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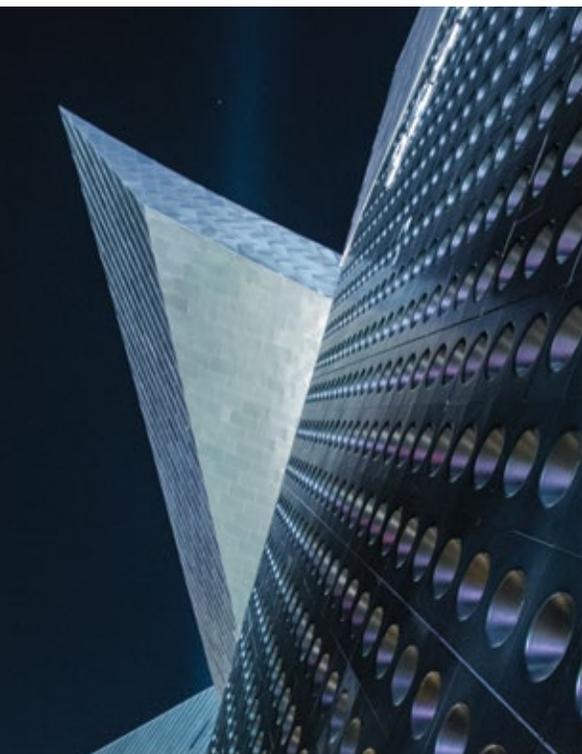
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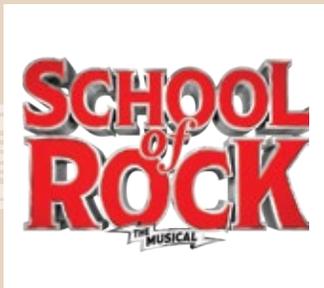
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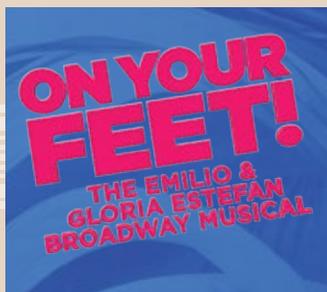
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Editor's note

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Usually in this space, I do the opening-flourish shuffle to introduce the issue's feature package with a bunch of hypertrophic, overheated prose. I was going to do that this month, too, but then I realized that I'd only be telling part of the story. But, yes, first, for protocol's sake: Feast your eyes on the winners of our sixth annual Focus on Nevada photo contest on p. 42! It's a showcase of what is unleashed when amazing photographers encounter and interpret Nevada's stunning visual richness. Your average smartphone shutterbug (*raises hand*) has a passable enough instinct for the picturesque. But what these winning photographers unlock are the *stories* — dramatic, poignant, humorous — that reside in our desert vistas and glittering cityscapes. Congratulations to all the winners.

But, again, only part of the story. In the six years we've been doing this contest, it's become an institution, and not just in the magazine. The moving parts that we've lathered and greased over the years have developed "Focus on Nevada" into more than a contest and photo feature. It's become a series of intramaural community events. For example, the judges we conscript from all over Las Vegas come into the Nevada Public Radio office for a live judging — which turns into a buzzy thing in itself, part private photo exhibition, part symposium where Las Vegans from disparate worlds of design, photography, politics, industry, and culture connect and converse. The awards and showcase bash is more than a party; it's a vivified feature story where diverse visions of Nevada effervescently yin and yang around each other. Even the stream of endearingly excited/worried emails and calls we get in the run-up — *Did you get my photos? Did getting an invite mean I won? When will I know because the anticipation is killing me?!!* — I consider part of the Focus on Nevada meta-phenom. It's all immensely gratifying to see — not just for the eyes, but for the entire spirit.



Andrew Kiraly
EDITOR

NEXT MONTH Get your grill on in our Summer Dining Issue!

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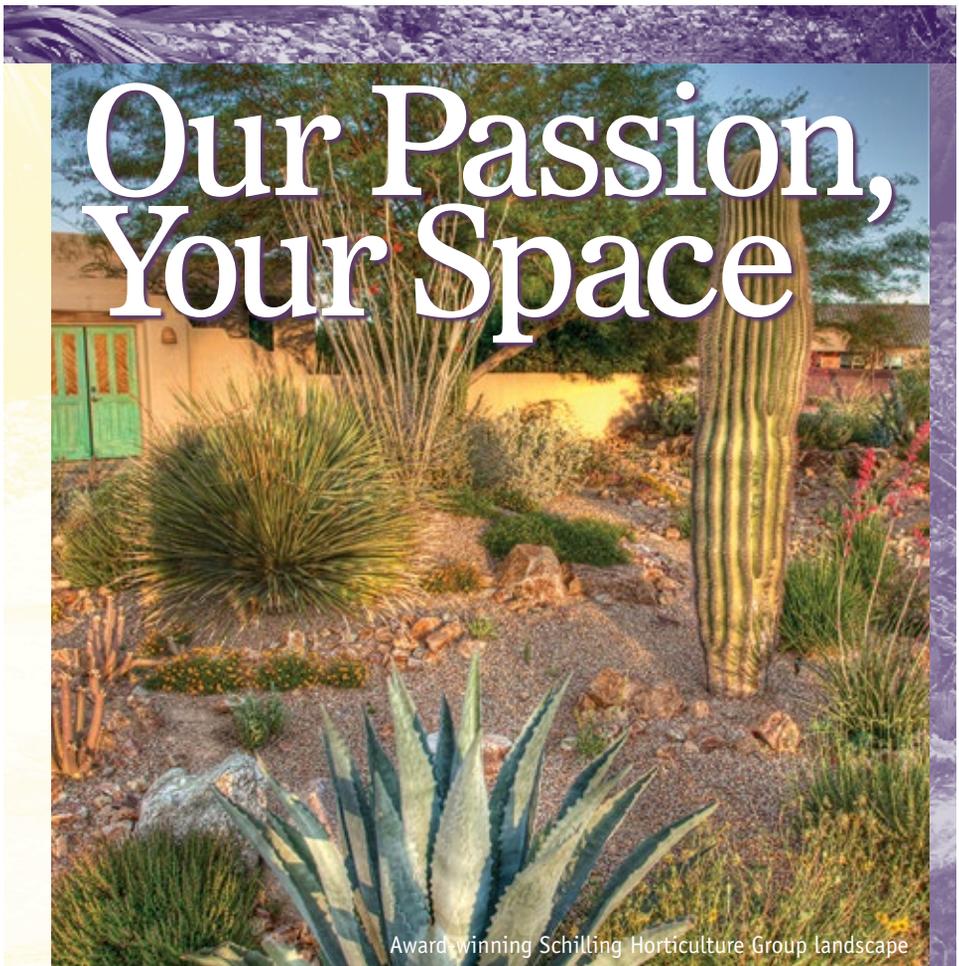
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Dr. Gollard has practiced medicine in Las Vegas since 1996 and is the Medical Director at OptumCare® Cancer Care. He is a medical oncologist, board certified in internal medicine, hematology and medical oncology. His career is marked by a focus on new technologies and therapies. He is also adept at integrating treatments and modalities for maximum efficacy. This focus on the multi-disciplinary approach is something Dr. Gollard teaches his students at UNLV, where he helps create the next generation of practitioners.

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ALL IN

8 PEOPLE, ISSUES, OBJECTS, EVENTS, IDEAS, AND CURIOSITIES YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS MONTH



ONE | **COMMUNITY**

Comic Relief

Artists, writers, and the graphic-novel industry rally around Las Vegas with a post-shooting benefit comics anthology

BY *Jason Scavone*

Four months after 9/11, comic book publishers DC, Dark Horse, Image, and Chaos!, working in the same grasping helplessness as everyone else in the country, came together to release two graphic-novel anthologies that benefitted charities helping in the aftermath. Since then, the benefit comic has bloomed, turning into a reliable, if niche, signpost of tragedy, even as they've helped out victims of hurricanes Katrina and Maria, the Japanese tsunami, the Pulse nightclub attack, and others.

Welcome to the miserable club, Las Vegas.

Here we are, all of eight months since a madman with inscrutable motives rained down hell, and it's our turn to be the beneficiaries of accomplished comic-book professionals hoping to unwind even a little bit of the damage.

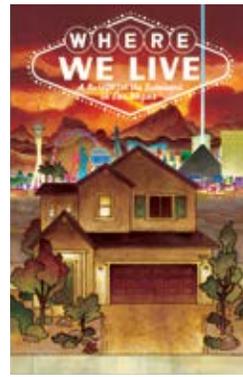
Massive anthology collection *Where We Live*, released May 30 from Image Comics (\$19.99), is the brainchild of recent California transplants J.H. Williams III and his wife, Wendy Wright-Williams. After years of visiting Las Vegas, they took the

residential plunge two years ago — just in time, as it were.

"We were out of town for a friend's wedding," Williams says of October 1. "But we know people who work on the Strip, and some very dear friends of ours were caught up in it. One of them was working at a restaurant that night and was forced into lockdown. We were on the phone with her for a good chunk of the night. Of course, it's terrifying; she's being told the shooter is in their building, there are bombs in the buildings. By the time we got off the phone with her it was almost 3 in the morning."

Stop us if you've heard that one before.

Williams, a highly regarded artist who's worked with comic-book luminaries like Neil Gaiman (*Sandman Overtures*) and Warren Ellis (*Desolation Jones*), did, in the aftermath of the shooting, the de rigueur helpless-and-angry-shouting-into-the-void dance, tweeting, "Gotta say, I'm mentally



MEET AND GREET

Where We Live will launch June 2 with an event 2-6p at Alternate Reality Comics, alternaterealitycomics.net. Many local contributors to the anthology will be on hand.

finding it difficult to do normal things and to work, after such a horrible thing happened 15 miles down the road."

Two replies came quickly, from letterer Bernardo Brice and industry heavyweight writer/artist Kurt Busiek (*The Avengers*, *Astro City*, *Superman*, et al), both saying they would contribute to an anthology. When Williams brought the idea to publisher Eric Stephenson, who heads Image, the third-largest comics company behind Marvel and DC, he signed off immediately. Didn't

even blink as the page count ballooned past 300 as more and more creators attached themselves between October and February.

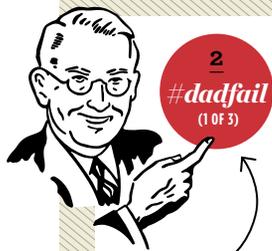
The contributor's list is a who's-who of comics: Gaiman, Brian Michael Bendis, Mark Millar, Mike Allred, Greg Pak, Cliff Chiang, Jeff Lemire, Sean Phillips, Darick Robertson, Bill Sienkiewicz, James Robinson, and Brian Haberlin — the latter two Las Vegas locals — have combined to work on just about every major superhero from Ant-Man to the X-Men, and have written or drawn some of the most influential non-superhero books, from Gaiman's industry-shaking *Sandman* to Phillips' award-winning *Criminal*.

Wright-Williams sought out more than a dozen local contributors, including Matt Cervillo, Josh Ellis, Rachel Crosby, Daniel Hernandez, Jarret Keene, and Pierce Elliott, among others, to tell their own stories, or the stories of people on the ground during the shooting. Proceeds from the book will go to the Route 91 Strong fund.

The stories range from journalism covering the victims and responders to poetry to essays to allegories. To a wide extent, they argue for restrictions on the availability of guns, something Williams didn't necessarily intend from the outset, but which was probably inevitable.

"Each person needed to say and vocalize what they felt inside, whether they lean one direction or the other. If, at the end, the book leans one direction or the other, that's just the tide." Even if the book has a de facto point of view, Wright-Williams' hope is that it will lead to that most oft-wished-for outcome of late modernity: a conversation. "We don't claim it's going to stop all gun violence. That's ridiculous," she said. "We're just hoping because it's not like pundits barking at each other that

Continued on P. 12



Father's Day
is June 17

Purple Hazed

Prince had one. Full-length and purple, studded at the shoulder with rivets to catch the light. Michael and Madonna wore theirs motorcycle-style, cinched at the waist, dripping chrome. I was a quiet teen, living in the South. My connection to glamour was having seen *Purple Rain* an unhealthy number of times, and stumbling into a talk-until-dawn encounter with Jesse Johnson from *The Time*. He had one, too — draped beautiful over his bare chest, while he tossed off salacious comments about songstress Tina Marie, whom he said, "had all kinds of booty going on." Aside from standing in line for concert and movie tickets, my closest bridge to that glamour was having a father in Las Vegas. I asked him for one: my first birthday request since he'd journeyed West. I did not expect it would ever come until it did—all hopeless and wrong.

Instead of the semi-gloss of kidskin and studs, the full-length leather coat I'd pined for arrived sewn in patchwork sections, stiff and padded. My 90-pound frame was drenched in bolts of leather. It was less Vanity Six, more Trenchcoat Mafia. But I pictured him, the father I'd known only as shadow, going into a Tandy, telling the clerk he was looking for a certain something for his daughter, wrapping it up and sending it off. To picture him moving through a day at my behest, working to fulfill the dream I was dreaming of myself, after so long and over so long a distance, was so heavy — so deeply heavy — that I trimmed the sleeves and wore it anyway.

Erica Vital-Lazare



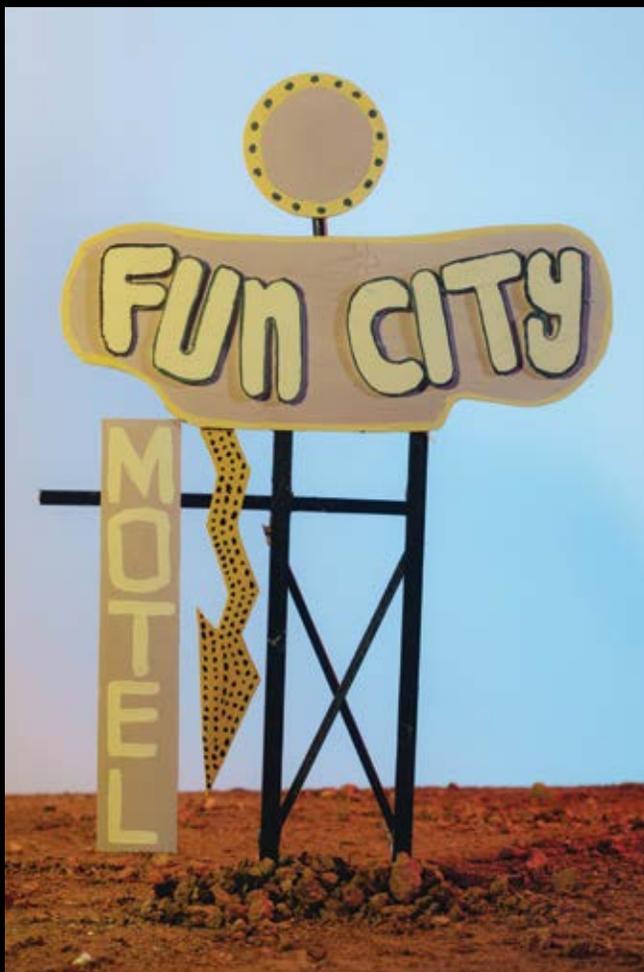
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SAVING SIGNS, IN HER OWN WAY

"Nothing is sacred in this city," says artist and photographer Mikayla Whitmore.

Certainly not winsome artifacts of the past, in this case classic signage: "It seems in the last few years — or maybe I am just old enough to pay attention now — that signs are being removed to be updated or switching hands." Plenty of artists have photographed classic Vegas neon, but with her dioramas of lost and imperiled signs — excerpts from a series — Vegas native Whitmore moves beyond a simple documentary function, investing them with a deep affection but also an air of fragility, of charm but also melancholy and transience. Like people, their minute imperfections bestow personality. "I hope to honor and create a sense of awareness to preserve these pieces of history," she says.

**Scott
Dickensheets**



Continued from P. 10

maybe we can have a conversation. You're taking in that information in a different way, because it is art."

We have more conversations than an overstuffed Mamet screenplay these days. You can judge for yourself their varying degrees of efficacy. But maybe this isn't the conversation we're going to take away from a project like this. Of two narratives that the book's editors point to that arose in the shooting's aftermath, Wright-Williams cites the unheralded (at least nationally) connectivity of the Las Vegas community. Williams, pessimistically, talks of a local paranoia about big, collective events, and of taking precautions where none were previously taken.

Maybe the conversation we, as a city, should have is a referendum on memory.

Williams may be right that some are staying out of the public square — but for how long? How long before tourists, who are even further removed, will feel like the odds of another incident are so far gone that the riskiest part of a trip to Vegas would be taking a Southwest flight there? How long until the shooting recedes beyond easy recollection?

It's hard enough as an American to keep a long memory of history. Harder still when you live in the city that's pure, concentrated black-tar America.

The guignol reportage coming out of the massacre was overwhelming, and the sheer volume of it threatens to turn signal into noise. *Where We Live*, though, makes a far more compelling case for the necessity of memory in a city that's often short on it. Las Vegas is young enough it could be an infant city, which is appropriate because it has a bad case of object impermanence. The Hoover Dam will stand forever as a signpost of its beginnings, but the middle doesn't have much remaining in the way of permanent iconography. At least with projects like this, we can get art — an actual, permanent object. The conversation we need to have is whether this process should, or can, be the beginning of an ongoing binding of art, memory, and place that makes a city more than a space you happen to exist for a few years. ♦



FOUR | ANALYSIS

Welcome to the Game, America

Sports betting is now legal in all 50 states. What does that mean for us?

BY **Matt Jacob**

Nevada's sports-betting monopoly is officially over. On May 14, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), opening the floodgates for full-scale sports betting to spread beyond Nevada's borders for the first time.

Before the ruling came down, there was only one way fans could lawfully place a wager on single-game sporting events: Come to Nevada. Which is why the national consensus on the ruling was essentially, "It's about time."

And other states aren't wasting any time. In anticipation of the ruling, New Jersey, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi already have sports-betting legislation on the books. Twenty-two additional states have introduced similar bills. One research firm predicts 32 states will be in the sports-betting business within five years.

What does this mean for Nevada's sports-betting industry — and tourism? Will bettors stay in their hometowns for the Super Bowl and the NCAA tournament?

Will Nevada seize the moment to export its brand and expertise? What states will be first in line for full-fledged sports betting? Here's what to watch for:

- New Jersey is best positioned to be the first state to post odds and begin accepting wagers. London-based William Hill, whose U.S. division operates more than 100 Nevada sportsbooks, has had a sports bar at New Jersey racetrack Monmouth Park that was set up to convert to a full sportsbook. It aims to be open for business by early June.

- Considering the jump-start they got, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi likely will be the next to begin taking bets, perhaps by the time the 2018 football season kicks off in September.

- Las Vegas will leverage its expertise and relationships for a piece of the action. In Jay Kornegay's perfect world, other states will be taking bets inside their own SuperBooks. Kornegay is the veteran vice president of race and sportsbook operations at Westgate Las Vegas, home to the famous Westgate SuperBook that is frequently cited when

Continued on P. 14

AP PHOTO/JOHN LOCHER



Father's Day
is June 17

Why Are the Eggs Gray, Dad?

One Saturday morning in my otherwise happy childhood, Dad scrambled a calf's brain into our eggs. Now, I need to stipulate something here: The man could cook a breakfast. If you'd been around our place then, you'd have loved his gorp the way we did — gorp's the family word for his improvisations with scrambled eggs and whatever else the fridge might yield, simmered into a hardy goop that didn't just stick to your ribs, it dry-walled them.

So I was inclined to trust him on this calf's brain thing ... until that first bite, one of the seismic events of my youth. Mooshy, gross, its voluptuous organ-ness thick in my mouth, I could taste the fact that, more than just basic animal meat, this stuff had *conducted a function within* that animal's body, which somehow made it 20 times worse. That it was inflicted on me by Dad made it worse yet. I've put some terrible things in my mouth in this life, but nothing compares to that.

I wish I could make its vileness forensically visceral for you, maybe with a scratch-and-lick patch, or a VR depiction of my flagellating taste buds. Alas, the only technology I have is metaphor: Imagine the Grim Reaper using your tongue as a bathroom hand towel. Yeah, like that.

When your cooking reminds children of their mortality, you've pushed your kitchen experimentation too far. It would take much virtuoso gorp, a ton of his perfectly grilled brisket, for Dad to regain the ground he lost that day. Thankfully, he was up to it. *Scott Dickensheets*

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Continued from P. 12

national media discussions turn to point spreads and futures odds. Kornegay says he and his colleagues have been ready with plans to spread to other markets that pass sports-betting legislation. “We’ve been preparing to expand our SuperBook brand and our SuperContest (a professional football handicapping contest), so we’ve been talking to other states, other jurisdictions about possible partnerships.”

“We’ve had legalized sports wagering in Nevada since 1949, so we have a history of operations, monitoring, regulating,” says Jennifer Roberts, associate director of UNLV’s International Center for Gaming Regulation. “Now you’re going to see those operators that have experience offer whatever resources they can to help guide new operators and new states coming on board.”

• As gaming spreads nationwide, Nevada will continue to adapt. Last year, Nevada sportsbooks took in \$4.87 billion in wagers, with the books keeping \$248.8 million of that. What happens to that revenue now that we no longer have a stranglehold on sports betting? And what about all the non-gaming revenue generated by sports bettors? Veteran observers aren’t worried. Longtime bookmaker Vinny Magliulo, now an executive at Vegas Stats and Information Network, addressed this on one of VSIN’s satellite radio shows. “Back in the 1970s, when casino-style wagering expanded, primarily in New Jersey and then a couple of decades later into Mississippi and other parts of the country, we were asked, ‘Is that the death knell for Las Vegas?’” he said. “As you know ... visitation here has actually increased. And this will do the same thing.”

Kornegay agrees. “A very small percentage of our visitors actually come to Las Vegas to make a sports bet,” he says. “People come to Las Vegas for our venues, the atmosphere, and all the amenities this great city has to offer. That’s not going to change. When we have our big events — Super Bowl, March Madness, the opening weekend of the NFL — we’re very confident you’re going to see the same types of crowds that you’ve seen before. Las Vegas is going to be just fine.” ♦



SIX | PROFILE

Nikki Corda

Family documentarian

BY *Nadia Eldermedash*

In the Facebook and Instagram era, it is easy to imagine that our most precious memories are saved and easily available, to be relived as often as we want. But, as you know from that cousin who posts too many photos of her children, more memories does not mean better or more treasured ones.

In 2006, documentary filmmaker Nikki Corda found herself wondering how she could truly treasure the memories of her father, musician and songwriter Mike Corda. She had returned to Las Vegas from Southern California to spend more time with her family in the wake of her father’s illness. With six years of experience in the film industry and a documentary to her credit, Corda put her skills into a labor of love — a short film about her father’s life.

“(My father) and my brother and my

older sisters came here during the Rat Pack era, and he had so many interesting stories,” she says. “I had a lot of emotion about that because my father never got the hit song that he desired, he never got the acknowledgment that he dreamed of.”

Deeply personal, the project was meant primarily for her family, and yet it quickly assumed a life of its own. Friends were immediately taken by the idea, and many asked, *Could you do one about my dad, too?* Life-Portraits was born.

The business, which she officially began in 2014 (although she’d been working with clients since 2007), taps into a “universal urge to hold onto our loved ones and learn as much about them while we can.” Corda takes an unscripted approach; the editing process incorporates home videos and photographs to create something that can

be passed down to the next generation.

One of her personal favorites is that of Chicago landlord Morrie Liebling. “When I interviewed (him), the first question I asked was, ‘What has been your life’s work?’ This was meant to be a segue to allow him to reflect on his career. Instead, he internalized the question at a very deep level, and it brought him to tears. Eventually he stated, ‘My life’s work has been taking care of my family.’

“This cracked him right open,” she says, “and he was very emotionally open throughout the interview, which was wonderful. Although this was my first question, I chose to end the documentary with this moment, and it was a beautiful conclusion.”

After her father died and her mother moved into an assisted-living facility, Corda began to interview her mother’s fellow residents, many of them World War II veterans. “(Older people) are ignored so often, especially when they get really old and they can’t keep up, can’t hear,” she says. “We just stop talking to them.”

As Corda developed Life-Portraits, she explored other documentary projects. In 2013, she and a few friends began working on a documentary about the mortgage crisis in Las Vegas. She met Ian Hirsch of Fortress Credit Services, who worked on mortgage modification at a time when Las Vegas was facing a tsunami of foreclosures.

“(Hirsch) would save people from losing their homes, and I really gravitated to the idea of what he was doing,” Corda says. “As a little burgeoning production project for me, I started making short films for Ian for his business, and they were all mini stories about how he’d saved different clients from losing their homes.”

That gave rise to Docu-Mercials, the sister project of Life-Portraits: short, documentary-style videos designed with an advertising purpose in mind, made for clients doing people-centered work.

In many ways, Docu-Mercials and Life-Portraits are products of the same philosophy. In both, subjects open up and share their life’s work and the things that have helped shape who they are. And while some of Corda’s clients are people whose work is part of the Las Vegas landscape — she’s working on Life-Portraits for entertainment photojournalist and performer Richard Faverty, and aerialist and circus performer Stephanie Castellone — most are ordinary folks.

“Everyone has their own unique tale of getting through this thing called life,” Corda explains. “It’s part of the human condition to have a story.” ♦

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7

'We're Already Past That'

Becky Harris, first-ever chairwoman of the Gaming Control Board, is already over her historic appointment, which is good — she's got a lot to do

BY **Steve Sebelius**

Becky Harris finds a lot of joy in being a student. Whether studying as an undergrad at Brigham Young University, earning her law degree at BYU's J. Ruben Clark law school, going back to get a master's in gaming law at UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law — even taking required continuing legal education classes to maintain her bar certification, Harris says she loves to learn new things.

That's part of what makes her new job as chairwoman of Nevada's Gaming Control Board so appealing. One of two regulatory bodies that oversee Nevada's privileged gaming license holders, the Control Board post ensures that no two days are alike.

"I love it. It is different every single day," Harris says, in her nondescript state office in the Grant Sawyer building near Downtown. "There's something new and interesting to learn about and to talk about with my staff, and figure out solutions to challenges that come our way."



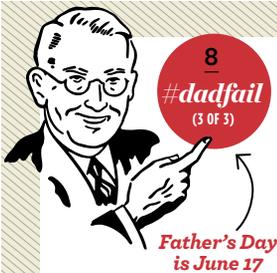
And there is no shortage of challenges for the three-member board (and their colleagues on the state Gaming Commission), from how a privileged industry charged with following local, state, and federal laws deals with marijuana, to the recent nationwide legalization of sports gambling, to new and innovative ideas such as eSports in casinos.

But Harris is no ordinary Gaming Control Board chair, even if she freely admits

she's never gambled in her life. She's the very first chairwoman in the board's history, and only the second woman ever to serve on the board at all. Most of the coverage of her appointment by Gov. Brian Sandoval, in fact, focused on the history that was made.

Harris herself says she had trouble believing it after getting the call from Sandoval's office asking about her interest.

"It was surreal," she recalls. "And my answer was, 'Of course.' And in my mind, I was



Slice of Life

My dad loved knives and all things knifey — kitchen knives, pocket knives, honing steels, whetstones. He was obsessed! One Saturday in 1979 he was in the garage, sharpening a knife on a contraption with two ceramic rods stuck like TV antennae in a wood base. He was rapidly whoosh-whooshing away until he slipped and fileted his left forearm, severing an artery. LOLLOL! No, seriously, it was scary and hardcore — even more scary and hardcore because I'd previously thought of him as a godlike inviolate paragon of righteous dadness. Mom tied a tourniquet and a neighbor drove him to the hospital. I remember seeing the blood all over the garage floor and thinking, *Wow, he's human.* **Andrew Kiraly**

thinking, ‘Well, who wouldn’t want to be considered for the Gaming Control Board?’”

But, deep into her plans for re-election to the state Senate, Harris put thoughts of making history out of her mind. “I was honored for the consideration, but never expected that it would ultimately be me,” she says. “There are a fair number of individuals who have a lot of expertise and experience in this area. To even be equated with those names was an honor.”

But Harris’s initial skepticism vanished when her appointment went forward. She quit her bid for re-election to a second term, and began preparing to become one of the top gaming regulators in the world, the keeper of what many in Nevada consider the “gold standard” of oversight for casino companies.

BACK TO SCHOOL

For Harris, the journey to that apex began during her political career. After an unsuccessful run for Assembly from a Henderson-area district in 2012, she was elected as a Republican to the state Senate from District 9, defeating one-term Sen. Justin Jones in a year that saw Republicans win up and down the ticket.

In the 2015 Legislature, Harris chaired the Education Committee, but it was on the Judiciary Committee that she learned she needed some more schooling, after she confronted gaming issues that were brand new to her.

“I learned in the 2015 legislative session that I did not have the depth of understanding with regard to gaming industries that I wanted to have, since it’s our largest industry,” she says. “And I wanted to have more information and articulate questions that I had in a more productive way.” During that session, she applied for – and was accepted to – the inaugural class of the master of laws in gaming law and regulation program at Boyd. She graduated in December 2016.

While Harris intended her education to help her write better laws, she hardly dreamed that she’d soon be enforcing them instead.

“And this just came out of the blue and surprised me,” she said. “Perhaps it had entered my mind that down the road, after some more political service and some experience as a gaming attorney, one day maybe I would be considered for the commission or the board.”

That day came a lot sooner than she

Continued on P. 18



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Continued from P. 17

thought, as Sandoval signed her commission to the board in January and sealed her place in Nevada gaming history. Harris says she doesn't consider herself a role model or a trailblazer, but acknowledges that being the first woman in her role does carry extra scrutiny. But she'd prefer to just get down to business rather than evaluate her place in history. Sure, there was some excitement about that aspect of her appointment for a few weeks. But now? "I think we're already past that point," she says.

A SURPRISING TURN

It was on Harris's fifth day of work that the *Wall Street Journal* broke a story that caught Nevada's gaming community by storm, if not surprise: Mogul Steve Wynn had been accused of sexual harassment — and worse — by female employees of his eponymous company. In a head-spinning development that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago, Wynn was ousted from his company, and even given a deadline to move out of his villa on the hotel property. A new day had dawned.

Harris and the board are still investigating Wynn — the probe is expected to wrap up this fall — and she's cautious about commenting about it. But she and the board held a workshop on draft regulations that require all gaming licensees to adopt rules indicating that sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and that all companies have to implement a mechanism to allow alleged victims to report allegations and be protected from retaliation.

Some casino companies said the rules were unnecessary, or duplicative of policies already in place at some companies. Harris disagreed.

"It's important to have clear guidelines in place," she said. "Certainly under [Gaming] Regulation 5, the board has the authority to call somebody forward for unsuitability. I think that's vague, particularly in the context of harassment issues."

Now, would those regulations have happened anyway, even without a woman chairing the board (and two more women serving on the Gaming Commission — Deborah Fuetsch and Sandra Morgan, both also appointed by Sandoval)? Perhaps. But Harris says there are differences between how men and women approach their jobs.

In the state Senate, she said, by way of example, she noticed that men were more likely to look at the issue of foreclosures in black-and-white terms; a mortgage contract

was signed, the terms breached, and thus consequences must follow. But Harris, who represented homeowners struggling to keep their houses while wrestling with the Great Recession, says she tended to look beyond that analysis, to the issues of *why* the mortgage went unpaid, and try to find solutions short of losing a home.

"I think where the difference comes is in the lens through which you see things," she said. "So the ability to have a more global perspective regarding issues, I think, is important. And that's a great perspective that the board has now."

But Harris also acknowledges that, day-to-day, there's not much difference in how men and women go about doing the job. For instance, she's in lockstep with the rest of the regulators when it comes to marijuana: Hands off, unless and until Congress acts to decriminalize the drug at the federal level. She believes, like the rest of the regulatory establishment, that Nevada has something to teach other jurisdictions when it comes to regulation of, say, nationwide legalized sports betting.

"For me, the question is, how can we help other jurisdictions do it right?" she says. "I think Nevada has been the leader in how to establish effective gaming regulation and would like to see Nevada continue to provide that guidance."

And, she says, she believes Nevada has a strong regulatory scheme, notwithstanding events such as the millions in fines paid by Las Vegas Sands Corp. in 2017 to end a criminal bribery case arising out of Macau. (The alleged violations took place long before Harris joined the board.)

For Harris, no one issue is more important than the board's basic mission, "just trying to make sure that we're regulating in a fair, neutral, and thoughtful way," she said. "As a regulator, having the opportunity to help protect and sustain our largest industry has been powerful."

Although she's only been on the job for about five months, Harris says she's faced some busy days. "Some days, I feel like I don't have enough bandwidth to get everything done that I would like to get done."

But she wouldn't bite when asked if she'd ever return to politics, or what's next for her (her term expires in January 2019, when a newly elected governor will have the option of re-appointing her or choosing someone else).

"I am very happy where I am right now," she says. "I'm strictly caught in the moment." ♦



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*Biker, Skier,
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A man with a goatee and a purple plaid shirt stands in a garage with his arms crossed, smiling. In the background, there are skis on a rack and a motorcycle. The text 'We're free spirits.' is overlaid on the lower left of the image.

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CURRENT | OBSESSION

Game of Dough

June 1 is National Donut Day. What better way to celebrate than with a 16-team, single-elimination donut-shop tournament of unrelenting caloric brutality?

(SIMPLE, SWEET)

Classic V



RONALD'S DONUTS
Vegan tiger tail



REAL DONUTS
Apple fritter

RONALD'S DONUTS
Vegan creme filled



We just might give up meat donuts for this vegan beaut!

RONALD'S DONUTS
Vegan apple fritter



Keep your choco-frills; this classic doesn't need frippery to win our hearts and bellies!

DULCE DONUTS
Cinnamon crumb



DULCE DONUTS
Cheesecake

Plato, seeking the perfect ideal of fritterness, would stop here

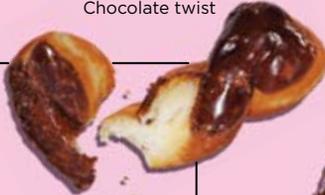


MASTER'S DONUTS
Glazed twist

KRISPY CREME
Plain glazed



KD DONUTS
Chocolate twist



FRIENDLY DONUTS
Apple fritter



RONALD'S
Old-fashioned

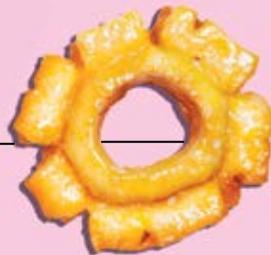
KD DONUTS & KOLACHES
Plain glazed



SUNRISE DONUTS
Sugar donut



FRIENDLY DONUTS
Old fashioned



Reader, we ate it.

FRIENDLY DONUTS
Maple bar



Cake + glaze: nothing newfangled about this old fashioned

ROUND ONE

Henderson represent! In the bottom half of the bracket, two Hendo shops — Friendly's and KD's — advanced decisively. We pitted KD's plain glazed against powerhouse Krispy Kreme's famous glazed, and were pleasantly, tastily, surprised to see its restrained version top the glycemic rush of Krispy's. In the top half, no one was shocked to see local fave Ronald's move on.

ROUND TWO

Dulce's donut was like a cocky but intriguing dating profile: It's rich, creative, and knows how to satisfy. But Ronald's vegan chocolate cream-filled earns the "Super Like" for what's on the inside. It's smooth, vanilla but not boring, and you could bring it home to mom. Meantime, Friendly's old fashioned lived up to its name, winning with its traditional virtue: deep, handmade flavor.

ROUND THREE

Two fritters enter the semifinals, one fritter leaves — and that fritter is from Ronald's. Both showcased their shop's virtues, so it was a close call, with Ronald's' tasty gem winning thanks to a richer flavor in the glaze.

So who won?

Scott, Heidi and Kristy voted for Fractured Prune's Death by Chocolate for its satisfying cake base and triple-chocolate topping, but Andrew was enthralled by the perfect crunch and balanced sweetness of Ronald's Donut's old-fashioned. **Final verdict:** They're donuts, people — they all win!

BY **Scott Dickensheets, Andrew Kiraly, Heidi Kyser, Kristy Totten**

S

(IT'S COMPLICATED)

Fancy

FRACTURED PRUNE
Death by Chocolate



Chocolate glaze, chocolate sprinkles, chocolate cookie crumbs = transcendent choco-gasm!

You could put paint chips on this cake base and we'd eat it.



FRACTURED PRUNE
Bacon Bomb



In the spirit of Nevada, it's big, rich, flaky and maybe just a little too much.

DONUT MANIA
Nevadan
(maple, cream, toasted coconut)



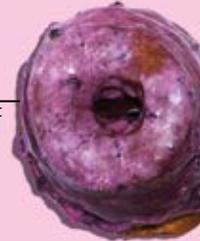
DONUT MANIA
Banana cream

GLAZE
Taro & Coconut



Intriguing, but we wanted to taste more taro. Also, what does taro taste like?

COCO DONUTS
Blueberry cronut



FRACTURED PRUNE
Salted Caramel



Fracture Prune's vanilla cake base kept taking the, uh, cake.



FRACTURED PRUNE
Coffee Cake

DUNKIN' DONUTS
Comet Candy



PINK BOX
Croughnut



PINK BOX
Samoa

CRUNCH
Ellen Doughgenerus



Sweet, fluffy and coated in Fruity Pebbles = stonerlicious.



CRUNCH
Katy Cherry

Unlike its namesake, the Katy Cherry is surprisingly complex, and a donut.

DONUT BAR
Crème brulee



CRUNCH
Kim Kardoughsian



Unlike its namesake, the Kim Kardoughsian is not too cloying and doesn't fuel a vapid culture of selfie narcissism.

ROUND THREE

Admittedly, we were rooting for Crunch's Ellen Doughgenerus — who doesn't love anything topped with Fruity Pebbles? But Fractured Prune's Bacon Bomb proved to be a dark horse (pig?). The bacon-crumble topping was a passable novelty — but, once, again, Fractured Prune's inimitable vanilla cake formula propelled it from our palates straight to the finals.

ROUND TWO

Pinkbox's Cronut masterfully combined flakiness with cakiness, but Crunch's Katy Cherry won for complexity — think an airy, deconstructed cherry Danish. Donut Mania's Nevadan squared off against Fractured Prune's Salted Caramel. It was a win for restraint: Fractured Prune's slightly crunchy, satisfying cake and restrained toppings won over Glaze's Nevadan with its happily overstated Bavarian cream, maple icing, and toasted coconut.

ROUND ONE

Donut Mania's Banana cream was a fine take on classic pie, and bested Glaze's Taro & Coconut. We love the idea of a crème brulee donut, but the dough in Donut Bar's customer fave was plain. Crunch's Kim Kardoughsian, though, had a Snickers-inspired topping with perfect crunch and goo. Meanwhile, Pink Box's hefty Samoa knocked out Dunkin's candy-spiked Comet, and Fractured Prune's cakily crackalicious Coffee Cake beat Coco's blueberry cronut.



LA PAPAYA DELI (1)

Juice, paninis, and crepes, oh my! This spot is great for lunch or breakfast. The crepes are beautifully prepared, but for my money the smoothies and juices are what's worth showing up for.
3347 E. Russell Road,
lapapayadeli.com

GREAT BUNS BAKERY (2,3)

So much bread! You can't really sit and eat here, but you shouldn't pass on it. The pastries are mighty fine — I especially love the raspberry tart.
3270 E. Tropicana Ave.,
greatbunsbakery.com

TACO Y TACO (4,5)

Authentic Mexican cuisine with rich flavors. Street Foodie adores the al pastor, as you should, but for some really deep umami, try the vegetarian mushroom tacos — they are a beautiful thing.
3430 E. Tropicana Ave.,
702-331-3015

OLIVIA MINI MARKET (6,8)

This Cuban specialty shop hosts its own kitchen, which makes sandwiches with flavors from all around the world. But the perfection that is their little shot of super-sweet espresso made Street Foodie's heart sing (and then race) in a way that doesn't translate easily into words.
5725 S. Pecos Road,
702-487-6305

EL POLLO MOBILE (7,9)

This valley-wide chain of Mexican chicken joints does it right. The birds here have just the right amount of grill on them. The *huaraches* provide all of the meaty, creamy, spicy flavor Street Foodie can ask for in a dish.
3347 E. Russell Road #C,
elpollomobile.com

SILVER STATE DINER (10,11)

American fare with no frills, the way a diner should be. One of the more fulfilling breakfast sandwiches I've had lately is this joint's buttery conception of bread, bacon, and eggs. Despite the small staff, the service is personal, the way a diner should be.
3430 E. Tropicana Ave. #6,
702-444-0555

DINING | REVIEW

Temple of Carb

The bread at Esther's Kitchen is incredible, but save room: The rest of the menu is just as flavorful and fun

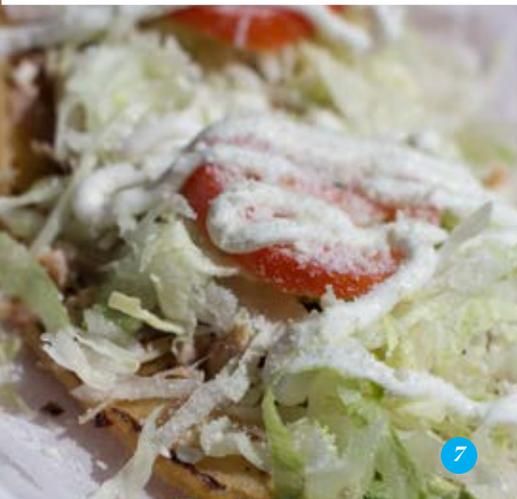
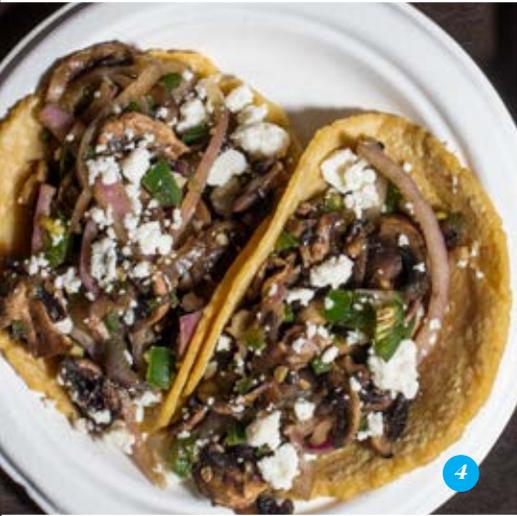
BY **Lissa Townsend Rodgers**

The Las Vegas Arts District has made its transition from arts district to Arts District. So went SoHo, so went DTLA and now goes 18b. Once a place of large spaces and low rents suitable for studios, galleries, and, well, artists, it's finally turning into what most cities recognize as an arts district: an area with atmospheric bars, unique boutiques, and hip restaurants.

So far, the area's been well-served in the first two categories, but is trying to catch up with the third. Thus, Esther's Kitchen and its merging of small plates with comfort food has been welcomed to the neighborhood with open arms and full tables. It's a sign of the changes in the neighborhood, and also in our city.

The space itself is stripped down, with a

Continued on P. 26



Taste the East Side

Street Foodie finds his own Flavortown around Pecos and Tropicana

PHOTOGRAPHY & CAPTIONS BY
Brent Holmes



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1130 S Casino Center Blvd.,
702-570-7864, estherslv.com

HOURS Tue-Sun, 5-11p

Continued from P. 24

reclaimed-wood wall and black-and-white photo mural, leaving the spotlight on the food. That focus takes the form of chef James Trees adding a last flourish of pecorino to a bowl of pasta or a dab of oil onto a plate of *crudo*. The diners themselves add to the flair — old friends catching up over Chianti and a cheese board, multi-generational families, third-date couples negotiating menu choices. It's bustling and noisy, but relaxed. As waiters in plaid shirts zip between tables, Robert Smith croons in the background about some pictures he's been looking at.

Like most Italian restaurants, Esther's Kitchen is a temple of carbs, with pasta, pizza, and bread. And that bread is to die for. The sourdough has a slightly charred, slightly crunchy crust with an interior that manages to have ethereal fluffiness and grain. It comes as a first course with butter, anchovy butter, or burrata. A toasted hunk is also served with their *polpette*, golfball-sized meatballs that come with a smear of basil-oiled ricotta and tomato sugo. You can blend the tastes and textures— piquant meatballs, rustic bread, sweet ricotta, acidic tomato.

The bread is also the basis for the house pizza crust, which is applied to a small, creative selection of pies. While the white pizza has its fans, my fave is the one topped with egg and bacon, another carefully balanced and blended dish. The slightly charred sourdough crust with creamy-sharp Fontina cheese, savory-sweet caramelized onions and a quail egg sunny sided-up onto each quarter — all the components harmonize like the Temptations. And, of course, the house-made pasta — cavatelli, agnolotti, fettuccine,

and the whole voluptuous bunch. *Cacio e pepe* is a simple dish, but that simplicity elevates it: The pecorino melts into the al dente pasta, the pepper goes things a bit. *Cavatelli* with sausage, rabe, and tomato has a bit more heft and a flavorful layering of green and meat and pasta.

Beyond bread and pasta, there are a number of vegetable dishes that change seasonally, such as Zucca flowers stuffed with ricotta — kind of like a stuffed pepper or squash blossom, lightly breaded, filled with warm cheese that oozes out with each bite. The lemon and pickled garlic that brighten up the parsnip risotto are intriguing but don't quite mingle and, ultimately, it doesn't have the plate-cleaning appeal of other items on the menu.

There are a few desserts, but don't screw around: Go straight for the Budino. It's best explained as Italian butterscotch pudding, but that truly does not do it justice. The butterscotch is part pudding-part mousse-part crema, rich and light at the same time, and is topped with a dollop of fresh whipped cream, a drizzle of caramel, and crunchy honeycomb. Do not share this. Get your own.

The cocktail program has a selection of classics like Manhattans and Negronis, as well as a changing list of market cocktails like the vodka-Amaro Bubbly Pino; plus, it's always nice to have a puff of smoked rosemary from the bar adding another layer to the many scents of the room. An extensive wine list gives each variety a three-word descriptor that's poetically evocative and prosaically helpful at the same time — a Pinot Noir is "rose petal, walnut, pomegranate," while a Sauvignon Blanc is "kiwi, coastal, tomato leaf."

Esther's Kitchen is a sign of how the Arts District has evolved, but also how dining in Las Vegas has evolved as well. Once upon a time, restaurants were swathed in wallpaper and draperies, filled with two- and four-tops of couples on a date night or conventioners on an expense account, tucking into each of their three designated courses. Today, most restaurants are designed along industrial-chic lines of painted walls, bare windows and tables that can seat a dozen, as well as menus that blur the distinction between appetizer, side, and entrée. With fewer Americans married than ever before, we're as likely to dine in packs as pairs; now that we're all foodies, we want to try more than the traditional meat and two veg — and let our companions try it, too. Esther's Kitchen may specialize in traditional dishes, but its new style isn't limited to what's on the plate. ♦

ROD STEWART

THE HITS.

JUNE 12 - 30

Cocktail
OF THE MONTH



BRAZILIAN NECKTIE
AT JAMMYLAND
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Typically, I put spicy cocktails in the same box as dessert cocktails — the one for novelties and sidebars. But Jammyland's Brazilian Necktie is a summer-worthy standard that's more than a mere trifle. Oh, it's certainly spicy, tingling with *cachaça* (think a sugar cane-based cousin to rum) infused with serrano and Anaheim chilis. But the rest of the drink — some citrus, some cucumber, some smoked sea salt and cracked pepper — contributes a balanced cooldown effect that will send you back for another sip.

Andrew Kiraly

COCKTAIL: BRENT HOLMES



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While author Amanda Skenandore has lived in Las Vegas for a decade, her debut novel, *Between Earth and Sky*, is quite remote from Sin City in time, setting, and subject. It unfolds before and just after the turn of the 20th century, amid the Native American boarding schools that most of us aren't aware existed — institutions that stripped indigenous people of their cultures and supposedly prepared them for integration into the white world, often with horrific results. In the book, Alma Mitchell, a white woman whose father ran one of these schools, is drawn into the murder trial of Askú, a Native American student she'd known as a child.

We recently talked to Skenandore about her novel, achieving historical accuracy, cultural appropriation, and the story's contemporary relevance.

So, what was the germ of the novel?

I was with my mother-in-law in Wisconsin, and we were on the Lac du Flambeau Reservation, in their casino, and they have these pictures on the wall of these Native American children in military garb. I asked her, What

Tragic History

Local novelist Amanda Skenandore explores the devastating consequences of a little-known aspect of America's past

BY **Scott Dickensheets**

is this? Why are these kids dressed this way? And she told me about the Native American boarding schools. That was something I had never heard about in school.

How did this story develop from there?

The idea of forbidden friendship and love was always in my mind. I was sort of formulating this story with an eye toward that. As I was researching, I watched a PBS special about the boarding schools, and they talked about (a Native American man) named 20 Horses who had attended Carlisle, probably the most well-known of all of these government-run boarding schools. He had come back to the reservation and lived there during the Wounded Knee massacre. A couple of days after the massacre, he shot one of the

Army officers and killed him. In the trial he was able to share with the courtroom that he had been at Carlisle and kind of robbed of his culture. So that when he came back home to the reservation he didn't fit in, and he didn't fit in the white world, either — which was the promise of the schools: *Come here and you'll just assimilate seamlessly into white culture.* And that wasn't the case.

His struggle really struck me, and I very loosely modeled one of my characters after his struggle. But the story, the teacher at the school, the characters — are all my imagining. They're all kids as they could have been.

How difficult was it to achieve historical accuracy?

I was lucky there. These schools were

set up in the late 1870s, and they operated in very much the same manner — with military-like drilling and marching — all the way to the 1930s. And so while there wasn't a lot of primary source material from the early days, there were memoirs and things from those later periods. There have been a couple of good nonfiction books written about these schools, so when you start to scratch the surface, I found there to be a fair amount of research available. Of course, there are always going to be holes where you just can't quite fill in all of the historical pieces. That's sort of where the fiction aspect of it takes over.

What draws you to historical fiction as opposed to more contemporary work?

When I was in high school we read *The Killer Angels*, a historical fiction about the Civil War. And I just love that it was able to bring that period out in a way that a textbook or an autobiography just never could for me. That's a great power of historical fiction.

And I think our history absolutely informs the present. It's terribly relevant today. You can see the effects of what happened with the Native American boarding schools, for example, with the loss of so many Native American languages — they weren't allowed to speak their languages at these schools. And so you have this generation of Americans who can't speak their language, and now so many of them are dead and dying.

You must have had a sense of the modern relevance of this topic; how much did that inform the way you wrote it?

Probably a great deal. I'm not Native American, but my mother-in-law, she's Ojibwe, my husband is Oneida. So in that way I have a close connection to their experiences. And she talks a lot about this idea of the historical trauma and how that continues to affect Native Americans today; my husband was up at Standing Rock last year. So it's very present in my life. And I wanted to make sure that that did come through in the novel.

One of the interesting things about this period is that there were definitely people who had just terrible, terrible ulterior motives, but, for example, the character of Alma's father, who runs the boarding school, his motives were quite altruistic. As wrong as he was, he really believed that what he was doing was the right thing for the Native American children and for the future of Native Americans. I was just drawn to that paradox of having altruistic intentions that ended having devastating consequences.

There's a lot of talk these days about whether it's permissible for people from one cultural background to write about people of another. Did that concern you? Did having Native American relatives mitigate that a little?

My connections with my relatives definitely helped make sure I was getting the perspective as close to realistic as possible, that I was getting some of those details right that we can miss if we come from one

particular cultural or ethnic or gendered kind of life. That's helped me navigate the novel and kept in my mind that I really wanted to do justice to these characters and their experiences. But that's the great power of art — it allows me, as the author, and hopefully the reader, to step into someone else's shoes, in the closest way that perhaps I, as a white woman, ever can, and see the world from their point of view. That's an important function that art has for society. ♦



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HIGHER GROUND

THREE MOUNT CHARLESTON HIKES TO ESCAPE THE HEAT

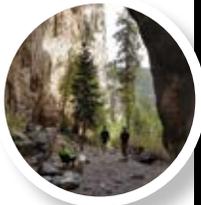
BRISTLECONE LOOP TRAIL

This cool hike is even cooler because it ends with an ice-cold brew. Lee Canyon's Bristlecone Loop Trail starts (and finishes) at the ski resort, making it the perfect destination for those with a thirst for the outdoors. Views along the trail are breathtaking, as are sightings of occasional wild horses — but the real highlights are Nevada's two official state trees: the singleleaf pinyon and the bristlecone pine.



FLETCHER PEAK

Just off the well-worn North Loop Trail, a stone's throw from The Raintree, is a one-mile spur trail to a panoramic peak that is shockingly undervisited. Fletcher Peak overlooks Kyle Canyon, Fletcher Canyon, and Deer Creek; and offers phenomenal views from Mummy Mountain to Griffith Peak. Pro tip: Most people stop at a rocky outcrop one hill short of the true peak. Fletcher's true highest point is surrounded in trees that block the view.



ROBBER'S ROOST

The best quarter-mile in Southern Nevada isn't at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, it's on Mt. Charleston, in a small canyon that gets its name from a group of probably-apocryphal horse thieves who were said to use this area as a hideout. This short but steep trail winds its way past a handful of small caves and large alcoves, eventually dead-ending at sheer limestone walls that are a haven for summer rock climbers.

Alan Gegax



Visual Art

ANDREW SCHOULTZ, IN PROCESS: EVERY MOVEMENT COUNTS

UNLV'S BARRICK MUSEUM

If you happen to be busting a move at the Winchester Cultural Center's newly arted-up skate park, you've gotten a taste of Schoultz's complex work. For those unable to shred, this gallery show is a perfectly suitable alternate way to experience his energetic mixes of high and low, with references to both illuminated manuscripts and life on the streets, punctuated with fantastical touches — beasts, eyes. **June 2-September 15** (reception at 5p, June 2), unlv.edu/barrickmuseum

Culture

JUNETEENTH

WEST LAS VEGAS LIBRARY

At once an annual recognition of the end of slavery and a celebration of African-American culture and potential, this two-day event will feature speakers, music, ideas, and inspiration. **1-4p, June 15; noon-5p June 16**, free, lvccld.org

T.S.O.L. in concert: The original gothcore punk outfit, T.S.O.L. has gone through lineup changes, musical identity crises, and legal hassles. Now it's back, including some original members, and geezing out the hard way. **6:30p, June 8, Brooklyn Bowl, \$22-\$25, brooklynbowl.com**

Literature

POETRY OF JAN STECKEL

CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY

A Harvard-trained doctor — pediatrics — Steckel’s poetry deals with “themes of both Jewish life and the experiences of a doctor working with underprivileged patients.” Which is to say, a wide and empathetic swath of what we call life. 2p, June 3, free, lvccld.org

LGBT

FAMILY PRIDE DAY

CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY

Families come in all possible configurations here in the 21st century, a fact acknowledged by Family Pride Day. Activities, talks, Drag Queen Storytime, and a teen drag queen competition all highlight an afternoon of celebrating who you are. 11a-4p, Clark County Library, free, lvccld.org

Fading Shadows, David Veliz: Nuanced drawn portraits from the hand of a local artist to watch. June 19-August 26 (opening reception 5:30p, June 19), Enterprise Library, lvccld.org

Music

DJANGOVEGAS!

HISTORIC FIFTH STREET SCHOOL

Celebrate the gypsy jazz tradition of Django Reinhardt with Hot Club of Las Vegas, The Black Market Trust and others. Perfect for a sultry summer evening. Play a little yourself? Join a 4p jam sesh before the 6p concert. June 16, \$20, lasvegasnevada.gov



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Back of House

Get behind the scenes with these free tours

The stillness is overwhelming, the lack of drama pervasive, the silence disturbed only by the voice of a docent. Above the orchestra pit of an empty Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, she quietly describes the stage's versatility and the theater's acoustical features. Absent the spectacle of the performance, the public can tour several spectacular Las Vegas venues. Learn how a show comes to life and feel like an insider with behind-the-scenes knowledge gleaned from these free experiences.

THE SMITH CENTER: *Hamilton* (through June 24) may be a tough ticket to score, but taking an hour-long tour is easy and educational. See all the ways the facility's architecture and décor pay homage to Hoover Dam, and find out why the Founders Room features irises and a sculpture of a hog. (Namesake Mary Smith, who died in 2010, was a fan of the blue iris flower and the Arkansas Razorbacks. Her husband, Fred W. Smith, died in April.) **Tours held periodically; thesmithcenter.com**



MYSTÈRE: Celebrating a quarter-century in Las Vegas in December, *Mystère* opens its doors weekly for the public to see cast members rehearse. Guests receive a special offer on tickets to see the show that started it all for Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas. **Treasure Island, 3-3:30 p.m. Saturdays**

THE BEATLES LOVE: In a stunning theater in a space that previously housed Siegfried & Roy, a weekly demonstration features technical elements such as staging, sound, projection, lighting, rigging, props, and the Grammy-winning soundtrack. **The Mirage, 1-1:30 p.m.**

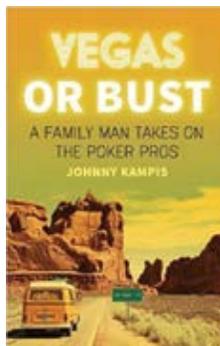
Fridays. To confirm Cirque's daily activity, call 702-352-0221

BELLAGIO CONSERVATORY & BOTANICAL GARDENS: A stroll through this seasonally themed Eden is free, of course, but you can ask questions of Mr. and Mrs. Green Thumb, members of the resort's horticulture team, to satisfy your curiosity: Just how many flowers are there? (Flowers are changed out weekly or biweekly for the duration of the display. In the Japanese Spring display through early June, more than 65,000 flowers were used.) **Bellagio, 10:30-11:30 a.m. daily**

BOOKS | **RANDOM EXCERPTS**

Vegas or Bust: A Family Man Takes on the Poker Pros

Sample passages from Johnny Kamps' tale of dragging his family to Vegas to pursue his World Series of Poker dream



Directly in front of me hung the banner of 2006 WSOP Main Event winner Jamie Gold, seemingly mocking me with his big smile as he draped his body over a mountain of bricks of wrapped \$100 bills, part of the \$12 million he won for first place, or \$11,983,507 more than I got for finishing 770th that year.

While the porn slappers are not allowed to give the cards to kids, many of the stripper cards end up littering the curbs and sidewalks of the Strip in full view of anyone of any age. One can imagine a 10-year-old with a three-ring binder full at home, attempting to complete his collection. "Hey, Timmy, trade you a Destiny for a Bambi?"

As expected, when I was seated at my table at the Venetian, I looked to be the youngest player there.

Unfortunately, a tight player with a sweet, grandmotherly look woke up with two kings in the big blind, pushed her own stack all in, and eliminated me from the Main Event.

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SOCIETY

HARD- WON HAVEN

For almost 20 years, the Las Vegas Lounge has been a safe place for the trans community — until a recent act of violence reminded them that safety is never a sure thing

BY **Michael Lyle**

Callie Lou-Bee Haywood is known for her love of shoes. Her friends never see her out without her wearing something with a heel. This particular February evening, she slid her feet into a pair of chocolate boots with six-inch heels before leaving her apartment for a night out.

As on many nights, she ended up at the Las Vegas Lounge. This was not uncommon. She not only performed there, but she frequently patronized the only bar in Las Vegas that appeals specifically to transgender customers.

The first bullet buzzed by her head at around 5 a.m., the exact moment she reached for her jacket. “Everyone just started to scream and run,” Haywood says.

An unidentified man had opened fire from outside, shattering the glass windows in the front and side of the bar. A bullet pierced Haywood’s left leg, through her boot. “I just remember laying there thinking I was dead,” she says. “It was so painful that you almost couldn’t feel it.”

The February 23 shooting barely regis-



STILL HEALING

Callie Lou-Bee Haywood, who was wounded in the Las Vegas Lounge shooting, is determined to defy her doctors’ prognosis and get back into her high heels soon.

tered in the media or the larger community.

The shooting is still an ongoing investigation. Though it’s undetermined whether this was a hate crime targeting the transgender patrons, many have reason to suspect it was. There were no deaths, but that night caused more damage than most people realize.

For starters, it wounded Haywood physically and emotionally. It also took something else. For almost 20 years, the Las Vegas Lounge has been the only real haven for many transgender patrons. Those who frequent it are still shaken, as the shooting served as a stark reminder of the obstacles and violence trans people have to deal with: higher rates of unemployment and homelessness, an increase in legislative “bathroom bills” targeting their ability to use public accommodations, the Trump Administration’s stance on trans people serving in the military. A rise in hate crimes makes it difficult for some to believe this wasn’t hate-motivated. In 2016, at least 23 transgender people (that we know of) were killed in the United States. That number increased to 28 in 2017, plus, of course,

hundreds around the globe. “When people tell me being transgender is a choice, it makes my blood boil,” says Jennifer Hallie, general manager of the Las Vegas Lounge. “Let me dispel that myth. Who would choose to become essentially unemployable and potentially become alienated from their entire family? Nobody makes that choice.”

Las Vegas Lounge sits on the outskirts of the Commercial Center District — that’s the Trans Pride Flag (two blue stripes, two pink stripes, and a white one in the middle) hanging outside the door. Inside, the space is deceptively big, with a scattering of high-top tables in front of the U-shaped bar. Like so many other local establishments, video poker machines are embedded along the counter space of the bar. But unlike most places, the lounge also features a small stage on which transgender drag performers entertain the audience with performances featuring songs from favored pop princesses and divas.

Whether or not it was the intention when the bar opened 19 years ago (the original owner couldn’t be reached for an interview), Las Vegas Lounge became a place where

transgender people could escape a world that mistreated them, where they could hang out with one another. Employees and customers have been coming to the bar for years.

“I didn’t really know any other trans women,” Hallie says. She began to transition when she was 17 and came to the bar when she was 22, after it had been open for a few months. Working in the beauty industry, her primary interactions were with gay men. She heard through the grapevine that the lounge would be a spot specifically for transgender people. It wasn’t long before she started working there, too. “I remember making the joke about wanting to work there,” she says. By the next day, her offhand comment to the owner turned into an employment opportunity. She became a go-go dancer. Hallie liked dancing, but she really wanted to be a bartender. After one of the girls was fired in 2006, she started the next night.

For years she has worked alongside Morgan Hipkins, who’s been employed at the bar almost since it opened. “I also said I wanted to be a dancer,” she says. “The manager told me the dress code was a thong and pasties. I already had a thong on, so he handed me some pasties and I started right then.”

Hipkins has lived in Las Vegas for 35 years, since she was 18. Prior to it being the Las Vegas Lounge, she had come to the space in its previous incarnations as a restaurant, a bar, and another bar before finally the Las Vegas Lounge stuck.

During her first 10 months, Hipkins just go-go danced. When a bartending job opened, like Hallie, she began serving. “I still would dance, though,” she says. Some nights, she would work a dancing shift for four hours, change and then work behind the bar another four.

On their nights off, at some point in the evening they would end up at the Las Vegas Lounge, even if it was for one last drink before going home. “We essentially lived here,” Hallie says.

Eventually, the Las Vegas Lounge got rid of go-go dancers, but now features performers such as Haywood. She remembers when she first started hanging out at the bar about five years ago. “It wasn’t as friendly back then,” she says. She went a few times, but then gave up after continued rude service. “I remember one time the air went out during the summer and they didn’t replace it for months,” Hipkins says.

At one point, having had enough of a particular manager, Hallie quit. That’s when she learned firsthand how hard it can be for a trans woman to find employment. “I



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applied for 75 jobs and got three call backs,” Hallie said. “Two of them, when they figured out where I had my experience from, all of a sudden I didn’t pass a background check.” Only one interviewer was honest about not hiring her. “He said, ‘I’ve had some dealings with trans women before, and you guys can sometimes bring an unwanted element,’” Hallie says. That’s why Hipkins didn’t leave the lounge: “There was always a fear you wouldn’t be able to find anything else.” Hallie eventually came back in 2015. She helped the current owner purchase the place and turn it around. That also meant bringing back clients like Haywood.

No matter the changes and the faces that would come and go and come back again, one thing remained constant. “For that generation, this was the place you could come to build confidence,” Hallie says. “I was able to learn so much from the older girls at the bar.” Over the years, it was home for a lot of people. “It means a lot for them to have a place to come and be themselves and not be harassed or feel threatened,” Hipkins says.

Though Las Vegas Lounge doesn’t have many jobs to offer, for some it was the only

place that would hire transgender people. Hallie says she’ll hire more if she can. “Even today as we create more laws (to protect trans people from employment discrimination) it’s not being enforced,” she adds.

The lounge hasn’t been without incident. Hipkins still has a scar on her temple from the time a rowdy customer failed to get her attention and chucked a glass over the counter at her. Patrons wrestled the man to the ground, the police were called, and the man was arrested.

But, Hallie says, there had never been anything like the shooting. During the gunfire, one of the employees called Hallie, who was asleep at the time. “She just kept saying, ‘Jen, they’re shooting at us,’” she says.

Hallie made the 25-minute drive to the bar. When she walked through the doors, not an hour after the shooting, she wasn’t prepared for the scene. Shattered glass covered the floor. Bullet holes were scattered along the walls and the mirror behind the stage. Her staff, and remaining customers, visibly shaken, were back in the pool room waiting for the police to interview them. “(One of the workers) who I’ve known

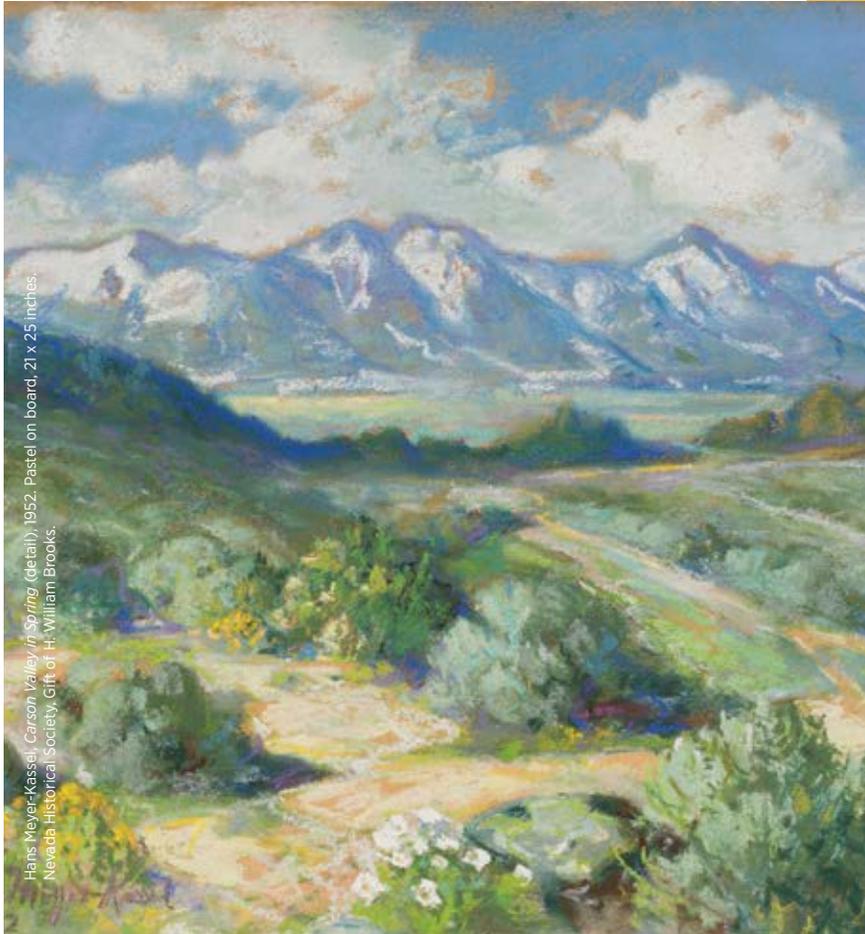
20 plus years, I didn’t even recognize her because I was in shock when I walked in,” Hallie says. “I knew what had happened, but to walk in to see it, I was not prepared.”

In all her years there, her bar — in some sense her home — had never looked like that. “That’s why it was so unnerving,” she says. “This was a safe space for us. We won’t give that up.”

Las Vegas Lounge was back in business the day of the shooting. Hallie got the windows fixed, sealed the holes in the wall, and cleaned the carpet all in a few hours. Because there was so little media coverage, most customers that night didn’t know what had happened.

In the days after the shooting, Hallie says, a lot of misinformation went around, from the number of people shot to rumors of altercations beforehand. “People would ask, ‘Did someone do something to piss (the suspect) off?’” Hipkins says. “We didn’t do anything to cause this. All we did was exist.”

Months later, there is still a bullet hole in one of the signs in the back. Otherwise, the only thing that remains is the trauma caused by the shooting.



Hans Meyer-Kassel, Carson Valley in Spring (detail), 1952. Pastel on board, 21 x 25 inches. Nevada Historical Society, Gift of H. William Brooks.

HANS MEYER-KASSEL Artist of Nevada

→ through September 2

From the Ruby Mountains to Lake Tahoe, artist Hans Meyer-Kassel (1872-1952) aimed to capture the scenic beauty of northern Nevada through his impressionistic paintings.

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Part of the healing process means making Las Vegas Lounge feel secure again. "This was a safe space for us. We won't give that up," says General Manager Jennifer Hallie.

Hallie still tears up talking about it. At one point, someone walked by the window, causing her to jump and turn around quickly. Remnants like that will linger for a while.

"Two months and six days," Haywood says one April afternoon. On her left foot, a high-heeled shoe has been replaced with a gray leg brace. If the PTSD or nonstop nightmares weren't enough of a reminder, the cast and steel rod in her leg fill in the gaps.

She has gone back to Las Vegas Lounge twice. The first time was less than two weeks later, when the lounge hosted a benefit for her medical and living expenses.

It's not just the pain in her leg bothering Haywood. Everything about the shooting has been hurtful. For one, being a dancer wasn't just about making money. "Dancing was always an outlet for me, and I don't have that anymore," she says. She had to move out of her third-floor apartment because it was too hard to get up the stairs.

Haywood says she even faced mistreatment from healthcare professionals because she was trans. According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality, about 30 percent of participants reported postponing medical care when sick or injured because of discrimination. Another 20 percent reported refusal of care, something that was reported higher among transgender people of color. Haywood is worried about how she will heal because of her encounters with medical professionals.

If that wasn't enough, Haywood says the response, or lack thereof, from the LGBT community is frustrating. "The (equal rights) movement was built on the backs of

trans people," she says. "And now, the LGB part of the community mostly ignores us." She adds that other gay bars didn't reach out to offer support. (Hallie says The Phoenix did host a fundraiser.)

It still bothers Haywood that she doesn't know who did this or why. "I want justice," she says. "Not just from the man who did this, but from the medical physicians who didn't care for me."

If there is any silver lining, Hallie says, it's what transpired afterward. For workers at the bar, that night is a reminder of the work the trans community still needs to do. In the aftermath, Hallie says she's been reaching out to other organizations, both trans-specific or larger LGBT nonprofits. In the past, trans people, especially those who come to the bar, have been isolated from the larger queer community. Hallie hopes this might change that. "There is a lot of healing that needs to be done in our communities," Hipkins says.

Since the shooting, Hallie has had some people from the queer and trans communities come in to pass out literature on anything from how to go about changing gender markers on documents to simple "know your rights" pamphlets. Haywood hopes this shows people, especially those in the queer community, just what's at stake for people who are transgender.

Haywood continues the long road to recovery, mentally and emotionally. The doctors told her she wouldn't wear those heels again. She is determined to prove them wrong. "There is power in every step," she says. ♦

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SIXTH ANNUAL

FOCUS ON NEVADA

photo contest



The boardroom where we screen and judge the photos for “Focus on Nevada” never fails to turn into a paaaaar-tay of oohing, aahing and other bespoke exclamations of delight. Our sixth annual contest was no exception: The more than 1,200 entries inspired awe, amusement and more than a few eruptions of “How’d they get that shot?!” Thanks to all the photographers who entered. It was the most fun we’ve ever had making really hard decisions.

And congratulations to the winners on the pages that follow — not just for taking some amazing snaps, but for broadening and refreshing our shared vision of the state we call home.





JUDGES

MARK ANDREWS
photographer

CHRIS BROWN
art director

NIKKI CORDA
Nevada Women's Film Festival

SCOTT DICKENSHEETS
Desert Companion

PATRICK DUFFY
Nevada School of the Arts

DWAYNE ESHENBAUGH
Novus Architecture

LEILA FADEL
NPR correspondent

RONI FIELDS-MOONEN
food stylist

STACIE FRAZIER
photographer

DEBORAH HARRIS
Nevada Women's March

ALLY HAYNES-HAMBLEN
Office of Cultural Affairs

CHRIS HEERS
musician

BRIAN HENRY
artist

BRENT HOLMES
Desert Companion

JENN HUNTER
Atomic Style Lounge

ANDREW KIRALY
Desert Companion

DANIEL KROHMER
chef

HEIDI KYSER
Desert Companion

ALEXANDRIA LE
Notes with a Purpose

SCOTT LIEN
Desert Companion

MARGO MARTIN
College of Southern Nevada

JERRY METELLUS
photographer

RICK MOONEN
chef

KATIE O'NEILL
Art Museum at Symphony Park

SABIN ORR
photographer

KATHY POWELL
Atomic Testing Museum

TINA QUIGLEY
Regional Transportation Commission

ANDREA ROA
Las Vegas Lights FC

TIM ROGERS
stylist

ROBIN SLONINA
Skin City Body Painting

CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Desert Companion

DEREK STONEBARGER
ReBar

DANETTE TULL
Nevada Film Office

ERICA VITAL-LAZARE
Vital Communications

HONORABLE MENTIONS

TOP ROW: Hugh Byrne (Amateur/student), Glenn Larsen (Semi-professional), Irene Yee (Semi-professional), Renzo Gabriel (Semi-professional) **SECOND ROW:** Dakota Smith (Amateur/student), Norm Halm (Semi-professional) **THIRD ROW:** Harlean Hudson Hansen (Semi-professional), Henry Presha (Professional), Justin Kelly (Amateur/student) **BOTTOM ROW:** BeeLee Young (Amateur/student), Matt Kuehl (Semi-professional), John Wright (Semi-professional)

ARTISTIC & ABSTRACT

1st Place

BRIAN RODRIGUEZ
SEMI-PROFESSIONAL



Honorable Mention

ALLAN DUFF
AMATEUR/STUDENT



2nd Place

CHUCK JONES
SEMI-PROFESSIONAL





1st Place
FERNANDO LOPEZ
PROFESSIONAL

2nd Place
ERIK RICARDO
PROFESSIONAL



FACES



Honorable Mention
CHRIS PFLUM
AMATEUR/STUDENT

Honorable Mention
DEWEY FARMER
SEMI-PROFESSIONAL



FOCUS ON NEVADA

NEVADA AT WORK & PLAY

2nd Place
DALE HURT
AMATEUR/STUDENT

1st Place
JONATHAN BOARINI
AMATEUR/STUDENT





1st Place
SANTI-JOSE ACOSTA
SEMI-PROFESSIONAL



2nd Place
SUE BEAUCHAMP
AMATEUR/STUDENT



Honorable Mention
MATT CARR
PROFESSIONAL



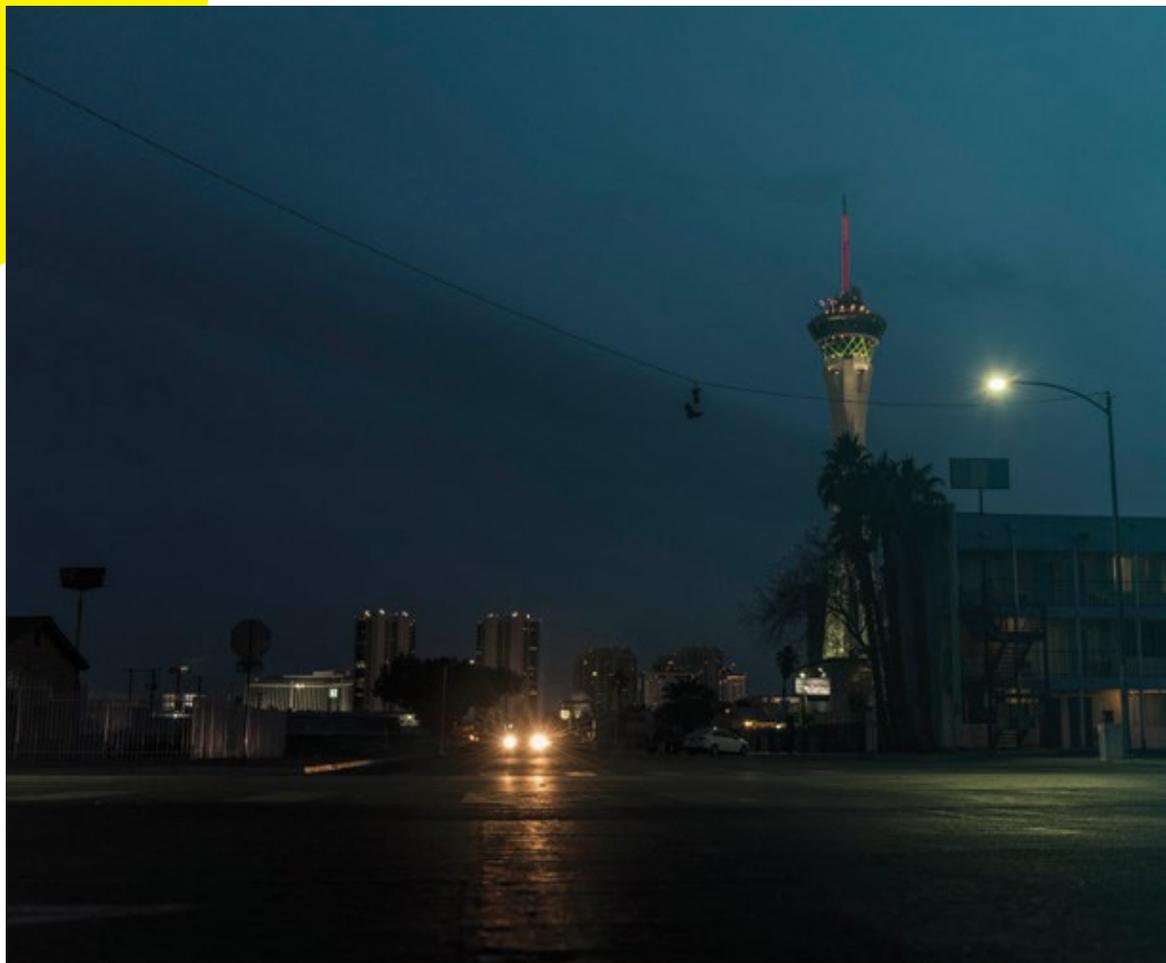
Honorable Mention
ARMAND THOMAS
AMATEUR/STUDENT



LANDSCAPE

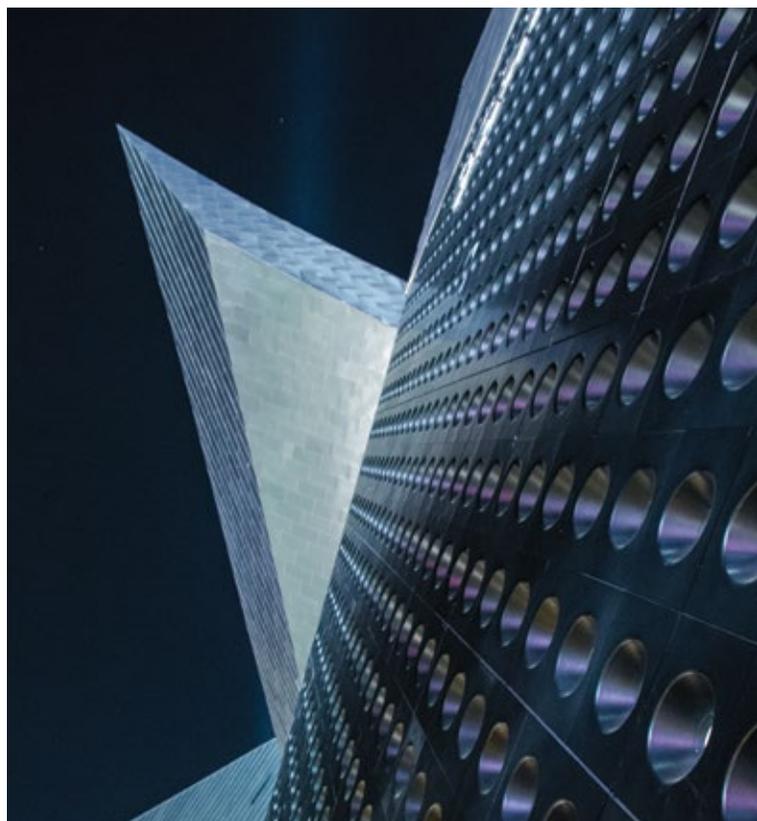
PLACES & ARCHITECTURE

1st Place
CARLOS MANZO
AMATEUR/STUDENT



Honorable Mention
NORMAN CRAFT
AMATEUR/STUDENT

2nd Place
KEITH MCDONALD
AMATEUR/STUDENT



Honorable Mention
SETH COHEN
AMATEUR/STUDENT



2nd Place
SHEREE JENSEN
SEMI-PROFESSIONAL



1st Place
COURTNEY CARROLL
AMATEUR/STUDENT



PLANTS & ANIMALS

GRAND PRIZE





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ONE TEAM, ONE CITY

FOR A BROKEN-HEARTED CITY, THE VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS' UNPRECEDENTED SEASON WAS JUST WHAT WE NEEDED, JUST WHEN WE NEEDED IT

We were all looking for something to nudge reality to the side — something to pull us from the depths of emotional despair, even for a little while. Five days had passed since a madman turned a joyous outdoor country music festival into an unspeakable nightmare, one that left 58 dead, 851 wounded, and an entire city scarred.

During those five days, we held on tight as the emotional roller coaster twisted past the requisite checkpoints of tragedy: shock, disbelief, grief, rage. We desperately needed a distraction. It would come some 1,200 miles away in Dallas, Texas, where on the night of October 6, the first major professional sports franchise in our city's history was making its debut — our Vegas Golden Knights against the Dallas Stars.

Very few of us knew much about the group of castoffs that composed the National Hockey League's newest roster — hell, let's be honest, few of us knew much about hockey, period. One thing we did know, however, was that our Knights were going to lose. A lot. Just like every single expansion team that came before it.

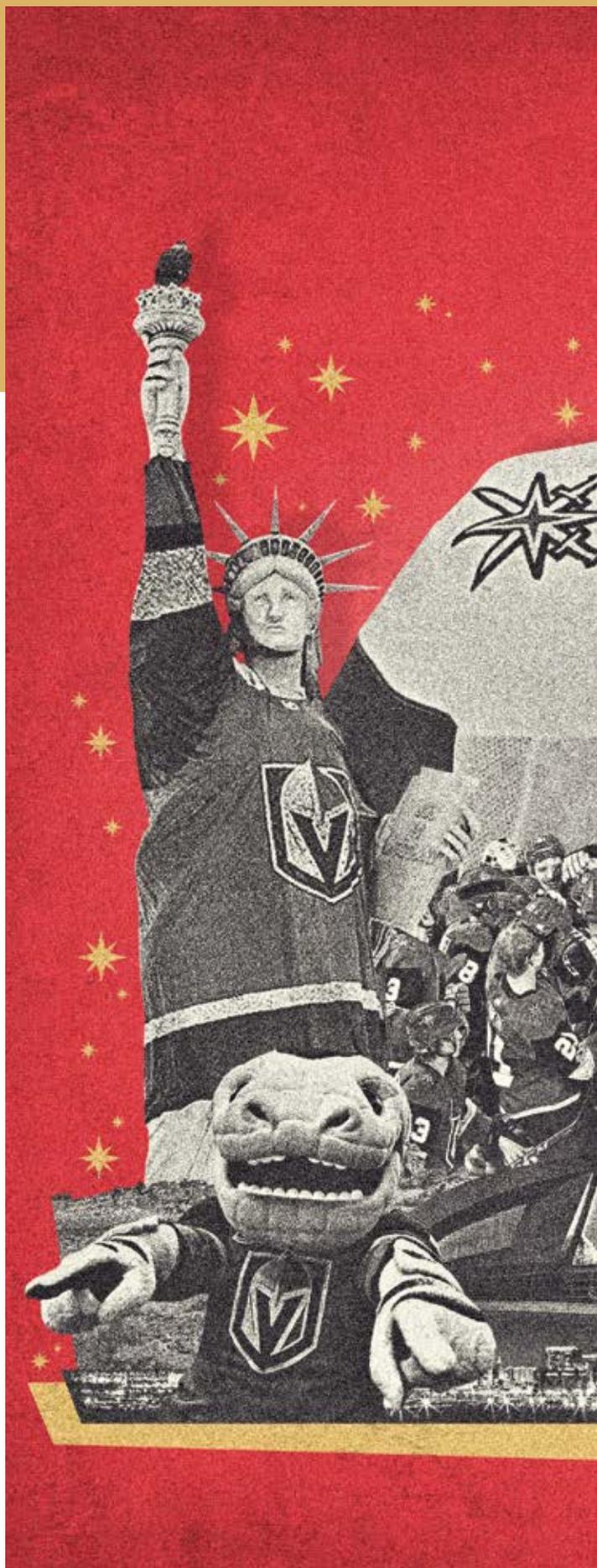
Yet even as we understood this truth, we thought the same thing that night: *Obviously, victories are going to be scarce this inaugural season. But wouldn't it be awesome — given all that we've been through this week— if the Knights won this first game? Sure would give the city a reason to smile again.*

And smile we did when veteran forward James Neal scored two third-period goals to flip the Knights' 1-0 deficit into a 2-1 victory. A second 2-1 victory (this one in overtime) followed the next night in Phoenix, part of an 8-1 start for the new kids on the NHL block. In all, the Knights would rack up 51 regular-season victories, each one more ridiculously improbable than the last. Then came the playoffs, when the ridiculous turned into the sublime: 12 wins in 15 tries, a Western Conference championship, and a berth in the Stanley Cup finals.

In T-Mobile Arena, in the City National Arena practice facility, and in bars all across the valley, jersey-clad Southern Nevadans — many of us fresh converts to the sport — have enjoyed a front-row seat on this most improbable journey. A journey that, at press time, was four victories away from ending with a raucous parade down the very same boulevard that, just eight months ago, was the site of unimaginable horror.

Yes, to the rest of the sports world, the 2017-18 Vegas Golden Knights will be remembered for being *the* greatest expansion team — and arguably *the* greatest story — in the history of pro sports. But to those of us who call this place home, they will be remembered for so much more. For being a source of civic pride that hasn't been seen in these parts since the heyday of Jerry Tarkanian's Runnin' Rebels. For giving us an opportunity to display our passion. For confirming once and for all that we indeed are a "real city."

And, most importantly, for bringing an entire community together at a time when we needed it most. **Matt Jacob**







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KNOW
THIS**



W O M A N

Behind Michele Fiore's gun-toting, straight-talking persona, there's a method to her madness. And a clue to political success in an era when none of the old rules apply.

BY HEIDI KYSER





EIGHT DAYS AFTER THE SCHOOL

shooting in Parkland, Florida, Michele Fiore lay in a dentist's chair getting a checkup for her Invisalign braces. As a dental hygienist cleaned the city councilwoman's teeth, Republican operative Dave McGowan came in and stood a few feet away. He joked about the joy of seeing Fiore speechless, and then went through their to-do list. The politician and her campaign manager had arranged to meet there because Nevada's ethics code discourages elected officials from conducting campaign business in their public offices, and because Fiore's schedule is so tightly packed that she often multitasks.

McGowan spoke in general terms, so I was more or less clueless as to what he was talking about. Until, that is, he grumbled about "this stuff that's going on in Florida" and the actions of some nameless "he" that was "pissing (McGowan) off." This was probably a reference to President Trump, who had responded to brewing public discontent over the high rate of American gun violence — voiced, loudly, in the aftermath of Parkland by well-organized students — with not only NRA-approved proposals, such as arming teachers and beefing up campus security, but also some gun-control ideas, such as banning bump stocks and increasing the minimum age for buying certain weapons. I took McGowan to be pro-gun. Fiore is, of course, though she didn't say anything at the time, her mouth being occupied by dental tools.

That she was willing to let a journalist listen in on such a conversation, in such intimate circumstances, hints at the complexities that emerge from close observation of this oft-caricatured politician. The more one gets to know Fiore, the less surprising it is that such a reputed bully would put herself in so vulnerable a position. Fiore's six years of public service, as a two-term state assemblywoman and now a member of the Las Vegas City Council, have earned her a rep as a gun-toting, militia-loving barnstormer who believes cancer is a fungus and it's all right to call people of color "colored." Yet that image somehow squares with her alter-ego: loyal friend, nurturing mother, woman of the people.

On the way out of the dentist's office, the hygienist gave her a hug and said, "Keep working for us! I'm so excited you're on (the City Council). It needed some shaking up!"

Fiore is shorter than she appears on TV. She is meticulously groomed. Even after

half an hour in the dentist's chair, her black dress was unrumpled, her makeup perfect, and there wasn't a hair out of place in her big blond 'do. Her fingernails were lacquered fiery red, with the ring-finger nail of each hand sporting an extra coat of sparkles.

Walking to her car, she asked me what kind of food I like, and, after the standard brief Q&A about my vegetarianism (*Do you eat fish? cheese?*), she moved on to other topics. I was surprised when, 20 minutes later, we pulled up to Market Grille Café, a mom-and-pop Greek place that she frequents in her district. As we'd chatted in the car about our past failed marriages and her youthful desire to have 10 children, she was concurrently thinking of the right place to take me for lunch. Inside the cafe, she sat next to me — rather than across from me — and for the first several minutes fretted about whether the menu's meat-free options would satisfy my needs, slipping seamlessly into the mama persona of her Italian heritage.

Midway through the hummus and pita, I steered the conversation back to guns. She shared with me her belief that mass shootings are caused by psychotropic drugs, or medication for mental-health conditions. I asked her to clarify: She thought people committed mass shootings because they were on psych meds? "I don't think it," she said, arching one dark eyebrow for emphasis, "I know it." She promised to send me information backing up the claim.

Several weeks later, Fiore's 28-year-old daughter, Sheena Siegel, who is also an executive assistant in Fiore's consulting business, Politically Off the Wall, sent me several links. One was to a Church of Scientology-founded website, Citizens Commission on Human Rights of Florida, whose self-described mission is "investigating and exposing psychiatric violations of human rights." Another was a 2014 YouTube video by conspiracy theorist James Corbett titled "Medicated to Death: SSRIs and Mass Killings," which claimed that five mass shooters, from Kip Kinkel through Ivan Lopez, were on anti-depressants when they carried out their crimes. A second YouTube video featured a psychiatrist discussing her concerns about anti-depressant use for work focus (but said nothing about mass shooters). The only peer-reviewed article, from the journal *Psychiatry*, surveyed the available literature to determine whether a relationship exists between mental illness and violence, and if so, what its nature is — but again, no specific link between mass shooters and psychotropic drugs.

Two *Desert Companion* interns and I

searched but found no academic research or scientific studies establishing that link either. Fiore's assertion seemed to be based on, at best, a correlation between mental illness and violent crime and, at worst, a crackpot theory — reinforced either way by the confirmation bias of someone who's generally against restricting access to guns. The evidence points to a similar conclusion about her belief that cancer can be treated by flushing a patient's body with a sodium bicarbonate solution, a belief she brought up while we were talking about her support of so-called "right to try" legislation, which allows sick patients to use alternative therapies without running afoul of the law. In each case, she backed up (or undermined, depending on your perspective) a rather mainstream position on a personal right — to carry a gun, or to or see a naturopath when you're sick — with a fringe idea. This tug-of-war between reason and extremism, with individual freedom at the center of the rope, is a hallmark Fiore trait.

* * * * *

The Parkland shooting came up again when

I interviewed Tick Segerblom, whose time as a state senator overlapped with Fiore's as a state assemblywoman. I asked him to categorize Fiore. Is she a Barbara Vucanovich? A Sharron Angle? Something else? Segerblom offered his personal experience with Fiore flouting the Republican caucus to support two of his pet bills (legalizing medical marijuana and reforming sentences for sex offenders) as evidence that she's someone who stands by her convictions and keeps her word, even if it's unpopular to do so. She is, he said, "a political player," not a litmus-test voter à la Angle.

But wait. What about her obsession with guns? Segerblom said that would be a problem if she were running for a federal office, but in her current position, which has little to do with gun laws, it doesn't matter. He also noted that Fiore had kept a low profile following the mass shootings that had happened since her election to the City Council in June 2017.

She talked about this when I met her at her high-ceilinged, sunny Centennial Hills home for a sit-down interview. Two days earlier, hundreds of local students had walked out of classrooms to mark the one-month anniversary of the Parkland shooting and to protest elected officials' inaction on gun control. Sitting at a project-strewn dining room table in flip-flops, jeans and a "Vegas Strong" sweatshirt, Fiore told me how surprised CSN students had been when

she spoke to them earlier in the week and voiced support for the protest movement:

They need to exercise that (their right to free speech). Whether we agree with their agenda or we don't, we want them to know it's okay to protest. It's okay. And it enables them and it makes them like, "I can do this." And they have a cause. Whether the cause is against what I believe or not, it's just exciting to see the youth, our next leaders in life, participating and getting fired up about an issue.

She went on to say that she had told a Channel 13 reporter the same thing in a 30-minute-long interview. She had also shared with that reporter her theory about psychotropic drugs causing mass shootings and her preference for arming teachers and security guards over restricting gun rights. When the reporter asked Fiore to elaborate on this point, she said, "You don't bring a knife to a gun fight. You don't bring a body to a gunfight. You bring a gun to a gunfight," and that was the soundbite that aired. The editing irritated Fiore; she told me the anecdote to illustrate how the news media excerpts her most inflammatory comments without providing context or including her other ideas. This, she says, is why she's seen as a gun nut.

Yet Fiore herself has thrown a lot of fuel on that fire. Consider her 2015 Christmas card, which featured a glossy family photo of her, her mother, her two daughters, and their husbands, all smiling, dressed in jeans and matching red T-shirts ... and holding semi-automatic rifles. In the photo, Fiore's children also hold three of her grandchildren; a fourth, Jake (age 5 at the time), stands on his own, toting a Walther P22. She followed up the Christmas card with a 2016 Second Amendment calendar, a wall hanging featuring pinup-style portraits of Fiore with a different weapon each month, from a Mossberg 590 for January — self-defense awareness month — to a SCAR (special operations combat AR) Heavy for June — campus safety month.

And sometimes full interviews, not selective excerpts, include Fiore's most controversial statements. For instance, there was her 2016 sit-down with political journalist Steve Sebelius, in which she said that she would shoot a law-enforcement officer to save herself, drawing an angry response from the state trade association for public safety officers:

Once you point your firearm at me, I'm sorry, then it becomes self-defense. Whether you're a stranger, a bad guy, or an officer, and



you point your gun at me, and you're gonna shoot me, and I have to decide whether it's my life or your life, I choose my life.

So, you can be forgiven for thinking of Fiore as a female Yosemite Sam. She wears a necklace with a Smith & Wesson 8-shot revolver pendant. On the bar in her City Hall office is a 3-foot-tall glass tequila bottle shaped like a machine gun. In her free time, she's developing a perfume that she plans to sell in gun-shaped vials, and designing a dress-boot line with pockets for stowing gun magazines.

"I love high heels and carrying guns," she told me. Her laugh rang with the *What can I say?* of her native Brooklyn dialect.

So, in addition to the Michele who says she'd shoot a cop in self-defense, there's another Michele, who's having fun at her critics' expense. And then there's the mama bear, that Michele who first had a gun put in her hands at 9 years old by her own single mom, and who says she'd do anything for her kids.

"We had a meeting one night with a donor and friend," recalls Victoria Seaman, Fiore's friend and fellow politician, "and we were supposed to meet at Paymon's. She called and said, 'The meeting is moved to my daughter's house; I have to take care of her kids.' ... Michele's family comes first."

Of the Channel 13 interview, Fiore also said, "The reporter asked, 'Well, you have



five grandkids. Would you be okay if your grandchildren's teacher had a gun?" And I told them I'd pay top dollar if I could get my kids in a totally secured environment. Are you kidding?" Fiore's love of guns is an expression of her maternal instinct, not a contradiction to it.

* * * * *

On the steps outside Fiore's office, on March 24, several progressive organizations staged a rally against gun violence. It was the first national, organized manifestation of the movement sparked by the Parkland kids a month earlier. As one Las Vegas student after another took the stage and vowed to vote out public officials who do nothing to protect them, I imagined Fiore looking out her seventh floor window at the plaza below, filled with citizens chanting, "Enough is enough!" But she wasn't there. She was in



CIVIC SAVVY

Whether she's doing the administrative work of City Council business or attending community events, Fiore seems to relish retail politics.

Washington, D.C., where, incidentally, she went four times during the two months I reported this story.

It made me wonder if the day was coming when Tick Segerblom and Fiore's other liberal "friends" would be forced to oppose her, when she'd leave the municipal realm, where her Second Amendment views can be overlooked, for the federal realm, where she would have power to shape gun laws. I wondered what was next for the mama bear with questionable backup for some of her beliefs and considerable populist appeal among her constituents.



MICHELE FIORE WAS BORN AND RAISED in Brooklyn, New York, by a lesbian mom who now heads Democrats for Fiore, a casual group of senior-citizen women. At 16, Michele fronted a rock band, Times Square, in New York, but left the music scene after she had her first daughter at 19. This experience was the basis for her self-made 2006 feature film, *Siren*, about a middle-aged empty-nester who gets guff from her family and friends when she hits the road in pursuit of her lifelong dream to sing in a band. Fiore has been married twice, but at 47 is, as she says, "single on purpose."

Fiore's reverence for tradition manifests itself as girliness. She redecorated her City Hall office in powder pink and pearlescent white, and has an affinity for glitter, satin, and designer accessories. She had the orig-

inal paintings from the city's modern art collection removed from the waiting area outside her office and replaced with large black-and-white celebrity photo prints from what she calls "classic Vegas" (the Rat Pack era). She has a personal stylist come to her home twice a month to blow out her hair, which she's been having cut every five weeks by the same woman for 20 years. She calls her granddaughters "grand-princesses." She's against allowing girls into the Boy Scouts, which, nevertheless, started last month.

As for her politics, Fiore describes herself as independent/Libertarian, but doesn't belong to the Libertarian Party because, she says, "it's just not formidable in the state of Nevada." Her libertarianism is reflected in her signature issues, which have to do with personal freedoms; besides the right to bear arms and try alternative medicine, she believes people should be able to marry whomever they want, and to smoke marijuana or get an abortion if they want (although she's against these last two personally). This may help to explain her success in Nevada, which is ranked ninth in the nation for gun ownership, is one of 10 states to legalize recreational pot, and leans pro-choice. According to the Secretary of State's most recent data, 27 percent of voters identified themselves as neither Democrat nor Republican, but "independent," "Libertarian," or "nonpartisan."

Prior to the City Council, which is officially nonpartisan, she ran and served as a Republican (another 33 percent of Nevada voters), and her campaign promises align with bread-and-butter conservative issues: reducing crime, lowering taxes, eliminating

laws that hamper private-sector growth, holding government accountable for taxpayer dollars, that kind of thing. These are the ideals that motivated Fiore to get into politics to begin with, as she tells it. In 2010, inspired by the passage of a tiered modified business tax law that negatively affected her home-healthcare company, she planned to run for state office. But party leaders talked her into making an ill-fated bid for Democrat Shelley Berkeley's seat in Congress. Two years later, she went with her original plan, winning Nevada Assembly District 4.

"I only went for Assembly because I just didn't know what the heck my own party was doing," she says. "Like, why are they making more regulations, and why are they making it harder for business? So I went up (to Carson City) thinking, *I don't care if I get reelected or not, but I'm going to talk to these politicians about what us nonpoliticians think they're doing wrong.*"

The thing that Fiore herself seems to most want people to know about her is: She works hard. Twice, she described herself as a "workaholic," and after shadowing her for 10 hours on a February day that she described as typical, I had to tap out. Her official duties would continue for another three hours.

That day started at 7 a.m. with the YM-CA's annual fundraising breakfast. Fiore — credited with keeping the Centennial Hills Community Center operating contract with the Y after her predecessor, Steve Ross, had proposed giving it to the city — shared a table with a smattering of business, nonprofit, and union executives, as well as Richard McArthur, a Republican who both preceded and succeeded her in the state Assembly. Before taking her seat, Fiore mingled with attendees. North Las Vegas Mayor John Lee asked her what it was like to be the prettiest woman there, and, upon learning I'm a journalist, informed me that Fiore is "hot," as in, her political career is on fire. She complimented him on his State of the City address. An evidently nervous constituent, Paul Harbauer, approached Fiore to pitch his idea for a motocross facility in her ward, No. 6. After hearing him out, she called over her assistant to set up a meeting with Harbauer. She explained that she and Clark County Commissioners from adjacent precincts have been hatching a plan for a sports complex, and that Harbauer's idea might fit into it. He walked away with a look of gratitude and wonder.

Throughout the day, I was frequently told how accessible Fiore is, how involved in the community. During a morning meeting to review a construction project in her district,

former Nevada Governor and U.S. Senator Richard Bryan, a Democrat, told me that “she’s always so easy to get an appointment with.” At an afternoon informational session on human trafficking, presented by an FBI agent and a federal judge, Fiore pointed out that she was the only elected official to show up, though all were invited.

She’s also proud of the activities that she organizes in her ward. Beyond the city’s standard slate of coffees with the mayor and movies in the park, Fiore uses money she raises, either through her Future for Nevadans PAC or campaign funds, to produce her own events. Twice a month, she spends the afternoon at her Centennial Hills YMCA satellite office for Mondays with Michele, an open house where constituents can talk to her about anything they like. Once a month, she invites several thousand randomly selected Ward 6 residents (regardless of political party, she says) to her house for a pasta dinner; usually, around a hundred people show up. In March she also produced an ice cream social for seniors, with an educational presentation on Nevada’s guardianship laws, and a family Easter egg hunt. In April, there was a spring fair with a focus on child foster care and adoption. According to what other City Council members posted online and sent out in their newsletters, only Stavros Anthony is as active in his community as Fiore is in hers. The others do less outreach.

At the first Monday with Michele that I went to, she told me, “Like twice a week, I will call people who I will call ‘in the political game’ — lobbyists, people that write checks — and I’ll say, ‘Hey, I’m doing these events, and I need some sponsors. Can you write me, you know, a \$500 check or a \$1,000 check or a \$5,000 check?’ I’m not shy about asking people for money, because I’m going to treat my folks fabulous. And we do.”

“She solicits input from her constituents,” says C.T. Wang, who’s lived in Ward 6 for more than 20 years and has attended several of Fiore’s events. “What I love about her is, she gives me a straight answer. She doesn’t try to be political or equivocate; she just says what she thinks.”

A seasoned political observer might chalk this up to Fiore’s having to prove her mettle in municipal politics. “I thought it was interesting for her to go to City Council, where the issues are very different (from the state Legislature),” UNLV History Professor Michael Green, a seasoned political observer, says. In order to function, he adds, the small governing body has to work in close quarters and find middle ground, but it also has a more satisfying policy metabolism: “They’re not simply legislating and then having to wait



POL POSITION
Fiore says her current focus is helping like-minded candidates get elected in 2018.

until the next biennium to find out what’s going on,” Green says. “You can do something and actually see the results. If you’re a good retail politician, it can be a lot more fun that way.”

Retail politics is also a form of incumbent campaigning. While bomb-throwers grab Carson City headlines, local representatives succeed when they get potholes filled. In the time I spent at Mondays with Michele, constituents complained about Republic Services’ weekly trash pick-up reduction, a Wahoo Fish Tacos (with gaming and a bar) opening too close to a preschool, a lingering construction project at Farm and Durango, and feuding in-laws making fake code-enforcement calls.

Fiore invited people to come in, have something to eat, join her in the ring of overstuffed armchairs and sofas she had set up for this purpose. She listened to every story, asked questions, took notes, and offered solutions and referrals. She remembered people’s first names.

“As the mom of Ward 6, I have to look at what’s good for all my kids,” she told one visitor.

* * * * *

Fiore’s current den mother persona is a far cry from that of her time in the state Assembly, where she fell more into the bomb-thrower column. With Democrats holding majorities in both the Assembly and Senate, Republicans had their work cut out for them in the 2013 Legislature, Fiore’s first. But that didn’t prevent her from making a name for herself, recalls Andrew Doughman, who covered that session for

the *Las Vegas Sun*.

“In some ways, Fiore was with the caucus, and in other ways, she was a bit of a maverick,” Doughman says. “As I recall, she was pretty outspoken about same-sex marriage, in favor of it, whereas virtually all her colleagues on the Republican side opposed it. She was also fairly outspoken about medical marijuana, and without her vote, it wouldn’t have passed. ... But the big bill she was pushing was the campus-carry bill.” It would have allowed students with concealed weapons permits to carry guns on Nevada’s college and university campuses.

That bill didn’t pass, but Fiore championed it again in the 2015 session, when Republicans controlled both state houses, and much of the political drama that Fiore became known for took place. She was elected majority leader and head of the taxation committee — only to have both positions quickly snatched away. She was stripped of her tax committee chair after news reports that her home-healthcare businesses had \$1 million in tax liens filed against it. A February *New York Times* story about her campus-carry bill quoted her as saying, “If these young, hot little girls on campus have a firearm, I wonder how many men will want to assault them. The sexual assaults that are occurring would go down once these sexual predators get a bullet in their head.” During an April floor debate on her proposal to increase local control over federal lands, Fiore barked at Republican colleague Chris Edwards, “Could you just sit your ass down and be quiet.” (She later apologized.) And in May, she stormed out of a session, slamming the door behind her, after Assembly Speaker John Hambrick denied her request for a roll-call vote on the campus-carry bill. (It later died in a senate committee.)

THE PRACTICAL PARTISAN

Ben Botkin, who wrote about Fiore while covering politics for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* in 2015-16, says, “Fiore is the sort of character who might be underestimated by her opponents, because of the things she gets press for — the (Second Amendment) calendar, storming out of the Assembly ... but beneath that, there’s a deeper political savvy that goes unnoticed and doesn’t get as much attention. That’s probably what helped propel her through the assembly and now City Council.”

Her bravado might be overcompensation for institutional sexism. “Women politicians — not just in Nevada — are always held to a different standard, unfairly,” Green says. “There is something to be said for the idea that a woman politician may have had to be a bit more provocative, because the boys playing in the sandbox weren’t going to let her in that easily. That may have been something she intuitively grasped or was told, or just knew, and acted on.”

Flouting established norms for acceptable behavior comes straight out of the populist playbook favored by Tea Party Republicans like Ted Cruz, whose 2016 presidential campaign Fiore helped to lead in Nevada. Whereas freshman legislators traditionally kept their mouths shut and heads down until they’d learned the ropes, she came out guns blazing, so to speak. “People who are fed up with the status quo are willing to take a chance on someone who’s willing to ruffle feathers and take on the establishment,” Botkin says. People like Fiore’s dental assistant, who said she was happy to see her candidate join a city council that “needed some shaking up.”

Sticking to her guns also lends Fiore an air of authenticity. Political consultant Ronni Council, who worked mainly on Democratic campaigns before taking Fiore on as a client in 2012, says: “People portray Michele as a politician out to get attention, and it’s the exact opposite. She’s not saying things to get press. I agree that she sometimes speaks off the cuff and says things that other people disagree with. It’s not always great, but she’s not doing it to get attention; she’s just saying what she really thinks. So she’ll never take it back.”

This is one of several traits that separate Fiore from President Donald Trump. She’s often been compared to him, most notably in a 2016 *Politico* profile. That piece focused on Fiore’s and Trump’s common willingness to flirt with fringe groups (anti-public lands militias in Fiore’s case, white supremacists in Trump’s) as a means of burnishing their populist cred. That similarity exists — more on that below — along with others; both are

brash New Yorkers who got their start in the private sector, and both have run businesses that got into trouble with the IRS. But there are differences too. A notable one is that, unlike Trump — who is for DACA one week and against it the next, isn’t going to cut Medicaid pre-election, then cuts it by 25 percent in office — Fiore sticks to her positions.

“I think young people did think she was kind of out there, especially about guns,” Doughman says. “But she came out with one opinion and has been consistent with it. Some people thought she was just kooky, but there’s a method to her madness, a libertarian outspokenness. She has these ideas with a libertarian bent, and she just says them repeatedly, and for some reason they resonate. She keeps getting elected, so it’s working.”

Fiore herself alludes to this when talking about her friend Victoria Seaman’s 2014 run for Nevada Assembly. “Her (Seaman’s) enemies will use pictures of her and I with guns against her, right?” Fiore says. “Yeah, okay, great. You know, it helps her, I guess, because she got elected when they were using it.” (Seaman was subsequently defeated in a state senate race, and dropped out of a Congressional race when Danny Tarkanian entered it in April.) She keeps a framed copy of the photo in question in her office. In it, she and Seaman, dressed in matching designer jeans and black tops and holding semi-automatic rifles, tilt their heads toward one another affectionately.

“You can get a lot of attention by making provocative statements, but then what happens when the rubber hits the road?” Green asks. “What happens is, if you then don’t vote it, then you’re automatically going to be considered nothing but a big mouth who makes a lot of noise but doesn’t follow through. Love her or hate her, Fiore follows through. She believes what she believes.”

* * * * *

Fiore’s modus operandi has made her transition to municipal politics rough at times, despite her knack for retail politics. Consider her successful drive, last fall, to repeal an anti-puppy mill ordinance that the City Council had passed two years earlier. Fiore’s rationale — that people who want to buy and sell specific breeds of dog shouldn’t be prevented from doing so, as long as they’re not breaking any existing abuse, cruelty, or neglect laws — fulfilled her campaign promises to “eliminate laws that hinder economic growth and job creation” and “limit the damaging effects of state

→ **2010** In Fiore’s first foray into politics, she runs for Nevada’s First Congressional District in 2010, losing in the Republican primary to Kenneth A. Wegner, receiving 22 percent of the vote to his 27 percent.

→ **2012** Running for Clark County Assembly District 4, Fiore wins 53 percent of the vote to beat Kenneth Evans.

→ **2013** Fiore stands out as the only Republican in the Assembly to vote in favor of both legalizing medical-marijuana dispensaries and the authorizing same-sex marriage in Nevada. Both bills pass.

→ **2014** Now the incumbent in Assembly District 4, Fiore wins with 62 percent in general election, beating Jeff Hinton.

→ **2015** In February, Fiore sponsors AB 148, which permits concealed carry on college campuses. The bill ultimately dies in a Senate committee.

→ **2016** Shifting gears, Fiore runs for Nevada’s Third Congressional District, losing the Republican primary to Danny Tarkanian. She receives 18 percent of the vote, behind Tarkanian’s 32 percent and Michael Roberson’s 24 percent.

→ **2017** Pulling back to a smaller scale, Fiore runs for Las Vegas City Council in Ward 6. She beats Kelli Ross in the general election, 51 to 49 percent.

Jakub Cernoch

regulations upon the private sector,” because the ordinance would have caused two pet shops, including one in her district, to close. But animal rights advocates, who spent years working on the legislation meant to curb demand from inhumane breeding operations outside the city’s purview, were blindsided by what they saw as the heartless handiwork of Cruella de Vil. Dozens of them protested the repeal at the November City Council meeting where it passed in a 4-3 vote.

On the other hand, yard-to-table hipsters found their savior in Fiore in March, when she tweaked an existing law and made it possible to keep backyard chickens in Las Vegas under certain circumstances. Whether constituents embrace Fiore's commitment to safeguarding personal freedoms may depend less on their political affiliation than on how the freedoms in question operate in their day-to-day lives. Some people will undoubtedly be for backyard chickens and against puppy mills, just as others will be for gun rights and against same-sex marriage.

This ideological conundrum evokes Bob Beers. He made a transition similar to Fiore's, from state government firebrand to city government team player, a transition that Jon Ralston described in the October 2013 issue of *Desert Companion*. Since that story's publication, however, Beers lost his run for City Council reelection to political newcomer Steve Seroka. Observers blamed Beers' loss on his position on a golf course development adjacent to the Queensridge community, a position that had been as true to his convictions and as unwavering as Fiore's on the puppy mill ordinance. The Beers-Fiore comparison raises the question:

How long can an uncompromising politician survive at the local level? Or perhaps, like Trump, Fiore is destined for a bigger stage.

"With Carolyn Goodman running for re-election, I'm her biggest cheerleader, and her number one endorser. So I would like to help get her re-elected," she told me. "Once we get through that hurdle, then I'll reassess where I am: Am I staying on the council? Am I going to look at the mayorship after the mayor does her 12 years? Yeah. But, you know, it's like a chess game. I can't tell you where I'm going to look at next because I just don't know if we're making strides in the city. Like, I spent a lot of time and money going back and forth to D.C. working on BLM issues with our federal delegation. And now I'm on two very important boards, so I'm going to D.C. again next Friday for Workforce Connections ..." (A digression into Workforce Connections ensued.)

In other words, a run for higher office is not off the table, which raises another comparison of Fiore to a famous former politician: Sarah Palin. During the time we talked at her home, Fiore took a call from U.S. Senator Dean Heller, showed me phone pictures of herself with U.S. Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto, and said she'd attended an Israeli American Council gala at "Sheldon's" house the night before, adding, "That's high level stuff." Fiore says her team has big plans for her. But for now, she insists, she loves her job on the City Council, and she's focusing on getting like-minded candidates elected in the 2018 midterms.

To that end, in mid-January, Fiore hosted one of her pasta dinners for Heller (unlike those she does in her capacity as city councilwoman, this one was organized through her PAC). Around 200 people showed up at her house to eat penne ala vodka, make donations, and ask the senator questions. They filed through the buffet set up on her kitchen island and sat around tables chitchatting, as Republican notables from Michael McDonald to Michael Roberson roamed the party anxiously. Fiore, meanwhile, played roving hostess, pointing people to more seating and desserts, bouncing toddlers while commiserating with parents about local education's shortcomings, and carrying cases of water from her storage shed to refill coolers in the kitchen.

Embracing Fiore for a photo op in her living room at the end of the evening, Heller thanked her for everything she's doing for Nevadans, and for him.



IN ONE OF SIREN'S PIVOTAL SCENES, the main character, Storm Fagan (played by Fiore), stands in her bra and underwear in front of a full-length mirror, poking at rolls of fat around her waist and shaking her head in disgust. In the preceding scenes, Storm had suffered a series of rejections at band auditions and agent meetings, where she was told she was too old, too plain, or otherwise not right for the part. In subsequent scenes, Storm takes up running, loses weight, transforms her stringy brown hair into a blond pouf, and puts together her own band, auditioning musicians in a room decorated with a Rosie the Riveter poster. Feminists may be tempted to see this interlude as a woman bucking the patriarchy and seizing her inherent power, but Fiore doesn't exactly embrace feminism. In one conversation we had the day I shadowed her, we debated the merits of #MeToo. She told me that she thought that the famous actresses who championed the movement were making fools of themselves.

Michele: So I'll tell you, as a female,



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one thing I can say about myself and some other females that I know is, when you piss us off, we get a little frustrated. Frustration with a female will motivate you. Like, if I'm frustrated, I get motivated, period. Now, you anger me, now I'm driven, right? So, um, and that's how I got involved with the world of politics.

Heidi: So, I'm going to bring that back to something that you said when I saw you at Mondays with Michele a few weeks ago.

Michele: Yeah.

Heidi: It was that Monday right after the women's march on Sunday.

Michele: Yep.

Heidi: And I think you said something like these women are making fools of themselves with the #MeToo movement and the march?

Michele: Yes, yes.

Heidi: So how is that different, because I think what they're expressing is anger like the anger that you're talking about.

Michele: Yes.

Heidi: So how does that make them foolish?

Michele: When someone attacks you. You need to fix it now.

Heidi: Okay.

Michele: Do you understand? Like you need to fix that right now. Don't wait 30 years. Okay. Don't sleep with some jack-off named Weinstein, get a few Emmys, and then go "Oh, by the way ..."

Heidi: So that's the #MeToo movement?

Michele: Yeah.

Heidi: So you don't feel that, I mean — their argument is that they felt they couldn't do anything about it, they were powerless.

Michele: Really? They were powerless? After one Emmy after another? I mean they're still powerless? At what point did they feel powerful?

Heidi: What about the women who reported it and then nothing happened?

Michele: Shame on the authorities. Shame on the authorities.

Heidi: But you would support them.

Michele: Oh, without a doubt. Without — let me tell you something, my kids, my daughters, they knew. (She tells me about how she taught her daughters to tell her everything that happens to them, and how she would pay back anyone who harmed them.)

Heidi: So what I'm hearing is, it's not that you don't believe these women. It's just that

you think that they waited too long to do something about it?

Michele: Especially after they've come to power. How powerful is it for Angelina Jolie or for Ashley Judd to make a movie to become a superstar and say, "You know what Harvey, what you did was wrong"? Do you understand, right now? Right now. But no, they wait until it's popular? That makes it really unpopular with me.

Heidi: What about all of the women who don't have power like the ...

Michele: They need to tell right now.

Heidi: ...like the thousands or millions of women who, you know, did the #MeToo on Twitter basically saying, this happened to me, this happened to me, and this happened to me. Like these are not famous people, right?

Michele: Let me tell you something, where there's a will there's a way, and you find your inner strength as a woman, you know? I guess growing up in Brooklyn, my family saw it differently.

Heidi: But the girls weren't asking for it.

Michele: I understand, so what I'm saying is, if these girls — they have to fight back, period. You have to fight back, Heidi. If

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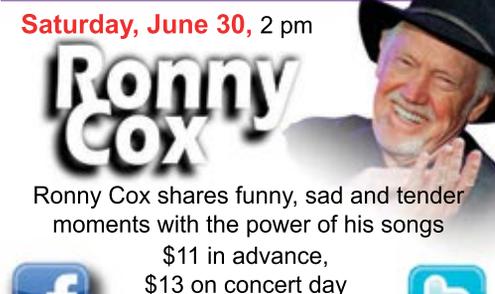
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someone touched you inappropriately, even to this day I mean, I don't know how old you are, but if you remember someone touching you when you were eight or nine, right? And if that man is still alive, you need to go pay him a visit and touch him back quite hard. Do you understand?

So, setting aside the feminist interpretation of *Siren*, the message of the striking underwear scene seems to be that Storm's success in her desired field relies on her ability to pull off a certain look. Zooming out, one could argue that the movie itself accomplishes that for Fiore, allowing her to reinvent herself as a movie writer, director, and star. With full control of the script, she reclaims the story of her abandoned music career and turns it into a feel-good cliché.

"*Siren* is about living your dreams at 47, 50," Fiore says. "It's about continuing on and not letting the naysayers get in your way. You just do it a different way. You just, you know, you write your own story, and you draw your own map."

One person who's spent a lot of time thinking about Fiore believes this is key to her psyche. Journalist John Sepulvado says, "More than anything, she understands narrative. She made a movie about herself. She came to Nevada from the East Coast, and she's reimagined herself as a modern-day Annie Oakley type of figure who rides high and clears brush and kicks butt."

Sepulvado's assessment is based on his years covering the Bundy family — from their 2014 standoff with the BLM in Mesquite to their 2016 occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside Burns, Oregon — first with Nevada Public Radio (where he and I were colleagues) and then with Oregon Public Broadcasting (he's now at KQED in San Francisco). Fiore played a part in both Bundy crises, and her close relationship with the family has shaped her attitude toward public lands, which can be seen in her Assembly bills to transfer jurisdiction of some federal land to the state of Nevada, and her belief that, as she wrote in her January newsletter, there is "BLM land that really should be designated to our great city."

Fiore's involvement in the 2014 standoff was mainly one of moral support. Her best-known moment may be an interview she gave to MSNBC's Chris Hayes, which liberals may remember for her implication that immigrants crossing the border are terrorists. As Fiore saw it, however, she schooled Hayes on government overreach by pointing out that the BLM could have imposed liens on Bundy's cows as punishment for his unpaid

grazing fees, rather than showing up with guns to confiscate his property.

Wearing a jean jacket, a breeze blowing her hair, and standing in front of a field where Bundy supporters were having a celebratory picnic, Fiore said, "Chris, do you want them coming to your house pointing guns at your wife and children? Is that okay with you? Because it's definitely not okay with me. It's not okay with Americans across the United States." (Bundy opponents counter that the BLM was armed because officers felt threatened by the dozens of militia members who camped out at the Bundy ranch, looking for a fight.)

Today, Fiore says that she went out to Mesquite because Bundy supporters repeatedly begged her to do so. She went expecting to shine a flashlight under the bed, so to speak, and reassure them that there was no government bogeyman hiding there. But what she saw once she got to the ranch, she says, changed her mind:

We had a taced-up BLM pointing guns at American folks on horses. That's the image why people came. People are not going to come because you have a lien on your property. People are not going to come because you're not paying your bills. People are not coming for that. People came because the federal government was slaughtering cattle and pointing guns at Americans. That's the only reason why people from across America went to Bunkerville, period. And unfortunately saying that out loud is not popular, Heidi. It's not popular.

* * * * *

This narrative of citizen victimization by government resurfaced at Malheur. After a month at the bird sanctuary in the bitter cold, the occupation began to unravel. Law enforcement officials arrested four of the main organizers, including Cliven's sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy, while they were driving to a community meeting, and one of them, Robert "LeVoy" Finicum, was killed in the confrontation. Four holdouts remained at the sanctuary for two more weeks, their nerves fraying. One man, David Fry, was suicidal. Based on the Bundy family's relationship with Fiore, they asked that she come to Oregon and negotiate their surrender, which she did. They didn't trust anyone else.

Fiore was later characterized as a knight in shining armor who swept in and cleaned up the mess. The *Washington Post's* article "Getting to Hallelujah: The frantic final hours of the Oregon refuge occupation," described

her as the hero who kept anyone else from dying. The *New York Times* called her the “calm peacemaker in the final hours of an occupation that had captivated the nation.”

But Sepulvado says these portrayals miss an important part of the picture: Fiore’s involvement in the Malheur occupation from the beginning. He wrote a story for Oregon Public Broadcasting two months after the crisis ended detailing the role played by a group of state lawmakers called the Coalition of Western States, or COWS. Within a week after the occupation started, COWS members, including Fiore, had a 90-minute meeting with local law enforcement and the FBI. COWS offered to negotiate on the occupiers’ behalf, but law enforcement declined and, instead, asked COWS to stay out of the conflict lest they embolden the occupiers. COWS went to the refuge to show their support for the occupiers anyway.

In a recording of the COWS-FBI meeting, Fiore can be heard saying, “The BLM has become a bureaucratic agency of, basically, terrorism, and they have taken land from your citizens. So at what point do we band together as elected officials and say, ‘Enough is enough’ to the BLM? So, can we divert this conversation? At what point are we actually going to do something for our citizens?”

In his story, Sepulvado suggests what he believes to be COWS’ true motivation: “Fiore worked with FBI agents to help end the standoff without bloodshed. Part of that motivation was for Ammon Bundy, who she described as family. But Fiore also knew that a bloody end could hurt the political advancement of COWS and the coalition’s efforts to take what had once been fringe ideas into the mainstream of the Republican party.”

Fiore told me her affiliation with the Bundys has only hurt her. “I have saved in a box my campaign literature where people were mailing out literature saying, ‘Assemblywoman supports welfare rancher,’ you know? I mean, they used that against me in every way, they used it hard in this (City Council) race, very hard.”

Nevertheless, Fiore won that race. She also won reelection to the Nevada Assembly, seven months after the Mesquite standoff, with 62 percent of the vote. She says she has no regrets and that she didn’t do it for any personal gain, but, rather, to protect the rights of “your Average Joe Blow American, period.”

Her involvement with the Bundys reveals a key piece of Fiore’s political strategy, which, as the *Politico* profile notes, she has in common with Trump: media savvy.

“It’s different now, at all levels,” UNLV’s

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Michael Green says. "It's not just the nature of (public) office that has changed, but also, between 24/7 news and the internet, there's a lot of time to fill. Fiore had a good sense of how fill it."

Both the *R-J's* Ben Botkin and the *Sun's* Andrew Doughman recall that, unlike other state representatives, who would ditch reporters by ducking into bathrooms or closed offices, Fiore, when she was in the Nevada Assembly, always had an open door, even after they'd written negative stories about her. She stressed to me several times that she welcomes conversation with anyone, from the press or public, whether they agree with her or not.

But she has also learned how to leverage reporters' craving for access. She's known to avoid Jon Ralston, whom she feels has been unfair to her, and she told me that, after the post-Parkland-shooting interview with the reporter who excerpted her knife-to-a-gunfight comment, she would no longer meet with Channel 13. At the same time, she was extraordinarily accommodating for this story, which I told her at the outset was envisioned as a lengthy feature.

And, as *Siren* demonstrates, she's not

afraid to shock her audience, if that's what it takes to make the desired impact. The countless examples of her stunning quotes in the press are certainly due at least as much to her own calculation (and the strength of her convictions) as they are to her being, as she described it to me, unfairly edited.

"Sometimes it's one particular issue on politics, where there's no room to compromise. It just matters deeply to them," Green says. "Some of it may be for show, and I'm not saying she did this, but Andrew Jackson, whose name has come up a little more often recently, would occasionally throw a tantrum at Congress when they weren't doing exactly what he wanted, and they'd say, 'Oh, we better calm him down and do it.' He knew what he was doing. There was a reason for what he did. It may be Fiore having an entertainment-oriented background, but there are some things she does for show. The problem is, when you do that, can you be taken seriously? When you want to be taken seriously? That may be the struggle she's having now. And winning."

When she was speaking at CSN in March, Fiore said, a student asked her what she would do if she ran for re-election and

lost. She says she told him, "Well, if you've been listening, I have a great life. I have two great kids that have given me five beautiful grandkids. I want 10. I have dogs. I have companies. I do stuff. So, if I didn't have to do this job, I'd fill it with another one. If I weren't reelected, I wouldn't let any grass grow under my feet."

But for today, her political future looks bright. It's no wonder she's currently investing most of her political energy in the 2018 midterms, since they may go a long way toward deciding her own fate. Will outsider mavericks, such as gubernatorial candidate Adam Laxalt, replace more moderate conservatives like Governor Brian Sandoval? Will Fiore's "150-percent" support of Trump remain intact if the people he endorses lose? In 2019 and beyond, in a state whose electorate gets bluer and more urban with each election cycle, will a populist candidate with cow-country appeal still be relevant?

If not, Michele Fiore will undoubtedly write a new role for herself. ♦

Jacob Lasky and Jakub Cernoch contributed reporting to this story.

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University of Nevada Press

Abracadabra begins with Mark Goodson, a seemingly well-adjusted married man, disappearing during a magic act. It falls to a former professional football player, Elko Wells, to uncover the far darker story of Mark's marriage and family and weave together a story at once compelling and true. Magicians and misdirection, gambling, down-on-one's-luck, the crazed sense of possibility and impossibility, mistaken identity, impersonators and body doubles, people acting bizarrely with all sorts of chaos, collisions, and overlaps thrown in for good measure. The twists this plot takes are all but impossible to anticipate. Reading *Abracadabra* is deliciously magical.

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69 The Guide



ART

THROUGH JUNE 10 Nevada Watercolor Society Spring Show

This exhibit showcases works by outstanding local watercolorists exploring still lifes, abstracts, portraits, and landscapes. Free for members or with general admission. **Big Springs Gallery at Springs Preserve, springspreserve.org**

THROUGH JUNE 15 6th Annual Desert Companion Photo Showcase Exhibition

The final showing of the winning photography published in the June 2017 issue that toured throughout Southern Nevada. **Free. Mayor's Gallery at Historic Fifth Street School, 401 S. Fourth St., artslasvegas.org**

THROUGH AUG. 31 Hearts4Vegas Touring Exhibition

A traveling healing exhibition of items collected from friends, family, and loved ones, memorializing the losses from the tragic Oct. 1, 2017 mass shooting. **Free. Durango Hills YMCA, 3521 N. Durango Hills Drive, artslasvegas.org**

THROUGH DEC. 16

VESSEL: Ceramics of Ancient West Mexico

The exhibition is organized by shape; visitors are invited to contemplate how the form of each vessel informs both practical use and communicates ideas of power, identity, and belief. **Free. Barrick Museum of Art at UNLV, unlv.edu**

JUNE 5–AUG. 12

Les Folies Bergère: Entertaining Las Vegas One Rhinestone at a Time

This photo and costume exhibit explores the beauty, artistry, and extravagance of the legendary show, which arrived at the Tropicana in December 1959 from Paris, France. **Free. West Charleston Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 7–AUG. 19

Wet is Wild: Water Stories

Jim Atha's abstract photographs encourage viewers to notice the shapes, patterns, and colors found in nature. **Free. Spring Valley Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 19–AUG. 28

Fading Shadows
Artist David Veliz's black and white portrait drawings examine light

and personality. Reception June 19, 5:40P. **Free. Enterprise Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 22–SEPT. 30

Microscopic Beauty of Fruits and Vegetables

Local artist Robert Belliveau discovered that microscopic crystals formed in the juices squeezed from fruits and vegetables self-organize into abstract designs. Free for members or with paid general admission. **Origen Museum at Springs Preserve, springspreserve.org**



MUSIC

JUNE 6

The Divine Divas of Song

The show will feature songs from some of the most celebrated divas in American music history including Ella Fitzgerald, Diana Ross, Barbra Streisand, Céline Dion, Carole King, and many more. **7P, \$20. Star-bright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com**

JUNE 6

Shades of Blues in America

Acclaimed guitarist Joey Leone combines his years on the road with his love of blues for a show featuring songs, stories, and history. **7P, free. (Other dates and venues available.) Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 7

Giada Valenti – From Venice with Love

The Italian songstress has



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The Guide

appeared on PBS, and her current show features hits of the past 50 years. **8P, \$35-\$55. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com**

JUNE 8 T.S.O.L.

True Sounds of Liberty was one of the original L.A. hardcore punk bands. They will be joined by Guttermouth, Guilty By Association, N. E. Last Words, and Last Rites. **18+ only. 6:30P, \$22-\$25. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 8

Elvis in Concert: Long Live the King

Matt Lewis is known as the "Best of the Best" Elvis impersonator. He will be joined by the Memphis Mafia Players. **7P, free. West Charleston Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 8-10

La Cenerentola (Cinderella)

Opera Las Vegas presents Rossini's rendition of the beloved fairytale. **Fri 7:30P, Sun 2P, \$55-\$75. Judy Bayley Theatre at UNLV, unlv.edu**

JUNE 10

Folias Flute and Guitar Duo

Andrew Bergeron and Carmen Maret are performers, composers, educators, and entrepreneurs from Grand Rapids, Michigan. **2P, free. (Other dates and venues available.) Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 10

To Elvis, Engelbert, and Tom: Thanks

For Everything!

The popular Vegas entertainer Tony Arias presents his tribute to the greats. Proceeds benefit the Gateway Arts Foundation. **2P, \$20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com**

JUNE 10

Ray

A tribute to Ray Charles, featuring film clips, photos, and rare stories about the musical legend. Proceeds benefit the Musical Arts Scholarship Program. **2P, \$45. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com**

JUNE 14

Nonpoint and Butcher Babies

This part of the Kings and Queens Tour also features Islander and Sumo Cyco. **5:30P, \$22-\$25. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 15

New Found Glory

The Florida-based pop-punk band will be joined by Bayside, The Movielife, and William Ryan Key. **18+ only. 6:30P, \$26-\$30. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 15-16

Paula Cole

The renowned singer of "I Don't Want to Wait" and "Where Have All the Cowboys Gone" delves into jazz and folk on her latest tour. **7P, \$39-\$59. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com**

JUNE 16

Blue October and Kitten

The chart-topping band will take the stage with new music from their latest album. Kitten is known for frontwoman Chloe Chaidez. **18+ only. 7P, \$29.50-\$49.50. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 17

Something Old, Something New, Something Chosen by YOU

The Nevada Chamber Orchestra will perform a surprise piece from the audience request forms at the end of the show. **3P, free. Summerlin Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 17

Songs for the Asking ... The Music of Simon and Garfunkel

Entertainers Kenny Davidsen and Dennis Blair recreate the hits and harmonies of the '60s duo. **3P, \$20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com**

JUNE 22

Francesca Anderegg in Concert

Violinist Anderegg will deliver an impassioned concert of classical music. **Free. Rainbow Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 22

Dru Hill

The Baltimore-based vocal group will perform their R&B hits. **18+ only. 7P, \$35-\$50. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 23

M Town & More

Gregg Austin and Second Wind perform classic

Motown hits. **7P, \$20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com**

JUNE 24

Las Vegas Brass Band: Festival Music

Closing their season, the 28-piece British-style brass band will perform marches, polkas, and popular melodies. **2P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 24

The Swing It! Girls in Concert

Three sisters will perform timeless boogie-woogie hits in the style of a USO show. **3P, free. Summerlin Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 24

Katchafire

The New Zealand reggae band will bring their classic sound to the stage. **18+ only. 7:30P, \$25-\$27. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, brooklynbowl.com**

JUNE 29

Michelle Johnson — Salute to Singer-Songwriters

This show features songs by luminaries such as Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, and many others. **8P, \$22-\$40. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, thesmithcenter.com**

JUNE 30

Josh Keating

The local singer performs a variety of hits in a wide range of genres, leading an eight-piece band. **7P, \$20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, scscai.com**



THEATER & COMEDY

THROUGH JUNE 9

Big Fish

Edward Bloom is a traveling salesman with colorful tales full of crazy characters. His son, Will, is determined to learn the truth. **Wed-Sat 6P, \$15. The Boman Pavilion at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, supersummertheatre.org**

JUNE 1-2

Rainbow Company Youth Theatre Ensemble Showcase

Enjoy 10-minute plays written and presented by the student ensemble members. **7P, free. Charleston Heights Arts Center, 800 S. Brush St., artslasvegas.org**

JUNE 16

A Night of Comedy with Alec Mapa

Mapa is known for his comedy special "Baby Daddy" and numerous TV appearances. **6:30P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 16

Summer Lovin' with LVIP

The weather is getting hotter, and so is the comedy. The Las Vegas Improvisational Players make up their fun, kid-friendly show on the spot -- based on the audience's suggestions. **7P, \$10; \$5 kids, seniors, and military. Show Creators Studio, 4455 W. Sunset Road, lvimprov.com**

JUNE 23-24

Conquerors

This musical takes

place in a school for performing arts and features alumni who face life-altering changes. **3P, free. West Las Vegas Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 27-JULY 14

She Loves Me

Set in a 1930s European perfumery, this musical is based on the plot of the beloved Jimmy Stewart classic *The Shop Around the Corner*. **Wed-Sat 6P, \$15. The Boman Pavilion at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, supersummertheatre.org**

JUNE 29

The Nostalgia Show Featuring Comedian Randy Riggle

Drive down memory lane in your '57 Chevy as Riggle fills the stage with songs and laughs. **4P, free. Sahara West Library, lvccld.org**



DANCE

JUNE 9

Captivation Dance Affiliates

CDA presents their annual showcase. **3:30P, \$15-\$20. Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 14

The Movement Dance Experience

TMDE presents their annual recital. **6P, \$12-\$15. Main Theater at Clark County Library, lvccld.org**

JUNE 22-23

Evolve Dance Center

EDC presents their annual dance concert.

Fri 7P; Sat 11P and 2P, \$15-\$25. Main Theater at Clark County Library
lvccld.org

JUNE 23

Family Hoedown

Liven up your summer with the Jackson Family Band & Cloggers, featuring four-part harmonies, dancing, and a variety of instruments. **2P, free.** Auditorium at Windmill Library, lvccld.org



DISCUSSIONS & READINGS

JUNE 15

The Poets' Corner

Join in this open-mic event for the Las Vegas Valley's biggest poetry talents. Hosted by Lablaque Williams. **7:30P, free.** West Las Vegas Arts Center, 947 W. Lake Mead Blvd., artslasvegas.org



FAMILY & FESTIVALS

JUNE 1

First Friday

From crafts to food to everything in between, this is the place to celebrate all things artsy. Cockroach Theatre offers 20-minute vignettes, multiple food trucks provide mouth-watering eats, and booths of all sorts offer one-of-a-kind items. **5-11P, free.** 1025 First St., ffflv.org

JUNE 16

8th Annual Juneteenth Celebration

Networking, artwork, jazz, and spoken word performances will highlight this celebration of the abolition of slavery. **10A-5P, free.** West

Las Vegas Library, lvccld.org

JUNE 16

Django Vegas! Gypsy Jazz Festival

Local musicians will jam and the session will be open to anyone who wishes to join in with other jazz lovers. Refreshments will be available for purchase. **4-10P, \$20.** Historic Fifth Street School, 401 S. Fourth St., artslasvegas.org

JUNE 29

Last Friday, Just Add Water Street

A festival for foodies, artisans, musicians, and crafters takes place all over the district. **6-10P, free.** Henderson Events Plaza, 200 S. Water St., cityofhenderson.com



FUNDRAISERS

JUNE 8

Swing FORE! Seniors Golf Event

Enjoy networking, competition, and brunch at this annual fundraiser. Proceeds benefit Helping Hands of Vegas Valley, which provides transportation, a food pantry, and other services for low-income seniors. **8:30A, spectators \$100; players \$200.** Top-golf, 4627 Koval Lane, hhovv.org

JUNE 24

32nd Annual Ribbon of Life

A star-studded production of *Chicago*, a red carpet reception, and a silent auction — what more could you ask for? Proceeds benefit those living with HIV/AIDS. **11A, \$45+.** The Foundry at SLS, goldenrainbow.org/ribbonoflife



Channel 10

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Tuesday, June 5 at 8 p.m.



Great British Baking Show, Season 5

Fridays at 9 p.m., premiering June 22



Endeavour, Season 5 on Masterpiece

Sundays at 8 p.m., premiering June 24

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BEHIND THE SHUTTER

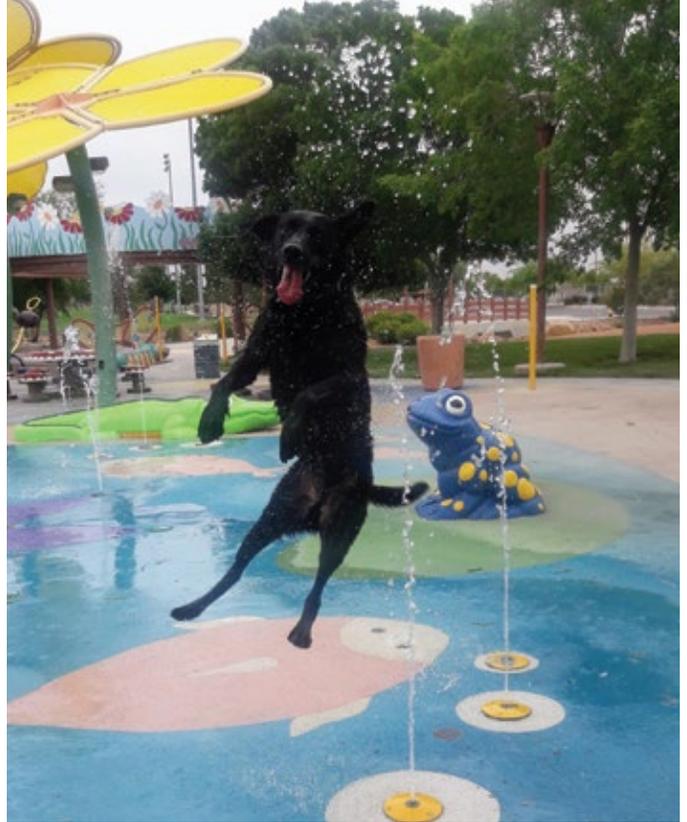
They didn't win our Photo Contest, but something about these images demands a closer look



Photographer
JOSEPH THOMSON

It caught our eye because: We were mostly intrigued by the tractor and the rubble — and something else we can't quite put our finger on ...

The story: This image “has a very interesting background,” Thomson writes. Gooo oon ... “It was constructed to bring attention to the possible destruction of the beloved Las Vegas High School” — a fate that alumni fretted over since other early high schools were torn down. Thomson mashed together an image of the “senior squares” monument as Las Vegas High, a shot from the mid-'50s tear-down of the Las Vegas Pharmacy (built in 1906), and a picture of Godzilla in mid-stomp. (*That's* the other thing that caught our eye!) The image went on to serve as a flier for a community meeting meant to rally support for the school's preservation. “It is a complex issue, but the image brought immediate clarity to the urgency and uncertainty of the historic Las Vegas High School structures.”



Photographer
MARCIA ZINK

It caught our eye because: If you don't swoon over a happy dog in midair, unfriend us immediately.

The story: “One day we were walking through the park,” Zink tells us, meaning Butterfly Park in Centennial Hills, “and the water caught Cole's eye.” Which you might expect, what with Cole being a Lab. Not only is playing in the water one of his favorite activities (along with fetch), “he's a bit neurotic about picking, and sticking to, only one of the water spouts. Over and over again, he jumps to reach the tippy top of the water. I truly believe he is smiling in this picture. Pure dog bliss!” And pure photographic adorability.



Photographer
CORY DARR

It caught our eye because: Those deep, soul-penetrating eyes.

The story: We couldn't reach Cory, but we imagine the story goes something like this: *Holy crap, there's a face in the grain of this otherwise unremarkable wooden surface!* Snap. Submit. Back-page glory. ♦

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