



POPCORN™
In Her Shoes:
Fitting Sentiments

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent
By **MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER**
3 popcorns

If you're a tough guy, that's reason enough not to see *In Her Shoes*, a sibling sentiment by director Curtis Hanson that just may betray you. Of course, you could borrow your racehorse's blinders. (This way, should you become teary, Ms. Tough Guy will be none the wiser.) Hmmp. As if she doesn't already know just what sort of softie she's been going around with to these many years.

In short, long before it was politically incorrect to pigeonhole films by the gender that might enjoy them, *In Her Shoes* would have been called *Lady's Film*. Perhaps because it rhymes and is somehow perceived as a hipper denotation, some now get away with uttering the term Chick Flick, careful even so not to doubly tempt the gods by wearing fur at the same time.

Let the record show that this column cottons to neither turn of phrase. That is, it prefers instead to spend several arduous paragraphs explaining why some women will have no compunction recommending this thoroughly endearing, though perhaps overlong, basket of bittersweet cheer. Whereas macho sorts will prefer not to discuss it all. You'll note the strain in this review.

That duly noted, the next piece of business to address is how Mr. Hanson's film, adapted from Jennifer Weiner's novel by Susannah Grant, may be a bit too direct and moralistic for some movie tastes. Not that viewers will necessarily guess how things turn out between forever warring sisters Maggie and Rose Feller, beautifully portrayed by Cameron Diaz and Toni Collette, respectively.

Well, *In Her Shoes* will have none of it. Which makes it a bit of a throwback...slightly old-fashioned and confident. And that's a good thing. But get ready to lose patience with Cameron Diaz's ditsy, careless, seemingly out of control user-abuser. Naturally, she's the younger and more glamorous of the love-hate-afflicted sisters. Unlike Miss Collette's superbly realized wall-flower-lawyer, who toils nonstop to avoid facing her romantically challenged existence, Maggie would prefer to keep her days and nights open.

This allows her to devote more

time to a rather ample if somewhat sullied love life. The more judgmental may prefer to substitute sluttily sullied.

Rose gives Imelda Marcos a run for her money. She buys shoes for the same reason that some people stuff themselves with comfort food, only it doesn't go to her hips. And Maggie, who lands at Rose's apartment whenever she's out of work (which is regularly), has a habit of, er, borrowing said shoes, as well as Rose's car, and sometimes her boyfriend.

So it's the old Cain and Abel story with a sisterly twist, set in both the City of Brotherly Love and Miami, via Hollywood. The title alludes to the two ladies' identical shoe size. Aside from a set of inherited genes, it's apparently the only thing that Maggie and Rose have in common.

You see, the sisters were raised by Sydelle Feller, a suburban update of the wicked stepmother portrayed by Candice Azzara. A yenta all too consumed with extolling the virtues of her own daughter ("My Marcia"), and doubtlessly jealous of whatever love her henpecked husband (Ken Howard) showed Maggie and Rose, she wasn't much of a nurturer.

But there's another sin...one of omission. It's connected to the mysterious death of the former Mrs. Feller. And no one's talking about it. It's not until Maggie stumbles across some never received birthday cards from the grandmother she never knew she had that the plot thickens.

A tacit investigation of the skeletons in the closet begins. We'd like to think Maggie heads down to Florida to learn more and become acquainted with Grandma Ella Hirsch, superbly limned by Shirley Maclaine. But she's just there to groom off the old gal. Don't worry. Ella has her own plans.

OK...so *In Her Shoes* is predictable. Predictable in the way that a much loved dish in a favorite restaurant is predictable. Predictable schmaddictable, you don't have to be a he-man to know you'd like another helping.

In Her Shoes, rated PG-13, is a 20th Century Fox release directed by Curtis Hanson and stars Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley Maclaine. Running time: 130 minutes.

Cancer Foundation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

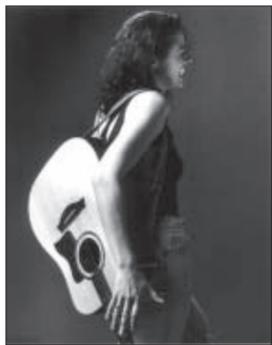
In the next scene, Mr. Rubenstein visits the Struss family of Sussex County, where Heidi Struss, the mother of Nicole, a young girl with leukemia, tells the camera, "We get the reassurance that we're not alone. We're not the only ones going through this."

Heidi says that Mr. Rubenstein and ECF provide information on what is to be expected which is comforting and reassuring to her.

Next, children's television personality Bob McGrath of "Sesame Street"

Coffee With Conscience Presents Trina Hamlin

WESTFIELD - The Coffee With Conscience Concert Series of Westfield will present New York City-based pop-blues artist Trina Hamlin in concert at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield, 1 East Broad Street (corner of North Avenue), on



Trina Hamlin

Saturday, October 15.

Doors will open at 7:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 8 p.m. Admission is \$15. All net proceeds from the concert will be donated to the Central Jersey Chapter of the Names Project (AIDS Quilt).

Reservations are encouraged, and can be made by calling the concert hotline at (908) 412-9105, or e-mailing concerts4causes@aol.com.

Ms. Hamlin is known for her blues harmonica, singing and guitar work. Her voice and presence have gained her national following since she began playing solo shows in the downtown New York City club scene. She was chosen as "Most Wanted New Artist" at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, and as an alumnus of the Newport Folk Festival, performed to soldout crowds along with the likes of Ani DiFranco, Dar Williams and the Indigo Girls.

She has performed on The Late Show with Conan O'Brien with the Suits and her music has been heard in the CBS-TV movie "Friends at Last," as well as on the WB's "Dawson's Creek."

fame drives home the point that ECF brings relief to parents, siblings and the patients themselves.

Nicole (daughter) and Vickie (mother) Benedetto join Dave (son) and Laurie Lasky (mother) in discussing how ECF has provided them with an extended family. The four met at ECF-sponsored events and have formed a strong network of support and comfort with one another.

An emotional Kathy Devereaux tells viewers about how her son died three times, but the doctors brought him back to life.

"Without Howard (Rubenstein) and ECF we'd have nothing because I can't take care of my son and be at work at the same time," she says.

Before the DVD concludes, Mr. McGrath continues to explain ECF's mission, the distribution of funds and how the organization and its devoted counselors and volunteers meet the families' needs. Mr. Haines encourages viewers to visit the ECF website to learn more.

Both narrators echo a simple plea at the end: "Please don't forget them (the patients and their families) and thank you."

To learn more about ECF and to receive a copy of the DVD, call (908) 322-4323 or visit www.emmanuelcancer.org. ECF's Headquarters and Central Regional Center is located at 1815 Front Street in Scotch Plains. However, the facility will move down the street into the Stage House Village around November.

Trailside Presents Plants Workshop

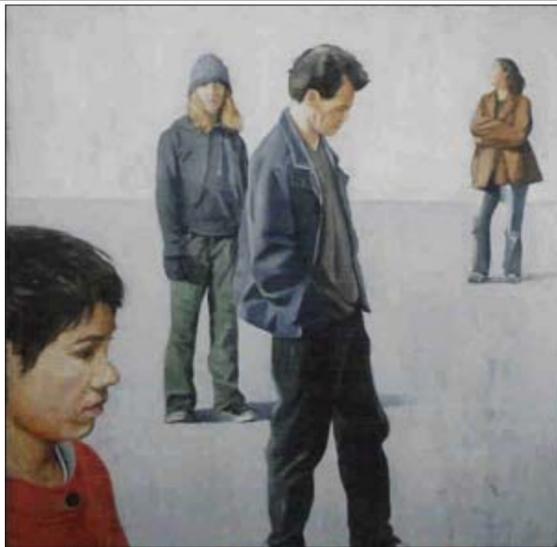
MOUNTAINSIDE - Trailside Nature and Science Center will focus on the identification of local wild edible plants during a workshop to be held Saturday, Oct. 8, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. The fee for this adult workshop is \$10 per person for residents of Union County and \$15 per person for out-of-county participants.

For additional information on the wild edible plants workshop or for information on upcoming fall programs and special events at Trailside, call (908) 789-3670. Trailside's adult, family and evening programs can also be viewed online at www.ucnj.org.

WF Psychologist Hosts Fundraising Concert

SCOTCH PLAINS - Dr. Diane Schupp and husband Hugh will host a fundraising concert at their home at 31 Ravenswood Lane in Scotch Plains to enjoy the music of daughter-in-law Anne Heaton and Frank Martotta, Jr. on Friday October 7 at 8 p.m.

The cost is \$25 per person and a donation from the proceeds will be made to The Center for Hope Hospice in memory of Betty Conington. RSVP at (908) 518-7657.



Wendy Letven's "One Self" Oil on Canvas

Rahway Art Guild Features Figure Painting Exhibit

By **MARYLOU MORANO**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

RAHWAY - The work of three New Jersey artists was recently featured at the Arts Guild of Rahway. The exhibit, entitled *Of Time, Place & People: Contemporary Figure Painting/Recent Works*, featured the figure painting of Neal Korn of Union, Wendy Letven of Glen Ridge and Michael Nirenberg of Jersey City.

The diversity of figure painting was evident in this exhibit, which was representative of the many talents brought to the Arts Guild by the individual artists. Mr. Nirenberg works with the medium of film, as well as with paint. In the past, his painting has been based on film stills from his videos. More recently, the artist has used live models to pose for him in tableaux. He then photographs the scenes and creates new paintings from the photos.

Mr. Nirenberg calls himself an abstract artist who believes in "everything and nothing." Geometric shapes play a large part in his artistic works. He offers these geometric shapes as symbols to his viewers, and invites his viewers to interpret them in whatever way he or she wishes. As for the technique of portraiture itself, Mr. Nirenberg said he feels that "portraiture is autobiography and autobiography can be fiction."

Ms. Letven's paintings are often portraits of children, the figures of which she juxtaposes with interesting surroundings. She does this in such a way as to spotlight certain figures while others, no less importantly, take prominence in the background. Some of her portrayals are of groupings of figures, or different views of the same figure.

"By taking the figures out of its original context and creating a new context, a narrative occurs," she said. "To paint the human form is to attempt to know or understand the nature and complexity of something," she continued.

Mr. Korn's work speaks to the viewer in a unique way. He combines text with his portraits, so as to allow the voice of his model to be incorporated into the artwork.

"I love to paint and I love to write," commented Mr. Korn in an exclusive interview with *The Leader and The Times*. "Sometimes, a painting's message can be obscure. By including text with my work, I force home my message."

Mr. Korn describes his earlier painting as having "more mystery," the portraits he creates and supports with text contain a "reinforced message."

"The artworks in *Of Time, Place & People* are all naturalistic in style and, while the three artists involved are distinctly different in approach, aims and perspective, they are complementary in effect, showing certain essential similar interests and characteristics," commented Executive Director, Lawrence Cappiello.

The next exhibit to be presented at the Arts Guild of Rahway will be "Celebrating Excellence: The Merck 2005 Juried Union County Art Show" which will run from Sunday, October 16 to Thursday, November 10. "Celebrating Excellence" opens with a reception on October 16 from 1 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The Arts Guild of Rahway is located at 1670 Irving Street in Rahway. They can be contacted by phone at (732) 381-7511 or by visiting their website at <http://www.rahwayartsguild.org>.



FOR THE 'BIRDS'...Jay LAVORFF, left, a Westfield resident and partner in Lindabury, McCormick and Estabrook, plays sax with the Nick Pablo Thang band.



JAZZED UP...Singer Cyriese Lambert entertains Lois Boyle, Judge Jack Boyle and Joan Blake last Wednesday night at the Northside Trattoria in Westfield. Trattoria Co-owner Chris Boyle said, "we had a great turnout and didn't advertise at all. People who were here were really treated to a special concert." Westfield Leader photos are available at <http://www.goleader.com/photos/05sep28Trattoria/>

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THE STUDENT VIEW
The weekly column written by local high school students

Parents Can Offer Defense, Help Stop Clique Mentality

By **CAROLYN DIPROSPERO**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Paper airplanes fly across the room and the volume of teenage voices swells, spilling over into the hallway. It's a typical lunch at a typical high school and the seating is, well, typical. There's the African-American table, the surfer/bohemian table and the varying degrees of "average Joe" tables. Sounds like a scene from the movie *Mean Girls*? Sadly, for many of today's high schools, this cliquish atmosphere is not just left to a Hollywood movie script.

A clique is defined as a small group of people held together by a common bond or interest, but these groups often take on a much darker side, excluding and even bullying "outsiders." Nowadays, cliques seem to be everywhere from school to the playground, but the alarming trend is in the increasingly younger age at which cliquish behavior begins. While many people think of cliques as part of the high school landscape, this behavior has wound itself all the way down to the middle and even elementary school level.

In recent years it has become commonplace to find tales of catty girls and bullying boys coming from the mouths of babes, in sixth grade that is. Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School senior Katie Schreiber can sympathize. When asked if she had ever felt excluded or left out because of cliques, she responded, "Yes, in fourth grade when my best friend ditched me for another girl."

But because this aggressive behavior begins at an earlier age does not, by any standards, mean that the behavior ends earlier as well. Liz Casserly, a junior at Union Catholic High School said, "During sophomore year, we had a lot more cliques," and related the story of a clique formed in her sophomore year, complete with a group name and initiations.

She also said that she has witnessed cliquish behavior at the stable where she takes horseback riding lessons, saying, "I have felt left out because of

cliques at the barn. They would be nasty (to me) and wouldn't let me get involved with things."

Not only do cliques promote cruelty and mean behavior, they can also be physically dangerous. A March 2004 article featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine cited a clique-related incident in an affluent Chicago suburb as just one example of the problems caused by cliques. "... a highly publicized hazing incident last spring involving high school girls in an affluent Chicago suburb. Senior-class girls — the leaders of the most popular clique at their particular school — were videotaped assaulting younger girls and throwing animal intestines, human waste and other foul substances at them. The targeted girls submitted to the abuse and humiliation because they wanted to be admitted into the group. Instead, several girls were admitted into the hospital, with severe injuries from the hazing."

With the unending clambering of teenagers to find their respective niche, it is easy to wonder, "Will cliques and the problems they cause ever become extinct or resolved?" Fortunately, the answer is "yes." Parents are part of the main defense against cliques. Kids need their parents to teach them proper social behavior, as well as self-confidence and the value of individuality in order to be one step closer to defeating the problem of cliques. But a large part of the responsibility falls upon the kids themselves.

We need to have the self-assurance to stand up to people who try to bully or exclude, to put our foot down against peer pressure and actions we know are wrong. After all, if you're involved in a clique, there's a lot to miss out on. As Casserly said, "I don't know why people start cliques; when you're involved in cliques, you are not meeting other people, who could be really cool, because you think your clique is too cool for them."

CarolynDiProspero, 16, is a senior at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Last of the Red Hot Lovers Opens WCP's New Season

WESTFIELD - Linda Correll has her cast in final rehearsals for the 8 p.m., Saturday, October 8 opening of Neil Simon's smash comedy hit, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* at Westfield Community Players (WCP), 1000 North Avenue, West in Westfield.

Other show dates are Friday and Saturday evenings, October, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28 and 29, with all reserved seats at \$15 available from the box office at (908) 232-1221.

In this comedy about love, sex and the ensuing complications, Simon gives us Barney Cashman, who yearns for a passionate affair to relieve the tedium of his hum-drum life. Using his mother's empty apartment, he embarks on a series of encounters with three wildly different women to see what he is missing.

The cast includes John Correll of Winfield as Barney. The women he pursues are Elaine Navazio of South Bound Brook, a cynical chain smoker; Bobbie Michelle of Edison, an uninhibited "hippy chick" and Jeanette Fisher of Westfield, as a nervous, depressed woman.

WCP now has reserved seating which should be requested from the box office when reserving seats. The WCP box office can be reached at (908) 232-1221.

Opening night patrons are invited to stay for light refreshments with the cast and crew after the curtain rings down.

Working with Ms. Correll are producer Kay Macrae and stage manager Stephanie Simons-Neal with Bob Murray handling the lights.



LAWYER JOKES...Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield), a partner with the Scotch Plains firm of Bramnick, Rodriguez, Mitterhoff, Grabas & Woodruff, parodies Frank Sinatra in "Fly me to Trenton" at the *Celebration of Lawyers in the Arts* on September 14 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

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