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Backstage with “Wicked”

Stage Manager Loves Life on the Road with Broadway Musical

by Andrew Tallackson



Stage Manager David O'Brien calls “Defying Gravity” one of the best Act One finishes ever.

It takes 13 trucks and 30 hours to transform a barren stage into the fantastical world of “Wicked.”

Contained within those trucks are, among many things, an automated dragon, lighting that adapts per city and two sets for the proscenium —the area in front of the curtain.

The traveling company of actors, crew, musicians and managers hovers at 75. Add into the mix local crews that help load the show, and the tally escalates to between 100 and 125 people.

David O'Brien.

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Backstage

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The guiding force, the glue that holds this touring company together, is production stage manager David O'Brien. Affectionately referred to as O'B, and with 34 years in the industry to his credit, including "Cats," "Grease," "Godspell," "Pajama Game," "Guys & Dolls" and "Noises Off," O'Brien's task is simple: Treat audiences to the unforgettable.

aficionado *hasn't* seen the musical *Variety* dubbed "a cultural phenomenon." Based on Gregory Maguire's novel, with book by Winnie Holzman ("My So Called Life") and music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz ("Godspell," "Pippin"), the story reinterprets L. Frank Baum's "The Wizard of Oz" from the perspective of the two main witches — Glinda the Good Witch and Elphaba (the Wicked Witch of the West) — primarily before Dorothy arrived from Kansas. Since its Broadway debut in 2003, the show has grossed more than \$3.6 billion worldwide and been



The cast performs "One Short Day."

"Whether it's somebody's first time seeing the show or their 50th time, and believe me, we've had people who've seen it 50 times, I want them all to see a good show," he said during a telephone interview from Houston, Texas, where the show is amid a six-week run.

Come Sept. 7-18, area audiences can experience the timeless magic of "Wicked" at South Bend's Morris Performing Arts Center.

Hard to imagine, these days, that any Broadway

performed in more than 100 cities in 13 countries. Today, it has eight productions under way in New York, London, Japan, Latin America, an Australian tour, a U.K. tour and two concurrent North American national tours. The CD recording of the show went double platinum in 2010. Of its many beloved songs, "Defying Gravity" and "For Good" have been practically canonized as Broadway classics.

One might consider it a daunting task, stepping into the stage manager shoes of a Broadway behe-

moth, but O'Brien, who has been with this touring company for four years, is an exceptionally genial, witty, good-natured man who calls himself the show's parent, coach, cheerleader and psychiatrist.

"It's kind of fun because you really do have to take care of everyone," he said. "If the company is happy, they put on a good show." He then adds with a laugh, "If they are miserable, they put on a good show with a grudge. A happy company puts on a better show."

O'Brien, himself, acted in shows in high school and college, but preferred life behind the scenes. The reason?

"Too nerve-wracking," he said, poking fun at himself by adding, "I like people to pay attention to me, but not *that* much."



David O'Brien at work, behind the scenes.

Concerned he might not forge a life for himself in theater, he enrolled in Boston College to study meteorology, a career track that barely lasted through his first year of schooling.

"So I'm in college and I'm hating all the physics and chemistry courses. I needed an outlet at night so I started working on shows," he said. "What ended up happening is, I started working in summer stock. Each year, I did something different. One year I was the carpenter, the other the lighting designer. Everything. Within my first year of college, I switched my major to theater, with a specialty in directing and design."

With each new production, he took on more responsibilities — a perfect training ground for an effective stage manager. His work took notice among directors, and that launched his career from sum-

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Backstage

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mer stock, to dinner theater, to tours, to Broadway. His first Broadway production was a 1990 revival of "Fiddler on the Roof."

Over the course of his career, he worked on 17 Broadway shows in New York. However, it was his five-year stint with Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Cats" that proved a professional and artistic turning point, one that made him realize long-term runs, in the same theater and city, were not for him.

"I've certainly met people who can keep things fresh five years into a show, but I don't think it's a majority of the people," O'Brien said. "When it's that long, it becomes about different things. It becomes about the money, the salary."

"As artists, no matter what you do in the theater, you always want to be challenged. If you end up giving into the kind of more corporate world, it's not about the joy of it. Your everyday life becomes so complicated, the show becomes secondary."

Not the case with a touring company for "Wicked." Four years into his run as stage manager, and O'Brien still finds himself challenged.

"I came on the road with the intention of just wanting to take a break from New York," he said. "Touring, it energizes you. The staleness is not going to happen. I'm still finding stuff in the show that's really challenging."

O'Brien's duties do encompass overseeing issues such as lighting, sound and other cues, but mostly during the first few shows upon arrival in each city. Assistants then take over so he can focus on the artistic end.

Take, for example, the show's six-week run in Houston. O'Brien estimates he's put in about 150 hours of rehearsals to accommodate new actors and actresses entering and exiting the production, including principal actors, chorus members and swings.

Audiences at the Morris, in fact, will see an actress new to the role of Elphaba. It was O'Brien's job

to work with her, to prep her for the Morris. Her last show was a revival of "Fiddler on the Roof," so she arrived ready to deliver the goods.

"This new Elphaba. Oh. My. God. Her voice is stupid good," O'Brien said, practically giddy. "Four years later, after countless Elphabas, Elphaba understudies, Elphaba standbys, I heard her and I'm like, 'This is going to be fun'."

"It's been crazy, but that is the majority of the job: teaching people the show, noting the show and maintaining the show."

Within a touring company, a family dynamic emerges. In a New York production, the cast performs a show, then heads home. But with life on the road, O'Brien says, bonds and clicks form. They become their own social network. And from there, one of O'Brien's unofficial duties arises.

"I have to make sure the cast is not creating their own little Elphaba within the company," he said, chuckling. "You get a company of 35 dramatic people, and you're going to have very dramatic issues out on the road."

"I have to hold it together, to make sure everyone has the freedom to have fun, but also every once in a while, you have to call them out on things...and that is my least favorite part of the job."

With no resident director traveling with them, O'Brien handles the show's directing duties. Every four to six weeks, an associate director visits the show.

The main director stops by maybe twice a year. As stage manager, he has his own opinions of the show, but takes a diplomatic approach.

"I have to be Switzerland," he says. "I do nod my head a lot, even though I may have strong opinions, and I may voice them. But one thing I have learned, and it took me a long time to learn this, but it's important to listen to both sides of the story, whatever someone is going through."

O'Brien maintains that cast members be allowed to put personal stamps on their roles. "We give the actors enough freedom," he said. "Not every Elphaba is going to be exactly the same. We don't do cookie cutter replacements. We give people time to develop their version within the bounds of



One of the amazing contraptions unveiled in "Wicked."

what the director originally set.”

When the actresses playing Glinda and Elphaba click backstage, that chemistry enhances what audiences view on stage. When the actress playing Elphaba brings a vulnerability to the role, O'Brien delights in watching audiences experience the same heartbreak as the character.

As such, O'Brien never tires of the music of “Wicked,” nor serving as stage manager for it.

“That’s a big thing for me, what I can listen to eight times a week for a long period of time,” he said. “I liked the score of ‘Wicked’ when I first saw it, but now I love the score to ‘Wicked.’”

“I will still sometimes watch the end of the first act (“Defying Gravity”) to catch the audience’s reaction. It is still one of the best endings to a first act.”

And what about “For Good,” which speaks to so many people about life and friendship.

“It depends on the witches,” he said. “That’s one of those things where if the witches have developed a really strong relationship, even in their everyday lives, you see it happen on stage and yes, you do tear up.

“I love the song, but the song makes me tear up because of people I think of in my life more than in the context of the show. In the context of the show, that has worn off a bit. But when I think of people over the years, people I’ve lost, if that meaning is there, then that song is the best.”

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Amanda Jane Cooper as Glinda and Emily Koch as Elphaba.



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Backstage

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O'Brien for many years called New York home. These days, he has a house in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., although he rarely has more than 24 hours down time there. What especially keeps him attached to "Wicked" is the love and attention lavished on it by its creators: Schwartz and Holzman. The two still visit their touring companies to offer insight and inspiration.

"I adore Stephen Schwartz," O'Brien said. "Right before I came on board with 'Wicked,' I did a revival of 'Godspell.' He still cares so much about the shows he has written. He was there all the time. This tour has been out for seven years, and he will still come out, still smiling.

"It's really cool. I've done shows that have run for six or seven months, and we never saw the director and composer again. It's part of the reason for the longevity of 'Wicked.' They keep working on it and they keep giving insight into it, and that to me is fascinating."



Amanda Jane Cooper as Glinda. Photo by Joan Marcus

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Musical Theater Rock Guitarist Releases CD, Plans Acorn Theatre Show

by Andrew Tallackson

Throughout his career, Tristan Avakian has established himself as one of musical theater's most hardworking rock guitarists, whether it be in "Book of Mormon" and "Kinky Boots" or "Rock of Ages" and "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

It was during two North American theater tours, however, between spring 2013 and fall 2014, that Avakian felt a creative surge to write his own music, the first time in quite some time. Written primarily on a battered acoustic guitar, he made the decision to test each new song at open mic nights. It was the best way, he felt, to introduce himself and his music to varying communities.

And, the most terrifying.

"You couldn't be more exposed up there," Avakian said of the open-mic experience. "Theater is about spectacle. This is the opposite of that. My writing is in a hushed, confessional tone. There is an emotional intimacy to it."

"Not everyone can get up there and do it, but what they all have in common is they're brave. So for me, if what I wrote worked in that setting, it got to live on the CD. When a hushed silence fell over a room, it was unnerving, but I knew I had something."

From that experience, "As Waters" was born, a stark, raw, emotional compilation of 10 uniquely different songs. Nine are original, the 10th written by Beck Hansen, but never recorded by him.

Avakian will present music from "As Waters" in a concert Friday, Sept. 2, at The Acorn Theatre, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Heavily influenced by the 1960s "storyteller" style, his voice containing echoes of Bob Dylan and Trent Reznor, the CD unites varying styles, from orchestral, to Civil War ballad, to Revolver-era Beatles.

While he didn't realize it at the time, Avakian said his musical-theater background heavily influenced the way "As Waters" was structured.

"I paced it like a show," he said. "It bottoms out a bit in the second act, then there's a rousing finale. In a way, the CD is all over the map, but people tell me it works."

Getting "As Waters" recorded was an organic process that unfolded over a series of carefully plotted steps. Amid a stop with his theater company in Nashville, he recorded three songs with Gary Gold, a Grammy winning producer-musician who has

worked with the likes of Smokey Robinson, Bonnie Raitt, Christina Aguilera and Jennifer Hudson. That led to a fruitful Indiegogo campaign in June 2014 to secure additional funding. He recorded the remainder of the songs in Los Angeles, then returned to Nashville for the mixing process. Along the way, a slate of talented musicians with impressive credentials joined the recordings, including bass player Viktor Krauss, who has performed with Lyle Lovett, percussionist Petri Korpela, who has played with Josh Groban, guitarist Mike Waldron, who has appeared with Tanya Tucker and Martina McBride, and David Davidson, a Nashville-based session violinist, composer and concertmaster.

The experience so inspired him, Avakian decided to take a break from musical theater. Not that he didn't enjoy it. Performing with "Rock of Ages" tapped into his inner 19-year-old self, he says, while "Book of Mormon" never grew stale.

"There was stuff in 'Book of Mormon' that cracked me up every night," he said, "and I did that show for three months."

Now that the creative juices are flowing again, Avakian wants to focus more on his music.

So what lured him to The Acorn Theatre?

Avakian was born in New York and has lived in Toronto since 2006. He periodically spends time in La Porte County because it is the home of his parents, filmmakers Dorothy Tristan and John Hancock ("Prancer," "The Looking Glass"). From one of those visits sprang the idea for him to perform at The Acorn, which over

the years has emerged as a hip, bold avenue for artists of all ventures to test new material.

What marks an effective live performance? Avakian says it is when truth emerges, forging a connection with the audience.

"I'm expressing things that are pretty universal," he said. "I try to define a vocabulary for people, that we share the same desires and feelings. They know it when they experience it."

"And when someone picks up on it, it validates your own experiences. You feel like you make sense, and that is a tremendous relief."

(Visit www.acorntheater.com for more details on the Sept. 2 show.)



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9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit Opens at Blue Chip Casino

The 9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit, which features artifacts, videos, recordings and live tours, arrives for a six-day visit Wednesday, Aug. 31, at Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa.

The mobile effort is a high-tech, 53-foot tractor that unfolds into a 1,000-square-foot exhibit. It provides interactive education, including artifacts such as steel beams from the towers, documentary videos, recordings of first responder radio transmissions and live tours conducted by FDNY firefighters. The exhibit was created in 2013 by the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation as a tribute to lives sacrificed on Sept. 11, 2001. It is named in honor of Siller, a New York firefighter who gave his life helping others on



9/11.

On Tuesday, Aug. 30, the mobile exhibit will receive a first responder escort from La Porte County Emergency Services, police, fire and EMS, along with The Guardian Riders and The Wall Gang. At approximately 11 a.m., the exhibit semi will leave from Harley Davidson on Franklin Street, travel to Pine Street to U.S. 12 and end at Blue Chip

Exhibit hours are noon to 7 p.m. through Monday, Sept. 5, in Blue Chip's front parking lot. Open to all ages, it offers free admission with opportunities to donate to its non-profit partner, the Steven Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

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Hoosier Star Judges Announced

La Porte County Symphony Orchestra has announced the celebrity judges for its annual Hoosier Star competition.

Billy Jones is an Indiana-based singer, songwriter, musician and performer. Schooled in drums and percussion, he is the lead singer in COR and the lead singer and drummer for Aftermath. He also plays Latin percussion and sings for NAWTY Acoustic. He has opened for national acts such as Tim McGraw, Candlebox, Jackyl, Ratt and Joe Nichols. He sings at venues within the Chicagoland and northern Indiana area just about every week. An avid weight lifter, bodybuilder and personal trainer, he lives in Kingsbury with his wife, Lea Anne. They have four children and one grandson.



A Central Kentucky native, Tim King recently retired to Rolling Prairie after a 32-year career in arts administration in Louisville, Ky., which included executive director of the Louisville Orchestra, senior vice president of the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts and director of performing arts for the Jefferson County Public School System, which educates 105,000 students each year. His last project before retirement was the creation of Lincoln Elementary Performing Arts School and Western Middle School to serve as feeder programs for the Youth Performing Arts High School in Louisville.



Since arriving in La Porte County, he has soloed with La Porte County Symphony Orchestra, served as its interim executive director in 2015 and chaired the orchestra's "A La Carte" fundraiser for three years. He also is a professional singer who has appeared on 150 occasions with symphony orchestras

across the country, from Buffalo, N.Y., to Santa Barbara, Calif.

Tara Lonzo has worked as a freelance casting director for theaters from Europe to Los Angeles, and was the Goodman Theatre's casting director for 18 years. Broadway credits include multi-Tony-winning "Death of a Salesman," "Night of the Iguana" and "Moon for the Misbegotten." She began her career as a talent agent in Chicago and was booking Broadway by 23. She was invited to participate in the William Morris Training Program in Beverly Hills known as "The Mailroom" and "The Harvard of Show Business," where she ascended to the TV talent department. Her casting partner is award-winning casting director Marla Garlin. Together, Garlin & Lonzo cast the pilot for the current USA original series "Playing House" starring Lennon Parham, Jessica St. Clair and Keegan-Michael Key. Recently, she cast the pilot "Downwardly Mobile" (NBC/20th Century Fox) starring Roseanne Barr and John Goodman. She taught Advanced Casting Direction at Columbia College Chicago. She currently serves as artistic director at Dunes Summer Theatre in Michiana Shores.



Hoosier Star is at 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 10, at La Porte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. The event, a fundraiser for LCSO, features individuals in adult and youth divisions. This year, the judges' votes account for 25 percent of the overall vote total. The audience still plays a key role in selecting the winners. New this year as well: Duets are allowed as performances. Nanda Danitschek and Jeremiah Souza are the emcees.

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Shopping for Results

by Kevin Scott

Throughout the day, you're smacked in the face with advertisements for restaurants and different foods. Each claims to be the newest, the freshest, the cheapest, the best.

Each day, you also pass by fast food places and restaurants, each trying to lure you in for the latest special. But you are on a mission to eat healthy. You made that decision to adopt this lifestyle. So, as you drive by these stores and head into the grocery store, you're smacked in the face again with products, sales and decisions.

So, how do you figure out what is good, what is bad, what uses buzzwords and what ultimately will help achieve your goal?

Having a plan when you go into the grocery store is your best bet. Just like anything else, planning out your trip will help avoid impulse decisions, or unhealthy alternatives. Same goes for heading to the grocery store when you are hungry. Bad decision. Trust me.

So, let me help you with a plan to make healthier decisions at the grocery store. Let's start with the first one. Shop the perimeter. This is usually the most common one. The perimeter is where you find the fresh, whole, real foods like produce, meat and dairy options. This isn't to say, stay out of the middle aisles all together, but it leads to the next tip.

Be a label reader. Yes, I am telling you to be one of those people (us) who are reading the label before you put it in the cart. Is it annoying? No, it's smart shopping. Check out what is in your food. See what the macronutrient (fats, carbs and protein) levels are. Not calories. Do not get stuck on calories. Speak to someone about the importance of finding foods that are full of nutrients, even if they may be higher in calories. Remember, if you are watching total calories, you can hit that number pretty easy by just eating Big Macs and drinking Coca-Cola, but what nutritional value will you get out of those?

The next tip is to avoid endcaps. They typically won't have your best nutritional needs in mind. They will have processed foods they are trying to get rid of, or are high in added fats and sugars and low on the nutritional side. There always is the exception to this rule, but typically you will find that in the perimeter anyways. See Rule One.

Next is one I want to reiterate and stress the importance of: planning. At my office, I constantly have sticky note after sticky note of lists of what to do each day, week, workout, after work. When heading to the grocery store, make sure to take a

list. This can be a cumulative list after a week of reaching into the fridge and saying "Crap, I need that." Again, trial and error, and this is a personal lesson. Build your list throughout the week and prep for meals you are going to make. Chances are, if you go into the store without a list, you will tend to overbuy, and that always results in wasting food because they go bad.

(Remember, because you are buying healthy, whole foods that will spoil if not eaten, unlike McDonalds French fries and Twinkies that could survive a doomsday zombie apocalypse.)

The next rule is easy and doesn't take much to follow. If you can't pronounce something, chances are you shouldn't buy it. It is unrealistic to know EVERYTHING in the ingredient list, but if, when reading the label, you feel like me reading the words they give spellers at the ESPN Spelling Bee, chances are you shouldn't be putting it into your body. On food labels, the order of ingredients are top to bottom by weight of the ingredient in the product. Start checking out what is in your food, and reconsider some products you might be eating constantly.

The last rule is one that hits mainstream America in commercials, advertisements, magazines, newscasts — everywhere you are getting your news. Buzzwords. Did a couple pop into your mind? Organic? Natural? Yes, perfect. Some organic foods are über-expensive, while not completely necessary. Some are highly processed, but seemingly more healthy options from different parts of the world.

Back to a relatable example similar to the Big Mac. An organic is still a cake. While in its true essence, organic foods avoid genetic modifications and harmful pesticides, they might not be as supremely nutritious to their normal, lower-priced counterparts. Now, with natural products, it seems food companies are just sitting outside your window, playing a love song that talks about natural, healthy, high values. A snack in a vending machine can smack the word natural on it and still be packed with ingredients you can't read and lack nutrients you need.

A smart shopper is a healthy shopper. Be wise to food packaging and buzzwords. Just like stomach wraps, cleanses and detoxes, products that ooze of quick fix and low calorie can be just as bad as a plate of desserts. If you are on a fitness journey, no matter what the destination, nutrition plays in integral role.

Contact Kevin Scott at kevinthomasscott00@gmail.com

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving
Calories 230

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 8g 10%

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%

Dietary Fiber 4g 14%

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8mg 45%

Potassium 235mg 6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

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Fernwood Botanical Garden

Kim Pilarski-Hall and Chip Schaddelee will lead TED-style talks about nature, as well as a field trip to the prairie, at 10:30 a.m. EDT Saturday, Aug. 27, at Fernwood Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve.

A TED-style talk involves a non-profit entity sharing information in almost any topic.

Pilarski-Hall and Schaddelee will discuss the development and personal connection Southwest Michigan's natural environment has had on them, and how it has influenced their lives.



Kim Pilarski-Hall

Schaddelee started his career by teaching an advanced natural science course at Fernwood from 1976 to 1978. He would go on to teach science and biology at secondary schools for more than 30 years. He also would work with The Nature Conservancy in Michigan and later partner with Bill Martinus to lead trips to various parts of the country for a week or two to look for botanical specialties.

After growing up in Buchanan, Pilarski-Hall, would leave the region after graduation and move to Knoxville, Tenn., where she has lived for the last 34 years working as a wetland biologist with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Pilarski-Hall and Schaddelee will shed light on their childhood love of the outdoors, and how classes at Fernwood inspired them in their careers, lifestyles and love of learning in nature. Pilarski-Hall also will give a brief overview of her late husband, Rikki, his book "Six Legs and a Buzz" and detail how lifestyle choices and environmental awareness played out in their daily lives. "Six Legs and a Buzz" will be available for purchase.

After the talk, a brief field trip heads to the prairie, then to the oak-wooded sandbar area along the river, where Schaddelee will point out the insects, wildflowers and animals that live there.

The program is free with paid admission. Fernwood is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Register at www.fernwoodbotanical.org. Call (269) 695-6491 for more details.

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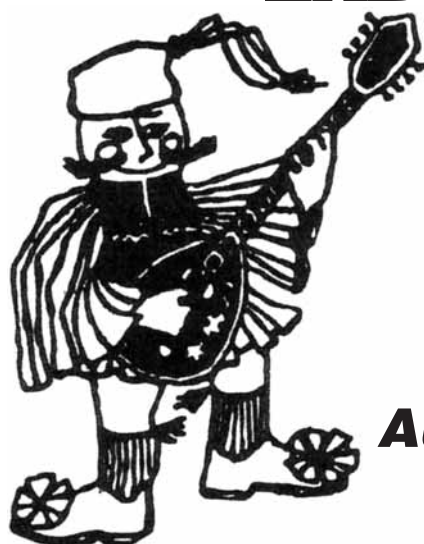
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This year marks the 35th anniversary of Steven Spielberg's "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and Three Oaks, Mich., is celebrating with a free showing on Friday, Aug. 26, at Dewey Cannon Park. The event will feature a 30-foot screen. It starts at dusk. Seating is available; however, picnic baskets, lawn chairs and lawn blankets are welcome. The showing is presented by a public/private partnership sponsored by the Village of Three Oaks, The Acorn Theater, Three Oaks Art and Education Center, Vickers Theatre and Harbor Arts.

Gardena Playground Renovation

Gardena Playground, 900 Gardena St., Michigan City, will be closed for demolition and renovation.

The project is expected to be completed by early November. Visit www.michigancityparks.com or contact the Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department at (219) 873-1506 for more details.

Registration Opens for Eco Program

Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve will begin taking registration for its Environmental Studies Programs for the 2016-2017 season starting at 8 a.m. EDT Wednesday, Aug. 31.

Each year, nearly 5,000 area students and youth groups participate in Fernwood's ESP programs, either on site or through the in-school Travelling Naturalist program. They are based on a science curriculum that incorporates basic state guidelines and hands-on activities at age-appropriate levels. Slots fill quickly.

The curriculum supports what schools are teaching, and on-site visits give children hands-on experience. On-site programs run 1½ to 2 hours and are tailored to the season. The fee is \$3.50 per student; teachers and adults are free (donations are accepted).

In-school Travelling Naturalist programs are offered January through March, with limited availability during the rest of the school year. Fees start at \$50 for one class/program and increase based on the number of programs, with an additional 45 cents per mile above 20 miles round trip from Fernwood.

Fernwood is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Call (269) 695-6491 or visit www.fernwoodbotanical.org for more details.

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Gene Barge: Swinging with Daddy G

by Kim Ward

What makes a musician a legend?

If it is longevity, Gene Barge has that covered. The saxophonist, producer and composer turned 90 on Aug. 9 and has been playing music for more than six decades.

If legends are people who transformed the shape of music by changing, or helping create, a new genre, then Barge is a true music legend.



Gene Barge.

In the 1950s, rhythm & blues changed the musical landscape in America. As a pioneer of this new sound, Gene “Daddy G” Barge says this new genre was a natural product of the integration of swinging jazz and rhythmic blues. Born in Norfolk, Va., Barge moved to Chicago in the early 1960s and began working for the world-renowned Chess Records. While with the record label, he produced, composed and recorded with the likes of Fats Domino, Little Milton, Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters, just to name a few. Subsequently, he continued to work with musical giants like Natalie Cole, Buddy Guy and The Rolling Stones, even securing acting roles in eight major films, including: “Code of Silence,” “Above the Law,” “Under Siege,” “The Package” and “The Fugitive.”

Today, Barge is still keeping company with legends while also working with younger artists. The Chicago Rhythm and Blues

Kings have been belting out Windy City Blues for more than 20 years, and Barge, who produced three of their albums, plays select gigs with the band. The saxophonist recently teamed up with Gary “U.S.” Bonds, Public Enemy frontman Chuck D and Daddy O of Stetsasonic fame to record a reboot of Bonds’ 1961 classic hit “Quarter to Three.” Barge says the project “replicates the old feeling, then brings in the hip-hop element.”

This Labor Day weekend, Barge and the Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings will perform on the main stage of the Ship and Shore Blues Festival in Michigan City. Art+Times recently spoke to the music legend about his career and music.

Art+Times: You’ve had an interesting career. Where did music start for you?

Gene Barge: My daddy started playing banjo with a band long before I was born, and I was influenced a little bit by the music that he was playing. I was in the school band when I was in junior high school and by high school, they had disbanded the band. My high school was Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, Va., and there were some big football powers in that area, and they needed to start the band again, so we started the band. So that’s basically how I got started. But I was more interested in sports than I was in music at the time.

Art+Times: R&B started around 1953, correct?

GB: Well, yes, but it actually started before that.

Art+Times: What type of music were you playing before 1953?

GB: I was playing light jazz. I was in the college jazz band, and I was in the marching band, and I was a music major at West Virginia State College. Then I started playing with a band called the Griffin Brothers, which was an R&B and blues band back in the early ’50s.

Art+Times: When artists transition from one genre of music to another, or when a new genre of music is created like R&B, there is usually some kind of disruption. Did you experience any backlash, or were people receptive to this then new genre of music known as R&B?

GB: Well, you know, this transition was just natural. Back in them days, you had



Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings.

Art+Times
where art and culture intersect

the Griffin Brothers and the guys that were playing like the swing jazz and the blues. It was like a fusion of music had blossomed into a form of music that is now known as rhythm and blues. The media and a lot of those guys named it rhythm and blues. It was a few years after the war, and people were out danc-



Fats Domino.

ing, and jazz music in our community was kind of fading a little, and then this music pops up and the small groups and the small combos and Milburn and all of these singers rose out of it. So there you have the rhythm and blues in the '50s going full blast. Fats Domino came on the scene, and all of a sudden, you have all of

these blues groups and eventually it went into a sophisticated blues, which is R&B.

Art+Times: Over the years, jazz has had to struggle to stay relevant. Blues seems to be dealing with that same issue.

GB: Well, blues has been mostly saved by white people now. White people in their 40s and 50s, those seem to be the ones that turn out for the blues. My people, they are more or less into the more popular R&B and hip-hop.

Art+Times: Why do you think that is, considering the fact that blues was created by African Americans?

GB: Well, you know, the blues is more of folk music. It tells a story. White people are more into folk music because they brought that over from Ireland and Scotland and different parts of Europe, and that evolved into country music. Country music is folk music. They started telling all of these stories, all of these tales in a different ethnic light, and that is what became country western music. Our music came from our time singing in the church — from gospel music. Gospel music is what influenced rhythm and blues music.

Art+Times: A lot of the jazz musicians during the civil rights movement participated in the movement by creating music that can be considered anthems for those who fought for civil rights. Did blues musicians do the same thing?

GB: Sure, most definitely. You've got those in the blues and in rhythm and blues who were some of the most rebellious guys against the system. But most of the early rhythm and blues guys were rural musicians that came

off of farms into music. They came out of the agricultural system and sharecropping in the South, so they were definitely more rebellious and very vocal about the movement.

Art+Times: Let's talk about your time working at Chess Records in the '60s. Isn't it true that Minnie Riperton started out as a receptionist, and then became a background singer at Chess when you were there?

GB: Back in 1964, Minnie was in high school. And she was in a little group called the Gems. And they came by Chess Records, I think, to try to get a recording deal, and right away they couldn't get signed. But Billy Davis, who was the head of music at Chess at the time, kind of took them in and encouraged them to hang out to practice and re-



Minnie Riperton.

hearse and let them hang out. And then eventually, every once in a while, they started using them as background voices on some of the other artists that were recording at the time. So Minnie was very talented on backgrounds. She could sing various parts on background. So they eventually recorded the group that she was in, but the group didn't obtain any type of popularity as they had hoped, and Minnie stuck around as a background singer.

Art+Times: At Chess Records, you worked with legends like Little Milton, Billy Stuart, The Dells, Muddy Waters, just to name a few. What was it like being part of that? That was almost like working at Motown, wasn't it?

GB: Well it was. In fact, Motown evolved out of what Chess was doing. The early association that Barry Gordy had with Chess was with the Barry Strong record, "Money, That's What I Want." Billy Davis was working with one of Barry Gordy's song writing partners at the moment along with Smoky (Robinson), and they were back and forth out of Chicago. So when Motown got hot in the '60s, Chess got hot, too. So they were like competition. They were very competitive with each other. Motown evolved

out of Barry's ideas and his way of doing things, but we had the in-house rhythm section.

Art+Times: You began working with Marvin Yancy in the early '70s and had the opportunity to record on some of Natalie Cole's early hits, including "Sophisticated Lady," for which you

More About the Festival

Ship and Shore Blues Festival will honor law enforcement, firefighters and EMS personnel Sunday, Sept. 4. Free admission will be provided to first responders from Michigan City, La Porte and Long Beach with ID and accompanying family members.

Gene Barge Continued from Page 21
won a Grammy. How did you meet Natalie and come to work with her early in her career?



Marvin Yancy

GB: Marvin Yancy was a young kid, around 20 or 21, and Inez Andrews, the gospel singer, had invited me over to her house to possibly do something with her. So I said, "Well, I've never heard you sing." So she said OK, and called upstairs, and downstairs came Marvin Yancy. He was hanging out with her daughter. So Marvin came down and played, and that's when I met Marvin. Then, Marvin hooked up with Jesse Jackson's brother, Chuck Jackson, and they became the team that ended up with Natalie Cole. I ended up with them doing the very first demo session with Natalie, downtown Chicago at Universal Studios doing the four songs that got her started.



Natalie Cole.

Art+Times: Were you surprised that you won the Grammy, and did anything change after that for you?

GB: I had been nominated for Grammys before because I had worked with Muddy Waters and

Little Milton. These people were at the top of the charts then. I had gotten nominated with the John Clema jazz album at Chess, and we didn't win, but I was nominated, which was close. And I was involved with the Grammys. I was the vice president of the Chicago chapter, so I was involved with it for a long time. So it was like some of the stuff that goes with the business, I guess.

Art+Times: You also got to play in the rhythm section of The Rolling Stones. What was it like traveling with them? And how much of an influence has blues had on their music, if any?

GB: Ahmet Ertegun, who was the president of Atlantic Records, and I had become friends. So he decided that he wanted to come to Chicago and do some blues, and he called me and asked me what studio he could use because the Chess studios were closing. So I set up the session and everything for him. And before he came in, he said, 'Incidentally, I'm bringing Mick Jagger with me. He's going to hang out while I'm in Chicago.' So we recorded for a week, and Mick and I hung out for a week, and that's how I got to know him. So when he (Mick Jagger) left Chicago, I wrote him a letter and told him that if he ever needed a saxophone player to let me know. Ironically, in 1981, Ernie Watts, the great saxophone player, did the American tour for The Rolling Stones, and he quit. Around the time the tour was over, Mick decided that he wanted to tour Europe, and Ernie Watts didn't want to make that tour. So Mick called me himself and asked me would I do it, and that's how it happened.



Mick Jagger.

Here's the thing about the Stones: Mick Jagger and them had been listening to and were influenced by the early recordings on Chess Records. In fact, Willie Dixon, one of the greatest blues writers ever, wrote a song called "Rolling Stone," and they took

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their name from it. And when they came to Chicago, they used the Chicago studios to try to capture some of that sound, and they got their first single hit out of Chicago. They came back again the next year, in 1964. I wasn't there at the time. I was still in Virginia. I was destined to come a few weeks later. But they recorded "I Miss You" with Sugar Blue on the harmonica, which was one of the big singles that helped to get them over in terms of worldwide popularity. So they were strongly influenced by what was going on at Chess.

Art+Times: Buddy Guy is probably one of the most influential names in blues today. How did you end up meeting him?



Buddy Guy.

GB: Buddy Guy was hanging out at Chess trying to get a deal, and he did some sessions with Willie Dixon. They were good friends. My association with Buddy came when Willie brought us together. One of the things we did together was "Wang, Dang, Doodle." And from that point on,

Buddy formed a band, and I was in Buddy's band, and we performed in all of the clubs in and around Chicago. He wanted to do an album. He had already done some recordings, but he wanted to do an album. So I produced his first really good album called "I Left My Blues in San Francisco." Buddy and I are really, really good friends.

Art+Times: How does blues stay relevant with the younger generation?

GB: Blues influences the music today. It's not the

favorite music of the young folks today, but the music that they listen to is influenced by it, they just don't realize it. The blues has been merged and integrated into the sound we have today. And the blues will always be with us, it will always be there. It just won't be as basic as it was in the '40s and '50s. Who knows where the evolution of the music will end up?

Art+Times: The Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings will be playing at the Ship and Shore Blues Festival in September. Tell us what audiences can expect to hear.

GB: The Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings is an evolution of Big Twists and Mellow Fellows. This is a hard-hitting blues band that does R&B and the blues. It's a band that does music from the past with a modern twist to it. We think we play really well.

(Gene Barge and the Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings will perform during the Ship and Shore Blues Festival. Visit www.shipandshorebluesfestival.com for a full schedule of events and to buy tickets.)

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Glen Rosenbaum drove to Comiskey Park on Saturday and met with the team. Manager Eddie Stanky and pitching coach Marve Grissom didn't want their starting pitchers throwing batting practice anymore. They wanted a dedicated BP pitcher — someone with great control, with a lot of different pitches and could throw strikes. They felt Glen was the best man for the job.

Back at the factory in Indiana, Glen visited his brother-in-law's office Monday morning. Bob Liggett gave him a dirty look. "You told me that you were through with that damn ballgame," he said.

Glen admitted he was done, but wanted to try this. "If I go down there and things don't work out, can I have my job back?," Glen asked. Bob hemmed and hawed, but finally relented.

"When it came to spring training, I went. I worked out with the team and threw BP, and it was what they were wanting — somebody to throw strikes and everything, so I signed a contract. That was during the summer, and then during the winter, I went back to work at the factory."

What did Shirley think of the decision?

"I had a good job, and she figured we didn't have to worry about that, so I don't imagine she was as thrilled about it as I was," Glen said smiling.

Why go back to baseball?

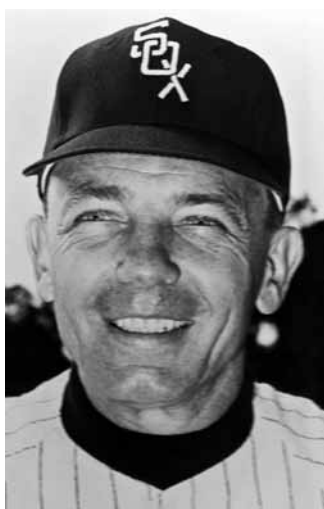
"I didn't especially like standing there at that lathe for eight hours a day," he said. "You talk about pressure. They gave you a tenth or a thousandth tolerance on that stuff that I was running on that lathe. You see your foreman come by with his mic checking that — getting the readings on each piece. You talk about a little bit of heart pounding. If you sent many of those back to the foundry to be scrapped — out the door."

Still, you had to harbor some bitterness, and rightfully so.

"Well, you have to turn the page," Glen said. "You live in the past, you lose your future."

After a two-year hiatus, Glen was back in baseball in 1968, traveling with the team and throwing batting practice to the players. Glen threw 300 pitches in an hour before every game and had to learn something new.

"I had to learn to make the ball



Eddie Stanky

Editor's note — Today marks the final installment of Matt Werner's four-part series on Glen Rosenbaum's experiences in minor and major league baseball. Ensuing articles in our series on America's favorite pastime will feature other local residents, locations and subjects.

by Matthew Werner

go straight throwing as often as I did," he said. "As the arm starts to get a little bit tired, the ball starts to move more. That is how you learn to make a ball move, by taking a little something off. Now, I had to work on trying to keep the ball straight. You don't want balls going in there and hitting guys on the fist in batting practice."

His second challenge involved the dress code. In the minor leagues, nobody dressed up before games or when traveling on the road. In major league baseball, the team expected you to be in a suit and tie. Before hitting the road, Glen bought two suits with reversible vests from Droege's in La Porte. It was quite a contrast to his roommate, Luis Aparicio.

"Luis was like a guy out of GQ," Glen said. "God, did he dress!"

On their first road trip in Baltimore, Glen's two suits hung next to Luis' wardrobe of suits, sport coats, beautiful neck ties and tailored shirts. Luis said matter of factly, "Roomie, whatever you want, go ahead. Whatever fits — wear it. I don't care."

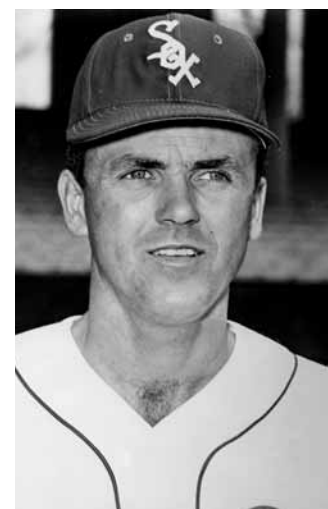
A Baseball Life



Glen and Shirley Rosenbaum at Tiger Stadium in 1973.



Glen Rosenbaum throwing at batting practice in this undated photo.



Glen Rosenbaum

stuck warming up Wilbur Wood because the regular catcher wasn't available. Wood threw knuckleballs — a particularly difficult pitch to catch. Glen put on the full catcher's gear and crouched down. Wood threw and the ball fluttered and danced about. Glen slapped at the ball, knocked it down and chased after it this way and that before throwing it back to Wood, who wanted to warm up in a hurry. But that wasn't working out.

"I apologized to him and told him I didn't know where the hell the catcher was. It was a bad experience," Glen said. But that was far from his worst bullpen experience. "The worst place to warm up pitchers was in Boston."

Carlton Fisk had the day off, and he and Glen were warming up right- and left-handed pitchers. "Batteries and 50-cent pieces came slinging down past our heads. The people in the stands were throwing that at us! They were brutal. The visiting bullpen was right there up against the right field stands. They were belligerent, and as soon as one of our guys would get up there on the mound to start throwing, they would start in on him. They were only 6 or 7 feet from them, screaming. We pretty much stayed underneath that roof there because the second you stuck your head out, it was instant. They were on you."

For eight years, Glen showed up in Florida for spring training, then traveled with the team all summer. Every winter, he stood at a metal lathe in a factory in Indiana.

In 1976, Bill Veeck bought the White Sox and moved Don Unferth from traveling secretary to the director of public relations. Unferth recommended Glen to replace him. It sounded so good to Veeck that he didn't even bother to interview Glen, or anybody else for that matter. Glen got the job, which was a full-time, year-round gig. He immediately quit his factory job.

In 1983, the Chicago White Sox hosted the 50th anniversary All-Star game. The organization went all out for the players — past and present. For the first time, Glen felt a bit of anxiety, and it happened while throwing batting practice before the old-timer's game.



Bill Veeck

asked. "You have better stuff than some of my pitchers."

Oftentimes, the guys held home-run hitting contests. Try to hit a towering shot on top of Comiskey Park's roof high above the upper deck of the outfield seats. "They would jack everything as hard as they could swing — to see how far they could hit it. During regular batting practice, I probably saw 30 or more hit up on the roof," Glen said. "I probably saw 10 or 11 on the roof in the years that I was there during a game."

"Tommy Egan, No. 1 catcher, hit one up there. Ron Kittle, Greg Luzinski, Oscar Gamble, Dick Allen, Wayne Nordhagen, Buddy Bradford — they were the main ones. Bradford — you didn't think he could hit a ball that far. He was sort of a wiry kid."

After throwing batting practice, Glen hit fungos to the outfielders, changed shirts and headed to the bullpen to warm up the starting pitcher, then oversee the bullpen pitchers. Once in New York, Glen got

A Baseball Life Continued from Page 25

"I was a little anxious when I threw to all those Yankee old-timers that Sunday afternoon," he said. "It is just the anticipation thinking, 'I don't want to hit one of them!'"

Some of the players in the old-timer's All-Star game were Glen's former teammates and opponents when they played minor league ball in the 1950s and 1960s. They were out of baseball, participating in an old-timer's game. Glen was still on the mound — pitching strong and having fun.

During batting practice for the main event, the active players of the American League were having a good time, seeing how far they could drive the ball beyond the outfield wall.

"Fred Lynn hit one on the roof off me in batting practice, and he hit one off the back wall in center field — the old cement wall," Glen said. Both shots took incredible power to hit a ball that far.

In the second inning of the game that night, Lynn stepped up to the plate with bases loaded and smacked a line drive into the right-field bleachers for the All-Star game's first, and only, grand slam home run.

The upper deck of Comiskey Park vibrated as fans danced, screaming and hollering. As Lynn trotted around the bases, the White Sox faithful taught the crowd how to sing, "Na Na, Hey Hey (Kiss Him Goodbye)." People could barely hear the organ music or the fireworks exploding from the scoreboard above their own roar. It was a beautiful night, and the American League won 13-3.

That year, the White Sox won the American League West Division. *Sports Illustrated* surveyed



Fred Lynn

all major league hitters and named Glen the best batting practice pitcher in Major League Baseball.

In 1984, Glen threw batting practice to the USA Olympic baseball team. Afterward, the coaches commended him. "Man, that was the best BP we've ever had. Is there anything we can do for you?," they asked.

"Sure, I'd like to keep this Team USA jersey, if I could," Glen said.

"Done."

That same year, the White Sox retired Luis Aparicio's number. When he saw Glen at the ceremony, he smiled and said, "Hey roomie! How you doing?"

The White Sox closed Comiskey Park in 1990 and moved next door to a new stadium. Glen had rotator cuff surgery that winter and hung up his batting practice uniform after 23 years. He was 54 years old and the only full-time batting practice pitcher to work at the old Comiskey Park. But he wasn't done with the organization. He remained the traveling secretary, a job that took tremendous time and patience.

"Baseball — all the years that I spent in it — while I was on the field it was fun. As soon as you left the field, it was work. Being on the field relieved the pressure of the traveling secretary job and the hassles and grumbles that you got. While you were doing your thing, you were in your own little world."

Traveling secretary "was a demanding job. You were everybody's servant," Glen said. At any given moment, he had to coordinate travel arrangements for 40 people: 25 players, five coaches, one general manager, four radio and TV broadcasters, one bullpen catcher, two trainers, one strength coach and the equipment manager. They also had to get all of that equipment between points. Fly out in the mid-



Luis Aparicio

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dle of the night, arrive in a new city early in the morning. Tip the bus drivers, tip the bell hops, tip the clubhouse managers, tip the concierges.

"You tipped everybody when you went on the road," he said. "You always made sure you had money on you constantly."

Wake up and do it all over again. One-hundred-sixty-two games. Hotel rooms, buses to and from the stadiums, airfare, meal money, dinner arrangements for special events and coordinating tickets for players' families and guests. Scouts who traveled in advance of the team relied on Glen for hotels and airfare, too, and hey, my family is in New York, do you think you can get them a couple tickets to the Yankees game? Suuuuurrrre, I can. Then, he was on the phone trading favors with ticket office agents.

Guys were getting called up from the minors, and guys were getting sent down to the minors. They all relied on Glen. Before all of that, there were two months of spring training when many more guys were there — always coming and going, always on the move.

"They got their money's worth out of me," Glen said.

One player especially appreciated Glen's work. When the team traveled to New York, short stop Ozzie Guillen asked Glen to pick out a sportcoat or suit from a tailor's shop, then he footed the bill. After Glen handed out meal money, Guillen sometimes slid a \$100 bill into Glen's shirt pocket, then slipped to the back of the plane.

"All those years as traveling secretary, how many other players did that?" I asked.

"None," Glen said.

In 1991, Major League Baseball named Glen Traveling Secretary of the Year.

Complimentary tickets for family and guests were always the most difficult part of the job, but "once the tickets were done



Bill Melton

and the game started, I got to go upstairs and all the stress left," Glen said. "I enjoyed being in the press box after many years of being on the field were over. I kept score every game. I had fun with the writers and with the other traveling secretaries and the ticket offices."

In Chicago, he sat with Jerry Holtzman, John Carmichael, Bill Gleason, Joe Mooshill and Joe Goddard as they sparred in the press box. They asked Glen what was going on in the game and asked him for stories about his years in baseball.

On the road, he sat and talked with Bob Feller in Cleveland and Buck O'Neil in Kansas City. In New York, he sat in Arthur Richman's office, and the two watched a couple innings of baseball and told stories. He befriended many scouts, including Clyde McCullough, Frank Malzone and Wes Westrum. "I would sit behind Wes or right beside him at every ballpark we were together," Glen said.

The best part was "just being part of the organization, and knowing that it was an important role, and knowing that you represented the whole organization when you were on the road."

When Glen retired from professional baseball for good, Mayor Richard M. Daley declared September 28, 1998, Glen Rosenbaum Day in Chicago. All told, he pitched 11 seasons of minor league baseball and compiled a 95-45 record. He threw batting practice for 23 years. He was traveling secretary for 23 years. He coached for six years. He filled many other roles neither he nor anybody else he worked with can completely recall.

"I miss all the guys. You miss the camaraderie that you had with the people because you are comfortable with a group. You don't pretend — it's just whoever you are," Glen said. "I miss a lot of the good



Sean Manaea



Ron Kittle

Continued on Page 28

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A Baseball Life Continued from Page 27

ballplayers because a lot of the good ballplayers were fun."

Throughout his 42 years of baseball, Glen worked alongside many great players, coaches and executives. Luke Appling, Johnny Mostil, Nellie Fox, Luis Aparacio, Billy Pierce, Sherm Lollar, Minnie Minoso, Rich Allen, Bill Melton, Eric Soderholm, Oscar Gamble, Harold Baines, Richard Dotson, Roland Hemond, Tony LaRussa, Jerry Reinsdorf, Greg Walker, Bobby Thigpen, Ozzie Guillen and Frank Thomas — he worked with all of them and many more. He worked with half of the White Sox Hall of Fame inductees, and eight of the 10 players who have who have had their number retired by the team.

Glen still follows the game closely. He knows more about baseball and pitching than most people — including those who now play the game — will ever learn. It takes him a few seconds to know what a pitcher is doing well, or what mistakes he's making. He can tell you a pitcher's breaking ball isn't breaking, he's lost velocity, his mechanics aren't right, he's tipping his pitches or he's just having a bad outing.

He watched Wanatah native Sean Manaea pitch in high school and is following his first year in the major leagues this season.

"Remember, he hasn't thrown a full minor league season of pitches yet," Glen said. "He'll do all right. They'll

give him every opportunity to succeed."

On summer days, you can find Glen standing in his yard, working in the garden or meeting friends with his cool smile and easy blue eyes. He's as lean as the day he threw his last pitch, hands jammed into his back pockets while he shoots the breeze just like he did when he was on the farm. Just like he did when he was on the field of a major league ballpark.

Glen celebrated his 80th birthday in June. Friends and family showed up to have some cake, wish him happy birthday and reminisce. He flashed his big, cool smile and greeted people with, "Hey there, whaddya' say?" He gave his signature handshake that says, let's remember that we met today.

His family displayed photographs and memorabilia. There was the mitt Glen's catcher wore for four years at Union Mills High School. Photographs showed Glen's parents, him as a child on the farm, playing high school baseball, his first minor-league team, getting married, father-son day at Comiskey Park, him throwing batting practice and working on the field of major league baseball stadiums across the country. There was a photo of Glen with President Jimmy Carter and photos dressed in various White Sox uniforms visiting with Hall Of Famers he'd befriended, including Brooks Robinson, Harmon Killebrew and George Kell.

All of those experiences Glen owes to one man: Gad-



Glen (center) at his 80th birthday bash with his son, Scott, and Scott's girlfriend, Michelle.



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get Ward, the umpire of an amateur baseball game in La Porte who asked him if he could call a White Sox scout to watch him pitch. Glen has never forgotten him and has been eternally grateful.

On a scorching hot Sunday in late July, Glen and I went to U.S. Cellular Field to watch a White Sox game. We entered through the employee back gate, visited the director of team travel, then walked down the front office hallway. People kept calling out his name. "Hey, Rosie!" Executive Vice President Ken Williams said when he saw him. "Rosie! Good to see you," Buddy Bell, assistant general manager, called out.

Secretaries stopped and hugged him. The senior director of media relations stopped Glen and they talked — White Sox, baseball, Glen's years with the team. This wasn't idle chit-chat, hey-how-are-you stuff. Everybody wanted to have a conversation with him. It took us nearly an hour to get to the main entrance so we could get to our seats.

During the game, something would jog Glen's memory and another story came out. He talked about the bench jockeys and hollering at opposing batters. He chatted with ushers he knew.

The Sox played the ninth inning of the previous day's game and won. In the second game, the Sox lead in the ninth inning, 4-1. The prospect of two victories in one afternoon had us feeling good. Then, the White Sox bullpen allowed three home runs to tie the game. Glen's high spirits ratcheted down. That competitive drive — that die-hard baseball spirit — rose up.

"I can't hardly watch this," Glen said. "They let up another homer and I'm leaving. I'm not staying for extra innings, I'll tell you that."

I didn't blame him. The outfield thermometer



Ken Williams

read 93 degrees. Enough was enough. But the Sox still had three outs to win the game. We decided to watch from the concourse.

With a walked batter and a sacrifice bunt, the White Sox had a man in scoring position. Adam Eaton slapped a single that drove home the winning run. As the crowd roared, Glen threw his fists in the air and did a skip and a jump. "Alright!" he hollered, flashing a big smile.

Back downstairs at the main entrance, a security guard stopped us from entering the main office hallway to get back to our car. He was just doing his job, but we were stuck. Then, the senior director of park operations, Greg Hopwood, turned the corner. "Hey-ey! Rosie! What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Trying to get back to our car," Glen said.

Hopwood looked at the young man in the security uniform. "Oh, we got a lot of new people around here," he said. He nodded to Glen. "This is Glen Rosenbaum — this building is practically *named* after him! Rosie can go anywhere he wants around here."

The security guard smiled and nodded his head. Glen laughed it off, and we were on our way.

All those people, all those years, all those game. What does he miss the most?

"The behind-the-scenes people — that's where the fun was," Glen said. "I knew the plumbers, the electricians, the carpenters,

and I would go in the carpenter's office on my lunch break sometimes and sit and shoot the breeze with them. That's the people I miss most."

Plumbers, electricians and carpenters. Glen Rosenbaum always was, and always will be, a simple Indiana farm boy who has led a remarkable baseball life.



Matt Werner with Glen Rosenbaum at a White Sox-Tigers game on July 24.

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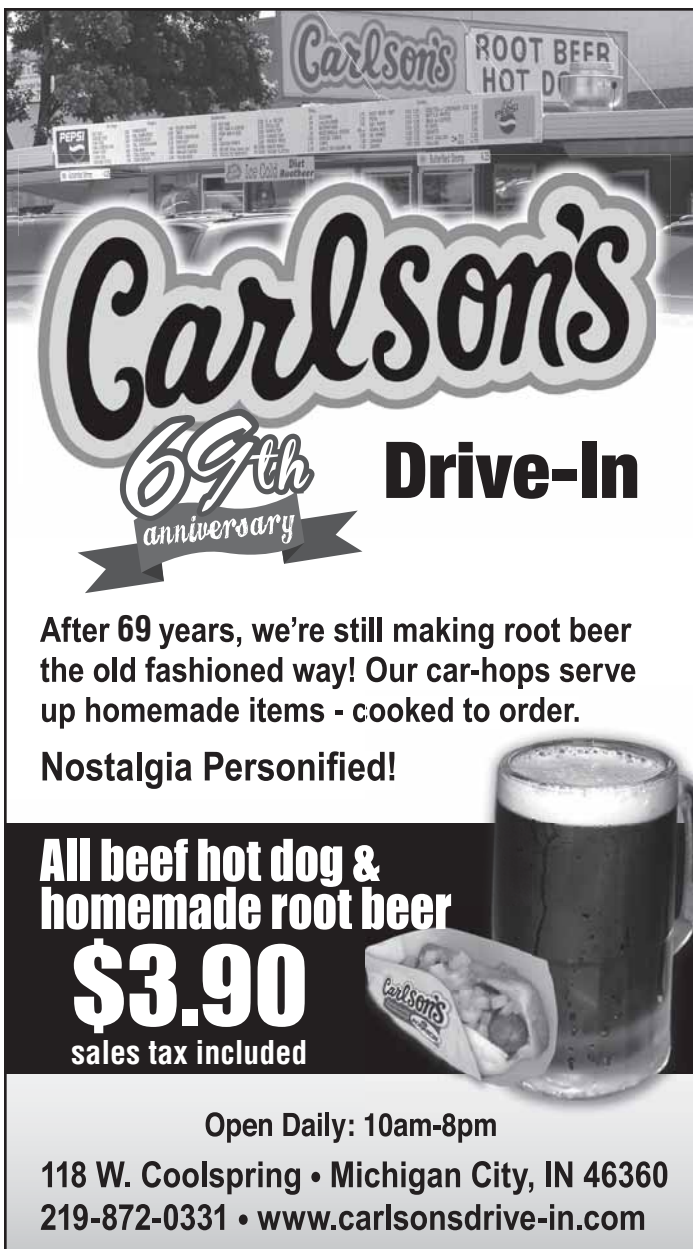
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Stargaze and Beer Event

Through a partnership with Indiana Dunes State Park and Zorn Brew Works, a stargaze event is at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, in the gardens at Barker Mansion, 631 Washington St.

Guests will peer through a powerful telescope and experience night-sky interpretation by Brad Bumgardner of Indiana Dunes State Park, viewing some of the same constellations the Barkers would have seen when living at the mansion more than 100 years back.

Beer from Zorn Brew Works, Michigan City's newest craft brewery, will be offered to those with a valid ID. Snacks will be served and lemonade made available for children or adults not wanting beer.

The cost is \$20 per adult and \$15 per youth, or those not drinking beer. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite at tinyurl.com/jxqlzk3 or by calling the mansion at (219) 873-1520. Advance ticket purchase is required.

Charity Golf Outing

La Porte Fire Department L363 will host its first Charity Golf Outing on Friday, Sept. 2, at Beechwood Golf Course, 2222 Woodlawn Drive, La Porte.

Registration and lunch are at 11 a.m., with a shotgun start at noon. Golf is in a Four-Man Best Ball format. The cost is \$70 per golfer or \$280 per team. Prizes include Closest to Pin, Longest Drive, Longest Putt and Raffles. Additional food and beverages will be available.

The event supports Meyer's Mile under construction at Hailmann Elementary School. It will include a trail, outside classroom, benches and outdoor decorations. Contact Zach Kanney at (219) 363-7320 or zach.kanney@laportefire.com for more information.

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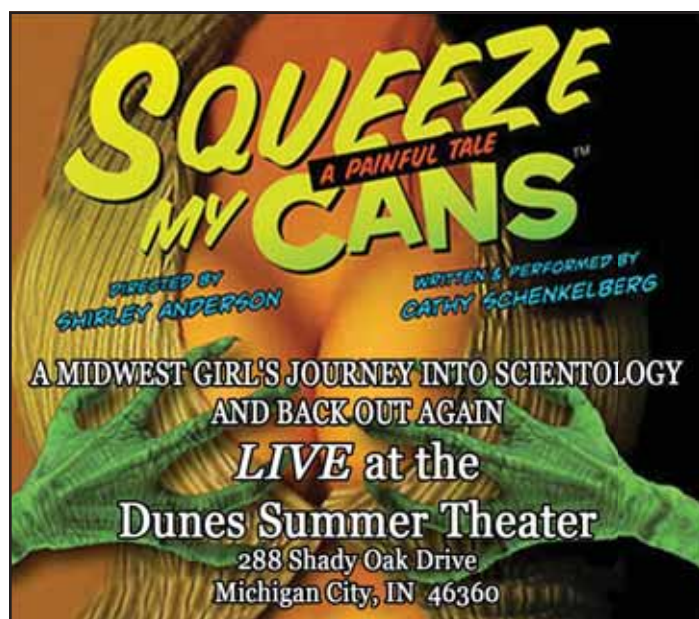
• **Friday Afternoon at the Movies: "The Finest Hours" at 2 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26.**

The docudrama depicts the true story of a daring Coast Guard rescue operation off Cape Cod during a ferocious storm in the winter of 1952.

• **Indiana Public Retirement System Retirement Benefit Workshop at 1 and 5 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30.**

The retirement workshops are for PERF or TRF members. Anyone approaching retirement and an INPRS member can register at www.inprs.in.gov or call (888) 286-3544.

Contact Robin Kohn at (219) 873-3049 for more information on library programming.



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Zoo to Unveil New Lions

Washington Park Zoo will unveil its two new African lions during a welcoming party from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27.

A rescue zoo in Nevada donated the yet-unnamed 2½-year-old male and 3-year-old female. Donations made to the Zoo Society helped make the acquisition possible.

All animals at the zoo act as conservation ambassadors for their wild cousins, according to a press release. With the addition of the two lions, the hope is to convey the message that these animals are threatened with extinction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists African lions as a threatened species, but increasing human populations in Africa are reducing and fragmenting the lion population. One of the biggest dangers facing wild lions is retaliation from local African ranchers who kill the lions for preying on their livestock.

The unveiling is part of the Zoo-B-Q event, which will have limited tickets sold so the crowd is smaller. Tickets include a buffet dinner, silent auction and live animal encounter/show from Silly Safari. Each child attending the event receives a ticket at the door for a chance to win one of 100 "Lion King" plush cubs. Advance tickets, which are required and sold at the zoo office, are \$15 for adults, \$10 for children 3-11 and free for children 2 and younger.

Also at the event, zoo staff may introduce two new wolves. The brother and sister pair will be about 4 months old when they arrive.

Visit www.washingtonparkzoo.com for additional information.

Quilts and Watercolors

An artist's reception for "Quilts and Watercolors," featuring Ruby Yoder Campos and Dave Knoebber, is at 6 p.m. EDT Saturday, Aug. 27, at Art Loft Studio, 10232 Wilson Road, New Buffalo, Mich.

Gallery showings are from 1 to 4 p.m. EDT Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 27-28.

Campos is a lifelong quilter who lives in Oak Park, Ill. Knoebber is a Harbor Country watercolorist who paints in his gardens at Art Loft Studio.

Contact Knoebber at (630) 441-8976 for additional information.

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The following programs are available:

- **Mount Baldy Hike at 5 p.m. most Fridays and at 10 a.m. Sundays.**

While Mount Baldy remains closed to unrestricted public access, visitors can join a ranger for a special guided hike along a trail on the dune's western edge found to be free of holes. The program starts at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter, then follows a ranger to Mount Baldy. Reservations are required by calling (219) 395-1882.

- **National Park Service 100th Anniversary Concert from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, at West Beach.**

Northwest Indiana Symphony, led by Music Director/Conductor Kirk Muspratt, will present the free concert sponsored in part by Dunes Learning Center. Fee collection at West Beach will stop by 5 p.m. so visitors can attend for free. Some limited seating is available, but it's recommended those attending take a folding chair and insect repellent.

West Beach is located at 376 N. County Line Road, Portage.

- **Pinhook Bog Open House from noon to 3 p.m. Saturdays through Sept. 10.**

Tour the bog and talk to rangers stationed along the trail who explain the unique area filled with carnivorous plants. Arrive by 2 p.m. to allow about one hour to walk the trail and tour the bog. The bog parking lot is located at 700 N. Wozniak Road, Michigan City.

- **Bailly Homestead and Chellberg Farm Open House from 1 to 4 p.m. Sundays through Sept. 4.**

Tour the Chellberg Farmhouse and Bailly Homestead to learn about the lives of early Duneland farm families. The parking lot is on Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 20 and 12 in Porter.

The Visitor Center is at 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. The Paul H. Douglas Center is on Lake Street in Gary. Call (219) 395-1882 for more information.

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Indiana Dunes State Park

The following programs are offered:

Thursday, Aug. 25

- **10 a.m. — Dunes Creek Crossing.**

Meet at the campground gate, and prepare for off-trail creek walking and to get wet.

- **3 p.m. — Who Pooped in the Park!**

Meet at the Nature Center to study the science of scatology, complete with games and prizes.

Friday, Aug. 26

- **10 a.m. — High Dunes Hiking.**

Wear hiking shoes and meet at the campground shelter by site 113 for the one-hour trek to Indiana's highest sand dune.

- **3 p.m. — Nature Crafts.**

Create a make-it, take-it craft at the Nature Center.

- **8 p.m. — Evening Campground Fun.**

Meet at the campground shelter by site 113 for everything from nature crafts to story time.

Saturday, Aug. 27

- **10 a.m. — Dog Days Hike.**

Meet at the Nature Center, if desiring with a pet, to explore the dunes forest.

- **3 p.m. — A Sandbox of Fun.**

Meet at the Nature Center to explore what makes sand special and unique.

- **7 p.m. — Sunset on Mount Tom.**

Meet at the campground shelter for a short jaunt up Trail 4. Children 12 and younger must be accompanied by an adult.

Sunday, Aug. 28

- **10 a.m. — Sassafras Saunter.**

Explore the popular sassafras tree and its uses.

- **3 p.m. — Dune Critters.**

Meet at the Nature Center to learn about the diversity of dune mammals.

Monday, Aug. 29

- **10 a.m. — Wetland Wander.**

Meet at the Nature Center for the one-hour stroll to explore wetlands.

- **3 p.m. — Just a Few Furs.**

Learn about dunes animals during the interactive 45-minute program at the Nature Center.

Tuesday, Aug. 30

- **10 a.m. — Busy Beaver Walk.**

Meet at the campground gate for the short walk, and prepare for off-trail walking.

- **3 p.m. — Dunes Through Four Seasons.**

Explore the dunes during the naturalist slide show tour at the Nature Center.

Wednesday, Aug. 31

- **10 a.m. — Beach House Blowout Bound.**

Meet a naturalist at the Nature Center for the one-hour moderate hike to the Beach House Blowout.

- **3 p.m. — Scales and Tales.**

Meet at the Nature Center for a look at reptiles of Indiana Dunes, with live animals present.

Indiana Dunes State Park is at 1600 N. County Road 25 East (the north end of Indiana 49), Chester-ton. Call (219) 926-1390 for more information.

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**American
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The American Red Cross La Porte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- Franciscan St. Anthony Health — Michigan City, 301 W. Homer St., Michigan City, 8 a.m. to noon Monday, Aug. 29.
- Purdue University Northwest, Library Student Faculty Building, Room 144, 1401 S. U.S. 421, Westville, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Aug. 29.
- South Central Junior-Senior High School, 9808 S. County Road 600 West, Union Mills, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30.
- A.K. Smith Career Center, 817 Lafayette St., Michigan City, 7:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30.

All presenting donors through Aug. 31 receive a \$5 Amazon.com gift card by email. Donors must be in good general health and feeling well, at least 17 (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. Call (800) 733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org for more information.

City Parks Public Survey

The Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department is seeking public input for its 2017-2021 park system master plan.

The survey was specifically created to gather information from residents and park patrons about their recreational interests, and their opinions concerning the programs, activities and quality of parks within the city.

Surveys will be received until Sept. 30. Call the Park Office at (219) 873-1506 for a form or for additional information.



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Fox Park Music Fest 8

Guardian Riders will support local active duty military, veterans and the less fortunate during Fox Park Music Fest 8 on Saturday, Aug. 27, at La Porte's Fox Park.

Gates open at 10 a.m., followed by music at 11 a.m. The event includes bands, a beer garden and food vendors.

Admission is \$10 in advance, \$12 at the gate, \$5 for ages 12-21 and free for 12 and younger. Parking is free. Visit www.guardianridersin.org/ for additional information.

Free Christian Concert

First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St., will host a free concert, "A Night of Worship with Corey Voss," at 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26.

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Westchester Public Library

The following programs are available:

• **Knit Wits and Pearls of Wisdom at 9 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 25, at Hageman Library, 100 Francis St., Porter.**

The weekly meeting is open to the skilled and novices, with no registration required.

• **Game On from 6 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 25, at Thomas Library, 200 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton.**

A different game is featured each month, with snacks provided.

• **Rainbow Loom from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, at Thomas Library Children's Department.**

Children in grades 3-6 create rainbow loom bracelets. Registration is required in person or by calling (219) 926-7696.

• **The Unnamed Guild of Gamers from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 28, at Thomas Library's Bertha Wood Meeting Room.**

Events will include a fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons campaign, as well as "Settlers of Catan" and "Pandemic."

• **Bits & Bytes series, Internet Security, from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, and 1 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 1, in the Serials/Automation Department at Thomas Library.**

Registration is required by visiting or calling the IT Department at (219) 926-7696, or registering at www.wpl.lib.in.us. Click on the Bits & Bytes link.

• **Eating Well for Healthy Living Series from 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, in the Thomas Library Bertha Wood Meeting Room.**

Registered Dietetic Technician Gia DeMartinis will discuss "Cooking with Herbs." Registration can be done in person or by calling (219) 926-7696.

• **Books to Film Trivia Night from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 30, at Westchester Township History Museum, 700 W. Porter Ave., Chesterton.**

Teams of 1-4 can vie for a prize on works ranging from "Gone with the Wind" to "The Hunger Games" and "Harry Potter." Refreshments will be served.

• **Creative Tweens from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays at the Library Service Center.**

All materials are provided. Registration is required. Call (219) 926-7696 or (219) 926-9080 to register.



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Low Putts: Peg King

"B" Flight

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Low Net: Donna Hennard
Low Putts: Jane Irvine

"C" Flight

Low Gross: Mary Weithers, Nancy Trainor
Low Net: Mary Weithers
Low Putts: Gloria McMahon

"D" Flight

Low Gross: Tina Sonderby
Low Net: Tina Sonderby
Low Putts: Alison Kolb

Sunken Approach

Sue Luegers Hole 18
 Roxanne Warble Hole 5

Birdies

Carol Excel Hole 10
 Lisbeth Slattery Hole 14

*Aug. 16, 2016***Event: Beat the Pro****"A" Flight**

Event: Carol Excel, Peg King, Sue Luegers
Low Gross: Sue Luegers
Low Net: Sue Luegers
Low Putts: Carol Excel

"B" Flight

Event: Roxanne Warble, Melanie Davis, Jane Irvine
Low Gross: Jane Irvine
Low Net: Melanie Davis
Low Putts: Roxanne Warble

"C" Flight

Event: Mary Weithers, Joan Carey,
 Nancy Trainor, Rima Binder
Low Gross: Joan Carey
Low Net: Nancy Trainor
Low Putts: Rima Binder

"D" Flight

Low Event: Tina Sonderby
Low Gross: Barbara Beardslee
Low Net: Barbara Beardslee
Low Putts: Kathie Mole

Sunken Approach

Peg King Hole 9
 Roxanne Warble Hole 18
 Jane Irvine Hole 16
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Curator's Report

La Porte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave., La Porte, released its July curator's report.

Visitors came from 32 counties, 18 states and Brazil. Events included the Ninth Annual Car Show on July 30, and "The Art of De-Stressing" fundraiser on July 23. The current display, "Dressing Up & Down: A Look at Kids' Clothes," continues through August. The state-sanctioned bicentennial exhibit, "Prominent People of La Porte County" continues through 2016 in honor of Indiana's 200th year.

Items donated to the Historical Society were:

- Boy Scout uniform, Girl Scout Singing Sands leader pin, book and magnet, Debbie Ingram.
- Seven wedding dresses and accessories belonging to local brides, Barker Mansion.
- Framed photo of Josam Manufacturing Co., 1960, Jim Labadie,
- Mexican pony saddle used by the donor as a child, Patty O'Neal Sardeson.
- Handmade miniature pianos made by George Gibson, New York Blower pencil, Mary E. Butts.
- New York Blower 125th birthday memorabilia, La Porte radio station advertising items and cookbook, Judy Harenza.
- Items for the sale table, Susie Richter, Lannette Crutchfield, Sharon Baugher, Kay Crites and daughter, Debbie Griffith, and Mary Butts.
- Archival information, B&J's Locksmith, Don Kelter, Irene Konieczny and Steve Tukos.
- Display items, Bonnie Quigley.



Upcoming events include a birthday party Saturday, Aug. 20. The Historical Society will be 110, with the museum in its present location for 10 years. The schedule includes Memorial Gardens at 1 p.m., miniature horses on the grounds from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and party activities.

Photo contest applications for "Barns of La Porte County" are available at the front desk or by emailing info@laportecountyhistory.org. Anyone wishing to volunteer at the museum may call (219) 324-6767 and ask for Susie or Janet.

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Run to the Center Registration

Registration is open for the fifth annual Run to the Center of the World, with race organizers announcing the event has joined forces with South-west Michigan RACERS.

Held Saturday, Sept. 17, the race begins at 9 a.m. EDT, with check-in starting at 8 a.m. EDT. Early packet pickup is available from 6 to 7 p.m. EDT Friday, Sept. 16.

New this year is:

- 10K Run in addition to 5K Run & Fun Walk.
- Online registration.
- Routes sanctioned by USA Track and Field.
- SWMI RACERS will set up and staff the finish chute, calculate times for race-day awards and publish all times online within 24 hours

First-place medals will be presented in each age category. First Place Overall Men & Women will have the names and times engraved in a brick mounted in the Community Center's Garden. Prizes will be awarded for Largest Team, Longest Distance Traveled and Best Costume.

A free breakfast will be available, and the first 100 check-ins receive a swag bag. Those who register before Sept. 3 are guaranteed a free commemorative T-shirt on race day. Anyone registering after may have to wait for a shirt.

Early registration costs \$20, or \$25 after Sept. 3. Online registration is at tinyurl.com/jh2vbx3. Forms also are available at New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road, where the race begins and ends. Proceeds benefit the all-volunteer facility that receives no tax support. It provides area residents with a lending library with WiFi, computers, story hour and a summer reading program. It also houses a playground, nature trail, outdoor classroom, demonstration rain garden, local history presentations and computer classes.

Contact Terry Hanover at (269) 426-4199 or Lorraine Hanover at (269) 469-5687 for more details.

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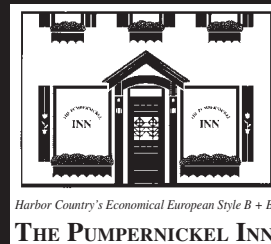
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Activities to Explore

In the Local Area:

Aug. 25 — Standup comedian Krish Mohan, 8 p.m., The Nest, 803 Franklin St.

Aug. 26 — Friday Afternoon at the Movies: "The Finest Hours," 2 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Aug. 26 — Free concert, "A Night of Worship with Corey Voss," 7 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St.

Aug. 26 — Stargaze event, 7:30 p.m., Barker Mansion, 631 Washington St. Cost: \$20/adult, \$15/youth, those not drinking beer. Reservations: tinyurl.com/jxqlzk3. Info: (219) 873-1520.

Aug. 26-28 — "Squeeze My Cans," Dunes Summer Theatre, 288 Shady Oak Drive, Michiana Shores. Times: 7 p.m. Aug. 19-20 & 26-27, 6 p.m. Aug. 21 & 28. Tickets: \$15, \$13/seniors & students. Reservations: www.dunesartsfoundation.com, (219) 879-7509.

Aug. 26-28 — Mill Pond Festival, 100 Mill Pond Road, Union Mills. Hours: 6 p.m.-midnight Fri., 9 a.m.-1 a.m. Sat., 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Free. Information: umicc.org

Aug. 26-29 — Vickers Theatre, 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. *Now showing*: "Cafe Society." Rated PG-13. Times: 6:15 p.m. Fri.-Mon. *Also*: Movie in the Park: 35th anniversary celebration showing of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Dusk Aug. 26, Dewey Cannon Park. Free. Sponsored by The Village of Three Oaks, Harbor Arts, Three Oaks Arts & Education Center and Vickers Theatre. *Also*: "The Fits." Rated R. Show time: 9 p.m. Sat., 3:45 p.m. Sun., 9 p.m. Mon. *Also*: "The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble." PG-13. Times: 9 p.m. Fri., 3:15 p.m. Sat., 9 p.m. Sun. All times Eastern. Info: vickerstheatre.com

Aug. 26-28, Sept. 2-4 — "6x10 Play Festival: An Evening of Original Ten-Minute Plays," 4th Street Theater, 125 N. Fourth St. Times: 8 p.m. Fri./Sat., 3 p.m. Sun. Tickets: \$15. Reservations: www.4thstreetncca.org, (219) 926-7875.

Aug. 27 — St. Stanislaus Catholic Church farmers market, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., parking lot next to tennis courts. Info: ssmcfarmersmarket@gmail.com, (219) 851-1785.

Aug. 27 — Fox Park Music Fest 8, La Porte's Fox Park. Gates open @ 10 a.m., music @ 11 a.m. Tickets: \$10/advance, \$12/gate, \$5/ages 12-21, free/12 & younger. Info: www.guardianridersin.org/

Aug. 27 — Unveiling, two new African lions, 4:30-8:30 p.m., Washington Park Zoo. Advance tickets: \$15/adults, \$10/children 3-11, free/children 2 & younger. Info: www.washingtonparkzoo.com

Aug. 27 — Farm Dinner Downtown, 5-9 p.m., Michigan Avenue, La Porte. Cost: \$30.

Aug. 27 — Music in the Park, Ben Benedict, 6:30 p.m. EDT, Dewey Cannon Park, Three Oaks, Mich. Free.

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Aug. 27 — National Park Service 100th Anniversary Concert, 7:30-9 p.m., West Beach, 376 N. County Line Road, Portage. Free. Info: (219) 395-1882.

Aug. 27 — Sunset on Mount Tom, 7 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Aug. 27-28 — Artist reception, "Quilts and Watercolors," 6 p.m. EDT, Art Loft Studio, 10232 Wilson Road, New Buffalo, Mich. Gallery showings: 1-4 p.m. Aug. 27-28. Info: (630) 441-8976.

Aug. 27, 31 — Michigan City Mainstreet Association Farmers Market, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sat./4-8 p.m. Wed., Eighth and Washington streets. Info: tinyurl.com/hhaajz2

Aug. 30 — Books to Film Trivia Night, 7-8:30 p.m., Westchester Township History Museum, 700 W. Porter Ave., Chesterton.

Aug. 31-Sept. 5 — 9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit, Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa. Free. Hours: noon-7 p.m. daily in front parking lot. Info: tinyurl.com/jb6cvx4

Mondays — Codependents Anonymous (CoDA), 6 p.m., Franciscan Alliance-St. Anthony Health. Info: (219) 879-3817.

Wednesdays — Al-Anon meetings, 6-7 p.m., Franciscan Alliance-St. Anthony Health. Info: (708) 927-5287.

Through Sept. 8 — Merchant Street Market, 4-8 p.m. EDT Thursday, Whittaker & Merchant streets, downtown New Buffalo. Info: www.newbuffalo.org

Saturdays through Sept. 10 — Pinhook Bog Open House, noon-3 p.m., 700 N. Wozniak Road, Michigan City. Info: (219) 395-1882.

Farther Afield:

Aug. 27 — TED-style nature talks, 10:30 a.m. EDT, Fernwood Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve, 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Free with paid admission. Info: www.fernwoodbotanical.org, (269) 695-6491.

Aug. 27 — South Bend Comic Book Convention, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. EDT, Comfort Suites, 52933 U.S. 933, South Bend. Free. Info: (309) 657-1599, www.epguides.com/comics

Aug. 27 — Lake Effect Jazz Big Band, 7:30 p.m. EDT, The Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Tickets: \$10/general admission, \$8/students and seniors, free/children 12 and younger. Info/reservations: (269) 983-3688, info@boxfactoryforthearts.org, www.boxfactoryforthearts.org



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Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

This week, I have chosen two books for your consideration. Two because they are shorter reads — 300 pages or less. The first one is from one of my favorite mystery writers, the other a novel of life in south central Indiana working as a bird researcher. Both have plenty of chuckles, as well as serious moments, and both are great ways to bookend some of your more weighty readings. Enjoy!

Scents and Sensibility
by **Spencer Quinn** (*oversize paperback, \$16, in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook*)

Wouldn't you like to have a conversation with your dog?! Find out what he really knows and what he thinks? Well, here's your chance. Chet is the canine half of the Little Detective Agency, Bernie Little being the human head of the company. Together, they solve mysteries. Chet is the narrator of this successful series, this being the eighth book, and a more enjoyable narrator would be hard to find! Humans amaze and sometimes confuse Chet, but his devotion to Bernie is never in question.

In this story, Chet and Bernie return home after an out-of-town trip to discover several puzzling things. First, Bernie's wall safe is missing, along with his grandfather's pocket watch, his most prized possession. Bernie left a key with a neighbor, Mr. Parsons, and since there is no sign of a break-in...well, that leads to the Parsons' son, Billy, fresh out of prison for kidnapping.

Second, these neighbors, the elderly Mr. and Mrs. Parsons, have a new addition to their yard — a saguaro cactus — protected by the state of Arizona. And guess who got it for them? Billy, of course. A woman from the Department of Agriculture comes to investigate the illegal cactus. She investigates, leaves and is later found dead in the desert.

Oh, Billy, what have you got yourself involved in? But, as in most mysteries, these happenings are only the tip of the iceberg. There's lots more to come. Billy keeps ahead of Chet and Bernie as they follow a trail of dead bodies to a desert music festival called Cactus Man, where things heat up, and I'm not talking about the music! It all leads back to a 15-year-old kidnapping that is having repercussions today. Lots of action at the end, with Chet giving his all to his partner, leaving the reader wondering if this could be the end of the Little Detective Agency. A totally enjoyable read, and a double bonus if you're a dog lover.



Snapper by **Brian Kimberling** (*oversize paperback, \$15, in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook*)

I picked up a hardcover copy of this novel for \$1 at The Dollar Tree. It has a nice collection of books if you have the time to sort through the not-always neat shelves.

Anyway, narrator Nathan Lochmueller, like the author, was born in southern Indiana. Evansville, to be exact. He's had a love/hate relationship with the state ever since. I thought this was to be a book about a birdwatcher, but it turns out to be much more...

Nathan was a philosophy major at Indiana University. After graduation, he stuck around town and got a job through the school, researching birds and their nesting habits as related to their surroundings. He never moved on from the job, working variously for the university and the state fish and game, as well as other groups.

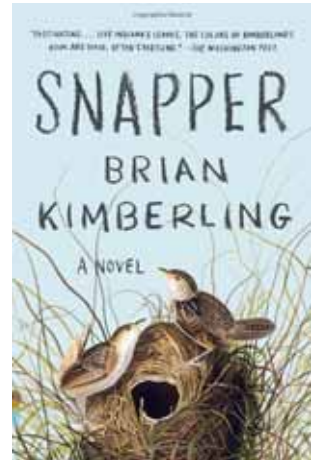
The first 40 pages are somewhat sketchy, and I almost stopped reading, but if you persevere, the story picks up nicely and you realize this is written like a memoir, not a birding saga.

College hijinks abound as Nathan's small group of friends provides head-shaking moments, like the night Nathan is thrown in jail because of an incident that involves beating up a parking meter with a 2x4. Or, the time they think catching a snapping turtle is great fun until the thumb incident. Then, there is his aunt and uncle who move up from Texas and get unintentionally involved with the KKK.

There's lots of bird lore, forest musings and plenty of stories about Lola, the woman who keeps floating in and out of his life. Nathan has some solid feelings about southern Indiana, too. For example: "*Bloomington is a kind of intellectual mecca rising from the cultural wasteland of south central Indiana.*" And then, Nathan surprises us with this: "*There's a week in May and about two in October when Indiana slips on a nice dress and calls you sweetheart for no good reason.*" I like that. I think you might, too.

Snapper was on NPR's list of Best Books of 2013, and *Booklist* gave it a starred review: "Kimberling writes gracefully about absurdity, showing a rich feeling for the whole range of human tragicomedy. A delightful debut."

Till next time, happy reading!





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