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So what if it’s Cold?

Usually by this time of year, I’m ready for summer again. I hate the layers I roll my body in to keep warm. I hate the ice that does everything it can to make me slip and fall. I hate the mounds of slop that I walk through to go about my day.

No, winter isn’t exactly my favorite time of the year. However, during one of the more recent snowstorms, I actually stopped to enjoy it. As big, fluffy snowflakes fell into a blanket over our fair city, I flew down a hill on a piece of plastic.

My recent jaunt with a sled led me to look at the activity with a little more interest. Now I may not be in the best of shape, but going up and down that hill got my heart pumping, and my mind thinking back to the days of my childhood.

Kids sure seem to have the right idea when it comes to physical activity. Kids play. They enjoy themselves, and they burn off their lunches at the same time. If we took a hint from our childhoods, maybe we could find the path to better health.

We may not have the endless amounts of energy that kids do, but we can still take time out of our days to do something fun that we enjoy. Running doesn’t thrill everyone. Too ofter people feel limited by their fitness choices. But there are many other options out there for those people who just can’t do that whole jogging thing. But why not take a lesson from childhood and play for fitness?

Sledding

Do what I did and hit those snowy hills for some good old-fashioned fun. Remember how exciting it used to be to go sledding when school was canceled? Charging down the hill backward, forward, standing, or with friends always made for an exciting and fun endeavor. While climbing up to the top of the hill now can be more tiring than when you were younger, you still get to slide back down! Bring some friends along and make it an event. You can race each other down the slope and then back up.

Playing Catch (or a kid)

I’m personally a fan of playing with the dog, especially since I don’t know too many toddlers. I like taking my Border Collie into the backyard with two Frisbees. I’ll throw one in one direction and then chase her until I

Here are how many calories you would burn doing these activities for 30 minutes. Counts are based on the average weight of the American female (160 lbs) and the average American male (190 lbs) according to the Center for Disease Control. Calorie counts obtained from WebMD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sledding</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing w/ kids or dogs</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Catch</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Skating</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whether you get your groove on out at the bars, or you partake in a dance-inspired fitness class, don’t hold back. Dancing is a great workout. If you don’t want to go out or don’t feel like dancing in front of others, just rock out hardcore in front of the mirror at home—pretend you’re the next big thing and jump around. Maybe even sing at the top of your lungs?

Childhood Sports

Playing catch is a timeless American tradition. Some people get really good at it and do it professionally now. But for the rest of us, we can still love that same game we did growing up. Want to get moving? Try to really get into a game of ping-pong or bowling. If you want less downtime, go ice skating out in the frozen ponds in City Park, or burn some extra calories and shovel your own rink at Coralville’s North Ridge Pavilion.

While the workout may not be as strenuous and hardcore as running, there are plenty of activities out there that can still get you moving if you do them right. Just keep fitness in mind and shake it.

As big, fluffy snowflakes fell into a blanket over our fair city, I flew down a hill on a piece of plastic.

Kelly Ostrem is Little Village’s editorial intern and Live Healthy Iowa team captain. Her biggest 100-day challenge will be to prevent Little Village’s lethargy-loving managing editor, Melody Dvorak, from staying home and watching Hulu.
No more agribusiness as usual

ike so many, I have very high hopes for the new administration. I expect a new deal that looks to new frontiers, offering us a great society with a chicken in every pot in a shining city on a hill. And did I mention I want it now?

Also like so many, I like President Obama “except...” Seems as though folks find him to be at or near perfect were it not for their one pet issue, and so it is with me. While it is true that he is the first presidential candidate in decades to even say the word “food” during a campaign, he also played stereotypical politician in appointing Tom Vilsack to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A). This appointment may have been pragmatic, but it was also flagrant payback for our former governor dropping out of the race early, forcing Senator Clinton to compete in Iowa and thus creating an opening for the superior ground game of the Obama campaign. It was also a huge setback for a local food movement that is finally gathering steam.

Now it is true that now-Secretary Vilsack presided over a massive expansion of farmers markets as Governor of Iowa. He also signed legislation making it illegal for local and county governments to have any say whatsoever in regards to the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in their areas. His campaigns were largely financed by major corporate ag donors, and he has been deep in their hip pocket for years.

But a friend of mine in Clear Lake may have found a work-around. Dave Murphy made national news during the transition by organizing a (mostly) successful online petition drive to persuade then-President-Elect Obama to appoint one of six proposed “sustainable” choices for SecAg – Iowans Neil Hamilton, Denise O’Brien and Fred Kirschenmann among them. As I said, Vilsack got the nod anyway, but the overnight success of the petition drive, in terms of attracting tens of thousands of signatures, did not go unnoticed.

Now Murphy has turned his attention to the undersecretary positions at his new website FoodDemocracyNow.org, where he has expanded his list to what he calls “The Sustainable Dozen.” At press time, he has attracted more than 83,000 signatures, and counting. The Undersecretariats are where the real work gets done, and so anyone with designs on reforming the food system should be keenly aware of what goes on there. If Secretary Vilsack makes these calls from his position inside Cargill’s Carharts, then we can expect agribusiness as usual from the U.S.D.A.

Obama played stereotypical politician in appointing Tom Vilsack to head the U.S.D.A.

The Sustainable DOZEN

FoodDemocracyNow.org’s candidates for Under Secretaries at the USDA

Gus Schumacher, former Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services at the U.S.D.A. Boston, MA.

Chuck Hassebrook, Executive Director, Center for Rural Affairs. Lyons, NE.

Sarah Vogel, former two-term Commissioner of Agriculture for the State of North Dakota. Bismarck, ND.

Fred Kirschenmann, organic farmer; Distinguished Fellow, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Pocantico Hills, NY.

Mark Ritchie, current Minnesota Secretary of State. Minneapolis, MN.

Neil Hamilton, Dwight D. Opperman Chair of Law, Professor of Law and Director, Agricultural Law Center, Drake University. Des Moines, IA.

Doug O’Brien, current Assistant Director at Ohio Department of Agriculture. Reynoldsburg, OH.

James Riddle, organic farmer; founding chair of the International Organic Inspectors Association. Winona, MN.

Kathleen Merrigan, Director of the Center on Agriculture, Food and the Environment, Tufts University. Boston, MA.

Denise O’Brien, organic farmer; founder of Women, Food, and Agriculture Network. Atlantic, IA.

Ralph Paige, Executive Director, Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund. East Point, GA.

Karen Ross, President of the California Winegrape Growers Association; Executive Director of the Winegrape Growers of America. Sacramento, CA.
"The/That One" is finally in the Big Chair! Hallelujah! I am proud of the presidency once again.

Last month, however, I wrote about how, despite my enthusiasm for our new president, Obama would not adequately address the fundamental needs of our economy and our lives on this planet. For me—and several other thinkers whom I cited last time—relocalization of our economy can be the "one true path," if there is one, to living a sustainable life in resilient communities. I would like to follow up on those ideas by briefly discussing a couple of other essential concepts that not only will make a relocalized economy practical, but also fulfilling and even uplifting.

Although the locavore-oriented economy does harken back to older times, its fundamentals, in need not be a "primitive" life.

cal, but also fulfilling and even uplifting. Often when the subject of a relocalized economy comes up, people have visions of isolation and deprivation. Although the local-

Can money buy happiness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S. Median Income in Today's Dollars</th>
<th>U.S. Happiness on a Scale from 1-10</th>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>$19,074</td>
<td>7.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$29,943</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$48,201</td>
<td>7.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, World Database of Happiness, Ruut Veenhoven, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Building an economy of abundance

McKibben demonstrates that wealth leads to happiness only up to a certain point before satisfaction declines.

Can money buy happiness? Although the locavore-oriented economy does harken back to older times in its fundamentals, it need not be a "primitive" life with no joy, no luxury, no sophistication, and no culture. In fact, quite the opposite can be true. But a reoriented mindset is necessary.

Let’s start with the concept of “enough.” As discussed last month, the global economy and the current definitions of success depend on perpetual material growth. As Bill McKibben clearly articulates in Deep Economy, which I also cited last time, perpetual economic and material growth is simply impossible. It can only outstrip societies’ and the planet’s carrying capacity. And, as detailed last time, McKibben demonstrates that wealth leads to happiness only up to a certain point anyway before satisfaction declines.

So, first, we’ve got to accept “enough” as a legitimate concept. If we have enough to provide a roof over our heads, good food on our table, and personal and social fulfillment, why do we need more? Some might argue that stagnation might ensue, but that need not be. Can’t we define “growth” in ways not dependent on material gain? The deepening of our relationships with our families, community members, spirituality, and natural world? The widening of our sharing of local arts and culture? The increased quality of what we make and do for our vocations? None of these necessarily require more money or possessions. Being satisfied with the riches we have right around us makes relocalization possible.

Some may still see “enough” as a concept that merely settles for the minimum. So I suggest we go one step better in the concept. We need to see “enough” as “abundance.”

It may seem counter-intuitive, but our current system of endless growth and material wealth is really an economy of scarcity. Partly that means we have an endless material desire that is never satisfied. But in our capitalist system, we also seek to make goods and services scarce enough for optimal profit. If supply completely meets demand, value plummets. And once demand is met adequately, it must be replaced by a new demand—newer, and more, and scarcer stuff. As Wendell Berry has said, “The industrial economy’s most-market-ed commodity is satisfaction, and…this commod-
family, community, and culture.

Now, of course, I’m not suggesting that we all must become hunter-gatherers. But we could learn a lot from the attitudes and practices of a culture of abundance. When we scale back our material desires and forsake the (arbitrary) value of perpetual growth, our locality can become a place that provides generously for all of our needs. We can exchange the treadmill of upward mobility for the deeper pleasures of home, community, and place. A relocalized economy can work extraordinarily well as an economy of abundance.

Some might argue that our upward mobility, our economy of scarcity, and our globalized competitiveness have led to the most remarkable innovations and advancements that human ingenuity and potential can muster. And, from many perspectives, they’d be right. But, as with everything in life, we must look at all the consequences of our actions, not just the positive ones. We must decide when the disadvantages of the way we live outweigh the advantages and re-strike the balance. That’s not a crazy idea. In fact, at its foundation are basic economic principles familiar to all—we’re really talking about cost-benefit analyses and points of diminishing returns. But in this context we’re expanding those principles beyond mere dollars and cents. We should hardly make all of our cultural decisions based on such a narrow category as the perpetual growth of material wealth. The collapsing global economy is now showing us the folly of such limited thinking.

A relocalized economy will no doubt provide us with fewer consumer goods and a simpler material lifestyle. But those goods, as well as the services we provide each other, will be of higher quality and will build community as we share and trade with each other. We will also provide ourselves the time and attention to build a culture of shared care and concern, of shared learning, and shared cultural expression. Now that’s an economy of abundance that is more than enough for me.

Thomas Dean took a few hours off from work to watch the Inauguration of the 44th President of the United States of America.

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A scaled-back economy, an economy of “enough,” is actually an economy of abundance.

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February 2009 | Little Village
Brian Eno and David Byrne’s My Life in the Bush of Ghosts, released in 1981, is a seminal album frequently cited as one of the first to popularize so-called “world music” (we can forget their recent 2008 reunion, Everything That Happens Will Happen Today, a lightly melodic though inconsequential and traditional record). On their classic early-1980s collage collaboration, Talking Heads frontman David Byrne and pop experimentalist (and soon to be U2 producer) Brian Eno appropriated a plethora of voices from around the globe. The voices included a Lebanese mountain singer, an Egyptian pop singer, firebrand preachers recorded off the radio, and several other “exotic” voices. Even though the album didn’t have a massive impact—in terms of chart success—it nevertheless influenced a wide range of musicians, including DJ Spooky, who tells me, “Probably my favorite album, looking at early sampling, is My Life in the Bush of Ghosts.”

Years before the copyright wars began, not to mention the rise of the Islam-West conflicts, this album waded knee-deep into those emerging issues, and didn’t look back. In my interview with David Byrne, he tells me why the two of them used so many “found” voices on that record.

“I seem to recall we fell into it as a unifying thread for that record,” Byrne tells us. “We certainly weren’t the first people to use ‘found’ voices in music.” He continues, expanding on this in his typically brainy, conceptual style.

“I believe we did maybe one or two songs that used voices and soon realized that by using varying sources and treatments we could make that the unifying factor for the whole record. It also relieved us of the burden of dealing with who would sing any particular song, as we both sing. By avoiding that issue we created

The title of the album is taken from the 1954 book of the same name by Nigerian author Amos Tutuola. The book (which neither Eno or Byrne had read when they started the album) is a folk tale about a bush so dense that civilization couldn’t penetrate it. A young boy enters the bush, discovering towns filled with ghosts. The sadness of the bush is so overwhelming that the boy can no longer sing the songs of his native earth.
another one—as listeners often presume that whoever is singing is, if not the author, then at least the “voice” of a particular song, because the singer (or author) is conveying his or her feelings by singing. In this case, those ways of listening and of authorship were upended."

In the case of their song “Qu’ran”—which featured Algerian Muslims chanting passages from the Koran—they ran into problems. Byrne told the hipster music website Pitchfork, “Way back when the record first came out, in 1981, it might have been ’82, we got a request from an Islamic organization in London, and they said, ‘We consider this blasphemy that you put grooves to the chanting of the Holy Book.’ And we thought, ‘Okay, in deference to somebody’s religion, we’ll take it off.’

Byrne expands on this story. “This was all pre-bombings and the rise of global jihad, at least as far as we knew,” he tells me. “When a fundamentalist Islamic organization in London said they found the use of the chanting of the holy book over a music track to be offensive—prayer chanting is not considered music—we immediately replaced the track on subsequent pressings with one we had on the shelf. Maybe we could have argued the point, but we weren’t out to make those kinds of points or to challenge or offend someone else’s sensibilities.”

Not only were they being sensitive for religious and other reasons, they also didn’t want to be sued.

“I think we were certainly feeling very cautious about this whole thing,” Byrne tells me. “We made a big effort to try and clear all the voices, and make sure everybody was okay with everything. Because we thought, ‘We’re going to get accused of all kinds of things, and so we want to cover our asses as best we can.’”

David Byrne has been drawing from non-Western music since the late-1970s in his work with Talking Heads and solo career, and he thinks there is certainly a difference between being influenced by certain types of music and outright theft.

“Stealing is when Rod Stewart lifts the tune from a Jorge Ben tune,” Byrne says, “and doesn’t compensate Ben.” He’s referring to the fact that Rod Stewart and his co-writer on “Do Ya Think I’m Sexy” directly lifted the melody from “Taj Mahal,” a song by Brazilian music legend Jorge Ben.

Ben sued, and Stewart agreed to donate the song publishing royalties for “Do Ya Think I’m Sexy” to the United Nations Children’s Fund. Providing a contrasting example, David Byrne continues, “If I work with, say, some Latin percussionists to lay down some grooves for a tune I’ve previously written, is that stealing? I don’t think so. It’s no more theft more than playing the blues inspired licks that have been appropriated by rock bands forever.”

Of course, this sidesteps the fact that rhythm (a central component of much non-Western music) is left out of an authorship equation that favors words and melodies, not the beat. It’s a downfall of the law, one that has caused much heartbreak—even in the United States, where drummers like Clyde Stubblefield (James Brown’s funky drummer) also have no rights over the fruits of their labor.

Kembrew McLeod will spend the winter months practicing with Lynne Nugent to develop their excellent Rock Band skillz.
Afloat upon a Sea of

Niall Sylvan presides over the combined collection of The Haunted Bookshop and the former Northside Book Market, which the Haunted moved into this past January.
City of Books

Paul Sorenson

This is a story about the story of books in Iowa City, told through the words of the town’s mesh of buyers and sellers and en joys, young and old and odd. It is a long story, but in no way exhaustive, surely missing many angles and colors of this City of Literature’s romance with literature, failing completely to examine certain said must-sees—the Writers’ Workshop, Prairie Lights, other cross-referenced bookpeople who could shed hours of knowledge in a breath. It’s merely the summary on the people who could shed hours of knowledge.

Prairie Lights, other cross-referenced bookpeople said must-sees—the Writers’ Workshop, literature, failing completely to examine certain said must-sees—the Writers’ Workshop, Prairie Lights, other cross-referenced bookpeople who could shed hours of knowledge in a breath. It’s merely the summary on the people who could shed hours of knowledge.

Or this:

Nialle Sylvan, of 203 N. Linn Street, was proud to say that she was perfectly strange, thank you very much. She was the first person you’d expect to be involved in things strange and mysterious, because she always stood by such nonsense.

Mrs. Sylvan was the owner of a store called The Haunted Bookshop, which just moved. She was a tall, skinny woman hugged by a turtleneck, and peered behind very circular glasses. She had a cat who was a special kitty of God and in her opinion there was no finer kitty anywhere.

Or this:

Nerdy, spry Nialle Sylvan perched behind her desk, hearing a box of books in which a novel and cookbook lay crossed. A beige sweater, overlong, was filled warmly by the musky hardwood air. She held a volume aloft and intoned:

— A man almost killed me with a bag of tenpenny nails.

But this particular story, it begins like this:

“Everything that happens here is a bizarre coincidence. I should stipulate that at the beginning. Just be prepared.”

It’s day one of The Haunted Bookshop’s re-opening and Nialle couldn’t be more pleased. These places are perpetual holders of odds and ends, but the new location (Northside Book Market’s old) is filled with adrafty brightness around a corner on a bicycle. About 35 miles an hour. And he has a bag of tenpenny nails in his hand. The bag is here, my face is here, a door is here—I dive.”

Her hands follow her memory; after a potentially painful setup (head versus nails), a quick jerk to signal a dive. And where to?

“Into Shakespeare & Company. The man jumps off the bicycle. And I’m now going to demonstrate exactly what his man said with his precise inflections. How’s your French?”

Non-existent.

“That’s okay, because what he said was,”—Nialle now speaks like a frog on testosterone—“you want to help me build a bookshelf?” Exactly like that—because this guy is George Whitman, owner of Shakespeare & Company.”

A pretty big deal in the bookselling world. Whitman is a legend, a Massachusetts native who successfully inherited Paris’ literary oasis.

Back to Nialle:

“I must have had bibliophile written on my forehead or something, so George gets off the bicycle helps me up and I go help him build a bookshelf. I end up sleeping by the bookshelves at night, hanging out in the bookstore during the day, and George realizes I’m spending more time in his shop than any of the cute Parisian guys. So he suggests to me, and again I’m going to quote exactly, ‘Nialle, go back to the States, find a nice bookstore, and settle down.’ And I’m like, George that’s a great idea—but how would you even start?”

2. How she starts, or, a potential encounter with a ghost named Claire.

[To catch up: Nialle is back in the United States, working at The Haunted Bookshop but not yet the owner. She’s been offered the chance to buy it, fulfilling George’s implanted dream. The conflict: She doesn’t have the money.]

“This is where the ghost comes in. People are always asking me if the shop is haunted—Okay, the shop is not haunted in any sort of conventional sense, there’s no blood dripping down the walls, we do not see visions, we do not have cold spots… I had taken it entirely with a grain of salt.”

But.

“One night it gets late. I come back to the bookshop after having left pretty late because I realized I didn’t turn off the coffee pot. I’m
Like a text-spouting Pied Piper, William summoned his books—now almost 600,000 of them.

“I wake up smelling something that I shouldn’t have been able to smell in that building—it’s supposed to smell like old books, right?—I’m smelling what my great grandfather used to make for breakfast when I was a little kid. Twenty years since I smelled this. You know how, at stupid o’clock in the morning, you are maybe a little less hardline skeptical? So I wake up and I’m like, wow, this is weird, is this the ghost then? This Claire chick? And because it’s stupid o’clock in the morning—and if I’m being honest with myself about my agnosticism—I’m like, okay, so Claire, if you’re a real ghost…and I don’t know how this ghost thing works…but I like it here and I think we make a good team. So if you could swing anything to help me out with this…like, how do you even phrase this question, right? Consulting the paranormal on business advice. What am I even doing?”

And then.

“Two days later I get a letter in the mail from my grandmother’s estate. She passed away five years before, but they had trouble finding my uncle Snake who’s a Hell’s Angel. That’s a whole other story there. One thing leads to another leads to another, and the amount of money available to me as a result…guess how much?”

I’m thinking what would make a good story. The exact amount?

“Matched it down the penny. As in blah blah blah 61 cents. The paraded amount to purchase The Haunted Bookshop on September 9th, 2004. So I did.”

Animated and emphatic, Nialle relays her personal tale like a book meant to be read aloud. But as she explains, Iowa City’s literary scene is an ongoing conversation—extending well beyond her newly opened door into stores like William Ingles.

Chapter Two: Book people are good people

William Ingles, the owner of 608 S. Dubuque Street’s The Book Shop, has his own backstory and passion—though one contained quietly and refined, a wise man who shares his catalog knowledge of all-things-book through a considered sieve.

After a slight Iowa City history lesson (taken back to the 1850s, traveling from stage-coaches to railroads and finally to 1986, where he purchased the land now holding his store), William takes me to 1963. He is 11 years old and about to discover books. Choosing a downtown Des Moines bookshop over bicycles, the 45-year love affair begins.

“What really sold me on books and those who work with them, in 1963—well, November 22nd of that year was not a good day. But folks at that bookstore were so articulate about their feelings about Kennedy’s as-sassination, put things in words that I couldn’t imagine putting in words. That really made an impression on me, that book people are really good people. And thoughtful.”

Perhaps even more than Nialle, William defines an Iowa City book person. He lives it. He traveled 49 states (and Mexico and Canada) as a writer for the ’70s trucker TV series “Movin’ On,” joined a staff writing team in Los Angeles, keeps contact with book buyers national and international, yet almost always maintained a residence here. And finally once home was here, like a text-spouting Pied Piper, William summoned his books—now almost 600,000 of them.

While only 25,000 books reside in his shop (“handsome” ones that make the best wallpaper), he maintains the rest in storage. Like many Iowans, a chunk of his belongings drowned in the ’08 floods (a death toll of 200,000). He owns more books than he’ll ever live to handle, but what impresses more than sheer quantity is the caliber of his knowledge of and through them—extensive and odd, bottling it up until someone like me comes along.

Things to talk to him about:
1. How Ronald Reagan ruined the publishing (and writing) trade.
2. The delicate and precise art of the internet book market.
3. The lost goal of university life, “to learn how to enjoy your life better.”
4. Why Tom Clancy can do the same thing in a sentence that Melville did in a dozen pages.
5. Desperate housewives (the type, not the show) are often boring.
6. That folks will always decry the decline of reading, but the book shall persist.

And so forth. He’s the rare sort that would keep absorbing text and conversation forever if he could.

“One of the worst things that ever happened to me was learning—well, being told—by a junior high school librarian, as I finished reading one shelf of books and was moving onto the next shelf, telling her, ‘I’ll have everything in here read by the time I leave school!’ And she said, ‘no you won’t.’ It was big shock to me that I wouldn’t be able to read everything that’s ever been written. It wasn’t very pleasant.”

But William seems happy enough, peeking out above stacked books as we talk, a tattered gray “Old Iowa” hat on his head, cat sprawled snuggly on his chest. A perennial good neighbor with an answer and often a helping hand. William tells this story:

“I remember a group of high school students who stumbled across our gay area. We
and more, and more, and more

The start of another chapter: Tom Walz only stops to talk during what must be his lunch break—after hours coordinating an assortment of loose ends and people. Being the heart and hands of Uptown Bill’s Small Mall, Tom is a true social worker. Books, to him, are just as beloved as to the Nialles of the world, but take on functions more therapeutic and charitable. Uptown Bill’s and its used bookshop is the core of a nine-business web serving people with disabilities—and having recently launched their own publishing label, Sackter House Media Productions, with plans to engage the UI undergraduate writing program and a cast of characters begging to tell their stories, books will always remain crucial to the store’s mission.

Or another: Gregory Delzer is the newbie in town, opening his Defunct Books in June 2007 after moving from Spokane, Washington, to our Midwest oasis. He’s more businesslike and formal than the other bookshop owners, less glowing with book love though with some obviously lights underneath. I come and leave to NPR blaring in the background, and never am told why he labels his store “Defunct” (apparently a secret).

Or another: Joe and Linda Michaud’s Bookery and Bindery is a family business, run out of a quiet eastside Iowa City neighborhood away from its literary core. Upstairs: the typical signs of everyday life, the kitchen settings, the leftover Christmas decorations. Downstairs: 14,000 books lining rows of shelves (though sharing one with a spillover pantry), an operating table Linda uses to repair neglected binding. Joe’s jutting goatee rises and falls as he talks, giving his history of his ephemera trade, his old downtown store, a few gripping stories about Iowa’s book thieves. And all the while Linda watches and smiles, a quiet woman best described as bookish.

Still more: I never get to Murphy-Brookfield, which I’m told is run by a lovely man and is the only true specialty seller (all others are “gen-
// Pulitzer Town //

Iowa City’s literary worth can be measured in many ways. To illustrate just one of the many reasons Iowa City was recently dubbed a City of Literature by UNESCO, we’ve compiled a timeline of The University of Iowa’s connections to 40 Pulitzer Prizes, ranging from poets to editorial cartoonists.

## Pulitzer Prize

Created by Joseph Pulitzer to honor excellence in journalism and the arts. The inaugural 1917 prizes were given in reporting, editorial writing, history and biography.

### University of Iowa Founded

Created as the State University of Iowa on February 25, 1847, only 59 days after Iowa became a state.

### Iowa Writers’ Workshop Is Born

Founded in 1936, it is the nation’s first program to award a Masters of Fine Arts in English. The creative writing program has been emulated throughout the world. In 2003, the Workshop received a National Humanities Medal from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a first for a university.

## Poets

### W.D. Snodgrass

1960 Pulitzer for Heart’s Needle.

BA, 1949; MA, 1951; MFA, 1953.

### Robert Lowell

1939 Pulitzer in history for A History of American Magazines. Former director of the UI School of Journalism.

### Frank Luther Mott

1939 Pulitzer in history for A History of American Magazines. Former director of the UI School of Journalism.

### Robert Penn Warren

Versatile writer who won three Pulitzers in two categories. 1947 for All the King’s Men (in fiction); 1958 for Poems 1954-56, Now and Then; and 1979 for Poems 1976-78. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers’ Workshop.

### John Berryman

1965 Pulitzer for 77 Dream Songs. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers’ Workshop where he taught Snodgrass, Justice, Levine and Iowa’s current poet laureate Robert Dana.

### Marquis Childs

1970 Pulitzer for her commentary at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (the first time the category was awarded). MA, Journalism and Mass Communication, 1925.

### Anthony Hecht

Former Poet Laureate of the U.S. won a 1968 Pulitzer for The Hard Hours. Former UI student.

### Tennessee Williams

One of America’s most well-known playwrights. A two-time Pulitzer winner, in 1948 for A Streetcar Named Desire, and in 1955 for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. BA, Theatre, 1938.

### Wallace Stegner

The Lake Mills, IA native won a 1972 Pulitzer for Angle of Repose. MA, 1932; PhD, English, 1935.

### Paul Conrad


### Paul Conrad


### At left, one of the cartoons the LA Times refused to run, a 1999 depiction of “Congressional Bipartisanship.”
In January, the University of Iowa Center for the Book hosted the first annual conference for the newly developed College Book Art Association, titled “Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place.”

It may seem an unlikely time for a conference devoted to what many perceive as a soon-to-be-obsolete medium: the printed book. After all, blogs easily give any average Joe instant publishing capabilities on the web; Google is well on its way toward creating an online book archive with its Book Search; and Kindle, Amazon’s “wireless reading device” that allows offline access to nearly 200 e-books at once, sold out in just five-and-a-half hours upon its debut in November 2007.

But to dismiss the physical book would be to sell it short. In a world filled with computers, Blackberries, and digital everything, it’s easy to forget that the printed book, which came of age during some of the most tumultuous and innovative years in human history—the European Renaissance during the 14th to 17th centuries—is itself a technology that changed history. Yet, as we enter another transformative and uncertain age of technological innovation, as newspaper after newspaper is forced to lay off staff as readers migrate to free content on the web, there is little discussion of the lessons we might learn from the book.

The history of one specific kind of book—the artist’s book—provides an interesting case study in the interplay between print and digital technologies.

First used in 1973, the term “artist’s book” signifies a book created by an artist who exerts particular control over all aspects of the publication, from content and design to production and presentation—a process distinctly differ-
technology made possible the reunion of artist and book. Bury writes that “20th-century artists have used the technological advances in reproduction—lithography, invented by Alois Senefelder in 1798, and photoengraving—to cut out the typefounder and typesetter, and have no intermediary between reader and writer.” With these new technologies, book production became cheaper, facilitating smaller-scale projects that could be undertaken by individuals.

The book art field has been gaining momentum ever since its resurgence in the 1960s, said Julia Leonard, UI School of Art & Art History lecturer, Center for the Book and Book and Print Studio Coordinator and one of the key organizers of the Art, Fact and Artifact conference. The first book to address the book art field, Joan Lyon’s *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, was published in 1985. In that same year, the first major exhibition of the form was organized by Anne Moeglin-Delcroix at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, *Livres d’artistes*. Many universities developed programs dedicated to the study of book culture and book arts in the 1980s as well, including the UI Center for the Book, which was founded in 1986. And in the 1990s, two comprehensive histories of the book art field were published: Bury’s *Artists’ Books* and Johanna Drucker’s *The Century of Artists’ Books*.

At the UI Center for the Book, Leonard said enrollment has been steadily rising since they added a graduate certificate program in 1996. The Center typically offers anywhere from 10 to 40 courses per year, with a mix of introductory and advanced workshops.

Ellen Knudson
Self-Dual (How to Walk a 30,000 Mile Tightrope)
Letterpress printed handmade book. The paper is 100% cotton rag paper from family clothes bound in a built-in groove case.
Feeling Bookish

B ook reading is an art. There are the masters who plow through dozens of books in a month, mentally recording favorite passages along the way. Then there are those of us who, try as we might, can only muster biannual attempts at bestsellers, pushing ahead a few pages per night before reluctantly admitting defeat one quarter of the way through.

In between are the rest of us: the bedtime-warriors, the Harry Potter addicts, the mystery lovers, the history junkies. The world’s supply of books will always far outpace our appetite, but we soldier on, savoring those too few literary morsels which we have the time or impetus to dine on.

As part of our cover story, we asked our editorial staff to tell us what whets their appetite for ink. But the question “what is your favorite book?” gave us more than a simple list of an- swers. Happily, we learned just as much about book reading is an art. There are the most famous pull quote is “Reality is whatever refuses to go away when I stop believing in it.” Dick spent his final years in the grips of an epic hypergraphia that produced his mostly unpublished Exegesis, which tried on, discarded, and mutated a thousand different theories about what his spiritual experiences really meant. As this relates to my life, and Dick’s place in my understanding of the world, the works of Philip K. Dick are a vast, scary, hilarious, entertaining exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, loving kindness, these three; but the greatest of these is loving kindness.

Paul of Tarsus—that first century Philip K. Dick—says that we don’t know what’s real, we don’t even know what we don’t know. The one thing in life we can cleave to, that will save our lives, is the loving kindness we share with others. That spirit of caring and empathy is what abides in Dick’s fractured, terrifying, fascinating, falling-down worlds.

Andrew Sherburne, publisher on Cat’s Cradle

I don’t have a favorite book. In fact, I hate that question. I don’t have a favorite album or a favorite movie either. How can one compare La Dolce Vita to The Goonies? The films, books and music that we love are often more about who we were and when we found them than about the art itself.

But there is a list. And those books that I hold dear are tied to a time or place that helped define the book itself. Riding in a bus past shantytowns in the bleak Peruvian desert made Cormac McCarthy’s No Country for Old Men oddly more real. Reading Richard

Kent Williams, arts editor on Philip K. Dick

I don’t remember the first Philip K. Dick novel I read. I started reading science fiction in grade school, starting with Bradbury, Heinlein, and Sturgeon. Eventually I found the works of Philip K. Dick. Back in the 1960s and ’70s, Dick was not the endlessly name-checked icon of weird cool he is now. Once I had an appetite for his work, I spent my teenage years scouring libraries and bookstores for his books. Until the last few years in his life, it was catch as catch can—The Man in the High Castle (1962) was on a wire rack at Jim’s Pharmacy, a few blocks from my house.

I found The Zap Gun (1967) in a dusty bookstore in Marion, Iowa. The Penultimate Truth (1964) was hiding in a rack in the Pueblo, Colorado, Greyhound bus station, hidden behind racy novels that had something to do with night nurses and spanking. Finding a book I’d not yet read was like discovering a crack in everyday reality.

There are three things about Dick’s work that enduringly kick my ass. First was the feeling that reality itself was provisional, fragile, and full of barely comprehensible beauty and menace. Second was the central tropes that provided an armature for his stories: the robotic Abraham Lincoln, only friend to a discommodulated boy growing up on Mars in Martian

Reality itself was provisional, fragile, and full of barely comprehensible beauty and menace.

Time-Slip (1964). The mind-boggling reversal of time’s arrow in Counter-Clock World (1967), the cult author writing an alternate history of the world by throwing the I Ching in The Man in the High Castle. Third—and as I’ve grown older, most important—is the devastating humanity of his characters, caught between their ideals and their petty appetites, fighting for the smallest of personal victories in worlds beyond their ability to comprehend. Beneath all the sci-fi shiny, Dick’s characters struggle to find a working model of how to be human, as jarring events and the cruelty of others reveals their habitual model to be a shabby, comical mistake.

In his later years, Dick’s novels became increasingly autobiographical, while paradoxically becoming ever more fantastic and baroquely imagined. Starting from a religious experience triggered by the light flash-
Wright’s “Native Son” helped me understand the relatively benign cultural turmoil of the once predominantly black neighborhood where I grew up.

If forced to pick one book-reading experience to celebrate, Kurt Vonnegut’s “Cat’s Cradle” is the one. As in nearly all of his writing, Vonnegut combines the simplicity of Middle-American life with metaphoric sci-fi absurdity. In “Cat’s Cradle,” the story revolves around Felix Hoenikker, the fictional inventor of the atomic bomb. Hoenikker values scientific inquiry over all else, including money, fame and family. His other great discovery has just as much deadly power: ice-nine, an isotope of water which is solid at room temperature, holds the potential to destroy every living thing if exposed to the world’s water supply.

Vonnegut toys with world extinction, and the plot is wrapped around the battle between science and morality, but he makes pit stops throughout to skewer many of American society’s other sacred cows, including religion, family and patriotism.

Vonnegut’s relentless insistence that we deconstruct our own existence is a welcome confrontation. Too often books are only an escape from reality, and upon our return from those alternate worlds we bring back few souvenirs. But “Cat’s Cradle” and Vonnegut allow us to apply the lessons of another world to our own.

As I said, my “favorite” books are born as much out of their place in my own life as they are in the writing itself. The first time I read “Cat’s Cradle”—as a godless teenager—I found a story which examined happiness, the meaning of life, and the dangers inherent in absolute faith and organized religion. Ten years later—in the middle of the Bush Ages—the story came something different, an allegorical tale cautioning against the triumph of hubris and human stupidity.

A book is best when it reveals as much about our own world as the fictional one that it describes, exactly what one finds in Vonnegut’s pseudo sci-fi. But better than that, as the world changes around us, a good read stays relevant, and “Cat’s Cradle” is such a book.

Melody Dworak, editor on Loving Books

I used to joke that my favorite book was a magazine. Then I joked that I was a book slut, teasing all of them by doting on first chapters while knowing I’d move on within a month. I tried rationalizing my lack of habit by saying that I preferred nonfiction books, while ignoring the nonfiction books as well. In January, I finally found an article about reading books elucidating the problem: I’m just not that into it.

It’s almost blasphemy to admit that in a town like Iowa City, UNESCO fucking City of Literature. Maybe it’s escapism that I could do without, but I love watching TV on the internet. Oh my god, effortless entertainment after a 9 to 5 job is a gift to us in this hardest-working nation. Is reading such an arduous effort? Because I edit Little Village articles for a non-living and proofread for a living, is reading work for me, like, a job I need to be compensated for? Is it like going home to plunge the toilet after earning a day’s pay as a hotel janitor?

No, that’s not it. When books are like wine, I totally read them. Maybe I just like writing more than reading, or maybe I read only for the sake of writing. Or maybe I’m just too goddamn picky and need all words and phrases to be brilliant and poetic and most books just aren’t my style. Then I have to be ashamed to admit I’ve even abandoned short stories by David Foster Wallace. I’m even having trouble remembering the books I’ve actually read all of, and had to make a list to assist me:

- 100 Years of Solitude; Love in the Time of Cholera
- David Sedaris’s books (though I’m not quite sure about Dress Your Family In a Long Title)
- Eats Shoots & Leaves
- Elements of Style (somewhat shamefully,

BOOK PICKS CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 >>
I experienced *Gran Torino*, Clint Eastwood’s sixth film in six years, with my father. He’d grown up, in the 1960s, with a very different batch of Eastwood pictures. When he was 24, Clint was king—a man’s-man who inspired men like him to wear ponchos, à la *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. My father’s Clint subsisted into the ’80s as Inspector “Dirty” Harry Callahan, a masculine wet dream armed with catchphrases and a .44 Magnum.

As a 24-year-old in 2009, this is not the Clint Eastwood I know. My generation’s Clint, so evident in *Gran Torino*, is a man of restraint, tolerance and unabashed sentimentality. He’s a revision of his prior persona—the man who could, as he grows in *Gran Torino*, “Blow a hole in your face and sleep like a baby.”

Part ’50s melodrama, Western, and ’70s vigilante pic, *Gran Torino* is a deceptively quaint effort on cinematic violence and cultural hybridity. It’s a film as moving as it is subversive, as intellectually rooted as it is emotionally penetrating. It is, in short, Eastwood’s most rewarding film since 1992’s *Unforgiven*.

*Gran Torino* concerns Walt Kowalski, a widowed Korean War veteran (Eastwood), and his interactions with a Hmong family that lives next door. Kowalski is a dying breed: a Rust Belt racist “still living in the ’50s,” so says his son. A man who refuses to evolve with the culture and technology of the 21st century, Kowalski spends most days on his porch, cooler full of Pabst, muttering PC-unfriendly slurs while admiring his 1972 Gran Torino, an emblem of his blue-collar past on a Ford assembly line.

Kowalski, the last white American on his block, overcomes his xenophobia just enough to befriend two neighborhood teenagers, Sue and Thao (Ahney Her and Bee Vang, both non-professional actors). Unwillingly, Kowalski becomes invested in their happiness, protecting the two from a Hmong gang committed to emasculating Thao and harassing Sue, whose aggressive wit disarms them. As Kowalski threatens the gang and other neighborhood predators, flashes of his violent past from the Korean War resurface, triggering more overt forms of hatred and intimidation.

Unpacking *Gran Torino* requires some familiarity with American history, cinematic and political. To portray a man fixated with the Korean War of 1950-1953, Eastwood crafts *Gran Torino* as a ’50s Hollywood melodrama. Like popular titles from that era, the film uses the domestic neighborhood setting to dissect familial and social behavior, often with an emphasis on gender roles; the film’s characters make much of Thao’s passive, unmanly manner, as compared to Sue’s assertive, (more traditionally) masculine air. Also similar to the ’50s melodrama are the film’s broad performances and characterization, both of which a viewer with rigidly contemporary eyes might call “over the top” or just “bad.” Further still, the film’s titular Gran Torino—like James Dean’s flaming red jacket in *Rebel Without a Cause*, to name one famous example of the melodramatic convention—is a fetishized object meant to loudly broadcast a protagonist’s inner psyche.

Kowalski’s ’72 Ford is a pretty obvious signifier of his refusal to accept modern America, but it’s also a more subtle evocation of ’70s era Eastwood (*Dirty Harry* hit theaters in 1971). Seventies Clint was a product of his time, a cinematic response to escalating urban American crime; viewers wanted to see a...
Small month, big sound

Probably the biggest news in local music this month will be the release of William Elliott Whitmore’s long-awaited album, Animals in the Dark. The album is coming out via Anti-, a record label that features big-name artists like Neko Case, Man Man, and Tom Waits(!). Whitmore, an Iowa fella’, will celebrate the album’s release (in stores on February 17th) by playing a two-night run at the Picador. The first is a late show on Saturday the 21st, featuring (FT) The Shadow Government. Luke Tweedy, a member of The Shadow Government, recorded Whitmore’s new record, so expect this one to be packed with local friends, family and scenesters. If you can’t get through the door or like to get to bed at a reasonable hour, come back on the 22nd for an early all-ages show where Whitmore will be performing with “Hagan Bears, who play at the Mill on the 18th. Joined by electronic popsters The Western Front and Minneapolis folk-pop band Caroline Smith and the Goodnight Sleeps, this one is going to feature lots of hummable hooks, and will probably warm your cold little February heart.

On the 28th, two of the Mill’s renowned soundmen will take their turn on the other side of the mics, as Sam Knutson’s band Shame Train shares the stage with Samuel Locke-Ward. Expect alt.country songs and dangerously astute lyrics from the Train, and god-knows-what from Sam Locke-Ward, but hopefully destroyed pop songs, cowpunk revival, dirges, ballads, waltzes, and everything in-between. I’ve said it before, but really: Locke-Ward is one of the most entertaining and talented guys we have in town.

With such rich local offerings in this short little month, it’ll be important to plan on also catching some of the national acts coming through town. The album is coming out via Anti-, a record label that features big-name artists like Neko Case, Man Man, and Tom Waits(!). Whitmore, an Iowa fella’, will celebrate the album’s release (in stores on February 17th) by playing a two-night run at the Picador. The first is a late show on Saturday the 21st, featuring (FT) The Shadow Government. Luke Tweedy, a member of The Shadow Government, recorded Whitmore’s new record, so expect this one to be packed with local friends, family and scenesters. If you can’t get through the door or like to get to bed at a reasonable hour, come back on the 22nd for an early all-ages show where Whitmore will be performing with “Hagan Bears, who play at the Mill on the 18th. Joined by electronic popsters The Western Front and Minneapolis folk-pop band Caroline Smith and the Goodnight Sleeps, this one is going to feature lots of hummable hooks, and will probably warm your cold little February heart.

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or our PR—but because of the “ongoing book conversation,” as Nialle calls it, an exhausting thing, “more complicated than Star Trek.” It isn’t shared by all, but those in on the talks have thousands of years of conversation starters, from Plato to Frank Herbert to Latino history, and plenty of open ears to what we talk about when we talk about books.

For the first time it’s easy to understand why we’re deemed a UNESCO “City of Literature.” Not for our workshops, our alum, Curious George.” “Don’t worry mom,” says the girl, “I don’t like Milton.” Jack reports that he appreciates reading Milton, “just so I can get other people’s Milton references.”

“It’s like watching Wayne’s World,” Nialle says. “You just have to do it.” Nialle understands that books are necessarily haunted, inhabited by a previous owner who left a crease in the spine or folded a corner down or underlined something. “You get a feel off a book of who had it before and what it meant to them.” But still, despite being surrounded by these ghosts of readers past, it’s the living that binds her business. People like Leiden, or the volunteer who taught her to use a nail gun (“quite satisfying”), or those who foster days-long conversation about Harry Potter or finger puppets, or the past and present holders of Iowa City’s book keys.

“I’ve learned so much from my…I don’t want to say customers.” She pauses. “From my family. People I’ve met and some who were visiting the Haunted long before I ever set foot in it. And they get so defensive of bookstores in this town. ’I always like how this one did this, and this one did this,’ and so on. They talk about them like it’s a community and they’re people—but they’re bookstores. And they’re okay with the people changing, but not too much, not too fast.

And for those like Nialle—guardians of ghosts, hosts of perpetual homecomings, book romancers and exotic lovers—there’s no reason to leave.

Paul Sorenson promises the book gods of Iowa City and beyond that he will keep reading. Contact him at sorensonpaul@gmail.com with recommendations or questions, and he’ll be sure to take a break from his passionate aimlessness to respond.

His conversation with Nialle is interrupted by Leiden, a 14-year-old member of Nialle’s extended book family who first visited the store when she was 10, explaining to Nialle why Marxism wouldn’t work—an excellent ice-breaker. Today’s problem: a vegetarian cookbook found in the art history section. And the ensuing conversation: “vegetable art” to paint-by-numbers. this one does this,’ and so on. They talk about them like it’s a community and they’re people—but they’re bookstores. And they’re okay with the people changing, but not too much, not too fast.

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When books are like wine, I totally read them.
20 classes per semester in printmaking, bookbinding, papermaking, calligraphy, and book culture and history. Leonard says they almost always fill quickly with waiting lists.

Given book art’s historical connection with technology, it seems apt that its recent resurgence parallels the most recent technological uptrend: the use of personal computers and the World Wide Web. Far from destroying our interactions with physical objects, the history of artists’ books demonstrates that new technologies can actually encourage artistic innovation.

However, Leonard is leery of placing too much emphasis on this connection. There are other documented reasons for the renewal, she said, including “a re-evaluation of the fine art field, questioning the role of the gallery and critic as the final arbiter, interdisciplinary exploration breaking down the traditional modernist definitions that categorized fine art practice.”

Still, she says, technology certainly has played an important role in how we perceive our interactions with physical objects.

“I do think that with book art as with many hand processes and craft disciplines, the rise of interest in making things oneself is in reference as further evidence of growing interest in the book art field. Nearly 240 people attended this first-time conference hosted by an organization that’s less than a year old. A volunteer at the conference said they had been expecting 50 to 100.

And the attitude at the conference was perhaps surprisingly techno-friendly. One presenter discussed Amazon’s Kindle—often framed as the book’s arch-nemesis—and the questions after her presentation reflected more curiosity about the device’s potential than fear. Another panelist explored the way her experience with a physical book was different than her experience with the digital version of that book, available on the online artists’ book database, artistsbooks-online.com. In some ways, she noted, the book was more accessible to her in its digital format. A librarian added that she sees a great value in the digital archiving of books, as students coming to her collections seem much more comfortable with the actual objects after having been able to prepare by looking online.

Leonard is not surprised at this intellectual engagement with change. In fact, it is what she expects.

“The interest in the book is not nostalgia for a lost or past form, but rather an interest in how the book can function within our contemporary technological world and other forms of communication,” she said. “While there is an interest in preserving the role of print, it is in the context of this new world: Where do print technologies make sense? How do these various forms of communication function together and complement one another? It is becoming ever clearer (following an initial blind love affair with all things digital) that each form has its strengths; how they work together is what becomes interesting.”

Jessica C. White
The Bad Sparrow

Letterpress printed from photopolymer plates and metal type; watercolor; ink; on Okawara paper.

Though it brims with postmodern references to our past, works best as a genuine, deeply moving yarn about our present.

Gran Torino, though it brims with postmodern references to our past, works best as a genuine, deeply moving yarn about our present. This is its real miracle. Eastwood and screenwriter Nick Schenk have shaped a film about American cinema, only devoid of easy pomo trickery. Clint’s a story-first director, with an unassuming visual style that refuses to draw attention to itself. Gran Torino exudes unfashionable earnestness; it depicts an anachronistic America—one that slips between the ’50s, the ’70s, and the Wild West—yet it never takes its eyes off 2008, the year when old white men lost home court advantage in the United States.

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

Maggie Anderson is an Iowa native who has lived and worked in Iowa City for the past five years. She is currently the marketing and media manager for The University of Iowa Museum of Art.
What I mean to say is that there’s Nashville Commersh, with its $800 cowboy hats and $500 haircuts, and then there’s the music that seems to come up out of the ground. Will Whitmore has a song that’s so close to the earth he sings of eating the very dirt. The 100s are Whitmore’s fellow travelers, but they’ve picked their own fertile row to hoe. Where Whitmore’s music is devastatingly spare, the 100s are a full country band, and they cleave to the conventions—tight harmonies, guitar, bass and plenty of pedal steel. But these guys stay away from country’s tendency for craven emotional pandering, or even worse, the reflexive tail-devouring of songs like Tim McGraw’s “Kristofferson.” The 100s are straightforward, un-ironic, and heartfelt. But not without nuance. In “Miles of Rope” David Petersen sings “Could I get an answer please, before I end up on my knees, don’t make me put it in a letter. I’d swear if I didn’t know you better, I’d say you’re enjoying this.” As country lyrics go, it’s the real deal: words of one or two syllables with emotional intensity, and yet tinged with a teasing wryness.

Lyrics aside, the arrangement and production of these songs is tasteful, but undeniably lush. Vern McShane’s pedal steel guitar is fantastic, never reaching for that hokey moan that makes my teeth hurt. The 100s have a sackful of good songs here, but McShane’s work makes each one a sensual pleasure. He’s a player who listens, underscoring Pedersen’s vocals like Bill Evans behind Miles Davis. The rest of the band members are good musicians, but I’m sure know as well as I do that they’ve got a treasure on their hands in McShane. And if that’s not enough, there’s a story song about Kate Shelley, who in 1881, rescued of a train full of passengers from death by warning of a washed bridge. The 100s are smart enough to know to stay out of the way of the album highlight and deftly employ the band’s strengths. “Possibilities” is fueled by a spindly Sleater-Kinney-esque guitar figure, over which Karlee Mannix sings about what amounts to cabin fever and erupts into a rave-up chorus replete chants about how she’ll make her escape and make it happen for “I, I, I, me, me, me.” This is followed by “Pull the Pin,” which opens with a blast of pumped up power chords and Karlee sneering at a loser she’s trying to ditch (presumably at a bar).

This is music for a night out. All the loves won or lost, the missed opportunities, or the guilt the morning after your successes, Just Havin’ A Night basically soundtracks all the possibilities.

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

Mannix!
Just Havin’ a Night
www.myspace.com/mannixtheband

Brimming with alcohol-fueled mayhem, growled come-ons and garage rock riffage, Just Havin’ A Night is exactly what we’ve come to expect from Iowa City’s favorite garage rock, go-go family (literally—they’re family), Mannix! However, Mannix! could have been their own worst enemy on its second album. If you cut your teeth on beer-soaked stages and strive for attention with all the kicks and hollers you can muster, when you finally get in the controlled setting of a studio, you can end up with a flaccid hunk of plastic.

However, Mannix! dug deep and found the boozy grit of their live shows in the otherwise sedate confines of the studio. With the hiss of an amp at the head of album opener “I’ve Got Something to Say” to the in-the-red vocals of standout “Pull the Pin,” it sounds like the group cut the record in a bar. Which would be appropriate since a lot of the action on Just Havin’ A Night seems to center around being out or wanting to go out.

The one-two punch of “Possibilities” and the aforementioned “Pull the Pin” at the heart of the album highlight and deftly employ the band’s strengths. “Possibilities” is fueled by a spindly Sleater-Kinney-esque guitar figure, over which Karlee Mannix sings about what amounts to cabin fever and erupts into a rave-up chorus replete chants about how she’ll make her escape and make it happen for “I, I, I, me, me, me.” This is followed by “Pull the Pin,” which opens with a blast of pumped up power chords and Karlee sneering at a loser she’s trying to ditch (presumably at a bar).

This is music for a night out. All the loves won or lost, the missed opportunities, or the guilt the morning after your successes, Just Havin’ A Night basically soundtracks all the possibilities.

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

The 100s
Echoes
www.the100s.com
straitjacketbowlie records

There’s country music, and then there’s Country Music. The 100s are the latter. What I mean to say is that there’s Nashville Commersh, with it’s $800 cowboy hats and $500 haircuts, and then there’s the music that seems to come up out of the ground. Will Whitmore has a song that’s so close to the earth he sings of eating the very dirt. The 100s are Whitmore’s fellow travelers, but they’ve picked their own fertile row to hoe. Where Whitmore’s music is devastatingly spare, the 100s are a full country band, and they cleave to the conventions—tight harmonies, guitar, bass and plenty of pedal steel.

But these guys stay away from country’s tendency for craven emotional pandering, or even worse, the reflexive tail-devouring of songs like Tim McGraw’s “Kristofferson.” The 100s are straightforward, un-ironic, and heartfelt. But not without nuance. In “Miles of Rope” David Petersen sings “Could I get an answer please, before I end up on my knees, don’t make me put it in a letter. I’d swear if I didn’t know you better, I’d say you’re enjoying this.” As country lyrics go, it’s the real deal: words of one or two syllables with emotional intensity, and yet tinged with a teasing wryness.

Lyrics aside, the arrangement and production of these songs is tasteful, but undeniably lush. Vern McShane’s pedal steel guitar is fantastic, never reaching for that hokey moan that makes my teeth hurt. The 100s have a sackful of good songs here, but McShane’s work makes each one a sensual pleasure. He’s a player who listens, underscoring Pedersen’s vocals like Bill Evans behind Miles Davis. The rest of the band members are good musicians, but I’m sure know as well as I do that they’ve got a treasure on their hands in McShane.

And if that’s not enough, there’s a story song about Kate Shelley, who in 1881, rescued of a train full of passengers from death by warning of a washed bridge. The 100s are smart enough to know to stay out of the way of a great story. Maybe that’s what makes the
100s so good—they know how to stay out of the way of the songs.

Kent Williams is an optimist who loves life, sport, and hates lies. He is Little Village’s arts editor.

Joe Price
Rain or Shine
www.joepriceblues.com

During these long winter months some hot blues can be just the thing to warm the soul. Joe Price is bringing the heat on his new recording, *Rain or Shine*. Released on Blues Acres Productions, this is the second of three planned releases by Price and his wife, Vicki, on their homegrown recording label.

Included are 10 new songs, all written by Price, five of which are blues instrumentals that alternate between the vocal tracks. This spirited recording finds Price in a rollicking mood. Equipped with his National ResoRocket guitar, Price rips into stories about wondering women and love lost. The opening track, “Hornet’s Nest,” sets the tone for the disc. This old fashioned rave up gets the floorboards rattling with furious guitar picking and boot stomping splendor.

*Rain or Shine* is essentially a solo recording, just Price and his guitar for the most part. In a similar style to Elmore James or John Lee Hooker, this is stripped down to the frame. Price’s raspy call is well steeped in the blues and capable of telling a story by itself. Hook it up with some beat box slide guitar and this is vintage blues.

A cut destined for summer outdoor concerts is “Beer Tent Boogie Woogie.” Echoing the lament of many a music festival attendee Price sings, “I got too drunk to drive.”

Price does have some friends join him on a couple tracks. Vicki adds just the right accent to the chorus on the rowdy “Steel Guitar”. And on “Rock Slide,” Keni Ewing plays drums and Al Naylor, from the Bob Door Blue Band, brings a big trumpet to talk back at Price’s guitar.

This disc was recorded live in the studio at Wow & Flutter in Nashville and at Catamount Studios in Cedar Falls, Iowa. In keeping with Price’s authentic style, *Rain or Shine* has a raw mix to it that includes some distortion. And yes that is a real train whistle at the end of “Beer Tent Boogie Woogie” from outside the Nashville studio. This doesn’t detract from the recording, it’s more of a style decision and makes the songs more personal.

Overall, *Rain or Shine* is a thoroughly enjoyable listen. On a snowy winter day it takes a little bit of the chill out of the air.

Pete Wilson is a Kentucky boy who landed in Hawkeye country after Katrina did its number on New Orleans. He covers music and culture related events, and occasionally dabbles in public interest reporting. With a May graduation date looming, it’s time to sell the house and pack up the wagon—a new town is calling.
**ART/EXHIBITS**

**African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa**

www.blackiowa.org

*Check website for locations*

**Marin Luther King Day Celebration, free admission**, Jan. 19

**AKAR**

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City

www.akardesign.com

**Recent Ceramics: Margaret Bohls**, through Feb. 13

**Arts Iowa City**

103 E. College St.

www.artsiowacity.org

*Self Portrait: Angela Regas*, Feb. 8-28

**Cedar Rapids Museum of Art**

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids

www.cra.org

*Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, open, Saturdays & Sundays, hourly 12-4pm*

**The Year of the River: Flood Photography from The Gazette**, through Feb. 22

**Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place**, www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

Iowa Artisans Gallery

www.grinnell.edu/faulconergallery

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell

Faulconer Gallery/Bucksbaum Center

Fresh Paintings, through Mar. 13

**The Chait Galleries Downtown**

218 E Washington St., Iowa City

www.thegalleriesdowntown.com

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

Fresh Paintings, through Mar. 13

**Faulconer Gallery/Bucksbaum Center for the Arts**

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell

www.grinnell.edu/faulconergallery

*Animated Painting, opening night Feb. 6, 4:30pm, exhibit through April 19*

**Iowa Artisans Gallery**

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

*Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place, through Feb. 15*

**Public Space One**

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

*James Sham Gallery Opening*, Feb. 6, 7pm

**Terrapin Coffee**

Oakdale and 12th, Coralville

New York City Series by Julie Staub

**UI Museum of Art**

www.uiowa.edu/uima

*Check website for locations*

**Bette Spriestersbach Distinguished Lecture by**

Adam Gopnik, Feb. 5, 7:30pm

**Check website for locations**

**www.uiowa.edu/uima**

**New York City Series by Julie Staub**

**Oakdale and 12th, Coralville**

**Terrapin Coffee**

**James Sham Gallery Opening, Feb. 6, 7pm**

**UI School of Art & Art History**

Studio Arts Building, 1375 Highway 1 W, Iowa City

www.art.uiowa.edu

*Graduate Exhibits: Andy Castro, Feb. 9-13 • Zach Stensen, Feb. 16-20 • Crystal Roethlisberger, Feb. 23-27*

**MUSIC**

**Capitol Theatre**

311 Ripley Street, Davenport

www.thecapdavenport.com

*Mudwayne*, Feb. 10, 7pm

**CSPS/Legion Arts**

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

*Bill Bourne, Wyckham Porteous and Jan, Feb. 13 & 14, 8pm • Buckwheat Zydeco, Feb. 17, 8pm • Gary Louris & Mark Olson, Feb. 19, 8pm • Tyva Kyzy, Feb. 21, 8pm*

**Englert Theatre**

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

*Dr. John with The Neville Brothers, Feb. 13, 8pm • Gathe Raho, Feb. 14, 9pm • Mason Jennings, Feb. 20, 8pm • 1964: The Tribute, Feb. 27, 8pm*

**Hancher Auditorium**

www.hancher.uiowa.edu

*St. Lawrence String Quartet, Feb. 4, 7:30pm • Time for Three, Feb. 12, 7:30pm • Vienna Boys’ Choir, Feb. 13, 7:30pm*

**The Industry**

211 Iowa Ave., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/theindustrial

*All shows at 8pm unless noted*

**Thumpday every Thursday**

Jumbies with Samba Nosso, Feb. 6, 8pm • JJ Grey & Moffo with Backyard Tire Fire & Dead Larry, Feb. 8, 8pm • The Schwag, Feb. 13, 8pm Holding Mercy, Feb. 14, 8pm • Dead Larry with Haytyente, Feb. 21, 8pm • Insectoid with Cirrus Mirror and Jason Sturgis, Feb. 28, 8pm

**The Mill**

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.1cmill.com

*Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted*

**Sunday Night Pub Quiz**, Sundays, 9pm-Midnight

Open Mic with J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up

**Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays**

Mannix!, The Black Slacks and the Post Mortems, Feb. 2, 9pm • GB Leighton, Feb. 3, 8pm • Iowa City Free Radio Benefit, Feb. 6 • Diplomats of Solid Sound with The Parlour Suite, Feb. 7, 9pm • Titus Andronicus, The Envy Corps & Birth Rites, Feb. 8, 9pm • The Brown Note, Petit Mal & Wax Cannon, Feb. 10, 9pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Feb. 11, 7pm • Pieta Brown with the Awful Purdies, Feb. 12, 8pm • The Beaker Brothers, Feb. 13, 9pm • Sarah Cram and the Derelicts, Matthew Grimm and the Red Smear & Sam Knuston, Feb. 17, 9pm • Caroline Smith and the Good Night Sleeps, The Western Front, Sarah Mannix and the Wandering Bears, Feb. 18, 9pm • West Music Young Jazz Warriors, Feb. 19, 6pm • Joe and Vicki Price, Feb. 20, 8pm • Andy Carlson and Casey Cook with guests from Big Wooden Radio and Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Feb. 21, 8pm • University of Iowa Jazz Performance, Feb. 24, 9pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Feb. 25, 7pm • Pokey LaFarge Duo, Feb. 27, 9pm • Miles Nielsen w. Shame Train and Samuel Locke Ward, Feb. 28, 9pm

**Old Capitol Museum**

Pentacrest, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

**Piano Sundays**, Uriel Tsachor, Feb. 1, 1:30pm • Was My Brother in the Battle? Songs of War, Feb. 4, 8pm • New Music for Violin and Viola, Feb. 8, 2pm • Sogro Brasil woodwind quintet, Feb. 9, 8pm • Zoran Jakovcic, Hannah Holman, and René Leeuwa, Feb. 15, 2pm • The Finders, Feb. 14, 7pm

**The Picador**

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.the picador.com

*All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted*

**Pharaohs of Rhythm & Dr. Z’s Experiment**, Feb. 2 • Kaiser Cartel & Midwest Trend Kill, Feb. 3 • Yo Majesty & Natalie “the floacist” Stewart, Feb. 4 • Collectible Boys & Local Clamor, Feb. 5 • Schaffer The Dark Lord & CoolcAZY, Case The Joint, Feb. 6 • T Gaines & Keys Davis, J Miracle, Feb. 7 • Tilly and the Wall & Porno Galactica, datagun, Feb. 8, 7pm • Asceethe, Shores of the Tundra, Lord Green & Lwa Feb. 10 • Young Coyotes, Single Indian Tear & Olivia Rose Muzzy Feb. 13, 5pm • The Horde & Helsplitter, Feb. 13, 10pm • Marah & The Maylies, Feb. 14 • Man Made Man, Albino Spiders, Burn The Rest & Grave Corp, Feb. 15, 6pm • Tyrone Wells, Trevor Hall, & Keaton Simons, Feb. 17, 6pm • Heligoats & Camel of the Sea, Feb. 17 10pm • Foxy Shazam, The A.K.A’s, Dr. Manhattan & Lost Apparitions, Feb. 18, 6pm • I am Ghost, Lower Definition, Driver Side Impact & Makeout Party, Feb. 19, 6pm • The Slats, The Wheels & Teddy Boys, Feb. 20 • William Elliott Whitmore, (FT) Shadow Government & T Wehrle, Feb. 21 • William Elliott Whitmore with Hagan Myer presents: “The Coyote Club Vaudeville Extravaganza!”, Feb. 22, 6pm • Waka Winter Classic Battle of the Bands, Feb. 24, 7pm • The Arms are Snakes, Darker My Love, Definition, Driver Side Impact & Makeout Party, Feb. 26, 7pm • The Finders, Feb. 27, 9pm

**Public Space One**

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

*Them Damn Kids & The Broken Spokes*, Feb. 1, 8pm • Beati Paoli, Olivia Rose Muzzy & Live Ghost, Feb. 8, 8pm
My Life and Work as a Feminist Porn Activist
Annie Sprinkle, Ph.D.
Wednesday, February 4, 7pm
King Chapel, Cornell College, 600 First Ave. SW, Mount Vernon

Oh, Annie Sprinkle—excuse me—Doctor Annie Sprinkle, how do we third-wave feminists love thee? Let me count the ways: You complicated the porn-is-bad mantra and showed us positive portrayals of female sexuality. You chose to love whom you love and let the whole world know. And you threw your life into art that offended and enticed. And now, Dr. Sprinkle, you grace Iowa with your sex-positive presence and give us stifled Midwesterners a little hope.

For 35 years, Dr. Annie Sprinkle has been personally researching—whether she knew it when she started or not—pornography, prostitution, sexuality and love, and now shares her findings not in an academic journal, but on the stage and screen. (She earned her doctorate in human sexuality from the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, an Institute that trains professional sexologists.) Annie Sprinkle’s performance art ranges from her personalized burlesque style to multimedia theater. She has authored seven books and written, directed or performed in innumerable films and videos for both the light and dark side of porn. Annie Sprinkle is coming to Cornell to present this evening talk on Wednesday, and hang around through Thursday evening for two more events. The Sidewalk Sex Clinic is held from 11am to 1pm Thursday, and she’ll show her latest film, Annie Sprinkle: Amazing World of Orgasm, at 6:30pm in the Hedges Conference Room. And for those who have 11am to 1pm available Wednesday, Annie Sprinkle will be giving sex life Tarot card readings in the Bowman Formal Lounge.

For those who can’t make it and meet the goddess in person, some of her art and videos can be viewed or purchased on her website, AnnieSprinkle.org, and the website of her collaboration with her lover and partner, LoveArtLab.org.
**THEATER | DANCE | PERFORMANCE**

**Brucemore**
2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids
www.brucemore.com
Dear Sweetheart: The Letters of Howard and Margaret Hall, Feb. 12-14, 7:30pm

**Englert Theatre**
221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Alley Cabaret - The Vagina Monologues, Feb. 27-28, midnight

**Old Creamery Theater**
39 38th Ave., Amana
www.oldcreamy.com
Love Letters, Feb. 6-21, 7pm

**Penguin’s Comedy Club**
Clarin Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguinscomedyclub.com
Check website for showtimes

**Rage Theatrics**
Space Place Theatre, UI Campus
www.ragetheatrics.com
Check website for locations

**The University of Iowa Dance**
Space/Place Theatre, North Hall
www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Check website for showtimes and locations

**Emma Goldman Clinic**
Event at Iowa City Public Library
www.emmagoldman.org
The Abortion Diaries film and Conversations on Abortion, Feb. 10, 6:30pm

**The Mill**
120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Talk Art Cabaret-Writer’s Workshop Readings, Feb. 11 & 25, 10pm

**Prairie Lights**
15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
www.prairielightsbooks.com
Feb. 9, 7pm • Andrew Porter, fiction
Feb. 10, 7pm • Stephen Lovely, fiction
Feb. 13, 6pm • Penn Elementary Bookfair, Feb. 14 • Dogs on the Bed, Feb. 17 • Always in Trouble, Feb. 20 • Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed, Feb. 24

**University of Iowa Arts**
www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Check website for locations

**CINEMA**
**Bijou Theater**
Iowa Memorial Union
www.bijoutheater.org
Check website for 2009 schedule and showtimes

**Landlocked Film Festival**
The Senior Center, Iowa City
www.landlockedfilmfestival.org
Encore screenings all begin at 2pm

**The Iowa Children’s Museum**
1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville
www.theicm.org
Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed, Feb. 24

**Critical Hit Games**
89 Second St, Coralville
www.criticalhitgames.net
Check website for daily gaming events

**Lamrim Kadampa Buddhist Center**
708 Sunset St, Iowa City
Healing Our Relationships using meditation, Feb. 1, 8, 15, 23, 7pm

**For inclusion, please email Calendar@LittleVillageMag.com**
Curses, Foiled Again
• When Jeffrey P. Cannon, 20, arrived at Washington’s Dulles International Airport from Ireland, customs officers detained him because a check of the passenger list turned up an outstanding DUI warrant. Officers searched his luggage and found “a large amount of tea bags,” Border Patrol official Steve Sapp told the Washington Post. The bags’ bulky shapes aroused suspicion, and officers found they contained 3.2 grams of hashish and 2.3 grams of marijuana. “If you know you’re coming into the U.S. with bad stuff,” Sapp said, “be prepared to be greeted rudely by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.”
• An Australian man wanted in connection with two home invasions in Sydney tried to evade police by hiding in the attic of his own home. While officers were searching the house, however, the 31-year-old suspect fell through the ceiling into the family room, where police arrested him.

Suspicious Habit
Police identified Randy Lee Shoopman Jr., 33, as their suspect in a string of burglaries across eastern Oklahoma by using DNA obtained from tobacco spit. Stilwell police detective Chad Smith said he noticed a tobacco stain on papers in a ransacked office that had been burglarized. “None of the ladies that worked there chewed tobacco,” Smith said. “You could tell that the stains were from the suspect.” It and spit found at five other burglary sites all matched the sample police obtained from Shoopman.

It’s Always Something
The world’s largest passenger jet, the Airbus A380, is so quiet that pilots complain they can’t sleep during rest breaks on long-haul flights because sounds caused by passengers, such as crying babies, flushing vacuum toilets and call bells, constantly disturb them. “On our other aircraft, the engines drown out the cabin noise,” said Ed Davidson, a senior vice president with Emirates Airlines. Pilots using the crew rest area in the rear of the aircraft have tried sleeping with earplugs, “but the cabin noise goes straight through them,” Davidson noted, adding that one solution might be installing lightweight generators to create ambient noise.

Fiery Irony
• After a fire gutted an animal shelter in Oshawa, Ontario, killing nearly 100 cats, investigators blamed the blaze on mice. Shelter manager Ruby Richards said the mice chewed through electrical wires in the attic.
• An Australian woman who donated money to buy her local fire department a new truck lost her rural home to a blaze that thwarted it and five other fire engines. Alan Fraser of the Wartburg Fire Brigade said heat from the fire kept firefighters from the only available water, forcing crews to wait for a tanker to arrive. By then, however, the multimillion-dollar home belonging to Annemarie Geckler, 79, had burned to the ground.

Self-Interests
• After receiving an anonymous call of a stabbing, police in San Clemente, Calif., found a trail of blood that led them to a 19-year-old man, who was bleeding from his hands and arms. He told investigators a former friend has stabbed him. Police Lt. Ted Boyne told the Orange County Register that officers later determined the man used a shard of glass to cut himself, hoping to get the ex-friend in trouble.
• Kelley Lemay, 29, accused her estranged husband of punching her in the face, but after police in Ocala, Fla., handcuffed the man, Lemay admitted she caused the injuries, trying to get him in trouble, by hitting herself in the face with a frying pan.

Slightest Provocations
• A jury in Scranton, Pa., convicted Robert Kane, 34, of cutting through his neighbor’s door with a chain saw because the neighbor’s friend parked in front of his house.
• Philadelphia authorities charged James Joseph Cialella Jr., 29, with shooting a man whose son was talking loudly during a screening of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.” Cialella told the boy to hush, then threw popcorn at him and got into an argument with the father that provoked Cialella to pull a .380-caliber handgun and shoot the victim in the arm. He then returned to his seat and continued watching the film until police arrived.
• Two men beat Army Sgt. 1st Class Richard Lopez, 37, to death at a sports bar in Steamboat Springs, Colo., because they objected to his choice of music. Witnesses told the Denver Post the victim’s jukebox selection was Jimmy Buffett’s “Margaritaville.” Police Capt. Joel Rae said Lopez was obviously enjoying the song when the two men disparaged it, and a fight ensued.

Dead Heat
• A town in Sweden plans to conserve energy by using heat from the local crematorium. “After all this talk about the environment, we realized we should take advantage of the heat created during cremation,” Halmstead cemetery administrator Lennart Andersson told the newspaper Aftonbladet. He said the city hopes to have its new energy source operating by 2010, adding, “To start with, we’re planning on heating our own facilities, but hopefully we can connect to the district heating network in the future.”
• The Spanish town of Santa Coloma de Gramenet has transformed its cemetery into a source of renewable energy by placing 462 solar panels atop mausoleums. The graveyard was chosen because there were no other suitable sites in the small but densely populated suburb of Barcelona. Community leaders hope eventually to erect enough panels to triple electrical output. “The best tribute we can pay to our ancestors, whether your religion may be, is to generate clean energy for new generations,” said Esteve Serret, director of a company called Constel-Live Energy that runs the Santa Coloma cemetery and also is involved in renewable energy.

Making His Point
Eugene Michael Falle, 35, admitted stabbing intruder Shane Chalifoux, 18, but claimed self-defense because he feared Chalifoux, a gang member who had tried to kill him before, had returned to “do my ass in.” He said he stabbed Chalifoux 39 times because he wouldn’t die. “So I keep stabbin’ him and stabbin’ and stabbin’ him and stabbin’ him and stabbin’ him, trying to slash his throat to get a jugular vein,” Falle told police in Edmonton, Alberta. “He wouldn’t bleed properly the way he should’ve bled, according to the movies.” The Edmonton Journal reported that after finally killing Chalifoux, Falle leaned out the window to ask his neighbor to order him a pizza. Despite the prosecutor’s argument that 39 stab wounds exceed the bounds of self-defense, a jury acquitted Falle.

Compiled from the nation’s press by Roland Sweet. Submit items, citing date and source, to P.O. Box 8130, Alexandria VA 22306.
Where Christians really thrown to the lions?

My friend says Christians weren’t actually thrown to the lions in ancient Rome, but when I was at the Colosseum, I saw a big cross there in honor of all the Christians martyred at that spot. He insists this was just made up by the church to perpetuate their religion. What gives?

—vbunny

The story has its suspicious aspects, I guess. According to the historian Tacitus, Christians during Nero’s time (at least) were mainly torn apart by dogs, crucified, or burned alive—no mention of lions. The Romans did throw people to lions on occasion, and Tertullian, writing later, remarks that the Romans were always ready to exclaim “Away with the Christians to the lion!” whenever times got tough. However, Tertullian doesn’t claim he witnessed any martyrdoms by lions personally, and anyway he was a Christian himself. Fact is, while the Romans evidently fed Christians to animals, and people to lions, we have no source stating directly that they specifically fed Christians to lions. So theoretically it’s possible the whole Christians-lions thing was a Christian ploy for sympathy.

But probably not. The Romans did a big business in mass slaughter by and of animals, showing great enterprise in arranging dramatic forms of killing, so if they didn’t throw any Christians to the lions, it was likely an oversight. While record keeping at the time wasn’t the best, and many early Christian texts have their implausible moments, here’s what we can say with reasonable certainty:

1. During the early Christian era, the Romans executed some prisoners using animals, sentencing them ad bestias, “to the beasts.” The beasts in question included dogs, bears, boars, and lions.

2. Christians were executed by the boatload during that time, often in cruel and unusual ways, with animals regularly playing a role. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote letters en route to execution in Rome predicting he’d be thrown to the beasts. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was threatened with being thrown to the beasts but as it turned out was finished off by the sword. Possibly no one saw more animal action than the Christian priest Saturus—reportedly he was first tied to a boar (which turned on its handler instead), then exposed to a bear (it proved too cowardly to attack him), and finally killed by a leopard. Speaking of Nero’s persecutions, Tacitus adds the detail that the emperor had Christians dressed in the skins of animals before throwing them to the dogs, possibly to help overcome any performance anxiety on the dogs’ part.

3. Animals weren’t used just for execution in ancient Rome; animal combat, usually ending in the animals’ demise, was unfailingly popular. Sometimes armed men fought beasts; sometimes the beasts were made to fight one another. Such games, originally held for religious purposes, became ever more lavish and were staged in amphitheaters across the empire. One well-loved event was the venatio, or hunt, often conducted amid elaborately constructed scenery, including real trees, rocky hills, artificial lakes, and the like.

4. Roman executions typically were considered a form of public spectacle. When coinciding with a game day, they usually took place during the midday break between the morning animal hunts and the afternoon gladiator matches. A favored method was exposing an unarmed criminal to lions or bears. Since it’s pretty clear that Christians were at times sentenced to death by beast (see 1 and 2 above), one may surmise that some of them met their end via lion in front of a Colosseum crowd, but we have no sure knowledge of this. The entertainment value of executions was apparently low due to their sheer number—many people found them boring, either leaving for lunch or sticking around and writing letters to friends about the tedium.

5. You have to think the killing of animals might have eventually gotten dull as well—it’s estimated that 9,000 beasts were slain during the inaugural games of the Colosseum alone (possibly an exaggeration; another source says 3,500 during 26 events). Over time more exotic animals were introduced to hold the crowd’s interest: lions and panthers turned up in 186 BC, bears and elephants in 169 BC, hippos and crocodiles in 58 BC. Pompey brought rhinos to Rome; Caesar wowed ‘em with giraffes. The ever-growing number and variety of animals required put a considerable burden on the supply chain. In his Natural History Pliny the Elder tells us lions were originally hard to catch (the idea was to chase them into covered pits), but later it was discovered they could be subdued by throwing a cloak over their heads. Elephants were captured and tamed by beatings and starvation. A major source of animals was the Roman army, which had a special rank (venator immunis) for those in charge of animal procurement.

A sorry business for sure, but Roman animal sports did at least provide an answer to one perennial question: Which is tougher, a bull or a rhino? Answer: Never bet against a rhino, which according to the writer Martial had no problem getting its horn under a bull and flipping it like a flapjack.

—CECIL ADAMS

Comments, questions? Take it up with Cecil on the Straight Dope Message Board, straightho.com, or write him at the Chicago Reader, 11 E. Illinois, Chicago 60611.
FOR EVERYONE—Roll with it. We will all be living and working amidst a blizzard of changes, large and small, high and low, and of all kinds. There are benevolent and healing forces behind these changes and optimism is warranted. One thing there will not be is certainty or clear direction. Even if we wanted to hunker down and safely wait out the changes or wait for a clear direction to emerge, we couldn’t. There is no place to hide from the change and none of the old rules apply any longer. And nobody really knows where all this is leading, yet. We are all going to have to participate. This is one of those times when everyone just needs to have faith in the processes of life and pitch in in good faith when and where they are needed. It will be some time before things settle into a new, stable form. But attractive, realistic alternatives will emerge for everyone as the months proceed.

ARIES—Let inspiration and your conscience be your guide. It’s impossible to know how events will turn out, let alone control them. The forces of change are in high gear and working overtime. The problem is you need to make many decisions from day to day to keep things going. Your best bet is to just do the right thing and to be open to real change. Right now, it is more important to be right on philosophical and ethical issues, to understand the deeper meaning of things, than to be in control.

TAURUS—Stargate. You are at a major life turning point. It might still seem only a twinkle in your eye, but it is about to become real. For years, you have been working hard and saving to lay the foundation for a lifestyle that suits the person you really are. For years it was a distant prospect. You might have thought it would never come. Now, in a cascade of changes, it will start to become a reality. February is a portal into the future you have long been working toward.

GEMINI—Know yourself. Events are overwhelming the people with most control over your job and finances. These events are hard to understand, too numerous to count, and completely beyond anyone’s control. It isn’t necessarily bad. And it’s nobody’s fault. The result, though, will be increasing pressure on you at work. To succeed, dig deeply and get in touch with who you really are. Know who you are. Be who you are. And do that with calm and dignity. It will bring you a surprising level of control over changeful work circumstances.

CANCER—Cut yourself some slack. An absolute blizzard of changes are going down, very fast, in every important area of your life. And there’s scarcely a thing you can do about any of it. The epicenter(s) of change are work, partnership responsibilities and long-term finances. Interestingly, though, you are somewhat insulated from actual events and protected from any really bad outcomes. But the thing is, all this input will wear you out. Your nervous system is on overload. Take advantage of whatever breaks you can get to rest and rebuild.

LEO—Healing. The winds of change are blowing hard through the lives of everyone you know. You are especially sensitive to the pain that change and uncertainty are causing. It’s a time of emotional and physical vulnerability for yourself and others, a bittersweet time, but also a time for healing. But events are also bringing you the power to shape the new reality. There is resistance. This resistance will grow, but so will your influence. To truly succeed, though, you must use your influence to benefit others. Self-centeredness will bring problems.

VIRGO—Stay calm and carry on. Change is causing stress among loved ones, at work, and in your romantic life. But don’t overlook the gains: a more stable home life and a more resilient, confident you. Prepare for a lengthy new effort to express your real self more effectively. A benevolent, healing influence is now influencing your work life and your health. Have faith in the benefit of long-term, patient approaches to issues. You will be rewarded generously for following your conscience. Someone who depends on you needs healing.

LIBRA—Step back. Librans have had more than their fair share of uncertainty and frustration. They’ve faced too many questions that nobody can answer yet. The issues won’t suddenly go away. But Libras will now have more help dealing with them. Friendship, romance, creativity, play, etc., will bring relaxing distractions and needed rest. Make that extra effort to heal yourself, to reduce stress and renew yourself. Seek out people who are into healing things. You need to help yourself before you can help others. The financial situation will ease.

SCORPIO—Home sweet home. In recent times, home has been a place of unusual stresses and strains. Invisible pressures, hard to define issues wore you down. It was tough to maintain inner calm, also. Home is now becoming a place of sanctuary and healing. Your mind will also be more at rest. The planets are clearing out issues like old cobwebs. You’ll be able to think through deep personal issues with greater clarity. Be sure to maintain proper boundaries as you also branch out into the community and meet new people.

SAGITTARIUS—Pick and choose. Be especially alert to make the proper changes in your economic life. There is enormous potential for success. You will find members of the community both sympathetic and helpful in your efforts. This is a long-term project. You are not just adjusting your budget, but transforming your finances to allow a different, better kind of life than you have known. It will take will-power and patience to finish the job and get it right. You are uniquely situated to offer guidance and direction to those caught up in change.

CAPRICORN—Downshift. You are facing a more complex financial situation than you expected. There is big potential, despite the tough decisions that are necessary. Amidst the chaos, powerful supportive and healing forces are at work. Events will soon simplify your choices, too. Embrace the slow pace at which decisions are being made. You need the time to sort things through properly. The delays and postponements frustrate you. But they help ensure that plans won’t firm up before they are truly ready. You don’t want something essential to get lost in the shuffle.

Aquarius

Don’t be swept away. You are starting to see the benefits of a new 12-year cycle of growth and prosperity. At the moment, you are also subject to intoxicating and unrealistic vibes. You are the expert in boundless possibilities. And you wrote the book on optimism. Pay some attention to those who want to set limits or who see the possible downside. Don’t get lost in an infinity of possibilities. To benefit yourself and others you need to accept limits. But you are the best judge of which limits to accept.

PISCES—Negotiate. Pisceans are betwixt and between. Inwardly, you sense all the potential. The optimism and confidence are there, inside. Outwardly, life seems too much about limitations and not enough about possibilities. You cannot quite achieve lift off. The resources you need to branch out are not quite within your grasp. Soon, you will have no choice but to submit to those who want you to be “practical” and “realistic.” But they are more flexible than you think and you can negotiate. By this time next year, you’ll see real benefits.
HOW TO LIVE UNITED.
INVEST IN THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A GOOD LIFE:
EDUCATION, INCOME & HEALTH.

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

LIVE UNITED

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