

# MONTANA KAIMIN

## SQUASHING THE SPIKE

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE  
UNIVERSITY'S INFAMOUS  
TRADITION

STORY BY DANTE FILPULA ANKNEY

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Cover Photo  
Matt Neuman



The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message," or "paper that brings news."

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CLASSIFIEDS

Community

Let's make some peace. Looking for students and faculty interested in joining a multi-campus virtual rosary prayer group. All are welcome. Call Fr. Chris 415-854-9900

**ELECTION DAY IS COMING UP!**

For info on voting go to:  
[www.voteinmt.org](http://www.voteinmt.org)

To check your voter registration:  
[www.myvoterpagemt.org](http://www.myvoterpagemt.org)

Remember that you can register to vote in MT until November 3rd, but you will have to vote in person this election if registering after October 26th!

**Vote like your future depends on it!**  
(Because it does)

KAIMIN COMIC



COOPER MALIN | MONTANA KAIMIN

EDITORIAL

We miss you, Halloween, but we have to stay home

It can be hard to mentally prepare yourself to miss something you love, especially when the idea of it vanishing into the ether never crossed your mind. But Halloween, like every other fun thing this year, is a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The loss of the holiday stings almost as much as the vampire makeup running into your eyes in the middle of the dance floor.

Let's not forget, though, that it's important to stay safe — to keep the fun well ventilated and socially distanced with close pals. Plus, who wants to catch the coronavirus dressed up as Joe Exotic in Stocks? The CDC has some neat guidelines on how to celebrate Halloween this year, but everyone knows the one place not to be is in a bar.

So don't do that. Instead, bust out last year's costume, and shower your home in glitter, cheap vodka and pumpkin guts. While we may not be able to enjoy the spookiest of seasons to its fullest extent, we can always reminisce.

Journey back to late October of last year. Before the ground was covered in a foot of snow. Before DoorDashing every night was okay. When Spirit Halloween, a carnival of cheaply made, spooky delights, would pop up in random abandoned buildings.

Life was good. It was simple. It entailed going to the liquor store to buy ALL the cheap booze for a party that took 20 minutes of meticulous planning. The crisp air, the complete spectrum of red in the

crunchy leaves and the overwhelming, nostril-burning smell of hairspray made early-evening preparations for Halloween shenanigans feel alive (and a brain cell killer, for sure).

Then it was time. The door burst open, and the crew hit the town. From your friend's extremely detailed recreation of Sporty Spice to your roommate's last-minute "my mustache is my costume, deal with it," the gang was ready. And so was Missoula. Somehow, the Garden City has always felt like it was made for Halloween.

Whatever happened next — that stayed between you and Halloween. But those were the before times.

Now, all the local stalwarts of the season, including "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," Disco Blood Bath, haunted houses and friends' crying in the bathroom because someone else had the same costume, are gone. But their memories remain. So, crack open a pumpkin-flavored 40 ounce, pour one out and STAY HOME.

LIKE IT? HATE IT? WISH WE WERE DEAD?

Email us your opinions at [editor@montanakaimin.com](mailto:editor@montanakaimin.com)

MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD

Not registered to vote?

You can register to vote & cast a ballot on or before Election Day (Tuesday, November 3rd) until 8pm!

All Elections Services Available:  
**Missoula County Elections Office**  
140 N Russell St, Missoula  
Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm  
Tuesday, November 3rd from 7am to 8pm



Learn more about how to register & cast a ballot at [voteinMT.org](http://voteinMT.org) or call 406-888-VOTE

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

			2	6				
					7	3	5	
	7	3						4
				2				
		9						1
8					9	2	6	3
4	8		3		2		1	
				1				7
5		7	6		4			

Edited by Margie E. Burke

**HOW TO SOLVE:**  
Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:

8	3	1	5	4	2	9	7	6
7	9	5	3	8	6	4	2	1
6	2	4	1	9	7	5	3	8
9	5	3	7	1	8	6	4	2
4	1	8	2	6	5	3	9	7
2	6	7	9	3	4	8	1	5
1	8	9	6	2	3	7	5	4
3	7	6	4	5	1	2	8	9
5	4	2	8	7	9	1	6	3

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# Briefs: DiverseU, ballot drop-offs and bar closures

## DIVERSEU GOES VIRTUAL FOR 2020

The annual DiverseU event is scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 28-29 this year, held exclusively over Zoom. "DiverseU provides a ready opportunity to contribute to the diversity efforts at UM," the event's website states. "This is a campus-wide series of events focused on topics of diversity and promoting civil discourse." Each event is performed, presented or discussed by either UM students, faculty, staff, alumni or community members. They run back-to-back from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday. Topics include equal opportunity in housing, addiction and recovery, the white savior complex, Dia De Los Muertos and the challenges of change for the neuro-diverse. (Mazana Boerboom)

## UM AWARDED GRANT FOR NATIVE REPRESENTATION IN STEM

The University of Montana was awarded \$236,000 by the National Science Foundation

to boost Native American and Alaskan Native students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, according to UM News. UM has an Indigenous Research and STEM Education Program that will use the award money to promote STEM education among Native American K-12 and college students in Montana. (MB)

## MISSOULA COUNTY, UM OPEN BALLOT DROP OFF LOCATIONS

The Missoula County Election Office (located on 140 N. Russell St.) will be open everyday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with the exception of Sunday, which is 9 a.m. to

1 p.m. Although there will not be normal voting booths on campus this year, UM will feature a ballot drop off location as a part of about a dozen drop off spots across Missoula County. The drop off locations will only be open on election day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and ballots need to be submitted by 8 p.m. to be counted. Several businesses and bars in Missoula County have been shut down after failing to comply with COVID-19 regulations, according to the Missoulian. Orders for closure have been filed to ROAM Student Living, Benny's Frenchtown Club, Monk's Bar, Bodega, Stockman's Bar and Larry's Six Mile Bar in Huson. Orders were given out after health officers from the Missoula City-County Health Department noticed failure to regulate safety measures such as social distancing and mask wearing in the businesses. Each business was given an Order to Comply before the closures. The health department accepted a reopening plan by Stockman's Bar. (MB)



# Blotter: Running from the law, temporary tenants and bears

## GRIFFEN SMITH

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Since last week's Blotter, UMPD reported 10 crimes in and around campus. Criminal mischief and bike thefts appeared as the most common crime, though the week was rather quiet when it came to crime. But bear sightings were an unusually common occurrence.

## 10/17 RUN FOR IT!

UMPD responded to a noise complaint in the parking lot near Craig Hall late at night to find a get together of underage drinkers, who were not excited to see the new company. Half of the group ran away, and nobody was able to find them. However, since some of the students lived in Craig hall, police looked at the security footage around campus to identify the runners. When they returned to their dorms, UMPD identified the getaways, and also watched one of them bust an exit sign in the building. Students who stayed and those who booked it were referred for conduct violations and one person is up for a charge of vandalism.

## 10/19 RIMINI STAY-INS

A series of break-ins at Rimini court in the University Villages elicited a public response from UMPD. They

described the suspects as burglars and urged the public to stay vigilant. After more investigation, officers determined that the break-ins were not to steal anything, as the suspects only broke into empty apartments. Instead they said the suspects were likely transients looking for a place to stay as cold weather entered Missoula. No suspects have been identified.

## 10/22 COLD WEATHER MELTDOWN

A resident of Bannack Court made the mistake of accidentally locking themselves out of their apartment in the chilly mid-afternoon. Neighbors heard the resident yelling and called in UMPD. Officers confronted the angry lockout, and after a small discussion on neighborhood etiquette, the police let the shaken resident back in their apartment.

## 10/23 BEAR WITH US

Another report of a bear on campus dropped into student emails early on Friday morning last week. The bear, an adolescent black bear, was helping himself to some garbage outside of Aber hall around 1 a.m., and scurried around buildings while most of Missoula was sleeping. According to UMPD, the tip came from their online submittable form, which prevented the department from putting out the alert until five hours after the fact. Why anyone was up wandering campus that late is still a mystery.



COLTON ROTHWELL | MONTANA KAIMIN

## The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15					16		
17					18					19		
20				21					22			
23			24	25				26				
			27	28				29			30	31
32	33	34			35		36				37	
38					39		40			41		
42				43			44		45			
46			47				48	49				
			50				51		52	53	54	55
56	57					58			59		60	
61					62					63		
64					65				66			
67					68				69			

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### ACROSS

- 1 Carrying cargo
- 6 Surgery souvenir
- 10 Hightail it
- 14 Get out of bed
- 15 Lose steam
- 16 "Tall" story
- 17 Without restraint
- 19 Sign of trouble
- 20 Band's booking
- 21 Laundry challenge
- 22 Winter forecast
- 23 Pump part
- 25 Fry cook's concern
- 27 Pastoral poem
- 29 Change the title of
- 32 Point a finger at
- 35 Lofty nest (var.)
- 37 Farrow of film
- 38 U.S. Chief Justice since 2005
- 40 Kind of court
- 42 Pop-ups, e.g.
- 43 Call upon
- 45 Like Olive Oyl
- 46 Close-ups show it
- 48 Gunpowder ingredient
- 50 Taxing job?
- 52 Indian bread
- 56 Pennsylvania sect
- 58 Type of eclipse
- 60 Classic card game
- 61 Mrs. Jetson
- 62 Lizard's kin
- 64 "The \_\_\_ have it"
- 65 D.C. office
- 66 Sharp end

- 67 Engine parts
  - 68 "Wish you \_\_\_ here"
  - 69 Loyalty, old-style
- ### DOWN
- 1 Comedian's goal
  - 2 Golf's Palmer, familiarly
  - 3 Mournful song
  - 4 WNW's opposite
  - 5 Capone nemesis
  - 6 Type of gown
  - 7 In a polite way
  - 8 Combat zone
  - 9 Clifford's color
  - 10 Hot, as in goods
  - 11 TV news employee
  - 12 Helm position
  - 13 Circus structure
  - 18 Online crafts site
  - 22 Church topper
  - 24 Vitamin C source
  - 26 Take a tumble

- 28 Muslim ascetic
- 30 Half of half-and-half
- 31 Piece of cake?
- 32 Thin fastener
- 33 Rich supply
- 34 Held back
- 36 Justification
- 39 Mah-jongg piece
- 41 Make
- 44 Narrow-minded
- 47 Evaluate
- 49 Disney World transport
- 51 Spartacus, for one
- 53 Part of a TV feed
- 54 Concerning
- 55 Up, on a map
- 56 Cracked open
- 57 Deli spread
- 59 Deeply absorbed
- 62 Scatter seeds
- 63 Scand. land

### Answers to Last Week's Crossword:

S	A	G	A		D	A	T	E	D		F	I	S	H
H	U	R	L		E	D	E	M	A		I	O	W	A
O	R	A	L		M	O	N	U	M	E	N	T	A	L
P	A	S	S	W	O	R	D		P	L	I	A	N	T
			S	P	A	T	E		G	N	A	T		
S	A	L	I	N	E		P	R	E	T	E	N	S	E
A	P	A	C	E		A	R	O	S	E		E	E	L
M	I	N	E		F	L	O	S	S		V	E	N	D
B	A	D		B	O	L	U	S		P	A	R	S	E
A	N	S	W	E	R	E	D		M	U	R	D	E	R
			A	R	M	Y			R	A	T	I	O	
D	A	C	T	Y	L		C	A	S	T	A	W	A	Y
I	R	R	E	L	E	V	A	N	T		N	E	M	O
N	E	A	R		S	E	R	G	E		C	L	O	D
G	A	M	Y		S	T	E	E	R		E	L	S	A

## 'Birds aren't real' and other conspiracy horoscopes

### ADDIE SLANGER

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NAT BRANCACCIO | MONTANA KAIMIN

Conspiracy theories are like the fan fiction of reality. Just because it's not canonical doesn't mean it isn't true, you know? For this spooky issue, let's see which conspiracy genre describes you best.

**SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):** Moon landing hoax. You know that scene in "New Girl," where Nick and Jess air out all their differences so Schmidt can't break them up? And Nick tells Jess the moon landing was obviously faked? You've had that same conversation with your partner. Admit it.

**SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 22):** Flat Earthers. Okay Sags, please don't take offense at this. It's just, we couldn't not include the flat-Earth conspiracy theory. And, well, you guys are a little eccentric. We can't apologize for speaking the truth.

**CAPRICORN (DEC. 23-JAN. 19):** Lizard/mole people. We're assigning this to you, Caps, mostly because we aren't completely sure you're not mole people. Or at least, you'd like to be? Living underground, away from all the bullshit, free to judge at your leisure? Kind of a dream.

**AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18):** Illuminati. Alright, Aquarius, you pretentious goofballs. If you're not actually gonna be in the illuminati (which, we know, is your real dream), you're at least going to be well informed. Anyway, maybe then you'll be recruited.

**PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):** JonBenét Ramsey. We feel like this one is self-explanatory. (And it was the neighbor, by the way.)

**ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):** Chemtrails. Ever since your slightly deranged grandmother stopped by to drop off some birthday money and complain that the government is poisoning us with pesticides disseminated through

air travel, you haven't been able to shake the feeling that maybe she isn't so crazy, after all.

**TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):** The Mandela Effect. We know just how excited you get when someone asks you to explain it to them, Taurus. You smug bastards.

**GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20):** Cryptids. Chupacabra, the Loch Ness monster, the Jersey devil. Geminis, don't lie to us, you dreamt of hosting one of those "Finding Bigfoot" shows when you were younger. And if you're still brainstorming ways to market your degree for this purpose? Well, that wouldn't surprise us either.

**CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):** Birds aren't real. As funny as that TikTok trend was, you didn't think it was a laughing matter. It's what you've been preaching for years.

**LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22):** Area 51. You often imagine investing in a nice tent, filling up on gas and driving to the Nevada desert to prove, once and for all, aliens are real. Just prepare for your film debut when you star in "60 Minutes" after suddenly going missing from your campus.

**VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22):** Ted Cruz as the Zodiac Killer. Virgo, your obsession with serial killers is a little concerning to us. And so is the fact that you have a whole page of your planner dedicated to proving Ted Cruz's guilt. At least it's color-coded, though.

**LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):** Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. You've read up on all the Reddit pages examining each possibility for the flight's disappearance, from aliens to black holes to government collusion. You've become such an expert, people ask you to explain at parties.

# New S.E.A. Change director's full circle journey back to UM

JACOB OWENS  
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Twila Old Coyote has spent her career working to improve marginalized communities in Montana, empowering Indigenous women along the way. Now, she plans to empower all women at the University of Montana.

The University announced in August the hiring of Old Coyote as the first director for the Safe, Empowered, Accelerated, Change (S.E.A. Change) Initiative. Old Coyote's goal is to create a pipeline of gender equity advocates in the community.

Old Coyote is an enrolled member of the Apsáalooke (Crow) and a member of the White Clay (Gros Ventre) Nation. She lived on the Crow reservation until sixth grade and graduated high school from Browning High School, which is on the Blackfeet reservation.

She arrived at the University of Montana as a first-generation college student years ago, unsure how to use a graphing calculator.

She was soon paired with Jon Stannard, the University's director of TRIO Upward Bound, where she became a counselor for three years before her graduation. She earned her degree in psychology and her minor in Native American Studies, then returned to UM for a master's in intercultural youth and family development.

Old Coyote would also one day be in charge of Upward Bound, which prepared disadvantaged students for college. UM's other TRIO program is TRIO Student Support Services. This program helps many students in similar situations once they get to UM.

"As Indigenous people the sense of a community is important to us, and for me it's natural to gravitate towards someone who shares similar cultural values and beliefs," Brittany Iron, a UM graduate student, said. "Twila was that person for me."

Iron first met Old Coyote through MSU's Caring for Our Own Program (CO-OP), where Old Coyote was the assistant director. CO-OP provides support for American Indian nursing students like Iron, who said it gave her a sense of community.

It was through CO-OP that Iron became accustomed to Old Coyote's infectious

positivity. It's a positivity reflected in Old Coyote's ever-present laugh, which brings a smile to those around her, even over Zoom.

Iron left MSU after three semesters, but never lost touch with the "personable yet professional" Old Coyote. Iron returned home to southeastern Montana where she attended a community college, Little Big Horn College.

Iron said she had an urge to finish her four-year degree after community college, and Old Coyote encouraged her to do so. The two met in Missoula in 2015 when Old Coyote explained the opportunities available for Iron at UM.

Iron is now in the University of Montana's Counselor Education program pursuing a master's degree.

Old Coyote became the director of UM's Upward Bound program in 2013, where she met Ali Archambault.

Archambault is a first-generation college student attending her first year at UM. Archambault met Old Coyote when she began participating in Upward Bound before high school.

Archambault said Old Coyote was a close mentor who propelled her toward attending college by always being there to cheer her on. Archambault considers her a role model, an example of how Native women can succeed.

"It's not easy because it just seems like the whole world's against you and nobody is on your side fighting," Archambault said.

Archambault thanked Old Coyote for all her support during the summer after her junior year. Old Coyote said she'd never been thanked for the summer program before. It had never seemed to slow her down though.

Old Coyote said her goal is not only for students to go to college, but to finish, because when an American Indian student gets a degree their whole community wins.

"As an American Indian woman myself, education is really something that no one can ever take away from you, that's always what I've told my students, it really opens doors of opportunities," she said.

Old Coyote is teaching a women and gender equity course this fall, open to anybody, as part of her new role as the first director of UM's S.E.A. Change Initiative.



S.E.A. Change Director Twila Old Coyote stands near a portrait of Elouise Cobell on the lower level of the Payne Family Native American Center on Oct. 22, 2020. Cobell sued the U.S. Government for mismanaging Native American trust funds. As the director of S.E.A. Change, Old Coyote plans to educate students in college, high school and middle school about gender equity. SARA DIGGINS | MONTANA KAIMIN

She cited wage discrepancies and an underrepresentation of women as company executives as proof of where gender equity has not occurred.

Old Coyote's plan for the class is for her students to mentor middle and high school students in internships this spring. In the summer these same students will become counselors for a week-long summer camp.

Old Coyote said she wants the S.E.A. Change Initiative to be a place where the intersectionality of women is highlighted and all women are empowered.

"In Montana if we don't get equity to survive then we owe it to our younger generations to create those pathways," Old Coyote said.

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# Time of isolation, but no shortage of debate

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The University of Montana Speech and Debate Team's plans were cut short last March when its trip to San Diego for nationals was canceled, and the team prepared for competitions held virtually.

As COVID-19 cases rose this semester, all of the team's meetings went remote. "I don't think anyone was worried about losing out on a semester or half a season, it was mostly whether or not it was going to be online, which we all basically assumed it would be," Tucker Wilson, the team's assistant coach, said.

This semester UM's team plans to compete in two virtual events.

Corinna Bickel, the team's president, said the shift to online competitions has saved the club money and made tournaments easier to do, but has diminished the personality and interactions present in the normal back-and-forth of a debate.

Asher Dalbey, the team's vice president, said virtual competitions have allowed for UM's team to compete with a variety of teams nationwide, but are not without

technical difficulties.

Dalbey's screen froze a few times during a competition earlier this month, and he had trouble with his camera.

Bickel said even with the virtual format's drawbacks, it's worth the ability to practice and compete.

The team's coach, Joel Iverson, said virtual competitions prevent the team from forming all the camaraderie he experienced in his 20 years of competing in and coaching speech and debate.

Iverson became the volunteer coach three years ago when the coaching position was cut along with many lecturers' positions at the University.

"I was faced with the choice of, 'Let the debate team die or keep it going,'" Iverson said.

Iverson said the team has about 15 members, five of which joined this semester.

The team competed in the virtual Steve Hunt Classic hosted by Lewis and Clark College at the beginning of October. It was held over Yaatly, a program with breakout rooms similar to Zoom.

Two students from UM competed. One of them was James Flanagan, who was



DAYLIN SCOTT | MONTANA KAIMIN

ranked the first speaker in the Senior (Varsity) Debate.

Bickel said the team is planning to compete in another virtual event, which will likely take place in the second or third week of November.

"As difficult as everything is right now with the quarantine, pandemic and all

that I think right now's the perfect time to focus on self improvement," Dalbey said. "Just generally people have free time that they want to fill. I think speech and debate is something they can use to fill it."

# UM sees a drop in active cases, countywide spread continues to climb

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As Missoula's first glimpse of winter unfolded over the weekend, experts from the Missoula City-County Health Department and epidemiologists from UM's Health Sciences department expressed concern about the county's continued rise in cases.

The group of health experts met for the third time over Zoom Thursday, Oct. 22, and discussed overall trends the area has seen with the pandemic. They found a rise in cases among the elderly and a need for more tests.

"The last time our epi situation unit held a press conference back on August 19, the status of COVID-19 in our community was relatively stable," UM epidemiologist Erin Semmens said. "The stability we saw a

couple of months ago was fragile, and we can see that now very clearly."

Since Labor Day weekend, cases dramatically increased from a few dozen to just under 700 countywide active cases on Oct. 26. The percent of people testing positive reached 8% this month. According to John Hopkins University, a rate over 5% means there are either too many people testing positive, or too few tests in the community.

Twenty-six people were hospitalized in the county Oct. 26, roughly a third of those are from communities outside of Missoula. Ten people have died from the virus in Missoula County, and six of those deaths occurred in the last month.

UM cases dropped significantly after two large clusters based in Greek Life and Athletics spiked active cases to over 120 in mid-September. As of Oct. 26, there are fewer than 60 University-affiliated active

cases.

Health department director Ellen Leahy attributed the drop in UM cases to the cancellation of University extracurricular activities.

"As we started to gather information about where transmission and exposure was happening, it was happening in the air in the less structured areas, without social distancing or the mask," Leahy said. "One of the first things the University did when they started seeing a spike was to pull back on their extracurricular activities."

Young people in general make up less of Missoula County's overall COVID-19 percentages, down from 50% of all cases at the beginning of October to 29% last week.

While COVID-19 continues to rise from normal social activities, presenters at the event voiced additional concern about the

upcoming Halloween weekend. They said an increase of gatherings, especially when more are inside due to weather, can create a larger spike in Missoula County.

"Not only are these popular times for gatherings and travel, but they also occurred during this colder weather we're starting to experience, so they're going to be indoor gatherings," UM epidemiologist Ethan Walker said. "Then when gatherings occur indoors, there's going to be a higher possibility of transmission because there's less ventilation, and there's more close contact."

The state of Montana allows for congregations of up to 50 people without masks or social distancing, but Missoula County is allowed to implement further restrictions.

# SQUASHING THE SPIKE

## THE HISTORY BEHIND THE UNIVERSITY'S INFAMOUS TRADITION



STORY BY DANTE FILPULA ANKNEY

Ben Porietis knew his neighbors weren't home. Eyeing the pumpkin sitting innocently on the porch across the street, his friend Rob Hutchinson made an absurd, alcohol-induced suggestion, and a loosely conceived plan was born.

They were going to steal the neighbors' pumpkin and spike it on the spire at the top of the 115-foot-high clock tower of Main Hall.

"It was all lit up, you know, it's Halloween," Porietis said. "So they had their pumpkin on display and it was uncarved. It was just a big-ass plain pumpkin, which is what made us think that we should do something to it."

In almost every year since Porietis and Hutchinson first adorned the spire, a pumpkin has appeared atop Main Hall. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the first Halloween spike.

Porietis and Hutchinson were never caught for their prank, which eventually became one of the University's most prominent and beloved annual traditions. And until now, their identities were not known.

Now, UM promotes the tradition as a quirky, unique part of campus culture, but school officials have not always been so laid back. For years, the prank persisted in the face of disapproving scrutiny from UM officials.

But before it could become the fabled act it is today, someone had to think of the idea.

Porietis and his three roommates hosted a party on Tuesday, Oct. 29, 1996, two days before Halloween. It was the usual early-evening, open-door-policy kind of college party they commonly hosted before ending their night with a drink elsewhere.

About 30 partygoers were dressed in costumes and stuffed into the four-bedroom house on a dead-end road off the Clark Fork River, near the Orange Street Bridge. People spilled out of the doors, drink in hand.

Porietis took a break on the front patio steps, sipping cheap beer with Hutchinson. Porietis met Hutchinson in an improv class the two unwillingly took to satisfy a graduation requirement, and bonded over a mutual passion for rock climbing.

They were both tall and blond, and fit from all the time they spent rock climbing in the Bitterroots. Porietis drove a Volkswagen camper van and sported long, shaggy hair and an unkempt beard. His footwear of choice was usually a battered pair of sandals.

Hutchinson usually substituted bland Carhartt pants for bright pink tights to climb. Porietis likened him to a Southern California surfer boy.

They looked toward the Clark Fork River

and let their conversation drift. They found themselves admiring the pumpkin on their neighbor TJ's porch. It was huge. Like a distant relative of James' giant peach. Hutchinson had an idea.

TJ returned home from his bartending shift to find a ripped-out piece of notebook paper in place of his giant pumpkin:

IT SEEMS AS THOUGH SOME HALLOWEEN GNOME, HAS STOLEN YOUR PUMPKIN AND FOUND ITS NEW HOME. JUST HEAD STRAIGHT TO CAMPUS TOMORROW A.M., WHEN YOU GET TO THE OVAL, CHECK THE TIME IF YOU CAN...  
HEEHEE  
HAPPY HALLOWEEN

The pumpkin was the talk of campus the day after Hutchinson and Porietis impaled it in 1996. Students thought it was comical. As Porietis remembers it, though, then-UM president George Dennison called for the expulsion of the students — if it was indeed students — who defaced his office building. Main Hall was not "architecturally suited" to have a pumpkin atop its spire, the UM facilities director said at the time. The prank was dangerous, and the pumpkin was going to be expensive to get down.

In an article published two days after the spike, "Puzzling Pumpkin Prank Will Cost a Pretty Penny," the Kaimin reported that UM planned to hire a crane operator, at \$110 per hour, to get the pumpkin down. Other options that didn't make the cut: hiring an experienced climber to risk the ascent; accepting an offer of a local hunter to shoot it down.

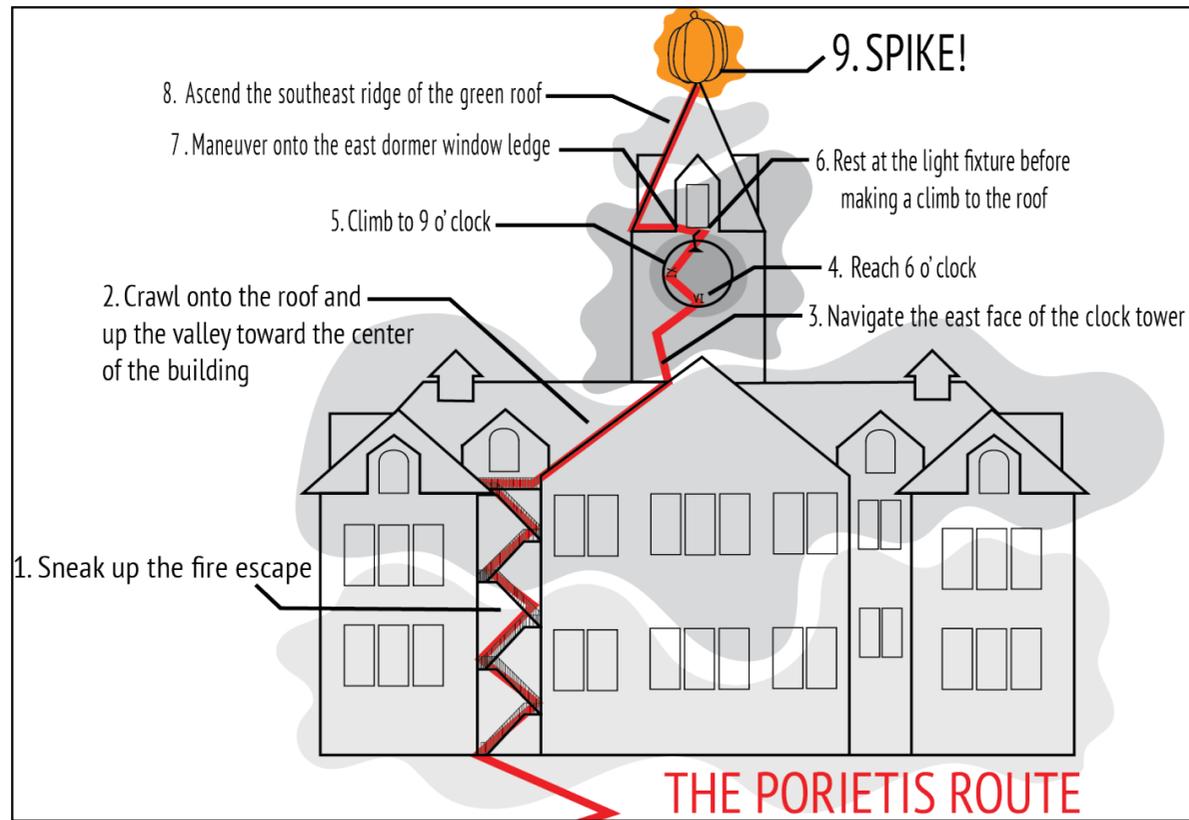
In the end, though, the pumpkin was never taken down. The crane was never hired. A week later, the Kaimin's editorial board applauded UM's decision to let the pumpkin be.

According to Porietis, the pumpkin didn't fall off quickly like he and Hutchinson had expected. It lasted through the fall, froze to the spire in the winter, and shriveled up during the spring and summer. The scrutinized squash rotted onto the Main Hall spire before falling off.

University police had no leads. The director of campus security at the time, Ken Willet, described the prank as cute but costly.

"We will probably never know who did it," Willet said at the time. "I don't know. Can you successfully lift fingerprints from a pumpkin?"

The next year, Willet was ready for the pumpkin pranksters to return. He assigned



three students to guard the clock tower on Oct. 30 and 31. To campus security's delight, no climbers attempted a spike during that period. But one day, two weeks later, faculty and students arrived on campus to find two pumpkins impaled on lower spires of Main Hall.

Willet was dismayed, according to a Kaimin article from November 1997. "We weren't ready for a Veteran's Day pumpkin," he said.

Porietis had already graduated by then, or else he and Hutchinson might have been behind the act. There was a new prankster, or pranksters, this time. The facilities director in 1997, Hugh Jesse, said the pumpkins would be more manageable to get down than the Pumpkin of '96. The University wasn't going to have to hire a crane.

"We might just be able to lean out the window and get it with a board," Jesse said. "If that doesn't work, we will find something else. They are not that high up."

After the Spike of '97, years passed without incident. But in 2003, to UM's bewilderment and a campus chuckle, the prank returned.

"If I were to believe in ghosts," Dennison,

by then the president of the University, told the Kaimin in 2004, "that seems to be the most plausible answer."

A pumpkin has graced Main Hall every year since 2003, but only two students have ever been caught in

**"There's a part of me that thinks it's really cool that it has become this mystery and that it's fun to carry on the tradition. When you are on the sharp end of an adventure, that's the shit, right? I mean, that's like natural endorphins. That's better than any drug someone is going to do on a Halloween night." - Ben Porietis**

the act.

One was reportedly charged with trespassing in 2004, after UMPD traced the climbing gear left at the scene. And in 2016, a UM student, Peter Breigenzer spiked the pumpkin before he was arrested and charged with obstructing a peace officer and criminal trespass.

Over the years, UM has gradually, if

reluctantly, warmed up to the idea of the pumpkin spike. Administrators now market the tradition as a part of the school's unique campus culture. UM posted pictures of this year's Main Hall pumpkin to Instagram and Facebook earlier this month.

"It's a part of our shared story that we tell about this institution," Kelly Webster, UM chief of staff, said. "People know what it feels like to have a shared lore or story, and we love that. So we celebrate that, and we want to preserve that."

Despite recognizing and promoting the tradition, she said that the University cannot condone any student climbing Main Hall. It

is strictly prohibited.

"If we were in person, I would be winking at you," Webster said in a phone interview. "We have worked with people who have been a part of the spiking, to facilitate a safe placement of the pumpkin. In the spirit of preserving some magic — that is all I will say."

Webster said she didn't know if UM has ever had a role in placing the pumpkin before this year. But it seems that UM has only recently become interested in upholding the tradition. For years, it was students involved in UM's rock climbing community who kept the pumpkin spike alive.

In 2006, a Kaimin front-page photo depicted a climber scaling the east face of Main Hall's clock tower. And in a 2010 documentary titled "The Pumpkin Man," then-UM film student Jesse Spaulding captured a masked climber scaling the tower. Neither publication named the climbers.

A former student and member of the UM rock climbing community, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said she had ascended the Main Hall clock tower several times to spike the pumpkin. The climber said she has been rock climbing for 15 years but does not get out as much today as she used to while at UM.

She helped orchestrate the annual pumpkin spiking for about 10 years, she said, from 2008 to 2018.

She said that, during each of those years, the UM climbing community chose two students, one to belay (or keep the rope taut) and one to climb and place the pumpkin. Both were usually a junior or a senior with proven climbing skills. But the climber said that, after scaling the clock tower herself, she didn't feel comfortable recommending it to anyone.

"I love this tradition, but it is also one of the dumbest pranks out there," the climber said. "It's frankly just not worth the human life for the amount of risk that you are putting yourself and your belayer in to do it."

She said that it's simply too dangerous, even for experienced climbers. She also worries about the structural integrity of the 127-year-old building. She was chilled to the bone when the clock face popped outward during one of her climbs, she said. Another time, the clock hands almost cut her rope like a pair of super-sized scissors.

"There is stuff on that building that is going to break someday, and if people keep climbing it, someone is going to die," she said.

The climber was not surprised to learn that UM administrators played a role in placing the pumpkin this year. But, despite



"The Great Pumpkin" descends from the Main Hall clock tower after placing its crown jewel, in addition to two other pumpkins, on the front spires. The climber had intended to place five pumpkins, one on each spire, on the tower. The decorating was cut two pumpkins short due to rain in the early hours of Monday morning, Oct. 26, 2009. **JESSE SPAULDING | MONTANA KAIMIN**

the dangers involved, she does not believe the climbing community will stop participating in this fabled tradition.

Climbing culture has always been about defying authority, she said.

Porietis remembers his own perilous climb.

Pilfering the ransom note was simple. It was far more complex to scale a building without a planned route.

Porietis slid his blue Schwinn 3-speed cruiser to a stop next to Hutchinson, who unloaded the pumpkin from the wire basket mounted to the front of his bike.

The campus was dark and silent, and they tried to blend in, wearing black sweatpants and black hoodies. They tiptoed up the fire escape at the rear of Main Hall like two cartoon bank robbers, hopped the ledge to the roof and snuck into a nook at the base of the clock tower, facing Mount Sentinel.

They unloaded their bags and prepped for the climb to the sound of their own

stifled laughter. Once they laced their shoes, tightened their harnesses and tied the knots in their rope, Porietis let enough slack into his line for Hutchinson to start climbing. He carefully looped some webbing, the

Hutchinson froze in place in front of the brightly lit clock. There was a cop on top of the library parking garage, presumably making his usual rounds.

"I hope he doesn't check the time,"

**"If we were in person, I would be winking at you. We have worked with people who have been a part of the spiking, to facilitate a safe placement of the pumpkin. In the spirit of preserving some magic — that is all I will say." -Kelly Webster**

seatbelt-like material used in climbing, onto different parts of the building and clipped in, in case he fell. Hutchinson had no idea if this was a good route. He was winging it.

Hutchinson was almost at the 10 on the clock face when Porietis yelled for him to stop.

"Oh, shit. Hold tight. Don't move," Porietis said.

Hutchinson said.

Porietis let out a laugh that was quickly followed by a command. He told Hutchinson to hurry and finish the climb. That was close, he thought, as Hutchinson continued up the clock tower.

Using careful and swift maneuvers, Hutchinson grasped the base of the spire. He looped his rope around the spire to secure

himself and haul up the pumpkin. He bear-hugged the spire with one arm as he yanked on the rope attached to the pumpkin.

"I remember the pumpkin going across the lit clock face, from 6 o'clock to 12 o'clock," Porietis said. "I was losing my fucking mind. I was cracking up so hard as he was hauling the pumpkin across the entire lit face."

The abnormally large pumpkin made it to Hutchinson, and in one swift spike, it was done—the pumpkin was impaled on the spire. He had successfully completed the climb, the first of many to follow, years after him. He reversed his ascent, and he and Hutchinson got back on their bikes. There was only one casualty: the pumpkin.

Porietis and Hutchinson returned to the party at the house, dropped off their gear, changed out of their black clothing and picked up another can of beer. Hutchinson had gotten the idea at 8 p.m., they started climbing by 9:30 and they were back at the party by 10:30, Porietis said.

It took about an hour for the two men to start a UM tradition that has lasted a quarter of a century.

Porietis now lives and works in Sand Point, Idaho. He has remained in touch with a couple of his roommates, but lost touch with Hutchinson. TJ Barnes, the neighbor, lives in Bristol, Connecticut, and still has the ransom note for his pumpkin. He also kept two newspaper clippings, one from the Kaimin and one from the Missoulian, from 1996. He was unaware the prank had become a tradition at UM and said he did not know for sure who'd stolen his pumpkin. But he certainly suspected the four roommates at the party house across the street.

This past summer, TJ took a trip to Missoula with his wife and daughter. While walking the Oval on campus, he told the story of the pumpkin that was stolen from his porch and spiked atop Main Hall.

The Kaimin could not locate Hutchinson for this story, despite repeated attempts. Porietis and TJ said they aren't even sure if Hutchinson was his last name. It could be Hutchings or Henderson.

After years of lying low and leaving the Missoula community to speculate on the identities of the original pumpkin spikers, Porietis hopes that his admission does not stop the tradition.

"There's a part of me that thinks it's really cool that it has become this mystery and that it's fun to carry on the tradition," Porietis said. "When you are on the sharp end of an adventure, that's the shit, right? I mean, that's like natural endorphins. That's better than any drug someone is going to do on a Halloween night."

## Cultivating peace: Missoula locals use walking meditation to support BLM

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A quiet, but crisp *gong* rang out among the three people clustered together.

The small singing bowl, reverberating with the noise, ordained silence among the gathered. Each person bowed, the cold nipping rain kissing their smiling faces.

The singing bowl's holder, Greg Gallo, said a small prayer in English, a mantra of sorts, and the three people began their walking meditation, known as the Peace and Solidarity Walk, around Rose Park in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

The three-to-10 people who attend these weekly events hosted by the Open Way Mindfulness Center every Tuesday evening use this walking meditation as a way to ground themselves so they can give back to the community.

"It is a way for us to make a statement for [Black Lives Matter] and other marginalized people," said Rowan Conred, a council member of the Open Way Mindfulness Center.

Walking meditation is a form of the practice that allows a person to move while being aware of the present moment. The act of meditation as a practice has been established for thousands of years in the Buddhist and Hindu cultures and has several health benefits.

"May all beings be happy," Gallo said as they began their walk. "We wish each being eternal happiness."

Each person walked at a different rhythmic pace, taking in the sensations around them. They could just hear the slight fluttering of falling leaves over the continuous thumping of raindrops on their jacket hoods and the cars speeding on the road to their right. They felt the soft wind, the almost stinging sensation of their cold cheeks, the motion of placing their foot on the ground, the motion of lifting their foot up again. They noticed their breath and the beautiful flower just to the left of their path.

Observing feelings and sensations that are occurring in the present moment is the foundation of meditation. Meditation is an act of focusing one's attention on something and letting other thoughts go with the intention of calming their mind. The calming of the mind and the temporary release of thoughts, obligations and future plans reduces stress that can manifest itself due to those swirling thoughts in the mind.

According to the Mayo Health Clinic, meditation can improve someone's emotional health by lowering and managing stress levels, as well as increasing their self-awareness,



Participants of the weekly Peace and Solidarity walk, hosted by the Open Way Mindfulness Center, make their way around Rose Park on Tuesday, Oct. 20. Every Tuesday evening, three to 10 people practice this walking meditation together to reduce stress and anxiety, in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

SARA DIGGINS | MONTANA KAIMIN

patience and tolerance. Physically it is proven to help reduce medical issues such as anxiety, heart problems and high blood pressure, according to a study published in the Harvard Gazette.

There are multiple ways to meditate, such as sitting meditation, mantra meditation and walking meditation. This group is using walking meditation as a way to take a stance on current issues of the world, such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

"We are expressing the need and expressing the hope for the lessening suffering," said Suzanne Heindrich, a regular participant in the Peace and Solidarity Walk.

According to Gallo, by practicing walking meditation, the group is cultivating peace they can continue to develop outside of meditation. It is also another act they can do in support of the Black Lives Matter movement other than a protest.

An ambulance blared past the small group in the park. They continued to walk, some with their eyes partially closed, focusing on the Earth beneath their feet. Others had their heads up and on a lazy swivel, taking in the environment around. One touched a yellow-red leaf on a small tree. The stark sound of the ambulance waned as it hastened away. The group could hear the rustling leaves again. The rain stopped, and the sound of birds chirping took its place.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, the world-renowned Buddhist monk and teacher on whom the Open Way Mindfulness Center bases its teachings, coined the term "engaged Buddhism." This idea focuses on using the principles of mindfulness and Buddhism to address the current world challenges. Nhat Hanh practiced this himself by heavily contributing to and leading a peaceful movement against the Vietnam War in the 1960s, accord-

ing to a New York Times article.

The weekly Peace and Solidarity Walks utilizes this concept.

As their half-hour walk around Rose Park finally came to an end, the three people gathered again in a circle around the spot where they started.

"See? No such thing as bad weather, only bad gear," one participant said. They all laughed through their shivers.

Gallo produced the small singing bowl from his jacket pocket, carefully placing it on his hand. The talking faded, making way for a silent respect.

Gong, gong, gong.

The group bowed to each other, marking the end of the walking meditation.

The three people said their goodbyes and slowly got in their cars. The rain resumed, the cold, nipping droplets hitting their cars as they drove away.



Montana Kaimin reporter Clarise Larson sits outside of Jus Chill'n on Oct. 26, 2020. CLAIRE SHINNER | MONTANA KAIMIN

## Udder-ly alone: Losing a Halloween tradition to COVID-19

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Todd Larson stood at a Halloween party in '95, cradling an empty bottle of Boone's Farm. Larson was so drunk he swore he saw a cow on two legs enter the kitchen. So drunk that he found that two-legged cow kinda hot.

The costume, with white fur and black spots, didn't fit properly. This caused a bit of an issue in the rubber-udder region. For 4-foot-11 Kristine Holtan, the udders sat too low and slapped her thighs with each step. They swayed so vigorously that they threatened everyone within a 5-foot radius.

There was no "moo" as the bipedal cow moved closer. Instead, there was a "hello."

Larson, my dad, had just laid eyes on the love of his life.

"She just looked so cute," he recalled.

Two decades later, those same costume udders slapped my thighs like they once did for my mother.

I had heard my parents' love story since high school and made it my mission to go to Halloween parties and manifest my own love story.

Sadly, this year will be different, thanks to COVID-19.

The coronavirus does not seem to give a damn about my, or anyone else's, love life. The virus also does not give a damn about the traditions and festivities of Halloween.

According to the National Retail Federation, 58% of Americans will be diving into spooky season this year. That's only a slight change from last year's 68% partici-

pation rate.

Many houses will shut their doors and turn off their lights to the trick-or-treaters who decide to suit up in search of sugar. The organizers of Disco Bloodbath, a Missoula classic, will not host its annual Halloween disco party. It would have been the event's 10th anniversary.

"It's up to all of us to slow the spread of COVID-19. Everyone, including young and healthy people, should avoid large gatherings during this time," Disco Bloodbath posted on Facebook.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned Americans not to celebrate Halloween like it's the before times. Officials suggest participating virtually, or at least with caution.

This year, I will not walk up to some stranger at a party, convinced they will

look at me the way my dad looks at my mom — because I will not be at a party. No. I will be sitting on my couch with my roommate, drinking IPAs and eating candy corn.

We'll pop on "The Silence of the Lambs" and maybe even watch a few Halloween episodes of "The Office" to party vicariously through the characters. F.O.M.O will give me an anxious hug as I fall asleep before 11 p.m., but I would rather have that than COVID-19. The cow costume will have to wait another year.

It seems that my only candidate for love this year will be Hannibal Lector.

Maybe it's meant to be. After all, my name is Clarise.

# Bruce Springsteen: The best version of an all-American

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I don't believe in idol worship. Unless, of course, it's Bruce Springsteen.

The standards I have for Springsteen are higher than the standards I have for God. No single white man has done as much for American popular music as the Boss, and that isn't up for debate. He's a national treasure, so it's hard to critique him and properly judge any album that isn't "Born in the U.S.A."

"Letter To You," Springsteen's latest album, his 20th, meets my expectations, but it doesn't exceed them.

On the opening track, "One Minute You're Here," Springsteen shows off to his legion of fans that he doesn't need to prove anything by starting off with electric rock and roll. It's a soft, acoustic launch that gets us warmed up to Springsteen's throaty vocals before we dive into something a little more exciting — on the title track.

Once he gets into it, this record sounds exactly how we would expect: like a Springsteen record.

In case you haven't listened to one in a while, or your brain kicked out the Boss a while ago, the sound is standout piano, soft-rock guitars, harmonica and a gravelly voice that sounds like the local barfly belting his heart out after a long week at work.

They're old tricks, but they're still effective. Springsteen doesn't sound like an old man trying to relive his glory days. He sounds

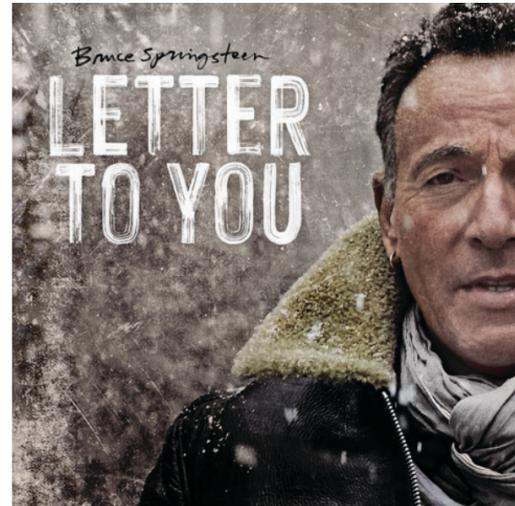
like an incredibly talented musician who has found his groove but doesn't really venture out of it.

"Last Man Standing," the most autobiographical song on the record, is a beautiful ode to working-class Americans. The lyrics refer to the Knights of Columbus, Firemen's Balls and a good old-fashioned game of pool. Anyone who grew up in or idolized small-town America will recognize the motifs of everyday life in Springsteen's words. Sometimes he can be subtle, but it's definitely not subtle here.

The songs on this record that could stand to, well, not exist are the extraordinarily, overly religious ones. When "The Power Of Prayer" came on, I felt myself wanting to turn it off or skip it. But maybe that Christian vibe is what really makes this record "American." I was hoping it would just be a blip, but the next song, "A Thousand Guitars," kept up the weird ambiance.

"Rainmaker" brings signature Springsteen back. It has a chorus that swells and soars, especially after the buzzkill of the previous two songs, that you may get a barely perceptible lump in your throat. Springsteen sings about desperately clinging on to whatever hope you can get your hands on.

Maybe the reason I have such a visceral, familial reaction to Springsteen is because the version of America he sings about has already happened. Or maybe it's the impending doom most people feel around them every day. Or maybe it's just plain-old nostalgia. But listening to Springsteen feels like coming back to a dream version of my working-class home, just at an arm's length.



# 'Over the Moon' shoots for the stars and (sort of) makes it

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Disney knock-offs are painful to watch. They're like that classmate in the school talent show who thinks she has the voice of an angel but misses every high note in "Hallelujah."

Movies like "Delhi Safari" and "Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return" attempt to get by with celebrity voice actors and inane songs, but fail to achieve the depth, sophistication and heart that made classics of films like "Beauty and the Beast."

I was ready to hate "Over the Moon." It seemed like another cartoon looking to fill the mouse house's shoes, this time from former Disney animator Glen Keane ("Dear Basketball"). But while Keane and his team rely heavily on the tropes that came before, they pack enough creative punch to make the film stand on its own.

Our protagonist is Fei Fei (Cathy Ang), a teenager who, shockingly, has a dead parent. Her dad (John Cho) finds a new fiancée (Sandra Oh), whom Fei Fei hates. Using her scientific smarts, she crafts a rocket ship to take her to the moon and prove the existence of the Chinese goddess, Chang'e (Philippa Soo). Fei Fei hopes that her dad will learn from the goddess, who has never let go of her lost love, and not remarry.

The plot introduces potentially interesting threads, like Fei Fei's rivalry with her stepbrother, Chin (Robert

G. Chiu). But the film is undermined by uneven pacing and the unfortunate use of Disney-esque clichés. It would have been better without tired tropes like "no one's ever really gone" or the annoying comic relief by a notable voice actor (Ken Jeong as a dog-like pangolin named Gobi).

But what the film lacks in content, it makes up for in presentation. The kingdom on the moon is gorgeously animated, and its gummy-like design helps it stand out from the countless other animated worlds we've been introduced to. The film's vocal talents, particularly Soo, are strong and never feel like they're just celebrities talking into a microphone.

The songs, written by musical theater alumni Helen Park ("KPOP"), Christopher Curtis ("Chaplin") and Marjorie Duffield ("Someday"), are a hodgepodge of bangers and stinkers. The exposition-heavy "Mooncakes" comes across as a "Belle" wannabe, and "Love Someone New" is painfully on the nose when conveying the film's message. "Rocket to the Moon," though, is a soaring, memorable ballad for Fei Fei, and the villainous rap song, "Hey Boy," slaps way harder than it has any right to.

"Over the Moon" won't become an animated classic, but it has enough to distinguish it from similar offerings. If you're tired of watching "Frozen II" with a kid on repeat, this trip to the moon will be worth an hour and a half of your time.



# When the laughter's over: Comedy in the winter

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Stand-up comedy isn't something that comedians are meant to do alone. Stand-up is done in small, dark bars and clubs with low ceilings and small tables. The audience shares the same air as the performer, and fuels her jokes with waves of rhythmic laughter — that is, as long as she isn't bombing.

Now, with the continuing ripple effects of the coronavirus pandemic, stages are shuttered. The laughter has been replaced with silence, and the smell of cheap beer substituted with Clorox.

Bars aren't particularly safe places during a pandemic. The Texas Medical Association recently ranked the COVID-19 danger level of everyday activities on a scale of one to 10, with one being the least dangerous.

Going to bars clocked in at a nine.

Even if patrons wear masks, sitting in close proximity while removing masks to drink or eat isn't optimal. So the stand-up comedy scene in Missoula, and everywhere else, had to change. And it did — for the summer at least.

As the pandemic started to shake the country, comedian Sarah Aswell contacted other local comedians to establish rules for stand-up. They created a checklist: Masks required. Social distancing required. No small venues. No large audiences.

Some comedians didn't perform for months, but Homegrown Comedy held stand-up nights at the Roxy Garden over the summer. Aswell, with the help of Revival Comedy, started a comedy night at the Ten Spoon, a rattlesnake-based winery.

"It's socially distant," comedian Abby Gillespie said. "There are progressively drunken boomers who don't understand

jokes about Tinder, but they laugh anyway."

In a patch adjacent to the winery, people sat at tables spaced 12 feet apart, making for an uninterrupted view of the mountains and neat rows of grapes. There was wine and food and a lot of time between laughs.

Gillespie performed stand-up at one of these comedy nights. She said comedians tend to put a lot of pressure on themselves, and the exposed venue meant that laughter took longer to reach the comedians.

"You feel so far away, and stand-up is such an intimate thing," Gillespie said. "I don't think any comedian could go up during Ten Spoon night and come down feeling good."

When Aswell took the stage at Ten Spoon, she said she opened by saying that comedians are told never to perform in daylight or in front of children and sober people. The wide-open vineyard was the opposite of the darkly lit, confessional atmosphere that comedians are used to. But Aswell said that, although comedy nights at the winery were awkward, they were also magical.

"At the heart of stand-up is connecting with a live audience," Aswell said. "I'm really worried about the winter."

Now, winter is coming, or is already here, and the Ten Spoon comedy nights are no more. Missoula comedians have only a few safe options to try out their material. One is the live-streamed comedy nights at the Zootown Arts Community Center. Local comedian Tim Miller said he used to perform once a week and now performs once every one or two months.

"I miss the camaraderie of being with my other comedians," Miller said. "I've been building up all these jokes about COVID, and I have nowhere to really let it out."



OLIVIA SWANT-JOHNSON | MONTANA KAIMIN

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## Athletics' Diversity and Inclusion committee seeks change within program

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The University of Montana athletic department founded its new Diversity and Inclusion Committee last month to work toward actionable change in the department, and to promote change within the University as a whole.

Over the past month, the committee has been working on a new mission of equality, justice and unity and choosing actionable items to work toward.

Senior football player Samuel Akem said one of the main actionable items of the committee is attaining 100% voter registration within the athletic department.

"I didn't vote in 2016," Akem said. "My mom was pretty upset with me about that, and she told me that my ancestors didn't have the right to vote, so I needed to make sure that I expressed that right."

This year, Akem has been more actively speaking out, particularly about racism. Akem said he's attended rallies and protests in addition to making his voice heard.

Women's basketball combo guard Bria Dixon, a freshman, said the committee is also working on the creation of "Equality-Justice-Unity" bracelets. She said the committee will be handing those out with a pledge for athletes to take, with the goal of promoting those three ideas if they are wearing the bracelets.

Both Dixon and Akem said the committee is making "Equality-Justice-Unity" patches for athletes to wear on their jerseys in games, too.

"The hope is that these spark conversations on teams," Dixon said. "Those three words, to me, are not political."

Dixon said she was chosen by her coaches to be a part of the Diversity and Inclusion committee. According to Dixon, coaches and administration in the athletic department nominated and voted students onto the committee.

Dixon said she has had a unique experience being from Portland, and played as the only white player on an all-Black basketball team in high school. In addition, she cited her role as a member of the LGBTQ+ community as being a part of why she feels this work is important.

"As the athletic department, if we stand for unity, justice and equality, we can have



University of Montana Men's Basketball Head Coach Travis DeCuire speaks to the media before a pre-season practice in Dahlberg Arena on Oct. 16, 2020.

SARA DIGGINS | MONTANA KAIMIN

a trickle down effect through the community, and even the state," she said.

UM men's basketball head coach, Travis DeCuire, said the committee is a big step toward progress.

"Dialogue needs to take place in order to have change," DeCuire said. "We all have to assume some sort of responsibility in our own special way to impact change. But, before that, you've got to come to the reality that it needs to take place."

Mimi Eiden, a senior forward on the women's soccer team, is also a part of the committee. She said as the committee moves forward, its goal is to make sure everyone in athletics knows this topic is an important one.

"We see the injustices and we're not going to sit around and let someone else take care of it," Eiden said. "We want to be

involved."

Akem also said with his platform as a student athlete, he feels an obligation to make change.

"Being on the football team is cool and all, but that's not everything," Akem said. "Being a part of this gives me an opportunity to be a part of the conversation that's happening."

Dixon said as the year goes on, it's important that people continue to ask difficult questions, and that the Diversity and Inclusion committee is open to those.

"Don't be afraid to sound ignorant or say the wrong thing," Dixon said. "It's all about learning."

She also said the committee is working on plans for sit-ins to be able to listen to

each others' experiences, and that once COVID-19 is not a problem anymore, the committee wants to hold a unity march.

Akem added that the most important thing students can do right now to create change is make sure they vote in the upcoming election.

The election takes place on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Students can drop off their ballots at the Adams Center on the University of Montana campus.