

The **MONTABELLO** Voice

an independent gazette

where the wild things are

January 23, 2020



Happy Chinese New Year – the Year of the Rat

By Raymond Houck

Chinese New Year

(generally called Lunar New Year globally) is the Chinese festival that celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar. The festival is usually referred to as the Spring Festival in mainland China and is one of several Lunar New Years in Asia.

Saturday, January 25, 2020 marks the beginning of the Year of the Rat.

The Rat is the first of the zodiac animals in the Chinese calendar. According to one myth, the Jade Emperor said the order of the animals in the zodiac would be decided by the order in which they arrived to his party. The Rat tricked the Ox into giving



him a ride. Then, just as they arrived at the finish line, Rat jumped down and landed ahead of Ox, becoming first. In terms of yin and yang, the Rat is yang and represents the beginning of a new day. In Chinese culture, rats are a sign of wealth and surplus. Because of their reproduction rate, married couples also prayed to them for children. Rats are clever, quick thinkers; successful, but content with living a quiet and peaceful life.

During Chinese New Year, money is put inside red envelopes which are then handed out to younger generations by their parents, grandparents, relatives, and even close neighbors and friends. Unlike a Western greeting card, red envelopes given at Chinese New Year are typically left unsigned.

A red envelope is simply a long, narrow, red envelope. Traditional red envelopes are often decorated with gold Chinese characters, such as happiness and wealth. Variations include red envelopes with cartoon characters depicted. Red symbolizes luck and good fortune in Chinese culture. That is why red envelopes are used during Chinese New Year and other celebratory events. Giving and receiving red envelopes is a solemn act; therefore, red envelopes are always presented with both hands and received with both hands. The recipient

of a red envelope at Chinese New Year should not open it in front of the giver.

For all occasions, certain amounts of money are to be avoided. Anything with a four is best avoided. Even numbers, except four, are better than odd — as good things are

believed to come in pairs. For example, gifting \$20 is better than \$21. Eight is a particularly auspicious number.

The festival traditionally is a time to honor deities as well as ancestors. Within China, regional customs and traditions concerning the celebration of the New Year vary widely, and the evening preceding Chinese New Year's Day is frequently regarded as an occasion for Chinese families to gather for the annual reunion dinner. It is also traditional for every family to thoroughly clean their house, in order to sweep away any ill-fortune and to make way for incoming good luck. Other customs include the decoration of windows and doors with red paper cutouts and couplets with popular themes of good fortune or

happiness, wealth, and longevity along with setting off firecrackers and sending messages of blessing. In the northern regions of China, dumplings are featured prominently in meals celebrating the festival, often serving as the first meal of the year either at midnight, or as breakfast on the first day. 🥟



Cover photos by Joe de Angelis

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1917

By Raymond Houck

How do you define heroism? For more than a century, movies have shaped our collective idea of the individuals and actions that qualify, often making the word appear out of reach to ordinary mortals. Now, along comes Sam Mendes' new film, "1917" to smash those assumptions, revisiting a day in World War I when two ordinary British soldiers — Blake (Dean-Charles Chapman) and Schofield (George MacKay) — distinguish themselves by undertaking a mission for which neither is the slightest bit prepared. Mendes has designed the film to look like it was played out in a single shot — an immersive reality version of events, conveyed through the continuous-take.

The day is April 6, 1917. German forces have retreated from the position they were holding in northern France, although they're not "on the ropes" or nearly ready to surrender, as some of their British rivals mistakenly believe. The German troops have fallen back to meet up with reinforcements, hoping to lure the Allies into a trap, and two British battalions are about to fall for it, ready to send their men to certain death the following morning. With communication channels cut and no way of contacting those outfits, the British commanding general (Colin Firth), sends two lance corporals, Blake and Schofield, across the French countryside to deliver the warning and call off the attack in less than 24 hours.

Given the importance of the message, it seems odd that two unproven foot soldiers should be chosen for the task, although Blake has a personal stake in seeing the mission through: his older brother is among the first wave of

troops to be dispatched in the morning.

Heroism reflects courage, of course, but that's not the same as an absence of fear. There are scenes in "1917" when audiences will see Blake and Schofield panic-stricken, terrified and even in tears. Their important order calls for bravery, and yet at times the pair can't help but second-guess their decision to deliver a message that could save the lives of 1,600 fellow British soldiers. To



Soldiers Francis X. Elder (left) with his cousin Bernard T. Houck.

do so, they must cross the battlefield in broad daylight, infiltrate booby-trapped German bunkers and confront the enemy face-to-face. One can hardly fault them for being afraid. If anything, the tension they feel makes the characters more relatable.

For me, the movie "1917" took on a personal and family point of view. My Grandfather's younger brother, Bernard Thomas Houck, was one of eight children of George McClellan Houck and his wife Barbara Bigler. He was born October 31, 1900 in Cumberland, Maryland. He entered the Maryland National Guard on June 4, 1917 and became part of Company G in the 115th Infantry.

Bernard, as a corporal, was deployed to northern France on June 15, 1918 where he eventually joined the Meuse-Argonne offensive which was fought from September 26 – November 11, 1918 when the Armistice was signed.

The Meuse-Argonne offensive was the largest operation of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I, with over a million American soldiers participating. This was also the deadliest campaign in American history, resulting in a total of over 350,000 casualties, including 26,277 Americans killed in action, 95,786 wounded; 28,000 German lives were lost, an unknown number of French lives, and over 120,000 casualties in total.

Bernard was killed in action during the Meuse-Argonne offensive on October 11, 1918. Sadly, that was also the same day and same place where his cousin, Francis X. Elder of Emmitsburg, Maryland, was killed. Both are buried in family plots in the Cumberland Valley.

I recommend "1917" as a must-see motion picture, and I will not be surprised if it sweeps the 2020 Academy Awards. Try to catch it at a theater that features IMAX/Dolby sound for an even more amazing and immersive experience. 🎬



Éire



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Montebello
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The Essential 1960s


Join the community on
Saturday, January 25th
From 6:30pm to 9:30pm – **The Community Center**

1960s

*Come join us for the next installment of "Saturday's By The Fire" Music Night. This evening will feature music from the 60's. **No traffic, tolls, or admission fee***

The Speaker Series Presents

Photographer Tom Albano



Tom Albano has worked in broadcast and production video for the past 34 years, mostly with CBS news at the Washington bureau, and with NBC and ABC. He has also been engaged in freelance commercial, fine art and corporate photography for the last 40 years.

He will discuss quality and quantity of light while addressing personal choices in creatively applying them to images. Albano will also address modifying considerations and techniques that improve image making capabilities.

At the end of the hour, a better understanding of light and supplication will lead to better evaluate lighting conditions that aid in composition for a more impactful photograph.

Wednesday, January 29th
7:30 in the evening
Community Center Lounge

Sponsored by the Activities Committee



Invite you to our film & discussion



O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?
THURSDAY JANUARY 30 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2




A rollicking, humorous romp through Depression-era America produced by the ingenious Coen Brothers with a musical score still popular today. It is the story of three escaped convicts from a chain gang led by Ulysses Everett McGill (George Clooney) along with his sidekicks, Pete and Delmar. Inspired by the adventures in Homer's Odyssey, the movie is full of surprises covering this vast panoply of our America in the 1930s

John Glaser will introduce the film and lead the post-movie discussion.

Mary Ann Jung portraying

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON - EQUALITY FOR ALL!



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and an eloquent writer; her Declaration of Sentiments was a revolutionary call for women's rights across a variety of spectrums.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Women's Suffrage! This 19th century Seneca Falls pioneer was a champion of Women's Rights. Learn about her friendship with Susan B. Anthony and her amazing fight to improve women's education, legal rights, and why she has largely been forgotten.

Monday, February 3rd
7:30 in the evening
Community Center Lounge

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

happenin'

SmartTalk Conversation

In celebration of Safer Internet Day

Tuesday, Feb 4

6:00 PM

Room G100, Mount Vernon High School
8515 Old Mount Vernon Rd, Alexandria, VA 22309



SmartTalk event programming is made possible with the support of



Submitted by
Sherrill
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MONTEBELLO MUSIC CLUB

PRESENTS

THE POLARIS ENSEMBLE



Katherine Murdock



Mark Hill



Audrey Andrist

Montebello Community Center
Sunday, February 2, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

We invite you to come and enjoy an afternoon of beautiful music
provided by viola, oboe, and piano.

Featuring compositions by Bach, Bruch, Bartok and Gershwjn

Free admission

Reception to follow

Donations to support programs will be accepted with gratitude

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Montebello CLASSIC MOVIE NIGHT

On the Big Screen in the Community Center at 7pm

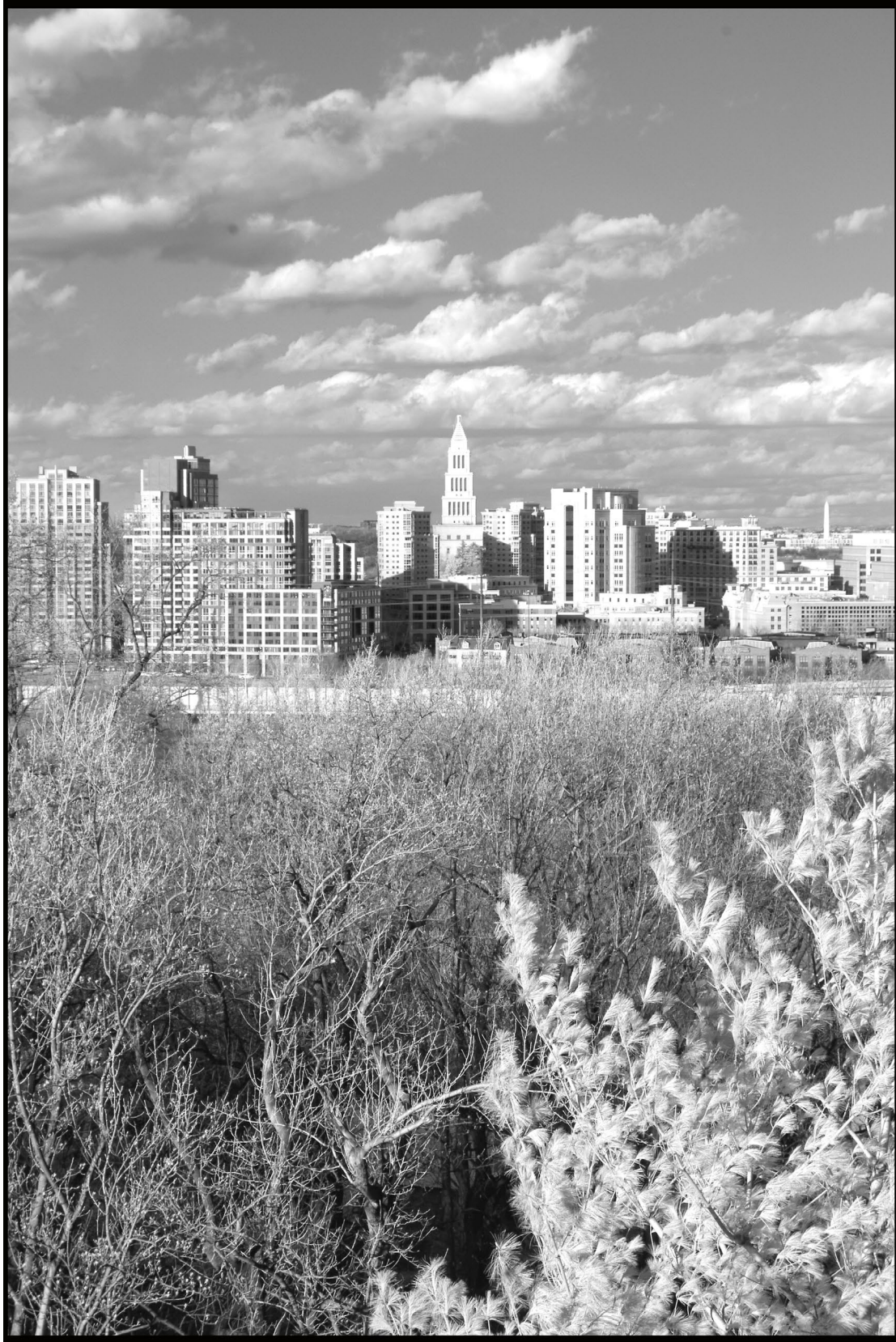


Swordplay, romance ... and great dialog. Shot on location in Zenda! Good and duty prevail in this 1937 and best version with Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, David Niven, Mary Astor, C. Aubrey Smith, & Raymond Massey

With a brief introduction and back-story by Pamela Copley on this 1937 version of the movie. More details? Contact PvonGruber@aol.com

FREE old-time Movie Night refreshments, popcorn, and confectionary!

final glance



Infrared red image of the view from the balcony

By Joel Miller