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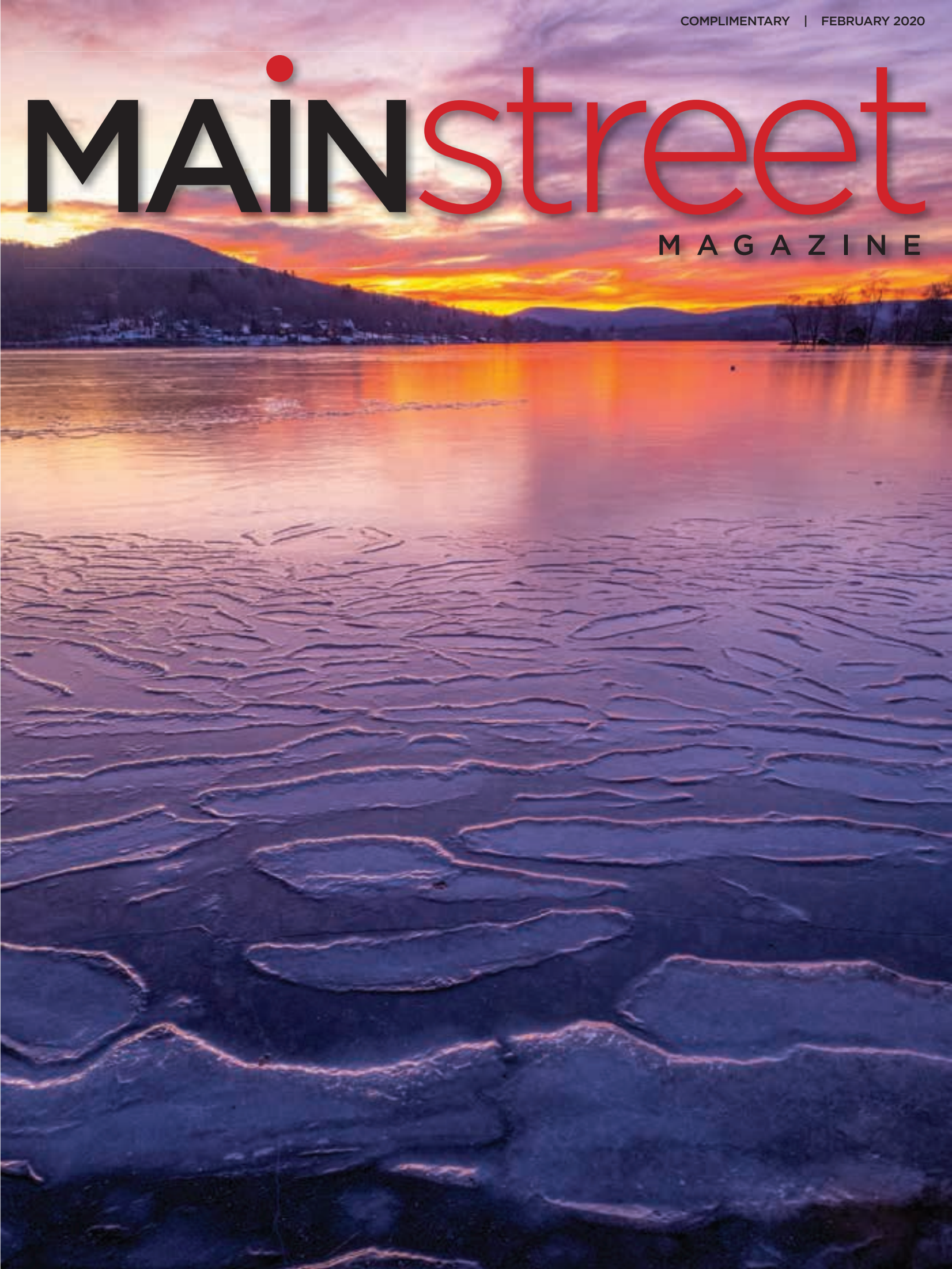

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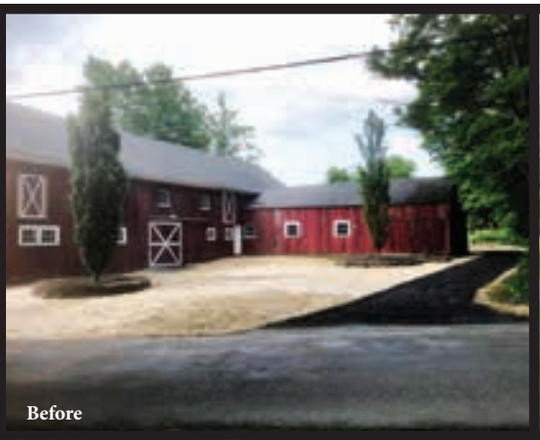
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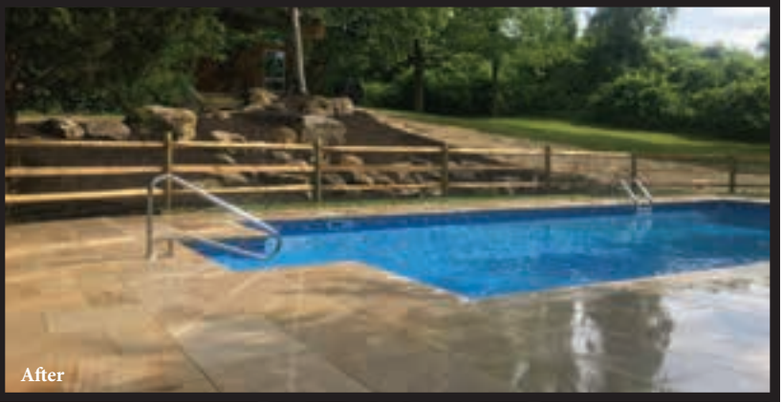
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FEBRUARY IS FOR LOVERS

A big shout-out to all of you lovebirds out there. February is, after all, the month for lovers … at least that's what the candy, flower, and card companies tell us. OK, OK, I'll skip the cynicism and give some love to February instead, because I do love getting beautiful roses to brighten things up and indulging in a chocolate sweet. Guilty as charged. February has always been a weird month for me though: it's the shortest one, the whole leap year thing makes it unique, it is the month of Valentine's Day and yet, a lot of us still don't like it. For all of the winter lovers out there, you probably love it because you still get to ski, snowboard, ice fish, snowmobile – or whatever else you winter folks do at this time. But for the non-winter lovers, some of us just feel that it's an "in-between" month: it's still winter but we're sick of winter, spring is very close but we're just not *quite* there yet… But enough talk about the weather and the grudges or love we hold for this month.

We've got some exciting things happening on our end. This issue came together nicely and we've got a great mixture of stories to share with you. CB has been killing it lately for us! This month he's penned three great pieces: of course he begins with the artist profile, and oh my goodness what amazing paintings and talent this artist has. He then brings us a breakdown of the upcoming OSCARS, analyzing the films and who he thinks might snag a gold statue. For those not aware, and for those who might ask why we're devoting paper to the OSCARS, CB began writing film reviews on our website last September, and so most of the films that he saw and reviewed for us have been nominated! So it was a nice little round-up for us and a way to tie things back to our website and put context to it.

But more locally, Ian shares with us the upcoming season at some local venues – so for those folks who are excited about lounging in green grass and taking in some great tunes, Ian's got you covered. Meanwhile, Griffin brings us the second installment of our political profile series. This month he interviewed the new Mayor of Hudson, NY, Kamal Johnson. Even though I made a point of staying away from politics since the inception of this magazine, I feel that it was time for us to do politics our own way. And so what you'll find in our political profiles is not a criticism or an opinion, but we take the human interest route. We are sharing with you a profile of an interesting person that could be very well be your representative. So lovers, have a beautiful February and thanks for reading!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir

FEBRUARY 2020

Icy sunset on Lake Waramaug in Warren, CT. February can be cold, but it can also be spectacularly beautiful.

Cover photo by Lazlo Gyorsok

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Elegance on canvas

ALLEN BLAGDEN

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

Allen Blagden's career as an internationally celebrated artist is embodied in a story arc that begins, lifts and soars, then settles into a comfortable sense of accomplishment and enduring promise. His talent has been widely celebrated, recognized with awards and – perhaps most importantly – included in private and public collections of great note. And, all of this has led him to create in a place that is no more than a brisk walk from where it all began.

Born into a family of artists, Allen's first teacher was his father – Thomas Blagden – who was on the faculty of The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, CT. He recalls that early in his life, he was aware of the presence of the tools and the encouragement to pursue art. "There was a long bench in the living room of our house. And it was full of paper, crayons, watercolors – all the essentials for creating art."

After graduating from Hotchkiss, Blagden pursued his art at Cornell University's School of Fine Art, taking a year off to study in Lausanne, Switzerland, and travel widely in Europe and North Africa. "I traveled alone, taking the trains and getting a third class ticket to wander all the way to Egypt … Alexandria, Cairo, Luxor. It was fascinating."

His canvases and pads were his camera, using them to record his impressions, the intriguing parts of life that caught his attention and the moments of beauty and grace that he encountered. He was never meant to be anything but a fine artist, and with the combination of genes and extraordinary talent, the way forward was quite clear.

To be sure, there were many side trips – explorations and experiences – that helped form and inform his work. He spent a summer in nearby Norfolk, CT, on a fellowship to Yale University.

Jobs and appointments followed, always tied to his incredible ability to capture the moment, the nuance of his subjects. His study of birds in college and contacts made in the Museum of Natural History supported him in pursuit of a job as a bird illustrator in Serengeti National Park in Kenya.

Soon a position in Hawaii drew his talent to the study and banding of birds halfway around the world in the Pacific Islands on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution. Blagden followed that adventure with a diversion into film, becoming a cinematographer for Denny McCoy.

He would return to Kenya a decade later, this time working as a wildlife illustrator for Abercrombie & Kent, the world renowned provider of safaris, Arctic and Antarctic cruises and uniquely packaged travel experiences around the world. While there, he further refined his precise technique of capturing the natural poses of birds, animals … and people.

"I could have been a portrait painter."

Allen Blagden's portraits have been a significant addition to his catalogue over the years and gained him notoriety for the sensitive way in which he has captured the moods, the personalities of his subjects.

His dogged pursuit of his subjects, no matter where they might be, has produced some of his most striking pieces. He had been impressed by the somewhat controversial, but highly influen-

Above, top to bottom: *Sea Watch*. (The image is cropped). The artist, Allen Blagden. Images courtesy of the artist.

Above, L-R: *Strange Scent. Woman of Arran.* Images courtesy of the artist.

tial docu/drama 1934 film *Man of Aran*, a study of the population of the islands off the west coast of Ireland made by celebrated filmmaker Robert Flaherty.

Decades later, Blagden took the time to visit the islands of Aran and discover that Maggie Dirrane, one of the stars of the film was still alive. As he did in so many other settings, Blagden asked if he could paint her portrait. She agreed, sitting for him for two days while he worked on capturing the gentle smile and weathered face of a true classic beauty. It was only when his work had been concluded that she revealed that she had become totally blind. His portrait belies none of that condition, revealing the incredible spirit of the woman and the magic that endured in her face. That is, indeed, the essence of Blagden's work: being able to move beyond the objective reality to the soul of the subject.

Shows, galleries and building an enthusiastic following

When back at home, Blagden's work was met with recognition that began quite early in his career. A two-person show with his father presented only a few years after his graduation from college and his globe-trotting pursuits set an early standard for how the art world regarded his work. He found representation in New York galleries shortly after that first formal exhibition and spent decades being represented by a small but elite collection of galleries.

Blagden's paintings of birds have drawn natural comparison to the work of Audubon, a fact that led to a recent one man show at the Sharon (CT) Historical Society. His renderings of animals in nature have been celebrated for their capacity to imbue a sense of personality to the subjects – not to merely treat them as objects, but as living beings responding to both environment and stimuli.

Comparisons abound, each one meant as a tribute to his unique talent, not an effort to cast Allen Blagden as an artist that merely mimics a style. Although he matured in an age when popular art had moved away from realism to impressionism and abstraction, his work has a clarity and immediacy that rightfully has him mentioned in the context of Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, and Andrew Wyeth.

Locations in the Northeast have had magnetic appeal to Blagden throughout his illustrious career. The coast of Maine was long a summer destination where family and friends would gather, year on year, to experience the stark beauty of the rock bound coast, the active ocean, and the stunning majesty of the forests.

Innocent controversy

One of his many paintings that graced the cover of magazines was featured on *Yankee Magazine* and elicited remarkable results. It is a painting of Blagden's daughter, Zelina accompanied by a dog, both very attentive to something happening out to sea. The image, entitled *Sea Watch* is a charming, elegant piece … although there were a few subscribers to the magazine who took umbrage at the fact that young Zelina is naked. "Four subscribers cancelled their subscriptions as a result," Blagden offers with a sly smile, realizing that there may be times when art and Puritan mores are in conflict.

Blagden's works have been collected in two books. The first, *Marking the Moment The Art of Allen Blagden* combines landscapes, portraits, and the compelling studies of birds and animals. The second, due out in 2020, is *Just Birds*, the title being self-explanatory.

For those who haunt the galleries and presentations that abound in the proximate area of Northwest Connecticut, Berkshire County, MA, and Dutchess and Columbia Counties in NY, a keen eye may well discover that an Allen Blagden exhibit will appear nearby. His recent presentation at the Sharon (CT) Historical Society drew great crowds and great comments on the lavish detail of his bird paintings. And, as one of the curators of the *Wonders of Winter* exhibit that was hosted in various locations around Salisbury, ending with the 2020 Jumpfest, the perceptive viewer would have found yet another original Allen Blagden neatly ensconced in the exhibit. •

Further exploration of the wide range of stunning paintings and graphite studies created over his career by Allen Blagden, visit his website at allenblagden.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work through the arts form on our "arts" page on our website.

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friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends

Pilar DeMann, owner of Pilar BLLaC Beauty Studio (Brows, Lashes, Lips and Cheeks) in Washington Depot, CT, has quickly taken over Litchfield County's salon scene with her passion for shaping and symmetry and her newfound love for the area. "I was born and raised in Los Angeles and moved here eight years ago, my husband was born and raised in Roxbury. I love the peace and quiet and incredible open skies and clean air and water we have here. I feel like living here is such a gift." Pilar says of her dynamic studio opened in July of 2019, "I specialize in everything eyebrows: shaping, tinting and Microblading. I also have a LightStim Professional LED Light Therapy device which heals skin, stimulates collagen production, and improves the quality of the skin. Looking good makes us feel good and feeling good is a great thing!"

Kirin Liquori Terni is Associate Director of Admission for Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon's Rock in Great Barrington, MA. Kirin has worked in higher education admissions for more than 15 years and has been in her current position since 2015. "My favorite part about my job is working with students to find their next school and helping to alleviate some of the stress that comes with the application process." When she's not working, Kirin likes to go outside, cook a big family breakfast, and visit with friends. She also loves attending the many events the region has to offer, such as the Columbia County Fair, the Salisbury Fall Festival, and the Millerton Gun Club's Easter Egg Hunt. "What I love most about the area is meeting people from so many walks of life. Everyone has a story and something that drew them to live here, visit, or pass through."

For local chef **Devynn Bessette**, growing up in our area means being able to explore every aspect of nature and local fare. "I love the easy access to the outdoors as well as area restaurants. My favorite thing to do with friends from out of town is enjoy an amazing breakfast at Crossroads in Hillsdale, NY, and then venture out on a hike up Alander Mountain." Currently, Devynn is putting his culinary skills to work at The White Hart in Salisbury, CT. "I've been there for three years combining local and seasonal ingredients to create fun and delicious dishes." Devynn also enjoys being active in local events, "My favorite event in our area is the Roe Jan Ramble bike ride held every September. The ride brings everyone on a scenic loop through towns of Copake, Ancram, and Hillsdale."

"Food is home for me, so creating wholesome meals lets me express my creativity and take care of people at the same time," said **Joann Robinson**, Sharon Hospital's executive chef and Dover Plains, NY, resident. She has 36 years of experience in food service and oversees patient meals and dining in the hospital cafeteria. In her hometown of Hyde Park, NY, she attends the Culinary Institute of America's annual Menus of Change conference, a favorite event of hers. Joann has learned how incorporating plant-based options into menus and recipes impacts the planet and our health. "Serving healthy, sustainable and delicious food while educating our customers is the best way, as a chef, to make positive changes," she says. When she's not whipping up a delicious meal, you can find Joann reading thrillers, mysteries, or an occasional romance novel. She also enjoys hunting thrift stores and flea markets for items from the 50s and 60s.

Patrick Downes is all hands on deck when it comes to managing the websites, social media, and digital marketing for all three Ruge's dealerships in our area. "I've been with Ruge's for eight years, every day is different in the car business, and not to mention the digital world is ALWAYS changing! Buying a car can seem like dental surgery, but it's lovely to work for a company that couldn't be less like that." Ruge's dealerships have fun promotions and events throughout the year, but Patrick says his favorite is Ruge's Jeep Go Topless Day in May. "I'm from London which is like New York, and at the same time the complete opposite." Outside the dealership, you'll find Patrick reading, watching movies, and yelling at the TV when English soccer is on though he remarks, "It's all in good fun."

Cindy Brothers may be a relative newcomer to the healthcare scene at Noble Horizons, where she works as a therapeutic recreation director, but her warm-hearted spirit has already helped to make her a seasoned pro within the walls of Salisbury's long-term healthcare destination. "I love working with people and getting to put smiles on my residents' faces every day. I feel like I'm making a difference in their quality of life." Cindy also loves the natural beauty of the area, "I do a lot of hiking around here and my favorite outdoor getaway is Bash Bish Falls in Hillsdale, NY. My favorite thing about our area is simply how rural and gorgeous it is. Every season contains something to look forward to and there's so much to explore outside."

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Bringing live music & goats to Egremont

NICK KEENE, SARA KEENE, & JENNY RUBIN OF THE EGREMONT VILLAGE INN

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

After the weekend guests had enjoyed breakfast with fresh eggs from the hens in back of The Egremont Village Inn, I learned about this family's seven year-long effort to revive live music in the old Curtis Barn in Egremont, MA, and burnish a historic inn in the Berkshires.

Whose idea was it to buy an inn in Egremont? Where do you all live?

SK: Seven years ago, on December 27, 2012, we bought this property when I was 80 years old. I was living in my house in Rhinebeck, NY. My daughter, Gigi Teeley, was aware that the inn was for sale and we made a decision together to pool our resources and buy the property. I live here at the inn, Nick and Jenny Rubin, who is the Barn's programmer/curator/manager, live across the street, and Gigi lives nearby.

NK: From the very beginning it was about reopening the Barn and bringing live music back to the area. From the 1970s until 1983 the Barn was the infamous Robbie Burns Pub, a real honky-tonk rollicking bar featuring local musicians. It's been great to have many of them come back here to play. There used to be ten live music venues in Egremont and Alford, and now there is only the Barn. Having a place to gather where there is live music, good food and drink is an important nutrient for a community.

How did you decide what was a fair price for the property?

NK: Initially it was too expensive, but it's not necessarily easy to sell an inn and the price eventually went down. The previous inn, the Weathervane, was very dated and the 1820 barn was completely dilapidated and needed total restoration. The property also includes ten acres between the golf course and the cemetery, which adds to its value. It's very hard to comp a 14-room house with ten bedrooms. Running a business like this is a lot of work and we all understood that the hospitality business was a "tough racket."

What did you do after you purchased the inn? Did you have any models?

NK: We threw a lot of the furniture out before renovating and re-opening under our new name, The Egremont Village Inn, in May 2013. It took us another three years to fully renovate the barn.

There aren't many other combination inn and music performance space examples to guide what we were doing. We just went ahead with our vision for it. Every year the Barn becomes more successful while the inn is performing in line with other bed and breakfasts. It's not something you do to get rich. It's a lifestyle change where you may be able to use your career skills in a different way. My own were in the hospitality industry and advertising, Gigi's in performing/teaching, Sarah, our mom was an opera/voice teacher, and Jenny's background is in music club management/stand-up comedy booking performers in NYC.

The goats and chickens in the back are a newish addition to the inn. The goats were babies last summer and guests love visiting them. The chickens provide fresh eggs for our breakfasts. We have also added a garden for vegetables, and fresh ingredients for the food we serve in the Barn. We are all animal lovers and take in rescue dogs, although we only allow guests with pets to stay in the carriage house for allergy considerations.

What was the hardest part of transforming the property?

NK: Definitely the hardest part was the physical restoration of the barn. We worked with very talented local craftsmen to put it back together again.

Above: The Egremont Village Inn at night. Photo courtesy of Nick Keene.

Who are your customers? How important are electronic booking services?

NK: Our guests come from all over the world. Some are tourists visiting the Berkshires from all parts of the US and foreign countries, others are parents with kids in private schools nearby, or seasonal visitors who want to ski or look at autumn colors. And now those who come to hear music in the Barn and enjoy a night out, sometimes prefer to stay here rather than driving home. Increasingly we have repeat customers who enjoy the casual, laid back quality of the inn and our delicious breakfasts. We handle weddings only on a selective basis.

Internet hotel booking sites like booking.com that has a European following, and Expedia, which brings together over 50 booking sites, are important to filling rooms. These intermediaries account for around 30% of our inn business, but their fees are very high – as much as 17% of the room price – not including further

Continued on next page ...

discounts we might offer seasonally. Unlike some small inns and bed and breakfasts, we don't advertise on Airbnb.

What can inn owners do about bad reviews online like Trip Advisor?

NK: It took us about a year and a half to get beyond the bad reviews of the previous inn. It can be difficult to expunge these opinions despite a name change and much contact with Trip Advisor. Right now we are rated "awesome" on booking.com and "excellent" on Expedia. I always read our reviews. We get a lot of positive feedback. Every once an a while there's bad review and, like all good business owners should, I try to pay attention when something disappoints a customer, figure out if it's accurate, and how to do it better.

What other kind of marketing do you do?

NK: We advertise on radio, and in print publications, and are active on Instagram, Facebook, and our website. We spend a good chunk on advertising.

What about maintenance?

NK: We do have a maintenance checklist, but things always come up that need immediate attention. Key to running an inn is to have reliable plumbers and electricians who can fix problems as they occur. Toilets are always a big problem that needs to be fixed quickly.

I can't stress enough the importance of these relationships – especially with a historic building to look after – with the local tradesmen. They are in great demand around here – they are always booked.

How often do you replace mattresses?

NK: All of our mattresses have been replaced since we purchased the inn. Some twice. Mattresses tend to last longer in an inn than they would in your home because they are not slept in every night, and each guest sleeps differently so mattresses wear more evenly.

How do you sign up performers?

NK: We've been very blessed to have many amazing talented performers making music and art here, everything from Grammy-winning artists to the best local musicians and performers. Jenny heads up the booking and is the real reason we've won *Best Live Music in the Berkshires* two years in a row. She and I both worked in New York at music clubs and know tons of artists. Everyone in our family and circle is connected to the performing arts. But what's best is that musicians have a great experience here. They are compensated fairly, given top-notch accommodations, and treated with respect.

How many employees do you have? What's the hardest help to find?

NK: We have a great crew of about seven part-time people, including two housekeepers. Kitchen help is almost impossible to find and is a crisis for restaurants, bars, and inns in the Berkshires and lots of areas of the country.

What is the difference in your mind between a bed and breakfast and an inn?

NK: Scale and scope. Having an eatery or tavern makes it an inn.

What are your plans for the future?

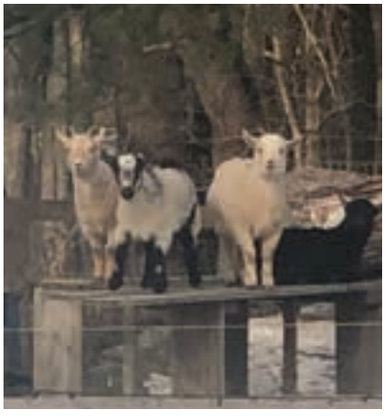
NK: We plan on adding a coffee shop open to everyone. There's a real need for breakfast spots around here and this would give our guests flexibility on where to eat.

What do you like the most about running an inn and performance venue?

JR: I value the creation of a hub for this community. Its funny, many people have told each one of us that their lives have changed because of the inn and Barn. We have heard human-interest stories about the Barn with real epiphanies. It's something about the resurrection of the Barn that the community has embraced. It feels as though I have found my mission in life. I don't miss New York City at all.

NK: People have gathered in taverns for a thousand years. The Barn gives everyone a place to come and be part of a community. •

To learn more about The Egremont Village Inn and the Barn, you can call (413) 528-9580, or visit them online at www.theegremontvillageinn.com.



Above, top to bottom: Live performance at The Barn at The Egremont Village Inn. The goats that live behind the inn and enjoy live music. Photos courtesy of Nick Keene.

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MY ONGOING JOURNEY TO A HEALTHIER LIFE HAS STARTED:

Learning to be healthier

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

Happy health in 2020 my friends! I've embarked on a new health voyage, one that I view as not being a choice but a necessity – but I'm happy to do it. I call this "THE journey to a healthier me – the journey to a better me – the journey to prolonging my life," and I'm making this a weekly "spot" on our website. So log on to our health section on www.mainstreetmag.com to read all about my embarkment, the hows and whys, and my progress.

That said, one of the first things that I needed to do in this process was to go to the bookstore and get some related books. One of the first that I found was *The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods,* by Michael Murray, N.D. As some of you might remember from past issues, I sometimes analyzed various foods that helped to heal, while outlined the ones that did harm. With that in mind, I'd like to share some interesting information that I found in this new book that I've been enjoying.

What's a legume?

So, I know what *legume* means in French, but I always forget what it means in terms of reference to food today – in English. According to my new book, it's a bean (I should be able to remember that from now on). Well then, why not just call it that? That might be a good question, but as with everything, there's a good reason. The book tells me that "this extremely large category of vegetable contains more than 13,000 species and is second only to grains in supplying calories and protein to the world's population. Compared to grains, legumes supply about the same number of calories but usually two to four times as much protein."

Well, that's fascinating! But what I found even more fascinating was to learn that legumes are referred to as "healthy people's meat." I'd like to join that category! Especially after I continued reading and learned about the many health benefits that legumes bring to us. The book stated that, "diets rich in legumes are being used to lower cholesterol levels, improve diabetics' blood glucose control, and reduce the risk of many cancers." Sign me up! Especially with my family history of cardiac problems and high cholesterol, I'm happy to join the legumes ranks.

Let's talk veggies

When it comes to vegetables, I'm a fan – always have been. But growing up in Iceland, we have a very limited growing season, and due to climate and geography, we've been limited in what we can grown – or at least *were* when I was growing up. That said, my fruit and vegetable palette was fairly basic before moving to America. The abundance and variation of fruits and vegetables here is incredible. And I've spent the last 30 years learning to eat certain fruits and vegetables. I'm still not a fan of all of them (I'll pass on the pumpkin, squashes, and melons) but I'm happy to eat many others.

We all know that there's a clear parallel between being healthy and eating fruits and vegetables. That said, the introductory paragraph in my book about vegetables hammers this point home. I'll just quote the majority of it, because it says all that needs to be said: "The word 'vegetable' comes from the Latin *vegetare*, meaning 'to enliven or animate.' The name is appropriate, as vegetables do truly give us life. More and more evidence is accumulating showing that vegetables can prevent, as well as treat, many diseases, especially chronic degenerative diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis. Vegetables provide the broadest range of nutrients and photochemicals, especially fiber and carotenes, of any food class. They are rich sources of vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, and protein, and the little fat they contain is in the form of essential fatty acids."

Well, if that doesn't tell you all that you need to know, I don't know what will. Where do I sign up for the Veggie Express? The health benefits are just so great, and sometimes it takes reading things like this to remind me of how important certain foods are. You might not need that reminder, but I find it helpful every so often to keep me in check. That said, I'm going to do the self-check right now with fruits.

Talkin' fruit

So I guess all fruits are not created equal. There are certain things that we might consider as nuts or vegetables that are actually fruit (i.e. tomatoes). My new favorite book here states how, much like vegetables, fruit has more or less all of the same types of health benefits: it's also a cancer-fighter, helps the heart, etc. But what's interesting and a main point made is the sugar in fruit. Yes, it is natural sugar, but for some people, like those with diabetes or who struggle with gout, sugar, no matter the form, can be dangerous. For that reason, the book advises a moderate fruit intake. That makes sense. We all know that sugar is not necessarily our friend … although it does taste good. With that in mind, I skimmed my favorite fruits.

"Apples are an excellent source of vitamin C, pectin, and other fibers. They are also a good source of potassium." But what's curious is that most of the benefits that apples have are found in their skin. So next time, don't peel that skin, but wash thoroughly.

I've had to learn how to eat (and appreciate) avocados. They are apparently referred to as an "alligator pear" – that's kind of neat. But the main point made about avocados is their fat, monosaturates, and how beneficial it can be to us. "The oils provided by an avocado include oleic acid and linoleic acid, thereby may help lower cholesterol levels." Perfect for me!

Oranges seem to be a pretty perfect fruit all around. Not only are they a great source of vitamin C and B "(B1, B2, and B6, folic acid, and pantothenic acid)," but they are also full of dietary fiber. "The combination of high vitamin C content and flavonoids make oranges important wherever vitamin C is required to function, especially within the immune system, lens of the eye, adrenal glands, and reproductive organs and in the connective tissue of our body, such as the joints, gums, and ground substance; and in promoting overall good health."

What does all of this tell us? I've barely begun to scratch the surface. There is such a vast amount of amazing knowledge and information out there, and I only hope that I can incorporate as much of it as I can into my life, diet, and lifestyle.

When you're young, you think that you're invincible and that none of these ailments or illnesses will happen to you. We should all be so lucky. But the reality is that we might all have to deal with something – what that something is will differ for us all. But I'm of the mind that why not help my chances? Why not be proactive and work on prevention? That's at least my goal now as I face the fact that I'm nearing the end of my 30s and that I have some seriously scary family history of health problems that could very well plague me if I don't do something to get my house in order. And that is precisely what my weekly spot on our website is all about. So check it out, you might find something there that you could find helpful in your health journey! Stay healthy my friends – and eat your fruits and veggies! •

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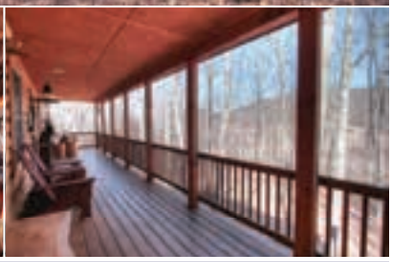

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Buying and selling inns and bed & breakfasts

GOOD BUSINESS OR LIFESTYLE INVESTMENTS?

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Hasn't everyone thought of running a countryside inn or a bed & breakfast? How you would transform a historic building with your own chic style, visit with interesting guests, and serve elegant breakfasts? I wondered if this was ever more than a fleeting daydream and whether it could make economic sense. I decided to investigate how much it costs to buy a small inn or bed & breakfast and what it takes to make it a profitable venture. And then how to go about selling once you're ready for the next project.

What's the appeal of owning an inn?

Juliet Moore of Elyse Harney Real Estate, and former owner of The White Hart Inn, shared this with us: "While a prescribed return on a business, calculated on a desirable CAP Rate based on the net operating income, is optimal – in my opinion, the short answer is that it is really not realistic with regards to the hospitality business. One needs to buy a restaurant or an inn because you want to run it – it is your business – it is your background – it is your passion; and, you will always think you can do better than the previous owner." (To read the full interview with Juliet on this subject, please visit www.mainstreetmag.com/real-estate/).

Owning an inn can become a new life, a new career in an attractive location. It's hard work, but it's work some people feel they can enjoy. Done correctly in a destination location, an inn or a B&B can produce income, but it is not a get-rich-quick and get out kind of business. Scott Shortt, a former financial services executive, caught the hospitality bug and bought the Kemble Inn in Lenox, MA, for $1.65 million in 2010 and is in the process of restoring the property "to the grandeur that it should be." He worked a full-time job the first five years, renovated, and slept on a mattress in the basement until the inn could become his full-time job.

B&B's serve breakfasts and inns don't – usually

There is a distinction between an inn and a bed & breakfast, but it's fuzzy and, perhaps, not a very important one. Typically B&Bs are part of the hosts' home and the owner lives there. They have fewer rooms and, because they were built as single-family homes, sometimes less privacy than an inn. Depending on the town and state they may be zoned differently than inns or hotels. Inns have more rooms than B&Bs and usually don't include breakfast in the price of the room. They may have a restaurant and/or a bar and other amenities like a pool, or even a performance venue. (See story on The Egremont Village Inn in this issue). Because inns are typically larger, rooms may be available on electronic booking sites, which is less typical with B&Bs. For better or worse inns often provide less personal hospitality than B&Bs.

There are over 17,000 inns and B&Bs in the US – it's a $3.4 billion industry

Although each inn or B&B may be small, put together, these independent, entrepreneurial ventures generate an estimated $3.4 billion in economic activity annually according to The Professional Association of Innkeepers International. The average inn has six rooms, over 90% of them with their own private bathroom and high speed internet. The big picture to consider is that nationally occupancy rates are only about 44% at a per room rate of $150. That's revenues before any expenses! Couples constitute 72% of owners and 79% of all owners live on the premises.

Small lodgings are often classified by the type of income they produce according to Rick Wolfe of The B&B Team, which advises buyers and sellers of small lodgings. A financially viable inn means that there is money left over after paying for the mortgage, the taxes, the operating expenses, and the owner's salary, and that the business has a track record of producing income. "Feasible" properties could make more money if the inn were managed differently. Prime actions to improve profitability include adding rooms, a bar, a restaurant, special events, or modernizing a worn and out-of-date décor and installing up-to-date booking systems. This "feasible" opportunity usually means a lower price and bank appraisal, and a higher cash down payment to get financing. "Lifestyle" inns suggest that the benefits of inn ownership are personal fulfillment not financial return or perhaps just buying a really elegant home with occassional guests. The owners should have other income from an outside job or retirement savings to support them like Scott Shortt who commuted to Hartford, CT, for five years when he first purchased the Kemble Inn in Lenox.

Above: The Cornwall Inn with 13 guest rooms, a pool and an owner's house is being shown by David Bain of Bain Realty. It's listed at $1,125,000 and provides operating financials to qualified buyers. Photo courtesy of Bain Real Estate.

Specifically what should a buyer expect to ask? What should a seller expect to reveal?

Start with location, location, location. What is the inn near? What sorts of guests does it attract? How easy is it to get to? What occupancy rate is probable? How seasonal is the

Continued on next page ...

Above: The White Hart Inn sits in the center of Salisbury, CT, and remains a hub in the town. Photo by Thorunn. Below, left: The owner's house at the inn in Warren is the reason some buyers are considering purchase as a private residence, Listed by Mimi Harson of William Pitt Sotheby's International. Photo by Randy O'Rourke.

business? What is the competition? Next look at the actual operating numbers. What is the Gross Operating Income by month for the previous three years calculated based on the number of rooms rented and the average rate. In our area expect to see low occupancy January to April, and peak months from June through October, especially during autumn color.

Next look at Net Operating Income before debt, owner's salary and depreciation – essentially the cash the inn produces before debt payment and any income to the owner. Expenses will include everything from cleaning supplies, labor, marketing, utilities, insurance, taxes, etc.

What drives the price?

There are never very many inns for sale at any one time in any one region. In all of Dutchess County and Columbia County in New York State, only 15 bed & breakfasts or inns were sold in the last nine years. The largest and most important sale was Troutbeck in Amenia, NY, which was sold in 2016 for $5,919,200 with 45 acres and multiple buildings. While the average price of these 15 properties was over $731,000 because of the Troutbeck sale, the median was only $295,000. After renovation and restyling Troutbeck commands high room prices and operates an excellent restaurant open to all.

The White Hart Inn in Salisbury, CT, was sold after being closed for a number of years for $2.9 million by Pat Best to a consortium of local investors who wanted to return the inn to the center of community life. "It was a noble act to buy the inn," according to Best. Since there were no operating results for the inn with new luxury suites, Best prepared conservative pro forms based on a 40% occupancy rate. The previous owners invested $6 million in restoring the 16 suite inn, which went on the market in late November 2010 at $5,000,000 and eventually sold in May of 2014 with all its furnishings.

What about selling?

Most inn owners employ an inn consultant like Rick Wolfe before putting the property on the market. These consultants can advise on how to improve profitability and occupancy before sale, present financials in an industry standard format, establish a reasonable listing price and help market the inn. Serious pre-qualified buyers will ask for three years of financials to calculate how much they could borrow based on the inn's cash flow. No one has to buy an inn, and it can take six months to three years to close a sale. Typically financially viable inns would have at least seven rooms and a 43% occupancy rate.

The Cornwall Inn, located in Cornwall in the northwest corner of Connecticut, is a turnkey 13-guest room property with a pool and separate owner's house, and is currently for sale for $1,125,000. The owner can provide three years of financials to qualified buyers. David Bain of Bain Real Estate points out that the inn has a top notch commercial kitchen and bar, which could be relaunched as a restaurant expanding the income stream further and three additional cabins which could be converted into guest rooms.

Another example of an inn for sale with a completely different style is the former home of the Rooster Tail in Warren. It is an updated historic 1750 colonial inn with six stunning suites, a contemporary separate owner's residence that was created in an antique barn, and a stone party barn listed for $1,850,000. The inn has been operated on a private basis only and has no recent operating history. Agent Mimi Harson of William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty says the property is being actively evaluated by residential buyers as well as by chefs who want to open a high-end restaurant. Harson says the only comments from those that look at the property are, "It is even more spectacular in person than in the photographs."

Why do inns fail?

Inn brokers and consultants suggest that the primary reason for under performance is the failure of the inn owner to adjust to new demographics, new styles, and new marketing techniques. If you think of bed and breakfasts with sagging beds, floral wallpaper, oak furniture, and dried flowers you are imagining a failed inn. Today guests want bright, neutral colors, Apple TVs, Wi-Fi, and always a luxurious bathroom. Online reviews and photos of your inn can wound an inn's reputation in the click of a mouse or tap on a phone.

Where to look for an inn?

Rather than driving around and looking for "For Sale" signs there are many online sites that list inns for sale. National and international inns for sale can be found on www.innshopper.com, which currently lists ten inns for sale in Connecticut and 19 in New York State, including $4.5 million for a boutique 18-room hotel in Cooperstown to under $400K for an eight-room bed & breakfast on the Lake Erie Wine Trail. The detailed information provided on each property typically includes contacts for the B&B consultant and/or real estate broker who is handling the transaction.

If you're really daydreaming you can look at international inns as well like a six-bedroom French villa in Brittany for $400,000. Others sites like www.danamoos of Maine focus only on a particular region or state. Of course your local real estate broker, some of whom have owned inns, can be your most informative source if you are searching locally. •

Christine Bates is a real estate agent with William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty and has written about real estate issues and market since the first issue of Main Street Magazine in 2013.

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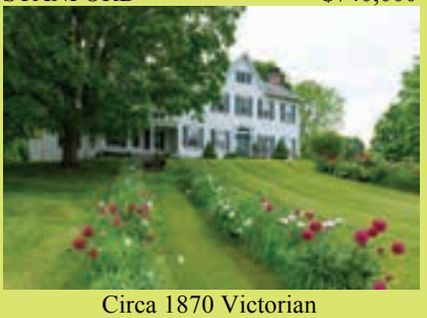

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GRUYERE BLACK PEPPER Popovers

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

I am relatively new to the world of homemade popovers (hollow, puffy, eggy, crispy-edged "muffins," of a sort) if you must know. In fact, I only started making them a few years back when I was developing recipes for my cookbook, *The Vintage Baker*. The book is chock full of vintage recipes that I have twisted and tweaked for the 21st-century baker, and I decided to include a popover recipe in the book due to their popularity back in the day. In short, I stumbled upon so many old-fashioned recipes for popovers when rifling through my collection of vintage recipe booklets, that taking a stab at them seemed nothing short of mandatory. I was shocked and oh, so pleased, at how easy they were to make and decided on a *cacio e pepe* one (Pecorino Romano cheese and black pepper) for *The Vintage Baker*.

Now, I am a bit of a popover aficionado, if I do say so myself, and I make them pretty regularly in all sorts of flavors, including cranberry cheddar, which is a new fave for the fall/winter. But here I am sharing another cheese and pepper version, this one with Gruyere instead of Pecorino Romano. Gruyere is a sweet, salty, and nutty cheese and I love it in these light-as-air popovers with a little pepper, for kick. But if Gruyere is not your cup of tea, by all means substitute any kind of grated cheese that floats your boat. Moreover, I would be doing you a disservice if I did not tell you that a plain popover – with no add-ins whatsoever – simply cannot be beat. And, in fact, while in college, I frequented a restaurant not far from my dorm that specialized in popovers and I ate more than my fair share of (delicious) plain popovers over the four years that I lived there, but I digress.

Popover thoughts

A few thoughts about popover making, which could not be easier, FYI: first, if you think you might make popovers more than once – even twice! – and you have a kitchen that can accommodate a new baking pan, might I suggest you invest in a popover pan? You can get one for less than $20, and although you can 100% make popovers in a muffin tin, you will never get the gorgeous, dramatic rise of one made in the proper pan. Moreover, if you own the pan, I am thinking you might make them more regularly, and invite me over for popover-night, so there is that, too.

Second, do not skip the step of pre-heating the empty pan before filling it with your batter. The hot pan contributes to the making of the tallest of popovers. Please be careful, though, when removing it from the oven, greasing it and filling it with batter, as the pan is, well, hot.

Third, a blender is an excellent tool for mixing up your batter, but a food processer will work as well, as will a bowl and a whisk. I just love using the blender as I believe the batter made in the blender rises the tallest, and if it has not yet become obvious, I am very fond of tall popovers.

Fourth, do not be tempted to open the oven while the popovers bake/rise. Again, they will rise the tallest if they are uninterrupted by a whoosh of room temp air entering the oven when the door is opened for a little peek.

Fifth, remove them from the pan as soon as you remove them from the oven. Popovers are filled with steam and can get soggy the longer they sit in the metal pan. To remove said steam – and reduce further chances of sogginess – gently poke a paring knife in the side of each popover once it is removed.

And, finally, eat them immediately! Popovers are best within seconds (okay, minutes) of their departure from the oven, when they are at their fluffiest and crispiest. You do not want to miss your ideal popover moment, I'm sure.

Ingredients:

Yield: 6 large popovers

4 eggs, at room temperature
1 1/3 cups whole milk, at room temperature
3 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp fine sea salt
1 tsp black pepper
1 cup finely grated Gruyere cheese

Preheat the oven to 450°F and place a 6-cup popover pan inside.

Combine the eggs, milk, and butter in a blender and blend for 15 seconds to combine. Add the flour and salt and blend for another 15 seconds, scraping down the sides of the blender, if necessary. Add the cheese and fold in with a flexible spatula.

Remove the hot pan from the oven. Grease it with non-stick cooking spray or brush with melted butter.

Evenly pour the batter into the cups; each one will be about 2/3 full. Do not overfill.

Bake for 15 minutes and reduce the heat to 350°F and bake for another 15 minutes. Do not open the oven for the entire baking period.

Remove the popovers from the pan and transfer to a wire rack as soon as you take them from the oven. They should slip out easily, but if they do not, run a small paring knife around the edges of each popover. Jab each one with said knife, to release steam.

Popovers are best eaten the day they are made and ideally within minutes of being pulled from the oven. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.

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A new kind of classroom

HoloLens technology revolutionizing education while helping the elusive Narwhal

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

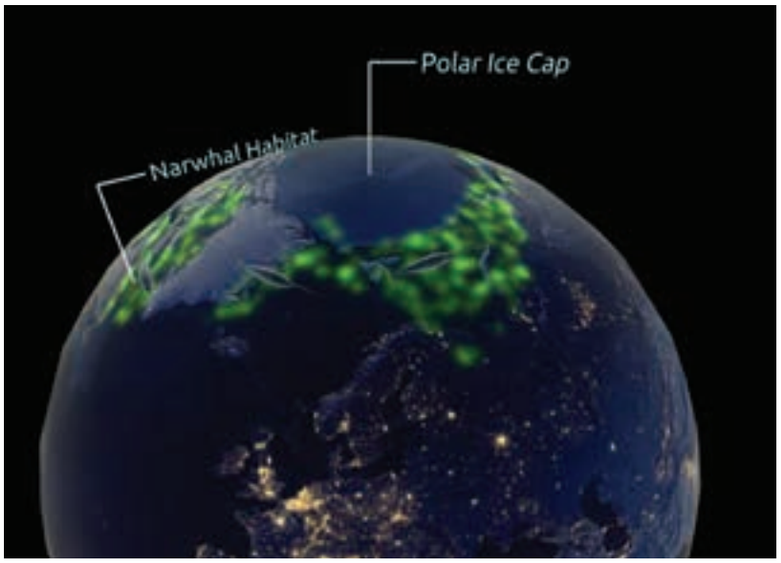
All photos depicted in this article showcase Hololens technology as it relates to the Narwhal. Photos courtesy of Dr. Nweeia.

Innovation can happen anywhere. From the grand halls of our institutes of higher learning, the expansive and unimaginably elaborate labs across the planet where we picture the world's best scientists scurrying about in long white coats testing secret methods whose sole purpose is to change life on earth, to the local country dentist office on the corner of our hometown streets – those men and women we have known all our lives. The future waits for no one, and across our area resourceful folks are hard at work transforming how we experience the modern world.

In Sharon, CT, neighborhood dental surgeon Dr. Martin Nweeia has combined two decades of research and his adoration for the Arctic's most fascinating whale species with a new and innovative technology that is weaving imaginative and engaging fibers into the tapestry of traditional learning. The male narwhal, one of the most extraordinary animals on the planet with its anomalous tusk protruding in a swordlike fashion through its upper lip, is commonly referred to as the "Unicorn of the Sea." In order to better understand the narwhal and its iconic tooth, Dr. Nweeia has used his dental medicine expertise, and his standing as assistant professor for Innovative Programs at Case Western Reserve School of Dental Medicine to peer through a unique lens of technological innovation, by visualizing the narwhal through Microsoft's HoloLens, a revolutionary innovation in augmented reality. What has resulted from this collaboration is a burgeoning shift in medical anatomy education from traditional textual learning to a true sensory experience. A shift that has transformed medical classrooms not only at the venerated Case Western University located in Cleveland, OH, but throughout all higher educational platforms across the country. For his part, Dr. Nweeia has worked fervently to present this immersive augmented reality (AR) experience with narwhals to the greater public, and has enlisted the help of some of the most well-known names both in scientific education and yes – even Hollywood.

Through the holo looking glass

"HoloLens has transformed medical education to the point where the dissection of cadavers is virtually obsolete," says, Dr. Nweeia. Instead, students at Case Western have begun dissecting virtual holograms of the human body thanks to the university teaming up with Microsoft in 2015 and introducing the tech-giant's HoloLens, an AR device that allows students and educators to both see, and interact with holographic images. "For many years, past and present, whether we are looking at a phone, computer or television, nearly every connection we have with the outside world comes with a screen attached. Our interaction with the world around us is connected through screens."



Dr. Nweeia recalls his initial impressions upon first seeing HoloLens technology juxtaposed to the current generation's interface with the world of screens, "HoloLens brings reality back into the modern world through interactive technology. There will no longer exist an interruption or interface of connectedness between students and the machines they use to engage in learning and life. I immediately saw that technical leap and the applications in medical science at Case, and conceptualized my proposal to bring holographic narwhals to any room on the planet that would welcome them!"

The HoloLens technology was developed by Microsoft as its introduction to the world of AR, something the corporation has termed "mixed reality." For the less tech-savvy like yours truly, the lens resembles the virtual reality aesthetic of other devices like the Oculus. Though unlike the Oculus, a device primarily used to transport players into an interactive environment in the world of gaming, HoloLens blends the user's environment seamlessly with holographic software using its own processing power, advanced optics, and sensors in order to engage students with subjects for a more keen comprehension in the field of medical research. The resulting phenomenon has spread throughout higher education like wildfire. A fire that has ignited much debate within the educational science community.

Those who still pine for the days of amphibious dissection say there is a certain immeasurable loss that comes with the phasing out of textile learning. Dr. Nweeia however, a dental professional who cut his teeth in the era of "old-school" scientific education, has been fully reborn in the world of AR learning thanks to HoloLens technology. "There are still those medical practitioners who believe hands-on learning can only

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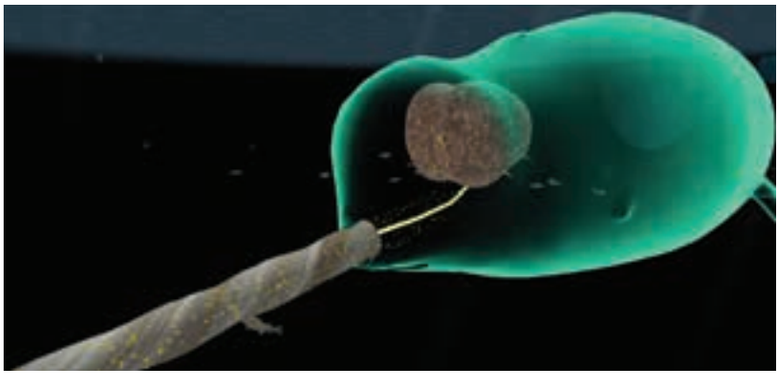

be achieved through textile interaction, and sure, there is a big difference between holograms and real cadavers. Indeed, there are pluses and minus to both, but your experience of interactive three dimensional (3D) holographic learning is unmatched with HoloLens. When it comes to real dissection for example, the body often appears mono-gray due to post mortem effects. In the past, this meant students learned operating procedures by texture rather than true-to-life color, three dimensions and functional display, leaving a large disconnect between cadaver and student learning. What HoloLens does is create an immersive understanding and perspective about where things actually are in their 3D orientation. The hardest concepts to learn are 3D ones, like the interactions of viruses and bacteria on normal cells, or embyology where understanding is enhanced with 3D displays rather than descriptive passages and images in textbooks. When it comes to holograms, everything is right in front of you."

Re-discovering an Arctic legend through the eyes of the narwhal

Thanks to Dr. Nweeia's diligent pursuit of the most unique of Arctic mammals, the local dentist was among the first to dispel a long-held myth regarding the narwhal's "tusk." "It's the coolest tooth on the planet," says Nweeia of what was previously believed to be something of a weapon used to fight off other males in a battle for mating purposes. "It's actually more of a tooth organ system, a giant sensory organ containing millions of little tubules that extend from its inner central nerve to the external ocean environment."

Unlike other whales who use their extra senses to detect sound and movement much in the way of sonar, the male narwhal sensory "tooth" serves a host of purposes. "It detects particle gradients, pressure, and temperature as opposed to sound. It is, in many ways, like other mammalian teeth like ours but also entirely unique, like no other tooth on the planet since it can continuously monitor its external ocean environment."

As part of his scientific venture, Dr. Nweeia has participated in eighteen expeditions to the icy Arctic region, carrying the famed New York City's Explorers Club flag on fourteen of those treacherous adventures. "I've been stuck in Arctic hurricanes, hazardous plane landings that became white-knuckle experiences, and had close-ups with polar bears. The hazards are pretty extreme." All the while, he has taken in the entire scope of the narwhal's plight, using Inuit knowledge to help understand the biology of the whale as well as the somewhat volatile conditions of its environment. "Our narwhal research is part of a larger climate issue as well since narwhals live in the Arctic where climate change is happening at twice the rate of the rest of the planet. This has an immense impacts on the mammal, and its ecosystem"

It was Dr. Nweeia's introduction to the Microsoft HoloLens technology that inspired him to take the next step in his research. With the help of some narration from Connecticut local, and legendary actor Meryl Streep, Nweeia launched a brand new interactive ecological experience called *Narwhal: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Tusk* which debuted at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and the American Association for the Advancement of Science this past October. "Working with Meryl Streep was just fabulous, bringing the experience to a whole new level; life and our experience in it is always better with kind, generous, and talented people like her."

Nweeia co-curated the narwhal exhibit *Narwhal: Revealing An Arctic Legend* at the Smithsonian, co-authored an award-winning catalogue for the exhibit, and is now co-curating a traveling exhibit with the same name through SITES, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Services. "I had the vision and the technology resources, and with a grant from the National Science Foundation, the vision was now transformed to reality." As part of the experience, visitors to the experience are immersed in a 3D Arctic world traveling under the ice and swimming with holographic, life-sized narwhals, even becoming a narwhal themselves in the interactive game that concludes the experience, based on scientific findings of how narwhal stun their prey. "It's a fully interactive AR experience where everyone can get a sense of what an Arctic ocean environment is like, and how the whale swims under the ice by watching them from their position on the ocean floor. As a result, participants are learning while experiencing the narwhal environment, and so the level of engagement is transformative."

The HoloLens software eliminates spatial perspective, as in the opening scene of the experience when holographic whales are swimming freely within an independently rotating virtual globe. Despite Dr. Nweeia's two decades of educational knowledge, and thousands of miles of Arctic discovery, he believes he has at last found the kind of innovation that will propel learning into the future. "This is like the invention of the telephone or the computer. Technology has outpaced the classroom and education now needs to catch up; this is the new interface to connect us to the world. I have no doubt the traditional classroom settings will be transformed – this is the future of engagement, motivation, and enhanced comprehension. What better way to experience it, then by diving into the 3D Arctic ocean world of the narwhal, and having Meryl Streep as your guide!" •

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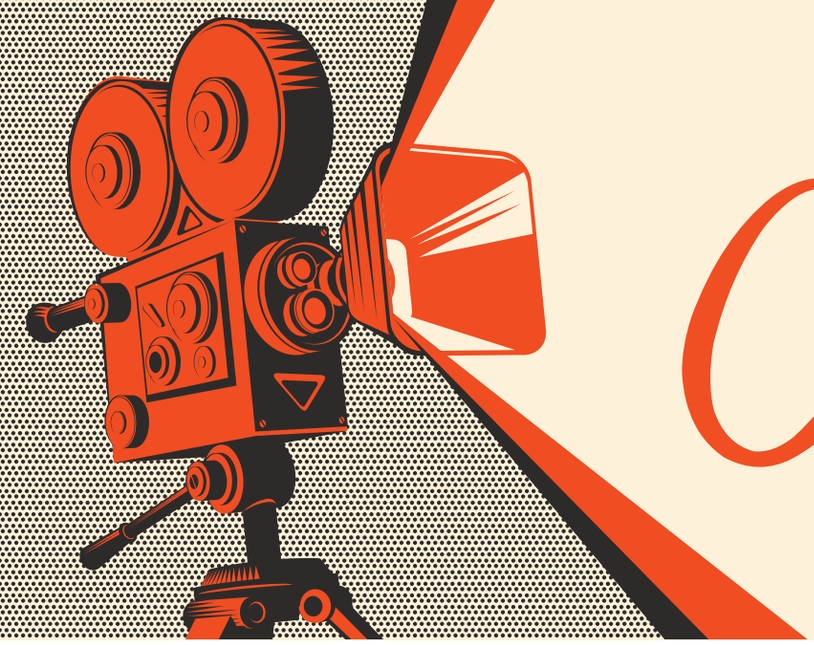

A NIGHT AT THE *Oscars*

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

"And the OSCAR goes to …"

But, hold on. Before we start handing out eight-and-a-half-pound statues, let's begin with how we get there.

The OSCARS … the Academy Awards … are presented every year by Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). That esteemed body is made up of 8,469 individuals who are professionally related to the film business. They are directors, producers, actors, wardrobe masters, make-up artists, composers, editors, etc. – divided into 17 "branches" that cluster together individuals by the specific role they play in making movies.

The members of those 17 branches are invited, every year in early January, to submit their nominations for stand out effort within their specialty. Only directors nominate directors. Only actors nominate actors, etc. Five nominations, each. The only exception to the nominating restriction by branch is Best Picture. Everyone gets to nominate their favorite films – minimum five, maximum ten titles submitted.

Then, the fun begins.

PriceWaterhouse Coopers, the giant accounting firm, handles the intricate math that sorts through all of the nominating ballots and comes up with five nominees in each category … up to ten in the Best Picture category.

When the lists have been narrowed down to the final slate of nominees, ballots are sent out to every member of the Academy – all 8,469 – and the voting begins. Everyone votes in every category. There is a presumption – perhaps more a hope – that the voting members have seen the films, performances, and skills nominated. Since the nominations are released in January, there is usually a short window when AMPAS members have the chance to catch up on films they haven't seen, specialties they haven't noticed, and mark their ballots.

And, on Sunday, February 9, the red carpet is rolled out in front of the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles and the annual extravaganza begins.

The previews

There are two award ceremonies that happen earlier in January that are often the predictors of how the major category awards will be decided when OSCAR takes the spotlight.

The Golden Globe Awards, aired early in January, has managed to earn a spot on prime time broadcast television through the concerted efforts of Dick Clark Productions and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the group that originated the awards. A mix of feature film and television awards, the Golden Globes are awarded based on the voting of 93 people – the entire membership of the association – who are journalists located in greater Los Angeles who cover motion pictures for the global press. The broadcast, usually smattered with audacious comedy stirred up by host Ricky Gervais and acceptance speeches fueled by copious amounts of wine served at the dinner, attracts 19 million viewers.

The SAG Awards, presented by the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG/AFTRA) confines the voting to performers in film and broadcast and concentrates on individual achievement as well as ensemble efforts. The SAG Awards were presented on January 19 with the event shown on both TBS and TNT. Ratings are fairly anemic for the telecast, since the annual event competes with a National Football League Conference Championship game.

Predictions

As one might judge from watching meteorologists perform their daily rituals, predictions are always seasoned with a great deal of luck. When those predictions are made on things subjective as whether the audience liked the performance of a female lead or if the story held together, then caution is thrown to the wind.

January publications and broadcasts are filled with the presumed intelligence of critics, both foreign and domestic, who handicap the OSCAR race based primarily on whether they liked a film or did not. Personal tastes, prior reactions to a director's work

Continued on next page …

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or an actor's suitability for a role play heavily in those selections. When seasoned by the outcomes of The Golden Globes and the SAG Awards, things can get jumbled in a hurry, or the "mob mentality" may win out and rally voices in support of what is considered the easy choice.

This article will not predict, not for fear of being wrong, which we would most certainly be, but in humble acknowledgement of the universal truth first offered by Roman poet Lucretius who died 1900 years before the first motion picture was introduced. With a modest adjustment for gender equality, he asserted "One person's meat is another person's poison." Or, as it appeared in an 1846 edition of *Punch*, "you pays your money and you takes your choice."

In that context, here is a simple, subjective listing of likely contenders for OSCAR glory in five categories: Best motion picture, best female and best male in a starring role and best male and best female in a supporting role. We invite your reference to reviews of many of these films posted on the *Main Street Magazine* website (mainstreetmag.com) and offered under "The Arts," "Film Reviews."

Best motion picture

Early speculation (because of its early release date and amazing box office revenues) focused on *Joker*.

It may survive the late season deluge of high budget offerings, but may have to focus its attention on the performance of Joaquin Phoenix, who won the Golden Globe as Best Actor in a Drama (see below). Both *Marriage Story* and *The Irishman* entered the competition under the cloud and confusion of Netflix control of release dates and exclusivity, but both will be strong contenders for the top award. *Marriage Story* captured an award for Laura Dern (below), but *The Irishman* was all but shut out.

Films must play theatrically in some major markets for seven days prior to midnight on December 31 to qualify. Being on Netflix is not considered playing in a major market, so the dominant satellite distribution network made sure that screens in New York and Los Angeles (among other cities) presented these two films. Both are exceptional in story, acting, directing and general production credits. On many lists, they are a toss up for best of the year.

1917 captured Best Drama and Best Director for Sam Mendes at the Golden Globes soirée. The scope and intensity of the World War I epic are exceptional. The assembled cast is supremely talented and the production technique employed by director Mendes is breathtaking.

The latest film by Greta Gerwig, *Little Women*, has created a storm of "buzz" because of the ensemble cast, the lucid script, and the positive message. Although films of controversy and struggle often appear at the top of Academy voting, this feel-good costume drama could be a great alternate for Academy voters.

Another ensemble cast driven piece that has gotten strong audience support is *Bombshell*, the story of the decline and fall of Roger Ailes of Fox News. The cast is superb and reflected, below, in other categories. The combination of excellent performances might well lead to a strong nomination for the film.

An "early" entry into the race is the historically based *Ford v Ferrari* that dramatizes the battle between the two marques as played out in the 24 hours of Le Mans. At times comedic and at times purely dramatic, the film boasts great performances and had strong, positive audience reaction.

The same is true for *Once Upon a Time … In Hollywood*, which got Brad Pitt a Golden Globe and rewarded Quentin Tarantino for the script. If that acknowledgement carries into the Academy voting is a very good question.

All movie poster graphics depicted in this article are courtesy of The Moviehouse, our Film Review partner on our website.

Best Performances – lead and supporting women

Saorise Ronan offered such a compelling performance in *Little Women* that she has to be considered a top contender for Best Performance by a Woman in a Lead Role. She's got plenty of solid competition, however, and some of the contenders have appeared in two films in 2019 and, therefore, could appear in both lead and supporting nominations.

Scarlett Johansson is one of those two film contenders who was striking in *Marriage Story* and compelling in a very different role in *Jojo Rabbit*. Charlize Theron's performance in *Bombshell* was electrifying, with two of her fellow actors competing for best supporting role honors.

Continued on next page …

Although *Judy* appeared earlier in the year (timing is very important, since some films are almost forgotten by the time the deluge of releases hits in December), Renee Zellweger's portrayal of Judy Garland got rave reviews at the time of release and led to her being awarded the Golden Globe for Best Actress. Certainly something to watch come OSCAR night. The performance by Cynthia Erivo in *Harriet* had a similar, early season fate. Both offered moving performances … we'll see if the voters can remember.

Supporting roles are often only modestly different in screen time and intensity from leading roles. Laura Dern offered two supporting performances in wildly different roles in 2019, playing the domineering attorney in *Marriage Story* – her Golden Globe winning role – and the loving, supportive mother in *Little Women*. Either performance should get her a nomination, if not an award.

Two of the main characters in *Bombshell* may have to compete with each other for the golden statue. Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie both offered amazing portrayals of women caught in the Ailes world of Fox News and could easily get nominations.

Best Performance – lead and supporting men

A few of the films under consideration provided excellent acting platforms for experienced leading men. The currently circulated lists do not show many, if any, newcomers contending for recognition in these two categories. That being said, Christian Bale, Adam Driver, Robert De Niro, Leonardo Di Caprio, Joaquin Phoenix, Adam Sandler, and Matt Damon each deserve serious consideration for their roles. Damon's performance in *Ad Astra* has the added baggage of being an "early release" film as does Joaquin Phoenix's disturbingly brilliant performance in *Joker*, which captured the Golden Globe.

Adam Driver was so compelling in his role in *Marriage Story* that he has gotten significant early support for the OSCAR. He also graced the final Star Wars installment and in the midst of a cast assembled for nostalgia and comic book action was quite solid. It's doubtful that he'll get a supporting actor nomination for that performance, but he's demonstrated great range and strength.

The mention of De Niro brings up *The Irishman*, again, and the epic film could be quite dominant in an academy still very much controlled by long time, somewhat creatively conservative voters. The Scorsese, De Niro, Pacino, Pesci cabal may not have fared well in early January voting, but there's a long history of loyalty and tradition skewing the OSCAR results.

The supporting role nominations for the men should be another curtain call for names quite familiar to movie audiences. Tom Hanks portrayal of Fred Rogers in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* was mesmerizing in a totally different way than John Lithgow's portrayal of Roger Ailes in *Bombshell*. Both were brilliant.

Timothee Chalamet is a young man who has already garnered attention for his performances in other films. His presence in *Little Women* provides perfect counterpoint to the characters of the four sisters of the Marsh household.

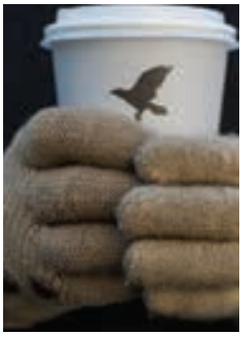
Finally, Brad Pitt's laid back performance in *Once Upon a Time … In Hollywood* was the perfect counterpoint to Leonardo Di Caprio's portrayal of the fading actor.

Then, once again, there's *The Irishman*. Both Joe Pesci and Al Pacino deliver performances worthy of a nomination and may, as others, above, contend with each other for the OSCAR.

The bottom line

The bottom line is the bottom line. Advertisers will judge the effectiveness of their ad buy on the February 9 telecast of the Academy Awards by evaluating the overnight audience numbers, but the real benefactors of that usually over-long evening of relentless television will be the studios and distributors of the winning films.

Those who have not seen all of the contenders can wait until the envelopes are opened, the shrieks of surprise echo through the cavernous theatre, the rambling acceptance speeches drone on, and the swelling music of the play off cues fades into the late evening. Once winners and losers have been identified, the victory laps will begin with films booked into local movie houses for one or two week runs in late February, March, and early April to fill the gap created by limited releases of new titles. If you didn't see the Best Picture when it was released, wait for it to come around, again, and marvel at the attributes that garnered enough of those 8,469 votes to be named "Winner." •



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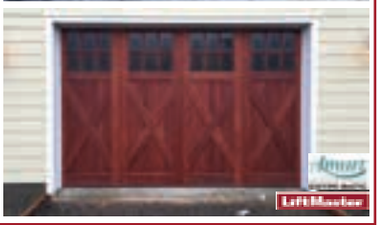

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Making history: leaving a legacy

Mayor Kamal Johnson begins his first term in the City of Hudson, NY

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

What does it take to lead? Is it purely tenacity? A hunger for commanding attention? Perhaps certain individuals are simply born with the spirit to lead, an innate sense of urgency to muster people behind a cause, an urgency that overlaps the fear of failure or societal rejection.

Edward R. Murrow, the grandfather of this modern business I find myself in, once said, "If we dig deep in our history and our doctrine and remember that we are not descended from fearful men – not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular."

Perhaps it is fearlessness then that forges the iron will of a natural born leader. Fearlessness to endure, to speak out when necessary, and most importantly, to connect with those around us – that's the type of fearlessness that often makes history. In Hudson, NY, such history was inscribed into the annals of the Hudson Valley when Kamal Johnson, a native of the city himself, was officially sworn in on January 1, 2020 as the first African American to be elected to such an office in the city's history. A new chapter for a new year in Hudson, and a leader whose passion for the community remains deeply rooted in the connection to the city where he has spent his entire life.

From his time as a young man working two jobs in order to support his siblings while his mother recovered from addiction, to his long road of peer-to-peer advocacy in jails and schools all over the Hudson Valley, Mayor Johnson has lived the issues facing the residents of Hudson and the policies he champions. If fearlessness lies at the heart of leadership, Kamal Johnson's story has steadied his resolve. He has taken the burdens of a community upon his shoulders, and refuses to abdicate that responsibility.

Growing up in Hudson and being a member of this city's community for your entire life has proven to be an integral part of your run for Mayor. What was it about growing up in the city that compelled you to pursue government?
Growing up here, I have experienced what it means to feel as though you are part of a real close knit community. I grew up knowing my neighbors, my very first friends were kids who actually lived on my street, I remember everyone in the neighborhood meeting up at John L. Edwards for games of No-Touch-Ground-Tag. That's what makes Hudson special, it's a place where you can step right into making a difference. The impact local politicians have can be felt right away because of our closeness to one another – then and now.

Have you seen a shift in the dynamics of Hudson since your youth?
I think it's safe to say that I have seen nearly all the changes throughout the city in my lifetime. There have been a few drastic changes since the time when I was a young man. From the antiques era, to today where we have seen the growth of a more trendy, boutique type of vibe while still maintaining the presence of small businesses. These eras of change in Hudson, in such a short period of time, have often been great for the city's character – though I believe moderation is key.

I of course would like to see the continuation of progress, but not at the expense of those who call this city home. One of our plans as a team of representatives is to try and balance gentrification with equity and restore people's sense of belonging with plans for affordable housing and jobs that can lead to careers.

This seems like a real personal responsibility for you to lead here. Would you say that sense of personal connection motivates you? And where did that come from?

Above: Mayor Kamal Johnson looks forward to leading the City of Hudson into a exciting future. Photo courtesy of Kamal Johnson. Next page, photo depicting Warren Street at sunset. Photo by Olivia Valentine Markonic.

I don't have what you might call the "typical" background of other politicians; I come from humble beginnings. When I'm out in the community talking with people I think my background carries a little more weight because issues specific to the city are issues that I have personally lived, and still live with, like others in the community. Having that general understanding with the members of the city, and connecting on a personal level with many of the issues today, has been my greatest advantage. At one point in my life, I felt my story was a disadvantage. Now I feel I can use my story to empower others and it feels like a real blessing.

Holding down two jobs as a young man in order to support a single parent can be one of the hardest things to endure. One of your jobs was working for Planned Parenthood, did you find that direct interaction with the community has helped you come to this point?
I would say, without a doubt, my time with Planned Parenthood helped me establish a certain sense of comfort when it came to direct interaction

Continued on next page ...

with the community, particularly public speaking. When you're able to talk about topics that are inherently intimate in nature in front of groups of people, any leftover fear about speaking in front of crowds kind of goes out the window from that point on. I was also a peer educator during that time, putting together different presentations and demonstrations when it came to contraception. I would often meet people who didn't necessarily agree with our message or methods of education and I see how that was a valuable experience in community engagement as well, taking the time to really hear opinions of every kind. Much of what I've learned has taught me to be more realistic about the world we live in.

Did those experiences lead directly to your work with Promise Neighborhood and Greater Hudson Promises?

My time with Promise Neighborhood came about while I was volunteering in after school programs here in Hudson. Eight years ago, I was invited to tour the Harlem Children's Zone, which is something the Greater Hudson Promise Neighborhood is based on. I remember traveling down to Harlem and being absolutely floored by the initiative's dedication to early childhood facilities, after school programs, and charter schools. I was so taken with the quality of the programs and the level of care for the kids participating that I thought we must do something like this in Hudson. The educators displayed a level of attentiveness that inspired me, also many of them were of color – something I had never experienced during my time in school.

During my time with the organization, Promise Neighborhood has transformed into a variety of initiatives. We obtained a two year planning grant in order to assess different potential programs we could realistically implement in Hudson. Even more importantly, the grant helped us discover what the primary needs of the youth community were by allowing us to conduct a full needs assessment and truly detail what Promise Neighborhood as an organization could bring to the city of Hudson. Despite the struggle that it always is to find funding, we managed to find enough to support our after school program, and two different programs in our local prisons. One upcoming program that I feel is absolutely crucial to the health of our community that will be replicated across the state is the visiting program called Children of Incarcerated Parents. Through this initiative, instead of seeing their parents from behind a glass wall, children will be able to visit an incarcerated parent in a room where those parents will be allowed to touch and hold that child, help them with homework, and spend valuable time together. I feel the impact on a child who doesn't feel as though they are being punished for the mistakes of a parent is immeasurable.

One of the biggest issues facing residents of the Hudson Valley in recent years has been the pervasive presence of opioids, how are you planning to counter this modern crisis in our area?

As I mentioned during my swearing in ceremony, Columbia County is among the top fifteen counties in our state when it comes to opioid deaths and overdoses. This has been an issue that I have wanted to tackle since I started campaigning and am looking forward to combating it immediately. That is why, as one of my first decisions as acting Mayor of Hudson, I have brought in Chatham, NY, Police Chief Peter Volkmann to aid our city in the fight against this epidemic. Mr.Volkmann has been instrumental in making Chatham one of the safest towns in the entire state, and helped establish Chatham Cares 4 U (CC4U), a program designed to help anyone battling opioid addiction requesting help in their fight against opioids. As part of the program, treatment beds and transportation to recovery services are guaranteed – no questions asked. His compassion and experience will be invaluable in our efforts.

As part of my history in community outreach, I have gained vital experience in prevention and recovery as well. Part of living and leading in our area is working together, to have someone like Peter, who has already done so much to transform his police force to combat the opioid crisis living right here in our county, it was an easy decision to bring him onboard to help bolster our efforts with new and innovative initiatives.

During your swearing in ceremony, Common Council President Thomas DePietro said with regard to the city of Hudson, "We have to decide whether we want to cater to outside investors or empower and serve the needs of those who have lived here for generations." Do you see the city being at a critical juncture when it comes to its standard of living?

At this moment in time, Hudson is experiencing a short-term rental epidemic. There has been a contingent of investors buying properties in recent years and converting those properties into short-term rentals disguised as popular weekend or vacation spots. In order to counterbalance the effects of high rental rates, I have made an effort to reach out to some of these groups to compromise, and possibly help the people who already live here.

The Galvan Foundation, for example, is one such group that has acquired multiple properties in the city in recent years. I have met with them with plans for a partnership that would be in the best interest of our city. I feel if they truly believe in the health and future of the residents of Hudson, they should consider investing in the construction of affordable housing units on some of these lots they have acquired. Spaces that can be designated a third to low income housing, a third to moderate income, and the rest at market rate would be a start in contributing to the quality of life to those who call Hudson home.

Stepping in for the first openly gay mayor of Hudson, who himself took over from the first female mayor of Hudson, have you felt any pressure now that you've made history as the first African American to be elected mayor of the city of Hudson, and has this victory furthered your ambitions for a future in politics?

There is certainly pressure. I think I felt the pressure a bit more while I was campaigning. During my campaign there were a lot of people counting on me, and I definitely sensed that. I always felt that I would win, but the sense that there is always a chance that it could go the other way and the feeling of people getting their hopes high, I just didn't want to let them down. I'm glad we made history, but I'm even more excited to prove to the city of Hudson that they have elected somebody who truly cares and knows what it means to live here. The political scene here in Hudson is a full contact sport, it can be rough and there has never been someone who looks like me in this position so I have had to learn how to navigate this system on my own.

As far as my future is concerned, I'm very much focused on Hudson. This is my hometown. I have spent most of my life here and the people here deserve a commitment from me. Despite being on the city council, this is truly the first time I can call myself a politician. Now this is my job, this is who I am, so we'll see where the future takes me, but for now my focus is on the city of Hudson. I made history here, but if I don't leave a legacy then none of that matters. •

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IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT FILM - IT'S ABOUT COMMUNITY

The hills are alive…

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

Above: When you think "music festival," you probably think of something like Fresh Grass, the bluegrass gathering at MassMOCA. Photo credit Fresh Grass.

Odds are, you are probably related to someone like my brother. Given the choice between buying groceries and buying tickets to see the band Phish, he'll bum a hot pretzel off the guy next to him at the concert. At this point, he's seen them over eighty times, including consecutive shows at Madison Square Garden leading up to the past five New Year's Eves.

Awhile back, I asked him why he was so devoted to the band, and he described it in almost religious terms: the transcendent feeling of 20,000 people simultaneously enthralled by music.

Live music has a unique ability to move an audience in ways that recordings never will, and wherever there is a community, there will be musical gatherings that bring everyone together in joyous celebration.

Our hills are no different, and while The Rolling Stones aren't likely to swing by on their worldwide tour, audiophiles can access plenty of performances in intimate venues that are destinations in and of themselves.

Tanglewood

The first to come to mind, of course, is Tanglewood, where, coincidentally, Phish's lead singer, Trey Anastasio, will headline the 2020 Popular Artist series along with household names like Ringo Starr and Arlo Guthrie. The wine-and-cheese set will be familiar with the iconic lawn at Tanglewood, but their 2019 addition of a four-building Tanglewood Learning Institute extends their offerings through all four seasons, covering a range of visual and performing artists. That's great and all, but listening to the Boston Symphony Orchestra outdoors on a perfect summer day is still the quintessential Berkshires experience.

Think local theaters

But I'm sure you already knew about Tanglewood. So where else can you catch a show without going to a major city? Think of local theaters. In Great Barrington, MA, the Mahaiwe Theater hosts 90s mainstays The Gin Blossoms this March, offering concertgoers a unique opportunity to experience the glamor of this magnificent theater that celebrates its 115th anniversary this year.

Architects back then knew what they were doing: the Mahaiwe's "use of electricity, sophisticated heating and ventilation systems and superb configuration made it a first-class performing hall almost one hundred years ago," explained the late Hugh Hardy, who restored the theater to its former glory in 2006.

Another glorious theater, the Colonial in Pittsfield, MA, hosts guitar prodigy Quinn Sullivan this March when he headlines the Blues & Brews Festival on the 21st. The 20 year-old *wunderkind* has performed with blues legends Buddy Guy and B.B. King, and *The Washington Post* has said Sullivan "may be the most gifted guitar prodigy on the planet, a blues player of jaw dropping virtuosity and depth who could turn out to be the Clapton of his generation." That's incredibly high praise, worthy of checking out with a mug full of local craft beer in a charming locale like the Colonial.

Similarly, Infinity Hall in Norfolk, CT, will charm you, no matter what style of music you go there to hear. It is the definition of intimate, with wood flooring and bistro seating, and you can almost hear the operatic strains that issued from its proscenium stage when it opened in 1883. Nowadays, cover bands for Neil Young, Clapton, the Eagles, and the Doors comprise their calendar, but for my money the eclectic Tex-Mex band Los Lobos offers incredible musicianship, covering a range of styles from boleros to zydecos. Check them out on February 21, along with Infinity Hall which is a destination in and of itself.

Continued on next page …

Above, top to bottom: The exposed wooden gables and warm glow of the stage at Infinity Music Hall are best appreciated from the bistro seating in the balcony. Photo credit Lora Warnick. February is a great time to start daydreaming about picnic lunches on the lawn at Tanglewood. Photo credit Alan Solomon/AP. Right: Every other year, Jeff Tweedy and his Wilco bandmates gather a host of talent for the Solid Sound festival. Photo credit Solid Sound Festival.

If you miss Los Lobos, however, you can always return to Norfolk, CT, in the summer for its Chamber Music Festival, performed by the Yale School of Music. This venerable institution embodies the rich tradition of music in the Litchfield hills, stretching back to the Battell family's efforts to bring world-class performances to what was once a layover between Albany and Hartford. The Music Shed built on the estate can accommodate 1,200 listeners, and since the passing of Ellen Battell Stoeckel in 1939, the Yale School of Music has honored her bequest to extend the "University's courses in music, art, and literature" to the public. Current director Melvin Chen will soon announce the slate of performances that will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the school this season.

Joyous celebration and MassMoCA

For those with an interest in world music, Sat Nam Fest on Lenox, MA's, Eastover estate brings sacred chanting in the Kundalini Yoga tradition for four days of joyous celebration on their scenic grounds. As anyone who knows Kundalini Yoga might expect, this is an immersive experience that incorporates activities for the mind, body, and soul that promise to leave participants rejuvenated and energized. Like most festivals, lodging is recommended, and Eastover provides impeccable accommodations that help to bring the Kundalini community together when the music ends.

The prototypical music festival venue, however, is MassMoCA, host to the biennial Solid Sound Festival (on hiatus in 2020) and Fresh Grass, a celebration of all things bluegrass. Few locations can pivot so deftly from regular business to host thousands of concertgoers for several days, but the influence of industry rock legends such as Wilco helps transform North Adams, MA, into a modern Woodstock featuring a range of indie rock heavyweights. Like most festivals, organizers have diversified the event beyond music to include comedians such as Tig Notaro and excellent author talks with the likes of Cheryl Strayed and John Hodgman. In addition to the perennial draw of Wilco, big names such as Courtney Barnett, Neko Case, Kurt Vile, and Real Estate guarantee good value for the $189 ticket prices. Look for it to return in 2021 for its seventh edition based on Jeff Tweedy's characteristically aloof commitment: "Barring some unforeseen problems, I don't see why not. I think that's the plan."

Rock stars are so cool.

The performers at the Fresh Grass Festival lean toward folk music, but household names like Allison Krauss and Old Crow Medicine Show anchor a slate of bluegrass artists that will keep your toes tapping for three straight days. For the first time ever, organizers are offering a chance for real devotees to get a head start at Fresh Grass Bentonville in Arkansas in late April, but the North Adams, MA, event is the epicenter of the Fresh Grass Foundation's work. Although (as of the writing of this article) they have not yet released the schedule of events, the roster of big names over the years is proof enough to clear your calendar for September 25-27.

At first glance, the *Main Street* area wouldn't appear to be a major crossroads for music tours, tucked between larger cities and lacking major indoor venues. Take a second look, however, and a host of intimate concert halls and varied musical offerings reveal the rich musical heritage of our area. For over a century now, our hills have been alive with the sound of music, bringing us together as a community through the magic of melody. To not join in at some point it to miss out on not only a cultural experience, but an experience of our local culture, too. •

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Picture perfect

Athabold's creative director and founder Shuheng Ji zooms in on her budding floral design studio

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Whether Shuheng Ji is behind the lens exploring the intricacies of a flower or in the studio creating exquisite floral arrangements, she remains focused on beauty and blooms.

Prior to launching Athabold, a floral design studio and boutique in Germantown, NY, Ji was employed as an actuary in New York City. She and her husband Dan Djuplin traded in the buzz of urban dwelling for the serenity of life in the Hudson Valley.

Although Ji's career as a floral designer is just blossoming, she has more than a decade of experience with flowers. After passing all the exams required to ascend to Fellow of Society of Actuaries and landing a director's position at Prudential, Ji began exploring the art of photography during her leisure time.

Subject of choice

Flowers were the budding photographer's subject of choice and macro photography – taking extreme close-ups of small subjects – was her key area of focus.

For years, Ji enjoyed zooming in to explore their undetected beauty. This resulted in intimate captures of countless blooms and bulbs. "I enjoyed how people reacted when they looked at my photos. Most people never notice the intricate details, textures, patterns, and colors within a single flower," says Shuheng Ji, founder and creative director of Athabold, which was started in 2017.

As for the name "Athabold," it journeyed over to America with Djuplin's Icelandic ancestors. While the meaning has evolved, to Ji and Djuplin, it means "everyone welcome." "When we thought about how we wanted to live our lives and who we wanted to work with, it was an idea that fit," admits Ji.

A closer look

Although Ji has always had an appreciation for flowers, a more profound connection to her subject bloomed later in life. Unlike many floral designers who enjoyed many seasons immersed in the serenity of the lush gardens that surrounded their rural homes, Ji spent much of her life as a city dweller. "This gives me a different perspective and appreciation to even the smallest or wildest blooms. Through my photography, I began to take a closer look," reveals Ji.

Most people are surprised at how she transitioned from numbers to design, but Ji believes that everything from her past influences her current work. As a photographer, Ji was already well acquainted with her subject. Her artistic eye was already drawn to the exquisite details, vibrant colors, and soft textures that lie just beyond the petals.

The entrepreneur believes that many aspects of her role as creative director – the way she envisions her designs, the ways she defines the Athabold brand, and the ways in which she provides customer experiences – stems from her previous careers.

Ji believes that the time spent enjoying her passion helped her develop her "eye" for unusual compositions. She mentions that her experience with photography has prompted her to consider how others perceive her work. While creating each blooming bouquet or striking arrangement, she ponders how the lighting will impact the hues and how the less obvious details may reveal themselves over time.

Continued on next page ...

All images with this article are courtesy of Athabold Flowers and depict the interior and exterior of the shop in Germantown, showcasing some of the beautiful flowers that Ji works with.

"This pushes me to provide points of interest within each arrangement. There are some elements that viewers see and immediately love, but other elements emerge as people spend more time with the arrangements and get a more intimate look," says Ji.

Signature style

Artistic, elegant, unique, and extraordinary are just a few words that convey Ji's style. Her portfolio boasts everything from natural, elegant large-scale designs for events to one-of-a-kind modern sculptural pieces.

When crafting her creations, Ji uses lots of greenery, tree branches, and wispy grasses. She reveals several sources of inspiration, specifically the work of Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf..

"I'm also influenced by themes and techniques of classical Chinese brush painting, which is often about 'leaving blankness' (making use of negative space) and making the composition seem poetic," says Ji. Her sense of adventure and curiosity also play a role in her creative process. She admits to enjoying some freedom while mingling materials and creating unexpected color combinations.

Since February is the season for celebrating love, many are currently seeking some design expertise. Those interested in gifting their Valentines with picture-perfect blooms can look to Ji for some creative inspiration.

Tis the season for gifting spring bulb flowers such as anemones, freesia, hyacinth, ranunculus, tulips, and early blossoming branches such as spirea and quince. Although Ji spends her days surrounded by luscious blooms, she cites ranunculus as a fave. "There are so many colors and the ruffled petals are so romantic and dreamy," reveals Ji.

Beyond roses and other more expected expressions of love, Ji recommends sending seasonal monochromatic bouquets that highlight depth and texture. She encourages intrepid senders to move beyond a single shade of red. Be creative. Think: blush, peach, and burgundy blooms.

At your service

With spring on the horizon, Ji will soon be preparing for wedding and event season. Stellar customer service is central to Athabold's business.

For the wedding clients, she enjoys the long-term collaborative process. "My best work happens when I get to know a client and I learn what they like and what they're trying to achieve. It's more challenging than being prescribed every detail, but it allows me to factor all these other elements in and create work that is truly unique, and something that represents who the clients are. That part is so rewarding to me," says Ji.

Seeing the reactions of her wedding clients has always inspired Ji, so she yearned to discover other ways to share those moments. That's how she made the move into retail.

"It's so easy to order an arrangement today, but to me, flowers are such an aesthetic product – something you can see, smell, and touch. I think the experience of ordering should be engaging," admits Ji.

Beyond the arrangements, Athabold offers delightful gifts such as art prints and pretty stationery adorned with floral motifs. Ji uses her photography skills to create many of the elegant patterns that grace the items.

While Athabold's event clients hail from all over, the retail shop makes Ji feel as though she's part of the community – and she is. Athabold plays a role in many celebrations throughout the area and beyond.

Ji enjoys when people come in with their own ideas and questions. Whether it's just a one-time arrangement or setting up a weekly arrangement for home or a business, she believes a two-way conversation is ideal. "I love creating arrangements that make people see things differently and maybe even think about flowers and nature differently," concludes Ji.

This year, go beyond the expected! Send a more personal, artistic floral expression created with love by Ji. •

To learn more about Ji and Athabold Flowers, visit them at 214 Main Street, Germantown, NY, give them a call at (518) 537-4215, or visit them online at www.athabold.com

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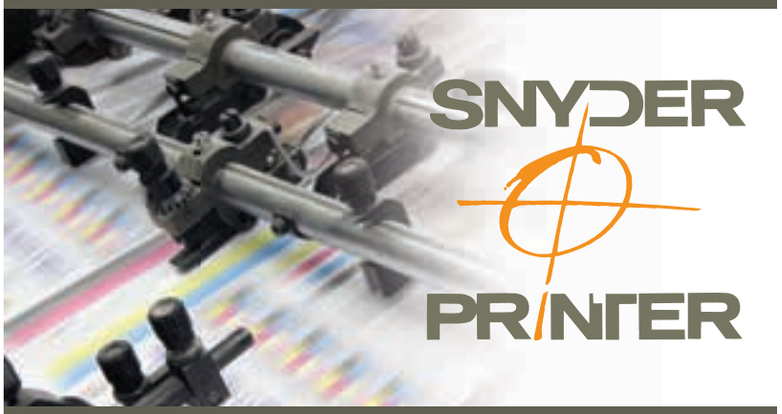

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Unblinking vision FILMMAKER ANNE MAKEPEACE

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

In his landmark 1964 book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* Marshall McLuhan created a firestorm of debate and controversy by declaring "the medium is the message." For Anne Makepeace, a filmmaker whose work has won a seemingly endless list of awards, the reverse is the case. Film is the medium, but her films have always been defined by the message.

Some film auteurs are intent on the "shock and awe' of bombastic special effects, far from credible characters and car/plane/boat/spaceship/motorcycle chases that dazzle and delight. Their audience skews younger, is transfixed by ever more explosive video games and pay the admission price at the local cineplex for the thrill of it all.

Not Anne.

Although she took a moment of her illustrious career to create the screenplay for a "Hollywood" film – the highly regarded *Thousand Pieces of Gold* starring Rosalind Chao and Chris Cooper that had a recent re-issue screening at The Moviehouse in Millerton, NY – Anne Makepeace has fashioned a career as a documentarian.

From here to there

Graduation from Stanford University set Anne on a trajectory to be a teacher, a career she enhanced with a graduate degree from the same university, and a teaching position in a nearby school system. English was her forte, and as she began to craft a curriculum for her students, the notion of incorporating film was born.

So compelling was Anne's engagement with film that she eventually returned to Stanford to capture another advanced degree … this time in film production. The die was cast. She had become a filmmaker.

A complete picture of her accomplishments is likely best discovered on Anne Makepeace's website: MakepeaceProductions.com. The cascading titles with dates and thumbnail summaries move, in reverse, from *Moonchild*, released in 1984 and presented on an international collection of broadcast and cablecast outlets. From HBO, Bravo, and PBS to ABC Australia, ZDF Germany, and Channel 4 London, the docu/drama captured the attention of film aficionados and, most importantly, those who became immersed in the story of Chris Carlson, a young man who became ensnared and eventually freed himself from the "Moonies."

A storyteller

Anne Makepeace had established her credentials as a documentary storyteller, inviting the audience to become immersed in ideas, struggles, human attempts at resolution, and the ultimate play-off that life brings to all of us.

These are not flights of fantasy or pieces of easily consumed fiction, but real stories presented by real people. Her perspective on pursuing the essence of a story and fashioning it into a viable film is quite simple. Makepeace explained, "I love it when my films take me into new worlds and cultures, whether that be Native Americans, Somali refugees, Moonies, architecture with I.M. Pei, tribal cultures with Edward Curtis, war photography with Robert Capa, and even the culture of my own Puritan New England family, in *Baby It's You*."

The avenues open to documentarians from both the funding and the presentation perspectives have none of the splash and bravado of theatrical films. There may be categories within the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that invite selection of the best films of any given year and award them with the coveted OSCAR. On percentage, however, the public's attention is paid to love stories, war stories, action films, crushingly handsome actors, adapted musicals, costumes, musical scores and directors who are "bankable" and given the chance to spend many millions of dollars

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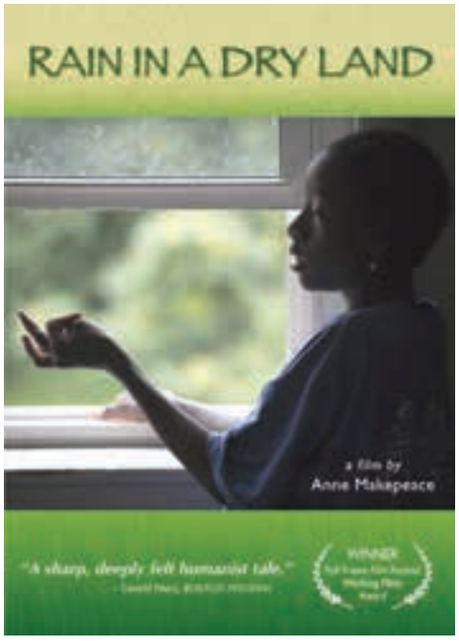
Above: Anne Makepeace. Below, left: The art for Makepeace's film, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. Imagery courtesy of Anne Makepeace.



Above: The art for Makepeace's two films, *Rain in a Dry Land* and *Tribal Justice*. Below, right: Filming for *Tribal Justice*. Imagery courtesy of Anne Makepeace.

to create a few hours of complete diversion.

Documentaries are for PBS, occasional relief on Netflix, and international markets eager for programming. For Anne Makepeace, that harsh reality has required her to be more than a writer/producer/director, and added fundraiser/business manager/promoter to her efforts. The extraordinary reach of her most recent film, *Tribal Justice*, is a fine example of that almost overwhelming set of responsibilities.

Tribal Justice

Tribal Justice is, in quick telling, a straightforward production. Through research and contacts, encouragement and sheer determination, Anne had become aware of the parallel legal system that exists within the indigenous tribes of the United States.

Political scientist Ruth Cowan had been searching for a director to take on the subject of the importance of tribal courts in the Native American communities. With suggestions coming from many sides, conversations and interviews completed, the choice for her was quite simple. Anne Makepeace had the credentials and the conviction to focus on the message, immerse herself in the communities selected, and deliver a statement worthy of the topic.

On Native American land and in their communities, there are judges who deal with the safety of their communities and mete out justice to those who break the local laws. It is a more traditional form of justice that focuses on the offender at the same time it deals with those impacted and strives for "healing and resolution, not punishment and incarceration."

But, as intriguing as the process might be, how could the story be told in a way that elevates, informs and enlightens? Start to finish, the project wound through four years, involving cross-country trips, endless meetings, hopeful conversations, and the inevitable all-consuming question of how to find adequate funding to proceed.

The answer comes in the form of an intricate dance that involves making a seemingly endless set of applications to grant-making organizations, foundations, and funds. Being turned down for a grant does not mean ultimate despair, it means trying ten more applications and learning what appeals and what does not.

Partial funding in place, the painstaking task of establishing credibility with the subjects of the film and getting them to allow the camera and microphone to be part of their most personal struggles is underway. Anne Makepeace can assure you that once principal photography has begun, the outcome of the piece becomes as much of a moving target as can be imagined. What will be said? Who will appear? More importantly, who will disappear?

With the unshakable support of her director of photography, Barney Broomfield, the result of Anne's exploration of *Tribal Justice* as delivered by two extraordinary Native American judges, Abby Abinanti, Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribe, and Claudette White, Chief Judge of the Quechan Tribe, has gained a succession of heralded screenings, appearing on PBS in the POV series and called by John Anderson in his *Wall Street Journal* review, "a lovely, bittersweet film about an intensely delicate subject."

Nods and awards

Anne Makepeace has allowed her curiosity and dedication to carry her through a variety of film projects that have all been based on that underlying principle of presenting an important message. Her film about Somali Bantu refugees, *Rain in a Dry Land,* garnered an EMMY nomination, *Coming to Light* was short-listed for Academy Award (OSCAR) consideration and named best in category at film festivals around the world.

Whether documenting the career of architect I.M. Pei or the photographic genius of Robert Capa or laying bare her own family struggle to adopt a child, *Baby It's You*, which was premiered at Sundance Film Festival and was screened at the Whitney Biennial 2000, for Anne Makepeace, the message has always been medium. •

One can review Anne Makepeace's filmography and catch a glimpse of the messages she has shared on her website Makepeace-Productions.com.

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Shots by Tilton

A self-taught photographer using nature as her studio. Like us on Facebook. spl.tilton@yahoo.com. shotsbytilton.weebly.com

Shots by Tilton stands as a shining example of why small business endures in the Hudson Valley. What started as a genuine appreciation for the art of photography has flourished into a previously undiscovered skill for Samantha Leonard-Tilton, premiere photographer and owner of Shots by Tilton. "I always loved photography growing up, but never had a nice enough camera to see what I could do with it. In the fall of 2014 I treated myself to a nice Canon Rebel and started experimenting with landscape photography. I didn't start photographing people until 2015 and found out that I had a real talent for capturing the personalities of families with their loved ones." While there remains still more to be accomplished for Samantha, her discerning eye for capturing the moment, and her love of the natural landscape, has already proved a powerful combination. "During my photography sessions, I am very focused on my client's pictures being unique. I put all of my effort into turning the pictures into something that my clients will cherish for years to come. When someone tells me I've captured the spirit of their child in a photograph it is incredibly rewarding. I love being able to freeze memories and I know that when I capture those moments that you will be staring at those pictures for years to come, and I'm so happy to be able to do that for people."

Taconic Ridge Farm

Weddings, retreats, and lodging. 2846 Route 23, Hillsdale, NY. (717) 369-3310, ext. 12. taconicridgefarm.com

After years spent scouring the area for the perfect home, Jim and Pam Carden finally found the combination of charm and space to match their rural sensibilities and today, are determined to share that beauty with the surrounding community. "We were not initially looking for an event space, but the property immediately struck us as something that could be more than just a wonderful place to share with family and friends," says Jim who, along with Pam, formally launched Taconic Ridge Farm in early 2019. "While we initially started off doing Airbnb rentals, we have been steadily adding weddings and other events into our calendar." Both Jim and Pam remain eager to share the pastoral beauty of their Hillsdale property with people in search of an eclectic mix of ventures, "We are primarily a wedding and retreat venue. The main house has five bedrooms and sleeps 12, while the cottage sleeps another four. There are numerous outbuildings and spaces for gatherings; a large barn (holds up to 150), an open-sided Pavilion, a large partially covered deck, and many other interesting nooks and quiet spaces on about eight acres. In addition, we would love to host pop-up dinners, music events, movie nights, and maker fairs. We are excited to create more of these types of opportunities for writers, artists, and other groups."

Handyboys

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Music is in Troy Ramcharran's DNA. Inspired by his time growing up in the Caribbean, where social functions were a large part of everyday life, Troy's connection with music was inspired in part by his father. "My father started it for me, he built one of the loudest sound systems powered only from a car battery." Troy moved to the US in 1995 and three decades later he remains compelled to follow his love for music wherever it leads him. These days, it has taken form in Handyboys, a business Troy says, "provides all things to transform, enhance and reinforce your event. From sound, lighting décor to temporary power." Though Handyboys may be based in Lakeville, CT, and Queens, NY, there are no limits to where they will travel in the Tri-state area. "We serve people and events throughout the Northeast, from Maine to Pennsylvania including New England and the Berkshires. Most importantly, we go where we are needed." Troy's passion for music and the event industry has allowed him to experience some of the most satisfying benefits of being a business owner, "We get to travel and work at some extraordinary venues, work daily with dreamers, visionaries and influencers." Troy continues, "I feel this area is flourishing, more and more weddings are taking place in our backyards, and I love being a part of the celebrations."

Roots and Stems

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Sometimes all it takes are two green thumbs and a wealth of artistic ambition to launch one of the most popular small businesses in the Hudson Valley. "After working together as flower gardeners for several years, we decided we wanted to move in a more artistic direction, which led us to start our own small business called Roots and Stems in 2018," say owners and friends Kristen Jones and Julia Zamboni who started the business based on a mutual love for seeing how decorative arrangements can inspire and liven up any occasion. "We offer bouquets for any occasion, wedding and event services, potted arrangements, winter wreaths, and various succulent, air plant, dried flower, and pressed flower creations. What sets us apart from other florists is that we have our own wild style, and use seasonal, local flowers when we can. We love to incorporate foraged wildflowers as well." Though Roots and Stems may still be in its relative infancy, both Kristen and Julia find the key to growth is their connection to the community, "What we find most rewarding is working closely with our customers to create arrangements that are not only beautiful and fragrant, but also bring their own aesthetic visions to life. We truly enjoy getting to know our customers, seeing their reactions when they are presented with the finished product is an immeasurable experience."

INSURING YOUR WORLD

The New Year brings about change as well as commitment to make our lives better. To that end it is an opportune time to pull all your insurance policies out and see if you have had any life events that might affect how these policies are written. Life insurance is the first to be overlooked, do you have adequate coverage? Have you taken on additional debt for a vacation home or had an additional child or two, did you open a new business that required borrowed capital? If the answer is yes to any of these questions then you should probably take out a new policy. How about your homeowners policy, is there enough coverage on your current residence? Building costs are running $250-$300/ square foot which makes a 2500 square foot home, including the foundation, $687,500 to rebuild. Do you have enough coverage on your current policy, if not call your agent for an evaluation. Has one of your children just moved out on their own into a new apartment? If so, have they purchased tenant homeowners coverage for their belongings and personal liability? Their landlord is not responsible for their belongings should a fire occur. Lastly, what about personal liability, do you have an umbrella policy should you get sued for more than your underlying limits on your home or auto policy? If not, it may be high time to purchase one, they start at $150 per $1 million per year! Remember, people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan ... so complete a quick review.

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PARTY PRIORITIES

Looking at your 2020 calendar with thoughts of gatherings and celebrations? Whether it's a backyard soirée under the stars or a wedding vow renewal ceremony and after party – prioritizing is a key component to insuring success, ease and happiness as the host:

Manage your time wisely. Be honest with yourself about what it takes to build out and manage an event. Think about how to best utilize the time you have, what you do and don't enjoy doing, the resources you can enlist for support, and whether you want to be a part of the fun or work the party. Creating this vision on the front side of the planning will insure your enjoyment throughout the process.

Decide what is most important to you. If it's all about the food and drink, make securing a fabulous caterer and menu your first to-do, and budget accordingly.

Book a great photographer. Whether you're a photo-album-keeper or social media fanatic, we can all agree that there is nothing better than having a collection of fantastic party photos of our favorite people. To cherish and to share, capturing and reliving a joyful event over and over again is the icing on the cake.

Make your guests' experience memorable. There are endless ways to make each guest feel welcomed, and it doesn't have to mean sending them off with a party favor. Creating moments that are personalized and meaningful and utilizing details that take some deeper thoughts are so worth making a priority. This is the fine tuning that comes from the heart, allowing you to step away from the checklist for a moment and weave the micro details into the overall plan, making each guest feel appreciated and grateful that they shared in your celebration.

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Five useful tips for event / party makeup:

Ladies, part of getting dolled up to go out for an event or party is to make sure your makeup is flawless. Here are some simple tips to help you get ready and look your absolute best:

1. Base your makeup off of your dress or whatever you may be wearing. Use this as inspiration.
2. Get a facial or any other skin care treatments 2-3 days prior to the event. This will give you an even complexion and will allow makeup to look that much better and smoother.
3. Use good quality makeup and brushes.
4. Moisturize and prime before applying makeup for extended wear.
5. The "smokey eye" makeup look is always a classic and reliable option for events.

Now go have fun – you look great!

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Speaking to professionals

Public speaking is something that rarely finds itself at the top of people's favorite hobbies. As a professional in the field of higher education, I have both given lessons in the classroom and presented to other educators and administrators in a conference setting. While there may be no cure for stomach butterflies and sweaty palms, here are a few tips that will give you the confidence to get your message across.

PREPARE: You can never be over prepared, however the opposite is almost certainly true and can mean a bad experience before you even take the stage. Try and make sure you have at least one or two extra materials as they relate to your presentation.

GET COMFORTABLE: This may seem obvious but try and get comfortable with the podium or whatever platform you will use to give your presentation from. Take a look around the room before you speak, get comfortable with the space where you will be speaking.

ASK QUESTIONS: A great way to break up the static nature of speaking publicly is to ask questions. Asking questions is also a great way to slow yourself down and articulate.

CIRCLE BACK: Never feel like you're talking too much or too little. Circle back to previous points for emphasis and consolidate ideas.

Truthfully, you will never say everything you wanted to before your presentation. Just be yourself and it will all be over before you know it!

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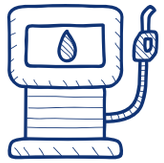

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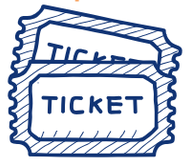

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