

TALK AROUND TOWN

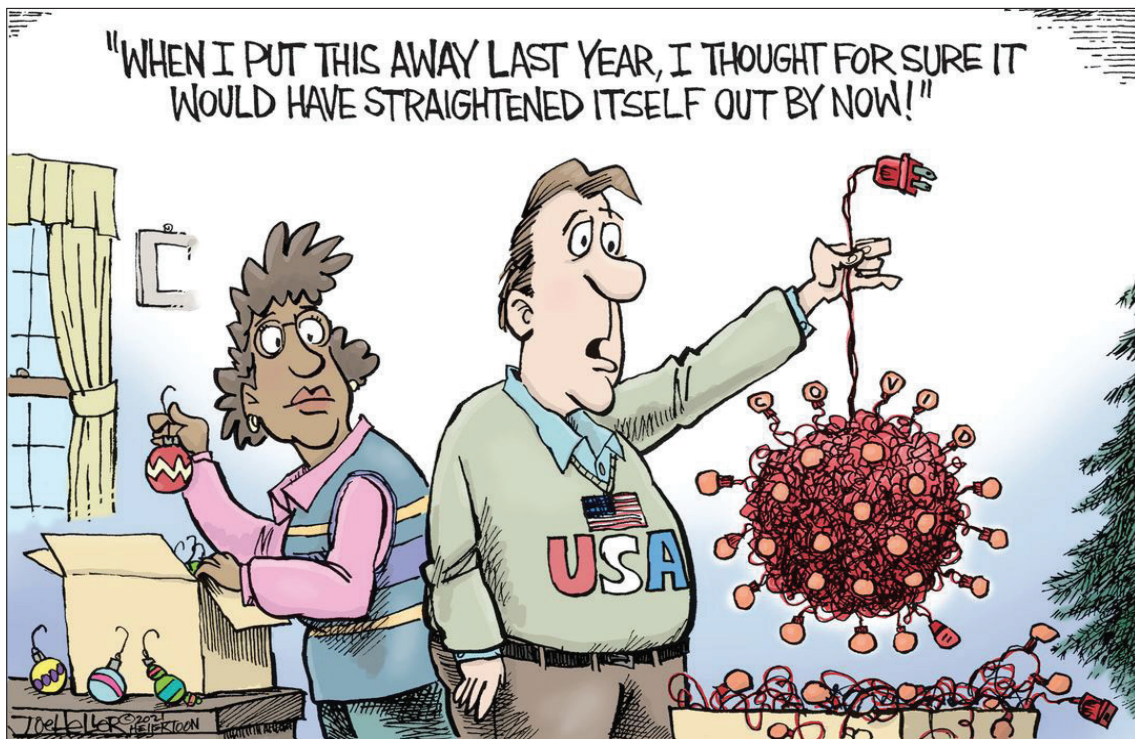
Opinions and commentaries about issues of the day

WHAT IS "LOUD & CLEAR" ABOUT?

The Daily Press letters policy?

Letters to the editor must be limited to 500 or fewer words and are subject to editing for grammar and clarity and headlining as appropriate. Letters must be typed. Those who submit letters must include a full name, city of residence and phone number for verification. Contributors are limited to one letter every 14 days.

Your view: Letters to the editors should be viewed by our readers with a critical eye and thoughtful mind. They are meant to provide a beginning point for dialogue, not as an ending point for belief. We must caution our readers that letters to the editor are only mere opinions.



COVID claims an Ashland gem

When I first met Terry Miller just over three years ago, he was driving a 1990s Dodge SUV that was more rust than steel.

He had to tape the driver's-side door window into its up position or it would fall down into the door — and he needed to be able to lower that window so he could reach inside to open the door. The outside door handle, like most everything else on that thing, didn't work.

But it suited a devout and humble man of modest means.

Terry died Sunday night of COVID after spending days in the MMC emergency room because there were no inpatient beds available anywhere in the northern half of the state. The last time I talked to him, he was making plans to spend Thanksgiving with his family.

Terry was retired after working at a grocery store, driving a bread-delivery truck and clerking at a local convenience store.

Despite his modest means, Terry spent his entire life giving. He was on the boards of two local recovery organizations, but at board meetings, he didn't say much.

He was more of a doer.

In the three years I knew Terry, I watched him work with more than a dozen men who were trying to get what Terry had — long-term sobriety.

His advice to them — to anyone, really — was pretty simple: Don't drink. Pray for nothing more than help. Do the right thing and give away what you've been

fortunate enough to be given. Be grateful for what you do have.

I spent probably 100 hours in a fishing boat with Terry over the past three years, and every excursion was a lesson in local history.

He'd talk about his own life, getting sober decades ago and trying to pass on what he'd learned, but he also would share local lore.

"I remember, in the fall of the year, you used to be able to catch more perch under that bridge than a man could fillet in a night," he'd say.

"We used to wade up that river and catch our limit of trout in 10 minutes. You'd just throw out a spawn sack and they'd bite it the minute it hit the water."

Every point on Chequamegon Bay, every log pile or bay, had a story to go with it — a story that came from a lifetime of fishing those waters.



Terry Miller, center, chats at the grand opening of Ashland's Partners in Recovery Center.

But in between those tales, Terry would talk of weightier matters — his faith, his delight at being a grandfather, his relationship with his children, for which he was extraordinarily grateful.

It was my great pleasure to share three particularly joyful moments with Terry.

The first came when I took him to a favorite lake of mine in the Upper Peninsula and paddled him to the catch of a lifetime. He reeled in a 30-inch lake trout on a medium-light rod in my canoe — a 20-minute thrill ride that left him grinning like a little boy.

I also took him twice to a secret pond I know near Minocqua. We went to fish for bass, but he hooked into a slab bluegill so we switched tactics. He couldn't stop shaking his head as we reeled in lunker after lunker. "I just can't believe this. Haven't seen fishing like this in 20 years," he exclaimed.

We brought home

12 pounds of bluegill fillets, and could have caught more if we hadn't run out of daylight.

On the way home from that outing, I queued up some Mavericks on the stereo, and Terry quickly fell in love with my favorite band.

So the third joyful moment I shared with him was a live Mavericks show under the Big Top last summer, where he and our mutual friend Teena Racheli danced, as they say, like no one was watching.

He paid for it the next day; his failing knees exacted a toll after hours in a canoe or most physical activity.

Despite that pain, Terry was pretty joyful most of the time. The only times I ever heard him speak a cross word were when his beloved Brewers tanked in the playoffs or Aaron Rodgers was being a prima donna.

Or when he talked about newcomers who didn't try to give back the way he was taught

to when he was early in sobriety.

But those were fleeting moments. Most of the rest of the time, he lived by his own words, grateful for the time he had on this earth.

"I have known him for 30-plus years and never heard anyone say one bad word about him," a mutual friend messaged me, when I told him about Terry's death.

That's as fine a eulogy as any of us can hope for.

Terry was the 21st Ashland County resident to die of COVID. He — and the other 20 victims — deserve much more than this, much more than a few words in the newspaper and some prayers at a memorial service.

He deserved to hold his grandchild one more time. To catch one more 12-inch bluegill. To win one more hand of Texas hold-em.

To work the first step with one more newcomer hungry for sobriety.

He and the other 20 were deprived of those things and more by this merciless virus.

I'm sure if Terry were given the chance for some last words, they would be the same that he uttered over and over in life:

Pray hard. Love hard-er. Give it away, and always be grateful.

Peter J. Wasson is managing editor of the Ashland Daily Press.



PETER J. WASSON

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Second Amendment has been distorted

Kyle Rittenhouse was found not guilty. Whether one agrees with this verdict is beside the point. The overwhelming problem with this verdict, this trial, this drama, is that a 17-year-old found an AR15-style semiautomatic rifle, armed it, carried it in

public in an already tense situation and killed two others.

This is the result of an incredibly flawed interpretation of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. "Well regulated" meant all able-bodied citizens were required by law to drill and train using the official U.S. Army system of infantry tactics, so if and when the president called up

the militia, they could coordinate with the deliberately tiny U.S. Army, as they did in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.

A "well-regulated militia" also means that militias must have rules and regulations. The Second Amendment is all about allowing people to form

militias and ability to own weapons in order to defend the country. Nowhere does it say the government cannot regulate the firearms industry.

Until we understand and accept what the Second Amendment really means, the terrible tragedy in Kenosha will repeat itself.

Mike Bunch,
Washburn

What do you think?

Email Letters to the Editor to
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