



Edith Piaf



Naomi Emmerson as Edith Piaf

Winchester Cultural Center Las Vegas Naomi Emmerson conquers all as Edith Piaf

By Marianne Donnelly
Las Vegas Tribune

"I have no regrets..." a line from, "Non, je ne regrette rien" — one of French chanteuse Edith Piaf's greatest hits — says it all about her poetic, tragic deeply-lived life.

Poverty, exposure to brothels at a young age, abandonment, numerous tragic deaths of lovers, death of her daughter, and an insuperable wanderlust created the heart and therefore voice of Edith Piaf (piaf means "sparrow," the stage name given to her by her first mentor who found her singing on the streets of Paris.)

At Winchester Cultural Center last Friday, a nearly sold-out audience cheered repeatedly and stood in ovation to Naomi Emmerson's, "Piaf: Love Conquers All."

This one-woman dramatic portrayal captured Piaf's nuances precisely — from puckered-lips to wild eyes, arched long brows, to late-life tremors to stilted walk and raucous laugh. Most magnificent of all was Naomi's un-miked soaring, aching vibrato emulating legendary contralto Piaf perfectly.

I hate to use cliché, but she *did* "channel" Edith!

The set was a brilliant white & black-red-accent theme with scrim drapes and furniture cut-outs designed with whimsy (while disguising practicality!).

Occasional light-projections and sound-accent completed the staging. Ms. Emmerson used every spare prop to maximum effect and it worked seamlessly.

Piano by Angela Chan Stopa and accordion by Hubert Gall accompanied Naomi with enthusiasm. Naomi's past experiences singing with Montreal Symphony Orchestra certainly helped refine her powerhouse-vocals.

Costumes were historically correct from perfect black dresses and shoes (straight from news clips of Edith) to exact wigs conveying Edith's slightly-unmanaged-hair.

As a solo performer (Janis Joplin and Louisa May Alcott), I know about the unpaid years of preparation to impersonate an icon, as well as write a script (with music) for that impersonation.

I was thrilled to see Naomi's accuracy and passion — indeed, a certain je ne sais quoi — working

to keep Edith's legend alive in grand theatre tradition. This show tours: tonepoetproductions.com has particulars.

Winchester Cultural Center is the heart of performing and visual arts for Clark County Parks and Recreation including dance, theater, music, visual arts and educational tours and events. Additionally enjoy their desert garden and well-lit skate park!

Join event-notice list at: gaffey@ClarkCountyNV.Gov



BEHIND THE MIKE Yogi and Spike

By Michael A. Aun

Nicknames have been a part of life in my family as early as I could remember. My older sister Mary Delle went by the name of "Myrt." Older brother George was labeled "Buzz."

My own moniker was "Yogi" because I resembled the baseball player Yogi Berra. I also looked like Alfred E. Newman, the guy on MAD magazine. Fortunately, nobody went there. And then there was Lorraine "Yainey," and on and on. No need to burden you with all 11 names.

Naturally, the tradition continued in my family, but not until my third son Christopher was born. He had a nice bump for a belly the day he arrived so his older twin brothers, Cory and Jason, immediately nicknamed him "Gutt." And that's how these labels get hung on us.

"Gutt" was the envy of every athlete at St. Cloud High School. Nobody had a cooler nickname than "Gutt." His license plate on his "Bubba Pickup Truck" said simply "Gutts," below a window sticker that proclaimed him a member of the "Fat Boy Club."

Ironically, he was never a fat kid but the label stuck. When one of the twins, Cory, got married to Casey, I immediately tagged her with the nickname "Mooch" because she was always mooching a meal at our house long before they were married.

Along came Jessica, who Cory's twin brother Jason met while they were both trying to make the US Olympic Team in weightlifting at Northern Michigan University. NMU trains the weightlifters, boxers and bobsled teams. Neither made the Olympic team but both came away with top notch educations, leading Jessica to become a doctor and Jason to become a molecular microbiologist.

Jessica was a bit of a runt so it seemed appropriate for me to nickname her "Runt." Now, she works alongside "Nurse Gutt" in the very same Orlando Emergency Room so now I call her "Dr. Runt."

Gutt was the third son to find a mate, Viviana, which had way too many syllables to suit yours truly. Most in the family call her "Viv" but I went with the nickname "Bones," because she's nothing but skin, bones and long beautiful black hair.

All three of my son's wives are beautiful women, one as pretty as the next. In the Christmas photo, the family looks like a group of models. Only my ugly mug gives it away.

My granddaughters Ava and Ashley (by Casey and Cory) are the only two that weren't labeled with a nickname. They actually look



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more like twins than all the twins in the family. I couldn't nickname a little girl. But when we were blessed with a second set of twin sons in the family, a pair of boys, the temptation was too much.

Cameron (Baby A) came out grumpy, loud and grinning, looking just like yours truly. *Bones* immediately nicknamed him *Jiddy Junior* because he looked just like me. *Jiddy* is the Arabic word for grandfather. Since he looked just like me when I was an infant, I figured I'd give him my childhood nickname "Yogi" because we both looked like the baseball great.

Keenan (Baby B) came into the world equipped with a full head of hair, so long that his father started styling the black locks into a spiked hairdo. So his nickname has become "Spike." He will definitely be a lady's man as he has all of his mom's good looks and quiet, loving personality.

Spike and *Yogi* are on the fast track to becoming superstars in the pre-school world. While they are just over seven months old, girls line up to get a look at the pair as I stroller them along the lakefront of East Lake Tohopekaliga in St. Cloud, Florida, a Sunday afternoon tradition.

Twins are a natural "chick attraction," as I learned when I'd take my own twin sons on a stroller ride when mom was busy shopping. As they grew older, they too sensed the attraction that women had to them, prompting them to conjure up a story that mom has passed on and they were being raised by this poor single father.

Even my twisted mind couldn't have conjured up a better tale of woe and when mom would arrive on the scene after her shopping spree, we all had to come clean and admit the tale.

Shame on us men... we'll do almost anything to get the girl. I'm thinking *Spike* and *Yogi* will be just as accommodating!

Michael Aun is a syndicated columnist and writes a weekly column for this newspaper. To contact Michael Aun, email him at maun@lasvegastribune.com.

Empowerment or Endangerment: How Your Leadership Makes the Difference

By Doug Dickerson

The people's capacity to achieve is determined by the leader's ability to empower — John Maxwell

Most leaders I know like to believe that they are making a difference in their organization. Ask most and they will affirm that they are. I'm sure you are one of them and that you strive to make a difference daily.

But if we take a closer look a different story emerges in some instances. Research by Gallup in 2014 shows that only 13 percent of all employees are "highly engaged" and 26 percent are "actively disengaged."

While not all companies have an employee engagement issue as mentioned here there are leadership lessons to be applied nonetheless.

On what level are leaders making a significant impact in their organizations if only 13 percent are highly engaged? Where is the reconciliation point between employers who believe that they are engaged and employees who believe that they are not? What rubric determines success and failure in this area?

One of the keys to bridging the gap rests with the leader's mandate to empower his or her team. As a leader you are either empowering your team or you are endangering it.

Here are five ways to know the difference.



DOUG DICKERSON

Empowerment is an investment of your trust

Trust is essential to your success as a leader. You must first earn the trust of the people that you lead. Without trust you have nothing. But your investment as a leader in your people is a game changer when you unleash their potential to perform. When empowered and trusted the commitment level of your team members will go through the roof and performance will be off the charts. But this is where it begins or ends.

As a leader you endanger your organization and your team if you do not trust them and empower them to do their jobs.

Empowerment is an acknowledgment of your security

Leaders who are secure in their own strengths and abilities have no

pause to empower others. Only secure leaders can give power away. It's based upon the first principle mentioned here — trust. Confident and secure leaders set the tone and raise the bar for all leaders in their organization to follow. Show me a leader who is secure in his or her leadership and their ability to empower others and I will show you a confident team moving forward.

As a leader you endanger your team when you allow your insecurities to cloud your judgment and disrespect your people. Get over yourself and empower your people.

Empowerment is an expression of your adaptability

The old adage says that change is the only constant. Your relevance as a leader is connected to your ability to change. By empowering your people and unleashing their creativity you position your organization to stay current and competitive. Empowerment is a great change agent and without it you render your organization irrelevant.

As a leader you endanger yourself and your team when you lose your capacity to change. Keep your values intact and remain grounded to core principles, but always be willing to change your methods.

Empowerment is a reflection of your culture

Name any of the top successful companies you'd like such as Google, Apple, Amazon, Starbucks,



Verizon, FedEx, Walt Disney, etc. and you will find that a culture of empowerment is a shared trait. Engaged leaders are attentive and intentional about creating a culture where people are valued, respected, trusted, and empowered. It's the secret sauce of success.

As a leader you endanger your team and the culture that could be enjoyed by hoarding the power. It's not about how much power you have but in how much you give away.

Empowerment is the blueprint of your success

Your growth and development as a leader comes with certain responsibilities and obligations. It's to empower those around you and the next generation of leaders who follow. Simply put, it's not about you. The level of success you wish

to achieve is proportional to your commitment to empower those around you. A sampling of your blueprint to success for you and your team should read like this: empowered, equipped, trusted, engaged, committed, etc. Is the picture becoming clearer?

As a leader you endanger your team and its future by neglecting the responsibilities of your leadership. Your leadership can make greater impact and be more rewarding when you realize it's simply a tool of empowerment.

Are you empowering or endangering?

Doug Dickerson is a syndicated columnist. He writes a weekly column for this newspaper. To contact Doug Dickerson, email him at ddickerson@lasvegastribune.com.