

EDISON-NORWOOD **TIMES REVIEW**

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THIS WEEK

DIVERSIONS



PRINCE AND THE POTTER

"Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" is reviewed in this week's Film Clips.

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FOOD



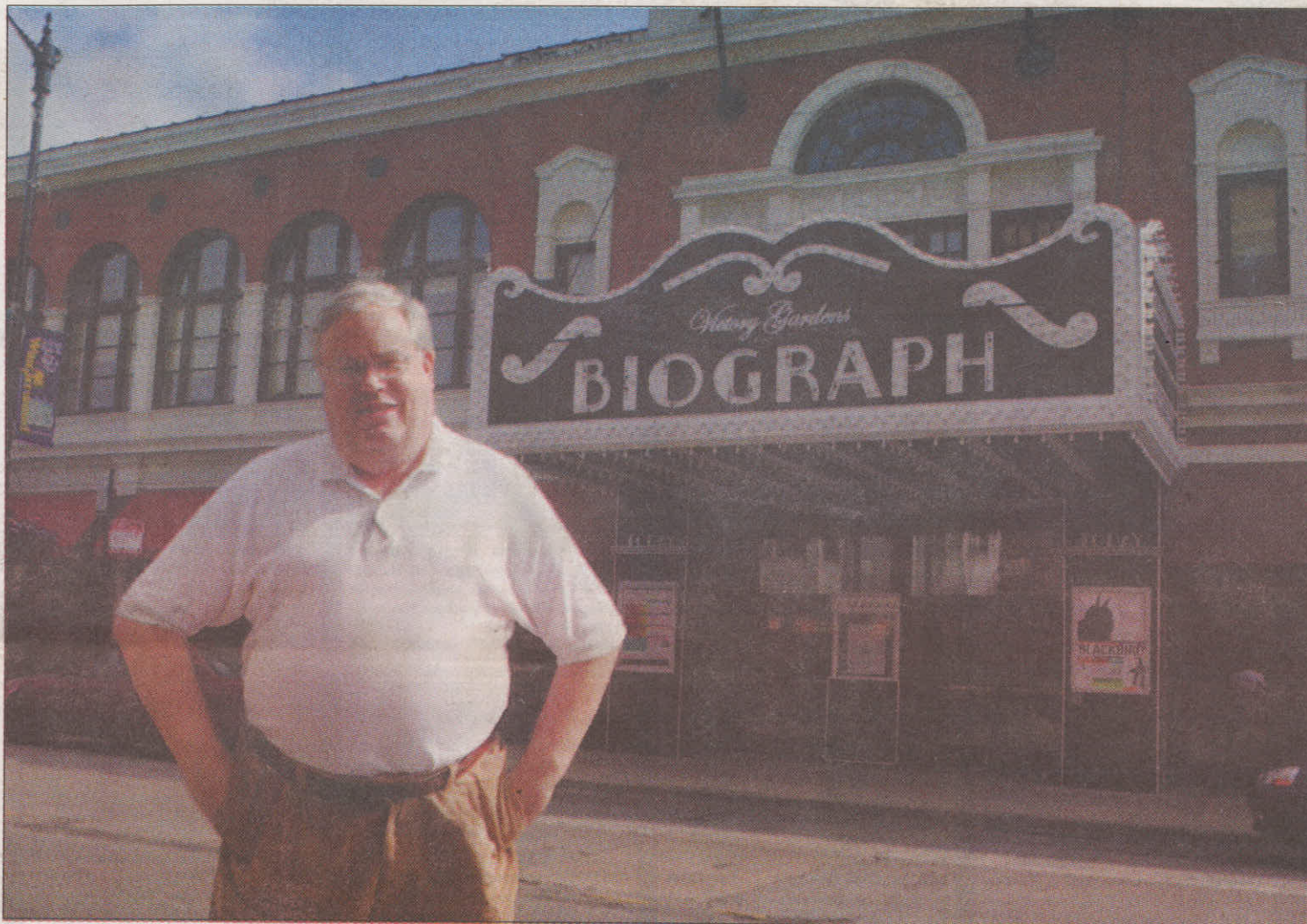
TANDOORI FEARLESS

Glenview chef simplifies the art of East Indian cookery.

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Inside!

Today's
New Homes



CRIMINAL PAST

Author Rich Lindberg stands July 3 in front of the Biograph Theatre, where famed criminal John Dillinger was shot by the FBI in 1934 in Chicago. Lindberg has written about 14 books, many of them focused on Chicago crime. Page 3. (Ruthie Hauge/Staff Photographer).

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LOCAL AUTHOR

Two sides to every city

New books show both the gritty and the pretty of Chicago's past

By ALAN SCHMIDT
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Two books released this year by Norwood Park native Richard Lindberg give somewhat contrasting views of this city.

One provides an unvarnished look at Chicago's "lustful, rollicking, and wicked" underbelly. The other is a tribute, with rich images and Chicago vignettes filling its high-gloss pages.

The Gambler King of Clark Street: Michael C. McDonald and the Rise of Chicago's Democratic Machine might make those trying to polish the blood and grime off the city's political history cringe.

Lindberg's book on McDonald, released last month, takes readers on a sordid tour through Chicago's thriving gambling dens, which spawned a political kingmaker.

The term "tourist trap" could well describe the dark world that existed on the fringes of Chicago's commercial district. McDonald got his start as part of a crew whose job was to greet newcomers and convention-goers at downtown railroad depots, then lure them to Chicago's "gambling hells" with stories of the paradise, pleasure and untold riches that awaited them.

McDonald is credited with coining the line, "There's a sucker born every minute." With a multilayered system of bribes distributed to stationmasters for lists of incoming passengers, and police officers willing to look the other way for a price, the suckers roped in included "gullible businessmen, farmers and commission merchants from the rural countryside."

McDonald progressed from there, amassing a fortune large enough to open "his 'Store' — the grandest, gaudiest and most brazen twenty-four-hour gambling palace in the Midwest." McDonald's gambling emporium, which stood at the northwest corner of Clark and Monroe streets, included the "Palace European Hotel" for overnight guests, a "clubhouse" for his political friends and allies, an apartment for his family, and trapdoors, peepholes and hidden closets to keep his customers concealed during police raids.

In addition to the gullible, small-time unfortunates who soon found their pockets empty, there was no shortage of big fish walking in through Mike's doors. The Store attracted the rich and powerful, "important men from the world of commerce, city, state, and national politics, and the arts, as well as scores of visiting dignitaries" who lost their money just as well.

McDonald also built a fortune in political clout, engineering the rise and fall of presidents, governors, county officials, mayors, police superintendents, aldermen and just about anyone else who had to run for political office. He retooled his former den of vice into a Democratic party headquarters where aspiring officeholders came to be anointed.

McDonald is "a metaphor of Chicago in its formative years," Lindberg said. "He had so much influence on the politics of this city. He built the Democratic machine. He played a significant role in giving the Democratic party legitimacy in the post-Civil War era. He single-handedly wiped out the Republican party in

Chicago.

"Mayor Richard J. Daley and every other Chicago boss owes a token of gratitude to McDonald."

But his book is not an indictment against the Democratic party itself, Lindberg said, but a "slam against one-party rule," allowed to operate without checks, balances or brakes. Right now about the only check on the current state of affairs — one party rule at the city, county, state and federal levels — is U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, he added.

Lindberg's second new release, *Chicago: Yesterday & Today* is a collaborative effort with co-author Carol Jean Carlson. There are some vignettes about Chicago's not-so-pretty history, but they don't take center stage on the book's high-gloss pages, which are filled with rich images of the central city and its sprawling neighborhoods.

"I did a lot of the neighborhood stuff and Carol did much of the arts coverage and on other territory familiar to her," he said. "The book went into production with an initial printing of 30,000 copies. In a sense it's my first national book that's been published.

"It's probably going to get the most play out of anything I've written."

Carlson, who serves on the Society of Midland Authors' Board of Directors along with Lindberg, helped edit Lindberg's previous book, *Shattered Sense of Innocence: The 1955 Murders of Three Chicago Children*.

For more information go to www.richardlindberg.net or www.midlandauthors.com.

Comment: pioneerlocal.com



Author Rich Lindberg stands July 3 in the alley outside the Biograph Theatre in Chicago, where famed criminal John Dillinger was shot by the FBI in 1934. Lindberg has written about 14 books, many of them focused on Chicago crime. (Ruthie Hauge/Staff Photographer).

Lindberg: Go-to guy on gangsters, guns

By ALAN SCHMIDT
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When local news reporters seek background about Chicago's criminal past or this city's never-ending marriage of convenience between corruption and politics, they often turn to Norwood Park author Richard Lindberg.

Pioneer Press reporter Robert Loerzel recently interviewed Lindberg for a story highlighting the Thompson submachine gun, which aired on Chicago public radio station WBEZ. The heavy and somewhat inaccurate weapon was commonly known as the "Chicago Typewriter" during the city's notorious Prohibition days.

With the release of the new movie, "Public Enemies," which put the spotlight on

John Dillinger's violent criminal career and his rapid-fire demise outside Chicago's Biograph Theatre, Lindberg has been called upon to share his knowledge of the events that followed that fateful showing of "Manhattan Melodrama."

Lindberg's touch is evident in a vignette titled, "Dillinger's Last Movie" in his book, *Chicago: Yesterday & Today*. The entry addresses a common misconception about a certain dress worn by Anna Sage, the brothel madam who "ratted him out to the FBI," according to the book. "Sage told the FBI she would be wearing an orange dress. But the marquee lights of the theater made the dress appear red, and thus history would label her the 'Lady in Red.'"

It is also there in a segment highlighting Chicago's 1885

City Hall and County Building, a graft-ridden incarnation of Michael McDonald. The building was so shoddily constructed that it had to be torn down about 20 years after it was built because it was unsafe and falling apart. It was replaced by the existing building, which stands at 121 N. LaSalle Street/118 N. Clark St.

Lindberg's roughly 15 books have focused on two major themes: Chicago history and his unabashed love for the Chicago White Sox.

He will be the featured author at the Norwood Park Historical Society's Book and Collectible Fair in August. His next book, *Whiskey Breakfast*, due out next year, tells the story of his life growing up on the Northwest Side.

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