

#GASTRONOMY

Bringing Family Recipes to the Fore

Started by Himanshu Rathore and his wife Deepti, Pratap Bhawan cuisine is an ode to the culinary prowess of Himanshu's mother, Jaikirti as well as the traditional cooking techniques and age old recipes of their family hailing from Chomu and Nimaj in Rajasthan. Khadh Raan, Khadh Maas, Bhunwa Maas as well as Chicken and Mutton Pickles are some of the specials on their menu.



Deepti and Himanshu Rathore



Tusharika Singh
Freelance writer and city blogger

There is no denying that the Covid-19 pandemic-induced lockdown led to a steep rise in the number of home kitchens across the country. And Jaipur followed suit with an array of home bakers and home chefs starting their own kitchens and bakery lines. One such home kitchen, Pratap Bhawan Cuisine, took the opportunity to bring to the fore exquisite home-cooked Rajasthani cuisine using traditional recipes that have been passed down from generations yet perfectly suit modern tastes and palate.

Started by Himanshu Rathore and his wife Deepti, the kitchen is an ode to the culinary prowess of Himanshu's mother as well as the traditional cooking techniques and age-old recipes of their family hailing from Chomu and Nimaj in Rajasthan. It is worth noting that Himanshu, who was formerly a naturalist by profession, has been running Pratap Bhawan as a popular homestay in Jaipur for a decade now.



Murgh Achaar and Maas Achaar

Talking about his love for food and fondness for cooking, Himanshu says: "I have always loved eating and my mother, Jaikirti was a great cook. We hosted a lot of house parties and our food was always hugely appreciated by the guests. As a child, I used to watch my mother and my maternal grandfather cook and I was always curious to learn cooking. I learned some recipes from my Nanosa and at the age of 12 I cooked my first dish, Kachri Murgh. However, I mastered most of the cooking from my mother's recipes."

Reminiscing about his youth and his days at the Mayo College boarding school in Ajmer, Himanshu adds: "I was the only one in my entire batch who knew who to cook



Kachri Haldi Ka Maas

chicken and mutton in class ten. And as a result, my friends and senior wanted me to cook at all the parties. Then when I went to college we used to have big house parties and I was always the chef." It is safe to say that Himanshu's family, friends and even acquaintances were well aware of his cooking skills even before he started his home kitchen.

Himanshu's friends often suggested that he should open a restaurant but he was never in favour of this idea. "I knew hired cooks will not be able to replicate our family's recipes. But when lockdown happened and I saw that some people are opening home kitchens, the idea immediately struck a chord with me. Along with my wife Deepti, I started a kitchen with mutton and chicken pickles and shaami kebabs on offer," tells the avid cook.

Though the kitchen received a great response, there was a persistent demand for main course dishes like Laal Maas. "This eventually paved the way for sumptuous additions to the menu. 'Khadh Maas', which is essentially curry cut mutton marinated in spices, kachri and yoghurt and wrapped in 9 rotis with ladies of ghee and baked to perfection, is one of the specials on the menu. Another delicacy on the menu is the 'Bhunwa Maas' - succulent mutton cooked with brown onions, dry masalas, yoghurt and fresh coriander. For roll lovers, chicken and mutton kebabs wrapped in egg parathas and flavoured with mint chutney and onions make for a delectable treat. The mutton and chicken pickles are also another unique item on the menu. With a shelf life of two months, they are being shipped across the country."

Talking about what makes his cuisine stand out from the crowd, Himanshu says: "The unique part about our cuisine is that all the recipes are our own creations which are either passed down across generations or are crafted by me. Furthermore, I do the entire cooking on my own and the staff only helps me in the process. These two things definitely make our food stand out."

While Pratap Bhawan has already been organizing culinary experiences like cooking classes and home dining for tourists for the past many years, they now also cater for small parties and events. Since the food is made fresh on order, pre-ordering a few hours in advance is mandatory.

More was to come as the clouds burst and scudding rain lashed the plane in angry gusts of sleet. The staccato din of hailstones striking the fuselage of the aircraft, penetrated the sound-proof vacuum-packed cabin and pounded our nerves like a relentless hammer; and those of us not busy puking, held our heads in sheer agony and mortal fear. The stewardesses abandoning their coiffure calm, rushed about frantically weaving their way through the pukey chaos, in an effort to provide solace and succour, but demand far outstripped supply.



Rajendra Shekhar
Former CBI director & former DG police Rajasthan

As Deputy Inspector General, in CBI, I was overseeing the work of Branches located in the North-Eastern Region. I happened to visit Gauhati in mid-August, just when the monsoons were peaking. During the return evening flight, the weather became very inclement and the passengers were asked to, 'please fasten your seat belts' in a sweet but distinctly urgent voice. Soon thereafter, the plane began behaving in a whimsical manner: suddenly plummeting several hundred feet in a matter of seconds while negotiating air-pockets, and then, as abruptly soaring up vertically into the skies in an attempt to regain its allotted flight-path.

We, the zapped passengers, became totally disoriented by the plane's see-saw battle with the elements to retain its balance. Consequently, thus, during the plane's downward plunge we would feel a sudden unerving vacuum in our guts. And even before we got inured to this peculiar sensation, the plane's precipitous climb made us undergo a heady feeling of weightlessness; as if we were space travellers defying the force of gravity.

It was scary. The seat belts could do precious little to quell the violent buffeting. We were like a bunch of amateurs rafting in exceptionally turbulent waters and most of us overcome by an urge to throw up, began to dem and spew bags.

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Plane Truth



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Rat-tat-tatting

One of those wingless angels who were frantically rushing in and out of the cockpit, came and plonked herself on the vacant seat next to mine; squirmed uneasily and said, 'Ouch!' I had been allotted the window seat in the front row on the right. Apparently, she was much upset to notice my briefcase which I had kept for easy availability on the vacant aisle seat. I nodded apologetically and under her suspicious glare removed the offending item from beneath her, and placed it next to my feet as reaching the baggage rack above was ruled out in the given circumstances. Her immediate concern having been satisfactorily resolved she became chatty.

She gave me the uplifting news that the Calcutta airport had been inundated with flash floods and the plane had been diverted to Agartala. She was about to say more when she was recalled to the cockpit. She went in, came out, and resumed her seat, as also her monologue.

"The Cal-Control Tower is unable to get in touch with Agartala as the airport staff there has packed up for the night," I gulped and nodded mutely. She continued, "In any case Agartala airport has no night landing facility."

Panic seemed to have gripped all the players of the cast involved in the operation, including the 'ground



Plane Truth

staff manning the Calcutta Control Tower. They should have known about the lack of night-landing facility at Agartala, or at least should have obtained an affirmation from that airport before directing the plane in that direction. I opened my mouth to put in a word edgewise but failed as she was in no mood for interruptions and kept rat-tatting like an ack-ack gun gone awry.

Harbingers of Good Cheer

"Our plane is hovering over Cal, airport hoping to get a clearance to land. The fuel is fast running out. Phew!" I felt like making it into a dual duet, "Phew!" I was dumbfounded. Hitherto I had the impression that flight attendants, particularly air hostesses, were harbingers of good cheer, or at least they were trained to keep their morbid fears to themselves in alarming situations. She got up to cater to another cockpit call, and returned to occupy her preferred perch. By then evidently, she had concluded that we had become paltry enough for her to share some personal concerns with me.

She revealed, almost in a whisper, that the chief pilot had 'guzzled' six glasses of water without let, and that she had developed a splitting headache. By then the rain had relented and for the occupants of the cabin, it was something to cheer about as their chief concern was safe landing. Little did they know that the plane's fuel was, fast running out, and neither Cal, nor Agartala airports were responding favourably. Since I was privy to this knowledge, I should have been the one mighty worried but had to put my concerns behind hers, since she had not yet finished with her litany.

Evidently there was a connection between the pilot's water intake and

her headache. And, so when I helpfully suggested, "Aspirin", she shrugged and said, 'I have already taken six.' From that I concluded that, 'six' was the prescribed limit for oral intake for the IA crew. Her ceaseless prattle triggered off an urgent need to unburden myself. So I unfastened my seat belt and got up, but resumed my seat under her severely prohibitive gaze.

She began where she had left, as if there was no interruption. I resigned myself to her unrequited lament, mainly directed at the chief pilot, who, poor chap, had nothing to do with the predicament the weather had put the plane, and passengers in. Though her grouse had some justification since he kept calling her to the cockpit to satiate his thirst (and cross the limit of prescribed number of 6 glasses of water intake); and in the process, interrupt her conversational free flow. She resumed, "you see." This time it was the announcement by the chief pilot that halted her in mid-sentence. But unlike her 6 aspirins, it brought about all round relief.

#THAT'S LIFE

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World AIDS Day

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, discovered in the 1980s, changed our way, from how we got our vaccinations to the way of choosing sexual practices. While HIV and AIDS are certainly still out in the world today, the horror stories that were told of how it works and how it was transmitted have largely been mitigated. World AIDS Day works to ensure that those who suffer from AIDS can live in a safer, more understanding world and help further research to eliminate this life-altering virus that can turn into a deadly disease.



World AIDS Day

The pilot and the co-pilot were hugged affectionately and carried aloft in the aisle. Some of the male passengers wistfully eyed the air hostesses, wondering whether they could widen their arc of demonstrative exuberance to include them too. However, the prohibitive, 'keep your distance' look from their objects of longing, restricted their celebratory impulse.

My stewardess friend, whispered an exclusive tid-bit in my ear, "Another minute or two, and the empty fuel tank would have forced the plane to crash land on the outskirts of Cal." She seemed disappointed it didn't. Apparently she was perfect material for a 'Tidaveen' kind of operation.

But for me, ironically enough, she proved to be an angel of mercy. You see, not even a month had gone before I emerged from under the surgeon's knife, after a 'slipped disc' operation. And it was ill advised on my part to undertake a plane ride. Gauhati Branch, surely, would have got on famously without my inspection, at least for some time more.

Anyway, the horrendously inclement weather thoroughly messed up my venturesome decision. And the feeling of vacuum and weightlessness, one after the other in quick succession, caused due to the involuntary peccadilloes of the plane, thoroughly churned up my innards, causing shooting pain to course through the area operated upon, and I was about to cry out in sheer agony when this wingless angel occupied the vacant seat next to me and began her ceaseless monologue.

Eventually, the weather did relent, but her rant didn't, and I silently thanked her for that. Because, her non-stop prattle had, unintentionally of course, provided me with an analgesic.

As a parting shot, the prophet of



As a parting shot, the prophet of

wrote:arbit@ashtradrudoot.com

#ART&CULTURE

Pink City Tales of Blue



Sadhana Garg
Journalist & social entrepreneur

Legend has it that once Ram Singh Ji (1830-1885) flying kites repeatedly had his kite cut short by two men in the street. The champs of the day were summoned by the Maharaja to know the secret of their success. The kite enthusiasts Churaman and Kaluram being potters from Achnera a suburb of Agra told the royal they had coated their kite flying string or 'manja' as it is known with glaze used in pottery. Ram Singh Ji a great patron of art and having discovered the process behind Blue pottery by a sheer luck, immediately appointed them in the ceramic department of the School of Art that he had founded in Jaipur in 1866 to promote different art forms in the city.

Three generations of Kaluram and Churaman taught ceramics at the School of Art. The two artisans had learnt pottery at the feet of one of the followers of Atique Shah a master craftsman in the court of Bahadur Shas Zafar, the last Mughal.



Basically items unheard of!

The purists not happy with what they thought as plebeian democratisation of art had no control of mass production that the artisans were engaged in due to Leela's efforts. Blue pottery was steadily glazing up private home and office space. It had moved away from galleries and museums to markets and shops that every art is destined to if it has to survive in a global village.

If innovation is about breaking the rules then Elizabeth Kerker an interior designer of Taj Group of hotels commissioned blue pottery panels based on existing Pietra dura designs in the palace for Rambag's coffee shop.

Before long blue pottery tiles were being used with wood and metal to produce furniture and household items. Chance, one day not only favoured the blue pottery entrepreneur but bought Vicki Oberoi the longest time ever they hung in her doorstep. Curious to know about the frequent visitors going in and out of the building opposite his office he was informed it is a blue pottery hub. He decided to pay her a visit and liked her work so much that he decided to use the 1,50,000 tiles for Raj Vilas hotel in Jaipur.

Princess Diana on seeing the exquisite blue pottery items on display at City Palace Bazaar curated for her and the Prince of Wales on one of their visit to Jaipur picked up a blue pottery elephant but not before she had understood the process in detail by Leela. In 2020 Bill Clinton on his visit to Jaipur picked up a

war comes to mean" Post-independence Jaipur's decorative arts were being nurtured at the School of Arts. Ramgopal Vijayvargiya a former student of the school became its Principal in 1960. His contemporary Kripal Singh Shekawat, a muralist and painter from Shantiniketan took charge of the ceramic department bringing to it his innate refinement.

A parallel Institute to the school was Sawai Ram Singh Shilp Kala Kendra founded by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Maharani Gayatri Dev in 1963 to promote and market Jaipur crafts.

Having relocated from Calcutta with impressions of her mother's self-less service in the company of none other than Mother Teresa, Leela Bortlia too wanted to make a difference in the lives of less fortunate. A chance meeting with struggling Blue Pottery artisans convinced her that this was a hand holding opportunity - a beginning magic of which was yet to unfold.

So she asked them to make beads. In due course Leela had more beads than space to store. Some she put on display at the Anokhi shop.

Her first order was from a French designer Paul Comart of a ceramic beads curtain - unheard of to say the least. To add to it six months later he returned with a

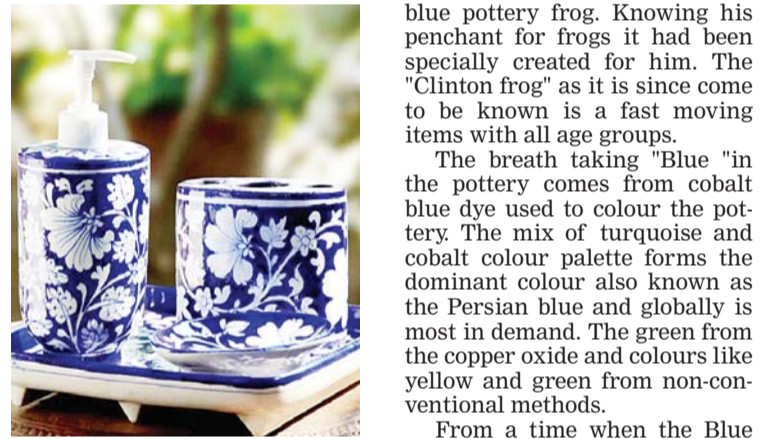
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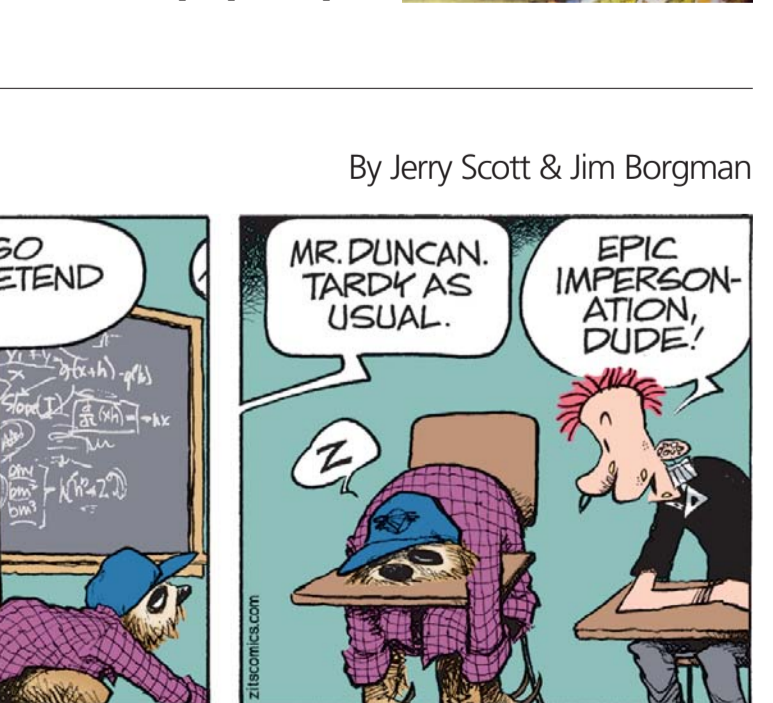
blue pottery frog. Knowing his penchant for frogs it had been specially created for him. The "Clinton frog" as it is since come to be known is a fast moving items with all age groups.

The breath taking "Blue" in the pottery comes from cobalt blue dye used to colour the pottery. The mix of turquoise and cobalt colour palette forms the dominant colour also known as the Persian blue and globally is the most in demand. The green from the copper oxide and colours like yellow and green from non-conventional methods.

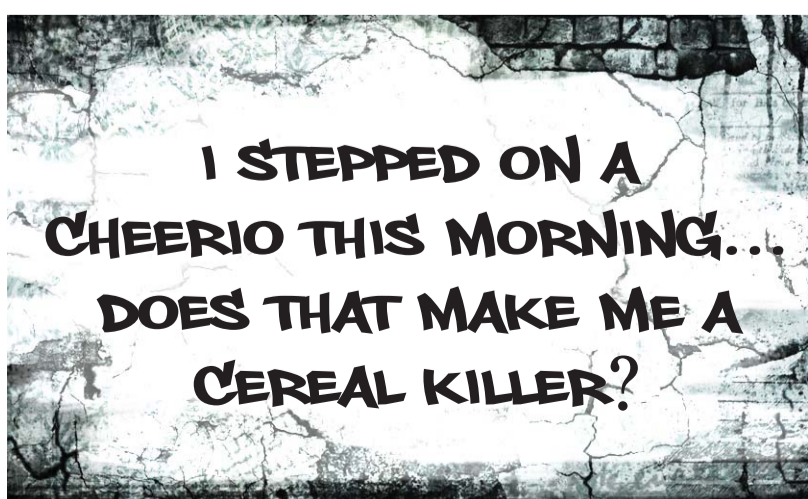
From a time when the Blue pottery tiles were used only as an architectural accessory to decorate mosques or tombs of Mughals Blue pottery today has earned for itself the Geographical Indication Tag.

Jaipur as a city has had a tradition of viewing the creativity of its karigars as an expression of infinity or even divinity. In the collective consciousness of the city Blue indeed is at the centre. As if in tandem with the sky, the ocean, it's Aradhya Dev - blue Govind Devji or the blue toned Lord Ram from whom the Jaipur House derives its august lineage or the gift of cobalt blue-an influence of Persia.

From near extinction to an exponential growth in terms of artisans employed and variety of products made, pottery has been bestowed the "Blue" element to the eternal story of the Pink city.

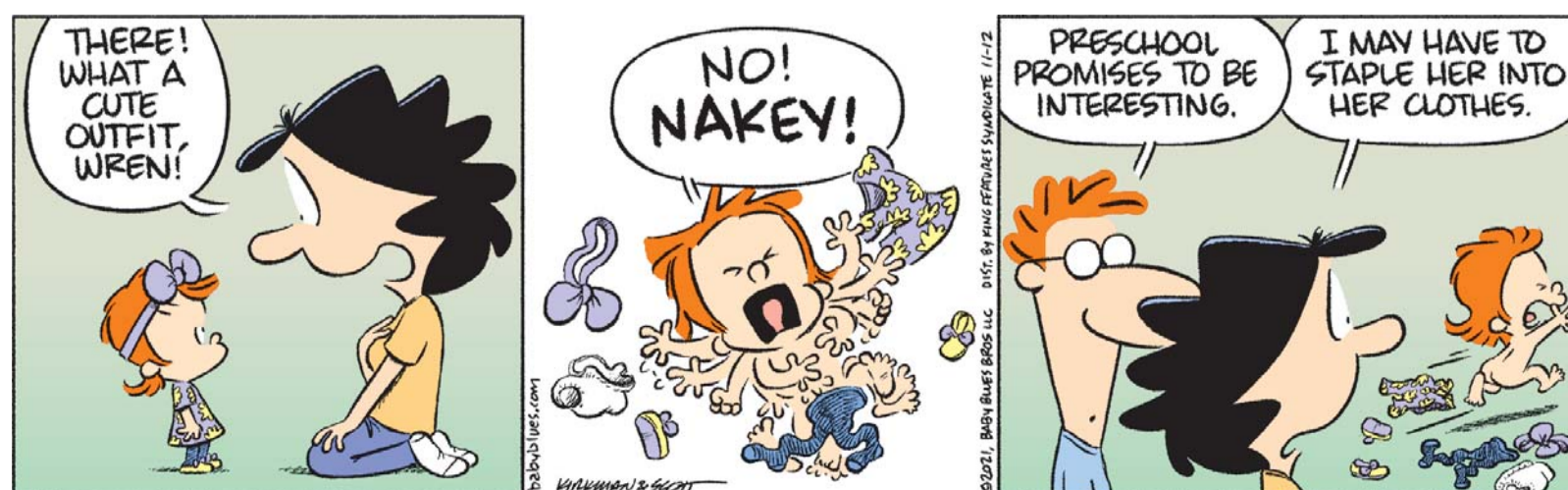


THE WALL



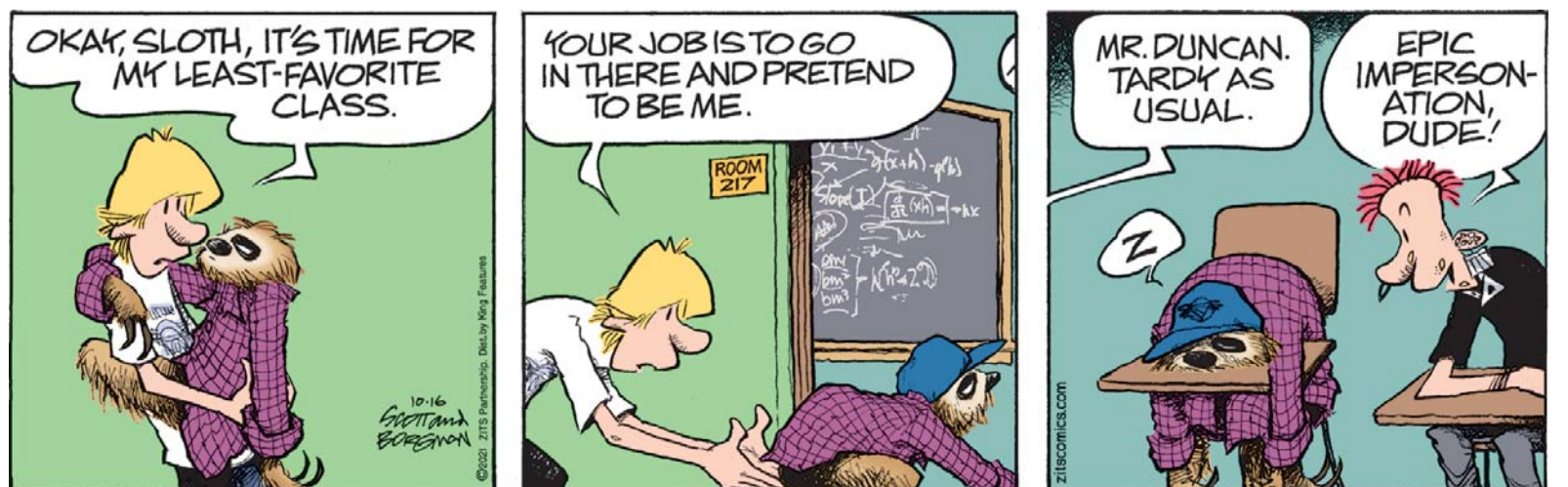
I STEPPED ON A CHERIO THIS MORNING... DOES THAT MAKE ME A CEREAL KILLER?

BABY BLUES



THERE! WHAT A CUTE OUTFIT, WREN!
NO! NAKY!
PRESCHOOL PROMISES TO BE INTERESTING.
I MAY HAVE TO STAPLE HER INTO HER CLOTHES.

ZITS



OKAY, SLOTH, IT'S TIME FOR MY LEAST-FAVORITE CLASS.
YOUR JOB IS TO GO IN THERE AND PRETEND TO BE ME.
MR. DUNCAN, TARDY AS USUAL.
EPIC IMPERSONATION DUDE!

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman