



Zone 1

DECEMBER 2025

the uptight **suburbanite**™

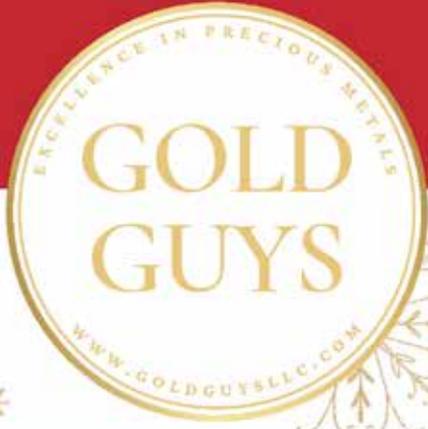
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See More on Page 15.



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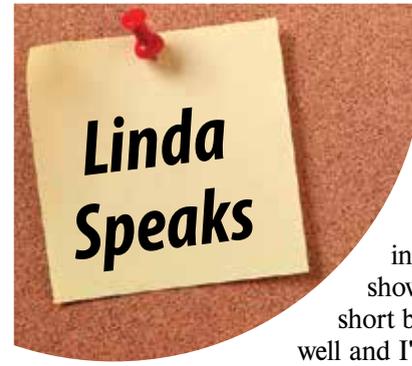


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Wow! It's been some month...

I've been busy catching up with clients and showing my face after a short break. My hip is healing well and I'm walking increasingly without a cane. YAY!!! Still need some assistance, but it hasn't stopped me from saying hello and discovering some new spots.

Turn to *Out & About* and read my report on *J's GourAmaze* in Elkins Park. This is a definite destination worth a visit. Artisan food and bread that's chef-rated, and a magic mecca that's unmatched. Owner Jay Howard shares his passion for both as you weave yourself through his very unique space. Turn to page 6 for details. (And while you're there, in *Out & About*, read about our visit to *Lorenzo's Pizza and Steaks* in Southampton. "Delish" is the word.)

Poor Wendi Rank is bemoaning time changing. Remember the fabulous animatronic display at downtown Philadelphia's Wanamaker's? It was tradition to make a visit during the holiday season for the display and to hear the organ. Good news is, you can still make that pilgrimage this year...

next year remains unknown. You can feel Wendi-the-Philadelphian yearn for the good old times. See page 14 for more.

Jerry Gervase shares what could have been a mystical encounter. Leave it to him to enlist "An Angelic Christmas Tale" at this time. Read further on page 20.

Say hello! to the folks at *Altimari Center* on 455 Second Street Pike. Formerly known as Pike Plaza, the businesses in the newly named Center have joined forces to welcome us as they celebrate the holiday season with specials, gift cards and coupons. Details on pages 16 and 17. We welcome our new friends to the *Uptight Suburbanite*!!

And yes, there's more.....Sales, specials. Everyone is ready to help you fill your holiday gift list. And check out the many restaurants between our covers. All can make your holiday celebrations easier and even more delicious.

So, grab a comfortable seat. And maybe something to nibble on... Happy reading! Wishing you and your family, from me and my family, a happy and healthy new year ahead. May it see dreams fulfilled. See you in 2026!!!

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Out & About *with* Linda

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When you look at the ad for J's GourAmaze you're informed that it's "The World's Tiniest Department Store." I would say "It Sure Is!!" But it's a whole lot more!!

J's GourAmaze is on High School Road in downtown Elkins Park. Surrounded by a number of good restaurants, across the street from Creekside Court and a terrific bookstore, next door to a busy health food store, this little shop is lit up like a Christmas tree all the time. It is tiny, but only in space. It is BIG in spirit, and a welcomed shop filled with magic (Yup, I said magic) and artisan foods. Clearly a destination worth the effort.

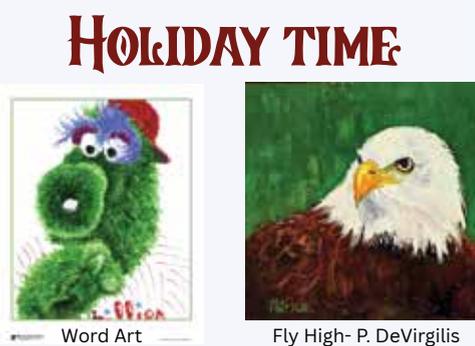
My sister and I travelled to J's GourAmaze not knowing what to expect. I guess we figured it would be "tiny" and "packed." We underestimated both!!

Entering Jay's shop one wiggles your body through a snake of a walkway until you are face-to-face with his baking area.... more later. As you walk, you pass through all sorts of magic games, cards, items...anything magic. We learned that magic

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Checking His List- J. Turner



Word Art

Fly High- P. DeVirgilis



Bald Eagle- R.Killion



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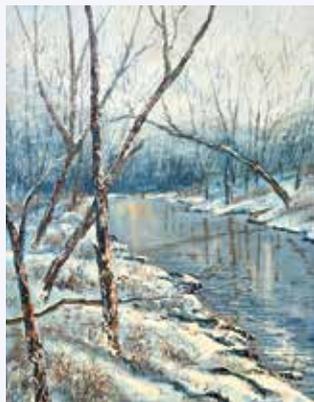
Passing Through Time- J. Turner



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Continued from page 6

is Jay's first love.... magic and costumes. His is a great place to take your budding magician for any kind of hood-winking trick they desire. And they'll hear some great stories from one of the best magicians around. That's Jay. I got this crazy weeping flower that I can't wait to use on my grandkids. It gave me a laugh. No squirting water, just fainting at the slight movement of a finger.

Now, as you pass through this packed maze of a magic kingdom, you'll pass by a freezer filled with some of Jay's specialties and baskets of his home baked bread, some of it gluten free. And yes, we were skeptical... talk about micro. His space is maximized beyond description. One has to experience it to understand it!! LOL!!

We checked out the filled freezer and took some of Jay's handiwork home. He makes what he calls "Stuffin Poppins." Thin dough filled with juicy brisket, caramelized onions, fresh carrots. Just like your grandmother use to make! These knish-like goodies were outa-sight. You'd be happy you made the trip to Elkins Park for these creations alone. BUT, we also picked up another "Stuffin Poppin" filled with kasha or groats. Moist and again, enveloped by this just-right thin dough. Delicious. Jay urged us to try a sweet "Stuffin Poppin".... we relented and brought home one filled with rice. Mildly sweet and moist, it was like eating a rice pudding dessert. Truth be told, we were so satisfied by the brisket and kasha, that we could only eat half of the rice pudding creation. He had some other options in the freezer and we'll be certain to check them out during our next trip... and YES! we will be making another trip.

His breads are all handmade without any additives. HUGE in size, Jay suggests cutting what you want immediately and freezing the rest until ready to use. Rye, brioche, pumpernickle, gluten free, we came home with a loaf of everything. We were not disappointed. I urge you to do the same... just keep your loaves either refrigerated or in the freezer.

The freezer is filled with other options. To be sure, we will give the others a try during our next visit...and YES! We will make another visit. In fact, I'm thinking of shipping my brother and his wife some of these "Stuffin Poppins" to New York City. That's how deliciously good they are!!

J's GourAmaze is a destination you should check out. Whether you're looking for some magic to wake up your life, or you're looking for something really delicious to wake up your tastebuds, make that visit to the "The World's Tiniest Department Store." (Why not check out Jay's special magic event on December 20. Call first for details. You don't want to miss anything!!)

Continued on page 10

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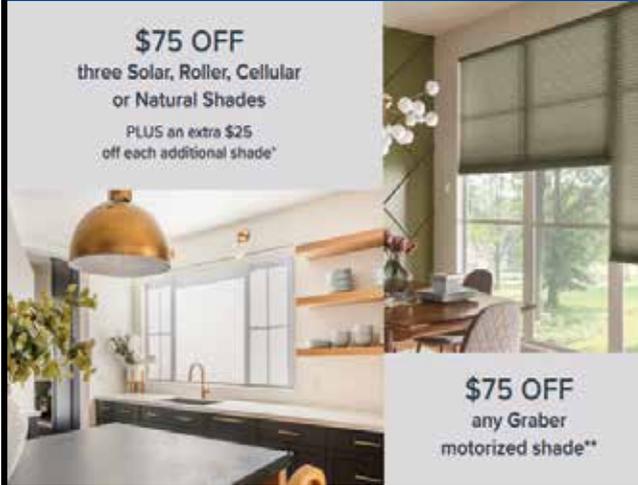
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Continued from page 8

Closer to home we checked out *Lorenzo's Pizza Steaks & Hoagies* in Southampton. With limited seating, we were able to get a table and dine in... The menu has all your favorites including steak sandwiches, hoagies, wraps, salads and even some dinner entrees. We hit the jackpot with some recommendations from Greg, the delivery guy.

Immediately our eyes saw the pizza he was eating. Called a Taco Pizza, it had everything taco; meat, salad, tomato, overflowing with taco goodness. We couldn't say "no" to that. A slice of their pepperoni pizza hit all the right "notes." Domingo, the owner, took the two slices and cut it into three for we three ladies and, yum, we probably could have finished our meal with that!!! But there was more to taste!!

Greg suggested The Lorenzo parm hoagie; chicken cutlet topped with fresh mozzarella, vodka and pesto sauce. Judy thought we could share the Veggie Delight sandwich with sauteed mushrooms, roasted red peppers, spinach, tomatoes, onions & romaine lettuce. Michele asked that they melt some cheese on top. And of course, we ordered fries!!!

We thoroughly enjoyed the veggie sandwich. Jam-packed with veggies. And the seeded roll was beyond delicious. The Lorenzo was filled with parmesan goodness, and was even better the next day as a leftover. The seeded roll was crunchy and satisfying as the "couch" for the hefty cutlet. I believe Lorenzo's rolls are special to *Lorenzo's*, so be prepared for a different hoagie-experience with that first bite. It's really delicious.

We had a fun time at *Lorenzo's*. I noticed their pick-up business kept the kitchen busy. Even so, Domingo was able to check in with us to make sure we were satisfied diners. And we were!!! We also had plenty to take home. Portions are substantial, so sharing is a possibility when ordering. Parking is easy out front. Hours for dine-in or pick-up are convenient.

Lorenzo's is now serving full dinners and providing catering for your gatherings at home or elsewhere. Whether it's a holiday celebration or watching your favorite football team (better be the Eagles!!), *Lorenzo's* can help you feed your crowd easily and deliciously. Just remember to tell them you saw them here, in the *Uptight Suburbanite*!! ♦

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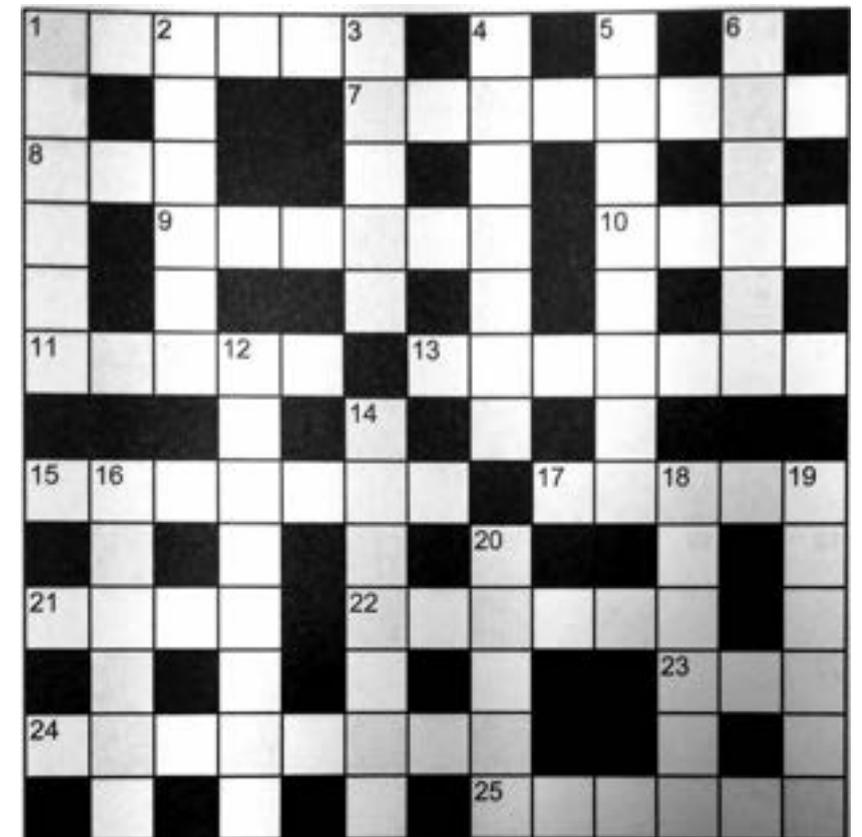
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- DOWN**
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 - Burrowing mammal with long ears
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 - Exhaustive
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 - And so on
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 - Although
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 - Detailed assessment of accounts

Answer on page 24.



Have you followed the crisis plaguing the old Wanamaker's building downtown?

And, yes. I do know calling it "the Wanamaker's building" places me well within a certain age bracket. I don't care. That's how dire this situation is.

When news broke in January of the Center City Macy's - née Wanamaker's - pending closure, my stomach dropped. I felt myself go pale. My hands shook. Why not, I don't know. Just tell me the police found my mom wandering on Byberry Road? That my mom ran over someone with her car? That my mom has a boyfriend?

Yes. Those are all things that happened. Don't worry. Everyone came out of those situations alive and uninjured. Except for my psyche.



The Dickens Village constitutes a major thread in the fabric of my holiday experience. It begins with Halloween on, well, Halloween and ends with *It's A Wonderful Life* on Christmas Eve, with a healthy smattering of my mother-in-law's sweet potatoes at Thanksgiving. She puts brown sugar on top instead of marshmallows. I will break your arm if you dish yourself up before me.

In between these precious activities, I weave in Christmas-themed milkshakes from *Craftsman's Row Saloon*, my grandmother's chocolate chip cookies, a Christmas tree chopped down with my husband and children's grit,

Continued on page 15

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Continued from page 14

apple picking, a holiday craft fair in Tamanend Park, "Blue Christmas" sung at the top of my lungs in the safety and solitude of my car, and approximately 67,125 viewings of *Elf* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. And, of course, the Dickens Village.

The news of the Dickens Village has been troubling at best. The new owners of Wanamaker's have said they failed to appreciate the area's love for animatronic figures that, quite frankly, are probably terrifying if you're alone, sans Christmas music, in the Dickens Village. Why anyone would underestimate a Philadelphian's emotions about anything, I don't know. The new owners have said the Dickens Village will run this year. They have established a fund to keep it going into perpetuity. If I were independently wealthy, I'd buy that village.

The idea of not having the Dickens Village to stroll through each December sends my holiday spirit from post-ghostly visit Scrooge to pre-ghostly visit Scrooge. I want to cry. I want to eat all of my grandmother's chocolate chip cookies, a healthy spread of my mother-in-law's sweet potato casserole atop each one.

You can't take the Dickens Village from my holiday. My autumn tapestry would disintegrate, unravel. It's like going to work with no pants on. That - that might be my protest. I refuse to wear pants until the future of the Dickens Village is guaranteed. Wait. No. It's getting too cold for that.

I have spent these last eleven months of 2025 calming that shriek in my brain, the one telling me I'm losing the Dickens Village forever. Just when I thought I had at least assuaged it a bit, more bad news came. I can find no evidence of the Tamanend Park

craft fair in my Parks and Recreation Department flyer. Um, excuse me, universe. I'm just a girl - OK, OK, woman; I call it Wanamaker's - trying to have a holiday season here. How can that happen when I'm panicking over the Dickens Village and I can't buy a homemade candle or marshmallow dipped in chocolate and jimmies?

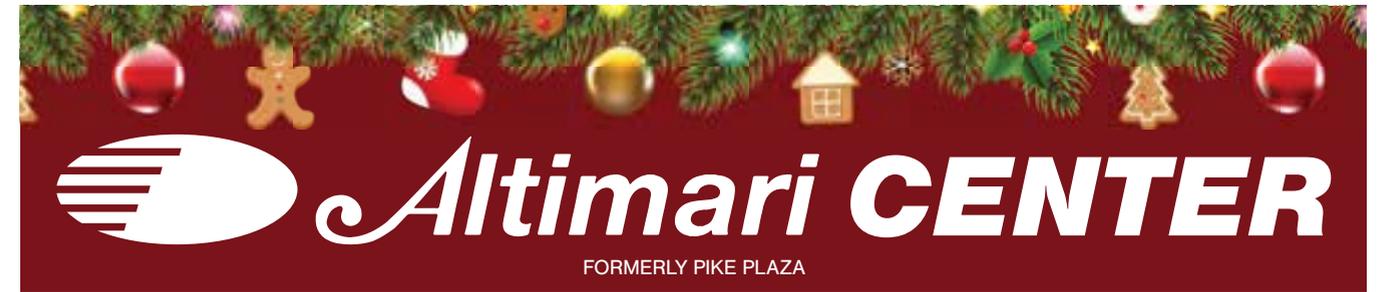
Oh, and Gerald Dickens announced this year is his last year doing his one-man show performance of *A Christmas Carol*. Last night, as I silently wallowed in my rapidly failing holiday, my mother-in-law texted me. "The craft fair is on!" she said. "I just got an email!"

I take it back. You can have first crack at the sweet potatoes. I'll be at the craft fair. ♦

Contact Wendi Rank on Instagram @wendirank



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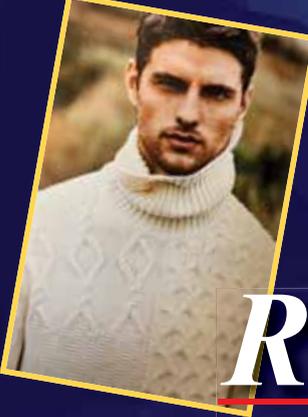
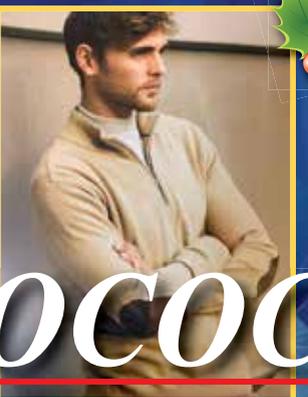
I could write a book about people I've met in coffee shops. Well, if not a book, certainly a TV sitcom. I've met people from far away places and homeless people with no places to be from. None is more memorable than a young man I met several years ago. I was Christmas shopping

Continued on page 21



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Continued from page 20

in downtown Monterey when I stopped for a break at Starbucks on Alvarado Street. No small tables were available, so after I got my drink I grabbed a seat at a long communal table, draping my jacket over the back of the chair. I began working on the Word Game in the newspaper, where you unscramble the letters of a host word and extract as many other words from it that you can. The word was “ocarinas.” The first word I extracted was “corn” I stuck with the C words and got cairn, coin, casa, and casino when a voice said: “I see you’re buying a lot of corn.”

A young man with long blonde hair and bright blue eyes sat down next to me. He set down his coffee cup, then proceeded to place three silver dollars portraying the likenesses of Washington, Eisenhower and Kennedy in front of him. Then he added a medallion with an American flag on its face. His clothes said homeless, or perhaps a wanderer. I told him I wasn’t buying corn and explained the word game to him. He said it was OK if I didn’t want it to get around that I was cornering the market on corn.

He told me his name was John, which he wrote down for me along with his last name, and his Incan name,

Yanaconas, given to him by the spirits. He added his address in Pebble Beach, and his birthday, October 17, 1988 at 6:45 a.m. He asked if I was familiar with the Chase Bank across the street. I told him I did my banking at a Chase branch in Carmel. “I’m in the process of buying it,” John said. I asked where he got the money to buy the bank. “I already own Bank of America. So money isn’t a problem, but I’m going to change the name to Bank of America.” Then he told me that because I was so friendly, he was going to give the bank to me. I thanked him for his generosity, but told him I liked the name Chase. He wasn’t sure about that and suggested I come up with an alternate name. “How about Bank of AmeriChase,” I said.

“Deal,” he exclaimed. Then he pointed to the silver dollars.

“Which one do you like?”

“I like Ike.”

“Here, take it. It’s a gift.”

“I’ll only take it if you accept a greenback dollar for

Continued on page 23

In The Kitchen

Winter is approaching and so are the "heartier" recipes characteristic of the season. The Chicken Pot Pie could be made with turkey or chicken, or maybe even salmon. Warm and comforting, it's the perfect go-to dish when the winds are blowing strong. The Baked Ziti has a bit of a twist... but again, is the perfect alternative to your traditional pasta-night dish. Check out the dips. You'll recognize them....perhaps not with the twist mentioned below. But they'll be yummy, and could help with your holiday entertaining. Enjoy!!

SLOW COOKER CHICKEN POT PIE

½ C. dry white wine
2 Tbsp. flour
Salt & pepper
4 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
2 stalks celery, sliced
1 onion, chopped
1 ½ lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into 1-inch pieces
1 sheet frozen puff pastry
1 large egg, beaten
1 C. frozen peas
1 Tbsp. fresh dill

In a 5-6 quart slow cooker, whisk together the wine, flour, ½ C. water and ½ tsp. each of salt and pepper.

Add the carrots, celery, onion and chicken and toss to combine. Cook covered, until the chicken is cooked through and easily pulls apart, 6-7 hours on low or 4-5 hours on high.

When the chicken has 30 minutes left to cook, heat oven to 400° F. cut the puff pastry into 8 rectangles and place on a parchment-lined baking

sheet. Brush with the egg and bake until puffed and golden brown, about 20 minutes.

Gently fold the peas and dill into the chicken and vegetables and cook, covered, until heated about 3 minutes.

Spoon into bowls, sprinkle with additional dill if desired, and top with the puff pastry.

MEATLESS BAKED ZITI

14 oz. dried ziti pasta about 4½ C.
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 (8oz.) pkg. fresh mushrooms, sliced
1 (5oz.) pkg. fresh spinach
1 (15oz.) container part-skim ricotta cheese
1 (8-oz.) pkg. crumbled goat cheese or feta cheese
1 C. shredded mozzarella (4oz.)
1 (14oz.) jar tomato pasta sauce

Preheat oven to 350° F. prepare a baking dish Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and transfer to a large bowl.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Add mushrooms, cook until tender and liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes.

Stir in spinach, cook until just wilted, about 1 minute.

Stir mushroom mixture, ricotta, goat cheese and half the mozzarella into bowl with pasta until well combined. Transfer to prepared baking dish. Top with pasta sauce and remaining cheese. Bake until bubbling.

PAN FRIED ONION DIP

2 large yellow onions
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter
¼ C. vegetable oil
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
4 oz. cream cheese at room temperature
½ C. sour cream
½ C. mayonnaise

Cut onions in half, then slice them into ¼-inch thick half rounds. You should have 3 C. onions.

Heat butter and oil in large saute pan on medium heat. Add the onions, cayenne, 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. black pepper and saute for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium low and cook, stirring occasionally for 20 minutes or more until onions are browned and caramelized. Allow onions to cool.

Place cream cheese, sour cream and mayo in a bowl and beat with an electric mixture until smooth. Add the onions and mix well. taste for seasonings. ♦



A picture frame that usually sells for \$500 is on sale for 5 percent off. If a 5 percent sales tax were added to the sales price, what is the amount you would pay for the frame?

Answer: \$498.75. A 5% discount on a \$500 frame is \$475. Now add 5% sales tax to \$475, or multiply by 1.05, the answer is \$498.75.

Continued from page 21

it." He didn't want to do that. I told him to consider it another business transaction, like buying the bank.

"I'll accept it under those circumstances."

I asked about the gold medallion. "The President gave it to me at the White House for meritorious service to the country."

"Which President?"

"Eisenhower, of course," he smiled. Then he excused himself and went to the restroom, leaving the coins and medallion on the table. Another coffee drinker sat down across from me, opened his laptop, attached his blue tooth phone to his ear and immediately began a phone conversation, speaking loudly as if he were alone in the coffee shop.

I gathered my newspaper, coffee, and John's coffee and coins and moved to a small table that had become available. Moments later John stood in front of me holding the jacket I left draped over the chair. I explained why I had moved and invited him to join me. Just then the

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store manager came up and asked if "this man" was bothering me. I said no. The manager said she had been observing John and asked him to leave. I repeated that he wasn't bothering me. She was adamant.

"It's OK," John said, as if he was used to such treatment. "I was just about to leave, anyway. By the way, you'll make a killing in corn."

The manager told me customers had complained about him on other occasions. Perhaps he was a little too animated for those people. My choice would have been to toss the computer guy, especially since he didn't offer to buy me my own bank.

I never saw John again. I like to think he was a messenger to remind me that Christmas is a whisper of grace with a promise of peace. Now years later I sometimes wonder if meeting John happened, and was there really a gentle breeze from the flutter of wings unfurling when he went out the door? Then I look at my Eisenhower silver dollar and wish I had bought corn futures.

Merry Christmas. ♦

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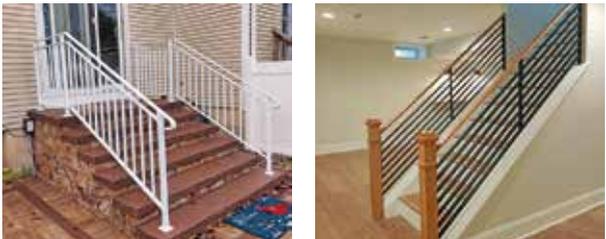
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Publisher Linda S. Herman

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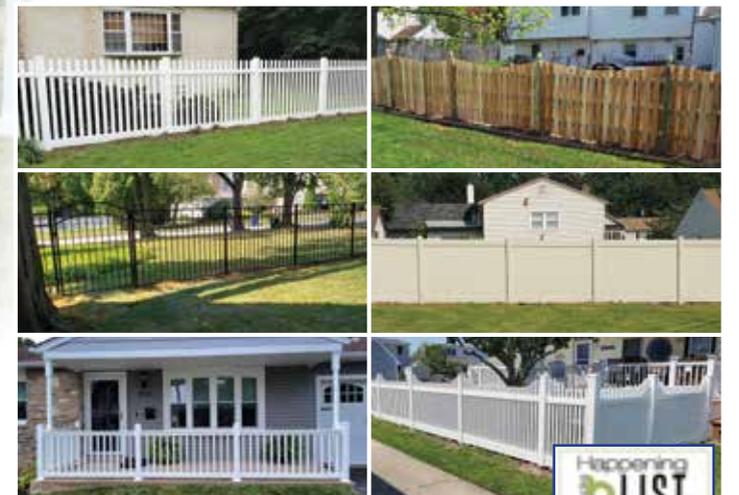


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