

Friday Night Lights

Life in a small town that is football crazy

By Aubrey Ann Parker

Current Editor

Have you ever seen *Friday Night Lights*, the television show that aired for five seasons on NBC from 2006-2011? According to Wikipedia, the show uses a “small-town backdrop to address many issues facing contemporary American culture, including family values, school funding, racism, drugs, abortion, and lack of economic opportunities... Though *Friday Night Lights* never garnered a sizable audience, it was a critical success, lauded for its realistic portrayal of Middle America and deep exploration of its central characters.”

Not only was the writing pretty good (well, if you skip most of the second season, that is), but the way that they filmed it is pretty interesting: like the 2004 movie by the same name (by the

same producer/director, Peter Berg), the show was shot to look like a documentary, with strange camera angles and actual locations, rather than stage sets and a sound stage.

Unlike traditional scripted television shows, entire scenes were shot in one take with three cameras that had been strategically placed at different vantage points. Additionally, the actors were given a lot of leeway with their performances, meaning that they could change their lines, as long as they still hit the pivotal plot points. Moreover, hundreds of locals served as extras, giving the show an authentic look



Frankfort is a lot like the idyllic, iconic town in the television show—the school colors and mascot are even the same—except that everyone has a nasally Michigan accent instead of a Texan drawl. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

and feel—they actually filmed real games of the Pflugerville Panthers and used these as the game footage in the series, plus most of the uniforms, cheerleaders, and fans were “real people” from these games. The show even won a bunch of awards: a Humanitas Prize, a Peabody Award, a Television Critics Association Award, and several Emmy Awards and nominations.

Well, I could go on and on, but if you have ever seen that show, you can imagine life in my small town.

Frankfort is a lot like that—the school colors and mascot are even the same—except that everyone has a nasally Michigan accent instead of a Texan drawl.

Jordan Bates and I have been together for 10 years now (and we have co-owned this newspaper together for the past five years), and we are now

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Meat(s)

Terry Conger and T.C. Butchering find a harvest home

By F. Josephine Arrowood

Current Contributor

Late summer and early autumn in Northern Michigan means harvest time, when we focus on our place in the cycle of the natural world and our relationship with our food sources. In its way, it is a story about death—that dark place of unknowing; the thing that looms as the end of all.

It is also a story about one man and his family, who work hard, live honorably, and make their livelihood by harvesting, culling, killing, slaughtering, butchering—death by any other name—animals into food for us.

In this largely rural region, numerous youth participate in 4-H clubs, learning how to raise livestock, including pigs, cows, and sheep. Or maybe the local organic farmer invests in a few pigs or goats as part of a Com-

munity Supported Agriculture (CSA) business. Now it is autumn, and those once-cute, little animals are fully grown, needing food, water, and daily attention, and are taking up quite a bit of space the in barn, shed, or field.

“Harvest season” becomes a pleasant, bucolic euphemism for, “We have to deal with all of these animals that we raised.” At the end of that growing process looms the question: Now what? Most neo-farmers lack the knowledge, skills, and



People would ask Terry Conger, “Can you cut up a pig? Can you cut up a cow? Can you cut up a bear? A moose?” Yes, he could do all of that. Photo by Taro Yamasaki.

logistical capacity to kill, cut up, and store even one large animal. This is where Terry Conger of T.C. Butchering can help.

“I’ve always made a living with a knife,” says Conger, who has sharpened his skills over a long, self-directed apprenticeship that included prep-cooking and managing a well-known Traverse City restaurant; working at area retail grocery stores; and processing thousands of game and farm animals.

He and his wife, Janet, possess a ferocious work ethic that includes 90-hour work weeks, boundless energy, smart business instincts, and a sense of humor. They have undergone the rigors of licensing and inspections by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its affiliates. These qualities have enabled them to carve a niche business in a region that needs residents like him with year-round

Please see Meat(s) on page 2

By Land or By Sea

New film festival is #5 for Frankfort

By Beth Roethler

Current Contributor

“Catch a wave, and you’re sitting on top of the world.” The Beach Boys knew what it was like to feel the water below you, the wind in your hair, and the sunshine on your face when they wrote their 1966 classic hit, “Catch a Wave.”

Northern Michigan is a great place to catch a wave; whether it is on a surfboard, a paddleboard, a kayak, or a canoe, water sports are a staple in this area. In celebration of this, a new event is coming to our area later this month—the 2018 Paddling Film Festival is being featured in 120 cities in Canada, the United States, and around the world. On Saturday, September

29, the festival comes to Frankfort, with a collection of unique, non-fiction films that feature water sports.

The festival will include eight mini-films, including Bass by Kayak, in which kayakers are fighting the battle of fishing, as well as The Making of a Birch Bark Canoe and Wild Coast, in which canoe and stand-up paddleboard expeditions show what adventures can be had when we leave the shore and



The 2018 Paddling Film Festival is being featured in 120 cities in Canada, the United States, and around the world. On Saturday, September 29, the festival comes to The Garden Theater in Frankfort. Photo courtesy of Rapid Media.

venture to the water. The first half of the films will run about 60 minutes with an intermission, and a second half of films will run for 41 minutes.

Among those spearheading the event are the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, a nonprofit that formed in 1993 to advocate, promote, and encourage the development and successful operation of a 22-mile recreational trail on the former Ann Arbor Railroad corridor in Benzie County that extends from Frankfort and Elberta into Beulah and out to Thompsonville.

Funds raised from the one-day film festival event will go toward a new signage project for the trail, which will include mileage markers, in addition to new ki-

Please see F5 on page 6


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Meat(s)

Continued from page 1

jobs; residents who, in turn, contribute to the local economy.

Sharpening His Skills

Conger grew up in Northern Michigan. After high school in Elk Rapids, he worked for a while in a manufacturing plant in Traverse City, where he met Jan, a Newman at the time, from Cedar. They married, had two sons, and bought some rural property just north of Lake Ann.

“I always liked to cook—my mom had taught me how to cook a little bit,” Conger says. “I quit my job at United Tech one day and went to Chamberlain’s Family Restaurant. I talked to Charlie Chamberlain; I said, ‘I don’t know that much about cooking, but I’d like to learn.’”

Conger and Chamberlain’s son, Randy—now the chef-owner of the acclaimed Blu restaurant in Glen Arbor—bonded over their mutual love of creative cuisine, and they still keep in regular touch.

“We started off prepping, we went to the line, and before we knew it, we were the assistant kitchen managers [at Chamberlain’s Family Restaurant]. Did that for three or four years,” Conger says. “Now and then, I’ll hook Randy up when he wants to do something off the wall or something special [at Blue]. One time, he wanted a whole ham leg. You’re not gonna go to Meijer or order off the truck from Gordon’s or Sysco for that—you gotta find a butcher!”

With his appetite whetted for the culinary business, Conger approached a local butcher shop—Pleva’s in Cedar.

“I was always good with food. I thought, ‘What if, instead of cooking it, I just cut it up?’ I’ve cut up a lot of deer [from hunting]; I thought I’d give it a shot,” he explains. “It happened they were looking for an apprentice, so I kind of fell into it. I wanted to learn the trade, wanted to do it right, learn the art of it. At Pleva’s, we cut up beef, some moose, some other wild game. We processed deer. That’s where you learned your cuts, how to run the saws. After a couple of years, I wanted to learn the speed part, the production part of it, so I went to work for a grocery store and learned to cut up meat really fast. I still have 10 fingers.”

He grins as he holds up his hands, displaying his many scars.

“It was all right, showing me how to lay out a retail case and things like that—but it also opened me up to corporate monkeys, middle management,” Conger continues. “You got your owners coming in, and your store directors. Too many bosses! You’re one person trying to please 27 different people.”

He moved on, for a time, to other grocery stores, each one adding to his layers of knowledge and providing opportunities to gain experience at his chosen craft. When the USDA changed the rules to ban farm-killed meat processing in a retail establishment, he found himself taking on more side jobs at home.

“I started doing more of custom-cut animals on my own after that. I had a shop [at home], and I’d started picking up different pieces of equipment here and there,” he says. “By this time, the economy started to fail [around 2009]. The wife lost her good job that paid 15 bucks an hour, and I thought, ‘Well, I’ll cut up a few deer, and she’ll get a new job in the spring, no big deal.’ We made it through the winter; I cut up some deer, everything was good.”

But in the spring, his wife did not get a good-quality paying job like she had before; she got a job that was half of what she had been making previously.

“I thought, ‘So, I’ll keep working at cutting up a few animals on the side.’ Did that for a while. Then she got a better job, things started going good, I backed off a little. Then that job moved away, and she went back down to another nine-dollar-an-hour job. So I cranked it up a little harder,” Conger recalls.

“People would ask me, ‘Can you cut up a pig?’ Yeah. ‘Can you cut up a cow? Can you cut up a bear?’ Moose?’ Yeah, I can do all that.”

Meanwhile, he still had his retail job at the chain grocery store, working six days a week.

“I’d always had the dream of having my own business, and I’ve told the wife that for 20 years,” Conger says. “But I always said I would wait until my last kid was grown and graduated. A few years ago, my son was coming up to graduation, and I asked for a half-day off. I put my request in four months in advance for his graduation party. Schedule comes out, and I didn’t get my half-day. I was told that I’m ‘too valuable an employee,’ and they can’t afford for me to take that on a Saturday in August.”

The day came, and Conger left at lunch-time to head to his son’s graduation party.

“When I punched in on Monday, they said, ‘You’d better go home and think about whether you want to work here,’” he recalls. “I thought about it for a few seconds. I shook the man’s hand and said, ‘I’ve made up my mind, thank you very much for the opportunity,’ and I walked out. I came home, it was only eight o’clock, and my wife said, ‘Why are you home?’ ‘I don’t know if I just quit or was fired.’ ‘Well, what are you gonna do now?’ she asked me. ‘I’m gonna start a company called T.C. Butchering.’”

The couple kicked that fully into gear about six years ago.

“Didn’t plan on quittin’ my job that day—but something snapped, the stars lined up for a split second, they pissed me off at the right moment,” he laughs.

We All Die

Conger explains the difference between meat cutters butchers: a meat cutter can stand in front of a band saw all day long, and you get a box of meat—New York strip, strip, strip, T-bone, T-bone, porterhouse, porterhouse.

“That’s nothing. But go find that porterhouse on that cow out there,” he says, waiting a beat and watching as realization dawns [on me, the writer]. “That’s the difference. Anybody can cut pork steaks off a pork butt from a box, but go find that pork butt on the pig. It is not on the rear of the animal like you’re thinking—it’s the front shoulder. You go up to an average person in a grocery store, even a meat cutter, and you ask, ‘Where does a tri-tip come from on a beeve?’ And they don’t have a clue where it comes from.”

Conger’s intimate knowledge of where our food comes from seems startling in our day and age. The average American does not know these details, and most of us would rather not know.

He sounds sorry for us in our ignorance and disconnection from something that, until recently, was so basic to survival—in 1900, 38 percent of the U.S. population farmed; by 2000, it was about two percent.

Conger knows how to kill animals. And he does so regularly; it is a necessary part of the business of food. It is not just about processing an animal that somebody else—such as a deer hunter—has taken from field or woods. That steer from the 4H club? Those pigs that your local CSA farmer has sold as shares, or the goats your neighbor pastured all summer? They all go somewhere to be butchered and turned into food for the table.

You may think, “How terrible,” or, “How cruel.” You love animals, or you are a vegetarian or animal-rights activist. And we all need champions to protect and support the beings that cannot speak for or defend themselves, whose lives are at the mercy of humans.

These lofty goals are not all contrary to the work of the butcher.

We all die; no one, as a friend of mine liked to say, gets out alive. Would you be content, and perhaps less afraid of death, if you knew that you could live in relative comfort and that someday, at a date and time unknown to you, your life would end quickly, cleanly—so quickly that you would not have time for regrets, so cleanly that your pain would be minimal? While you live, would you start to think about the measure of your days in terms of quality rather than time logged or time remaining?

A visit to the animals on Conger’s property shows them resting comfortably in spacious outdoor pens, with shade, bedding, and water.

“People are blown away by what I do,” he says. “They cannot believe how calm and cool and collected my animals are. You’ve seen pictures [or videos] of the big processing plants: the animals are screaming and going ape. My animals are here, chilling out, relaxing, happy—the way life should be. They don’t know if I’m going out there tonight or killing them tomorrow; they don’t have a clue, and that’s the way it should be. No stress. They come in on trucks and trailers, they’re stressed. We’re gonna give ‘em a few days just to chill out and relax; I want them to. And it’s better for the meat, too.”

He goes on: “It should be all about the animal. Unfortunately, those [big] processors are not about the animal; it’s about get ‘em in, get ‘em out; it’s about volume and making money. They’re called factories for a reason. I’m not running a multi-million-dollar operation. I know how much money it takes to pay my bills—any more than that, we can go out to dinner.”

Word of Mouth

Building a business from scratch can be difficult, but Conger was lucky enough to get in on Northern Michigan’s local-food, farm-to-table movement, which plays well with his business philosophy.

“I’ve always been a big fan of trying to keep it local and support my neighbors,” Conger says. “I’m just trying to feed people in Northern Michigan here with some good, quality food and show them that it doesn’t have to be as expensive as what it is. You don’t have to send your animal downstate or pay \$250 for a hog to be processed.”

After six years, Conger has seen his business grow and take on more regular rhythms.

“Mostly, we work off my reputation,—word of mouth,” he says. “There’s just a few processors left that do what we do, and if you’re good, word’s gonna get around. We do very little advertising. It’s a one-man operation. The wife will come down when I get real busy on the weekends. Sure, we could make it bigger, but it’s just hard to get people; they’re not gonna work this hard.”

Winter is the busy season. About the first of August, Conger starts picking up some animals, just before the Northwest Michigan Fair.

“Then the fair is really the kick-off; after that, it just gets busier and busier,” he explains. “You’ve got farmers that have a couple of pigs here, couple of beeves there, goats and lambs. Farmers are getting ready to do some crop hunting for deer, wanting to know if we can take them.”

But potential clients need to call before they hunt, because Conger’s availability continually shrinks as autumn progresses. During deer season, he can process many as 120 deer in two weeks, or three an hour.

“It’s all bone-out,” he says. “We’ll cut deer for a day; the second day, we’ll grind and wrap.”

About those work rhythms, he says: “There’s so many things that could go wrong. With butchering, in general, you’ve got to know where your next paycheck is coming from: an animal out there alive that I haven’t found yet. There’s the animal I know on paper that I gotta go get next week. The animal alive in this pen that I’m going to kill this week. I’ve got to have animals in my walk-in that are dead right now. I’ve got to have them in my walk-in, already cut up, that I can wrap—ones in my freezer that are done, but I’m waiting on hams and bacon to catch up. The ones that are done, but I’m waiting for my customer to come pick up. At any time, if anyone drops the ball, the game stops. It’s a delicate balance of everything.”

He is in it for the long haul, he says.

“It’s fought me every inch of the way, but everything I’ve done, it’s been worth it,” Conger smiles.

What is the most unusual animal that he has processed?

“Monkey,” he says with a straight face. Then he and his wife burst out laughing.

“You’re kinda gullible, aren’t you? No, probably the weirdest thing I’ve ever cut up was an emu; we did some of them over at Pleva’s. Yeah, I think it tasted like chicken.”

Good, Sharp Knives

As the butchering season winds down at the end of winter, Conger puts on his chef’s toque for the summer’s picnics, graduations, and weddings. A recent party featured 100 pieces of chicken.

“I brined it and smoked it in my smoker, fully cooked it, then I brought it up to temperature,” he says. “They went nuts over it, I think even more than the pork. I get to play; same thing with any of my snack sticks, sausages. I make all my own recipes, any way I want. We’re licensed to process your animal; we can smoke your hams and bacon and whatever. We’re also licensed to buy and sell any USDA product; like if I want to buy some pork bellies and smoke them, turn them into bacon, I can turn around, sell them as retail product here, too. I sell bacon out of the garage—brats, snack sticks, all sorts of stuff. I have a catering license, too.”

Additionally, he builds and rents smokers for pig roasts; he also provides the instructions, the pig—you tell him how many people that you plan to feed, and he gets the appropriate-sized animal—and even the gallon of barbecue sauce.

Each summer, he has got a hog slated for The Homestead, where there is a local chef who likes to work with different cuts.

“I’ll do primal cuts, wrap it, get it over to them,” Conger says. “If you hear me say that I’m going to chop and chunk, I’m gonna go cut something up with my cleaver.”

Good, sharp knives are a staple of the business, of course.

“You just can’t have enough. It’s about finding good steel in the knife,” Conger explains. “What really gets them dull is when you’re boning the animals, cutting through cartilage. But what I consider a dull knife, you’re going to think is still an extremely sharp knife. I’ve probably got eight or 10 at the sharpener’s now and 20 more in my shop.”

In the slower months, he sharpens his own.

Minimizing Waste

He tries to minimize waste from the animal, as well.

“You can sell beef or deer hides,” he says. “We donate some of the deer hides to the Elks Club; they make gloves and moccasins. The femur bones from the beef, we make those into dog bones. Sometimes people want the organ meat for their animals with special diets. People use the fat or tallow to render it, make candles or soaps.”

He teases his wife, Jan, about all the soap that he receives from his customers, which he gives to her as gifts. Then he grows reflective.

“I was never truly happy with any of my other jobs, because I never felt they could challenge me to the limit,” he says. “Having my own business has pushed me. I am more happy now than I’ve been in over 25 years. The first couple months—couple of years!—[Jan] was a little grumpy. But she’s seen what I can do. I will get in over my head, and she will freak, and I will still dig myself out, seven days a week, whatever it takes. She’s seen me work 90 or 100 days straight with no day off; 14, 18 hours a day, until I was satisfied that I could walk away. But we’re into August now, and it’s time to work.”

He pounds his fist on the picnic table.

“It’s time to work. I’m ready, I’m rested, I’ve got 30 days of animals on paper—let’s start this.”

T.C. Butchering is located at 19762 Maple Leaf Trail, Traverse City, although that address is a bit misleading—the shop is about halfway between Lake Ann and Cedar/Maple City. Call 231-409-0027 for more information.

A version of this article originally published in the Glen Arbor Sun, a semi-sister publication to The Betsie Current.



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Wii Bowling at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Magical History Tour: A collaboration between the Benzie Area Historical Society and Benzie Bus, the Betsie Bay Tour departs from the Benzie Area Historical Museum in Benzonia at 2pm. \$15. Call 231-882-5539 to reserve your spot in history!

Saturdays
Frankfort Farmers' Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th & 9th streets, along the beautiful waterfront. 9am-1pm.

MIFiberShed at Grow Benzie is open 9am-4pm.

Apples of our Ancestors on Port Oneida Road. 11am.

The Legend of Sleeping Bear Dunes. 3pm.

Secret of the Stones: Beautiful beach rocks abound on the sandy shores of Sleeping Bear Dunes. Use your keen observation skills to uncover the tales that these stones hold. Cannery beach in Glen Haven. 4pm.

Tours of Stormcloud's production brewery and tasting room, complete with an overview of the brewing process and guided tastings. All participants will take home a Stormcloud logo tasting glass or sticker. \$10 per adult or teen (ages 12-20), children under age 12 are free. Reservations required: stormcloudbrewing.com/brewery-tours/ Tours are each about 45 minutes long, and tours begin at 3pm, 4pm, 5pm, and 6pm.

Sundays
Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

Ranger-led stroll through Glen Haven: who lived in this village? 2pm.

Fall Chairlift Rides: Watch Benzie County transform into a kaleidoscope of color, and enjoy panoramic views of three counties and top-of-the-mountain attractions, such as live music and a cash bar. \$7 per person, but ages 8 and younger ride free with a paying adult; all house guests ride free. Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville. 4pm.

*Yoga classes at Discover YOU Yoga and Fitness in Frankfort every day of the week, except Saturday. For a complete schedule and more information on classes and rates, visit discoveryogami.com.

ON DECK

Friday, September 14
Benzie County Chamber of Commerce's Annual Golf Outing: This annual event provides a great opportunity for Chamber members to network with each other during a fun day on the course. Shotgun/Best ball format: \$130 per golfer or \$520 per foursome. Registration includes 18 holes of golf,

with cart; box lunch; course challenges; dinner; team and individual prizes; hole-in-one contest to win a car; team photos. Crystal Lake Golf. 10:30am-7pm.

Friday, September 14
Maggie McCabe at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm.

Friday, September 14
Lynn Thompson is a singer-songwriter based in Grand Rapids with deep southern roots that flow through his Taylor 12-string acoustic guitar. Raised in Chicago, Lynn's musical influences have been many, from Peter Gabriel and Jethro Tull to the Stanely Brothers. Stormcloud Brewing Company. 8-10pm.

Saturday, September 15
Tri Up North Triathlon: bike, paddle, and run in Frankfort! This event centers around Frankfort's Betsie Bay, on the western shore of Lake Michigan and features two different triathlon courses - the Classic 10-mile event, which is specifically geared toward beginners and those who are looking for a little motivation to become more active, and the Challenger 22-mile event, which is a competitive course for experienced athletes and relay teams who are looking for a challenge. For those who would like to participate but are not interested in tackling a triathlon, there is the Betsie Bay Walk, a fun, non-timed 2.5 mile walk. The event is put on by the Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, and funds raised this year will support Community Wellness Programs at the Betsie Hosick Health and Fitness Center in Frankfort. 9am-1pm.

Saturday, September 15
The Chris Michels Band brings their funk to St. Ambrose. 6-9pm.

Saturday, September 15
Maggie McCabe performs at Iron Fish. 7-9pm.

Saturday, September 15
Folk, blues, pop, and soul: Abigail Stauffer can perform them all. With influences like Sufjan Stevens, Regina Spektor, Iron and Wine, and Feist, Abigail's music connects with a wide range of audiences. Stormcloud Brewing Company. 8-10pm.

Sunday, September 16
Artist reception for Cherie Correll and Melonie Steffes at Iron Fish Distillery. 2-4pm.

Wednesday, September 19
The Frankfort Rotary s hosting an "End World Polio" event that will feature appetizers and a polio survivor's story (Marsha Minervini), followed by the movie "Breathe," and a Q&A following the film with Dr. David Martin, epidimiologist. Admission is free, but there is a suggested tax-deductible donation of \$25. The Garden Theater in Frankfort. 4:30-8pm.

Friday-Saturday, September 21-22
Crystal Mountain's Farm-to-Table dining series brings the fresh flavors of Northern Michigan to the Thistle Pub & Grille. Our chefs work with local farms, making personal visits to many of them, to build a custom three-course menu.

Saturday, September 22
Big Barn Bounty Bonanza: Why have a barn if you don't have a barn dance?! One of our favorite events of the year, featuring fall cocktail specials, music by Ted Bounty and the Bounty Hunters, and the Taco 'Bout It food truck. Free admission. Iron Fish Distillery. 6:30-9:30pm.

**Grammatically, it should be "Every Day". However, the editor thinks it is funny to misspell it so that it "matches" the other "days." (e.g. Everyday, Monday, Tuesday...) The design editor wanted to fix it. Clearly, you can see who won that argument.*

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F5

Continued from page 1

osks at trail heads, as well as the upkeep and maintenance of the trail.

“The Betsie Valley Trail is such a beautiful community resource, and as the years have progressed, we are looking to the future of the trail,” says David Oellerich, a longtime board member of the Friends of Betsie Valley Trail. “We are working on multiple projects to keep this trail in sparkling condition. When it came time to seek out ways in which to fundraise, the 2018 Paddling Film Festival was a perfect match for us. If you love riding or walking on the trail, your love of nature can also be found on the water that follows the trail and complements its beauty.”

The Paddling Film Festival will take place at The Garden Theater, located in downtown Frankfort, which was built in 1923 and shows first-run, independent, and foreign films throughout the year. It is a staple in the community and is the perfect place to bring this community event together, Oellerich says.

The Garden Theater is already home to four other film festivals each year—the Frankfort Film Festival is brought to life each year in October (10th annual this year); the Dark & Stormy Film & Beer series has paired award-winning films with small-batch beers from Stormcloud Breweing Company each March for the past five years; the Frankfort48 contest has given aspiring filmmakers 48 hours to create a three- to five-minute film celebrating the beauty of Northern Michigan for the past two Junes; and the Traverse City Film Festival partners with local theaters with its “Around The Bay” film tour, in which The Garden and other theaters host movies as a per-courser to the TCFF at the end of July.

“The Garden Theater is delighted to partner with the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail for this dynamic event,” says Rick Schmitt, one of the co-owners of the theater. “Helping to raise money for an incredible asset in our community and doing so with such a magnificent film festival is just plain exciting.”

Crystal Lake Adventure Sports knows what is “SUP”—get it? “what’s up” vs. stand-up paddleboarding, also known as “SUP”... it is punny!—when it comes to water sports. As one of the community’s leaders in water sports, CLAS co-owner Elaine Newbold was excited to be a part of this unique film experience.

“We are surrounded by the beauty of Lake Michigan and surrounding lakes and rivers to kayak or stand-up paddleboard, as well as biking the Betsie Valley Trail that runs along the Betsie River and Crystal Lake,” Newbold says. “As a community, we are so fortunate to have this beauty to enjoy year round.”

Beth Roethler is board member for the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail, which has partnered with Crystal Lake Adventure Sports, The Garden Theater, and the 2018 Paddling Film Festival for the event on Saturday, September 29, beginning at 4 p.m. Advanced tickets are available for \$10 at BetsieValleyTrail.org; day-of tickets are available for \$15 at The Garden Theater. The Paddling Film Festival World Tour is produced by Rapid Media; learn more at PaddlingFilmFestival.com. Want to volunteer or become a member of the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail? Learn more at BetsieValleyTrail.org.

FNL

Continued from page 1

both coaches in the area (him for Frankfort Junior Varsity and NorthShore club volleyball, me for middle school co-ed soccer and varsity girls soccer at neighboring Benzie Central), much like *Friday Night Lights*’s protagonists Coach Eric Taylor and his wife, Tami Taylor, who (spoiler!) becomes the school counselor and later the principal. We both started coaching around the time that I began binging this show on Netflix, and the Taylors’s on-screen relationship and the way that they deal with problems together as a unit—whether those are on the field, in the classroom, or at home—is definitely aspirational.

Back here in Reality Land, Jordan and I do not go to a ton of home football games; we are probably the only people in town who can say that. (Seriously, everyone goes to these things religiously, like church on Sunday.) But even so, we manage to watch at least a couple of games each season. This Friday, we will attend our first game of the year when Frankfort plays Glen Lake.

Funny enough, this rivalry game between these two teams is something that we witnessed back in 2016, when it was the Homecoming football game. Jordan wanted to go a little early to tailgate and because they were honoring the state champion teams from the 1990s, including the 1991 team that his brother, Ben Bates, played on 25 years earlier. By the end of the night, the Frankfort Panthers played (and beat) the Glen Lake Lakers that year with a final score of 26-21. In 2017, Glen Lake came out on top, with a score of 48-34; what this year’s game brings is anyone’s guess, least of all mine..

That is mostly because I do a lot more people-watching than game-watching. I do not know if it is because I loved how the T.V. show was filmed, and so going to these games reminds me of that, or if it is something else, but I just love photographing the people who attend these games—it really is Americana Rust Belt at its best.

Just like the idyllic, iconic town in the T.V. show, you can hear the announcer from our house. We walk the 3.5 blocks to Lockhart Field on streets with few cars and fewer people. The closer that we get to the field, the more cars that are lined up on both sides of the street, making us glad that we walked instead of drove, avoiding the fight to find parking.

The trees are just starting to turn colors. There is a slight chill in the air, so you want to wear jeans, a sweater, a scarf, and a puffy vest. Maybe a hat. Most people at the game are donning something purple and gold. There is also a lot of painted faces and people carrying balloons. There is tailgating right on the practice field (at least during 2016’s homecoming game there was), where you can buy a brat, homemade french fries (nom nom nom), coleslaw, a soda, and your choice of baked good, all for just \$5.

Grapevines that are beginning to change over from dark green to a deep red hang over the chain-link metal fencing of the practice field, where kids in hoodies are running around, just to the south of the game field. A couple dozen signs—each with a player’s name and number—are on the other side of the grapevine-lined fence, along the main road into town, beckoning people in to watch the game. Many storefronts downtown have closed up early but will re-open for post-game patrons looking for a late-night snack.

There are more people at the game than can fit in the ‘home team’ bleachers, so a few spill over to the north side of the guest bleachers, just below the box where the announcers sit and just above the concessions, where buttery popcorn and cheesy nachos are being served up.

The gleam off the gold pom-poms mirror the glint in the eyes of the high school band, playing a series of short riffs on shiny brass instruments with a strong drum-line beat. Even more fans can be found standing all along the field, even sitting along the end zone on a blanket beneath the yellow field goal. A small child sits on Daddy’s shoulders to get up above the crowd. A copper-plated plaque on the ground bears the name of a beloved coach who took several seasons worth of players to state final matches. (Read more about “Coach” in a previous article from *The Betsie Current* at <http://bit.ly/1iwU3Iv>.)

Yes, this is Middle America on a Friday night.

Human Interest Story

Frankfort 6th grader counts every boat on Crystal Lake

By Ned Edwards

Current Contributor

How many boats are there on and around Crystal Lake? Thomas Edwards, an incoming 6th grader at Frankfort Elementary School, wanted to know after observing so few boats active on the lake this past summer.

So he and his grandfather [myself], set out on our pontoon boat to do the 20.8 miles around the perimeter of Crystal Lake, close to the shore, to make the count.

July 24 was a clear, sunny day that we chose for the project. It took more than four hours to make the trip and do the counting.

Thomas prepared score sheets for 10 classifications of boats. What he came up with was a total of 1,395 boats in hoists, in moorings, on the shore, or active on the lake. He did not count all of the sailboats at the Crystal Lake Yacht Club, nor the boats for rent at the Crystal Lake Marina, but the 10 categories of boats scored like this:

- Inboard Runabouts: 389
- Kayaks: 245
- Pontoon Boats: 202
- Sailboats (sloops, catamarans, Butterflies, Sunfish): 170
- Personal Watercraft: 166
- Outboard Fishing Boats (mostly Whalers and aluminum boats): 113
- Outboard Runabouts: 47
- Ski Boats (mostly Mater Craft): 24
- Classic Wood Boats: 13
- Unknown (empty hoists): 26

Maybe another count next year will show a difference in popular boats. Thomas is anxious to make that comparison, but for now, he will settle with 6th grade math.

We at *The Betsie Current* love when we get story submissions like this one. Do you have a story idea, cool or unusual, that needs telling? Send an email to editor@betsiecurrent.com or call 231-649-3988. We would love to hear from you.



On one clear, sunny day in July, Thomas Edwards, an incoming sixth grader at Frankfort Elementary School, decided to count and categorize the 1,395 boats on Crystal Lake. Photo courtesy of Ned Edwards

Human Error - Correction

Yep, we mess up, just like everybody else does sometimes

In our 7th issue this year, the one that came out August 16, 2018, we made a pretty big error, which someone alerted to us via a phone call. In the article titled, “A Public Right or Trespassing?” and subtitled “Explaining riparian rights on Lake Michigan beach and inland lakes,” on the bottom of our front page, we had this photo and caption. However, the caption should have read as follows—there are two potential options to correct our previous caption. We apologize whole-heartedly to our readers, as well as to Linda Alice Dewey, the author of the article. The mistake was wholly on the end of the editor of this publication. In these uncertain times of “fake news,” we believe that it is extremely important to be getting out correct facts and to take responsibility when we screw up.



Option #1: These young people are walking on the public beach at Point Betsie Lighthouse. If they were walking along privately owned Lake Michigan shoreline, their feet would have to be in the water, or they would be considered trespassing they could walk the beach so long as they stay below the natural ordinary high-water mark (NOHWM), typically the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the water is so continuous as to leave a distinct mark either by erosion, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, or other easily recognized characteristic. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Option #2: These young people are walking on the public beach at Point Betsie Lighthouse. If they were walking along privately owned Lake Michigan shoreline, their feet would have to be in the water, or they would be considered trespassing. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker

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