

# THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

ILLUSTRATED

A CASUAL COMPENDIUM: WORDS AND WHIMSY TO INFORM AND AMUSE THE LOYAL READER

## GALLERY NIGHT:



In a word -- SMASHING!!

The Candlelight Shopping Evening of December 5th was the kind of event that sent local merchants to reclining chairs with the fatigue that comes with a day of hard work and a payoff in both dollars and personal satisfaction.

The artists, artisans, shopkeepers and restaurateurs of Mineral Point spoke of happy crowds on the city's streets, drawn by favorable December weather and hefty promotion on radio and social media. A strong turnout of residents and visitors made the day a resounding commercial success.

Chamber Director Joy Giese called it, "simply the best one, ever."

Arts Mineral Point (AMP), which coordinates and promotes the four Gallery Night events through the calendar year, expressed similar feelings. AMP's Ried Knapp said his Wantoot Gallery surveyed visitors on the busy night, and discovered many had never been to Mineral Point before. With 70% of the surveyed visitors from the Madison area, Knapp said "AMP's expanded advertising push in Madison is definitely working."

The economic impact of a three-day holiday festival in Spring Green appeared to be negligible, although that directly competing project enjoyed a \$4,000 JEM grant for marketing.

Arlene Byrne, proprietor of The Pear, told the *Times*, "It was surely the busiest December Gallery Night on my books, ever! All the stars seemed aligned for a magical evening. So many locals came out to support us. . . just heartfelt."

Elsewhere on that Saturday, Santa and Mrs. Claus staged a photo-op in the Shake Rag Alley Cabinet Shop and a record 85 Kids & Santa Portraits were taken. The arts and crafts school sold out of cookies and gingerbread house components. Shake Rag's Executive Director Megan Kulick said, "It was truly wonderful to see the community out in full force for the annual Santa Day tradition. Our stock was emptied out but our hearts sure were full!"

The day also featured "The Mitten Project: Warm Hands, Warm Hearts," organized by Carole Spelic and Christine Tharnstrom. A group of volunteers made mittens and headgear from a variety of fabrics for children and adults. The finished items were donated to the Free Clinic in Dodgeville.

Congratulations to all who played a role in a fabulous Gallery Night.



### A FIRST-RATE BEATLES BAND IS COMING TO OUR TOWN, TO HELP THE OPERA HOUSE. GOT YOUR TICKET YET?

"GET BACK WISCONSIN," a Beatles Band with a genuine love for the music of the Fab Four, will headline a Special Benefit Concert at the Opera House on Saturday, Feb. 20th, at 7:30 p.m.

The *Times of Mineral Point* will underwrite the event, and the proceeds will help fund restoration of the 1915 marquee at the Opera House, a project now in the planning stage, gathering needed resources to begin work.

Priorities include structural repairs, new signage at the doors to tie the theater's facade to the larger City Hall building, and effective uplighting to make the marquee sparkle after dark.

"GET BACK WISCONSIN" is a group of seasoned Madison musicians who work to achieve what they call "Beatles Purity" by matching the songs note for note and word for word, an unusually authentic approach. The quintet is not a "Tribute Band," mop-topped look-alikes playing a few of the Beatles covers. They're trained academic and professional musicians who are dedicated to sound, not image.

They've mastered more than 100 of the Beatles' 215 original recordings, with a playlist of about fifty songs in their live concert. Between the tunes, they toss out well-researched facts and trivia, to add to the fun.

We promise an evening of musical treats. And your \$15 donation will help the Opera House Marquee Project.

Tickets at Berget's and at the door.

**GET BACK - FEB. 20 - 7:30**



**Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No Hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today ...**

**Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
and no religion, too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace ...**

**You may think that I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one.  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one.**

For Beatle **John Lennon**, "Imagine," was the signature song of his solo career. Inspired by the writings of Yoko Ono, recorded at his home studio in England in May 1971, the song soared on American charts and millions of copies were sold before and after Lennon's murder in December 1980.

"Imagine" has been derided for its stanzas against religion, convention, nationalism and capitalism, but those elements are sugar-coated and the song has become an anthem for the Peace/Harmony Movement.

## ASSEMBLY MULLS THE MURDER OF OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Flying beneath a banner that reads, "Property Rights!", a bill now before the legislature's Committee on Housing and Real Estate is designed to strip the power of Wisconsin cities to protect their historic places by making compliance with local preservation rules *optional*. Bill AB-568 adds an "owner consent" provision to state law, which allows property owners to opt in or out of preservation ordinances and rules.

The practical impact of the legislation would end local enforcement of historic preservation regulations and would force a monumental re-write of existing standards and publications.

The bill enjoys strong support from landlord and real estate organizations.

A number of Mayors and city officials have voiced opposition.

Pointer, Jim Stroschein, has restored his farm home and shepherded the big restoration project at Orchard Lawn. He comments, "Picture the stone storefronts in Mineral Point covered with vinyl siding. This proposal is absurd. Cities that have retained their identities and character have done so because: *a*) people *care*, and *b*) ordinances protect against insensitive exterior changes to properties. Mineral Pointers should call or, better yet, write a letter to our representatives Todd Novak and Howard Marklein to let them know how you feel about this proposal to take away local historic preservation control."



**"It's MY property, and NO ONE  
can tell me what to do with it."**



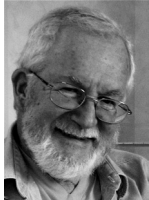
# THE TIMES OF MINERAL POINT

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



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Arlene Byrne  
Joy Gieseke  
Bruce Howdle  
Ried Knapp  
Steve Morgan of "Get Back" Band  
Lauren Powers  
Carole Spelic  
Brian and Diane Stuart

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WOODWARD PRINTING SERVICES  
PLATTEVILLE, WISCONSIN  
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## 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.

# ENDANGERED SPECIES

UW-PLATTEVILLE SQUEEZES ITS ART DEPT.



**"The \$300 million, two-year cut to the UW System proposed by Governor Walker will have severe adverse consequences for the quality of higher education in Wisconsin, for the costs borne by Wisconsin families, and for our state's economy. Our world-class university system has long been a key factor in the state's economic growth and the deep cuts could put that economic benefit at risk."**

We were well warned.

The alarm bells rang on the OpEd pages, at community forums, across the table, and in corner conversations, while the daily news headlines tracked the Governor and G.O.P. majorities in the legislature as they pushed dozens of "reforms" through Capitol chambers where the minority Democrats were mere spectators.

This month we begin to see the consequences of the contentious Walker austerity budget and the state's 2016-2017 spending plan. The Bean-counters are announcing staff cutbacks.

A budget is, by definition, a mind-bending array of numbers, ratios and projections — abstract, cold, indifferent. The *human* component is missing.

But, with sadness, we can now put warm faces on a few of the digits in the government's spreadsheet. You may recognize the faces; they are Pointers, people we know, local artists whose work we have admired.

They are our neighbors, our friends.

And, their jobs are in jeopardy.

Shrinking state funding has forced administrators in the Performing and Visual Arts Dept. at UW-Platteville to consider budget cutbacks which may very well result in staff reductions. The budget pie is being divided now, with final determinations to come later in January and in March.



Bruce Howdle, one of the artistic gang that came to Mineral Point in the mid-1970s and bunked at the Foundry, teaches ceramics in the Art Department in Platteville, and completes commissioned murals and clay works in his Commerce Street home and studio.

Carole Spelic' executes magic with paper, plays her double-bass in the Point Five Band and teaches two Art classes, working alongside her partner, the artist Richard Moninski, who works in various art media in their home/studio, the historic Green Lantern Gallery on High Street.



Peter Flanery is a local sculptor with a country studio. He has led installations of public art pieces in three Mineral Point locations.

Daniel O'Brien is a familiar face, too. A Cuba City resident, he worked here to supplement his UW-P income.

The state chopped \$250 million from the UW System, and the Platteville campus was hit with a cut as high as \$6 million, about 3% of its annual budget.

The money-crunchers crank in complex mechanisms that evaluate costs, tuition paybacks, enrollment totals and other factors for existing classes in the schools of Music, Theatre and Art. Then, they make plans for future classes.

In projections issued in December, the School of Music gets an 11.8% reduction in funding, Theatre takes a 9% cutback, but the Art Dept. is disproportionately whacked by a devastating 31%. [A few days later, university officials told the Art faculty they might restore much of the threatened cut — and it's said letters sent to administrators may have influenced a decision for a softer penalty.]

The Art program has three tenured positions, and those instructors are not effected by the cuts. But the five art teachers you've met here, "Lecturers" in the adjunct faculty, will share only 1.16 positions, which works out to about *one* class per teacher. For teachers now handling one, two and three classes, it's obvious their class schedule AND paycheck is in freefall.

It's no big secret that non-tenured "adjunct" teachers are modestly paid. And, it's also no secret that very few artists can make a good living with their art alone. Artists often rely on a working spouse, or a job in academia, so the news of the Platteville plan is a blow to both the morale and the livelihood of the talented local instructors we feature here.

Some of these teachers may have to make a difficult choice, whether to continue to teach with reduced pay, drop out of teaching and take other work, or move to a home in a different city.

But, the teachers aren't the only ones who will suffer. Because of structural changes forced by the cutbacks, the Art Dept. may lose eleven classes, class sizes will increase, lecture classes will balloon from 45 to 80 students, classes offered every year will be taught every other year, resulting in frustration at registration and delayed graduation (four college years may become five years, with additional tuition and family financial burdens).

Further, Art classes are popular with students pursuing other majors but seeking knowledge about design, beauty and creativity. Those classes may disappear, with telling impact on the entire Liberal Arts concept.

The erosion of a high-quality Art program seems inevitable. Unless . . .



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Chancellor: [shieldsd@uwplatt.edu](mailto:shieldsd@uwplatt.edu)  
Provost: [denherderm@uwplatt.edu](mailto:denherderm@uwplatt.edu)**



## RACE TO THE BOTTOM

OPINION from Frank Beaman

Wisconsin has contributed much to the nation's political theater and has provided a dynamic showplace with a cast of noteworthy players.

The Republican Party first took root in Ripon. Bob LaFollette wrote the book for the Progressive Populist movement. Wisconsin sent genuine public servants with real stature to Washington: Wm. Proxmire, Gaylord Nelson, Melvin Laird, Les Aspin, George Kennan.

Yes, and Joseph McCarthy, too.

And, for sixty years in a row, from 1950 to 2010, the Badger state elected twelve governors (six Democrats, six Republicans) who swam in the middle of the political stream, a dozen politicians who worked to both reflect and preserve the basic values of the people who elected them.

Without exception, these governors avoided political extremes, and they struck compromises with their adversaries. They often set up Blue Ribbon committees to consider a full range of viewpoints, shed public light on the state's problems and possibilities, and listened — really listened — to the voices of the voters. As administrations came and went, the governors set aside their ambitions for higher office, pandered to no out-of-state interests, never surprised the citizenry with underhanded or unexplained actions. They asked for, and got, participation from both the legislature and the voting public because they exhibited a clear understanding of which policies and which principles were shared by a strong majority of Wisconsinites. It was an era of civil but spirited policy debate and, usually, compromise, a culture of shared decisions. Drastic change came only after public debate and public input. Generally, the common goal was the common good: making Wisconsin a better place to live and work.

Then came the Tea Party election of 2010; and the "Wisconsin Idea" was re-written. Literally re-written.

Five years later, Wisconsin's landmark "participatory" government is in tatters. Madison now has become a government "imposed on the people."

For Scott Walker, the Republican-controlled Senate and Assembly, and the conservative majority on the state's Supreme Court, the agenda for state government has been drafted behind closed doors, hidden from public awareness, with scant oppositional input and open disdain for dissent.

Governor Walker's punishing state budget for 2016-17 was a blueprint for total control by the Republican power structure, but members of the governor's own political party found it hard to defend. Some even called it "crap."

The sole defense for all the take-aways from education, science, the environment, rural interests and small towns, and open government?

Simply "We froze property taxes."

On this page, you see one tragic result of the budget that butchered.

Fact: POLICY EFFECTS PEOPLE.

On this page we glimpse how policy reaches into Mineral Point's creative community to hurt our best ambassadors -- our artists who want to teach.

It is sad. It is shameful.

And, this newspaper fears, it will take many years to repair the damage being done to the institutions and the good citizens of Wisconsin.





## POCKETPARK GETS CORNISH LABEL

Many Pointers are not aware of a new designation for the small park west of the Opera House, a move that brings a new identity to the green spot.

Writing in the newsletter of the Southwest Wisconsin Cornish Society, Glen Ridnour points to recent action by the Mineral Point City Council which unanimously approved the name, "Cornish Heritage Park" for the city-owned property.

Ridnour, Cornish Society Board Member who chairs the city's Historic Preservation Commission, said, "The primary purpose of the new park is to create a place where anyone passing by can find information about the importance of the city's Cornish Heritage."

The first step was to install two green highway signs, originally intended for roadside use but blocked by a change in the state rules for such signage. The signs recite the Cornish presence in Mineral Point, as "The Most Cornish Town in the USA" and "Twinned with Redruth, Cornwall, UK."

The green signs were placed in the rear of the park along Jail Alley.

The next step, now underway, is raising funds to have an official State Historical Society marker placed in the front of the park, entitled "The Importance of Cornish Heritage in Mineral Point and Wisconsin." The \$2,000 cast iron sign would illustrate the city's Cornish attributes and set out the many ways the city's Cornish had impact on local life. The target for installation of the sign is the city's Annual Cornish Festival in September 2016.

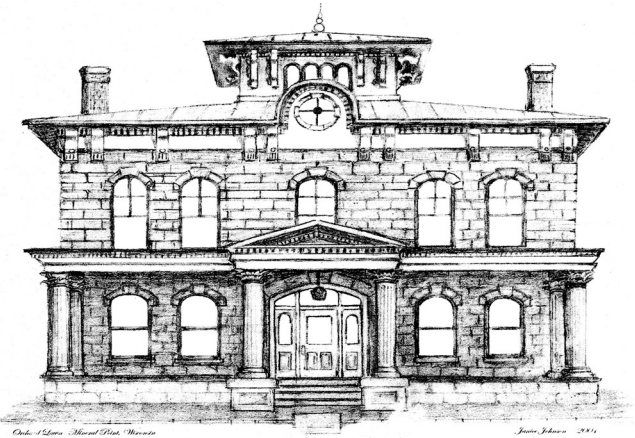
Future plans call for a park centerpiece, a statue depicting the Cornish miner (a Pointer!) featured on the Wisconsin state flag. Additional display items to carry out the Cornish theme of the pocket park are planned.

Your tax-deductible contribution is welcome. Please note, "**For Heritage Park**" on your check and send it to **Sandy Weitzel, Treasurer, SW Wisconsin Cornish Society, 217 Mineral Street, Mineral Point, WI 53565.**

**In Cornwall, our friends are aware of the importance of the park as a Heritage Centre in this most important Centre of Cornishness in North America. So, in spite of the difficult nature of the Cornish dialect, offer the following as a fund-raising slogan:**

**\$\$ CUM ESS ON M'ANSUMS \$\$\$ WE D' NEED YER 'ELP \$\$**

**Translation = Come on now, Me Handsomes, We do need your help!**



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2016 LYCEUMS

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 17th** at 2 p.m. at the Opera House -- the Annual Meeting and the first lyceum of the year featuring the election of officers and a discussion focused on the history of the Democrat/Tribune, the city's historic newspaper, with excerpts from old newspapers read aloud.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21st** at 2 p.m., at a location to be announced. This lyceum focuses on the lively history of Soldier's Park and the vanished Pavilion where so much musical and entertainment history was made.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 20th** at 2 p.m. Location to be announced. The third lyceum will explore a fascinating aspect of American history: The Potluck. Discussion is about Wisconsin's role in the traditional gathering along with recipes and community cookbooks that have been published by local "chefs".

The gathering will, in itself, be a potluck, in which lyceum participants will bring the proverbial "hot dish" to add to the fun.

Mark your calendar for these Mineral Point Historical Society events.



## GATEWAY TO AMERICA

Twelve million immigrants shuffled through the gates at Ellis Island during sixty years of public service that ended when the building closed in 1954.

Before 1890, individual states were managing immigration on their own. New York had processed eight million newcomers in the previous forty years.

But, it was becoming clear, the rush of immigration would outgrow the states' capacities and policies. As conditions in southern and eastern Europe worsened and demand for religious asylum increased, officials prepared for what would soon be the greatest human migration in the history of the world and decided to greet the "huddled masses" before they ever went ashore.

President Harrison designated Ellis Island as the first federal immigration center in 1890, and it took three years to build a facility to greet shiploads of immigrants from Europe.

On January 1st, 1894, a 15-year-old Irish girl named Annie Moore became the first person to be ushered through the gates at Ellis Island.

Processing worked this way: First- and second-class passengers arriving in the U.S. were generally waved past the island and given only a brief inspection on board their ship to check for obvious disease. After docking in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, poorer third-class and steerage passengers were ferried to Ellis Island by barge where they underwent thorough interviews. Officials observed the immigrants as they climbed the stairs into the main hall and marked a simple chalk code on the coats of those who looked sickly. If you were in good health and your story checked out, processing would take about five hours. Only 2 percent of all immigrants who passed through the gates were turned away, often for infectious disease.

The facilities expanded constantly to meet the growing throngs of people, and engineers steadily increased the footprint of the island by dumping ship's ballast and piling up landfill from construction of New York's first subway lines. The island was eventually expanded tenfold to roughly 30 square miles. In the year 1907 alone, more than a million people passed through the center. But, with the dawn of World War I, immigration from Europe began to slow. The Red Scare and a growing backlash against foreigners at home soon brought it to a crawl, and after 1924, laws were passed allowing immigrants to be processed at foreign embassies. Ellis Island was made into a detention center for suspected enemies.

In November, 1954, the last detainee was released. The island was formally decommissioned and was abandoned for decades. But, in 1984 the island began the largest restoration project in U.S. history, creating an Immigration Museum that has now drawn more than thirty million visitors.

Today, some 40 percent of the American citizenry can trace their ancestry through the gates of Ellis Island.

**SOURCE: Writers Almanac on NPR**



## IN JANUARY: Get in touch with your Inner Artist!

### ART SHOW AT CANNERY

Arts Mineral Point (AMP) invites townspeople to display their home-grown art works at a MEMBERS ART SHOW on January 16-17 at the Cannery Arts Incubator. The arts advocacy group says, "The show will build community appreciation for the art and artists living here and will showcase the works of *hidden* artists as well."

Members can submit two pieces of art for display at an Open House at the Incubator, Sat., Jan. 16th from 5 to 9 p.m. and Sun., Jan. 17th from 2 to 5 p.m. Non-members are welcome to participate for a \$25 fee (an AMP membership comes with it).

But, you must send your plans to AMP's Brian Stuart by **Jan. 5th**, and deliver your work on Jan. 13-14th. Visit [www.artsmp.org](http://www.artsmp.org) and use "Contact."

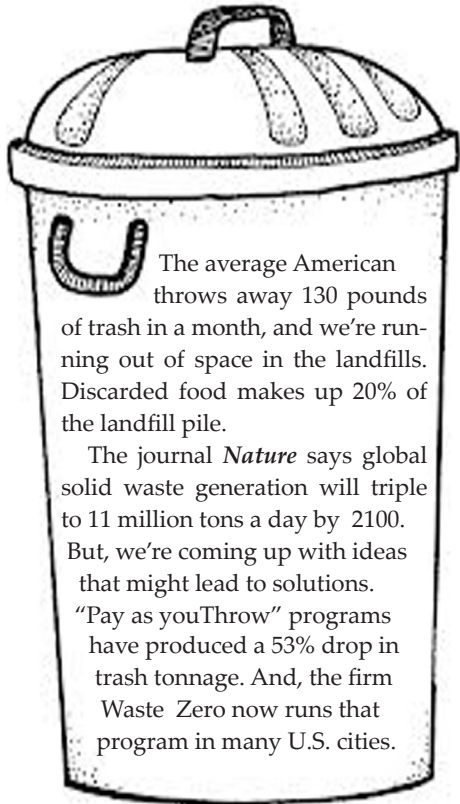
### 2ND "PAINT PARTY" JAN. 30, 7-9 P.M. GRAY DOG

Bruce Howdle will again offer a fun-filled class for wannabe painters at the second AMP "Paint Party," a fund raiser for the Cannery Art Incubator. Using tables at Gray Dog Deli, with all supplies furnished, learn how to draw an acrylic painting on canvas, and take your finished work home with you. The first "Paint Party" was such a success, a repeat was suggested.

Drinks and appetizers are available for purchase. \$35 for AMP members, \$45 for non-members. Pre-register as space is limited to 30 people. Sign-up online at [www.artsmp@org](mailto:www.artsmp@org), visit Gray Dog Deli, or call 987-2454.

### The 2ND ANNUAL "PAINT THE POINT" WINTER EDITION FEBRUARY 10 - 14

### Watch Outdoor Artists Paint our Landscapes







# FLOTSAM & JETSAM

BY THE EDITOR, FRANK BEAMAN

As we welcome Year 2016, many of us share the uneasy sensation that a runaway jet airliner is headed directly toward us, and it's coming in too low.

The nation's 24/7 news cycle brings us terror by the truckload. Americans are more fearful about the likelihood of another major attack than at any time since the weeks after Sept. 11, 2001.

We live with a gnawing sense of dread that has been expanded and then exploited by various fearmongers: the blowhard at the saloon, the scribbler on the Internet, the talk show pundit, and the combative political candidate.

If you breathe deeply and think about it, you may conclude that although we live in dangerous times, today's headlines, temper tantrums, accusations, bald-faced lies and wrong-headed solutions have moved beyond danger, into *absurdity*.

Perhaps, in a Theater of the Absurd with fear, falsehood and folly at center stage, we might consider the use of a show-biz device to better characterize the nature of some of the current noise.

Perhaps we need a laugh track, "No, no," you say, "our problems are real, and they're plenty scary."

"Yes, yes," I say, "but if you take the *historical* approach, instead of the knee-jerk *hysterical* approach, you come to realize that most of what is scaring us has happened, somewhere, before, and somehow we've survived."

As a student of history and a lifetime news junkie, I've seen today's headlines, expressed in slightly different words, over my seven decades of life. In what has often been a race to the bottom, progress and enlightenment have been slow in coming.

But we're still here.

I was born in March, 1933, the month both Adolph Hitler and Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power. I've studied how each man played his historic role. Both showed an intolerant streak for those "not like us." Hitler wanted a Master Race without Jews. FDR locked Japanese Americans in camps. Compare their views with symptoms of contemporary intolerance — deportation/closing our borders. The wall is not really a brand new idea, is it?

I've seen walls go up before (remember the Cold War?) and, eventually, they are torn down.

I've watched the violence in Selma and Montgomery, so today's racial tensions are uncomfortable but familiar signs of painful progress.

I've kept notes as public servants forgot they were elected to do good for the voters they represent and became bought-and-paid-for puppets for the special interests, and I've checked off the names on the roster as the Giants of

Congress became mere Pygmies.

In the flow of history, we are infatuated, at first, with our demagogues, the political hustlers and charlatans, but in the end we see them for what they are.

I've observed, with sadness, the loss of basic knowledge about politics and government. We need a class in Civics. We don't know much about government and most of us don't care; we just pick out a slogan and print a sign for the front yard.

And, I've watched as my chosen profession, journalism, has abandoned its twin roles as Town Crier, bringing needed information to the public, and Watchdog, exposing the wrong-doers. Rebel Reporters, who got down and dirty while digging for the truth, have largely given way to Entertainers and Stenographers who amuse us by reading the corporate press releases which run on their teleprompters.

As for the threat of a terrorist attack at any moment, a quick visit to Google refreshes one's memories of the Northern Ireland Conflict, known as the "Troubles" of 1969 to 1998. At least 10,000 bombs were detonated during that conflict in England, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. More than 3,500 people were killed.

In dozens of cities innocent bystanders were killed and maimed by surprise attacks in churches, meeting halls, markets, pubs and subways. So, it's safe to say the average citizen awoke each morning in dread of a life-ending day as the contentious ethnic/sectarian violence played out.

Thirty years of daily terror! But, the Brits never called it "war." They recognized the persistent terrorism for what it was: an effort to spread chaos and trick the nations' leaders into making decisions that played into the hands of the terrorists.

British leaders recognized the attacks as CRIMES, horrific crimes, but not WAR. Then, they used their resources to perfect the world's best Police and Intelligence network — not the world's biggest Army. There was no carpet-bombing, no border closings, no kicked-in doors in house-to-house neighborhood searches.

Superior law enforcement tracked down violent thugs and put them behind bars. And, the people endured.

It took more than the UK's legendary Stiff Upper Lip. It took SMARTS. It took careful good sense and restraint.

Great Britain learned their lessons in the terrible days of the Nazi Blitz of 1939, when they first put up a poster:

"KEEP CALM & CARRY ON"

We might want to hang that poster. And plug in the laugh track, too.



# THE WAY WE ARE

We Live in Fear of Terrorism . . . and We Hope for Divine Intervention in Football

At years end, as everyone knows, the popular magazines always run round-ups on this or that. It's a matter of tried and true journalistic tradition.

*The Week* magazine is a deftly-done catch-all for seven days of news, opinion, and trivia. Their December 25th edition featured a full page of poll-gathering, the findings from a variety of public opinion surveys.

Some of the public opinion results seem serious. Some, not so much so. All are intriguing in today's strange times when most of us continually ask, "Good grief, who ARE these people?" and "Did they REALLY say THAT!?"

Well, yes, they probably did say that. Polls are quietly accurate. We hear complaints about their accuracy only when a survey goes astray.

So, here's the word from the American public, words both good, bad and, uh, whatever.

**How are we feeling?** Not so good. Bloomberg Politics says 69% of us think the USA is on the wrong track, the most pessimistic finding in four years, and 72% say we've slipped from former greatness. 59% say the economy is bad; 47% are living from paycheck to paycheck (CNN/ORC). "The American Dream is broken," say 61%, and only the wealthy can get ahead. (CBS News) More than half of us believe our kids will grow up worse than we did. But, we're still proud of our country: 40% say "We're Number One" and another 34% say we're "among the best." (NBC)

**Who's to blame?** The politicians, mostly. Pres. Obama scores only 46% favorability on the economy, only 41% on foreign policy. A record 50% now disagree with the Supreme Court's decisions, and a whopping 86% mark our Congress unfavorably. (Gallup)

Indeed, more than half of us say "ordinary folks" could do a better job than our elected leaders. (Pew Reseach)

**How has society changed?** We're more accepting. A record 61% now accept same-sex marriage, the same number OK births out of wedlock, and 58% favor the legalization of marijuana use. (Gallup) But religious intolerance is on the rise. 56% say Islam isn't compatible with traditional American values; that's up 9 points from 2011.

Our growing reliance on technology troubles us: 73% think Smartphones and other electronic gadgets make us lazy, illiterate, and non-communicative. (HarrisPoll) Still, 36% admit to checking their phones "constantly," and more than 1/3rd confess their phone is the first thing on their minds at wake-up time every day.

**What do we do for fun?** We kick back and watch a football game. Half of the American public follows the NFL, and follow these teams more than they pay attention to any other sport. For some, watching sports on TV is a religious experience: 26% believe God plays a role in deciding which team will win, and 53% say God rewards athletes of faith with good health and success. (Public Religion Research Institute)

Do we get up from the couch? Hmm. 28% of Americans didn't engage in ANY exercise or physical activity last year — the highest percentage since 2007. (Physical Activity Council)

**What are we afraid of?** A lot. 83% of voters in a *Washington Post* survey fear a large-scale terrorist attack in the U.S. sometime soon, and 60% think it's likely terrorists are living in their hometowns. (Fox News) 63% worry they will be caught by gun violence. (Mc Clatchy/Marist) Almost half of the country believe the Feds could use a military exercise to covertly seize control of a state (Rasmussen) and 44% say machines with installed artificial intelligence could wipe out the human race. (Monmouth Univ.)

**Whew! This is pretty grim stuff. Have we totally forgotten about pleasant times? How about a day at the beach?** Not a chance! 38% of us are afraid a shark will eat them if they dare to take a dip in the ocean. (Ipsos)



Fact is, much of the reporting on the widespread fears, fashions, and fables of modern Americans simply does not apply to most level-headed residents of Mineral Point, Wisconsin.

It's not that we are "out of the loop," though some of us choose to be. It's more likely we are simply too busy leading full lives: working hard, caring about each other, and using common good sense to replace fear with hope.

