



Root Beer Float

**Root Beer and
Checker Club**
Established 1944
February 2024

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A publication of the

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Checker Club**

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Issue 208

Root Beer and Checker Club President's Message February, 2024



Wow, we're already into February. We're enjoying another mild winter, and the days are getting longer. But I'll keep my snow shovel and snow blower ready, just in case.

February – that means: Valentines Day!, Superbowl!, Taking a trip to some warm and sunny place!, getting ready for our tax returns (ugh), finally taking down all those holiday decorations, and of course enjoying our Root Beer and Checker lunches - every Tuesday at Bahrs' and on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month at Luigi's in Little Silver.

With Valentines Day dead ahead, here's a few funny quotes about Love and Relationships:

"Being a good husband is like being a good stand-up comic – you need 10 years before you can even call yourself a beginner" (Jerry Seinfeld)

"I'm happily married, but about once a week I catch my wife looking at me like "I'm going to have to let you go." (Jim Gaffigan)

"Women get into more bad relationships than men. Why? Because men see red flags and they bolt. Women see red flags and they say, "I can fix that". (Gina Brillon)

Calling all theater lovers: on Sunday, March 17, we will be seeing the Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece 'Sunday in the Park with George', which is one of the most acclaimed musicals, by Sondheim. It will be presented at the Axelrod Theater. Details can be found in this issue of the Float.

Finally, some great news: the 'Holmdel Antenna', will be preserved in its original location up on Crawford Hill. Holmdel Township has taken possession of the 35-acre property that is home to the Horn Antenna, used to confirm the Big Bang Theory. As reported by nj.com news (January 24, 2024): "The site, once slated for development, will now become a public park. The Horn Antenna recorded a hissing sound on May 20, 1964, that was used to confirm the Big Bang Theory. Robert Wilson and Arno Penzias, former Bell Labs physicists, earned the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1978 for their work." (cont.)

Club News

RB&CC President's Message January, 2024 (cont.)

You may be wondering 'how does knowing anything about the beginning of the entire cosmos affect me, when I'm trying to balance making more doctors' appointments with seeing grandkids, and when the world seems to be on fire, etc.?'. To get a sense of our emerging cosmic perspective, I would recommend a short and readable book "Astrophysics for People In A Hurry" by Neil DeGrasse Tyson.

Our club website says it all: **The Club feels that it has, and will continue to have, a membership that represents the outstanding business and professional people of the community. Let's have lunch sometime!** <https://rootbeerandcheckerclub.org/about-us>

Rich Vodhanel, President of the Root Beer and Checker Club



**January's
Birthday Cake**
Photo - Jim Powers

Frank is MIA!

Not Frank Haftl, but our Root Beer and Checker Club mascot and Looney Tunes tweetie bird 'Frank'.

This photo shows Frank Haftl proudly displaying Looney Frank.

In honor of Frank Haftl's legendary jokes (which are funnier in German!), Looney Frank is the prize awarded for a week to a club member who tells a great joke during lunch. Thanks for Al Zager who instituted this time honored tradition for our club. But unfortunately Looney Frank is now MIA. It would be appreciated, with no questions asked, if someone would return Looney Frank.



From The Membership Committee

This month I'd like to welcome **Douglas Stives** as the latest member to join our club.

Doug, as he likes to be called, and Liz hail from Tinton Falls. Doug currently is a professor at Monmouth University. In his spare time, he enjoys sailing and skiing and he is also a member of the Rumson Country Club and the Shrewsbury Sailing & Yacht Club.

On behalf of the executive officers of the Root Beer & Checker Club, I welcome Doug as a valued member and look forward to seeing them at our meetings and social events.

Sal Di'Fede

Chairman, Membership Committee

**If you have outstanding club payments and did/do not receive a December invoice from Donna Topinka please advise Charlie Parr
cdparro3@msn.com**

Club News (cont.)

Our Birthdays This Month

Dusty Griffith	7	Rob Sanders	11	Jay Cordaro	15
Larry Dennis	15	Art Zeller	15	Henry Nemser	22
Ron Ruberg	22	Ed Fenton	26		

Note: Friday (cash) lunches now offered at Luigi's Famous Pizzeria on the **first and third** Fridays of each month

February's **Birthdays Cake** - Bahr's Tuesday, February 20

Axelrod's ***Sunday in the Park with George*** - Sunday **3/17** - Details page 4

RB&CC visit to Saratoga Springs, NY - **July 31 thru August 1** - Details page 5

FYI - If anyone is having a problem with transportation to our lunches or special events, please let Jim Powers (seamuspowers@yahoo.com) know.

Possible multiple speakers are in the works - details to follow.

Possible visit to the Battleship New Jersey. Guided tours are every day, starting at 12 noon, \$35 for seniors. Details to follow.

If interested please contact Bill Tice - wrt2013@verizon.net

Further details on page 6

Note - Emails from Dona Topinka are your RB&CC invoices ! Please use separate checks and note "Annual Dues, Party, etc."

CARE COMMITTEE

Note, that if anyone should know of a fellow member being ill, incapacitated or unfortunately deceased, please let one of the Board members know so that as a club we can get in touch by phone call, get well/sympathy card, or hospital/nursing home visit.

Club News (cont.)**Theater News**

March 17, 2024 at 3 pm

A number of tickets are still available

\$47 per ticket

The first musical in the Axelrod's **Sondheim Centennial Project** will be the Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece ***Sunday in the Park with George***, written with **James Lapine**, regarded as one of the most acclaimed musicals of all time. The 1984 musical, which originally starred Bernadette Peters and Mandy Patinkin, was inspired by the French pointillist painter Georges Seurat's painting A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte. The Broadway production was nominated for an astounding ten Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

If interested please contact Charlie Parr

cdparro3@msn.com

Club News (cont.)

RB&CC visits Saratoga Springs, NY in 2024 ***Bruce Rodman***

Hello everyone I've done some preliminary research about an RB&CC trip next summer to Saratoga Springs, NY & here are some thoughts.

Dates: Wednesday and Thursday nights, July 31 to August 1, 2024 (there is no racing on Mondays or Tuesdays, and weekends are challenging for dining and track reservations).

Accommodations: Several options, which would probably be left up to the individual members to make their own reservations. Several of the newer properties downtown are already sold out, but the Saratoga Hilton (downtown) is available for about \$400 per night. About 20 minutes south of Saratoga is the Hampton Inn of Clifton Park, NY for about \$215 per night. There are other options but probably not much else downtown.

Activities: Arrive **Wednesday** July 31 by noon, lunch downtown, which I could reserve. After lunch, a visit to the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame on Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs. Walking tour of downtown or catch the late races across the street. Dinner, which I would arrange.

Thursday: Arrive at Saratoga Racecourse around 7:30am for backstretch tour hosted by me as your tourguide, followed by breakfast on your own. 1PM -- attend the races at the oldest thoroughbred racetrack in the Americas, seating about \$50 per person to be arranged by me. Dinner, which I would arrange.

Friday: Depart

Arranging accommodations is the trickiest part -- my thinking is that each member would make his own reservations. I could try to get group rates and, if successful, communicate that info to interested members. The only thing that would be a "group" expense would be seating at the track, which I could front, and members reimburse me. Everyone could pay their own Museum fee, and the backstretch tour is free. Nonmembers are welcome, too.

Please let me know if you are interested. Thanks.

Bruce Rodman

732-759-5945

brodman8@gmail.com

Possible visit to the Battleship New Jersey. Guided tours are every day, starting at 12 noon, \$35 for seniors. Date(s) to follow.

The New Jersey will be heading to drydock for maintenance from the end of February to Memorial Day.

Tours during the drydock period will focus on the hull since we will be able to see the propellers.

For \$100 dollars we can fire the 20mm gun, for \$500 we can fire a 5 inch gun. Of course we would divide the cost among ourselves and draw straws to see who gets to do the deed.

If interested please contact Bill Tice - wrt2013@verizon.net



The Status of the War in Israel - Dan Rozett - January 23



Al Zager introduced Dan as follows: “Dan is the Director of Community Relations and Israel Engagement for the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey. He is a native of New Jersey who has served as a member of the Israel Defense Forces. He will speak about the current situation in the war between Israel and Hamas/Hezbollah.”

Dan began by describing the events of October 7. The attack began with a heavy barrage of rockets for several hours. Three quarters of the country were under attack which served as a diversion. Next 3000 Hamas terrorists attacked a broad swath of Israel killing about 1400 Israelis and taking 240 hostages. How Hamas was able to launch such an attack as a surprise is something that will be the topic of investigations after the war has ended. The atrocities and horror perpetrated by Hamas and Palestinian civilians stunned everyone. It

took 19 hours for Israel to mount its first response. That too will be investigated.

Israel’s response was to attack the Hamas forces in Gaza City in the north first because of the large Hamas concentrations of missiles and materiel stored there, and the site of a major Hamas command center. At this point, northern Gaza has been subdued, and the current stage of the war is centered on the central portion of Gaza. That too is almost completed or will be soon. The final stage will be to eliminate Hamas in southern Gaza.



Dan pointed out that Israel has been hit by over 14,000 rockets from Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon as well as Gaza. Many Israelis have been displaced due to these attacks. Israel’s plan is to continue to press actions against Hamas to destroy their tunnel systems and their cache of weapons. However, the large scale efforts now underway cannot continue for a long period of time. Israel’s soldiers are volunteers and the economy is being hurt by so many workers now in uniform. Eventually, a buffer zone will be established between Israel and Gaza.



Dan talked about how Hamas has deliberately established its headquarters in densely populated civilian areas. Civilian casualties are a terrible part of any war. Israel has tried to minimize the casualties by informing civilians of impending attacks by leaflets and other means. Over 190 thousand tons of relief aid has been supplied by Israel. They are very mindful of

humanitarian plight of the Palestinians.

While we ate lunch, Dan showed us some videos from the front lines describing the war in detail. Dan’s presentation lasted for over an hour; far more than can be covered in this summary. We appreciate his taking the time to let us know what is happening over there. *Jim Powers ... photos by Paul Hester and Bill Tice*

All of Dan’s slides can be accessed by [this link](#).

Runinations on Some Old Photographs - Jim Powers

It's been my good fortune over the years to be involved in photography. It has given me a lot of enjoyment. During the past several years I've been lucky to find some very old images and I'd like to share some of them with you. Today we take photos instantly with our phones in color and can send them anywhere in seconds. What once was a laborious, time-consuming process requiring skill and effort has become effortless and ubiquitous.

The first type of photography is the daguerreotype, invented by Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre. After years of work his Daguerreotype process was announced in 1839 in the French Academy of Science publication. Daguerre partnered with Joseph Niepce whose son, Isidore was also credited with Daguerre in the article. Incidentally, Joseph Niepce was credited with making the first permanent photograph of rooftops from his window in 1826 or 1827. Daguerre's name was the one that became popular. Daguerreotypes became an instant success both in Europe and America. For the first time portraits were not limited to those who could afford to pay an artist.



Notice how stiff the subjects are. Hands had to be hidden or supported. People didn't smile – not because they were unhappy, but because you can't hold a smile for the length of time it took to expose the metal plate. Some photo studios had metal support rods to help people sit still long enough. Daguerreotypes were small and often set in elaborate metal frames and cases. Besides the small size, they could not be copied, so only Uncle Ed had Aunt Martha's picture.

In the mid 1850's collodion on glass negatives began to replace Daguerreotypes. Now Cousin Mike could have a copy of Aunt Martha's picture to pin on the wall. Their use continued for many years with improvements in the type of light sensitive coating used. I always wanted to obtain a glass negative, and one day while poking around the Dancing Dog antique shop in northeast Pennsylvania I found a whole box of about 250 4X5 inch glass negatives taken by Andrew Smith of West Lafayette, Indiana. Some 4X5 film negatives were included as well. Smith was apparently a well-to-do farmer who took up photography as hobby just as we are wont to do today. The only information I had about the negatives was that they were taken between 1910 and 1915. Just stuck in a box without any protective sleeves, the negatives varied widely

(Continued on page 9)

Ruminations (Cont.)

in quality. Quite a few were stuck together, but many of them were good enough to print. How I did this is described on my website – powerspix.com. Since many of you are avid sailors, I have included some of his pictures of ships.



A five masted sailing ship being towed.



First Class Cruiser either Pennsylvania Class or Tennessee Class. Length 504 ft Beam 69.5 Ft



California Class built between 1903 and 1905. Length 502 ft beam 69.5 ft.. Classified as an armored cruiser, there were 6 ships in this class.



Delaware Class, a dreadnought built in 1907. It's length was 510 ft beam 85 ft.

Ruminations (cont.)



The Washington Monument circa 1910 or so.



This is an example of what these glass negatives looked like.



This is the resulting print. I considered this to be a decent quality.; many were much worse.

This project was very interesting. People haven't changed—we still take pictures of people, places, and things that are important to us.. It's just a lot easier now.

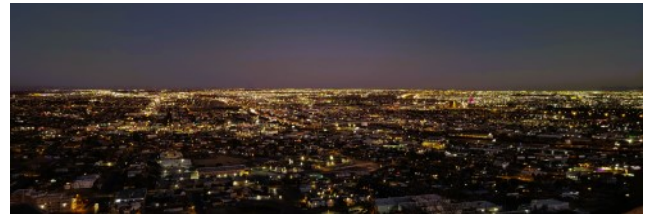
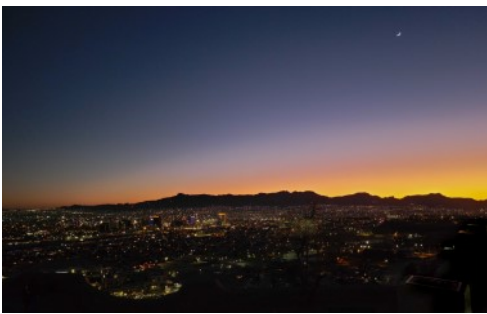
All the printable slides are on my website. www.powerspex.com

Enjoy...Jim

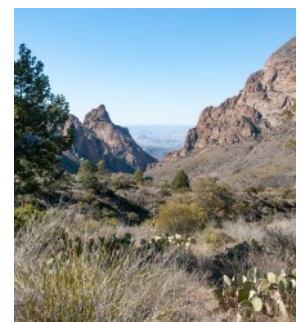
A note of thanks to Bill Tice for helping to identify the ships.

Hiking in Big Bend, Guadalupe, and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks January 13 to 21, 2024 - Jerry Mahood

Knowing that it is way too hot to hike in Texas in the summer, I signed up for a January Road Scholar hiking trip to Big Bend, Guadalupe, and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks in the far western part of Texas and New Mexico. A little to my surprise, the weather in the high, desert mountains was just as cold as New Jersey. Flying into El Paso a day early gave me time to get a car and explore the area before joining the hiking tour. As the sun sets over El Paso, one sees a small downtown and a lot of urban sprawl. There is a band of light that marks the border with Mexico and, interestingly, the bulk of the lights are in Mexico.

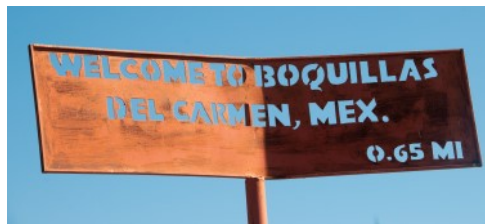


The next morning, I drove along the Mission Trail, which is a string of adobe mission churches. They are still in use and the service I dropped in on was well attended. Not too surprising, the service was in Spanish so I can't report much about the service. I did ride along the "Wall" for a way but didn't see any immigrant activity. The next morning, a group of 24 hikers, two guides, and two minibuses headed for the long ride to Big Bend National Park area with mini hikes and visits along the way. Settling into Terlingua, TX, for four nights gave us a base for our numerous hikes into canyons and up into the mountains. Parts of Terlingua are an old, ghost, mining town, and the occupied parts seem to be stuck in a 30- or 40-year-old time warp as everything is old. Many people, like our two guides, who are married, live off the grid. (cont.)



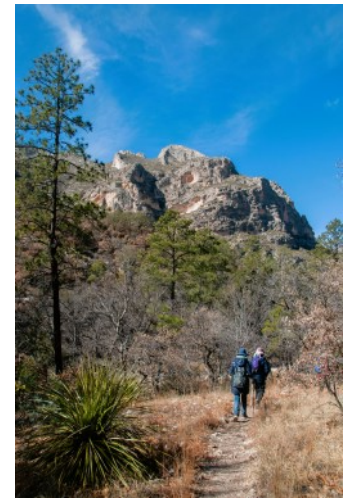
Hiking in Bid Bend, Guadalupe, and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks January 13 to 21, 2024 - Jerry Mahood (*cont.*)

The next day's hike was into Boquillas Canyon and the Rio Grande. There is no need for a "Wall" here as the land is barren, canyons steep, and there is nowhere to go if you cross the river. Along the trail there were "souvenirs" hanging from trees or on the ground with a can to collect payments. A Mexican rider was near by selling tamales out of his saddle bag. After a short ride to a Class B entry point, which recognizes the past easy access of locals, we crossed into Mexico. The Rio Grand is very narrow and only knee deep so you can wade across or to keep dry and take "ferry boat." A quiet, dusty little village is at the end of a short walk. There are many souvenir booths and little children trying to sell trinkets but very little pressure. One of the many dilapidated buildings clearly shows the adobe construction method. (*cont.*)



Hiking in Big Bend, Guadalupe, and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks January 13 to 21, 2024 - Jerry Mahood (*cont.*)

The next day we headed into New Mexico to visit an 1876 ranch and Carlsbad Caverns. A mile walk down 750 feet of elevation brought us onto a circular path in the big room area and all the interesting formations. Mercifully, there is an elevator up. The last hike was a seven-mile round trip hike in Guadalupe National Park on a canyon trail going back and forth across a stream bed and ending at a 1936 geologists cabin. After a ride back to El Paso, we had a farewell dinner, said our goodbyes to new friends, and headed back to our respective homes the next day. *Jerry Mahood*



Big Bend_Guadalupe_Carlsbad-Terlingua (*2 more for prior page*)



The Zagers visit Nashville - February 5th - Al Zager

Robin and I toured Nashville, Tennessee today. I proudly wore my Root Beer & Checker cap. Here we are at the Ryman Auditorium. This was the original location of the Grand Ole Opry until they moved to a much larger facility outside of the downtown area. Below are some photos for the Float proving that RB&C has set its foot in Nashville, Tenn. *Al Zager*

Robin and me at the now
not-so-new
Grand Ole Opry.

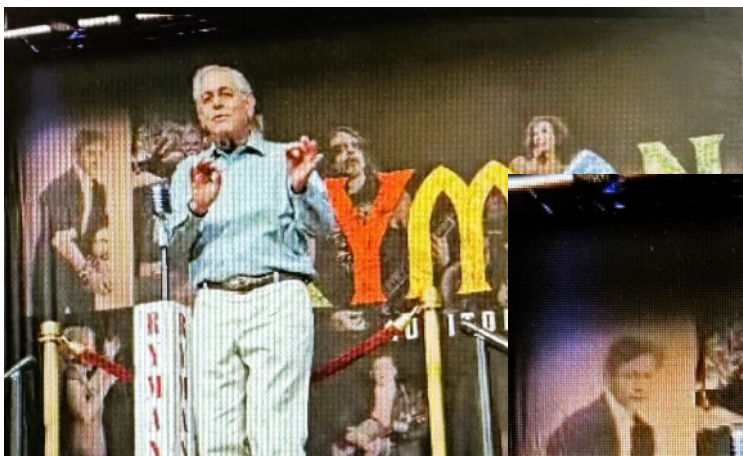
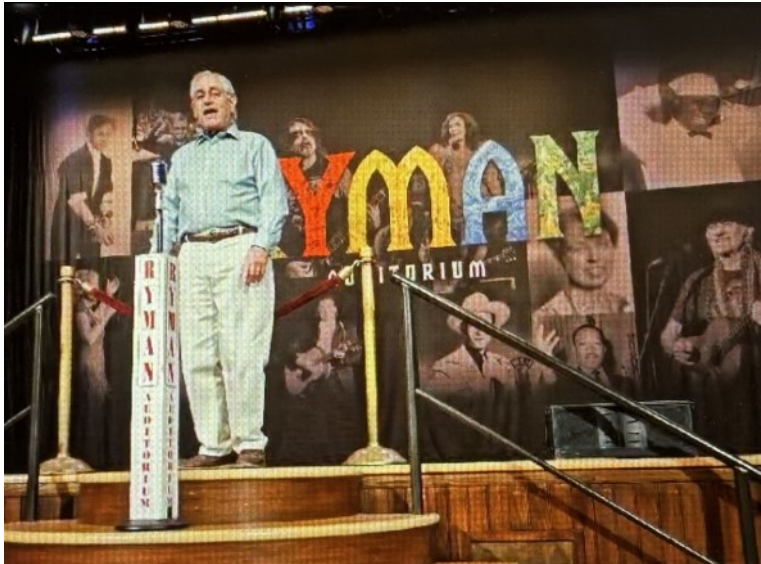


>>
On Broadway
outside of the
Lucky Bastard
Saloon.

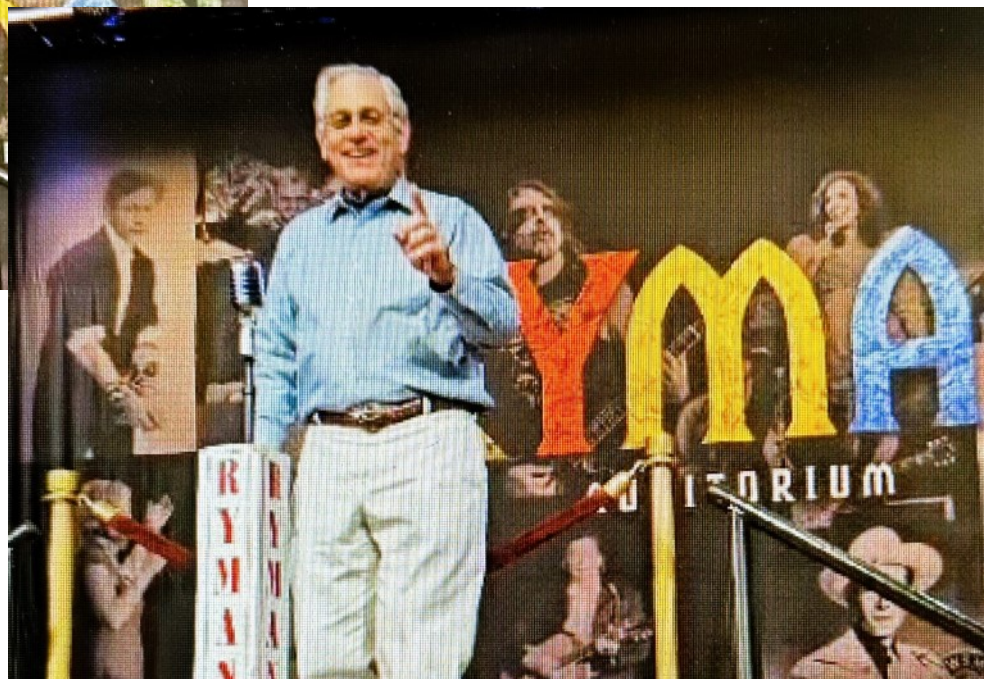
<<
With Charlie
Pride outside of
the Ryman
Auditorium, the
original home of
the Grand Ole
Opry.



The Zagers visit Nashville - February 5th - Al Zager (cont.)



These three are actually from a video of me singing on the Ryman Auditorium stage, the original home of the Grand Ole Opry.



Cutting Coconuts in the Caribbean - Marty Torbert



We are happy to announce the release of our new album called "*FEZZIWHIG VI*".

This is a collection of original songs written or co-written and produced by yours truly, Martin Torbert, and performed by the artist Fezziwhig.

It is the 6th album in the Fezziwhig series.

The new album, as well as the first five albums, is now available for streaming worldwide on 150 sites including Spotify, Apple Music, I Tunes, YouTube, Amazon Music, Deezer, Reverbnation, as well as many others.

Here are several links to the music.

<https://music.apple.com/us/album/fezziwhig-vi/1725437935>

<https://open.spotify.com/album/1EoIVM6Nt8yU1mGU9j68yS?si=ytK-AfMoSb6NBTv1BL5Lg>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_k8u5VlhTexQu_bi4HXZo7DzY9nnL7hXiQ&playnext=1&index=1

Enjoy,

Marty

Winter Wonderland ? - Duncan Jay



The annual meeting
of new residents is this
weekend.



Board meeting and lunch at Bahr's - 2/6/24
Check out all those happy people !



Business Bulletin Board



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Songs of Martin Torbert

Recorded by the artist "Fezziwhig" available on the Web at:
Spotify/Apples Music/iTunes/YouTube/Amazon Music/Deezer/ReverbNation/Etc.

Google: **Fezziwhig**

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*We all long for
smooth sailing.*

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**Hats ! We've got Hats !
Thanks to Terry Flynn
for making this happen !**

**\$22 each billed through
monthly invoices.**



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732-963-7628

Cartoon of the Month !

Structural Engineering Quiz

Define "rebar"

When I hit the same bar twice in one night.

I THINK I'LL QUIT TEACHING, BOB.

THAT BARS SOUNDING GOOD.

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