

News from Small Town Middle America

#8

by Michael Gilfix

Small town thoughts to ponder:

"Coming from a small town it was tough to dream big. When I grew up in a small town in Georgia, my biggest dream was one day to be able to go to Atlanta."

- Herschel Walker.

Same for me. We went nowhere, except a couple of trips to Winnipeg. Yes, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Going to Detroit (3 hours away) was not even considered, it was so distant. Getting on an actual airplane at age 16 to fly to San Francisco for my brother's wedding was beyond exciting. And scary. I bought life insurance from a vending machine at the airport!

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County Seeks Broadband Internet Services

The county Board of Commission voted to retain consulting services to create a "rural broadband public private partnership" to enhance internet services.

On my last visit to Tawas, I had faster internet service on my phone than I recently did in sophisticated Palo Alto, California. Nevertheless, rural services need attention all over the nation.

Letters to the Editor: EV Cars & Pot Smoking

Paul R. is concerned that EV cars often have trouble getting charged at public charging stations. He has a suggestion: "They need to put pot smoking shops/cafes at each charging station. Most EV Owners are also the same ones who voted to legalize smoking dope anyway (so they) will lose the concept of time and they will forget about being pissed for having to wait so long."

Dan M. comments on an earlier letter that was critical of a particular political party. He concludes that "her real 'concern' is not for name calling, but that some views differ from hers and that she feels threatened by that." You can't really tell what "side" Dan is on from this comment, can you?

Janet S. reminds everybody that we had Constitution Week in mid-September. The local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) sends along this note. Did you even know that it was Constitution Week September 17-23?

Absentee Ballots in Michigan

Interestingly, residents can already apply to vote absentee in the November 8 election. Keep in mind that Michigan is one of the states that experienced serious and worrisome

election challenges. Depending on who wins, you can see challenges coming!

Churches Abound, Enjoy Longevity

No fewer than 20 churches announce their services in the weekly newspaper. Harbor Church celebrates 90 years as part of the community.

Given the population of East Tawas, there is one church for every 140 people in town.

The Scourge of Meth - The District Court Was Busy

About 13 individuals received jail or fines this week. Most relate to alcohol abuse or drug use. Methamphetamines continue to plague certain elements of the community. The vast majority avoid this scourge.

Yet, small mid-western towns seem to be particularly susceptible. Do you wonder why?

Paul Bunyan Days to be Celebrated

This is the Babe and the Blue Ox Festival. It features “a beard contest, tall-tale competition, and the opportunity to dress up your pet like a legendary lumberjack.”

On the drive from Tawas north to Alpena, a giant statue of Paul Bunyan enthralled me as a kid. I hope it's still there!

Labor Day an Annual, Sad Milestone

When and since I was a kid in town, Labor Day was a day of sadness and disappointment. It signaled the end of the summer. The town quieted down, dances at the community center in the park ended (the community center was replaced by a hotel many years ago). The quiet town of East Tawas became even quieter. I suppose it was about 60% disappointment and 40% gratitude that the summer season was over. For businesses, it was and is 100% disappointing.

So goes it for small tourist towns in Michigan. The tourists leave. Residents look to their neighbors, and they look inward.

Notes from the Author:

The Goal of my Tawas News is to educate and amuse you about my home town, East Tawas, Michigan. It is to remind you that small towns still thrive in America, that they are sometimes struggling, often vibrant. It is based on my hometown weekly newspaper, personal memories, and occasional, very personal observations.

The Inspiration: The inspiration was Garrison Keillor's “News from Lake Wobegon” on his NPR show, Prairie Home Companion. Lake Wobegon was fictional, quietly poignant and lol enjoyable.

Tawas is not fictional; it is very real. It is similar to Lake Wobegon in many ways – the farmers, the pastors, the community where everybody knows everybody's business.

The town of East Tawas is located on Lake Huron on the lower peninsula about 110 miles north of Flint, Michigan. The population is around 2,723. It hasn't grown much from my

childhood in the 50's and 60's. The adjacent town of Tawas City has a population of about 1,726. Why 2 separate towns? Don't ask.

So, enjoy, and let me know what you think. Share it with friends and family. I am happy to add anyone to the mailing list, so send me names.

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