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Born to Play

by William Halliar

When music is performed, it is fleeting. It touches the soul but for an instant. Then, in a heartbeat, it is gone, leaving behind memories of sweet moments from the past and hope for the future.

Hazel Lucile Harrison had music in her heart. She died on April 29, 1969, at age 85. During her lifetime, she was hailed as “one of the greatest living woman pianists.” At a 1983 concert in honor of her centennial birthday, the program noted, “At a time when it is both unfashionable and highly unlikely to scale the pinnacles of achievements, as did this pioneer, Hazel Harrison was able to attain what very few women – and certainly no black pianists – were able to accomplish at that time. One can only say that she was born to play.”

LaPorte native Hazel Harrison was born to play, to hone her talent to entertain, inspire, uplift and celebrate her heritage. LaPorte County Historian Bruce Johnson has done extensive research on her life, his findings with photographs and articles featuring other influential African Americans in special displays honoring Black



During her lifetime, Hazel Harrison was hailed as “one of the greatest living woman pianists.”

History Month at LaPorte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave.

From a series of articles titled “LaPorte County Stories: Hazel Harrison — Someone You Should Know During Black History Month,” Johnson recounts her early life history: “Hazel Lucille Harrison was born May 12, 1883, the only child of Hiram and Olive Jane Harrison. The family lived at 1306 Clay St. in LaPorte, Indiana. Her father had a barber shop, and mother operated a beauty parlor. Hiram also sang in the choir and played piano for the First Presbyterian Church.”

One can only imagine young Hazel sitting quietly in a pew listening to her father and his friends sing church hymns, soaking in the melodies, being inspired by the rhythms. If her father played piano for the choir, he likely spent many an evening, after a long day on his feet at the barber shop, playing the piano, going over and over difficult passages of music until he perfected his style and technique. This must have had a great influence on Hazel, who drifted off to

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sleep many an evening listening to the strains of wonderful music played by her father on the family piano.

Johnson's history continues, "When she was four, Hazel showed exceptional musical talent and began taking piano lessons from Richard Pellow who was organist at the church. By the time she was eight, Hazel was playing for local dance parties and making extra income for her family."

The talented and precocious Hazel must have been a star at many a family gathering, as the little girl sat and entertained at the keyboard. This is often the way of musical families. And as with anyone who takes the time to learn an instrument discovers, the best way to enjoy music is to share it.

Hazel continued her musical studies, although to do so came at some cost. As she played in the community, her talent was noticed and encouraged. A local newspaper reported in 1910, "It was learned upon inquiry that Miss Harrison has studied and is studying under most difficult and trying conditions. Lack of financial means makes it necessary for her to labor at tasks which interfere with the technical development of her fingers and coming to the city for her instruction is also accomplished only under the hardest conditions."

The same source continues speaking of money that could be donated to help her studies: "...if a little of it could be devoted to the helping of this gifted one, who deserves and will succeed, it would be a truly excellent thing. If narrowness of mind prevents some of our town's wealthy persons (from donating) perhaps then some of the more fortunate of her own race should look to her helping. She will prove credit

to them if she be given the chance."

Despite all of the difficulties, and with much encouragement of family, friends and all who enjoyed her music, Hazel continued to study.

Johnson's excellent article continues the story: "She was brought to the attention of Victor Heinze, a famous German musician, who became her next piano teacher for many years in LaPorte and later commuted for her lessons in Chicago. Although she was home schooled as a child, Hazel attended and graduated from LaPorte High School in 1902."

The people of LaPorte must have loved Hazel's music, because she was sought after to play for local dance parties. Remember, there was no radio, and phonographs were rare at the time. She also gave piano lessons to children of prominent LaPorte citizens.

A great honor was accorded to Hazel in 1904 when she was 20: She performed as a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in Germany. Johnson notes this was "the first appearance with a European Orchestra of an American performer who had never studied outside of the United States!"

Of her performances, Lucien H. White wrote in a New York newspaper, in an article titled "Sunday Afternoon Recital, Rorerich Hall": "Miss Harrison's playing, even to one who has heard her a number of times, developed new beauty and charm. There was a breath of utterance, a power of expression, a fluidity of style and a

technical dexterity that compassed the entire gamut of musical requirement." It was said she played Bach with a "virile strength." The reviewer was most impressed with her interpretation of a Chopin piece that was "...played with a dreamy delicacy in interpretation which seemed to transport one from the regions of a rushing Niagara to the sweet and quiet garden of an Eden rest."

What's also interesting and impressive is that



LaPorte County Historian Bruce Johnson has done extensive research on Hazel Harrison's life.

besides playing classical piano, Hazel was adept at jazz improvisation: a new form of music at the time.

At the same New York appearance mentioned earlier, she played an original piece by an African-American composer who was present in the audience. She then invited him onto the stage where together they improvised on the keyboard, incorporating a number of jazz themes.



Hazel Harrison toured the United States playing the music of some of her favorite European and African-American composers.

Through her performance, Hazel gained sponsorships that allowed her to study under several great European musicians. Upon returning to America, she moved to Chicago and, using that city as a home base, toured the United States from 1920-1926. She made several stops in her hometown of LaPorte, where it was reported she played for audiences of standing room only, once giving a benefit concert to raise funds to complete construction of the new African Methodist Episcopal Church on Brighton Street. Many of these concerts would conclude with a performance of Hazel's signature piece, "By the Beautiful Blue Danube," a Concert Arabesques on Motifs by Johann Strauss. The soaring melodies of this famous music must have spoken to Hazel's heart since it was music she so often employed to close concerts.

In the 1930s, Hazel began teaching piano at the Tuskegee Institute, Alabama State College and Howard University. She played concert tours during World War II to raise funds for the war effort. Between 1947-1950, she toured the United States playing the music of some of her favorite European and African-American composers.

Hazel performed with famous orchestras such as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, under Eugene Ormandy's direction, and the Hollywood Bowl Symphony. She retired from what must have been a grueling schedule of teaching and performing in

Continued on Page 4

Michigan City Chamber Music Festival Presents

Rising Again

Sunday, Feb. 20, 3 p.m.

St. Mary's Catholic Church, 411 W. 11th St.



Jennet Ingle
oboe



Mariah Boucher
piano

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Born to Play

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1954, giving her final “Farewell Concert” at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

After Hazel’s passing, friends who corresponded with the famous pianist remembered she was still active with her music until the last year of her life, always working to perfect the technical aspects of her art.

One of her more famous students, Roberta Flack (“Killing Me Softly With His Song,” “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face”) said it was Hazel who taught her to “play from the heart.”

Hazel Harrison had music in her heart. She was born to make music and was true to her art until the very end.



Danielle Adams, the LaPorte County Historical Society Museum assistant director, is photographed by *The Beacher's* Bill Halliar at the museum's tribute to Hazel Harrison.



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If You Go

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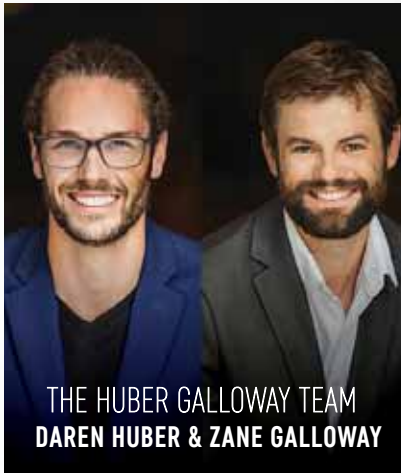
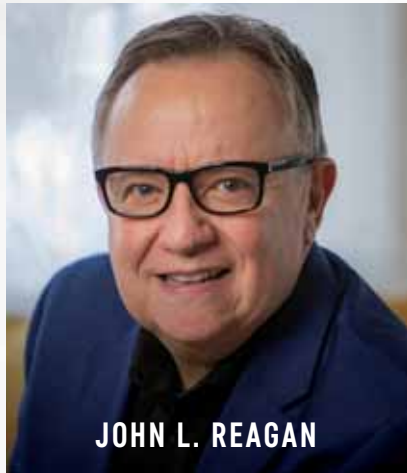
Displays throughout the museum spotlight many prominent black men and women in LaPorte County, including doctors, humanitarians, pianists and everyday people. Visitors can hear about Michigan City’s Elite Youth Center and hear Hazel Harrison’s piano playing.

In celebrating “Love in LaPorte,” the museum will feature wedding dresses from different eras. Every Saturday in February, the museum’s assistant director, Danielle Adams, will wear a wedding dress around the museum. Also, a new scavenger hunt is planned.

Call (219) 324-6767 for more details

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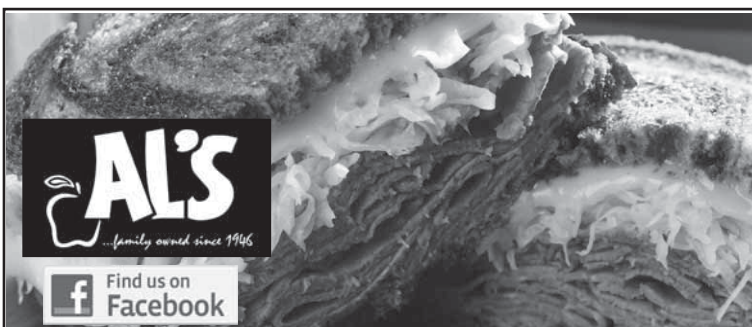
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Chamber Music Festival to Host “Rising Again” Concert

Michigan City Chamber Music Festival will present “Rising Again,” a family friendly program by oboist Jennet Ingle and pianist Mariah Boucher, at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, 411 W. 11th St.

The free concert, which includes a meet-the-artists reception, explores themes of transfor-



Boucher



Ingle

mation through compositions by leading new music composers such as Mary Chandler, Katherine Needleman, Dirk-Michael Kirsch and Alyssa Morris.

Ingle is principal oboist for South Bend Symphony Orchestra and Northwest Indiana Symphony. Her first book, *The Happiest Musician*, is forthcoming. Boucher is an opera and art song coach who has been music director of South Bend Lyric Opera for the past five productions, and serves as staff accompanist at Indiana University-South Bend and vocal coach at The University of Notre Dame.

The reception is next door in the St. Mary’s Artist Studios. Light refreshments will be available. The St. Mary’s resale shop and food pantry will be open.

Visit www.MCCMF.org or MC Chamber Fest on Facebook for more information.

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Polish Heritage Essay Competition

The Polish Heritage Association of Michigan City is accepting applications for its 2022 Essay Competition.

The contest is open to any high school or college student legally residing in Northwest Indiana (Lake Porter, LaPorte, Starke and St. Joseph counties). Applicants are eligible for awards of \$1,000 (first place), \$500 (second place) or \$250 (third place), and not required to be of Polish ancestry.

Students may choose from one of three topics:

- Which Polish American has contributed most to U.S. history and why?
- Which native of Poland has contributed most to science, mathematics or medicine and why?
- What was the First Partition of Poland (1772), and how did it impact Polish history?

Applications and essays are due no later than Aug. 1 to Professor Janusz Duzinkiewicz at jduzinkiewicz@pnw.edu. Email him for complete essay contest information and an entry form.

Public Art Committee

Michigan City Public Art Committee meets through Zoom at 10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 17. The Zoom link is tinyurl.com/2j25s6sp. The meeting ID is 822 3670 0471 and the passcode 766440.



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Michigan City Public Library

Michigan City Public Library's circulation/front lobby area is open to the public.

The front doors are open. Public seating is available, and the computer lab is open. Hours are: 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Saturday and closed Sundays.

The following programs are scheduled:

- **MCPL Podcast Episode Release at 9 a.m. Friday, Feb. 18.** "Discussions with Miss Dana" includes classic books youth should read and previews of 2022 releases. Listen on Buzzsprout or through www.mclib.org/podcast.
- **Celebrating Naomi Anderson at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19.** Presenters Joe Coates and Bonnie Schaaf are members of Michigan City Mainstreet Association's Celebrating Naomi Anderson Committee. The group commissioned the eight-piece steel sculpture commemorating Anderson, a Michigan City-born suffragette, in Charles E. Westcott Park. An unveiling is in March. Schaaf will describe Anderson's importance to the community, while Coates will discuss her significance to civil rights, voting rights and equality.
- **Needle Arts Club at 5:30 p.m. Mondays, Feb. 21 and 28.** Membership to the group, formerly known as the Knit Club, is open to anyone interested in needle arts such as crochet, needle-

point, cross-stitch, crewel, tatting and other hand stitching. All skill levels and ages are welcome.

- **The Zoom presentation Women in Jazz with Flutist Galen Abdur-Razziq at 3 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22.** The presentation highlights women such as Bessie Smith, Valaida Snow, Mildred Bailey, Mary Lou Williams, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn. Contact Robin Kohn at (219) 873-3049 for the Zoom link, or meet at the library for the presentation on the meeting room screen.
- **Virtual Story Time with Take-Home Craft.** A new story-time video is posted at 10 a.m. Wednesdays on the library website and YouTube channel at www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/ Visit Youth Services to get the craft! The program is aimed at children through age 5. Contact the Youth Services department at (219) 873-3045 for more details.



Abdur-Razziq



The Michigan City Exchange Club wants to thank Don Montgomery and The Beacher for all their help with our printing needs!

Join Exchange Today: Call Membership Chairman Jim Fisher at (219) 873-7900

Volunteers are needed for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at least one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and helpers must pass the VITA test through the intermediate level. Testing and training are online. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.

Two new services are available:

- ComicsPlus offers unlimited access to thousands of digital comics, graphic novels and manga. Popular titles include Avatar: The Last Airbender & The Legend of Korra, Big Nate, Bone, Disney Princesses, Geronimo Stilton, Stranger Things, Locke & Key and American Gods. Patrons need a current library card and PIN.
- The app Library NewsStand includes 7,000 titles of digital magazines and newspapers in more than 60 language, including: *Newsweek*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *The New Yorker*, *Reader's Digest*, *Elle* and *Esquire*. A library card is required.

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

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Indiana Dunes National Park

Indiana Dunes National Park and Indiana Dunes Tourism have partnered to offer Drop-In Volunteering, a no-hassle option for those looking to help.

Opportunities are available nearly every day and include stewardship, restoration and park cleanup.

From 9 a.m.-noon the third Saturday of each month, meet at the Park Connection Office next to the Bailly/Chellberg parking lot. Projects vary by season, but can include working on invasive species, land and building restoration, or preparing for special events. Visit www.indianadunes.com/volunteer for this month's details.

From 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily, stop by Indiana Dunes Visitor Center or the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education for the "Trash Trekkers" program. Grab a bag at either center and help keep beaches and trails clean.

No formal commitment is necessary; simply drop in at any location. Dress appropriately for the work: wear comfortable outdoor clothing and depending on the season, take sunscreen, bug spray and water. The national park will provide gear and training to anyone interested.

Call the Park Connection office at (219) 221-7098 or visit www.indianadunes.com/volunteer for additional details.



The National Park Service has approved an Indiana Dunes National Park entrance fee that begins March 31.

The new revenue will help fund the Marquette Greenway Bike Trail, visitor services, parking and transportation improvements for a park that has seen attendance increase from 1.7 million visitors to more than 3 million since its 2019 name change.

The fee only affects the national park, not Indiana Dunes State Park. Costs vary depending on the method used to enter:

- The per person/walk-in/bike-in/boat-in rate is \$15 (up to a maximum of \$25 per family).
- Motorcycle pass is \$20.
- One- to Seven-Day Vehicle Pass is \$25.
- Annual Pass is \$45.
- Commercial Fee for a Motor Coach (Bus): up to \$100.

Holders of the following federal land passes will not pay an entrance fee: Annual Pass, Senior Pass,

Veterans, Military and Gold Star Family Pass, Fourth Grade Pass, Access Pass (for permanent disability) and Volunteer Pass.

The Entrance Pass (1-7 days) and Annual Pass will be available at: Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, seasonally at West Beach Entrance Station or online at www.recreation.gov. The Annual Pass will be available March 1 and the Entrance Pass on the first day fees are collected: March 31. There are plans to have local vendors such as gas stations, or other retailers near the park sell passes. More information will be available when vendors are confirmed. Call (219) 395-1882 or visit www/nps.gov/indu for more detail.



The National Park Service has created an audio version of Indiana Dunes National Park's official map and guide, making it accessible to visually impaired visitors.

The audio description can be accessed by visiting tinyurl.com/2p82t2rx, or by downloading the UniDescription mobile app for Apple and Android devices. Downloadable audio files are available as well. The apps target people who are blind, visually impaired, print dyslexic or who prefer learning through sound. Local and other park employees, including a legally blind staff member — facilitated the project alongside a fully blind, experienced volunteer who has assisted other national parks' audio-described brochures.



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.

Indiana Dunes State Park

The following programs will be offered:

• **Beaver Tales Trek from 10 a.m.-noon Sunday, Feb. 20.**

Participants during the easy three-mile Trail 2 hike will learn about the park's largest rodent. The trek includes visiting marsh habitats. If conditions allow, free snowshoes will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

• **Beach Mysteries Table from 2-3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20.**

Meet at the Nature Center to see a naturalist explore what washes up on the beach.

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



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LCSO in the Spotlight



Chris Price.

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

LCSO Student Apprentice Chris Price is a LaPorte High School senior who's been playing cello for seven years.

Chris has written numerous compositions and plays other instruments, such as guitar and ukulele. He recently was accepted into Purdue University-West Lafayette for computer science, and plans to continue in Purdue's orchestra program.

Notre Dame International Exhibit

The History Museum, in collaboration with Notre Dame International, will present "University of Notre Dame: The Fabric of a Global University" through May 28 in the museum's Ernestine M. Racine Gallery of Notre Dame History.

The exhibit explores Notre Dame's global network that offers opportunities for research, collaboration and education through partnerships and programs. Photographs, artifacts and videos highlight the diversity of students, faculty, staff and scholars. A centerpiece is art by Nancy Sinnott.

On view is a traditional Nigerian dress, Batik stoles from Guizhou, China, and the trophy from the 1979 Mirage Bowl in Japan, Notre Dame's first international football game. Photographs range from the observatory in Chile to Notre Dame's historic location in Kylemore Abbey and villas of Rome. Other countries represented by artifacts and photographs are Brazil, India, Israel, Kenya and Mexico. Local resources are highlighted, including a traveling trunk available to educators.

The museum is located at 808 W. Washington St., South Bend. Tickets cost \$11 for adults, \$9.50 for seniors (60+), \$7 for youth (6-17) and free for members. Admission to the Oliver Mansion is included; however, it is an additional cost to visit the adjoining Studebaker National Museum. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. EST Monday-Saturday and noon-5 p.m. EST Sunday. Visit www.historymuseumSB.org or call (574) 235-9664 for more details.

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“Wolf Like Me” is One of Streaming’s Best New Shows

by Andrew Tallackson



Gary (Josh Gad) falls in love with a woman (Isla Fisher) with a dark secret in “Wolf Like Me,” now streaming on Peacock.

It puzzles me as to why Isla Fisher isn’t a bigger star. She has the bombshell looks of old Hollywood, but a goof’s soul. Think Rita Hayworth meets Lucille Ball. Heck, she’s comedy royalty, married to Borat himself, Sacha Baron Cohen.

In movie after movie, she charms you, playing instantly likable women who give average guys hope they’re not undatable. In “Wedding Crashers,” “Confessions of a Shopaholic” and “Now You See Me,” she has an energy her costars lack, but her costars often are bigger stars, so they get all the attention.

She’s in a new Peacock series, “Wolf Like Me,” that features her best work and sees costar Josh Gad — the voice of Olaf in “Frozen” — elevated to leading-man status. Six episodes, each shorter than 30 minutes, and leaving you hungry for more.

When I share the premise, your first instinct will be to flip the page in search of something else to read: Gad plays a widowed father who discovers the woman he’s dating (Fisher) is a werewolf.

Don’t mentally clock out yet. Hear me out.

When a friend messaged saying the series is worth a look, I had visions of something like “Teen Wolf” — the Michael J. Fox movie, not the MTV reboot — where Fisher walks around in a wolf mask and “hilarity” ensues.

No, the series, written and directed by Australian filmmaker Abe Forsythe, plays it straight, with light moments of comedy and a nerve-jangling final episode. Everyone sells it so convincingly, you’ve bought into it where you believe it could happen. Actually, it’s one of the best new shows.

Up until now, Gad never seemed comfortable in his own skin. Either you could still hear Olaf in his voice, or he had difficulty abandoning his theater background (his first big break was “Book of Mormon”). Here, it’s like rediscovering him as Gary, a single father living in Adelaide, Australia, with 11-year-old daughter Emma (Ariel Donoghue). They live a traumatized existence after Gary’s wife passed away from cancer seven years earlier. He has tried dating, Emma is in therapy, but nothing works. Nothing lifts them out of their funk.

Gary and Mary (Fisher) “meet-cute” after their cars collide. In a Hallmark Christmas movie, the encounter would be staged with “oops” delicateness. “Wolf Like Me” stages it like out-of-nowhere whiplash: a literal and symbolic means to jolt Gary and Emma back into the land of the living.

Mary, though, is an enigma. Gary first sees her comforting Emma immediately after the accident, his daughter eliciting her first smile in years. In

subsequent encounters, Mary is charming one minute, running off in a panic the next. And it's at the tail end of the second episode that Gary follows Mary home, sneaking into her house as she locks herself in the basement, telling him he'll just have to deal with what comes next.

We don't see Mary as a werewolf, nor any gore or carnage, until the final episode. Instead, we hear the bone-rattling roar from the basement that terrifies Gary into never wanting near Mary again.

It's here Fisher gives you something special. Mary realizes the limits of her ability for intimacy, but she craves companionship. Fisher does not treat Mary as a joke. She's a good person transformed against her will into damaged goods. The actress invests so much desperate yearning to be loved, so much good cheer when she's not a wolf, you can see why Gary is drawn to her. And Gad is proof a romantic lead doesn't require abs of steel, but a sense of humor, and a heart bigger than most.

Some of the humor is so subtle, you almost miss it. Mary, at one point, tells of how she became a werewolf and subsequently ate an Italian family. Later, Gary, out for dinner with Emma at an Italian restaurant, loses his appetite after noticing the family of four seated next to him.

The real heart of the series, though, isn't in cheap laughs. Again, Forsythe, as the writer and director, does not treat his material as an extended gimmick.

Instead, he explores three wounded souls – Gary, Emma and Mary – who heal through each other. It's like watching butterflies emerge from cocoons of sorrow.

Then, we arrive at the final episode. Gary, Emma and Mary, out in the Australian wild, his car battery dead not long before the sun will set and the moon rise. Mary takes off, fearful of hurting those she loves. When strangers arrive threatening danger to Gary and Emma, Mary returns in wolf form. Forsythe stages the sequence like the T-Rex attack of "Jurassic Park." With Gary and Emma confined to their car, we see little at first, the growls enough to pin you to your seat. And when the attacks commence, the stark violence is just enough without crossing the line into the offensive. The sequence chills you more by the *idea* of it, what you don't see.

A lesser series might have ended there, simply as a violent cliffhanger. But Forsythe does something remarkable. Three people, riding in silence in their vehicle, on the precipice of where they go from there. The revealing expressions that emerge on their faces create an unexpectedly moving close.

Whether "Wolf Like Me" gets renewed or this is it, what Forsythe achieves is self-contained to exist on its own. I would love to see more of these people, but if that's not the case, then the time spent with them was unforgettable.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



The finale of the last episode has the same tension of the T-Rex attack in "Jurassic Park."

“The Power of the Dog” is This Year’s Oscar Heavyweight

by Andrew Tallackson

I don’t get it.

Twelve Academy Award nominations for “The Power of the Dog”?

At the time of my review, I gave it a mild three-star recommendation. As a parent, the ending spoke to me — *somewhat* — in depicting a child willing to do whatever it takes to protect his mother.

Other than that, the movie contains stretches that are like watching paint dry. Pretty paint, yes, but a laborious process that makes you restless.

Then again, we all experience adverse reactions to Oscar news, don’t we? Critics go bonkers over a particular film, and we scratch our heads, puzzled as to why it warrants all the fuss. Heck, I get emails from you, dear reader, questioning my take on a particular movie, at odds with a glowing recommendation or indifferent dismissal. But that’s the beauty of cinema. It is a subjective art form, speaking to us on different levels. What appeals to some may ward off others. And apparently, “The Power of the Dog” is the academy’s cup of tea.

Otherwise, this year’s nominees for the 94th Academy Awards are about what you might expect. A solid showing, a commendable balance of seasoned pros and fresh young talent.

And, a few records set.

Jane Campion is the first woman to be twice nominated for Best Director, the first for 1993’s “The Piano.” “West Side Story,” which nabbed seven nominations, is a milestone for Steven Spielberg.

He has directed 11 films to receive a Best Picture nomination. That has to take some of the sting out of the movie’s dismal box-office showing. And if Ariana DeBose wins Best Supporting Actress, it will be the first time two actresses have won for playing the same role in the same category. Kinda cool.

Elsewhere, Academy voters typically view science-fiction as solely a technical achievement. The fact that “Dune” scored seven nominations, including Best Picture and Adapted Screenplay, is a welcome sign voters are willing to embrace fantasy as major awards contenders.

Strange, though, that “CODA” earned three nominations for Best Picture, Adapted Screenplay and Supporting Actor. The fledgling Apple TV+ streaming service has to be thrilled... but the film, while touching, feels like a safe Hallmark TV movie. And if you’re going to nominate the cast, why not the lead actress, Emilia Jones?

Glad to see Will Smith and Aunjanue Ellis earn nods for “King Richard.” These two, for my money, gave the year’s best performances. And while it would have been nice to see “The Rescue” nominated for Best Documentary Feature Film, that “Summer of Soul” is among the contenders is rewarding.

A shock, to be honest, that Rachel Zegler didn’t receive a Best Actress nomination for “West Side Story.” Reviews for her work — mine included — were virtual love letters to a performance deemed a lock for a nomination. Ditto Lady Gaga for “House of Gucci,” Mahershala Ali for “Swan Song” and the actresses from “Passing.”

Oh well. That’s the Oscars for you.

For our annual “Beat the Editor” contest, we’ve made a few changes. Our new sponsor, and we’re excited about this, is Swingbelly’s, which will provide the first-place winner with a \$25 gift certificate. Big thanks to M.J. Werner and everyone at Swingbelly’s for their support! We’ve also trimmed the categories from eight to six, shifting the focus to the top fields.

Other than that, everything else is the same. The ballot to the right explains all the particulars, so we won’t repeat them here.

Let’s have fun. Let the guessing game begin!

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



Benedict Cumberbatch stars in “The Power of the Dog.”



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And the Nominees Are...

PICTURE

- ☐ "Belfast"
- ☐ "CODA"
- ☐ "Don't Look Up"
- ☐ "Drive My Car"
- ☐ "Dune"
- ☐ "King Richard"
- ☐ "Licorice Pizza"
- ☐ "Nightmare Alley"
- ☐ "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ "West Side Story"

DIRECTOR

- ☐ Paul T. Anderson, "Licorice Pizza"
- ☐ Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"
- ☐ Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Ryûsuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car"
- ☐ Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story"

New Contest
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ACTRESS

- ☐ Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
- ☐ Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"
- ☐ Penélope Cruz, "Parallel Mothers"
- ☐ Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Kristen Stewart, "Spencer"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- ☐ Jessie Buckley, "The Lost Daughter"
- ☐ Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"
- ☐ Judi Dench, "Belfast"
- ☐ Kirsten Dunst, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Aunjanue Ellis, "King Richard"

ACTOR

- ☐ Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Andrew Garfield, "Tick, Tick ... Boom!"
- ☐ Will Smith, "King Richard"
- ☐ Denzel Washington, "The Tragedy of Macbeth"

SUPPORTING ACTOR

- ☐ Ciarán Hinds, "Belfast"
- ☐ Troy Kotsur, "CODA"
- ☐ Jesse Plemons, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ J.K. Simmons, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Kodi Smit-McPhee, "The Power of the Dog"

Rules for The Beacher's Beat the Editor Contest:

Check one box in each category. Only one entry per person. Entries from *Beacher* employees will not be accepted. Forms can be dropped off at *The Beacher* or submitted by mail to: The Beacher, Attn: Oscar Contest, 911 Franklin St., Michigan City, IN 46360. Only scanned copies will be allowed by email to drew@thebeacher.com. The deadline is noon Friday, March 18. Editor Andrew Tallackson's picks will appear in the March 24 edition, before the March 27 telecast. Those who beat his picks will be placed into a drawing. First place receives a \$25 Swingbelly's gift certificate and an AMC movie pass. Second place receives an AMC movie pass. If no one beats him, readers with the most correct picks will be placed into the drawing. The winner will be revealed in the April 7 edition.

Name:

City/Town:

Phone Number:



“Moonfall” is More B-Movie Cheese from Roland Emmerich

by Andrew Tallackson



Halle Berry (right), Patrick Wilson (center) and John Bradley play the crew of a space shuttle out to stop the moon from crashing into Earth in “Moonfall.”

“Moonfall” is the kind of movie where you leave the theater shaking your head and laughing. It’s a big chunk of B-movie cheese. Stupid, but in isolated moments, largely entertaining.

The disaster flick hails from Roland Emmerich, who’s been destroying the planet for so long now we take for granted how good he is at doing it. He’s Irwin Allen on steroids. Whether it be the “Independence Day” movies, “The Day After Tomorrow” or “2012,” his projects all share the same plot. Earth is under extraterrestrial or ecological attack. No one heeds the warnings, particularly the science types who should know better. Catastrophe ensues: exploding buildings, at least one wave and plenty of just-in-the-nick-of-time escapes. Cue the happy music at the end when humanity somehow saves itself.

“Moonfall” combines an alien threat *and* natural disasters, so Emmerich is in hog heaven. Science and logic are absent, the dialogue atrocious. But when Emmerich is in his zone, there is no one better. When a movie has his name attached to it, you know exactly what you’re getting.

So what is the catalyst for catastrophe this time? Seems the moon isn’t just Earth’s only natural satellite. It is an alien construct, an artificial megastructure seemingly knocked out of rotation and headed toward Earth. Emmerich likes to give his characters backstory to try and humanize them. It never works because the writing is terrible. In this case,

★ ★ 1/2

“Moonfall”

Running time: 130 minutes. Rated PG-13 for violence, disaster action, strong language and some drug use

it is disgraced astronaut Brian Harper (Patrick Wilson, who appeared in Emmerich’s “Midway”), who was out on a routine shuttle mission with fellow astronaut Jocinda Fowler (Oscar-winner Halle Berry, slumming) when the alien threat first presents itself. A colleague is killed and Brian held responsible.

Years later, Jocinda is NASA’s deputy director when, like all Emmerich pictures, everyone starts nervously shuffling pieces of paper and staring ominously at computer screens. Something ain’t right with the moon, it seems. It’s closer to Earth. Flooding begins, affording Emmerich and his special-effects team the chance to roll tsunamis into hotels and restaurants. This is right as conspiracy nut K.C. Houseman (“Game of Thrones” actor John Bradley) is pitching conveniently accurate theories about the moon to Brian. Jocinda tracks the two down and ropes them into a tricky plot to thwart the moon from its intended path.

Berry, who kicked major ass in the third “John Wick” movie, doesn’t get to do much at first, just stare at big screens in disbelief and mouth dialogue no screenwriter with a shred of self-respect should hand

an Oscar winner (“We’re not prepared for this,” “We’re dealing with an intelligent entity,” “If we can save the planet, maybe we can save ourselves”). Then again, Houseman doesn’t fare much better in the stock role of the portly misfit saddled with cheeky dialogue.

Then, Emmerich, who penned the script with frequent collaborator Harald Kloser, plunks Brian, Jocinda and K.C. into a defunct space shuttle headed for the moon. That would be enough, but Emmerich sends a tsunami toward the shuttle pad. You gotta give the guy credit. He knows how to stage grand popcorn flick moments. The special effects, the rousing soundtrack, the heroics are everything you want from a Roland Emmerich disaster movie.

Much of the film’s second act is set in and around the moon, where the explanation behind its origins is totally bonkers. But again, the special effects are so efficiently executed, the action so relentless at times, there rarely is pause to catch your breath. Back on Earth, Emmerich recycles elements from “2012” that sees family members of the astronauts trying to reach a bunker as large chunks of the moon pelt the planet.



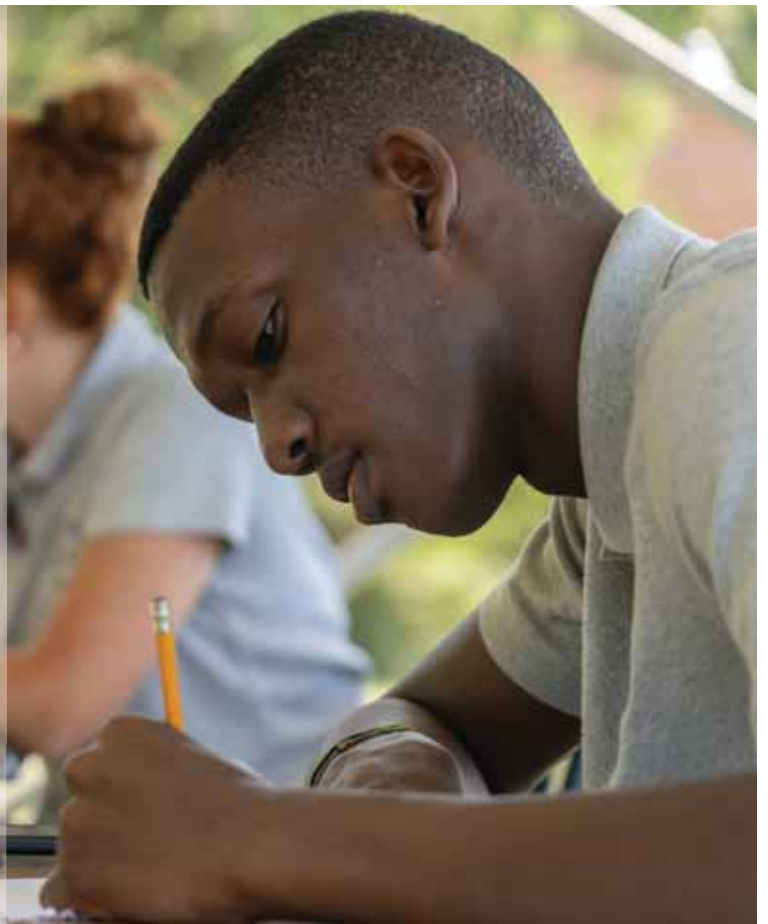
A tsunami heads toward a shuttle launch pad right as liftoff is about to commence.

There is something about the child in us that likes to see things go boom. The spectacle of it gives us a guilty thrill. Emmerich is a master of making things go boom. He’s the best at what he does. Do we care about the characters this time around? Not really. At least in “The Day After Tomorrow,” we hoped Dennis Quaid might reach his son in time to save him. Here, we just wait for the next special effects extravaganza. Then again, if you’ve made it this far in the review, you’re likely on the same page. Am I right?

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

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Harbor Country Hikers

Harbor Country Hikers will explore a portion of the Lake Baroda bed, an ice age-era body of water that once stretched nearly the entire length of Berrien County, at 2 p.m. EST Saturday, Feb. 19.

Before leading the group on a 2.1-mile walk, HCH President Pat Fisher will give a brief introductory talk on the extinct lake's geology and history. The path then will head through a variety of habitats: woodland, savanna, streams, marshes and ponds. The estimated total time for the easy hike is two hours. Participants should meet at the Hickory Creek Preserve and adjoining Knauf Park in St. Joseph, Mich.

Attendees should dress in layers, wear sturdy boots and a warm hat, and take plenty of water. Depending on the weather, there may be some wet or icy stretches.

Membership is encouraged; however, the public is invited. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult.

HCH observes federal and state COVID guidelines, and face masks are optional. An all-terrain rollator — an outdoor walker with oversized wheels — is available on a first-come, first-served basis by email at harborcountryhikers@gmail.com. Visit www.harbourcountryhikers.com or Harbor Country Hikers on Facebook for more details.

Libido Funk Circus

Chicago-area dance band Libido Funk Circus will perform from 7-10:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18, at La-Porte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St.

The group's catalog of songs ranges from the 1960s to current musical genres. Tickets, which start at \$15, are available on Eventbrite.



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Soft Skills Training Program

A new Soft Skills Training for the Future Workforce program, which partners with five LaPorte County high schools, will arm students with interpersonal, communication and leadership skills.

The effort involves LaPorte Economic Advancement Partnership, Howmet Aerospace Foundation and Unity Foundation of LaPorte County. It is open to students at LaCrosse, LaPorte, New Prairie, South Central and Westville high schools who will soon enter the workforce. Rene Ray of R Squared Strategies, a local consulting company focused on sales and workforce strategies, is the presenter.

Students will participate in a two-part training. Areas include: understanding soft skills and their importance; a self-assessment; tips for personal branding, appearance and interviews; and the building blocks of a strong work ethic.

Contact Workforce Development Coordinator Erik Nelson at erikn@laportepartnership.com or (219) 324-8584 for more details.

Noon Time Talk Series

The Noon Time Talk Series continues at 12:20 p.m. EST Thursday, Feb. 17, at Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart.

Director/Curator Brian Byrn will discuss 20th century watercolorist Patricia Tobacco Forrester (1940-2011), who was known for intricate nature paintings. She studied with Leonard Baskin at Smith College, and her Yale classmates included Chuck Close and Janet Fish.

Admission is \$5. Members are free. Call (574) 293-6660 for details.

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HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES

	SCORE
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2. Mary Lou McFadden	161
2. Dottie Brinckman	161
2. Carolyn Wiggins	161
3. Deb Frederick	160
4. Deb Konicek	155
5. Kim Stokes	154
6. Kathy Osborne	150
6. Pat Collado	150

SPLITS

Mary Lou	3-10, 5-8-7
Susie Lutz	3-10

THREE STRIKES IN A ROW

Dottie Brinckman, Mary McDonald, Pat Collado

More bowlers are invited when teams meet at 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays at City Lanes.



American Red Cross

The American Red Cross LaPorte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- A.K. Smith Career Center, 817 Lafayette St., 7:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18.
- Northwest Health Heart and Vascular Building, 901 Lincolnway, LaPorte, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19.
- Kingsbury Elementary School, 802 W. County Road 400 South, LaPorte, 2:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23.

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 www.redcrossblood.org for more details.



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Humane Society Online Auction

Starting Sunday, Feb. 20, the public can view auction items in Michiana Humane Society's 2022 Cabin Fever Pawction.

Bidding lasts Feb. 27-March 5. The auction include brunch at Cherry Ridge Farm Indiana, golf outings, art pieces, gift certificates to local restaurants and gifts for pets. Individuals and businesses donated all the items.

Anyone can participate. Funds raised benefit more than 1,000 animals Michiana Humane Society will care for this year.

View auction details at www.tinyurl.com/27reck4d. Contact Development Director Heidi Treacy Tuthill at heidi@michianapets.org or (219) 872-4499, Ext. 103, for more details.



Two of the pets awaiting homes through Michiana Humane Society.



MCAS Seeks "High Dosage" Tutors

Michigan City Area Schools needs retired educators, future educators and other community members to assist students who fell behind academically due to COVID-19.

MCAS high-dosage tutors will work at the elementary and middle-school levels in language arts, reading and math. Students in groups of no more than four will meet with tutors for 30 minutes per day, three days per week, during the school day.

According to MCAS Director of Curriculum Cathy Bildhauser, high-dosage tutoring is effective because tutors can pinpoint specific gaps and address them with an individualized catchup plan.

Tutors will be paid \$15 per hour, with retired teachers receiving their most recent hourly wage. The schedule can be flexible, based on the tutor's availability. MCAS will provide all training and curriculum. It also will assess the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring and consider continuing the program over the summer and into the next school year. Visit <http://educateMC.net/highdosage> for more details.

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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.

**In the Area:**

Feb. 17 — Feed the Birds This Winter, 1-4 p.m., Luhr County Park Nature Center, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, LaPorte. Free. Info: www.laportecountyparks.org, (219) 325-8315.

Feb. 18 — MCPL Podcast Episode Release, 9 a.m., through Michigan City Public Library. Info: www.mclib.org/podcast

Feb. 18 — Chicago-area dance band Libido Funk Circus, 7-10:30 p.m., LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. Tickets: Eventbrite.

Feb. 18-20 — "Jerry's Girls," Footlight Theatre, 1705 Franklin St. Times: 7:30 p.m. Fri. & Sat./2 p.m. Sun. Tickets: \$15, \$10/children 12 & younger. Reservations: www.footlightplayers.org, (219) 874-4035, @ box office.

Feb. 19 — Celebrating Naomi Anderson, 2 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 20 — Michigan City Chamber Music Festival concert, "Rising Again," 3 p.m., St. Mary's Catholic Church, 411 W. 11th St. Free. Info: MC Chamber Fest on Facebook, www.MCCMF.org

Feb. 21 — PRESIDENT'S DAY.

Feb. 21, 28 — Needle Arts Club, 5:30 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 22 — Joyful Movement Easy Exercises for All Ages, 8:30 a.m., Luhr Park Nature Center, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, LaPorte. Free. Info: (219) 325-8315, www.laportecountyparks.org

Feb. 22 — Women in Jazz with Flutist Galen Abdur-Razziq, 3 p.m., through Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. In person & Zoom option. Info/Zoom link: (219) 873-3049

Feb. 22 — Readers Corner — Book Club, 6-7 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library Coolspring Branch Meeting Room, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Through March 31 — Local artist Kristy Kutch, The Legacy Center Gallery @ Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Legacy Center hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Thur., 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun.

First/Third Tuesday — Bingo, 5-6 p.m., Long Beach Community Center, Room 13, 2501 Oriole Trail. Free.

Saturdays — Turn Up Dance Fitness with Stacy G., 8:30-9:30 a.m., Long Beach Community Center, 2501 Oriole Trail. Cost: \$5 paid at class.

First and Third Mondays — Singing Sands Toastmasters Club, 6:30-8 p.m., Senior Health/Wellness Center (old hospital ER, Barker/Buffalo).

In the Region

Feb. 17 — Noon Time Talk Series, 12:20 p.m. EST, Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart. Admission: \$5, members/free. Info: (574) 293-6660.

Feb. 19 — Harbor Country Hikers, 2 p.m. EST, Hickory Creek Preserve/adjoining Knauf Park, St. Joseph, Mich. Free. Info: harborcountryhikers@gmail.com, www.harbourcountryhikers.com, Harbor County Hikers on Facebook.

Feb. 19, 26 — Guided snowshoe hikes, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Feb. 20 — Beaver Tales Trek, 10 a.m.-noon, Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 20 — Beach Mysteries Table, 2-3 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Through March 25 — "Finding (Me)aning," Red Cup Café, 115 Broadway, Chesterton. Info: programs@chestertonart.org

Thursdays-Fridays in February — Friends of Beverly Shores Bazaar, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., 100 Brown Ave., Suite 1, Chesterton. Info: wagnercasa44@gmail.com, (219) 299-6998.

Through March 26 — "Shadow, Mooring + Undercurrents," Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Info: (219) 926-4711, www.chestertonart.org

Through May 28 — "University of Notre Dame: The Fabric of a Global University," The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend. Tickets: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors (60+), \$7/youth (6-17), free/members. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat./noon-5 p.m. Sun. Info: (574) 235-9664, www.historymuseumSB.org



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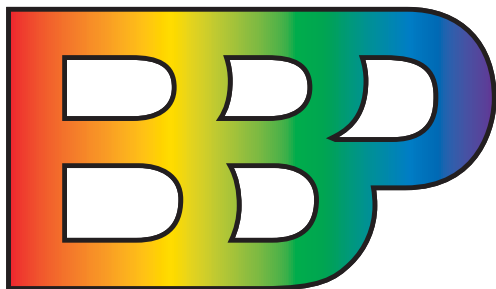
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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On February 17, 1817, Baltimore became the first America city with gas street lights.

On February 17, 1876, Maine's newspapers reported the first sardine was canned at Eastport. While not specifically mentioned, it is safe to assume the second and third were canned on the same day.

On February 17, 1897, the PTA was founded in the United States as the "National Congress of Mothers." It later expanded to include fathers, teachers and other citizens. Today, the official name of the organization is: "The National Congress of Parents and Teachers."

On February 17, 1933, *Newsweek* was first published.

On February 17, 1985, the cost of mailing a first-class letter rose to the unheard price of 22 cents.

On February 18, 1678, John Bunyan's classic novel, *Pilgrim's Progress*, was licensed for publication. A religious allegory, it has been translated into more than 100 languages. It was so well-written that, in the 1700s, many schools used it as a text book.

On February 18, 1735, the first opera to be presented in the United States, "Flora, or Hob in the Well," was performed in Charleston, S.C.

On February 18, 1885, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published.

On February 18, 1945, during World War II, the Battle of Iwo Jima began.

On February 18, 1953, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz received an \$8 million contract to continue their TV show ("I Love Lucy") through the 1955 season. This was the highest single TV contract to that date.

On February 19, 1878, Thomas A. Edison received a patent for his invention of the phonograph. His assistant, John Kreusi, who constructed the first working model from Edison's drawings, received \$18 for his efforts.

On February 19, 1910, the famous "Diamond Jim" Brady appetite was in rare form. At a New York dinner party it was reported he ate seven dozen oysters, five servings of roast beef, two gallons of stewed fruit and three gallons of orange juice.

On February 19, 1981, the post office increased the price of a first-class stamp from 15 cents to 18 cents.

On February 19, 1994, American speedskater Bonnie Blair won the fourth Olympic gold medal of her career as she won the 500 meter race in Lillehammer, Norway.

On February 20, 1792, President George Washington signed an act creating the U.S. Post Office.

On February 20, 1944, during World War II, U.S. bombers began raiding German aircraft manufacturing centers in a series of attacks that became known as “Big Week.”

On February 20, 1962, John Glenn, in his Mercury space capsule, became the first American to orbit the Earth, circling the globe three times before landing in the Atlantic.

On February 20, 1965, the unmanned “Ranger 8” spacecraft, after sending back thousands of pictures, crashed on the surface of the moon.

On February 20, 1999, *Chicago Tribune* movie columnist Gene Siskel, 53, died in Evanston, Ill., of brain cancer.

On February 21, 1804, the first self-propelled steam railway locomotive was demonstrated in Mid-Glamorgan, Wales. Built by Richard Trevithick, it pulled a 10-ton load around a 10-mile track.

On February 21, 1838, Samuel Morse gave the first public demonstration of the telegraph.

On February 21, 1866, Lucy Hobbs, upon graduating from the Ohio College of Dental Surgery, became America’s first women dentist.

On February 21, 1878, Connecticut’s New Haven Telephone Co. issued the world’s first telephone directory.

On February 22, 1819, the United States bought the Florida territory from Spain.

On February 22, 1879, in Utica, N.Y., Frank W. Woolworth opened the first “five-cent store,” forerunner of the modern “five-and-dime.”

On February 22, 1879, the first women registered for longshore work on the piers of New York.

On February 22, 1924, Calvin Coolidge delivered the first presidential radio broadcast from the White House.

On February 22, 1934, the romantic-comedy “It Happened One Night,” starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert, opened at New York’s Radio City Music Hall.

On February 23, 1822, Boston was granted a charter to incorporate as a city.

On February 23, 1836, the assault on the Alamo began as 5,000 Mexican soldiers, under the command of Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, laid siege to the Texas fortress, defended by 150 men.

On February 23, 1861, President-elect Abraham Lincoln arrived in Washington to take the oath of office.

On February 23, 1871, in Louisville, Ky., a traveling troupe billed as “Sargent’s Great Vaudeville Company” performed at the Weisiger Hotel. This marked the first time that the word vaudeville appeared in an entertainment announcement.

On February 23, 1905, Chicago’s Paul Percy Harris, along with three friends, founded the Rotary Club.

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Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

Quicksilver by Dean Koontz (hardcover, \$28.99 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook and audiobook. 356 pages.)

Love it or leave it.

That's the best way to describe this latest from the king of thrillers. Other universes, creepy government secret agents, a man on a mission and an abandoned baby all add up to — what? It's up to you to decide. This is one of those books you will rate either a 1 or a 10. There's simply no in-between.

I haven't read a lot of Koontz novels except his Jane Hawk series, which I enjoyed immensely, so when this one came out, I knew I had to give it a try, come what may.

"My understanding of the true nature of the world was undergoing a seismic shift."

I can't help but wonder if that prophetic statement goes beyond the story here and reaches out to Koontz's view of the world today. Be as that may, here's a short look at Quicksilver and a very creepy?-scary?-alluring? story you will love or hate.

A baby is found in a bassinet in the middle of a highway in Arizona. How did he manage to stay alive until three men stop to see what they think is a dead child? He is very alive, looking well-fed, with a note attached with only his name — Quinn Quicksilver — written on it.

Taken to the sheriff's office, then handed over to the Mater Misericordiae orphanage, Quinn thrives under the watchful eye of the nuns. He grows up a quiet, thoughtful boy, finally leaving the home at 19 to take a job at *Arizona!* magazine as a feature writer.

One day, something leads him to the back of a restaurant where he finds a gold coin that turns out to be worth \$40K. Something compels him to divide up the money — hide some, put some in his jacket, some in the bank — as if he should be ready to leave in a hurry.

As if foreseen in some crystal ball, things begin to happen quickly...

Quinn never gave up trying to find his parents. He even joined a group that matches DNA with other possible family members. Bad idea, because one day at the diner, Quinn is approached by two men in black suits, sunglasses, driving a big, black SUV... you get the picture. Government agents — Internal Security Agency — are sent to get him because something in his DNA isn't normal. Normal as in

not quite human.

Quinn hightails it out of there before they can grab him. He knows he will be on the run. Leaving town involves detours onto strange roads without his actual thought...he knows he is being guided by something he calls "*strange magnetism.*" Arriving at a deserted ranch, Quinn swerves through a barn door where two people are being tortured by two ISA men. He kills them both, accidentally of course; Quinn is as mellow as they come.

The people he saves are Bridget and her grandfather, Sparky Raining. Bridget seems to have Quinn's psychic abilities, but Sparky doesn't. So Quinn isn't very surprised when Bridget tells him her DNA test shows "*several sequences in my genome are not human.*" Sounds familiar.

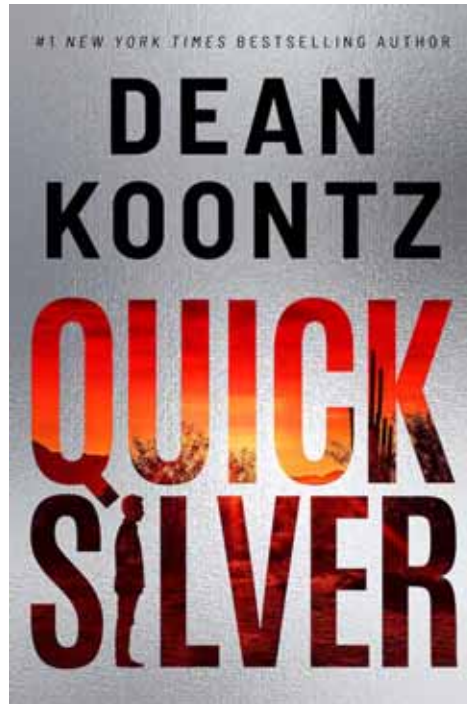
Where to go from here? The three set out on a quest of sorts to help Quinn discover his roots by searching out the three men who originally found him on the highway. Only one of the three is still in the area. Finding him only brings up more questions, and the trio are soon on the road again. And soon, they have an encounter with Screamers: aliens that look human except to Quinn and company. However, it seems the humans are scarier than the Screamers.

They pick up another fellow traveler — a woman named Panthea Ching and a dog they rescue from drug dealers. They end up at a place called The Oasis, a playground in the desert for the über-rich and depraved. Quinn discovers two women he knew in the orphanage are being held as sex slaves along with other young men and women. What to do? Give Bodie Emmerich, the owner of this establishment, a surprise visit he isn't expecting. Piece of cake, says Bridget!

Quinn has his doubts about this mission as he tells her, "*In every movie, at a moment like this, when someone says it's gonna be a piece of cake, it never is. That's always when the dying starts.*"

Getaways and chase scenes are essential in this story, so if all this seems a little daunting, stick around and just enjoy the action, because absolutely no one could put all these elements together as neatly as Koontz. All will be revealed at the bombshell ending — an ending that proves you can't judge a book by its cover.

Till next time, happy reading!



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