

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

WEEK OF APRIL 7-13, 2021

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| SECTION B

PHOTOGRAPHER WHO SAW IT ALL



As a New York Daily News staff photographer, Tom Middlemiss captured the city in all its grit and glory. Now living in Naples, his book “A New York Press Photographer’s Story” includes more than 80 images he made during his career.

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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Tom Middlemiss chronicled New York City street life from the 1960s to the 1980s, an eye witness to tragedy and triumph, poverty, glamour, sports stars and presidents. His pictures were splashed across the cover or inside the New York Daily News, one of the city’s prominent tabloids, where Mr. Middlemiss was made a staff photographer after working as a copy boy and apprentice.

Now 85, he lives in Naples

SEE PHOTO, B4 ►

Clockwise from top: Port Authority Police Officers, cross trained to fight aircraft fires, use foam on an Eastern Airlines DC-7 that crashed and burned at Idlewild Airport (now JFK International) on Nov. 30, 1962, killing 27 passengers. ■ Frank Sinatra filming “The Detective” at the 19th Precinct in Manhattan.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM MIDDLEMISS COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

INSIDE



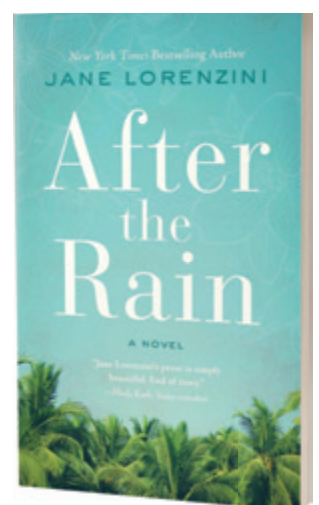
Collector’s Corner

Behold: A wooden 19th-century baby stroller. **B2** ►



Watch it

“Ding” film series wraps up with food waste story. **B4** ►



Top Picks

Check out our weekly calendar of great things to do this week. **B6-9** ►



Dining

Enjoy seafood at Skip One Seafood and Deep Lagoon Seafood, among other spots around town. **B19** ►

Creator of “Shrill” to speak at Planned Parenthood Virtual Gala

BY NANCY STETSON
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Lindy West may have been shy as a child, but wow, how things have changed.

The 39-year-old has a big, bold voice she uses — in print, on screen and onstage — in support of feminism, body positivity and fat acceptance.

She’s the creator and executive producer of the Hulu series “Shrill,” as well as author of three books: “Shrill: Notes From a Loud Woman,” “The Witches Are Coming” and “Sh*t, Actually,” a collection of movie reviews. (The cover title essay is about the

movie “Love, Actually.”)

Ms. West is now lending her voice to Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida; she’ll be on a panel at its virtual gala at 6 p.m. April 8.

Other speakers include Dr. Bertice Berry, author of the memoir “I’m On My Way, But Your Foot is on My Head,” and former NFL player Wade Davis, who writes and speaks on gender, race and orientation equality. New York magazine writer and award-winning author of “Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Anger,” Rebecca Traister, will moderate.

According to Planned Parenthood, the theme is Naked Truth, with the

event celebrating “the power of telling Naked Truth through the personal stories of national movement-makers and stigma-breakers who have used their voice to stand up for what is right.”

“What is my naked truth?” asks Ms. West.

“I’ve been thinking lately about how I truly don’t know anything. I’m just trying. The strength in my work is just being vulnerable about that. I’m muddling through, along with everyone else. I don’t think anybody knows anything, maybe aside from trained professionals, like therapists. I think ... the things

SEE WEST, B15 ►

PHOTO

From page 1

with his wife, Marianne. His book "A New York Press Photographer's Story," which he published through Amazon, is a collection of his photography from the Daily News and an autobiography. It is a testament to an analog era, a gritty and exciting period in the city's life and a photographer who captured the full spectrum of humanity in The Big Apple and beyond in his 40-plus year career.

"Many of the photos in this book may also be disturbing," he writes. "But many will show the best of New York City."

The book is available on Amazon and through his website, www.eventpixer.com.

One of 11 widely read papers in the New York metro area after World War II, the Daily News called itself "New York's Picture Newspaper." Its old offices on 42nd Street in Manhattan were the model for the Daily Planet in the



MIDDLEMISS

first Superman films, and the stories Mr. Middlemiss photographed could reach 1.5 million people on a weekday and double that on Sunday with an overseas edition.

One of its cover images from 1964 is also the cover of Mr. Middlemiss's book: two firefighters trying in vain to breathe back life into a baby. Mr. Middlemiss remembers being in his bedroom in Brooklyn, where he lived with his parents, early that morning on Easter Sunday 1964.

He had one police radio tuned to Brooklyn North and another one other to Queens, as well as one that picked up fire department calls. A call for "all hands operating" meant it was a bad fire, around 2 to 3 a.m.

"I got dressed, out of the bed, gone in the car and flew," he said. "In those days there was nobody on the street... I got to the scene and it was bedlam.

"A woman came down the street screaming 'my babies are in there; my babies are in there.' Firemen came out with this child."

The two firemen sat down on the back of the ambulance to try to save baby Eric. Mr. Middlemiss made his photograph with a 4 x 5 Speed Graphic camera and flash. (Later in his career, he used a Rolliflex with 120mm film and finally 35mm film cameras).

"That is probably — it is the best picture I ever made," Mr. Middlemiss said.

It won the Best Spot News Photo of 1964 by the Newspaper Guild, judged by the editorial staff of all NYC newspapers. It was a major achievement, especially since he was still a young studio apprentice at the Daily News at the time.

"A lot of people thought, 'well congratulations you son of a gun,'" Mr. Middlemiss remembered. "A lot of people they put up their noses at me. One fella, the boss, was standing there and he talked to the boss and said, 'what do you think of this kid getting the page 1 award, hot stuff huh? And the boss said, why don't you try to do just as good.'"

Later that year he was officially made a staff photographer. He would work a day shift and the 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. night shift. He might cover politicians or baseball, be it the New York Mets or The Rangers — though he never covered the Yankees. He might be sent to photograph a celebrity at a restaurant, a murder or the opening of a play, such as one starring actor and French sex symbol Brigitte Bardot.

"And when she came it was a mob scene," he said.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM MIDDLEMISS COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
Walt (Clyde) Frazier, New York Knicks smooth-shooting guard, throws one up at Madison Square Garden.



Grace Kelly with Alfred Hitchcock.

The Daily News often covered crime and fires, and fostered a good relationship with those agencies.

Gerald "Jerry" Sanford worked for the New York City Fire Department for 30 years, as a fire fighter and later as press secretary, before moving to Florida, where he is retired as public information officer for the North Collier Fire Department.

He knew Mr. Middlemiss in New York as a fellow professional before they later became friends in Florida.

Mr. Sanford, 82, recalled a time when fires ate up whole, sometimes abandoned NYC city blocks.

"We called it the war years," he said. "It was the '60s and '70s when the city was burning... They were some hard years. All of those men now are retired. Retired and dead. And the police did the same thing. And Tom was right in the middle of it, on the scene whether it was a police shooting or accident or a fire."



Firemen George Goldbock, left, and Brian Preston of Ladder 105 try in vain to save 18-month-old toddler Eric Peterson, after they found the infant in a Brooklyn fire on Easter Sunday morning, 1964.

"That is probably — it is the best picture I ever made."

—Tom Middlemiss

Mr. Sanford recalls, “Everybody read the paper, I’m talking before computers. It was a huge industry. Everybody bought the paper. Everybody had it delivered. You’d look in driveways, there were newspapers there.”

While The New York Times covered more national and international news, tabloids made pictures prominent and focused on local news, crime, sports and entertainment. The Daily News is one of four major New York dailies that survive today, including The New York Post, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.

“Some of the tabloids had much better pictures, at least more immediate pictures,” said Naples resident Lawrence De Maria, 76, who worked as a stock broker on Wall Street and later as a reporter for The New York Times during much of the time Mr. Middlemiss worked at the Daily News.

“If you wanted to see who was starving in Rwanda you opened the New York Times,” he said. “But if you wanted to see who got shot on 42nd Street or what mafia guy got rubbed out you opened the Daily News.”

After they met and became friends in Southwest Florida, Mr. Middlemiss hired Mr. De Maria to help edit some 3,000 photographs down to more than 80 and lay out “A New York Press Photographer’s Story.” It is a revised edition of a book he published in 2020.

“I (had been) been working on it for 5 years,” Mr. Middlemiss said. “And then finally last year I said, I have to finish this book.”

He came to Florida in 2004 with his wife, Marianne, to visit family and fell in love with the area right away. He also has two daughters from his previous marriage, Elizabeth and Kathleen.

He stayed active in photography after moving to Southwest Florida, finding work at a local paper, the Naples Sun Times.

“It was great,” he said. “I got to know Naples and Fort Myers like the back of my hand.”

He used a digital camera for the first time and made pictures for real estate agents and as a volunteer for St. John the



Fireman Dan Tracy with 7-month-old Terry Sykes, whom he rescued from a blazing Brooklyn tenement fire in 1967.

Evangelist Catholic Church in Naples.

These days if he wants to make a picture, he typically uses his iPhone. It’s a long way from the first camera he used at age 9, a Kodak Brownie Reflex, to photograph family gatherings and holidays.

“The realization that I could touch a button and the medium going into film through a piece of glass, it just amazed me,” he said.

Whatever camera he used, it was in the end the final image that mattered.

“We never ‘took’ pictures, we ‘made’ pictures,” he said. “And the most

important part about a picture is the composition. It’s what’s in the picture that counts.”

Mr. Middlemiss grew up on the border of Queens and Brooklyn, the last of three siblings, two brothers and a sister, in an Irish Catholic family. His father worked as an attorney and his mother as a schoolteacher.

“Oh, it was wonderful,” he said. “The 1950s were the most beautiful times. We lived in innocent times — and it was so much fun. You could go out and play in the streets. And when the streetlights came on you had to go into the house and do your homework or whatever you had to do.

“The ’60s started to change everything. Woodstock, I think, was the great change.”

Mr. Middlemiss covered Vietnam War protests in New York. His views on that conflict changed over the years.

“I was all for it,” he

said. “I was former military so I was all for the military. As I grew older, I said you know the kids in those days were right. I was wrong.”

Following high school, he attended St. John’s University, earning a communications in arts degree. Then he joined the U.S. Army Reserves for infantry training at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Starting in 1960 at age 24 he worked first as a copy boy — earning \$48 per week — and then studio apprentice for the Daily News. He waited for his turn as one of 54 salaried staff photographers, which only happened if one of them retired or died. And he always wore a button down shirt and tie on the job, a requirement as well as a practical consideration.

“I remember my mother saying when I became a copy boy, she said ‘Tom, you must wear a shirt and tie,’” he said. “‘That way they can send you to see The Cardinal or they can send you down to The Bowery where all the bums hang out — you can always go.’ And she was right.” ■

“The realization that I could touch a button and the medium going into film through a piece of glass, it just amazed me.” — Tom Middlemiss



“Tarzan and Jane,” two chimpanzees stolen from the Prospect Park Zoo in Brooklyn, are reunited with their zookeeper, reading all about it in the Daily News.



The New York Rangers mix it up with the Philadelphia Flyers at Madison Square Garden.