noticeably, some familiar and important faces will be replaced by new ones. You'll find yourself working for people who are more generous and supportive. Some personal changes you've been cultivating quietly will become part of your public image. Budgets will tighten noticeably as you and others cope with the costs of complicated transitions in tough times.

♌ LEO—Balance. Conditions on the job might seem too uncertain, complex and out of your control for you to be involved. But delving into certain issues could be what you need to do, to a point. Take care of yourself. Work demands are high and risks to health could be greater than you think, especially since you are inclined to overexert. A little empathy is required for those feeling the impact of events more strongly than you are. Soon, unexpected events will simplify your choices and your luck will improve, generally.

♍ VIRGO—Stay involved. Many of the key players in your life are involved in a stubborn standoff. Some seem willing to force an outcome. Tempers could flare. Great exertions could be required. The issues won't be easily or quickly resolved and ignoring the issues is not an option. The path forward in your life leads right through the heart of this standoff. However, even small agreements could bring gratifying progress. The simple act of participating in negotiations will have a positive, synergistic effect on your affairs. Meanwhile, don't neglect routine chores.

♎ LIBRA—Be Libran. December's events are too intense, complicated, and sweeping to avoid. And it's all just getting started. Active involvement in resolving these issues, challenging as they are, will be surprisingly rewarding. And simply remaining balanced, reasonable and diplomatic - being your Libran self - will be helpful to all. Still, working through these potentially life-changing issues will take time, patience and determination. Long-expected changes at home will soon simplify your choices. Partners are beginning a new cycle of growth and expansion, and they are in the mood for change.

♏ SCORPIO—Progress plus confusion. Important things that have been missing in your life will return, especially in the area of community activity. Other dramatic changes are unfolding quickly in your immediate neighborhood. More new policies and programs will soon affect health and work related areas in a good way. Even more new changes are being proposed. They might or might not happen and plans are still evolving. Reliable information is hard to find. Prepare for high emotions and confusion as people react, and overreact. You will soon begin a spiritual renaissance.

♐ SAGITTARIUS—Promote optimism. You see a growing number and variety of opportunities. Others see forbidding complexities, obstacles and hard work. They might have a point, actually. But you need to keep the challenges from causing pessimism strong enough to dishearten everyone, on the one hand, and frustration severe enough to cause conflict, on the other. This is true for Sagittarians in general this month. But it's also personal. Your livelihood could depend on defeating pessimism and keeping others focused on the opportunities despite all the complexities and hard work that's needed.

♑ CAPRICORN—Discipline. They say if you can't take the heat, stay out of the kitchen. But Capricorn can't leave the kitchen. You'll have to tolerate the heat. You're stuck in the middle of everything. Interpersonal friction is intense as people cope with uncomfortable adjustments. Confusion is high. Lines of communication are under strain. Be on your best behavior. Gently insist that others be on theirs. This is just getting started. It might seem like you are demanding too much of others. However, meeting these challenges will bring widespread and unforeseen benefits.

♒ AQUARIUS—Bittersweet. Thoughts of unfinished healing, unresolved relationship issues, or responsibilities you might have neglected, could burden your mind. Don't be discouraged. This fog of worry will soon lift. Also, the coming year brings a remarkable mix of challenges and opportunities. As you meet these challenges and explore the opportunities, you can make up for past mistakes, and avoid repeating them. Also, resolving these old issues will have a surprisingly beneficial effect, beyond what you might anticipate. It will help you release potential that you might have given up for lost.

♓ PISCES—Step by step. You're starting a new cycle of growth and prosperity. Your charisma is due for a big boost, also. But given what's going on in your life and the world, forging a workable lifestyle will still be a challenge. Don't underestimate the complexity or the importance of this task. Extra time and effort spent sorting through a mix of challenges, opportunities and unknowns will pay surprising dividends, now and later. Unexpected events will soon simplify your choices and smooth your path. Don't depend too much on borrowed money.

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