



These bridges built without de-watering!

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

THE TRUTH IS ALWAYS FAIR

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FEB 04 - FEB 11, 2016

VOL. 17, NO. 05


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Turning Off The Falls For The Benefit Of Engineers, Construction Firms Here?

Mike Hudson

How could it be possible? One might be forgiven for asking.

How could it be possible that, using technology commonly available more than a century ago, the State of New York was able to build two stone arch bridges from the mainland to Goat Island in Niagara Falls State Park and now, in 2016, finds itself unable to repair the bridges without turning off the water flowing over the mighty Cataract?

Was the water wasn't turned off in 1901, when the twin spans were originally constructed? It wasn't turned off in 2004, when two temporary bridges were erected so that repairs could be made to the originals. In fact, the only time we know of that the American Falls was ever "de-watered" was in 1969, when state officials said they wanted to examine the effects of erosion on the underlying bedrock.

The bridges, one for pedestrians and the other for vehicular traffic, cross a narrow span of the Upper Rapids of the Niagara River. State officials say the dewatering and reconstruction project might cost anywhere from \$21.6 million to \$37.3 million, depending on the repair option they adopt.

Undoubtedly, the project will actually come in at far more than the upper end of this early projection suggests, creating a huge windfall for developers, construction companies and engineering consultants.

Which prompts another question: Who exactly is the driving force behind the dewatering plan, and what are their motives? Quite clearly, bridges can be built to Goat Island without turning off the American Falls.

In fact, people have been building bridges across turbulent waterways without shutting the water off for thousands of years. The Brooklyn Bridge, the Golden Gate in San Francisco and the Bridge on the River Kwai are but a few notable examples.



This simple pedestrian footbridge was built in 1901. Today, the state Parks Commission claims it will cost tens of millions of dollars and require the turning off of the American Falls to replace.

Canadian tourism officials were quick to begin salivating at the prospect of the water on the American side being shut down.

"Plan to dry Niagara Falls to repair bridges could be Canadian tourist boon," read a recent head-line in the Toronto Globe and Mail.

"A plan that could see the American side of Niagara Falls go dry for a short period of time to re-build two bridges might be a boon to Canadian tourism," the article stated.

Well known local historian Paul Gromosiak, whose many books on the falls have made him the go-to expert for a generation of national and international television reporters, said turning the water off is just a bad idea.

"I think it's a mistake," Gromosiak said of the plan to dewater the falls. "I'm very concerned about the long-term effects. I wish they could do it without turning off the falls."

Would more tourists go to Yellowstone Park to see Old Faithful if the geyser couldn't be relied up-on to erupt at regular intervals? If the Grand Canyon was filled with topsoil would it draw more visitors? Currently, around 8 million people come to Niagara Falls, N.Y., each year to see the falls.



At the Niagara Falls Reporter, we find it a bit hard to believe that more people will want to see a dry river bed and a cliff than the world famous waterfalls.

The local media had to look hard, but finally they came up with Michelle Kratts, who served as Niagara Falls city historian until this past December, to put a positive spin on what will most certainly be a tour-ism disaster here.

"It's the nature of curiosity," Kratts said. You want to see what's underneath, to see its skeleton."

There are three proposals to replace two bridges to Goat Island — with two of those proposals recommend stopping the flow of water for five to nine months.

State Parks spokesman Randy Simons says the option they are recommending would leave the falls dry from September to April, but it wouldn't happen until 2019 at the earliest and they still need funding.

Money will be secured after a plan is chosen and State Parks will be able to evaluate opportunities for state and federal funding for the bridge replacement project, he added.

Simons called the prospect of a dry falls "a once-in-a-lifetime" event "because beyond fixing these bridges, there is no reason to dewater the falls."

A 131-page report on the designs, along with a drawings was presented to the public



Somehow we can't help but suspect that the dewatering plan is developer-consultant driven and that it would be possible to do the bridge construction without shutting off the falls.

the beginning of the 20th century. Olmsted designed what construction was to look like in that park so they don't look out of place. The (temporary) bridge is everything Olmsted would have abhorred."

Olmsted, of course, would have abhorred nothing more than the flow of water going over the falls being shut down, and during his lifetime did everything he could to see to it that people could see and enjoy the falls. In fact, he designed the bridges in question and oversaw their construction without having to resort to such draconian measures.

The state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation estimated it will have a design approval in place by this summer, after all public comments and reviews have been completed. A final design for the project will begin when funding is in place.

Approximately two years will be needed to complete the final design, obtain permits and approvals, and bid and award the construction contract. Actual construction is also anticipated to last another two years, officials said.

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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Wednesday night at City Hall.

"The meeting went great," Simons said. "People love the idea to fix the bridges — there was no real opposition."

The proposal the park is recommending involves concrete archways that mimic the original bridges. Engineers would dry the falls for construction by installing a temporary dam — called a cofferdam — just upstream of the island, and the water would then be diverted down the Horse-shoe Falls on the Canadian side.

The bridges were closed in 2004 and temporary truss bridges were put in to provide for safe passage. The temporary bridges are an "aesthetically unappealing experience for park visitors," according to the report recommending the dewatering. The bridges also restrict views of the rapids and are narrower than the concrete arch bridges, the report states.

Former city historian Tom Yots channeled the spirit of Frederick Law Olmsted to make a case for shut-ting down the American Falls.

"The biggest problem is coming up with the money to do this," Yots said. "These beautiful bridge de-signs go back to

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Engineers To Get Nearly \$5 Million For Design Work On Goat Island Bridges

Mike Hudson

Greenman Pedersen, the Albany based engineering and construction firm overseeing the Peace Bridge project in Buffalo, is also in line to receive a healthy chunk of the \$4.9 million design contract for the Goat Island bridge replacement project.

The firm signed off on a 131-page preliminary Design Report and Environmental Assessment on the project, which cost \$2.4 million, and states that the final design report will cost another \$2.5 million. The project itself is estimated at between \$21.37 million and \$37.32 million, and will involve halting the flow of water over the American Falls for at least five and perhaps as long as nine months.

The longer of the two bridges is 424 feet while the shorter span measures 245 feet in length, the re-port states. Several alternatives are listed, ranging from doing nothing but ongoing maintenance to keep the bridges open to building two completely new spans.

The report states that the American Falls must be dewatered to allow for the demolition of the existing bridges and construction of the replacements. It does not say if engineers and construction workers managed, 115 years ago in 1901, to build the current bridges without dewatering the falls.

In fact, the flow of water over the falls was much greater in 1901, prior to the hydro-



One of two relatively small bridges on Goat Island that engineers claim must be rebuilt by shutting off the water to Niagara Falls.

electric diversions associated with the Niagara Power Project.

“Dewatering is expected initially (to) be a tourism draw (a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the falls and river channel without water), but after some period of time could negatively impact park attendance, particularly during the summer tourist season,” the report states.

No alternative to dewatering is considered, other than localized dewatering around the pilings and piers as they are constructed, which the report says would be cost prohib-

itive.

And the reality is that a dewatered Falls is not a “once in a lifetime” event, since the falls were shut off in 1969 so that geologists could examine the condition of the underlying bedrock.

At that time, human skeletons, thousands of coins, guns and other weapons were recovered by work-ers.

Ultimately, the report recommends construction of a large cofferdam at the upstream tip of Goat Island to shut off the flow of water to the American and Bridal Veil falls and

diverting it to the Canadian Falls.

According to the report, planning for the project began in 2005, after the bridges were closed and the temporary bridges opened. At that time, a study conducted by Cannon Design recommended the bridges be replaced, based on the deteriorating condition of the arches and the concrete piers that support the spans.

In 2009, Bergmann Associates and L.P. Ciminelli undertook another study to determine what kind of bridges would make for suitable replacements, along with an assessment of various dewatering op-tions to be used during construction.

Finally, in 2012, State Parks signed a memorandum of understanding with the state

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Waterless Waterfall Big Draw For Tourists Looking For Novelty



A dry Niagara Falls is said to be a tourist draw. But will it be?



Imagine the fun of being able to go to Las Vegas and not be able to gamble!

Quick. What's the first word in "Water-fall"?

No, it's not a trick question. If you said "Water" you are correct. And apparently quite a bit smarter than some of the public officials who have commented on the state's plan to shut down the American and Bridal Veil falls here in order to replace two very small bridges to Goat Island.

Former city historian Michelle Kratts, State Parks spokesman Randy Simons and

engineers from Greenman Pedersen, who prepared a preliminary report on the project, have all said that the "once in a lifetime" opportunity to see the falls with no water going over them would actually boost tourism here, at least in the short term.

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster told a local television station that the project won't affect the Maid of the Mist operation, so everything will be fine.

"It's not like we're turning off the entire falls, water will still flow over the Horseshoe Falls so the Maid of the Mist will keep running," Dyster said.

And no data exists from 1969, the last time the flow of water over the falls was diverted to the Canadian side.

The American Falls draws approximately 8 million tourists a year. Will more come to see a dried up riverbed and a sheer cliff, which is what the falls are without any water going

over them?

If you were coming from Japan, India or Europe, would you be more or less likely to spend the money on a trip when the mighty Cataracts roar like thunder or when they were, to put it simply, turned off?

If Kratts, Simons and the engineers from Greenman Pederson are correct, it may alter the face of tourism at destinations far removed from Niagara Falls.

Las Vegas, for example, might want to give visitors the "once in a lifetime" opportunity of going there and not being allowed to gamble.

In Malibu, closing the beaches would have much the same effect, providing a novel experience for those more interested in having a novel experience rather than swimming, surfing or working on their tan.

At Walt Disney World, near Orlando, Fla., they could shut down all the rides. Imagine how exciting it would be to simply look at the roller coasters rather than riding on them.

Arguing that a water-less waterfall would be a great tourist draw is absurd. Plans call for the water to be turned off for five to nine months, depending on the plan that it ultimately adopted, and even under the rosier of scenarios that may have a negative economic impact in a city that can ill afford any further financial woes.

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How Come These Bridges Could Be Built Without De-Watering?



According to the many navigators who have been sailing them for the past five centuries, the roughest waters in North America can be found at the confluence of the East River and Long Island Sound in New York City, where the twice daily conflicting tides roil and churn the waters. Still, on Sept. 30, 1916 — a century ago — the railroad bridge there was opened without dewatering either the East River or Long Island Sound. Which prompts the question: Why does the replacement of two tiny pedestrian bridges over the Upper Niagara Rapids require such draconian measures a century later?



The Seven Mile Bridge was also built without dewatering the Atlantic Ocean.



Some of the most treacherous waters in the world are associated with the conflicting tides of Golden Gate, in the San Francisco Bay. And yet, engineers working in 1937 were able to build this three mile long span without dewatering the bay. It's really too bad all those engineers are now dead because the NYS Parks Commission could have called them up and asked how to build the dinky pedestrian bridges they are now proposing.



Bridges have been built for tens of thousands of years. This one, at Alcantara, Spain, was erected by the Romans around the time of Christ. In Niagara Falls, much smaller bridges cannot be maintained after a mere century and require tens of millions of dollars and draconian engineering projects to put right.



This simple pedestrian footbridge was designed and built by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1901. Today, the state Parks Commission claims it will cost tens of millions of dollars and require the turning off of the American Falls to replace.



British and Australian POW's built the Bridge on the River Kwai for the Japanese during World War II without dewatering said River Kwai. The bridge was a major engineering project designed to carry railroad traffic, unlike the tiny bridges proposed by the New York State Parks Commission, which will be called upon to carry only pedestrian traffic.



The Rainbow International Bridge just a few hundred yards away was built without de-watering the Niagara River.

Chilton Apartments Given Away To Insider: Bad Deal Or Just Stupidity?

The facts are in. Only two possibilities remain.

Either the purchase of an apartment building located at 631 Chilton Ave. by an appointed volunteer city official with close ties to the Dyster administration represents some sort of shady deal, or the Department of Community Development and its youthful head, Seth Piccirillo, simply botched the process, allowing valuable city property to be possibly transferred into private hands for a measly \$500.

The building was never advertised as being for sale and no sign was ever posted on the property to let neighbors and others interested in the property that it was available.

According to the Niagara Gazette, last week, an Aurora area man, Joseph Gullo, emerged to say he had been interested in the property since last April, and had the emails and phone records to Piccirillo's agency to prove it.

"If we could find the right house, we could rent out the property short term, fix it up, let our kids live there when they attend college, and eventually retire in it," Gullo said in an email to the Gazette.

Piccirillo said the emails were apparently



631 Chilton was sold rather quietly for \$500 by the city to Karen Mock.

relegated to the Department of Community Development's spam account, and that neither he nor anyone else had seen them.

So he placed a tiny ad, last August, in the Gazette, asking for a Request For Proposals (RFP) on acquiring and fixing up the Chilton Avenue property. In addition to getting the apartment building, the potential buyer could also get a \$40,000 grant to rehabilitate the property, the RFP said.



437 Memorial Parkway sold for \$500 by the city to Karen Mock.

As far as can be determined, the only person to have seen this ad was Karen Mock of Keller Williams Realty in North Buffalo and a member of Dyster's Healthy Community Committee. She submitted the lone bid of \$500.

The 3,160 square foot brick building has an assessed value of \$37,261, according to records at City Hall. And it comes with the \$40,000 reimbursable grant for renovations.

The property was gifted to the city by Wells Fargo bank after the previous owner defaulted on the mortgage.

And of course this isn't Mock's first experience with buying property from Dyster and the city. In 2013, members of the Niagara Falls City Council unanimously approved the sale of a city-owned property at 435 Memorial Parkway to Mock for another measly \$500.

That seven-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath brick structure has an assessed value of \$44,047. In other words, over the past two years, Mock has been able to pick up Niagara Falls real estate assessed at more than \$81,000 for \$1,000 and get an additional \$40,000 grant in the bargain.

That might be described as insider trading. It also might be described as a gigantic screw-up on the part of Piccirillo and his Community Development Department.

Mostly though, it could be described as business as usual in the Niagara Falls run by Mayor Paul Dyster, whose idea of economic development has more to do with building housing for the welfare cases his policies have created than it does with creating jobs.

Dyster's Claim That Health Care Benefits Are Necessary To Attract Council Candidates Is Ridiculous

Anna Howard

Last week the Reporter broke a story detailing how Niagara Falls Mayor Paul A. Dyster had vetoed the recently passed council resolution ending the perk of taxpayer paid health insurance for future council members.

While the mayor's killing of the cost saving resolution has puzzled reporters and the general public alike no one has dared to go beyond the highly suspect veto and seek an answer to the question: Why did the mayor veto a perfectly fine, though rare, cost cutting council resolution?

On the face of his veto the mayor would have us believe that the health insurance benefit "is needed to attract the best possible council candidates." The mayor would like us to accept two things that aren't true: 1) the elected position of public servant is the same as the hired position of public employee, and 2) both private sector employees and elected officials must be offered employee benefit packages...even though one is hired and the other elected.

Once again the mayor has triangulated the argument (see our articles on the mayor's cricket field for a discussion of Dyster triangulation) by turning the questions of the propriety of health insurance for council members into a hollow claim of "If you don't provide free health insurance and the costly opt out clause then you're against good government!" To that the Reporter says, horse feathers.

There's more here than meets the eye but what can it be? Since the mayor's argument is dead on delivery it must be something else. After all Mr. Dyster is a mayor not a council member. What possessed him to put his proverbial nose into council business...cost cutting business so rare that it hasn't been seen in recent memory.

Next year the council seats of Grandinetti, Touma and Walker are open for filling. Are there potential new candidates in the wings that the mayor wants to see on the council? Are those possible future members of the council going to seek office with hopes of scoring either the health insurance or the

opt out cash award that's given for declining the health insurance? Remember, the council position pays a respectable \$12,000 annually (for attending 26 biweekly meetings) along with \$10,000 in opt out cash for those qualified for that particular goodie.

One wonders how far Dyster wants to take his comparison of the council position to full time city employee. Would the mayor support the council forming an "elected officials union"? Does he think the council should have the right to picket or strike? Since

he wants the council members to receive benefits intended for contractual employees maybe he'd like to see the council negotiate their own employment contract. We pose these questions in view of the mayor's curious veto and his silly notion that employment benefit packages are necessary to attract qualified council candidates.



Mayor Paul Dyster does not want to end health care perks for future part time council members.

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The Reporter Has Consistently Led The Way On Train Station Coverage And Analysis

Anna Howard

It seems that the Reporter has become – maybe it always was – the Rodney Dangerfield of news reporting. Especially political news reporting. And this in spite of the fact that this paper consistently covers, breaks and editorializes on the uncomfortable issues that are routinely ignored or wished into the cornfield by other media outlets.

Casino taxpayer dollars going out the window, city taxpayer dollars unaccounted for as discovered by the NYS Comptroller, non-transparent bidding and public projects featuring seemingly endless work change orders are just a few of the subjects the Reporter has examined. News that some find as inconvenient truths as the city slides deeper into an abyss of debt and deficit.

A local talk show host recently broadcast that his was the sole media source raising questions about how the city's soon to open train station was being built in the face of questions regarding its cost, its Amtrak contract and its operating budget. How he could have missed the Reporter's dozens of train station analysis pieces in the last two years is a mystery.

The Reporter has owned the train station story and all of the questions that go with it for more than half a decade. We were there at the beginning to counter the groundbreaking ballyhoo. We noted the \$44 million minimal cost, the lack of an annual operating budget and the station location. We questioned the: historical accuracy, expense and administration of the Underground Railroad Interpretive Center; train station project consulting fees; \$350,000 train station rebid; change orders; projected ridership; and, the folly of promoting a 19th Century means of travel while the local airport's potential for charter flight and



A Mayor Paul Dyster look-alike was found to demonstrate the value of building a \$44 million train station for a city that gets 64 riders per day.

cargo handling is ignored.

In addition to the above the Reporter (tap, tap...is this microphone on...can you hear us in the back?) has been the lone news source to predict that an outside operator is going to be hired to run the train station and that federal money will be injected into the early operating years of the station to make sure it doesn't fail. With significant federal dollars having made its construction possible there are Washington entities who can't afford to let the project collapse once the ribbon is cut.

Rodney Dangerfield didn't get any respect but he was one incredibly talented comedian. He had a long and successful career. Other comedians robbed his jokes and some even tried to imitate his act. But he was never threatened by the imposters because he knew

that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

The Reporter wishes that more media outlets would imitate our hard hitting, factual, inconvenient news reporting style.

BTW here are just a few of the train station stories we have published in the last few years:

June 17, 2014

Dyster's Train Station Debacle Mirrors City Courthouse Fiasco

Groundbreaking Event for Train Station Attracts 150 Number at ceremony far exceeds expected ridership

Nov 18, 2014

Train Station of Dreams' Could Be Disaster

Train Station Just Wasteful Foolishness Feb 3 2015

Will New Train Station Bring Same Old

Results?

May 26, 2015

Reporter Predicts Train Station is Doomed

Enough Already, The Name's Too Long To Achieve Success, New Intermodal Transportation Center Must Be More Than Train Station

No Lease Between Amtrak, City May Mean Future Surprises for Train Station

July 7, 2015

Early Morning Fog Befuddles Dyster's Grasp of Railroad Station Time, Budget

July 14, 2015

No Contracts With Amtrak, Tour Companies To Occupy, Use New Train Station Here

Dec. 10 2015

Reporter Unveils Controversial Plan to Subsidize Train Ridership And Boost Local Economy!

Jan 14 2016

Train Station and Wallenda – same old, same old



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Complaints About Goat Island Parking Mount; Resentment Of State Agency Builds Among Local Residents

James Hufnagel

It's the tourist off-season, and that means the restrooms at Devil's Hole and Whirlpool State Parks are closed, Three Sisters Islands have been gated off and, as we reported to you last week, parking discounts for seniors in the Niagara Falls State Park are not in effect.

Our story struck a chord with one of our readers, who contacted us the following day to relate her own frustrating experience trying to park on Goat Island, undoubtedly shared by scores of other discount parking permit holders on a regular basis.

"This happened to us just last week. Went to Goat Island for a nice walk around the island and either we HAD to take the automated ticket and pay or we had to back out. There was no one at the other toll box to talk with to say we were sr. citizens. We did find parking at Three Sisters parking area, but it's the process that's infuriating...this doesn't happen at other state parks – with those, either we drive right in or a ticket taker checks our license and lets us in."

The appalling lack of consideration and disrespect for senior citizens exhibited by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, not to mention



Niagara Falls State Park, a former nature preserve, has now been perfectly tuned to squeeze every last single buck out of visitors, to accumulate in the pockets of Albany, Jimmy Glynn and Jeremy Jacobs.

locals who visit these attractions during the off-season and would appreciate the simple

courtesy of open bathrooms, can't be overstated.

There's blame to go around, however. The chief beneficiaries of the spending of the eight million tourists who visit Niagara Falls State Park every year are Jeremy Jacobs, Sr., owner of Delaware North Companies, Inc., and Jimmy Glynn, owner of the Maid of the Mist Steamboat Co., and it's common knowledge that they, not the Parks agency, call the shots at the famous attraction.

Delaware North runs a restaurant, a large snack bar with associated food court and several food and ice cream booths scattered around the park. Maid of the Mist has made so much money over the years that it was able to build a new \$35 million boatyard in the Niagara Gorge last year without so much as flinching, even after losing half of its annual revenue due to revocation of its Canadian concession for alleged bid-rigging.

Both Delaware North and Maid of the Mist are "privately held" corporations. That means that neither has shareholders to answer to, dividends to pay, balance sheets and income statements to be made public or a board of directors to oversee business practices and ethics.

And since they are privately held, every red cent of profit from Maid and Delaware

North business activities in Niagara Falls State Park flows directly into the pockets of two men, Glynn and Jacobs, instead of businesses in the city.

Keep An Eye On Chemours Closing: Excuse To Treat Frackwater, Hike Taxes, Water Rates

Anna Howard

Niagara Falls -Keep an eye on the Chemours closing.

Chemours plans to close its Niagara Falls plant by the end of this year, eliminating about 200 jobs at the Buffalo Avenue factory.

The Niagara Falls plant makes reactive metals for specialty chemicals industries such as pharmaceutical, pulp and paper and others. It is a DuPont spin off.

With the loss for both the city in taxes and water board in water fees, expect Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster to cite the loss as an excuse to raise taxes and for the water board to cite the loss as a reason to jack up water rates.

The Chemours closing is being tied to a major loss of water service revenue, but haven't all of those new hotels created significant increases in water revenue for the water board?

Now that Chemours is leaving, also keep an eye on the fracking water treatment scenario. For years water board members have said the water plant can handle frack water treatment with no problem and that the loss of water revenue from Chemours has to be made up somehow and that fracking water treatment is the way to go.

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King Con Schmueli Sues Own Mother, Proving Once And For All He's A Class Act

Frank Parlato

We were shocked at the number of emails complaining that we had omitted a story about the no-torious swindler and con artist Shmuel "Sam" Shmueli in last week's paper. This newspaper has uncovered a great deal about the rascal who has stiffed or tried to stiff almost everyone he has come in contract with. Apparently the public has an appetite for more.

We have learned from the Israeli courts that Shmueli – who has made a living in the U.S. suing dozens of people in meritless lawsuits – is also actively filing lawsuits in Israel, where he's current-ly living.

Although the Israeli lawsuits are in Hebrew and we're awaiting translations, we've already learned that in one lawsuit Shmueli is suing his 90 plus year old mother. Yeah you read that right. We can't wait to read the full translation to learn how his mother ran afoul of Shmueli – of course, we'll share that information.

We also discovered that Shmueli has been evicted from several more apartments than we had previously reported and that when he leaves he always leaves his trademark piles of Shmueli de-bris. The mess is always so catastrophic that landlords are compelled to make an extensive cata-log of photographs.

Another choice tidbit: When he had his own newspaper in Brooklyn– Israel Shelanu – evi-dence from his printer (who he stiffed), and testimony from former employees who claim he cheated them of out pay checks,



Shmuel Shmueli as a newspaper editor. His employees said he stiffed them out of paychecks and ran off fake editions with ads, then sent the bill to advertisers.

seem to reveal that Shmueli did not print the quantity of papers he claimed.

He told advertisers – and the Los Angeles Times in an interview – that he printed 120,000 copies weekly of his Israel Shelanu. According to a former employee, he actually printed less than 12,000 copies.

"Maybe he made a mistake with the extra zero," one of his ex-employees told the Reporter.

Also according to an employee, some of his advertisers who didn't actually see the newspaper were sent a photocopy of a fake newspaper page made with an advertiser's ad in it – Shmueli would send it to them and bill them as if the ad had actually appeared in the newspaper.

His Hebrew language newspaper was shut down when he was sued for copyright infringement by Haaretz Daily Newspapers, Maariv Modiin Publishing Co., Ltd., and the Publication Group, Inc. of Los Angeles after plagiarizing their work for years. There was a \$24 million judgment filed against Shmueli.

Shmueli never paid a dime, discharging the \$24 million debt in bankruptcy, along with dozens of other debts he incurred from good folks dumb enough to extend him credit.

Shmueli is an Israeli citizen currently residing in that country. But up until recently he lived in Buf-falo and Niagara Falls. The Niagara Falls City Police Department is currently pursuing an active case against Shmueli for writing bad checks. Their investigation is based on the complaint of a Niagara Falls landlord victim to whom he allegedly wrote bad rent checks, as reported on in our January 7, 2016 edition.

According to Niagara Falls Police Supt. Bryan DalPorto, "There is an active investigation of filing false instruments. The dollar amount rises to a felony level and we're investigating it fully. If we find there was criminal activity, he will be charged."

"It will be up to the DA's office [extradition]," said DalPorto, "it is an extraditable offense."

A non-violent D felony charge carries a penalty of up to seven years in prison.

The Parkway Condominiums – from which he was unceremoniously evicted last month– house many of Niagara Falls' elite – so the elegant Shmueli was right at home with lawyers and other professional people

who live there. In fact he told everyone there he was a lawyer.

He is not. Although he is going to need one.

With panoramic views of the Niagara River, it must have been pleasant for Shmueli, sitting on the balcony on a bright summer morning, having his favorite breakfast of lox and bagels, reading the newspapers, and planning how to stiff his next lawyer.

In a nutshell – Shmueli's con involved getting investors to give him money to retain lawyers for a lawsuit and in return, if he won the case, returning a share of the winnings to the investor. Instead of paying lawyers, however, he only paid a retainer fee, pocketed the rest of the cash and stiffed the investors and lawyers both.

Prominent attorneys and law firms such as Joseph Zdarsky, David Gutkowki, Steven Cohen, Co-rey Hogan, John LaFalce, Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel, Kevin Burke, Bradley Hoppe, the former law firm of Damon Morey, Eric Bloom, William Savino, Mitchell Banas, Blair and Roach, Kazlow and Kazlow, Gene Kazlow, Andrew Lavoot Bluestone, Anderson & Anderson, David C. Buxbaum, Kloss, Stenger and Lotempio, Joseph Mazurek, Phil Abromowicz, David Kloss, Michael Paskowitz, all lived, we suspect, to regret the day they saw Shmueli walk through their doors.

The accounts of his ex-employees are stimulating, the accounts of his ex-landlords are enlivening. The accounts of the lawyers he stiffed and was sued by or countersued are thought -provoking.

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When Was The Last Time You Did It?

Anna Howard

There was a time when husbands and wives did it frequently.

Lovers thought it was incredibly romantic to do over and over again.

Sometimes they did it all night long and from city to city.

When was the last time you did it?

Ride the train, that is.

Mayor Paul A. Dyster's nearly completed \$45 million train station will be called "the Niagara Falls International Railway Station & Intermodal Transportation Center."

That's a mouthful – in fact it is the longest name for any train station in America.

It is likely to be one of the loneliest too.

At 22,000 square feet, it is bigger than train stations in larger cities. Niagara Falls averages 64 passengers per day [32 coming and going]. Amtrak currently services these in an 800 square foot station at no cost to city taxpayers. 800 square feet is all they are going to rent in the new station since that is all the need.

It is up to taxpayers to pay for the other 21,200 square feet of new train station space.

A federal, state and city-funded project to build, the city will pay for its maintenance, estimated by this publication to be between \$300,000- \$500,000 per year based on published information of other train stations costs.

This big increase in city taxpayer burden



Is Niagara Falls going back in time or will more people ride the train because of a new train station?

will be paid by city taxpayers to offer no new train services just a much larger station for an outmoded form of transportation.

Some critics say the mayor built the train station to quench his childhood wish to be a railroad engineer.

But is it outmoded?

Please stop reading right here, turn to your friend, your spouse, your significant other or whoever is sitting or standing near you and ask: When was the last time you rode a train?

When you traveled to Disney World, did you take a train? When you went to Vegas for the weekend, did you take a train? When you went to DC and chaperoned your children's school outing, did you ride the train? When you went to New York City with friends to

catch a Yankee's game did you take the train? When you and your girlfriends shopped the Big Apple for the holidays, did you go by train?

So, who is taking the train and, more importantly, who is going to be taking the train to Niagara Falls?

The millions of city dollars spent to build the train station could have gone toward further development of the Niagara Falls International Airport. It could have gone toward road and highway improvement so that visitors would have a smooth, safe stay instead of pothole-filled roadways. There are few places in America where roads are in poorer condition.

It could have gone to a lot of items needed in Niagara Falls.

The millions could have been saved, gone to the general fund, to reduce what are the highest property taxes in New York State in proportion to the value of the real estate.

Dyster instead built an outmoded transportation monument to himself at a huge cost and a huge future maintenance cost – for what will be an empty building.

That will be one of his legacies. A disproportionately large station that will be empty most of the time and cost taxpayers all of the time.

We are indeed fortunate that Mayor Dyster never dreamt of becoming an astronaut.

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Wednesdays (Feb. 10, 17, 24)

Hip Hop Dance Class: "For Good Health's Sake: Run, Jump & Shake." Led by Cardiopulmonary Services Manager Melissa Rackmil, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., Medical Center Auditorium. Free.

Thursdays (Feb. 11, 18, 25)

Smoking Cessation: Learn the keys to kicking the habit and get the support you need, 2 to 3:30 p.m., Niagara Wellness Connection Center, sixth floor.

Sunday, Feb. 14

Go Red for Church Day: Area churches share lifesaving information for women from the American Heart Association. Want your church to participate? Phone 285-2382. Free.

Friday, Feb. 19

Become a Champion of Change: Annual Black History Month Luncheon and Health Program. "Getting to the Heart of the Matter," 10:30 a.m. Lunch with keynote speaker and Buffalo Promise Neighborhood President Yvonne Minor-Ragan, Ph.D., 11:30 a.m. Memorial Medical Center Auditorium. Free. Call 285-2382.

All events except Go Red for Church will be held at Memorial Medical Center, 621 10th St., Niagara Falls



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Cult Of NXIVM Series Part 11:

Frank Parlato

Recap from last week: I was hired as a consultant by NXIVM, in September 2007 when the company was embroiled in multiple lawsuits and several press articles accused it of being a cult. One of my tasks was to stop the negative publicity.

But I soon observed that Keith Raniere, the founder and leader of NXIVM, had a secret harem of a dozen or more women, although NXIVM students were led to believe he lived like a celibate monk. I also discovered that Raniere had “lost” \$65.6 million of the Seagram’s heiresses Clare and Sara Bronfman’s money in the commodities market and that he advised the sisters to invest another \$26.3 million in a real estate deal in Los Angeles. And I recognized that the lawsuits and the bad press were a tool Raniere used to keep his harem women in a constant state of crisis, forever circling the wagons to protect him.

I was employed by a liar, a master manipulator, sex deviant and possibly a thief on a grand scale of millions. When I exposed the real estate deal was a scam and the developer stole \$10 million I was fired.

Subsequent testimony by former high ranking NXIVM members in a court case suggest that Raniere has a gambling problem (using other people’s money) and that he’s both a sex addict and a sexual predator. And that the adoring harem that services Raniere is not enough for his sexual appetite. In fact, he enlists his harem women to act as wing women – to procure more and more women for his enjoyment.

During the day Raniere would sleep. Once awake he would usually consult with girlfriend and NXIVM member Kristen Keeffe about various ways to keep the lawsuits alive. They would also discuss ways of punishing NXIVM enemies.

After meeting with Keeffe, Raniere would often meet with Clare Bronfman and with earnest gravity unload his great ethical teachings on her and any other women who might be around. Then he might take a walk over to Nancy Salzman’s house where she would cook dinner and wait on him. Salzman was his chief assistant, the president of NVIVM and like Keith an expert at hypnosis and Neuro Linguistic Programming.

After dinner, Raniere would decide what woman or women he would bed that night.

He had a lot of options. He could stay



Daniela Fernandez, one time harem member. Raniere imprisoned her in a NXIVM house for more than a year. She fled from Raniere and returned to Mexico. (left)

Longtime harem member Karen Unterreiner. (right)

home and sleep with one or both of the two women that lived with him – the beautiful Mariana Fernandez, an illegal Mexican alien, and Pam Cafritz, an aging but still attractive, slavish devotee. Cafritz served as his main wing woman procuring him new females. He could also go next door to visit Karen Unterreiner his long time harem slave who willingly put businesses in her name to make certain Raniere would not be on the hook for any tax fraud.

Living with Karen was Camilia the younger sister of Raniere’s Mexican beauty Marianna. Camilia was underage or barely of age and was also here illegally.

If none of the regular women were satisfactory, Raniere might go a-calling on any one of a dozen other NXIVM women who would drop everything – even NXIVM classes they taught – if Raniere chose to bed them that night.

If none of his regulars were of interest on a given night he might spy some new lovely among the ranks of students and begin grooming her – or Pam would – getting her ready for a magical night. A female student would be told she was the one who was growing the most spiritually, and while it was a sacrifice for him to sleep with the lady, it was also a sign of her honor and privilege.

Eventually the time came when Raniere wanted to prey on Salzman’s two young daughters. How he pulled it off is classic Raniere.

Ex-NXIVM member, Becca Friedman recalled:

“During a seminar [for women] Nancy Salzman talked about how men [fathers] become attracted to their daughters when they hit teenage-hood, because the kids look so



Loretta Garza, harem member. (left)

Pam Cafritz – (right) lives with Raniere. Said to be his wing woman.

much like their mothers. This was totally disgusting and really turned a lot of people off. Most of us could not understand what she was talking about, why and what it had to do with feeling empowered as a woman.”

Salzman spoke about this father-to-daughter attraction at the seminar because Raniere introduced the concept to her, most likely in order to accomplish his own plan to sleep with Salzman’s daughters.

Here is how I think he worked it: Raniere tells Salzman that fathers are attracted sexually to their daughters because it reminds them of their wife when the father first met her and fell in love. A mother should be flattered, Ra-



Longtime number #1 wife. She lent him more than \$1.6 million. Raniere lost it. She is now an enemy of Raniere. (left)

For eight years she was Raniere’s number #1 wife. He promised her a female child who would be an avatar, she said. No child was born. She is now an enemy of Raniere. (right)



Mariana Fernandez, Raniere’s current #1 wife. (left)

Esther Chiaponne Carlson left Alaska thinking she would be Raniere’s only girlfriend. Was persuaded to join harem. (right)

nieri says, and not have conventional, unenlightened disdain for this ‘normal,’ incestuous attraction.

Ex harem member, Toni Natalie recalled that Raniere was not opposed to incest.

The Albany Times Union wrote, “When [Natalie’s] conservative Catholic upbringing made her reluctant to engage in oral sex [with Raniere], she was invited to attend a class Raniere created on the subject. She said he told the students, including Natalie, that mothers in some developing nations perform oral sex on their children to soothe them. She suspects the class was organized just for her.”

Another ex-harem member told me that



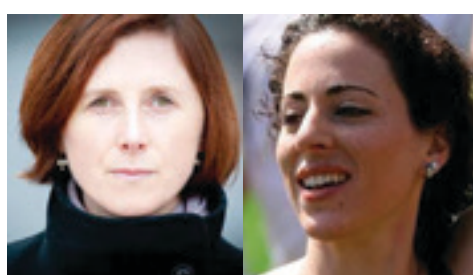
Gina Hutchinson. (left) Her sister and friends claims Raniere had sex with her when she was 15. She later committed suicide. Raniere was blamed by sister.

Gina Melita. (right) claims Keith Raniere in his mid 20’s had sex with her when she was 15.



Raniere disciple and alleged sex partner and harem member Clare Bronfman. (left)

Raniere disciple and one-time alleged Raniere bed partner Sara Bronfman. (right)



Siobahn Hotelling a lesbian devotee of Raniere. (left)

Michelle Salzman, Raniere allegedly bedded her with her mother’s consent. (right)



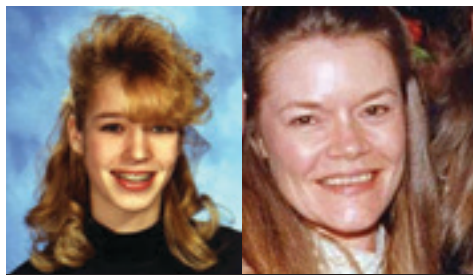
Keith Raniere

Raniere Handles His Harem And A Lot More



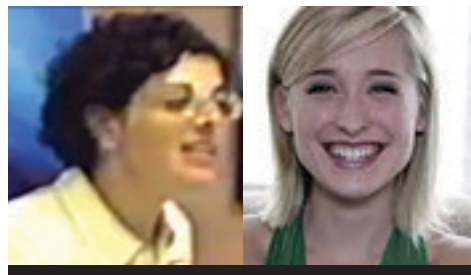
Ivy Navarres, harem member. (left)

Christine Marie (right) met Raniere but chose to flee from him when he tried to make unnatural demands on her.



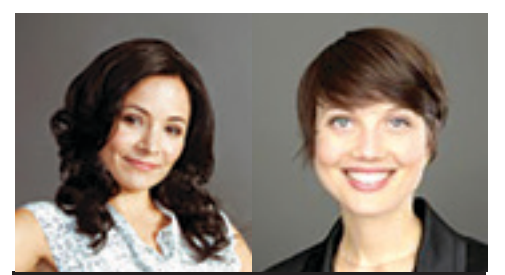
Rhannon. (left) Claims Raniere had sex with her 60 times when she was 12. Raniere was 30.

Lifelong harem member, Barbara Jeske, (right) died recently of brain cancer.



Nancy Salzman his longtime business partner, disciple. (left)

Allison Mack actress, alleged harem member. (right)



Sarah Edmondson, actress, follower of Raniere. Kristin Keeffe said that no one who worked with Raniere and who was female was not bedded by him.(left)

Nicki Clyne alleged harem member and actress. (right)

Raniere did not organize the class for Natalie but taught this tribal mother - son oral sex concept before and after and that Raniere teaches that sex with children is acceptable as long as there is no pain involved.

Raniere also practiced what he preached. Several women who are now adults have publicly claimed that Raniere had sex with them when they were under the age of consent.

One of the more shocking stories was reported in the Albany Times Union. Raniere was 30 then. He is now 55. A mother was working as a saleswomen for him and she had a 12-year old daughter, Rhannon.

When Raniere offered free tutoring to the girl, her mother was pleased since she thought Raniere was like an Einstein who could teach her daughter as no one else could. To encourage more frequent rendezvous, his wing woman Pam Cafritz hired the child to walk her dog. This brought her over to the house.

"He was supposed to teach her Latin and algebra," The Albany Times Union reported following interviews with mother and daughter. "Instead, [the daughter] said, he told her she hugged like a child, her arms wrapped around him but her hips pushed away. He taught her to hug the way adults do, pelvis-to-pelvis."

Rhannon recalled that Raniere had sex with her in his townhouse, in empty offices, in an elevator, and a broom closet. After about 60 encounters, she ran away from home.

"He took my innocence," she told the Times Union. "I can never get that back." She said she spent 20 years in counseling.

Raniere has also been observed flirting with other student's teenage daughters. According to a court filing, Peter Fallon, a prominent Albany area pharmacist and NX-IVM student, attended a Halloween party at Salzman's house. He was one of only two or three men at the party.



Kristin Kreuk, alleged harem member (left)

Dawn Morrison; harem member. (right)



Sevtlana Kotlin, Left Raniere when she found out she was not his only girlfriend. Now an enemy of Raniere. (left)

Lauren Salzman., Raniere allegedly [sequentially] bedded Lauren along with her sister Michelle and her mother Nancy. (right)

was/is sleeping with to approve and encourage sleeping with her own daughters.

Women I spoke to point out an even darker side to Raniere. They allege he tells women he has supernatural powers to trick them into sex; that he has slept with illegal Mexicans under the age of consent [Mexico's age of consent is 12]; that Raniere had an underage Mexican boy film him having sex with the boy's sisters; that sleeping with lesbians is a trophy accomplishment; that from 'guilting' her, he sexually enslaved Clare Bronfman; he sexually enslaved a woman whose rich and well known husband impotently watches and donates millions to Raniere; four well known TV actresses - his students - have been favored by being allowed to come into his bedroom for special teaching sessions; a third Fernandez sister, Daniela, refused to cooperate with Raniere's sexual plans and illegal computer hacking, and was imprisoned in a house owned by NXIVM. After more than a year she escaped and left her two sisters in Raniere's harem and returned to Mexico; and finally and saddest, that he encouraged two women to commit suicide and they did.

Normally the type of allegations made against Raniere by these women who were close to him would initiate an arrest or commitment to an asylum. But Raniere is said to

have control of Clare Bronfman's money - which makes him a very rich man [and now control of the husband-millionaire of one of his sex devotees] - and he has no problem paying top lawyers, offering money through his harem to elected officials and making job offers to government prosecutors at salaries that dwarf what they make as public servants.

Raniere is proof that you can buy your own lifestyle, crook the courts, and spend and control millions in America without paying a dime in taxes and no law enforcement agency is going to take you down.

There's something worse, though. Not only is he immune from prosecution, he directs prosecution anywhere he likes. He has had most of his enemies, including harem members who left him, indicted on trumped up charges. It has cost him millions to do it, but he has millions at his disposal.

Next week we will put some of the women on the record for the first time, as I take on the Cult of NXIVM, which is in fact nothing more than the cult of a diabolical genius who pretends to be a saint, named Keith Raniere.

To be continued....

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Readers Speak Out On Issues Of The Day

One feature of the Niagara Falls Reporter's redesigned website www.niagarafallsreporter.com readers seem to really be responding to is the ability to comment on stories we publish in real time, essentially as soon as they get done reading.

The number of comments has grown every week since we made the changeover, and last week was no exception. Here are some of the more interesting ones;

On our story, "Train station set to open with one tenant, no museum here?", reader Michael Alice blamed the train station boondoggle on Niagara Falls voters, who elected Mayor Paul Dyster in three consecutive elections.

"The citizens of Niagara Falls have the government they want. They have voted for the mayor 3 times in a row," Alice wrote. "The first time, maybe they thought he would make a difference. The second time, they should have known better, but still gave him the benefit of the doubt. But the third time? They have what they asked for. Now, with any luck, he will be indicted for all of his 'good deeds.'"

Another reader, Joanne, made light of city Planner Tom DeSantis's contention that people would pay to see the Underground Railroad Museum proposed for the train station.

Quoting the article, she wrote;

"DeSantis didn't make clear exactly what he expects people to pay to see, I think that is why they are calling it the 'Underground Railroad Interpretive Center,' where one would pay to enter a vast empty room and imagine, or leave it to one's own interpretation. Much like the artwork planned for the traffic circle, devoid of substance, large on cost (but also) open to 'interpretation.'"

John Ski wrote that trying to get Dyster to see sense is a lesson in futility.

"There's many ideas I would have to expand this train station but the current mayor is closed to thoughts other than his own," Ski wrote. "But pretty sure he will be playing second fiddle to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and whoever he chooses to 'help' run this city then the mayor will become nothing than a puppet."

On our interview with former councilman Sam Fruscione, who lost his seat in 2013 for questioning the Hamister hotel deal, Al Metro wrote, "I see that Fruscione is still crying like a baby. For some reason the Reporter thinks someone really cares what Fruscione thinks. Bulletin: Nobody does! Fruscione's opinion is not relevant. I like to see him run for Ceretto's seat so we can see Fruscione get crushed."

Our article about Councilwoman Kristen Grandinetti using her Facebook page to post a picture of a nearly naked young woman as a commentary on "rape culture," Carl B. Latham wrote "Oh please, give me a break! Not only is she 'asking for it,' she's double-dog-daring somebody to try something! Point proven? I suppose so, since I'm a man – but why does it take a man to inject some common sense into the discussion?!"

Walking down a dark alley doesn't give somebody the right to mug you. Forgetting to lock your front door isn't an invitation for a burglar to ransack your home. Dressing in provocative clothing should never be seen as an offer to be sexually assaulted.

In all three instances, whatever the criminal does remains illegal, no matter how easy the victim may have made things for the bad guy. Still, this does beg the question: why would ANYone consciously wish to be seen as a target?!

"My advice? At night, walk as part of a group along well-lighted streets, secure your home whenever you're out and, when in a public setting, PUT ON SOME CLOTHES!"

"Save your political commentaries for the lecture hall."

Out story, Landmark Delaware North Trademark battle hearkens back to Maid of the Mist, about Jeremy Jacobs' suit against the federal government for trademark infringement on classic icons at Yosemite Park, reader Lou Ricciutti blasted both Delaware North and the Maid of the Mist Steamboat Co. for attempting to steal American heritage using trademark law.

"You cannot trade or service-mark a geographic location name, such as Yosemite or Niagara Falls. That's not allowed in the Patent – Trademark – Copyright office rules and laws," Ricciutti wrote. "As far as being greedy and corrupt, perhaps those two words should also be copyrighted by these fellows! How about using Maid-of-the-Moist? Or someone starting a company called Delaware South? Since Delaware and South are both geographic locations, should these be allowed and at least as legit as what these "great American heroes are trying to do? What's next? Maid of the Delaware Crossing? Jimmysberg Battlefield? The Grand-Jacobs Canyon? The U.S. Government should counter-sue for these attempts at stealing America's heritage."

Our story about dwindling revenues at the Seneca Niagara Casino putting a crimp in the city budget brought out one rabid Dyster supporter, who signed himself LJJR21.

"Have you've been to the casino lately? Maybe a trip there will show you that attendance is down. Which means the cash is going to be going down," LJJR21 wrote. "I forgot, this paper blames Niagara Falls city hall for everything. The casino's revenues itself are down, must be Dyster's fault. It's snowing, Must be Dyster's fault. Anna Howard [the story's author] must be Hudson's new pen name [Not true]. Then again, we're all supposed to be supporting Kristen Grandinetti now after being told by this paper that she must be no good because she's the mayor's neighbor."



City Controller Maria Brown is "one of the few sane voices of reason."

In response to LJJR's remarks, Joanne wrote:

"The mayor and Council were well aware that casino attendance projections would be down and were warned by citizens at Council meetings. The Niagara Falls Reporter and other news outlets also reported on this and the city administration ignored the warnings. A moratorium on all non-emergency spending should be initiated ASAP. Projects and plans in some instances may need to be delayed or postponed until the city has its fiscal house in order. The mayor and council should not be an ostrich with his head in the sand when all economic indicators are obvious to the common man that money is tight. [City Controller] Maria Brown appears to be one of the few sane voices of reason, perhaps what she says should be more paid attention to. The city should concentrate on providing the basics as a strong foundation will beget growth rather than succumbing to being the emperor with no clothes."



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Dyster Preserves Gilt Edged Benefits For Council Members

Mike Hudson

It's enough to make one wonder what happened to the servant part of public servant. Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster last week vetoed a resolution by the city Council that would have ended the gilt edged health care benefits Council members receive for their part time jobs.

Dyster said the highly unusual veto of a Council resolution for a benefit only Council members receive, was a simple matter of pragmatism.

"Providing a compensation and benefit package which is both fair and responsible is an important factor to ensuring we attract candidates with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints," he told the Niagara Gazette.

Council members were not happy.

"I am curious as to why the mayor would leverage his executive privilege to veto a resolution that the city council passed in an effort to save taxpayers money," said the sponsor of the measure, freshman Councilman Kenneth Tompkins said.

The Council measure passed 3-2. It is highly unlikely that Dyster's veto will be overridden, as it would take a super majority of four votes to do so.

Council members earn \$12,000 a year but the health care coverage is said to be worth \$21,981. Council members who are

covered by health insurance at their regular jobs can receive an opt out payment of \$9,713 for a family or \$3,526 for a single person.

In 2012, Councilwoman Kristen Grandinetti moved to end the opt out payment after it was revealed that she'd been taking the family amount despite the fact she is single. She is covered by health insurance from the Niagara Falls City School District, where she teaches kindergarten. Grandinetti later made restitution.

She also practiced what she preached declining to take the opt out subsequently.

Council Chairman Andrew Touma, who is also a school teacher, called Dyster's veto disappointing.

"I don't know what's driving this, I think we have a very diverse council as it is, but I don't think the council members ran for the monetary gain," Touma said. "It's been two years since I've been on the council and we haven't made strides."

Touma has health insurance provided to him through the Niagara Falls School District. In addition Touma accepts \$9,713 annually from the city, on top of his \$12,000 council salary for opting out of health insurance with the city.

Touma is one of several scores of Niagara Falls city and school employees who earn in excess of \$100,000. According to www.seethroughny.net, Touma earns 103,000 from his job at the school district in addition to his



Niagara Falls Council member Kenny Thompkins pushed to have health insurance benefits not made available to future part time council members. Dyster vetoed the measure.

\$21,713 from the city council.

Newly elected council members Ezra Scott and Kenny Thompkins both receive health insurance from the city. Thompkins' council health insurance cutting measure would not have affected present council members but only future elected council members.

The position of city council is part time;

few employers anywhere offer full health insurance coverage for part time employees. According to a study made by the Buffalo News, Niagara Falls pays the highest opt out payments for employees who do not accept health insurance coverage of any municipality in the region.

Critics of Dyster's veto say that the reason for running for elected office should not be the salary, benefits and perks but should be motivated by a true zeal to serve, and that elected officials should lead the way in making cuts to a budget that in Niagara Falls surpasses revenue by millions every year.

Niagara Falls is ranked by the New York State Restructuring Board as having the highest property taxes in the state in proportion to the value of the real estate being taxed.

The measure to suspend health insurance benefits for future council members could have saved taxpayers more than \$100,000 per year based on present cost of health insurance assuming all five members of the council chose to take the city's health insurance.



Political Observations And Inconvenient Insights With Shecky Sherman

Good grief, just when you thought you'd seen everything the abusive New York State could do to Niagara Falls, the state comes along and does what? They say they're planning to SHUT OFF the damn water flowing over the American falls!

And right on cue – as the city fathers play the role of abused spouse to the state's role of brutish abuser – the city's political leaders and tourism professionals say "Good, go right ahead, shut our water off, we can't wait for you to dry up the most famous waterfall in the world!"

Are you kidding me? Hey New York State, while you're at it why don't you demolish my home, shoot my dog and change all the presets on my radio. I'd ask you to raise my taxes too but it's impossible to jack 'em any higher.

The state cutting the water off and telling the city it's good for them is like an abusive husband giving their wife a big black eye and telling them it color coordinates with their new red dress.

The waterfall with no water will be a TOURISM BONANZA. Uh huh. A waterless waterfall is good for business. The waterless falls could start a modern tourism and travel trend. Next thing we'll see is New York City without Broadway, Paris without the lights and Disney world without the rides and that

silly Mouse.

Should we be surprised that the state that gave us the Parkway and high electric costs and the state that forced Indian gaming on us and the state that occupies our Reservation Park the way Russia occupied East Germany is once again flipping us the middle digit? No surprise. It's par for the course.

And, par for the course is the way the area's fawning political "leaders" are accepting the dewatering plan. In fact they're greeting the grim news with all the twisted glee of a fat bottomed salesman suffering the whip of his favorite dominatrix at the company convention.

In the final analysis the dewatering scam makes a sort of sick sense. After all, this Dyster administration has turned poverty into economic development by merely saying it's so. The administration has spent \$100 million in casino funds and – with a straight face – cries poverty as it plans to raise taxes. It's turned the endless "revitalization" loop of Third Street into a shameless government subsidized enterprise where the taxpayers foot the bill for favored businesses. And so it only makes sense that in DT (Dyster Time) the dewatering of the world's most famous waterfall should be seen as good and desirable and as a veritable tourism "BONANZA."

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Tonawanda's Mandarin Garden Offers Authentic Asian At Affordable Prices

Sheligh Love

There is a restaurant in Western New York where you can dine-in, affordably, at a quality Asian restaurant.

Sure there are scores of local Chinese restaurants. Most of their business is take out or buffet where staff loads up food in wells on steam tables, cheap, piled high, larded with MSG and for the most part indistinguishable one from another.

Now we have a local, authentic Asian restaurant where you can eat Chinese not off a buffet table, or 30 minutes cooled out of a takeout container, but cooked up order, served fresh, perfectly spiced, fresh from the high temperature wok [it's the high heat that gives food that indescribable, flavorful edge known as "wok hay."]

The place is the Mandarin Garden at 1400 Niagara Falls Blvd. near the Boulevard Mall in the Town of Tonawanda.

You walk in these doors and leave Western New York behind, transported to a land where attention to exquisite manners, ambience, Feng Shiue, carefully chosen music, pleasing aromas, colors, lighting, and the culinary art is expertly combined.

At Mandarin Garden, attention is given to the finest points of preparation – carefully ground spices, the choicest selection of tender meats, beyond-fresh fish and vegetables that seem to come out of a green market.

Whether it is crispy chicken, luxurious shrimp, or twice cooked pork, whether it is comfort food (think General Tso's chicken and orange beef), or distinctly Chinese fiery Sichuan and or Hunan moo shoo pork, a lot of credit goes to Chef Zhi Liang Guang.

Guang was executive chef for the famous Lee's Restaurant in New York City prior to coming to Western New York where Mandarin Garden owner Chao Yue Lee procured his services.

At Mandarin Garden, prices are deliciously low. Combo lunches run from 5.95.



Ambiance is part of what Mandarin Gardens offers. Located on Niagara Falls Blvd. near Maple Road. in Tonawanda.

Full dinners are great deals too: Chicken with Broccoli 8.50; Shrimp with Mixed Vegetable 11.95; Hunan Beef 9.50; Mixed Vegetable with Bean Curd 8.00; Orange Chicken 12.00.

All come with a choice of white or fried rice – or brown rice too.

Mandarin Garden is casual and elegant at the same time. It offers modern Chinese as well as traditional dishes prepared as they would be if you were dining in China tonight.

四川回锅肉 Double Cooked Pork 7.95;

铁板牛仔骨 Pepper Short Rib in Hot Plate 15.95;

糖醋鱼片 Sweet and Sour Sliced Fish 11.00;

椰子虾豆 Coconut Shrimp 13.95;

Stir-fried Spicy Clam 11.95

Mandarin Garden is a place for business meetings, or special date, for children and their parents and grandparents – for family is something highly honored in Chinese culture.

Mostly what sets it apart is the food. At Mandarin Garden they take time to assemble the finest ingredients and time to prepare it.

"It is all about the cooking time and temperature," owner Chao Yeu Lee said. "A lot of Asian dishes are served at a certain temperature. Temperature is very important to bring the flavor out. The minute we have it ready we bring it out and that's how you ex-



Walk through these doors and you will be transported to China....

perience a meal prepared as it should be in Chinese tradition."

Another thing that sets Mandarin Garden apart is its extensive menu. Mandarin Garden offers Thai, Vietnamese and authentic cuisine from all parts of China.

Most local restaurants serve mainly Americanized dishes such as sesame chicken, pepper steak, and General Tso's chicken [which Mandarin Garden also serves fresh and tasty] Mandarin Garden also has stir fry pea shoots, Sichuan style beef, Chong Qing chicken, braised pork, bitter melon with eggs or shredded pork with garlic sauce.

In addition, sauces are made specially by Chef Guang: Brown sauce, black bean, Sichuan, Hunan, white sauce. On some meals Guang makes the sauce as he cooks the meal capturing authentic juices further flavoring the dish.

The Mandarin Garden also has a great selection of noodle entrees - PHO, Pad Thai, mei fun, udon, chow fun – soups, vegetable plates, and specialties like fresh spring roll, fried calamari & crab meat Rangoon.

The Mandarin Garden is a 72 seat casual-dining restaurant focusing on modern and authentic Asian cuisines. The menu demands repeat visits. Hours of Operation 7 days a week 11 to 10 Sunday through Thursday, 11-11 Friday and Saturday.



An authentic dish from China --Chongqing Spicy Chicken



Walnut Shrimp 15.95 ; Crispy battered jumbo shrimp fried to perfection then drizzled with a creamy walnut dressing served with steamed broccoli.



An American favorite: Sesame Chicken

Reader Disputes "Still Not Asking For It" Picture Grandinetti Posted On Facebook

Last week in our story "Grandinetti & Rape Culture" we reported that Council member – woman's rights activist Kristen Grandinetti posted this picture on her lively and active Facebook page:



One of our readers, Jonathan Rogers disagrees with Ms. Grandinetti and her premise. He wrote:

Re: Grandinetti & Rape Culture and the woman pictured on page 9, Jan 28th/Feb 3 issue: "Still Not Asking For It" she claims, but if this woman is not asking for it that's funny because she acts like she is asking for it. If this is what a woman does when she is not asking for it, migod what would she be doing if she was?

Actions speak louder than words. This woman is conveying a provocative double message. She is legally permitted to do so, but whether it's naively playful or wickedly deliberate, she is playing with fire. Human society is not 100% safe, but we have strong survival instincts and we need everyone to rely on them. Like, we don't smoke when fueling our cars.

It would solve the problem if men had no desire for sex with women. If gasoline were not flammable we could smoke while fueling, but then cars wouldn't run and we would hear lamentations from women in desire of a ride.

Yours truly,
Jonathan Rogers

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Aesop's The Ant And The Grasshopper Retold For American Socialist Sensibilities

Original Story:

The Ant works hard in the withering heat all summer building its house and laying up supplies for the winter. The Grasshopper thinks the Ant is a fool and laughs, dances and plays the summer away.

Come winter, the Ant is warm and well fed. The Grasshopper has no food or shelter so he dies out in the cold.

US Version

The Ant works hard in the withering heat all summer building its house and laying up supplies for the winter. The Grasshopper thinks the Ant's a fool and laughs, dances and plays the summer away.

Come winter, the shivering Grasshopper calls a press conference and demands to know why the Ant should be allowed to be

warm and well fed while others are cold and starving.

ABC, NBC, CBS, the Times, Huffington Post, CNN and other liberal media show up to provide pictures of the shivering Grasshopper next to a video of the Ant in his comfortable home with a table filled with food.

The world is stunned by the sharp contrast. How can this be that this poor Grasshopper is allowed to suffer so?

Occupy Ants stages a demonstration in front of the Ant's house.

Bernie Sanders goes on a fast demanding that Grasshoppers be relocated to warmer climates during winter.

Obama states this as 'injustice' done to minorities. Hilary Clinton calls it injustice to women since some grasshoppers are female.

The Internet is flooded with online petitions seeking support for the Grasshopper

Obama issues an executive order preventing Ants from working hard in the heat so as to bring about equality of poverty among Ants and Grasshoppers.

Finally, Congress drafts the 'Prevention of Terrorism Against Grasshoppers Act' [POTAGA], which goes into effect from the beginning of the winter.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services makes 'Special Reservation' for Grasshoppers in Educational Institutions in Government Services.

The Ant is fined for failing to comply with POTAGA and having nothing left to pay his retroactive taxes, the Ant's home is confiscated by Government and handed over to the

Grasshopper in a ceremony covered by ABC, NBC, CBS, the Times, Huffington Post, CNN and other liberal media

Obama calls it 'A Triumph of Justice'.

Sanders calls it 'Socialistic Justice'.

Hillary Clinton calls it 'Revolutionary Resurgence of Downtrodden'



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\$9⁹⁹ Dinner Buffet

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Dinner valid Mon-Sat after 4 pm; all day Sun.

PONDEROSA

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Cannot be used in combination with any other coupon, discount or promotional offer. Tax not included. Valid for up to party of 6 at participating Steakhouses.

\$6⁹⁹ Breakfast Buffet

PONDEROSA

Expires: 2/29/16

Cannot be used in combination with any other coupon, discount or promotional offer. Tax not included. Valid for up to party of 6 at participating Steakhouses.



"Such was the will of the Father that his Son, blessed and glorious, whom he gave to us, and who was born for us, should by his own blood, sacrifice, and oblation, offer himself on the altar of the cross, not for himself, by whom "all things were made," but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."

St Francis of Assisi



Really, there is no greater sin than cowardice; cowards are never saved — that is sure.

None will reach truth until he is strong.

Swami Vivekananda

The Right Side By J. Gary DiLaura: ‘WHY AMERICA?’



J. Gary DiLaura

The Right Side

God blessed America with the greatest natural resources in the world! We have more coal, more natural gas, more fresh water, and more oil than any other country. We have enough natural gas to provide electric power for 100+years; enough oil to provide all our refined petroleum needs for 100 years and

probably more! We have uranium, gold, silver and copper and the safest nuclear technology in the world!

It's easy to see why countries like Russia and China and many more would love to "own" America!

Some people are too stupid to understand why it is important to protect our sovereignty, to protect our borders and protect our Rule of Law. Those who want to change America to a socialist Nation, should go to a Nation that currently "enjoys" those things they feel they can't get here. From an iron fist Russia, China and North Korea to free love like Sweden. Go live there for a while then come back and tell us about socialism.

Our forefathers had the genius to create the Constitution and Bill of Right to prevent people from coming here to change our government to be like the nation from which they came! And why, if the country you left is so great did you leave?

As a rule, most people come to Amer-

ica because they seek a better place to live. Some come to destroy it. If you want to come to America but don't want us to know who you are, or where you come from, and you don't want to learn the language and become an American citizen, then we don't want you! You have no right to come to the United States. It's a privilege we grant to people we want!

If you don't want to assimilate to our way of life and our customs, don't come. If you don't want to become an American citizen because you would rather be a Muslim than an American, then don't come! I can't see how a Muslim can possibly believe in our Constitution, which is a requirement to become an American citizen. There is no religious freedom and no separation of church and state with Islam! According to the Koran, Muslims must believe in the Koran or become "unbelievers".

If you want to become an American Citizen, learn English, obey our laws and respect

our customs like Christmas, 4th of July, Veterans Day and have something to offer, rather than something to demand!

Why America? Because it is the best place on the planet!

Finally for those who are citizens, think twice before you vote for president this year since you may lose the right to pick your leader, to pick your religion, to pick your health insurance (oops, you already lost that, didn't you?), your job, your housing, the right to be a Democrat or Republican or Independent!

You may not want to "pay the price" you will have to pay to become a socialist and get all that "free" stuff!

In America, don't be angry, you are expected to work and pay your fair share.

All happiness depends on courage and work.

That's why America is the greatest nation on earth!

New Owners Find a Home at Wehrle Diner, Plan All Day Fish Fry on Ash Wednesday

Tony Farina

Ash Wednesday, a mostly Catholic observance where ashes on the forehead are a reminder of our mortality, marks the beginning of Lent and in recognition of the special occasion next Wednesday, Feb. 10, the new owners of the Wehrle Restaurant (now Wehrle Diner) in Amherst are offering up an Ash Wednesday Fish Fry all day that includes homemade coleslaw.

"We want to invite the regular customers who have come here all these years and folks who have never been here to come by and enjoy our special Ash Wednesday offering," says new owner Jaspal Singh. "It is our way of letting you know we are happy to be here and serve you on Ash Wednesday and every other day you might be looking for good food in a pleasant atmosphere."

Jaspal and his wife Amritpal are Canadians who selected the Buffalo area in part to be close to their daughter Joty who is a UB Law School student, and also to open up a place of their own after running restaurants in Greece and Connecticut. With the help of Sunbelt Business Brokers and co-owner Lidia Couzo, they found and bought the Wehrle Restaurant last year from Sylvia Kientos who owned it for 30 years with her late husband. The Singh family now calls their place the Wehrle Diner but it remains a Greek restaurant featuring all day breakfast and specials on weekends.

In addition to their daughter attending UB, Jaspal and his wife have two daughters attending college in Toronto and who can be found from time to time with their parents at the warm and friendly family diner that the family now treats as their pride and joy, devoting many hours making sure it is a model of consistency where customers will return for a warm and tasty meal.

"We are truly living our dream, and we are enjoying meeting so many people and serving them the best food we can and the

freshest fish fry in town," says Jaspal. "It has been a great experience and we are so glad to be here serving the Greek food we learned to cook in Greece and on Greek tour ships. We know how to do it and our customers seem to be enjoying it very much." And the eggs benedict with homemade hollandaise is one of the most popular dishes at the diner, located at 29 Wehrle Drive at the busy intersection with Kensington and Harlem. Parking is available at the diner and across the street in the Walgreens parking lot.

So far, so good for the Singh family who have been warmly received by their customers and looking forward to staying for a long time.

"It is a dream come true, for sure," says Jaspal. "We were able to find just what we were looking for, and now we have it all and are also near our daughter. I look forward to being a part of this community and meeting folks from all over the area at our Wehrle Diner."



Lucy Rauch and Jaspal Singh ...longtime worker and new owner of Wehrle Diner



Tiffani Balch With Fish Special ...at Wehrle Diner

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Only In NT: Historic Preservation Benefits Select Few In NT



Sweeney Payne

In 2005, during the administration of North Tonawanda Mayor David Burgio, the Common Council passed a Historic Preservation Ordinance creating a Historic Preservation Commission.

The subsequent Commission hasn't focused on preserving historical sites with actual historical status but has enabled wealthy carpetbaggers to get tax credits for "historic" buildings.

Why is there still no attempt at designating for historic status the Niagara Falls Power Transfer Station on Robinson, Sweeney Cemetery, the area known as Black Hannah's Woods, the Erie Railroad station on Oliver Street, entrance to Pine Woods Park, the Hungarian church building on Oliver, Niagara Power building on Webster, Evening News building on Webster, Payne Avenue High School building, Colonel Payne school

building?

A review of City minutes where the Commission's recommendations for local designations were approved indicates a rather amusing collection of structures. What has happened to them since they were designated as "local landmarks" is in some cases a travesty.

Four churches were designated as local landmarks in the Commission's early years. Two were, at the time, St. Peter's Lutheran Brethren Church on Thompson at Bryant and the original home of First Baptist Church which then was a photography studio being converted into a wedding chapel. The entire campuses of Ascension and Our Lady of Czestochowa Roman Catholic Churches were designated. Members of the Elks Lodge in its 1921-era Louis Eggert-designed building also obtained designation by the Commission. These buildings and their history, including designations by the Commission as local landmarks are documented in publications produced as guidebooks for tours of historic homes and other books by the NT History Museum available in both the Museum and the NT Library.

There appear to be no public listings of such sites by the Historic Preservation Commission or NT itself, certainly not on NT's website.

The First Baptist building was altered

several times before its designation. The Ascension buildings were and are being altered, something that isn't supposed to happen with historic designation. The Elks building? No attempt at all was made to preserve even part of it after a 2011 fire of suspicious origin. NT's immediate removal of all traces of its illustrious existence so the property could provide additional parking for the Remington Tavern was a disgrace.

Somehow, in order to provide significant taxpayer-funded assistance on the acquisition and renovation of the former Remington-Rand complex, the Burgio-created Lumber City Development Corp. accomplished Federal and State historic status and tax credits and grants for the complex, in spite of former NT officials who toured NT before the Commission or LCDC were created with State officials being told it had too many changes to be eligible for historic status.

Two of the Ascension structures, the church and rectory, now are owned by a member of the Planning Board who is most known in the community for his union involvements and being a landlord on Oliver St.

The former mayor, who moved to NT in 1993, was able to get the same Federal and State historic status and tax credits for the acquisition of a building on Webster constructed in 1891 as the Dick Block building by the Dick family. Photos from 1897 indicate it had

serious alterations of the front façade in the 20th century. LCDC worked on getting him historic status and somehow overcame the fact that it's a brownfield. The former mayor, after benefiting from the historic status recently sold the building to an out-of-town real estate management operation.

It makes you wonder what he'd have done if he ever had gotten his Gateway Point project through? Did he plan to personally acquire all of the land occupied by boathouses? Is that why the ridiculously bordered and only "local historic district" (per City minutes) ever created, the Downtown Historic District, ended at River Road and didn't include the historic waterfront that was responsible for the City's development? Of course, all of that area is a brownfield also!

Somehow, notifying all of the property owners in that area and making it possible for potential owners to know before they purchased that they would not obtain building permits for changes to the appearance of their property unless the Historic Preservation Commission approved, has never happened. The two properties whose owners benefited the most so far from the creation of the Historic Preservation Commission and Lumber City Development Corp. are of course in that district.

Sunbelt Business Brokers Look for the Right Fit

Tony Farina

"This business changes destinies," says Cal Lawson, president and co-owner of Amherst-based Sunbelt Business Brokers who has spent more than 24 years evaluating people and entrepreneurial opportunities across

Western New York and beyond, looking for the right match for buyer and seller.

"We pick and choose," says Lawson's partner and co-owner Lidia Couzo who has been with Sunbelt since 1994 after working as a financial broker for a local bank and who just completed a deal that helped a Toronto man find the right business to make his dream of owning his own restaurant come true with the purchase of the well established Wehrle Restaurant in Amherst from the woman who owned it with her late husband and was looking to sell. It was the right match for buyer and seller.

Getting the right fit, if you will, is a big part of what Lawson and Couzo do in their business, working from their many years of experience to align the interests of buyers and sellers for mutual benefit.

"Some people may not be entrepreneur material," says Lawson, "and we conduct a thorough interview and evaluation process to try and make sure they are going in the right direction and not heading down the wrong path," suggesting some would-be entrepreneurs are not cut out for what they want to do.

The local Sunbelt offices are located on



Lidia Couzo and Cal Lawson
..Sunbelt partners

Audubon Parkway in Amherst and they do business throughout Western New York with deals from \$200,000 up to \$5 million, with helping to arrange financing a big part of their work. But the firm has even a bigger reach for those who need it with 200 offices in the United States and in six countries around the world. Sunbelt is ranked as the largest business brokerage in the U. S., offering a wide range of services including business evaluations, turnarounds, and consulting.

There are many success stories on the Sunset books, including the recent \$2 million deal that kept a local industrial electronics control repair service in business when the owner decided to retire after 46 years but was looking for the right buyer to keep the business going.

Control Systems Laboratories, estab-



lished in 1970 at 1501 Kensington Ave. in Buffalo, still has more than 15 workers gainfully employed after Sunset brought in local buyers Gary Fredricks and Edward Bialek to meet with longtime owner Edward Bartle who was retiring but wanted to keep the doors open on the business he started 46 years ago. It was another perfect match and buyer and seller were the beneficiaries.

And a few years ago, Lawson—who owned several auto dealerships before joining Sunbelt in 1994—pulled out all the stops and used all his powers of persuasion and experience to find a buyer with virtually no notice to save a Jamestown business with 120 employees from going out of business.

"It was pretty much around-the-clock for about a week, with so much on the line," recalls Lawson about his work in dealing

with MetalTech, a metal stamping manufacturer that was closing its doors before Lawson stepped in, working with local officials including the IDA, and found a buyer and kept the business in Jamestown. Even now, several years later, the expression on Lawson's face tells it all, the satisfaction from saving all the jobs at the Jamestown facility and keeping the business going.

Lawson and Couzo emphasize there are many traditional businesses that are real success stories that are available for the right young buyer to walk into and change his destiny, as Lawson said at the beginning of this story. And Lawson said the Buffalo market ranks as the number one place to open a new restaurant.

Helping young entrepreneurs looking for the right opportunity and working with established businesses who are looking for the right buyer is what Sunbelt is all about in addition to turnarounds for existing businesses that may have lost their way and need a new look or style. As both Lawson and Couzo stated repeatedly, it is about finding the right fit for buyer and seller, at times an exhausting and frustrating experience but one that is absolutely necessary to give both sides the best chance for success.

You can make you own evaluation of Sunbelt by checking out their website at www.sunbeltnetwork.com.



Physical Wellness: Health-Enhancing Habits

In an effort to continue our focus on health and wellness in 2016, we expand from our article last month. Wellness is a multidimensional, holistic, evolving state and process of achieving your full potential. It is subjective, personalized, individual, cultural and situational. Each month, we'll look at one of the eight dimensions of wellness: physical, social, intellectual, emotional, mental, financial, vocational and spiritual.

This month we examine physical wellness. Physical wellness is the ability to achieve and maintain a healthy quality of life and have enough energy to be productive in our daily activities both at work and outside of work. Daily decisions, choices and behaviors all play a role in a person's physical wellness. Do you choose a fast food sandwich for breakfast or a bowl of fruit and oatmeal? Do you drink coffee or an energy drink in the morning? Improve your physical wellness by choosing to follow these health-enhancing habits:

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet and stay properly hydrated
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Lead an active lifestyle and engage in a regular physical activity
- Practice sun-protective behaviors: use sunscreen, seek shade and wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat
- Get at least seven hours of quality sleep in a tranquil environment
- Follow regular medical, dental and vision check-ups, accept personal responsibility and care for minor illnesses and seek medical attention when necessary
- Manage stress by altering the situation or your reaction to the situation
- Monitor and manage chronic conditions through lifestyle choices and/or medication (as determined by you and your physician)
- Avoid risky sexual behavior, abstain from tobacco products and avoid substance misuse or abuse

Optimal physical wellness can be achieved by adopting health-enhancing habits and avoiding destructive ones. For example, strive for eight hours of sleep, eat grapes instead of potato chips, replace soda with water, replace sitting in front of your computer with walking. As your physical wellness improves, you will become more familiar with your body's vital signs and warning symptoms, how your body reacts and performs based on what you do (and what you don't do) and what your body craves. Your body is talking – all you have to do is listen.



Frank Cotroneo, 17, of Grand Island on Wednesday signed a letter of intent to attend Division 1 Villanova University on a soccer scholarship that equals 70 percent of a full grant-in-aid that consists of tuition and fees, room and board, and required textbooks on loan. Cotroneo, a defensive star in the U. S. Soccer Development Academy out of Rochester, played one year of varsity soccer at Grand Island High School before moving on to the academy. He is the son of Frank and Deidre Cotroneo and the signing took place at West Herr's Ford Lincoln store on Millersport Highway in Amherst where Deidre works as a billing clerk.

Photo by Tony Farina

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KARAOKE OPEN MIC

KEVIN ROGERS PEGGY SILVESTERI

9:30 PM - 1:30 AM
FRIDAY, FEB 05

8 PM - 12 AM
EVERY THURSDAY

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

Chuck Shephard

NEWEST FASHIONISTAS

■ In January, the upscale Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana introduced stylish hijabs and abayas aimed at Muslim women unafraid to call attention to themselves as they exercise their obliged modesty. D&G's marketing effort even accessorized models' headscarves and cloaks with stilettos and oversized, gaudily framed sunglasses. It was clear from the suggested retail prices that D&G would be pitching the line mainly in the wealthy Persian Gulf countries like United Arab Emirates.

UNCLEAR ON THE CONCEPT

■ Awkward Signals in New Jersey: (1) The government watchdog MuckRock requested records on the cause of death of a dolphin in New Jersey's South River last year (to investigate larger dangers to the animal), but in January 2016 the state's Department of Agriculture initially declined to release them—citing "medical privacy" (usually requested, for autopsies, by "the deceased's family"). (2) At the same time, Maria Vaccarella is facing a \$500 fine in Howell, New Jersey, for violating a state law because she illegally rendered "care" to two apparently orphaned baby squirrels when their mother abandoned them. She was due in court as

News of the Weird went to press.

QUESTIONABLE JUDGMENTS

■ The director of senior services for Cranston, Rhode Island, resigned in January after a mayor's press-conference went badly. To publicize a snow-removal program that would benefit seniors unable to shovel for themselves, the director (needing a proper example of a beneficiary of the program) instructed a middle-aged male subordinate to (unconvincingly) don a wig and dress and stand beside the mayor during the announcement.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

■ Weird Japan, Again: (1) Among the sites Japan has submitted for 2017 United Nations World Heritage status is the island of Okinoshima, home of a sacred shrine with which Shinto gods have been "protecting" fishermen as long ago as the fourth century. (The island is so sacred that females have never been allowed on it—judged either too delicate to make the trip or menstrually unclean). (2) A current Tokyo craze, reported an Australian Broadcasting correspondent, involves "stressed out" professionals and office workers publicly outfitted in colorful, full-body lycra suits ("zentai") in a rebellion against the nation's stultifying conformity. Said one, "I'm a different

person wearing this. I can be friendly to anyone."

SUSPICIONS CONFIRMED

■ Crescent City, California, drug dealer James Banuelos pleaded guilty in January in exchange for a lighter sentence (three years in prison), thus avoiding for police the airing of an embarrassing hidden-camera video of the raid showing arresting officers stealing the dealer's money and valuables. "Multiple" officers were shown laughing and helping themselves, and a gold chain belonging to Banuelos wound up for sale a few days later on Craigslist. As part of the plea agreement, the prosecutor agreed to give all Banuelos' stuff back to him.

■ The United Nations announced at year-end that the book most often checked out last year at its in-house Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York was the nearly 500-page "Immunity of Heads of State and State Officials for International Crimes." The list of borrowers was not revealed. (In general, the book concludes, current heads of state have immunity but not past ones.)

WAIT, WHAT?

■ New Age Medical Care: Surgeons treating 4-month-old Teegan Lexcen (born with only one lung and a critically deformed heart) had given up on her, but doctors at Nicklaus Children's Hospital in Miami jury-rigged a surgical tool that saved the infant's life. In a delicate seven-hour procedure, using an iPhone app and \$20 Google Cardboard box virtual-reality viewers, doctors guided themselves through Teegan's chest based on two-dimensional body scans that the app had converted to 3-D. (Old-style 3-D images, they

said, were too grainy for precision surgery.)

■ Too Much Information: In January, the British sex toy company Hot Octopuss, trying for a spurt of publicity in New York City, unveiled a reconfigured pay phone booth at 5th Avenue and 28th Street in Manhattan that offered a seat, a laptop, a Wi-Fi connection, and a "privacy curtain" to help people (mostly men, one imagines) relieve stress "on both your mind and body." A company rep claimed that about 100 men "used" the booth its first day, but what the men actually did there is "private."

THE CONTINUING CRISIS

■ Think Your Commute Was Bad? (1) The main road linking the port city of Mombasa, Kenya, to Nairobi and beyond (to landlocked Uganda) was blocked in mid-November by damage from heavy rains, leading to a 30-mile-long stream of stopped vehicles, stranding more than 1,500 trucks. (2) In October at the end of China's traditional, annual week-long getaway, new traffic checkpoints for the notorious G4 Beijing-Hong Kong-Macau Expressway reduced the previous 50 lanes of traffic (yes, that's "fifty") to 20. Videos from a TV network's drone showed a breathtaking traffic jam-cum-parking lot that quickly inspired delight, or compassion, all around the Internet (bit.ly/1je9mG6).

■ Police chiefs of six small Ohio towns recently demanded an investigation of Sandusky County Sheriff Kyle Overmyer after, comparing notes, they learned that Overmyer had approached each one claiming to be helpfully "collecting" for "disposal" their departments' confiscated drugs—on behalf of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. (DEA, reportedly, knew nothing of this.) The Ohio attorney general is investigating.



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Sat, Feb 13, 2016: 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Sun, Feb 14, 2016: 1:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Prime Rib
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Prime Rib with Lobster Dainties
\$37.95 Per Person
\$65.95 Per Couple

Taste of Italy
Cheese Ravioli, Homemade Gnocchi, Lasagna, Chicken Parmigiana
\$24.95 Per Person

The specials include:
Prosciutto & Melon, Cheese & Olives, Shrimp Cocktail, Mixed Green Salad, Baked Potato, Vegetable Italiaio & Cupid's Delight Dessert

**Entire Menu Also Available*

CITY HALL JOKES...



Six million tourists walk into a bar. They turn to the bartender and say, “We traveled all the way here to see a waterfall and the damn thing’s been turned off! Get us drinks and keep ’em coming, we got nothing to do and all day to do it!”



Now you just know someone is going to be selling shirts with “I came here to see the Falls and all I got was this dry tee shirt” written across it.



Heard around town last week: “The decision to dry the Falls is being made by state officials that are all wet.”



Hey, State Parks, the US Army Psychological Warfare Operations Division phoned. They want their Methods of Group Thought Control handbook back.



People are predicting that the dewatering of the Falls will create a “tourism bonanza.” Uh huh, it’ll start a tourism trend. Next thing you know they’ll be filling in the Grand Canyon with gravel, removing the elevator from the Eiffel Tower and hiding the pyramids under sun shades.



Mayor Dyster and a pedophile walk into a bar. After ordering a round, the bartender looks at Dyster and says, “We do not serve people of your ilk in here.” Dyster responds, “I am the mayor and I have to have somewhere to drink.”



The city council and city officials have expressed great surprise at the casino revenue dropping. They also said they were shocked to learn that water is wet, the sky is blue and government officials tell lies.



City hall survey
What’s your least favorite thing to listen to?
A) The University of Iowa fight song
B) A Paul Dyster state of the city speech
C) A local talk show
D) All of the above



There’s good news and bad news with the non-stop playing of the Iowa fight song in the “Third Street entertainment district.” The bad news is it’s repetitive and annoying. The good news is the music is a lot cheaper than the \$450,000 the city spent on Hard Rock concerts.





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Your Weekly Horoscope

By Jean Topascani



Aries: (March 21 - April 19)

Someone sends you an instant messages – with a baseball bat. Good news. You're not dyslexic; just really, really stupid. Your spouse and you were happy for twenty years. Then you met. People who know you are jealous of all the people that haven't met you!



Cancer: (June 21 - July 22)

People don't just think you act stupid, they're sure it's the real thing. You hate it when you are about to hug someone really sexy and your face hits the mirror. Your superpower is making people laugh. Which would be great if you were trying to be funny.



Libra: (September 23 - October 22)

People try to get on your good side, but no one has found it yet. You were born naked, wet and hungry. Then things get worse. If laughter is the best medicine, your face must be curing the world. Stupidity is not a crime so you are free to go.



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19)

What would you call a person who goes out with You? Desperate! You snore so loudly that it scares everyone in the car you're driving. What language are you speaking? Cause it sounds like bullshit. You are known at the gym as the "before picture."



Taurus: (April 20 - May 20)

Skeletor called, he wants his You always go the extra mile. The restraining order says you have to. If you had a dollar for every person that found you unattractive, they would eventually find you attractive. Waking up means the best part of your day is over! If you are here - who is running hell?



Leo: (July 23 - August 22)

You're not really stupid. You just have a bad luck when thinking. Money talks ...but all yours ever says is good-bye. If you really want to know about mistakes, you should ask your parents. You're multi-talented: You can talk and piss people off at the same time.



Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21)

You try e-harmony. They kept matching you up with people who look like you in a wig. You're too intimi-dated to date someone that attractive. If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame. Makeup tip: You're not in the circus.



Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18)

People don't want you to feel like you can't express yourself, but they do want you to stop talking. Learn from your parents' mistakes: use birth control. Bacteria is the only culture you have.



Gemini: (May 21 - June 20)

You know you're ugly when it comes to a group picture and they hand you the camera. You're not fat, you're just... easier to see. Your job is secure. No one else wants it. Doing things that you are not supposed to do at work makes your vision, hearing and alertness much better.



Virgo: (August 23 - September 22)

You're like school in the summertime - no class. You rationalize: If you're not supposed to eat at night, why is there a light bulb in the refrigerator? A camel can work 10 days without drinking, you can drink 10 days without working. People love what you've done with your hair. How do you get it to come out of the nostrils like that?



Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21)

Jesus loves you, but everyone else thinks you're an asshole. You sometimes watch birds and wonder "If I could fly who would I shit on?" A straight face and a sincere-sounding "Huh?" have gotten you out of more trouble than you can remember. In your spare time you like to read, write, and fall in love with unavailable people.



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

Did something bad happen to you or are you just naturally ugly? You are great at multitasking. You can waste time, be unproductive, and procrastinate all at once. People sometimes make fools of other people, but you are the do-it-yourself type. Many people may love to shop but no one is buying your bullshit.

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