

BORROWED MONEY!

Stimulus Money Hits The Valley

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I N S I D E




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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

Sgt. Dan Cotnoir, U.S. Marines
Ordnance Maintenance Company, 4th Maintenance Battalion, Devens, MA

Paula Porten
VALLEY PATRIOT HERO COLUMNIST

In 2005, Sergeant Daniel Cotnoir of Lawrence was named Marine of the Year by the Marine Corps Times for his outstanding bravery and service to the United States.

Sgt. Dan Cotnoir began his military career in 1999 when he joined the Marine Corps. He was trained as an armorer (small arms repairman). But his military career took a big turn when his civilian career as the funeral home director became his military assignment in Iraq.

Sgt. Cotnoir's became a mortuary affairs specialist whose job consisted of retrieving the remains of fallen Marines from the battlefield so they could be prepared and brought home to their families for a proper funeral and burial. In 2004, Cotnoir and his unit of 20 men were deployed to Camp Taqaddum, Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

During Cotnoir's service to this nation he was responsible for returning 182 fallen heroes back to their families

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EDITORIAL

Don't Count on a Community Organizer for Homeland Security

President Obama's naïve perspective in dealing with the war on terror (which he refuses to call a war on terror, for fear of offending terrorists), begs the boldness of our enemies to hit us again and again.

The latest suicide attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, "the underwear bomber", to bring down a plane full of innocent passengers is but a hint of what is yet in store for us, and does not scratch the surface of the bizarre avenues of ruthless havoc available to these dedicated fanatics.

To them, death in martyrdom is preferred over living.

So how did Obama handle this terrorist attack? First, by denying that it was a terrorist attack or part of any organized Al-Qaeda plot, and treating Abdulmutallab like a common criminal. He was read his rights and provided a lawyer.

If the situation wasn't so serious, this would be a joke. The problem is that America is under attack by Al-Qaeda and Obama is just not prepared to play hard ball. Abdulmutallab should have been treated as an enemy combatant and interrogated immediately by our military. We need to find out who he worked with and whether there were any other attacks planned. Instead, he was advised that he has a right to remain silent, blah, blah, blah.

So, now while Al-Qaeda is laughing at us for failing to recognize a terrorist attack, Obama shows them how weak we are by closing the American Embassy in Yemen. Why? Because the United States cannot keep our diplomats safe from Al-Qaeda.

President Obama has surrendered. And while he has intelligence that Yemen is now the hotbed for terrorism, last week he released 6 terrorists being held at Guantanamo and sent them where? You guessed it, back to Yemen, so they can help train and strengthen Al-Qaeda and attack us again.

Well, he had to keep one campaign promise: closing Gitmo and letting the terrorists go free.

Closing Guantanamo – a country club prison if there ever was one – and spending millions of taxpayer dollars to buy new prison accommodations in mid-America for these enemies, and giving them the rights and privileges of United States citizens, is about as foolish and suicidal as it gets.

The idea of sending terrorists back to Yemen, a hotbed of terrorist recruitment and training, is logic turned on its head. Also, at what price to U.S. taxpayers comes the showcase trial in mid-Manhattan?

The cost of security alone will be in the millions. And, you can bet the ACLU will be rooting for our enemies.

Imagine during World War II, having to read all German or Japanese prisoners their rights (reserved for Americans) and then releasing them to fight again, or dragging them back to the U.S. for trial?!

Only when this war is over should these Muslim murderers for Islam go home, just like past wartime prisoners were handled.

Until then, they should all be executed.

Yes, we are at war, President Obama. Wake up! Or we will all blow up!

News tips

Phone in news tips to (978) 557-5413, or you may email tips to us at valleypatriot@aol.com. We respect the anonymity of our sources if requested.

Letters to the editor, columns and op/eds

can be submitted to valleypatriot@aol.com. The Valley Patriot is not responsible for the opinions expressed in submitted letters or columns. It is the policy of The Valley Patriot not to edit or exclude submitted material based on content.

Corrections; Please contact the editors at valleypatriot@aol.com

The Valley Patriot is not responsible for, nor do we necessarily share the opinions of columnists and contributors that are published in the paper. Columns, by definition are opinion pieces.

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Reader unhappy with Congressman Tierney

Dear Editor:

John Tierney's recent vote to continue funding of an alternate engine program for the F 35 Joint Strike Fighter was the right vote. But, I don't believe he cast his vote for the right reasons or that his expressed motivation was pure.

The JSF program is vital to our District both because it provides for our future national security and protects jobs in Lynn. As a citizen of the district and as a candidate for Congress, these are of equal importance.

The single-engine F 35 will be THE fighter aircraft for all of our military branches in the future, replacing the nation's aging F-16, A-10, and F/A-18 tactical fighters. Getting the solo engine right (as General Electric has demonstrated it will by consistently receiving top reviews for program execution, including budget performance), is critical if our nation's air supremacy and protection of our military personnel are to be assured. Neither our national security nor our ability to reduce future defense costs through competition will be secure if Pratt & Whitney (which has failed to meet technical requirements and has had cost overruns) is allowed to be the sole source of such a critical component of our national defense over the next 30 years.

Especially with the massive, mindless Congressional overspending and waste evidenced during all of 2009, Citizens are right to be wary of Congress using tax dollars to pretend it is creating jobs. And, unlike Mr. Tierney, I don't believe our government should generally be involved in using your money to fund private enterprise.

When it comes to national defense, however, our constitution creates an exception when it mandates that Congress "provide" for our national defense. Our military (in this case) is the primary "customer" of this essential product. The GE engine is about 70% complete, and our NATO allies have shown interest in purchasing the Lynn built GE product; economic factors that both support production and project completion.

The issue here is that Congressman Tierney is a bit hypocritical. He is clearly anti-defense spending unless it suits his own selfish needs. For example, he has

voted against the B2 Bomber reauthorization (a program that the Pentagon wanted), has voted against missile defense development, and voted against body armor for our soldiers and their vehicles. He even admits politics is the reason he acts on these issues, blatantly commenting on his vote in news reports that "this isn't just local politics and parochialism". Shameful to say the least.

I'd love to believe that the Congressman has sincerely turned over a new leaf and will finally begin to support our military, but I am certain that the truth is different. John Tierney voted the way that he did because it was an opportunity to buy your vote in a contested election year. Had the situation been reversed and the primary contract gone to GE, he would have voted NO on secondary sourcing and would have taken those jobs away from the Connecticut workers at Pratt and Whitney irrespective of the weakening of our national security, just as he did for the Boeing folks who were to build the B2 Bomber. Had Massachusetts had no interest in the project, he would have voted to table the entire project, based on his consistent track record of "nay" votes on military and homeland security protection issues. Despite his statement to the contrary, this vote, and his reported defensiveness on the issue, were all self serving on the Congressman's part.

Make no mistake about it, I don't believe the government should be using tax dollars to subsidize the private sector. But when we send our troops into harm's way and seek to protect our country's vital interests, we must provide them with the best tools available, as well as fail safe secondary options. Those are my fundamental beliefs, and I will employ them in every vote I take in Washington. That this vote secures jobs at one of Lynn's most important employers makes supporting this particular project a no-brainer.

I'm not so sure it's okay for a Congressman to get it right if his motivation is simply to buy your vote. Are you? After all, even a broken clock can get it right twice a day.

Bill Hudak, Republican Candidate for Congress, Massachusetts 6th Congressional District



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New year, new council, new hope in Lowell

Joseph Mendonca
LOWELL CITY COUNCILOR

The New Year has begun. The new City Council has been sworn-in. Jim Milinazzo was elected as the Mayor and Kevin Broderick was elected as the Vice-Chairman of

the Council. Now the work begins.

There are many challenges ahead for the new Council. The largest challenge will be the creation of an FY2011 budget. The word from the State is that revenues have continued to fall – that cities and towns should anticipate receiving less

local aid. It seems that even level funding would be too much to ask for. That sets the stage for further budget cuts as fixed costs (utilities & health care) continue to rise.

While preparing the next budget, the new council will have to deal with the ramifications of the personnel reductions in the current budget. As the snow melts in the spring will the pot-holes be taken care of as in the past? Will our Parks Department be able to prepare all of our parks for spring and summer activities? Does the City have the resources in Inspectional Services to deal with the code violations in many of the City’s neighborhoods? Our neighborhood groups are doing their part. Can we provide them the support that is needed?

On the other hand, a smaller government will be less of a burden on the tax-payers – to both residents and businesses. This will make new developments more attractive to new residents and businesses that are considering moving to the City. These new developments will further spread the burden and in that way we all benefit.

Looking ahead, there is reason for optimism and hope. There is much going on in the City in spite of the economic downturn. If we move forward wisely, we can position the City for future growth – new businesses and new jobs.

Working together, we can surmount these challenges and come out the other end as a stronger City that is better positioned to meet its future.

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As we move forward, we have to realize that the City’s resources are limited - that the City can not provide all things to all the people. The residents of the City will have to do their part by helping to keep the areas around their properties clean and presentable, keeping our parks litter free, and reporting code violations and other illegal activities promptly.



Joe Mendonca is a newly elected city councilor in Lowell. He is a former Lowell School Committeeman (1999 - 2006) and former Lowell City Councillor (2007) who is familiar with Lowell’s City and School Department Budgets.

Neck and Shoulder Pain?

Does your shoulder pain build up when you move it wrong or is it a sudden sharp pain shooting from your neck into your arm?

Do you have difficulty just washing your hair or even scratching your back? Have you had to give up golf because of your shoulder pain?

Nothing’s worse than feeling great mentally, but physically feeling held back from life because your neck and shoulder hurts and the pain just won’t go away!

My name is Dr. Jin Sung a chiropractic physician and owner of Functional Chiropractic, Inc. Over the past thirteen years since I’ve been in private practice, I’ve seen hundreds of people with neck pain, shoulder pain, frozen shoulder and rotator cuff problems leave the office pain free.

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- * Sharp, radiating pain
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No question... if you are having neck and shoulder pain then something is wrong. It’s not normal aging to hurt all the time. Pain in your neck and shoulder isn’t just a ‘sign of old age’, if that was true all 360 joints in your body would hurt, since your whole body is the same age.

Pain is your body’s warning sign telling you something is wrong. Finding the problem and fixing it has got to be a top priority!

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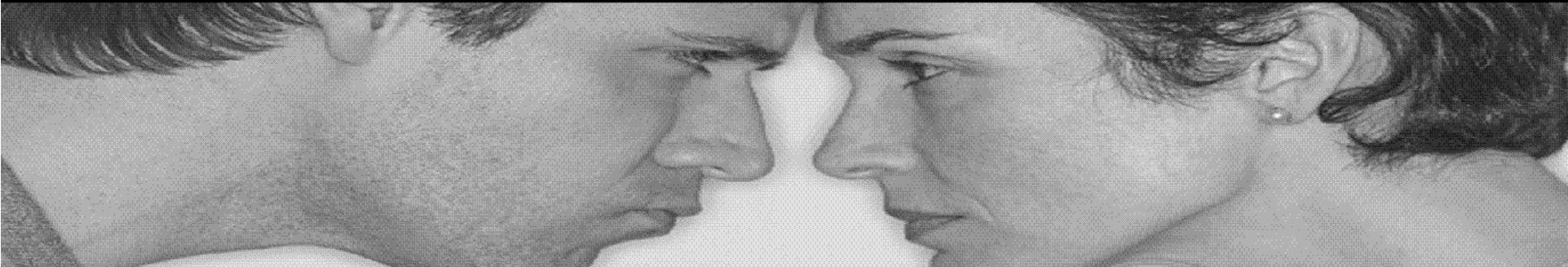
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Some of North Andover's finest wear a collar

Tracey Zysk

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Kyzer, Julie, Iris, and Eiko. Over the past five years these are names North Andover residents have heard or read about time and time again. But who are they?

These brave CANINES are North Andover's Finest! They help protect the Town of North Andover, Essex County, the Com-

monwealth and in some case our Nation.

It is no secret that Chief Stanley is very proactive in keeping his department cutting edge. He keeps his officers well informed, provides them with unlimited training and education and is always able to provide top notch equipment to help his officers perform exceptionally well on their jobs.

But probably one of the most powerful tools Stanley has been able to provide to his department and to the community of North Andover is his K-9 Unit. This Unit is the department's silent strength.

The K-9 Unit assists police personnel to search for missing persons, hidden suspects or articles, evidence of a crime, to locate the presence of narcotics and to detect bombs and explosives. The K-9 Unit also assists in the arrest and apprehension of felons and protects officers and the public from serious injury. The current K-9 department consists of Sgt. Chuck Gray and his shepherd Kyzer and Officer Bill Brush and his black lab Julie.

Gray and Kyzer attended the Boston Police K-9 Academy for several months to become certified in patrol/tracking and narcotics detection. Gray is a member of the International Police Work Dog Association and is also a certified Drug Recognition Expert and Drug Recognition Expert Instructor certified through the National Highway Traffic Safety Association and the International Chiefs of Police Association.

When I asked Sgt. Gray why he chose to become a K9 officer it was obvious that this was his passion and it was going to be the next step in his career. This decision wasn't made lightly. Gray is married and has children. There is a commitment level to being a K-9 officer as it is a 365 days a year 24/7 dedication. When a K-9 officer goes home at night he is still working, his dog is with him, and they could be called at any moment. Knowing this decision was right for him and once the position became available Gray moved into the role whole heartedly and fully dedicated. Knowing this would a life changing experience; however, he never really knew how much his life would truly change.

On Wednesday November 14, 2007,



a typical morning, Kyzer and Sgt. Gray were in their cruiser doing their every day routine when a call came in about a shooting at Independent Tires next to the Lawrence Municipal Airport. When they arrived they had no idea what they were about to encounter. It wasn't just a shooting it was serial shooting. Once on site, Gray released the leash and let Kyzer go. Kyzer did exactly what he was trained to do; he bit the shooter's arm and knocked down the gun. This was a shooting rampage, Kyzer not only saved Sgt. Gray's life he saved the lives of all the police officers that were on location. To Kyzer this was just a day's work. This was what he was trained to do. What Kyzer didn't realize is his quick and accurate reactions to this terrible tragedy made him a hero. It also did not go without notice. Kyzer received local and national attention and several awards. His performance helped open the doors for other police depart-

K9, page 35

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Senior Activities for JANUARY

If you call it "Senior," will they come? That's just one question on the minds of the North Andover Senior Center as we look down the road and see the baby boomer population approaching old age.

What happened? When I was in high school no one wanted to be a freshmen, sophomore or junior. We all could not wait to call ourselves seniors. So why now as we age and become a senior in our community does it have negativity attached to it? A common name helps people find the Center in their community. It clearly identifies the facility as where seniors go for services and activities. The common barriers that keep seniors from attending are accessibility issues like transportation, parking, health issues and hours of operation. Perhaps more difficult to combat are misperceptions people have about senior centers—such as that they're only for low income individuals or people must be very old to participate. In many situations, there's a basic lack of understanding about what a senior center is, what services are provided and to whom the services are available. The North Andover Senior Center is truly representative of what I see centers looking like in the future, multi-service, a wide range of programs for young, old, frail, active, retired and working. We offer a computer lab, large multi-functional space that can be broken into multiple program areas and a support services health room. We focus on multi-functional utilization. We are offering more exercise and health programs and a greater selection of intergenera-

tional activities. We are actively collaborating with other community organizations such as universities to offer educational and recreational opportunities that seniors want. I welcome you this New Year to stop by and take a good look. I hope you will choose to get involved in what is going on at the North Andover Senior Center.

Town of North Andover Health Department H1N1 Flu Shot Clinic will be held on Wednesday January 6, 2010 at Osgood LANDING (South East Entrance) from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Need help understanding your health benefits? Please call 978-688-9560 to set up an appointment. Our SHINE Counselors will be holding office hours at the Center on the 1st, 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of every month from 12:00 – 3:00 PM. As well as Thursdays from 12:00 – 3:00 PM.

Seniors on the go:

Foxwoods: Next scheduled trip January 14, 2010, \$25.00 includes lunch buffet, transportation, Keno. Bus leaves from St. Michael's parking lot at 6:30 AM.

Supper Club Thursday, January 21, 2010 4:30 PM The Loft Restaurant, Transportation \$2.00 Order dinner off the menu.

*Beginner Ballroom Dancing Lessons



Starts Thursday, February 4, 2010, 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM – 6 weeks. Learn the Fox Trot and the Swing. This class is open to ages 16 and up. The cost is \$90.00 per person or \$150.00 per couple for 6 weeks. Call Barbara at 978-688-9560 to sign up.

WII Game System: The North Andover Senior Center has a Wii game in the new living room. The following games are available, bowling, baseball, tennis, golf and boxing. The system is set up on our new 46 inch flat screen TV. It is a great way to exercise and have fun at the same time. Stop in for a game or two, call for availability of room.

ZUMBA: Tuesdays at 9:30 AM – 10:30, 6-weeks for \$24.00. Come exercise to the

beat of Latin Music with Zumba Instructor Barbara Selima. (This class starts on January 12, 2010, please call 978-688-9560 for sign up information.) Walk-ins are welcome. Drop the kids off at school and come take a Zumba class at the Senior Center. You do not have to be a senior to sign up for this class.

New Program: We will be starting an after school Zumba class in the future. Please watch for postings in the local news as well as in the schools.

Support Services and Programs:

Movie & Discussion Support Group: 2nd and 4th Fridays every month from 12:30 – 3:00 PM in the living room. Join the group and enjoy a movie and discussion afterwards with Beacon Hospice

Social Worker, Lu Bonanno.

Lecture Series: Every Monday at 10:00 a.m. featuring: December 28, Linda Soucy, Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Fuel Assistance Program and ways to reduce consumption. January 11, Town Manager Mark Rees, Looking forward to 2010 in North Andover. January 25, Michelle Ellicks from the Registry of Motor Vehicles will speak on Safe Driving for Seniors.

Hearing Clinic: Free on the 3rd Thursday of every month. Call for an appointment.

Pranic Healing: Fridays, 11:30-1:30 PM, 20 minute treatment for \$5.00 donation. Call for an appointment.

Attorney George White: is available to meet with you to discuss your legal issues. Please call the Senior Center to make an appointment.

We need Volunteer Medical Transport Drivers! Call the North Andover Senior Center for more information. Speak with Barbara at 978-688-9560 for application and assistance.

Welcome to the CASH VALUE gift card program.

Stop by the Senior Center to receive your free card. The Friends of the North Andover Senior Center is pleased to announce its endorsement of the Cash Value Card Program recently launched in the Merrimack Valley. For more information stop by the North Andover Senior Center and pick up your FREE card. Participating merchants include: Amici's Pizzeria, McAloon's Liquors, Quic Pic, The Loft, Boston Chowda, Bella Vita Salon & Day Spa, The Keys Grille and J. Brian's Pub & Grille.

North Andover Merchants ... stay local, shop locally!

Phil DeCologero

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Truly North Andover's finest.... Formed to advocate on behalf of the business community of North Andover, the North Andover Merchants Association (N.A.M.A.) is wasting no time tackling its mission.

"I really can't remember the last time I went a day without doing something N.A.M.A. related," said Lesley Carlson, owner of Rolf's Pub on Main Street, and Vice President of N.A.M.A.

After only six months of operation, and a lengthy list of accomplishments under its belt, it is no surprise Carlson feels this way.

Since organizing in July, N.A.M.A. has worked to aggressively amp up its business-building and community-outreach activities. These activities include joint-advertising ventures, networking nights, business-building workshops and business-profiling on one of North Andover's TV stations.

"It's really quite impressive when you consider that N.A.M.A. is completely volunteer-based," said Dick Vaillancourt, owner of PC Pros.

In October N.A.M.A. sponsored its first joint advertisement in a local newspaper by announcing the formation of the association, while listing each of the founding-member businesses. N.A.M.A. used the ad as an opportunity to get its memberships' names out there.

"We treated it as a chance to get our feet wet," said Tracey Zysk, owner of Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care. "I had never really advertised in print media before, and I was really surprised at the amount of positive feedback I received. The customers I picked up just from that single advertisement make membership in N.A.M.A. worth it."

In mid-October the group hosted a Networking Night, inviting all of the town's business owners. "The Networking Night served the dual purpose of facilitating relationships between the different business

owners in town," said Carlson, "while also allowing N.A.M.A. to introduce itself to the entire business community."

Since the initial Networking Night, N.A.M.A. has seen membership, which costs \$100 annually, balloon to almost 100 businesses. "The increase in membership continues to drive our momentum," said Vaillancourt. N.A.M.A. voted to support the town's efforts to hang Holiday Wreaths on the telephone poles lining Main Street. Hoping to see more wreaths lining the roadway, N.A.M.A. presented the Board of Selectmen with a donation of over \$400. Several N.A.M.A. members also spent one Sunday helping assemble the wreaths.

"The wreath itself is sponsored either by residents or businesses," said Carlson, "but the wreaths require a frame to be hung from. N.A.M.A. made its donation so that more frames could be purchased, which would then allow additional businesses to sponsor the wreaths."

"Residents get to enjoy the additional decorations, while businesses that sponsor a wreath benefit from the increased exposure. It's a win-win," said Vaillancourt. "This was a simple project, but it sums up the mission of N.A.M.A. – business and community improvement."

This mission was about to be dramatically built upon in November. "For years I have been a business owner in town," said Bryan Favor, owner of Main Street Hardware. "Every year North Andover has the Santa Parade on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. We thought: this year why not ask if N.A.M.A. can get involved?"

Once speaking with the town, N.A.M.A.'s membership sponsored the Pentucket High School Band to march in the parade.

"It was really great of N.A.M.A. to support the parade the way they did," said Se-

lectman Tracy Watson.

"Everyone seemed really thrilled with the addition of another band," said Favor, "and while residents enjoyed the band, they also couldn't miss the large banner that included the names of sponsoring businesses – as well as the additional banners some businesses had following the band."

With so many hands ready to help, N.A.M.A. has been able to offer a number of different services to members.

In November N.A.M.A. hosted an Advertising Workshop for its members. The workshop included presentations from Spectrum Marketing, with specific regard into advertising strategies. The North Andover Citizen attended a December meeting, while the Valley Patriot will be speaking with members in January.

"Really, this provided me an opportunity to explore a business strategy that I had never really looked into," said Zysk.

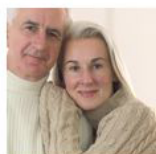
N.A.M.A. arranged with one of the papers for members to participate in a full-page advertisement that would be running for the three weeks preceding Christmas.

In addition to the print media, N.A.M.A. has also developed a relationship with North Andover Camera. By joining NA CAM, N.A.M.A. can utilize their equipment to tape and profile businesses throughout town.

"We spent days learning how to use the equipment to tape and edit material," said Carlson. "We then signed out a camera and immediately went about taping several businesses in town."

The show would be "Local Shop Talk", and N.A.M.A. would interview members, discussing the basics of their business, while also shooting footage of their stores. Following editing, the final clip would be 8-10 minutes long, and run on North Andover's Community Access Channel (Channel 22 for Comcast).

NAMA, page 14



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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The Liberal/Socialist Alternatives Select Just One: Prohibited or Mandatory

Dr. Charles Ormsby

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

"The trouble with government regulation of the market is that it prohibits capitalistic acts between consenting adults."

- Robert Nozick

Are you tired of being a slave?

What did you say? You're not a slave?

How can you tell?

Can you own a home without paying a tithe every quarter to the local constables? And if you don't pay it, can they take your home away from you and dump you and your family in the street?

Can you be compensated for your labor without wetting the government's beak? If you don't pay up, will you be dragged off to prison by the IRS?

Maybe you excuse these acts of outright theft because you believe they are imposed as part of some justifiable civic duty – a price you must pay for living in a civilized society. OK. We could debate both the method of collection and the amounts, but let's assume you have rationalized your abdication to government.

Now that you have consented to having the government's hand in your pocket, don't you think that is enough? Having taken 40% or more of your income every year, shouldn't it just leave you alone?

Shouldn't government let you decide how to live, what to buy, what not to buy, who you will conduct business with, the nature of your business, what to eat, where and how you educate your children, etc.?

But liberals are not content to take 40% or more of your income and decide for you how it should be spent. They also want to control the rest of your life and your remaining resources. What you have left isn't yours if you cannot decide what to do with it.

The one thing liberals/socialists can't stand is for lowly citizens, like you and

me, to decide anything for ourselves. They know everything better than we do and it is about time we appreciate their brilliance.

Do you want to sit in your home with friends after work and play poker? PROHIBITED!

Is it OK to drive an automobile without a seatbelt or ride a motorcycle/bicycle without a helmet? Nope, PROHIBITED!

Can we buy a high-deductible, major medical policy that leaves routine doctor bills to be paid out of pocket? PROHIBITED!

How about negotiating medical insurance coverage based on our needs and having the price based on the coverage selected and our particular circumstances? No, No, No ... That would be PROHIBITED! Even if you are a single male you MUST have coverage for pregnancy and breast/uterine cancer. Brilliant!

Can we opt out of Social Security and save for retirement in our own way? Absolutely not! That's PROHIBITED!

Would you like to offer or accept a job based on pay and conditions that you and your employee/employer agree upon? No! VERBOTEN!! There are the mandatory minimum wages, overtime regulations, minimum benefits, termination requirements, mandatory holidays to take into account. Oh, and if you are the employer, it is MANDATORY that you do the government's dirty work and extract, account for, and submit your employees' income, Social Security, and Medicare taxes. Are you compensated for performing this MANDATORY task? What's your best guess?

Can you build a house of your own design and with materials of your choosing? No. The government has MANDATED minimum requirements for windows, doors, acreage, electrical service, etc. Also, you must build only with government approved materials; heat with gov-

ernment recommended fuel; use government approved insulation; and on and on.

You say you can't afford a house because of all these requirements? Tough! You will just have to sleep under a bridge (yeah, that's better!).

At your struggling business, your workers ban together and want to force you to deal with them on their terms and prevent you from hiring willing/qualified workers outside their group. Do you have to deal with these thugs? Yes, it's MANDATORY! You have no right to negotiate with or enter into a mutually beneficial employment relationship with anyone else.

Your current business is barely surviving because of these union/labor laws and onerous taxes, so you decide to start a new business: an airline service that offers greater security than competing airlines. Your plan, to arm pilots and put undercover guards on every flight, is effective, inexpensive and attractive to a substantial segment of the flying public. Surely this business will prosper! Can you do it? Nope, that's PROHIBITED!

You can't start Terror-Proof Airlines, so you find yourself in need of a little extra income and you decide to get a second job. Unfortunately, local businesses and other prospective employers face the same regulatory burdens and confiscatory taxes as your struggling business and they are not hiring.

To pay for food and rent you decide to offer taxi service with free snacks in your local community. Is that OK? No way! All of the allocated taxi medallions are assigned so you and those who would like to ride with you are out of luck! Not to mention that you would need a special license to serve food!

Of course, the government knows better than the market how many taxis there should be, what they should charge and what amenities can be offered. Providing

taxi service without a medallion or at a different rate (higher or lower) is PROHIBITED! (Aside: The going rate for a single taxi medallion in NYC is currently over \$750,000. And you wonder why you can't get a cab and why it costs so much?)

As if all of this misfortune isn't bad enough, your doctor tells you that you have terminal cancer and you will only live for 10 weeks. All the FDA-approved drugs prove ineffective and you begin the process of putting your affairs in order. Then you hear about an experimental drug (e.g., dichloroacetate or DCA) that shrinks human cancer tumors implanted in rats with no side effects. Human clinical trials are planned, but they will take years to complete by which time you will be pushing up daisies.

After consulting with your doctor you decide that this unapproved drug is worth a try. Heck, its better than buying a tombstone!

Can you do it? No! The FDA says that it is a PROHIBITED drug. The suggested government alternative is pain pills and the mortuary. Just die and shut up.

The FDA bureaucrats know better than you or your doctor and they want to see the results of a decade-long, billion dollar study to determine efficacy and side effects before you can try it. (Aside: people are practicing civil disobedience with DCA. See www.theDCAsite.com.)

With liberals/socialists in charge of our government, your life will likely conclude as follows:

You're driving home after your appointment with the funeral director and you feel hunger pains. Since you will be dead soon anyway, you decide that a monster burger with bacon and cheese, large fries, and a milk shake would cheer you up. You pull up to the window and hear, "Fageta-boutit! That's PROHIBITED!"

As you swallow your FDA-approved boiled tofu dinner, you feel your life slipping from you. You contemplate transferring your meagre life savings and your struggling small business to your children. Surely, after paying all those taxes and putting up with countless regulations all your life and now having to die unnecessarily, they will let you do that!

Unfortunately, your lawyer and accountant inform you that the liberals/socialists won't permit it. Instead, your business will have to be sold and the proceeds used to pay your death taxes. (Aside: If you were planning on saving on taxes by dying in 2010, think again. The likelihood is that the estate tax will be reinstated with lower minimums and with higher rates retroactive to January 1st.)

The liberals/socialists often tell us how caring and compassionate they are ... not to mention how smart they are.

We are so lucky to have them do our thinking for us. Life is so much easier if everything is either PROHIBITED or MANDATORY.

All we have to do is follow their rules ... just like on the plantation!

Happy New Year!!



Dr. Ormsby is an ex-member of the N.A. School Committee. He is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctorate from MIT. He is currently a Visiting Professor of Mathematics at UMASS, Lowell.

You can email him at: ccormsby@comcast.net

A meeting with senatorial candidate Scott Brown

Randall H. Miller

VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

I recently had the pleasure of spending an evening with WBZ News Radio's Dan Rea. Arriving early, I was pleasantly surprised to find State Senator (and U.S. Senate hopeful) Scott Brown (R) waiting outside of the production booth. I spent the better part of the next hour chatting with him about a number of issues.

The Massachusetts Special Election is Tuesday, January 19. Brown is running against current Attorney General Martha Coakley. Republican or not (yes, Massachusetts does have Republicans), here are three reasons why you should vote for Scott Brown for U.S. Senate.

As a former member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and current member of the State Senate, Brown is no stranger with getting "up close and personal" with the people who put him in those positions.

His appearance on "Nightside" with Dan Rea happened about 24 hours after President Obama announced his plans for a "troop surge" in Afghanistan. Predictably, he spent the first segment of the show discussing his own position on the issue. At the first commercial break, he took off his headphones, turned to me, and asked what I thought. He listened closely as I explained my position (which

is the polar opposite of his) and acknowledged my points as I made them. Suffice it to say that he knows what he's talking

about (unlike most of our politicians who are painfully ignorant when it comes to anything beyond spouting their "talking points"), and he responded by making a convincing argument without belittling mine. It's tough to imagine having the same conversation with John Kerry.

Military service is not a prerequisite for elected office, nor should it be. However, we live in a day and age where the use of military force is, unfortunately, very common. As a consequence, I feel more comfortable knowing that the elected officials making these decisions have, themselves, served in our Armed Forces. Scott Brown has served honorably in the Massachusetts National Guard for almost

thirty years and currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. A graduate of the U.S. Army Airborne School and decorated for



meritorious service for homeland security in the wake of the September 11 attacks, I'm pretty confident that he wouldn't send our troops to places where he wouldn't be willing to go himself. Maybe this is a bigger deal for me than

it is for you, but it seems that some of the biggest hawks today are elected officials who have never picked up a weapon or served a day in uniform. We need more soldier representation in the U.S. Senate.

One Party Rule is Killing Massachusetts. In November, I attended the New England Business Expo and spent the entire day on the floor talking with exhibitors. The mood was cautiously optimistic

BROWN, page 31

Tsongas, Governor, announce spending of federal stimulus money in The Valley

Dawn Rattelade-Brantmuller
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Deval Patrick: As the senator said, we have had to close a multi-billion dollar budget gap in the last few years, nine billion dollars, actually over the last 18 months and we have done that responsibly and by being true to our values.

We have delivered, now, 3 budgets that were balanced responsibly and on time, which is not something that many other states can say. If you think that is just an abstract bragging point, let me tell you that the credit agencies, all three of them, have re-affirmed the commonwealth's double A bond rating and stable outlook, specifically sighting our proactive management, in partnership with the legislature of this budget crisis, which means that we continue to afford the bond of borrowing that we are doing to invest in ourselves.

To rebuild our roads, bridges, expand, restore the public college and university campuses. To invest in public, affordable housing and to expand broadband. It is enormously important and it connects. This would not be possible without the partnership of the legislature and the leadership of Senator Pangiotokas and it



Governor Deval Patrick in Lowell announcing the disbursement of Federal Stimulus money. Governor Patrick, 5th District Congressman Niki Tsongas (far left) and and State Senator Steve Panagiotakos held the press conference to highlight how federal dollars were being spent locally.

would not have been possible without the resources and partnership of the congress lead by congresswoman Niki Tsongus and I thank you, Niki. Sometimes, people think of the recovery act as just an abstraction. They say “Where are the results?”

“Who’s affected?” I ask you to look at the folks here behind me. The firefight-

ers, the police officers, the construction workers, the teachers, the nurses at places like Lowell Community Health Center that got a 9.4 million dollar grant just last week. Ask them whether the Recovery Act matters. Ask them whether is an abstraction. I’m telling you that we are dealing with a crisis unlike anything we have seen in 80 years in this country. The global economic collapse and without the Recovery Act, these good people and the services they provide to us, all of us, in all of our communities, would be up a creek. So, there is value in this Recovery Act, there is tangible help that has come from the Recovery Act and we are grateful for it. I, also, wanted to say that here in state government to the extent that we have had re-

sponsibility for distributing funds, there is a sort of urban legend we talk about all of the time. If the Recovery Act represented a blank check, payable to me, and you just have to get me in a good mood and then, we will disburse it. (People laughing)

In fact, it comes through very specific programs with a tremendous amount of controls, oversight and transparency which is important and I want to acknowledge Jeffrey Simon who is our Recovery Act Czar who helps to make sure that our reporting is thorough and accurate and the oversight is rigorous.

We have had some choices to make and we have tried to make those choices in the nature of that “old adage” that says that if you give a man a fish, they eat for a day, if you teach them to fish, they eat for a lifetime and so we have, wherever we can, try to invest in ways that leverage private investment as well.

Beyond the paving job for a given road, as important and valuable as that job is, that road opens up a developer’s ability to create new housing, or new commercial space, ultimately. We are looking for those leverage opportunities that we have found and I am please to say that we will be ahead of schedule in committing all Federal Transportation money that has been made available to us through the Recovery Act.

So, again special, special thanks go out to Congresswoman Tsongas and all of the members of the Congressional Delegation and to the administration for making these enormously important resources available

STIMULUS, page 8

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Devine Millimet is pleased to announce that Peter J. Caruso, Sr. has joined the firm as a shareholder in our Andover office. Attorney Caruso brings extensive experience in all facets of the law, including family and business planning, real estate, asset protection, estate planning, as well as in media law--newspaper, privacy, defamation, advertising, media, internet copyright, and publications. He is the former managing partner of Caruso and Caruso, LLP and now joins the firm's 80 attorneys in offices in Manchester and Concord, New Hampshire as well as in Andover. Established in 1947, Devine Millimet has served the Merrimack Valley for more than 25 years.



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STIMULUS: FROM PAGE 7

to us at a critical time and, again, this is not an abstraction, these are real jobs and real values, brought to real families who are trying to find a way forward in times of enormous challenges to all of us. I am proud to be with you and I look forward to continuing to work closely with all of you, thank you.

After Governor Patrick's statements he entertained questions from the press. Here is the exchange between Valley Patriot reporter Tom Duggan, Governor Patrick and Congresswoman Tsongas.

Tom Duggan: "When you ran for election, talked so much about the deficit and spending of the government, are you concerned when this money... that is borrowed, comes due, that we are going to be back in the same position that we were before this money was disbursed?"

Congresswoman Niki Tsongas: "Well, ... little did we anticipate the extraordinary challenge to our economy, [which] became so apparent last fall, a year ago this fall.

Every economist virtually, that I spoke with and I reached out to many because we had a major challenge on our hands, they said that we had to take a lesson from the great depression and said that if the government did not act, the situation could become much worse and over time, the way I have come to describe it is that: our economy was here (doing a graph with her hands) we were falling to here, with our recovery package we brought ourselves to here ... the work is between getting to here and here (pointing to the top) and if we had done nothing, we would have gone down to here (pointing to the bottom).

And, coming from Lowell, Massachusetts, you see what happens when government doesn't react to a different climb in industry, in this particular community, but generally a tremendous downfall in our country.

If we do nothing, the climb back is much steeper and takes many more years. So, an economist supported that approach and as a result, we passed a recovery package and that is what we've been

talking about to date. It's a one-time, very extraordinary expenditure of funds in order to save our economy and get us back on the path.

Obviously, going forward we have work to do. We have to address the deficit and the debt. We are committed to doing that, but the timing around that still remains important because of our recovery is still fragile and if we do it too soon, we could compound the challenges going forward.

So, obviously yes, I am a strong supporter of something called "Pay as you go". As we spend certain funds we have to be sure we have a way to either pay for it or by cutting elsewhere or raising our revenue to offset it, but this is a one-time challenge that we have a responsibility to address."

Tom Duggan: "But, it is borrowed money, right Governor?"

Governor Deval Patrick: "First of all, ditto. It is borrowed money ... but I'll tell you, if you think about the circumstance that we've been in, if there had not been a recovery act, we were looking at a full blown recession, ... excuse me, depression.

With the banking industry facing a total collapse and dragging the rest of the economy into the hole with it, a difference between a year ago and now is that we are not talking about whether we will recover, we are talking about what kind of recovery and how fast it will be.

So, I think it was a very wise investment in ourselves and our future. I think there is more of that kind of work that we are looking forward to working with the Congress on as we go forward."

Tom Duggan: "When this money runs out, will the cities and towns have to pay to continue

the spending that is being done now, or is there some way to phase that back?"

Congresswoman Niki Tsongas: "The goal was, as the drop in revenues were taking place at the state and local level, the recovery package already started its work and eventually, the revenues will start to rise again.

Will they rise again to the level they were prior to all of this, that is still un-



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

Left to right: State Senator, and Chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, Steve Panagiotakos, Governor Deval Patrick, and 5th District Congressman Niki Tsongas announce the disbursement of Federal stimulus money in local communities. All three officials took a shot at answering Valley Patriot editor Tom Duggan's questions.

known, but the revenues will start to come back and hopefully will avoid the most aggressive kind of cuts that might have been necessary."

Governor Deval Patrick: "As a growth, for all of us, the solution to the situation that we are in, the recovery act provides a cliff, because the money does run out on a date certain. And I'd leave out something if I didn't say we will work with the congress to get more of a "slope" than "cliff" right now and I also think that the hope was that the economy would recover even faster than it has.

I think in the long run, we will be good and we will be strong and in many respects, we will be stronger than we were as a commonwealth before this recession began. It's because of a whole host of reforms that this crisis has caused us to have to confront and to implement."

Tom Duggan: "Given that Lawrence is in the position that it's in and in the last 20 years, billions of dollars have been pumped into Lawrence and it hasn't really done much good, what good do you see in pumping more money into Lawrence to try to make it better when that hasn't worked for 15 to 20 years?"

Governor Deval Patrick: "Well, first of all, I don't accept the premise of your question, since a lot of that money ...

Tom Duggan: "I like when you challenge me."

Governor Deval Patrick: "But a lot of that money is education money and, you know, educating a child is not a waste of money or time, um, I will say that what

we are looking at in Lawrence is not an infusion of capital, it's getting at some reforms that are sure that they get on sounder fiscal footing and management and that this sort of thing doesn't happen again."

Tom Duggan: "With very little oversight into the money that has already gone into Lawrence, even long before you came on board, the more money that, now, gets pumped in from this point forward, is there going to be more oversight, is there going to be more accountability on the local city counsel, mayor, etc.?"

Governor Deval Patrick: "That is exactly the point. What we've been talking about with the state delegation and with the mayor elect, one of the system's fiscal and financial management and controls an oversight that have to be in place to ensure that this does not happen again."

Tom Duggan: (laughing) "Can you just admit who you supported between Willie Lantigua and Marcos Devers in the last State Rep. Race since you endorsed both of them? You can admit it now, it's over, (governor starts walking away) the elections over. I just need to know."

(Laughter and Oh my gods in the crowd)...

Governor Deval Patrick: "Gotta go, See ya! See ya!"



Press conference and interview transcribed by Dawn Rattellade-Brantmuller of Salem, NH. Dawn is the new assistant to the editor.

Recovery Act Dollars being spent in The Valley

- Over 90 Public Safety positions across the Fifth District been retained or created, including 12 police officers in Lawrence and 34 Police Department positions in Lowell

- 31 firefighters have been hired, including 16 firefighters in the Methuen and Lawrence area and 3 in Chelmsford

- The Recovery Act has saved over 1400 teacher and staff jobs in the public school system by providing Education funds – including preserving over 100 jobs in Dracut, 60 jobs in Methuen, 500 positions in Lawrence, 35 in Bolton and 400 positions in Lowell

- Nobis Engineering of Lowell was awarded a \$14 million Recovery funded contract to finish cleanup of a Superfund site in Lowell, work which will create 50-70 high paying construction jobs

- Expansion projects at Lowell Community Health Center and Greater Lawrence Family Health Center are creating

construction jobs, as well as permanent health care jobs, while increasing access to primary and other health care services in the Merrimack Valley

- Aerodyne Research of Billerica, Triton Systems of Chelmsford and Physical Sciences of Andover are all examples of businesses receiving Small Business Innovation Research funds. These funds ensure that high-tech, innovative businesses are a significant part of the federal government's research and development efforts

- \$4 million in Federal Research and Development dollars have been competitively awarded to the University of Massachusetts Lowell

- Recently, a \$24 million contract with the Department of Energy was awarded to Beacon Power of Tyngsborough. This will not only create jobs, but also help deliver reliable power more effectively with less impact on the environment, helping sustain our communities for the long term.

"Since Recovery Act dollars began to be released in March, the Fifth District has received more than \$350 million, helping to create or save 1,600 jobs. This includes construction projects with Lowell Public Housing, Community Health Center expansions in Lawrence and Lowell, and double tracking along the Fitchburg and Haverhill commuter rail lines. Additionally, leading clean energy companies such as American Superconductor in Devens and Beacon Power in Tyngsboro have been able to add research and manufacturing jobs, and hundreds of local teacher, firefighter, and law enforcement jobs have been saved."

- 5th District Congressman Niki Tsongas

This project will demonstrate advanced Smart Grid technologies and improve grid reliability while increasing the use of wind and solar power.

- Community Teamwork Inc. of Lowell recently was awarded a Green Jobs grant to train 75 youth on solar installation and weatherization through YouthBuild.

- The Lowell Housing Authority cre-

ated 30 jobs with over \$3.7 million they received for capital improvements to housing units

- The Recovery Act has also helped those in greatest need. Massachusetts received over a \$20 billion increase in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp Program.

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Five questions for Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua

Robert O'Koniewski, Esq.
VALLEY PATRIOT SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

As we go to print, the City of Lawrence stands on the threshold of history.

On Monday, January 4, Lawrence state representative William Lantigua was sworn in as the city's first elected mayor of Hispanic descent.

As a newly elected mayor, however, Mr. Lantigua is now faced with a challenge befuddling most mayors – new and old – across the Commonwealth: How to balance the municipal budget amid economic crisis; shrinking state local aid payments; intransigent union demands on pay raises, job protection, and health insurance; and locked in pension costs that are certainly more lucrative than anything the private sector employee sees, just to name a few challenges.

At his inauguration, Mr. Lantigua spoke of his vision for the next four years – how to address the challenges of today and what his priorities are for the future.

For many, this will be the first time that they have ever heard him articulate a vision for our city. For all Lawrencians, however, much will rely on his ability to succeed.

Indeed, Lawrence is at a crossroads.

As Patrick Blanchette and the '08-'09 city council scurry out the door into the dead of night leaving behind a complete financial disaster, Mr. Lantigua certainly will spend the bulk of his tenure figuring out how to balance the books while making sure basic services, especially fire and police, are delivered adequately and efficiently to an anxious citizenry.

As we all witnessed history on January 4, there are certain questions demanding appropriate response:

1. What exactly is the size of the financial mess the outgoing city council and Sullivan administration are leaving the incoming mayor and the new council?

Former city budget director Mark Andrews, (who high-tailed it out of here one step ahead of the posse to a new job far, far away), claimed the budget deficit is

less than \$2 million.

However, the state Department of Revenue has estimated that it is closer to \$17 million for the current fiscal year 2010 that ends on June 30th, expanding out to \$30 million through fiscal year 2011.

This is interesting given the fact that the city pulls in about \$45 million on its own through taxes and fees and depends on the state for the rest of our \$200 million in non-school budget funding.

The fact that Patrick Blanchette and the '08 - '09 city council closed up shop with some nice parting gifts in mid-December and self-congratulatory speeches without addressing the deficit and setting a tax rate will make Mr. Lantigua's job that much harder kicking off 2010.

Much depends on the real size of the budget deficit and whether that gap can be closed with some immediate, severe budget cuts and layoffs or something much more drastic, like a \$35 million loan that it will be paying back for the next 20 years.

2. With the crisis comes an opportunity for reforms at City Hall. Is Mr. Lantigua up to that task?

Clearly the city cannot continue with the same old, same old. Our municipal government demands re-organization and consolidation. We do not need to foster continued duplication of services within city hall and the school department, for instance.



But, does Mr. Lantigua have the imagination and gumption to tackle such political hot potatoes that Sullivan and his team punted on for eight years?

There certainly needs to be a focus on providing service to the taxpayers and the public. For many offices, it is hit or miss that the office is

staffed at any given point in time during the work week. For example, how can we have a city clerk's office closed at lunch time because of an inability of the clerk to manage his people properly, yet there are three clerks taking minutes at each council meeting, while it is being taped for the viewers at home? There is no reason why the mayor cannot hire competent managers and institute cross training and stagger lunches amongst city hall employees so that no office is closed on any work day, even if it is normally staffed by a single person.

3. What will Mr. Lantigua do with Wilfredo Laboy? For how long will the state allow this soap opera to continue? And just when will the school department vacate its luxurious office with its high-priced rent and relocate to city owned property?

The fact that the school superintendent still pulls a paycheck has become a running joke. Frankly, once state investigators found the cache of booze in Laboy's school department office, the school committee should have fired him then and there for cause. I cannot imagine at this point that there will be a collective majority will to fire the superintendent for cause for this transgression, absent some flexing of mayoral muscle by Mr. Lantigua to move this ugly chapter of our history behind us. Further, the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts effectively pays 100% of the cost of our school system. How long will the Patrick administration allow this saga to continue before it becomes a campaign issue in the upcoming gubernatorial election? If the Patrick administration is going to help the city with a \$35 million loan, then it certainly cannot be on the political hook for Laboy, too.

4. Who will Lantigua bring in as part of his team?

To the victor go the spoils. So certainly no one begrudges a winning candidate from bringing in his own people to run the show. However, Mr. Lantigua needs to properly handle the removal of current department heads he deems expendable or hostile to his agenda and the hiring of qualified professionals to properly implement a plan of reform, re-organization, and consolidation. To simply hire more hacks to maintain that fine Lawrencian tradition of seeking the lowest common denominator will augment an already sorry state of service delivery and depress further an already skeptical tax-paying public. Job postings and interviews take time. The quicker Mr. Lantigua can clean house and hire real professionals to run the various departments, the sooner the city's house can be restored to order.

5. Will the city council be a rubber-stamp for the mayor?

Mr. Lantigua can lay claim to the political loyalties of at least six city councilors. Will a majority of the council kowtow to all that Mr. Lantigua demands, or will councilors actually demonstrate collectively some real leadership and imagination to work in tandem with the mayor and his team toward a common good? A lack of cooperation between the executive and legislative branches has poisoned city hall for at least the last four years. Our city cannot continue to endure such hostilities amidst the current crisis. But at the same time, there are nine individuals on the council who have ideas of their own to improve our community. The challenge for the new mayor and the council leaders is to get everyone on the same page toward the common goal of rebuilding our community.

Bob Okoniewski is a former member of the zoning board in Lawrence and is an attorney. You can email him at bobokesq@hotmail.com.

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Lantigua can do both jobs

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There are several State Representatives who don't even show up for a majority of their votes. They can never be found at The State House and they are completely inaccessible to the public. Sadly, those Representatives get reelected by the voters in their districts every time they run.

What's more, almost every Representative on Beacon Hill has a full time job while "serving" the people of Massachusetts.

Haverhill State Representative Brian Dempsey runs a busy insurance company full time. Barry Finegold, Dave Torrisi, even State Senator Steve Baddour all run lucrative law practices during the day instead of being at The State House doing the people's business.

Why is Willie Lantigua any different just because his job is going to be paid for by the people of Lawrence?

Does it really take more time and effort to be the Mayor of Lawrence than it does to defend a lifetime criminal in a murder trial? I'm pretty sure it doesn't.

So it's no surprise to me that Lawrence Mayor Willie Lantigua (da chief) has announced that he will keep his job as Lawrence's State Representative while also serving as the city's Mayor.

He believes he can do both jobs given how little State Representatives actually do. And he is right.

There is no law prohibiting him from being a Mayor and a State Representative, and though Lantigua's colleagues are trying to change that, I say it should be up to the people of Lawrence and no one else.

Think what you want about his politics, Willie Lantigua is a smart guy. He is fully capable of being the Mayor of Lawrence while keeping his barely part time job in Boston. Clearly he can do both jobs and do them well.

If the people of Lawrence have a problem with that, they can vote against him when he comes up for reelection. But it certainly isn't the business of State Representatives from Worcester, Framingham or anywhere else.

But they are trying really hard to make it their business and it's not because they care about the people of Lawrence.

What they care about is protecting the cash cow on Beacon Hill that allows them to get full time pay for barely part time work, all the while spending 80 hours a week running law offices, chain stores, and insurance companies or consulting firms.

Every day that Lantigua holds both jobs he is a living, breathing reminder to the voters that these guys are getting away with murder every single day. They don't want the gravy train to ever end.

They are afraid that it will cause a backlash among the voters, especially when guys like Howie Carr and Tommy Duggan start to use Lantigua's double dipping to shine the light of day on the fact that these guys are getting rich on our dime while running their own side businesses, all the while their constituents are out looking for work.

Let's face it, nobody believed that Willie was going to step down from his legislative job once he won the mayor's race and had nothing to lose. I certainly didn't.

And although he did say (at least according to the Eagle-Tribune) that he would give up his seat in Boston if he won the Mayors race, he never specified when he would step down and he certainly never promised to vacate the seat immediately.

Mayor Lantigua may find on his own that being the Mayor of Lawrence and a State Representative at the same time is just too much for him to handle.

And maybe he won't. But that decision is up to Willie Lantigua (da chief) and the people of Lawrence.... and nobody else.



Tom Duggan is the president of Valley Patriot, Inc., a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday from 10am-noon. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com.

Holding true to my word

Mark Gray

LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

I thought that as a member-elect of the Lawrence School Committee I may not be able to write very much before being sworn in.

However, since I am still being boycotted from information I have no ethical duty to *not* voice my opinion until being sworn in. As I write this I have yet to be sworn in and take office, though I do understand that this column won't be published until after the inauguration.

After sending my request for items to be placed on the school committee agenda, both through e-mail and certified mail I have not received an acknowledgment of receipt. Issues to be dealt with at the central office level to be sure.

However to the people of Lawrence it was important to me, to swiftly make good on all the things I have talked about in the months of NOT campaigning on empty promises.

As I have discussed with many people I have placed the most important issues on the forefront, and have a growing list of secondary issues that could easily take up months if not years to address and resolve.

One of the most important issues first on my agenda is YOU the public. I plan on getting agenda items posted and placed on the media channels of local access. Also, at every possible chance I tend to bring up issues and allow for a follow up meeting for the public to come in and talk about the issues.

I will also propose an earlier start time to meet with the school PTAs and school

councils to make sure all input is heard and we have complete transparency. My initial agenda item will help tackle issues from administration changes to Public participation. This one item will set a standard so repetitive problems will be stopped before they happen again leaving the committee free to fine tune budget and educational plan issues.

Some of my information requests revolve around corruption, disciplinary actions, and why the public doesn't get the answers they deserve from the administration.

Public accountability, of course, is a very important issue for me. To the point that it will push to replace any personnel who are unable to work under the yolk of the taxpayers' dollar.

As to the superintendent, I have received inquiries about this matter and my general response is simple. 'What did I say I would do?'

That is of course is what I will do.

I know that in Lawrence a lot of people seem to have a hard time believing that someone will actually do what they say they will do, but then again I hope that's why you elected a parent, an ex-marine, a person who doesn't have a ton of personality, but is honest with you.



Mark Gray is a school committeeman from District E in Lawrence, with 3 son's in the Lawrence Public School system. He served in the Marine Corps, the Army reserves, and has been active with the issues and problems facing the community. Mark can be reached by e-mail at ghostapollo@yahoo.com

Beginning of a New ERA

Mr. Maali

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Now after the election of ousting the loyal people such as the Peter Laroque the School committee member for District E, who was confused about his mission as the school committee member that his duty is to serve our citizen and our children instead he played as a puppet for the Lawrence Public School Administration and continuously remain faithful solidier to the SUPERINTENDENT Wilfredo Laboy.

Now is the time for the new members of the school committee to keep their campaign promises about Laboy.

The people and the parents in our city would like to fire Laboy who has been a symbol of having some one that making \$200,000 per year while people of the city are suffering from the 39 % unemployment rate. Laboy's arrogance and selfish-

ness toward his own people is demeaning.

We'd like the new school committee members to protect our teachers, since, without our highly trained and caring teachers our children never have any hope and dream for their future.

The new members of the school committee need to remember that We the People brought them to power and We the People could bring them out of the power. As long as they are dedicated to serve our children and our citizen and stand up for our teachers we as the citizen city support them and we are behind them.



Mr Maali is a candidate for the Lawrence School Committee, he is an Iranian who immigrated to the U.S.. This is his first run for office. He is married with two children. You can email him at harman-maali@gmail.com

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GEORGETOWN TODAY

MAYOR FIORENTINI'S NOTEBOOK

'Anyone But Deval' – A year in Review

Part 1

Lawrence "Lonnie" Brennan
VALLEY PATRIOT GEORGETOWN COLUMNIST

They say that every path has a few puddles, and for many, 2009 was a washout. The year began with Gov. Deval 'Together-We-Can' Patrick's foot pushed flat against the spending pedal.

Fresh off another round of finding taxpayer funded jobs for his friends and neighbors, the 'Gov.' proposed to increase the gas tax to 42.5 cents per gallon (from its current 23.5 cents). Despite his repeated outbursts, somehow the legislature managed to ignore the fool. Let me be the first to say vote "Anyone But Deval." In fact, if you want a bumper sticker, go to VoteCoreValues.org and order one cheap.

In 2009, the media was full of crooks from Wall Street to Main Street, cheating celebrities, pop icons, athletes, and local pols.

Locally, in the opening months of 2009, the local newspaper showcased Heidi Donovan and her daughters, with a new t-shirt: "Be strong, be true, be you." Karen Pelletier continued to keep the chairs hopping at her barber shop, and the Georgetown Record began recognizing local volunteers including Sandra Gerraughty (finance committee, Longview Fire, etc.), Scott Jones ('Save the Teachers' fund, Georgetown Education Foundation, etc.), and Deb Johnson (who, together with Laura and Rich Laflamme started the Mike Donahoe memorial roadrace).

Rep L'Italien made one of her rare appearances to speak before the Georgetown Special Education Political Action Committee, with President Lisa Woodford. Ms. L'Italien would also vote to re-elect Salvatore DiMasi as house speaker despite a horrific corruption scandal buzzing through the Boston media at the time. Within weeks, DiMasi would abruptly step down as prosecutors stepped in, making him the third indicted Democratic House speaker in a row.

With less than 90 days into his new job, Fire Chief Al Beardsley proposed that the selectmen change his new contract in the future: add 10 more hours work each week and give him a 37.5% salary increase. He also requested a 10.4% increase to the fire department budget.

Reg Tardiff, Jim Connolly, and Bert Hanlon ran a great Knight of Columbus basketball event for local youngsters. Dan Brodie and the Erie 4 crew and Troop 51

held their annual Italian Dinner to close January on a high note.

Senator Bruce Tarr warned of more cuts to local aid and education monies. Town Administrator Stephen Delaney predicted up to a 30% decrease in state education funding. Selectman Chair Matt Vincent announced a new 4-year agreement with Police Chief James Mulligan: a 3% raise each year, five weeks vacation each year, three personal days each year, and the ability to accumulate 90 days of unused sick time for a retirement bonus-paycheck at contract end.

Peter and Nanette Sarno's famous Tenney Street Christmas display amazed neighbors once again. Georgetown Fish and Game revived their Ice Fishing Derby (kudos to Tom Simmons and crew). Highway Surveyor Peter Durkee sought money fix the highway garage roof. The Georgetown Education Foundation ran a great Gala to raise funds for the schools, and well-loved Sgt. Donald Cudmore was promoted to Lieutenant.

School Committee Chairman George Moker advocated a 4.9% increase to the school budget.

Jenn Greenfield and Sue Phillips organized a PTA Casino Night. Chandler Noyes and Kay Ogden ran a fundraiser that kept the Trestle Way greenhouse warm. Barbie Linares ran another successful PTA Spelling Bee. Taryn O'Connell achieved all-time leading basketball scorer with 1,326 points. Patrolman Scott Hatch was recognized for his efforts apprehending a suspect sought by the state police. The Georgetown Girls' Basketball Team played in the Boston (TD) Garden! An incredible performance of Bye Bye Birdie included father/son musicians Jim and Dean Antonio, and father/daughter musicians David and Catarina Bongiorno.

Phil Trapani supported letting golfers at The Georgetown Club drink on the course. The school committee granted what turned out to be an average 3% raise for the teachers, this year, next year, and 5% the following year. More to follow next month...



Lawrence "Lonnie" Brennan is a former Georgetown Selectman and is currently Vice-Chair of the Georgetown Republican Town Committee. He can be reached at Lonnie.Brennan@verizon.net.

Task Forces and Unemployment

*** Task Force on Technology** - Last month I presented to the city council a list of his appointees to a new task force charged with enhancing city services, management and operations through a heightened use of cutting edge technology. The Mayor's Task Force on Technology will strive to improve delivery of City services through increased usage of technology. Members of the Task Force include: Karen Buckley, Chair, Robert Bertoni, David Spaulding of USAi.net, Pam Carr, City Informational Technology Director, Robert DeFusco, Purchasing Director, Ed English, Haverhill IT Department

*** Health Care Study Task Force,** Appoints Chairman. Last month I created and appointed a task force to assess and address the costs of health care for municipal employees. The rising costs of health care represent one of the largest mandatory increases in the City budget. Given the tough economy, our budget constraints, the impact of the Hale debt and projected cuts in State aid, we urgently need to tackle how to reduce the soaring costs of health care. For next year, our financial advisors are predicting a \$2.5 million increase in the City's health care costs, based upon a projected cost increase of 8.6%, which is not even the worst case estimate. Richard MacDonald, a Haverhill resident who has been serving as the Town Manager in Duxbury (MA) for 14 years, has agreed to head the Task Force. MacDonald will be volunteering time outside of his regular duties in Duxbury at no cost to taxpayers in either community.

"While Haverhill has some unique budget issues, the City's challenges are not unique when it comes to health care," Mr. MacDonald said. Like Duxbury and nearly every other city and town, we need to work with the public employee unions to make reasonable concessions that won't allow a budget crisis to mushroom into something far worse during this unparal-

leled recession. Richard has many years of hands-on experience working with unions around public employee benefits to make sure that they do not create budget-busting mandates," Mayor Fiorentini noted. "I appreciate his volunteerism and leadership in this regard."

The Task Force, which includes City Solicitor William Cox and City Human Resources Director Mary Carrington, is likely to include additional members. The Task Force is meeting weekly in order to prepare for the Fiscal Year 2011 budget.

Employee and retiree health care comprises \$24.77 million or 17.2% of the city's \$143.8 million budget this Fiscal Year. If changes are not made, employee and retiree health care will consume over 19.3% -- or nearly one-fifth-- of the entire city budget next year.

*** Latest Unemployment Numbers** Cause for Cautious Optimism. Haverhill's unemployment rate has dropped for the second consecutive month, and is now below the national average. The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board revealed that the City's unemployment dropped to 9.6% in November, 2009. The City's unemployment over the past two months has dropped 1.2%, and is now below the national average on 10.0%. Locally, the Haverhill unemployment rate is better than Lawrence, Lowell and Methuen. The latest numbers are cause for optimism. It is too early to tell for certain, but the latest unemployment numbers, showing a drop in unemployment two months in a row are cause for optimism. The fact that there are corresponding drops in Massachusetts and in the region seem to show that the bottom has been reached and we seem to be headed in the right direction. I remain committed to further job growth and economic development for Haverhill residents, and we obviously need to keep working hard to keep progressing on this front.

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Frost and Snow Season

John McCormack
VALLEY PATRIOT BOXFORD COLUMNIST

New England residents experience Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter in full. Doing your own gardening and grounds maintenance on a large, leafy Boxford lot can teach you a lot about the natural world and man's relationship to it. On this day in January some nameless nor'easter is taking two days to dump a foot of snow. This gives me time to write this column and reminds me that the year is divided into two major seasons, snow season and everything else.

Snow and winter inspire the poet. I picked up a large volume of Robert Frost's complete works recently. He's well worth reading with adult eyes if your last exposure to Frost was in grade school. In the brief "Storm Fear" he mingles dark of night, creeping cold, and the realization of human weakness and concludes "And my heart owns a doubt / Whether 'tis in us to arise with day / And save ourselves unaided." I recall that

exact feeling long ago just after the blizzard of '78 had passed and I stood in my driveway, shovel in hand and waist-deep in snow, convinced I would never get out.

The governor banned driving for a while in the aftermath of that storm. I lived in a densely developed town which had nowhere to put the enormous snow banks left by the plows. One day a deus ex machina appeared: the largest snow blower I'd ever seen. My impression was of a rubber-tired diesel locomotive with a multi-auger blower taller than a man.

This behemoth lumbered down the street chewing up snow banks and throwing a great volume of snow and ice over fifty feet into yards and gaps between homes. I admired the skill and care which the operator displayed negotiating the narrow street and occasional marooned car. Somebody later said the machine was borrowed from Logan Airport.

Frost's "The Tuft of Flowers" isn't about snow but the camaraderie a man turning cut grass in a field feels for the

unseen worker who cut the grass and spared a tuft of flowers for a butterfly. He concludes "'Men work together,' I told him from the heart, / 'Whether they work together or apart.'"

Appreciation for the work of others unseen comes easily in a sparsely settled place like Boxford when you observe the blizzard's handiwork and realize you are, at least temporarily, cut off from meaningful mobility and physical contact. That mobility can be restored by the efforts of countless people: the public works crews plowing in the middle of the night, the miners and transporters of sand and salt, the designers and builders of power equipment, the producers and refiners of motor fuel, and even the meteorologists helping us plan our actions. We have over time improvised an intricate, complex system to contend with the simple act of water molecules freezing in air.

A sufficiently destructive war or natural disaster could disrupt this system; beyond that is the collapse of civilization. Is it possible that we may do it to ourselves? The journalist H. L. Mencken said "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary." The scale and cost of the hobgoblins is growing rapidly. Imagine the next forty years.

The EPA may attempt to roll back the industrial age by restricting carbon dioxide emissions in a vain attempt to affect climate change. That old snow blower may need expensive annual inspections and service by government

certified technicians. Its replacement may have computer controls and an encrypted wireless module for reporting use which will trigger a bill for frivolous fuel use. Evasion will be a federal offense.

Eventually small engines will be outlawed. A certified operator must plow your driveway using an electric plow recharged by a wind turbine. The operating cost is subsidized by a special tax on auto sales and the service charge is a percentage of your annual income. The tax level needed for universal health care, other entitlements, and the national debt interest makes it too expensive to hire anyone for service. Spouses learn to cut hair again. Roving gangs of men shovel driveways for cash.

Home construction stops due to labor costs. Homeowners rent to four boarders per bedroom. The government promotes affordable fifty year 0% loans. Housing prices soar. Nobody drives anymore since the only jobs are in the neighborhood. Civilization has effectively collapsed. The new Green Party administration in Washington congratulates the EPA on reducing carbon dioxide emissions 80%. Congress sets a new goal of 95%.

This future was unimaginable not long ago. Now many of these fanciful events are patterned on policy proposals and reality. It'll be a long, cold winter.



John is a Boxford resident and was vice president of Lattice Trading and Batterymarch Financial Management. You can email him at jmacprime@yahoo.com



By Linda Greenstein

The students at Masconomet High School recently collected toiletries, reading material and holiday cards with personal messages that were packed and shipped to the U.S. Army Task Force 28th Combat Support Hospital in Iraq. All of the items the students collected were packed into holiday care packages to help make the holiday season a little brighter for these men and women that are so far from home this holiday season. The response from students and families was so overwhelming that the storage space overflowed and additional volunteers were needed to help with the packing in order to make the overseas shipment deadline. Left to right: Students Kara Dibenedetto; Amy Griffith; Melissa Wells; Rebeckah Iseman, teacher; Thuy Ong and Samantha Rosenberg sort donations in preparation for assembling holiday care packages that were sent to U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

NAMA: FROM PAGE 5

"We considered the time of year and chose to profile three local gift shops," said Carlson. "We edited those clips and turned it into a single episode."

In addition to a Gift Shop themed episode, N.A.M.A. also taped McLay's Florist and the Roche Farm Stand – both of which were combined into a second episode.

"Shop Talk", like many of N.A.M.A.'s efforts, look to be a re-occurring part of the group as the New Year begins.

"We just finished having our December Networking Night at Chickering Plaza, we are continuously updating our website, www.NorthAndoverMerchants.org, and planning 'Shop Talk'," said Vaillancourt.

"We have our next workshop planned for January 20, and we are constantly discussing new activities to benefit members. I am really surprised at how much we have successfully taken on."

As 2010 begins, there is little doubt that N.A.M.A. will continue to do their hard work.

Interested in learning more about N.A.M.A.? Please visit www.NorthAndoverMerchants.org or email NorthAndoverMerchants@gmail.com. Meetings are also held at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held in the North Andover Senior Center, and all are welcome to attend.

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Mike Miles, Warren Shaw launch personal attacks, but can't debate the real issues

D.J. Deeb

VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

In a recent letter attacking me, Dracut School Committee 'Gang of Three' member Mike Miles offers his professional services as a counselor. The letter is ludicrous and speaks for itself. Unlike Mike Miles and his Gang, I will actually address the issues that he raises regarding my previous column, statements in his letter, and offer insight into some of the latest developments concerning the members of the Dracut School Committee.

First off, while serving on the Greater Lowell Tech School Committee, although I was critical at times of Superintendent Bill Collins. Although we disagreed at times, I still have a great deal of respect for Mr. Collins. Superintendent Bill Collins decided to retire in 1999 on his own accord. I certainly did not have the power or influence to force him out as a minority member of a 6-2 board. As far as the next superintendent, Sheila Herbert, is concerned, I was one of her four original supporters. Did Mr. Miles forget the fact that as a member of an 8-member committee, I sat there and voted for Sheila Herbert for Superintendent 200 times in a 4-4 split roll-call? Eventually, Mike Hayden (Miles' business partner) switched his vote in favor of Mrs. Herbert and she was elected in a 5-3 vote. I supported Sheila Herbert in her role as Superintendent and Mrs Herbert also retired on her own accord.

Now let's consider what happened when I was on the Dracut School Committee. As far as Mrs. Espindle is concerned, we certainly had many differences and I would not have voted to renew Superintendent Espindle's contract. I always liked her personally, but I believe in performance-based assessment. In previous columns, I have addressed the poor performance of Dracut Schools under her leadership and the political nepotism that Miles et. al have sanctioned.

I cannot speak, nor do I claim to speak for, other board members, past or present. Having said that Mrs. Espindle chose not to seek a contract renewal and decided to retire from Dracut Schools. I realize that Mike Miles and his Gang are so supportive and defensive because she hired their friends for positions in Dracut Schools. Do I need to mention names because I certainly can?

Mike Miles charges that I have an "obsession" with Warren Shaw. That's giving Shaw too much credit. Warren is as influential as he is because people like Mike Miles allow him to get away with stuff.

Warren continues to attack me even though I am out of office and spread vicious lies on the radio and I will not permit him to get away with it. He uses his radio show and Valley Dispatch column to attack anyone he does not like or who disagrees with him.

This whole exchange started when Warren wrote an article criticizing me and other past members of the Dracut School Committee in the November 13th Valley Dispatch. Warren, like anyone else, certainly has a right to his opinion (I will defend that right even though he thinks others should not be able to speak/write freely), but he should CHECK HIS FACTS! He wrote that the Dracut Superintendent Search Committee was "headed by Dracut Housing Authority member Ken Martin, who in turn appointed school board member Dennis Deeb to the Housing Authority Director Search Committee."

This is blatantly false.

Ken Martin asked the Chairpersons of both the Dracut Board of Selectmen and the Dracut School Committee to serve on the screening committee, or select a representative from their respective boards, to recommend finalist candidates for Executive Director of the Dracut Housing Authority. Dracut School Committee Chairman Ron Mercier appointed me as the representative since I was Vice-Chair and he did not have the time to serve in this role.

I was NOT appointed by Ken Martin. Instead of criticizing Tom Duggan and the Valley Patriot for printing the truth, MAYBE THE DISPATCH AND WARREN SHAW SHOULD CHECK THEIR FACTS!

The previous School Committee and I have been unfairly attacked and criticized for the process we followed in hiring Dracut Superintendent Spencer Mullin. Mike Miles and Warren Shaw have been championing this criticism.

Unlike the process that has been followed in appointing Interim Superintendent Elaine Espindle, the process that we followed in 2008 was fair and open every step of the way. All of the finalist candi-

dates were interviewed in public televised sessions. By the way, Mr. Miles must have dementia; he voted for Spencer Mullin for Superintendent along with the rest of the Committee. It was a unanimous vote. Now, Mr. Miles wants to rewrite history when it suits him. The fact remains that Mike Miles and Matt Sheehan (along with Bonnie Elie) drove Superintendent Mullin out. The Lowell Sun reported on November 22, 2009: "About a week before he gave the School Committee his [retirement] notice, Mullin was still looking to renegotiate his current contract." What happened, Mike and Matt? I think you owe the public an explanation. Maybe Superintendent Mullin would not engage in the political nepotism that Mike Miles et. al are all about!

Let's examine the process that has been followed thus far in filling the position of Interim Superintendent. On November 4th, Superintendent Mullin sent notice of his intentions to retire effective March 3, 2010.

Shortly afterwards, the Dracut School Committee voted to advertise the position of Interim Superintendent for the remainder of the School Year from March until July, which is when they hope to have a replacement Superintendent on board. This part makes sense.

What does not make sense however is to spend \$5,000 in taxpayer money to advertise the position of Interim Superintendent and then before the application's postmarked deadline of December 18th has passed for Chairman Matt Sheehan to appear on Warren Shaw's radio program on December 12th and state, "I'd love for Elaine Espindle to come back.

If Mrs Espindle wants to be the interim superintendent I am sure she will be the interim superintendent."

According to Roberts Rules of Order, the Chair is the official spokesman of the committee. When Mr. Sheehan went on Warren's show, Mr. Sheehan did not state ahead of time that he was speaking for himself personally. This is most certainly unethical and probably violates the Open Meeting Law. On another note, the advertisement for Interim Superintendent called for a "Minimum of a Master's Degree from an accredited College or University required; Doctorate Degree preferred." There were 11 applicants for the position of Interim Superintendent.

The Gang of Three (Miles, Sheehan,

and Elie) voted against a motion to interview some or all of the applicants. At least four of the applicants had doctoral degrees and prior experience as superintendents in other Districts. Mrs. Espindle does not have a doctoral degree.

Do you call this a fair and open process? It sounds like a bag job to me.

Public interviews should have been conducted and if Mrs. Espindle was the most qualified then she should have been hired. This process was skewed from Day 1.

Then again, The Lowell Sun and Warren Shaw had been advocating on behalf of Espindle from the very beginning. If the previous school committee that I served on had followed a process like this, we would have been criticized and torn apart by the media and rightfully so.

Warren Shaw criticized the fair and open process that we followed in hiring Spencer Mullin, but not a word of criticism is uttered by him now because the person he supported for Interim Superintendent was given the position.

Clearly a double-standard exists here and the public will be made to see it as it continues to unfold!


There are many more issues that I could address, but space here and time will not permit me to do so. Mike Miles, Warren Shaw et. al. continue to attack me personally, but that is the oldest trick in the book.

Forget the personal attacks, let's discuss the real issues.

I challenge Mike Miles, Warren Shaw, Matt Sheehan, Bonnie Elie, and anyone else to dispute any fact I have written in my last VALLEY PATRIOT column or any other. I will happily appear on Tom Duggan's Paying Attention Radio Program (Sat. 10-1pm on WCAP) to debate anyone. By the way, there will be more coming. I am watching!!



D.J. Deeb is a member of the Town of Dracut Committee on Government Rules and Regulations. He served as a member of the Dracut School Committee from 2005-2008 and the Greater Lowell Regional Voc-Tech School Committee from 1997-2009. Deeb is an Adjunct Professor of History/Government at Bunker Hill Community College and an Adjunct Political Science Instructor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He teaches Social Studies full-time at Reading Memorial High School.



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TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

ALABAMA/N. ANDOVER – Dozens of employees at a North Andover newspaper headquartered in Alabama got an early Christmas bonus last month. Workers at the Eagle Tribune were informed by their parent company last week that every employee had to take a three-day furlough without pay before December 26th. Employees at the Tribune told The Valley Patriot that the mandated three days of unpaid leave were mandatory spurring many to start sending out resumes. “We’ve lost a lot of people this year who were smart enough to get out early,” he said. “Those of us, who weren’t, now get a ‘Merry Christmas’ from our bosses that basically ruin our holiday.”

LAWRENCE - Willie Lantigua is great at creating an image for himself as a man of undying loyalty and gratitude for those who help him. But over the last several years nobody has done more favors for Lantigua than Mike Sullivan’s Planning Director, Mike Sweeney. Sweeney not only helped Lantigua over the years but donated to Lantigua’s campaign before the primary election last September. Yet when Lantigua took office earlier this month Michael Sweeney was one of the first people Lantigua fired on his very first day as Mayor. So much for being “loyal to a fault”, seems to me Lantigua’s only loyalty is to his hack friends Patrick Blanchette and Lenny Degnan. And I say the three of them deserve each other. It won’t be long before Blanchette and Degnan end up ruining Lantigua’s credibility in the community.

LAWRENCE - Following their successful holiday fundraiser, the Lawrence Teachers’ Union (LTU) will donate \$2,400 to local area charities. The LTU sponsored the party with Lawrence Public Schools and collected contributions from the Lawrence Administrators Association and the City of Lawrence Administrative Support Staff Association. Lazarus House Ministries, Cor Unum, Neighbors in Need, Salvation Army and Bread and Roses will each receive \$450. Earlier this month, the Teachers’ Union donated \$150 to the Lawrence Eagle Tribune’s Santa Fund, a charity for local needy families in the Merrimack Valley. “This year’s holiday party was a big success,” LTU President Frank McLaughlin said. “I want to give special thanks to Superintendent Mary Lou Bergeron and the Claddagh Restaurant, as well as the many friends of the Lawrence Teachers’ Union.”

METHUEN - The Ranger Band Parent’s Association is hosting a Friend’s & Fam-



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

The good Ol’ Days! - Willie Lantigua just a short year ago when he was using Mike Sweeney and the Sullivan brothers to build his political empire. Loyalty? Not with Willie Lantigua. On Lantigua’s first day as mayor this month, he fired Mike Sweeney and went after Sullivan appointees.

ily Night on Saturday February 6, 7:00 PM at the Methuen Knights of Columbus, Gaythorne Hall, Route 28, Methuen Ma. Tickets are \$25.00 for Adults, \$20.00 for Children under 12 and Seniors over 65. Join us for dinner, raffles, a cash bar and live music from the Side Street Five Jazz Band. Proceeds benefit the Methuen High School Ranger Band. For more information email us at president@methuenrangerband.org or visit www.methuenrangerband.org

LAWRENCE - The next Lawrence Chess Club meeting will be Thursday, 14 January 2010 from 6-8pm at the Lawrence Public Library at the corner of Lawrence and Haverhill streets. All ages, all abilities, all languages and all levels are welcome to play, learn and help teach. As always, it is free. If possible, please bring a friend and a chess set. Remember, you really do not know how to play chess until you have lost 500 games

LAWRENCE – The Lawrence Exchange Club’s Police/Firefighter/EMT of the Year Event, will be held on Wednesday, January 27th at 6:30 at the Wyndham Andover Hotel. Tickets for that

event are \$20. We will forward a flyer as it becomes available.

LAWRENCE – The inauguration ceremonies in Lawrence were a who’s who of local politicians. Governor Patrick, D.A. Jon Blodgett, Congressman Niki Tsongas, State Senator Sue Tucker and dozens of other politicians shared the stage with Lantigua and the other elected officials. Not present at the ceremony? David “Where-is-he” Torrissi the State Representative from North Andover. Maybe his GPS is broken.

HAVERHILL - Effective immediately, the Highway Yard is now closed for the season for disposal of yard waste.

This facility reopens in April 2010. The Recycling Center remains open. For a fee, residents can drop off appliances such as refrigerators as well as tires and propane tanks on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Recycling attendants can not accept cash or checks. However, fees can be paid on the City website: <http://www.ci.haverhill.ma.us/departments/finance/Unipay/unipay-start.html>, or paid in person at the Highway office, 500 Primrose Street, Monday - Friday, (7AM - 3PM). Once paid, residents should present the receipt with appliance on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

LAWRENCE - Violinists Perform for Veterans. Six young violinists from Lawrence performed before an audience of 200, including Lawrence’s Mayor Sullivan and other dignitaries at the South Lawrence East School to recognize local veterans last month. The musicians were part of Community Strings, a string program involving more than 100 Lawrence students that is supported by the Northshore Youth Symphony Orchestra (NYSO). The program is directed by Marcia Lier who teaches Lawrence students at Community Day Charter School, Esperanza Academy for Girls and in her home. Students who performed range in age from 10 to 15 years old and have been playing the violin from 3-5 years. They played America the Beautiful, My Country ‘Tis of Thee, Simple Gifts and Chorus from Judas Maccabaeus. It was a great tribute to be able to incorporate the NYSO’s Lawrence group at this year’s Veterans Program,” said Francisco Urena, Director

of Veterans Services in Lawrence, who coordinated the event. “Working with these students is a privilege and having the opportunity to honor our veterans who have done so much for America, made this a very special occasion,” said Trudy Larson, NYSO Strings and Development Director. “The students were very excited to be included in this event.”

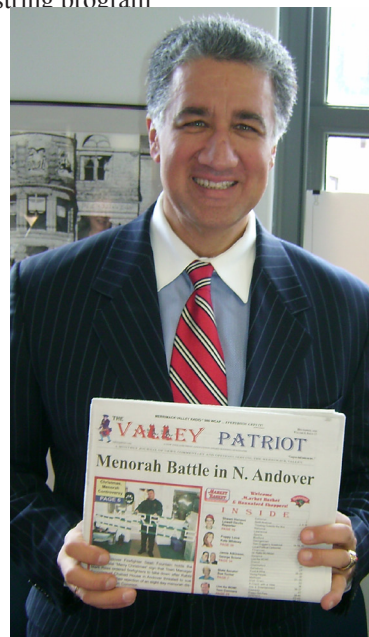
METHUEN - NECC Julie Varney of Methuen, who is the current editor of the Observer, Northern Essex Community College’s student newspaper, is one of just 75 students from around the country selected to receive a full scholarship to participate in the Campus Coverage Project, a three-day campus investigative reporting workshop. In addition, she will participate in a year-long program that offers ongoing training and opportunities to learn from top reporters from throughout the country. The Campus Coverage Project will take place at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State University this month. Participants will attend workshops and sessions gaining interviewing and research skills they can apply to covering campus issues. Additional training opportunities will be provided throughout the year. A graduate of Methuen High School, Varney will receive her Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts with a Journalism/Communication Option from Northern Essex in May and she plans to transfer to a journalism program at a four-year college or university in the fall. In addition to serving as editor in chief of the college’s award winning student newspaper, The Observer, Varney has interned at the Haverhill Gazette and now writes for the weekly on a part-time basis.

DANVERS - Kate Victory Hannisian, owner of Blue Pencil Consulting, of Danvers, will be speaking at the North Shore Business forum on how to present your best self in 30 seconds and write a memorable bio. The North Shore Business Forum meets at 7:30am at the Danversport Yacht Club, Rt. 62 East, Danvers, MA. The \$9 admission fee includes a continental breakfast and pre-registration is not required. For more information - (978) 774-0322 – www.nsbforum.org

LAWRENCE - Shame on Roger Twomey I just can’t tell you what a disappointment Lawrence City Councilor Roger Twomey has been

in the last few years. He is clearly one of the most honest people in Lawrence politics. But, honesty doesn’t mean a hill of

NEXT PAGE





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When Governor Deval Patrick came to Lawrence last month he couldn't find a parking spot so he just made his own, parking illegally on Appleton Way. I'm still waiting for Dalia Diaz to write about this in Rumbo given her fetish for elected officials who park illegally.

beans when your judgement is so impaired that you start making disastrous decisions with far reaching affects over long periods of time. Case and point: two years ago Councilor Twomey was the deciding vote to make Patrick Blanchette the City Council president. Just think about that one bad decision alone and all the carnage that has ensued as the result of that vote. You would think he would have learned from that but this year Twomey was one of the deciding votes to make City Councilor Grisel Silva the vice-president of the council. When you consider Silva's suicide attempt, arrest record, screaming fits at public meetings, personal attacks, abuse of power and the myriad of other public problems Silva has caused (including a \$17 million deficit she is responsible for as the council's Budget and Finance chairman) it is indefensible that a man like Roger Twomey would (again) show monumentally bad judgement and put another hack in a leadership position.

DANVERS - No matter what your New Year resolutions include, if you don't get a good night's sleep, you are unlikely to succeed. Dr. Agnes Jimenez, of Beverly's Majorek Medical Group, Jean Boccelli, of North Reading's, "Your Positive Image", and Ellen Skryness, M.Ed., M.P.H., of Beverly's, Onsite Stress Reduction, will be guest speakers at the North Shore Business Forum meeting on January 22. Dr. Jimenez will speak about how to get a good night's sleep naturally and how the body is affected by sleep deprivation. Jean Boccelli, fitness instruction and Weight Watcher leader, will discuss diet and fitness and Ellen Skryness will teach how meditation relaxes the body. The North Shore Business Forum meets at 7:30am at the Danversport Yacht Club, Rt. 62 East, Danvers, MA. The \$9 admission fee includes a continental breakfast and pre-registration is not required. For more information - (978) 774-0322 - www.nsbforum.org

LAWRENCE - Just when you thought things couldn't get any more bizarre in the

world of Lawrence politics here comes Marcos Devers to make things even more interesting. Devers was the archenemy of Willie Lantigua (da chief) for many years and ran against (or campaigned against) Willie so many times I can't even count! But, last November he shocked everyone when he announced that he was going to support Willie Lantigua for mayor and was even thanked by Lantigua in his inaugural address, publicly calling him "my good friend". Leaving the event, I bumped into Devers and asked him about his future plans in politics. "I am running." He said with a smile. "I am running for state representative." But, what if Willie Lantigua (da chief) decides to run for re-election, I asked him. "I am running. I am telling you right now I am running."

He won't be alone though, the primary elections don't happen until September of this year but our sources say Devers will be joined by Leslie Melendez in the race for Willie Lantigua's State Rep. seat. If Willie runs, my money is on da chief! Though I will not be supporting him.

DANVERS - The North Shore Busi-

ness forum will host a group networking event on January 29 at 7:30am at the Danversport Yacht Club, Rt. 62 East, Danvers, MA. The \$9 admission fee includes a continental breakfast and pre-registration is not required. For more information - (978) 774-0322 - www.nsbforum.org.

NEWBURYPORT - Lawrence author Kenny Tingle will be holding a book signing for his novel *The Girl in the Italian Bakery*, on Jan 16th at The Bookrack in Newburyport.

HAVERHILL - Mayor Jim Fiorentini says he will make job development the top priority in his 4th term.

Fiorentini, in an exclusive press release to the Valley Patriot, said that bringing new jobs to Haverhill and to the Merrimack Valley would be his top priority. Fiorentini said to gain new jobs, he would establish a separate zoning task force to re-examine the zoning laws of the city. Fiorentini called it a first step towards a new citywide master plan. Fiorentini said that downtown, he would use a number of new techniques including establishing a new facade improvement program, and establishing new design standards and zoning laws for the downtown and a new development task force.

Outside of downtown, Fiorentini said he would propose renaming the industrial parks as business parks, and allowing more types of business, including office space, to go into the parks without rezoning or special permits. "The easier we make it, the more red tape and regulatory barriers we eliminate, the better chance

we have at job creation" Fiorentini said. Fiorentini said that in the short term, the city of Haverhill faced some very difficult budget decisions. However, he said that he was convinced that if the city embarked on a concerted push to bring in new jobs, that Haverhill's best days lay ahead.

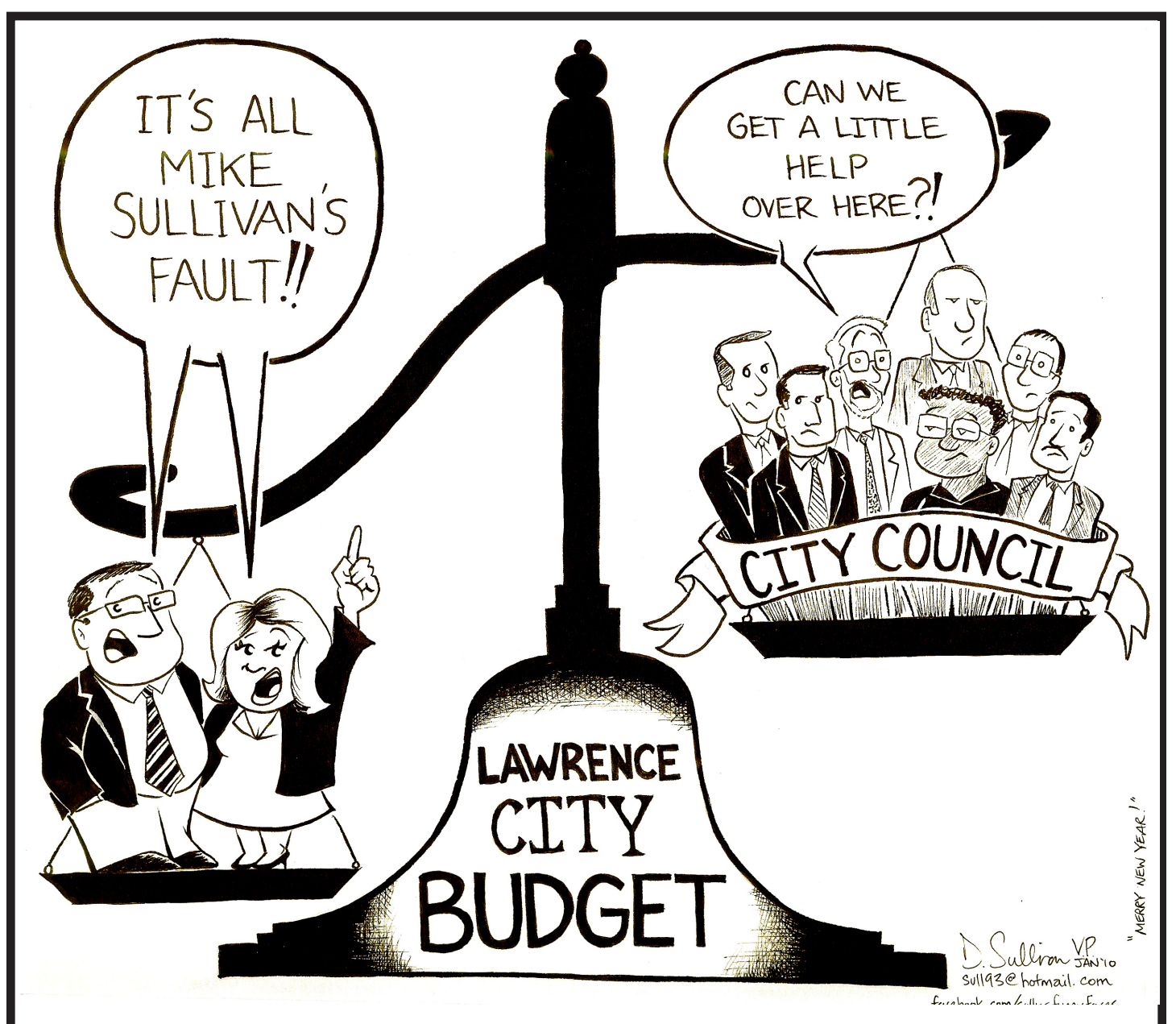
NORTH ANDOVER - Business Building Workshop. The North Andover Merchants Association (N.A.M.A.) will be holding its monthly Business Building Workshop on Wednesday, January 20th.

The theme of this workshop is "Planning for Retirement". Representatives from Sovereign Bank will be discussing ways that small business owners can plan for their retirement - including account set up and management for themselves, and their employees. An independent Tax Advisor will discuss how saving for retirement can affect your taxes.

An independent Investment Advisor also will be present to meet with attendees. The workshop begins at 7:00p.m. at the North Andover Senior Center, and is open and free to all members of the North Andover Merchants Association. N.A.M.A. also holds its regular monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month beginning at 7:00p.m., in the North Andover Senior Center. To join N.A.M.A., please visit www.NorthAndoverMerchants.org or email N.A.M.A. at NorthAndoverMerchants@gmail.com.

DRACUT - It seems the war between Warren Shaw and DJ Deeb has heated up once again as Deeb wrote a column last

NOTEBOOK, page 37



NEWS ITEM: The '08-'09 City Council adjourns without setting a tax rate or balancing the budget, leaving a massive budget mess for the incoming 2010 city council. Blanchette & his budget Chairman Grisel Silva are still blaming Mike Sullivan for their own lack of competence in balancing the city budget



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Q – I am 67 yrs old and thinking about a reverse mortgage. My neighbor says not to do it because the bank will make me move out when the money is gone. Mary S. – Methuen.

A – Mary, your neighbor is misinformed. Get some accurate information about the federally insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) program before deciding. The lender could not foreclose unless you fail to pay your property taxes, fail to maintain your homeowners insurance or fail to keep your property in good condition. Using up all the money has nothing to do with it.

Q – My wife is only 59. Can we still do a reverse mortgage? Howard D – Lawrence.

A – FHA requires that all owners of the property must be 62 or older in order to qualify for a reverse mortgage under the HECM program. On occasion I have recommended that the younger spouse be

removed from the deed in order to qualify but this is risky. In the event that you pass away unexpectedly, your wife would have to repay the reverse mortgage or sell. If her goal is to remain in the home, I strongly advise that you buy term life insurance at your savings bank with part of your reverse mortgage proceeds to hedge against the possibility that you pass away first.

Q – We live in a two family home recently converted to condos. Are we eligible to do a HECM? Larry & Mary – North Andover

A – Unfortunately, you cannot. HUD requires that the condominium complex must be at least 4 units, 51% or more of the units must be owner occupied and the complex must also be FHA approved with an adequate reserve for maintenance

Q – We have a mortgage of about \$68,000 and a home equity loan of \$15,000. Can we do a reverse mortgage? Betty – North Andover

A – Possibly. The amount you qualify for must be equal to or greater than the

total of liens or mortgages on your home. Many seniors do a reverse mortgage just to retire the existing debt. Depending on the value of your home and the age of the youngest borrower, the amount you qualify for may be more than enough to pay off the \$83,000 you presently owe. The result – no more monthly mortgage and no more home equity loan payments.

Q – Do we have to take all of the money that we qualify for? What if we only need \$15,000? Mike - Dracut

A – No, you don't have to withdraw all the money with a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM). You can leave a large balance in a line of credit to draw from as needed. But you might be better off to apply for a home equity loan with your local bank if you really only need \$15,000. Problem is you will need good credit and you will also need to verify enough income to prove you can make monthly payments back to your bank on your line of credit.

Q – We want to buy a condo in Florida

now while prices are low. Can we do a HECM reverse mortgage on our home in MA and use that money to buy a condo in Naples, FL? Sarah J – Lawrence

A – Most definitely. You may use the funds from a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage for any reason. Just make sure you are living in your primary home here in MA at least 181 days of the year.



If you have questions about reverse mortgages, get straight answers from the Reverse Mortgage Guy. Bob Irving is a Certified Senior Adviser & Senior Reverse Mortgage Consultant with First Integrity Mortgage, LLC in Lawrence, MA. He has worked directly with hundreds of seniors, family members & their trusted advisors for many years in the reverse mortgage industry. Contact him with your questions at Reverse-Guy@gmail.com or call him at 978-686-0394. Visit www.rhiring.com for access to much more information. If your question is published here, we will not use your full name.

Landlord liabilities over tenant pitbulls

Sheldon Fine

VALLEY PATRIOT LEGAL COLUMNIST

Can we hold the landlord liable for injuries of a child caused by a Pit Bull even though the landlord is not the owner of the dog?

The law has long held that the owner of a dog was strictly liable for injuries caused by their dog. If a child, etc was bitten by an animal, the owner was responsible for the injuries caused by the animal.

In a recent case, Nutt vs. Florio, the Appeals Court took another view of the law, where a 10 year old child was attacked by a vicious Pit Bull outside his house.

The court recognized in this case a different standard of liability in negligence cases involving such a controversial breed of dog namely the Pit Bull.

The facts of the case are as follows: The landlord owned a four family apartment. One of the tenants owned a Pit Bull which he allegedly found in the woods. On this particular day the owner and his dog were sitting on the porch and the injured child was playing next door in the neighbor's driveway.

Suddenly, the Pit Bull ran from the porch and severely bit the child in the leg. Further facts in the case, the boys' parents alleged that they observed the dog acting aggressively and complained to the land-

lord on several occasions. They claimed in their suit that they told the landlord that the dog ran around the property unleashed and that the dog had jumped on their children in the past.

What does this case really say?

Originally, the liability fell on the owners of the dog who would be liable for the actions of their dog. In this case, the court said through Judge Gary S. Katzmman who wrote for the court, based his decision on a Supreme Court's ruling that Pit Bulls are a breed well recognized as "aggressive".

He wrote in his decision. "While the defendants (landlords) may not be held strictly liable by virtue of (the dog's) breed knowledge of that breed and its propensities may properly be a factor to be considered in determining whether the defendants (landlords) were negligent under common law principles."

"At issue, then, is whether (the dog) had dangerous propensities, whether the defendants (the landlords) knew or should have known about them and if so what actions by the defendants would have been reasonable in light of their duty as landlords" to protect tenants from reasonable foreseeable risks of harm."

The case emphasizes the fact that a defendant in a dog bite case can not end by

summary judgment against a landlord who is not the owner of the dog.

It is a question for the jury as to whether the landlord is held liable for any injuries to a plaintiff caused by a dog with dangerous propensities. The judge in effect said that the defendant (landlord) owed a duty of reasonable care to the plaintiff. That duty to the plaintiff requires a showing that the landlord knew or reasonably should have known that the dog had dangerous propensities.

The ruling sets up a change in the way Pit Bull bite disputes will be litigated. You must look at all the facts such as landlord's knowledge or reasonably should have known that the dog had dangerous propensities. It is a genuine issue of material fact to be determined by a jury.

However, in a footnote by the Judge, that the court was not pronouncing or making a new rule that Pit Bulls are inherently dangerous by virtue of their breed.

Such a finding the Judge said, which in effect created a new cause of action by imposing strict liability on owners of propensity where they are kept, which is the law as to owners of the dogs.

In the opinion of the writer, landlords will have to be aware of who they rent to and what if any animals they allow on to the property. This case deals with Pit

Bulls. What if we allow other dogs who have the same dangerous propensities such as Rottweilers, etc. Once the door opens a crack, another case can open the crack further.

We have now gone from showing a history of a dog biting someone or showing that the dog had attacked or injured in the past to showing a dangerous propensity which will have lawyers looking as stated above other breeds of dogs.

The landlord should check the tenants out and beware of and research the dogs they allow. This puts the landlord on alert and goes beyond the common law of duty to protect visitors from dangers that should reasonably be known to the landowners.

Landlords beware of the dangers of having dogs on your property.



If you have any questions and would like to discuss them in more depth, you can call to make an appointment at 978-475-9886 or by E-mail at S.Fine2@verizon.net. The writer also is engaged in real estate, personal injury cases, such as automobile accidents, wills and trusts, and business law, such as incorporation.

Preserving your assets

Gregory Loosigian

VALLEY PATRIOT FINANCIAL COLUMNIST

Building a systematic withdrawal plan around a sustainable withdrawal rate is a smart effort for making your money last, but it may not be enough. Assume you have a retirement portfolio worth \$1 million. Initially, annual withdrawals of 5% (\$50,000) seem conservative. You may be surprised to learn however, that at that rate there is only a 90% chance your money will last just 20 years. In other words, one in ten people following this seemingly conservative withdrawal strategy could potentially out live their retirement nest egg later in life.

In addition to careful consideration of withdrawal rates, retirees must be aware of the significant risk market volatility poses. Erratic swings in equity-based investments can decimate portfolio values without warning - seriously threatening potential future income since percentage-based withdrawals shrink as total assets

are eroded.

Holding onto what you have - asset preservation - is a top priority for retirees. Though you may not know how long you'll live, you do know that running out of money is not a scenario you hope to experience. If only there were guarantees... The good news is: there are.

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simple withdrawal strategy.

In case of premature death, the Lifetime Income Annuity has a Cash Refund option, which returns to beneficiaries the difference between the initial premium and whatever has been already paid out. If inflation is a concern, an Annual Increase Option can be added to the annuity contract at purchase -- initial annual payments would start off smaller, but increase each

year between 1 - 5% according to the owner's preference. Over time, the total annually adjusted payouts would potentially provide more income than their unadjusted counterparts.

Gregory J Loosigian, Financial Services Professional, New York Life Insurance Company, Ma. Lic. # 183059, NH. Lic # 2017596



Mind, Body & Soul: Health in The Valley

Cutting Back on Sugar and Fat? Don't Forget About Salt

Dr. Rallie McAllister
SYNDICATED MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Around this time of year, most Americans are working hard to avoid eating too many sweets and high-fat treats. While limiting your intake of fat and sugar is a great way to stay healthy during the holidays, cutting your consumption of salt may be just as important.

Americans love the taste of salt, and most of us eat far too much of it. On average, people in the U.S. consume 10 grams of salt daily, the amount in two teaspoons, which is far more than the 5 grams per day recommended by the World Health Organization.

Table salt is a chemical compound composed of sodium and chloride. While both minerals are essential for life, too much of a good thing is definitely bad for you.

Excessive amounts of dietary sodium can elevate blood pressure. For individuals with hypertension, a sodium-rich diet can worsen the condition, making blood

pressure harder to control, even with prescription medications.

For years, doctors have known that a high-salt diet can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease indirectly by elevating blood pressure. In a recent analysis of 13 studies involving more than 170,000 people, a team of researchers from the United Kingdom and Italy found a direct correlation between salt consumption and the risk of heart disease and stroke.

The review, published online in the British Medical Journal, found that people



who regularly consumed an extra 5 grams of salt daily had a 23 percent greater risk of stroke and a 17 percent greater chance of developing heart disease.

Too much salt is bad for your cardiovascular system, and it may be just as bad for your bones. A study conducted by researchers at the University of California showed that excessive salt consumption significantly increases the amount of calcium excreted in the urine, boosting the risk for osteoporosis.

Excessive salt intake can cause your body to retain water in order to dilute the sodium levels in the blood and tissues to a normal level. As a result, regular consumption of salty foods

can cause you to look and feel puffy and bloated.

Cutting back on salt may seem relatively simple, but it's often easier said than done, especially for folks who don't prepare their own meals.

Approximately 77 percent of the average American's sodium intake comes from processed foods and meals prepared at restaurants and fast-food outlets.

Roughly 12 percent of the sodium we consume occurs naturally in foods. Only about 11 percent comes from the salt shakers on our tables.

One of the best ways to limit your salt consumption is to eat a diet rich in whole grains and raw fruits and vegetables. Most plant foods are naturally low in sodium and rich in potassium, a mineral that can offset some of the negative health effects of a high-salt diet.

Preparing your meals from scratch isn't always easy or convenient, but it's an excellent way to help you control the amount of sodium in your diet. Instead

McAllister, page 20

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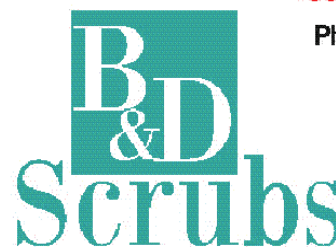
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PHOTO: COURTESY

Ten years and nearly two thousand bears later

LAWRENCE/HAVERHILL. – Ten years ago two sisters Kelly and Kristen Klemarczyk of Haverhill couldn't think of anything they really needed for Christmas. They asked their mother Kim to give the money she would have spent on them to charity. Instead of having their mother simply write a check, the girls decided to help one local organization so that they could make a difference in the lives of young children. They chose the youngest patients at Home Health VNA and started what became the Guardian Angel Teddy Bear Project.

Together with their mom, Kelly and Kristen spent their holiday shopping time that year looking for perfect teddy children who were receiving Home Health VNA care and services. After countless trips to department stores and hours of choosing just the right 'friend' for a sick child, they chose not one or two, but dozens of teddy bears. Home Health VNA nurses then made special deliveries to their patients – a soft, cuddly bear to help them through an illness or recovery.

Kelly and Kristen had so much fun during that holiday they decided to continue their project over the next ten years. Each year they invited family and friends to join them in the endeavor. During their high school years at Central Catholic their classmates helped them amass these "Guardian Angels" and it didn't stop once the girls went away to college. Kelly and Kristen's annual holiday donation turned into a year long distribution of Teddy Bears to children facing illness and recovering from surgery.

"In the past ten years I think we've collected at least 1,800 bears!" said Kelly, now 25 years old. "We've really enjoyed this project and we know that our bears are finding their way to just the right owner."

Her sister, Kristen, 23, always seems to find a special bear amongst the bunch.

"This year my favorite is a bear named Pudding," Kristen laughs as she cuddles the soft, brown, floppy bear. "He'll definitely find a good home. We really take the time to pick the softest, sweetest bears. It has been a lot of fun."

The sisters have given such a generous donation of teddy bears (and other plush friends) that Home Health VNA was able to extend the recipients to include elders suffering from dementia who are in need of a close, comforting friend and the children of hospice patients being served by Merrimack Valley Hospice.

"We've been so fortunate to be the recipient of this family's generosity," said Emily Raymond, RN, Maternal Child Health Manager for Home Health VNA. "Our nurses enjoy bringing a little comfort to our patients who are dealing with illness. We see some of the agency's frailest patients and just being able to offer them something to hold on to is truly remarkable."

Raymond has already started distributing the bears to her team of nurses.

"As soon as Kelly and Kristen dropped them off our nurses began choosing bears for their patients," said Raymond. "It's fun to see our team sort through them and find just the right friend for their patient. We'll be making our special deliveries through the Christmas holiday and beyond."

Home Health VNA is a not-for-profit agency affiliated with HomeCare, Inc. and Merrimack Valley Hospice. Together, the three agencies serve more than 80 communities throughout the Merrimack Valley, Northeastern Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire from their offices in Lawrence, Newburyport, Lowell, Peabody and North Hampton, New Hampshire. For more information visit www.homehealthvna.org.

McALLISTER: From page 19

of using salt, try using spices and herbs, lemon juice or sodium-free seasoning blends to enhance the flavor of your favorite foods.

When you must eat packaged foods to avoid starvation, reading the labels can help you identify sodium-rich items, such as canned soups, snack foods, luncheon meats and cheeses. Whenever possible, avoid foods that are obviously high in sodium, such as cured ham and salty sauces and gravies, and opt for low-sodium frozen entrees and microwave meals.

If you're trying to cut back on your salt consumption, you may want to steer clear of most boxed convenience foods, such as stuffing mixes, pasta meals and flavored rice. Since most canned vegetables are prepared with salt, it's a good idea to rinse them thoroughly before serving them.

Soy sauce, salad dressings, ketchup and other tomato-based condiments are

surprisingly high in salt, so it's wise to use these items sparingly. Fortunately, most supermarkets now offer low-sodium varieties of your favorite condiments.

Removing your salt shaker from your table will make it easier to avoid the temptation of adding extra salt to your food. If you can't bear the thought of parting with your salt shaker, try filling it with tasty, sodium-free seasonings and spices such as oregano, paprika or dried parsley.

It may take a week or two for your taste buds to adjust, but if you stick with it, you'll find that it's entirely possible to survive with a little less salt in your life.

Rallie McAllister, M.D. is a family physician, speaker, and co-founder of www.MommyMD-Guides.com, a website featuring child-raising tips from trusted doctors who are also moms. To find out more about Rallie McAllister, M.D., and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com. COPY-RIGHT 2009 CREATORS.COM

Battling the winter blues with our seniors

Terri Crow Mercier

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

We all know that winter blues feeling that comes over us deep in the heart of winter, usually by mid-January. That yearning for spring ever so strong inside of us. Longing for the sun's warm rays to beam on our faces and warm us head to toe. Reassurance of new beginnings and rejuvenation of all things dormant are ready to begin again.

Now picture yourself a bit older. Add those aching bones, thanks to good ole Jack Frost and don't forget you are now afraid to venture out in the cold, snow, ice and shorter, darker days. Many of our seniors live this daily through the long winter months. It has become so much more difficult for them than the rest of us, who can jump into a car and experience different sights, sounds and stimulation that we all need to help balance our overall well-being. Taking a simple walk down the street with the family dog in the winter crisp air has now become impossible for them.

There are many different things that we can all do to help break up the winter constraints. Call ahead and plan a day to get together with the senior in your life. First this will give them something to look forward to in a realistic measurable period of time, a few days not weeks is so much easier to look forward to. You have already started to lift their spirits. Pack a picnic lunch, hot dogs, potato salad and fresh fruit complete with a checkered table cloth. Sun glasses, beach towels and seashells will bring out the beach feeling. Be creative and set up in the living room or move the kitchen table out of the way. Do not forget our best resource, the children. Getting them involved can make for a guaranteed fun filled afternoon. Set up the kiddie pool, and yes inside the house. A little tossing of the beach balls back and forth will provide an easy way to sneak in the exercise they may be lacking. Those endorphins are just itching to make us feel good. They just need a little help being

released.

Perhaps this is not up your alley and that's ok there are other ways to help. Offer to take them for a scenic drive or out to a restaurant for lunch. Maybe even a little trip to the market is all they need. You can

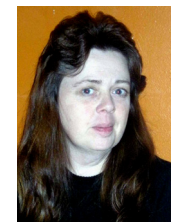


mail summer themed post cards as well just to say hi and let them know you are thinking about them. That is sure to warm the heart. Do not forget about your elderly neighbors as well. They may not have the support that others do. Keep in mind that often seniors that drive in the nicer weather may not be able to do so in the

winter months and become housebound.

You will discover that these are win/win ideas as you are not only helping them feel better but you will feel great for doing it. Understand though that there is a difference between winter blues and depression. If you ever feel that the winter blues are a little more than just that please do not hesitate to encourage them to consult their doctor. Depression is a reality with our seniors that can set in very quickly. It can be treated with a positive outcome if properly identified. Not only is depression a mental health issue but it can have a ripple effect and cause medical issues as well. When depression sets in seniors tend to neglect themselves by not eating appropriately, practicing proper hygiene or taking their prescribed medications. These things can have major medical consequences.

So as I start to plan for our annual Beach Day at my nursing home I hope you will join me by reaching out to seniors around you. Sometimes it is not the big accomplishments we attain in our lives but the little acts of human kindness that we do with ourselves that truly define who we are as human beings.



Teri Crow Mercier is the Director of Activities At Colonial Heights Care and Rehab-where she has worked for many years. You can email Terri at mike3433@msn.com

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Live the WOW!

Get Rid of the Bigotry and Racism! It's Poisoning You. From the Inside Out. Force yourself this New Year to Learn How to Reach Out to People No Matter How DIFFERENT They Might Appear. Just Like Those Who are Living the WOW!

Thomas Connors
VALLEY PATRIOT WOW! COLUMNIST

STOP! Take a deep Breath. Make this the year you cleanse your Heart and Soul of the Poisons that have polluted both through obvious and not so obvious bigotry and racism. They destroy your inner peace of mind and self-enthusiasm. They have no benefits whatsoever. They are like leeches that have to be ripped out of you.

Fear not though. At sometime in all our lives we all fall victim to some form of bigotry and racism. Most of us see them for what they are and dismiss them. That kind of awareness and maturity, I am happy to say, can be learned and implemented. All it takes is a desire to Live the WOW!

WHAT would Jesus Do? Maybe we should all be Asking THAT Question more often.

That simple question, "What would Jesus Do?" was my Mom's way of providing some resemblance of moral guidance when she was not around. It was her motherly way of putting a guilt trip on me; just in case. It was always something we'd joke about as I became a teenager and later in my twenties.

Now, the older I get, it doesn't seem quite so funny anymore. In fact, THAT simple Question can FORCE you to STOP and identify your bigotry and racism before they get the best of you. What WOULD Jesus do?

I don't care what religion you are. You KNOW the answer when it comes to bigotry and racism. We are all created equal in the Good Lord's eyes. And who are we to announce that we are any better than the neighbor, the co-worker or the student next to us in class?

Grab onto HOPE over HATE every time! Hope breathes Life into every cell of your body, while HATE sucks all life out of you till you become part of the Walking Dead! THAT is no way to Live the WOW! In fact, it's IMPOSSIBLE!

No matter how justified you might feel, HATE does nothing but bring you down and destroy everything living inside you. Any feel-good signs that might arise at the moment are just a ruse. Those feelings are short-lived and quickly replaced by an eventual debilitating cancer that continually eats away at the very depths of your Heart and Soul. The two vital parts of you that must be healthy and operating at full capacity in order to Live the WOW! When these parts are unhealthy or worse, being poisoned, all efforts to Live the WOW! are for not.

Hope is the antidote for bigotry and racism. It gives you peace of mind and self-confidence to attack the very nature of their existence. It attacks the threat of un-comfortableness and a lack of surety about your own weaknesses and shortcomings. Hope allows you to build upon the opportunities available to you. It turns your shortsightedness into a positive future filled with many WOW! Moments! Never deny yourself of that Dream!

Suicide of the Heart! Don't kid yourself. It is nothing short of that! And You CAN Prevent it if you try.

By nature, we know there is a Purpose for us here on earth. Some people search for a lifetime trying to figure out what that Purpose is. They go to great lengths to discover who they are and why they are here on earth. All the while, the answers to many of their questions are right inside themselves.

In response to their feelings of inade-

quacies they strike out in ways and against people who appear to be different. It may be a person's skin color or a particular group to which they belong. Whatever the case, there is no basis in rational thought. And although they may harm another with intensely hurt feelings and slights, the person doing the hating always destroys themselves much, much more.

Keep fighting your natural reason for being and you will never live in Harmony. The cruelest joke ends up on you when you actually end up fighting with your inner self!

Ok, Bigshot. Still not convinced? Well, go ahead. Keep posing as an obnoxious human being people simply tolerate and don't want to be around. THAT's what you want to be most proud of?

Give it up! You're wasting your Purpose in life by focusing your selfish efforts on everyone else but where they should be. You, and how you can make this world a better place is where every waking moment should be dedicated. Whether at home, at work, at play or at church.

Exactly Where is your Pride? Tearing people down? Or building them up to be the best they can be? Too many people are so caught up in their own little world they starve themselves of the advantages that are right before them. They ignore opportunities in exchange for the ways of hate and anger in order to hold on to what amounts to cheap rewards. They sucker themselves into false accomplishment and false peace of mind; always at the ready to belittle and shoot others down. The hate they have for others ends up betraying themselves as well. They become their own personal Judas by placing themselves in a no win predicament that is also a guaranteed lose situation. Their self-de-

struction is steady and sure.

Build that Nuclear Bomb inside you. Guess who gets destroyed first when it finally explodes!

When bigotry and racism show their ugly faces for all to see, the real destruction takes place within you. And that destruction takes place day after day, waiting until you are weakest and then explodes with a vengeance. You find fault with every one you meet and every one you see. You are never at peace. The hate-filled world you create is so all-encompassing that it overtakes your entire life. Make the effort and take the time to STOP it now!

American Training is living proof of what people Living the WOW! already know.

At American Training, we learn amazing things from people from all walks of life. Students, Guests, Residents and Colleagues, enriching each one of us with a unique blend of culture, knowledge and creativity. Absorbing this uniqueness gives each one of us a fresh perspective for our own self-discovery and improvement. The result is a more fully developed person built for his or her Purpose on earth. Ready to give Life and the World all they got! Now, that's a WOW!

Tom Connors is President/CEO of American Training, a diverse collection of companies committed to "Bringing Out the Best in Everyone They Touch". He believes in living life to the fullest by making the WOW! a regular part of your personal, spiritual and working life. You can reach Tom at Tom@AmericanTrainingInc.com or by writing to him at Tom Connors, American Training, 102 Glenn Street, Lawrence, MA 01843 © 2009



4 steps to making your New Years' resolution stick

Christy Matta
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

I was never a New Year's Resolution sort of person, until I read a 2003 study in The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions that found people who express a commitment to change are significantly more likely to change than those who do not. Thousands of us in the Merrimack Valley have made New Years' Resolutions. We may want to improve finances and health, spend more time with family or get out of a job rut. But how do you make a resolution that sticks? And where do you find the resources to help you achieve your goal?



STEP 1: Choose Your Goal
Choosing the right goal is the most important step in making a resolution that sticks. If you're not truly committed to your goal, you won't put in the effort required to achieve it. To have staying power, a resolution or goal generally needs to solve a problem or improve your life. Ask yourself the question "what would have to change to make my life better?" If you have a particular problem you're facing, ask "what would have to change for the situation to improve?"

Often you may identify a problem, but be unsure of your goal. For example, you may be unhappy with your current work situation, but not sure if you want to quit your job, go for a promotion or stay where you are. If this is the case, set a goal that will help determine which

coarse of action is best.

Remember, the purpose of step one is to identify a goal that you're committed to working on. Don't choose something that others perceive as a problem, but you do not. You won't stick to it.

Try to choose something that really does solve a problem that you are currently facing.

STEP 2: Explore Your Options

Once you have a goal, how you are going to achieve it? Don't assume there is only one way to get where you want to go. For example, if your goal is better health, will you focus on treating health problems, changing

your eating, exercising or a combination of all three? Within each of those three there are thousands of options: eat more vegetables, cut out fast food, exercise at home, join a gym, get a physical, consult a nutritionist etc. At this point, you want to generate as many possible solutions or routes to your resolution as possible. Spend a little time brain storming different ways to proceed. Try to resist the urge to reject ideas. Tell yourself that "quantity breeds quality."

STEP 3: Anticipate Road Blocks

What do you really think will happen? If you're resolved to improve your health, do you expect to get derailed (i.e. I'll start and then lose interest or I'll become tempted by snacks at work)? Ask yourself how you'll overcome those obstacles. Go public with your resolution, surround

SIMPLE WISDOM

Straightening shelves

Gail Van Kleeck
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

One of us left the basement freezer door ajar. Parker said it wasn't him. Fortunately I discovered it in time to salvage the food. Unfortunately the inside of the freezer looked somewhat like a winter wonderland. I transferred its contents to plastic containers, left the door wide open and waited for the ice to melt. Later, as I put the food away, I discovered things I didn't know were there. That night we ate crab cakes, beans from a friend's garden and an apple pie from last year's harvest. I hadn't needed to go to the store. Everything we needed was already there in our freezer, just waiting to be discovered.

The experience reminded me of a dream of a grocery store I'd had many years ago. The grocery store was fully stocked, but the cookies, light bulbs, catsup and oatmeal were all combined helter-skelter on its shelves. When both my time and money were exhausted, many of the things I needed were still missing from my list.

I remember being haunted by that dream, and by the fear that no matter what I did in life, that some of my needs might never be met. Then I realized that the dream was offering me a different way of

seeing myself. I began to wonder if perhaps I was like that grocery store. What if most of what I needed was already inside me, simply waiting for me to discover it by paying more attention to my inner shelves?

Sometimes in our busy, over-scheduled lives, we forget to base our priorities on those things we truly value and look in the wrong places for the things we think we need. We listen to too many experts. We run too fast. We deprive ourselves by taking on more than we can possibly do. Then we buy more than we need in an effort to reward ourselves for what seems to be missing in our life.

The Hawaiian's say that if it doesn't get done today, maybe its not important.

What if we began this fresh, New Year by slowing down just a little? What if we taught ourselves to say "No" to just one of life's demands each day? What if we stepped outside our door and breathed in night sounds, just for a moment before going to bed? How might our lives be different? What might we discover within us that we may not need to look beyond ourselves to see?

WHAT WE FOCUS ON IS TRULY WHAT WE SEE!



To E-mail International inspirational author and motivational story teller, Gail Van Kleeck gail@simplewisdom.com

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American Tales and Outlaw Dreams

As told in poetry and pictures

Written by John MacDonald
Photos by Thomas LaSure

Marketing Madman and Midnight Poet

TOM DUGGAN

During the day, John MacDonald, Vice President of Communications and Corporate Strategy at Lupoli Companies is well known as a key player. Lupoli Companies is better known as Sal's Pizza, Salvatore's Restaurant and Riverwalk Properties, all located in Lawrence. John is the man standing side by side with successful entrepreneur Sal Lupoli during some of the bigger announcements and events in Lawrence. Whether it is politics, encouraging another major company to make Lawrence its new home, marketing Sal's signature 19' pizza or organizing the recent media circus around the implosion of the one hundred year old Wood Mill smokestacks....MacDonald is involved. But at night....who knew that John MacDonald was a poet?

Well...to be honest, I did. During the summer of 2009, a poem was written by John and then published in the September edition of The Valley Patriot. The poem is called "The Shift" and it was dedicated to and inspired by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. What I didn't know is that John had written dozens of poems through the years and some of them are now published in his book American Tales and Outlaw Dreams.

"For years, I was encouraged to put some of my poems together", said MacDonald. After a recent visit with an old military buddy, Thomas LaSure, John felt it was time to put the book together. "Tom and I talked about the old days, my poems, and Tom's passion for photography....it just seemed like a fun thing to do". John, a United States Air Force veteran of Operation Desert Storm served with LaSure in Tucson, Arizona. John and Tom, who have kept in touch over the past twenty years, both appreciate the other's work. "I worked in collaboration with Tom through emails, Facebook and telephone calls. I wrote the poems, and he took many of the pictures in the book", said MacDonald.

With interesting titles such as "A Quick Trip", "The Ride", "Pub Thirty", "The Shift" and more, American Tales and Outlaw Dreams is a collection of inspirational traditional styled poems that easily connects to the American psyche and the everyday reader. Meaningful poems, combined with some beautiful photographs, American Tales and Outlaw Dreams is available on Blurb (www.blurb.com), which is a website for book self-publishers and is available in soft or hard cover.

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Dr. Rami R. Rustum, M.D. is the Director of Merrimack Pain Associates at 50 Prospect St. in Lawrence. You can contact him at: ramirustum@comcast.net

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Rabbi Bronstein of the Chabad House of Merrimack Valley (Andover), hosted a Menorah Candle Lighting Ceremony at the North Andover Commons with members of the Board of Selectmen, Fire Chief Martineau, Police Chief Stanley, State Senantor Bruce Tarr, Town Manager Mark Rees and Valley Patriot editor Paula Porten who lit one of the candles on the menorah. Members of the board initially denied the Rabbi's request for a menorah on the common for 8 days but in a show of unity and understanding for the Jewish community came together during Chanukah.



PHOTO: TOM DUGGAN

L. to r. Congressman Niki Tsongas, Registrar of Deeds Bob Kelley, Isabel Melendez, Lawrence Mayor Willie Lantigua (da chief) , Governor Deval Patrick, School Committeeman Gregory Morris, City Councilor Marc LaPlante, School Committeeman Jim Vittorioso and Councilor Sandy Almonte.



Valley Patriot Reader in Need of a Liver

George R. Haddad has lived in Lawrence since 1977, is the father of five and grandfather of seven. Last year George found out that the needed a liver transplant from year of suffering from sorosis. Haddad says he got sorosis from a blood transfusion and doesn't drink, "the sorosis has eaten away at 90% of my liver," he says. Haddad has been on the waiting list for a transplant for more than four months. It's hard because my blood type is O positive but even if someone is a match for my blood type my body could still reject the liver I get so it's hard to keep up hope but I just thank God every day I have my family and I am still around to enjoy my children and grandchildren."

George is a diabetic and has been making regular visits to the doctor, sometimes three or four times a week. "I've been through CAT scans, MRI's, ultra sounds, so many tests I can't remember. My liver is so weak that they have to keep testing me to make sure my liver still functioning," he added. Haddad has been a regular reader of The Valley Patriot since our very first edition in March of 2004 and said he hopes one of our readers may be able to help him find a liver so he can enjoy his children and grandchildren for years to come. Anyone interested can call George at: (978) 208-0637 or email him at: ghaddad09@comcast.net



PHOTO: KERRY PARENT

Massachusetts National Guard Deployment Ceremony for the 101st FA, 164th TB & RCAG was held on January 3, 2010. Two Soldiers bid each other farewell and a safe return during the Benediction by Chaplain Candidate 1st Lt. Michelle L. Durkee.

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Methuen SOAR Award

"Academically distinguished, intellectually inquisitive, and athletically gifted best describe senior Katie Oskar," states Principal Jim Guica. Methuen High School is pleased to recognize a student of Katie's stature as the S.O.A.R Award recipient for December.

Katie is a student athlete of the highest order. She truly enjoys social studies and in particular, United States history. She demonstrates her passion for the subject by spending her own time doing in depth reading and study of topics covered in class. The results of this devotion to her study became evident last spring when she achieved the highest score attainable in the Advanced Placement U.S. History testing. That score now enables Katie to count her Advanced Placement high school social studies class as college credit when she matriculates to college next fall.

Katie Oskar's academic achievements, however, are not limited to social studies. She is an honor student in the truest sense; being a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, and History Honor Society. For her course load this academic year, Katie is taking four Advanced Placement courses plus Calculus and honors Spanish. Katie's academic performances in the classroom match up well with the excellent scores she has achieved in state testing. Katie registered a perfect score of 280 in the MCAS Biology test and narrowly missed getting a perfect score in Math MCAS testing by two percentage points.

Athletically, Katie holds the current school swim team record in diving and the



track record in the triple jump. In addition to garnering 'All MVC' honors this past fall in swimming and in diving, Katie was also named team MVP.

Katie is a personable young lady and student role model who has represented her school well. Our congratulations go out to Katie Oskar as the December S.O.A.R. Award winner.

Methuen tax rate approved by State, mayor sends out property tax bills, Attacks Tribune for "misleading reporting"

Tom Duggan

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue has certified the City of Methuen's tax rate as voted on by the city council last week. Mayor Bill Manzi told the Valley Patriot that he was excited to be able to send out the property tax bills on time given the heated discussion and debate regarding the city's pension fund contributions and the budget being "technically out of balance"

Manzi also took the Eagle Tribune to task on his website saying that the story they printed was inaccurate. "Today's Tribune has a story on pension funding by the City of Methuen. The online version has a headline which reads 'Mayor says City not able to pay pension money today', which is not what I said. I said that we would not make the payment today, because it would be financially imprudent to do so. We could make the payment if we had to."

Manzi says he can make the payments but refuses to. "Getting the D.O.R. certification was made difficult by the refusal of the City Council to fund the pension obligation, which put our budget technically out of balance (an 'appropriations deficit'). The finance team worked very hard on this for two days, and I would like to thank Tom Kelly and Ann Guastafiero for their hard work."

"Whatever your thoughts on the City Council tax vote I think all sides agreed that getting a tax bill out on time was critically important to Methuen, and in light of that importance everyone should know that the certification has occurred."

Manzi also attacked the Eagle Tribune (which is headquartered in Alabama) for misleading their readers about a Methuen budget "deficit".

"Contrary to the Tribune editorial this is not a budget 'shortfall' but rather a problem of tax collections being pushed further into the future, leaving the City unable to meet payroll or honor its other obligations," Manzi wrote on his website.

"Under those conditions I have said

that I would have to consider furloughing employees, not to solve a budget problem but rather because the City would not be able to fund payroll. Such an action could be construed as a violation of our one year labor agreements and subject the City to having to repay the ten percent given back by our employees, or \$1.9 million dollars."

"The additional suggestion, that employees be furloughed to reduce City expenses, would be a clear violation of those agreements, since we have furloughed ten percent of their wage base already. That tea would be very bitter and expensive for the taxpayers of Methuen."

"As far as the Tribune editorial of December 23 goes," Manzi continued, "it cites a non-existent budget 'shortfall' of \$12 million dollars. That is the number I cited as a cash flow deficiency in the event a tax bill is not sent. It is not a budget shortfall. The budget itself is balanced, and setting the classification factor is simply an outgrowth of the budget that was adopted. Why the reference to a budget shortfall keeps occurring is a mystery to me. It is interesting to note that Haverhill and Andover have both set factors, and both raised the average residential tax bill. I must have missed those editorials. And although the Tribune rightly notes that taxpayers are paying for snow removal and trash collection it would be nice to point out that we charge no fees for school athletics or school busing."

We provide city wide recycling, and our negotiations for trash tipping fees have resulted in a huge decrease in those costs this year. I have been a careful steward of the public dollar and I have fully participated in the wage cuts that helped us to a budget where we had no layoffs, no service cuts, an increased allocation to our library, and a protection of the services we provide to seniors, as well as being under the Prop 2.5 levy limit by over a million dollars. The budget, and the values that are reflected in that budget, are good values and represent fairly what I campaigned on."

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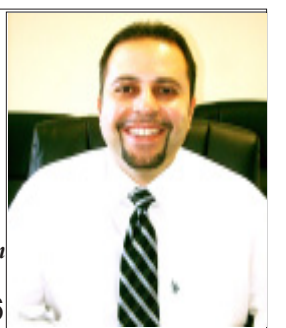
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RONNIE’S RANTS

Random Thoughts

Ronnie Ford
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

I saw Alcalde Willy Lantigua at Carleen’s the other day, he looked as though he just stepped out of a Vogue magazine. If Willy can run the city of Lawrence as well as he dresses, there will be no worries.

Methuen’s financial plight worsens as time goes by. The only way Methuen gets out of this is through attrition or layoffs. Unfortunately, public safety and key essential positions cannot be slashed. Fire and police have to be kept untouched. Department heads must lead their services. The question is how many people will retire or for whatever reason quit; we must not replace them. A good look at the running of local government is a must. Cut the fat out, and do not hurt anyone, just do not replace positions we do not need.

If the Mayor and Councilors put their personal agendas aside, put their collective thinking caps on and do the people’s business, maybe, just maybe we will get out of this situation.

It took the threat of not receiving billions of United States monies from the taxpayer’s goodie jar; to have the Brazilian government abide by international law regarding the parental custody laws. How cruel is that? David Goldman was denied access to his biological son for five years. How sick is that? It goes to show you that money talks and bull manure smells! I think David Goldman is very generous in letting his Brazilian enemies visit Sean. I caution David to never let him see them alone! Now the stepfather and his grandmother (has she a stone heart?) want to have the custody decree reversed in their favor! What gall! What brass! How inhuman!

A leopard never changes his spots. I also wonder how much money greased the palms of the judges and lawyers in Brazil? I hope Sean and his Dad have a long and loving relationship.

Surendra Dangol was gunned down trying to make a living the honest way by an unknown merciless, low life sub human. The dead man’s family has received visas to come to his funeral from Nepali; all except his nine- year old daughter! How cruel is that? Our government doesn’t want his family to abuse the visas and remain here. Therefore, “they” reason his family will go back home. Do Federal, State, and Local representatives have to go to DUMB SCHOOL before they are put into positions of authority? This poor dead man, who entered the US the right way, and has nothing to show for his efforts except spilled blood. And we allow gazillions to come across our borders illegally and drain us monetarily, socially and every other free goodie that these liberals dispense. How crazy is this?

Mail- away prescriptions paid for through our insurance companies to pharmacies are reaching a new low. When you have a problem with a prescription, they have un-educated customer service people answering questions from a protocol list. Some of them do not even have a good command of the English language.

When asked if they know what the drug the customer is asking about is for, they are hard pressed to know the difference between an aspirin and a beta-blocker. They could be dealing with a drug that is essential to that person’s life, and they pall parrot from their protocol list mindless of the anxiety and stress to the person they are speaking to. Even when you ask to speak to a supervisor that person reiterates the same garbage. Only when you threaten are you able to speak to a pharmacist. AND, even then you may not get your problem resolved. It will take someone dying and the family suing the drug companies to make these hoity-toity pharmaceuticals come down off their thrones that they seem to think they sit on. Remember, we pay through the nose for your services. Oh, we lament the departed local corner druggist that you knew personally, and they knew you, instead of being just an Rx number.

Why are we always reactive instead of being proactive when it comes to our travel safety? We always have a knee-jerk reaction to these situations. I am talking about the recent terrorist aboard the airplane that landed in Detroit. Thank God for the quick actions of a few. Now because of this, we have to remain in our seats one hour before deplaning. We can have nothing in our laps. They are even discouraging us taking on carry on luggage.

Now, would you trust your medications, valuables and other essential things to baggage? What about the elderly, children, or people who are just plain nervous about flying? Do they have to sit there jiggling because they have to tinkle? Next, they will be handing out depends and diapers (for a fee).

HELLO OUT THERE! Who is this woman who heads Homeland Security? What are her qualifications and credentials? Put a retired Special Forces or Navy Seal person in charge one who knows a little something about terror! And knows how to think ahead. Airlines put Air Marshals on every plane. We pay enough in airfare to have them on board. Get these political appointees out of sensitive positions they know little or nothing about what they are doing. We have had eight years to get smart, yet we look like incompetents to the rest of the world. Get these nincompoops out of these positions.

Another year is gone, and another decade begins. I hope this next decade brings our nation cohesiveness, swings the pendulum more to the middle, and gives us peace home and abroad. Wishing you all a very HAPPY, HEALTHY, NEW YEAR!

May the good Lord take a liking to you, do something nice for someone today, and we wish you enough!!



Ronnie Ford is a Methuen resident, the former host of the “Hot Line” radio program, a former Methuen police officer and a former member of the Methuen school committee and city council. You can email Ronnie at Radiotalk@comcast.net

The Merrimack Valley Irish Connection

Irish Lore’s and Cures

Jack Doyle, County Sligo
VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

Right in the middle of Conway’s Cross, in County Sligo; across the road from the homesteads of the Milmoes, Conlons, and Lavin’s stood a dance hall called “Jackie’s Hall”, “The Ballroom of Romance” as it was known. It was built by Jackie Conlon himself, in the mid-1930’s. It is said that he made a pulley from an old bicycle wheel to haul the mortar up during its construction. The “Hall” was an important centre for many people during its construction. During its hay day dances were held on Sunday and Thursday evenings with big crowds coming to see the bands of the day and dance to foxtrots and waltzes. Many of the bands from county Sligo played there, including the Derrlylin Starlights and Sonny Conlon’s Band.

The Conlon’s Lough Bo Ceili Band played in practically all the local halls in the area during the forties and fifties until some of the band members went their own way. The Lough Bo Moonlight Dance Band was then formed and consisted of Sonny Conlon, P. Conlon, John Conlon, Alfie Joe Dineen, and Brendan Dineen whose combined musical skills delighted dancers with their melodic strains of saxophone, clarinet, piano, accordion, fiddle and drums.

The band played every Sunday night in all the local halls from Ballyfarnon to

Drumahair* The Shadow of Carran Hill, pg. 118. I personally witnessed the tearing down of “Jackie’s Hall a few years ago.

In 1962 a new Hall was built, not to far from Jackie’s Hall, the Patrician Hall, as it was called would become a social, recreational and cultural centre for the people of the area. The Community of Lough Arrow Social Program was officially launched, (C.L.A.S.P.) in the Hall, and the Hall was renamed Gleann Community Centre.

Oddly enough, Patrician Hall is directly across the road from “Crann’s Pub“, which was owned by Patrick Crann in 1883. my great-grandfather. The Pub is still in operation today by new owners, but I understand it is up for sale again.

I want to take a few spaces to mention “The Irish Cottage” in Methuen which opened recently. Colie Ryan, formally from County Sligo, is the senior owner of the Restaurant and Pub. I know well that he will make a success of his new venture, as he had done while at “The Claddagh Pub”, after all, he’s a Curry man.



Jack Doyle is an author and has published two books: *Echoes of My Past*, and *Medjugorje, Heaven on Earth*. To sponsor Jack’s Irish Craic” in The Valley Patriot contact: Jack5772@comcast.net

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Lowell Devils layout Providence Bruins

Shawn Hansen
VALLEY PATRIOT SPORTS WRITER

In the past month of hockey, the Lowell Devils have been the team to beat.

On Dec. 4, the Devils slaughtered the Bridgeport Sound Tigers 5-1. In the game, the Devils opened the gate first with just 2:28 into the first period as #19 Brad Mills scored his third goal in the last couple of games.

The second period you could call deja-vu as the Devils scored yet again with 2:28 into the frame. This time it was off the stick of #25 Nick Palmieri. Moments thereafter, 7:27 to be exact, #14 Nathan Perkovich tallied home his eighth goal of the season making it 3-0.

In the final period of play, Palmieri finished game with a pair of goals, scoring two on the night.

The ‘Sound Tigers however let out a slight roar as they swept away the thought of shut out when #23 Trevor Smith scored Bridgeport’s lone goal of the night.

On Dec. 6, the Manchester Monarchs squeezed by the Lowell Devils with a 6-5 upset.

In the first period of play, Manchester scored two quick goals from #55 David Meckler, and #53 Alec Martinez to take a 2-0 lead. The Devils however found their way on the board before the end of the first period as #12 Tim Sestito knocked in his eighth goal of the season. Sestito scored again to twin up the game 2-2.

The rest of the game would be controlled by power plays as #15 Patrick Davis netted home a goal to take a 3-2 lead followed by a Monarchs goal 11 seconds thereafter by Meckler.

With 14:24 on the clock into the second period, #18 Matt Halischuk scored his first goal of the season. Monarchs #76 Viatcheslav Voynov then netted in a goal tying up the game 4-4. Manchester would then take the lead with 8:20 into the third when #7 Patrick Mullen scored on a power play.

Lowell matched the Monarchs 5-5 as #23 Michael Swift scored the Devils last goal of the night.

With the clock nearing the end of regulation, #21 Dwight King scored the final goal of the night capping off a 6-5 win for the Monarchs.

The day after Christmas, the Devils gave the Tsongas Arena and their fans a holiday gift surpassing the Providence Bruins 5-1. In the game, #28 Cory Murphy snuck a goal past goaltender #32 Danny Sabourin with only 4:31 into regulation. With a little under a minute left, Swift scored to make it 2-0.

Opening the second period, the Providence Bruins snuck in their lone goal by #23 Trent Whitfield. From that point on, the Lowell Devils showed Providence everything they had scoring four more times taking a 5-1 gift-wrapped victory.

After Whitfield put the visiting Provi-



PHOTO: SHAWN HANSEN (c) 2010 VALLEY PATRIOT, INC.
R-L.. #44 Drew Fata.. #32 (In-Net) Danny Sabourin.. #29 Scott Fletcher

dence Bruins on the score board, #9 Ben Walter scored two minutes later for his 10th goal of the season as Palmieri sank his 10th goal of the season as well with the second period coming to a conclusion.

Swift capped of the 5-1 victory scoring his second goal of the night with 8:49 into the third period. Goaltender #31 Jeff Frazee saved 34 of 35 shots for the Devils.

As of Dec. 30, the Devils are 19-13-3-0

sitting in a second place behind the 23-10-1-2 Manchester Monarchs.

“Shawn Hansen is currently in his last semester at UMass Lowell. He wrote for The Campus Report, and was sports editor. Hansen now writes for the UMass Lowell Connector, the Billerica Minuteman, and the Tewksbury Advocate. To get in touch with Shawn, email him at Shawn.Hansen.sportsentertainment@gmail.com.”



Youk welcomed back to Lowell

Chris Papoulias
VALLEY PATRIOT SPORTS WRITER

The audience in attendance for the Lowell Spinners Annual Alumni Dinner gathered at their tables, most dressed to impress and all waiting to get a glimpse of Red Sox Gold Glove first baseman Kevin Youkilis.

Kevin was on hand to receive the Dick Berardino Alumni Award. Before receiving the award Kevin was able to spare some time and discuss a few of the Red Sox hot topics. First was the departure of Leftfielder Jason Bay, in which Kevin Replied “It’s definitely going to be tough for all of us, Jason was a great friend and a great ball player, but this is business and things happen on both sides”.

Kevin also said about Jason “I wish him the best in New York and hopefully we’ll get to see him in the World Series

someday”.

Youkilis also expressed his optimism about the Red Sox, especially with the signing of former Angel’s pitcher John Lackey. “I think we got a great team, signing mike Cameron was a great addition to the team, I think we have a good offense but picking up John Lackey was huge” Kevin said.

He also spoke of the impact John Lackey would have overall on the team “Where you don’t allow as many runs your offense doesn’t have to be as great, but you have great pitching and great pitching wins championships. For us we got six starting pitchers and if all can stay healthy who knows what’s going to happen.” Kevin spoke about some current teammates saying some of them could improve on their numbers from last season. The Red Sox seem to have a new identity,

a little above average offense, stellar defense, and a pitching staff that could rival the 90’s Atlanta Braves who had Glavine, Maddux, and Smoltz.

When asked about the Mike Lowell dilemma Kevin was very blunt about the situation, expressing how this is starting to become a “common thing, when the last year of a player’s contract comes up there’s always a shuffle and guys are either going to get traded during the off-season or before the trade deadline.” Even if Mike Lowell is traded, don’t plan on seeing Youk playing too much third.

With the pickup of third baseman Adrian Beltre the red sox have secured that spot, so the gold glove first baseman can continue his dominance at the position. Beltre signed a one year \$9 million contract, with a \$5 million player option in 2011, and a \$1 million buyout which

all rests upon Beltre passing his physical. When asked about what he thinks about the Red Sox potentially having a Gold Glove infielder he replied, “We only play the field to hit, maybe some guys like to play the field better than hit but I like to hit”. The Red Sox don’t seem too worried about the upcoming season even if half of Red Sox nation is.

With the signing of John Lackey coming out of nowhere, you have to be a bit optimistic of some blockbuster trade or a big impact signing. Theo Epstein is known for playing his cards close to the vest; let’s hope he is not bluffing.

**Chris Papoulias is a Dracut resident, avid New England sports fan and former co-host of Front Row, a sports talk show on Dracut and Lowell Cable Access with George Papoulias.*



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FROM THE DESK OF MAYOR MANZI

Challenges ahead for Methuen

William Manzi, III
MAYOR OF METHUEN

This week I will have the honor of being sworn in for my third term as Methuen's Mayor. Much has been accomplished over the past four years, but so much more remains, with the challenges facing Methuen as great as any that we have ever faced.

Our financial situation remains good, but with the FY 2011 budget will present us with some truly difficult choices. As elected officials we will need to work together and avoid the type of rhetoric that brings division and tries to reap political gain out of those difficult choices. As we move forward let us look at what we have done financially, and where we go from here. We have just had the 2010 tax rate certified by the Department of Revenue. Our budget is balanced with the help of one year collective bargaining agreements that saved Methuen taxpayers \$1.9 million dollars in this cycle. We also negotiated health care changes that saved taxpayers an additional \$1.2 million dollars. Spending was further trimmed by the elimination of scores of positions that totaled over \$1 million dollars. Those positions included the Deputy Chief of Police, a Police Captain, the Deputy (Assistant) to the Fire Chief, two D.P.W. Superintendents, the Historic Planner, six rank and file D.P.W. positions, and a cutting back of our Land Use Planner to a 24 hour position. For those that say that we have not cut spending or trimmed city government those numbers show how wrong that contention is. We have managed to avoid layoffs, maintain services, and remain over a million dollars below the Prop 2.5 levy limit.

That is the good news. Now for the challenges. We will be faced with a pension liability increase of over one million dollars in FY 2011, on top of the \$600,000 increase in this fiscal cycle. Our total pension obligation will balloon to over six million dollars in FY 2011. Additionally industry reports indicate that health care premiums are likely to rise over ten percent next year. That would be an increase of over one million dollars in expense to Methuen, potentially driving our health

care costs over eleven million dollars annually. Not only are the numbers huge, but the rate of increase in both is simply unsustainable.

As we start the New Year I urge our partners in the State Legislature to act to help us provide a lower cost model at the municipal level. In the area of health care municipalities need the same rights that the Commonwealth bestows upon itself, namely the right to make health care plan design changes outside of collective bargaining. In the area of pensions we need the Legislature to push out the full funding schedule from 2028 to 2040. This would help smooth out some of the enormous one year increases that will be coming down the pike due to losses in our pension system. There is simply no other way

Policy initiatives in Methuen will include looking at new energy initiatives, as well as continued economic development, the construction of a new Headstart Building on Gill Avenue, and the major renovation of Methuen High School. All are important, but I must emphasize the critical nature of the Methuen High School project. The educational infrastructure cannot, in its current state, produce a first rate learning environment for our students. And as we look to renovate our goals are simply to produce a first rate school that will give our students the academic opportunity that they deserve. We will not spend to create a monumental building, but rather to create an atmosphere that will allow our students to compete in the global economy. And without this project we would not likely see State funding for at least another five years or more, putting the High School accreditation at risk and condemning a new decade of students to a substandard building. We can, and must, do better than that. Working together we will see this project through.

Visit my blog at www.billmanzi.com or email me any comment or concern at wmmanzi@ci.methuen.ma.us



Bill Manzi is in his third, two year term as the Mayor of Methuen. You can read his blog at billmanzi.com or email him at billmanzi1@comcast.net

Remembering Clyde Joy

Mark Palermo
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Last January a musical legend passed away in a Methuen nursing home.

He was a country and western singer who got his start during the depression, playing for two dollars a day in a Manchester, NH clamshack. From there came appearances on live radio, and he spent the rest of his life playing at country fairs and small town venues throughout rural New England.

If you are over 55, you may remember Clyde Joy from his TV program on WMUR- Manchester in the 1950's. This was long before cable TV and if you grew up in Lawrence as I did, you had to adjust the rabbit ears just right to pick the station up. Clyde, sporting a ten-gallon hat and string tie, would MC the show speaking in his backwoods New Hampshire accent while his wife, Willie Mae, co-hosted and played the upright bass. And the show went out live. In the early days of television, live meant really live- not merely taped before a studio audience, which seems primitive by today's digital programming standards, but somehow more genuine and spontaneous.

Music took Clyde many places in life as it did with me. I started playing guitar at dances when I was in high school. Graduated to taverns, college mixers, supper clubs and honky tonks- I was even a street musician in Madrid, Spain and played organ in a church. But I will always remember when the capricious hand of fate placed me into Clyde's musical orbit in the summer of 1974.

That's when somebody needed a bass player in a hurry and I got a call. Was I familiar with country music? I lied and said I was. With three chords, country music is easy- I was studying jazz. Anyway, it paid well and I ended up that summer playing in the house band at the Circle 9 Ranch in Epsom, NH- which was owned by Mr. Clyde Joy.

Looking back now, the Circle 9 was pure Americana. This was when the economy of rural communities was sustained by farming and light manufacturing; when most Main St. businesses were locally owned, including even department stores and banks.

The Circle 9 gig turned out to be a Saturday night barn dance. Not a caricature of a barn dance by yuppies trying to simulate the experience of being "country." No, this was the real thing. If only I had thought to take pictures. Rural folks arrived in pickup trucks with the mounted gun racks. Admission was three bucks and you bring your own booze and drink it at wooden picnic tables inside. Sometimes a whole family would be at a table, including grandpa, grandma and the kids, sometimes even with a baby in a cradle next to the cases of beer, a spectacle which



PHOTO: COURTESY

reminded me of the Okies in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. By the end of the night things could get wild, but it was great fun. I remember a hefty, perspiring woman who would climb up on stage every Saturday night and belt out "The Games People Play." (I wondered what was in her life to make this song resonate so much with her.) Then the height of the evening was when Clyde, wearing his ten-gallon hat and string tie, would sing a set with the band, bringing the house down with his signature "I Got My Education Out Behind the Barn."

Clyde was an excellent showman.

We all were drinking, but I noticed Clyde was drinking a lot- actually getting wasted during his performances. In fact, at times we had to tune his guitar for him or steady him onto the stage. Another time, he couldn't go on because his beautiful Gibson acoustic guitar was found outside-smashed with a rock. Something was terribly wrong, and when I found out what it was, I realized it would make anyone want to get wasted: Clyde's youngest son had been killed in Vietnam a couple of years before. And his wife, Willie Mae, had just left him for one of the musicians in his band. Thinking back on it now, I think he smashed his own guitar out of frustration. Can you imagine having the job of entertaining people- catering to the needs of a crowd- when your life is falling apart? But when entertaining is your livelihood, that's what you must do.

But it ended well for Clyde. Through it all he prevailed, becoming a beloved, venerable elder statesman to ever younger generations of country fans. He kept performing into old age, and was an annual feature at Deerfield Fair.

His passing reminds me once again that in the long run, it's not so much the storms of life that come to you, but how you react to them that define your character. Music took him places, and I remember the places music has taken me too-like those long ago Saturday nights at the Circle 9 Ranch.



com

Mark Palermo is a professor at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. You can email him at markpalermo@gmail.com. Visit his website at <http://markpalermo.tripod.com>



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FIREHOUSE IN NEWBURYPORT

New Works Festival 2010

WHEN: Fri-Sat, January 22-23 and Fri-Sat, January 29-30 at 8PM
WHERE: Firehouse Center for the Arts, Market Square, Newburyport, MA
TICKETS: All tickets are \$12 (a limited number of Festival Passes are available for \$35) and may be purchased at the Box Office, by calling 978/462-7336, or online at www.firehosue.org.

The New Works Festival 2010 will open at the Firehouse on Market Square in Newburyport on Friday, January 22 at 8pm with a staged reading of *Dead and Buried*, the winner of the Pestolozzi Award for Best Full-Length.

All tickets for each evening are \$12 and a limited number of Festival Passes (4days) are available for \$35 each. To purchase please call the Box Office at 978/462-7336 or visit online at www.firehouse.org.

The winning playwright, James McLindon, has been in this circle before. Three-time New Works Festival winner McLindon offered to step down when he received word that he had won the top honors for Best Full Length again this year. After all, he had won in 2007 with “Garden of Dromore and in 2009 with “Faith”. Committee members were adamant however that he not do that, fearful that such an action would interfere with the integrity of the Festival and the judging process.

The nearly 100 plays that were submitted to the Festival were reviewed by a panel of seven judges in blind readings. That is, the authors of the plays were unknown to the judges until after all plays had been read by the judges, the finalists had been culled, and the top full-length and the top short had been selected. The

New Works Festival Committee agreed that should previous winners be excluded from future Festivals, then that must be stipulated up front in the submissions policy, but that it would be wrong to change the policy for this year’s Festival after the fact.

“*Dead and Buried*” deals with a young woman’s quest to learn something about her birth mother, a woman she never knew. Set in a cemetery, the play weaves themes of life, death, discovery and loss, around moments of lightness and humor in a way that allows us, the audience, to take our life lessons in palatable doses.

This annual festival continues to foster the development of New England writers, directors, and actors, as it has since 2002. Opening night, Friday, January 22 will feature the McLindon play, “*Dead and Buried*”; followed by Saturday’s lineup (January 23) of half of the selected shorts (memorized). The next weekend, the second of the two full-length plays, “*pudding,*” (written by Michael Tooher) is presented as a staged reading on Friday, January 29. The Festival will close out on Saturday, January 30 with the final group of shorts. For a complete lineup, please visit the Firehouse website at www.firehouse.org.

About The Firehouse Center for the Arts- The Firehouse Center for the Arts is member-based organization located on the waterfront at One Market Square, Newburyport, MA with a 195-seat theater. The Firehouse offers “arts inspired experiences” including film, dance, theatre, concerts, children’s programming, a new works festival, and an art gallery which exhibits works by local and international artists. The Firehouse is handicap accessible.



PHOTO: COURTESY

VALLEY PATRIOT TV REVIEW



PHOTO: COURTESY THE CW

Gossip Girl on CW, Mondays at 9pm

Beth Daigle

VALLEY PATRIOT ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

“Gossip Girl” is one of those shows that I should seemingly like, but don’t. It has all of the elements that I would normally enjoy in a program such as a youthful cast, edgy drama, debatably responsible adult characters, sexual tension and current, albeit questionable, fashion. Yet, despite many attempts to hunker down and give it a go I never actually end up watching it. It only takes about one, maybe two, commercials before I become distracted with channel surfing and land somewhere far, far away from the hub of hot gossip and turmoil. “Gossip girl” takes every aspect of affluent, city living to an entirely absurd level leaving me to feel that it is just too much to handle.

To break it down as simply as possible, there are 6 main characters; Blair, Serena, Chuck, Nate, Dan and Jenny. The first four are privileged Manhattan natives who have childhood and relationship history that fuels endless disputes, romances and scandals. Dan and Jenny entered the scene as somewhat innocent outsiders who eventually get wrapped up in all of the Upper East Side mayhem. Dan began as a love interest to Serena then subsequently became her stepbrother as his Dad and Serena’s mom rekindled lost love. Jenny began her stint as the “good girl” but then turned into a punk inspired social climber. It’s unclear if she is now that wild child who everyone wishes they could be or simply the good girl gone bad from whom it is best to turn in the opposite direction. Either way, her role is weak in relation to

the other characters and her fashion sense is even weaker. Some might appreciate it, but it is far too strange and dark for my taste.

Blair, Serena, Chuck and Nate as a whole are over-indulged, over-styled, over-sexed and, most often, simply overwhelming to watch. I’d be remiss if I neglected to mention how entirely creepy Chuck is. I cannot be sure if he is overacting or if he, as an actor, is actually that severe but his uncomfortable intensity and raspy, breathy tone is completely bizarre and such a turn off.

There is just so much going on with “Gossip Girl” that it is destined to come off as distasteful and generally confusing. I am all for stretching the boundaries of realism in a show, but “Gossip Girl” strikes me as trying too hard to gain response via shock value versus a thoughtful or relatable plot.

I know there are many “Gossip Girl” fans but now, after several failed attempts, I can confidently claim that I am not one of them –xoxo.



Beth Daigle is a freelance writer who writes for several area publications. Beth is a North Andover resident and happily reports on the good, the bad and the ugly in television entertainment. Beth’s background is in marketing having

earned her BA from University of Massachusetts, Amherst and MBA from Bentley College. Send comments to Bethdaiglevp@comcast.net

LIVE CONCERTS IN SALISBURY AT THE TUPELO MUSIC HALL

JANUARY 2010 CONCERT SCHEDULE

Saturday, January 9, 8pm – JAMES MONTGOMERY BAND - Tickets \$20
Sunday, January 10, 7pm – LITTLE FEAT / Adam Ezra opens - Tickets \$45
Friday, January 15, 8pm – DAVE MASON - Tickets \$40 / \$45
Saturday, January 16, 8pm – MARTIN SEXTON - Tickets \$40 / \$45
Friday, January 22, 8 pm – JOE PISCOPO “A Night with Sinatra” - Tickets \$40
Saturday, January 23, 8pm – EDDIE MONEY - Tickets \$40
Thursday, January 28, 8pm – THE MARSHALL TUCKER BAND - Tickets \$40
Sunday, January 31, 7pm – ANI DIFRANCO – Tickets \$40

FEBRUARY 2010 CONCERT SCHEDULE

Saturday, February 6, 8pm – NEW ENGLAND WINTER BLUES FESTIVAL (\$22)
Friday, February 12, 8pm – TAB BENOIT (\$25 / \$30)
Saturday, February 13, 8pm – MARKY RAMONE’S BLITZKRIEG (\$30)
Friday, February 19, 8pm – POCO & PURE PRAIRIE LEAGUE (\$35 / \$40)
Saturday, February 20, 8pm – BO BICE (\$25 / \$30)
Sunday, February 21, 7pm – JUDY COLLINS (\$35 / \$40)
Saturday, February 27, 8pm – TOM RUSH (\$30 / \$35)

Eddie Money Live!

(This concert is The Valley Patriot PICK OF THE MONTH!)

General admission; tickets \$40

In the 70’s, Eddie Money charted with singles such as “Baby Hold On” and “Two Tickets to Paradise.” Money continued his successes and took advantage of the MTV music video scene in the early 80s with his humorous narrative videos for “Shakin’” and “Think I’m in Love.” This is a special more intimate, more acoustic show with Eddie Money and his band.



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SHAWN HANSEN'S COMEDY CORNER

Remembering Kevin Knox

Taken from this life too early due to the horrific disease of cancer, Kevin Knox was known as "The Wild Man of Comedy."

Known to many as "Knoxie" a number of comedians who were close to Knox shared their stories of a legend that will be remembered forever.

Bob Seibel said he met Knox in the '80s, and took in a positive vibe from him right when they met. "I loved him dearly," said Seibel. "He was one of the friendliest, honest, sincere gentlemen I have ever met, and I mean gentle man."

Johnny Pizzi reminisced on how Knox was always there no matter what. He said, "Whenever I needed to do a benefit, fundraiser, whenever somebody came to me asking for help, Kevin was always there. He never said no."

Bringing up subjects other than comedy, Artie Januario said they would talk about Guatemalans, the Mayan civilization, and Eskimos. "These are the things people don't usually talk about, but Kevin knew a lot about a lot of stuff," said Januario.

Telling a story about Knox, Jimmy Dunn looks back at the first time they met talking about golf. He said for his first show on the road, "I get sent out to open for Kevin Knox in Springfield. He calls me and said, 'Pick me up, and don't forget your golf clubs.'"

Dunn said that Knox loved golf, and was phenomenal on the stage with energy that he hadn't seen before.

Paul D'Angelo remembers his friend as a great comedian and person to be around. "I have respect for him as a performer, a friend, and a person for being so brave in the face of adversity."

Greg Boggis reflected on Knox as a comedian who was memorable to see because he had a larger than life persona. "He always made things fun. There are headliners that you love to work with, and he was one



of them. He didn't care how you introduced him. He always said, 'Just do the show, I don't care how you bring me up, just bring me up.'"

Ed Regal said he was one of the best comedians out there. He said Knox would have nicknames for different places, and referred to himself as the "Knox man." He would perform shows in Las

Vegas telling people, "Welcome to Knox Vegas. This is my town."

Regal said, "Every time you were with Kevin Knox, you felt good about yourself."

Explaining how generous Knox was, Ira Proctor looked back to when he first started comedy talking about trying out for Mike Clarke. Having close to nothing on his resume, Clarke asked Knox about Proctor. "I didn't even think he saw my act, and Kevin said, 'He's great, he's great, you gotta use him,'" said Proctor. In a state of shock, Proctor asked why he would do that. "He said, 'that doesn't matter kid, you're going to have enough obstacles. If I can get you through the door, I want to do it.'"

Lenny Clarke said Knox started out as a fan going to shows every week. "One day, I said to him do you want to give this a try? He said, 'I'd love to, but I don't have the nerve.' I said, well I gotta take a break, you're up next."

Starting from Lenny taking a bathroom break from his act, Knox continued to go back every week and perform.

In 2004, Knox played "Chuck" in an episode of Rescue Me titled, "Leaving."

Lenny said when talking to Denis Leary, Leary told him he would like to give Knox a spot on the show because he did such a wonderful job at Comics Come Home.

In the episode, "Kevin, Kenny Rogerson, and Tony V all did this thing where they were firemen from Fitchburg that came to the firehouse, and they ended up burning it to the ground," said Lenny.

There will be another tribute to Knox in the February edition of The Valley Patriot.

A COUCH WITH A VIEW

"2009 – A 50 Year Retrospect"

Ray Shackett

VALLEY PATRIOT COUCH POTATO COLUMNIST

Happy New Year friends. 2009, what a year. But was it really?

Or was it one of those floater years that served mainly as a bridge from one great moment to another. I don't know about you but 2008 was a memorable one for me with the birth of my second son four minutes after the ball dropped. Will 2010 bring the same excitement and joy, we'll have to wait and see.

As far as 2009 it had its personal highs but I won't bore you with those details. We come together in my humble little article to talk about all things pop culture. In that respect was 2009 a year to remember?

Let's explore while we put together a virtual time capsule that we can look back on in fifty years. Will we revel in the state of our escapism fifty years prior or ask for a polite pass from those who wonder how we had so much time on our hands back then to fuss with such issues?

My bet is on the latter. As I collect soon to be relics from past events featured on the covers of People and Star magazines, I shudder to think these stories represent important moments in our lifetime as their media coverage would suggest. Nonetheless, they shaped our current high gossip times so let's get to it.

My first item to add to our time capsule is a single balloon. Someday in the distant future the name Balloon Boy might spark thoughts of perhaps a celebrated future Disney film if you were unaware of the true story. But it's, in fact, a sad narcissistic story of a man's need for fame and fortune at the expense of his family.

Dateline October 15th 2009, Fort Collins, Colorado. A frantic Richard Heene calls 911 claiming that his son, ironically named Falcon, is missing and may be flying across the Colorado skies in an experimental transportation balloon that the man himself had designed and constructed. Through the course of the day a major boy hunt was executed by local and federal agencies. The event was

broadcasted on television for the entire nation to witness as Falcon's parents and brother were ninety percent sure they saw him climb into the backyard contraption and float away.

The boy was found later that day hiding in the garage safe and sound. While being interviewed the following day on Good Morning America he innocently let slip that his parents planned the whole thing as a ploy to get their own reality show.

Over the next few weeks the Heene's were at the center of attention of news programs and magazine articles. Not exactly the attention they were hoping for as they ultimately were charged with a number of crimes that held a sentence of minimal jail time and supervised probation. Who says the family unit is dead?

My next induction is eight baby pacifiers. These items serve as a recount of two major 2009 headlines.

First, The Octomom. This story soars over the Balloon Boy tale and takes bad parenting to a whole new level. It started innocently enough as Nadya Denise Doud-Suleman Gutierrez gave birth to octuplets in January. A celebrated moment as these were only the second full set of octuplets ever born in the U.S. Later we learned that during IVF treatments beginning in 2001 Nadya gave birth to 4 boys and 2 girls in the span of 5 years. With 6 embryos remaining she insisted that they all be implanted despite all the warnings. This led to another 8 racking up a grand total of 14 children! Later Nadya would admit to failed relationships with would-be fathers and caretakers and her own parents, not having a job to support her family and needing her "fans" to send money for her well-being. In the end, The Octomom campaigned for her own reality show.

That request is still pending.

Jon and Kate plus 8 was a cute and heartwarming reality show that introduced us to the Gosselins. The story centered on

2009, NEXT PAGE

Shawn Hansen's Comedy Corner with Bob Seibel and friends

Host Alvin David started off the evening telling the crowd it was nice to meet everyone. "I had a hard time meeting people as a child mostly because my parents named me Alvin and sent me to public school."

Growing up in Everett, David told a story about a business in town that advertises for tattoos, piercings, and more, explaining that he was intrigued by the "and more."

"It's not like it's a coffee, muffins, and more. What's that you say? You want a hook for a hand? Poof, you're a pirate, and more," laughed David.

Talking about when he quit smoking lit up the room in a laughing matter. "I quit for no other reason, because you're not going to believe this guys, but every now and then a lady has... with me without a cash transaction."

David then said he gets tired after a while, and ends up looking like David Ortiz trying to leg out a double.

Ending his night, David joked about being in the Air Force telling everyone he joined because the recruiter's words were inspirational to him. "He calls me into his office and says, 'Hey, Alvin, how would you like to defend America from a really safe distance.'"

From this, David said he joined the Air Force, but had a hard time because they

once made him do 25 push-ups on his knees over the course of a day.

Taking the mike next was no other than Kelly MacFarland. Opening her bit, she told the crowd that in 2004 she was on The Biggest Loser.

"Has anybody not seen the show? It's the show with the fat Americans. Easy to catch, they don't like to run. I was at an Applebees when they caught me. I was like, 'Can I finish my...Riblets?'"

Bringing up the topic of running into old friends, MacFarland said they feel awkward because they either don't recognize you, or just don't know what to say.

"If you haven't seen me in awhile, and I lost a...Olsen twin off my backside, mention it. I worked hard to lose that little Mary Kate."

Before the show, talking to Seibel he said he has been doing stand up comedy for 31 years this April. Seibel said that he started comedy when he was in school and kids would make fun of him.

"I had a big nose, elephant ears, large lips," said Seibel. "I took a lot of heat from my friends because I wasn't the same. I learned if you make them laugh they're not going to hurt yah."

In his career, Seibel has done stand up on cruise ships, worked with Jane Oliver, Frankie Valli, The Temptations, The Tops, Loretta LaRoche, The Pointer Sisters, Ed-



die Youngman, and Robin Williams.

Seibel will be at the Sahara in Las Vegas from Jan. 4-10, so if you're out there, go see him.

When Seibel went on stage, he told the crowd that he is 68 years old.

"How did I make it? Obviously you can tell I had some serious problems. You don't get to look like this unless you hit the concrete on weekends," said Seibel.

Explaining that he would drink for four days, and then take two weeks off, Seibel laughed saying, "I'd eat the gourmet food at the bar, Slim Jims and picked eggs. You breath on people, they'd go, 'Did you fart?'"

Seibel also does a funny bit about his German mother. He tells the audience that when she got older she started getting

smaller. He said, if she got any smaller she would be a Hummel.

If you would like to see more of Seibel's comedy, buy his DVD called: "70 Minutes of Manic Madness with Bob Seibel." Interested in purchasing this DVD, email Seibel's girlfriend at dianareintges@verizon.net.

Besides Kowloon Komedy, enjoy fantastic Chinese food for a reasonable price. They have great chicken wings, shrimp, spare ribs, egg rolls, and more. For further information about the Kowloon, give them a call at 1-781-233-0077, or visit their Web site at kowloonrestaurant.com. They are located at 948 Broadway on Route 1 North in Saugus, Mass. 01906.

Shawn Hansen’s Comedy Corner with Bill Cosby, Rick Cormier & friends

On Dec. 5 at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium, Bill Cosby entertained a full house for nearly two hours.

Before the actual show began, a fan expressed her feelings for Cosby hollering, “We love you Bill.” In response, Cosby said, “Not so fast.”

Telling the audience that he is 72 years old and has been performing for 47 years, Cosby said, “I started when I was young, and now I’m old, and what happened was somewhere around my seventh year of performing, I noticed that people where sitting down, and I was standing.” With that said, Cosby sat on a chair through most of the show.

He talked about when he went to Reno, Nevada and bumped into a couple with a bucket full of quarters for gambling purposes, Cosby said they blurted out, “This is the luckiest day of our lives. Today, we got married, she hit the jackpot for \$500, then we see you.”

Jumping over to the China Blossom on Dec. 18 in North Andover for the main event, the comedy show, I enjoyed a fine meal of Chinese food.

Aside my favorite, General Tso’s Chicken, which was absolutely mouth watering, I had the Crab Rangoon, Chicken Fingers, and (more) General Tso’s Chicken. The food at the China Blossom is scrumptious and I recommend everyone goes there, not today, not tomorrow, but now!

After dinner, the show began with host Johnny Joyce talking to a group of 20 or so ambulance workers who were drinking it up, having a good time in the corner of the room.

Telling everyone to call an ambulance when your drunk, Joyce said if you feel sick, or have chest pains call an ambulance company and tell them where you are, and to pick you up.

“Before that, call AAA, and have your car towed so you can get in the ambulance. There’s no activity going on, you didn’t smash into the guard rail, a cop didn’t show up,” said Joyce explaining to call any company you can. “Have the ambulance take you home, pay the 620,

it’s cheaper then the 3,000 you’ll pay for driving drunk.”

Taking the mike next was no other then Steve Albert who brought up a story of working for a homeless shelter in Lowell even though he felt no one thought he worked there.

“At the end of the day, we’d all get off the couch, I’d get paid, and they’d get really, really confused,” said Albert.

Kris Earle then jogged in dressed as Santa Claus giving everyone Candy Canes. In the holiday spirit, Earle sang a song called, “When I rode a sleigh”

to the song “When I ruled the world” by Cold Play.

“I used to ride a sleigh, had to work for only one day. Now in the morning I’ll need a loan to keep the village I own. One moment the world loved me, Hanukkah Harry had nothing on me.”

Following Earle’s song, Rick Cormier spun the room in a new direction firing off one-liners left and right.

Talking about relationships, Cormier said, “I fell in love with this girl they called Corn Chip. I found out later that it was because she was Frito-lay.”

Recently getting out of a marriage he said his ex-wife is a housekeeper who got to keep his car too.

“We fought all the time. One time she told me to zip her up, I said, sure, where’s the body bag? I’m kidding. I put my wife on a pedestal. Of coarse, I kicked it away when the noose was in place.”

In the holiday spirit like Earle, Bob Gautreau came to the stage dressed as a Christmas tree singing a song.

“Every year when Christmas comes, something happens to me. You know its like I’m decorated like a Christmas tree. Warning, when I plug in, don’t throw water at me.”

Impersonating Robert DeNiro doing the “DeNiro face,” Gautreau said DeNiro hates Christmas and would say, “Merry Christmas, happy holidays, jolly holiday and all that...bull... Everybody is always happy. What if you just broke up with somebody and you aint too...happy about it?”



BROWN: FROM PAGE 6

until Democratic Governor Duval Patrick showed up and sucked the life out of the entire DCU Center. I won’t go so far as to blame all of our woes on the Democratic Party but, when you have a lock on just about every level of government in the Commonwealth, you have to accept the majority of the blame. This political monopoly needs to end. Massachusetts voters need to stop blindly following the same party that year after year, decade after decade, consistently fails them. Electing Scott Brown to the U.S. Senate certainly won’t solve our state or national problems overnight, but it’s a step in the right direction.

Sidenote: Brown’s complete biography and positions on the major issues can be

found on his official campaign website: www.brownforussenate.com. He has an interesting story and a talented family (his wife is WCVB TV’s Gail Huff, and one of his daughters is American Idol semi-finalist Ayla Brown).

Randall H. Miller is an American college educator/blogger. He is also a former U.S. Army officer (82nd Airborne) with a M.A. in Diplomacy (focusing on International Terrorism) and a B.A. in Criminal Justice. The words and ideas expressed here are his own and not those of his employers or affiliated organizations. His blog address is www.Randall-Miller.com.



AVATAR: A Movie Review

Ben Flagg
VALLEY PATRIOT MOVIE REVIEWER

To give you an idea about how I felt about this movie, I will tell you this, I went into this with the highest expectations possible, and it was better than I thought it was! I went into this with high expectations for a multitude of reasons, namely because it was directed by movie making master James Cameron. He created The Terminator, Rambo First Blood Part II, Aliens, Terminator 2, and Titanic (the latter of which is the highest grossing movie of all time). But this is not about those movies; it is about the wonder that is Avatar.

I have been asked by so many people if this is an animated film, the answer to which is a big, resounding NO. It’s using motion capture, then sort of copying and pasting the actor’s exact movements onto those of another body. This allows the movements of the characters to look more realistic than ever. The only thing that’s truly animated is the scenery, which is oh-my-lord fantastic. The creature designs are amazing as well, ranging from a sloth-like panther, a shining, crystal covered rhino-type creature, and a horse with seemingly no face that can read thoughts. The most effective part of all this scenery and these creatures is when the movie is taking place at night, because pretty much everything on that planet glows different neon colors and it’s just plain beautiful.

Plot wise, the movie is kind of average. It’s not necessarily bad, it’s just something we’ve all seen before. If you’ve seen Dances with Wolves, the core stories are pretty much exactly the same. The plot centers around a paraplegic marine in the

year 2154 (played by Sam Worthington) who is stationed on an alien planet called Pandora, home to the 10 foot tall, blue, sentient humanoids known as the Na’vi. The humans want to mine the planet for its resources, but the Na’vi refuse to move. Wanting to avoid bloodshed, the humans create the Avatar program. The Avatar program is a program in which human minds are basically transferred into the body of a Na’vi. Sam is sent into the Avatar program on the promise that if he gets them to move out of their village, he will get his legs back. After watching it, you can’t help but think of Dances with Wolves, which I can’t really tell you about because I don’t want to ruin the movie.

Finally, the cherry on top of the sundae is the supporting characters, all of which are very interesting, some of which more so than the main character. You have Zoe Saldana playing a female Na’vi whom Sam befriends, Sigourney Weaver as the hard-nosed female scientist, and (my personal favorite) Stephen Lang as the psychotic military Colonel, who has some of the best lines in the movie (“Beyond that fence, every living thing that crawls, flies, or squats in the mud wants to kill you and eat your eyes for jujubes”).

Overall, this is the best movie of the year with amazing effects, a perfectly paced (but unoriginal) plot, and excellent acting which I can’t wait to go see again.



Ben Flagg is a freshman at Methuen High School. He participates in the JROTC and Drill Team. He also enjoys playing the bass guitar in his spare time.

RESOLUTION: FROM PAGE 21

yourself with supportive friends and family, break your goal into small accomplishments, build rewards into your progress and remind yourself of why you originally made the resolution. If you find yourself coming up with reasons why every course of action is doomed to fail, look at why you’re throwing roadblocks in the way.

STEP 4: Get Specific and Get Started

Go over where, when and how you’ll do something differently in your day-to-day life. Get detailed with your plans. With the example of improving your health, you may decide to eat vegetables as snacks. You’ll need to make sure that you shop regularly, buy vegetables and have time for vegetable preparation after grocery shopping.

Remember: people who achieve their goals are not the people who face the least amount of failure. They are the people who fail and get up and try again. If you get off track, don’t decide you’ve failed. Get recommitted and back into action.

FINDING RESOURCES

There are many resources in the local

area to help you towards your goal. The following are a few that might help you get over the hurdles.

Jenelle Nadeau, certified personal trainer, Personalized Physique (www.thepersonalizedphysique.com); Heather Maietta at Career In Progress (www.careerinprogress.com); Maureen Weisner, Life Coach Coaching & Consulting, 978-409-1106 ~ 978-409-1107 fax, www.linkedin.com/in/maureenweisner; Fashion Coach Susan Kanoff, www.agreatnewlook.com; Maureen Campaiola, Business Coach www.daretobephenomenal.com.



Christy Matta M.A. is a DBT trainer, consultant and freelance writer. She is intensively trained in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and has designed and provided clinical supervision to award winning DBT residential programs. You can find more tips and strategies for managing stress on her blog www.christymatta.wordpress.com.

2009: FROM PAGE 30

a family that included twin girls and a set of sextuplets. After 5 seasons the show came to screeching halt when Jon and Kate put themselves through a very public divorce that was covered through every media source throughout most of the year. This could soon be known as the most painful, for them and us, celebrity divorce on record.

As I realize how long winded I can be I notice how empty our time capsule is. Time for another rapid-fire conclusion to my column. In 50 years feel free to Google, or whatever the future equivalent may be, these memorable items from

2009. Test your short-term memory now and guess what they correspond to.

A single white glove. A White House cocktail napkin. A tourist t-shirt that reads “Doin’ It In Alaska”. A work application from World Wide Pants Inc. And last but not least, the event that rounded out the year that was... A broken 9 iron. Happy New Year everyone.



Ray Shackett radio veteran and fan of all things entertainment. For questions, comments or suggestions, email Ray at kidcruise2003@yahoo.com

Needed: Someone to Care

Imagine a sixteen year old girl spending the last three years in foster care. Her childhood, spent with her mom, moving from one bad situation to the next, never knowing what tomorrow would bring.

At the age of 13, she entered the foster care system when her mom was arrested. Her first few foster homes didn't work out so well; she kept running away.

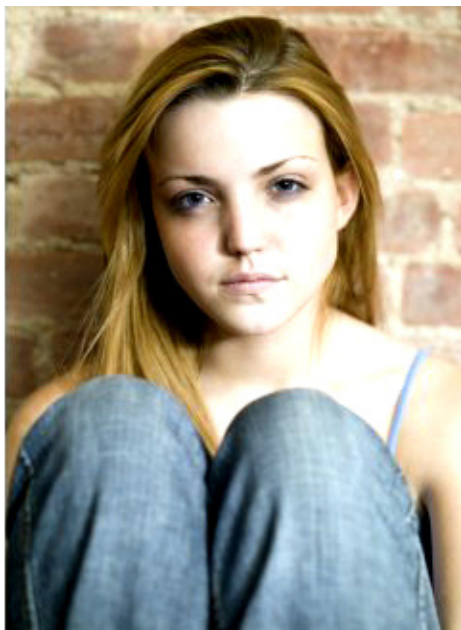
She was scared and hurt. She was looking for happiness but had no idea what that meant. She finally moved in with a Dare Family Services therapeutic foster family that specialized in working with troubled teens.

Although the first few months were trying for everyone involved, something finally clicked for her. She realized that this new family of hers really cared about her, no matter how much she tried to act out. They made sure that there was always food on the table. They helped her with her school work and got her interested in after-school activities.

They asked what was important to her and made her feel like a real person. She started to open up to this family, realizing that they were there for the long haul. Her foster family has legal guardianship, so when she turns 18, she doesn't have to worry about "aging out" of the system and becoming homeless like so many other teens in foster care.

This is an example of one of the few lucky foster teens who found a family to walk beside her throughout her life.

"The majority of youth who come into care are teens, and it is especially important that we provide them with the skills necessary to lead productive and successful adult lives," said Sharon Mainguy,



director of home finding for Dare Family Services. "Just because the kids are older doesn't mean they stop needing a parent figure or a family in their lives."

The demand for truly caring adults to become foster parents is overwhelming, especially for older foster youth. Opening your home and heart to a child as a foster parent can help heal broken young lives and restore their trust in adults. Foster parents, with the training and support of the Dare team, guide the child or teen through the healing process.

Call now to find out how you can help. Spread the joy of the holiday season and help give foster youth a chance. If you live in the Northeast Massachusetts area and would like more information on becoming a foster parent, please call Dare Family Services at (978) 750-0751 or visit www.darefamily.org.

Stay At Home Dads

A message for The Working Women

Pete Baylies

VALLEY PATRIOT DAD EXPERT

As important as it is for you to communicate your work schedule at home, you must also relay the message to your boss and co-workers.

Yes, you may have a demanding job that requires you to stay at the office longer than expected. At times there are emergencies and this cannot be avoided but if you get too obsessed with your work, you may find yourself doing some tasks after your shift is over that can wait for tomorrow.

Over time you may find that almost any chore can feel like an emergency and it can hard to get away from your desk while your husband is fretting at home. Don't be afraid to tell your boss what expectations you have regarding leaving work for home. Remember many bosses have families too and will sympathize for your cause.

Keeping your work at a reasonable pace can be good for your health too. The National Institutes for Health released a study in April of 2002 that compared women in high-pressure-cooker jobs with women in low-authority job. The high-powered jobs had a three times greater risk of heart disease.

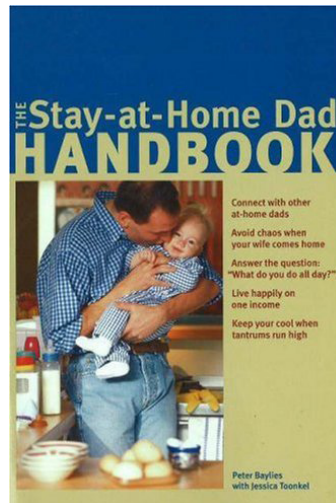
Take Mike Stillwell's wife who worked at a frenzied pace while a senior executive WorldCom. She was inundated with high energy work, phone calls and e-mails, nights and weekends. When WorldCom went bust she landed a job at Fannie Mae, a company that not only supported her family life but encouraged it. Mike notes, "When I left my job to be home with the

kids, my wife's realization hit her hard that she was the breadwinner, she had to be careful that she did the best job and spent many hours at her work. When she changed jobs to Fannie Mae, they actually urged her to spend more time with the kids. She was able to volunteer for her

daughter's soccer team. And to show support the company donated water and granola bars to the entire team. (Fannie Mae was named by Working Mother Magazine in 2002 as one of the top ten best companies for working mothers and has been on the top 100 lists 9 times before that.)

While most moms are not able to control their office cultures, the more balanced your work and family life is, the better

and more productive you will feel. Sometimes moms come home in full-work mode and continue to act with their children and husbands as they do with their co-workers. For example, one at-home dad complained that his wife who was a project manager continued to delegate to him and his children when she got home. She was still in work mode and needed the cooling off period. He notes "If she means taking an extra walk around the block before you walk in the door that's what I wish she would do."



Kid Corner with Morgan Cotnoir

My Grammy

My grandmother is Nancy Cotnoir. She is a kind and loving woman who has a great sense of humor. One of the many things I love to do with her is bake. I sleep over her house almost every weekend. The last time I did, we baked dough-



nuts. She is also going to teach me how to use a sewing machine. I can't wait!

I like to think that I'm like my grandmother when she was little. I hope when I'm a grandmother, I'll be as good at it as she is!

Peter Baylies lives in North Andover and is the author of the *At-Home Dad Handbook*, provides free resources for stay-at-home dads at athomedad.com. E-mail: athomedad@aol.com

com for more information.

Roar about Reading!

Two local award winning organizations collaborate to create a FREE event for children in the community.

LAWRENCE – On January 23, 2010 Little Sprouts and Imagine That will be collaborating and hosting the "Roar about Reading" Literacy Event for the community. This event was created to help increase the awareness of the importance of incorporating literacy in a child's development, even if the child is an infant.

Little Sprouts Inc. recently was awarded for the 3rd time in a row the "Early Reading First Grant" by the U.S. Department of Education. This grant is worth 4.4 million dollars and offers a priceless opportunity to increase an amazing literacy experience in preschool classrooms throughout the Little Sprouts schools. This grant also allows Little Sprouts to help host great literacy events for the communities such as this "Roar about Reading" Literacy Event.

Imagine That, the interactive playspace in Lawrence, was happy and honored to be able to host the "Roar about Reading" Literacy Event. Imagine That has over 10 interactive & educational stations for children. One particularly dedicated to literacy. This station was created in partnership with WGBH's award winning "Between the Lions" television show. Families can find not only books, writing utensils and various literacy tools, but after January 23rd, this "Between the Lions" station

will also contain interactive literacy videos from the "Between the Lions" show. "We are excited to reveal this new portion of our "Between the Lions" station here at Imagine That," stated Jennifer Silver, Creativity Director of Imagine That. "Children and their families will now have the opportunity to integrate literacy knowledge through interactive media."

Doors are opened at 10:00 am on January 23, 2010 and admission is FREE for all. Please join us in various literacy activities and games. We will also be having a special guest appearance from Leona the lion from "Between the Lions" herself!

For more information on the "Roar about Reading" Literacy event please check out www.imaginethat.com.

About Little Sprouts Inc.: Little Sprouts has been a leader in providing award winning early education since 1982. A group of humanitarians that believe in the power of literacy to change the world; social, emotional, intellectual and physical literacy for children, youth, teachers and families. Little Sprouts believes in the commonality in humanity. We embrace that unity is best achieved by celebrating diversity. Little Sprouts has 7 schools in Massachusetts supporting families that reflect 32 cultures speaking 23 languages from all walks of social, economic, religious & ethnic backgrounds. To learn more about how you can join us in making the world a better place, visit us at www.littlesprouts.com

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PUPPY LOVE! with Kate Whitney

Help us save abused and neglected puppies!

Kate Whitney
VALLEY PATRIOT PUPPY COLUMNIST

Happy New Year everyone!
I hope your 2009 was a year to remember and 2010 will be just as memorable! I have a few things that I wanted to discuss this month. One has to do with buying dogs as gifts and the other is a plea for your help regarding my rescue.

I know I've written about the topic of buying dogs as gifts before, but it's something that really bugs me, so I wanted to touch base on it again.

Under NO circumstances, should you ever get a dog as a gift for someone.

Getting a dog is a very personal and important decision that should only be made by the party who will be caring for the dog. To surprise someone with a new puppy, although a cute idea, is the worst gift you could give.

There are many different types of dogs (my favorite of course are mutts from shelters) each with their own characteristics; ranging from activity level, to size, to disposition.

Getting a dog is a very big step, and should only be made after many months of searching and preparation. People think that giving a puppy as a gift is a cute idea; and it is.

Except when the novelty wears off and the person is left with vet bills, boarding bills, food bills, doggie daycare/dog walker bills, etc.

Getting a dog is a great thing, only if you are ready. People need to be aware of the expenses that come along with properly owning a dog. Taking your dog to the vet is not cheap; nor is the monthly dosage for flea/tick preventative and heartworm pills. A good brand of dog food comes along with a pretty high price tag. Having a dog is like having a child. They need



to be seen regularly by a doctor and you only want to feed them healthy food. This type of responsible ownership isn't cheap. Make sure you are getting a dog for the right reasons. A dog is a commitment that could last over 15 years.

Make sure that you are prepared for this. A dog isn't something that you get and then a few months or years later, dispose of it when something better comes around.

I write this from the deepest part of my heart. I don't mean to offend anyone who has given a dog as a gift before or who has given up a dog. But working in dog rescue, I see so many dogs dumped in shelters just because they became an "inconvenience" to their families. People surrender their dogs for many different

reasons, but there are a few that are very common.

If you have to move, try a little harder to find a pet friendly place, they are out there. If you have a baby, do your best to incorporate your new addition into your pet friendly home. Your dog was there first, and it's unfair to kick your dog to the curb just because a baby is in the house. You might need to hire a trainer to help teach your dogs some manners. It's important to start working with

your dog early on so they aren't totally shocked when the little one comes home. If you think it's impossible to have both, think again. Plenty of people have babies and dogs; it just takes a little extra time to adjust.

With all that said, please think twice about surprising someone with a cute little puppy for their birthday, Christmas, Valentine's Day, or whatever special day you celebrate. Hopefully now you realize how the decision to get a dog is very personal



PHOTO: COURTESY

The Valley Patriot's PuppyGirl, Kate Whitney with Zoey, the latest of Kate's foster puppies and Honey, Kate's newest adopted puppy. Zoey has been adopted by her new family in Melrose. Please adopt a shelter dog in the new year! For more information you can email One Tail at a Time at onetail@comcast.net

and shouldn't be sprung upon an unsuspecting person.

Now on another note....the rescue that I volunteer for, One Tail at a Time Rescue, out of Haverhill, MA, needs your help. We have incurred a numerous amount of vet bills over the past year and we are asking for help to get some of them paid off. If anyone would like to donate to a great cause, please consider making a donation to this rescue. I can assure you that your donations will go directly towards saving dogs; not towards someone's salary or a utilities bill. We are an all volunteer rescue that relies on foster homes for our dogs.

Even if you can just donate \$1, please

don't think it won't help. Any amount will be greatly accepted, and I thank you in advance. Please make checks out to One Tail at a Time Rescue and mail them to PO Box 155 Boxford, MA. 01921. If you have any questions about the rescue, please email me at kwsingrite@aol.com

I wish all of you and your furry friends a very happy, safe, and prosperous 2010!

Kate Whitney is a Boxford resident and owner of the Swingrite Corporation. If you are interested in adopting a puppy or becoming a foster parent to a puppy waiting for a home you can email Kate at Kwsingrite@aol.com

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Doggy daycare dilemma

Tracey Zysk

VALLEY PATRIOT DOGGIE COLUMNIST

This past October a horrible accident happened at a doggie day care in Stoughton MA. My heart absolutely sunk when I watched the news.

"Dog gets killed at Doggie Daycare"

I immediately thought to myself "what happened and how did this happen?" After watching the news it was quite obvious this was a situation that could have been handled very differently. A tiny Shih Tzu puppy was left alone unsupervised with two greyhounds and a golden retriever. The dog was mauled and killed instantly.

May I repeat "Left alone, mauled and killed instantly"

Where was the supervision? Who was in charge? That is the first round of questions and ones that have kept the Stoughton Police department busy with their investigation.

The second question is "why isn't this industry regulated?" by definition a doggie day care is a facility or a home where you bring your dog to that location for pet sitting. There are usually several other dogs on the premises which consist of all different sizes, temperaments and breeds.

Just like child care, pet care is an industry that is growing and an industry that really has not been affected by the economy. Also just like child care, pet care is an industry that is built totally on TRUST. You are entrusting that this facility is providing the best and safest environment possible for your dog, your companion, your family member.

However it is not REGULATED! There is nothing within the Commonwealth that oversees the handling of these facilities. Each town may have their own ordinance on what is required to run a doggie day-care. For example: some may require the facility to be on a certain amount of acres, some may require a cap on the number of animals allowed under one roof and some may require a staff member to dog ratio but there are no State rules or regulations.

There is truly a big difference between a top notch doggie day care that puts your animal's wellbeing first and operates like a business compared to someone that is trying to make a quick buck and is running a "backyard gig" The problem is in this economic slow down and unemployment at an all time high, people are opening up

doggie day cares all over the State. Many of these "so called" doggie day cares are being operated by owners that aren't registered businesses and may not be insured, not to mention many do not have any animal behavior or animal first aid training. If the towns don't know about these day cares they really can't help you if a tragedy was to happen to your pet.

Remember, the people that are watching your animal must be true pet care professionals and must be trained to handle multiple situations as they occur.

Another thing to remember, dogs are dogs and by instinct they are pack animals. When a member of the pack is rejected you want to be sure that the facility is trained to handle that situation immediately.

This is where you as the pet owner must do your research before you drop your pet off for the day at one of these facilities:

1. Take the time to set up an appointment to meet with this facility and staff, take a tour and bring your dog with you
2. Ask to see the business license

3. Ask for proof of insurance
 4. Ask how they introduce new dogs into "the pack" and how they measure dog temperament
 5. Do they have different areas for different sized dogs
 6. What do they do in a situation when a dog misbehaves or bites another dog
 7. If the dog is staying over night is it a cage free environment or are they put in cages for the night or do they offer both options
 8. What is the dog to staff member ratio, do they cap off the number of dogs they will take in for the day/night
 9. How often to they require a complete health certification of each dog (vaccinations must be current and kennel cough shots should be every 6 month to a 1yr)
 10. Most importantly MAKE SURE your pet will always have supervision
- Your dog is your family and you have the right to know what type of environment you are leaving your pet in.
- The concept of a doggie day care is a wonderful idea. It is a great place to bring

your pet for play time, exercise groups, socialization and some facilities even offer training, grooming and animal massage.

I own a pet care business and I am a strong supporter of legal and professionally operated doggie day cares. My business, Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care in North Andover MA is a dog walking and pet sitting service it is not a doggie day care, I do not have a facility where you drop your pet off with several other animals. I walk dogs and when I pet sit I go to your home to take care of your pet. Even so, I am a registered business with the Town of North Andover, I am insured and I am bonded. I am also certified in animal CPR, animal first aid and animal massage. My clients know that when their animals are in my care I will make sure that they are in the best care possible.

I work closely with "The Dog Nanny" in Andover MA and I highly recommend her facility. For me, it is a great alternative for a back up to my business. In fact, we

DOGGY, page 35

Come to the Lowell Humane Society and take us HOME!

>>>Miss Thing - I am a sweet 10 year old girl who needs a quiet loving home. I just had surgery last week to remove 11 teeth and now I'm feeling much better! I'm active and love to snuggle. Won't you take me home?



>>>Nena- Fuzzy- I am a 7 year old bunny who was brought to the shelter after my family got a new dog who didn't like me. I'm very sweet and love to binky around when it's time to play!



Looking to do something special for the Lowell Humane Society? You can donate pet items that will assist us in caring for the thousands of animals who pass through our doors each year.

Your support is greatly appreciated! The Lowell Humane Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization which receives no local, state or federal funding. Your donations are tax deductible and will greatly impact the lives of the animals we care for. For more information on volunteering or making a donation to The Lowell Humane Society contact Community Outreach Coordinator Chris Arnott at 978-888-4770 or chris@lowellhumanesociety.org.

For a full list of adoptable animals visit their website at www.lowellhumanesociety.org.

Contact Chris for details at (978) 452-7781 or chris@lowellhumanesociety.org



<<<BABY - Baby-I can be your Baby, all you have to do is adopt me! I'm a sweetie pie whose previous owners moved and couldn't bring me along. I'm a very sweet, laidback girl who loves to play with feathers and toy mice. I'm

great with kids and cats, but I'm scared of younger kids. I'm looking for a loving home where I can shower you with all my love!

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Help us, help you when your pets are on the loose!

Crystal Arnott
VALLEY PATRIOT PAT COLUMNIST

Each year thousands of animals go missing and are never reunited with their families.

Without proper identification, many of these animals enter shelters and never make it home. There are many ways to ensure your pet makes it home after an adventure out of the house, and a little work now will make it easier to get your pet home if it goes missing.

Veterinary Records: To keep your pet safe if it escapes, animals need to be kept up to date on vaccinations to prevent contracting diseases. Your dogs, cats and even ferrets should at the very least have a Rabies Vaccination, as Massachusetts State Law requires. Also, spay or neuter your pets; animals that are “fixed” are less likely to wander away. Keep your records of your veterinary visits handy, this is one

way to prove ownership of a pet.

Collar and ID Tag: All pets, even indoor cats, should wear a collar and ID tag at all times since you never know when they will get adventurous and sneak away. This is the easiest and most inexpensive way to help ensure your pets make it home. Good Samaritans are usually the first to pick up a stray dog or cat and can get them home quickly and easily if identification is clearly printed and displayed on the pet’s collar. The animals name and 2 phone numbers should be listed on the tag.

Take Photos: If your pet goes missing you’ll need to make a flier to post in your neighborhood and forward to the local animal shelters. A current photo is important for shelter staff to identify your pet if someone drops it off. Include on the flier the pets approximate age, a good description, sex and whether spayed or neutered, description of collar and ID tags and where it was last seen. This will also

help your neighbors identify your pet if it’s seen wandering through their yards.

Microchipping-: There are many companies available now that will “Microchip” your pet. A microchip is a tiny chip, the size of a grain of rice, and holds a unique identification number. The chip is inserted into the “scruff” area of a dog or cat, right under the skin on the back of the neck. Most veterinarians, animal control facilities and animal shelters have scanners which can pick up the chip number when waived over the animal. Once the identification number is found, the microchip company is contacted and the owner is immediately called.

This is one of the most effective ways of getting your pet back home, they are permanent and provide an alternative method in case a collar slips off. Most companies will also provide easy to make Lost Fliers if your pet goes missing. Microchips should be used in addition to

collar and id tags for the most effective way to get your pets home.

What To Do If Your Pet Does Get Out

Call your local animal control office and shelters to report your pet missing. Don’t wait! The sooner you report your pet missing, the sooner everyone can be on the look out for them. Many people wait days or even weeks to report missing cats, but it is imperative that shelters know early that your pet may come through their door.

Once you’ve notified the local officials, print off some lost fliers and distribute them to your neighbors and hang them on bulletin boards at the convenience store, library, supermarket and anywhere that will let you post them.

Lastly, don’t give up hope! There have been reports of animals returning home after long adventures of weeks or even months!

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Is your dog a shelter dog? If yes, which shelter? _____

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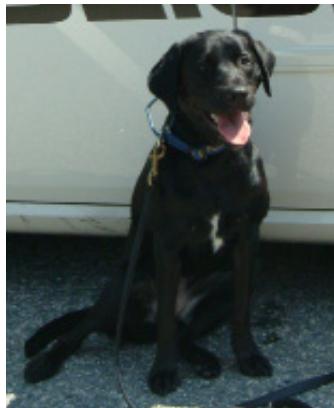
K9:FROM PAGE 4

ments to bring on their own K- 9 Units and he became a role model in the K-9 community.

Officer Bill Brush's background is very different than Gray's. Although he is a K-9 officer he specializes in explosives and is a member of the NEMLEC STARS team (North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council) and a member of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF). Officer Brush services not only NAPD but Middlesex and Essex counties. Being that he is sworn in as a US Marshall, he and his K-9 Julie may be called to go anywhere in the United States. When Brush and his first K-9 Iris started in 2000 they were only 1 of 30 ATF explosive K-9 teams in the United States. I asked Officer Brush why he chose to go into explosives and he mentioned that events like Columbine and 9/11 intrigued him into performing explosive searches.

Brush has been deployed to work at Superbowls, DNC Conventions, Ms. Teen America pageants, and has done sweeps on local, state and federal buildings. Not to mention all his calls with NEMLEC and North Andover. Definitely a busy guy!

When Iris retired, Officer Brush was paired up with Julie a very fun loving, very social, black lab. Although labs are outgoing they are also extremely intuitive in nature. Because they seem so friendly to the general public what most people don't understand is while they are playing around they are actually doing a passive search. It's a wonderful combination. Julie actually started her career training to be a Seeing Eye dog. However, fate called her



to explosives and she was trained by the "Puppies Behind Bars" program. This program trains inmates to raise puppies to become service dogs for the disabled and explosive detection canines for law enforcement.

Julie came to NAPD from the federal government and is considered an ATF dog. Because she is considered a federal dog she was of no cost to the Town of North Andover and her expenses are covered by ATF.

Most police departments that have K-9 Units tend to have dual coverage of narcotics and tracking. North Andover has three specialties; in fact they were one of the first K-9 Units in the State to have narcotic, tracking and explosives available at the local level. This makes them a very talented and valuable K-9 Unit for the community of North Andover and the entire Merrimack Valley.

But with all the glory comes the pain.....

On a sad note, one that must be mentioned and never forgotten is Sgt. Gray's first K-9 dog named Eiko. On January 28, 2006 Eiko was tracking a suspect from an armed robbery along the Shawsheen River in Lawrence. At some point in the chase Eiko got injured along his mouth and jaw area. Being the dedicated officer he was he continued on with the search. The next day Gray noticed the injury and brought Eiko to the veterinarian for emergency surgery. Eiko did pull through; however, he never fully recovered. He got progressively fatigued and was unable to walk. With great heartbreak to all, mostly Sgt. Gray, Eiko passed April 1, 2006. He was the first police dog to die in the line of duty in Massachusetts in 15 years.

DOGGY DAYCARE: FROM PAGE 34

share quite a few clients.

The Dog Nanny offers day care, a cage free environment, training, and puppy head start programs all on a 11,000 sq foot location. Most importantly, they have a staff member to dog ratio. They are a 365/24 hr a day facility and their staff is fully trained.

Whatever type of pet care you choose for your pet I ask you do your homework. Ask for references, check documentation and most importantly feel comfortable where you are leaving your dog. Your dog is your family and deserves the best

and safest care possible when you are not around.

Tracey Zysk, owner of Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care in North Andover MA is a local pet care professional. She has been featured on local radio, TV and newspapers educating the general public on animal care and animal health & wellness. Tracey is a proud supporter of Police, Fire & Military K9 Units. Tracey may be reached at wigglewalk@comcast.net



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PHOTO: COURTESY

Left to right: Crystal Arias, Joyce Zhang, David Rodriguez, Eudy Lopez Jr., Idelson Taveras and A.J. Rodriguez, Trudy Larson

NOTEBOOK:FROM PAGE 17

month in The Valley Patriot about Shaw and his influence in Dracut politics. But instead of striking back at Deeb, Shaw decided to attack The Valley Patriot on his radio program because we refused to censor Deeb’s column. I offered Shaw the opportunity to write his own rebuttal to Deeb’s column so that our readers could get both sides. But Shaw doesn’t have the intestinal fortitude to do that. He would rather complain about Deeb on his radio program and call him (and us) liars instead of addressing the issues Deeb brought up in his column last month. Quite frankly I have taken no side on this haw v. Deeb war but when it comes to free speech I refuse to bow down to Shaw’s insistence that I censor Deeb from the pages of the Valley Patriot simply because we both work at the same radio station.

LAWRENCE - OK so let me see if I have this straight. Patrick Blanchette is a tax cheat who refused to pay his income taxes to the IRS for three years. He was the City Council president who left the city with a \$17 million budget deficit. He adjourned the ‘08-’09 city council session without setting a tax rate, balancing the budget or sending out the tax bills. According to State law he cannot take a city job within 6 months of leaving the city council and his answer to why he is violating state law is “the law doesn’t apply to me”. And THIS is the guy that Mayor Willie Lantigua (da chief) is hiring as the Economic Development Director for the city of Lawrence? Are you kidding me? Talk about bad judgement. I mean its bad enough he hired Lenny (da VOKE) Degnan to be his Chief of Staff but at least Degnan is qualified to do that job, at least on paper. But Blanchette the tax cheat who nearly bankrupted the city being in charge of economic development? If this is a sign of how Lantigua is going to govern the city I will be surprised if the city isn’t in receivership by next year at this time. It just goes to show you that a man like Lantigua can be a political genius at election timeand a complete dope when it comes to governing.

LAWRENCE - Asked about the contro-

versial decision by Rep. William Lantigua (D-Lawrence), recently sworn-in as the city’s Mayor, to hold on to his State House job too, Gov. Deval Patrick said he was unsure whether one person could perform both jobs adequately. “It seems to me Lawrence has enough challenges in front of it that it would require the full-time attention of the Mayor,” he said on WTKK with host Jim Braude. “I may have to respect his judgment, but I want to be sure that Lawrence is getting his undivided attention.” Patrick recently filed legislation authorizing the city borrowing to help it out of its fiscal crisis.

LAWRENCE/N. ANDOVER - RiverBank’s 300 Essex Street Branch Relocating to 10 South Broadway, Lawrence. RiverBank is pleased to announce the relocation of its 300 Essex Street branch to a new facility located at 10 South Broadway, Lawrence, MA on January 11, 2010. The new branch will offer many new features, including on-site parking, drive-up banking including teller and ATM services, self-service coin machine and Saturday hours for friendlier, easier and better service to our customers. We are also pleased to introduce a new level of customer service we call the Universal Associate, where one employee can meet all of a customer’s needs, from typical teller transactions to new account openings and customer service.

The Bank will celebrate the opening during the week of January 11th with refreshments and giveaways, along with a raffle for a chance to win gift cards for groceries or gas. Customers at this branch will also receive a free gift if they open an xStream Savings account between January 11th and January 30th. We encourage everyone to come by and visit the new branch and take part in our weeklong celebration.

“We are very pleased to be able to provide the city of Lawrence with a modern banking environment that better meets today’s banking needs. We are particularly pleased to introduce the highest standard

of customer service with our new Universal Associate program”, said Gerald Mulligan, President & CEO. “RiverBank is proud to be serving the Lawrence community for over 141 years.”

www.riverbk.com. headquartered in North Andover, MA, has been providing Southern New Hampshire and the Merrimack Valley with “friendlier, easier and better” banking service for over 141 years with \$740 million in assets, and a localized, personalized approach. A subsidiary of LSB Corporation, a publicly held company, the common stock is traded over the counter on the NASDAQ National Marketing System under the symbol “LSBX”. Sales prices of the stock are reported in the Wall Street Journal as “LSB CP.” RiverBank is a member of FDIC and DIF, with all deposits 100% insured. RiverBank has seven branches in Massachusetts Merrimack Valley and Southern New Hampshire.

LAWRENCE - Dalia Diaz has been criticizing School Committeeman Greg

Morris for being on the School Committee and working a city job in the Lawrence DPW at the same time. Her criticism was unmerciful as she apparently has a very hard time with city workers serving on the School Committee. I agree by the way, I believe it is a conflict of interest even though legally it is not a conflict. But now Frank Bonet, a friend of Diaz is serving as Willie Lantigua’s Personnel Director in City Hall and yes, he also serves on the School Committee. I am still waiting for a scathing editorial by Diaz in Rumbo calling Bonet “on the take” and in bed with Lantigua as a conflict. I’m not holding my breath though.



Tom Duggan is the president of Valley Patriot, Inc., a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday from 10am-1pm. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com .

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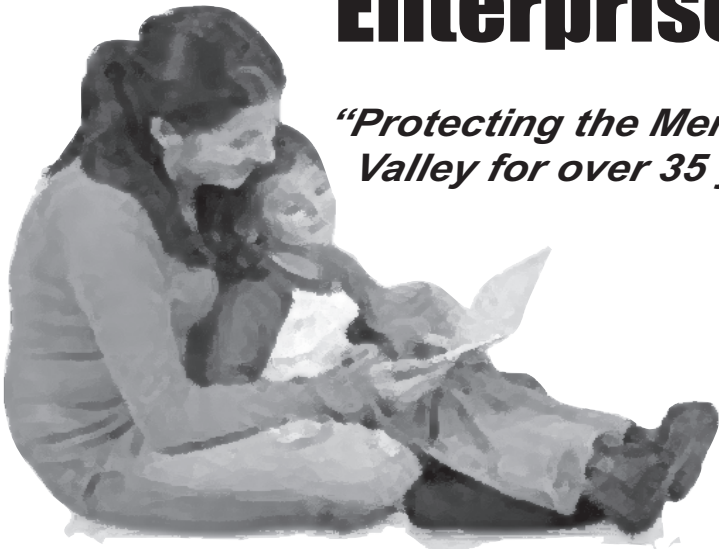
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What will 2010 bring for our Veterans?

John Lenotte
VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

Another year has come and gone. And yet it also seems like we were just celebrating the year 2000! And now we are in 2010. What will the year bring for us? Who could have predicted the economic mess; the fight over health care reform; the many layoffs that still continue?

Budget cuts still continue as businesses are still reducing staff. Governments are cutting deeper and deeper into their budgets.

As I mentioned last month, the budgets for the Soldiers Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke have been cut, thereby cutting services at both facilities. It is interesting that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides some of the best benefits in the nation to veterans but has chosen to hit our most vulnerable veterans.

Funds are generated from the sale of veteran's license plates and go to both of the Soldier's Home budgets. Yet, those accounts have a cap on them. Where are

the extra funds going? Can they not be used for the Homes, especially in this time of crisis?

I am not aware of funds from any other license plates going to help fund a state program. Should this not be taken into consideration? Again, I ask all veterans (and let's not forget that those currently serving are veterans), their families and friends to contact the Governor's office and their state legislators about this issue. If we cannot or choose not to let our voices be heard now, then when?

We cannot depend on our neighbor; we must each take action to let our opinions be noted. Once the service is cut, I doubt they will be renewed in the future. And what is next? Will the homes be closed or privatized?

Then it may cost us more as taxpayers to subsidize the programs. Will you stand and be counted on this issue? Or just complain and do nothing more. The choice, my friends, is yours.

This also a time of year that parents and students begin to apply and make decisions about attending college. And at today's costs, scholarships become very important. The American Legion and other Veterans organizations give out many scholarships each year. Sadly, there are often very few applicants. If you go to www.masslegion.org and look under forms, you will find the information on about eligibility and how to apply for a scholarship. Nineteen are given out each year at the state level. Many Posts also have a program. There is also an oratorical contest and information is available on the website.

There is also a link to the Boys State program held each June at Stonehill College. There is also information on the Legion national website, www.legion.org, about scholarships.

This is only a part of who we are, what we do. Veterans are still serving the community, state and nation.

Too often we are thought of as a veterans club, old timers hanging out drinking beer. Many posts do not have a members lounge. Some do. But that is NOT what we are about. Check out the state and national web sites. Learn about us and the service

we have been doing for over 90 years. Do not judge us until you know us. We are your neighbors, friends and family. Our commitment has never been stronger.

In Massachusetts, we have over 50,000 Legion members, not including the Auxiliary or the Sons of the American Legion. Though often misjudged, we are proud of the work we do.

Unfortunately, most of us do not talk about the good works. The families and charities we assist; support of groups like the Boy Scouts and Legion Baseball teams. The list goes on.

Perhaps your New Year's resolution will be to stand up and be counted. We can all make a difference if we stand together. I hope you will join and/or support veterans groups in this coming year.

May God bless our troops and bring them home safe.

John Lenotte is the American Legion, Commander, Wilbur M. Comeau Post 4 Haverhill and Vice Commander, Dept. of Massachusetts. You can Email him at JohnLDistrict8@verizon.net



Disabled Vets: COLA out, stimulus "IN"... maybe

Susan Piazza
VALLEY PATRIOT VETERAN COLUMNIST

Veterans, and social security recipients, will receive no increase in the cost of living allowance (COLA) this year.

Laws set the parameters for COLA years ago halting an increase when the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is 0 (zero) or below.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the current CPI to be in the negative (-1.5%). This year's (2010) failure to generate COLA is only the third time in more than thirty years that this problematic situation has occurred. A recent e-mail from a colleague in the American Legion Auxiliary informed that while no COLA payments would be forthcoming this year Representatives and Senators did vote someone a nice pay increase - themselves.

Senators will receive an additional \$5,300. a year and Representatives an additional \$4,700. a year.

To offset this financial decrease a few legislatures have proposed bills that would allow another round of stimulus checks to be sent to those affected by the disappearance of a COLA.

Sen. Sanders (I-VT) and Rep. DeFazio (D-OR) introduced a bill that would provide for a one-time check of \$250. to individuals effected by the COLA's removal.

Rep. McCarthy (D-NY) also intro-

duced a bill to help offset COLA's loss; her bill would provide for a one-time payment of \$150. These payments would mimic prior stimulus payments; veterans who receive money from both the VA and social security would be limited to only one check. (No double dipping.)

What you can do:

Those reading this column and those so inclined, can contact their legislatures; let them know whether or not you feel veterans (and/or those on social security) should receive benefits from any of the aforementioned bills.

Best wishes to all for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. We pray all our service men and women, here and abroad, stay safe.

May god bless them and may god bless this great democracy, this United States of America. Until later, I remain, Sue Piazza, Past Commander, Chapter 2 Queen City, DAV

Sources: DAV Magazine, November/December 2009 and e-mail from AL Auxiliary colleague, December 2009,



Susan Piazza is the past Commander, Chapter 2, Queen City, DAV and was the first female commander of the DAV in 75 years. She has been involved with the DAV for over twenty five years. You can email Susan at WithMara@aol.com

Turning a Century Old

Terri Crow Mercier
VALLEY PATRIOT SENIOR COLUMNIST

Catherine Flanagan, a resident of Colonial Heights Care and Rehabilitation, South Lawrence just celebrated her 100th birthday. Officially now a centurion, she was asked, what is the most exciting thing about turning 100 years old? Catherine says that "watching all the new inventions come out such as the remote control for TV, microwave oven and electric kitchen appliances. Taking a ride in an automobile was a big deal when I was young," she reflected. She remembers working so hard at daily chores. "Nothing was electric, you did everything by hand". The hardest part of being 100 years old is that you watch so many of those you love go before you. What keeps her strong is her "faith and praying the rosary daily she says. Letting all those petty little things go and focusing on what is really important in life". The Greater Lawrence Technical High School heard of her upcoming celebration and the Culinary Class, under direction of Chef Instructor Richard Coakley, truly rose to the occasion and students whipped up a beautiful cake, fit for a queen. Students in the Activity Professionals program under the guidance of Teacher Judith McLernon were on hand as well to help with the celebration and served up the elegantly decorated cake to all. Surrounded by flowers, balloons, students and her Colonial Heights family she made a wish, and yes she blew out her candle on the first try! "Not bad for a 100 year old although I am more like a young 90 years old." she joked.



Catherine Flanagan, our newest centurion here in the Merrimack Valley. Students in the Culinary Department of the G.L.T.S. show off their beautiful cake with former students of G.L.T.S, now employees of Colonial Heights Care and Rehab. They are Taysel Concepcion, Shenelle Torres, Chris Encarnacion, Chris Suarez, Jackeline Gonzalez, Yudenny De La Cruz, Nick Schribney, and Mayelin Garcia.

The Valley Patriot is now the **EXCLUSIVE** newspaper of:

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SGT. DAN COTNOIR: From page 1



Sgt. Daniel B. Cotnoir, R. Lee Ermey, and Kate Cotnoir.

here at home.

The grueling task of recovering fallen Marines often included sacrificing his own safety to retrieve these hero soldiers. More often than not, Cotnoir had to endure heavy enemy fire.

Dan even helped cut down the burned bodies of civilian contractors hanging from a bridge in Fallujah, the shocking scene that was broadcast via satellite all over the world.

Cotnoir was promoted to Sergeant while in Iraq.

Because of his service in the Marines as a mortuary affairs specialist, Cotnoir earned the title of Marine of the Year in 2005. In the Citation it states "For Sgt. Cotnoir was called upon to do what no other Marine really wants to do, but what must be done: take charge of bringing fallen Marines home to their final resting place, from the battlefield. This he has done with a tremendous sense of honor and dignity befitting the memory, sacrifice and integrity of those who have given their lives for our country...His selflessness and dedication to fallen Marines and to their families back home is truly inspiring.. It is truly our honor to recognize this outstanding, unsung hero."

Dan Cotnoir's family has owned Racicot for over 19 years. He went to Camp Pendleton in California where he was assigned to help train Marines in mortuary affairs. The assignment

involved teaching Marines how to clean and recompose bloodied bodies of soldiers killed in combat. Cotnoir helped pioneer a new mortuary affairs occupational specialty for the Marine Corps. He trained 40 Marines in mortuary and remains-recovery skills. He wrote a manual and designed a specialty training package.

Cotnoir continues to give back to the community. He organizes an annual Marine Corps golf tournament that raises money for Toys for Tots and volunteers for military funeral details. He is a member of the Lawrence Exchange Club, life member of VFW post 8349 and life member of AMVETS post MA29. Cotnoir is also a member of the Marine Corps League and American Legion Post 122.

Cotnoir also ran for mayor of Lawrence in 2009 and has volunteered his time on numerous boards and civic organizations.

For his bravery and sacrifice to his country as a Marine and his continued activism and service to his community here at home, The Valley Patriot is proud to honor Sergeant Daniel Cotnoir of Lawrence as our Valley Patriot of the Month.

Thank you Dan for making our country and community a better place and being a role model to young men and women everywhere. We will never be able to repay you for your heroism!

Sgt. Dan Cotnoir, U.S. Marines

Ordnance Maintenance Company, 4th Maintenance Battalion, Devens, MA

"Sergeant Daniel Cotnoir is a natural leader who epitomizes the Marine commitment to fellow Marines. He is an example of the essential role our Reserve forces have today. But it is the special, unsung role he has played, honoring and caring for our fallen heroes, that calls us to honor him tonight.

For Sgt. Cotnoir was called upon to do what no other Marine really wants to do, but what must be done: take charge of bringing fallen Marines home to their final resting place, from the battlefield. This he has done with a tremendous sense of honor and dignity befitting the memory, sacrifice and integrity of those who have given their lives for our country. He has seen first-hand the sacrifices that many of us back home see only in abstract terms.

An armorer by military specialty, Sgt. Cotnoir, during his deployment to Iraq, found himself assigned to a new area. The Marines had no mortuary affairs specialists, and desperately needed his funerary skills from civilian life. He volunteered for this particularly difficult, traumatic and often thankless battlefield assignment, because he knew he could handle it, and he knew how important it is to honor the fallen Marines. Sgt. Cotnoir pioneered a new mortuary affairs military occupational specialty for the Corps. He wrote the manual, and volunteered to train 40 Marines in mortuary and remains-recovery skills. He designed a special training package covering subjects including anatomy, blood-borne pathogens, and the conduct of search and recovery missions. His counsel, encouragement and compassion were an example to these Marines engaged in a very psychologically stressful mission.

His selflessness and dedication to fallen Marines, and to their families back home, is truly inspiring. This noble mission is always emotionally traumatic, and often dangerous – searching through blast areas, gathering remains and personal effects, often while under enemy fire. Sgt. Cotnoir's efforts are responsible for returning 182 fallen heroes to their families. On one occasion, for instance, he crawled into a burned LAV-25 to recover a set of remains trapped in the dangerous wreckage. He did this in full knowledge that he would be exposed to large quantities of depleted uranium rounds.

Back home, Sergeant Cotnoir is an active volunteer in his community. A fellow Marine says, "He's just an all-around example of an excellent Marine." A resident of Lawrence, Massachusetts, Sergeant Cotnoir is married and has two daughters. It is truly our honor to recognize this outstanding, unsung hero. Please join in saluting Sergeant Daniel Cotnoir as 2005's Marine Corps Times Marine of the Year."

Mike's tips for your car in the winter

1. Keep your headlights clear with car wax! Just wipe ordinary car wax on your headlights. It contains special water repellents that will prevent that messy mixture from accumulating on your lights - lasts 6 weeks.
2. Squeak-proof your wipers with rubbing alcohol! Wipe the wipers with a cloth saturated with rubbing alcohol or ammonia. This one trick can make badly streaking & squeaking wipers change to near perfect silence & clarity.
3. Ice-proof your windows with vinegar! Frost on it's way? Just fill a spray bottle with three parts vinegar to one part water & spritz it on all your windows at night. In the morning, they'll be clear of icy mess. Vinegar contains acetic acid,

which raises the melting point of water---preventing water from freezing!

4. Prevent car doors from freezing shut with cooking spray! Spritz cooking oil on the rubber seals around car doors & rub it in with a paper towel. The cooking spray prevents water from melting into the rubber.

5. Fog-proof your windshield with shaving cream!

Spray some shaving cream on the inside of your windshield & wipe it off with paper towels. Shaving cream has many of the same ingredients found in commercial defoggers.

6. De-ice your lock in seconds with hand sanitizer! Just put some hand sanitizer gel on the key & the lock & the problems solved!

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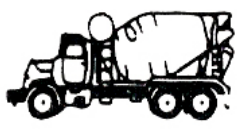



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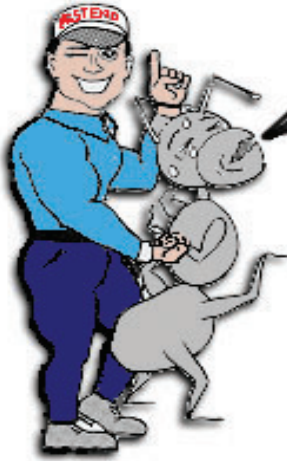
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