

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unhappy With Animal Abuse Case

To the Editor:

I am totally upset over the animal abuse case that was just "finished!" after taking animals away from unfit or unsafe home, then court.

First, Mr. Rooney is told by the judge he could have 15 or so animals, but not all, under certain conditions of probation. So he violates probation. Second, the judge says he loses all but the dogs.

In the courtroom in front of several people, he asked the prosecutor if he can give away or sell some of the horses, llamas, and goats. The prosecutor said it would be a race to see who got there first. I questioned him that he'd be in violation of a court order, and I only got a stare! No reply.

Fred Feleppa has said he won't be pushed, and he felt blackmailed in this matter. By whom? The people who ask questions, who vote?

All but a few animals were gone when animal control went out. No one knows where, or didn't know. This cost the taxpayers lots of money, and shouldn't have. This has been going on long before our new animal people got involved. But no one ever did anything.

How many of you had to buy a license for more than a few dogs? Paid because your dog got loose? Did you get a break? I didn't.

If you have concerns, you should ask Fred, your friend, neighbor, the person who's in the position to make a decision for you, or call him at work. I have.

Linda Horn
St. Ignace

Editor's Note: We asked Prosecutor Fred Feleppa to respond to Mrs. Horn's letter. His remarks follow.

The Animal Control Officer (ACO) had been monitoring Larry Roney's animals since August of 2006. The animals were under consistently neglectful conditions of too much manure, poor foot care, and cramped space.

The first my office became aware Mr. Roney existed was Friday afternoon, January 10, 2008. Forty-two animals were seized with a Court Order. Funds for the care of these animals were solicited and received. I was told that if I didn't obtain certain results, these donors would be given their money back and the County would then suffer the burden of paying for the animals' care. I label this as blackmail. I strive daily to make fair, just, and equitable decision and not be influenced by cash. The money donated would have been used exclusively for caring for these animals.

On February 26, 2008, Mr. Roney plead to animal neglect. Twenty-six of his animals were forfeited to the state. Mr. Roney was ordered to pay \$250. A larger amount would have hindered the goal of speedy permanence for the animals and would only be as good as his ability to pay.

On April 18, 2008, Mr. Roney was back in court for alleged violations of his probation (eventually plead to on May 6). They were for having six, and not five, horses as allowed and a veterinarian had not inspected his animals and their living conditions. The ACO, however, had inspected the conditions and animals and found both satisfactory.

Judge Gibson signed an order to seize all horses, goats, and llamas present at Mr. Roney's property. When he was in court, Mr. Roney said he had already sold some of them and people were coming to get the rest. No term of probation prohibited him from selling or giving away his animals. The ACO seized all animals present when she got finally got to his property: one horse and the goats. His legal act of selling or giving animals away saved the ACO the inconvenience of seizing, expense of fostering, and difficulties of adopting out five horses and two llamas. Mr. Roney has since given sworn testimony where the other animals went. The ACO has the names and has been asked to verify the legitimacy and appropriateness of those arrangements.

Since January 2008, Mr. Roney has had 40 animals taken from him by the state. Of the animals seized, all that remain are one goat and dog. He will be on probation until 2010 with restrictions and monitoring.

This office handles hundreds of criminal cases each year. Last year, 17 individuals were sentenced to prison - more than the past three years combined. I would like the luxury of being able to focus on each case and accept no compromises. I have received roughly 1,000 e-mails and a hundred letters solicited from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that my handling of this case was inappropriate. I have learned much from the experience of this case and would do parts of this case differently. However, I will keep animal neglect cases in perspective with the other demands of this office.

Fred Feleppa
Prosecuting Attorney, Mackinac County

Demand Government Regulations

To the Editor:

Are we there yet? As the never-ending rising price of gas and food surges onward, are we starting to get it? As the oil companies suck us dry of our blood like big fat wood ticks that won't let go until they are gorged with our blood, are we starting to feel the pain? Are we finally starting to understand that something is terribly wrong with the way we are doing things? Is the failed notion that if we let the corporations do whatever they like, somehow everybody benefits from the "trickle down" effect, starting to sink in as a lie?

We have been here before. At the turn of the century Teddy Roosevelt brought the monopolies and robber barons to heel as they plundered America. We forgot the lesson, though, and in 1929 runaway fiscal insanity brought global economic collapse. Another Roosevelt, FDR, straightened it out. We have forgotten our lessons again. This new revolution began in 1980 with Ronald Reagan, and has continued through two Bush presidencies and Bill Clinton. Clinton continued in the same economic vein as his predecessors, he was just a better money manager.

The idea is, let the multi-national corporations have their way in the world and everything will be just grand for America. We now let the oil companies rape us with little protest. We have become a docile, obedient, brainwashed people. We send our jobs to Communist China and India, who now, thanks to our own stupidity, have plenty of money to demand more oil and help drive the price up. What irony that those of us who fought in Vietnam and Korea against the "Communist menace" are now terribly unpatriotic if we speak up about American jobs going to Communist China. As if American workers should have no problem competing against sweatshop labor with no environmental regard.

The answer is the same to our problems as it was at the turn of the century and after the 1929 Wall Street Crash. It is called government regulation! We the people elect a government to serve us - we the people, not the profit margins of the multi-national corporations. Our government can easily stop American jobs from going overseas. They are called laws. We long ago used tariffs on foreign produced goods to balance competition and replace taxes. It is called stop giving American companies tax breaks to send jobs overseas. Our government can bring the oil companies and their incredible profits to heel, it is called setting limits on prices for emergency purposes and windfall profits taxes. It is called the end of price gouging and market manipulation. It is called investigating the relationship between our President, whose family is heavily invested in oil, our Vice President, who is the former CEO of a company that services big oil, and our Secretary of State, who was a former Chevron employee. Gas was \$1.46 a gallon when George W. Bush took office; it is now at or approaching \$4 a gallon. Are we starting to get it yet, or will we continue to be bled dry as we remain obedient and subservient?

Don't let the propaganda agents of big business tell you that all we need to do is let Big Oil drill in Anwar and everywhere else they want in the U.S. We use 60% of the world's oil and we have 2% of it. If we started drilling for oil in Anwar today, it wouldn't be flowing for about 10 years and by today's prices, its quantity would only be enough to reduce prices by maybe 1 cent a gallon. Drilling in Anwar and other domestic drilling is not a solution, it is just more spin so you won't see the truth.

The truth is we need a government. A government that won't let our children chew on toxic toys from China and won't let the oil companies rape us. We need a government that encourages alternative energy exploration. We need a government that cares about its people. We are a country, not a gigantic corporation. We breathe the same air and drink the same water and drive the same roads. There is a common good. We are all in this together. You have been told since 1980, the start of the "me generation," that only profit is good and the market is your god. It is time to reclaim our heritage. You have been fed a lie; it doesn't work. Are we beginning to understand? Are we there yet?

Jim Ramelis
Gould City

Veterans May Attend Reunion, WWII Tribute in Traverse City

Northern Michigan military veterans may attend a reunion and World War II tribute in Traverse City Saturday, May 31, and Sunday, June 1. Saturday's events will include dinner, entertainment, and guest speaker Doug Stanton, author of the book "In Harm's Way." A brunch is planned Sunday.

For more information about attending the veterans reunion, contact Del Corner at (231) 632-6955. Donations are also being accepted for the event.

St. Ignace News Policies

Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

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MICHIGAN POLITICS

By George Weeks



Spirited Congressional Races in store for '08

This year's GOP challenge of five-term Senator Carl Levin shapes up as another Mission Impossible, but Michigan faces some of its most spirited challenges of congressional incumbents in decades.

Most of the action is downstate, including targeting of two Republicans seen as vulnerable and two Democratic primary opponents of the mother of the beleaguered mayor of Detroit.

But Michigan GOP Chairman Saul Anuzis insists there is potential in the decidedly uphill and underfunded bid of term-limited state Representative Tom Casperson of Escanaba, a third-generation owner in a family log trucking business, against eight-term 1st District Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee).

Anuzis also trumpets the challenge of Levin by term-limited state Representative Jack Hoogendyk of Holland, who long has had one of the most conservative voting records in Lansing and last week filed 30,000 petition signatures, double the number needed and collected from all 83 counties.

Levin, Michigan's longest-serving senator, has been holding his opponents to about 40% of the vote.

Stupak has done even better on occasion, getting 69% against Don Hooper of Iron River in 2006, and 66% against Hooper in 2004. Hooper seeks the nomination again this year, as does Linda Goldthorpe of McMillan.

After his filing last week, Casperson said that in his travels, "What I heard from Houghton to Houghton Lake was that the residents of the District want congressional representation that stands up for fiscal responsibility; stands against burdensome regulations; seeks common sense solutions; avoids partisan politics; and refuses to 'legislate' merely through press releases and letters to the editor."

Northern Michigan's other two congressmen have solid Republican districts - 2nd District eight-term Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), opposed by Hope College professor Fred Johnson of Holland, and 4th District nine-term Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland), opposed by attorney Andrew Concannon of Saginaw.

Nationally, highest-profile Democratic targeting is of freshman Representative Tim Walberg (R-Tipton), proclaimed by assorted independent groups to be a toss up race - or, as described Friday by Michigan Democratic spokesperson Liz Kerr, a looming "rock star campaign." Challengers are state Senate Democratic Leader Mark Schauer of Battle Creek, highly successful in fundraising, and Sharon Renier of Munith, who got 46% of the vote against Walberg in 2006.

Also among the top 10 targets of national Dems is eight-term Representative Joe Knollenberg (R-Bloomfield Township), opposed by ex-Senator Gary Peters of Bloomfield Township, who came within 5,200 votes of defeating now-Attorney General Mike Cox in 2002 and then was named lottery director by Governor Jennifer Granholm.

In Detroit, six-term Representative Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, mother of Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, is challenged in the Democratic primary by state Senator Martha Scott and ex-state Representative Mary Walters, now working for Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, who has filed perjury and other charges against the mayor stemming from his racy text messaging sex scandal with his female chief of staff.

Last week, some high drama appeared possible when the Reverend Horace Sheffield, a controversial political activist, filed in the primary against 22-term Representative John Conyers (D-Detroit) (whose wife is on the city council and voted against removing the mayor). But, alas, Sheffield withdrew Friday.

Conyers has no GOP opponent. Not that it would matter. He's won by about 90% when he has.

Notable Northern Women

The Michigan Women's Hall of Fame abounds with political north-erners.

In 1925, there was Cora Reynolds Anderson of L'Anse, first woman elected to the state House to what was then called the "Iron District," the counties of Baraga, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon.

In 1950, Ruth Thompson of Whitehall was the first Michigan woman elected to Congress, representing counties as far north as Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau.

Among the most notable is Munising-born Connie Binsfeld of Maple City, who before her 1990 election as lieutenant governor was the only woman in Michigan history to be elected to both houses of Legislature and hold major leadership positions in both.

Binsfeld was among political pioneers cited by Michigan Supreme Court Justice Betty Weaver, former chief justice and herself a hall of famer, in remarks prepared for Sunday dedication of the Leelanau County Government Center.

In touting other Leelanau firsts, Weaver, a former probate and Michigan Court of Appeals judge, cited a woman who was born in a log cabin in the county in 1891 and was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame in 1990: Emelia Schaub, who in 1936 was the first woman elected in Michigan as a county prosecutor; lobbied First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and others on behalf of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians long before it gained federal recognition, and published a book at age 95.

All of that long before Wayne County just recently elected its first female prosecutor.

Notable Northern Books

Governor Jennifer Granholm, following a tradition started in 1954, proclaimed Michigan Week starting May 17 "as a time to embrace, explore, and celebrate everything that sets our state apart as an ideal place to live, work, and raise a family."

One of the traditions is the annual selection of 20 Michigan Notable Books by a Library of Michigan committee. (Full disclosure: I am on the selection committee.)

One timely 2008 non-fiction selection is "Mackinac Bridge: A 50-year Chronicle, 1957-2007," by Mike Fornes.

Among novels is "Returning to Earth" by Jim Harrison. Northern Michigan plays a pivotal role in the fifth novel by an author who has had abodes in Leelanau and Alger counties.

Another northern Notable is "The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft," edited by Robert Dale Parker. Born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie by her Ojibwe mother and Irish-born father, Schoolcraft is the first known American Indian literary writer.

A list of all 2008 selections, and those of previous years, can be seen at www.michigan.gov/michiganweek, clicking on Notable Books.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

Cheboygan Art Show Dates Announced

The Summer Arts and Craft Show in Cheboygan is scheduled for Friday, June 13, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday, June 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The show will be at Washington Park.

For an application to participate, contact the Cheboygan Chamber of Commerce at (231) 627-7183.

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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.