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How Men Become Boys Once Again Through Magic of Summer Softball

A lawyer loses his suit, an accountant forgets his pencil and an engineer sets aside his calculator. Businessmen forget the bottom line for an evening.

The phenomenon occurs at this time every year. It's fun, sometimes hilarious. It's men's summer softball games—where middle-aged men circle the bases with a stride that can often be smaller than their waistlines.

It happens all over the region every evening and on weekends. One crucial element is a catchy name for the team—and the name does not necessarily describe the prowess of the team on the playing field.

There are angels and saints battling when St. Jude's mauls St. Paul's. In a Family Feud, the Jolly Trolley derails Charlie Brown's. You might find Sour Grapes being squeezed by the Old Stars. And if there is any laying down to be done, it won't be by the Mattress Factory, and you can be sure that there will be Chaos, controlling.

What other matter of such importance would cause an area executive to e-mail our Sports Editor from Japan to get game results for team playoffs. The dedicated teammate cut his trip short to return home when he discovered his team was up for the championship game.

One serious player was jubilant to discover our photographer had snapped his picture during a sterling

play. "You're going to put it in the paper, aren't you?" he happily exclaimed. On second thought, he remembered he had called in sick from work to make the game. "Well... go ahead and publish it anyway," he said. The fame was worth the shame.

The teams are really a social happening as well. All over the county, presidents and postmen ply for pilsner. On any evening, you'll have Mountianside men infiltrating the Scotch Plains League. On Thursday evenings, the Mountianside league is plundered by Westfielders. The Westfield League draws players from all over, including Cranford, Union, Fanwood and Rahway.

The men love to be boys—and they're good at it. If you believe things are quiet here over the summer, stop in at a local watering hole at sundown. You may find a pack of men-II-boyz telling softball war stories while enjoying the company. These are boys who have temporarily traded in the three-piece suit and Gucci shoes for cutoff shorts and a pair of Nikes.

No matter who strikes out who during play (even if it's a chairman of the board,) by the end of the night you can spot plenty of friendly slaps on the back and a "Way to go, buddy."

Good game guys! Enjoy the season.

Letters to the Editor

National Chains Have Other Options Besides Replacing Local Businesses

As a person who grew up here, I came back to live in Westfield after I was married because of all the qualities that make Westfield unique. After living in different parts of the country, I came to appreciate the thriving downtown, the sense of community, and the familiar Westfield-like Elm Delicatessen and Backroom Antiques.

It was with great sadness that I read that these establishments were being forced out of business. I want to express my thanks to Mr. DeReubis, the owner of Elm Delicatessen, and Ms. Gentempo and Mrs. Priscoe-Spurr, the owners of Backroom Antiques, for being valued members of the Westfield community.

I remember being a teenager and going to Elm Deli after school for a soda and being treated like their best customer; not all stores were that tolerant of kids. These stores which give back to the community are what make Westfield special and unique.

I must say that I was pleased that national chain stores would be moving into Westfield to take over empty store-

fronts; the downtown is booming and will bring in shoppers from other towns. I support having a mix of larger corporate and smaller independent stores, but why should we allow current businesses to be pushed out, while the former Woolworth and Auster's stores remain vacant and an eyesore?

We need to protect the other independent shops in Westfield to ensure their future by patronizing them as much as possible; otherwise, the greedy landlords will dictate what stores we have access to downtown.

It is too late to change the fate of Backroom Antiques and Elm Deli, but I would urge all Westfield residents to patronize these businesses as much as possible in the last months that they are open as a way of thanking them for making Westfield what it is today.

It is my sincere hope that both businesses will be able to reopen at other locations, but whether they do or not, they have a permanent place in the history of Westfield.

Robin Sitzer Quick
Westfield

Failure to Renew Elm Deli's Lease Is Wrong End to American Dream

During this past week, the First Lady has been touring various historical sites in our area, bringing attention to the need to preserve reminders of our past. These places and objects are important to show us who we are, where we come from, and where we're going.

I think there is a similar situation developing in Westfield. There are two local businesses that are losing their leases so that others can make more money.

The Elm Delicatessen is owned by Tim DeReubis. Tim came to Westfield from Italy at the age of 14 to make his way in life. His is the ultimate American story. Through his own hard work, he became a success, and he continues to work long and hard hours to maintain that success.

The Elm Deli is a fixture, and Tim is an important member of our community.

Tim may never have held public office, but he is a good neighbor in the very best possible sense of that phrase. On the human, person-to-person level, Tim has performed many unsung and unnoticed deeds to help others in need in our town.

Tim's dream was to be able to sell his business and thus achieve security for his retirement. Presently, that dream is in tatters.

Is there anything we can do to prevent this wrong ending to the American dream? We managed to save the Rialto; can't we do something for Elm Deli?

Tim himself is resigned to the situation, saying, "It's just business." But I can't let him go without at least some recognition of his place in our lives and a protest of the system in which he's caught. Where are we going?

Doris V. Jackson
Westfield

New Fanwood Resident Sees Few Symbols of Patriotism Over the 4th

On July 8, I celebrated my first anniversary as a Fanwood resident. It was not a happy occasion. Throughout the long Independence Day weekend there was a paucity of American flags on display. I toured the town and much to my dismay our Star Spangled Banner was waving at no more than five percent of our homes.

Whereas some blocks were well represented, Old Glory was hard to spot on too many others.

I wondered whether Fanwood residents, as they picnicked, partied, vacationed, played, etc. paused, even for a moment, to consider why we were celebrating a holiday. Two centuries ago many brave Americans died or were wounded fighting to free this country from tyranny and sacrificed again in subsequent conflicts to permit people to enjoy the freedoms that are still denied much of the world's population.

The red, white and blue of the Stars and Stripes represents pride, respect and remembrance.

I wondered whether these uncaring citizens are the ones who complain about things but never bother, prior to elections, to learn the issues or who the candidates are or what their positions are or even bother to vote. When the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag is taught it might be necessary to explain what the words mean.

When I see our flag waving it reminds me to appreciate how fortunate I am to live in America, a country which, although still not perfect, is a far better place than any alternative. I am not as mean as those who say, "America, love it or leave it." But I believe we should refer to Webster's and reread the definition of patriotism. We seem to have forgotten.

Maurice Fenichel
Fanwood

POPCORN™

Lethal Weapon 4: Deadly Assault on the Senses

By Michael S. Goldberger

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent



If Rip Van Winkle were to wake up today, probably the very first thing he'd want to know is, "What number Lethal Weapon are we on?" Hey, first things first. And if the cutting edge carnage in earlier issues of this most successful salt-and-pepper buddy flick pleased old Rip, then surely he'd be delighted by this fourth foray into the shamelessly glib world of exploitative violence.

With series stars Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in place, Director Richard Donner again proves he has the formula for deadily high jinks down pat.

While at least some semblance of restraint was shown in previous installments, it's strictly no holds barred this go-round. Donner and company turn the nihilism all the way up and the credibility way down, resulting in a non-stop barrage of maniacal pyrotechnics and gratuitous gunplay. And the estimable fx quotient adds yet another new dimension to the traditional chase scene.

Even the Keystone Cops would be impressed with Sergeant Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson) making like a water-skiier as he pilots an overturned table down the California Freeway, pulled along by a tractor-trailer at breakneck speed. Most folks don't even like driving a good-sized car on that treacherous road.

In a running commentary, Sergeants Riggs and Murtaugh (Danny Glover) reprise their tongue-in-cheek comedy act. Like two old vaudevillians tap dancing through a familiar routine, they make with the incessant, jokey chitchat, their camaraderie and petty problems obviously much more important than the smoldering world around them.

At times, the movie's unceasing torrent of fury can be likened to a lousy restaurant where they try to give you your money's worth by serving doubly large portions of bad fare. Imagine then, just to add insult to injury, the waiters mirthfully carrying on about the possibilities of botulism.

In case it matters to someone, there is a plot. Supplied by screenwriter Channing Gibson, it concerns a Chinese triad, the smuggling of illegal aliens as slave labor, a counterfeiting scheme, and a strife-torn family's quest for reunification.

This setting allows for the rousing introduction of Jet Li as a one-man war machine, the demonic Wah Sing Ku. A whirling dervish of martial arts excitement, dramatically highlighted in typical Hong Kong stop-action/slow-mo, Mr. Li appears to be the logical successor to the legendary Bruce Lee. That's the Oriental side of the story.

On the Occidental end, Riggs's live-in gal, Lorna (Renee Russo), is in a family way, but expectant Dad isn't too keen on hitching-up; Murtaugh's eldest daughter is also waiting on the stork, and though best pal Riggs knows she has secretly wed young detective Lee Butters (Chris Rock), he lets his partner think that the neophyte's solicitous actions toward him are a love struck function of his homosexuality. When East meets West and the shooting starts,

Russo and Rock are quick to join in the fray.

Writing Chris Rock into the script adds a fifth Musketeer to this heroic crew of ragtag cavaliers. But though Mr. Rock was recently funnier as the annoying guinea pig in Dr. Dolittle, his particular brand of comic bravura serves as a good balance against Joe Pesci's obstreperous Leo Getz, that embarrassingly unabashed hanger-on, wannabe cop, and foul-mouthed sad sack.

If you take even an iota of these plot considerations seriously, then you better make sure you paid the children's admission price. Granted, there is curious entertainment in the guilty thrills that comprise Lethal Weapon 4.

The production standards are impeccable, the direction is calculated for hair-raising enrapture, and the five principals have mastered an endearing swagger that belies the absurd backdrop to which they play. But following all the trumped-up ballyhoo, after you've caught your breath and regained your senses, only feelings of betrayal and manipulation remain.

Escapist entertainment? From what unspoolable horror would one be escaping to prefer this high gloss drive? And to think we woke up old Rip for this.

Lethal Weapon 4, rated R, is a Warner Brothers release directed by Richard Donner and stars Mel Gibson, Danny Glover and Renee Russo. Running time: 125 minutes.

NEWS FROM TRENTON

22nd Legislative District

Preserving New Jersey's Heritage Is an Investment in State's Future

By Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger

If we were playing a game of historical word association and I said to you "movies," your first response would be "Hollywood." If I said "Revolutionary War," you'd probably say "Boston," or "Philadelphia." If I said "baseball," you'd almost certainly say "Cooperstown, New York."

The correct answer in each case should have been New Jersey, but not many people are aware that the first movies were filmed on New Jersey sound stages; that George Washington campaigned longer in New Jersey than in any other state, or that the first game of baseball was played at Hoboken's Elysian Fields.

The fact is, very few people know very much about New Jersey history. Outsiders know very little, and my recent experience serving on the Task Force on New Jersey History showed that New Jerseyans don't know nearly enough.

As a state, we suffer collective amnesia about our past, insecurity about the present, and myopia about our potential for the future.

It is, sadly, also a fact that New Jersey has not done a very good job of remembering what it has done, and has done a worse job of telling its children—and the rest of the world—about its glorious past. The state in which the American Revolution was fought, the Industrial Revolution was forged and the Information Age conceived should not have to worry about being the punch line in yet another tedious joke.

This ignorance could explain why Benjamin Franklin once called New Jersey a valley of humility between two mountains of conceit—and why we often still don't quite grasp the pivotal role New Jersey has played during the past 300 years of American history.

New Jersey has a history to be proud of and to be proclaimed—if New Jersey would only take the time to do it. Self-respect, alone, is reason enough to pay more attention to our state's past.

There's another good reason, too. We tend to live exclusively in the present, but the present is informed by the past and the future is inescapably determined by it. Our efforts to plan for tomorrow are bound by yesterday's decisions. We are now debating how to preserve the most natural portion of New Jersey's past: its primordial open spaces.

This is a debate that cannot take place unless we understand that before shopping malls took root in Bergen County's fields, the crops that give the Garden State its nickname grew there as surely as they now do in Burlington County. Or that the explosive growth of the shore could never have happened without knowing of the history-changing construction of the Garden State Parkway. Our efforts to preserve open space across New Jersey now can only succeed if we understand what has happened during the past 50 years.

Last pride is only one of the prices we pay for ignoring our past. The price we pay for losing our heritage can be measured in lost business and foregone tax revenues.

A Little Television Never Hurt Kids So Long as They Don't Cross the Line

By Louis H. Clark

When I was a kid, my two sisters and my younger brother would sit on the floor in front of the television and watch cartoons. My mother didn't think we were being brutalized by Wily Coyote chasing the Roadrunner. She was worried by the incessant talk at night, scaring parents by warning them that if they allowed their children to sit too close to the television set, their eyesight was going to be ruined.

So for one week she drew an imaginary line in front of the television which we could not go over. The first one, I distinctly remember, was six and one half feet. None of us were to go over this line. My mother appointed my eldest sister as her deputy in making sure the line was kept.

Then the next week, my mother would hear that eight feet was the right spacing between us and the television. My oldest sister was again put in charge. She loved the job, too. Every now and then she'd yell "Mom! He is going over the line." My mother would come racing in and wonder what she was going to do with me "when I went blind."

The line over the years went back and forth. My sister developed a commanding



BY JO & JOHN JACOBSON

TO BE MASTER OF ONE'S TRADE

Craft guilds flourished throughout western Europe from the 11th to the 16th centuries. Originally modeled on religious guilds, craft guilds eventually developed into occupational associations comprising all of the artisans in a specific profession.

The guild structure was remarkably similar throughout Europe. The policies of the guilds were established by four Elected Wardens. There were three categories of craftsman: apprentice, journeyman and master.

The masters of a guild formed a silent inner circle. Each master achieved his lofty status by first providing proof of a skill by passing certain tests and by creating a masterpiece. Master builders of old were not only the general supervisors of the structural they produced, but their architects as well. Today's construction unions were patterned after these medieval guilds.

Art historians refer to the works of the great artists of that period (11th to 16th centuries) as masterpieces and old masters, while the artists of that period are referred to as masters and old masters. A past master, one who is thoroughly experienced or exceptionally skilled, was originally one who held the office of master in a guild or lodge.

Jacobson & Company has the finest team of master ceiling craftsmen in the industry, and have many masterpieces installed over its 104-year history to prove it. Thank goodness Michelangelo and Jacobson never refused to do ceilings.

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WESTFIELD GIRLS SCOUTS
Adult Volunteers Play Vital Roles In Westfield Girl Scout Programs
Written by Girl Scouts for Girl Scouts

This is the 80th anniversary year of Girl Scouts in Westfield. Having begun with a single troop, Westfield Girl Scouts have grown to 88 troops, 996 Girl Scouts ages 5 through 18, and 305 adult Girl Scouts. Adults are active prime forces and volunteers in Westfield's Girl Scout movement, and fill many capacities such as: leaders, assistant leaders, cookie mothers, troop first aid coordinators, trainers, Service Team members, delegates to Washington Rock Girl Scout Council, and council committee and board members. Though not often well known, adults in Girl Scouts are often honored with special awards. The two highest adult awards given by the Girl Scouts, the Thanks Badge and the Thanks Badge II, were granted recently to two Westfield adult Girl Scouts, Bernedine Liebrich and Betty Riker. Mrs. Liebrich, an adult Girl Scout

Letters to the Editor

Resident Seeks Answers To Issues Surrounding Downtown Businesses

I applaud you for your editorial "From Camelot to Westworld" that appeared in the July 16 issue of The Westfield Leader. But, keep it rolling. Tell us—Who owns downtown Westfield? Who are the "greedy" landlords? Name them.

Why does the Director of the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce delight in telling us that some of the national chain stores have joined the Chamber of Commerce?

What role has the Downtown Westfield Corporation had in destroying the stability of our downtown? I thought its mission was to fill empty storefronts, not to drive out long-term tenants.

William B. Shafer
Westfield

More Letters
On Page 5

tone with us that she uses to this day when we get together on family matters. She doesn't use the tone with her own kids. I once asked her about that. "I don't know," she shrugged. "Mom used to use her deputy in so many things that it just became a habit."

None of us went blind. Though when we got something in our eye and ran to her to take it out, she invariably said, "You children watch too much television."

Nowadays, the complaint is about computers. Ignoring the fact that green is the most soothing color a human eye can look at, there are always reports about women having eye trouble because of staring at computer screens. Men who are having trouble with their eyes say it's because they have to read so much garbage.

I must admit that every now and then, when I'm watching television, I think I am getting cataracts. It's a beauty commercial with men and women dipping in and out of fogs and dreamy mists. Then I remember it's a Calvin Klein commercial. After all, anyone who makes and sells a perfume to be used by men and women alike must live in a dreamy, foggy world.