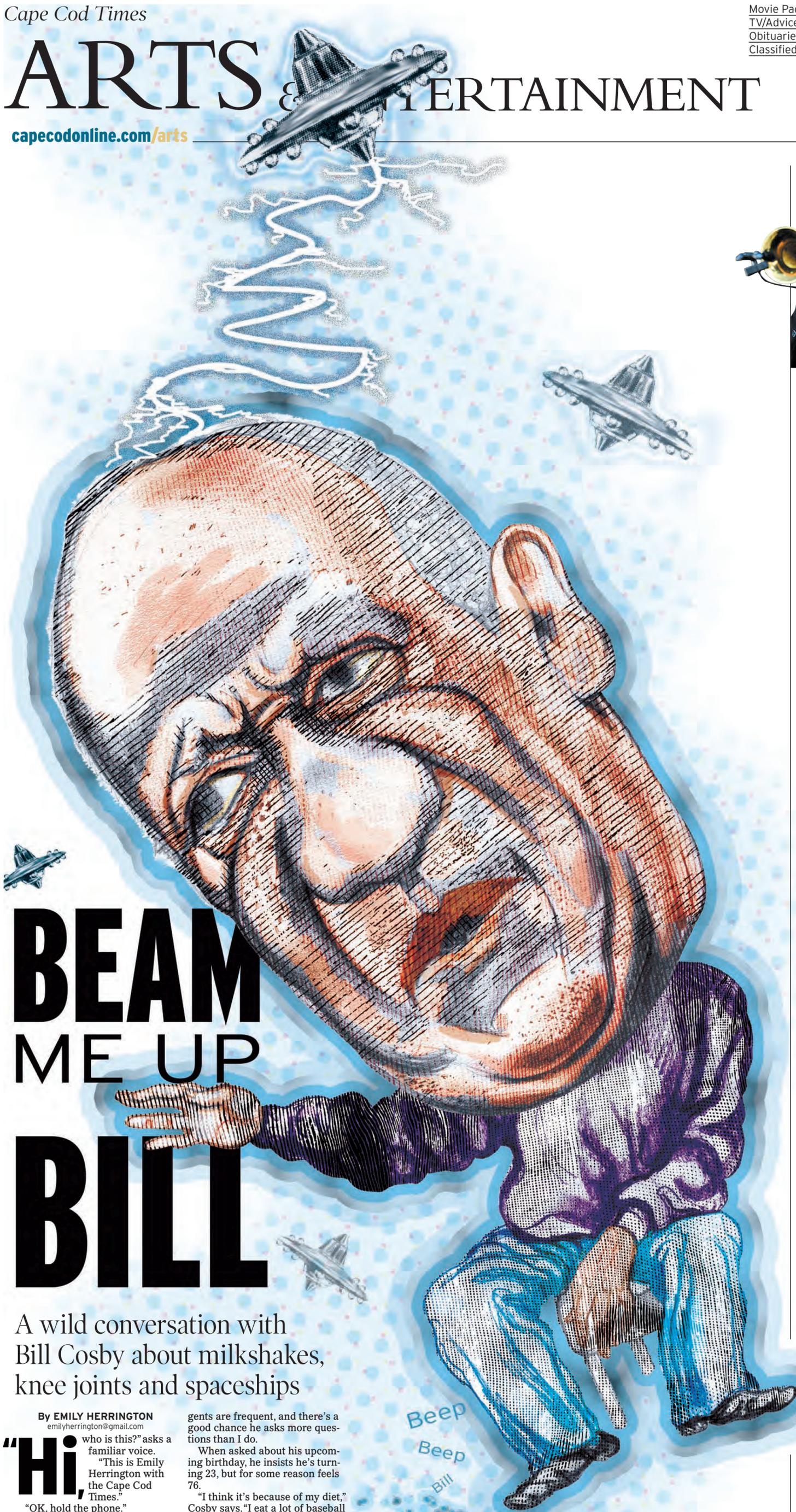


ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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SATURDAY, JULY 27, 2013



BEAM ME UP BILL

A wild conversation with Bill Cosby about milkshakes, knee joints and spaceships

By EMILY HERRINGTON
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"Hi, who is this?" asks a familiar voice. "This is Emily Herrington with the Cape Cod Times."

"OK, hold the phone."

About two minutes pass.

"HELLLOOOOOOO? Aren't you 9 years old? Let me talk to your mother. I'm supposed to do an interview with your mother."

And so begins the 48-minute-long phone interview with legendary comedian Bill Cosby.

The July 11 interview took place on the eve of his 76th birthday, and Cosby was speaking with me to promote his two Aug. 3 appearances at the Barnstable High School Performing Arts Center in Hyannis.

The interview twists and turns as it goes along; it's half-serious, half-joking and full of Cosby's characteristic quirkiness. Tan-

gents are frequent, and there's a good chance he asks more questions than I do.

When asked about his upcoming birthday, he insists he's turning 23, but for some reason feels 76.

"I think it's because of my diet," Cosby says. "I eat a lot of baseball park hot dogs, and after that I've gone to double cheeseburgers with double quarter-pounders and the bread and ketchup, pickles, fries, fried onion rings, and then I need something healthy so I have a glass of milk. Which was really a milk," he pauses, "shake."

As a result, he says, "the joints hurt."

"I don't know why a milkshake would hurt the knee joints, but I have some wonderful doctors, who after examining me and have spoken about my pain, they want to give me new knees. New knees! Isn't that a funny sound? New

Beep
Beep
Bill



see COSBY, page 2

JAMES WARREN/CAPE COD TIMES



JOE GIBLIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Chris Botti, shown in 2008 performing at the Newport (R.I.) Jazz Festival, had a tough time getting to his Melody Tent gig last year. He expects things to go much smoother when he returns to the Tent on Friday.

Botti gets better with age

By JIM SULLIVAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Chris Botti – the world's best-known jazz trumpeter; famous for his melancholic, languid sound – had nothing bad to say about playing the Cape Cod Melody Tent last year. He dug the rotating stage; he loved the intimate vibe.

It's just that last year's concert didn't quite work out the way it was planned.

Botti recalls the situation: "We did this gig and I said 'Because of the traffic, we're going to fly private and take a little jumper plane, land on Cape Cod and it'll be great.' We got to Newark and they said, 'Bad weather, we're not going to be able to fly.' We're like 'What? We're supposed

IN CONCERT

Who: Chris Botti, with Tripping Lily

When: 8 p.m. Friday

Where: Cape Cod Melody Tent, 21 W. Main St., Hyannis

Tickets: \$43.25-\$63.25

Reservations: 508-775-5630 or www.melodytent.org

to go on stage at 8.' This is 2 o'clock. We had two SUVs that had driven us to the airport and thank God they said, 'We'll take you to the Cape.' So we are hauling ass and we didn't arrive at the venue until 9. I was so freaked out. It was really a nail-biter. But the audience waited for us, and it was fantastic. People were so gracious."

The Oregon-born Botti, of course, hopes this year's gig on Friday – it should go nearly two hours – runs a little smoother. He'll bring his seven-piece crack band and lead them on his 1939 Martin Committee large bore Handcraft trumpet. Botti spoke with us on the phone recently from his Los Angeles home.

Q: You and I talked three years ago and you told me you were a much better trumpet player now at 47 than at 37 or 27. OK, so now you're 50. Is there a lifespan on trumpeters? Do you really get better with age?

A: I believe that wholeheartedly, without a doubt. Maybe this last year I took another jump. What you do creatively, how your brain digests chords or emotions might be something else, but the more physical you are on the trumpet the better you can express yourself. I'm really dedicated to still practicing. I know that probably it's going to start turning the other way in 10 years. Physically, your lungs might deteriorate a tiny bit, but thus far it's been very kind to me. I'm super grateful that's been the case. A lot of my friends, either the circumstances they're in, or the mental thing, they just lose the drive. I've been able to remain pretty focused.

ON STAGE

Who: Bill Cosby

When: 5 and 8 p.m. next Saturday

Where: Barnstable Performing Arts Center

Tickets: \$55-\$85

For more information: www.capesymphony.org

see BOTTI, page 2

Cosby: Spaceships provide ideas

from C1

knees. New knees. 'What's your name?' 'New Knees.' 'Hi, Mr. New Knees.'

But it turns out, despite the nice ring the phrase "new knees" has, Cosby didn't need the new knees anymore after he stopped eating the bad stuff and lost weight. He says he doesn't feel 23, but a good 76.

"What makes that wonderful is that whenever I'm in front of people, I can suck in. See, before, I would suck in and nothing sucked in."

Cosby speaks slowly throughout the dialogue and takes several long, careful pauses. His pace surely makes note-taking easy, and I have to wait long enough before I ask my questions so as not to interrupt his stories.

What can audiences expect from his Hyannis show?

"Genius. And clever," he says, his voice slow, deep and dramatic.

"You know why you're gonna laugh? Because you're going to laugh at what he's doing and you're gonna start saying, 'Oh, he's doing what - how did he get in my house?' Then you're gonna say, 'Oh, no, that's my mother and father.' ... And you're gonna be laughing and you're gonna be hitting the person next to you. And guess what else? Your head is gonna hurt - the muscles in your face - because you're laughing and smiling and keep saying, 'How did he see us? How does know us?'"

The answer? Simple. Spaceships. Sometimes, Cosby says, he gets beamed by a ship in outer space. "Boooooooop," he chimes, mimicking the sound of the spaceship.

And that's where his ideas come from. He knows to write down the ideas after he's been beamed, he says.

He's also learned that not all the beams are good beams, he says. He describes a time he "got beamed" (cue spaceship noises) and the spaceship convinced him to pull a chair out from under his father as he went to sit down with a plate full of food.

Bad idea. With the occasional hiccup like the incident with his father, it appears the beams have treated Cosby rather well. His career spans five decades, and he's accumulated numerous awards.

He says he's remained relatable and relevant over

"I'm 52 years writing, and I've always found the joy of writing about things that are different from what other comedians walk out and do and say."

BILL COSBY

the years because he's able to reach the basic human being, regardless of race, age, socioeconomic status, what have you.

"We are the same. We think the same."

"Get out," Cosby says as he's talking about removing prejudice from his comedy. I'm briefly taken aback, then he tells me it's Mrs. Cosby. "I'm on an interview, dear," he calls to the background. "She beams me too," he says into the phone.

He gets back on track.

"I'm 52 years writing, and I've always found the joy of writing about things that are different from what other comedians walk out and do and say. This is almost my country. And I'm proud because the ship - boooooop - gives me things they don't give other people."

His comedy hasn't aged and appeals to everyone, he says, because funny is funny. He recalls a time he was performing and he heard one teenage boy in the front row turn to two of his friends and say, "This is Bill Cosby. He does real comedy." Cosby was 72 at the time.

It felt wonderful, he says. "I think that's very significant." Cosby's vernacular is unique, recognizable, and therefore widely imitated. He says the imitations range from flattering to odd to not even close. But he thinks comedian Jimmy Fallon does a pretty good Cosby.

After nearly an hour, Cosby has to go. There's a call waiting for another interview.

But before he hangs up, he instructs me to tell my editor that he got beamed and then beamed me to make sure I go to his show.

"Boooooop."

Botti: Trumpeter coming back to Melody Tent

from C1

Q: I know you were a big Miles Davis fan and he was your early inspiration to pick up the trumpet when you were 9. I saw him just once live, and it was in his declining years, with his back turned to the audience, barely playing. It was kind of sad. Do you think you'll know when to walk away?

A: Miles was gone for such a long time and then when he came back he had this fascination with placing an instrument on top of an R&B groove. It became much more of a smooth jazz groove. For me, once you put a heavy bass and heavy bass drum under that trumpet sound, you can't get to Miles 'cause there's all this other stuff going on. Also, you can't take seven years off the trumpet and come back. I don't care who you are. And he had a bunch of other health issues to overcome. I think he got overcome by his sheer star power and history, and I think that clouds a lot of people. I hope it doesn't cloud me, and I probably won't be in that situation. But I've got to say, every athlete, every singer, every artist, they say I'm going to hang 'em up when I need to and then they turn into Michael Jordan going to the Washington Wizards. I would hope that I would know. A lot of my stuff, even though it may sound ballad-esque, it's really trumpet-esque. It's chops. And when I'm unable to do that night to night, I might retreat within myself. I hope that would be the case, but you never know.

Q: I was listening to your latest album, "Impressions," today, a steamy hot Massachusetts afternoon, and thought what nice, icy music to counter a heat wave. There's a great flow to the music, a calming sensuality.

A: I was inspired relatively recently by Keith Jarrett's "The Melody at Night." That's what "Impressions" is - where you put the record on and it keeps you in the same pocket. That's a much more difficult thing to pull off than you'd think - that the record doesn't have a sameness to it, but yet it does. And then it ebbs and flows a little bit. You want 12 or 13 ways to look at a ballad.

Q: It came out in 2012 and won a Grammy for best pop instrumental album this year.

A: I realized when I did my first gig with Sinatra (in 1984) that he's interacting with the audience. Nowadays, singers sing straight ahead looking out, but there's not that relationship with the audience, there's just them singing to the audience and being rock stars. Sinatra was a pretty big rock star, and still the way he sang to people, the way he acted on stage, and handled the mic, that was something I always admired. So in my own little way, I try to do that.

Q: When I saw you play live last time, I was very much



"Sinatra was a pretty big rock star, and still the way he sang to people, the way he acted on stage, and handled the mic, that was something I always admired. So in my own little way, I try to do that," Botti says. JIM COOPER/ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

There are some originals, but mostly covers, with guest spots from the likes of Andrea Bocelli, Vince Gill, Mark Knopfler, Herbie Hancock and others.

A: I was fortunate enough to have a record company that let me do what I want. They said, "You can record anywhere with anyone with any kind of budget." OK (laughs). That intersection, I'm so grateful once in my career I had the opportunity to do that kind of record.

Q: What would you like a listener to come away feeling after a Chris Botti concert?

A: If people listen to "Impressions," some people might think, "If I go to the show, he's going to be that record; I might fall asleep or it's going to be dreamy, moody stuff for the whole show. How am I gonna handle that?" And they'll come up to me afterward and say, "My friend dragged me to the show, I had no idea what to expect and it was the best show, I liked the drummer, the singer, the violinist, I cried, I laughed, etc." The other comment is from someone who comes to see me and says, "This is my 15th time." It's like half the audience is friends and the other half, those people are surprised at the variety and the more muscular, virtuosic place the band goes to. They're not just a band playing parts; they're all virtuosos on their instruments.

Q: You also use a bit of comedy; you're very social on stage.

A: I realized when I did my first gig with Sinatra (in 1984) that he's interacting with the audience. Nowadays, singers sing straight ahead looking out, but there's not that relationship with the audience, there's just them singing to the audience and being rock stars. Sinatra was a pretty big rock star, and still the way he sang to people, the way he acted on stage, and handled the mic, that was something I always admired. So in my own little way, I try to do that.

Q: When I saw you play live last time, I was very much

struck by the fact that it's your name on the marquee, it's a group of musicians sharing the stage. There's a certain equality.

A: If I have a musical pet peeve, it's when I go to see whatever pop du jour ... every single pop act, with the exception of John Mayer, they never have anybody great behind them. They don't acknowledge them, they don't feature them and a lot of the music is tied to the computers and the ProTools that's going on below the stage. Half the background vocals are triggered. It feels not authentic, and the joy from the stage feels rehearsed. The star is surrounded by faceless people, and he really doesn't care. They're interchangeable. When I was coming up in the '80s, when I got out of college and moved to New York, there was a huge movement among the big rock star bands - the Stones, Eric Clapton, Madonna, Paul Simon, Sting - they had incredible sidemen that worked beside them.

Q: Of course, you played with, among others, Sting and Paul Simon.

A: My experience being in Paul's band for a year and a half and standing with Michael Brecker ... I'm a 28-year-old kid, going "Wow, my head's being twisted around!" And knowing how much Paul valued great

musicianship - getting these famous Brazilian musicians - when I got to be a band leader, it made me want to do the same. So whether the audience knows it or not, they value that. It's a lost thing. And that's where I'm spending my money. You know, when you become successful a lot of times you have a bloated staff or more light shows or you go around in a private jet. I just spend my money on great players and it shows. It's kept my band going place to place year after year.

Q: And Sting ...

A: It's easy to say, "You were in Sting's group and you got a lot of exposure," but people really aren't aware of behind-the-scenes stuff. Within the band, he pushed me to the front of the stage, figuratively and literally, and then when he subsequently fired me from his band, he hired me to be his opening act. The concert we did in Boston at Symphony Hall (which became the 2009 PBS special and best-selling DVD/CD "Live in Boston," with Sting, Steven Tyler, Yo-Yo Ma, John Mayer and others) he knew what was best for me. You know how easy it is to get someone to join your special when you say Sting's on board? Those things don't happen unless you have that rock you can cling onto, and he's been there for me for the last 14 years of my career. He's someone I've learned from, his routine, how he runs his band, his organization. Here's a guy who rolls around without any security, a really cool thing. I learned a ton from that stuff and it helped me in my little jazz world. Beyond that, we're such good friends and that's been fantastic as well.

PEOPLE

Doctor: Jackson feared same fate as Elvis

In a video played for jurors Friday, a Santa Barbara County doctor said pop singer Michael Jackson once told him he wanted to stop using pain medication because "I don't want to end up like my father-in-law" Elvis Presley.

Dr. Scott Saunders said he treated Jackson from 1998 through 2003, his first contact coming when the singer

asked if he made house calls. Saunders said he visited Jackson at Neverland Ranch and treated him for an upper respiratory infection.

Saunders' video deposition was played in court Friday during the ongoing wrongful-death case in which Jackson's mother and his three children claim that entertainment giant AEG Live is complicit in Jackson's 2009 death.

Saunders said he and Jackson eventually became friends.

"He was rather lonely and didn't have anyone he could trust," Saunders testified.

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