

O Little Town of Bethlehem Popping Up All Over the Big Big World

The Bethlehem Gadfly Fun Stuff, Local Color August 18, 2019

*(The Gadfly invites your “local color” reflections of this sort***)*

Michael Colón is a lifelong Bethlehem resident and enthusiast. He also moonlights as a City Councilman.

Dear Gadfly,

Now that we’ve closed out another Musikfest that brought people from near and far to our fine city, I wanted to share recent experiences that truly highlight how coincidental life is. Both involve trips out of state; both involve our two colleges.

The first happenstance was last month while I was on a trip out west. One arid, Arizona evening some of my extended family took me out to Sedona to see a desert sunset. Whilst hiking up a large rock, we noticed a young man perched way ahead atop the crag. His father was in earshot of our comments and shared he unfortunately didn’t have his phone to capture this great photo opportunity. My aunt volunteered to text it to him, while asking for his number. “717” he started before we interrupted him. Turns out the family is from Lancaster meeting up with their son while he’s on a one-man road show in a used RV for the summer because he just earned his master’s degree from our very own Lehigh University. The young man negotiated with his employer, located in Bethlehem Township, to start after Labor Day, allowing him this chance to see the country all summer in his hopefully reliable used RV. As he descended, we had a chance to speak to the young man named Justin. My family and I shared we’re Bethlehem folk too. We wished him well in his travels and

career, then continued on as strangers passing on a rock, 2500 miles from home, known to each other only because of the need for a cell phone camera. If his father would've had his phone, would we even know that we've all come from one tiny area of earth all this way to share this view of AZ together on an even smaller patch of earth? Likely not.

The second event occurred a couple weeks ago. On a hot Saturday with nothing on the schedule for either of us, my girlfriend and I decided to hit the beach (or go down the shore). We chose Point Pleasant for no reason other than my youngest brother talks about it. We walked up the boardwalk, choosing a beach entrance at random. As we paid to get onto the sand, we were instructed to wait for "one of the guys" who would give us a beach umbrella. Our "guy" working on the beach was a teenager who after telling us to follow him turned around displaying a Moravian College drawstring bag on his back. We immediately shared with the young beach-hand that we're from Bethlehem. "Is that near Moravian?" he asked. Turns out this 16-year-old Jersey Shore local is the son of someone in a management position at the college. He knew Moravian is a college where his dad worked and that it isn't close to home. He learned locals from Bethlehem like to tell him about it. After kindly helping us plant our umbrella, he returned to work; my girlfriend tuned out my drumming about how coincidental this was, and I got sunburn on my foot. Out of all the beach towns we chose that one, out of all the beach entrances we chose that one, and out of all the employees helping out we got that one. What are the chances?

I share these stories because I'm fascinated by luck, fate, coincidence, or whatever other word you want to attach to it. We'll never truly know how many close encounters pass us by, but when we do become aware of the stranger on the desert rock or the kid at the beach, it is a unique experience. Admittedly I'll always be partial to the ones about our not so little town of Bethlehem.

Thanks for reading, and if you feel so inclined, please share your stories of Bethlehem turning up in unexpected places outside the Valley.

Michael

**** From the Gadfly [About](#) page: “Local Color: original creative work with recognizably local Bethlehem subjects or connections — art, poems, mini-essays, vignettes, photographs, songs — that help us see or think about our town and townspeople in interesting ways.” Please do follow Michael’s lead and take him up on his invitation.*