

THE BLUE ANGELS ARE FLYING AGAIN »

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MAY 2014

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Good Break

BRYAN CRANSTON is back in the spotlight with a new movie and a hit Broadway play



JUST IN TIME FOR THE KENTUCKY DERBY, **CHURCHILL DOWNS** GETS A MAKEOVER

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(pg. 14)



The Rhythm of Time

LONGTIME READERS OF this column may remember an entry called “Green Grow the Rushes,” which ran in the April 15, 2009, issue of *American Way*. It was a yarn fastened with yearning and appreciation for what I believe to be one of the prettiest parts of America: the grasslands in and around Oelwein, Iowa, which is set in the northeast corridor of the state but is in the middle of America. My story was a celebration of the Rockwellian landscape; of sprawling lawns accented by white Victorian gazebos and blooming flower beds; of oak and elm and crabapple trees rustling in the breeze; of the flanking rivers and tributaries meandering through the heartland as they make their way to the mighty Mississippi River to the east; of a section of the country awash in Twainian charm, to be sure.

And longtime readers of this column may softly avow — not aloud, but to themselves — that much has changed — locally, corporately, globally — in the five years that have elapsed since I wrote “Green Grow the Rushes,” only my 14th column in *American Way*.

It’s these ideas of change and the precipitating causes and effects that have been on my mind lately, and that have worked their way into my more recent *American Way* columns (this one marks my 135th, as we’ve been coming out twice a month for 27 years, and I started in October 2008).

Let’s start with assessing the ratio of change to stay-the-same stories in this issue. In the “change” category, we have the very striking Bryan Cranston (page 68), who has put on plenty of post-Walter White weight and is about to play a witty scientist in the forthcoming *Godzilla* and who currently plays former president LBJ on Broadway, both characters a change from his *Breaking Bad* days (and an even greater change from his *Malcolm in the Middle* days). Churchill Downs, host of the

pomp and pageantry that is the Kentucky Derby, is 140 years old, but that didn’t stop its brain trust from implementing \$14.5 million in changes, including a 171-foot-wide, 90-foot-tall video board, the largest in the world (page 36). And could a fundamental change have occurred vis-à-vis the idea that home ownership is the pinnacle of achieving the American dream (page 52)?

In the “stay the same” category, we have a comprehensive and compelling roundup of presidential residences from throughout our country’s history (page 76). Perhaps the most defining element of the various dwellings is how well they’re preserved (and the lengths to which their caretakers go to ensure they remain devoid of change). A very thought-provoking and cerebral article about preserving our favorite literary franchises long after the deaths of their creators adds weight to the maxim, “The more things change, the more they stay the same” (page 60), and the tried and true aerobatics of the Navy’s Blue Angels entertain millennials just as enticingly as they did the Greatest Generation when the Angels formed in 1946 (page 44).

Which is a good segue to the twin virtues of change and consistency as they pertain to *American Way*. What you can expect from us is the same award-winning and compelling writing, photography, illustration and design that you’ve come to look forward to since our founding in the winter of 1966. That will not change, not on my watch nor on that of my successors, whenever that day should come. But we are changing our look and our frequency a bit. For starters, I’d like to introduce our “Final Approach” section (page 95), highlighting all the goings-on within our company, as well as our terminal and route maps, which, taken with the content — including our new “In Their Own Words” column, where one of our pilots, flight attendants, gate agents or fleet clerks tells his or her story (page 120) — further the message from within our company.

Same great content, to be sure, but at a more sustained frequency. Starting this month, *American Way* will be published on the first of the month, and will remain in your seatbacks for the entirety of the month. In so doing, we will provide you with more content and a more robust



magazine. But we know that many of you like the additional travel and human-interest reading material more often, and we were specifically thinking about you when we implemented this new change: Starting this month, all of our *Nexus* magazine content will be translated into English and published on aa.com/nexus, so you can read — for free — our award-winning Spanish- and Portuguese-language in-flight magazine, if, like me, you’re not trilingual.

It’s been 121 columns since I last wrote about Oelwein, Iowa, and now’s the most apropos time to revisit this Midwestern hamlet. Perhaps no other place in America so accurately reflects the change-while-staying-the-same mentality. The aesthetic of Oelwein has waxed and waned over the centuries while the population ebbed and flowed right along with the U.S. economy. But these days, Oelwein is rising up and remaking itself while being ever mindful of its past. A new wellness center, performing-arts center and library were recently erected, and the historic Main Street downtown district, a hollowed-out ghost town for years, has a new streetscape, which embraces its historic railroad-town roots. Eleven parks help maintain the Twainian splendor of the area, and even the new streetlights resemble Victorian gas lamps. “We don’t want to forget where we came from,” says Oelwein Chamber Coordinator Deb Howard. “We relish where we came from and what made us who we are today. We don’t want to be stagnant.”

To be sure.



ADAM PITLUK
Editor

-  Want to talk to Adam? Reach him at editor@americanwaymag.com
-  Want to read Adam’s past columns? Visit aa.com/americanway and click on “Editor’s Note.”