



Danny Heitman
AT RANDOM

Graduation a time to celebrate self-driving children

When my son moved out of state for college four years ago, my wife and I were excited about his plans, although we sometimes wished he'd be closer to home. In 2020, life challenged us, as it often does, by giving us what we'd asked for.

As a pandemic closed campuses across the country, our son came home to study remotely. Our college student was back under our roof, though through circumstances we couldn't have imagined. Amid the suffering of a global health crisis, we felt lucky to be healthy and employed. We were also grateful that online learning gave our son a way to continue his education.

Even so, it was hard to witness the losses imposed on my son and thousands of other college students as COVID-19 spread across the planet. Digital technology was a vital lifeline as classrooms emptied, but it couldn't fully replace hands-on learning experiences.

Social distancing forced the closure of the lab where our son, a computer engineering student, was heading a team to program a self-driving vehicle. He worked hard to keep the project moving through online collaborations with team members now scattered across the country. But lack of access to the vehicle itself was an obvious obstacle.

As a volunteer lecturer for a few Zoom classes at LSU during the pandemic, I connected with other college students navigating their own challenges. When each lesson concluded, I'd ask students to share how they were faring as remote learners. None of them expressed self-pity about the hand they'd been dealt.

They seemed resilient, resourceful and resolved to push ahead in spite of a public health emergency that had overturned higher education.

I'm aware of the widespread assumption that today's 20-somethings are fragile and self-absorbed. For centuries, older people have lamented new generations as too soft for the trials

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PROVIDED PHOTO BY LANIE MARINA

Scaffolding surrounds the closed Splash Mountain attraction at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom theme park. When it reopens in 2024, it will have become Tiana's Bayou Adventure, a New Orleans-themed attraction inspired by the 2009 animated film 'The Princess and the Frog.'

ALL EARS

Disney taps big-name New Orleans musical talent for remade Splash Mountain ride

BY MIKE SCOTT
Contributing writer

Both polished their musical chops as children growing up in New Orleans. Both have since won multiple Grammy Awards. Both regularly play to audiences around the world.

Now, Terence Blanchard and P.J. Morton — two of New Orleans' most prominent musical ambassadors — have earned their Mickey Mouse ears.

Blanchard and Morton have been tapped by the Walt Disney Co. to write original compositions to play as part of Tiana's Bayou Adventure, the New Orleans-flavored retheming of the Splash Mountain attraction at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, and Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, the company announced Thursday.

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY DISNEY

Grammy-winning and Oscar-nominated composer Terence Blanchard stands with Disney's Princess Tiana at Dooky Chase restaurant in New Orleans. Blanchard has been tapped to write the music for the queue area of Tiana's Bayou Adventure, a new attraction set to debut at Disneyland and Walt Disney World in 2024.

Cow towns

Midwestern marketing strategy helped form New Orleans' dairy belt

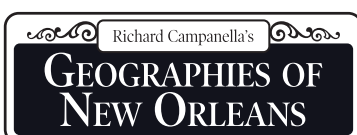
BY RICHARD CAMPANELLA
Contributing writer

Historically, most major cities had a "dairy belt," a rural zone far enough away where cows could be raised inexpensively, but close enough so that milk could be delivered fresh.

In the 1700s and early 1800s, New Orleans' dairy production, as well as poultry and vegetables, came from nearby farmsteads along the Bayou Road and Metairie and Gentilly ridges, or from nearby plantations.

Well into the 1900s, truck farms with dairies operated on the urban outskirts, in places like Kenner, Algiers, Marrero and in St. Bernard Parish.

But by then, New Orleans' main dairy belt had shifted to the Florida Parishes across Lake Pontchartrain, specifically Washington, St. Helena, and most of all, Tangipahoa Parish.



What brought dairy to this region was the construction of New Orleans' first interstate railroad, followed by a clever railroad marketing strategy.

In 1851, investors formed the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad, aiming to connect with Mississippi by laying tracks across the Manchac land bridge into what were then Livingston and St. Helena parishes.

Four years later, the N.O. J. & G.N. opened for service, and its stations gave rise to the communities of Ponchatoula, Hammond, Tickfaw and Tangipahoa.

Despite damage during the Civil War, the N.O. J. & G.N. proved so



PROVIDED PHOTO

An Amite dairy farm in 1910

effective in peopling this region that it helped justify the creation of Tangipahoa Parish in 1869, carved from lands of the four adjacent parishes.

What the railroad did from an economic perspective was enable shippers to send cargo in a fraction of the time taken by wagons or waterborne transportation. The

parishes on either side of Lake Pontchartrain began to integrate into one regional economy.

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