

The Dispatch

The February 2022: Entertainment/Fun

What do YOU do for FUN?

Though the agricultural calendar is seemingly chock-full every month, February is one of the least busy months for many. With that in mind, your Dispatch staff has decided to write on entertainment or fun—some of the things we do in a “down” time. Lance describes two streaming series: “Yellowstone” and “Succession,” while Bill talks of his surprising rediscovery of a video game from thirty-five years ago. Davon has the month off—she is no doubt out having fun! Let us know your comments or thoughts.

Life and Art: Imitating Each Other

[Lance Woodbury](#)

As you deal with the daily blessings and challenges of a family agriculture business, take a break with some engaging content on your television, computer or tablet. Several shows about family business have taken center stage on the American screen, and two of the most popular are [Yellowstone](#) and [Succession](#).

Just a warning – some of the language in these shows would make a sailor blush, and the plots can seem pretty far-fetched, but it’s fun to watch the politics and relationships in a family business taken to extremes on the screen.

[NBC’s Yellowstone](#) follows the Dutton family on their Montana ranch as they fight with everyone, including, at times, one another. (Someone the other day called it an agricultural soap opera, a ranch-family “*Days of Our Lives*.”) From sibling rivalry to real estate development conflicts, to clashes with Native Americans, biker gangs, and even employee relations, *Yellowstone* shows us the quintessential ranching family at odds with the world. But like many of you, they keep on ranching, because, as Kevin Costner says in his role as patriarch John Dutton, “[it’s one hell of a life!](#)”

[HBO’s Succession](#) takes place in the urban environs of New York, chronicling the lives of the Roy family’s adult children after their father, the CEO of a media conglomerate, suffers a stroke. They jockey for position, fight for control, throw each other under the bus, battle substance abuse, and generally suffer from having too much money. Like most television shows, *Succession* takes situations in the family business to somewhat unbelievable places – places we wouldn’t go with our own family members – but it can be fun to watch [someone else](#) go there!

One interesting tidbit is that *Yellowstone*, now the most-watched cable TV show, had stronger viewership in smaller, even rural markets, while *Succession’s* viewership is primarily urban. And if you are involved in horses or ranching, *Yellowstone* features real-life working ranches and famous quarter horses and riders, making the bridge between life and art just a little shorter.

With the days growing longer, winter calving in full swing, and spring planting just around the corner, your television watching opportunities may be dwindling. But an episode or two provides a nice break from the difficulties of the day. Or, at least it offers a sense of relief that as bad as you have it, you are not as bad as the Dutton or Roy families. One final tip: be sure to decline anyone who offers to give you a ride to the [train station!](#)

At Time for...FUN!

[Bill Long](#)

One of my most unforgettable pastors was a pacifist—but a pacifist who spent his free time painting toy soldiers. When I gently tried to point out that this seemed to be a contradiction, he smiled mysteriously and told me that someday I would understand.

As time went on, we lost touch with each other, and I plunged into the world of career and family. When our children were young, my wife and I took them on occasion to a local pizza parlor that boasted not only passable-quality pizza but a room full of video games. Lights were flashing, buzzers were going off, kids were screaming and everyone was having a great time. Even I decided to get into the act by learning to play my one (and only) video game—PAC-Man. It is a game of skill where you basically try to consume all the “dots” on the board before the enemy creatures consume you. By today’s standards it is a pretty tame video game. But it provided distraction and entertainment for me while I was watching my daughter and waiting for the pizza.

My daughter will turn 40 this year, and the memories of playing video games at the Chuck E. Cheese pizza parlor are now somewhat dim for both of us. But something happened in the past six months that caused these memories, as well as the memory of my pastor friend, to return. I joined a local gym that not only has fitness facilities but a moderate-sized game room. I decided to stop into the game room. Lo and behold! It had a PAC-man game.

Even though the room was swarming with kids (I was by far the oldest person), the kids didn’t touch the PAC-man game, since they preferred spending their time shooting lasers and other explosives at each other. PAC-man was just too dull for them.

But not for me. I began hesitantly to play but then found myself getting sucked into this game I had first played about 35 years ago. Then, I began to understand the words of my pacifist pastor friend. I discovered that when I played PAC-man, I had to concentrate fully lest I be consumed by these enemy creatures! And that was my friend’s secret. Some of the joy of “fun” is that it fully occupies you, totally removing you from the cares and worries of your “job.” I now play PAC-man more often than I should, but it provides a welcome escape from a busy life. And, it is great to be with teens and younger people in a game room! May you, too, find a joyous focus, just for fun!