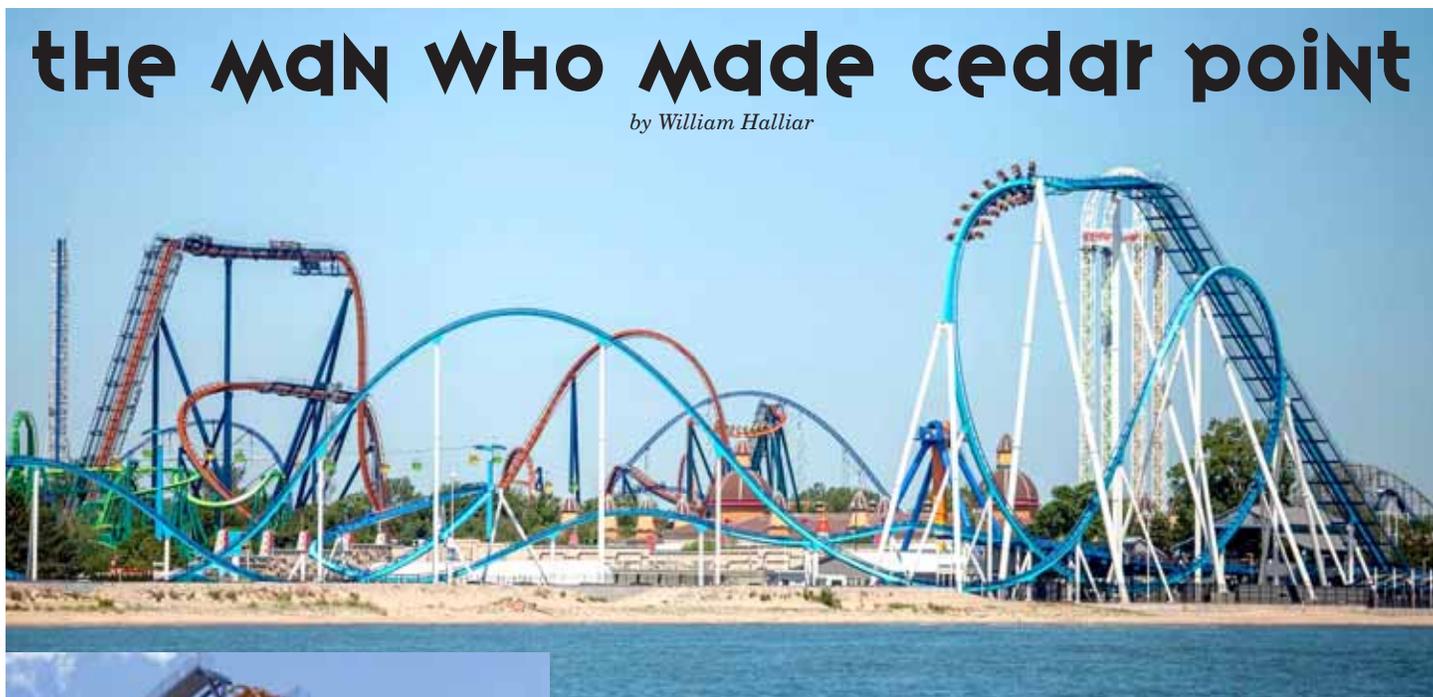




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the man who made cedar point

by William Halliar



“Steel Vengeance” (left), Cedar Point Amusement Park’s newest roller coaster, features a terrifying 214-foot drop.

Hands are held high as upturned faces mirror sheer joy and exuberance amid a few expressions of abject terror within the group. Sleek, colorful cars soar and slide, glide and roar into space, swooping around curves in vertical and horizontal circles.

Riders of “Steel Vengeance,” Cedar Point’s newest roller coaster, experience the thrill of a lifetime while speeding along a sleek, silvery track of steel at what seems like supersonic speeds. A terrifying 214-foot drop pins riders against restraints as hair and facial expressions are plastered sideways in a blur of screams.

Why is it so many people love roller coasters? Query the 6,500 members of the non-profit American Coaster Enthusiasts, which maintains a database of roller coasters, publishes a newsletter and offers exclusive ride events and sneak previews of attractions in the works. These folks can’t wait to have the wits scared out of them, standing in line for hours for the privilege of riding just one more time.

Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio, which celebrated its 150th anniversary last year, is known today as “The Roller Coaster Capital of the World.” According to its colorful, voluminously illustrated website, Cedar Point is a place like no other with 18 roller coasters. The riding experiences are diverse.

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According to the advertisements, “*there’s a roller coaster for every thrill seeker.*” From pint-sized starters like Woodstock Express to the 120-mph Top Thrill Dragster, if you love roller coasters, Cedar Point is the only place you need to be. Swing and sway on the Iron Dragon, ricochet left and right on Maverick or dive straight down on Steel Vengeance.

Who could imagine today that the man responsible for all this was a Michigan City native?

Cedar Point, which began as a bathing beach back in the 1860s, was a quiet backwater on the shores of Lake Erie until a young man from Michigan City, a man of vision, unlimited energy and imagination, came on the scene. He purchased the property in 1897, turning Cedar Point into a Midwest showplace.

We at *The Beacher* recently were introduced to the story of George Arthur Boeckling — hailed by *The Sandusky Register* back in 1922 as “the man who made Cedar Point.”

While scouring the archives of The Old Lighthouse Museum for information for the 2020 book [Michigan City, Indiana-Businesses & The People That Made Them Prosper-1832-1890](#), authors Gloria Arndt and Dorothy Germain uncovered countless pages of information about many successful individuals who grew up here. Much curious material did not necessarily fit into the narrative of their book.

The life story of Boeckling, who was born here, but made his name in Sandusky, was one of these tales. Dorothy passed this particular bit of information onto *The Beacher*. The story of one more Michigan City native who made an impact on the world

can once again be brought to light.

I asked Dorothy why she didn’t include his story in the book she and Gloria worked so hard to research, since it seems he was quite successful and recognized in Sandusky. In an email reply, she said, “The only mention of George that I came across was as a travel agent (traveling salesman, I believe is the current term) for Cook & Wilson Lumber Co. There are other Boecklings listed as grocers and milliners, but I could find no connection to George.

After we had finished the book, it still bothered me that I couldn’t find a connection to George or even if the story that I heard about him and Cedar Point was true.”

She continued recounting the discovery of an 1890 city directory at The Old Lighthouse Museum. Here, she encountered, in the book’s appendix a list of employees at J.H. Winterbotham Co. She said “Anton Boeckling was listed as a foreman.” It is the only mention of Anton, but he was a stone left unturned (in her search).

Sure enough, Anton proved to be the connection to George — the story of George Boeckling and Cedar Point proved to be true. Dorothy said she passed the story on to *The Beacher* to make amends for leaving him out of her book.

On Feb. 2, 1862, German immigrants Anton and Elizabeth (Schmidt) Boeckling of Michigan City had their first son, christening him George Arthur. He was the oldest of 10 living children.

The year before in 1861, Harriet Colfax was appointed the first keeper of the Michigan City Lighthouse. The American Civil War began. It was also the year Michigan City’s first volunteer fire department was formed. In 1862, the original Michigan City School at Fourth and Pine streets was replaced by a two-story brick school called the Union School,



George Arthur Boeckling

or First Ward School. Later, it was renamed Elston Elementary School.

Boeckling spent his early years as a real-estate agent and presumably had a wide territory, including Ohio along the shores of Lake Erie. In 1897, he became the general manager of the newly created Cedar Point Pleasure Resort Co. What had been for many years a summer picnic area through his leadership became a booming amusement park drawing visitors from around the country.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the United States began a period of rapid industrialization led by northern states that had been building factories for the construction of railroads and war machinery. A middle class — a concept unique to America — comprised of workers earning livings for their families in these burgeoning enterprises sprang up. These workers began to have a little extra money to spend on a few luxuries. After the Haymarket Riot on May 4, 1886, a shorter work day was introduced, eventually becoming the norm of the land. With shorter work days and weekends off, workers had more time to relax. With a little extra money in their pockets, they could take trips to vacation spots.



Michigan City's "Hoosier Slide" might have had an impact on how George Arthur Boeckling viewed the recreational delights of people.

Boeckling — visionary, philanthropist and man of action — was the right man in the right place, and he took advantage of the times to create an amusement destination for the new middle class. According to a blog called "Sandusky History," Boeckling

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the man who... Continued from Page 3

“always seemed to anticipate what would appeal to the public.” He offered concerts, movies and dancing, and encouraged military groups and businessmen to hold their annual conventions at Cedar Point.

The Hotel Breakers, which opened to Cedar Point



Hotel Breakers in 1905 and today.

guests in 1905, offered visitors amenities such as brass beds, wicker furniture and Tiffany-stained glass windows in the lobby. Services available to guests included a manicurist, physician, barbers, beauticians, stenographer and tailor.

It is perhaps not an accident that Boeckling began to build roller coasters at his new amusement park, or that Cedar Point eventually would be known as “Roller Coaster Capitol of the World.”

Roller coasters and George Boeckling grew up in the same era. Remember, too, that Boeckling’s hometown gave rise to the “Hoosier Slide.” Here, folks from Michigan City could haul blankets up the 200-foot-high slope — winter and summer — and with a rush slide down the sandy slopes just for the thrill of it. Imagine sliding down that hill at breakneck speeds back before railroads were common, and the fastest that anyone could go was at the speed of a running horse.

Often in his youth, Boeckling must have watched as young people scampered to the top of that sand dune over and over again, only to tumble and sled down its friendly and inviting slopes, landing at the bottom in heaps of giggling laughter.

How many towns back in the 1860s and 1870s could boast such an attraction as our Hoosier Slide? I like to think it was Michigan City’s great mountain of sand that inspired Boeckling to bring coasters to Cedar Point.

Cedar Point’s first roller coaster, “The Switchback Railway,” was built in 1892 and became an instant success. As with most inventions, the history of the roller coaster is one good idea built upon another, often spurred by a profit that could be made on such an attraction until today, we see steel tracks spiraling into the sky with no apparent heed to gravity.

The idea for the modern roller coaster began with people sliding down hills, much like the Hoosier Slide, just for the fun of it. It was especially exciting in the winter with ice and snow covering the slopes. Soon, improvements were made to naturally occurring slopes. Steeper downhill grades created with wooden supports were introduced to produce faster, more thrilling rides.

As far back as 1784, it is thought that Catherine the Great of Russia had a sledding hill especially constructed at her palace in St. Petersburg. American railroads



took a different tactic by offering rides to passengers in times when there was not money to be made hauling freight. Cars loaded with thrill seekers would be pushed to and over the top of a hill, where gravity would take hold and they could roll swiftly and safely to the bottom. Thus, the idea of adding tracks to make the ride smoother and more predictable.

The first truly modern roller coaster opened to the public in Paris on July 8, 1817. It is thought of as the progenitor of our modern roller coasters because it had wheeled cars that were locked to tracks, allowing it to more safely attain higher speeds.

Cedar Point’s “The Switchback Railway” consisted of two tracks for the free-falling cars to ride. Riders would climb stairs to board a car that would roll down a hill in one direction, then the car would be pulled up the other side, switch tracks and slide down in the other direction.

In 1885, Phillip Hinkle came up with the idea of running his coaster in a circle with a mechanical lift up a hill and gravity drop slide down a slope for speed. He named his device the “Gravity Pleasure Road,” and it became a hit attraction at Coney Island in Brooklyn. From here on out, designers never looked back, each trying to outdo the other with the most hair-raising thrills.

Cedar Point has the best of them.

The Pennsylvania Railroad and Lake Shore Electric Railway were at first instrumental in bringing



Cedar Point's first roller coaster, "The Switchback Railway," was built in 1892.

visitors to the somewhat remote Cedar Point. Later, Boeckling had a steamship built that could carry passengers across the bay from Sandusky to "The Point" for a day of relaxation and pleasure. This steamship, named the G.A. Boeckling, could carry more than 2,000 passengers at a time. It was 155 feet long and had a pilot house on each side so it did not have to turn around as it made round trips between Sandusky and Cedar Point.

Boeckling was referred to as a "hustler" and top-notch manager. Cedar Point prospered under his direction. Charles Robb, publisher of *The Michigan City News*, wrote in an article for *The Sandusky Daily Star* on Dec. 13, 1900: "George has for the past three years or more been the hustling manager of the

Cedar Point Pleasure Resort at Sandusky and his success in that capacity has proven his ability as a manager and caterer to public patronage."

Besides promoting Cedar Point's amusements, Boeckling built, owned and managed several hotels in the Sandusky area, one of them being The Breakers, which is still one of the main Cedar Point attractions today.

According to tinyurl.com/3sno7r8j — "Broeckling was an impresario who brought many stars of the New York Metropolitan Opera to sing at the Breakers while on their summer tours of Chicago. During the mid-twentieth century the Breakers was a top gathering place for many famous people, including John Phillip Sousa and six U.S. Presidents."

Continued on Page 6



The steamship G.A. Boeckling, which was built to carry passengers across the bay from Sandusky to "The Point."



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the man who... Continued from Page 5



G.A. Boeckling's home, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1983, now operates as The Boeckling Club, which houses a bar and German restaurant, with rooms for private meetings.

During his lifetime, Boeckling was very public-spirited. He was a member of the Sandusky Chamber of Commerce, Elks Lodge, Aerie of Eagles and was charitable to local churches, veterans organizations and youth clubs in Sandusky.

He died on July 24, 1931, leaving controlling interest of Cedar Point to his sister, Elizabeth. During the time Boeckling ran Cedar Point, much of his family moved to the Sandusky area and became involved in the family venture.

Boeckling and Elizabeth never married. They lived together in a home that has now been renovated and operates as The Boeckling Club, which houses a bar and German restaurant, with rooms for private meetings. The home has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1983.

In Boeckling, we see yet another son of Michigan

City who made good in the world, and carried traditions formed during his youth in this, our lakefront home, to the greater world.

One obituary said it best: *"For six years, after he was 19, Mr. Boeckling was a traveling salesman and then for 19 years he was engaged in the wholesale lumber business, establishing several yards in Indiana. He came to Sandusky when 35 as manager of Cedar Point which then was a sand peninsula, covered by underbrush and used mainly as a local picnic ground."*

"The rise of the man who was a grocery clerk at the age of 12 in Michigan City, Ind., to the head of a \$1,750,000 firm which annually is host to many state and national conventions, long has been the subject of one of Sandusky's most interesting business romances."



G.A. Boeckling's grave site at Oakland Cemetery in Sandusky.



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• **“Meet the Greats: Fernwood Virtual Lecture Series” from 7 to 8 p.m. EDT Thursday, March 4.**



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Michael Dosmann will speak on “The Regal Lily and How it Redeemed One of the World’s Most Famous Plant Explorers (Ernest Henry Wilson).”

A Fernwood member, Dosmann is the Keeper of the Living Collections at the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University, a title bestowed to only two individuals in Harvard’s history. The other recipient was Wilson.

Tickets cost \$25, or \$20 for members.



Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Call (269) 695-6491 or visit www.fernwoodbotanical.org for more information and to confirm the status of classes.

Unity Foundation Meets Match

Unity Foundation of LaPorte County successfully completed the Lilly Endowment Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow initiative-Phase VII match.

The initiative tripled the impact of local donations to Unity’s Community Funds over the past two years with a 2-1 match. As a result, \$500,000 in donations became \$1.5 million.

GIFT has been a priority of the Endowment since the first phase in 1990. Lilly unveiled the latest phase, GIFT VII, in October 2018 to help Indiana community foundations grow financial resources and meet current community needs. LaPorte County reached its goal ahead of the December 2021 deadline.

Community funds support charitable programs and organizations in La Porte County, and can meet changing community needs as they occur. These funds also help fuel Unity’s annual Power for Good Community Grant Program, which awards more than \$150,000 to local projects and charities.

Visit www.uflc.net for more details.

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Chesterton Art Center



This screenshot shows students on Zoom involved in children's art classes through Chesterton Art Center.

Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St., is offering monthly children's art classes during the school year taught on Zoom by Jennifer Aitchison.

All materials are included in the tuition and can be picked up from the center. Students actively participate in learning while studying a major movement of modern art history each month. All classes include drawing in some form and exposure to mediums such as painting, printmaking, sculpture, collage, drawing, weaving and paper arts. On-site

classes may be added later when it is safe to do so.

The March focus is the history of the Pop Art Movement, with artists such as Andy Warhol and Ray Lichtenstein discussed as students explore how to interpret pieces from the American movement.

Classes begin Monday, March 1, with no programming the week of March 22-26 (spring break). Therefore, there will be a make-up day for any individuals who sign up for a Thursday class.

- Monday, 1:30-3 p.m., homeschool, 8- to 15-year-olds.
- Monday, 3:30-5 p.m., elementary, 8- to 12-year-olds.
- Tuesday, 1-2 p.m., preschool/K, 3- to 5-year-olds.
- Tuesday, 4-5:30 p.m., 5- to 8-year-olds.
- Wednesday, 3:30-5 p.m., 5- to 8-year-olds.
- Thursday, 1:30-3 p.m., 8- to 15-year-olds.
- Thursday, 3:30- 5 p.m., fifth through eighth grades.
- Thursday, 5:30-7 p.m., 13- to 18-year-olds.

Tuition is \$90 per month for high-school, middle-school, elementary and home-school students (the member rate is \$70), and \$75 for preschool and kindergarten students (the member rate is \$55). Preschoolers will need assistance from someone at home. A bag with supplies is included in the tuition and can be picked up from the center.

Chesterton Art Center is located at 115 S. Fourth St. Visit www.chestertonart.com or call (219) 926-4711 for more information.





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LaPorte County Public Library

LaPorte County Public Library has updated its curbside pickup service using meeScan.

New users can download the meeScan app through options such as Apple and Google Play. Then, place holds on items using a customer account. Once at the library, check in using the app and clicking Pickup from the bottom of the screen (or calling the library location). An appointment no longer is needed. Add the parking space on the app if picking up from the main location. Enter information in the instructions box if picking up holds placed on more than one account, or if needing additional assistance.

A staff member brings held items to the vehicle. Customers using the app receive updates as their requests are processed. Returns can be placed in book drops and be checked in within 24 to 72 hours. At this time, there is no limit to the number of items customers can reserve and pick up during curbside.

An upcoming program in the Coolspring Branch meeting room is:

- **“Intro & First Exercises Drawing Class” from 2 to 4 p.m. Thursday, March 4.**

The all-levels class reviews drawing materials and exercises to improve skills. The instructor will provide prompts and materials, and walk attendees through a quick demonstration. The workshop’s success relies on students providing feedback in a supportive environment. The library will provide basic supplies (graphite pencils, rubber erasers, manila paper, drawing paper) that attendees can supplement with their own tools. Take a kneaded eraser. Each workshop mirrors three episodes of the “How to Draw” series from “The Great Courses” available through Kanopy. The workshop reviews skills taught in episodes one-three. Visit tinyurl.com/jdgpbst to register. All attendees must wear a face mask. Seating is arranged to maintain social distancing. Registration is required. Anyone who feels uncomfortable attending, or has an underlying health condition, should check the library website for online programs. Anyone in close contact with, or who is experiencing any COVID symptoms, should follow CDC guidance.

Hours for locations in *The Beacher’s* readership area include:

- Coolspring Branch: Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Main Library: Tuesday/Thursday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and Saturday (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

Check laportelibrary.org and follow social media for updates.

LaPorte County Public Library is located at 904 Indiana Ave. The Coolspring Branch is located at 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Visit www.laportelibrary.org for more details.

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Michigan City Public Library

The library is open, but with restrictions in place.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday. There is no public seating. The library also follows LaPorte County Health Department's Public Health Order Face Covering Mandate by requiring masks inside the building. Every individual must wear a face covering over his/her nose and mouth at indoor areas open to the public. The circulation and reference desks will have masks available for \$1.

The following services are temporarily suspended: public programs and meetings; literacy tutoring; MakerSpace/3-D printing; study rooms; homebound service; interlibrary loan; puppets; puzzles; blocks and children's AWE computers in Youth Services; Ellison die cut machine; public faxing; microfilm use; magazine/book sale; and accepting donations.

Access is limited to the computer lab: One session (up to one hour) per person per day is allowed. Due to social-distancing guidelines, only one person at a station at a time. Children are not allowed in the computer lab with parents/guardians.

One computer is reserved for genealogy research, with time limited to one hour per person per day.

Four charging tables allow a limit of 30 minutes per use (no seating is available at these stations).

WiFi is available throughout the building and exterior/parking lot.

Two new databases are available. Newspapers.com World Collection contains historical newspapers from the 1700s-2000s, including thousands of well-known regional, state and small local newspapers in the United States and other countries. Visit tinyurl.com/4f8kfo3v and log in with a library card number.

In addition, Fold3, a military records database powered by Ancestry.com, is available. It provides access to military records, including stories, photos and personal documents. Visitors to the site can combine records found there with personal effects to create an online memorial for someone who served. Visit tinyurl.com/58cnu2vn and log in with a library card number.

The following virtual programming is scheduled:

- Great Decisions returns through Zoom. Limited discussion booklets are available at the circulation desk. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.
- Virtual Story Time. A new video will be posted to the website, Facebook page and YouTube channel at 10 a.m. Wednesdays. Each video will be available on the website for two weeks at www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/. Stop by Youth Services to receive the craft project for the week beginning on Wednesdays.
- Checkers!. Color a checker board, follow the instructions and play with checkers made in 3-D printers. Sets are limited to one per family.
- Online Graphic Novel Club for teens will focus on Walter Dean Myers' graphic novel *Monster*. Stop by Youth Services to pick up a copy while supplies last. The Zoom meetup is on Thursday, Feb. 25. Call Jonathan at (219) 873-3045 or email YOnline@mclib.org.



Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. Visit www.mclib.org for more details.



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Bridgman Public Library



Berens

Bridgman (Mich.) Public Library will host a Zoom book presentation, Abra Berens' Ruffage: A Practical Guide to Vegetables, at 6 p.m. EDT Tuesday, March 2.

Ruffage won a 2020 Michigan Notable Book award. Included with her program is a prerecorded cooking demonstration. Berens is part of the Granor Farm team in Three Oaks,

Mich., where she combines her love of farms and restaurants to create dinners that celebrate the region's agriculture.

The Zoom link is available at www.bridgmanlibrary.com. Call (269) 465-3663 for more details. The library is located at 4460 Lake St.

Westchester Public Library

Westchester Public Library has curbside pickup at its Thomas and Hageman branches.

Use a library card or go online to place holds on up to 10 items, including DVDs and CDs. Once notified the items are available, park in specially-numbered spaces at each branch during pickup hours.

While parked, call the library phone number posted on the numbered space sign, tell staff your library card number and he/she will check out the items and take them to a table at the parking space and walk away. Patrons then can step out of their vehicle to retrieve them. Curbside hours are Monday-Friday (1 to 6 p.m. at Thomas and Hageman) and Saturday (11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Thomas and 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Hageman).

Hageman Library (219-926-9080) is located at 100 Francis St., Porter. Thomas Library (219-926-7696) is located at 200 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton. Westchester Township History Museum (219-983-9715) is located at 700 W. Porter Ave., Chesterton. The Baugher Center is located at 100 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton.

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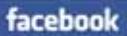
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“Judas” is a Smart, Engrossing Look at Black Panther Party

by Andrew Tallackson



Daniel Kaluuya is Oscar-worthy as Illinois Black Panther Chairman Fred Hampton in “Judas and the Black Messiah.”

It’s unfortunate, really, that a film released in 2021 about racial injustice of the 1960s offers a relevant commentary on society today.

Curious times, indeed. “Judas and the Black Messiah,” about an FBI informant’s betrayal of Illinois Black Panther Chairman Fred Hampton, is exceedingly intelligent and involving, placing its characters in thoughtful context and brilliantly evoking a specific time and place.

Better yet? A performance for the ages by Daniel Kaluuya. This is a young actor already boasting a Best Actor nomination for Jordan Peele’s “Get Out” (2017), along with a crucial role, ironically, in Marvel’s “Black Panther” (2018). Nothing, though, can prepare you for this.

The FBI informant at the core of this fact-based docudrama, in theaters and streaming on HBO Max, is Bill O’Neal (Lakeith Stanfield), who in the first scene is a thief using fake FBI credentials to steal a car. He is apprehended and offered a deal by FBI Special Agent Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons) — Go undercover, help nab Hampton and the FBI will drop all charges against him.

Bill exists as the movie’s audience surrogate, our window not just into the Black Panther Party, but its charismatic Illinois leader as well.

When we first see Kaluuya as Hampton, he’s at



“Judas and the Black Messiah”

Running time: 126 minutes. In Theaters & HBO Max.

Rated R for violence and pervasive language

a party meeting, rallying the troops. The culminating effect of the actor’s performance is galvanizing. He paces back and forth with the fearless determination of, well, a panther. His eyes bore into every individual gazing back at him. You can feel the pull, his hypnotic appeal.

And Kaluuya never dials it down from there. He maintains the same electrifying pitch from start to finish. Hampton is a man on an eternal mission, one who rarely lets his guard down.

The script, credited to four people – brothers Kenny and Keith Lucas, Will Berson and director Shaka King – achieves a complicated balance, much in the way Spike Lee did with his 1989 masterwork “Do the Right Thing.” We witness race-fueled violence, most notably a crazy shootout that ends with the chapter’s office being torched. But the film does not champion violence for violence’s sake. The violence it depicts is a reaction to being treated violently.

Whether you accept that or not, it is not my place to comment. Nor does the film. Instead, it asks more



Lakeith Stanfield more than holds his own as FBI informant Bill O'Neal.

that we admire Hampton for his bravado, for standing up for what's right in the face of fear and apathy.

It shows, too, the Black Panther Party forging alliances with Hispanics and whites in the community, all three groups wanting better health care and jobs.

We appreciate, as well, that the movie looks and feels just right. The clothes, hairstyles, makeup, cinematography relying on natural light — we feel fully immersed in this world.

And in Stanfield's FBI informant, we see a man at constant odds with himself. Rising through the party's ranks, especially after Hampton lands in prison, he is empowered by the party's mission, yet limited by knowing the FBI will wipe his slate clean if he complies with them. And in Plemmons, we have a special agent we can never quite make out. He has a conscience, he wants to do the right thing, but he's also answering to J. Edgar Hoover, played by Martin Sheen with one of the worst prosthetic noses in cinema history.

(Watching "Judas and the Black Messiah" on a 4K television does Sheen no favors. You can see where the fake nose ends and his actual face begins.)

Stanfield, by the way, another veteran of "Get Out" and Marvel's "Black Panther," is extraordinary in Bill's final scene with Hampton: trembling, barely composing himself. Kaluuya may be getting all the Oscar buzz, and rightly so, but Stanfield delivers a career high in that scene alone.

Another impressive element of one of the past year's best.

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Three Oscar Hopefuls Explore the Effects of Alzheimer's, Dementia



Anne (Olivia Colman) experiences a brief moment of clarity with her father, Antony (Anthony Hopkins), in "The Father," which rolls out into theaters and View On Demand over the next month.

In a film that disorients viewers by placing them in the mind of a man with Alzheimer's disease, Anthony Hopkins and Olivia Colman deliver the year's best performances.

Period.

And I've blasted through quite a bit of Oscar hopefuls lately. These two in "The Father" do shattering work. This is a film that will deeply affect those who see it, particularly anyone who has watched a loved one suffer from this crippling disease. It's not easy to watch, but Hopkins and Colman refuse to relinquish you from their grips. They lay bare their hearts and souls.

The film is gradually making its way around the country, with a limited release Feb. 26 in Los Angeles and New York before expanding into more theaters March 12 and finally being available through View on Demand on March 26.

Director/co-writer Florian Zeller, working with world-class playwright-screenwriter Christopher Hampton ("Dangerous Liaisons"), adapted his 2012 French play "Le Père," and what he achieves honors the stage origins of his work while finding ways to make the material cinematic.

The most astonishing achievement is how we en-

★★★★★
"The Father"
Running time: 97 minutes. Limited release. Rated PG-13 for some strong language and thematic material

ter the world of Antony (Hopkins), and how sane and rational it appears. It is *everyone else*, and their actions, that seem off-kilter. Disorienting to everyday routines.

Antony lives with his daughter, Anne (Colman), and he can be intoxicatingly charming one minute, alarmingly combative the next. He's scared off one caregiver, with another (Imogen Poots) about to be interviewed. Anne, it seems, has found a new love after her divorce, and her intentions are to move to France to be with him.

Or is she?

By placing us within Antony's mind, we experience what he experiences. This is one of the few movies that, in dealing with Alzheimer's, achieves the equivalent of sensory viewing. There are moments of clarity, followed by conversations and confrontations that often repeat themselves, or appear out of sync. One minute, someone familiar is in Ant-

by Andrew Tallackson



John (Viggo Mortensen, right) tries to calm his father, Willis (Lance Henriksen), as he lashes out in "Falling," which is available through View on Demand.

★★★
"Falling"
Running time: 112 minutes. View on Demand. Rated R for language throughout, including offensive slurs, crude sexual references, brief sexuality and nudity

ony's presence, the next a person altogether foreign. The result is subtle, with the extremely effective score by Ludovico Einaudi adding an unstable layer to the confusion. Even minute changes to the apartment — a missing watch, the absence of a painting — trigger bursts of fear and uncertainty.

Hopkins rarely lets his guard down on film. He thrives playing men who are in control and control others, not just in "The Silence of the Lambs," but also in "Shadowlands" (1993), about C.S. Lewis, and the Stephen King adaptation "Hearts in Atlantis" (2001). But here, he is raw: vulnerable at times to a state of childlike distress. When he breaks down, consumed by the misery of his condition, we no longer see an 83-year-old actor, but a frightened little boy in desperate need of comfort.

Colman transforms a potentially thankless role

— the put-upon caretaker — into a wrenching portrait of anguish and crushed hope. What the film gets right is how the person suffering from dementia can have episodes of cruelty, where they lash out, treating one child as inferior to the other. Colman's eyes, her stunned reactions, are a diagram of hurt and devastation. That she can still smile with optimism that her father is still *somewhere* inside him tears you up inside. *This*, more so than Netflix's "The Queen" or her Oscar-winning turn in "The Favourite," is the actress' most empathetic and accomplished work.

These two are complemented by top-notch talent — Rufus Sewell, Mark Gatiss and Olivia Williams — but to reveal how they fit into the story's intentionally baffling structure would spoil the surprise elements of the tale.

I was deeply, *deeply* moved by "The Father."

□

"Falling" wallows in a sad truth, even for those clutched in the grip of dementia, that a miserable life is one bitter pill to swallow in the end.

This is a passion project for Viggo Mortensen,

Continued from Page 17



Sam (Colin Firth, right) and Tusker (Stanley Tucci) embark on a cross-country trip in "Supernova," now available through View on Demand."

an actor who successfully eclipsed his "Lord of the Rings" fame with one understated performance after another ("A History of Violence," "Eastern Promises," "Captain Fantastic," "Green Book"). He not only stars in the film, which is available through View On Demand, but also wrote and directed it, produced it, even composed the piano-driven score.

And this is not a vanity project. It's designed as a late-in-life Oscar bid for his 80-year-old star, Lance Henriksen, a beloved B-movie veteran known for James Cameron's "Aliens" and Kathryn Bigelow's "Near Dark." The actor, whose low, gravelly voice could intimidate the devil, hurls himself into the role with a rabid intensity, but that's the problem. His character is such a nasty S.O.B., you feel nothing for him.

Mortensen stars as John, who lives with his husband, Eric (Terry Chen), in California. He decides to bring his father, Willis (Henrickson), to stay with them, the plan being to find a nearby living facility. Willis embraces a solitary existence on his rural Midwest farm, but he's rapidly slipping into dementia. The plane ride to California, featured in the opening scene, unleashes Willis in all his venomous glory: spewing obscenities, hurling homophobic insults at his son, mentioning his long-dead wife as if she's still present.

Once in California, it gets worse. Through flashbacks, we see how Willis (Swedish actor Sverrir Gudnason) may once have had a happy family, including a beautiful and devoted wife (Hannah Gross), but somewhere along the line, he turned sour. The film

does not offer any explanation. Suddenly, he's mean, vindictive. Prone to the drink. His son and daughter loathe him for it, particularly John, depicted at ages 5, 10 and 15, who sees him for the massive failure he's become.

Maybe that is why John's saintly approach to his incorrigible father rings false. His father is a man who spews hate, and directed in every direction possible. Not just at gays, which because of John takes the brunt of his bile, but also people of color. Even his daughter (Laura Linney) and grandchildren. Oh yeah, add misogynist to the list. He speaks abhorrently about his desires in the company of women... and the movie suggests his dementia has nothing to do with it. He's always been this way.

John just takes it, quietly absorbing all the verbal abuse.

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are the cruelest of illnesses in that they strip the sufferer of their memory, what defines them as human beings. We know, too, that in real life, bonds between children and their ailing parent can lack the necessary closure. But on film, there is something innate in us that demands of our entertainment that we be enlightened.

Not only does "Falling" deprive us of that, but in depicting the heartache of dementia, it presents us with a cruel, oppressive tyrant who created his own misery.

Whatever fate befalls him, we are thankful simply for parting company with him.

□

The delicate beauty of “Supernova” is how universal it is. The flippant cannot dismiss it as a “gay movie” because its portrait of grief, of standing at the abyss of one’s own mortality, strikes a chord with anyone who sees it.

And, it features Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci at the top of their game.

The long-hyped Oscar hopeful, which arrived through View on Demand on Feb. 16, weaves a tapestry of grand emotions, but it does so in an unusually quiet manner. The camera exists as a patient observer of two individuals in love, chronicling the unspoken dialogue between them, the rhythm of their conversations. Keaton Henson’s score pipes in from time to time. Even the outbursts, the exultations of sadness, taper off into stillness.

The net effect: A rare movie where we not only believe two people are in love, but that they were destined to be together.

This is only the second film by writer-director Harry Macqueen, and his stroke of genius was casting Firth (“The King’s Speech”) and Tucci (“The Dev-

“*This is a rare movie where we not only believe two people are in love, but that they were destined to be together.*”

il Wears Prada”) in the central roles. Good friends in real life, there was no need to manufacture any semblance of companionship. The bond was there from the start.

As “Supernova” begins, Sam (Firth) and Tusker (Tucci), together for 20 years, are traveling across England in an RV, the goal being to spend time together, and with family and friends. Tusker is in the early stages of dementia. Both men realize they live on borrowed time, the clock ticking on Tusker’s memory, and they intend to make the most of it.

Tucci is an actor of infinite intelligence, one who has a way of triumphing as the smartest guy in the room. And because of that, filmmakers often ask that he gnaw down to tiny morsels whatever scenery remains (“The Hunger Games,” anyone?). But here, those scene-stealing flourishes are dialed down considerably. Instead, we get subtle gestures or motions that convey his gradually diminishing mental capacities. The way his brow furrows when having trouble recalling the past. The upbeat tone adopted to soothe Sam’s fears he is sliding deeper into dementia.

Firth is even more impressive. Here is an actor who, now and then, runs the risk of being the British Woody Allen, awkwardly stammering his way through roles. Not here. His performance is the devastating centerpiece of “Supernova.” Anyone who has watched a loved one suffer will identify with what he achieves. Alternating between helicopter parent

★★★★★
“Supernova”
Running time: 95 minutes. View on Demand.
Rated R for language

— afraid to let go — and an agonizing sense of fear and loss, Firth gives the role everything he’s got. A carefully modulated performance that’s like watching someone in the company of a loved one who’s already gone.

Macqueen’s screenplay arms his actors with the tools to make their union believable. The way a word or two, the start of a recollection, trigger a laugh, a smile in the other. A tender caress. Tiny gestures that convey love between two people.

“Supernova” builds to a startling revelation, and it’s impossible not to be moved by what follows. Yes, the film is a downer. There is no avoiding that. But in being bold enough to faithfully observe this couple, the story hits us hard because Firth and Tucci makes us believe fate brought their characters together. They were made for each other. Even amid the unthinkable.

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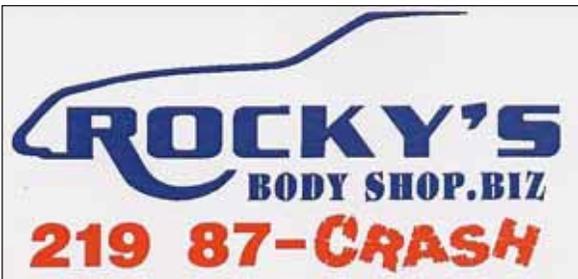


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Indiana Dunes National Park

The National Park Service has implemented a mask requirement for employees, visitors, partners and contractors.

The move supports President Biden’s Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing, aiming to protect those who live, work and visit national parks.

At Indiana Dunes National Park, face masks are required in all park buildings and facilities, including the Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center, Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education and Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk pavilion. Masks also are required on NPS-managed lands when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including on narrow or busy trails, overlooks and in historic homes.

As conditions are subject to change, visitors should check the park’s website and social media channels for updates before a visit. Visit tinyurl.com/2r86ch6e for details. Park rangers are on duty to provide information, protect visitors and park resources and uphold the requirement.



The park is offering virtual ranger chats for teachers and students through a variety of media.

The programs can cover a wide range of topics and grade levels. IDNP educators can customize programs to meet teacher preferences. For example, the park can bring Max, the milk snake, into a virtual classroom to teach about animal adaptations.

No Maple Sugar tours at Chellberg Farm are planned, but a virtual presentation about maple sugaring, complete with activities and connections to the area’s history, is offered.

Visit www.nps.gov/indu or www.facebook.com/IndianaDunesNPS for a list of programs, then call the scheduling office at (219) 395-1885 for details.



Snowshoes are available for free checkout from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily, with at least a 2-inch snow base required, at The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.

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The Visitor Center is at 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. The Paul H. Douglas Center is at 100 N. Lake St. in Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Call (219) 395-1882 or visit www.nps.gov/indu for details.

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LCSO in the Spotlight



Editor's note — This weekly spotlight, provided by Tim King, LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra executive director, highlights its talented musicians.

Danielle Lilly is a junior at LaPorte High School, where she is first chair bassoon in the wind ensemble. She is a student apprentice with LCSO as second bassoon for the 2020-2021 season.

When not with LCSO, Danielle works in visual art with charcoal and painting, along with playing video games with her twin brother, Nathan. After high school, her college major could be bassoon performance or 2-D Arts...or both.

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Former Area Resident Named to Post

Former Michiana Shores resident Justin Banda has begun a two-year associate director seat on the American Institute of Architects Chicago board.

Banda received his Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies in 2015, and a Master of Architecture with a concentration in Sustainable Design in 2017, both from Judson University. He is employed at Legat Architects in Chicago, where he works as a project associate and part-time marketing coordinator, and serves on the company's Design and Research & Innovation committees. He also directs the company's annual Think Tank symposium.



Banda

He is the 2020 co-chair of the AIA Chicago Young Architects Forum and works closely with the AIA Illinois Emerging Professionals Network, where he serves as the Chicago delegate.

Banda's family still lives in Michiana Shores. His sister, Jenni, completed her degree in international relations at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan and works in Chicago. His youngest sister, Anna, is a senior at La Lumiere School.

LaPorte Farmers Market

The LaPorte Farmers Market, sponsored by the City of LaPorte Urban Enterprise Association, is seeking vendors for its 2021 summer season.

Located in the parking lot next to Mucho Mas on Lincolnway, the market manager is Lindsay Jongkind. Opening day is May 22 and closing day Oct. 9.

Contact Jongkind at lindsayj@laportepartnership or call the office at (219) 324-8584 for details.



Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail.)

Oh, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh, Star of the 'Sea, help me and show me, herein you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth! I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in

this necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. Oh, show me herein you are my mother. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you in Eternal Glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days, the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.

A Notice to Our Readers

The Beacher will continue the following office hours for now

**Mon.-Thurs.: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Thank you for your patience during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Beacher, 911 Franklin St. • (219) 879-0088 • beacher@thebeacher.com



Prayer to Saint Rita

Thank You to St. Rita
You are called the "Advocate of the Hopeless" and "The Impossible." Your help in my recent situation was successful, the petition was granted and I am truly grateful for your intercession. I urge all to call on you when faced with a "hopeless" situation. You are, indeed, a miracle worker.

Rising Stars of Indiana



Pictured are (from left) Savannah Holley, Charlotte Bartlett, Alyssa Shaia, Kaylee Shank and Michigan City High School Interim Principal Julie Fregien.

Four Michigan City High School juniors are among the Indiana Association of School Principals "Rising Stars of Indiana" Class of 2022.

Each Indiana high school was invited to recognize up to four 11th grade students based on academic achievement. Representing MCHS are Charlotte Bartlett, Savannah Holley, Alyssa Shaia and Kaylee Shank. The four have grade point averages between 4.46 and 4.53.

PNW Commencement Ceremonies

Purdue University Northwest will proceed with outdoor, in-person graduation ceremonies, with appropriate health and safety protocols, for the spring Class of 2021.

Ceremonies are May 15 in the area south of the Nils K. Nelson Bioscience Innovation Building on the Hammond campus. The rain date is May 16.

All state, local and university health and safety protocols will be followed. Should the situation change, PNW will notify candidates for graduation as soon as possible.

More details are available at pnw.edu/commencement-faqs.

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Activities to Explore

In the Area:

Feb. 25 — Zoom meetup, Online Graphic Novel Club for teens, Walter Dean Myers' *Monster*. Info: (219) 873-3045, email YOnline@mclib.org

Feb. 27 — Full Moon Hike, 7 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Registration: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 28 — J.D. Marshall Shipwreck History Hike, 10:30 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Registration: (219) 926-1390.

Through Feb. 27 — Indiana University Northwest's School of the Arts, "Mobile Art + Action Pop-Up," Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Free, masks required. Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Info: www.chestertonart.org, www.iun.edu/arts

Wednesdays — Virtual Story Time, 10 a.m., through Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/

Through March 31 — Dale Cooper installation (3-D paper flowers), The Legacy Center Gallery @ Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Gallery hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Info: jessicar@qas.org

Through June 5 — New exhibits, "Lost and Looking" & "Pipelines and Borderlines: The Art of Survival," Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Info: www.lubeznikcenter.org

In the Region

Feb. 25 — The Region of Three Oaks Museum/The School of American Music, "Songs of the Pioneers," 7 p.m. EDT, Zoom. Log-in information: trotommuseum@gmail.com

Feb. 26-March 7 — Jerry Mayer's "2 Across," Elkhart Civic Theatre @ Bristol (Ind.) Opera House, 210 E. Vistula St. (Indiana 120). Times (Eastern): Feb. 26-27, March 5-6/7:30 p.m., Feb. 28 & March 7/3 p.m. Tickets: live performances — students/\$16, adults/\$22, seniors 62+/\$20; streaming — \$19. Reservations: www.elkhartcivictheatre.org/tix, (574) 848-4116.

March 2 — Bridgman (Mich.) Public Library Zoom book presentation, Abra Berens' *Ruffage: A Practical Guide to Vegetables*, 6 p.m. EDT. Zoom link: www.bridgmanlibrary.com. Info: (269) 465-3663.

Through March 7 — Exhibits, Elkhart's Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St. Exhibits: "The Blue Ribbon Collection: The Amish Acres Arts & Crafts Festival"; "Adam Grant: A Holocaust Remembrance"; "Gabor Peterdi: The Early Works." Info: www.midwestmuseum.us, (574) 293-6660.

Through March 12 — Student exhibit, Art Barn School of Art, 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Gallery hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue., Thur., Fri./10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Info: (219) 462-9009, www.artbarnschool.org

Through March 28 — New exhibits, KAC Members' Show & local ceramist Jennifer Zona, Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT Fri.-Mon. Info: www.krasl.org, (269) 983-0271

Fridays and Wednesdays through February — Live Stream Yoga, 10-11:15 a.m. EDT. Through Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve, 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Info: <https://spore-studios.com/yoga/>

History Museum Mystery Program

South Bend's The History Museum will present "Mystery at the Mansion: Dillinger's Last Caper" as a virtual program for the first time since it began in 2007.

Links, which go live at 7 p.m. EDT Friday, Feb. 26, can be purchased for \$10 (general) or \$8 (members) at www.historymuseumSB.org

The event is inspired by John Dillinger's 1934 robbery of Merchants National Bank in South Bend. Participants track down the secret accomplice. Those who solve the case have a chance to win the grand prize: a curator-led, behind-the-scenes virtual tour of the 38-room Oliver Mansion.

Participants also will hear accounts from those involved, then cast a vote for the person who helped "Public Enemy No. 1."

Local author Roger Chrastil, who scripted past "Mystery at the Mansion" plays, as well as the museum's "Christmas at Copshaholm" specialty tours, wrote the story. He has written several other works, including the plays "An Immigrant's Story" and "Or Does It Explode?," both of which were performed at the museum.

Visit www.historymuseumSB.org or call (574) 235-9664 for reservations. The museum is located at 808 W. Washington St.

Musical History Program on Zoom

The Region of Three Oaks Museum and The School of American Music will present "Songs of the Pioneers" at 7 p.m. EDT Thursday, Feb. 25, on Zoom.

The songs, played by a quartet of local folk musicians, depict the subjects that occupied the minds of Southwest Michigan's 19th century settlers, including logging, farming, domestic work, the railroads, Great Lakes sailing and celebrations. Program host Nick Bogert, a TROTOM board member, provides historical context for the music.

Local musicians include: Garth Taylor providing guitar, dulcimer, vocals and arranging; Dan Moser on vocals, banjo, guitar and percussion; Tara Dodge on vocals, flute and percussion, and Daniel Rodriguez on upright bass.

Email TROTOM at trotommuseum@gmail.com for log-in information.

ENVELOPE



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On February 25, 1570, Pope Pius V excommunicated England's Queen Elizabeth I.

On February 25, 1836, Samuel Colt received a patent for his famous Colt six-shooter revolver.

On February 25, 1901, in New Jersey, J.P. Morgan incorporated U.S. Steel Corp., creating the nation's first billion-dollar corporation.

On February 25, 1919, Oregon became the first state to levy a tax on gasoline.

On February 25, 1988, the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance permitting limited night baseball at Wrigley Field.

On February 26, 1870, the first New York City subway line opened to the public.

On February 26, 1932, singer Johnny Cash was born in Kingsland, Ark.

On February 26, 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that England had produced an atomic bomb.

On February 26, 1979, a total solar eclipse cast a moving shadow 175 miles wide from Oregon to North Dakota and into Canada.

On February 27, 1902, author John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, Calif.

On February 27, 1922, in a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court guaranteed women the right to vote.

On February 27, 1960, the U.S. Olympic hockey team defeated the Soviets, 3-2, at the Winter Games in Squaw Valley, Calif.

On February 27, 1964, the city of Pisa asked the Italian government to spend more than \$1 million to straighten the 184-foot Leaning Tower of Pisa. At that time, it slanted 11-feet from the perpendicular, and engineers predicted that, without immediate correction, it would soon collapse.

On February 27, 1979, Jane Byrne defeated Mayor Michael Bilandic in Chicago's Democratic mayoral primary.

On February 27, 1997, divorce became legal in Ireland.

On February 28, 1846, a new warship, the U.S.S. Princeton, was cruising on the Potomac River. Aboard was President John Tyler, along with other top government officials. During a demonstration, a large gun, which was called the Peacemaker, exploded. Killed were Abel P. Upshur, Secretary of

State; Thomas W. Gilmer, Secretary of the Navy; along with many others.

On February 28, 1849, the ship California arrived at San Francisco, carrying the first gold seekers.

On February 28, 1917, it was reported the United States had intercepted the "Zimmermann Telegraph," reputed to be a proposal for a Mexican-German alliance should the U.S. enter World War I.

On February 28, 1983, the final episode of "M*A*S*H" aired on CBS television.

On February 28, 1993, four federal agents from the Bureau of Tobacco, Alcohol and firearms were killed in Waco, Texas, during a raid on David Koresh's Branch Davidians religious cult compound.

On March 1, 1790, Congress authorized the first U.S. Census.

On March 1, 1792, a federal law was passed providing that the president pro tempore of the Senate and the speaker of the House, in that order, would follow the vice president in line of succession to the presidency.

On March 1, 1864, Rebecca Lee received a medical degree from Boston's New England Female Medical College, becoming the first black woman licensed to practice medicine in America.

On March 1, 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the establishment of the Peace Corps.

On March 2, 1776, the Navy and Marines fought their first battle of the Revolutionary War, capturing a British fort on the Bahamas' New Providence Island.

On March 2, 1837, Rush Medical College, predecessor of Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, was incorporated in Chicago.

On March 2, 1888, H.G. Wells, reacting to criticism his poetry lacked meter, responded, "*Meters are used to measure gas, not the outpourings of the human heart.*"

On March 2, 1899, Congress authorized the establishment of Mount Rainier National Park in Washington.

On March 3, 1831, Chicago railroad-car magnate George Pullman was born in Brocton, N.Y.

On March 3, 1851, Congress appropriated \$250 for President Millard Fillmore to buy books to start a library in the White House.

On March 3, 1857, John "Long John" Wentworth defeated Benjamin Carver (5,933-4,842) to become Chicago's first mayor.

On March 3, 1875, "Carmen," Bizet's world-famous opera, premiered in Paris.

On March 3, 1879, Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood, of Washington, D.C., was the first woman admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court.

On March 3, 1923, the first issue of "Time" magazine was published.

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- St. John's United Church of Christ, 101 St. John Road, noon-6 p.m. Tuesday, March 2.
 - Eaton Chiropractic, 8690 Pabs Road, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesday, March 3.
 - Uptown Social, 907 Franklin St., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesday, March 3.
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Off the Book Shelf

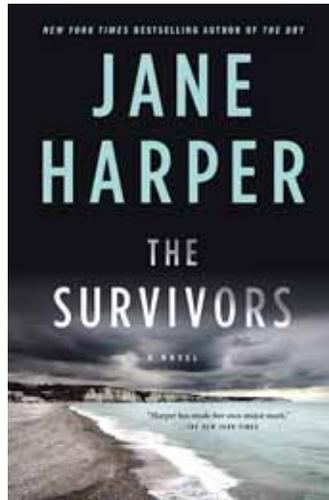
by Sally Carpenter

This week, I have two mysteries with more in common than just dead or missing bodies — both revolve around family and community. Especially in small communities, where everyone knows everyone, and a horrendous event can make or break the delicate thread of relationships.

Each book takes us to a different part of the world through each author's unique brand of putting the reader in the picture, making the landscape as much of the story as the people. There is a certain similarity between a winter blizzard in Northumberland and a gale on the Tasmanian sea that sets the tone of the story.

The Survivors by Jane Harper (hardcover; \$27.99 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook. 372 pages.)

Here's an interesting destination for any armchair traveler: Tasmania, located off the southeast coast of Australia, and the 26th largest island in the world. The fictional town of Evelyn Bay is a small coastal village. The population only swells in the summer where the sandy beach, dotted with caves, and the thrill of diving, draw a large number of tourists. But now, it's the end of summer and the streets are becoming more deserted.



"If that storm had fizzled out at sea, or hit a few kilometers further up the coast, who knows what would have happened?...Change that one day and everything would have been different."

That one day happened 12 years ago when two men died in a capsized boat during the worst storm Evelyn Bay saw in decades. And then, a 14-year-old girl, Gabby Birch, went missing. The only thing found was her backpack that washed up on the beach.

Now Kieran Elliott has returned to his hometown from Sydney with his girlfriend, Mia, and their baby daughter. Kieran's brother, Finn, and a friend's father, were the two drowned men. Kieran always blamed himself for their deaths, and apparently, so did others.

As Kieran and Mia reconnect with old friends, it doesn't take long for old memories to surface, providing happy moments and long-suppressed pain. Even more suspicion and fear soon come to a head when Bronte, a waitress, is found dead on the beach.

The sea and the caves along the shore hold se-

crets as well, and this latest murdered girl brings up long-dormant questions, fears and accusations that could tear apart a family and a group of childhood friends.

Harper gives us an insider's view of a place most of us will never visit, and a group of people we may never forget. Is anyone to blame? Or is everyone to blame?

The Darkest Evening by Ann Cleeves (hardcover; \$27.99 retail in bookstores and online; also now available in paperback and as an eBook. 373 pages.)

This book is the latest in the Vera Stanhope series set in Northumberland in the northeast of England. Time has not worn down the strong personality or stories of its saucy main character, who is an

inspector in the police department. Yes, Vera may be pushing middle age, but she proves herself invaluable with her innate sense of ferreting out clues, particularly among those who try hard to hide their dastardly deeds.

How apropos that this story starts out with a blizzard, because the events that follow certainly stir up a lot of stone cold feelings for a family that once turned its back on Vera and her father.

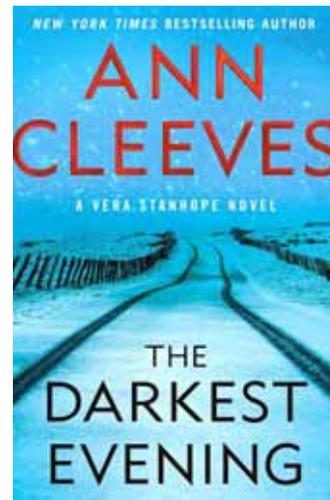
Driving home in the storm, Vera spots a car off the road that crashed into a tree, the driver's door wide open. Her surprise comes when she finds a toddler unharmed and still strapped in the back seat. Where's the mother?

Her next surprise comes with the realization she is not far down the road from her relatives' ancestral home — Brockburn — where her father grew up and left when he became a policeman.

The young missing mother is known to many in the area, but no one knows why she would be out on such a dangerous night. There are suspects aplenty, some of them Vera's relatives. But where is the body? Can't be found.

Can Vera be as hard on her family as anyone else during this investigation? Will they even cooperate? Or will they turn on her as they did her father? Funny how a missing person, who is no relative to Vera, can lead to complex family secrets, because there are as many suspects of family relatives as non-relatives. Who has the most to gain from this young single mother's death? Answers never come easily.

Till next time, happy reading!



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