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The Language of the Swedish Kitchen

by Kim Nowatzke



Jonni Hegenderfer, author of *A Swedish Family Cookbook: From Farm to Fabulous*.

Described as “more of a personal passion project than anything else,” Jonni Hegenderfer’s [Swedish Family Cookbook: From Farm to Fabulous](#) isn’t just a collection of vintage and revamped old recipes.

It’s a fully illustrated guide to Swedish cooking, the preservation of family favorites passed down for generations, even a short history lesson in what Swedes faced as they set sail for America at the turn of the 20th century.

Most of all, the self-published gem is a testimony of “the joy of family and celebration of the moment” (phrases penned by the author on her dedication page) that the reader can almost see, smell and taste through 80 dishes shared in the book’s beautifully illustrated pages.

For the 79-year-old author who lives part of the year in Grand Beach, Mich., it all began with an

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The Language of the Swedish Kitchen

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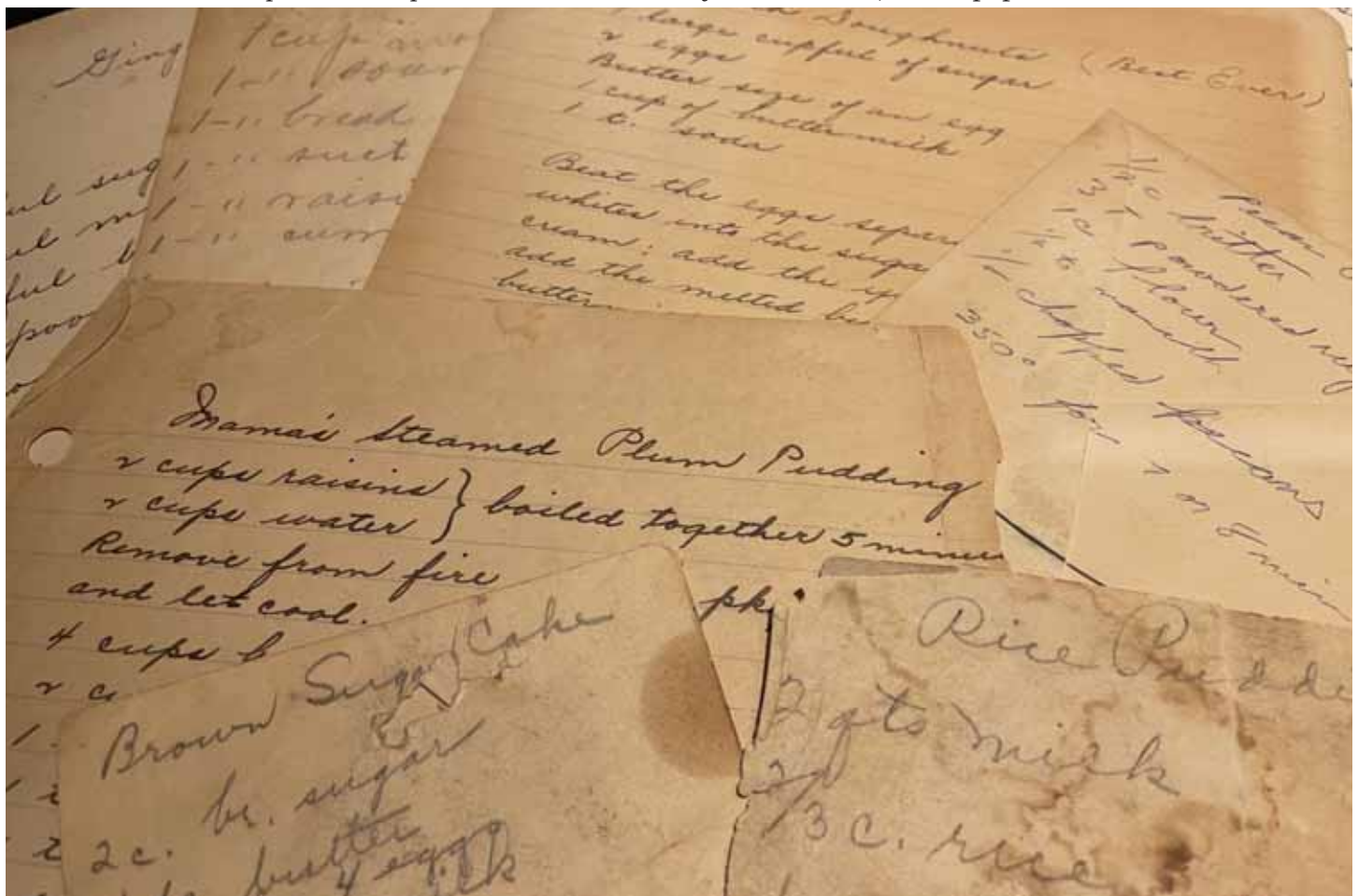
old manila envelope, along with a notebook and recipe box, filled with faded and food-stained family favorites from her mother, Cornelia (Larson) Hazzard, maternal grandmother, Anna (Andersson) Larson, her aunt, Mimi (Andersson) Aronson, and her brother, Clif Hazzard.

“I thought, ‘I can’t just throw these away,’” Hegenderfer explained.

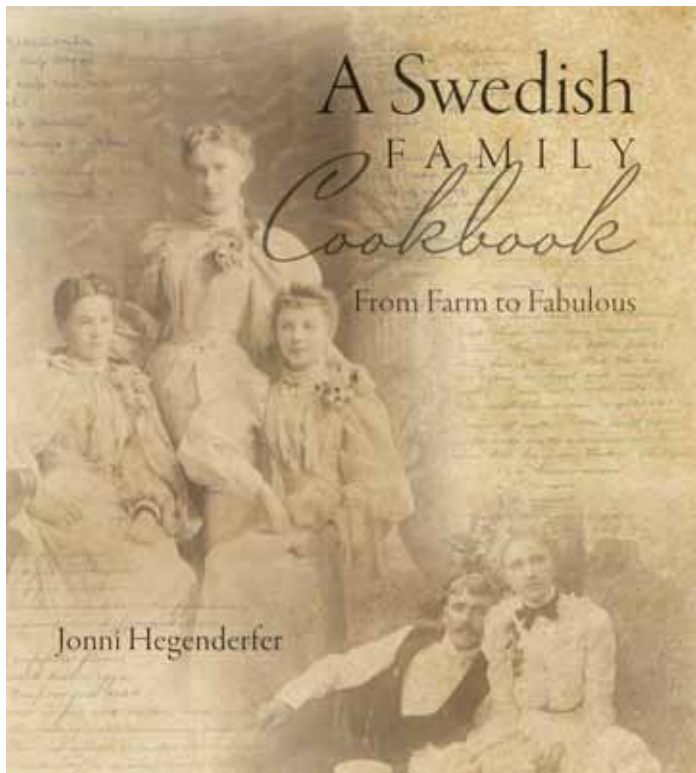
Hegenderfer offered more insight into her motives in the cookbook’s “My Swedish Family” section: “Stirring together the Rice Pudding for Easter dinner a few years ago, stirred up memories of past celebrations. The inspiration to preserve these trea-

sured family recipes before it was too late, before the pages faded away to Smörgåsbord Obscurity, became an exciting concept. My cousins in America and in Sweden, representing four generations of Swedes, agreed this would be a ‘fantastic initiative.’ The adventure to compile *A Swedish Family Cookbook* was planned.”

The real story behind the cookbook, however, actually began with her grandmother, Anna, who, at not quite 21, arrived in Chicago on April 4, 1895. Along with her two sisters, Hulda, 18, and Brita, 16, they said goodbye to their mother, whom they never saw again, their father and two brothers, embarking on a roughly six-week journey. As explained in the book, Chicago, with employment opportunities such as cooking, sewing, cleaning and child care for women, and work in the steel mills or Pullman rail yards for men, was a popular choice for Swedes.



A few of the Swedish handwritten recipes from Jonni Hegenderfer's mother, aunt and grandmother.



The cookbook cover features the author's grandmother, Anna Andersson, at nearly age 21 (middle of the top photo), with her sisters, 16-year-old Brita Andersson and 18-year-old Hulda Andersson, and Anna after her marriage to John Larson (lower right-hand corner).

Eventually, Anna and John Larson, another Swedish immigrant, married in 1902 and settled in Chicago after a brief time back in Sweden to make a go at running a chicken farm. They had their first daughter, Cornelia, while in their homeland, then her sister, Elmida (Mimi), in the United States.

"While neither of the Larson sisters learned to speak Swedish, they learned the language of the Swedish kitchen," Hegenderfer wrote.

Through research, she discovered her grandparents were from the same area in Sweden and on the same ship sailing to America, both arriving in Chicago the same day. She still wishes she knew the backstory behind their relationship, such as if they were friends or lovers back in their home country. She takes solace in knowing they were deeply in love and married seven years after arriving here.

In the 1940s, Hegenderfer's family lived together in a brick two-flat on Chicago's South Side. She lived on the first floor with her parents, Clifford and Cornelia Hazzard, and her brother, Clif. Upstairs lived Grandma Anna, Aunt Mimi and her husband, Uncle Aron. Her grandfather, John, passed away before she was born.

Hegenderfer has fond memories of those days filled with love, laughter and life.

"This multi-generational living arrangement was an incomparable blessing that enriched my childhood creating memories that continue to warm my heart every day," she wrote. *"...Like all children, I loved*

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The Language of the Swedish Kitchen

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family celebrations – the fun and laughter, the stories, my dad singing, my brother playing the piano, the flowers on the table, and mom and Aunt Mimi stirring and twirling as they created kitchen magic. Especially, I loved the smells hinting at the feast about to be served and the tastes I would steal straight from the bowl before anyone else had a chance to dig in... When I think back, most of our everyday meals were mini-smorgasbords featuring a little of this and a little of that – ‘Lagom’ in Swedish.”

Back in 2019, Hegenderfer writes in the cookbook, the first step in making her cookbook dream come true was a trip to Sweden with her cousin, Bengt Jansson, a “great Swedish cook,” and her good friend, Kay Porsche, “also an accomplished cook who offered to come along to take copious notes on our kitchen experiences.”

The three spent four days visiting a Swedish cousin, Gunilla, in Vessigebro and, Inger, Bengt’s sister, in Jönköping. There, they explored markets, cafes and restaurants, reviewed recipes and filled their time with plenty of cooking and eating. Prior to the visit, many phone calls and emails coordinated efforts to come up with a menu that created a complete and traditional Swedish family dining experience.

“The family cookbook project, once a ‘fantastic initiative’ became a ‘Most Marvelous Eating Adventure,’” Hegenderfer quipped in the book.

Back home, the author had her work cut out for her as she translated recipes.

“They used the metric system for measurement, so it was a challenge,” she admitted.

Just as difficult was deciphering vague amounts of ingredients, such as a “handful,” “shake” or even “butter the size of an egg.” Some of the oldest recipes didn’t even include oven temperatures or baking times, as Swedish cooks in the 1800s used wood-fired stoves with varying temperatures depending on the type and amount of wood used. The cooks relied more on experiences and taste tests.

Speaking of taste testing, the fun continued as

Hegenderfer set to work honing the recipes in her own kitchen, and hosting dinner parties that focused on cookbook entries.

“I have a very close group of friends,” she explained. “We had to taste test all the recipes. Each person had to take a recipe (or more) and take notes on the process. Then, we all shared and evaluated. It was great fun and a wonderful thing to do during COVID. It became a group effort. It was a great process.”

For further research, Hegenderfer spent many hours visiting Chicago’s Swedish American Museum.

“When I started researching, I didn’t know much about Swedish history,” she admitted. “I was able to feel closer and understand better what they went through for their new future for their families.”

Which recipes does Hegenderfer consider her favorite?

There’s the simple Creamy Rice Pudding.

“It’s a childhood memory,” she said. “We never had Christmas Eve or New Year’s Eve without rice pudding.”

An avid cookie lover, Hegenderfer ranks Cornelia’s Spice Cookies at the top. When her mother, “a very good cookie baker,” couldn’t find her own mother’s recipe for *pepparkakor* (a ginger spice cookie), she came up with her own cinnamon and ground cloves variety.

There’s also Anna’s Swedish Chili, which Hegenderfer describes as “not your typical Texas chili” that

incorporates sweet and sour flavors: a common theme in Swedish cooking.

“I always thought this was my dad’s recipe,” she wrote in the book. “He was the chili cook in our family, bursting through the kitchen door on a wintery afternoon with a sack of groceries. In my mind, Dad owned the chili pot. Then I found the original recipe

in my grandmother’s handwriting hidden in the stack of old kitchen notes. So, now, this is Anna’s Swedish Chili – lovingly prepared by Cliff, my dad.”

To date, about 400 copies of A Swedish Family Cookbook: From Farm to Fabulous have been sold on a print-on-demand basis through Palmetta Publishing. It has won an award in the Cookbooks: Regional category in the National Indie Excellence Book Awards contest.

Hegenderfer has conducted book signings near another one of her homes in Bonita Springs, Fla.,



Jonni Hegenderfer’s friends, who served as her personal taste-testers as she created the cookbook.

one at Chicago's Swedish American Museum and at Stockholm Objects, which has locations in Harbert, Mich., and Hinsdale, Ill.

"We were so happy to host an afternoon of book signing and treats with Jonni this summer in our store in Harbert," Stockholm Objects owner Annette Brinkmeier said. "As a Scandinavian-inspired lifestyle store, this was a perfect match."

Copies of the cookbook may be purchased through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other book sellers, as well as on the author's website, www.swedishfamilykitchen.com. There, readers can find more information about the cookbook, several Swedish recipes, a cooking blog and Swedish Family Pantry necessities.

In the About section, Hegenderfer also shares some of her professional background and the birth of the cookbook. She earned a bachelor of arts degree from Purdue University in English, teaching in the mid-1960s, and taught high school English in Long Beach, Calif., for three years. Following that were stints as a secretary in the local ABC affiliate and positions in the editorial departments of *Chicago* and national magazines.

As she "was looking for a job that was fun, interesting and paid the bills," Hegenderfer landed jobs in marketing departments in real estate, home building and the financial industry. Replying to a newspaper ad, she began to work at a Chicago public relations agency, with Midas as her first client. After a decade there, she launched her own boutique consumer marketing public-relations agency, JSH&A, that specialized in consumer marketing, especially event marketing and issues management. Clients included McDonald's, Hershey, Jim Beam, ConAgra and other Fortune 500 companies. She retired in 2017 after 27 years operating her company.

"I wanted something a little different, so I went out on my own," she said. "Don't be afraid to explore and learn from different opportunities that come your way. I was able to move from different accounts because I had that experience and knowl-



A sampling of delicious items found in the cookbook.

edge base."

A testimony to this advice was Hegenderfer's pursuit of excellence as a food truck owner in the early 1970s.

"I always admired Portillo's hot dog stand, which started out as a small stand in an industrial park near O'Hare airport and became a highly successful free-standing operation with restaurants scattered in several states," she explained.

The fact that she loves hot dogs also added to the allure.

"...Many years ago," she said, "my husband gave me \$1,000 to start my quest to be a hot dog queen. We converted our motorhome and had the first health certificate for a mobile food vendor in DuPage

County, Ill. McDuck's Dogs was a pioneer in the now popular food truck community. McDuck's Dogs went to community July 4 events, art fairs, county horse shows and numerous other community events on summer weekends. At one time, we actually had a free-standing hot dog stand in Holland, Mich."

Eventually, with regular weekday jobs, it became too much for the couple to maintain the business. But, she never forgot the secret to a perfect gourmet hot dog. It's steamed Vienna All-Beef hot dogs with natural casing, steamed Mary Ann brand poppy seed buns, yellow mustard, green relish, chopped onions, tomato slices and celery salt. Peppers, cheese and or chili are optional.

Just as easily as she shares her hot dog secrets, Hegenderfer is excited to share her treasured family traditions and recipes in her cookbook.

She said it best in her book: "*I hope you'll enjoy this Smörgåsbord of my Swedish family recipes as much as I have loved the journey to collect, cook and taste...I have treasured this journey to my roots and the ability to savor the many delicate flavors of Sweden with dear friends and cooks in kitchens here and there. My wish is that you, my fellow culinary explorer and disciple of flavor, will know the same excitement of discovering new tastes and the warmth and joy of sharing with those you love.*"

Two Recipes From Swedish Family Cookbook: From Farm to Fabulous

Cornelia's Spice Cookies



Yield: Approximately 50.

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter (or half butter and half margarine).
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar.
- 1 teaspoon vanilla.
- 1 egg lightly beaten.
- 1 1/2 cup flour, scant measure.
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon.
- 1 tablespoon ground cloves.
- Pinch of salt.

Directions

Preheat oven to 325F.

1. Cream softened butter and sugar.
2. Beat in lightly beaten egg. Add vanilla.
3. Combine cinnamon, cloves and salt with flour. Slowly add flour to batter, mixing well at medium speed.
4. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
5. Drop teaspoonful of batter onto prepared cookie sheets. These buttery cookies spread so leave space between each.
6. Bake at 325° F for 15-18 minutes. Edges will begin to turn brown. Oven temperatures vary, so watch carefully to avoid scorching.
7. Makes about 5 dozen cookies, depending on size.

Anna's Swedish Chili



Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, chopped.
- 1 pound ground beef.
- Dash salt and pepper (to taste).
- 1 tablespoon butter.
- 28 ounce can diced or crushed tomatoes.
- 15 ounce can tomato sauce.
- 1/4 cup water.
- 15 ounce can light red kidney beans.
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar.
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar.
- 1 ball pickling spices (approximately 1 tablespoon tied up in cheesecloth, about the size of a golf ball).

Directions

1. In a large pot, brown the chopped onion in butter until translucent and tender.
2. Add the ground beef to the onions and cook through. Salt and pepper lightly.
3. Add crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, water and kidney beans and stir together. (V-8 can be substituted for the tomato sauce. Both options are great.)
4. Add brown sugar and cider vinegar.
5. Place pickling spice in center of a 3" square of cheesecloth or surgical gauze. Bring up sides of cheesecloth to form a ball and tie off with string. Cut excess top of gauze if too much. Add spice ball to chili and stir.
6. Cover and simmer chili for an hour, stirring occasionally. Add tomato sauce or V-8 if chili cooks down and becomes too thick.

Optional: Top-off each serving with shredded cheddar cheese and a dollop of sour cream for a perfect gourmet Swedish Chili night. Great with a small salad and garlic bread.



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“Drive Through” Food and Book Drive

The Michigan City High School Student Council again will host a district-wide “drive through” food drive for people in need from 9 a.m.-noon Saturday, Dec. 16, at Ames Field, 2501 Franklin St.

Students and Michigan City Area Schools staff will participate, accepting non-perishable food items to benefit The Salvation Army of Michigan City food pantry. Last year, the drive generated more than 4 tons of canned goods and other non-perishable items.

Students and staff volunteers will collect items from those driving through. Monetary donations for The Salvation Army also will be accepted.



Student council members are photographed with the trophy.

As in the past, the drive will have an element of competition. All MCAS schools will vie to claim a traveling trophy to display over the next year. Food will be weighed and credited to the donor’s Michigan City school of choice. The school collecting the most food (based on weight, adjusted for school size) receives the prize.

In conjunction with the food drive, the MCHS National Honor Society is collecting new (or nearly new) books for children and teens through its “Operation Bookworm” drive. The community can drop them off at Ames Field. Books will be donated to The Salvation Army for holiday distribution

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Indiana Dunes National Park

- **The Save the Tunes Council performs from 7:30-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15, at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** The group preserves folk songs in the traditional way, using guitar, autoharp, dulcimer, banjo, harmonica, bagpipe, penny whistle, hurdy gurdy and other obscure instruments.
- **Chellberg Farm Care from 9 a.m.-noon Saturday, Dec. 16, at Bailly Homestead/Chellberg Farm, 618 N. Mineral Springs Road, Porter.** Meet a ranger and fellow volunteers to care for the farm. Equipment and protective gear will be provided.
- **Porter Beach Restoration from 9 a.m.-noon Saturday, Dec. 16.** Meet staff and volunteers at Porter Beach Parking Lot at Wabash Avenue and Johnson Beach Road. Wear comfortable clothes; work gloves and equipment will be provided. Temporary passes will be available.
- **Holiday Traditions at Chellberg Farm Open House from noon-3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.** Celebrate a traditional Swedish Christmas and learn more about the region's cultural history. Park at the Bailly Homestead/Chellberg Farm lot, 618 N. Mineral Springs Road, Porter.
- **Stargazing Kemil Beach from 7-9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at the Kemil Beach parking area.** Michiana Astronomical Society will attend

with telescopes. The parking lot is located at 27 N. East State Park Road, Chesterton.

- **Warm Up to Winter from 1-3 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays in December at Chellberg Farm.** Try snowshoeing and wander through Chellberg Farm. Then, stop by the farmhouse to learn about the area's history. A limited number of snowshoes can be checked out at the Eastern National Bookstore located off the main parking lot. Snowshoeing is dependent on the amount of snow on the ground, with a minimum of 3 inches of snow required. Regardless of snow, the farmhouse will be open for hikers. The parking lot is on Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12 and 20 in Porter. Call (219) 395-1882 for snow conditions.
- **Drop-In Volunteer Program (Trash Trekkers) from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily in December at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** Trash Trekkers is a no-hassle volunteer option that helps keep trails and beaches clean. Temporary passes are available. Visit tinyurl.com/2p83798v for more details.

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 program will be offered:

- **Happy Owl-ids from 1:30-3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.** Humane Indiana Wildlife Director Nicole Harmon will introduce native Indiana Dunes owls and discuss their adaptations and characteristics. Meet at the Nature Center auditorium. The program is outside unless the weather is poor.
- **How Indiana Dunes State Park Came to Be at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 17.** A naturalist will shed light on the park's origins.

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.

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Unity Foundation Awards Grants to Local Teachers

Unity Foundation of LaPorte County has announced recipients for the 2023-2024 cycle of grants for Michigan City educators.

The grants, which this year total about \$20,000, support teachers to find ways to make learning more engaging for students.

The Michigan City Education Foundation provides grants for Michigan City public and parochial elementary and middle schools. Teachers may use them for hands-on or virtual activities in any academic area or life skills. This year's recipients are:

- Erica Ackerson, Krueger, Fitnessgram Take 2.
- Shirley Allen, Krueger, African Musical Adventure and Sight Singing is a Superpower.
- Lexa Allison, St. Stanislaus Kostka, Rosie Revere, Engineer Meets Ada Twist, Scientist.
- Kate Bobillo, Notre Dame, Time to Get Moving.
- Britney Bruhler and Kelley Gertner, Lake Hills, Becoming a Scientist!
- Angela Dydo, Coolspring, Reading Together for Fun!
- Shari Ann Forker and DeAnna Munoz, Lake Hills, Writing About Our World in a Snapshot and Cocoa and Canvas.
- Nicole Groleau, Springfield, Arts and Crafts.
- Katie Houghtington and Annie Madigan, Marsh, Igniting Curiosity!
- Lisa Hill, Stephanie Jones, Elizabeth Maher, Veronica McFerson, Christina Stavropoulos, Springfield, Multi-Sensory Environment at Springfield Elementary.
- Robin Krassow, Knapp, Alternative Seating in the Classroom.
- Elizabeth Law, Lake Hills, Phonics Fun Turned into Wonderful Writing.
- Heather Martin, Knapp, Safety and Daily Essentials for Special Education Classroom.
- Brigid McKee, Notre Dame, Science of Reading.
- Anna Pyke, Edgewood, Young Authors at Work.
- Hannah Scheller, Knapp, Independent Mathematical Centers for Kindergarten.
- Susan Shell, Marsh, Math Simplifies Our Lives and Multiplies Our Opportunities.
- Michelle Sickles and Kristal Chenault, Edgewood, One Well for All.
- Ian Smith-Garcia, Barker, Film & Drama Club at Barker Middle School.

- Sheri Tuesburg and Holly Stanici, Edgewood, Astounding Authors of Various Writing Genres.
- Sheri Wagner, Lake Hills, The Learning Adventure.
- Penny Will, Lake Hills, STEM-tastic Authors!!!

The Barbara A. Carmen Memorial Endowment Fund honors the former Michigan City kindergarten and first-grade teacher in public and parochial schools. It provides grants for items that enrich curriculum or enhance a teacher's ability to meet student needs. This year's recipients, schools and project titles are:

- Britney Bruhler and Kelley Gertner, Lake Hills, Hands on Learning.
- Sara Conn, Notre Dame, "Razzed" Up for Reading.
- Amy Georgitsis, Notre Dame, Living Wax Museum Project.
- Nicole Groleau, Springfield, STEM.
- Sarah Jones, The Ultimate Inclusive Classroom.
- Heather Martin, Knapp, Sensory Needs for K-2 Autism Classroom.
- Theresa Riehm, St. Stanislaus Kostka, Mystery Science.
- Susan Shell, Marsh, You Had Me at the Letter A!
- Michelle Sickles, Edgewood, Quality Work Wall of Fame.
- Jessica Vesecky, St. Stanislaus Kostka, Scholastic Magazines.
- Sheri Wagner, Lake Hills, The Science of Reading.

The Teacher Innovation Fund for Michigan City Area Schools is for Michigan City High School and LaPorte County Career and Technical Education A.K. Smith Career Center teachers and professionals. Grants can help purchase equipment, supplies, tools for special programs or ideas to enrich curriculum and enhance each professional's ability to meet his/her students' needs. This year's recipients are:

- Susan Cleveland, Painted Murals at Michigan City High School.
- Kristen Freitag, Keeping Students "Plugged IN."
- Mary Gish, One Small Incentive, One Life Changed.
- Adam Goebel, Elevating Chemistry Through Cool Chemistry Experiments.
- Cathy LaFrance, "Allons-y" to the Francophone World!
- Carlos Melendez, Level Up: Empowering Esports in Education.
- Rachel Pauer, Dual Credit Biology 2: How Impairment Impacts You.
- Trish Tompkins, Gifting to Get Ahead.
- Amy Wojasinski-Labis, Caught Being Kind at MCHS and The Den Closet.

The next round of grants opens in summer 2024. All LaPorte County teachers are eligible to apply for Unity's "Power for Good" Community Grants. That application period opens in spring 2024. Visit www.ufc.net for more details.

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LaPorte High School Seniors Named Lilly Scholars

Megan Lambert and Stephanie Leon are the recipients of the 2024 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship for LaPorte County.

Both are LaPorte High School seniors.

Lambert has demonstrated leadership in volunteer, extracurricular and athletic activities. She has participated in mission trips, Leadership LaPorte County, newspaper, cross country, track and field and National Honor Society. She has excelled academically, including in advanced placement, dual credit and honors courses, and is ranked at the top of her class. Lambert plans to study health science and become a physician's assistant.

Throughout Leon's high school career, she has balanced volunteer service, academic success and extracurricular activities. Her involvement includes French Club, National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society, and sports. She is ranked at the top of her class and has excelled in her coursework, which includes advanced placement, dual credit and honors courses.

Each Lilly scholarship provides full tuition, required fees and a special allocation of up to \$900 per year for required books and equipment for four years. It is for full-time undergraduate students leading to a baccalaureate degree at any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university. Lilly scholars also may participate in the Lilly Scholars Network, which connects current scholars and alumni with resources and opportunities to be

active leaders on their campuses and in their communities. Both the scholarship program and LSN are supported by grants from Lilly Endowment to Independent Colleges of Indiana and Indiana Humanities.

In determining nominees, consideration went to academic achievement, service to others, extracurricular activities and, to a lesser extent, financial need by the review committee. After the field of applicants was narrowed down, the committee interviewed each finalist and submitted their nominations to ICI, the statewide administrator of the program, which approves the final selection of scholarship recipients.

The scholarship program has provided approximately \$6 million in tuition and book stipends to 72 LaPorte County students since 1998.

The eight remaining finalists each receive a \$2,000 Robert L. Ludington and Anita Huppenthal Ludington Scholarship through Unity Foundation and are eligible to apply for additional scholarships administered by Unity.

Graduating high school seniors, continuing students and non-traditional students seeking to obtain a professional certificate, or associate, undergraduate, graduate or doctoral degree are invited to apply for the many scholarships administered by Unity Foundation. Visit www.uflc.net to learn more and apply starting Jan. 1, 2024.



LaPorte High School Principal Scott Upp (back row, left) and Assistant Superintendent-Secondary Education Jane Larson are photographed with Megan Lambert (front row, left) and Stephanie Leon.

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“Frybread Face” Finds Warmth, Love and Identity on Navajo Reservation

by Andrew Tallackson



A moment of pure joy: 11-year-old Benny (Keir Tallman) surprises his family in “Frybread Face and Me.”

There is a moment in “Frybread Face and Me” when an 11-year-old Navajo boy laughs, and laughs, and laughs. He and his cousin have lured errant sheep home, and they’re just as surprised as everyone else that their plan worked. The boy’s laughter is one of happiness. A joy found only with family.

It is a beautiful moment in a film blessed with many of them. There isn’t much drama to it; instead, it has the comforting warmth of a fond memory. Billy Luther, the writer-director, so forcefully creates his world, it’s almost a shock that this is not a true story. Yes, Luther culled elements from his own life, but the story is entirely of his own creation. Bummer, because you’d like to believe these people actually exist.

Luther’s story effortlessly blends culture-specific storytelling with universal truths. In 1990, Benny (Keir Tallman) is an 11-year-old boy living with his family in San Diego when they ship him off to Arizona for the summer to stay with family on a Navajo reservation. Benny is mostly oblivious to his indigenous roots. He’d prefer to see a Fleetwood Mac concert, and there is an ongoing joke, feeding off urban myth about Stevie Nicks, that makes you laugh each time it pops up.

On the reservation, Benny feels out of sync with his family. His grandmother (Sarah Natani) does not speak English. His uncle (Martin Sensmeier) behaves like he has a chip on his shoulder. His slightly older cousin, Dawn (Charley Hogan), wears her “Frybread Face” nickname with conviction, carrying a haphazardly stitched together Cabbage Patch

★ ★ ★^{1/2}

“Frybread Face and Me”

Running time: 83 minutes. Netflix. Rated TV-MA, mostly for language. It’s perfectly acceptable for 13 and older.

Doll she calls “Jeff Bridges.” That gag seems like an isolated joke, except the only VHS tape available to the kids is “Starman,” which they watch repeatedly and know every line of dialogue. That 1984 Oscar nominee also leads to one of the best lines in which the grandma, confused, asks her grandchildren, “Why is that white woman at the bottom of that crater?” Fans of “Starman” will savor that one.)

“Frybread Face & Me” has an easy, relaxed feel. It isn’t so much designed to accelerate to a finish, but to allow Benny to ingratiate himself into this world. Brightening up scenes is the wonderful Kahara Hodges, whose Aunt Lucy is one of those blessedly cheerful people who enjoys life even as she fails to reap its many benefits.

What Benny discovers over the course of the summer is that everyone’s quirks are part of what makes them family. What endears them to each other. Indigenous customs that seem trivial at first take on greater meaning, especially a moving scene where the family celebrates an infant’s first laugh.

The movie also sneaks in an LGBTQ undercurrent. Luther, who is openly gay, depicts Benny as increasingly comfortable with shedding expectations for young boys, toying with his own image with help

from his cousins. For Benny, "family" becomes synonymous with acceptance.

We anticipate a big emotional resolution to "Frybread Face and Me," but in its own quiet way, it is affecting. Luther, who narrates the film, offers a reminder of how we never seize moments to let family know how much we appreciate them. It is only after the fact, after years have passed, that appreciation sculpts our perceptions of them.

At 83 minutes, "Frybread Face" is almost too brief. You leave the film thankful to have spent time with these people...and craving more. More time to savor how each family member makes life for Benny just a little more special.



Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com



Benny's close pal on the reservation is a slightly older girl nicknamed Frybread Face (Charley Hogan).

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“May December” Seems Puzzled By Its Characters

by Andrew Tallackson



Elizabeth Berry (Natalie Portman, left) follows Gracie (Julianne Moore), almost like a case study, in “May December.”

When Julianne Moore teamed up with writer-director Todd Haynes for 2002’s “Far From Heaven,” the intention was clear. Take the weepy melodramas of Douglas Sirk (“Written on the Wind,” “Imitation of Life,” “All That Heaven Allows”), recreate their Technicolor splendor, but dive into issues muzzled at the time by censors, specifically race and sexuality. The result was meticulous. A film with images that ached with beauty, and broke your heart.

Now, Moore has reteamed with Haynes for the Netflix Oscar bait “May December,” and I have no clue what the movie wants to say. It is loosely based on the 1990s Mary Kay Letourneau scandal, and I suppose the campy tone is admirable. Telling a straightforward approach would reduce the film to Lifetime Channel dreck. But the movie isn’t necessarily a comedy, nor a drama. It exists in cinematic limbo where it struggles to maintain an identity.

The snark comes from Natalie Portman as Elizabeth Berry, a popular actress cast in an upcoming indie film, lifted from fact, about the significantly older woman, Gracie (Moore), who had an affair with a seventh-grader, Joe (Charles Melton). Now, they’ve been married 23 years. She was 36 at the time of the affair, he 13. Elizabeth stays with them in 2015 as research for her performance.

Haynes does not recreate the affair, nor the after-

★ ★ 1/2

“May December”

Running time: 117 minutes. Netflix. Rated R for sexual content, graphic nudity, drug use and language.

math once it came to light. Instead, Elizabeth functions sort of as an investigative journalist, scribbling observations and comments in her notebook from which she can cobble together a performance.

Once you realize, through Portman’s sneaky performance, that Elizabeth’s kind, inquisitive demeanor is an act, “May December” has a few devious pleasures. Portman plays Elizabeth like a buzzard picking at a carcass. Like she’s feeding off any morsel of truth, even going so far as to recreate what it might have been like for Gracie and Joe to hook up in a pet store stockroom.

To embellish the camp factor, Haynes has his composer, Marcelo Zarvos, adapt a score by Michel Legrand for 1971’s “The Go-Between,” and it’s a huge mistake. *Big time*. The score becomes another character in the film, designed to pound it into the viewer how shocking this affair was. Instead, it has the reverse effect. Scene after scene, it undermines any dramatic value.

Worse, by the end of “May December,” we’re not



Charles Melton, seen here with Julianne Moore, gives the most empathetic performance.

sure what to make of Gracie and Joe. Moore plays her as a jittery grab bag of Freudian diagnoses. Melton has the film's best scene. Seated on a rooftop with his teen son, the sadness of Joe is obvious. He's flatlined from having been robbed of his own youth.

But how are we supposed to *feel* about him and Gracie? Haynes, working from a screenplay by Samy Burch, does not know. More to the point, he may not care. The final scene may hint that Elizabeth realizes she's a psychological vulture. That she's part of a trend in society to treat damaged souls as fresh meat.

But did I care by the end? Not really.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

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A Christmas Tradition Returns



As it nears its diamond anniversary, Michigan City Messiah will mark Handel's beloved oratorio by saying a bittersweet farewell to the man who for decades was the driving force behind it.

G.F. Handel's "Messiah" is at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 17, at The Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring St. The concerts are free, with no reservations required. It will be the 59th presentation. The program was organized and conducted by Dan McNabb, who still sings in the chorus; however, this holiday season marks his final year.

"The MC Messiah wants to make this a very special set of concerts as a very special way to thank Dan McNabb for his selfless gift to our community," according to a press release.

The presentations features a full Baroque orchestra conducted by Philip Bauman and soloists Kimberly Jones, soprano, Kristen Gornstein, mezzo-soprano, Matthew Daniel, tenor, and Bill McMurray, bass-baritone. Bauman is in his ninth year as music director.



All photos by Andrew Tallackson

Restoration of Spielberg's "Duel" is Essential Viewing



A menacing truck driver tries to push David Mann's vehicle into a passing freight train.

I was curiously unmoved by Steven Spielberg's "The Fabelmans"...until the final scene. The movie's Spielberg surrogate finds himself in the studio office of his hero, John Ford ("Stagecoach," "The Searchers"), played by a hilariously profane David Lynch, who gives the eager lad a crash course in directing. Specifically, never settle for the easy shot. Make the familiar feel fresh in the eyes of moviegoers.

As the young man waltzes out of the office and onto the studio backlot, you realize this kid is on the precipice of greatness. "The Sugarland Express" and, of course, "Jaws," are a few years down the road, but after helming a few episodes of popular TV shows, the project that puts him on the map will be a little 1971 ABC Movie of the Week called "Duel."

The movie was just released in a pristine 4K restoration. Having not seen it in more than 40 years, curiosity got the better of me. So, my assignment for "Past/Present" was this: 52 years after its debut, were the signs there of the great American filmmaker Spielberg would become?

Absolutely.

Maybe not quite to the polish of "Jaws," but the seeds that made the 1975 shark thriller the first true summer blockbuster were sown with "Duel." Even more remarkable is the skill on display when Spielberg only had a \$450,000 budget, a 10-day shooting schedule and a mere three weeks to edit before the movie aired on TV.

The story hailed from a short story published, no

past
present
Andrew Tallackson



less, in *Playboy* by acclaimed fantasy-horror writer Richard Matheson ("I Am Legend," "What Dreams May Come"). Having penned memorable "Twilight Zone" episodes, including the classic "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," the author in the early '70s was cranking out dynamite television. Not just his script for "Duel," but also the "Night Stalker"/"Night Strangler" TV movies that birthed Darren McGavin's paranormal investigator Carl Kolchak.

"Duel" was like a relentless "Twilight Zone" episode by way of Alfred Hitchcock, a heavy influence on Spielberg. The story? Simple to the extreme. Middle-aged salesman David Mann (Dennis Weaver), headed on a business trip, is terrorized by an unseen presence driving a rust-covered menace of a truck. The simple act of David passing the truck triggers something dark in its driver. It pursues David across miles of desolate landscape.

The terror inherent in Matheson's script, and Spielberg's devotion to it, is that we never see the truck driver's face. An arm waving out the window,

yes, his silhouette behind the wheel from a distance. But the truck may as well be driving itself. A supernatural entity with no emotion or compassion. A relentless killing machine.

Sound familiar? When Spielberg's mechanical shark in "Jaws" proved itself a colossal failure early in the notoriously difficult shoot, to keep the movie on schedule, he recalled what he learned from "Duel." The unknown is always more terrifying than the known. What we cannot see triggers the darkest recesses of the mind. The tension escalates from there. That is why we do not see the shark until the movie's riveting last act.

In "Duel," that there is no rhyme or reason to the chase adds to the nightmarish quality of Spielberg's film. And when David, after nearly losing his life on the road, stumbles into a roadside cafe, fearful anyone present might be the driver himself, Spielberg proves himself a master of what are called point-of-view shots. What that means is, we only see what the main character sees. We are not privy to any other details. Take, for instance, a movie released one year later: "The Poseidon Adventure." Director Ronald Neame ventures outside of the ship's ballroom at midnight. We see the tidal wave headed for it. We are given information the main characters lack. But in "Duel," Spielberg's camera is the film's surrogate for David's line of vision. We only see what's right before David. And with every gaze by those seated at the bar being rather ominous, the sequence is a masterful exercise in paranoia.

Spielberg would rely heavily on this tactic in a showcase moment in "Jaws." Before the young boy on the raft meets his gruesome fate, we only see what Sheriff Brody views from his seat on the beach. Spielberg allows the images to trail along with seemingly no warning. Our pulse quickens, bracing for the worst. And when the camera finally dips into the water, John Williams' classic score standing in for the shark, the effect is terrifying.

That approach is everywhere in "Duel." The title credits unfold with images directly seen from inside



In one of the most chilling moments, the truck driver comes after David Mann (Dennis Weaver) while he's inside a phone booth.

of David's vehicle. As the truck tries to push his stopped car into a train barreling by, we see, and hear, the truck grinding against the vehicle. In the most chilling shot, as the truck awaits on the other side of a tunnel, only its headlights visible, it's like a game of "Chicken" from David's perspective. We feverishly await for the truck to charge.

Many filmmakers have tried to ape Spielberg here. Some are direct tributes ("Breakdown," "Joy Ride"), others sly nods ("The Hitcher," Quentin Tarantino's "Death Proof"). None have the same impact because they give away their secrets early.

The new 4K restoration of "Duel," by the way, only enhances the visceral experience. In the disc's extras, you can see the original film as it aired on TV, and it has the dull, washed out look of footage aged by time. Here, the colors pop: the stinging oranges and reds of the sun-scorched landscape. The animal-like growls and howls of the truck itself. Like David Lynch's advice to Spielberg in "The Fabelmans," the 4K restoration has made the old feel new again.

This version of "Duel" is essential viewing, a worthy addition to anyone's collection and, for Spielberg fanatics, proof of the greatness waiting to break free and wow us.



Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

Holiday Greek Bake Sale

A holiday greek bake sale is from noon-4 p.m. EST Friday-Sunday, Dec. 15-17, at Annunciation-Agia Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church, 18000 Behner Road, New Buffalo, Mich.

Orthodox Philanthropic Society sponsors the event that includes greek pastries and museum tours. Call (269) 231-9052 for details.

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Michigan City Public Library

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

- **Christmas Angels Among Us at 2 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14.** Ange Benz, who leads the discussion, can be contacted at (219) 874-3754.
- **Duneland Stamp Club at 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14.** The club meets the second Thursday of each month. New members are invited.
- **Film Showing: "Prancer: A Christmas Tale" at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15.** This is not the 1989 John Hancock film, but a 2022 update.
- **Holiday Harp Music with Debra Sawyer at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.** Sawyer plays an electric lever harp.
- **Monday Musicale Holiday Concert at 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.** Guests can take a non-perishable food item as a donation.
- **Bad Art Night for Adults from 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 19.** Designed as a way to unwind and create, the library provides the paint, canvas and pompoms. An award goes to the piece voted Worst Art. No registration is required.
- **Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays in November-December.** Membership is open to anyone interested in needle arts such as crochet, needlepoint, cross-stitch, crewel, tatting and other hand stitching. All skill levels and ages are welcome. Also, the group has organized a local chapter of the Warm Up America Foundation. Volunteers are knitting and crocheting handmade squares (7x9 inch) that will be joined together to make full-size afghans.
- **Genealogy Help with Pat Harris from 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays in December.** Harris can offer tips and advice on how to research a family tree or find genealogical record
- **Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17) from 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays in November-December.** Create with LEGO WeDo, Micro:bits, paper circuits, Ozobots and 3-D pens. Children 12 and younger must have a parent or guardian attend with them.
- **Story Time at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.** Children birth to age 5 and adults will enjoy stories, songs and crafts. Check out previous story time videos through the library's YouTube channel, Facebook page and website.
- **Dungeons & Dragons (ages 13-17) at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 20.** Supplies and characters are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Email Miss Dana at dwolf@mclib.org for details.
- **Holiday Favorite Characters Scavenger Hunt in December.** Visit Youth Services, find all the characters and win a prize.
- **Weekly Crafts for Kids & Teens.** Each week offers a different project. Take-home craft kits are available, or create some in the Makerspace.
- **Food and Mitten Drive through Jan. 2.** Take non-perishable foods, mittens, gloves, hats or scarves to the Youth Services area. Collected items will be donated to a local shelter.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance aid needed.** Volunteers help at least one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and passing the VITA test through the intermediate level is required. Testing and training are online. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.

Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. Visit www.mclib.org or call (219) 873-3049 for more details.

New Buffalo Township Library

- **Christmas Cardmaking Workshop (ages 7 and older).** The program is at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14. Sign up at the library.
- **Christmas Story Time with Santa.** The program is at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 18.
- **"Letters to Santa."** Children can write to Santa for a reply by sending letters to: Santa, 33 N. Thompson St., New Buffalo, MI 49117

Weekly programs:

- Craft Time on Wednesdays while supplies last.
- Read to a Dog Sessions for all ages from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday and 4-4:45 p.m. Wednesday.
- Lego Club on Fridays-Saturdays.
- Story time at 10 a.m. Mondays.

All times are Eastern. New Buffalo Township Library is located at 33 N. Thompson St. Call (269) 469-2933 for more details.

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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.

- 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.).

Patrons are no longer charged daily overdue fines. Customers only will be charged for items they damage, lose or never return.

The following programs are planned:

- **Storytime with the Symphony from 7-8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, at the Coolspring branch, and 6-7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 18, at the main library.** Five LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra members will present Christmas carols, while children can make holiday crafts, read stories and participate in a sing-along.
- **Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Friday, Dec. 15, at the main library.** Children ages 3-5 with their caregivers experience stories, songs, crafts and activities.
- **Getting Started with Libby (adults 19+) from 1-2 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 19, in the Coolspring Branch Meeting Room.** Learn how to access and navigate the app with a library card. Take a device to follow along.

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, including programming through the Exchange building.

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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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Christmas Joy Lights Festival

The volunteers at Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12, will transform the attraction for the holidays during the Christmas Joy Lights Festival from 4-7 p.m. Friday-Sunday, Dec. 15-17.

Families can sing with carolers, take a picture with Santa and sample hot cocoa. They also can stroll through garden trails bathed in hundreds of Christmas lights festooned 200 feet high in the surrounding trees and hillsides.

The event is designed as open-house style. Use the main parking lot off U.S. 12.

Tickets will be available at the door and online. Admission is:

- Members/children 12 and younger: free.
- Adult non-member: \$10.
- Senior non-member: \$7.
- Veteran non-member: \$7.

Visit www.friendshipbotanicgardens.org, call (219) 878-9885 or email info@friendshipbotanicgardens.org for tickets or more details.

TROTOM Bake Sale

The Region of Three Oaks Museum, 5 Featherbone Ave., as part of the Holiday Stroll, will host a bake sale at 10 a.m. EST Saturday, Dec. 16.

Home-baked items will be sold, along with hand-crafts and books and videos on local history. The miniature model of Three Oaks used in 1989's "Prancer" will be on display at Heritage Hall, along with other memorabilia from the movie. If weather permits, a festively painted sleigh from the 1800s will be set up at Linden and Elm streets so people can take holiday photos.

Donations will be accepted. All bake-sale proceeds support the non-profit museum.



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Harbor Country Hikers



A group of hikers surmounts a dune during a 2020 winter walk at Warren Dunes State Park.

Harbor Country Hikers will visit the trails of Warren Dunes State Park, 12032 Red Arrow Highway, Sawyer, Mich., at 1 p.m. EST Saturday, Dec. 16.

HCH President Pat Fisher will lead the group through Whitetail Trail and other favorites from among the park's six miles of trails. Those who take the 1.8-mile hike should dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes or boots and take water. Physical difficulty is rated moderate, partly for some uphill climbs on packed sand.

Membership is preferred; however, the public is welcome. Visit www.harborcountryhikers.com or Harbor Country Hikers on Facebook for more details.



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American Red Cross

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

- Eaton Chiropractic, 8690 Pabs Road, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14.
- A.K. Smith Career Center, 817 Lafayette St., 7:45 a.m.-1:45 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14.
- Northwest Health Heart and Vascular Building, 901 Lincolnway, LaPorte, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.
- Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte, 140 E. Shore Parkway, LaPorte, 12:30-5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 20.

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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HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES

	SCORE
1. June Salmon	160
2. Dottie Brinckman	158
2. Kathy Osborne	158
3. Deb Frederick	156
4. Ann Bogart	155
5. Pat Collado	152
6. Nancy Kubath (series)	404

SPLITS

Sarah Blank	3-10, 7-8
Jean St.Peter	4-5
Ginny Hogan	3-10

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In the Area

Dec. 14 — Christmas Angels Among Us, 2 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 874-3754.

Dec. 14 — Duneland Stamp Club, 4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Dec. 14 — Storytime with the Symphony, 7-8 p.m., Coolspring Library Branch, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Dec. 15 — Film Showing: "Prancer: A Christmas Tale," 2 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Dec. 15-17 — Christmas Joy Lights Festival, 4-7 p.m., Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12. Tickets: members & children 12 & younger/free; adult non-member/\$10, senior & veteran non-member/\$7. Info/reservations: www.friendshipbotanicgardens.org, (219) 878-9885.

Dec. 15-17 — "The Magic of Christmas: A Musical Review," LaPorte Little Theatre Club, 218 A St. Times: 7:30 p.m. Dec. 15-16, 2 p.m. Dec. 17. Tickets: adults/\$17, seniors/\$16, students/\$13. Reservations: www.laportelittletheatreclub.com

Dec. 16 — The Michigan City High School Student Council "drive through" food drive, 9 a.m.-noon, Ames Field, 2501 Franklin St.

Dec. 16 — Holiday Harp Music with Debra Sawyer, 3 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Dec. 16 — Monday Musicale Holiday Concert, 4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Dec. 16 — Night at the Giese Church, 6-8 p.m., LaPorte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave. Info: (219) 324-6767.

Dec. 16-17 — Michigan City Messiah, 7 p.m. Dec. 16/3 p.m. Dec. 17, The Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring St. Free.

Dec. 17 — Queen of All Saints Choir, "A New and Glorious Morn," 3 p.m., Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 606 S. Woodland Ave. Free.

Dec. 18 — Storytime with the Symphony, 6-7 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Dec. 19 — Bad Art Night for Adults, 5-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St.

Info: (219) 873-3049.

Through Dec. 31 — Work by Michigan City Art League, The Legacy Center Gallery at 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. Info: kd3627@hotmail.com

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

Mondays in Michigan City — Bingo, Moose Family Lodge 980, 2107 Welnetz Road. Doors open/8:30 a.m., early birds/9:30 a.m., regular Bingo/10 a.m.

Mondays in LaPorte — Weekly line dance lessons, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1130, 181 W. McClung Road. Cost: \$5. Beginner lessons, 2-3 p.m. Improver lessons, 3-4 p.m. Info: (219) 363-8301.

Tuesdays — Bingo, St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, 109 Ann St. Doors open: 3:30 p.m. Bingo: 6 p.m. \$45 entrance fee (includes all cards). Info: (219) 336-3099.

Tuesdays in December — Genealogy Help with Pat Harris, 1-4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Tuesdays in December — Creative Tech Activities, 3:30-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Thursdays in December — Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

In the Region

Dec. 14 — Christmas Cardmaking Workshop (7+), 6 p.m. EST, New Buffalo Township Library, 33 N. Thompson St. Info: (269) 469-2933.

Dec. 15 — The Save the Tunes Council, 7:30-9 p.m., Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 15 — Acorn Holiday Open Mic Night featuring Daniel Cole Dailey, 7 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Reserved seating: \$25 tax-deductible donation. Info: www.acornlive.org

Dec. 15-17 — Holiday greek bake sale, noon-4 p.m. EST, Annunciation-Agia Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church, 18000 Behner Road, New Buffalo, Mich. Info: (269) 231-9052.

Dec. 16 — Bake sale, 10 a.m. EST, The Region of Three Oaks Museum, 5 Featherbone Ave.

Dec. 16 — Chellberg Farm Care, 9 a.m.-noon, Bailly Homestead/Chellberg Farm, 618 N. Mineral Springs Road, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 16 — Porter Beach Restoration, 9 a.m.-noon, Porter Beach Parking Lot, Wabash Avenue & Johnson Beach Road. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 16 — Holiday Traditions at Chellberg Farm Open House, noon-3 p.m., Bailly Homestead/Chellberg Farm parking lot, 618 N. Mineral Springs Road, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 16 — Harbor Country Hikers, 1 p.m. EST, Warren Dunes State Park, 12032 Red Arrow Highway, Sawyer, Mich. Info: www.harborcountryhikers.com, Harbor Country Hikers on Facebook.

Dec. 16 — Happy Owl-idays, 1:30-3 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 16 — Stargazing Kemil Beach, 7-9 p.m., Kemil Beach parking area, 27 N. East State Park Road, Chesterton. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 16 — Dave Rudolf's "Completely Cracked Christmas," 7-9 p.m. EST, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Advance tickets: \$12/general admission, \$15/cabaret seating. Reservations: www.ticketstripe.com/daverudolf. Walk-in tickets: \$15, free/children 12 & younger.

Dec. 16 — Bryan Lubeck: Welcome Winter At The Acorn, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$35 + \$5.50 convenience fee, \$60 + \$5.50 convenience fee. Reservations: www.acornlive.org

Dec. 17 — How Indiana Dunes State Park Came to Be, 2 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 18 — Christmas Story Time with Santa, 10 a.m. EST, New Buffalo Township Library, 33 N. Thompson St. Info: (269) 469-2933.

Through Jan. 4, 2024 — Annual Members' Exhibit, Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Info: (219) 926-4711, www.chestertonart.org

Through Jan. 14, 2024 — Berrien Artist Guild annual member show, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: www.boxfactoryforthearts.org

Through Jan. 18, 2024 — Janice Sonnenberg paintings, The Village Gallery at Pines Village Retirement Communities, 3303 Pines Village Circle, Valparaiso.

Through Jan. 21, 2024 — Annual members show, Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: (269) 983-0271, www.krasl.org

Through May 12, 2024 — "Indiana Lore," South Bend's The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors, \$7/youth 6-17, free/members. Info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

Mondays — Pickleball, 5:30 p.m. EST, New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road. Free, donations welcome. Info: (269) 426-3909, friendsofnewtroy@yahoo.com

Saturday-Sunday in December — Warm Up to Winter, 1-3 p.m., Chellberg Farm, Mineral Springs

Road between U.S. 12/20, Porter. Snow conditions: (219) 395-1882.

Vickers Theatre — *Now Showing:* "Wonka." Rated PG. Times: 7 p.m. Dec. 15-16, 4 p.m. Dec. 17. Also: "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," 7 p.m. Dec. 14. Also: "Made In Three Oaks Film Series," 7 p.m. Dec. 17. Also: "Prancer," 6 p.m. Dec. 18. All times Eastern. Theater address: 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickerstheatre.com, (269) 756-3522.

Night at the Giese Church

LaPorte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave., will host the annual Night at the Giese Church from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.

Hot cocoa and cookies will be provided. Admission is by donation. Call (219) 324-6767 for more details.



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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On December 14, 1902, the cable ship Silver-ton set out from San Francisco to lay the first cable from the mainland to Honolulu. On Jan. 1, 1903, the cable was ready to transmit messages.

On December 14, 1910, a \$10 million gift from Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The purpose was to work toward peace through research, publications and other educational activities.

On December 14, 1911, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundson made the first recorded visit to the South Pole, beating out an expedition by Robert F. Scott.

On December 14, 1962, a U.S. space probe, Mariner 2, approached Venus and transmitted the first information about the planet's atmosphere and temperature.

On December 14, 1999, to the dismay of millions of fans, cartoonist Charles Schulz announced he was retiring his "Peanuts" comic strip.

On December 15, 1791, the first law school in the United States was born when the trustees of the University of Pennsylvania elected James Wilson to the post of professor of law.

On December 15, 1919, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the "National Prohibition Act."

On December 15, 1938, in Washington, President Franklin Roosevelt presided over groundbreaking ceremonies for the Jefferson Memorial.

On December 15, 1939, "Gone With the Wind" premiered at Loew's Grand Theater in Atlanta.

On December 15, 1944, during World War II, an army plane, with bandleader Maj. Glenn Miller aboard, disappeared on a flight over the English Channel.

On December 16, 1773, at the world-famous Boston Tea Party, American colonists (dressed as Native Americans) boarded a British ship, at anchor in Boston Harbor, and threw 342 chests of tea into the water.

On December 16, 1809, the French Senate granted Napoleon Bonaparte a divorce from Empress Josephine.

On December 16, 1835, more than 700 buildings burned in New York City, resulting in a \$20 million loss.

On December 16, 1905, *Variety*, a weekly magazine devoted to all phases of show business, came out with its first edition. It contained 16 pages, and sold for a nickel.

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On December 17, 1791, a New York City traffic regulation established the new nation's first one-way street.

On December 17, 1835, Hiram Husumin was appointed chief engineer of Chicago's first fire company.

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright made the world's first successful airplane flight as they soared over the sand dunes near Kitty Hawk, N.C. Only five people, besides themselves, were present. Although a general invitation had been issued to everyone within a five- or six-mile radius, not many were willing to face a cold December wind to see, as they no doubt thought, another flying machine that would not fly.

On December 17, 1919, \$1 million in damage occurred when a federal arsenal blew up at Pictinny, N.Y.

On December 18, 1865, slavery was abolished in the U.S. by adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which read: *"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been legally convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."*

On December 18, 1892, Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia.

On December 18, 1936, the first giant panda to be imported into the United States from China arrived in San Francisco.

On December 18, 1970, despite fierce opposition from the Catholic Church, a law permitting divorce went into effect in Italy.

On December 19, 1776, Thomas Paine published his first "American Crisis" essay, in which he wrote, *"These are the times that try men's souls."*

On December 19, 1777, Gen. George Washington's Continental Army, consisting of about 11,000 men, went into winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pa.

On December 19, 1843, Charles Dickens' famous Yuletide tale, A Christmas Carol, was published in England.

On December 19, 1871, New York's Albert Jones was granted a patent for corrugated paper.

On December 20, 1813, Congress established the Internal Revenue System to raise funds to run the government.

On December 20, 1820, Missouri imposed a \$1 annual bachelor tax on unmarried men up to age 50.

On December 20, 1928, when the Ethel Barrymore Theatre was opened in New York, she became the first living actress of the United States to have a theatre named after her.

On December 20, 1946, the Frank Capra film "It's a Wonderful Life" had a preview for charity at New York City's Globe Theatre, a day before its "official" world premiere.

On December 20, 1976, Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley died of a heart attack at age 74.



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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.



Dachshund Through the Snow by David Rosenfelt (*hardcover \$24.99, paperback \$16.99, 342 pages.*)

"They haven't started Christmas yet? Don't they realize that Halloween is over?"

That will forever be a favorite book quote for me exemplifying life in the 21st century.

Canines, Christmas, murder, mystery and a pinch of humor. What an entertaining Christmas read for yourself or as a gift to a friend. In 19 previous novels (Rosenfelt's now up to 29), he has shown how much our doggie friends contribute to the holiday season.

Each novel is about the Carpenter family: Andy, the father, Laurie the mother, and son Ricky. And, of course, the family pets, Tara, a golden retriever ("*...the supreme living creature on all planets so far discovered*") and Sebastian the basset hound ("*...basically all he wants to do is eat and sleep*").

Andy is a criminal-defense lawyer, sitting comfortably because of a family inheritance and some lucrative cases he won in court, while Laurie is a former cop. Andy and a friend have started a dog rescue foundation that proved to be much needed in their hometown of Paterson, N.J. They keep 25 dogs at a time, replacing them when any get adopted. A most worthy endeavor.

Those are the basics. Now, here is a look at this intriguing story first published in 2019...

First of all, to combine all the story elements mentioned above takes the genius of a well-rounded author who knows his dogs and the law. Taking on a German shepherd as a client is one that will have your scratching your head, until you understand Andy's line of reasoning. The judge will be left with wondering what doggie law covers this one!

Simon Garfunkel, Simon for short, is a police K-9 dog who also is a service dog. He's one year short of the local law that says he must serve 10 years before he can retire from the force. His trainer says that's "*species discrimination*," and Simon deserves to be retired due to his exemplary service and because his hips are beginning to wear out — a common complaint for his breed. And, the force wants Simon to work his last year as a drug-sniffing dog, which will be an even more stressful assignment. Andy's plea before the judge is one that will have you cheering him.

But that's only the start of Andy's unusual Christmas. There's more to come.

Laurie goes every year to various stores with Christmas trees where children can "*fill out a small form asking for special gifts, and those are put in envelopes and hung on the tree.*"

This is Laurie's special project, so right now as she reads the latest requests, Andy is "*...fulfilling my own*

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



wish, which is to sit on the couch and watch ESPN."

Laurie gathers up a number of these forms each year and makes the wishes come true. This year, however, includes one very unusual request from Danny Traynor. He wants a warm coat for his mom and a doggie coat for his dachshund, Murphy, a dog that is "*at a level beyond adorable.*"

And what about the third wish? "*Please, Santa, find my dad and bring him home. Thank you.*"

Wow. Two out of three ain't bad, but what about that third wish? Especially if the dad doesn't want to be found?

Fourteen years ago, 18-year-old Kristen McNeil was found strangled to death. DNA found under her fingernails and at the scene of the crime cannot be attached to anyone in any database, so the case remained unsolved. But now, because a family member put his DNA on one of those family tree organizations that help find family members, a match is found. The person whose DNA was found under Kristen's fingernails is no other than Danny's father, Noah Traynor. He is found and arrested...

Laurie pushes Andy into taking Noah's case, even though it seems hopeless.

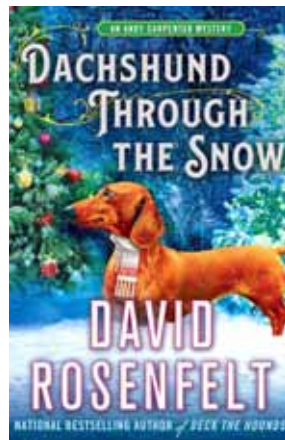
Most of the story is told in Andy's voice, and that's what makes these stories sweet and salty. Andy has a droll sense of humor, somewhat more Jack Benny than Red Skeleton (Am I showing my age here?!).

Soon, there are more suspects that can't be accounted for, and someone is following Andy around town. And what about NetLink? That's the computer-router manufacturing company whose owner's son was Kristen's boyfriend. She even worked there until one day, she up and quit her job and wouldn't tell her sister or anyone why. But whatever happened, it made her scared...

The case progresses in court, with Andy fearing nothing can stop Noah from a life sentence in prison. But then the bodies start piling up — do they have anything to do with Noah's case? They don't make sense at first, and Andy's digging around just might get him killed.

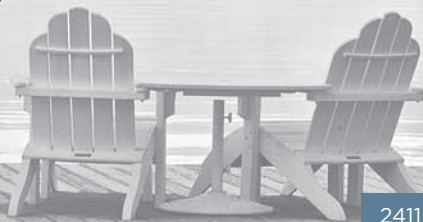
The final word: I devoured this read overnight and felt a deep satisfaction with the ending, especially with Andy's take on life and dogs in general. Snappy writing gives us characters that are, well, characters, and the canines add a bit of class to the story. I dedicate this review to Sadie of the Tallacksons — may your Christmas dreams come true!

Till next time, happy reading and happy shopping!



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