



# Valley Patriot

\*Free

"Congress shall make no law..."

www.valleypatriot.com

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January - 2007

32 Pages

# City Council President Called "Dangerous"

Lawrence's Assistant City Attorney, Jim Bowers Calls Patrick Blanchette "Dangerous": SEE STORY PAGE 9!

Tom Duggan

## Heroes In Our Midst



photo: Ted Tripp

**Lieutenant Colonel Muriel Katschker**  
**U.S. Marine Corps Reserve**

Ted Tripp

NORTH ANDOVER – Muriel Katschker remembers well where she was on December 7, 1941. She was with her parents listening to the radio when the regular programming was interrupted by an announcer's voice saying the Japanese had just attacked and bombed Pearl Harbor. Instantly, the family knew this meant the country was at war.

At the time, however, Muriel was a young lady and had no idea that years later she would end up with a lifelong commitment to the Marine Corps.

Muriel Katschker was born and raised in Boston. She attended the city's public schools and in high school became head cheerleader on the cheerleading squad. She was also active in the Girl Scouts where she eventually achieved the rank of Mariner. This gave her the delightful opportunity to sail on the Charles River.

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Lawrence City Council President Patrick Blanchette has been on a mission for the last few months. His mission: create a firestorm around Budget and Finance Director John Griffin so that he either quits or gets fired, create a firestorm around Caroline Ganley (who has left) and Planning Director Mike Sweeney, so that they will either quit or get fired. and most recently create a firestorm around Assistant City Attorney Jim Bowers until he either quits or gets fired. In defending himself before

the council last week, Bowers called Blanchette "dangerous!" Blanchette has also attacked John Griffin calling for him to be fired for spending \$10,000 on office renovations while the City Council Offices were getting a \$16,000 makeover.

See All Blanchette Related Stories on Pages 9 & 10

Andover Struggles with Hate Group - See Page 20



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Methuen Councilor

**Debbie Quinn**

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Georgetown Selectman

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Former Haverhill Mayor

**Jim Rurak**

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Lawrence Mayor

**Mike Sullivan**

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## Valley Patriot \*Editorial\*

### The Only Think Wrong With Hanging Saddam: It Was Too Good For Him

The New York Times editorial staff, in what could only be excused by a pre-New Years Eve drinking binge, complained in its December 29<sup>th</sup> editorial that Saddam's trial was "flawed" and that the Iraqi government didn't punish him in a way that "nurtured hope for a better future."

The standard set by the N.Y. Times for the nascent Iraqi government, operating in the wake of centuries of tribal warfare, decades of tyranny, and an erupting civil war flamed by a worldwide Muslim terrorist movement pouring suicide bombers into their country is that Iraq should have a "flawless" legal process!

After having inherited a substantial legal tradition from the British and with the benefit of another 200 years of practice in a placid environment, we still find "flawless" well beyond our reach.

But Iraq, with car bombs exploding outside the courthouse and judges and their families threatened with assassination, should be criticized for falling short of perfection. Whatever they're serving at those Manhattan cocktail parties should be outlawed.

As for nurturing hope for a better future for the Iraqi people, the N.Y. Times could contribute to the needed nurturing by stopping its relentless support for anything that undercuts our troops and the Bush administration's efforts to introduce democratic processes and the rule of law into the Middle East.

There may be some legitimate arguments against our invasion of Iraq — e.g., we should have invaded North Korea, Iran or Syria first. But to oppose our efforts to move Iraq from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in just a few short years and then complain that the resulting government doesn't quite live up to the N.Y. Times' standards for nurturing hope is, to say the least, preposterous.

Saddam is lucky that the Iraqi government didn't ask his victims how he should have been put to death.

Those who were tortured or who had family members murdered by Saddam's henchmen showed remarkable restraint by not feeding him slowly into a wood chipper, feet first.

At least in this instance, Iraq's oppressed have shown remarkable restraint and deserve our praise and support. Way to go!

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To the Editor,

In light of the recent discussions and heated debate locally regarding fiscal responsibility and taxpayers' obligation to pull their own weight, would it not be appropriate for our foreign policy makers to apply the same arguments when dealing with our "good friends," the House of Saud? For too long now, Saudi Arabia has enjoyed the benefit of U.S. military protection and intervention in the Middle East without the slightest hint of the quid pro quo (i.e., reduced/regulated oil prices) it was assumed by many would follow the U.S. liberation of Kuwait and removal of the Iraqi military threat sixteen years ago. Indeed, the United States' misguided beneficence has been seen by the Saudis as weakness and "rewarded" by a massive increase in Saudi/Wahabist terror funding and record breaking oil profits.

Ironically, today once again the United States finds itself picking up the tab (with the lives of young Americans and your tax dollars) and serving as Saudi Arabia's military buffer against an enemy far more insidious and difficult to defend against than Saddam Hussein's Iraq: Shiite fundamentalism in the form of Iran's Islamo-Facist Jihadist world view. For years, the Sunni House of Saud has dealt

with internal secular and political dissent through brutally repressive means.

Now that Saddam has been removed and Iran has emerged as the preeminent external threat to Saudi interests, is it not time for the Saudis to apply similar means when dealing with the Iranians' military and economic ambitions?

The U.S. must impress on the Saudis the novel concept that, as a sovereign nation, they have a responsibility to field a viable military force (absent current levels of U.S. support) able to deter and discourage outside interference from regional threats. As constituted today, the Saudi military simply is not capable of such action. Economically, an increase in Saudi oil production and corresponding decrease in pricing would barely dent Saudi prosperity, while at the same time dealing a crippling blow to the Iranians' oil-funded nuclear weapons program and secular terror wars by proxy in neighboring countries.

I am not suggesting abandoning an "ally" during this crucial and uncertain time in global politics and secular strife. I simply think that it's time the Saudis pay their fair share (in blood *and* dollars) as the bills come due.

Mark McKallagat  
Lawrence



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The Valley Patriot welcomes letters to the editor on any topic. We also welcome column/article submissions from elected officials, neighborhood associations, community organizers, average citizens, and newsmakers. Though we may not agree with the opinions expressed in submissions, our mission is to give readers the unique opportunity to receive important information from those who are driving important public issues without the "creative editing" policy employed by most newspapers. Submissions from guest columnists/writers in The Valley Patriot are published without the filtered agenda of an editorial board. If you would like to write a column, letter or article for The Valley Patriot, please email us at: [ValleyPatriot@aol.com](mailto:ValleyPatriot@aol.com)

# People Finally Prevail Over Cowardly Legislature

In a surprise action, on January 2<sup>nd</sup> the Constitutional Convention of the Massachusetts Legislature actually voted to move forward a citizen petition to amend the state constitution on the definition of marriage. The constitution itself, in Article 48, requires the ConCon legislators to vote up or down on a citizen initiative petition, but in the past our gutless pols had found ways to avoid a vote through procedural delays until time ran out and the petition died.

This year the legislators were poised to once again flout the constitution and their oath of office by denying a vote on two initiative petitions. One was on universal healthcare and the other was on the definition of marriage. They did manage to kill the healthcare amendment - which passed the ConCon last year - by sending it to a committee for further study. The marriage petition, however, proved to be more difficult to ignore because of continuing public pressure and threatened lawsuits.

The cowards on Beacon Hill postponed the vote several times during the year,

hoping the media and people would tire of the subject. But this time it didn't work. Newspaper editorials from across the state - and even the Wall Street Journal - castigated the Legislature for trying to avoid a vote. Citizens repeatedly called their representatives and senators. Then Governor Romney petitioned the SJC, trying to force the Legislature to vote. Others filed lawsuits to sanction or disbar the 42 legislators who are lawyers if they didn't fulfill their obligations under the constitution.

All this proved too much and on Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> Senate President Travaglini relented and called for a vote on the matter. The 100 plus cowardly legislators who had desperately tried to kill the initiative all year had now run out of options. The vote went forward and 62 respectful legislators finally voted "yea" to advance the petition and "let the people decide" on the definition of marriage.

The Valley Patriot salutes all those who worked so hard to pressure our self-serving and arrogant politicians to show some respect for the state's constitution - and the people.



## Thinking Outside the Box!

Dr. Charles Ormsby, N.A. School Committee

# An Open Letter to Iranian President Ahmadinejad

## Iranian President Has it All Wrong

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful ...

I'm sorry my response to your letter of 29 November has been delayed. I had to finish my Christmas shopping and mail some care packages to America's brave troops who are risking their lives to protect innocent Iraqis and Afghans from a slew of maniacal Muslim fanatics. Allahu Akbar!

Speaking of Christmas, I hope yours was peaceful and you were not distracted by any nearby car bombings or the screams of innocent hostages being beheaded. Allahu Akbar!

You started your letter by speaking to the American people directly since you hope to divide us and separate us from our government with the long list of evils you catalogued.

Mahmoud, you don't know the half of it! I've been detailing the evils of our government here in The Valley Patriot for three years now. Unfortunately, I haven't had much luck changing things, so I'm beginning to believe that I should enroll in one of your desert training camps. Hey, I'm a physicist, so maybe while I'm in Tehran, I can help you with your "peaceful" nuclear

program. You know, the program that will help Iran "light up" the Middle East.

Later in your letter you outlined all the things that the Iranian government has in common with the American people. In case you've forgotten, here is a passage from your letter:

*"Both our nations are God-fearing, truth-loving and justice-seeking, and both seek dignity, respect and perfection.*

*Both greatly value and readily embrace the promotion of human ideals such as compassion, empathy, respect for the rights of human beings, securing justice and equity, and defending the innocent and the weak against oppressors and bullies.*

*We are all inclined towards the good, and towards extending a helping hand to one another, particularly to those in need.*

*We all deplore injustice, the trampling of peoples' rights and the intimidation and humiliation of human beings.*

*We all detest darkness, deceit, lies and distortion, and seek and admire salvation, enlightenment, sincerity and honesty."*

Continued on Page 24



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**ENJOY THE SCENIC VIEW OF LAWRENCE'S HISTORIC FALLS!**

This month we report on our downtown urban renaissance zoning package. We were approved and are eligible for a \$600,000 state bonus with more in the future.

We have some good news on your taxes. Haverhill single-family homeowners had their **lowest tax increase in ten years and the lowest increase of any city in the region.**

The state audit of our public schools shows we are doing better, but there is a long way to go. We'll have more on that in future editions.

I think the city looks beautiful at Christmas. There is a new pride in Haverhill, and it shows!

**Mayor's Rezoning Plan Wins Approval**

This past week both the City Council (by a vote of 7-2) and the state approved our plans to rezone Wingate Street, lower Washington Street, Locke Street and Locust Street (areas with abandoned shoe shops) as a "Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District." We have had a mayoral task force working on this for over a year. This rezoning makes us a statewide leader in the redevelopment of old factory buildings. (See article in *Boston Business Journal*. (click here.) A Chapter 40R zoning overlay district is a zoning district located within 1/4 mile of a transit station and it is designed to encourage people to live in old factory buildings. Housing in these districts is allowed as a matter of right. Retail is required on the first floor. There are detailed architectural and design standards. The state pays a bonus if cities agree to adopt Chapter 40R. Haverhill will receive an up-front cash bonus of \$600,000 and an additional \$3,000 per unit for every residential unit built. Shortly, the Chapter 40R ordinance and design standards will be on line on the city Web site.

**Chapter 40R is a tool to help us go from this ...**



**View of abandoned factory building on Locke street which Forest City Enterprises would like to redevelop**

**To this...**



**Front entrance to Beacon project from Locust Street**

**State Rates Our Schools**

The state audit of our schools shows that while our MCAS scores are improving and there is improvement over the report issued three years ago, we have a way to go.

\* Haverhill is among the "moderate performing school districts in the Commonwealth."

\* "Between 2002 and 2005, Haverhill MCAS performance showed some improvement overall in math, while the district had little improvement in ELA." [English Language Arts]

\* "The district did not regularly engage in internal and external audits to inform of the effectiveness of its programs and services..." [Dr. Buchanan has put forth a plan which I support to fix this.]



**Moving Haverhill Forward**  
Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini

\* Some parents believe the School Committee is "bogged down with dissension, embarrassing public squabbles and local political strife..."

\* City contributions to schools have gone up significantly over the past three years, but serious budget problems remain.

We need to do better! Our first step is to borrow the money to bring our textbooks up to date. Our proposal to do that is before the City Council.

**More Business Means Local Homeowners Catch a Break**

This year property values for businesses rose faster than property values for residents. As a result, even though all the local communities raised overall taxes by 2.5%, Haverhill single-family homeowners saw **the lowest tax increase in ten years, and the lowest increase of any city in the region.** "Haverhill's average bill this year will go up \$70, **the lowest increase among local communities.**" - *Eagle Tribune*, December 24, 2006.

**Local Family Encourages Hospice Care**

Haverhill and Lawrence, Mass. – Imagine for a moment that you or a loved one has just been diagnosed with a terminal illness. You're overwhelmed, and you don't know what to do or which way to turn for help. Merrimack Valley Hospice is the place these families turn to for much needed support. Recently, a family from Haverhill shared their story of how Merrimack Valley Hospice made a positive impact on an important time in their lives.

Jackie Dirsa of Haverhill found herself wondering where to turn when she discovered last year that her beloved father, Peter Stack, was dying of cancer. Jackie had heard about Merrimack Valley Hospice, and with the help of its specialized team she was able to maintain her own strength and preserve her father's dignity during his final days.

For more than twenty years, Peter and his wife, Florence, lived with their daughter, Jackie, her husband and four children. Florence died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2003, but with Jackie's help Peter was able to cope with this extraordinary loss. In 2005, the family was shocked to learn that Peter had developed terminal lung cancer.

Over the next several months, Peter's health rapidly declined. He lost weight and became weak. In January of 2006, he decided to undergo a radiation treatment hoping to extend his life, but unfortunately the treatment was unsuccessful. After admitting Peter to the hospital in February, Jackie met with nursing staff to discuss options for her father. At this point he weighed 87 pounds and was unable to get out of bed. Their recommendation was hospice care, and Jackie was relieved to learn that hospice care was covered by her father's insurance. After discussing the options with her father, Peter chose to return to the home he knew and have Merrimack Valley Hospice provide his care.

"The nurse from Merrimack Valley Hospice followed us home, and within hours she had our house all set up for making my father's last days as comfortable as possible," said Jackie Dirsa. "I was impressed with the positive outlook of the hospice staff and their excellent communication skills with my family."

Jackie's father was able to spend his last days comfortable in his own home, surrounded by his family and pain free. Jackie and her family had access to a team of compassionate and expertly trained medical directors, nurses, home health aides, pastoral counselors, social workers, bereavement counselors and volunteers – all available around the clock.

**Updates & Events**

**Parking Garage Update:** We have scheduled a meeting of our parking task force January 11th to review the results.

**Downtown Boardwalk Update:** We are scheduling a meeting on January 23 to obtain public input on a downtown boardwalk.

**REMINDER: January 07--** Registration for Riverside Bradford Little League, public library **January 11<sup>th</sup>** — 7-8 p.m. Public Meeting of Parking garage task force, Room 301, to review preliminary engineering results. **January 11-13 12-9** — Book Sale, Public Library **January 13** — 10-1—

Haverhill Little League registration, public library **January 23**, 6 p.m., site to be determined, - public meeting on downtown boardwalk to obtain public input on a proposed boardwalk downtown. January 27 Haverhill Little League registration, public library. More events, Merrimack Valley Arts and Cultural events.

**Your Opinion Matters!**

What is your opinion about the Chapter 40R rezoning noted above?

- ( ) From what I know, I agree with it;
- ( ) From what I know, I do not agree with it;
- ( ) I do not have enough information to base an opinion.

Jim Fiorentini is the mayor of Haverhill and was just elected to his second term. Mayor Fiorentini is a Democrat. No public money was used to produce or distribute this newsletter. You can E-mail Jim Fiorentini at: [jimfior02@aol.com](mailto:jimfior02@aol.com) or call 978-374-2300



Jackie appreciated their openness and straightforward approach with her regarding her father's health and mental status.

"I felt that I could call the hospice team any time with any questions or concerns. They helped me fit the pieces of the puzzle together on how to handle my father's impending death," recalls Jackie. "Their support made me feel like a heavy burden was lifted from my shoulders."

Jackie's father died peacefully in March of 2006. She was compelled to share her story with others in hopes that they would take advantage of hospice care when the time came for them or a loved one.

There are literally hundreds of families like Jackie Dirsa's that are cared for each day by Merrimack Valley Hospice. The agency's care doesn't stop when the patient dies. They continue to follow a family for more than a year after the death of their loved one, offering them bereavement support services. "One of the most important aspects of our hospice care is caring for the family who are grieving the loss of the person they loved so deeply. The sooner the family calls us, the sooner we can start helping them deal with what is happening," said Pam Saucier, Vice President of Merrimack Valley Hospice. "We have so many families like the Dirsa and Stack family who's loved one's wish is to remain at home during the final days of their lives. We make that a possibility for them, providing support around the clock for the patient and caregiver."

Jackie Dirsa hopes that more families will seek out the assistance from Merrimack Valley Hospice.

"My father, Peter, was a humble man, but also a proud man. It was important for me to help him preserve his dignity until the end of his life," said Jackie. "Merrimack Valley Hospice afforded me the opportunity to do that."

Learn more about the agency on [www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org](http://www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org).

# HAVERHILL'S FUTURE!

Jim Rurak, Former Mayor of Haverhill

## Our Schools: How Leadership Makes a Difference



The Department of Education (DOE) lambastes our city for the lack of leadership in our schools. The School Committee will discuss the extensive report on January 4. But one real chance to prove the DOE wrong, and the one recent chance to show our teachers and students that we really want to promote better achievement, was completely botched by the mayor. The real problem is that it was the kind of mistake totally in keeping with his style of politics.

Here's what happened. Over the past two years our students' test scores have dropped dramatically. The DOE is, and everybody should be, deeply concerned. The superintendent, the mayor and the members of the School Committee rightly reasoned that a major cause of this decline is that teachers are forced to use textbooks which are woefully out of date. Students cannot "shine" on tests if the texts that are supposed to prepare them are a dull representation of what they need to know. The needed textbooks cost \$450,000.00.

So, the committee, acting as a whole, requested that the mayor submit a loan order for \$450,000.00 to the City Council so that up-to-date books could be bought soon and the teachers and students could begin to use them. The reason for the rush is two-fold. Our students need the books, and, unless scores improve, the DOE might take over our system.

Everyone was all set to make a major and positive step toward improving school climate and showing our students and teachers that we're solidly behind them. The School Committee made the request for the needed textbooks and it was prepared to pay for them over time. Note the School Committee was not asking for the money from the city budget. It simply required that the mayor ask the City Council to authorize a loan which the School Committee would pay from its own budget over four years. The mayor is the bridge between the committee and the council. Thus, it was up to him carry the request from one branch to the other.

Instead of leadership, we got political gamesmanship. First, the mayor issued a press release claiming full credit for the idea and for bringing the loan request to the City Council. Most insiders have gotten used to that type of thing, but his next move was a disaster. Without consulting the superintendent or the School Committee, and who knows for what reason, the mayor abruptly altered the deal. Instead of asking for a loan to cover the full cost of the books, he submitted a loan order for only one-half the amount. The other half, a full \$225,000.00, would have to come from the current school budget, money which simply isn't there. So, on his own, the mayor changed the deal and essentially wanted the schools to pay one-half the loan up front.

This would have required the type of cuts everyone tried to avoid when putting the budget together last spring. But because it hurt the schools without helping the city, it

simply made no sense. It's the kind of mistake only an unseasoned opportunist would make.

Look at it another way. You run a delivery service that requires a truck. Your truck wears out. Without another one, you're out of business. You don't have the free cash to replace it, so you go to the bank for a loan. The bank says of course you can have the loan, your business can easily make the payments over the next four years.

Then you get the paperwork back and you discover that the bank changed the deal and now requires you to come up with one half the purchase price in advance. The fact that you don't have that kind of free cash is why you went to the bank in the first place, so now you can't buy the truck. You go out of business or make deliveries by foot (our current textbooks).

That limits your customers. While you try to save up for the cash you need to qualify for the loan, you lose good customers, you don't make the sales you need to stay in business. Your business suffers, maybe even fails, despite your best efforts. (What our students and teachers are now doing without the books they need.)

It seems the mayor likes to think of himself as the bank in the above illustration. But a good bank doesn't act that way. If your credit is good, you qualify often for a 100% loan. You pay it off from the business the loan keeps afloat. Unlike a good bank, the mayor didn't care whether the terms he dictated would seriously compromise the ability of the school system to do its job. This is what everyone, including the superintendent, seemed to be saying would happen if the mayor got his way. The schools do not have the discretionary capital to pay for one half of the loan up front.

Ultimately, the mayor caved in, but only because he must have calculated that there was more political capital in doing what he had first promised rather than in appearing to be an emperor without any clothes. His power-play tactics had backfired one more time. Remember the fiasco over repairs to the Crowell School?

The real problem is the spectacle this creates for our students, parents and teachers. When we have a chance to show them we care, that we'll supply the texts that we know that they need, the mayor drowns out that positive message by political games. Perhaps that's the leadership the DOE most questions. In any case, it's a leadership style that needs to change if our students, teachers, parents and the general public are to have confidence in our schools. And it is that confidence and sense of general ownership that is the true foundation of student learning and achievement. The DOE website lists, as one of the defining characteristics of a successful school district (and I would also say of a successful city), that it cultivates a culture of ownership for its challenges rather than a climate of individual praise and blame. Haverhill needs that, and it needs it now.

Jim Rurak is a professor at Boston College and is the former mayor of Haverhill. Email your comments or questions to Jim Rurak at [JARandKAS@comcast.net](mailto:JARandKAS@comcast.net).

*Ultimately, the mayor caved in, but only because he must have calculated that there was more political capital in doing what he had first promised rather than in appearing to be an emperor without any clothes.*

# Random Thoughts



Haverhill (NECC) Professor Mark Palermo

The good old days where I grew up weren't always so good. In the late 1960's Lawrence earned a well-deserved reputation (along with Beverly and Springfield) for having the highest percentage of junkies in the state. Junkies were so common in Lawrence's old neighborhoods, there even existed a certain "junkie chic." Users had a style of dress and behavior. Pushers strutted around with pride and self-satisfaction, as if they were successful entrepreneurs or rock stars. I knew beautiful girls that were attracted to junkies and sought them out. It seems incredible now that this loathsome, diabolical habit was cool; but it was a statement of disenfranchised youth.

Thinking back to that time, a popular song by Curtis Mayfield called "Freddie's Dead" resonated with me; it portrayed my own feelings about the everyday lives I observed and the dissolution of the inner life of the old mill city.

This could be such a beautiful world  
With a wonderful girl...  
Why can't we be brothers?  
Protect one another?  
No one's serious,  
And it makes me furious,  
Another Freddie's on the corner now...  
If you wanna be a junkie, why?  
Remember Freddie's dead...

Why are drugs so seductive? Even the happiest, most well-balanced person can feel existential loneliness, even on the happiest day of their life. What do I mean by existential loneliness? I have always remembered an old "Star Trek" episode from several years ago where, an alien in spirit form, came to the earth on some sort of mission to satisfy his curiosity. He wanted to inhabit a human body to see what it was like. Somebody on the Enterprise crew let him enter their body. Once he found himself inside, he started to weep uncontrollably. When he came back out of the body, he was overcome with sorrow for human beings: he had not been able to feel the beauty, mystery and active participation in the universe. Existential loneliness is the default ground of people's being, the place they live inside themselves which is debased from their natural higher selves.

It doesn't matter that this feeling of separateness and isolation from the universe itself is illusory. The philosopher Alan Watts says, "In the same way an apple tree 'apples,' the universe 'peoples'." We are indeed active participants and truly connected, we just can't feel it. And herein lies the problem.

Pain is the human condition. We must all- sooner or later- face separation,

sickness, loss of friends and family, old age, and we all have to die. Philosopher and guru Ram Dass once said that suffering existed even inside the Playboy mansion- he had stayed there. But suffering itself is not nearly as much of a problem as the lack of meaning that modern people experience in their lives.

I used to ask some of my old doper friends what heroin feels like. The answer was inevitably something to do with heaven. One guy actually told me he felt like "God's son." He had found something to fill his existential separateness, and he assured me that heroin does this very well- even better than sex. No wonder then that people steal from friends and family, sell their bodies and destroy their lives for it.

If life is sad at times, if we are filled with doubt, or paralyzed with fear, the way is forward. Viktor Frankl addressed the question of meaning after he survived the Holocaust, during which he experienced the murder of his family. In his book, "Man's Search for Meaning," he used the Holocaust as an existential laboratory to examine the reactions of people under the most wretched and brutal conditions imaginable. He told the world that even under these conditions, some people were nevertheless able to find a sense of meaning.

The Bible tells us there is nothing new under the sun. In the old days, heroin and meth were the epidemic. In the 1980's it was coke. Now it's heroin and cocaine, with meth use accelerating. But even the worst hardcore dopers I knew from the old days- people whose whole life was getting high- had a fearful respect for crystal meth. And with good reason. It may be the worst drug of all.

If you want to see what they saw. If you want to impress upon your kids the dangers of this drug, go to a website called "faces of meth." Here you can show kids what meth is capable of. Here you can see unretouched "before and after" photos of beautiful, healthy girls turned into toothless, wasted hags. Young men in the prime of their lives that look like starved refugees. When I gaze at these pictures, I hear Curtis Mayfield's lyrics, "If you want to be a junkie, why?"

We all must find our own way home. And there is much to be learned during our brief visit on this planet. In the words of Viktor Frankl, "The door to life opens outwards."

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Footnotes from

# TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

You can't make this stuff up!

## Torissi Holds Meeting... Nobody Shows up

What happens when you call for a public meeting to discuss changing your town charter and nobody shows up? Just ask Rep. David (Where-IS-he) Torissi from North Andover. Last month, Torissi called for a public forum for members of the community to express their views and ask questions about his efforts to be the town's first mayor by eliminating Town Meeting and revamping the charter. But the only people who bothered to attend were his "guest speakers," Selectman Tom Licciardello, Methuen Mayor Bill Manzi and a Franklin Town Administrator (see pic. on page 16). I guess the people of North Andover really don't have much to say about Torissi's latest coup attempt. Rest assured, however, if he tries to put it on the ballot, it will be soundly defeated by the voters.



## Useless Boddy?

According to sources in Mayor Mike Sullivan's office, the whole controversy surrounding why Assistant City Attorney Jim Bowers was tasked with negotiating a buyout deal for Finance Director John Griffin, instead of City Attorney Charles Boddy, is not because of some secret conspiracy to hide it from the council. "Charlie Boddy himself says he purposely avoids this kind of work because it is too controversial. Anytime Attorney Boddy is asked to render a legal opinion on anything political such as this, he breaks out into a cold sweat and then, poof, he is suddenly out



sick the rest of the week," our source said. "He is petrified of Council President Blanchette," the source added. Given the way Blanchette has publicly treated former Finance Director John Griffin and current Assistant City Attorney Jim Bowers, it is no wonder Boddy is reluctant to do any work on controversial matters at all. We do want to thank him, however, for helping us get copies of Andrea Traficante's phone records (though it took six months to get them - see The Valley Patriot next month). But I still have to wonder, if a city attorney is afraid to do his job, shouldn't Lawrence find someone who isn't?

## Looking Forward to Linda Campbell Taking Office

Last July, The Valley Patriot interviewed (then candidate) Linda Dean Campbell about her views on gay marriage and the Legislature's refusal to put the issue on the ballot. Campbell said at the time that while she favors gay marriage she also favors the will of the people and would vote to place the item before voters if it comes up during her term as a state representative. The Valley Patriot hopes that Campbell can teach her fellow legislators Dave Torissi, Barbara L'Italien and Steve Baddour the meaning of the phrase "serving the voters."

## The Diane Huster Bill ARE YOU KIDDING ME???

While some state legislators file bills to get retirement benefits for police and firefighters because they fell through the cracks of the state retirement system, state Senator Steve Baddour has filed a bill called the "Act Relative to Essex Regional Retirement



System and Diane Huster" (1406). Huster, who was an elected member of the North Andover School Committee, did not qualify for retirement benefits because she did not apply for them in time. But, thanks to Steve "where's the microphone" Baddour, Huster gets another bite at the apple! Representatives Torissi and L'Italien have also signed on to the corresponding House bill (H4773). Even former Huster supporter Jack Watkins of the Finance Committee has written a letter to his state legislators protesting the more than \$100,000 in free benefits Huster could receive from the town if Baddour, Torissi and L'Italien get their way.

## Pulling Teeth in North Andover

No... I'm not talking about dentistry here. I'm talking about trying to get straight answers out of the North Andover school department. At a recent School Committee meeting, education advocate Ted Tripp asked Chairman Al Perry for a copy of the school department plan to meet the five-year academic improvement goals that the committee had unanimously adopted 2 1/2 years ago. Mr. Perry turned the question over to Superintendent O'Connor who went on at length about how busy he was on audits, budgets, dealing with teachers, addressing large class sizes and other issues. After what seemed like an eternity, Perry interrupted to say the issue was closed.



But O'Connor had never answered the question. So at the next meeting, Tripp got up again and asked Perry if he could assure the people watching the broadcast that

such a plan actually exists and copies could be made available to the public. Having put him on the spot, Perry had to admit that such a plan does not exist. When pushed on the issue, neither Perry nor O'Connor could or would say when such a plan would be put together. This year the NA school department fell far short of the committee's second-year improvement goals. This now comes as no surprise since the schools apparently never had a plan to reach those goals. It's probably too late this academic year to develop a plan to affect the third year results. Just expect to be disappointed when this year's test scores finally come in.

And you wonder why the schools have no credibility?

## Andover Principal Pays for Hate Group From Slush Fund

You have to hand it to Peter Anderson, principal of Andover High School. Anderson mastered the art of playing both sides of an issue last month when he first agreed to allow anti-Semitic hate group "Wheels of Justice" to speak to his students about the evils committed by Jews and Americans. Then, when The Valley Patriot exposed the issue, he canceled the speaking engagement, only to buckle again when the hate group threatened to sue. Now The Valley Patriot has learned that Principal Anderson is not only allowing Wheels of Justice to come and indoctrinate (behind closed doors) Andover's school children with hate, he is paying for it out of his own discretionary slush fund. Isn't it amazing that the principal of a high school can privately collect money from members of the community and then use that money to promote Jew hatred and Anti-American venom in the classroom? I wonder where Barry Finegold has been on this issue. Seems he has been missing in action!

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