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## KAITY *Kasper*

died on October 23, five days after celebrating her fortieth birthday. She was many things—both conventional and unconventional—to many people. Her style of dress and the persona she cast could have an edginess to it. But she was also a lawyer, a brilliant woman, who had the ability to study things in minute detail. That ability to focus, and to learn as much as possible about a subject, guided her on a spiritual journey. Along that route she survived cancer twice, beating all odds, confounding her doctors. And Kaity also spoke directly to God, and He to her. *continued on page 12*



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by REBECCA D'ANGELO

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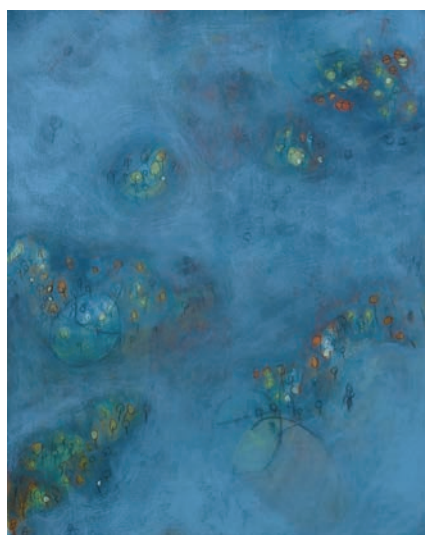
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## ARTS

# The Common Quiet

Works by  
**R. Sawan White**  
At **Eric Schindler  
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**A** NEW EXHIBIT BY  
R. Sawan White  
called “the common  
quiet” opens No-  
vember 16 at Eric  
Schindler Gallery.

Of her own work, the Rhode Island based artist says, “I spend a lot of my time thinking about the unseen. It is a place I like to dwell. My paintings and prints explore this. They are about many things, places, people (nouns, I suppose). They are my processing of life. Many people keep a diary or journal; I have never been good at that. But the paintings—they are a record of my living. I record in color and line, texture and form. I believe we as people are many things. That we are formed and known and in turn desire to do the same. We were made to seek beauty, justice, truth, things unseen, and to make them visible through our lives.”

Opening reception is from 7-9pm  
November 16. Show runs through  
December 22.

*Eric Schindler Gallery,*  
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## 15TH ANNUAL Ginter Park Show At LGRA



It's become a Northside tradition. The 15th Annual Ginter Park Show to be held December 1 from 10 till 5 at Lewis Ginter Recreation Association will include the work of more than 50 artisans. Featured works include pottery, jewelry, fiber, oil paintings, wood and other media. This is the

perfect venue for holiday shopping where you can purchase a one-of-a-kind gift for a one-of-a-kind friend or family member. This event is free and open to the public. A Goatocado food truck will be on site.

For more information, contact Diana Vicenti at [sewdianavicenti@gmail.com](mailto:sewdianavicenti@gmail.com)



## Art Clearance Sale At Studio Art 1229

Studio Art 1229 will be holding its second annual Art Clearance Sale from 10-4 on Saturday, November 17. Last year, the 20 painters exhibiting their work sold 66 paintings by noon. These artists will be offering recently painted work they did not sell this past year.

“The idea of the sale is to sell the paintings, all at low prices to make way for

more paintings to be painted next year,” says Studio Art 1229 owner, Brenda Stankus, who is also an artist. “These are all original works in a variety of mediums. A win-win for both the painters and the buyers.” **NEJ**

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# Weekend Backpack Ministry So No Kid Goes Hungry

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**A** CONGRESSIONAL Republicans were trying to take food from the mouths of children, Virginia First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe worked diligently to ensure that kids in the Commonwealth from low-income families would be fed before and during school, five days a week.

“We cannot have 13 million hungry children in the United States of America,” she famously said. “It doesn’t need to be that way. We have enough food to feed ourselves and the world.” Thanks to her, the number of public schools in Virginia now offering universal free breakfast and lunch has increased by more than 300 percent.

The former First Lady began her campaign five years ago, at about the same time a local Northside congregation decided to guarantee that children would have enough food to tide them over on weekends. Ginter Park Baptist Church partnered with Ginter Park Elementary School and created The Weekend Backpack Ministry.

These days grocery bags have replaced the backpacks for practical reasons. “We started with backpacks, but keeping up with whose backpack belonged to who and trying to get them back from the kids was impossible,” says Keene Irwin, lead coordinator for the backpack ministry. “It was just more efficient for us to do it with the brown paper bags.”

Every week for the past five years now, the relatively small congregation of Ginter Park Baptist Church (the church has about fifty members) packs up bags of food for students at Ginter Park Elementary School. “The church works in conjunction with the school to provide thirty-six bags of food every weekend during the school year,” Keene says. “And during summer school we do fifteen bags.”

Each bag contains contain six meals, two snacks and five beverages. “An example would be cereal, milk, fresh

fruit, oatmeal, breakfast bars, apple juice, peanut butter, a sleeve of crackers, fruit juice, mac and cheese, apple sauce, water, Hormel little entrée, chocolate milk, chicken soup, a can of vegetables, chips, and microwaved popcorn,” says Keene. “This menu has been looked at by the school, by the principal and community coordinator and they agree with us that these are good foods for the kids to have so we try to keep the food as nutritious as possible. And with things like peanut butter, we send the biggest jar we can find so the kids can share this with their family.”

It’s seems unimaginable in a country where the average salary of an S&P 500 CEO is \$12 million a year, that any child would ever go hungry. But they do.

“We don’t know the hunger that they know,” Keene says. “They are not aware once they leave school whether there’s going to be a meal for them or not. So we are trying to provide those meals for over the weekend when they’re not in school and they don’t have their breakfast and they don’t have their lunch.”

Each bag contains about \$15 worth of groceries, which is roughly \$570 for a year’s worth of food per student. Not much really when you consider this can stave off hunger through every weekend of the year for one child.

This Backpack Program keeps all students anonymous. “Confidentiality is important for us, and we realize it is for the school,” says Keene. “We want dignity for the families, we want confidentiality for the students. The principal and community coordinator choose the children that will be in the program. We don’t know any of the children.”

Every member of this small faith community assists with this program. They comply with the instructions of Christ to feed the hungry and suffer the children. And several years back, this same Baptist Church bucked the hierarchy by doing what was right when they ordained an openly gay man as their minister.



*Backpack Ministry volunteers unload bags of food at Ginter Park Elementary with Krystle Cook, the school’s community coordinator. This program ensures 36 students eat over the weekend.*

“This backpack program is church wide,” Keene says. “Everybody’s got a little piece in this program. We all take turns shopping and delivering the bags to the school.”

At this point, the church is only able to supply 36 bags of groceries each week, though the principal has indicated that the school could use an additional 25 bags.

“That’s part of the reason I’m doing this interview,” says Keene. “I would like for other people to see the possibility of this program. I’m hoping that somebody’s going to read this article and say, ‘You know that’s something I can do too through my church or my book club.’”

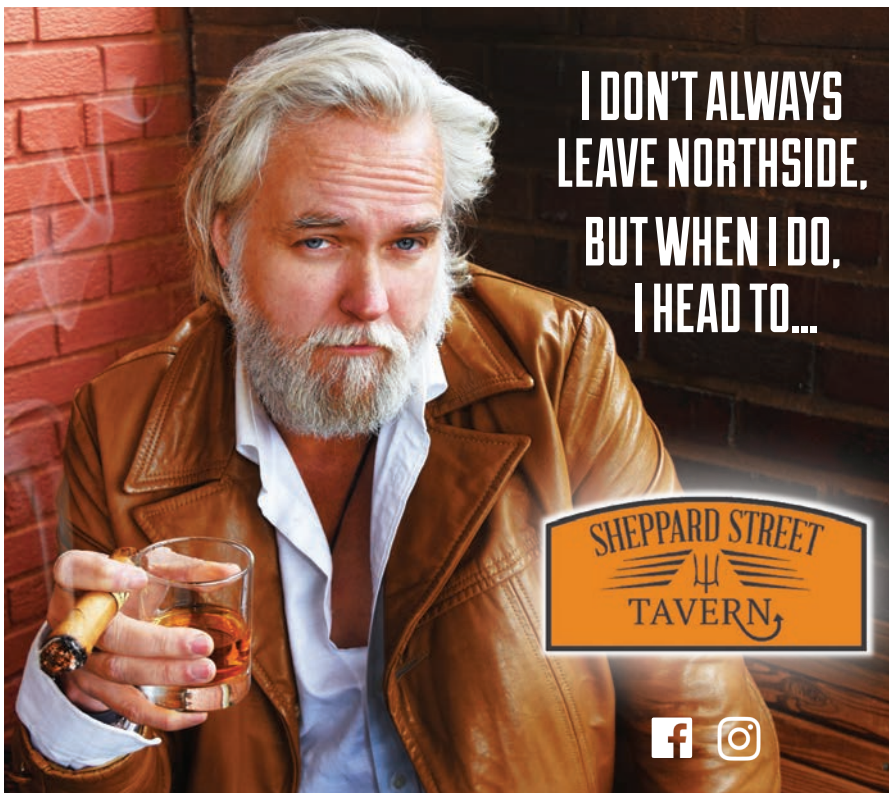
And citywide, there are children in need at schools where no Backpack Program exists.

On a bright and cloudless All Saints Day, a minivan pulled into the parking lot of Ginter Park Elementary School and parked near the side entrance. Krystle Cook, the school’s community coordinator, and Noelia

Gonzalez, another school employee, rolled out two large, double-tiered carts. And then four congregants from Ginter Park Baptist Church—Dixie Leathers, Ann Keller, and Paul and Keene Irwin—piled out of the minivan, opened the back doors, sprung open the hatchback, and began handing off brown paper bags from one volunteer to the next until the bags reached the carts. It was like a bucket brigade, but they weren’t passing along water to quench flames, they handed off food to fill empty bellies.

“We don’t want to have to do this,” Keen says. “We don’t want children to be hungry, but we are thankful that we are a positon to be able to do it, that we have the money, that we have the hands, that we have the community support. If anyone has any questions about starting a program or helping us out they can email me at [gpbcbbackpacks@gmail.com](mailto:gpbcbbackpacks@gmail.com)” **NSJ**





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## RENEWAL

# Restoring the Old Bellevue Theater

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN



Top: Bellevue Theater as it appeared within years of its opening on MacArthur Avenue in Bellevue.

Bottom: The building in its current incarnation as Samis Grotto.

The Bellevue Theater is one of two Art Deco theaters in the city of Richmond that has yet to undergo any architectural restoration. "This theater in Bellevue was built in the 1930s and we want it to be an integral part of the community and restore it so that it has public uses," says Bill. "The first thing we want to do is secure loans and grants to restore the façade. We want to begin by making the exterior presentable and appropriate to the original historical and architectural integrity of the building itself."

Bill envisions the restored theater to serve the community in a varieties of ways— from the screening of classic films, to a venue for local theatre and musical events, perhaps, even as a place to host catered affairs. "We're open to good suggestions," Bill says. "That theater's had an exciting life, and we want it to continue, and we want to be an integral part of the community."

Unlike other theaters in Richmond, the old Bellevue Theater has an extremely wide sidewalk that Bill hopes one day will be transformed into a sort of piazza. "We'd like to encourage a festival atmosphere that would lend itself to entertainment and restaurant use," he says.

Bill Thomas will make a presentation about the restoration of the theater, as well as the historic district designation, on November 20 at the next Bellevue Civic Association meeting (the location of that meeting has not yet been determined). "At the same meeting we may also request a presentation by the state department of historic resources to explain this important opportunity to the community," says Bill.

He also thanked long-time developer Louis Salomonsky for his help in engineering this project. "He has been a valuable pro-bono advisor in helping us to envision the theater's endless possibilities and we're grateful for his friendship and support," Bill Thomas says. "The ultimate goal of this project is to preserve this important part of Richmond's story as we all strive to make Richmond one of the most historic and visited destinations in America." **NE**

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**S**HIRLEY MACLAINE and her younger brother Warren Beatty saw their first motion picture in the Art Deco treasure now called Samis Grotto. The space, at that time called

The Bellevue Theater, was just a few short blocks from their home in the 3900 Fauquier Avenue. After watching that first movie there, the young Shirley MacLaine decided to become an actress.

And for a number of years, Virginia's version of the Grand Ole Opry, was broadcast live from The Bellevue Theater. After Sunshine Sue retired as host of the show in 1957, the show was renamed the New Dominion Barn Dance and its home was moved from the Lyric Theater downtown to the Northside. Among those who performed on its stage were Johnny Cash, June Carter, and a very young Willie Nelson. As a matter of fact, the original backdrop of the New Dominion Barn Dance stands behind the curtains on the stage at Samis Grotto.

Bill Thomas, one of the newest members of the Bellevue Civic Association, and a trustee for the old Bellevue Theater on behalf of Samis Grotto, is spearheading an effort to restore The Bellevue Theater to its former glory.

"We're trying to create a rebirth for the building so that it can be an important landmark in the community," Bill says. "So we've tried to be the catalyst with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) to encourage a state and national historic landmark with the Bellevue neighborhood beginning with the area immediately around the old Bellevue Theater."

To that end, Bill recently received a letter from VDHR that recommends the old Bellevue Theater "be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register."

This was great news for Bill. "The first step in order to make us eligible for certain historic loans, grants and tax credits is by having an historic district, and this would substantially augment our possibilities for restoration of the theater."





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- Dec 5 Nutcracker Suite  
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- Dec 15, 16, 21, 22 & 23 Full Length Nutcracker  
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## SEASONAL OFFERINGS

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**C**OME CELEBRATE North Side's prodigious diversity and experience the true spirit of the holidays with Christmas on MacArthur, a day packed with fun for every family in Richmond. Christmas on MacArthur has become one of the largest single donors in Central Virginia to Toys for Tots—the U.S. Marine Corps annual toy drive. What's more every toy donated is given to a local child in need. Every child donating a toy, which can be dropped off at any of the merchants in Bellevue, is eligible to win one of six brand new bikes!

Appearing live on the MacArthur Avenue stage directly after the parade will be The Neons from 12:15-12:30; Laura Ann Singh from 12:45 to 1:15; Janet Martin from 1:30 to 2:00; Fat Spirit from 2:15 to 2:45; and The MelBays 3:00-3:30. The massive professional stage the musical artists perform on comes courtesy of Main Stage Productions and Lee Johnson, a close friend of Jimmy Tsamouras of Dot's Back Inn and Demi's Mediterranean Kitchen. Christmas on MacArthur kicks off with the Santa Parade down the center of the 4000 block of MacArthur Avenue.

Bill Bevins and Jessica Noll, of WTVR CBS 6, will emcee the parade. Among the participants in this year's parade are Jonathan the Juggler, students of Holton Elementary and Franklin Military Academy, Colonel David Hudson, Dr. Nikea Hurt, John Marshall High School marching band, live alpacas, animal rescue groups, ACCA Shriners, Richmond police and firefighters, U.S. Marines, Saint Andrew's Legion Pipes & Drums, Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, YMCA Indian Princesses Cayuga and Indian Guides

Waccamaw Tribes, and, of course, a visit from St. Nick. He'll be listening to kids Christmas wishes throughout the day, following the parade.

Christmas on MacArthur also offers great holiday shopping opportunities. More than 65 vendors will be on hand with their handmade arts and crafts, all locally made, one-of-a-kind products, which make perfect seasonal gifts.

None of this would be possible without the hard work and commitment of Colonel David Hudson, Dr. Nikea Hurt, Holton Elementary, Franklin Military Academy, the Bellevue Merchants Association, Jimmy and Daniella Tsamouras of Dot's Back Inn and Demi's Mediterranean Kitchen, Mike LaBelle, Chris and Cecelia Rich of Rich's Stitches, Bob Kocher of Once Upon A Vine, Teri Phipps and David Schieferstein, Amy Foxworthy and Josh Carlton of the mill on MacArthur, Vickie Hall of Stir Crazy, Bobby Shore and Rich Richardson of Decatur's Garage, Joe Stankus of Classic Touch Cleaning, Larry Brown, and scores of other volunteers too numerous to name.

This event is sponsored each year by the Bellevue Merchants Association,



North of the James magazine, Holton Elementary School and Franklin Military Academy.


If you would like to participate as a vendor, contact Teri Phipps at (804)310-7710, or email her

FireweedRVA@gmail.com, but do so immediately as space is extremely limited.

For more information on this event contact Charles McGuigan at north-of-the-james@gmail.com or at (804)-218-5265.

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ber 18 at Williamsburg Regional Library. The full Nutcracker Ballet will be performed at Monacan High School in Chesterfield County on December 9 and 10, and at Atlee High School in Hanover County on December 16. For more information please call (804) 798-0945 or visit [www.concertballet.com](http://www.concertballet.com) or find them on Facebook. 







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# Kaitly Kasper

## BLAZING INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

**FOR A FEW YEARS, KAITLY KASPER** was a permanent fixture at Stir Crazy Café in Bellevue. A notebook, a laptop, several books, pages dogeared or marked with Post-its, surrounded her like friends or associates at the table she sat before. And more often than not, someone would join her and they would talk for hours. But as soon as that person left, Kaitly would get back to her reading and her writing and her quest for answers.



**SHE HAD AN** inimitable style. Some days she dressed in yoga pants and a tank top, other days layered skirts and dresses. Her eyes were a golden brown, often concealed behind dark-rimmed glasses, and her right arm was a work of art, and her left arm a relatively blank canvas awaiting the careful stippling and pricking of a tattoo artist's needles.

Of her right, highly decorated, arm, Kaitly told me, "I joke about this arm as being a scratch pad of my life."

One tattoo featured the billowing petals of ranunculus and cherry blossoms, three birds, and a New Testament quote. "Ranunculus has always been my favorite flower, and cherry blossoms symbolize the beauty and fragility of human life," Kaitly said.

She rubbed her right shoulder, and by so doing, touched the head of an owl. "The owl is for the wisdom that we gain from the experiences in our life," she said, and then moved her hand down to her lower biceps. "The dove represents the Holy Spirit," she said. "I feel the Holy Spirit guides me in my decisions in the way that I try to lead and live my life."

Below that was a hummingbird. "He is there for love and laughter and lightness," Kaitly said. And then she read a passage written on her arm. "It's half of a quote from Jesus," she said. "The full quote is 'You do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you'll understand.' It's about those times we don't know what it is God is doing through us, but when we look backward later, we understand."

Finally, she pointed to a tattoo with three simple words—"I love you"—in the shallow ditch of her arm where ulna and humerus meet. "That's where the infusion site was for my chemo," she said.

Seventeen years ago, Kaitly was diagnosed with cancer, and fortunately her former husband Evan, a medical student at the time, was working in the lab of Dr. Gordon Ginder, the director of Massie Cancer Center and a leading specialist on lymphomas.

"Dr. Ginder has been my oncologist for the last four-

teen years," Kaitly said two years ago. "And I fully credit him with saving my life that go around. He made sure I had the best care possible. I spent the better part of that year doing chemo and radiation therapy under Dr. Ginder's supervision. It was stage 2B Hodgkin's lymphoma. The diagnosis was at the end of March, and I finished the radiation the day before Thanksgiving."

The cure was utterly complete. "It was scary," she said. "But I don't think I ever thought death was on the table with that one."

Kaitly, who already had a bachelor's degree from Loyola University Maryland and a master's from Virginia Commonwealth University under her belt, decided during the treatment to get a degree in law from University of Richmond. Which is exactly what she did.

Once she passed the bar, Kaitly went to work for Hancock Daniel, Johnson and Nagle, the firm where she worked the rest of her professional life.

Since she was a child, Kaitly had a keen sense of the Divine. She was raised Catholic in East Berlin, Connecticut, though her parents weren't particularly devout. "I don't remember going to church as a family very often," Kaitly said. "But I do remember there was this small church you could walk to from our house and I remember taking myself there and I couldn't really figure out why. At an oddly young age I would go to the self-help section of the library and get these books out by rabbis and I would lay in the backyard and underline them in pencil. I was probably twelve or thirteen when I started doing this. I was just interested in what they were saying and what they were talking about. It always felt to me like God was doing something here."

Kaitly later attended parochial school, and the entire student body would file into the adjacent church for first Friday Mass. "I would always pray while I was there that God would call me to be a nun," she said. "I would say, 'God, that's what I want to do, please call me to be a nun.' I remember being so disappointed, and thinking something was so wrong with me because God didn't want me to be a nun and I couldn't figure it out. But I've always had, from a very young age, some connection to that, and an unwavering knowing He was there for me."

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN  
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO





Kaity had converted to Judaism, the faith of her former husband, and stuck with it for a year after their divorce. Then she tried returning the religion of her birth, but that didn't work. "I felt stalled and I felt like God kept saying to me, 'There's something else that has to break out here, and you're not going to find it in this cathedral,'" she remembered. "And so I ended up exploring some other churches throughout Richmond during that time, and that was really when things got a little bit more serious for me."

About seven five years ago now, Kaity learned what yoga is really about from instructor Dana Walters. "Through her I really started to discover the ways that yoga can change not just our physical body, but our spiritual and emotional bodies," Kaity said. "Once I got there, it became really apparent to me that the connection I had been looking for was going to come directly from God."

Back in March of 2016, Kaity was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

"It came completely out of the blue as ovarian cancer is wont to do," she said. "I had a partial hysterectomy. They were able to keep my uterus, but I lost both ovaries, my fallopian tubes, my appendix, seven lymph nodes, the tumors I had developed, and a ton of fluid that had built up over about a month."

She was enrolled in a clinical trial down at Massie Cancer Center, where she had done years of volunteer work. It was a grueling chemotherapy, one week on, one week off, a total of six rounds, and each bout left Kaity annihilated.

The prognosis for her kind of ovarian cancer was not good.

When she returned to her home in Bellevue, she assumed a number of her close friends would be there for her. But that was not to be the case.

"God created this situation where I was forced to be alone with him in this," Kaity said. "God could not have done the work that he needed and wanted to do with me in this space, if I was not alone."

During those dark nights of the soul—and there

were many of them—Kaity learned something that most of us will never begin to understand. "Regardless of what other people may do, God is never going to abandon me," she told me. "God gave me just enough support so that I always had food, I always had someone to talk to if I really needed, I always had the thing that I needed provided for me, but what I needed was the experience of realizing that I won't abandon myself, and God won't abandon me, and that's actually enough. You can get through the worst kind of crap, if you know those two things."

For many cancer patients, doctors administer a CA 125 test to monitor the patient's blood to ensure cancer has not recurred. The normal range in healthy patients is 5 to 20; Kaity's CA 125 was 208. Through the course of the chemotherapy, though, those levels dropped to between 198 and 134, but they fluctuated within that range after each chemo treatment. One doctor recommended that Kaity receive chemotherapy for the rest of her life as long as her body could endure it. This same physician told her the cancer was incurable.

But Kaity heard another voice, one that she had begun to recognize, and it was a real voice.

"I heard God's voice, clear as day, say 'Do not do any more chemotherapy, that's not what you need,'" Kaity said. "I am someone who hears a voice that's not mine when it's God communicating with me. God to me is a man. It's a slightly deeper voice than how I hear my own voice, and it comes from a different place. When I hear my own thoughts, they come from the brain. When I hear something that's coming from God, it's coming from my core."

So she opted out of chemotherapy. And she prayed to God that her numbers drop by at least five points. A month after she stopped treatment, Kaity's numbers had dropped from 198 to 68.

Soon thereafter, Kaity embarked on a journey of discovery with the hope of bringing back secrets that would help others heal themselves. It was as if God had plucked her for this purpose. "I think what He wants me to do is to bring this stuff back and through writing and speaking and working with people one-on-one to help people learn how we can walk in faith

in such a way that allows us to tap into the voice of the Holy Spirit, Creator, Universe, Source, whatever you want to call it," she said.

Two of Kaity's closest friends—Claire McGowan and Mary-Catherine Berry—are sitting at my dining room table, which is draped in a cloth emblazoned with hundreds of Calaveras a la Dia de Muertos. There are skulls and jack-o-lanterns, witches and mummies, decapitated heads and evil birds, scattered throughout the house, which was decked out for the season three days before Halloween.

Like many people, Mary-Catherine and Claire met Kaity at Stir Crazy, and they immediately became friends.

"It was like a wild and a passionate love affair," Mary-Catherine said. "That's what I've told Mike, my husband." She smiled when she said this, and then, as if in explanation, added: "There was a certain rawness about Kaity, something I've always wanted in a friend, where you can just say, 'You hurt my feelings.' That's probably the last time you'll ever have to talk about it again. It's unconditional. And I've never had a relationship like that except in my marriage."

Claire nodded along, smiling herself. "Kaity had this hard ass, rock and roll side to her," she said. "And then she has these beautiful feathers, and great skirts and dresses. And she was a lawyer. And she loved dogs. She was real and edgy and sometimes she was cranky. She owned every different aspect of her life. I just adored her for it."

For the better part of a year, this trio, made up of Kaity, Mary-Catherine and Claire, would meet weekly for a walk through the neighborhood.

"We had a text thread among the three of us for walks at 4:30," Claire said.

"Every Tuesday we would do it," Mary-Catherine added. "Super short walks, two blocks, two blocks, two blocks and two blocks."

Mary-Catherine remembers what Kaity said during one of those walks when Claire, who had broken her foot, was absent.

"I like how open and honest you are about how



freaking hard motherhood is, and that it's not your end-all, be-all," Kaity said.

Later, Mary-Catherine's son, Jonah, took Kaity's hand, and wandered off with her.

"Hey Kaity Kaspaw, do you like coffee?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," said Kaity.

"I know this great little coffee shop around the corner. Let's get you a coffee."

Stir Crazy was already closed, and Jonah had no money anyhow.

"Jonah loved her," Mary-Catherine said. "He connected with her immediately. He still prays for her because I haven't told him that she's died. 'Dear Gawd,' he says. 'Please heal Kaity Kaspaw. Thanks for everything, Jonah.'"

This past summer, Kaity decided to do something she had been planning to do for quite some time. "She wanted to open an Ayurveda (a system of medicine with its roots in the Indian subcontinent) clinic," said Mary-Catherine. "So she was like, 'I'm going to do this in Charlottesville.' She ended up with the most gorgeous apartment



Mary-Catherine Berry and Claire McGowan reminisce about their friend.

on the planet in Charlottesville, and then she had her very own shop."

But it was never to be.

The day after she moved to Charlottesville, Kaity's right leg began to swell.

"A week goes by and she can't move

her leg anymore," Mary-Catherine said. "And then another friend of hers from Richmond said, 'You've got to see the oncologist, the cancer is back.' Kaity didn't want to know that the cancer was back. Kaity was terrified of dying, and she said over and over and

over again, 'I don't want to die.'"

"The timing couldn't have been worse," Claire said. "She didn't even get to fulfill the dream she had, the thing she wanted to do. I mean she had everything set up."

One day as she was driving, Kaity heard the voice of God. As plain as day, she heard these words: "Don't do chemo."

Kaity wanted to try other protocols, though nothing seemed to work. "She couldn't level out," said Mary-Catherine. "The swelling got worse and worse and worse. They took eight liters of fluid out of her stomach every seven days."

By then, Kaity had moved to Ohio where she lived with friends on a farm. She had taken her dog, Hope, with her, and she took multivitamins, followed a very regimented diet, and fully expected to recover. There was also coffee shop out there that Kaity frequented.

"And that's when the vomiting started," Mary-Catherine said. "She couldn't keep anything down; she would vomit for twenty-four hours every day. And then she couldn't walk at all. She vom-

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ited every time she moved.”

Ultimately, she moved herself to Boston where her stepmom and stepdad lived. She finally started chemotherapy.

“She didn’t take well to the chemo,” according to Mary-Catherine. “By then, the cancer had spread to all of her organs. She went to hospice on a Saturday morning, and died early Tuesday AM.”

The day before, Kaity’s brother, Tyler, had called Mary-Catherine. “He had called me at work on Monday and said, ‘I just wanted to let you know she’s no longer with us, but her body’s still here,’” Mary-Catherine recalled.

Mary-Catherine picked up her cell-phone as we sat at the table, remembering Kaity Kasper. She began scrolling through messages from Kaity, a diary of what was happening in those last days of her life.

Mary-Catherine began to read. “She said, ‘Tell everybody at the coffee shop, that I’m doing great.’ And then she says, ‘This will end, right?’ And I say, ‘Oh yes, and in the better of two ways. You and I will porch sit together with wine, and this will fade away into

a distant memory. This is not your new forever. This is a right now, and a sh\*\*ty one, too.”

One of the last messages she received from Kaity, read, “Sorry things are nuts here. I love you. Let’s talk this weekend for sure.”

It was sent four days before Kaity gave up the ghost.

“This has really shaken me,” said Claire. “It should be a reminder that we have no guarantees in our life.”

Claire and Mary-Catherine are planning to set up a scholarship fund simply called The Kasper Fund, to award monies to those who wish to study Ayurveda. And sometime this spring or summer there will be a memorial service to celebrate the life of Kaity Kasper.

“I believe there are doorways we are supposed to pass through,” Mary-Catherine Berry said. “Sometimes, when I’m driving in my minivan, Kaity’s sitting next to me. I just stare at her. I haven’t talked to her yet.”

“I’ve been talking to her,” Claire McGowan said. 

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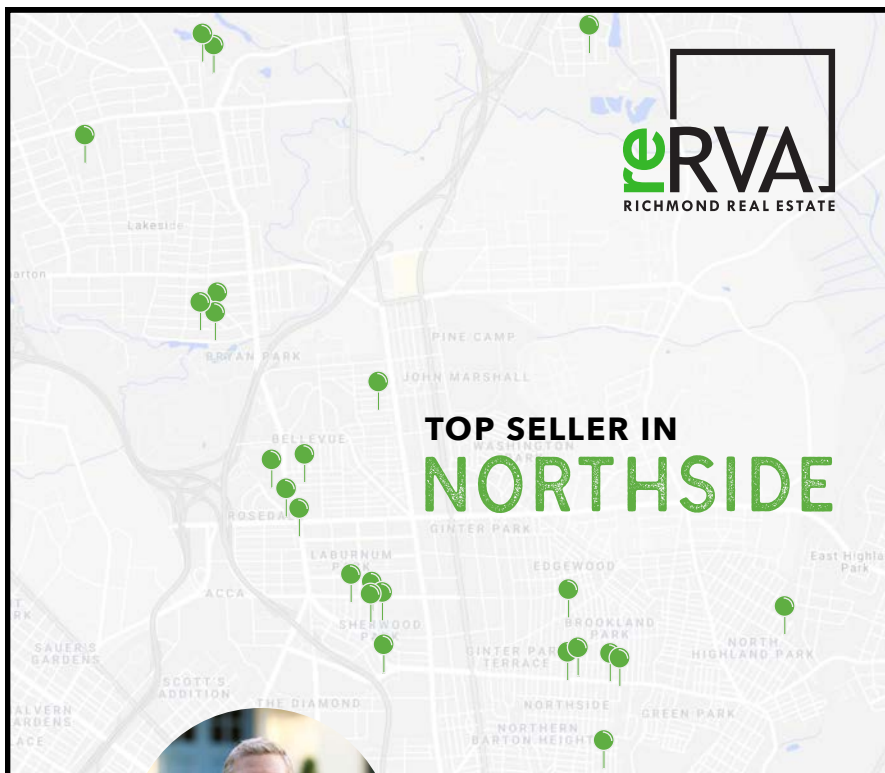
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# The Worst of the Supremes

by JACK R JOHNSON

**D**ESPITE AN adolescence filled with drunken debauchery, topped off with at least one attempted rape charge, Brett Kavanaugh may not be the worst Supreme Justice ever confirmed to that august institution. In fact, he may not even make the top five. Here, for your historical consideration, are the five worst justices in the Supreme Court's history, based on their personal life, their legal decisions, and the overall negative impact their existence has had on our nation.

## CHIEF JUSTICE ROGER B TANNEY

According to Ian Millhiser's "Injustices: The Supreme Court's History of Comforting the Comforted and Afflicting the Afflicted," one of the worst Supreme Court justices ever was Chief Justice Roger B. Taney. It would be journalistic malpractice to exempt Taney from the list of poorest justices for one very important reason—he is the author of the worst decision ever handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court: *Dred Scott*.

Taney's opinion seemed to be driven by a motivation to end the question of slavery once and for all—by ruling in favor of the shameful practice. In the opinion, he took an originalist approach to the question of whether *Dred Scott* became a free man once his "owners" brought him into a free state. The most quoted passage from the incredibly lengthy opinion? When discussing the founders' view of "that unfortunate race," Taney noted:

"They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order; and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit."

His opinion also invalidated the Missouri Compromise, even though the Court admitted that it had no jurisdiction to hear the case, since *Scott* was not a citizen. The ignominious ruling swept far beyond the question presented in that case to offer a philosophic defense of white supremacy and chattel slavery.



## JUSTICE STEPHEN JOHNSON FIELD

Next of our worst Supremes is Justice Stephen Johnson Field. On a personal ethical level, Field was probably worse than Taney, but his decisions were not as far reaching, nationally. As a sitting justice in 1880, Justice Stephen Johnson Field launched a dark horse bid for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Claiming that "the chilling shadow of the empire" was descending upon the United States, Field fronted an anti-government campaign that, according to Millhiser, would "make all but the most strident modern day tea partiers blush." A rabid conservative, Field joined the Court's pro-segregation decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and he authored another opinion permitting former Confederate officials to practice law in federal court. Like modern day conservatives on the far right, he railed against anything smacking of government power to enact economic or business regulations. After Congress enacted a modest income tax on upper-income earners, Field complained that it was an "assault upon capital" which "will be but the stepping-stone to others, larger and more sweeping, till our political contests will become a war of the poor against the rich; a war constantly growing in intensity and bitterness." A statement that sounds frighteningly prescient with regard to the anti social-safety net zeal-

ots in our current congress; and mildly insane with regard to everyone else.

## JUSTICE JAMES CLARK MCREYNOLDS

McReynolds was, in *Time* magazine's words, "a savagely sarcastic, incredibly reactionary Puritan anti-Semite." Additionally, McReynolds was just pure lazy. He often would not even open the briefs lawyers filed to prepare him to hear a case until hours before the case was argued, and he frequently spent just a few hours crafting opinions that would govern all other courts in the country. McReynolds was nasty. He labeled President Franklin Roosevelt "that crippled son-of-a-bitch . . . in the White House," and shunned his own nephew after the boy woke him up by playing jazz music on the radio. McReynolds was a petty tyrant. He ordered his staff never to smoke tobacco even on their free time, and dictated where they were allowed to live. According to Millhiser, during his frequent duck hunting trips, Justice McReynolds would "bring along his longtime servant Harry Parker, and he would order Parker to wade through ice-cold water to retrieve the fallen animals in lieu of a bird dog."

As you might guess, McReynolds was a raging sexist, and bigot. On the rare occasions when a woman argued a case before McReynolds's Court, the justice would exclaim "I see the female is here"

and walk out of the Courtroom. When Charles Hamilton Houston, the Harvard-educated black attorney argued before the Supreme Court, McReynolds turned his back on the Courtroom to signal his disapproval. McReynolds once warned one of his law clerks, who had grown close with Harry Parker, that the clerk "seem[ed] to forget that [Parker] is a negro." He advised the clerk to "think of my wishes in this matter in your future relations with the darkies."

After Justice Louis Brandeis, the first Jewish Supreme Court justice was confirmed, McReynolds refused to speak to him for three years. When McReynolds died in a hospital in 1946, some reports say that he had no friends or relatives nearby, and no Supreme Court justices attended his funeral.

## JUSTICE SAMUEL CHASE

It would be a major oversight not to include Justice Samuel Chase because he was the only Supreme Court justice to ever be impeached. Was he corrupt? Not really, but he was, according to the Professor Bernard Schwartz's "A Book of Legal Lists," a shamelessly partisan judge, who let his Federalist leanings openly influence his judicial decisions and conduct on the bench. He may very well be a harbinger of what we can expect from the unsolicited ramblings of Brett Kavanaugh. Chase would bemoan President Thomas Jefferson's policies



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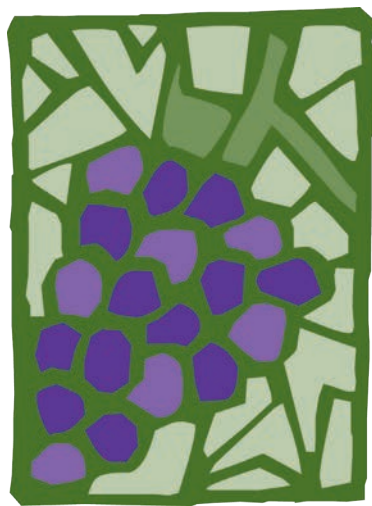
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from the bench, and when he presided over trials brought under the Sedition Act of 1798, it was said that his “performance as a judge was almost indistinguishable from that of the prosecution.”

Chase’s partisan activities eventually led to his impeachment, although the Senate, mindful of the importance of an independent judiciary, voted to acquit the justice.

### JUSTICE CLARENCE THOMAS

Like Kavanaugh, Thomas was confirmed to the Supreme Court under the cloud of alleged unethical behavior. Unfortunately, his actions on the court have only served to confirm these original suspicions. His wife remains publically involved in deeply partisan conservative causes; some of which have come before the Supreme Court, but Thomas has refused to recuse himself. In fact, seventy-four members of Congress signed a letter asking Justice Clarence Thomas to recuse himself from any ruling on the Affordable Care Act because of his wife’s work as a conservative activist and lobbyist, where she specifically agitated for the repeal of “Obamacare.”

Thomas refused.

He has also made a questionable decision not to report more than \$500,000 in earnings from conservative groups which his wife earned. His response that “he didn’t understand how they were supposed to file” is risible.

But even beyond these obvious ethical lapses, his legal decisions illuminate a distinctly partisan bias, coupled with pure laziness. He is the only current member of the Supreme Court who has explicitly embraced the reasoning of Lochner Era decisions striking down nationwide child labor laws and making similar attacks on federal power. Indeed, under the logic Thomas first laid out in a concurring opinion in *United States v. Lopez*, the federal minimum wage, overtime rules, anti-discrimination protections for workers, and even the national ban on whites-only lunch counters are all unconstitutional. These antiquated decisions don’t read as well thought out legal briefs, but rather, as if they are boiler plate recitations of the GOP stances on the American political landscapes.

In closing, remember that even though Brett Kavanaugh might be a rapidly partisan, overly privileged, alleged rapist wannabe, he will need to up his game if he wants to be one of the worst Justices on the United States Supreme Court. The competition is stiff. Although, we must admit, he appears to be off to a good start. **NJ**



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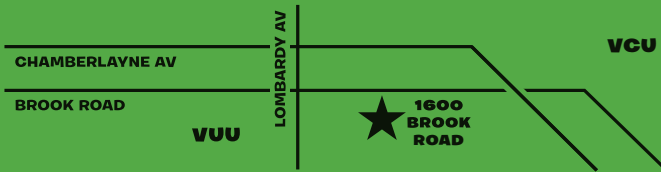
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## WHAT'S NEW

# Gallo Blanco On MacArthur

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

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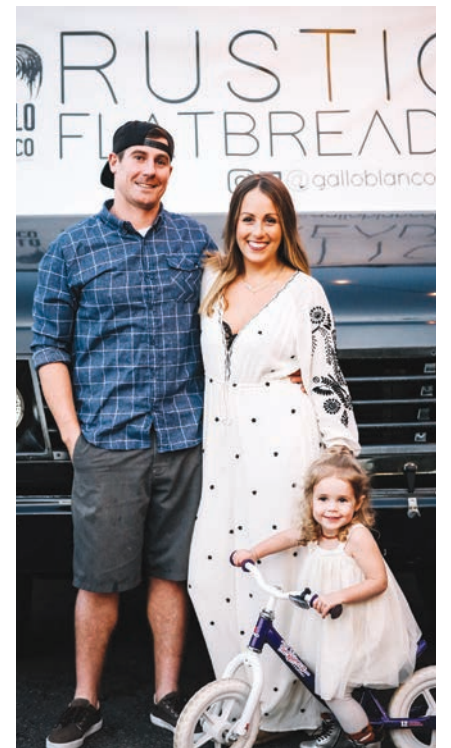
Not long after Bob Kocher opened the wine and beer shop back in 2004, he leased that portion of his property to Jamie Dickerson who opened a lunch wagon there called Jazzbo's Rollin' Gumbo, which he ran until his death. Later, there was Bob Harr who gave us Ginter Parked. The food at both places was exceptional, and reasonably priced.

Over the years, Mike has honed his skills in the back of the house. While attending college at Coastal Carolina University, he worked his share of bars and restaurants in nearby Myrtle Beach. Later, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado he managed a kitchen called the Tap House. He spent four years at The Grill on Patterson Avenue. "And I've worked at various other places in the city," he says.

Mike had been toying with the idea of a food truck for some time. He bought an old ice cream truck, tricked it out with a kitchen, a new service window (that he pried off of an old RV in a junkyard), a double-tier pizza oven, and painted it all a glossy black.

"With food trucks you need to be able to be fast because people will only wait a certain amount of time," says Mike. "Nothing performs like the ceramic oven. We keep it at about 500 degrees and we can do six at a time."

Since a soft opening on September 15, Gallo Blanco has already become a neighborhood hit. "Two of our most popular flatbreads are the natural sausage that we smoke ourselves, and the smoked pork with the pickled onions, that we pickle," Mike says. "And the Margherita is extremely popular. It's vegetarian with all fresh produce—tomatoes and basil. We buy all our vegetables from local farmers' markets."



*Mike McGrath with wife Shae, and daughter Maisy in front of Gallo Blanco.*

On Saturday and Sunday Mike and his staff also serve breakfast flatbreads for both meat lovers and vegetarians. "We have gluten free crusts for those who want it," he says.

Now that cooler weather is here, Gallo Blanco is also offering soups. "We did a chipotle sweet potato with garlic toast for five dollars," says Mike.

Mike is already looking ahead to spring, when Gallo Blanco will feature a variety of salads. "Again, everything will be fresh and local," Mike McGrath says. "That's the key to great meals." **NJ**

**Gallo Blanco: Rustic Flatbreads**  
Tues-Fri 4-8; Sat 11-8; Sun 11-4  
Parking lot of Once Upon A Vine  
4009 MacArthur Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23227  
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# Christmas on MacArthur Avenue

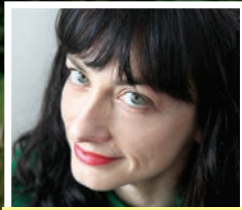


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**Fat Spirit**  
2:15-2:45



**The Melbays**  
3:00-3:30

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# GALLO BLANCO

RUSTIC FLATBREADS

## RUSTIC FLATBREADS | \$8

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**PEPPERONI** | red sauce, beef pepperoni, mozzarella, italian herbs

**SMOKED SAUSAGE** | red sauce, smoked italian sausage, mozzarella, italian herbs

**SMOKED PORK** | bbq sauce, smoked pork shoulder, mozzarella, bacon, pickled red onion

**MARGHERITA** | tomato, olive oil, garlic, basil, mozzarella

**BASIC** | avocado spread, garlic, tomato, arugula

## WEEKEND BRUNCH | \$8

**MEAT LOVERS** | bacon, sausage, egg, cheese

**BACON LOVERS** | bacon, tomato, egg, cheese

**BASIC BRUNCH** | avocado spread, garlic, egg, cheese, arugula

## KIDS | \$4

**CHEESE OR PEPPERONI** | red sauce, mozzarella

Tuesday - Friday 4-8; Saturday 11-8; Sunday 11-4

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Beyond Life Lies Everything Happens for a Reason

by FRAN WITHROW

**K**ATE BOWLER WAS a 35-year old Duke Divinity School professor with a new baby when she discovered she had stage IV colon cancer. Instantly her world was turned upside down. How could this happen to her? What was the reason for this?

Bowler grew up steeped in the Christian faith, marrying her teenage Mennonite sweetheart and believing that God wanted nothing but blessings for her.

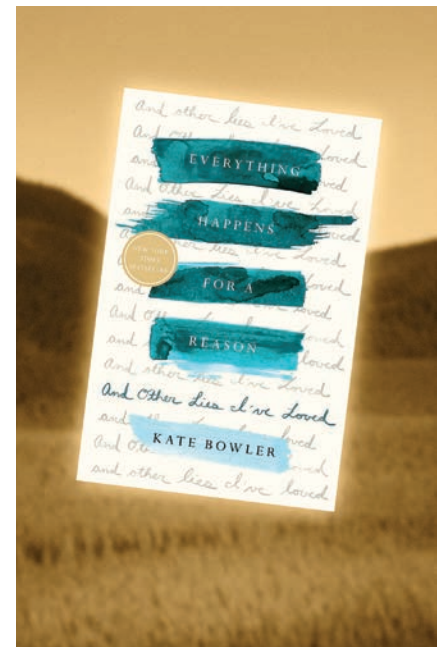
Where's the blessing in stage IV cancer that has no cure?

Bowler ponders these unanswerable questions in an appealing, engaging way in this elegant book. While her Christianity informs her thinking, it is lightly applied, and I did not find it to be an obstacle. I found much to love in this beautiful foray into what it means to relish life while also facing mortality.

This book could easily be a very depressing one, but Bowler's writing is cheerful, upbeat, and often humorous. Trying to find the cause for a previous health issue, she visits dozens of doctors who don't know what is wrong. "...I was beginning to feel like an insecure girlfriend: Just tell me what's wrong with me. Is it me? It's me, isn't it?" I never expected to laugh out loud while reading a memoir about cancer, but her cheery writing is charming and heartfelt.

There is, of course, a bittersweet quality, a sorrow over life that will be cut short throughout this book. The poignancy of her condition is laid out subtly, the ache of leaving her beloved son and husband just under the surface. She holds her baby in her arms and thinks, "I am dying. I am my son's first goodbye."

But this is not just another memoir about cancer. Bowler's musings about the meaning of life and the place of faith in her world are worth studying. She was raised to believe that God is fair; that though there might be hardships in this world, ultimately blessings will rain down on God's people.



This is a lie she no longer believes. So what can she believe?

Bowler is accepted into an experimental treatment program that is currently keeping her cancer at bay. And though she knows her cancer is incurable, she discovers she can still find ways to live life fully, to laugh, to swear, to wonder, to try to make sense of this beautiful, glorious, irrational world we inhabit.

In a life that is full of uncertainty, Bowler probes for answers, for assurances. Instead, she finds love everywhere. She is reminded to live for today. A wise friend gives her the best counsel: "Don't skip to the end."

I read this moving, exquisite book twice and found it sensitive, penetrating, and thought provoking both times. Bowler exposes the dichotomies of life: hard, sad, funny, glorious. Exceptional writing, keen observations, and contemplations about what it means to be alive make this a memoir to buy and keep on the shelf. Bowler reminds us to treasure each day, each life, even though we have no idea why things happen, or how long we have.

And that is worth reading about. **NJ**

**Everything Happens for a Reason:  
And Other Lies I've Loved**  
by Kate Bowler  
208 pages  
Random House  
\$26.00

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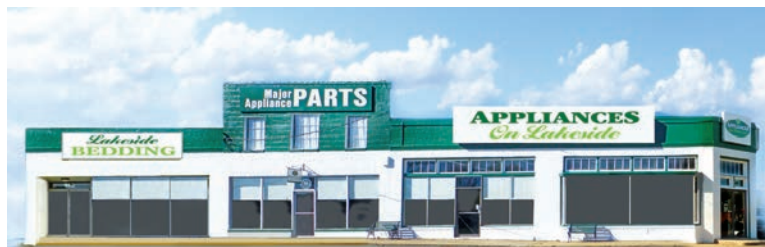


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