

Local Authors set to release novel this summer

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A duo of local Authors from Franklin is set to release their book, *The Intuitives*, this July. The Authors, Erin Michelle Sky and Steven Brown, have been working on the project for over a year, and are soon going to see their hard work come to fruition.

After being friends for more than a decade, Sky and Brown came up with the idea for *The Intuitives*: A fiction story about the tomb of Alexander the Great that presents a fantasy that young people can relate to reality. Although they are independent writers on their own, Sky and Brown have recently teamed up to work with each other to produce the best novel possible. “We both consider ourselves good writers,” said Sky. “But Steven and I both have our particular strengths. Neither one of us would have been able to write this novel by ourselves.”

Sky found her passion for writing when she was in her early teens and got addicted to Anne McCaffrey’s *Dragonriders of Pern* series. “I realized pretty quickly that I wasn’t going to be a dragon rider like the books,” Sky chuckled. “I did realize that I wanted to be an author and bring people as close to that fantasy and make other people feel the way I felt when I read those books.”

Sky’s co-author, Steven Brown, also found his niche for writing at an early age. Being the older of two other brothers, Steven used to write stories from scratch to read to his little brothers to keep them occupied. “He found that he was really good at writing, just like I was and he kept going with it,” said Sky.

Sky and Brown are a dynamic team with their writing, just like the six characters that are in *The Intuitives*. Despite the fact that they have different personalities, Sky believes that having people on her team that are different than her is more beneficial than having people who are similar to her. “People seem to value individual work more than team work, which I don’t understand,” said Sky. “When peo-

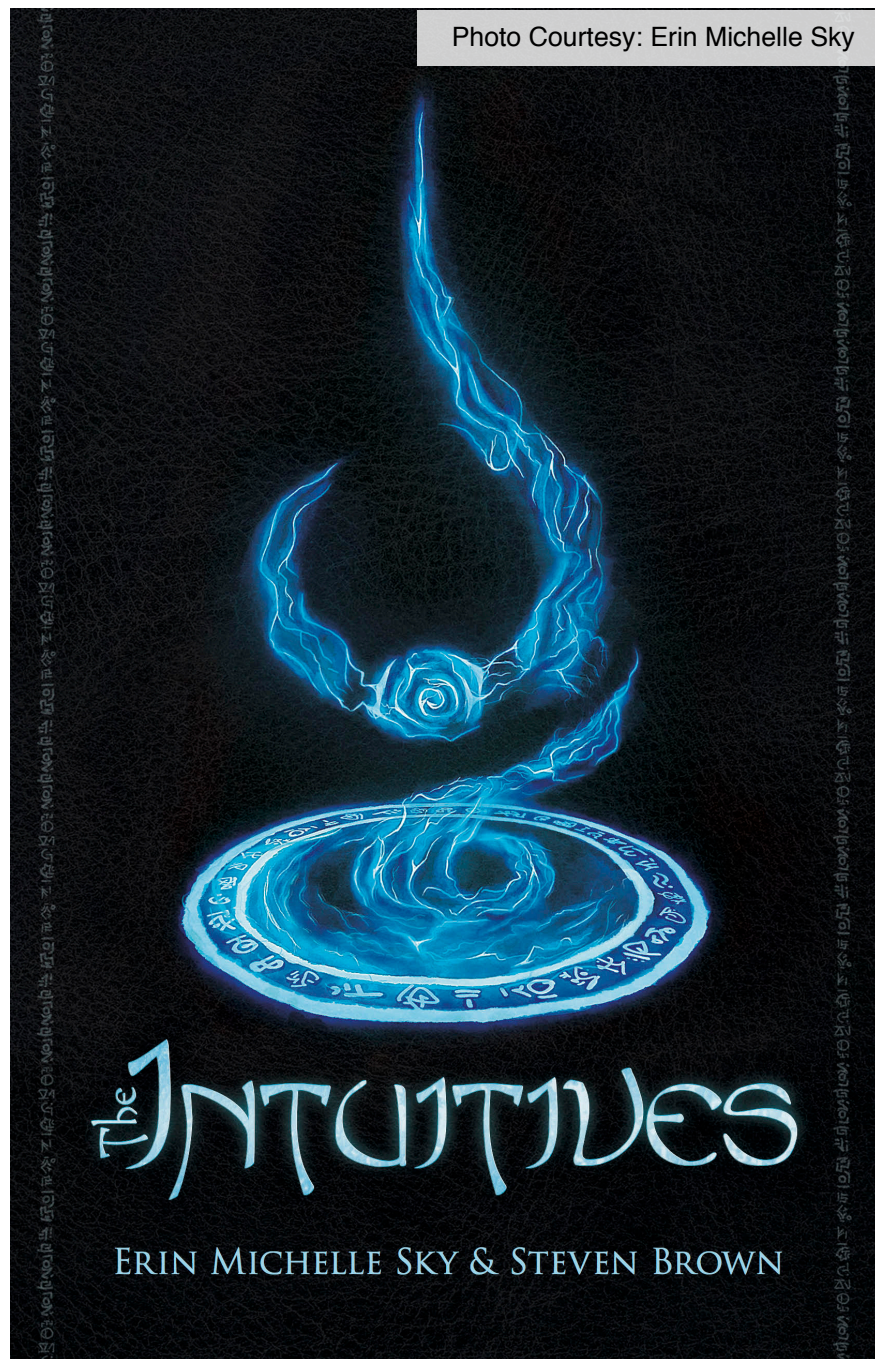


Photo Courtesy: Erin Michelle Sky

ple work together, you can take all the strengths from every individual and work together to make a project better than anything you could have done by yourself.”

The dynamic duo believes strongly in teamwork, which reflects in their novel. Many people today are taught to do work themselves and to not rely on other people for help. “Kids are taught to learn to stand on their own two feet and solve problems themselves,” said Sky. “The problem with that is people are limited to their own abilities. People could achieve so much more if they worked as a group with people with a different skillsets as opposed to working as individuals.”

Sky and Brown value teamwork more than anything, which is what sets them apart from other authors. “Every superstar has a team of people working for him or her that makes him successful,” said Sky. “People like to think Steve Jobs everything with Apple, but they do not look at the Apple development team as a whole. Jobs couldn’t have built the iPhone without the help of his Apple team.”

The Intuitives will be released to the public on July 25. Readers can view the book at trash-dogs.com. Readers can also enter to win one of five free autographed SRC copies of the book at www.goodreads.com/book/show/3323918.

West Georgia Outdoors bringing another activity to campus

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On April 8 and April 22 West Georgia Outdoors is gearing up for another one of its interactive adventure trips; a bike ride to the Carrollton farmer’s market off of Adamson Square. In an effort to connect students with the Carrollton community, West Georgia Outdoors will show students a more sustainable approach to shopping.

“We would love to see more cycling as a form of commuting on campus, and we think this would be a great first step to get people familiar with the idea of biking to a destination instead of driving,” said Grace Andrews, Assistant Director of Outdoor Education. “I think it’s really important to teach our students the value of connecting with our community and neighbors, and supporting the Farmer’s Market definitely does that.”

Students who are interested must register for the event ahead of time in order for the bike equipment

to be secured. The event will max out at 10 people in order to ensure the safety of all participants. Once you register for the bike ride, you will receive a confirmation email including the meetup time, place and a general itinerary for the day.

“Our trip leaders will go over a brief lesson on how to ride on the street in traffic,” said Andrews. “It’s not as scary as people think. Then, the group will take off to the Farmer’s Market off of the square.”

Participants will have reusable eco-friendly tote bags and can purchase whatever they would like from the farmer’s market. Once participants are done shopping, they will return to campus.

As West Georgia moves forward with more and more green initiatives, it is important for community members to have the opportunity to become educated on how to use bikes and how to ride in traffic.

“I think a lot of people believe that riding a bike on a street is a scary thing - and the first couple of times you do it you feel a little exposed - but I think going as a group and having an experienced person

with you can help instill some confidence,” said Andrews. “I hope people are willing to make this a habit in their lives.”

This event also serves as a learning opportunity for participants wanting to know more on the importance of eating well and eating foods locally grown, and what impact that has on the environment and our health.

“You’ll be hard-pressed to find foods with a bunch of preservatives that aren’t from around here at the Farmer’s Market,” said Andrews.

This event is free; however, pre-registration is required. Equipment and instruction is provided for this event, but participants are highly encouraged to bring their own grocery bags and money for shopping.

“I really hope that participants can achieve a greater sense for commuting by bike, a better understanding for eating and purchasing local foods, feel closer to the Carrollton community and get to know someone on this event that they would not have normally met,” said Andrews.

West Georgia Outdoors was

founded in 2006 and was known as Outdoor Recreation until last year. The program started out with the same climbing wall that is in the campus center today, and smaller Rental Center operations. Currently, they have increased the Outdoor Recreation Center space to provide students, faculty and staff with more rental options and a more inviting space. Anyone affiliated with the university can rent out mountain bikes, cruiser (hybrid) bikes, canoes, kayaks, stand up paddleboards, tents, sleeping bags, backpacks and lots of other gear.

“Our Adventure Trips is one of our largest operations that we put on as a program,” said Andrews. “Our trips allow students, faculty and staff to get out of campus, try something new and meet new people! Our trips range from smaller outings, like the Farmer’s Market Bike Rides, to extended trips, like our Spring Break trip to Everglades National Park.”

For more information on the event and how to register visit www.westga.edu/campus-life/urec/outdoor-recreation.php or call 678-839-5380.



The College Circuit

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The University of West Georgia's number one radio show on The WOLF Internet Radio, College Circuit, is changing the way listeners feel about college radio. The hosts of the show have really made an effort to make it interesting.

The show's executive producer Neriah Ethridge has had an interest in radio for many years. "I've always loved everything about television and radio," said Ethridge, "when I was little I would see the actors and hear radio personalities and say I want to be that, I want to be famous one day." Ethridge had a goal of becoming famous but did not really know how she would achieve it until her sophomore year. "This has always been my passion but I really didn't start getting involved until the

second semester of my sophomore year when I heard about the radio station and thought I could be a radio personality like the people I grew up listening to," said Ethridge.

Once she started getting involved in radio production, she could not keep herself away from it. "I thought it was a really cool environment," said Ethridge. "When I came in here and found out how to do the behind the scenes work it caught my interest. I used to sit in the studio for hours learning new things and I fell in love." During Spring 2016, Ethridge was enrolled in the W.I.T class, which was designed to teach students about the radio software and equipment. For one of her assignments, the professor put her into a group so they could develop a show. "That was the most random and best group I've ever been in," said Ethridge. "Usually group projects never work but we are all from different backgrounds so with that and our different personalities, it all meshed together well and it still does."

The idea for the show came

from a rap song "2 Phones" by Kevin Gates. They started playing with the words and decided on the concept "Where the students are the plug" which means, the students are the voice of the school. "We asked the people around the radio studio and everyone loved it so, we kept it," said Ethridge.

The hosts of college circuit are determined to have a show that is different from the rest. They aim to provide interesting topics that any and every college student needs to hear. "One thing that differentiates our show from the others is that we try to discuss topics that are beneficial to college students," said Ethridge. "We talk about entertainment but we want to make sure that this show has a purpose. We always include one really serious topic per semester." Last year, that topic was police brutality. This semester, the hosts of the show decided to tackle the topics of interracial dating and the LGBT community. Those topics are usually ones that people try to stray away from but College Circuit

wants to push their limits and take on the challenge.

Since Thursdays are notorious for partying on college campuses, College Circuit had to find new and innovative ways to gather listeners and keep them engaged. "We wanted give them something they like to listen to before they go out," said Ethridge.

The concept for College Circuit was developed in spring 2016 and the show aired during the fall semester. Even though the show was new, College Circuit proved to be a success with their ratings. "The ratings are pretty good last semester, said Ethridge. "Last semester we won all around best show for community outreach and best listenership." The ratings have remained the same but the hosts have new ideas that they hope will change that. In the near future, they wish to set up cameras in the studio and air their radio show live so people can watch it online. They are also looking towards more promotion, events and free merchandise.

Freestyle Dance Team

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A new dance team is being started at the University of West Georgia. Santi Nilo, a California native and student at UWG is the president of the dance team. While exploring his new found home in Carrollton he noticed the university was missing one thing that played a huge role in his California life, dancing.

"When I came out here there weren't really any legitimate dance crews," said Nilo. "This culture doesn't really know about dancing all that much. So, I wanted to bring that culture here."

Nilo saw the opportunity to broaden the dance culture at UWG and took advantage of it by starting an organization through the Center for Student Involvement Office, and it is named Freestyle Dance Team.

"My biggest inspiration was that there was not a dance team here so I said 'Why not start a team then' and started it," said Nilo.

The team is centered around the teachings of hip-hop and freestyle dancing, as well as members sharing different styles of dance. The team prides themselves on learning from all types of dance styles and not limiting themselves to

just one style.

"We do sessions and try to get our members to freestyle, and that's how I came up with the name of the group," said Nilo.

The Freestyle Dance Team began this semester and has meetings every Friday where they share their different styles of dancing. The team welcomes members of all experience levels and currently has twelve members. Currently, members of the team have no fees or dues to pay.

"We do collect money for shirts or hats if they are wanted, but currently there are no membership fees," said Nilo.

Nilo does have future goals of becoming a competitive team, but wants to focus on having fun and making people comfortable with dancing for now.

"There is not that many people who like dancing out here, or even know about it, so I just want to warm up people to the idea of dancing," said Nilo. "Then once I get more people in the organization and start teaching them. That's when I would like to move forward and try to get into competitive dancing."

There are no public performances planned for the school or student body yet for this new organization. Although, Nilo would like to see that happen in the future for the Freestyle Dance Team.

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The Croft Street Bridge Comeback

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The Croft Street Bridge in Carrollton is undergoing renovations due to some deterioration in a cross beam at the north end of the bridge that the Department of Transportation deemed unsafe. The City of Carrollton will begin renovations starting on Monday, March 13 and is expected to be completed by April 1. Considering that it is an old wooden structure that has been up since the 1800s, the bridge requires periodic maintenance from time to time. Norfolk Southern is the railroad company that owns the bridge but the City of Carrollton took responsibility of the bridge in exchange for the Train Depot located on Bradley Street back in 2005. This kind of ownership is very unconventional and requires the City of Carrollton to get permission from Norfolk Southern whenever the bridge requires repairs. This requires the city to have a certain kind of insurance, a right of entry permit and various other documents in order to pursue renovations on the bridge.

“It is a very complicated and difficult arrangement,” said Tim Grizzard, Carrollton City Manager. “We are responsible yet we have to get their permission to work on it, back when they were responsible they could work on it anytime they want.”

The Croft Street Bridge is not only a Carrollton monument but also serves a great purpose for the city and its residents. Those who live in the

area are more than likely aware of the railroad that runs through town and how the train will periodically stop in its tracks and will sometimes take a great deal of time to get moving once again. The Croft Street Bridge, however, goes over the railroad tracks, which allows people to escape the nuisance of having to wait for the train to regain momentum. Though the bridge could be replaced by a new and more modern structure, a lot would have to be done. The structure would need to be raised eight feet which would make the approach ramps too steep for vehicles to cross.

“It would impact Croft Street, and homes in the area, and side streets so it’s just not worth the impact of the neighborhood,” said Grizzard.

The city of Carrollton hired the contractor that did renovations on the bridge in 2010 to lead the construction this time. After a long, complicated process the City of Carrollton has all of the necessary requirements to begin renovations on the bridge. Though the damaged cross beam was the main issue with the bridge that made it unusable, there are a few other minor renovations that need to be done to it as well in the upcoming weeks.

“None of that will prevent it from opening,” said Grizzard. “We have replaced the beam that would prevent it from opening and they are going to do everything that they can to get it open by the first of April. Then some of the work can continue when the bridge is open.”

The Croft Street Bridge is on track to reopen by the first of April so the people of Carrollton can continue to admire its long history and utilize it when necessary.

Spacewalking astronauts prep station for new parking Spot

Marcia Dunn
Associated Press

Spacewalking astronauts prepped the International Space Station on Friday for a new parking spot reserved for commercial crew capsules.

The 250-mile-high complex already has one docking port in place for the SpaceX Crew Dragon and Boeing Starliner, which should start carrying up astronauts as early as next year. Friday’s spacewalk set the stage for a second docking location. A new docking device will fly up late this year or early next.

NASA astronaut Shane Kimbrough disconnected all four cables from an old docking port, using some extra force on one. He looped a spare tether around the balky cable and pulled, and off it came. “Nicely done, Shane,” Mission Control radioed.

On Sunday, flight controllers in Houston will move the old port to provide better clearance for the future ships. Then on Thursday, the crew will conduct another spacewalk to secure the unit.

Until the new crew capsules come on line, U.S. astronauts will keep riding Russian rockets to orbit.

As Kimbrough worked on the docking port and replaced a computer-relay box, French astronaut Thomas Pesquet hunted for signs of an ammonia coolant leak in outdoor plumbing. The leak, while still small, has worsened recently, and NASA wants to

pinpoint the location.

“No leaks. No flakes whatsoever,” he reported.

During their 6 ½-hour excursion, the spacewalkers also replaced a pair of Japanese cameras, greased latching mechanisms on the end of the big robot arm and even tackled some extra work.

Their crewmates welcomed them back inside, wearing special black glasses and face masks, after Kimbrough reported there was a yellow chalk-like substance on one of his gloves. As an added precaution, both of his gloves were bagged before they came off.

NASA wants to cram in two and possibly three spacewalks before Kimbrough, the station’s commander, returns to Earth on April 10.

Before a third spacewalk, Orbital ATK needs to launch a cargo ship to the space station with replacement parts. That shipment was supposed to be there by now, but repeatedly has been delayed because of rocket concerns. It’s unclear when the Atlas V rocket will be ready at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

NASA has been contracting out cargo deliveries since the end of the space shuttle program in 2011. The space agency is counting on private companies to do the same with astronauts.

“It will be exciting to see a new way to bring crew members into orbit,” NASA astronaut Robert Behnken said from Mission Control. He is among four astronauts training for the Dragon and Starliner test flights.

Poker tables keep decreasing on Nevada casino Floors

Regina Garcia Cano
Associated Press

When the Monte Carlo casino closes its eight-table poker room in about a month as part of a \$450 million overhaul, the Las Vegas Strip will be down nearly a quarter of the tables it had a decade ago.

Casinos constantly adjust their floors to meet customer demand. And unlike the boom years when they competed for card fans after everyman Chris Moneymaker won the World Series of Poker’s main event in 2003, poker’s appeal in Sin City has been weakening this decade.

Some casinos have made their poker rooms smaller. Others have eliminated them entirely.

“Casinos added more tables in response to popularity, and once it became less popular, they took away the tables,” said David Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The peak of the poker room was 2007.

In 2002, before fans of Texas Hold ‘Em began to rush to the Strip, casinos had 144 tables and made \$30 million from the game. Five years later, casinos had more than tripled their poker revenue to \$97 million with 405

tables. Last year, the game netted them only \$78 million after the number of tables decreased to 320.

The situation is similar across the state. Casinos had 907 tables and made \$168 million in 2007. Last year, they took in \$118 million from 661 tables.

Even the game’s proponents understand poker has never been a big moneymaker for casinos. That’s because instead of gambling against the stacked odds of the house as they do in blackjack or slots, players wager against one another and the casinos take a portion as a fee for hosting the games.

Casinos were willing to do that to keep players in their establishments while the game’s popularity soared. The boost was fueled by the rise of internet gambling and a watershed moment in 2003 when Moneymaker, as an amateur, won \$2.5 million as people watched on TV.

The landscape drastically changed in 2011, when the federal government cracked down on internet poker and blacked out major sites - a moment poker enthusiasts refer to as “Black Friday.”

MGM Resorts International, the owner of the Monte Carlo, attributes its decision to close the property’s poker room to an overhaul that includes a full rebranding with the launch of a new luxury hotel named Park MGM and a version of the widely acclaimed NoMad Hotel. The compa-

ny’s nearby Aria and Bellagio properties have poker rooms.

The Hard Rock Casino Hotel east of the Las Vegas Strip closed its poker room earlier this month. Other Vegas casinos that have shed their poker room since 2010 include Ellis Island, Palms and Tropicana.

Property officials carefully choose games for their valued space and are always looking to maximize their revenue per square foot. Meanwhile, floors are generally smaller overall as casinos have morphed into full-service resorts with nightclubs, shopping areas, restaurants and other amenities.

“Gaming has become a smaller portion of the overall revenue mix and things like poker rooms are candidates for further evaluation as to whether they make sense or not at a casino property,” said Brian Gordon, a principal at the Las Vegas-based research firm Applied Analysis.

Caesars Palace, owned by the company that owns the World Series of Poker, relocated and downsized its poker room by two-thirds in 2015. But the revenue it now generates is much higher per square foot, said Seth Palansky, the tournament’s spokesman.

“We recognized the room was bigger than it needed to be,” Palansky said. “You can make a lot more money per square foot with a nightclub-dayclub these days than you can with a poker table.”

news

Bad breath: study find array of bacteria when orcas exhale

Phuong Le
Associated Press

When the mighty orca breaks to the surface and exhales, the whale sprays an array of bacteria and fungi in its his breath, scientists said, some good, and some bad such as salmonella.

The findings in a new study raises concerns about the potential role of infectious diseases as another major stress factor for the struggling population of endangered Puget Sound orcas.

Those orcas’ breath samples revealed microbes capable of causing diseases. Some were resistant to multiple antibiotics frequently used by people and animals, suggesting human waste contaminating the marine environment, according to a study published online Friday in the journal Scientific Reports.

Scientists followed the whales as they swam in Washington state waters and waited for them to surface and exhale. The researchers on boats would swing a 25-foot long pole with several petri dishes above

an orca’s blowhole, capturing the droplets that sprayed out.

Using those unique breath samples captured over a four-year period, the study identifies an array of bacteria and fungi contained in the exhaled breath of the small, distinct population of southern resident killer whales of the northeast Pacific Ocean.

The number of Puget Sound orcas has fluctuated in recent decades as they have faced threats from lack of prey, pollution and noise disturbance from vessels. The orcas were listed as endangered in 2005, and now number 78.

Scientists also found healthy bacteria in the breath samples but also worrisome drug-resistant ones such as salmonella and Staphylococcus aureus.

The whales swim through urbanized waterways and encounter a number of environmental stressors caused by humans, including everything from what gets flushed down toilets to agricultural runoff.

“They’re recruiting the bacteria in their habitats,” said Stephen Raverty, the study’s lead author who is a veterinary pathologist with British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford.

Orcas with weak immune responses can be more susceptible to bacteria resulting in respiratory disease.

“These animals are subject to many stressors, which reduce the competence of their immune systems,” said marine mammal veterinarian Pete Schroeder, co-author of the paper.

It’s the first such study to provide a snapshot of the pathogen burden of this endangered population. It will also help scientists develop a baseline to compare changes to the whales’ respiratory conditions over time.

Scientists collected 26 breath samples from whales around San Juan Island and compared them to seawater samples collected from the millimeter-thick layer on the surface of Puget Sound. When the whales break through the surface of the water, they take in the contaminants and other microorganisms in that sea layer. Pathogens and antibiotic-resistant bacterial strains were found in both the breath samples and seawater.

Scientists don’t know enough to say how harmful the microbes are to the orcas.

“Because you find a potential pathogen, it doesn’t mean the

animal is necessarily sick. It might be something normal,” said Linda Rhodes, supervisory research microbiologist with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle and co-author.

Bacteria are there, and if for any reason the animals become immune-suppressed, it could provide an opening to make the orcas sick, Raverty said.

Scientists tracking deaths of whales found that respiratory disease was a factor in those animals. About 40 percent of those animals had some infection in the lung, and in some cases, it was strong enough to contribute to their deaths, he said.

The study said it is noteworthy that within 30 miles of the study area, the city of Victoria, British Columbia, does not have a secondary sewage treatment facility, and instead discharges waste with only primary treatment into the Salish Sea.

Scientists are working on creating personal health records for each endangered whale, which are intensely tracked and photographed. Individual Puget Sound orcas are identified by unique black and white markings or variations in their fin shapes, and each whale is given a number and a name.

Spacewalkers lose piece of shielding, use patch Instead

Marcia Dunn
Associated Press

Spacewalking astronauts carried out an impromptu patch job outside the International Space Station on Thursday, after losing a vital piece of cloth shielding when it floated away.

As the drama unfolded, Peggy Whitson set a record for the most spacewalks by a woman - eight - and the most accumulated time spent spacewalking - just over 53 hours.

The bundled-up shield somehow came loose as Whitson and Shane Kimbrough worked to install micrometeorite protection over a spot left exposed when a new docking port was relocated. Mission Control monitored the shield as it drifted away and, a couple hours later, determined it posed no risk to the 250-mile-high outpost. It was visible in the distance as a white dot.

As Whitson and Kimbrough installed the three remaining shields, Mission Control quickly came up with a TV MacGyver-like plan for a patch. The astronauts filled the gap using the cover that they had just removed from the relocated docking port.

The cover is made of the same material as the shielding, according to Mission Control, and just as capable of protecting against potential strikes by bits of space debris and providing thermal control. The entire space station is protected, in some fashion, against possible debris strikes.

It was not immediately clear how the shield got away, said NASA spokesman Dan Huot. It’s supposed to be tethered to the station or spacewalker at all times. Frustration was evident in Whitson’s voice as she told Mission Control about the mishap. She was delighted, though, by how well everything turned out.

“You guys came up with a fantastic plan - on short notice. That’s amazing,” Whitson radioed.

Spacewalkers have lost things before, including an entire tool kit in 2008.

But the getaway items are usually small, like bolts. The lost fabric shield is relatively large: It weighs 18 pounds and, when unfolded, measures about 5 feet by 2 feet and is about 2 inches thick. It eventually will re-enter the atmosphere and burn up.

The relocated docking port will serve as one of two parking spots for commercial crew capsules under development by SpaceX and Boeing. It was disconnected during a spacewalk last Friday by Kimbrough, the space station’s commander and a six-time spacewalker. Then flight controllers in Houston moved it to a new and better location Sunday. The spacewalkers hooked up heater cables to the port Thursday.

Midway through the seven-hour excursion, Whitson surpassed the record for women of 50 hours and 40 minutes of total accumulated spacewalking time, held by former station resident Sunita Williams. Williams is one of four NASA astronauts who will make the initial test flights of the SpaceX Crew Dragon and Boeing Starliner capsules. The first flight could occur as early as next year.

Whitson is now No. 5 on the all-time spacewalking list.

A Russian holds the top spot: Anatoly Solovyev with 16 spacewalks for a grand total of 82 hours.

The 57-year-old Whitson has been in orbit since November. This is her third space station stint. Altogether, she’s spent more than 500 days off the planet, also more than any other woman.

She’s scheduled to return to Earth in June, but may stick around an extra three months, until September. NASA is hoping to take advantage of an extra seat in the Russian Soyuz spacecraft that’s due to launch with two astronauts next month and return in September.

NASA, meanwhile, has indefinitely delayed a spacewalk that had been scheduled for next week. A shipment with replacement parts needed for that spacewalk is on hold because of rocket concerns at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Shipper Orbital ATK is relying on the United Launch Alliance’s Atlas V to haul up the goods.

Twitter eases 140-character limit in Replies

Barbara Ortutay
Associated Press

Twitter has found more creative ways to ease its 140-character limit without officially raising it.

Now, the company says that when you reply to someone - or to a group - usernames will no longer count toward those 140 characters. This will be especially helpful with group conversations, where replying to two, three or more users at a time could be especially difficult with the character constraints.

When users reply, the names of the people they are replying to will be on top of the text of the actual tweet, rather than a part of it.

Last year, Twitter said it would stop counting photos, videos, quote tweets, polls and GIF animations toward the character limit. Twitter also said it would stop counting usernames, but the change did not go into effect until now.

Twitter, which has been struggling to attract new users, has been trying to appeal to both proponents and opponents by sticking to the current limit while allowing more freedom to express thoughts, or rants, through images and other media.

Twitter’s character limit was created so that tweets could fit into a single text message, back in the heyday of SMS messaging. But now, most people use Twitter through its mobile app. There isn’t the same technical constraint, just a desire on Twitter’s part to stay true to its roots.

Of course, there are ways to get around the limit , such as sending out multi-part tweets, or taking screenshots of text typed elsewhere.



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news

With ‘Formation’ and ‘Black Beatles,’ Mike Will has made it

Jonathan Landrum Jr.

Associated Press

Whenever Mike Will Made-It receives any praise for his work on Beyonce’s anthemic “Formation,” he thinks about all of the people who doubted he would ever work with the Grammy-winning pop star.

“Back then, I was like, ‘Man I could do something crazy for Beyonce.’ But they was like, ‘...Beyonce don’t be working with just anybody bro,’” he recalled. “People told me that ‘Beyonce ... doesn’t work with just anybody.’ Now, I’m to the point where I’m face-to-face with Beyonce in the studio, and all that plays in my head.

“It’s basically not letting anyone tell you what you can’t do.”

Mike Will stayed true to the advice his father gave him a long time ago - to remove “can’t” from his vocabulary. It has helped him reach his goals as a producer and songwriter, and craft hits like Rihanna’s “Pour It Up,” Juicy J’s “Bandz a Make Her Dance” and Miley Cyrus’ “We Can’t Stop.” He also executive produced Cyrus’ “Bangerz,” her 2013 album that pushed her to full-blown pop star status, and he has produced for Kanye West, Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj and more.

But last year Mike Will saw his biggest success as he co-produced and co-wrote Beyonce’s “Formation,” which earned him, and Beyonce, Grammy nominations for song and record of the year. He also produced Rae Sremmurd’s “Black Beatles,” which reached the No. 1 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks. The song, featuring Gucci Mane, became so popular that it often served as background music to the viral “Mannequin Challenge,” where people acted motionless while the camera scans them.

Despite the skeptics, Atlanta-raised Mike Will has really made it.

“Everybody was against him,” said Swae Lee of Rae

Sremmurd, the rap duo that includes his brother Slim Jxmmi (the group is signed Mike Will’s Ear Drummer Records).

“But he stays locked in on the art,” Swae Lee continued. “He’s focused on his craft. He’s not worried about no one else. Today, he’s like one of the greats in the industry.”

Now, Mike Will has taken the next step as a producer: He released his debut album, “Ransom 2,” last week - a day after his 28th birthday. The album features Kendrick Lamar, Rihanna, Big Sean and Young Thug.

“He’ll take a small idea and make it into a big one,” Slim Jxmmi said of Mike Will. “I’ve seen him take one of my freestyles and make a whole entire song out of it. ... Mike has this knack for putting it all together into a big song.”

A freestyle is actually what led to “Formation.”

When Swae Lee blurted out, “OK ladies, let’s get in formation,” during a car ride to the Coachella music festival, Mike Will knew he had something.

“Swae Lee might have a laundry list of voice notes, but never records the song,” the producer said. “But I told him we got to record this. In my mind, I’m thinking we’re going to get this to Beyonce. I’m thinking about it being a woman empowerment song like ‘Single Ladies.’”

Working on “Formation” forced Mike Will to push back his own album, but also gave him time to hone his sound and tweak the songs.

“I wanted to drop an album I feel good about, that I feel strong about,” he said of “Ransom 2,” the follow-up to “Ransom,” his 2014 mixtape. “Ever since I started doing mixtapes, it’s always been a dream for me to release an album. Like how Timbaland had everybody on his album.”

And like Timbaland, Mike Will has a goal of producing for more A-list acts, including Adele. He said he spoke with the British singer’s manager about working on her “25” comeback album, but it never panned out.

“I feel like we can come together and do a song that’s never been heard of,” he said.

Cosby prosecutors seek to use talk of quaaludes, Spanish Fly

Maryclaire Dale

Associated Press

Prosecutors preparing to try actor Bill Cosby on sexual-assault charges want to use not only his explosive deposition testimony about getting quaaludes to give to women before sex but also his riffs on trying to slip women the supposed aphrodisiac Spanish fly.

In a court filing Thursday, they say the comments show his familiarity with date rape drugs and should not be dismissed as “merely jokes.” They quote Cosby making Spanish fly references in his 1991 book “Childhood” and in an interview that year with talk show host Larry King.

Spanish fly is made from a green beetle called the Spanish fly, in the family of blister beetles, and has been sold as an aphrodisiac. In the book, Cosby says he and his adolescent friends needed the potion to get girls interested in them.

“They’re never in the mood for us,” Cosby wrote. “They need chemicals.”

Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele said in the court motion that Cosby “may cling to the cloak of comedy to avoid culpability.”

“(But) these are powerful and damaging admissions,” Steele wrote, “in two instances coming straight from the defendant’s mouth and in the other from the tip of his pen.”

A hearing on the trial evidence is scheduled for Monday in suburban Philadelphia.

Cosby, once known as America’s Dad for his beloved portrayal of Dr. Cliff Huxtable on his top-ranked “The Cosby Show” in the 1980s and ‘90s, is accused of drugging and molesting a Temple University basketball team manager, Andrea Constand, at his home near Philadelphia in 2004. He’s charged with felony sexual assault. Dozens of women have raised similar claims against

him, but Montgomery Common Pleas Judge Steven O’Neill has ruled that only one of them can testify at the June 5 trial.

Steele argued that the Spanish fly stories should be admitted in keeping with a Pennsylvania court ruling that allowed a jury to hear rap lyrics about a plan to kill someone to suggest the person’s state of mind. Defense lawyer Brian McMonagle declined to comment on the motion.

In the book, Cosby lays out a story about the boys first trying to mix a Spanish fly powder in a drink and then sprinkling it on cookies they offered girls at a party. In the end, it failed to have the desired effect. On the talk show, Cosby told King that boys “from age 11 on up to death” sought out Spanish fly.

“Put it in a drink. ... The girl would drink it and,” Cosby began.

“And she’s yours,” King said.

“Hello, America,” Cosby replied.

Cosby, in the decade-old deposition, said he got seven prescriptions for quaaludes in the 1970s, intending not to use them but to give to women he was pursuing for sex. The powerful sedatives were banned in 1983, and Cosby said he no longer had them when he met Constand 20 years later.

Defense lawyers say any reference to quaaludes should therefore be excluded from the trial. They also want the judge to exclude Cosby’s deposition testimony about what he calls a long string of consensual affairs and sexual liaisons.

Cosby, who has been married for decades, sat for the deposition after Constand sued him for defamation and sexual battery in 2005. He later settled the lawsuit for an undisclosed sum. He has pleaded not guilty in the criminal case, which was filed in late 2015.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they give permission, which Constand has done.

Amazon celebrates theaters, previews Haynes’ ‘Wonderstruck’

Lindsey Bahr

Associated Press

Amazon Studios might have a streaming component, but executives say the company is fully committed to the theatrical experience.

The young studio in its second year at CinemaCon, an annual gathering of theater owners and exhibitors, reiterated its commitment to preserving the theatrical window Thursday and previewed its upcoming slate of releases. Amazon’s streaming and original content com-

petitor, Netflix, did not present at CinemaCon.

“Our customers love great movies and great movies play in theaters,” said Amazon executive Jason Ropell. “We really believe in the theatrical experience by fully supporting the theatrical window for our releases.”

Last year at CinemaCon, Amazon was a new studio, timidly dipping its toes into the waters alongside the biggest studios in Hollywood. This year, it came back with swagger and a story, boasting Oscar wins for “Manchester by the Sea” and “The Salesman.”

One of its most highly anticipated is Todd Haynes’ “Wonderstruck,” a fanciful coming of age dra-

ma set in 1927 and 1977 and starring Julianne Moore, Michelle Williams and “Pete’s Dragon’s” Oakes Fegley. The film is set for release sometime this year.

Amazon plans at least 15 releases again this year, concentrating on filmmaker-driven projects like Richard Linklater’s “Last Flag Flying” about Vietnam vets played by Bryan Cranston, Steve Carell and Laurence Fishburne who reunite years later around a death.

The studio also showed a preview of the Mike White-directed “Brad’s Status” starring Ben Stiller in a dramatic turn and the John Cena war pic “The Wall” from “Edge of Tomorrow” director Doug Liman.

Its next release is “Lost City

of Z” on April 14 from lyrical filmmaker James Gray. Starring Charlie Hunnam, “Lost City of Z” is a spiritual adventure film about an explorer obsessed with a city he discovered on an expedition.

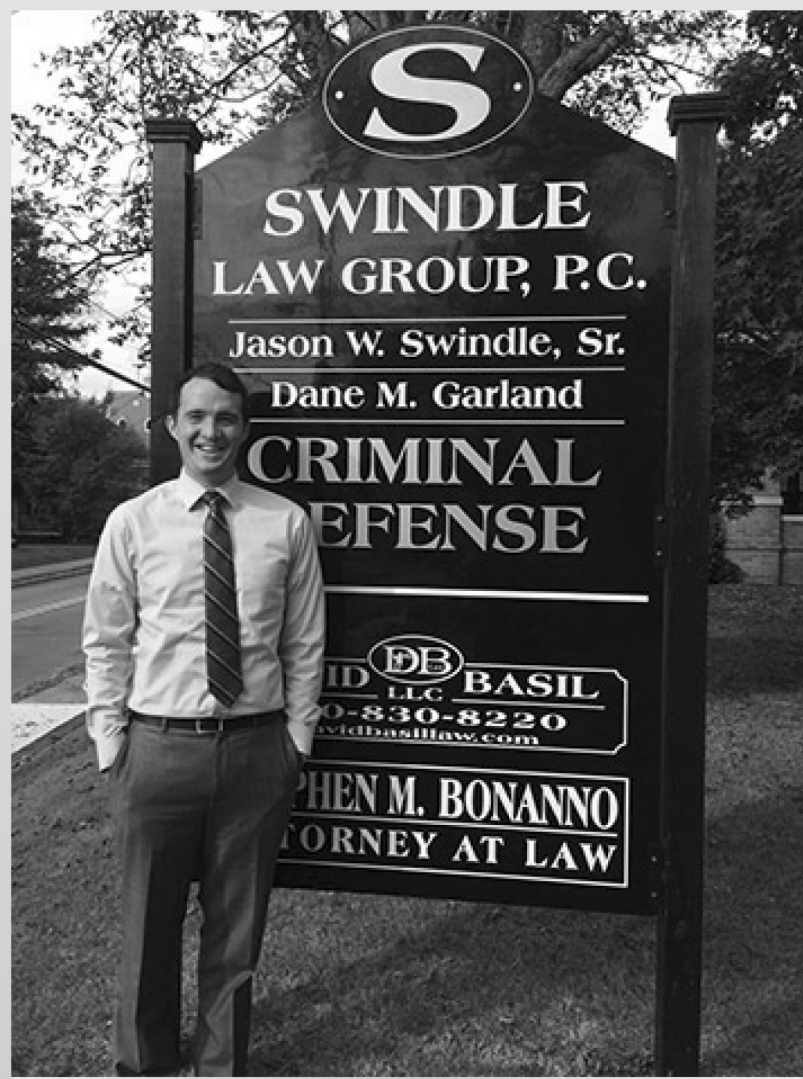
Hunnam was on site to talk about the arduous jungle shoot and the beetle that crawled into his ear one night during production. The actor also passed out candy to the audience in crowded ballroom at Caesar’s Palace along with Kumail Nanjiani, whose rom-com “The Big Sick” launches on June 23.

Amazon’s marketing head Bob Berney also announced that Terry Gilliam’s long-time-coming “Don Quixote” is currently in production with Adam Driver.



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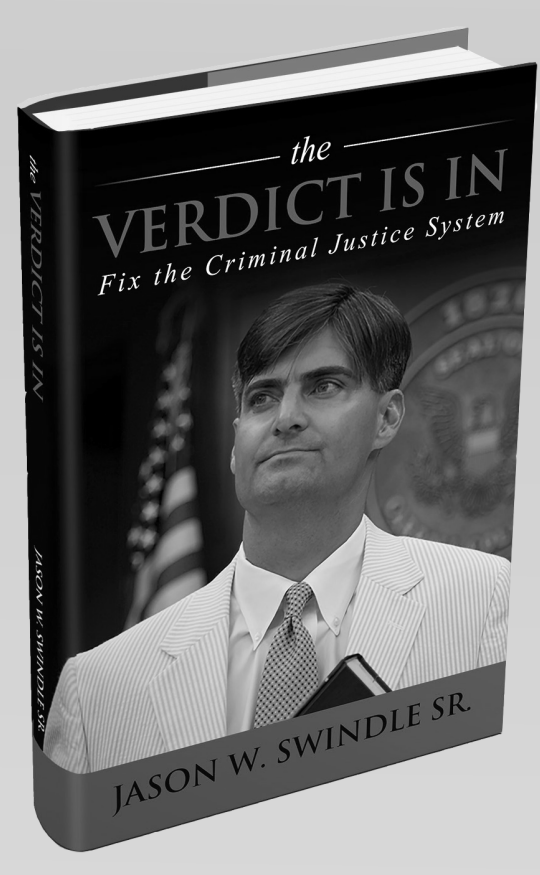
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arts & entertainment

Reynolds and Fisher honored with humor, music and dance

Anthony McCartney

Associated Press

Laughter, music and the tapping of dancing shoes reverberated throughout a public memorial to Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher, which loved ones say is just how the actresses would have wanted it.

There were few tears throughout the two-hour ceremony Saturday, which honored the mother-daughter duo's impact on film, culture and those who knew them with a mix of photos, videos, and anecdotes that kept the audience laughing and applauding.

Todd Fisher led the ceremony, which he said was intended to bring fans an intimate view of his mother and sister. He called it a show, saying his mother hated to attend memorials.

Hundreds of fans - some wearing "Star Wars" attire - attended the public ceremony that featured numerous family photos and Reynolds' final interview reflecting on her life and philanthropy, and one of Fisher's high school friends sharing some her off-color emails to him.

A troupe from Reynolds' dance studio performed an homage to "Singin' in the Rain," the film that catapulted Reynolds to stardom at age 19. After an opening film that was an ode to Fisher's "Star Wars"

role, a working R2D2 unit came on stage, mournfully beeped and parked next to a director's chair with Fisher's name on it. Across the stage, near a piano, sat an empty chair with Reynolds' name on it.

Fisher, 60, an actress and writer who starred as Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, died Dec. 27 after suffering a medical emergency days earlier aboard a flight from London. Reynolds, an Oscar-nominated actress for her role in "The Unsinkable Molly Brown," died the following day at age 84.

Todd Fisher recounted his mother's final moments and her remark that she wanted to be with her daughter.

"It was a very peaceful exit that only my mother could have orchestrated," he said to booming laughter. "She was trained in Hollywood where they teach you to make a great entrance, and exit."

Fisher and Reynolds had a complex relationship, with some years of estrangement before they reunited and became close confidantes.

Actor Dan Aykroyd described Fisher, his one-time fiancée, as a chatterbox who never let him speak. He described using the Heimlich maneuver on her once, and joked that if he had been on the plane where Fisher fell ill in December, he "might have been able to save her again." He echoed a sentiment expressed by many early in his remarks. "We really shouldn't be here this soon," he said.

The ceremony was attended by several stars, including Rene Russo, Beverly D'Angelo, "Dallas" actress Morgan Brittany, actor-director Fisher Stevens, "Brady Bunch" actress Susan Olsen and actor Griffin Dunne.

Dunne recounted living with Fisher in New York when they were both young actors, and her initial reactions to working on "Star Wars." He recounted Fisher's assessment of the film: "It's stupid and it's terrible."

After the first screening, they both knew she had been wrong. "We knew movies would never be the same, and you just knew Carrie's life would never be the same."

When speakers weren't delivering one-liners - some that had been uttered or penned by Fisher and Reynolds - music and dance took over the stage. The ceremony featured a new song James Blunt wrote after Fisher's death, and the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles performed a somber rendition of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors" that celebrated Fisher's status as a feminist icon.

Actress Ruta Lee celebrated Reynolds' philanthropy in her eulogy, which included her singing to troops during the Korean War and her later efforts raising millions to help those suffering from mental illness. Carrie Fisher battled mental illness and addiction, exploring her struggles in the book "Postcards from the Edge."

Fisher discussed her mother's charitable work in a video clip,

joking: "She sort of started what this town was going to need quite a bit of, which was treatment for the mentally ill."

Lee said it was OK to feel sadness at the deaths of Reynolds and Fisher, but not to dwell on it. "Debbie the unsinkable and her beautiful daughter would never want us to mourn," she said.

Author Gavin de Becker, who attended high school with Fisher and recounted how his infatuation with her turned into a lifelong friendship, said his friend "zoomed through time" and made so many people's lives better. He recounted how Fisher took him on international trips and "gave me so many firsts."

"The first time I had sex was at Carrie's house," de Becker said. "It wasn't with Carrie, but she arranged it."

It was one of many tales about the actresses that drew boisterous laughter.

After the service, fans were invited to see the actresses' final resting place at Forest Lawn - Hollywood Hills, a storied cemetery where numerous celebrities, including Bette Davis and Liberace, are buried or interred.

Many also paused to snap photos with some of the actresses' memorabilia that was displayed outside the theater, including two dresses Fisher wore while filming "Star Wars" and "When Harry Met Sally," and two of Reynolds' costumes from "Singin' in the Rain" and "Unsinkable Molly Brown."

The Alternative Way of Life

Victoria Jones

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Starting in 2012, two courageous men used their creativity and unique ideas to create an event that would provide millennials the opportunity to engage in an activity that would serve as the "alternative" for what the world has to offer. One idea led to another and after staying up all night planning a fresh and brand new idea, Caleb Stanley and Austin Dennis came up with an organization called The Alternative, an event that would be held once a month.

"We all need hope and we all need community. We have all been given a dream to do something that is bigger than ourselves and we need people around us that are going to push us toward courage, so that is when we came up with The Alternative," said Caleb Stanley, co-founder of The Alternative and former student at UWG.

From the early stages to now, The Alternative has developed significantly through the years. When The Alternative was first created, it was held at various churches or with different organizations, but now the main goal is to hold the events at The Newnan Centre so that it holds no affiliations and will gain an even larger crowd.

"When we started this year we agreed that even though it would be easier and much more affordable, we are not going to meet in churches this season," said Stanley. "We are going to find public property that is not associated with organizations and meet on those places so that anybody can come because if you stay in one church for too long everyone thinks you are just that church's ministry or just with that organiza-

tion."

The events consist of worship, spoken words, and different forms of creative elements to convey the message of the night. At one particular event The Alternative team came up with a theme called "New Season," which was based around the different seasons in one's life. The team created a prayer room that was decorated with maps and other creative designs that went along with the theme of the different seasons going on in the world and how they relate to individuals. Because the events are only held once a month, the team is able to lead a successful service by putting all of their energy into each event.

"The monthly event is a service centered around who Jesus is and we portray that message through music, a message or a film,"

said Stanley. "It is like a big Easter service every month. We give everything we have and base it around what we can do to reach people who the churches are not reaching."

The Alternative team strictly holds onto faith to get them through their needs to successfully carry on and look forward to the rewards of the outcome and lives that are being changed.

"We definitely operate by faith. For example, the Newnan Centre is \$2,500 to rent and I said, 'If this doesn't get covered then I will be selling my car,' but God comes through and now we are here," said Stanley. "I think when you step out and go for something, people want to be apart of it and take risks with you. Courage is contagious and it makes the reward even bigger."

The "why" behind The Al-

ternative and the mission statement of awakening dreams, uniting community and amplifying hope is what keeps it prosperous.

"What keeps me going is constantly reminding myself of why we started, which was so we could be a part of something that is bigger than ourselves and to give people hope," said Stanley. "Everyday people are hurting and broken, especially millennials. I am a dreamer and I am a missionary so there is something in me that has always loved to go against the odds and dream big and do this to see other people's dreams come alive."

To further advance in their mission, The Alternative's next monthly event will be held at The Newnan Centre on April 14, 2017. The Alternative way of life begins now.



Photo: The Alternative Media Team

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