

# FROM THE Editor's Desk

BY SARAH NIGBOR



## A little faith

In the wee hours of Thursday, Feb. 10, the worst kind of phone call came that no one ever wants to get. My husband's grandpa, "Pa," had had a heart attack and it looked like the end was near. My husband's grandma, "Nan," and his cousins Christopher and Roger raced through the dark night to get to the hospice facility. The vigil began.

My husband was able to call Pa and say his final goodbyes while Christopher held the phone to his ear. Pa couldn't respond, but he could still hear. He died about an hour later, gently and quietly, with family surrounding him.

As we gathered around Nan's old kitchen table Friday night reminiscing and grieving, Christopher and Nan had an amazing tale to tell. It will give you chills, and hopefully a bit of comfort.

First off, you need to know that Pa was an avid trout fisherman. He grew up in Shawano County where you trip over a trout stream every five feet. Sometimes they're tiny and barely visible from the road, but Pa knew where all the good spots were, whether it was standing on a culvert near the road as icy water poured through into a deep hole, or back through the brush to a secret, hidden pool. The streams there tumble and churn over millions of stones. He passed his love of trout fishing onto my husband and his cousins. If you've never seen anyone fish a trout stream, it's truly a delicate and visual art. The movements are distinct and precise, knowing exactly when to jig, the line flowing through fingers, the casting and reeling. Somehow they all know how to do this in the tightest, brushiest quarters with precision. When we go to Shawano County, I just watch my husband fish because it's beautiful to me.

As Nan, Roger and Christopher sat in Pa's room toward the end, Pa, barely able to speak, told Nan just exactly where his ice fishing tip-ups are so the boys could find them. Many he crafted himself. Soon, his speaking ceased and he stopped responding. His chest rose gently with each breath, but they became shallower each time. Soon, they noticed his arms moving in what seemed an erratic fashion. Was this something that happens when death is about to pounce? But as Christopher watched, the movements Pa's arms were making took on a familiar rhythm. He was tying a line, casting, letting the fishing line flow through his fingers, his right arm extended. Soon the jigging started. His fingers and arms moved through the familiar dance, without a tremble, through the precise dance of trout fishing. He was trout fishing. Oh, he hit a snag! Dang it, the line broke. He had to retie the lure. Pop the line into the mouth, tie the line, good as new, the dance begins again. This went on for quite some time.

As Christopher told this story around the old kitchen table, tears streamed down our faces. While we hated that we'd lost Pa, there was comfort in knowing he was doing what he loved best as he passed from this world to the next. He was trout fishing.

My husband teaches psychology and told me later that most likely, the movements were due to buried memories in a part of the brain called the hippocampus. That may well be, or maybe it was because he was already in the next life, with his foot lingering in this one, doing the one thing he loved most as he transitioned to his heavenly reward. Sometimes, you just got to have a little faith. I believe Pa was really and truly trout fishing.

# WOODWORKING Again

BY DAVE WOOD



## Bets in the barbershop

My B. W. (Beautiful Wife) also serves me as M.B. (My Barber) because I have for years had so little hair with which to deal. Back in Minneapolis I always had what hair I have cut by a great barber located in The Grain Exchange. John was a swell guy and honest, too. Each time I visited for a cut, he charged me a reasonable \$10 and presented me with a pint of honey to compensate for the 2 minutes he took to lower my ears. Why the honey? Because Mike was also an A.B. (Amateur Beekeeper).

As B.W. snips away at my "hairspot," which is much smaller than my baldspot, I dream of the days when I could stride into a shop on the main drag of Whitehall, like most normal people, and had enough hair to give the barber orders on how I wanted it cut. The first barber to cut my hair was a wonderful fellow, with a fantastic barber-chair side manner. His name was Mervin Engen, but everyone called him "Cleve" because of a mistake he made as a youth when he returned from his first trip to Chicago and ordered a "Cleveland Sandwich" and had to be told by the counterperson that such a morsel was called a "Denver."

Cleve put up with his new moniker and even forgave me for my first journey to the chair. "You screamed and bawled like a Banshee when I put you on the board to raise you up." I took his word for it and continued to patronize his establishment until I was in high school. Before that I dropped by Cleve's shop to show him the brook trout I had just caught up in Irvin Coulee, which only measured six inches, so I had to break its back and stretch it so it measured a legal seven. Cleve didn't expose me, but did manage to let me know that he was onto me, by saying "It looks a little peaked to me, Davey, but congratulations."

Once I became a snazzy high school student, I had to change barbers. And of course, that meant the fancier shop simply called "Swenson and DeBow," presided over by young Kenny, who was a star pitcher on the Whitehall Millers baseball team and who knew how to fashion a crewcut (called a "Heinie"), and his older partner "Cooch" DeBow. It was a big place,

with a shoeshine stand and all the accoutrements of a fashionable tonsorial parlor. Back issues of the Police Gazette, featuring buxom models and news stories stating that Adolph Hitler had been spotted in Argentina. Tall bottles of pomades, like green Pinol Skintone Lotion, yellow Hess Coconut Oil, Glove's Imperial Sarcoptic Mange Medicine, as well as the scent of talcum powder and sound of razor strokes slap-slap-slapping.

It also had a reputation for a certain raciness. Legend had it that Mart Swenson (Kenny's late father) and Cooch had purchased a radio on the q.t. in 1920. It was the town's first such contraption, which Mart and Cooch sequestered in the back room, which they visited frequently to pick up baseball scores, only to return to their chairs to make bets with the lawyers, bankers, and Lutheran Brotherhood salesmen who were wireless in their homes. After months in operation, one customer, banker Charlie Melby, purchased his own "wireless," began winning some of his bets, uncovered the ruse and the odds were evened.

Oh, and it was so sophisticated. My father remembered the day he turned 16 and was getting a haircut at noon, his back to the assemblage, when he discovered his favorite teacher Thaddeus Cassius Parr, smoked wicked cigarettes. "It was noon and Doc Parr teacher walked in, lit up a Lucky Strike, took several drags and told an absolutely filthy joke, then hurried back to class."

Fifty years later, Mart and Cooch had passed on to the Great Tonsorial Emporium in the sky. But Mart's son Kenny was still cutting hair as he had had always done since his father died in the 30s and he quit school to lower ears in Whitehall for more than 60 years. And Dad, balder than I, had his weekly trim as usual. "Once in a while," Dad said, "Ken would get to talking and forget to trim one side of a customer's head. It happened to me once."

"Gee, Dad, what'd you do?"

"What all of us do. We just drive to Blair, go to a young barber and have him finish it off."

Dave would like to hear from you. Phone him at 715-426-9554.

## Trust is complicated

By Sen. Jeff Smith  
Representing  
Wisconsin's 31st District



State Sen. Jeff Smith

I've learned a lot about building and holding one's trust, especially as an elected official. Trust can be elusive especially when the facts we find don't align with the rhetoric. When claims are verified with facts, trust is earned.

Trust can be puzzling too when it's given without any question or verification of facts. When we hear or read statements that align with our beliefs, we might automatically trust the source. It's not earned, but we want it to be true.

Politics is all about trust. Earned and unearned.

My office receives constant emails proposing new ideas or legislation. Some are informed and original while many are generated from misinformation campaigns. It's common for groups to send out messages warning anyone who is on their site or receive their emails about bills they don't like. They will have their own reasons. They may be legitimate reasons, but they may also be for selfish or political reasons.

Last week we heard a bill during a public hearing for the Committee on Utilities, Technology and Telecommunications. Senate Bill 838 was introduced by Republican members in the committee. In a nutshell, this proposal preserves Wisconsin's control over electric transmission decisions through the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, our state's regulators.

What does this have to do with trust? Before the public hearing folks were getting

emails and seeing Facebook messages saying this bill would do terrible things. They were told their electric rates would go through the roof.

Trusting their source, folks put their names on form letters declaring their opposition to this bill and we needed to vote "no." They gave their trust without verification.

The reality is, there is no proof that rates will go up or have gone up in places that already passed similar legislation. My colleagues on the committee and I asked lots of questions. When asked if rates had been affected in other states, those opposed to the bill had to admit they hadn't.

Throughout the discussion we only got the usual conjecture and political ideology that led individuals testifying against the bill to believe that rate increases are inevitable. Oddly, they used the fact that rates have gone up around 10% over the last decade with no evidence it was caused by policies like this. The legislation being proposed is not current law and has nothing to do with rates during the past decade.

Building new transmission lines and the emerging infrastructure for the 21st Century is expensive. It gets more ex-

pensive with delays and missteps, which is what states have found when the bidding process is too loose and left to oversimplification. This bill prevents unnecessary costs and preserves what little control our state has over our energy needs.

Wisconsin's rates are high because these same groups that misled people last week misled people a decade ago when Wisconsin tried enacting legislation to produce our own renewable energy. Do we want to be at the mercy of out-of-state entities? It's already happening, but we can stop it now. This bill is a bi-partisan effort to preserve local control. We don't have enough of that cooperation in Madison these days.

I know it might be asking a lot of anyone, but it's wise to get both sides of an argument before handing over your trust. Better yet, every bill proposed has an analysis that is relatively easy to read and it's written by our non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau.

Before posting cruel comments or lending your name to emails someone else has composed for you, take the time to look up the bill or ask questions of the bill authors. Honesty and trustworthiness are fundamental to building relationships and accomplishing our goals. When trust is given without justification it is fragile and will often lead to a disappointing conclusion. Then, trust becomes even harder to earn.

When trust is earned it can be lasting and meaningful, but it must constantly be earned again and again. That's how it should be.

Trust is important. Don't give it up too easily.

## Reviving Wisconsin's supply chain

By Rep. Warren Petryk  
Representing Wisconsin  
State Assembly District 93



State Rep. Warren Petryk

Everyone throughout our state has seen or felt the effects of a constrained supply chain. You can see it at your local gas station, your local grocery store, or when ordering online. By slowing our ability to transport goods, we are holding back our economic growth and creating barriers for customers and businesses. That is why I was appointed to the Special Assembly Committee on Trade and Supply Chain to investigate the impact of disruptions in production and distribution of products in Wisconsin.

The committee recently met to talk about the trucker shortage in our state that is only projected to double within the next 10 years; 77% of communities rely on trucks to export their goods throughout the state, so clearly, we need to act. In addition, according to the State Chamber of Commerce, 72% of employers state that the workforce shortage is the top public policy issue in Wisconsin, and the trades and trucking industries are no exceptions.

That is why I co-authored Assembly Bill 941. This bill

would increase the numbers of individuals with CDLs by providing grants and scholarships for students to enroll and enter into such programs. This would provide grants to help upskill individuals who already have an employer as well as provide scholarships to help train students who are hoping to be employed within the industry. By lowering the cost(s) of training, we can reduce the barriers individuals have in entering this needed field.

We also had a hearing on legislation that I co-authored that would help high school students and adults become interested in a career in the trades. Assembly Bill 9332 allocates \$20 million to promote and provide information on the availability of Youth Apprenticeship Programs, es-

pecially in districts that do not currently participate in them at all or have lower participation rates. This would raise the number of recognized programs that provide mentored on-the-job training in which 75% of students are subsequently offered full-time employment.

Moreover, further funding would be directed to the Apprentice Completion Award Program to incentivize students to participate in the program. The bill would also provide additional resources to allow credits earned in the Youth Apprenticeship Programs to transfer to a Registered Apprenticeship program to shorten their overall training time.

These bills are also a part of a larger Workforce Package and promotion of Career and Technical Education month that have been moving through the Assembly. It is my hope that these will help reimagine industries and trades while refueling passions that will facilitate family-supporting and economy-encouraging employment in western Wisconsin. While working on these topics, I look forward to an improved and more prosperous future for Wisconsin.

## LETTERS to the Editor

### Biden's accomplishments

To the editor:

State Sen. Jeff Smith seemed to suggest that the reason Joe Biden's approval rating is in the toilet is because his accomplishments are not widely known. Perhaps a trip down memory lane will shed some light on his accomplishments.

His catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan started with the release of terrorists from the Bagram Air Base. One of these terrorists made his way to Kabul where he murdered 13 US military personnel. Biden, the delusional tough guy, decided to retaliate for these murders by droning the wrong vehicle and ended up killing 10 innocent Afghans including seven children. Now the Taliban is running amok killing Afghan men and torturing Afghan women and children. Heck of a job Joey!

Biden created a massive border crisis by orchestrating the ongoing daily super spreader events allowing nearly two million illegal immigrants from over 50 different countries into the United States. This does not even include the "gotaways" which is estimated to be another

500,000. This has resulted in record amounts of illegal drugs entering our country. Moreover, the open border has enabled child sex traffickers to get rich by selling children with ease.

He stopped the XL Pipeline which destroyed thousands of American jobs. Since oil is a global commodity, this not only resulted in higher gas prices for hard working Americans but it also made Biden grovel to Russia and Iran for more oil production. This puts America back in the Obama era when we had to pay Iran (the largest terrorist country in the world) for their oil which funded their terrorist activities.

Biden's agenda of defunding and demonizing the police has resulted in the largest increase in crime in decades. Even worse, this has led to a record number of police officers being murdered! Biden sometimes says he does not support defunding the police but his actions say otherwise. He has appointed Kristen Clark and Vanita Gupta both of whom have long advocated for defunding the police.

Biden's massive government spending has resulted in runaway inflation which adversely impacts low-income Americans. Biden does not care because today's Democrat party is owned by Big Tech, Big Media, Big Pharma and Big Education (aka the NEA) The Democrat Party of the 1960's and '70's that cared about the working class disappeared decades ago!

Biden has overseen far more COVID deaths than President Trump even though Trump didn't have vaccines or therapeutics while Biden has had both!

The reason Biden's approval rating is in the toilet is because people actually do know what he has done.

Ken Pazdernik  
Ellsworth

### 'Gerrylaunders' is not what the people want

To the editor:

I served with eight other Wisconsinites on the People's Map Commission. Gov. Evers asked the commission to create legislative and congressional maps that would be without partisan bias or advantage, while holding true to traditional redistricting criteria.

We fulfilled those obligations. The Princeton Gerrymandering Project gave our maps A-plus grades. Meanwhile, the legislators drew maps to maintain partisan advantage. Princeton graded them Fs. After the Governor vetoed the legislators' maps, the Wisconsin Supreme Court took

charge.

Although the Governor supported the People's Map Commission's maps, he wasn't allowed to present them to the Supreme Court. Why not?

Because the Supreme Court Justices declared they would only consider maps that differed as little as possible from the current maps.

This astounded me. For one year, we heard from nearly 2,000 citizens from all parts of Wisconsin. Never once did we hear, "leave the maps alone." We learned from 18 redistricting experts: not one mentioned "least change" criterion.

A person must wonder why the Justices prioritized "least change." There is nothing about "least change" in the Wisconsin Constitution. The legislature certainly didn't follow "least change" when they redrew maps in 2010. The Supreme Court appears to want to cement the unfair partisan advantage of the current maps indefinitely. Robert Yablon, UW law professor, named this situation -- where mapmakers perpetuate advantages -- as "gerrylaunders." Gerrylaunders is not right, not fair, not just. It certainly is not what the people of Wisconsin told us they want.

Annermarie McClellan  
Former People's Maps Commissioner  
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