

SKI TEAM

JUST AFTER Labor Day, members and coaches of the independent Hidden Valley Ski Team (HVST) begin four months of dryland training in preparation for racing on the slopes when snow falls in the winter. Training includes strength and conditioning, running up hills, slopes, rollerblading, and simulated race runs. When the resort opens for the season, the team is there at least three times a week. Many athletes and coaches then travel to regional races. With 12 coaches and a roster of more than 60 kids ranging in age from 5 to 18, the Missouri team consistently racks up impressive accomplishments in regional and



national alpine race events. For 11 straight years, members have qualified for the USSA regional Junior Olympics in Colorado. At the NASTAR National Championships in Colorado in March, athletes brought home 16 gold, silver, and bronze medals, placing the team eighth in the national NASTAR rankings. Dave Coulter, head coach and race director, finds the awards fitting. "Many people have the misconception that you can't become a great skier from a small ski area, but it's all about dedication to the sport and not the length of the hill." —**Stephanie Stemmler**

Checkmate

AFTER STAYS in New York and Miami, the U.S. and World Chess Hall of Fame came to St. Louis this September. Housed just across from the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of St. Louis, the 15,000-square-foot building is home to permanent exhibits capturing the history of the game. Included in the collection is chess furniture that belonged to the American Grandmaster and World Champion Bobby Fischer, the first commercial chess computer, and a 500-year-old ancient Egyptian piece from the earliest documented board game, Senet.

—**Andrew Lovgren**

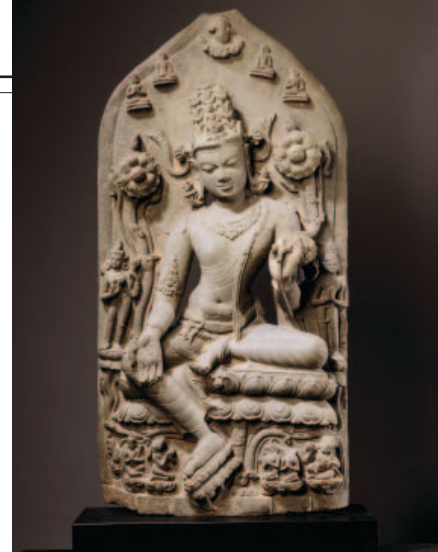
www.worldchesshof.org



Sacred Space

REFLECTIONS of the Buddha, at The Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, succeeds in opening a different world to the visitor. This exhibition was organized with the collaboration of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the St. Louis Art Museum, the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University, and the Pulitzer. Selected from all over Asia with a span of more than 1,500 years, there are 22 pieces in the exhibition, 17 of which are statues. The thematic and stylistic similarities (and differences) of the art works are underlined by their inclusion in the boldly different gallery spaces of the museum. It is Buddha (without a Buddha belly in sight) on display in the private ambience of the Entrance Gallery and under the airy high ceilings of the Main Gallery. A key aspect of Buddhist sacred spaces is meditation and contemplation, usually while seated on the floor. The function behind the half closed eyes of the Buddhas on display is to make eye contact when you look up at them from the floor. The Pulitzer has preserved the original intention by arranging the figures so they look down on the viewer. The back galleries include depictions of a wider variety of other religious figures from Buddhism. With intricate scrolls and gilded statues, the intensity and intimacy in the Cube Gallery is the best opportunity to connect with another world. The Lower Gallery displays the most exotic and unfamiliar aspects of Buddhism. The Pulitzer is only open on Wednesdays noon to 5 PM and Saturdays 10 AM to 5 PM. Special programs and tours occur regularly on Saturdays. —**Drew Davis**

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SANTA'S MAGIC

DRIVE THROUGH the four-story doors at Santa's Magical Kingdom in Eureka, and you will enter the magical world of the North Pole. Complete with a snack bar, Kringle's General Store, pictures with Santa, larger-than-life 3D displays, and more than two million lights, this park works hard to make every child's Christmas fantasy come true. "We try to figure out what kids' fantasies are about Santa and tailor the displays to that," says Kathy Jones, who created the kingdom with her husband 19 years ago. "All the displays are made with kids in mind—families, but especially kids." Scott Jones created the park after a back injury ended his profes-

sional soccer career. As a player he loved entertaining fans and families, and he wanted to find a way to continue to entertain. He got the idea for a Christmas-themed park from the memories of going to downtown St. Louis with his grandpa every year to see the light displays, and he still cherishes those memories 30 years later. He wanted to create something that would keep families coming back year after year. Santa's Magical Kingdom adds new touches season to season, but also carries on with many displays that returning guests come to see. Some favorites include Santa's Flying Reindeer soaring overhead, Candy Land filled with candy canes and



gingerbread houses, Toy Land, Santa's Castle, and a Waterfall of Lights that guests actually drive through. The park offers wagon rides and the Santa Express Train to take families on tours of the displays, or allows you to bundle up in pajamas, load up the car, and drive through the exhibits for just \$18 per vehicle. —Nicole Heisick

www.santasmagicalkingdom.com
636-938-5925

MISSOURI'S CLAIM TO FAME

"Ukulele Ike" Lives On

HE SOLD 74 million records, appeared in more than 100 movies, and his most famous song is ranked No. 7 on the American Film Institute's "100 Years ... 100 Songs" list. Yet the name of Missouri's own Cliff Edwards, the voice of Disney's Jiminy Cricket, has been nearly forgotten. Edwards was born in Hannibal on June 14, 1895. At the age of 10, he was employed at a shoe factory in Hannibal, singing as he worked to entertain the other workers. When he was 14, Edwards traveled south to St. Louis, taught himself to play the ukulele, and began performing in vaudeville. While at the Arsonia Café in Chicago, a waiter named Spot could never remember Edwards's name and took to calling him "Ike." The nickname stuck. "Ukulele Ike" became a hit on the vaudeville circuit. Edwards's career skyrocketed in 1924 when he appeared in *Lady Be Good* on Broadway with Fred and Adele Astaire. He made his first phonograph records in 1919, recording some of the earliest examples of jazz scat singing. The first recording of "Singin' in the Rain" was made famous by Edwards and reached No.

1 on the U.S. pop charts in 1929. In 1929, Edwards caught the attention of movie producer/director Irving Thalberg. Thalberg's MGM Studios hired Edwards to appear in Hollywood Revue of 1929, performing the film debut of his hit "Singin' in the Rain." Edwards went on to appear in 54 movies during the 1930s. He was cast as the Reminiscent Soldier in *Gone with the Wind* with Vivien Leigh and Olivia De Havilland in 1939. In 1940 came his most famous voice role as Jiminy Cricket in

Walt Disney's *Pinocchio*. Edwards's touching rendition of "When You Wish Upon a Star" earned the Oscar for Best Song that year, the first won by Disney. Throughout the 1940s and '50s Edwards's career continued to flourish, but he also battled alcoholism and suffered economic hardships. By the 1960s, Edwards had dropped out of the public eye; at the time of his death on July 17, 1971, he was a charity patient at the Virgil Convalescent Hospital in Hollywood, with medical expenses being quietly paid by Disney. Though once nearly forgotten, Cliff Edwards and his remarkable body of work lives on. —Lisa Marks

