

SUNDAY MAGAZINE

The Advocate | Sunday, March 13, 2016



Really surreal

Stamford artist finds her zen

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Furniture maker's modern formula



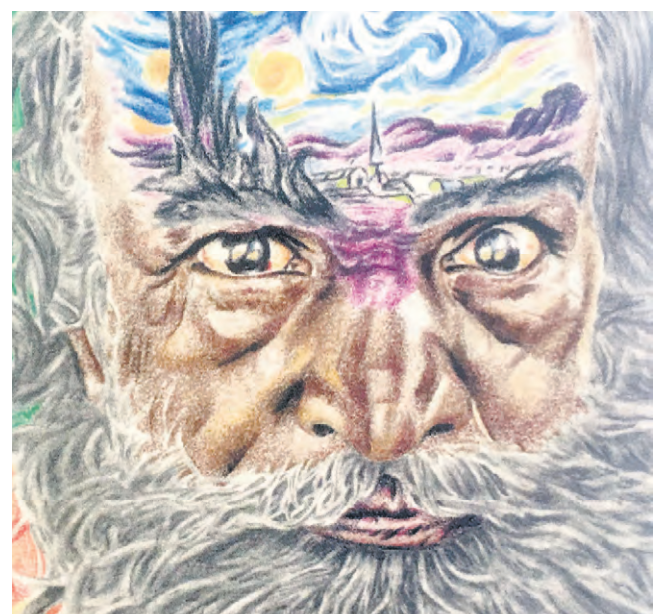
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JIM SHEA

Waking up a little late this morning? You're not alone

In a bit of a fog this morning, are we?

Feeling tired, cranky, a tad out of sync?

We sprang forward after you were asleep.

Sorry, someone had to tell you.

I know this hurts. There are fewer things in life more painful than losing an hour of sleep on a Sunday morning.

Plus, there is this: If you didn't set your clock ahead, you are not only beginning the day behind the times, but probably behind the eight ball as well.

Were you supposed to be somewhere, like, say, church? You are probably now either late or never.

You won't be alone. Attendance at church services suffers when the clocks are moved forward. I once tried to explain my absence by arguing it was my belief that God ran on standard time. I did not receive absolution.

It's not all your (our) fault. Moving the clocks forward and backward can be very confusing.

Many people rely on the old adage: Spring forward, fall backward. OK, but technically is it not possible to fall forward and spring backward?

Worse than failing to remember to move your clock is remembering to move your clock and then moving it in the wrong direction. This is more common than you might think.

I mean, who decided that the clocks should be changed at the exact same time (2 a.m.) that the bars close? I'm sure President Trump will fix this.

The time change is not just a one day thing, either. It can mess with the body's natural circadian rhythms for days.

Personally, I hate the word circadian. It reminds me of cicada, which is the name of the large bug fried in butter that I once ate for a newspaper story. Did it taste like chicken? I have no idea. It wasn't in my body long enough for me to tell.

Anyway. Even if you have handled the clock work correctly, another thing you may notice if you got up early is that it is still dark outside. This evening, if you are not napping, you will no doubt notice it stays light later.

I don't have a problem with more light at the end of the day — in summer. But what are you going to do with that extra hour of light after

ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH SERVICES SUFFERS WHEN THE CLOCKS ARE MOVED FORWARD. I ONCE TRIED TO EXPLAIN MY ABSENCE BY ARGUING IT WAS MY BELIEF THAT GOD RAN ON STANDARD TIME. I DID NOT RECEIVE ABSOLUTION.

dinner in March — in New England? Lounge on the deck in your Speed-o and snorkel parka?

And what about high school kids? It's hard enough rousing them out of bed in the morning as it is. Getting them up and at 'em when it's still night outside can be near impossible, even if you do own a top-of-the-line cattle prod.

The time change is not only annoying and disruptive, it's also a major hassle. I'm talking about all the clocks you have to go around and reset by hand. Then there is the clock in my car which you have to be an IT person to adjust. You know the expression even a broken clock is right twice a day? Well, the clock in my car is right six

months of the year.

And here is yet another problem, particularly if you live with a teacher or editor of freelance pedantic. Do you say daylight saving time, or daylight savings time? You know what, I could care less. (Or should that be I couldn't care less?)

What I am sure of, is this:

God runs on standard time.

Jim Shea is a lifelong Connecticut resident and journalist who believes the keys to life include the avoidance of physical labor and I-95. He can be reached at jimboshea@gmail.com and on Twitter @jimboshea.



Cathy Zuraw / Hearst Connecticut Media

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PLAN ON IT

Best of the arts in the weeks ahead

Music

Search for America

▶ Look no longer. The classic soft-rock band America is on tour celebrating its 45th anniversary with founding members Gerry Beckley and Dewey Bunnell performing the group's greatest hits, from "Tin Man," "Ventura Highway" and "Sister Golden Hair" to the unforgettable "Horse With No Name." *Ridgefield Playhouse, 80 E. Ridge. Wednesday, March 16, 8-10 p.m. \$87.50. ridgefieldplayhouse.org.*

Timeless tale

▶ The world where a cat sounds best as a clarinet and a duck gives voice through an oboe will open up for an hour at the free Curiosity Concerts family music series, in association with Ashforth Children's Concert Series. The Woodwind Quintet of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra and Really Inventive Stuff's storyteller, Michael Boudewyns, perform Sergei Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf." *Greenwich Library, 101 W. Putnam Ave. Sunday, March 20, 1 p.m. Tickets are free, but reservations required at curiosityconcerts.org*

Don't be fooled

▶ Tony Bennett is performing live fresh off his February Grammy win for 2015's best traditional pop vocal album, "The Silver Lining: The Songs of Jerome Kern," along with jazz pianist Bill Charlap. Of course, that's coming off his 2014 win for best traditional pop vocal album, "Cheek to Cheek," with Lady Gaga. "This is my 18th Grammy and I'm thrilled," Bennett said after his win with Charlap. *Mobegan Sun Arena, 1 Mobegan Sun Blvd., Uncasville. Friday, April 1, 8 p.m. \$59-\$39. 800-745-3000, ticketmaster.com*

Beatles celebration

▶ A hit in London's West End, "Let It Be," a theatrical celebration of The Beatles, will be playing three shows at the Palace in Waterbury April 15-16. The show opened in the fall of 2012 to good reviews in the British press, moved to Broadway for a limited run the following year and has been touring ever since. The first half traces the rise of The Beatles through the "Sgt. Pepper" album and Act II takes the audience



Contributed photos

A hit in London's West End, "Let It Be," a celebration of The Beatles, will be playing three shows at the Palace in Waterbury April 15-16.

from "Magical Mystery Tour" through the final album "Let It Be." *Palace Theater, 100 E. Main St., Waterbury. Friday, April 15, 8 p.m.; Saturday, April 16, 2 and 8 p.m. \$75-\$50. 203-346-2000. palacetheaterct.org*

Exhibits

Made by hand

▶ Get creative and join in the fun of taking part in hands-on craft activities and watching demonstrations by such local artisans as Denyse Schmidt (quilting), Ruben Marroquin (weaver) and Ed Pirnick (woodworker), who are featured in the "Handcrafted" exhibit at the Fairfield Museum & History Center. Geared to families and friends. *Fairfield Museum & History Center, 370 Beach Road. Sunday, March 20, 1-3 p.m. Free. fairfieldhistory.org*

Lost now found

▶ One of the region's most daring and sophisticated new showcases for art — The Harts Gallery — is bringing together three artists, Erin Walrath, Stephen



"Jersey Boys" returns to the Shubert Theatre in New Haven May 3-8.

Reynolds and Silas Finch, whose works consist almost entirely of found objects and repurposed materials. From cut and sorted book covers to 19th century Bibles in a shipwright's vice, they approach the three-dimensional form from entirely different perspectives, yet all begin their journeys from the same flea market, scrapyards or abandoned dog-track. *The Harts Gallery, 20 Bank St., New Milford. Through Saturday, March 26. 917-913-4641, thehartsgallery.com*

Film

Reel global

▶ Focus on French Cinema, an annual celebration of contemporary French-language films, arrives with a special screening in Manhattan and continues with screenings of feature-length films, premieres, documentaries and shorts in Greenwich and Stamford. Award-winning actress Nathalie Baye is the special honoree. *Greenwich Bow Tie Cinema, 2 Railroad Ave., and Stamford's Avon Theatre, 272 Bedford St. April 1-5. VIP passes start at \$270; focusonfrenchcinema.com*

Stage

Green Day musical

▶ The powerful Broadway show adapted from a Green Day album, "American Idiot," will be produced at the Downtown Cabaret Theatre. The rock band's front man, Billie Joe Armstrong, won acclaim for the powerful storyline he created with Michael Mayer about three young friends struggling against the confines of their suburban lives after 9/11. Armstrong expanded the album into a theater piece that stands alone. It includes such Green Day hits as "21 Guns" and "Holiday." *Downtown Cabaret Theatre, 263*

Golden Hill St., Bridgeport. April 29-May 15. \$28. 203-576-1636, dicab.com

Versatile Vereen

▶ Broadway and television veteran Ben Vereen will provide star power to Stamford Palace Theatre's annual gala and fundraiser with his one-man show, "Steppin' Out with Ben Vereen." The Tony award-winning actor is known for his work on TV's "Roots" and Broadway's "Pippin" and "Jesus Christ Superstar." *Stamford Palace, 61 Atlantic St. Thursday, March 31, 8 p.m. Show-only tickets begin at \$35. palacestamford.org*

'Jersey Boys'

▶ The national tour of the long-running Broadway musical "Jersey Boys" is returning for a third time to the Shubert Theatre. It was in 2007 that the first road tour was rehearsed and launched at the Shubert. The show had an encore run in 2012. The stage biography of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons has outlasted most other so-called jukebox musicals, with the Broadway production at 11 years and counting. Many people attribute the success of the show to the unusually smart book by Marshall Brickman (with Rick Elise). *Shubert Theatre, 247 College St., New Haven. Tuesday, May 3, to Sunday, May 8. \$115-\$45. 800-745-3000. www.shubert.com*

Etc.

Celtic convergence

▶ The Greenwich Hibernian Association hosts its annual St. Patrick's Day parade with dancers, pipers and not-to-be-missed Cycling Murrays. The route kicks off at Town Hall, with plenty of opportunities to check out the parade along Field Point Road or East Putnam and Greenwich avenues. *Sunday, March 20, 2 p.m.*

greenwichhibernians.org

Comedy tour

▶ Having created a quirky and beloved portfolio of television characters ("Todd Margaret," "Dr. Tobias Fünke") over the past 15 years or so, actor, comic and writer David Cross has launched his first stand-up tour in six years. He will be performing at the Capitol Theatre as part of his "Making America Great Again" tour. *Capitol Theatre, 149 Westchester Ave., Port Chester, N.Y. Friday, April 1, 8 p.m. Eighteen and older show. Tickets begin at \$35. www.thecapitoltheatre.com*

Spring antique show

▶ Circle the weekend of April 16 and 17 and visit this favorite vintage market with charming room-setting displays of 18th and 19th century tiger maple furniture, American country, portraits, folk art, nautical antiques and fine estate and Native American jewelry. *Wilton High School Field House, 395 Danbury Road (Route 7). Saturday, April 16, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, April 17, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. \$10. 914-474-8552*

Rising star

▶ The raucous singer-comedian Bridget Everett already has a huge cult following in New York City from a series of sold-out shows at Joe's Pub. She will be bringing her act to the Ridgefield Playhouse. The combination of an extremely powerful voice and a quick, raunchy wit have brought Everett comparisons with Bette Midler in that star's early Manhattan days. She is not for the easily shocked, but the Village Voice has called Everett "the most exciting performer in New York City." *Ridgefield Playhouse, 80 E. Ridge. Sunday, April 17, 8 p.m. \$30. 203-438-5795, ridgefieldplayhouse.org*



Ben Vereen will supply the star power to Stamford Palace Theatre's annual gala on Thursday, March 31.

HOME

3 EASY PIECES

With a metal frame, top and colorful panels, anyone can customize their own modern furniture

By Christina Hennessy

The drill is quiet and the sander is still this morning, as their operator makes her way to a custom-made piece of furniture in this large, airy industrial space in Bridgeport's East Side. Marci Klein is like a proud parent as she talks about the desk, all 23½ by 47½ by 30½ inches of innovative design and whimsical touches. Turns out, it's eco-friendly, too.

"The design took me over a year-and-a-half to perfect, but it opened a world of options," says Klein, whose outfit reflects her constructive and creative spirit — blue jeans, work boots and an Austin City Limits T-shirt. "I wanted to create a blank canvas for creatives. The hard part was to design it to be simple, versatile and multifunctional."

At its most basic, her furniture line begins with a patent-pending framework, created by custom-cut horizontal and vertical aluminum bars, held together by small interior screws. Add a top of sustainable bamboo, and then choose multicolored panels that slide along tracks, revealing as little or as much a view of the objects stowed behind them as their owner wants. Color choices abound for the frames and panels, as well as drop-down storage units that she calls "invisibins." The furniture pieces cost about \$900 to more than \$5,000.

"Once I got the design squared away and figured it out and tested everything and it worked, I decided I'm going to do this for real. This is the job for the next half of my life," she says.

These days, from her design studio at the Bridgeport Trade and Technology Center, Klein makes desks, credenzas, coffee tables, media and storage units out of those frames, tabletops and panels, that are, as she



Mara Lavitt / For Hearst Connecticut Media

Marci Klein, the owner, designer and maker at her business Modify Furniture, in the showroom area with her polychrome case units.

N.Y., artist Kristin Reed's abstracts are on select coffee tables and Bridgeport street artist E.S. has given lots of color to a credenza. With nothing to lose, Klein then reached out to the well-known Brooklyn-based furniture maker and woodworker Daniel Moyer to see if he would be willing to work with her. The result is what he calls the "executive decision" desk accessory, a playful paperweight made of material recycled from his other works. Klein has ideas for other collaborations to make her desks one-of-a-kind, open-sourced creations. She has created one of her own accessories, a milk and cookies tray, with a hollowed circle to rest a cup and a well to hold about six sandwich cookies. "It needed to be perfect."

This may seem like an odd detour, but Klein, who lives in Fairfield with her family, often tinkered alongside her civil engineering father, as he worked in his basement workshop in their Brooklyn home. Small spaces have long fascinated her, as well, in terms of how to maximize their potential. Before her days were steeped in sanding, drilling and hand-waxing for a living, she was thinking about furniture design — as is evident by the pair of futon-like couches that sit in a cozy corner in her design studio.

"That was my Frank Lloyd Wright phase," she says with a self-deprecating laugh as she settles in one. She designed them more than 20 years ago, while living in a one-bedroom apartment in New York City and studying to be a doctor. She needed her furniture to do double-duty, serving as a couch and guest bed, yet look good while doing so. "That's all I could do at that time. I had to get someone else to make them."

Visit modifyfurniture.com or the Fairfield County Antique and Design Center in Norwalk.

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"ONCE I GOT THE DESIGN SQUARED AWAY AND FIGURED IT OUT AND TESTED EVERYTHING AND IT WORKED, I DECIDED I'M GOING TO DO THIS FOR REAL. THIS IS THE JOB FOR THE NEXT HALF OF MY LIFE."

describes it, "modern, modifiable and modular," and all designed to work with multiple spaces and styles. Modify Furniture, which launched late last year, is all that, and more — a second chapter for Klein, 46, whose toolbox once held a stethoscope. A pediatrician for about 20 years, she put her medical career on hold to go into furniture design and manufacturing nearly two years ago.

As much an invention of her own imagination, her line also is inspired by the midcentury modern movement, with its simple, clean, minimalist design, as well as today's sensibilities: High-quality, cost-effective products that rely on local resources, and sustainable materials and manufacturing.

"The whole idea of modern design was to make high-quality design available to everybody," says Ken Benson, a furniture designer for more than 40 years and adjunct professor at the Shintaro Akatsu School of Design at the University of Bridgeport. "It was meant to be relatively inexpensive, of high quality, efficient to make and made to last a long time."

What he sees as a societal shift —

one that Klein has accounted for in her design — is the desire for customization, meaning one can surround themselves with as little or as much individualized, visual complexity as they desire.

"I think today's modern design serves as a kind of palate for this, creating something different for yourself, which appeals to a broader audience. So someone like me might want clean, white panels, and perhaps a 20-year-old will want images of Marvel comics, and, in the end, they both will look great."

Klein suggests the panels (which can be custom created) are a great surface for your sweetheart's image, quite literally a swipe to the left or the right, which can be quickly switched out for your next sweetie, if things don't quite work out. Her impishness aside, Klein sees a serious opportunity to showcase local artists, wherever "local" happens to be.

She has launched a limited collection of works, "Modify After Dark." It already features work by Canadian painter Julie Hawkins, with whom she connected at the Toronto Interior Design Show in January — where Klein's line made a splash. Brooklyn,

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FASHION

PERSONAL PLAIDS

Today's tartans are runway ready

By Christina Hennessy

What do Brooks Brothers, Saks Fifth Avenue, Florence, Italy, the Scottish Rugby Union team, Connecticut and the New York Tartan Day Parade have in common? The last one gives it away, by the way. If you said an official tartan, then you would be correct.

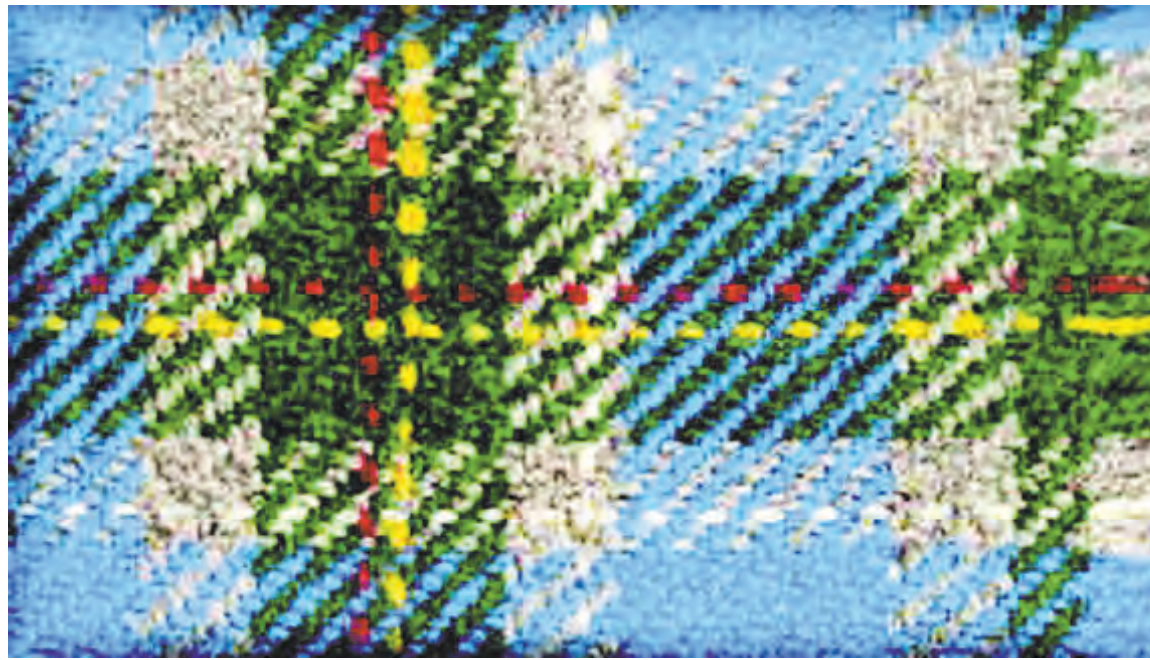
This material art, which has kept the Scottish people clothed and connected to their countryfolk and countryside for centuries, long ago extended past its borders, but it has increasingly become a way for disparate cultures and organizations around the world to rally behind a unified banner. As opposed to tartan's more humble beginnings — relatively simple designs created by ingredients at hand, such as lichen, tree bark, berries and seaweed — today's designs boast multiple vibrant colors and complicated patterns created by hand or with machines.

The designs also often come with a kind of legend, or a set of ideals, objects, history and geography that shape the thread count and ensuing pattern. Connecticut's, for instance, established in 1995, has blue and green stripes for Long Island Sound and its acres of forest; gray for its granite; red and yellow stripes for its foliage and white stripes for its snow.

"It's not as if time stood still with tartans," says Gregor MacIntyre, the pipe major for the Greenwich Pipe Band, which was started in 1982 by the late, Scottish-born John Beveridge, of Stamford. "New ones are being created every day."

The Scottish Register of Tartans keeps track of the thousands around the world. MacIntyre, who emigrated from Scotland to the United States in 2000, is quite familiar with two of the more established designs. The modern Gordon tartan design colors the band's kilts, while the other is what he wears in solidarity with others who share his surname.

The former will literally be on parade when the band plays in the



Contributed photo

Connecticut adopted an official tartan in 1995, representing several components that represent the state, from the blue and green stripes for Long Island Sound and its acres of forest; gray for its granite; red and yellow stripes for its foliage; and white stripes for its snow.

"IT'S NOT AS IF TIME STOOD STILL WITH TARTANS. NEW ONES ARE BEING CREATED EVERY DAY."

St. Patrick's Day Parade in Greenwich on Sunday, March 20, and on Saturday, April 9, when it marches in the New York Tartan Day Parade. Although it is custom not to don another clan's tartan, the rules have eased, which is understandable, given the way this checked pattern has woven itself into popular consciousness. "Now it's just an overall celebration of all things Scottish," MacIntyre says.

Tartan, which is created by patterns established by specific thread counts bound horizontally (weft) and vertically (warp), has a present-day role as muse for high-profile fashion designers. The late Alexander McQueen, Marc Jacobs and Stella McCartney have turned to it for inspiration. Howie Nicholsby has created trendy kilts and tartan design for European and American celebrities with his 21st Century Kilts. There's even cargo kilts.

MacIntyre said he does not know the exact meaning behind his family's design, but he has had a close relation to the craft: His grandmother was a weaver back in Scotland.

Of course, if you were around in Greenwich from the early 1920s to well into the past century, you would have seen plenty of clans, kilts and tartans with the annual Round Hill Highland Games each Fourth of July holiday. It was a tradition that began in 1923, when Charles Moore, who was of Scottish descent and who lived on Round Hill Road in Greenwich, offered the use of his grounds to his Scottish-born workers to celebrate their motherland. It grew bigger each year, until the property was sold and the event moved to different sites.

Clans themselves can have tartan variations that represent modern and ancient patterns, as well as those for certain pastimes, such as hunting.

"Initially, it became a badge of wherever you came from. So clan tartans had no meanings except where they come from or who they were worn by," says Brian Wilton, director of the Scottish Tartans Authority and designer (he fashioned four of the tartans mentioned at the start). The idea that they have meaning is new, too. In the beginning, a weaver from a particular area might



File photo

Gregor MacIntyre, pipe major of the Greenwich Pipe Band, marches at the Memorial Day Parade in Old Greenwich in 2012.

specialize in a design that would become affiliated with that region, but starting with the 1700s and 1800s, the idea of clans with distinct patterns, known as setts, and colors began to emerge. Some suspect the shift was brought on by a mix of Scottish pride (Highlands dress and the tartan had been banned by the English from about 1750 to 1780) and a desire by far-flung expats to surround themselves with objects from home.

"The beauty about tartans in this modern era is you can design the history of tomorrow in the tartan of today," Wilton says. For example, among the elements in the New York Tartan Day Parade design is six gray bands signifying the six traffic lanes of Sixth Avenue, the parade route. He said purists might be a bit abashed at that inclusion, but he said it's a matter of "making tartan relevant for the people who use it."

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ARTS

Zen and art

WHEN A PAINTING HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN

By Joe Meyers

The idea of literal representation holds no interest for artist Lisa Cuscuna.

When gallery patrons look at one of her surrealistic paintings and ask, "What are you trying to say?" she would prefer that viewers come up with their own interpretations.

Cuscuna has delighted in combining the real and the surreal in work like the canvas that shows an open doorway floating in the sky above a beach. (I think of that airborne, reflective monolith in "2001," but you might see Dali or Escher.)

"I ask people to look beyond a conventional way of seeing things — try to choose another point of view and see if that works for you," she says in her studio at Stamford's Loft Artists Association.

The pull between control and chaos in Cuscuna's work might be more acute than it is for other artists because she has juggled life as a successful businesswoman with her abstract art. The artist retired from her job as a producer of video installations for museums to refocus her energy.

"I did budgeting and design. I was at the top of my game, but I never saw my family," she says of creating huge video displays for places like the twin tower skyscraper in Kuala Lumpur. That was a \$2.7 million video wall project that took three years to pull together. (She used the New York Philharmonic for the music.)

"Painting is an ever-changing new career for me," Cuscuna adds of her life now. "I am very much enthralled with the idea of the creative process and that it should be unfettered. The work should flow through the artist, taking on a spirit and youthfulness that you won't get if you push too hard. ... Zen and art go together for me."

Cuscuna was still pulling together work for a major show at the Stamford nonprofit — "The Fluid Palette," opening March 17 — when I visited her studio.

The surreal paintings began in a round-about way for her.

"I was doing a lot of surreal photography and I took the work to a gallery that liked them, but they said, 'These are very nice. Can you paint them?' I said, 'Absolutely' without missing a beat and went right home and started to paint," she says with a smile.

A door suddenly opened into new territory for the artist, much like the portals she has included in her work.

Cuscuna has been delving deeply into the concept of "poured painting" in recent work. Instead of using a brush, an artist working with this technique pours paint onto a canvas and builds a new work layer by layer. The process of pouring and then being forced to wait for the next step has bolstered Cuscuna's belief in the union of art and zen and other practical aspects of life. During the required pauses to allow each layer of oil paint to dry, she is able to shift gears to her volunteer work as treasurer of the Loft Artists Association.

New York artist Paul Jenkins was the father of this style of art that played a major role in the classic late-1970s art-world drama, "An Unmarried Woman." He created the work done by the painter Alan Bates plays in the movie.

"It's a departure from the exact and the specific that excited my imagination," Cuscuna says of the technique, in which part of the "control" is taken away from the artist. "There are certain things that the paint does by itself — it curdles, there are striations and textural effects you have to work with.

"This is far more challenging than looking at something and replicating it. You have to be on your toes, ready for personal adjustments. ... The painting has a life of its own.

"You also do a lot of praying," she says, laughing.

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Contributed photo

Lisa Cuscuna, a Stamford artist, specializes in surreal images. Her studio life is a far cry from her former creative vocation.

Writers



Contributed photos

Artwork from prisoners, above and below, who participated in a Chris Belden writing program.

WRITING BEHIND BARS

A volunteer job inspires novelist Chris Belden

By Joe Meyers

Teaching writing to maximum security prisoners was supposed to be a temporary gig for novelist Chris Belden, but six years later, he is still spending a day each week at the Garner Correctional Institution in Newtown.

"It has been a way to learn about people, learn about teaching and to see how people can grow," the author of the acclaimed 2015 novel "Shriver" says of the volunteer work that has become an essential part of his life.

"I haven't yet written about the experience in any form, but it has certainly influenced me — my life and how I see the characters in my work," Belden adds of his Thursday mornings with prison writers.

"When I tell people I do this, it's an immediate attention getter. They want to know what it's like. 'Are you scared?' People are pumped from all of the movies and TV shows they've seen about prisons."

Belden admits he was slightly anxious at first — "There was a fear of the unknown" — but he has never once experienced anything that has made him regret his commitment.

"Some of the guys in there are not necessarily friendly or outgoing, but that's rare. Overwhelmingly they are happy I'm there," he says.

Belden jokes that past experience trying to teach groggy college students at 8 a.m. classes makes him appreciate the enthusiasm of his prison writers all the more. "I know when someone doesn't want to be in a class, but my Garner students thank me regularly, sometimes profusely."

The proof of the value in what Belden does can be seen in "Sentences,"

the literary journal that he edits, collecting the best work of his students — nostalgic tales of happy childhood moments, angry accounts of time lost in confinement, vivid memories of the joy to be found in one beautiful autumn day on the outside.

The Ridgefield novelist started at Garner to fulfill a third-year thesis project in the MFA program at Fairfield University. He had to find a second subject that was not connected to his creative writing submission. A thesis dealing with the teaching of writing was eligible, and when Belden saw that social justice work was a subcategory, he applied to be a volunteer at the Newtown facility.

The writer became part of a long tradition of prison writing teachers that has included another Connecticut notable, the best-selling novelist, Wally Lamb. After Belden completed his Fairfield University assignment, he realized he did not want to give up his Thursdays in Newtown. Writing is a natural extension of the intensive reading done by many prisoners. In maximum security

cells, there is little else the convicts can do to fill the seemingly endless "free" time.

"The guys are very interested in reading, and they write all kinds of crazy stuff based on that ... and science fiction. A lot of what could be called urban fiction — life on the streets, social justice. Fantasy serves a real purpose for them, too."

Belden says he has learned most of what he knows about prison life indirectly, because the men don't generally like to talk about their lives outside class.

"I'm interested to see how prison works and doesn't work, but a lot of it is still mysterious to me, even after six years. I hear stuff, but they generally don't talk about why they are there,"

he says of the crimes that caused his students to be imprisoned. "So I don't ask about that."

Like all writers, Belden's students want their work to find a connection with readers, so the literary journal "Sentences" is an important part of the class, along with readings where special guests are invited to hear the prisoners' stories and poems.

"Sentences" receives some funding from the Westport Writers Workshop, where Belden also teaches.

"To me it's super important when you're writing regularly to have readers. And the guys want their work to get out there — to have some kind of outlet for what they do. We all need that."

Excerpts

A Christmas memory

As you peered toward the staircase, you got a quick glimpse of a shadow downstairs in the living room, where a majestic Christmas tree stood. Could it be? Was he really there? ... You peeked your head around the corner, and to your astonishment and disappointment Santa was nowhere to be found, but under the tree, wrapping a present was your mother.

An after-prison story

He pulls up to his baby mother's house and sees his son sitting on his bike in the front and talking to his cousins and uncles that are his age. He gets out of the car and smiles to himself as he reads his son's lips: "Is that my daddy?" He closes the car door and his heart softens as his son jumps off his bike and runs toward him and says, "What up, Dad?" "Everything, baby boy. Everything."

What is lost in prison

One day I looked back and my youth was gone. What I have lost along the way has been scattered from prison cell to prison cell ... all over America, pieces of my soul I will never get back. A living death, when I look around my cell I see nothing but a coffin.

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WELLBEING

FitBit for feelings: Love in the age of technology

By Amanda Cuda

When Michael Gabriel's marriage ended, the Greenwich resident was plagued with questions.

Was there something that he missed? What more could he have done? Did he change? Did his wife change? Was there a way they could have assessed and fixed the problems in the relationship before they spiraled out of control and the marriage ended?

"I was just trying to figure out what happened," says Gabriel, 55, a longtime media and technology executive who has worked for such companies as HBO, NBC and the National Basketball Association.

His quest led him to write "The Balanced Relationship Barometer," which applies business tactics to the task of sustaining loving and successful relationships. But Gabriel didn't want to stop there. He wanted to give people another tool that would allow them to take a close look at what they wanted from their relationship, and to track how well their goals were being fulfilled. It dawned on him that, if people can track their physical fitness and financial health using mobile apps on their smartphone or tablet, why couldn't they do the same with romantic relationships?

So he developed Relationship Barometer, an app that allows users to set relationship goals, then regularly check in on how well those goals are being met. "Basically, it's FitBit for relationships," Gabriel says.

Relationship Barometer is one of a number of apps that claim to help users assess and/or improve their love lives. Others include the Boyfriend Log, through which users can track their satisfaction with their relationships on a day-to-day basis; Love Maps, which encourages partners to improve their relationship by learning more about each other; and Fix a Fight, which helps resolve conflicts.

Like many pieces of technology, these apps can be helpful if used correctly, says Stamford-based dating coach Sandy Weiner. For instance, she's heard of apps that help long-distance couples stay in touch. She also likes the idea of an app such as Gabriel's that helps people think critically about what they want out of their relationship.

"Anything that helps people communicate with each other and tell their partner they love them is probably a good thing," says Weiner, who runs the site LastFirstDate.com.

To Gabriel, using tech-



Contributed photos

Michael Gabriel, of Greenwich, created the Relationship Barometer app, below.

nology as a relationship aid is a no-brainer, and something that's long overdue. "We've started to use technology to improve other parts of our lives," he says. "One of the most important aspects of our lives is the romantic relationship we have with someone, and we often just let that happen to us."

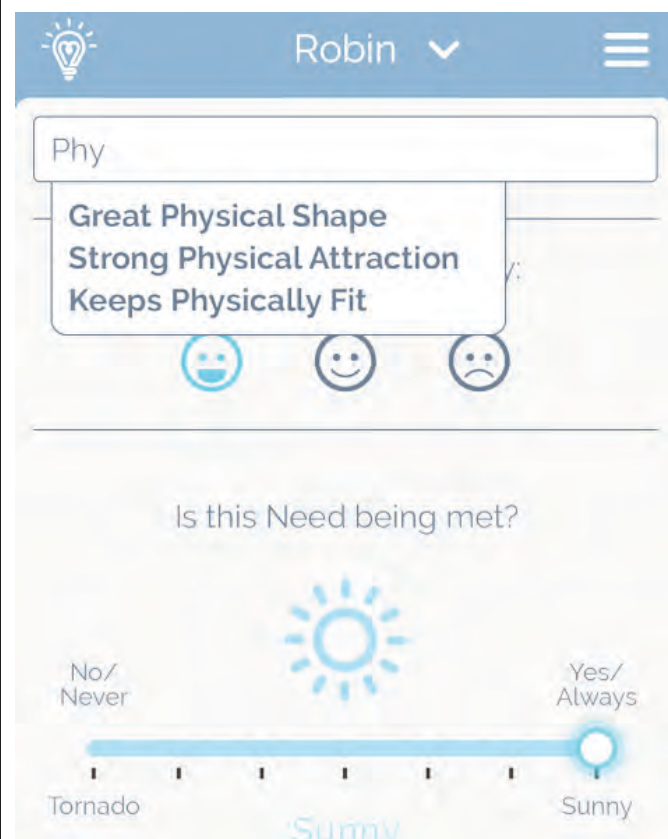
The Relationship Barometer app provides users with a starter list of traits — such as "communicates well," "makes me feel important," "complains a lot" and "is sloppy" — and has them pick ones that are important to them (labeled as "Gotta Have" in the app), ones that are somewhat important ("Like to Have") and ones they wish their partner wouldn't display ("Gotta Not Have"). Users are then asked to assess how well their relationship fulfills each of their needs by giving them a ranking ranging from "Sunny" (need is being met perfectly) to "Tornado" (need isn't being met at all).

Users are then asked to provide updates (called "Check-ins" on the app) about how their needs are being met. For instance, if one of their "Gotta Haves" is communication and their partner hasn't called in days, the user would enter that information. Over time, the check-ins create an overall picture (or "forecast") of the relationship's strengths and weaknesses.

"It really keeps you in touch with the things in the relationship that give you pleasure, and keeps you from ignoring the things that bring you pain," Gabriel says.

However, he and Weiner stressed that technology is just one tool in the utility kit of relationship management. Though it can play a role, it doesn't eliminate the need for other tools — such as simple, open, honest communication.

"(Apps) certainly don't replace face-to-face interaction and conversation," Weiner says. "You still need that."

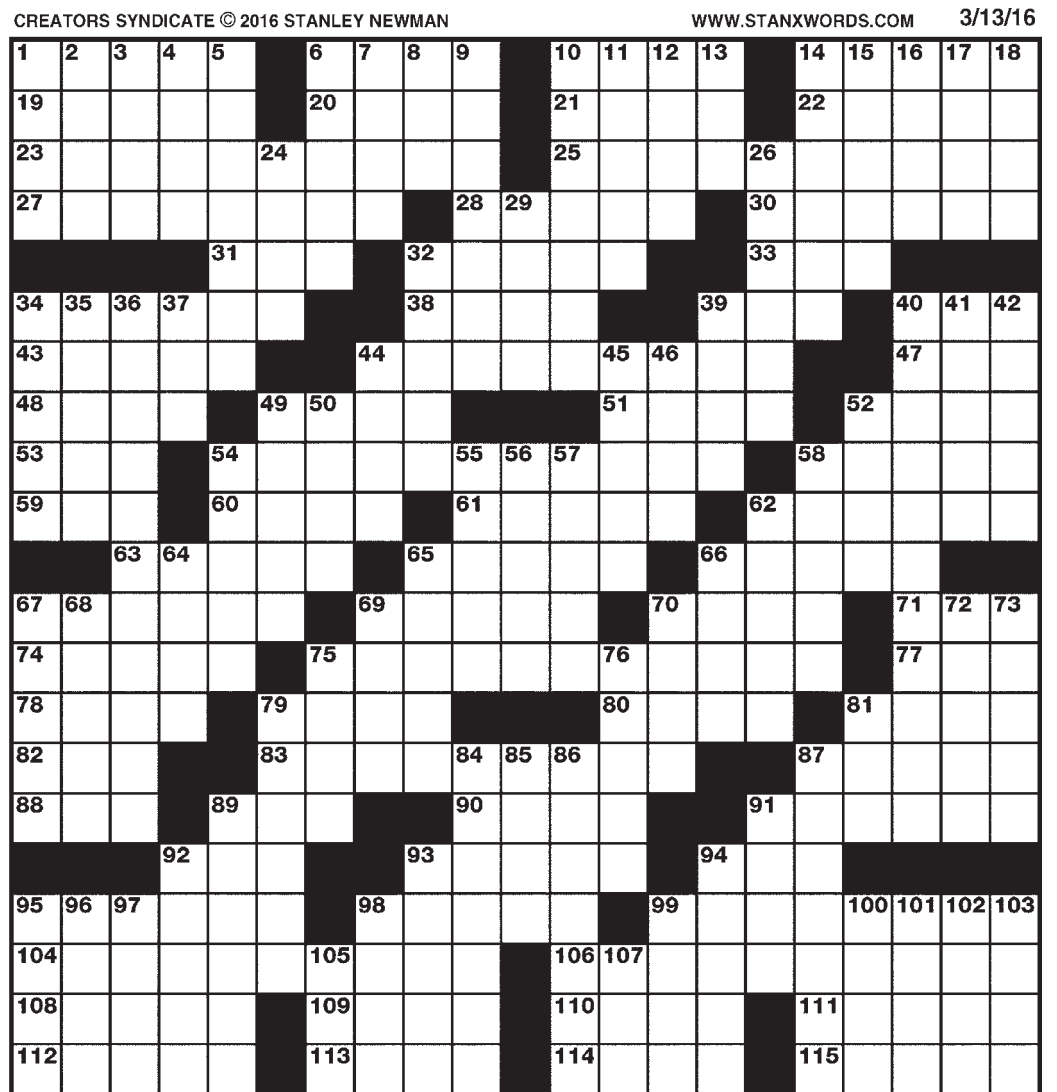


take a break

THE NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

Edited by Stanley Newman (www.StanXwords.com)
CAPITAL MENU: With an ingredient in common
 by Fred Piscop

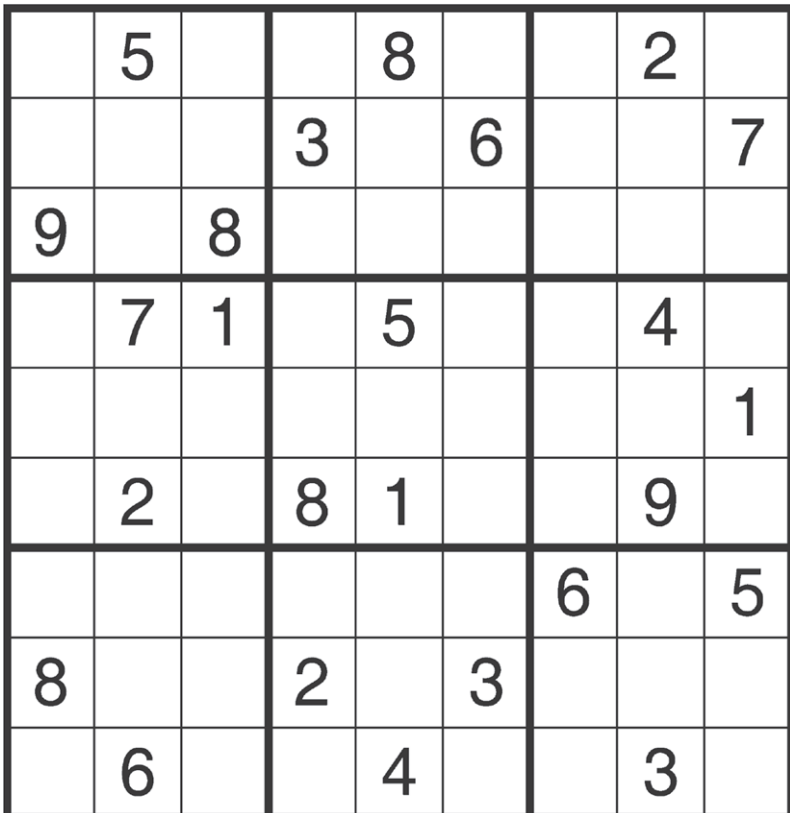
- ACROSS**
- 1 Legal proceeding
 - 6 Be optimistic
 - 10 Hoof sound
 - 14 Captures
 - 19 Shower accessory
 - 20 Spouse of a countess
 - 21 Lie low
 - 22 Put up with
 - 23 Summer beverage
 - 25 Side dish with sauerbraten
 - 27 Campers' dinnerware
 - 28 Drain delays
 - 30 Ease up on
 - 31 Right-angle shapes
 - 32 Cherry center
 - 33 Plethora
 - 34 Highland Games poles
 - 38 Actress Spelling
 - 39 Brillo alternative
 - 40 Truck compartment
 - 43 Hampers the value of
 - 44 Lollipops, e.g.
 - 47 Feel badly about
 - 48 Wordworth works
 - 49 Spiced tea
 - 51 Predisposition
 - 52 County bordering London
 - 53 Farrow of film
 - 54 Burger meat
 - 58 Campus clubs
 - 59 110 Across piece
 - 60 Somersault
 - 61 Wipe clean
 - 62 Not very sturdy
 - 63 Taffylike
 - 65 Online party notice
 - 66 Poker ploy
 - 67 Mrs. Rocky Balboa
 - 69 Thin mud
 - 70 Purplish brown
 - 71 Rather unlikely
 - 74 1 Across setting
 - 75 Autumn quaff
 - 77 Call out
 - 78 Last word of *The Wizard of Oz*
 - 79 Exclusive
 - 80 Essay page, for short
 - 81 Ferry, for instance
 - 82 Poetic sphere
 - 83 Dessert from a loaf pan
 - 87 Vader's title
 - 88 CIA forerunner
 - 89 Football great Marino
 - 90 Deception
 - 91 English economist
 - 92 "... winter of ___ discontent"
 - 93 Fringe benefits
 - 94 Young seal
 - 95 Twosome in a 747
 - 98 Celestial ram
 - 99 Atlanta suburb
 - 104 Seafood serving
 - 106 Seafood serving
 - 108 Do sculpting
 - 109 Besides that
 - 110 Jambalaya veggie
 - 111 Sealing supplies
 - 112 Villainous look
 - 113 Propellant, in part
 - 114 Colorful horse
 - 115 Point of view
 - 6 Lifts with difficulty
 - 7 Buffoons
 - 8 ___-K school
 - 9 Ballot caster
 - 10 Habitual
 - 11 Faithful follower
 - 12 Bettors' figures
 - 13 Chest muscle, for short
 - 14 No-nos
 - 15 Monastery head
 - 16 Cars from Korea
 - 17 Brink
 - 18 In public view
 - 24 Some portrait paints
 - 26 Brass and bronze
 - 29 Tennyson title
 - 32 Wood finish
 - 34 Chew noisily
 - 35 Half of A/V
 - 36 Stuffing ingredient
 - 37 UFO crew
 - 39 Neighbor of Neb.
 - 40 Summer side dish
 - 41 Some babysitters
 - 42 "Heavens to" woman
 - 44 Take by truck
 - 45 Treat poorly
 - 46 "Well done!"
 - 49 Symbol of sovereignty
 - 50 Sanctified
 - 52 Mr. Kringle
 - 54 Five-star
 - 55 Red Halloween costume
 - 56 Whodunit deed
 - 57 Couldn't stand
 - 58 Risky venture
 - 62 Stood up to
 - 64 Engage
 - 65 Pompeo of *Grey's Anatomy*
- DOWN**
- 1 Quick haircut
 - 2 Many an Olympics event
 - 3 Midmonth time
 - 4 Gives a boost to
 - 5 Gym array



- 66 Mannerless
- 67 Sneeze sound
- 68 Opportunities, so to speak
- 69 *Star Trek* character
- 70 Plumbing piece
- 72 Steamed
- 73 Ancient legends
- 75 Natural satellite
- 76 Pepsi alternatives
- 79 Few and far between
- 81 Large inlet
- 84 Hanukkah top
- 85 Medical breakthrough
- 86 Invites, as trouble
- 87 Portrays
- 89 Fencing combatant
- 91 Certain Turk
- 92 Pimiento holder
- 93 Plain speaking
- 94 Hymn of praise
- 95 Rudiments
- 96 Seuss' *If ___ the Zoo*
- 97 Steamed
- 98 Rights org.
- 99 Oscar-winner Sorvino
- 100 Mideast airline
- 101 Spanish appetizer
- 102 Feds under Ness
- 103 Subordinate: Abbr.
- 105 Alphabetic trio
- 107 *Citizen Kane* studio

sudoku MICHAEL MEPHAM

Level: 1 2 3 4



Last week's Sudoku

Last week's Crossword

9	4	1	3	7	5	6	8	2
6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5
5	2	3	4	6	8	1	7	9
7	5	6	2	9	1	8	3	4
3	1	9	6	8	4	5	2	7
4	8	2	7	5	3	9	1	6
1	6	4	8	2	9	7	5	3
8	3	7	5	4	6	2	9	1
2	9	5	1	3	7	4	6	8

BARBS	ZEEB	HOUR	SAJAK
EMAIL	ACME	ELSE	ABASE
LINCOLN	STEFFENS	LUCIE	
INC	WAIT	TATS	ALASKAN
ZOOM	PEABODY	BLADES	
ERRERD	STY	DRESSDOWN	
AUSTIN	POWERS	NRIA	
BLOTCH	CARBON	INAPET	
RELATES	TOOK	MONOTONE	
ONLY	MAUVE	LOGROLL	
SIAM	PIERRE	GARDIN	LOTT
PRIVATE	ALBEE	CORA	
BLINKERS	ETAT	NOVICES	
LEASES	ENTREE	HICKOK	
AND	HELENASUKOVA		
HOUSEREDS	TRI	ADAPT	
KERMIT	PROSODY	ALOE	
ATALOSS	GAIN	PSAT	DUN
FAKED	MONTGOMERY	BURNS	
ALICE	ANAT	FRAU	SPICE
RESTS	NOTI	FINIS	PINES

chess

SHELBY LYMAN

Bobby Fischer was "a difficult" child, explained his mother. Fiercely independent, he was difficult for adults who had a normal interest in shaping his world.

Fiercely competitive in sports, especially chess, he brought an aura to each game that was distinctly his.

He was not the typically talented kid, according to the Granddaster Robert Byrne, who began play jauntily but melted before the power of grandmaster expertise.

Recalling his first game against Fischer, Byrne gives an account of a kid who kept coming at him, no matter what. There was both a degree of admiration and intimidation in Byrne's account.

A description by Arnold Denker and Larry Parr ("The Bobby Fischer I Knew") also offers a memorable account of the young prodigy. "You could see the killer instinct in his eyes, how they flushed with anger and deep-seated hatred when he lost and how they flooded with maniacal glee when he won."

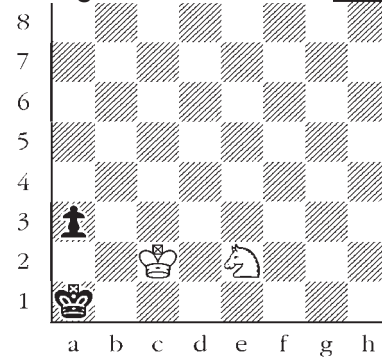
Only two or three such players come along in a century.

Today's Magnus Carlsen seems to share many of Bobby's traits.

He would like, he tells us in "New in Chess," to have played Fischer at his best "because the precision and energy he played with is unmatched in the history of chess."

Below is a win by Fabiano Caruana against Wei Yi from the Tata Steel Tournament in Wejk aan Zee tournament, the Netherlands.

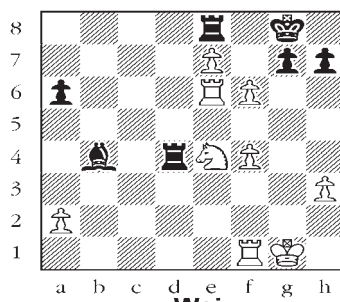
Beginner's Corner



Hint: Restrict the king.
 Solution: 1. Nc1! a2 2. Nb6 mate.

SOLVE-IT

after 32. Re6
 Wei Yi



- BLACK TO PLAY**
- Caruana.....Wei
- 1. e4
 - 2. Nf3
 - 3. Bb5
 - 4. Ba4
 - 5. O-O
 - 6. d4
 - 7. Bb3
 - 8. dxe5
 - 9. c3
 - 10. Bc2
 - 11. h3
 - 12. g4
 - 13. Nd4
 - 14. f4
 - 15. cxd4
 - 16. Be3
 - 17. Nc3
 - e5
 - 18. Bxe4
 - 19. d5
 - 20. dxc6
 - 21. Nxd1
 - 22. Rc1
 - 23. Bc5
 - 24. e6
 - 25. e7
 - 26. gxf5
 - 27. Nf2
 - 28. Nxe4
 - 29. Bxb4
 - 30. Rxc6
 - 31. f6
 - 32. Re6
 - O-O
 - c6
 - dxe4
 - b4
 - Qxd1
 - R(f)d8
 - Rd3
 - Bd8
 - Rc8
 - Ba5
 - Be8
 - Rd5
 - Bxc6
 - Bxb4
 - Re8
 - Rd4
 - Black resigns

bridge

FRANK STEWART

The shadow of Morton

In a Senior Teams match at the Fall NABC, North-South got to six clubs after West opened a weak two-bid with a flimsy hand — and at threatening vulnerability.

Many experts would have chosen North's 3NT; it looks to me like a bid better suited to a matchpoint event. South's four clubs was an artificial inquiry. North's four diamonds said his 3NT was based on a long, solid suit, not a fistful of high cards.

Against six clubs, West led the jack of spades. Finding himself declarer, Ron Smith of Chicago took the ace and knew he could succeed if he located the ace of diamonds. If East had it, declarer could lead a low diamond from dummy. Then if East took the ace, declarer would have 12 tricks. If East played low, declarer could win, pitch dummy's king of diamonds on the king of spades, and ruff a heart in his hand for a 12th trick.

But if West held the ace of diamonds, South had to lead the first diamond through him. (This maneuver is known as "Morton's Fork." Cardinal Morton, treasurer for King Henry VII, extracted funds from affluent nobles with this approach: If they lived well, they clearly had plenty of money; if they lived frugally, they had money saved.)

Since West had bid, vulnerable, spectators watching on the Internet expected declarer to play him for the ace of diamonds. But Smith knew his customers. He led a trump to dummy at Trick Two, returned the deuce of diamonds and made the slam. As it turned out, his team would have lost the match had he failed.

West dealer
 Both sides vulnerable

NORTH			
♠	3	♠	Q 10 9 6 5 4
♥	A 5 2	♥	10 4
♦	K 2	♦	A J 6 5
♣	A K Q J 7 3 2	♣	9

WEST			
♠	J 8	♠	10 9 6 5 4
♥	K J 9 8 6 3	♥	10 4
♦	10 9 7	♦	A J 6 5
♣	8 6	♣	9

SOUTH			
♠	A K 7 2	♠	Q 10 9 6 5 4
♥	Q 7	♥	10 4
♦	Q 8 4 3	♦	A J 6 5
♣	10 5 4	♣	9

West	North	East	South
2 ♡(1)	3 NT	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4 NT
Pass	6 ♣	Pass	All Pass

Opening lead — ♠ J

horoscope HOLIDAY MATHIS

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 13): Because you're creative, you'll wind up in unusual places with epic stories to tell, too. The next three weeks will bring unpredictable adventure. There are several answers to the question of whom you should spend your hours with — yours is the best. It's wonderful to have so many options! Cancer and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 45, 33, 39 and 12.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): You might do things you wouldn't normally do to accommodate someone — nice of you, but don't expect a return on this. Your paycheck will be purely spiritual, and therefore it's up to you to interpret as you will.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): If you don't know the answers yet, don't worry. You always find help when you need it. Furthermore,

a quick review of the hits and misses of the last few weeks will reveal a single, clear, obvious and empowering goal.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21): There is someone out there who is trying to help you but is over-helping you instead. The crazy energy of this feels repellent. Heed the warning in that feeling.

CANCER (June 22-July 22): Life is a journey, and you're not wed to the road map. You're not even wed to the road itself. Your vehicle is capable of an off-roading adventure, and it's about time that you went on one.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Make yourself comfortable. This won't require money. What's really needed is some organization. You have everything that's required. All you have to do is quiet your brilliant mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Homogeny is the enemy of perspective. You won't have to go out of your way to find someone with a different point of view. And when you find such a person, don't hesitate to ask everything you've been wondering about.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): You don't need to jump in and save the day. In fact, you'll be better off hanging back and waiting to see what's really necessary. Play it cool in every way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): While you follow the leader, are you wishing that you were the one bringing everyone along on this tour? It's a lot of work to be in that position, but you're almost ready for it ... almost!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Your family now extends past the one you were born into. Most of the people around you are

people you chose in some fashion. Your relationship with extended family will greatly influence your day.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You'll take on a responsibility in order to give another person a break. This is among the absolute sweetest things you can do for a loved one, and hopefully you'll be shown the level of appreciation you so deserve.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You might have to remind someone of the agreement that was made. You're both thinking of it differently. Forgetfulness (not malice) is at the root of this.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): The best wrestlers know that not everything is worth going to the mat over. Love thrives because you know how to pick your battles, and you pick very few of them, if any at all.

