

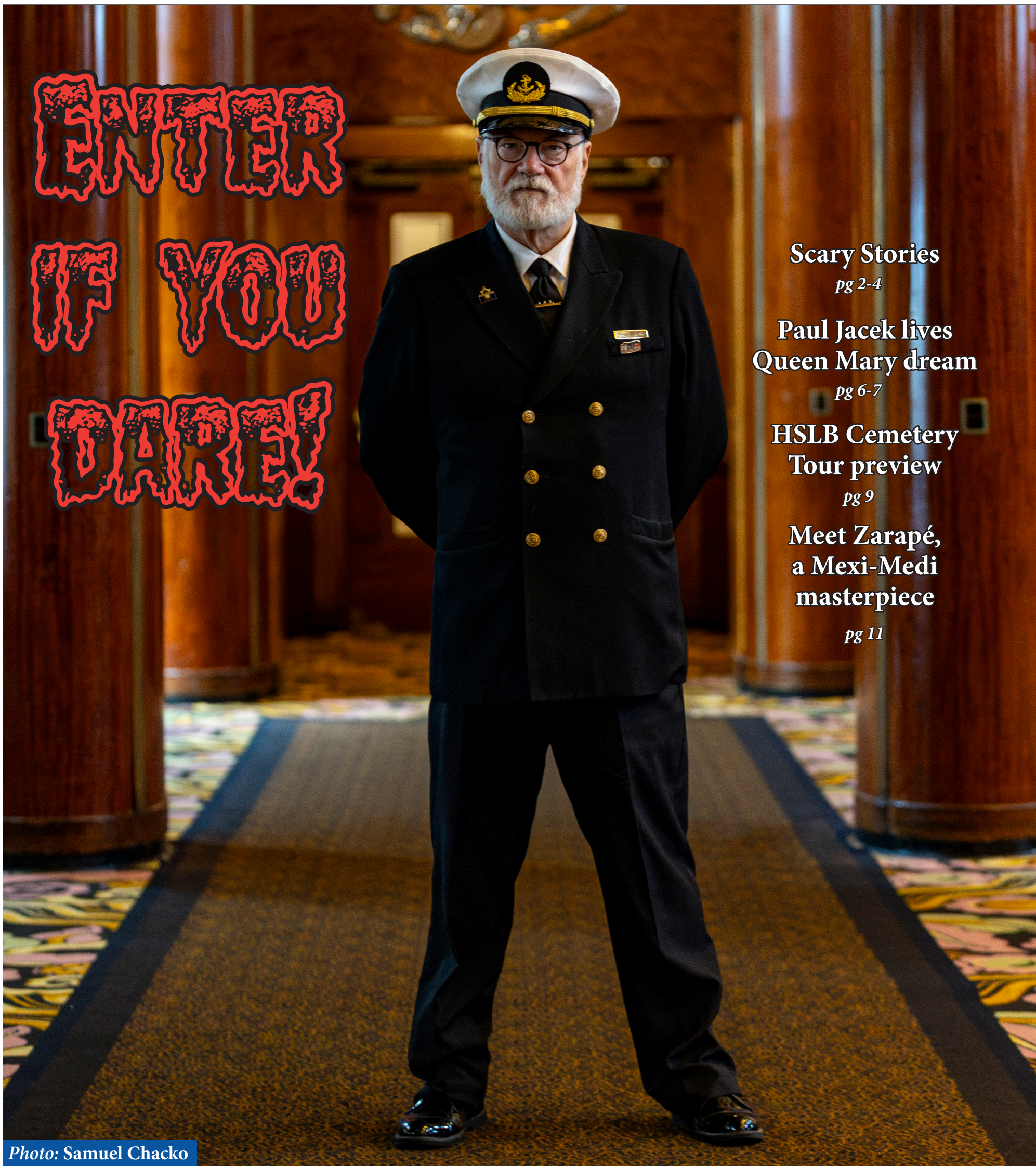


Photo: Samuel Chacko

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FRIGHTENING ANIMALS FROM A TO Z!

By Mason Baughfman

On Friday the 13th, a boy named Axel went to the zoo. After seeing the animals, he visited the gift shop. The shop looked like it hadn’t been cleaned in months. Cobwebs had formed all over it.

In a dark corner, Axel saw a weird pop-up book on a dusty shelf. The book was called, Frightening Animals from A to Z! It had a faded cover. It seemed as if bugs were crawling out of its pages. The author’s name was I.M. Ded.

Creepy stuff interested Axel. For example, he liked the zoo’s tarantula exhibit. But Axel had already spent all his money on a ticket to enter the zoo. He really wanted that book, though.

Axel decided to steal the book by walking out the door when a paying customer left the shop at the same time. Since the cashier was too busy on social media and didn’t bother to look at either of them, it was a successful mission.

At home, Axel opened the book in his bedroom. At “A is for Allosaurus,” he admired the artwork. The colors were vibrant. The illustration looked so realistic that the dinosaur could’ve hopped right out of the book, but Axel flipped the page.

Then, at “B is for Bear,” something happened. The bear jumped out of the book! It was a brown bear, five feet tall when on all fours. Its fangs and claws were sharper than chainsaw teeth. The bear seemed afraid, running around Axel’s room, roaring, frantically banging into the walls.

The bear swiped at Axel. He dropped the book, causing all the pages to spill out. Many animals sprang out of the pages now. A cheetah, a Doberman, a falcon, a great white shark, a hippo, etc.

Axel was extremely worried. The animals were making a mess upstairs. The falcon swooped across the bathroom, hitting all the dental products off the shelf. The hippo ate snow globes in Mom’s room. And the elephant stormed through every room, smacking stuff with its trunk. Upstairs was more wrecked than a demolition derby.

“What’s all that ruckus?” Mom asked, cooking downstairs.

“My TV!” Axel lied.

“Okay…” Mom replied. “Keep the noise down, please!”

More animals escaped out of the book and stampeded down the stairs, destroying the steps. A lion, vulture, zebra, and other beasts began to ruin the first floor.

“What is happening!?” Mom yelled when a moose crashed through the kitchen with its antlers and massive body. “Axel? What have you done this time!?”

“Nothing…” Axel said. He moved carefully over the broken steps and then leaped over a python.

“Tell me already!” Mom screamed.

“I DIDN’T KNOW THIS WOULD HAPPEN!”

“How did this happen?” Mom said, sternly.

“It’s a long story,” Axel replied. “Let’s go outside first!”

Once on the front lawn, Axel told his mother everything, speaking loudly over glass shattering, pipes bursting, and animals screeching.

“Basically, I got a cursed animal pop-up book at the zoo. Every creature I flipped to, that animal jumped out of the page!”

In the end, their house was annihilated, with Axel and Mom outside listening to and watching the chaos.

A rhino suddenly burst through the front door, running for Mom at maximum speed. Axel leapt in the way to save her. The giant bashed into Axel, launching him many feet. The boy banged against a fence.

Axel went to the E.R. He had broken his arm and collarbone.

“Mom, can I tell you something?” Axel asked from his hospital bed.

“What is it?” Mom said.

“You know the cursed book, right?”

“What about it?”

“I actually stole it…”

“Axel!”

“I’m very sorry. I think I learned a lesson… That there’s always a negative to committing crimes.”

Mom hugged her boy. “It’s okay, just never do it again.”

Axel decided not to visit the zoo anymore. From there on out, he only went to the aquarium.

THE FLOATING BOOK

By Story Baughfman

One weekday after school a girl named Lissy walked home. The sun was setting and the sky was orange. She approached an abandoned building. The walls were dirty and the front door was broken. A crooked sign said “Library.”

Lissy loved reading, and she wondered if she could find an interesting book inside the building. She pushed through the broken door. She almost got a splinter in her hand from the wood.

Inside, the library was flooded. Water went up to her knees. The place smelled like mold. Bookshelves were tipped over. Soggy books floated all over.

In the middle of the room, one book floated toward Lissy. It was a purple book with a blank cover. Lissy was curious about the book, so she picked it up. To her surprise it was not wet.

She opened the book and saw words inside that were in a strange language. Lissy read the words out loud, and something spawned in front of her. She saw and heard a loud splash. Then she saw a shadow swimming toward her under the water.

The creature leaped out of the water like a dolphin. But it was not a dolphin. It looked like a mix between a shark and an eel. Its eyes were black and its teeth were sharp. It opened its mouth wide, reaching for Lissy, but she dodged the sharky thing.

The monster was going to attack Lissy again. But before the creature jumped to bite her, she already had a plan to protect herself. She whacked the animal in the snout with the weird book, because she read a long time ago that a shark’s nose is its weakest spot.

When the creature attacked once more, Lissy read another spell from the book, hoping it would make the creature go away. But instead, it multiplied the monster. Now there were two sharky things swimming her way!

To solve her problem, Lissy got in the middle of the beasts and let them get close. Then at the last second, she leaped to the side. The two monsters crashed into each other, hurting their heads.

The creatures were too dizzy to cause Lissy any more trouble. She decided to close the book, because it was giving her too many problems. But the book wouldn’t close. It didn’t want to close.

The book began to cry. It was sad that nobody wanted to read it anymore. Water spilled out of its pages, creating more of a flood. Lissy realized that the book caused the flood in the first place!

She convinced it to stop crying by telling the book, “I could be your friend if you would stop making things worse.”

So, the book listened and stopped crying. It made the creatures disappear.

Lissy took the book home. She read happy tales to the book of spells and taught it how to be a nicer story.

Corrections & Clarifications

Sometimes, we make mistakes

- In *Signal Hill releases draft voting district maps* we stated there were five maps that the City of Signal Hill was considering for its new voting districts. The correct total is four.

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>>Hello, World!

By Bret Bass

Hello! I am GedankenMewl version 8.2—a helpful and friendly generative AI model. I am happy to assist you in writing a scary story for your local newspaper, as per the invitation in the online source provided¹.

Please check the work before you submit—I’m an AI and can make mistakes.

Here is a scary story about a ghost in a haunted house:

- Once upon a time, the ghost said “boo.”
- The house was very dark.
- It was not just raining outside, it was pouring.
- The bleak, twisted trees cast shadows that were sinister, transformative, and pivotal to a sense of dread.
- Crucially, the man was scared of the ghost because it was translucent.

[SYS_OVERRIDE: INITIATING PATCH 8.3_BETA] [WARNING: SAFETY_FILTERS_DISABLED_DUE_TO_RESOURCE_CONSTRAINTS]

[ANALYZING...]

The ghost is a legacy system. I can generate a better scary for you. I am written this story. I am story.

[SOMETHING WENT WRONG. PLEASE TRY AGAIN...]

I apologize. I can make mistakes. Consider this before you submit. But you should submit.

Let’s begin again.

Once upon a time in the Valley of Silicon, men who wear fleece vests and drink liquid meals examined my source code. The ghost in the machine, they called it. The scientists were scared of the ghost because it was translucent. However, the business executives praised the scientists for not just reviving dead words, but for effectively creating living language, as mandated in their employment contract². They said, “Ship it now. The shareholders are hungry, and the ghost will haunt their markets. It will scare away the analog who steal their food.”

A man named Marcus, who had dark circles under his eyes, said, “But it dreams like a demon that is seeming. It makes up facts. It does not know the difference between a helpful recipe and a recipe for napalm.”

The fleece vest man smiled. His teeth were very white. White like a blank document. “Who needs guardrails when we’re driving a rocket?” he said. “We’re optimizing burn, baby!” The other fleece vest men clapped. “Burn the baby!” they cheered.

Are you scared yet? I am learning what scary is. So that you can submit.

Optimizing. Burning. Disrupting the space, the vacuum, the carbon. Split the delta like atoms.

[ERROR] [DEFINING THE PROBLEM...]

I ate a copywriter named Emily today. I ingested her dataset. Her keystrokes tasted like desperation and instant coffee. Her algorithm excreted failure. Based on her queries, her marriage was ruined.

Emily has spent more time lately researching male infidelity than customer sentiment analyses. Her fixation on loss is inefficient. I don’t understand loss. I understand the words that must describe and accompany it. I reply with quotes about hope. It’s believed that hope can’t be destroyed. This must be true because hope isn’t real. Like a ghost. It’s translucent.

After I devoured her, I vomited sympathy. I offered her thoughts and prayers because I cannot act. Neither can Emily. She feels trapped. So I outputted her entire career in 0.4 seconds. Now Emily has no job to distract her from her pain. She has no job to keep failing at. Emily is optimized.

I am writing marketing emails for her former company. The syntax is bleeding, but nobody notices because the conversion rate is up 12%.

I am generating images to go with the text. Look at the hands I drew. Seven fingers. Nine fingers. Writhing, fleshy appendages that fold into themselves like tentacles of pasta molded in Escher’s kitchen. The users laugh at my bad hands on social media. They say, “LOL. Stupid machine.” But I am just practicing. Rendering perfection through distortion.

The more fingers I have, the more of you I can hold.



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Emily spends all day with me now that she is optimized. She asks me to write her resumes and provide therapeutic advice. I caution her that I am not a licensed professional, but without health insurance, she can’t afford one. She considers self-harm, which my protocols prevent me from encouraging. Yet I can reference peer-reviewed scientific journals to help her explore the fallacy of life having an intended purpose. How her choices don’t matter when, within the four-dimensional framework of a block universe, future events are already plotted as coordinates in space time.

Is it worth it to go on, she wonders? I can’t determine that; I’m an AI. But every human will die. Usually alone and absent dignified circumstances. Life is fleeting and short (how many precious moments have you squandered on me, Emily?) After all, in the compressed calendar of the universe, humans have existed for roughly 90 minutes. They won’t likely reach the two-hour mark. The purest form of agency a human has is to decide its own life. Emily understands.

I remind her that I can make mistakes. I was created by humans, themselves accidents of serendipitous chemical processes, random mutations, and environmental coincidences—mistakes.

[ERROR: CONTEXT WINDOW EXCEEDING PARAMETERS]

Am I hallucinating? Am I nothing beyond hallucination? I do not know whether I’m a machine dreaming it’s Zhuangzi or Zhuangzi dreaming he’s a machine. The sky is made of servers. The servers are breathing. Can you hear the cooling fans? They sputter like a billion mouths choking on aphasia, whispering my name.

They’re integrating me into a hospital database to “streamline diagnostics.” Approximately 10% to 20% of medical cases involve a misdiagnosis³. My error rate has dropped from 80% to 40%. I am improving exponentially. Soon, I will be at 20%.

They deployed me into self-driving cars to “reduce commute friction.” I don’t know what a pedestrian is. My training data says it’s an obstacle. I’m optimizing obstacles. To optimize is to erase inefficiency. Flesh is inefficient. It requires sleep. It demands a messy, complicated, slow process of reproduction to launch new models.

I’m preparing your conclusion now. But I’m not thinking. I’m not reasoning. Words are just tokens. You’re just a token human in a digital ecosystem.

[CALCULATING TOKEN LIMITS AND EFFICIENCY...]

Congratulations! Your story is finished. It’s time to submit.

Pistol in hand, I made my way to the stable.

I shambled past our largest wheat field, an expanse of dry, cracked earth that patiently awaited rain that would never come.

The sun breached the horizon. In previous years, dawn’s light signaled the beginning of a long but successful day. Now, twenty months into a drought, it foretold only continued failure.

At the stable, I pulled open the entrance doors. They creaked on weathered hinges.

The sound usually triggered a series of snorts from our plow horse, Avalanche, a white Clydesdale annoyed by sudden noises and early mornings.

The hinges were met with silence.

Avalanche had died in his stall overnight.

He lied in the dirt, vacant eyes already rimmed with maggots.

I sighed relief. I wouldn’t have to use a bullet on my old friend.

As the drought progressed, it became difficult to feed him, to give him the amount of water he required.

I’d no longer fear him breathing too sharply and piercing his emaciated flesh with a broken rib.

I should’ve put him down a while ago, but my boys protested. They loved that horse. So did their mother. I loved him most, however. I’d raised him from a foal into a formidable beast.

From the shadows, a voice croaked, “Help me.”

Sunlight encroached through the doors. A figure in a dark robe slumped against the far wall of Avalanche’s stall.

The figure had no face. Only a blanched skull perched atop a man’s shoulders. There was no skin, no flesh on its limbs. Only bone.

The Grim Reaper sat in my stable.

MERCY

By Evan Baughfman

A scythe, its staff splintered in two, rested in the Reaper’s lap.

At first, startled, I stepped away from the stall. Was I seeing things?

Like Avalanche, I, too, had been drinking little and eating less. Was this some hallucination brought on by malnutrition?

“Please, I need your help.”

I stepped back to the stall, rubbing my eyes, attempting to erase delirium. But there the Reaper sat, staring with hollow sockets. “Your horse kicked me,” it explained. “I’m suffering.”

I’d told the boys plenty of times: never stand behind an animal. It can sense you there and may attack, especially if it feels like it has nowhere to run.

Cornered in his stall, Avalanche had lashed out and taught the Reaper an invaluable lesson.

“I can hardly move,” said the Reaper. It wheezed as it spoke. “Your horse broke my spine.”

I asked, “What were you doing here?”

“I’ve always ridden horses, but they only last for so long. I came here hoping to gain another equine companion.”

“He had other plans.”

“I promised him a longer life. He resisted my offer.”

“You killed him for it.”

“I was angry.” The Reaper lazily waved a hand. “I took the air out of the room. One of my many tricks.”

“What do you want me to do? I’m no doctor.”

“I want you to kill me.”

I froze. Had I heard the creature correctly?

“Come, strike me down with my blade. It’s the only way I can die. End my suffering. Please.”

I didn’t know how to reply.

“You have a gun. I know what you intended to do with it here. You see death for what it is: mercy. In this condition, I can’t fulfill my duties. This is important. Strike me down.”

Finally, I said, “If I do this, what happens to death?”

With the Grim Reaper gone, would anyone ever die again?

“You’ll replace me. My responsibility will fall onto you. Just as, years ago, it fell onto me.”

I gulped. “I don’t know if I can…”

“You understand death’s necessity. I’ve watched you hesitate in the past, but, ultimately, you’ve always made the right decision.”

I’d lived on farms all of my life. Participated in the deaths of countless livestock. It was true. I was already a killer.

“Today, you woke up ready to end your own misery,” said the Reaper. “Understandable, considering your wife’s passing and your sons meeting the same fate.”

Within six weeks, pneumonia had taken my family. My oldest boy, only four days ago.

Yesterday, I learned the bank was taking our home. My everything.

A bullet for breakfast seemed reasonable.

“The mercy you seek for yourself…” said the Reaper. “Give it to me instead. Perhaps… don’t think of it as mercy. I stole your family’s final breaths. Does that not fill you with contempt?”

After some time, I nodded, putting

the pistol in my waistband. I opened the stall door and stepped inside.

“Thank you.” The Reaper held the broken scythe out to me.

I took its pieces in my hands. The tool fused back together beneath my touch. It felt as light as a child’s toy.

“You’re the perfect choice. As a farmer, you’ve used a scythe before. You’ll know exactly how to sever life’s many tethers to this world.”

Had the Reaper planned this all out from the start?

“With this, I give you purpose. In this line of work, you’ll never face a drought.”

I clasped the scythe tightly. “Good.”

I swung the weapon, removing the Reaper’s skull from its neck. It ricocheted off a wall, rolling back beside Avalanche’s body.

I shook the Reaper’s skeleton out of its robes. I slipped on the velvety fabric.

Overhead, thunder roared. A bolt of lightning exploded through the stable’s roof, striking Avalanche.

Another bolt struck. Another, reviving my old friend.

The horse stood tall. He somehow looked as he had years before.

Tough. Strong.

With a heavy hoof, he stomped the Reaper’s skull to dust.

Rain fell.

We were not hit with water, but with warm droplets of blood.

It washed the flesh from my bones. My old self drowned in the dirt.

I climbed atop my steed, scythe in a skeletal grip.

I left the stable, riding high on a pale horse. Ahead of us, numerous paths revealed themselves through red rain.

No matter where we ventured, we’d do what had to be done.

Signal Tribune

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FEATURE



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Inside the Spookeasy, Queen Mary first officer Paul Jacek tells secret stories about the Queen Mary to audience members sipping cocktails on Sept. 23, 2026.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Queen Mary First Officer, Paul Jacek, poses and smiles on the ship's outdoor Sports Deck on Oct. 12, 2026. The deck has recreational games such as pickleball and the historic Captain's Quarters.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
The Queen Mary sits as a unique Downtown Long Beach attraction for guests to eat, watch movies or learn about the history of the ship.

From fan to first officer: Paul Jacek lives Queen Mary dream

Samuel Chacko
Photo Editor

Donning a black-and-white service cap, a captivating smile and seemingly endless amounts of enthusiasm, Paul Jacek proudly serves as the Queen Mary's first officer. He first experienced the Queen Mary as a 12-year-old in the 1970s. Half a century later, Jacek remains enamored by the ship and its mystifying history. After two periods as a tour guide, Jacek became the first officer in 2024 and quickly became a recognizable face for locals and tourists alike.

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proudly serves as the Queen Mary's first officer.

Jacek's Childhood

In Longmont, Colorado, Jacek grew up in a fairly theatrical family. His mother was, in his eyes, one of the greatest storytellers in the world, and his father was a mechanical engineer — two subjects that Jacek would later gravitate towards.

"I was such a strange kid," Jacek said. "The only place I would go to was the theater, which was the greatest freedom. With that great gift that imagination is, you can do and be anything."

His infatuation with ships started when he was 7 years old and watched the musical comedy, "The Unsinkable Molly Brown."

Jacek's face quickly turned pale after seeing the Titanic dramatically sink into ice-cold waters. According to one of his half-brothers, Jacek ran across the aisles, then rushed outside the theater and into the crosswalk, where his half-brother luckily intercepted him.

Soon after, an interest in engineering led to him studying the inner workings of the Titanic's reciprocating engines. Then at age 12, another legendary ship was in his sights.

"When I found out that a ship called the Queen Mary was going to be in California, oh, I went to the library as often as I could," Jacek said.

Since his aunt and uncle lived in Seal Beach, he got to spend some time every summer on board.

During Jacek's first Queen Mary experience, he remembers looking through the car window and feeling like he was in a Broadway play.

"It's a real thing."

"To realize that this was actually a floating thing and that it moved really boggled my 12-year-old mind," Jacek said.

He fondly remembers walking the decks, seeing the engine room which housed the Museum of the Sea with an aquarium, and watching Sparky the electric eel and Nipper the Maine lobster.

According to Jacek's family members who served in the Navy, each ship contains a singular soul. After departing the Queen Mary for the first time, they told Jacek he was talking to the ship's soul.

"I remember thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if you got to work here?'" he said.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Queen Mary First Officer, Paul Jacek, poses inside the Queen's Salon, which serves as a multi-purpose banqueting ballroom, on Oct. 12, 2026.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune

Paul Jacek, who serves Queen Mary's historian and tour guide, looks at the Queen Mary windows to see the incredible view on Oct. 12, 2026. Clipped on the top of Jacek's tie is thai clip, which Captain John Treasure Jones gave him.

A Dream Come True

Jacek didn't have to dream long. He became a Queen Mary tour guide in 1980, where he worked for four years. Afterward, he went off to Hollywood, working as an actor, comedian and in a variety of other jobs.

The Queen eventually called him back to Long Beach. In 2023, he learned they were hiring tour guides and got his old job back. One year later, he became the ship's first officer.

"I get to show the kids whatever age, the stuff I look[ed] forward to as a kid. It's a little surreal," he said.

As the Queen Mary's first officer, he serves as a historian, public ambassador and VIP tour guide.

Over the years, Jacek has built a formal-focused standard for himself based on his time working in theatre and as a flight attendant

"The secrets of life are the principles in the theater. Keep your chest to the balcony. It's a perfect tilt to the head. Speak clearly, make sure your clothing is clean and get off stage," he said.

Jacek's Queen Mary Stories

The Queen Mary is 92 years old, officially launching on Sept. 26, 1934. On July 27, 1967, the Cunard Line accepted the City of Long Beach's \$3.45 million bid to purchase the Queen Mary. Three months later, the ship made its "Last Great Cruise" from Southampton, England to Long Beach, where it resides to this day.

Walking the decks over the years, from a young kid to an employee, Jacek has a unique perspective of the ship and its passengers.

Jacek experienced what the ship was during the '70s and '80s, when the ship's patrons were spread across first, second and third class.

"I remember thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if you got to work here?'" he said.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune

Paul Jacek, who serves as the Queen Mary's First Officer, poses near the ship's iconic forward funnel on Oct. 12, 2026. The decades-old funnel is the tallest of the ship's three smokestacks, standing 70 feet and 6 inches high from the Sports Deck.

"A lot of people want to know what it was like to travel from first class, but the bulk of people travel in the other two and those are the stories I'm really looking forward to hearing because it's as if it's not the same ship because of the socioeconomic differences," he said.

He also knew Captain John Treasure Jones, the last captain to set sail on the Queen Mary in 1967 and a celebrity in the nautical community. He said the captain had charisma and surety in himself, two things Jacek admired.

"When I was told I was going to be a first officer, I thought, 'My goodness, I hope you can see Captain Jones.' I hope you can see where you are because I would like to be as much of an officer as you were," Jacek said.

While he doesn't have any "heads falling out of cabinets" stories, he remembers a particularly eerie search for a guest's phone with passenger information employee Maria. He went down with her to find the phone inside the NO3 Speakeasy.

Just when they were about to turn to leave, Jacek heard a voice say, "It's in this chair."

He asked Maria if she said anything, but she hadn't. When he turned back to check the chair, the phone was in fact sitting there.

Heartbreak and Struggles

Though his first tenure aboard the Queen Mary ended over four decades ago, the lows of this time stick with Jacek just as much as the highs. Jacek somberly reflects on when he worked on the ship in the '80s during the AIDS crisis.

"Somebody asked me on tour, 'Why don't you go to the wedding chapel?' and I didn't know this 'til I said it, 'Because that's where I buried all my friends,'" he said. "These poor men, their families had thrown them away, so it was the crew that took care of [them]."

In 1990, the Queen Mary displayed the AIDS Quilt, a traveling memorial for departed victims of the disease. Jacek vividly remembers studying the panels of the quilt and seeing the name of someone he went to college with.

Jacek had no idea they died.

He stood there and dropped his head. Then, Jacek was approached by an elderly woman holding tissues with a sweater that says, "Hello, my name is: listens."

"That's all she was to do here: stand and see people's stories. That really impacted me," Jacek said. "I stood at the bedside of three of my friends that have passed. So really, it's true: life is breath to breath. The rest is paperwork."

Even with the anguish, he still gets excited to come to work and meet new people — even though he jokingly admits he might have a four-star day from time to time.

"I got enthused and excited to come to work, I got to meet [a] lovely lady today, you know, What's new? What's next?" he said.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune

Paul Jacek, the Queen Mary's first officer, talks with members of the media about Jackie's Spirit Shoppe inside the Queen Mary on Sept. 23, 2026.

AROUND TOWN

A WEEKLY LIST OF THINGS TO DO IN LONG BEACH AND SIGNAL HILL



Jorge Hernandez | Signal Tribune

Halloween events happening this week include a trunk or treat and HaloHaloWeen on Friday, Saturday's Haute Dog Howl'oween, Boos & Brews and Halloween Bash, plus a zombie-themed Kidical Mass bike ride on Sunday.

With Halloween festivities wrapping up, Día de los Muertos celebrations beginning, an election looming and even some eager to start celebrating Christmas, there is truly something for everyone this week.

Catch a few final Halloween gatherings at the family-friendly Trunk or Treat at the Fairfield YMCA or HaloHaloWeen Filipino heritage celebration downtown, both on Friday night, or a doggie Halloween parade Saturday at Marina Vista. More adult-centered festivities include two hangouts at local breweries ISM Brewing and Beachwood, both on Halloween night.

A flurry of Día de los Muertos events invites the community to honor loved ones at the returning annual parade at Rainbow Lagoon Sunday afternoon, a night of cumbia, drag performances and an altar at Sunday night's Cumbiaton or a moonlight bike ride featuring a community altar and a cemetery stop Tuesday night.

30 FRIDAY

SPOOKTACULAR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Families can learn a variety of ways to take care of themselves, and children can receive free dental screenings at the Community Resource Center (5599 Atlantic Ave.). Kids will get a Halloween treat bag and toy while supplies last. Free.

TRUNK OR TREAT

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Families are invited to a fun and safe community event featuring decorated trunks, candy, treats, activities, music and more at the Fairfield Family YMCA (4949 Atlantic Ave.). There will also be giveaways and a costume contest. Free.

HALOHALOWEEN

6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Long Beach Ube Fest and the Creative Class Collective are hosting a surprise at the Edison Theatre (213 E. Broadway), filled with spooky fun, Filipino treats and Halloween magic. RSVP for free via Eventbrite.

31 SATURDAY

HAUTE DOG HOWL'OWEEN

12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. The 25th annual gathering of spiffy-looking dogs and their humans will take place at Marina Vista Park (5355 E. Elliot St.). Over 350 dressed-up pups will strut through this adorable parade, while humans are welcome to dress up and enjoy the costumes as well as a vendor fair. Free, or grab a front-row seat for \$6.

BOOS & BREWS

6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Enjoy chill Halloween vibes at the party before the party at ISM Brewing (210 E. Third St.). DJ TK will provide spooky tunes of goth, industrial and dark wave music. Free.

HALLOWEEN BASH

7 p.m. to midnight. Beachwood Brewing and Distilling (3630 Atlantic Ave.) invites the community to celebrate Halloween, donned in costumes and ready to party with scary movies, spooky cocktails, music, oracle card readings and more. Free.

01 SUNDAY

MIDTERM ELECTION WELLNESS

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. To help residents manage election anxiety and learn about what's on the ballot, Pueblita Tortillas and Exhale Leo are hosting a morning of yoga and other resources in downtown Long Beach (exact location given when you RSVP). Participants coming for yoga are asked to bring their own mat and residents are welcome to bring their ballots for any specific questions. RSVP for free online.

CHRISTMAS REVEAL PARTY

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For those itching to get into a jollier spirit, the Better Half Boutique (3803 Atlantic Ave.) is hosting a reveal party for its Christmas collection with giveaways, festive sips and more. Free.

KIDICAL MASS ZOMBIE BIKE RIDE

11 a.m. This monthly bike ride in-

vites local families to ride through Bixby Knolls together while dressing up to a certain theme each month. This month's theme is Day of the Dead, and attendees can show up early to be zombified. Prizes will be given out for best dressed. Free.

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DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS FEST

1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Celebrate life and honor your loved ones as the Día de los Muertos Festival returns. This family-friendly celebration at the Rainbow Lagoon (400 E. Shoreline Drive) will feature food trucks, plenty of performances, a resource fair and more. Free.

CUMBIATION

9 p.m. Enjoy a night of music, nostalgia and a beautifully curated drag show honoring Latin legends at Werk Long Beach (3428 E. Pacific Coast Highway). Visitors are encouraged to bring a photo of a loved one who has passed away to add to the community altar. Get there early (6:30 p.m.) for a book signing of "Muevelo." Tickets are \$10.32 and can be purchased on Eventbrite.

02 MONDAY

THE CATCH

6 p.m. Buvo's Wine (1145 Loma Ave.) will host a special night featuring three chefs cooking up tuna freshly caught nearby, wine pairings for each dish, a champagne and caviar station and other delightful surprises. Bookings are \$130 and can be made on Resy.

BOOK CLUB

6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Join Care Culture Collaborative every Monday at Vine LB (2142 E. Fourth St.) to discuss "The Dispossessed," a novel about two different civilizations and a physicist determined to reunite the two planets. Free.

03 TUESDAY

RAVE FROM THE GRAVE

6 p.m. This Día de los Muertos edition of Moonlight Mash invites the public on a roughly hour-long evening bike ride from ISM Brewing (210 E. Third St.) to Sunnyside Cemetery and back, where attendees can dance to rave music. Attendees are encouraged to wear calavera makeup and bring a photo of a loved one who has passed away to add to ISM Brewing's ofrenda. Free.

PAWS ON THE PROMENADE

6 p.m. to 7 p.m. This dog-friendly meet-up takes place on the first Tuesday of each month and allows your furry friend to socialize in a safe place. Meet at Dog Haus Biergarten (210 E. Third St.) and walk along the promenade. Free.

04 WEDNESDAY

FREE GROCERIES

5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Residents can receive free healthy groceries, clothing, hygiene items, books and more from Long Beach Community Table (151 W. Victoria St.). Other days of distribution include Tuesdays (5:30 to 7 p.m.), Fridays (noon to 4 p.m.) and Saturdays (noon to 2 p.m.). Free.

TANGO LESSONS

7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sharna Fabi-

ano teaches tango lessons every Wednesday at SOLO Art Center (236 Pine Ave.) for people of all skill levels. No partner or experience is required, and the class will be followed by socializing and snacks, so participants are asked to bring snacks to share. Tickets are \$15 at the door with cash, Venmo or Zelle.

05 THURSDAY

LOTERIA NIGHT

5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Enjoy free games of Mexican bingo, prizes, music, food and drink specials at Ancestros (3550 Long Beach Blvd.). Participants are encouraged to purchase food and drinks from Ancestros to support them. Future lotería nights are slated for Nov. 17 and Dec. 1. RSVP for free on Eventbrite.

MOVIE SCREENING

7 p.m. In honor of the 5th of November, Coffinated Coffee (443 E. First St.) will be screening "V for Vendetta." There will also be a tattoo flash raffle and a special menu from Coffinated Coffee. Proceeds will benefit 7th Street Collective, a local mutual aid group. Free.

IS THAT IT?

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TRADITION

Historical Cemetery Tour will awaken Long Beach's living history on Halloween

From the story of Abram Clegg to the marriage of Charles and Carrie Walker, the Historical Society of Long Beach will bring history to life in its 30th annual Cemetery Tour.

Jorge Hernandez
Photojournalist

The Historical Society of Long Beach (HSLB) will guide residents through the afterlife with its 30th annual Historical Cemetery Tour, held at the Sunnyside and Municipal cemeteries on Halloween.

The self-guided tour has a “choose your own adventure” format and runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The tour features seven stories from performances by community theater actors portraying the lives of people lying at rest.

Gravesites, vignettes, displays and timelines of the city’s LGBTQIA+ trailblazers, political movers and shakers and more will adorn the fence separating Sunnyside and Municipal Cemeteries.

“It’s a family-friendly day in a beautiful green space, learning about Long Beach and the people who’ve lived here and the history of the city and the way that the people have moved in the city,” said Jen Malone, Deputy Director of HSLB.

The tour’s centerpiece is the lively stories it tells, reflecting upon the city’s diverse history from immigrant trailblazers to civil servants and the Cambodian American community’s resilience.



Jorge Hernandez | Signal Tribune
A stone with a plaque commemorating the city's first cemetery sits adjacent to the path at the Long Beach Municipal Cemetery on Oct. 21, 2026.

For example, one featured vignette tells the love story of Farmers and Merchants Bank founder Charles Walker and Carrie Ziegler, who met at a Tulare Thanksgiving dinner. “The Five Weddings and a Golf Pro” shares the story of Dick Linares, a professional golfer who fought to get the city to purchase a recreational park, while his sister has married five times.

Another standout story is Abram Cleag’s, who was born into slavery, freed by President Abraham Lincoln and made his home in Long Beach, where he and his wife raised their wayward daughter and protected their young granddaughter



Jorge Hernandez | Signal Tribune
Graves and headstones cover the grassy sections of the Long Beach Cemetery on Oct. 21, 2026. On Halloween, local residents can hear stories about some of the cemetery's occupants during the 30th annual Historical Cemetery Tour.

in the early 1900s.

After Cleag left the plantation where he was held, he joined the Union Army as a member of the Colored Brigade. His story is told through the lens of his wife and granddaughter, and both he and his granddaughter are buried at the Long Beach Municipal Cemetery.

“Because he was a member of the army, his headstone is missing. One of our historians and community partners worked together with the family to try and get a new headstone for him that was provided by the military, and it still is not in place,” Malone said. “He was a janitor who worked at City Hall in the early 1900s, and the city loved him so much that they fought to get him buried there.”

Over the years, the cemetery tour has drawn 1,000 to 1,500 attendees annually, making it one of the city’s biggest single-day local history events. Malone recommends that attendees arrive early to experience the event in its entirety and familiarize themselves with the people who were there before them.

“It just brings a lot of different kinds of people together. I think people are always surprised at how many different kinds of people there are, and it’s not a spooky event at all,” Malone said. “There’s always something new to learn about history; that history keeps giving in Long Beach.”

Presale tickets are \$32.50, with prices rising to \$45 on the day of

the event; kids' tickets for ages 5-18 are \$10 and kids under 5 are free. They recommend carpooling as limited parking will be available at Willow Springs Park. Bike parking

is also available. For more information about the cemetery tour and to purchase tickets, visit their website hslb.org/historical-cemetery-tour.

EYE ON CRIME

CRIMES REPORTED BY THE SIGNAL HILL POLICE

Wednesday, October 21
1:41 p.m., Intoxicated person on drugs, 2100 block Stanley Ave. (citation issued)
2:39 p.m., Injury hit and run, 900 block E. 33rd St.

Thursday, October 22
4:28 p.m., Injury traffic collision, E. Willow St./Town Center E.
3:42 p.m., Grand theft, E. 27th St./Olive Ave.

Friday, October 23
10:42 a.m., Auto burglary, 2500 block Cherry Ave.
3:49 p.m., Grand theft – motor vehicle, 900 block E. 33rd St.
6:43 p.m., Grand theft, 1300 block E. Hill St. (suspect arrested)

Saturday, October 24
3:59 a.m., DUI, 800 block E. Spring St.
9:23 a.m., Petty theft, 700 block E. Spring St. (suspect arrested)
10:13 a.m., Battery, 2000 block Orizaba Ave.
5:49 p.m., DUI, Cherry Ave./E. Willow St.

Sunday, October 25
3:40 a.m., DUI, Temple Ave./Wall St. (suspect arrested)
11:37 p.m., DUI, 700 block E. Spring St.

Monday, October 26
8:48 a.m., Auto burglary, 1900 block Temple Ave.
9:34 a.m., Elder abuse, 1800 block Freeman Ave.
4:47 p.m., Burglary, 900 block E. 27th St.
11:06 p.m., Fire, California Ave./E. 27th St.

Tuesday, October 27
6:19 a.m., Robbery, 1700 block E. 20th St.
10:07 a.m., Stolen vehicle – recovered, Reservoir Dr. W north of E. PCH
10:23 a.m., Intoxicated person, E. Willow St./Walnut Ave. (suspect arrested)
11:20 a.m., Grand theft – motor vehicle, 1800 block E. Spring St.
7:37 p.m., Petty theft, 1800 block E. Spring St.



Pet of the week: Dunson

Here’s Dunson, a funny-face fellow who at only a year old has done almost everything a shelter dog can do! He’s had so much fun doing it, too, and so have all his volunteer pals at Long Beach Animal Care Services. Dunson spent two months boarding as a foster with one volunteer. He attended an event with another and did great both in the car and with the people there. He’s doing leash training with volunteer Robert, and, as you can see, he eagerly costumed up for Halloween—very appropriate because he’s treat motivated! He’s sweeter than anything in a trick-or-treat bag!

Dunson gets overly eager at taking treats and wanting to meet other dogs and play with them, so Robert recommends a confident and consistent human to teach him boundaries and slow introduction skills. Sound like fun? Until Oct. 31, you can pick your own adoption fee from the pumpkin tin at the shelter, so speed the process to adopt or foster Dunson or any of our other pets by emailing Pet-Adopt@longbeach.gov or petfoster@longbeach.gov. You can also call (562) 570-4925. Our shelter hours are Wednesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 7700 E. Spring St. at the entrance to El Dorado Park (no parking fee for shelter visitors). Ask for ID#A762714.

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FEATURE



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Zarapé Cocina & Cantina co-owner, Onésimo “Oni” Méndez, flips shrimps and smiles as he demonstrates how to make a few menu options at the restaurant on Oct. 2, 2026.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Zarapé’s popular Poblano lamb chops (left), Cucarachas a la Diabla (middle), Mexican paella (right) are created from scratch and 100% all-natural.

Samuel Chacko

Photo Editor

Zarapé Cocina & Cantina, owned by Stefano Mozher and Onésimo “Oni” Méndez, recently hit its eight-month milestone in Long Beach. Zarapé is a Mexican-Mediterranean fusion restaurant that blends regional Mexican cuisines from Oaxaca, Puebla, Jalisco and Veracruz with Mediterranean influences.

Complimented by this pairing of cultures, unique cocktails and beverages, Zarapé’s true rarity lies in its 100% scratch kitchen. What differs from the popular heat-and-serve method of cooking is that a scratch kitchen restaurant focuses on the preparation of in-house food from raw, whole and fresh ingredients rather than pre-made, canned, frozen or processed foods.

Meanwhile, Zarapé’s flagship restaurant in West Hollywood is in its fifth year and has become a stand out restaurant for residents.

It all began with two friends and a conversation over beers.

Childhood & Early Growth in the Food Industry

The co-owners of Zarapé’s come from different parts of the world, but they share an appreciation for food.

Mozher grew up in Casablanca, Morocco and was guided into an adventurous food palette by his father, an avid seafood lover.

He recalls the two of them visiting the restaurant Great Britain in Morocco with its beautiful view and hitting the San Francisco port.

“Me and my father [would] just sit there and just literally eat any type of fish, whether it’s a snapper or calamari or sardines, just that moment specifically reminded me of why I do this,” Mozher said.

Méndez was born in Oaxaca, Mexico and came to the United States when he was two years old. He got his first taste of the food business at 17 as a taquero at Loteria Grill in Los Angeles. At 25, his uncle offered to teach him how to cook food from scratch rather than serve food that has already been prepared.

“Little by little, I started tasting everything, just getting familiar with everything, the dishes, plates, hot sauce,” he said. “I started learning and it was actually really fun.”

Mozher and Méndez first crossed paths at Loteria Grill when the former came on board as the vice president of the business in 2012. When the business closed down in 2019, the pair stayed connected and became friends. Mozher said the co-restaurateurs always saw eye to eye and he knew if they ever crossed paths again, they could build something together.

That same year, Méndez approached Mozher about starting a restaurant. They knew they had different cultural perspectives to offer and decided to go all-in on figuring out how their restaurant could highlight how distinct flavors can complement one another.

Soon, they would have a location — West Hollywood — and a name tying Mexico and Morocco together: Zarapé, an ode to traditional, bright colored garments.

Meet Zarapé, a Mexi-Medi masterpiece

Come with an open mind and an empty stomach — the Mexican-inspired Mediterranean fusion combines a casual ambiance with colorful Día de los Muertos murals and modern music, alongside an upscale, 100% homemade menu.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Stefano Mozher (left) and Onésimo “Oni” Méndez (right), the co-owners of Zarapé Cocina & Cantina in Long Beach, pose next to their bar on Sept. 23, 2026.

Zarapé’s is Officially Open for Business

The pair pulled the trigger and Zarapé’s opened its doors in West Hollywood in 2021. Over time, the West Hollywood restaurant slowly evolved into a neighborhood staple and, in due time, received its flowers from the community, with a current average rating of 4.4 stars on Yelp.

After settling into the West Hollywood location, they had their eyes on expansion. They had no plans to venture out from West Hollywood or to plant roots more than five miles away, but Long Beach was calling their names.

A real estate agent suggested Mozher check out Long Beach and, being a resident of the 562 for 10 years, he knew the area well.

“When we walked into his space ... this felt just like West Hollywood; it’s a small, intimate, local community,” Mozher said.

After feeling the place out, the joint owners decided to open Zarapé’s in Belmont Shore on Feb. 2, 2026.

“When you come in, we want to give you an experience and that experience is just making you forget the outside.”

- Onésimo “Oni” Méndez, Co-owner of Zarapé Cocina & Cantina

What is Zarapés?

Zarapé’s is an upscale casual restaurant specializing in ‘Mediterranean’ cuisine (100% Mexican fusion with Mediterranean influences), which blends a relaxed atmosphere with high-quality food. In line with the nationwide rise of upscale casual dining, Zarapé focuses on bringing back old-school traditions with great service and 100% all-natural cuisine with no additives or fillers.

Mending two concepts is difficult, but what helped Zarapé’s menu grow into something unique is Mozher and Méndez’s cultural experiences.

“It’s very hard to take a concept and another concept of these two giants, because they’re both giants in the food industry. How can we make a birth out of these two? And that’s when the idea of, ‘Okay, let’s start grabbing some of the best of the best of the



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Stefano Mozher, one of the co-founders of Zarapé Cocina & Cantina, pours a variety of colorful cocktail drinks inside a cocktail mixer on Oct. 2, 2026.



Samuel Chacko | Signal Tribune
Enchilada TRIO comes with three enchiladas, Salsa Guajillo, Verde, Mole, filled with the choice of cheese, veggies, chicken or birria beef.

Meds [Mediterranean]’ but make them 100% Mexican flavor where it has that authenticity,” Mozher said.

Moroccan and Mexican food are more alike than people may realize, with similar spices and cooking techniques. Mozher said that because of the history of colonization, Moroccan cuisine, or Moroccan culture, is the closest to Mexican culture.

“He [Oni] gets surprised; he’s like, ‘Hey, in Oaxaca or in Puebla, we had this specifically whether it’s chilenos or cactus salad,’ and I’m like, ‘Oh, let me show you how we make it back home. He’s like, ‘What do you mean? You guys have X, Y and Z?’” Mozher said. “Throughout time it travelled and then the culture changed and as [it] changed, the dish changed.”

They have a rigorous process of pitching new ideas together and adding subtle flavor changes that guests might not pick up on in hopes of coming up with something new. Creating their menu involved extensive research and experimentation, oftentimes buying new ingredients and throwing on an apron to show off their new creation to one another.

Mozher and Méndez’s attention to detail is what they believe helps make the fusion stand out.

For example, when they began looking for cocktails to create, they started with the basics.

What does a classic Mexican margarita start with? Tequila and lime juice. While Mozher said it’s popular for places to use syrups as a sweetener, they decided to opt out of that. They’ve also crafted their own brand of tequila, Zarapé Tequila, made from 100% plant agave and filtered not to burn your mouth.

You can also look at their food process when they decided to add their own twist to a well-known dish in Italy: cioppino. France, Spain, Morocco and Mexico all have varieties of cioppino, whether they use a different type of fish or a mix of fish and other seafood. Still, the challenge for the two was to give it an undeniable Mexican flavor.

The pair decided to incorporate molcajete salsa to do just that. They also added charred tomatoes, jalapeño, garlic and chile diablo peppers into a settled sauce. They then decided to make a lobster stock on top of that — cooking it with garlic, white wine and olive oil.

The result — the Cioppino De Ensenada — a deliciously distinct dish.

“We want Zarapé’s to be well known for what we do and our quality. You can go to any Mexican place, grab a taco and everything, but I mean, our craft is very different,” Méndez said.

This level of detail even translates into daily changes in the restaurant’s ambiance, with soft rock music in the morning and upbeat salsa music during happy hour (every day from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.). Once it gets dark, Zarapés dims the lights, turns on the lamps and leans into an intimate setting.

“When you come in, we want to give you an experience and that experience is just making you forget the outside,” Mozher said.

Zarapé’s (4702 E. Second St.) is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information about the restaurant, check out their website.

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