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Wednesday, October 17, 2012 • Page 1C

Sorghum happens!

Friends Drift Inn



BY JOYCE PINSON

As she switched between the ironing board and the kitchen stove, the toddler tugged at her apron strings insistently. It was time to get supper on the table and she was running behind. She

ironed with one hand and stirred the pot with the other. The child whined, bored with the process. He yanked on her dress hem.

In desperation, or in a moment of brilliance, Great-Grandma Betty scooped up the baby and walked to the pantry. She grabbed a bucket of sorghum and plunged the boy's tiny hands deep into the goo. The child was startled, but did not cry. Next she went to the sewing area, to a bag of downy goose feathers ready for pillow making. She shoved the infant's

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Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Matt Jamie of Bourbon Barrel Foods in Louisville is credited with bringing sorghum to the national food table. On this month's "Friends Drift Inn" he cooks up sorghum popcorn with peanuts and bacon. Tune in for the recipe!



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Danny Ray Townsend of Townsend's Sorghum Mill cooks off sorghum, running the green, squeezing through cooking and evaporating pans to cook down, producing brown sorghum syrup.



ON THE COUCH

Michelle Goff
 Ain't no mountain high enough

On Sunday, an Austrian extreme athlete named "Fearless" Felix Baumgartner landed safely on his feet in Roswell, N.M., after a 24-mile fall from the stratosphere.

No, Felix didn't slip off the wing of an airplane whilst saving a kitten. He planned the dive.

That's right, foolish and fearless 43-year-old Felix intentionally strapped himself into a pressurized capsule, which was carried by a 55-story helium balloon, and floated 24 miles into the clouds before jumping out.

During Felix's nine-minute skydive, half of which he performed in free fall, he is believed to have exceeded 700 miles per hour, and the altitude from which he leapt marked the highest-ever for a skydiver.

Felix's record-breaking skydive saturated the news and captivated my friends.

It left me asking, "So?" Oh, I'm happy Felix lived to fear nothing another day. From what I learned — after the fact — Felix was in mortal danger during the dive. His team worried if his facial shield was working and hoped he would not make contact with the capsule during his exit. Contact could have torn his suit and led to lethal bubbles forming in his bodily fluids.

I'm not sure it's a good thing if bubbles, lethal or otherwise, ever form in your bodily fluids, so Felix definitely earned his nickname this weekend.

Still, I must ask, "What was the point of these shenanigans?" It's not like Felix was competing for a medal in the X Games stratospheric skydiving event or parachuting into the Olympics with James Bond.

He skydived after taking an extended balloon ride. That reminds me, I feel like I've seen this before. In fact, it's eerily reminiscent of the episode of "Little House on the Prairie" when Carrie falls asleep in a balloon basket that's released feet, if not yards, into the clouds.

Only Carrie's a kid, and she doesn't have a parachute. And Pa cries.

Felix's mother, who was one of his cheerleaders at mission control, cried when her adventurous boy touched down.

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ACT staging 'Second Samuel'

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
 KRISTY STEVENS

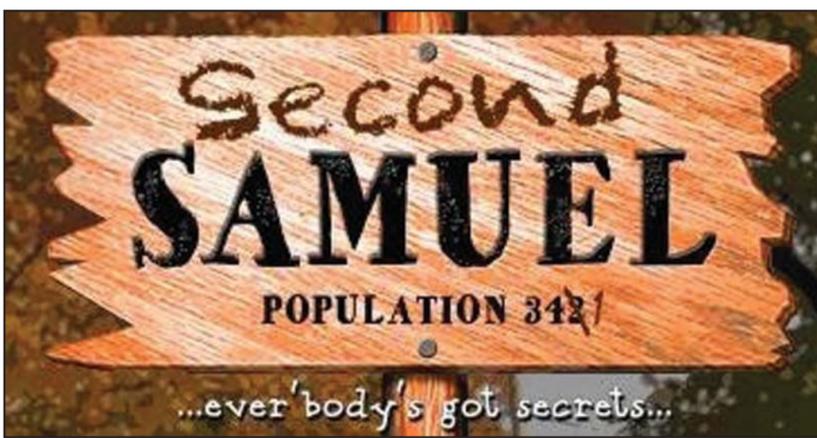
ELKHORN CITY — "Second Samuel" is now on stage at Artists Collaborative Theatre in Elkhorn City under the direction of Stephanie Richards and Lauren Brooke Stewart.

Written by Pamela Parker and produced by special arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Company of Woodstock, Ill., "Second Samuel" is a

touching Southern comedy about family, diversity and strength, with a unique blend of charm, wit and humor. It'll bring laughter to your heart and a tear to your eye.

In the rebuilt town of Samuel, Ga., the men spend their leisure time at the local watering hole and the women are found gossiping at the beauty salon. Set in the late 1940s, it was a simpler time, especially in the

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The Great Pumpkin Harvest



Submitted photo

Pictured are Robert and Dora Anderson of Kimper, with their grandson, Camron. The bountiful harvest netted 26 pumpkins with the largest weighing in at a bit more than 150 pounds.

SORGHUM

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hands quickly into the soft plumes. For the next hour the child tried to pull feathers off his hands; and of course if he succeeded in plucking them from the left they stuck to the right. Giggles.

The clothes were pressed for Sunday Go to Meeting, and Great-Grandpa had a fine supper prepared! Sorghum saved the day. Sorghum saved Morgan County, too.

After the tornado, I wondered if the little mountain town of West Liberty would ever bounce back. Could the community heal from the horrors that left Main Street looking more like a scene from Beirut, than Kentucky's Appalachia? Walking through the crowds gathered for this year's Morgan County Sorghum Festival, I found my answer.

In between chain linked fences protecting the crowds from rubble and debris, standing under the shadow of a boarded up courthouse, then basking in the Kentucky sunshine, I discovered that sorghum brings out the best in all of us.

Clella Leggett, who was demonstrating basket weaving, asked me why a food writer would be interested in the sorghum festival. I told her how sorghum was a trendy ingredient away from here. I told her how celebrity Chef Linton Hopkins of Atlanta promotes our rich, thick liquid gold. I talked about hillbilly

Chef Sean Brock and his efforts to preserve mountain food ways. I pointed to Chef Mike Latta's recent story on NPR radio.

She looked at me a little skeptically, not really comprehending the significance of sorghum on the national food stage. It was when I explained that sorghum was not just a delicious delicacy, but truly a way of life that she burst into tears and in a broken voice responded, "It took sorghum to really mend West Liberty." Sorghum, now that is sweet healing power!

At the University of Kentucky's Robinson Center "Taste of the Mountains" event in Breathitt County, Professor Todd Pfeiffer explained the importance of sorghum growing both from a historical perspective and from the economic impact small-scale growers can have on a community's financial health. He talked about the sorghum varieties — Honey Drip, Sugar Drip, Keller and Dale — and how each has different growing attributes and flavors.

For me, sorghum is all about the eating. Louisville's Matt Jamie of Bourbon Barrel Foods describes the taste of sorghum as "earthy, rich, with a hint of woody flavors mixed with a background of tobacco." He speaks of sorghum flavor profile with the passion of a connoisseur. Jamie is hailed as a champion of sorghum, and credited with bringing the nearly forgotten sweet syrup back to tables across America.

Shocking as it may



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

University of Kentucky Professor Todd Pfeiffer explains the differences in sorghum varieties at Robinson Center's "Taste of the Mountains" event in Breathitt County.

seem, sorghum syrup is on the Slow Food Ark of Taste which means the group believes we are in danger of losing this Appalachian food tradition. And tradition is something we cannot afford to toss aside.

I am always fascinated as sorghum makers cook the syrup through a maze of evaporation pans, transforming the green juice into brown sorghum syrup. Donald Lowe of Ratliff Creek smiles as he remembers savoring the foam during the cook-offs of his childhood, dipping a sliver of sorghum cane into the warm bubbles of sweetness

with his momma shaking her head in amused indulgence. It's a good memory, and one worth making with the next generation.

Go find a sorghum "cooking" in your local community, or attend the Incredible Food Show in Lexington on Saturday, Oct. 27, to see demonstrations. Make visiting sorghum "cook-offs" part of your friends and family fall rituals. Do you have sorghum in your pantry? Now's the time to pull it out and use it up!

Had you thought about sorghum in barbecue sauce? What about drizzled

over a crisp apple slices and goat cheese for a mid-morning snack? Sorghum in baked beans gives a depth of flavor that is smooth, comforting and familiar! You will love sorghum caramel popcorn with peanuts and bacon! Get out your sorghum!

If stored sorghum seems a little "stale," warm the syrup on the stove and add just a pinch of baking soda. Be careful, the mixture will foam up a little; but you won't care one bit when you pour a river of sweetness on freshly-baked cat-head biscuits. Forget Calgon ... let the sorghum

take you away!

As a stand of mountain solidarity, buy sorghum this year and share the sweet experience because in Appalachia's hills "Sorghum still happens!"

Watch Pike TV Channel 99 this month as Matt Jamie and I cook up party foods using sorghum as the key ingredient and visit www.friendsdriftinn.com for more stories and recipes.

Joyce Pinson is a Master Gardener, home cook, and a local insurance agent. She maintains a food and garden blog at www.friendsdriftinn.com.

New Arrivals at PMC

Pamela and Clay Thacker, a son, Caleb Boone, born July 25, 2012, 7 pounds, 10 ounces.

Kelley ughter, Adyson Skye, born July 26, 2012, 10 pounds, 4 ounces.

Marlena Bishop, a daughter, Brooklyn Faith Reynolds, born July 31, 2012, 5 pounds, 4 ounces.

Jasmine Bowling and Corey Stanley, a daughter, Jaylee Brooke Stanley, born Aug. 2, 2012, 7 pounds, 11 ounces.

Samantha and John Copley Jr., a son, Jaxon Everett, born Aug. 3, 2012, 7 pounds, 5 ounces.

Stephanie and Aaron Davis, a son, Deacon Lake, born Aug. 4, 2012, 6 pounds, 12 ounces.

Chezrai Kizer and

Donavon Conn, a son, Shaddix Kade Kiser, born Aug. 4, 2012, 8 pounds, 8 ounces.

Amanda Rose, a daughter, Kirah Anne, born Aug. 5, 2012, 7 pounds, 10 ounces.

Brittany and Marvin Tackett, a son, Brantley Jayce, born Aug. 5, 2012, 7 pounds, 11 ounces.

Crystal Cox and Rudolph Blackwell, a daughter, Ruchelle Nevaeh Rah'dele Blackwell, born Aug. 6, 2012, 6 pounds, 11 ounces.

Jessica Childers and Alijah Reynolds, a daughter, Lilith Addie-May Reynolds, born Aug. 6, 2012, 5 pounds, 11 ounces.

Brittany Daniels and Anthony Bailey, a son, Coby Lee Bailey, born Aug. 6, 2012, 8 pounds, 8 ounces.

Kristen and Matthew Day, a son, Levi Austin Matthew, born Aug. 7, 2012, 8 pounds, 7 ounces.

Katlin Justice, a daughter, Aaliyah Brae, born Aug. 8, 2012, 6 pounds, 12 ounces.

Jessica Justice, a daughter, Caleigh Brooke, born Aug. 8, 2012, 7 pounds, 9 ounces.

Kristi and Christopher Hardin, a son, Colt Alan, born Aug. 9, 2012, 11 pounds.

Larri and Terry Thacker II, a son, Preston Dwayne Braxton, born Aug. 9, 2012, 6 pounds.

Deborah Maness, a son, Dalton James, born Aug. 9, 2012, 6 pounds, 5 ounces.

Jessica and Joshua Horn, a daughter, Capella Page, born Aug. 10, 2012, 7 pounds, 12 ounces.

GOFF

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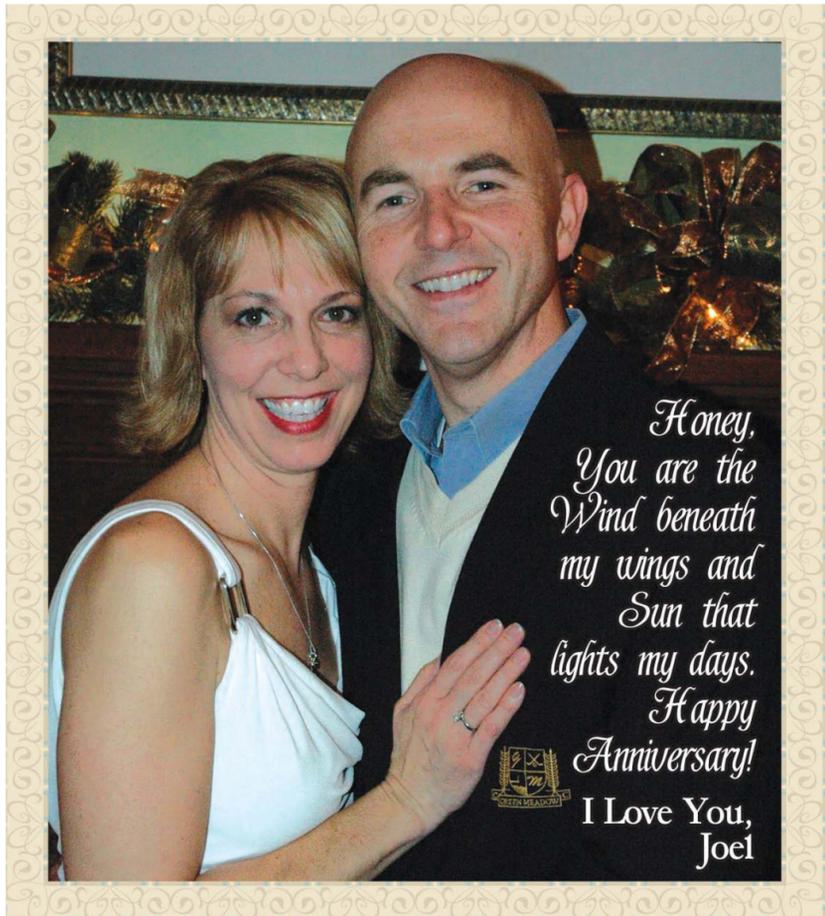
Before heading to celebrate with his mama and others at mission control, Felix paused to offer these remarks to reporters,

"Sometimes we have to get really high to see how small we are."

That's his explanation? That the only way to contrast the insignificance of his life with the significance of nature was to scale a great distance? This guy's

from Austria. Hasn't he heard of the Alps? Couldn't he have just climbed a mountain?

Michelle Goff writes a column for the News-Express and can be reached at gmgoff@setel.com.



Penix, Renee exhibit artwork in BSCTC gallery

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-EXPRESS

PRESTONSBURG — Johnson County is well represented this month at the Big Sandy Community and Technical College Art Gallery, with a dual exhibit by two of its natives, Tina Penix and Robin Renee. The exhibit will run until Oct. 25.

Penix, an artist who has achieved a high level of technical skill, even though she has never had any formal art training, credits her talents to God. Penix says that her religious beliefs have provided comfort as well as inspiration.

Her art is in a realist style, and represents her life and perceptions of the world around her. Her brightly colored canvasses convey a world of peace, and also inner strength.

Penix is a single mom and lives with her three children Bruce Thomas, Tabitha Cortney, and Tyler Cade.

Renee is a multi-talented artist, who not only produces a variety of art work from drawing to photography, but creates frames for her work that are art in

themselves.

"I use the flawed wood knots, holes, jagged edges, worm holes, etc.," Renee says. "I use them because the imperfections add to the beauty of my frames."

Renee says she has a passion for depicting people, animals, and landscapes. Her art has been featured on CD covers, country music magazines, and she has taken photos of well-known celebrities. She is a self-taught artist and photographer, and recently started a business to market her art.

A reception for Penix and Renee will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 18, in the Big Sandy Community and Technical College Art Gallery. Refreshments will be offered. The public is invited.

The gallery is open five days a week, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon.

For more information call (606) 886-3863, Ext. 64746.



(Top) This painting, titled "Reflections, is one of the works by Robin Renee now on display in the art gallery at Big Sandy Community and Technical College. (Bottom) The painting "Iris," by Tina Penix, will be on display in the art gallery at Big Sandy Community and Technical College, through Oct. 25.



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