

## People &amp; Places

## Books

## 'Meant to Be' sensible

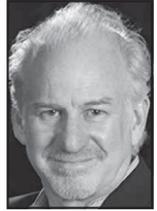
## 'Cabin Fever' captures horror of COVID cruise

By Rob Merrill

**'Cabin Fever: The Harrowing Journey of a Cruise Ship at the Dawn of a Pandemic'** by Michael Smith and Jonathan Franklin (Doubleday)

Imagine stepping off a dock in Buenos Aires in early March 2020 to board a ship with 1,242 fellow passengers and 586 crew members for a cruise around the tip of South America. You've heard about a virus making people sick in China and Italy and Spain, but it's thousands of miles away. The prospect of touring the Falkland Islands, climbing Machu Picchu, and getting up close to a penguin colony in Chile far outweigh whatever dread you feel about global news.

That's the starting point for a new nonfiction book called "Cabin Fever" by investigative journalists Michael Smith and Jonathan Franklin. They tell the story chronologically, starting March 6, 2020, just two days before the Holland America cruise ship the MS Zaandam leaves port in Argentina. Days later the World Health Organization formally classifies COVID-19 as a pandemic and for the next 25 days, the Zaandam is adrift in international waters, denied safe harbor in every port as COVID breaks out across the world. It's not until April 2, 2020, that the ship finally docks in Port Everglades, Florida, with three bodies in its morgue and hundreds of other sick passengers on board.



Smith

The book opens with a cast of characters — brief bios of the people on board who the journalists talked to to reconstruct the narrative. In addition to Dutch Captain Ane Smit and a few of his fellow officers, there's a pair of retirees from Missouri hoping to cross Machu Picchu off their bucket list, two men from Nashville celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary, and the manager of the ship's massive laundry operation, Wivit Widarto, who has spent 30 years working on cruise ships to provide for his family back home in Indonesia.

## Experience

Over the course of the book's 250 pages we learn their stories, with a focus on their experience aboard the Zaandam. Smith and Franklin eschew the Bob Woodward approach, writing in the omniscient third-person, not trying to recreate dialogue. Each dispatch is dated and time-stamped as we read about the characters' journey from "everything's going to be all right out here in our adult playground on the ocean" to knocks on doors as trays of food are dropped outside cabins by crew members wearing hazmat suits. The result reads like the longest newspaper story ever written mixed with the requisite dramatic flourishes required to keep readers turning pages. "One additional traveler was aboard the ship," ends chapter one. "The crew was unaware of its presence."

It was never cataloged or ordered and had not purchased a ticket. This stowaway, likely hiding in the lungs of a passenger or perhaps a crew member, was microscopic in size yet capable of overwhelming this gargantuan ship.

The Zaandam's journey, of course, was well covered by the media. It was one of more than 100 cruise ships at sea when COVID broke out. Thanks to social media and wi-fi, passengers shared their misery in real time. But putting it all together in a format like this gives it the proper context. It's easy in hindsight to think it wasn't that bad. At least six Zaandam passengers ultimately died, but the death toll in the US alone has now exceeded one million people. Smith and Franklin's riveting recount of the cruise take readers back to a time I'm sure many of them would like to forget — when fear trumped everything and nobody knew what the future looked like. It's an impressive example of narrative journalism. Perhaps too soon for some, but a worthy addition to the historical record.



"Meant to Be" by Emily Giffin (Ballantine)

Joe Kingsley comes from a larger-than-life family with connections, achievements and celebrity akin to the Kennedys, complete with a family curse and everything. The pressure on him is immense to exceed his father's vast accomplishments, before he died when Joe was only 3.

Cate Cooper's upbringing is completely different. Her mother worked at diners to make ends meet until she could find a man to support the two of them. Seemingly the only thing that connects Cate to Joe is that her father also died when she was 3.

"Meant to Be" by Emily Giffin is a sweet and sensible romance firmly placed in the real world. The classic tale of unlikely lovers reimagines American history through the alternating voices of Joe and Cate from their childhood in the '60s up to their fateful meeting in the '90s.

Although the protagonists are roughly 25 and 30 when their courtship finally begins, they flirt like teenagers. When they move past flirtation, it wastes no time getting steamy. But Giffin's approach to romance is layered, relishing in the bond between two people on emotional, intellectual and physical levels.

Cate's early life is far more exciting than Joe's, who mostly toils around begrudgingly doing what's expected of him and being mildly successful due in large part to his status.

Meanwhile, Cate struggles to escape an abusive household and build a life for herself in the grueling world of modeling.

But their disparities are not overlooked — Giffin uses Joe's privilege to expose systemic inequities as his wise and gracious grandmother teaches him to empathetically use his power to help others.

"Meant to Be" balances classic romance scenes with nuggets of history and nuanced takes on modern issues. Giffin's historical knowledge peeks out in well-placed pieces of reality woven into the greater fictional story, covering events ranging from the fatal 1967 Apollo test to the 1976 Soweto Massacre in South Africa.

As the book progresses the plot gets more predictable and upbeat, relaxing to the point of suspicion. Despite knowing things can't keep getting better without some pitfall or drama, the big twist is still surprising when it finally comes.

The novel's saccharine happy ending is syrupy sweet to excess, but after Cate's tragic childhood and deeply embedded cynicism it's not too tough a pill to swallow.

With 10 other novels under her belt, Giffin's writing is consumable and rich, balancing dialog and descriptions to build a parallel world with convincing characters. "Meant to Be" proves you can have your romance and think deeply, too. (AP)



Olivia Harrison, widow of musician George Harrison, appears at the World premiere of the film 'Eight Days A Week' in London on Sept. 15, 2016. Harrison released a book of poetry, 'Came the Lightening: Twenty Poems for George.' (AP)

## Books

## Harrison's widow talks of life, death through poetry

## Olivia pens 20 poems for George

NEW YORK, June 22, (AP) — The first line of Olivia Harrison's book of poetry captures a feeling universal to everyone who has lost a loved one. "All I wanted was another spring," she writes. "Was it so much to ask?"

Through the verses that follow that question, the widow of former Beatle George Harrison opens up about her husband, and about grieving after he died of lung cancer at the age of 58 on Nov. 29, 2001.

Twenty poems for 20 years, a number that's not a coincidence. "Came the Lightening," a collection published Tuesday, is a first for the 74-year-old Harrison, and a surprise. She has meticulously curated George's work with the help of their son, Dhani, but has otherwise maintained the privacy the couple kept throughout their marriage.

She was inspired to write by reading Edna St. Vincent Millay's work about a "wound that never heals," and her own line about wanting another spring was a turning point. She changed her mind after initially deciding not to release it publicly.

"It was because he was a good guy," she said in an interview with The Associated Press. "A good guy. And I thought, 'I want people to know ... these things.' So many people think they know who George is, I thought that he deserves this, from me, to let people know something a little more personal."

She writes about the mundane moments of a marriage that become more special when they can't be repeated — the late-night dances to a jukebox in the living room, how her cold feet sought the warmth of his under the covers on a winter night.

George Harrison met the former Olivia Arias in the 1970s when she worked at his record company in Los Angeles. One poem recalls her nervousness in first welcoming him to her Mexican immigrant parents' humble home. "He said, 'it's a mansion compared to my youth,'" she wrote.

She remembers him welcoming her into his Friar Park estate west of London for the first time with the gentle

words, "Olivia, welcome home." They drove up in "John and Yoko's long white car." It was another hint that she wasn't just marrying anyone, along with her description of the day "the legendary Slowhand dropped in with the ex-Mrs."

That would be Eric Clapton, with George's ex-wife Patti. Awkward!

"It seemed to be this love triangle legend," Harrison said. "I thought I would try to get it over with in three verses."

Her husband never talked publicly about losing his first wife to Clapton, and Harrison's poem indicates it didn't go well. "Predictable exchanges and yes, they ended badly," she wrote.

## Victory

Harrison also writes, at some length, about the harrowing night of Dec. 30, 1999, when a disturbed man with a knife broke into Friar Park. She recalled pleading with George to stay hidden in the bedroom but instead he went down to confront him and was stabbed in the ensuing struggle. Olivia attacked the intruder with a fireplace poker and, against odds, they both survived.

"I wouldn't say it was a defining moment, but it was such a profound experience that I still can't believe," she said. "George nearly died and you think, no, he's not going to die like that. He was a very defiant person in that sense — I'm not going to die like that. He was thinking that at the time, actually. After everything I've been through, I'm going to die like this?"

Nineteen years earlier, she had taken the middle-of-the-night phone call that John Lennon had died, and they huddled under their blankets for hours.

Even though George died not quite two years after the Friar Park attack, she considered it "a victory, not a loss."

"It was a victory because he went out on his own terms in the way that he wanted to," she said. "It was something that he regretted that John Lennon didn't have the chance to do."

Harrison writes tenderly about the day her husband died: "I wanted you to leave without any impediments of

care, to float away like you always imagined and prepared. I couldn't help myself and nuzzled your ear, and whispered final words to leave you with my sound."

His son was 23 when George died. Harrison said she's constantly surprised to hear him talk about things she didn't know his dad had told him.

"Whether it was something for history's sake, or a mantra, or some lesson, I thought, he didn't wait until (Dhani) was 30 or 40," she said. "That's a real lesson, too. Why do we hold back? Why are we so constrained by time? George didn't live like that. Maybe he was prescient. Maybe he knew."

In the book, she also writes about the final visits of Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr to say goodbye to their former Beatles mate.

Now, she and Dhani sit at the boardroom table with McCartney, Starr and Yoko Ono when Beatles business is discussed. It's in many ways an ongoing venture, like with last year's Peter Jackson-produced "Get Back" project.

"Dhani and I are really there to look after George's legacy," she said. "On some things, we're more opinionated. But on other things, I'm like, 'it's their music, it's their images ... they know what they want to hear and see. It's great to shepherd and provide George's material and help them in any way we can.'"

Besides, she said, it's a lot of fun. It wasn't until the anthology project in the 1990s that George became more comfortable with the Beatles legacy, she said.

"He said, 'I guess it's not going away.' I said it's not. He was so funny. I said, no, it's not and he said, 'Good, maybe I'll get some respect around here,'" she said with a laugh.

Harrison still lives in the Friar Park estate. She's too old to move, she said, and too much stuff is accumulated. She and her husband were both avid gardeners, and one hint about why she stays comes in a poem that talks about the trees there: "My constant source of comfort, my oldest, tallest friends," she writes.



Mason Thames, (left), and Madeleine McGraw arrive at the Los Angeles premiere of 'The Black Phone' on Tuesday June 21, at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Justin



Hailey

## Variety

NEW YORK — Two former college roommates who created a successful clothing line under the "Rhode" trademark sued model Hailey Bieber on Tuesday, saying she's creating market confusion by marketing a skin care line under the Rhode name.

The lawsuit in Manhattan federal court asked a judge to cite trademark infringement and block Bieber from selling or marketing any products with the Rhode name. It also sought unspecified damages.

The lawsuit said court intervention was necessary because Hailey Bieber is a celebrity with over 45 million Instagram followers who launched her skin care line last week and has filed trademark applications to sell clothing.

Hailey Bieber is married to singer Justin Bieber, and the lawsuit said her husband has promoted her business to his 243 million Instagram followers, generating 1.5 million likes with one posting. Her lawyer didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to the lawsuit, Purna Khatau and Phoebe Vickers are seeking to protect the business they began in 2014 when they quit their day jobs to create a high-end clothing and accessories line, targeting "feminine, confident and well-traveled women."

Since then, it said, their products have been featured in Vogue, carried in stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus worldwide and worn by celebrities including Beyonce, Mindy Kaling and Rihanna. Sales are projected to hit \$14.5 million this year, the lawsuit said.

On the day her product was launched, Hailey Bieber said in a Forbes story that she's had a "really hard time" with "a world of media that likes to perpetuate women against women," the lawsuit said. "But the reality is that the 'world of media' Ms Bieber describes is at her disposal. And she has chosen to use it to squash a woman and minority co-founded brand that simply cannot compete with her immense fame and following," the lawsuit said. (AP)



LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Disney workers traded their character costumes for yoga pants early Tuesday and planked, did the downward dog and folded into lotus poses at Walt Disney World in Florida to celebrate International Yoga Day. The sunrise celebration has spread to

other Disney properties around the globe since yoga enthusiasts started it at the Florida resort in 2016.

More than 1,700 Disney workers spread out their yoga mats in front of Cinderella's Castle in Florida, while another 1,000

workers started their morning with yoga in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle at Disneyland Resort in California.

Other Disney workers participated at resorts in Hawaii and Vero Beach, Florida; in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle at Dis-

neyland Paris; and in front of Cinderella's Castle at Tokyo Disney Resort. The yoga sessions were conducted virtually at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort and Shanghai Disney. (AP)

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — Jurors at a civil trial found Tuesday that Bill Cosby abused a 16-year-old girl at the Playboy Mansion in 1975.

The Los Angeles County jury delivered the verdict in favor of Judy Huth, who is now 64, and awarded her \$500,000. She said the fact that jurors believed her story meant more than the sum of money or the fact that she didn't win punitive damages.

"It's been torture," Huth said of the seven-year legal fight. "To be ripped apart, you know, thrown under the bus and backed over. This, to me, is such a big victory." Jurors found that Cosby intentionally caused harmful contact with Huth, that he reasonably believed she was under 18, and that his conduct was driven by unnatural or abnormal interest in a minor.

The jurors' decision is a major legal defeat for the 84-year-old entertainer once hailed as America's dad. It comes nearly a year after his Pennsylvania criminal conviction for assault was thrown out and he was freed from prison. Huth's lawsuit was one of the last remaining legal claims against him after his insurer settled many others against his will. (AP)



Evan Rachel Wood attends the premiere of HBO's 'Westworld' Season 4 at Alice Tully Hall on Tuesday, June 21, in New York. (AP)