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VALLEY LIFE EDITOR
Brendan Garcia
(956) 683-4463
bgarcia@themonitor.com

THE MONITOR

VALLEY LIFE

'POTTER' LEAPS TO THE TOP

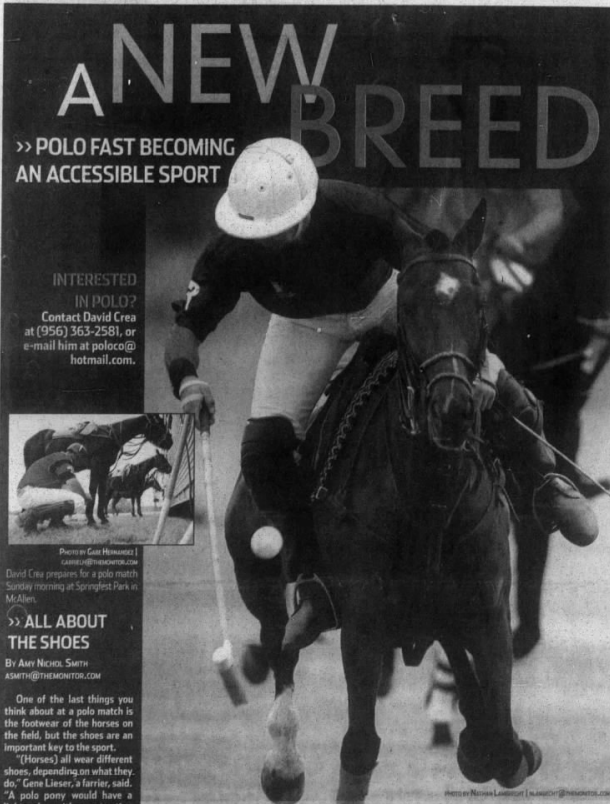
Harry Potter has cast his biggest box-office spell yet with a franchise record \$125.1 million domestically over opening weekend, according to studio estimates

Sunday | 2D

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The first lady stars theatergoers at a Broadway show. | 2D

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INTERESTED IN POLO?
Contact David Crea at (956) 363-2581, or e-mail him at poloco@hotmail.com.

Photo by Gene Hernandez | cread@themonitor.com

David Crea prepares for a polo match Sunday morning at Springlake Park in McAllen.

ALL ABOUT THE SHOES

By Amy Nichol Smith
asmith@themonitor.com

One of the last things you think about as a polo match is the footwear of the horses on the field, but the shoes are an important key to the sport. "Horses" all wear different shoes, depending on what they do," Gene Lieser, a farrier, said. "A polo pony would have a lighter shoe with more traction because they do quick, fast turns on the grass," he said.

Lieser, 39, has been a farrier for 16 years, and for the past decade he has been competing in horseshoeing contests. Last month, Lieser was named the 2010 National Champion at the State Fair of Louisiana.

Now Lieser and three of the top farriers at the competition will go on to battle other teams at the first international team farrier contest in Kentucky. "I just got back from New Hampshire for a practice at another guy's house. We'll probably get together in December, January and February before we go," he said.

Lieser owns four horses, but hasn't had time to ride much lately.

"I've been so busy with work and travel," he said.

The horseshoeing business he owns draws enough clients by word of mouth, and he travels the country and to Canada often for competitions.

Lieser recently vied for the title of World Champion at the 31st annual Calgary Stampede World Championship Blacksmiths' Competition. Several people from 12 different countries fought it out, and Lieser earned the honor of being named the fifth best farrier in the world.

By Amy Nichol Smith
asmith@themonitor.com

In *Pretty Woman*, Vivian (Julia Roberts) chased on the players at a polo match with an inappropriate Arsenal Hall-inspired "Woof, woof, woof." While the outburst earned her side-eye stances from other spectators, Vivian was dressed well for the charity event.

Though glamour has been preserved at high society events, designer threads and big, floppy hats aren't required to attend a local polo match.

"Oh, no, you come as you want to," said McAllen Polo Club manager David Crea. "It's very laid back and a lot of families come and bring their dogs. No, it's not like what you see in the movies where you got to wear the fancy hats and everything."

The McAllen Polo Club is a new addition in the United States Polo Association, and they're always looking for new players and sponsors, Crea said.

"It's wasn't for Dr. Rebecca Rivas, polo wouldn't be in the area," Crea, 56, said. "It wouldn't exist out a long time ago, but through his efforts, enough people have been recruited to keep it going."

Traditionally, polo attracts the wealthy—from the players to the spectators—but it is quickly becoming a more casual sport.

In 2006, Lauren model and professional polo player Ignacio "Nacho" Figueroa took his first step toward making polo

more accessible in the United States.

The 24-year-old Argentine helped start the Vespene Ciquepo Manhattan Polo Classic on Governors Island in New York. The second year, the charity event drew 6,000 people, and this year, the polo match more than doubled that number to 15,000, according to Figueroa in an *L.A. Times* article.

Camille Rich had polo on her list of things to do after surviving breast cancer. The 43-year-old special education diagnostician owns one horse and began taking polo lessons with Crea in March.

As the only local female polo player in the club, Rich might get a little ribbing from her fellow teammates.

"Well, maybe behind my back, not to my face," she joked. "No, they're all really good guys and they all accepted me as part of the team."

Rich has owned as many as nine horses in the past, and she's tried other equestrian sports, but none of them have lived up to polo.

"I love it. It's about staying on your horse and it's... all the other (horse) sports focus on how you look and what your horse is doing, and all that sounds lame, but (for me) it's not a ribbon. It's to win a game," Rich said. "So it's a whole different take on what you're using your horse for."

There's another side to polo that you won't see televised on an obscure sports channel. Crea has been playing since he was 15 years old.

"I just love the game. I love the camaraderie. We play playing it, the thrill of sitting on top of a 1,000 pound horse and running down the field hitting a ball and the competitiveness of it," he said. "I've been around horses all my life, and probably will be the rest of my life, more than likely."

There are some basic requirements to play polo, most importantly is the ability to ride a horse. The next step, Rich said, is to come out and watch a game.

"You can always start with what they call a foot mule. You hit a ball on the ground and just practice your shots and coordination," she said. "Next then picture yourself on your horse doing that and you can always take a lesson. Talk to some of the guys. You just got to come see it."

The weekend games played at Springlake Park in South McAllen are free to watch, but the season is coming to a close soon. The McAllen Polo Club will play the last two matches of the year at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 27, and 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 28. Polo will resume at the park February through April next year.

Amy Nichol Smith covers features and entertainment for The Monitor. She can be reached at (956) 363-4420.

SURFACE TREATMENT
NANCY MOYER

Metaphor for truth



"Water-Spring," wood, Lucite and metal

For Susan Fitzsimmons, transparency serves as a metaphor for truth. It is through this perception that she explores environmental issues in the visible. "On the Edge," now on display at the Art House Gallery. Exhibited works include paintings and sculptures.

Almost immediately, the sculptural work demands attention. Forceful images of stratified water are depicted through brilliantly worked slabs of transparent Lucite. The water images are bound on one or two sides with roughly hewn wood, giving a sense of contained energy.

Fitzsimmons considers these pieces as recycled; she resuscitated her own damaged works from a time when she lived in New York, giving them a second life.

"Metal, carving, and other recent modifications," explained Fitzsimmons, "have helped me see the timeless fascination we humans have with seeing through things, to the heart of the matter."

The transparent character of the Lucite in these sculptures is a powerful element. "Water in Winter" holds the viewer's attention with its emotional counterbalancing of the warm tone of the wood combined with the icy Lucite.

Fitzsimmons' paintings address environmental issues in terms of transparent layering. Thin veiled colors and tones reveal earlier layers of action and intent.

"The subject matter, transparency and water, I've been working on for more than thirty-five years," said Fitzsimmons. "The paintings series is what I've been doing for the last 10 to 15 years. Stephen Jay Gould inspires this particular series. He talks about the cycles of time, and the book that really got to me was 'Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle' starting with deep geological time and how we perceive the universe. It's something that has fascinated me, also reading about biology for many years."

In these paintings the artist evokes Gould's layers of time through the illusion of overlap and shadow depth. The painting "When Did I Get from Here?" suggests dynamic temporal overlap. Time is still in the process of layering. We have the past with its build-up of prehistoric strata, but we can't yet see the future strata. What will it be?

Centuring toward an arctic painting, Fitzsimmons explains by saying, "This is 'This Day,' which is a idea of where we are environmentally." In "Genesis," a small fetal figure is abstracted and its humanity is lost. The painting is hands, predominantly black and white. Last colors are visible as subordinate layers, from under a dark climate.

There are several watercolor series from a 2004 series that incorporate the artist's poems, which are painted onto the imagery. Two of these works, "As a Cantaway" and "Was," are informed by very different poems. However, in both works the time continuum is not seen as a desirable force, and each reflects on its implications.

"These environmental issues never seem to resolve themselves," remarked Fitzsimmons, "although their urgency for our survival continues to increase with time."

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art from UTRP, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rpm.com.