Dear Bill and Judy,

This issue of American Lifestyle magazine is all about the humanities: the study of how people process and document the human experience through subjects like literature, art, and music.

A great venue for humanities is the library, and the Kansas City Public Library has been a pioneering force in Missouri since opening in 1879. In addition to being a home for research, it strives to be a community meeting place where residents can have dialogues about civic issues, attend readings, and get help with both homework and careers.

Artist Nicolas V. Sanchez's childhood was spent in small-town central Michigan, and it wasn't until he moved to New York City for art school that he realized just how big the world is. He credits his upbringing for giving him the tools to navigate his career, like a strong work ethic and integrity. And he credits four-color highlight pens for his incredibly realistic portraits.

Violinist Bryson Andrews takes pop music to the next level, creating opportunity and fame via YouTube and social media. This viral musician focuses mostly on rewriting contemporary songs, using a looping technique to refine each arrangement.

You can contribute to the subject of humanities right now by asking the person nearest to you a question. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner

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84 percent of readers save these tear out cards to reference recipes and other helpful tips and pass along your contact info to referrals.*

**Add a personal letter to the front inside cover that speaks to your connections. This personalization leads 81 percent of recipients to better appreciate the sender.**

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**PAPPARDELLE WITH vegetable bolognese**

*Vegetable Bolognese:*
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 lb. baby portobello mushrooms
- 1/4 c. celery, minced
- 1/4 c. carrots, peeled and minced
- 1/4 c. onions, peeled and minced
- 1/2 c. sun-dried tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1/2 c. yellow squash, finely chopped
- 1/2 c. red wine
- 2 c. crushed tomatoes

*continued on other side*

**Add the Bolognese:**
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 4 c. vegetable stock, cooked
- 1/2 c. Parmesan cheese, shredded
- 2 tbsp. basil, chopped

1. For the Bolognese: Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the garlic, mushrooms, celery, carrots, onions, sun-dried, and yellow squash for 3–5 minutes.
2. Pour in vegetable stock, and bring to a simmer. Cook for 3 minutes or until liquid has partially evaporated. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, and season with salt and pepper. Cover, and cook for 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
3. While Bolognese is cooking, preheat the broiler to high. Grill cherry tomatoes with olive oil, and broil for 3–5 minutes or until charred.
4. Spoon Bolognese over cooked pappardelle, and top with sautéed tomatoes, Parmesan cheese, and basil before serving.

Serves 4
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Each issue is filled with feel-good content that engages your audience and makes 76 percent of recipients more likely to contact you.*
DRAWING ON THE PAST, SKETCHING THE FUTURE

Interview with Nicolas V. Sanchez | Written by Shelley Goldstein

What is your earliest memory of making art?
I come from a very creative family; my dad taught me how to draw as a kid. I remember one day, on our way to the grocery store, my older brother and I were in the back seat of the car acting like two wild and rambunctious boys. To settle us down while he was driving, my dad pulled over and gave both me and my brother a small sketchbook. He reached into his shirt pocket, where he always carried a ballpoint pen, divided up each sketchbook into four sections, and gave us different drawing exercises. That was essentially my introduction to drawing. I was probably around five years old.

What did the path to becoming an artist look like for you?
I have been drawing all my life, so my path started very early, even before I realized it began. My childhood consisted of drawing dinosaurs and my favorite cartoons, and also doing basic drawing exercises from my dad. Later, in high school, I was more interested in portraiture and other mediums such as photography, sculpture, and pastels. I then focused on portraiture in pastel drawings that were mostly of my family. Pastels allowed me to learn about color, which prepared me for my time at Kendall College of Art and Design, where I learned how to paint. Later, I moved to New York City to attend the New York Academy of Art. My experiences at the Academy really pushed me to grow as a person and as an artist. I learned about my voice and how art fit into my life. I have been a full-time working artist since I finished school, and I still continue to draw or paint every day.

Where did you grow up? How did that influence your career path or life philosophy?
I grew up in central Michigan. I didn’t realize I was from the Midwest until I moved to New York City nine years ago. Everyone has that moment in life when they realize how big the world truly is. That was that moment for me. Moving away from a small town, family, and nature, and being thrown into the ever-revolving vortex that is New York City helped me understand where I’m from, what I stand for, and what I’m passionate about in life. The values and beliefs I inherited from my family and the Midwest help me navigate my career. A strong work ethic, integrity, and gratitude all push me through to the next step in my professional and creative goals.

Does New York City feel like home?
At this point in my life, it does. Michigan still feels like home, but more in a childhood neighborhood sort of way. Michigan allows me to reflect, which is great, but New York City is where I can think about the present and plan for the future.
If someone were to ask you to describe your identity, would “artist” be the first thing you say? I think so. Most of my life experiences have come out of my lifestyle as an artist—traveling, meeting interesting people, and life challenges all derive from my efforts to create and share my paintings and drawings.

Do you have a mission statement or motto of sorts that informs how you live? It changes depending on where I am in life. Sometimes my mission statement is about a balance between work life and relationships with people I care about. Other times, it can be about being open-minded and letting the world decide what’s best for me. Most times, my efforts are based on growing as an artist and as an individual and taking care of my loved ones.

How would you describe your aesthetic? Is it different depending on what medium you are using? I don’t think I can describe all of my paintings and drawings as a single aesthetic. It definitely changes per medium and subject matter; however, what is usually consistent is my effort to make a drawing or painting that can exist on its own.

Do you give yourself more creative license in your paintings? Your ink drawings seem more hyperrealistic. I allow paint to direct me a little more. I draw in ink definitely serves that expectation out the door. That’s not to be much more enjoyable when I throw paint into my drawings seem more hyperrealistic.

Tell us about a memorable artist residency:

My first residency was the longest and the most eye-opening. I was selected to live and work in China, where I spent five weeks in Shanghai and five weeks in Beijing. Getting used to the culture while managing my creative goals within a constricted time frame was an intensely fast learning curve. I had the opportunity to learn from local Chinese artists and teachers from the Fine Arts College of Shanghai University and Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. They taught me about the stark contrast between contemporary Western art, which can be conceptually loud, and Eastern traditional art, which can be just as conceptually developed but more internalized in its final manifestation—a notion that makes more sense to me.

When you are not creating art, where might someone find you?

I’m not actually painting or drawing, I’m traveling or spending time with my family. I love catching up with my nieces and nephews to see what new parts of their personalities start to show. Being an uncle is the best.

What does “a life well-lived” mean to you? Do you have a philosophy of life that you return to over and over? I guess I won’t really know what “a life well-lived” means until I’ve lived mine to the end, but I get the most out of life when I remember to stay curious and keep learning. Life can be complicated, and the world moves fast—it’s easy to get swept up at a speed or in a direction that isn’t in sync with how I want to live my life. I find that returning to the question “How does art fit into my life?” allows me to reevaluate my ambitions and the intentions behind them.

You recently began a scholarship program. What is it and why is it so important to you? In 2018, I started the Nicolas V. Sanchez Art Scholarship Program, which awards annual scholarships to students at Haslett High School, Lansing Community College, Kendall College of Art and Design, and the New York Academy of Art—all schools I have attended. It is also my privilege to offer my mentorship to each recipient for additional guidance and support. This scholarship program aims to provide an opportunity to further young artists’ development through art education.

I am so grateful for my personal and creative growth through my experience at each school, and I am super excited to support future generations of artists. To give back in this way has been a lifelong goal, and it’s important to me because the education, love, and support I have received over the years has helped me learn more about who I am and who I want to be.

For more info, visit nicolasvancesh.com
Lettuces are lightly grilled, giving this green salad a surprising depth of earthy flavor. Homemade green goddess dressing, feta cheese, and crunchy sunflower seeds top this delicious farm-fresh summer salad.

SERVES 4

GRILLED GREEN GODDESS SALAD

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup olive oil

Salad:
1 head romaine, split
1 head radicchio, split
1 bunch kale
1 bunch spinach

Salad Dressing:
½ cup buttermilk
½ cup chives
½ cup parsley
½ cup cilantro
1 lemon, juiced
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
½ cup mayonnaise
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

Toppings:
1 cup sprouts
1 cup pea shoots
1 avocado, peeled, cored, and sliced
2 tablespoons sunflower seeds
3 tablespoons feta cheese crumbles

For video versions of these delicious dishes, visit americanlifestylemag.com/video

INSTRUCTIONS:

1 Heat the grill to medium-high heat, and brush with oil. Grill the lettuces for 2–3 minutes, just until grill marks form and the lettuces are slightly charred. Chop into bite-sized pieces, and keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

2 For the salad dressing: Place the buttermilk, chives, parsley, cilantro, lemon juice, and garlic in a blender. Puree until smooth. Add the mayonnaise to a medium bowl, and whisk in the buttermilk mixture. Season with salt and pepper, and refrigerate until ready to serve.

3 In a large serving bowl, toss the grilled lettuces together with the toppings. Drizzle with the salad dressing, and serve with lemon wedges.
For this gluten-free dish, black rice is tossed with mangoes, bell peppers, carrots, red cabbage, radishes, and edamame, and dressed in a delicious miso dressing before being topped with seared halibut. It’s as colorful as it is satisfying!

SERVES 4

HALIBUT WITH MISO RAINBOW RICE

INGREDIENTS:

Miso Dressing:
- 2 tablespoons white miso paste
- 1 tablespoon white sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- ½ cup rice vinegar
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ cup olive oil

Rainbow Rice:
- 1 cup wild rice or black rice, cooked
- ½ cup mangoes, chopped
- ½ cup red bell peppers, chopped
- ½ cup carrots, peeled and shredded
- ½ cup red cabbage, shredded
- ½ cup radishes, shredded or sliced
- ½ cup edamame
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound halibut filet, cut into 4 portions
- Chopped scallions, for garnish
- Sesame seeds, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. For the miso dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together all the dressing ingredients except the oil until blended. Pour olive oil in a thin stream while whisking until the dressing thickens slightly. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

2. In a large bowl, toss together the rainbow rice ingredients until blended. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

3. Heat the oil over medium-high heat in a large nonstick skillet. Place the halibut, skin side up, into the skillet, and cook for 12–14 minutes, flipping once, or until the fish is cooked and seared golden brown. Let it rest for 5 minutes before serving.

4. Top the rainbow rice with the cooked halibut, and drizzle with miso dressing. Sprinkle with scallions and sesame seeds before serving.

Tips: Make the rice salad and miso dressing ahead of time for easy meal planning prep. The rice salad is lovely served cold or hot.
PAPPARDELLE WITH VEGETABLE BOLOGNESE

Charred garden tomatoes, homemade vegetable bolognese, and wavy pasta combine to make a delightfully hearty and healthy family meal—perfect for summer.

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

**Vegetable Bolognese:**
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 cup baby portobello mushrooms
- ¼ cup celery, minced
- ¼ cup carrots, peeled and minced
- ¼ cup onions, peeled and minced
- ¼ cup zucchini, finely chopped
- ¼ cup yellow squash, finely chopped
- ½ cup red wine
- 2 cups crushed tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes (on the vine, if possible)
- 4 cups pappardelle pasta, cooked
- ⅛ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons basil, chopped

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. **For the Bolognese:** Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the garlic, mushrooms, celery, carrots, onions, zucchini, and yellow squash for 5–6 minutes.
2. Pour in red wine, and bring to a simmer. Cook for 3 minutes or until wine has partially evaporated. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, and season with salt and pepper. Cover, and cook for 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
3. While Bolognese is cooking, preheat the broiler to high. Drizzle cherry tomatoes with olive oil, and broil for 5 minutes or until charred.
4. Spoon Bolognese over cooked pappardelle, and top with scorched tomatoes, Parmesan cheese, and basil before serving.
Filling:
- 12 ounces white chocolate chips, melted
- 2 cups cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup frozen raspberries, thawed and pureed
- 2 cups whipped topping, with ½ cup reserved for garnish
- 1 cup frozen peaches, thawed and pureed
- 1 box of graham crackers

Garnishes:
- Fresh peaches
- Fresh raspberries
- Mint sprigs

1. Divide melted chocolate, cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla. Place the first half of these ingredients in an electric mixer, fitted with a paddle attachment, with the raspberry puree, and blend until smooth.

2. Scrape mixture into a large bowl with ½ cup of the whipped topping. Fold together until combined, and set aside. Clean out the mixing bowl, and repeat steps with the peach puree.

3. Line a loaf pan with plastic wrap, with extra hanging over the pan, and dollop ½ cup of whipped topping on the bottom. Top with graham crackers, and gently press down. Pipe peach layer, top with graham crackers, and gently press down. Repeat this process for raspberry filling, and continue layering until the peach and raspberry creams are gone.

4. Top the final layer with graham crackers, and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 24 hours. When ready to serve, uncover the plastic wrap from the top of the loaf pan and invert onto a plate. Remove the pan and plastic wrap. Spread remaining whipped topping, and garnish with peaches, raspberries, and mint before slicing and serving.

Tips: This cake will last for a couple days in the refrigerator for easy prep ahead of time—just remove when ready to garnish and serve.
IN RECENT YEARS, AUTHENTICITY—

often sacrificed in this time of mass-
production and oversaturation—has
been making a comeback. What’s old is
new. Antiquing is popular. Collectibles
are back. Vintage is in.

One place that has been championing
authenticity for decades is the American
Shakespeare Center, home to the
Blackfriars Playhouse—the world’s
only re-creation of the playwright’s
famous indoor theater. The Blackfriars
is the jewel of Staunton (pronounced
Stanton), Virginia, a mountain town of
about 25,000 in the Shenandoah Valley.

“They say the Blackfriars is one of
a kind, and it really is,” says Ethan
McSweeny, the ASC’s artistic director.
“It was constructed entirely in wood, in
painstaking detail, by local craftsmen,
and it’s an intimate space that still
allows audiences to dream on an epic
scale.” The theater seats approximately
300 people, and every seat is in close
proximity to the stage. In part, that’s
because there is no amplification or
effects in the Blackfriars Playhouse—
everything is spoken and played live.
“If we have a sound cue, we make it
ourselves. If we have a scenery move, we
push it or drag it or roll it or carry it by
hand,” McSweeny adds.

In all, the American Shakespeare Center
produces over fifteen plays per year and
holds hundreds of performances, both
at the playhouse and on tour around
the country, fifty weeks a year. “This
place is like a perpetual-motion theater
machine,” shares McSweeny, who joined
in 2018. “It’s a hive of activity.”

It all began over thirty years ago, born
out of frustration. Ralph Cohen, a James
Madison University English professor,
was exasperated by the overelaborate

© Lindsey Walters

BARD
TIMES
written by matthew brady
photography as noted
would feel innately familiar to him and he’d feel entirely at home here. There’s a lot about Staunton and its surroundings that is reminiscent of the English countryside.”

CLOSE CONNECTIONS
When you see an American Shakespeare Center performance, expect a theatrical experience you’ve never had before. For example, at the Blackfriars Playhouse, the electric candles stay on—both over the stage and over the audience. Music plays a major role as well, with the actors connecting with the audience by playing songs before, during, and after a show—mostly acoustic versions of contemporary songs that are relevant to the play. You can even

productions of Shakespeare plays that favored sets and lighting at the expense of the language and story. So he encouraged his students to research the Bard’s original staging conditions, and, using those practices, he directed them in a production of Henry V. Inspired by that experience, Cohen and cofounder Jim Warren started a touring company called the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express (which changed its name to American Shakespeare Center in 2005).

The troupe toured widely—much as Shakespeare’s had back in the day. After the town of Staunton offered to build it a theatrical home, the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express moved to Staunton and, influenced by London’s re-creation of Shakespeare’s outdoor Globe Theater, the company worked with the city to re-create his indoor theater, the Blackfriars Playhouse.

By 2001, the new Blackfriars Playhouse opened its doors. “It’s a really great story of a civic partnership,” says McSweeny, who also notes that the theater has brought in millions of dollars per year to the community, which he says has “really contributed to making Staunton an exceptional small town with a ton to offer.” About Staunton, he adds: “I’d like to think that, when we talk about being Shakespeare’s American Home, we mean both Blackfriars and Staunton itself
Regardless of where it lands, the touring company uses the same Shakespeare staging conditions as the playhouse—which McSweeny says is particularly challenging for those performing. “Touring is harder on the actors because they must adapt to different environments,” he shares. “We tour with three plays in repertoire, so they may stay two or three days to do one of each or just be in town for one night and then go back on the road. They really are warriors when they go out there and carry the show on their back. It’s pretty amazing work.”

ROAD WARRIORS
If you’d prefer to see the American Shakespeare Center closer to home, the company continues its longstanding tradition of touring, often performing at universities and performing arts centers from Maine to Texas. In addition, McSweeny says that the ASC is getting booked at more and more law schools, which use Shakespeare and rhetoric as tools for the legal profession.

Shakespeare as exciting to their students as possible.

McSweeny says that the tools of creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration are at the heart of it all, and, as such, the American Shakespeare Center is a place where classical theater can be instructive and fun and can even change lives. By staying true to Shakespeare’s works, staging conditions, and timeless messages, this unique venue offers not only an unforgettable few hours of entertainment but also insights that can only come from the Bard—proving that age-old wisdom never really goes out of style.

For more info, visit americanshakespearecenter.com
It had been over eight years since my last adventure in Maine, which involved a car, many hours on the road listening to compact discs (how old am I?), and a magical place called Ogunquit, a seaside town known for its meandering beach walk along the rocks. When I think of Maine, I picture myself there, gazing at the water, inhaling the calm, salty air as my hair poetically dances in the wind. You know what they say about expectations.

I landed in Portland, Maine, late at night. My wet and sticky backpack, courtesy of a fellow traveler’s unannounced spill on the plane, dangled off my wrist. My taxi driver unceremoniously dumped me at my lodging. As I wrestled my suitcase out of the trunk, I was grumpy and sticky and tired, and the only piece of writing my hair was dancing to was Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day. The Inn at Park Spring was warm and inviting, though, and I went to sleep reassured that tomorrow would be better.
DAY 1
INN AT PARK SPRING
Jet-lagged and bleary-eyed, I made my way downstairs during breakfast hours. I was greeted by John, the innkeeper, whose smile and charm thawed my grumpy soul. He poured me coffee and brought me fresh fruit, gluten-free English muffins, and eggs over easy. The oppressive rain emojis that had appeared in my weather app a week before had grown smiles and transformed into sunshine, and it was time to explore the town.

OLD PORT
Bam Bam Bakery, a gluten-free joint, was on my radar, and it was only a ten-minute walk east toward the water. Sunlight streamed through the windows and landed on the cases filled with éclairs, cupcakes, and other goodies. A three-tiered stand stacked high with jam thumbprint cookies and sugar cookies caught my attention, and, though I was still full from breakfast, I bought a sprinkled sugar cookie for future happiness. Old Port is a great neighborhood to stroll, and I popped in and out of shops on Commercial Street.

I wandered farther down to Maine State Pier to check out the water and found myself at the ferry terminal. On a whim, I inquired at the window about a ticket to Peaks Island. Five serendipitous minutes later, I was boarding a ferry bound for this popular destination away from the urban sounds of Portland but only a three-mile trip from downtown.

PEAKS ISLAND
After disembarking, I found a shaded bench overlooking the water to eat the sugar cookie I had stowed away. Golf carts and bicycles are the preferred methods of touring if you want to circle the entire island. I opted to grab a coffee from Peaks Cafe and meander up the street and around the corner. As I continued on Island Avenue, a little sign announced “Umbrella Cover Museum.” Inside, a small woman with a giant personality welcomed me into her quirky world of carefully curated umbrella covers. Director Nancy Hoffman’s mission statement is about appreciating the mundane in everyday life, finding wonder and beauty in the simplest of things, and knowing there is always a story behind the cover. I was thoroughly delighted when she pulled an accordion out of the ethers and proceeded to croon a song about letting a smile be your umbrella.

After a quick goodbye, I hightailed it to the ferry and back to the city. The evening was cooling down, and I started to worry I might be cold on the lobster boat excursion I had booked—what a good excuse to souvenir shop! But I had very limited time before I needed to be at the pier. As the writer Paulo Coelho once said, “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.” Fate intervened when I walked into Cool As A Moose and found an insanely soft sweatshirt with “Maine” emblazoned across the chest. Sure, Coelho may have been speaking about life purpose, but I’d like to think he also cares about my body temperature and comfort whilst on a lobster boat.

LUCKY CATCH CRUISES
Hoping to catch a bit of golden hour, I had chosen the Whitehead Passage cruise, which took off from the pier at 5:30 and wrapped up around 7:00. Captain Tom and his two crewmates educated us on lobstering rules, like immediately releasing a female lobster that is berried (carrying eggs). The eggs appear as tiny black circles on the underside of the lobster, and a nine-pound
female could carry up to 100,000 of them. It is also illegal to keep a lobster that is undersized or oversized, and the lobsters are measured quickly with a double-sided gauge. The tour was chock-full of opportunities to participate, including baiting and releasing the traps and banding the lobster claws once they met all specifications. At several points during the tour, the boat became a bit like a scene from Hitchcock’s The Birds, as the seagulls circled and squawked, attracted to either the fish bait or the smell of tourists who don’t know what they’re doing. At the end of the tour, you could purchase a lobster for a very low price and have it cooked for you across the pier at the Portland Lobster Company restaurant. For the sake of this article, I will pretend I did that and absolutely did not eat french fries at Five Guys.

ONE LONGFELLOW SQUARE
I’d seen a brochure on the foyer table at the inn about a nonprofit concert venue called One Longfellow Square, and a particular show caught my eye. Luckily for me (and Paulo Coelho, who is quite invested in my trip at this point), the concert was that night. Joe Walsh, a renowned mandolin player, was headlining, and he had brought along a posse of übertalented musician friends. One of them, Berklee College of Music fiddle player Ella Jordan, not only wowed the crowd with her violin skills but also with her voice, which oozed charm, like something out of the 1940s. Sharing the stage with them were Grammy-winning bluegrass guitarist Scott Nygaard and upright bass player Zoe Guigueno of the band Della Mae. The space felt unfussy and warm, and if I lived anywhere near Maine, I’d be a regular here.

DAY 2
THRIFT STORES
I’ve been on a mission for years to be friendlier to the environment in various ways—my shower only accepts hipster cleaning goo in the form of bars, my grocery bags are reusable, and I let my produce chill out in my shopping cart without plastic bag cocoons. I also have a great affinity for clothes shopping at thrift stores, and Portland ranks at the top for expertly curated vintage shops. I ended up with pieces from Find, Little Ghost, and Material Objects. If thrift stores aren’t your thing but you like the idea of shopping locally, retail gallery Maine Craft Portland is the place to go. It’s located in Mechanics’ Hall, a building constructed in 1859 and now on the National Register of Historic Places. The Maine Crafts Association made the decision to lease the first floor of the Hall and renovated it to create this gallery. At one time, the space had housed a jewelry retailer, and the 200-year-old, floor-to-ceiling hardwood-and-glass cabinets have been salvaged and used as a main feature to display wares. Jeffrey Lipton’s pottery made such an impression on me, I checked my suitcase (and my camera!) so I could carry one of his mugs onto the plane.

EMPIRE CHINESE KITCHEN
When I’m traveling to a new place, I like to star on Google Maps all the restaurants that safely cater to celiac disease, and then I try to find lodging in the densest area of stars. Many years of traveling have taught me I’m willing to walk far distances to get to tourist attractions, but having to walk more...
than five minutes to find food results in dramatic, hangry meltdowns. Empire Chinese Kitchen was a place I was quite excited about because they have gluten-free dumplings. The waitress recommended the spinach dumplings, as well as the garlic green beans. I know I’m supposed to be talking about lobster, but those spinach dumplings and green beans are still two of the best things I’ve ever eaten.

HARBOR FISH MARKET

As I inhaled my dumplings, a couple at a nearby table suggested I check out the Harbor Fish Market for some good photo opportunities, so I made my way back to the Old Port neighborhood in pursuit of photogenic seafood. A giant tank with live lobsters sat on the left-hand side. A red, metal, vintage-looking scale hung from the ceiling, and buckets of oysters lined another wall, with labels announcing each variety. In the cases were haddock, red grouper, and something called butterfish. An employee smiled at me, and possibly laughed under his breath at the strange woman photographing dead fish. “That’s not a very pretty one,” he suggested helpfully, with a wry smile.

THE PROMENADES

This was perhaps much too ambitious for a hot summer day, but I wanted to be a thorough journalist, so I took myself first to the Eastern Promenade to stroll along the water. I stopped to observe (OK, awkwardly lurk behind) a woman painting en plein air. It was such an iconic artist scene, with her easel and her wide-brimmed hat and her disdain for photographers. I took an Uber to the Western Promenade after treating myself to some pistachio gelato at Gorgeous Gelato. The Western Promenade is a much less populated spot to watch the sunset, and I smiled at two teenagers lying on their backs side by side with their skateboards by their heads. It was so peaceful, the way the sun dipped and filtered through the trees.

BLUE

This bar is something of an institution when it comes to jazz music, dedicating every Saturday night to it. But I was there on a Thursday, so I watched Zapion and Friends, a group that played Turkish, Arab, and Armenian music. The “friends” part came in the form of a belly dancer with a penchant for audience participation, who gratefully recognized the introverted panic in my eyes and opted to pull a more enthusiastic guest onto the floor. I’m sure Paulo Coelho has some good wisdom for moments like that. I’ll check in with him later.

DAY 3

THE HOLY DONUT

I had one thing on my list before my flight and that was doughnuts—and specifically a place called the Holy Donut that boasts mashed potato doughnuts... I enjoyed a couple bites of both the dark chocolate sea salt and the maple-glazed flavors and passed the rest off to my very pleased Uber driver.

Dear Portland: I’m sorry I ever made you feel like you weren’t good enough to fit inside my idealized image of Maine. I’ve since learned that Maine comes in many flavors, and yours is definitely worth tasting.

For more info, visit visitportland.com
Where did your interest in architecture and design first begin?
I have always had a deep appreciation for great architecture and design, but my initial interest was in construction. I began my career working with a general contracting firm that catered to high-end architects working on historic renovations, gut rehabs, and kitchen and bath remodels. I developed an understanding of how things are constructed, which informed my ideas about design. Good construction highlights good design, and vice versa. The two go hand in hand.

How did your travels through Europe influence your style and point of view?
My travels in Europe were the most important influence on what I do, as there are so many phenomenal examples of important architecture. Being able to experience everything from Roman ruins to the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona to modern architecture in London was truly inspirational.

You have been working with your partner, Charles Grode, since 1986. How did the partnership first begin, and how have you maintained such a strong sense of who you are as a business?
While I was doing the high-end renovation and general contracting work I previously mentioned, Charles called me up and said he wanted to become involved in the business. I asked him to stop by and, in talking, realized we had similar backgrounds. He had also traveled extensively through Europe and had a great respect for art, architecture, and design. He brought his business acumen to the table, which is one of the reasons we work so well together. He takes care of the business side of things, and I handle the design and creative aspects.
things, and I handle the architecture and construction. We each have input in all aspects, but we respect each other’s expertise, which fosters a really smooth working relationship.

When you acquire a new client, what is the most important first step? We begin every project with a preliminary study, which is separate from and precedes a design-and-build contract. This gives the client a no-pressure opportunity to explore the possibilities of what they can build given the constraints of the lot and the budget. Our first questions are always about a client’s lifestyle, as well as their needs and wants. We start talking about everything from room relationships to aesthetics and design preferences. The preliminary study is all-encompassing so that we can truly understand our clients. After working very closely with them, we submit what we call a “solution” to their vision, one that is not only beautiful and fulfills their needs and wants but also highly functional.

How did your most recent project and winner of a 2017 Best in American Living Award, the Lincoln Park Transitional, come about? What was the clients’ vision? The clients were originally looking at another development project when we met. We happened to have a 60-foot lot available in Lincoln Park at the time and presented them with the option to custom build with us. They decided the location was perfect and that building with us was their best option for getting the quality home they wanted. The homeowners wanted this to be a family home, which meant comfortable, easy living and plenty of family-friendly spaces. There were also specific requests for an abundance of natural light and a spa-like indoor swimming pool the family could enjoy year-round.

Speaking of the pool, the stone accent wall in this space, with its flecks of gold, is a really interesting focal point. What was the decision behind including this? This is a custom-fabricated panel that is backlit with hundreds of LED lights. It becomes a piece of art in the space and definitely has that “wow” factor.
In the kitchen and bathrooms, you opted for large pieces of shelving and storage. What does this do to visually open up these areas? I think the outcome visually opens up the space by creating these long horizontals that draw your eye through the rooms. Good space planning and maintaining continuity throughout with materials and sight lines creates a space that’s very relaxing to the eye.

The children’s rooms are fun and whimsical, but they still look put together and sophisticated. What was your strategy for keeping these rooms creative without being over the top? I like to see adequate and convenient storage that can accommodate different stages as children grow and their interests and needs change. Display areas for projects provide color and whimsy while helping maintain a sense of order.

What do natural elements, like the wood finishes in many of the rooms, bring to a home in an urban setting? The homeowners’ goal was to create a very organic and peaceful feeling in the space. I think this was absolutely achieved, and the outcome is a city home that still feels very connected to the outdoors.

Does the environment of the neighborhoods you work in influence your designs? Is there a particular style unique to these areas? The urban environment in general demands a more sophisticated outcome, regardless of style. You will see many homes with much more interesting
and costly exterior materials. We strive to uphold that level of quality and complexity in everything we do.

What do you think makes your firm stand out from other design and architecture businesses and has kept BGD&C going strong for so many years?
I feel the main difference that sets us apart is that we only do custom homes. This means our entire business is focused exclusively on our clients and providing them with homes that fulfill their needs and wants. We aren’t distracted by other projects that might take our time away from our company’s main focus.

What is most challenging about owning a full-service firm? What is most rewarding?
Building a completely custom home, as you can imagine, comes with many challenges. Every project is different, from the floor plan to the paint colors. There are thousands of decisions to be made throughout the process. The construction part is easy; orchestrating the decision-making and attending to small details are more challenging. If we don’t have decisions made in time, it can slow down or halt construction.

On the contrary, the most rewarding part of my job is witnessing the homeowners’ pleasure in living in their new home. Just the other night, I was invited to a movie screening in a former client’s backyard, which was a big hit. This was a house that we made for entertaining, so to see it being used so successfully was a great joy.

For more info, visit bgdchomes.com
"A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life."
—Henry Ward Beecher

A common misperception in the internet age is that libraries are a thing of the past. In reality, they are arguably more important than ever. According to the American Library Association, there are over 17,000 public libraries alone in the US—that’s more public libraries than Starbucks locations. On average, over four million people walk through their doors every day.

One of the institutions leading the way is the Kansas City Public Library—which has been a trailblazer in Missouri since opening in 1873 with a single set of encyclopedias. Over 140 years later, the library has 250 people on staff (including part-time and substitute workers), who welcome over two million physical visitors a year to its ten locations and two million more through its digital branch. It also has over two million materials, including books, of course, but also e-books, audiobooks, DVDs, and CDs.

Just as important as these impressive numbers is another number: one. The library’s mission is to be the singular place in the Kansas City community where everybody can gather to learn, to grow, and to have a dialogue.

"Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest." —Lady Bird Johnson

According to executive director R. Crosby Kemper III, the library has been returning to its roots and fulfilling its original purpose to the city. “Kansas City was very focused on intercultural and immigrant populations and had a very racially diverse population in the very beginning in the 1820s,” he notes. “But by the end of the nineteenth century, it became substantially white. That’s been changing over the past twenty to twenty-five years. Black people and white people now each make up a little over 40 percent of our population. The immigrant population is a fast-growing population in Kansas City. We have materials in the library in about twenty languages that are regularly used.

“Historically, this library was always a place of self-education and drew people from all over the community,” he continues. “By the time we had an independent building starting in 1889, we also conducted dialogues around great ideas and civic issues. So there was a tradition in the Kansas City Public Library of playing a civic role and bringing people together around that role.” In the past few decades, the library has revived this role, becoming the epicenter for many of the area’s public meetings about politics, social issues, and more.
The library had long been part of the school district—it’s original name was the Public School Library of Kansas City. It rapidly grew in popularity from the outer, so much so that over 20,000 people visited within the first two days after its new location opened in 1897. A year later, in a nod to its civic role in the community, the library became free to the public. It split from the school district in 1988 and built a series of freestanding libraries in the 1990s.

But perhaps Kansas City Public Library’s most ambitious initiatives to date have happened in the twenty-first century. In 2004, right after Kemper joined, the library’s Central branch moved into the hundred-year-old First National Bank building. Of course, converting a bank with marble columns and bronze doors into a library has its advantages, one of which is the Durwood Film Vault—the library offers digital certifications; consultations with librarians for developing job skills and starting small businesses; and help with job searches, résumés, and online interviews. “Everything in the job universe is now virtual, and libraries have found one more way to destroy that world-class public programming, which is probably the best in the country, in my view.”

“IT’S PARKING GARAGE FEATURES A MAGNIFICENT, COLORFUL SERIES OF TWENTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH BOOK SPINES ALIGNED IN WHAT’S CALLED THE COMMUNITY BOOKSHELF. THIS PIECE OF ART HAS GONE VIRAL, LANDING ON SEVERAL “MUST-SEE” LISTS FOR BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE.”

Kemper states. “We do more public programming than anybody else. That’s been important to me.”

One key initiative involves health care. Community members can participate in weight loss programs, take exercise classes, have their blood pressure checked, and even get help with things like eye care. Also at the forefront is job skill development. The library offers digital certifications; consultations with librarians for developing job skills and starting small businesses; and help with job searches, résumés, and online interviews. “Everything in the job universe is now virtual, and libraries have found one more way to destroy that world-class public programming, which is probably the best in the country, in my view.”

“But our biggest challenge is still financial,” he explains. “Functionally, we’re 90 percent property-tax funded; however, we’ve been working on diminishing that through private fundraising. It’s hard for a library to do on a consistent basis, though. That creates a financial challenge as we try to find means to provide services while also maintaining our branch system, which is now about twenty-five years old and is showing the kind of wear you’d expect.”

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An excellent example of this, according to Kemper, is the library’s Career Online High School. “In this digital space, we’re actually graduating kids from an accredited high school. It’s a big step beyond the GED we’ve always done,” he says. “We also have something called 2124U, or peer-to-peer university, which is developed out of the MIT media lab. It’s, in essence, a do-it-yourself online postsecondary education. All of this is very career-oriented toward developing accredited skills and is directly related to needs in the community. It shows that the library can be a place where people can come to develop these skills. What used to be completely inside the formal education universe is now available in the library in virtual ways and, in some cases, real physical ways. That’s important.”

“When I read about the way in which library funds are being cut and cut, I can only think that American society has found one more way to destroy itself.” —Isaac Asimov

Of course, opening the doors to so many possibilities for so many people in the community costs money, and getting sufficient funds without burdening the population it serves is something that the library has fiercely fought for since Kemper took the reins a decade ago.

“When I showed up, I was given a budget that was very complicated. It looked like we had a big deficit, which was one of the reasons they hired me, but we didn’t,” he reveals. “We had a large budget because of money donated by the Kauffman Foundation, a nonprofit that supports education and entrepreneurship in Kansas City. Out of that, we built what world-class public programming, which is probably the best in the country, in my view.”

Another reason for the library’s popularity is actually outside the Central Library. Its parking garage features a magnificent, colorful series of twenty-five-foot-high book spines aligned in what’s called the Community Bookshelf. This piece of art has gone viral, landing on several “must-see” lists for buildings and architecture, helping the library to attract visitors from all over the world, despite being located in a smaller United States city.

“A library is a place that is a repository of information and gives every citizen equal access to it. That includes health information and mental health information. It’s a community space. It’s a place of safety, a haven from the world.” —Neil Gaiman

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Within its community, the Kansas City Public Library has also been a groundbreaker with the programs it provides, offering a seemingly endless amount of benefits. Every year, for example, over 150,000 people attend adult events, such as readings, and 80,000 kids attend children’s events like story time and Friday Night Family Fun. Teens can get homework help, enjoy gaming, or use the digital media lab to learn things like robotics and media production.

“We’ve built world-class public programming and have really become the intellectual center of the city,” Kemper states. “We do more public programming than anybody else. That’s been important to me.”

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Another 20 to 25 percent of the population needs us, but we don’t get to them,” Kemper says. “One of our goals if we get new money is making sure we get to everybody who needs us.”

“I always felt, if I can get to a library, I’ll be OK.” —Maya Angelou

In many respects, the Kansas City Public Library has come full circle in its mission to be a community haven—and then expanded it. Combining the welcoming, open environment of its past with modern twenty-first century technology, it serves as a shining example of the important role libraries play in America today.

For more info, visit kclibrary.org
How did you get started with music?
My interest in music began when I was younger. I wanted to feel closer to my father, who I had yet to meet but had watched sing on old VHS tapes. In my eyes, he was a rock star. The summer before I started sixth grade, I finally met him and was excited about taking up the drums in the school band. But I had a crush on a girl who was in the orchestra, so I changed my mind at the last minute and joined that instead. Before classes started, I mentioned to my dad that I was joining the orchestra and, without hesitation, he said, “Anything you want, I get it, son.” He then purchased a violin and sent it to me in Alaska. This began my journey into the music world.

What was your upbringing in Alaska like, and how did that influence you as a musician?
I had the typical ’90s-kid lifestyle, mixed with some fishing and camping on the Kenai River, which maybe isn’t so typical. No one in my family was as into music as I was, so I saw violin as something that would be my “thing.” It became my obsession—I used songs on the radio to practice ear training and notation, and I would practice finger patterns on any and all surfaces. Many people wouldn’t expect this, but Alaska has a really strong string community, and the level of musicality is top-notch. There are a lot of passionate teachers who offer guidance. When I was younger, I didn’t appreciate that as much and just wanted to make music freely. As I progressed, I started purchasing books with my lunch money and sat next to the advanced kids in orchestra to study their techniques and sound. I worked my way up to become section leader in the Anchorage Youth Symphony.

How did learning violin in the orchestra eventually lead to covering popular songs on YouTube?
Pop songs came very naturally to me. I enjoyed learning songs by ear that were both fun and challenging, especially when “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” wasn’t exactly cutting it for me anymore. I started performing at family events, obliging requests just so I would continue getting better. Studying pop songs in tandem with the required school material eventually led to some musical experiments. I would record multiple takes over each other (a technique known as looping), and this gave birth to something completely unique. In retrospect, all of this did wonders for my musical arrangement skills. I didn’t fully transition into pop until after high school, when I no longer had symphonic duties.

What made you want to upload your first video?
I was getting some hate from kids at school for playing violin, so I turned to the internet in the hope that I would...
find a more encouraging audience. Soon after uploading my first video, I deleted it because people online started doing the same thing that kids at school were doing. It took some serious self-reflection to get over the opinions of others. My family supported and encouraged me, which made me rethink the situation and start uploading again.

What was the defining moment for you—the one that made you want to pursue this passion full time?
When I was twenty years old and hoping to find success, I was approached by a man who described himself as a big-time producer. In the end, I was scammed out of $3,000 on the way to Los Angeles—on top of my equipment and clothes being stolen—and then told by TV executives in California that my music style wasn’t marketable. Even at the lowest point in my life, I knew music was my passion and the only thing I wanted to do. Shortly after that, I was captured playing violin on the streets of Spokane, Washington, by a stranger, and my career began to skyrocket.

You’ve built a strong following over the years. Is there pressure involved with having an audience?
In the beginning, I was more focused on having fun and performing in as many local places as possible. I didn’t really know anything about the entertainment industry, so becoming “discovered” opened my eyes to a lot. As my career started to grow, so did my insecurities. I quickly realized what I was wearing is the only thing I wanted to do. Shortly after that, I was captured playing violin on the streets of Spokane, Washington, by a stranger, and my career began to skyrocket.

What is your process for covering a popular song and morphing it into something unique?
When choosing a song, I try to go with a melody, beat, or message that sticks with me. Then I listen to it repeatedly in the shower, when working out, and while driving, and I even set it as my alarm clock. I’m listening for those key sounds that make it unique. It takes me about ten to fifteen minutes to learn the melody and capture the artist’s styling. Then I move on to basic chord structure, supporting lines, moving lines, ornamentation, and drum patterns. I arrange and rearrange the song into parts before refining it to the final product. It sounds like a lot, but it only takes about two hours.

How many hours a day do you typically practice?
I practice for two hours a day, which includes warming up, freestyling, and refining a song I’m currently working on. Sometimes I’ll practice into the night without even realizing it.

What is your favorite cover so far?
Every cover I’ve done has been my favorite because I only play songs that I love. One that’s requested often from my followers is “Secrets” by OneRepublic.

What musicians have been especially inspiring to you?
I’ve been a fan of Imogen Heap since I was fourteen—her performance of “Just for Now” inspired my style of looping. Lucia Micarelli is another big one for me—she’s a violinist with a delicacy to her style but also an intensity that I’ve always loved.

What's your advice for those trying to find their niche in an industry that’s made it increasingly difficult for musicians to stand out?
Don’t chase the views. Put out content that you enjoy making, and stay consistent. The fans will follow. Remember that social media success does not always reflect real-life success, and vice versa.

What do you enjoy doing outside of music?
The only thing my life consists of is music and family. It’s awesome.
Raspberry-Peach Icebox Cake

SERVES 6-8

Ingredients:
- 12 oz. white chocolate chips, melted
- 2 cups cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries, thawed and pureed
- 1 cup whipped topping, with 1/2 c. reserved for garnish
- 1 box graham crackers

Garnish:
- Fresh raspberries
- Fresh blueberries
- Mint sprigs

Instructions:
1. Divide melted chocolate, cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla. Place the first two ingredients in an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, with the raspberries pureed, and blend until smooth.
2. Scrape mixture into a large bowl with 1/2 cup of the whipped topping. Fold together until combined, and set aside. Clean out the mixing bowl, and repeat steps with the peach puree.
3. Line a loaf pan with plastic wrap, with extra hanging over pan, and dollop 1/2 cup of whipped topping at the bottom. Top with graham crackers, and gently press down. Spread remaining whipped topping, and continue layering until the peach and raspberry creams are gone.
4. Top the final layer with graham crackers, and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 24 hours. When ready to serve, uncover the plastic wrap from the top of the loaf pan and invert onto a plate. Remove the pan and plastic wrap. Spread remaining whipped topping, and garnish with raspberries, blueberries, and mint before slicing and serving.

Tips:
- This cake will last for a couple days in the refrigerator for easy prep ahead of time—just remove when ready to garnish and serve.
Bill and Judy Smith
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