

# The Courier-Journal



MONDAY 7.17.17 || COURIER-JOURNAL.COM || METRO EDITION || PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## 'INDIANA JONES' MEETS 'STAR WARS'



David West Reynolds, above, stands on the spot Luke Skywalker, left, played by Mark Hamill in the original "Star Wars" movies, stood at the edge of the crater pit containing his underground home.

1995 PHAETON GROUP, PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL J. RYAN (ABOVE); STAR WARS 1997 LUCASFILM LTD. (LEFT)

**COMMUNITY GIANT**  
 Honored Louisville artist  
 Friedman, 86, set to star in 'Masters SA'

**ME MURRAY KINGDOM**  
 \$29.95

**PACKED HOUSE:** Louisville City FC set a new attendance record this weekend. Sports IC

# The Courier-Journal

MONDAY 7/17/17 | C.J. COURIER-JOURNAL.COM | 6 NEWS EDITORS | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



## 'INDIANA JONES' MEETS 'STAR WARS'

## Push on for VA to choose Jewish Hospital

**DARLA CARTER**  
 reporter

Though Jewish Hospital was dismissed as a possible bidder for a new Veterans Affairs medical center, the commercial developers that have been selected to build the new facility, which is being built by Ferguson Health, said they would like to see a Jewish hospital as one of the bidders. The VA's plan of using medical sites that have been part of general community hospitals about what might happen to the facility, which is being sold by Ferguson Health, said they would like to see a Jewish hospital as one of the bidders. The VA's plan of using medical sites that have been part of general community hospitals about what might happen to the facility, which is being sold by Ferguson Health, said they would like to see a Jewish hospital as one of the bidders.

**New Albany native's film chronicles lost movie sites that spawned tourist industry in Tunisia**

**MADÉLEINE WINER @MADELEINEWINER**

David West Reynolds, a New Albany native, has visited a galaxy far, far away and wants to share it with you. • That galaxy is the Sahara Desert of Tunisia, where he was the first to find the original — and supposedly lost — “Star Wars” filming locations using a combination of his fanboy status and archaeological talents. • Not only that, he filmed it all and is making a documentary of his trip, where he takes audiences to iconic “Star Wars” settings like Luke Skywalker’s underground dining room and the Junland Wastes, where Jedi Master Ben Kenobi rescued Skywalker in a canyon. See **STAR WARS**, Page 10A

**USA TODAY NETWORK**  
**US adding space to missile race**

North Korea seemed to have made great progress toward developing a ballistic missile that can reach the United States, the Pentagon says. The United States has been working to improve its missile defense system, says a Pentagon spokesman. The United States has been working to improve its missile defense system, says a Pentagon spokesman.

**USA TODAY 10**

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## New Albany native's film chronicles lost movie sites that spawned tourist industry in Tunisia

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**“I went to Tunisia with clues like, ‘It’s on the left.’”**

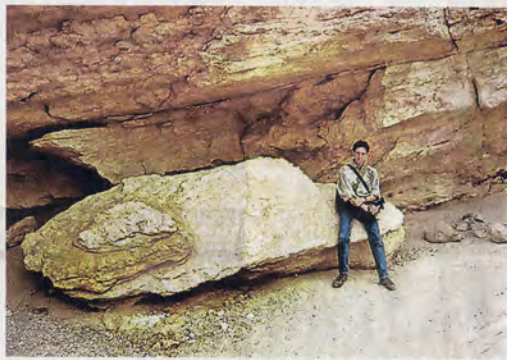
**DAVID WEST REYNOLDS**  
 ON THE HAZY LOCATION DESCRIPTIONS HE RECEIVED FROM THE LOCATION SCOUT FOR THE ORIGINAL “STAR WARS” MOVIES



Archaeologist David West Reynolds located the site where Jedi Knight Ben Kenobi rescues young Luke Skywalker by singling out the cave-like feature in the background and searching for that.



Ben Kenobi rescues young Luke Skywalker in a canyon of the dangerous Junland Wastes.



David West Reynolds pinpointed the exact location of what he calls the “Jawa Rock” using geological data visible in behind-the-scenes photos.

## Star Wars

Continued from Page 1A

The expedition meant a lot to the Hoosier. His quest started in 1995 and actually spiraled into a 10-year career working in the “Star Wars” industry: He helped scout locations for a “Star Wars” prequel, spurred a “Star Wars” tourism industry in Tunisia and has written a number of New York Times bestselling “Star Wars” reference books. He even took a job for a while at Skywalker Ranch.

But it all started back in that original Saharan trip.

Now Reynolds wants to cap off that journey by finishing post-production of the film, called “Journey to Tataouine.” He started a Kickstarter campaign to help.

“I’m amazed at the support,” Reynolds said. “The fans put us over the top for our first goal in just six days.”

### How did he find these locations?

It started out rough.

When Reynolds called Lucasfilm, the production company founded by “Star Wars” creator George Lucas, no one could tell him the locations because there simply wasn’t a record of them. But the Lucasfilm team connected him with Robert Watts, the location scout for the original movies.

“I went to Tunisia with clues like, ‘It’s on the left,’” said Reynolds about Watts’ hazy descriptions.

He used photographs from the movie and looked at rock formations in the background to narrow down possible locations, a critical part of any archaeological expedition.

“I saw there are sedimentary rocks at a particular angle, and I looked at a geological map in the university library, and I cut it down to only four places where there’s that sedimentary rock,” explained Reynolds, who received his doctorate in archaeology from the University of Michigan.

After narrowing down locations, the locals helped him pinpoint the exact ones in a month-long excursion across

the Sahara.

### Here’s what they found

The Hotel Sidi Driss in Matmata, a small town in southern Tunisia, was the only exact location Watts remembered when Reynolds started his “treasure hunt” of an expedition. The site served as the Lars homestead and underground portion of Luke Skywalker’s home. It still had the decor from the movie.

Reynolds also found the site used for the spacecraft of Mos Eisley, where Hans Solo’s spaceship is docked and the cantina where audiences meet Hans Solo. Reynolds said it was shot on an island called Djerba off the coast of Tunisia where the buildings had a style of arch not seen elsewhere.

“It was otherworldly,” Reynolds said.

In about a month of working sunrise to sunset, they also found locations used for the Junland Wastes, the surface portion of Luke Skywalker’s home located in salt flats in southern Tunisia and the site of the Sahara dunes where robots C3-P0 and R2D2 crash land.

### How it became lifelong obsession

After his expedition, Reynolds wrote an article for Lucasfilm’s fan club magazine “Star Wars Insider” about his trip. At the same time, the company was getting ready to film the prequel to “Star Wars” — you can guess who they called to serve as their guide in revisiting the locations.

Reynolds ended up taking a job at Skywalker Ranch with Lucasfilm in Marin County, California, where he ran the “Star Wars” website for a few years and wrote New York Times bestselling “Star Wars” reference manuals.

In 2000, he started his own consulting firm, working in communications for government clients and other international organizations. While working, he put his trip footage on the backburner because Lucasfilms didn’t want to release it, he said.

But when the 2011 collectors set of the “Star Wars” movies was released on Blu-ray, one of the movie’s producers talked about working with Reynolds



Jawas carry the stunned “droid” R2-D2 past the distinctive rock.

**“The community allowed me to be creative. And with this (Kickstarter campaign), the community is again stepping in and showing its little gesture of encouragement.”**

**DAVID WEST REYNOLDS**  
 REFLECTING ON HIS “STAR WARS” JOURNEY

and urged him to dust off the footage.

“I thought there’s a lot of really fun stuff here,” Reynolds said. “It’s been years since I wrote the first article (for Star Wars Insider), and after all, I created this subindustry of Tunisian tourism.”

It’s true: Hundreds of thousands of people have visited the sites since Reynolds’ article. And after the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions, Tunisians are looking to revitalize those locations to boost

their economy, according to NBC News.

But no one has seen the locations like Reynolds. And starting last July, he set out with Ray Cart, a colleague in Southern Indiana, to make his documentary, which he hopes to finish before winter.

Reynolds hasn’t planned where he’ll show it but hinted that he’d like to have a viewing locally.

After all, Reynolds credited Higgins Toys in the old New Albany Plaza with helping foster his connection to “Star Wars” when he was 8 years old.

And the New Albany Library showed his stop-motion animation shorts he made with “Star Wars” toys while he was a youngster at Scribner Middle School.

“The community allowed me to be creative,” Reynolds said, reflecting on his “Star Wars” journey. “And with this (Kickstarter campaign), the community is again stepping in and showing its little gesture of encouragement.”

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