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SAM

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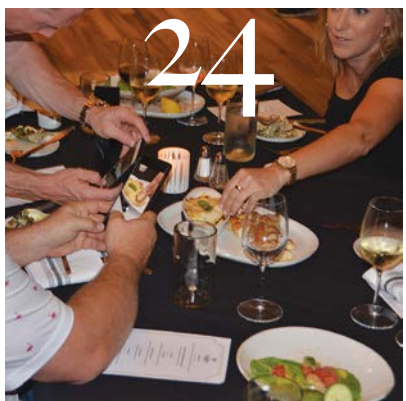
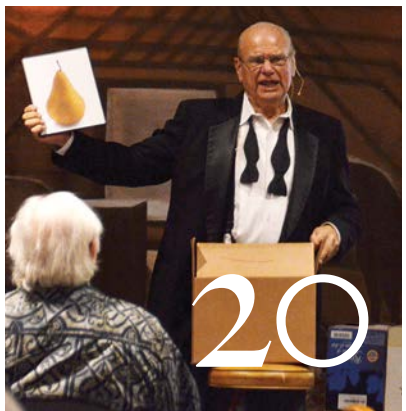
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January's printed edition will feature much of the same content without reference to holiday and will be available via our regular distribution. Order or subscribe on-line: StAugustineMagazine.com

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Publisher's Note

Dear Friends,

Whew! What an adventure I have had these past few months!! No, I have not been away on a luxury cruise. Instead, my little boat (my body) has been fighting a rough storm on the sea of life.

And it was a perfect storm—a storm in which a chronic health condition, my long-term prescription medication, and my immune system were at serious odds with each other and refused to cooperate together. The waves of this perfect storm sent me often to the hospital, and left me incapacitated too much of the time.

But even during this perfect storm my anchor held against The Solid Rock—the Rock of Ages.

So, I am happy to be back, and very excited about some of the stories and information I want to share with you. Thanks to your care, prayers, and well wishes I am ready to set sail on this beautiful sea of life again.

I have posted an updated schedule for magazine production on the website. Please email me with your own wish list of what you would like to see in the magazine. After all, SAM is your magazine and we are here for you!. Even with the storms that we all face from time to time, how blessed we all are to have St. Augustine as part of our lives. And what a wonderful adventure we can share in our magical, charming town by our beautiful sea!

Have a Very Merry Christmas!

Peace and Blessings,
Yvette Monell, Publisher

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The Secret Life of EGGS by Shirley D. Jordan

I GREW UP IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS. WINTERS COULD BE mild or harsh. This is a memory of a secret my mom and I shared when the snow was deep and the air was freezing.

My best friend in grade school was Dolly Sue Galbraith. I am convinced there is a Dolly Sue in everyone's life. You know, that cute little friend who seems to have everything including, blonde hair and dimples.

Dolly Sue even had a beautiful royal blue snowsuit with pants that pulled up under her skirt. I, on the other hand, had a brown plaid one that required me to tuck in my skirt to allow for the suspenders. Dolly Sue looked like a lovely ballerina while I resembled one of the Hardy Boys!

But whenever we went out to play on those bitter cold days I had something special—something secret that Dolly Sue would never have. You see, my clever mom would hard-boil two eggs, and slip one into each of my pockets.

When my hands got cold I would pull off my mittens and plunge my hands deep into those pockets, wrapping my fingers around those hot eggs.

Once the eggs grew cold, I would pull them out to eat and of course give one to Dolly Sue. She never caught on.

Yes, my mom was clever and Dolly Sue was my nemesis. Dolly Sue was also my friend, and she was perfect! ■



A Memory of My Mom By Shirley Drake Jordan

To Sees as Jesus Sees

by Robert B. Butler

Oh to see like Jesus sees,
He must see such majesty.
I would like to view His sights,
And take in such grand delights.
Just one day to view these things,
Might help me see why angels sing.
Open my heart and open my eyes,
Lift my gaze up to the skies.
Oh to see like Jesus sees,
Would be a wondrous thing to me.

Jesus, He can see it all,
He sees mankind after the Fall.
He sees the dark, the lonely night,
He sees the fears, He sees the fright.
He sees the sick, He sees the lost,
He sees the broken and sees the cost.
He sees the weak, He sees the worn,
He sees the empty soul unborn.
Jesus sees the meek, the mild,
Jesus sees the little child.

Oh to see like Jesus sees,
From before beginning to eternity.
Jesus sees us from the cross,
Jesus sees our sin, our loss.
Jesus died then rose again,
That we may see and glorify Him.
Jesus sees Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love,
Jesus sees all from up above.
Oh to see as Jesus sees,
Would bring Him Glory and Majesty!





SAINT AUGUSTINE'S First Coast Opera Celebrates 20 Years

OPERA COMPANIES ARE USUALLY FOUND IN LARGE CITIES SUCH as New York, Chicago, Miami, but Saint Augustine is the proud home of First Coast Opera, the only producing opera company in northeast Florida. Founded in 2000 as a performance outlet for local singers, the company has grown into a professional company featuring talent from across the United States. While still providing local singers and technicians with opportunities to gain experience. The company's current 20th Season includes five major programs providing a variety of entertainment opportunities for audiences of all ages.

Led by Artistic Director Curtis Tucker, the season kicked off with a one-night-only dinner theater event, *Pasta and Puccini*, on October 26, 2019. The unique evening featuring dinner by Moveable Feast and excerpts from *La Bohème* performed by guest artists. The event was held at the new St. Jude Celebration Hall at St. Anastasia Catholic Church, and night included a private champagne reception with guest artists.

For the first time, the 20th Season will include three fully-staged productions: Gilbert and Sullivan's classic comedy *H.M.S. Pinafore* performed at Lewis Auditorium on January 4th & 5th, 2020, a heartwarming operatic version of *The Little Prince* performed in March 2020, and, in a co-production with A Classic Theatre, a double bill of Arthur Sullivan's one-act operetta *Cox and Box* with the world premiere of a new sequel composed by FCO Artistic Director Curtis Tucker performed during Romanza Festival in May 2020.

The company's annual social soiree and fundraiser, *An Evening of Arias: Bel Canto*, will be held at Marsh Creek Country Club on Saturday, February 29, 2020, and will feature food stations and entertainment by FCO guest artists.

Like most performing arts organizations, First Coast Opera relies on both ticket sales and charitable contributions to fund its operations and programs. Grants also provide important support, and the company has earned awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, State of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, and St. John's County Tourist Development Council.

Opera has sometimes been inaccurately thought of as elitist entertainment, but Artistic Director Tucker insists that First Coast Opera makes the experience accessible, comfortable, and enjoyable for everyone. He explains that "performances cover a wide variety of musical and theatrical styles, combining

continued



photos: Cathy Tucker



singing, acting, dancing, visual arts, comedy, and tragedy.” He notes that projected translations make the action easy to follow, even when some operas are sung in foreign languages. And he is most animated when he discusses introducing opera to young people, as the company did during its Family Opera Festival this past season. For the 20th Season, all student and child tickets will be free with an accompanying adult to *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Little Prince*. Tucker’s bottom line, “Opera is for everyone, whether aficionado or newcomer, because when done right, opera performances make audience members feel a wide range of emotions. In today’s fast-paced technology-filled world, escaping for a couple hours to a place of beauty and wonder, complete with all ‘the feels’ can be very satisfying, even therapeutic.” For the 20th year, First Coast Opera will offer its brand of art and humanity to Saint Augustine and the surrounding region.

Full casting and additional program details are available, along with tickets, at firstcoastopera.com. ■

First Coast Opera’s 20th Season

H. M. S. Pinafore

Gilbert and Sullivan

Saturday, January 4, 2020 at 7:30pm

Sunday, January 5, 2020 at 2:00pm

Lewis Auditorium at Flagler College

\$40 (children free with paid adult)

An Evening of Arias: Bel Canto

Saturday, February 29, 2020

Marsh Creek Country Club \$60

The Little Prince

Rachel Portman

Based on *Le Petit Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupéry

Spring 2020 \$40 (children free with paid adult)

Cox and Box with Sequel (world premiere)

Arthur Sullivan and Curtis Tucker

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Travels broadens Ones outlook on America

by Derek Boyd Hankerson

WGROWING UP, MY FAMILY OFTEN traveled from our homes in Illinois, Florida, and Maryland to various other states to visit relatives and friends. Given our large extended family, this covered a lot of states and a lot of ground.

While my parents did have a Green Book (as depicted in the 2019 Academy Award winning movie for Best Motion Picture of the Year, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actor) for our travels in the South, they also made sure we spent a great amount of time traveling in the less restrictive North. If there were any limitations imposed on our trips, like driving through a Sundown Town, my parents never made us kids aware of it. Our family travels were absent of color restraint, or at least that was my perception even though I was a Black American kid. For



that lack of a sense of discrimination, I owe my parents a debt of gratitude.

The major cities and states we visited over the 20 years we were together during my childhood and pre-college days included Detroit and Inkster, Michigan; Akron, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, Ohio; Oakland, Somerville, and Memphis, Tennessee; Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, Boyton Beach, Orlando, St. Augustine, and White Oak, Florida; and Long Island and Jamaica Queens, New York. The additional and often under-appreciated benefit of a road trip is, of course, all those miles and miles along the highway in between the big cities. From my childish point of view these were endlessly boring miles, but as an adult, I now appreciate the real sense of rural America these trips instilled in me.

continued

In traveling, my parents provided a wonderful opportunity for me to learn about new cultures, people, places, and things. Travel afforded my brother, sister and myself an opportunity to broaden our horizons. As a youth, I got to see different slices of America while forming my own opinions on this great nation and its people. I'd be the first to say our family was the exception to the rule. I know we were blessed to adventure, explore, and complement our education with real-time travel. It was our home schooling of the day and it worked for me.



As a child stuck in the back seat of the car with my siblings, there was likely more bickering going on than there was soulful reflecting on the importance of these trips, although my parents were short on settling disputes and long on peace, love, and harmony. It was about the journey, not just the destination and it was the 1960s and '70s after all. As an adult, these travels have helped me understand times past and appreciate what a gift my parents gave us. I cannot help but chuckle remembering events or places, and especially a few particularly colorful relatives.

Fast forward, I have recently returned from a trip to Detroit, Michigan. I felt like a kid again discovering family history in the Motor City. Reverend J. H. Hankerson, who was native to Live Oak, Florida, had a B. A. in theology and pastored two churches in Michigan.

The first church he pastored was Shiloh Baptist Church in Port Huron, Michigan, which began in 1918 where he served as the 9th pastor. He then had an opportunity to serve as pastor of Unity Baptist Church from 1937-1939, in Detroit, Michigan. I was floored to have found the church that my great grandfather, Rev. J. H. Hankerson pastored in the early 1900s after he was appointed by Republican William Howard Taft as the first “negro” post master of Armstrong, Florida in St. Johns county in and around 1910!



more >

It is also interesting to note that my relative, E. H. Hankerson, pastored Shiloh Baptist Church in St. Augustine, Florida and another relative, J. B. Brooks, pastored a Church in Daytona, Florida in 1889! Visiting these churches in Michigan and knowing my family's long history here in Florida to include the Gullah Geechee community of which was the subject of my own Hankerson-Henry Productions documentary film, Gullah Geechee Corridor and the East Coast Greenway, I'm truly humbled to see the many accomplishments my relatives have made towards Christianity in America and how they proactively contributed to America's greatness.

As one whose family is native to the South but also extends to the North, I'm humbled and blessed to have broadened my horizons through travel. From big cities like Detroit to my current hometown of St. Augustine, Ft. Pierce, and Vero Beach in Florida, traveling has made me appreciate the significant investments to in revitalizing inner cities and depressed urban areas. I remember an America of my childhood that was great, again with credit given to my parents for instilling American values — the

same American values of God, family, freedom, greatness, compassion, character, prosperity and work.

As I travel now, I can't help but believe that there is also opportunity to turn my focus at Hankerson-Henry Productions on these inner-city stories. Out of the experiences of my youth grew a desire to create films that inspire and educate which not surprisingly has included cycling, tourism, and highlighting rich cultural heritages.

One such film will be about two friends who are native to Detroit titled, "Two Girls in the Hood" showing that despite the bad rap that Detroit often gets, the city is nothing to fear. Detroit is rejuvenated again, and one need only look to cycling with the Detroit Slow Roll, a unique organization that focuses on cycling with bike rental kiosks where one can rent a bike (or a scooter) for free for 0-30 minutes to see it.

My Michigan cousins, a school girlfriend, and I had a blast playing

tourist together in their hometowns. The most humbling moments during the trip were hearing a sermon on Sunday at Unity Baptist Church on sticking to your roots while you let your branches grow, and participating in Shiloh Baptist Church Service entitled Women's Day, "Walking in the Light!"

I'm sure my parents are proud (in heaven) to know that I've continued the journey and family legacy of traveling, broadening my horizons, and giving back to the community at large. ■





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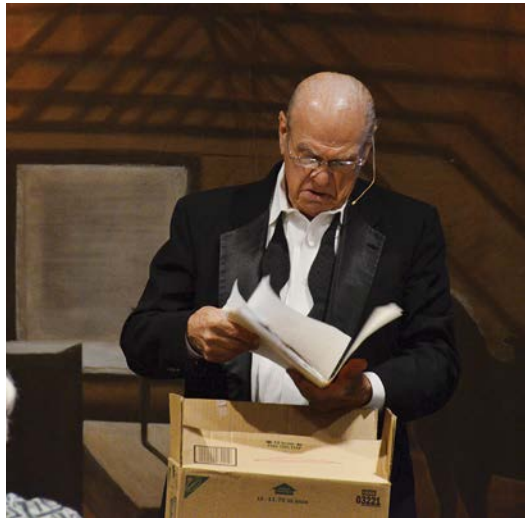
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photos by Yvette Monell

Lee in “The Attic”

Lee Weaver gave another stellar performance, one person show! “The Attic: The Long Goodbye” is about a man who lost his wife a decade earlier to Alzheimer’s. He’s now searching The Attic for the wedding ring, passed down through generations, for his son, who is to put it on the finger of his bride in 3 hours. Watch for encore performances at the Corazon Cinema. Don’t forget...

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This article was inspired out of love for my country. Whether it is Memorial Day, July 4th or Veteran's Day, we owe this rebel anthem to our brave military defenders. These words are dedicated to our active military forces and the countless veterans who came before. May your sacrifice and courage never be taken for granted. Indeed, freedom goes far beyond the political spectrum and their means to divide. It's now time to put aside our differences, to look each other in the eye, and work together for a brighter future. We only have one shot at freedom, so let's make it ring by standing tall. One nation, under God, indivisible...

Freedom Never Dies

WHAT IS FREEDOM BUT A SOFT WHISPER FROM OPPRESSION? What is freedom beyond knowing you can vote and not be murdered for your beliefs, the ability to speak with your own voice, to earn your own dollar? Freedom is quite simple. Freedom is wearing your heart on your sleeve when the chips are down, using your power to spread compassion and courage. Freedom is not forced, it is not beaten into the pavement by faceless thugs, it is not sealed in a bottle filled with kerosene.

I have seen freedom. It is my drug of choice. It flows heavy through my veins. Nobody will ever sacrifice greater than those who came before, their blood upon foreign soil, their bitter resolve to stomp out tyranny. I will never surrender my heart to politicians, never bow before some God that demands violence. I will not be fooled by hidden agendas or silenced by the sinister gears of corruption. Most importantly, I will never apologize for my interpretation of freedom.

Always know who you are, and never be a pawn to circus politics, because the clowns will always leave you naked and hungry. What is freedom? I am freedom, and you can never buy my allegiance. My blood flows in three colors, red, white and blue. How about you? ■

Aaron W. Towle is a Media Specialist living in Green Cove Springs. Having worked as a military journalist as well as a graphic artist, he has a wide range of publishing and editorial skills. He is also an artist with a passionate finger pressed firmly on the pulse of the industry.



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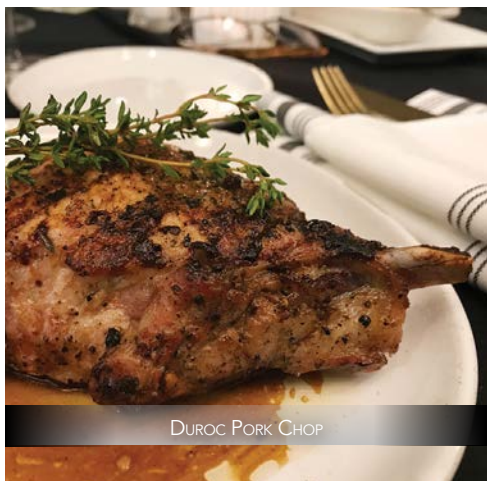


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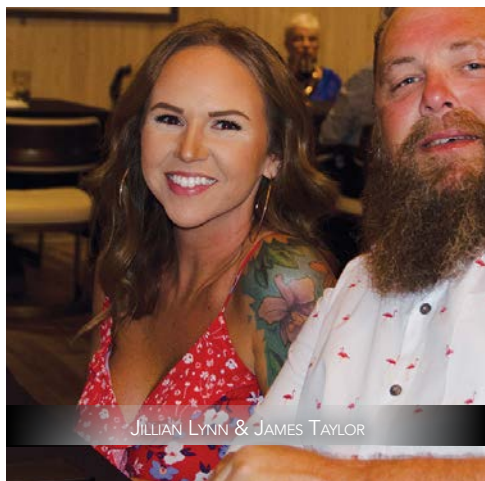


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JACQUELINE ROOKSTOOL [EMBASSY SUITES]

The Art of Buying Wine

by Jeanne Maron, Owner of The Gifted Cork & Gourmet

THERE REALLY IS AN ART TO BUYING A GOOD BOTTLE OF WINE. The first and foremost objective is to know what you are pairing the wine with (what's for dinner?) or what you are in the mood for.

I recommend that you shop at a good wine shop that specializes in quality wines at reasonable prices. Make sure your salesperson (or the owner) knows what they are talking about and knows their inventory. He/she should qualify what you are looking for and what kind of price range you are comfortable with. After that is out of the way, it's time to find out what your comfort zone is with unusual varietals and countries.

To find the perfect shop, make sure the salesperson is friendly and down to earth. They should be into wine and your needs. If they seem bothered with helping you or look down on you, it's time to go elsewhere.

The shop that gets you and hits a home-run most of the time is a good fit. No one is perfect, so if they get it wrong the first time give them another chance. If they bomb again, it's time to start seeking another store.

Learn how to ask for a great bottle. You might want to ask what is new or the latest trend. Many of my customers ask me what my favorite bottle is. Considering my palate is pretty developed, my wine choice is probably not the best wine for a newbie. However, if the salesperson is taking a certain wine home that evening, it's probably a decent bottle. It never hurts to ask.

The salesperson should ask you what you typically like to drink and should qualify if you want something similar this time. If my customer loves oaky/buttery Chardonnay's, then unoaked Chardonnay would not be a good fit, no matter what the price.

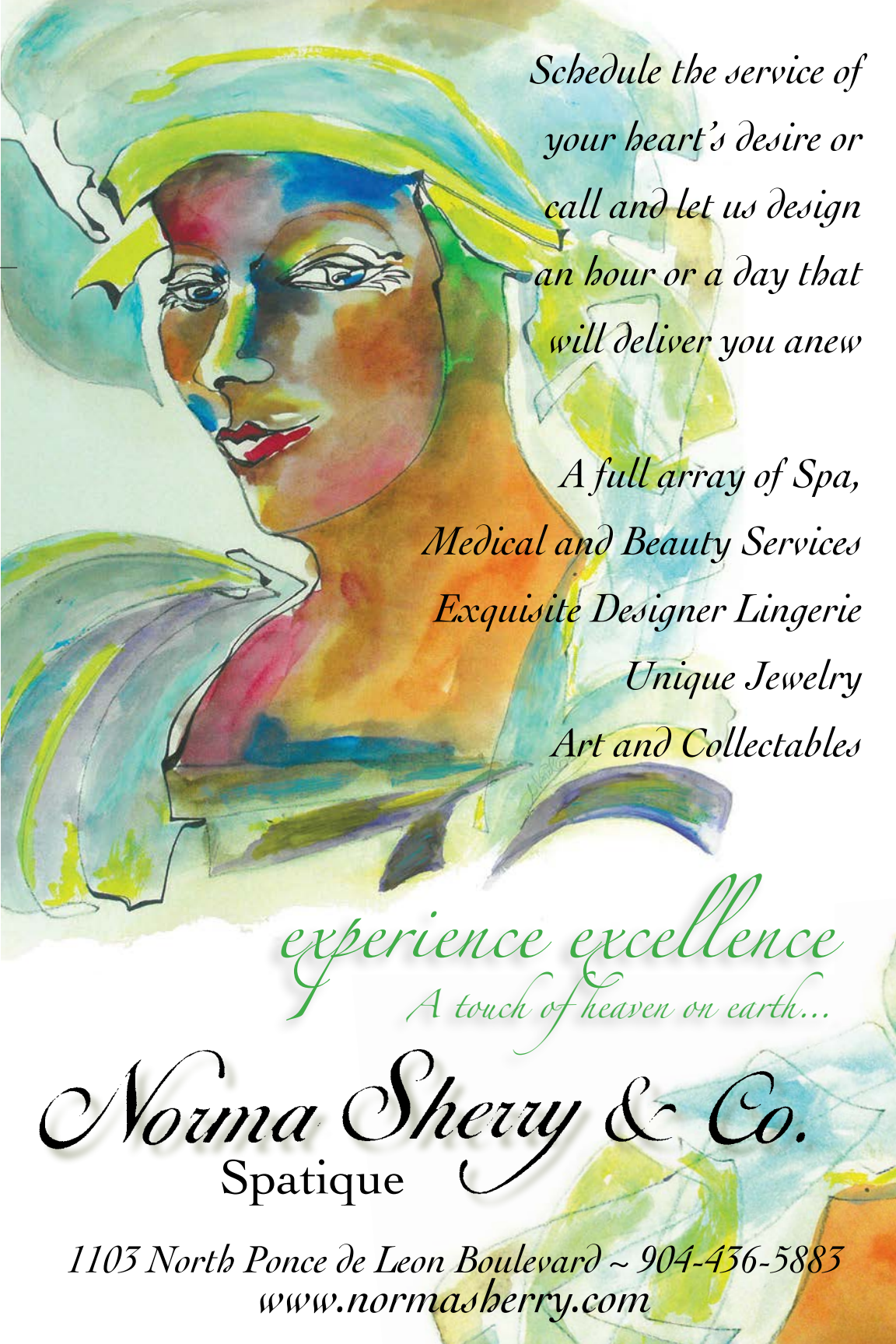
Furthermore, beware of store's endorsements on the labels. That scenario tells me they are trying to move that wine or it's a hidden item with a lot of profit built into it. If there are shelf-talkers (or descriptions) on the wines, evaluate the wine based on terminology you understand, or, you can put stock into critics' ratings. Be sure you've enjoyed the same wines as those trusted critics in the past so you know you have a similar palate. If it's a critic or award you've never heard of, take the information with a grain of salt.

Ask your salesperson what's new or exclusive to their store. Many wineries sell their newest products to wine shops to help build a label before the wine hits the big-box stores. Many times you can get some great bargains passed on from the store since they might have gotten specials to help build the brand.

Ask for a sample. Many times, the stores may have the wine open or are willing to open one bottle for a potential client. The worst thing they could say is no.

No matter where you shop, buy a wine for the juice, not the label. Use the help of knowledgeable salespeople and go for it. The art of wine is in the sharing, and shopping should not be a chore. ■

—Cheers to you! Jeanne Maron



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on the cover



Fashions: Emily Sifrit designer / e.Kaye

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Jewelry Designs: Donna Moody Gray
Global Island Treasures

Model: Natalie M. Aponte

Fashions: Emily Sifrit designer / e.Kaye

Photographer: Rudy Arias

What a surprise it was to learn that a Chicago based fashion designer had seen photos of my Global Island Treasures, and that she wanted my jewelry included in her “Look Book” for New York Fashion Week! Then to learn that the designer is Emily Sifrit of e.kaye Designs, one of the “Designers to Watch.” How thrilled, honored, and humbled I felt!!

The actuality of the photo shoot was better than I could have imagined. Oh, I knew fabulous photographs would be produced because I had seen some remarkable images shot by Rudy Arias. But at the first shoot together which began at midnight! I was blown away by the creativity, the professionalism, and the down-to-earth respect and “niceness” of the entire team, and I was so very happy to be a part of it.

Emily’s designs are absolutely magical! I was so happy to be a fly-on-the-wall as she did some last minute designing and stitching on site. Rudy knew the look he wanted the photography to achieve and how to get it, and Natlie understood how to pose for the perfect shots.

I loved how open they were to my ideas and suggestions. In fact, I loved every moment of the adventure—an adventure that has opened my own sense of creativity even more!















Emily Sifrit is the designer behind e.Kaye, a clothing label based in Chicago, IL. She began sewing at her grandmother's table at the age of seven, and has let her instincts and imagination guide the way since. Emily considers fabric her artistic medium, although she's been known to create rare garments using burlap, plastic tarps, and foil. Her statements are versatile, edgy, feminine, and always nod to pure sensuality. Emily loves the Old City and will be back soon fluffing clothes, making adjustments, and being inspired by all that Saint Augustine is.
ekayecollection.com

Photographer **Rudy Arias** has been shooting for a little over 42 years. He left Chicago for NYC in 1980, then after his first gallery exhibit in Paris in 1984 he moved to Europe, then Milano. Rudy repatriated in 1998, now lives in Jacksonville, Florida. He shoots both digital and film. A special thanks goes out to Rudy for introducing these talented designers and models to one another. Also, for his choosing Saint Augustine as the location to bring his creative talent here.
instagram: @rudyparias

Jewelry Designs: **Donna Moody Gray**
Global Island Treasures

Models: **Natalie M. Aponte & Katherine Grant**

photos by Yvette Monell

ArtBox Opening

It was the “Friends & Family” opening at the new ArtBox gallery at 137 King Street, St Augustine, FL. The jam packed gallery was filled with energy, original creations, well-wishers, loved ones, and fun. ArtBox, together with the ladies who started, is a welcome and is fantastic new additions, to The Old City’s art scene.

facebook.com/artbox137





RIP Norma Jean by Shirley D. Jordan

IN 2017 MY DAUGHTER STARTED SENDING ME A QUESTION EVERY Monday morning. I was to answer in the form of a short story or poem. Some of her questions really surprised me and it was a great project. At years end the stories were put in a collection just for my family.

I am now going to share one of my favorites.

The question was, “If you could have dinner with anyone in the world, living or dead, who would it be?”

As a Christian one might expect me to answer with the name Jesus. But I do not have to sit down to dinner with Christ to have a personal relationship with Him. I simply have to sit quietly and pray.

Therefore, I answered the question in a totally different manner. Here is my honest answer.



I share a condition with a famous person, or infamous person, depending on your inner thoughts. I would like to have dinner and a long conversation with a blonde movie star who led a most troubled life.

I fight a nightly bout with insomnia. This was a condition Marilyn Monroe suffered right up to the time she took her own life. Her birth name was Norma Jean, but the world knew her as Marilyn.

People who drift off to sleep easily can never understand our nightly battle for release from the troubles of the world. To sleep, perhaps to dream, is a lovely thought—but to a true insomniac—to sleep, perhaps to rest would be much more appropriate.

On the nights when my insomnia raises its ugly head, I ask myself what is troubling me. But when I ask this question, the answer is usually—Nothing! I live a reasonably trouble free life. I am not wealthy but my husband left me comfortable and I have a good head for finance.

Yes, I have suffered loss during my life. But I feel I have accepted these losses and moved on as well as a person can. I have a healthy daughter who is happily married. Her children, my grandchildren, are healthy and, so far as I know, are happy. My great grandson is perfect and adored, and by the time you read this I will also have a great granddaughter.

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I would like to talk to Miss Monroe about what finally triggered her desire to leave this world, and only sleep.

I have no such desire, but I truly understand how the condition finally brought her to that fateful night.

Now, luckily, my sleepless nights are usually no more than two in a row. Once I have a good eight hours in slumber, I am a much happier soul. In fact, five hours is adequate.

Until two years ago, I had two little dogs so I refused to take anything strong for sleep as I feared not waking if the doggies needed me.

I am now alone and could take much stronger meds. But having had a son with an addictive personality, I choose to live with the condition rather than chance getting hooked on a sleep crutch.

When sleep refuses to come, I get up and go to my computer. Some of the best lines I have ever written were written at three in the morning.

This story, however, is being written midday. You see, I fell asleep last night after only an hour in bed. I feel good and am looking forward to the rest of this day!

Rest in Peace Norma Jean! ■

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by Monica Smit

Doing the right thing... is always the right thing!

SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME RECENTLY THAT REALLY CEMENTED a concept I've pondered on a lot over the last few years.

We all have consciences. Some are formed differently than others, and we all have a unique set of moral-codes and boundaries. However, some things are black and white, some things are wrong, and some things are right. Things like lying, cheating, scamming and causing unnecessary pain...are bad. I don't care how you justify it... they're all wrong full stop.

Some people might say 'oh but what if you're lying to spare someone's feelings' or 'what if they never find out, who cares'...NO NO NO. You can withhold information to protect someone's feelings, but you cannot lie...there is a difference. Deep down, everyone knows about these black and white scenarios. Some people try to trick their conscience to the point where it's confused and convinces them that a wrong is justifiable.

Let me tell you a secret...it ALWAYS catches up with you. Whether now or later, whether in this life or in the next...you cannot avoid the karma you deserve. You can take all the drugs your body can handle, drink all the alcohol you can afford, watch every Netflix show...it won't go away! The niggling conscience that keeps you up at night and feeds you random thoughts throughout the day...yeah you know the ones I'm talking about. Right now, as you're reading this, a few things have already popped into your head. I have them too...they're called regrets.

It's not unhealthy to have regrets, its normal. Regretting something doesn't mean you hate yourself for it or cry about it. It means you are a human being who is aware of your faults. If you had the chance to do that part over again, you would do it differently. I dislike it when people say things like, 'I have no regrets', 'you can't live your life with regrets'. I'm sorry but I don't believe you. Are you a human being with a beating heart and a brain? Yes...well you've made mistakes just like the rest of us, and that's ok.

The reason I'm bringing this up is because I have a specific story to share where I got a clear sign that I did the right thing and was rewarded for it. Sometimes we do good things and never know if that deed was 'banked' in our 'karma bank'. Of course, we should do them regardless of reward, but hey...it's nice to get a clear sign once in a while. :-)

I'm currently road tripping USA and I sleep in my car so if it breaks down, that's the end of my trip. It had been playing up for a few days. I'd taken it to 2 small-town mechanics who couldn't figure it out, so I drove 2 hours out of my way to go to a KIA dealership to get a diagnosis. They told me the engine was finished and there was no point fixing it.

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That was a clear sign for me and I didn't question it. I started giving things away, looking at flight options, packing my bags and day-dreaming about seeing my family who, I dearly miss. I already had tickets booked for the Grand Canyon and other tours, the thought of missing that was disappointing.

I decided to try and sell the car to one of those second-hand car sales places. The first one didn't want it, but the second one offered me \$2000 USD for it. If the engine needed replacing, \$2000 was far too much. I really struggled internally because the idea of going home with cash in my hand was a comforting feeling, but I had to tell the truth...so I did.

She thanked me for my honesty and made an appointment for their mechanic to look at my car in the morning. I nearly booked my flight home that night, but my Mum pushed me to wait and see what the next mechanic said. I was hesitant to wait, but I took her advice. Yes, I know, Mum's are always right :-)

This mechanic told me the car was fine! The radiator needs replacing soon but otherwise it's completely fine to keep driving, I just need to keep the water filled.

It didn't all hit me at once but over the next 24 hours, I pondered over the series of events. I realized if I had not told her what I thought was true about the car engine, she would have given me \$2000 and I would have been on a flight back home. I would have carried around the guilt for the rest of my life. It would have really bothered me for a month or so, and then the guilt would dissipate over time, but it would always be there to niggle me for the rest of my life. As I said, the guilt never completely disappears, it just appears less often.

Not only would I have the guilt for lying about the car, but I'd have the regret of not being able to finish my adventure. On top of all that, I never would have found out that the car was actually fine and was worth the money they offered me. I would have carried the guilt around for NOTHING!

Sometimes doing the right thing is really hard, I know! Sometimes we never get rewarded in an obvious way, sometimes it feels like we are losing because we told the truth. Sometimes truths hurt us, or people we love. Sometimes the lessons aren't obvious, and we wonder why we bother trying to be a 'good person.'

I know...I feel all these feelings too and trust me, I definitely do not always do the right thing. The key is to at least try to be a better person, even if it's small steps at a time. Going 2 steps forward and 1 step back is better than not moving at all. It's really that simple.

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When you're feel like your good deeds aren't getting you anywhere, I assure you they are! I'm no guru but it's just common sense. You're the only person in your head, you're the only one responsible for your actions and you will have a more fulfilling life if you simply choose to do the right thing no matter what.

Sleeping at night is a lot easier with a clear conscience.

'YOU CAN NEVER BE TRULY HAPPY UNTIL YOUR CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR'

You can't erase mistakes, but you can make amends for them and that's clearing your conscience. I still have a lot of clearing to do myself...one thing at a time and we'll get there. ■

Monica Smit: I am an independent journalist/documentarian traveling the world searching for inspirational people and stories so I can highlight the goodness in humanity. Sharing these stories will hopefully encourage others to find PURPOSE in their lives. Every direction I go, every decision I make is based on my 'gut instinct'/God. I get strong feelings when I know it's God's will for me to cover a particular story. It gives me strength to know I'm following His direction—looking for inspirational and intriguing stories to share with you. monicasmit.com

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Addiction to the Big Bottle and the Little Bottle

I NEVER THOUGHT MY PERSONAL ADDICTION STRUGGLES WOULD be of value helping others suffering from alcohol addiction.

I am not a medical doctor or member of the medical community. I am not, as we say in Boston, “just another guy in the diner,” when it comes to alcohol addiction, however. I am a recovering alcoholic with twenty-eight years (10,220 days) of continuous recovery making me uniquely qualified to offer insight into this local, national and global tragedy.

Alcohol is a legal, controlled substance and alcoholism is today one of the most common addictions in America. Alcohol addiction, also known as alcoholism, is marked by a craving for alcohol and the inability to stop drinking – even when it causes extreme personal or social harm.

Not everyone who drinks is an alcoholic, but anyone whose life is negatively affected by alcohol on a consistent basis is considered to have a problem with alcohol.

Even people who drink during social activities or only drink beer or wine are susceptible to an alcohol use disorder.

In the extreme, those with a severe alcohol use disorder may feel that they can't start their day without a swig of vodka, or finish it without a glass of whiskey on the rocks.

Addiction has been described by many experts as not only as a disease but an “allergy” as well. Can you imagine someone being allergic to nuts or certain seafood thinking that just this once it will be OK to eat them knowing time and time again how violently ill they become upon consumption? This is the insidious, insane behavior of the afflicted, alcohol addict.

Alcoholism is a progressive disease. It is imperative we remember our loved ones and their families that are slowly losing the addiction battle with the Big Bottle or the Little Bottle are sick, suffering from a disease and NOT a simple lack of willpower.

The disease of addiction is described in Twelve Step literature as being “cunning and baffling.” Why?

Alcoholism is the only disease that tells the person suffering they don't have a problem and if friends and family members would just leave them alone to drink in peace then everything would be OK. This is the power of denial of this disease.

What men and women must do when caught in the vortex of addiction and denial is to reach out and ask for help. Anyone reading this who is battling addiction knows that reaching out for help is what you should do but don't. An alcoholic and substance abuse addict will only seek help with their addiction

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when they have hit their bottom and become ready and willing to finally give up being sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Examples of an alcohol addict's bottom includes divorce, bankruptcy, job loss, and a DUI citation.

If a loved one or family member is struggling and losing their battle with alcohol or pills, remember they are sick and have a disease. Pray for them of course, let them know you love them and care about them. But most importantly tell them they are not weak willed, that they have a disease and there is help. In order to get them help and relief you must Scream Louder! ■

Lawrence (Laurie) Traynor lives in Jacksonville Beach and available to help alcoholics, their loved ones and their families locate local assistance resources. 904.553.1600

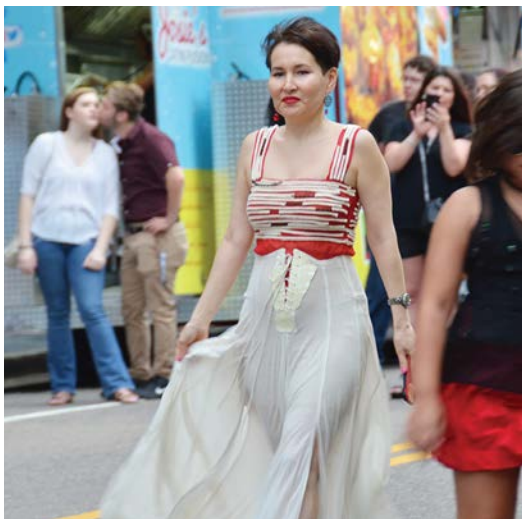
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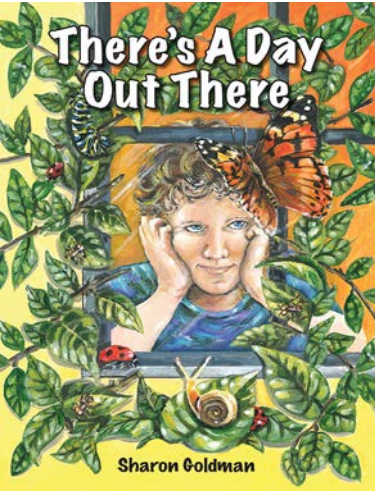


FGI Show

A warm evening and spectacular fashion designs combined to create a sizzling and unique presentation by the Fashion Group International, North Florida's unique fashion show.

The runway of the fashion show began inside the Regions Bank and continued outside on West Bay Street in Jacksonville, featuring outstanding models from St. Augustine and Jacksonville. Designers showcased included Alexandra Ni, Zula Khramov, and St. Augustine's own Donna Moody Gray of Global Island Treasures.





Stocking Stuff

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR SHARON GOLDMAN'S latest creation encourages kids to go outside. Readers of all ages will enjoy "There's A Day Out There" about a boy who declares there's nothing to do, his mother suggests exploring outside.

A native Floridian, Sharon teaches art classes to students of all ages in her studio. Galleries throughout North Florida have highlighted her artwork.

The paperback edition is \$14.95 and includes an extensive list of facts, coloring pages and a place for listing what can be seen by looking out your window. For kids ages three to eight. ■
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photo by Phil King

Nights of Lights

Celebrating the 26th Anniversary

IT WOULDN'T BE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT THE DAZZLING CANOPY of millions of tiny white lights draped in the trees of Plaza de la Constitución. Sparkling water reflecting light from the Bridge of Lions. The historic buildings and public spaces outlined in light from the sidewalks to the rooftops, all dressed in radiant holiday glow throughout the Ancient City Historic District.

Free for all to see every night now through February 2, 2020. Saint Augustine's Nights of Lights has been listed among the top ten holiday light displays in the world by *National Geographic*. There are live music performances in the plaza on weekends and throughout the holidays. ■

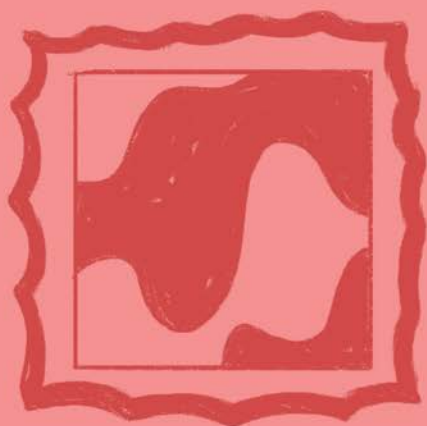
Free Nights of Lights Park & Ride Shuttle

Saturdays in December

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