

The Clubhouse

Star

april 2020

A publication of the Sally and Howard Levin Clubhouse. A program of Jewish Residential Services.



Nice Egg

By Jonathan Krsul

Here's a nice egg in this trying time: 62 years and counting of Mineo's pizza-making and they have only made delivery for one man. Yes, yours truly, Jonathan T. Krsul, has gained elite-level VIP status with the staff at Mineo Pizza House on Murray Avenue in Squirrel Hill (the best pizza in Pittsburgh, and, dare I say it, in the world). Granted, it was only across the street and my gang knows I was struggling with abnormal back pain for a few more days than usual, because of the more sedentary lifestyle the Coronacation forces.

PS please if everyone can reach out to the band Red Hot Chili Peppers to play Coronacation to the tune of Californication I'd really appreciate it because I still haven't gotten a response on Twitter and it's been a week and I know they have the free time to check Twitter. Strength in numbers, people.

FREE JOE EXOTIC



BUILDING MODELS

By Mike Hogan

I have been promising for months that I would work on an airplane model. I was loath to get started because I had not built an airplane for 50 years. Building an airplane model is quite different than building a model of a car.

I chose to build an old Monogram model. It is the "Black Widow P-61" kit from 1974. It was a pioneering attempt at a highly detailed airplane of the sort that is in the industry norm today. I don't think I could either afford or successfully build one of these new airplane kits. We all have limitations.

Nonetheless, I forged forward with the Black Widow. The greatest difference between airplane modeling and auto modeling is the order of building. In auto modeling the kit is built as subsets. Engine, interior, undercarriage and the body are all built at the same time as units. In airplane modeling, it is essential that the instructions be followed in order. Deviating from the instructions booklet will leave the modeler hopelessly lost. Aircraft modeling requires a different type of discipline.

I found that the instructions were comprehensive but difficult to follow. Some steps were confusing; other instructions were not possible with my set of skills or tools. This meant that the model didn't come together as planned.

I'm up to the decaling step. I don't think that I will use all of the decals the kit provides. Most are much too tiny for me to apply. Nonetheless, I think that the model will look good on my shelf.

All in all, it has been a fun experience. It has kept me busy during Gov. Wolf's stay at home order. I'm glad that I tried it. I hope you will face your fears and trepidations and do something challenging. It will be good for your mental health.

As Always: Keep on Building!



BARGAIN BIN RECORD REVIEWS

BY: Mike Hogan

Duet singing is a jazz tradition that goes back to the dawn of recorded sound. The contemporary iteration of this tradition is **Tony Bennett** singing with one of the leading female singers of the era. I think that it is a winning formula.

The idea originated with Bennett singing with **K. D. Lang**. She was a dominant voice in popular music during the 1990's. Lang and Bennett dueted on a album in the early 2000's which went over very well. There was a lot of chemistry between them and the album is a real bargain at just \$1.00. I think that you should pick up a copy.

The duet idea went over so well that in 2014 Bennett went back into the studio with **Lady Gaga**. Their aim was to extend the success the K. D. Lang album enjoyed, and to show off Lady Gaga's popular singing chops. Although Tony Bennett had little in common with Lady Gaga, their musical instincts carried them through the recording. I found it a bit expensive at \$8.00 for a used copy, but it is a fine album that both Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett fans will want to own.

Finally, there is a third duet album in this series. It features Bennett singing with **Diana Krall**. Now, you'd think this would be a natural pairing, as both are accomplished jazz singers. But, I was disappointed. The chemistry that I anticipated was not there.

Part of it was the repertoire. They picked an all Gershwin program. Unfortunately, the songs are too familiar, with scores of versions to compare them to. Tony does his familiar Bennett-isms; Krall falls back on musical clichés. They both sound better singing solo instead of together. I'd pick up one of the first two albums instead.

So there you have it. Jazz singing is a set of skills that you can't pick up overnight. I was surprised that Lady Gaga adapted to it so smoothly. I was further disappointed that Diana Krall did not meld with Bennett. Duet singing is highly unpredictable.

Note: I'm launching a new project. I call it the "Five Dollar Challenge." Stay tuned for more details.

AS ALWAYS:

KEEEP ON SWINGING!

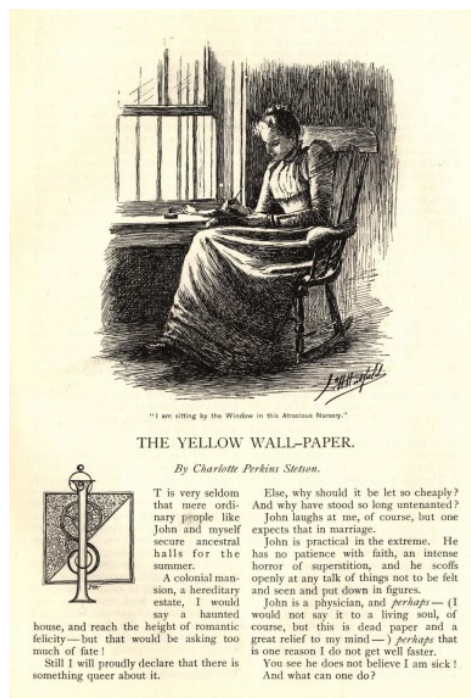
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You can download the books for your own personal use. You can cut and paste a favorite section or even a whole work to print out or even to directly email to someone.

My recommended book is a short story I was introduced to at age fifteen. When I recently discovered it in Project Gutenberg I enjoyed directly emailing it to friends and family: Charlotte Perkin's Gilman's 1892 short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. It is narrated by a character who is probably dealing with post-partum depression/"baby blues." Instead of helped to heal, she is crush-smothered into madness by the well-meaning oppression of the day. As a youth trapped in the after-effects of my own first tussle with mental illness, the story inspired me to demand a life in community, amidst "normalcy," not pulled into the metaphorical wallpaper of my own room-confinement.

Gutenberg is full of forgotten gems. But perhaps you are looking for something much more recognizably FAMOUS? What about the original version of a story that led to movies and more perhaps? Why not consider: *The Three Musketeers*, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Moby Dick*, *Poirot Investigates*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Dracula*...

Or maybe just an interesting taste from a different era:



Get Connected - Melissanne Myers

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What about a computer??? What good is internet without a computer?? NO WORRIES: Internet Essentials customers are eligible to buy reasonably priced desktop and laptop refurbished computers. They are not new but they are pretty good. This article was written on a refurbished Internet Essentials desktop.

What about the skills? What if I do not know how to use the internet? Internet Essentials provides all sorts of online classes and resources.

Other providers: supposedly Verizon does something in connection with Lifeline and other providers may have options too. Explore.

Shopping Adventures and Quarantine Cooking

By Delaine Swearman

In March of 2020, the arrival of the Coronavirus Pandemic and stay-at-home orders turned everyday life upside down. One of the most significant changes in my life relates to obtaining and preparing food.

Before hunkering down, I attempted a last minute grocery run, only to discover empty grocery shelves with limited bread products and canned goods. I decided to try the grocery delivery services and signed up for Instacart. The first order went through flawlessly, but then as Instacart became overwhelmed, I discovered the earliest delivery times either a week into the future or no availability at all. I went ahead and scheduled for a future time slot, but on the day of delivery some of the items I requested were not in stock. I chatted in real time with my shopper and was able to find substitutions for some items.

After four weeks of lockdown, I ventured into the Aldi's grocery store on my own. I went on a Sunday, which I had heard was one of the less busy days of the week. Upon arriving, I donned a face mask and gloves and took only my keys, phone, grocery list, a small hand sanitizer, and credit card into the store. The employees were outside of the main entrance sanitizing carts, and I obtained a clean cart as I went into the store. Signs were posted along the aisles indicating that they were one way and reminding people to "socially distance" and stay six feet apart. The store was not very busy and everyone was very mindful of rules. I only saw one person (a customer) not wearing a mask. I found all but two items on my shopping list. I had to wait behind one person at the checkout line, and there were colored pieces of tape on the floor marking every six feet where people should stand. At the register itself a large plexiglass window separated me from the cashier. I removed one glove to take my credit card out of my pocket and tapped the screen to pay, then immediately put my card away. After leaving the store I removed the other glove and threw them both in the trash. I unloaded all my groceries into the back of my car and sanitized my hands after returning my cart. After getting home I washed my hands, put things away, washed my hands again, changed clothes, washed my mask, washed my hands again...

Living alone, I have never been much of a "cook" and my preferred cooking appliance is the microwave. It is easy and quick. But now that I have so much extra time on my hands during the day, I have plenty of time to prepare food before I'm ready to eat. So I pulled out my crockpot and cookbooks. I enjoy eating home cooked "real" foods and since I do live alone, making a single recipe means that I will have leftovers for several additional meals and this is a big bonus. I've made chili, crockpot stuffed cabbage, fried cabbage and mustard pork chops, Tuscan chicken, and Tuscan chicken with whole wheat pasta. I used to get takeout or fast food a few times a week, but now I'm making almost all my meals at home. One of my favorites which I'd like to share with you is the Tuscan Chicken recipe.

Creamy Tuscan Chicken

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp butter

½ cup chopped onion

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

1 pound boneless skinless chicken thighs

4 cups baby spinach

1 cup sliced mushrooms

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

1 tsp Italian seasoning

1 tsp black pepper

½ tsp kosher salt

1 cup heavy whipping cream

¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese



Directions:

HEAT a large skillet over medium-low heat; add the butter. Once the butter is melted, add the onion, garlic, and red pepper flakes (if using). Cook, stirring until the onions are coated, about 30 seconds.

Add the chicken, spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes, Italian seasoning, pepper, and salt. Mix well.

Pour in the cream and stir to combine. Cover and cook until the chicken has reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees F, approximately 15 minutes.

Stir in the Parmesan and serve alone or over pasta.

Notes:

Go easy on the red pepper flakes! Feel free to add extra vegetables, eliminate the cheese, or substitute a different cheese.



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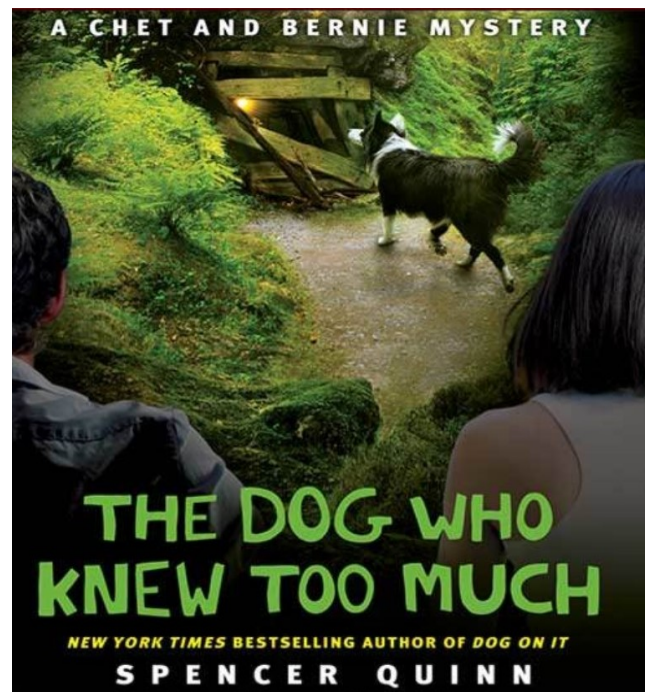
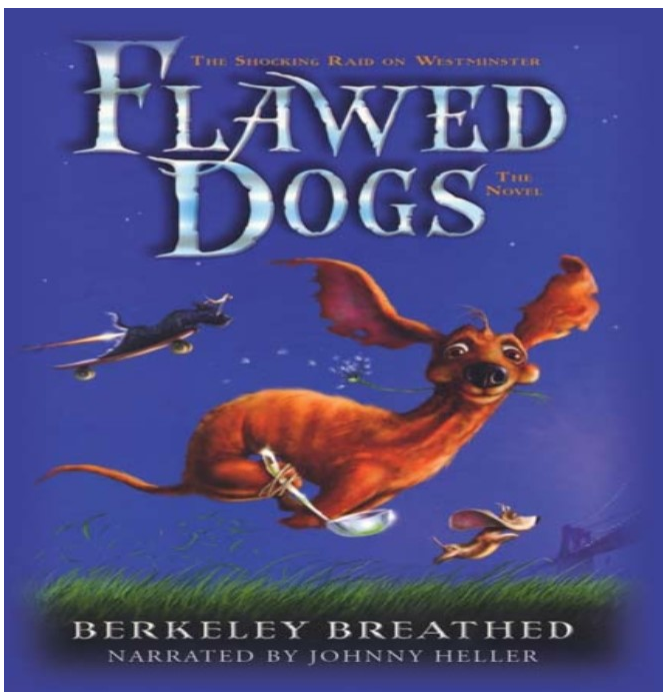
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While hanging out at home, why not try some good reads? There are massive options available online. If you are able, download **Libby**. Libby is our local "online librarian." If you have a library card for any of the Carnegie libraries you have free access to Libby.

Here are 2 books on Libby I suggest: **Flawed Dogs** & **The Dog Who Knew Too Much**

Flawed Dogs starts out with an "ideal purebred" waiting to meet his show owner - but instead he discovers a friend. He licks her nose and life changes. There are some painful parts but he focuses on the beauty of imperfections and the capacity for authentic hope and real love. Flawed Dog's author, Berkeley Breathed, gained fame decades ago for his incredible cartooning - a skill still visible today in illustrations he sprinkles throughout the book. But even the audiobook (which can't show his drawings) still tells a tale worth experiencing -- doesn't hurt that the narrator is a famous comedian.



The Dog Who Knew Too Much is the fourth book in a New York Times best-selling mystery series. Why do I love this series? Because it is narrated by a dog! Yes, a dog. A dog who relies on his nose and has to deal with losing his focus to a tennis ball and getting tricked by a treat and...and, well: being a dog. The dog, Chet, failed his K-9 exam but discovered he makes a better detective than police dog. He is partnered with a military veteran with a bum leg - a gruff yet wonderful human named Bernie (great name!). Together they solve crime. In book four Bernie gets falsely arrested and Chet, frustrated by all his nose and ears tell him but he can't tell humans, must elude villains and ...

IT'S WORTH READING EVEN IF YOU DON'T ADORE DOGS - BOTH BOOKS ARE!

Garden Update

By Hayly Hoch

Today I write to you on April 22, celebrated around the world as Earth Day! It is the perfect day to share the first update about our Clubhouse garden; however, I must type quickly as I plan to fully enjoy Earth Day outside with my hands in the dirt!

Our 2020 garden adventures began just one week before the Clubhouse's temporary closure. On a busy Friday afternoon, we planted the seeds that will fill our garden with abundance! Together, we planted cold loving plants like broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, lettuce, and kohlrabi. Just two weeks later, I planted the heat loving crops like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil, as well as zinnias, marigolds, bachelors buttons, and more for our cut flower garden. Finally just last week, I planted our fast growing cucurbits plants—cucumbers, winter squash, summer squash, zucchini, gourds, and sour gherkins! All of the seedlings have been growing strong in my tiny Northside apartment, just inches from my work from home office desk. They will continue to grow inside until May 1st, at which time I will introduce them to the glorious outdoors for the first time! Beginning in May, I will take them outside from just a few hours a day and carry them back inside each evening. This process, called hardening off, gives the seedlings a chance to slowly acclimate to the bellowing winds, beating sun, and spring rains. After one or two weeks, the seedlings will be ready to move into their final home in our garden beds!

Although we have to wait until mid-May for some seedlings to join the garden, other veggies are already growing at full force in our garden beds! We have two garden beds full of nutrient dense salad greens like spinach, arugula, mesculin greens, and spring lettuce mixes. Next up, cold hardy roots veggies like radishes, turnips, beets, and carrots are growing beneath the soil's surface. I am dreaming of the day when we can all be in the garden and tug on their leaves to reveal unexpectedly colorful roots; purple carrots, golden beets, pink and white striped radishes! A tough veggies, but a tough sell during lunch, our red Russian kale survived the winter and is growing strong in the shade of our gum tree. The old farmers' almanac tells us that a St. Patty's day tradition is to plant peas in the PA garden; our festively green peas took two weeks to break through the soil and have just begun to show their first leaves. Outside of the garden beds, we have a plethora of perennial herbs that have joined our garden family. Sage, thyme, oregano, lavender, chives, as well as chocolate mint, apple mint, and spearmint sit in pots adjacent to our shed. Their scents fill the garden and play a valuable role in attracting pollinators while simultaneously deterring pests. Other new additions include strawberries, raspberries, and boysenberries! Although they may not produce fruit in this first year as they establish new roots in our garden, we can look forward to berries for years to come in the future. Finally, our apple tree's buds have just emerged and begun to burst in the last 48 hours. After watching 10+ Youtube videos, I armed myself with hand shears and a saw to prune our overgrown apple tree. The tree has responded spectacularly, sending out a bounty of leaf buds that now have room and space to soak up sunlight. Below the apple tree, yarrow, an important native pollinator plant, battles with early spring weeds like thistle, dandelions, watercress, and dead nettle.

Gardening, just like our time at home during this closure, is a patient but ultimately rewarding practice. Although we must lie in wait now, the garden will reward our patience endurance with a bountiful, lush harvest. Thank you for staying home, so that we may be safely together again soon!





Photograph by Melissanne Myers.

Since stay at home began, One of our colleagues Robert, has been developing and practicing his drawing skills as a strategy to improve his focus and manage stress. He said we could share some of his sketches, like this kitty!

