

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,
“Bridge Medallion Design Approved.”

Ironically, this article appeared directly above the ad for Edgerton’s “Tobacco Heritage Days” in the July 9 edition. I have to agree with Dave Thomas and his comments “drawn by an anonymous artist, and didn’t recognize the area’s tobacco history.” I am a lifelong resident of Edgerton. My grandparents raised tobacco and my parents paid for their first home with money they earned raising tobacco, which ended up being my siblings and my childhood home. My first job while in high school was working in the tobacco fields for local farmers.

While cities like Beloit, and now Janesville, are working to either revive or preserve their cities’ history, Edgerton seems to be erasing the past. I “get” that some think we are promoting tobacco use. Not so. If done correctly and aesthetically, it truly could be our (Edgerton) story, our history. We have an architecturally modern city hall (which I do not understand why the architect didn’t incorporate the infamous neon city hall signage in the design that you see very often done and done well) right across the street from Edgerton’s past—tobacco warehouses.

We also have a “pottery” garden, that seems to have mystified a lot of local Edgerton residents, and we have many empty storefronts downtown. From professional experience, businesses, entrepreneurs, etc., I like to go the extra distance to find locations to land their business, within the history and dwellings of a community. Walking at night, I see the many older homes that are being brought back to life and are the conversation of many who visit Edgerton. They are amazed at their beauty and inquire about their history. Kudos to those who have the passion for restoring these homes and their history.

A medallion on the freeway is not going to “sell” a new lifestyle or create tourism—as quoted in the July 9 article. Mixing the old with the new can have amazing and profitable results, not to mention creating positive conversation that will carry outside the city limits.

In closing, let’s get our youth involved. Give them the chance to take ownership in the city that they live in, go to school in. Other (Edgerton) city services have been known to work with the teachers, involving our youth in the community. Does anyone remember the Rialto graphics used as the entrance for the old auditorium at the EHS? How cool was that!

Susan Heritage Griffin

Q: Why should every child learn to play the piano?

A: Because it makes you smarter. Research has shown that piano instruction will dramatically enhance children’s abstract reasoning skills necessary for learning math and science. Also, there is a correlation between improved SAT scores and length of time studying piano. Studies show that time at the keyboard offers emotional advantages as well. Music students have less anxiety, loneliness and depression. Lessons can be started as early as age five. It is very helpful for beginning piano students to have assistance at home on a daily basis. Parents can offer organizational skills and psychological support. Also a little practice each day is much better than a lot of practice on

two days of the week. A keyboard or a piano at home is essential. I welcome all students regardless of age or ability to study piano.

Diana Berryman, M. Mus.

Dear Editor,

I have had the good fortune to be acquainted with the Sheridan family for many years. I know a little bit about the family’s values and Mike’s dedication to public service, in particular.

I saw Mike in action during the years preceding General Motors’ shutdown. I saw him fight hard to keep GM afloat during those dismal years: job creation when Janesville was at its lowest, tax credit creation to retain jobs and to lure new industry into the area, and the creation and implementation of a new job tax credit program to benefit all workers and businesses.

General Motors closed, but not for lack of hard work or great effort on Sheridan’s part.

It will take experience, dedication, and sacrifice to fill the gaping hole left by Tim Cullen when he steps down in November.

I think Mike Sheridan is up to the task as a vote for Sheridan is a vote for Wisconsin families, new job creation, an enhanced local infrastructure, and improved public education.

Mike has been on the front lines before; his experience speaks for itself. Join me at the polls on August 12 and vote for Mike Sheridan.

Cinder Roherty

Town of Albion

Board concerned about 911 system

By Marie Doty

Special to the Edgerton Reporter

The Town of Albion board members are considering their options with DANECOM (Dane Communication System). One of those options is to drop out.

The new 911 system has hit a few snags. “Joe Parisi (Dane County Administrator) has claimed it will be working,” Bob Venske, board chairman, said. “So far we’re not convinced of that. I think we should withhold our payment. Half the county association agrees. We’re paying a lot of money and, hey, it’s not working.”

A member of the audience asked, “What are our options?”

Julie Hanewall, clerk/treasurer, replied, “We have to give 17 months’ notice to get out.”

“We hoped to have our first responders able to use the system by now,” Venske said. “That’s the reason we’re paying for it and they keep saying this will happen. We’ve already gone by the deadline by nine months and it’s still not working.”

Doug Dypold asked, “Are they giving us any kind of information? It sounds like we’re flying blind.”

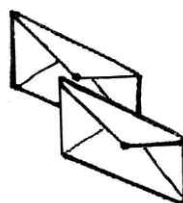
“The gentleman who set this up promised it would be working by x amount of time,” Venske replied. “He came back three months later and said we’ve got to have another tower. It will cost a million and a half to make the system work. Well, if he didn’t know this before setting it up, what’s he doing running the show?”

“This is involving half a dozen different entities,” Claude Rader-macher said. “The fire department is right down the road. Yet the call goes six



Back of the Envelope

a column of notes and observations by Diane Everson



Editors Note: I wrote this column eight years ago, July 19, 2006. As I sat down to write the editorial today, I felt I had written what I wanted to say before. Sure enough. With Steve Stricker’s success, the publishing of Mark Scarborough’s book and our festival this weekend, I am reprinting this column with a minor change.

This weekend is our Tobacco Heritage Days celebration. For over 30 years, Edgerton has created a family-oriented, fun-filled and something-for-everyone event. Unfortunately, the part of our history this event recognizes now has a social and politically incorrect stigma. Yet, tobacco is part of our past and just as important as the celebration of the Scandinavian, German and Indian history of our neighboring communities.

The dictionary defines heritage as “that which is or may be inherited” or “a gift which constitutes a possession” and “something handed on by past generations; legacy.” Our community was largely built with money from growing, processing and storing tobacco. This is not to mention the commerce our merchants enjoyed as well as the contributions to our schools, churches and civic organizations. Tobacco as a crop was a gift to Edgerton.

Our heritage also includes people and they too, are a gift. Hometown boy, Sterling North, became a celebrated writer, editor and author. His internationally best-selling book, *Rascal* has entertained multitudes of children and adults in countries across the globe. Edgerton was important to Sterling and he told the world. And so, consequently, all of us benefit from his fame even to this day.

Now, Steve Stricker is currently one of the people putting Edgerton on the map. Whenever a sportscaster reports on his golf game or a sports reporter writes of his accomplishments, they say he is an Edgerton native.

Our friend and former colleague, Mark Scarborough has been described as a “Renaissance Man.” He was an accomplished historian, author, poet, educator and one dogged, determined and relentless reporter. Professionally, I marveled at his knowledge of the open records laws and his expertise in all areas of the public’s right to know. Our newspaper and our community benefitted from his zeal for quality journalism.

These are but three of the hundreds of people, past and present, who have been a tribute to our community with their accomplishments here and across the world. They have excelled publicly and privately in medicine, law, government, the military, business and academia. We have much of which to be proud.

Our pride must also include the tremendous contributions of the tobacco

to ten miles away.”

“There’s a move to get mutual aid,” Venske said.

However, he added that if this is still not working, the township has until October or November to decide to get out and get its money back.

Construction on Hillside Road drew some irate comments from the audience.

Stacey Babriaz, member of the planning board, said there often was no communication when the road was closed.

“There are alternate routes,” Venski replied. “People can stay out of the work zone.” Jokingly he advised, “They should at least get out of the way when the roller is out.”

Babriaz: “Just past the Lake House, we sat over an hour. We had eight people in line. Finally someone said the whole road was closed. There should’ve been a sign.”

A brisk discussion began in the audience, some agreeing, some not.

“Before they even started paving, the road was shut down completely and there were no signs,” Babriaz said. “People came to a dead end.”

“Don’t fight the contractor,” Venski ended the discussion. “He’s doing the best he can.”

On Interchange Zoning, Venski said, “The gentleman from the Dane County Zoning Commission will help us for free. There will be no cost.”

A major concern to the board was drainage. Venski said that a drainage ditch would be more effective than laying pipes. “All the owners around the interchange want to sell their property. A ditch is more effective in draining the runoff and is also more cost effective. One machine can do the job rather than buying pipe.”

Because of concern about monitoring a new Alcohol Ordinance, action on it was tabled.

In other action, Andy Decker was appointed to the planning commission. Venski said that another member would like to retire. “Anyone who is interested in being on a board or committee, sign in with Julie (Hanewall). If you want to be involved, we would like to know about it.”



Heavy equipment rests Monday afternoon as a lone bulldozer grooms the retired cornfield just north of Newville near the intersection of Hillside Road and Jason Road. Meise Construction is finishing the surface preparation on property owned by Jeff Fox where five expansive storage structures are planned to be built. A stormwater retention area west of the roofed structures and paved alleys will abate soil erosion in and around the property during heavy downpours.

(Edgerton Reporter photo/David Esau)

industry and our tobacco growers. Granted, since the federal tobacco buy-out, there is less tobacco grown here. Even so, tobacco has been huge.

It seems what is really at issue in the “politically correct” circles is whether celebrating tobacco days is a proponent of smoking. It is not. However, we must support that people who choose to smoke have a right to do so. Cigarettes and cigars are legal products as well as chewing tobacco and the new e-cigarettes.

Often abuse gets confused with use. All those who smoke do not necessarily become 4-5 pack a day smokers. Though some do. In addition, recent rules for restaurants and public buildings are addressing the rights of non-smokers. Both sides have rights.

Celebrating the history of our community should not have the political overtones of the smoking and anti-smoking movements. Simply put, our history “is what it is.”

Just as Sterling North, Steve Stricker, Mark Scarborough and the hundreds of others whose contributions large and small have reflected well on our community, tobacco must be also held in high regard. Again, celebrating our tobacco history does not promote its use.

We now share a common heritage that is far more significant than it is popular to acknowledge in our contemporary society. So, let the smoking/chewing political correctness take a rest for this week. Allow for the true celebration of our past that our festival offers.

See you this weekend!



City debates bridge medallion design

By Sam Martino

Special to The Reporter

Councilman David Thomas said this week he would ask for the issue of a medallion representing the city for a Highway 59 bridge display to be discussed again at Monday’s Common Council.

“You wouldn’t believe the number of people I have talked to who asked about it,” Thomas said.

Thomas opposed the council adopting a medallion of a sunburst and sailboat to be placed over the I 39/90 Highway 59 bridge because he felt it was not representative of the Edgerton area.

“We didn’t get to be the Capitol of Tobacco U.S.A. for nothing,” he said in an interview Tuesday.

City officials obtained Common Council approval of a medallion design without any public input.

A Department of Transportation spokesman said Tuesday the DOT has until Sept. 1 for approval of the medallion design.

City Administrator Ramona Flanigan said it might have been possible to conduct a school logo contest or some other competition for a logo drawing but time was of the essence.

Flanigan said she and Mayor Christopher Lund made an internal decision to recruit an artist to draw a medallion for the Common Council

to vote on July 7 without a public hearing.

Flanigan said she got an artist, who asked to remain anonymous, to prepare the drawing for the council’s consideration.

“We had to move it along because of the interstate construction schedule,” Flanigan said.

Reconstruction of the bridge is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2015 and be completed in the Fall of 2018.

Asked if another medallion drawing could be submitted, Flanigan said “yes” but time was of the essence.

Asked if other community artists and high school students could compete in a logo contest, Flanigan also said “yes.”

She agreed that “there still is time for a contest.”

She said donations would be sought from the community for the \$3,590 cost estimated to cast the medallions, which would be six feet long and six feet wide.

The Common Council voted 4-1 to adopt the medallion design by the unknown artist to represent tourism and recreation.

Council members Mark Wellnitz, Ron Webb, Candy Davis and Matt McIntyre voted for the medallion.

The townships of Albion and Fulton also must approve of the drawing. Six patterns of the medallion will

be placed at the new bridge abutments and on the overpass facing east and west.

The same medallion would be placed over the Highway 73 and Highway 51 bridge.

Thomas said area residents for the past week questioned adopting the medallion as a representation of the Edgerton area.

“There was no public input on it at all,” Thomas said.

“I wish they had made a contest with the school kids to participate in,” Thomas said.

Thomas said a tobacco leaf on the medallion would show Edgerton’s link to the tobacco trade in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

“That’s where we got much of our reputation,” he echoed.

However, other council members favored the medallion as a sign of Edgerton’s entrance to the Lake Koshkonong recreation area on the city’s border.

“Tobacco put a lot of kids through school, paid for a lot of fences, paid for a lot of migrant workers,” Thomas said.

Thomas said he would like to see another medallion presented to the council.

If it (the present medallion) goes up it will be there for another 50 or 60 years until some engineer gets a new dream for a better highway,” Thomas added.

World Premier of Play Seedfolks performing on July 25-26

Submitted by Merri Oxley

The Edgerton Sterling North Book and Film Festival, an organization celebrating the legacy of hometown author Sterling North and the arts, will host the premier of the play *Seedfolks*, on July 25-26, 2014, at 7:30 p.m., at the Edgerton Performing Arts Center, located at 200 Elm High Drive, Edgerton, WI. Tickets for the play can be purchased at the door. The lead sponsor is American

Family Insurance.

Seedfolks, based on the award-winning book by Paul Fleischman, tells the story of 13 adults and youth from different cultures who meet at a vacant, garbage-filled lot in their neighborhood. As they begin to plant seeds and transform the lot into a small community garden, they also begin to transform their own hopes and dreams as they form new relationships with their neighbors.

According to Paul Fleischman, “You might order your tomato seeds in December, but you’re dreaming of that first bite in July. The same is true for a play’s premiere, when work that’s lived in the playwright’s head for years finally comes to life on the stage. I’m thrilled that [Edgerton] will be doing this for *Seedfolks*, and I can’t wait to see their vision on stage.”

“Paul Fleischman wrote a lovely story about changing a neighborhood with people growing plants while also growing in their own outlook about those around them. We are enjoying the process of growth ourselves as we work on this drama together,” states Director, Ellen Knutson.

For more information about the play or to contact Connie Tronnes or Ellen Knutson, email: SterlingNorthSeedfolks@gmail.com.

For more information about the Edgerton Sterling North Book and Film Festival visit: www.sterlingnorthbookfestival.com.



Rock’N the River with Santa debuts on July 26

On Saturday July 26, 2014 Santa will be boating on the Rock River.

Santa, along with his elves, will be stopping at Lakeview at 3 p.m. to listen to the band Tip Up. Afterwards, he will be stopping at the Anchor Inn at 6 p.m. to listen to Rainbow Bridge.

Raffle tickets are also being sold. The money raised will go to provide services to the youth in Edgerton. Tickets can be purchased at Lakeview, Anchor Inn, Steve’s 51 Repair, Edgerton Community Outreach and from any Gifts for Kids board member. Tickets will also be for sale at the Pie and Ice Cream Social at Central Park during the Art Fair. The raffle drawing will be held at Anchor Inn on July 26 at 8 p.m.

For more information check us out on Facebook under Gifts for Kids.

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