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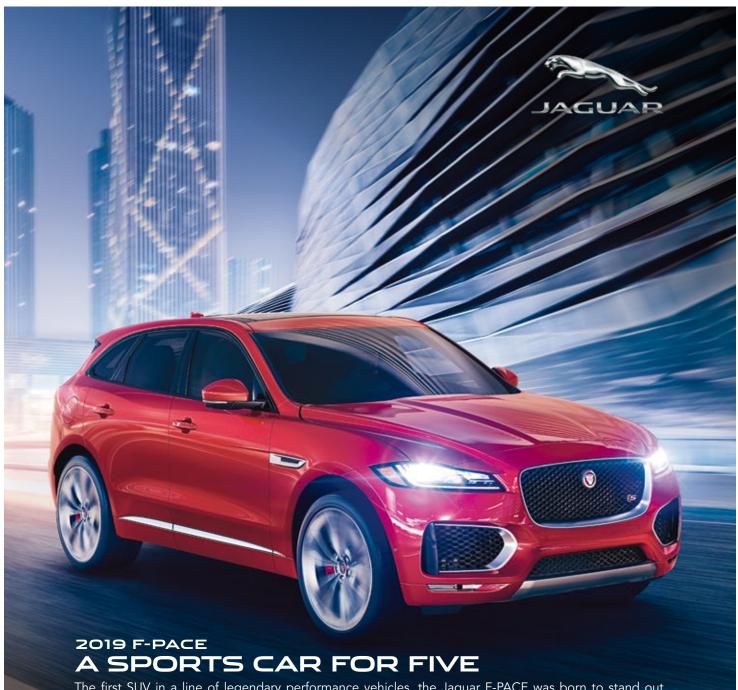
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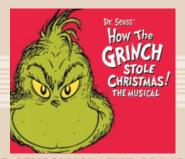
PHOTOGRAPHY Anthony Mair

## THE HE RTOF THE ARTS



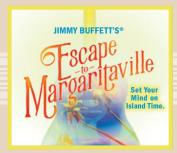
JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR NOVEMBER 5-10, 2019

#### BROADWAY



DR SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS! THE MUSICAL

NOVEMBER 26-DECEMBER 1, 2019



JIMMY BUFFETT'S ESCAPE TO MARGARITAVILLE

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PAUL ANKA: ANKA SINGS SINATRA HIS SONGS, MY SONGS, MY WAY! NOVEMBER 23, 2019



THE PIANO GUYS
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BETWEEN RIVER & RIM: HIKING THE GRAND CANYON with Writer, Kevin Fedarko and Photographer/Filmmaker Pete McBride NOVEMBER 21, 2019



STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND with Photographer, Jodi Cobb MARCH 18, 2020



OCEAN SOUL
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JUNE 12, 2020





Editor's Note

## **HOMEWARD** AND ONWARD

ctober marks that last quarter of the year that leans toward the decidedly domestic: fall, a time of settling down amid the happily familiar — think family traditions, think seasonal celebrations. I'm not just noting that October kick-starts the holidays. I'm reaching for something more elemental: This wedge of the calendar seems to provoke a desire for solidity, warmth, ritual, kinship, and connection.

That's on my mind because many of this issue's seemingly disparate stories revolve around those themes. Our cover story, "A Fading Tradition" (p. 38), is a portrait of Hank Vogler, a man who is possibly Nevada's last sheepherder. To you and me, livestock ranching in our state's outback may seem like a quaint rural industry. But to Hank and others, it's a way of life rich in purpose, and a tradition marked by a deep connection to the land and stretches of meaningful solitude. Heidi Kyser's feature story, "Family Circus" (p. 50), approaches the motifs of home and family through a completely different subject: the county's family court system, a magnet for controversy, outrage, and drama. But critics and reformers agree on at least one thing: The system needs to be fixed. Even our feature on the trend of mocktails (p. 62) offers a different spin on the camaraderie of holiday drinking: Who said you necessarily have to toast the health of friends and family with an alcoholic beverage?

Speaking of toasts: Join me in welcoming Desert Companion's new publisher, Jerry Nadal. If that name sounds familiar, it's because Jerry has been a friend of Nevada Public Radio for years — as a longtime philanthropic supporter, board chair, and as the guy who agrees to give away all those Cirque



tickets on the last day of pledge drive. (He recently retired as senior vice president of Cirque Du Soleil's Resident Shows division.) I'm confident that, under his guidance and vision, Desert Companion's best seasons are certainly ahead.

Andrew Kiraly

NEXT MONTH Our holiday guide will supply you with plenty of ideas for gift-giving — and getting involved.



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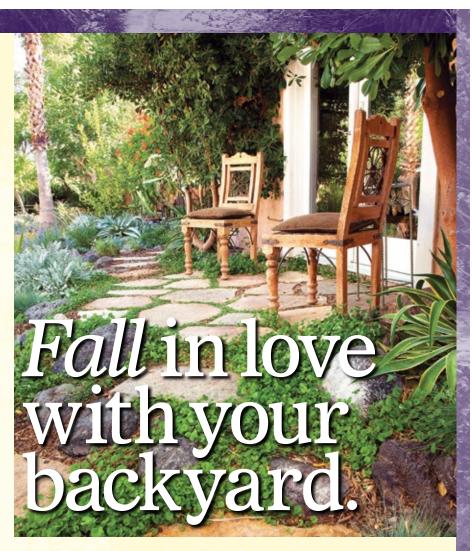
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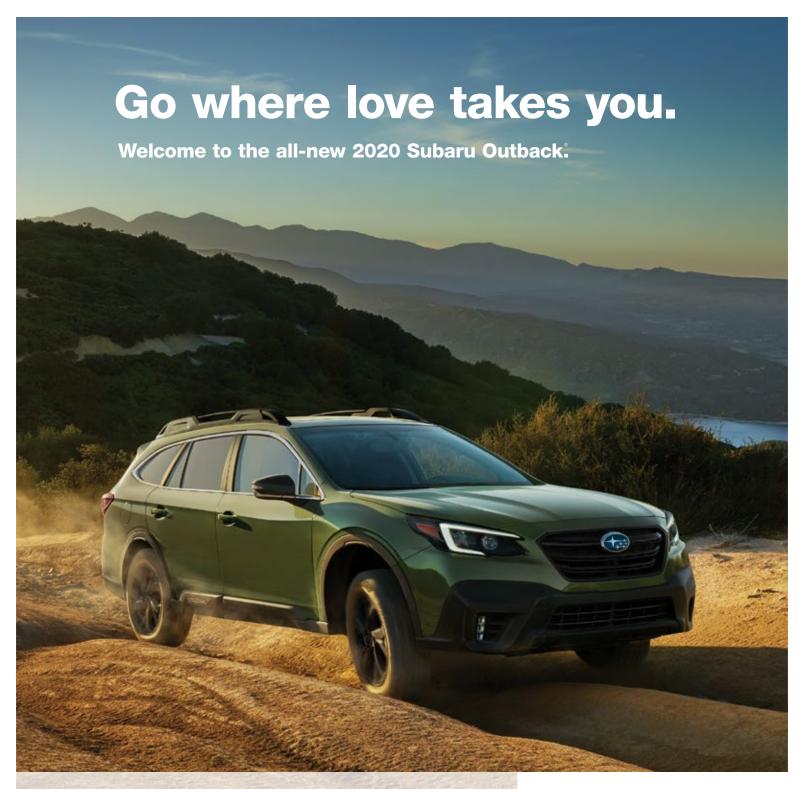
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# THE PEOPLE, ISSUES, OBJECTS, EVENTS, AND IDEAS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THIS

CLIMATE CHANGE

## The Realist

Why aren't our roofs white? Should we ban sprawl? And other questions asked by green urbanist and architect Steffen Lehmann

BY Doug Puppel

teffen Lehmann gets animated about a lot of things. During a recent interview, the director of UNLV's School of Architecture talks enthusiastically about his early career in his native Germany, running his own office in East Berlin months after the wall came down; his search for knowledge in Japan that landed him a coveted job working for Pritzker Architecture Prize-winner Arata Isozaki; his life as an academic nomad, which has taken him to 40 countries in the last 25 years; and Mawson, the 13-year-old cocker spaniel that accompanied Lehmann from Australia a year ago — and now has a cozy bed in his office.

MONTH

But what excites Lehmann the most is a 900-page doorstop of a textbook titled *The Principles of Green Urbanism*. He wrote it a decade ago.

He slides it across his desk; it's as thick as the two reams of paper he uses as a monitor stand. The book has been used on countless college campuses, translated into Chinese, and is still in print. The title sounds optimistic, even utopian. But the book endures, Lehmann says, because the ideas inside are anything but. He refused to look at a green future with rose-colored glasses, and avoided laying out anything approaching a "green utopian dream."

"I am representing a generation that thought that, truly, utopia was dead and we had to engage with the opportunities of reality," Lehmann says. "It was the first comprehensive 'pulse check' on what architecture could do in terms of the environmental crisis."

It can do a lot — a little at a time. Green urbanism is about making communities that are livable for humans and sustainable for the earth. In his book, Lehmann lavs out different models for sustainable urban growth, with an emphasis on energy-efficient, net-zero carbon strategies intended to "future proof" the post-industrial city. And with the zeal of an evangelist, Lehmann preaches the book's lessons today in a community better known for excess than environmental awareness. "People who know me will tell you that I am like a machine," he says. "I do basically nothing else except spread the word on these topics."

But what relevance does green urbanism have to Las Vegas — a sprawling, postwar pastiche of suburbs whose economic engine is consumptive, escapist tourism? Actually, a lot. Best of all, you don't have to read a 900page tome to learn what it is. Distilled from his book, Lehmann's ideas range from the modest and practical to, well, a little utopian. Some we've all heard before. But his post as head of the UNLV School of Architecture means he's positioned to influence a new generation of architects, and encourage them to build these ideas into their future practice. In a wide-ranging talk recently, he discusses ideas such as:

- Reducing urban heat. The use of reflective and white roof materials can reduce the dangerous "urban heat island" effect and keep roofs cooler. The worst scenario? A black-colored roof, as it requires much more energy for cooling during summer.
- Growing in, not out. Las Vegas, Lehmann says, would do well establish a strict growth boundary to limit the increasing footprint of the city, and help to stop further sprawl into the desert landscape. Las Vegas should develop toward its center, not outward. A large number of vacant, low-density sites and rundown parts in the city should be tackled first, and development limited to already built-up areas.
- Gentle densification. Las Vegas was in the grip of mid-rise and high-rise fever in the early aughts, but Lehmann proposes we scale our ambitions back. "There are real

**Hear More** To listen to Steffen Lehmann discuss his ideas on KNPR's "State of Nevada," search his name at knpr.org

opportunities to increase urban densities through buildings with three-to-five stories. We need multistory buildings, not high-rises, that put four units on a site where only one unit currently sits. This will help with the housing shortage while making Las Vegas more compact, mixed-use and walkable."

■ Live where you work, work where you live. Inner-city apartment living is more sustainable than large suburban houses far away from workplaces, and we should encourage it. Bringing living and working closer together again is a good strategy, reducing the need to constantly commute. In this model, apartments are arranged above commercial spaces, which are on the ground floor, allowing for higher density, reducing apartment sizes into a 400- to 500-square-foot "efficiency unit." This opens up all street frontages to natural airflow and daylighting, and cuts back on the need for on-site parking. When a neighborhood offers good walkability and public transit options,

on-site parking can be radically reduced. Outside the halls of academia, Lehmann pushes his students to explore how other cities are striving for sustainability through architecture. Noting a high percentage of Spanish-speaking students at UNLV, Lehmann created exchange programs with institutions in Spain and Latin America. The students study for four weeks in other hot-weather cities that are also on the front lines of coping with climate change. They return with fresh perspectives and valuable connections.

"This experience is as important as anything that happens in the classroom," Lehmann says. "The young people we educate here will be the decision makers of the future, and the more perspective they have, the better decisions they will make." +

Desert Companion and "State of Nevada" have made a commitment to cover the urgent issue of climate change in partnership with other media outlets around the world. See more stories at knpr.org.

SENSE OF PLACE

## The Magic Room

In the Sahara West Library is a place where childhoods are shaped, even if they can't last forever

BY Erica Vital-Lazare

hey enter through a magic door in the wall. Some toddle on legs unsure and edible, it seems — baby fat purling in variegated folds of meringue from vanilla to toast to my own deep chicory. Some stoop to crabwalk through, proud that there is a space where their new growth demands they temporarily revisit a kind of smallness. Others are wheeled in, lolling like latter-day pimps in tricked-out strollers, as their escorts bend to ferry them through the tunnel that lies on the other side of the door. Stubborn ones, my own included, hold up traffic so that they might linger in the enchantment of a structure within a structure, so obviously built to honor their specifications. They stake positions, star-fishing within the frames of kid-sized windows, and look out into the scrim of heat and palo verde below.



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We are in an exalted place: the story room in the Young People's Library at the top of Sahara West.

The music is already pumping. Raffi riffing through "Baby Beluga," his guitar a scratchy joy, warbles from the librarian's cart. The door and tunnel widen into a palace playroom in pennant colors - royal golds, reds, and blues. A paper crescent moon rises, suspended on moss-colored walls. We settle crisscross applesauce on rounds of carpet printed like highways the little ones cannot yet drive. Unable to contain herself, a pony-tailed 2-yearold breaks from her mother's embrace to breaststroke among the fins and octopi of a carpeted round stamped ocean blue.

In the height of summer or the raging desert winds of winter and fall, we are the cool. We are the lucky. We have shown up early for

> our Storytime tickets. Raffi strums, Bababababa ... Bababababa ... Baby Beluga in the deep blue sea. Swim so wild and you swim so free. Moms bob their heads and puppet-string the hands of their lap-sitters into clapping along. The 2-year-old leaps up. Toddlers shimmy diapered bottoms. My handsome boy in Baby

Gap shorts and chunky sandals taps a foot into tendu. His baby brother, ensconced in a yellow onesie, dozes at my chest.

After having packed diaper bags and animal

INDOOR/OUTDOOR

## Stop Here First

Some visitor centers are as compelling as the parks they serve

BY Greg Thilmont

t's once again cool enough to spend time outdoors, but along the way, spend some quality time inside, at the visitor centers those informative, and often unsung, mini-museums at the entrances to regional preserves and recreation areas. Some of our favorites:

**CLARK COUNTY WETLANDS PARK** This verdant spot is a pleasant surprise. It's a great place for kids to learn about water ecology with hands-on displays in its main building. There's also an indoor picnic room, a new retail shop filled with fun but educational gift items, and some spectacular views. 7050 Wetlands Park Lane, 702-455-7522

#### ASH MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Set in a reed-filled oasis on the way to Death Valley National Park, this architecturally striking center stands out gorgeously against the rugged Funeral Mountains. Inside, exhibits highlight the cultural history of the Amargosa River Valley. Be sure to catch the documentary film that plays regularly. 610 E. Springs Meadows Road, 775-372-5435

#### RED ROCK CANYON NATIONAL CONSERVATION

AREA Few Nevada viewpoints are as stunning: the grandeur of Mount Wilson through this center's panoramic windows. Be sure to chat with rangers about the area's flora, fauna, and millennia of human history. The gift shop sells stylish T-shirts, too. 1000 Scenic Loop Drive, 702-515-5379

DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Nestled along a pond on Corn Creek, this is worth a stop on the way to Mount Charleston. It's notable for its diorama of a rocky cliff with taxidermied desert bighorn sheep and a mountain lion. Also, see endangered Pahrump poolfish in the nearby Refugium. 16001 Corn Creek Road, 702-879-6110

SPRING MOUNTAINS NATIONAL **RECREATION AREA** Framed by swaths of pine trees and distant limestone crags, this is an artfully constructed stopping point. Check out the plaza devoted to Southern Paiute tribes, as well as the Cold War workers memorial, plus adjacent trails. 2525 Kyle Canyon Road, 702-872-5486

crackers, wet wipes and baby carrots, Goldfish and Capri Suns in their trifold aluminum packets, we form this circle and swim in the club-stir air of adrenaline. The gloat and glee of having made it is akin to having stood outside the velvet rope on a Saturday night. Except this is a Friday morning, or a Monday, or a Wednesday, any of the countless library mornings in what I'd believed would be an eternally unwinding host of small and joyful daily ministrations in the childhood of my sons. Raffi gives way to the librarian's reading of Abiyoyo. She takes out her ukulele to accompany Pete Seeger's story-song.

I could not give my boys my childhood walks to the Chesapeake - the bay bringing me the puffed splendor of jellyfish stranded on the shore, the clumps of seaweed tangled with salt and memories. But I could give them this — these library visits — an amalgam of all the other libraries and vistas I'd known. I could give them books made real by librarians who decorated shelves with standouts from Ezra Jack Keats' The Snowy Day and Norman Bridwell's Clifford the Big Red Dog.

These days I enter Sahara West alone. My dancing boy is now full grown and starting a career in e-media, editing the work of a staff of writers. The baby in the onesie is near 6-foot-3 and heading soon to college. I avoid the Young People's Library at the top of the stairs. I dare not venture past the magic door, knowing I will see them there. +



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ore people than not think of the '80s as a lost decade for Las Vegas, when it was just spinning its wheels waiting for The Mirage to open. Not Don Usherson. You will not find anyone who loved '80s Vegas more than the longtime entertainment columnist and TV host, who died last month at age 72.

Usherson's Las Vegas Review-Journal column championed the era's mostly forgotten, mid-tier headliners, such as Louise Mandrell, Ray Stevens, and Yakov Smirnoff. But he devoted the same reverence and column space to journeyman lounge singers Catte Adams, Denise Clemente, or George Trullinger, the Buddy Holly impersonator in Legends in Concert.

When I announced I was shipping off from a Kansas City Star bureau for Las Vegas in late 1987, more than one person told me, "You're going to have a showgirl for a girlfriend." If only. But Don did (a gorgeous and also very sweet Legends dancer, Julie). For a couple of years there, he and I were quite the odd couple. I was brought in to be the "young guy" to cover the growing "locals" side of entertainment, and I complained about the R-J making us wear ties. Don was freelance, working outside the office, but never without the jacket with the handkerchief thingie in the pocket. And he introduced me to characters such as show producers John Stuart and Norbert Aleman (who I think was wearing a leopard-print jacket at the time) who, like Don, turned out to be the last of the breed for the Strip's small-town, Miami Vice era.

It now gives me pause to realize Don was barely in his 40s. With a 13-year age difference, you'd think we would have shared more common ground in what's now called classic rock. Don didn't care about Bruce Springsteen or Pink Floyd. His tastes were much older, in line with what he covered. One of his columns

Entertai Sunday, June 19, 1988 **EULOGY THAT '80S GUY** Bally's and Caesars Palace. Little remembered now, Strip entertainment columnist Don Usherson was a man of his time BY Mike Weatherford

in 1988 argued there was nothing wrong with targeting seniors with a vaudevillian lounge show called Sex Over 40: "After all, we have no qualms with staging acts like Sting, which we know is designed for much younger crowds." Sting was 36 at the time, not quite five years younger than Don.

"These groups you write about — where do they get those names?" he would ask, shaking his head, cracking himself up. "What was that one? The Jesus and Mary something?" Our only shared love was the Rat Pack and the extended circle of legends who still played

Don's news and show-review column ran alongside my features-section preview stories, written with a more skeptical eye toward what I saw as a tired, dated show scene. We were a good balance, a result of late R-J features editor Frank Fertado somehow anticipating the "new Vegas" about to arrive. Don would meet Frank and I for lunch and patiently try to school us on the virtues of the Strip's entertainment product. The lunches always ended in a standoff. But he always admired my reporter's background and was willing to see the difference from his perspective as a former hotel PR guy.

Somehow, "a fairly nerdy former history teacher," as Don once described himself on Facebook, made his way from suburban New Jersey to become the PR guy for the Strip's largest hotel, the MGM Grand, by the time

#### Deleted Vegas Scenes From Joker

Joker halts mayhem to politely ask Las Vegans to follow lawnwatering guidelines. "We're in a drought," he cackles

Adjunct teaching job at CSN means he can't afford terrifying face paint; resorts to highlighters

Disgusted to learn Nevada is 50th in nation in per-clown funding

into madness and urge for social chaos land him coveted R-. I columnist job

Descent

Spotted in Huntridge Tavern slamming Teguila Sunrises and muttering about Heath Ledger

Turns out he was just Gordon Ramsev



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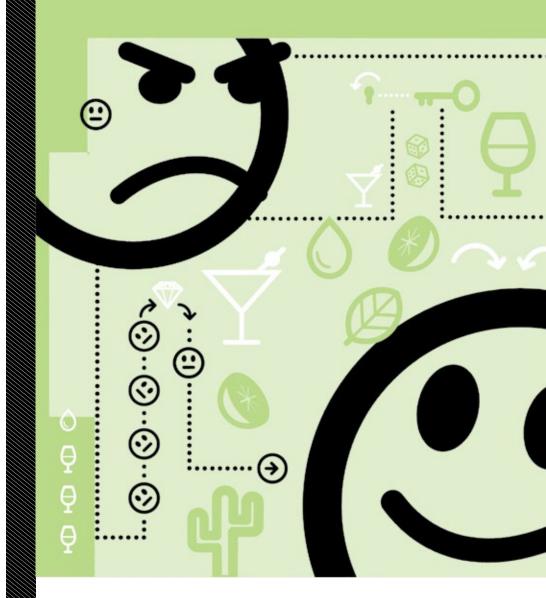
of its devastating 1980 fire. He also promoted the early days of Legends in Concert, which made celebrity impersonators a fixture of casino entertainment.

The R-J ended Don's column in 1990, bringing show coverage inhouse by hiring Michael Paskevich to cover an expanding entertainment picture. Don built up his locally produced, late-night talk show Las Vegas at Night, with local broadcast stations picking it up through the Channel America Network before its home base at the Dunes was imploded in 1993.

His columns often had bite, but criticism came as much from a hotelier's point of view as a ticket-buyer's. Thinking about it now, he was the natural transition between the glorified press releases of the Earl Wilson-styled guys such as Forrest Duke and Ralph Pearl and the modern perspective that Paskevich brought.

Writing about the September 1988 opening of the Catch a Rising Star comedy club, Don asked if we were going to replace the greats such as Frank Sinatra with "just comics? That seems to be the direction the city is taking. ... But the tide will inevitably swing again, as it always does, and comedy's popularity will start to wane as Las Vegas audiences start to clamor for more solid musical entertainment. There probably won't be enough to go around though, without the city nurturing it as it did in the '50s and '60s."

Any columnist trying to predict the future is lucky to be at least half right. The comedians pretty much took over the marquee space for headline names, and Cirque shows or pop stars in concert meant there was never a need to groom that future wave of old-school entertainers. But I hope there are plenty of them up there in the "Big Casino," as a terminally ill character in Ocean's Eleven called it. Based on Don's final Facebook posts - empathetic and accepting of whatever was coming his way, with no immediate family left to share the journey — the maitre d' will walk him right up front to a prime booth. And he will never have to worry about the dress code. +



**ESSAY** 

## From Sober **Furious to Sober Curious**

Or how I learned to stop worrying and love the mocktail

BY Andrew Kiraly

wouldn't say I'm a heavy drinker, but I frequently drink occasionally, hehe, enough to heed some prudent, subliminal biological directive that tells me to take seasonal breaks. I've white-knuckled it through three or four Dry Januaries now (I can remember them with the keen, almost vibrating clarity produced by the very sobriety they enforced), but I've always celebrated the successful completion of a month with no alcohol by splurging on one of the fancier \$12 vintages from Trader Joe's and drinking it while binge-watching a



Netflix show it would not behoove my professional reputation to identify here. Which I admit is all kinds of dumb and totally self-defeating - treating sobriety like a grueling strongman competition after which I just go crazy. So, still receptive to this sensible trend of "conscious sobriety," I've recently changed my approach.

For the last year or so, I've been focusing instead on curbing my drinking overall, rather than just putting myself in some annual teetotaler jail at the beginning of the year. And let me tell you: Sobriety as a discipline and lifestyle is hard! Especially if you think of alcohol like I do, as something between a muse, all-purpose relaxant, sacred ritual substance, and important dietary supplement crucial for the digestion of steak and pasta. That said, I'm proud to say I've successfully curbed my drinking, but not

without some struggle. Here's my account of the many complex, medically recognized psychological stages I went through before it got easier.

Stage 1: Denial Cloaked in Romanticizing Drinking as a Valuable Social Rite and Path to Intimacy and Truth, Heck, Even If It's a \$7 Bottle of Albertsons Cabernet Sauvignon, Whose Fluorescent Warehouse Tang and Notes of Mirthless Retail Mass Production Pair Perfectly With This Hillshire Farms Smoked Turkey Rope Eaten Right From the Package, Yes, This Is Happiness, I Am Happy.

Stage 2: Angry Delusions of Martyrdom and Persecution That Compare Sobriety to Prison, a Prison in Which You Bitterly Refuse to Drink Anything but Plain Water, as Though Water Is Like the Solitary Confinement of Sobriety-Prison to Which You're Bravely Sentencing Yourself Because All Pleasure Has Fled Your Life and You Might as Well Take a Perverse, Theatrical Satisfaction in Your Sacrifice and Suffering, You Poor Thing.

Stage 3: Starting to Notice That When You Abstain From Alcohol You Wake Up Without the Faintest Scrim of Inertial, Begrogged Reluctance to Get Out of Bed at 5:30 a.m. and You Actually Go to the Gym Instead of Hitting the Snooze Bar 13 Times and Grate Another Whole Hour of Sleep into a Dismal Pile of Five-Minute Naps.

Stage 4: That Time You Attempt to Attend a Social Function Without Drinking and Your Anxiously Leaping, Lugubriously Bereft Heart and Percolating Resentment Give Way to Noticing That, Hey, You Can Speak Sentences With Coherent Ideas,





1. Existential Whimper Captured in Mason Jar



2. Entire Glass of Bitters



3. Weiner Juice (cocktail weiners, tears)

and Some Microscope Knob Has Turned to Bring Your Conversations Into Finer Focus: Also, Your Social Intelligence Has Made Some Small but Significant Darwinian Lunge Shoreward So That Your Greetings to People Are Now More Than What You Think Are Playfully Complicated Fist-Bumps and Actually Approach Something Like a Firm Adult Handshake.

Stage 5: You Realize that When You're at a Bar, You Can Order a Tonic Water With Lime and Nobody Knows It's Not a Vodka Tonic and, Besides, There's That Weird Dynamic at Bars Where You Sort of Osmotically Absorb and Reflect the Collective Atmosphere of Loosened Revelry, as Though You're Slightly Buzzed Anyway in a Kind of Psychosomatic Social-Cue Contact High, But One Accompanied by Sturdy Footing and Self-Assurance, and That Cliché, "You Don't Have to Drink to Have a Good Time" Strikes You as Mortifyingly, Indisputably True, and Here All These Years You Laughed at It.

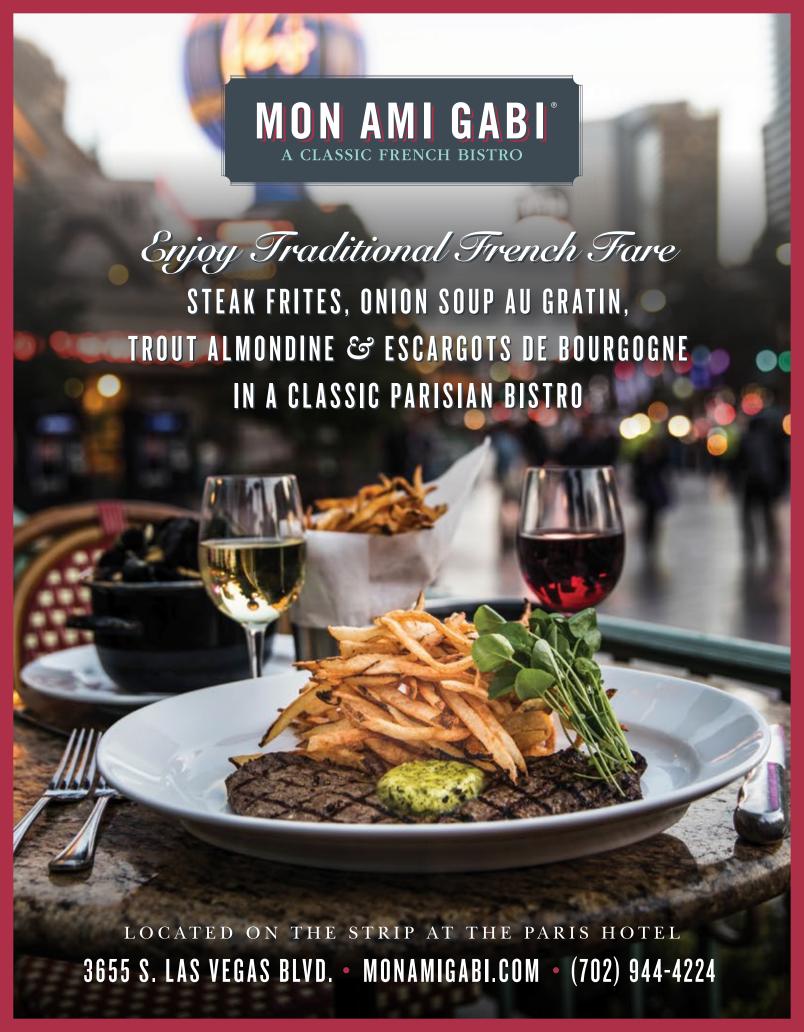
Stage 6: When You Begin to Suspect That Casual, Everyday Alcohol Consumption Has Been Normalized by a Nominally Meritocratic Society Under the Mantle of Deserved Indulgence, a Kind of Warped Idea of Self-Care, and the Leisurizing of Self-Medication.

Stage 7: When You Realize, Whoa, You Probably Would've Never Had That Thought in Stage 6, in All Its Lambent Pomposity, Without the Benefit of Extended, Intentional Sobriety, Also, You Get Momentarily Scared That You Might Become One of Those Annoying Sobriety Evangelist Assholes.

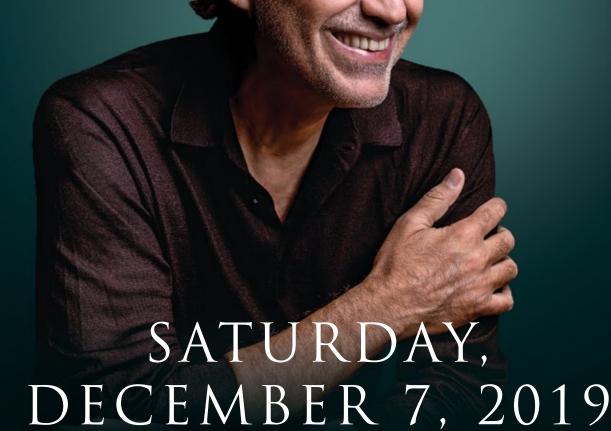
Stage 8: When You Realize That Sobriety Doesn't Solely Need To Be Thought of as Self-Denial, Nor a Dull State of an Absence of Stimulation, but Rather an Active State To Be Developed and Used for Constructive Ends. For Instance, Now You Can Do the Dishes Right After Dinner Instead of Lolling Like a Wine-Soaked Manatee on the Couch.

Stage 9: When You Order Your First Mocktail Without Embarrassment or Irony, and Without Making Simpering Excuses about Being the Designated Driver or Whatever, Though You Do Momentarily Consider Telling the Bartender, "I'm the Designated Driver ... OF MY LIFE!," But Thankfully You Don't. +

For more on mocktails and the sober life, see our feature on page 62.







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## ALLOUT

CULTURE, FOOD, STYLE, AND OTHER WAYS TO USE

# A Song of Spice and Smoke

Cocktail drinkers (and cocktail slingers) are rediscovering tequila and mezcal for libations that are spicy, smoky, and sophisticated. Here's where to get a taste of the trend. iSalud!

#### **GHOST DONKEY**

HIDDEN BEHIND THE family-friendly bustle of the Cosmopolitan food court — sorry, Block 16 Urban Food Hall - Ghost Donkey's speakeasy vibe extends beyond its semi-secret door. With its salsa music soundtrack, tchotchkes, and Christmaslights-ball-fringe-glitter decor, the bar evokes the Dominican and Puerto Rican social clubs of New York City. However, the drink menu is distinctly more upscale, and definitely more focused. Ghost Donkey's bartenders can whip anything from a sugary girl drink to a sophisticated, spirit-forward concoction out of their stock. The Mezcal Old Fashioned (right) is a twist on the classic with Peloton mezcal in an oversize glass with an oversize ice cube. St. George coffee liqueur combines



#### MAMA RABBIT

THE WORST SIN for a Strip bar that celebrates mezcal and tequila is to celebrate them to death - that is, mixologize the earth, spice, and soul right out of the spirits. I

admit that I was bracing for this possibility at Mama Rabbit in Park MGM. The cocktails are disarmingly florid - sometimes literally, buoyed with so many edible flowers your drink looks like a swimming pool after a thunderstorm. But credit goes to L.A. restaurateur Bricia Lopez for managing to shout-out her roots while also remembering that drinking is fun. Her mezcal cocktails have the requisite amount of Instagrammable froufrou, but they don't abandon the liquor's core flavors of smoke, salt, and sun. The Dama Blanca is my favorite. With Ilegal Joven mezcal and orange liqueur, it's rich, frothy, floral, even

sensual, and served in the glass equivalent of a classy party dress. My second favorite, the elegant Flora y Fauna, is all tang and light, a blend of El Tesoro Blanco tequila and cucumber, lime, aloe vera, and rose water. Mama Rabbit is hoping to convert adventurous cocktailers to the mezcal faith, and I say amen to that. In Park MGM, parkmgm. com Andrew Kiraly

#### **EL DORADO CANTINA**

**BOTTLES OF CUERVO** and Cazadores and Casa Noble are lined up in multiples at the ready behind the bar at El Dorado Cantina. The decor is all scarlet walls and big banquettes under a ceiling dotted with star-shaped lamps and Edison bulbs. There's a variety of margaritas, but those who want to mix it up

should try the Paloma, which mixes tequila with grapefruit soda and lime to create a perfect summer drink — a subtly sweet concoction in which the liquor manages to slip behind the tartness of the grapefruit. Of course, if you like your tequila straight, the El Dorado has plenty of options. During happy hour, the Don Julio 1942 that's normally \$25 is \$6 a shot. It's something to be enjoyed slowly, with an initial bite that turns Scotch-smooth — no salt or lime necessary.

#### **ELECTRA**

3025 Sammy Davis Jr. Drive, 702-722-2289,

eldoradovegas.com LTR

YOU MIGHT THINK this gleaming, magnetic hive off the Palazzo gaming floor is the province of assembly-line cocktails marked up for buzz-hunting Chads in shiny shirts,



but Electra's ambitious cocktail program is a pleasant surprise. And as mezcal surges into mainstream popularity, Electra's menu serves as an onramp to exploring the liquor's versatility and complexity. The try-curious would do well to start with the Age of Aquarius, with passion fruit and lime brightening its mezcal foundation; a splash of Campari lends accent and structure. Veterans might want to level up to the Hawkeye, a house original, and a strong one: It's a pyramid built on Plantation and Goslings rums, with versatile Del Maguey Vida mezcal bringing in richness and char. For tequila fans who want to class it up, the tropical Spicy Tommy's #2 is served in a sort of beveled chalice that reminds you that not all tequila cocktails have to be slammed. This one politely asks you to sip. In the Palazzo, palazzo.com AK



#### SALUD MEXICAN BISTRO AND TEQUILERIA

THE BAR AT Salud is relatively small, but offers more than a hundred tequilas and mezcals, as well as a cocktail menu that gets creative with both. The Cucumber Basil is a hybrid of the margarita and the gimlet: house cucumber-infused tequila dashed with agave and muddled with basil leaves. The cucumber cools the tequila's sharp edge, turning a shooter into a sipper that just needs a dash and a splash. The Aztec Sunset is one of those drinks that sounds awkward in practice but is graceful in execution — a blend of Monte Alban Mezcal, muddled strawberries, lemon, lime, agave and, uh, Orange Crush? It somehow manages to be candy-like but not cloying and, as such, is dangerously drinkable. Salud also offers flights, themed as "Lowlands" or "Clear and Classy," among others, or you can pick your own, from a Siete Leguas blanco tequila to an anejo Kimo-Sabe Reposado mezcal. 8125 W. Sahara Ave. #110, 702-665-6423, saludmexicanbistro.com LTR

#### LA MONJA CANTINA

FORMERLY A HISTORIC motel, the new Fergusons Downtown feels somewhat like a walled hipster compound in some artisanal alt-reality Fury Road, but I suspect its posture will relax once it's a little more lived in. La Monja (by Other Mama's Dan Krohmer) might be the family room of the complex. La Monja means "the nun," but this is no cloister. It's a lively, compact pan-Mexican restaurant that's doing its boisterous best to liven up the place. Mezcal and tequila are front and center in the form of shots and pours, and in a suite of cocktails that are bracing in their freshness. The Blood In, Blood Out is a glowy pink beacon of pure temptation: mezcal, blood peach, lime, and the spiced, tropical syrups of vanilla orgeat and falernum; the mezcal dignifies what might otherwise be a forgettable indulgence. The Mileena, another mezcal mixer, glints with notes of lime, ginger, and habanero. La Monja's \$10 margarita list may seem like value-menu fare, but its pedigree is apparent at first taste: Whether you go with tequila or mezcal, they're impressively pert and tonic. 1028 Fremont Street #190, 702-848-3530, lamonjacantina.com AK

#### CADILLAC MEXICAN KITCHEN

THIS IS THE place. I said THIS IS THE PLACE. The place where you have to shout at your date's





face over the torrent of tourist clamor and blare of 10,000 sports happening on 10,000 screens, retract elbows often for nudgy bodies coming and going, and dutifully shout in hoarse unison whenever something sportsy and crucial happens in the basketbase footgame whateverball match. And it's glorious. This bar is the emotional endpoint of happy communal drinking, and the menu serves that mission. They've got a long list of tequila that goes from frat-friendly to Most Interesting Man fare, a handful of mezcals, and, of course, margaritas that run the gamut. I went highbrow at first with the barrel-aged hibiscus margarita - earthier and more savory than you might expect - but said what the hell and hit slushytown with the Sangria Swirl, a frozen margarita whorled with red sangria. If Little Debbie went on an R&D recon mission to Tijuana, she'd come up with this piece of silly brilliance. I endorse this important scientificinitiative. In the Golden Nugget,  $goldennugget.com\,\mathbf{AK}$ 

#### LA LINDA AT LINDO MICHOACAN

THERE ARE MULTIPLE outposts of Las Vegas' Mexican dining standby, but the location on Desert Inn features the most impressive bar, a small, high-ceilinged room whose main features are an enormous stained-glass window and the shelves of mezcal and tequila bottles lining the walls. They're works of art in themselves — shaped like cacti, pistols, horse heads, sombrero'ed hombres. Most are empty displays, but dozens and dozens of full bottles are still pouring, from smooth, mahogany-toned ultra anejo varieties to your classic, quick-and-dirty blanco with a beer back. Of course, Lindo has a rainbow of margarita flavors, from the reasonable (and delicious) watermelon to the what? of banana (it's fine, but if you want a daiquiri, just have a freakin' daiquiri). Among the specialties of the house is the La Linda, a shake of Chamucos tequila with cucumber, simple syrup, lemon and a spike of hot sauce — a little reminder that this smooth refresher is tequila, after all. 2655 E. Desert Inn Road, 702-735-6828, lindomichoacan.com LTR +



why it isn't finished yet - my job, the internet, television, the rabbit holes of social media, and yes, friends and family. Whether you're a creative who's incredibly busy or (like me) just easily distracted, an artist's or writer's retreat may be the ticket. These retreats, residencies, and rentals have different requirements and different areas of focus, but they all offer two things: plenty of inspiring solitude and great scenery for soaking it in. Most application windows open between now and December; check websites for details.

#### **NEVADA**

IKE'S CANYON (pictured) Year-round, 30 miles off-pavement, open-stay writers' retreat in the middle of the Monitor Valley between Tonopah and Fallon, about 50 miles from the (almost) ghost town of Austin. I loved the journey getting to Ike's almost as much as the retreat itself. Accommodates one to four writers at a time. Hosted by writer Robin McClean and mapmaker and former balloonist Jerry Elkins. Amazing, restorative water. Cool goat. Incredible views. Info: ikescanyon.com

NEON MUSEUM Yes, our very own Neon Museum has an eight-week, multidisciplinary single artist residency each summer. It includes use of a 1,000 squarefoot studio, lodging Downtown, plus a \$3,000 stipend. The 2020 summer residency is open for applications in early December. Info: neonmuseum.org.

GOLDWELL The Goldwell Open Air Museum/Red Barn Art Center in Rhyolite is a spooky, fun sculpture park and open-air museum with an RV pad next to the art center that artists can rent by the week. Info: goldwell@goldwellmuseum.org

ROGERS ART LOFT RESIDENCY Year-round, four- to eight-week artist residencies at the Rogers Art Loft with lodging at the nearby Lucy in Downtown Las Vegas. Studio, lodging, monthly stipend, travel allowance, and per diem provided. Open to both national and international artists. Highly competitive. Info: rogersartloft.com

MYSTERY RANCH PROJECT Invitation only, multidisciplinary, collaborative residencies on a historic, 60-acre ranch outside Searchlight. In association with United Catalysts and UNLV MFA artists Steve Radosevich and Kim Garrison. Info: unitedcatalystsart.com

#### CALIFORNIA

DJERASSI Multidisciplinary, four- to five-week residencies that run from mid-March to mid-November; Djerassi





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#### ALL OUT

overlooks the Pacific Ocean from its 583-acre ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Hosts up to 12 artists per month, with a focus on diversity and collaboration. Although there were some 1,100 applicants (!) for 2020 residencies, more than 70 applicants are accepted each year. Info: djerassi.org

SETI AIR SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute in Mountain View, has a residency program for artists whose work intersects with the scientific interests of SETI, including electronic music, theater, dance, and digital arts. Previous work by SETI AIR artists is on exhibit at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno. Info: seti.org

WRITING BETWEEN THE VINES Writers, including screenwriters and poets, can apply for three-day to one-month residencies at various Sonoma wineries. Applications for 2020 are closed, but email info@writingbetweenthevines. org to get on a wait list.

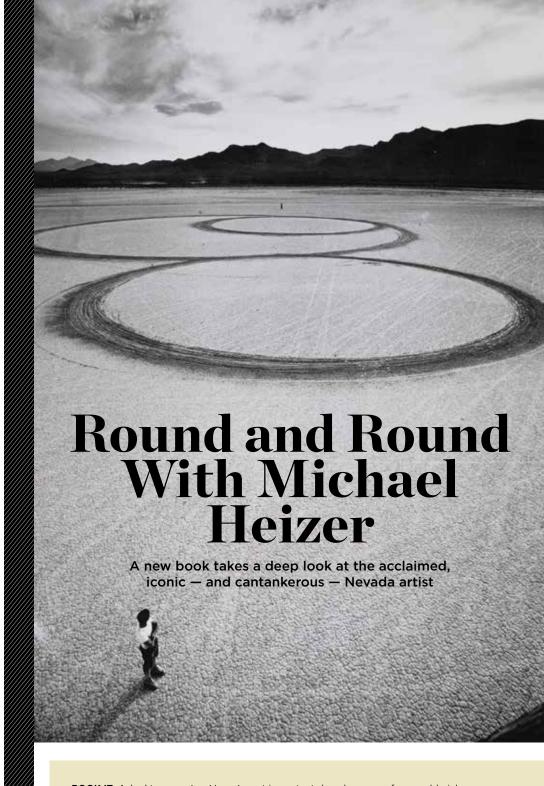
18TH STREET PROJECT For visual or performing artists only. One- to threemonth artist residencies in live-in studios either paid for by the artist, or with grant money. Eighteen blocks from the ocean in Santa Monica. Info: 18thstreet.org

#### **FARTHER AFIELD**

ART & SOUL (New Mexico) Two- to four-week residencies from January to May for artists or writers. Located two hours south of Albuquerque with private, indoor mineral baths. Limited to five artists per residency. Info: artandsoulinternational.com

SUREL'S PLACE (Idaho) Free, private lodging for one-month, single residency for artists, writers, musicians, or dancers. Located in the center of the Boise arts district. Small stipend offered for those willing to teach a class at a local school. Info: surelsplace.org

JENTEL ARTIST RESIDENCY (Wyoming) Four-week residencies with lodging, studio space and a \$400 stipend for food. Up to five artists accepted per month on a cattle ranch 20 miles southeast of Sheridan. Info: jentelarts.org +



BOOK IT: Asked to name Las Vegas' most important decade, many of us would pick some 10-year slice of the 1990s and/or early 2000s — the boom years, when the city leveled up and then some. But pose the question to author Larry Gragg and he'll tell you "the 1950s marked the most important decade for Las Vegas." You gotta back up a statement like that, which his new book, Becoming America's Playground: Las Vegas in the 1950s (University of Oklahoma Press), sets out to do. It's a deeply researched look at the machinations required to hoist Las Vegas from a well-known but not top-tier destination - "few saw it as a true resort city like Palm Springs" — to a tourism powerhouse that saw a tenfold jump in visitors in a short time. Meanwhile, research for this next book sounds like fun: Vegas Brews: Craft Beer and the Birth of a Local Scene (NYU Press). But author Michael Ian Borer, a UNLV sociology instructor, is going for something more than a sudsy romp (see "sociology instructor"). Just as crucial as "beer" in the book's title is "local," his idea being that the craft-brewing community is a bulwark of local identity in a city that constantly has identities thrust upon it, and that a passion for the carefully crafted and the handmade ties into our sense of place in unexpectedly important ways. Scott Dickensheets

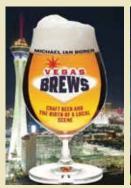
of Michael Heizer: The Once and Future Monuments (The Monacelli Press, \$45), in which one of Nevada's more notable writers, William L. Fox, takes stock of the most significant land artist associated with the state. You've probably heard of Heizer's Double Negative, his dug-out installation near Moapa, and City, his massive, secretive installation out in basin and range country. But there is much more to the artist, and to the landart movement, which Fox's sweeping book ably details in spite of Heizer's legendarily cranky uncooperativeness. Notwithstanding the material's high intellectual threadcount, because of the advanced-art context in which Heizer must be considered, The Once and Future Monuments is accessible,

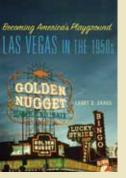
eptember saw the publication

So, an anecdote: Pictured here is Circular Surface Planar Displacement, which Heizer created in 1969 on a dry-lake bed near Jean. Land artist Walter de Maria had previously drawn on that surface with chalk lines. Heizer wanted to attempt something similarly epic, but in a different, more demanding way. In the book, Heizer's longtime pilot G. Robert Deiro recalls the scene:

thanks to its easygoing, anecdotal style.

"So Michael took a big 350cc motorcycle and said, 'Go up and watch me.' So I got in the airplane, I flew up, and he went out there and drew circles, huge circles, on the dry lake, rocked over, cranking the motorcycle. He drew a big one and rolled off. He drew a couple more." Photos were taken until Heizer waved the plane back in. "When we got the pictures back ... (t)he circles are round, they're not distorted. And he didn't use a string or tape or any other assistance. I mean, this is freehand drawing, I don't know how he made them touch tangentially like that, and to be such perfect circles, going at speeds up to a hundred miles an hour." Scott Dickensheets







his city is not known for its kindness toward aging structures, and New Orleans Square is no exception. Comprising four buildings on the Karen Avenue side of the sprawling Commercial Center complex, it predates its Disneyland name twin, having opened in 1963. During the most recent recession, the square earned an unsavory reputation that continues to plague possible patrons, notwithstanding the property owners' valiant endeavors to update both the tenant assortment and the structure's

visual appeal.

#### **SQUARE HUB**

BUSINESS

With its growing roster of galleries and culturally inclined businesses and agencies, New Orleans Square is emerging as the valley's newest cultural center

BY Veronica Klash

But if there ever was a historic Vegas space deserving of another chance, New Orleans Square is it. And it's getting that chance, as a steady accumulation of cultural and community-oriented tenants has the potential to give the valley another arts zone to complement the Arts District.

"Why does it have to be in one area?" asks gallerist Nancy Good, whose CORE Contemporary Gallery serves as an anchor of sorts in this eclectic hub. "It doesn't make sense for the long-term cultural health of the community. ... There's room enough for everyone." Her efforts to provide gender and cultural representation in a gallery setting have resulted in a dynamic exhibition space the likes of which have been missing since the departure of Marty Walsh and Trifecta

Gallery from the Arts Factory.

She describes New Orleans Square as a multidisciplinary family, a phrase that characterizes to a T not only the square but one new tenant in particular, Hiptazmic Studio. Run by husband and wife team Christine and Matt Esposito, Hiptazmic Studio is a "steampunk explosion (featuring) one-of-a-kind jewelry" fueled by Christine's creative energy. Asked why they moved to the square, Christine says, "It felt like when you're let into Disneyland early in the morning, and the stuff hasn't happened yet, but you feel it, you feel that the stuff is going to happen. ... It wasn't just the people, it was the building itself." Matt adds, "We both said the same thing at the same time, it's like it wants to be something."

This duo was instrumental in the creation of  $F^2$ , an event featuring vendors, art, crafts, and food, all taking place on the first Friday of every month. If this sounds familiar that's because they got their start more than a decade ago in a tent outside the Arts Factory, eventually opening a store inside and taking over the First Friday vendor selection.

Lisa Dittrich is another Arts Factory transplant. Her space, Random Alchemy Gallery, is not only home to Dittrich's special brand of Gothic Southwestern art, but also to upcoming group shows with titles such as Twisted Toy Land. Both she and Hiptazmic Studio view the happenings at the square as organic growth stemming from the attitude and monetary issues that haunt the Downtown arts scene. "(New Orleans Square is) more like a village, rather than a pissing contest, if that makes sense," Dittrich says. "And actually, the arts movement in Las Vegas, it wasn't going to stay pigeonholed in one spot." Still, she says, echoing the Espositos, the square isn't competing with 18b. They just hope to increase the footprint of the scene and continue to build a community.

That's something that Happy Earth Market, an arts and education incubator that opened in September 2017, is especially adept at doing. Its Third Saturday event acts as a bazaar where vendors who participate in the collective's Earth-friendly code of ethics can share their wares while music and art surround attendees. Their own offerings vary wildly from granting creative space to providing counsel in launching small businesses.

Elsewhere in the square, you'll find spaces housing cultural operations as disparate as a violin store, a recording studio, the Las Vegas Youth Orchestra, Photo Bang Bang, the Sci Fi Center, the Las Vegas Artists Guild, and the Sankofa Cultural Center, devoted to African American heritage.

Further underlining the square's emergence as a cultural center, property owner Ron McMenemy and director of operations Chelsey Kelly, along with Good, are planning Mural Mecca, October 11-13; four local artists, chosen in a juried competition style, will decorate four walls in a festival atmosphere. Proceeds will benefit a variety of local organizations.

"We love our creative spaces, different people, different vibes, different backgrounds," Kelly says. "We love this family that we created ... you have to feel it, you feel the vibe when you're here and it's amazing." +



(Musical)

#### TAJ EXPRESS

This Bollywoodinfluenced musical follows a young composer's drive for success. Featuring music by Slumdog Millionaire's A.R Rahman and several of India's most iconic composers. A blend of rhythmic dance moves and bursts of vibrant colors. October 8, 7:30p, \$29-\$99, thesmithcenter.com

(Drama)

#### SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

#### LAS VEGAS LITTLE THEATRE

John Guare's acclaimed play follows a young black con man who captivates a high-society couple in New York. This is a piece that forces us to examine our own biases and identity - our personal connections in life - and what they truly mean. 3920 Schiff Drive, October 18-November 3, 8p, \$25, lvlt.org

### (Activity) **VEGAS BIKEFEST**

Strap on those helmets and rev your engines. The 19th Vegas Bikefest is here, baby! Some 150 vendors, free beers (!), a tattoo convention, and live entertainment. All taking place in the heart of the city. October 3-6, \$25, lasvegasbikefest.com

(Family)

#### HAUNTED HARVEST

#### **SPRINGS PRESERVE**

It's the beginning of October, the coolness of fall is upon you — finally. Time for a couple of ghouls, some freak-ish costumes, and one too many buckets of candy corn. Haunted Harvest includes trick-or-treat candy stations and more than a dozen plant friends. Count us in. October 11-13, 18-20, 25-27, 5p-9p, \$8, springspreserve.org

**Art in the Park** Boulder City's annual art festival, with more than 300 artists and craft vendors. plus kids' activities, food, music, and more. October 5-6, free, bchcares.org/foundation/ art-in-the-park

#### (Music)

#### **SOFAR SOUNDS**

What if we said you could enjoy a live event in the comfort of a living room? Sofar Sounds infuses intimacy into its live shows with three acts playing in the comfort of everyday spaces. How it works: It's a lottery. Only a handful of guests are selected (it's a secret gig, remember), which means no headliners, no jam-packed crowds, no clue as to who's playing until the day of. Interested yet? Sign up online; if you're chosen, you'll be told where to go. October 5, 7:30p, \$15, sofarsounds.com

Thom Yorke The Radiohead vocalist and songwriter takes center stage to perform tracks from his solo album Tomorrow's Modern Boxes. The Chelsea in The Cosmopolitan, October 26, 8p, \$49, cosmopolitan la svegas.com

#### (Oddity)

## **DISGUSTING FOOD**

**MANDALAY BAY** 

You'll need a strong stomach for this one. Stroll through the Disgusting Food Museum (part of the Global Food & Beverage Expo), with roasted guinea pig, maggot-infested cheese, and natto (fermented soybeans, below) as your main entrées. It invites curious eaters to challenge the idea of what is considered edible and what isn't. Step out of your taste-bud comfort zone! October 8-10, \$10, gfba.vegas/ disgustingfoodmuseum







or every tuxedo, a rhinestone. For every Sinatra, a Liberace. The "Vegas cool" of legend always had a counterpart: Vegas camp. The wink and the snicker loomed large in Strip showrooms, from the 1950s arrival of camp's bedazzled O.G., Liberace, through the era of grand showgirl revues such as Jubilee!, with its Samson-deceiving Delilah, and the hussy who sank the Titanic by distracting the boys in the engine room.

But just as Sinatra cool ran deeper than skinny ties and scotch tumblers, "camp" is a more fluid, elusive sensibility that echoes the famous definition of pornography: You know it when you see it. Further confusing the issue is that camp subdivides into basically two categories: Covert, or overt? Subtext, or text? Ironic or deliberate?

Conveniently, the recent drift of casino entertainment illustrates the difference. One recent show arrival reminds us of the winking old days, while two new ones embrace the breaking down of gender and sexual walls that makes new camp more mainstream, to the point where the cable-TV hit Ru Paul's Drag Race is now coming to the Flamingo for an extended run starting in January.

Dutch magician Hans Klok's recent arrival at Excalibur is the throwback; Siegfried, in search of a Roy, as he rocks the wavy blond tresses, his shirt unbuttoned to show off CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## **Camp Town**

Once a staple of Strip entertainment, the camp sensibility waned for years — but now it's back

BY Mike Weatherford

his spray tan. Though it's all family fun on the surface, the showcase of classic illusions roughly divides into two columns. (a) Klok ties up his miniskirted "Divas of Magic," stuffs them into boxes and plastic bags, or stretches them across the points of swords. Or (b) the Divas turn the tables on him with the help of an evil queen in a black cape, and it's his turn to be locked in the box or impaled on the spear. Spoiler alert: He always manages to switch places with his tormentors and pop out with that blond coif and pearly smile. Here, the camp is in the subtext.

For a Vegas showbiz nanosecond, Brett Loudermilk wore black trousers, loafers, and a buttoned-up shirt for his sword-swallowing act in the short-lived Band of Magicians at the Tropicana. But these days, you can find him at The Cosmopolitan, where he answers to the name of Rear Admiral Todd Vader in Opium. Loudermilk now does his

act in silver booties and short-shorts with a prominent bulge. The show's retro-future fashions (imagine a gay planet visited by the original Star Trek crew) carry the bootsand-shorts look over to the fellow who does the hula-hoop act, and the shirtless strongman who does his balancing act with a Chihuahua.

Opium comes courtesy of Spiegelworld, the first production house to get traction with ongoing shows on the Strip since the recession. Spiegelworld is following Cirque's path to multiple titles, adding to Opium and Absinthe, at Caesars Palace, with Atomic Saloon Show, which opened last month in the Venetian.

Atomic means to be in-your-face. Literally. Audiences at an August shakedown run at Edinburgh's Festival Fringe saw the male lead give a male audience member a lap dance - twice. As with Opium, there's a sustained premise, this time a postapoca-



**CAMP COUNSELORS** 

They're bringing winking excess to the Strip in a big way: drag star Ru Paul left Atomic Saloon Show center, and Blanc de Blanc, above.

lyptic Wild West saloon. The show opener is a rousing little ditty centered on the "grab 'em by the ..." word. The acrobatic action includes a male aerialist in a thong, and a nun's creative use of ping-pong balls to play a xylophone. (Las Vegas audiences won't see a male stripper go "full Monty," as Edinburgh crowds did. "In Vegas there are rules that apply - contracts and partnerships - and we adhere to all of those," says Spiegelworld impresario Ross Mollison.)

"It's a very saucy show," Atomic director Cal McCrystal says. "It pushes the boundaries, this show." But, he adds, "it's also a very warmhearted and straightforward show.... In a way it's very traditional (in its storytelling), but it's also very outrageous. I didn't set out to make it campy, I just set out to make it funny. But when you get big, well-built people doing silly things, it kind of looks campy."

Time will tell if the millennial generation's nonchalance about "binary" or omnisexual behavior means Atomic won't have to align with either the "straight" humor of Absinthe or the "gay" aesthetic of Opium. "It's everything," Mollison says. "That's why RuPaul's Drag Race is so popular now. It doesn't matter what your sexuality (is). ... And I think people will love Atomic for the same reasons."

Sexuality sure used to matter, though. For decades, Las Vegas was deliberately vague about who was in on the joke. Even into the modern era, the long-running An Evening at La Cage was possibly the straightest drag show ever, devoting at least half its running time to literal, lip-sync impersonations of celebrity pop divas.

"Camp" wasn't really part of the lexicon until writer and cultural critic Susan Sontag attempted a sprawling definition of it in her landmark 1964 essay "Notes on Camp." It was published only a few months after Liberace showed he was one of the few Las Vegas stars with the stature to barge in on the Beatles at the Sahara, during an August stop on their landmark U.S. tour, as George Harrison later recalled.

Liberace's 1955 inauguration of the Riviera was a milestone because his \$50,000-per-week salary made him the Strip's highest-paid entertainer to that point. On opening night, he chased his silver-lamé suit with two more costume changes. But you could take the act two ways.

"Think of the term 'piss-elegant," says Dennis McBride, director of the Nevada State Museum and author of Out of the Neon Closet: Queer Community in the Silver State. In certain parts of the country, at least, "flashy things and elaborate things were at some point equated with good taste and manners and wealth," he notes.

"You think of Liberace with his elaborate piano and the candelabra. ... As a gay person I look at that and say, 'This is really funny.' But in those days, someone could look at Liberace's house and say, 'Wow, he's got really great taste.' It appeals two different ways, depending on the audience. And that can be very deliberate. Which in Liberace's case, I think it was."

Sontag's essay never mentions Las Vegas, but gets tantalizingly close when she writes, "(t)he hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance. Camp is a woman walking around in a dress made of three million feathers." Along with that near-literal description of the Lido de Paris or Folies Bergere showgirls, another Sontag note could be speaking to those shows' flair for onstage chariot races or sinking luxury liners: "Camp is the attempt to do something extraordinary. ... When something is just bad (rather than Camp), it's often because it is too mediocre in its ambition. The artist hasn't attempted to do anything really outlandish."

Straight men ogled the topless showgirls in extravaganzas created mostly by gay men, "who always made sure there was a subtext of some kind," McBride says. "They couldn't appeal to the gay community directly, but it was obvious to us." Yet the shows that were once the Strip's pride and joy evolved into a different kind of camp: the sort of thing that David Letterman and the generation sharing his ironic perspective would mine for unintended comedy. (Remember Letterman's TV week of cruising the town with an Elvis impersonator, etc., in 1987?) While the isolated world that was "Vegas" bought them a few more years, the dancing chorus

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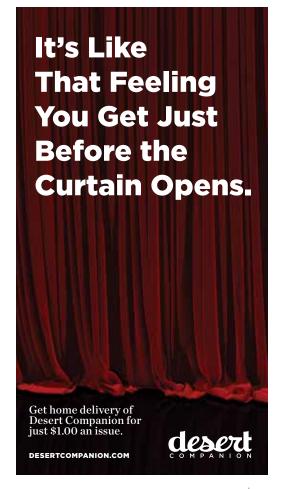


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boys in top hats and showgirls top-heavy with eyelashes and plumage eventually died slow deaths, victims of budget-wrangling and indecision about how - or if it was even feasible — to update them.

But the same could be said of most of Las Vegas in the 1980s. "Even though homosexuals have been its vanguard, Camp taste is much more than homosexual taste," Sontag wrote. And the most heterosexual man on earth. Tom Jones, did his lascivious thing in painted-on pants for a sealed biosphere of middle-aged women, until the British pop ensemble Art of Noise introduced his version of Prince's "Kiss" to the outside world in 1988. At that point, Jones could only shrug, wink, and let us think it was all a joke if that's what we wanted to think.

Siegfried & Roy went the other direction in the 1990s. At first, the Beyond Belief magic duo reflected the showgirl revues from which they sprang. "I remember being taken away with the tights that they wore and their huge bulges, which sort of went away later on, when the '70s ended," McBride notes. The duo's 1990 makeover at The Mirage was overseen by Cats and Les Miserables

production designer John Napier, trading the sequins for Wagnerian opera. It was a smart move that anticipated the arrival of Cirque du Soleil three years later.

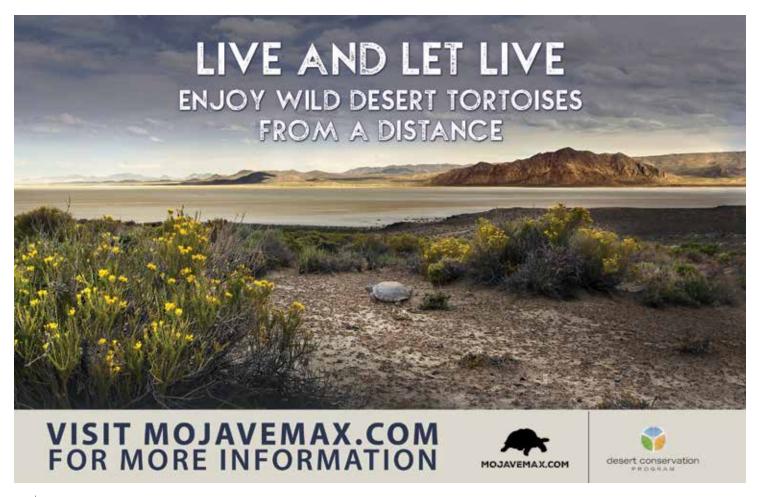
Gradually, camp returned in increasing doses, from the deceptively underplayed drag host Eydie (Christopher Kenney) in Cirque's Zumanity to the wall-to-wall romp of Opium. Atomic Saloon Show debuts on the heels of Blanc de Blanc, an Australian import whose arrival coincided with the SLS changing its name back to the Sahara. Themed around its front-of-stage hot tub and barely dressed cast, the revue has already been pegged "alt-cabaret" in other markets. It's as good a name as any for this growing subgenre on the Strip, where Blanc de Blanc could have been elevator-pitched as a cross between Zumanity and Absinthe. "It goes from a bit sophisticated to a bit crazy," creator Scott Maidment says.

Crude jokes spew along with liberal amounts of bubbly courtesy of Spencer Novich, whose spindly frame is played for comic contrast with the ripped gym bod of his cohost, known as Monsieur Romeo. At one point, Novich and two women do a "naked dance"

that appears to leave him no choice but to, uh, tuck - and squeeze his legs shut - to avoid a full-frontal display. But is it camp? Or just crass? Blanc de Blanc may finesse its humor over time, but the mood swings lead to a deeper appreciation of the tone Spiegelworld strikes and sustains from the get-go.

Blanc's nudity is "not actually titillating. It's comedy," Maidment says. Atomic producer Mollison agrees that this new wave of Las Vegas shows is the next step for an audience now bored by conventional topless revues: "I'm not interested in the kind of, you know, nude show, where someone comes out, 'Oooh, take my top off. ... Oooh, sexy.' I'm not interested in that unless it's funny." And with 180 seats (230 counting the booths), Atomic is a low-stakes test. "I predict this show will either be a disaster and close in four weeks, or you are not going to be able to get a ticket. It's either one or the other."

It's also a test of Sontag, and the question of whether camp still works if it tries too hard. "Pure Camp is always naive," she wrote. "Camp which knows itself to be Camp ('camping') is usually less satisfying." +



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WRITER IN RESIDENCE

### How Do We House the Homeless?

BY T.R. Witcher



Editor's note: In this rotating column, a writer explores a topic of relevance to Southern Nevada in six installments. Our first Writer in Residence is T.R. Witcher. This is the fourth of six columns about housing. Read his other essays at desertcompanion. vegas.

n late August, the Las Vegas chapter of the American Institute of Architects hosted an all-day design charrette on the top floor of the World Market Center in the city's growing Downtown, not far from the nexus of social service providers along the city's Corridor of Hope, and in sight of the Historic Westside, a neighborhood waiting for its own transformation.

The goal was to hash out embryonic plans for low-income, affordable housing projects along Maryland Parkway, on the Westside, and near the Stratosphere. These plans will be finished this month, and there's a chance some might lead to built housing.

I thought the charrette might result in some bravura back-of-napkin design sketch that I'd remember years from now when an actual building

was put up. But designing buildings isn't quite like making art, and designing for low-income residents is even tougher. It's not just the unit, it's the services around it - day care, job training, parks, and access to jobs and transit.

The few dozen architects, designers, and planners, working in teams on different projects, took to heart the words of architect Rick Van Diepen: "Architects need to be less passive, need to be more engaged."

They got out their pens and laptops and mostly debated and researched how to make the numbers work; units per acre, costs per unit, and the right mix of studios and one-bedrooms and two-bedrooms. The biggest round of applause I heard all day was when one team announced that calculations indicated their project could pencil out.

Get the numbers right. The designs will follow. Getting the numbers right - making low-income housing easier and cheaper to build in greater quantity - is critical, as the valley struggles with preserving affordability and helping those who've become homeless get off the streets.

\* \* \* \* \*

ONE NIGHT IN January, every year since 2011, census workers at the Southern Nevada Homeless Continuum of Care - the HUD-mandated planning body comprising local service providers working to end homelessness - conduct a Point in Time count of the valley's homeless population.

According to the 2019 census, 5,530 people

experienced homelessness on January 23. Forty percent were in emergency shelters (1,670) or transitional housing (543); 3,317 were unsheltered - nearly all on the street, outdoors, in camps, or vehicles (only 5 percent are in the city's tunnels). About 21 percent were unaccompanied youth or young adults. But the census survey notes that about 14,000 people will experience homelessness at some point during the year.

The numbers are trending down - in 2015, the PIT survey counted 7,509. But chronic homelessness, those who have been homeless for at least a year while struggling with mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability, is increasing. And, further, the figure doesn't take into account the thousands of Southern Nevadans who are housing insecure - doubled up in a friend or family member's home. Or the rent burdened.

Declining numbers are good news, though they belie most Las Vegans' assumption that our homeless population is increasing.



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Arnold Stalk, who runs Veterans Village, a low-income housing and services provider that houses some 500 people a night, finds the census "arbitrary and nonscientific. You get in your car and identify people who look like they're homeless." He contends you can find 6,000 homeless people just within a few miles of Foremaster Lane and Las Vegas Boulevard — to say nothing of the whole valley. "It's a gross undercount."

Fuilala Riley, president of HELP of Southern Nevada, describes the flow of people into and out of homelessness as like water flowing into and out of a bathtub. There are challenges at all stages. For folks entering, or at threat of entering, their income is not keeping up with rising rental costs. Half of Americans, she says, can't withstand a \$400-\$500 emergency. "When that happens, they might end up in the faucet coming into the tub."

"Many people who live in our buildings are at risk of homelessness if they did not have Nevada HAND," says Audra Hamernik, president/CEO of Nevada HAND, a nonprofit that has built and manages 33 developments in Southern Nevada, housing 7,200 residents.

It's even tougher for people on the streets. There are only about 4,000 shelter beds in town, so even if the census figure is not an undercount, there are more than 2,000 people a night on the streets. Southern Nevada has the third highest rate of unsheltered homeless in the nation.

"The shelters we do have are in very overcrowded conditions. We have no emergency room, essentially," Stalk says. "There are no family shelters in the valley, little transitional and rental housing, and no housing for people who are chronically ill."

There's a bottleneck on the other end, too. Some people are stabilized in transitional or supportive housing - they're ready to move on into something more permanent — but they can't afford an apartment.

So what to do? Nearly all low-income housing is built with public-private partnerships. Nonprofits can apply for federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits through the Nevada Division of Housing, and then - because they don't pay income taxes - sell up to 10 years of those credits to a private company that does pay taxes. A private firm or developer can buy those credits for \$.90 or \$.95 on the dollar - the



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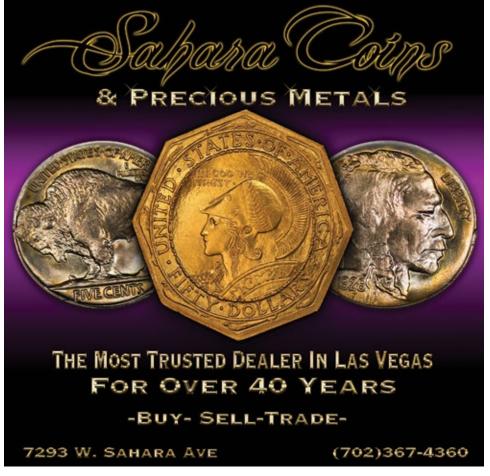




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#### WRITER IN RESIDENCE

tax-free proceeds immediately go to what Hamernik calls a nonprofit's "capital stack," allowing it to build immediate equity in a project - buy land, and pay architects and contractors. That, along with other state and federal grants, gets affordable projects off the ground. "It's very difficult to think in the private world, without some subsidy, that you can make that work," Hamernik says.

The LIHTC has program led to the construction of 1,066 units of housing across the state, 772 in Clark County, It's not nothing. Earlier this year the Nevada Legislature passed SB 448, which will provide \$10 million in tax credits for new affordable units: this is expected to produce 600-800 new units a year. Further, \$12 million in state revenue from marijuana licensing fees will go toward affordable housing (the Continuum of Care providers get about \$14 million from HUD; Clark County spends about \$50 million a year on homeless services).

But Stalk wants to move to a model where the private sector is front and center in building or rehabbing housing more quickly. "You can't solve a homeless problem without housing," Stalk says. "The rest is just semantical. It is absolute talk."

Stalk's model leans heavily on private investment, as well as in-kind donations from building trades and a variety of private businesses, including the Strip hotels — to paint and provide supplies.

Stalk just opened fully reconditioned apartments in an old motel, Fremont Gardens, on Fremont Street. "We made a deal with the seller, to do a master lease. Raised the money for it, and the rents will pay for the mortgage. We have a formula that pays investors a decent return, and everyone goes home happy."

Stalk's goal is to provide permanent and transitional housing for 400 more people over the next three years. He is trying to acquire more motels on Fremont, in the most decayed part of the city's redevelopment area.

\* \* \* \* \*

AS THE CHARRETTE wound down, a few things became clear: Reconciling the needs of residents, building codes, and financiers is like solving a puzzle that keeps changing; and the private sector needs to be more involved.

As Kathi Thomas-Gibson, director of community services for the City of Las Vegas, explained, real change won't take place until the private sector "sees itself as the thought leader, the financial leader, and the policy and planning leader to resolve homelessness."

"This is not the responsibility of the government," Stalk says. "This is the responsibility of us." +



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NEVADA

# COUNTING DOWN

Irascible, outspoken sheep rancher Hank Vogler has devoted himself to a traditional Nevada way of life that may not outlast him

> ву **John M. Glionna** рнотодгарну **Anthony Ma**i





## WHITE PINE

he mid-April storm descends on the North Spring Valley at dusk, the snow sticking to the ground and to the backs of Hank Vogler's sheep. It's the height of harvest season, when the teams of itinerant, Spanish-speaking shearers move in to help the veteran rancher cull another year of wool from his flock of 10,000, and this sudden turn in the weather feels ominous.

The sheep are annoyed at their lot, especially the ones just relieved of their warm coats. They bleat and bawl, huddling in groups to conserve heat. A few older ones have already died of stress, their bodies stiffening in the snow, and a look of concern flashes across the old sheepherder's face.

The 70-year-old Vogler is behind the wheel of a pay-loader, dropping bales of hay that are distributed by workers, who keep the sheep moving in large circles in the open field. In the fading light, the animals resemble large armies forging across the landscape, as though positioning themselves for the battle ahead. Thousands have already been sheared; more will have their turn come morning. Right now, that seems a long time away.

"The snow is stressing the sheep," Vogler shouts down from the machine. "You take your clothes off and get a shave in this kind of cold; it's a bit of a shock. You gotta get their bellies full after shearing, to keep their furnaces going."

A half-hour later, walking his isolated ranch headquarters an hour north of Elv. he spots the bodies of two older sheep that crawled beneath a trailer to die. Vogler shakes his head, his voice low with emotion. "That one old grandma looked good last year," he says, "but she had a bad winter and didn't make it."

Vogler has herded sheep in central Nevada for 35 years, a stubborn adherent to an industry he knows is in great peril. He's an aging ambassador to a colorful 140-year old tradition that got its start in Nevada in the 1880s, when immigrant Basque families dominated the scene with their innate know-how and sprawling flocks.

The trade has watched its sheep numbers plummet from one million a century ago to just 75,000 today, the vestiges of a once-thriving industry now propped up by a dozen remaining families, many of them Basque.

Reasons for the decline are numerous: Consumers have moved away from even the finer merino-blend wool toward synthetic-fiber clothing. Herders must also fight off predators such as coyotes and mountain lions, which can thin a flock by 15 percent or more in a year. There are regular droughts and wildfires, as well as bouts of loneliness and depression.

Vogler insists he also deals with twolegged threats - wildlife activists, for example, who claim that even healthy domestic sheep carry strains of a respiratory-tract bacteria that can cause fatal pneumonia in wild Bighorn sheep, whose numbers are also in decline. (Vogler says the connection is exaggerated.) Or Big City water officials who want to drain Nevada's rural aquifers to build more housing tracts around Las Vegas. There are also the constant tensions of running herds on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, whose officials don't always see things his way. Experience has taught him that some have personal agendas, like giving more credence to wildlife activists than they do ranchers. Still others assume he's just another rich rancher, or a Cliven Bundy wannabe who'll thumb his nose at any regulation. (BLM officials, of course, say this is all nonsense.)

Sheep stockmen such as Vogler also struggle to hire herders from such South American nations as Peru and Chile, who tend to far-flung bands of sheep for months on end, often going weeks without encountering another human being. Tightening immigration laws mean it's harder to bring foreign workers into the U.S., and some bolt after arriving, leaving the bill for their visa and flight to the ranchers.

The result: Remaining sheep ranchers say their children want nothing to do with the business, leaving them to fret about its future.

"The commitment is huge," says Pete Paris, secretary of the Nevada Wool Growers Association. "This business has broken a lot of people who don't put in the requisite time, sweat, and blood. You almost have to live with these sheep."

Vogler knows all too well about the roundthe-clock commitment necessary to stay afloat. In 2018, he sold 100,000 pounds of wool, at an average of \$3 a pound, but feeding sheep is expensive. Ever since he brought his Need More Sheep company here in 1985, the hard-luck business has many times broken his heart and nearly his pocketbook. It also took one of his two sons, who died in a wreck doing ranch chores, making Vogler question much more than just his chosen pursuit.

"I question my own mental health every single day," Vogler says. "Because if you like the same box of cereal for breakfast every

#### **NEVADA**







Time to harvest the wool: Brought down from their pastures, the sheep are queued into chutes. The ranch hands, many from countries in South America, lay the animals on their sides and backs, quickly and efficiently relieving them of their thick coats. The wool is then compressed into 500-pound bales for shipping

morning, well, this job isn't for you. The phone rings too often in the middle of the night. You've got issues with predators like mountain lions and coyotes, or sheepherders losing sheep in difficult country. You're like a fireman putting out fresh fires every single day, and it's only crazy persistence that makes everything work."

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR CRITICS AND friends alike, Vogler is an often-maddening collection of contradictions, a man of letters in a hands-on trade, a college-educated former ranch buckaroo who quotes Thomas Jefferson and can issue ranch commands in several Spanish dialects (as well as Basque, German, and Mandarin Chinese, if necessary). He has become an often-irascible industry spokesman in magazine articles and newspaper editorials, as a frequent radio talk-show guest, and as the author of a children's book about raising sheep.

Vogler says he writes for his fellow ranchers, "the people who live at the end of the road or the other side of nowhere" and doesn't much care what outsiders think. This take-no-prisoners approach applies more broadly, too, whether he's serving on the board of the Nevada Department of Wildlife or emceeing a celebration of sheepherding. As with many rural folks, his politics lean decidedly to the right, but Vogler doesn't consider himself to be a run-of-the-mill



good-old-boy. "I've been known to throw a skunk on the table at a garden party," he says.

Even within the tightly knit ranching business, Vogler insists on going his own way. With ranchers, he says, there's often a prevailing groupthink. "And if you don't advocate that groupthink at all times, you're in trouble," he says. "You're considered an outlaw." He might occasionally find himself at odds with others over predator control or somebody's herd spending too much time on a shared high-country trail, gobbling up all the vegetation. But the remaining families know the only way they're going to survive a diminishing market is to all get along.

Vogler doesn't even like the term "sheepherder," preferring to be called a stockman. "You can own 10.000 cows and no one calls you a cowboy, but own one sheep and you're a sheep man," he says.

Above his signature mud boots, blue jeans, flannel shirt, and suspenders, his stockman's face is craggy, his eyebrows pronounced, graying hair slicked to the side. He has big shoulders and a ramrod posture, as if he's perpetually hung on a coat rack.

If he often scowls around the toothpick in his mouth, the look is lightened by bursts of laughter; his is a deadpan, homespun wit. He likes to riff on country-western song titles, giving them a sheepherder's spin, such as, "I don't think my heart could stand another Ewe" or the Willie Nelson-infused, "Ewe were always on my mind." Just watch, and he'll imitate the accents of the old Basque sheepherders who taught him the trade, or describe with great relish such ranch chores as rubbing iodine on a ewe's umbilical cord or pulling out a juvenile sheep's testicles with his teeth.

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And he sizes up critics by saying, "If you added up all the people trying to put me out of business, the list would be longer than a polygamist's clothesline."

Recent years have tested Vogler's resolve. He survived a painful battle with pancreatic cancer, thanks to numerous operations. "Just about every doctor I've met tells me the same thing: You're gonna die," he says. "I've been given last rites so many times, the next time I'm in that position, I'll be able to administer them myself."

Vogler's unlikely joie de vivre despite hardship has endeared him to many in the business. "Hank finds humor in agony," said C.J. Hadley, the editor of Ranch magazine, which has printed many of Vogler's stories. "Despite massive setbacks - physical, mental, and financial – he always comes back. He's tough. He's bright. He's raw and real."

\* \* \* \* \*

HE WAS BORN Henry Conrad Vogler IV, or just Hank, the grandson of an Oregon ranching scion, who grew up breaking colts, working on













put himself through school. He worked at a Safeway, milked cows at the university dairy, and punched the clock at a slaughterhouse. In his senior year, he managed a nearby ranch, facing a 100-mile daily commute to classes.

After graduation, Vogler returned to ranch life in Oregon, where, he says, in a card game against an opponent nicknamed Cowboy Bob, he won enough to buy seven sheep. That started it all: He eventually returned to Nevada in the mid-1980s and began taking over grazing permits from people who wanted out of the sheep business. "It's like buying a straw hat in the middle of winter - when other people get out, I get in," he explains. "Maybe it's my contrary nature. A lot of people in my family had a competition to see who could stay the drunkest. I went down another path."

In 1985, Vogler met a rancher who was behind with the bank and ventured out to the North Spring Valley to assess his operation. "When I dropped over that mountain, the hair on the back of my neck stood right up," he recalls. The feeling was neither good nor bad, maybe just a hunch - a sense of opportunity, or the dread of sensing all the work that lay ahead. He recalled seeing



"My life was set at age 5," he recalls. "The only stability I had was sitting at the chow table with my grandfather, the chore boys, and buckaroos. I knew what I wanted to do." He had mentors such as his Uncle Charlie, a veteran ranch hand with a sense of humor, and Robert Carlson, the old foreman who lost a leg and could still outwork three people.

the fence and having crews. Vogler's father was

a drunk and gambler who discouraged his son

from the cowboy way. From an early age, Vogler

felt like a black sheep. While most members

of his clan were blue-eyed Germans, he took

after his Native American grandmother's

roots - a mix of Chickasaw and Cherokee.

After his grandfather sold the operation when Vogler was 15, he decided to go to school and learn how to run a ranch for somebody else. He later married his high school sweetheart and, as he likes to say, "my first daughter was 18 days old by the time I turned 18." The couple eventually had five children.

In 1971, Vogler graduated from UNR with a degree in agriculture, laboring full-time to an old pink house, now gone, that was "a rat-infested piece of nothing. I had the heebie-jeebies from the moment I rolled into this vard."

He took over the rancher's cattle and sheep permits to graze on public land and worked hard to pay off the six-figure debt in five years. He ran cattle for neighbors, refurbished barns, bought and sold an investment property in Ely.

He soon focused on running sheep. Nowadays, his two dozen herders and their dogs make sure the bands keep moving and don't overgraze areas across allotments that can be hundreds of miles away. Sheep also have a more varied diet than cattle, Vogler says, consuming weeds and leaves while cows eat only grass. Nevada's dry climate and cold winters, and the fact that the herds graze on the open range, he adds, produces

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#### NONVIRTUAL REALITY

In a world largely defined by technology, sheep ranching remains an old-school, get-yourhands-dirty endeavor. Rancher Hank Vogler doesn't need online translators to issue instructions to his crews; he speaks several Spanish dialects, Basque — even some Mandarin Chinese. But as enduring as ranching seems, time may be running out for this Nevada industry. "I worry about the future," Vogler says.

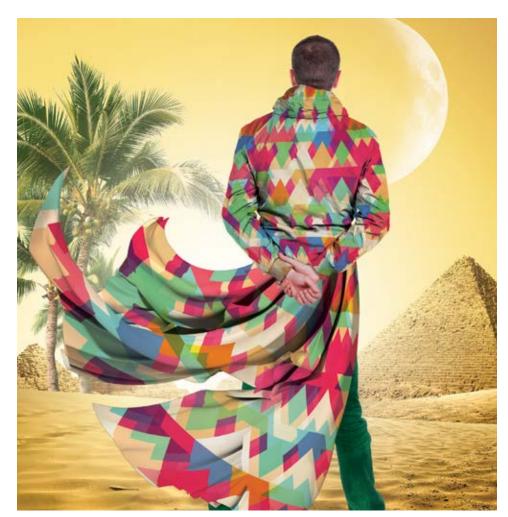


a cleaner, better-quality, higher-yielding wool product.

He's up each day at 4 a.m., driving the landscape in his white Ford pickup truck.

"All I've got is these animals," he says, "and I'll do whatever I have to do to protect them." No kidding: On the living room of his ranch house sits the stuffed remains of a mountain lion he caught ravaging his lambs.

"Sheep are a needy little animal. They need tending. But I dunno. I like 'em," he says. "Some nights, when you're so tired you could fall asleep in a second, but too sore to move, you see those little lambs bucking and running around while their mothers are bleating, calling out as if to say, 'God-dammit, come on home; we're about to have supper. And to see those babies finally go back, all calling in unison for their moms, well, it's like a beautiful rural symphony."



Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat



#### A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIFE

"I question my own mental health every single day," rancher Hank Vogler says of the stockman's life. He has to deal with unpredictable animals, long hours, vast, empty spaces, tricky weather, and stretches of solitude. "It's only crazy persistence that makes everything work."











\* \* \* \* \*

NOT LONG AFTER taking over the North Spring Valley operation, Vogler's 17-year-old son, H.C., was killed after he hit a patch of ice and flipped his truck. Among other effects, the resulting trauma ended his marriage.

"The only way I was going to survive was to stay busy. I thought about it day and night, trying to put it in perspective," he recalls. "My only reprieve was to hit the pillow at night and go to sleep. It took me six or seven years, and I'm still not really over it."

Not long afterward, Vogler was at a meeting where sheep ranchers were reviewing a new marketing campaign. He didn't like it, and told people so, saying, "You might as well be selling woman's brassieres. That's not our industry."

That's when somebody spoke up: "If you know so much, why don't you write it."

So Vogler did. He wrote a children's book he called The Story of Rangelands, channeling his late son and his love of the land. "My son had just died," he recalls. "I cried while writing much of that book."

In 2013, he literally ran into a woman in a grocery store in Elko, knocking her egg carton to the floor. He paid for the eggs and the rest of her groceries, and later jump-started her stalled car. He married China-born Wei Chen not long afterward.

That year, following his health scare, Vogler began several upgrades on his ranch, building a new shop and bunkhouse. He also constructed a new house that sits on a bluff over his operation, with views of the valley and mountains beyond.

"When doctors told me I was going to take a dirt nap, I decided to upgrade so the next rancher's wife would be more inclined to buy the place," he explains. "But much to the chagrin of my detractors, I'm still here. ... Either it's the love of the job or just plain stupidity."

Sometime in the late 1970s, he was out on the Oregon range, in a place with the name Whorehouse Meadows, when he spotted some words carved into a tree. It was a poem, dated 1930, and signed "Val Johnson 1934." He memorized it:

"You talk about your lamb chops and the woolen clothes you wear/But never a word or never a care for the man who put 'em there.

"I've summered in the tropics, had the yellow fever chill/I've wintered in the arctic, known every ache and ill.

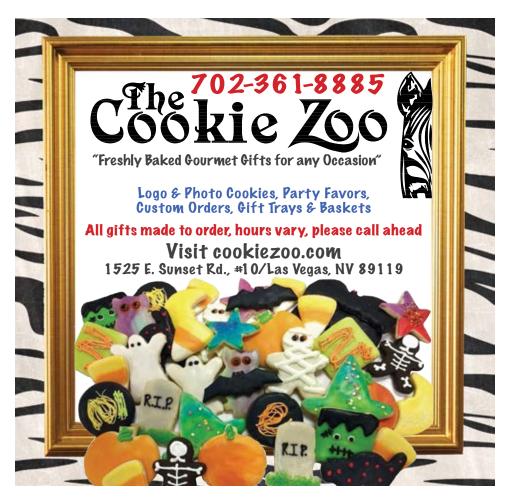
"Been shanghaied on a whaler, and stranded in the deep/But I didn't know what misery was until I started herding sheep."

\* \* \* \* \*

IT'S THE MORNING after the storm, and the shearers have waited until the sun has burned the last of the snow from the sheep's backs. The animals bawl as they're prodded from their pens, through a single-lane chute, and











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#### **NEVADA**

into the shearing shack. Inside, the workers lay the surprisingly docile animals onto their sides and back and, with a quick precision. cut away their woolen coats.

Once sheared, the sheep exit through a swinging door, jumping for freedom like inmates leaving the penitentiary. After being checked for contamination, the fleece is separated by the quality of the wool and pressed into 500-pound bales that are loaded onto semis.

Vogler walks the vard, speaking in serviceable Spanish to the men, who mostly understand his directions, occasionally glancing at one another for confirmation. The grounds are littered with small trailers that house the shearers as well as Vogler's sheepherders, who have come in from the surrounding countryside, along with their dogs. The grounds are abuzz with calling animals and chattering men.

In one large pen awaiting their turn are the pregnant ewes, whom Vogler refers to as "blushing brides," skittish because they've already been through the shearing ordeal. Next door are the yearlings that will get pregnant this year, a band the sheepherder calls his "ladies in waiting," new to the shear.

"For them, it's like going to a party," Vogler says. "Hey, there's my Mom and Aunt Betty. Let's go!' Once shorn, they'll know. They'll take two steps back."

His children, all college-educated, work such jobs as computer technician, probation officer, heavy-equipment operator, archeologist, and Marine Corps officer. None want to take the reins of their father's lifelong investment.

"I always ask myself, 'Can I continue to do this?' I worry about the future," Vogler says. "I guess my kids all made the right decision by getting the hell out of here. Still, they were good buckaroos, all of 'em."

Having someone assume the reins of the business he built is just one worry. There are fewer sheep and fewer resources fewer shearers to harvest the fleece, fewer dedicated trucks to haul it to market.

"I worry all the time about the future of sheepherding in Nevada," he says. "My son has one more year in the Marines, maybe he'll come back, maybe he won't. Maybe it'll skip a generation, and it'll be the grandkids who take over. I'm not the only one worrying about this. We all do."

He looks off toward another set of storm clouds.

"In the end, when the bank finally comes for this place, I just want 'em to say that old Hank Vogler sure took care of it for them." +



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# **FAMILY CIRCUS**

HEIDI KYSER,		)
	Writer	$\langle$
CHRISTOPHER SMIT	T <b>H</b> , Photographer	)
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Critics and would-be reformers call the district court's family division a dysfunctional nightmare. Is it as bad as they claim? And can it be fixed?

THE VIDEO OF THE JUNE 2016 incident that got family court Judge Rena Hughes in trouble is hard to watch. A 12-year-old girl sits alone at a litigant's table in Hughes' courtroom, sobbing and pleading with the judge repeatedly to let her see her mom and not send her to her dad's house. A stonefaced Hughes looks down from her bench and tells the child that the decision has been made, and it's final. When the girl persists, the judge threatens her: If she doesn't go with her father, she'll go with child protective services. "It's not fun, Child Haven," she says. "In fact, they put you in a holding cell. It's like jail."

After the video ends, the father takes his daughter home. The mother — who was representing herself in court that day and whom the judge had banished from the building while legal and physical custody were being transferred to the father - won't see the girl again for months. When she finally does, it's only for 24-hour visitation.

Eventually, a new judge will implement 50-50 shared custody between the parents. The Nevada Commission on Judicial Discipline will publicly chastise Hughes for her actions in court that June day and sentence her to take a class on managing challenging matters. The father and mother will settle their custody dispute and go on with their lives as a tattoo artist and ballet teacher, respectively, though the mother will also find new purpose in a virulent court protest group. Reputable family law attorneys and judges will cringe at the mention of the incident, insisting it's a rare exception in their world that unfortunately confirms public misperceptions and wrongly taints the entire field. Perhaps the most damaging result: The daughter, now a teenager, will have to live with the permanent, visual documentation of her trauma, viewed thousands of times online and readily available for any curious gawker to see.

Who won this case? No one, clearly. And that's the nature of family court.

Non-Trial Dispo	skions:
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"It's a very emotional environment," says Stephanie McDonald, the attorney who runs the family court's self-help center for Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. "In family law, there's very rarely a winner and a loser. At the end of the case, everyone's going to walk away still feeling hurt. The legal system can't solve the personal pain that someone is going through because of a divorce or custody crisis."

Mixed among the emotions of family court, however, are tangible problems that McDonald and others are working to fix. The case involving Hughes and the little girl illustrates some of them — the high proportion of litigants representing themselves in a byzantine process that wasn't designed for laypeople; an imbalance of power that favors those with enough money to hire attorneys; and the need for more, and more competent, adjudicators. Other problems, such as the apparent corruption of a system where elected judges solicit campaign funds from the attorneys who appear before them, are larger than any single case, but they are increasingly part of the public discussion about reform as well.

And that was 2016; this is 2019. What has changed recently? What's left to be done — indeed, can anything really be done — to minimize the negative impact of unraveling families? With elections on the horizon, it's time to give these questions serious thought. In an era of skyrocketing school violence and teen suicide, when fostering kids' good mental health is a high priority for community leaders, what goes on in family court is everyone's business.

# EMOTIONS AND MOTIONS

WELTHY SILVA EMBODIES THE IMAGE of a ballerina

— a petite sprite with her hair pulled back in a knot. She has the accent and manner of her native North Carolina, no-nonsense grace. But when the subject turns to her experience with family court, there's a shift. She fidgets in her chair, gesticulates stiffly, calls people involved in the case "corrupt bitch" and "f---ing lunatic." I no longer see the woman I'd chatted with a few times in the late-aughts at neighborhood cocktail parties, the ballet teacher I took my stepdaughter to for a couple of lessons. This Welthy is filled with rage — the inevitable result of dealing with family court, she says.

It all started several years before she and ex-husband Rogerio Silva split up in 2013. In Welthy's version of the story (Rogerio did not respond to our requests for an interview), he began having temper tantrums and became increasingly critical and unpredictable over time. Finally, tension between the two grew too oppressive to bear. Rogerio moved out, and Welthy stayed with their daughter (whom she asked that we not name) in the family home.

Court records show the divorce, which Welthy filed for soon after the split, was acrimonious. The Silvas fought over the usual things: money and parenting. She complained that he was late with child support and alimony; he complained that she hadn't refinanced the mortgage as agreed. But nothing

was a source of greater contention than their increasingly divergent views on what was best for their daughter.

Welthy describes herself as "alternative" (think: naturopath over MD), and this mindset applies to her parenting style. She gives her daughter latitude, believing that a child should be free to create, explore, and make up her own mind about things. Take schooling, for instance.

"(My daughter) wanted to be homeschooled," Welthy says. "She'd been going to a Montessori school, which I liked, but I never objected to homeschooling. ... I didn't want her artistic abilities to be suffocated. I didn't want her to be put in a box. I don't think that everyone learns the same way, so why should they be taught the same way?"

Rogerio supported the idea of homeschooling initially, Welthy says, which is obvious because their daughter was homeschooled for a couple of years before he moved out. After the split, however, Rogerio expressed disapproval of the arrangement, requesting that their daughter be enrolled in public school. The divorce decree says, "All schools, health care providers, day care providers, and counselors shall be selected by the parents jointly. In the event that the parents cannot agree to the selection of a school, the child shall be maintained in the present school pending mediation and/or further Order of the Court."

In other words: If you can't agree - or let it go - take it to court.

The legal battle the Silvas waged other over their daughter's schooling encompasses dozens, if not hundreds, of pages of documents and illustrates a pattern in the case: Mom cites Daughter's wishes to back up her view; Dad files legal action to enforce his. And this is just one disagreement among many.

This kind of combat is exhausting ... and expensive. Rogerio and Welthy both went through several lawyers. By early 2016, she had racked up more than \$5,500 in attorney's fees that she couldn't pay. Her lawyer withdrew from the case, and she was on her own.

Up to this point, there's nothing unusual about the Silvas' divorce and custody dispute. Local attorney Ishi Kunin, a keen court observer who's been practicing family law for almost four decades, says, "In a lot of cases, it's 'I don't care if I end up in the gutter, as long as you're in the gutter, too."

According to lawyers.com, the average cost of a contested divorce in Nevada is \$13,700, with \$10,800 of that going to attorneys. When children are involved, the cost goes up to \$20,600. Alimony and property disputes add thousands more. High net-worth couples pay an average of \$35,000 — again, most of it in legal fees. Prominent family lawyer Marshal Willick charges from \$110 per hour for paralegal services to \$600 per hour for his own. At the other end of the spectrum, handwritten signs on telephone poles advertise "Divorce \$200, (in very small print) not including filing fees." Samples of those filing fees are \$299 for a divorce complaint; \$259 for a child custody complaint; and \$200-\$215 for answers and motions.

It's easy to see why so many people, like Welthy, are tempted (or have no choice but) to represent themselves. Called "pro se" litigants, they make up 60-70 percent of all plaintiffs and defendants in the Family Division of the Eighth Judicial (Clark County) District Court, experts estimate, and that

range has increased steadily over time. Moreover, a high percentage of *all* civil cases are family cases. In 2018, family division accounted for 22 percent of all non-traffic district court cases. Among those that go to trial, that number jumps to 58

percent. That means that some two-thirds of litigants in the county's busiest trial court are appearing with no lawyer.

Pro se representation is one of the family division's greatest challenges. The Family Law Self-Help Center's McDonald

says, "The law is complicated. The family courthouse wasn't built for the everyday person to just walk in, fill out a form, and get what they want. Anything you're trying to do at family court is going to involve multiple steps, and the self-represented litigant is responsible for accomplishing all those steps."

Kunin agrees the system is too complicated for most people to navigate alone, and adds that attorneys do sometimes take advantage of their clients' rancor to run up the tab.

"It's zealous advocacy combined with the fact that these are families and people who have to continue to raise children together," she says. Her advice? "We're a no-fault state, so get over it. Both of you need to walk down the aisle with your daughter when she gets married or go to your son's graduation someday. Attorneys need to care more about that than the advocacy part of it."

Lawyers also have a greater likelihood of getting what they (or their clients) want when the opponent is pro se. Around the time Welthy ran out of money for an attorney, a visitation issue between her and Rogerio was coming to a head, and the final result definitely didn't go her way.

On his designated days, Welthy says, she took their daughter to the appointed place and time for the handoff, but the girl would refuse to go with her dad. So, Welthy would take her daughter home. She tried sending a friend to make the handoff in her place; same result. Disinclined as she was to force her child to do anything against her will, Welthy didn't see any alternative.

Rogerio's desire to spend time with his daughter was apparent in his persistent requests for it and cooperation with court-ordered strategies to make it work, such as reunification therapy. He argued that abiding by the visitation agreement is the parents' responsibility, not the child's choice — and Rena Hughes, who'd taken over as judge in Silva v. Silva following Hughes' election in 2014, agreed. A final failed visitation handoff precipitated the infamous June 2016 incident, where Hughes grilled the Silvas' daughter, alone and off-record, for nine minutes in her court; had her marshal banish Welthy to the parking lot; called Rogerio and his counsel back into



the courtroom; transferred temporary physical and legal custody to him and canceled his child support obligation: and ordered Welthy to pay child support and her ex-husband's attorney's fees, and to have no contact with her daughter.

Anyone can imagine a mother's panic when she learns all this transpired while she wasn't even there. It would be one thing if she'd been properly warned of a hearing with these possible consequences and didn't show up to defend herself, but that isn't what happened. In June 2018, the Nevada Commission on Judicial Discipline determined that Hughes had violated Welthy's due process rights — and that she'd used the custody transfer to punish a mother she found to be uncooperative.

"The Commission found that the change in custody was not primarily motivated by the best interest of the child," the decision read, citing case law establishing that the child's best interest must be the court's sole consideration in making custody determinations. "This court has made it clear that a court may not use changes of custody as a sword to punish parental misconduct; disobedience of court orders is punishable in other ways."

Judge Hughes was publicly reprimanded and required to take a corrective judicial college course within a year or be removed from the bench. According to a spokesperson for the court, Hughes fulfilled her obligation in April of this year by taking a class called Advanced Bench Skill: Procedural Fairness. She declined to be interviewed for this story, but sent the following statement:

"As a Family Division judge, I am prohibited from commenting on specific cases. Commenting generally, my priority with custody cases is to serve the best interests of children. My experience with the commission has provided me with an

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opportunity to enhance my knowledge of managing challenging family law cases to better serve families in our community."

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Welthy Silva struggled to put her life back together. At first she scraped together enough money for a paralegal to write her pleadings; later, she found an attorney who helped her on an issue-by-issue basis. Four months after the June 2016 hearing, she was granted 24-hour visitation. Another seven months on, Hughes recused herself from the case, and the new judge, Sandra Pomrenze, gave Welthy and Rogerio shared custody.

The worst of the saga was over. But scars remain, and probably always will. When we asked Welthy for a selection of documents to verify her story, she handed over a huge box filled with stacks of papers — the entire court case. She couldn't bear to go through them, she said, because of the pain they revive. It's because of the protracted court battle, of course, but something else suggested the deeper loss that all family court litigants seem to have in common.

"I wanted that happy family," she'd said, remembering her early years with Rogerio and their daughter. "I really wanted mama, papa, baby."

# WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

**IT'S APPROACHING 90 DEGREES** at 9 a.m. on the last Friday in July, and muggy, due to the previous week's monsoons, which may explain why only seven people have gathered on the corner of Pecos and Bonanza roads for a family court protest. (More than a dozen showed up later.)

"Give kids a voice," reads one woman's sign, bearing a picture of a boy with tape over his mouth.

Two marshals stand about 50 feet away, in the shade of the District Court Family Division parking lot, watching passively, their thumbs in their belts.

Under a parasol on the street corner sidewalk, Steve Sanson is busy unpacking boxes and arranging protest materials on a table. The retired Marine wears a Veterans in Politics International (or VIPI) T-shirt. As I approach, he jokes about the months that have passed since our first interview: "Heidi ... Christmas came and went, and no card, nothing under the tree." I hesitate, confused, since our first interview was in May, so he goes on, "You didn't think that was funny, huh?" Sanson's brand of charisma is lost on those outside his social criticism niche.

Protesters tell us horrific stories of kidnapping, substance abuse, violence, and other family crises. They believe family court at best didn't help and at worst exacerbated their problems.

"They don't follow the evidence," says Frank Switzer, repeating a common refrain. Switzer won his case, gaining full custody of his daughter from his ex-wife, but he says justice was unreasonably delayed, violating a central tenet



of family court.

"They got the evidence," he says, "they got it two and a half years ago, that she was an incompetent parent. It took that long to get it to this point and her wanting to terminate her own rights. Not the drug tests, not the child abuse, not the neglect, not the constant lying in court — which is perjury and also burglary, technically, by Nevada state law (we could not verify this). ... I just happened to keep my nose clean, and I followed the evidence."

Switzer and other protesters think judges act out of bias for or against a certain demographic - say, white people or women. They think that attorneys bribe judges by donating to the judges' campaigns (a point we'll return to later). Some, such as Welthy Silva, who was also at the protest, think bad judges simply relish in tearing families apart and seeing people suffer. One protester, Matthew Phillips, even told us family court is a part of Agenda 21, a conspiracy theory that the U.N.'s sustainability plan is a cover for world domination by the Clintons/communists/various other villains. Family court's goal, Phillips said, is to create a society of fatherless children, because it's "well-proven" that children from single-parent homes end up addicted to drugs and incarcerated; hence, easier to control. (Sanson didn't allow Phillips to join other protesters on the sidewalk because he refused to wear a VIPI T-shirt, so Phillips carried his sign around the parking lot instead. It bore the number of days -313 – since, he says, he's seen his son.)

Detractors dismiss VIPI as fringe band of disgruntled rabble-rousers. But even the staunchest opponents acknowledge Sanson's power is no joke.

Consider Welthy Silva's case. She attributes Hughes' recusal to a complaint about the judge having been filed with the Nevada Commission on Judicial Discipline and the negative publicity surrounding the June 2016 incident. VIPI was responsible for both.

"We filed a judicial disciplinary complaint against Judge Hughes for violating Welthy Silva's constitutional rights,"







Sanson says. "We also encouraged mom to do the same. We placed the videos of the Silva case on our YouTube channel, exposing Judge Hughes, and wrote an article about it. … The mainstream media picked up the story and started to broadcast the video. I was receiving death threats at this time for exposing Hughes."

Sanson goes on to say that he paid Silva's travel expenses to Hughes' judicial discipline commission hearing in Reno, got a media pass to attend and record the hearing, posted the resulting video on his website, and interviewed Silva on his talk show, an internet radio program that contains hundreds of interviews, including some with attorneys and judges, as well as city, county, and state officials.

So, why would a veterans advocacy group take a nonveteran mom's side in a family court fight?

Sanson says his interest in family court started shortly after he took over Veterans in Politics in 2005. He learned that family court judges were garnishing veterans' benefits for child support and requiring deployed military members to attend hearings by phone or Skype, a practice he objected to. He took on the issue, using contacts and knowledge he'd developed in the court system while doing collections for a directory publisher in the '90s. From there, it was a short leap to political advocacy, promoting judges who supported veterans and opposing those who didn't. Along the way, he embraced the struggle of all he saw as disenfranchised, not just veterans.

Thus, his involvement in Silva's case, which could objectively be counted as a win for him (although he complains that the judge's punishment was a "slap on the wrist"). And it's not his only one. People he's campaigned against, such as family court Judge William Gonzalez, have lost. People he's filed complaints about, such as Judge Jennifer Henry, whose discipline commission hearing was last month, have been investigated. Issues he's taken up, such as open-hearing rules, have been addressed to his liking over the course of his advocacy (VIPI volunteers regularly observe court proceedings). He takes credit for all this, and much more.

"We have filed many cases against current elected judges, senior retired judges, hearing masters, attorneys, and deputy marshals," Sanson says. "We are currently involved in over 40 cases, including the entire state of Nevada. Because of our actions to date, several judges have been disciplined and two judges retired early."

Sanson may be overstating his role. For one thing, VIPI has campaigned for losing candidates and against winners, so the group's endorsement doesn't guarantee an outcome. Sanson himself has lost multiple runs for political office, at the city, county, and state level.

For another thing, it's tough to determine when an activist's relationship to change is causal and when it's coincidental. Take judges' work hours. Sanson says his letters to the chief district court judge outing certain family court officials for not working full days led to their schedules being tracked via key cards showing when they're in the building.

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"Absolutely not accurate," a district court spokesperson says, when asked if this is true. "We have had the same system of entry into and out of the courts for years."

In some instances, his outrage requires context. Sanson insists family court judges are overpaid, but their starting salary of \$160,000 annually, which is set by law, hasn't been raised since 2009 and equals the national average of judicial compensation, according to the National Center for State Courts. That's not to say that judges shouldn't work full-time for their pay, but his assertion that they take \$8 million out of taxpayers' pockets each year to work three days a week is exaggerated. (The judges themselves contend that they regularly spend evenings and weekends preparing for hearings and trials, so their time inside the building isn't the only gauge of how much they're working.)

Not everyone believes that Sanson's working for the common good, either. In fact, some believe he's engaged in a systematic attempt to fashion a judiciary he can control, using his many broadcasting platforms as a megaphone to incite backlash against anyone who disagrees with him.

"Sanson claims to run an 'advocacy' group but actually runs an internet-based extortion and defamation service intended to alter political races and judicial proceedings – essentially a

**"BECAUSE OF OUR** 

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DISCIPLINED AND

**TWO JUDGES** 

RETIRED EARLY."

COURT CRITIC

**AND ACTIVIST** 

STEVE SANSON,

modern-day 'protection racket,'" wrote family law attorney Marshal Willick, in a petition asking the Supreme Court to reverse a family court judge's decision allowing Sanson to keep an objectionable hearing video on his website and social media pages. Willick says the video was excerpted to intentionally misrepresent the facts and cast Willick's girlfriend, family law attorney Jennifer Abrams, and her client in a negative light. The Supreme Court denied Willick's petition, but the conflict lives on in Abrams' and Willick's pending civil suits against Sanson—suits from which numerous

judges have recused themselves because they've appeared on Sanson's internet show.

Sanson admits that he has "haters," but dismisses their accusations as a deflection of their own guilt. "They would rather focus on us than the problems that have been going on for a very long time in Clark County family court," he says. "Unlike many attorneys you might interview for this story, they get paid, and we don't."

He repeats this often — that he doesn't get paid, that he uses his own money to fund his activities, preferring not to be indebted to anyone he might have to report on. "If any of our sponsors decided to donate, we paid for the airtime of the talk show, we paid for our email blast account, we paid for venues to hold endorsement interviews, we paid for food for our interview panel, we paid for protest signs, we paid for parade entry fees, and the list is endless," Sanson says, adding (in a reference to himself in the third person), "Most of the money comes out of Steve Sanson's personal account." His income, he says, comes from his military disability and work as a medical coder.

Asked what kind of organization VIPI is, he said it was a 501(c)4 nonprofit whose mission is "to educate, organize, and awaken our veterans and their families to select, support

and intelligently vote for those candidates who would help create a better world, to protect ourselves from our own government(s) in a culture of corruption, and to be the political voice for those in other groups who do not have one."

According to the IRS, a 501(c)4 is a social welfare organization that "may not inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual." The Nevada Secretary of State's business registry lists Veterans In Politics International Inc. as a domestic nonprofit corporation that's been active since July 2006. The "solicits charitable donations" box is marked "no," and there is "no data to display" under the business details tab for any year the company is listed. On the IRS's website, the tax forms that nonprofits are required to file, 990s, are posted for 2016 and 2018 only. The filings don't include expense details.

Equally eyebrow-raising, Sanson enjoys the same insider status he accuses attorneys and judges of abusing. "You know, I've been in this town 24 years in November," he says, describing how he sought advice in the Jennifer Abrams video situation, "and I called up some judge friends I know, and some of them are retired, and I said, 'What are my grounds on this?" Later in the interview, he notes, "The reason why I know they (judges and attorneys) have little meetings that

are not open to the public is because I have a lot of judges that are still friends of mine, and I have a lot of people that are friends of mine who work with judges, and I have a lot of people that are friends of mine who carry a badge and gun and roam those courtrooms. So, what I'm saying is that a lot of people in that capacity don't like what's going on ... and they come back and tell me stuff." And still later, he gets a call on his cellphone that he answers, "Hey, judge. Yeah, we're on. Yeah. You said noon, right?"

Sanson does make some good points, family court observers concede. He's a fierce defender of pro se litigants' rights who draws attention to the socioeconomic hurdles — not to mention the stone-cold fear — average people face when going to court. But even when making good points, he relies on sensationalism, such as his 15-page July 2017 missive sent to a dozen state and local officials. In it, Sanson coherently outlines many troubling allegations of misconduct, ranging from one judge renting a room from an attorney who had cases pending before her, to another denying a litigant's request to postpone a trial days after his attorney committed suicide. Titled "War Declared on Clark County Family System" (also the name of his Facebook group), it warns that "100 litigants will protest against judges' failure to follow the laws and unethical behavior," illustrated by an image of an atomic bomb mushroom cloud. For many, any valid service he might provide is drowned out by the negativity of his approach.

Yet, for a certain online contingent, that approach works. VIPI has 2,800 followers on Facebook, and its videos are routinely shared hundreds of times. And Sanson's most loyal supporters either don't believe he's in it for the money or they don't care.

When we asked Welthy Silva what she thought his moti-



vation was, she said, "I think, you know, people feel like they have a mission in life. And that's what gets you out of bed in the morning, right? I think that he feels strongly that that is his place in the world, to fight corruption."

Is she worried he might be exploiting her to further his own agenda? "You know," she says with a laugh, "if he is, good. Exploit away. Because I need all the attention on this that I can get. I would be happy if it was (profiting him in some way). I could give something back."

She is now secretary of Veterans In Politics Foundation, which Sanson founded in December 2018.

### **BENEATH** THE ROBE

**EVEN SITTING IN A CHAIR** on the floor before his bench, Bryce Duckworth fills his courtroom with a reassuring authority. Part of it is his size — he played basketball at the University of Utah —part of it's his warm smile, and part, his decade of experience deciding cases in which children are taken away from parents, estranged spouses cry, and heartbreak is sorted out through reams of tedious documents.

"I think the emotional aspect is not always a negative," says Duckworth, who became family court's presiding judge in January 2018. "The issues we're dealing with are of a heightened emotional level, particularly issues of custody. Those issues weigh heavily, not just on the litigants, but also on the adjudicator. Those are the decisions that weigh on your mind after hours. ... I think you just want to make sure that the emotional aspect never clouds what's in the best interest of the child."

Such an attitude has earned Duckworth respect among his peers. In the Las Vegas Review-Journal's 2011 and 2013 (its most recent) Judicial Performance Evaluations, 94 and 93 percent of surveyed lawyers, respectively, recommended that he be retained.

Duckworth is no fan of VIPI. That became clear two years ago when Steve Sanson was observing hearings in a divorce and custody case before Duckworth. Marshal Willick was representing the plaintiff, and Sanson (who. by then, already had bad blood with Willick over the Abrams video) felt the judge was being unnecessarily generous with the attorney. So, Sanson called the judge to complain about it.

Sanson asked Duckworth why he allowed Willick to "get away with so much crap," in the case, using the defendant's name to specify which case he meant.

The judge hung up and, soon after, summoned the activist to appear before him in the matter.

"I find that there has been an effort to influence this court outside of the four walls of this courtroom," Duckworth said, during Sanson's appearance, "and given these influences, I find that complete transparency of these proceedings is in the public interest to maintain confidence in the judicial system. ... Communication with a judicial officer about a specific case inclusive with veiled threats is corrupt. ... This is about outside interference in the administration of justice through intimidation, threats, and improper influence. This is an attack on our system of justice in which an individual seeks to remove the symbolic blindfold of lady justice. This matter should be investigated."

He then recused himself from the case.

Sanson responded by asking the judicial discipline commission to investigate Duckworth for misconduct. The commission found there were no grounds to do so.

"So, maybe I did something I shouldn't have," Sanson says today, acknowledging the call to Duckworth. But mostly, he seems to harbor resentment for Duckworth having called out his volunteer court observers as "disgruntled" recruits during the hearing. "So, in essence, because they're disgruntled, they must be stupid," Sanson says. "I know a lot of people that are disgruntled that are very smart and are right on point. And the reason why they're disgruntled is because somebody in the system made a bad decision."

All this drama does make it tempting to see family court as "crazy town," the term a friend who went through a custody matter there used to describe it when I told her I was working on this story. But family lawyers bristle at this characterization. Family court judges and lawyers are no different than any other division's, they say; there's no more misconduct there than in any other court.

"If you're trying to focus on family court having more corruption, I think it becomes more difficult" to make that argument, attorney Ishi Kunin says. "If you focus on family court by its very nature, having more concerns that need to be addressed by the selection of the judges, by the process, I think that's fair."

The idea that family court is no worse or better than any

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other court isn't supported by judicial discipline commission records. Since state legislation established the family division in 1993, one-third of all 65 formal disciplinary actions have been against Clark County family court judges. Three have been removed from the bench: Fran Fine, in 1998, for having ex-parte communications and hiring a cousin as a case mediator; Nicholas Del Vecchio in 2008 for multiple cases of sexual misconduct and harassment; and Steven Jones, in 2014, because of his conviction in a federal fraud case (he was suspended with pay in 2012, banned for life in 2016). Most recently, Judge William Potter was disciplined for berating and handcuffing attorney Michancy Cramer, who he felt was being difficult during a court discussion of document production, and then sentenced her to three days in jail for contempt of court. During his disciplinary hearing, Potter described his own behavior as cringeworthy. The discipline commission suspended him without pay for two months and ordered him to do 10 hours of community service, pay \$5,000 to an anti-bullying organization, undergo a psychiatric exam, and attend a class on dealing with difficult parties/attorneys. He's on the bench today and declined to be interviewed for this story.

(Sources told us off the record they actually like Potter's style. While using a clapper toy to shut people up in court probably isn't a good idea, they say, his no-nonsense way of cutting to the chase and sticking to the law is refreshing.)

Family law attorneys' performances are more difficult to assess than judges', because not all attorneys practice family law exclusively, and the state bar lawyer referral doesn't list disciplinary actions by type of practice. The state Supreme Court reports that, between 2008 and 2018, appeals from family and juvenile cases accounted for 4-7 percent of the statewide total.

As for Kunin's other point, that special training would help to improve family court judges, that was actually part of the original intent.

"It is important the judge who is to hear these matters be thoroughly familiar with family and child welfare issues," said Nancy Angres, a state welfare official who testified before a legislative committee considering a bill to create family court in 1989, according to a history of the court's creation written by U.S. Representative Dina Titus, who was a state senator at the time. "In every jurisdiction, the court has the social and moral responsibility for ensuring the provision of adequate services to children under its care."

The vision of a family court was realized, but the dream of it being run by judges who specialize in family and child issues was not. Duckworth has practiced family law for his entire legal career, but that was his choice, not a requirement for his current position.

The judicial selection process in general may be the biggest problem with family court in particular. In Nevada, judges are elected. Any licensed, practicing attorney with 10 years' experience (including two years in Nevada) can run. Or, as local attorney Dayvid Figler put it in a recent *Nevada Independent* op-ed, "Any jerk with a law degree can become a judge, and as a former judge, I'm living proof."

There's no requirement of experience in the field you'll be overseeing.

What's worse, most campaign donations come from - you



guessed it — attorneys. And as many press reports, most notably a lengthy 2006 *Los Angeles Times* investigation, have pointed out, having

a case before a judge doesn't preclude an attorney from donating to his or her campaign. On the contrary. The *Times* detailed several cases where attorneys with financial ties to judges appeared before them in active litigation. Sanson has also claimed that attorneys who oppose him use the threat of withholding campaign donations as a means of persuading judges to shun VIPI.

"The process of seeking financial assistance in running a campaign is extremely problematic," Duckworth says. "That's one of the benefits of going to a merit selection process. I did not enjoy that aspect of it at all. And if there's one thing that, to me, even more than informed decision-making, stands out as a reason not to have judges go through that process, it is the need to finance campaigns. If there's some way to get out of that, I think, as a community, we benefit."

Figler and many others before him have proposed alternatives to judicial elections, involving various combinations of who gets to pick and how they do it. An elected official could choose appointees from a vetted selection, as the governor does now for vacancies, and then voters could decide whether to keep or eject the appointees in the next election cycle. Or,

the system

a committee could regularly assess appointees to approve them for continued service. In any case, voters would have to approve a change in the process. And so far, voters have rejected every proposal to get rid of judicial elections.

The same voters, that is, who picked all those judges who've been disciplined and lacked experience.

"I have no problem with the election process if those making the decisions are informed," Duckworth says. "The challenge – and I know this from when I was out on the campaign trail ... – is, you wonder how much information voters are able to attain. My preference is that, ultimately. the decision be made by informed individuals."

It's the only point that every source we spoke to for this story agreed on. Attorneys joked about the number of ballots they've "filled out," by giving their friends and neighbors advice on who to vote for, because the general public simply has no idea who judges are.

"This is a big deal," Welthy Silva says. "People really need to pay attention to who they're voting for. 'Oh, that name looks good... Check!' Right? I mean, I was guilty of it, too, before I went to family court. But these judges, they can affect your life."

The Review-Journal is bringing back its Judicial Performance Evaluations this year, with revisions recommended by UNLV researchers. Responses to the 3,000 surveys were due at the end of August, and the results will be available to voters before the next election. Voters can also easily see which judges have been disciplined or are under investigation on the judicial discipline commission's website. They can look up attorneys' license status, specializations, disciplinary records and more on the state bar's website. And they can see judges' campaign donations on the Secretary of State's website. But all those resources have been available for many years. Will people use them in 2020, when all the family court judges will be on the ballot? If history is any indicator, they're more likely to rely on the endorsements of groups such as VIPI.

Reformers aren't waiting to find out. They've got plenty of other work on their plates already.

**INSIDE** JOB

WHEREAS VIPI'S SEEMING HATRED of family court makes them want to scrap it altogether and start over, others' affection for it makes them want to change it from within.

One of the latter is Marshal Willick, due, in part, to his deep ties to the system. Willick was one of those charged with creating the rules and regulations to set up family court up in the early '90s, and he has been heavily involved in efforts to revise those rules ever since. He's sat on innumerable committees, is a substitute judge, helped design software to ease access to court records, and has written volumes of blogs, books, and web copy to guide people through the local family law landscape.

"The problem with people who protest family court being

awful," Willick says, "is they don't remember what it was like before it existed," when sensitive family matters were aired in a general district courtroom, with criminal and personal injury parties waiting in the gallery.

His sense of ownership fuels a drive to keep making it better. He's led efforts to improve the judicial selection process, judges' performance evaluations, and the way cases are heard. For instance, he supports Clark County judges making more decisions "on the papers" - that is, based on the merits of a case, as documented in legal filings - rather than holding so many hearings (which also happen to be the hub of family court's emotional tension).

"When we proposed getting rid of hearings, maybe 15, 20 years ago, we had a bunch of solo practitioners that came and started screaming that if they did that, the world would end," Willick says. "Those of us who are rules reformers run into opposition from people who see the law as financial institution as opposed to an instrument of justice. ... Bureaucracy, inevitably, over time, starts to favor the people running it."

Nevertheless, the family court bureaucracy has undergone some positive change, a fair amount of it focused on people who represent themselves.

The Family Law Self-Help Center completed its first year of operation in 2000, and Legal Aid took it over in 2013, with Stephanie McDonald at the helm. McDonald, her staff attorney, and 10 legal information facilitators assisted 49,669 customers in 2018, compared to 37,742 five years ago. Those customers run the gamut, McDonald says, from people who've gotten their first summons and have no idea what to do, to those who've completed a divorce years earlier and are returning to modify a custody agreement. Some are in and out in half an hour; others will spend all day, waiting, getting advice, filling out forms, and filing paperwork. The center is open to everyone, and all forms and services are free.

"Everybody thinks I'm crazy because I love my work," McDonald says. "The issues are difficult, but the rewards are really great. We have a lot of happy customers. They are coming to see us at probably the worst moment in their life, where there is no hope, they don't see an end in sight, and they are just lost in a legal system that is confusing them at every turn. We get to play the role where we are helping them in small bite-sized pieces to understand the system. ... They may not be completely happy with the outcome, because most family law cases involve some sort of compromise somewhere along the line. But in the end, they're relieved that they felt like they were heard. They got their day in court."

In addition to the self-help center's in-person services, it has a website full of articles, interactive forms, and video tutorials that lead users through the process of completing paperwork and attending hearings. Nearly 860,000 people used it last year.

As far as getting a lawyer is concerned, Legal Aid gives priority for its pro bono family law services to income-qualified applicants who are victims of domestic violence. But the nonprofit center offers free community legal education classes covering paternity, custody, and guardianship, as well as a litigation trial preparation class. It also hosts free lawyer consultations for pro se litigants through the Ask-A-Lawyer program at the Family Division courthouse.

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"We offer it once a week," McDonald says. "We sign up 50 people for 15-minute sessions. Attorneys will evaluate their case and suggest what they should do, shouldn't do, what forms to file, etc. It gets fully booked every single week."

The Nevada State Bar also has a pro bono lawyer referral service. Both Willick and Ishi Kunin have won multiple statewide awards for taking so many pro bono cases.

McDonald's vantage point from inside the system has helped her advocate for procedural changes to improve the public's experience. She gives the example of a glitch that had been potentially endangering people applying for temporary protective orders.

"We operate under the one judge-one family rule, where every case between a family is assigned to the same judge," McDonald says. "When a case is filed and accidentally assigned to the wrong judge, the system automatically sends out a notice of a new case assignment. It was doing that in cases where someone had applied for a temporary protective order ... tipping off the adverse party that a new case had been filed, creating significant safety concerns for the applicant. We quickly identified that issue and worked with the court to create a new process, so the applicant is the only one notified of a case reassignment."

Duckworth touts several other procedural improvements, such as an online dispute-resolution system that launched this year. People who've been referred to mediation have to complete it, helping them get cut-and-dried matters such as work schedules and income statements out of the way before discussions start, and getting them familiar with the concepts and terms they'll encounter with their human mediator.

The changes, insiders hope, will help family court both shed its reputation as a miserable morass and take its rightful place among the other, more prestigious areas of the law.

"Family law is the ugly red-headed stepchild of the legal system," Willick says. "There's a certain degree of truth in that. There's not enough respect for how complicated this stuff is. People walk in and say, 'How hard can it be?' I can't tell you how many of them leave saying, 'I'll never do this again.""

He, Duckworth, Sanson, and everyone else concerned about the workings of family court will soon have official word on the matter. In August, a third-party evaluator completed a comprehensive assessment of Clark and Washoe counties' family courts. The Supreme Court ordered the review "to determine whether the family courts are meeting expectations of lawmakers and families, following state and local court rules, and resolving legal disputes timely and effectively."

"Family courts are an important part of our judicial system," Supreme Court Justice James Hardesty said in a news release about the report's imminent release. He added that various aspects of the court have been looked at in the 28 years since its creation, but a full review was "timely and appropriate."

About time, that is, for the circus to leave town. ◆



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Once an afterthought on drink menus, mocktails are now taking their rightful place at hotspots across the valley. Here's a taste of what the buzz is (or isn't) all about





hen Juyoung Kang was a child, she desperately wanted

to try Orangina. One problem: her mother wouldn't let her have

it. Despite Kang's attempts to prove Orangina was booze-free, her mom stood firm. So Kang came up with a solution: Sprite and orange juice. It was sweet, fizzy, tart, and, in retrospect, the first of many drinks she'd mix.

Today Kang is the lead bartender at The Dorsey, a craft cocktail bar at the Venetian that specializes in seasonal drinks made with fresh juices. The bar has a couple of mocktails on its menu at any given time, and Kang helps dream them up: melon in summer, pomegranate or cranberry in fall. The Garden Party is a perennial favorite, a zingy green apple and cucumber juice, souped up with mint, lime, sugar, and soda. It's poured over a hand-carved ice cube and garnished with thinly sliced apple, fanned out over the rim. "It's about being inclusive and having something for everyone," Kang says of their mocktail-friendly menu. Here's the Garden Party recipe for when you want to take the party home. - Kristy Totten



#### **Garden Party** from The Dorsey

Pouring a convivial

spirit — without

the spirits

2 oz fresh green apple juice 1 oz fresh cucumber juice .5 oz fresh lime juice 5 oz simple syrup 10 mint leaves

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake. Add club soda and strain ingredients over fresh ice. Top off with club soda. Garnish with three to four halfmoon slices of green apples, and serve in a Collins glass.



#### KAME SODA 1

at Sushi Kame, \$5

Soda for designated drivers has been the staple for ... basically ever at this point, but they shouldn't be limited to Coke or Pepsi. Sushi Kame makes handmade sodas in a variety of flavors, such as berry, matcha, black sesame, Japanese cola, and shiso leaf. They're subtle and refreshing, and a welcome alternative to fountain drinks. "I always crave flavorful soda that's not overly

sweet," lead bartender Joon Koo says. Plus, he did "Dry July" and got tired of plain water.

# **ROUGE DESIR 2**

at Partage, \$9

Mocktails don't always look like cocktails, but this one does. Served "up" in elegant stemware and garnished with berries and mint, this bar favorite blends raspberry, strawberry, vanilla syrup, and cranberry juice. The result is frothy, complex, and not overly

sweet. For best results, pair it with a berry dessert. "People think it's just fruit juice, but it's not," bartender Ian Ayson says. "It's more creative than that."

### THE BABY DRIVER **3**

at Jammyland, \$7

"I love making nonalcoholic stuff," Jammyland co-owner Danielle Crouch says. "It's so boring to drink soda all the time." So she invented the Baby Driver, a sweet, tart, gingery mocktail with a distinctive tiki vibe. It's made









with fresh-juiced lime, pineapple, ginger, muddled mint, a splash of soda, and a few drops of bitters. It's refreshing, bright, and - most importantly - the opposite of boring.

#### MANGO SPRITZER 4 at District One, \$6

Mocktails aren't always just cocktails minus the booze, but sometimes they are. This is true of the Mango Spritzer, a boozeless version of the popular Vietnamese restaurant's Red Lantern. The mocktail transforms mango puree, lime, simple syrup, and Sprite into a peachy smoothie with a little skunk, "A lot of our customers don't drink," bar lead Janelle Grady says. Instead, they come in for kombucha-like vinegar shrubs or the divine Toasted Coconut, a dream made of pineapple juice, condensed milk and, yes, toasted coconut.

#### LAVANADA 6

at Locale, \$6

Think fresh lemonade, rich honey, gin-

ger beer, and a touch of earthy lavender, and you're thinking of the Lavanada. Chef Nicole Brisson's neighborhood Italian joint offers three mocktails, each with different flavor profiles. The drinks are popular among pregnant women and kids who want to play grown-up, but they're not just for sober folks. "We sometimes get people who ask for a mocktail with alcohol because they want those flavors but with vodka," a bartender told us.

n 2014, when I examined my relationship with alcohol and ultimately decided to stop drinking, there didn't seem to be much vocabulary on the subject. Today, there's an entire spectrum of labels for people who stop drinking or don't drink: sober, alcoholic, sober-curious,

gray-area drinker, alcohol-free, in recovery, dry, nondrinker, and so many more.

If you're considering joining the thriving Sober Curious movement with a "Dry Month" (or even a dry weekend), here's some advice I wish I'd had at the start of my journey.

**EXPLORE THE "WHY."** Take the time to reflect on the reasons behind your decision to spend 30 days sans alcohol. Want to improve mental clarity? Lose weight? Wake up earlier? The more concrete the reasons behind your choice, the more powerful your motivation.

FILL YOUR FREE TIME. Do you have a project around the house to finish? A hike on your bucket list? Been meaning to get back to the gym or start cooking again? This is the perfect time to reconnect with the hobbies you enjoyed before drinking.

**SEEK COMMUNITY.** Make sure you share your decision with someone supportive. You might choose to tell a partner or a friend, join an online support group, attend a traditional A.A. meeting, or even share it with a mental health professional. Telling others sets expectations, creates accountability, and builds support.

**EXPLORE THE BOOMING NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINK REVOLUTION.** From n/a craft brews to high-end mocktails, many restaurants and bars in Las Vegas now offer sober-friendly options that taste as sophisticated as traditional alcoholic drinks.

CONSIDER YOUR TRIGGERS. Even after a few years of sobriety, there are times when I allow myself to leave a party early. The first few weeks of not drinking can be exhilarating, but they can also bring up unexpected emotions. When going out, consider your exit plan for the event. If you're at a gathering and someone asks why you're not drinking, you don't owe them the entire backstory if you're not ready to discuss it yet. **REWARD YOURSELF.** At the end of your Dry Month, do something for yourself (except, of course, celebrate with a night of binge drinking). Apps such as Sobriety Counter can track how much money you've saved — so why not splurge on a nice dinner and show tickets? If you're interested in learning more, the Foundation for Recovery, the Las Vegas Central Office for Alcoholics Anonymous, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism offer resources, and The Temper (thetemper.com) features articles on a variety of sobriety-related topics. - Kim Miller

Kim Miller, the founder of Sober in Vegas (soberinvegas.com), is a writer, artist, parent, and outdoor enthusiast.

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# The Guide

#### **THROUGH** OCT. 18

#### There Is Nothing I Can Do Without You

Artist Shan Michael Evans's living and evolving public art exhibition features themes of dependency. growth, change, and circumstance the world around us experiences. Free. Las Vegas City Hall along First Street, artslasvegas.org

#### THROUGH OCT. 19

#### Contemporary Stratigraphy

Maryland-based artist Liz Ensz presents a comparative study of the mass-cultural investment in disposability and the human desire to imagine permanence. At the heart of her practice lies a determined material engagement, scavenger impulse, and a sincere hope for the rethinking of the valuation of people, resources, the environment, and living things.

Free. CSN Fine Arts Gallery, North Las Vegas Campus, csn. edu

#### **THROUGH** OCT. 30

#### Celebrating Life!

This exhibit features the award-winning artists of the juried fine-arts competition open to residents ages 50+. Mon-Thu, 7A-5:30P, free. City Hall Chamber Gallery, 495 S. Main St., second floor, artslasvegas.org

#### THROUGH NOV. 7

#### Native Nevada Basketry **Traditions**

The focus of this exhibition is to display baskets that have differences and similarities in construction and design; all basket weavers are Native American Nevada residents. Mon-Thu 7A-5:30P, free. City Hall Grand Gallery, 495 S. Main St., first floor, artslasvegas.org

#### THROUGH FEB. 22

Connective Tissue

The exhibition features largescale murals and interactive installations enriched by renowned neuroscientist-turned-artist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya's belief that power and impact are created through connections and networks. Free. Marjorie Barrick Museum at UNLV, connectivetissue.us

#### OCT. 3-NOV. 26

#### **Imagine** Nevada

This annual invitational exhibition brings Nevada artists and poets together to share their visions, their voices, and the ideas that can be shared through art and verse. Free. Nevada Humanities Program Gallery, 1017 S. First St., nevadahumanities.org

## OCT. 3-JAN. 11

#### Les Folies Bergère

An exhibit featuring photographs, artwork. documents, and costumes from the big stage show that debuted at the Tropicana in 1959. Free. Charleston **Heights Arts** Center, 800 S. Brush St., artslasvegas.org

#### OCT. 4-DEC. 7

#### Through the Eves of Hans Van de Bovenkamp Renowned for

his monumental

sculptures, the artist's beautifully crafted wood sculpture will wow the viewer. Reception Oct. 10 at **5:30P. free.** The Studio at Sahara West Library, Ivccld. org

#### OCT. 10-JAN. 12

#### Through Her Lens

Women in Focus presents photo landscapes, portraits, architecture, and more by local female photographers. Reception Oct. 10 at **5:30P, free.** Sahara West Library, Ivccld. org

#### OCT. 10

#### Nevada Watercolor Society Fall Show

With this juried exhibition, the NVWS celebrates 50 years of encouraging and promoting the advancement of watercolor media in Southern Nevada. 5:30P, free. Sahara West Library, Ivccld.

#### OCT. 11-DEC. 7

org

Block 17 The exhibition is a diaspora of sorts, showcasing the artists of African heritage living in the Las Vegas area. Free. Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery at UNLV, unlv. edu

#### OCT. 17-DEC. 17

#### **Suchness of** Light Artist Yasmina

Chavez's exhibit is made of concrete photography, made with light directly touching the surface of photosensitive material. Reception and jazz concert Oct. 20, 3:30P, free. Summerlin Library, *lvccld.* org

# OCT. 24-DEC.

#### Pizzazz Art

The installation includes the bright, colorful abstract paintings created by retired musician and pit boss James Pakala. Reception Oct. 24, free. Spring Valley Library, lvccld.org

#### MUSIC

#### OCT. 8 UNLV Chamber

Orchestra Enjoy the music of the advanced students. 7:30P, free. Lee and **Thomas Beam Music Center at** UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 8 & 22

#### Michael Grimm: Delta **Bound Band go** to Memphis

This dynamic concert features the earthy voice and soulful stage presence of singer-songwriter Grimm, winner of season five of America's Got Talent. 8P, \$30-\$49. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.

com

#### OCT. 10 Acoustic Alchemy

The band embraces a spectrum of musical styles, performing on acoustic and electric guitars as well as keyboards, bass, and a robust rhythm section. 7P, \$39-\$59. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter. com

#### OCT. 12

#### **Sibling Revelry** Sisters Ann Hampton Callaway and Liz Callaway combine musical forces, engaging the audience with witty banter and a collection of great songs. 3P and 7P, \$35-\$55. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center. thesmithcenter.

#### OCT. 12

com

#### Very Vegas Showcase

The Las Vegas Philharmonic brings an evening of a range of music from local composers to the Rat Pack. 7:30P, \$30-\$110. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com

#### OCT. 13

#### **Common Kings** Influenced by rock and reggae, the Kings' island sounds will have you feeling good all night. Ages 18+ only. 7P, \$30-\$45. Brooklyn Bowl at The Ling, brooklynbowl.com

#### OCT. 18

#### Shameless Band

Danny Rome & The Rockin' Rebels bring their close harmonies of the '50s, the swinging '60s, and the disco beats of the '70s for an energetic show. 7P, \$15. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com

#### OCT. 20

#### **Tapestry Unraveled:** The Complete Carole King Album

Michelle Johnson delivers an evening of storytelling and fabulous music. 3P, \$25-\$40. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter. com

#### OCT. 24

#### **UNLV Fall Choral Concert**

The following university choirs will perform: Concert Singers, Chamber Chorale, University Chorale, and Las Vegas Master Singers. 7:30P, \$10. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 25

#### El Caliente Band

The smoking, high-energy, dance showband performs amazing tribute classics, rhythm and blues, hot disco classics. big swing bebop, funk, country, and pop. 7P,

\$15. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com

#### OCT. 25-26

#### Sinatra with **Matt Dusk** Journey back

to 1966 as Dusk

whisks you away with his homage to Frank Sinatra. 7P, \$39-\$59. Mvron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.

#### OCT. 25

#### Flamenco Legends by Javier Limón: The Paco de Lucía Proiect

This concert brings together the original band widely considered to be Spain's greatest musical export. 7:30P, \$25-\$35. Artemus W. **Ham Concert** Hall at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 27

#### The Soul of Spectrum & Radiance

Two award-winning quartets sing and dance their way through the Great American Songbook. 3P, \$45-\$48. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center. thesmithcenter. com

#### OCT. 27

#### Beethoven 250 **Project**

This concert features Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 4 in G major - Beethoven's chamber version for piano and strings;

Piano Concerto no. 5 in E-flat major, "Emperor," for piano and strings. 4P, free. Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 29

#### WindSync

A collective of five outstanding North American wind musicians presents concerts that are intimate, joyful, and thoughtfully programmed. 7:30P, \$30. Lee and Thomas **Beam Music** Center at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 31

#### The United **States Marine** Band

Col. Jason K. Fettig conducts the United States Marine Band in a concert. 7:30P, free. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### NOV. 1

# The Music of

The Godfather David Perrico and his Pop Strings Orchestra will perform the score of the iconic film as well as Italian arias and original compositions. 8P, \$25-\$40. Myron's Caba-

ret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter. com

#### NOV. 2

#### The Music of **Danny Elfman**

Experience some of your favorite music from Elfman and Tim

Burton movies - live! Costumes are encouraged. 7:30P, \$30-\$110. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center. thesmithcenter.com

#### **THEATER &** COMEDY

#### OCT. 4-5

The Witches Based on the popular Roald Dahl book, this Rainbow Company Youth Theatre presentation features a boy and his grandmother who dare to defend the world's children against the Grand High Witch and her wicked followers. Fri-Sat 7P: Sat 2P, \$5.50. Charleston

#### asvegas.org OCT. 4-13

**Heights Arts** 

Center, 800 S.

Brush St., artsl-

#### **Fun Home**

After the death of her brilliant but troubled father, Alison delves into her family's history, exploring her memories of growing up in her uniquely dysfunctional family. Fri-Sat 7:30P; Sun 2P, \$28. Judy Bayley Theatre at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 4-20

#### The Woman in Black

Get ready for Halloween with Susan Hill's bone-chilling ghost story that will shake you to your core! Thu-Sat 8P; Sun 2P,

\$20. Black Box at Las Vegas Little Theatre, lvlt.org

#### OCT.8

#### Taj Express – The Musical

Featuring the music of A.R. Rahman (Slumdog Millionaire), the production reveals the secrets of the world's most prolific film industry and the people behind the screen who make the magic in India's factory of dreams. 7:30P, \$29-\$99. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com

### OCT. 18-NOV.

#### Six Degrees of Separation

The play explores the existential premise that everyone in the world is connected to everyone else in the world by a chain of no more than six acquaintances .Thu-Sat 8P; Sat-Sun 2P, \$25 adults; \$22 seniors/students. Las Vegas Little Theatre, Ivlt.org

#### NOV. 5-10

#### **Jesus Christ** Superstar

In celebration of the iconic musical's 50th anniversary, award-winning director Timothy Sheader and choreographer Drew McOnie bring this production to life. Ages 10+. Tue-Sun 7:30P; Sat-Sun 2P, \$40-\$128. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter. com

#### **DISCUSSIONS** & READINGS

#### OCT. 5

#### Fishnet & **Spotlights:** Specialty Acts, Part 1

The popular series focused on the featherand-rhinestoneclad history of the Las Vegas Strip continues with another panel, this time featuring some of the amazing specialty acts that performed in the production shows. 2P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library, Ivccld. org

#### OCT. 13

#### Native American Shamanic **Short Stories** and Tall Tales

Sean "Walking Bear" Mah will share stories of Shamanism, magic, spirits, and anecdotes of the Medicine Men. 2P, free. Summerlin Library, lyccld.org

#### OCT. 17

#### A Change is Gonna Come: Reinvention in the City of Second Changes

An event of essays, stories, poetry, book launches, and a conversation with the authors moderated by Scott Dickensheets and Geoff Schumacher.

7P, free. Main Theater at Clark

#### County Library. nevadahumanities.org

#### OCT. 26

#### StorySLAM "The Dark Side"

Sometimes we need to expose ourselves to the darkness to appreciate the light. Join us as storytellers recount experiences of encounters with "The Dark Side."

7P, \$5. Charleston Heights Arts Center, 800 S. Brush St., artslasvegas. org

#### OCT. 28

#### She Who Has No Master(s): Food, Memory, Mythology

Spend a decadent evening of words and food with Black Mountain Institute as they host Vietnamese poets, writers, and performance artists Dao Strom, Stacey Tran, and Vi Khi Nao. 7P, free. East Las Vegas Library, lvccld.org

#### DANCE

#### OCT. 6-13

#### A Choreographers' Showcase

This collaboration between Cirque du Soleil and Nevada Ballet Theatre is celebrating its 12th year of performances. Sat-Sun, 1P,

\$29-\$49. Mystere Theatre, Treasure Island Hotel and Casino, tickets through thesmithcenter.com

#### OCT. 12

#### Sol Mexicano

The audience will savor the sensation of the Mexican sun with strong and sassy folk dances performed by Sol Huasteco. 6P. free. East Las Vegas Library, lvccld.org

#### OCT. 12

#### PHILADANCO!

The Philadelphia Dance Company is celebrated for its innovation, creativity, and preservation of predominantly African-American traditions in dance. 7P, \$30. Charleston Heights Arts Center. 800 S. Brush St., artslasvegas. org

#### OCT. 16

#### I Am Tango

Tango Lovers Org. presents a character who transits through different ages and cultures, demonstrating the evolution of the Tango. 7:30P, \$65-\$85. Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org

#### OCT. 18-19

#### Daphnis and Cloe

The season kicks off with the fourth collaboration between UNLV Dance and the UNLV Orchestra. Fri-Sat 7:30P; Sat 2:30P, \$18. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 24-27

#### **Swan Lake**

This most iconic love story in all of ballet is set to Tchaikovsky's timeless score. gloriously enveloping the romantic fable of ill-fat-





#### **Press on Masterpiece** Sunday, October 6 at 10 p.m.



Friday, October 18 at 9 p.m.





#### Nature: Okavango: **River of Dreams: Paradise**

Wednesday, October 23 at 8 p.m.

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# **Honoring Zion's Artistic Legacy**

### November 6-10, 2019

Zion Canyon has inspired many of the world's great artists for more than a century. In celebration of Zion National Park's centennial, eleven of America's finest painters will continue this artistic legacy by joining us for a week of insight, learning and enjoyment. Activities and events include free outdoor painting demonstrations, instructive evening lectures, and wet-paint exhibits with art sales benefiting Zion National Park. We extend a welcome to all who are inspired by Zion's beauty and the wonders of nature.

Hosted by the Zion Forever Project.



#### The Guide

ed love. 7:30P, \$35.95-\$149.95. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter. com

#### FAMILY & **FESTIVALS**

#### OCT. 11-13

#### 26th Annual Age of Chivalry Renaissance **Festival**

Flame eaters, belly dancers, gladiator battles, minstrels, magicians, jokers, jugglers, princesses, pirates, period-specific food, and so much more! Fri 6A-11P; Sat 11A-11P; Sun 11A-6P, \$18 adults; \$8 seniors/children 6-12. Sunset Park. Ivrenfair.com

#### OCT. 11

#### **Mystic Fair**

Explore Reiki and chakra balancing, aura photography, clairvoyants, tarot and oracle cards, henna art, gemstones, spiritual jewelry, meditation CDs, food trucks, kids' activities, and more! 3P, free. Windmill Library. lvccld.org

#### OCT. 11

#### **UNLV Art Walk**

All of the art galleries open their fall exhibitions so that you can explore the variety of arts, performances, and live music. **5-9P, free.** UNLV College of Fine Arts campus, unlv.edu

#### OCT. 19

#### Downtown **Brew Festival** Join thousands

of craft beer and music fans at one of the most celebrated local festivals of the year. Ages 21+. 5-9P, \$35-\$80. Clark County Amphitheater, 500 S. Grand Central Parkway, downtownbrewfestival. com

#### OCT. 20

#### 2nd Annual Fall into the Blues Festival

The Las Vegas Blues Society presents live entertainers as well as a classic car show, face painting, raffles, food trucks, vendors, and more. 1-7P, \$10-\$25. Garagemahall, 6300 W. Tropical Parkway, lasvegasblues.org

#### **FUNDRAISERS**

#### OCT. 6

#### 9th Annual NF **Hope Concert**

The Strip's most notable headliners come together under one roof in the fight against Neurofibromatosis. **2P, \$49-\$89.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com

#### OCT. 10

#### Taste of Downtown

Guests will spend the evening poolside indulging in the cuisine and cocktails from several popular Downtown establishments. Funds go to scholarships for culinary students. 6:30P, \$70. Plaza Hotel & Casino, plazahotelcasino.com























Guests enjoyed a variety of wines and tasty bites while learning more about Touro's goal to provide healthcare and education services to our community and beyond.

We also got to play with their cool toys.











an individual in U.S. history."

- OCTOBER 2, 2002: Jimmy Boegle writes in CityLife: "Catchy quotables. Biblical rhetoric. Ridiculous worst-case scenarios. Insults. Scare tactics. Lies. These were all used by the various Nevadans Against Legalizing Marijuana."
- **OCTOBER 3, 1984:** Former local defense attorney and U.S. District Court Judge Harry Claiborne is sentenced to two years in prison for tax evasion, "the first federal judge in U.S. history convicted for a crime while on the bench."
- OCTOBER 4, 1995: Funeral services are held for high school teacher Ann Butler, 50, and her long-time partner Russell Teresi, 54, who were gunned down by Butler's ex-husband, local FBI agent Cullen "Mike" Butler.
- OCTOBER 5, 1918: Schools are shut down indefinitely as 80 cases of the world's flu pandemic strike our town.
- OCTOBER 6, 1928: A newspaper editorial blames parents for "the 50 boys of 12 and under roaming our streets after 11 p.m."
- **OCTOBER 7, 1984:** Announcing his candidacy for the U.S. presidency, local entertainer Blinko the Clown says: "If politicians can act like clowns, then clowns can act like politicians."
- OCTOBER 8, 1914: American Woman Suffrage President Dr. Anna Shaw, who "tears down the barriers of prejudice and precedent," speaks here.
- OCTOBER 9, 1930: After a recent crime wave, as unemployed people flock here seeking work on the Boulder Dam project, three men are added to the police force, bringing the total number of officers to eight.

# RANDOM **ACCESS MEMORY**

Droll, odd, tragic, and awkward moments from the many Octobers of Las Vegas history

BY Chip Mosher

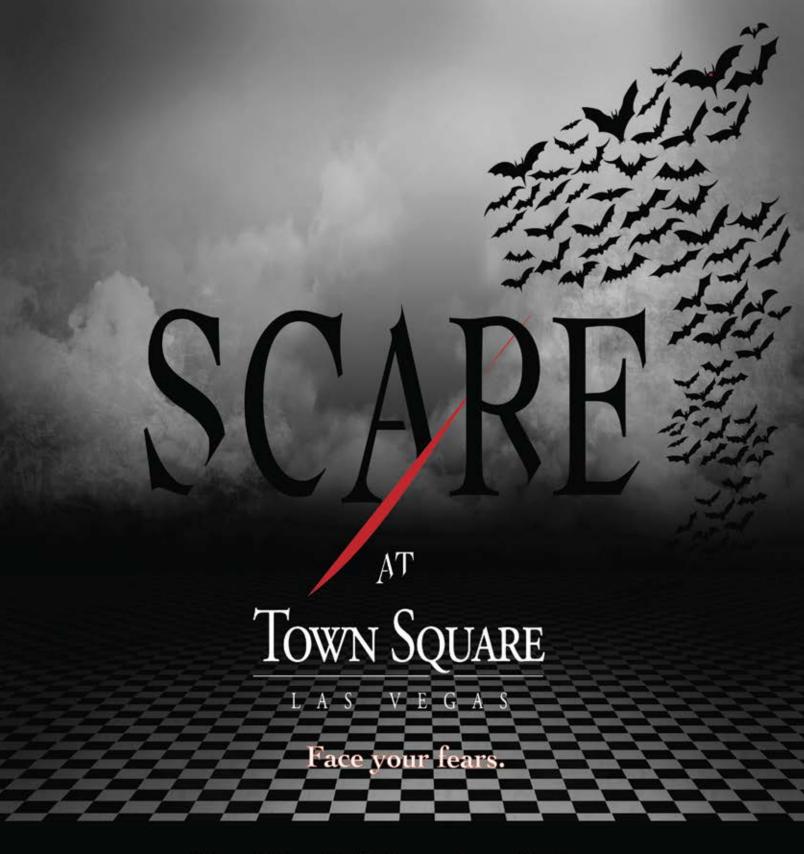
- OCTOBER 10, 1969: Under integration guidelines ordered by a federal judge, "Of the 2,381 teachers in our schools, 182, or roughly 7 percent, are minority race teachers, 25 of whom have been reassigned to the valley's white schools."
- OCTOBER 11, 1917: Seventeen-hundred "soldier boys" from Utah, heading to the war in France via L.A., stop here to give a parade before reboarding their train.
- OCTOBER 12, 1906: A newspaper ad touts, "There is but one reliable cure for Contagious Blood Poison (syphilis), and that is S.S.S., the great vegetable blood purifier."
- OCTOBER 13, 1952: Speaking here, U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, after calling local publisher Hank Greenspun "a pamphleteer of the Communist Party," says this community "should choose between Mc-Carthyism and Greenspunism."
- OCTOBER 14, 1952: Area women are invited to a demonstration by home economist Mary Jane Isenburg on "wrapping and packaging foods for the home freezer," at the Fun Center in North Las Vegas.
- OCTOBER 15, 1969: Easy Rider, starring Peter Fonda, is play-

- ing at the Huntridge Theater. OCTOBER 16, 2007: Former County Commissioner Erin Kenny reports to a "minimum-security, college-campus-like" prison in Phoenix to serve a 30-month sentence for taking bribes from strip club owner Michael Galardi.
- OCTOBER 17, 1960: Two lawsuits totaling \$850,000 have been filed against the city by the families of two men "who were shot to death when rookie policeman Jerome Kuk went berserk at his home in Boulder City."
- OCTOBER 18, 1974: Accused murderer Albert Scott. 21. tells a judge he can't afford a lawyer but prefers that renowned defense attorney Harry Claiborne defend him rather than a public defender who would "only make me plead guilty to things I didn't do."
- OCTOBER 19, 1907: To help rid the city of hoboes and beggars, a newspaper urges commissioners to create a chain gang and put them to work.
- OCTOBER 20, 1960: In a speech before the American Association of University Women, publisher Hank Greenspun reportedly boasts, "I can run any woman in Vegas out of town by just starting rumors against her."
- OCTOBER 21, 1916: Since no woman in Clark County "has ever been honored with election to public office," the



- newspaper suggests Mrs. Jane Burns, a Republican, for the office of auditor and recorder.
- OCTOBER 22, 1960: Sketches for the Vegas Community Bomb Shelter, to be built next month at Fourth and Mesquite streets, have been released.
- OCTOBER 23, 2002: A homicide victim found in the desert three weeks ago has been identified as area resident Jav "Pinkv" Smith, 87, former child actor in the Little Rascals series.
- OCTOBER 24, 1946: In the news: A dollar today buys what 69 cents did in 1941.
- OCTOBER 25, 1913: Castoria, which contains "neither opium nor morphine but rather 3 percent alcohol," is advertised as a cure for worms, baby teething problems, and flatulence.
- OCTOBER 26, 1985: Also in the news: Penthouse Pet of the Year Sheila Kennedy, 23, started out as a "camera girl" at the Flamingo Hilton four years ago.
- OCTOBER 27, 1960: A hundred irate mothers storm City Hall "to protest the closure of the Las Vegas Child Day Center."
- OCTOBER 28, 1982: Newfound funds of \$345,000 in the school district budget have surprisingly surfaced at the last minute to help save 57 jobs scheduled to be cut due to the state's \$8.6 million revenue shortfall.
- OCTOBER 29, 1945: The Atom Bombers, a band billed as "the detonators of devastating rhythm," are playing at the Railroad Pass Casino.
- OCTOBER 30, 1915: William Delegro, "the piano man," has been in town two weeks and already has sold six pianos.
- OCTOBER 31, 1864: Abraham Lincoln's determination to make Nevada the 36th state comes to fruition.

Sources: Las Vegas Age; Las Vegas Morning Tribune; Las Vegas Review-Journal; Las Vegas Sun; CityLife



Haunted Maze - Phobia Rooms - Horror Film Escape Wicked Selfie Sets - Live Entertainment - Speakeasy with Spooky Cocktails - More

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