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NEW HOLLAND MYSTERY, A VISIT TO CUBA, OSCAR PICKS AND HEALTH CARE HIGHLIGHTED

 Raleigh attorney Jule Mann wants to know why a Massachusetts entrepreneur back in the early 1900s drained North Carolina's largest natural lake thinking he could replicate the Village of Pinehurst in the wilds of under-populated Hyde County in eastern North Carolina. At the end of the saga, Lake Mattamuskeet was emptied three times. Today, the natural landmark is a famous waterfowl refuge, but the herculean effort to create a residential community has left its imprint - and an intriguing tale involving some of North Carolina's most famous families.

Cuba remains an unresolved political problem for the United States. With Fidel retired and his brother Raul in charge, there is a noticeable thaw in the relationship, although tensions remain. Mrs. Lou Johanson of Raleigh traveled to the island nation and filed an exclusive report for Metro readers.

The annual Oscars festivities mark the return of Godfrey Cheshire. The former chairman of the New York Film Critics Circle and a regular Metro contributor, Cheshire explains the influence of the New York Film Festival in picks for best foreign film over the years - and offers his selection of the best movies of 2012.

In this age of health awareness, Raleigh physician Bob Bilbro presents his ideas for salvaging the American medical delivery system; senior editor Taylor Arnold explores the latest in cosmetic procedures and Metro's monthly Medical Rx keeps you informed of the latest news from our world class medical community.

It's winter, but the time is now to plan and organize weddings. Check out Metro's informative guide for brides, offering tips from respected wedding planners on the latest trends, hot venues, tailored arrangements and unique touches. And the fashion scene marches on at Metro. Taylor Arnold discovers Mefiver, the bold new denim line created by NC State textile graduates, and Catherine Fain discovers an up-and-coming North Carolina jewelry designer.

The 100th anniversary of the dramatically influential Armory Show in New York City reminds Louis St. Lewis of the importance of supporting original and cutting edge artists; Carroll Leggett presents all you need to know about oysters; Jim Leutze is worried the South will rise again; and CC Glenn recommends Basque-influenced tapas restaurants in the Triangle.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Diane Lea, Metro's highly regarded Design Editor, is traveling the world during 2013. She plans to file features on architecture from far-away places she finds of interest. We will miss Diane's insightful and elegant coverage of the area's built environment until she returns to us later in the year.
Correspondence

THE CASE AGAINST CIRCUMCISION

Bernie Reeves was not his usually charming self in the last paragraph of his column in Metro's December issue (Caligula Would Blush, My Usual Charming Self, December 2012 issue).

Male circumcision is not necessary for health except in extremely rare cases. There are no health benefits to the victim of infant circumcision at the time of this painful invasive procedure. There are only harms and additional risks, including loss of the entire penis and death. Both of these happen.

Though some claim that there are "potential health benefits" later, for most men, these benefits never materialize. Why? Because the conditions that those promoting circumcision claim are prevented or lessened are uncommon (like UTIs), to rare (like phimosis), to very rare (like HIV) to extremely rare (like cancer of the penis, one for the very rarest cancers in humans).

The male penis has been trivialized into a disgusting dirty object of scorn by the medical circumcision industry. For financial gain they hide behind a smokescreen of preposterous claims that men in the rest of the world disprove by merely living with their intact genitals, just as normal men and women have lived throughout human history. I am glad circumcision is making the news these days, and that more babies are leaving the hospital intact as more and more parents are becoming educated and realize that it is not only unnecessary, but also harmful.

Unfortunately, what's often missing in the discussion - and is the most important part of the circumcision decision - is the purpose and function of the foreskin itself. It is not a birth defect that needs to be amputated. The adult foreskin is approximately 15 square inches of erogenous tissue containing many thousands of highly sensitive fine-touch nerve endings similar to those in the lips, delicate blood vessels and muscles. These structures in the foreskin contribute to a man's pleasure in a big way, and the smooth gliding action it enables contributes greatly to his female partner's pleasure. Also, the foreskin provides protection to the penis throughout life. It is not a useless little flap of skin.

For more information I suggest: www.circumstitions.com/Sexuality.html#sorrells and www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-Ln396q8KA

I urge your readers to study up on this issue. The more they know about it (and their own anatomy) the less they will accept circumcision.

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12 Oaks Joins Arnold Palmer Golf Management

Arnold Palmer Golf Management, owned by Century Golf Partners—who run more than 80 private clubs and golf courses across the country—announced it has entered into a long-term agreement to manage The Club at 12 Oaks, featuring a course by Jack Nicklaus Design Group with amenities that include a resort-style pool, fitness center, lighted tennis courts, casual dining café and a children's playground.

12 Oaks members will now be able to access the "Palmer Advantage," a reciprocal club and travel benefit that provides concierge services and special privileges at private clubs, resorts and golf courses throughout the U.S. and internationally.

12 Oaks, founded in 2007 and suffered financially in the recession, is now the second fastest-selling new home community in the Triangle marketplace, generating over 225 sales for nearly $75 million dollars in the last two years, according to David Mason, general manager for 12 Oaks real estate.

Raleigh Fine Arts Society to Host Elementary Choral Celebration

The Raleigh Fine Arts Society (RFAS) will host its 15th Elementary Choral Celebration on March 19 and 20 at the Meymandi Concert Hall at the Progress Energy Center for the Performing Arts. This project offers choral groups in grades 3 through 5 in Wake County schools a chance to share their music in a state-of-the-art facility and non-competitive performance setting. For more information visit raleighfinearts.org.
Lucy Daniels Center Receives Grants for Lucy’s Book Club Outreach Plan

Lucy Daniels Center, the non-profit provider of mental health services for children in the Triangle, is expanding its early childhood outreach program, Lucy’s Book Club (LBC), through grants provided by Caterpillar, PNC and Target Corp. The grants will allow the organization to provide educational and development programming to 10 early childhood centers in the Triangle, including underserved families in Wake and Johnston counties that have high volumes of students receiving child care subsidy. For more information visit www.lucydanielscenter.org.

NC Tops Entries For Westminster Dog Show

The Westminster Kennel Club’s 137th Annual Dog Show February 11 and 12 will feature 52 entries from North Carolina among a record 2,271 entries, the largest number of competitors in the history of the show.

Raleigh’s David Frei, a co-host of the show since 1990, will repeat his role for the national broadcast from New York City. For more information, visit the website at www.westminsterkennelclub.org.

EYES ONLY

DPAC Garners National Ranking DPAC, the Durham Performing Arts Center, has placed 5th in the U.S. among the most attended theaters in the country, as tracked by industry trade magazine Pollstar in their recent 2012 report, “Worldwide Ticket Sales - Top 100 Theater Venues.” DPAC was also recognized by Billboard Magazine as the #4 theater in the U.S. with a capacity under 5,000 for gross ticket sales. DPAC’s 2012 calendar year featured 204 performances, which drew over 425,000 guests and saw 75 sell-outs. Heading the list of the highest attended shows were “Wicked” and “Jersey Boys.”

Pollstar - 2012 - Top 5 Ranked US Theaters and their seating capacity:
• Radio City Music Hall - New York, NY - 6,015 capacity
• The Coliseum at Caesars Palace - Las Vegas, NV - 4,300 capacity
• Nokia Theatre L.A. LIVE - Los Angeles, CA - 7,100 capacity
• Fox Theatre - Atlanta, GA - 6,015 capacity
• DPAC - Durham, NC - 2,712 capacity

For more information about DPAC please visit www.dpacnc.com.

Interior designer Lee Tripi and furniture and lighting specialist Bob Drake - who owned the “Metro” showroom in Charlotte for 26 years - have created Trig Modern, located at 328 W. Jones Street in Raleigh. The home design/home furnishings space features new and vintage modern home furnishings, a custom kitchen and bath showroom, modern lighting concepts and original art and objects. The location also serves as a working studio for Lee Tripi Interior Design. Now open for business, the official grand opening is set for March 1.

Raleigh-based author Peggy Payne has published her latest novel, Cobalt Blue, due out March 29. Cobalt Blue explores sexuality and spiritual awakenings, taking readers from the golf town of Pinehurst, North Carolina, to pre-Katrina New Orleans with pauses in India, Ecuador and other exotic locations. Payne is also the author of the critically acclaimed novels Sister India and Revelation.

Wrightsville Beach is offering a winter promotion and sweepstakes for visitors who book rooms at seven participating lodging partners between now and March 17 for a chance to win a pair of his and her TAG Heuer watches. Rates start at $49 per night. Go to www.WrightsvilleBeachNC.com for more information and a listing of planned special events.

The Alice Aycock Poe Center for Health Education’s Poe Health Young Professionals Network will host a silent auction and raffle in support of Poe’s statewide health education program delivery on Saturday, February 23 from 7 to 10 p.m. This year’s theme is “Laissez les bon temps rouler pour POE! (Let the good times roll... for POE!),” and all proceeds benefit the Poe Center. Tickets are available for purchase at www.poehealth.eventbrite.com.

Tammy Lynn Center for Developmental Disabilities has been chosen as the 2013 partner for Band Together, a Triangle-based non-profit creating social change through live music. As a result, it has postponed its annual A Toast to Triangle fundraiser for a year to devote resources to the Band Together event. For more information visit www.tammylynncenter.org.

The North America Jazz Alliance, has released the The Montreal Sessions, arranged by Steve Hobbs of Raleigh, the internationally renowned vibes player. Go to Challenge Records for a review.

Comedian and actor Jeff Foxworthy and his wife Pamela Gregg joined Duke Medicine leadership as the celebrity hosts of the Teddy Bear Ball benefiting Duke Children’s Hospital & Health Center on Saturday, December 1.
Cuba’s Crumbling Twilight

by Lou Johanson

Lou Johanson of Raleigh traveled to Cuba with a group organized under a license of the North Carolina Museum of Art in the People to People program in October of 2012. The following are her observations:

During the Raleigh Spy Conference in August of 2012, a Raleigh doctor related that he met earlier in the summer with Lech Walesa in Poland, along with some former Soviet citizens. Walesa said to the doctor, referring to Cuba: “When are you Americans going to let the last dinosaur of Communism go?”

During our week-long tour in Cuba, I thought of two titles for a report on the experience: “18 Degrees Northeast” or “The Dark Light.” The first refers to the direction from Cuba to the freedom of Key West. The second came to me as we drove from Havana to Matanzas, a city and state in Cuba. The long line of light poles had no lights burning. In fact, the city of Havana has few lights burning. It is dark, eerie and an example of a failed state, which is why thousands of Cubans have left - and the Diaspora continues.

When the government eases the restrictions on leaving, it is probably because they will have less people to care for, and will gain hard currency from remittances sent back to family members left in Cuba. Our enlightened and humorous guide lost all of his friends to freedom and has only his immediate family with him. He, and a representative of the Cuban government, both related that the elimination of the American embargo would do nothing to improve conditions in Cuba. The United States serves as the bogey man for Cuba’s ills.

The reality is that every Cuban has a job, but few work. The average salary is about $20 per month. Each citizen has a libreta, or ration book, for staples and basic needs at a nominal cost. The supply never meets the demand. There is more freedom now to own a house or apartment, with people vying for property on the street near the Prado in Havana. But there is little opportunity to own the land. There are a few more opportunities to create businesses.

However, the fear is these freedoms offered by the government can be easily withdrawn.

Doctors, engineers and other trained professionals drive taxis to obtain CUC’s, a type of currency created to obtain money from foreigners, allowing them to buy certain goods that cannot be obtained with the peso. The value of the CUC is comparable to the American dollar. The official Cuban peso, pegged at about one fourth of the CUC, is used for wages and basic goods in the domestic economy.

The most astonishing fact to me about the Cuban economy is that there is so little farming or raising of basic food needs. I was amazed to hear that chickens are not raised and must be imported! Fish are not readily available in this island nation but are reserved for foreigners, or become part of underground purchasing. And, by the way, we were often served fish.

Since blackouts occur in Cuba, we were advised to take a flashlight. Fortunately, our well-lit and comfortable hotel, an Art Deco structure built in 1930, pays extra for more electricity. One of the two elevators never worked and the other could be problematic - then we went to the service elevator. For a time, the average Cuban could not enter hotels and restaurants used by tourists and foreigners. This has been somewhat relieved recently by the government.

Streets and sidewalks are uneven and potholes are ubiquitous. At times I saw holes so large that grass was stuffed in them as a warning to walkers. Facing these streets, particularly in Havana, once beautiful buildings now serve as a reminder of a once-prosperous city. Citizens have died in falling buildings. On average three to five fall per day. Others are patched, peeling and in a sad state.

Two opportunities were given us to understand the Cuban and
American perspectives. During our visit to the United States Interests Section, we were briefed by a State Department official. (As an aside, an American with another group was stunned to see that there was an American presence in Cuba, and an Englishman I met at the Hotel National said “what are YOU (as an American) doing here?”) The briefing was not very revealing but was used to assure us that our government was there if needed. The briefer admitted that her house and cars were bugged and that she played a lot of loud music to disguise her conversations.

A representative of the Cuban government, who had served as foreign secretary based in New York, came with his wife and son to brief us at our hotel with a talk entitled “The Current Cuban Realities.” He and his wife had recently returned from a visit to North Carolina where he was warmly welcomed at Wingate College and UNC Chapel Hill. (His wife told me she wants to live in Chapel Hill and has already found the house she wants!)

The essence of the presentation was to assure us of the many commonalities Cuba has with the United States, and to show us a document describing the new model for governing Cuba and the guidelines for achieving their goals. The most startling revelations were that “Cuba is on a cliff, not as a consequence of imperialist America, but of its own wrongdoing” and that Cuba would like to have a relationship with the USA similar to the Vietnamese model.

Let me end with a few other thoughts:

We visited the magnificent Colon Cemetery, named for Columbus, whose remains were originally placed here. This is one of the great cemeteries of the world and is, as they say, a sight to behold. Its pristine condition offers a huge contrast to much of Havana.

As our US-flagged plane landed in Havana upon our arrival there was applause from many passengers. We surmised most came from Cuban Americans returning to their Motherland for a visit. (There was no applause when we returned to Miami.) The Havana airport looked like it belonged to a Third World country.

When we went through the door to find our Chinese-built coach, it was easy to spot the 1950s American cars. (One writer said that Cuba has the best cars America ever made!) There are about 150,000 in the country, all converted to diesel due to lack of fuel.

When we reached our hotel upon arrival, the scene was eerie—few lights in the evening, with streets and buildings almost in ruin. There was a feeling of being displaced, and as one article said “it is like being in a Fellini film.” There was a sadness so evident that one of our group said he wanted to go home.

As time went by in the crumbling capital, the darkness and the not-always-good mojitos were relieved by the Cuban sense of humor, good art, beautiful music and finding connections with our neighbors to the south.
What Were They Thinking?

by Julian Mann

Lake Mattamuskeet in sparsely populated Hyde County, NC, is the state’s largest natural lake. It was drained three times, initiated by a Massachusetts businessman supposedly to emulate the success of the town of Pinehurst, established by “soda fountain king” James Tufts - also a Massachusetts entrepreneur. And the connections multiply. But the question remains: what motivated this seemingly reasonable man to take on this herculean risk?

Driving across Lake Mattamuskeet today on State Highway 94, it’s hard to imagine what exactly Massachusetts developer Douglas Nelson Graves was thinking back in 1915 when he planned to build New Holland, a sophisticated planned community that required draining North Carolina’s largest natural lake.

Perhaps Graves was thinking of duplicating the success James and Leonard Tufts achieved 15 years earlier, 250 miles to the southwest with the town of Pinehurst in an equally remote area of Moore County.

The vision Graves embraced was a 2000-unit planned community to be built in the bottom of the lake bed, near the southern shore. It required an initial investment of millions in today’s dollars. First he had to secure the purchase of Lake Mattamuskeet from the owners - the State Board of Education - and drain it completely by selling bonds issued by the Mattamuskeet Drainage District.

The project, if successful, would have significantly increased the population of sparsely settled Hyde County, which, in 1915, had not a single paved road. Added to the original plan was the construction of three additional communities farther out into the lake. Eventually, the population could have reached as many as 20,000 residents. (At the time Charlotte - NC’s largest city today - had less than 35,000 residents.) If Graves’ vision had come true, it would have made Hyde County one of the largest population centers in the state.

Remarkably, the only means to reach this planned development was by water and rail. The potential residents were not to have originated among the high tide locals from the mainland or Ocracoke, who presumably had better sense than to build their homes in the bottom of a drained lake bed. Nor were these buyers to originate from any other region of the Tar Heel State. The new owners, like their counterparts in Pinehurst, were to travel by rail from states far above the Mason Dixon Line.

The New Holland Concept

But why pick a remote county such as Hyde, and why build a development on such a grand scale? The answer remains hidden in history. Even today, most historians know little about the reasoning behind the development, and even less about what motivated Graves to build it.

Fifty years earlier, a drainage project in Holland probably spawned the model for Graves. Lake Haarlem was emptied to create a successful planned community that still exists today, and includes farming communities not far outside of the township. Dr. Lewis Forrest, the foremost authority on Lake Mattamuskeet’s history, believes the Haarlem project was the model since Graves named the proposed Hyde County development New Holland. He also named two major thoroughfares Haarlem and Amsterdam Avenues, and a Dutch windmill became the developer’s marketing icon.

No one knows for sure why Graves would speculate with such a large capital investment in Hyde County, far greater than...
Tufts' investment in Pinehurst, Forrest, who has written the authoritative history of the drainage project, can only speculate why such a massive plan was undertaken.

Extensive Investment
A large part of the bond investment cost involved connecting the lake to Pamlico Sound by a seven mile canal, dug in much the same manner as the Panama Canal, followed by the construction of a massive pumping station housing the world's largest capacity steam driven pumps designed by Morris Engineering Works of Charlotte. Before the project was abandoned, the pumps successfully and completely drained Lake Mattamuskeet on three different occasions.

Graves first hired noted New England landscape architect Harlan Kelsey of Massachusetts, who lived a short distance from the Brookline studio of Frederick Law Olmsted, the world's most famous landscape architect. Olmsted, who designed Central Park and the beautiful grounds surrounding the Biltmore Estate outside Asheville, NC, also designed the Town of Pinehurst for James Tufts.

Kelsey, like Olmsted, was no stranger to North Carolina. At an early age he lived in the North Carolina mountains and was a major player in the development of the Blue Ridge Parkway, advocating for the purchase and inclusion of Grandfather Mountain, owned by his long time friend Hugh Morton.

Continuing Connections
The New Holland and Pinehurst projects had in common two developers and two landscape architects from Massachusetts. But there were other connections between Pinehurst and New Holland. In 1915, Graves constructed the New Holland Inn, a large Mediterranean-style hotel designed by Charles Loring and Joseph Leland (FAIA) in the same year Leonard Tufts commissioned the same firm to design the "Myrtle," one of the famed historic residences in Pinehurst. Loring and Leland, who enjoyed social prominence in Boston's society, were both graduates of Harvard, and both studied at the Beaux Arts Institute in Paris.

Charles Loring's father was a famous Civil War General and the Director of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. But perhaps the most interesting connection to Pinehurst was Charles Loring's father-in-law, Walter Hines Page from Cary, NC, a world renowned journalist who served as editor of the Atlantic Monthly. Page was co-founder of Doubleday & Page book publishers and was appointed Ambassador to Great Britain by Ambassador Woodrow Wilson.

Before leaving North Carolina for New York, Page was the editor of the State Chronicle newspaper of Raleigh and a principal founder of N.C. State's Watauga Club. In 1895, the Page family deeded the land that Tufts eventually developed into the Village of Pinehurst. In 1918, shortly after retiring as Ambassador, Page returned to his home in "Garren Hall," a community just outside of Pinehurst's historic district, where he died after a brief illness. His daughter Katherine - Mrs. Charles Loring - was at his side.

Connecting The Coincidences: New Holland, Pinehurst and Raleigh
Since past historians have been unable to connect conclusively the evidentiary strands between New Holland and Pinehurst, present historians continue to provide theories. Michael Southern, architectural historian with the Office of State Historic Preservation, first saw a possible architectural connection. He noticed the similarity in the Mediterranean-style architecture of the Loring and Leland design of the 1915 New Holland Inn and the Mediterranean-style architecture of the Pinehurst Club House, principally designed by Leonard Tufts' brother-in-law, Lyman Sise of the Boston architectural firm Haven & Hoyt (1922).
Chronology of the New Holland Mystery

Unlike Pinehurst, the New Holland project failed. Some speculate it was the infamous and inhospitable Hyde County mosquitoes that did it in. The official reason rested with the scarcity of coal available for commercial use after the United States entered the First World War in 1917, and the failure of the steam engines to pump 14,000 gallons of water per second as contractually warranted, spawning a legal dispute that lasted for years while the engines remained idle as the lake refilled.

In 1919, Graves unloaded the project on Ohio investors who expanded the New Holland theme and upped the investment by building the New Holland, Higginsport and Mt. Vernon Railroad to transport coal and prospective buyers across the dry lake bed. However, these investors were destined for bankruptcy, but not until the lake was drained again. In 1925, a wealthy New York investor, August Heckscher, purchased the assets but abandoned the real estate development for a commercial farming operation, draining the lake for a third time.

Finally, in 1932, as the Great Depression overtook the national economy, Heckscher sold the development in perpetuity to the United States government, saving Lake Mattamuskeet and its natural beauty for the public to enjoy today. The National Wildlife Refuge, which encompasses all of Lake Mattamuskeet, protects one of the world's largest migratory waterfowl populations and is home to thousands of Tundra Swan.

But clues to the Graves project remain caught in the survival of some of the original flora introduced into Hyde County by Harlan Kelsey's planting plan. Other evidence of the project include remnants of rusting railroad tracks abandoned on the lake's isolated islands, and by the pumping station itself with its towering smoke stack, now mired in a multi-million dollar renovation that has ground to a budgetary halt.

Southern adds to this coincidence the similar Mediterranean-style of the Raleigh Woman's Club by Raleigh architect James Kennedy, built on Hillsborough Street around 1915 at about the same time as Harlan Kelsey, the landscape architect who contributed to the design of both the New Holland and the Blue Ridge Parkway, completed his design of Raleigh neighborhood Boylan Heights - Kelsey's only other known North Carolina residential development. Again, it was Michael Southern who pointed out Kelsey's Raleigh connection, a fact confirmed by Martha Clark, Curator at the Boxford, Massachusetts Historic Document Center and the custodian of the Kelsey Archives. “We have an archival file on Kelsey’s design and development of both the New Holland and Boylan Heights projects in North Carolina.”

Street Names Provide Clues

One of the most telling connections between the Towns of Pinehurst and New Holland rests with the number of times the street names are duplicated. Certainly, Harlan Kelsey must have known of the original plat of Pinehurst. He “borrowed” quite a number of street names such as Cherokee, Magnolia and Laurel Roads directly from the Olmstead plan of Pinehurst, streets that are quite familiar to the residents of Pinehurst today.

Conceivably, Carolina Avenue, the northernmost border of the Town of New Holland, finds duplication in reference to Carolina Vista Avenue and the famous Carolina Hotel, completed for James Tufts in the early 1900s. Loring and Leland’s Pinehurst residence, the “Myrtle,” reflects a street by the same name in New Holland that connects Magnolia Road and Holly Place. Holly Place easily connects to the historic Holly Inn on Cherokee Road in Pinheurst, the first hotel built by James Tufts in 1895.

But the most compelling revelation is found in the name of the avenue that stretches the entire length of Kelsey’s easternmost border of New Holland, an avenue named, quite simply, Pinheurst Road, an unmistakable reference to the Tufts project.

In addition, both plats have pronounced curvilinear street configurations, and both towns consist of approximately the same acreage. And both are laced with multiple parks and common areas. Prospective owners in both Pinehurst and New Holland received lots suitable to build a small bungalow and an opportunity to purchase a larger tract outside of the townships for farming or gardening.

But these comparisons only provide interesting conjecture. Mattamuskeet historian Forrest recognizes the connection but reserves his conclusion. “If you believe it to be true, prove it with a primary source document.”

So, the answer to the riddle, “What were they thinking?” remains officially an unsolved mystery.
February, the month when the Academy Awards are presented, is inevitably a time for looking back at the preceding cinema year. From my seat in the national movie theater, 2012 was notable for many things, but two related events seem to gain significance in retrospect. It was the year when the New York Film Festival turned 50, and when the festival's director, Richard Peña, only the second person to occupy that position, stepped down after 25 years at the helm.

When the festival, which is staged by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, was launched in the early 60s under Peña’s predecessor, Richard Roud, film festivals were a rarity in North America. Since then, of course, they have exploded in number, to the point that there are literally hundreds, of all descriptions. Some, such as Sundance and Toronto, are now much larger and arguably more famous. Yet New York retains a very special cachet as the premier taste-maker and launching pad for artistic cinema in the U.S.

I’ll tell you one very simple way I measure that impact. At the end of this column you’ll find my 10 Best List for 2012. I realized after compiling the list that eight of the 10 films made their American debuts at the NYFF (the exceptions were Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry and Silver Linings Playbook). That 80 percent would be remarkable in any case, but it is even more striking when you consider that, while festivals such as Toronto and Tribeca annually present over 300 films each, New York’s ultra-selective main section never showcases more than three dozen.

The festival’s imprimatur has long had an influence that reaches across the nation, most definitely including North Carolina. When I covered my first NYFF in 1980 for Raleigh’s Spectator Magazine, I was agog at seeing in the flesh cinematic heroes such as Jean-Luc Godard, Akira Kurosawa and Francois Truffaut. But reporting on the festival for Spectator wasn’t just a matter of recounting the doings at Lincoln Center; it was also a way of anticipating the appearances of Godard’s Sauve qui peut (la vie), Kurosawa’s Kagemusha: The Shadow Warrior and Truffaut’s The Last Metro at Durham’s Carolina Theatre, just then establishing itself as the Triangle’s first successful art house.

Such connections grew ever stronger as theaters like the Carolina proliferated and the festival’s predilections evolved. Initially highly Eurocentric, and more specifically Francophilic (the Cannes Film Festival’s influence on New York remains profound), the NYFF over the decades has developed a more truly global perspective, introducing U.S. audiences to innovations from cinematic cultures as diverse as mainland China, Taiwan, Iran, Burkino Faso, Mexico and Romania. Likewise, it has championed new currents in American cinema by presenting the work of filmmakers ranging from Jim Jarmusch and Steve James to Quentin Tarantino and Todd Haynes.

The festival’s expanding purview had a lot to do with the stewardship of Richard Peña, who came aboard in late 80s as the European cinemas heralded by Roud were fading in comparison with new hotspots such as China and Iran. Yet one of the hallmarks of Peña’s tenure was its consistency: the festival started out as a bastion of auteurism, and though the names and home countries of the auteurs have changed over the years, the emphasis on strong individual visions and artistic sophistication has not. In turning over the reins to new programmers Kent Jones and Robert Koehler, Peña leaves the NYFF a robust and forward-looking institution even after its half-century mark.
AND THE YEAR'S BEST FILM IS...

If there was ever a suspicion that the European art cinema championed by the NYFF beginning in 1963 is no longer vital and relevant, Michael Haneke’s Amour offers powerful proof to the contrary. Likely to arrive in North Carolina art houses in the next few weeks, Haneke’s latest has had an international career that bespeaks remarkable artistic achievement: After winning the Palme d’or at Cannes last May, it has been hailed at festivals across the globe, including New York. Now it is the recipient of several Oscar nominations including Best Picture and Best Foreign-Language Film, as well as Actress, Original Screenplay and Director (Haneke got the nod in a race where Affleck, Bigelow and Tarantino were passed over).

Those honors are all the more extraordinary, given the film’s challenging subject matter. Though Haneke is Austrian, Amour is the latest of several films he has made in France. Apart from a couple of early scenes, it takes place entirely in the old school Paris apartment of spouses Anne (Emmanuelle Riva) and Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant), apparently in their 80s and now facing the trials of aging in an increasingly serious way. During the story, Anne suffers two strokes (typically, Haneke doesn’t show us these). After the first, she has spells of dementia; during her lucid moments, she is crotchety and downcast. After the second stroke, she’s paralyzed on her right side and rapidly spirals downward to a state where she can only howl certain words (“hurt...”) over and over.

With a quietly observant intensity, Haneke focuses on the things Georges does to care for Anne, a retired music teacher: lifting her in and out of bed, changing her diaper, cutting her hair, feeding her, singing songs with her. When the couple’s daughter, Eva (Isabelle Huppert), visits, she’s distraught at her mother’s decline and seems to accuse Georges of not managing things properly; he ignores her complaints, further solidifying the emotional cocoon that increasingly surrounds him and his wife.

The story’s dramatic crux comes in its first half, when wife says to husband, in effect: I don’t want to live, because I’m only going to be more and more a burden to you. He replies: But if our situations were reversed, wouldn’t you do the same for me? Of course she would, but the answer doesn’t satisfy her. She only sees the difficulty she causes, not the reason Georges stoically bears it—a reason given in the film’s title.

Though inhabiting a lineage of European films, such as Ingmar Bergman’s Wild Strawberries and Cries and Whispers that concern suffering and mortality, Amour is first and foremost a film about conjugal love, a very profound and beautiful one. (That beauty is the answer to people who wonder, “But isn’t it depressing?”) As such, it is a welcome surprise. Like other critics, I’ve long considered Haneke one of the European cinema’s few contemporary masters, yet also an artist limited by a chilly, cerebral outlook that verges on misanthropy. While such qualities account for one of this new film’s most salient virtues—a lack of sentimentality that you can’t imagine in a Hollywood movie—Amour deserves to be called Haneke’s greatest film for attaining a more generous, compassionate and fully rounded view of human nature.

In this, he’s immeasurably aided by two superb actors. The great Trintignant, star of The Conformist, My Night at Maud’s and A Man and a Woman, gives a masterfully controlled and unshowy performance as Georges. But the film’s real miracle is the Anne of Emmanuelle Riva, whose physical and emotional transformations are astonishing to behold. Also a new wave veteran, the star of Hiroshima Mon Amour, Riva has an Oscar nomination as Best Actress. Most years, it would be unthinkable that the star of a foreign film actually could win the prize. But Riva’s work is so amazing that you never can tell. She would certainly have my vote.

TEN BEST FILMS FOR 2012

Amour (Michael Haneke, France/Austria). The Cannes laureate and deserved Oscar nominee, see above.

The Kid With a Bike (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Belgium). In telling of an abandoned 12-year-old boy and the hairdresser who tries to help him, the Dardenne brothers fashion one of their most luminous parables of grace and redemption.

The Gatekeepers (Dror Moreh, Israel). Comprised of interviews with the six former heads of Shin Bet, Israel’s F.B.I., the year’s best documentary is a devastating indictment of the Israeli occupation of Palestine; the Oscar nominee hits U.S. theaters in February.

This Is Not a Film (Jafar Panahi, Iran). Banned from filmmaking for 20 years, acclaimed director Panahi endures his house arrest by making a “not-film” in which he drolly contemplates his work and his troubled country; smuggled out of Iran, it became an international critics’ favorite.

The Life of Pi (Ang Lee, U.S.). A boy in a boat with a tiger traversing the trackless Pacific, the improbable dramatic core of Lee’s fantastical journey film, produces a story about faith that reaffirms the transformative powers of humane movie magic.

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry (Alison Klaman, U.S.). This portrait of intertwined artistic and political courage shows Ai, an artist with a huge international reputation, taking on the Chinese government for its corruption and repression; seldom has a one-man war against a state been so astonishing or illuminating.

Barbara (Christian Petzold, Germany). The finest film about Communist East Germany since The Lives of Others concerns a determined doctor (brilliantly played by actress Nina Hoss) plotting to defect while enduring a small town exile.

Silver Linings Playbook (David O. Russell, U.S.). An off-beat romantic comedy about damaged people and dotty families, Russell’s film offers the American cinema’s sharpest recent combination of terrific script, direction and acting (a cast led by Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence).

Holy Motors (Leos Carax, France). The most piquant slice of French surrealism since the heyday of Luis Bunuel, this indescribable comedy-nightmare features a madcap performance by Denis Lavant in an enigmatic tale that seems to concern cinema itself.

The Paperboy (Lee Daniels, U.S.). Daniels lets out all the stops in this pulpy, noirish tale of crime and passion in the small town backwoods Florida of the early 60s; the hothouse drama features fine work by Nicole Kidman, Zac Efron, Macy Gray and others.
What are the hottest minimally invasive procedures today?

by Taylor Arnold

By now most of us have heard of Botox and facelifts, and some of us may even be familiar with the various laser treatments available today. But with so many medical spas touting the latest and greatest in anti-aging treatments, it can be tough to know what's what. Read on as we round up this season's best minimally invasive procedures and get the latest information from the experts at some of the city's top medical spas.

**GentleYAG™ Laser**

- **The claim:** Reduces wrinkles and loose skin for a more youthful appearance.
- **How it works:** A laser skin tightening device emits a single wavelength of light that heats the dermis, stimulating fibroblasts to produce collagen. New collagen production causes improvements in skin tone, texture, and tightening of the skin.

- **What to expect:** You'll feel gentle pulses of heat during the procedure, but the heat fades almost immediately following treatment. This is a no downtime so patients may resume normal activity immediately after treatment. Most patients require four to six sessions spaced about four weeks apart.

- **Cost:** Starts at $150 per session, depending on the area treated
- **Where to find it:** Blue Water Spa, Raleigh

- **What the experts say:** "We now find that it [GentleYAG] can be very beneficial as an adjunct to other treatments," says Dr. Michael Law of Blue Water Spa. "For instance, Zeltig's CoolSculpting Complete is a non-invasive fat removal device that actually freezes fat and removes inches with no downtime. Very often, people who are interested in losing inches also want to tighten up areas of concern, and the GentleYAG is an ideal complement to the Zeltig CoolSculpting Complete Treatment."

**IPL Photofacial™**

- **The claim:** The gold standard for reducing wrinkles, scars and blemishes, and improving aged or sun-damaged skin.
- **How it works:** Your esthetician uses a laser that sends short beams of light into the skin to remove the outer layer, or the epidermis. When the treated area heals, the new layer of skin that appears is smoother and firmer.

- **What to expect:** Treatment time is typically 45 minutes, and any discomfort is minimal. Some patients see hyperpigmentation (brown spots) that peel off in about 10 days. Avoid the sun for a day or two following treatment, as you will be more sensitive to developing a burn. Most patients need between three and five treatments at four-week intervals.

- **Cost:** $299 per session
- **Where to find it:** Glo de Vie, North Hills, Raleigh

- **What the experts say:** "This treatment is best to do in the winter because sun exposure should be limited afterward," says Amanda Gallagher, owner and nurse practitioner at Glo de Vie. "It's a very popular procedure because there is no social downtime, and you can even do it on your lunch hour."

**Micro Laser Peels**

- **The claim:** The safer alternative to a chemical peel, or "the weekend peel."
- **How it works:** Your esthetician uses a laser that sends short beams of light into the skin to remove the outer layer, or the epidermis. When the treated area heals, the new layer of skin that appears is smoother and firmer.
- **What to expect:** Immediately after the procedure, your skin may become red and irritated, but any signs of the treatment should be gone after about three days. Most people require one to four treatments spaced six to eight weeks apart, depending on the condition of their skin.

- **The cost:** $300 and up per treatment.
- **Where to find it:** The Museum Spa & Laser Center, Raleigh

- **What the experts say:** "The procedure is individually tailored to the nature of the condition being treated," says Judie Mapoma, spa director at the Museum Spa & Laser. "It is gentle enough to treat the delicate skin around the lips, eyes, mouth, chest, neck and hands. A micro laser peel offers a minimal recovery time of three to six days, so you can have the procedure on a Friday and look years younger by Monday."

**Ultherapy**

- **The claim:** Safely firms, tightens and lifts skin without disrupting the surface.
- **How it works:** The procedure works by heating and therefore damaging the weak-
enlarged collagen creating an injury response, which creates brand new tightened collagen lifting the entire face.

- **What to expect:** One session lasts two to five years. Ultherapy can treat the whole face or individual areas.
- **Cost:** $2,900 for the entire face. Pricing for individual areas varies.
- **Where to find it:** Pure Medical Spa, Raleigh and Cary
- **What the experts say:** “Ninety-five percent of clients see a response in three to six months,” says Dr. Melanie Lutz of Pure Medical Spa. “Thirty to 40-year-olds see results in one to three months, while 50 to 70-year-olds usually need six months to see them. Five percent of clients are what we call ‘non-responders’ and can be retreated if need be.”

**SmartLipo**
- **The claim:** The solution to cellulite reduction and body reshaping.
- **How it works:** After you receive a local anesthetic (or general anesthetic if you prefer), a very small laser-tipped cannula (surgical wand) is inserted directly into the targeted area of fat. As the laser dissolves fat cells, your surgeon will gently guide the cannula back and forth through the fat layer. In addition to treatment of fat deposits, the laser’s energy heats the dermis, causing collagen to contract and the skin to tighten.
- **What to expect:** Treatment takes one to two hours depending on the number of areas. Most patients can return to work the following day after treatment, but expect to wear compression garments for two weeks following the procedure. Only one session is typically needed.
- **Cost:** Pricing varies depending on the area treated, but the average cost is between $3,000 and $4,000.
- **Where to find it:** BodyLase Skin Spa, Raleigh and Cary
- **What the experts say:** “SmartLipo is better than traditional liposuction because there is no general anesthesia and smaller incisions, which means less bruising and no scarring,” says Karen Albright, president of BodyLase Skin Spa. “The results are fairly permanent because once you physically remove fat cells, it is really difficult to gain weight again in that area.”

**Endovenous Laser Ablation (EVLA)**
- **The claim:** A permanent solution for the removal of varicose veins.

- **How it works:** A laser is threaded into the catheter and heats the lining of the vein. Then it is slowly pulled out of the vein, damaging it and causing it to shrink and seal shut. Once this happens, blood can no longer flow through the vein, eliminating the pressure in the vein that caused it to bulge.
- **What to expect:** One session of EVLA can last from 30 minutes to two hours, and a topical anesthetic gel is used to numb any pain. You may experience some mild soreness and bruising in the week following the procedure, but there is no incision other than a small puncture where the catheter was inserted.
- **Cost:** Pricing ranges depending on the number of sessions required, but insurance sometimes covers this treatment.
- **Where to find it:** VeinCare of North Carolina
- **What the experts say:** “Every patient is different,” says Dr. Jane Smith, medical director of VeinCare of North Carolina. “It depends on how many veins are abnormal and need treatment. One patient may have three veins on each leg that are abnormal and require EVLA treatment for a total of six laser treatments. Another patient may have just one vein that needs treatment, so...”

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**Q&A with Dr. Alan Boehm of Raleigh Foot and Ankle Center**

**How are lasers used in podiatry?**
In podiatry, lasers are most often used for toenail fungus, but can be used for warts and other conditions.

**What does laser nail treatment involve?**
Our process involves applying a painless laser pulse to the toenail and surrounding skin to kill fungal elements. To prevent further fungal infection of the feet and nails following treatment, patients are advised to keep their shoes sanitized.

**How many sessions does it require?**
The amount of treatment sessions will depend on how severely affected the nails are, but we typically recommend one to two sessions that last 10 to 15 minutes each.

**How much does this procedure typically cost?**
The cost can vary depending on severity of the condition. Typically the cost averages about $500.

**What types of results do your patients see after laser nail treatment?**
About 80 percent of people will notice clearing of the toenail and improved appearance. Laser treatment is one of the most effective, and most safe, treatments available for toenail fungus.

For more information visit www.raleighfootandanklecenter.com.
they will have one laser. If the treatment is done thoroughly in the first series of treatments and the patient is followed closely for the first year (three, six and 12 month visits), and then seen for re-evaluations yearly, the veins treated should never come back.

CoolSculpting
- **The claim:** Freeze your fat away with no surgery or downtime.
- **How it works:** Using a process called cryolipolysis, this non-surgical fat reduction technology applies targeted cold to small areas of unwanted fat. The cold temperature damages fat cells causing fat to be expelled through the body's lymphatic system.
- **What to expect:** The first five minutes of the procedure can be uncomfortable, but there are no punctures of the skin, no post care garments to be worn and no post procedure pain medicines required. The entire treatment takes about 60 minutes, and many patients begin to see results within three to four weeks, with 100 percent of their results within four to five months. The results from CoolSculpting are permanent as long as the patient maintains their diet and exercise and does not gain weight.
- **Cost:** $650 to $1200, depending on the area treated.
- **Where to find it:** Davis Plastic Surgery, Raleigh
- **What the experts say:** "The key to getting great results is having a certified CoolSculpting specialist to assess your needs and perform your procedure," says Veronica Wilson, patient care specialist at Davis Plastic Surgery. "In the 14 months that we have had CoolSculpting, we have treated over 500 patients. Our patients have had amazing results. They love that the procedure is so easy and they can relax or work on their laptops while they are here."

A Healthcare Solution That Works
by Dr. Robert H. Bilbro, MD, FACP

Raleigh physician Robert Bilbro is experienced in the delivery of effective healthcare. His plan is simple and obvious. Compared to other developed nations, the United States spends about twice as much on healthcare, yet achieves less impressive outcomes. This is true whether measuring on a per capita basis, or as a percent of gross domestic product. By multiple parameters, we still rank poorly on our collective health status. U.S. life expectancy from birth ranks 25th in the world. Our infant mortality rate ranks 45th and our maternal mortality rate is tied for 44th place. All of the countries who rank ahead of us by these parameters have some type of universal access to basic healthcare.

Multiple measures can be taken to help curb our costs. One that is not recognized or appreciated by the public is significant potential savings in healthcare costs by getting all of our citizens connected with and utilizing a "medical home." This terminology describes a clinic or a physician's office providing first-stop or primary care. The provider may be a physician or nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

Currently, about 50 million citizens in the United States have no health insurance. That figure includes over 1.5 million people in North Carolina who lack health insurance through either commercial insurance or public programs including Medicare, Medicaid or the Veterans Administration. Without such economic means of healthcare access, the great majority of these patients get their care through emergency departments. These emergency facilities do remarkable things caring for true emergencies, but they are not a setting to manage chronic disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure, increased cholesterol or depression. Nor is the ED able to work with patients on lifestyle issues such as diet, lack of exercise, obesity or cigarette smoking.

Medical conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure are woefully common. Persuasive data show that medical management of these chronic problems makes a remarkable difference in preventing cata-
Medical Quarterly

One way to create workable, cost-effective universal healthcare coverage is to have all citizens covered by basic health insurance, either through commercial health insurance companies, Medicare or Medicaid. More elaborate care that goes beyond the basic benefits package would be paid for with supplemental insurance, or out-of-pocket.

Outcomes including improvement in metrics such as glucose control in diabetics, better control of blood pressure, lower cholesterol levels, effective maintenance of asthma management and more widespread immunizations. Quality of life for these patients improved, but moreover, there was significant reduction in patient visits to emergency departments and hospitalizations. This decrease in utilization of services generated remarkable savings.

To apply these principles to the 50 million citizens across the country who have no health insurance would result in huge savings in healthcare costs. Currently, these uninsured persons turn to emergency departments for their healthcare. Such behavior is highly expensive and poorly effective for managing chronic disease. While the patients typically do not pay for their costs in the ED, the hospitals recoup their losses by cost shifting of revenue from commercial insurance payments. Data from CCNC shows that if we get these uninsured patients utilizing a medical home, our collective health statistics would improve and the total dollars we spend on healthcare would decrease.

To have these uninsured people become established with and have access to a primary care practice would enable us to shrink the pool of funds that we now commit in one form or another to healthcare expenses. We would have less upward pressure on health insurance premiums - a savings in tax dollars consumed by healthcare.

How can this be accomplished?

First, we should acknowledge that libertarian principles do not work in healthcare. A person dedicated to such principles may be opposed to the "socialistic" elements of having health insurance. However, when this indi-
individal has an auto accident, a heart attack, respiratory failure or other medical crisis, he or she will be treated appropriately with no opportunity to refuse treatment. Fortunately for the libertarian patient, altruistic values form an underpinning in our healthcare system. For a health insurance program to function properly, all persons need to be a part of the risk pool and to participate in paying premiums or taxes to support the program.

One way to create workable, cost-effective universal healthcare coverage is to have all citizens covered by basic health insurance, either through commercial health insurance companies, Medicare or Medicaid. More elaborate care that goes beyond the basic benefits package would be paid for with supplemental insurance, or out-of-pocket. An appointed commission could be responsible for prescribing the basic benefits package. The extent of the package should be influenced not only by scientific evidence for clinical efficacy, but also by budgetary realities. This commission should make periodic adjustments in the basic benefits package. Probably a desirable methodology would be to have Congress approve the package annually, but to do so with a yes/no vote without changing elements in the proposed package. Ideally, this commission would define the basic benefits package for both Medicare and for commercial insurance.

A major concern is that insurance policies with high deductibles can compromise care of patients with chronic conditions because of this financial barrier for optimal care of common problems. The “basic benefits package” provided through a medical home eliminates that barrier, thus promoting better clinical outcomes. Deductibles and coinsurance would more appropriately be applied for care that goes beyond the basics of medical management.

For the Medicare program, one approach might be to reduce the co-pay for the basic benefits from 20 percent to 15 percent, while the more elaborate benefits would have a co-pay of perhaps 50 percent. This methodology could be pivotal in curbing our progressively increasing Medicare costs and provide an effective measure for reducing our national debt.

The economic reality is that we cannot sustain the application of all the expanding options in medical technology for all of our citizens, but we can commit to provide basic healthcare for everyone. We would leave options available for persons who wish to and can afford to spend more money for more elaborate healthcare.

The nation of Switzerland mandates that all citizens have basic health insurance. There are multiple private insurance companies competing for business in Switzerland, but by law they are not allowed to make a profit on the basic insurance package, which is set by a commission and has the same benefits through each of the insurance companies. However, these companies are allowed to make their profits on the supplemental insurance for more elaborate care.

In summary, we can decrease the portion of our GDP that we spend for healthcare by having all of our citizens connected with a primary care medical home. Data from Community Care of North Carolina gives strong evidence for this phenomenon. Furthermore, we can decrease Medicare costs by defining a basic benefits package with a significant increase in the co-pay for more elaborate care. If we were to have similar delineation in commercial health insurance, our system would be more cost effective and would improve health outcomes.
Duke University Health System Hospitals Awarded "A" for Hospital Safety

The three hospitals in the Duke University Health System – Duke University Hospital, Durham Regional and Duke Raleigh – each received an "A" Hospital Safety Score by The Leapfrog Group, an independent national non-profit run by employers and other large purchasers of health benefits. The "A" score was awarded in the latest update to the organization’s Hospital Safety Score list, which issues grades A-F to U.S. hospitals based on preventable medical errors, injuries, accidents, and infections. For more information visit www.hospitalsafetyScore.org.

298 Wake Forest Baptist Physicians Named to Prestigious 2013 Best Doctors in America List

The 2012-13 Best Doctors in America® database includes 298 physicians from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, a 3.4 percent increase from the previous list. This includes 49 pediatric specialists at Brenner Children’s Hospital, part of Wake Forest Baptist, and 29 other specialties. For more information visit www.wakehealth.edu.

Rex Healthcare Expands Neurosurgical Services with Addition of New Physician Practice

Three of the Triangle’s top neurosurgeons have formed a new practice in partnership with Rex Healthcare. The newly established Rex Neurosurgery and Spine Specialists will enable the hospital to enhance care for patients with routine and complex spine problems, brain tumors and other ailments that require neurosurgical expertise. As partners with Raleigh Neurosurgical Clinic, Drs. Grant Buttram, Robin Koeleveld and Robert Lacin will collaborate with oncologists at the Rex Cancer Center and specialists at the UNC Department of Neurosurgery to offer more acute-care treatments and services closer to home for patients in Wake County and across Eastern North Carolina. The practice’s new office is located across the street from Rex’s main campus in Raleigh at 4207 Lake Boone Trail, Suite 220. For more information, call 919.784.1410 or visit rexhealth.com/neuro-spine.

Four AAAS 2012 Fellows Among UNC School of Medicine Faculty

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has awarded the distinction of AAAS 2012 Fellow to four of its members at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

AthleteInMe.com’s Calorie-to-Exercise App Recognized by Web Health Awards

For the second year in a row, Web Health Awards has recognized AthleteInMe.com® for its innovative health and fitness resources. During 2012, Web Health Awards recognized AthleteInMe.com’s “Exercise Calorie Converter” app, which translates the calories in common food items into minutes of exercise, specific for the person’s body weight. The Exercise Calorie Converter app is available for Apple iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch, and for Android-compatible smartphones. It sells for $2.99. For more information visit www.athleteinme.com.

Duke Researcher Named Harrington Scholar-Innovator

Wolfgang Liedtke, MD, PhD, associate professor at Duke Medicine, has been named a Harrington Scholar-Innovator. The Harrington Discovery Institute at University Hospitals Case Medical Center launched its inaugural grant program this year, focused on supporting the nation’s best physician-scientists and their efforts to accelerate promising drug discoveries into novel treatments for patients. Dr. Liedtke won for his work in pain control, specifically helping to develop a new class of drugs that inhibit the pain response in skin with potential applications in painful skin conditions including sunburn and wound pain. For more information visit www.dukemednews.org.

UNC School of Medicine Receives $1 Million Gift from the North Carolina Eye Bank to Establish State-of-the-Art Surgical Skills Lab

The University of North Carolina School of Medicine has received a $1 million gift from The North Carolina Eye Bank (NCEB) to establish an innovative surgical skills laboratory. The laboratory is the only of its kind in the region and provides state-of-the-art surgical training opportunities to medical students, residents, fellows and physicians across the state. The 3,500-square-foot space includes 19 stations, a 50-person conference room and an 800-square-foot simulation lab with access to high fidelity simulators such as robotic stations and anatomic computer based simulators. For more information visit www.med.unc.edu.
From a downright elegant affair to a simple outdoor ceremony, there is no shortage of wedding styles, trends and traditions. If you or someone you know is tying the knot this year, this area is home to an array of unique venues, not to mention professional bridal clothiers, caterers and photographers. To assist new brides, Metro has enlisted the help of some of the area’s best event planners to identify the top bridal trends for 2013, as well as wedding day tips and creative ideas to make your big day stand out.

Top Wedding Trends: What’s in for 2013

“In 2013 I believe we will see a return to glamour,” says Katie Dunn, owner and lead planner at La Fete Event Creation, Planning & Management. “I think rustic and vintage weddings will still be in style, but with a more glamorous twist: etched crystal, crystal chandeliers, lush centerpieces, beautiful lace and ruffles. I also think we will continue to see brides making the extra effort to make their wedding one-of-a-kind with personal touches, unique locations, custom logos and specialty food stations that reflect the couple’s ethnic backgrounds or favorite foods.”

According to Sabrina Seymore, owner of Mane Event Wedding and Event Planning in Durham, incorporating a couple’s ethnic backgrounds makes for a more personalized event. “We have an African-American bride who wants to have a four-post canopy, also known as a Mandap, in her ceremony,” she explains. “This is an Indian custom, but the fabrics and details of Indian weddings are becoming very popular among all cultures.”

Catherine Katz, owner of Cherished Celebrations in Cary, also sees a continuation of what she calls “the rustic-chic look.” “I predict a return to elegance, more detailed and expensive looking but not necessarily expensive,” she says. “One bride had silverware and glassware that was all mismatched; it was very eclectic and beautiful and went with that rustic, vintage-chic theme.
I've had people do multiple small cakes instead of one large wedding cake, or cake buffets where they also have a variety of desserts. People also like to have signature drinks, such as the bride and groom's favorite beer or wine, and lately it's focused on local craft beers." And when it comes to color, she predicts a softer palette. "Purple is going to be huge this year, especially darker purples. Soft pinks always go well with the rustic-chic theme, and I think we'll see this paired with silvers and golds."

With regard to the rustic-chic theme, Jeff Eisenhuth, owner of At Last...Weddings and Events in Raleigh, predicts softer flowers such as peonies and garden roses. "I think we'll see more sophisticated brides this year," he says. "With cakes, it's more brilliant colors - a lot of reds and bold colors. People are getting away from traditional cakes, and putting more design work on them."

Unique Venues
Gone are the days when wedding ceremonies are expected to be held in a church or synagogue and receptions in hotel ballrooms. Brides are choosing to hold their events at plantations, farms, vineyards, bed and breakfasts and many other beautiful backdrops throughout the
region. “ Farms such as Elodie Goat Farm (in Rougemont, NC) or Bennett Bunn Plantation (in Zebulon, NC) are wonderful options for the outdoorsy bride who wants to take advantage of our beautiful weather and landscapes,” Dunn says. “Urban venues such as the Stockroom at 230 or The Cotton Room are amazing for the swanky bride who wants a blank canvas to make her own.”

Eisenhuth suggests choosing a location that reflects a bride’s unique style. “For more of a castle setting, I like Barclay Villa in Angier,” he says. “Bay 7 in Durham is more industrial, and great for large weddings. For a rustic, outdoor reception, I like Shady Wagon Farm Bed & Breakfast in New Hill, and for a grand setting, you can’t go wrong with the Grand Marquis Ballroom in Garner.”

**Getting the Most Bang for Your Buck**

When it comes to allocating funds for wedding vendors, it’s important to know where you can cut corners and where you should never be stingy. According to Dunn, guest comfort should always be paramount when planning the big day. “You can spend thousands of dollars on a wedding, but if your guests are outside and it’s miserably hot, or there are long food and beverage lines, or guests have to drive an hour away and don’t have easily accessible directions, it will be all anyone will be able to remember.”

Photography is another area that Seymore says should never be slighted. “There’s a large chance that guests will forget what type of food they ate, what the centerpieces consisted of or any of the fine details,” she says. “They’ll remember that the food was ‘good’ and the venue was ‘pretty.’ But the photographs capture those precious memories that tell the story of your wedding. I always tell my guests to make sure they invest in a good photographer who will capture all of the moments of that special day.”

So where is it safe to cut corners? “People spend too much on party favors, especially when they have more than one
We know how important comfort is to you. Beyond climate control, we make sure you’re comfortable with our technicians and the level of expertise they deliver. Maybe you’ve just seen our vans around, or we’ve already become a trusted partner in maintaining your home’s heating and cooling system. Either way, we wanted to let you know we now handle plumbing as well. Call now to find out more.

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type,” Eisenhuth says. The dress is another area where Katz sees brides consistently overspend. “It’s a white dress, and nobody sees the tag,” she says. “Cut back on that and spend more on food and floral.”

Thinking Outside the Bouquet

Just because a wedding is a ritual based on tradition doesn’t mean you can’t add some non-traditional touches to make the event your own. “A lot of people are moving away from the cakes and having dessert stations,” Eisenhuth says. “They’ll have chefs come out later in the evening to make bananas foster or some creative dessert they make right onsite. People like to have food later in the evening after dancing.”

Place settings are another area where you can give your guests a little something unexpected. “Last spring I designed a place card made of quilling paper that hung on each guest’s wine glass in lieu of traditional tented place cards,” Dunn says. “I also had a bride last spring who made a magnet with a picture of each guest that was attached to a huge sign that read, ‘Find your face, find your place!’ It was a great focal point for cocktail hour and guests were able to take their magnets home. Another favorite was a custom corn hole set we had made with silhouettes of the bride and groom. We used the game at the rehearsal dinner and everyone had a blast.”

And if you are a nonconformist by nature, by all means let your unique style shine through. Seymore is currently working with a non-traditional bride. Her ceremony will have four aisles with guests along each aisle, and the bride, groom and pastor standing in the middle on a platform. “Flowers are cliché for this specific event, so we will be using feathers in her centerpieces,” she says. “Instead of cake they’ll serve an assortment of exotic fruits, and lastly, the photographer will take photos of guests as they walk in ‘red carpet’ style and give them a copy as a favor.”

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UP AND COMING DENIM BRAND MEFIVER
FOUNDED BY AREA DESIGNERS

If you're not yet familiar with the name “Mefiver,” chances are you will be soon. The up-and-coming premium denim brand co-owners - Carly Spano Giammona and Veronica Tibbitts of Cary and Apex - are both award-winning NCSU College of Design + Textiles alums. Alana Vaughn is an International MBA and Ph.D. Fellow who is responsible for Mefiver’s strategy, marketing, finance and media relations. “Mefiver targets the enlightened consumer,” Alana says. “Our jeans are made with a proprietary process that is indigo-free and eco-friendly, made in the USA by local Carolina textile experts.”

All of the jeans are designed in-house by Veronica and Carly, ranging from classic dark washes to executive workwear, bright color effects, stunning artistic translations and even 3D anaglyphs. The collection caters to a spectrum of visual styles, from edgy fashion-forward to the beautiful simplicity of a traditional dark denim.

So how exactly did these three come up with the unique name for their brand? “The name Mefiver started as an inside joke,” Alana explains. “On a family vacation, Carly’s brother was attempting to beat Veronica’s score in a word game, and the only letters left that he could use were ‘m-e-f-i-v-e-r.’ He insisted that it was a real word for a high-five - as in ‘Slap Mefiver!’ It immediately became permanent in family vocabulary. We chose to name the company Mefiver because of the fun spirit of the word, and also because it resonated with the idea of the industry standard five-pocket jean, and with the five point back pockets. And it’s a great way to say ‘give me a high five!’ - ‘Slap ME-FIVER!’”

It seems their strategy has worked. The Mefiver team recently beat over 120 local companies to be awarded a prestigious North Carolina IDEA grant, and competed against over 400 startup companies worldwide to be named in the “Top 5 Most Promising Startups in the World” by Startup Open, an initiative of the Kauffman Foundation. Through Startup Open, Mefiver was also featured on CNBC’s website as a company to watch.

Next up, Mefiver plans to begin selling their jeans in boutiques local to the Triangle. “At this stage, it is critical that we maximize our influence in the market and establish a great relationship with the boutique owner,” Alana says. “After all, this is our town, and this is the store our friends and families will shop at, which makes it a top priority for us.” They are also finalizing plans to launch a landmark denim boutique in New York City, and they hope to expand to other urban areas including LA, DC, Chicago, Miami and Atlanta. The jeans will be competitively priced in line with other premium denim brands, in the $200-$400 range, depending on design complexity.

“Our approach to every aspect of the company begins with the design process,” Alana says. “We aim not only create a beautiful product, but one that is made by a thoughtful, enlightened process, which ultimately creates a solution and not just an object.”

For more information visit online at www.mefiver.com.
CHESTER NYC
by Catherine Fain

For Mimi Harris, a recent NYC transplant and North Carolina native, her move to the Big Apple has unexpectedly opened the doors to a second career: jewelry design, a hobby of hers while living in Charlotte. After relocating to NYC, she found she missed the process and set about creating the statement necklaces she loved to make.

Today, she spends her days working for Bank of America, but has turned her apartment into a workspace for her jewelry business where she strings together semi-precious stones, glass beads and vintage pieces.

Since starting Chester NYC three short months ago, Harris's pieces have been selling well in stores from NYC to NC. One of her necklaces was worn on-air by morning show host Kelly Ripa. Visit www.chesternyc.com or stop by Charlotte’s in Raleigh.
ARMORY SHOW ANNIVERSARY RENEWS COMMITMENT TO ORIGINALITY

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the month we should all raise our glasses of Perrier-Joët and toast the memory of Arthur B. Davis. Who is Arthur B. Davis, you may ask. While to many not a household name, Davis is the man responsible for an event 100 years ago this very month that changed the art landscape forever.

“We obtain absolute poverty when we remain content with our accomplishments of Rubens, or Raphael, or Cézanne, or Picasso, or Giotto.”

— Samuel Kootz

Davis had traveled to Europe in the early 1900s and witnessed the new modernist movement, and became instantly captivated. He decided to find a way to bring this revolution back to New York City to exhibit. With a small cadre of colleagues, he dreamed up and organized the massive Armory show in New York City in February of 1913. This one event is credited with introducing modern art to America from Europe, forever altering how our nation and the world approached art.

It’s hard to express how groundbreaking and shocking this art was at the time. The show was lambasted with accusations of quackery, immorality, anarchy and insanity. Other art organizations staged mock exhibitions in retaliation. After viewing the exhibition, President Theodore Roosevelt declared, “That’s not Art!” A nude study by Picasso was available for $60 bucks and his Hercules pen and ink could have been yours for $65. You could have purchased a Henri Matisse portrait of a young girl for $50. Marcel Duchamp’s "Nude Descending a Staircase" was derided by the public and the critics and called “an Explosion in a Shingle Factory.” Archipenko’s works were there, along with Bernard and Brancusi, Braque, Cezanne, Corbet, Dufy, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Kandinsky, Renoir, Seurat and dozens of others. And while your Great Aunt Sally and Uncle John were not impressed, the exhibition inspired an entire generation of American artists, which led to our nation taking the lead in modern art from the 1940s onward.

I think a lot of people wish they could be in a time machine and go back to the Armory show with a pocket full of cash. In hindsight, the ability to purchase these great works of art for a few dollars is very tempting, but I wonder if most people would really be interested in the art versus the “name” and the dollars. Here we are in the 21st century and people still cock their heads when viewing modern art, especially here in North Carolina. Many of our galleries couldn’t keep the doors open without selling the most boring and pedestrian landscapes and tobacco barn paintings. And many art buyers wouldn’t take a Picasso painting if you gave it to them for free if they were unaware of the value.

Do we still have the creative spark? Can we still challenge ourselves and others with art and make a difference as opposed to mere decoration? I’m not certain. As art critic and early modernist art dealer Samuel Kootz stated, “We obtain absolute poverty when we remain content with our accomplishments of Rubens, or Raphael, or Cézanne, or Picasso, or Giotto. Progress can only be achieved when we make our own ideologies coincide with the necessities of today’s living. The meek academic follower of tradition has nothing important to give his own time, still less to give to the future. The artist who partakes of his time, shares its forward surge who helps direct that surge, this is the artist who is anointed of his time.”

I have had some gallery folks ask why I don’t cover their exhibitions more often. I’ll tell you why. I simply don’t have time to write up fluff pieces for already approachable art. If you want to publicize that, you can pay for an ad like everyone else. As one of my few resolutions for 2013, 100 years after the groundbreaking Armory show, I will strive only to write about artistic and cultural events that somehow lift us to better places.

There is something new taking place every day out there, and I know, especially now that I am of a certain age, I need to challenge my own perceptions and artistic prejudices as well. I have no doubt that there are young (and not so young) artists among us with the ability to challenge and transform the way we view the world. I look forward to meeting them, and so should you.
KNOW YOUR OYSTER

While some folks draw back and refuse to eat one of nature’s least visually appealing offerings, I have never been off put by the prospect of slurping an oyster straight from the shell. One of my earliest culinary memories was watching my mother place a pan of oysters covered by a wet cloth in a hot oven and waiting impatiently for their shells to steam open. Ingesting the strange bi-valves seemed like a very natural thing. “You look like a little bird standing there with your mouth open,” my mother said, as she tried to lay claim to an oyster or two for herself.

With no disrespect to the venerable Sunnyside Oyster Bar in Williamston, Hammerhead’s in Windsor, 42nd Street in Raleigh, the three oyster bars in my own town of Winston-Salem and others scattered across North Carolina, there is perhaps no better place to eat oysters than New Orleans. The fact is, you can hardly avoid it. I just spent five days there enjoying meals at places as toney as Commander’s Palace and Galatoire’s, and as down home as the neighborhood spot Domilise’s near Tulane University that many people consider the Big Easy’s “po’ boy” mecca. It is almost impossible to find a menu in New Orleans without oysters of some sort, including the oyster po’ boy — simply put, a sub with fried oysters, lettuce and tomato and condiments of choice.

The French Quarter has a host of oyster bars, and most carry the Gulf Coast varieties. Acme has the most famous name and, consequently, tourists flock there. Felix’s, a little dive just across the street, is smaller and has a devoted local clientele. I prefer Felix’s. The shuckers know their customers and carry on the kind of banter that was usual with the old time shuckers at Cliff’s in Greenville (RIP). Then there are countless oyster bars scattered throughout the city, such as the century-old Casamento’s on Magazine Street.

When I hit town, I headed straight for Deanie’s in the Quarter — an unpresumptuous restaurant with lots of chrome and booths and diner décor that has been voted Best Seafood Restaurant in New Orleans. In a matter of minutes, its “charbroiled oysters” served in the shell had me dancing on the table. Swimming in butter with bread crumbs and parmesan cheese and served with great locally baked bread for sopping, they set the bar for the next five days of culinary exploits. I thought it couldn’t get any better until brunch at Commander’s Place when I ordered the “Oyster and Absinthe Dome” — a sinfully rich creamy casserole of oysters and artichokes with absinthe and a puff pastry top. Later I found the recipe on Saveur’s website.

If I said that New Orleans is the oyster capital of the nation, I would hear it from fans of New York’s Grand Central Oyster Bar that has some 30 varieties on its menu from places far and near — New York, New England, Canada, Virginia, the West Coast and on occasion even from South America. But the online menu shows no Gulf Coast oysters. Just as there are wine snobs and coffee snobs, there are oyster snobs, and New Yorkers would not deign to eat the “common” Gulf Coast oyster which is served in countless U.S. seafood restaurants. They are plentiful, consistent in size and flavor and relatively inexpensive when you consider that Grand Central’s Oysters on the half-shell run from about $2.50 to $4 each. 42nd Street in Raleigh offers Gulf Coast oysters on the half shell at $1.65 each. And North Carolina oysters — Rose Bay and Stump Sound — and Virginia oysters run slightly higher.

Oysters used to be poor man’s fare — like canned salmon when I was a child — but no longer. Today, they are right up there with other top-drawer gastronomic treats.

North Carolina still has public oyster beds that produce wild-caught oysters. But they have been depleted over the years by excessive oystering and pollution. Taking oysters is strictly regulated by the state, and the season for taking them is limited to a few months. State officials monitor the harvest closely. When they conclude the stock is being unduly depleted, they halt the taking. Public beds in North Carolina could be closed this month until sometime in late fall.

But oysters will still be available. Individuals up and down the NC coast (as in other coastal states) have private beds where individuals cultivate oysters and ensure that restaurants have a plentiful supply year round. How does this gibe with the notion that one should eat oysters only in the “R” months?

Oysters go through an annual reproductive cycle. During that time — the non “R” months — they take on a repulsive fishy taste and become mushy. A couple of years ago I was in D.C. for the
Fourth of July and was availing myself of a raw bar. I knew the oysters were from New York, which produces high-quality oysters, and I was looking forward to these, plump, briny treats. Instead, I ate one and had to leave the table. It obviously was wild caught and should not have been served.

Cultivated oysters do not have a reproductive cycle and, consequently, the "R" month rule does not apply so these oysters are available year round. There is one caveat, a serious one. When the temperature of water in which oysters are growing rises above a certain level, a harmful and sometimes deadly bacteria can infect them. Vibrio vulnificus bacteria thrive in a warm environment of 86°F to 95°F, and where salinity levels are approximately 0.5 percent sodium chloride. The highest concentrations of the bacteria are found in the Gulf of Mexico from April to October. For this reason, I am leery of Gulf oysters during the hot season and always ask where oysters come from.

In my opinion, North Carolina oysters have never been given their due. Ordinarily, they are extremely flavorful and briny. Sometimes this can be their downfall. I have heard the uninitiated at oyster bars complain about oysters being too salty, whereas the oyster aficionado revels in the briny taste. My experience has been that Gulf oysters are mild and seldom have the distinctive flavor of Atlantic Coast oysters, or particularly Pacific Coast oysters.

Oysters grow faster in warm water and their texture is more delicate. Cold water oysters, like those from New England, Canada and the West Coast states of Washington and Oregon usually have firmer texture and can be smooth and buttery. West Coast oysters can vary greatly in size and take on an almost clam-like consistency. The tiny Olympias contrast with some varieties that can grow so large that one will fill a pint container – quite a shock when I purchased oysters for dressing at Whole Foods one Thanksgiving.

The origin of oysters and harvest date is carefully tracked due to the health risks involved in eating raw oysters. Oysters sold commercially must bear a tag stating place of origin and day harvested. But there are some tricks of the trade. Oysters can be harvested in one spot – let's say low saline water – then taken to salty water and placed back in the water for a few weeks to increase their salinity before being sent to market. In the process, they can be retagged. Point of origin is important to knowledgeable oyster lovers because the water in which they are grown affects their taste, and especially their salinity. In North Carolina, their ears perk up when they hear names like Stump Sound and Rose Bay that have long histories of producing delicious oysters.

Oysters in the wild are making a comeback, and water people are having great success with cultivated oysters so that supply is generally available year round. Consequently, oyster bars are proliferating inland, and better restaurants throughout North Carolina, including Upstream in Charlotte and Grove Park Inn in Asheville – hours from the coast – can offer a selection of oysters on the half shell that delights gourmands.
After spending the summer in Paris a few years ago, I boarded a TGV (train à grand vitesse) for Bordeaux where my friend and I spent two nights touring the surrounding wine region before he convinced me to venture into nearby l'Espagne, about 130 miles to the Southwest.

It was here—in Basque country—that I fell in love all over again. Although the majority of Euskadi (Basque Country) is in Spain, it is an autonomous community with its own language. Aside from the spectacular and relatively inexpensive wine, the most memorable aspect of our Spanish séjour was the miniature meals we devoured. I'm talking about tapas. Or as they say in Euskadi, pintxos.

Soon bar owners realized that they could profit from selling these little morsels of food. Salty vittles such as ham, chorizo, salted cod or anchovies were chosen to induce thirst, thereby increasing bar sales. Nowadays, tapas are usually eaten standing amongst a bevy of friends sipping glasses of vino and noshing on handfuls of small bites. Because they dine much later than Americans, tapas are an important fixture to Spanish life: When having a drink with co-workers at the end of the day, tapas help curb hunger until dinner, as well as soak up the alcohol.

TAPAS OFFERINGS IN THE TRIANGLE

Every now and then, however, I get a hankering for tapas. Fortunately for my taste buds, there are two excellent restaurants in the Triangle that offer the perfect panacea.

**Mateo, Bar de Tapas**
109 W. Chapel Hill Street, Durham – 919.530.8700
Lunch served Tues – Fri from 11:30 am – 2:30 pm
Dinner service begins at 5 pm. Closes at 9:30 on Sun; 10:30 Tues – Thurs; midnight Fri & Sat
Closed Monday.

**Tasca Brava**
607 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh – 919.828.0810
Dinner Mon – Thurs 5:30 – 9:30 pm; Fri – Sat til 10 pm.
Closed Sunday.

According to Irma Rombauer's best-selling Joy of Cooking, the term "tapas" originates from nineteenth century bar-keeps in Andalusia concerned that stray fruit flies might take a dip in patrons' glasses of sweet sherry. The solution was to place a thin piece of bread or a slice of ham over customers' glasses. In Spanish, tapar means "to cover," thus the tradition of covering one's glass with a small bite to eat became the more familiar tapas. In Euskadi, the term tapas is interchangeable with pintxos (a skewer—or toothpick, a common tool used to hold together pintxos).

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urban chic vibe with low lighting, exposed brick and a striking wooden bar enhanced by red leather banquettes lining the wall opposite the bar. And, like its motherland, the ambience and the cuisine are festive, spontaneous and inventive. A massive chalkboard lists the daily especiales, and diners are offered the option of sitting at the bar, at low-top wooden tables on one side of the room, or in the center of the action at high-top marble tables arranged in the middle of the bustling restaurant.

"There are a lot less rules at Mateo than there are at Vin Rouge," Kelley says, a topic he knows much about, considering he was the chef at Vin Rouge for over 10 years. At Mateo, he has a little more fun, and enjoys more freedom when it comes to writing the seasonal menu. "That's my jam," he says of French nouveau cuisine. But he also enjoys Spanish fare because it mixes clas-
sic French cookery with the Moorish influences of Northern Africa, as well as aspects of Mediterranean gastronomy.

At Mateo, Kelley takes advantage of our local terroir—sweet potatoes, kale, grits, beets and cauliflower—and elegantly incorporates them into classic Spanish tapas. And just as France and Spain are neighbors, so too are Vin Rouge and Mateo, with locations less than two miles apart.

The beauty of tapas is in their functionality. My companion and I started with the chicken and chorizo empanada over braised kale and tomato sauce (a special) and the croquetas. Next to arrive was a succulent smoked North Carolina trout (Trucha y Jamon) with Serrano ham, Spanish cider, apple and a corolla potato confit. To top it off, we split another special, crispy fried rabbit over Carolina gold rice, as well as melt-in-your-mouth pork ribs (Costillas de Puerco) with espelette pepper jelly.

If you’ve saved room for dessert, try any one of the dulces, such as crema catalana, or crunchy churros with chocolate sauce. Pair it with a sweet sherry to top off a flawless meal.

Despite Kelley’s classic French culinary upbringing, he is proving to be a master of Spanish cuisine. Mateo is invigorating the downtown Durham gastronomic landscape, setting the bar even higher.
TASCA BRAVA

Although Mateo is in vogue at the moment, Tasca Brava is a hidden Spanish gem that has been pleasing diners for over 10 years. Despite Chef/Proprietor Juan Samper’s delectable cuisine, attentive service and extraordinarily charismatic disposition, Tasca Brava remains under the radar, partly due to the fact that the restaurant has relocated three times.

Samper and his late wife, Marta Brewer-Samper, opened the restaurant in Cary in 2001 almost by accident. Both were talented cooks, despite having no formal training, with unique global upbringings. Samper, though born in Catalonia, spent most of his formative years in Columbia, as well as a stint in Puerto Rico before moving permanently to the U.S. Marta was Panamanian, and had relocated to the Triangle around the same time (circa 1996) after enduring a divorce.

They happened upon opening a restaurant when they set out to rent a professional kitchen to produce a special sauce Marta was known for making. They made an offer on a kitchen, and ended up buying a vacant restaurant. Both excelled at creating flavorful Spanish dishes based on their experiences in Spain and their family roots. “I love the variety of food there,” Samper says.

Despite moving to North Raleigh several years ago, and then ultimately to its current location on Glenwood Avenue in 2008, Tasca Brava remains loyal to its Spanish heritage, and adds a new flair by incorporating several South American twists (for example, Samper often offers diners fried yucca or plantain chips). Traditional tapas such as boquerones, croquetas and stuffed piquillo peppers are always available, in addition to nightly additions to the menu.

Though he has helpers in the kitchen, Samper is a bit of a one-man band since his wife passed away of cancer in early 2009. Expect to be greeted and seated by the thickly-accented charming Samper upon arriving. He’ll provide a comprehensive and entertaining explanation of the daily specials before he takes your order, retreating to the kitchen where he makes his own sausages, cures his own meat, roasts his own coffee beans and incorporates mint and basil from his garden into specials.

The quaint restaurant, situated in the house formerly home to Bistro 607, is accented with red and black décor, Spanish-inspired paintings and low lighting. Cozy and romantic, it also has a miniature bar in the back of the restaurant.

La Cepa, hanging hams in San Sebastian

A friend and I dined there recently on a freezing cold night, but Samper’s warm personality distracted us from the chilly weather. Before we even looked at the menu, Samper brought out a small bowl of crispy sweet potato chips to whet our appetites. He enumerated a host of special tapas before we chose to start with pan de queso (housemade bread stuffed with warm gooey Spanish cheese), creamy black bean soup, and golden brown chicken and ham croquetas.

Instead of indulging in more tapas, we decided to order more substantial entrees: chuleta de buey (ribeye topped with a creamy Cabrales cheese sauce) and the solomillo extremeno (scalloped pork loin doused in a rich and velvety goat cheese sauce). Every bite was memorable.

Samper offers a variety of traditional Spanish desserts as well as refreshing sorbets, made from exotic fruits such as guava and papaya.

It may seem out of place—sandwiched between the Brooklyn Heights bar and a flower shop, but you mustn’t overlook it. Once you’ve tasted Samper’s Spanish delicacies, you’ll want to keep coming back.
THE NEW CIVIL WAR

Because I am working on a Civil War Museum project in Fayetteville, that unfortunate period is much on my mind. But it may also be that current events make the linkage obvious. For whatever reason, I am drawn to the conclusion that this is the most dysfunctional and dangerous time in American political history since the run up to war between the North and South.

The brouhaha over the “fiscal cliff” is the most recent indication of trouble, but there have been similar rumblings over the last two years - and there are surely more to come. It may have started with the Tea Party, or the economic collapse of 2008, or Mitch McConnell’s declaration that the single goal of the Republican Party was to make Barack Obama a one term president. Whatever it was, and precisely when it happened, is perhaps immaterial, but the fact is the political system no longer works. The anti-Obama movement and the less government movement morphed into an agenda intended to bring the “government” to its knees.

The government no longer works because one party compromise has become anathema, and that’s not just my opinion. In the book *It’s Even Worse Than You Think* by two Washington analysts described as “centrists” (Thomas E. Mann and Norman Ornstein), they claim they have never seen the system this dysfunctional. They go on to say that “the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party.” In their view, “The GOP has become an insurgent outlier in American politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition.”

Constitutional democracy was not designed to work under these conditions; compromise is an essential ingredient in the founders’ formula. Without compromise, gridlock is the result. The only hope is that something will change with an upcoming electoral cycle. If this were a parliamentary system, as I am hoping to wish it were, new elections would have to be called anytime the party in power could no longer summon a majority. Until that time, the minority would have to watch (“loyally”) as their opposition worked its will.

There are several aspects of the lamentable state we find ourselves in that remind me of the 1850s. At that time the issues that divided the country were regional. So it is today. The red states are mostly in the South and the Midwest; the blue states are in the Northeast and along both coasts. All of the states of the old Confederacy are in control of the Republican Party – the House, the Senate and Governorship. An early indication of the trouble and irony of this division has been the decision by all of those states, plus several others, not to cooperate with setting up insurance exchanges called for under the Affordable Care Act, thereby leaving the heavy lifting and control to the dreaded federal government. What other mischief will come from this division between red and blue will remain to be seen, but it won’t be positive.

The two issues that defined the Civil War were slavery and states’ rights. The institution of slavery was rather easily dealt with via the Thirteenth Amendment, although its shadow long lingered over the country. States’ rights are another matter. We have members of the Supreme Court and the Congress who seem to be undecided on the issue. We have grassroots movements calling for secession and members of state legislatures talking again about “nullification.” So far as the public is concerned, a recent CNN poll showed that 25 percent - that is one out of four Americans - say that they sympathize more with the Confederacy than with the Union in the Civil War. In the southern states the number is 38 percent! (See Charles Blow, New York Times 4 January)

Since I can’t imagine these southerners are thinking about the slavery issue, they must be thinking about states’ rights. So more than one third of the people in the southern states think they had the better case in the Civil War that was fought 150 years ago. This can’t be good.

I don’t mean I anticipate another Civil War, but there is a lot of mischief short of war that can frustrate the will of the majority. To avoid such mischief will take strong measures, including redrawing the filibuster rules in the Senate; placing redistricting in the hands of independent commissions; limiting the power of money in elections; and coming up with a method to insure the minority party cannot hold full faith and credit of the country hostage every time it comes to raising the debt ceiling.
Openings

3/6
Music | HOLLY WILLIAMS | Lincoln Theatre Events, www.lincolntheatre.com

3/1
Stage & Screen | HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS | Progress Energy Center Events, www.progressenergycenter.com

3/15-16
Stage & Screen | MONSTER TRUCK JAM; DATE WITH DESTRUCTION | Progress Energy Center Events, www.progressenergycenter.com

2/22
Museums | NCMA CINEMA: MY MAN GODFREY | NC Museum of Art Events, www.ncartmuseum.org

2/14
Music | MOE | Lincoln Theatre Events, www.lincolntheatre.com
Galleries

ARTSPACE EVENTS / Raleigh, www.artspacenc.org, 919-821-2787
THROUGH MAR. 9 / Margaux Crump Exhibit; Gallery 1
FEB. 1- MAR. 30 / Regional Emerging Artist-in-Residence Retrospective; Gallery 2
MAR. 6- APRIL 27 / Artspace Artists Association New Works Exhibition; Gallery 1

FEB. 1-23 / Allison A. Dahle & Mary Beth Owen-Zdanski Exhibit, The Human Heart; Opening Reception Feb. 1
FEB. 1-23 / Wake County High School Student Show
MAR. 1-30 / Shawnda Rossi & Tarrah Huff Exhibit, Paint-Tastic; Opening Reception Mar. 1

VISUAL ART EXCHANGE EVENTS / Various locations, Raleigh, www.visualartexchange.org, 919-828-7834
FEB. 2 / For the Love of Art Auction & Gala; Raleigh Marriott City Center

NC MUSEUM OF HISTORY EVENTS / www.ncmuseumofhistory.org, 919-807-7900
THROUGH OCT. 2013 / Part two of the series, North Carolina and the Civil War: The Raging Storm, 1863
FEB. 10 / Music of the Carolinas; Jeff Warner
FEB. 16 / Young Associate’s 5th Annual Casino Night
FEB. 17 / A night of Movies: Glory

MARBLE’S KIDS MUSEUM EVENTS / www.marblekidsmuseum.org, 919-834-4040
THROUGH FEB. 7 / Led Zeppelin Celebration Day; watch the December 10, 2007 tribute concert to the band’s dear friend and Atlantic Records founder, Ahmet Ertegun in high definition and surround sound; IMAX Theatre
FEB. 16 / Butterfly Bash; IMAX Theatre
FEB. 16 / Music Makers with guest musician, David Alpert
FEB. 23 / Family Camp-In
APRIL 27 / Imagination Ball; Colorful “grown up gala” to raise money for the Imagination Fund at Marbles. Tickets on sale, Feb. 1

ACKLAND MUSEUM OF ART EVENTS / www.ackland.org, 919-966-5736
THROUGH MARCH / More Love: Art, Politics and Sharing Since the 1970’s

NASHER MUSEUM OF ART EVENTS / www.nasherduke.edu
THROUGH FEB. 10 / Collecting Matisse and Modern Masters; The Cone Sisters of Baltimore Exhibit

FEB. 12 / Family Camp-In
APRIL 27 / Imagination Ball; Colorful “grown up gala” to raise money for the Imagination Fund at Marbles. Tickets on sale, Feb. 1

TITANIC: THE EXHIBITION, THROUGH APRIL 28 / During the 100th year anniversary, showcasing two hundred artifacts retrieved from the wreck site. NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh. www.naturalsciences.org

Museums

NC MUSEUM OF ART EVENTS / www.ncartmuseum.org, 919-839-6262
THROUGH FEB. 10 / Edvard Munch: Symbolism in Print
FEB. 3 / Blue Ridge Chamber Players: in Celebration of NCMAS Permanent Collection
FEB. 8 / NCMA Cinema; Cobra Woman
FEB. 16 / NCMA Cinema; Written on the Wind
FEB. 16 / 1 Heart Purim: An Evening of Fun, Food and Dancing
FEB. 22 / NCMA Cinema; My Man Godfrey

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FEB. 16 / Young Associate’s 5th Annual Casino Night
FEB. 17 / A night of Movies: Glory

MARBLE’S KIDS MUSEUM EVENTS / www.marblekidsmuseum.org, 919-834-4040
THROUGH FEB. 7 / Led Zeppelin Celebration Day; watch the December 10, 2007 tribute concert to the band’s dear friend and Atlantic Records founder, Ahmet Ertegun in high definition and surround sound; IMAX Theatre
FEB. 16 / Butterfly Bash; IMAX Theatre
FEB. 16 / Music Makers with guest musician, David Alpert
FEB. 23 / Family Camp-In
APRIL 27 / Imagination Ball; Colorful “grown up gala” to raise money for the Imagination Fund at Marbles. Tickets on sale, Feb. 1

ACKLAND MUSEUM OF ART EVENTS / www.ackland.org, 919-966-5736
THROUGH MARCH / More Love: Art, Politics and Sharing Since the 1970’s

NASHER MUSEUM OF ART EVENTS / www.nasherduke.edu
THROUGH FEB. 10 / Collecting Matisse and Modern Masters; The Cone Sisters of Baltimore Exhibit

FEB. 12 / Family Camp-In
APRIL 27 / Imagination Ball; Colorful “grown up gala” to raise money for the Imagination Fund at Marbles. Tickets on sale, Feb. 1

TITANIC: THE EXHIBITION, THROUGH APRIL 28 / During the 100th year anniversary, showcasing two hundred artifacts retrieved from the wreck site. NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh. www.naturalsciences.org

Stage & Screen

CAROLINA BALLET EVENTS / www.carolinaballet.com, 919-719-0800
FEB. 7-14 / The Nutcracker
MAR. 7-14 / Rite of Spring

CAROLINA THEATRE OF DURHAM EVENTS / www.carolinatheatre.org, 919-560-3030
FEB. 8 / Cocktails with Larry Miller

DURHAM PERFORMING ARTS CENTER EVENTS / www.durhamperformingartscenter.org
FEB. 12-17 / Mary Poppins
MAR. 10 / Lord of the Dance

PROGRESS ENERGY CENTER EVENTS / www.progressenergycenter.com, 919-962-0606
FEB. 12-17 / Spamalot, presented by Broadway Series South and North Carolina Theatre
FEB. 27 / Bruce Cockburn
MAR. 1 / The Gibson Brothers
MAR. 3 / Imani Winds; Raleigh Chamber Music

PNC ARENA EVENTS / www.thepncarena.com
FEB. 6-10 / Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus; Dragons
MAR. 1 / Harlem Globetrotters
MAR. 15-16 / Monster Truck Jam; Date with Destruction
APRIL 3 / Eric Clapton with special guest, The Wallflowers

Music

CAROLINA THEATRE OF DURHAM EVENTS / www.carolinatheatre.org, 919-560-3030
FEB. 1 / Jesse Cook
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Durham Performing Arts Center Events
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February Events

FEB. 15 / Southside Johnny and The Asbury Jukes
FEB. 16 / Harry Belafonte
FEB. 17 / Musical Landscapes

DURHAM PERFORMING ARTS CENTER EVENTS / www.durhamperformingartscenter.org
MAR. 12 / Rain- A Tribute to The Beatles

Lincoln Theatre Events / www.lincolntheatre.com, 919-821-4111
FEB. 2 / Jackyl with Wayland, Lexx Luthor and Automag
FEB. 8 / The Breakfast Club with Heart Brigade
FEB. 9 / David Allen Coe with Rebel Son
FEB. 10 / Soul Asylum with Miles Nielsen and The Rusted Hearts
FEB. 14 / moe.

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FEB. 21 / Jimmy Herring's Superband, The Ringers
FEB. 22 / Perpetual Groove
FEB. 23 / Nantucket's 2nd Annual Heartbreakers Ball
MAR. 2 / Bandtogether's "Last Band Standing" supporting the Tammy Lynn Center
MAR. 6 / Holly Williams
MAR. 7 / Randy Rogers Band
MAR. 9 / The Gaugher Anthem with Cory Branan

NC SYMPHONY EVENTS / Meymandi Concert Hall, The Progress Energy Center Raleigh, www.progressenergycenter.com, 919-831-6060
FEB. 1-2 / The Planets: An HD Odyssey
FEB. 8-9 / Sibelius' Second Symphony
FEB. 15 / Schumann's Piano Concerto
FEB. 22-23 / Freedom; Classical Series
MAR. 1-2 / Kenny G; Pops Series
MAR. 9 / Rhythm In Your Rubbish
MAR. 15-16 / Elgar's Enigma; Classical Series

Potpourri
BLACK TIE AND TAILS BALL, FEB. 23 / To benefit the Carolina Tiger Rescue; Washington Duke Inn, Durham. For information, call 919-542-4684 or visit www.carolinatigerrescue.com
ANNUAL HOBBY GREENHOUSE TOUR, MAR. 2 / Self-guided tour of local greenhouses, including member and non-member greenhouses and commercial and institutional greenhouses throughout New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender Counties. Tour starts at the New Hanover County Arboretum, Wilmington. Visit www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org
FASHION FORWARD, MAR. 10 / Presented by the Junior League of Raleigh and Belk; event includes a cocktail hour, raffle and Spring runway show with proceeds to benefit the Junior League of Raleigh and its programs. Belk, Crabtree Valley Mall, Raleigh. Contact www.jlraleigh.org
WINE GALA, APRIL 7-9 / Presented by the Junior League of Durham at the Fresh Market, Chapel Hill. Tickets can be purchased online or at the door. Visit www.jldoc.org

TO LIST AN EVENT: Send events info and color images, slides or photos six weeks before publication date to: Metro Magazine, 1033 Oberlin Rd. Suite 100, Raleigh 27605 or email: editors@metro.nc.com.
Rex Gala — Celebrating 25 Years
Benefitting Rex Healthcare Foundation
November 10, 2012
Raleigh Convention Center
Photos courtesy of Brian Strickland

Honorary Chairs Dr. and Mrs. James Zidar

Chris and Grant Young

Artspace Collector’s Gala
Benefitting Artspace
November 17, 2012
Photos courtesy of Mike Shield Photography

Joseph Philipose and Donna Shoplock

Artspace board member John Therien and his wife, Heather

Collectors Gala honorary co-chairs Tricia & Stuart Phoenix with Melissa Simpson and Sally Pyle

North Carolina Opera Gala
Benefitting the North Carolina Opera
November 10, 2012
The Umstead Hotel and Spa
Photos courtesy of Doug Van Zande

Honorary Chair Dr. Michael Zellinger

Holly and Eric Mitchko, Dr. Siaphan and Rochelle Prystowsky, Jim and Anna Romano

Charles Kishcart, Worth Dunn, Douglas Brinkley, Ken Godden

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Joe and Mary Laurie Cico, Betsy and Steven Levitas, Edwina Shaw
RALEIGH/CARY

18 SEABOARD — 18 Seaboard Avenue, Suite 100 Raleigh, 919-861-4318. www.18seaboard.com. Chef-Proprietor Jason Smith welcomes you with sensibly, inventive American Cuisine using North Carolina ingredients. From the downtown views of our open-air mezzanine to the staff’s warm hospitality, 18 Seaboard is the place for casual dining or special occasions.


THE ANGUS BARN — 9401 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh. 919-781-2444. www.angusbarn.com. The Angus Barn, a Raleigh landmark offers Angus steaks, seafood, an extensive wine list, experienced and knowledgeable staff and much more in its eclectic barn setting. Since opening in the 1960s, the basic principals — hospitality, attractive atmosphere, and value have remained the same.


CAFÉ TIRAMISU — 6196-120 Falls of Neuse Rd., Raleigh. 919-981-0305. Northern Italian Cuisine; A family-owned and operated restaurant originating from an old Raleigh favorite Piccolo Mondo restaurant. Sleek and contemporary décor, will give fine dining at its best.

COQUETTE BRASSERIE — 4351-119 The Circle at North Hills, Raleigh. 919-789-0606. www.coquettebrasserie.com. Raleigh’s first authentic French Brasserie featuring traditional fare, an exclusive French wine list and the best beers and classic French cocktails. Open air restaurant made possible by giant doors that open when the weather is just right. Mon-Thur: 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri-Sat: 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Sun: 10 a.m.-10 p.m.

EL RODEO GRILL — 7420 Six Forks Rd., Raleigh. 919-844-6330. www.elrodeo.com. Inspired by the bold flavors of Tex-Mex fare and the vibrant culture of Mexico, enjoy our favorite fajitas and stuffed Chile Rellenos. Or for a higher degree of authenticity, try our Michoacan-style Carnitas and a Mexico-City style Steak Tacos special. Signature margaritas and refreshing beer make for a perfect compliment to this twist on traditional Mexican dining.

FIREBIRDS ROCKY MOUNTAIN GRILL — 4350-118 Lassiter at North Hills Ave., Raleigh. 919-788-8778. A unique style of American cuisine that originated in Aspen Colorado. Open-flame grilled steaks, herb-roasted prime rib, fresh seafood, hearty pasta, awesome burgers and giant salads served in a cozy, comfortable setting. Bar and outdoor patio seating available. M - Th: 11 a.m.-10 p.m., F-Sat: 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Sun: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

GLENWOOD GRILL — Oberlin@Glenwood, Raleigh. 919-782-3102. The longtime favorite in the Triangle, five-time MetroBistro winner for Power Lunch. Head Chef John Wright continues to discover new takes on Contemporary Southern. Now offering even More for Less: $30 Dinner for Two, Mon-Fri. Appetizer or salad to share, two entrees, dessert to share and a bottle of wine. For lunch, Monday-Friday: Two for $12. Choose appetizer or salad with Main Course. Available for private parties on Sundays. Visit us at glenwoodgrill.com.

GRAVY — 135 S. Wilmingon St, Raleigh. 919-896-8513. www.gravyraleigh.com. Ask any Italian American what ‘gravy’ is, and they’ll tell you it’s the pasta sauce their mothers and grandmothers cooked fresh every night. At Gravy, we use that beloved gravy to put a modern spin on classic Italian-American dishes.


THE RALEIGH TIMES BAR — 14 E. Hargett St, Raleigh. 919-833-0999, www.raleightimesbar.com. This timelessness watering hole in the old The Raleigh Times building in downtown is known for its classic bar fare favorites, such as barbecue pork nachos and PBR-battered fish and chips, and an inventive drink menu and extensive beer selection.

sutS CHIS STEAK HOUSE — 4381-100 Lassiter at North Hills Ave, Raleigh. 919-791-1103. New Orleans-inspired appetizers, aged USDA Prime steaks, fresh seafood, signature side dishes and homemade desserts served with genuine hos-
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SHERATON RALEIGH HOTEL — The Grove Café— 421 South Salisbury Street, Raleigh. 919-834-9900. Located on second floor of the Sheraton Raleigh Hotel, serving Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner in an open atrium atmosphere. The cuisine is American Continental, serving a daily breakfast buffet and for all day dining. Also enjoy live entertainment on Wednesday nights in The Bar.

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Winston's Grille — 6401 Falls of Neuse Rd., Raleigh. 919-790-0700. Locally owned and operated for 25 years. We are dedicated to providing a great dining experience to our guests. We pride ourselves in providing quality food and service make us a top choice for steaks, prime rib, fresh seafood, salads, burgers and more.


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BEYOND THE TRIANGLE

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BEAUFORT GROCERY CO — 117 Queen St., Beaufort. 252-738-3899. www.beaufortgroceryco.com. Beaufort’s oldest and continuously operating fine dining restaurant since 1991. Specializing in regional cuisine fused with global techniques and influences. Lunch M-W Sat 11:30-3 p.m., Dinner M-W Sat 5:30-9:30 p.m. and Sun brunch at 11:30 a.m. Closed Tues.

BLUE MOON BISTRO — 119 Queen Street, Beaufort. 252-738-5800. Coastal cuisine in a causal historic setting. Offering innovative dishes that bring a welcomed departure from other coastal venues. Chef Swain’s eclectic menu includes references from Asia, France and America. For a balanced plate, enjoy a well-matched wine to accompany your entrée. Dinner Tues-Sat.

RESTAURANT GUIDE


FISHTALES WATERFRONT RESTAURANT — 222 W. Beaufort Rd. Beaufort 252-504-7263. Visit Web site online at www.fishtalesdining.com. Have your Holiday Party on the Waterfront this year! FishTales offers the best food selection, service and a great atmosphere for your special event. We can provide the perfect setting no matter what the occasion. Our facility accommodates parties from 10 to 1000. Call today or come by for a personal tour.


My Usual Charming Self

I FEEL THE EARTH MOVE UNDER MY FEET
by Bernie Reeves

Ever get the feeling we will be like Germans who don't have a good answer to why they stood by as political developments in the 1930s ultimately destroyed them? One day they woke up and their country wasn't theirs anymore. Those who did resist, the so-called "good Germans," at least had a clear conscience.

So, where are the "good Americans" as Barack Obama irrevocably alters the nature of the country to the point of no return? Certainly not the Republicans, who have a knack for mediocre leadership. Senator Rand Paul made a hash of questioning Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over the display of incompetence that left the American ambassador to Libya and three others dead. House Speaker John Boehner is a prisoner of the Tea Party wing nuts, and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell can't rise above the mealy-mouthed Senate leader Harry Reid. Newt Gingrich drones on indecipherably saying nothing, and Mitt Romney has absconded having realized the fratricidal GOP deserted him.

The opposition to Obama is functionally non-existent, except for temper tantrums in Congress. The ordinary citizen is now a bystander to a comic opera, numbed by five years of unprecedented economic dislocation - caused by unprosecuted Wall Street criminal conspiracies masquerading as capitalism; arrogant presidential executive orders, as if we already lived in a totalitarian state; a deliberate socialist mindset in the White House that has destroyed hope for the middle class: a Fed chief who prints money to cover up incompetent fiscal policy; a stock market disconnected from the real economy; a dumbed-down electorate created by four decades of radical politicization of the curriculum; fear and uncertainty as the Obama health care legislation continues to titillate unpleasant surprises and previously undisclosed costs; and political gridlock, sex scandals and incompetency in Washington.

Inauguration morning, hours before Obama was sworn in for a second term, a combination Gallup/Pew research survey reported a vastly different opinion than Obama's about how we feel as a nation after his first term. Americans said they were very concerned about their future wealth, job stability, personal security, college debt, home values and spiraling world events. Only 40 percent see improvement in the economy five years after the great crash of 2008, creating a general anxiety in stark contrast to the ebullience of Obama's claim that all is well.

Obama's speech obviously did not address the concerns of the people as measured in the poll. Of course, the fawning mass media paid attention. Having assured his two victories, they are now focused on ginning up false accolades to assure his place among the "great" presidents. To achieve this, both Obama and the lap-dog press ignored the failure of his economic policies that have nearly extinguished the middle class - and increased the preposterous federal debt to astronomical heights.

To avoid these unpleasantries in his speech, Obama made a grandstand bid for his place in world history by calling for a major initiative to prevent climate change, like Canute holding back the sea. Rather than offer a sane policy to assure Americans they are safe, he announced his goal to solve the intractable illegal immigration issue, hardly a priority since the flow of illegals has slowed to a trickle with jobs scarce and the U.S. economy buckling. And concerning gun ownership, Obama shamelessly exploited the Sandy Hook massacre to push the left wing desire to ban guns while ignoring the real issue of identifying and containing the dangerously mentally ill.

The fissure between truth and reality has already formed that could lead to chaos under Obama's lack of genuine leadership. Blue versus Red; Democrat versus Republican; black versus white and, in an historical coincidence, North versus South. As in the Civil War, it's still about slavery - as the country is reminded constantly by activists - economic hegemony and contempt. The New Yorker and other bien pensant publications are sending smoke signals containing whiffs of sulfur: they say the South's values are antiquated in the new age of human idealism, and Southern traits - such as patriotism, proper manners, gun ownership and religion - are splitting the country.

And worse, say the Yankee pundits, Southerners stubbornly refuse to sanitize their regional accent in order to speak effectively the politically correct conceits that have become a faux reality in Blue State conclaves. Hidden in this surface argument are the American values the South retains that the other half of the nation denigrates or ignores: sound fiscal policy; military strength; aversion to a welfare state; suspicion that affirmative action creates a false reality that ultimately harms the status of minorities; and allegiance - to family, friends and country.

Obama's stated goal to "improve America's standing in the world" gives his game away. Why should the most generous nation in history feel ashamed? Because, according to the Obama manifesto, our nation of individuals does not live up to the ideals of the righteous Left that demand collective adherence to platitudes absent in the marrow of human nature. That is why the Obama agenda calls for a continuing policy of minority, immigrant and gender rights, and the incessant drumbeat of accusations of historical wrongs that denigrate the nation's identity while ignoring its achievements. Conditioning citizens by vilifying the past as evil and guilt-ridden with racism, chauvinism, imperialism and homophobia gives impetus for consensus to restructuring society to achieve socialist perfection.

The Big Lie is on, supported by the mass media that cannot seem to locate anything negative about the administration. He is hoisted aloft on their mendacious shoulders in a Potemkin-like ticker tape parade down the avenues of the nation. Bow your heads America, to a false god who is destroying our values and replacing them with misery and dissolution.

Read more commentary by Bernie Reeves at www.the­berniereeses.com and at the American Thinker (www.americanthinker.com)
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