

## ISSUES

# Baseball, Picasso, Chinese tea — they get things right

**T**here is nothing like getting things right. And nothing beats a baseball game, a big sausage sandwich in one hand and a beer in the other on a summer evening. This was me, last Tuesday, catching a doubleheader at Principal Paid-for-the-naming-rights Park, Sec Taylor Field, at the intersection of the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers, Des Moines, Iowa, U.S.A.

The afternoon heat had abated, the mosquitoes took the night off and the I-Cubs won both games. AAA league baseball is the very last place to see great baseball at a low price in an intimate setting without all the crap that weighs down the Major League venues.

You can live one of those Master Card commercials where they tick off the price of the ingredients of then event, all equaling a priceless experience.

The I-Cubs get things right. From the kids running around the outfield grass racing in burger costumes to the demolished remains of what once was a hot dog coming out of air cannons. The cannons are used by stadium personnel as they drive around the infield in golf carts between innings, shooting pork product into the air above the paying customers. It is an interesting idea, using a comfort food such as a hot dog as a cannon projectile. If I-Cubs owner Michael Gartner wants to have some fun, they should drive several

## COMMUNITY PULSE



**JOHN  
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air cannons around the infield between innings. The tortilla chip cannon can be directly followed by the hot nacho cheese cannon, making the between innings warmups a little more exciting for hungry fans.

Another person who is getting things right is Dan Kavanaugh, owner of the Kavanaugh Art Gallery in Valley Junction. Within the last month they've taken over space just to the north of their gallery and increased space by about another 50 percent. The gallery is jam-packed with paintings and sculptures.

Last Thursday I was getting baked by the sun on the east side of Fifth Street while visiting the Valley Junction Farmers Market, so I stepped inside Kavanaugh to see what was new and enjoy some of the gallery air conditioning. I had to maneuver around a crowd at the front door, jockeying for places in line for hot dogs (where is Michael



An original charcoal drawing by Pablo Picasso titled *Eva on Her Deathbed* from 1915, hangs in the Kavanaugh Art Gallery in Valley Junction.

Gartner's cannon dogs when you need them?) Ten steps inside the front door I was presented with a breathtaking piece of art.

Three original Pablo Picasso charcoal drawings, on display, for sale. Pablo Freakin' Picasso, cubist master of the 20th century.

A Russian painter and friend of Mr. Kavanaugh had brought them in to sell in the gallery last week. Two of them even had nice nameplates, which authenticated them as the work of Pablo Picasso. Close by was also a painting by some bum named Arthur Dove. Mr.

Kavanaugh said it was worth \$185,000, but I was far more interested in the original Picasso for only \$18,000. And did I mention there was a hot dog stand out front? Picasso and dogs in the Junction.

And then there's Gong Fu, a

trendy East Village tea house located at 414 E. Sixth St., just west of the State Historical Building.

Gong Fu is an ancient form of Chinese tea presentation but also means skill through practice (often spelled kung fu). Well, practice has made the experience close to perfect. They only lose points only because I can't get Cheetos at the counter.

But the thoughtfulness behind the entire experience makes an afternoon pot of tea into an elegant and delightful sit down. If you need a moment of peace amid the chaos of life, it is definitely waiting for you there.

You can sample smell many of the teas they sell — currently that number is 123. The samples stand on a tasteful series of inner-illuminated clear shelves in jars. After choosing your tea, which come in names like Ancient Happiness, Cherry Blossom, Monkey Picked Ti Kuan Yin and Jeff Gordon Morning Thunder, you take your seat and they serve you a pot of tea that has been meticulously steeped.

And if you want your tea cold, it even comes in a tall tumbler that has the mouth narrowed just a bit, like a white wine glass, to keep the drink refreshingly chilled. They get it right and without having to shoot hot dogs into the air.

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