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Atlantic City Adventures in Scrabble

By Douglas Yeisley

Since the release of Patrick Creadon's delightful ode to crosswords *Wordplay* and Seth Gordon's moving *The King of Kong*, pastimes at one time considered "geeky" have gained remarkable cultural relevance. Other board, puzzle, and arcade games, even without the benefit of a feature film, have also taken off across the country. Sociologists and cultural observers might offer explanations like the "geeky is cool" phenomenon and the innate desire for a niche, but it is enough for most to simply experience the joys of bonding with other oddballs over a rousing round of Connect Four.

Scrabble is experiencing a renaissance of sorts, thanks in part to an online version of the game called Scrabulous. Scrabble clubs meet regularly across the nation, and big scrabble tournaments are held practically every weekend. The National Scrabble Association, the governing

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Actual Scene from the Atlantic City tournament. Photograph by Ruby Watson

Hilary Clinton Pays Visit to Philadelphia

By Douglas Yeisley

November 2008 is arguably going to be one of the most important elections in recent memory, and Super Tuesday was perhaps the biggest political event thus far this year. During this much hyped primary event, Senator McCain managed to substantially widen his lead in the race for the Republican nomination. Now he is a virtual lock to get the nod, forcing at least one of his two chief adversaries, Governor Mitt Romney, to concede. The other, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, has yet to make such a declaration. On the Democratic side, Senator Hilary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama are still practically deadlocked. Both are turning their sites to upcoming primaries. However, unless Clinton and

Obama somehow maintain their tie until April, Pennsylvania's own primary is too far removed from this political positioning to actually make a difference. Slated to be held on Tuesday, April 22, our primary might simply be more of an exercise on how to properly flip the levers at the polling booths than actually im-

pacting the election. It is a shame; Pennsylvania has such an intriguing voting potential.

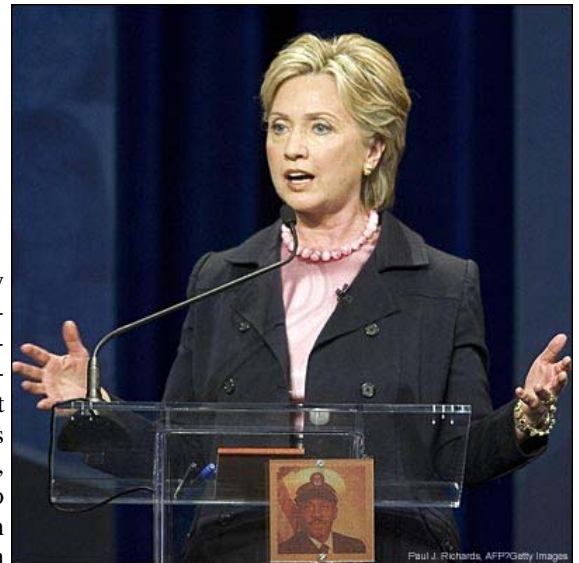


Image Courtesy of Google Images

Senator Hilary Clinton paid a visit to Philadelphia's City Hall on Wednesday, January 23, 2008. Why? Well, since the aforementioned Philadelphia primary is so far away, it was a priority of Clinton's to secure an endorsement from Governor Ed Rendell and Mayor Michael Nutter. She succeeded in acquiring both men's support in the past couple of months, so naturally she would maintain close ties with them. Her visit received only a small blurb in the newspaper since it was more of a press only event. I missed this announcement, but thanks to journalistic dumb luck, I managed to accidentally stumble across the crowd waiting for Hilary's exit. The weather was still cold back then, so the whole crowd was shivering, stomping, and leaving in shifts to get coffee at Dunkin' Donuts.

Clinton and Obama supporters clashed in a mostly lighthearted way: a man wearing a trucker hat kept yelling, "Philly for Hillary!" quite pleased that it rhymed while Obama's crew held up signs declaring quite the opposite. Another Obama sign boldly said, "Honk! If you support Obama" to which area mo-

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Community

Scrabble

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body of Scrabble, is responsible for most of the major tournaments, a few of which are televised on ESPN. When compatriots of mine decided to attend an NSA tournament in Atlantic City, I gladly agreed to accompany them. I hopped on a bus, and soon found myself at a Clarion Hotel a few miles outside of town.

The tournament was held in a ballroom, which could really only be described as drab, with no windows and no bold colors to speak of. The focus clearly was on the scrabble at hand. Everyone populating this ballroom seemed to be a caricature straight from one of those other documentaries. Customized scrabble gear, fancy equipment, and enthusiasm abounded. Once I got past all the scrabble paraphernalia, I noticed that an astounding cross-section of life was present. Almost every race and ethnicity seemed to be represented, united by the love of letters on tiles.

The games began, and I eagerly took my place. Unfortunately, I had no idea how to play competitive scrabble. Bizarre rules unfolded before my eyes:

holding the tile bag in a certain position when drawing tiles, hitting the timer, turning the board, and so on. I also learned that you can actually use words that aren't really words, like "qi." A computer sat by the door in case of any challenges, which were frequent. We were in the "D" group, the lowest echelon of scrabble players at the tournament, and yet we were utterly destroyed. I played one lady, who yelled at me every other turn about not following some rule or another, ended up beating me by at least 150 points. Then, she says, "You'll be a good player someday. You just have to learn to stop making dumb moves." I took her words to heart.

There really was not much levity during games, since everyone was more intent on humiliating each other with deft seven word plays (called "bingos") than striking up conversation. I actually heard taunting, and the conversation and occasional jokes were all scrabble related. I actually got sick of the game by the end of the day; the intensity of the matches wore me out. Thankfully, the last person I played was drinking vodka from a water bottle, so she really did not mind my apathy.

Afterwards, my friends and I wandered around Atlantic City, taking in all the neon lights. I ate a slice of apple pie, and all was well. With my scrabble days behind me, I think it is safe to say I will never be featured in a documentary, which is probably for the best.

Clinton

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torists happily obliged. I was intrigued by the amount of cabbies who responded to this sign, but have no idea what that actually means. Local news camera crews came out to observe the action, only to be deterred by the cold. As I was trying to find a good political pose as the cameras swept the crowd, I was tapped on my shoulder by a MTV News reporter, who asked me if I wanted to be interviewed. I agreed, and answered various questions about both Senator Clinton and the election in general. After signing a release form, I realized why they wanted me. I was by far the youngest person in the entire crowd. Clinton has tended not to attract younger voters, and this gathering proved nothing different.

Finally, Clinton, and Mayor Nutter, exited the building to everyone's delight. Nutter half-heartedly waved, but Clinton immediately jumped into her SUV. The crowd disbanded, emotionally deflated. If Clinton merely waved, she would have sent them into a fury of delight, but it was not to be so. Apparently she acknowledged some supporters on her way in earlier that day, but her lack of courtesy to these people waiting in the cold left them feeling frustrated.

I understand candidates have a grueling schedule, but it has long been that way. President Harry Truman, during his campaign, traveled 21,928 miles by train, stopping virtually everywhere. Teddy Roosevelt once shook 8,513 hands in one day, against the Secret Service's advice. Campaigning seems to be more about creating a public image than actually meeting the public: rolling up your shirtsleeves to feign hard work, posing for a photo-op. Both politics and our nation have outgrown the ability to meet with the constituents in a more intimate basis, and that, too, is a shame.



Photograph by fellow scrabble enthusiast Sally Watson.

Culture

Kimya Dawson Plays Free Show

By Douglas Yeisley

Kimya Dawson, member of the Moldy Peaches, played a free show at Old City record store AKA Music on January 19, 2007. In case you have not been keeping up with things, indie movie *Juno* has been a phenomenal success, and Dawson's music was featured on the movie's popular soundtrack. As a result, her popularity has increased dramatically, which explains the crowds that packed into the small upstairs room in the record store. Among them were many MCPC residents, including Bethany Ellis, Emily Yoder, Amanda Holston, Lacey Ward, and more.

She made her way through the crowd, which was a mixture of disillusioned hipsters and teenage girls empowered by *Juno*, and took her place on the stage. She was heavily tattooed, and sported an afro supported by a headband. She dressed almost like an Earth mother; she has all the makings of a modern-day saint. As soon as the first few notes of her *Juno* hit "Anyone Else But You," the whole building joined her in singing it. From that moment on, she had everyone enraptured. Song after song followed, some from her *Moldy Peaches* work and some from her forthcoming

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Image Courtesy of Google Images

Art Review: Trisha Donnelly at the ICA

By Emily Yoder

Trisha Donnelly doesn't mind withholding explanation from her audience. Many of her pieces consist of mere lines and symmetrical shapes. Minimalism and abstraction define her current installment at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art.

Donnelly, a San Francisco-based artist, attempts to evoke feelings from the audience using minimal catalysts: works she has made between 1998 and 2007. Many of the pieces suggest the theme of time, but may use only simple shapes to draw the viewer to his or her self-made emotional conclusions.

The pieces line neatly across one wall on the gallery's second floor. As the viewer moves across the wall experiencing each piece individually, the variety of the workmanship creates a unique contrast. The haste of a pencil sketch on a crumpled white paper conjures memories of the tedium of a stained foam carving several spaces over or the details of a white-clad woman jumping up and down in slow motion, which would likely be overlooked in actual time.

Color is a rare indulgence, as most of the collection consists of black and white pieces, simple sketches, and earth tones. However, a chartreuse fabric piece with splotches of black enamel paint demands the most visual interest of the pieces in the room.

The most contrast in her collection comes in the varied use of media. From still black and white photographs, to short DVD clips



Donnelly piece currently on exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Image Courtesy of www.icaphila.org

(one displaying the word "Frances" between two spinning wheels), to giant prints (one of a metallic circle inscribed with the word "Peralta" in front of a flame), Donnelly displays comfort and thoughtful command of many artistic forms.

The strength of the collection is rooted in the compression of the pieces, and the obvious care put into their visual order. Standing alone, the pieces may appear more decorative and considerably less deliberate. Thoughts of time and emotion can emerge from the experience of the collection, but a lone, colorless hieroglyphic sketch would lack the same imaginative power with audiences.

While this phenomenon communicates the important factor of exhibition in the art experience, it brings one to question the merit of the individual pieces.

The installment will be displayed at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania until August 3, 2008. The gallery, located on 36th Street in West Philadelphia, costs \$3 for students throughout the week, but is free on Sundays between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

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Urban Living

Donnelly

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This month The Institute of Contemporary Art is also featuring "Beyond Kiosk" a display of rare publications, Carlos Motta's "The Good Life," a multimedia documentary-in-progress about the United State's foreign policy in Latin America, and "The Puppet Show" a collaboration of 29 artists examining the use of puppets in contemporary art. Although the hike to the Institute is slightly farther than a trip to the Art Museum, one can critically engage with the pieces in new ways, since they were intended for modern audiences and lack the renown of the timeless pieces the Art Museum houses.

Dawson

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baby song album (Dawson is a proud mother). By the time Dawson finished, she had invited people on stage, offered everyone a hug, told a guy to stop complaining, and took requests. Meanwhile, the room overheated, causing a French girl to faint.

None of this really surprised me, though, except perhaps the girl fainting. Dawson is a non-traditional star, fiercely critical about consumerism and the other social ills that haunt us. Her East Coast tour, in promotion of the *Juno* soundtrack, featured only independent music stores as venues, playing shows at little to no cost. So, was sitting in sweltering heat and cramped conditions worth it? Absolutely.

Want to Write for the
Broad Street Journal?

Send all thoughts, questions,
and articles to
dy1157@messiah.edu

Next issue is slated to come
out February 22, 2008.

Out with IHOP: A Review of the Café Estelle

By Mel McKrell

Don't be fooled by the "International" or "Pancakes" in International House of Pancakes. There's something better out there for you. It's called Café Estelle, and it's fluffy, not greasy.

Rumor has it that one of the chefs once put twice the amount of buttermilk in a customer's order by mistake. The customer liked it so much that Café Estelle has been doing the same ever since. So when I brunched there with Lacey Ward and her little sis Toni on Sunday, I quickly found myself forking mouthfuls of Toni's pancakes. Toni is scrawny and probably needed the food more than I did, but I regret nothing.

Lacey's light, egg-y french toast came with homemade vanilla ice cream. It had the hallmark of a quality meal: it was good enough to be filling the first time around. When I go to a McDonalds, it takes me four 99-cent burgers to get full.

The café also has your bookstore coffee shop beat [Euphemism: Starbucks]. Lacey's never been partial to scones on account of their overall crustiness, but she loved the melting warmth of the one she sampled. Bonus: The cafe shares a glass wall with the high rise lobby next door, so you get to watch the security guard swiveling around in his chair.

Lest we talk of breakfast too much longer, Café Estelle has a range of soups, flatbread pizzas and foo-foo drinks like jasmine-infused spring water. On its weekly menu you'll find ingredients like Kalamata olives, oyster mushrooms and melted leek risotto. The City Paper called their ham, manchego cheese and pearl-onion relish panini "the best hot sandwich we've had in ages." Beat that, Panera/Cosi/Potbelly's/Arby's.

For those with tight wallets, french-pressed coffee is around two dollars with free refills. The one-dollar sacks of bagel chips are a bargain.

You'll probably spend around 10 to 20 dollars when you visit. While you're there, check out the local artwork on the back wall and get to know Kristen Mulvenna, the manager and co-owner of the café. Boyfriend, past sous chef and co-owner Marshall Green heads the kitchen.

Go to Café Estelle. It'll have you eating off your roommate's sister's plate in no time.

Café Estelle Information:

Hours: Mon-Fri 7:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Sat-Sun 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

444 N 4th St between Spring Garden and Callowhill Streets

Three Area Events Worthy of Your Time

By Douglas Yeisley

-Chinese New Year has officially begun; the year of the fire pig has officially ended (good riddance, I say). If you missed the festivities, though, do not be dismayed. The celebrations do not end until the first full moon, fifteen days later. In the meantime, at noon the next couple of Sundays, there will be ongoing celebrations in Chinatown by the Friendship Arch on 10th and Arch St.

-On February 23rd, Maple Syrup Day showers the area with sticky goodness. Held from 11am to 3pm, this fun event at Wissahickon Valley Park features maple sugaring demonstrations, pancakes served with real maple syrup, and much more. Consult Fairmount Park's website, www.fairmountpark.org for additional information.

-If you were intrigued by the scrabble article, there will be a tournament in Philadelphia on February 17th. Please visit www.scrabble-assoc.com for details.