Baja’s wild side featured in documentary

KENNIA SITTON | Uptown News

The wilderness in Baja California (Photo courtesy Devil’s Road film)

A family is at the heart of a new documentary about Baja California being shown at the Natural History Museum on March 10. “Devil’s Road” recreates the epic journey of two prolific naturalists: Edward William Nelson and Edward Alphonso Goldman. The pair spent 10 months collecting 30,000 specimens in Baja California in 1905-06 while it was still a nearly untouched wilderness punctuated by small villages. Their legacy strung into obscurity except among their descendants, which include the Bruce family. The Bruces knew about the adventures of their conservationist great-grand uncle and in 2016, decided to make a documentary about his work that would eventually become “Devil’s Road.”

News analysis: Controversial neighborhood changes likely did not affect election outcome

KENNIA SITTON | Uptown News

In 2019, some proposed changes to Uptown were met with fierce neighborhood opposition. In particular, the 30th Street protected bikeway and turning the old Mission Hills Library into permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals both stand out as controversial items that were much discussed during this election cycle. However, the public outcry appears not to have negatively impacted candidates that championed those plans.

Short prison sentences in 2000 slaying

NEAL PUTNAM | Uptown News

Two men have been given short prison sentences for their lesser roles in the 2000 slaying of a 71-year-old man in North Park during a robbery.

San Diego Superior Court Judge Runston Maino reflected Feb. 21 about the Aug. 23, 2000 killing of LeRoy ”Mac” Parkins, who was struck twice in the head with a baseball bat in an alley behind 3675 Pershing Ave.

“The sad thing is, the man who wielded the bat is not going to prison for that,” said Maino, referring to the release of Edward Brooks, 39, after two juries deadlocked.

Brooks was released from jail Jan 27 by Judge David Gill after he granted the second mistrial. Two juries both deadlocked 9-3 once in favor of conviction, and the second in favor of acquittal.

Gill dismissed the murder case against Brooks, saying he didn’t think a third jury would be able to reach a verdict.

Lester Roshunn Bell, 39, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and Terrence Maurice Brown, 38, pleaded guilty to robbing Parkins. A murder charge was then dismissed against them.

Maino sentenced Brown to two years in prison. Because he has 744 days of jail credits, Brown should be released from jail soon.

Bell got three years in prison. Because he has 744 days of jail credits, he is likely to be paroled later this year since he has already served two years.

Bell and Brown testified that Brooks clubbed Parkins in the head with a baseball bat during a robbery. In 2018, a DNA test on the empty pockets of Parkins came back positive for Brooks’ DNA in three places. He was
Based on public outcry, City Council member Chris Ward should consider the negative feedback from the community when he evaluates the plans. As someone who has worked with the community for years, Ward understands the importance of transparency and accountability in decision-making processes. The data shows that the proposals were not supported by the majority of voters in his district. While there may be potential benefits to the proposals, such as increased walkability and bike safety, there is also concern about their impact on local businesses and residents. Ward’s name recognition as an elected official may also be helpful with low-information voters, although the data shows little if no impact on opponents to the plans. Michelle Nguyen and Adrian Kwiatkowski, with the most conservative views on protected bike lanes, actually received slightly less support in the 10 precincts touching 30th Street than they did overall (Nguyen had 10.29% compared to 18.23% overall; Kwiatkowski had 7.28% compared to 8.35% overall).

Kwiatkowski did not outright oppose the permanent supportive housing at the old Mission Hills Library but did sign a letter asking for other locations to at least be considered. He received 11.2% of the votes in Mission Hills, where he is a resident. Since most candidates are expected to receive a boost in their neighborhood, it’s unclear if Kwiatkowski’s support there came from his stance on the library or knowing more people.

The controversies around the proposals were not aberrations—anyone who witnessed the hours of angry testimony at community meetings can attest to that. There are a number of possible explanations for the election results. The data shows there came from his stance on the library or knowing more people. Perhaps most shocking is that Kwiatkowski received 11.2% of the votes in Mission Hills, where he is a resident. Since most candidates are expected to receive a boost in their neighborhood, it’s unclear if Kwiatkowski’s support there came from his stance on the library or knowing more people.

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Another way to tell if those controversies were reflected by vote totals is by examining if candidates who opposed the plans received higher support in those affected neighborhoods. Based on the numbers from the San Diego County Registrar on Wednesday, March 4, in Mission Hills, Ward carried 77% of the vote—far better than 56.82% he tallied across the entire Assembly district. In the three precincts in South Park and seven in North Park that contain the proposed bikeway, he was supported by 56.03% of voters—nearly equal to his district-wide support.

When it comes to Ward’s replacement on the City Council, Chris Olsen has been the most vocal supporter of the 30th Street bikeway. While it is still too close to tell if Olsen will make it through the primary, his voter support remained steady in those 10 precincts on 30th Street compared to the rest of the district—20.18% compared to 20.73%.

Another meeting at the new Mission Hills-Hillcrest Library did not have enough space for everyone who came to speak about the old library plan in June 2019. (Photo by Helen Rose Allen)
J.T. Bruce graduated from SDSU’s film school in 2009 so he was situated to direct the film. He did the majority of the filming himself along with the post-production jobs of visual effects, sound design, editing and voice-over. His father Todd Bruce served as the producer and his sister Bri Bruce was the associate producer and marketing director.

“I had the opportunity now to learn more about my family’s history. Going through this whole process, I got to do a cool project with my kids. Having your adult children want to spend time with you and work on a project like this, to me is the best thing that I could ever hope for,” said Todd Bruce.

They hope that by centering the family, they are able to expand the process of exploration for a broader audience.

To round out the four-person film crew, scientific advisor Greg Meyer was brought on board.

“If we can alert people — educate them about [Baja California’s] uniqueness, maybe it can be preserved,” said Meyer. “One of the most interesting things for me in doing all the research about Nelson and Goldman and the work that they did, is that they recognized in 1905 and ’06 how much of the flora and fauna was on the brink of extinction. If we don’t do something now, this wildness will not be here.” They recognized it back then.

With the same conservationist goals as the Bruce’s ancestors, the crew highlighted at-risk species as Baja has become more developed, particularly in the last decade. They did not want the documentary to be all “doom and gloom” though so they interviewed scientists about preservation work being done, including by the Mexican government, which has set up national parks and biospheres to protect the area. Among the experts included in the film are Exequiel Ezcurra, a UC Riverside ecologist who worked at the San Diego Natural History Museum, who was an architect of a program to release endangered California condors in Baja.

“The thing aims to balance the serious topics it delves into with a fun soundtrack of rock ‘n roll and motorcycle adventures.”

Goldman and Nelson traversed the rugged terrain by horseback. Father and son followed the same path but on motorcycle, with a few jaunts by boat, surfboard, and horse. After a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the Smithsonian where most photos, notes, and specimens from the original expedition are, the pair were able to recreate many of the photographs Nelson and Goldman took — documenting a century of change on the biodiverse peninsula.

Although not as difficult as 10 months spent on horseback, the filming itself was challenging. Unlike big productions with a chase vehicle, all of their food, fuel, camping gear and cameras had to be packed onto the motorcycles each morning.

“It was packing up, filming, writing, unpacking, setting up camp and then starting it all over again,” said Todd Bruce.

“Our daily routine was really a balance between planning and improvisation. We got into trouble sometimes where we just couldn’t traverse the path that we had planned out. We had to reroute and improvise. We would constantly either run into unexpected things that were super exciting that we needed to film, or the things that we were planning to film were not nearly as interesting as we thought they were,” said director J.T. Bruce.

His sister Bri also joined them for one section of the trip where they followed the exact path Nelson and Goldman took on horseback.

“This is a great example of the little pockets that you find in Baja that are still really wild and there really isn’t any indication that you’re in 2017 versus 1905. I had the opportunity to be firsthand, on the back of a horse, riding through the desert, just really putting myself in Nelson and Goldman’s shoes. To get that perspective was a very pivotal reason why we wanted to make this film,” she said.

She also joined them to surf, which was an important aspect to include because surfing is what put Baja California on the map in modern times and fueled the tourism explosion that has led to so much development of the once natural landscape.

The family’s adventures, both past and present, are the backbone to a film which highlights preservation success stories and serious issues of ecological destruction. Since so many people vacation in Baja, the film could give viewers a broader vision of what the peninsula contains.

“Nelson and Goldman have this major expedition 100-plus years ago — and this place still exists. You can still go and have this kind of adventure. That’s what we saw with J.T. and Todd as they drove the peninsula on their motorcycles. That’s just a reminder to people that the world’s a big place and there’s still a lot of wild left,” Meyer said.

The showing on the giant screen at the Natural History Museum is at 6:30 p.m. on March 10. The creators, as well as some of the scientists and conservationists, will be on hand to speak. Tickets may be purchased online, at the museum, or by calling 877-946-7797.

— Kendra Slioton can be reached at kendra@sdnnews.com.
40th anniversary of San Diego’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade

On Saturday, March 14, the annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Irish Festival will take place in Balboa Park at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Laurel Street. The parade will start at 10:30 a.m. and the Irish festival will take place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The festival will feature Irish music, dancing food and crafts. Guinness beer will sponsor the huge beer garden and a free shuttle will ferry visitors from free parking zones at the Veteran’s Museum and the Air & Space museum.

This parade is the largest St. Patrick’s Day parade west of the Mississippi and will take place rain or shine. The event is free and visitors of all ages are welcome. The main stage in the beer garden will feature the local Irish bands Highland Way, The Downs Family, Tony Cummins, The Shamrockers, The Ass Pocket Whiskey Fellas, and closes out with Scéal Eile. The smaller North Stage will feature the band Calamity, the dancing of the Rose Richie and Clan Rince Irish dance studios, and renowned harpist Chiara Capobianco.

Live Irish music is a tradition at the parade (Photo by Vince Meehan)

The parade will start at Fifth Avenue and Laurel Street, and continue down to Upas Street. There it will do a U-turn onto Sixth Avenue and terminate at the festival at Sixth and Laurel. Many Bankers Hill businesses will be open early and feature specials in honor of the parade.

The festival will also feature other international food fare as well as ice cream, snow cones and coffee. A special all-ages section will be provided to those who wish to view the music stage without entering the beer garden. There will also be a raffle available to win prizes including two round-trip tickets to Ireland courtesy of Aer Lingus, and tickets to see Irish singer David Gray at Cal Coast Credit Union Open Air Theatre on Aug. 2, courtesy of Live Nation.

All proceeds from the raffle and beer sales go to the Irish Congress of Southern California, a nonprofit organization that puts on the parade every year. For info, go to stpatsparade.org.

— Vince Meehan can be reached at vinniemeehan@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to save.

You did it, San Diego. More than 600,000 of you are thinking about energy differently. By using less electricity from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., you’ve helped save energy and contributed to a cleaner environment for us all. Because of you, when is truly in. Visit us online for tips on how to continue your success with Time-of-Use.

Find tips at sdge.com/whematters
Documentary captures origins of Greek folk dance festival

In the 1970s, San Diego’s Greek immigrant community, which accounted for less than 1% of the population, was struggling to find a way to preserve their heritage and connect their youth with other Greek American young people. The solution came in the form of a folk-dance festival that attracted Greek youth from across the nation. It is now the largest Greek folk-dance festival in the world outside of Greece. Its founder, La Mesa resident Peter Preovolos, recently produced a documentary tracing the history of the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance and Choral Festival, also known as FDF.

For the first few years, just four churches participated. The event was held in the only Greek Orthodox Church in San Diego at the time, St. Spyridon in North Park. Now in its 44th year, the festival ballooned to 3,000 participants and thousands of attendees annually. The 2020 FDF was held in Anaheim over Valentine’s Day weekend. A week later, the documentary “Kefi” was shown at the Museum of Photographic Arts in Balboa Park.

Preovolos spent the last six years working on the documentary, which included conducting around 50 interviews of people involved in the festival. This work was imbued with a sense of urgency because many of the people were elderly and their voice needed to be captured before they died. The documentary includes quotes from many of the original organizers, dancers, parents and church leaders overlaid with video footage of the dances through the decades.

Peter Preovolos in 1986. (Photo courtesy Kefi film)

see Greek dance, pg 15
COMMUNITY VOICES / FINANCE

Homage to Paras Newsstand

BY SUSAN TAYLOR / Correspondent

There was a place for truth, honest expression, and humbled hearts worn on artistic sleeves.

Its owners were solid, trustworthy people.

I liked that Lou was a grandpa and that he had a taste for smooth Wrangler’s carmelitas just like me.

Not all the people who went in there were like me. But it was interesting to see regular North Park folks buying horse racing papers, lottery tickets, Doritos, and magazines.

If you spoke German or Italian, you could find a kindred magazine.

If you needed one of those things to keep your glasses on your head, you could find it there.

Even when they took away all the of parking space to make a bike lane, it was accepted philosophically.

It was open late but looked warm and friendly and surprisingly nonthreatening, even on this vulnerable 30th Street corner.

The Rockwalk Roll Marathon street closures couldn’t put a crimp in Paras’ style.

We’re here for you if you need us. When the newstand closed it took away cultures and opinions.

Global testimonies were wiped away like dust.

Walk by now and peer through the iron accordion gates.

Behind the gates are glass doors. Behind the glass doors is a cavern devoid of thoughts and soul.

The stories and bright blazon graphs have been sold off or carried away by you and gapers, lots, it’s okay. It’s okay.

Don’t forget to close the door behind you.

Tomorrow the bus stop people, the side-walk sleepers, and the readers gripe. But they have memories of the old days.

The curious will seek other places where mysteries and secrets Stand tall on bookshelves or hidden behind last month’s publication.

Truly, to be honest. The words, real news, the poetry, the fashion, the art, the stop-in-your-tracks photograph can’t really disappear.

They pay rent in our mental museums for us to revisit as we will.

– Sue Taylor is a retired English teacher and currently works as a private tutor and freelance writer. She has written for North Park News and Edible San Diego. Taylor can be reached at suetaylor6082@yahoo.com.

BIG CHANGES TO YOUR IRA

A new federal law called the SECURE Act went into effect this year that impacts everyone with an IRA or employer savings plan including 401(k), 403(b), and TSP plans.

The act packet of changes mostly impacts the heirs who will inherit these accounts.

Grandparents and parents will be most interested in these changes as they are passing along investments to younger generations is an important goal for them.

Before getting into the specific change, we need a crash course in “required minimum distributions,” or what many people call RMDs. The government created rules that allow us to save in pre-tax retirement accounts. This is great! We can save in accounts like IRAs and 401(k) plans without paying taxes on that saved money. This allows more of your savings to be invested because you didn’t have to pay taxes on that money.

Of course, the government eventually wants their share of the pot! The IRS requires you to take distributions from these pre-tax accounts at a certain age.

These required minimum distributions, or RMDs, make pre-tax money pass through the tax gate so the IRS can collect their taxes. RMDs require people to take these pre-tax accounts as a way to create tax revenue from your retirement savings. The government won’t allow you to let this money grow tax-free forever.

This brings us to our first change in the IRA laws. Previously, people had to start taking RMDs from their IRA, 401(k), 403(b) and TSP plans when they turned 70 1/2 years old. This age was pushed back to 72 years old.

This is a good change for people who don’t need their retirement savings to live on. They can delay the start of RMDs by 18 months.

The big changes to your IRAs occur after you die. Under the previous rules, non-spoouse beneficiaries who inherited IRAs that are employer plans could “stretch” their RMDs over their lifetimes. This was called a “stretch” IRA. A typical scenario is this: parents die and the kids inherit the iras. The kids could take RMDs over their lifetimes and let the IRAs continue to have tax-deferred investment growth.

This also limited the tax liability for the kids; they are only required to take out a small distribution of the IRA each year. The new law no longer allows kids (or any non-spoouse beneficiary) who inherit IRAs to stretch their RMDs over their lifetime.

Non-spoouse inheritors now must withdraw the entire IRA balance within 10 years of inheriting the money. This new 10-year rule also applies to inherited Roth IRAs.

This is a gigantic change in the rules! It allows the IRS to collect billions in tax revenue over a short period of time as parents pass away and wealth transfers to their kids and other heirs.

As with all things in life, there are exceptions! If you already have an inherited IRA from before 2020, you are grandfathered in and can continue to take your RMDs over your lifetime. The new 10-year rule does not apply to you and they will not change as they have in previous years.

Additionally, the 10-year distribution rule does not apply to a surviving spouse. Their rules for married couples are still the same. If your spouse dies, then you can take their IRA into your own name and there are no required minimum distributions until you turn 72 years old.

Another exception to the 10-year distribution rule is non-spoouse IRA beneficiaries who are no more than 10 years younger than the original IRA owner. A probable case is a single person with no kids who has their siblings as their IRA beneficiaries. If the IRA owner dies, the siblings who are no more than 10 years younger than the IRA owner can stretch out the RMDs from the inherited IRA over their lifetime.

What if the siblings who inherit an IRA are older in this example? They cannot stretch out the RMDs over their lifetime. They must withdraw their inherited IRA within 10 years of inheriting the account.

One more exception to the new 10-year withdrawal rule are minor children of the IRA owner. It’s important to note this is not for any minor kid who inherits an IRA; it is only for minor kids of the original IRA owner. In these situations, the minor child can “stretch” the required minimum distributions until they are 18 years old. Once they reach 18, the 10-year clock begins, and the adult kids need to withdraw all the inherited IRA money by the time they are 28 years old.

If the inheritor of the IRA is disabled or chronically ill, then the RMDs can be taken over the lifetime of the IRA inheritor. There are specific criteria to qualify for these exceptions. A financial advisor should help you in these situations.

These are just two of the new IRA rules. Pushing back the RMD age to 72 is a benefit for IRA owners. The other rule changing inherited IRAs to be fully withdrawn in 10 years is a revenue generator for the government and not a benefit for your heirs.

This rule change makes it extremely important to have an estate planning attorney review your living trust. The new rules create potential landmines in your estate documents. A review by your attorney will ensure that you heirs will receive the best tax treatment when they inherit your IRAs.

We still have more changes to cover regarding IRA contributions and qualified charitable contributions, but these will occur in next month’s article.

– Steve Doster, CFP, is the financial planning manager at Bowling & Associates – a fee-only wealth management and CPA firm helping individuals create a worry-free financial life. Bowling & Associates works to foster a fiduciary standard of care helping people with their taxes, investments, and financial planning. Read more articles at bowling.com/blog.
Using California’s Red Flag Law to combat hate crimes

A 35-year-old Clairemont man threatened on Facebook to “shoot up” a gay bar in Hillcrest and then kill himself. He reiterated those threats to law enforcement after being detained. Our office intervened with a Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO) to prevent this attack.

This is just one example of more than 300 situations where our office has obtained a GVRO to avert potential gun violence tragedy in San Diego. While the majority of cases referred to our office involve domestic violence or threats of suicide, we’ve also found GVROs to be a valuable tool for preventing hate-fueled violence in our community.

Using California’s Red Flag Law, our office obtains GVROs to safely remove firearms from individuals who pose a danger to themselves or others. They also serve another purpose – preventing the person named in the order from acquiring new guns and ammunition. We established California’s first GVRO program and are training hundreds of other agencies throughout California on how to use this life-saving tool.

Hate crimes have increased dramatically since their decade-low rate in 2014, and they increasingly target individuals as opposed to property. With this law, we protect the most vulnerable populations in our city, particularly those who face discrimination and even threats of violence because of their race, religion, national origin, gender identity or other characteristics.

As city attorney, my job is to ensure all our citizens feel safe in their own communities.

A GVRO was obtained in each of these cases to prevent a potential hate crime:

- A 50-year-old man confronted three Muslim women in Little Italy, forcefully bumping one with his shoulder. He pulled the hijab off another woman’s head, and punched the third woman, the victims testified in court. He yelled at them, “Go back to your country!”

When San Diego Police went to his apartment, he answered the door with a gun. Our office obtained a GVRO to prevent him from owning firearms in the future.

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When San Diego Police went to his apartment, he answered the door with a gun. Our office obtained a GVRO to prevent him from owning firearms in the future.
Imagine stray dogs and wild pigs consuming sewage and garbage dumped into streets and empty lots. A town in Creté in 3000 B.C. Yes. But also San Diego. In 1850, the modern sewer design of underground pipes with access manholes for cleaning and repairs was not envisioned until 1882. And it took until 1917 for almost all houses built in San Diego to have wastewater removal either by the city system or septic tanks. It is a fact that we want to think much about. In contrast, the newly built, eight-foot diameter sewer tunnels in Paris during the 1700s were considered an engineering feat and a public attraction. People toured the sewers in barges to admire the efficient system. Live tours of the sewer system in neighborhoods like North Park are not feasible, since the typical population density is too high. However, the construction of the system had a significant effect on development throughout San Diego. In 1868, fewer than two dozen people lived in New Town, the core of what has become San Diego’s Downtown. But within a few years, waste generated by the growing population created problems. The Sept. 5, 1872 issue of the Daily Union recommended some more effective means of carrying off sewage be developed, because the flows emptying into the bay on the beach at Alonzo Horton’s wharf above low water mark were creating very offensive odors. As dire as this situation may seem, it was 10 years before the city’s Committee on Sewerage released a report on how to address the problem. The May 30, 1882 issue of the San Diego Union printed the committee’s recommendations, which involved separating stormwater from sanitary waste, constructing several sets of sewers in New Town and Horton’s Addition as soon as possible, especially south of B Street and west of 12th, which was the “present centre of population.” Modern features of the system included access manholes and provisions for periodic flushing. The committee also recommended that the underground pipeline system carry only sewage collected from direct connections to households and businesses and not carry any surface runoff, in order to keep the pipeline sizes as small as possible. At this time, East Coast cities typically provided large pipelines for carrying off combined flows of rainfall runoff and sewage. Separate pipelines for rainfall runoff and sewage were the “Waring System,” after Colonel George E. Waring, jr. who championed this concept and was instrumental in having such a system installed in Memphis, Tennessee in 1880. That city was in dire financial shape at the time and could not afford a “combined flow” system. Waring (1833-1898) was born in New York. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War and became an expert in sanitary engineering, including facilities for drainage, sewers, and garbage removal. The San Diego Board of City Trustees sought his guidance in February 1887, when a bond issue was approved for the construction of buried sewers by the city. Waring offered to supervise the project and came to San Diego in April 1887. Work began in July that year. Neighborhoods in New Town, Sherman Heights and Golden Hill were the first to benefit from the pipeline system. The first trunk sewer to collect urban flows was the Market Street Trunk Sewer. It discharged into a tank located in San Diego Bay about 1.100 feet offshore. The tank failed to operate properly, however, and was removed a year later. As a new century dawned, the sewer pipeline system expanded, while disposal into San Diego Bay through multiple outlets continued. The April 5, 1912 issue of the Evening Tribune announced final sewer connections for a system serving University Heights from Georgia to Kansas streets west to east, and University Avenue to El Cajon Boulevard south to north. This sewer system was dubbed the “North Park” line, and also connected homes north of University Avenue and west of Oregon street. Two other trunk lines were completed at this time. The “east side” trunk line ran in Switzer Canyon under the 30th Street bridge and drained to the sewer system at junction of Switzer and Powel House (now Florida) canyons. It served homes along Utah, Sherman (now Grenada), Kansas and 30th streets. The “west side” sewer started at University Avenue and Fifth Street, and drained into the bay at Olver Street.

By the end of the 1910s, San Diego Bay was a polluted mess that was corroding the paint off Navy ships. In 1940, the Navy helped the city obtain the necessary funds for a treatment plant and deep outfall to be constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). President Roosevelt signed the proposal, the plant was located on Navy property at Harbor Drive and 32nd Street and was completed in June 1943. It was enlarged in 1950, but even so, increasing flows degraded water quality in the bay to the point that the County Department of Health quarantined the entire bay in 1955. It took eight more years for the Point Loma Treatment Plant and ocean outfall to be completed. In 1963—nearly 100 years after New Town residents started discharging raw sewage into San Diego Bay—the metro system began operations, and the bay finally was able to recover its natural water quality.

Katherine Hon is the secretary of the North Park Historical Society. Reach her at info@northparkhistory.org or 619-294-8990.©
Since its inception in 2017, The Roustabouts Theatre Co. almost instantaneously became an acclaimed and award-winning company, producing new dramas and comedies. After taking an unofficial break from producing main stage shows in San Diego in 2019, the organization is back with a new dark comedy at the Monie Theatre in Rolando, “GUNTOPIA.”

Presented in the vein of an old-fashioned sitcom such as “Father Knows Best” and “Leave It to Beaver,” founding member, Will Cooper’s (Phil Johnson and Ruff Yeager are the other founding members), script follows the life of a loving patriarch, Harry Nelson (Johnson), He and his wife, Mary (Lisel Goren-Getz), son, Bobby (Levi Ladden), and daughter, June (Ava Harris), are all gun enthusiasts.

The story deals both comically, and eventually, dramatically, with the consequences of gun violence.

During an earlier reading put on by The Roustabouts, Johnson was blown away by Cooper’s writing, and believes the character of the father is going to be impacted by the playwright’s prose. “I want people to get as much out of this play as they can, because it will affect such a response,” he said. “I think the people that listen to it will be moved.”

Cooper did not want the plot to focus on gun violence, exclusively. “I wouldn’t say this is a play solely about gun violence,” he said. “I see it as a play about the social impact of gun violence.”

In particular, Cooper is disturbed by how “massacres” and school shootings have risen in the last few years, and how Americans are getting used to hearing about these tragic events on a regular basis.

While other notable shows from Cooper that were produced in San Diego, including Moxie’s production of “Jade Heart” and The Roustabouts staging of “Margin of Error,” are dramatic with moments of humor, his latest is more comedic than those tales.

“The first scene that I wrote featured a dark comedy tone, and I kept that mostly all the way through, except towards the end,” he said.

Johnson finds the final part of the narrative to be haunting, and a powerful contrast to the rest of the evening. “Setting it in a 1950’s-1960’s -style television world is kind of a formal covering on this thing that cracks open by the end of the play,” he said. “It’s a way in for the audience, because they’re laughing and they don’t quite understand why. They don’t wake up to what’s going on until the facade cracks.”

Given the premise, audiences might expect Harry to be portrayed as a potentially unlikable and bigoted protagonist. However, Johnson says Harry is actually a character worthy of sympathy, despite the father’s flaws.

“Harry is the most empathetic guy I’ve ever played,” he said.

Part of the reason Johnson cares so much about Harry, is because the role is making him reflect on his relationship with his own 10-year-old-child.

“Something I think about all the time is, what would I do to protect my son?” he said.

Despite caring about Harry, Johnson acknowledges that the character makes poor decisions in the first part of the show. Yet, Johnson respects how much Harry cares about his family, and attempts to change as the plot develops.

“Many of the points that Cooper wants audiences to take away from his text are not easy to decipher.”

The play has a mystery at its core, and every audience member will have to figure out what that means to him or her,” he said.

A notable aspect that ties into the ope-n-interpretation messages in the play, are several talkbacks with speakers ranging from Cooper and the director Rosina Reynolds, attorney Thomas Haine, and a discussion with both Assembly member Todd Gloria and Jess Darline, chair of the Western Region Caucus of the DNC. Topic Topics covered in these talkbacks range from 2nd Second Amendment issues to student activism around gun violence issues.

Although gun violence is a sensitive topic, Cooper, Reynolds and Johnson want to leave audiences thinking deeply about this issue. Roustabouts Roustabouts latest hopes to inspire people to take part in smart and nuanced discussions revolving around a serious subject that is now more relevant than ever. “GUNTOPIA” runs Wednesdays through Sundays, March 8-29 at the Moxie Theatre, 6663 El Cajon Blvd, Suite N. For tickets and more information on “GUNTOPIA,” visit theroustabouts.org or call 619-728-7820.

—David Dixon is a freelance film and theater writer based in San Diego.

Four easy ways tech can help grandparents bond with younger family members

Grandparents: a word often associated with presents, special outings, yummy food and unconditional love. Yet many Americans don’t talk to, or see, their grandparents as often as they’d like.

Here are four ways technology can help you connect with your grandparents.

1. Messaging Apps

A recent study revealed that 73% of grandparents own smartphones. Messaging apps like WhatsApp or Talkatone are a great introduction to texting for grandparents.

With messaging apps, you can send and receive text updates, photos and videos in one place. When there’s time for a longer conversation, you can use these apps to chat for free, as most don’t use cell minutes.

2. Video Chat

Video chat makes you feel as though everyone’s in the same room. Use apps like Skype or FaceTime to have a video conversation from virtually any device, and share life events such as graduations or weddings.

3. Gaming and Creativity Apps

Apps like Magisto and PhotoFunia allow you to personalize photos and videos. Looking for some friendly competition with your grandparents? Try a gaming app like Wheel of Fortune or Minecraft. Keep your grandparents updated with an app like Keepy, an interactive platform for sharing school projects and artwork. Use family tree apps like Ancestry to discover photos and stories together as you navigate your family history.

4. Social Media

Start a private Instagram account where you can post photos and videos. Grandparents have lots to share as well, so encourage them to make their own Instagram handles and record their stories. This can be a unique way to learn about your grandparents’ past, pass down family memories or share family recipes.

Snapchat is another option for sending and receiving custom pictures or videos with a variety of fun filters and lenses.

How to Help Your Grandparents

Only 44% of grandparents identify as tech-savvy.

Teaching non-tech-savvy family members how to use video chat and social media can be a bonding experience. You can also set your grandparents up with useful home features like the SURE Universal Remote, which allows them to control their TV and other devices from their smartphone. Less tech-savvy grandparents may not realize they can watch their cable TV content from their mobile device or schedule DVR recordings with apps like Cox Connect.

Giving your elders the power to connect helps build relationships with the people you love most, and that’s priceless at any age.
Morning beer buzz

Come On Get Happy!
Dr. Ink

The morning sun looms over a popular Hillcrest dive bar.

I’m drinking the latter, a $6 feel-good deal that has me wishing it was Friday night. The suds also give me a hankering for a $6 heavy shot of something like Jameson Irish Whiskey.

But I refrain because it’s a workday. And it’s frigging morning rush hour out there. Not even vacationing on some tropical island have I ever imbired alcohol this early in the day—let alone before eating even a morsel of food for breakfast.

The Alibi ranks among San Diego’s oldest dive bars. I used to frequent the place years ago, at night, when the atmosphere is notably carefree and festive.

Yet I found the morning vibe to be surprisingly upbeat, albeit with far less customers compared to the evenings. I counted eight people at the bar, and a few on the back smoking patio. Conversation was flowing, and jukebox tunes by The Beatles, Steve Miller Band, and Bob Dylan were playing at a reasonable volume.

“We have awesome patrons in the mornings,” said bartender Christy Sons, whose welcoming personality can dismantle your morning grouchiness in no time.

But not everyone is fresh out of bed. A quiet-type guy sitting next to me drinking $4 vodka and sodas revealed he finished work at 2:30 a.m. before grabbing breakfast.

Another customer sitting nearby said he came straight off his graveyard shift. “This is my happy hour,” he said while sipping away at a big dipper.

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Another customer sitting nearby said he came straight off his graveyard shift. “This is my happy hour,” he said while sipping away at a big dipper.

Silhouetted by the morning sunlight beaming through the front windows was a guy named Joe. He kindly bought everyone at the bar a round of drinks. I was told later he’s one of the owners.

“There’s always a good cross section of people on my shift,” Sons added. “It’s industry types, workers on their days off, vendors, and retired people—the reason you come to a dive bar.”

The Alibi stopped serving food many years ago. And now I needed some. So when looking up from my empty beer glass, I happened to notice a McDonald’s commercial on one of the flatscreen TVs. It was promoting two Egg McMuffins for $4. Lo and behold, there are golden arches directly across the street.

With a moderate stagger and notebook still in hand, I was there within minutes. It was a radically enjoyable morning.
Sink your choppers into this beer-dough pizza at Cueva Bat. (Courtesy photo)

Chef-owner Oz Blackaller of Cueva Bar in University Heights recently added pizzas made with beer dough to his menu. The 10-year-old bar and cafe is a destination for wine and tapas, as well as Mexican, South American and coastal cuisine. Blackaller said he wanted to return to his pizza-making roots from when he lived on the East Coast years ago.

“My dough is handmade and I use a local lager in the recipe. It’s a trick I learned from a pizzeria in Virginia,” he added.

Two varieties of the 12-inch pizzas can be found on the regular menu—a salami version with marinara sauce and cheese; and a vegetarian pie with chimichurri sauce, mixed cheeses, roasted poblano peppers and portobello mushrooms. A rotation of specialty pizzas are available on the weekends.

Blackaller also revised his happy hour, which is now held from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. It’s when everything on the food, beer and wine menu is $2 off.

The eighth annual Bankers Hill Art & Craft Beer Festival will be held from 6 to 9 p.m., March 27, at The Abbey, an elegant and historic venue noted for its stained-glass windows and Greek-revival architecture.

This year’s event will feature unlimited 2-ounce beer pours from 15 different local craft breweries. They include Green Flash, Alpine Beer Company, Mikkeller Brewing, Latchkey Brewing Company, and more.

As attendees peruse a host of diverse works from San Diego-based artists, they can also enjoy complimentary food samples doled out onsite by neighborhood restaurants such as Wetstone Wine Bar, Cucina Urbana, Barrio Star, Jimmy Carter’s Mexican Cafe, and others.

The festival is presented by the Bankers Hill Business Group in partnership with the San Diego Brewer’s Guild. Monies from the event are used to promote area businesses and increase awareness of Bankers Hill. Tickets start at $30 per person. They can be purchased at the door or online. Attendees must be 21 years of age or older.

Celebrate Pi Day at this neighborhood pie shop. (Broad & Bottle PR)


— Frank Sabatini Jr. can be reached at fsabatini@san.rr.com.
FROM PAGE 7

RED FLAG

door with a handgun in his hand. The officers observed an AR-15 assault rifle, tactical vests and ammunition inside. He was arrested and charged with three counts of battery and a hate crime. The police confiscated seven long guns (some with scopes), a double-barreled shotgun, two handguns, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

- A 18-year-old Ramona man left disturbing telephone messages referencing bullets and guns at the San Diego offices of an English as a Second Language school, after he got into a political argument on Facebook with the school’s director. When he learned the school was planning a field trip to Ramona, he left messages saying he didn’t want “those [explicative] illegals up here” and that his neighborhood was “MAGA territory.”

- A 30-year-old man stated that he wanted to purchase automatic weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines in Arizona, and then commit the largest mass shooting in U.S. history and broadcast it on Instagram. He mentioned a school in the Poway Unified School District, and stated he wanted to kill people based on their race.

These disturbing examples demonstrate how powerful GVROs can be at thwarting hate crimes and preventing gun violence. Our office will remain proactive and vigilant in our effort to prevent this kind of violence, and I want to continue to work together as a community to stamp out hate. I urge community residents to report dangerous conduct to the San Diego Police Department immediately. With your help, we can protect all San Diegans, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

— Mara W. Elliott was elected city attorney of San Diego in 2016 after serving as the chief deputy attorney for the office’s Public Services Section and legal adviser to the city’s Independent Audit Committee and Environment Committee. Elliott and the lawyers in her section held polluters accountable, reformed city contracting, cut administrative red tape, and strengthened the city’s living wage and non-discrimination in contracting ordinances.

How to take the 2020 census

The Census provides vital information about the nation’s growing population and infrastructure, which impacts the everyday lives of all persons living in the United States. Census data is used to allocate funding for communities, ensure public safety, and plan new schools and hospitals. People use Census data to decide where to open businesses and offices, which create jobs. The 2020 Census is the first census to rely heavily on digital response, but will still have phone, mail, and will-enabled kiosk options available before enumerators are sent door-to-door.

Starting in mid-March 2020, households will receive an invitation in the mail informing them of the options for filling out the Census questionnaire. The invitation will contain a unique ID number to use when filling out the Census. However, if you misplace your number, you can still take the Census using your home address. Once the invitation arrives you can respond for your home in one of four ways:

- Online: Complete the questionnaire at the official website, my2020census.gov on your desktop computer or mobile device, or through Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Kiosks hosted by libraries, governments, and community groups at various locations around the region.

- Mail: You can respond by completing the Census questionnaire at the official website, my2020census.gov, or by filling out your Census questionnaire and returning it by mail.

- Phone: Call 1-844-330-2020 (TTY: 1-866-653-4273) to complete the Census questionnaire.

- In-Person: A Census taker will visit your home in one of four ways:
  - In-person visit: A Census taker will visit your home and interview you.
  - Assisted interview: A Census taker will assist you in completing the Census questionnaire.
  - Assisted interview with a Census taker: A Census taker will assist you in completing the Census questionnaire and will also interview you.
  - Assisted interview with a Census taker and a Census taker: A Census taker will assist you in completing the Census questionnaire and will also interview you and another Census taker.

Rely heavily on digital response.

2020 Census is the first census to rely heavily on digital response.
**Friday, March 6**

**Friends of the Library Book Trails**

Come to North Park Library to purchase some used books in support of library programs. The sale starts at 9:30 a.m. This is the last day the library will be open until April 30.

**Art of Pride: Youth Art Show**

Join the San Diego Gulls Hockey Club, San Diego Pride, and the You Can Play Project for The Gulls to celebrate and highlight the LGBTQ community. All Gulls fans are invited to the event. Tickets are $20.

**Tuesdays**

**Introduction to Buddhist Meditation**

Join an all-ages introductory class on meditation. This class is an introduction to Buddhist meditation concepts as well as participate in a discussion and silent meditation. Jeff Zottin, Free. 7-8 p.m. at Dharma Bum. 5515 Pacific Ave. Also held on Saturdays at 11 a.m. at blt.ly/dharmabum.

**North Park Thursday Market**

Shop at more than 90 tents for locally grown produce, hand-crafted arts and crafts, flowers and local handmade goods. 3-7:30 p.m. at 3000 North Park Way, stretching from 31st to Utah streets.

**Sunday, March 7**

**San Diego Uptown News**

March 6-19, 2020

sdnews.com

**San Diego Zoo Walkabout**

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The idea of FDF first came to Preovolos when he lived in Los Angeles and was at the Rose Bowl when the Church of Latter-Day Saints hosted a square dance competition in which 5,000 youth competed.

“I turned to my wife and said, ‘Can you imagine 5,000 Greek kids in the various costumes that are worn throughout Greece?’” he explained.

Four years later, he moved to San Diego and led the youth program at St. Spyridon. One year, the youth came to him and asked if they could perform at the annual food festival held at St. Spyridon. Typically, the church hired professional dancers from Los Angeles for the event. Preovolos got the church to agree to the idea of letting the students see if they were as talented as the professionals. The students became a wildly popular addition. From there, more churches were invited to participate and the folk-dance festival was born.

According to the documentary, in many of the villages in Greece, people were illiterate so they passed down their stories through song and dance.

As the festival grew, choreographers and dancers were sent to Greece to research the variety of dances there. Instead of a simple Americanized Greek dance, the dancers began to showcase the differences in costume and folk dance from each of the islands and villages in Greece. The dance became more authentic and competitions in choral singing and costumes were added.

The documentary also shows some of the difficulties of an organization calcifying after initial innovation. Scholarships to send dancers to Greece who could not afford to go dried up. The student-leadership aspect waned away. When Preovolos was in charge, he set up a council of around 25 teenagers to run all aspects of the program with some oversight and support from adults.

“We made sure that all the kids were responsible for all the money and program. When I finally retired the program, [the annual] budget was $750,000,” said Preovolos. “We don’t do enough with kids. We don’t give [them] enough responsibility. As parents, we all try to do it for them.”

Many of the former student leaders interviewed in the documentary explained that planning the event taught them skills they would not have learned elsewhere and set their career trajectory decades later.

Director Patti Testerman and Preovolos are now applying for the documentary to be shown in film festivals in Greece, Europe and across the U.S. So far, it has been shown at the TCL Chinese Theatre Hollywood while competing in the Golden Film Festival. Preovolos hopes the film will inspire other ethnic groups to start festivals of their own that could preserve part of their culture.

“It’s impossible to preserve 100% of it. By the third generation, your language is generally gone. Maybe there’s some culinary aspects still in play, but most of it is pretty well starting to disappear. I think that’s kind of sad because one of the great things about America is this magnificent quilt that has made America what it is. All of the ethnic groups, parts of their culture are very valuable, very vibrant. That makes this quilt so magnificent,” Preovolos said.

— Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
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Lucia Bonham
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