

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Realtors Turning Scenic View From Road Into Ads Bonanza

To the Editor:

Few drives compare to the eastward ride on M-134 from I-75 to DeTour Village. Long referred to simply as "The Scenic" by locals, the 40-plus mile road is peaceful, often bucolic, as it hopscotches the north shore of Lake Huron. One of the last stretches of Great Lakes natural beauty, it remains unencumbered by ubiquitous mass development, overblown marinas, condominium clutter, golf resorts, vanity mansions, monster billboards, and the ultimate tax on stupidity, the casino craze. Miles of pristine

beaches, bays, natural estuaries, rocky shoreline, islands, and cedars interrupted only by the small-town charm of Hessel, Cedarville, and DeTour. Okay, maybe not so charming, but they are small.

Disconcerting, however, is the truly excessive use of real estate "For Sale" signs along the route. It is no secret that we have an economic downturn, an out-of-control war, statewide poverty, and fiscal policy weakness, wazoo fuel prices, and for several years now, a real estate "buyer's market." Watch the evening news

tonight. Or any night.

Why not a single sign per parcel? Is it necessary or prudent to have three, four, five, or more placements? Ask your realtor, with three signs on a single small property, are you three times more likely to sell? For three times the price? Three times faster? Or does the realtor (a) Want to create listing envy among the competitors? (b) Want to substitute flimsy marketing for genuine salesmanship? (c) Believe the signage is more attractive than the natural beauty of the land? (d) Have a brother in the sign business?

Even worse, once a transaction has been successfully completed, the tradition is to paste on a "sold" banner and leave it standing for weeks, months, or even years. Yikes! One might assume that as respected members of commerce, ambassadors of charm and goodwill, their most valuable currency as professionals would be promoting the perception of desirability, an attractive area to live and work. Then again, they may view this critic as an altruistic buffoon.

Do they have a board or association that adheres to a standard of conduct or an ethic of reasonable decency, in innate pride in the area where they may also reside, or are repugnancy and greed allowed to become the code, the norm? The answer, my friend, is written in the wind, blowing the weeds that are overgrown around sign number four.

In Cedarville, across from the high school, a single small house and lot (three signs); at one end of

Hodeck Street, an aging commercial building (3); at the other end an old house and cottage (5); in downtown DeTour while waiting for the Drummond ferry, to the left, a postage stamp vacant lot (4); and to the right, a terminally ill saloon (6); and on and on and on...you can't make this stuff up. And don't drive up Lakeside Road unless you have [medication] to control the nausea.

Look, I'm not suggesting a private group should require public persuasion. Or even suggesting eco-terrorism, but in the militia-minded U.P., what might ensue is scary. Imagine tattooed balding men on bicycles sporting black T-shirts marked R.E.V.E.N.G.E. (Real Estate Vigilantes Needlessly Garish Exposure) armed with cans of Krylon spray paint and bent on retribution.

Reasonable people should be able to forge a policy against repulsiveness. Aside from turning off your TV. Multiple signage is ineffective and demeaning. Properties that have been for sale, some for years, provide a clue: it's not working.

A slave to the paraphrase, it reminds me of my own mother, Florence (1918-1999), who once said, "If you must serve leftover ice cream, don't reheat it." Or even the great Yogi, "It ain't over, until it's overdone." Or Reagan in 1989, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down these signs."

Please. You know you can. You know you want to. Your public will thank you.

Charles N. Spiber
DeTour Village

Better Fiscal Responsibility Needed at Gros Cap School

To the Editor:

Paul Gingras' article on the Gros Cap School stated the school received \$995,886.36 for the 2005-06 school year. With 77 students in grades K-8, that figures out to \$12,933.59 per student. So, we taxpayers are spending almost a million dollars a year to educate 77 students.

The argument will be that it's not just for students, it's for many other areas, like salaries, heat, lights, building, etc. But the bottom line is, everything is there because of the students.

Where is the fiscal responsibility?

Tom Schwalbach
St. Ignace

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

Lane Closure Change on I-75

Lane closures changed on an I-75 project in Mackinac County, Tuesday, August 8. The right northbound lane now is scheduled be closed through Wednesday, September 30.

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has completed work on the left northbound lane, which now is open, though a

10-foot width restriction exists on this lane.

The I-75 MDOT project, which includes resurfacing nine miles of I-75, from M-134 north to the Chippewa County line, is scheduled for completion in October 2007.

MDOT reminds drivers that when workers are present, the speed limit is 45 miles per hour.

Police Search for Stolen Tailgate

The larceny of a pickup truck tailgate in Chippewa County has prompted Michigan State Police to seek information through the Crime Stoppers program. The theft occurred on or about Wednesday, June 28, at Barr Brothers Incorporated on Mackinac Trail near Four Mile

Road. The tailgate was stolen from a gray and black 1997 Dodge Ram truck.

Those who have information on this or any crime are asked to call (800) 465-7867. Callers to Crime Stoppers may remain anonymous and tips leading to arrest may receive up to \$1,000.

SANE Arrest Two St. Ignace Men on Charges of Delivery of Drugs

Two St. Ignace men were arrested on drug charges by Straits Area Narcotics Enforcement (SANE), the agency announced July 28.

Richard Osmon, 46, was arrested for one count of delivery of morphine. Daren Phillips, 19, was arrested for one count of delivery

of marijuana and maintaining a drug house. Both men were lodged in the Mackinac County Jail and arraigned Friday, July 28, in 92nd District Court.

They were among 20 arrests announced by SANE July 28 in communities across northern Michigan.

Fred Strich in Free Press Photo With Tiger Woods at Buick Open

Fred Strich of St. Ignace appeared in a Friday, August 4, *Detroit Free Press* photograph watching golfer Tiger Woods during the Buick Open in Grand Blanc.

Mr. Strich, a Michigan State Police trooper, was accompanied by Craig Therrian, also of St. Ignace, who also works for Michigan State Police as a motor carrier officer.

Mr. Strich's head is seen on the far left of the newspaper photograph, just above Mr. Wood's tiger club covers. Mr. Therrian, not pictured, was right behind him.

Both men were given tickets to the Open for their birthdays from their wives, Lori Strich and Jeni Therrian. Mr. Strich turns 49 Saturday, August 19. Mr. Therrian turned 50 Tuesday, August 8.

‘Day After Boat Show’ Artist Reception To Be Held Aug. 13

The annual "day after boat show" artist festival and reception will be at Creekside Herbs and Art in Cedarville Sunday, August 13, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Each year, the event brings

together local artists and those who participated in the annual Festival of Arts the day before.

The public is welcome, and food and beverages will be available.

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Pols Slinging Cleaner Mud Than in Past

This year's gubernatorial campaign will be Michigan's costliest, thanks largely to the deep-pockets TV spending by Republican Dick DeVos. But it won't be the nastiest.

DeVos and Governor Jennifer Granholm won't sink to the level of personal attacks that 1998 Democratic nominee Geoffrey Fieger directed against Governor John Engler.

Nonetheless, even before Tuesday's primary in which Granholm and DeVos were unopposed, the merchants of mud were throwing it from both camps.

Last year, the Michigan

Democratic Party began attacking DeVos because Alticor Inc., when he was head of the company that is the parent of Amway, "cut nearly 1,400 jobs from Michigan and created tens of thousands of jobs in China." DeVos says "zero jobs" were transferred to China, and contends Michigan benefits from Alticor's huge overseas investments, including about \$220 million in China.

(After he interviewed Granholm at the Traverse City Film Festival last week, I asked Qunduo Xu, a reporter for government-sponsored China Radio

International, if he was aware of Dick DeVos and that Amway's China operation was an issue in the Michigan campaign. He was not, but said Amway products there are "very popular. The market is huge. People love it.")

When Democrats began attacking DeVos in TV ads, he countered with one that concludes: "Instead of getting down in the mud, let's get down to business - create more Michigan jobs."

But in late July, DeVos ran an anti-Granholm TV ad that so distorted the positions of two Michigan newspapers that the ad was changed after the papers complained. The original ad had the *Detroit Free Press* using "phony" and "demagoguery" to describe Granholm's criticism of DeVos, and the *Lansing State Journal* saying: "It's all negative all the time out of the Granholm camp."

In fact, in each case, the views were not of the newspaper - but of a columnist expressing a personal opinion.

When I asked Granholm last week about the ad, she said: "I have a feeling that is just the beginning."

In truth, distortions to sharpen a 2006 campaign attack did not start with that ad - or with this year's campaign. Politicians travel muddy trails.

Jabs got sharper in the final week of the U.S. Senate GOP primary between Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard and the Reverend Keith Butler.

In taping of their only televised debate (WOOD-TV, Grand Rapids), Butler accused Bouchard of conflict of interest for getting about \$40,000 a year from Jackson National Life Insurance Company for a consulting role while still getting his sheriff's salary.

Bouchard, who said he is "a watchdog for policyholders," said:

"I don't run a church and get paid over \$1 million a year."

In a TV ad, Butler, a former Detroit councilman, rapped Bouchard, a former state senator, as "a career politician. On the ballot 14 times in the last 19 years." Bouchard dismissed the ad as "a distraction" from important issues.

There was a glitch in a Butler radio ad buy last week Up North. A commercial designed to urge Detroit Democrats to cross over and vote for Butler was heard on one northern station during the Rush Limbaugh show. Not many Detroit Democrats in that audience.

Tribal Cops

Examples abound across the northland of tribal law enforcement agencies working cooperatively with sheriff's departments and other local police agencies.

So it is not just Native Americans who will benefit from last week's announcement by Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow of \$680,207 in U.S. Justice Department grants to eight Michigan Indian communities to assist tribal law enforcement activities.

The grants: Bay Mills Indian Community, \$123,701; Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, \$112,871; Hannahville Indian Community, \$43,556; Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, \$53,391; Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, \$35,700; Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, \$148,988; Little Traverse Bands of Odawa Indians, \$12,000; and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, \$150,000.

George Weeks recently retired after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.