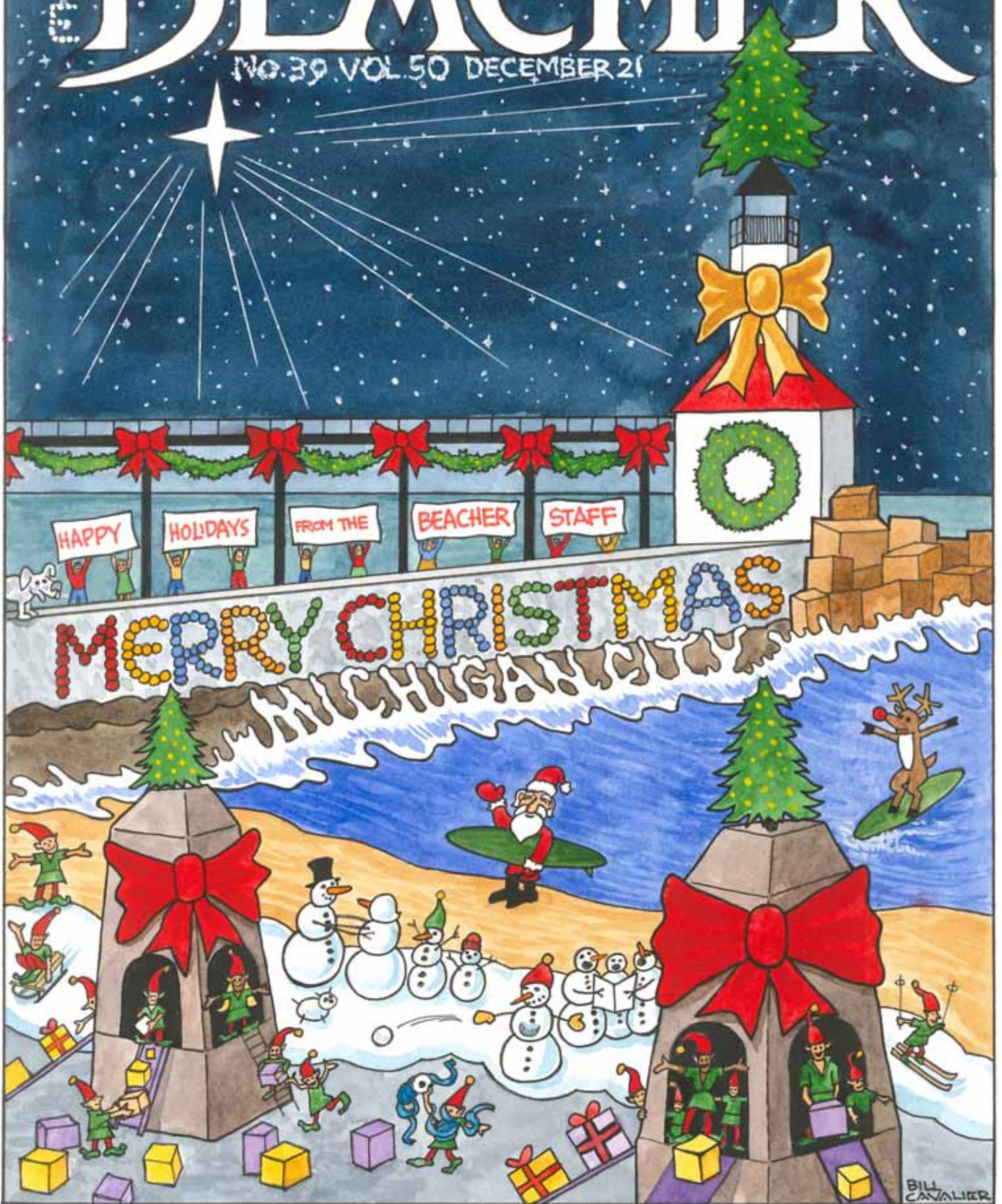


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About the Cover

For our Christmas edition cover, we gave Bill Cavalier a challenge: Place a Michigan City spin on “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.” What he created is delightful: a vision of our lakefront in full holiday spirit.

Triumph Over Adversity

by Connie Kuzdym

Robert Kopnicky, photographed at Vintage Lighting by *The Beacher's* Bob Wellinski, is a testament to persistence and faith over adversity.

A flickering lamp in need of repair led me to Vintage Lighting Inc. Located off County Road 400 West in LaPorte, Robert “Bob” Kopnicky’s workshop is a welcoming red building at the end of a single-lane driveway that winds through grassy knolls surrounded by trees and birdhouses. The layout mimics his native Pennsylvania landscape.

Bob sells a variety of antique lighting fixtures, many he has restored. He specializes in brass, copper, cast iron, white metal and steel repairs for antiques and high-quality pieces, along with metal restoration.

We briefly chat, and I discover he has endured adversity that took years to fully grasp, accept and realize the blessing within.

Why would a Vietnam War veteran now in his mid-70s, a business owner, an inventor credited with four patents and more than 14 patentable inventions, willingly show his grade-school report cards when they all say he has a problem?

A photo of the schoolhouse he attended in the 1950s in Blainesburg, Pa., hangs in his shop as a reminder of those long-ago days.

By second grade, Bob knew he had a problem. He could not read, spell or do math, which made him feel insecure. By the time he reached third grade, he felt completely lost.

Placed in special tutoring classes, his teachers tried to help him read and do math, but to no avail. In the 1950s-1960s, tests to diagnose learning disabilities were not readily known or available.

“They didn’t know what to do with me,” Bob said, “so they kept pushing me through to get rid of me because they didn’t know what was going on.”



Growing up in Blainesburg, Pa., Bob knew by second grade he had trouble learning. This photo was taken in 1947.

Growing up in a turbulent home with his parents and older sister, he lacked support from his parents. His mother was detached. His hard-working coal-miner father hoped his son would become a doctor. Never physically abusive towards Bob, the words directed at him left their own scars. Fortunately, his grandmother lived nearby and helped as best she could. Imagine the pain he felt knowing his parents were unsympathetic toward his plight. He learned how to keep things inside, to not show anyone how he was feeling. Teased at school for his inability to learn, and knowing he was different, eventually led him to contemplate suicide.

“A neighbor had (committed suicide)...I kept thinking, this is the only way out. I don’t have a choice,” Bob said. “Whatever is wrong with me is going to be wrong with me no matter what. I can’t get away from myself. This problem I have is within me. It’s not going to ever disappear.”

Fortunately, he found solace in the woods. Heading there daily after school, he studied the trees, how the water came off the rocks in the creek. He

Continued on Page 4

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Triumph Over Adversity

Continued from Page 3

looked for fish and crabs. He became an avid camper and to this day loves being outdoors.

After years of bitter fighting, his parents divorced. His dad accepted a job in the steel mills in Gary, and the two moved to Portage. After high school, Bob attended Valparaiso Technical Institute. Due to poor grades, he was drafted for the Vietnam War. Enlisting in the Navy for four years, he attended radar school. How did he manage to pass while struggling with the three R's?

"That's a good question, because I didn't...no one addressed it...they just kept pushing you through," Bob said. "They must have liked me or something... It was bizarre. I flunked the final, but they still pushed me through anyways."

He volunteered for a tour of duty in Vietnam, completing his four-year military service stateside, on the east coast.

After serving, he returned to Indiana, was hired at Bethlehem Steel and eventually fell into the partying life. He resisted for more than a year, but his close friend was a drug dealer. Before long, they were partying daily. Drugs were part of that lifestyle. Constantly telling themselves if they wanted to quit, they could. During this time, he salvaged a children's Bible written in 1891 in an old house slated to be torn down.

In reality, Bob's life was beginning to unravel. He was causing trouble for his boss. In turn, his boss

was trying to have him fired. His close friend lived in a converted chicken coop, he in a trailer. Doing drugs caused everything to become tougher.

He began thinking he should quit, tried and realized he could not stop.

"I was shocked. Here I am in a drug scene I can't quit," Bob said. "I have a third-grade reading ability. I'm in real trouble. I can't read, I can't spell, I can't do math. I remember my health was deteriorating...My boss hated me, I hated him, everything was going south really fast."

"I remember I was on the floor sobbing and I heard a voice. I sensed something was really different," Bob said. "My dad always told me, when you start hearing voices, you're gone. You've gone crazy. The voice told me, I want you to turn your life over to me because I want to use you. I knew nothing about spiritual things."

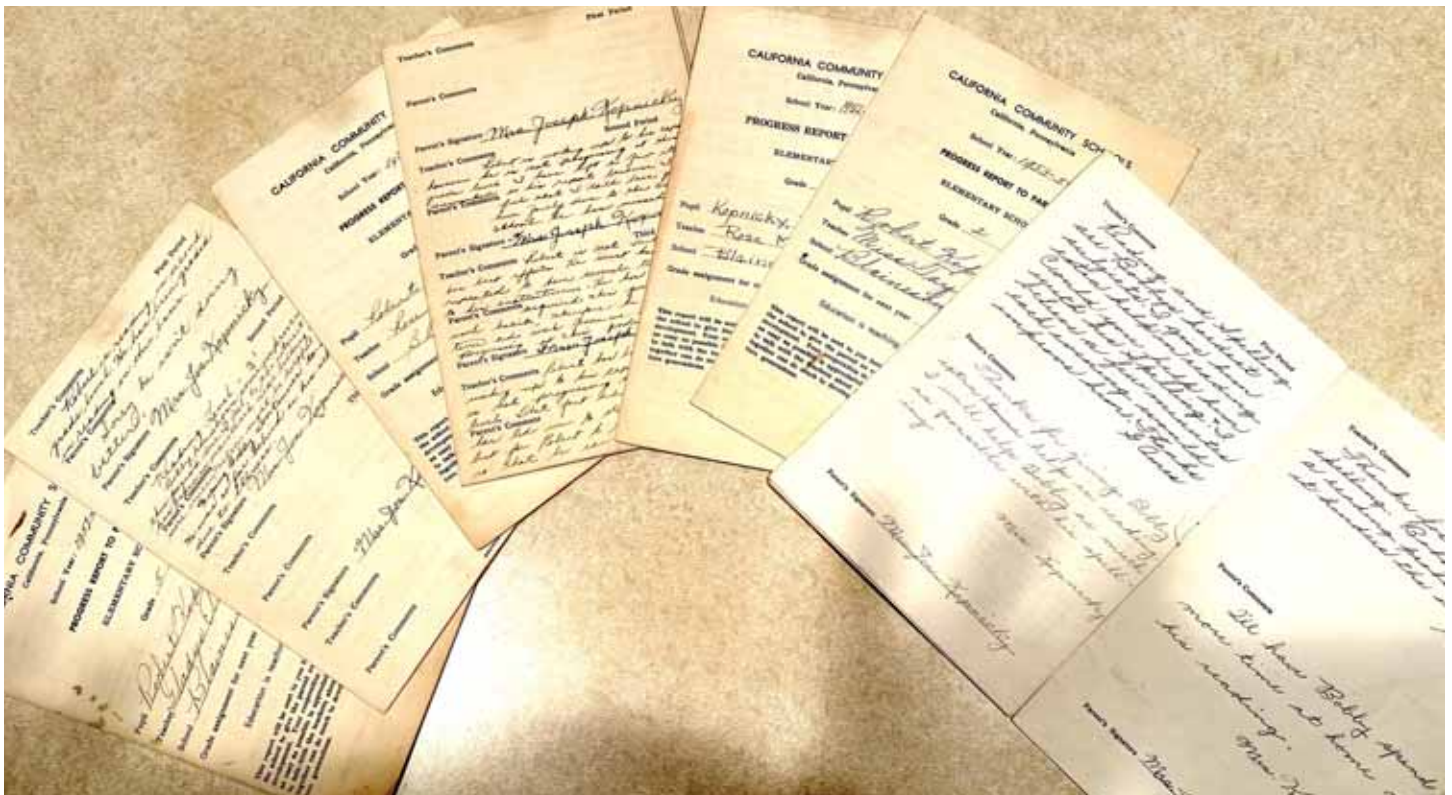
As a youngster, he attended church, but never understood what was being said. Instead, he recalls studying the church's beautiful iconography.

He heard that voice twice more, which brought him to a crossroads.

"During this time, I'm ready to pull the trigger because now, I'm hearing voices..." Bob states, emotion in his voice. "I thought to myself, OK, I have one of two choices. I could either pull the trigger or I could say yes, I'll do it. If it happens again, I'll do it. If it doesn't happen again, I might as well pull the trigger and get out of here."

It did happen again. The same words, the same voice.

Bob turned his life over to God.



Bob has kept all of his report cards as a testament to everything he's overcome since childhood.



A group photo of one of the social groups Bob helped grow at church.

That next day, he quit cold turkey without anyone's help or knowledge. He flushed all the alcohol and drugs down the toilet. He began attending church regularly, befriending the pastor. Going cold turkey, he experienced a sense of shock. Inside, he was a mess, but he persevered. Every night, he also tried reading that children's Bible, but made no progress.

Bob decided one day he would speak with the pastor's son, Dave Gilmore, who was an eye doctor. Several months passed before the opportunity presented itself. Bob called out to him and his wife in the church parking lot.

Choking up, he recounts that day's conversation vividly, saying, "Dave, I have to make an appointment with you. I've got this problem. When I read, I reverse letters in a word and I reverse words in a sentence. And I take a word out of one sentence and try to plug it into the sentence I'm trying to read. I flip letters and numbers over, and I can't tell the difference between a b and a d and a 6 and a 9.

As he spoke, he saw they were listening carefully. Their demeanor changed.

"He looked at me and said, 'You're dyslexic.'" With tears in his voice, Bob continued. "I never heard that word. I was 29 years old. I just looked at him in shock because I didn't know there was something that I was."

Gilmore's wife took over and explained that dyslexia is a learning disability.

According to Mayo Clinic's website, dyslexia is a learning disorder that involves difficulty reading due to problems identifying speech sounds, and learning how they relate to letters and words (decoding). Dyslexia is not due to problems with intelligence...most children can succeed in school with tutoring or a specialized education program. Emotional support also plays an important role. There is no cure, but early assessment and intervention result in the best outcome. Sometimes, dyslexia is undiagnosed for years or until adulthood.

In another article, "A brief history of dyslexia and

Continued on Page 6

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Triumph Over Adversity

Continued from Page 5

the role women played in getting it recognized,” found at www.Independent.com.uk, interest in dyslexia waned between the world wars, but emerged again in the early 1960s. Sandhya Naidoo published one of the first major studies into the condition, *Specific Dyslexia*, in 1972. Her book, along with Critchley’s *The Dyslexic Child* (1970), were landmarks in early research.

Gilmore’s wife gave him an assignment to go home and crawl every day for 15 minutes. Raw emotions, visible and audible, surfaced as he recounted what occurred when he went home that day and tried to crawl.

On his knees, he tried, but could not do it. He had a meltdown, then pulled himself together. Then, daily, he practiced for 15 minutes. After 2 1/2 months, he could crawl, and began being able to read the children’s Bible. Although he still struggles to read, today, he faithfully reads five chapters in the Bible out loud every day and has not missed a day of reading in 18 years.

As Bob looks back on those years, he understands those series of spiritual encounters turned him around.

For years, Bob caused trouble for his boss. Then, overnight, he completely changed.



A plaque highlights the patents Bob has received.
Photo by Bob Wellinski.

“When he would give me a dirty job, I would just go and do it. I wouldn’t argue. I wouldn’t fight with him. I just did my job, that’s all I did,” Bob said. “I tried telling people what happened to me. I was so excited about what I had found. I was trying to tell my friends at work about the Lord, until they started telling me, man, you lost your mind, you’re crazy. After getting into several of those, I thought, maybe, I should shut up. All I did was my job.”

A peculiar thing occurred. Bob began getting noticed by management. He was an instrument tech-

nician at Bethlehem Steel who couldn’t read a manual, but could solve difficult problems. His superiors capitalized on that. He began inventing countless things for the mill, and patented the following two inventions. A Contact Thermocouple Assembly extends vertically into the furnace and measures the temperature of the horizontal steel as it flies by. The Impact-actuated Gripping Tool grips and unscrews an atomizing air tube screwed into the internal structure of a furnace burner assembly, aiding in not having to disassemble everything to get to the tube.

On his own, he invented and received a patent for a Quadra-limbular Therapeutic Exercise Machine used by handicapped or impaired people from his/her wheelchair. He created it for a good friend who became a paraplegic after a jeep accident. His fourth patent is for Therapeutic Systems and Roller Devices and Methods of Use, which was granted in 2020 for hand tools used to treat or alleviate symptoms relating to soft tissue injuries and ailments such as carpal tunnel.



Bob and his wife, Karen, have been married for 38 years.

Through church, Bob became the head of a singles group and met his wife, Karen. They have been married 38 years, have a daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren who live in South Bend.

Vintage Lighting Inc. was founded when Bob and Karen moved to LaPorte County. As a child, Bob would go to the scrapyards with his dad, which continued into adulthood. Finding fascinating metal items, he turned them into lamps. At first, it was about lighting their home; later, they began selling at antique shows.

His job at the mill gave him the knowledge to work with metal. For example, he came across an 1895-1905 statue that had multiple broken pieces.

“When I saw it, I thought to myself, oh, what a piece of history this is. I already knew that I could fix it,” Bob said. “I could run my mind forward and reverse, engineer the whole job while I’m looking

at the piece. It's kind of weird. The reason I can do that is because I'm dyslexic."

Although he loves doing the lighting, at this point, he would like to do more metal restoration work. His dream may come true, as his niece Cassidy has joined him once again in the shop and is proving to be a great assistant.

Bob was in his 60s when he began understanding that being dyslexic is a gift.

"My whole life, I thought I was cursed being dyslexic..." Bob said. "You got to understand, when you can't read an instruction manual...you have a job... you have to ask your buddies or you have to figure it out some other way. It's so embarrassing."

Today, he leads two Bible study groups at his shop. He has a tough exterior, but he is humble. The hurt from being different can never be entirely erased, even though he has accepted the challenges it presents.



Promotional material for the Rehabcycle Bob created.



Bob's niece, Cassidy, works with him in their shop area. Bob is working on an Art Nouveau piece he completely restored. Photo by Bob Wellinski.

In speaking with him, it is evident he sees things through a different lens than most, but that is what makes him unique.

"Every negative thing that happens to me, I look at it as one of three or four reasons it's happening," he said. "I'm either being disciplined by

God, or I'm being tested by God, or God is trying to teach me something, or He's trying to mold my character."

He would prefer not to be molded, because the situations usually entail hurt; however, he understands it is not in his control.

Today, he describes himself as a "failure to the world, but I'm blessed by God."

"Being a failure was actually the biggest blessing for me because I wouldn't be who I am spiritually if I would have been successful," Bob says. "I'm very content with who I am...I don't want to be successful and lose what I got, who I am on the inside."

The failures he experienced, to him, are not really failures.

"They might have been failures financially, but I learned so much more from it, that it was actually an education to my brain," Bob said.

In his early days, he was considered least likely to succeed. Today, he accepts who he is, the life he has been given and the challenges conquered and unconquered.

Asked if he is still coming up with new inventions, his entire demeanor changes to excitement. His dream is to one day watch surgeons at work.

"Just give me a year of that and I would be making inventions," Bob said. "I don't see what other people see. I see things differently mechanically. I have this dyslexic thing over here, on the other side I have something else going that's really vivid...I'm an odd character, but I'm happy with myself.

"I just want to say these things that have happened to me are because of God working in my life," he continued. "I don't want to take any credit for any of it. It's all about God."



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“Wonka” Has Its Heart in the Right Place, But Lacks the Magic

by Andrew Tallackson



Oscar-nominee Timothée Chalamet plays a young version of Roald Dahl's chocolatier in “Wonka.”

I was unaffected by “Wonka,” restless by it, much in the way 2018’s “Mary Poppins Returns” couldn’t quite make lightning strike twice. Both want some of that magic pixie dust left by classics, and in some respects, they have it. High energy and sweet spirit. Lush sets. Lively costumes. Cheerful cast. All that’s missing is a reason to care...and one decent song.

The movie provides an origin story for Roald Dahl’s peculiar chocolatier Willy Wonka, played first to wicked perfection by Gene Wilder, then with Michael Jackson creepiness by Johnny Depp in the Tim Burton update. Unfortunately, the story this time, by director/co-writer Paul King (the “Paddington” pictures), is a snooze, with dinner theater-style songs by Neil Hannon that crush any buoyancy.

Wonka (Oscar-nominee Timothée Chalamet) arrives in an undisclosed European city with dreams of forging a chocolate paradise, only to clash with chocolate mafiosos who want him dead. But first, Wonka wrongly chooses a decrepit laundry as the place to stay for the night, forced by the owner to join her motley crew of downtrodden slave labor.

Seriously, *that’s* King’s idea of family fun? To be fair, the old crone running the laundry is played by Oscar-winner Olivia Colman (“The Favourite”), and she has the right idea, modeling her performance after any classic Roald Dahl harpy.

Chalamet (“Call Me By Your Name”), though, is an interesting choice for Wonka. This may be the first movie where the typically grim actor voluntarily smiles. There is a sweetness to him here, but he doesn’t make the role his own. Exhibit any wow factor. You catch him acting when the character’s

★ ★ 1/2

“Wonka”

Running time: 116 minutes. In theaters. Rated PG for some violence, mild language and thematic elements.

loopiness should feel effortless.

The songs do him no favor. They are bright, cheery...and disintegrate on impact. They all sound the same, and when the trio of villains breaks out into jazz hands, you wish the singing would stop. The villains, too, are a bust. Paterson Joseph, Matt Lucas and Mathew Baynton aren’t interesting enough, enough of a legitimate threat, to make them deliciously despicable.

Thank heavens for the supporting players. Calah Lane is pure delight as Noodle, Wonka’s budding young assistant. Sally Hawkins, seen in flashbacks as Wonka’s mother, lends a tender simplicity to scenes. Jim Carter (Mr. Carson from “Downton Abbey”) lends that booming hammer of a voice to charming moments. And Hugh Grant has choice scenes as an Oompa Loompa.

That the final scene is perfection, ironically, is a bummer. By resurrecting the timeless “Pure Imagination” from the Gene Wilder film, and conjuring Wonka’s true vision for his chocolate factory, the movie has discovered its mojo too late to rescue it.

“Wonka” isn’t bad. Its heart is in the right place. Nods to the 1971 classic are everywhere. It just makes the unfortunate error of being forgettable.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

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(Photos provided).



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Final Days

William Ladra Sr. provided these photos of the final demolition at the former LaPorte Hospital site.



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“Abstraction + Love”

“A painting is not a picture of an experience; it is an experience.” Mark Rothko

When it comes to abstract art, Rothko nailed it, which is why such art can be so difficult to pin down, sometimes because *it* is an experience.

An individual looking at such work comes to it with his/her own set of expectations and history, and that impacts the experience. Like so many other aspects of our lives, we all have our opinions, prejudices, understandings and misunderstandings. For some viewers, however, abstract art crosses the line, and they may even consider it elitist, or something they just can’t understand or relate to. I like to think of this art form as more mystery, suggestion, psychological and intangible rather than recognizable places, people or things. It is an art form that challenges the viewer.

In the case of Lubeznik Center for the Arts’ “Abstraction + Love,” this three-gallery show brings a contemporary theme with a new twist to the story of abstract art. As stated on the wall-mounted posting, “*This exhibition provides a glimpse of where several, mostly Midwestern, contemporary artists have taken abstraction in the 21st century...*” As a movement, abstraction has been around since the 19th century, so being able to experience how it has evolved into the 21st century, especially as interpreted by Midwestern artists, is fascinating, insightful and sometimes humorous.



In the foreground, Claire Ashley’s “Clown XI (Twinsies),” and Bernard Williams’ acrylic on canvas, “Scream,” in the background.

Located within LCA’s Hyndman, Brinka/Cross and Susan Block galleries, the mix of works and range of media is fascinating. Participating artists include Claire Ashley, Helen Frankenthaler, Sarah Krepp, Robert Motherwell, Sandra Perlow, Julie Richman, Roland Santana, Edwin P. Shelton, Selina Trepp, Rhonda Wheatley, Bernard Williams and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung.

Frankenthaler and Motherwell lend a nice touchstone as examples of earlier 20th century propo-

The Inquisitive Artist

Linda Weigel



“Black Mountains” by Robert Motherwell.

nents of the movement. They’re kind of like old friends visiting to see what’s up with the youngsters. Chicago-artist Williams already is well-known for his sculpture and mural works in the area. Shelton is a regional artist/educator well-immersed in the local art scene. I was not familiar with many of the others, but I’m glad I experienced their work. I have returned more than once to walk the galleries again, to perhaps shift my initial impressions a bit.

For many folks, including some of my own family, the term “abstraction” conjures up thoughts of something puzzling. Perhaps it is the non-realistic/non-representational aspect of the works. The great 20th century artist Arshile Gorky said, “*Abstraction allows man to see with his mind what he cannot physically see with his eyes...*”

I often think of this style as art that does not reference anything in my visual reality, but rather communicates some aesthetic, emotional, internal or intangible purpose. And, of course, abstract art like those before it involved branching out into other iterations, such as abstract expressionism, color field painting, suprematism, neoplasticism and hard-edge painting.

While still in high school, I saw my first abstract piece at The Art Institute of Chicago. I believe it was a piece by Motherwell. Initially I didn’t understand it. It looked so effortless, not something I had come to expect as being “art.” Motherwell once stated, “*One of the most striking of abstract art’s appear-*



"Sensations" by Roland Santana: acrylic, enamel, insulation foam, compound and silicone on wood.



"The Initial Painting" (2012), oil spray paint on canvas by Molly Zuckerman-Hartung.

remind me of magnified amorphous creatures. As for the artist's intent, she relates these works as being in "two states – both as flaccid skin and taut volume – metaphors for our bodily processes..."

Santana's three wall works made me want to look closer, to note the surface quality: tactile and sometimes heavily textural paint. Two of his wall-mounted works take on freeform bold shapes. Although not the first to use shaped forms (see Frank Stella, Elizabeth Murray, Lee Bontecou) or canvases, his interpretation is a

ances is her nakedness, an art stripped bare." That certainly makes sense when looking at his work. Happily, there is an example of Motherwell's work in the LCA show. "Black Mountains" is an aquatint and etching print with strong black gestural lines set against a red background. It's a work that appears quickly executed and spontaneous. Read the accompanying signage to learn more.

The range and materials used for works in this exhibit are interesting, from Ashley's inflatable sculptures comprised of ripstop nylon or other materials to Krepp's assemblages utilizing bits and pieces of tires embedded on stretched linen. The material choices, alone, are intriguing.

The Hyndman Gallery includes the bulk of the show. Ashley's inflatables are huge and dominate the space. On her website, she states, "I work with inflatable sculpture as the surface for painting to live and breathe, becoming a tattooed skin of sorts on a kind of hybrid body..." The forms are definitely organic, rounded, bulbous and unusual. They


kind of updated version, especially concerning the structural materials. His use of non-traditional art stock (insulation foam, compound, silicone and/or plaster) enhances the forms and shapes. Interestingly, he is aware of environmental concerns over his use of these materials and mitigates that by using those found in alleys or recycled from his studio.

Williams has two large acrylic and unstretched canvas paintings in the exhibit. Boldly dynamic and patterned, they present as boldly pieced collages representing his interest in "diverse cultural forms, signs, symbols and patterns..." The size of the works encourages one to step back, to take in the entire energetic scene.

Williams is not unfamiliar to this region. (See "The Art of the Inevitable" in the May 19, 2022, *Beacher*). His talent takes on many forms, including sculpture, murals and paintings. His two paintings help dominate the space for their size, color and geometric dynamism, offering a counterbalance and contrast to Ashley's huge, softer, organic inflatables.

When I first viewed Krepp's two large wall-

Continued on Page 18





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“Abstraction + Love” Continued from Page 17

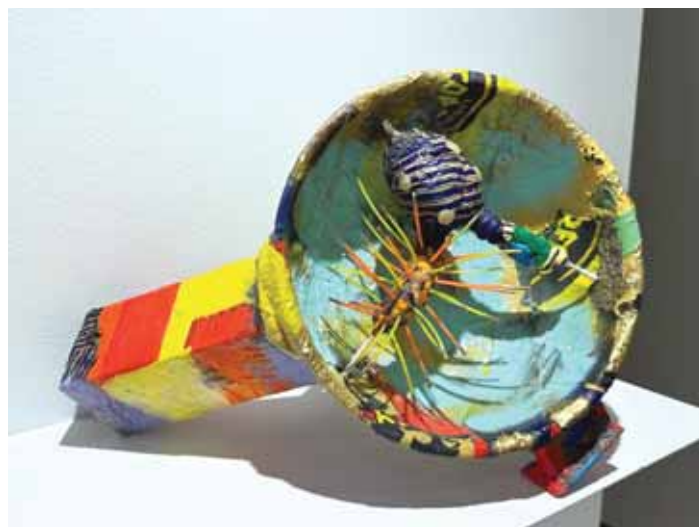
mounted works, I thought they were some form of ink or black paint on canvas. Instead, what I discovered were curls and bits of old tires screwed onto the background. Part of her “BLOW-OUT” series, these works fool the eye until one gets close enough to recognize the dimensional quality of the attached pieces. Interesting and surprising while creating movement and repetition across the surface, these assemblages play tricks with the eye, initially blurring *“the boundaries between painting, sculpture and drawing, ultimately confusing two-dimensional and three-dimensional space.”* My initial response was of the “isn’t that interesting” variety; however, it soon became one of metaphorical discomfort over what those shreds possibly represented culturally, especially considering the current state of world affairs. For me, it is another example of what may appear to be simple, yet isn’t. Underneath the seemingly calm surface, there is more. Much more.

Three more two-dimensional artists in the Hyndman offer a range of approaches and media. Richman and Zuckerman-Hartung present oil or oil spray paint on canvas, while Perlow offers acrylic marker on paper.

Richman’s “Organic Geometry XIV – Mountain”



“5603261,” an acrylic on unstretched canvas by Bernard Williams.



Edwin P. Shelton’s mixed-media piece, “Non-Duality Galaxy” (2023).

is an oil on canvas executed in primarily cool colors, with a balance between organic and geometric shapes organized in a kind of visual topography. It’s as if I am above ground looking down at structures, landscape and rivers. It reminds me somewhat of an abstracted aerial version of a Richard Diebenkorn painting.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung’s “The Initial Painting” is an oil spray paint on canvas. There is a bit of the post-cubist feeling to it. Colorful, the work feels compact, yet constrained as the varying shapes push and pull against each other. The color balance, and how she uses color to create dynamic design, caught me in my initial viewing, and continued to do so the more I looked at it. Zuckerman-Hartung likes to draw on multiple cultural references for her large abstract works.

In contrast, Perlow’s “Small Bursts” uses acrylic markers on paper. The work presents a primarily cool-colored painting with organized shapes placed one atop another, creating a sense of centered balance and limited space. Perlow is inspired by the walks she takes, and the resulting sketches, as well as her interests in architecture and landscape and this work, are reflective of those interests.

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find recent works by Michigan City artist Edwin P. Shelton (See “The Evolution of a Sculptor/Educator” in the Sept. 2, 2021, *Beacher*). His standing center piece “Non-Duality Antenna” is composed of welded aluminum stock, fabric, glue, paint, upholstery thread, faux fur, fake gems, paper mâché, glitter and discarded objects. To say his work is comprised of multiple sourced media is an understatement. Shelton transforms found, discarded objects into colorful forms, evoking a whimsical take on art in three-dimensional forms.

Opposite Shelton’s work are Wheatley’s exquisite, lyrical, collage-based paintings. Her use of vellum cutouts merges seamlessly while overlaying the painted backgrounds. These are captivating abstract pieces, fascinating to dissect and contemplate. Wheatley states on her website: “*My work is grounded in the speculative, metaphysical, and spiritual, and through it I explore healing, consciousness expansion, and transformation.*” Clearly, such



“Untitled 7,” Rhonda Wheatley’s acrylic and collage with hand-cut vellum on canvas.

concerns are present in these fine works, leaving the viewer with a sense of wonderment and peaceful contemplation.

In the Susan Block Gallery, you encounter a new installation by Selina Trepp. She has created her own seating for gallery attendees. The animation, itself, is quirky, humorous and a form of stop action. Does it make any clear sense? No, of course not, but that doesn’t limit its appeal. Take a seat and enjoy her film.

Indeed, this interesting exhibit is not what I expected based on the title. When I asked LCA Director Janet Bloch about the “+ Love” portion, she said it “refers to the humor and joy these artists bring to abstraction. This genre of art began

as a more serious, psychological and philosophical endeavor that appealed to the avant garde. In the hands of artists working in the 21st century, the art form has become accessible, quirky, exuberant and playful.”

Quirky and playful certainly are expressed in multiple versions throughout the exhibit.

Make this your opportunity to discover something new and exciting. Take the family. Check out how youngsters react, then have a family discussion. The exhibit closes Feb. 10, 2024, so there is still time to see it and put your own spin on the experience. Kandinsky said, “*Form itself, even if completely abstract...has its own inner sound.*”

Discover your inner sound, your insights. Don’t wait.



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All photos by Bob Wellinski







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Happy Holidays



The Beacher staff wishes you and yours a holiday season filled with joy, peace and love, and a New Year that promises more.

A special thanks to our advertisers. We couldn't do what we do without you. And, of course, to you, our dear and faithful readers, thanks and see you next year!

The Beacher will take a two-week holiday and return Jan. 11.

Dear Santa Claus

Dear Santa,

My name is Nina. How are you doing today? I am doing well. Thank you for all the presents last year. I had fun with them. This year I am going to make some chocolate chip cookies and milk. Oh, and by the way my cat Wallace drank some milk that we left out for you last year. I am so sorry. I have been good this year. Can I have a baby toy for my baby sister who was just born Monday!!! For me, may I have a Baby Alive doll -a girl please.

Love, Nina

Dear Santa,

How are you? I'm great! Can I have a hover board? I have been doing my homework and chores so can I have a hover board. I will leave cookies and milk and we will leave carrots for the reindeer.

Love, Vasili

Dear Santa,

How are you? How have you been? I'm great! Hi. I would really like a blow horn. I've been good. Can I have a Guinea pig? I've been doing my chores. Can I have a iPhone 15? I've been doing my homework. Can I have a candy machine? I have good grades. I would like a drone. I have been good at home.

Love, Eva

Dear Mr. Santa,

I've been super great at school. I have good grades and I love my life! I'm doing my homework and I would really love a kid sewing kit and a cute fox stuffy please. Thank you so much. Oh, and I will leave some cookies and milk for you. Goodbye Santa.

Love, Mena

Dear Santa,

How are you doing? I'm great! Are you doing a great job? I really want to see you! I would really like a pair of gloves and a hat, because I was doing my homework. And I was so good! I really would like a candy cane, because I was doing my chores. And I will really like 3 animals! On Christmas Day I will give you cookies and milk!

Love, Zoe

Dear Santa,

How are you Santa? I'm great! I love all the toys you brought me last year. You are so awesome! I love you

so much! Can I please stay up late to see you on Christmas Eve?

Can I please have a Nintendo Switch? I'll give you my best sugar cookie that I'll make! I also promise I will share with my brothers and my sister, Noreen, if she wants to. Can I also please have a Lego set for Christmas? I'll let my sister and my brother, Walter, help me build it if they want to. I will also listen to my mom. Can I also please have some books? I've been getting good grades and turning in my homework. Finally, can I have a bracelet kit? I have not been as annoying as last year. Thank you Santa! I love you!

Love, Bernadette!

P.S. What's your favorite cookie?

Dear Santa,

Hi, hello!!! How old are you? I am doing great. And your beard looks like a snowball in a good way. Now for my question. What am I getting for Christmas? I'll tell you what I want for Christmas. A real live hamster. I've been good and getting good grade and I do chores. Pretty please, I am begging you. Also, I want a vacation to California. If you can leave the tickets to California on the Christmas tree, and five tickets for free. I will leave you all the cookies and milk you desire. And the last is I want is a house, my very own personal house, and a car that comes with it. Again, make it personal. Thank you.

Love Vivien

Dear Santa,

How are you? I'm great! Can I have a big monster truck for my cousin? He's a little crazy but I'm ok with it. I'm being good! Can I have a drone?? I'm being good in school! Can I have a meal for the poor to give them?

Love, Ady

Dear Santa,

How are you?

You are the best Santa in the whole entire world! How are the elves doing?

Here's some things I want for Christmas! Something I really want is some Legos and Nike tennis shoes. I wear a size one. One more thing I want for Christmas is a bead kit with stickers. That's all I want for Christmas.

Love, Emmalyn

Dear Santa,

How are you doing, Santa? How are the reindeer? I am working hard at school. Can I have on Ohio junior jersey? I would like a treehouse to play in and an I phone15. I have been nice and have been doing good. I do my homework and help my mom do chores.

Love, Nico

Hi Santa,

How's it going with Mrs. Claus? It is going good with me. I have been good. Can I have some toys please?

Your friend, Michael

Dear Santa,

How are you? I miss you so much. I've been so good this year. My room is so clean. I would love a VR headset, VR games, Xbox games, Lego sets, a tablet, sports stuff and games. I will be thankful for anything.

Love, Brogan

Dear Santa.

I've been good this year and I was hoping I would get some presents for Christmas. but maybe you could pick out the presents this year instead of me telling you on my list. If you can handle it, that would be great. But I think you can do it for Christmas

Love, Hero

Dear Santa,

How are you? Are you real? I have been good in school. Can I have a PS 5 Spiderman video game, a PS5 Harry Potter video game, and an I phone 15?

Love, Oliver

Hi Santa!

How are you feeling? I really want to see you one day. I will make you milk and chocolate chip cookies when I see you. I have started on a special treat for your reindeer! I can't wait to see you soon! I would really like to have a puppy for Christmas. My parents say it's a lot of work. I promise I will take good care of it. Thank you, Santa! See you real soon!

Love, Aubrey

Dear Santa,

I have been good in school this year. I would like a Lego City, electric guitar and a VR head set. How are you doing Santa? Tell the elves I said hi!

Love, Carter

A Visit From St. Nicholas

by Clement C. Moore



*T*was the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

*T*he children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced through their heads;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.

*A*way to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

*T*he moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below;
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick..

*M*ore rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer! and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!

*A*s dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleighful of toys, and St. Nicholas too.

*A*nd then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

*H*e was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot:
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

*H*is eyes, how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath.

*H*e had a broad face, and a little round belly
that shook, when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly.

*H*e was chubby and plump - a right jolly old elf -
And I laughed, when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye, and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

*H*e spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

*H*e sprang to his sleigh, to the team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle,
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Dear Santa Claus

A beloved tradition returns to The Beacher with letters to Santa Claus from Notre Dame Elementary School second-graders, presented to you just as the children wrote them. Thanks to second-grade teacher Sara Conn for helping us out. Enjoy!



Dear Santa,

I've been good all this week at school. May I have a bike for Christmas? Can I also have a sketchbook? Thank you if you get me it.

Love, Nora

Dear Santa,

How are you doing? Doing good? I'm doing good in school.

Can I please have an Elf on the Shelf for Christmas? I just need a note for his food and water. Can I have a dart gun for Christmas? I will put them in the safest place in my house. I will take super great care of them.

Love, Elliott

Hi Santa,

My name is Ella. I really like you sooooo much! How is your day? Because my day is good!

I really want a small electric piano because I will always take care of it! I also want a toy unicorn and a toy dog. I will always take good care of it, and the toy unicorn and the toy dog. I'm getting good grades at school. I'm doing my chores when my Mom is sleeping. I'm listening to my teacher when she is talking. Merry Christmas, Santa!

Love, Ella

Dear Santa Claus,

Am I your favorite kid? How's Rudolph doing? Can I get the Daily Bu-

gle Lego set, please? I will give you Christmas sugar cookies. Next, I want one of the best rated Lego set's. I will give you all the cookies you desire, Next, can I get Crash Bandicoot 5 video game, please? I will feed the poor.

Love, Caleb

Dear Santa.

How are you? I'm great! Are you doing a good job? How old are you? I really want to see you!

I would love a super Mario Sunshine game for Christmas. I've been doing my homework! I would really love Star Wars Lego set to! I promise to leave you milk and cookies!

Love, Liam

Dear Santa

I've been doing my homework and chores. I've been listening.

Please can I get an iPad for me? Can I get a cute dress for my mommy and a cute shirt for my daddy? Can I get a Boonicorn toy for my sister and me? Can I get a cute dress for my grandma to and a cute shirt for my grandpa?

Love, Ella

Dear Santa,

How are you doing, Santa? I am doing good. Do you like your job?

I want \$10,000 to donate to the Children Hospital. I have been working good in school. I also want a toy

machine too. I have been doing my homework good for my mom.

My last thing I want is a drone with a camera on the controller, please. I have been helpful at home!

Love, Zoey

Dear Santa,

How are you? I'm great. How old are you? How is Clarice? I have Clarice and Rudolph in my backyard! Can I please have a present for my grandma? And can I please have a reindeer? I've done my homework, and I have good grades. Can I please have a VR system? And Santa, you are the best in the world! Can I please have chalk for my hands on my gymnastic bars? I will leave you lots of cookies and some carrots for the reindeer! I can't wait for Christmas!

Love, Everleigh

Dear Santa,

How is your day? Are You real? Can I have a robot, please? I want a good hoverboard, please. I left cookies for you!

Your friend, John Paul

Dear Santa,

I am trying my hardest in school, but can I have an iPhone 15? But move that aside you are the best Santa in the world (and only) :) But you also have the best beard in the world.

Your friend, Eleanor

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“Leave the World Behind” Takes Strange, Tense Journey into Chaos

by Andrew Tallackson



Mahershala Ali (from left), Myha'la, Julia Roberts and Ethan Hawke play individuals who find themselves in the same home as an apocalypse begins in “Leave the World Behind.”

I’m not sure the point of “Leave the World Behind,” the deeper meaning behind it.

When Roland Emmerich stages an apocalypse (“The Day After Tomorrow,” “2012”), his intentions are clear: blow up everything in sight, and at ear-shattering decibels.

But “Leave the World Behind,” the new Netflix film based on Rumaan Alam’s 2020 novel, aims higher. You don’t spend nearly 2 hours and 20 minutes, and with the cream of the A-list acting crop, just to whip up cheap thrills. There is a message...I think.

So how do you review a movie like this? I suppose strictly on surface value. As an end-times tale, “Leave the World Behind” is ominous, strange, tense, well-acted and extremely well-directed. The wow factor of some the visuals comes courtesy of writer-director-producer Sam Esmail, who cut his teeth on edgy TV (“Mr. Robot,” Prime’s paranoia thriller “Homecoming”). He’s a born storyteller.

In the film, we meet Amanda and Clay Sanford (Julia Roberts and Ethan Hawke) right before chaos erupts. She’s a misanthrope, having long lost faith in humanity. That’s why, on impulse, she arranges a weekend getaway to a posh rental home in Long Island. Their children, Archie (Charlie Evans) and Rose (Farrah Mackenzie), are game for the trip, although Rose, who is binge-watching “Friends,” is disgusted she can’t stream the last episode. The im-



“Leave the World Behind”

Running time: 138 minutes. Netflix. Rated R for language, some sexual content, drug use and brief bloody images.

ages freeze on her iPad.

Once in Long Island, the family heads to the beach, and it is here Esmail stages one whopper of a visual. An oil tanker, seen at distance, inches closer to shore. The editing is extremely effective. With each passing moment, Rose realizes the tanker is not altering course. It’s headed directly for them. Once everyone on the beach catches on, it is too late. The special effects used to create the tanker landing on the shore — families fleeing in fear — is terrifyingly realistic. Breathless in execution.

Then, cell phone and Internet service go down. Later that night, a stranger turns up at the house. G.H. Scott (Mahershala Ali) and his snarky daughter, Ruth (Myha’la), introduce themselves, announcing the house belongs to them, that they’ve returned from the city because of a mass blackout. They don’t ask the family to leave, but announce their intention to stay with them.

What’s going on? There are hints of a carefully orchestrated cyberattack. That the perpetrators are of Middle Eastern descent. Of all the individuals confined to that Long Island home, Ali creates the most

complex and satisfying of the lot. Mysterious, as if knowing more than he's revealing. Then, bit by bit, introducing a man of deep intellect and integrity.

"Leave the World Behind" may be using these characters, confined to a single location, to comment on how society would behave in such a scenario. Esmail, whose gets a bit showy with his camera, dangles like a carrot the issue of race. Ruth sees the family's distrust of her and her father as white against black. Thing is, Amanda and Clay are on edge for other reasons. Roberts, who worked with Esmail on "Homecoming," dares to make Amanda unlikable. A living, breathing spewer of bile. Hawke plays Clay as a man whose touchy-feely demeanor has a way of driving Amanda nuts.

Do you like these two? You're on the fence. You find yourself more drawn to Ali's commanding presence, as well as the big moments where the characters realize society is collapsing. Deer turn up in their yard. Piercing sounds stop them in their tracks. And, there is special-effects triumph No. 2: Ali fleeing the beach as a plane crashes just feet away from him.

The sense of foreboding is dynamite. By the end, however, the movie seems like it wants to say something. Something pertinent about us as a people. Maybe it's that all terrorists have to do these days is plant the seed of terror, then let human beings destroy themselves all on their own. That, in and of itself, is a profound observation, but the final scene plays like a comic punch line in the spirit of "Don't



The moment an oil tanker crashes into the shoreline is a wow of a visual.

Look Up," the message being, when the you-know-what hits the fan, it's best to ignore it.

Is that the message? Greater minds may speak of it. For me, well, uh...



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Springing into '24

Two things we definitely will do in the spring/summer of 2024:

1. Ride the South Shore from Michigan City to Chicago and back.
2. Ride our bicycles on the Kal-Haven Trail from South Haven to Bloomingdale and back.

The former, of course, involves the great states of Indiana and Illinois, the latter located entirely in the Great Lakes State of Michigan.

Our '24 resolutions are entirely based on the vagaries of construction. Maybe our plans will be delayed until summer 2024. So be it. But we do plan to get back aboard our favorite railroad in the leaping Leap Year of 2024, and to ride the western half of the magnificent rails-to-trails linear park we know as the Kal-Haven Trail.

No surprise about the South Shore in 2023, as the South Shore Line was great about posting regular updates on the progress of its ambitious double-track project between Michigan City and Gary. Lately, it has promised a final completion in spring 2024, complete with additional trains and faster running times.

Sounds great, right?

Sure does, and I for one can't wait to get back into "training" on the South Shore. Especially because I never did get up the nerve to do the South Shore's "bus-to-train" travel option this year. Friends assured me it was "easy-peasy," and that I should definitely give it a go, but I never did.

When I did train into Chicago during the double-track project, I took Amtrak from New Buffalo, Mich. That was a breeze, although it was more expensive, and I did arrive in Chicago at Union Station — a far cry from all the action on Michigan Avenue. Climb out of the South Shore's Millennium Station, and you're right there on "Avenue M." Chicago Cultural Center is right there at Randolph and Michigan, and down the Ave. — Millennium Park, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and all the rest.

Emerge from Union Station on Adams or Jackson, on the other hand, and you can go for a swim in the south branch of the Chicago River.

Life With Charley

Charles McKelvy



A rush-hour South Shore train stops to collect passengers at Van Buren Street.

At least Amtrak runs nonstop from New Buffalo to Chicago, and it does give you a colorful tour of some really old steel mills. That was worth the extra fare, especially since I was often joined on the train by my friend from East Lansing, Mich., Rick Lewandowski. He worked his way through college with summer jobs in the mills of Detroit. The man knows steelmaking; he was a great guide as we glided through Gary and points west. Plus, he can walk like nobody else, so no worries with an arrival west of the Loop. Rick and those long legs of his led me on a long walk west to a way-cool, old Italian deli on Randolph Street, in the old market, which is now a way-cool-hip-dude eatery zone, complete with outdoor seating in always-sunny-and-warm Chicago.

So, Amtrak was good to me in 2023, but I do look forward to getting on board the new and improved South Shore in spring 2024. That would be a great leap in the Leap Year, right?

You bet. And I'll be ready to take that leap whenever the South Shore is ready for us.

Just as I will *really* be ready to ride the Kal-Haven from the trailhead in South Haven at least as far east as Bloomingdale. We were all set to do exactly that on a perfect-page summer day in 2023 when we arrived in the parking lot just as a truck with a load of gravel was getting ready to unload.

"Uh oh," we said. "Not a good sign." Then we saw the red sign clearly stating the "trail (was) closed until further notice."

Had we but checked before hauling our bikes up to South Haven, we would have known the western half of the trail was undergoing a long overdue overhaul, and would not reopen until — you guessed it — spring of 2024.

We had only ourselves to blame for not doing due diligence on the state of the trail, but that's how we roll. We're a pair of laid-back 70-somethings, and we don't do the smart-phone-text-text-text thing like so many of our contemporaries do. And sometimes, we pay the price; we certainly did that day.

We were both upset, but none more than Yours Truly because he had built his life around a ride on the Kal-Haven that day. But then I was really mad at myself for not checking out the trail before driving all the way up to South Haven, albeit on the stunningly beautiful Blue Star Highway. We reckoned the trail would be open from Grand Junction, Mich., to points east, but, no, the same barriers with those red signs greeted us there. Darn!

We went with Plan B and motored over to Van Buren State Park and launched northward on the Van Buren Trail. I had been bugging Natalie for some time about riding it from the state park to South Haven, round trip. Well, that was Plan B and, as most Plan Bs go, it wasn't all biscuits with gravy. But, it was a ride of a good 10 miles or more, and we did get to take a break along the bluff in South Haven and contemplate the picturesque lighthouse, beach and always great lake of Michigan. Happy time in the sun and surf. What's not to like, especially when you're on a bike? Natalie didn't like the sum total of it as much as I did, and we both longed for a real ride on the Kal-Haven. But not before we got home and checked out the Kal-Haven website on our massive and usually reliable desktop computer.

In no time flat, we learned the "closing until further notice" was due to the Michigan Department of



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is replacing the Donald F. Nichols Covered Bridge over the Black River on the Kal-Haven Trail.

Natural Resources' multi-million-dollar revitalization of the trail's western section, the section most convenient to us. In other words, those construction guys we saw in South Haven that ill-fated day were there to help resurface some 15 miles of a 33-mile trail that hadn't been resurfaced since it opened in the late 1980s. According to the site, work was supposed to be completed in early 2024. We took that to mean we'd be riding the western section in the warmer days of late spring.

That would work for us, but what would not work for us is the DNR's plan to replace the picturesque Donald F. Nichols Covered Bridge over the Black River with a sturdy, uncovered span.

But we will ride the western section regardless. Maybe somebody will come up with funds necessary to build a new covered bridge...and maybe not.

We would certainly be happy to have our crossing of the Black River covered in spring 2024, but we'll just be glad to have our complete trail back. More from me then.

Meanwhile, happy rails and trails.

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JROTC Supports MCAS, Community

Michigan City High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps participated in many civic events to support Michigan City Area Schools and the community.

Among those activities were supporting The Salvation Army with food donations, helping the Deserving Children's Shopping Tour and assisting with setup and cleanup of the "One City, One Sound" concert. Cadets also led the Michigan City Festival of Lights Parade, along with providing color guards for the LaPorte County Veterans Court graduation and MCHS home boys basketball games.



Cadets help off-load donations at The Salvation Army.

The JROTC supported the MCAS food drive Dec. 16, and was set to assist with Salvation Army food distribution Dec. 21.

The military drill team will prepare over Christmas break for the Jan. 27 sectional championship at Indianapolis Ben Davis High School. If winning that meet, they will travel to the Washington, D.C., area to compete in the national championship in April.



Faculty Advisor Ralph Gee advises the team as it prepares to compete.

Cadets will continue to support MCHS athletics. They also will do presentations at Barker and Krueger middle schools to familiarize eighth-graders with JROTC prior to scheduling freshman-year courses.

On Dec. 7, cadets participated in Cyber Patriot, the national high school cyber-security competition, defending against a mock cyber attack.

Besides the technical skills of manipulating the virtual imagery, cadets also exercise decisiveness and judgment regarding making choices in a stressful situation.

The event was the state qualifying round. Results were to be announced after *The Beacher* went to press with this week's edition.

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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:

- **Mario Kart in Real Life (ages 9-17) from 4-6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21.** Winners receive prizes. No registration is needed.
- **Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays in 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 December.** Create with LEGO WeDo, Micro:bits, paper circuits, Ozo-

bots 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.
- **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.
- **Holiday closings.** The library closes at noon Friday, Dec. 22. It also closes Sunday-Monday, Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

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

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Indiana Dunes National Park

- **Winter Solstice Hike from 3-5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21, at Kemil Beach.** Join rangers for a hike starting at the Kemil Beach parking lot. Afterward, participants gather around a campfire. The parking lot is one mile north of U.S. 12 on East State Park Road (County Road 300 East).
- **Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 23.** Families, amateur birders and scientists can use binoculars, bird guides and checklists to help count bird populations. National park areas included are Miller Woods, West Beach, Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk and Tolleston Dunes. Cities include portions of Gary, Hobart, Portage, Lake Station, Burns Harbor, Ogden Dunes and Merrillville. Participants must register with ranger Christine Gerlach at (219) 395-1885 or christine_gerlach@nps.gov. For the exact count circle area, visit <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.
- **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.
- **National Park Themed Movie from 2-3:30 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays through February at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** Movies will change each weekend and last between an hour to 90 minutes.
- **Drop-In Volunteer Program (Trash Trekkers) from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily 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.



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To streamline and modernize the CUA program, an online system is available and includes a standard non-refundable \$350 fee per application.

Visit tinyurl.com/29ue9y88 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 programs will be offered:

- **Holiday Critter Dinner at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 23.** Meet at the Nature Center as reptiles and amphibians eat live meals.
- **Creature Feature at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday-Friday, Dec. 26-29.** Meet naturalists who will introduce live Indiana Dunes animals.
- **Turtle Shell-abration at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 30.** Meet native turtles and learn about their adaptations.
- **Holiday Photo Scavenger Hunt from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 31.** Take a camera or phone to the Nature Center for the game that includes a list and prizes.
- **Annual First Day Hike at 10 a.m. Monday, Jan. 1.** The route is a two-mile moderate loop along Trail 7 to Lake Michigan, along the beach and back via the campground. A campfire with treats closes the experience.
- **"Feed the Birds B-I-N-G-O" at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday-Friday, Jan. 2-5.** Join a naturalist at the Nature Center to help fill bird feeders and play the game.
- **National Bird Day Hike at 11 a.m. Friday, Jan. 5.** Join a naturalist for a hike seeking winter birds and wildlife.

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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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:

- **Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Fridays, Dec. 22 and 29 and Jan. 5, at the main library.** Children ages 3-5 with their caregivers experience stories, songs, crafts and activities.
- **Readers Corner-Book Club from 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 26, at the Coolspring Branch Meeting Room.** The focus is Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*.
- **Holiday Tech Table from noon-5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 28, at the main library study cafe.** Stop by anytime for help with everything from new tech to email or apps.
- **Creative Kids (ages 6-11) from 4-5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 3, in the main library multipurpose room.** Activities center on creating something new.
- **Super Mario Bros. Trivia Night from 3-4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6, at the Coolspring Branch meeting room.** Prizes and snacks are planned for the family program.
- **Page Turners Book Club from noon-1 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9, in the main library Meeting Room B.** The focus is Michelle Richardson's *The Book Woman's Daughter*.
- **Virtual Author Talk with Rebecca Serle from 7-8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10.** Serle is a *New York Times* bestselling author. Register through the website.
- **Holiday closings.** The library will be closed Saturday, Dec. 23, Monday, Dec. 25, and Monday, Jan. 1.



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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First Friday Open Mic

Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St., will present its annual First Friday Open Mic Night from 5-8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 5.

Hosted by emcee Tim Rounds, the event is open to musicians, poets, stand-up comics and spoken-word artists. Register at www.LubeznikCenter.org/Events, click on "Open Mic Night," then click on "Sign Up To Perform!" Spots are limited.

Admission is free, and free light refreshments and a cash bar round out the night.

Attendees can view "Abstraction + Love," LCA's current exhibit (see Linda Weigel's review in this edition), as well as the Social and Learning Institute-Paladin exhibit "Creative Communities" in the NIPSCO Art Education Studios. Continuing through Jan. 26. The popular exhibit features work by artists with cognitive disabilities in classes LCA provides. Support comes from Duneland Health Council Inc. and Horizon Cares.

Contact LCA Marketing Coordinator Jessie Sexton at (219) 874-4900 or jsexton@lubeznikcenter.org for more details.



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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American Red Cross

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

- Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St., 12:30-4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 26.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 220 Crescent Drive, LaPorte, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 30.
- St. John's United Church of Christ, 101 St. John Road, noon-6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 2.
- First Church of God, 2020 E. Lincolnway, LaPorte, noon-6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 8.
- Purdue University Northwest, Library Student Faculty Building Room 144, 1401 S. U.S. 421, Westville, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9.

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.

New Buffalo Township Library

- "Letters to Santa." Children can write to Santa for a reply by sending letters to: Santa, 33 N. Thompson St., New Buffalo, MI 49117.
- **Holiday closings.** The library is closed Dec. 24-26.

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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Call For Artists

Jan. 11 is the deadline to submit entries in the Miniatures 2024 "Give a Little Love" fundraiser to support Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich.

All miniatures are considered a donation to the Box Factory and will be sold for \$30.

Artwork must be a finished size of 4" x 6" exactly, vertical or horizontal, and be on heavy stock paper, rigid backing, photo paper or other hangable material. Frames are not necessary. All media (2-D and 3-D) are welcome, including paint, pencil, ceramic, textile, glass and wood; however, heavy pieces must include a secure hanging device.

Submissions can be dropped off between noon-3 p.m. EST Thursday-Sunday (winter hours). Mail-in submissions are accepted. Artists and the public are invited to an opening reception from 5:30-7 p.m. EST Friday, Jan. 19. Works remain on exhibit and available for purchase through Feb. 25, 2024.

Visit www.boxfactoryforthearts.org/gallery24 and scroll down to Rules for Submitting Miniatures for more details.

South Shore Line Special

South Shore Line has expanded its Kids Ride Free program to all trains and train times Tuesday, Dec. 26, through Friday, Jan. 5.

This applies to up to three children 13 and younger when accompanied by a parent or guardian. Quiet car remains in effect on the last car of rush hour trains during this time.

Temporary busing to stations between Gary and Dune Park remains in effect.

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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.

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The Christmas Joy Ride by Melody Carlson
(hardcover, eBook or audiobook; various prices online. 168 pages.)

Miranda is broke, jobless, with a pending foreclosure on her house. Her marriage lasted barely two years when her husband took off for greener pastures. Happy Holidays, Miranda!

Lucky for her, she lives next door to Joy, the 85, soon to be 86 widow (on Christmas Day, no less). Joy has made plans that will need a second pair of hands to help her. Miranda is the perfect candidate.

Joy has her own blog called “Christmas Joy,” giving advice about decorating, seasonal food and everything Christmas. Miranda helped her with getting the blog online, entering photos and filming her episodes.

Joy has a fairly large following, deciding her plans for the holiday will be a great addition to her usual program. And who knows, this might be the last episode.

Joy has been trying to persuade Miranda to accompany her on a cross-country trip from their homes in Chicago to Phoenix, where Joy will move into an assisted living unit to be close to her two sons, Rick and Rob. Problem is, her sons think she is coming on a plane — not by an old motorhome.

Every Christmas season, most holiday books tell stories of recent widows or divorcees seeking solace in the Christmas season, and a chance to reinvent their lives by going to the lake, ocean, island, etc., to regain perspective on life. Along comes a mysterious stranger, and well, you know the rest. It’s the most common theme.

In this book, however, we have a story that defines the real meaning of the season with a different perspective. That’s why I chose it for the last review of 2023.

Joy is an elderly widow who still has a lot of living to do. She’s determined to do some good before settling into the assisted living facility. She’s obviously had a good life and wants to help deserving people have a holiday to remember. It’s easy to see that true altruism is guiding her actions. Since Miranda is only 37 and suffering through a bad couple of years, Joy’s offer of a free trip in her motorhome in exchange for helping with her “projects” makes Miranda realize she has no reason not to go along.

Joy runs a contest on her blog, asking for letters about someone truly deserving of smiles and help this Christmas. She picks out four letters that will

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



be on her designated route along U.S. 66.

Miranda is amazed at how organized Joy is — mapped-out instructions showing where they are going, boxes carefully marked with each family’s name, plenty of food to cut down on stopping at restaurants. There’s just no end to Joy’s ability to think ahead.

It tickled my funny bone to read of two women in a big motorhome, both driving and parking it, not to mention hooking up water and electricity for overnight stays in RV parks — it’s a nightmare for Miranda. There’s lots more to this story, however. I loved reading about the connection these two women make. They learn that friendship and good will can show up in the most unexpected places. And, let’s face it, will Joy make it? For all her enthusiasm, she’s still an octogenarian.

Their first stop is a small diner in Missouri. The owner, Delores, is having a hard time and may lose her only method of income. It’s a big success, and they leave happy and tired. Joy maybe a little more slowly. The second stop is a hair studio outside of Tulsa, Okla. Another decorating afternoon and more

surprises.

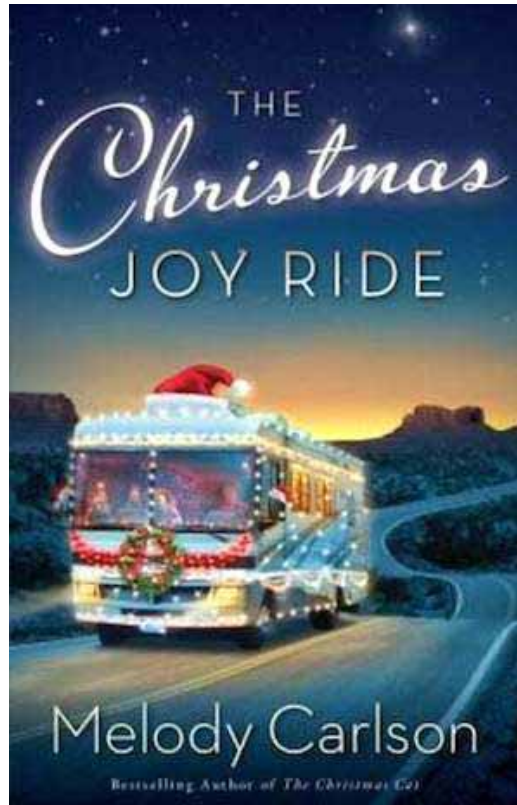
A foster home for children in Flagstaff, Ariz., proves to be the most depressing place, but perseverance and Joy’s unflagging enthusiasm provide more than the children expect.

The final stop is in Phoenix and the home of a little girl who lost her mother several years ago. Her father now refuses to observe Christmas, and Emily’s letter hits Joy’s heart hard.

The final word: Two women in a big, old motorhome — going cross country to help people they have never met, a week before Christmas, a possible snowstorm on the horizon — what could possibly go wrong?! But the real question is, what could possibly go right?

This is the best modern holiday story I have read in a long time. If this doesn’t jack up your holiday spirit, nothing can.

Till next time, happy reading and a glorious holiday season to all!





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In the Area

Dec. 21 — Mario Kart in Real Life (ages 9-17), 4-6 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Dec. 24 — CHRISTMAS EVE.

Dec. 25 — MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Dec. 26 — Readers Corner-Book Club, 6-7 p.m., Coolspring Library, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Dec. 26 — Holiday Tech Table, noon-5 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Dec. 31 — NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Jan. 1 — HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Jan. 3 — Creative Kids (ages 6-11), 4-5 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Jan. 5 — First Friday Open Mic Night, 5-8 p.m., Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Free admission. Performer signup: www.LubeznikCenter.org/Events. Info: jsexton@lubeznikcenter.org, (219) 874-4900.

Jan. 6 — Super Mario Bros. Trivia Night, 3-4 p.m., Coolspring Library, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Jan. 9 — Page Turners Book Club, noon-1 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Jan. 10 — Virtual Author Talk with Rebecca Serle, 7-8 p.m., through LaPorte County Public Library. Registration: www.laportelibrary.org

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. 21 — Winter Solstice Hike, 3-5 p.m., Kemil Beach (East State Park Road). Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Dec. 23 — Christmas Bird Count, through Indiana Dunes National Park. Registration: (219) 395-1885, christine_gerlach@nps.gov

Dec. 23 — Holiday Critter Dinner, 11 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 26-29 — Creature Feature, 10:30 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 30 — Turtle Shell-abration, 11 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 31 — Holiday Photo Scavenger Hunt, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Dec. 31 — Shemekia Copeland with Nathan Graham: A New Year's Eve Celebration, 9 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$60 + \$8 convenience fee, \$95 + \$8 convenience fee. Reservations: www.acornlive.org

Jan. 1 — Annual First Day Hike, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Jan. 2-5 — Feed the Birds B-I-N-G-O, 9:30 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Jan. 5 — National Bird Day Hike, 11 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

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.

Saturdays-Sundays in January-February — National Park Themed Movie, 2-3:30 p.m., Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

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. 22, 4 & 7 p.m. Dec. 23, 3 p.m. Dec. 24-25. *Also:* “It’s a Wonderful Life,” 7 p.m. Dec. 21. *Also:* “Casablanca,” 7 p.m. Dec. 28. *Also:* Kieran Conway Live @ The Vickers, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Dec. 31. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. All times Eastern. Theater address: 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickerstheatre.com, (269) 756-3522.

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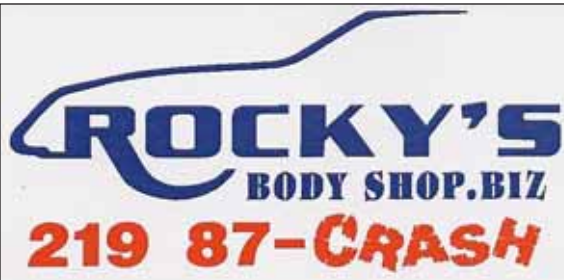
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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On December 21, 1620, the Pilgrims, who crossed the ocean on the Mayflower, first set foot on American soil at what is now Plymouth, Mass. “Forefathers Day,” observed mainly in New England, is in commemoration of this landing.

On December 21, 1898, Marie and Pierre Curie discovered the element radium.

On December 21, 1913, the Sunday supplement of *The New York World* contained the nation’s first crossword puzzle.

On December 21, 1914, the first feature-length silent film comedy, “Tilly’s Punctured Romance,” was released.

On December 21, 1937, Walt Disney’s animated cartoon, “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” which was based on a Grimm fairy tale, was shown in Los Angeles for the first time.

On December 22, 1864, during the Civil War, Union Gen. William Sherman sent a message to President Lincoln from Georgia, saying, “*I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah.*”

On December 22, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in Washington for a war-time conference with President Franklin Roosevelt.

On December 22, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge, U.S. Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe reportedly replied “*Nuts!*” when the Germans demanded the Americans surrender in the World War II conflict.

On December 22, 1963, 155 perished when the Greek liner Lakonia caught fire and sank in the Atlantic (north of Madeira).

On December 23, 1867, businesswoman and philanthropist Sarah Breedlove Walker, considered the first black female millionaire, was born near Delta, La.

On December 23, 1928, the National Broadcasting Co. established a permanent coast-to-coast radio hookup.

On December 23, 1947, John Bardeen, Walter H. Brattain and William Shockley, of Bell Laboratories, announced the invention of the transistor.

On December 23, 1997, a jury in Denver convicted Terry Nichols of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy for his role in the Oklahoma City bombing, declining to find him guilty of murder.

On December 24, 1814, the United States and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. However, word of the treaty failed to reach British forces before their attack on New Orleans the next day — an attack repulsed by

Americans.

On December 24, 1818, Germany's Franz Gruber of Oberndorf, Austria, composed the music for "Silent Night." The words were written by Josef Mohr, and it was sung for the first time on Christmas Day.

On December 24, 1851, in Washington, D.C., fire swept through the Library of Congress, destroying more than 35,000 priceless volumes.

On December 24, 1871, Verdi's spectacular opera "Aida" had its world premiere in Cairo, Egypt. The Khedive of Egypt commissioned the composer to write the opera, which was to be part of the festivities celebrating the opening of the Suez Canal.

On December 24, 1951, the first opera written for television, "Amahl and the Night Visitors" by Gian Carlo Menotti was performed on NBC.

On December 25, 336, the first recorded celebration of Christmas on Dec. 25 took place in Rome.

On December 25, 1223, St. Francis of Assisi assembled one of the first Nativity scenes in Greccio, Italy.

On December 25, 1776, Gen. George Washington's troops began crossing the Delaware River for a surprise attack against Hessian forces encamped at Trenton, N.J.

On December 25, 1865, Chicago's Union Stock Yards, the world's largest at the time, opened at Halsted and 39th streets.

On December 26, 1799, Col. Henry Lee eulogized the late George Washington as "*first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.*"

On December 26, 1931, an enthusiastic audience was on hand at New York's Music Box Theatre for the opening of George Gershwin's musical "Of Thee I Sing." Besides being a smash hit, this was the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize for drama.

On December 26, 1941, Winston Churchill became the first British prime minister to address a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress.

On December 27, 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a voyage to the Pacific aboard the HMS "Beagle." Darwin's discoveries during the trip helped form the basis of his theories on evolution.

On December 27, 1845, Chicago's first steam-powered press was set up in the office of *The Chicago Democrat*.

On December 27, 1904, "Peter Pan," the play about a boy who refused to grow up, opened in London.

On December 27, 1932, Radio City Music Hall opened in New York City.

On December 27, 1947, the children's television program "Howdy Doody" made its debut on NBC.

On December 27, 1970, "Hello, Dolly!" closed on Broadway after a run of 2,884 performances.

On December 27, 1985, American naturalist Dian Fossey, 53, who was studying African gorillas in the wild, was found hacked to death at a research station in Rwanda.

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TROTOM Leadership Change

Harold Russell has resigned from The Region of Three Oaks Museum board due to health considerations that kept him from attending meetings.

Russell, a retired attorney, has served on the board since 2004 and was instrumental in creating the museum. Earlier this year, Randy Miller, who had served as vice president, was appointed president after longtime president Chuck Sittig stepped aside to focus solely on his treasurer's responsibilities. Nick Bogert has assumed the vice president position. Bryan Volstorf joined the board last month.

Anyone interested in filling the board vacancy can email a resume and statement of interest to trotommuseum@gmail.com

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