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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



Aldermen opt out of new tenant powers

Proponents defend anti-gentrification program on NW Side

By Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

When David Amato walks into eviction court Thursday, he'll have a lot on his mind.

Anger at the new landlord he says plans to double the rent and refused to negotiate after purchasing the Logan Square building where he lives. Pride in the six-month rent strike he and his tenants union are waging in response.

And bitterness that a tool he believes would have given him and his neighbors the power to outmuscle a rich corporation to instead buy the 16-unit building themselves — and stay in their homes — materialized just months too late.

"These people are just steam-rolling this area. They're buying up buildings left and right, they're throwing people out of their houses and it's just devastating people," Amato said. "You don't have to be a genius to buy a building. I think we could have."

But the program progressive aldermen put in place this year to give longtime residents like Amato the power to try to keep their homes in the vicinity of the popular 606 trail and other parts of fast-gentrifying Northwest Side neighborhoods is now suffering rollbacks.

While the Northwest Side Preservation Ordinance aims to slow gentrification by giving tenants a "right of first refusal" and discouraging development that decreases density, a pair of aldermen are opting out. They say the still-nascent law that affects neighborhoods including Avondale, Humboldt Park and Logan Square severely disrupts real estate deals and strips homeowners of the right to control their property.

At stake is a policy that advocates hope will serve as a citywide blueprint for creating and preserving more affordable housing and more renter power, the latest battleground in a decades-long fight over the future of residential development in the area. But it may also be an example of how complicated

Turn to Program, Page 4

'I NEVER EVER GIVE UP'

Izzy Martínez built a wrestling empire in Chicago. Can he take the sport mainstream?

By Andrew Carter | Chicago Tribune

The tenets of Izzy Style Wrestling are displayed with prominence inside the suburban Chicago gym where Israel "Izzy" Martínez has molded legions of kids into believers, and the best of them into champions. The principles hang on a banner amid the lingering smell of stale sweat and constant work, near the mats that have launched journeys to national championships and the Olympics.

Martínez feels most at home here, inside the gym he built at the end of a road in a modest industrial park. A great many Chicago-area youth have walked through his doors and found purpose, direction and self-belief. Martínez gets as much, if not more, out of it as he puts in — and he put in enough on a recent Wednesday morning to be covered in sweat soon after a workout began.

"This place is a sanctuary," he said about two hours later, after guiding more than two dozen of his wrestlers through an off-season summer training session. "There's nothing like it."

It begs the question, then, of why. Why is Martínez, who has turned his once-humble gym in Addison into the epicenter of a wrestling empire, stepping out of the comfort of a self-described sanctuary? Why is he risking his name and reputation to launch a startup professional league, Real American Freestyle Wrestling, that aims to be the first of its kind?

Part of the answer is among those tenets in his gym, the ones taped up to the back of a door between the mats and the weights and the custom-built, high-handle-barred motorcycle that's out of place yet perfectly at home inside Martínez's gym. There's

Turn to Wrestling, Page 10

Above: Coach Izzy Martínez demonstrates technique with wrestlers on Aug. 13 at his Izzy Style training center in Addison. **Left:** The U.S.'s Kennedy Blades and her coach, Martínez, celebrate after she defeated Kyrgyzstan's Aiperi Medet Kyzy 8-6 in a women's 76-kilogram semifinal freestyle wrestling match Aug. 10, 2024, at Champ de Mars Arena during the Paris Olympics. **BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTOS**



Grain Belt Express sparks high emotions

Chicago businessman, politicians and farmers in power line dispute

By John Lippert
Chicago Tribune

For seven years, Michael Polsky has been trying to build a high-voltage power line from the windswept prairies of Kansas to the ravenous electrical grids of the Midwest and East Coast.

He brings plenty of firepower to the task.

His Chicago-based company Invenery is the country's largest privately held generator of renewable power. And his investors

include Blackstone, the world's biggest private equity firm.

But it's been a seesaw battle, and the outcome is still in doubt.

One of the main problems for Polsky's power line is that it needs to cross lots of farmland in Kansas, Missouri and Illinois. And lots of farmers hate the idea of eminent domain, especially when it's a private developer such as Polsky who wants their land.

The Grain Belt Express has filed nearly 50 eminent domain lawsuits to obtain the right-of-way it needs in Missouri alone, according to Andrew Bailey, the state's attorney general. Most of these cases have been settled, but emotions still run high. In Illinois, the state Supreme

Court is also preparing to weigh in. On July 2, Bailey opened an investigation into the Grain Belt Express for making false claims. Invenery was grabbing land, he said in an earlier statement, "to satisfy the greed of private investors." President Donald Trump followed up by canceling a loan guarantee for the transmission line. The president also accelerated the phase out of hefty tax credits for wind and solar farms, including those whose power the line was intended to carry. Still, experts say that among all the energy developers in the United States, Polsky may be best equipped to navigate

Turn to Power, Page 8



Joe and Lucy Gleespen stand on the lawn of their farmhouse in Rosamond, Ill., on Wednesday. Invenery is planning to build a high-voltage power transmission line running from western Kansas to the Illinois-Indiana border that would run through the Gleespens' property. **JOHN J. KIM/TRIBUNE**

Bears coach's passion, fire and competitive chutzpah

Ben Johnson has energized the Bears with his fiery presence. Will he have staying power his predecessors lacked? Plus, projecting the team's initial 53-man roster. **Chicago Sports**

Texas governor vows to approve new maps

Lawmakers approved final plans and Gov. Greg Abbott promised to quickly sign off on a new gerrymandered map to help the GOP maintain its congressional majority. **Nation & World**

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 74 Low 54

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 20

\$5.75 city and suburbs and elsewhere
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Track Napoleon's rise and fall in Paris

Rick Steves

I can't think of any two people more prominent in the minds of French citizens than the Virgin Mary and Emperor Napoleon. And they share an important date: Aug. 15 — when it's believed she ascended into heaven, and when he was born. Of course, churches across France recall Notre Dame (our lady). But city halls recall Napoleon, and his huge impact on French civic life.

When I'm filming my TV shows and writing my guidebooks in France, I try to get the straight story on Napoleon. But it can be tricky. His own quote, "What is history but a myth agreed upon?" applies to his own life, where it's sometimes hard to separate myth from reality. Just a humble kid from Corsica, Napoleon attended military school in Paris. He rose quickly through the ranks during the tumultuous years of the French Revolution, and by 1799 he was ruler of France. Five years later, France had conquered most of Europe, and Napoleon declared himself emperor of it all. His personal charisma on the battlefield was said to be worth 10,000 additional men.

Leading France's grand million-man army, he blitzed Europe — until it all came to an end on farmland 15 miles south of Brussels. Two centuries and a catchy ABBA song later, "Waterloo" has become a cultural catchphrase, and Napoleon's famous defeat carries much of his legacy.

After Waterloo, Napoleon was sent into exile on the island of St. Helena. Once the most powerful man in the world, he spent his final years as a lonely outcast suffering from



Napoleon's tomb rests beneath a dome that glitters with 26 pounds of thinly pounded gold leaf. CAMERON HEWITT

ulcers, dressed in his nightcap and slippers, and playing chess, not war.

To get a better feel for Napoleon, head to Paris. South of the city, the Château de Fontainebleau has more Napoleon connections than any other palace in France, featuring his personal apartments and an adjacent museum.

You'll see the emperor's bed, the grand "power desk" where he worked, and the humilitatingly little table where he abdicated. There's also a tent-like room dedicated to Napoleon at war, with his small-but-ironic battle coat and hat, a field cot, and first-class camp gear. And the throne room is the only one in France with its original furniture.

Grand paintings portray the emperor and his first wife, Josephine, after their coronation. Napoleon

aspired to create his own family dynasty, but Josephine was too old to have children.

To turn his Corsican blood blue, he divorced Josephine and married a Habsburg. You'll see a portrait of his second wife, Empress Marie-Louise, who provided what he called "a royal womb."

Looking at the final painting, which depicts Napoleon with symbols of the "Napoleonic Code" — the legal system he gave France — it's fascinating to consider his mix of ideals, charisma and megalomania. This revolutionary hero came out of a movement that killed off the Old Regime ... only to create a new Old Regime.

There's no better symbol of Napoleon's oversized ego than Paris' Arc de Triomphe. Patterned after the ceremonial arches of

ancient Roman conquerors (but more than twice the size), it celebrates Napoleon as emperor of a "New Rome." On the arch's massive left pillar, a relief sculpture shows a toga-clad Napoleon posing confidently, while an avestruck Paris — crowned by her city walls kneels at his imperial feet.

Napoleon died before the Arc's completion, but it was finished in time for his 1840 funeral procession to pass underneath, carrying his remains (19 years dead) from exile to Paris.

Elsewhere in Paris, the complex of Les Invalides — a former veterans' hospital built by Louis XIV — has various French military collections, collectively called the Army Museum.

Here, in addition to galleries on World War I and II, you'll see plenty of Napoleon memora-

bilia including a bed with mosquito netting, a director's chair, his overcoat and pistols — and his beloved horse, Le Vézir, which weathered many a Napoleonic campaign, grew old with him in exile, and now stands stuffed and proud.

At the other end of the complex, Napoleon's tomb rests beneath a dome that glitters with 26 pounds of thinly pounded gold leaf. Enter the church, gaze up at the dome, then lean over the railing and bow to the emperor lying inside the scrolled, red porphyry tomb.

If you've ever considered being an absolute dictator of a united Europe, come here first. Hitler did, but still went out and made the same mistakes as Napoleon. (Hint: Don't invade Russia.)

While you visit these places, it's instructive to

ponder these symbols of war, empire and revolution. Why are today's French so hell-bent on defending their civil liberties?

Perhaps it has to do with their heritage of struggling so long and hard to overcome the stubborn abuse of power to earn their freedom.

When you travel to Paris, it's clear: Napoleon has left today's visitors with some amazing and thought-provoking sights.

Rick Steves writes *European guidebooks*, hosts travel shows on public TV and radio, and organizes *European tours*. This column revisits some of Rick's favorite places over the past two decades. Visit his website at ricksteves.com, email him at rick@ricksteves.com or follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Spartan village inspires Demas

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

Some people dream of quitting their job and enjoying the quiet life. Not Leonidas G. Demas. After he retired from his career as an attorney, he pursued his passion for filmmaking. Demas wrote a script for the film "A Spartan Dream," which was filmed entirely in Greece.

"Over the years, I had developed a love for Greece, visiting many times from childhood to the present," said Demas, 78. "(I was) particularly focused on a small village in the Spartan countryside known as Amyklai. These were the experiences from which 'A Spartan Dream' is derived."

This interview with Demas has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Where are some of the places you filmed "A Spartan Dream"?

A: Actually, the entire film was filmed in Greece and 90% was filmed in and around the modern town of Sparta. We also filmed in the seaside town of Gythio, which is in ancient times was the port for Sparta and is about 25 minutes by car to the south. Xirokambi lies in between. The entire countryside around Sparta is filled with olive and orange orchards from east to west and north to south. It is bordered by lengthy mountain ranges running north and south, one on each side. Quite beautiful.

Q: How does the Greece of today compare to your



Filmmaker Leonidas G. Demas, left, and son Chris are seen on the set of "A Spartan Dream." ODYSSEY ENTERTAINMENT

earlier trips?

A: Lord have mercy, I've been to Greece 15 times beginning in 1960 through last year. In 1960, there was no electricity in the countryside around Sparta. So we used oil lamps in the villages. No running water, so we went several times a day to the local well to bring buckets back home. No bathroom, just an outhouse. We could have been back in Byzantine times or even ancient Sparta and not known the difference. Back in 1960, the morals were very patriarchal and very strict. Still, the people enjoyed their simple lives immensely. But things quickly changed when electric lines stretched throughout the valley. All the conveniences sprung up. "A Spartan Dream" (set in 1987) was well past those days of candlelight.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been before?

A: Strangely enough, I would like to go to Xi'an, China, to see the Terracotta Army.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?

A: My first trip outside the continental U.S. was as a child of 10. We lived in Wheeling, West Virginia, and we were moving to Puerto Rico where my

father got a job as racing secretary at El Comandante Racetrack. I was thrilled and, in those days, there weren't many mainlanders there. Learned Spanish quickly and went to a local school for three years before going to a middle school run by the Methodist Church in Santurce.

Q: What was your best or worst vacation memory?

A: Probably when I was touring the Museo del Prado in Madrid. After about an hour of the guide showing us everything in the museum in great detail, I ran out of steam and began to faint. As I did, I ran toward a 15th-century settee along one of the walls. The guide yelled out that I was not to even touch that settee. I collapsed onto it and was lifted off by two attendants and was escorted to the closest bathroom, where they splashed my face. Then took me to the main entrance to wish me bon voyage.

Q: What was the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A: I learned that every sane person learns. Underneath all the trappings, mementos are the same wherever you go.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehaekim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Turo charges renter \$500 for vehicle's peeling paint

By Christopher Elliott | King Features Syndicate

I booked a 17-day National Geographic Expedition to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. I'm traveling with four other people. After I rented a car, I immediately reported an issue to the car owner and Turo, whom I rented the car from.

But instead of acknowledging the problem, Turo blamed me and charged me \$500 for a new paint job. Turo insists that I was responsible because the peeling occurred during my rental period.

This experience has shaken my trust in Turo's commitment to fairness and customer satisfaction.

Can you help me get my money back?

— Latisha Thompson, Groton, Connecticut

A: I don't see how you could be held responsible for peeling paint on a car that you rented from Turo. I mean, if you had collided with another vehicle and the paint started peeling, then yes, perhaps. But you showed me pictures of your car, and it looked like a paint job gone wrong.

So, what happened? Your records show that Turo charged you a \$500 deposit when you rented the vehicle. After you returned the Sonata, Turo's claims team sent you an email saying that the owner had filed a claim to repair the paint on the roof. Since you declined Turo's optional protection, you were liable for the damage, according to Turo. You signed an agreement saying that you are financially responsible for "all physical damage or theft of a booked vehicle that occurs during a trip" including any additional

costs and fees resulting from damage, regardless of who is at fault. In other words, while the damage wasn't your fault, you were still responsible.

Turo strongly recommends that you take "before" and "after" photos of your car. It even has a feature on its app called Trip Photos that allows you to do so and store the images in the app. I think this is brilliant because if you can prove that the car was damaged before you rented it, you're far less likely to face a successful claim by your host.

Why didn't you spot this damage when you picked up the car? You say the vehicle looked "very glossy and shiny" as if someone recently painted it. The paper trail between you and Turo shows that the company was unconvinced. A brief, polite email sent to one of the Turo managers I list on Elliott.

org, my consumer advocacy website, might have led to the reversal of this \$500 charge.

If there were to be another look at this claim, it's hard to imagine that you did anything to the vehicle to cause the paint to peel the way that it did. Something just fell off about it. So, I contacted Turo on your behalf. In response, Turo sent you an email that it had decided to drop the matter.

"We are pleased to inform you that we will be closing the claim, and you will not owe anything for damages at the present time," it added.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of *Elliott Advocacy*, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org or help.chris@elliott.org.