

# **SWELL LETTER**

## **May 2025 Volume 5, Issue 5**

### **Lu Cox**



**My husband's name is Tim. We have a daughter and son who live in Des Moines. We have 2 grandchildren, Clifton and Clara, who bring us so much joy. I work at Mercy One with plans to retire this summer. Looking forward to spending more time with the people at swell!!**

**Article submitted by Gene Phab**



Why have 7 to 12 men gathered weekly for a movie since 1990? Even though they might not fully grasp the enduring appeal. Yet perhaps the answer resonates with CDC research highlighting how social connection fosters longevity, improved health, and greater well-being. At SWELL, we likely experience similar advantages. Discover their story below.

## 1,001 cinematic nights

### Long-time movie-going group hits milestone

**BY MICHELLE LONDON • [michelle.london@thmedia.com](mailto:michelle.london@thmedia.com)**

On a Wednesday night in March, seven gentlemen of a certain age gathered at Dubuque Mining Company for a meal. The plan, as it has been just about every week for the past 35 years, was to enjoy a burger and a beer, and then a movie. The movie on this particular night would be the new Led Zeppelin documentary, “Becoming Led Zeppelin.” The men, most in their 70s, are all Dubuque residents. Most are retired. The documentary was the 1,000th film the group has seen. Boys Night Out, as they call themselves, has been in existence since 1990, when Ed Norman and Jim Blaser were playing a friendly game of racquetball. Afterward, the conversation turned to a newly released movie they both thought they’d like to see. The movie was “Tremors,” a tongue-in-cheek horror film that had Kevin Bacon, Reba McEntire and a host of quirky residents in the desert town of Perfection, Nev., fighting for their lives against giant worm-like monsters. “We both wanted to go, and we knew our wives wouldn’t have wanted to see it,” Norman said. “They don’t want to see blood, gore and all that. So, we decided to go. And then we just started doing it (on a regular basis).” Soon the two movie-goers became three and then four. “And then it just kind of became word of mouth,” Norm Freund said. “Somebody knew somebody and said, ‘Hey, you want to do this?’” BNO has about two dozen members. Freund sends out an e-mail each Monday listing the movies playing in town, and a vote is taken to determine the film the group will see that week. Then RSVPs start coming in. Dinner and a movie happen each week when at least three members commit. Dubuque Mining Company has been their regular meeting spot. In the past, The Ground Round and West Dubuque Tap were also eateries the group utilized for their weekly movie outings. Wednesday was chosen as the night to meet, as theater crowds are usually light midweek. “We typically used to have eight or 10 people regularly back in the day when our numbers were bigger,” Norman said. “Right now, it’s three to six quite a bit of the time.” Some members have passed away, while others have moved out of the area, but BNO apparently is missed and isn’t far from their thoughts. “We’ve had guys who’ve moved and requested to stay on the list so that if there was any chance, they were back in the area when we got together, they could come,” Freund said. The movie tastes of the men vary quite a bit. “I like horror,” Bill Mauss said. “I get bored by horror,” Steve Norman responded. And while it seems that in a group of guys, rom-coms wouldn’t be high on the list of movies to see, BNO sees their fair share. “We do see some romcoms,” Rick Lorenzen said. “Yeah, definitely. But those sometimes get saved for the wives.” BNO has averaged 29 movies per year since 1990, in every genre you could imagine. And after more than 1,000 films, there is only one time that a member has walked out of the theater before the film was over — and it’s become a bit of legend among the group members. “Jimmy (Blaser) walked out,” said Greg McGinn. “He’s the only one. He walked out on ‘Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy.’ It was a little weird when the dolphins were playing in space. That was it for him.”

While BNO enjoys keeping up with the latest Hollywood releases, they also take advantage of classic movie showings. “We’ve seen ‘The Three Stooges’ (on the big screen),” Freund said. “We enjoyed that.” And bad movies? Well ... they aren’t always all that bad. “We do like a really bad movie once in a while,” Freund said. “We all enjoyed ‘Hot Tub Time Machine.’” Coming out of the COVID shutdown, when many social groups disbanded or couldn’t manage to get any momentum going again, BNO came back strong. “We just started meeting again,” Freund said. “This group was doing social distancing before that was cool,” Norman added, referring to the group’s habit of keeping one seat empty on either side of each member for a little added space. BNO seems to be upping its movie-viewing game as members get older, rather than the other way around. It took the group 22 years to reach its first 500 films. In the past 12 years, from 2013 to 2025, it matched that number, reaching the milestone of 1,000 films. “We’ll probably try to petition any nursing home that will take us to have a movie night,” McGinn said. The group heartily agrees that their friendships have developed beyond the big screen. “We have our differences,” Freund said. “Certainly, we have our political differences. We all love movies, and we love food, and we remain good friends. I don’t know if we’re going to get to 1,500 or not, but we are going to give it a shot.”





During my time with the SWELL program, I was able to meet lots of new people, learn many things, and grow my experience in leading workouts. The class was very similar to what I do with ROTC or what I had learned in the past, so it felt repetitive. I was glad that I had some challenges of trying to lead the workouts by memory and eventually learning how to conduct the tai chi part of class. Eventually, I worked my way up to leading the whole class by myself without having to reference my notes. It has been a good experience and made me realize things about what I want to add to my daily life. I also took notes for future reference in case I am in charge of an exercise class. Especially working with older adults, I now better understand the limitations and struggles that they face and how to help them improve their quality of life. Overall, the SWELL program has been beneficial to my experience and continued knowledge of living a healthy life. Thank you to everyone for welcoming me to work out with you all. You all have inspired me to be grateful for what I am capable of now and for the possibilities of what I can do in the future as long as I stick to a healthy lifestyle.

--Ellec

## Beyond the Baskets: A Journey Through the Evolution of Easter!

Easter season is a wonderful time of year. The weather changes as April showers bring May flowers, most of the time AOL. Christians celebrate the Ascension of Jesus as churches see record numbers of their congregation return to services dressed in their Sunday best. Little girls wear their flowery dresses, and little boys wear pleated pants and nice shirts. There is excitement in the air as the little ones are anticipating the arrival of Peter Cottontail or as some people call him Peter Rabbit, the egg-laying bunny. My six-year-old granddaughter Mary says this is her favorite Holliday. She has learned about Easter at Sacredheart elementary and understands the Ascension of Jesus but fully embraces the arrival of the egg-laying rabbit. We enhanced the weekend by bringing to life the history of the egg-laying rabbit. After some research we told the story of the Easter Bunny to our 7 grandkids.



The Easter Bunny's origins are a mix of ancient pagan traditions and Germanic folklore. The legend of the egg-laying hare, or "Oschter Haws" in German, is believed to have been brought to America by German immigrants in the 1700s. While the specific origins are somewhat unclear, the Easter Bunny is often associated with the pagan goddess [Eostre](#), who was a symbol of spring and fertility, and whose animal symbol was the rabbit. The Easter Bunny and Easter eggs became integrated into the Christian holiday over time.

In 1893, Beatrix Potter wrote a letter to a sick child, Noel Moore, describing the adventures of Peter Rabbit and his family. This letter evolved into her famous book, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," which was privately printed in 1901 and commercially published in 1902.

Peter Rabbit is a classic children's character known for his disobedience, his love of mischief, and his adventures in Mr. McGregor's garden. The book has sold over 40 million copies and has been translated into numerous languages. Peter Rabbit has also inspired a wide range of merchandise, including toys, clothing, and games.

"Here Comes Peter Cottontail" Song: The song "Here Comes Peter Cottontail" was written by Steve Nelson and Jack Rollins in 1949 and first recorded by Melvin Shiner in 1950.

The song became a popular secular Easter tune, portraying the Easter Bunny delivering eggs, flowers, and candy. The song was later recorded by Gene Autry, who was already successful with Christmas songs like "Here Comes Santa Claus" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". The song has been used in numerous Easter commercials and has become a beloved part of Easter traditions.

The Easter Bunny always shows up at the Wittman house.

--Gary

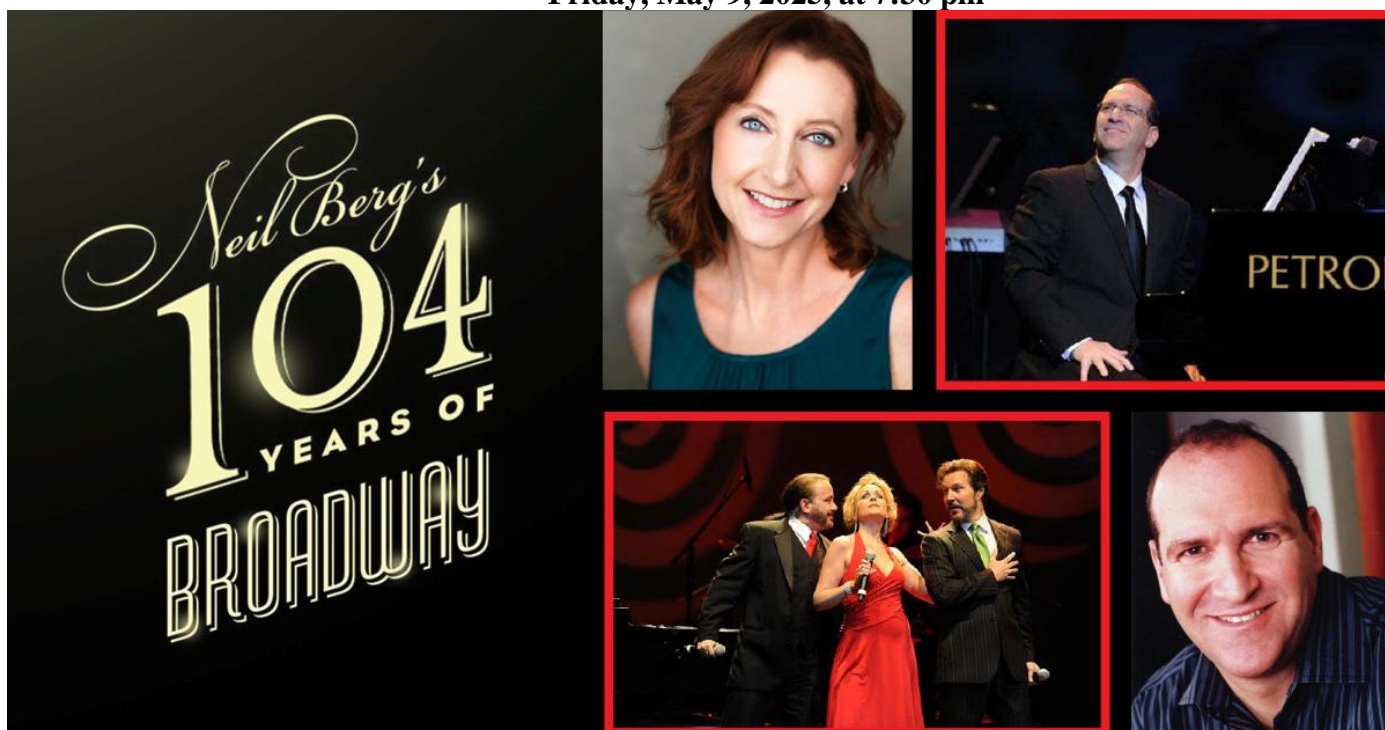








**Heritage Center**  
**104 years of Broadway by Neil Berg and Natlie Harvey**  
**Friday, May 9, 2025, at 7:30 pm**



Direct from New York and featuring Dubuque native Rita Harvey, producer/pianist/composer Neil Berg returns to Heritage Center with a sequel to his hit Broadway revue with a cast of stars from Broadway's greatest musicals. Neil shares the songs and stories behind the music that changed the world! 104 Years of Broadway recreates the greatest moments from the finest shows of the past century.

**Ticket Distribution:**

- **Friday, May 2nd through Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>**



## **SWELL Special Forces**



**Friday April 25, 2025, our 12 SWELL Special Forces were ready and able for action. We moved into the entry of the CRWC to complete Tai Chi as the rain came down at the end of class. It was a great experience.**

**Monday April 28, 2025, our Special Forces grew to 34 strong as we completed all our exercises. We dressed for the cool breeze and completed our mission with a smile.**







Presented at the honors convocation April 8th 9:00 a.m.

#### SWELL Intern of The Year Award

"It is with great pleasure that I present the Spartan Senior Wellness (SWELL) Intern of the Year Award to Hunter T. Snyder class of 2025, majoring in Human Health Science, Wellness, and Exercise Science.

This Des Moines native and UD track and field athlete was recognized for his exceptional commitment and leadership, positively impacting over 200 Dubuque area seniors. Hunter's compassionate and skilled approach to wellness, including independently leading classes and mastering multiple Tai Chi routines make him exceptional. His contributions have made a lasting impact on the SWELL community.

Congratulations Hunter T. Snyder, SWELL intern of the 2024-25 academic year and SWELL Intern award of \$500.00.

Thank you, Gary Wittman for being a great Supervisor and teacher in my SWELL Internship. I learned so much from you and Karen and I will never forget the things I learned and the memories I created. I hope I made an outstanding impact on the program and the people I had the pleasure of

teaching. I hope to one day get a job and be able to use what I learned to help people of all ages to improve their quality of life. Thank you so much again for this opportunity and the 2024-25 SWELL intern of the year award. I am so grateful!

**--Thanks again, Hunter Snyder**



**Click on the link and see what happens during Tension Zen Meditation.**

You will see the heart rate and stress levels drop during Tension Zen. This drop-in heart rate and stress will calm and relax you immediately after meditation. Over time you will become less stressed and calmer each day. Remember stress is the cause of up to 80% illness.

[https://connect.garmin.com/modern/activity/18954354811?share\\_unique\\_id=67](https://connect.garmin.com/modern/activity/18954354811?share_unique_id=67)

**Tension Zen Mind and Body** on Patreon offers 2 audio tracks to help you sleep better including the 20-minute meditation experience after lunch daily and the 7-minute Tension Zen Deep Sleep Experience when you go to bed and repeat if you wake up at night to go back to sleep.

**Our Tension Zen meditation app is available on Patreon!**

For just \$1 a month, you'll gain access to a wealth of resources designed to improve your physical and mental well-being. For \$2 a month you will gain access to SWELL workouts and Tai Chi.

<https://www.patreon.com/TensionZen>

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**Thanks to those who submitted wonderful articles to our SWELL newsletter.**