

THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

Vol. 3, No 8

October, 2014

WORDS AND WHIMSEY DEPICTING THE GOOD LIFE IN MINERAL POINT, WISCONSIN

21st FALL ART TOUR

AUTUMN COLORS AND OPEN STUDIOS

It's always a pleasant drive through Driftless Wisconsin's hills and valleys dressed for the brilliant fall season, but it's also an opportunity to carry home a local art treasure.

For twenty years, on the third full weekend in October, the Fall Art Tour has brought thousands of arts tourists to the sponsoring communities: Mineral Point, Dodgeville, Spring Green and Baraboo.

This year, forty-three studios will open their doors to the public, giving visitors time to meet fifty-three artists and artisans, enjoy a chat, then purchase the art they admire.

The studios are as colorful as the fall landscapes. Some artists live above their shops, some in distinctly rural settings; and, for the three days of the Tour, visitors will get a glimpse of the artist's workplace and the way of life the artists enjoy. Most of the artisans offer rare demonstrations of their craft: painting, sculpture, pottery, weaving, glass, jewelry, woodworking, photography and more.

In Mineral Point, the headquarters for maps, brochures and information about the free, self-guided tour is the Johnston Gallery, at 245 High Street. Tom and Diana Johnston have helped coordinate the event since its first year.

Communities in Wisconsin and other states have used the Fall Art Tour as a model for their own art-related tours.

Local artists work hard to build a sizable new product inventory in the weeks prior to the event, and local artisans say a significant share of their annual income is recorded during this special weekend.

The FALL ART TOUR
Oct. 17 - 19
Phone 608 987 3787
www.fallarttour.com
potters@johnstongallery.com



A Harvest of Time and History

October: a time of turning.

The first red blush as leaves turn in the big maple out front.

The downward drifting as green turns to gold, the rustle of the rake, the settling pile.

Homeowners turn to their ToDo lists to begin the button-up for a Wisconsin winter.

We mow the lawn in what we hope is its last trim.

We look for that perfect Apple Crisp recipe.

Football turns our weekend leisure into spectator sport.

Outdoor events go indoors. Halloween is still a fresh air event, but with a curfew.

Beyond the city limits, the grains we grow have turned crisp and stand ready for the big machines that turn foliage into food.

In dwindling daylight, we see lights burning in the dairy barns and on the combines.

It is the time of the harvest, a time to reap what we have sown.

If our luck holds, we'll enjoy a few pleasant Indian Summer days, the name we've given to a puzzling-but-welcome warm snap in October.

A few Pointers may need a reminder, which we'll provide here, that we live proudly in farm country, and we should ponder what we owe to agriculture and our hard-working neighbors who toil in the soil.

Agriculture, like most 21st Century occupations, is struggling in a time of turmoil.

The family farm, the backbone of American life until the Industrial Revolution, is threatened by today's complex and expensive technology, shaky prices, predatory major investors, and a change in family attitude that whisks rural young people off to the cities.

But in the fields around Mineral Point, the family farm is holding its own. Cattle graze on the grasses, and a new generation of farm operators grow their crops and work their animals to provide high-quality milk, cheese, and beef for the region's food processors.

The average age of local farmers is more than fifty-five, but younger farmers are working right alongside their elders, bringing knowledge, technology and new ideas to the region's farms.

Because of uncertainty in the prices paid for farm products and changing regulations in the farming industry, some younger farmers are forced to take a second job to provide enough income to stay in the place they love. That dictates a long, hard day, and careful attention to agri-economics, but that's something farmers have been willing to do. Farming has always had a demanding work ethic.

A walk through the barns at the county fair will show you the passion of today's farmer.

But, as every year passes, and the big fish eat the smaller fish, the concentration of land

often flows to the nation's rich and powerful agribusiness interests, who respect the investment safety of farm land over the risk of the stock market.

Thus, we read that foreign and institutional buyers are snapping up acreage (Chinese investors recently purchased 10,000 acres in Wisconsin).

But, around here, many of the "big buyers" are farm families like the Steffes, four brothers working numerous farms together. Likewise, the Reichling family, or the Craves brothers' multi-generational farm near Waterloo, WI.

Big Ag/Big Money is not always Big Brother. Not yet.

Finally, there's this basic problem, sadly true for many years: in our badly-flawed food system, in which "fresh" products are shipped hundreds of miles to overstocked supermarkets, the farmer gets only pennies after all the middlemen take their cut.

So, put the American farm on your list of things that need reform. It's not too late to turn things around, to discourage monoculture planting, keep farm size sensible, stop the depletion of soil, and focus on local and regional production and consumption of food.

Meanwhile, the 2014 fall harvest looks healthy because of a cool summer. And we need to give a shout-out to our farm neighbors, our partners in Mineral Point's good life.

NEW ARTS INCUBATOR IN THE CANNERY

AMP to offer
affordable space
to local artists.

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) has attained one of its major goals by securing a handsome creative space for artists in the 1930s Cannery building, the large, yellow structure north of the Walker House on Water Street. A 1,200 sq. ft. room on the 2nd floor will become custom-built, low-rent studio spaces for participating artists. The area boasts a private entrance, is clean, heated and cooled, served by a kitchenette and two rest rooms.

AMP will develop the space under a flexible agreement with building owner Robert Oberhauser, operator of BEC Controls Corp., housed in the old cannery's ground floor. "Bob sees our vision and has been super-supportive," says AMP's Ried Knapp.

Committee member Brian Stuart spearheaded the effort to create an arts incubator. He called the big room "a perfect starter space," and said when AMP's clients fill the incubator, additional space could be built out on the massive third floor. Several local artists have already expressed an interest in the collaborative endeavor.

AMP will host an Open House during the Fall Art Tour.

AMP Board Members
Ried Knapp & Brian Stuart
in new creative space.



THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

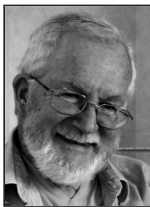
Published by



MINERAL POINT PRESS

216 NORTH IOWA STREET
MINERAL POINT, WI 53565

PARTNERS WITH POINT FORWARD
IN THE INTERESTS OF
COMMUNITY AWARENESS
AND FURTHERANCE
OF HISTORIC UNDERSTANDING



EDITOR & PUBLISHER

FRANK BEAMAN

WITH THE EAGLE EYES OF
SANDEE BEAMAN

Photographs by the Editor
unless otherwise noted.

frankbeaman2@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ainsley Anderson

Lois Federman

Jan Johnson

Ried Knapp

Mike Marr

Mineral Point Archive

Sandy Scott

Brian Stuart

PRINTED BY
WOODWARD PRINTING SERVICES
PLATTEVILLE, WISCONSIN
© COPYRIGHT 2014



THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

is published without cost to its
readers and printed without
advertising content.

Pick up the **TIMES**
in several locations
in the city.
THANKS, merchants !

We send an issue to every
home in Mineral Point,
tucked in the bundle of the

Shopping News

with delivery during the
first week of each month,
May through December.

Call the **FREE Shopping News**
at (608) 348-2374 if you are not now
receiving each Tuesday's delivery.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Check Sandee Beaman's
Online Events Calendar

Go to

<http://hwy23events.wordpress.com>

And simply click on an event
to get all the details.

WISCONSIN'S FIRST ELECTION



Wisconsin's first elected officials took office during the last week of October 1836 when twenty newly-elected members of the premier state legislature rode down to tiny Belmont, our first capital, just a few miles from Mineral Point. Four rough frame buildings stood in Belmont, hauled from Pennsylvania by riverboat and wagon and plunked down on a plot owned by a politically-connected land speculator.

The selection of our capital city developed into an issue that was not only one of the most controversial of the day but would emerge as a topic for heated debate for many years. And, the competition for the capital's prestige and a \$20,000 prize gave rise to truly historic political back-room wheeling and dealing.

But, the formation of the state's new government began months before the assembly gathered in Belmont, and Mineral Point was in the thick of it.

When Michigan become a state in early 1836, a huge region west of Lake Michigan was declared eligible to be a territory in its own right. That "Wisconsin Territory" as it was proposed stretched from Green Bay across the Mississippi to include all of modern Iowa, Minnesota, and almost half of the Dakotas. Congress enacted a law defining the Wisconsin Territory in April of 1836, and President Andrew Jackson appointed one of his loyal prote'ge's, Henry Dodge, as the first governor. Dodge led the Iowa County militia and he enjoyed a good reputation as a war hero. What's more, his long-time support of the region's lead mining interests and his affiliation with the Democrats, then in power, made Dodge a quick and easy choice for the gubernatorial post.

He took the oath of office in Mineral Point on July 4th. His responsibility was to conduct a census, hold elections, and convene a legislature in the First Capitol.

To identify voters, the census of August 1836 divided the massive territory that is now Wisconsin into six counties. It found only 11,683 non-Indian residents within the bounds of today's Wisconsin: Brown County had 2,706; Crawford County, 850; Milwaukee County posted 2,893, and Iowa County (the most populous) showed 5,234 voters in lands south of the Wisconsin River and west of Highway 51. Thousands of lead miners had settled there, in rough-hewn cities like Mineral Point.

So, when it was born, Wisconsin contained only about as many people as, say, Fort Atkinson does today. Having listed all the white males over age 21 in the four populated counties, Dodge authorized local officials to hold elections early in the 1836 fall season.

With the census results in hand, residents were to choose delegates to represent them in the new legislature. Only twenty people were to represent the entire population; seven in the Territorial Council (today's Senate) and thirteen in the Assembly.

By today's standards, the state's first elections were primitive. Voters and candidates generally knew each other personally. No political party was organized to get out the vote, no advertisements flooded a non-existent media, and no bumper stickers adorned the backs of ox-carts and horse-drawn wagons.

Ideological divisions in the electorate were geographic: immigrants from New England, predominantly Whigs, lived on the eastern lakeshore. They were opposed by the immigrants of southern mining districts, usually Jacksonian Democrats. Although French-speaking residents had lived in Wisconsin since the mid-1600s, no one with a French surname was elected to the first legislature. Similarly, no American Indians participated.

With this election, the old territory's political power had shifted from the native tribal elders and French-Canadian Catholics to white English-speaking Protestants.

The votes were counted and plans were drawn for the first assembly of the chosen twenty.

But "Where?" was the big question. And, as other cities jockeyed for the honor, land broker John Atchison, a businessman from Galena, seemed oddly optimistic by naming his Belmont buildings as if they were already the capitol complex. But, one could ask, in an out-of-the-way frontier town with very few creature comforts, a 15X20 foot room to lodge all the legislators, and bad food at the nearby tavern?

You'd hardly think so! But...

Dodge's announcement surprised everyone: "We convene at Belmont for the purpose of organizing the first session of the Legislative Assembly."

The reasoning behind Gov. Dodge's choice of Belmont is obscure. The temptation to suspect a darker motive, based upon his previous association with Atchison, is inescapable, then and now, but there's no concrete evidence to support such a connection. The fact that Belmont was situated in the middle of the lead-mining region or that it was roughly

halfway on the East-West axis of the sprawling four-state Wisconsin territory may have had more to do with Dodge's choice than any sort of imputed cronyism.

So, in October, 178 years ago, prairie lawmakers went to Belmont and took seats. Gov. Dodge convened the first session of the Assembly, which met for 46 days in the Governor's surprising choice of towns. And, the chief issue before the new lawmakers was — you guessed it — where to locate the capital.

Into this noisy and somewhat shady scenario entered Wisconsin's promoter and lobbyist par excellence, James Duane Doty. As a young man, Doty, as many others of his day, traveled to the west to seek his fortune and he had been particularly successful at it. When he arrived in Detroit from his native New York in 1818, young Doty quickly attracted the attention of the notables of legal and government circles in the Michigan territorial capital. He pursued several political posts and then turned to land speculation. And, with a few others, started buying land in the Four Lakes area between the big population centers in Mineral Point and Milwaukee. Doty and a partner, who just happened to be the newly-sworn governor of Michigan, purchased one thousand acres on the isthmus between two lakes, precisely where today's capitol building stands.

Meanwhile, back in Belmont, Dodge announced that this time he would take a "hands-off" posture in the selection of a permanent capital.

Doty pounced.

He proceeded to Belmont in November 1836, where his presence would soon be felt, even though he had no official capacity there. He promoted his Four Lakes' interests as a possible location for the territorial capital. Doty could be very ingratiating, generous, and influential. He befriended the men in the new legislature; and, using gifts and muscular sales talks, made it clear he was pushing Madison in the "Capital Sweepstakes." By the end of the short legislative session, sixteen delegates, the clerks of both houses and Gov. Dodge's son, Augustus, owned property in Madison.

The rest, as we usually say, is history.

Sources: Wisconsin Historical Society, "Curiosities" Oct. 2008; Wisc. Blue Book, 1983-84



They're actually our friends, those ugly birds making lazy circles in the sky. They don't look very friendly, however, and most of us feel the Turkey Vulture is among the most disgusting of all the critters.

The typical *Cathartes Aura* stands almost three feet tall, with a 70-inch wingspan, but weighs only 4.5 pounds. When it hasn't dropped down to pick at a carcass, that is. Yes, it's a scavenger; it doesn't kill its food, it simply feeds on road kill, garbage, or an animal that has died from disease. Scientists say it will eat more than 100 pounds of carrion a year.

But the vulture doesn't get sick from eating spoiled food, and its droppings are disease-free. That's only one of an amazing array of facts about this species. This bird has an extreme sense of smell that enables it to locate food below a ceiling of treetops without seeing it ahead of time. But, the vulture is usually blind. It has no voice box, and is defenseless when a young chick.

As an adult, however, the turkey vulture has a defense system that is, shall we say, very interesting. If threatened by a human being or predatory skunks, snakes, owls or hawks, the vulture quickly and forcibly vomits pellets (about 1 inch around) in the direction of their enemy. The gray or brown pellets, chunks of bones and fur, can often be found beneath their roosting areas.

Their flocks can be huge, as anyone who visits the local water tower in the summer will testify. But you'll seldom see a group of birds clustered around a carcass.

Also called buzzards, these birds play a role in nature by cleaning diseased flesh out of the environment, which protects other animals and people from getting sick. Scientists think the reasons behind this digestive cleaning process could be important to medical science.

Biologists once thought the turkey vulture was a bird of prey, a raptor like hawks, owls and eagles, but in 1994 DNA tests found they belonged in the stork family.

They're part of the Mineral Point family on summer evenings, flying their thermals, while we make a game out of counting their number.



**Y'ever notice how
"What the Hell"
is always
the right answer?
--- Marilyn Monroe**

ArtsMP Set to Expand 2015 Gallery Nights



New Destinations,
Diverse Experiences
& Lower Costs for
Local Merchants
who will Participate

For fourteen years, Mineral Point has celebrated Gallery Night as four seasonal show-case events designed to give visitors and local residents an opportunity to visit the studios and galleries where our artistic neighbors work.

A small committee launched Gallery Night in 2000 and has lovingly maintained it. But, in May, twenty participating galleries opted to transfer responsibility for the events to Arts Mineral Point (AMP), and AMP has now announced its plans to expand the scope, promotion and direction of the endeavor in 2015.

The arts-boosting AMP team will assemble a larger committee, spread event tasks among committee members, and promote heavily to draw a bigger public turnout in 2015.

AMP hopes to recruit stores, restaurants and lodging enterprises to join current Gallery Night artists and galleries in a longer, stronger event. Many of these businesses were not members of Gallery Night in the past but should profit from the foot traffic the arts-and-tourism event generates.

Increased retail participation and group purchasing power should provide affordable supplies and amenities for merchants as well as tax benefits and deductions.

The goal is to make a good thing even better, for the city's galleries, for local businesses, and for residents and tourists who simply relish a Saturday Gallery Night stroll from place to place.



Only a Pointer could dream of the PERFECT pasty. But, if you come up with the right recipe, the Vaillancourts at the Walker House have a prize for you in the Pasty King/Queen Contest they're holding this month. Check www.walker-house.org for details.

Speaking of Pasties

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the world's LARGEST pasty was made by a team of six bakers from Proper Cornish Food Co. in 2010. It was 15 feet long and weighed 1,604 lbs. It took 11 hours to cook in a specially-built oven, as part of a TV show cook-off.

MINERAL POINT WELCOMES THREE CREATIVE NEWCOMERS



The Sielaff property on S. Commerce St. has been sold to May Sorum and Maggie Tucker, leaving Mt. Horeb to install Sorum's new letterpress operation in the showroom on the ground floor of the historic 1870s Penhallegon Warehouse.

High-quality letterpress printing, which is enjoying an artistic rebirth, adds a sculptured look to paper surfaces such as notecards, stationery, calendars and art prints.

Tucker, a telecommuter for a family-owned corporation, said the two young women were visiting the city on ATVs, admiring the old buildings, and found their dream right alongside the bike trail at Brewery Creek. They adjusted their five-year business plan to act quickly.



Dee Hooks creates colorful, whimsical art from recycled materials, and will soon begin showing her work in the 1860s storefront at 214 High Street.

"I take cast-offs and found items and give them new life as clocks, lamps, jewelry, boxes and other household objects. It's all about function and fun from things that might have headed for a landfill."



Painter Jane Wilcoxson is putting finishing touches on her new studio in the space formerly occupied by Story Pottery on Commerce Street.

A weekend visitor since 1991, Jane and her husband shortened their long-range plan to acquire a gallery here when she noticed a For Sale sign on the property this summer.

She says the city reminds her of home. "I was born in Chippingsodbury, near Bristol, not quite Cornwall but very close. I grew up eating pasties and was surrounded by stone buildings, so I always feel at home in Mineral Point."

Wilcoxson's colorful body of work reveals a fondness for Nature and animals.

She hopes to open her doors in time for the Fall Art Tour.



SINGER ATTACKS TOASTER

That could only be Heywood Banks, the riotous songwriting comedian whose biggest hit, "Toast," is played by whacking on a toaster with forks, sometimes heard on the syndicated Bob & Tom Show on radio. Oct. 4th at the Opera House at 8 p.m.

HEALTHY HOEDOWN

Oct. 4th at Folklore Village, sponsored by Shooting Star Farm. A Music Jam at 5:30, and a 6:30 potluck preceding the Barn Dance with the Kettle Creek String Band. Bring your own dish.

FINAL FARMERS' MARKET

The Saturday morning social hour ends Oct. 18th, as local food providers button up for the Winter. Say thanks to the growers who keep our food local and fresh. Watertower Park 8:30-11.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Yes, the undead walk among us once more, crawling out of the bushes at Alley Stage. The play by Lori Allen Ohm is based on the original 1968 horror film. Oct. 10-18 at 7:30. (If you'd like to be a "zombie extra" at four shows, contact the Producer)

FASHION SALUTE FOR VETS

A one-time performance to applaud members of the Armed Forces, with a nostalgic look at their uniforms and the BigBand Music of the Larry Busch orchestra. Leah Crubel and many volunteers stage the fundraiser's live-model fashion show, a raffle and a short film and talk about the "Heroes Hunting" group that supports veterans. At the Opera House at 4 p.m. on Oct. 12th. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

GRAND MARQUIS & POINT 5

Point 5, the popular local group, joins the Grand Marquis band for a lively musical evening with blues, prohibition-era jazz and more. Oct. 18th at 8 p.m. at the Opera House.



HALLOWEEN EVENTS

The Chamber's annual Halloween celebration, "Costumes & Cocktails," is slated for Oct. 25th at Pendarvis.

And on Oct. 31st, the city's young goblins will walk High Street in the Halloween Parade, followed by Trick 'R Treating at Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts.



POINT FORWARD MARKS 20 YEARS

We hear the buzz about two innovations, Crowdfunding and Kickstarting, as financial tools to start a business on a shoestring.

In Mineral Point there's an important-but-unheralded start-up organization that has quietly celebrated two decades of community service recently. Point Forward Corp. supports local not-for-profit groups by allowing them to utilize tax-exempt 501(c)3 status to raise funds for their operations under the Point Forward umbrella. Pres. Kandy Kueler

says the organization was created to benefit local business, but it has become a popular vehicle for volunteer groups, including the Opera House, Library, Masonic Temple, SW Wisc. Book Fair, Theatre of Ballet Arts and the city's Trees Committee. This newspaper is one of the group; Arts Mineral Point (AMP) is the latest.

All have been launched as members of Point Forward and have grown with ample contributions from the local citizenry who are allowed to tax-deduct their gift.

THE MINERAL POINT SCHOOLS "EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS"

Wisconsin 2014 "Report Card"
issued by Dept. of Public Education

BUCKSKIN BROWN & BUDDIES, RECYCLERS

In 1853, the tall pines that lined the Wisconsin River were some of the first harvested in the state. Logging brought a thriving trade to the area: 100 saws running in twenty mills, and seventy million board feet of pine on rafts floated down-river to St. Louis and other markets.

The makeshift rafts were piloted by rough, tough men who proudly wore the title, "River Pig." Their work was hard and dangerous. And, so was their play.

On one river logging drive, a raft steered by River Pig Buckskin Brown pulled up to the shore in Sauk City. Brown and his crew were tired. And thirsty. And broke.

They whittled a pile of pine shingles and carried them up-hill to town, walked into the tavern and asked the barkeep if they could trade the shingles for whiskey. The deal was struck, and the loggers were told, "Just take 'em out to the back yard."

That took care of the first round of drinks. But the thirst persisted. Then, two of the men reappeared at the front door, their arms filled with shingles, to purchase a second round. Again, they were told to take the shingles to the back yard.

The evening went that way, with the exchange of shingles for whiskey, until the loggers said goodnight and wobbled back down to the river bank.

Later, Buckskin Brown told a few friends, "Some of the boys claimed they sold that same bunch of shingles eleven times, and then carried all the wood back to the raft." He didn't count the transactions, but he said, "We had all the whiskey we needed."

There is no record of what the saloon-keeper might have said on the morning after.

JENNIFER SHARP SCENES SHOWN

Watercolorist Jennifer Sharp has reproduced many of the popular Mineral Point scenes she painted and sold during her long artistic career.

Fifty images from her collection, some three thousand colorful and detailed paintings of local homes and buildings, have been printed on letter-size archival paper, and are available at very modest cost at the Longbranch Gallery. It is the first time the artist has reproduced the larger watercolors that hang in many local homes.

The reprinting was only possible only because she recorded color photos of every finished painting and has used a scanner to convert Kodachrome slides to digital files.



Hello, Silence, my old friend.

Remember silence? It was the sound of no sound. And it's extinct now, gone, along with privacy and the luxury of focusing attention on one thing—or one person—at a time.

Silence has been largely displaced by the gadgets we carry, which track our every move, snap photos of almost everything we do or say, dump us online, and divert our overburdened eyes from the human beings we meet. Or other cars on the road.

Our gadgets make our lives one long instant replay, but a life focused on record-and-playback doesn't leave space for stillness that leads to silence.

With your eyes on a glowing screen, inches away, you may think you'll miss nothing because you're so plugged in to the world. Actually, you'll miss almost everything.

The American family spends twelve minutes at breakfast. We simply don't have the time to find the cereal box, fill the bowl, pour the milk then eat spoonful by spoonful.

Thus, pressed as we are, we stop for a donut or breakfast sandwich, as the folks at Kwik Trip or Pit Stop can attest.

Without question, the fastest eaters are Middle and High School students, and many parents worry about a diet built around quick-food.

We got word from School Nurse Julie Pompos that she has received a UW-Madison grant she will use to start an after-school Cooking Club. Kids who sign up will get important advice about nutrition as well as worthwhile lessons on the culinary arts.

A "healthy cooking" club at the high school compliments a hillside veggie garden at the Elementary School, where young people learn how their food is grown and how to grow it. Some of the garden crops even move inside to the school's cafeteria.

Bon Appetite, Good Kids!

A loud new Big Blog Buzz is the "teacher's marketplace," in which educators hustle jobs as "free agents" and demand compensation commensurate with their skills.

That puts schooling our

kids in the same free-market arena as the NFL or the Movie Biz, where the big bucks go to those who can hit the hardest or deliver the most audience.

But, education is not Sunday afternoon football. It's not a big win at the Super Bowl. It's a lifetime of learning.

The Tech Ed teachers would likely command the highest pay in a market-driven system, and they would attract signing bonuses and other perks in the wealthier school districts. Poor and rural schools, as usual, would come up short.

And so would the kids. The most important teachers are not the computer wizards who train young minds for mindless jobs. The most important teachers are those in the early grades who build a solid foundation for learning, and the art, music, literature and social studies teachers who help students understand the world around them.

On Diploma Day, the best-equipped young people are smarter than their phone, thanks to that patient, caring, sadly under-valued teacher in front of the classroom.

Last month I wrote about Shia LaBeouf, the troubled celebrity who yelled "Do you know who I am?" as security guards escorted him from his seat at a Broadway show after he'd made a ruckus there.

Now, two more Persons of Personal Privilege have asked the same question. Members of Sarah Palin's family got into a face-punching party brawl in Alaska. Witnesses said it looked like an episode on Jerry Springer's show, and the former governor is said to have yelled, "Do you know who I am?" in the midst of the pitched battle.

And, in Florida, a motorist told police officers that George Zimmerman, the man acquitted in the murder of Trayvon Martin, threatened to kill him, asking "Do you know who I am?" during a shouted road confrontation, while their two cars were side-by side with windows rolled down.

It may be time to answer this odd inquiry from these Oh So Well Known People, perhaps by saying, "It's not that we don't know who you are; the problem is that we DO."

BUBBLEWRAPPING OUR KIDS

by Frank Beaman

I came of age during the Cold War, a time when "duck and cover!" was an exercise that instructed public school kids to dive under their desks when a loudspeaker sounded the alarm. We knew a wooden desktop wouldn't provide real protection from a Soviet super-bomb, but we went through all the motions because that's what kids did in the 1950s—we followed instructions.

In those days, children and teenagers were viewed by parents as Adult Trainees, young people who, IF they behaved well, could eventually earn the title, "Grownup".

Most rules of conduct were handed down by parents, but parental authority was an odd paradox: strict discipline but with surprising laxity in many areas of parental oversight. Parents confidently expected their "laws" to be obeyed, and kids knew those expectations were to be met or there would a penalty or punishment: solo time in-your-room, grounding, and, yes, spanking (the discipline of last resort). Spanker and spankee understood that, while sometimes delivered in anger, it was retribution for breaking the laws. It stung but didn't bruise.

Mom and dad determined our wardrobe: it was adult-style clothing, but in smaller sizes. No "pre-teen fashion." No \$100 sneakers.

Mom and dad determined our dining habits. We ate what was put on the table.

Mom and dad shaped our language skills. We worked to join in adult conversation, *never* interrupted adults, and cursed only around close pals.

But, mom and dad did not hover over us. A day's hour-by-hour life for most kids was remarkably free from restrictions. Adults expected their Trainees to learn by doing, by making mistakes and remembering not to repeat those mistakes. We learned that you could be burned if you weren't careful at the kitchen stove, that a fan could nip your fingers, that if you stuck a hairpin into an electrical outlet, you would sit down – hard – and tingle for a while. We learned that, if you didn't stay in your seat in the family car, a sudden stop might mean a chipped tooth. And, if you tumbled from the jungle gym, you nursed a skinned knee.

On most evenings, the family stayed home. A restaurant meal was a big occasion.

After dinner, we played outdoors with marbles, jacks, and jump ropes, rode bikes, swung from trees, chased fireflies, and all without adult supervision.

In the days before Little League and other kinds of adult-organized play, teams

were formed, on the spot, in "the vacant lot" (all neighborhoods had one). The young players chose the team members, not a "Parent-Coach." And though we might save up pennies for a catcher's mitt, no one could imagine a kid with a batter's *glove* or shockproof headgear. Hockey was played on an icy pond where kids skated without hundreds of dollars worth of body armor.

We walked to school and to the corner grocery without an escort. Our schools had no metal detectors at the door.

We innocently sat at the feet of our favorite uncle while he lighted one of many cigarettes. We didn't know our daily bread should be gluten-free, or that tomatoes from the neighbor's garden should be both organic and carefully washed. (Dirt in the diet, that favorite uncle argued, would give a kid a good immune system.)



Warning labels were rarely seen. Our evolving Common Sense told us that chewing a small piece of plastic might choke us and something sharp might cut us. We learned to be careful without legal counsel.

In our modest two-bedroom, one-bath home, there was one TV, in the living room, a radio or two, and the phone was mounted on the kitchen wall. These gadgets were generally under the control of mom and dad. There were no other communications playthings.

And, our limited supply of toys had to go back into the toybox before bedtime.

So, few toys. No computer, no smartphone, no bookbags, no airbags and car harnesses, or training wheels, riding helmets, video games, sunscreen, or plastic covers for the electrical plug-ins, no white sound machines, no alarm system for the baby's room.

If you didn't grow up in that generation you ask, "How did you get by with so little?"

Answer: "I guess we were hoodwinked. We had plenty of what we *needed*. We lived optimistic lives, unburdened by constant fear. And, most of that stuff hadn't been invented yet, because we didn't know we had all those problems."

I am aware that hundreds

of innovations, such as seat belts in autos, have improved safety and reduced death and injuries, and many products marketed to protect our children have great merit. Many products and services, however, were foisted on gullible families operating in a climate of fabricated fear.

In the 1960s, a new Age of Permissiveness produced the Child-Centered Household, a role-reversal in which the parents became subservient to their kids, "to protect the child's self-esteem." Not so co-incidentally, Big Retail discovered that childhood was a time for exploitive marketing. Yesterday's Adult Trainees became Big Spenders at the Mall.

The Sixties also gave rise to urban rioting, the ugly Vietnam War, violent games, and a televised "Scare of the Day."

The drumbeat of calamity created a climate of concern and complaint, and more than a few gadget makers magnified a safety problem, lobbied for new laws, then cranked out the gadget that complied with laws they had created.

We are afraid because we've been told we *should* be afraid; and, sadly, some parents have bubble-wrapped their kids.

But, Facts fight with Fear.

Thanks to better medicine, lower crime rates, and our careful attention to any sort of physical threat, our kids are safer than ever. But, you'd never know it by reading the news headlines or watching parents who keep their children on a short electronic tether and try to micromanage their lives.

Childhood experts now say, "Parental hovering creates co-dependencies and sends kids this message, "The world is a dangerous place and you are ill-equipped to navigate it."

Children are naturally resilient. But over-protected kids may find it hard to function as they grow into adulthood without constant protection.

The final irony is that our over-attention to safety has not in fact made a big difference in the number of accidents kids experience. Check it out!

The bottom line is this: the "duck and cover kids" survived and prospered, despite all those unrecognized hazards. We can only hope for a similar fate for the kids who are encased in bubblewrap.



A guy walks into a tailor's shop in ancient Athens. He's carrying a pair of trousers with the crotch seam wide open.

**The tailor says, "Euripides?"
The guy says, "Eumenides!"**